



SRDC
SOUTHWEST REGIONAL
DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
2401 Broadway Avenue, Suite 1 • Slayton, MN 56172

Newsletter

JANUARY 2025

www.swrdc.org

2401 Broadway Ave, Slayton, MN
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<https://www.swrdc.org/>



A conference highlight: Transportation Planner Chris Webb participated in a mobile workshop bike tour through Fort Collins and the Colorado State University campus, gaining firsthand insight into the benefits of safe, accessible routes.

National Safe Routes to School Conference

Planner Webb attended the National Safe Routes to School Conference in Fort Collins, CO, from October 22-24. This inspiring three-day event brought together transportation planners, Safe Routes to School coordinators, engineers, and advocates from across the country to share and develop strategies for strengthening Safe Routes to School programs in our communities.

NADO

Deputy Director Robin Weis and Executive Director Jay Trusty attended the NADO Annual Training Conference in New Orleans. As usual, there was a lot of good information gathered. Minnesota had the most attendees they've had since the event was in Minneapolis twenty years ago, with Regions 1, 3, 6E, 6W, 8 and 9 in attendance. There were over 620 registered for the conference.



CERTs Retreat

SRDC staff, Nadya Bucklin and Executive Director Jay Trusty, joined the CERTs staff at an organizational planning retreat from 10/29-10/31, held at the Deep Portage Learning Center in Hackensack, MN. This was an opportunity for CERTs staff to reflect on the past year and do some planning and priority setting for programs in the coming year, as well as focus on internal operations and communication. Tracy Chaplin, Northeast RSDP, facilitated the 3-day retreat



CERTs' four Executive Directors, representing the 4 partners that make up CERTs, joined for the day on Wednesday: Pete Wyckoff (Department of Commerce), Rolf Nordstrom (Great Plains Institute), Jay Trusty (Southwest Regional Development Commission), Kathy Draeger (Extension--RSDP). They had a bit of time early in the day to share some of the opportunities and challenges they see in Minnesota's clean energy space, and then took part in the planning processes over the course of the rest of the day. In addition to reflections and goal setting, the retreat included a renewable energy tour of the Deep Portage Learning Center, which uses high efficiency wood burners, solar PV, and solar thermal panels, for all of the buildings' energy needs.



SRDC Commission Recognition

The SRDC recently honored four board members for their dedicated service. Dennis Klingbile and Keith Elbers were each recognized for nine years of commitment to the commission. Stephen Schnieder received recognition for 3.5 years of service, while Scott McClure was acknowledged for his contributions over the past year.

Moving Greater

Minnesota Forward Planning Grant: MNRAAA in Cottonwood County successfully applied for this planning grant through MnDOT. Their community-based committee will be working through a 10-week course with a MnDOT consultant to plan out how to increase transportation options for seniors traveling to and from medical appointments and other similar transportation needs. This is a Phase 1 Planning Grant. Phase 2 includes applying for funding to carry out plans created in Phase 1. More information at the link: <https://www.dot.state.mn.us/shared-mobility/moving-forward-phase1.html>

Train & Retain Grant program

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) has awarded \$250,000 to the Southwest Regional Development Commission (SRDC) to support the organization's Southwest Minnesota Meat Processor Workforce Development Initiative. Awarded through the MDA's Meat Processing Train & Retain Grant program, the one-time funding will assist small- to medium-sized meat and poultry processors with hiring, training, and retention of new employees.

DWSMA (Drinking Water Supply Management Area) Project



Supporting solar development within local drinking water protection areas. A \$498,000 Energy Future Grant from the U.S. Department of Energy will allow the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) to evaluate the benefits of using solar energy to help provide renewable power while also providing economically viable and environmentally sustainable land use options in Southwest Minnesota, where nitrate levels in drinking water has been an ongoing concern.

The grant will fund engineering feasibility studies that will examine energy, environmental, and financial opportunities and barriers for solar energy development in, and near, four community public water systems in Southwest Minnesota. The land in these Drinking Water Supply Management Areas (DWSMAS) has been used primarily for agricultural purposes, which poses a risk of nitrate contamination to the groundwater. Shifting this land use by installing solar energy in DWSMAS can reduce threats to groundwater and health risks for consumers by reducing the pathways for nitrate contamination while protecting landowner economic returns and ownership.

