



HELLO
May

FULL COMMISSION MEETING

PUBLIC HEARING - 3:30 p.m.

Full Commission Meeting immediately following

Thursday, May 8, 2025

Community Center - Hardwick, MN



SOUTHWEST REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

Southwest Regional Development Commission
July 1, 2025 - June 30, 2026

Revenues	FY2026 Budget
Tax Levy	479,586
Current Contracts	169,088
R9 McKnight balance of what we received up front	150,000
MN Department of Transportation	75,000
Economic Development Administration	70,000
RLF- both Covid and Regular	60,000
Commerce-State Comp Grant	120,000
CERTS Funds	66,660
PACE loan orig/int/misc	6,800
USDA Food Business Center Grant	-
Interest Earned & Miscellaneous	21,000
Building Reserves Used	-
Total Revenues	1,218,134
Expenditures	FY2026 Budget
Committee Expense	34,000
Salaries & Fringe	1,142,572
Staff Travel	60,000
Office Space	15,000
Postage	5,349
Communications	9,219
Print/Publication/Marketing	8,000
Insurance	5,917
Supplies-Mtg/Wkshp Expenses	8,000
Computer	53,000
Audits	33,000
Consultant/Contracted Services/Legal	6,000
Dues/Memberships & Other	5,000
Financing Fees & Other	5,500
Equipment/Building updates	10,000
PACE loan interest	508
Debt Service-Principal & Interest	11,635
Building Lease Principal Payment	23,360
Total Expenditures	1,436,060
Overall Balance	(217,926)
Anticipated Reserve Changes by Category	
Incr/(Decr) in Equipment Reserve	-
Incr/(Decr) in Building Reserve	-
Incr/(Decr) in Employee Transition Reserve	-
Incr/(Decr) in PACE Adm for Interest	12,766
Incr/(Decr) in Unrestricted Reserve	(230,692)

Southwest Regional Development Commission—Full Commission

* Board of Directors

Commissioner	Representing
Rick Anderson	Lyon County Commissioners, SRDC Treasurer*
Kent Bargfrede	Jackson County Commissioners
Carrie Bendix	Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council
JoEllen Benson	Rock County Townships*
Leah Bittner	Redwood County Municipalities
Kristie Blankenship	Southwest Minnesota Housing Partnership
Bob Byrnes	City of Marshall & RLF Committee Chair*
Miron Carney	Murray County Municipalities, Immediate Past Chair, Legislative Committee Chair*
Vacant	Lower Sioux Community
Pam Cooreman	Lyon County Municipalities
Vacant	Murray County Townships
Dan Delaney	Pipestone County Municipalities
Lori Grant	Lyon County Townships
Donna Gravley	Cottonwood County Commissioners*
Mark Haberman	Jackson County Municipalities Rep*
Eric Hartman	Region 8 School Boards* SRDC Secretary
Chris Hollingsworth	Pipestone County Commissioners*
Lyndon Johnson	Lincoln County Municipalities*
Tiffany Knott-Lesmeister	Redwood County Townships
Ronald Kottke	Cottonwood County Townships
Paul Langseth	Nobles County Townships, SRDC Chair*
Steve Kellen	Nobles County Municipalities
Dennis Madison	Rock County Municipalities
Jeff Moen	Lincoln County Townships
Vacant	Cultural Diversity
Bob Paplow	Nobles County Commissioners
Jenny Quade	Cottonwood County Municipalities
Craig Rubis	Jackson County Townships
Vacant	Region 8 School Boards
David Sturrock	SW MN Higher Education
Vacant	Pipestone County Townships*
Sherri Thompson	Rock County Commissioners
Mic VanDeVere	Lincoln County Commissioners, Transportation Committee Chair
Bob Van Hee	Redwood County Commissioners*
Rick VonHoldt	City of Worthington*
Dennis Welgraven	Murray County Commissioners, SRDC Vice-Chair*
Justine Wettschreck	Economic Development
Beth Wilms	Health and Human Services

SRDC Full Commission Membership

- One (1) County member from each of the nine counties.
- One (1) Township member from each of the nine counties.
- One (1) Mayor/Council member from each municipality over 10,000 in population.
- One (1) Mayor/council member for each of the nine counties representing cities under 10,000.
- Two (2) School Board members.
- One (1) Lower Sioux Indian Community member.
- Five (5) Public Interest Groups

SRDC Board of Director Membership

- SRDC Chairman & a regional commissioner from each county elected by the regional commissioners from each county and:
- One (1) Elected commissioner from each city over 10,000 in population.
 - One (1) Elected commissioner from any county with a population of more than 20,000 but without a city over 10,000 in population nominated by the regional commissioners of that county.
 - One (1) School board member selected by the Commission as a whole



SRDC
FULL COMMISSION MEETING

Thursday, May 8, 2025
3:30 pm

Community Center
111 E. Main Street, Hardwick, MN

AGENDA

#	Time		Page
1	3:30	Call to Order & Pledge of Allegiance	
2	3:35	Introductions	
3	3:40	Additions to and Approval of Agenda Action Needed: Approve Agenda	
4	3:45	Commissioner Appointments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carol Biren, SW Health & Human Services Action Needed: Approve Appointment	
6	3:50	Consent Agenda Items <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> March Receipts & Expenditures <input type="checkbox"/> March 13, 2025 FC Meeting Minutes <input type="checkbox"/> April 10, 2025 BOD Meeting Minutes <input type="checkbox"/> Nobles County Comprehensive Plan Contract Action Needed: Approval of Consent Agenda Items	6-10 11-17 18-21 21-26
7	3:55	Project Review - Planner Webb <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of Vesta Action Needed: Approve Project Review	27
8	4:00	Finance Reports — <i>Treasurer Anderson & Finance Director Nelson</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treasurer’s Report, including bank accounts & investments • Administrative March 2025 Action Needed: Approval of Treasurer’s Report Action Needed: Approval of Administrative Report	28 H-1
9	4:05	FY2026 Public Hearing Results – Chairman Langseth <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reports on results of SRDC’s FY2026 Public Hearing held before today’s meeting Action Needed: Accept results of SRDC FY2026 Public Hearing	
		Budget & Personnel Committee Report — <i>Committee Chair Anderson & Finance Director Nelson</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presta – RLF Software Contract Action Needed: Approve Committee Recommendations	29
10	4:10	Legislative Report – Chair Miron Carney	
11	4:20	Deep Dive: EECBG – Deputy Director Weis	

12	4:40	Economic Development Report — <i>Deputy Director Weis</i>	30-32
13	4:50	Revolving Loan Fund Report — <i>Deputy Director Weis & Committee Chair Byrnes</i>	33-34
14	5:00	Community Development Report — <i>Community Development Director Walker, along with Planners Bucklin, Webb, Murphy</i>	36-38
15	5:10	Transportation Report — <i>Planner Webb</i>	39-40
16	5:15	Executive Director’s Report — <i>Executive Director Trusty</i>	41
17	5:25	Chairman’s Report — <i>Chairman Langseth</i>	
18	5:30	Commissioners Recognition <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beth Wilms, SW Health & Human Services – 4 years 	
19	5:35	Reports from SRDC Commissioners Representing Local Units of Government & Public Interest Groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bob Paplow, Nobles County Commissioners Dan Delaney, Pipestone County Municipalities 	
20	5:45	Unfinished Business	
21	5:45	New Business	
22	5:45	Annual Meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appoint a nominating committee for the election of officers in July <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Chair: eligible for reelection, 2-year term Vice-Chair: eligible for reelection, 2-year terms Treasurer: eligible for reelection, 1-year term Secretary: eligible for reelection, 1-year term <p>Action Needed: Chairman makes Committee Appointments</p>	
23	5:50	Announcements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SRDC vacancies exist from the following representation: Murray County and Pipestone County Townships, School Board, Lower Sioux along with a Minority Rep. SRDC Office will be closed Monday, May 26th in observance of Memorial Day SRDC Board meeting Thursday, June 12, 2025 SRDC will be closed Thursday, June 19th in observance of Juneteenth day SRDC office will be closed Friday, July 4th in observance of the signing of the Declaration of Independence SRDC annual meeting: Thursday, July 10, 2025 at the Hiawatha Lodge, Pipestone, MN 	
24		Adjourn	

Southwest Regional Development Commission
 Check/Voucher Register - Board Check Register
 From 3/1/2025 Through 3/31/2025

Session ID	Check ...	Document...	Vendor Name	Transaction Description	Check Amount	Effective Date
PRS030625	03062...	3/6/2025	Nadya N. Bucklin	Employee: BucklinN; Pay Date: 3/6/2025	2,138.35	3/6/2025
PRS030625	03062...	3/6/2025	Robin R. Weis	Employee: WeisR; Pay Date: 3/6/2025	2,534.63	3/6/2025
PRS030625	03062...	3/6/2025	Sheila F. Crowley	Employee: CrowleyS; Pay Date: 3/6/2025	1,677.96	3/6/2025
PRS030625	03062...	3/6/2025	Jodi L. Klein	Employee: KleinJ; Pay Date: 3/6/2025	1,425.41	3/6/2025
PRS030625	03062...	3/6/2025	Jodi L. Klein	Employee: KleinJ; Pay Date: 3/6/2025	8.98	3/6/2025
PRS030625	03062...	3/6/2025	Melissa Nelson	Employee: MansonM; Pay Date: 3/6/2025	2,373.14	3/6/2025
PRS030625	03062...	3/6/2025	Kimberly Murphy	Employee: MurphyK; Pay Date: 3/6/2025	1,944.30	3/6/2025
PRS030625	03062...	3/6/2025	Kathleen M. Schreiber	Employee: SchreiberK; Pay Date: 3/6/2025	1,707.58	3/6/2025
PRS030625	03062...	3/6/2025	Kathleen M. Schreiber	Employee: SchreiberK; Pay Date: 3/6/2025	38.70	3/6/2025
PRS030625	03062...	3/6/2025	Kathleen M. Schreiber	Employee: SchreiberK; Pay Date: 3/6/2025	22.10	3/6/2025
PRS030625	03062...	3/6/2025	Jayne I. Trusty	Employee: TrustyJ; Pay Date: 3/6/2025	3,188.29	3/6/2025
PRS030625	03062...	3/6/2025	Jason L. Walker	Employee: WalkerJ; Pay Date: 3/6/2025	2,464.04	3/6/2025
PRS030625	03062...	3/6/2025	Christopher S. Webb	Employee: WebbC; Pay Date: 3/6/2025	1,860.34	3/6/2025
PRS032025	03202...	3/20/2025	Nadya N. Bucklin	Employee: BucklinN; Pay Date: 3/20/2025	2,113.15	3/20/2025
PRS032025	03202...	3/20/2025	Robin R. Weis	Employee: WeisR; Pay Date: 3/20/2025	2,447.95	3/20/2025
PRS032025	03202...	3/20/2025	Robin R. Weis	Employee: WeisR; Pay Date: 3/20/2025	56.00	3/20/2025
PRS032025	03202...	3/20/2025	Sheila F. Crowley	Employee: CrowleyS; Pay Date: 3/20/2025	1,653.46	3/20/2025
PRS032025	03202...	3/20/2025	Jodi L. Klein	Employee: KleinJ; Pay Date: 3/20/2025	1,420.93	3/20/2025
PRS032025	03202...	3/20/2025	Jodi L. Klein	Employee: KleinJ; Pay Date: 3/20/2025	13.46	3/20/2025
PRS032025	03202...	3/20/2025	Melissa Nelson	Employee: MansonM; Pay Date: 3/20/2025	2,126.86	3/20/2025
PRS032025	03202...	3/20/2025	Melissa Nelson	Employee: MansonM; Pay Date: 3/20/2025	13.38	3/20/2025
PRS032025	03202...	3/20/2025	Kimberly Murphy	Employee: MurphyK; Pay Date: 3/20/2025	1,664.21	3/20/2025
PRS032025	03202...	3/20/2025	Kimberly Murphy	Employee: MurphyK; Pay Date: 3/20/2025	21.09	3/20/2025
PRS032025	03202...	3/20/2025	Kathleen M. Schreiber	Employee: SchreiberK; Pay Date: 3/20/2025	1,580.50	3/20/2025
PRS032025	03202...	3/20/2025	Kathleen M. Schreiber	Employee: SchreiberK; Pay Date: 3/20/2025	132.62	3/20/2025
PRS032025	03202...	3/20/2025	Kathleen M. Schreiber	Employee: SchreiberK; Pay Date: 3/20/2025	55.26	3/20/2025
PRS032025	03202...	3/20/2025	Jayne I. Trusty	Employee: TrustyJ; Pay Date: 3/20/2025	3,188.29	3/20/2025
PRS032025	03202...	3/20/2025	Jason L. Walker	Employee: WalkerJ; Pay Date: 3/20/2025	2,464.04	3/20/2025
PRS032025	03202...	3/20/2025	Christopher S. Webb	Employee: WebbC; Pay Date: 3/20/2025	1,958.34	3/20/2025
APS032625 ...	03262...	3/28/2025	Craig Rubis	Craig Rubis 2/20/25 to 3/21/25 Meetings	200.00	3/28/2025
APS032625 ...	03262...	3/28/2025	Craig Rubis	Craig Rubis 2/20/25 to 3/21/25 Meetings	266.00	3/28/2025
APS032625 ...	03262...	3/28/2025	Richard Anderson	Rick Anderson 3/13/25 Meeting	50.00	3/28/2025
APS032625 ...	03262...	3/28/2025	Richard Anderson	Rick Anderson 3/13/25 Meeting	32.20	3/28/2025
APS032625 ...	03262...	3/28/2025	Robert J. Byrnes	Bob Byrnes 3/7/25 + 3/13/25 Meetings	50.00	3/28/2025
APS032625 ...	03262...	3/28/2025	Robert J. Byrnes	Bob Byrnes 3/7/25 + 3/13/25 Meetings	96.60	3/28/2025
APS032625 ...	03262...	3/28/2025	Robert J. Byrnes	Bob Byrnes 3/7/25 + 3/13/25 Meetings	50.00	3/28/2025
APS032625 ...	03262...	3/28/2025	Robert J. Byrnes	Bob Byrnes 3/7/25 + 3/13/25 Meetings	50.00	3/28/2025
APS032625 ...	03262...	3/28/2025	Steven A Kellen	Steve Kellen 3/13/25 Meeting	50.00	3/28/2025
APS032625 ...	03262...	3/28/2025	Steven A Kellen	Steve Kellen 3/13/25 Meeting	49.00	3/28/2025

