



Commission Meeting

Wednesday, June 18, 2025 6:00 p.m.



COMMISSION MEETING

June 18, 2025 | South Central Service Cooperative
Dinner and Networking at 5:00 p.m. | Meeting at 6:00 p.m.

AGENDA

		<u>Time</u>	<u>Page</u>	<u>Action</u>
1.	Call to Order - Chair Laven	6:00		
2.	Approval of Agenda			Action
3.	Pledge of Allegiance			
4.	Roll Call - Secretary Brastad			
5.	Approval of New Commissioners Jeff Annis - Blue Earth County, Cities under 10K Hunter Jordan - Special Interest, High School Age Luisa Trapero - Special Interest, Minority Populations	6:05		Action
6.	Introduction of New Staff Members Tom Polich - Regional Food Rescue Coordinator Stephanie Hilpipre - Finance Director	6:10		
7.	Approval of Consent Agenda A. Approval of April 9, 2025 Minutes B. Financials	6:15	2 7	Action
8.	Chair's Report - Chair Laven A. FY26 Meeting Dates - Resolution 2025-02 B. Board Officer Update C. Commission Code of Conduct	6:20	8 9	Action
9.	Executive Director's Report - Nicole Griensewic A. NADO Recap B. Bus Tour Recap	6:25		
10.	National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) Update and Overview Presentation - Joe McKinney, Executive Director, National Association of Development Organizations	6:40	14	
11.	Region Nine Economic Development Areas of Work - Kristian Braekken, RNDC Economic Development Director	7:05		
12.	Public Hearing of FY26 Budget - Chair Laven A. Call for Opening Public Hearing B. Approval of FY26 Operating Budget C. Approval of FY26 Preliminary Levy D. Call for Close Public Hearing	7:15	20	Action Action Action Action
13.	Rural Resilience: Existing Efforts & Regional Opportunities -	7:35	40	

Sam Sharp, RNDC Energy & Sustainability Planner
Lisa Callahan, Community Readiness & Outreach/GreenCorps

- | | | | |
|------------|---|------|---------------|
| 14. | Other Business
A. Commissioner Updates
B. Meeting Evaluation | 7:45 | |
| 15. | Adjournment | 8:00 | <u>Action</u> |

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Laven called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m. at South Central Service Cooperative.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Chair Laven requested that the Finance Director's Report be moved to the Approval of the Consent Agenda section.

O'Connor moved to approve the agenda. Nowell seconded. Motion carried.

3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

4. ROLL CALL

MEMBERS PRESENT: Jean Anderson, Sarah Berry, Andrea Boettger, Dave Borchert, Jim Branstad, Steve Cooling, Chris Dalton, Marie Dranttel, Elroy Glidden, Robert Goblirsch, Paul Harris, James Kotewa, Dawn Kratzke, Liz Krocak, Lynda Kruse, Mike Laven, Christian Lilienthal, Tom Loveall, Mary Milbrath, Bob Nielsen, Shanon Nowell, Patty O'Connor, Mike Pfeil, Billeye Rabbe, Rita Rassbach, Gary Richter, Steve Rohlfing, Phil Schafer, Scott Schlueter, Julie Tesch, Rob Wilkening

MEMBERS ABSENT: Katelyn Kratz, Matt Peterson,

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Brad Krause, Pam Rodewald,

OTHERS PRESENT: Alejandra Bejarano, Jazmine Flores, Jessica Beyer, Joel Hanif, Kristian Braekkan, Mark Plotz, Nathan George, Sarah Janovsky, Sabri Fair, Samuel Sharp, Lisa Callahan

There was a quorum.

5. INTRODUCTIONS

Chair Laven introduced the following individuals: returning members Tom Loveall, Faribault County Commissioner, and Mary Milbrath, representing Nicollet County Townships; new members Liz Krocak, representing Le Sueur County Townships; James Kotewa, representing Martin County Cities over 10,000; Billeye Rabbe, Martin County Commissioner; Lynda Kruse, representing Blue Earth County Townships; and Jean Anderson, representing Faribault County Cities under 10,000. He also introduced new staff member Mark Plotz, RNDC Road Safety Transportation Planner.

6. APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

Treasurer Dranttel reported that Finance Director Melissa Reintjes resigned on April 3 after determining the role wasn't a good fit for her. During her two weeks, Melissa began work on the FY25 budget, audit prep, and internal processes. Recruitment efforts are underway, with interim support from Jazmine Flores and consultant Mary Bogie.

Wilkening moved to approve the consent agenda. Milbrath seconded. Motion carried.

7. CENTER FOR TRANSPORTATION STUDIES (CTS) ACCESSIBILITY PRESENTATION

Kyle Shelton, Director of the University of Minnesota Center for Transportation Studies, introduced himself.

Eric Lind, Director of the Accessibility Observatory at the Center for Transportation Studies, presented on how his team measures accessibility, defined as the ease with which people can reach valued destinations like jobs, schools, and grocery stores. He explained that instead of focusing solely on vehicle speed, their work emphasizes people-centered metrics across different transportation modes (driving, biking, transit, walking), using data to map opportunity access by location. He shared urban and rural Minnesota examples, including Mankato and Cottonwood County, and discussed how the data can help inform local transportation planning and identify investment gaps.

8. MINNESOTA CLIMATE ADAPTATION PARTNERSHIP (MCAP) PRESENTATION

Nathan Meyer, Associate Director & Extension Program Leader for MCAP, shared details about a new partnership with Region Nine. He explained that they focus on helping communities prepare for Minnesota's changing climate, especially the impacts already being felt, such as warmer winters, hotter summers, increased precipitation variability, and drought. Rather than focusing on reducing greenhouse gases, his team supports local adaptation through research-based education, technical assistance, and tools like climate projections and planning resources. He highlighted ongoing collaborations with Region Nine, including work in Waterville and Le Sueur County, and efforts to support smaller communities in incorporating climate resilience into comprehensive planning.

9. CHAIR'S REPORT

Chair Laven provided an overview of the caucus process, noting that representatives from communities with populations over 25,000 are granted a seat on the Board of Directors but do not participate in caucusing with the county in which their community is located.

Branstad motioned to limit committee membership to one board member per committee. Richter seconded. Motion failed.

Discussion occurred regarding the motion on the table.

10. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Jessica Beyer, Deputy Director, provided an update on organizational activities and key initiatives. She began by noting that staff compile a detailed report for each Commission and Board of Directors meeting, which was included in the meeting packet and highlights ongoing work across various departments. She encouraged members to review the report, as it provides a snapshot of the important efforts taking place across the region.

She informed the Commission that the Executive Director is currently on leave and is expected to return on May 12. As a result, the RNDC Executive Director Succession Plan was activated, with Jessica stepping in as Acting Director during this period. Over the past month, a special Board of Directors meeting was held to approve a grant application to the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources. The application, developed in partnership with GeoSyntec, proposes a regional interactive toolkit to support ground source heat pump implementation, positioning RNDC as a pilot region for broader statewide efforts.

Jessica reported that the Budget & Personnel and Legislative Committees also met during the past month. During the Legislative Committee meeting, the Greater Minnesota Partnership presented updates on current legislative issues relevant to Region Nine's priorities, particularly around economic development and housing. She shared that RNDC continues to closely monitor federal programs and funding changes. Of note, the Safe Streets and Roads for All transportation planning program is currently paused, affecting project timelines in several counties and delaying the regional transportation plan.

She also updated the Commission on the USDA Regional Food Business Centers program, reporting that reimbursements are currently allowed through January 19, 2025, though the long-term future of the program remains uncertain. RNDC continues to advocate for its continuation, given its importance to local farmers and regional food systems. In positive news, Jessica announced that the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant had been unpaused, allowing RNDC to move forward with technical assistance and community-based energy efficiency work.

Jessica shared her recent attendance at the Advanced Bio Leadership Conference in Washington, D.C., where she promoted the region's economic development opportunities, including the importance of RNDC's BDO zone designation. She also introduced new staff working on food systems efforts and noted that Tom, who leads the regional food rescue initiative, would be formally introduced at the June meeting.

In April, an orientation was held for newly seated Commission members. Jessica emphasized that this was a valuable opportunity to build relationships and provide foundational knowledge about RNDC's work before members began attending formal meetings. She also highlighted several ongoing projects, including strategic economic development planning, a housing study in Springfield, and various economic impact and opportunity assessments in Blue Earth, Wells, Mapleton, Gibbon, Fairfax, Winthrop, and Montgomery, in partnership with the Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation.

She discussed RNDC's collaboration with the Center for Transportation Studies and Cedar representatives from Faribault and Martin Counties to pursue federal economic resilience funding. Additionally, an economic impact study is underway in Lime Township, which the Commission may learn more about during the upcoming bus tour. Finally, Jessica reminded the Commission that the next meeting will take place on June 18 and will include the annual bus tour. This year's tour will focus on the northern part of Region Nine and will highlight various regional projects and best practices. Members were encouraged to reserve their spot via the QR code provided on the table, as space on the bus is limited.

