

Mid-Minnesota Development Commission
Five-Year Performance Assessment
December 2006

Background

Minnesota Statutes require that Regional Development Commissions review their activities and issue a report assessing their performance in fulfilling the purposes of the Regional Development Act every five years. The report is to address whether the existence of the Commission is in the public welfare and interest.

The Mid-Minnesota Development Commission's (MMDC) last assessment was completed in 2001, thus this year another performance assessment is required to be sent to the Minnesota Legislative Reference Library.

MMDC is the Regional Development Commission that serves the four counties located within Region Six-East. The four counties are: Kandiyohi, McLeod, Meeker, and Renville. Region Six-East has 40 municipalities and 82 townships. The State Demographer's Office shows an estimated 2005 population of 118,316 persons within Region Six-East.

An important tool used to help the Commission perform the 5-year performance assessment was a survey to the Commission's local units of governments and other close customers/partners to seek out their opinions on how well the Commission is performing. The results of this survey are enclosed within this report. MMDC also has reviewed what activities it has been involved in during the past five years. The survey results and MMDC performance were discussed at the December 6, 2006 Commission Meeting. In addition, MMDC's Board of Commissioner's Work Program and Budget Committee annually reviews MMDC activities and bring forward to the entire Commission an annual work plan designed to best fulfill the Commission's mission and meet the needs of its citizens. Currently, the Commission's Board has 22 positions, of which 16 positions are locally elected officials from the Region's four counties.

Summary of Key Activities 2002 through 2006

Over the course of the past five years the Commission has been involved with numerous technical assistance activities within Region Six-East. Below are highlights of some of the larger assistance projects during this period of time. Some projects that are mentioned are for 2006, thus a number of projects mentioned are still underway.

Revolving Loan Fund Activities:

From 2002 through 2006, the Commission has made 11 loans to new and expanding businesses with the Region's four counties. Loans were made in all four counties. The 11 businesses created a minimum of 118 jobs. Over 1.5 million dollars were leveraged with this program during this period of time.

Community and Economic Development Technical Assistance Activities:

- Comprehensive Local Water Plans for each of the four counties.
- Hazard Mitigation Plans nearing completion for Kandiyohi and Meeker Counties, just beginning in McLeod and Renville Counties.
- Comprehensive plans for the Kandiyohi and Meeker Counties and the Cities of New London, Spicer, Bird Island, Plato, Stewart, Renville, Dassel, Pennock, Lester Prairie, and Litchfield.
- Zoning ordinances or zoning ordinance updates for Meeker County, Kandiyohi County, McLeod County, Cities of Franklin, Pennock, Raymond, and Lake Lillian.
- Assistance with gravel mining ordinances in Meeker and Kandiyohi Counties. In Kandiyohi County led a Gravel Task Force that made recommendations for the ordinance. This effort earned a NADO Innovation Award.
- Prepared a number of adult business ordinances.
- Prepared a subdivision ordinance for Kandiyohi County and completed ordinance codifications in the communities of Franklin and Raymond.
- City of Bird Island Housing Study.
- GIS needs assessments for Kandiyohi and Meeker Counties.
- City of Buffalo Lake Tornado Recovery assistance through building inspections, a community survey, committee assistance, and preparing and administering grant funds.
- Buffalo Creek Watershed District and Middle Fork Crow River Watershed District Water Plans. Recent Clean Water Legacy Act grant application for the Buffalo Creek Watershed District.
- Wastewater project assistance in the cities of Prinsburg, Franklin, Cedar Mills, Blomkest, and Lake Lillian.
- Kandiyohi County Level 2 Feedlot Inventory assistance.
- City of Litchfield grant applications for the “Mighty Ducks” program, and a DNR grant for the Prairie Park Reserve.
- Administered 5 SCDP applications for projects that received funding through MMDC produced applications.
- Kandiyohi County Health’s “Eliminating Disparities” survey assistance.
- Prepared numerous Environmental Assessment Worksheets (EAWs) for a variety of projects.
- Assisted the Region’s local units of government with getting the proper paperwork submitted for their participation in the state’s Job Z Program.
- Technical assistance provided to McLeod County regarding a tax abatement strategy.
- Co-sponsored a number of economic development activities such as a labor force assessment, a regional marketing assistance program, and an “Economic Watershed Summit”.
- Provided assistance to the West Central Growth Alliance.
- Assistance was given to the Willmar Airport Committee.

