



ANNUAL REPORT

FY26 | BUILDING STRONGER
COMMUNITIES TOGETHER



2401 Broadway Ave.,
Slayton, MN 56172



www.swrdc.org



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As of August 7th, I have served as Executive Director of the SRDC for 25 years. What has kept me engaged and enthusiastic throughout that time is the wide range of topics and programs we get to work on every day.

Our governing statute, the Minnesota Regional Development Act, states that our purpose is to “work with and on behalf of local units of government to develop plans or implement programs to address economic, social, physical, and governmental concerns”. This allows us to respond to our local communities and constituencies on a wide range of topics.

This year, in particular, brought a diverse mix of projects across the region.

From the EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

JAY TRUSTY



PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS



On the planning side, the SRDC finished up the Lyon County Comprehensive Plan and worked on updating Zoning Ordinances as well as finishing up the Lyon County/Camden Trail Master Plan. Work continues on the Marshall Parks Plan, the Nobles County Comprehensive Plan.



Work also concluded on the twelve-county Southwest Regional Solid Waste Plan. This plan is for the next ten years and should serve the region in good stead as it deals with solid waste issues from Construction and Demolition Landfills to forever chemicals, (PFAs).



Staff continue to work with local grocery stores on a number of projects, wrapping up our work on the Meat Processing Train and Retain Program and pursuing the possibility of a Bulk Milk Dispenser Initiative. Our work with local grocery stores dovetails nicely with our energy efficiency work, helping local businesses achieve greater efficiencies in operations by providing loan funds and assisting with technical assistance and grant writing.



Our work in the energy space also continues as we provide staff support to the Rural Minnesota Energy Board and staff the Southwest Clean Energy Resource Teams (CERTs) Coordinator position. CERTs has been very active this past year with six SEED Grants being funded and staff ramping up the CERTs Energy Ambassador Program.



It was also an interesting year in that it saw staff do our first work in a somewhat controversial area, data centers.

The SRDC continues to be the go-to organization for neutral third party analysis of economic development projects, sometimes being asked by the developer and sometimes the community to take a look at a project and present an unbiased analysis so that local elected officials can make the tough calls with the best available information.



This circles back to our statutory purpose and our mission, “to provide professional expertise and leadership to enhance regional opportunities.”



SRDC

SOUTHWEST REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

PROVIDING
PROFESSIONAL
EXPERTISE &
LEADERSHIP TO
ENHANCE REGIONAL
OPPORTUNITIES



Southwest Regional Development Commission (SRDC) is a nine-county Regional Development Organization that aims to connect units of government, businesses, and communities with the resources, planning, & services needed to promote and further opportunities in Southwest Minnesota.



Since 1973, SRDC has been a regionally-focused partner providing community development, economic development, and transportation planning initiatives across our region.



Our vision is to channel progressive collaboration between cities, counties, & townships so that knowledge & resources can be used to help the region prepare for a future where people and businesses thrive.



FUNDS BROUGHT TO THE REGION

\$15,141,126

as a result of our work in FY26



\$14,783,820

invested in our region
as a result of SRDC's
work in FY26



\$357,306

Contractual Services
the SRDC provided
to the region \$



\$15,141,126

TOTAL FUNDS BROUGHT
TO THE REGION AS A
RESULT OF OUR WORK

SERVING



9

 Counties

80

 Cities

162

 Townships

32

 School Districts

1

 Tribal Nation

and over

117,000

people in
Southwest Minnesota

COMMISSIONERS

Executive Committee

Paul Langseth, Chair
Dennis Welgraven, Vice-Chair
Rick Anderson, Treasurer
Eric Hartman, Secretary
Miron Carney, Immediate Past Chair

Cottonwood County

Donna Gravley, Commissioner*
Jenny Quade, Municipalities
Ron Kottke, Townships

Jackson County

Kent Bargfrede, Commissioner
Mark Haberman, Municipalities*
Craig Rubis, Townships

Lincoln County

Mic VanDeVere, Commissioner*
Lyndon Johnson, Municipalities
Jeff Moen, Townships

Lyon County

Rick Anderson, Commissioner *
Pam Cooreman, Municipalities
Lori Grant, Townships
Bob Byrnes, City of Marshall *

Murray County

Dennis Welgraven, Commissioner *
Miron Carney, Municipalities *
Vacant, Townships

Nobles County

Bob Paplow, Commissioner
Steve Kellen, Municipalities
Paul Langseth, Townships *
Rick Von Holdt, City of Worthington *



Back row: Luke Johnson, Rick VonHoldt, Dennis Welgraven, Mic VanDeVere, Leah Bittner, Craig Rubis, Jenny Quade, Mark Haberman, Donna Gravley, Kristi Blankenship, Sherri Thompson, Lori Grant, Lyndon Johnson. **Front Row:** Rod Hamilton, Bob Byrnes, Miron Carney, Rick Anderson, Paul Langseth, Dennis Madison, Dan Delaney, Pam Cooreman.

