



REGION NINE



**DEVELOPMENT
COMMISSION**

Board of Directors Meeting

Wednesday, May 13, 2026 4:30 pm



AGENDA

	<u>Time</u>	<u>Page</u>	<u>Action</u>
1. Call To Order	4:30		
2. Roll Call – <i>Secretary Branstad</i>			
3. Approval of Agenda			Action
4. Approval of March 18, 2026, Meeting Minutes			Action
5. Approval of Financials	4:40		Action
6. Grant/Project Item Review			
a. New Grant Awards			
b. Updated Grant/Project List			
7. Proposed Scope of Work Plan for Financial Sustainability & Organizational Development	4:50		
Presented by Jessica Beyer, Interim Executive Director and Kim Snyder, Excelsior Bay Group			
8. Annual Succession Plan Reviews	5:05		
a. Finance Director’s Succession Plan Review			
b. Interim Executive Director’s Plan Review			
9. Retention Policy Revision Update & Draft	5:15		
10. Chair’s Report	5:25		
a. Approval of Resolution 2026-02: Proposed FY27 Meeting Dates			Action
b. Nominating Committee Recommendations of Officers			
c. Other			
11. Reports	5:35		
a. Interim Executive Director’s Report – <i>Jessica Beyer</i>			
b. Finance Director’s Report – <i>Stephanie Hilpipre</i>			
12. Other Business	5:45		
a. Commissioner Updates			
b. Meeting Evaluation			Handout
13. Adjournment	6:00		Action

1. Call to Order

Chair Laven called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m.

2. Roll Call

MEMBERS PRESENT: Jim Branstad, Marie Dranttel (virtual), Mike Laven, Tom Loveall, Christian Lilienthal (virtual), Patty O'Connor, Steve Rohlfig, Phil Schafer, Rob Wilkening (virtual)

MEMBERS ABSENT: Andrea Boettger

OTHERS PRESENT: Jessica Beyer, Stephanie Hilpiper, Sarah Janovsky, Shanon Nowell (B&P Chair), Josh Heggem (Attorney)

There was a quorum.

3. Approval of the Agenda

Schafer moved to approve the agenda as presented. Branstad seconded. Motion carried.

The Board entered a closed session pursuant to Minnesota Statute 13D.03 to discuss labor negotiation strategy

O'Connor moved to return meeting to open session. Loveall seconded. Motion carried.

4. Approval of February 11, 2026, Meeting Minutes

Schafer moved to approve the February 11, 2026 meeting minutes as presented. Rohlfig seconded. Motion carried.

5. Approval of Financials

The Finance Director provided an overview of the January financial statements, including cash balances, receipts, disbursements, and outstanding payables. The Board discussed current financial conditions and acknowledged upcoming budget pressures.

Loveall moved to approve the Financials. Schafer seconded. Motion carried.

6. Grant Items

Staff presented a proposed resolution authorizing submission of a Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR) grant application. The Board discussed the opportunity, including the absence of a match requirement, indirect cost implications, capacity considerations, and strategic value of pursuing the funding despite fiscal constraints.

Loveall moved to approve the resolution authorizing submission of the application. Wilkening seconded. Motion carried.

Staff reported that RNDC was awarded an MPCA grant to support stormwater, wastewater, and community resilience work across the region. The Board received an overview of the grant scope, funding amount allocated to RNDC, project duration, and planned use of funds, including partnerships and staffing components.

Staff reviewed the updated Gantt chart outlining active, pending, and submitted grants, including recent EPA and EDA applications. The Board discussed timing uncertainties related to grant awards and the ongoing need to track grant obligations, staffing capacity, and cash flow implications.

7. Information/Discussion Items

Stephanie Hilpipre presented a revised fiscal year 2026 budget based on actual cash activity and current staffing assumptions. The Board discussed revenue constraints, expenditure reductions, austerity measures, legal costs, and assumptions related to reduced staff hours and the absence of an Executive Director.

Rohlfing moved to recommend the revised FY26 budget to the full commission. O'Connor seconded. Motion carried.

Hilpipre presented a detailed overview of FY27 budget planning, including funding flow diagrams, use of levy dollars, reserve requirements, indirect cost recovery, and long-term financial sustainability. Discussion focused on diversification of revenue sources, rebuilding reserves, and strategic use of contract work to support financial stability.

Jessica Beyer informed the Board that the agency's records retention schedule, last updated in 2013, would be reviewed and updated in conjunction with an office relocation. Discussion included both physical and electronic records and alignment with current state standards.

The Board discussed the Executive Director position in light of current financial conditions. Consensus was to pause further action and revisit the position at a later date after financial stabilization.

The Board discussed caucusing timing, officer succession, committee assignments, and alignment with election cycles. Staff also reported on upcoming caucusing at the April Commission meeting, ongoing commissioner appointments, and the Budget and Personnel Committee's role in nominations.

8. Reports

Chair Laven acknowledged staff efforts during a challenging financial period and emphasized the importance of continued oversight, transparency, and collaboration. Upcoming closed session topics and Commission items were noted.

Beyer highlighted ongoing grant activity, upcoming housing forum planning, and general operational updates. Additional closed session matters scheduled for May were noted.

Hilpipe expanded on financial sustainability efforts, reserve planning, indirect cost recovery, and long-term budget strategy. Potential options related to revolving loan funds and cash flow management were discussed at a high level.

9. Other Business

The Board acknowledged the passing of a local elected official and expressed condolences. No additional business was raised.

10. Adjournment

Loveall moved to adjourn. Branstad seconded. Motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:16 p.m.



Financial Report
May 10, 2026 - Full Commission Meeting

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

Cash Receipts	\$	46,692.98
Bank Interest	\$	3,724.19
Total Receipts	\$	50,417.17

Payroll and Benefits Disbursements	\$	(132,996.57)
Accounts Payable	\$	(123,045.11)
Credit Card Charges	\$	(7,351.74)
Total Disbursements	\$	(263,393.42)

CASH BALANCE - April 30, 2026 **\$ 487,636.33**

Region Nine Development Commission Accounts

R9 MAGIC	\$	429,397.95
Wells Fargo - Payroll Account	\$	58,238.38
TOTAL:	\$	487,636.33

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

Description	Amount
DATE: 4/20/2026	
Check Deposit	\$ 4,974.13
DATE: 4/29/2026	
State of Minnesota - State Competativeness	\$ 31,782.47
State of Minnesota - EECBG	\$ 9,936.38
April 2026 Total Cash Receipts:	\$ 46,692.98

