

Northwest Regional Development Commission

2006 Evaluation and Assessment

NWRDC
115 South Main . Suite 1
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nwrdc.org

Working on behalf of Local Units of Government in
Kittson, Marshall, Norman, Pennington, Polk, Red Lake and Roseau Counties

Northwest Regional Development Commission 2006 Evaluation Report

I. Background of the Evaluation

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 report 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."**

The Northwest Regional Development Commission (NWRDC) 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.

II. Methodology

The following steps were completed during the evaluation process:

- A review of past evaluations was completed.
- The NWRDC Board of Directors instructed staff to complete a survey of local units of government and those receiving services from the Commission.
- Staff drafted a survey instrument, solicited input on understandability and completed modifications based on input. See page 4 for a copy of the survey and associated documents.
- The survey was mailed to county commissioners, county auditors/administrators, mayors, city clerks, township association chairs, NWRDC advisory committee members, and a sample of persons receiving services from each of the programs. A total of 620 surveys were mailed. Each mailing included a stamped return envelope.
- Survey results were tabulated and presented to the NWRDC Board and Commission.
- A final report was drafted and accepted by the NWRDC on December 2, 2006.

III. Survey Results

The survey results are tabulated on page 4. The total number of persons responding to each question and quality of service rating is found in or near the box for each response option.

Response Rate

- The overall response rate of 41.5% is high enough to assume the results are representative of those surveyed.
- The response rate from local units of government was high enough to reflect a representative sample. 155 Surveys were returned from the 289 units of government (7 counties, 54 cities, 228 townships) in the region. Each type of local government also appears well represented in the returns.
- The response rate for NWRDC/Committee members was high enough to indicate a representative sample. 116 surveys were returned from board members. Each Committees was also well represented. The lowest Committee return rate was 62%.
- All the programs and service types are well enough represented in the responses to assume the survey can be applied to all components of the NWRDC.

Quality of Services

- The ranking of 8.7 on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the highest ranking, reflects a very positive assessment by those responding to the survey.
- There were only 3 rankings below 5. The comments related to those rankings were mainly about the need for more information or assistance.
- Cross tabulations of quality of service according to categories of elected officials, committee members, program areas, and types of services showed very little variation.

Fulfillment of Purpose

- 90% of those responding agreed with the statement that the NWRDC is working on behalf of local units of government to address concerns of the region.
- Only .4% of those responding felt the NWRDC is not working on behalf of local units of government. 8% were not sure. Comments related to these responses were almost all about a lack of information.

Information

- 85% of those responding felt the NWRDC is providing adequate information about it's programs and services.
- 5% (12) felt information was not adequate and 9.6% were not sure. This was associated with low quality and fulfillment ratings. 6 of the 12 not adequate were township responses.

Priorities and Comments

- There were a variety of suggestions and comments on the operation of the NWRDC and future priorities. The responses are summarized on page 5. The great majority of the comments were positive or constructive in nature with a small number of negative comments and concerns. There were scattered comments about increased contact with communities and business; and some comments about getting more information out to the public.
- There were no major trends in the comments that appeared to reflect a need for the NWRDC to make large scale shifts in direction. There were a number of helpful suggestions and reaffirmations of the work directions set by the NWRDC and program Committees. A number of comments appeared to be directed toward the importance of maintaining efforts go support growth and development.

IV. Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusion

Based on the results of the evaluation process, the Commission can state that:

1. **The existence of the commission is in the public welfare and interest.** This statement is made in consideration of the costs and benefits of the services provided by the NWRDC.
2. The NWRDC is fulfilling it's purpose of working on behalf of local units of government to address economic, social, physical, and governmental concerns of each region of the state.
3. Local units of government and others receiving services feel the programs and services of the NWRDC are high quality in nature.
4. No major shifts in direction or corrective measures are needed to respond to public concerns.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made to address concerns expressed during the evaluation process and to insure 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, especially to township representatives.
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.

