



Board of Directors Meeting

Wednesday, August 14, 2024 at 4:30 p.m.



CONSENT AGENDA

	<u>Time</u>	<u>Page</u>	<u>Action</u>
I. Call to Order	4:30		
II. Roll Call – Secretary Branstad			
III. Approval Consent Agenda	4:35	2	Action
A. Approval of May 8, 2024 Minutes		3	
B. Out of State Travel Requests (3)		5	
C. Treasurer’s Report		8	
IV. Chair’s Report – Chair Laven	4:40		
A. Introduce Jazmine Flores, Lending Specialist			
B. Audit Update			
C. HKS Recap – Vice Chair Boettger		11	
V. Executive Director’s Report – Nicole Griensewic	5:00		
A. Staffing Update			Org Chart
B. October Commission Agenda			
C. MADDO All Staff Training			
VI. Other Business	5:20		
A. Commissioner Updates			
B. Meeting Evaluation			
VII. Julie Fleming – Closed Session	5:30		Action
VIII. Adjournment	6:00		Action

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Laven called the meeting to order at 4:34 p.m. at RNDC.

II. ROLL CALL

MEMBERS PRESENT: Andrea Boettger, Jim Branstad, Marie Dranttel, Lyle Femrite, Mike Laven, Christian Lilienthal, Tom Loveall, Steve Rohlfinding, Phil Schafer, Rob Wilkening

OTHERS PRESENT: Nicole Griensewic, Ky Battern, Sarah Janovsky

There was a quorum.

III. APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

Femrite moved to approve the consent agenda. Lilienthal seconded. Motion carried.

IV. FINANCE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Ky Battern spoke about the recently vacated Loan Specialist Position.

V. OUT-OF-STATE TRAVEL REQUESTS

Rohlfinding noted that the mileage rate on the travel requests was incorrect. This will be updated.

Rohlfinding moved to approve the out-of-state travel requests with mileage revision. Drantell seconded. Motion carried.

VI. SALARY SCHEDULE COST OF LIVING ADJUSTMENT RECOMMENDATION

Femrite moved to approve the cost of living adjustment recommendation onto the full commission. Wilkening seconded. Motion carried.

VII. FY24 REVISED BUDGET

Loveall moved to approve the FY24 Revised Budget. Branstad seconded. Motion carried.

VIII. FY25 PRELIMINARY BUDGET RECOMMENATION

Wilkening moved to approve the Preliminary FY25 Budget recommendation onto the full commission. Femrite seconded. Motion carried.

IX. PRELIMINARY LEVY RECOMMENDATION

Boettger moved to approve the Preliminary Levy recommendation onto the full commission. Drantell seconded. Loveall and Schafer opposed. Motion carried.

X. CHAIR'S REPORT

A. Resolution 2024 – 02 - Proposed FY25 Meeting Dates

Wilkening moved to approve the Proposed FY25 Meeting Dates onto the full commission. Schafer seconded. Motion carried.

B. Nominating Committee Recommendation on Slate of Officers:

- i. Chair - Mike Laven, Lisa Norton
- ii. Vice Chair - Andrea Boettger
- iii. Treasurer - Marie Drantell
- iv. Secretary - Jim Branstad

Slate of Officers will be:

- i. Chair - Mike Laven
- ii. Vice Chair - Andrea Boettger
- iii. Treasurer - Marie Drantell
- iv. Secretary - Jim Branstad

XI. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Griensewic asked for a motion to close the meeting per state statute 13D.05, to discuss a legal matter.

Schafer moved to close the meeting at 5:28 p.m. Rohlfing seconded. Motion carried.

Rohlfing moved to open the meeting at 5:44 p.m. Wilkening seconded. Motion carried.

XII. OTHER BUSINESS

XIII. ADJOURNMENT

Loveall moved to adjourn. Wilkening seconded. Motion carried.

The meeting adjourned 6:02 p.m.

Basic Information:

Anticipated Costs:

Board Chair Signature: _____ Date: _____

Out-of-State Travel Request Form

Basic Information:

Name: Nicole Griensewic

Travel Reason/Event: 2024 NADO Annual Training Conference

Travel Destination: New Orleans, LA

Date of Departure: 10.20.2024

Date of Return: 10.24.2024

Funding Source: General Fund

Anticipated Costs:

