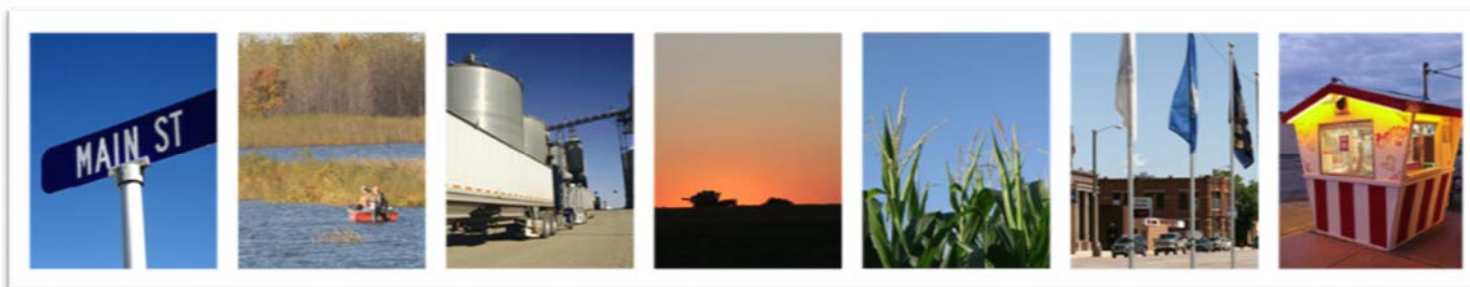




Upper Minnesota Valley  
**REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION**  
Helping Communities Prosper

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# The Upper Minnesota Valley Region Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy 2019 Annual CEDS Performance Report Submitted 4/30/2019



Prepared for Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration

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## **Introduction**

This report summarizes the Upper Minnesota Valley Regional Development Commission's (UMVRDC) economic development activities within the Economic Development District (EDD) of the UMVRDC Region (Counties of Big Stone, Chippewa, Lac qui Parle, Swift and Yellow Medicine). This report represents the CEDS Annual Performance Report for the current EDA Planning Grant. The required activities of the District follow the "Scope of Work" that was provided with the EDA Planning Grant. All planning staff is in part responsible for implementing planning activities within the region including economic development programs and projects listed in this report.

## **Upper Minnesota Valley Regional Development Commission (UMVRDC)**

The UMVRDC was created by the RDC Act of 1969 that authorized the establishment of regional development commissions to work with and on behalf of local units of government to develop plans or implement programs to address economic, social, physical, and governmental concerns of each region of the state. The UMVRDC assists with developing and implementing plans and programs for local units of government throughout the five county regional boundaries in western Minnesota. The UMVRDC is one of nine regional development commissions throughout the State of Minnesota.

## **UMVRDC Mission Statement**

*"Enable the region to thrive by assisting local units of government."*

## UMVRDC EDD & CEDS

The UMVRDC provides leadership for the preparation and maintenance of the region's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), assist in the implementation strategies identified in the CEDS, and provide technical assistance to economic development organizations in the region as required by the Economic Development Administration (EDA) as the designated Economic Development District (EDD). The EDD designation and approved CEDS qualify all counties and municipalities within our region for EDA grant assistance programs. In November of 2016, the UMVRDC approved and submitted our CEDS Update to EDA which we are currently implementing.

The UMVRDC CEDS is the result of a continuous regional economic development planning process in our five-county region. The UMVRDC sees the CEDS as a tool to create and retain jobs, promote a more stable and diversified local and regional economy and improve living conditions and the quality of life of the region.

The UMVRDC and its organizational leadership have embarked on a strategic planning process to update the organization's planning methodologies and measurement. The process began in March 2019 and is scheduled to evolve over the remainder of calendar year 2019. A newly developed and implemented strategy will inform ongoing development and implementation the organization's CEDS. The identified process will thoughtfully, collaboratively and effectively engage UMVRDC staff and board to:

- Reflect on the organization's experience in pursuing its strategic framework over the last plan cycle and lift out learnings to carry forward into the next.
- Build a shared picture of the demands and challenges likely to face RDC stakeholders in the upcoming three to five years (with an eye toward five to ten).
- Craft the agency's high-level goal areas, or strategies to orient governance, service delivery and capacity development throughout the next plan cycle.
- Establish one-year priorities and quarterly targets to propel implementation over the first 12 months.
- Outline a rolling process to refresh priorities and targets for each remaining year of the plan period.

## **UMVRDC CEDS Vision**

*The Upper Minnesota Valley region will be recognized for an abundance of place-based amenities, world-class broadband access, collaborative governments, housing opportunities for those moving in and moving over and a highly recognized branded lifestyle that attracts more newcomers each year to communities and jobs in the Upper Minnesota Valley.*

## **CEDS Strategy Committee**

The UMRDC has a board where membership is outlined in state statute. The UMRDC acts as the governing board for the CEDS. The membership of the UMRDC is county, city, township, tribal and school board elected officials and a smaller number of public interest representatives. The CEDS Strategy Committee is established through appointment by the UMRDC. The CEDS Strategy Committee is responsible for developing and updating the goals and strategies in the CEDS and is the principal facilitator of the economic development planning and implementation process.

As outlined in the Federal guidelines, CEDS Strategy Committee members represent all major interests in the community, both public and private to ensure viewpoints of all segments of the community are considered and to take advantage of local skills and resources in program development and implementation. The CEDS Strategy Committee was updated and approved during the full CEDS update in 2016. There are no changes to the membership at this time.

Members of the CEDS Strategy Committee individually participate in many of the projects identified in this plan with their own vested interest in supporting the region. Their individual and collective participation in CEDS work is instrumental in providing local knowledge that allows the UMRDC to deliver programs and assist with projects that have the greatest impact on the region.

## REGIONAL PROFILE

### POPULATION CHANGE, 2000-2017

Economic Development Region 6W – Upper Minnesota Valley includes a total of 5 counties, located in the larger 23-county Southwest Minnesota planning area. The UMRDC Region was home to 42,965 people in 2017, comprising less than 1 percent of the state’s total population, making it the smallest region in the state. It is about half the size of the next two smallest regions, which both had about 85,500 people in 2017, and it is considerably smaller than the three regions surrounding it: Region 4 had 229,775 people, while Region 6E and Region 8 both had just over 116,000 residents. In sum, the region saw a -14.1 percent population decline since 2000, which was the largest and fastest decline of the 13 economic development regions (EDRs) in the state. In comparison, the state of Minnesota saw a 13.4 percent gain from 2000 to 2017 (see Table 1).

	2000 Population	2017 Estimates	2000-2017 Change	
			Number	Percent
<b>The UMRDC Region</b>	<b>50,011</b>	<b>42,965</b>	<b>-7,046</b>	<b>-14.1%</b>
Big Stone Co.	5,820	5,026	-794	-13.6%
Chippewa Co.	13,088	11,980	-1,108	-8.5%
Lac qui Parle Co.	8,067	6,685	-1,382	-17.1%
Swift Co.	11,956	9,407	-2,549	-21.3%
Yellow Medicine Co.	11,080	9,867	-1,213	-10.9%
<b>Southwest Minnesota</b>	<b>394,518</b>	<b>392,228</b>	<b>-2,290</b>	<b>-0.6%</b>
<b>State of Minnesota</b>	<b>4,919,479</b>	<b>5,576,606</b>	<b>+657,127</b>	<b>+13.4%</b>

Source: [U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates](#)

Every county in the region lost population, but Swift County saw the fastest population decline of the 87 counties in the state (primarily due to the 2008 closure and subsequent loss of the prison population in Appleton), followed by Lac qui Parle County with the fifth fastest decline, Big Stone County with the eighth fastest decline, and Yellow Medicine and Chippewa with the 14th and 19th fastest declines, respectively. Big Stone County is now the fifth smallest county in the state, while Lac qui Parle is the 12th, Swift is the 17th, Yellow Medicine is the 20th, and Chippewa County is the 26th smallest. These recent declines are part of a long-term trend in the region, which has been losing population since 1950.