- Assisted with conducting a survey for the City of Willmar “Multi-Cultural Marketplace” proposal.
- Numerous other smaller scale technical assistance activities.

GIS Activities:

- In the process of preparing parcel maps for Meeker and Pipestone Counties.
- Grove City flood plain map.
- City of Willmar zoning map.
- BSWR grants obtained and work performed with drainage system inventory and map for Kandiyohi and Meeker Counties.
- Kandiyohi County feedlot map update and a drainage ditch map project.
- Job Z Program community maps.
- Maps for the Meeker County Economic Development Authority.
- Customized aerial maps for the Farm Service Agency.
- Buffalo Creek and Middle Fork Crow River Watershed District maps for both plans.
- MMDC ArcIMS Site preparations.
- New London TH 23 and TH 9 Intersection Official Map project.
- Numerous mapping projects in support to MMDC’s planning projects.
- A number of other smaller mapping projects for a variety of customers.

Transportation Planning and Assistance Activities:

- Annual assistance and membership on the Southwest Minnesota Area Transportation Partnership.
- Meeker County Trails Plan.
- TH 71 & TH 23 corridor study participation.
- Kandiyohi County Jurisdictional Study.
- Functional Classification Update for the four counties and cities of Willmar, Hutchinson, Litchfield, and Glencoe.
- Transportation plan components to all comprehensive plans highlighted above.
- Help in establishing and staffing the Highway 15 Coalition.
- Plato’s TH 212 Intersection Study.
- Served on the TH 212 Corridor Management Team.
- Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Plan for the Region.
- Numerous other transportation assistance activities.

Building Inspections Department Activities:

The MMDC Building Inspections Department provides contracted services to communities that have adopted the State Building Code. During the past 5 years, MMDC’s State Certified Building Inspectors have had as many as nineteen cities and townships that have adopted the Building Code. A couple of other communities asked for short-term assistance with Building

Inspection Activities while they were looking to hire new staff. Currently, MMDC has contracts with fourteen cities and one township in providing this service. The department also has assisted both the Hutchinson HRA and the Willmar HRA with housing rehabilitation inspection services. In addition, the department has assisted with numerous other inspections including lead-based paint inspections and risk assessments, asbestos inspections, hazardous building inspections, and miscellaneous other inspection work. The majority of their work is within the Region, but inspection services are provided outside the Regional boundaries.

Area Agency on Aging Activities:

During the past five years a major change has taken place with providing Area Agency on Aging administration. Beginning in 2004, the Commission no longer has its own Agency, but is part of a Joint Powers Agreement with the three other Southwestern and South-central RDCs Minnesota in providing Area Agency on Aging (AAA) services. The new AAA is called the Minnesota River Area Agency on Aging (MnRAAA). Overall administration and grant administration is provided by the Region 9 RDC in Mankato. The Southwest RDC provides the Senior LinkAge Line® Program service. Much work was done at each of the four RDCs in the planning and creation of MnRAAA.

Within the MMDC office, there is a Senior Outreach Specialist staff position who provides one-on-one assistance for persons seeking assistance on an array of needs. By far the largest service provided by this position is with health insurance concerns and with Medicare Part D enrollment and appeals assistance. Many hundreds of persons have been provided these services through the past five years. This staff person also directs Volunteers who have provided thousands of hours of donated labor for Part D assistance. The Senior Outreach Specialist also makes numerous presentations about AAA services including information on health insurance counseling topics such as Medicare Approved Drug Discount Cards and Senior LinkAge Line®. This staff person participates in the Life Connections Expo and other area Senior Health Fairs.

The other MMDC staff member working in MnRAAA is a Program Developer who works on a variety of activities that are laid out each year within the AAA's approved work plan with the Minnesota Board on Aging. During the past five years, some of the larger technical assistance projects that have been provided are as follows:

- Family Care Giver Support development.
- Long Term Care activities including a gaps analysis and regional analysis.
- Sponsored and co-sponsored numerous aging conferences, special meetings, and training events.
- Facilitated local White House Conference on Aging event in conjunction with National White House Conference on Aging. Event focus to identify national reforms.
- Participated in the Medicare FYI Robert Wood Johnson Medicare Savings Programs.
- Participated on the Advisory Committee of the West Central Integration Collaborative.

