

East Central Regional Development Commission



Five Year Performance Assessment

December 2011

East Central Regional Development Commission
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I. INTRODUCTION

During 2011, the East Central Regional Development Commission (ECRDC) conducted a performance assessment to determine how well it had performed during the preceding 5 years. This assessment was performed as required by Minnesota Statute 462.393 Subd. 2, which states “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.”

This report will include information gathered by means of a survey, analysis of the survey results, reports on accomplishments in various program areas, setbacks, and financial information for the past five years. At the conclusion of this report, we will discuss possible next steps as the East Central Regional Development Commission positions itself for the future.

The East Central Regional Development Commission conducted an online Performance Assessment Survey during April 2011. A total of 260 surveys were disseminated via SurveyMonkey® and a total of 47 responded resulting in a 18% response rate. A copy of the Performance Assessment Survey and its results follow.

A. SATISFACTION

The ECRDC asked its various constituencies to rate their satisfaction with the quality and quantity of assistance provided. Overall, the local units of government rated the ECRDC as successful in providing services throughout the region. The key question in this section and perhaps the key question on the survey “Do you feel the Commission is currently fulfilling its role?” In varying degrees ranging from somewhat to strongly, 85% of the respondents to this question agreed that the Commission was fulfilling its role. Only 15% of the respondents answered “no” indicating that they did not feel the Commission was fulfilling its role. The result of this question seems to demonstrate that the “existence of the commission is in the public welfare and interest,” as required by the Regional Development Act.

B. PROGRAM PRIORITIES AND PERFORMANCE

Each year the ECRDC develops an overall work program that addresses specific objectives to be accomplished during the upcoming fiscal year. Many of the objectives vary little from year to year, and reflect the ongoing operations of the ECRDC. Respondents were asked to evaluate the importance of the Commission’s major work program areas and rate the performance. Below are these areas and the associated responses:

1. Please indicate whether or not you are an elected official?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes		29.8%	14
No		72.3%	34

2. If yes, please indicate office?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Mayor		15.4%	2
Township Officer		38.5%	5
County Commissioner		30.8%	4
City Council Member		15.4%	2
		Other (please specify) Show Responses	6

Showing 6 text responses

No responses selected

State Agency
5/12/11 1:48PM [View Responses](#)

city clerk
5/10/11 9:25AM [View Responses](#)

Chamber of Commerce
5/9/11 10:30AM [View Responses](#)

East Central Art Council
5/7/11 7:34AM [View Responses](#)

ECRDC RLF Board Member
5/6/11 8:39AM [View Responses](#)

School Board
5/6/11 8:36AM [View Responses](#)

1. In your opinion, how satisfied are most of the local governments and organizations with the amount of assistance the Commission has provided:

		Response Percent	Response Count
1		19.5%	8
2		41.5%	17
3		26.8%	11
4		7.3%	3
5		4.9%	2

2. In your opinion, how satisfied are most of the local governments and organizations with the quality of assistance which the Commission has provided:

		Response Percent	Response Count
1		17.1%	7
2		41.5%	17
3		29.3%	12
4		9.8%	4
5		2.4%	1

3. In your opinion, how satisfied are most of the local governments and organizations with the quality of assistance which the Commission has provided:

		Response Percent	Response Count
1		15.0%	6
2		42.5%	17
3		27.5%	11
4		12.5%	5
5		2.5%	1

4. In your opinion, how useful has the Commission been to local units of government in helping the units carry out their functions and responsibilities:

		Response Percent	Response Count
1		17.5%	7
2		37.5%	15
3		30.0%	12
4		5.0%	2
5		10.0%	4

5. In your opinion, how useful has the Commission been in communicating local concerns to state and federal agencies:

		Response Percent	Response Count
1		25.0%	10
2		32.5%	13
3		30.0%	12
4		7.5%	3
5		5.0%	2

6. How knowledgeable, in your opinion, is the Commission concerning your local government's challenges and needs:

		Response Percent	Response Count
1		17.1%	7
2		39.0%	16
3		22.0%	9
4		17.1%	7
5		4.9%	2

7. Do you feel that overall the Commission is currently fulfilling its role:

		Response Percent	Response Count
1		20.0%	8
2		40.0%	16
3		25.0%	10
4		10.0%	4
5		5.0%	2

PAGE: ECRDC AGING PROGRAM

1. AGING PROGRAM IMPORTANCE Health Insurance Counseling, Develop/fund Senior Adult Program, Rural Health Advocacy, Minority and Cultural Awareness, Aging Information and Assistance

		Response Percent	Response Count
A		45.9%	17
B		32.4%	12
C		21.6%	8
D		0.0%	0

2. ECRDC PERFORMANCE OF AGING PROGRAM.

		Response Percent	Response Count
1		35.1%	13
2		32.4%	12
3		16.2%	6
4		2.7%	1
5		13.5%	5

1. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM IMPORTANCE Job Opportunity Building Zone, Revolving Loan Fund, Workforce Development, Grant Writing Assistance, Small Business Assistance

		Response Percent	Response Count
A		86.5%	32
B		8.1%	3
C		5.4%	2
D		0.0%	0

2. ECRDC PERFORMANCE OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM.

		Response Percent	Response Count
1		45.9%	17
2		35.1%	13
3		10.8%	4
4		5.4%	2
5		2.7%	1

