



**REGION NINE**



**DEVELOPMENT  
COMMISSION**

# Commission Meeting

Wednesday, April 8, 2026 6:00 p.m.





## COMMISSION MEETING

April 8, 2026 | South Central Service Cooperative  
Networking at 5:30 p.m. | Meeting at 6:00 p.m.

### AGENDA

		<u>Time</u>	<u>Page</u>	<u>Action</u>
1.	<b>Call to Order</b> - Chair Laven	6:00		
2.	<b>Approval of Agenda</b>		2	<a href="#">Action</a>
3.	<b>Pledge of Allegiance</b>			
4.	<b>Roll Call</b> - <i>Secretary Branstad</i>			
5.	<b>Approval of College-age Commissioner and Introduction</b> - <i>Andrew Haefner</i>	6:05	3	<a href="#">Action</a>
6.	<b>Approval of January 14, 2026, Meeting Minutes</b>		5	<a href="#">Action</a>
7.	<b>Approval of Financials</b>		8	<a href="#">Action</a>
8.	<b>Approval of the Revised FY25/26 Budget</b>	6:10	12	<a href="#">Action</a>
9.	<b>Nicollet County Public Health Presentation &amp; Discussion</b> - <i>Spencer Crawford, Nicollet County Public Health Planner</i>	6:20	15	
10.	<b>Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Planning Overview &amp; Discussion</b> - <i>Alejandra Bejarano, RNDC</i>	6:40	17	
11.	<b>Committee Overviews &amp; Updates</b>	6:55		
	A. Comprehensive Economic Development (CEDS) Committee - <i>Alejandra Bejarano, Economic Development</i>			
	B. Legislative & Communications Committee - <i>Chair Andrea Boettger</i>			
	C. Budget & Personnel Committee - <i>Chair Shanon Nowell</i>			
	D. Bylaws Ad-hoc Committee - <i>Jessica Beyer, Interim Executive Director</i>			
	E. Revolving Loan Fund Committee - <i>Jazmine Flores, Finance</i>			
	F. Transportation Advisory Committee- <i>Joel Hanif, Transportation</i>			
12.	<b>Reports</b>	7:25		
	A. Chair's Report - <i>Chair Laven</i>		37	
	i. Commission Committees & Caucus Process			
	ii. Caucus for Committee Seats			
	B. Interim Executive Director's Report - <i>Jessica Beyer</i>		40	
	C. Finance Director's Report - <i>Stephanie Hilpipre</i>		42	
13.	<b>Other Business</b>	7:45		
	A. Commissioner Updates			
	B. Meeting Evaluation		Handout	
14.	<b>Adjournment</b>	8:00		<a href="#">Action</a>

*Members may participate either in person or via Microsoft Teams, provided they can be both seen and heard.*

## Memo

**To:** RNDC Commission Members  
**From:** Jessica Beyer, Deputy Director  
**Date:** March 27, 2026  
**Re:** Public Interest – College-age Commissioner

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An application was received from Andrew Haefner to serve as the College-age Youth Commissioner. His application was reviewed by the Budget and Personnel Committee at its March 18, 2026, meeting. Following the process outlined in the RNDC Bylaws, the committee recommends approval for Andrew Haefner to serve as the College-age Youth Commissioner on the full Commission.

**Date**

11/27/2005

**Name**

Andrew Haefner

**Phone**

(507) 848-6482

**Email**[haefnerandrew707@gmail.com](mailto:haefnerandrew707@gmail.com)**Address**

2108 175th St  
 Fairmont, MN 56031  
 United States  
[Map It](#)

**Why do you wish to serve on the Region Nine Development Commission?**

I'm currently working towards a political science major in college and believe it would be a good step in my career and I could both learn and experience a lot.

**What makes you best able to represent college youth in the region?**

In the summer of 2025, I worked as an intern at the Martin County courthouse with the county coordinator and worked closely with the commissioners as well. This taught me a lot and I was able to attend some Regional 9 meetings as a part of this. I feel best able to represent college students in the region well due to being well versed in politics and always keeping my eyes on how the area is feeling or responding to both federal, state, and local developments. I feel these things all blend together to make me a strong candidate for this position due to deep experience in both facets.

**Please list any civic, leadership, professional or volunteer activities you are, or have been, involved with:**

Speech and Debate captain in High School, internship with Martin County, and grant writing with CEDA.

**Endorsements**

Click the plus icon to add another line.

Name	Title	Organization	Phone
Erik Walker	IT/Speech Teacher	Fairmont Jr/Sr High School	651-587-5343
Scott Higgins	Country Coordinator	Martin County	507-236-1497
Billee Rabbe	County Commissioner	Martin County	507-236-5579

## **1. CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Laven called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. at South Central Service Cooperative.

## **2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

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

## **3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

## **4. ROLL CALL**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Jean Anderson, Jeff Annis, Sarah Berry (7:08 arrival), Andrea Boettger, Dave Borchert, Jim Branstad, Steve Cooling, Chris Dalton, Marie Dranttel (virtual), Elroy Glidden, Robert Goblirsch, Hunter Jordan, James Kotewa, Dawn Kratzke, Brad Krause, Liz Krocak, Lynda Kruse, Mike Laven, Christian Lilienthal, Tom Loveall, Mary Milbrath, Bob Nielsen, Shanon Nowell, Patty O'Connor, Matt Peterson, Billee Rabbe, Gary Richter, Steve Rohlifing, Phil Schafer, Scott Schlueter, Julie Tesch, Luisa Trapero, Rob Wilkening (virtual)

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Paul Harris, Mike Pfeil, Rita Rassbach, Pam Rodewald

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

There was a quorum.

## **5. APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA**

Cooling moved to approve the consent agenda. Dalton seconded. Motion carried.

## **6. REPORTS**

### **a. Chair's Report**

Chair Laven reported that communities across the region, including Mankato, are experiencing significant community responses to recent federal immigration enforcement actions. He noted that these issues are not unique to one jurisdiction and encouraged commissioners to continue working collaboratively within their respective communities in ways that best fit local needs. Chair Laven emphasized that Region Nine Development Commission (RNDC) staff are available to provide guidance on connections to resources and communities for jurisdictions seeking support on these matters.

### **b. Interim Executive Director's Report**

Deputy Director Jessica Beyer reported on her role as Interim Executive Director following activation of the internal succession plan on November 12. She summarized efforts to manage the organizational transition, maintain operations, coordinate with staff and partners, and support the Board Chair during this period. She noted ongoing work to address financial stabilization in collaboration with the Treasurer and Finance Director, including expense management and maximizing reimbursable staff time.

Ms. Beyer highlighted positive developments, including receipt of \$50,000 in McKnight Foundation funding, collection of county levy payments, and a reduction in insurance premiums. She also outlined upcoming initiatives, including formation of an ad hoc committee to review RNDC bylaws, continued regional outreach, and preparation for Board discussions regarding next steps to fill the Executive Director position.

### **c. Finance Director's Report**

Finance Director Stephanie Hilpiper presented a comprehensive financial status update, outlining a return to prior reporting formats to improve clarity and transparency. She reviewed cash balances, receipts, expenses, and transfers between operational and revolving loan fund accounts, noting significant reconciliations completed since the December report. Adjustments included transferring funds to appropriate revolving loan fund accounts and correcting previously misallocated deposits.

Ms. Hilpiper reported that RNDC's adjusted operating cash balance was \$751,335 after excluding restricted McKnight pooled funds. She also provided an overview of ongoing financial clean-up efforts, including assistance from former finance director LuAnn Vanderwerf, timelines for completing reconciliations, upcoming audit preparation, budget amendments, and development of future budgets. Additional updates included clarification regarding 1099 reporting requirements and administrative processes.

## **7. EMPOWERING SMALL MN COMMUNITIES RURAL EMS PRESENTATION**

The Commission received a presentation on rural Emergency Medical Services (EMS) challenges and opportunities led by Stuart W. Grande, Ph.D., Associate Professor at the University of Minnesota School of Public Health, with participation from Brown County Commissioner Dave Borchert and RNDC Transportation Planner Joel Hanif. The presentation summarized findings from an Empowering Small Minnesota Communities project focused on the sustainability of rural EMS systems across the region.

Dr. Grande discussed research based on a literature review, key informant interviews, and regional listening sessions, identifying workforce shortages, reliance on aging volunteer service models, financial instability, training and recruitment barriers, and increasing service demands from aging rural populations.

The presentation emphasized that volunteer-based EMS models are increasingly unsustainable and highlighted the need for regional collaboration, policy reform, improved funding structures, and consideration of EMS as an essential service. Commissioners discussed local EMS challenges, collaborative service models, funding constraints, and potential regional solutions, with presenters noting that additional research, pilot projects, and funding opportunities are being pursued to support rural EMS sustainability within Region Nine.

## **8. REGION NINE DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION 2025-2026 AREAS OF WORK OVERVIEW & ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION**

As part of this agenda item, RNDC staff provided a high-level overview of major projects, initiatives, and priorities across the organization's areas of work for 2025–2026, including administration and finance, communications, economic development, revolving loan fund activities, environmental sustainability, food recovery, energy, and transportation planning. Staff highlighted current efforts, recent accomplishments, and upcoming initiatives aligned with the RNDC strategic plan.

Following the presentations, Commissioners participated in small-group roundtable discussions led by Jessica Beyer and organized by jurisdiction type to provide feedback on RNDC services, identify regional needs and opportunities, and discuss ways RNDC can continue to support communities across the nine-county region. Staff collected input for consideration in future planning and program development.

## **9. OTHER BUSINESS**

Hunter Jordan, Public Interest High School Age Commissioner, presented on the BRIDGE Club (Building Regional Impacts through Development, Government, and Engagement). He described the club's mission to engage high school students in community involvement and leadership by supporting Region Nine projects, including volunteer efforts related to food access and energy efficiency. Mr. Jordan highlighted current activities, partnerships, and future opportunities for collaboration with RNDC staff and communities across the region.

Commissioners gave updates from their communities.

## **10. ADJOURNMENT**

Nowell moved to adjourn. Rabbe seconded. Motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:11 p.m.



