

Regional Economic Resilience Plan

Southwest Minnesota

Southwest Regional Development Commission



SRDC

The Southwest Regional Development Commission (SRDC) is a Development Commission as established under Minnesota Statute §462.381-462.398 the “Regional Development Act.” The SRDC represents nine counties, one-hundred and sixty-one townships, eighty-one cities and thirty-four unincorporated communities.

In support of the SRDC mission statement “Providing professional expertise and leadership to enhance regional opportunities,” the SRDC plays a multi-faceted role. Some of the services that are offered include technical assistance/planning services, acting as liaison for the different levels of governmental municipalities, and taking on legislative issues that are a priority for the region.

The SRDC is in southwest Minnesota and is bounded by South Dakota to the west, and Iowa to the south. The office is geographically centered in Slayton Minnesota, in Murray County.

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REGIONAL ECONOMIC RESILIENCE PLAN

WHAT IS ECONOMIC RESILIENCE?

Regional Economic Resilience is defined by a region's ability to prevent, withstand, and recover from major economic disruptions or shocks to the economic base. According to the EDA, shocks/disruptions to the economic base of a region can manifest in three ways:

- Downturns or other significant events in the national or international economy which impact demand for locally produced goods and consumer spending.
- Downtowns in particular industries that constitute a critical component of the region's economic activity; and/or
- Other external shocks (a natural or man-made disaster, closure of a military base, exit of a major employer, the impacts of climate changes, etc.)

At the regional level, SRDC is instrumental in building the capacity for economic resilience. SRDC has become a focal point for post-incident coordination, information dissemination, responding to external inquiries, and as a lead grant administrator federally funded recovery initiative.

SRDC's role in building the Region's economic resilience through the following initiatives:

- P.A.C.E.
- SRDC RLF Fund
- SRDC COVID-19 RLF Fund
- Dissemination of information and funding opportunities
- Administration and assisting in Grant Application

SRDC also provides the following technical services to the Region

- Planning Services
- Marketing and Communications Audits
- Strategic Planning workshops

WHY A REGIONAL ECONOMIC RESILIENCE PLAN?

The SRDC region has gone through several economic shocks/disruptions since its inception in 1974, with the most recent disturbance being the COVID-19 recession. The plan includes a study of economic shock/disturbance and their impacts in the region, a review of existing planning efforts, and input from regional resilience workshops. This Regional Economic Resilience Plan will serve three main objectives at a regional level:

- Identify opportunities and projects that further economic development by increasing the quality of life in a community
- Identify resources that are especially vulnerable to economic shocks/disturbances
- Identify supporting businesses and industries that complement the already present characteristics of the region

PLANNING EFFORTS IN THE SRDC REGION

2019 DEVELOPMN: A COMPREHENSIVE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR GREATER MINNESOTA

The DevelopMN Plan is a collaboration of member of the Minnesota Association of Development Organizations (MADO). MADO is made of 10 Regional Development Organizations who strive to promote economic development and prosperity in Greater Minnesota. The document is written to align strategic economic development efforts throughout Greater Minnesota and leverage resources for an overall development impact.

DevelopMN identifies major priorities known as Cornerstones to promote economic prosperity. These cornerstones and descriptions provided by DevelopMN are as follows:

Human Capital: Developing, retaining and attracting talent are critical for Greater Minnesota in order to sustain and grow rural businesses and communities. Tracking the characteristics of the labor force and the needs of employers, and creating strategies for alignment between the two, is one aspect of this cornerstone. Another is forecasting the economy of the future and working with communities to ready a workforce that can thrive in a rapidly changing environment, particularly with respect to advances in technology.

Economic Competitiveness: Making Greater Minnesota an attractive environment for smart, sustainable growth is critical to creating jobs, improving living standards and financing necessary public services. Economic Competitiveness requires communities to develop and link all available assets to support innovation and encourage business investment.

Community Resources: Greater Minnesota communities seek to maintain rural values, their heritage and the assets that support them. At the same time, we respectfully acknowledge that Greater Minnesota was home to Native Americans long before new Americans settled it in the 19th Century. And we endeavor to welcome more new Americans as the 21st Century unfolds. Community Resources includes topics that balance the preservation and improvement of social, cultural, and natural assets that are critical for the health and wellbeing of everyone, now and in the future.

Foundational Assets: Greater Minnesota communities require proactive and collaborative approaches/strategies to address infrastructure needs in a cost-effective manner. Managing the access to, maintenance, replacement and growth of these assets is key to preserving and maintaining communities and providing for growth opportunities. Foundational assets include aboveground and below-ground infrastructure such as transportation, utilities, and water.

To address each cornerstone, goals known as SMART goals are created. These goals are backed by implementation strategies that meet the critical noted in the image to the right. In the latest DevelopMN the following goals were identified in each cornerstone:

Human Capital

- Increase labor force participation in Greater Minnesota from 69.7% to 71.7% by 2021.
- Reduce labor shortages to 30% or less for employment requiring post-secondary education, certificates, technical degrees, or apprenticeship by 2025.

Economic Competitiveness

- Improve Greater Minnesota's Stats America headline index from 87.1 to 89.1 by 2021.
- Maintain a net increase in business establishments in Greater Minnesota.
- Maintain an annual increase in gross sales for Greater Minnesota businesses.

Community Resources

- Increase visitor spending in Greater Minnesota by 5% by 2021, to \$4.78 billion.
- Increase employment in arts, entertainment, and recreation in Greater Minnesota by 5% to 16,270 by 2021.
- To reduce the carbon footprint, increase the number of kilowatt hours of renewable energy produced in Greater Minnesota from 11,607 in 2018 to 12,000 by 2021.
- To preserve natural resources, reduce the spread of invasive species as determined by the

MN Department of Natural Resources (DNR). In 2018, the DNR estimated that 7% of all lakes, and 1066 total bodies of water in Minnesota were considered "infested."

Foundational Assets

- No later than 2026, all Minnesota businesses and homes will have access to at least one provider of broadband with download speeds of at least 100 megabits per second and upload speeds of at least 20 megabits per second.
- By 2021, decrease statewide RRRTI score to 1.40 or lower.
- Reduce the gap between the amount of funding available for water-waste water infrastructure and the actual infrastructure replacement cost to \$100 million by 2030.
- Reduce the percentage of cost-burdened households in Greater Minnesota from 25.5% in 2018 to 23% in 2021.

SOUTHWEST MINNESOTA'S CEDS 2017-2021

SRDC as a regional Economic Development Authority publishes a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy or CEDS every five years. The document has a 5-year horizon and aims to serve as a strategy-driven plan for regional economic development. The process brings public and private sectors together to create a road map to diversify and strengthen the regional economy by analyzing the region's current conditions, establishing goals, creating an implementation guide for a regional plan of action. The latest CEDS was completed by SRDC in 2017 with the horizon of 2017-2021.

The Economic Development Vision Statement for the SRDC region is:

“The southwest region conducts collaborative economic development efforts to be globally competitive, attracting new and diverse residents, businesses, and investments. The region cultivates and promotes a unique culture that includes a high quality of life, preservation of natural resources, an educated and skilled workforce, and strong civic engagement.”

To support this mission statement, all goal and strategies mirror the DevelopMN cornerstones: Human Capital, Economic Competitiveness, Community Resources and Foundational Assets. Goals to address these cornerstones include:

Human Capital

- Increase labor force participation by 2% by 2021.
- Increase GED or high school equivalent education in the southwest region.
- Increase the number of residents (ages 18-64) who have completed post-secondary education or training with a particular focus on certificates, technical degrees, and apprenticeships relevant to employment in middle-skill, living wage occupations and those residents aged 25-44 with a bachelor's degree

or higher, collectively to 36% by 2025.

Economic Competitiveness

- Broaden access to capital to encourage innovation and entrepreneurship.
- Increase the number of capital investment programs available to Small and Medium Enterprises (SME, small is considered 20 or fewer employees, medium is considered 21-50 employees) to allow growth and job creation for the southwest region.

Community Resources

- Based on “Rural Pulse,” increase the percentage of respondents who feel that their community works together effectively to address local needs by 5% by 2025.
- Increase employment in the arts industry in the southwest region to 2.5% by 2021.
- Increase visitor spending in the southwest region by 5% by 2021.
- Protect and preserve natural resources for continued responsible use. Achieve no net loss of wetlands/prairie lands and add programs and policies that reduce the carbon footprint through renewable/chemical energy or energy efficiency initiatives.
- Improve water quality by ensuring that the southwest region's groundwater and surface water supplies are protected from depletion and degradation by reducing the number of impaired waters and endangered ecosystems.

Foundational Assets

- Increase the percentage of the southwest region's good quality-rated roadways in the next 20 years and increase/maintain the County

ten-ton network.

- Assist 2 communities with achieving BFC-designated status.
- Assist 3 communities with the adoption of a Complete Streets policy.
- Increase the number of regionally designated parks and trails by the Greater Parks and Trails Commission.
- Increase the level of transit system service in the southwest region by 2021.

COMMON THEMES FROM DEVELOPMN AND THE CEDS

Both plans focus on the same four cornerstones Human Capital, Economic Competitiveness, Community Resources, and Foundational Assets. The SMART Goals associated with each cornerstone in both plans are also very similar when compared to each other. Both plans mention the need to increase their populations, promote higher educational attainment (through certificates and specialized training), earning more income through visitor spending increasing employment in arts, entertainment, and recreation. The plans do differ in goals under the Economic Competitiveness. DevelopMN goals to address Economic Competitiveness included improving Greater Minnesota's Stats America Headline, maintain a net increase in business establishments in Greater Minnesota and annual increases in gross sales for Greater Minnesota businesses. The goals under the CEDS Economic Cornerstone included broadening access to capital to encourage entrepreneurship and increasing the number of capital investment programs available to small and medium businesses.

Chart 1: Goals from the 2019 DevelopMN and the 2017 CEDS

	DevelopMN	CEDS
Human Capital	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase labor force participation in Greater Minnesota from 69.7% to 71.7% by 2021. 2. Reduce labor shortages to 30% or less for employment requiring post-secondary education, certificates, technical degrees, or apprenticeship by 2025. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase labor force participation by 2.0% by 2021. 2. Increase GED or high school equivalent education in the southwest region. 3. Increase the number of residents (ages 18-64) who have completed post-secondary education or training with a particular focus on certificates, technical degrees, and apprenticeships relevant to employment in middle-skill, living wage occupations and those residents aged 25-44 with a bachelor's degree or higher, collectively to 36% by 2025.
Economic Competitiveness	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improve Greater Minnesota's Stats America headline index from 87.1 to 89.1 by 2021. 2. Maintain a net increase in business establishments in Greater Minnesota. 3. Maintain an annual increase in gross sales for Greater Minnesota businesses. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Broaden access to capital to encourage innovation and entrepreneurship. 2. Increase the number of capital investment programs available to Small and Medium Enterprises (SME, small is considered 20 or fewer employees, medium is considered 21-50 employees) to allow growth and job creation for the southwest region.
Community Resources	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase visitor spending in Greater Minnesota by 5% by 2021, to \$4.78 billion. 2. Increase employment in arts, entertainment, and recreation in Greater Minnesota by 5% to 16,270 by 2021. 3. To reduce the carbon footprint, increase the number of kilowatt hours of renewable energy produced in Greater Minnesota from 11,607 in 2018 to 12,000 by 2021. 4. To preserve natural resources, reduce the spread of invasive species as determined by the MN Department of Natural Resources (DNR). In 2018, the DNR estimated that 7% of all lakes, and 1066 total bodies of water in Minnesota were considered "infested." 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Based on "Rural Pulse," increase the percentage of respondents who feel that their community works together effectively to address local needs by 5% by 2025. 2. Increase employment in the arts industry in the southwest region to 2.5% by 2021. 3. Increase visitor spending in the southwest region by 5% by 2021. 4. Protect and preserve natural resources for continued responsible use. Achieve no net loss of wetlands/prairie lands and add programs and policies that reduce the carbon footprint through renewable/chemical energy or energy efficiency initiatives. 5. Improve water quality by ensuring that the southwest region's groundwater and surface water supplies are protected from depletion and degradation by reducing the number of impaired waters and endangered ecosystems.