1. TRANSPORTATION PLANNING IMPORTANCE: Regional Transportation Planning, transportation Funding Process, Highway Safety Initiatives, Transit Planning/Coordination

		Response Percent	Response Count
A		62.2%	23
B		24.3%	9
C		8.1%	3
D		5.4%	2

2. ECRDC PERFORMANCE OF TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

		Response Percent	Response Count
1		40.5%	15
2		21.6%	8
3		24.3%	9
4		8.1%	3
5		5.4%	2

PAGE: ECRDC EAST CENTRAL ARTS COUNCIL

1. EAST CENTRAL ARTS COUNCIL IMPORTANCE Technical and Financial Assistance of the Arts (ex. Arts Project Grants, Individual Artist Grants, Arts in Our Schools Grants, and Arts and Cultural Heritage Grants)

		Response Percent	Response Count
A		13.5%	5
B		37.8%	14
C		29.7%	11
D		18.9%	7

2. ECRDC PERFORMANCE OF EAST CENTRAL ARTS COUNCIL

		Response Percent	Response Count
1		13.5%	5
2		35.1%	13
3		13.5%	5
4		18.9%	7
5		18.9%	7

1. GENERAL INFORMATION AND REFERRAL IMPORTANCE			
		Response Percent	Response Count
A		54.1%	20
B		35.1%	13
C		10.8%	4
D		0.0%	0

2. ECRDC PERFORMANCE OF GENERAL INFORMATION AND REFERRAL			
		Response Percent	Response Count
1		29.7%	11
2		59.5%	22
3		5.4%	2
4		2.7%	1
5		2.7%	1

1. INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS IMPORTANCE			
		Response Percent	Response Count
A		62.2%	23
B		29.7%	11
C		8.1%	3
D		0.0%	0

2. ECRDC PERFORMANCE OF INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

		Response Percent	Response Count
1		35.1%	13
2		35.1%	13
3		13.5%	5
4		5.4%	2
5		10.8%	4

PAGE: ECRDC LEGISLATIVE ISSUES

1. ECRDC LEGISLATIVE ISSUES IMPORTANCE Examples include pursuing funding opportunities for local/regional planning, legislation to support housing initiatives, increase funding for rural transportation funding needs, and the Job Opportunity Building Zones (JOBZ) program.

		Response Percent	Response Count
A		58.3%	21
B		30.6%	11
C		11.1%	4
D		0.0%	0

2. ECRDC PERFORMANCE OF LEGISLATIVE ISSUES

		Response Percent	Response Count
1		41.7%	15
2		27.8%	10
3		19.4%	7
4		5.6%	2
5		5.6%	2

At the conclusion of the survey, respondents were invited to provide written comments regarding possible changes the ECRDC might undergo to become more efficient and effective. Listed below are the comments received from the survey:

3. Please provide additional comments regarding the changes the ECRDC should undergo in the coming months in order to make it a more efficient and effective organization.

Showing 4 text responses

No responses selected

I know you cover a large area, but more face time with county boards would be good.

5/10/11 8:13AM [View Responses](#)

difficult to assign a rating to something that is kind of unknown there may be alot of work done on this, I'm just not familiar with it. ECRDC could use more visibility , difficult to answer most of the questions due to lack of knowledge of the programs.

5/9/11 10:13AM [View Responses](#)

focus on more new jobs, jobs, jobs!

5/6/11 8:55AM [View Responses](#)

None - The ECRDC is a responsive and effective organization.

5/5/11 3:23PM [View Responses](#)

II. Economic Development

The ECRDC represents Region 7E as a federally designated Economic Development District (EDD). The Economic Development Administration (EDA) of the U.S. Department of Commerce provides planning funds to the ECRDC to work with local units of government to develop and implement a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) that addresses economic distress. The ECRDC has received high marks for its administration of the EDD and was among the first Districts in the nation to be upgraded from a 1-year to a 3-year planning grant award in 2008. Listed below are some of the activities that the ECRDC has engaged in during the past 5 years relating to economic development:

A. JOB OPPORTUNITY BUILDING ZONE (JOBZ) PROGRAM: The ECRDC continued to promote, market and assist in the administration of Region 7E's JOBZ program in conjunction with the local units of government and the MN Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED). JOBZ is a State of Minnesota initiative that provides substantial tax relief to companies starting up or expanding in designated locations. The program began on January 1, 2004 and will sunset on December 31, 2015. A total of 12 cities participated with a total of 1,486 acres being awarded JOBZ status.

To date approximately half of the JOBZ acreage has been utilized for thirteen projects in our region. Cumulatively in Region 7E, the JOBZ effort has resulted in retaining approximately 219 existing jobs and creating 414 more. The estimated annual payroll from this initiative is over \$22.4 million and with private investments totaling over \$56 million.

The ECRDC worked extensively with local units of government, GPS 45:93 (formerly the Northern Technology Initiative), and the Initiative Foundation on JOBZ marketing efforts.