**Financial Report**  
**April 8, 2026 - Full Commission Meeting**

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**CASH BALANCE - February 28, 2026** **\$ 756,736.77**

Cash Receipts	\$	34,720.65
Bank Interest	\$	-
<b>Total Receipts</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>34,720.65</b>

Payroll and Benefits Disbursements	\$	(56,515.83)
Accounts Payable	\$	(31,815.16)
Credit Card Charges	\$	(2,513.85)
<b>Total Disbursements</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>(90,844.84)</b>

**CASH BALANCE - March 25, 2026** **\$ 700,612.58**

**Region Nine Development Commission Accounts**

R9 MAGIC	\$	688,996.38
Wells Fargo - Payroll Account	\$	11,616.20
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>700,612.58</b>

**Region Nine Development Commission  
March 2026 - Summary of Cash Receipts  
FY 2026**

Description	Amount
<b>DATE: 3/10/2026</b>	
RNAI - Food Recovery by Wooden Spoon	\$ 9,750.00
<b>DATE: 3/19/2026</b>	
State of Minnesota	\$ 24,970.65
<b><u>March 2026 Total Cash Receipts:</u> \$ 34,720.65</b>	

**Region Nine Development Commission**  
**March 2026 - Summary of Disbursements**  
**FY 2026**

Date	Description	Amount
<b>Payroll and Benefits Disbursements</b>		
3/23/2026	Missionsquare	\$ (488.95)
3/17/2026	PERA	\$ (4,907.91)
3/17/2026	Wex Health	\$ (495.00)
3/17/2026	Wex Health	\$ (484.61)
3/12/2026	Payroll	\$ (33,783.94)
3/11/2026	iSolved fee	\$ (137.68)
3/9/2026	Missionsquare	\$ (488.95)
3/6/2026	Delta Dental	\$ (264.88)
3/3/2026	Wex Health	\$ (495.00)
3/3/2026	Wex Health	\$ (484.61)
3/3/2026	Principal - Life Insurance	\$ (309.42)
3/2/2026	SCSC - Health Insurance	\$ (9,197.64)
3/2/2026	PERA	\$ (4,977.24)
<b>Total:</b>		<b>\$ (56,515.83)</b>
<b>Accounts Payable</b>		
3/2/2026	Xcel Energy	\$ (70.52)
3/2/2026	Shred-It c/o Stericycle Inc.	\$ (156.14)
3/2/2026	Spectrum	\$ (170.00)
3/2/2026	TeamKeeper	\$ (175.16)
3/2/2026	Metro Sales, Inc.	\$ (1,029.85)
3/2/2026	Arrowhead Regional Development Commission	\$ (3,271.78)
3/2/2026	Thomas A Horan, PhD.	\$ (15,615.55)
3/3/2026	Wooden Spoon	\$ (570.00)
3/5/2026	Waseca County Treasurer	\$ (115.00)
3/6/2026	Waseca County Recorder	\$ (46.00)
3/6/2026	Pizzeria 201 Inc.	\$ (366.05)
3/9/2026	Scott Schlueter	\$ (86.25)
3/9/2026	Security Storage Systems	\$ (100.00)
3/9/2026	Lisa Callahan	\$ (4,200.00)
3/10/2026	Sarah Janovsky	\$ (47.28)
3/10/2026	Jazmine Flores	\$ (120.35)
3/10/2026	Rob Wilkening	\$ (269.36)
3/10/2026	Thriveon, Inc.	\$ (3,829.92)
3/11/2026	Creative Ad Solutions, Inc.	\$ (25.20)
3/11/2026	Patty O'Connor	\$ (50.00)
3/11/2026	Lynda Kruse	\$ (74.65)
3/11/2026	Dave Borchert	\$ (93.50)
3/11/2026	Xcel Energy	\$ (96.77)
3/11/2026	Luisa Trapero	\$ (109.45)
3/11/2026	Philip Schafer	\$ (141.35)
3/11/2026	Robert Goblirsch	\$ (230.50)
3/13/2026	Gary Richter	\$ (126.85)
3/16/2026	BANK SERVICE CHARGE - DEBIT	\$ (351.53)
3/16/2026	Mike Pfeil	\$ (150.75)
3/17/2026	James Kotewa	\$ (125.40)
<b>Total:</b>		<b>\$ (31,815.16)</b>
<b>Credit Card Charges</b>		
2/2/2026	Jessica - SMIF 40th Anniversary	\$ (15.00)
2/6/2026	Jessica - Pappageorge Restaurant	\$ (55.63)
2/2/2026	Sabri - HyVee	\$ (10.78)
2/14/2026	Sabri - Patton Hoversten Waseca	\$ (291.50)
2/18/2026	Sabri - HyVee	\$ (26.62)
2/2/2026	Jazmine - Secretary of State	\$ (20.00)
2/2/2026	Jazmine - Secretary of State	\$ (20.00)
2/3/2026	Nate - CANVA	\$ (79.40)
2/3/2026	Nate - Dri*Signs	\$ (169.97)
1/23/2026	Stephanie - Kraus Creative Company	\$ (2,000.00)
2/20/2026	Stephanie - USPS	\$ (6.08)
2/11/2026	Sarah - Sams Club	\$ (77.33)
2/20/2026	US Bank Rebate	\$ 258.46
<b>Total:</b>		<b>\$ (2,513.85)</b>



**Revolving Loan Fund - Cash Balance Report**  
**April 8, 2026 - Full Commission Meeting**

**CASH BALANCE - February 28, 2026** **\$ 1,760,355.38**

Legacy RLF Loan Payments \$ 14,833.12  
 Legacy RLF Bank Interest \$ -

CARES RLF Loan Payments \$ 11,674.30  
 CARES RLF Bank Interest \$ -

**Total Receipts \$ 26,507.42**

New Loans \$ -  
 Returned ACH Payment \$ -  
 Service Charges \$ (34.76)

**Total Disbursements \$ (34.76)**

**CASH BALANCE - March 25, 2026** **\$ 1,786,828.04**

**Revolving Loan Fund Accounts**

Legacy RLF - MAGIC	\$ 1,552,539.87
CARES RLF - MAGIC	\$ 234,288.17
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$ 1,786,828.04</b>

<b>Cash Receipts since 7/1/2025</b>	<b>\$ 1,703,217.72</b>
Principal Stock Cashed Out	\$ 286,081.36
RLF Misdeposits	\$ 78,181.77
RNAI Misdeposits	\$ 41,600.00
Payments for Work Completed in Prior Years	\$ 204,594.36
Payments of Prior Year Levy	\$ 272,178.19
<b>FY2026 Cash Receipts YTD</b>	<b>\$ 820,582.04</b>

## Revenues

<u>Levy</u>	<u>YTD - 3/16/2026</u>	<u>FY26 Budget</u>
Fiscal Year 2026 Levy	\$ 326,050.85	\$ 698,409.00
<b><u>Contracts</u></b>		
State Competitiveness Fund	\$ 125,067.82	\$ 173,523.72
Revolving Loan Fund - Expenditure of Interest		\$ 150,000.00
EDA Partnership Planning Grant	\$ 17,500.00	\$ 80,000.00
MnDOT Planning Grant	\$ 45,000.00	\$ 75,000.00
Safe Streets & Roads for All		\$ 72,533.60
McKnight Emergency Funds	\$ 50,000.00	\$ 50,000.00
McKnight Foundation	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 2,000.00
ECCBG	\$ 7,655.17	\$ 10,000.00
UofM - MCAP	\$ 4,395.32	\$ 60,000.00
UofM - Center for Transportation Studies	\$ 53,500.00	\$ 53,500.00
USDA	\$ 28,111.56	\$ 28,111.56
State of MN - LFPA Funds	\$ 31,412.11	\$ 31,412.11
Region 5 - RFBC	\$ 11,833.33	\$ 11,833.33
Compeer - Childrens Museum	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 5,000.00
GMG/DEED Mainstreet Grant Review	\$ 4,950.00	\$ 4,950.00
Springfield CARES	\$ 4,500.00	\$ 4,500.00
City of Henderson	\$ 4,500.00	\$ 4,500.00
State of MN - Stormwater, Wastewater & Community Res	\$ 2,800.00	\$ 2,800.00
Shooting Star Scenic Byway		\$ 37,192.00
Apple Blossom Scenic Byway		\$ 37,192.00
Historic Bluffs Scenic Byway		\$ 15,000.00
RNDC - Thriving Communities		\$ 20,000.00
SCMNFR - Thriving Communities	\$ 9,750.00	\$ 9,750.00
New Ulm Local Climate Action Grant		\$ 5,490.00
Children's Museum Local Climate Action Grant		\$ 3,150.00
Tri-County Solid Waste		\$ 5,000.00
MSU - Local Foods Month	\$ 11,750.00	\$ 11,750.00
<b><u>Interest and Dividends</u></b>		
Bank Accounts	\$ 23,548.23	\$ 32,048.23
Principal	\$ 8,278.40	\$ 8,278.40
<b><u>State Disaster and Ag Credits</u></b>		
State of Minnesota	\$ 9,272.66	\$ 9,272.66
<b><u>Reimbursement of Expenditures</u></b>		
SCSC - Kavira Reimbursement	\$ 3,888.00	\$ 3,888.00
SCSC - Wellness Reimbursement	\$ 1,640.00	\$ 1,640.00
Germany Trip - Travel Reimbursements	\$ 5,739.27	\$ 5,739.27
NADO Conference Reimbursements	\$ 4,195.13	\$ 4,195.13
SBDC Consulting - Alejandra	\$ 4,635.00	\$ 4,635.00
RNAI - Mahkato check reimbursement	\$ 4,307.20	\$ 4,307.20
Overpayment Reimbursements	\$ 5,790.36	\$ 5,790.36
Misc.	\$ 3,511.63	\$ 3,511.63
<b><u>Use of Unearned Revenue Funds - Money received in FY25 or FY24</u></b>		
Food Rescue Coordinator - Mankato Area Foundation	Approx. \$ 100,000.00	\$ 150,000.00
McKnight Contract - R9 Funds	Approx. \$ 75,000.00	\$ 150,000.00
Convivncia Hispana	Approx. \$ 80,000.00	\$ 182,500.00
Windward Foundation	Approx. \$ 50,000.00	\$ 150,000.00
	<b>\$ 820,582.04</b>	<b>\$ 2,050,903.20</b>

<b>Expenditures since 7/1/2025</b>	<b>\$ 1,851,360.11</b>
RNAI Misdeposits -Current and Prior Fiscal Year	\$ 45,050.00
RLF Misdeposits -Current and Prior Fiscal Year	\$ 314,560.23
MADO Passthrough Funds Spent	\$ 49,727.29
<b>FY2026 Expenditures YTD</b>	<b>\$ 1,442,022.59</b>

