



**NORTHWEST**  
REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT  
COMMISSION



# ANNUAL REPORT 2024

[www.nwrdc.org](http://www.nwrdc.org)

*Serving the counties of Kittson, Marshall,  
Norman, Pennington, Polk, Red Lake and Roseau.*

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# IN 2024, NWRDC STAFF HAD A COLLECTIVE 164 YEARS OF SERVICE WITH THE NWRDC!





# A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIRPERSON



GARY KIESOW, COMMISSION CHAIRPERSON

## Dear Board Members and Stakeholders,

It is with great pleasure that I present to you the annual report for 2024 on behalf of the Northwest Regional Development Commission. As Chair of the Board, I am honored to reflect on the past year's achievements, challenges, and the collective efforts that have shaped our regional development endeavors.

Throughout 2024, our organization remained dedicated to advancing the economic prosperity and well-being of our region. Despite facing various obstacles, we remained resilient and adaptive, striving to fulfill our mission with unwavering commitment.

### Key Highlights:

Community Development - NWRDC staff continued their efforts to identify solutions to workforce/market rate housing issues across northwest Minnesota. Through a grant from the Otto Bremer Trust, NWRDC supported the launch of NorthStar Neighbors Community Land Trust (CLT) as a subsidiary of the Northwest Minnesota Foundation, six new market rate homes were

constructed in Thief River Falls and Red Lake Falls as part of the CLT portfolio.

Dancing Sky Area Agency on Aging - NWRDC Aging division launched a new wraparound service for adult protection clients (WRAPS). The goal of the project is to stop, reduce or mitigate the risk of abuse neglect or financial exploitation. Utilizing ARPA funds to provide direct support services to clients in need of things such as emergency assistance funds, utility assistance, home repairs, and many other specific needs

Transportation - 2024 was a very active year for transportation at the NWRDC. Grants totaling over \$2.6 million were awarded to communities in Northwest Minnesota for local transportation projects. These projects include walking and biking trails, sidewalks that encourage walking, biking and rolling, street improvements, and new LED street lighting.

RTCC - NWRDC staff have become integrated into the community

network of transportation providers. We provide the connecting point between providers and riders who need assistance with their transportation. This year was filled with relationship building and developing new processes for sharing vehicles.

Revolving Loan Fund Statistics - Currently we have 59 active Loans totaling \$6,557,055 at origination. Legacy RLF \$1,652,238 and CARES RLF: \$2,432,877

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to our dedicated board members, staff, volunteers, and partners for their unwavering support and contributions throughout the year. Your passion, expertise, and collaboration have been instrumental in driving our organization's success and impact.

Thank you for your continued dedication and commitment.

Sincerely,  
Gary Kiesow



COMMISSION MEMBERS: FRONT ROW (LEFT TO RIGHT) – SARAH FINSETH, GERALD AMIOT, NORMA CAMPOS, DEBRA WISKOW, KATHY TWITE, LOREN YOUNGGREN, LOREN LUSIGNAN; BACK ROW (LEFT TO RIGHT) – KEITH SISTAD, RON WEISS, WARREN STRANDELL, JOHNY BARBOSA, JUDY JONES, BRUCE LAWRENCE, GARY KIESOW, JESSE LEE, DARYL WICKLUND, KIM JOHNSON, JIM DUCHAMP, GUS BOOTH, DAVID ERICKSON, KEVIN REICH

# A MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



DARLA WALDNER  
NWRDC EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**Dear Friends, Partners, and Community Members,**

Reflecting on the past year, I am inspired by the strength and resilience of our Northwest Minnesota communities. At the Northwest Regional Development Commission, our mission remains steadfast: to serve as a bridge for the communities we represent, connecting local needs with resources, opportunities, and solutions.

This year, we strengthened partnerships, advanced key initiatives, and secured critical funding for transformative regional projects. Our commitment to environmental stewardship is evident in efforts like renewable energy planning, conservation-focused development,

and building resilience against environmental challenges. These actions aim to preserve the pristine landscapes and resources that sustain our way of life.

We continue to address disparities in rural areas by advocating for infrastructure, day care, housing, transportation, and home and community-based services. By honoring diverse perspectives and promoting equitable access to resources, we strengthen the fabric of our region.

Our success is made possible by our talented team, dedicated board, and valued partners. Together, we're creating a vibrant, inclusive future for Northwest Minnesota. Thank

you for your continued support and collaboration as we work toward lasting, positive change.

As we look to the year ahead, I am filled with optimism for the opportunities that lie before us. Together, we can continue to create lasting change, ensuring that our communities are not only resilient but flourishing. Thank you for your continued support, collaboration, and belief in the mission of the Northwest Regional Development Commission.

