



Northwest Regional Development Commission

2001 Evaluation and Assessment

NWRDC
115 South Main . Suite 1
Warren, MN 56762 . 218-745-6733
nwrdc.org

*Working on behalf of Local Units of Government in
Kittson, Marshall, Norman, Pennington, Polk, Red Lake and Roseau Counties*

Northwest Regional Development Commission 2001 Evaluation Report

I. Background of the Evaluation

The Regional Development Act of 1969 requires that a self evaluation of each Regional Development Commission be completed every five years. The section of the Act which deals with the evaluation reads as follows:

"In 2001 and every five years thereafter the commission shall review its activities and issue a report assessing its performance in fulfilling the purposes of the regional development act. **The report shall address whether the existence of the commission is in the public welfare and interest.**"

The Regional Development Act states the purpose of Regional Development Commissions 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 of each region of the state."**

The Northwest Regional Development Commission (NWRDC) has undertaken this evaluation to determine if the Commission is meeting the expectations of the public and if improvements can be made for the future.

II. Methodology

The following steps were completed during the evaluation process:

- A review of past evaluations was completed.
- The NWRDC Board of Directors instructed staff to complete a survey of local units of government and those receiving services from the Commission.
- Staff drafted a survey instrument, solicited input on understandability and completed modifications based on input. See page 4 for a copy of the survey and associated documents.
- The survey was mailed to county commissioners, county auditors/administrators, mayors, city clerks, township association chairs, NWRDC advisory committee members, and a sample of persons receiving services from each of the programs. A total of 495 surveys were mailed. Each mailing included a stamped return envelope.
- Survey results were tabulated and presented to the NWRDC Board and Commission.
- A final report was drafted and accepted by the NWRDC.

III. Survey Results

The survey results are tabulated on page 4. The total number of persons responding to each question is found directly adjacent to the box for each response option. The following is a summary of the results:

Response Rate

- The overall response rate of 38.6% is high enough to assume the results are representative of those surveyed.
- The response rate from local units of government was high enough to reflect a strong representative sample. The overall return rate for local units of government was 67%.
- The response rate from NWRDC members and Committee members was very high at 91%.
- All the programs and service types are well enough represented in the responses to assume the survey can be applied to all components of the NWRDC.

Quality of Services

- The ranking of 8.9 on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the highest ranking, reflects a very positive assessment by those responding to the survey.
- There were no ranking below 5 with the exception of one ranking of 1. A manual review of the surveys indicated the survey with this ranking probably felt 1 was the highest ranking.
- Cross tabulations of quality of service according to categories of elected officials, committee members, program areas, and types of services showed very little variation.

Fulfillment of Purpose

- 91% of those responding agreed with the statement that the NWRDC is working on behalf of local units of government to address concerns of the region.
- Only .5% of those responding felt the NWRDC is not working on behalf of local units of government. A small percent (8%) were not sure.

Information

- 86% of those responding felt the NWRDC is providing adequate information about it's programs and services.

Priorities and Comments

- There were a variety of suggestions and comments on the operation of the NWRDC and future priorities. The responses are summarized on page 5. The great majority of the comments were positive or constructive in nature with a small number of negative comments and concerns.
- There were no major trends in the comments that appeared to reflect a need for the NWRDC to make large scale shifts in direction. There were a number of helpful suggestions and reaffirmations of the work directions set by the NWRDC and program Committees.

IV. Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusion

Based on the results of the evaluation process, the Commission can state that:

1. **The existence of the commission is in the public welfare and interest.** This statement is made in consideration of the costs and benefits of the services provided by the NWRDC.
2. The NWRDC is fulfilling it's purpose of working on behalf of local units of government to address economic, social, physical, and governmental concerns of each region of the state.
3. Local units of government and others receiving services feel the programs and services of the NWRDC are high quality in nature.
4. No major shifts in direction or corrective measures are needed to respond to public concerns.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made to address concerns expressed during the evaluation process and to insure the continuation of quality services to the area:

1. The NWRDC should monitor changing economic, social, and natural resource conditions to maintain a clear understanding of development issues facing Northwest Minnesota.
2. Individual programs should review the results of the evaluation to incorporate information about the public's perceptions on priorities and direction.
3. Appreciation should be expressed to commission members, committee members, local units of government, staff, and our other partners for their efforts in public service.