Over the next year, MDH will develop innovative solar energy plans for the rural communities in partnership with the Great Plains Institute and a project team including local community organizations. CERTs will be one of the technical consultants.

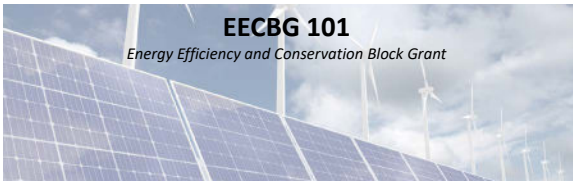


GreenStep Cities is a free and voluntary challenge and assistance program available to all Minnesota cities. It supports and recognizes the adoption of 29 sustainability best practices aimed at reducing energy use, cutting costs, improving quality of life, and fostering a culture of innovation.

Cities can achieve Step Two or Step Three recognition by implementing a minimum number of best practices across five key categories: buildings and lighting, land use, transportation, environmental management, and resilient economic and community development. Each best practice includes a selection of four to eight specific actions that cities can complete to meet program goals.

Participating cities are recognized for their achievements on the GreenStep website. Visit www.Mn-GreenStep.org to explore the program, review city accomplishments, and learn how your city can get involved.

Regional participants include:
 Marshall – Step 5, New Ulm – Step 2, Sherburn – Step 1, St. James – Step 3, Vesta – Step 1
 An interested city: Luverne.



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

The Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) Program is a program designed to assist small communities (this includes cities or counties under 15,000 in population) in implementing strategies to reduce energy use, to reduce fossil fuel emissions, and to improve energy efficiency. This funding, with no match requirement, applies to all cities in our region and the counties of Cottonwood, Jackson, Lincoln, Murray, Pipestone, and Rock. SRDC received \$99,959.78 of which 10% is allocated for project administration. Grants to eligible communities are maxed at \$20,000 with a focus on planning efforts. Planning efforts could include resiliency plans, energy audits, engineering studies, etc. If possible, there should be emphasis on disadvantaged communities.

Recently there was a conversation with a county regarding a solar study on their highway shop and a municipality in need of lift station electricity improvements which could result in an EDA grant that includes engineering. Details were also shared with the municipality regarding the MPDA Implementation Grant for Wastewater Resilience



North Central Regional Food Business Center: The Southwest Regional Development Commission (SRDC) is committed to seeking ideas and suggestions from various groups and individuals. To foster growth and development in the next four years, the North Central RFBC (Regional Food Business Centers) Action Plan was created, and our work continues to support and strengthen businesses and projects to facilitate expansion and growth. We recently supported one meat processor in our region to apply for the MDA Meat, Poultry, Egg, and Milk Processing (MPME) Grant. This program funds businesses by investing in equipment and physical improvement projects that support expanding production capacity, promotes safety, and market access for their products.

The SRDC is actively assisting several businesses in Southwest Minnesota with applications for the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) Good Food Access Program Equipment and Physical Improvement Grant. This grant aims to support grocery stores and small food retailers by funding physical improvements and equipment purchases to boost the availability of affordable, nutritious, and culturally appropriate foods.

Last fall, the SRDC collaborated with Egan’s Market in Adrian, MN, on a successful application for the MDA’s Meat, Poultry, Egg, and Milk Processing (MPME) Grant. Egan’s Market was awarded \$11,378, covering 50% of the cost for their flooring project. The store’s flooring, approximately 45 years old, had become worn and deteriorated, prompting a USDA mandate for replacement. The new flooring will address multiple challenges by improving sanitation efficiency, enhancing contamination control, and ensuring safer conditions for employees.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Southwest Minnesota Meat Processor Workforce Development Initiative

The Southwest Regional Development Commission aims to use grant funds to train small to medium-size meat and poultry processors, addressing employment barriers to retain workers and investing in 30 individuals within their service area.

Are you considering a career in meat cutting or aspiring to become a butcher?

