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

The Northwest Regional Development Commission (NWRDC) exists because of active commission members, in combination with dedicated and valued local businesses, educational, healthcare and governmental entities, private citizens and private and public sector agencies. These partnerships in the communities throughout the seven (14 & 21) counties make us stronger.

At the NWRDC, 2022 was quite a year. The organization went through a significant transition in 2021 as several long-term members of the NWRDC leadership retired from public service. Building upon the legacy of previous leadership, regional development commission staff came together to focus on organizational capacity and visioning for the opportunities of innovation and growth within local programs and services.

With the partnerships listed above, Northwest Minnesota pushed through its goals to enhance regional housing, address workforce challenges, build organizational sustainability, emergency & resiliency planning and focus on opportunities to build rural communities of equity.

Here are the NWRDC program highlights in 2022:

- Completed the 5-Year Local Human Service Transportation Coordination Plan.
- American Rescue Act funding awarded to the city of Fosston for expansion of the Industrial Park and airport ($5.8 million to support business growth). NWRDC offered technical assistance for the application to the US EDA’s Economic Adjustment Assistance Program.
- Facilitated a Market Rate Housing Study with support through the Northwest Minnesota Foundation in collaboration with the Northwest Multi-County HRA. Research was provided on the lack of market rate housing and impacts to the business community.
- Aging Department welcomed many new staff throughout 2022 and are excited for the numerous years of experience and innovative skill-sets added to the team. Dancing Sky Area Agency on Aging continues to be a strong advocate for increased state nutrition funding to address food insecurities in Northwest Minnesota, transportation inequities and in-home supports.
- Assisted with the completion of a successful Family Assistance Center Seminar for Northwest Minnesota, along with members of the Region 3 Joint Powers Board, NW Health Services Coalition, NW Minnesota Foundation, and other partners. We look forward to future events and updated plans for 2023.
- The Revolving Loan Fund program made 12 loans totaling $1,365,000.00: leveraging $7,167,451.00 in private funding and $300,000.00 in additional public funding.

Thank you for the support, participation and assistance towards the local programs that assist Northwest Minnesota. The NWRDC looks forward to celebrating 50 years of public service with you in 2023.

Sincerely,
Gary Kiesow
Dear Friends,

As I reflect on my first year as the Executive Director of the Northwest Regional Development Commission, I feel a sense of gratitude for the amazing staff and Commission members that have been a shining example of professional leadership during a season of transition.

Another challenging year has come and gone, together with our staff and partners we shifted our focus from recovery to resiliency. Remembering the valuable lessons that the pandemic taught us, we became inspired by rural communities coming together to solve complex problems that have been around the region since before the pandemic. However, like never before there is a renewed sense of urgency and a willingness to come together, publicly and privately, to tackle our biggest challenges.

The pandemic illuminated the many underlying challenges that face our region for individuals, families, businesses, and our communities. But it also brought the people of the region together. Fiercely independent, self-reliant individuals came together to aid and assist those in need and identify new approaches to age-old rural issues: food access, healthcare, and digital connectivity. Strategies for economic prosperity, active living, and establishing how the region can seize on market opportunities have been at the forefront of our regional planning.

We continue to strive to focus our efforts on empowering communities and their people through sustainable partnerships; promoting equity and inclusivity; and providing services to enhance the quality of life in the region.

This year’s annual report showcases the amazing work, in collaboration with our partners, we have accomplished throughout 2022. As our team continues to meet the needs of our stakeholders in the 21st century, I want to thank everyone who has been involved with the NWRDC for your unique contributions to where we stand today as an organization. Our future is bright thanks to your support.

All the best,
Darla Waldner
Executive Director

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### Commission Membership

**Kittson County**
- Kimberley Johnson* (Kennedy Municipalities)
- David Treumer (Hallock Counties)
- Loren Younggren (Hallock Municipalities)

**Marshall County**
- Gary Kiesow** (Goodridge Counties)
- Loren Lusignan (Grygla Municipalities)
- Lindsay Oslund (Grygla Municipalities)
- Gail Yutrzenka (Argyle Municipalities)

**Norman County**
- Nathan Redland* (Halstad Counties)
- Crystal Stene (Ada Municipalities)
- Lucas Spaeth (Halstad School Boards)