- Co-sponsored Annual Caregiver Events held in Willmar.
- Provided grant writing assistance for Community Service Development grants to various organizations.
- Secured Alzheimer's Demonstration Grant for region; focus on consumer directed model of service.
- Facilitated Eldercare Development Partnership Long Term Care Coordinating Council for 13 counties. Goals focused on supporting community development of services to support elderly persons living independently.
- Coordinated survey of home care agencies in the Region and within an additional 12 counties regarding their need for telehealth service.
- Established a Memorandum of Understanding with Rice Memorial Hospital Health Insurance Counseling Program to share volunteer and training activities.
- Member of a Cultural Diversity Committee and co-sponsored Regional Cultural Diversity Conferences held in Willmar.
- Team recruitment chair for the Willmar Arthritis Walk.
- Assisted with development of adult foster care homes in Prinsburg and Lake Lillian.
- Assisted with Small Cities Development Project Application for Prinsburg Opportunities Grant.
- Provided technical assistance to City of Sunburg with survey process for assisted living project.
- Assisted with application for AAA Provisional Designation to MBA.
- Facilitated redesign of Eldercare Development Partnership Long Term Care Coordinating Council.
- Participated in the Medicare FYI Empowerment and Collaboration Initiative (MECI) program.
- Participated on the Leadership Committee of the Willmar Community Capacity Collaborative.
- Conducts annual project assessments for Title III B, C, and E projects with Region 9 Grant Management staff. Also conduct meal site assessments.
- Provided technical assistance to numerous agencies regarding contract outcomes.
- Provided technical assistance to numerous agencies that have applied for Community Service/Service Development (CSSD) grants.
- Provided a number of agencies with contract development.
- Technical Assistance was given to Heartland Community Action Agency for a USDA grant application to assist low-income seniors with food subsidy.
- Facilitated ElderCare Development Partnership meeting for Long Term Care Coordinating Council. Worked with PrimeWest and Blue Plus to add members to the council.
- Submitted an ElderCare Development Grants applications for MnRAAA.
- Assistance was given to the Atwater Living at Home Block Nurse Program for an Alzheimer's Demonstration Grant. Facilitated a meeting with Affiliated Medical Clinic liaison, Atwater Living at Home Block Nurse Program, and

MBA staff regarding Alzheimer’s Demonstration project and application to rural clinics.

- Other aging program activities too numerous to mention.

The list of activities shown above demonstrate that the Commission has been busy with a variety of technical assistance efforts that are important to the Region. The Commission Work Program and Budget Committee spend time analyzing the activities of staff. They along with the entire Commission support the activities that have been worked on. The Annual work programs developed in the past years show that the Commissioners desire a continuation of the types of technical assistance that has been offered. In addition, the Commission is constantly looking for new opportunities to provide new technical assistance within Region Six-East. Through this period of time the Commission has kept an active schedule to keep up with the ambitious number of complex projects it has worked on. Staff have worked hard to keep work product at a highly professional level. While a small number of complaints have come in over the past few years, they have been relatively minor in comparison to the compliments and gratitude of those the Commission has served. The Commission always strives to improve work performance and to deliver better products. The Commission has grown reserve accounts during the past five years and is currently in a very healthy condition.

Mid-Minnesota Development Commission Performance Assessment Survey Results

Regional Development Commissions in Minnesota agreed to conduct similar surveys as part of the required five-year assessment of Regional Development Commission performance. Mid-Minnesota Development Commission (MMDC) surveys were mailed out to 417 individuals, including county commissioners, mayors, city council members, township chairpersons, city and county administrators, city clerks, and other persons that have a relationship to the Commission as partners and/or customers. The survey deadline was November 24. A total of 114 surveys were returned for a return rate of 27.3 percent.

Of the 114 surveys returned, 75 (65.8%) were elected officials. Of these 75 elected officials the breakdown of who they represent is as follows:

Mayors	8 (10.8%)
County Commissioners	12 (16.2%)
Township Officers	21 (28.4%)
City Council Members	33 (44.6%)
No Answer	1

In most cases there was no way to determine from what jurisdiction the survey came from. In some cases this information was available for those that wanted the survey results and/or wanted to be contacted for some particular reason.