	Departure Airport		Arrival Airport		Cost
Airfare (Roundtrip)	MSP	to	MSY		\$ 737.20
	Description				Cost
Registration	2024 NADO Annual Training Conference				\$ 700.00
	Total Nights		\$ Per Night		Cost
Lodging	5	x	\$ 259.00	=	\$ 1,295.00
	Total Days		\$ Per Diem		Cost
Meals/PerDiem	5.00	x	\$ 75	=	\$ 375.00
	Total Miles		\$ Per Mile		Cost
Mileage	156.00	x	\$ 0.670	=	\$ 104.52
	Description				Cost
Other					
	Description				Cost
Other					
Total Anticipated Cost of Out-of-State Travel Request					\$ 1,916.72

Employee Signature: _____ Date

Executive Director Signature: _____ Date

Out-of-State Travel Request Form

Basic Information:

Name:	Mike Laven
Travel Reason/Event:	2024 NADO Annual Training Conference
Travel Destination:	New Orleans, LA
Date of Departure:	10.20.2024
Date of Return:	10.24.2024
Funding Source:	General Fund: Commission

Anticipated Costs:

	Departure Airport		Arrival Airport		Cost
Airfare (Roundtrip)	MSP	to	MSY		\$ 386.95
	Description				Cost
Registration	2024 NADO Annual Training Conference				\$ 825.00
	Total Nights		\$ Per Night		Cost
Lodging	4	x	\$ 259.00	=	\$ 1,036.00
	Total Days		\$ Per Diem		Cost
Meals/PerDiem	4.00	x	\$ 50	=	\$ 200.00
	Total Miles		\$ Per Mile		Cost
Mileage	156.00	x	\$ 0.670	=	\$ 104.52
	Description				Cost
Other					
	Description				Cost
Other					
Total Anticipated Cost of Out-of-State Travel Request					\$ 2,552.47

