



## BUILDING A RESILIENT REGION:

**Enter the Resilient Region Champions—Lessons  
Learned in Distributed Leadership**

### ABSTRACT

*Cheryl Lee Hills, Executive Director, R5DC, “This model has been recognized on a national level. Federal and state partners ask, ‘How are you doing this?’*

*Our work is extremely unique; congratulations to all!”*

Respectively submitted by Dr. Stacey Stockdill on behalf of the 42 Resilient Region Champions

## Executive Summary: Lessons Learned from the Distributed Leadership Model

We are grateful to the Bush Foundation for giving us an opportunity to try out and learn about using a distributed leadership model to implement the Resilient Region Plan. We have learned a great deal.

- There are times when it looked like this approach was the next best thing since sliced bread, and at other times we seemed to lack the support and resources needed to move the plan forward.
- We learned that sometimes it worked well for some of the themes. For other situations it did not work as well as we hoped.
- It has become a model for the way we did our work this past year, as well as the way we will continue to do our work.
- Nearly all champions have committed to another year! And we have in addition brought on some new very important players—42 in all have stepped up to the plate to build a Resilient Region!

So all in all, it has been a worthwhile experiment that has become the way we will continue to do our business!

**A Resilient Region Distributed Leadership Model.** To help others learn, we will tell our story. Why a distributed leadership model? Who are we? How was the distributed leadership model employed? When did it work? When didn't it work as well as we had hoped? What are the impacts/outcomes from the work to date? What can we tell others about the lessons we have gained from this approach?

**Why a distributed leadership model?** When the Resilient Region Plan was completed we knew we had a responsibility to the 600 who were engaged in developing it to put their plan into action. But the question became—how? The HUD/DOT/EPA no longer had implementation dollars available. We knew we would need to move forward with individual grant writing on projects, but worried that we would lose so much of the value of having truly multi-sector, cross-disciplinary visionaries working to help build a resilient region.

So how do you move forward without implementation dollars?

Dan Frank said it best, “We can either say we can't do anything because we have no money—or we can say we have infinite resources!”

We already had 22 individuals who agreed to be Resilient Region Champions and an additional 11 who agreed to support that work, called “Ex Officos.” The Ex Officio member *“is the one who kept sending out reminders and prompts to keep everybody focused and to keep us in line with deadlines for getting reports in and to help protect the day of the Champion meetings. So in addition to their expertise and their input, that person kept us focused on the right time and place to get all the people together and the ideas shared.”* (Todd Holman). They provided the critical back-office support.

With the Bush Foundation support we were able to retain Dan Frank as facilitator—a role he served so well during the two-year planning work. We were able to obtain meeting space, provide stipends, and serve food! We found that the Champions in fact did not take the stipends, which means that we can obtain space and food for another year.

The Bush Foundation support also allowed for us to evaluate each meeting, profile the work of 11 themes through the video/ storytelling project, and write this final report. The videos are available on our Resilient Region website and will be crucial to helping us continue to tell the story of this work.

**Enter the  
Champions!**



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### Appendix: Acronyms

### Online Resources:

**Building a Resilient Region: the Final Report for the HUD/DOT/EPA Sustainable Communities Planning Grant.** <http://www.resilientregion.org/region-plan/index.html>

### Champion Interview Videos

[Andrea Lauer - Efficiency and Effectiveness](#)

[Stacey Stockdill - Connectivity](#)

[Dan Frank - Changing Populations](#)

[Tim Houle - Champion Chair](#)

[Larry Lundbland - Education and Workforce](#)

[Mike Monson - USDA Rural Development](#)

[Jason Edens - Energy](#)

[Arlene Jones - Local Foods](#)

[Jani Wiebolt - Healthcare](#)

[Todd Hollman - Natural Resources and Development Patterns](#)

[Jennifer Bergman - Affordable Housing/Housing](#)

Video production supported by Bush Foundation grant and produced by: Erika Johnson, Owner/Director/Editor, and Colin McLain, Videographer/Assistant Editor, South Shore Productions, Inc. (SSP), 17561 Otto Zeck Road, Detroit Lakes, MN 56501 (281-849-1643) [erikajohnsondl@gmail.com](mailto:erikajohnsondl@gmail.com)

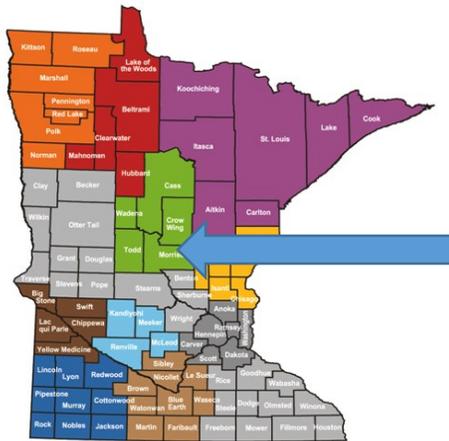
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<sup>1</sup> I would also like to thank Dr. Elizabeth Peterson who served a report editor!

## WHO ARE WE?

**We are a community-driven, university-assisted public/private partnership pursuing economic and environmental vitality in Cass, Crow Wing, Morrison, Todd, and Wadena Counties.**

Our full story can be found on the **Resilient Region website**<sup>2</sup> and in our final report, *Building a Resilient Region*<sup>3</sup>. In summary:



**Region Five.** Crow Wing, Cass, Morrison, Todd, and Wadena counties, located in central Minnesota, make up “Region Five.” This is a rural and small town area with a population of 162,000 in 69,194 households spread over an area of 3,996,051 acres.