## Expenditures

	<u>YTD - 3/16/2026</u>	<u>Additional Expenses</u>	<u>Total Budgeted</u>
<b><u>Payroll</u></b>			
Salary, Employee Deductions and Taxes	\$ 743,723.57	\$ 281,048.08	\$ 1,024,771.65
Fringe Benefits -Health Insurance, HSA, Etc.	\$ 214,084.47	\$ 81,263.52	\$ 295,347.99
Unemployment	\$ 4,740.00	\$ 19,908.00	\$ 24,648.00
<b><u>Indirect Costs</u></b>			
Rent	\$ 26,932.00	\$ 13,216.00	\$ 40,148.00
IT Services	\$ 30,289.03	\$ 25,000.00	\$ 55,289.03
Utility - Electricity	\$ 702.78	\$ 360.00	\$ 1,062.78
Utility - Internet	\$ 1,342.90	\$ 680.00	\$ 2,022.90
Copier Machine Lease	\$ 7,244.90	\$ 3,250.00	\$ 10,494.90
Cleaning Services	\$ 2,880.00	\$ 1,440.00	\$ 4,320.00
Accounting System - GMS	\$ 8,636.00	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 9,636.00
Time Keeping System - TeamKeeper	\$ 736.44	\$ 475.00	\$ 1,211.44
Payroll System - iSolved	\$ 1,549.33	\$ 750.00	\$ 2,299.33
Shredding Services	\$ 753.02	\$ 600.00	\$ 1,353.02
Offsite Storage	\$ 700.00	\$ 500.00	\$ 1,200.00
Cell Phone	\$ 841.72		\$ 841.72
Property and Casualty Insurance - LMC	\$ 9,350.00		\$ 9,350.00
Audit		\$ 25,000.00	\$ 25,000.00
Website Maintenance	\$ 172.75		\$ 172.75
<b><u>Commission Expenses</u></b>			
Per Diems and Mileage	\$ 15,324.57	\$ 7,000.00	\$ 22,324.57
Commissioner Food	\$ 498.92		\$ 498.92
Bus Rental	\$ 828.00	\$ 900.00	\$ 1,728.00
SCSC Space Rental	\$ 526.00	\$ 500.00	\$ 1,026.00
<b><u>Legal Fees</u></b>	<b>\$ 22,380.00</b>	<b>\$ 17,500.00</b>	<b>\$ 39,880.00</b>
<b><u>Consultants</u></b>			
Lu Vanderwerf	\$ 2,635.00	\$ 15,000.00	\$ 17,635.00
Lisa Callahan	\$ 11,400.00	\$ 4,000.00	\$ 15,400.00
Mercedes Sempe	\$ 1,275.00		\$ 1,275.00
Fractional Head Start (Mary)	\$ 32,422.50		\$ 32,422.50
<b><u>Germany Trip</u></b>			
Interpreter	\$ 5,926.55		\$ 5,926.55
Photographer	\$ 3,538.21		\$ 3,538.21
Credit Card Charges - Hotels, airfare, trains, etc.	\$ 24,379.40		\$ 24,379.40

	<u>YTD</u>	<u>Additional Expenses</u>	<u>Total Budgeted</u>
<b><u>Revolving Loan Fund Expenses</u></b>	\$ 2,315.89	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 3,315.89
<b><u>Contract Passthroughs</u></b>			
SBDC Consulting - Alejandra		\$ 4,635.00	\$ 4,635.00
UofM - Center for Transportation Studies	\$ 47,115.55		\$ 47,115.55
LPPA	\$ 46,157.23		\$ 46,157.23
EECBG	\$ 18,041.65		\$ 18,041.65
Community Energy Innovation Prize	\$ 91,920.50	\$ 63,019.50	\$ 154,940.00
Misc. Contract Passthrough	\$ 4,498.88		\$ 4,498.88
<b><u>Misc. Expenses</u></b>			
Staff Travel and Conferences	\$ 11,216.60		\$ 11,216.60
Staff Mileage and Expenses	\$ 4,998.21	\$ 2,500.00	\$ 7,498.21
Printing/Publications/Marketing	\$ 9,119.81	\$ 500.00	\$ 9,619.81
Dues and Memberships	\$ 9,090.00	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 11,090.00
Technology/Software	\$ 4,859.35	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 5,859.35
Meeting and Events Catering	\$ 3,748.48		\$ 3,748.48
Staff Professional Development	\$ 3,468.22		\$ 3,468.22
Office Supplies	\$ 870.29	\$ 500.00	\$ 1,370.29
Region Nine Vehicle Expenses	\$ 314.39	\$ 300.00	\$ 614.39
Parking	\$ 797.95	\$ 400.00	\$ 1,197.95
Postage	\$ 361.45	\$ 200.00	\$ 561.45
Legal Postings	\$ 234.49		\$ 234.49
Kavira - SCSC Reimbursed	\$ 3,888.00		\$ 3,888.00
Wellness - SCSC Reimbursed	\$ 791.00		\$ 791.00
Bank Fees	\$ 391.53		\$ 391.53
Returned Checks and ACH Payments	\$ 2,929.88		\$ 2,929.88
Misc. Checks	\$ 606.80		\$ 606.80
Misc. Credit Card Credits	\$ (1,526.62)		\$ (1,526.62)
	\$ 1,442,022.59	\$ 575,445.10	\$ 2,017,467.69
		<b>Revenue-Expenses</b>	\$ 33,435.51

## Memo

**To:** RNDC Commission Members  
**From:** Mark Plotz, RNDC Road Safety Transportation Planner  
**Date:** March 27, 2026  
**Re:** 2025 Nicollet County Community Health Assessment

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The [2025 Nicollet County Community Health Assessment](#) is the product of extensive community outreach and engagement that began in fall 2024. The Assessment provides a snapshot of key needs in the county on topics such as physical and mental health, transportation, housing, economic security, and more. Highlights of the plan will be presented by [Spencer Crawford](#) (Public Health Planner, Nicollet County), who carried out the Community Health Assessment. Staff from Nicollet County will be on hand to present and answer questions.

### Key findings:

- Housing emerged as a critical determinant of health in Nicollet County. Many residents experience housing cost burdens, with nearly half of renters spending more than 30 percent of their income on housing and a significant portion spending over 50 percent. Rising home prices have made homeownership increasingly unattainable, while renters reported issues related to overcrowding, discrimination, and poorly maintained units. These housing challenges contribute to stress, poor mental health, and difficult trade-offs between housing costs and other essentials such as food and healthcare. The report emphasizes that affordable, safe, walkable, and culturally appropriate housing is essential to improving health and equity across the county.
- Transportation was identified as another key issue affecting access to daily needs and overall health. Nicollet County's transportation system is largely car-dependent, creating barriers for residents without reliable access to a vehicle. While limited public transit and

dial-a-ride services exist, residents reported challenges related to cost, scheduling, language barriers, and lack of awareness about available options. Gaps in sidewalks, bike infrastructure, and safe pedestrian routes further limit mobility. The assessment highlights that improved public transit and expanded walking, biking, and rolling options can reduce stress, support physical activity, and connect residents to food, healthcare, employment, and social opportunities.

- Healthy eating is also a significant concern, shaped by food insecurity, access, affordability, and local food environments. Approximately one in ten residents experience food insecurity, and many live far from grocery stores that offer affordable, nutritious options. Community members noted that healthier foods are often more expensive, while fast and convenient options are more accessible. Despite these challenges, there is strong interest in healthier restaurant options and local initiatives such as food shelves adopting models that prioritize dignity and access to fresh foods. Improving access to affordable, culturally relevant, and nutritious food is identified as a key opportunity to support long-term health.

The Assessment identifies several next steps centered on collaboration and community-driven action. These include strengthening partnerships between local governments, nonprofits, healthcare systems, and residents; expanding affordable housing and transportation options; improving access to healthy food; and continuing to elevate community voices in decision-making. The assessment is intended to serve as a foundation for future planning, policy development, and action. The full report can be accessed here:

<https://www.nicolletcountymn.gov/DocumentCenter/View/9425/2025-Nicollet-County-CHA>.

# 2026 COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (CEDS)



*Promoting the development of the region through intergovernmental cooperation, community and human development, long-range planning, and technical assistance.*

# WHAT'S the CEDS?

- Region-owned strategy
- A roadmap for future growth
- It helps us understand what **challenges** we're facing and what **opportunities** we can build on
- It's a team effort:
  - Community members, businesses, local governments, partners, students and more!
- Vision board for the region
- **Think big together!**



# About the CEDS

- The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) is a five-year regional plan through 2030.
- It builds a shared picture of where the region is heading, where we want to go, and how we'll get there.
- It acts as a community vision board, built with input from everyone who calls this place home: residents, workers, farmers, business owners, educators, and students.



# About the CEDS

## A CEDS is designed to:

- Bring together the public and private sectors
- Be an economic roadmap to diversify and strengthen regional economies
- Analyze the regional economy
- Serve as a guide for establishing regional goals and objectives
- Be a regional plan for implementation and action
- Identify investment priorities and funding sources



