What can we be best at?
What are we deeply passionate about?
What drives our resource engine?

Helping Communities Prosper

2012 Annual Report
Enable the region to thrive through assisting local governments

Responsibility:
1. the state or fact of being responsible.
2. an instance of being responsible: The responsibility for this mess is yours!
3. a particular burden of obligation upon one who is responsible: the responsibilities of authority.
4. a person or thing for which one is responsible: A child is a responsibility to its parents.
5. reliability or dependability, especially in meeting debts or payments.

I recently had cause to look that word up. Like many words it has multiple definitions. I take this word seriously at home with my family (you have the responsibility to clean your own room, keep track of your own things, and help your little brother) and here at work (we are responsible to our board and to the units of government in our region to be efficient and transparent with the work we do). It is a word that I use regularly and feel it has a certain heaviness to it.

As defined in Minnesota Statute the UMVRDC has the responsibility to assist the units of government with information and services. We can help local governments write grants, develop plans, coordinate services, complete research and operate programs on behalf of the region. I feel fortunate to work within an agency that is empowered to help get things done. UMVRDC employees often talk passionately about using our combined knowledge, resources and abilities to help advance projects that serve needs in the region. We take the responsibility that has been assigned to us seriously.

Please review the highlights in this report and see how we have assisted the region throughout the last year. I want to ensure you that our team of talented and resourceful employees feel and understand the responsibility of our work and stand ready to serve you now and into the future. Please let us know if you have questions about the work in this report or how we can help you with your current needs.

We are made wise not by the recollection of our past, but by the responsibility for our future.
- George Bernard Shaw

Message from the Executive Director

Serving the 5 counties, 37 communities, 1 tribal nation, 94 townships, and 10 school districts in the Upper Minnesota River Valley

The amount of money invested in our region as a result of the UMVRDC’s work in FY 2012:
$1,807,032

Mission
Enable the region to thrive through assisting local governments
UMVRDC’s Core Values

- Strong board stewardship
- Staff is accountable to and driven by the Board and the units of government in this region
- Integrity
- Respectful, open and transparent
- Agency’s role is to assist, guide and facilitate projects and programs for units of government in this region
- Excellent customer service
- Progressive thought and action
- Value all of our communities
- Strive for excellence in work and products
- Collaboration and cooperation
- Value the region’s lifestyle and all it has to offer
- Pride in the agency’s abilities and capabilities
The UMVRDC’s Good to Great Process

The UMVRDC continues to implement our Good to Great strategic planning process that is defining the future for the agency. The goal of this plan is to position the UMVRDC to best meet the needs of the local units of government it was created to serve.

Our strategic plan is based on Jim Collins’ book Good to Great. We have spent the last five years focusing on moving our organization from good to great by examining our organizational values, what we are passionate about, what we can be best at, and what drives our resource engine.

In 2010 the UMVRDC reviewed our strategic plan using Good to Great as a framework. Based on these ideas, we refined the three questions shown on this page.

### What Can We Be Best At?

- Solutions consistent with the values in Region 6W.
- Helping communities not only survive, but prosper.
- Making the region a great place to live, work and play.
- Assisting local units of government to address issues such as planning, zoning, technology, transportation, development, and tourism.

### What Are We Deeply Passionate About?

- The rural quality of life.
- Helping communities not only survive, but prosper.
- Making the region a great place to live, work and play.
- Assisting local units of government to address issues such as planning, zoning, technology, transportation, development, and tourism.

### What Drives Our Resource Engine?

- Excellent results at a reasonable price.
- Providing excellent service at reasonable cost.
- Successfully completing projects with tangible results.
- Responsive, knowledgeable service.
- Talented staff with a wide range of expertise.
- Local contracts.
- Levy.
- Knowing our communities and their leaders.

The UMVRDC’s Hedgehog Grant: Helping Communities Prosper

The UMVRDC mission statement directs us to “enable the region to thrive by assisting units of government”. We know through our recent survey that local governments have lots of needs but are having a hard time paying for them. Those needs prompted the creation of the Hedgehog Grant to help subsidize the cost of our grant writing and planning services.