**Our Assets.** Our five-county area is blessed with an abundance of business, industry, cultural, and natural resources. Tourism is one of the major economic engines of the region and our region is referred to as the Central Lakes Region due to the abundance of lakes. Geographically our region is unique—three distinct environments or biomes meet.

**Our People.** The ethnic makeup of Region Five is largely representative of the first Germanic and Scandinavian settlers as well as a sizable Ojibwa population. Latino and Amish populations are increasing today in Todd County. The region is very proud and supportive of former military service people who make up a disproportionately large percentage of the population. Camp Ripley U.S. Army Camp, is one of the largest employers in the region. The culture of our region has a distinct flavor. The people are trusting, hardworking, and hearty individuals ready to face the challenge of sustained temperatures below zero. Many residents consider “Up North” the best place to live where cutting wood is a family activity; birds, deer, and fish are plentiful; and wide-open spaces and solitude can be found just a few minutes or miles from bustling commercial hubs.

**The Need for a Sustainable Development Plan.** The citizens of Region Five are struggling to survive. It is the only region in the state where all five counties are classified by USDA and EDA as “economically distressed.” The recent unemployment rate (PositivelyMinnesota.com) was 9.3% for our 5-county area (7.8% for the US and 5.8% for MN). The average weekly wage (from the same source) is nearly half of that for the state of Minnesota and many places in the US (2011: US = \$924; MN = \$920; R5DC = \$592). The closing of the Potlatch Plant meant that the region lost 150 FTEs. For the 87 counties included in the 2012 Minnesota County Health Outcomes ranking (representing health of a county) the rankings were these: Cass 84, Crow Wing 62, Morrison 78, Todd 67, and Wadena 80. For the Health Factors (influences the health of the county) the rankings remain poor: Cass 81, Todd 77, Crow Wing 59, Morrison 76, and Wadena 66. The MN State Demographer has projected that our senior population will increase as much 39% by 2035.

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<sup>2</sup> Resilient Region Website<sup>2</sup> (<http://www.resilientregion.org/plan/>)

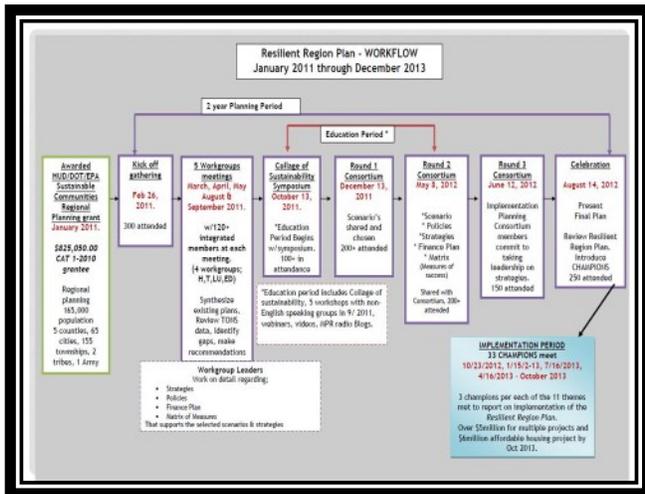
<sup>3</sup> *Building a Resilient Region*<sup>3</sup> (<http://www.resilientregion.org/region-plan/index.html>)

In 2010, we were awarded one of the first HUD/DOT/EPA Sustainable Communities Planning grants. We formed the community-driven and university-assisted partners and leveraged \$1.8 million dollars (\$800,000 from HUD/DOT/EPA and \$800,000 in-kind local match) to develop a five-county strategic plan through highly involved civic engagement.

**The Core Team.** The planning work was supported by a core team from: Region Five Development Commission (R5DC); Central Minnesota Initiative Foundation; Clean Energy Resource Teams (CERTs); Central Minnesota Housing Partnership (CMHP), Envision Minnesota, EnSearch, Inc.; University of Minnesota Regional Sustainable Development Partnerships.

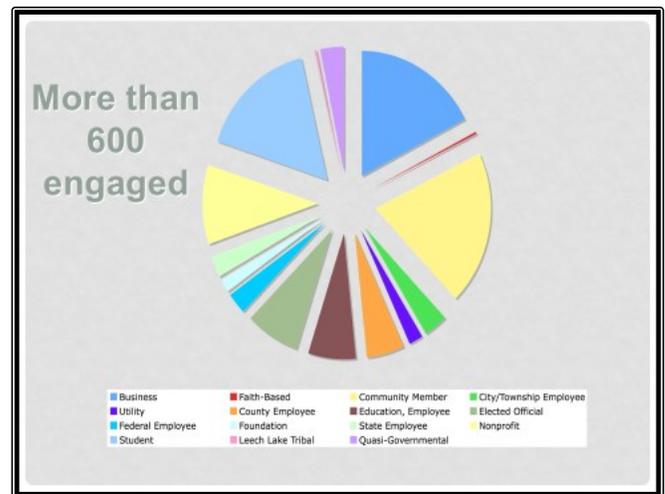


Resilient Region Planning Grant Core Team and HUD Partner



We successfully engaged more than 600 residents (3 times the projections) in developing a multidiscipline, region-wide vision for the five-county region of Cass, Crow Wing, Morrison, Todd, and Wadena Counties. Although focused on Economic Development, Housing, Land Use and Transportation, the interdependence of these focus areas was always taken into consideration. This consanguinity is an especially critical factor in rural areas.

