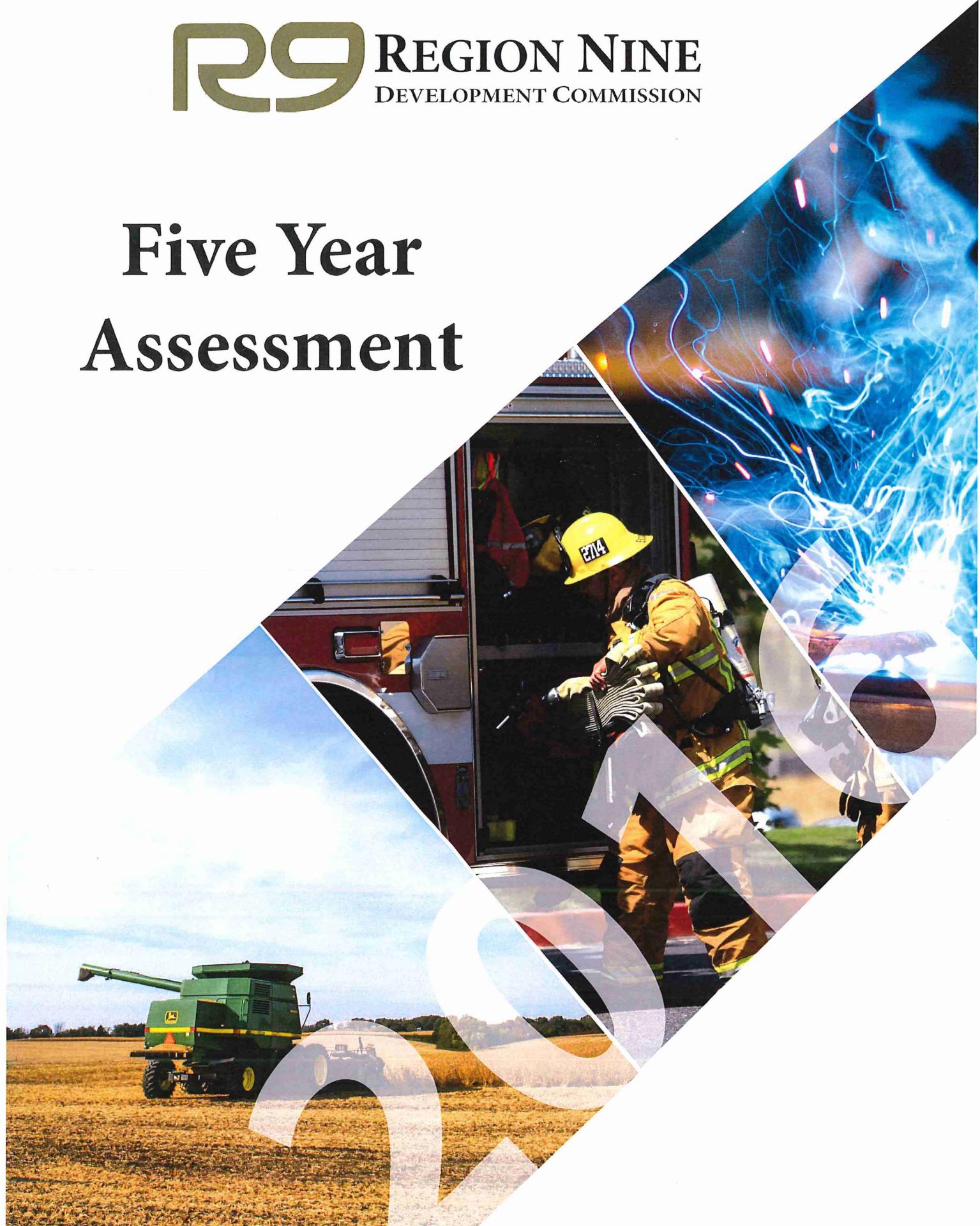




REGION NINE
DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

Five Year Assessment



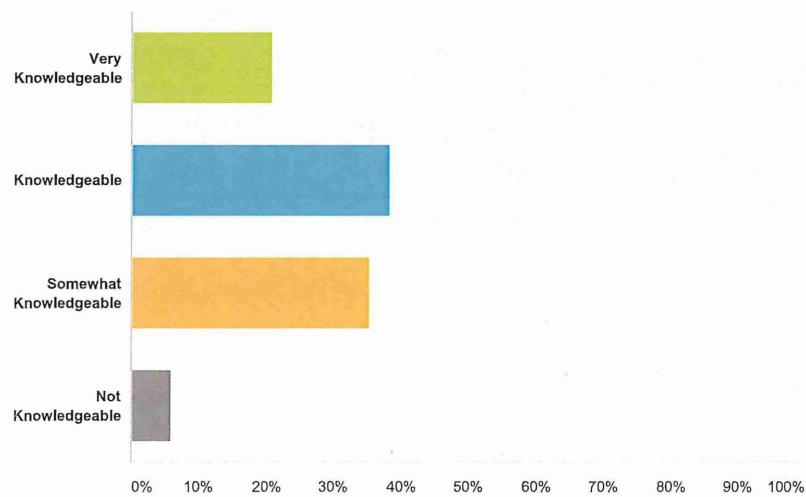
Region Nine Development Commission has conducted a self-evaluation regarding the organization's performance and effectiveness. Organizational evaluation plays an important role in determining whether Region Nine is meeting service expectations, fulfilling its mission, and whether improvements can be made.

Since 2001, and every five years after, Region Nine has reviewed its performance within the nine-county area. The Regional Development Act of 1969 states the purpose of Regional Development Organizations 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 2011-2016 five year self-evaluation report sought to determine if Region Nine is fulfilling this stated purpose.

In June 2016, Region Nine created a community survey that was sent out to regional stakeholders via electronic communication on multiple platforms. Community members had until July 22nd to respond to the survey. Region Nine received a total of 34 responses and the following is an analysis of that data.



Q1. How knowledgeable are you of Region Nine Development Commission and its programs and/or services?



Increasing awareness of Region Nine continues to be an organizational focus. The responses show that the majority of people are familiar with Region Nine and its programs/services. Almost 59 percent of all respondents were "Knowledgeable" or "Very Knowledgeable" and over 35 percent were "Somewhat Knowledgeable." Only two respondents, or just under six percent were "Not Knowledgeable."

The number of people that have worked with Region Nine over the past five years corresponds highly to the number of people that are "Knowledgeable" or "Very Knowledgeable," which is almost 59 percent. Eleven people, or 32 percent, had not worked with Region Nine in the past five years, with almost nine percent unsure.

Region Nine had a variety of sectors that responded to the survey. The majority, 38 percent of those represented cities and almost 21 percent represented counties in Region Nine. Over 23 percent of respondents classified themselves as "Other." Participation was lower in townships, school districts and local units of government, with a combined response rate of seventeen percent. In future community surveys, it may be necessary to conduct more outreach to these sectors to ensure their needs are being addressed and met by Region Nine.

The majority of respondents have worked with Region Nine on Safe Routes to School/Active Living Planning, with over 42 percent having partnered with Region Nine on these programs. Other programs that had a high rate of utilization were Comprehensive or Strategic Planning (36%), Bus Tours (36%), Revolving Loan Funds (27%), and Transportation (24%). The vast majority of programs and services offered by Region Nine were used on average by ten percent of the respondents. It should be noted that Local Foods/Food Access had a low usage rate, but Region Nine has only made this a priority in recent years.