For the tabulation results below, percentages shown do not include those who did not answer a particular question.

Overall Satisfaction of MMDC Performance

The survey asked respondents to score how satisfied they are with the **amount of MMDC assistance** the Commission has provided on a 1 to 5 scale, with 1 being very satisfied and 5 not satisfied. The results are as follows:

Very satisfied	12 (10.9%)
Above Ave Satisfied.	43 (39.1%) (49.1% cumulative)
Satisfied	34 (30.9%) (80.9% cumulative)
Below Ave. Satisfied	15 (13.6%)
Not Satisfied	6 (5.5%)
No Answers	4

The respondents scored their level of satisfaction with the **quality of MMDC assistance**, on the same 1 to 5 scale, as follows:

Very satisfied	12 (11.0%)
Above Ave Satisfied.	45 (41.3%) (52.3% cumulative)
Satisfied	31 (28.4%) (80.7% cumulative)
Below Ave. Satisfied	16 (14.7%)
Not Satisfied	5 (4.6%)
No Answers	5

When asked to rate **how useful** has the Commission been to local units of government in helping them carry out their functions and responsibilities, the 1 to 5 scale responses are as follows:

Very Satisfied	15 (13.6%)
Above Ave Satisfied.	33 (30.0%) (43.6% cumulative)
Satisfied	37 (33.6%) (77.3% cumulative)
Below Ave. Satisfied	17 (15.5%)
Not Satisfied	8 (7.3%)
No Answers	4

The responses to the question on how useful has the Commission been in communicating local concerns to state and federal agencies are as follows:

Very Satisfied	13 (11.9%)
Above Ave Satisfied.	33 (30.3%) (42.2% cumulative)
Satisfied	37 (33.9%) (76.1% cumulative)
Below Ave. Satisfied	18 (16.5%)
Not Satisfied	8 (7.3%)
No Answers	5

The responses to the question on how knowledgeable is the Commission concerning your local government's problems and needs are as follows:

Very Satisfied	13 (12.0%)
Above Ave Satisfied.	39 (36.1%) (48.1% cumulative)
Satisfied	34 (31.5%) (79.6% cumulative)
Below Ave. Satisfied	16 (14.8%)
Not Satisfied	6 (5.6%)
No Answers	6

Cross tabulations show that mayor and county commissioners have tended to give a higher percentage of above or very satisfied answers to the above questions when compared to township officials and to city councilpersons. The non-elected officials that answered the survey tended to have a higher percentage of them that were satisfied or above in their opinion on MMDC performance matching fairly close to that of mayors and county commissioners.

The survey respondents gave the following answers to the question, overall, the Commission is currently fulfilling its role:

Yes: 76 (75.2%) No: 25 (24.8%) No Answers: 13

Throughout the survey, there is a strong correlation that those who have given more negative answers on the survey had a much more likelihood of continuing to give a negative assessment on other questions on the survey. The opposite is also true. Persons who gave very positive responses to the performance of the Commission on the survey, generally continued to score the Commission's performance fairly high throughout the survey.

Program Area Importance

The survey asked respondents to indicate how important are various program areas for the citizens and local units of government. Examples were given under each program area to be certain those answering the survey were basically giving the same definitions to these program areas. There is some concern that if respondents did not read instructions carefully under this section of the survey, they may have continued to answer the same way as the general performance questions. The answers to the program importance are given below: (N/A means No Answer.)

	Very Important To Region	Very Important To Some Jurisdictions	Not Beneficial Program	Essential To Region	N/As
<u>Aging Program</u>	55 (52.9%)	29 (27.9%)	19 (18.3%)	1 (1.0%)	10
<u>Economic Dev. Program</u>	65 (63.1%)	29 (28.2%)	10 (9.7%)	1 (1.0%)	9
<u>Community Dev.& Planning</u>	57 (52.8%)	35 (32.4%)	13 (12.0%)	2 (1.9%)	6
<u>GIS Mapping Assistance</u>	35 (33.7%)	48 (46.2%)	18 (17.3%)	3 (2.9%)	10
<u>Transportation Planning</u>	48 (47.5%)	36 (35.6%)	15 (14.9%)	2 (2.0%)	13
<u>Building Inspection Services</u>	44 (44.0%)	35 (35.0%)	17 (17.0%)	4 (4.0%)	14
<u>General Info. & Referral</u>	29 (28.7%)	44 (43.6%)	25 (24.8%)	3 (3.0%)	13
<u>Intergovernmental Relations</u>	31 (30.7%)	42 (41.6%)	25 (24.8%)	3 (3.0%)	13
<u>Legislative Issues</u>	55 (53.9%)	32 (31.4%)	13 (12.7%)	2 (2.0%)	12