All the best,  
Darla Waldner  
Executive Director

## 2024 COMMISSION MEMBERSHIP

### Kittson County

Kimberley Johnson*	Kennedy	Townships
David Treumer	Hallock	Municipalities
Loren Younggren	Hallock	Counties

### Marshall County

Gary Kiesow**	Goodridge	Counties
Loren Lusignan	Grygla	Townships
Devin Rudd	Grygla	Municipalities

### Norman County

Jesse Lee*	Halstad	Counties
Darin Johnson	Halstad	Municipalities
Lucas Spaeth	Halstad	School Boards

### Pennington County

Dave Erickson	Thief River Falls	Townships
Judy Jones	Goodridge	Municipalities
Bruce Lawrence*	Thief River Falls	Counties

### Polk County

Gerald Amiot	Crookston	Labor
Johny Barbosa	Angus	Diverse Cultures
Norma Campos	East Grand Forks	Diverse Cultures
Sarah Finseth	Warren	Youth
Keith Sistad	Fosston	Townships
Warren Strandell*	East Grand Forks	Counties
Toby Strom	McIntosh	Municipalities
Kathleen Twite	East Grand Forks	Business

### Red Lake County

Jim DuChamp	Plummer	Municipalities
Anthony "Chuck" Flage	Red Lake Falls	Counties
Kevin Reich	Red Lake Falls	Townships
Ronald Weiss*	Red Lake Falls	Watershed District

### Roseau County

Gus Booth	Roseau	School Board
Dan Fabian	Roseau	Municipalities
Daryl Wicklund*	Badger	Counties
Debra Wiskow	Greenbush	Townships

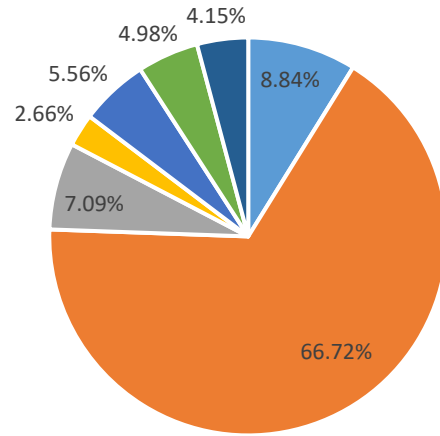
\* Board Members    \*\* Chairperson



# CALENDAR YEAR 2024 FINANCIALS & 2025 BUDGET

## CALENDAR YEAR 2024

### Actual 2024 Revenue Sources



■ Levy ■ Aging ■ EDA ■ Homeland ■ MNDOT ■ RLF ■ Misc.

REVENUES	CY'2024 BUDGET	CY'2024 ACTUALS	CY'2025 BUDGET
Local Tax Levy	\$335,312	\$334,390	\$345,371
MN Board on Aging/Department Health	\$3,153,549	\$2,524,294	\$2,947,950
Economic Development Admin/Energy/USDA	\$256,200	\$268,359	\$303,904
Homeland Security	\$102,275	\$100,452	\$60,000
MN Department of Transportation	\$216,309	\$210,213	\$242,245
NW Minnesota Enterprise Fund	\$125,541	\$188,416	\$135,296
Dancing Sky AAA County Match	\$64,235	\$64,235	\$66,163
Local Contracts/ Miscellaneous	\$76,108	\$92,829	\$51,000
Regrant Revenue	\$4,878,271	\$4,955,918	\$3,537,389
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$9,207,800</b>	<b>\$8,739,106</b>	<b>\$7,689,318</b>

### CY'2023 AUDIT

The CY'2023 Audit was conducted by Brady Martz, Certified Public Accountants and Consultants in Crookston, Minnesota. The auditor's report expresses an unqualified opinion on the General Purpose Financial Statements of the Northwest Regional Development Commission.