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APS032625 ...	03262...	3/28/2025	David E. Sturrock	David Sturrock 3/13/25 Meeting	50.00	3/28/2025
APS032625 ...	03262...	3/28/2025	David E. Sturrock	David Sturrock 3/13/25 Meeting	49.00	3/28/2025
APS032625 ...	03262...	3/28/2025	Dennis Madison	Dennis Madison 3/13/25 to 3/21/25 Meetings	100.00	3/28/2025
APS032625 ...	03262...	3/28/2025	Dennis Madison	Dennis Madison 3/13/25 to 3/13/25 Mtgs	117.60	3/28/2025
APS032625 ...	03262...	3/28/2025	Eric A. Hartman	Eric Hartman 1/19/25 to 3/13/25 Mtgs	150.00	3/28/2025
APS032625 ...	03262...	3/28/2025	Eric A. Hartman	Eric Hartman 1/19/25 to 3/13/25 Mtgs	214.20	3/28/2025
APS032625 ...	03262...	3/28/2025	JoEllen M. Benson	JoEllen Benson 3/13/25 Meeting	100.00	3/28/2025
APS032625 ...	03262...	3/28/2025	JoEllen M. Benson	JoEllen Benson 3/13/25 Meeting	79.80	3/28/2025
APS032625 ...	03262...	3/28/2025	Kent Bargfrede	Kent Bargfrede 3/13/25 Meeting	50.00	3/28/2025
APS032625 ...	03262...	3/28/2025	Kent Bargfrede	Kent Bargfrede 3/13/25 Meeting	99.40	3/28/2025
APS032625 ...	03262...	3/28/2025	Lyndon Johnson	Lyndon Johnson 3/21/25 Meeting	50.00	3/28/2025
APS032625 ...	03262...	3/28/2025	Lyndon Johnson	Lyndon Johnson 3/21/25 Meeting	98.00	3/28/2025
APS032625 ...	03262...	3/28/2025	Mark Haberman	Mark Haberman 3/13/25 Meeting	50.00	3/28/2025
APS032625 ...	03262...	3/28/2025	Mark A Haberman	Mark Haberman 3/13/25 Meeting	45.50	3/28/2025
APS032625 ...	03262...	3/28/2025	Paul Langseth	Paul Langseth NADO per diem+expenses; 3/21 Comm Orientation	300.00	3/28/2025
APS032625 ...	03262...	3/28/2025	Paul Langseth	Paul Langseth NADO per diem+expenses; 3/21 Comm Orientation	270.62	3/28/2025
CD031725 W...	1	3/25/2025		Feb 2025 Wex Fees	25.75	3/25/2025
APS030525 ...	61008	3/5/2025	City of Slayton	City of Slayton 1/23/25 to 2/21/25	22.08	3/5/2025
APS030525 ...	61008	3/5/2025	City of Slayton	City of Slayton 1/23/25 to 2/21/25	23.92	3/5/2025
APS030525 ...	61009	3/5/2025	Culligan Water Conditioning	3 bottles water, cooler rental	38.90	3/5/2025
APS030525 ...	61010	3/5/2025	Darren Veldhuisen	Snow removal 2.8 + 2.10.25	140.00	3/5/2025
APS030525 ...	61010	3/5/2025	Darren Veldhuisen	Snow removal 2.8 + 2.10.25	210.00	3/5/2025
APS030525 ...	61011	3/5/2025	Grants Management Systems ...	GMS Monthly Software/Support/License/Warranty	100.00	3/5/2025
APS030525 ...	61011	3/5/2025	Grants Management Systems ...	GMS Monthly Software/Support/License/Warranty	40.00	3/5/2025
APS030525 ...	61012	3/5/2025	Mr. Z's All American Eatery, LLC	CRLF Loan Disbursement: Mr. Z's All American Eatery	21,348.00	3/5/2025
APS030525 ...	61013	3/5/2025	Northwest Gas	NW Gas 1/23/25 to 2/25/25	286.76	3/5/2025
APS030525 ...	61013	3/5/2025	Northwest Gas	NW Gas 1/23/25 to 2/25/25	430.15	3/5/2025
APS030525 ...	61014	3/5/2025	One Office Solution	Meter reading	161.60	3/5/2025
APS030525 ...	61015	3/5/2025	Slayton EDA	EDA Lease March 2025	4,848.63	3/5/2025
APS030525 ...	61016	3/5/2025	The Computer Man, Inc.	Email server maint, help Sheila/Kathy, ZixMail subscr	336.25	3/5/2025
APS030525 ...	61016	3/5/2025	The Computer Man, Inc.	Email server maint, help Sheila/Kathy, ZixMail subscr	31.25	3/5/2025

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APS030525 ...	61016	3/5/2025	The Computer Man, Inc.	Email server maint, help Sheila/Kathy, ZixMail subscr	90.00	3/5/2025
APS031225	61017	3/12/2025	Buffalo Ridge Newspapers, LLC	Tyler Tribute Subscription	56.00	3/12/2025
APS031225	61018	3/12/2025	Chandler Co-Op	Chandler Coop Feb 2025	19.60	3/12/2025
APS031225	61019	3/12/2025	Mark's Plumbing, Heating & A/...	PACE SEP loan disbursement: The Benson Company	48,425.00	3/12/2025
APS031225	61020	3/12/2025	NCBERS Group Life Ins.	NCBERS Apr 2025	64.00	3/12/2025
APS031225	61021	3/12/2025	Schaap Sanitation	Schaap 3/1/25 - 3/31/25	30.51	3/12/2025
APS031225	61021	3/12/2025	Schaap Sanitation	Schaap 3/1/25 - 3/31/25	45.76	3/12/2025
APS031225	61022	3/12/2025	SRDC	Explore SW Feb 2025	21.25	3/12/2025
APS031225	61023	3/12/2025	Stoneberg, Giles & Stroup, PA	Mr. Z's (CRLF) judgment & tax lien search	79.50	3/12/2025
APS031225	61024	3/12/2025	TCM Bank NA	TCM Visa closing date 3/2/25	2,292.00	3/12/2025
APS031225	61024	3/12/2025	TCM Bank NA	TCM Visa closing date 3/2/25	10.00	3/12/2025
APS031225	61025	3/12/2025	The Computer Man, Inc.	SSL Cert, server maintenance	212.49	3/12/2025
APS031225	61025	3/12/2025	The Computer Man, Inc.	SSL Cert, server maintenance	212.50	3/12/2025
APS031225	61026	3/12/2025	Verizon Wireless	Verizon 3/2/25 to 4/1/25	41.06	3/12/2025
APS031225	61027	3/12/2025	XCEL Energy	Xcel Energy 2/4/25 - 3/6/25	184.77	3/12/2025
APS031225	61027	3/12/2025	XCEL Energy	Xcel Energy 2/4/25 - 3/6/25	277.15	3/12/2025
APS032025	61028	3/20/2025	Above the Fold	Tracy Headlight Herald annual subscription	79.00	3/20/2025
APS032025	61029	3/20/2025	The Benson Company	PACE SEP loan disbursement: The Benson Company	3,150.00	3/20/2025
APS032025	61030	3/20/2025	Frontier Communications	Frontier 5078360034 3/10/25 - 4/9/25	481.39	3/20/2025
APS032025	61030	3/20/2025	Frontier Communications	Frontier 5078360034 3/10/25 - 4/9/25	894.00	3/20/2025
APS032025	61031	3/20/2025	Nobles County Auditor/Treasurer	2025 PACE Special Assessment Maint. Fee	24.00	3/20/2025
APS032025	61032	3/20/2025	Quill Corporation	Name badge and magnet	8.06	3/20/2025
APS032725	61033	3/27/2025	Abila	Abila Multiple Clouds 4/26/25 to 5/25/25	813.76	3/27/2025
APS032725	61034	3/27/2025	Adrian Building Center	PACE EE-RLF loan disbursement: Harder Saloon	1,868.73	3/27/2025
APS032725	61035	3/27/2025	AFLAC	Aflac March 2025	409.44	3/27/2025
APS032725	61036	3/27/2025	Allen Jensen	Allen Jensen FDC Mtgs 2/5 - 3/20/25	75.00	3/27/2025
APS032725	61037	3/27/2025	Association of Minnesota Coun...	RMEB: 2025 Website Design	500.00	3/27/2025
APS032725	61038	3/27/2025	Jeremy D. Janssen	Jeremy Janssen FDC Meeting 3/20/25	25.00	3/27/2025
APS032725	61039	3/27/2025	John Hay	John Hay FDC Mtgs 2/5 - 3/20/25	75.00	3/27/2025
APS032725	61040	3/27/2025	Kevin Leopold	Kevin Leopold FDC Mtgs 2/5 - 3/20/25	75.00	3/27/2025
APS032725	61041	3/27/2025	Larkin Hoffman	Larkin Jan + Feb 2025	3,651.00	3/27/2025
APS032725	61042	3/27/2025	Marilyn Samuelson	Janitorial services Mar 2025	328.00	3/27/2025
APS032725	61042	3/27/2025	Marilyn Samuelson	Janitorial services Mar 2025	472.00	3/27/2025
APS032725	61043	3/27/2025	Redwood Valley Technical Sol...	MNADO annual website hosting plan (annual)	360.00	3/27/2025
APS032725	61044	3/27/2025	Slayton Electric, Inc.	Replace ballasts	49.08	3/27/2025

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Session ID	Check ...	Document...	Vendor Name	Transaction Description	Check Amount	Effective Date
APS032725	61044	3/27/2025	Slayton Electric, Inc.	Replace ballasts	73.62	3/27/2025
APS032725	61045	3/27/2025	SRDC	Jan+Feb 2025 Planner + Finance	2,717.50	3/27/2025
APS032725	61046	3/27/2025	Steven Bornhofs	Steven Bornhofs FDC Mtgs 2/5 - 3/20/25	75.00	3/27/2025
APS032725	61047	3/27/2025	The Computer Man, Inc.	Update Veeam to 12.3.1.1139 due to security vulnerability	31.25	3/27/2025
APS032725	61047	3/27/2025	The Computer Man, Inc.	Update Veeam to 12.3.1.1139 due to security vulnerability	31.25	3/27/2025
APS032725	61048	3/27/2025	Tracy L. Freking	Tracy Freking FDC Mtgs 2/5 - 3/20/25	75.00	3/27/2025
CD031125 B...	BCBS4	3/20/2025		BCBS April 2025	13,480.51	3/20/2025
Report Total					154,938.75	



MEMBERS PRESENT: Vice-Chairman Dennis Welgraven, Commissioners Rick Anderson, Kent Bargfrede, Carrie Bendix, JoEllen Benson, Leah Bittner, Miron Carney, Lori Grant, Donna Gravley, Mark Haberman, Eric Hartman, Steve Kellen, Dennis Madison, Jenny Quade, Craig Rubis, David Sturrock, Sherri Thompson, Mic VanDeVere, Rick Von Holdt, and Beth Wilms

MEMBERS ABSENT: Commissioners Kristie Blankenship (excused), Bob Byrnes (excused), Pam Cooreman, Dan Delaney, Chris Hollingsworth (excused), Lyndon Johnson, Ron Kottke, Paul Langseth (excused), Tiffany Lesmeister-Knott (excused), Jeff Moen (excused), Bob Paplow (excused), Bob Van Hee (excused), Justine Wettschreck (excused)

STAFF PRESENT: Nadya Bucklin, Sheila Crowley, Melissa Nelson, Kathy Schreiber, Jason Walker, Chris Webb and Robin Weis

CALL TO ORDER

Vice-Chairman Dennis Welgraven called the meeting to order at 3:30 p.m., followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and introductions.