Region Nine Development Commission
April 2026 - Summary of Disbursements
FY 2026

Date	Description	Amount
Payroll and Benefits Disbursements		
04/28/2026	Wex Health	\$ (495.00)
04/28/2026	Wex Health	\$ (484.61)
04/27/2026	PERA	\$ (5,110.67)
04/24/2026	Wex Health	\$ (79.75)
04/23/2026	Payroll	\$ (35,580.44)
04/20/2026	Missionsquare	\$ (488.95)
04/14/2026	Wex Health	\$ (495.00)
04/14/2026	Wex Health	\$ (484.61)
04/13/2026	PERA	\$ (4,919.77)
04/13/2026	iSolved Fee	\$ (214.59)
04/09/2026	Payroll	\$ (34,262.56)
04/07/2026	Delta Dental	\$ (264.88)
04/06/2026	Missionsquare	\$ (488.95)
04/01/2026	Health Insurance	\$ (9,197.64)
03/31/2026	Wex Health	\$ (495.00)
03/31/2026	Wex Health	\$ (484.61)
03/30/2026	PERA	\$ (4,951.01)
03/26/2026	Payroll	\$ (34,473.78)
03/26/2026	Wex Health	\$ (24.75)
Total:		\$ (132,996.57)

Accounts Payable		
03/27/2026	Conference Speaker Fee (MADO Pooled Funds)	\$ (10,400.00)
04/15/2026	ANALYSIS SERVICE CHARGE - Bank Fee	\$ (497.37)
04/30/2026	James Kotewa	\$ (128.30)
04/28/2026	Mike Laven	\$ (50.00)
04/28/2026	Jordan Hunter	\$ (52.18)
04/28/2026	Scott Schlueter	\$ (86.25)
04/28/2026	Tom Loveall	\$ (100.75)
04/28/2026	Stephanie Hilpipre (Wellness checks)	\$ (280.00)
04/27/2026	Jessica Beyer	\$ (138.93)
04/27/2026	Robert Goblirsch	\$ (230.50)
04/27/2026	Mike Pfeil	\$ (251.50)
04/27/2026	St. James Electric	\$ (32,914.00)
04/24/2026	Lynda Kruse	\$ (79.00)
04/24/2026	Liz Krocak	\$ (106.55)
04/24/2026	Gary Richter	\$ (126.85)
04/24/2026	Vanderberg Cleaning	\$ (360.00)
04/24/2026	Frontier Energy	\$ (12,250.00)
04/23/2026	Philip Schafer	\$ (145.70)
04/23/2026	Mary Milbrath	\$ (168.85)
04/23/2026	Metro Sales Inc.	\$ (290.40)
04/22/2026	Patty O'Connor	\$ (50.00)
04/22/2026	Andrea Boettger	\$ (83.35)
04/22/2026	Jeff Annis	\$ (86.25)
04/22/2026	Steven Cooling	\$ (86.25)
04/22/2026	Jean Anderson	\$ (100.75)
04/22/2026	Jim Branstad	\$ (109.45)
04/22/2026	South Central Service Coop	\$ (207.50)
04/22/2026	Mid-Minnesota Development Commission	\$ (3,575.00)
04/22/2026	Minnesota U.I Fund	\$ (10,428.00)
04/21/2026	Tom Polich	\$ (71.05)
04/21/2026	Harris Computer Systems	\$ (90.60)
04/21/2026	Elroy Glidden	\$ (144.25)

04/21/2026	Blethen Berens	\$	(430.00)
04/21/2026	Southwest Regional Development Commission	\$	(561.27)
04/21/2026	ICS Consulting LLC	\$	(3,062.50)
04/21/2026	Pemberton Law	\$	(3,709.50)
04/21/2026	Reichel Insulation, LLC (Thriving Communities Grant)	\$	(19,109.80)
04/20/2026	Jazmine Flores (mileage)	\$	(142.83)
04/20/2026	Shred-It	\$	(164.59)
04/16/2026	Security Storage Systems	\$	(300.00)
04/16/2026	Shanon Nowell	\$	(71.75)
04/14/2026	American Solutions for Business	\$	(37.27)
04/13/2026	Neubau Holdings LLC (Rent)	\$	(6,808.00)
04/10/2026	Mike Laven	\$	(50.00)
04/09/2026	City of Mankato (Parking)	\$	(266.54)
04/09/2026	Vanderberg Cleaning	\$	(360.00)
04/09/2026	GMS	\$	(438.00)
04/09/2026	Metro Sales Inc.	\$	(1,083.19)
04/08/2026	Claire Goettl	\$	(50.00)
04/08/2026	TeamKeeper	\$	(90.60)
04/08/2026	Lisa Callahan	\$	(4,200.00)
04/07/2026	Steve Rohlfig	\$	(30.45)
04/07/2026	Xcel Energy	\$	(62.74)
04/07/2026	Scott Schlueter	\$	(84.80)
04/07/2026	Gary Richter	\$	(126.85)
04/07/2026	Tom Polich	\$	(168.93)
04/07/2026	Tom Loveall	\$	(251.50)
04/07/2026	Blethen Berens	\$	(1,634.00)
04/06/2026	Lu Vanderwerf	\$	(4,890.62)
04/06/2026	Philip Schafer	\$	(145.70)
04/06/2026	Lynda Kruse	\$	(71.75)
04/06/2026	Christian Lilienthal	\$	(50.00)
04/06/2026	Andrea Boettger	\$	(50.00)
04/02/2026	Jim Branstad	\$	(105.10)
04/02/2026	Patty O'Connor	\$	(50.00)
04/01/2026	Tom Loveall	\$	(302.25)
03/31/2026	Scott Schlueter	\$	(169.60)
3/31/2026	Andrea Boettger	\$	(175.40)
03/25/2026	Mike Laven	\$	(50.00)
Total:			\$ (123,045.11)

Credit Card Charges

3/9/2026	Alejandra - Survey Monkey	\$	(1,080.00)
2/23/2026	Jessica - Adobe, Inc.	\$	(3,623.30)
2/25/2026	Jessica - The Plaid Moose (Slayton)	\$	(22.13)
2/25/2026	Jessica - Key Largo (Slayton)	\$	(38.40)
2/26/2025	Jessica - The UPS Store	\$	(137.00)
2/26/2025	Jessica - The Plaid Moose (Slayton)	\$	(24.13)
2/26/2025	Jessica - Kwik Trip	\$	(32.28)
3/5/2026	Jessica - Fillin' Station Coffee	\$	(17.29)
3/6/2026	Sabri - AirBnB (duluth conference)	\$	(476.59)
2/23/2026	Nate - gotprint.com	\$	(324.78)
3/5/2026	Nate - Canva	\$	(53.94)
2/27/2026	Joel - ACEC Minnesota	\$	(300.00)
3/19/2026	Joel - Hyatt Place St. Paul	\$	(467.50)
3/19/2026	Joel - Hyatt Place St. Paul	\$	(25.00)
2/27/2026	Tom - Mistake Swipe (already reimbursed)	\$	(579.37)
2/24/2026	Sarah- Family Dollar	\$	(5.39)
2/24/2026	Sarah - Lake Shetek Resort	\$	(95.12)
3/3/2026	Sarah- Sams Club.com	\$	(49.52)
Total:			\$ (7,351.74)