WATER MANAGEMENT

Yellow Medicine One Watershed One Plan

Since watershed issues are not confined to political boundaries, the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) was authorized under legislation passed in 2012 to align local planning within watershed boundaries. The Yellow Medicine One Watershed One Plan (1W1P) was developed as one of five pilot “One Watershed One Plan” projects in Minnesota and is a collaborative effort between

ten local governments including Lincoln County and their Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), Lac qui Parle County and their SWCD, Lyon County and their SWCD, Yellow Medicine County and their SWCD, and the Yellow Medicine River Watershed District (YMRWD). Two of the four counties involved are located within the SRDC region (Lincoln and Lyon).

Chart 2: Priority Concerns & Goals from the Yellow Medicine One Watershed One Plan

Priority Concerns	Goals to Address Priority Concerns
Mitigate Altered Hydrology and Minimize Flooding.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Add 1,000 acre-feet of new stormwater storage. 2. No net increase in highest annual peak flows. 3. 3 percent increase in dry season base flow.
Minimize the Transport of Sediment, Excess Nutrients, and Bacteria.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 10 percent decrease in Total Suspended Solids (TSS) loads. 2. 10 percent decrease in Total Phosphorus (TP) loads. 3. 8 percent decrease in Total Nitrogen (TN) loads.
Protect and Preserve Groundwater Quantity and Quality.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Seal 25 unused wells per year 2. Begin hydrogeological atlas process 3. Maintain fewer than 10% of private wells failing to meet 10 mg/L nitrate water quality standard.

Source: Yellow Medicine One Watershed One Plan

Missouri River Watershed Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan

The Missouri River Watershed One Watershed, One Plan (1W1P) planning area is in the southwestern corner of Minnesota, and includes all or portions of Rock, Pipestone, Nobles, Jackson, Lincoln, and Murray counties and the Kanaranzi-Little Rock and the Okabena-Orcheda watershed districts. All the counties involved are in the SRDC region. The Missouri River Watershed Compressive Watershed

Management Plan addressed priority issues for the following topics, ground water, surface water, fish and wildlife habitat, local knowledge base and technical capacity, and land development/ stewardship.

Chart 3: Water Topics & Concerns for Missouri River Watershed Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan

Water Topic	Priority Concerns
Ground Water	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Elevated nitrate-nitrogen in groundwater wells. 2. Elevated bacteria (i.e., Escherichia coli (E. coli) and fecal coliform) in groundwater wells. 3. Land use changes where water enters aquifers, including Wellhead Protection Areas (WPAs) or Drinking Water Supply Management Areas (DWSMAs). 4. Sustainable quantities of groundwater supplies for drinking water use with suitable water quality.
Surface Waters	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Elevated suspended solids (sediment) and phosphorus levels. 2. Elevated bacteria (i.e., E. coli and fecal coliform) levels. 3. Elevated nitrate-nitrogen levels. 4. Increased spread of aquatic invasive species. 5. Land use changes contributing to wind and overland runoff. 6. Streambank/riverbank erosion causing loss of bank sediment. 7. Elevated phosphorus concentrations in the water and increased risk of algal blooms. 8. Land use changes leading to loss of vegetative cover and field residue. 9. Land use changes leading to loss of natural storage. 10. Loss of functioning wetlands. 11. Presence, width, and quality of vegetated areas alongside ditches.
Fish and Wildlife Habitat	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Habitat loss from bank erosion in creeks, streams, and rivers. 2. Aquatic and riparian habitat loss from development and intense drainage. 3. Terrestrial habitat fragmentation and loss.
Local Knowledge Base and Technical Capacity	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lack of watershed-wide education and outreach on management and structural best management practices (BMPs) and their impact on farm profitability and the environment. 2. Lack of understanding, agreement, and consensus about the hydrologic impacts of tile drainage and the benefits to producers. 3. Piecemeal approach and lack of long term and consistent funding for water management programs at the local level.
Local Development and Land Stewardship	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Decreased agricultural soil health. 2. Increased sheet, rill, and wind erosion. 3. Manure application and disposal. 4. Undercut and unstable streambanks. 5. Livestock accessibility to streams. 6. Vegetated buffer along streams and rivers.

Source: Missouri River Watershed Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan

Redwood County Comprehensive Local Water Management Plan

Redwood County’s latest Comprehensive Local Water Management Plan 2006-2016 with an Amendment for 2016-2020. The plan serves two main functions. The first function is to identify existing and potential problems and opportunities for the protection, management and development

of water and related land resources. The plan also serves to develop objectives and carry out a plan of action to promote sound hydrologic management of water and related resources and effective environmental protection.

Chart 4: Priority Concerns & Strategies from Redwood County Comprehensive Local Water Management Plan

Priority Concerns	Strategies to Address Concerns
<p>Groundwater protection that will focus on wellhead protection for public and private water supply: Protection of groundwater resources for public & private supplies.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Work with cities to develop wellhead protection plans and work with landowners within these protection areas that have areas of concern. 2. Seek funds for the sealing of abandoned wells. 3. Utilize all educational opportunities to educate citizens about the importance of protecting groundwater from contamination. 4. Seek funds to conduct private well testing.
<p>Drainage management focusing on wetland restorations and floodwater retention opportunities: Protect, Improve & Manage all Surface Waters</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Implement the 2015 Buffer Law. 2. Target practices that will store water on the land, reduce nitrogen, phosphorus, and sediment loading. 3. Utilizing the Wetland Conservation Act (WCA) to work with producers to understand the importance of wetlands and encourage restorations. 4. Work to develop a drainage management plan for the county. 5. Work with feedlot operators to ensure feedlot sites are in compliance and they are utilizing proper manure management. 6. Work with citizens of the county by providing educational materials and low interest loans to upgrade failing septic systems. 7. Continue the work of addressing solid waste issues such as proper handling of materials that may cause environmental contaminant concerns. 8. Work with all Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategy (WRAPS) Programs and One Watershed, One Plan as they occur in each watershed within the county.

Priority Concerns	Strategies to Address Concerns
Erosion and sediment control focusing on residue management county-wide, and gully and concentrated flow areas in the southwest portion of Redwood County: Reduce Erosion, Sediment, & Nutrient Loading.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Hold workshops on topics such as cover crops that show the importance of reducing soil erosion and improving soil health. 2. Encourage enrollment in programs and the installation of Best Management Practices that will aid in reduction of soil erosion.
Drainage management focusing on wetland restorations and floodwater retention opportunities: Target Landscapes to Increase Conservation Cover to Increase Biodiversity.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Work with residents of the county to promote enrollment in land retirement programs to achieve high quality grasslands and wetlands.

Source: Redwood County Comprehensive Local Water Management Plan

Cottonwood County Comprehensive Local Water Management Plan 2017-2027

The Cottonwood County Comprehensive Local Water Management Plan 2017-2027 was a 2017 update to the 2007-2017 water management plan. It was intended to identify existing and potential water issues in the context of watershed units

and groundwater systems, informing specific implementation actions to achieve goals for sound hydrological management of water and related resources.

Chart 5: Priority Issues & Strategies from Cottonwood County Comprehensive Local Water Management Plan

Priority Issues	Strategies to address those Issues
Improve Surface Water Quality: Improved land use and agricultural best management practices are necessary to address the water quality of lakes, wetlands, and rivers.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Protect soil from erosion and prevent agricultural runoff. 2. Wetland restoration and management. 3. Address TMDL Impaired Waters.
Drainage Management: Improve stream and lake water quality and hydrology by better managing public and private agriculture drainage systems.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Protect long-term water supply. 2. Address negative impacts of drainage management. 3. Develop a comprehensive Multi-Purpose Drainage Management Plan. 4. Create more short-term and long-term water storage.
Feedlots & SSTS: Protect public waters and assist residents in meeting feedlot and septic standards, focusing on immediate health and safety situations.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Assist feedlot owners to maintain compliance with MN Statute 7020 standards. 2. Continue to bring nonconforming ISTS into compliance with state standards.

Source: Cottonwood County Comprehensive Local Water Management Plan

COMMON THEMES FROM THE WATER MANAGEMENT PLANS IN THE SRDC REGION

Although each water management plan varies in level of technical recommendations, some common issue or priority concerns are highlighted in each plan. The common issues identified included elevated nitrates and bacteria matter in the groundwater, buffering land uses near Wellhead Protection Areas (WPAs) and Drinking Water Supply

Management Areas (DSWMAs) and agricultural best practices for sediment movement and erosion control. Addressing these concerns requires various forms of long-term partnerships of all stakeholders within the impacted areas.

HAZARD MITIGATION PLANS

Cottonwood County All-Hazard Mitigation Plan

The All-Hazard Mitigation Plan for Cottonwood County was completed in August 2019. The following High Rank Hazards for Cottonwood County and the recommended strategies to address those hazards are as follows:

Chart 6: High Rank Hazards & Strategies from Cottonwood County All-Hazard Mitigation Plan

High Rank Hazards	Strategies to Address Hazards
Tornado and Windstorms	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improve the weather warning system in at least one community each year. 2. Encourage all residents to have and use NOAA All Hazards Public Alert weather radios, preferably with Specific Alert Message Encoding (SAME) capability. 3. Increase support for the local storm spotters’ network. 4. Review and update the EOP media plan to provide public information about all-hazard events. 5. Work with critical facilities such as hospitals and rural water suppliers to assure access to back-up power generation. 6. Encourage residents to use licensed contractors. 7. Plan for designated long-term shelter location(s) in case of disaster event. 8. Educate public about benefit of safe rooms and funding sources available. 9. Encourage construction of safe rooms in public facilities and parks.
Winter Storms	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Work with communities to review and/or complete Continuity of Operations Planning and encourage private businesses and families to prepare for all-hazard events. 2. Work with MnDOT / local road authorities to identify and improve hazardous intersections and bridges. 3. Use road design and living snow fences to help control snow on roadways. 4. Encourage property owners to maintain landscaping distances to overhead power lines. 5. Require utility providers to have power lines buried and/or hardened against hazards, where feasible.
Server Summer Storms including Lightning and Hail	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Participate in “Severe Weather Awareness Week” each spring. 2. Continue to enforce building code for new construction. 3. Construct safe rooms at outdoor recreational facilities. 4. Place sirens in key unincorporated areas including Delft and Talcot Lake campground.

Source: Cottonwood County All-Hazard Mitigation Plan

Jackson County All-Hazard Mitigation Plan

The All-Hazard Mitigation Plan for Jackson County was completed in February 2016. The following High Rank Hazards for Jackson County and the recommended strategies to address those hazards are as follows:

Chart 7: High Rank Hazards & Strategies from Jackson County All-Hazard Mitigation Plan

High Rank Hazards	Strategies to Address Hazards
Blizzards, Winter Storms, and Extreme Cold Events	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Educate county residents on the importance and need of adequate supply of emergency shelters and safe rooms.2. Educate county residents on where emergency shelters are located.3. Have staff at the schools, hospitals, and nursing homes trained for severe weather emergency response.4. Have county citizens become better notified of severe weather conditions and precautions they should take.5. Have a backup generator for winter electric failure to insure proper heating of designated shelters, safe rooms, and homes.
Tornados and Straight-line Wind Events	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Have designated tornado and winter storm shelters and safe rooms in town for people with no appropriate shelter.2. Ensure all severe weather sirens have a back-up power source.3. Ensure proper siren coverage within Jackson County.

Source: Jackson County All-Hazard Mitigation Plan

Lincoln County All-Hazard Mitigation Plan

The All-Hazard Mitigation Plan for Lincoln County was complete in August 2019. The following High Rank Hazards for Lincoln County and their recommended strategies to address those hazards are as follows:

Chart 8: High Rank Hazards & Strategies from Lincoln County All-Hazard Mitigation Plan

High Rank Hazards	Strategies to Address Hazards
Blizzards, Winter Storms, and Extreme Cold Events	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Work with critical facilities such as hospitals and rural water suppliers to assure access to back-up power generation.2. Work with utility providers to have power lines buried and/or hardened against hazards.3. Encourage all residents to have and use NOAA All Hazards Public Alert weather radios (preferably with Specific Alert Message Encoding Capability) and to sign up for the county public notification system.4. Continue to maintain and test the weather warning system in all communities within five years.5. Increase the number of trained weather spotters in Lincoln County.6. Educate the public about the benefit of safe rooms and funding sources available.7. Encourage property owners to maintain landscaping distances to overhead power lines.8. Encourage individuals and entities to use licensed contractors.9. Work with MnDOT/local road authorities to identify and improve hazardous intersections and bridges.