AGENDA ADDITIONS/APPROVAL

Contracts was added to the agenda.

M/S/P Motion made by Commissioner Carney and seconded by Commissioner Hartman to approve agenda as updated. Upon vote taken: Ayes-19, Nays-0. Motion Carried.

COMMISSIONER APPOINTMENTS

M/S/P Motion made by Commissioner Hartman and seconded by Commissioner Carney to approve Dennis Madison, Rock County Municipalities, Lyndon Johnson, Lincoln County Municipalities, Lori Grant, Lyon County Townships and the re-appointment of Justine Wettschreck, Economic Development Representative. Upon vote taken: Ayes-18, Nays-0. Motion Carried.

BOARD OF DIRECTOR APPOINTMENTS

M/S/P Motion made by Commissioner Grant and seconded by Commissioner VanDeVere to approve the following 3-year appointments to the Board of Directors: Rick Anderson, Lyon County and Bob Van Hee, Redwood County. Upon vote taken: Ayes-19, Nays-0. Motion Carried.

CONSENT AGENDA

M/S/P Motion made by Commissioner Wilmes and seconded by Commissioner Hartman to approve the January 9, 2025 Full Commission Meeting Minutes, the February 13, 2025 Board of Directors Meeting Minutes and the January Receipts and Expenditures reports. Upon vote taken: Ayes-20, Nays-0. Motion Carried.

CONTRACTS

Deputy Director Weis went over the annual contract with the Southwest Minnesota Housing Partnership.

M/S/P Motion made by Commissioner Anderson and seconded by Commissioner Von Holdt to approve the contract as presented. Upon vote taken: Ayes-20, Nays-0. Motion Carried.

PROJECT REVIEWS

Deputy Director Weis presented a project review for an EAW for a new Swine Finishing Feedlot project in Rock County and a review for a Lift Station Replacement project for the City of Hendricks.

M/S/P Motion made by Commissioner Haberman and seconded by Commissioner Carney to approve the project reviews as presented. Upon vote taken: Ayes-20, Nays-0. Motion Carried.

FINANCE REPORT

Treasurer Anderson referred Commissioners to the Treasurer's Report as of February 28, 2025, showing bank accounts and fund designations. There were no questions.

M/S/P Motion made by Commissioner VanDeVere and seconded by Commissioner Rubis to approve the Treasurer's report as presented. Upon vote taken: Ayes-20, Nays-0. Motion Carried.

Finance Director Nelson went over the Administrative Report through the end of January 2025 pointing out some line items and contracts that are on pause or terminated. There were no questions. Nelson went over the FY26 Budget and Work Plan timeline.

M/S/P Motion made by Commissioner Carney and seconded by Commissioner Bittner to approve the administrative report as presented. Upon vote taken: Ayes-20, Nays-0. Motion Carried.

COMMITTEE AND STAFF REPORTS

A. Legislative Committee Report

Committee Chair Carney gave an update on the legislative session. There is a tie in both chambers after the special election. With most things happening in the last few weeks of the session and the fact that no bonding bill was reached last year, the Legislative Committee decided to go with the same priorities as last year. Legislators were not very confident a bonding bill would occur during this session either. Chair Carney thought there would probably need to be a special session. The state budget forecast for the biennium shows the 2024-2025 budget up, the 2025-2026 budget down and the 2026-2027 budget drastically down.

B. Economic Development Report

Deputy Director Weis reported that the EDA Planning Grant was due February 17. This is a three-year grant for \$70,000 per year for a total of \$210,000.

Staff have recently helped the City of Steen with an MPCA Small Communities Planning grant for stormwater improvements. This was a \$27,700 grant request.

The City of Hardwick is in the process of applying for a \$30,000 USDA SEARCH planning grant for planning efforts for water system improvements. SRDC Staff has assisted the City with a USDA ADA checklist for their existing buildings and provided technical assistance with the required Accessibility Transition plan.

Weis noted that priorities for EDA Investment Opportunities have recently changed with the reauthorization to include critical infrastructure, workforce, innovation and entrepreneurship, economic resiliency and manufacturing. The EDA Disaster NOFO is being drafted. Eligible units of government, higher education, etc. based on FEMA disaster declarations are those within Cottonwood, Jackson, Murray, Nobles, Pipestone, Redwood and Rock counties. These funds have already been allocated.

Staff continue to work with the City of Adrian on their EDA PWEAA grant. Work on the timeline and site certification is happening now.

EECBG (Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant) Energy Planning for small communities program was on pause by the federal government but is now back to receiving funds. The SRDC CEDS committee will meet to review two applications for funding from this program.

The USDA Regional Food Business Center North Central Regional Food Business Center grant has been terminated, not just paused. The contract did not have wording for the pausing of funds so when, or if funds, start up again a new contract with Region 5 will be executed.

Region 8 and 6W are working on details for a Workforce Summit on April 29, 2025 in rural Taunton. This focus is on employer recruitment and retention.

Planner Bucklin will present at the Mankato State of Energy Summit on March 24. She will talk about the clean energy ambassador program and SEED grants. Bucklin recently attended an Art of Hosting Training. This training focused on creating engaging and productive meetings and events.

Staff helped the City of Lambertton apply for a grant from the Taylor Family Farms Foundation for the replacement of the liner and decking at their outdoor pool. Help was also given to the Iona Township Hall and Community Center's application for efficiency upgrades. Grant awards will be announced in April.

With several programs on federal pause, staff are taking this opportunity to meet with cities in the region to see what they are in need of and if the SRDC would be able to help.

C. Revolving Loan Fund Report

Weis reported the RLF account has approximately \$380,000 and the CRLF account has approximately \$314,000. There are two loans that have been approved and not yet closed. These are in the amount of \$21,348 and \$36,250.

There are funds available from the contracted RLF funds of Jackson County, Heron Lake and Falcon Development for projects in their service area.

PACE

Weis reported the approximate PACE amounts available are EE-RLF \$245,000, ARRA \$105,000 and SEP \$83,000. There are loans approved that have not been completely closed and a couple loans that have not had any money disbursed yet.

A PACE 101 training session was given online for two new RMEB members on March 19, 2025.

D. Community Development Report

Community Development Director Walker reported that the RMEB met on January 27. Discussion was held on whether they wanted to support ending the moratorium on nuclear power development in Minnesota. Presenters from McKinstry provided details on how counties could enter into performance contracting to accomplish large scale efficiency and renewable projects.

Staff collaborated with Region 9 RDC to coordinate writing the concept paper for the Energy Improvements in Rural or Remote Areas Grant from the Department of Energy. The Total DOE funding request is \$40,824,000, the total non-federal cost share is \$12,056,000 for total project costs of \$52,088,000.

Planner Webb continues to work on the Lyon County Comprehensive Plan, the Camden Regional Trail Master Plan and the City of Tracy Zoning Ordinance update.

The Renewable Energy Siting through Technical Engagement and Planning (R-STEP) and the Drinking Water Supply Management Area (DWSM) projects have been paused.

RSDP is in the process of reviewing idea brief proposals. One idea brief was from our region and is the repurposing of the Old Lamberton School.

E. Transportation Report

The Transportation Advisory Committee met before the March Full Commission meeting. A District 7 ATIP presentation was given on their next four years of MnDOT projects in that area.

Transportation Planner Webb will present at the MnDOT conference next week.

F. Executive Director's Report

Deputy Director Weis gave the Executive Director's report in the absence of Trusty. Trusty gave a PACE presentation to the MADDO Executive Directors so they would have a better understanding of how the program works.

Trusty and Chairman Langseth attended the NADO Legislative Conference. They are planning on meeting with Legislators (or their staff) Smith, Finstad, and Klobuchar.

Orientation for local officials and SRDC Commissioners will take place on March 21 in Slayton.

G. Chairman's Report

As Chairman Langseth was absent, Weis asked for volunteers to be on the Awards Committee. Commissioners Bittner, Haberman, Hartman and Von Holdt volunteered to be on the committee.

REPORTS FROM SRDC COMMISSIONERS REPRESENTING LOCAL UNITS OF GOVERNMENT & PUBLIC INTEREST GROUPS

A. Cottonwood County Commissioners

Commissioner Gravley reported on the happenings in Cottonwood County. Some of the highlights were: They have one new commissioner. Budgets are their biggest concern. The new public works building is almost finished. New platforms, steps and windows are needed on the Courthouse. There is a five-year plan for getting broadband to the entire county. A new creamery is moving forward and will have ice cream and cheese curds. The county was able to hire a county attorney and they also have a new recorder.

B. Redwood County Municipalities

Commissioner Bittner reported on the municipalities in Redwood County. Some highlights were: The City of Belview broke ground on a new water treatment facility. Lamberton is working on a Safe Routes to School project and attracting new businesses. They are having a hard time staffing their police department and EMS. Lucan needs to fix roads and is having a hard time finding funding. Milroy recently finished an over \$1 million street project. Morgan will work on their water tower and plant. Redwood Falls is working on a new trail in town and the wastewater treatment plant. They have a housing development with 27 lots but are having problems selling the lots due to increased construction costs and interest rates. Vesta is looking for funding for infrastructure. They will celebrate 125 years this summer. Wabasso is working on a sewer project and water treatment plant project and will celebrate 125 years this summer as well. Walnut Grove is working on cleaning up blighted properties. They have an incentive for homeowners to do the demo work themselves. EDA purchased a Main Street building and fixed it up for office and meeting space. United Community Action constructed a house in town. Wanda is in need of work on their water tower.

C. Public Interest Group-Higher Education

Commissioner Sturrock reported enrollment at SMSU in Marshall was up 15% in the fall and 18% in the spring. SMSU President Kumara Jayasuriya provides great leadership. The college is working on developing a new 4-year nursing program-an RN to BSN program. They are also starting a master program for social work.

MnWest offers a 2 + 2 program where students attend 2 years at MnWest and 2 years at SMSU. They are a military friendly school. Fall enrollment was up 9%. MnWest partners with 55 schools.

MnWest has had some good athletic teams the past couple years. Both schools sponsored an Ag Bowl with 1,400 FFA students participating. The winners received scholarships to MnWest or SMSU.

NEW BUSINESS

Administrative Specialist Schreiber directed commissioners to their handout for a survey regarding moving the annual meeting to a different month and if they would like to receive their board packets via email instead of mail.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Vice Chairman Dennis Welgraven referred Commissioners to the announcements included on the agenda.

SRDC Commissioner vacancies exist from Pipestone County Townships, Murray County Townships, School Board Representative, Lower Sioux and Cultural Diversity.

ADJOURNMENT

Vice-Chairman Welgraven adjourned the meeting at 4:50 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

Meeting Minutes prepared by Kathy Schreiber, Administrative Specialist.

Reviewed by:

Approved by:

Eric Hartman
SRDC Secretary

Paul Langseth
SRDC Chairman



MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Paul Langseth, Commissioners Rick Anderson, JoEllen Benson, Miron Carney, Donna Gravley, Mark Haberman, Eric Hartman, Chris Hollingsworth, Bob Van Hee, Mic VanDeVere, Rick VonHoldt

MEMBERS ABSENT: Commissioners Bob Byrnes (excused), Dennis Welgraven

GUESTS PRESENT: Jeff Moen

STAFF PRESENT: Executive Director Jay Trusty, Nadya Bucklin, Sheila Crowley, Kim Murphy, Melissa Nelson, Kathy Schreiber, Jason Walker, Chris Webb and Robin Weis

CALL TO ORDER

Treasurer Rick Anderson called the meeting to order at 3:34p.m., followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and introductions.

AGENDA ADDITIONS/APPROVAL

The EDA Resolution was added to the agenda under new business.

M/S/P Motion made by Commissioner Hartman and seconded by Commissioner Carney to approve the updated agenda. Upon vote taken: Ayes-10, Nays-0. Motion Carried.

CONSENT AGENDA

M/S/P Motion made by Commissioner Gravley and seconded by Commissioner Hartman to approve the February Receipts and Expenditures and the MnDOT Contract and Resolution. Upon vote taken: Ayes-11, Nays-0. Motion Carried.