With an aging and declining population, the UMRDC Region experienced a negative natural rate of increase – having more deaths than births – of -187 people so far this decade. In addition, the region lost population because of out-migration, with 2,052 more people moving out of the region than moving in. Though there was domestic out-migration of 2,335 people, the region did enjoy positive in-migration of 283 additional residents from international sources (see Table 2).

The UMRDC Region is now home to 977 foreign born residents, or about 2.2 percent of the total population. The number of immigrants in the region jumped by 16.3 percent since 2010. Over half (542 people) of these immigrants were from Latin America, while the second largest number were from Asia, accounting for 15 percent of the region’s immigrants.

### **POPULATION BY AGE GROUP, 2000-2017**

The UMRDC Region has a much older population than the rest of the state, with 22.3 percent of residents aged 65 years and over, compared to 15.4 percent statewide. Consequently, The UMRDC Region had a lower percentage of people in the 25- to 54-year-old age group, typically considered the “prime working years,” as well as a smaller percent of school-aged children and young adults.

A large portion of the region’s population is a part of the Baby Boom generation, people born between 1946 and 1964, which is creating a significant shift in the population over time. While the number of younger and middle-aged residents was declining, the number of residents aged 55 years and over was rapidly increasing. This included a huge jump in the number of people from 55 to 64 years of age, but a more measured increase in people aged 65 years and over, as some people are choosing to leave the region for various reasons.

### **POPULATION PROJECTIONS BY AGE GROUP, 2020-2040**

The UMRDC Region is projected to experience continued declines in the next 20 years. According to population projections from the Minnesota State Demographic Center, The UMRDC Region is expected to lose 3,500 residents from 2020 to 2040, an 8.4 percent decrease (see Figure 4). In comparison, the state of Minnesota is projected to grow 8.8 percent.

Most notably, the UMRDC Region is projected to gain nearly 2,100 people aged 75 years and over, a 43 percent increase. The region is also expected to see a small increase in the 25- to 44-year-old age group, as well as a corresponding bump in children under 5 years of age. In contrast, the UMRDC Region is expected to lose school-aged children and young adults from 5 to 24 years of age, as well as people from 45 to 74 years of age.

### **LABOR FORCE CHANGE, 2000-2017**

According to data from DEED’s Local Area Unemployment Statistics program, The UMRDC Region has experienced some substantial fluctuations in the size of the available labor force over the last 17 years in response to changing economic conditions. During the recessions in both 2001 and 2007, workers flooded into the labor market to earn extra income; then quickly dropped back out when the region’s economy improved. Like the region’s population decline overall, The UMRDC Region lost 1,685 workers over the last 17 years, from 25,466 available workers in 2000 to 23,781 workers in 2017. In contrast, the state was steadily gaining workers over the past decade and a half. As the economy has recovered, the labor market in the region has been getting tighter, with only about 945 unemployed workers in 2017, down from a peak of 1,780 unemployed workers in 2010.

After averaging a net gain of nearly 250 additional labor force participants per year between 1990 and 2001, The UMRDC Region employers were able to tap into a slowly growing pool of talented workers. However, from 2001 to 2017, the UMRDC Region’s labor force started to shrink, losing almost 2,300 workers so far this century.

Increasingly tight labor markets and a scarcity of workers is now recognized as one of The UMRDC Region’s most significant barriers to future economic growth. In the face of these constraints, it has become evident that a more diverse workforce in terms of age, gender, race, ethnicity, disability status, and immigration has been and will continue to be a vital source of the workers that employers need to succeed. As the White, native-born work-force continues to age, younger workers of different races or from different countries will comprise the fastest growing segment of the labor force.



## LABOR FORCE PROJECTIONS, 2020-2030

If the UMRDC Region’s population changes at the projected rates shown in Figure 4 above, the region would be expected to see a further decline in the labor force over the next decade. Applying current labor force participation rates to future population projections by age group creates labor force projections for the region, which show a further 10 percent drop in workforce numbers (see Table 2).

In addition to the overall decline, the labor force will also see a significant shift over time, with small gains in the number of workers aged 65 years and over against huge declines in the number of workers aged 45 to 64 years. The region is also expected to lose teenaged workers and entry-level workers in the next decade. However, the region is expected to see gains in the number of 25 to 44 year olds. Due to the growth, the 25 to 54 year old age group will make up about 58 percent of the total workforce in 2030, up from 54.5 percent in 2010. Either way, these long-term declines will likely lead to a tight labor market in the future, with employers needing to respond to the changing labor force availability in the region.

	2020 Labor Force Projection	2030 Labor Force Projection	2020-2030 Change	
			Numeric	Percent
16 to 19 years	1,203	1,058	-145	-12.0%
20 to 24 years	2,412	2,347	-65	-2.7%
25 to 44 years	7,286	7,451	+165	+2.3%
45 to 54 years	3,833	3,467	-366	-9.6%
55 to 64 years	4,937	3,090	-1,847	-37.4%
65 to 74 years	1,610	1,678	+69	+4.3%
75 years & over	311	386	+76	+24.4%
<b>Total Labor Force</b>	<b>21,592</b>	<b>19,478</b>	<b>-2,114</b>	<b>-9.8%</b>

*Source: calculated from [MN State Demographic Center projections](#), and [2011-2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates](#)*

## UNEMPLOYMENT RATE, 2000-2017

The UMRDC Region had consistently reported unemployment rates that closely matched the state rate. According to Local Area Unemployment Statistics, the region’s unemployment rate hovered right in line with the state rate from 2002 to 2012, even dropping below the state rate during the recession in 2009 and 2010. However, while the state’s economy has recovered and unemployment rates are back to prerecession levels statewide, The UMRDC Region’s rate stayed higher in 2015 and 2016.

## HOUSEHOLD INCOMES

Household incomes were significantly lower in the UMRDC Region than the rest of the state. The median household income in the UMRDC Region was \$51,651 in 2016, compared to \$63,217 in Minnesota. Almost half (48.5%) of the households in the region had incomes below \$50,000 in 2016, compared to 39.5 percent statewide. Another 34.3 percent of households earned between \$50,000 and \$100,000 in the region. In contrast, only 17.1 percent of households in the UMRDC Region earned over \$100,000 per year, compared to 27.7 percent of households statewide.

Median household incomes varied by race or origin in the region. Asian households reported the lowest incomes in the UMRDC Region, with a median income that was about \$23,000 lower than for White households. Hispanic or Latino and Black or African American households also reported much lower household incomes. Poverty rates also vary widely by race, from a low of 9.9 percent for Whites to more than 25 percent for Black or African Americans, American Indians, and Asian residents.

### COST OF LIVING

According to DEED’s Cost of Living tool, the basic needs budget for an average Minnesota family (which consists of 2 adults and 1 child, with 1 full-time and 1 part-time worker) was \$57,624 in 2018. The cost of living for a similar family in The UMRDC Region was \$44,544 – which was the second lowest of the 13 economic development regions in the state. The highest monthly costs were for transportation, food, and housing; though the region’s housing, child care, taxes, and transportation costs were significantly lower than the rest of the state. In order to meet the basic cost of living for the region, the workers in the family scenario described would need to earn \$14.28 per hour over the course of 60 hours per work week.