Source: Lincoln County All-Hazard Mitigation Plan

Lyon County All-Hazard Mitigation Plan

The All-Hazard Mitigation Plan for Lyon County was completed in April 2017. The following High Rank Hazards for Lyon County and the recommended strategies to address those hazards are as follows:

Chart 9: High Rank Hazards & Strategies from Lyon County All-Hazard Mitigation Plan

High Rank Hazards	Strategies to Address Hazards
Blizzards, Winter Storms, and Extreme Cold Events	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Residents will understand the importance and need to take responsibility for themselves and their families/neighbors in a severe storm event.2. All critical government buildings are equipped with quick connect systems for transportable generators.3. To have a backup generator for electric failure to ensure proper heating and cooling of designated emergency shelters, safe rooms, and critical facilities.4. There are adequate emergency shelters in Lyon County.5. To have appropriate emergency shelters available to people without appropriate emergency shelter and people living in manufactured home parks in Lyon County.6. Have all cities in Lyon County become Storm Ready Communities and Weather-Ready Nation Ambassadors.7. Residents should understand snow and wind load provisions in the Minnesota State Building Code.8. Entities in Lyon County are prepared for hazard events.9. Conserve electrical resources during an extreme heat event.10. Spotter training is available in Lyon County.11. Have staff at the schools, hospitals, and nursing homes trained for severe weather emergency response.12. Have a robust, uninterruptable communication system available for use in emergencies.13. Warning Systems are regularly tested, and all sirens have a back-up power source.14. Proper siren coverage within Lyon County.

Source: Lyon County All-Hazard Mitigation Plan

Murray County All-Hazard Mitigation Plan

The All-Hazard Mitigation Plan for Murray County was completed in February 2012. The following High Rank Hazards for Lyon County and their recommended strategies to address those hazards are as follows:

Chart 10: High Rank Hazards & Strategies from Murray County All-Hazard Mitigation Plan

High Rank Hazards	Strategies to Address Hazards
Agricultural Disease (Animal & Crop)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide information on ag disease and prevention to producers & residents. 2. Monitor invasive insect species, such as emerald ash borer.
Severe Storms such as Blizzards and Winter Storms and Tornado/Straight-line Wind	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conduct a study to determine what places in the County and each city are deficient in safe rooms; Construct at least one new safe room or improve warning system in one community each year 2. Educate local schools, nursing homes, hospitals, etc. on importance of doing a “Severe Weather Awareness Week” workshop for their staff, including identifying evacuation routes and safety shelters, etc. 3. Make nursing home staff aware of the need/importance of providing shelter locations and evacuation routes for nursing home residents in case of severe weather. 4. Encourage all residents & public buildings have NOAA Public Alert radios with SAME technology, especially in rural areas away from community sirens. 5. Increase signage at public campgrounds warning campers of weather risks – i.e., those sites not covered by sirens. 6. Ensure that critical facilities have access to back up power generators. 7. Harden utilities, replace overhead with underground power lines. 8. Map location of underground utilities. 9. Support amateur radio/communications improvements. 10. Make sure that County dispatchers & First Responders are aware of any low/minimum maintenance roads or “closed roads” within the respective townships. 11. Work with MnDOT / local road authorities to identify and improve hazardous intersections and bridges. 12. Use road design and living snow fences to help control snow on roadways.
Public Health and Infectious Disease	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improve coordination and communication with the local media. 2. Work with Public Health Service and MDH on the mass distribution of needed medicines and supplies for public health emergencies. 3. Maintain a quarantine plan in coordination with local doctors and other health professionals. 4. Spray standing water areas for mosquito control. 5. Ensure that hospitals have access to back up power generators. Examine needs and costs for providing back up power generation where none currently exists.
Water Supply	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Work with the Minnesota Department of Health to develop & implement Wellhead Protection Plans. 2. Update the Emergency Response Plan to identify alternate sources of drinking water, including the location of adequate amounts of bottled water. 3. Review the County water plan for potential groundwater contaminants within the County.

Source: Murray County All-Hazard Mitigation Plan

Nobles County All-Hazard Mitigation Plan

The All-Hazard Mitigation Plan for Nobles County was completed in March 2018. The following High Rank Hazards for Lyon County and their recommended strategies to address those hazards are as follows:

Chart 11: High Rank Hazards & Strategies from Nobles County All-Hazard Mitigation Plan

High Rank Hazards	Strategies to Address Hazards
Severe Summer Storms (Including tornadoes and straight-line winds)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conduct a study to determine areas deficient in safe rooms/not covered by warning systems; Construct at least one new safe room or improve warning system in one community each year (including county and municipal parks), maintain or upgrade sirens in place, and install new warning sirens in identified underserved population areas. 2. Educate local schools, nursing homes, hospitals, public and private sectors, etc. on importance of doing “Severe Weather Awareness Week” workshop for their staff, including identifying evacuation routes and safety shelters; Encourage all residents and public buildings to have and use NOAA Public Alert Radios with SAME technology; encourage staff and residents to sign up for Nixle alerts. 3. Make nursing home staff aware of the need/importance of providing shelter locations and evacuation routes for nursing home residents in case of severe weather. 4. Ensure that each manufactured home park has an updated emergency plan; work with park managers and owners to improve communication during severe storm events; ensure residents are familiar with the emergency plan and recognize evacuation routes and shelter sites. 5. To mitigate damage to electric lines and/or road closures, keep trees trimmed or removed along roadways and remove debris after storms. 6. Install lightning detectors on school property for notification during outdoor events and activities.
Severe Winter Storms (including blizzards and ice storms)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure that critical facilities have access to back up power generators 2. Harden utilities, require local electrical distribution lines to be buried where feasible. 3. Use road design to help control snow on roadways and mitigate flooding. This action also addresses flooding and Transportation infrastructure.
Water Contamination	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create County Response Team made up of emergency personnel which will be the first responders to accidental hazardous materials spills; educate and train emergency personnel so all types of potential hazardous spills will be readily recognized upon arrival at the scene. 2. Update the County Water Plan to include all potential groundwater contaminants.

High Rank Hazards

Strategies to Address Hazards

Flooding (Flash, ravine, and dam/culvert failure)

1. Encourage sewered communities to address infiltration to reduce extra flow in storm events; Inspect, maintain, and repair area sewage lagoons to ensure adequate capacity and operation.
2. Adopt buffer system and Best Management Practices (BMPs) in agricultural lands within the flood fringe areas.
3. Continue to indicate on zoning forms if property is a flood hazard area.
4. Develop a program to voluntarily acquire, relocate or elevate at-risk structures in floodplains.
5. Implement County Ditch 12 Flood Reduction Plan.
6. Monitor and inspect dams, ditches, culverts, and bridges for maintenance, repair, and replacement needs
7. Develop, plan, and implement flood reduction plan for the ditch which runs from east side of state highway 91 to Mulberry Street.
8. Purchase physical barriers and road closure signs to prepare for road closure emergencies. This also address Hazardous Materials, Fire and Erosion, landslides, and Subsidence.
9. Improve storm water drainage system capacity by creating and maintaining storm water retention ponds to improve water quality.

Hazardous Materials

1. Determine future population trends, create evacuation procedure for hazardous spill, public health outbreaks, flood, etc., and identify resources available for disasters. This also helps address severe winter storms, severe summer storms and Flooding.
2. Apply for funding to assist farmers with hazardous materials containment. This also addresses Agricultural disease.
3. Develop Geographic Information Systems (GIS) capability to map locations of fixed facilities using hazardous materials and associated transportation corridors.
4. Update the County water plan to include all potential groundwater contaminants. This action also addresses water contamination issues.
5. Educate county residents, farmers and businesses on reporting and evaluate potential impacts of hazardous material spills, clean-up, and monitoring procedures. This action also addresses water contamination issues
6. Increase awareness of the household hazardous waste facility, its importance, and how to utilize its services.

Public Health Emergencies

1. Improve coordination and communication with the local media (radio, print, TV, social) for dissemination of public health information, including prior to and during incidents/public health emergencies.
2. Work with MDH on the mass distribution of needed medicines and supplies for public health emergencies.
3. Develop a quarantine plan in coordination with local doctors and other health professionals.

High Rank Hazards

Strategies to Address Hazards

Utility Failure

1. Cooperate with county/state to improve access to cellular services and broadband access for all of Nobles County.
2. Ensure essential facilities and equipment are protected from potential loss of fiber services.
3. Update and/or connect private sewer systems to municipal sewer in high vulnerability areas, educate producers regarding best farming practices, conduct public awareness and information campaigns, and install bioreactors in wellhead protection streams. This also addresses Public Health Emergencies.

Source: Nobles County All-Hazard Mitigation Plan

Pipestone County All-Hazard Mitigation Plan

The All-Hazard Mitigation Plan for Pipestone County was completed in August 2019. The following High Rank Hazards for Pipestone County and their recommended strategies.

Chart 12: High Rank Hazards & Strategies from Pipestone County All-Hazard Mitigation Plan

High Rank Hazards	Strategies to Address Hazards
Tornados and Windstorms	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Each spring, educate local schools, hospitals, nursing homes, and others on the importance of doing a “Severe Weather Awareness Week” workshop for their staff, including identifying evacuation routes and safety shelters. 2. Conduct a study to determine areas that are deficient in safe rooms and/or not covered by warning systems; construct at least one new safe room (including in public facilities or manufactured home parks). 3. Work with fire and ambulance volunteers to develop a safe shelter plan for the county including shelters, shelter capacity, and transportation routes. 4. Ensure that each manufactured home park has an updated emergency management plan; work with park managers to improve communication during severe storm events; ensure that residents are familiar with the emergency management plan and that residents recognize evacuation routes and shelter sites. 5. Evaluate and upgrade siren warning systems (considering study outcomes from Action 10).
Winter Storm	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Work with communities to review and/or complete Continuity of Operations Planning and encourage private businesses and families to prepare for all-hazard events. 2. Encourage all residents to have use NOAA All Hazards Public Alert weather radios, with Specific Alert Message Encoding (SAME) capability. 3. Develop a comprehensive media plan to provide public information about all-hazard events. 4. Work with critical facilities such as hospitals and rural water suppliers to provide access to back-up power generators.

Source: Pipestone County All-Hazard Mitigation Plan

Redwood County All-Hazard Mitigation Plan

The All-Hazard Mitigation Plan for Redwood County was completed in August 2019. The following High Rank Hazards for Redwood County and the recommended strategies to address those hazards are as follows.

Chart 13: High Rank Hazards & Strategies from Redwood County All-Hazard Mitigation Plan

High Rank Hazards	Strategies to Address Hazards
Severe Storms including Tornado/Windstorms and Winter Storms	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conduct a study to determine what places in the county and each city are deficient in safe rooms; Construct at least one new safe room or improve warning system in one community each year. 2. Educate local schools, nursing homes, assisted living, hospitals, etc. on importance of doing a “Severe Weather Awareness Week” workshop for their staff, including identifying evacuation routes and safe rooms. 3. Make nursing home staff aware of the need/importance of providing shelter locations and evacuation routes for residents in case of severe weather. 4. Ensure manufactured home parks have updated emergency management plans; work with park managers to improve communication during severe storms; ensure residents are familiar with emergency plans, evacuation routes, and safe rooms. 5. Encourage all residents and public building to have NOAA Public Alert Radios with SAME technology and to sign up for CodeRED alerts, especially in rural areas away from community sirens. 6. Ensure that critical facilities have access to backup power generators. Examine needs and costs for providing backup power generation where none currently exists. 7. Harden utilities, replace overhead w/ underground power lines. 8. Use road design and living snow fences to control snow. 9. Scope at least one infrastructure retrofit project in one community each year.
Flash Flood	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Work with communities to develop their own EOP. 2. Discourage future development within floodplains; consider minor localized flood reduction projects, especially to reduce overland flooding. 3. Encourage sound construction practices and agricultural Best Management Practices (BMPs) in flood fringe areas. 4. Implement dFIRM floodplain maps. 5. Jurisdictions not currently participating in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) will review their flood hazard areas and consider participation. 6. Encourage all property owners in flood hazard areas to purchase flood insurance. 7. Develop a program to voluntarily acquire, relocate, or elevate at-risk structures in floodplains. 8. Retrofit infrastructure to reduce impacts of flooding; stabilize/replace at-risk bridges and slopes prone to sloughing. 9. Reinforce natural spillways and grade existing spillways. 10. Encourage sump pump ordinances and strengthen existing ordinances with inspection. 11. Harden water retention areas. Raise existing water retention ponds and create new ones where appropriate.