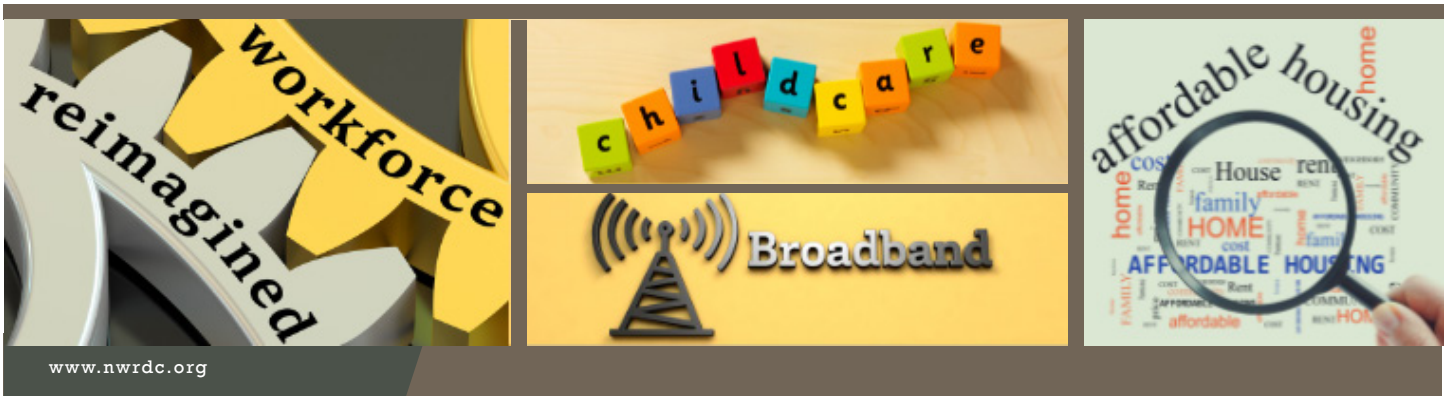
### COST ALLOCATION

CY'2024 Actual  
Leave Rate:  
**17.09%**

CY'2024 Actual  
Fringe Rate:  
**38.1772%**

CY'2024 Actual  
Indirect Rate:  
**13.64%**

EXPENDITURES	CY'2024 BUDGET	CY'2024 ACTUALS	CY'2025 BUDGET
Salaries and Fringe	\$2,641,445	\$2,379,863	\$2,671,954
Professional Services	\$1,139,323	\$987,803	\$956,710
Travel	\$142,649	\$122,056	\$165,089
Printing/Postage	\$27,966	\$26,353	\$46,505
Supplies	\$35,669	\$41,103	\$44,597
Rent/Maintenance	\$117,423	\$34,658	\$73,554
Other	\$225,054	\$101,696	\$193,520
Grants/Contracts	\$4,878,271	\$4,955,918	\$3,537,389
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$9,207,800</b>	<b>\$8,649,449</b>	<b>\$7,689,318</b>



## Community Development

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### Purpose:

To assist communities in discussing and developing solutions to rural issues and problems which are common in Northwest Minnesota

### SERVICE PRIORITIES:

Assist local units of government with comprehensive planning, infrastructure needs, area promotion, housing, and other issues that contribute to strong quality of place

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## Community Development Focuses on 4 Key Areas

NWRDC's Community Development expanded our outreach efforts in 2024. These regional efforts supported a variety of community-centered initiatives. Key areas of focus directed by our Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy included: Childcare availability; Regional housing availability; Clean Energy and regional resilience.

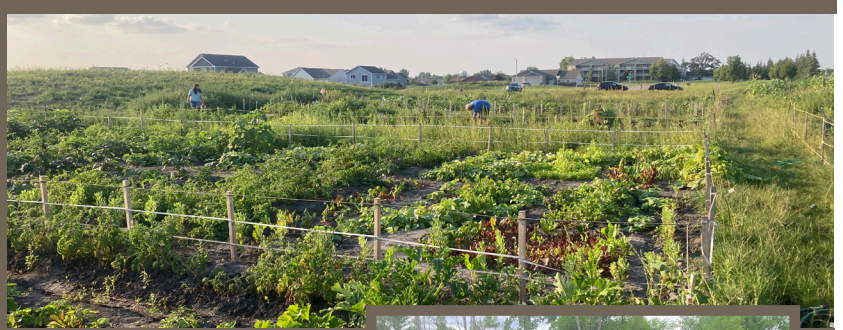
### 2024 Project Highlights

#### Increase the Region's childcare capacity

Childcare capacity is constrained in Northwest Minnesota which is impacting job growth. A 2022 study completed by First Children's Finance (FCF) indicated the need for up to 593 additional birth – age 5 slots in School District #564 (Thief River Falls) alone. Through collaborative efforts with FCF, Advance Thief River, local businesses and the Northwest Minnesota Foundation, funding for a second Discovery Place childcare center location in Thief River Falls was secured. The new site is expected to be operational in May 2025. In partnership with the Thief River Falls Area Community Fund, the childcare collaborative has established a childcare sub-fund with a goal to raise \$100,000 to support community childcare providers with nearly half being raised towards that goal in 2024.

#### Incentivize the need for affordable Market Rate Housing

NWRDC in partnership with Northwest Minnesota Multi-County HRA received additional funding in January from the Otto Bremer Trust to support phase II of the Market Rate Housing project in Region 1. In May, the newly established North Star Neighbors Community Land Trust broke ground on four new homes in Thief River Falls to support this effort. In September, two additional homes were dedicated in Red Lake Falls, with plans for additional home construction in Roseau and East Grand Forks slated for 2025. This group also hosted the Northwest Minnesota Workforce Housing Summit in July in East Grand Forks with regional stakeholders, and highlighted MN Housing Commissioner Jennifer Ho as keynote speaker. In a partnership with Advance Thief River, workshops focusing on 55+ active senior living were conducted in December to solicit recommendations for this age group in determining future models for community living and social engagement. NWRDC also supported an application by Advance Thief River to Age-Friendly Minnesota for additional funding to study senior housing needs as a strategy to create more naturally occurring workforce housing.



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## Regional Foods Business Center (RFBC)

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### PURPOSE:

To provide technical assistance to small to medium-sized farm businesses, food processors and distributors in the food supply chains

### SERVICE PRIORITIES:

Improve profitability of existing direct market farms, increase the number of direct market farmers and help food processors access capital

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## Local Foods Becomes a Development Priority

Demand for locally grown and sold foods continues to grow, and local foods have been shown to improve rural economies by helping money circulate within a particular region. In October, 2024, NWRDC hired a Food Systems Planner to lead outreach efforts within its community development in Regions 1 and 4 (West Central Initiative).

### Assessing the Needs of Local Foods in Northwestern Minnesota

Two dozen producers, aggregators, and non-profits that represent specialty grain growers, local meat producers, and businesses involved with fruit and vegetable production were asked about needs for their businesses. Farms and businesses near population centers were concerned that the number of vegetable and fruit producers were declining. Vegetable growers in rural counties would like more places to sell their produce. Specialty grain growers needed access to capital to scale up their operations. Vegetable and meat processors wanted to replace aging equipment.