The 18-month planning process, supported by the HUD/DOT/EPA Sustainable Communities Project, earned us the status of “high-achieving grantee” (“*In part because of our ability to deliver all reports and all proposed activities on time and on budget; and because of our uncommon success at community engagement across virtually every measure of diversity,*” Don Hickman, Initiative Foundation”).



The 18-month planning process led to the development of a comprehensive regional plan <http://www.resilientregion.org/plan/> fully integrating 11 themes in the areas of:

- |                                              |                                              |
|----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| 1) Housing,                                  | 6) Transportation,                           |
| 2) Connectivity/broadband,                   | 7) Economic engines,                         |
| 3) Energy,                                   | 8) Healthcare,                               |
| 4) Natural resources & development patterns, | 9) Changing populations,                     |
| 5) Education & workforce development,        | 10) Government efficiency and effectiveness, |
|                                              | 11) Affordable housing.                      |

Our work has been recognized by the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) and we have been asked to speak twice at the White House Rural Council Forum on Regional Innovation (Fall 2012 and Fall 2013—where Cheryal Hills was asked to provide a keynote address).

### Why a distributed leadership model?

When the Resilient Region Plan was completed we knew we had a responsibility to the 600 who were engaged in developing the plan to put their plan into action.

But the question became—how?



The HUD/DOT/EPA no longer had implementation dollars available. We knew we would need to move forward with individual grant writing on projects, but worried that we would lose so much of the value of having truly multi-sector, cross-disciplinary visionaries working to help build a resilient region.

So how do you move forward without implementation dollars?

Dan Frank said it best, “We can either say we can’t do anything because we have no money, or we can say we have infinite resources!”

The idea to use a distributed leadership model came from Dan Frank, Community Specialist from the Initiative Foundation who was charged with facilitating the planning process. When asked if he had a definition for distributed leadership, he wrote:<sup>4</sup>

*Wish I did. Really just came out of what I saw with the core team with the Resilient Region planning process. Seemed we, the core team, each had a part to play and that we all did our part without having to*

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<sup>4</sup> D. Frank. (E-mail correspondence, October 14, 2013).

*be directed. The group communicated well and it seemed no one had to be assigned to do something, they just stepped up and into the roles that seemed to make sense for them, seemed organic and natural to me.*

In preparation of this report, Dan Frank and I explored the definition of distributed leadership model. We found there were more than 2,000 sources when searching the Metro State University Library System and more than 1,000 peer-reviewed/scholarly journals on the topic. The definition that seemed most like how we were operating was from the Australian Government Office of Learning and Teaching.<sup>5</sup> This definition works well to explain how the distributed leadership model was used to implement the Resilient Region Plan:

“Distributed Leadership ... is a leadership approach in which collaborative working is undertaken between individuals who trust and respect each other’s contribution. It occurs as a result of an open culture within and across **[organizations]**. It is an approach in which reflective practice is an integral part enabling actions to be critiqued, challenged and developed through cycles of planning, action, reflection and assessment and re-planning. It happens most effectively when people at all levels engage in action, accepting leadership in their particular areas of expertise. It requires resources that support and enable collaborative environments together with a flexible approach to space, time and finance which occur as a result of diverse contextual settings **[within the region]**. Through shared and active engagement, distributed leadership can result in the development of leadership capacity to sustain improvements **[and implementation of the Resilient Region Plan]**.”



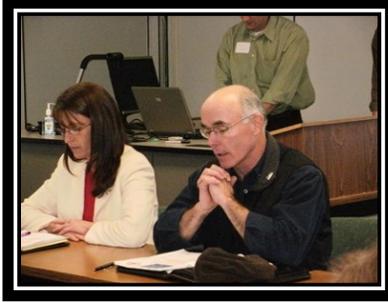
In the summer of 2012 during one of the last Resilient Region planning sessions, we identified the need for Champions and Resource Organizations. The implementation structure was based on a distributed leadership model, meant to be flexible and organic, able to expand and contract its level of activity as opportunities appear and are addressed.

- It is organized around the 11 themes.
- It has at least two champions per theme.
- It has more than 400 resource organizations.
- Theme champions meet once a month within their theme areas and four times a year across themes.

Therefore we had a unique, working model in place to improve the economic and environmental vitality and health of this region.

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<sup>5</sup> Australian Government Office of Learning and Teaching. *What is distributed leadership?* Retrieved October 14, 2013 from <http://emedia.rmit.edu.au/distributedleadership/?q=node/10>



We already had 22 individuals who agreed to be Resilient Region Champions and an additional 11 who agreed to support that work, called “Ex Officios.” The Ex Officio member *“is the one who kept sending out reminders and prompts to keep everybody focused and to keep us in line with deadlines for getting reports in and to help protect the day of the Champion meetings. So in addition to their expertise and their input, that person kept us focused on the right time and place to get all the people together and the ideas shared.”* (Todd Holman). They provided the critical back-office support.

With the Bush Foundation support we were able to retain Dan Frank as facilitator, a role he served so well during the two-year planning work. We were able to obtain meeting space, provide stipends, and serve food! The Bush Foundation support also allowed for us to evaluate each meeting, profile the work of 11 themes through the video/storytelling project<sup>6</sup> and to write this final report. The videos are available on our Resilient Region website and will be crucial to helping us continue to tell the story of this work. Because the Champions did not take the stipends, we can obtain space and food for another year.