Appendix 1 - Survey Format and Tabulation

Return Rate: 495 Sent Out - 191 Returned

1. Association with the NWRDC - Please check all that apply:

Elected or appointed official:

(9.0) (8.9) (8.5) **(Quality of Service Average)**

County 55 City 44 Township 11

NWRDC Board or Committee Member:

NWRDC 27 Arts Council 21 Loan Fund/Econ.Dev. 22 Aging 16 Transportation 13

Recipient of Services:

Aging/SeniorLink 31 Arts 42 Economic Dev. 36 Loan Fund 25 Transportation 11

2. Services - If you received a direct service from the NWRDC in the past five years what type of service did you receive? (Check all that apply)

Grant 30 Loan 29 Info/Referral 51 Professional Service 27 Publication 36

Technical Assistance 38 Other 13 Describe Other:

3. Quality of Services - How would you rank the overall quality of the services? (Please circle one number, with 10 being the highest ranking):

Average 8.9 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
1 0 0 0 4 2 14 31 41 63

4. Fulfillment of Purpose - Do you feel the Northwest Regional Development Commission is working with and on behalf of local units of government to address economic, social, physical, and governmental concerns of the region?

170 1 15
Yes No Not Sure
If you would like, please explain:

5. Information - Does the NWRDC provide adequate information about it's programs and services?

162 11 15
Yes No Not Sure
If you would like, please explain:

6. Future Priorities - What are the development issues or programs you feel the NWRDC should pursue in the next five years? (Please use back if necessary)

(See Next Page)

7. Comments- Please provide any additional comments about the programs and services of the NWRDC, including both areas working well and those needing attention: (Please use back if necessary)

(See Next Page)

Summary - Survey Comments

Question 6 - Future Priorities

More Economic Development - 17
Senior Citizen Issues (Housing, Transportation) - 13
Affordable Housing - 13
Keep Small Town Businesses Running or Bring New Businesses to the area - 12
Expand Rural Development - 9
Keeping the Arts Alive or Even Expanding the program - 8
Transportation - 8
Provide Employment - Job Skills - 5
Continue Farm Wrap - 2
Technology - Internet Service - 2
Tourism - 2
Grant Money for Local Government - 2

Question 7 - Comments

The Staff are very knowledgeable and helpful - 7
Job Done Well in all Areas - 7
Not Familiar with Services - 6
Keep Up The Good Work - 5
Dedicated staff - very professional - 4
The arts grant forms are very straight forward and simple to fill out - 3
Have heard good reports on AAA program - 3
Without the Arts Grants there would not be as many opportunities for students and communities - 2
Need more local contacts for the services provided - 2
The arts program works well - 2
Quicker Process for Loan Consideration - 1
Low Cost Funding Services - 1
Promotion of Preventative Health Care - 1
NWRDC should work with area service providers to improve available services - 1
Keep supporting seniors - 1
Transportation outside of local areas is almost impossible unless you own a car and can drive yourself - 1
Small business needs expanded assistance - 1
Collaboration with local Economic Development Organizations - 1
Need to promote Northwest Minnesota - 1

Survey Cover Letter

Name
Address

Dear _____,

The Northwest Regional Development Commission (NWRDC) is conducting an evaluation of its performance as required by the Regional Development Act. The primary purpose of this evaluation is to determine if we are fulfilling the purpose of the Act and whether the existence of the commission and its programs is in the public welfare and interest.

The Regional Development Act states the purpose of Regional Development Commissions 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 of each region of the state."**

The program areas being evaluated include the Area Agency on Aging, Arts Council, Economic Development/Loan Fund, and Transportation Planning. All types of services are being evaluated including information and referral, grants, loans, professional services, and publications.

Please take a few minutes to complete the enclosed survey. Your comments will help us greatly in this task.

Sincerely,

Leon Heath
Executive Director

P.S. If you return the survey registration form your name will be placed in a drawing for a gift certificate from the business of your choice. (One \$50 and two \$25)