NWRDC 2006 Evaluation Survey

Association with the NWRDC - Please check all that apply:

1. Elected or appointed official: (Surveys mailed-620 Returned-257 Rate:41.5%)

9.0	8.6	8.7	8.4	7.6
<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 9	<input type="checkbox"/> 62	<input type="checkbox"/> 48	<input type="checkbox"/> 45
Federal	State	County	City	Township

2. Commission or Committee Member:

8.8	8.8	8.9	8.8	8.5
<input type="checkbox"/> 53	<input type="checkbox"/> 17	<input type="checkbox"/> 13	<input type="checkbox"/> 21	<input type="checkbox"/> 12
NWRDC	Arts Council	Enterprise Fund	Aging	Transportation

3. Recipient of Services:

8.8	9.3	8.9	8.8	8.7
<input type="checkbox"/> 41	<input type="checkbox"/> 50	<input type="checkbox"/> 39	<input type="checkbox"/> 36	<input type="checkbox"/> 28
Aging/SeniorLink	Arts	Economic Dev.	Loan Fund	JobZ
8.5	8.6			
<input type="checkbox"/> 11	<input type="checkbox"/> 20			
Housing	Transportation			

4. Services - If you received a direct service from the NWRDC in the past five years what type of service did you receive?

9.2	8.7	8.8	9.1	8.5
<input type="checkbox"/> 55	<input type="checkbox"/> 29	<input type="checkbox"/> 40	<input type="checkbox"/> 37	<input type="checkbox"/> 25
Grant	Loan	Info/Referral	Professional Service	Publication
9.0	8.6			
<input type="checkbox"/> 55	<input type="checkbox"/> 18 Other (Describe Other):			
Technical Assistance				

5. Quality of Services - How would you rank the overall quality of the services? (Please circle one number, with 10 being the highest ranking):

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 **8.7 Average**

6. Fulfillment of Purpose - Do you feel the Northwest Regional Development Commission is working with and on behalf of, local units of government to address economic, social, physical, and governmental concerns of the region?

228 (8.8)	3 (3.0)	22 (8.0)
Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Not Sure <input type="checkbox"/>

If you would like, please explain (Use back of this Page):

7. Information - Does the NWRDC provide adequate information about programs and services?

214(8.9)	12(6.5)	24(7.6)
Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Not Sure <input type="checkbox"/>

If you would like, please explain (Use back of this Page):

8. Priorities - What are the development issues or programs you feel the NWRDC should pursue in the next five years? (Please use back of this Page)

9. Comments- Please provide any additional comments about the programs and services of the NWRDC, including both things working well, and those needing attention: (Please use back of this Page)

Comments from Questins 8 and 9

8. Priorities - What are the development issues or programs you feel the NWRDC should pursue in the next five years?

"Economic Development"

"Economic Development"

"Federal Funding"

"1) JOBZ; 2) Housing"

"Industry in Kittson County. Our school enrollment is dropping fast each year because our young people are moving away, nothing to keep them here."

"Economic Development & Housing"

"Economic Development"

"Home repair grants, better heating systems, disaster recovery, health awareness programs."

"Economic Development."

"More emphasis on roads."

"Transportation & additional funding for services in rural areas, ie - nutrition & community based service."

"Economic Development & Job Creation"

"Staff Resources to assist communities with Econ. Dev."

"Continue to build on & improve the current services & at the same time watch for other opportunities as needs change or as the chance to fill another unmet need arises."

"Continue Transportation"

"Most small cities need help with assessing their overall infrastructure and strategic planning."

"Continue to work with our region and support the ongoing growth partnership with NW MN cities."

"Economic Development & the needs of the elderly."

"Economic Development"

"Transportation planning & priorities - more integration with state, county, city and township plans."

"Aging population, lack of workforce to fulfill our communities needs. Stop population loss."

"Helping to fix poor families shacks that they have to call home."

"Raise funding for seniors. Lower duplication of services."

"Economic Development that will provide jobs for H.S. grads who choose not to go on to college. Assisted Living opportunities."

"Economic Development, housing, assist aging with government health programs and area transportation."

"Transportation & Housing"

"Rural county econ. Dev. & more transportation funding."

"Rural Development - jobs, resources, etc."

"Marketing & promoting our available resources and econ. Dev."