**Revolving Loan Fund - Cash Balance Report
May 13, 2026 - Full Commission Meeting**

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

Legacy RLF Loan Payments	\$	18,036.00
Legacy RLF Bank Interest	\$	9,370.05
Legacy RLF Loan Closing Fees	\$	1,350.00

CARES RLF Loan Payments	\$	12,451.49
CARES RLF Bank Interest	\$	1,452.66
CARES RLF Loan Closing Fees	\$	1,023.00

Total Receipts **\$ 43,683.20**

New Loans	\$	(90,000.00)
Returned ACH Payment	\$	(1,396.35)
Service Charges	\$	(35.68)

Total Disbursements **\$ (91,432.03)**

CASH BALANCE - April 30, 2026 **\$ 1,739,079.21**

Revolving Loan Fund Accounts

Legacy RLF - MAGIC	\$	1,490,513.09
CARES RLF - MAGIC	\$	248,566.12
TOTAL:	\$	1,739,079.21

RNDC Funding Summary

Department/Program	Contract Source	Money Source	R9 Lead	Full Award	Pass-through	\$ for R9 Operation Expenses			Start	End
						FY26	FY27	FY28		
General Fund										
	Nine Counties	Lewy	Jessica			\$698,409	\$719,361	\$740,942		
Revolving Loan Fund										
Legacy Revolving Loan Fund	De-Federalized	Interest	Jazmine			\$117,000	\$121,000	\$125,000		
CARES Revolving Loan Fund	Economic Development Administration	Interest - Federal	Jazmine			\$33,000	\$34,000	\$35,000		
Economic Development										
EDA Planning Grant	Economic Development Administration	Federal Funds	Alejandra	\$210,000		\$80,000	\$52,500	\$52,500	4/1/2024	3/31/2027
Springfield CARES	Springfield CARES	Local Contract	Alejandra	\$4,500		\$4,500	\$-	\$-		
UofM - Center for Transportatin Studies (TPEC)	University of Minnesota	State Funds	Kristian	\$53,500		\$53,500	\$-	\$-		
Compeer - Childrens Museum	Compeer	Private Grant	Kristian	\$5,000		\$5,000	\$-	\$-		
GMG/DEED Mainstreet Grant Review	GMG	Private Grant	Kristian	\$4,950		\$4,950	\$-	\$-		
Transportation										
Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A)	Federal Highway Administration	Federal Funds	Mark	\$340,000		\$72,534	\$133,733	\$133,733		6/30/2028
MnDOT Planning Grant	MnDOT	State Funds	Joel	\$150,000		\$75,000	\$75,000	\$-	7/1/2025	6/30/2027
Shooting Star Scenic Byway	MnDOT District 6	State Funds	Joel	\$74,305		\$37,192	\$37,113	\$-		
Apple Blossom Scenic Byway	MnDOT District 6	State Funds	Joel	\$74,445		\$37,192	\$37,253	\$-		
Historic Bluff Scenic Byway	ECRDC - subcontract of MnDOT funds	Out of Region Contract	Joel	\$15,000		\$15,000	\$-	\$-		
Rural EMS - Empowering Small Communities	University of Minnesota Extension	State Funds	Joel	\$8,000		\$-	\$8,000	\$-		
Tri-County Solid Waste Management Plan	Le Sueur, Nicollet & Sibley Counties	Local Contract	Joel	\$5,000		\$5,000	\$-	\$-		
Environment & Sustainability										
McKnight FY27-FY28 Contract	McKnight Foundation	Private Foundation	Jessica	TBD		\$50,000	TBD	TBD		
Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG)	MN Department of Commerce	State Funds	Sabri	\$100,000	\$60,660	\$10,000	\$26,841	\$-	7/1/2024	11/30/2026
Local Foods Month	Minnesota State University	State Funds	Sabri	\$27,500		\$11,750	\$15,750	\$-	4/1/2025	10/31/2026
MPCA - R9 Community Resilience Plan	Minnesota Pollution Control Agency	State Funds	Sam	\$85,000	\$12,748	\$72,252	\$-	\$8,500		
Henderson Stormwater/Wastewater Plan	Minnesota Pollution Control Agency	State Funds	Sam	\$135,000		\$4,500	\$12,000	\$-	1/28/2026	1/12/2027
BRIDGE the Gap - CERTS Seed Grant	University of Minnesota Extension	State Funds	Sam	\$5,000		\$2,500	\$2,500	\$-	6/1/2024	6/30/2026
McKnight State Competitiveness	McKnight Foundation	Private Foundation	Jessica	\$150,000		\$75,000	\$-	\$-		
McKnight FY26 Emergency Funds	McKnight Foundation	Private Foundation	Jessica	\$290,000		\$173,524	\$-	\$-		
State Competitiveness Fund	McKnight Foundation	Private Foundation	Jessica	\$63,492		\$60,000	\$-	\$-	2/16/2024	6/30/2026
Minnesota Climate Adaptation Partnership (MCAP)	MN Department of Commerce	State Funds	Jessica	\$5,490		\$5,490	\$-	\$-	9/23/2024	6/30/2026
Local Climate Action Grant - New Ulm	University of Minnesota Extension	State Funds	Sam	\$3,150		\$3,150	\$-	\$-	7/8/2025	6/30/2026
Local Climate Action Grant - Children's Museum	Minnesota Pollution Control Agency	State Funds	Sam	\$350,000		\$20,000	\$-	\$-	7/24/2025	3/31/2026
RNDC - Thriving Communities	Minneapolis Foundation - Federal Subgrantee	Federal Funds	Sabri	\$310,000	\$302,375	\$20,000	\$-	\$-	4/31/2025	
Community Energy Innovation Prize/Covivencia Hispana	U.S. Department of Energy	Federal Funds	Sabri	\$150,000		\$50,000	\$-	\$-	9/9/2021	6/15/2025
Resource Rural - St. James	Windward Foundation	Private Foundation	Sabri	\$290,553		\$28,112	\$-	\$-		
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)	U.S. Department of Agriculture	Federal Funds	Sabri	\$31,412		\$31,412	\$-	\$-		
Minnesota Local Food Purchase Assistance (LFPA)	Minnesota Department of Agriculture	State Funds	Sabri	\$11,833		\$11,833	\$-	\$-		
USDA Regional Food Business Centers (RFBCC)	Region 5 - USDA Federal Subgrantee	Federal Funds	Sabri							
Food Recovery										
Regional Food Rescue Coordination: FY25 - FY26	Mankato Area Foundation	Private Foundation	Sabri	\$150,000		\$100,000	\$-	\$-		Until Exhausted

Memorandum

To: RNDC Board of Directors

From: Jessica Beyer, Deputy Director/Interim Executive Director

Date: May 1, 2025

Re: Proposed Scope of Work Plan for Financial Sustainability & Organizational Development

Included in the Board Packet is a proposed scope of work plan to continue to address long-term financial sustainability and organizational development needs of the organization into the future.

