



*Your regional partner for progress.*

# Annual Report

2017  
7/16 - 6/17



In this annual report, you can see a snapshot of the variety of accomplishments of the past year. Reflecting on the past shows us how far we have come and how nimble Region Nine has been to meet the region's needs.

The purpose of Region Nine is to promote the development of the region. This is best done by addressing issues that face the region head on. For example, the It's Time to Talk: Forums on Race that began this past year does just that. As mentioned in this report, these forums create dialogues that eventually can lead to more welcoming communities to diverse populations.

Looking forward, Region Nine will continue to provide programs, planning and assistance to meet the region's changing needs. Thank you to our staff, commissioners, and partners who help make our successes possible.

Sincerely,

Nicole Griensewic Mickelson  
*Executive Director*



Collaboration and sustainability are buzzwords that are commonly used whenever elected officials get together. How can we work together, no matter where we are at or who we represent, to reach the goals and objectives that we have made for a sustainable future?

From transportation, transit, community development, race relations and disaster relief the talented staff at Region Nine work in collaboration with local officials. Working with and assisting counties, cities and townships within the region in planning and implementing projects that are vital to the continued success of our area.

Region Nine is the perfect example of collaboration working towards a sustainable region. This following report highlights the past year and the projects that have been brought forward.

The work of the Region Nine Development Commission is vital to the future of all the communities it serves.