DEED’s Cost of Living tool provides different estimates for household compositions including single people, partnered couples, and up to 4 children. For a single person living alone and working full-time, the estimated yearly cost in The UMRDC Region would be \$26,352, which would require an hourly wage of \$12.67 to meet the basic needs standard of living (see Table 3). That was again the second lowest in the state.

Table 8. Region 6W Cost of Living, 2018										
Family Composition	Number of Workers	Yearly Cost of Living	Hourly Wage Required	Monthly Costs						
				Child Care	Food	Health Care	Housing	Transportation	Other	Taxes
Region 6W										
Single, 0 children	1 FT	\$26,352	\$12.67	\$0	\$337	\$134	\$535	\$625	\$255	\$310
Single, 1 child	1 FT	\$38,604	\$18.56	\$406	\$497	\$269	\$698	\$663	\$349	\$335
2 parents, 1 child	1 FT, 1 PT	\$44,544	\$14.28	\$203	\$769	\$417	\$698	\$772	\$429	\$424
2 parents, 2 children	2 FT	\$62,448	\$15.01	\$702	\$1,003	\$426	\$968	\$821	\$576	\$708
State of Minnesota										
Single, 0 children	1 FT	\$31,656	\$15.22	\$0	\$334	\$136	\$754	\$696	\$318	\$400
2 parents, 1 child	1 FT, 1 PT	\$57,624	\$18.47	\$504	\$763	\$459	\$980	\$869	\$510	\$717

Source: DEED Cost of Living tool

## WAGES AND OCCUPATIONS

According to DEED’s Occupational Employment Statistics program, the median hourly wage for all occupations in the UMRDC Region was \$16.86 in the first quarter of 2018, which was the third lowest wage level of the 13 EDRs in the state. The UMRDC Region’s median wage was nearly \$3.25 below the state’s median hourly wage, equaling 84 percent of the statewide wage rate, and over \$5.00 below the median hourly wage in the 7-County Twin Cities metro area, which would amount to over \$10,500 per year for a full-time worker. The UMRDC Region had lower wages than surrounding regions like Region 6E at \$17.56 and Region 4 at \$17.46, but higher wages than Region 8 at \$16.53 (see Table 4).

<b>Table 4. Occupational Employment Statistics by Region, 1<sup>st</sup> Qtr. 2018</b>	Median Hourly Wage	Estimated Regional Employment
EDR 1 - Northwest	\$18.39	36,250
EDR 2 - Headwaters	\$17.06	30,460
EDR 3 - Arrowhead	\$17.72	143,490
EDR 4 - West Central	\$17.46	86,020
EDR 5 - North Central	\$16.75	59,210
EDR 6E - Southwest Central	\$17.56	50,120
<b>EDR 6W - Upper MN Valley</b>	<b>\$16.86</b>	<b>16,640</b>
EDR 7E - East Central	\$18.47	51,730
EDR 7W - Central	\$17.91	184,060
EDR 8 - Southwest	\$16.53	55,150
EDR 9 - South Central	\$17.56	107,700
EDR 10 - Southeast	\$18.91	238,090
EDR 11 - 7-County Twin Cities	\$21.92	1,769,290
<b>State of Minnesota</b>	<b>\$20.07</b>	<b>2,838,270</b>
<i>Source: <a href="#">DEED Occupational Employment Statistics</a></i>		

The largest occupation group in the region was food preparation and serving related workers, with 2,130 jobs and a location quotient of 1.5, the UMRDC Region also had a higher share of workers in construction and extraction; installation, maintenance, and repair; production, and transportation and material moving occupations (see Table 5).

Table 5. The UMRDC Region Occupational Employment Statistics, 1 <sup>st</sup>					State of Minnesota		
	Median Hourly Wage	Estimated Regional Employment	Share of Total Employment	Location Quotient	Median Hourly Wage	Estimated Regional Employment	Share of Total Employment
Total, All Occupations	\$16.86	16,640	100.0%	1.0	\$20.07	2,838,270	100.0%
Food Preparation & Serving Related	\$10.24	2,130	12.8%	1.5	\$11.12	239,950	8.5%
Office & Administrative Support	\$16.82	2,050	12.3%	0.9	\$18.45	409,820	14.4%
Production	\$15.54	1,910	11.5%	1.5	\$17.89	217,610	7.7%
Sales & Related	\$13.75	1,530	9.2%	0.9	\$14.10	277,720	9.8%
Transportation & Material Moving	\$17.74	1,230	7.4%	1.2	\$17.59	178,720	6.3%
Construction & Extraction	\$23.01	1,030	6.2%	1.8	\$27.10	99,900	3.5%
Healthcare Practitioners & Technical	\$25.04	1,000	6.0%	0.9	\$34.44	182,500	6.4%
Installation, Maintenance & Repair	\$22.36	940	5.6%	1.7	\$23.22	95,660	3.4%
Education, Training & Library	\$17.86	890	5.3%	0.9	\$23.65	163,850	5.8%
Management	\$36.65	850	5.1%	0.9	\$49.99	168,930	6.0%
Building, Grounds Cleaning & Maint.	\$12.64	540	3.2%	1.1	\$14.07	84,300	3.0%
Business & Financial Operations	\$24.87	500	3.0%	0.5	\$31.97	161,080	5.7%
Healthcare Support	\$14.23	480	2.9%	1.0	\$15.81	85,940	3.0%
Personal Care & Service	\$12.07	470	2.8%	0.6	\$12.12	139,210	4.9%
Community & Social Service	\$20.44	240	1.4%	0.7	\$21.88	55,430	2.0%
Protective Service	\$19.47	230	1.4%	0.9	\$20.27	43,150	1.5%
Architecture & Engineering	\$26.27	190	1.1%	0.6	\$36.61	53,780	1.9%
Arts, Design, Entertainment & Media	\$18.32	150	0.9%	0.7	\$23.44	36,910	1.3%
Life, Physical & Social Science	\$28.42	90	0.5%	0.6	\$31.27	26,220	0.9%
Computer & Mathematical	\$25.19	70	0.4%	0.1	\$40.00	94,290	3.3%
Legal	N/A	-	0.0%	0.0	\$37.34	19,750	0.7%
Farming, Fishing & Forestry	N/A	-	0.0%	0.0	\$15.45	3,540	0.1%

Source: [DEED Occupational Employment Statistics, Qtr. 1 2018](#)

Not surprisingly, the lowest-paying jobs are in food preparation and serving, personal care and service, sales and related, and building and grounds cleaning and maintenance jobs, which tend to have lower educational and training requirements. For the most part, the gap in pay between the UMRDC Region and the state is also lower in these jobs. In contrast, the highest paying jobs are found in management, computer, business and financial operations, healthcare practitioners, and architecture and engineering occupations, which all need higher levels of education and experience, including many that require postsecondary training. The pay gaps between the region and state are much bigger in these occupations.

**Source:** All of the information above, unless otherwise stated is supported by the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development 2017 Regional Profile for the Upper Minnesota Valley region, updated September 4th, 2018.

## 2016-2021 UMRDC CEDS MATRIX

The goals within are big and bold! Success will require collaboration and innovative thinking from the public, private and non-profit organizations in the region. We are all up to the challenge! The CEDS is designed to be a living document and worked on daily over the next five years.

The cornerstone framework divides up our highest priority projects, we've organized each project under the cornerstone that was most appropriate for the region. Although each cornerstone contains multiple supporting elements, we have challenged ourselves to sharpen our focus on a specific goal with an action plan. The cornerstones are listed in prioritized order.