# WHY IS A CEDS IMPORTANT?

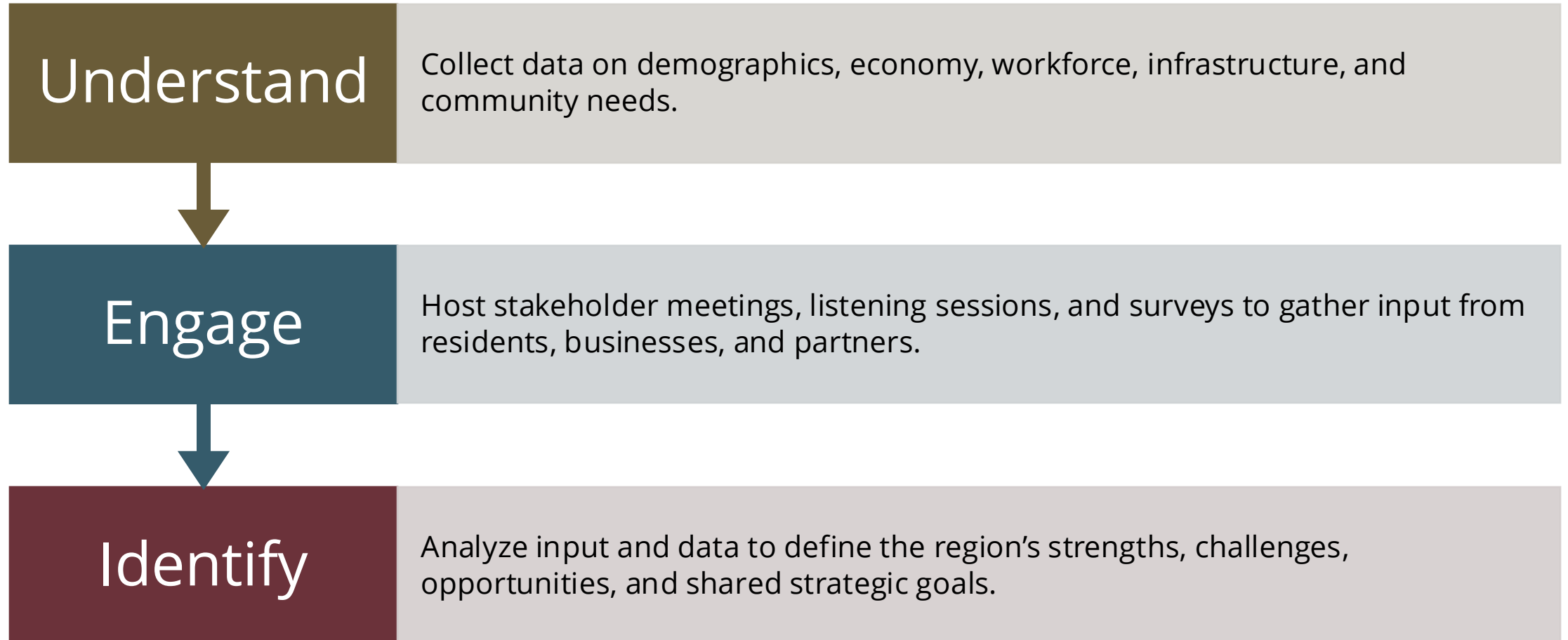
- Set shared regional goals and objectives
- Identify gaps in resources and expertise
- Strengthen regional resilience
  - Our ability to respond to economic shocks and natural disasters
- Increase access to federal funding
  - With a CEDS in place, the region is more likely to attract federal funding dollars



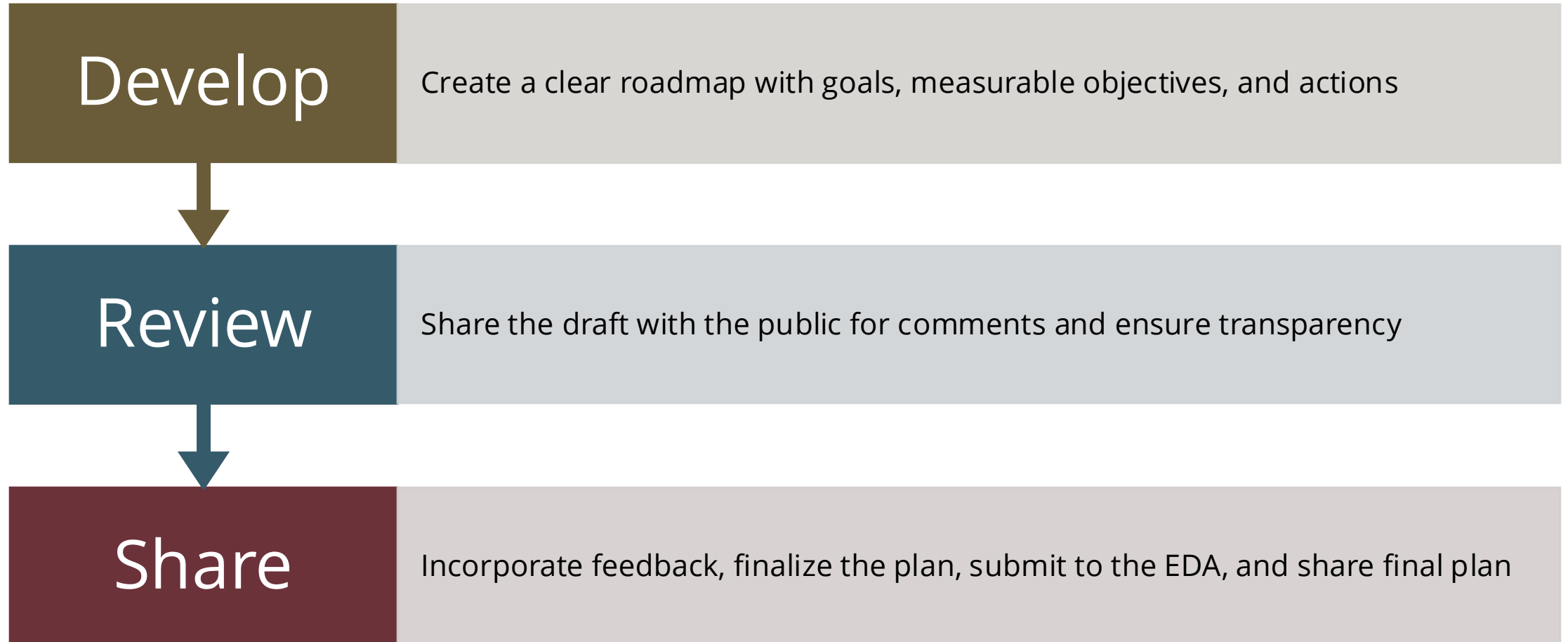
## Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

### South Central Minnesota

# HOW IS IT DONE?



# HOW IS IT DONE?



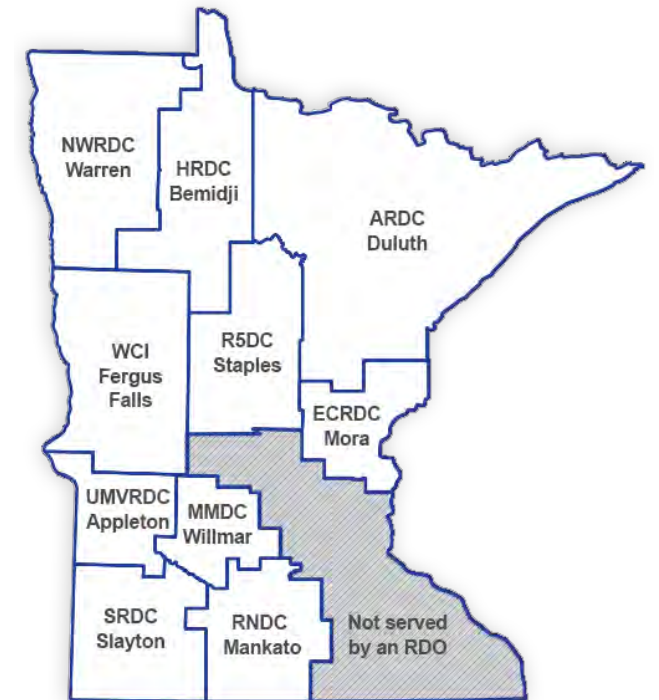
# The Four Cornerstones

 <i>Human Capital</i>	<b>Labor Force</b> <b>Manufacturing</b> <b>Education</b> <b>Childcare &amp; Primary Care Giving</b>
 <i>Economic Competitiveness</i>	<b>Entrepreneurship and Innovation</b> <b>Small Business Stability &amp; Growth</b> <b>Global and National Competitiveness</b>
 <i>Foundational Assets</i>	<b>Equity</b> <b>Arts and Culture</b> <b>Tourism</b> <b>Environment and Sustainability</b>
 <i>Community Resources</i>	<b>Housing</b> <b>Broadband Access</b> <b>Transportation &amp; Freight</b> <b>Active Mobility &amp; Transit</b> <b>Community Facilities and Infrastructure</b>

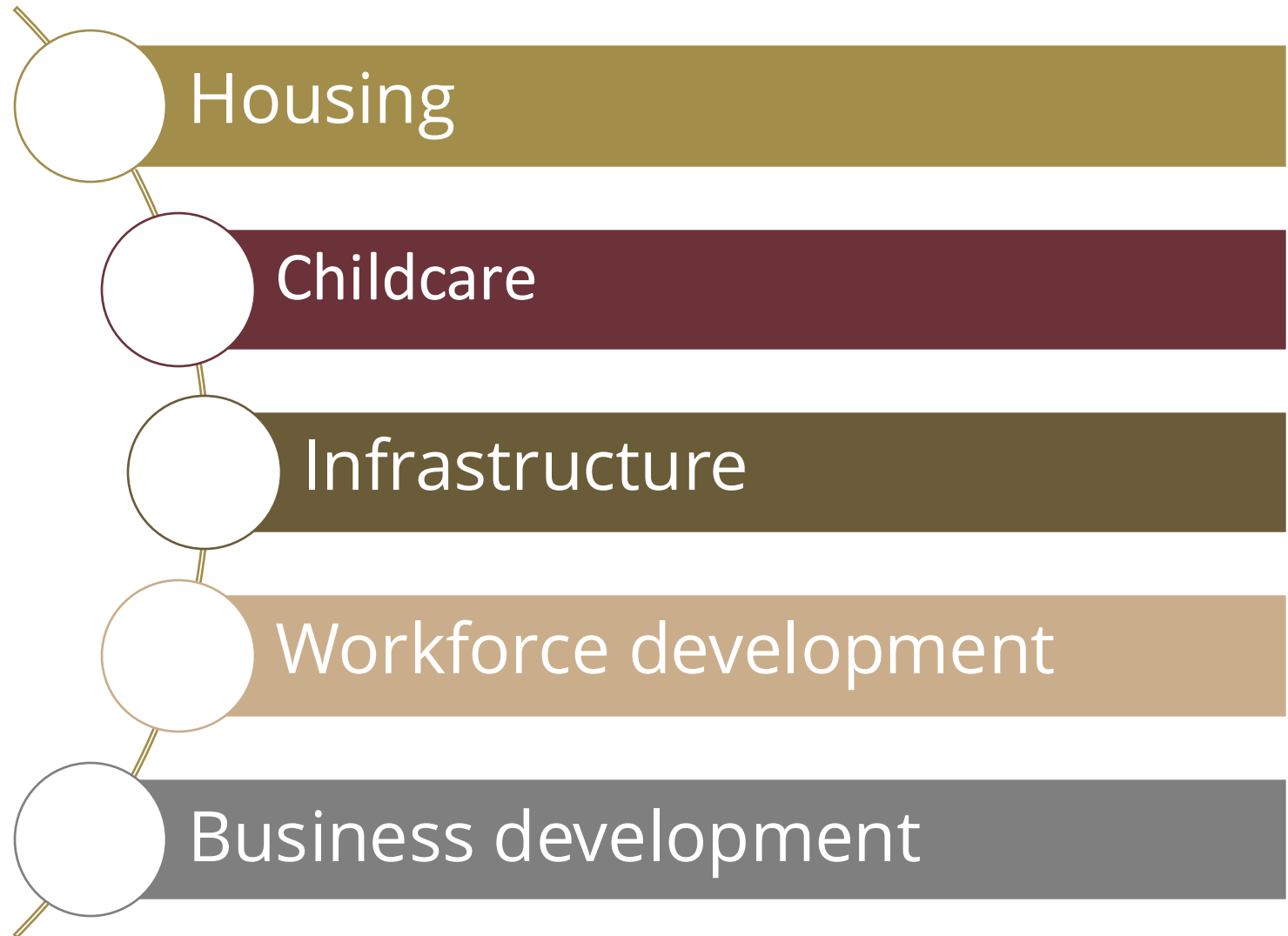


The member organizations of MADO collaborated to identify four cornerstones used to guide our CEDS process:

- **Human Capital:** Education, workforce, health & wellbeing, retention, and future skills
- **Economic Competitiveness:** BRE, entrepreneurship/innovation, industry clusters, and small business vitality
- **Community Resources:** tourism, arts, belonging, main streets, quality-of-life, and local gov capacity
- **Foundational Assets:** housing, childcare, broadband, transportation, healthcare, water, and environment/resilience



# STRATEGIC DIRECTION



# WHO IS INVOLVED?

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Residents

---

Community leaders

---

Business owners

---

Educational institutions

---

Industry

---

Local government

---

Faith communities

---

Diverse populations

---

Students

---

Non-profits

---

## ENGAGEMENT

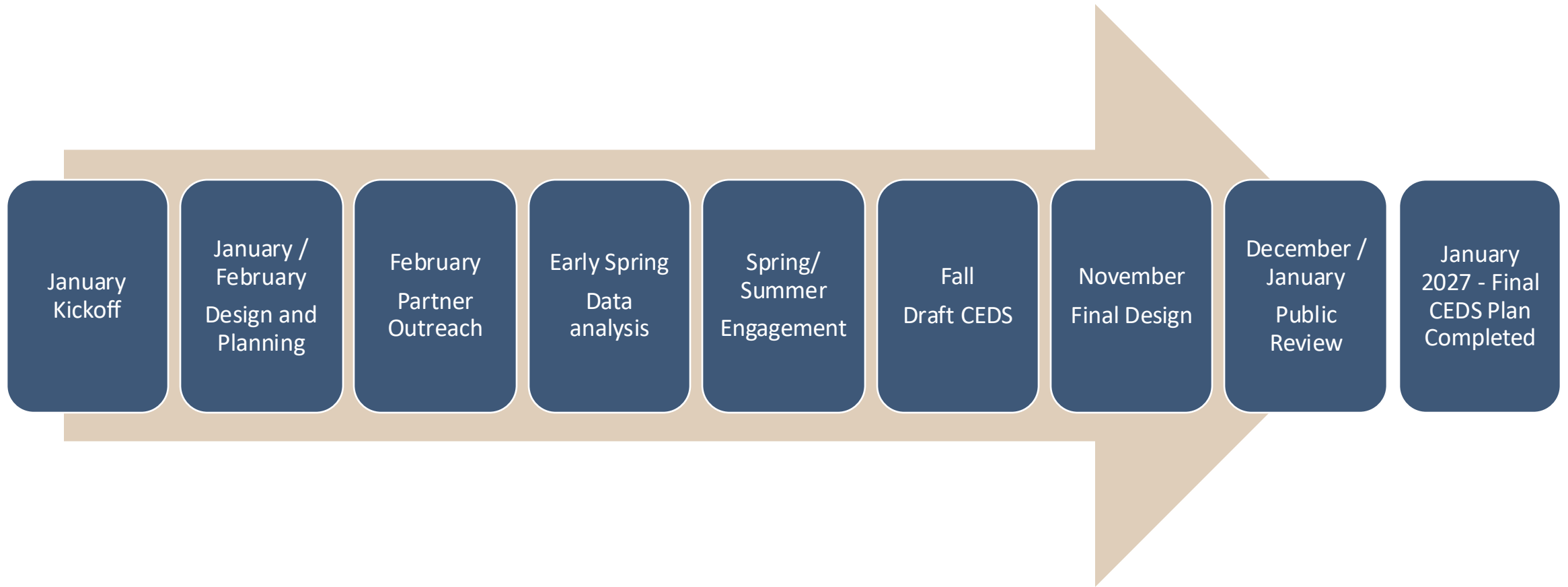
Surveys

Focus groups

Forums

Pop-ups

# TIMELINE



# REVIEW AND ADOPTION

**R9 REGION NINE DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION**

**Share your thoughts on Region Nine's 2022-2026 CEDS report!**

Name:

Email:

Subject: 2022-2026 CEDS Report Comments

*If you do not provide your name and email, we will not be able to contact you if your comments require any additional conversation or clarification.*

## 2022-2026 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy



A Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies document (CEDS) contributes to effective economic development in communities and regions through locally-based, regionally-driven economic development planning processes. A CEDS document is required by the U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration (EDA) in order to maintain Economic Development District (EDD) status, and must be updated at least once every five years to qualify for EDA assistance.

Region Nine is the designated Economic Development District for the nine county area of South Central Minnesota and is responsible for preparing the CEDS update report. The CEDS report is posted in accordance to EDA's regulations found in the Federal Register at 13 C.F.R. part 303.

### What does a CEDS report do?

- Bring together the public and private sectors
- Be an economic roadmap to diversify and strengthen regional economies
- Analyze the regional economy
- Serve as a guide for establishing regional goals and objectives
- Be a regional plan for implementation and action
- Identify investment priorities and funding sources

The 2022-2026 CEDS report is currently under public review. The public review for the CEDS will end on **December 30th**. For questions or comments, contact Community Development Director Leah Petricka at [lpetricka@mdc.org](mailto:lpetricka@mdc.org).

[Read the 2022-2026 CEDS Draft](#)



# WHAT DO WE ASK?

- When you think of the future of the region you feel:
- What's **hard** about living here?
- How resilient do you think people in the region are when facing change or challenges?
- What would best help people prepare for **future jobs and technologies**?
- Where do you see the **biggest gaps** between what students learn and what local jobs require?
- What makes housing difficult in your community?

# WHY COMPLETE THE CEDS?

- **Required to maintain Economic Development District (EDD) designation**
  - Required to complete every five years
  - Annual performance Reports
  - Recurring investment from EDA Planning grant
- A guide for establishing regional goals and objectives
- Identify gaps in resources or expertise that need to be addressed



- With a CEDS in place, the region is more likely to attract federal funding dollars
- Make the region more resilient and better positioned to respond to and recover from natural disasters and economic shocks

# HOW CAN YOU BE INVOLVED?

- Share your feedback, input, and insights
  - Take a survey
  - Participate in an engagement event
  - Schedule a 1-1
- Outreach to local communities, councils, EDAs and businesses
  - Share information, surveys, and events
- Know of an event that we should join? Let me know!
- Co-host or Partner
  - Co-host a conversation in your town
  - Recruit employers and residents for roundtable discussions
- Share local data, projects, challenges, and more

# HOW CAN YOU BE INVOLVED?

Scan the QR Codes or visit [www.rndc.org/CEDS](http://www.rndc.org/CEDS) to take a survey

**DO YOU LIVE OR WORK  
IN REGION NINE?**

TAKE THE  
**2026 REGION NINE  
HUMAN CAPITAL SURVEY**

HELP SHAPE THE FUTURE  
OF REGION NINE!



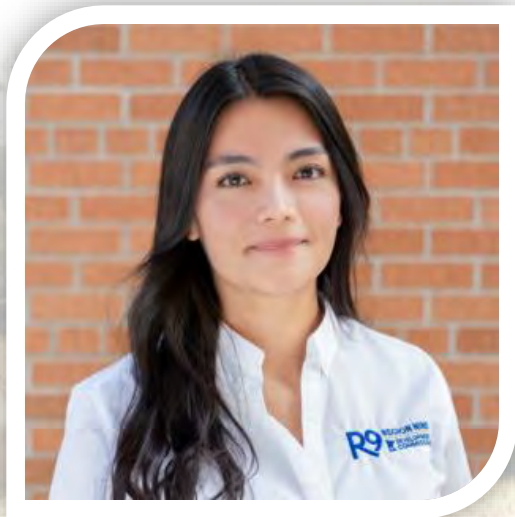
**CALLING ALL EDUCATIONAL  
PROFESSIONALS!**

TAKE THE  
**2026 REGION NINE  
EDUCATION SURVEY**

HELP SHAPE THE FUTURE  
OF REGION NINE!



# Thank you! Questions?



**Stay Connected:**  
**Alejandra Bejarano**  
*Economic Recovery Planner*  
507-389-8871  
[alejandra@rndc.org](mailto:alejandra@rndc.org)





# Stay Connected

(507) 387-5643 | [www.rndc.org](http://www.rndc.org)

Visit the  
RNDC Website



in



f



Sign up for the  
RNDC E-Newsletter



# LEARN MORE ABOUT THE CEDS



## A REGIONAL PLAN FOR SOUTH CENTRAL MINNESOTA'S FUTURE

The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) is South Central Minnesota's five-year plan for jobs, businesses, housing, childcare, broadband, infrastructure, economic growth and overall quality of life.

Led by the Region Nine Development Commission (RNDC), this effort brings together voices from across the nine counties.

The CEDS acts as a shared roadmap for the region.

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## WHAT IS THE CEDS?

The CEDS is a locally driven plan that helps guide economic growth and long-term stability in our region.

Supported by the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA), the CEDS:

- Serves as a roadmap for future growth
- Identifies challenges and opportunities across the region
- Positions Southern Minnesota to compete for state and federal funding
- Brings together residents, businesses, schools, local governments, and partners

## Why Is It Important?

A strong CEDS helps South Central Minnesota:

- Attract funding for local projects
- Support businesses and workers
- Strengthening small towns and rural communities
- Prepare for economic changes and unexpected shocks
- Create and grow quality jobs

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## What Does the CEDS Include?