**Pennington County**
- Elvera Cullen (Thief River Falls At Large)
- Dave Erickson (Thief River Falls Townships)
- Judy Jones (Goodridge Municipalities)
- Bruce Lawrence* (Thief River Falls Counties)

**Polk County**
- Gerald Amiot (Crookston Counties)
- Norma Campos (Fertile Municipalities)
- Gerald Jacobson (Fosston Municipalities)
- Keith Sistad (EAST GRAND FORKS COUNTIES)
- Warren Strandell* (EAST GRAND FORKS MUNICIPALITIES)
- Toby Strom (McIntosh Municipalities)
- Kathleen Tuite (EAST GRAND FORKS BUSINESS)

**Red Lake County**
- Jim DuChamp (Plummer Municipalities)
- John Dudycha (Plummer Counties)
- Kevin Reich (Red Lake Falls Townships)
- Ronald Weiss* (Red Lake Falls Watershed District)

**Roseau County**
- Daryl Wicklund* (Badger Counties)
- Debra Wiskow (Greenbush Townships)
- Dan Fabian (Roseau Municipalities)
- Robin Wisner (Roseau Minorities)

* Board Members  ** Chairperson
The CY’2020 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.

### CY’2021 AUDIT

### COST ALLOCATION

- CY’2022 Actual Leave Rate: **17.61%**
- CY’2022 Actual Fringe Rate: **37.52%**
- CY’2022 Actual Indirect Rate: **11.79%**
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.

A Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for Region One

Region One has seen several of its major employers expand in recent years all while combating a labor force shortage that has been accelerated by the pandemic.

Whether it be through additional production facilities, acquisition, or diversification and retooling, Region One is fortunate to have manufacturers and other businesses making significant investments within the region. As a result, we should see further employment opportunities along with the potential for growth.

This growth potential is not without its challenges. The labor force shortage and subsequent support for the labor force such as housing and childcare will all play a role in the region’s ability to realize this growth potential.

In early 2022, the 2022-2026 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) was developed. The CEDS is a strategy aimed at improving the region’s economy and labor force so the previously mentioned economic potential may be realized.

In addition to the new CEDS, the NWRDC and Headwater’s Regional Development Commission have partnered with the EDA University Center at University of Minnesota, Crookston to gather regional partners in efforts to further implement the CEDS strategies within each region. By convening regional economic and community development partners for 4-6 meetings per year, we intend to create a strategy that best aligns with the region’s ability to implement the strategy and identify gaps in the region’s resources where additional assistance may be needed.

Ongoing efforts to improve “Quality of Place” continue throughout the region. One thing we learned from the pandemic is our traditional idea of the labor force in which our employers have to draw from has changed. As more companies continue to adopt telecommuting as an option for employees, the pool of eligible applicants expands, as does the potential competition for those applicants.
The Northwest Regional Enterprise Loan Fund closed out the disbursement phase of the CARES Act and have entered the revolving phase of the loan funds.

In 2022, we saw a sharp rise in interest rates creating several conflicting impacts to the Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) program. The rise in rates, makes the cheaper Revolving Loan Fund money look more appealing to borrowers and bankers alike but eventually the higher rates will reduce the number of people seeking financing.

The last of the CARES Act loan funds were lent out in June of this year. Under the CARES Act Revolving Loan Fund program, 24 loans were made totaling $3,130,000. The CARES Act loans were offered at 0% interest for 24 months and 2% for the remainder of the term.

For 2022, 12 loans were made totaling $1,365,000.00 between both the Legacy Revolving Loan Fund and the CARES Act Revolving Loan Fund. Restaurants, grocery, manufacturing, and service industries were all recipients of Revolving Loan Fund funding.

In addition to opening new loans, other loan fund activities included loan restructuring, interest rate adjustments, payoffs, loan assistance to community economic development agencies (EDAs), 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, Northwest Minnesota Foundation, and formerly the IDEA Competition.
Economic Resiliency Becomes A Permanent Program

In January 2021, NWRDC assumed an additional role for regional resiliency in direct response to the Covid-19 pandemic. With funding from the Federal CARES Act, the Commission developed strategies to mitigate the impacts of the ongoing global pandemic and its effects on communities, employers, higher education, childcare, workforce, and housing to name a few.