As can be seen from the above, the program areas that MMDC are involved in are seen as at least beneficial to the vast majority of the survey respondents. Again, some respondents may have thought they were marking the second box on the survey as somewhat less than very important to the region as a whole. This could happen if they did not read the instructions given in this section and went off instructions from the first section of the survey. It would seem to appear that some program categories would be hard to be thought of as just impacting some jurisdictions and not others. For example, to a great extent, the Aging Program benefits senior citizens regardless of where they live.

Program Area Performance

Survey respondents were asked to rate MMDC's performance in each of the same areas as shown above. The results of the survey return for these questions do not correspond well to how respondents answered how well MMDC is operating as a whole. Throughout the program performance ratings negative scores were over twice as high as the scores in the first section that rated MMDC's general performance. If some survey respondents did not read the new instructions for this question, but followed the instructions from the first part of the survey, they would have thought that the third check box was a general satisfaction answer. The reason behind thinking that some respondents did not read the instructions is the fact that there is over twice the dissatisfaction shown in each category than is the case when ranking MMDC's performance in general. There is a strong correspondence with survey respondents checking the same box throughout these questions. It is not logical for survey respondents to give a good score on general performance, but then mark the Commission down for poor performance in all the work areas. The only conclusion is that some did not pay attention to the instructions within this section. With that being said, the results below come in to question as to how valid they truly are.

The following is the scale that was used to determine performance satisfaction under MMDC's work program areas: 1 = MMDC is performing very well, 2 = MMDC performance is good, but room for improvement, 3 = MMDC's performance needs significant improvement, 4 =

MMDC should not be performing this service, 5 = unknown or unfamiliarity with the program. (See comments above this paragraph.)

	<u>1's</u>	<u>2's</u>	<u>3's</u>	<u>4's</u>	<u>5's</u>	<u>N/A's</u>
<u>Aging Program</u>	21	36	27	8	9	13
<u>Economic Development Program</u>	28	34	31	5	6	10
<u>Community Dev. & Planning</u>	28	40	22	8	9	7
<u>GIS/Mapping Assistance Program</u>	15	42	26	7	14	10
<u>Transportation Planning</u>	22	34	23	11	10	14
<u>Building Inspection Services</u>	29	27	23	10	12	13
<u>General Information & Referral</u>	13	49	30	3	6	13
<u>Intergovernmental Relations</u>	11	42	37	5	7	12
<u>Legislative Issues</u>	14	40	28	12	8	12

As with the questions on general MMDC performance, township officials tended to be more critical of the performance of the Commission within the different program areas as were other survey respondents.

Overall, the survey shows that while the majority of individuals are at least satisfied with the performance of the MMDC in carrying out its activities. Many of these respondents rate Commission performance as above average to excellent. There are a consistent 17 to 18 percent of respondents who are not satisfied with the Commission's activities and performance. In the majority of cases it is jurisdictions that have not had technical assistance from the Commission for some time.

It is evident that the Commission needs to do a better job in publicizing the activities it is involved in to show the value and quantity of work performed. It is also fair to say that a certain small percentage of persons think the Commission is just one more unnecessary level of government at taxpayer's expense. No matter how much positive contributions are made to the region, these individuals will always oppose the Commission's existence.

Assessment of Performance

With the review summary of activities of the MMDC over the past five years, and the analysis of the survey results, the Commission believes that it has fulfilled the purposes of the Regional Development Act. Improvements are needed in keeping local units of government and other customers and partners aware of the Commission's activities and what services it offers. The Commission employees are dedicated and bring knowledge and skills to their positions. While the Commission believes it has done a good job in providing needed services during the past five years, there are always opportunities to improve on performance. It is the opinion of the Commission that the existence of the Commission is in the public welfare and interest.