FINANCE REPORT

Treasurer Anderson referred Commissioners to the Treasurer's Report as of March 31, 2025, showing bank accounts and fund designations. There were no questions.

M/S/P Motion made by Commissioner Von Holdt and seconded by Commissioner VanDeVere to approve the Treasurer's Report as presented. Upon vote taken: Ayes-11, Nays-0. Motion Carried.

Finance Director Nelson went over the Administrative Report through the end of February 2025. She pointed out some line items. There were no questions.

M/S/P Motion made by Commissioner Carney and seconded by Commissioner Hartman to approve the Administrative Report as presented. Upon vote taken: Ayes-11, Nays-0. Motion Carried.

PROJECT REVIEWS

Community Development Director Walker presented a project review on the Coneflower Solar Project in Lyon County.

M/S/P Motion made by Commissioner Von Holdt and seconded by Commissioner Gravley to approve the Project Review as presented. Upon vote taken: Ayes-9, Nays-2. Motion Carried.

COMMITTEE AND STAFF REPORTS

A. Budget & Personnel Committee Report

Committee Chair Anderson presented three items for consideration:

The Committee recommends for approval the FY2026 COLA at 3% plus 1 step after a successful evaluation. This increase will be effective the first full pay period in July. Gravley pointed out that the SRDC has a great staff and the B&P Committee wants to keep them.

M/S/P Motion made by Commissioner Anderson and seconded by Commissioner VanHee to approve the FY26 COLA along with one step for a successful evaluation for staff. Upon vote taken: Ayes-11, Nays-0. Motion Carried.

The committee recommended taking the FY26 Budget to the Public Hearing before the May 8, 2025 Full Commission meeting.

M/S/P Motion made by Commissioner Anderson and seconded by Commissioner Hartman to recommend the FY26 budget to the public hearing. Upon vote taken: Ayes-11, Nays-0. Motion Carried.

The committee recommended taking the FY26 Work Program to the Public Hearing before the May 8, 2025 Full Commission meeting.

M/S/P Motion made by Commissioner Anderson and seconded by Commissioner VanDeVere to recommend the FY26 Work Program to the public hearing. Upon vote taken: Ayes-11, Nays-0. Motion Carried.

B. Legislative Committee Report

Committee Chair Carney reported that the legislature had two deadlines in April. April 4: the committees had to act on bills and on April 11: the committees had to act on major appropriation and finance bills.

There looks to be dramatic cuts in the budget bill. Education and Health and Human Services are being targeted. If a bonding bill is passed it will probably only include infrastructure projects.

The Coalition of Greater MN Cities will host a call on April 14 to present an update on the legislative session.

C. Deep Dive

Planner Webb gave a deep dive into the Transportation Program.

D. Executive Director's Report

Executive Director Trusty updated commissioners on the Southwest Solid Waste Plan. The first round of comments has been received by the MN Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) so a meeting with the committee to go over them will take place on April 15.

Staff met with the City of Marshall regarding a possible Marshall Parks Plan contract.

We are waiting for bids on replacing the roof on the Center for Regional Development building. Work will be done as soon as possible once the bid is awarded.

SRDC Annual Meeting will be held at the Hiawatha Lodge in Pipestone and will include a bus tour with four stops.

E. Chairman's Report

Chairman Langseth commented on how worthwhile the annual trip to Washington DC for the NADO Conference was. He noted that Trusty is well known therefore the SRDC is well represented.

NEW BUSINESS

Deputy Director Weis directed commissioners to their handout for the EDA Resolution that needs to be approved as part of the EDA Planning Grant.

M/S/P Motion made by Commissioner Carney and seconded by Commissioner Hartman to approve the EDA Resolution. Upon vote taken: Ayes-11, Nays-0. Motion Carried.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Chairman Paul Langseth referred Commissioners to the announcements included on the agenda.

SRDC Commissioner vacancies exist from Pipestone County Townships, Murray County Townships, School Boards, Lower Sioux and Cultural Diversity.

ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Langseth adjourned the meeting at 4:55 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

Meeting Minutes prepared by Kathy Schreiber, Administrative Specialist.

Reviewed by:

Approved by:

Eric Hartman
SRDC Secretary

Paul Langseth
SRDC Chairman

**TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CONTRACT BETWEEN THE
SOUTHWEST REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION AND NOBLES COUNTY**

This Agreement is entered into by and between the Southwest Regional Development Commission, hereinafter referred to as the "Commission," and Nobles County.

1. Contract Agreement

- a. DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT: Nobles County and Commission agree that the Project is as described in Exhibit A, which is attached to and incorporated herein by reference, and entitled the "Scope of Work." Nobles County and Commission recognize that, during the course of performing the services under this Agreement, the Project may need to be reduced, expanded, or otherwise modified.
- b. Change of Scope of Consulting Services. Nobles County may, at any time during the term of this Agreement, make changes to the scope of the planning services provided under this Agreement and its technical provisions. If any such change causes any increase or decrease in Commission's cost of performing any part of its obligations under this Agreement, upon Commission's request and Nobles County's written authorization, an equitable adjustment shall be made in the contract price, and a written amendment of such adjustment shall be made. Any claim by the Commission for an equitable adjustment shall be made in writing and delivered to Nobles County before proceeding with the additional services. No additional services shall be performed until written authorization is received from Nobles County. Nothing in this subparagraph shall excuse the Commission from proceeding with the performance of its obligations under this Agreement per the original terms and conditions contained herein and any approved changes.
- c. Contract Term. The Commission shall commence the Work under this Agreement on May 1, 2025 and complete it no later than June 30, 2027; however, the target completion date is December 31, 2026.
- d. Termination of Work: Nobles County may terminate all or a portion of the Work covered by this Agreement for its convenience at any time. Nobles County or Commission may terminate work if the other party fails to perform per the provisions of this Agreement by providing thirty (30) calendar days prior written notice to the other party by certified mail with receipt for delivery returned to the sender. In the event of termination, the Commission shall perform such additional work as is necessary for the orderly filing of documents and closing of the Project, and all finished or unfinished documents, maps, studies, work papers, and reports prepared by the Commission under this Agreement shall be the sole property of Nobles County. The time spent on such additional work shall

not exceed five percent (5%) of the time expended on the Project prior to the effective date of termination. Consultant shall be compensated for work satisfactorily performed prior to the effective date of termination, plus work required for filing and closing as described in this Article.

2. SCOPE OF NOBLES COUNTY SUPPORT: Nobles County agrees to provide the following:

- a. All criteria and complete information as to County's requirements for the Project.
- b. Available information and data pertinent to the Project.
- c. Timely reviews of work product.
- d. A steering committee composed of Nobles County Commissioners, staff, and key community stakeholders to guide and participate in the planning process.
- e. Nobles County shall appoint a county representative with respect to work to be performed under this Agreement. Said Nobles County representative shall have complete authority to transmit instructions, receive information, and interpret and define Nobles County's policies. The Commission shall be entitled to rely on representations made by said County's representative unless otherwise directed in writing by Nobles County.

3. COMPENSATION

- a. Compensation for services provided under the contract agreement shall be as set forth in Exhibit B, Compensation and Terms and Conditions of Payment, which is attached hereto and incorporated herein by reference.

4. RECORDS AND DOCUMENTATION

- a. Reports: The Commission shall provide quarterly progress reports along with invoices to Nobles County. Any written, visual, audio, or electronic publications or press releases related to this project shall credit both the Commission and Nobles County.
- b. The invoices shall be submitted by email to Administrator Bruce Heitkamp at administration@co.nobles.mn.us
- c. Hold Harmless: Nobles County to indemnify and hold harmless the Commission against any legal actions brought by any person or entity arising out of or claimed to be arising out of the performance of either party under this service agreement.

5. MISCELLANEOUS

- a. Nobles County reviews all reports for compliance with its

guidelines and requirements.

- b. The contract shall be subject to all pertinent state statutes and regulations.
- c. Any portion of this contract deemed invalid by a court of competent jurisdiction shall be held severable and shall not affect the remaining portions.

IN WITNESS, THEREOF, THE Commission has caused this contract to be duly executed on its behalf, and Nobles County has caused the same to be duly executed on its behalf.

**SOUTHWEST REGIONAL
DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION**

Nobles County

Authorized Official

Authorized Official

Attested By

Attested By

Date: _____

Date: _____

EXHIBIT A

SCOPE OF WORK

Work elements for the Nobles County Comprehensive Plan are outlined as deliverables below.

Initial Contacts

Staff communicate with project leaders to establish the deliverables' dates, times, logistics, and scope.

Kickoff Meeting

The RDC Planners will schedule and co-facilitate a kickoff meeting with the Nobles County Steering Committee. Tasks will include meeting preparations, note-taking, distribution, interim communications, and follow-up.

Data Gathering

Collect, review, and analyze the relevant documents and data that Nobles County has available for planning efforts. Additional tasks could include conducting focus groups, creating and distributing surveys, and conducting community engagement events, which would add cost.

Data Analysis

Analyze the results of all data-gathering activities such as research, focus groups, surveys, interviews, and meetings.

Plan Meetings

Organize and facilitate at least 16 strategic planning meeting sessions with organizational leadership, board members, staff, and other stakeholders identified during the process.

Finalize Plan

Finalize the chapters, goals, vision statements, and objectives based on all data gathered. Complete a final strategic plan document that will be shared digitally and physically at a presentation to the Noble County Board.

Exhibit B

Compensation and Terms and Conditions of Payment

The Commission shall make planners and a communications specialist with competent training and experience available to accomplish the assigned tasks and projects. Other reimbursable charges to the Commission by Nobles County include meeting expenses, printing, mileage, and applicable technologies/software necessary to complete the contract at the SRDC's established reimbursement rate. These costs are estimated in the "mileage/supplies" item listed under "payment for services performed."

The total contract cost for the project will not exceed \$70,000 unless modified by mutual agreement in writing.

Payment for Services Performed

Nobles County shall pay the Commission funds following the Commission's submission of a monthly invoice requesting funds for costs incurred and completion of tasks and/or deliverables completed as heretofore itemized:

Deliverables:

Task 1: Initial Contacts	\$1,000
Task 2: Kickoff Meeting	\$2,000
Task 3: Data Gathering	\$5,000 - \$20,000

Completion of essential data gathering tasks will be billed as a \$5,000 deliverable. The Commission will bill any additional tasks, such as conducting interviews, focus groups, etc., at the billable rate of \$100/hour.

Task 4: Data Analysis	\$3,000 - \$10,000
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Completion of essential data analysis tasks will be billed as a \$3,000 deliverable. The Commission will bill any additional analysis at the billable rate of \$100/hour.

Task 5: Plan Meetings	\$32,000 +
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The Commission will charge \$2,000 per meeting and request written permission for any meeting beyond the agreed-upon 16 meetings.

Task 6: Finalize Plan	\$6,000
Mileage/Supplies	\$2,000

Southwest Regional Development Commission Project Review

Agenda Item: Handout

Meeting Date: May 8th, 2025

Project Name: City of Vesta (Redwood County) – Water/Sanitary Sewer System Improvements

Project Description

The most viable option for Vesta is to rehabilitate its existing water tower, replace the deteriorated, aging distribution system, perform select improvements to restore functionality to its wastewater treatment facility, and replace and reconfigure select portions of its storm sewer system to address localized flooding.

The proposed improvements are needed to correct identified issues with the existing drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater systems due to health and sanitary concerns and aging infrastructure. The project will include reconstructing existing sanitary sewer collection, sewer lift station with backup generator at their wastewater pond, bituminous restoration, storm sewer with inlets, rehabbing the city water tower, and sanitary services with clean outs.

	Drinking Water	Wastewater	Stormwater	WEP-Ineligible
Total Proposed Improvement Project Cost	\$11,017,000	\$905,000	\$2,893,000	\$4,321,000

Staff Comments

SRDC Staff are concerned with the total amount of funding required for this municipal project. Especially considering that \$4 million is not traditionally eligible from state funding sources (MPCA, PFA, etc.). USDA Rural Development does not have a Letter of Commitment in place currently. The city and its engineering firm will need to work to reduce the overall size of the project scope, or secure other sources of funding to make this project financially feasible.