This year, the NWRDC made permanent the Director of Community Development in an effort to more broadly focus our resources on the region’s community development needs. Community Development strives to assist regional efforts to build assets that go beyond core economic development efforts.

Region 1 benefits from a robust economy which continues to improve post-pandemic. However, several challenges still create headwinds for continued growth in the communities we serve. NWRDC is committed to multiple, regional efforts focused on developing solutions to advance regional prosperity.

2022 Project Highlights

- **American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Funding**: NWRDC staff worked with several regional project submissions to seek funding. These were highly competitive grant rounds with submissions exceeding available funds by a ratio of 3:1. Fosston was selected to receive nearly $6 million in federal funds to expand their existing Industrial Park and develop a new hangar at the adjacent municipal airport. When complete, this project will provide infrastructure to create eleven new industrial sites and expand and improve operations at the airport. EDA funding will be matched with 25% local funds.

- **Increase the region’s childcare capacity**: Childcare capacity is constrained in NW Minnesota which is impacting job growth. A recent study completed by First Children’s Finance (FCF) indicated the need for up to 593 additional slots, ages birth – age 5 in School District #564 ( Thief River Falls) alone. NWRDC is actively engaged in a Strategic Supply Plan effort guided by FCF to create additional capacity across the community. This effort will identify options for an additional daycare center, combined with expansion of in-home or pod-model daycare availability.

- **Incentivize the need for affordable Market Rate Housing**: NWRDC in partnership with Northwest Minnesota Multi-County HRA received funding from the Northwest Minnesota Foundation to study the impacts of Market Rate Housing disparities in Region 1. Working with the Grand Forks Community Land Trust, the project is focused on the communities of Roseau, Red Lake Falls, Thief River Falls, and Warroad with in-depth research on workforce housing availability versus identified need. The project is also aligned with and supporting Minnesota Housing Partnership’s Emerging Developer Initiative.

- **Expand access of high-speed internet to rural and remote areas of NW Minnesota**: Access to reliable broadband is a challenge for several areas in Region 1. NWRDC is supporting Warroad’s efforts led by a Blandin Broadband Communities grant to plan for and fund the installation of broadband throughout School District #690. This remote rural area struggles with equitable access which impacts commerce, education, and other aspects of daily life for residents.
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 and 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 2022, thanks to a grant funding opportunity through Minnesota Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HSEM):

- Partner Information Coordination Planning
- Recovery Planning Related to Hostile Action Scenarios
- Regional/Local Emergency Operations Center Planning
- Family Assistance Center Regional Seminar
- Regional Badging & Credentialing
- Involvement with the Upper Red River Valley COAD (Community Organizations Active in Disaster), Regional Radio Board/Radio Advisory Committee and the Northwest Health Services Coalition.
- Assistance to Northwest Minnesota Foundation – Philanthropic Preparedness, Resiliency and Emergency Partnership (PREP)
- Exercise Planning & Assistance
- BCA Threat Liaison Training
- Quarterly and Joint Powers Board Meeting Attendance
- Local & Regional Exercise Involvement

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

- Resiliency Planning in Coordination with the Community Development Director
- Supply Chain – Resiliency Planning with the University of Minnesota Crookston and the Northwest SBDC
- Assistance to the NW Regional Transportation Coordination Council
- Northwest Minnesota Tourism Directory
- IT Support
- Survey Project with Blue Cross / Blue Shield
- Strengths at Work Training
- Minnesota Association of Development Organizations (MADO) – Conference
- Workplace Well-Being Collaborative
Purpose:
The 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.

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 Continues Important Work

Return to Community
Our Community Living Specialists help older adults remain in their home by connecting them with housing options, assistance programs, providers of community-based services, healthy aging workshops, caregiving support, and more. They also provide follow up visits and phone calls to aid in the success of the older adult living safely out in the community.

Pre-Admission Screening
Our Specialists receive and process assessments to ensure that it is appropriate for a person to be placed into a skilled nursing facility. These assessments are required in the state of Minnesota to measure a person’s need for nursing home level of care and to connect people with supportive services.

Information & Assistance
Phone staff received calls from older adults and/or their caregivers who were 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, resolve billing errors, compare 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 along with our Senior Coordinators and temporary staff can assist older adults save money by doing plan comparisons to see what plan is right for them based on their health and medication needs for the coming year.