11. OTHER BUSINESS

Commissioners gave updates from their communities.

12. ADJOURNMENT

Kratzke moved to adjourn. Dalton seconded. Motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:54 p.m.

Region Nine Development Commision
Statement of Revenues, Expenditures, and Changes
As of April 30th, 2025

	<u>General</u>	<u>Legacy RLF</u>	<u>Cares Act RLF</u>	<u>Auto Fund</u>	<u>McKnight Fund</u>	<u>Total</u>
Revenues						
Levy						
Taxes	423,891					423,891
Federal Grants						
EDA Planning Grant	13,841					13,841
Other Federal Grants	20,134					20,134
Transportation						
Transportation - MnDOT Contract	67,500					67,500
Other Grants	231,390					231,390
McKnight & Pass Through					1,500,000	1,500,000
Contract Revenue	54,846					54,846
Deposit Interest & Dividends	40,258	75,199	23,098	1,964		140,519
Loan Interest Earned		49,899	1,978			51,877
Loan Administration Revenue		1,000	-			1,000
Other Revenue	16,128	-	38			16,166
Total Revenues	867,988	126,098	25,114	1,964	1,500,000	2,521,164
Expenses						
Salary & Wages	685,157	55,216	4,749		195	745,317
Fringe Benefits	171,630	13,804	1,187			186,621
Indirect Costs	214,300				45	214,345
Contracts, Consults, Subgrants	140,403				5,000	145,403
Passsthrough McKnight to RDCs					1,119,420	1,119,420
Travel and Mileage	14,812	184		1,964		16,960
Staff Development	9,690				2,717	12,407
Dues, Memberships, Subscrip.	10,096					10,096
Software	11,458					11,458
Commission Per Diem, Travel, Other	8,533					8,533
Equipment	9,108					9,108
Catering	5,916				835	6,751
Legal Fees	3,556	648				4,204
Unemployment Benefits	40,306					40,306
Miscellaneous	9,634	236				9,870
Total Current	1,334,599	70,088	5,936	1,964	1,128,212	2,540,799
Debt Service						
Copier Lease Payment	377					377
Total Debt Service	377	-	-	-	-	377
Total Expenditures	1,334,976	70,088	5,936	1,964	1,128,212	2,541,176
Net Change in Fund Balances	(466,988)	56,010	19,178	-	371,788	(20,012)
Fund Balances, July 1 2024	671,682	3,001,854	964,489	67,388	-	4,705,413
Fund Balances as of April 30, 2025	204,694	3,057,864	983,667	67,388	371,788	4,685,401
Cash Balances as of April 30, 2025	291,838	1,965,506	60,013	18,583	371,788	2,707,728
Region Nine McKnight Cash Available					146,208	
Shared RDC McKnight Cash Available					225,580	
					371,788	



RESOLUTION

Region Nine Development Commission

2025 – 02

**Resolution Establishing Region Nine Development Commission
Meeting Dates for Fiscal Year 2026**

- Whereas,** The State of Minnesota established the Region Nine Development Commission to work with an on behalf of the nine counties, seventy-two cities, and one hundred forty-seven townships on economic, social, physical and governmental issues of a regional nature, an
- Whereas,** the bylaws of the Region Nine Development Commission require that meeting dates of the Commission be set by resolution of the Commission.

Now, therefore, be it resolved, that the Region Nine Development Commission establish the following as meeting dates for fiscal year 2025.

Full Commission

October 8, 2025
January 14, 2026
April 8, 2026
June 10, 2026

Board of Directors

August 13, 2025
September 10, 2025
November 12, 2025
December 3, 2025
February 11, 2026
March 11, 2026
May 13, 2026

Be it further resolved, that the meetings of the Commission shall be held at the principal office of the Commission in the City of Mankato, Blue Earth County, Minnesota and may establish such other locations for meetings, as it may deem appropriate.

Dated this 18th day of June 2025

Signed:

Mike Laven, Chair

Jim Branstad, Secretary



Code of Ethical Conduct Policy

Region Nine Development Commission (RNDC) employees and commissioners are held to the highest standard of honesty, integrity, and ethical behavior.

RNDC employees and commissioners have a duty to the people of the jurisdictions they represent and must act in the public interest.

Every employee and commissioner must comply with this Code of Ethical Conduct to:

- Ensure compliance with the Code of Ethics for Employees and Commissioners found in [M.S. 43A.38](#), and other applicable law
- Avoid any appearance of impropriety
- Maintain the public trust
- Ensure the use of county, federal, and other local resources for purposes
- Strengthen governance processes
- Increase accountability

This policy applies to all employees and commissioners of RNDC.

Acceptance of Gifts

Employees or commissioners may not directly or indirectly solicit, accept, or receive anything of value for performing their RNDC duties, except for the compensation and benefits provided by RNDC. They may not directly or indirectly solicit, accept, or receive any payment of expense, compensation, gift, reward, gratuity, favor, service, promise of future employment, or promise of a future benefit for activities related to their duties, except those provided by RNDC. Employees offered impermissible gifts must decline or return them to the giver; an employee who is unable to return the gift must contact the RNDC's Executive Director to determine appropriate disposal.

The *limited exceptions* to the prohibition on the acceptance of gifts are as follows:

- Gifts of "nominal value" – defined as being of little or no marketable value. Gifts of cash and gift certificates or gift cards of any value are prohibited. Some examples of gifts of "nominal value" include, but are not limited to:
 - Pens, cups, totes, flash drives or other trinkets bearing a company's name/logo that do not have a marketable value.
 - Snacks or light refreshments provided at a meeting, conference or other event as a normal courtesy and offered to all attendees.
- Plaques or mementos recognizing individual service in a field of specialty or to a charitable cause.

- Payment or reimbursement of expenses for travel (including lodging and meals) that:
 - are not reimbursed by the employee or commissioner's agency and RNDC,
 - have been approved in advance by the employee's agency,
 - are associated with a work assignment, and
 - which do not otherwise present a conflict of interest.
- Honoraria or expenses paid for papers, talks, demonstrations, or appearances which are:
 - made by employees on their own time, including vacation,
 - not part of their regular job duties, and
 - which do not otherwise present a conflict of interest.
- Special discounts or offers made by private businesses along as offered as a marketing strategy to increase its business, not to influence the work responsibilities performed by the employee or commissioner.

Use of Confidential Information

Employees and commissioners may not use confidential information obtained in the course of their involvement with RNDC to further their private interest, or the private interest of any person or organization except as authorized by law.

Additionally, employees and commissioners may not accept outside employment or involvement in a business or activity which requires them to disclose or use confidential information obtained in the course of their work under RNDC.

Use of RNDC Property

Employees may not use or allow the use of RNDC leased facilities, supplies, equipment, or other property for their private interest, for the private interest of any person or organization, or any other use not in the interest of the jurisdiction area RNDC represents, except for personal use of IT under the following parameters:

- (1) Does not increase risk to RNDC data or system security
- (2) Results in no more than an incremental cost to RNDC
- (3) Complies with state and federal law

Conflict of Interest

Employees and commissioners must avoid any action which might result in a conflict of interest. Conflicts of interest occur when an RNDC employee or commissioner personal interests or loyalties compete with or compromise their ability to faithfully fulfill their responsibilities under the RNDC with objectivity, impartiality, good judgment, and loyalty to those interests RNDC represent. Conflicts of interest include, but are not limited to, the following actions:

- Using or attempting to use RNDC's employee or commissioner's position, including their badge, uniform, title, prestige, authority, or influence, for their private gain or that of their family, relatives, partners, friends, or outside interests. This prohibition includes using or attempting to use one's position with RNDC to solicit or secure special benefits, privileges, or advantages that

are not available to the general public for the employee or commissioner or their family, relatives, partners, friends, or outside interests.

- Accepting or soliciting employment, a contractual relationship, or a fiduciary responsibility that will affect the employee or commissioner's independence of judgment in the exercise of the duties required inherent with RNDC.
- Accepting or soliciting employment, a contractual relationship, or a fiduciary responsibility with any person or public or private entity that is directly or indirectly subject to control, inspection, review, audit, or enforcement by the employee or commissioner in their RNDC position.
- Receiving or accepting any money or thing of value from anyone other than RNDC for performing an act which the employee would be required or expected to perform in the regular course or hours of their RNDC employment or as part of their RNDC duties.
- Performing an act in the employee or commissioner's personal capacity which may later be subject directly or indirectly to the control, inspection, review, audit, or enforcement by the employee or commissioner in their RNDC position.
- Holding or seeking financial interests that conflict with the conscientious performance of the employee or commissioner's RNDC duties.
- Participating on behalf of RNDC in the development, review, or evaluation of requests for proposal ("RFP"), request for bid ("RFB"), or requests for information ("RFI"), or the selection, award, or administration of a contract or grant when the employee or commissioner, their family, their partner, or any of the their outside interests has or is seeking a financial or other interest in, or has or may obtain a tangible personal benefit from, an organization that is likely to apply for, is considered for, or is selected for the contract or grant.
- Participating on behalf of RNDC in the development, review, or evaluation of RFPs, RFBs, or RFIs, or the selection, award, or administration of a contract or grant with respect to a non-state public entity when the employee/commissioner, their family or partner is an elected or appointed official of the non-state public entity.
- Acting as an agent or attorney in any action or matter pending before the employing agency except in the proper discharge of official RNDC duties or on the employee or commissioner's own behalf.
- Competing with the RNDC or soliciting a financial agreement for the employee or commissioner or other entity other than RNDC, where RNDC is currently engaged in providing a service or where RNDC has expressed an intention to engage in competition for providing a service, unless RNDC waives this conflict.