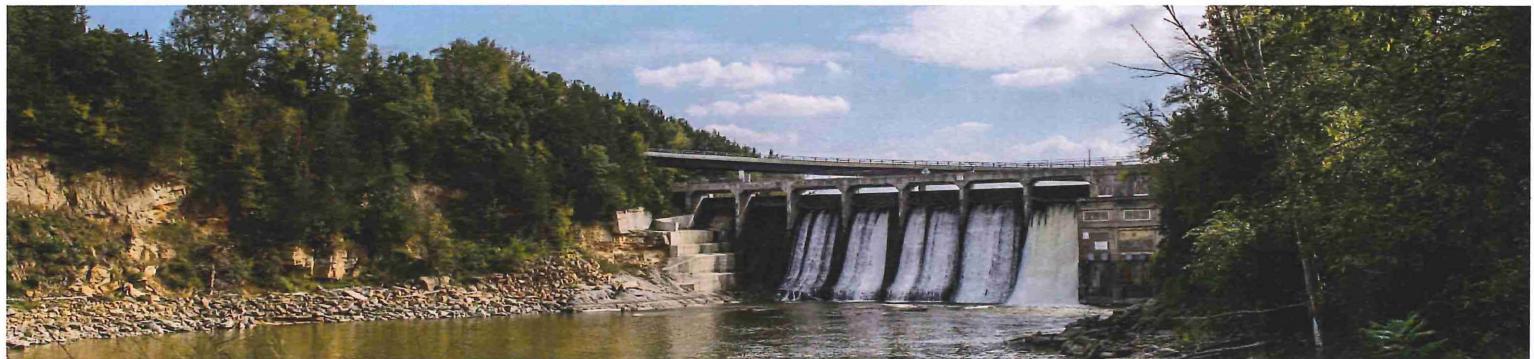
Being available to the region by providing accessible and timely service is the hallmark of any successful organization. Eighty-five percent of respondents said that Region Nine was either responsive or very responsive to their requests and needs. The rest of the respondents were unsure as to a response time, as they had not worked with Region Nine in the past five years.

Almost 78 percent rated the quality of the services provided by Region Nine as “Good” or “Excellent”. “Don’t Know” was the next highest response, which is to be expected as some of the survey participants had no experience with Region Nine’s programs and services.

When asked how satisfied they were with the product or service that Region Nine delivered, the vast majority of respondents, 60 percent, said they were completely satisfied. “Somewhat Satisfied” made up 21 percent of the responses and the rest had not received service from Region Nine. Specific comments related to any issues with their experiences with Region Nine were asked later in the survey.

Over 62 percent of the survey respondents found the services provided by Region Nine to be “Very valuable,” while 31 percent found them to be “Somewhat Valuable.” Just under seven percent, or two respondents, found the services to be “Not Valuable.”

Region Nine staff rated high marks in their overall effectiveness and professional capabilities. Over 53 percent rated staff as “Excellent,” over 36 percent rated the staff’s abilities as “Good.” This would indicate that staff are well aligned with the goals and services that Region Nine provides.



Respondents were given a list of 20 common regional development programs/issues and asked to rate their level of importance for their area.

The top five categories determined to be of a critical or urgent issue included:

1. Business Retention and Expansion
2. Workforce
3. Infrastructure Planning or Funding
4. Transportation Planning or Funding
5. Marketing Our Community

The top five issues indicated as important were:

1. Trails and Parks Planning or Funding
2. Infrastructure Planning or Funding
3. Changing Demographics
4. Comprehensive or Strategic Planning
5. Assisting with Financing for Businesses

The top five issues indicated as unimportant were:

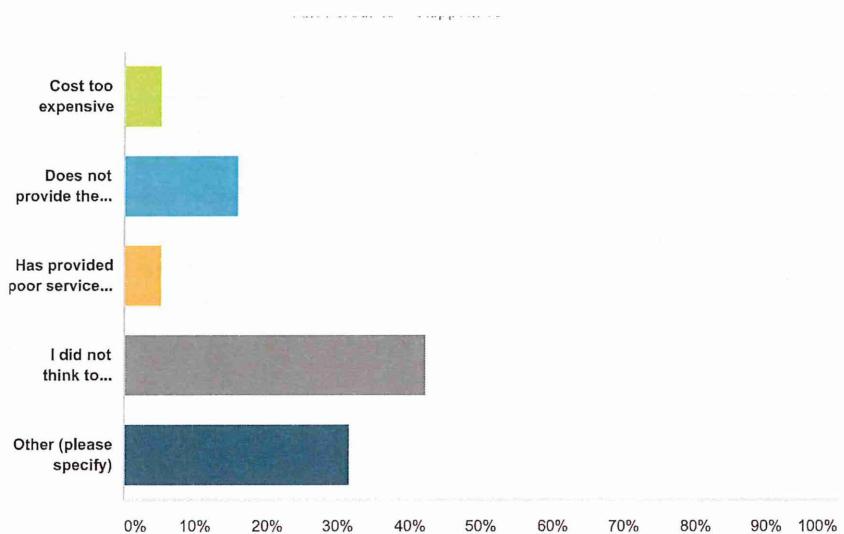
1. Broadband Planning or Funding
2. Fiscal Sponsorship
3. Energy Efficiency for Public Buildings
4. Zoning or Ordinances
5. Hazard Mitigation Planning