Source: Redwood County All-Hazard Mitigation Plan

Rock County All-Hazard Mitigation Plan

The All-Hazard Mitigation Plan for Rock County was completed in August 2019. The following High Rank Hazards for Rock County and the recommended strategies to address those hazards are as follows.

Chart 14: High Rank Hazards & Strategies from Rock County All-Hazard Mitigation Plan

High Rank Hazards	Strategies to Address Hazards
Blizzards, Winter Storms, and Extreme Cold Events	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure critical facilities such as hospitals and rural water suppliers have access to back up power generators. 2. Work with fire and ambulance volunteers to develop a safe shelter plan for the county including shelters, shelter capacity, and transportation routes.
Tornado and Straight-line Wind Events	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Distribute educational materials regarding the risks associated with violent storms that occur in Rock County when building licenses are applied for and issued. This will help emphasize the importance of have an adequate safety shelter. 2. Increase signage at public campgrounds warning campers of weather risks (i.e., those sites not covered by sirens) 3. Build a safety shelter at Blue Mound State Park. Identify other municipal and county parks where safety shelters are need. 4. Conduct a study to determine where additional safety shelters are needed within cities (mobile home parks and other areas where basements are uncommon). 5. Each spring, Rock County Emergency Management personnel will educate local schools, nursing homes, hospitals, etc. on the importance of doing a “Severe Weather Awareness Week” workshop for their staff. This workshop identifies evacuation routes and safety shelters, along with other important information. 6. Encourage Rock County residents to sign up for emergency alerts through the Nixle Alert System. The Nixle Alert System allows verified government agencies to send out messages to residents via phone, email, and internet. The Nixle Alert System allows local government to send out information to residents regarding current weather conditions and other precautionary measures. 7. Encourage residents to purchase NWS weather radios, especially those in rural areas away from community sirens. 8. Evaluate the recommendations made by Federal Warning Systems, Inc. regarding emergency sirens in Rock County and implement said recommendations. 9. Identify old Fallout Shelters as locations to be used during severe weather events.

Source: Rock County All-Hazard Mitigation Plan

COMMON ISSUES IN ALL HAZARD MITIGATION PLANS WITHIN THE SRDC REGION

Extreme Weather Events such as Tornadoes, windstorms, straight-line winds, winter, and Summer Storms are the common high-rank hazards noted in each of Counties All-Hazards Mitigation Plans. Hazards such as tornadoes winter and summer storms are a higher risk depending on the

season while straight-line winds and windstorms can occur spontaneously throughout the year. Other common hazards mentioned in county ill-hazards mitigation events, include seasonal flooding (specifically after the initial thawing even), drought and drinking water accessibility.

TRANSPORTATION INVENTORY

All roadways are connected through a vast network that connects people, goods, and service to their destinations. To assist with roadway design and to categorize the characteristic of user travel, the Federal Highway Administration in coordination with the U.S. Department of Transportation developed the Functioning Classification system. This system classifies roadways based on design, general traveler destinations.

MOBILITY VS ACCESS

The terms mobility and connectivity are terms that are used to generalize the usage of roadways. Mobility refers to connecting travelers to destinations over a long distance. Roadways that serve higher orders of mobility typically do not serve there abutting land uses, have little opportunity for entry/exit and operate at higher speeds. Whereas roadways that provide access provides many opportunities for entry and exit, typically serve abutting land uses, and operate at slower speeds. All roadways serve both mobility and access however they do so at a varying degree.

ARTERIAL VS COLLECTOR

Arterials roadways are designed to serve a higher order of mobility to connect travelers to their destinations. Collector roadways are designed to connect and provide access for local roads and streets with arterials.

FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM

Functional Classification is the practice of grouping roadways into classes based on their design and the character of service. In the state of Minnesota these classifications are used to determine eligibility for Federal and State Aid.

Interstates

Interstates are the highest classification of Arterials and are designed to serve the highest order of mobility for long-distance traveling. Roadways in this classification category are officially designated as Interstates by the Secretary of Transportation.

Freeways & Expressways

Roadways in this classification tend to look very similar to Interstates. Freeway and express way are interchangeable terms, and their usage is usual of regional preference. The roadways have direction travel lanes and are limited to on and off-ramps and a limited number of at-grade intersection.

Principal Arterial-Other

These roadways often serve major centers of metro areas and provide a high-level mobility. Abutting lands uses may be served by principal arterials. Access for these roadways include driveways to parcels and other at-grade access points. Principal arterials serve rural and urban communities in a similar manner except multiple principal arterials may serve an urban community and rural communities may be served by one.

Minor Arterial

Minor arterials are roadways that support trips of moderate length, serve geographic areas that are smaller than principal arterials. In urban

settings, minor arterials serve to connect principal arterial routes in a manner that is cohesive, with little disturbance to traffic flow. In urban settings, minor arterials can support higher speeds and should be spaced according to population density.

Major and Minor Collector

Collectors serve to gather traffic from local roads and funnel them into the arterial network. Historically, the delineation between a major or minor collector was dependent on whether it was in an urban or rural setting. Currently the distinctions between Major and Minor Collectors are subtle. In general, Major Collector routes are longer in length and have lower connecting driveway densities. They may have higher speed limits, more travel lanes and higher average traffic volumes. Overall, the total mileage of Major Collectors is typically lower than the total mileage of lower collectors.

Local Roads

Local roads account for the largest percentage of total roadways mileage in any network. Local roads are classified by default when all other roadways have been identified. Local roads also provide the highest order of access to the overall transportation network.

OTHER TERMS COMMONLY USED TO DESCRIBE ROADWAYS

Trunk Highway

Trunk Highways are major roadways such as Interstates, US Highways and State Highways that serve as main route connecting cities, ports, airports, and other importation traffic generators.

County Road

County roads are roads that are locally maintained by county highway departments. These roadways can include a variety of functional classifications as defined.

County State Aid Highway (CSAH)

County State Aid Highways are county highways that receive authorized financial support from the County State Aid Highway Fund.

Chart 15: Functional Classification of Urban Roadways in SRDC Region by County

County	Total	Principle Arterial-Interstate	PA-Other Freeway/Expressway	PA-Other	Minor Arterial	Major Collector	Minor Collector	Local
Lyon	98.8	0.0	0.0	7.5	9.5	15.1	6.4	60.4
Nobles	81.0	3.1	0.0	7.0	4.9	12.3	4.5	49.2
Total Urban	179.8	3.1	0.0	14.5	14.4	27.4	10.9	109.6

Chart 16: Inventory of Functional Classification of Rural Roadways in SRDC Region by County

County	Total	Principle Arterial-Interstate	PA-Other Freeway/Expressway	PA-Other	Minor Arterial	Major Collector	Minor Collector	Local
Cottonwood	1,262.5	0.0	0.0	39.2	47.8	202.3	134.5	838.8
Jackson	1,414.3	30.4	0.0	46.5	22.8	230.6	142.9	941.1
Lincoln	1,048.2	0.0	0.0	20.8	63.2	160.2	90.8	713.2
Lyon	1,364.9	0.0	0.0	81.5	46.9	192.1	153.4	891.0
Murray	1,376.8	0.0	0.0	28.8	62.1	205.0	95.7	985.2
Nobles	1,417.2	27.1	0.0	28.5	37.2	176.6	156.0	991.8
Pipestone	956.9	0.0	0.0	30.1	45.4	147.7	81.2	652.5
Redwood	1,699.1	0.0	0.0	80.8	52.2	260.6	136.3	1,169.2
Rock	1,006.5	20.5	0.0	17.4	26.4	147.8	118.2	676.1
Total Rural	11,546.4	77.9	0.0	373.5	404.1	1,723.0	1,109.0	7,858.8

DEMOGRAPHICS & POPULATION

POPULATION

As of 2018, the SRDC Region had an estimated population of 116,910 and made up approximately 2.1% of the State of Minnesota population. The region experienced consistent growth until it hit its peak in 1960 at 149,268. Since then, the SRDC region has experienced population loss. The period with the most population was between the years of 1980-1990 when the population decreased by 13,680 or 10%. Population growth was stagnant from 1940-1960 at .04%. Since then, the regional population has declined with the period of greatest population loss being between 1980-1990 when the region's population decreased by 13,680 or 10.0%.

Taking a closer look at the Region's population since 2000 give one a better insight on recent trends in population loss/gain. Since 2000, population in the SRDC region has decreases by a total of 4,679 or 3.9%. There was a slight increase in regional population from 2009 to 2010 of 3,324 (2.9%). Since then, Population in the SRDC region has been decreasing at an average annual rate of 0.2%.

POPULATION PROJECTIONS

Population projections are provided on a county level for selected age categories by the Minnesota Demographic Center. According to these projections the region's population loss is decreasing is slated to stabilize by 2050. By 2050 the regional population is projected to decrease to 109,126 or 6.9%. Most of the region's population is between the ages of 25–44-year-old at 23.6% The second largest age cohort are those that are 65 years or older (23.1%). The Minnesota Demographic Center projects that those of retirement age will increasing in composition of the total population until 2030 when they are projected to make-up 25.9% of the total population in the

Figure 1: SRDC Region Population

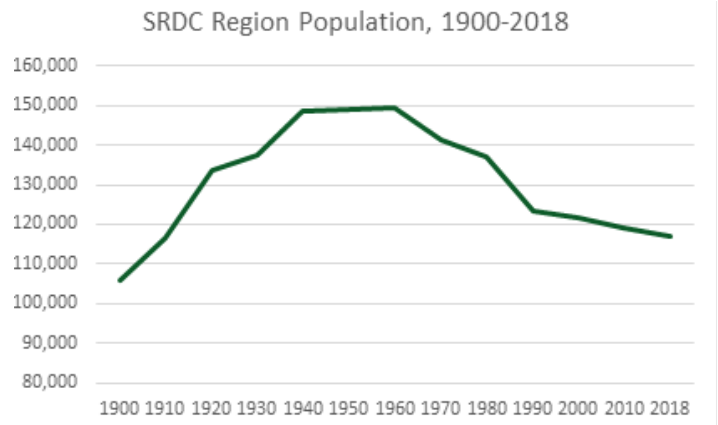


Figure 2: SRDC Region Population & Percentage Change

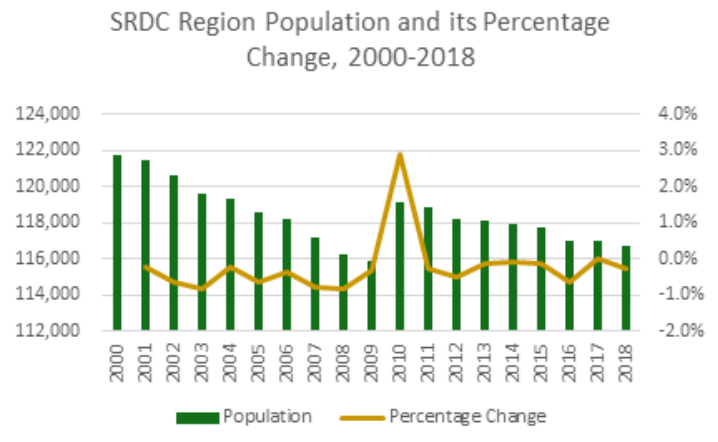
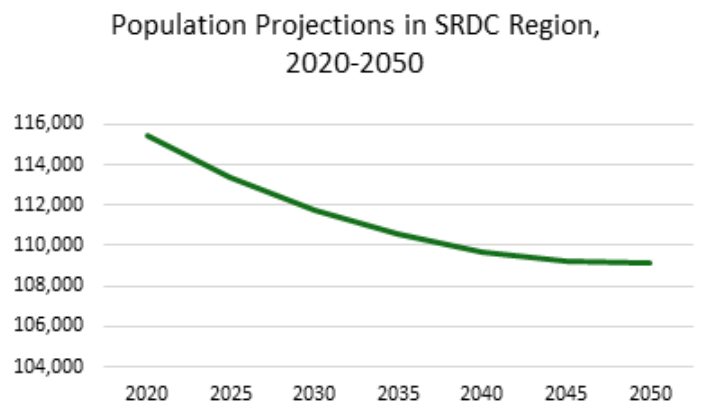


Figure 3: Population Projections in SRDC Region



region. They are then projected to decrease in composition by 23.1% in 2050. The 15–24-year-old cohort (High school and young adults) comprised 12.2% of the total population in 2018 and projected to increase in composition until 2040 when they are estimated to peak at 14.5% in 2025. This age cohort is then expected to decrease to 11.7% by 2040 and increase to 13.4% by 2050. This will be an overall increase of 1.2% from, 2018-2050. Youth under 15 years old (typically children completely dependent on their head of household) make up 20.7% of the population in 2018 and this cohort is projected to decrease until 2030 when it is estimated to dip at 16.7%. By 2050, the 15 and younger cohort is projected to make up 18.3%, an overall decrease of 2.4% since 2018. The two main income earning cohorts (those aged 25—44 years and 45-64 years old) have opposite growth patterns. In 2018, those aged 25-44 and 45-64 years old made up 22.2% and 25.8% of the total population, respectively.