Employees must also avoid any action which might result in a potential conflict of interest or the appearance of a conflict of interest.

"Potential conflict of interest" means that the employee or commissioner's own interests, the interests of the their family or partner, or the interests of any of the their outside interests could create an inappropriate influence on their judgment in the exercise of their organizational duties if they are called on to make a decision or recommendation that would affect one or more of those interests.

"Appearance of a conflict of interest" means any situation that would cause a reasonable person, with knowledge of the relevant facts, to question whether the employee or commissioner's personal interest, affiliation or relationship inappropriately influenced their action in their RNDC position, even though there may be no actual conflict of interest.

- NOTE: Nothing in this policy shall be construed to suggest that an employee should not participate in a matter because of their political, religious, or moral views.

If there is a determination that an actual, potential, or apparent conflict of interest exists, the employee or commissioner must avoid the situation giving rise to the actual, potential, or apparent conflict, and may be instructed not to pursue or to discontinue a conflicting outside activity, unless the conflict is of the type that can be lawfully waived and the agency determines in its sole discretion that it is in the best interest of the agency to waive or seek a waiver of the conflict. While actual, potential, or apparent conflicts of interest sometimes can be resolved by assigning the matter to another employee or commissioner who does not have a conflict, the agency has no obligation to do so if the agency determines, in its sole discretion, that such reassignment is not in the best interest of the agency.

No commissioner shall vote, decide on, or discuss any matter before the commission in the event a possible conflict may exist as outlined above, except that:

- a. A commissioner having interest through a voluntary association with the person or organization may be allowed to discuss the matter.
- b. If the matter concerns a person or organization with which the commissioner had former contact, and that former contact existed either prior to his or her selection, or occurred at least two years prior to the current discussion of the matter, the commissioner may freely act.

Reporting Responsibility

It is everyone's responsibility to raise a concern promptly about a violation of RNDC policy, law or regulation. This is intended to encourage and enable persons to raise serious concerns within the RNDC before seeking resolution outside RNDC. In most cases, a board member should present his or her concerns to the chair of the Board of Directors. All others should present their concerns to the executive director. However, if a board member is uncomfortable speaking with the chair of the Board of Directors or is uncomfortable with the chair of the Board of Directors response, or if a committee, taskforce member, or employee is uncomfortable speaking with the executive director or with the executive director's response, the person is encouraged to speak with anyone on the Board of Directors whom that person is comfortable approaching.

RNDC prohibits retaliation against anyone who in good faith reports a suspected violation of law, regulation, or RNDC policy or who cooperates in an RNDC investigation. RNDC will not permit any harassment, retaliation or adverse employment consequence against a person for making a good-faith complaint, regardless of whether the underlying facts prove to be correct or result in any corrective action. An employee who retaliates against someone who has made a good-faith complaint under this policy is subject to discipline up to and including termination of employment or removal from the commission.

RNDC's executive director, working with the chair of the Board of Directors, will act as the RNDC's compliance officer. The compliance officer is responsible for ensuring that all complaints about unethical or illegal conduct are investigated. The chair of the Board of Directors, or his or her designee, will assume the compliance officer role if the report involves the executive director.

The Budget and Personnel Committee of the RNDC shall address all reports, concerns or complaints regarding corporate accounting practices, internal controls or auditing. The compliance officer shall immediately notify the Budget and Personnel Committee of any such complaint and work with the committee until the matter is resolved.

Anyone filing a complaint concerning a violation or suspected violation of the law, regulation or RNDC policy must be acting in good faith and have reasonable grounds for believing the information disclosed indicates a violation. Any allegations that prove not to be substantiated and which prove to have been made maliciously or knowingly to be false will be treated as a serious disciplinary offense.

Violations or suspected violations of law, regulation or RNDC policy may be submitted on an anonymous basis, but in deciding whether to make a report anonymously, please understand that investigation and resolution of anonymous reports may be more difficult than investigation and resolution of a non-anonymous report. Reports of violations or suspected violations of law, regulation or RNDC policy will be kept confidential to the extent possible, consistent with the need to conduct an adequate investigation.

If warranted, RNDC will commence an appropriate investigation, using internal and/or external resources with expertise in conducting investigations. The compliance officer, or the person responsible for carrying out the compliance officer's role with respect to a reported or suspected violation, will acknowledge receipt of the reported violation or suspected violation by promptly writing a letter (or e-mail) to the complainant, unless the report has been made anonymously. Investigations will be conducted promptly and discretely, and appropriate corrective action will be taken if warranted by the investigation.

Printed name of Commissioner: _____

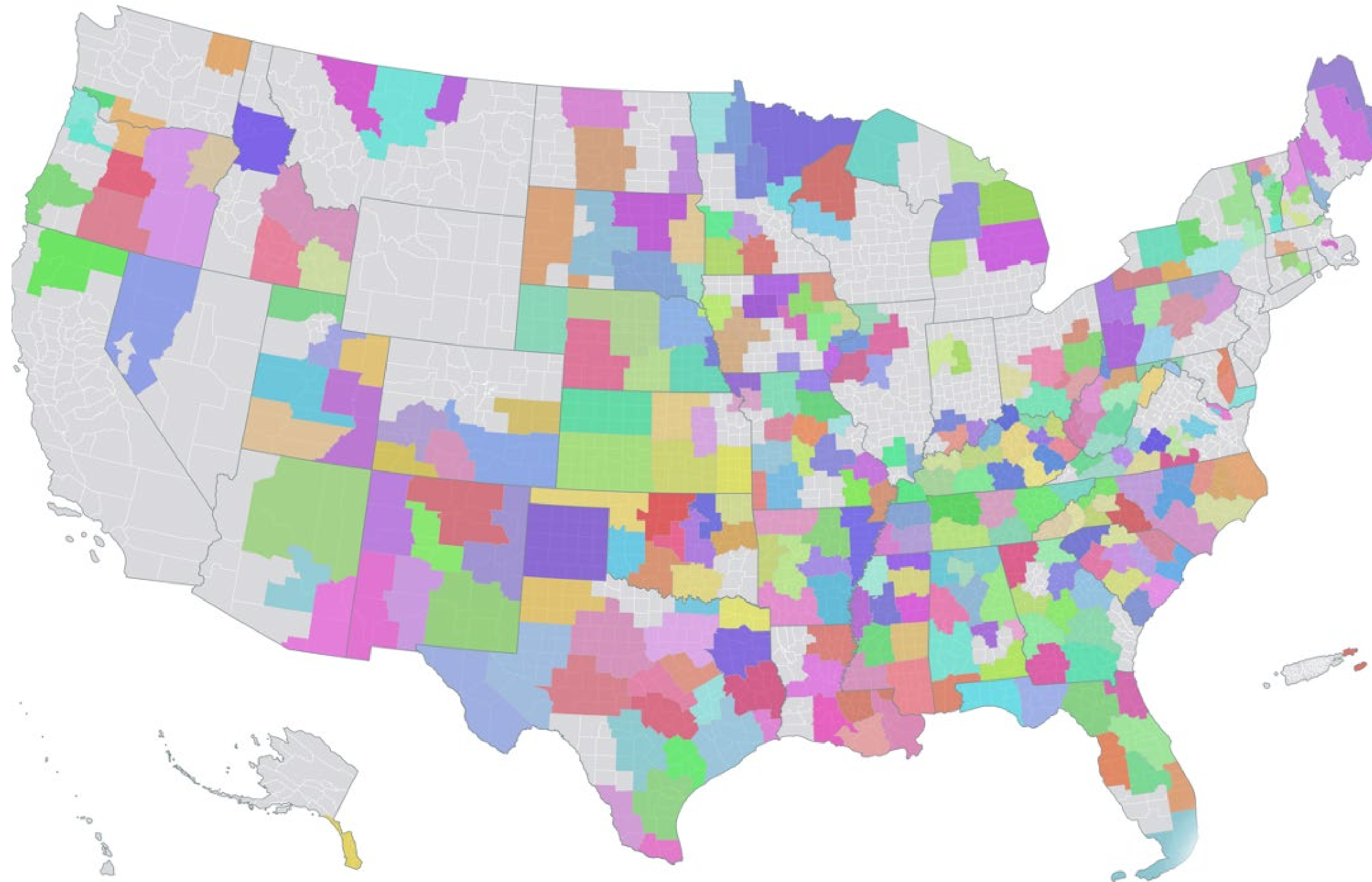
Signature of Commissioner: _____ Date: _____



Region Nine Development Commission



Map of NADO Member Organizations



Scan the QR code for an interactive map of NADO members.