The outcomes expected is a substantial impact in each of the cornerstone areas that demonstrates the commitment of our regional network to advancing economic prosperity. That said, the UMRDC works on a wide-range of community and economic development projects as do our regional partners, that we will continue to work on as needed by the communities we serve and as timely opportunities arise.

Cornerstone	UMVRDC EDD	Baseline 2016	Goal 2021	Change	How does it build resilience
<b>Community Resources</b>	Develop a portal for people to connect with regional amenities, jobs and lifestyle info.	No portal No traffic	Annually increase unique visitor traffic by 20%	40-60% increase in unique visitor traffic	An online portal will make our region and information about the region more accessible
<b>Human Capital</b>	Raise the labor force participation rate of 25-44 year olds in the region	87.2%	89.2%	+2%	Labor force is the life blood of the region with a population aging faster than the state & nation, focusing on this cohort is critical to our future
<b>Foundational Assets</b>	Increase the number of households in the region with broadband access of 100/20	Current county percentages range between 19% - 99%	Increase all counties by at least 20%	20% increase or 100% access to 100/20	Creates new opportunities in jobs, business, education and healthcare and more
<b>Economic Competitiveness</b>	Increase the number of business establishments in the region	1,528	1,600	+4.7% increase or 72 businesses	Encourages regional diversification minimizing the impacts of industry challenges

## Annual Update Matrix

### Community Resources Smart Goal

Develop a regional online portal that provides a helpful connection to the abundance of amenities, jobs available, and lifestyle that can be found in the region using the Get Rural brand.

Action Plan	Tasks	Partners	Resources	Update
1. Create a portal concept and business plan around the "Get Rural" regional brand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with ED Pro's to develop the concept for the site</li> <li>Work with a subcommittee on the business plan</li> <li>Develop a social media marketing plan</li> </ul>	EDAs Chambers DEED SWIF SWMNPIC	Vivid Image (Consultant)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Website integration to Prairie Waters completed</li> <li>Business plan development is in process</li> <li>Partial funding plan in place, funding applications for developable properties</li> </ul>
2. Develop a section of the portal dedicated to entrepreneurs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Available spaces/resources inventory (vacant buildings)</li> <li>Collect Testimonials</li> <li>Promote businesses for sale</li> <li>Explore a youth section</li> </ul>	EDAs SWIF	SBDC Gap Lenders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Preliminary business profiles developed with student assistance</li> <li>Preliminary industrial park profile template developed, Clara City mockup complete</li> </ul>
3. Continue to build a strong Regional Tourism Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Blend tourism into the portal - connect with Prairie Waters</li> <li>Promote and market the growing arts culture and Annual Meander Art Crawl</li> <li>Promote Visitor for a Day Campaign &amp; Lifestyle Snapshots</li> </ul>	Prairie Waters Tourism Chambers EDAs	Explore MN Tourism Southern MN Tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prairie Waters regional tourism and Get Rural regional recruitment integrated into new website design launched in 2019.</li> <li>Updated social media engagement supporting Get Rural initiative.</li> <li>Student supported initiative developing and disseminating a regional database of marketing imagery accessible to regional partners.</li> <li>Founding organizer of the Arts Meander since inception in 2004 and each year responsible for organizing the planning, artists selection, fundraising, marketing and financial management of the event.</li> </ul>
4. Strengthen the network of organizations that address workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use the portal as a gateway to regional employment opportunities</li> <li>Develop a network of people who are willing/able to connect potential newcomers</li> </ul>	EDAs SWMNPIC DEED	Chambers Businesses Schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Working with MN DEED and SWMNPIC for employment portal functionality.</li> <li>Partnered with SWIF to host an employer meeting in Aug 2018 to discuss workforce attraction issues.</li> </ul>

	with employers to help make regional connections			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New pricing in the visitors guide targeting newcomers and follow up with regional employers about how PW/Get rural info can help.</li> </ul>
5. Work with communities to connect them with the regional portal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meet with each city and county about the portal</li> <li>• Create a project summary we can share with public, private and non-profit organization</li> <li>• Work with realtors and employers on using the portal</li> <li>• Create measurement tools to share progress with stakeholders in the future</li> </ul>	EDAs Pioneer Public TV SWMNPIC	EDA (federal) DEED Explore MN Tourism Chambers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Get Rural presentations to existing Prairie Waters partners summarizing Get Rural work and annual report of results to PW/Get Rural funders</li> <li>• Presentations to and engagement with regional ED Pros on initiative efforts.</li> </ul>

## Human Capital Smart Goal

Increase the labor force participation rate of 25-44 year olds from 87.2%.to 89.2% by 2021.

Action Plan	Tasks	Partners	Resources	Update
1. Develop a Regional Recruitment Program (See Community Resources for details)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a marketing plan – social media</li> <li>Create additional online content images, stories, videos, reliable links</li> <li>Explore regional recruitment best practices – build a welcome network and help our communities be better at welcoming newcomers</li> </ul>	EDAs Chambers	USDA Bush Bremer Blandin Foundation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Get Rural portal in place integrated with Prairie Waters</li> <li>Developed data warehouse of available marketing content.</li> <li>Content has been archived and made available for use by regional partners</li> </ul>
2. Build childcare capacity in the region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support individual community strategies</li> <li>Collect best practices to share with the region</li> <li>Explore viable grant/loan options to support child care expansion</li> </ul>	Cities EDAs	First Children’s Finance SWIF UMVRDC Employers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have worked with various communities on projects and funding for childcare initiatives</li> <li>Case studies developed for regional daycare projects and partnership with SWIF to fund the development and updating of more childcare case studies in our region.</li> </ul>
3. Explore career awareness programs / Encourage youth business ownership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meet with each of the 10 school districts to discuss the idea and develop strategies to connect students to ownership opportunities in the region</li> </ul>	SWIF School Districts Higher Education	Junior Achievement EDA Employers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>LYFT and CTE collaborative engagement with area school districts on careers programs in place</li> <li>Further plan development and engagement ongoing.</li> </ul>
4. Help employers become mobile friendly to their employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Host a workshop on managing remote employees / how to be mobile friendly</li> <li>Showcase local best practices</li> <li>Promote job opportunities where employees can be mobile</li> </ul>	SWMNPIC DEED	ED Pro’s DEED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have developed case studies/success stories linking broadband deployment to local employment changes.</li> <li>Engagement in state broadband coalition.</li> </ul>
5. Expand high speed broadband access in the region. (See Foundational Assets for details)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with cities and counties who are unserved or underserved with broadband access</li> </ul>	Cities Counties	Broadband Providers / EDAs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Working with remaining 2 out of 5 counties to pursue successful broadband deployment projects. Chippewa and YMC reps engaged.</li> </ul>



## Foundational Assets Smart Goal

Increase the percentage of households that have access to 100/20 mbps by at least 20% or until 100% of households are reached whichever occurs first.