B. REVOLVING LOAN FUND (RLF): The ECRDC operates a regional revolving loan fund established in 1994 with federal and local dollars. It offers gap financing for fixed assets and working capital for new and expanding businesses in Pine, Isanti, Kanabec, and Mille Lacs Counties. As of June 30, 2011, the fund had loan balances of \$229,857 with \$99,694 remaining available for loans. The ECRDC petitioned the US Department of Commerce – Economic Development Administration (EDA), co-seeder of the RLF, to be allowed to lend to businesses in Chisago County based on distress levels. In spring, 2011, the ECRDC was granted authority by the EDA to lend to Chisago County businesses, and made their first loan in the county in May, 2011.

The purpose of the RLF program is to accommodate the more risky segments of the business financing packages. Therefore, the RLF experiences a higher-than-usual delinquency and default rate. Since 2006, a total of nine new loans totaling \$330,000 have been made. During this same time period, two loan balances totaling \$141,000 were written off because of default. Repayments to the RLF, however, have improved dramatically since that time and all current loans have been making payments on schedule.

C. SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTER (SBDC) & SCORE: From 2006 to 2010 the ECRDC operated a satellite office of the North Central Region Minnesota Small Business Development Center (SBDC). During that period of time the SBDC office assisted over 100 entrepreneurs and would-be entrepreneurs with a variety of services including business planning assistance, financial analysis, and small business loan packaging, etc. Our SBDC Office also assisted in securing over \$2 million in financing for small businesses in our region.

Because of funding cutbacks to the SBDC, the satellite office closed at the end of 2010. In early 2011, the ECRDC became a satellite office of the St. Cloud, MN chapter of the Service Core of Retired Executives (SCORE). SCORE provides mentoring to entrepreneurs and would-be entrepreneurs through the use of volunteer counselors. These counselors are typically experienced former and current business leaders that share their years of experience and expertise to assist others.

D. BUSINESS ASSISTANCE DIRECTORY: The ECRDC continues to develop and maintain a database of technical and financial resources available to small businesses. This information is assembled into the East Central Business Assistance Directory. In 2011 the ECRDC began the undertaking of task of taking this directory online and featuring links to resources and service providers, as well as videos describing services available to assist businesses. This site will also be “linkable” by local units of government, chambers of commerce, and others to help spread this directory.

E. EDA INFRASTRUCTURE GRANTS: The ECRDC assisted Pine Technical College in obtaining a \$1.8 million Infrastructure Grant from EDA to fund a technology business incubator & entrepreneurship center on the PTC campus in Pine City. Also, the ECRDC assisted in receiving an EDA technical assistance grant to assist the Cities of Mora and Cambridge in marketing available land in their EDA-funded industrial parks. The ECRDC worked extensively with the Cities of Isle, Princeton, Sandstone, and North Branch on the EDA Infrastructure Grant application for the development and/or expansion of their industrial parks as well.

F. PARTNERSHIPS: The ECRDC also partners with a number of outside organizations to further the mission of the regional economic development strategy. Examples of this include participation in the East Central Workforce Partnership (ECWFP), GPS 45:93 (formerly the Northern Technology Initiative), the Central MN Workforce Investment Board (WIB), chambers of commerce, local economic development authorities, and the Central Minnesota Housing Partnership (CMHP).

III. Community Development

The ECRDC has provided community planning assistance to local units of government throughout Region 7E for many years. For most of that time, the State of Minnesota, through its planning agency, made available planning assistance funding to the region. This helped provide full-time community development staffing at the ECRDC and had a great impact on encouraging local units of government to develop comprehensive land use plans for their communities by making the process affordable. The local planning assistance program was discontinued in the late 1990s due to budget constraints at the State level. This prompted the ECRDC to combine the offices of community and economic development. In 2003, the State abolished MN Planning which eliminated another valuable technical resource to the ECRDC's community planning function. The ECRDC continues to assist communities with community planning where possible and affordable. Since the last 5 year assessment in 2006, the ECRDC accomplished community development work in the following areas:

A. COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING: The ECRDC assisted a number of local units of government in preparing and/or updating their comprehensive land use plans, as well as creating new interments. Among them were the City of Mora, Finlayson Township and Windemere Township. Potential future projects include land use plans for Brook Park Township and Mille Lacs County.

B. ZONING ORDINANCE UPDATES: The ECRDC also assisted a number of local units of government with preparing and/or updating local zoning ordinances. Among them were Windemere Township, Brunswick Township, Finlayson Township, Kroschel Township, Royalton Township, and the Cities of Rock Creek and Ogilvie.

IV. East Central Arts Council

The East Central Arts Council (ECAC) was a program of the ECRDC since 1979 and, until July 1, 2011, was one of only two in Minnesota remaining under the auspices of a regional development commission. The mission of the ECAC is to improve the quantity and quality of arts experiences in Region 7E by facilitating the production, presentation, and dissemination of art development for arts organizations and by promoting the growth of individual artists. Funding for the ECAC programs comes primarily from a direct appropriation of the State Legislature, the McKnight Foundation, and the Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund of the Minnesota Clean Water Land and Legacy Amendment.

During those many years, the ECRDC partnered with the Minnesota State Arts Board to improve the quantity and quality of arts experiences in East Central Minnesota.