What Does NADO DO?

NADO is the national association that represents Regional Councils and Regional Development Organizations (RDOs) across the country.

WHAT WE DO:

- **NADO** educates federal policymakers about what Regional Councils are; why they are important; and the funding, programs, and reforms they need to succeed
- The **NADO Research Foundation** provides resources, education, training, and peer-learning opportunities designed to support Regional Councils and their work



www.nado.org



The National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) is a 501c4 membership association that represents the interests of regional community and economic development practitioners.

Established in 1967, NADO advocates for policies and programs that promote equitable community development, economic competitiveness, rural development, economic mobility, and quality of place.

NADO represents a national network of more than 500 Regional Development Organizations (RDOs) across the country.



The NADO Research Foundation (NADO RF) is a 501c3 non-profit organization that provides technical assistance, education, research, and training to support and strengthen the national network of RDOs.

Established in 1988, the NADO RF provides thought leadership, conducts research, and produces publications focused on promising practices and innovative approaches to promote regional community development. NADO RF also works with RDOs and their partners to enhance their organizational and professional capacity.

NADO Helps Strengthen RDO Relationships with Federal Agencies and Other Key Stakeholders





122 C Street, NW, Suite 830 | Washington, DC 20001
202.921.4440 | NADO.ORG

Questions?

jmckinney@nado.org

Memo

To: RNDC Commission Members

From: Budget & Personnel Chair Nowell

Date: June 6, 2025

Re: Budget & Personnel Committee Budget & Levy Recommendations for
Fiscal Year 2026

The Budget & Personnel Committee met on June 3, 2025, with the primary focus of the meeting to review and discuss Fiscal Year 2026 Budget presentation materials, along with making recommendations on the budget, levy, and cost of living adjustment. These recommendations will be presented during the FY26 Budget Public Hearing.

Included in the Commission packet are budget presentation slides and a separate sheet that summarizes the Fiscal Year 2026 Proposed Budget.

The following recommendations were made by the Budget & Personnel Committee:

1. 3% Levy Increase

The proposed 3% levy increase, the maximum allowed under Minnesota state statute, was approved for recommendation to the Commission.

2. 3% Cost of Living Adjustment for Staff Salaries

This percentage was approved and calculated as part of the Fiscal Year 2026 Budget.

3. Fiscal Year 2026 Budget

The proposed Fiscal Year 2026 Budget was approved for recommendation to the Commission.



Finance Updates and Fiscal Year 2025 to 2026 Budget Presentation

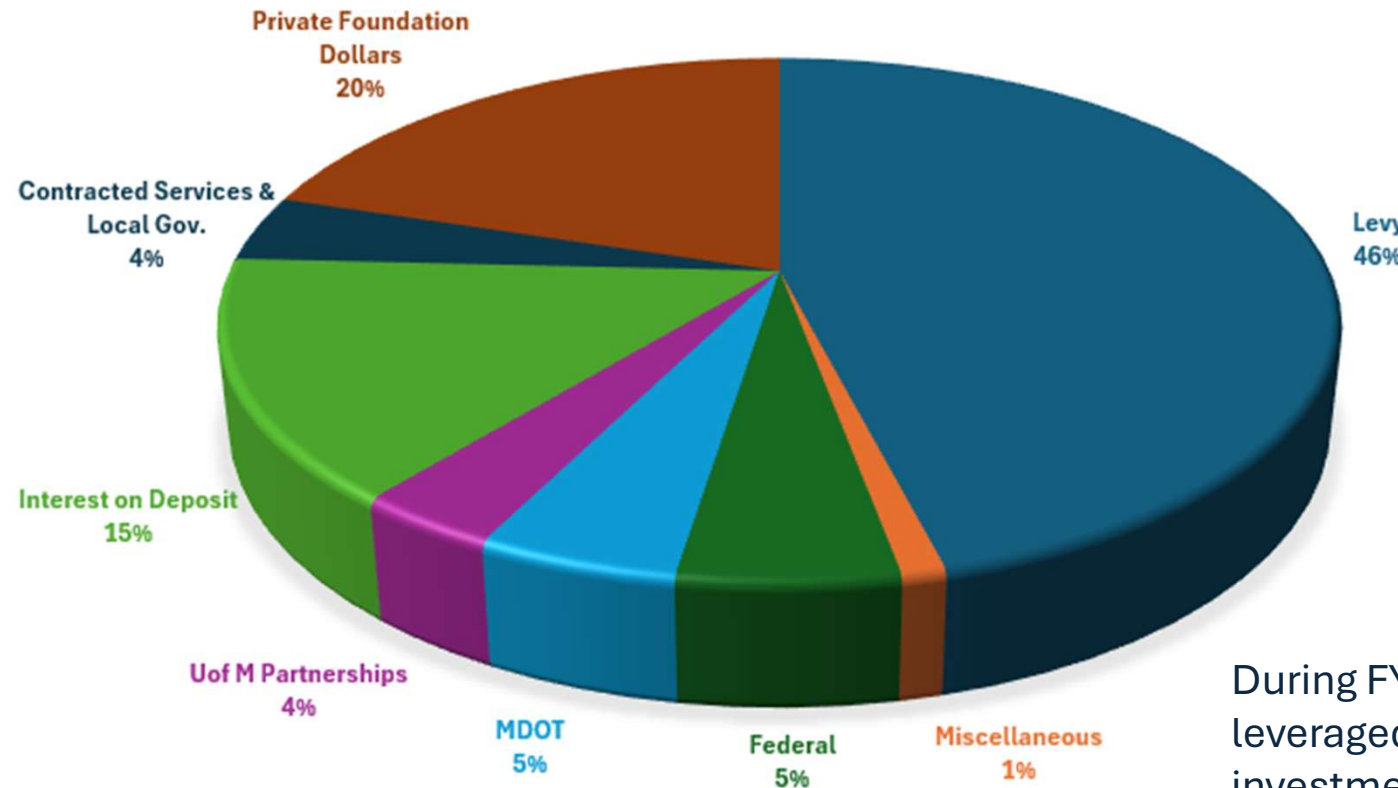
Stephanie Hilpipre, Finance Director
Jessica Beyer, Deputy Director



Finance Updates

- Finance Director Succession Plan Implemented: January to May 2025
- Finance Director Hired: Start date May 27, 2025
- Complete Re-development of Budget Materials for FY 2026
- Continue to Evolve the Process and Best Practices Moving Forward

Region Nine's Diversified Funding



Funding Sources:

- Levy Funds
- Federal Grants
- State Partnerships
- Private Foundations
- Interest on Deposits
- Other Revenue
(Contractual Work, Technical Assistance, etc.)

During FY 2025, Region Nine successfully leveraged levy dollars to double the financial investment in our communities.

Current Summary of Region Nine Bank Accounts

- The majority of our funds on deposit are held in ‘Minnesota Association of Governments Investing for Counties Fund’ (MAGIC Fund) accounts. As of May 30, 2025, these MAGIC money market accounts are earning a yield of **4.32%**

Account	5/31/2025
R9 MAGIC Account	\$770,466
Wells Fargo – Payroll Account	\$195,480
Wells Fargo	\$3,118
Total	\$969,064*

*This value **does not** reflect the current General Fund balance. The General Fund is held in these accounts along with grant funds that have been received and are designated for specific projects or signed contracts.