Action Plan	Tasks	Partners	Resources	Update
1. Help communities better understand broadband especially communities identified unserved and underserved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meet with all cities and counties that are currently underserved with broadband access</li> <li>Provide education to local elected officials - dig once policies</li> <li>Promote opportunities to improve and use broadband</li> </ul>	<p>Schools Cities Counties EDAs</p>	<p>DEED EDA Broadband Providers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engaged with Swift County on rural broadband communities initiative</li> <li>Participating in YMC BB Taskforce pursuing county-wide broadband, as well as City of Clarkfield project(s).</li> </ul>
2. Connect communities to tools kits to start broadband conversations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilitate community conversations</li> <li>Coordinate education panels</li> <li>Connect communities to Blandin technical assistance</li> </ul>	<p>Blandin DEED Office of Broadband</p>	<p>Blandin FTTH Council</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Remained active with local, regional and statewide broadband initiatives</li> <li>Continued partnerships with Blandin Foundation and local communities</li> </ul>
3. Meet with local providers to discuss future opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Determine project/funding possibilities</li> <li>As requested provide technical assistance to communities with survey work to validate demand/feasibility</li> </ul>	<p>Cities Counties</p>	<p>EDAs DEED Schools</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ongoing support to Farmers Mutual and Federated Telephone on broadband deployment projects. Engaging YMC BB Taskforce.</li> </ul>
4. Work with local EDAs to promote availability of high speed broadband	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Determine how broadband can be included in economic development or marketing plans</li> <li>Work with the private sector to promote the availability of high speed broadband (employers, realtors, chambers)</li> </ul>	<p>EDAs Cities Counties</p>	<p>Realtors Employers Chambers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engaged regional EDA's and ED Pros with broadband initiatives in support of economic development.</li> <li>Engaged city and county governance in support of broadband deployment</li> </ul>
5. Collect stories about how broadband has made a difference in the region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with cities and counties who are unserved or underserved with broadband access</li> </ul>	<p>Broadband Providers EDA's</p>	<p>University of MN Center for Small Towns</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chronicling various regional broadband success stories for Get Rural initiative, web portal and periodic newsletters. Presented case studies to Governor's Broadband Coalition.</li> </ul>

## Economic Competitiveness Smart Goal

Increase the number of establishments in the region from 1,528 (QCEW, 2014) to 1,600 by 2021.

Action Plan	Tasks	Partners	Resources	Update
1. Be a connector!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assist communities in using the vacant buildings inventory to promote available spaces</li> <li>Encourage communities to promote the types of businesses needed in the community</li> <li>Find places to post businesses for sale</li> </ul>	EDAs	MNDEED SWIF University of MN Extension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Building property inventories into Get Rural portal functionality</li> <li>Utilizing U of M student interns for development of business profiles</li> <li>Funding request submitted to U of M SWRSDP for developable properties inventory</li> </ul>
2. Work on retention strategies for existing businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage communities to go through a BR&amp;E process</li> <li>Business roundtables – what can economic development staff do to help you be successful?</li> </ul>	EDAs	SWIF Gap Lenders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ongoing interactions with EDA's, ED Pros and RLF borrowers in support of BR &amp; E</li> <li>Brainstorming with ED Pro's quarterly on potential trainings in support of BR &amp; E</li> </ul>
3. Collaborate with gap lenders to explore a "start-up funding package"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Research other "start-up packages"</li> <li>Meet with regional lenders to discuss new ideas</li> <li>Experiment with the concept of a start-up package</li> <li>Invite and encourage culturally diverse businesses</li> </ul>	Gap Lenders	SBDC SBA SWIF Prairie Land EDC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintained and expanded RLF lending portfolio</li> <li>Maintained referral relationship for SBDC start-up services</li> <li>Worked with Milan Micronesian population in support of culturally diverse business development</li> </ul>
4. Explore/promote the development of jobs that would help diversify the region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Look at opportunities to increase jobs in the following industries: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Arts, Entertainment, Recreation</li> <li>Professional and Technical Services</li> <li>Agriculture, Forestry, Fish &amp; Hunt</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	EDAs	University of MN Extension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continued to support Arts development in Madison, Milan and Montevideo (Meander, etc.)</li> <li>Engaging with regional partners to exploit Opportunity Zone investment for ED projects</li> </ul>
5. Increase the amount of resources that can help improve main streets – especially those that can provide essential services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with EDAs/local units of government to develop incentives for entrepreneurs willing to invest in a currently vacant building</li> <li>Help EDAs/HRAs look at models to flip properties</li> <li>Assist communities in finding funds to demolish properties</li> <li>Explore an "investor network"</li> </ul>	EDAs SWIF	DEED HRAs Local Lenders USDA RD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provided grant writing and administration services for cities of Clinton/Graceville/Beardsley, Granite Falls, Benson, Milan/Watson and Canby for SCDP residential/commercial rehab projects.</li> <li>Provided grant writing services for City of Dawson historic building preservation project.</li> </ul>

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administration and support for Lac qui Parle County and cities of Appleton and Dawson for RLF capitalization and administration.</li> <li>• Engaged planning efforts with small LQP county municipalities on community development/infrastructure projects.</li> </ul>
6. Explore cooperative and/or incubator ideas for small business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research small business support ideas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Accounting/Book keeping</li> <li>○ Legal support</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	SWIF EDAs SBDC	EDA (federal) Regional Workup Spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan and strategy development slated for 2019-2020</li> <li>• Potential integration of Opportunity Zone Fund development to establish early stage private investment.</li> </ul>

## Revolving Loan Fund

A combination of 33 full and part time jobs were created or retained as a result of the four new business loans approved by the UMVRDC during this last year. In total, the RLF lent \$210,000 to businesses in the five-county region. Loans for the businesses listed below were approved for equipment, fixed assets, and real estate.

- After Five Supper Club, Madison-\$40,000
  - Equipment-New
- Hilltop Bar and Grill, Dawson -\$40,000
  - Equipment and Inventory-New
- Headquarters Bar and Grill, Graceville-\$90,000
  - Equipment and Inventory-Expansion
- Appleton Power and Equipment, Appleton -\$40,000
  - Equipment and Inventory-Expansion

A total of \$1,107,499 of RLF funds along with additional public and private dollars were spent on these four projects. Financial partners in the projects include local banks, Southwest Initiative Foundation, Lac qui Parle County Economic Development Authority, and the Swift County Rural Development Authority.

UMVRDC Revolving Loan Fund Portfolio as of 3/31/19	
Total Loan Funds	\$1,932,990
Loans Current	33
Loans Default	0
Loans Deferred	0
Funds Committed	\$100,000
Total Receivables	\$1,197,879
Total Available for Lending	\$431,991.16

## Past Year's Local Activities & Services

Many of the UMRDC's programs and projects are large in scope and cross multiple calendar, fiscal and EDA reporting periods. During the past year the UMRDC has been involved with the following projects, conferences and meetings in support of economic development in our region and throughout the state. The following list provides an overview of our activities and services since July 1, 2017.

- **City of Benson Technical Assistance**

The city of Benson requested technical assistance for their community and economic development projects. A contract was executed in January 2019. Project technical assistance includes but is not limited to the following:

- Marketing assistance/conference attendance
- EDA/RLF assistance
- Economic development project coordination.

- **Yellow Medicine County Bonding Application**

After a couple years of no attention and exposure to the natural elements, the structure of the Clarkfield School was damaged to the point of being a hazardous site. It was estimated that it would cost two to three times as much to clean and rehabilitate the structure as it would to demolish it. Approximately 75% of the building was uninhabitable.

The gym and three class rooms were salvageable and the city wanted to renovate these spaces to create a community center. The classrooms would be used as areas to display past Clarkfield School items, as a gathering place, and a location for reunions.

The UMRDC was asked to prepare and submit a capital bonding request to the State of Minnesota for \$675,175 to partially demolish and rehabilitate the tax forfeit former school building.

- **LqP/Swift County Hazard Mitigation**

Hazard Mitigation Planning aims to break the cycle of disaster-repair-disaster and can help a community to prepare for a more sustainable future.

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) requires local units of government to have a multi-hazard mitigation plan in place in order to be eligible for Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) funding. In order to continue to be eligible for HMGP funds, counties must update the plan every five years.

Starting in July 2017, Lac qui Parle and Swift Counties began updating the All-Hazard Mitigation plans to meet the requirements of the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 with the assistance of the UMRDC.