In this spirit, the ECRDC and their Arts Council Advisory Committee began discussions in 2009 on how to best position the Regional Arts Council (RAC) for a bright future in our region. Part of this process involved hiring an independent consultant to do a comprehensive assessment of our regional arts program and identify the most efficient delivery model possible. New funding available through the State’s Arts & Cultural Heritage Fund and a general desire to increase awareness of the arts and funding opportunities were major considerations during the assessment. The new funding also brought a corresponding “up-tick” in grant activity making it necessary to explore ways to streamline the grant application/approval process. The results of the assessment report suggested that the region might best be served if the RAC were its own organization – separate from the ECRDC.

To this end, the Arts Council Advisory Committee took on the task of creating a separate new Minnesota nonprofit corporation, the “East Central Regional Arts Council,” with 7 of their members serving as the initial board of directors. The new ECRAC enacted by-laws and secured tax-exempt status with the IRS. The ECRDC fully supported this effort and made the decision not to apply for the regional arts council designation beyond June 30, 2011. The newly formed ECRAC is located at 112 Main St. So. in Braham. Below is a summary of the various grant categories and amounts the ECRDC awarded during the past five years:

ECAC Grants Awarded						
Grant Program	FY 2007	FY 2008	FY 2009	FY 2010	FY 2011	Total
Arts Scholarships for K-12 Students	\$ 1,500	\$ 1,500	\$ 1,500	\$ 1,827	N/A	\$ 6,327
Small Grants for Organizations	3,500	3,500	1,900	7,134	4,326	20,360
Organization Project Grants	26,989	54,696	52,765	156,242	255,054	545,746
Art in Our Schools Grants	4,970	4,895	6,325	9,484	5,640	31,314
Individual Artist Grants/Fellowships	12,000	12,000	12,000	43,715	26,287	106,002
TOTAL GRANTS AWARDED	\$48,959	\$76,591	\$74,490	\$218,402	\$291,307	\$ 706,749

V. Transportation

The ECRDC contracts with the Minnesota Department of Transportation (Mn/DOT) to provide transportation planning services within Region 7E. This involves a number of activities including the solicitation and prioritization of local candidate projects for federal funds, transit planning and programming, coordination of regional Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) activities, and providing regional transportation planning services.

Region 7E is located within three Mn/DOT Districts. Kanabec, Isanti, and Mille Lacs Counties are in District 3 (Brainerd); Pine County is located in District 1 (Duluth); and Chisago County is located in the Metropolitan District. Consequently, the ECRDC is responsible for participating in three different Area Transportation Partnership (ATP) processes for prioritizing projects eligible for federal funds. Below is a table illustrating the types of local projects and the amount funded in Region 7E between the years 2006 and 2010:

**Federal Funds for Region 7E through ATP Process
2007-2011**

District	Road/Bridge (Number of Projects)	Transit (Number of Projects)	Enhancement (Number of Projects)
District 1	\$15,074,662	0	0
District 3	\$30,818,128	\$3,007,829	\$ 973,874
Metro District	\$10,717,848	\$ 240,000	\$0
TOTAL	\$56,610,638	\$ 3,247,829	\$973,874
Total Funding Through ATP Process - \$56,610,638			
Total Number of Projects Funded - 69			

A. AREA TRANSPORTATION PARTNERSHIP & FEDERAL PROJECTS: A number of noteworthy projects were funded and implemented to benefit the residents of the region. Major projects included construction of a new expanded bridge at I-35 and TH 95 in North Branch; construction of a new pedestrian bridge over TH 169 at Onamia, and safety improvements at the TH 47/TH 95 intersection in Isanti County. Many other local projects were brought forth by the ECRDC and included in the State Transportation Improvement Program. These locally driven projects provided significant improvements to the transportation system in the region.

B. TOWARD ZERO DEATHS (TZD): Utilizing grant funding through the MN Department of Public Safety, the ECRDC responded to highway safety issues in Isanti and Kanabec Counties by implementing the *Toward Zero Deaths* program. A number of initiatives have been launched focusing on traffic safety improvements as well as behavior especially in the areas of seat belt usage, speeding, and impaired driving. Local governmental officials, law enforcement, and others participate in TZD Coalition activities. The Safe Cab program was developed with Cambridge Cab in Isanti County. This program has become a model for other communities to replicate. To date, almost 6,000 persons have been served.

C. TRANSIT: In 2006 the ECRDC completed the Human Service Coordination Plan in cooperation with the Minnesota Department of Transportation and the Minnesota Department of Human Services. The planning processes created the development and implementation of new transit starts in both Pine and Kanabec Counties. Prior to this, both counties did not have public transit.

As a follow-up and continuation to the 2006 planning, the ECRDC once again completed the 2011 Human Service Transit Coordination Plan for the region. The objective of the planning process included identifying strategies for improving coordination of public transit, human services transportation, and private transportation providers, especially as they pertain to transit-dependent populations such as older adults and disabled persons. Federal law requires that projects selected for certain funding must be included in the plan. In both planning projects, the ECRDC worked with many regional stakeholders through conducting surveys, holding workshops and training along with one-to-one technical assistance to all five counties and their public transit providers.