In brief, the implementation of the Resilient Region Plan using the distributed leadership model flowed as follows:

1. Summer 2012: 22 Individuals agreed to serve as Resilient Region Champions. The Core Team agreed to serve as “Ex Officio” members to support and guide the work of the champions.
2. Champion Meeting #1: October 23, 2012 Champion Orientation
3. Champion Meeting #2: January 15, 2013
4. Champion Meeting #3: April 16, 2013
5. Champion Meeting #4: July 15, 2013
6. Champion Meeting #5: October 22, 2013

In between each meeting, Champions and Ex Officio members were to work with resource organizations (using existing networks) to identify priority projects, seek funding, and implement projects.

Prior to each Champion meeting, the Ex Officio members, primarily made up of those who served as the core team for the Resilient Region Planning Process, met to prepare the agenda.



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<sup>6</sup> The videos can be found on “The Plan” <http://www.resilientregion.org/plan/> mid-way down the page.

The list of our Champions is impressive. All of these individuals have stepped up to work on a region-wide basis to improve the economic and environmental conditions of our five-county region.

**Resilient Region Theme Champions**

**CHAMPION CHAIR:**

Tim Houle, Administrator, Crow Wing County

**EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**

Dr. Larry Lundblad (President) Central Lake College (CLC)  
 Craig Nathan (Regional Director) Rural MN CEP  
 \*\*Dr. Chad Coquette (ED) National Joint Powers Alliance (NJPA)  
 \*Cheryal Lee Hills (ED) Region Five Development Commission (R5DC)

**EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS**

Don Hickman (Vice President) Initiative Foundation  
 Andrea Lauer, Mayor of Royalton  
 \*Mel Radermacher (Controller of External Affairs and Members Services) R5DC

**TRANSPORTATION**

Tim Houle (Engineer) Widseth, Smith, Nolting  
 Jarrett Leas (Engineer) Kadrmas, Lee & Jackson  
 \*Tad Erickson (Community & Economic Development Planner) R5DC

**ECONOMIC ENGINES**

Greg Bergman (Director) Small Business Development Center (SBDC)  
 Rick Utech (ED) Todd County Economic Development Corporation  
 \*Joe Schulte (Bus/Loan Developer) R5DC  
 \*\*Vicki Chepulis (Grants Coordinator) Five Wings Arts Council  
 \*\*Arlene Jones (Owner/Operator) The Farm at St. Mathias & (Manager) SPROUT Food Hub

**CONNECTIVITY**

Pam Mahling (Corporate Resource Specialist) West Central Telephone Association (WCTA)  
 Kevin Larson (CEO) Consolidated Telephone Company (CTC)  
 Janelle Riley (CEO) Syvantis Technologies  
 \*Dr. Stacey Stockdill (CEO) EnSearch, Inc.  
 \*\*Merritt Bussiere (Extension Educator) University of Minnesota Extension

**ENERGY**

Bob Schaefer (Instructor) CLC  
 Jason Edens (President) Rural Renewable Energy Alliance (RREAL)  
 \*Molly Zins (ED) University of Minnesota Sustainable Development Partnership

**HEALTHCARE**

Jani Wiebolt (retired COO) Essentia SJMC  
 Tim Rice (CEO) Lakewood Health System  
 John Solheim (CEO) Cuyuna Regional Medical Center  
 \*Bob McLean (COO/GM) Hunt Utilities Group  
 \*\*Adam Rees (CEO) Essentia Health  
 \*\*Mike Larson (COO) Essentia Health

**AFFORDABLE HOUSING/HOUSING**

Lynn Hunt (Board Chair) Resilient Living Council  
 Jennifer Bergman (ED) Brainerd HRA  
 Colleen Faacks (ED) Mid-MN Builders Association  
 Janie Weston (ED) Greater Lakes Association of Realtors  
 \*Deanna Hemmesch (ED) Central Minnesota Housing Partnership (CMHP)  
 Amy Hunt McLain (Board) Resilient Living Council

**CHANGING POPULATIONS**

Mary Sam (Director of Intercultural Services/Diversity/Tribal Relations) CLC  
 DeAnn Barry (ED) Brainerd Lakes Area Senior Center  
 \*Dan Frank (Community Specialist) Initiative Foundation

**NATURAL RESOURCES AND DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS**

\*Todd Holman (Program Director) The Nature Conservancy  
 John Sumption (President) Sumption Environmental  
 \*Phil Hunsicker (Author) Conservation Design Score Card



\*Served as Ex Officio  
 \*\*New Fall 2013

## How was the distributed leadership model employed?

In essence the distributed leadership model framework included: a) All Champion Meetings—once per quarter; b) Theme Champion and Resource Organization Meetings—sometimes monthly, sometimes once a quarter; and c) organic/fluid work driven by demand, need, and resources available—sometimes across themes.