Plan updates are scheduled for completion and approval by the counties and FEMA in FY19.

- **The Milan Listening House**

The City of Milan participated in the Partnership Arts program through the Southwest Minnesota Housing Partnership and ArtPlace. The intent of this program is to infuse arts into community development projects to solve problems.

UMVRDC staff teamed up with three other artists: Lucy Tokheim (designer), Lauren Carlson (poet), and Brendan Stermer (new media) to work with Milan community members to use art to explore the many meanings of home. The team rented a house that needed rehabilitation and developed the “Milan Listening House” to serve as a gathering space, work space, and gallery space. Through the conversations and coordination, this project worked to identify shared values and priorities of what changes would help Milan address housing issues. The community-generated art installation centered around the question, “What does home mean to you?”.

After months of listening sessions and public exhibit hours, the artists presented a guiding document of concrete suggestions for housing & community planning to the city of Milan. The top three priorities are:

- Visual revitalization of public spaces
- Better relationships between community members
- Develop leaders

- **Dawson Armory & Public Library Historic Preservation**

The Dawson Armory and Community Building houses the Dawson Public Library and Heritage Court Apartments and experienced water infiltration through the roofing system and at the foundation. The City of Dawson requested assistance from the UMVRDC with a Minnesota Historical Society (MNHS) Historical and Cultural Grant.

The project overview was to complete architectural drawings, construction documents, specifications, and a scope of work and cost estimates for the Dawson Armory and Community Building. The 1923 historic former Armory required architectural & engineering drawings to address infrastructure and interior issues in order to preserve the building.

The long-term goal of the project was to repair the roof, stop the water infiltration, and restore the interior in order to preserve this historic structure. The MNHS grant submission requested grant funds to hire an architect experienced in historic buildings, preservation standards, materials and historic construction techniques for specific drawing and prioritization of projects.

- **Lac qui Parle County Master Plan**

The Lac qui Parle County Park just completed their master plan as part of the process of pursuing regional park designation through Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission (GMRPTC). Achieving regional designation shows the park meets a very high standard for natural-resource-based outdoor recreation and is part of a regional system across Greater Minnesota. It also makes the park eligible for the Regional Parks and Trails Legacy funding program where an estimated 8 million dollars will be available annually. The Lac qui Parle County Park needed to complete this master plan before it can be formally designated and eligible for funding.

The UMRDC and the landscape architect firm, Damon Farber, worked with the Lac qui Parle County Park Board to create the master plan that was adopted the spring of 2018.

The plan shows that the first phase of projects the park board hopes to implement are the west entrance road, a bridge, and the park loop trail on the west side of the park. Phase two includes the trailhead on the west side of the park, with a bathroom/shower building, parking, and lighting. Phase three includes more trail system improvements and additions.

- **Memorial Park in Granite Falls**

The UMRDC continues to assist the City of Granite Falls with improvements to Memorial Park, which was designated a regional park in 2016. The city is currently working on the construction of Phase 1, which includes building a new shower house, improvements on the main park shelter, and reworking the entrance to the park to make safety improvements. The request of \$595,613 was funded in the spring of 2017 and this project will be implemented in the fall of 2017.

Phase 2 focuses improvements on the south side of the park. It will develop the RV campground closer to the new shower house and turn the existing campground into a nature-based playground area. It will restore the ecological landscape on the south side of the park, improve the overlook trail and add signage to the entire park. The city received \$732,261 to complete this phase and is now working through the paperwork and environmental review.

Funding for both of these phases came from the Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission (GMRPTC). The UMRDC helped with the funding requests, environmental review and master planning process. The UMRDC will be assisting with the next phase funding request due July 2018.

- **Small Cities Development Program Grant Management**

The UMRDC staff continues to author grant applications and provide the general administration of the MN DEED Small Cities Development Program (SCDP) which helps cities and communities with funding for housing, public infrastructure, and commercial rehabilitation projects.

The Swift County Housing and Redevelopment Authority, Prairie Five Community Action, and the UMRDC wrapped up administration of the City of Appleton's SCDP grant in December 2017. Over \$766,000 were invested into the rehabilitation of 20 owner occupied homes and 6 commercial buildings.

The communities of Clinton, Graceville, and Beardsley are continuing to use their joint SCDP grant authored by the UMRDC. The communities have until September 2019 to use the \$637,500 in SCDP grant funds and aim to rehab 26 owner-occupied homes and six commercial businesses. Prairie Five Community Action and UMRDC staff are providing the communities with the field and general administration of this project.

The City of Benson was awarded \$638,250 in SCDP grant funds in June 2017. The UMRDC authored grant was written for an estimated 20 owner-occupied homes and six commercial properties to benefit from the estimated \$854,000 project through September 2020. The UMRDC staff will continue to work with the City of Benson and Swift County HRA to administer the program.

A \$1,107,430 grant award along with leveraged resources, will total 24,152,455 in rehabilitation within the city of Clarkfield. A public infrastructure project along with 15 owner occupied homes and five commercial businesses are the goals for this SCDP grant. Additional tasks include the environmental study and grant administration.

RDC staff worked with the City of Canby to complete an SCDP preapplication that was submitted in November 2018. A preapplication was submitted asking to rehab 17 owner occupied units and 12 commercial units with a total rehabilitation project cost of 1,302,428. Notification was received that the pre-application was judged to be competitive. Submittal of the full application took place in February 2019.

The Cities of Milan and Watson requested assistance with a Small Cities Development Program (SCDP) grant application for 2019. Staff assisted the cities with developing an application and worked with the cities in developing a list of interested participants in the program. An application was submitted at the end of Feb 2019 for 14 owner-occupied, 16 units for multi-family and 4 commercial units for a total of \$784,000. The successful pre-applications was submitted to DEED in November 2018 and the full application in February 2019.

- **USDA Rural Business Development Grant**

The UMRDC assisted the Lac qui Parle County Economic Development Authority (EDA) in writing a United States Department of Agriculture grant. The EDA was notified during the summer of 2017, that they were awarded the grant to establish a county-wide revolving loan fund. The Rural Business Development Grant (RBDG) through USDA is designed to support development or expansion of small, emerging businesses in rural areas. The EDA leveraged \$25,000 of their own dollars in the application for the \$99,999 grant. The UMRDC now contracts with the County for RLF administration

The UMRDC staff assisted the City of Appleton in writing their RBDG a few years ago, which was awarded. During the spring of 2018, the UMRDC again began assisting the city with administering their RLF that they established with the \$149,999 grant and \$50,000 in leveraged funds.



- **Regional Transportation Coordinating Councils (RTCC)**

The UMRDC is partnering with Prairie Five Community Action to research, coordinate and author a grant application to create a regional transportation coordination council. This grant was submitted the end of March 2019.

Overall goal of this RTCC planning project:

Improve coordination of transportation services in Region 6W. Region 6W is Prairie Five's service area which includes the counties of Chippewa, Lac qui Parle, Yellow Medicine, Swift and Big Stone

Objectives of the planning project:

- Establish a formal entity dedicated to improving coordination of transportation services in Region 6W.
- Define the geographic area of the Prairie Five RTCC.
- Plan and implement strategies that meet the regional transit coordination needs and goals identified in the Region 6W Local Human Transit Coordination Plan (LHTCP).
- Develop an operation implementation plan for the Prairie Five RTCC.
- Plan and develop the Prairie Five RTCC and a public participation plan.