### Increasing Fruit and Vegetable Production for Local Markets

Local fruit and vegetable production can be increased by helping existing growers succeed while providing a pipeline for new growers. Twelve existing growers received production advice on pest control, irrigation, and soil fertility. New Americans could become a source of new commercial gardeners, both to supply the needs of their communities and to make money at farmer's markets. Over 100 immigrants from Iraq and the Democratic Republic of the Congo participated in a community garden where they gained experience growing vegetables in Northern Minnesota. All participants received training on how to plant and fertilize their vegetables and harvested bushels of their own produce.

### Increasing Access to Capital

20 local food processors and farms received help writing grants to buy new equipment, increase production capacity, streamline production or to study new market channels. Three of the grants were funded. In December 2024, the USDA announced a one-time subsidy to fruit and vegetable growers called the Marketing Assistance for Specialty Crops program, and ten qualified growers in Northwest Minnesota were directly contacted and requested to apply for the subsidy. Each grower remarked that the subsidy would help them stay in business or buy necessary equipment.





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# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

## PURPOSE:

To maintain and increase the population level and job base in the seven counties of Northwest Minnesota

## SERVICE PRIORITIES:

Business development, labor force development, renewable energy, promotion, and planning

## U.S. Department of Commerce Invests \$2.4 Million in the Region

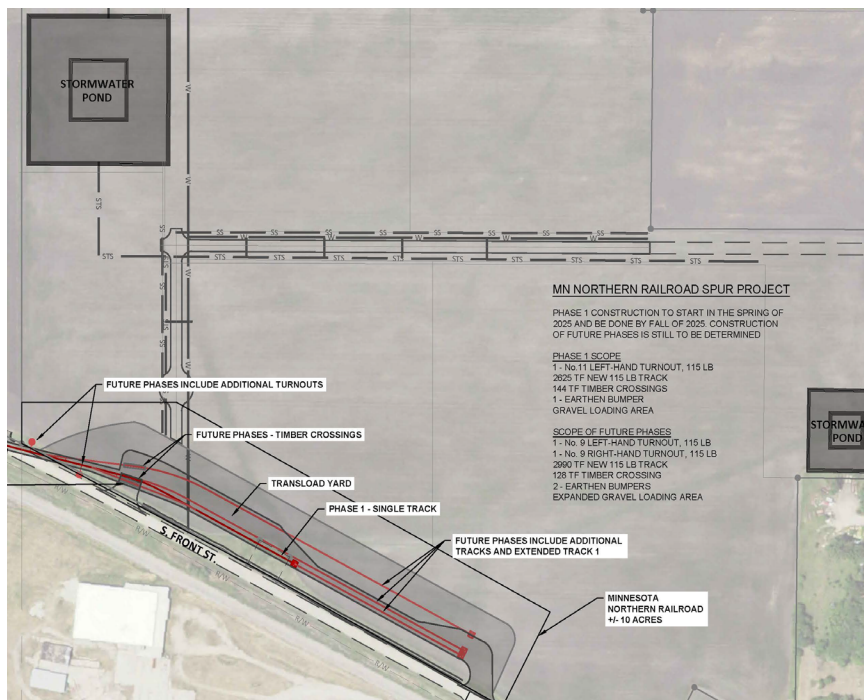
As part of the 2023 disaster supplemental funding, the City of Roseau was awarded \$2.4 Million to upgrade stormwater infrastructure to mitigate overland flooding in their business district around Highway 89.

The project is intended to reduce economic disruptions caused by heavy rains and overland flooding. The project timing will also coincide with Highway 89 improvements for a more efficient use of funds.

### Additional Applications to the Federal Economic Development Administration (EDA)

In 2024, the City of Crookston submitted an application to the Federal EDA. The request is to help fund road, water, stormwater, and wastewater infrastructure in the industrial park on the south end of Crookston. Crookston is essentially out of buildable industrial space and wants to provide locations for industry to locate, along with providing public access to the rail spur that is expected to be built in 2025. A decision on the application is expected at the end of 2024 or early 2025.

The NWRDC and Headwater’s Regional Development Commission have completed the second year partnership with the EDA University Center at University of Minnesota, Crookston to gather regional partners in efforts to further implement the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) strategies within each region. The first year was primarily introductory to each cornerstone of the CEDS and various tools we can use to measure progress as it pertains to the strategies and goals. The second year focused on identifying the strengths and weaknesses in the region and identifying new partnerships and investment opportunities.





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# NORTHWEST REGIONAL ENTERPRISE LOAN FUND

**PURPOSE:**

To strengthen and diversify the economy by providing a source of low interest financing to businesses when credit is not otherwise available from other sources and to ensure the successful completion of activities to be financed

**SERVICE PRIORITIES:**

Financing for-profit businesses which create or retain jobs, especially for the long-term underemployed or unemployed

## CARES Act and Legacy Loan Funds Assist Businesses

New loan volume decreased in 2024. The decrease was expected with higher interest rates but the extent of the decrease was unknown coming into the year.

The Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) program only wrote one new loan in 2024. The program had approved an additional application in 2023 that was to close in 2024 but the project did not make it to closing.

The program still saw inquiries but many of the projects stalled out, didn't fit the program guidelines and had to be referred elsewhere, or were in a location that had cheaper money available through local revolving loan funds.