Employee Signature: _____ Date

Executive Director Signature: _____ Date

Region Nine Development Commission
Board Payment Listing - May and June of 2024

Check#	Check Date	Vendor Name	Check Amount	Description
117050	05/30/2024	Colin Scharf	(440.00)	VOID - Positive Pay Return Issue
117053	05/30/2024	MAPCED	(600.00)	VOID - Positive Pay Return Issue
117059	05/30/2024	Blethen Berens	(453.00)	VOID - Positive Pay Return Issue
117060	05/30/2024	Blethen Berens	(800.00)	VOID - Positive Pay Return Issue
117061	05/30/2024	Blethen Berens	(551.00)	VOID - Positive Pay Return Issue
117063	05/02/2024	NGSW Properties LLC	50,000.00	NGSW Properties Loan Distribution - Approved on 4/12/24
117064	05/08/2024	Vanderberg Cleaning Services LLC	360.00	May Janitorial Services - INV 17568
117065	05/08/2024	Living Earth Center	2,724.06	USDA NRCS Grant Costs - April 2024 - INV 1032
117066	05/08/2024	Friesen's LLC dba Wooden Spoon	759.00	LFPA Grant - Monthly Grant Costs for April - INV 4233
117067	05/08/2024	GHG Corporation	75.00	TeemKeeper Clock Software for March - INV 98510
117068	05/08/2024	Security Storage Systems	210.00	Offsite Storage - April & May - INV 26145 & 26146
117069	05/08/2024	American Solutions for Business	68.96	Business Cards for Nicole & Andrea - INV 07374150
117070	05/08/2024	Blethen Berens	940.51	Legal services for delinquent RLF - Acct 12541.009 No 8
117071	05/08/2024	GHG Corporation	80.00	Teemkeeper clock system for May - INV 99173
117072	05/08/2024	GMS	80.00	Monthly License & Maintenance for March & April - INV 300712 & 301641
117073	05/08/2024	GMS	280.00	Monthly License & Warranty for GMS Software - INV 300073,300074,301039,301040
117074	05/08/2024	Thriveon Inc	3,447.95	Monthly IT & Microsoft Billing - INV 188064
117075	05/08/2024	Spectrum	133.93	Internet Charges for April/May - INV 0820665042324
117076	05/08/2024	River Bend Business Products	103.00	Brochures for RLF - INV 406472-00
117077	05/08/2024	SFM	1,432.00	Additional Work Comp Owed after Audit - INV 3290113
117078	05/08/2024	Johnson, Corree	5,850.00	Misc Contract Work for April - INV 000005
117079	05/08/2024	Principal Life Insurance Company	283.58	Life Insurance Premiums - May - Acct 1125885-10001
117080	05/08/2024	Xcel Energy	80.77	Electric Service - INV 874033733
117081	05/08/2024	SFM	440.00	Quarterly Work Comp Installment - INV 3283340
117082	05/08/2024	Blethen Berens	551.00	Loan Template Creation Services - Acct 12541.010 st 7
117083	05/08/2024	Neubau Holdings LLC	3,208.00	May Rent
117084	05/08/2024	Blethen Berens	580.00	RLF Closing Document Review - Acct 12541.012 St 1
117085	05/08/2024	Shred-It, C/O Stericycle Inc	144.52	Shredding Services for April - INV 8006820608
117086	05/08/2024	Metro Sales Inc	377.25	Copier Lease Payment for May - INV 2513914
117087	05/08/2024	Metro Sales Inc	519.17	Copier Usage Charges - INV 2513491
117088	05/08/2024	Battern, Ky	30.45	Postage for Mailing Reimbursement - 4/18
117089	05/08/2024	South Central Service Coop	146.00	Beverages for Conference Rental - INV 22658, 22657, 22656
117090	05/08/2024	Richter, Gary	111.02	Per Diem & Mileage - 4/30
117091	05/08/2024	Harris, Paul	92.26	Per Diem & Mileage - 4/30
117092	05/08/2024	Femrite, Lyle	50.72	Per Diem & Mileage - 4/30
117093	05/08/2024	Hilpipre, Stephanie	122.88	Mileage & Per Diem - 4/16, 4/30
117094	05/08/2024	Lilienthal, Christian	92.26	Per Diem & Mileage - 4/30
117095	05/08/2024	Lilienthal, Christian	89.58	Per Diem & Mileage - 5/7
117096	05/08/2024	Belgard, Elliot R	133.60	Per Diems & Mileage - 4/30, 5/7
117097	05/08/2024	Hilpipre, Stephanie	61.44	Per Diem & Mileage - 5/7
117098	05/08/2024	Femrite, Lyle	50.72	Per Diem & Mileage - 5/7
117099	05/08/2024	Berry, Sarah	64.12	Per Diem & Mileage - 5/7
117100	05/08/2024	Richter, Gary	111.02	Per Diem & Mileage - 4/16
117101	05/23/2024	Ryno Repair LLC	150,000.00	Loan Distribution - April 12, 2024 Approval
117102	06/04/2024	Friesen's LLC dba Wooden Spoon	759.00	LFPA Grant - Monthly Reimbursment Fees for Storage & Admin
117103	06/04/2024	Vanderberg Cleaning Services LLC	360.00	Janitorial Services for June
117104	06/04/2024	Janovsky, Sarah	45.88	Reimbursement for Meeting Snacks
117105	06/04/2024	Spectrum	124.98	Internet Service - 5/23 to 6/22 - INV 0820665052324
117106	06/04/2024	Thriveon Inc	3,447.95	IT June Tech & Microsoft Services - INV 188607
117107	06/04/2024	Lime Valley Advertising Inc	26.00	Plugin - Layerslider annual renewal - INV 24120.03
117108	06/04/2024	Neubau Holdings LLC	3,208.00	Office Rent for June
117109	06/04/2024	Xcel Energy	74.01	Electric Utility for May - Act# 51-0012085064-9
117110	06/04/2024	East Central Regional Dev Commission	57.09	MADO Meeting Cost Share - INV 052124
117111	06/04/2024	My MN Farmer	723.00	LFPA Grant Local Foods Reimbursement - Bulk Eggs - INV 000045
117112	06/04/2024	NADO	350.00	2024 Summer Board Meeting Registration - INV 23981-D728Z3
117113	06/04/2024	Verizon Wireless	143.20	Cell Service for ED & iPad for April 9 to May 8 - INV 9963622525
117114	06/04/2024	Dalton, Chris	38.05	5/14 - Mileage for CEDS Meeting
117115	06/04/2024	Creative Ad Solutions Inc	56.04	Name Plates for Commission
117116	06/04/2024	Living Earth Center	100.00	Wellness Activity - Herb Planting - INV 1033
117117	06/04/2024	Branstad, Jim	92.00	5/8 - Mileage & Per Diem
117118	06/04/2024	Loveall, Tom H	86.90	5/8 - Per Diem & Mileage
117119	06/04/2024	Boettger, Andrea S	109.68	5/8 - Per Diem & Mileage
117120	06/04/2024	Femrite, Lyle	50.72	5/8 - Per Diem & Mileage
117121	06/04/2024	Lilienthal, Christian	92.26	5/8 - Per Diem & Mileage
117122	06/04/2024	Laven, Mike	40.00	5/8 - Per Diem
117123	06/04/2024	Wilkening, Rob	72.16	5/8 - Per Diem & Mileage
117124	06/04/2024	Schafer, Philip H	128.00	5/8 - Per Diem & Mileage
117125	06/04/2024	Rohlfing, Steve J	68.14	5/8 - Per Diem & Mileage
117126	06/04/2024	Blethen Berens	800.00	Client Handbook Review - Acct 12541.003 St 80
117127	06/04/2024	Spirited Journeys LLC	1,169.08	USDA NRCS Grant - Consulting for March
117128	06/04/2024	Ahern & Frutiman LLC	570.00	January - March Maggie Ahern Services
117129	06/04/2024	Trapero, Luisa	3,125.00	Community Energy Innovation Prize - 1st Half Program Director Work
117130	06/04/2024	Julieta Ochoa Orozco	3,125.00	Community Energy Innovation Prize - 1st Half Program Director Work
117131	06/04/2024	Benjamin Eliseo Ayala Aguilar	1,875.00	Community Energy Innovation Prize - 1st Half Navigator
117132	06/04/2024	Everado Vargas	1,875.00	Community Energy Innovation Prize - 1st Half Navigator
117133	06/04/2024	Nidia Zelaya Henriquez	1,875.00	Community Energy Innovation Prize - 1st Half Navigator
117134	06/04/2024	Maria Yasmin Zamarripa	1,875.00	Community Energy Innovation Prize - 1st Half Navigator