To accomplish the RTCC goal, the entity will engage a broad set of stakeholders in both planning and implementation, and it will focus on practical, high-impact coordination improvements that benefit transportation disadvantaged households and support wider community development and focused on transportation needs. The entity will be flexible to balance both broad, regional needs and more specific subregion and subpopulation needs. This balance will be critical to both keep stakeholder engagement and secure ongoing local match funding for the Prairie Five RTCC.

- **Border to Border Broadband**

The UMRDC contracted with Farmers Mutual Telephone Company (FMTC) to author Border-to-Border Broadband applications through the MN Office of Broadband Development. The grants would provide funding to establish high speed broadband service from FMTC for NE Yellow Medicine County, the City of Watson and miscellaneous selected addresses within SW Lac qui Parle County.

Project partners FMTC, the City of Watson and Yellow Medicine County proposed to build out fiber infrastructure to the aforementioned areas, creating ubiquitous broadband that meets and exceeds state and federal standards. Broadband infrastructure has been identified as a high priority for the region in their strategic plan. This infrastructure priority is supported with financial commitments, public-private partnerships and need expressed by residents, businesses and organizations in letters of support found in this project proposal.

The management of the system by FMTC will follow the same best practices, policies and procedures, and dedicated staff they use in their current networks that has and continues to lead to many successful projects.

Broadband improvements will create equal access opportunity throughout the project areas. During the development of this application FMTC, Yellow Medicine County and the City of Watson explored the project impact with residents, businesses and organizations within this project geography. The overwhelming support from farmers, commercial businesses, home-based businesses, students, and healthcare organizations shows the beneficial impact that broadband will have in the proposed project area and beyond.

The UMRDC have previously contracted with motivated service providers and local units of government to author Border-to-Border Broadband applications through the MN Office of Broadband Development. The grants would provide funding to establish high speed broadband service to historically underserved areas within the region by building out fiber infrastructure to the aforementioned areas, creating ubiquitous broadband that meets and exceeds state and federal standards. Broadband infrastructure has been identified as a high priority for the region in the UMRDC's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. This infrastructure priority is supported with financial commitments, public-private partnerships and need expressed by residents, businesses and organizations in letters of support found in this project proposal.

The Border to Border Broadband grant program went unfunded by the state in the last funding cycle. The UMRDC continued to support regional broadband efforts, identify additional potential funding sources and advocate for funding of the State's program in the upcoming cycle. The UMRDC continued to work with Chippewa and Yellow Medicine Counties, the two (2) remaining counties in the region without successfully funded broadband deployment projects, to support and assist taskforce development for purposes of identifying and developing deployment projects. Assistance and support was also provided to Swift County for participation in the Blandin Foundation Broadband Communities Initiative.

- **Maynard Area History Museum**

The UMRDC has been assisting the City of Maynard with their Historic Maynard State Bank Building. Staff wrote and implemented a grant for the building to be placed on the National Register of Historic Places, which was completed in the spring of 2018. Registering the building on the National Register will enable the Maynard History Museum to take advantage of other grants and resources from the Minnesota Historical Society.

- **Montevideo Arts Project (MAP)**

The UMRDC has been providing grant writing and project implementation services to the Montevideo Arts Project (MAP) for several public art projects.

MAP's 2017 project was "Rustician" (hunt and gather...seek and find), an antique tractor turned sculpture by Chatfield, MN artist, Karl Unnasch. The tractor was donated from the Minnesota Valley Antique Farm Power & Machinery Association. Unnasch, who visited Montevideo to collect stories from residents and history books, incorporated these stories into the stained glass, which is back lit by LED lights and embedded into the tractor. The UMRDC wrote the successful grant to the Southwest Minnesota Arts Council for \$20,000.

For 2018, MAP has started working on a public art project centered around staircases in the downtown area. They are working to hire an artist with a planning grant received from the Southwest Minnesota Arts Council to develop the project further.

- **City of Appleton Comprehensive Plan**

The UMRDC completed a comprehensive plan for the City of Appleton, which was adopted in the spring of 2018. A task force helped in developing the plan, which is meant to guide the city for the next 10 years (2018-2028). A plan serves as a legal basis for land use regulations and it provides guidelines for the city council and decision makers on how best to use city resources. It also gives an opportunity for residents to voice their shared vision for the community.

The Appleton Comp Plan includes information on the past, present, and what it hopes for the future. The community profile includes demographics, a brief history of the community, and a snapshot of where Appleton is today. The community vision outlines where the community hopes to be in 10-20 years.

There are seven planning topics in the plan and each section includes an overview of each topic, as well as goals and strategies that should be worked on. The implementation chapter gives an outline on how to use the plan and give an action plan with guidelines on how to prioritize the strategies.

- **City of Kerkhoven Comprehensive Plan**

The City of Kerkhoven requested assistance with a comprehensive planning project starting Fall of 2018. The planning project is estimated to take approximately 18 months to complete. The development of a comprehensive plan will be gained through a variety of task force and community meetings, along with a public hearing process and public participation. This plan will provide the city guidance on how to best utilize their resources while looking to the future years to come. Not only will this work allow city residents the ability to contribute and create a shared vision for the City of Kerkhoven, but also serve as guidance to the city council and other decision makers within their community.

- **Upper Sioux FEMA Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grant**

The Upper Sioux Community requested assistance to write and submit a FEMA Pre-Disaster Mitigation (PDM) Project grant application. This grant would pay for the design and construction of a storm safe shelter for the Community's Wacipi grounds. The UMRDC staff helped the community develop a new application and worked with the community in developing the project.

The Upper Sioux Community Wacipi grounds are part of the Upper Sioux Community, which is an area vulnerable to tornadoes and high wind events. The Upper Sioux Community Wacipi Event, falls within the March-to-November tornado "season". Fortunately, the Upper Sioux Community has not been hit by a tornado during the Wacipi, but nearby Granite Falls was hit by record tornado events in July of 2000 and September of 2005.

Construction of a storm safe shelter on the Upper Sioux Community Wacipi grounds in accordance with FEMA guidelines will provide near absolute protection from storm events. FEMA defines a safe room as providing "near absolute protection" based on their current knowledge of tornadoes and hurricanes. Construction of a storm safe shelter is the only viable mitigation activity that meets the Upper Sioux Community's stated objective in its 2015 All-Hazard Mitigation Plan.

- **Clarkfield Childcare Grant**

While developing solutions to the child care shortage in Yellow Medicine County, the City of Clarkfield was determined to take on the task of opening a new child care center. Through a collaboration between the city and the Clarkfield Charter School, a non-profit was organized. Local donations, sweat equity, county support, and other grants, including a collaborative Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development grant application with the Southwest Initiative Foundation, that UMRDC staff assisted the city with, all came together to help this nonprofit function. All resources were necessary to get the newly constructed center up and running in May of 2018.

Visit the UMRDC website to view case studies of childcare centers throughout the region.

- **Opportunity Zones**

Opportunity Zones are a new community development program established by Congress in the Tax Cut and Jobs Act of 2017 to encourage long-term investments in low-income and urban communities nationwide. The Governor was able to designate 25% of eligible census tracts as Opportunity Zones in the state. UMRDC staff worked with regional city/county representatives, along with the Southwest Initiative Foundation, to meet for purposes of writing a response to the Governor prioritizing and ranking Opportunity Zones within the region.