Project Review Time: 2 hours

Income to the SRDC for this Review: \$0

Reviewer: Chris Webb, Transportation Planner



Southwest Regional Development Commission

Month End March 2025 Fiscal Year 2025

YTD Comparison % of Budget 75.00

	FY25 Budget		Month End March 2025 Fiscal Year 2025				Year to Date	Under / Over Budget	% of Overall Budget	Explanation/Comments
	July - September	October - December	January	February	March	April-June				
Revenues										
Taxes	465,617	1,325.51	7,836.65	0.00	1.24	7,837.89	0.00	260,520.18	44.0%	When current taxes received, payments primarily received in Dec. and Jun
Contract for Services	272,778	42,953.48	14,689.78	18,024.06	12,256.98	44,970.82	0.00	128,325.77	53.0%	Based on activity earned to date.
R9-McKnight	191,275	191,275.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.0%	We received all of the R9 McKnight money up front. in July 2024
MnDOT-Regional	75,000	37,500.00	30,000.00	0.00	0.00	30,000.00	0.00	7,500.00	90.0%	Based on Billings Yearly amt is \$75000
Economic Development Adm	105,119	9,822.68	2,742.51	20,477.39	52,159.58	75,379.48	0.00	670.38	99.4%	Grant Earned (Federal share)
EDA Trails Grant	58,291	58,291.08	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.0%	Based on activity earned to date. (Federal share) Done Sept 2024
RLF Admin (Covid & Regular)	60,000	20,775.64	5,364.00	4,489.75	1,435.39	11,289.14	0.00	9,679.44	83.9%	Based on activity earned to date. \$290,000 over 2 yrs 4 mths, est. start March 2024, est. to use in FY24
Commerce - State Comp Grant	179,000	28,772.15	5,971.14	4,916.06	697.44	11,584.64	0.00	108,433.96	39.4%	Based on activity earned to date - main Certs (not subprojects), which equate more time
CERT's Funds	86,160	4,284.01	7,311.91	5,205.17	5,545.04	18,062.12	0.00	36,789.73	57.3%	
PACE loan orig/Int/misc	6,800	757.11	3,315.48	0.00	213.16	333.48	0.00	2,180.77	67.9%	Loan mflban orig fee mostly received in Dec and June (code 46664321)
USDA Food Grant	30,000	15,000.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.0%	*USDA is being reviewed, contract is terminated as of 2-25-25 - December is the last payment to be received* Based on Billings (800 hours at \$75/hr for the year)
Interest & Miscellaneous	19,184	11,706.52	3,182.22	1,270.44	4,028.86	6,622.89	0.00	-2,327.63	112.1%	Bank mflban orig fee -Bank interest is coming in higher than estimated and includes CD interest**
Building Reserves Used	31,850	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	31,850.00	0.0%	Need to replace the roof and only a small amount will be paid by insurance (Quote is \$290,000, our portion is \$31,850 and SWMHP's portion is \$33,150)
Total Revenues	1,581,074	422,463.18	368,694.68	75,239.58	54,596.03	206,293.62	0.00	583,622.60	63.1%	
Expenditures										
Committee Expenses	30,300	4,790.44	1,908.90	1,791.68	2,567.92	6,268.50	0.00	13,967.70	53.9%	Includes Board Retreat & Orientation, added Annual Mtg
Salaries & Fringe	1,072,887	223,789.33	75,190.65	82,338.55	85,725.74	243,254.94	0.00	333,117.42	69.0%	Includes FY25 Salaries/Fringe (including 8% increase of Health Insurance/H.S.A)
Travel	60,000	12,667.31	2,627.32	1,839.78	2,901.72	7,368.82	0.00	21,000.76	64.9%	Staff Travel
Office Space Costs	44,194	2,166.86	2,281.83	695.49	1,008.94	2,508.37	0.00	37,236.94	15.7%	Utilities
Postage (on hand, not including Hsg Reimb)	5,349	29.97	2,029.97	1,064.94	9.99	1,084.92	0.00	2,204.14	58.8%	We sent out the EDA Trails booklets, so had to get more postage in November. EDA Trails did reimburse us for most, we had to estimate because of the timing of the Contract ending and books showing up.
Communications	9,219	3,936.66	1,868.21	458.46	582.44	1,563.35	0.00	1,850.78	79.9%	
Printing/Publication	20,504	1,851.13	4,758.77	11.33	0.00	101.33	0.00	13,792.77	32.7%	
Insurance	5,917	2,615.85	173.57	24.41	22.08	68.57	0.00	3,059.01	48.3%	Insurance dividend/Building Insurance
Supplies	17,000	4,748.71	6,302.36	480.09	516.17	1,655.92	0.00	4,783.01	71.9%	August includes our Strategic Plan, this also includes our part of MADO
Program Supply (Trails EDA)	11,418	11,418.27	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.0%	Reimbursed by Trails EDA
Computer	41,250	3,883.06	4,343.79	2,730.88	1,215.44	5,618.87	0.00	27,404.28	33.6%	Quoted price for FY25 audit - Kinmer & Co. + estimated amt for FY22/FY23 Audits
Audits	41,000	14,884.00	10,000.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	16,116.00	60.7%	
Consultant/Contracted Services/Legal	33,275	80.00	40.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	33,155.00	0.4%	
Dues/Memberships & Other	7,200	14.25	4,000.00	85.00	101.00	186.00	0.00	2,999.75	58.3%	Includes MADO Coordination (\$2000 per region)
Financing Fees & Expenses	5,500	72.75	182.11	49.75	103.61	38.25	191.61	5,053.53	8.1%	
Equipment/Building Updates	10,000	0.00	56.00	55.14	32.00	87.14	0.00	9,856.86	1.4%	
PACE loan interest paid	508	0.00	391.79	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	116.21	77.1%	Paid in December and June
Debt Service: Prim. & Int.	10,000	0.00	10,000.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	10,000.00	100.0%	Paid in December
Building Lease Principal Pymt	23,183	5,675.96	1,936.17	1,945.09	1,954.14	5,835.40	0.00	5,916.49	74.5%	Our portion of lease pymt
Total Expenditures	1,448,704	292,624.55	349,065.33	86,372.03	96,683.44	275,303.74	0.00	916,993.62	63.3%	
Revenues Over (Under) Expenditures	132,370	129,838.63	-11,132.45	-37,652.24	-20,225.43	-69,010.12	0.00	80,458		

Order Form | Presta Technologies, Inc.

This Order (the “**Order**”) forms a part of the Master Hosted Services Agreement (the “**Agreement**”), dated April 30, 2025, by and between Southwest Regional Development Commission (“**Customer**”) and Presta Technologies, Inc. (“**Provider**”). Any capitalized terms used herein but not defined herein shall have the meaning ascribed to it in the Agreement.

The “Services” for the purpose of this Order are as identified below.

A. The Services

- a. Presta's digital lending infrastructure to manage end-to-end commercial and small business lending processes.

B. Fees and Payment Terms:

- a. The yearly License Fee is \$10,000. 50% of the fee will be due within 30 days of signing and 50% 90 days after signing.
- b. The License Fee grants the Customer access to The Services without any additional transaction or servicing fees.

- C. Term and Termination: This Order shall begin as of May 15, 2025 and shall continue for a period of (5) years (the “**Initial Term**”), unless earlier terminated by either party, and shall automatically renew for successive one (1) year intervals (each a “**Renewal Term**”, and together with the Initial Term, the “**Term**”) unless either party provides at least thirty (30) days’ notice of its intention not to renew prior to the end of the then current Term. This Order may be terminated by either party in the event of any breach or default in the obligations of the other party hereunder, which is not cured within thirty (30) days of notice to the other party.

THE UNDERSIGNED, HAVING CAUSED THEIR DULY AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVES TO EXECUTE AND DELIVER THIS EXHIBIT TO THE AGREEMENT AS OF THE DATE(S) SET FORTH BELOW THEIR RESPECTIVE SIGNATURES, INTEND TO BE BOUND BY THE TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF IT AND THE AGREEMENT.

SOUTHWEST REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

PRESTA TECHNOLOGIES, INC.

By: _____

By: _____

Name: _____

Name: _____

Title: _____

Title: _____

Date: _____

Date: _____

Economic Development Report

CEDS | EDA | PLANNING | USDA REGIONAL FOOD BUSINESS CENTER

COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (CEDS)

Our current CEDS can be found at <http://www.swrdc.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/CEDS-2022-2027.pdf>. Every five years, EDA requires an updated CEDS for the region. Our next CEDS is due on 12/31/2026. If you are interested in being on the CEDS committee, please contact staff.

Our **EDA planning grant** was due 2/17/2025. Grant funding available per year is \$70,000 or \$210,000 over the three-year planning grant. Staff withdrew the application per Chicago regional EDA staff and resubmitted to better align with the new federal administration.

EDA PLANNING

EDA Investment Opportunities: Priorities can be found at Investment Priorities | U.S. Economic Development Administration (eda.gov). Priorities have recently changed with the reauthorization to include Critical Infrastructure, Workforce, Innovation and Entrepreneurship, Economic Resiliency, and Manufacturing. You can find EDA funding opportunities at All Funding Opportunities | U.S. Economic Development Administration (eda.gov).



The **EDA Disaster NOFO** is being drafted. Eligible units of government, higher education, etc., based on FEMA disaster declarations ([dec_4797.pdf](#)), are those within Cottonwood, Jackson, Murray, Nobles, Pipestone, Redwood, and Rock counties. Staff are working on preliminary project plans with the city of Wilder (and city of Windom) on a wastewater sewer system, city of Jackson on an industrial park expansion, and the city of Pipestone on an industrial park expansion. Staff assisted the city of Wilder in presenting their project to the Windom Utilities Commission on 3/26.

The **Public Works Economic Adjustment Assistance (PWEAA)** grant opportunity continues to be available, now at a 60% grant rate. More information can be found at Public Works | U.S. Economic Development Administration.

SRDC continues to assist the **City of Adrian** on their funded EDA PWEAA grant for an electric substation. The grant award was 50% of the project cost (\$3,258,900) or \$1,629,450. The SRDC provides administrative and financial services, acting as a liaison among the City of Adrian, DGR Engineering, and the EDA.

During a time of several **Federal pauses**, planners are scheduling conversations with cities across the region to discuss needs, potential projects, etc. These meetings have resulted in SRDC awareness, technical assistance, referrals, etc.

MADO Economic Development staff plan to meet in Hutchinson on 5/6. This group meets quarterly. Region 6E is coordinating.

INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

Staff recently assisted the city of Steen with an MPCA Small Communities Planning grant for stormwater improvements. The application was submitted for \$27,700 (includes 10% match) for stormwater improvement planning. The city is awaiting an announcement.

Southwest Minnesota Youth Committee- The committee meets quarterly to gather members who support career and technical education programs and to educate students and parents about local career and training opportunities. The committee will next meet on 5/20/2025. SRDC staff is involved in planning efforts for a Tour of Manufacturing for grades 10-11 in Jackson, Cottonwood, and Nobles counties.

Economic Development Report

The **City of Hardwick** is in the process of applying for a \$30,000 USDA SEARCH planning grant that will include planning efforts for water system improvements. The hope is for system updates to the water system that will allow for remote reading of residential water meters. The city requested assistance from SRDC regarding USDA ADA requirements. SRDC was involved with the ADA Checklist for Existing Buildings and provided technical assistance with the required Accessibility Transition plan.

Southwest Minnesota Meat Processor Workforce Development Initiative

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) has allocated \$250,000 to the Southwest Regional Development Commission (SRDC) to support its Southwest Minnesota Meat Processor Workforce Development Initiative. This funding, provided through the MDA's Meat Processing Train & Retain Grant program, will assist small- to medium-sized meat and poultry processors in hiring, training, and retaining new employees.

The Southwest Regional Development Commission (SRDC) has teamed up with the Mid-Minnesota Development Commission and the Upper Minnesota Valley Regional Development Commission to address workforce development needs. CareerForce services will be offered through the Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council and Central Minnesota Jobs and Training Services. Additionally, Ridgewater College and the University of Minnesota will help tackle challenges in the meat and poultry processing sector.

The SRDC is proud to participate in this initiative, which aims to invest in 30 individuals by addressing training gaps through both formal and on-the-job support. This program will also offer unique retention strategies and work to minimize employment barriers. Currently, six individuals have engaged in the on-the-job training option, and the second round of formal training will kick off in the Fall of 2025. Due to lower participation than anticipated, the SW MN Processor Workforce Development Initiative did return half of what was allocated for Training (\$65,000) and half of what was earmarked for Retention (\$25,000), for a total of \$90,000. The Minnesota Department of Agriculture has included these funds in a new round of funding for this grant opportunity.

Friends in the Field- This group meets quarterly. The latest Friends meeting was held on April 9 with a focus on Attraction and Retention in rural communities.

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

PAUSE LIFTED MARCH 11

EECBG is a funding source for planning efforts designed to assist small communities (this includes cities or counties under 15,000 in population) in implementing strategies to reduce energy use, to reduce fossil fuel emissions, and to improve energy efficiency. There is no match requirement, and it is eligible to all cities in our region and the counties of Cottonwood, Jackson, Lincoln, Murray, Pipestone, and Rock. SRDC received \$99,959.78 of which 10% is allocated for project administration. Grants to eligible communities are maxed at \$20,000. Planning efforts could include resiliency plans, energy audits, engineering studies, etc.