Region Nine Reserve Funds

FY 2024 Audit Report General Fund Balance as of 7/1/2024	\$653,765
The Region Nine Commission Policy stipulates the total General Fund Reserve Balance should be 80% of the total levy	740,952 x 80% =
To meet policy requirements for FY 2026 the General Fund Reserve Balance should be:	\$592,754

- We cannot rely on the General Fund Balance to offset expenditures for Fiscal Year 2026

Key Budget Drivers/Considerations for FY 2026

- Consistent FTE/PTE Count for the Organization
 - No new FTE/PTE's Planned
 - Line-item Budgetary Reductions Where Possible
 - Potential Implementation of Hiring Delays and/or Not Backfilling Positions that are Vacated
 - Possible Voluntary Employee Hour Reductions
- Reductions in consultant contracts, fellowship contracted positions such as Americorps, and non-funded internships
- CARES Dollars are Spent Down
- The need for Levy dollars to leverage Federal and State program matches for regional investments/grants
- Continued pursuit of grant and contract opportunities that serve regional needs in addition to providing diversified revenue for the organization

Fiscal Year 2025-2026 Proposed Budget

<u>Revenues</u>	FY25 Projected	FY26 Budget
Levy	\$ 698,409	\$ 719,361
MN Department of Transportation	\$ 75,000	\$ 75,000
Contract Services	\$ 54,846	\$ -
Resource Rural	\$ 150,000	\$ -
Center for Transportation Studies UofM	\$ 13,000	\$ -
U of M Partnership - MCAP	\$ 40,500	\$ -
EDA Planning Federal Grant	\$ 13,841	\$ 80,000
Tri County Solid Waste - Transportation Area		\$ 5,000.00
EEGBC - Energy Block Grant (Federal Funding)		\$ 12,000.00
Local Climate Action Grant - New Ulm		\$ 3,150.00
Local Climate Action Grant - Children's Museum		\$ 5,000.00
MNSU Local Foods		\$ 15,750.00
Community Energy Innovation Prize		\$ 20,000.00
R9 Wellness - benefit paid from health plan	\$ 1,560	\$ 1,500
USDA Local Foods Passthrough	\$ 20,134	\$ -
SMIF - Grow a Farmer	\$ 131,175	\$ -
Regional Food Business Center Grant	\$ 48,167	\$ -
Food Recovery Coordinator	\$ 25,000	\$ -
Food Recovery SHIP Grant	\$ 6,663	\$ -
Social Media Campaign - City of Springfield	\$ 90	\$ -
Legacy RLF - Interest and Fees	\$ 150,151	\$ 150,000
Cares RLF - Interest and Fees	\$ 30,261	\$ 30,000
Interest Earned	\$ 36,317	\$ 30,000
Dividends	\$ 8,358	\$ 5,000
Miscellaneous	\$ 14,953	\$ -
Total Revenues	\$ 1,518,425	\$ 1,151,761

<u>Expenditures</u>	FY25 Projected	FY26 Budget
Salary	\$ 901,440	\$ 928,483
Fringe Benefits	\$ 217,724	\$ 235,142
Indirect Costs	\$ 249,346	\$ 250,000
Consultant Services	\$ 55,100	\$ 15,000
Technology/Software	\$ 21,453	\$ 22,000
Staff Travel/Conferences	\$ 12,739	\$ 10,000
Dues and Memberships	\$ 9,264	\$ 9,350
Commissioner Per Diems and Expenses	\$ 8,533	\$ 15,000
Meetings/Events Catering	\$ 6,751	

Professional Services	\$	4,707	\$	5,000
Region Nine Vehicle	\$	2,327	\$	2,500
Office Supplies	\$	1,932	\$	2,000
Bus Rentals	\$	1,588	\$	835
Banking/Service Fees	\$	1,364	\$	1,200
Printing/Publications/Marketing	\$	7,718	\$	7,500
Postage	\$	306	\$	300
Utilities (electricity, etc.)	\$	281	\$	300
R9 Wellness - benefit paid from health plan	\$	1,071	\$	1,500
Telephone Services	\$	216	\$	225
Personnel/Hiring/Recruitment Costs	\$	29	\$	50
Miscellaneous	\$	888	\$	-
MADO Expenses - One Time All-Staff Training	\$	7,162	\$	-
MADO	\$	5,000	\$	-
Staff Consultant/Intern Fees	\$	5,509	\$	-
Internships/Fellows	\$	3,150	\$	-
Staff Professional Development	\$	4,453	\$	-
Commission Travel/Conferences	\$	2,923	\$	-
Unemployment Benefits	\$	40,306	\$	-
Region Nine Area Inc. - Passthrough	\$	27,746	\$	-
Convivencia	\$	18,150	\$	-
NUBRIC	\$	5,789	\$	-
Passthrough Funds	\$	154	\$	-
Total Expenditures	\$	1,625,119	\$	1,506,386
Total Net Budget	\$	(106,694)	\$	(354,624)

Paused Funds that Were Previously Secured

USDA - Regional Food Business Centers	\$	60,000.00
Safe Roads for All	\$	113,333.00
Thriving Communities	\$	9,000.00

New Funding Opportunities - Pending Applications

LCCMR	\$75,000
AAA Safety Foundation	\$72,000
MN Forward	\$50,000
USDA Regional Food System Partnership USDA Grant	TBD

Potential New Consulting/Technical Assistance Opportunities

Federal EDA Disaster Grant Funding Grant Administration	\$75,000
Federal EDA Resilience Coordination Grant	\$50,000
General Project Consulting Fees for Economic Development Work	\$40,000
General Project Consulting for Transportation	\$15,000
SMIF Contracts	TBD

Received Revenue Recap for Fiscal Year 2025

- FY 2025 revenues received are higher than what was presented in the proposed budget last year:

Proposed FY25 Revenues	Received FY25 Revenues	Additional Funding FY25
\$1,192,658	\$1,518,425	\$325,767

- This \$325,767 is a 27% increase over the original value proposed
- Additional payments may be received before the fiscal year concludes on June 30, 2025

Expected Expenditures Recap for Fiscal Year 2025

- FY 2025 expected expenditures are higher than what was presented in the proposed budget last April

Proposed FY25 Expenditures	Projected FY25 Expenditures	Additional Expenditures FY25
\$1,382,628	\$1,625,119	\$242,491

- This \$242,491 is a 18% increase over the initial value proposed
- Additional revenues outpaced additional expenditures resulting in a lower projected loss
- Due to the additional revenues received we were able to expand staffing to better serve the region and carry forward grant obligations

Fiscal Year 2025-2026 Preliminary Budget

- The FY 2026 proposed revenue of \$1,151,761 is in line with the proposed revenues on the FY 2025 preliminary budget which was \$1,192,658.
- The \$40,897 difference in proposed revenues from year to year can be attributed to miscellaneous 'Contract Services' with local governments. These are typically smaller, one-off projects where Region Nine can provide added value and services to communities needing assistance. We did not include an estimate for the value of these contracts in the FY 2026 budget.
- The FY 2026 proposed expenditures are \$118,733 less than FY 2025 projected expenditures.
- The projected net shortfall for FY 2026 is currently \$354,624. However, this figure is misleading, as we anticipate signing new contracts throughout the year. Our year-over-year performance demonstrates that we are able to obtain this value of additional funding with our current staffing. The lower section of the budget handout outlines the new contracts and grants Region Nine is actively pursuing.

Potential Additional Funding Opportunities for Regional Projects

New and Pending Grant Applications

- Legislative Citizen Commission on MN Resources Project Opportunity: \$75,000
- AAA Safety Foundation Transportation Funding: \$72,000
- MN Forward Transportation Funding: \$50,000
- USDA Regional Food System Partnership: TBD
- Other Opportunities as Available

New Consulting/Technical Assistance Opportunities

- Federal EDA Projects
- Consulting/Technical Assistance for Counties/Communities as Needed
- Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation (SMIF) Contracts

FY 2026 Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA)

- Cost of Living Adjustment for FY 2025 was 3.5%
- The Budget and Personnel Committee passed a reduction for Fiscal Year 2026 to 3.0%

3%	3.5%
\$33,574.93	\$39,170.75

- The reduction resulted in a total budget savings of \$5,596

Preliminary Levy Overview

- Minnesota Regional Development Organizations (RDO) Levy Authority
 - Different from Counties, Cities and other Local Government Entities
 - Cities and Counties do not have capped levy percentages
 - RDO's only have the authority to pass a 3% levy increase and cannot adjust with higher levies to compensate for inflation and future cost fluctuations

Region Nine's Proposed Levy – Payable 2026

Payable 2025 Levy:	Proposed 2026 Levy:	Total 3% Levy Increase:
\$719,361	\$740,942	\$21,581

Levy Fast Facts: Cost Breakdown by County

Tax Levy per County	Payable 2025	Proposed 3% Increase	Proposed Levy Payable 2026
Blue Earth	\$183,663	\$5,510	\$189,173
Brown	65,545	1,966	67,511
Faribault	59,629	1,789	61,418
Le Sueur	87,291	2,619	89,910
Martin	82,036	2,461	84,498
Nicollet	85,923	2,578	88,500
Sibley	57,713	1,731	59,444
Waseca	49,625	1,489	51,114
Watonwan	37,254	1,118	38,372
Scott/New Prague	10,681	320	11,002
Total	\$719,361	\$21,581	\$740,942

Levy Fast Facts:

Examples of Levy Increases on Property Owners

Property Example	Taxable Property Value	Current Levy	3% Levy Increase
Residential - Blue Earth County	\$782,100	\$11.44	\$0.34
Residential - Le Sueur County	\$218,900	\$3.29	\$0.10
Residential - Faribault County	\$60,400	\$0.84	\$0.03
Commercial - Brown County	\$6,775,300	\$182.96	\$5.49
Commercial - Faribault County	\$213,800	\$4.90	\$0.15
Agricultural - Nicollet County	\$2,385,000	\$29.79	\$0.89