Outreach Events
Staff partnered up with Arrowhead Area Agency on Aging to present a virtual Medicare 101 class. These classes are for people who are new to Medicare, agency providers, and/or County Social Workers.

In 2022, in the 21 counties the Dancing Sky Area Agency on Aging serves, they provided assistance to approximately 21,072 people.

By County in the NWRDC Region:

- Kittson
- Marshall
- Norman
- Pennington
- Red Lake
- Roseau

**These totals do not include the month of December**
Development Team Increases Outreach

The Development Team has been increasing their outreach in creative ways. Since the pandemic halted many of the activities of the Development Team, they continue to increase outreach, virtually and in-person.

MONTHLY WEBINARS
- Dementia-related Behaviors
- Advance Care Planning
- Financial Planning
- Spring Cleaning/Reducing Clutter
- Funeral Planning
- Hospice and Palliative Care
- Medication Storage and Disposal
- Parkinson’s Foundation
- Stroke Awareness & Prevention
- Weatherization and Energy Assistance
- Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services
- State Service for the Blind

*Webinars reach: 420 individuals.
*A YouTube channel hosts the recorded webinars. An additional 140 people have viewed the webinars online. (Search “Northwest Regional Development Commission”)

DEMENTIA EDUCATION EVENTS
Including Dementia Friends Info Sessions, Teepa Snow Training, The Remember Project Events, Dementia Capability Training, Dementia Friendly Communities, Dementia Friendly Libraries, etc.

Dementia Education Reach: 485 people

HEALTH AND WELLNESS COMMUNITY EVENTS

Community Events Reach: 550+

FACEBOOK CAMPAIGNS
- 37,399 Individual Reached
- 2,082 Visited Our Facebook Page

Interaction with:
- 87.3% Female
- 12.7% Male

PROFESSIONAL TRAININGS
Led by Development Team staff: Matter of Balance Leader Trainings (2), Living Well with Chronic Conditions Leader Training, Caregiver Consultant Training (in partnership with Trellis) and Caregiver Coaching Training.

IN-PERSON PRESENTATIONS
Topics Included “The File” (organizing legal and financial documents), Falls Prevention Bingo (includes traditional bingo with fall prevention tips and movement added in), Living Well in Your Home (covers general service options as we age, how much they cost, and how to pay for them).

In-Person Presentation Reach: 361

RADIO INTERVIEWS
- Nijii Radio out of Callaway
- KXRA out of Alexandria

Radio Reach: 1,000’s of listeners

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<th>2022 AGING GRANTEES</th>
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<td>Park Rapids Living at Home - Caregiver, Respite &amp; Homemaker, Evidence Based Classes</td>
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<td>West Central Community Action - Home Modification, Evidence Based Classes</td>
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<td>Northwoods Caregivers - Caregiver &amp; Respite, Evidence Based Classes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Western Prairie Human Services - Caregiver &amp; Respite, Evidence Based Classes</td>
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<td>Wilkin County Public Health - Homemaker, Evidence Based Classes</td>
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<td>Tri-County Community Corrections - Chore Program</td>
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<td>Northwest Sentence to Service - Chore Program</td>
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<td>Clearwaters Life Center - Assisted Transportation &amp; Homemaker</td>
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<td>Productive Alternatives - Assisted Transportation</td>
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<td>Legal Services of Northwest Minnesota - Legal Assistance</td>
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<td>Lutheran Social Services - Caregiver &amp; Respite</td>
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<td>Central MN Elder Network - Caregiver &amp; Respite</td>
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<td>Lake Region Healthcare - Medication Management</td>
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<td>Community Resource Connections - Telephone Reassurance</td>
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<td>Nutrition Services Inc. - Congregate/Home-delivered Meals</td>
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<td>Lutheran Social Services - Congregate/Home-delivered Meals</td>
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<td>Warren Serving Our Seniors - Evidence Based Classes</td>
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<td>First Lutheran of Detroit Lakes - Evidence Based Classes</td>
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<td>East Grand Forks Senior Center - Evidence Based Classes</td>
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<td>Perham Area Community Center - Evidence Based Classes</td>
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<td>Barnesville Helpers - Evidence Based Classes</td>
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<td>PARTNERS of Rothsay - Evidence Based Classes</td>
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<td>REACH of Hawley - Evidence Based Classes</td>
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<td>Alexandria HRA - Evidence Based Classes</td>
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<td>Mahube-Otwa - Evidence Based Classes</td>
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<td>Wellness in the Woods - Evidence Based Classes</td>
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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.