Two agreements have been signed, each for \$20,000 projects. The CEDS committee met on 3/19 to consider these projects in Slayton and Pipestone.

Southwest Regional Transportation Coordinating Council (RTCC):

The group met on 3/4/2025. SRDC is responsible for representing economic development on the council.

Economic Development Report

Regional Food Business Center / North Central Regional Food Business Center:

PAUSED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE

Due to Executive Orders under the current Administration, USDA Regional Food Business Center funding has been paused. Due to the uncertainty of the USDA's ability to authorize and process North Central Regional Food Business Center (NCRFBC) reimbursements beyond January 19, 2025, necessary action was taken by the NCRFBC to terminate our contract effective February 25, 2025.

Staff collaborated with several small business owners in the region to apply for the Good Food Access Program Equipment and Physical Improvements Grant. **Bolts Grocery Store in Lake Benton** received \$70,120, and **Ivanhoe Supermarket in Ivanhoe, MN**, received \$70,000—both receiving 100% of their grant requests.

Bolt's Grocery Store is undertaking a project to remove and dispose of their outdated refrigerated meat and dairy cases, along with the associated condensing units. These old cases are too small and inefficient. By replacing them with newer, larger, and more energy-efficient models,

the store will not only create additional space but also save money. This will allow them to expand their selection of fresh meat and dairy products, including options sourced from Minnesota-raised farms.

Ivanhoe Supermarket's project will focus on replacing the refrigeration displays used for produce and meat. Completing this project will ensure the maintenance of high-quality produce and meat products with consistent food storage for years to come.

Staff has also recently submitted a grant application for the **MPCA Next Generation Refrigeration Grant** on behalf of the Heron Lake Mini Mart. Heron Lake Mini Mart needs to replace its outdated and malfunctioning walk-in freezer and cooler, as well as the external compressor and condenser. By installing new equipment, normal operations will be restored, and inventory can be expanded to include meat, dairy, eggs, and ready-to-eat fresh salads and sandwiches. An energy audit conducted on October 28, 2024, shows that replacing the failing equipment will result in significant savings through improved insulation and enhanced cooling efficiency. This grant award will be announced by May 15, 2025.

Workforce Summit: Employers and economic development staff in the EDA regions of 8 and 6W recently met at a Workforce Summit on Tuesday, April 29 at the Heritage Event Center near Taunton, MN. The focus was on employer recruitment and retention. Registrations were received from 106 people.

Revolving loan fund

COVID-19 RLF | TRADITIONAL RLF | CONTRACTED RLF

RLF

The committee consists of five members and meets as needed. The committee covers both the COVID-19 RLF and Traditional RLF. The committee meets as needed. The committee last met on 4/16/2025.

Interest Rates: SRDC RLF has been financing projects using an interest rate of 75% of prime. This adheres to regulations governing RLF awards.

Application and Checklist: The Application (fillable — same application for both RLF programs) and Requirements Checklist (this is currently being updated to include both SRDC RLF and COVID-19) are online and can be found at <http://www.swrdc.org/economic-development/revolving-loan-funds/>.

Funds Available for Lending

Funds Available: Funds on hand are the following; Traditional RLF (as of 4-11-25) \$413,029.67 and C-RLF (as of 4-4-25) \$324,769.49. CRLF funds will remain federalized until seven years have passed. Not included within these figures is a loan approval in Pipestone, but not yet scheduled to close, in the amount of \$36,250 and another loan in Cottonwood County in the amount of \$90,000.

Loan Servicing

Now, more than ever, the committee has had to consider interest only and/or modification requests. Some of the requests are due to seasonality, and others are due to changes in the market.

Site Visits

Site visits are required every three years; however, they are done more often as the need arises. Annual business taxes continue to be gathered for files. Site visits are combined with communication audits and interviews for storytelling. Success stories can now be found at <https://www.swrdc.org/regional-spotlight/>

MN Business Finance Corporation (SBA Lender)

MBFC and SBA will be conducting a Lunch & Learn in Marshall on 4/28.

RLF Plan

Every five years, the RLF Plan required revision. SRDC's RLF Plan is due 9/6/2025.

CDFA Advanced RLF Course

SRDC staff will be facilitating the Portfolio Management session on 5/15.

WE ARE HERE TO HELP

Funding Opportunities for Businesses and Entrepreneurs

SRDC administers several funding opportunities for businesses and entrepreneurs in Southwest Minnesota. Financing from the SRDC makes projects possible when gap financing or up-front funds are not available.

Two primary funding opportunities include the SRDC Revolving Loan (RLF) and Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE)



2401 Broadway Ave
Slayton, MN
507-836-8547

For more information
check out the website at
www.swrdc.org



Revolving loan fund

COVID-19 RLF | TRADITIONAL RLF | CONTRACTED RLF

Contracted RLFs

SRDC helps with business start-ups, retentions, expansions, and financing. Additionally, SRDC assists with three revolving loan fund programs within the region and are in communication with another as of recent.

Jackson County RLF: There are four active loans. One loan had a recent write off as the business was sold for less than lender obligations. Another business paid their loan in full. Approximately \$185,000 is available for lending. The committee last met on 1/29/2025. There is a vacancy on the committee from Heron Lake.

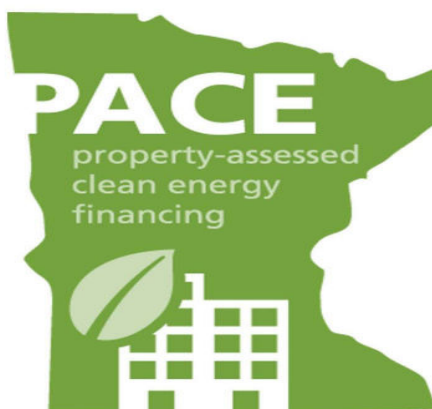
Heron Lake RLF: HLRLF focuses on economic development within a 20-mile radius of Heron Lake. These are Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds. SRDC continues to assist them with GMS entry and amortization schedules as requested. There are funds available for businesses in their service area that have gap financing needs.

Falcon Development Corporation (FDC): Information on FDC can be found online at <https://www.swrdc.org/revolving-loan-funds/>. FDC is a local organization that focuses on improving economic development within a 30-mile radius of Heron Lake. The funds provided by FDC are not federalized, which means that Davis Bacon is not applicable to construction projects. There is currently an interest rate incentive, as low as 2%, on loans that close before August 2025 month-end. The FDC Board has a maximum of 7 members. The committee currently has six members. The committee will next meet on 5/7/2025. Approximately \$57,000 is available for lending. Through August 2025, FDC funds may be available under their 2% interest rate special.

If you have questions about the business lending via SRDC RLF or its contracted RLFs, please contact Robin Weis, Deputy Director, at 507-836-1638 or via email at robin@swrdc.org.

Are you looking to cut your energy bill?

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



Energy saving measures are repaid on property tax assessment which eliminates burden of upfront costs providing low-cost, long-term financing



- Heating/Cooling
- Lighting
- Refrigeration
- Insulation • Air Sealing



- Solar Energy Systems
- Wind Turbines
- Geothermal



This Program is administered by the SRDC on behalf of the Rural Minnesota Energy Board.

COUNTIES SERVED

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

Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) Report

General Information: PACE is available to property owners of small businesses, including agri-businesses and some non-profits based on usage. Please help spread the word about PACE to property owners looking to make improvements that lower their energy usage. Interest rates for new projects are set at 3% under Prime, with a floor of 3%.

Funds Available: Funds are currently available in the approximate amount of PACE EE-RLF (as of 3-31-25) \$243,776.03, PACE ARRA (as of 4-17-25) \$ \$71,588.29, and PACE SEP (as of 4-3-25) \$30,921.31. Not included within these numbers are unspent project expenses and the latest loan approved was for a Renville County agricultural property owner for solar installation at \$60,000.

Currently, two PACE loans are in default with one not paying their 2024 property taxes and the other yet owing a partial 2023 property tax payment.

PACE Committee: The committee meets as needed, often in conjunction with RMEB (Rural Minnesota Energy Board) meeting dates. Committee members are Metz, Wildermuth, Wachal, VanDeVere, and Paap. The committee last met on 3/24/2025.

Energy Audits: Energy assessments/audits are informational to property owners and may be the start to cost-saving energy improvements. MN DOC is working on increasing access to energy auditors. Contractor estimates and the energy assessment/audit are the two first steps to PACE financing. Referrals for energy audits are often made to RETAP, MNTAP, CEE, or EnergySmart.

PACE 101

Weis conducted a PACE 101 for two new RMEB members on 3/19. Weis also was asked to be a part of a Q&A with MN DOC and other RDCs interested in pursuing PACE administration on 4/21.

Payback to 14 RMEB

Counties to begin December 2026

There were 14 counties within RMEB that provided \$6,336 to lessen the interest burden of 3% financing via REDG. The other initial financing was REED with 0% interest. REDG will be paid off in June 2025 and REED is projected to be paid off in June 2034. Financial help from the counties allowed the PACE program to continue. Payback is set to start in December 2026.

PACE Success Stories

A few recent success stories can be found at <https://www.swrdc.org/regional-spotlight/>

The updated PACE application that includes a checklist can be found at RMEB PACE Application.

If you have questions about the PACE or energy audits, please contact Robin Weis, Deputy Director, at 507-836-1638 or via email at robin@swrdc.org.

Community Development Report

RURAL MINNESOTA ENERGY BOARD

ENERGY | LAND USE, PLANNING & ZONING | SOLID WASTE & NATURAL RESOURCES

ENERGY

Rural Minnesota Energy Board (RMEB): RMEB met on March 24, 2025, at 1:00 PM. At this meeting, Xcel provided a short update on the new transmission line connecting Brookings to Lyon County. The line has significantly reduced curtailment in the region



and increased the amount of electricity that is getting delivered, but congestion costs have also increased due to the rate of wind energy projects getting built exceeding the rate at which transmission is being built. The next meeting will be held on June 2.

State Competitiveness Funding: With many of the federal grants through IIJA and IRA paused or cancelled, we are shifting our focus to helping communities in our region plan for future opportunities in energy, efficiency and resilience. Let us know if you would like us to visit your community to hear what challenges you are trying to solve.

Hardwick Water Systems: Hardwick is applying for a USDA Grant that will allow it to update its water system. It will enable them to read the residents' water meters remotely. Before officially applying for the grant, they must get their City Hall Office Building into compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) or have an Accessibility Transition Plan. SRDC will be involved with completing the ADA Checklist for Existing Buildings, writing the Accessibility Transition Plan, and assisting with writing the USDA grant. Updates to the water system will result in energy savings.

PAUSED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE

Renewable Energy Siting through Technical Engagement and Planning (R-STEP): In January, we began contract negotiations, but after the first meeting, the DOE put a "pause" on all activity and canceled all the contract negotiation meetings that we had scheduled.

PAUSED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE

DWSMA (Drinking Water Supply Management Area) Project: Supporting solar development within local drinking water protection areas. A \$498,000 Energy Future Grant from the U.S. Department of Energy would allow the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) to evaluate the benefits of using solar energy to help provide renewable power while also providing economically viable and environmentally sustainable land use options in southwest Minnesota, where nitrate levels in drinking water has been an ongoing concern. SRDC was a subgrantee whose planned role is/was coordinating and facilitating workshops in four selected areas and convening cohort groups.

Solid Waste & Natural Resources

Solid Waste Commission: The Southwest Solid Waste Commission convened on Monday, March 24, 2025. During the meeting, Jay Trusty, the Executive Director of the Southwest Regional Development Commission, presented the 10-year Solid Waste Plan to the Commission. The draft plan has been submitted to the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) for an initial review. The MPCA will provide feedback, and any necessary corrections will be made before the final report is submitted.

The next regular meeting is scheduled for June 2, 2025.

LAND USE

Lyon County, Comprehensive Plan: The upcoming schedule is as follows: May-Transportation & Infrastructure Chapter, June-Parks, Recreation & Natural Resources Chapter, July – Sustainability Chapter, August – Implementation Chapter.

City of Tracy, Zoning Ordinance Update: Planner Webb held a status meeting with City of Tracy staff on 4/8 to update staff on the work to date. Currently, Planner Webb is writing their new zoning ordinance.

Taunton Strategic Planning: The mayor of Taunton contacted SRDC about strategic planning for the city. Staff provided a proposal that the city council will vote on in May.

Nobles County Comprehensive Planning: SRDC is in the contracting process to complete a new Comprehensive Plan in Nobles County over the next 18 –24 months.