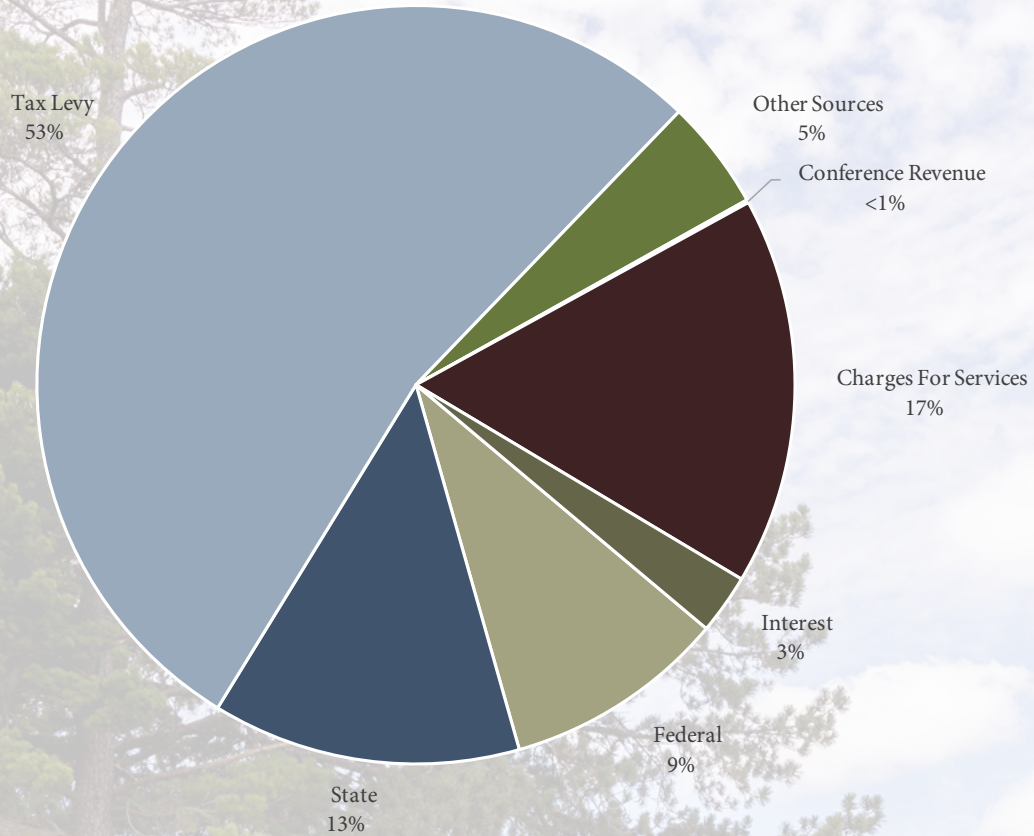
Thank You,

Brad Ahrenstorff  
*Chair*



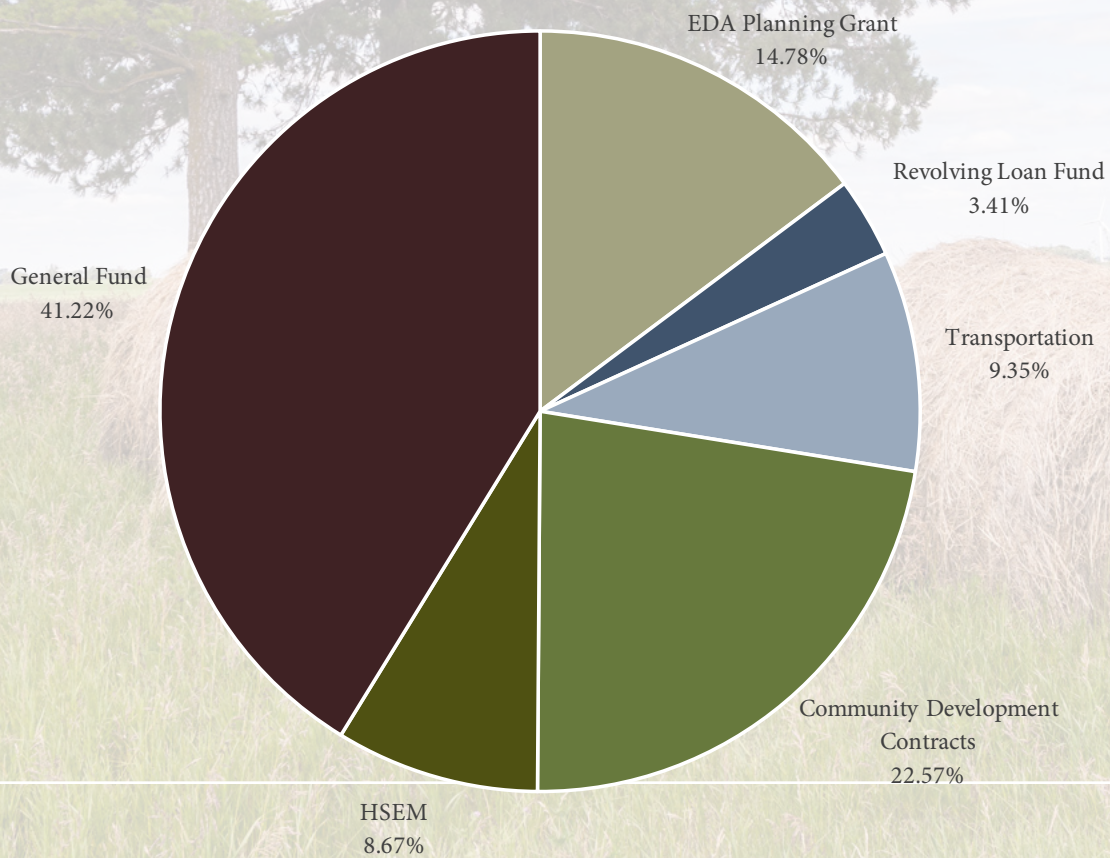
## Actual FY2017 Revenue by Sources

Total Revenue \$969,231



## Actual FY2017 Expenses by Department

Total Expenses \$969,231





# Project Highlights

## Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

Region Nine receives an annual planning grant from the Federal Economic Development Administration to conduct economic development planning activities within the region. These activities include developing and maintaining the region's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy.

The strategy creates a foundation for regional economic development and captures the unique regional perspective related to economic development. Throughout the development of the document, the region created strategies to help mitigate threats, overcome weaknesses and capitalize on strengths to create a more viable and prosperous region. Woven throughout the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy are components of economic resilience.

The strategy will ultimately enhance and support current and future economic development efforts in the region and engage local, regional, state and federal partners. Region Nine will champion and advance effective, sustainable and resilient rural economic development in south central Minnesota.



## It's Time to Talk: Forums on Race

Region Nine understands the region is currently in the midst of changing demographics that are uniquely impacting rural communities and recognizes the lack of equity within these changing demographics. It is important to build connections among neighbors as a component of community development.