The top five issues that respondents felt were not a concern or problem in their jurisdiction were:

1. Climate Change Adaptation – 10 respondents
2. Fiscal Sponsorship – 8 respondents
3. Renewable Energy Planning or Funding – 7 respondents
4. GIS Mapping – 6 respondents
5. Housing Rehabilitation

It is important to note with these, that many of the issues that are in the top five of a category, also appear high in importance as well, just not in the top five. An example of this would be Renewable Energy Planning or Funding, which ranked third as “Not a Concern,” but also came in sixth as an “Important Issue” with 14 respondents. Where this question will be useful is determining whether Region Nine is devoting their energy to services that the public feels are priority issues. It may also indicate lack of communication on Region Nine’s part in addressing the importance of some of the programs or issues listed. This may require more outreach to regional partners to determine where any disconnects may be.

Q11. If Region Nine was not selected for a project, can you please share why?



In analyzing the reasons why Region Nine was not chosen to work on a project, the most common response was that the respondent did not think of them for the job (42%). The next highest is “Other” at 31 percent, which included a combination of “not used in the past” and “did not know about RNDC.” One response referred to staff turn-over which may indicate that Region Nine staff develop strong relationships with the communities. Just over fifteen percent of the respondents indicated that Region Nine did not provide the service they were looking for, but it is unclear as to what services they were seeking to attain.

While there was an improvement in community awareness of Region Nine and the services offered, visibility and communication continues to be an ongoing theme with respondents. Of the ten people that answered this question, the majority of responses dealt with increasing program and service awareness in all Region Nine communities. The other theme within the comments was for Region Nine to increase their number of forums as well as educational seminars for public workers.

When asked to share any specific problems with the staffing or expertise of Region Nine, the bulk of the respondents, over 95 percent, gave an answer of “None.” The one comment this question received was in reference to the cost of service or that the “end product did not seem to justify the cost.”

Region Nine is seen as a collaborative organization that can help communities and other organizations work together towards shared goals. Some of the comments were to assist with:

- Tourism and more economic development
- Regional Human Services analysis of service delivery models
- Help negotiate fire service contracts between cities and townships
- Changing demographic updates and consequences for the region



The statements for Question 15 included:

1. County elected officials within the region are actively engaged with Region Nine.
2. Region Nine tries hard to interact, network and partner with local economic development corporations.
3. Representatives of Region Nine serve on committees, task forces and working groups related to its programs and interest areas for the region.
4. Municipal elected officials within the region are actively engaged with Region Nine.
5. Region Nine has worked to evolve its programs and services to meet the shifting needs and opportunities within the region.
6. Local governments in the region turn to Region Nine for assistance, advice and leadership as the first option, before asking consultants, universities or other groups for assistance, especially with planning, strategy development or program design.

Overall, the responses in Question 15 shows Region Nine and its partners are perceived positively among survey participants. The statement that Region Nine ranked the highest on was statement number 5, which had 53 percent of respondents giving a good or excellent rating. This demonstrates a high level of responsiveness to the specific needs of the region. Statements 1, 2, and 3 had 50 percent of respondents giving a rating of good or excellent, showing a strong commitment by Region Nine staff to support the continued growth and success of the region. It also reinforces Region Nine's collaborative efforts with county officials. The statement that ranked the lowest was statement number 6, which backs up the previous findings about the importance of continued community outreach and communication of Region Nine's services and programs.



Change is an important and necessary part of any organization. How Region Nine responds to the changing needs of the communities it serves is crucial to its effectiveness and viability as a regional partner in progress. In conclusion, Region Nine has continued to not only increase organizational visibility, but also its usefulness to the region in the past five years. This survey, along with continued community engagement and strategic partnerships, will help guide Region Nine Development Commission through the next five years and beyond.



10 Civic Center Plaza, Suite 3, Mankato, MN 56001
(507) 387-5643 | www.rndc.org