Pipestone County

Chris Hollingsworth, Commissioner*
Dan Delaney, Municipalities
Scott Blom, Townships

Redwood County

Bob Van Hee, Commissioner *
Leah Bittner, Municipalities
Tiffany Lesmeister-Knott, Townships

Rock County

Sherri Thompson, Commissioner
Dennis Madison, Municipalities *
Vacant, Townships

School Board

Eric Hartman, School Board *
Vacant, School Board

Lower Sioux Community

Vacant

Special Interest Groups

Vacant, Cultural Diversity
Tim Jones, SW MN PIC
David Sturrock,
SW MN Higher Education
Carol Biren, Health & Human Services
Kristie Blankenship,
SW MN Housing Partnership
Rod Hamilton
Economic Development

* indicates FY2026 Board Member



Marshall Parks

Marshall's parks and public spaces are essential to the community's quality of life, providing places for recreation, wellness, and community connection. To help guide future investments, the City of Marshall partnered with the Southwest Regional Development Commission (SRDC) to develop a comprehensive Master Parks Plan. Through the University of Minnesota's Empowering Small Minnesota Communities Program and an extensive public engagement process, SRDC worked with residents, park users, community organizations, and local leaders to identify priorities and create a long-term vision for Marshall's parks system.



Planner Webb explaining the Marshall Parks Plan

The planning effort reflects Marshall's continued commitment to enhancing its parks and recreational amenities. Independence Park exemplifies these investments with recent improvements that include new restroom facilities, a replacement picnic shelter, electrical upgrades, and other site enhancements supported in part by a Minnesota DNR Outdoor Recreation Grant. The Master Parks Plan highlights SRDC's role in helping communities create thoughtful, community-driven plans that strengthen quality of life and support vibrant, healthy communities throughout southwest Minnesota.



Planner Webb talking about the Camden Region Trail Plan

Camden Regional Trail

The Camden Regional Trail is one of southwest Minnesota's premier recreational assets, stretching approximately 14 miles between Marshall and Camden State Park. The trail connects neighborhoods, Southwest Minnesota State University, parks, and community amenities before winding through the scenic countryside to one of Minnesota's most popular state parks. It provides residents and visitors with opportunities for recreation, active transportation, and access to the region's natural beauty.

SRDC has played an important role in advancing regional trail development through planning assistance, grant support, technical expertise, and partnerships with local governments and trail advocates. The Camden Regional Trail demonstrates how regional collaboration can enhance quality of life, support tourism and local businesses, and create lasting community connections that benefit southwest Minnesota for generations.



Little Explorers owner Jamie Gillund talked about the center.

Little Explorers Child Care Center

Little Explorers Child Care Center in Ghent is a powerful example of how community development supports families, strengthens the workforce, and invests in the future. Founded by Jamie Gillund after 17 years of operating an in-home daycare, the center opened in October 2021 in response to the region's growing child care shortage. Today, Little Explorers serves families from Ghent, Marshall, and surrounding communities, providing high-quality, play-based early childhood education while helping children develop the skills they need to succeed in school and beyond.

The project was made possible through a partnership between State Bank of Taunton and the Southwest Regional Development Commission's Revolving Loan Fund, which helped provide the financing needed to complete the facility. Little Explorers demonstrates that child care is a critical component of economic development—allowing parents to remain in the workforce, helping businesses recruit and retain employees, and supporting the long-term vitality of rural communities. Building on its success, Lit-

tle Explorers is expanding with a second child care center in Minneota, increasing access to quality child care for even more southwest Minnesota families.

Heritage Event Center

The Heritage Event Center in rural Taunton is a remarkable example of how entrepreneurship, historic preservation, and community investment can work together to strengthen a region. Located on the Fier family farmstead, which has been in the family since 1885, the venue grew from Dale Fier's commitment to preserving the historic family barn. What began as a restoration project soon evolved into a thriving event destination after hosting its first barn wedding. Today, the Heritage Event Center welcomes weddings, reunions, fundraisers, concerts, and community events while celebrating the rich agricultural heritage of southwest Minnesota.

When the COVID-19 pandemic threatened the business, SRDC's COVID-19 Revolving Loan Fund provided critical financing that helped the Heritage Event Center retain employees, complete facility improvements, and continue investing in the property. The venue now attracts visitors from across the region, contributes to the local economy, and preserves an important piece of southwest Minnesota's history. The Heritage Event Center exemplifies how strategic investment and local entrepreneurship can transform a family legacy into a lasting community asset.



Dale Fier spoke to the group about the improvements made to make the family farm an event center.



Guest speaker, Kim Nagle, addressing the group

Annual Meeting

SRDC Celebrates Partnerships, Progress and People at 2026 Annual Meeting

TAUNTON, Minn. — The Southwest Regional Development Commission (SRDC) celebrated another year of partnerships, innovation and community investment during its 2026 Annual Meeting held Thursday, July 9, at the Heritage Event Center near Taunton.

Commissioners, elected officials, community leaders, project partners and stakeholders from across southwest Minnesota gathered to reflect on the accomplishments of Fiscal Year 2026 while celebrating projects that continue to strengthen the region's communities and economy.