Check#	Check Date	Vendor Name	Check Amount	Description
117135	06/04/2024	Cristi Liliana Aguilar Aguilar	1,875.00	Community Energy Innovation Prize - 1st Half Navigator
117136	06/04/2024	Maria C Carreon	1,875.00	Community Energy Innovation Prize - 1st Half Navigator
117137	06/04/2024	Tesch, Julie	69.48	5/13 - Commissioner Orientation - Per Diem & Mileage
117138	06/04/2024	OMG - Otto Media Group	375.00	Photography Services - INV 1281
117139	06/04/2024	MAPCED	600.00	Dues (Check Reissue) - INV 14262-24
117140	06/04/2024	South Central Service Coop	19.00	Beverages for Conference Rental - INV 22735
117141	06/04/2024	Johnson, Corree	4,860.00	General Consultant Services for May 2024
117142	06/04/2024	Colin Scharf	540.00	Grant Writing Services - INV 240513
117143	06/04/2024	Cyphers, Ruth	75.05	5/14 - Mileage for CEDS
117144	06/04/2024	Metro Sales Inc	377.25	Contract Base Lease for Copier - June - INV 2532328
117145	06/04/2024	Living Earth Center	2,639.32	USDA NRCS - Grant/Farm Manager Expenses for May - INV 1034
117146	06/07/2024	Madelia Optometric Inc	50,000.00	Loan Disbursement - 4.23.24 Commitment
117147	06/26/2024	Ahern & Frutiman LLC	1,280.00	Transportation Study - Maggie Consulting
117148	06/26/2024	Creative Ad Solutions Inc	579.38	Bottles & Promotional Items - INV 27145
117149	06/26/2024	Blethen Berens	467.00	RLF Legal Services - Acct 12541.009 St No 9
117150	06/26/2024	Blethen Berens	2,258.25	RLF Legal Services - Acct No 12541.013 St No 1
117151	06/26/2024	Lake Crystal Coaches	300.00	Final Billing for Bus Tour Coach Bus - Inv 13212
117152	06/26/2024	Creative Ad Solutions Inc	22.50	Mug for New R9 Staff Member - INV 26450
117153	06/26/2024	Friesen's LLC dba Wooden Spoon	759.00	LFPA Grant - June Monthly Services Agreement - INV 4248
117154	06/26/2024	Boettger, Andrea S	70.82	6/12 - Per Diem & Mileage
117155	06/26/2024	Branstad, Jim	95.00	6/12 - Per Diem & Mileage
117156	06/26/2024	Laven, Mike	40.00	6/12 - Per Diem
117157	06/26/2024	Nowell, Shanon	60.10	6/12 - Per Diem & Mileage
117158	06/26/2024	My MN Farmer	528.00	LFPA Grant Reimbursement - Bulk Eggs
117159	06/26/2024	Norton, Lisa	54.74	6/12 - Per Diem & Mileage
117160	06/26/2024	Harris, Paul	92.26	6/12 - Per Diem & Mileage
117161	06/26/2024	Pfeil, Mike	88.24	6/12 - Per Diem & Mileage
117162	06/26/2024	Schlueter, Scott A	72.16	6/12 - Per Diem & Mileage
117163	06/26/2024	Schafer, Philip H	123.75	6/12 - Per Diem & Mileage
117164	06/26/2024	Wilkening, Rob	82.88	6/12 - Per Diem & Mileage
117165	06/26/2024	Kratz, Katelynne	54.74	6/12 - Per Diem & Mileage
117166	06/26/2024	Femrite, Lyle	60.10	6/12 - Per Diem & Mileage
117167	06/26/2024	Lilienthal, Christian	86.90	6/12 - Per Diem & Mileage
117168	06/26/2024	Borchert, Dave	74.84	6/12 - Per Diem & Mileage
117169	06/26/2024	Kratzke, Dawn	80.20	6/12 - Per Diem & Mileage
117170	06/26/2024	Richter, Gary	111.02	6/12 - Per Diem & Mileage
117171	06/26/2024	Dalton, Chris	73.50	6/12 - Per Diem & Mileage
117172	06/26/2024	Nielsen, Robert	118.39	6/12 - Per Diem & Mileage
117173	06/26/2024	Milbrath, Mary	44.02	6/12 - Per Diem & Mileage
117174	06/26/2024	Goblirsch, Robert	187.20	6/3, 6/12 - Per Diems & Mileage
117175	06/26/2024	Cooling, Steven	76.18	6/12 - Per Diem & Mileage
117176	06/26/2024	Glidden, Elroy	127.00	6/12 - Per Diem & Mileage
117177	06/26/2024	Tesch, Julie	72.16	6/12 - Per Diem & Mileage
117178	06/26/2024	O'Connor, Patty	40.00	6/12 - Per Diem
117179	06/26/2024	Omar, Ayan	60.10	6/12 - Per Diem & Mileage
117180	06/26/2024	United Team Elite	452.00	Sweatshirts for Commissioners - Order No 1091198
117181	06/26/2024	Upbeet Acres	56.00	LFPA Grant Reimbursement - Lettuce
117182	06/26/2024	Peterson, Matt	40.00	6/12 - Per Diem
117183	06/26/2024	Rassbach, Rita	104.79	5/23, 6/12 - Per Diems & Mileage
117184	06/26/2024	Thriveon Inc	3,281.57	IT & Microsoft Monthly Services - INV 189444
117185	06/26/2024	Principal Life Insurance Company	283.58	June Life Insurance Premium - Acct 1125885-10001
117186	06/26/2024	Internet Connections Inc	300.00	Annual Website Hosting Fee - 7/1/24 to 6/30/25 - INV 179684
117187	06/26/2024	City of Mankato	258.90	Ramp Parking - Quaterly Payment - INV 22470
117188	06/26/2024	The Free Press	13.16	Public Notice for FY25 Budget on 6/12 - Acct 112310
117189	06/26/2024	Truman Tribune	24.00	6/12 Public Notice
117190	06/26/2024	Faribault County Register	12.75	6/12 Public Notice
117191	06/26/2024	Baarts, Lee	81.07	6/12 - Mileage
117192	06/26/2024	Spirited Journeys LLC	90.00	USDA NRCS Grant Work - May Hours
117193	06/26/2024	Creative Ad Solutions Inc	472.49	Promotional Pens - INV 27094
Check Total	324,598.75			
Report Total:	324,598.75			