Since January 2011 the UMVRDC has set aside $32,550 of our local levy dollars to cost-share the following projects:

- **LqP County, Grant Writing**: $1,200
- **Swift County, Planning & Zoning**: $4,000
- **Granite Falls, Strategic Planning**: $2,000
- **Dawson, Grant Writing**: $4,000
- **Clara City, Comprehensive Planning**: $4,250
- **Dawson, Grant Writing**: $4,000
- **Swift County, Planning**: $3,500
- **Milan, Comprehensive Planning**: $4,850
- **Granite Falls, Grant Writing**: $4,000

Applications and more program details are available on our website. To talk about potential projects that might be eligible for the Hedgehog Grant, please contact Dawn Hegland, Executive Director at 320-289-1981.

In addition to the agency budget, the UMVRDC fiscally managed $2,551,220 of grants for counties and cities.

The Revenue and Expenditure Comparison for Current FY 2012 and Proposed FY 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>FY12</th>
<th>FY13</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Revenue</td>
<td>$751,639</td>
<td>$769,954</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Expenditures</td>
<td>$750,690</td>
<td>$769,389</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excess Revenue</td>
<td>$949</td>
<td>$656</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Expenses

- **Salaries/Fringe** 508,000 523,829
- **Data Acquisition** 600 0
- **Commissioner’s Expense** 39,030 39,000
- **Audit** 12,000 12,000
- **Computer Technical Assistance** 16,000 12,000
- **Contract for Services/Comm. Dev** 10,000 1,500
- **Copy Change/Asset Lease** 10,000 10,000
- **Depreciation** 11,000 11,000
- **Dues** 3,000 3,500
- **Insurance** 3,500 850
- **Telephone/Internet** 12,210 12,210
- **Postage** 10,050 6,000
- **Printing/Advertising** 5,000 5,200
- **RDC Marketing Items** 2,000 2,000
- **Regulation/Training** 13,000 15,000
- **Repairs/Maintenance** 2,000 2,000
- **Software/VOA Maintenance** 11,000 8,000
- **Subscriptions** 2,000 2,000
- **Supplies** 7,000 6,000
- **Travel/Transportation** 7,500 2,500
- **Telephone/Internet** 12,210 12,210
- **Web Hosting/Maintenance** 1,500
- **Meals/Out of Town** 18,450 28,500
- **TOTAL** 750,690 769,389
BHAG Accomplishments in 2012

“A Big Huge Audacious Goal (BHAG) is action-oriented; clear (who, what, where, by whom), compelling and griping—people ‘get it’ right away; bold; bordering on hubris and the unattainable. It is a 10- to 30-year objective—like a big mountain to climb— that serves as a unifying focal point of effort, galvanizing people and creating team spirit. It is crisp, compelling and easy to understand.” (Good to Great, Collins, 2001)

Community Development BHAG: Be the premier agency for community development in Region 6W.
- The UMVRDC had a total of 26 contracts for service with 13 different cities and one county for different types of planning, technical assistance and grant writing.
- Three cities and one county entered into more than one contract with the UMVRDC.
- Two cities entered into three or more contracts with the UMVRDC for service during FY11.
- The UMVRDC assisted in the coordination of over ten workshops/trainings in the region (Broadband Classes, Economic Development Professionals - ED Pro).
- Developed a mini planning workshop for cities under 500.
- Provided staff for the Meander Upper Minnesota River Art Crawl.
- Provided staff for the Minnesota River Valley National Scenic Byway.
- Provided eight new loans to local and expanding businesses in the region.

Marketing BHAG: All local units of government (LUGs) in Region 6W will know who we are and what we do.
- Analyzing new website via site statistics and user feedback. Site is continually being updated and used as a tool for consistent, timely communication with LUGs.
- Continued to make all marketing efforts consistent with RDC branding.
- Sent at least 46 email blasts and over 20 press releases.