D. SPECIAL STUDIES, COMMITTEES, TASK FORCES & HIGHLIGHTS: The ECRDC has been and continues to be involved in a number of special studies, committees, and task forces relating to transportation improvement including:

- Highway 8 Task Force - focuses on traffic flow and safety improvements to TH 8 in Chisago County
- TH 65 Corridor Task Force – focuses on improvements on TH 65 from south to north in the region.
- Active Living by Design – ECRDC supported development of a new pedestrian trail in Isanti County; between the Cities of Isanti and Cambridge.
- North Branch TH 95/I-35 Bridge – identified funding for a major bridge expansion on TH 95 at the Junction of I-35 in North Branch.
- Pine County Transit – Provided impetus for Pine County to implement a public transit program. Arrowhead Transit was identified as the initial service provider. Funding for services was secured through Mn/DOT.
- Isanti and Kanabec County Toward Zero Deaths programs focusing on traffic safety.
- Implemented Safe cab program in Isanti County and others.
- Received two NADO (National Association of Development Organizations) awards for transportation planning projects in Region 7E. Transit Planning and Safe Cab development were recognized with rural transportation planning awards.

VI. East Central Senior Resource Center

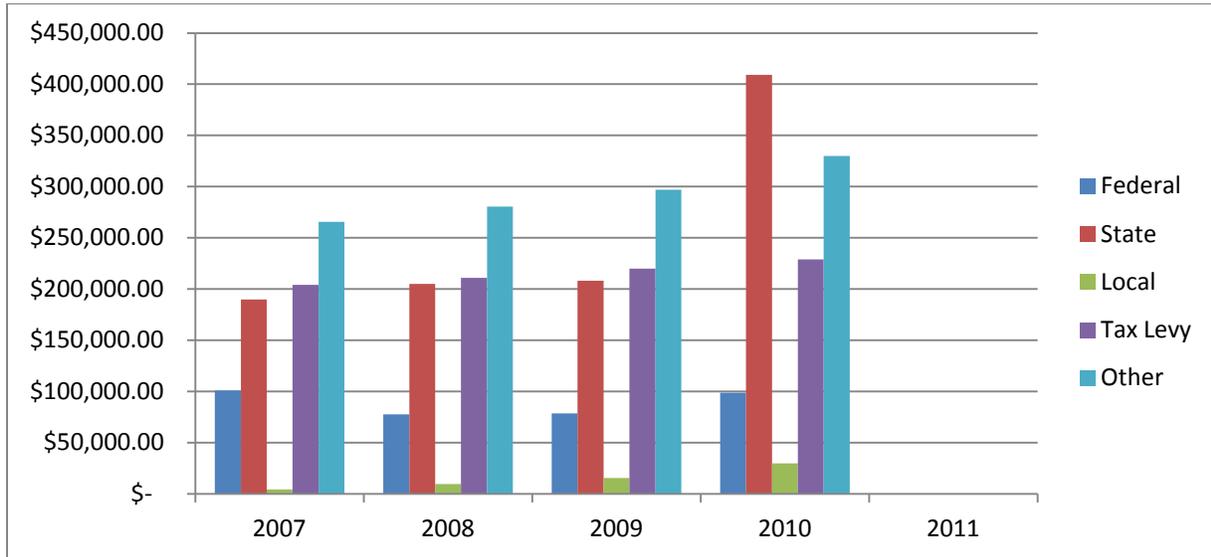
The East Central Senior Resource Center (ECSRC) came into existence in January 2005 after the Minnesota Department of Human Services required that planning and service areas become larger geographically with more centralized administrative functions. The ECRDC, consequently, is no longer a designated Area Agency on Aging (AAA). Rather, it was merged into a larger AAA that covering a 14 county planning and service area taking in Regions 7W, 7E, and 5. The new structure went into existence in January 2005 and is coordinated through the Central Minnesota Council on Aging (CMCOA) located in St. Cloud. The ECRDC appoints board members from each of our five counties to represent East Central Minnesota on the CMCOA Board of Directors. The administrative functions of the AAA are managed through CMCOA, contracts to the ECRDC to provide program development, information and assistance, and family caregiver supports through the newly branded East Central Senior Resource Center (ECSRC) since 2004.

The ECSRC continues to operate the programs that were in existence prior to the merger, with the exception of AAA administration functions. For example, the information and assistance program, part of the State of Minnesota's Senior LinkAge Line® (SLL) program was established in 2001 and has grown to include two full-time staff with offices in Mora and Cambridge. The SLL staff provides a wide range of services to over 3,600 seniors yearly. Work includes assisting seniors with accessing Social Security Insurance benefits, Medicare benefits, housing, home care, transportation and more. The SLL staff also trained over 20 volunteer staff that assists in providing information and assistance services.