"Stay the course."

"I think the focus of the organization is on track."

"Economic Development, Jobs, Business, Affordable Housing, Transportation, Senior Support Services."

"1. Transportation Funding. 2. Improve trucking routes for NW MN Industries. 3. Renewable fuels."

"Continue with coordinating work with staff, county and other water management agencies."

"Problems that cities have that don't fit in a certain category."

"Arts and Aging. They are often put on the back burner by other segments of society - especially when funds are tight."

"Economic & Community Development"

"Explore ways to be entitled to grant monies & understand how some theatres receive larger amounts of money."

"Labor force issues."
"Economic Development - Housing"
"Housing & bringing in new workers to the area."
"Currently meeting all expectations."
"They should continue to provide grants and mentorships in order to educate artistic youth."
"I feel your program should simply continue to target areas you are currently working on."
"The arts are still important."
"Additional state funding."
"Hi-tech development in Ethanol & bio-diesel and value added agriculture."
"Seek funding to renew the arts across Minnesota program."
"We need more assistance with applying for Grants to address our city's needs for repairs of infrastructure & upgrading city building & equipment."
"The one thing that should be looked at or changed is the cap on the artist/author visits of \$250 a day. Depending on the author it can be much higher than this and is a problem for small schools who can only bring in someone for one day."
"Could assist cities under 1,000 more with future planning."
"Attract more businesses to the area, thus attracting more people for the work force. Funding for the Arts, all areas."
"Assistance with township issues - contact each township."
"Early childhood education."
"Services to seniors & transportation."
"The same programs."
"Continue with your Arts grant funding for small schools, this is our only chance!"
"Would like an update on our zoning and NWRDC did for us."
"Housing, job creation and retention, alternative energy sources and transportation."
"I feel that NWRDC is in a very good place as far as what they are able to provide for grant recipients."
"Arts Grants"
"Arts Grants"
"Transportation/Arts Funding"
"Possibly finding even more funding partners, thereby increasing available funding."
"Mentor - Student Grant Programs. Literary Arts Grants for students. Hometown Theatre - improvements in grant \$'s."
"Continue funding aging programs to the highest extent possible."
"1. Give #1 attention to businesses that have proven themselves over the years. 2. Seek out low interest rates, 3% if possible. 3. Close the loans much faster as time is of the utmost importance to the business' success in surviving."
"Arts"
"Continued effort in housing, Transportation issues, further study and promotion of alternative energy."
"Recreation - providing enhanced recreational opportunities will help to bolster the area's quality of life and draw more residents."
"Marketing our region - work with towns, townships, etc. to highlight what we have first, then move on."
"Economic Development"
"That's for your board to decide."
"Keep on doing what you are doing."
"Rural Minnesota needs a shot in the arm."
"Holistic, sustainable community/regional development, assist with infrastructure development of trail and river access, promote health/wellness opp., provide technical asst. to communities, help facilitate regional forum, support of artistic creation."
"Poverty alleviating projects, human rights, access to safe and sanitary

housing, and support & services for seniors."

"I think that the NWRDC should give more grants if possible."

"Tourism, Housing Dev., secure homeland security funding, and work with area colleges to develop websites for area businesses."

"More grants for schools and the arts."

"Affordable Housing. Whatever issues do come up as priorities, I think it is best to focus on 2-5 new issues so resources don't get to spread out and then little progress is made in any area."

"Help to seek out new businesses that help our country in the bio-tech and other clean green fuels. Wind power, ethanol, etc."

"Economic Development and Transportation."

"Economic Development, Aging and Housing"

"Preparation for the inevitable types of meetings such as: Assisted Living, Nursing Home, Relinquishment of drivers license."

"I'd like to see continued and increased support as NW MN works together to address joint ventures in housing, transportation and the marketing of our region."

"Continue economic development projects and tourism programs."

"Quality of Life issues, small business grants, tax decreases for business owners."

"10 ton roads"

"Economic Development & Transportation"

"Economic Development, Arts, Aging, Transportation, etc."

"More housing possibilities in rural cities."

"Affordable housing, bring jobs, families to rural areas, transportation barriers."