Board Stewardship BHAG: Have 100% active participation of the UMVRDC Board.
- Processed six new board members in 2012.
- Utilized the round robin at Commission meetings to share information and current issues with other jurisdictions.
- Continued to utilize the Planner Update to inform and educate board members about the services and projects of the UMVRDC. Recycled the planner update into a monthly email blast to elected officials and government staff in the region.
- UMVRDC staff coordinated 4-speaker engagements for UMVRDC Commissioners and other interested parties: Katie Cadle, MnDOT; Deb Larson, Prairie Five Community Action Council; Jerret Hubbard and Bridig Turk, MnDOT; and Rick Stolz, Lac qui Parle County Attorney.
- Surveyed board members to determine priorities for an annual board event. Determined a board tour was the priority for 2012. The tour will occur on the July 2012 board meeting day and will feature projects the RDC has worked on in the region.
- Surveyed Commission members quarterly about the process, content and function of the board meetings.
- Featured three Commission members and four staff members in quarterly newsletters.

Special Regional Project:

C. K. Blandin Foundation included the UMVRDC as one of 11 demonstration communities in its Minnesota Intelligent Rural Communities (MIRC) Program funded through the US Department of Commerce’s National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP).
- A UMVRDC steering committee allocated $90,000 toward seven projects that promoted the use of broadband technology and could show measurable outcomes by March 2012.

Big Stone County Does More Business Online

The goal was for Big Stone County to provide the public with more convenient access to government information and resources such as GIS, highway project information, county government forms, and four years of tax statements have been placed online and are available to the public.
- All GIS info (even paid subscription information) is available at a kiosk in the county building, the assessor’s office staff are available to help customers and train them in finding and using the data.
- Statistics over the first year include 64,000 non-subscription hits and has 1,750 paid subscription hits. These subscriptions will help pay for the maintenance of the site.

Lac qui Parle County Computer Commuter Goes Further with Program Development

The goal of the Lac qui Parle County Computer Commuter is to increase the digital literacy of area residents by offering a free mobile computer lab.
- A coordinator is available at all times to offer FREE assistance and guidance as needed.
- The bus is in six communities once a week for four hours.
- Users range in age from teens to elderly and have a wide range of skills.
- 162 users to date; 84% are 50 years and older.
- Average user spends 1.5 hours on the bus.

UMVRDC Helps Two of Our Cities Develop a Web Presence

The goal was to have the UMVRDC develop two new websites for some of the smallest cities in the region.
- Two cities responded to our website offering: Bellingham and Echo. Both cities now have new websites.
- For more information on these two sites, please visit page 12 of this annual report.

Ortonville School Teacher and Students Partner with EDA to Create a Community Web Presence

The goal of the project was to provide a web presence for all Ortonville businesses.
- The EDA worked with two high school students to meet with businesses to collect information and pictures for more than 100 new or improved business and community websites.
- Organized a “Get Connected” program to further promote to review what businesses are using for internet tools, share tips, claiming businesses online, verifying map locations are correct, and more.
- Added wifi to the school building for greater public and student access to broadband.

Johnson Memorial Healthcare of Dawson Embraces Tele-Health Opportunity

The goal was to help keep seniors in their homes longer by using technology to assist with their healthcare needs as well as increase social connections using video conferencing instead of regular phone calls.
- Free local families were chosen to participate in the pilot Homestream project.

Pioneer Public TV Puts Rural Broadband on the Map

The goal of the project was to produce a video segment on broadband issues in rural areas.
- An initial 13-minute segment was submitted to the national PBS series Need to Know web site in early December 2011.
- The second phase developed and produced additional video content for a 26 minute broadcast describing the challenges facing rural area in the availability and use of broadband. The documentary looked at the impacts on businesses, farmers, youth and newcomers. This segment will play as documentary in their 45 rural counties in western Minnesota, northwestern Iowa and eastern South Dakota in September 2012 and they hope to share the content with other PBS stations.

Please visit our website at www.umvrdc.org for more information on MIRC including links to these projects.