Levy Fast Facts: Potential Compounded Revenue Loss

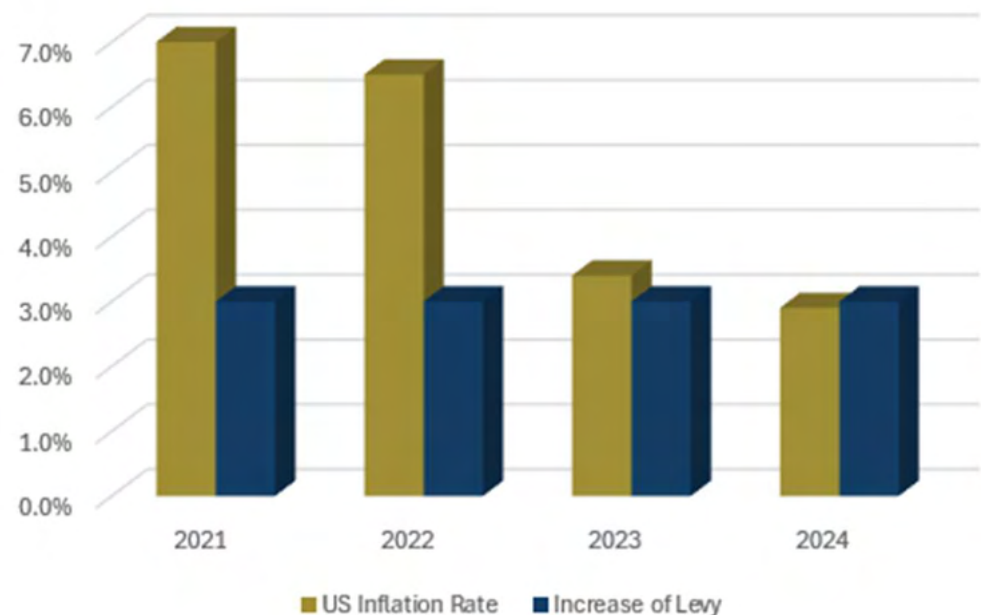
Payable Year	3% Increase	No Increase	Net Lost Revenue
2026	\$740,942	\$719,361	\$21,581
2027	763,170	740,942	22,229
2028	786,065	763,170	22,895
2029	809,647	786,065	23,582
2030	833,937	809,647	24,290
2031	858,955	833,937	25,018
2032	884,724	858,955	25,769
2033	991,265	884,723	26,542
2034	938,603	911,265	27,338
2035	966,761	938,603	28,158
		10 Year Total	\$247,400

Payable 2021 Levy	U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Inflation Calculator	Payable 2026 Proposed Levy
\$639,143	\$783,823	\$740,942

Current Inflation Gap: **-\$42,881**

Levy Fast Facts: The Levy Does Not Address Inflation Gaps

- Because of the 3% levy cap, previous levy increases have not kept pace with inflation, and the funding gap caused by high inflation from 2021 to 2023 has not yet been recovered.



Questions and Discussion

Approval of FY26 Operating Budget

Approval of FY26 Preliminary Levy

PROGRAM UPDATES:

Strategic Economic Development Plan for the City of Springfield – Alejandra

Alejandra is leading and executing the Strategic Economic Development Plan for the City of Springfield. Over the past few weeks, Alejandra has been working on the final draft of the strategic economic development plan. She presented to Springfield's EDA, and gathered further information to include alongside the plan.

Global Talent Workforce – Alejandra, Mercedes

RNDC received a contract through the Drive for Five grant from DEED, awarded to GMG, to design and deliver employer training on hiring international students. Alejandra presented the toolkit and work around the workforce taskforce at the South Central Minnesota Workforce Summit event, which GMG hosted with support from RNDC.

Rural Child Care Innovation Program in Eagle Lake – Alejandra

Alejandra is part of the core team supporting the Rural Child Care Innovation Program in Eagle Lake. She leads efforts within the workforce development goal area to promote paid work-study programs for students interested in working with childcare providers.

Community and Economic Development Committee – Alejandra

Alejandra leads the Community and Economic Development (CED) Committee and is working on organizing June's meeting that will focus on regional trends and priorities. The next CED committee meeting will provide an update on the Annual Performance Progress Report.

Transforming Tomorrow Together Talent Hub – Alejandra

Alejandra serves on the Talent Hub Committee, which is working to develop a regional Talent Hub for Mankato and the surrounding area. The committee brings together local leaders, employers, and educational partners to strengthen workforce development and talent attraction strategies. Alejandra supports the committee's efforts to implement a retention campaign aimed at attracting and retaining young residents and families.

Childcare Steering Committee – Alejandra, Mercedes

The Childcare Steering Committee is focused on creating and developing a childcare association for the Greater Mankato area, which will serve and support childcare providers across the region.

Springfield CARES Childcare Project– Alejandra

Alejandra is working with the City of Springfield CARES Group to conduct stakeholder outreach and engagement with childcare providers and parents in the city. The recently formed non-profit supports childcare providers across the city, and Alejandra will collaborate with the group to assess current services and identify additional support opportunities.

Regional Food System Supply Chains and Transportation Implications – Kristian and Aaron

On June 10th, Kristian and the U of M, Redlands University, Georgetown, and ESRI research team presented the preliminary findings of the agriculture and food industry study to the advisory board of the Transportation Policy and Economic Competitiveness (TPEC) program. RNDC co-directs this work and has provided a cluster study of agriculture and food value creation in the context of transportation needs in the larger Upper Midwest region (MN, Ill., IA, and WI). Kristian and Aaron specifically provided a visualization of interrelated industries for this portion of the study. Senator John Jasinski represents southcentral Minnesota on TPEC's advisory board, along with other state senators, MN House Representatives, representatives from statewide industries, MnDOT, DEED, Met Council, Greater MSP, and elected officials from across the state.

Rural Resilience:

Existing Efforts and Regional Opportunities





Recent Project Updates

EECBG Projects -

- Fairmont Energy and Environment Resilience Plan
- Saint James Energy Audits on Public Buildings
- We have funding to do more!



MPCA Local Action Climate Projects -

- Energy Efficiency Improvements for the Children's Museum of Southern Minnesota
- Energy Efficiency Improvements for disadvantaged low-income census tract in New Ulm, MN to augment efforts of existing NUPU CIP.



LCCMR Proposal -

- Submitted application for a pilot regional toolkit centered around Ground Source Heat Pump (GSHP) feasibility and implementation.



New Projects





Mitigation and Adaptation Project Overview

What's Driving the Project?

Rural communities across Minnesota are vulnerable to extreme weather like flash floods and droughts

What is Return on Environment (ROE)?

ROE is a framework that quantifies the economic value and avoided costs of ecosystem services, helping communities make informed, resilient decisions.

Key ecosystem services include:

-  Water supply replenishment
-  Water quality protection and improvement
-  Flood mitigation
-  Carbon sequestration and storage
-  Regenerative agriculture practices
-  Soil stabilization and erosion control
-  Runoff reduction and infiltration enhancement



R9 Mitigation and Adaptation Scope & Goals

Project Scope:

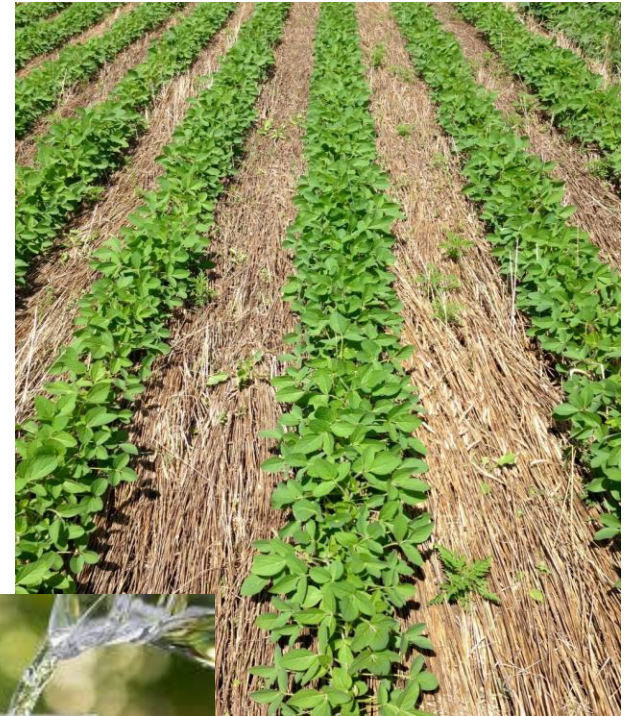
Through engagement with county and community leaders, this project will identify local challenges and opportunities related to:

- Water quality
- Flood mitigation
- Regenerative agriculture
- Carbon sequestration

Project Goal:

To reduce long-term costs and risks for rural communities by delivering a practical, community-informed tool. This tool will:

- Quantify the value of local ecosystem services
- Support implementation of ROE strategies
- Provide funding sources



Q&A



Regional Food Rescue – Tom, Sabri

There have been four more food rescues: 30 cases of spinach from MN-19 Truck Wash, 2 cases of canned chili from LSS – Mankato, a pallet of sweet potatoes from Walmart, and 2 pallets of eggs and mango salsa from ECHO/Walmart. These rescues were able to be given to the following partners: SCMNR, Maverick Campus Pantry, Crossroads Campus Pantry, ECHO, U of M Extension, and the St. Peter Food Shelf. A total of 4,202.5 lbs of food, with an approximate value of \$8,973, was able to be disbursed into the community through area partners.