Executive Director Jay Trusty reflected on his 25 years of service leading the Southwest

Regional Development Commission. Trusty shared the organization's evolution over the past quarter century, highlighting the importance of regional partnerships and collaboration in helping communities address changing challenges and opportunities.

The annual meeting also celebrated another productive year of accomplishments for the Commission.

During Fiscal Year 2026, SRDC continued implementation of the region's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), assisted communities with comprehensive planning and community engagement initiatives, administered Economic Development Administration funding for the City of Adrian's electric substation project, expanded business financing through its Revolving Loan Fund programs, advanced regional transportation and trail planning efforts, supported energy planning and renewable energy initiatives, and provided technical assistance and grant support to communities throughout the nine-county region.

The evening's keynote address was delivered by nationally recognized entrepreneur, business coach and author Kim Nagle, known as The DAMN Plan® Lady. Nagle challenged attendees to rethink community development by focusing not simply on buildings, roads or infrastructure, but on the people whose lives are transformed because of those investments. Drawing from her own personal story and decades of experience working with communities across the Midwest, she illustrated how investments in housing, workforce development and child care create ripple effects that strengthen families, businesses and entire communities for generations.

Using Little Explorers Child Care Center as an example, Nagle demonstrated that an investment in quality child care is far more than funding a building—it is an investment in working parents, children, employers and the future economic vitality of an entire region. She encouraged community leaders to tell the stories behind their projects and focus on the lives changed rather than simply the dollars invested.

As the evening concluded, attendees left with a renewed appreciation for the partnerships that continue to move southwest Minnesota forward. Whether expanding recreational opportunities, supporting entrepreneurs, strengthening the workforce or helping communities plan for the future, the Southwest Regional Development Commission remains committed to improving the quality of life throughout the region—one project, one partnership and one community at a time.

Little Explorers Child Care Center is more than child care—it supports families, strengthens the workforce, and invests in the future of Southwest Minnesota.



A PASSION THAT STARTED YOUNG

After 17 years of providing in-home daycare, Jamie Gillund opened Little Explorers in October 2021 to help meet the region's growing child care shortage.



FOCUSED ON CHILDREN & FAMILIES

Little Explorers provides a safe, nurturing, play-based environment where children can learn, grow, and thrive—while giving families dependable child care so they can work and build their futures.



A VITAL COMMUNITY RESOURCE

With multiple classrooms and approximately 20 staff members, Little Explorers continues to see demand exceed capacity, with dozens of children on its waiting list.



A PARTNERSHIP THAT MADE IT POSSIBLE

A partnership between State Bank of Taunton and SRDC's Revolving Loan Fund helped turn Jamie's vision into reality and expand access to quality child care in the region.



THE STORY CONTINUES

Little Explorers is completing a second child care center in Minnesota, expanding its impact and helping even more families access quality child care.



SRDC Chair Paul Langseth presented the 2026 "Project of the Year Award" to Little Explorers Child Care Center of Ghent, founded by Jamie Gillund. Pictured: Paul, Jamie, husband Kurt, daughters Daylin and Skyla. Front: son Gunner and daughter Whitney. Not pictured: son Kestler.

“

Our mission is to provide a safe, nurturing environment where children learn, grow, and thrive—while giving families the support they need to work, dream, and build a better future.

– Jamie Gillund, Owner, Little Explorers Child Care Center



Investing in Local Businesses. Building Stronger Communities.

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SRDC

SOUTHWEST REGIONAL
DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION



FY26 HIGHLIGHTS

Connecting Communities. Strengthening Lives. Building the Future.

As we reflect on the past fiscal year, SRDC remains committed to supporting our region through planning, collaboration, and innovative solutions. Together with our partners, communities, and stakeholders, we are building stronger economies, connected infrastructure, and healthier places to live, work, and play.

OUR REGION. OUR IMPACT.



9 COUNTIES

Working Together



80 CITIES

Stronger Together



162 TOWNSHIPS

Built on Partnership



32 SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Investing in Our Future



ONE TRIBAL NATION

Endless Possibilities



Our mission is to improve, promote, and develop our region through services and leadership.



Investing in Local Businesses. Building Stronger Communities.

COTTONWOOD

JACKSON

LINCOLN

LYON

MURRAY

NOBLES

PIPESTONE

REDWOOD

ROCK



2401 Broadway Ave., Slayton, MN 56172



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SRDC Southwest Regional Development Commission

FY26 HIGHLIGHTS EDA PLANNING

Strengthening Communities. Building Resilience. Planning for the Future.

Building
**STRONGER
COMMUNITIES**

**CREATING
BRIGHTER
FUTURES**



EECBG

(Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant)
– Energy Planning for Small Communities

The Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) program provides funding opportunities for planning efforts designed to assist small communities in:

- Reducing energy use
- Lowering fossil fuel emissions
- Improving overall energy efficiency

Eligible applicants include cities and counties with populations under 15,000. There is no local match requirement for participation.

Eligible Communities

Eligible entities within the SRDC region include:

- All cities within the region
- The counties of:
 - Cottonwood
 - Jackson
 - Lincoln
 - Murray
 - Pipestone
 - Rock

SRDC Funding Allocation

SRDC was awarded \$99,959.78 through the EECBG program, with 10% allocated toward project administration.