Minneapolis Intelligent Rural Communities

Dawson/Braid/Bay Schools Create New Collaboration Center Focused On Technology

The goal was to establish a Multimedia Collaboration Center (MCC) to use for school and community use.
- Rehabilitated a computer lab with multimedia technology and wifi to be used for increased student and public use.
- Established a Teacher/Community Expert Training Academy that offered in-person and online classes throughout the community. They offered classes on:
  - Basic Computer Care
  - Google Docs
  - Microsoft Office 2010
  - Overview of the Microsoft Cloud
  - Native American Strategies
  - Shutterfly

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Jacki managed the UMVRDC Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) participation in 8 different loans over the last fiscal year. The RLF provides gap financing for business startups, expansions, and job-creating projects needing working capital, fixed assets and real estate. A total of $471,520 in revolving loan funds were lent to eight businesses:

- Barr’s/Conroy Electric, Ortonville: $46,000
- C&L Powder Coating, Echo: $13,000
- CC Diamond, Clara City: $100,000
- Granite Falls Dairy Queen, Granite Falls: $100,000
- Jager Building Supply, Dawson: $62,000
- Kaercher Publications, Ortonville: $62,520
- Porter Elevator, Porter: $75,000
- Merritt Construction, Porter: $10,000

As a result of these eight loans, 44 jobs are expected to be created and retained within the first 24 months. In addition to RLF funds, another $2,550,175 was leveraged in public and private funding outside of RLF funds creating a total investment of $3,021,695.

The RLF saw an increase in equity in this year’s projects; just under $500,000 was identified as owner investment in the projects listed above, that calculates to an average of $62,500 of owner investment per project. Last year it was common to see little to no owner equity in projects.

Looking for better quality of life and are willing to leave a higher paying job in a city for the what the rural areas have to offer. The notion of people coming into the region on their own got a few economic developers thinking, what if we started marketing to this demographic? Would more people come? Would more people stay?

According to the loan history, the RLF has more loans at year-end (37) than we’ve had in the last eleven years with a total of 37 loans the RLF has maintained a healthy portfolio with no delinquent or defaulted loans in the last year.

Regional Recruitment

partner agencies include:

- Ortonville Economic Development Authority
- Lac qui Parle County Economic Development Authority
- Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development
- Minnesota West Community & Technical College - Canby
- Southwest Adult Basic Education
- EDA University Center, Crookston, Minnesota
- University of Minnesota Extension, Center for Community Vitality

The group is currently finalizing the first element of the regional recruitment strategy, a website for potential residents to get information. The website will be found at www.MinnesotaRural.com and will go online in summer 2012.

Is Region 6W falling into the dooms and gloom of the “brain drain” phenomenon? Not so much.

Ben Winchester, a Research Fellow at the University of Minnesota Extension Center for Community Vitality suggests that most rural Minnesota counties including those in Region 6W are really experiencing a “brain gain.” Statistics show that although our bright and talented youth are leaving for college, there is an influx of 35-44 year olds that are coming into the region bringing their education, experience, wealth and children.

Region 6W does continue to experience overall population decline. But on the upside of things, brain power seems to be coming into the region on its own without any marketing tactics or recruiting efforts. According to our research, many of them are not coming for a job nor have family ties... many are just looking for better quality of life and are willing to leave a higher paying job in a city for the what the rural areas have to offer. The notion of people coming into the region on their own got a few economic developers thinking, what if we started marketing to this demographic? Would more people come? Would more people stay?

Dawn and Jacki worked with a group of economic development professionals in Region 6W to test this hypothesis. In collaboration with the Upper Minnesota Valley Regional Development Commission, this group will experiment with a regional recruitment effort that will specifically market to the demographics identified in research. The goal is to attract and retain more residents in our rural region.
In the fall of 2011, the UMVRDC offered a unique opportunity for our cities with populations under 500. Staff offered to visit any city in the region with a population under 500 to facilitate a one-hour planning session, free of charge, to help city councils prioritize and/or start a future projects list. Jacki, Kristi, and Lindsey visited two cities, Marietta and Maynard. The feedback they received from these cities was that it was valuable to have outside perspectives and the expertise of the UMVRDC to keep the planning sessions focused.

Community Statistics Profiles

Jacki completed All-Hazard Mitigation Plan updates for Swift and Lac qui Parle Counties. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) deemed the plans updates “excellent.” All five counties and the Upper Sioux Community have had their plans approved by FEMA.

The All-Hazard Mitigation Plan process challenges our counties and cities to determine the likelihood of disasters, refine strategies to mitigate potential disasters, and look at the costs of disasters. These plans are now ready to be used as a resource to support requests to the Minnesota Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HSEM) and FEMA for mitigation planning and assistance. All finished plans can be found on the UMVRDC website at www.umvrdc.org.