Tom has been searching for ways to solve the logistical hurdles with regional food rescue. The next steps will be to make agreements with area transportation services or procure funding for a regional solution, such as a refrigerated truck or trailer cooling units. The team will be submitting their transportation funding request for \$5,000 to the Mankato Area Foundation Giving Catalog.

Only a few more food access partners have to be reached out to in the region. Most recently, Tom met with Taylor Piotter of Blue Earth County Waste and Recycling to discuss ways of reducing edible food going to the landfills through networking and education. He has also planned to meet with South Central College regarding their campus pantry and how food rescue could fit into their program.

Food Access Partnership Building - Tom

Tom has been building relationships with area food access partners to help guarantee the strength of their operations in the community. He recently led two successful volunteering shifts at SCMNR. He will also be assisting FOCP in volunteering for the STOMP program over the summer and with the creation of their Community Cupboard. There has also been research done in alternative or ethnically relevant food sources for the Crossroads Campus Cupboard and the Watonwan Co Food Shelf.

Make Hunger History Initiative in St. James – Tom

The MHH plan has identified key opportunities and is currently in the solution development phase. Next, the group will assign specific focus areas to individual members, with implementation planned for later this year.

Local Foods Month – Sabri

Eight farms and twelve restaurants will participate in this summer's event. Sabri has connected all participating farms and restaurants and is now coordinating logistics for photography and marketing materials.

Mankato Permanent Farmer's Market Pavilion – Sabri

This project worked with vendors and customers of the Mankato Farmer's Market to understand if a permanent covered location was of interest and what would make this space exciting and accessible for them. After the first year of data collection, there is resounding support from vendors and customers. The project has now moved into sharing this information with possible partners.

Sabri is wrapping up the final reporting and is engaging institutional partners in their interest in moving this project forward, including but not limited to the City of Mankato, MNSU, and Mankato Area Foundation.

Fairmont Energy and Environmental Resilience Plan – Sabri/Sam/ Lisa

So far, the team has hosted two community meetings and developed a community survey. Key discussion topics have included lake water quality, emergency notifications related to power outages and community risks, and electrical grid load management.

Revolving Loan Fund – Jazmine Flores

The RNDC Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) program continues to build momentum. Currently, two projects have received loan committee approval: a daycare center in Mankato and a new construction laundromat/car wash in St. James. Both projects are moving toward anticipated closings later this summer.

Several additional initiatives are in development, including potential support for a mental health clinic and an indoor playground adjacent to the Pickle Barn in Mankato. RNDC is also continuing its collaborative efforts with the Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation (SMIF).

To enhance outreach, Jazmine is proposing the launch of annual or semi-annual banker breakfasts. These events would aim to inform area bankers about the complementary revolving loan programs offered by both Region Nine and SMIF.

St. James Energy Navigators – Sabri

Energy Navigators have continued conducting energy audits, with the final audits scheduled for completion in May. This summer, the team will shift focus to education and the installation of case study projects. The first community education event is planned for June 30.

Earlier this spring, the project was awarded a \$350,000 EPA grant, which was unfortunately later terminated. Despite this setback, the project will move forward on a more limited scale using the remaining funds.

REGIONAL TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE:

Faribault/Martin County – Economic Adjustment Assistance – Jessica/Kristian

RNDC has been coordinating conversations with the federal EDA regarding economic adjustment assistance opportunities in the counties of Faribault and Martin following requests from local and county representatives. RNDC and the county representatives are exploring opportunities to develop an economic recovery coordinator position or program to serve economically distressed communities in the counties. Ongoing conversations with the federal EDA are underway.

Le Sueur County/Waterville Flood Project Coordination – Jessica/Kristian

Ongoing coordination by RNDC is continuing to support Le Sueur County, Waterville, and potentially neighboring counties/communities impacted by the June 2024 flooding. Jessica and Kristian have been facilitating and supporting efforts to help Le Sueur County potentially apply for EDA funds when available for a regional project through special disaster funds. A meeting was recently held with the federal EDA to prepare for an application.

Economic Impact Analysis for the Children’s Museum of Southern Minnesota – Kristian/Aaron/Nate

Kristian presented the economic impact analysis for the Children’s Museum of Southern Minnesota’s expected expansions to their board of directors on May 21st, with support from Aaron and Nate. RNDC is pursuing a grant from Compeer Financial to support the museum in conducting a feasibility study on future programming.

Housing Study for the City of Springfield – Kristian and Nate

RNDC completed a housing study for Springfield as part of a larger project funded by the Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation (SMIF) and RNDC, which also included the ongoing Strategic Economic Development Plan led by Alejandra, which will conclude in June. Kristian and Nate submitted the housing study to the city in the second week of June.

Eagle Lake Solar on Public Buildings Grant – Sabri

Sabri has continued work with Eagle Lake to apply for the Solar on Public Buildings Grant. Those applications are due May 5th and will seek funding to install solar at their Public Works building and City Hall.

Waseca Co-op Committee – Sabri

Sabri has been attending meetings with a group of community and economic leaders in Waseca County to explore opportunities for a co-op grocery store in the community. The group has visited and interviewed several co-ops across the state to learn about their processes and experiences.

Tri-County Solid Waste Plan – Joel/Mark

No update.

MnDOT Regional Planning Grant – Joel/Mark

Joel and Mark attended the South Central Toward Zero Deaths Workshop in Mankato on May 19. There, they heard from presenters on a range of topics, including the data housed at the Road Safety Information Center, the MnCrash reporting system, the MnDOT Strategic Highway Safety Plan, traffic incident management, mental health, AI, and youth e-bike safety. At the meeting, current MnDOT District 7 TZD coordinator Vanessa Thongvivong announced her departure from that position and her intent to return to the State Patrol. She had been previously met with Region Nine once a month to align and coordinate regional TZD efforts and our future SS4A plans. Joel and Mark attended and presented at the RDO Transportation Planners quarterly meeting on May 19 and 20. Their presentation was on SS4A, Region Nine's experiences with the program thus far during a tumultuous period for federal grants, and advice on grant application content and processes for other RDOs interested in pursuing SS4A planning grants. Joel and Mark also heard from presenters on StreetLight data, bike and pedestrian counting equipment, accessibility in MnDOT and Safe Routes to School infrastructure projects, particularly as it relates to individuals with visual impairments, and TED grants.

Joel presented the MnDOT planning grant work plan for the upcoming fiscal year, previously recommended for adoption by the TAC, along with the biennium contract, to the RNDC board. The board adopted a resolution approving both the contract and the work plan.

Joel and Mark are collaborating with the MnDOT Office of Transit and Active Transportation to potentially host a Walk! Bike! Fun! training in the region. The training would support both in-school educators integrating the curriculum during the school day and out-of-school-time educators applying the skills in extracurricular settings.

Mark submitted a grant application for the Carbon Reduction Program (CRP) to support the MAPO region. The proposal sought funding for a three-year, part-time position at Region Nine focused on encouraging mode shifts to bicycling, transit, and walking. The application was in response to Mark's analysis of Census and StreetLight travel data, which showed a notable decline in active and public transportation trips since 2010. While the application received high marks for cost-effectiveness and co-benefits such as safety, equity, and access, it was not approved by MAPO's Technical Advisory Committee. Region Nine plans to submit a revised proposal in the next CRP funding cycle (FY2028).

In addition, Mark submitted a proposal to the AAA Traffic Safety Foundation titled, "An Examination of the Pre-Crash Circumstances Leading to Pedestrian Fatal and Serious Injury Crashes in Minnesota, for Select Years, 2017–2026." The project would build on preliminary work already underway through Region Nine's FHWA Safe Streets and Roads for All grant.

Age Friendly Mankato/North Mankato – Jessica/Joel

No update.

Empowering Small Minnesota Communities - Joel

The project report on building a more sustainable model for rural EMS in Region Nine was finalized, and distribution to stakeholders began in May. Joel, Commissioner Dave Borchert, and other partners on the project team still hope to present the report's findings and recommendations at a future Region Nine commission meeting.

Minnesota Climate Adaptation Partnership (MCAP) - Jessica/Sam/Lisa

Jessica, Sam, and Lisa have been working with the University of Minnesota's MCAP team to develop a framework for addressing climate resilience and adaptation for rural Minnesota communities. This partnership aims to provide technical assistance and resources to aid communities in their development initiatives through a climate-resilient lens.