- Maximum grant amount per community: \$20,000

Eligible Planning Activities

Potential planning efforts may include:

- Resiliency plans
- Energy audits
- Engineering studies
- Energy efficiency and conservation planning initiatives

Approved Projects

The CEDS Committee has approved projects involving:

- City of Slayton
- City of Pipestone
- City of Hadley
- City of Comfrey
- Rock County

In addition, SRDC has requested an additional \$25,000 in funding to support two applicants that have not yet submitted final applications.



ED PROS

This group is for anyone in our region with an interest in economic development.



The group meets quarterly.

Participants connect, share ideas, and stay informed about economic development opportunities.



EDA DISASTER NOFO

The EDA Disaster Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) has been released and EDA is currently reviewing applications. Projects can be funded at up to an 80% grant rate.

Eligible applicants include units of government, higher education institutions, and other qualifying entities located within counties covered under FEMA disaster declarations. Potential projects include:

- **Minnesota West Community and Technical College** – equipment and facility upgrades
- **City of Mt. Lake** – Infrastructure and improvements on newest industrial park
- **City of Jackson** – industrial park expansion



INDUSTRIAL PARK STRATEGIC PLANNING – REDWOOD FALLS

SRDC continues to assist the City of Redwood Falls through its EDA-funded planning initiative focused on future industrial park development and business expansion opportunities.

Recent Activities

- Assisted with preparation for the March 31 working session.
- Facilitated discussions with city council and staff.
- Developed and distributed a survey targeting existing light manufacturing businesses.



MEAT PROCESSOR WORKFORCE INITIATIVE

- ✓ \$250,000 MDA Grant
- ✓ 7 OJT participants
- ✓ 4 hires at Happy Halal Meats
- ✓ Partnership with Ridgewater College



RIDGEWATER
COLLEGE



BULK MILK DISPENSER INITIATIVE

- ✓ Exploring pilot schools
- ✓ Reducing packaging waste
- ✓ Improving sustainability



GOOD FOOD ACCESS GRANTS

BOLT'S GROCERY – LAKE BENTON

\$70,120 AWARD

Replacing outdated meat & dairy cases with larger, energy efficient models.



IVANHOE SUPERMARKET IVANHOE, MN

\$70,000 AWARD

Replacing produce & meat refrigeration displays to ensure food quality &



HERON LAKE MINI MART

Refrigeration improvements and energy efficiency upgrades.



SOUTHWEST MINNESOTA GROWERS' CONNECTION

Developing a regional network of local producers.



SUPPORTING LOCAL FOOD SYSTEMS

FROM FARM TO TABLE



LOCAL FARMS



STRONG COMMUNITIES



HEALTHY FOOD



SUSTAINABLE FUTURE



TOGETHER WE GROW



FY26 HIGHLIGHTS

RLF PROGRAM YEAR IN REVIEW

A YEAR OF INVESTMENT, GROWTH & OPPORTUNITY

SRDC's Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) programs continue to provide capital and support to businesses across Southwest Minnesota. Through strategic lending, strong partnerships, and improved processes, we're helping local businesses grow and communities thrive.

COMMITMENT TO LOCAL BUSINESSES



RLF COMMITTEE

Five-member committee that meets as needed to oversee both the Traditional RLF and COVID-19 RLF (C-RLF) programs.



INTEREST RATE

SRDC RLF projects are financed at 75% of prime, in compliance with federal RLF regulations.



APPLICATIONS

The fillable application (used for both programs) and the Requirements Checklist are available online: [SRDC RLF Application](#)

TECHNOLOGY UPGRADE



Presta

FINANCIAL SOFTWARE

Implementation of Presta is underway, replacing the outdated GMS system.

- ✓ As of the September 1 ACH cycle, all payments were successfully processed in Presta.
- ✓ Staff anticipate significant time savings through automation features.



APPLY ONLINE!

Applications can now be submitted through Presta at:
<https://app.letspresta.com/signup/32/85>

A YEAR IN SUMMARY



\$591,000 LENT OUT

- Nobles County \$283,000
- Cottonwood County \$145,000
- Pipestone County \$40,000

- Redwood County \$63,000
- Murray County \$60,000



CRLF funds remain federalized until seven years have passed.



*Investing in Local Businesses.
Building Stronger Communities.*



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SRDC Southwest Regional Development Commission



FY26 HIGHLIGHTS

RLF PROGRAM YEAR IN REVIEW

A Year of Investment, Growth & Opportunity

SRDC's Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) programs continue to provide capital and support to businesses across Southwest Minnesota. Through strategic lending, strong partnerships, and improved processes, we're helping local businesses grow and communities thrive.



Our mission is to improve, promote, and develop our region through services and leadership.



BY THE NUMBERS



\$456,598.53
TRADITIONAL RLF
FUNDS AVAILABLE
(as of 6-17-26)



\$206,852.82
COVID-19 RLF (C-RLF)
FUNDS AVAILABLE
(as of 6-25-26)

SITE VISITS & STORYTELLING



Site visits are required every three years but are conducted more frequently as needed.