Individual City Websites

As a result of a MIRC grant (see page 9 in this report for more info), Kristi and Jenifer helped the cities of Echo and Bellingham create new city websites. Before this project, 19 of our 37 cities did not have a website.

- Echo, population 278, utilized a GovOffice website. Their website has 17 pages, with 25 subpages for their businesses.
- Bellingham, population 205, opted for a Wordpress website, a free platform from which a simple 6 page website was created.
- Kristi also helped the cities of Milan and Maynard update their GovOffice websites that were previously created by the UMVRDC.

Regional Public Art Planning

Through a Forecast Grant, Kristi has been able to start conversations around the region on how we can encourage more public art projects. A focus group met in June, and will meet again in July to finalize a plan to outline the next steps.

Upper Sioux Community Energy Plan

Kristi and Jacki completed a LongRange Energy Plan for the Upper Sioux Community in the fall of 2011. The energy plan initiated a panel discussion on renewable energy sources such as wind, solar, biomass and geothermal. The process also incorporates energy audits and data collected by the Upper Sioux Community staff about existing energy usage on the reservation. The results from this innovative project will be used as they make decisions on development and plan their energy future. This energy plan will be the first of its kind in our region.

Local Public Transit - Human Service Coordination Plan

The 2011 Local Human Service Transit Coordination Plan was completed and adopted on January 24, 2012. The goal of the Plan is to identify the transportation needs of individuals with disabilities, older adults, and people with low incomes; provide strategies for meeting those needs; and prioritize transportation services for funding and implementation in the region.

After the Plan was adopted, Dawn and Lindsey recommissioned transit stakeholders to develop a short-term work plan based on priority projects in the plan, as well as to identify how the projects would specifically impact veterans.

The work plan, addendum was amended into the 2011 Local Human Service Transit Coordination Plan on July 24, 2012, and is available on our website.

Safe Routes to School

Lindsey worked closely with five school districts to develop six Safe Routes to School (SRTS) grant applications. All six applications, listed below, were successful in receiving funding.

- Appleton/Milan Elementary School in Appleton: planning assistance valued at over $10,000
- Benson Elementary and Jr. High Schools: planning assistance valued at over $10,000
- Stevens Elementary School in Dawson: planning assistance valued at over $10,000
- MMN Elementary School in Madison: planning assistance valued at over $10,000
- YME Elementary and Middle Schools in Granite Falls: planning assistance valued at over $10,000
- Canby School District (including St. Peter’s Catholic School): implementation grant to hire a SRTS Program Manager for two years at $20,000

The goals of SRTS are threefold:

- To enable and encourage children, including those with disabilities, to walk and bicycle to school;
- To make bicycling and walking to school a safer and more appealing transportation alternative, thereby encouraging a healthy and active lifestyle from an early age;
- To facilitate the planning, development, and implementation of projects and activities that will improve safety and reduce traffic, fuel consumption, and air pollution in the vicinity of schools.

All SRTS grants use federal funds and no local matching funds are required from the school or community. The plans will be completed in FY2013.

Regional Trails Plan

Lindsey has convened a local steering committee to make updates to the existing 2002 Regional Trails Plan. The Regional Trails Plan identifies priorities and guiding principles for trail development and provides local units of government and groups interested in developing trails with technical support resources and a process to follow for trail development. The major updates to the Plan include updated trail maps and a prioritized list of potential trail projects in the region. The Regional Trails Plan will be completed at the end of the summer and available on the UMVRDC website under Transportation 2012.
Minnesota River Valley National Scenic Byway

“Creation of a new Geocaching project called ‘Who’s Who in 1862.’ This program began in June of 2012 and will encourage users to explore eight locations along the byway.

Other projects from this past year include:

- Distribution of Byway Guides to Byway businesses and attractions, at the Mall of America, Travel Information Centers on the state’s southern borders, as well as fulfilling visitor requests.
- Kristi attended the National Scenic Byway Conference in Minneapolis in August 2011.
- Created and placed numerous ads in our regional papers, statewide, and in out-of-state publications such as Midwest Living, AAA, and South Dakota Magazine.