The CEDS answers four key questions:

- Where is the region now?
- What are the region's strengths and challenges?
- Communities vision for the future of the region?
- How will the region get there?



## Memo

**To:** RNDC Commission Members

**From:** Chair Mike Laven

**Date:** March 27, 2026

**Re:** Committee Caucusing

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RNDC Committee Caucusing will occur during the Commission Meeting on April 9, 2025. Commissioners will be seated by county, including special interest commissioners, who will sit with the county in which they reside.

Each county group will designate representatives for the following committees:

- Board of Directors
- Budget & Personnel
- Legislative & Communications
- Transportation Advisory
- Community & Economic Development

All commissioners are expected to commit to serving on at least one committee.

At the meeting, we will review committee information and facilitate the caucusing process.

Once the caucusing process takes place, Commissioner service on the committees will begin immediately.

# COMMITTEE DESCRIPTIONS

## Board of Directors

The Board of Directors have legal and ethical responsibility to ensure RNDC does the best work possible in pursuit of its goals.

**Meets:** Feb, Mar, May, June, Aug, Sep, Nov, Dec at 4:30 p.m.

**Staff Contact:** Executive Director

## Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC)

The committee is a forum for regional stakeholders to provide input on transportation projects, policies and planning initiatives of regional and statewide significance. The committee is composed of RNDC commissioners, MnDOT and Mankato Area Planning Organization staff, and city & county engineers.

**Meets:** Quarterly during business hours.

**Staff Contact:** Transportation Planner

## Budget & Personnel

The committee provides oversight and guidance to the organization in regard to annual budgeting, personnel issues and updating organizational policies as appropriate and in accordance with the law.

**Meets:** Monthly meetings are held during budget season (March-June) in the evening. Meetings throughout the remainder of the year are held as needed.

**Staff Contact:** Executive Director and Finance Director

## Revolving Loan Fund (RLF)

The committee reviews and approves applications to the RLF program.

**Requirements:** Members of this committee must have a business or banking background with the ability to read and understand financial statements, projections and business plans.

*(50% of members must be RNDC Commissioners)*

**Meets:** As needed typically held on Tuesday's during business hours.

**Staff Contact:** Finance Director and Economic Development Planner

## Community and Economic Development Planning Committee

The purpose of the committee is to promote the economic and socio-economic development in the region through intergovernmental cooperation, long-range and strategic planning.

**Meets:** As needed. Typically during business hours.

**Staff Contact:** Community Development Planner

## Legislative & Communications

The committee establishes legislative priorities and policy recommendations, advocates for the region's needs and communicates as needed.

**Meets:** As needed. On average, four times per year.

**Staff Contact:** Executive Director

# Committee Members

July 2025

Year = Joined RNDC or RLF  
 \*Not a RNDC Commissioner

	<b>Board of Directors</b>	<b>Budget &amp; Personnel</b>	<b>Legislative &amp; Communications</b>	<b>Transportation Advisory</b>	<b>Community &amp; Economic Development</b>	<b>Revolving Loan Fund</b>
<b>Blue Earth</b>	Patty O'Connor 2023	Lynda Kruse 2025			Jeff Annis 2025	Claire Goettl* 2023
<b>Brown</b>	Andrea Boettger 2021 Vice Chair	Gary Richter 2017	Andrea Boettger 2021 Dave Borchert 2023	Rob Goblirsch 2017	Chris Dalton 2019	Chris Dalton 2020
<b>Faribault</b>	Tom Loveall 2003	Tom Loveall 2003			Jean Anderson 2025	
<b>Le Sueur</b>	Steve Rohlfig 2011	Scott Schlueter 2021	Scott Schlueter 2021	Liz Krocak 2025	Steve Rohlfig 2011	
<b>Martin</b>	Phil Schafer 2010	Billeye Rabbe 2025	Elroy Glidden 2022	James Kotewa 2025	Elroy Glidden 2022	Celia Simpson* 2025
<b>Nicollet</b>	Marie Dranttel 2011 Treasurer	Shanon Nowell 2023	Rita Rassbach 2024	Mary Milbrath 2025		Julie Fredrickson* 2023
<b>Sibley</b>	Christian Lilienthal 2021	Christian Lilienthal 2021	Dawn Kratzke 2021	Bob Nielsen 2023	Dawn Kratzke 2021	Travis Mons* 2020
<b>Waseca</b>	Rob Wilkening 2023	Sarah Berry 2023	Brad Krause 2025	Rob Wilkening 2023	Julie Tesch 2023	
<b>Watsonwan</b>	Jim Branstad 2021 Secretary	Mike Pfeil 2013	Mike Pfeil 2013	Steve Cooling 2016	Paul Harris 2023	Steve Cooling 2022
<b>Mankato</b>	Mike Laven 2021 Chair					

# Interim Executive Director's Report

*Submitted by Jessica Beyer*

Commission Report for April 8, 2026 Meeting

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## **Leadership Transition & Organizational Stability**

Since November 12, 2025, I have been serving as Interim Executive Director as part of the organization's succession plan following the vacancy of the Executive Director position. Over the past several months, my primary focus has been maintaining organizational continuity, supporting staff, and ensuring consistent engagement with the Board and Commission during this transition.

This work has included close collaboration with Board leadership, direct outreach to Commission members, and intentional staff engagement through regular meetings, individual check-ins, and team communications. Ensuring that programs, services, and projects remain on track while supporting staff morale, enhancing organizational processes, and pursuing new funding opportunities that align with the needs of our region have and remain key focus areas.

## **Financial Oversight & Administrative Operations**

Added oversight, support, and attention has been given to working with staff and board leadership including the Finance Director and Treasurer to address needs within Finance including financial clean-up, catch-up, and strategizing current and future stability. This work is essential for audit preparation, compliance requirements, and informed decision-making moving forward.

Additional administrative and operational focus areas include:

- Providing oversight of finance functions, audit preparation activities, and compliance requirements
- Submitting required non-accounting reports (e.g., PERA)
- Alignment of support and resources (administration and consultant support)
- Managing areas of carrying out the executive director succession plan, administration oversight with follow-up and current work, and providing the Board with options and information for filling the executive director position vacancy.
- Handling insurance renewals, service contracts, and executive sign-off duties
- Working with the Finance Director on a revised FY25/26 budget and strategy development for the FY26/27 budget
- Coordination and facilitation of FY26/27 team budget meetings

## **Governance, Bylaws & Organizational Development**

Governance and efforts to strengthen organizational practices continue to be carried out. Key accomplishments and ongoing work include:

- Establishment of, along with ongoing work/support of an ad-hoc Bylaws Subcommittee
- Development of surveys, background materials, and packets for regular Commission, Board, Budget & Personnel, and Legislative Committee Meetings
- Oversight and assistance with Commission member recruitment and onboarding efforts
- Continued follow-up work on recommendations and actions from Commission and Committee meetings
- Preparations are underway for upcoming caucusing at the Commission meeting and annual meeting activities

## **Funding, Grants & Strategic Partnerships**

I have worked closely with staff to identify, pursue, and oversee grant funding and partnership opportunities that align with RNDC's mission and long-term sustainability. These efforts include both competitive grant submissions and strategic relationship-building activities.

Notable activities include:

- Meetings with McKnight Foundation, Blandin Foundation, Mankato Area Foundation, SMIF, Xcel Energy, and Taylor Family Farms Foundation to further develop relationships, partnerships, and potential funding opportunities for our organization and stakeholders within our region.
- Identification of new partners and avenues for collaboration
- Advocacy work alongside MADDO colleagues for collective regional development funding
- Ongoing grant tracking and oversight reflected in the organizational Gantt chart showcasing pursuit of new grant dollars.
- Oversight of awarded grants, including the Mankato Clinic Foundation Grant (\$10,000), MPCA Grant (\$85,000)
- Assistance and support related to several EDA grant applications
- Exploration of opportunities to support our region through the utilization of staff skills and expertise to develop technical assistance contracts to bring further value and support organizational revenue.

## **Staff Engagement & Capacity Building**

Supporting and investing in RNDC staff remains a priority. In addition to monthly staff meetings and individual check-ins, I have facilitated additional engagement opportunities—such as listening sessions and informal coffee conversations—to strengthen communication, trust, and team culture.

Staff development and organizational learning efforts also included:

- Participation in statewide director convenings and leadership training to bring best practices to RNDC
- Coordination and support of all staff training/programming that will provide professional development opportunities for our team (all grant funded)
- Gathering best practices and resources to inform updates to HR policies, procedures, and internal systems
- Continued focus on team development, clarity of roles, and organizational support

## **External Engagement & Regional Representation**

Throughout the reporting period, I have continued to represent Region Nine at key local, regional, and statewide meetings and events. These engagements support RNDC's partnerships, advocacy efforts, and regional leadership role.

Activities have included participation in:

- MADDO/NADO executive director calls and convenings
- Special events throughout the region that support our mission such as the Mapleton Childcare tour, presentation, and social
- Media representation through newspaper and radio interviews/coverage
- Participation in Transforming Tomorrow Together regional planning initiatives
- Ongoing State and Federal Legislative relations with officials and staff
- Engagement with higher education partners through participation at events and meetings
- Engagement with stakeholders throughout the region with the example of presenting at a recent Faribault County Board Meeting and planning/scheduling additional opportunities

## Finance

- The Financial Report located previously in this packet has been revised to improve clarity around available cash balances. Previously, Region Nine Development accounts and Revolving Loan Fund accounts were presented together, which created confusion and made it appear that more funds were available for operational use than was actually the case. These accounts are now reported separately, and the RLF cash balance statement has been moved to the final page of the report. This change is intended to provide a clearer picture of funds available for RNDC operational purposes.
- Work continues on cleaning up the GMS accounting system. However, this process is time-consuming, and my total workload continues to exceed my capacity. Previous board packets include slides that illustrate my workload across past (FY25), present (FY26), and future (FY27) responsibilities. Jessica and I have worked to identify and engage resources for help based on this breakdown. Our contractor Lu Vanderwerf is primarily assisting with cleaning up GMS and other tasks related to past work. Sarah has taken on a significant workload helping with accounts payable, benefit management, and other present tasks. Jessica and I continue to have budget planning discussions, and she assists with tasks related to future planning.
- On February 20<sup>th</sup>, Lu and I had a meeting with Abdo regarding our FY25 audit. We discussed the possibility of overriding the trail balance in GMS. It's not an ideal fix because it can cause multi-year reports to be incorrect, but at this point may be our only practical option. We also discussed the need to apply for an extension of our Single Audit. The auditor indicated this will likely result in an audit finding, which would require additional testing for future audits (40% instead of 20%). This should not create a significant burden, because our only funds currently requiring a Single Audit is the CARES RLF.
- A revised FY26 budget was approved by the Board for recommendation to the Full Commission at their March 18, 2026 meeting, and will be presented for final approval at this April meeting. Initial work on the FY27 budget has begun and will be the focus of the May Budget & Personnel and Board meetings, with final approval anticipated at the June Full Commission meeting

## Revolving Loan Fund

- Since the last Full Commission meeting, I have discussed with the Board the possibility of amending the de-federalized Legacy RLF plan to allow RNDC to apply for loans during emergency cash flow situations. Due to lack of support from the Board, this option will not be pursued further.