The higher costs of real estate, products and services, in addition to the higher cost of borrowing still seem to be barriers for many who are seeking financing. As inflation slows and if interest rates continue to fall, we

should see more activity in 2025.

In addition to opening new loans, other loan fund activities included loan restructuring, interest rate adjustments, payoffs, loan assistance to community Economic Development Agencies, and technical assistance.

We continue to provide technical assistance in the form of information and referral to other organizations and agencies, including, but not limited to, a Small Business Development Center, EDA University Center, Agricultural Utilization Research Institute, Department of Employment and Economic Development, Headwaters Regional Development Commission, NW Minnesota Multi-County HRA and Northwest Minnesota Foundation.

**Historical Loan Activity**

*(period ending 12/31/2024):*

Total Loans	250
Active Loans	58
Total Loan Amount	\$19,937,229
Other Financing Leveraged	\$100,054,592
Jobs Created/Retained	2,256
Total Project Costs	\$138,242,484

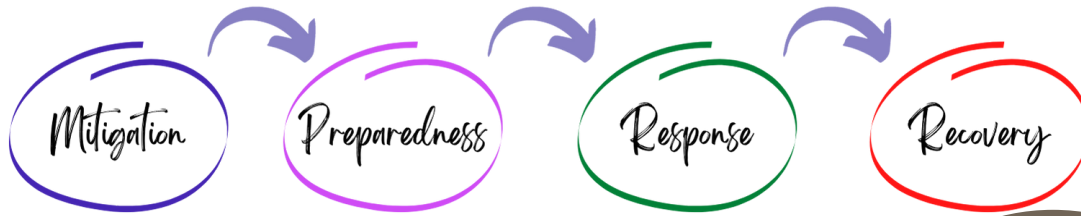
**Historical Loan Activity by County**

*(period ending 12/31/2024):*

County	# of Loans	Amount
Kittson	25	\$1,389,120
Marshall	46	\$3,187,045
Norman	21	\$1,239,248
Pennington	33	\$3,291,850
Polk	77	\$6,733,475
Red Lake	16	\$1,190,615
Roseau	32	\$2,905,875



# Emergency Management



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## EMERGENCY OPERATIONS PLANNING

**PURPOSE:** To aid Homeland Security & Emergency Management (HSEM) Region Three in the preparation, planning, and implementation of activities related to regional preparedness, response, and recovery

**SERVICE PRIORITIES:** Utilize a specifically geared, annually evolving work program to support existing emergency management capabilities throughout Northwest Minnesota, as approved by the Emergency Management Joint Powers Board and HSEM staff



## HSEM Region 3 Joint Powers Board

The Northwest Regional Development Commission continued its planning partnership with the HSEM Region 3 Joint Powers Board by providing planning services for the fourteen counties and two tribal nations located in Northwestern Minnesota. This year's focus was on homeland security and terrorism.

With an ever-evolving work program combined with an active array of hazards present in Minnesota; it takes many individuals active in emergency preparedness, mitigation, response and recovery in order save lives, reduce property damage and decrease/eliminate future effects. Government, local agencies, volunteers, businesses and emergency response personnel all work together and lend efforts/resources to keep our communities safe. The following points highlight a few of the successes that the Northwest Emergency Manager's Joint Powers Board's regional planning program has accomplished in 2024, thanks to a grant funding opportunity through Minnesota Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HSEM):

- Soft Target/Crowded Place Vulnerability Reduction
- Hazardous Materials Planning
- Mass Fatality Planning
- Regional/Local Emergency Operations Center Planning
- Family Assistance Center/Reunification Planning
- Exercise Planning & Assistance
- Regional Badging & Credentialing

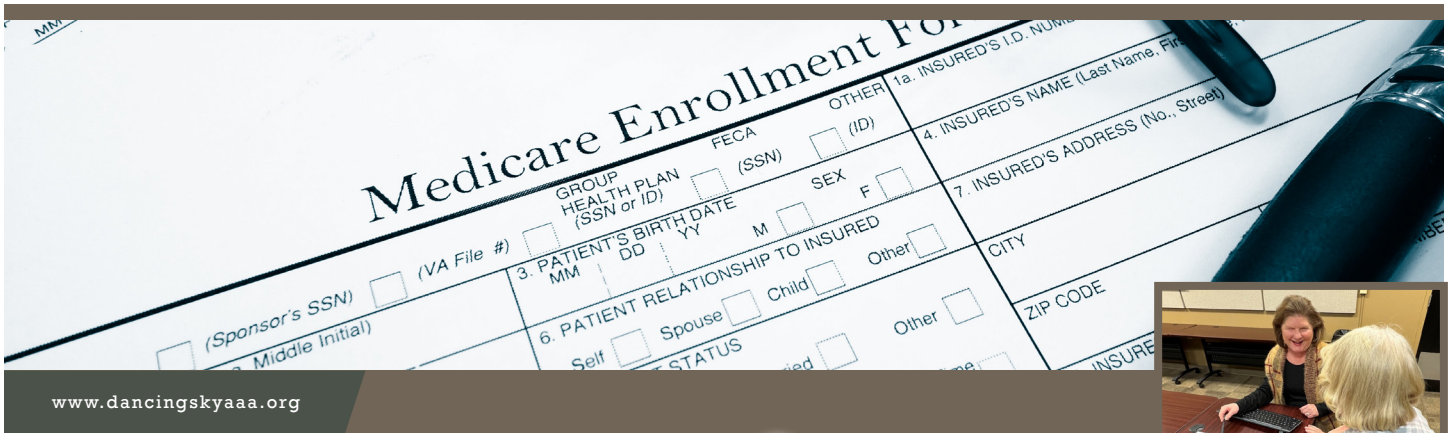
- Involvement with the Regional Radio Board/Radio Advisory Committee and the Northwest Health Services Coalition
- Regional Exercise with Paramount Planning
- Quarterly and Joint Powers Board Meeting Attendance
- Local and Regional Exercise Involvement

