



The Regional Development Act of 1969 requires that a self evaluation of each Regional Development Commission be completed every five years. The section of the Act which deals with the evaluation reads as follows:

“In 2001 and every five years thereafter the commission shall review its activities and issue a report assessing its performance in fulfilling the purposes of the regional development act. The reports shall address whether the existence of the commission is in the public welfare and interest.”

The Regional Development Act states the purpose of Regional Development Commissions is to “...work with and on behalf of local units of government to develop plans or implement programs to address economic, social, physical, and governmental concerns of each region of the state.”

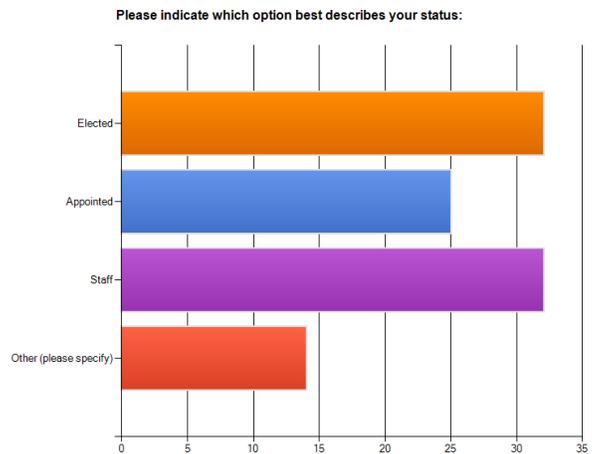
Region Nine Development Commission has undertaken this evaluation to determine if the Commission is meeting the expectations of the public and if improvements can be made for the future.

The 2011 self-evaluation of Region Nine Development Commission was conducted by means of a community survey. The survey was emailed to approximately 225 public and private entities including Commission members, local governments, federal and state agencies, school districts and key stakeholders within the nine-county Region Nine area. Region Nine received

103 responses or a 46% response rate. A full copy of the survey is attached for your review.

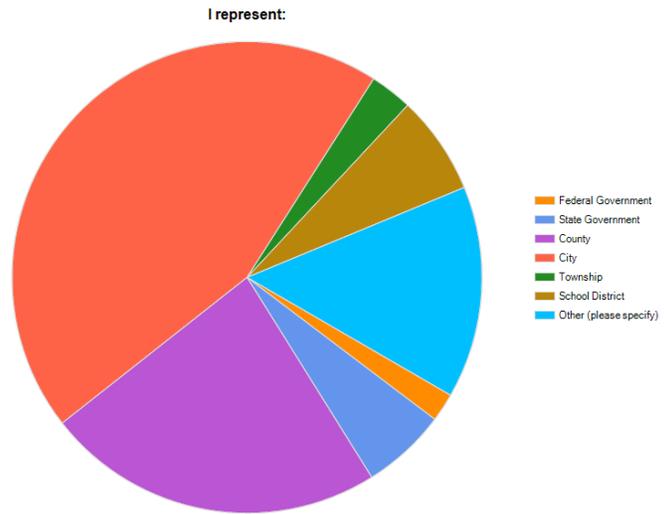
The data was downloaded and analyzed. The response revealed a considerable amount of information as to how Region Nine has been interacting with various groups and if it has been fulfilling the purposes as set forth in the Regional Development Act.

Responses to the survey were well represented by appointed and elected officials as well as staff. The graph below shows participation by “status”:

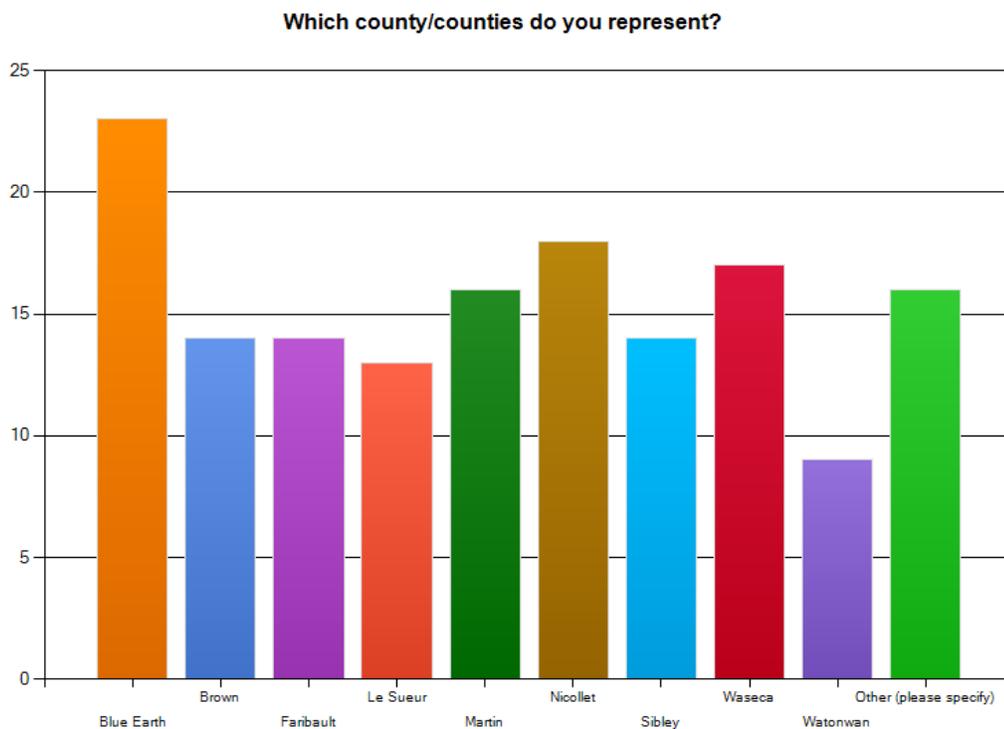


As you can see above, 31% of the respondents were elected officials, 24% were appointed, 31% were staff, and the remaining 14% fell into the “other” category, which included participants such as municipal consultants, Loan Committee members, and University faculty.

We also had representation from the various levels of government. As you can see from the chart to the right, the majority of the respondents were from cities and counties throughout the nine-county region (45% and 23% respectively); however we also had responses from Federal partners (2%), state agencies/legislators (6%), school districts (7%), townships (3%), while 15% selected the “Other” category (Higher Education, banking industry, and non-profit organizations).



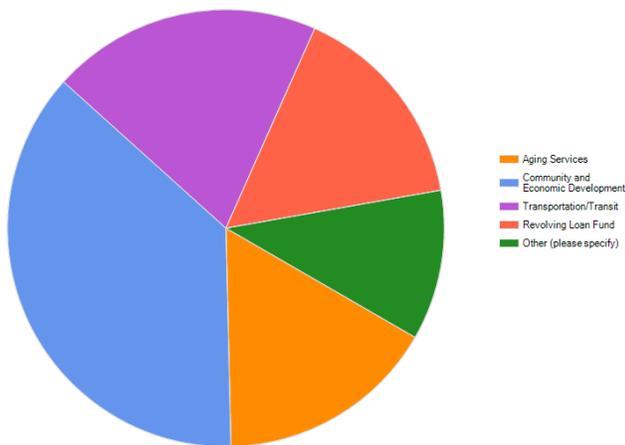
We also had good representation from across the region. The graph below shows fairly well distributed responses from all nine-counties throughout the Region Nine area. Response rates ranged from a high of 22% in Blue Earth County to a low of 9% in Watonwan County.



Respondents were asked which areas they utilized services in at Region Nine. Options included Aging Services, Community & Economic Development, Transportation/Transit, Revolving Loan Fund, or Other. Respondents were able to select one or all of these options. It is important to note that early on the survey process, participants were unable to select “Other” as their only option. In this case, participants were forced to select one of the four program areas listed above, even if they had not utilized services from that department.

This was rectified later in the survey process and respondents were able to use “other” as their only option. Because the survey was initially developed without the ability for respondents to select “other” as their only option, this may have skewed the numbers a bit, since they were forced to select a department that they, in fact, may not have used services from.