## Region Nine Area, Inc.

- RNAI is the fiscal host for the entity Food Recovery by Wooden Spoon. Last month they were awarded an Immigrant Rapid Response Fund grant from the Women's Foundation of Minnesota. The total award deposited into RNAI was \$30,000.

**PROGRAM UPDATES:**

**Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) – Alejandra, Nate**

To kick off the CEDS planning/engagement process for the required five-year update of this plan, three surveys have been launched to gather feedback from education professionals, students, and residents across the region. Alejandra also submitted a Regional Sustainable Development Partnerships (RSDP) application to support the CEDS planning process, regional engagement activities, and the development of a more interactive format for regional partners and the public.

Alejandra and Jazmine plan to host a gap financiers engagement event this summer to increase awareness of the RLF program and support CEDS outreach efforts. Alejandra has also been reviewing regional planning documents and economic data to help inform CEDS priorities.

Nate created a CEDS landing webpage and one-pager to share with stakeholders, and the CEDS Committee will convene in March to begin guiding the planning and implementation process. Alejandra has also been identifying regional organizations that can support the engagement process by co-hosting events, sharing feedback, and helping spread information about the CEDS.

Nate has been updating stakeholder lists to assist in CEDS engagement and future communications. Additional team members will be involved as needed for components of this planning and work including Kristian and Jessica. He has also been researching available data to support the report.

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

TPEC research activities continue to advance with significant progress in the Agriculture and Food Supply Chain cluster study, co-directed by Kristian. Over the past month, the team has completed a comprehensive quantitative research phase, culminating in a formal presentation of key findings to the advisory committee of statewide legislators and private sector representatives. This work has been further translated into a detailed final report supported by an interactive story map and a suite of data visualizations, all designed to clearly communicate trends, gaps, and opportunities across the supply chain. These deliverables are now in the final stages of refinement and integration, positioning the study for completion in alignment with the broader TPEC plan timeline.

Looking ahead, efforts are focused on finalizing the full set of recommendations that will inform both strategic priorities and targeted investments. The completed study will directly support the development of funded research initiatives for the 2026/2027 funding year, ensuring alignment with identified needs and high-impact opportunities within the sector. The full plan, including actionable recommendations and implementation guidance, remains on track for completion by June 30, providing an evidence-based foundation for the next phase of TPEC-supported research and programming that RNDC is part of.

**Regional Food Rescue – Tom, Sabri, Jessica**

2026 has gotten off to a strong start for food rescue in our region with 29,843 lbs., valued at approximately \$54,044. Some of the highlights thus far include green peppers, oranges & chicken from trucks rejected at Walmart, a large 5,000 lb. rescue of carrots from Kato Moving & Storage, extra meat from Compart Family Farms, and even some ice cream and milk off trucks at the MN-19 Truck Wash in Gaylord.

The goal for 2026 has been set at 125,000 lbs. rescued for our region. This reflects what we expect to be able to rescue based on current capacity and transportation arrangements while also including a slight increase over last year's numbers.

Tom has created a more streamlined "route system" for large rescues to make them more efficient and equitable to our food access partners. While this is in place, it still is reliant on time for Tom's availability and if the current transportation (the Wooden Spoon van) is available. If a more consistent and available transportation solution is found, talks with food access partners about regular deliveries will be made.

The tracking system has also been cleaned up and revamped for this next year. Our partnership with SCMNFR will allow them to also contribute data to the tracking sheets to not have duplicate data and to have a whole picture of food rescue within our region.

Sabri and Tom will be attending the Food Justice Summit in Duluth, March 27-29<sup>th</sup> to present on our local efforts and how this could be replicated throughout the state. Jessica and Tom attended the Faribault County Board of Commissioners meeting on March 17<sup>th</sup> to discuss RNDC's efforts throughout the region, with an emphasis on food rescue. Recent discussions have taken place with the Mankato Area Foundation and Taylor Family Farms to garner additional support for next phases and components of continuing to build regional food rescue efforts.

#### **Mankato Clinic Produce Place & SHIP Freezers – Tom**

Mankato Clinic will be looking into freezer solutions soon to have additional capacity. Additionally, RNDC received a \$10,000 grant from Mankato Clinic Foundation for furthering current efforts and supporting work to begin collaboration with area landfills.

Seeing how this program has flourished, SHIP has provided SCMNFR funding for four freezers around Blue Earth County the freezers have been delivered and filled for Pride Counseling Services, Fernbrook Family Center, Partners for Housing, and the Lake Crystal Area Rec Center.

Mayo Clinic has also expressed wanting to have a more formal agreement in place for their fridge/freezer program at their Eastridge location.

#### **SCMNFR Advisory Council – Tom, Sabri**

The final scheduled meeting of the council was held on March 16<sup>th</sup>. Participants agree that additional meetings would be helpful for the region and will have on-going meetings planned for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday of every month at 3:30pm. Future Discussion will be about the upcoming MPCA grant, the local growing season opportunities and gaps in coverage within our region.

#### **Communications – Nate**

In addition to other projects noted throughout, Nate has been preparing for the updated accessibility requirements. This has involved researching the new requirements, running an accessibility report, and correcting issues that he can. He has also gathered quotes to fix any issues that cannot be addressed in-house.

Nate is also working with Stephanie to prepare a move to a new storage facility that is climate-controlled and secure. The storage shed will contain RNDC documents. This project will also involve securely disposing of old documents to reduce the needed space for the new storage unit.

Nate to continued his work on a comprehensive communications guide for RNDC. This document will guide the communications department to ensure a consistent voice and help develop communication strategies for the future. The guide will also establish best practices when writing about communities and creating content for social media. This will also assist future communications personnel.

Nate continues to work reduced hours when he is able, although it has become difficult to manage the workload while cutting hours to help stabilize the organization's financial situation.

#### **Revolving Loan Fund – Jazmine**

Jazmine processed payments for the Revolving Loan Fund and remained actively engaged in community and industry events. She attended the Pioneer Bank March Madness networking event alongside Tom Polich and co-hosted the Conversation for the Public Good event in St. Peter at Gustavus. This event provided a valuable opportunity to connect with local business owners, resulting in several follow-up meetings to discuss the Revolving Loan Fund in greater detail.

Jazmine successfully closed the Our Family LLC (dba Czech Point Restaurant) loan in Montgomery and has begun conducting site visits for various clients, prioritizing CARES clients with the largest loan files. She also met with

stakeholders involved in the Truman Tavern project, which closed a few months ago, and completed an on-site evaluation, including reviewing operations and products.

In addition, Jazmine attended an SBA 504 Loan Program lender training in Mankato to further expand her expertise. She is currently working with a client in the process of purchasing a floral and gift shop in Le Center.

**Safe Streets and Roads for All Grant – Mark**

Mark and Joel have started scheduling public engagement workshops and walking audits for spring in Martin and Faribault Counties. The meetings will document the traffic safety concerns of residents and gaps in infrastructure. The outcome will be a list of prioritized action items for policy, maintenance, and infrastructure projects.

**Transportation/MnDOT Regional Planning Grant – Joel, Mark**

Joel attended the Minnesota Transportation Conference in St. Paul on March 17-19. There, he learned about a variety of topics, including street art and creative pavement (a topic also covered in the most recent TAC meeting), the new MnDOT corridor planning guidebook, mini and modular roundabout usage as affordable alternatives to traditional roundabouts, and design guidance for sidepaths along rural highways.

Joel received news from the MnDOT Office of Transit and Active Transportation that the City of Mapleton and RNDC's application was selected for an active transportation planning assistance grant. MnDOT will be paying for a consultant to create an active transportation plan for the city and install a demonstration project over the next year. RNDC staff, MnDOT representatives, and local stakeholders will serve as a committee throughout the planning process.

Joel and Mark attended a webinar on the new MnDOT Cost Participation Policy, which impacts all parts of the region where MnDOT may initiate projects. The most important detail from this is that the maximum local contribution for a MnDOT initiated project in a community is capped at 0.8% of the community's 5-year average annual net tax capacity, rounded to the nearest thousand dollars. The amount for each local unit of government is updated for the next fiscal year every September. Required local contribution amounts in the region range from \$0 in multiple cities with small tax bases to \$953,000 for the county with the highest tax base, Blue Earth. At the township level, the Ridgely Township in Nicollet County has the smallest required share with \$5,000, and Lanesburgh Township in Le Sueur County has the highest at \$36,000.

Mark is working with local bike advocates to reboot Bike to Work Day in Mankato on May 15.

**St. James Energy Navigators - Sabri**

Sabri has 11 household insulation installations scheduled for March and April.

**Prevention of Wasted Food MPCA Grant – Sabri**

Sabri is leading a regional effort to apply for the MPCAs prevention of wasted food and food rescue grant. The goal of the application is to rescue more food and build stronger infrastructure to connect that food to rural communities across the region. So far, partners include the Waseca Food Shelf, Neighborhood Pantry, Feeding our Community Partners, Southcentral MN Food Recovery, MY Place, Heaven's Table, and the Mankato Head Start.

**REGIONAL TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE:**

**Fairmont Energy and Environmental Resilience Plan – Sabri, Sam, Lisa, Nate**

They have started drafting the plan and should have a final document in late March. Nate is currently working on the final print-ready document. This includes remaking low-res charts and graphs, editing the original document to ensure a consistent voice and conformity to the Plain Language Initiative, and finding supporting images.

**Federal EDA Disaster Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) – Jessica, Kristian, Alejandra, Sabri**

RNDC anticipates a funding determination at any time for the MSU grant application submitted last fall, with approximately \$850,000 allocated to RNDC from the \$3.5 million project.