Visits include communication audits and interviews to capture success stories.



Read our client success stories and spotlights:
www.swrdc.org/spotlights

CONTRACTED RLFS SUPPORTED BY SRDC



JACKSON COUNTY RLF

- Four active loans
- Approximately \$210,000 available for lending



HERON LAKE RLF (HLRLF)

- Funded through CDBG
- Focus: economic development within a 20-mile radius of Heron Lake
- SRDC assists with GMS entry and amortization schedules as needed
- Funds are available for businesses with gap financing needs



FALCON DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION (FDC)

- Focus: economic development within a 30-mile radius of Heron Lake
- Funds are de-federalized (Davis-Bacon does not apply to construction projects)
- Board has 6 members (7 maximum)
- Approximately \$10,000 available in lending capacity at this time

COTTONWOOD | JACKSON | LINCOLN | LYON | MURRAY
NOBLES | PIPESTONE | REDWOOD | ROCK

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SRDC Southwest Regional
Development Commission



SRDC

SOUTHWEST REGIONAL
DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

SRDC's Revolving Loan Fund

— A Gap Financing Tool For Businesses —

Since the first loan that closed on 2/21/95, SRDC's Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) continues to strengthen and grow businesses in southwest Minnesota.

The SRDC RLF originated as a Disaster RLF with **\$1,226,000** because of extreme flooding and was later expanded with **\$1,480,000** COVID-19 disaster funds. Since its inception, SRDC has assisted **237** businesses in the region through the RLF, loaned out over **\$86 million** and leveraged **\$87,500,000** in the region through private and public funds and client equity.



55 SRDC RLF loans are current at the end of the fiscal year which added or retained **303** jobs.



Nine new loans were approved in FY26 under the SRDC RLF. Financing was made available for businesses which include a fuel stop, tree service, truck and repair and towing business, radio station, construction, pharmacy, HVAC plumbing and heating, and a farm implement business totaling **\$591,000** of financing and **\$632,500** leveraged.



SRDC staff would like to thank those involved in making FY26 a success! A big thank you to our five-member RLF committee who met four times in this last fiscal year. They manage both the traditional RLF and COVID-19 RLF.



The SRDC appreciates their loan clients, dedicated lenders, and successful partnerships. We look forward to what FY27 will bring and are available to discuss project ideas that add or retain jobs in the region.



The SRDC RLF application for business financing can be found at **www.swrdc.org**. Businesses may also apply through Presta, our online loan management system.

LOANS

TRADITIONAL RLF



237

businesses
assisted since
its inception



\$80,070,202.70

loaned out

COVID-19 RLF



43

Businesses
assisted since
its inception



\$6,649,129.26

loaned out



Over
\$87 Million
leveraged in the region
between the two programs
since inception





Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE)

PACE loans are a new way to finance **energy efficiency** and **renewable energy** upgrades to buildings of commercial property owners, industrial and agri-business.

LOAN SIZE

- Minimum PACE Loan: \$5,000
- Maximum PACE Loan will be lesser of:
 - The actual cost of improvements, or
 - Greater of 30% of the assessed property value or 30% of the appraised value.
- Maximum PACE loan of \$100,000
- Interest rate - 3% under prime



PACE is a financing tool used to assist commercial and agri-businesses with improvements to existing facilities that substantially increases energy efficiency.



Costs for the improvements are paid back through a special assessment on property taxes.



The increase in property taxes is offset by the decrease in energy costs so that the business sees no change in the bottom line.



Solar and wind are eligible purposes of PACE financing.



PACE BY THE NUMBERS

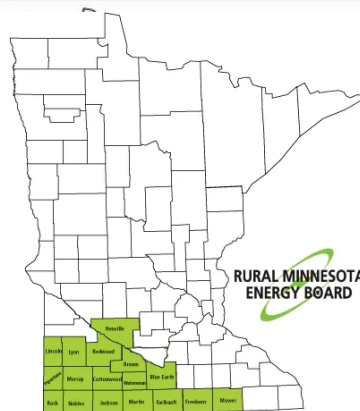
40

LOANS CLOSED

\$1,623,008.84

TOTAL INVESTED

Helping businesses invest in energy efficiency and a stronger future.



Serving the counties of:

Blue Earth Brown Cottonwood Faribault Freeborn Jackson
Lincoln Lyon Martin Mower Murray Nicollet Nobles
Pipestone Redwood Renville Rock Watonwan

*This program is administered by the SRDC on behalf of
the Rural Minnesota Energy Board*



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SRDC

SOUTHWEST REGIONAL
DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT FY26 YEAR IN REVIEW

SRDC continues to help communities across Southwest Minnesota build a resilient, sustainable future through collaboration, education, and innovative energy solutions.



BIODIGESTER TOUR



On August 21, SRDC and CERTs hosted a Biodigester Tour with stops at the Agricultural Utilization Research Institute (AURI) Bioindustrial Innovation Center in Waseca and the Hometown BioEnergy Facility in Le Sueur.

Attendees included members of the SW CERTs Steering Committee, RSDP work group, RMEB, the Solid Waste Commission, and State representatives Thomas Stenson (District 19B) and David Bier (District 16B).