Funding from this program can be used for expenses such as:

- Tuition Reimbursement
- Relocation Assistance
- Transition Services
- On-the-Job Training & Supplies
- Career Navigation

Excellent Opportunity

- Online Coursework: flexible
- No relocation required
- Retention Incentives
- Weekly On-the-Job NEAR YOU
- Fall & Spring Semester
- Starts

For more information contact:
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News Brief

Solid Waste

The Solid Waste Administrators (SWA) recently gathered in Ivanhoe to tour Lincoln County's new transfer station facilities. Highlights included a re-use building, where community members can take home perfectly usable items that others have discarded, and a heated facility designed for safe hazardous materials disposal. Following the tour, the SWAs convened to advance work on the ten-year plan. They focused on refining budget development guidelines, identifying key components to include, and exploring strategies to meet state recycling compliance requirements. Progress is underway, with SWAs beginning to submit the necessary data for the plan.

Highwater Creek Meat Market

SRDC staff assisted with an application for Highwater Creek Meat Market to AGRI Meat, Poultry, Egg, and Milk Processing of which they were awarded a grant.

RLF Site Visits

Staff scheduled several site visits. These visits are required every three years; however, they are done more often as the need arises. Site visits were combined with communication audits and interviews for storytelling. Success stories can now be found at <https://www.swrdc.org/regional-spotlight/>.



SRDC staff gathered at Bizzy Lizzy Flourless Bakery, White, SD on Nov 6th. Lizzy and Sheila are a mother-daughter duo who created delicious products utilizing oatmeal and flax seed without a trace of wheat. Learn more at www.bizzylizzybakery.com

SRDC Commissioners

Cottonwood County

Jenny Quade, Municipalities
 Ronald Kottke, Townships
 Donna Gravley, Commissioners

Jackson County

Mark Haberman, Municipalities
 Craig Rubis, Townships
 Kent Bargfrede, Commissioners

Lincoln County

Vacant Municipalities
 Jeff Moen, Townships
 Mic VanDeVere, Commissioners

Lyon County

Pam Cooreman, Municipalities
 Lori Grant, Townships
 Rick Anderson, Commissioners

Murray County

Miron Carney, Municipalities
 Vacant, Townships
 Dennis Welgraven, Commissioners

Nobles County

Steve Kellen, Municipalities
 Paul Langseth, Townships
 Bob Paplow, Commissioners

Pipestone County

Dan Delaney, Municipalities
 Vacant, Townships
 Chris Hollingsworth, Commissioners

Redwood County

Leah Bittner, Municipalities
 Tiffany Lesmeister-Knott, Townships
 Bob Van Hee, Commissioners

Rock County

Keith Elbers, Municipalities
 JoEllen Benson, Townships
 Sherri Thompson, Commissioners

Cities over 10,000

Rick VonHoldt, City of Worthington
 Bob Byrnes, City of Marshall

Officers

Paul Langseth, Chair
 Dennis Welgraven, Vice Chair
 Rick Anderson, Treasurer
 Eric Hartman, Secretary

Southwest MN School Boards

Eric Hartman
 Stephen Schnieder

Lower Sioux Community

Vacant

Public Interest Groups

Justine Wettschreck, Economic Development
 Carrie Bendix, SW MN Private Industry Council
 David Sturrock, SW MN Higher Education
 Beth Wilms, Health & Human Services
 Kristie Blankenship, SW MN Housing Partnership

SRDC Mission Statement:
Promoting Growth & Opportunities for Southwest MN
 We work to connect units of government, businesses, and communities with the resources, planning, and services needed to promote growth. Together we can further opportunities in Southwest Minnesota by promoting a growing workforce and business base and ensuring population stability

SRDC Staff

Jay Trusty
Executive Director
Robin Weis
Deputy Director
Melissa Nelson
Finance Director
Jason Walker
Community Development Director
Kim Murphy
Economic Development Specialist

Nadya Bucklin
Development Planner
Chris Webb
Transportation Planner
Kathy Schreiber
Administrative Specialist
Jodi Klein
Accounting Specialist
Sheila Crowley
Communications Specialist