It is a pivotal time for RNDC amidst a leadership change with ongoing work to rebuild organizational culture, trust, and accountability on top of challenging financial pressures the organization has not experienced in recent history.

Over the last six months, as I've led the organization as Interim Executive Director, I'm proud of the way the RNDC team has continued to pivot and work together to make organizational progress in addition to working with me on ways to reinvent how we meet the needs of the region while building partnerships, identifying new funding opportunities, and doing our best to stay resilient throughout a changing environment with many of our traditional funding sources shrinking or going away.

However, looking to the future, much more work needs to be done strategically to address financial sustainability as well as organizational development needs long-term.

Given tight budgets without a financial means to gain external guidance at a critical time for RNDC, I knew I needed to get creative to explore resources and tools to help the organization get to the next level with navigating multiple challenges. Therefore, I researched different opportunities and leaned on relationships and resources I was aware of from past leadership experiences in the region to explore grant opportunities that could support our organizational development needs at RNDC.

To support the proposed scope of work plan provided, I obtained a grant through the Mankato Area Foundation as part of their consultant in residency program.

As part of the grant opportunity, Kim Snyder, founder and consultant with Excelsior Bay Group will be able to work with RNDC at no-cost to execute on the proposed work plan that we developed together.

This proposal seeks to address top focus areas and needs of the organization. Kim and I will present and facilitate discussion with the Board about the grant opportunity at the May 13 Board of Directors meeting.

Proposed Scope of Work Overview
 Kim Snyder, Excelsior Bay Group
 May 1, 2026

Like many nonprofit and public-sector organizations across the state, the Commission is facing significant financial pressures while also navigating an unanticipated leadership transition. This moment presents both challenge and opportunity to strengthen alignment, clarify roles, and position the organization for long-term sustainability.

To support the Commission during this period, the Consultant will partner with the Deputy Director/Interim Executive Director, Staff, and Commission Leadership to strengthen:

1. **Financial sustainability** by identifying opportunities to diversify and grow both earned and contributed revenue.
2. **Organizational culture** and build a shared sense of commitment to the Commission’s short and long-term success.
3. **The partnership between the board and staff** by establishing clear practices that support collaboration and accountability and secure the future.

Proposed Services and Timeline:

May 13 th	Board meeting – Kim present scope of proposed work for feedback and/or approval
May 14-29 th	Individual interviews with selected Commission, Board, and B & P members to gather feedback regarding (a) understanding of their roles and responsibilities, (b) organizational and board strengths and weaknesses, (c) perceptions regarding how best to move forward with unity and clarity of purpose.
May 18 th	Staff meeting – Kim to meet with staff to gather feedback regarding (a) the Commission’s internal culture, (b) their own role in building a healthy trusting work environment, and (c) the Commission’s value to the region – NOTE: consider conducting individual interviews with key staff before this meeting.
June -- TBD	Present findings to staff and Board/Commission with suggested recommendations for addressing the three issues above.

Potential interview / discussion questions for board and staff members:

Culture-related:

- How would you describe the organization’s/board’s current culture?
- What can we build on and what needs improvement?
- What do you need to be successful in your role, both individually and as part of the team/board?
- What is one thing you can do to strengthen internal culture and demonstrate your commitment to the mission?

Purpose:

- What do you see as the organization’s greatest strength or value to the region?
- Do the people who live and work in the region need more or different things from the Commission?
- What do they need – and is this within the scope or capacity of the Commission?

SUCCESSION PLAN
For Region Nine Development Commission (RNDC)
Finance Director Position

Approved by the RNDC Board of Directors
(This plan is reviewed, updated, and approved annually.)

EMERGENCY PLAN - Short Term Unplanned Absence.

1. Rationale: When the Finance Director departs unexpectedly, usually due to death or illness, this can be used as a short-term “stop gap” measure to sustain viability for the short-term or for longer-term use when it will take time for recovery of illness or to go through replacement.
2. Priority Functions of the Finance Director needed to be completed on a short-term basis include:
 - A. Ensuring vendors are paid on a timely basis.
 - B. Performing the payroll and related human resources functions.
 - C. Receipting and depositing funds as necessary.
 - D. Submission of required federal reporting as needed.
3. Approved Actions in the event of an unplanned temporary/short absence or death of the Finance Director.
 - A. The Board of Directors authorizes the Executive Director to implement the terms of this emergency plan.
 - B. The Executive Director shall immediately inform the Chair of the Commission of the Finance Director absence.
 - C. The Lending Specialist shall assume the duties as listed under Priority Functions as listed earlier.
 - D. RNDC’s IT representative will allow all applicable data access to that of the Lending Specialist and/or Executive Director.
4. Cross-Training Plan for Appointees: The Finance Director with the help of the Executive Director shall develop a plan for training the Lending Specialist in each of the priority functions of the Finance Director. *(as listed in bullet 2.)*

The training plan will be attached to this document when the plan is completed. The Finance Director shall have the responsibility of handling the logistics of the plan’s implementation. The plan will include:

- A listing of all login systems needed for completion of priority functions.
- Video walkthroughs of how to perform each priority function.

- Email and call forwarding to be put in place for communications required of the Finance Director.
5. **Compensation:** The Acting Finance Director shall receive a temporary salary increase to the entry-level salary of the Finance Director OR to 5% above his/her current salary, whichever is greater.

TEMPORARY LONG-TERM PLAN

1. **Rationale:** When the Finance Director's unplanned absence is expected to last more than 3 months and it is expected that the Finance Director will return to his/her position once the events precipitating the absence are resolved.

If the Finance Director will be able to resume the duties of the position, then the following procedures will be taken.

2. **Procedures:** The procedures and conditions to be followed shall be the same as for the unplanned short-term absence with one addition:
 - A. The Board of Directors will give immediate consideration in consultation with the Lending Specialist to temporarily back-fill the position left vacant by the Acting Finance Director. OR they may decide to develop a temporary plan utilizing **multiple** appropriate staff to cover the responsibilities of the position left vacant including the possibility of employing a temp agency or consultant. This is in recognition of the fact that, for a term of more than 3 months, it may not be reasonable to expect the Lending Specialist to carry the duties of both positions. The position description of a temporary position would focus on covering the priority areas in which the Lending Specialist needs assistance.

APPROVALS AND MAINTENANCE OF RECORD

1. **Succession Plan Approval:** This succession plan will be approved by the Board of Directors. Following approval, the plan will be reviewed and amended as needed annually.
2. **Signatories:** The Board Chair, Executive Director, Finance Director and the appointees designated in this plan shall sign this plan and all updated version of the plan if there are changes at the June meeting of the Commission.