Springfield's construction application is awaiting a final EDA decision and is currently under consideration for a reduced award of \$8–9 million, pending utility provider contributions for electrical upgrades.

It is important to note that we are also awaiting funding news on projects for the following communities/areas; Cannon River Watershed (Le Sueur County), Martin County, and North Mankato.

Our team is continuing to work with Waterville and Mapleton on applications as well as circling back with a few other jurisdictions including Sibley County to determine potential projects as funding is available. Please reach out if there are questions or considerations for projects in your areas of representation.

**Minnesota Climate Adaptation Partnership (MCAP) – Sam, Jessica, Sabri**

As part of MCAP efforts, Sabri is coordinating with local Architecture and Engineering firms to bring an MCAP training and associated modeling resources to the region in late spring or early summer.

**Tri-County Solid Waste Management Plan – Joel, Mark, Nate**

Joel and Mark met with Tri-County Solid Waste in March to go over narrative and maps produced for the plan thus far. TCSW is pleased with the progress and will provide additional information for the plan later in March.

**Apple Blossom Road & Shooting Star Scenic Byways Corridor Management Plans – Mark, Joel, Sabri, Sam, Alejandra, Kristian, Sarah, Nate**

Mark is collecting GIS data for building detailed maps of each Scenic Byway.

**Empowering Small Minnesota Communities Rural EMS Project – Joel**

The project team had its first meeting for the Community Engagement to Advance Research and Community Health (CEARCH) grant. Over the several months, the team will continue research and outreach to develop legislative language around designating rural EMS as an essential service.

**Housing Forum – Alejandra**

Alejandra is working with MN Housing to co-host a regional Housing Forum focused in southern Minnesota. The event will tentatively take place on June 9<sup>th</sup>, the event aims to bring together 100–150 community leaders, nonprofits, developers, and policymakers to share data, success stories, and practical tools for advancing housing solutions, and planning is underway to identify speakers and finalize topics.

**GRANT COORDINATION AND ADMINISTRATION:**

(Additional Grant information is provided on an attached Gantt Chart Document)

**Solar on Schools – MNSU, Mankato – Sabri**

Sabri supported staff at MNSU-Mankato to submit a Solar on Schools' application which would add solar to the new dorm at their Future State Development. The full request was \$675,000 and would result in roughly a 438 kWdc solar array.

**Food Retail Improvement Grant – Sabri, Alejandra**

The team submitted two applications for this grant to improve the viability of local grocery stores through much needed investments in infrastructure. They are working with Seoul Foods in North Mankato and Davis' Marketplace in Waterville.

**BRIDGE The Gap: Student-Led Energy Outreach – Sam, Lisa**

The team will be holding the second project meeting hosted at the RNDC office. BRIDGE Club members will work with RNDC to finalize the survey and firm up the outreach strategy. Door-knocking and LED lighting kits distribution will begin in April.

**Region Nine Community Resilience Plan – Sam, Lisa**

Region Nine was recently awarded \$85,000 to complete a regional resilience plan through the MPCA's Planning Grants for Stormwater, Wastewater, and Community Resilience. The purpose of this project is to develop and test a

climate vulnerability assessment framework tailored to the Region Nine area, addressing gaps between FEMA-compliant Hazard Mitigation Plans (HMPs) and state climate priorities. This planning effort will provide counties and cities with actionable workflows, GIS-based vulnerability maps, and adaptation strategies that strengthen stormwater, wastewater, and community resilience.

**LCCMR Regional Resilience Coordination** – Sabri, Sam, and Lisa

RNDC seeks to expand regional capacity by establishing dedicated staff to serve as a regional sustainability coordinator for 72 rural communities across nine counties. The project will deliver free grant writing, in-kind project management, community engagement support, and decision-ready technical assistance for environmental and resilience initiatives. Communities will receive assistance with energy efficiency and renewable-energy planning, stormwater and flood-mitigation strategies, wetland and habitat restoration concepts, and natural-resource protection measures.

The project proposal has been submitted and is currently being processed for review. If selected to move on, a formal presentation of the proposal will be held in Summer 2026. If selected for funding, project activities would be eligible to begin Summer 2027.

**Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG)** – Sam, Sabri, Lisa

No new updates at this time.

**Henderson Stormwater and Wastewater Resilience Plan** – Sam, Lisa

No new updates at this time.

## RNDC Financial Gantt Chart - Current Funding

Project Title	Source	Category	Budget	RNDC Match	Total	Remaining Eligible Dollars for FY25/26	Other	Period	Disbursements	Start	End	Contract Link
EDA Partnership Planning Grant	Economic Development Administration	Federal	\$70,000	\$70,000	\$140,000		Not impacted by shutdown	Quarterly	\$17,500	4/1/2024	3/31/2027	<a href="#">EDA</a>
MnDOT Planning Grant	MnDOT	State	\$75,000	\$13,235	\$88,235			3x/year		7/7/2025	6/30/2026	<a href="#">MnDOT Planning</a>
Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) Year 1 of 3	Federal Highway Administration	Federal	\$90,667	\$22,667	\$113,334			Monthly		9/11/2025	6/30/2026	<a href="#">SS4A</a>
EECBG - Energy Block Grant	MN Department of Commerce	State	12,250	None	\$100,000					7/1/2024	11/30/2026	<a href="#">EECBG</a>
State Competitiveness Fund (For Pursuing Federal Projects)	MN Department of Commerce	State	100,000	None	\$290,000					2/16/2024	6/30/2026	<a href="#">State Competitiveness Fund</a>
State Competitiveness Fund (For Pursuit of Climate/Clean Energy Projects)	McKnight Foundation	Private Foundation	150,000	None	\$150,000					6/1/2024	6/30/2026	<a href="#">State Competitiveness - McKnight</a>
Regional Food Rescue Coordination	Mankato Area Foundation	Private Foundation		None	\$110,000			Single Stipend			Until funds are exhausted	<a href="#">no contract</a>
Community Innovation Prize	Community Innovation Prize	Federal	\$20,000	None	\$20,000			Pass through Funds		1/1/2025	1/1/2027	<a href="#">Thriving Communities - Innovation Grant</a>
RNDC - Thriving Communities	EPA/Minneapolis Foundation	Federal/Foundation	\$57,700	None	\$57,700					4/31/2025	3/31/2026	<a href="#">Thriving Communities</a>
Resource Rural - Windward Fund, St. James			\$15,000	None	\$15,000			Single Stipend		1/1/2025	1/1/2027	<a href="#">Resource Rural - St. James</a>
SCMNFR - Thriving Communities	EPA/Minneapolis Foundation	Federal/Foundation	\$19,500	None	\$19,500							<a href="#">SCMNFR - Thriving Communities</a>
Local Foods Month	Minnesota State University, Mankato		\$15,750							4/1/2025	10/1/2026	<a href="#">MNSU-LFM</a>
Local Climate Action Grant - Children's Museum	Minnesota Pollution Control Agency		\$1,800							8/8/2025	6/30/2026	<a href="#">LCA-Children's Museum</a>
Local Climate Action Grant - New Ulm	Minnesota Pollution Control Agency		\$5,490							8/8/2025	6/30/2026	<a href="#">LCA-New Ulm</a>
Shooting Star Scenic Byway	MnDOT District 6		\$74,305	None	\$74,305					10/15/2025*	6/30/2026	<a href="#">Shooting Star Byway</a>
Apple Blossom Scenic Byway	MnDOT District 6		\$74,445	None	\$74,445					10/15/2025*	6/30/2026	<a href="#">Apple Blossom Byway</a>
Tri-County Solid Waste Management Plan	Tri-County Solid Waste (Le Sueur, Nicollet, Sibley Counties)		\$15,000*	None	\$15,000					8/21/2024	6/30/2026	
Minnesota Climate Adaptation Partnership	University of Minnesota Regents	Higher Education	N/A	None	\$63,492	\$59,096.68				9/26/2024	6/30/2026	<a href="#">MCAP</a>
Henderson Stormwater/Wastewater Plan	Minnesota Pollution Control Agency	State	\$26,000	None			Needs Update!			4/1/2027	4/1/2027	
BRIDGE the Gap: Student-Led Energy Outreach	Clean Energy Resource Teams	Statewide Partnership	\$3,500	none	5000					1/1/2026	1/12/2027	<a href="#">CERTS-BRIDGE Club</a>
Historic Bluff County Scenic Byway	MnDOT District 6		\$15,000									
Bright Ideas for Comfrey	Clean Energy Resource Teams	Statewide Partnership	\$1,500	none	\$9,000					1/1/2026	1/12/2027	
SWC Planning Grant	MPCA	Grant	\$85,000	10% RNDC in-kind	\$93,500		RNDC lead applicant			5/1/2026	5/1/2027	pending

## RNDC Financial Gantt Chart - Submitted or Pending

Project Title	Source	Category	Budget	RNDC Match	Total	Remaining Eligible Dollars for FY25/26	Other	Period	Disbursements	Start	End
University of Minnesota - TPEC Study	U of M	Grant	\$20,000		\$20,000	\$20,000				10/1/2025	6/30/2026
NADO Rural Energy Academy	NADO	Stipend	\$4,000		\$4,000	\$4,000				11/1/2025	11/31/2025
SMIF	SMIF	Grant	\$20,000	\$5,000 (plus \$15,000 in-kind)	\$20,000					1/1/2026	
McKnight USDA Replacement	McKnight Foundation	Grant	\$50,000		\$50,000	\$50,000				10/31/2025	
Rural Resilience Through Nature-Based Solutions	Bush Foundation	Grant	\$250,000		\$250,000					9/12/2025	
From Recovery to Resilience: Strengthening Region Nine with Skills, Training, and Workforce Readiness	EDA	Grant	\$807,468	\$78,492	\$885,960		MSU				
Rural Resilience: Southern Minnesota Rapid Response to Extreme Weather	USDA-NIFA	Grant	\$99,000	No match						9/15/2025	
Increasing Climate Urban Practices - Outreach and Engagement Initiatives	Greater Blue Earth River Basin Alliance	Contract	\$10,000							9/12/2025	
Increasing Climate Urban Practices - Project Development Initiatives	Greater Blue Earth River Basin Alliance	Contract	\$65,000							9/12/2025	
Local Climate Action Grant	MPCA	Grant	\$50,000	\$2,500 (RNDC 5% in-kind)	\$52,500		RNDC lead applicant				6/30/2027

RED = Did not Receive