By 2015, it is projected that the 25-44 and 45-64 cohorts will make up 23.6% and 21.6% of the total population. Combined these main income earners expect to decline and overall, 1.8% in composition by 2050.

RACE & ETHNICITY

The region displays some economic strength in some of its diverse populations. 9.1% of the region’s residents are of Hispanic or Latino Origin. This is 3.8% higher than the state of Minnesota and 8.7% below the national average. Although the region is less diverse than the State of Minnesota and the United States as a whole, it has been increasing since 2000. Nonwhite populations in the SRDC region have increased by 5.2% since 2000. The Hispanic or Latino population had the greatest growth rate (a 5.5% increase) from 2000-2018 within the SRDC region. The racial group that had the highest rate of growth in the SRDC region between the years of 2000 and 2018 was the Asian & Other Pacific Islander group which increased 1.9%.

Figure 4: Population Composition by Age Group

Population Composition by Age Group, 2018

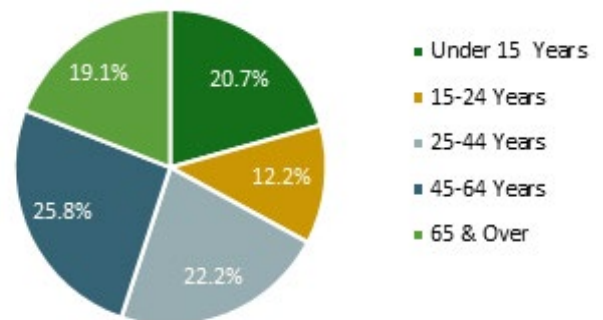


Figure 5: Projected Population Composition by Age Group

Projected Population Composition by Age Group, 2050

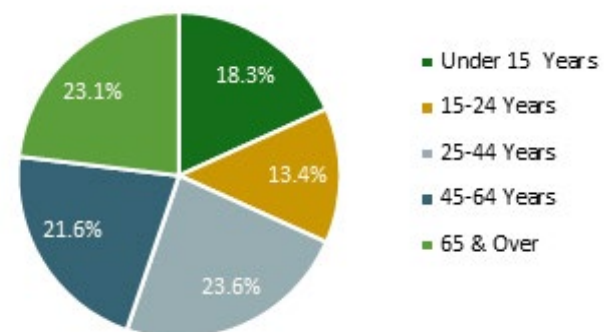


Chart 17: Race & Ethnicity for SRDC Region and Minnesota in 2018

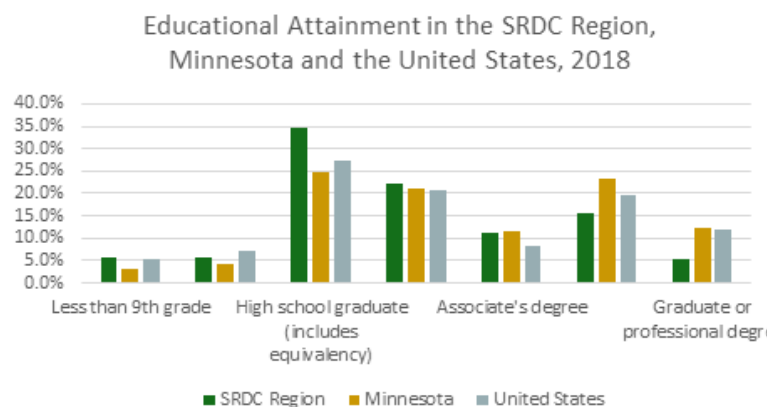
Race/Ethnicity	SRDC Region 2010	SRDC Region 2018	Minnesota 2018	United States 2018
White	94.2%	89.0%	83.4%	72.7%
Black or African American	0.6%	2.1%	6.2%	12.7%
American Indian & Alaska Native	0.8%	1.1%	1.1%	0.8%
Asian & Other Pacific Islander	1.5%	3.4%	4.7%	5.6%
Some Other Race	1.9%	3.0%	1.8%	4.9%
Two or More Races	0.9%	1.4%	2.9%	3.2%
Hispanic or Latino Origin	3.6%	9.1%	5.3%	17.8%

Source: 2010 Decennial Census and 2018 ACS 5-Year Estimates

EDUCATION

There are 29 school districts in the 9-county SRDC region. According to the 2018 ACS 5-year estimates, 20.7% of the regional population is the cohort that attends school (5-24 years old). The region's population that is 25 and older have lower educational attainment rates compared to the state. As of 2018, the region's total population with a high school degree or higher level of education (88.7%) is lower than the state (93.0%), but higher than the Nation (87.7%). 20.6 percent of the population within the SRDC region have a bachelor's degree or higher. This is lower than the state's population with a bachelor's degree or higher (35.4%) and the nation's (31.5%). For the SRDC region, Minnesota and the nation, the most popular educational attainment level is that of a High School Diploma or its equivalency. In general, the higher educational attainment rates degrees or above can be explained by the opportunities that cities and the metro areas.

Figure 6: Educational Attainment in SRDC Region, Minnesota and United States



LABOR FORCE

Since 2000, the SRDC Regions Labor Force has fluctuated. The total labor force peaked in 2011 at 66,627 and dipped at its lowest in 2018 at 64,147. From 2018-2019 the total labor force increased by 1,025, showing signs of recovery. Total Labor Force includes those that are actively employed along with those that are looking for work. Unemployment rates measure the percentage of those within the labor force who are not employed and are actively seeking employment. Comparing these two measures and indicate some of the economic restrictions that the region may be having. For example, if the total labor force and unemployment simultaneously increases, this may allude to a mismatch of employment opportunities and the skill sets of the available work force. If both rates simultaneously decrease or stay stagnant, a community may have trouble attracting new business, the expansion of existing business and difficulty attracting potential employees. This is the typical trend in the SRDC region. Decreases in the available labor force paired with the increase in unemployment, tends to indicate that a region is not only losing major employers, but are losing potential employees that have the economic means to move to better opportunities. When this happens, those that are left behind tend to be lower to modest skilled laborers whose work is no longer in demand, thus average wages tend to decrease, and economic mobility far less likely. Optimally, an increase in total labor force pairs best with a decrease in unemployment rates. This trend indicates that a community is attracting new populations and business that suit the workforce's skill set.

Unemployment within the SRDC Region peaked in 2010 at 6.0% while Minnesota's peaked 7.8% in 2009 and the Nations peaked at 9.6% in 2010. The SRDC Region peaked in its unemployment rate when the labor force was 66,572. This is the second largest Laborforce in the SRDC region since 2010. The Regions Laborforce peaked in 2011 at 66,627 with an unemployment rate of 5.5%. From 2010 to 2013unemployment rates decrease to its lowest at 3.0%. unemployment rates slightly increased (3.0%-

Figure 7: Total Labor Force & Average Unemployment Rate

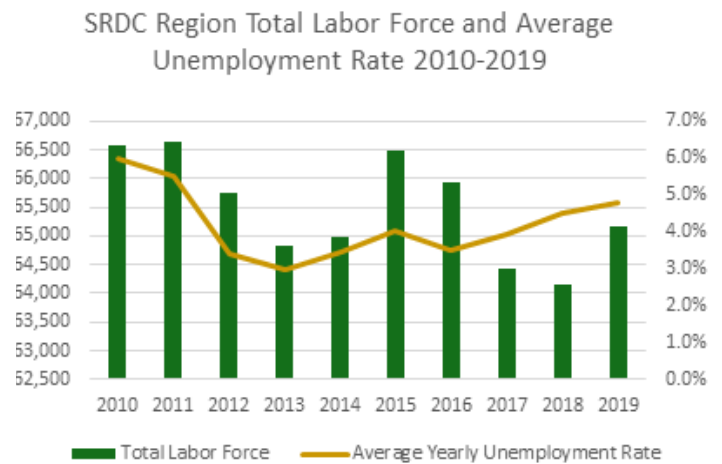
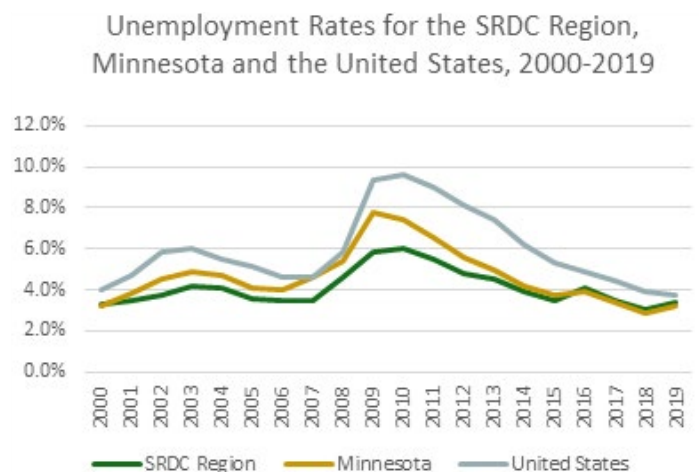


Figure 8: Unemployment Rates for the SRDC Region, Minnesota, & the United States



4.1%) from 2013-2015. This 1.1% increase was paired with was matched with the second largest Laborforce Since 2000 the exceptions to this trend were between 2003-2004, 200 8-2013 and 2016. In general, the SRDC region is robust to changes in unemployment that impact Minnesota and the United States as a whole. Typically, unemployment rates within the SRDC region are below the state and national average with few exceptions and the rates of changes are less volatile in the SRDC region than state of Minnesota and the United States as a whole.

EMPLOYMENT

According to 2018 ACS 5-year estimates, the education (which includes educational and health care sectors), sector employs the largest proportion of the SRDC Region (22.6%), the state of Minnesota (25.2%) and the United States (23.1%).

Manufacturing is the second most popular sector of employment for the SRDC Region at 16.8 percent and for Minnesota at 13.4 percent. On the national level, the professional and management sector is the second largest area employment at 11.4 percent and is closely followed by retail trade at 11.3 percent. The Agricultural, forestry and hunting sector accounted for 9.9 percent of employment in the SRDC region. This out paces the state and national levels which employ 2.1 percent and 1.8 percent, respectively. The information sector employs the smallest proportion of employees for the SRDC Region (.08%), State of Minnesota (1.7%) and the United States 2.1%.

Chart 18: Employment by Industry in SRDC Region, Minnesota & the United States, 2018

Industry	SRDC Region		Minnesota		United States	
	Employment	Distribution	Employment	Distribution	Employment	Distribution
Total	58,868		2,931,458		152,739,884	
Agriculture	5,837	9.9%	62,944	2.1%	2,793,463	1.8%
Construction	4,193	7.1%	173,411	5.9%	9,874,923	6.5%
Manufacturing	9,916	16.8%	392,925	13.4%	15,550,889	10.2%
Wholesale trade	1,910	3.2%	84,129	2.9%	4,025,876	2.6%
Retail trade	6,652	11.3%	323,381	11.0%	17,240,297	11.3%
Transportation Warehousing	2,779	4.7%	134,249	4.6%	7,984,110	5.2%
Information	493	0.8%	50,572	1.7%	3,164,287	2.1%
Finance Insurance, and Real Estate	3,087	5.2%	208,236	7.1%	10,015,304	6.6%
Professional, scientific	2,481	4.2%	287,073	9.8%	17,455,119	11.4%
Education and Health Care	13,325	22.6%	740,013	25.2%	35,293,449	23.1%
Arts and Entertainment	3,919	6.7%	245,435	8.4%	14,800,927	9.7%
Other services Including Public Administration	4,276	4.0%	229,090	7.8%	7,461,333	4.9%

Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates

EMPLOYMENT PROJECTIONS

Employment projections are provided for the SRDC region through the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development or MnDEED. Overall job opportunities are projected to grow by 1,885 (0.09%) between 2016-2026. This figure is an average that includes both projected employment growth and loss for each industry. Percentage wise the industry with the largest projected employment growth is the agricultural, forestry and hunting industry at 25.5%, followed by the Transportation and Warehousing industry at 11.8%. In contrast, industries with the largest

projected employment loss are the Mining industry with a loss of 10.6% followed by the Information and Other Services, Ex. Public Admin industries both with losses of 6.4%.