3. **Maintenance of Record:** Copies of this plan shall be maintained by the Executive Director and Finance Director on an annual basis.

SIGNATORIES

TO Be Annually Updated and Secured at Commission June Meeting

This Succession Plan has been reviewed and approved by the full Board of the RNDC Commission on RNDC.

Mike Laven, Board Chair

Date

Executive Director

Date

Finance Director

Date

Jazmine Flores, Lending Specialist

Date

SUCCESSION PLAN
For Region Nine Development Commission (RNDC)
Executive Director Position

Approved by the Commission of RNDC
(This plan is reviewed, updated, and approved annually.)

EMERGENCY PLAN - Short Term Unplanned Absence.

1. Rationale: When the Executive Director departs unexpectedly, usually due to death or illness, this can be used as a short-term “stop gap” measure to sustain viability for the short-term or for longer-term use when it will take time for recovery of illness or to go through replacement.
2. Priority Functions of the Executive Director – see attached job description and External Roles and Relationships. Those functions include:
 - A. Carry out the mission of RNDC as stated by RNDC Commission through planning, administration and communication.
 - B. Assure that the overall operations of the commission are carried out in an effective, professional, and timely manner.
3. Approved Actions in the event of an unplanned temporary/short absence or death of the Executive Director.
 - A. The Commission authorizes the Board of Directors to implement the terms of this emergency plan.
 - B. The Deputy Director or other appropriate staff shall immediately inform the Chair of the Commission of the Executive Director’s absence.
 - C. The Commission Chair shall convene a meeting of the Board of Directors via video conference to affirm the procedures prescribed in this plan or to make modifications the Board deems appropriate.
 - D. Standing Appointee to the position of Acting Executive Director: to be Jessica Beyer, Deputy Director.
If Jessica Beyer is unable to take on the role of Acting Executive Director, Kristian Braekkan will serve as the backup for the position.

The Board of Directors may consider the option of splitting executive duties among the designated appointees.

4. Cross-Training Plan for Appointees: The Executive Director will work with the Deputy Director to develop a plan for training in each of the priority functions of the Executive Director. *(from job description)*

The training plan will be attached to this document when the plan is completed.

5. Authority and restrictions of the Appointee: The person appointed as Acting Executive Director shall have the full authority for decision-making and independent action as the regular Executive Director. This includes signature authority on all accounts, investments and checks, etc. The RNDC Finance Director, will immediately issue all appropriate signature changes to include Acting Executive Director; such as signature cards for checking accounts at banks, etc.
6. Compensation: The Acting Executive Director shall receive a temporary salary increase to the entry-level salary of the Executive Director OR to 5% above his/her current salary, whichever is greater.
7. The Board Chair is responsible for oversight and support to the Acting Executive Director: As with the Executive Director, the Board Chair will have responsibility for monitoring the work of the Acting Executive Director. In addition, the Board of Directors will also be alert to the special support needs of the Acting Executive Director in their temporary leadership role.
8. Communications Plan: As soon as possible after the Acting Executive Director has begun covering an unplanned absence of the Executive Director, The Board Chair shall communicate the temporary leadership structure to the following key supporters external to RNDC:
 - A. Governments within the Region Nine region, total of nine counties
 - B. Key Customers (current contractual partners)
 - C. Key Partners and foundations (NADO and MADDO Executive Directors)
 - D. When appropriate the Communications Specialist will develop a press release for regional newspapers and media. Press release will also be sent to all newspapers and news outlets in the region.

TEMPORARY LONG-TERM PLAN

1. **Rationale:** When the Executive Director's unplanned absence is expected to last more than 3 months and it is expected that the Executive Director will return to his/her position once the events precipitating the absence are resolved.
Process: A determination will be made by the Board of Directors to decide if the Executive Director is ready and able to resume the duties of the position. If it is determined that the Executive Director is not either ready nor able to resume the duties of the position, and therefore will not be reinstated, then

the Permanent Plan outlined in this document will commence. If it is determined that they are ready and able to resume the duties of the position, then a plan for an orderly return will be established, communicated and implemented.

If the Board of Directors determines that the Executive Director **will be able** to resume the duties of the position, then the following procedures will be taken.

2. **Procedures:** The procedures and conditions to be followed shall be the same as for the unplanned short-term absence with one addition:
 - A. The Board of Directors of the Commission will give immediate consideration in consultation with Acting Executive Director, to temporarily back-fill the position left vacant by the Acting Executive Director (filling the Deputy Director position). OR they may decide to develop a temporary plan utilizing **multiple** appropriate staff to cover the responsibilities of the Deputy Director position left vacant. This is in recognition of the fact that, for a term of more than 3 months, it may not be reasonable to expect the Acting Executive Director to carry the duties of both positions. The position description of a temporary position would focus on covering the priority areas in which the Acting Executive Director needs assistance.

PERMANENT PLAN

1. **Rationale:** A permanent unplanned absence is one in which it is firmly determined that the Executive Director will not be returning to the position.
2. **Procedures:** The procedures and conditions shall be the same as the temporary long-term plan for an unplanned absence with the following additions:
 - A. The Commission shall appoint a Search Committee to include a minimum of two Commission members, one or two MADO Executive Directors (Dawn Hegland and/or Jay Trusty), and begin the process of a search for a permanent long-term Executive Director.
 - B. Search Committee will utilize a Talent Recruitment Consultant who will report directly to the Chair of the Search Committee to develop a full search plan and implementation.

- C. Search Committee Chair will work with the Acting Executive Director to:
1. Develop Request For Proposal (RFP) for a Talent Recruiter, that a search firm considered for selection criteria would have a rural perspective, Minnesota base preferred, experience in working with organizations similar to RNDC and other criteria that could be developed by the search committee.
 2. Set up interviews with Search Consultant candidates, and
 3. Once a Search Consultant has been selected, amend the organizational budget to include both Search Committee and Search Consultant expenses.
- D. When the selection of the new Executive Director is made, the Search Committee Chair will work with Acting Executive Director to development a communications plan utilizing, where appropriate, the communications plan above for the formal announcement of a new Executive Director.

APPROVALS AND MAINTENANCE OF RECORD

1. **Succession Plan Approval:** This succession plan will be approved by the full Commission. Following approval, the plan will be reviewed and amended as needed by the Board of Directors.
2. **Signatories:** The Board Chair, Executive Director, and the appointees designated in this plan shall sign this plan and all updated version of the plan if there are changes at the June meeting of the Commission.
3. **Maintenance of Record:** Copies of this plan shall be maintained by the Board Chair, Executive Director, Finance Director, and filed.

SIGNATORIES

This Succession Plan has been reviewed and approved by the RNDC Commission.