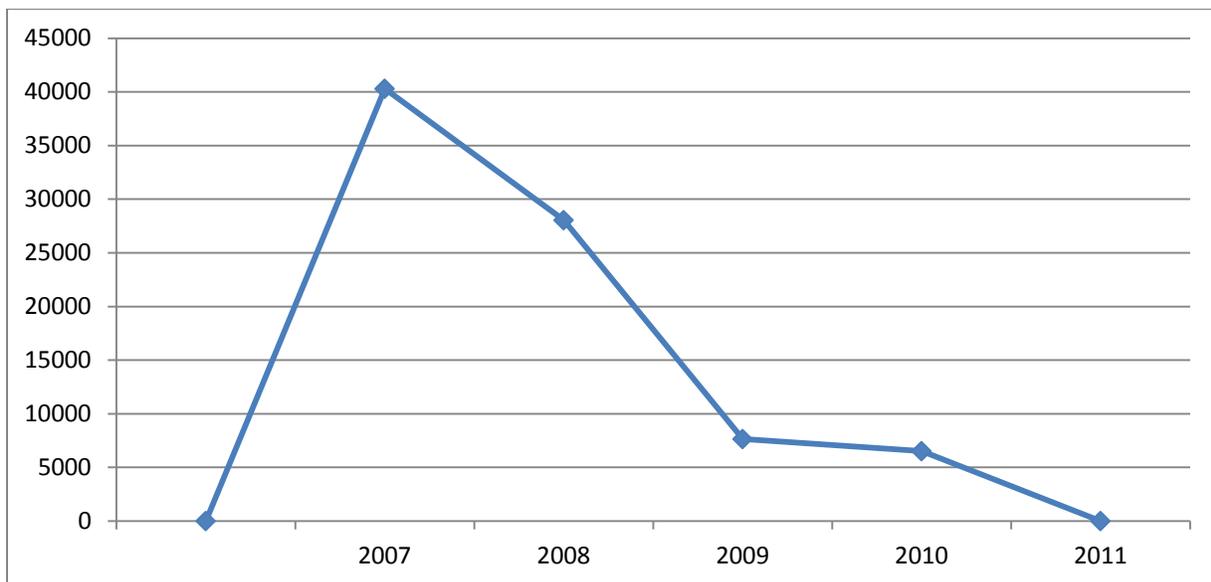
The Program Development and Coordination (PD&C) program continues to offer technical assistance to not-for-profit, government and for-profit entities that have a desire to develop or expand services for older adults that encourage living independently in their community. For example, this may include working with local units of government to expand public transit or assist an agency to secure funding for an assisted living facility, adult day center, or home health services. The PD&C program work includes facilitating the Minnesota Department of Human Services funding titled Community Services/Service Development (CS/SD). Over the past five years the ECRDC has guided six organizations in securing over \$1.75 million dollars from CS/SD. Additionally, organizations in Mora and Wyoming gained over 60 low/moderate income senior housing units through U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) funding, in amounts over \$6 million dollars.

Over the past five years, the ECRDC developed a new service specifically for family/informal caregivers. Two full time caregiver consultants working from offices in Mora and Cambridge spend 1100 hours assisting over 150 persons annually who care for older adults. This service is an expansion from the Senior LinkAge Line® program. Significant case management-type services reduce caregiver burdens and reduce costs to the families affected and public assistance programs.