It's Time to Talk: Forums on Race, a program of the YWCA Mankato, is being held in seven rural communities in Region Nine to provide a platform to build awareness and have meaningful dialogues about race. The goal is to weave threads of understanding among neighbors to strengthen the fabric of the community.

The creativity of this project is in the specialized partnerships and unique community engagement process. Region Nine has brought together two non-profit partners to assist in facilitation and outreach, YWCA Mankato and the Greater Mankato Diversity Council. These events are made possible with funding from the Blandin Foundation and Blue Cross Blue Shield of Minnesota Foundation.



## Local Foods Report and Needs Assessment

In 2015, Minnesota farmers reported over \$100 million in sales of edible goods sold through direct market channels. There is a growing prevalence of direct marketing food farms, such as community supported agriculture. Acknowledging this, Region Nine applied for and received an Americorps VISTA service person to build organizational capacity to assist those working in local food.

The primary goal of the VISTA was to create baseline data on area farm businesses and investigate any possible community benefits associated with their operation. Through surveys and interview data, a Local Foods Report and Preliminary Needs Assessment was developed. The report gives an overview of what a local producer is experiencing in today's marketplace.

The South Central Minnesota Grower's Network also emerged out of this local foods initiative. The network provides access to others with similar perspectives and experiences who can offer critical insight and advice, without hidden agendas.



## City of Madelia Planning Process

The City of Madelia has officially launched a multi-tiered planning process with Region Nine to provide a roadmap for the future development of Madelia. The City of Madelia has received planning assistance from the State of Minnesota, Federal Economic Development Administration and Blandin Foundation to embark on this effort.

The city will be partnering directly with the community and Region Nine to develop three individual plans: a comprehensive plan, an economic resiliency plan and a marketing strategy. The comprehensive plan will give the community overall goals and action steps in regards to transportation, utilities, land use, recreation and housing. The economic resiliency plan will craft strategies to diversify Madelia's economy and allow it to prosper and grow through business retention, recruitment and job creation. The marketing strategy will help Madelia communicate more effectively and promote itself to site-selecting agencies, tourists, entrepreneurs and prospective new residents. Collectively, these plans will help establish goals and tactics to guide the community.



## Marketing & Communications Trainings

In October 2016, Region Nine partnered with the Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation to launch a series of marketing and communications trainings. The events were held through the region nine service area and covered a vast range of topics.

The goal of the trainings was to enhance the marketing and communications skills of business and organizations around the region. By providing free training, attendees had the opportunity to develop the skills to increase the awareness of their product or service. This in turn leads to a more vibrant and prosperous region.

Events were held in:

- Blue Earth
- Madelia
- Mankato
- St. Peter
- Waseca



## Social Media Breakfast - Mankato

Region Nine has partnered with Otto Media Group and the Center for Innovation & Entrepreneurship to launch Social Media Breakfast - Mankato. These events bring together social media practitioners to network and learn about social media.

Social Media Breakfasts serves two main purposes:

- Face-to-face networking: Bring together marketers, public relations professionals, students, entrepreneurs and social media practitioners and enthusiasts of all types over breakfast.
- Education: Teach, share and learn social media best practices for business through panel discussions, presentations, case studies and breakout sessions.

The events are held monthly on the second Friday. Attendance to the events has ranged from 30-45 people from Mankato and throughout the region.





## Kiester Park Report & Concept

When school district athletic facilities centralized, the City of Kiester inherited 13.77 acres of what was school athletic grounds in the northwest corner of the city. Many ideas have surfaced within the city as to how the area could be improved, of which many involve a recreational component. As a result, the Statewide Health Improvement Partnership joined with the City of Kiester and Region Nine to gather the ideas from community members to guide the decision of the city.

The target audience to elicit feedback from was the younger generation in Kiester. To reach this audience, Region Nine used various community engagement methods including attending a local community event and using targeted Facebook posts to promote an online survey. Overall, 116 responses were tallied between the Kiester Days event and the survey, with 55 of those responses from people under the age of 40.

The City of Kiester was then presented with several park and trail concepts in the Kiester Park Report.



## Transit Coordination Plan

Region Nine partnered with the Minnesota Department of Transportation to create an update to the 2011 Local Human Service-Public Transit Coordination Plan. The plan's focus is on providing better service for people in the nine-county area that depend on public, private, and non-for-profit transit to get to medical appointments, jobs and other destinations.