Finance

- The organization's fiscal year end occurred on June 30, 2024 and work has been focused on the financial close of the year. Auditors from Abdo will be on site July 31st through August 2nd to complete their field work. The goal is to have everything completed and financials presented come our full commission meeting in October.
- Interviews for the Lending Specialist position took place in June. Three finalists were brought in for second interviews and an offer was extended to Jazmine Flores who started with us on July 8th. Jazmine previously worked at Pioneer Bank for 5 years within their consumer lending and was most recently working as the payroll specialist for Mayo Health in Mankato. Jazmine and I have been working closely together as she gets trained in and up to speed with the program.
- We've been in communication with Eric Weller from Blue Earth County regarding R9 administering potential work under the 'Digital Geographic Information System Mapping for School Facilities' from the legislative initiative HF5216. This funding is to provide first responders with up to date, mapped locations of facilities in the event of emergency. Only \$7M was appropriated for this and information is limited as of this time.
- A meeting with Darrin Fleener of the Federal EDA was held to discuss the potential for any disaster related revolving loan funding in response to the area's flooding. Any funding would need to be first approved by congress and then appropriated to the EDA for application and dispersal.

Revolving Loan Fund

- Since May of this year, 5 loans have been approved and closed. R9 partnered with various organizations on the following:
 - United Team Elite, Mankato – Expansion of their production and storage areas.
 - Lykke Books, New Ulm – Renovation and opening of a new location downtown.
 - Ryno Repair, Blue Earth – Purchase of a large automotive service and repair facility.
 - Madelia Optometric #1, Madelia – Renovation of their new leased business space.
 - Madelia Optometric #2, Madelia – Purchase of the building in which they operate.
- All closing documents were created internally using templates as created by Blethen Berens.
- As mentioned above, Jazmine Flores joined R9 on July 8th as our new Lending Specialist.