Chart 19: Southwest Minnesota Industry Projections, 2016-2026

Industry	2016 Estimate	2026 Projection	2016-2026 Percent Change	2016-2026 Numeric Change
Total, All Occupations	211,618	213,503	0.9%	1,885
Health Care & Social Assistance	29,857	31,196	4.5%	1,339
Manufacturing	31,264	31,145	-0.4%	-119
Retail Trade	20,647	19,748	-4.4%	-899
Educational Services	16,891	16,886	0.0%	-5
Public Administration	13,150	13,136	-0.1%	-14
Accommodation & Food Services	12,207	11,965	-2.0%	-242
Construction	7,995	8,408	5.2%	413
Wholesale Trade	8,272	8,323	0.6%	51
Transportation & Warehousing	7,176	8,023	11.8%	847
Other Services, Ex. Public Admin	7,632	7,142	-6.4%	-490
Agriculture, Forestry, and Hunting	5,599	7,026	25.5%	1,427
Finance & Insurance	6,314	6,369	0.9%	55
Professional & Technical Services	4,296	4,600	7.1%	304
Administrative & Waste Services	4,163	4,277	2.7%	114
Information	2,746	2,569	-6.4%	-177
Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation	2,544	2,402	-5.6%	-142
Management of Companies	1,563	1,541	-1.4%	-22
Real Estate & Rental & Leasing	1,232	1,269	3.0%	37
Utilities	755	831	10.1%	76

Source: MnDEED 2016-2026 Employment Outlook

WORKFORCE INCOME

Individual Income in the past twelve months for those aged 16 and older in SRDC Region are generally lower than for the state of Minnesota and for the United States. As of 2018, the average median earnings for the past 12 months were \$41,882.78 for the SRDC Region, \$51,693.00 for Minnesota and \$47,527.00 for the nation. The average mean earnings for the past 12 months were \$53,338.67, \$68,020.00 for Minnesota and \$65,069.00 for the nation. For both the median and mean earnings the past 12 months the SRDC Regions average more closely resembles the national average rather than the states averages.

Looking at income distribution, it can be noted that 36.0% of the region's income earning aged 16 and above earn less than \$35,000.00. This is a higher proportion than for the Nation (32.9%) and for the State (25.9%). 25.8% of the SRDC regions income earning population makes between \$35,000.00 to 49,999.00. This is 4.1% more than the state and 6.1% more than the national level. There is a greater proportion of people that earn between \$50,000.00 and \$74,999.00 in the SRDC region than for the nation. The prevalence of lower income positions illustrates the lack of opportunities for skilled labor.

Figure 9: Average Median & Mean Income in the Past 12 Months for SRDC Region, Minnesota, and the U.S.

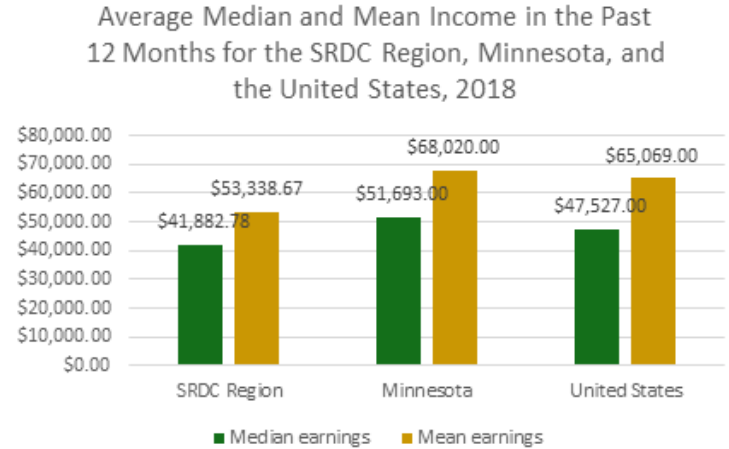
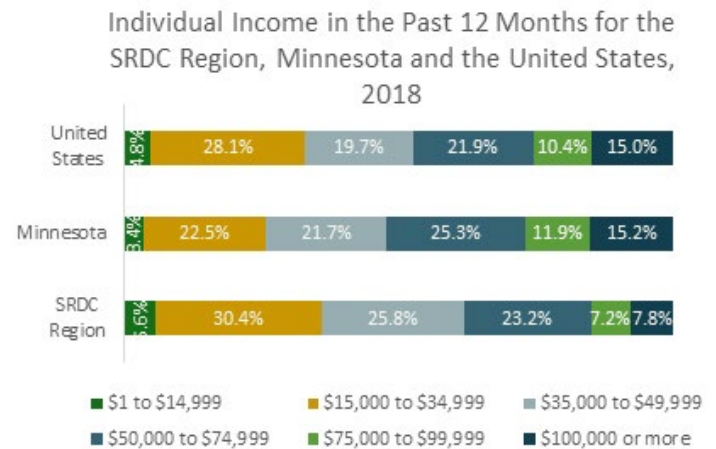


Figure 10: Individual Income in the Past 12 Months for SRDC Region, Minnesota and the U.S.



USDA CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE

The Census of Agriculture is a complete count of U.S. farms, ranches, and operators that raise, grow, or sell products that are valued at least \$1,000.00. This includes products that would have been sold during the census year but were not due to unforeseen circumstances. This census is taken every five years and counts land uses, land use practices, ownership, production practices, incomes, expenditures, and crops. The latest USDA Census of agriculture took place in 2017.

AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION ACREAGE AND SALES

In 2017, there were 7,287 operations within the SRDC region that operated a total 3,280,291 acres. The most popular operation sizes were those that were 180-499 Acres. Despite total operations 1,000 acres or larger comprising only 12.9% of the total, the average mean operation acreage was 4,030 and the average median acreage was 2,140 acres. This is evidence of the consolidation of farms and agricultural related operations.

Total commodity sales were \$3,350,135,000 for the SRDC Region while average commodity sales were \$4,168,714. Of the total regional commodity sales, \$1,566,609,000 or 46.8% came from total crop sales and \$1,783,523,000 or 53.2% came from Animal and animal product sales.

Most agricultural operations had sales that were \$100,000 or above. In the SRDC region, 7,287 operations reported sales and of those with reported sales, 1,543 (53.6%) reported sales of 100,000 or more and 1,543 operations (21.2%) reported sales of less than \$2,500. This illustrates the popularity of either larger consolidated farms or of smaller hobby farms in both rural and in urban settings.

Figure 11: Operations by Acreage in SRDC Region

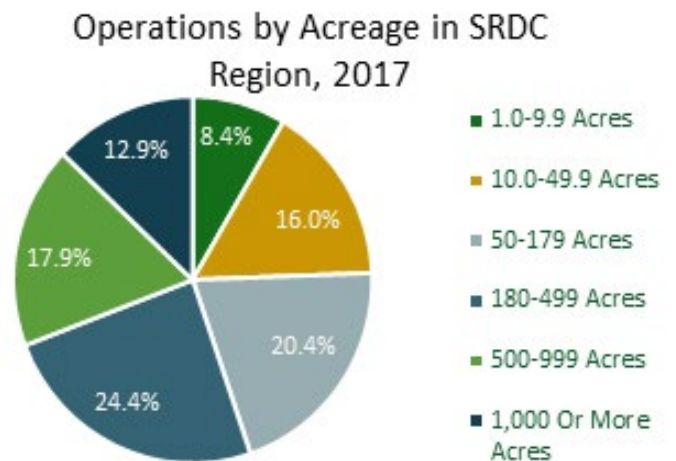
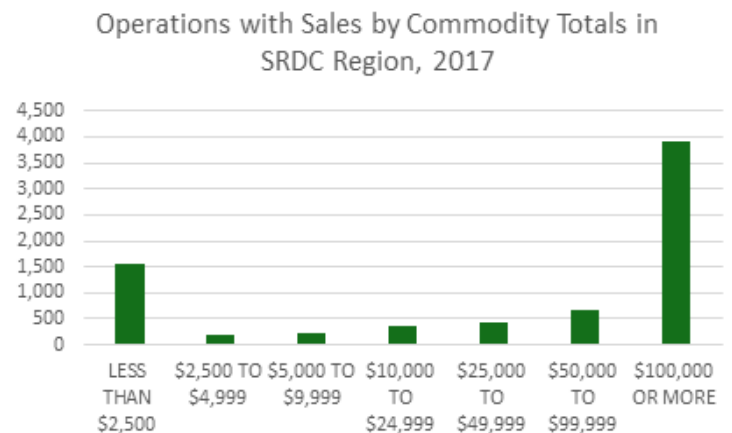


Figure 12: Operations with Sales by Commodity Totals in SRDC Region



OPERATIONS WITH ANIMALS IN INVENTORY

In the SRDC region, 44.8% of all operations that had animals in their inventory had beef for cattle. Hogs were the second most popular animal for operations with animals at 27.0%. Other animals included in operator inventory were Layer Chickens (10.0%), Sheep (9.3%), and Cattle for Dairy (6.4%), and Broiler Chickens (2.3%).

When comparing total operations with animals in inventory to total animals in inventories, it can be noted that some operations with animals work on different scales due to industry practices. In 2017, there was a total of 3,348,176 animals inventoried in the SRDC region by the USDA. Hogs comprise an estimated 75.5 percent of total animals inventoried. Despite having the most operations with cattle for beef in the region, cattle for beef only make an estimated 1.3 percent of the total animals inventoried by the USDA. 23.3 percent of the total animals being inventoried by the USDA in 2017 were broiler chickens even though 2.3 operations had broiler chickens.

Crop Production

For agricultural operators that harvested crops in the SRDC Region, the most popular ones were Corn for Grain and Soybeans. Most operators rotate between corn and soybeans from one season to another as a soil sustaining practice. Doing this allows farmers to use less nitrogen fertilizer due to the fact that soybeans leave nitrogen-rich residue in the soil. These two crops account for 76.3% of all the crops sold within the SRDC region. The remaining 23.7% of crops sold include corn used for silage (animal feed) hay and haylage (used for animal feed) all other vegetables (not in a greenhouse) and orchards.