Mike Laven, Chair of the Commission

Date

Executive Director

Date

Jessica Beyer, Deputy Director

Date

Kristian, Braekkan, Economic Development Director

Date



RESOLUTION

Region Nine Development Commission

2026 – 02

**Resolution Establishing Region Nine Development Commission
Meeting Dates for Fiscal Year 2027**

Whereas, The State of Minnesota established the Region Nine Development Commission to work with an on behalf of the nine counties, seventy-two cities, and one hundred forty-seven townships on economic, social, physical and governmental issues of a regional nature, and

Whereas, the bylaws of the Region Nine Development Commission require that meeting dates of the Commission be set by resolution of the Commission.

Now, therefore, be it resolved, that the Region Nine Development Commission establishes the following as meeting dates for fiscal year 2027.

Full Commission

October 14, 2026
January 20, 2027
April 14, 2027
June 9, 2027

Board of Directors

August 12, 2026
September 9, 2026
November 11, 2026
December 9, 2026
February 17, 2027
March 10, 2027
May 12, 2027

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

Dated this 17th day of June 2026

Signed:

Mike Laven, Chair

Jim Branstad, Secretary

Interim Executive Director's Report

Submitted by Jessica Beyer

Board of Directors Report for May 13, 2026 Meeting

Leadership Transition & Organizational Stability

Over the past six months, I have worked to maintain and enhance organizational continuity, support staff, and ensure 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, enhancing organizational processes, working to achieve financial solvency, and pursuing new or continued 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 Finance to continue progress with managing department functions, project/deadline priorities, communication, and resources to aide wherever possible with financial clean-up efforts and time sensitive needs.

A recent main responsibility has been coordinating, facilitating and following up on team budget meetings in preparation for the FY26/27 Budget. This has also included external meetings related to new and existing partnerships/revenue sources to solidify expected revenue for the new fiscal year. I have also been working to find additional ways to reduce expenditures wherever possible with service contracts. For instance, I'm currently analyzing and obtaining quotes for IT services to make sure we are right sized for our needs. Costs with our current IT contract significantly increased in March.

Navigating project lists with finance and delegating work, when possible, to myself and team members to support the finance workload is ongoing.

I've been in communication with Tom from Abdo and Stephanie on the audit extension which is on my radar as a key priority for Finance that needs to happen within the next few months in coordination with clean-up and Abdo's availability.

Governance, Bylaws & Organizational Development

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

- Ongoing work/support/progress of an ad-hoc Bylaws Subcommittee
- Development of materials, and packets for regular Commission, Board, and Budget & Personnel Meetings
- Continued follow-up work on recommendations and actions from Commission and Committee meetings for example with development of policies
- Preparations are underway for the annual meeting and bus tour

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. Recent grant awards will be discussed at the meeting and notable meetings are listed at the end of this report for this reporting period. Additionally, more information

will be presented specifically on the organizational development and financial sustainability work I am spearheading for the organization.

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.

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.

Notable Activities/Meetings/Events since April 8, 2026:

- 5/13/26 - RNDC Board Meeting
- 5/12/26 - SMIF Partnership Discussion
- 5/11/26 - RNDC Staff Meeting & Spring Potluck
- 5/6/26 - Bylaws Committee Meeting
- 5/4/26 - Transportation Reauthorization Discussion with NADO and MN RDO's
- 5/4/26 - RNDC Staff Meeting
- 4/29 to 5/1/26 - MADDO All Staff Professional Development & Peer Group Training
- 4/28/26 - Bob Meyer Retirement (Blue Earth County Administrator)
- 4/27/26 - RNDC Staff Check-in Meeting
- 4/24/26 - MCAP Partnership Contract Discussion
- 4/23/26 - SMIF 40th Anniversary Event; SBDC Partnership Meeting
- 4/22/26 - Mankato Area Foundation Recharge Event; EDD Quarterly Meeting; MCAP Awards Event
- 4/20/26 - RNDC Staff Meeting and Employee Appreciation Activities (including baked potato bar lunch)
- 4/16/26 - Sibley County Meeting with Administrator
- 4/15/26 - Safe Routes to School Meeting with Le Sueur
- 4/13/26 - RNDC Staff Check-in Meeting
- 4/10/26 - Pioneer Bank Relationship Building Meeting
- 4/9/26 - Meeting at MSU with Congressman Finstad's DC Representative
- 4/8/26 - Bylaws Committee Meeting and Commission Meeting

Upcoming Notable Activities/Events/Meetings to June 17, 2026:

- 5/14/26 - New Ulm Family Resource Meeting
- 5/15/26 - Bike to Work Day
- 5/18/26 - RNDC Staff Meeting
- 5/26/26 - Budget and Personnel Committee Meeting
- 5/27/26 - Le Sueur County Communities Presentation
- 5/28 to 5/29/26 - MADDO Executive Directors Meeting
- 6/1/26 - RNDC Staff Meeting
- 6/5/26 - KTOE Talk of the Town
- 6/8/26 - RNDC Staff Check-in
- 6/10/26 - RNDC Housing Forum; REDA Advisory Committee Meeting
- 6/12/26 - AMC District Meeting - Brown County
- 6/15/26 - RNDC Staff Meeting
- 6/27/26 - RNDC Bus Tour; Commission Meeting

Finance

- As mentioned in my previous Finance Director reports, my workload continues to exceed my current capacity. A long-term, cost-effective solution to this issue remains imperative to ensure that all financial responsibilities, reporting requirements, and organizational priorities can continue to be managed effectively and in a timely manner.
- Training is now complete for Sarah to assist with the accounts payable process. Now that she has received initial training on the GMS system, we have jointly blocked out our calendars for May 13–15 to focus specifically on recoding and correcting FY25 transactions.
- Lu Vanderwerf continues to provide valuable assistance with correcting and updating the GMS system so that accurate and current accounting reports can once again be generated reliably. Her continued support has been instrumental in helping move this process forward. Her next full day in the office is scheduled for May 20.
- There are still several contracts that have been worked on but not yet invoiced. The continued inability of GMS to generate correct financial reports is creating a significant backlog in the invoicing process, which is delaying reimbursement and revenue collection efforts. Resolving these reporting issues remains a top priority.
- Initial work on the FY27 budget has begun. My schedule has been blocked out for May 18–22 to focus on completing the budget development process, with presentation to the B&P Committee scheduled for later this month. We anticipate facing several financial challenges in the upcoming fiscal year, including ongoing uncertainty surrounding federal funding sources. Diversification of revenue streams and continued strategic financial planning will be increasingly important to maintaining organizational stability and supporting future operations.

Revolving Loan Fund

- Jazmine has experienced a significant increase in applications for new loan requests over the past several weeks, to the point that a waitlist system may soon need to be implemented in order to effectively manage workflow and maintain timely communication with applicants.
- A notable takeaway from the recent MADO All Staff training was learning that Region Nine is tied for the largest Revolving Loan Fund among all Minnesota RDOs. Between cash on hand and invested assets, the fund has now reached approximately \$4 million.