\* Additional projects (not part of the above-mentioned grant) were also undertaken including:

- Assistance to the NW Regional Transportation Coordination Council
- Northwest Minnesota Tourism Directory
- IT Support
- Strengths at Work Training
- Assistance with the Safe Routes to School Planning Program
- Alternative Transportation Exercise Series with the NW Health Services Coalition
- Senior Disaster Preparedness with the Dancing Sky Area Agency on Aging

The Northwest Regional Development Commission wishes Jennifer Olson well as she embarks on new employment at Minnesota Department of Public Safety - Homeland Security and Emergency Management. The NWRDC looks forward to 2025 for new partnership opportunities as well as continued support to the local emergency management community.





## DANCING SKY AREA AGENCY ON AGING

### PURPOSE:

Dancing Sky is 1 of 7 Minnesota Area Agencies on Aging. Our goal for the people of Minnesota is simple: to work with rural communities to help older adults stay in control of their choices. We envision vibrant communities invested in their elders as well as older adults and caregivers planning for the future. Together, older adults and communities thrive.



SLL STAFF ASSISTING OLDER ADULT DURING OPEN ENROLLMENT

### SERVICE PRIORITIES:

Nutrition - congregate and home delivered meals, legal services, homemaker and chore services, home modification, assisted transportation services, health promotion and prevention programs, medication management, dementia friendly and age friendly communities.

## Senior LinkAge Line (SLL) Continues Important Work

### Return to Community

Resource Coordinators help older adults remain in their homes by connecting them with housing options, assistance programs, providers of community-based services, healthy aging workshops, caregiving support, and more. In addition, they provide follow up visits and phone calls to aid in the success of the older adult living safely out in the community.

### Information & Assistance

Resource Specialists receive calls from older adults and/or their caregivers who are seeking information and resources on things such as: housing, transportation, Medicare, financial services, community supports, assistance with complex issues and decisions, reducing prescription drug costs, resolving billing errors, comparing health and/or drug plans, fighting fraud and abuse, and many more miscellaneous topics.

### Medicare Open Enrollment

Through free, unbiased comprehensive assistance, our trained Senior LinkAge Line staff can assist older adults in saving money by doing plan comparisons to see what plan is right for them based on their health and medication needs for the coming year. This year we had a gentleman

come in for assistance and had he not, he would be paying an estimated \$11,000 for one of his medications in 2025. Thankfully he had come in for a plan comparison and the Specialist found this and was able to assist him in picking out a different plan that will cover the medication.

### Outreach Events

We continue to partner with Arrowhead Agency on Aging to present a virtual Medicare 101 class. These classes are held 1 time per month. They are geared toward people who are new to Medicare, caregivers, agency providers, and/or County Social Workers. Senior LinkAge Line staff continue to team up with the Dancing Sky Development Team to staff booths at Health Fairs throughout our region. We have also been out in communities doing presentations at various types of settings, but mainly Senior Centers. The topics include: Healthcare Fraud, Waste, and Abuse, Medicare Updates, and the Senior LinkAge Line – who we are/what we do/how we can help.

**In 2024, in the 21 counties the Dancing Sky Area Agency on Aging serves, they provided assistance to approximately 7,506 people.**

# WRAPS Pilot Project

Referrals come from county adult protection staff, consumers can be 18+ and qualify for funding to reduce/mitigate their risk of maltreatment.

- The average expenditure per person is \$1,200 but each person qualifies for up to \$2,500
- Utilizes American Rescue Funds extended through September 2025
- 60 referalls from April 8th - December 1st
- Over \$45,000 in funds expended to directly support clients and caregivers
- Services provided include: Transportation, relocation, meals, legal services, home environment, health promotion, emergency housing, and consumer supplies

## Development Team 2024

### OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

- Dancing Sky Facebook – 629 Followers
- In-person presentations  
30 presentations  
408+ in attendance
- Dancing Sky Monthly Virtual Webinars  
184 Zoom attendees + 32 at a “watch party”
- Community & Health Fair Booths  
2600+ Attendees

### DEMENTIA FRIENDLY INITIATIVES

- Dementia Friends Info Sessions – 169 participants
- Virtual Dementia Tours - 39 participants

### HEALTH AND WELLNESS CLASSES

- 44 classes in SAIL (Stay Active and Independent for Life), Matter of Balance, Tai Ji Quan, Bingocize, Enhance Fitness, Living Well Programs, & Walk with Ease
- 500+ Participants