Participants toured AURI's pilot-scale biodigester, researched payback at Hometown BioEnergy (gas project, blessed by a unit vote), and reviewed MnRealist solar scale biomass facility, which converts local agricultural and food wastes into renewable electricity for the Minnesota Municipal Power Agency.

SOLAR FOR COMMUNITY RESILIENCE ON DWSMAs



SRDC assisted with community engagement in a scaled-down project focused on solar energy and drinking water management supply areas (DWSMAs).

The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) and the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) are working with one or two communities in Southwest Minnesota to develop plans for solar projects that enhance rural water system resilience while addressing nitrate contamination.

Potential pilot sites include Adrian, Rock County, Lincoln, Pipestone Rural Water (Holland Well Field), and the Lindstrom Wellhead Protection Area in Murray County.



SRDC received **\$12,000** for this effort.

GREAT PLAINS INSTITUTE – CAROLYN FOUNDATION PROJECT



- SRDC subcontracted with GPI on a \$3,000 project (August 2025–December 2026) to identify high-priority community benefits from renewable energy development.
- SRDC engaged local stakeholders and participated in statewide PUC permitting process discussions.

PV SUCCESS WORKSHOPS



- As part of a McKnight-funded CERTs initiative, SRDC staff supported solar workshops in Houston and Nobles Counties.
- These workshops help communities and landowners understand the benefits and process of solar development.



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NOBLES | PIPESTONE | REDWOOD | ROCK



www.swrdc.org/spotlights



SRDC Southwest Regional
Development Commission



First Children's Finance

Investing in Our Future:

Child Care and Economic Growth

SRDC Deputy Director **Robin Weis**, Karen DeBoer of Region 8 Child Care Aware of Minnesota / Southwestern Minnesota Opportunity Council, Inc., and **Josh Malchow**, **Slayton City Administrator** attended the 2025 Foundations of the Future: Child Care in Economic Development event held in Alexandria, Minnesota.



The conference focused on the **vital connection between child care and community prosperity**, beginning with a keynote presentation by **Art Rolnick**, "*Child Care is Key to a Thriving Minnesota Economy.*"



Sessions throughout the day explored how communities across Minnesota are leveraging local strategies, partnerships, and innovation to strengthen child care access, support providers, and create opportunities for economic growth.



This event was sponsored by **First Children's Finance**, an organization dedicated to strengthening child care businesses and supporting thriving communities.



Learn more at firstchildrensfinance.org/minnesota



Pictured with Robin (left), Karen DeBoer (Ellsworth), and Josh Malchow, Slayton City Administrator.

SESSION HIGHLIGHTS



Session 1: Child Care Works: Leveraging Local Strategies and Partnerships for Lasting Impact

Highlighted collaborative efforts improving child care access and quality.



Session 2: Caring for Growth: Child Care Solutions for Thriving Communities

Showcased how teamwork, funding, and community support are helping launch new child care businesses.



Leadership in Action

SRDC's Deputy Director, **Robin Weis**, and Community Development Director, **Jason Walker**, recently participated in the MADO Leadership Training Program—a three-day intensive hosted by Ridgewater College's Customized Training division.

The program brought together staff from Regional Development Organizations (RDOs) across Minnesota to strengthen leadership capabilities, enhance collaboration, and exchange innovative approaches to community and economic development.



We applaud Robin, Jason, and all Leadership in Action participants for committing to their professional development and for bringing forward new insights that will support SRDC's continued service to the region.



Robin Weis and Jason Walker along with Leadership in Action participants



SRDC Staff in Action: Continuing Education

Melissa Nelson, SRDC Finance Director, and **Jodi Klein**, SRDC Accounting Specialist recently attended the 16th Annual MIP User Conference in Las Vegas, October 14–16. Hosted by NP Solutions, this event is the largest and longest-running MIP User Conference designed specifically for nonprofit and government professionals.

Over the course of two and a half days, our staff joined sessions covering topics such as:

- ✓ Building better budgets
- ✓ Streamlining accounts payable and payroll processes
- ✓ Strengthening fraud prevention and internal controls
- ✓ Exploring the future of AI in accounting
- ✓ Developing dashboards for better data visibility
- ✓ Effective grants management and cost allocation



The conference offered valuable hands-on training, networking with nonprofit experts, and opportunities to explore new tools and technologies to enhance efficiency and accountability in financial operations.



By investing in professional development opportunities like this, SRDC ensures our team continues to bring the most up-to-date financial knowledge and best practices to support communities throughout Southwest Minnesota.



Melissa Nelson and Jodi Klein



SRDC Staff in Action: Writing for Purpose Workshop

SRDC staff members **Kim Murphy**, **Nadya Bucklin**, and **Sheila Crowley** attended a three-day Writing for Purpose workshop in April led by Kim Nagle, a nationally recognized writer and strategist with a strong track record in rural and nonprofit development.

Guest speakers Jill J. Johnson of Johnson Consulting Services and Scott Nyegaard of LegacyGroup, LLC, added valuable insight—covering everything from using research to strengthen writing to leveraging AI as a thoughtful, effective partner.