Figure 13: Total Operations with Animals in Inventory in SRDC Region

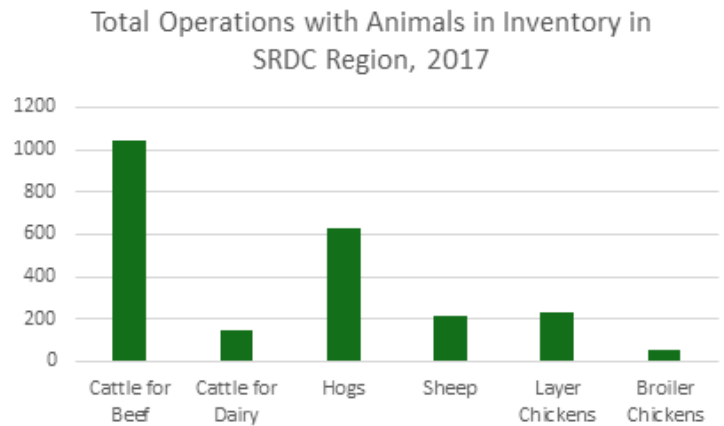


Figure 14: Total Animals in Inventory in SRDC Region

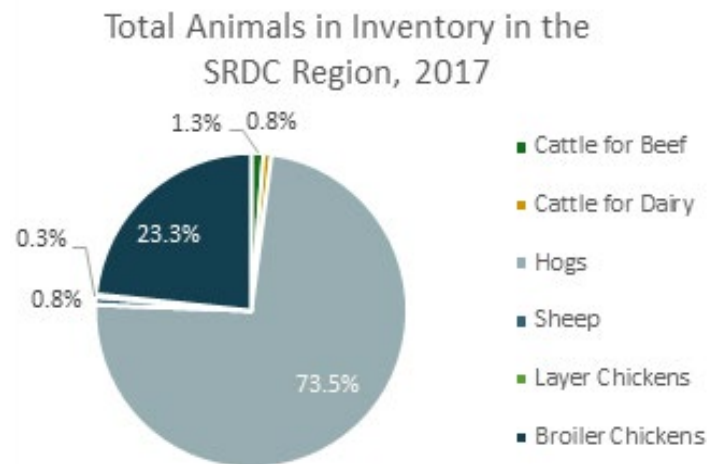
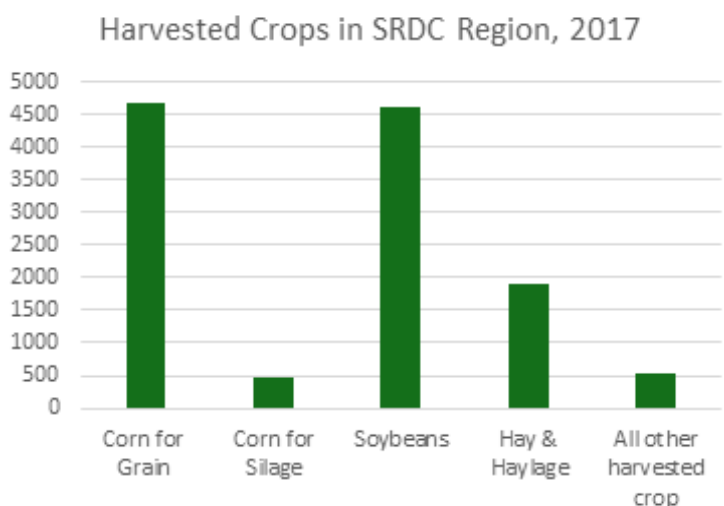


Figure 15: Harvested Crops in SRDC Region



OPERATIONAL INCOME

In 2017, 5,624 operations reported Net Income gain. For the USDA Census, operations that broke even are reported as had Net Income Gain. For the SRDC Region, all operations reported a Net Income of \$885,560,000 with an average net income being \$1,098,359. Operations with Net losses were also accounted for in USDA Census, and in the SRDC Region 1,663 operations reported a total net income loss of \$382,481,685 with an average loss being \$229,995.

LABORFORCE AND LABOR EXPENSES

In 2016, 2,621 operations in the SRDC region hired 7,439 employees and spent \$79,826,000. 40.4% of operations that hired laborers hired only one worker and 22.1% hired two workers. Only 99 operations hired more than ten workers. Most workers hired by agricultural operations are hired as short-term (less than 150 days) employees. In 2017, only 34.4% hired were employed more than 150 days. Of the \$79,826,000 in labor expenses in the SRDC Region, 17.8% (\$14,181,000) of the expenses were spent by operations that employed laborers for less than 150 days, 39.6% were spent by operations employed laborers for longer than 150 days and 42.6% were spent by operations that employed laborers both longer than and greater than 150 days.

LAND USE PRACTICES

In the SRDC region 3,280,921 total acres are utilized for agricultural production. That is 82% of the total land area of the 9-county SRDC Region. Therefore, it is important to look at agricultural land use practices as they are a major contributing factor into water and soil quality. To gain a higher crop yield, ensure less soil erosion and maintain water quality, many agricultural operations maintain a form of field drainage.

There are two general methods to maintain proper filed drainage. One method is to drain by artificial

Figure 16: Operations with Hired Laborers by Number of Employees Hired in SRDC Region



Figure 17: Total Workers Hired by Length of Employment in SRDC Region



Figure 18: Labor Expenses for Operations with Hired Labor by Length of Employment in SRDC Region



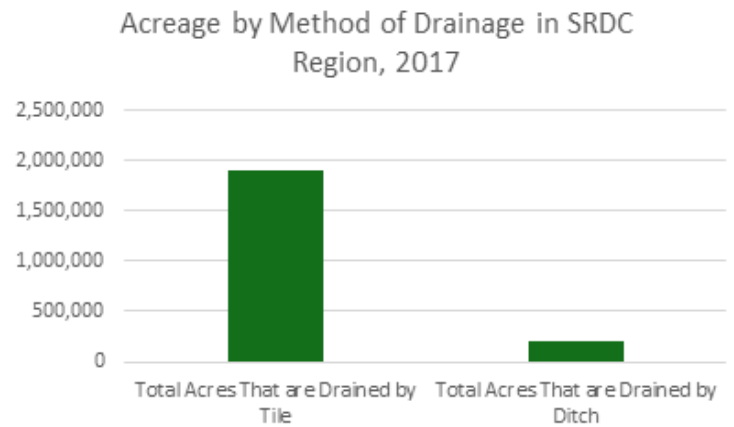
ditch. This method primarily moves surface water away from fields either through a tunneling system or an open water collection method as pictured to the right. This method does tend to cause soil erosion at the ditch site and at the site where the water is dispersed. This method can also result in an excess of standing water which can act as breeding ground for mosquitoes and other containments.

Another method to ensure field drainage is installing field tiles. These tiles are typically plastic tubs with holes or slits in them. They are installed before planting session, below where the crop roots will be and above the water table. Tiles work by draining water below the surface. During heavy rains or freeze-thaw events, water feeds into the tile as the water table rises. Because the water is drained from the water table below rather than from the surface, the water is able deliver important nutrients to the plant roots. Also, the water drained has been thoroughly filtered and contains far less nitrate contaminants than surface water drained by artificial ditch. This method does result in less soil erosion, and there have been many adaptations to mitigate against excessive drainage.

Most agricultural acreage in the SRDC region that is drained is done so by tile, which is 1,907,874 acres.

The USDA has an Agricultural Conservation Easement Program assist landowners, land trust and other entities to protect, restore, and enhance wetlands, grassland, and working farms and ranches though conservation easements. His program has two main components. The Agricultural Land Easement Component allows the NRCS (Natural Resources Conservation Service) to assist American Indian tribes, state and local governments and nongovernmental organizations protect working agricultural lands and limit non-agricultural land uses. With the Wetland Reserve Easement Component, the NRCS helps restore, protect, and enhance enrolled wetlands. In the SRDC Region, 39,192 total acres are protected by a form of conservation easement with an average of 1,082 acres of conservation easement per operation.

Figure 19: Acreages by Method of Drainage in SRDC Region



ISSUES IMPACTING ECONOMIC RESILIENCY FOR THE REGION

EMPLOYMENT PROJECTIONS ARE NOT MATCHED BY POPULATION PROJECTIONS

Although employment opportunities are only projected to grow 0.9% by 2026 in the region, this employment growth is not matched by the projected population growth. The overall regional population is projected to decrease by 2,006 people from 2020-2025. Moreover, projected population decrease in the primary income earning age cohorts (those aged from 25-74), is 2,938 or 5.5%. These conditions do contribute to the low unemployment rate, however, constrains business expansion and leads to a miss-match of employment opportunities and skills sets of the labor force.

MISS-MATCH OF SKILLS AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The top industries with the greatest projected employment growth are Agricultural (25.5%), Transportation and Warehousing (11.8%), Utilities (10.1%), Professional & Technical Services (7.1%), Construction (5.2%), and Health Care & Social Assistance (4.5%). The industries with greatest projected employment loss are Mining (10.6%), Information and Professional (6.4%), Other Services excluding Public Administration (6.4%), and Arts Entertainment and Recreational (5.6%). The SRDC regions educational attainment rates are lower than the states and the nation in general. Encouraging educational attainment and training that matches the necessary training that match the industries with projected employment growth will help retain population, prevent “brain drain” and help raise median incomes of the region.

LAND-USE: PRESERVING AGRICULTURALLY PRODUCTIVE LANDS AND LAND STEWARDSHIP

Approximately 86% of the total land area in the SRDC region is used for some form of agricultural production. For that reason, agricultural land-use practices reflect the general land-uses practices of the region. 1,907,874 total acres are drained by tile in the SRDC region (about 50% of the regions land in total). If tiling is not properly maintained or is broken, this can lead to flooding, soil erosion, and excessive sulfate contamination in the groundwater. There are different forms, additions an upgrade to tiling that further mitigates against the previously mentioned issues. Ensuring that agricultural producers and operations are able access and are incentivized to utilize these technologies can promote water quality, prevent repetitive flooding promote crop yield within the region. A growing number of agricultural producers are experimenting with not tilling their fields at all. This practice has potential to result in a lower crop yield that is made up by the decrease in capital cost. Further research is needed to see how this practice can be integrated in Southwest Minnesota.

COVID-19 IMPACTS ON THE REGION

Although first discovered overseas in 2019, Covid-19 was categorized as a pandemic on March 11th, 2020, by the World Health Organization. As the virus spread, businesses were faced with challenges as they adjusted their operations to accommodate for federal/state emergency regulations to prevent further spread of the virus.

The general impacts of Covid-19 resulted in the worst recession since the Great Depression in 1929. Although the 2020 recession only lasted for 2 months it's cut into the American economy was deep and swift compared the 2008 recession.

By April of 2020, the US economy lost 20.6 million jobs as many states required an initial shut down of businesses deemed "non-essential". This job loss led to an increase in unemployment rates (14.8%) in April. These unemployment rates would remain in the double digits until August when unemployment hit 6.75

In Southwest Minnesota, the impacts of COVID-19 varied from county to county. Prior to the pandemic, counties in Southwest Minnesota experienced tight labor markets with very low unemployment rates and more job vacancies than job seekers. The rapidly aging population of the region foreboded an upcoming wave of retirees and more job vacancies to replace those skilled workers. From the first quarter of 2019 to 2021 counties in southwest Minnesota's lost approximately 2,277 jobs in total, with two counties seeing a gains in jobs (Cottonwood and Rock County). However, attracting workers, I essential for the entire region as southwest Minnesota move forward in employment recovery.

COTTONWOOD COUNTY

Cottonwood County was one of two counties in southwest Minnesota to gain jobs during the Covid-19 pandemic. The county experience job growth of 10.9% (545 total jobs). This employment boom was mostly influenced by gains in the manufacturing sector. There were also small, but notable gains in the Administrative Support, Waste Management, and Remediation Services. Despite this modest growth, Wholesale Trade, Finance, and Insurance sectors. Cottonwood County also saw an overall increase of 47 establishments between 2019 and 2021.

JACKSON COUNTY

Jackson County lost approximately 317 jobs between 2019 and 2021. However, the county did see an increase of 30 establishments. The largest job decline was seen in the Manufacturing (151), Accommodation, and Food Services (53).

LINCOLN COUNTY

The county lost around 172 jobs. The Construction industry lost the most jobs 72 jobs followed by the Retail Trade with 20 jobs lost. There was some job growth in the Utilities sector with 19 new jobs. Lincoln county was the only county in the region that did not see any change in the total number of firms.

LYON COUNTY

Lyon County experience the highest numeric job loss in the region with a total of 903 total jobs lost. The Accommodation and Food Services sector suffered the most losses at 236 jobs lost followed by the Health Care and Social Assistance Sector

(234) and the Administrative Support and Waste Management/Remediation Services (161 jobs lost each). Two sectors experienced an increase in jobs, Management (98) and Public Administration (1). Despite the overall job losses, there was an increase of in the total number of firms.

MURRAY COUNTY

Murray County lost a total of 136 jobs. Retail Trade lost the most jobs (41) followed by Wholesale Trade (18). Public Administration led in industries that gained jobs with 16 new positions.

NOBLES COUNTY

Nobles County saw the smallest drop in jobs in the region losing only 43 jobs. The sectors with the most jobs losses were Agriculture, forestry, Fishing and Hunting (151 jobs). This job loss was also met with gains in the Manufacturing sector with an increase of 237 jobs. Other sectors with notable losses include the Health Care and Social Assistance (52) and other services (42). This county also saw a small increase in the number of establishments.

PIPESTONE COUNTY

Pipestone County experienced the biggest percentage loss in labor force losing approximately 12.8% of their labor force participants. During this time, the county also lost a total 389 jobs with the biggest job losses in the manufacturing sector (211).

REDWOOD COUNTY

Redwood County lost a total of 317 jobs. Job losses were more evenly distributed than in other counties. The sector with the most job losses was the manufacturing sector with 53 jobs lost followed by Accommodation and Food Services (41), Retail Trade (38) and the rest in 8 other sectors. Two sectors saw job gains, Arts, Entertainment and Recreation (14) and other services (19).