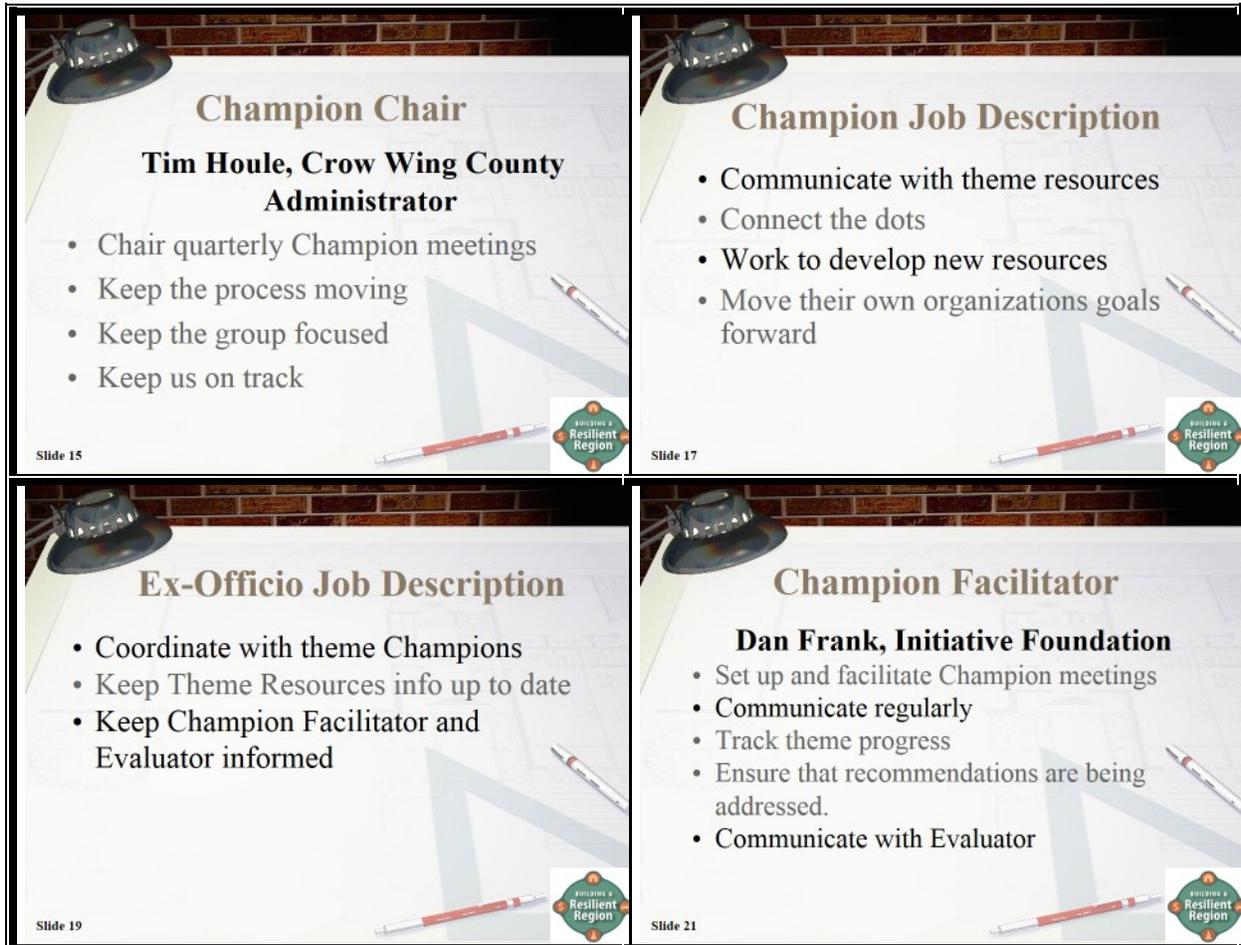
A great deal of preplanning went into the quarterly All Champion Meetings. To retain this incredible group of skilled, over-committed, regional champions, the meetings had to be a very effective and an efficient use of their time. We were lucky in that Tim Houle (Administrator, Crow Wing County) agreed to serve as chair. His requirement for serving in this capacity—the meetings had to be “*crisp, focused, and worthwhile.*” So the theme oral reports at each meeting were limited to 2 minutes! We were also lucky in that the Ex Officio members participated in this preplanning work (often without compensation) and to have Dan Frank serve as facilitator.

From those initial preplanning meetings some key PowerPoint slides were developed and used with each meeting to remind everyone about the focus and purpose of our time together. Below are a few samples. (See Implementation of the Plan <http://www.resilientregion.org/plan/> for a complete set.)

We always started the meeting with the Resilient Region purpose and mission to connect everyone to the work that had gone before. Some of the Champions were new to the work while some had been intensely engaged in the development of the Resilient Region Plan. We needed to bring them all to the same place to begin the work.



We also needed to clarify roles and responsibilities. The role for the Champions was provided in documents as part of the recruitment. We wanted to make sure that before they committed to serving as a champion they understood the various roles. These roles and responsibilities were reinforced at the first meeting and referred to throughout the year.



Before each meeting they were also asked to provide a report on their work from the past three months. By design these were to be kept brief. (See Implementation of the Plan <http://www.resilientregion.org/plan/> for a complete set of reports.) Upon reflection this meant that we did not always have the depth of information we had for the HUD/DOT/EPA quarterly reports.

Sample Report Template



**Champion Report Template**

Theme Area: \_\_\_\_\_

Champions: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Submit to Champion Facilitator to be compiled,  
cover highlights in one-minute report**

1. What is happening in our region related to our theme's goals and/or recommendations?

- 
- 
- 
- 

2. What are some opportunities for action/alignment and collaboration?

- 
- 
- 
- 

3. What one or two Key Theme recommendations are you working on?

- 
- 
- 
-

At the end of each meeting, Champions were given assignments (see examples below).