It was an engaging and informative experience that will help strengthen communication and storytelling across SRDC's work.



CERTs Community Gathering

CERTs staff, partners, and steering committees gathered on March 30 in Waite Park for a day of visioning, connecting, and conversation.



The conversation focused on how we collectively build community-based clean energy in Minnesota.

Nadya, Jason, and Robin attended the event and Nadya also attended the CERTs all-staff meeting the following day.



SRDC Board Retreat:

SRDC held its biennial Board Retreat April 8–9 in Okoboji. The retreat brings together board and staff to strengthen relationships and explore agency work in greater depth.

This year's discussions focused on SRDC's history in energy, solid waste, aging services, and its partnership with the federal EDA.



Brian Kletscher, CEO of Highwater Ethanol and former Redwood County Commissioner, provided historical perspective. He previously served as chair of both the Rural Minnesota Energy Board (RMEB) and the Southwest Regional Solid Waste Commission.



SRDC Staff: Back; Kathy Schreiber, Jay Trusty, Chris Webb, Jason Walker, Jodi Klein. Front Sheila Crowley, Robin Weis, Nadya Bucklin, Melissa Nelson, Kim Murphy



All Staff Retreat:

At the end of April, staff attended the statewide RDC (Regional Development Commission) All-Staff Retreat in St. Cloud with approximately 80 participants.

The event focused on peer learning, training, and emerging topics such as AI, cybersecurity, community development, and transportation.

Featured speakers included Doug Griffiths, author of *13 Ways to Kill Your Community*, along with presentations from the State Demographer's Office, PERA, and the Minnesota State Retirement System. Sessions also covered facilitation of difficult conversations and effective storytelling for RDCs.



Nadya Bucklin at the CERTs in Action



CERTs in Action:

Staff represented CERTs at a National Science Teacher's Conference showcase event, on November 12, at the Minneapolis Convention Center. The conference was an opportunity for science and STEM educators to connect with fellow professionals and industry leaders, share resources and innovative ideas, and learn from each other.

SW and Central regional CERTs coordinators, **Nadya Bucklin** and **Heidi Auel**, hosted a table full of clean energy resources for educators; including free curriculum examples, MN grant opportunities, and other energy related materials.



Supporting Our Communities: Rural Grocery Stores Matter

During a visit to Bolt's Grocery in Lake Benton, **Senator Amy Klobuchar** met with owners **Bill and Kelly Bolt**, local leaders, banking representatives, and SRDC staff to discuss the critical role rural grocery stores play in sustaining small communities.

The conversation highlighted the economic challenges facing independent grocery stores, including razor-thin profit margins, aging infrastructure, rising operational costs, and the increasing difficulty of securing traditional financing for upgrades and repairs.

Bill and Kelly Bolt shared the story of purchasing the store shortly before the COVID-19 pandemic. Since then, they have invested heavily in improvements, including new refrigeration systems, updated coolers, energy upgrades, and expanded inventory.

Grants and financing programs, including SRDC-supported PACE financing and other rural grocery assistance grants, were essential to keeping the business operational.

The discussion emphasized how rural grocery stores often serve far beyond their traditional retail role—providing groceries, bait, propane, senior meals, delivery for shut-ins, fresh meat processing, bakery items, deli foods, and serving as a social hub for residents.

SRDC Deputy Director **Robin Weis** discussed SRDC's support through programs such as PACE financing and revolving loan funds supported by federal Economic Development Administration and USDA funding, along with assistance in identifying and applying for grants.

Local banking representatives and community leaders praised the Bolts' commitment to the community, noting that rural economic development depends on partnerships, character lending, and collaboration. Senator Klobuchar acknowledged the importance of maintaining rural grocery access, supporting tourism, and investing in infrastructure and grant programs that help small-town businesses remain viable.



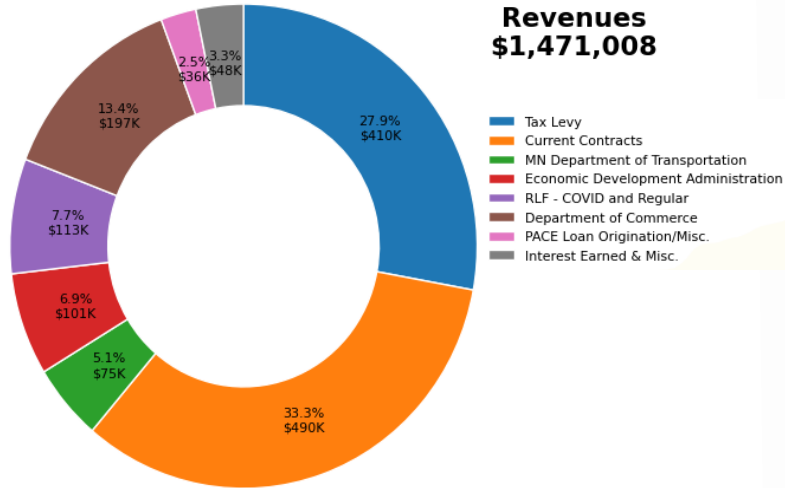
SRDC staff along with Senator Klobuchar and Bolt Grocery store owners Bill and Kelly Bolt