Region Nine Area, Inc.

- RNAI Two RNAI clients, Food Recovery by Wooden Spoon and Waseca Community Investment Group, currently have grants that are winding down and will require additional assistance with final project reporting and closeout activities. Staff will continue working closely with both organizations to ensure all reporting requirements are completed accurately and submitted within the required timelines.

PROGRAM UPDATES:

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) – Alejandra, Nate

Alejandra submitted an application to the University of Minnesota's RSDP program to support the CEDS process. After review, RNDC was invited to submit a full proposal. If selected for the final project, RSDP would partner with RNDC and connect RNDC with a graduate student to support data analysis. The project would also provide staff time from Extension educators, stipends and funding to support engagement activities, and funding to cover platform memberships for data analysis and survey collection. Alejandra has also been conducting one-on-one interviews with key regional stakeholders in workforce development and education. She leads the CED committee, which is steering and leading the implementation process for the CEDS.

Regional Food System Supply Chains and Transportation Implications – Kristian

No new updates at this time.

Regional Food Rescue – Tom, Sabri

The amount of food rescue in our region is currently sitting at 42,240 lbs. so far this year, valued at approximately \$92,071. Some of the highlights this past month include biscuits, coffee creamer & corn from trucks rejected at Walmart, a large 2,200 lb. rescue of produce from MSU.

Prior to the summit, Tom also presented to the Northeast Climate Smart Food Systems group, highlighting our program and helping them identify potential opportunities in their area.

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. This has already resulted in us getting a diverted call from the Ponderosa landfill for 800 lbs. of spinach, most of which reached the Produce Place refrigerators.

Seeing how this program has flourished, SHIP has provided SCMNER 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. The final fridge from this program will be delivered to Beyond Brink in the coming week.

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

Bus Tour – Nate, Jessica

Nate and Jessica met with Commissioner Annis about touring Mapleton as part of the 2026 Bus Tour. Tentatively, the bus tour will stop at the Winnebago Museum before heading to Mapleton. Final destinations, speakers, and agenda will be provided soon.

Communications – Nate

Nate attended the MADDO All-Staff training in St. Cloud with the rest of the team. The training provided the RDO's staff to learn from leaders in Economic Development and Leadership. MADDO also gave the various departments an opportunity to meet with their peers and discuss issues and best practices.

Nate also attended MADDO's Writing with Purpose Intensive. This event focused on ways to tell the stories of our organizations and the communities we serve. During the event, Nate gave the winning presentation that secured a \$1000 donation to the YouthSet Organization in St. Cloud.

Nate has been helping to facilitate the upcoming Regional Housing Forum in June. This has included creating the event and landing pages and creating promotional materials. Trying a new platform to check effectiveness and features. He has created a webpage and graphics to promote the event as well as booking a radio session for Alejandra on KTOE.

Nate met with Lime Valley Advertising to discuss ways to make the CEDS easier to access and use. Nate is exploring a web-based solution to make navigating the final document and data more intuitive. Nate will continue to assist with the CEDS when the budget allows.

Nate continued his work on a comprehensive communications guide for RND. 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 has created signage and social media posts for the upcoming Bike to Work Day happening in May. He is supporting Mark with tasks as they arise including a press release to be distributed to local media.

Nate and Jessica met with Hannah Bretz, the Regional Director of the SBDC to discuss providing marketing consultation services to SBDC clients as part of new partnership discussions with SBDC. Nate will be meeting with Hannah to discuss further and take the next steps with the opportunity.

Nate has been examining and implementing cost-saving measures in the Communications Department. He switched to a new social media scheduling platform. The change eliminated a recurring \$1,200 annual membership in exchange for a \$47 lifetime membership on the new platform. He also negotiated a lower per-user rate for RND's Adobe Acrobat team accounts. Nate has also greatly reduced the cost of website maintenance over the last four years with a dramatic decrease in 2025 and into 2026. When he took over the communications department, the service cost for 2023 was \$948.55. In 2025, the cost of services was lowered to \$156.25 due to Nate's experience managing websites.

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 Flores continued to support the administration and growth of the Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) through a combination of portfolio management, outreach, and professional development activities. She completed a UCC extension for Pizzeria 201 to ensure compliance and continuity within the portfolio. In addition, she received and began reviewing new loan applications for several prospective projects, including Kinder Cottage Daycare, Le Center Floral, Endless Adventure Park, and a potential project with River Rock in St. Peter. Jazmine also maintained routine financial operations by processing RLF payments and onboarding new clients into the bank portal in preparation for upcoming payment cycles.

Jazmine remained active in strengthening partnerships and exploring program expansion opportunities. She met with Alejandra to review the structure and feasibility of reintroducing a microloan program at Region Nine. She also participated in MADDO training alongside the full team to enhance her professional knowledge and stay aligned with statewide development efforts. As part of ongoing outreach, Jazmine met with Jordan Evans from CCF Bank to discuss continued collaboration opportunities and, along with Jessica Beyer, visited West Bank to explore potential partnerships. She plans to follow up with both institutions to present on the RLF program and expand lender relationships.

In addition to lender engagement, Jazmine connected with local daycare advocates, facilitated through Alejandra, to discuss childcare funding needs and how the RLF could support these efforts. She also attended a Grow America best practices webinar focused on fraud prevention, strengthening her awareness of risk management strategies. To stay connected with existing borrowers, Jazmine conducted a site visit at Moonshot Enterprises, reinforcing ongoing client relationships and monitoring project progress.

Safe Streets and Roads for All Grant – Mark

No new updates at this time.

Transportation/MnDOT Regional Planning Grant – Joel, Mark

Joel facilitated the quarterly TAC meeting on May 8. There, he presented the proposed workplan for the FY27 MnDOT planning grant contract and took suggestions from the TAC on additional items before the TAC motioned to recommend approval of the FY27 workplan. There was also a discussion in the TAC about starting a Regional Transportation Coordinating Council (RTCC) in the region. Mark also gave a road safety update at the TAC meeting.

Relevant to the RTCC discussion at the TAC, Joel, Mark, and Jessica have been meeting with the Mayo Clinic to discuss starting an RTCC in the region as well. Since the RTCC funding cycle won't be open again until early 2028, other funding avenues are being explored to serve as a stopgap until 2028.

Joel and Mark met with other RDO transportation planners ahead of the MADO all-staff retreat for their scheduled quarterly meeting and during the retreat as well. There, they discussed differences in procedures between the ATPs throughout the state and are looking to meet with MnDOT transportation staff at the next quarterly meeting to discuss best practices. They also discussed the various functions and forms each RDC's TAC takes and may continue that exchange to see what works and if some RDOs want to reconsider how their TAC operates entirely.