<p><b>Champion Meeting #1 Assignment</b></p> <p><b>Next Step: Contact Theme Resources</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. What's happening in our theme area related to our goals and recommendations ?</li><li>2. What should we be doing together?</li><li>3. What are you willing to work on within the next 30 days?</li><li>4. Who would you like to work with?</li><li>5. Who else should be added to our theme resource person/organization list?</li></ol> <p>Slide 33</p>	<p><b>Champion Meeting #2 Assignment</b></p> <p><b>Before you Go</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Complete meeting Evaluation</li><li>• Remember our next Champion Meeting is April 16<sup>th</sup>, same time and location.</li><li>• Encourage action on at least one key theme related project!</li></ul> <p>Slide 27</p>
<p><b>Champion Meeting #3 Assignment</b></p> <p><b>Before you Go</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Remember our next Champion Meeting is July 16<sup>th</sup>, same time and location.</li><li>• Continue to take action on Priorities, invite resources to join you on actions.</li></ul> <p>Slide 33</p>	<p><b>Champion Meeting #4 Assignment</b></p> <p><b>Next Steps</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• We will evaluate today's' input and be in touch about next steps as far as structure, and meetings for the coming year.</li><li>• Continue to take action on Theme Priorities that you are engaged in and willing to continue with.</li><li>• Turn in evaluations, harvest sheets and worksheets</li></ul> <p>Slide 29</p>

Above all else, we understood that to keep partners at the table they had to see visible signs of success. At each meeting we reinforced the “success measures” message.

**When did it work?**

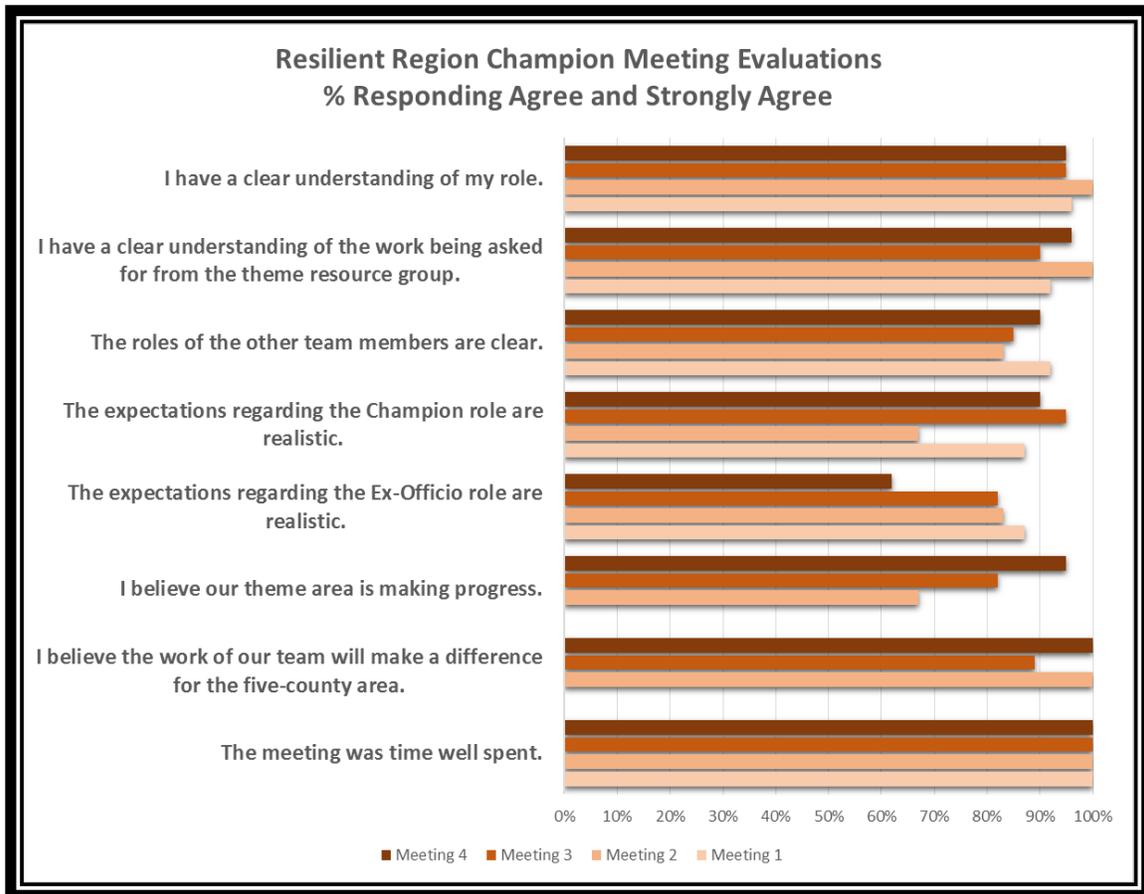
Throughout the year, we obtained evaluation feedback from our partners. The data indicate that at the very first meeting excitement about the work was generated. The evaluations tended to remain strong and positive throughout the year. The one area that showed a steady decline was the area of expectations regarding the ex-officio role (in that fewer at each meeting agreed that this role was realistic).

**Success Measures**

1. Performance is Key, getting things done.
2. Relevant to Stakeholders (you and your work)
3. Dynamic/Organic Distributed Leadership
4. Creates a Learning Community
5. Implements through a Replicable Process.
6. Responsive to Team Leadership Needs

Slide 31

On the flip side, there was a steady increase in the percentage who believed that their theme area was making progress. In all cases, the meetings were rated as *time well spent!*



We obtained very little feedback each time on items that weren't covered: **“Anything else on my chest that I didn't get a chance to say”:**

**Meeting #1:**

“Still a little unclear of my mission.”  
 “Very well done—Great to start and end on time but be highly productive in between.”