Region Nine Area, Inc.

- No new activity to report.



HARVARD Kennedy School

Vice Chair Andrea Boettger recently participated in a three-week program at the Harvard Kennedy School in Cambridge, Massachusetts for Senior Executives in State & Local Government. This intense course is reserved specifically for those elected to or appointed in government, leaders in public safety, public health, parks & recreation, and forestry. Content for this course centered on crisis management, negotiations, economic development, rural democracy, American history, and leadership development.

In her cohort of 81 from around the United States, Australia, Ireland, and Brazil, Andrea engaged in deep conversations with her classmates where she shared and discussed our local challenges, and learned from her colleagues who are experiencing similar challenges within their communities.

Housing, childcare, water infrastructure, and clean energy continue to be top-of-mind issues not just in Minnesota, but across the country. Andrea looks forward to sharing about the creative ways other communities and regions are addressing these issues locally and any success stories that could provide a helpful framework to tackle these issues within our own region.





STAFF UPDATES | August 2024

Nicole Griensewic

The summer has not slowed down for the Region Nine team since the June annual meeting. I am super proud of the impactful work that the team has been producing.

Since returning from the Kennedy School in June, the team has done more professional development activities together. Kristian and I led the team on a Decision Science group exercise from my Harvard course. Nate also led the team on a group exercise on communication differences and how to work well together at the last staff meeting. I have been in communication with one of my professors Todd Rogers to have him lead the team on a session for: "Writing for Busy Readers". He authored a book by the same name and was also a guest lecturer for Vice Chair Boettger's Kennedy School course in July. I have asked Boettger to share some of her learnings with the Board at the August meeting.

Our application for the Climate Pollution Reduction Grants (CPRG) Program: Implementation Grants General Competition was reviewed but unfortunately was not selected for an award. The competition was intense, with many high-quality applications vying for the \$4.3 billion available, while nearly \$33 billion was requested. I am super proud of Sabri and Sam for taking the lead on the federal application for four other RDOs in MN. While the grant was not funded, we as a team learned a lot and created a partnership with the other regions and their staff. This was the grant that would have put solar on publicly owned buildings and land.

We were not awarded funds for the equitable residential decarbonization CPRG proposal due to high competition. A debrief with the EPA is planned to review the proposal's strengths and weaknesses. This was the grant that MPCA wrote us in for and took the lead on. It was a huge compliment for our team and work to have been specifically written in. Because we were not awarded, we will not need to bring on two additional team members to complete this work.

On a positive note, Minnesota received approximately \$200 million for the Climate-Smart Food Systems proposal, which focuses on decarbonizing the food system, managing food waste, and supporting peatland restoration. MPCA leadership stated that there could be opportunities to pursue more anaerobic digesters through this grant.

Kristian and I interviewed three individuals for the Deputy Director position. The plan is to have the position filled in September. We will also need to post a Transportation Planner position for the new grant, *Safe Roads and Streets for All* from the federal DOT.

Alejandra Bejarano

The City of Eagle Lake was selected to participate in the Minnesota Rural Child Care Innovative Program through First Children's Finance. As part of this work, a core team was developed to participate in the program that Alejandra will be part of. The team will meet over two years to help the city design a plan that identifies and evaluates childcare solutions tailored to the community. The core team had a day long kick-off meeting in June with First Children's Finance to discuss goals, expectations, and the timeline of the two-year planning process. The core team, which includes stakeholders from the city and other regional members, had its first planning meeting in July, where members joined three different committees with specific tasks, which included reviewing surveys that will be distributed to local employers, childcare providers, and residents.

In the most recent EDD quarterly meeting, EDA released the new reporting criteria for the planning grant. EDA will no longer require an Annual Performance Report (APR) and semiannual reports; instead, all reporting will take place through an Annual Performance Progress Report (APPR) with new guidelines, which will be due on October 31st. Alejandra has started working on the APPR and is using the EDA guidelines to report on achievements and outcomes completed this calendar year as part of the planning grant.

Alejandra is leading the CED committee, which in August convened to hear from Jazmine Flores, RNDC's new Lending Specialist, on the RLF program, and the Children's Museum Expansion's CEO, Louise Dickmeyer, who shared about the museum's expansion plan. The committee will also discuss the Annual Performance Progress Report (APPR) and outreach ideas as local communities still deal with the flooding's aftermath.

Alejandra and Mercedes are currently drafting a regional report that will detail the results of the employer and student surveys deployed earlier in the year that will be shared with regional stakeholders. Mercedes, Kristian, and Alejandra also submitted a funding request to the Minnesota Department of Human Services to offer technical assistance and career services support to New Americans in the region.