"Continued job creation"

"Continue to work on transportation needs that reflect the ever changing development of greater MN."

"Business retention program to help existing business do a better job."

"Support of the Arts, Econ. Dev., and service for the elderly."

"Senior Programs/project is a must. Health insurance is struggle for seniors."

"Work needs to continue in providing adequate housing, expanding job opportunities and promoting NW MN as a great place to live."

"Housing"

"Jobs to bring population up."

"Maybe more on grants available to all parties."

"Helping seniors & low income connect with services available to them."

"GPS Services"

"ECO-Tourism. Affordable housing."

"Housing, assisted living, econ. Dev. Aiming to provide living wage jobs with benefits."

"Attract larger businesses to local area."

"Arts and transportation."

"Keeping people in the area, able and willing to work here. Roads, highway, etc. could use updating. More cooperation between the county, city & rural townships for planning."

"Housing"

"Continue with Transportation funding."

"Aging/Econ. Dev./JOBZ"

"Help small cities continue to retain if growth doesn't appear to be an option. Attend local Booster/chamber mtgs. To update/inform groups as to what is out there for us."

"Economic Dev., Loan programs, and aging programs."

"JOBZ"

"Closer work with EDA's."

9. Comments- Please provide any additional comments about the programs and services of the NWRDC, including both things working well, and those needing attention:

"The RDC is a very effective organization and is very much needed in our area. Thank you for funding them. It is money well spent."

"I've always been impressed & satisfied."

"We could do a better job of letting public know about us."

"The RDC has been very effective in addressing planning, housing & economic development issues."

"I truly believe the RDC has developed a spirit of passion for NW MN. Econ. Dev. & housing are 2 issues that will help stop the out migration of our young people. These are working well, and will continue to need change and fine tuning as we go forward."

"Communication with government units is working quite well. Keeping the general public informed-need attention."

"Our organization has a high value on services NWRDC provides."

"When Donaldson had to change the sewer systems, NWRDC worked with the city on a project that the residents would not have been able to finance."

"Some employers have a struggle to find employees but getting good paying jobs is still needed."

"Happy with NERDC's work programs."

"We feel the NWRDC is working hard to promote NW MN - keep up the good work."

"We have had excellent cooperation with Area Agency & NWRDC staff."

"Most communities have purchased property, have water, sewer & other infrastructure in place for housing development. I believe the NWRDC could help the communities market these building sites by assisting with website design & other methods of marketing."

"I'm well satisfied with the services & staff of the RDC."

"I believe if it weren't for the NWRDC, our business wouldn't be here today."

"Housing programs are well utilized. Econ. Dev. And Transportation very useful also."

"I recently had the opportunity to use the Senior LinkAge Line on behalf of my mother. I had an excellent experience, was treated very professionally and my question was answered in a very timely manner. I would give this program a 10."

"Concerned about her daughter getting assistance to fix her home."

"Keep up the good work."

"Mara does a good job with the Arts Council."

"The arts council director is very efficient and has the mission of Regional Commission in her correspondence/presentations. Information is readily available/accessible."

"Positive response from co-worker on Senior referral/medicare question. Very impressed at the information given to her regarding her mother."

"Commission staff is experts at solving inter agency conflicts that could destroy are so far successful efforts."

"I think the ripple effect of various projects encouraged and/or funded by NWRDC is tremendous - too great to be measured."

"We believe the grant monies generated to us as a small theatre group is very usefull to bring our community together with the arts."

"I have appreciated the arts grants - without them, we would not be able to offer/present the majority of our art/cultural events in our small rural community."

"I had a difficult time starting my mentorship because I could not find a mentor. It would be a good idea to have a list of people willing to mentor the students."

"I appreciate having a real person answer the phone rather than automated voice. They are always helpful and answer the questions we have completely."

"Always been satisfied."

"Staff has been helpful and easy to work with. Very positive."

"Advertise more so people know about this resource."

"The NWRDC has to be ready and flexible to go in any direction that will increase economic development and population in the region."

"I think they do a very adequate job!"

"Your staff is very helpful in making things work!"