**Meeting #2:**

“I think we are all getting our feet under us on expectations and how we can work together. I need to have patience. I believe this will work for the benefit of our area.”  
 “Still feels like Wadena county (needs, resources, etc.) frequently forgotten☺”  
 “Central point of data?”

**Meeting #3:**

“Quarterly face-to-face is good.”

“Tim's use of time—moves group forward. Could there be additional time included for specific theme resource interaction?”

**Meeting #4:**

RE: Role of Ex-Officio: “I would say that our Transportation Theme, Jake had to put in the majority of effort. Thank you Jake, but can we ask him (and maybe other ex-officio) to continue to do that?” RE: Theme area is making progress “It is making progress, but maybe my expectations were too high.” “Keep focused on measurable achievable sustainable objectives. That's what the Resilient Region is doing well.”  
 “Hard to get everyone together throughout the year (between meetings).”  
 “Thank you R5DC and Initiative Foundation.”

And inspiration in the work was found from the very first meeting through Meeting #4. When asked, “What inspires you about this work?” implementation and connections were consistent themes.



**Meeting #1:**

“Everything! Let’s Rock!”  
“Well-developed plan based on synergy!”  
“So many opportunities.”  
“The list of champions! This is a special group of individuals! Lots of potential for the region!”  
“The community as a whole—but especially these age 55+ that I serve!”  
“Increasing the communication and connections we all know that we should be making, but at times lack the ‘forum’ to encourage it.”  
“Many minds—make better decisions and projects.”  
“A continually improving outstanding region.”  
“Having this work impact my work!”  
“Making a difference on a regional basis.”  
“Keeping ‘the plan’ visible and part of current conversations.”  
“Opportunity to find a new path to implementation.”  
“The organic nature of how it works and the successes!”  
“Add value to one another’s work.”  
“Feel like I can get help to make things happen—to move the region toward sustainability/resiliency.”  
“I know we will get there and it will do great things.”

**Meeting #2:**

“Big picture, long-term potential for a better area.”  
“It’s so helpful to work with smart, efficient, dedicated people—inspiring!”  
“Others are working on things which assist me.”  
“Connections, toward action”

**Meeting #3:**

“I love that it’s a holistic approach to a whole region and not just piecemeal.”  
“Planning, big picture work and continue to lead to practical application.”  
“Connecting the different themes; learning what is needed.”  
“The opportunity for collaboration.”  
“I like that it keeps the bigger picture in front of us—serves as a sort of ‘carrot’!”  
“Trying to work from a region-wide perspective.”  
“So much great work is happening—very encouraging.”  
“The other people involved—the great team of all that is happening across the region.”  
“The scope and potential of the Virtual Highway project.”  
“We are getting things done!”  
“The plan is working!”  
“Achievement of tangible, measureable outcomes.”  
“Seeing things move forward; seeing people/organizations apply for and receive funding

**Meeting #4:**

“Love seeing all that is really happening. The strength of using true community leadership and collaboration. Having a plan for getting to a true resilient region that addresses all the real issues and needs.”

“Building stronger communities.”

“Getting to know and understanding what the other regional leaders do in their work.”

“Progress! What a great team!! ☺”

“Rolling up our sleeves and getting stuff accomplished.”

“Hearing about what is actually being done in the different areas and how I can relate this information to others.”

“I am always amazed when I come to these meetings to hear about everything being accomplished in Region 5 mostly to the credit of the Resilient Region Plan. Many of the projects have been successful because they have incorporated several themes.”

“Results that matter. Interdisciplinary focus.”

“Overall the enthusiasm to work collectively.”

“Implementation!”

“It just makes sense. Although quite ambitious, by taking the time to reflect on our neighbors and their issues, and being aware of “themes” that interact with the ones nearest to our hearts, we can achieve so much more—therefore, it’s rewarding.”

“The quality of the participants is outstanding. It is inspiring to see so many intelligent, motivated individuals working together to make a difference.”

“We are collectively making progress. We have momentum and we are a magnet for support ... Keep it going!”

“Cheryal Lee Hills! Collaboration Collaborative Spirit; Everyone’s sincere participation!”

“The collective wisdom, expertise, connections and opportunities can’t be matched—and one leading to real, meaningful results.”

“We are getting things done and we are collaborating across public/private/nonprofit areas.”

“How the collaborative nature of the group has led to a number of aggressive implementation projects.”

“Work across silos, trans-boundary—with the greatest assets or attributes of our region!”

Already by meeting #3 we found that our Champions and Ex Officio members were willing to continue to serve.

**Meeting #3: What do you think your future role will be regarding the Resilient Region Plan?**

“To assist the [theme] Champions.”

“Continued involvement at some level.”

“Continue to champion in some form.”

“Support with projects—building collaborations.”

“I will continue as a Champion.”

“Continuing on ... to be determined exactly what I’ll be doing!”

“Keep plugging away on connecting our theme to other themes.”

“Hub for ideas and outcomes.”

“Continue on multiple fronts.”

“It’s hard to know.”

“I will continue where it aligns with my work across the region.”

“Continue to collaborate; to be a team player.”

“Resource person, connect the dots/people.”

“I want to continue working on this project. It has great potential and the people working together are making a difference!”

“Continue as a Champion.”

When asked, “**What are the strengths of the distributed leadership model?**” several key strengths were identified, including: collaboration among community leaders, collective experience, across theme, broader input, and multiple input:

“Bringing forward benefits of numerous community leaders.”