In our region, **counties** were required to prioritize and rank Opportunity Zones within in their county as their 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> choices. Counties were also asked to explain how the following principles lead them to their 1st, 2nd and 3rd rank choices:

- **Needs** of the low-income community and other partners serving the zone including data about the unemployment rate, high poverty rate and low median income
- Potential for positive impact to **further equity and inclusion**
- **Commitment(s) to support the zone** by industry, education, nonprofits and governments including ongoing collaborations (i.e. promise zones, empowerment zones and renewal communities)
- **Development possibilities** within the zone in the next 5 years including affordable and workforce housing and economic development
- **Engagement** with organizations who have indicated an interest in creating Opportunity Funds
- Businesses and emerging businesses with **investment potential** in the zone
- **Potential positive impact** the zone could have on the most distressed communities

These are the census tracts in the Southwest Region recommended by the Governor for inclusion in the Opportunity Zone Program:

As the Federal EDA designated RDD, UMRDC staff will be working with MN DEED, SWIF, and local units of government to convene discussions and planning efforts regarding the formation and administration of Opportunity Funds as further guidance is made available by the U.S. Department of Treasury.

Once approved by the U.S. Department of Treasury, projects in Opportunity Zones will be eligible for funding through Opportunity Funds. Opportunity Funds are an investment vehicle that is set up as either a partnership or corporation for investing in eligible property that is in an Opportunity Zone and that utilizes the investor's gains from a prior investment for funding the Opportunity Fund. Guidance for opportunity funds are being developed by the Treasury Department and the Internal Revenue Service and should be available later this year.

The UMRDC began work on a project in partnership with the City of Granite Falls EDA to develop an Opportunity Zone Funding Plan for redevelopment of a downtown property in the central business district. The proposed new development plan for the site will be for demolition of currently vacant dilapidated site structures and construction of a \$5M, 10-12k s.f., three-story mixed-use building. The first floor will consist of retail/commercial storefronts. The upper two levels will consist of units available for market-rate housing. Total new residential unit occupancy will be approximately 28 units.

- **Browns Valley Flood Recovery**

The UMRDC staff has a contract to provide the City of Browns Valley fiscal agent and technical assistance for their DNR Flood Damage Reduction Grant.

- **Regional Application for FEMA Assistance to Firefighter's Grant**

The UMRDC has been coordinating with fire services throughout the region to put together an application for the FEMA Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program, expected to open this fall. The program helps fire departments across the country fund the replacement of critical fire equipment –such as turnout gear, air packs, and rescue kits.

Each application to the grant program is eligible for up to \$1 million in requested funds with a 5% match requirement. Currently, there are 12 fire departments in the UMRDC's five-county region interested in participating in the applications. After coordinating with FEMA's regional grant program specialist, it was discussed that the region might submit up to four separate applications, allowing for up to \$4 million in available funding.

## Past Year's New or Ongoing Programs & Services

Non-infrastructure projects identified in the CEDS as high priority are listed below. Key priority areas should be worked on and completed when an opportunity presents itself or when funding is available to move a key project forward.

- **Meander**

The 2017 Meander was another success! After tallying reports from Meander artists, the UMRVDC found that Meander attendees purchased more than \$111,920 of art over the course of the three days of the art crawl.

*Meander attendees did not just buy art, they also spent \$43 on food and gas, \$18 on lodging, and \$11 on shopping (other than art) per person. If we estimate that at least \$1,500 people meandered, this amounts to another \$108,000 dollars (infographics) entering the small towns across the five-county region of Big Stone, Chippewa, Lac qui Parle, Swift and Yellow Medicine counties. The Meander Art Crawl highlights the region's artists and their studios while also introducing people to the region and giving a huge economic boost to the small businesses too.*

**11 studios**      Average number of studios customers visited

**75%**              of customers said the quality of the art was excellent

**77%**              of customers said their overall experience was excellent

**73%**              of customers plan to attend again the next year

The UMRVDC has been a founding organizer of the Meander since it started in 2004 and each year is responsible for organizing the planning, artists selection, fundraising, marketing and financial management of the event.

The UMRVDC would like to thank all the sponsors, artists, and participants who make the Meander the amazing event that it is.

- **Minnesota River Valley National Scenic Byway**

The mission of the Minnesota River Valley National Scenic Byway Alliance (MRVSBA) is to cooperatively enhance the Minnesota River Valley as a travel destination and raise awareness of its nationally important stories in order to provide economic benefits and preserve the intrinsic qualities of the byway.

The MRVSBA is a partnership of committed individuals from the 287-mile byway corridor, representing a variety of interests including chamber of commerce, various attractions and historic sites, state parks, local and state governmental bodies, private businesses, and concerned individuals. The UMRVDC has been providing staffing and fiscal services to the byway since 1996.

The byway plays an important role in linking and promoting historical sites and stories to better tell the history of the Minnesota River Valley through a variety of efforts, including its programs, website, roadside signs, brochures, and other marketing materials.

In the past year, the MRVSB has completed their corridor management plan, marketing plan, major website updates, and a new visitors guide. The byway has also been active with the Minnesota Byway Statewide Strategic Planning process.

- **Prairie Waters Regional Tourism**

The Western Minnesota Prairie Waters Regional Tourism place to visit, live, and work by highlighting and historical assets. Prairie Waters is supported by the counties, cities, chambers, economic development

2017-2018 highlights:

Wrote a successful grant to Explore Minnesota Tourism

**Annual Gathering**

annual gathering at the Swift Falls County Park with over prizes.

The annual gathering rotates through the Prairie Waters to highlight unique assets within the region by inviting been before.

**Map updates**

website interactive maps and Google Maps.

**Expanded the Prairie Waters website**

Revamped the Prairie Waters Tourism website to include information on employment opportunities, housing, education, healthcare, childcare, stories, and more - Visit [www.prairiewaters.com](http://www.prairiewaters.com).

**Social Media Campaigns**

There are currently over 4,600+ followers that Prairie Waters markets to with weekly updates, events, community info, stories about the region and more. Staff worked with Vivid Image to run a series of paid Facebook and Google Adwords ads targeting a very specific target market to get the message in front of the right people.

**Responded to leads & distributed guides**

The Prairie Waters Visitors Guides are distributed to chambers, cities, and businesses throughout the region; travel information centers across the state

2018 Prairie Waters Members

- Chippewa County
  - Clara City
  - Milan
  - Montevideo
- Lac qui Parle County
  - Dawson
  - Madison
- Swift County
  - Appleton
  - Benson
- Yellow Medicine County
  - Canby
  - Clarkfield
  - Granite Falls

Program has been promoting the region as a great showcasing our natural, cultural, scenic, and region's local units of government that includes authorities, local businesses and the UMRDC.

**Advertising**

procuring \$7,000 for advertising the region.

More than 150 people attended the Prairie Waters 35 classic cars rolling in, kid's activities, free food and

counties every year. The purpose of the gathering is locals and visitors to a location they might not have

Updated the business listings on the Prairie Waters

and at the Mall of America; and are sent out upon requests. The guide can be downloaded on the Explore Minnesota Tourism website. (Jackie tally up leads)

NEW guides coming Spring of 2019!



- **Get Rural: {Regional Recruitment}**

Attracting and retaining residents is a key component for the sustainability of the region and has been voiced as an issue from several local units of government within the region.

Stemmed from the “Brain Gain” research and efforts done over the past several years convening local stakeholders, the UMRDC took a huge leap in January 2018 by launching a new website that includes information to make it easier for a potential new comer to move to the region. The UMRDC expanded the Prairie Waters website including information on employment opportunities, housing, healthcare, education, childcare, stories, and things to do. Creating a one-stop-shop has been a huge goal for several years throughout the recruitment process.

Over the next year, UMRDC staff will continue to incorporate new content and develop relationships with local entities to feed into the new web pages. The UMRDC staff will be convening and working with local employers, schools, healthcare facilities, realtors and local newspapers on how they can work together to better market themselves.

Follow the project on Facebook, Instagram, and Pinterest by searching Get Rural MN, or visit the UMRDC website.