ROCK COUNTY

Rock was one of the two counties in the region to experience a gain in overall jobs (177). This overall gain in jobs was caused by gains in the manufacturing industry (314). Another industry with jobs gained was the Health Care and Social assistance with 28 additional jobs. These increases helped offset the losses in the Retail Trade, and Accommodation and Food service

PUBLIC OUTREACH PROCESS

Although data is an important resource for assessing a region's strength, weaknesses and needs, reaching out to community members was a valuable step. By reaching out to community members and hearing their stories of resilience staff was able to draft recommendations that not only fit the context of the region but serve as immediate steps to better position SRDC as a regional resource during times of unprecedented economic distress.

RESILIENCY WORKSHOPS

To better understand how communities responded to economic downturns in the past, staff conducted a series of economic resilience workshops. Participants that were invited represented a wide range of community members and included the following:

- Family Farming Operations
- Business Owners
- City, County, and Township Representatives
- First Responders
- Economic Development Professionals

During these workshops, staff asked participants about their communities' strengths and vulnerabilities and how they see their community overcoming economic downturns. From these workshops four unique themes emerged.

Business communities need to be diverse.

Business communities that are complementary yet diverse are more resilient to industry-related economic downturns. This can be difficult for rural communities to achieve in their downtown areas due to population size and local demands. To avoid over-dependence on a single industry or business

type, entrepreneurs and local lenders can support diversity in the business community by taking calculated risks in local business ventures that are not already present in the community.

Companies need access to an adequate and diverse workforce.

The Southwest region does boast an unemployment rate that is lower than the state and national levels but must deal with consistent population loss or stagnant population growth. To employers that may consider expanding or relocating within the region, these low unemployment rates signal a constrained or inaccessible labor force. Communities can foster employer attraction/growth by connecting more of the current workforce (including recent High School graduates) to the available employment opportunities the region has to offer.

Younger professionals are choosing to move for the place, not the job.

Economic development in the region is beyond supporting businesses and entrepreneurship. Creating communities where people want to live is a strategy that is increasingly connected to economic development. Looking at community amenities as economic assets/resources can influence funding revenues and attract more people willing to relocate and potentially work within the region.

Economic resilience begins with community resilience.

When a downturn is eminent in the local or regional economy, most community members turn to each other for the necessary resources to withstand difficult times. Due to social distancing, and cancellations of social events, Covid-19 has

detrimentally impacted the social bonding within our region. In the future, local festivals and events will hold a significantly higher value as a community asset.

COVID-19 IMPACT BUSINESS SURVEY

To find out how Covid-19 impacted small businesses in the region a survey was sent to many small businesses across the region. Doing a direct survey with business owners helped inform SRDC staff on specific needs of the business communities during time of economic downturns.

SRDC heard from fifty-six businesses. Of these businesses, thirty-four were small employers with five or fewer employees. Staff recognized three overarching themes in the response.

State restrictions had different impacts on business Expenses and revenues based on the business type. During the COVID-19 pandemic, most of the nation experienced constraints, regulations, and mandates that were unprecedented. Businesses were forced to adjust how they served their customers/clients. Businesses whose revenue was dependent on the number of patrons served were hurt the most by capacity restrictions. Stay-at-home recommendations mostly impacted businesses such as insurance agencies, and finance/accounting services, despite having the ability to serve their clients electronically.

All business types reported an increase in expenses due to the use of protective personal equipment/sanitizing supplies and the time to disinfect between customers to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Expenses also rose for companies that decided to invest in one-time purchases such-as website upgrades or installations due to Covid-19.

There were a few funding resources for businesses that were well-known by business owners however, many business owners did not have the time to navigate the grants, loans, and other available funding options. Most business owners are usually so busy working for their business they do not have much opportunity to work on their businesses. Let alone have the time to

navigate through the available resources, gather the required information and turn in applications. Although there is no financial risk to applying for funding resources, there is a tremendous risk in the business owner's time when perusing these funds.

When asked about services they would participate in if offered, business owners reported, free or low-cost webinars, technical assistance (navigating and applying for funding resources) and Communications Audits (developing marketing and outreach strategies). So far, SRDC has established itself as a funding resource for the small business community in the small business community. The organization has closed over 180 revolving loans, thirty-five Property Assessment Clean Energy Loans and nineteen Covid-19 Revolving loans. However, there is room for SRDC's role in the small business community to grow to reach the other noted wants and needs of the small business community.

REGIONAL ECONOMIC RESILIENCE STRATEGY SURVEY

After hearing from businesses and conducting Resiliency Workshops, SRDC reached out to professionals in the region to hear about strategies staff could partake in further economic resilience in the region. The survey was structured by presenting the respondent with the draft goals and objectives under each goal. The responses under each objective were used to create draft strategies. There was a total of 14 responses from economic development professionals, environmental officers, and elected officials. The survey took place from the end of August through mid-October

SRDC BOARD OF DIRECTORS RETREAT

October 29th 2021, SRDC's Board of Directors were presented the findings from the before mentioned survey. They participated in an exercise where they assessed each of the suggested strategies on amount of effort it would take and their impact on the region. The results were presented in a 2x2 matrix that separated strategies in four separate quadrants depending on their average scores from participating voters. Strategies that were assessed by the group to have high impact and take little effort were prioritized as "low hanging fruit" and should be undertaken by the commission right away. These landed in the upper left quadrant. Strategies that were seen as needing a lot of effort and high impacts were considered things to undertake in

the future after careful strategizing. These landed in the upper right quadrant. Strategies that were assessed to require a lot of effort with little impact or little effort with no impact were thought of as "thankless tasks" and were not recommended for future consideration. These tasks landed in both lower quadrants.

Doing this exercise guided how staff determined their next steps for the next fiscal year.



HOW IT ALL COMES TOGETHER

Each step of the planning process worked towards pivoting SRDC to be better prepared for future economic disturbances by assessing the regions strengths, finding it's weaknesses, surveying the regions needs and creating action steps to integrate into the commissions workplan.

Data assessed from the U.S. Census Bureau, the USDA's Census of Agriculture and local planning documents highlighted the main issues impacting economic resilience in the region. These issues were then turned into general goals that would further the economic resilience of the region.

Information collected from economic resilience workshops conducted in the region highlighted the key strengths in the region. Using those strengths, staff created objectives that would further the goals noted before. Thus, using the regions strengths to address the regions weaknesses.

Responses from Covid-19 business survey, and Regional Economic Strategy Survey allowed staff to hear directly from organizational partners about what their needs were and what lessons they have learned going through an economic disturbance. This information was used to draft the strategies presented to the commissions Board of Directors. After strategies were assessed and prioritized staff worked on determining the Action Steps to advance the strategies, objectives, and goals. These "Action Steps" are incorporated into the Commissions work plan and range in scope from accessible sharing of contacts for stakeholders to writing a new regional trails plan.

IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN

At the completion of each fiscal year, staff will assess the progress made on each Action Step and determine if they are still supporting their strategies, objectives, and goals. Every other fiscal year ending in an odd number, the commission will reach out to stakeholders and its board to review the strategies and objectives. Goals will be reviewed along with the CEDS as new data is released and confirmed.

IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN

Goals	Objectives	Strategies	Immediate Action Steps for Fiscal Year 2023
<p>Goal 1: Further economic development by advancing quality of life improvements in the region.</p>	<p>Increase awareness of opportunities and benefits of living in the Region.</p>	<p>Share stories of real-life community members and why they choose to live here (new, returning, and never left).</p> <p>Become part of groups, community organizations, committees, or events that operate within or serve Southwest Minnesota.</p> <p>Seek out resources that could benefit Southwest Minnesota and all levels of government within it.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reach out to individuals from project partners, and the business community as they take new positions in the region to gain testimonies on their experience living in southwest Minnesota. Create a method to track in-person contacts at events hosted Southwest Minnesota. SRDC planning staff will check grants.gov once a month for open and upcoming grant opportunities. Track, assess and align participation in workgroups, steering committees, and other agency groups that meet the RDC’s strategic direction.
	<p>Promote outdoor recreational opportunities in the region.</p>	<p>Use SRDC’s media resources that are run by SRDC to promote outdoor recreation in Southwest Minnesota.</p> <p>Enhance safety and access to outdoor recreational opportunities in the region.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify potential MnDOT/Rail ROWs in trail and outdoor recreational corridors. Make these into maps. Create a Regional Trails Plan for Southwest Minnesota. Create visual aids that depict parks, trails, and other outdoor recreational opportunities in Southwest Minnesota.
	<p>Support efforts to prioritize local art and artistry for government engagement and placemaking.</p>	<p>Find and showcase communities with local art installations that highlight the community’s history, cultures, and people.</p> <p>Work cooperatively with SMAC and other community art organizations to publicize all art opportunities in one location.</p> <p>Work with communities and artist to share resources to promote “placemaking” in the region.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each year, spotlight one community’s art installations from each county. Include these spotlights in the quarterly newsletter. Invite SMAC representative as an invitee for local/regional planning efforts.
	<p>Develop SRDC as a resource hub for communities that want to adopt environmentally sustainable development practices.</p>	<p>Encourage SRDC staff to attend webinars, training, and other training opportunities to learn more about rural communities that adopt environmentally sustainable development practices.</p> <p>During times of unprecedented legislative action or regional shock/disturbance, SRDC will connect with communities, counties, and other stakeholder groups in Southwest Minnesota to facilitate real-time coordination and response.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> These activities are performed as workshops, webinars and other training opportunities are available. Connecting with the listed stakeholder groups will be done following the Communications Plan. All new contacts will be provided to the Communications Specialist. SRDC staff will transfer most contacts to a shared online searchable spreadsheet that identifies contact’s position, organization, geography, and topics of interest.

Goals	Objectives	Strategies	Immediate Action Steps for Fiscal Year 2023
Goal 2: Build the resilience of resources that are especially vulnerable to shocks or disturbances.	Support the advancement of best practices in resource protection.	Work with local JPAs, organizations, and other stakeholder groups that focus on resource protection to promote their work within the region. Highlight when there are improvements in the health of local rivers, lakes, and other natural resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During the Regional Trails Planning, SRDC Staff will highlight two communities and resource protection along/near trails. • Check reports provided by state agencies and highlight any improvement in the quality of drinking water and water bodies.
	Increase awareness in natural resource preservation/conservation measures being undertaken by other agencies.	Become familiar with materials distributed by local soil and water conservation districts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend AMC District 8 Land Use and Environment Advisory Task Force meetings when staff is available. • Promote SWCD's efforts as they update One Watershed One Plans management plans. This includes sharing public input opportunities and serving and in advisory roles.
	Develop SRDC as a resource hub for community amenities that are in demand.	Introduce SRDC as a resource to local entities in the region. Encourage SRDC staff to attend webinars, and other training opportunities on public engagement, and amenities trending in rural community nationwide.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SRDC will survey community officials on technical assistance needs, and community development constraints once. • SRDC staff will regularly seek training opportunities offered through NADO, State Agencies and other partner organizations.

Goals	Objectives	Strategies	Immediate Action Steps for Fiscal Year 2023
Goal 3: Promote best practices that support businesses and complement the already present characters	Support communities in economically sustainable and practical business recruitment.	Work with local chambers and/or cities with outreach to new businesses in the region so they are aware of the resources available. Connect with local planners and city admin within Southwest Minnesota.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop new business welcome packets that include a list of resources and departments. • Connect with University of Minnesota Regional Sustainable Development Partnership’s Idea Brief Program to study business demand in Minnesota.
	Promote the regional business community with up-to-date marketing and outreach strategies.	Coordinate cross-posting between businesses and the agencies SRDC works with. Work with local chambers and EDAs to promote workshops, classes, and other resources for businesses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supply media kits to project partners and coordinate social media post for best project/resource exposers. • When sharing resources to be distributed throughout southwest Minnesota’s small business community, supply media kits to those contacts.
	Develop SRDC as a resource hub for businesses and entrepreneurs that are interested in partaking in business succession.	Learn from businesses who are planning for business succession vs. retirement. Highlight businesses in/near Southwest Minnesota that have gone through the processes of business succession.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey loan clients every two years on potential retirement and succession plans (can be incorporated into already occurring surveys). • Find and contact businesses in/near Southwest Minnesota that have gone through the processes of business succession.



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