Mark and Joel have secured a city permit for Bike to Work Day on May 15 and will be hosting an event from 7:00am-9:00am on the stage area in front of the Intergovernmental Center in Mankato.

St. James Energy Navigators - Sabri

Sabri has 45 household installations scheduled between March and September.

Prevention of Wasted Food MPCA Grant – Sabri

Sabri submitted a regional application 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, grant partners includes the Waseca Food Shelf, Neighborhood Pantry, Feeding Our Communities Partners (FOCP), Southcentral MN Food Recovery, MY Place, and the St. Peter Area Food Shelf.

Local Foods Month – Sabri, Nate

Sabri has continued to work on Local Foods Month. So far, he has 7 farms and 7 restaurants participating for 2026.

MDA Specialty Crop Block Grant – Sabri

Sabri and the Living Earth Center were conditionally awarded a specialty crop block grant from the MDA. The grant will further establish the Emerging Growers program and help these growers in establishing their businesses and creating markets for their culturally relevant crops.

REGIONAL TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE:

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

No new updates at this time.

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

Sam and Jessica recently attended the Minnesota Climate Adaptation awards to celebrate efforts taken across the state over the past year, and to continue building the relationship between RNDC and MCAP. Sam is also working with the EM Directors for Waseca and Blue Earth Counties in developing a community preparedness workshop. This initiative is designed to prepare residents and community members ahead of extreme weather events, helping them think about putting measures in place to be more resilient and ready for future floods, droughts, and more.

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

No new updates at this time.

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

Mark has continued to build up the GIS deliverables for the scenic byway plans. Mark and Joel have scheduled kickoff meetings with select stakeholders for both plans.

Empowering Small Minnesota Communities Rural EMS Project – Joel

The project team is working on an additional phase of interviews from key informants in EMS in the region.

Housing Forum - Alejandra

Alejandra has been working with Minnesota Housing staff to plan the housing forum, which will be hosted on June 10 at the Mayo Health Clinic Event Center. She has also been meeting one-on-one with housing experts and leaders to identify key questions, topics, and resources to highlight, as well as conducting outreach to promote registration. The forum will bring together local governments, nonprofits, lenders, housing developers, and community leaders from across the region to share ideas, highlight resources, and identify practical solutions to address housing challenges. The event will also include discussions on current housing trends, tools and financing options, and local examples of communities making progress on housing.

Empowering Small Minnesota Communities: South Bend Township – Sabri, Sam, Lisa

RNDC worked with the South Bend Township Board to submit an application focusing on flood mitigation for impacted households. Recurring issues related to drainage and surface flow have led to flooded basements and properties, making life difficult for residents. This project will assess a variety of solutions and project ideas that can help alleviate these issues.

GRANT COORDINATION AND ADMINISTRATION:

Solar on Schools – MNSU, Mankato – Sabri

No new updates at this time.

Food Retail Improvement Grant – Sabri, Alejandra

No new updates at this time.

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

Sam and Lisa have been coordinating efforts with BRIDGE Club on the distribution of LED lighting kits to Mankato neighborhoods. Approximately 100 kits have been deployed alongside energy efficiency resources (MVAC, Citizens Utility Board) and a project survey Sam developed in tandem with RNDC Youth Commissioner, Hunter Jordan.

Region Nine Community Resilience Plan – Sam, Lisa

No new updates at this time.

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

Sam and Sabri will be working with Lake Crystal to develop solar education resources for the community.

Henderson Stormwater and Wastewater Resilience Plan – Sam, Lisa

The MPCA contract agreement has officially been formalized, and a kickoff meeting will be held during the first full week of May to coordinate roles and responsibilities for the project partners. RNDC will be facilitating and managing the project.

MPCA Waseca Local Climate Action Grant – Sam, Lisa

RNDC was awarded \$50,000 to help develop a climate resilience hub for the City of Waseca. These efforts will prioritize direct community engagement, fielding input and expertise from local stakeholders. Technical partners for this grant include the Minnesota Climate Adaptation Partnership (MCAP) for hub framework insights, and the Great Plains Institute (GPI) for the energy expertise.

Eagle Lake Land Use Plan – Alejandra

Alejandra has been working to identify and pursue funding opportunities to support a land use plan for the City of Eagle Lake. She worked with Jennifer Brownland to submit an application to the Blandin Foundation to fund the plan. After submitting the letter of intent, Eagle Lake was invited to submit a full application.

Economic Development Administration (EDA) Disaster Grants - Kristian, Jessica, Alejandra, Mark

Region Nine staff have been working with local governments and higher education to submit EDA Disaster Grant applications since the release of the notice of funding opportunity in June 2025. All nine counties within Region Nine were part of the disaster declaration. It was presented at the April Commission Meeting that we obtained word from the EDA that grants for MSU/Region Nine, City of North Mankato, Le Sueur County (Cannon River Watershed), Martin County, and Rice County were not awarded funding. The City of Springfield still has a pending grant with the EDA. Currently, we are also supporting the City of Waterville, South Central College, and the City of Mapleton with potential submissions. Over the last several weeks we have been conducting debrief calls for each of the projects and determining the next steps for pursuing alternative funding. Jessica and Kristian have also been in communication with the Federal EDA Regional Office and Federal Delegation staff members regarding the uniqueness of no awards being made. Jessica was also part of a meeting with a representative from Congressman Finstad's Office where information about the grants and projects was shared.

McKnight MADO Application – Jessica, Sam

Jessica and Sam worked with 7 other RDOs to develop and submit an application to the McKnight Foundation designed to support general capacity building and operating support for climate and clean energy focused initiatives. The application will be reviewed by the McKnight Board in mid-May, and funding announcements are anticipated to be made by early June.

McKnight Region Nine Application – Sam, Sabri, Lisa

Sam, Sabri, and Lisa worked to develop an additional McKnight Foundation application designed to establish a dedicated funding stream for grant writing and high-level technical assistance support. This funding would act as a revolving grant writer fund replenished annually by RNDC's grant writing fee for service charge. This instills a sustainable model that allows RNDC planners to continue pursuing funding opportunities for the region while also ensuring RNDC is compensated for its time in these efforts.

Blandin Foundation Application - Jessica, Sabri, Alejandra, Sam, Kristian, & Lisa

RNDC is submitting an application to the Blandin Foundation designed to bring in additional capacity building dollars to continue our work in the region. We will focus on providing direct support to communities under 1,000 residents and communities with significant BIPOC populations. This will include supporting communities in the expansion of their housing stock, building and maintaining their tax base, and creating environmentally and socially resilient communities. Specific projects and deliverables will include supporting applications for DEED's Small Communities Development Program, developing economic feasibility studies for projects in the region, supporting flood resilience initiatives, and other opportunities discovered during the funding period.