Interest In Transportation Alternatives Increases

The NWRDC Region had a record year for Transportation Alternative funding through the Area Transportation Partnership (ATP). Staff visited Argyle, Twin Valley, Crookston, Thief River Falls, Fosston, Roseau County, and Marshall County. Other communities having an interest include Lengby and Warren.

The Argyle project needs to purchase right of way and a new trail alignment was recommended to keep the trail out of the floodplain. They were encouraged to apply next year when they are more ready to deliver.

The Twin Valley project is located on the north end of city limits across from the City Park. They were planning a multi-use trail along the river that wasn’t going to be paved and had a much better appeal to the DNR Regional Trails Grant and they were encouraged to seek funding through the DNR program.

Crookston submitted two applications and were encouraged to partner between the city and school district to submit an application for a safe routes to school plan and partner on connecting the elementary to the high school and other points of interest.

The projects encouraged to fill out the complete application include:

- The Marshall County Park at Florian.
- The Roseau County sidewalk project connecting the school to MNTH 11 along the county road.
- The Crookston trail that connects the northeast portion of town with existing sidewalks that connect to the high school.
- The Thief River Falls project will connect the east end of the residential portion of town to Digi-key and the existing trails that travel on Greenwood.
- The Fosston project will connect a new trail system on the east side of town with the trails around the fitness complex.

The Area Transportation Partnership has $1.1 million to designate to the Transportation Alternative projects and it looks very favorable for several communities in the NWRDC Region to be funded for construction in 2027.
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

RTCC Mobility Manager Increases Outreach

To meet the goal of involving constituents of the counties we represent, the NWRTCC Mobility Manager made presentations to each county commission and recruited new members to the Regional Transportation Coordination Council (RTCC).

Presentations were made to all the Living-at-Home programs in the region. During a talk in Polk County, an attendee decided to be a representative for volunteers in Polk Count and began attending the RTCC meetings.

Work teams met to focus on a few of the primary goals:
• Volunteer driver
• Shared mobility
• Communications
• Emergency Management

RTCC members have been working diligently to plan activities that will make progress.

To provide outreach we launched a website, www.nwrtcc.org and started a Facebook page. Regular posts with updates and news related to transportation keep our constituents informed.

Members of the RTCC attended the Marshall County Fair and passed out provider directories to the public. Social service and non-profit organizations were able to access transportation information easily through an on-line provider directory.

The Mobility Manager attended the Community Transportation Association of America's annual meeting and learned about national mobility trends.

Staff participated in Easter Seal's Mobility Manager training sponsored by the MCOTA Volunteer Driver Work Team. Staff also took part in MCOTA sponsored facilitator's training and attended multiple webinars sponsored by the AARP, AAA, Area Agencies on Aging, Council on Disability and others.

The Mobility Manager partnered with MCOTA staff and the Mid-Minnesota Regional Development Commission’s RTCC Coordinator to provide a workshop on mobility management and how its mission is similar to the mission of the Regional Development Commissions.

Also, the Mobility Manager partnered with social service and elder care providers in Kittson County to produce a grant proposal for the National Center for Mobility Management, called Ready to Launch. This proposal would offer volunteer drivers $1 per-mile reimbursement from their door and back, to provide medical transportation to Kittson County residents. The recommended donation for these rides is $20 or more, if participants are able.

Currently, the volunteer driver program serving Kittson County has one driver and turns down an average of 20 ride requests from county residents per month due to lack of drivers. The goal is that this new model will increase the number of volunteer drivers, thus increasing access to non-emergency medical care.
PLANS & PUBLICATIONS
PREPARED BY THE NWRDC

PLANS:

**2022 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.

PUBLICATIONS:

**SeniorNews** – A newsletter for senior citizens and service providers of Northwest Minnesota.

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

**2022 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
www.dancingskyaaa.org
www.visitnwminnesota.com
www.nwrtcc.org