Western Minnesota Prairie Waters Regional Tourism

The mission of Western Minnesota Prairie Waters is to promote our area as a great place to visit, live and work. Jenifer and Kristi continue to seek out projects that accomplish that mission while taking advantage of a mix of old and new mediums: printed and online.

Following are some of the highlights of what Prairie Waters has been working on the past year:

- Wrote a successful grant to Explore Minnesota Tourism procuring $4,000 for advertising in our region.
- Updated and reprinted the Prairie Waters Antiques, Local Shops, Dining and Lodging Guide. This full-color guide is a comprehensive listing of shops, restaurants and accommodations available in the Prairie Waters region. It is a collaborative effort between Prairie Waters and Chambers of Commerce from many of the region’s member cities.
- Responded to approximately 2,000 requests for information in 2011.
- Maintained and updated the Prairie Waters website.

Minnesota River Valley National Scenic Byway

Plan, create an interpretive plan, and allows for the funding of 10 new interpretive panels. This is an exciting three-year project for the MRVSBA.

Collaboration with the Minnesota Historical Society to promote their new oral history mobile tour. For more information, call 888-601-3010.

Promoted 10 new interpretive signs about the U.S.–Dakota War of 1862 along the Minnesota River Valley. The signs are located at Camp Release in Montevideo (pictured at left), Renville County Park #2, Henderson, Milford Monument (near New Ulm) and New Ulm.

Meander Art Crawl

Kristi and Jenifer helped coordinate planning, manage finances, and develop and implement marketing for the Meander event this fall.

Kristi wrote successful grants to the Southwest Arts and Humanities Council for both Meander 2011 and 2012. Kristi wrote a grant to the Minnesota State Arts Board for Meander 2013 that will be announced in November of 2012. These grants help pay for advertising and organization of the event.

2011 Meander Economic Impacts

- $85,357 in Meander art sales was reported by artists during the Meander weekend, an increase of 23% from 2010.
- The average art sales per artist was $2,134.
- 83% of the money raised to organize the Meander through sponsors and artists was spent on products or services (printing, paper, advertising, graphic design, staffing) in the five county area.
- Customers visited an average of 10 studios over the weekend.
- 78% of customers said the quality of the art was excellent.
- 78% of customers said their overall experience was excellent.
- 85% of customers said they plan to attend the next Meander.

Collaborated with “Have Fun Biking” to promote biking in the Prairie Waters region. “Have Fun Biking” prints an annual guide with maps showing bike trails, routes for road biking, and low-traffic roads that are suitable for biking.

The new guide features a two-page map of the region and a QR code that connects mobile device users to the Prairie Waters website.

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- Updated and reprinted the Prairie Waters Antiques, Local Shops, Dining and Lodging Guide. This full-color guide is a comprehensive listing of shops, restaurants and accommodations available in the Prairie Waters region. It is a collaborative effort between Prairie Waters and Chambers of Commerce from many of the region’s member cities.
- Responded to approximately 2,000 requests for information in 2011.
- Maintained and updated the Prairie Waters website.

Minnesota River Valley National Scenic Byway

“Creation of a new Geocaching project called ‘Who’s Who in 1862.’ This program began in June of 2012 and will encourage users to explore eight locations along the byway.

Other projects from this past year include:

- Distribution of Byway Guides to Byway businesses and attractions, at the Mall of America, Travel Information Centers on the state’s southern borders, as well as fulfilling visitor requests.
- Kristi attended the National Scenic Byway Conference in Minneapolis in August 2011.
- Created and placed numerous ads in our regional papers, statewide, and in out-of-state publications such as Midwest Living, AAA, and South Dakota Magazine.

Western Minnesota Prairie Waters Regional Tourism

The mission of Western Minnesota Prairie Waters is to promote our area as a great place to visit, live and work. Jenifer and Kristi continue to seek out projects that accomplish that mission while taking advantage of a mix of old and new mediums: printed and online.

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Fact

When the lead goose gets tired, it rotates back into the formation and another goose flies at the point position.

Lesson

It pays to take turns doing the hard tasks and sharing leadership — people, as with geese, are interdependent upon one another.