Ways that Make ‘Cents’ Seed Grant

Ways That Make ‘Cents’ is a CERTs Seed grant project, carried out by Erika Gilsdorf, an international filmmaker and producer. It is a series of 26 stories filmed throughout northwestern and southwestern Minnesota featuring residents, businesses, and community organizations. She captures a variety of clean energy projects ranging from 28-second clips at busy businesses, to 30-minute tours of Bemidji homes. The Southwest portion focuses on the businesses and community organizations that have implemented clean energy projects in their communities. The website is whatfuelsyouusa.com and has video interviews from each project and a trailer for each region.

St. James EV ride and Drive

St. James will be holding an EV Ride and Drive event on Saturday, May 17, from 11 am – 3 pm, at the St. James Middle and High School. It will be held in coordination with Recharge America, who will be providing a lot of the resources and outreach around the event. The event will also feature a local vendor and exhibit EXPO, including a table for the GreenStep Cities program. St. James is a Step 3 GreenStep city, but will be moving up two steps to Step 5 thanks to their GreenCorps volunteer. They will be recognized at the League of MN Cities conference in June.

CERTs Steering Committee Field Trip

The CERTs Steering Committee is planning a field trip out to two different locations on August 21. Exact timings are yet to be determined, and travel will need to be independently planned as we will not have a bus. The two locations are the Home-town Bioenergy facility in Le Sueur and the AURI Bio Innovation Center in Waseca. In Waseca, the group will tour the AURI laboratory and anaerobic digester as well as have a presentation on anaerobic digestion and possibly the RNG Roadmap. We are opening this tour up to others who are interested, including members of RMEB and our RSDP partners. Please let Nadya Bucklin or Jason Walker know if you are interested. More information and details to come.

Community Development Report



Earth Day Podcast Spotlights SW Minnesota's Leadership in Renewable Energy

Community Development Director Jason Walker was recently interviewed by Meg Carney for her episode of The Outdoor Minimalist

Slayton, MN — In honor of Earth Day 2025, The Outdoor Minimalist Podcast is bringing the conversation about renewable energy home—to Southwest Minnesota. Community Development Director Jason Walker of the Southwest Regional Development Commission (SRDC) was featured in a special Earth Day episode hosted by Meg Carney.

The episode explores the vital role rural Minnesota plays in the clean energy transition. With Walker's expert insights, listeners get an up-close look at how utility-scale wind and solar projects are not only driving the future of energy but are also delivering tangible economic benefits to small towns, counties, and landowners in RMEB's 18-county region.

"We meet communities where they are in the clean energy space," Walker shares. "Some are starting with energy efficiency. Others want to go all-in with microgrids and solar on public buildings. Our job is to help connect them to the resources they need to achieve their goals."

Walker emphasized that while conversations about cli-

mate goals and emissions are often politically charged, the true driver of renewable energy adoption in Southwest Minnesota is economics. From increased tax revenue for counties, to wind and solar lease payments to landowners, to economic boosts for local hotels, cafés, and service industries during construction, clean energy is proving to be a major financial win for rural communities.

"Projects like these bring in hundreds of construction workers, and local businesses often report their best years during those times," Walker says. "And after they're built, they leave behind high-paying, low-maintenance jobs—exactly the kind of workforce fit our region needs."

Listeners will also learn how wind and solar revenues helped counties like Lincoln expand broadband access and how misconceptions about noise, glare, and property values are being addressed with education and planning.

The episode ends on a hopeful note, highlighting the power of community-level decisions and individual leadership.

"Be an example," Walker encourages. "Whether it's putting solar on your home, advocating for community-scale projects, or just having conversations—everyone has a role to play."

Listen to the full Earth Day episode of The Outdoor Minimalist Podcast featuring Jason Walker at: <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/178-earth-day-special-our-power-our-planet/id1586174667?i=1000704275600>

Food Truck Electrification Project — Formerly known as World Mart

Tacos Coahuila food truck, out of Worthington, is interested in participating in the battery installation project. RSDP partners are currently in the process of gathering information for

their application for RSDP and IonE (Institute on the Environment) funding. Either of these funding sources would be enough to support the project. Once the funding is secured, the RSDP staff will work together with some of the previous team members

from the World Mart project (U of MN engineering department, SRDC staff) to complete the battery installation process.

Transportation Report

TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE | ATPs | TRANSPORTATION PLANNING | ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION & SRTS

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

Active Transportation Planning Assistance Grant: MnDOT announced that ten Minnesota cities will receive funding support from the latest round of Active Transportation Planning Assistance to help them increase the number of people walking and biking to destinations in their communities.

“MnDOT’s Active Transportation Planning Assistance program brings together neighbors to dream big and develop a work plan for building their own network for walking and bicycling,” says Will Wlizlo, MnDOT Active Transportation coordinator. “This assistance helps cities reduce pollution, curb traffic, revitalize Main Streets, and increase residents’ health and safety.”

The cities of Mountain Lake and Worthington were awarded planning assistance grants.

E-Bike Rental Program at End-O-Line Park in Currie:

Planner Webb has been facilitating meetings between Southwest Health and Humana Services, Murray County, and other local stakeholders in order to gauge the potential for an E-Bike Rental Program at End-O-Line Park in Currie. Box Car Wind awarded \$4,000 to Murray County and SWHHS awarded \$4,500 to this project. The goal is that 4 E-Bikes will be in place at the park by June 1 for residents and visitors to use the bikes on the Casey Jones State Trail Loop located in Lake Shetek State Park.



Portable Counters Available: If you or someone in your area is planning to apply for MnDOT or other funding for a trial project, consider requesting a portable counter from the SRDC Office. These counters provide valuable information and data on current trail users that can be very beneficial for grant applications and other planning efforts. Contact Planner Webb for more information: chrisw@swrdc.org

AREAS TRANSPORTATION PARTNERSHIPS (ATP)

ATP 7 will hold its next meeting on Friday, June 13 at 10 AM in Mankato.

ATP 8 will hold its next meeting on Friday, June 27 at 10 AM at a location that is TBD.

RDO Transportation Planner’s Group: Planner Webb has been selected to serve as Co-Chair of the RDO Transportation Planner’s Group in Minnesota. This group works with MnDOT officials and all of the Regional Development Commissions to lead quarterly planning meetings and other efforts in relation to RDO’s and their relationship with MnDOT.

SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL

Lamberton/Red Rock Central Safe Routes To School Planning Assistance Grant: Planners Webb and Bucklin hosted the final meeting with the SRTS Steering Committee on 5/4 in Lamberton. The final draft of the Safe Routes Plan was approved and now needs to be forwarded to local partners for their approval before being sent off to MnDOT for final approval.

Transportation Report

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION EVENTS

Shared Mobility Workshop in Lincoln County: University of Minnesota Extension in collaboration with United Community Action Partnership, Southwest Regional Development Commission, and the Lincoln County Enterprise Development Corporation put on a Shared Mobility Workshop in Ivanhoe on May 6th. Planner Webb attended and served on a panel discussion at the event.



Getting Around Together
Exploring Shared Mobility in Lincoln County

May 6th, 2025
1:00 - 4:00pm

Lincoln County Courthouse Assembly Room (Lower Level)
319 N Rebecca St, Ivanhoe

Toward Zero Death Regional Workshops: Toward Zero Deaths (TZD) is a national strategy on highway safety to advocate for eliminating serious injuries and deaths on our nation's roadways. MnDOT is hosting Spring 2025 Regional Toward Zero Death Workshops in our region.

Wednesday, May 14, 2025
Prairie's Edge Casino
5616 Prairies Edge Ln.
Granite Falls, MN 56241

Monday, May 19, 2025
The Venue
1850 Madison Avenue
Mankato, MN 56001



Executive Director Report



The Southwest Regional Solid Waste Plan is in the review stage. I received the first comments back from MPCA at the beginning of April. Our MPCA Planner requested a meeting with a select group of the Solid Waste Administrators to discuss the comments. We met with MPCA at our offices on April 15th. We got through all of the comments and made many changes right at the meeting. The most substantive changes will be in the recycling section, where it has been requested to deviate from the MPCA template and group the programs by county for clarity. I will be getting the first county draft in the new format to MPCA for review and then make the rest of the changes. The Solid Waste Administrators will meet towards the end of May to review the changes.

Former Representative Aaron Peterson (Lincoln County) contacted me, he is now working for the Washington Department of Commerce. They are working with a consulting firm to develop some templates for Community Benefit Agreements, primarily for wind projects in eastern Washington and wanted to discuss the RMEB. Jason and I met with them over Zoom and gave them the history and background of the RMEB and discussed our partnership with CERTs and the wind energy production tax.

Speaking of CERTs, the Executive Directors group met at the Great Plains Institute (GPI) offices in Minneapolis on the 17th of April. The primary topic of discussion was the impact on CERTs and particularly the Department of Commerce and GPI of the chaos at the federal level concerning anything to do with renewable energy.

We also received an email from the Chicago office of the **EDA** on what sort of requirements would be in the new **CEDS** documents and what we're not supposed to talk about. Naturally, the administration wishes to completely ignore the impacts of renewable energy on our regional economy and is not interested in hearing about what local priorities might be but is instead wanting the CEDS to reflect the priorities of the administration. The Region 5 Executive Director sent a scathing response, citing that the purpose of the CEDS is for the region and the people who live in the region to set their development priorities and that they weren't interested in pursuing a CEDS that didn't take local input into account. It's been radio silence since, so we'll see how this all plays out. Luckily, our CEDS isn't due until January of 2027.

The next **MADO Executive Directors** in-person will be hosted by Headwaters RDC in Bemidji at the end of May. The plan is to meet with Cheryl Glaeser on the afternoon of the 28th to work on "Strategic Doing" and then to have our regular meeting beginning the next morning. It is timely to be having this discussion as we go forward as a state organization and try to figure out what we want to be when we grow up.

The **SRDC Staff Retreat** will be held on June 4th at the Round Lake Vineyard. This year's theme will be celebrating the arts. Nicole DeBoer from the Southwest Minnesota Arts and Humanities Council will present and we will do some art creation as well.



Southwest Regional Development Commission

Cottonwood • Jackson • Lincoln • Lyon • Murray • Nobles • Pipestone • Redwood • Rock

SRDC Energy Efficiency and Conservation Strategies Grant Application

“The Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) Program is designed to assist units of government (cities, counties, townships, or school districts) with *planning efforts* that focus on energy efficiency and/or energy resilience. Planning efforts should result in financial savings due to reduced energy consumption.

The Southwest Regional Development Commission (SRDC) can award EECBG sub-grants to units of government with a population under 15,000. Awards to local units of government can be up to \$20,000. All planning efforts must be completed by November 2026.

Awards can be flexible to meet the planning needs of the respective unit of government; however, EECBG's purpose is to provide information to units of government on how to lower their energy burden to save on energy costs. Below are project examples that may be eligible for EECBG sub-grants:

1. Climate, energy, and resiliency planning

SRDC staff are experienced in climate resilience and community energy planning. This planning effort would result in a document informed by relevant data and guided by the specific goals and interests of the area served. Planning efforts would include education and community engagement to prepare for implementation. Consultants can be utilized to enhance planning efforts.

2. Energy audits

A comprehensive assessment, conducted by a certified energy professional, provides energy efficiency and savings opportunities including, but not limited to, lighting, insulation, HVAC systems, geothermal, solar, and other equipment.

3. Professional services including Engineering and Architectural

The initial energy planning required for the successful implementation of a project. Examples could include 1) energy efficiency and savings opportunities within a preliminary engineering report, specifically as it relates to high-energy infrastructure such as a water treatment plant, or 2) analysis of integrating solar energy into a municipal distribution system.

4. Other energy-related planning studies

Preference will be given to planning efforts within disadvantaged communities

Applicant Information

Unit of Government: _____

Contact Name and Title: _____

Phone Number: _____

Email Address: _____

Mailing Address: _____

2401 Broadway Avenue, Suite 1, Slayton, MN 56172 • 507-836-8547
srdc@swrdc.org • www.swrdc.org

REPORTING:

Please note that project reports will be required. Selected applicants will be required to report on the following: 1) Capacity of electricity savings supported (kilowatts), 2) Capacity of fuel oil savings supported (gallons), 3) Capacity of natural gas savings supported (million cubic feet per year, and/or 4) Capacity of propane savings supported (therm). Not all metrics will apply.

The final narrative will request program performance and achievements, barriers, and implementation plans. Selected applicants will be required to submit links or copies of planning documents and any publicity or media mentions.

APPLICATION NARRATIVE

Project Summary:

What are you hoping to accomplish from these planning efforts?