I have utilized services from the following departments at Region Nine Development Commission:



Again, as you can see from the chart above, there was fair representation among all four program areas at Region Nine. The bulk of the respondents had used the services of the Community & Economic Development department (55%), 30% used the Transportation/Transit department, Aging Services were used by 24% of the respondents, and 23% had used the services of the Region Nine Revolving Loan Fund. The “other” category, which received 17% of the votes were mainly individuals that had not used any of the services noted above.

The following information begins to provide Region Nine with important information about key areas that we feel support our ability to fulfill the purposes of the Regional Development Act.

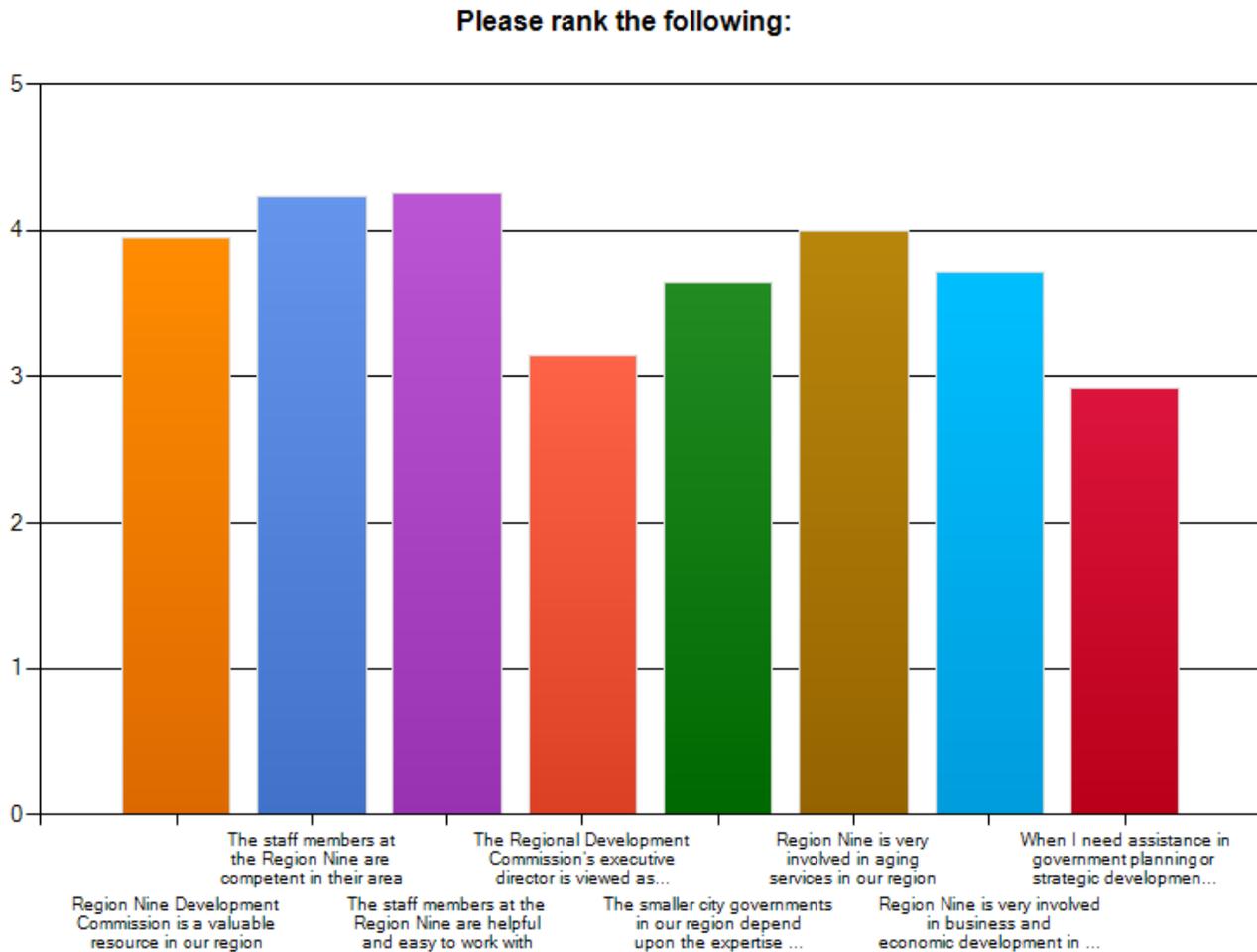
This portion of the survey asked participants to rank, on a scale of 1 – 5 (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Somewhat Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Somewhat Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree) various components of Region Nine’s services. Areas to be ranked included:

1. The value of Region Nine as a resource throughout the region
2. The competency of the staff
3. The helpfulness of the staff
4. The leadership capabilities of the Executive Director
5. The level of reliance that the smaller units of government place on Region Nine’s services
6. Region Nine’s involvement in Aging Services throughout the region
7. Region Nine’s involvement in business and economic development services throughout the region
8. The likelihood that Region Nine would be the first “go to” resource that communities would turn to for assistance

Responses were averaged out and the highest potential ranking for each question above was a 5. The overall ranking was as follows:

- 4.26 - Helpfulness of staff
- 4.23 - Competency of staff
- 4.00 - Involvement in Aging Services
- 3.95 - Value of Region Nine as a resource throughout the region
- 3.72 - Involvement in business and economic development throughout the region
- 3.65 - Smaller communities rely on Region Nine
- 3.15 - Leadership capabilities of the Executive Director
- 2.92 - Region Nine is the first “go to” resource for assistance

A graph outlining the full results can be found below.



Survey respondents were asked three questions at the close of the survey:

1. Please tell us what you believe to be the greatest strength of Region Nine Development Commission.
2. In what area(s) could Region Nine improve its service delivery.
3. Please share with us your best experience working with Region Nine.

Responses to question #1 (Please tell us what you believe to be the greatest strength of Region Nine Development Commission) fell into a few broad themes (there were 49 responses overall):

- Region Nine brings a regional perspective and provides broad representation
- They provide planning assistance and expertise in a variety of areas, especially for the smaller communities
- The aging services they provide are important for our region
- The staff are knowledgeable and helpful

When asked, “ In what area(s) Region Nine could improve its service delivery”, the following themes were recorded (42 responses overall):

- Region Nine needs to better communicate its mission; tell us what you do and how we can access your services
- Visit our communities more
- Listen to local issues and help provide resources to deal with these issues
- Help Commissioners be informed of their role in R9. Tell them why they are serving and what their role is. Be more strategic in planning efforts. Hold more committee meetings to identify issues and approaches to resolving these issues. Develop better relations with cities, counties, townships and schools. Work more closely with cities, counties, townships, and schools to identify issues that are affecting them. Strategically plan as a region how to approach these issues. Develop plans at committee levels and work as a Region to find solutions.

Question #3 asked respondents to share their best experience working with Region Nine. The following broad themes were documented (there were 43 responses overall):

- Region Nine’s economic development planning services and grant workshops have been helpful
- Good experiences working with staff
- Transportation and transit planning in rural areas
- Services provided by MNRAAA are very important

*I have worked with RNDC for many years and find it difficult to select a single experience. Healthy communities , transportation/transit and economic development are all areas that Region 9 has made significant contributions in and that I have appreciated working with.*

It is clear from the survey results that Region Nine has competent, helpful staff that are experienced in their respective line of work. It is also clear that the Aging Services provided throughout the region is a very important service. However, we also learned through this survey process that greater steps need to be taken to better inform the public about the role of Region Nine. We need to make sure that we are taking every opportunity to visit our local units of government and share with them the mission of Region Nine and what services we have available that they could benefit from. It is also clear from the survey responses that Region Nine must take steps to ensure that they are seen as the “go to” organization within the Region.

The following recommendations are made to address concerns expressed during the evaluation process and to ensure the continuation of quality services to the area:

1. Staff, Commission, and Committee members should make an extra effort to provide information about the Commission when the opportunity is presented. Providing understandable information to the public and units of government should be an on-going priority.

2. Individual programs should review the results of the evaluation to incorporate public perceptions and priorities.
3. Appreciation should be expressed to commission members, committee members, staff and our many partners for their efforts providing service to the public.

Success will require commitment and hard work of the R9 Commissioners, staff and regional partners.

Overall, Region Nine Development Commission views the results of the self-evaluation as very positive. Region Nine feels the report documents support for Region Nine Development Commission and verifies that the existence of Region Nine is in the public's welfare and interest.