Alejandra was also part of the hiring interviews for the lending specialist role.

On June 14th, RNDC, in partnership with Greater Mankato Growth (GMG) Mankato, hosted the Minnesota Association of Professional County Economic Developers (MAPCED) in the region. MAPCED members convened in Mankato, where they toured Lakotah Made. The visit also included presentations and discussions from local and state representatives around childcare, tourism, resident attraction and retention, and city development.

Kristian Braekkan

Kristian is continuing to work with Tim Penny and Pam Bishop on an economic prosperity assessment for the counties in southern Minnesota. This phase of the contractual work will conclude by September 30, but will continue as a qualitative assessment through June

2025. He is also supporting cluster studies of agricultural production in partnership with the University of Minnesota, Redlands University, and scholars from ESRI and Georgetown University. Kristian and Jazmine also presented to the Brown County Board of Commissioners on August 6th as part of the annual presentations to county board members. He also facilitated conversations between the city of New Ulm and Minnesota State University to engage faculty and students in a feasibility study regarding the city's district heating.

Sabri Fair

A grant that Sabri wrote for the City of Comfrey resulted in an award of ~ \$35,000. The funds which came from the MPCA's Local Climate Action Grants will be used to install an Air Source Heat Pump in their Firehall and to upgrade the Clerk's Office with an Air Source Heat Pump and 98% efficient furnace. These upgrades will reduce Comfrey's energy use and related greenhouse gas emissions.

The 3rd annual Local Foods Week occurred from July 22nd – 28th. This year's event connected 11 local farmers with 11 local restaurants across the region. Sabri and Nate worked diligently on the promotion of the event and saw strong interest expressed on Facebook. Nate was also able to help Sabri get a segment on Kato Living with a participating farmer from Madelia and a restaurant from Waseca.

The Butterfield Hardware and Grocery Store also received a grant that Sabri wrote for them for \$35,000. The funds will be used to create a new commercial kitchen space that will allow them to process and store more fresh local food for in their grocery store, at their restaurant, and for the Butterfield school. The school will use the space for the home economics class which does not currently have a cooking space in their building. This will allow the students to learn about cooking and local agriculture.

Sabri has continued work on the Regional Food Recovery Plan and has interviewed 20 food access partners across the region. So far, the main themes he has heard are that there is an increase in the number of clients with some food shelves seeing 30 – 40% increases and an increase in the cost of food of about 10 –20%. The vast majority of them have expressed a strong interest in being connected to additional sources of food. The next phase of the project involves talking to organizations that have excess food such as food distributors, truckers, manufacturers, retailers, and processors. Recently Sabri visited the Four Seasons Truck Wash in North Mankato because a trucker left 3 pallets of spaghetti squash there. They said they have been getting that amount of food for the last few weeks. While there Sabri also spoke with a trucker who when asked if he had extra food often replied "you must not know anything about trucking, last week I had to throw a pallet of ground beef in a dumpster cause one of the boxes was torn" It is extra food like this that Sabri hopes to connect our communities with so it doesn't end up in the landfill.

Sabri has also continued work with the Mankato Farmer's Market Pavilion Committee. They have a final draft of the vendor survey ready to be deployed and are beginning to develop a customer survey. The planning process is just beginning and will continue community engagement to identify what amenities would make the farmers market more profitable for vendors and more accessible to the community.

Jazmine Flores

Two Loans completed for Madelia Optometric. The first loan was in the amount of \$50,000.00 for the purpose of renovating the building located at 18 Benzel Ave NW. The second loan was for Bryngelsson Holdings LLC in the amount of \$80,000.00 to purchase the building located at 18 Benzel Ave. Also completed RLSS payment processing training alongside Ky.

Nathan George

Nathan has been working on the Annual Performance Report. This report is created yearly and highlights projects that RNDC has completed and includes the financial audit. He has been writing summaries of various projects, designing the cover, and laying out each page which will be submitted to the state.

Nathan created and implemented the marketing campaign for Local Foods Week which took place July 22-28. He designed all material, created and administered the Facebook event page, responded to questions, and organized media placements to draw attention to the event. He set up an appearance on KEYC's Kato Living program and his press release was picked up by multiple media outlets.

Nathan has been administering and promoting the open Deputy Director position. He has collected and organized the entries, contacted the applicants, and prepared the documents for review by the Executive Director. Once an applicant is hired, he will train Sarah on performing background checks.

Nathan has been working with RNDC Consultant Jessica Beyer to collect information and prepare for RNDC's role in recovery from the July flooding. He attended a meeting hosted by GMG that provided affected businesses to discuss their concerns. He communicated the information to the staff.