"Our organization feels the NWRDC's granting program for the arts is essential to our ability to provide quality arts opportunities in our rural area."

"The business loan fund is a tremendous help to small businesses in the area."

"I have worked with Leon on floosing in Roseau Co. and Jennifer (Roseau Mitigation Plan) during the past 4 years. Both were very professional and extremely helpful."

"We appreciate the work of Commission of prior years. Very helpful to our Township. (North Pennington)"

"NWRDC does a great job of not only identifying problem areas, but also getting programs started that address those issues. The housing program has been great and has added value to our communities."

"I am very thankful to have had this opportunity & being able to keep accelerating because of my grant. I feel that everything was handled sincerely & well organized!"

"Without the arts council's support my students would have missed out on many educational journeys."

"The arts grant I received was very useful, financially and artistically. It was a great boost to my writing career. NWRDC's work in this area is terrific."

"I think they are doing well in helping out the community. When I applied for a grant, the process seemed to be a hassel."

"It would be so helpful if the on-line forms could be saved, if they cannot be completed in on sitting."

"Mara is just super to work with and helps in any way possible. She is just on the ball, gives advice that works, and is always enthusiastic."

"Have a personal NWRDC rep. stop by the larger and most important businesses to see if loan adjustments may be made to ensure the survival of that business now that the investment has been made."

"The NW Art Exhibit is a wonderful opportunity for my students to participate in a juried art show."

"More good jobs are always needed in this area if we are to improve or even preserve our population base."

"The professionalism displayed by NWRDC staff is top notch. Something to be very proud of."

"I deeply appreciate this program. With the grant, I learned many new techniques and skills. I am very appreciative of the opportunities NWRDC has given me. Thank you."

"It is good to take a look at what is working well and reconsider any program that is not - including grant programs. We want to make sure our dollars are spent wisely."

"Our school was so excited to get the \$100 grant to upgrade our sound system. It was the motivation I needed to direct and finish a project that was long overdue. It's a great incentive."

"The aging services, arts, econ. Dev., are areas that seem to be very helpful. Keep up the good work."

"It's time to do things in theory, but lets work to get the job done."

"I think the NWRDC should advertise more so more people can receive grants or services like me."

"Any new info. Of upcoming traffic trend changes would always help us. An example of this is that any business that are expanding or building new that would have impacts on traffic is always helpful. We are always the last to find out."

"To continue providing quality service in promotion of the arts."

"Thanks so much for the arts grant - it was great!"

"Overall - A good job. I would like to see a wind farm up here & other

technology jobs as well."

"I fell the NWRDC services have been very good to our community theatre. Anytime I had a question or concern, it was taken care of and done very politely and professionally."

"Also meetings that could encourage healthier & creative eating when older and/or living alone social life opportunity info."

"Looking for funding opportunities for a veterans memorial for Kittson County in Lake Bronson."

"Either more media info. Or mailings to townships."

"I think committees are looking forward and trying to address the issues that face us regionally in a proactive manner."

"Staff are terrific. Keep up the good work."

"I've always been very impressed with the NWRDC."

"NWRDC is doing a good job."

"I have referred many people to the Agency in Warren and they always followed through with correct info. Without that kind of free info. Many of our Seniors would have more difficulty than they normally encounter."

"The only thing I know about is the Area Agency on Aging."

"They clearly have more work to do than they have staff to do it."

"We used the NWRDC for township zoning - Leon Heath was a great help."

"I'm sorry, but I have not paid much attention to the organization."

"The loan program was very helpful in our flood recovery. Other than that, my knowledge of NWRDC is limited."

"What exactly does the NWRDC do? I don't really see the NWRDC as really helping the public in general, maybe a select few, but not everyone."

"Our region is very lucky to have this organization working for us. Great job!"

"I believe that the RDC is doing and excellent job and that our communities are better off for having their services."

"The two training sessions I have received on Medicare Part D have been useful; however, I have not found a way to actually put my knowledge to work in my local community."

"Well satisfied with services."

"On thing I would like to see is more public awareness of the programs & services that NWRDC provides. Maybe provide posters/contact info. Signage so that it can be readily available."