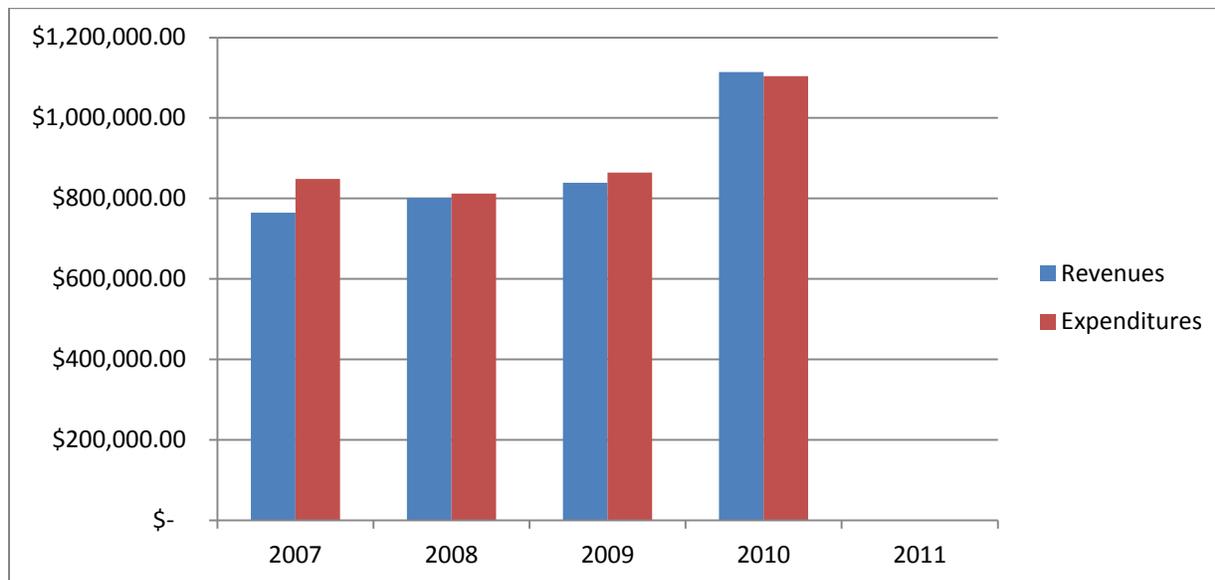
VII. ECRDC Financial Information



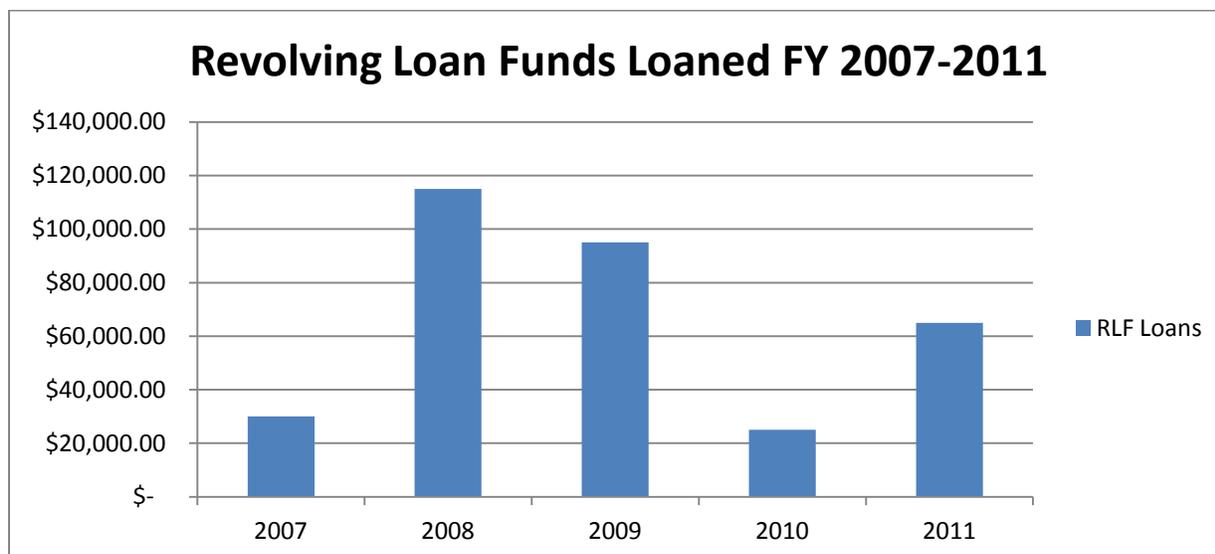
ECRDC REVENUE SOURCES					
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Federal	101,171	77,768	78,666	98,740	TBD
State	189,856	205,117	208,229	409,062	TBD
Local Contracts	4,467	9,611	15,610	29,992	TBD
Tax Levy	204,179	210,841	219,993	229,105	TBD
Other	265,547	280,536	297,117	329,973	TBD
Total Revenue	765,220	783,873	819,615	1,096,872	TBD



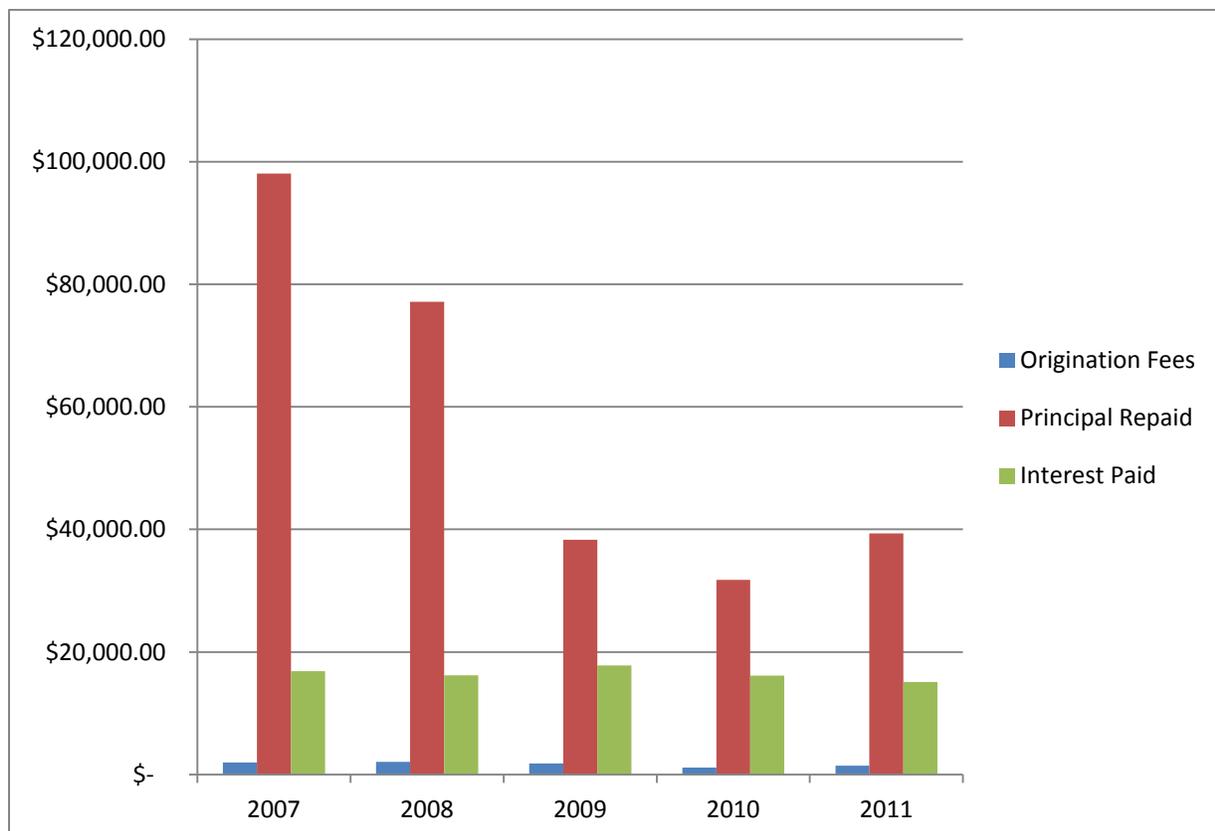
ECRDC FUND BALANCES					
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Fund Balances	40,289	28,042	7,643	6,515	TBD