To gather as much input as possible, Region Nine formed a steering committee, held focus groups and a public workshop, and distributed surveys. Several goals derived from these planning sessions including:

- Centralize ride arrangement calls by taking calls at a central location, where staff can align a ride from an available service based upon client needs and eligibility.
- Centralize information about services and funding for the organizations that provide or have clients that use transit.



# Revolving Loan Fund

Region Nine administers a Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) to assist existing businesses as well as new entrepreneurs in securing financing they are otherwise unable to secure through traditional channels. The primary goal of the RLF program is to create new jobs in the region. The source of funding is the Federal Economic Development Administration. Region Nine often partners with other lenders to assist local area businesses.

Region Nine approved eight new business loans over the course of the past year. As a result,

**55 new jobs** are expected to be added to the region.

Loans were approved for businesses in the following counties:

- Blue Earth
- Nicollet
- Le Sueur



*Pictured at right:  
Loan recipient Diamond Dust Bakery, St. Peter*





# Region Nine Area Inc.

Region Nine Area Inc. (RNAI) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization created to support Region Nine's efforts to increase social and economic opportunities for local community groups, non-profits and government entities in the nine-county region. The mission is to serve citizens of the region by accessing resources in support of Region Nine, local governments and other community organizations that serve those in need.



During Fiscal Year 2017, RNAI was the fiscal sponsor for:

- 410 Project
- Martin County Veterans Memorial
- Minnesota Makers and Artist Guild
- Town Center Inc.
- Sleepy Eye Fire Department

# Commissioners

## Blue Earth County

Brad Ahrenstorff, *(Chair) Cities under 10,000*  
Eric Anderson, *City of Mankato*  
Drew Campbell, *County Commissioner*  
Lyle Femrite, *Township Board*

## Brown County

Tony Berg, *County Commissioner*  
Gary Richter, *Cities under 10,000*  
Robert Goblirsch, *Township Board*  
Charles Schmitz, *City of New Ulm*

## Faribault County

Tom Loveall, *County Commissioner*  
Steve Holmseth, *Township Board*  
Richard Scholtes, *Cities under 10,000*

## Le Sueur County

Chuck Nickolay, *Cities under 10,000*  
Richard Peterson, *Township Board*  
Steve Rohlfing, *County Commissioner*

## Martin County

Elliot Belgard, *County Commissioner*  
Ruth Cyphers, *City of Fairmont*  
Jeff Ross, *Cities under 10,000*  
Phil Schafer, *Township Board*

## Nicollet County

Marie Dranttel, *County Commissioner*  
Terry Genelin, *Township Board*  
Pam Rodewald, *Cities under 10,000*  
Jim Whitlock, *City of North Mankato*  
Chuck Zieman, *City of St. Peter*

## Sibley County

Doug Munsch, *Cities under 10,000*  
John Pioske, *Township Board*  
Jim Swanson, *County Commissioner*

## Waseca County

Blair Nelson, *County Commissioner*  
Gerri Lienke, *Township Board*  
Daren Arndt, *Cities under 10,000*

## Watsonwan County

Steven Cooling, *Township Board*  
Ray Gustafson, *County Commissioner*  
Gary Sturm, *Cities under 10,000*

## Special Interest Groups

Seasame Glackler-Riqualmae, *Youth*  
Brian Gramentz, *MN Valley Council of Governments*  
Jim Grabowska, *School Boards*  
Mohamed Ibrahim, *Minority Populations*  
Olivia Lippert, *Youth*  
Mike Pfeil, *School Boards*  
Chera Sevcik, *Health & Human Welfare*

Striving to promote the development of the region through  
intergovernmental cooperation, community and human development,  
long-range planning and technical assistance.



# Staff



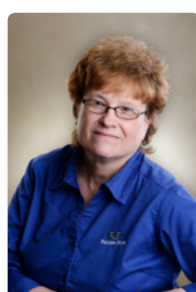
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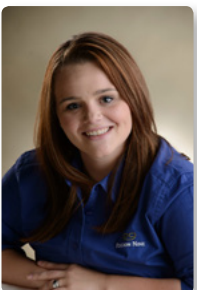
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## *Stay Connected*

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