## 2024 AGING GRANTEES

Alexandria YMCA - Evidence Based Programs  
Bakken's Grocery - Grocery Delivery  
Barnesville Helpers - Evidence Based Programs and Caregiver Support  
Bemidji Senior Center - Evidence Based Programs  
Central MN Elder Network - Caregiver Support  
Clear Waters Life Center - Homemaker/Asst Trans  
Community Resource Connections - Telephone Reassurance / I&A  
Douglas County - Information & Assistance  
First Lutheran Church (Detroit Lakes) - Evidence Based Programs  
Frazee Neighbor to Neighbor - Caregiver Support  
Groceries Plus LLC - Grocery Delivery  
Kittson County Public Health - Evidence Based Programs  
Knute Nelson - Evidence Based Programs  
Lake Region Healthcare - Medication Mgmt  
Lakes and Prairies CAP - Information & Assistance  
Legal Services of NW Minnesota - Legal Assistance  
Lifecare – Roseau - Evidence Based Programs  
Living at Home of Park Rapids - Caregiver Support/Homemaker/Asst Transportation  
Lutheran Social Services - Nutrition/Caregiver Support and Evidence Based Programs  
Mahube-Otwa - Homemaker/Chore/Home Mod/I&A and Evidence Based Programs  
Northwest Sentence to Serve - Chore Services  
Northwoods Caregivers - Chore/Home Mod/Caregiver Support and Evidence Based Programs  
Nutrition Services Inc. - Nutrition  
Otter Tail County - Information & Assistance and Caregiver I&A  
PARTNERS – Rothsay - Evidence Based Programs  
Perham Area Community Center - Evidence Based Programs  
REACH of Hawley - Evidence Based Programs  
Regents of UMN - RSVP of RRV- Evidence Based Programs  
Riverview Health - Evidence Based Programs  
Tri-Community Living at Home - Telephone Reassurance  
Tri-County Community Corrections - Chore Services  
Tri-Valley Opportunity Council - Assisted Transportation  
Valley General Halstad - Grocery Delivery  
Warren SOS LAH Program - Evidence-Based Programs  
West Central Community Action - Home Mod/Chore/Homemaker/Assisted Transportation and Evidence Based Programs  
Western Prairie Human Services - I&A/Caregiver Support and Evidence Based Programs  
Wilkin County Public Health - Homemaker/I&A and Evidence Based Programs

## CONNIE TROSKA

We mourn the loss of a beloved member of our team, Connie Troska, who fought a brave battle against cancer. Her kindness, dedication, and bright spirit touched us all deeply. Though she may be gone, her legacy of resilience and positivity will forever inspire us. Let's honor her memory by continuing to support one another and spreading kindness in everything we do. Rest in peace, dear Connie. You will be deeply missed."





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## TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

### PURPOSE:

To ensure safe and efficient movement of people and commodities and provide an on-going forum for important transportation issues in the region. To assist MnDOT and provide input with planning and programs.

### SERVICE PRIORITIES:

Direction setting, comprehensive regional planning, legislative advocacy, and MnDOT project coordination

## Local Communities Benefit From Transportation Planning

The NWRDC assisted several local communities with transportation planning initiatives in 2024. Staff helped guide cities and counties with transportation needs through the planning and grant process. Several local projects will receive grant funding in the near future to assist them in completing needed infrastructure improvements. These grants come from the State and Federal grant programs which require a local match but make it possible for our rural communities to afford needed improvements.

### Local Projects

The city of Crookston will receive \$1,120,000 to do upgrades that connect to the MnDOT project that will improve HWY 2 in the city. This will be a great improvement and provide better and safer access for people walking, biking, and rolling in the downtown area.

The city of Fosston was the recipient of two grants. One for \$249,000 and the other for \$349,000. These will be used to replace sidewalks in the downtown area and connecting to areas in the northern part of town. People will have a much safer system to walk or roll around town and provide better access to businesses and schools.

Thief River Falls received \$592,000 to complete new sidewalks along First Street. This will help connect the schools with safer routes for students and others using that corridor.

The city of Middle River received \$112,000 to resurface a recreational trail that needs repair.

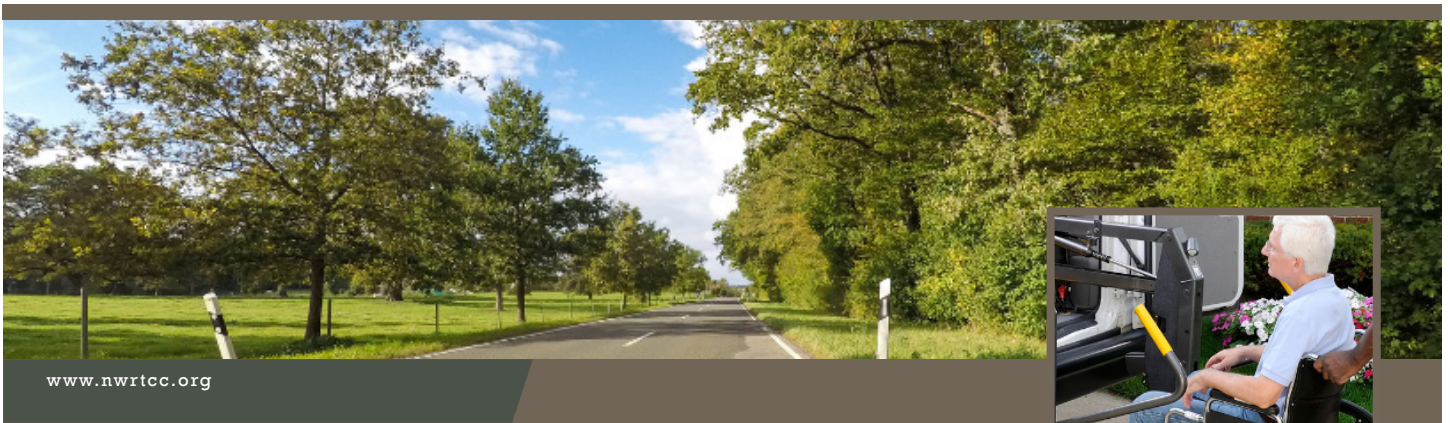
The cities of Ada and Warren received \$112,000 and \$40,000 respectively to upgrade some old street lights to LED to conserve energy and provide better lighting for the communities.