New Ulm Anaerobic Digestion Initiative – Sam/Lisa

No Update

MN Forward Pooled Fund

Mark submitted a grant application that would allow Region Nine to provide technical assistance to local governments within our service area to enhance their preparedness for potential data center development. The scope of work would include: reviewing zoning code and developing model ordinances; providing cost-benefit analysis of proposals to host data centers; sharing best practices on public engagement around the question of data centers; and providing direct technical assistance to units of government when requested.

GRANT COORDINATION AND ADMINISTRATION:

Community Readiness and School Outreach – Sam/Lisa

Sam and Lisa continue to reach out and offer support for the disadvantaged communities within Region Nine. They attended various engagements such as the Clean Energy Economy MN (CEEM) Factsheet and Clean Energy Resource Teams (CERTs) annual meeting events to learn more ways to increase clean energy for the Region Nine region. In Mankato, they attended the South Central Service Cooperative Career Expo. Roughly 2,000 10th-grade students attended and participated in the MyStory event. Sam and Lisa had the opportunity to present career paths and what can lead to sustainability endeavors. Together with academic institutions, RNDC is working on a clean energy and sustainability educational video that focuses on green opportunities post-high school. They plan on working with teachers in Region Nine to present it to students.

New Ulm Local Action Climate MPCA Grant – Sam/Lisa

No Update

Children's Museum Southern Minnesota Local Action Climate MPCA Grant – Sam/Lisa

No Update

Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR) - Regional Ground-Source Energy Project Evaluation Toolkit Grant – Sam/Lisa/Jessica

No Update

Mitigation and Adaptation Project – Sam/Lisa

As weather patterns are becoming more frequent, like flash floods and droughts, we are investigating the feasibility of developing a mitigation and adaptation tool. We continue to reach out to county and community leaders to build a needs assessment. We are exploring potential partners interested in being part of this initiative. This project will support rural communities with Return on Environment (ROE) strategies. ROE estimates the value and avoided costs associated with implementing ecosystem services like water quality protection and improvement, flood mitigation, carbon sequestration, and regenerative agriculture practices.

Food Access Grants – Tom

Tom has been supporting area partners with three grant opportunities and a matching program aimed at expanding their capacity to receive food rescues. The first, the EFSP grant, is currently on indefinite hold due to the federal spending freeze. In addition, two community impact grants—one from Open Your Heart and another from POET—are being pursued by several local food shelves. Tom will also be assisting a few food shelves in enrolling in the Open Your Heart Summer Challenge, a fundraising match initiative that runs throughout July.

Local Food Purchase Assistance Grant – Sabri

Work has continued for the Local Food Purchase Assistance Grant, and we are preparing for the growing season. So far this spring, we have purchased excess spinach and eggs from farmers. Preparation has begun to purchase a cow from a local farmer, which will be used by South Central MN Food Recovery.

Grow A Farmer Grant – Sabri

RNDC has distributed all \$50,000 of the Grow-A-Farmer grant to 18 farms and farmer support organizations across the region.

Carbon Reduction Program - Mark

Region Nine submitted a funding application to MnDOT's Carbon Reduction Program for a proposed multi-year initiative focused on promoting and coordinating low-carbon transportation options—biking, transit, and walking—in the Mankato area. The effort aims to reduce vehicle miles traveled while delivering benefits such as improved safety through crash reduction, increased transit ridership, decreased congestion during local events, and enhanced public health through increased physical activity.

COMMUNICATIONS**Bus Tour Planning – Nate/Jessica/Sarah/Tom/Mark/Kristian**

The bus tour committee has lined up three stops for the tour, including the Camp Quarry Adventure Park, Henderson's Main Street, and the Sibley County Mobile Food Pantry in Gaylord. The committee has lined up speakers, and invitations have been sent. Commissioners are reminded to register as soon as possible to ensure they get a seat.

Bravo Zulu House Event – Nate

Nate attended the ribbon cutting for the Bravo Zulu House in Winnebago. The house is America's first all-military sober house to help treat PTSD and addiction.

Minnesota Star Tribune's Minnesota Matters Event - Nate

Nate attended this presentation and networking event that was focused on the flood recovery efforts. The Star Tribune is holding these community conversations in many cities and it provided an opportunity for Nate to meet and talk about the region to Star Tribune reporters and leadership.

Talk of the Town – Nate/Tom

Nate and Tom went on "Talk of the Town" to discuss RNDC's food rescue efforts and the South Central Minnesota Workforce Summit. Tom talked about how the Mankato Area Foundation grant has led to tangible results in Region Nine. Nate promoted the Workforce Summit to encourage employers to attend.

Region Nine Delegation to Aachen Materials – Nate/Sam

Nate and Sam have been producing summaries, biographies, and travel materials for the upcoming delegation to Aachen, Germany. The materials were produced to keep the delegates up to date on logistics and provide the German counterparts with information regarding the attendees.

Food Rescue Resource Page – Nate

Nate created a web page for RNDC's Food Rescue Initiatives. The page currently has the Food Rescue in Southern MN report as well as the partners involved. In the future, additional resources will be added.

Local Foods Month Promotional Materials – Nate

Nate has started creating the social media and flyer templates for the participating restaurants and farmers. The templates will be finalized and provided to the participants when photos and recipes are provided.

In addition to the above projects, Nate has assisted in proofing, designing, and typesetting multiple documents and presentations for various projects.

ADMINISTRATION DEPARTMENT – Jessica/Jazmine/Sarah

In addition to the department's involvement in assisting with components of all the work noted above, Administration and Finance has been involved with the following:

Commission Member Orientation – Jessica/Nate/Sarah**Regional/Community Outreach** – Jessica/Kristian

Jessica and Kristian have participated as presenters for a few different meetings recently including the Blue Earth County Mayors and Clerks, in addition to Kristian presenting at the Gaylord Chamber of Commerce event.

Stakeholder Connection Meetings – Jessica

Jessica has recently coordinated various stakeholder connection meetings to update partners on project progress or explore ways to maintain or further develop relationships. An example includes Jessica coordinating a meeting with her and Kristian to connect with Tim Penny at the Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation ahead of leadership transitions taking place. Similarly, Jessica facilitated a meeting with Mankato Area Foundation contacts, along with Sabri and Tom to provide Regional Food Rescue updates and to keep in communication/coordination with the funding partner.

Budget Preparation – Jessica

Jessica coordinated meetings with all RNDC staff teams in recent weeks to review and discuss preliminary budget information as part of formulating and preparing materials for the FY 25/26 Budget.

Terms & Abbreviations

ACC – American Connection Corp	MAPO – Mankato/North Mankato Area Planning Organization
APPR – Annual Performance Progress Report (CEDs)	MCLA – Minnesota Council on Latino Affairs
ATP – Area Transportation Partnership	MDH – Minnesota Department of Health
AURI – Agricultural Utilization Research Institute	MPCA – Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
BDO – Bioeconomy Development Opportunity	MSA – Metropolitan Statistical Area
CRP – Carbon Reduction Program	MSU-M – Minnesota State University, Mankato
CEDs – Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy	MYLAP – MN Young American Leaders Program
COPAL – Comunidades Organizando el Poder y la Acción Latina (Communities Organizing Latino Power and Action)	NEA – National Endowment for the Arts
CGMC – Coalition of Greater Minnesota Cities	NEH – National Endowment for the Humanities
CPRG – Climate Pollution Reduction Grant	NUBRIC – New Ulm Business Resource Innovation Center
CSET – College of Science, Engineering & Technology	NRCS – Natural Resources Conservation Services
CSM – Climate Smart Municipalities	PI - Prosperity Initiative
CSSJ – Climate Smart St. James	PROTECT – Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient, and Cost-saving Transportation
CTS – Center for Transportation Studies	REDA – Regional Economic Development Alliance
DEED – Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development	REV – Rural Entrepreneurial Venture
DOE – Department of Energy	RLF – Revolving Loan Fund
EDA – Economic Development Administration	RNAI – Region Nine Area Inc.
EDD – Economic Development District	RNDC – Region Nine Development Commission
EECBG - Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant	SACE – Southern Agricultural Center for Excellence
GAC – Gustavus Adolphus College	SAF – Sustainable Aviation Fuel
GIS – Geographic Information Systems	SBDC – Small Business Development Center
GMG – Greater Mankato Growth	SCC – South Central College
GMNP – Greater Minnesota Partnership	SCSC – South Central Service Cooperative
HACER – Hispanic Advocacy and Community Empowerment through Research	SHIP – Statewide Health Improvement Partnership
IF – Initiative Foundation	SMIF – Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation
LGU – Local Government Unit	SRTS – Safe Routes to Schools
LMI – Labor Market Information	SS4A – Safe Streets for All
LMI – Low-to-Moderate Income	STIP – State Transportation Improvement Program
MADO – Minnesota Association of Development Organizations	TAC – Transportation Advisory Committee
MAPCED - Minnesota Association of Professional County Economic Developers	WCI – West-Central Initiative
	TZD – Toward Zero Deaths