	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Revenues	764,595	802,129	839,250	1,114,114	TBD
Expenses	848,583	811,830	864,659	1,104,299	TBD



REVOLVING LOAN FUNDS LOANED OUT 2007-2011					
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
RLF Loans	30,000	115,000	95,000	25,000	65,000



RLF FUND RESOURCES					
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Origination Fees	1,980	2,046	1,822	1,124	1,460
Loan Repayments	98,049	77,123	38,320	31,766	39,368
Interest	16,878	16,210	17,813	16,118	15,077

VIII. Next Steps

As a result of this Performance Assessment, there are a number of areas the ECRDC will be looking at in the future. While the survey respondents generally agree that the ECRDC is fulfilling its role, several of the comments indicate the Commission needs more visibility, communication, and awareness. To accomplish this, the ECRDC should increase a number of activities including economic development forums, presentations to local units of government, radio interviews, expanded presence on the web, newsletters, etc. to provide a better understanding of ECRDC programs and services.

The survey also seemed to indicate the importance of the Community Development and Planning function of the ECRDC. As mentioned earlier in the report, state funding for this activity has been eliminated for quite some time. Region 7E is one of the most rapidly growing parts of the State and the ECRDC should explore ways to make land use planning and community development services more available and affordable to local units of government.

The ECRDC should continue the pursuit of new regional level programming opportunities by building upon existing programs and recent successes. For example, the MN Dept. of Public Safety sponsored “Toward Zero Deaths” traffic safety program in Isanti and Kanabec counties might very well be replicated in other parts of the region as resources permit. The regional Human Services Transit Study jointly funded through MnDOT and the MN Department of Human Services may produce results that could give the ECRDC a role in expanding transit opportunities for the region as well. Also, the emerging “quality-of-life” issues in the region will determine transportation improvements of many types (i.e. trails) in years to come.

The ECRDC should continue to pursue/expand opportunities to serve older adults through our partnership with the Central MN Council on Aging. The loss of the ECRDC’s Area Agency on Aging designation in 2005 provided tremendous opportunities for the ECRDC to provide direct services for older adults such as the federally funded Caregiver Consulting program. Direct services cannot be offered – something the MN Board on Aging prohibits AAAs from doing.

The economic development program should continue working with communities to market the remaining JOBZ acreage which has approximately 4 years of tax incentives for qualifying business yet available. Efforts should be made to increase the revolving loan fund pool in order to assist more businesses in the region. Also, the new SCORE program should be marketed aggressively so that more businesses can take advantage of the mentoring services available. Finally, the ECRDC will continue providing technical assistance and coordination to cities seeking EDA Infrastructure grant funding to expand the regions industrial parks, etc.

Improving the financial strength of the ECRDC is also an ongoing task. The general fund reserve has been relatively flat over the past five years. A longer term objective might be to increase this amount to cover approximately 3 months operating revenue which is presently about \$150,000. This would afford the ECRDC sufficient resources to explore new program areas while minimizing financial risk. To off-set stagnant funding from EDA’s planning grant program for some 35 years, the ECRDC recently took steps to increase revenue by implementing some hourly charges for communities needing assistance with EDA grant applications. The ECRDC office building is also scheduled to be paid in full in January of 2014 which will provide additional operating revenue as well.

Indirect cost rates have steadily decreased as a result of efficiencies in the ECRDC’s administration and more direct charges to specific program areas. Examples of indirect costs include telephone service, office space, utilities, internet, support staff time, etc. These costs are typically shared and charged back to the programs based on a percentage of the salary and fringe benefit amounts paid by each program. Starting in 2007 the indirect rate was 49.6 percent. This rate dropped to 44.6 percent for the current budget cycle. These efficiencies have freed up staff time previously paid out of the indirect pool and replaced it with paid contract work which greatly contributes to the reduction in indirect costs.

Conclusion...

As required by Minnesota Statute 462.393, the East Central Regional Development Commission has conducted a Performance Assessment. The information included in this assessment included the results of a survey of local constituencies, review of programs by ECRDC staff, and a discussion of possible future directions. During the last five years, the ECRDC has worked to fulfill the purposes of the Regional Development Act by developing plans to address economic development, social, physical and governmental concerns of the East Central Region, and assisting with, developing and implementing plans and programs for individual local units of government.