Planning continues for other projects in the region with several communities.

### Safe Routes to School

The NWRDC completed the Safe Routes To School plan with Highland Elementary in Crookston in 2024. Staff is currently working with the community on grants to help implement needed projects identified in the new SRTS Plan. The NWRDC assisted the Grygla and Red Lake Falls School districts in receiving planning grants to complete Safe Routes to School plans in each community in the 2024 – 2025 School year. The plans will look at all aspects of transportation to and from the schools and determine what can be done to improve safety for the students and better traffic flow. Committees of local residents and officials have been established in each community that will assist in the planning and implementation of a local plan.





www.nwrtcc.org



## Northwest Regional Transportation Coordination Council

### PURPOSE:

To support improved access and options for transportation services in northwestern Minnesota through communication and creative partnerships

### SERVICE PRIORITIES:

The workplan consists of seven tasks identified by the Minnesota Council on Transportation Access. The link is at [www.nwrtcc.org](http://www.nwrtcc.org).

## Supporting Improved Access and Options

The Mission of the NWRTPCC is to **SUPPORT improved access and options for transportation services in Northwestern Minnesota through communication and creative partnerships.**

### Website

To assist with transportation guidance, we continue to manage our website to communicate current events, best practices, and agency news. The website also provides a comprehensive database on all transportation options in the region. One example is a gentleman who contacted us to get transportation from the local hospital to an addiction treatment center and a ride to his home three days later. We were able to connect him with the public transit system for a demand response ride to the medical facility and a ride home using a volunteer driver.

### Sharing Resources

One of the most obvious ways to improve efficiency is to begin sharing the resources we currently have. One

partnership was developed between the Falls Corporation, a DT&H program in Thief River Falls, and a local nursing home. The DAC shares its accessible bus with the nursing home on the weekends so they are able to provide social and recreational opportunities for their residents.

### Relationship Building & Sharing Vehicles

NWRTPCC provides the connecting point between providers and riders who need assistance with their transportation. This year was filled with relationship building and developing new processes for sharing vehicles. A major development is the sliding fee scale made available to private pay individuals through the volunteer driver program that serves the vast majority of our region. A major project completed by the RTCC staff was the Moving Greater Minnesota Forward grant, and the Pony Express model developed for that program.



This picture features Mary Phillippe who is taking her 94-year-old mother, Colleen Mongoven, for a ride around Warroad with a stop at Scoops Ice Cream Parlor for a cone. Colleen is a resident at the Warroad Senior Living Center. The vehicle in use is called a "Tri-Shaw" and offers a fun way for volunteers to provide opportunities for outdoor social activities to the residents.

# PLANS & PUBLICATIONS

## PREPARED BY THE NWRDC

### PLANS:

**2025-2028 Aging Area Plan** – Includes senior and provider input as well as demographic data to establish priorities for the use of Title-III Older Americans Act funds. Includes information on the unique characteristics of our region, demographics, accomplishments, program outcomes, and budget information.

### **Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)** –

The 2022–2026 CEDS has taken a little different shape to more closely resemble that of each of the other Economic Development Regions of Greater Minnesota. The Economic Development Regions have agreed upon four key cornerstones to economic development: Human Capital, Economic Competitiveness, Community Resources, and Foundational Assets. Each region has based their CEDS on these cornerstones and developed their own unique goals and strategies. The 2022-2026 CEDS does maintain previous priorities of Planning, Promotion, Business Development, Labor Force Development and Renewable Energies with added emphasis on workforce related issues such as housing, childcare, training and business succession planning.

**Revolving Loan Fund Plan** – Consists of program elements and guidelines.

### PLANS:

**Government Units of Service Directory** – A listing of service agencies and government offices from the township and legislative levels.

**2023 Annual Report** – A report sent to local officials and legislators on funding and work activities of the NWRDC.

**NW MN Visitor & Recreation Guide** – A guide of attractions highlighting services and recreational opportunities in Northwest Minnesota communities.

### WEBSITES:

- [www.nwrdc.org](http://www.nwrdc.org)
- [www.dancingskyaaa.org](http://www.dancingskyaaa.org)
- [www.nwrtcc.org](http://www.nwrtcc.org)





# 2024 NWRDC TEAM



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