Nathan recorded a voiceover for the ERC Phase 2 Grant Application video created by Sam and Mireille. He also created Closed Captions for the video which was uploaded and submitted for approval.

Nathan has been working to develop open lines of communication with metro media to expand the exposure of RNDC. The goal of this is to promote the region and potentially connect with new partners from the metro. He has set up a meeting with the Star Tribune's

new Greater Minnesota reporter Karen Tolkkenien to discuss the region and organize a tour later this year.

Joel Hanif

Joel's work on the Waterville-Elysian-Morristown Safe Routes to School plan continues as he works on the draft plan. With flood recovery in Waterville ongoing, some of the final plan steps may occur later than originally anticipated.

Joel has met a multiple times with UofM Extension and Dave Borchert to plan a scope of work for Brown County/Region NIne's recently funded Empowering Small Minnesota Communities project. This research project will include an environmental scan identifying existing challenges and successful strategies related to EMS staffing in rural areas. It will also create a list of actions and strategies to support the recruitment, retention, and training of EMS staff in rural areas. Finally, the project deliverables include the development of grant-based templates to assist regional EMS leaders in applying for funding and streamline application processes.

Joel hosted and facilitated a TAC meeting on June 25 where Robert Clarksen from MnDOT presented on the state rail planning process.

Joel has been researching programs to assist in flood recovery in Waterville. This has included conversations with USDA-RD on possible funding streams. Waterville may be reimbursed for water main repairs made after the flood via the Emergency Community Water Assistance Grants (ECWAG) program.

Joel has been in communication with Al Christensen of Tri-County Solid Waste regarding them contracting with Region Nine to update their solid waste management plan. He met with Al to go over a draft contract on July 26 and expects the contracts to be signed and work to begin in August.

Joel (along with co-chair Mallory Jarvi of West Central Initiative) facilitated a Regional Development Organization Transportation Planners meeting in Brainerd on August 7 and 8. This included presentations and tours from the local airport authority, presentations on scenic byways, and a peer exchange.

Sarah Janovsky

Sarah wrapped up the annual bus tour – thank you all for making it a fantastic first experience! She's also been busy scheduling interviews for the Lending Specialist and Deputy Director positions, planning a team wellness activity at Kato Escape Room, and working on various meetings and projects for RNDC.

Aaron Pacheco

Working with GIS software, Aaron has created a business database on all manufacturing firms in Region Nine and the surrounding counties, pinpointing firm locations within census tracts. Starting off by compiling business data into spreadsheets, he then processed these into a single georeferenced dataset to be uploaded into GIS. From this point, he has begun generating maps and performing analyses examining how manufacturing firms and their individual employment statistics shape the region. One goal has been to address issues related to low industry diversity in rural communities. Even where firm count may be high, his spatial analyses can measure employee size by firm to visualize how most residents are employed in Region Nine and what percentage rely on just a few anchor employees within their community. Working with Kristian Braekkan, they are expanding the analyses of this dataset to answer more questions including better understanding the best ways to invest in manufacturing and related activities to best benefit community development and resilience.

Sam Sharp

Samuel and Mireille successfully applied to the DOE's Energizing Rural Communities Prize Phase II to perform outreach and education with agricultural communities across the region. These efforts would serve to prepare farmers for future investments in the bioeconomy, connecting them to resources and financial incentives to support bio-based investments. Awards are expected to be announced in August 2024.

Samuel has been working with Nicole and Jessica to coordinate an upcoming delegation visit to Mankato from colleagues in the Aachen Region of North-Rhine Westphalia, Germany. These delegates will have the opportunity to learn more about initiatives taking place in Region Nine, as well as connect with industry leaders, local governments, and higher education representatives to potentially identify areas of alignment for future collaboration.

Through the recently awarded Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG), Samuel and Sabri will do eight climate resilience plans over approximately four years, each plan totaling \$10,000 with an additional \$2,000/plan to fund energy audits in each community. Environmental Justice (EJ) and disadvantaged communities will take priority during the outreach stage and, in the event there is not enough interest among EJ and disadvantaged communities, a formal RFP will be developed and made available for the remainder of communities in Region Nine to apply for.

Samuel will be visiting the Children's Museum of South Mankato to lend support and offer insight on the building's redevelopment and expansion plans as it relates to renewable energy and energy efficiency. The CMSM will use donations to achieve this work and has expressed interest in clean energy initiatives.

Terms & Abbreviations

ACC – American Connection Corp	MAPO – Mankato/North Mankato Area Planning Organization
APR – Annual Performance Reports (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
	WCI – West-Central Initiative
	TZD – Toward Zero Deaths