Does this planning project have the potential to provide your unit of government with the information necessary to make decisions about how to lower your energy burden which will save on energy costs? Yes/ No

Will this planning project assist you in taking further action toward implementation? Yes/ No

Are you planning to utilize the planning documents to apply for an implementation grant?
Yes/No

If so, which implementation grant:

Potential Barriers, if any:

Project Partners:

Expected timeline:

Grant Request

- Energy efficiency and climate resilience plan: \$ _____
- Energy audit: \$ _____
- Technical assistance services: \$ _____
- Other planning services: \$ _____

Total Grant Award not to exceed: \$ _____
(max: \$20,000)

SUCCESS STORY

In small towns across Minnesota, local meat lockers are an essential part of the community, providing high-quality, locally processed meats while supporting area farmers. However, finding skilled workers to sustain these businesses has become an increasing challenge. Thanks to the Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council (PIC) and the **SW MN Meat Processor Workforce Development Initiative**, provided by the Southwest Regional Development Commission (SRDC), Highwater Creek Meat Market was able to recruit and train two promising individuals, Porter and Lindsey, helping to secure the future of their business while providing meaningful career opportunities. PIC played a key role in facilitating this opportunity, covering wages through the grant and ensuring that businesses like Highwater Creek Meat Market have the workforce they need to thrive.



When Porter joined the team, he had little experience in the meat processing industry, but he was eager to learn. Through hands-on training and mentorship, supported by PIC, he quickly became a part of the butchering process. His dedication to improving his skills did not go unnoticed.

“Porter has really stepped up and been a tremendous help on the butchering side,” shared the business owner. **“He continues to show hard work and dedication. His skills are improving every day, and he works well with everyone. He’s showing more confidence in his training.”**



Southwest MN Workforce Summit

Employers, HR professionals, educators, community leaders, and economic development professionals were invited to attend the Southwest Minnesota Regional Workforce Summit on April 29 in Taunton at the Heritage Event Center.



Nationally recognized workforce expert **Gerry Hoeffner** kicked off the day with a keynote address exploring how employers across the country are successfully attracting and retaining a stable workforce.

Workforce Development

Gerry Hoeffner's presentation offered a compelling overview of today's workforce challenges and strategies, with a focus on trends shaping Minnesota's employment landscape and actionable solutions for employers navigating a competitive job market.

Current Trends and Workforce Realities

Minnesota's unemployment rate sits at a notably low 3.33%, even amid ongoing economic fluctuations. The job market is expanding faster than the labor supply, and immigrants have been vital in filling workforce gaps. Meanwhile, younger generations—especially Gen Z—are redefining workplace expectations by prioritizing personal development, a sense of community, and authentic relationships at work.

Changing Demographics and Worker Preferences

Women now surpass men in higher education pursuits, and people are starting families later. Workers want flexibility, purposeful work, and emotional investment from employers. Understanding generational context—comparing past and present mindsets—helps explain these shifts and enables organizations to better meet employee expectations.

Evolving Employer Strategies

To attract and retain talent, companies must rebrand themselves as employers of choice. That means moving away from generic claims like “we're like family” and instead using specific, measurable data (e.g., turnover rates, training investments, pay linked to skills) to stand out. Employers should market themselves actively through social media and digital storytelling, using real employee experiences to reinforce workplace culture and values.

Modernizing Recruiting and HR Marketing

Today's hiring landscape demands agility and creativity. Cumbersome applications, slow responses, and outdated practices drive away candidates—especially those under 35. Instead, applications should take no more than 5–10 minutes, with responses issued within 24 hours, even during evenings. HR should act as a marketing team, delivering compelling elevator pitches, crafting strong online presences, and using tools like geolocation and behavioral assessments to recruit top-tier talent.

Innovative Recruitment Tactics

- Examples shared include:
- A beer distributor who mailed handwritten thank-you notes to employees' spouses, turning them into workplace advocates.
 - Targeted recruiting during teacher strikes to attract out-of-area talent.
 - A painter who advertised job openings alongside service promotions to

capture both clients and workers.

Retention and Onboarding Best Practices

The first 90 days of employment are crucial; most attrition happens here due to poor cultural fit or lack of connection. Managers should mentor rather than micromanage, focusing on individual strengths and regular relationship-building. Pay should be tied to skills and performance, not tenure, to motivate and reward growth.

Cultivating Long-Term Talent Pipelines

Organizations should maintain contact with past applicants, interns, and promising candidates—through birthday cards, event invites, or informal check-ins—creating a strong bench of future hires. Even unsuccessful applicants should be treated with care to maintain the organization's reputation and foster trust.

The Big Picture

To thrive in today's talent-driven market, companies must embrace diversity, flexibility, and generational values. Hiring the right people and building meaningful workplace relationships are more important than ever. A people-centered, data-informed, and creative approach to workforce development is no longer optional—it's essential.

The Southwest MN Workforce Summit put together by the following partners: Southwest RDC, UMVRDC, Southwest Initiative Foundation (SWIF), LYFT Career Pathways, Southwest MN Private Industry Council (SWMNPIC), Marshall Chamber of Commerce, Pipestone Chamber of Commerce, Redwood Falls Chamber of Commerce, Worthington Chamber of Commerce, Murray County EDA, Swift County RDA, Benson EDA, Montevideo EDA, Ortonville EDA/Big Stone Area Growth, and Prairie's Edge Casino Resort.



Breakout 1: Workplace Culture & Valuing the Employee

Panelists T.D. Hostikka (Project Turnabout), Amanda Walljasper-Tate (Daily Apple), Heather Willert (D&G Excavating), and Kelly Johnson (CCM Health) shared how they are successfully retaining employees and creating a positive workplace culture.



Breakout 2: Generations in the Workplace

Nancy Walker, Deputy Director - Southwest Health & Human Services, Marshall, MN talked about how work-life expectancy is expanding and organizational careers don't look the way they did before. The presentation covered the now five generations in the workplace, their attributes, their influences, what they expect from the workplace, how to prevent workplace tension and what different approaches managers can do to motivate them.



Breakout 3: Employment Law

Pamela Harris, of Pamela Harris PLLC, Employment Law provided

an overview on the MN Paid Leave law that is scheduled to take effect in 2026 and will have an impact on almost all employers and also allow some time for other employment law questions from attendees.

Regional Highlight: LYFT Career Pathways / Train & Retain Meat Cutting Program

Brief overview of LYFT Career Pathways program along with the SWMN Train & Retain Meat Cutting Program



Regional Highlight - Drive for Five Members of the group talked about employers participating in Drive for Five Cohort training.



Reflections on Change and Leadership

Change is a constant, yet its process is layered and often met with resistance. Different groups react in distinct ways: fear, defensiveness, threatenedness, or outright opposition. Leaders must navigate this emotional landscape, guiding individuals from hesitation to acceptance and even celebration.

The Truth

About Change and People

There's a myth that people resist change. The reality is that 84% of people will support or eventually accept change when it's communicated clearly. Only a small portion—about 3%—will actively resist and attempt to undermine it.

Here's a breakdown of how people typically respond to change:

- 3% – Change Enthusiasts: Eager for change, often impatient for the next update.
- 13% – Change Drivers: Motivated to lead, influence, and help implement change.
- 34% – Willing Participants: Cooperative, especially when supported and guided.
- 34% – Cautious Observers: Need more information, but will join once they understand the details.
- 13% – Late Adopters: Will accept change—but only after it's already been implemented.
- 3% – Resisters: Actively push back, spreading fear and misinformation.

Understanding these categories helps leaders tailor their communication and support strategies to effectively guide people through transition.

A key strategy to foster adaptability is celebration. For example, a company once organized a barbecue, complete with music, a cornhole tournament, and a speech by the president to recognize 100 changes. However, one warehouse team felt overlooked—highlighting the importance of inclusivity. Celebrations must be thoughtful and inclusive to ensure all teams feel seen and valued. Without this consideration, well-intended gestures can backfire and erode trust.

To successfully implement change, it's crucial to address the motivators behind it. Pain—the discomfort of not changing—and pleasure—the rewards of transformation—are powerful drivers of behavior. Leaders must clearly communicate both: the necessity of change and the benefits it will bring.

Resistance should not be unexpected. Some will oppose change, and leaders must be prepared to repeat their message, remain honest, and show patience. Overcoming resistance requires addressing fears directly. As Christopher Columbus once mused, “What lies beyond the dragons?” Beyond fear lie opportunities, wealth, and growth. Leaders must inspire their teams to face these “dragons,” dispelling myths and fostering curiosity about what lies ahead.

Motivation is also critical to sustaining change. Even small gestures—such as acknowledging individual contributions on stage—can have a profound impact. For some, a simple thank-you is enough; for others, detailed recognition rein-

forces their value to the organization.

Leadership plays a pivotal role in creating a culture of adaptability. Executives must commit to change wholeheartedly, because trust in leadership is the foundation of successful transformation. Leaders must inspire, support, and guide their teams, creating an environment where change is not feared, but celebrated.

Celebration also marks the closure of one phase and energizes teams for the next. Recognizing past achievements—whether through speeches, tournaments, or visual displays—fosters a belief that change is manageable and worthwhile. For example, listing 100 changes on a conference room wall can motivate teams to continue evolving.

Clear communication is another cornerstone. Sharing information promptly and transparently helps employees understand the purpose and benefits of change. Repetition is key; people need to hear messages multiple times to internalize them. A clear, consistent voice prevents misinformation and builds confidence.

Ultimately, change is not just a moment—it's a continuous journey. It requires trust, patience, and celebration. By addressing fears, embracing motivators, and fostering a culture of adaptability, organizations can thrive in the face of transformation, finding opportunities and growth beyond the dragons.

Exploring Artificial Intelligence – A Powerful Tool, Not a Replacement



Mike Kutzke, Professional Training Services, spoke on the transformative power of artificial intelligence and shared the fundamental and real-world applications along with AI concepts, principles, and applications, emphasizing the importance of AI literacy.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) isn't just a tech buzzword anymore—it's here, it's real, and it's already changing the way we work, learn, and connect. During a recent presentation, a dynamic and passionate speaker shared insights on AI's role in workforce development and productivity, while emphasizing a crucial point: AI is a tool, not a replacement for human intelligence. And like any tool, it must be used wisely—with validation, oversight, and ethical judgment.

Kutzke opened with a reminder that while AI is powerful, it's still dependent on us. Humor, context, and common sense are essential to ensure the information it produces is accurate and useful. They shared a memorable anecdote about a student's AI-generated resume that sounded great—until closer inspection revealed inaccuracies,

highlighting the need for human review.

The presentation outlined four key categories of AI:

1. Generative AI – This is the most well-known type, used to create new content such as text, images, summaries, or even ideas. It's like having a brainstorming partner on demand. Whether you're a teacher helping students or a business leader crafting a marketing plan, generative AI can speed up and enrich the creative process.

2. Predictive AI – With the ability to analyze vast amounts of past data, this form of AI can forecast trends, needs, or outcomes. From stock market patterns to inventory predictions, businesses are already using predictive tools to make smarter decisions.

3. Agentic AI – This is where things get futuristic. Agentic AI refers to autonomous agents that can take action on your behalf. Imagine an AI that automatically scans emails, summarizes them, and outlines action steps—without being asked every time. While powerful, these agents require thoughtful setup and monitoring, as they can operate independently.

4. Natural Language Models (like ChatGPT) – These models interact with users conversationally. You can ask questions, request summaries, or generate content using everyday language. They're already integrated into platforms like Microsoft Copilot and are changing how teams work, write, and communicate.

Kutzke highlighted how AI is integrated into common tools like Microsoft Teams and PowerPoint. Meeting summaries, slide generation, and resume analysis can all be enhanced with AI. The emphasis was clear: AI isn't just for tech experts—it's accessible, and it's becoming a workplace standard.

Two Key Workforce Considerations

1. Job Displacement – As AI automates certain tasks, some traditional jobs may be reduced or reshaped. It's critical for workforce leaders to anticipate these changes and support affected employees.

2. Reskilling & Upskilling – With change comes opportunity. Equipping workers with new skills—especially in digital literacy, data handling, and AI usage—will help them stay competitive and confident in evolving industries.

Privacy & Ethics

The speaker stressed the importance of data privacy and ethical use. While AI can scrape the internet for data, users must be cautious about sharing confidential or personal information. Always validate AI-generated content for accuracy, tone, and appropriateness.

In Summary

AI is not a magic wand, but it is a transformative tool. Used responsibly, it can increase efficiency, inspire creativity, and help people learn faster and work smarter. However, it still requires human oversight to ensure it's used ethically and effectively. As the speaker concluded: "This is cool stuff—but it needs you."

Save the Date

BUS TOUR & ANNUAL MEETING

*July
10th*



*Bus leaves
at 1 p.m.*

Stops to include:

- Edgerton Bakery (RLF Client)
- Stop at Woodstock Casey Jones Trail
- RTR School (Safe Routes to School)
- Bolt's Grocery, Tyler (PACE Client)

Bus will return to
Pipestone at 4 p.m.
with Annual Meeting
and meal to follow



2401 Broadway Avenue, Suite 1

Slayton, MN 56172

www.swrdc.org