FINANCIALS

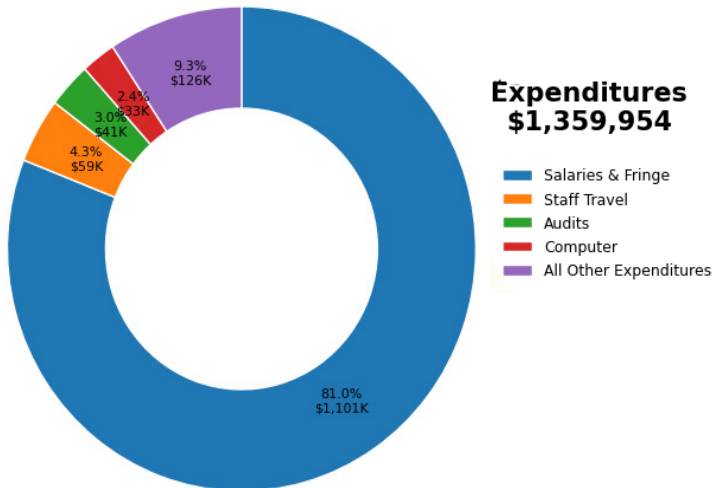
FY2026 Financial Overview

Year-end revenues, expenditures and overall balance

Revenues \$1,471,008



Expenditures \$1,359,954



FY2026 Overall Balance: \$111,054

Expenditure categories under \$60,000 are grouped as "All Other Expenditures."

Note: Listed revenue and expenditure line items each total \$1 more than the stated totals in the source financial statement.

Revenues	FY2026 Year End*	FY2026 BUDGET
Tax Levy	410,359	471,544
Current Contracts (includes R9 McKnight)	490,233	462,767
MN Department of Transportation	75,000	75,000
Economic Development Administration	100,853	70,000
RLF- both Covid and Regular	112,807	60,000
Dept of Commerce Revenue	197,422	222,790
PACE loan orig/int/misc	36,132	19,566
Interest Earned & Miscellaneous	48,203	69,840
Total Revenues		
	1,471,008	1,451,507
Expenditures	FY2026 Year End*	FY2026 BUDGET
Committee Expense	24,707	34,000
Salaries & Fringe	1,101,226	1,142,572
Staff Travel	58,996	60,000
Office Space	10,464	15,000
Postage	3,174	5,349
Communications	7,463	9,219
Print/Publication	4,765	8,000
Insurance	9,449	10,000
Office Supply/Meeting Expense	3,959	8,000
Program Supply - reimbursed by contracts	2,330	-
Computer	32,506	56,000
Audits	41,000	41,000
Consultant/Contracted Services/Legal	21,015	24,013
Dues/Memberships & Other	4,085	5,000
Financing Fees & Other	605	1,000
Equipment/Building updates	1,056	5,000
Debt Service-Principal & Interest	10,000	10,000
Building Lease Principal Payment	23,155	23,360
Total Expenditures	1,359,954	1,457,513
Overall Balance	111,054	(6,006)

2024 Audit

The FY23 audit was conducted by Kinner & Company Ltd, Certified Public Accountants, Tracy, Minnesota. The auditor's report expresses an unqualified opinion on the General Purpose Statements of the Southwest Regional Development Commission.



MEET OUR TEAM

Dedicated People. Stronger Region.

Our team is committed to connecting communities, businesses, and partners with resources, planning, and services that create opportunities and build a stronger Southwest Minnesota.



Jay Trusty
Executive Director



Robin Weis
Deputy Director



Jason Walker
*Community
Development Director*



Melissa Nelson
Finance Director



Kathy Schreiber
Administrative Specialist



Jodi Klein
Accounting Specialist



Kim Murphy
*Economic Development
Specialist*



Nadya Bucklin
Development Planner



Chris Webb
Transportation Planner



Sheila Crowley
Communications Specialist



COLLABORATIVE
Stronger together



RESOURCEFUL
Connecting communities
to opportunities



INNOVATIVE
Creative solutions for
regional success



COMMITTED
Dedicated to a thriving
Southwest Minnesota



OUR WORK

*Strong Communities.
Sustainable Futures.*



The Southwest Regional Development Commission is dedicated to fostering thoughtful, resilient growth and strong leadership across Southwest Minnesota. We work hand-in-hand with communities, local leaders, and partner organizations to ensure every project contributes to a thriving region. Our efforts range from gathering community input on ideas or concerns, to developing long-term plans for growth, to supporting and strengthening businesses and entrepreneurs. We also help advance initiatives, address challenges that may hinder progress, and provide solutions designed to sustain and enhance community vitality.

Every community is unique, and we take pride in delivering assistance tailored to their specific needs. Rooted in the history, values, and vision of Southwest Minnesota, our work is created in collaboration with our communities—and always for their benefit.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Gathering input and addressing ideas or concerns.

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PLANNING FOR GROWTH

Developing long-term plans that guide strong communities.

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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Supporting and strengthening businesses and entrepreneurs.



www.swrdc.org