"Need to really publicize more in the future the aging programs - the 60+ age group is going to really grow in the next 7-10 years."

"Your doing a good job for your population. Keep it up."

Date

Name

Address

Dear _____,

The Northwest Regional Development Commission (NWRDC) is conducting a performance evaluation as required by the Regional Development Act. The primary purpose of this evaluation is to determine if we are fulfilling the purpose of the Act and whether the existence of the commission and its' programs is in the public welfare and interest.

The Regional Development Act states that 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."**

The program areas being evaluated include the Area Agency on Aging, Arts Council, Economic and Community Development, Enterprise Business Loan Fund, JOBZ Tax Free Zones, Housing Partnership, and Transportation Planning. The enclosed brochure provides additional information about each program and the NWRDC; or you can also go to www.nwrdc.org.

Please take a few minutes to complete the enclosed survey. Your comments will help us greatly in this task.

Sincerely,

Leon Heath
Executive Director

P.S. If you return the Gift Registration Form your name will be placed in a drawing for a gift certificate from the business of your choice. (One \$50 and two \$25)

NWRDC 2006 Evaluation Gift Registration Form

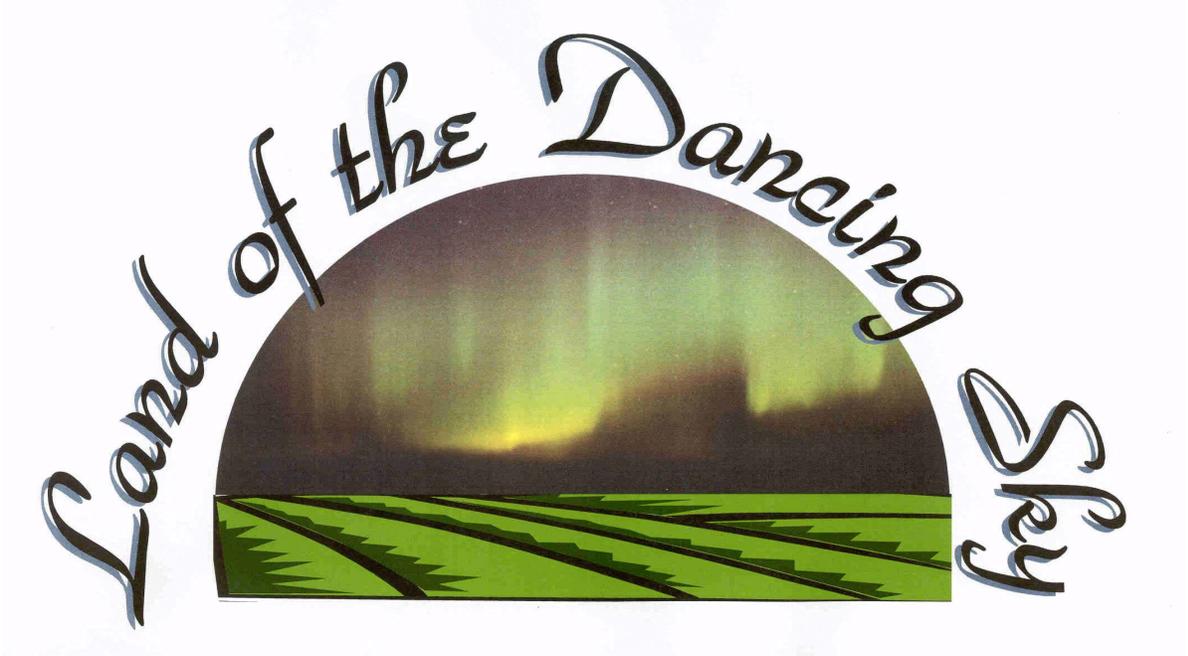
Name _____

Phone _____ (Optional)

Note: Please return this registration and the survey in the envelope as provided. This page will be separated from the survey prior to tabulation of the survey results.

The drawing will be completed at the December meeting of the NWRDC. One \$50 and two \$25 Gift Certificates will be given out.





www.visitnwminnesota.com