“Each of us brings different talents, relationships and expertise to these groups; structure allows us to capitalize on these, and to compensate for our lesser strengths!”

“Champions are enabled to propose work that their organizations value but have not be able to do yet. Champions can propose the ‘things we have always talked about doing’ but have not had the resources, to execute.”

“The Resilient Region Project is too large for a small group of champions—the eleven themes need the distributed leadership model to move the projects forward.”

“It distributes the work to hopefully prevent over-burdening any one team member. It engages all team members, facilitates a natural role and action items for each.”

“Destruction of silo-thinking, cross pollination, wholistic thinking.”

“Collective experience, seeing issues and opportunities from multiple perspectives. Problems and solutions are multifaceted—not linear. It takes this broader distributed approach to define issues well and address them effectively.”

“The distributed leadership model has been surprisingly successful! When I first heard that we were going to be working this way, I was concerned that nothing would get done. Instead, we have accomplished more than I would have expected from a top down model.”

“Sometimes the quiet people have the most to contribute—it ensures everyone participates. By hearing all views, collectively we have gathered a much broader understanding, vision and hopefully have more achievable and useful projects.”

“Forms a linkage between theme areas that are otherwise diverse. Distributes responsibilities.”

“A leader among peers—balances strength of personalities and disciplines.”

“Not being solely responsible for the product; more people to think the issues and concerns through.”

“The knowledge that each person brings to the table.”

“Collaborating with other champions.”

“Broader input, more realistic or grounded ideas brought forth. More ideas and thoughts exchanged.”

“More information gained, different aspects.”

“I can rely on the work of my champions and other theme members to get the job done. I may be an expert in my theme but others bring a lot to the table to enhance what I can do for the region.”

“Decisions are made.”

“Multiple input, taking turns pulling and pushing as leaders. Love the ex-officio role person, Deanna—she is a real strength.”



### What are the weaknesses of the distributed leadership model?

The role of Ex Officio and required/needed role of facilitator were the common themes. Without someone to provide the back office support to call and organize the meeting—work does not get done. For some themes this worked well because the focus of the Resilient Region Plan and their theme dovetailed with their everyday work. For others it took tremendous commitment from someone (usually the Ex Officio) who was going to do whatever it took to keep the work moving forward. We also believe we did not engage resource organizations as much as needed and are making plans to increase this engagement in 2014.

“You do—eventually—need someone to lead, make the call, decide, implement, delegate tasks, etc.”

“We all tend to be over-committed (spread thin) so time is always a limiting factor.”

“Hasn’t been a problem yet, but accountability could be missing.”

“Champions don’t necessarily meet to discuss their theme areas until a report is needed. Or if there is a specific topic/project going forward. We need monthly e-mail to really keep on track.”

“It might lead to slightly more ambiguous roles and responsibilities (at times hard to know exactly how champions are responsible for engaging broader community on the theme area).”

“Diffusion of responsibility; tragedy of the commons (free loader effect).”

“Perhaps making sure you have the right representative in the leadership model and keep fostering future champions.”

“I really haven’t seen any weaknesses.”

“Certain types of people seem to be turned off by the “touchy-feely-ness” of it—and perhaps have left the table.”

“Easier to lose focus.”

“Is anyone in charge?”

“The role of champions—the assumption was that they would bring ‘resources’ and take charge—but in reality the burden has often fallen to the Ex Officio to make sure something happens. It appears to depend on the degree to which the theme has an existing infrastructure—such as for workforce. In that case working on the recommendations and action steps is a logical extension of the work already taking place. In many of the other themes—this ‘existing’ infrastructure is missing—so it is more difficult to bring all partners together and to make progress. In these cases the burden seems to fall on the Ex Officio.”

“We do not get to dive into deep-time.”

“Getting everyone together between big quarterly meetings. Having someone take charge and lead the meetings without dominating the conversation.”

“Timelines and getting together.”

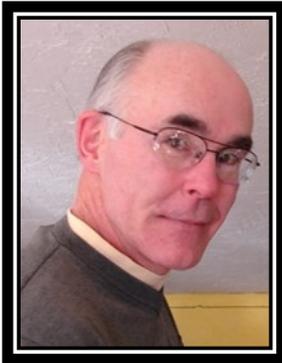
“Diverse individuals or cultural representation.”

“Wondering—who should be in charge? Who should be responsible? A lot then falls on the Ex Officio person.”



A taped interview of Todd Holman by Bob McLean, as part of the video project, further refined our understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the distributed leadership model. The strengths included the individuals engaged, the leadership/core team (comprised of the ex officio members and facilitated by Dan Frank), *The Resilient Region Plan* as a document to be used to engage others, and the tangible benefit for those who are serving. Again the need for frequent (four times a year) meetings, the role of Ex Officio (*as herder of cats*), and need to continue to establish metrics for success are challenges and opportunities for improvement in the future.

**Interview between Bob McLean, COO/GM, Hunt Utilities Group, Healthcare Champion and past chair of the Resilient Region Advisory Board and Todd Holman, Program Director, The Nature Conservancy and Natural Resources and Development Patterns Champion.**



**Bob Mclean, “What is the role of a Champion?”**

*Todd Holman, “The term Champion might be overblown, but I like what it signifies; it means whoever is willing to take the charge for this effort and pull together people for this effort. The role of the Champion is to look for sustainability in this process. This is a great distributed management idea ... As a Champion it is incumbent on all of us to keep looking for other people to keep this energy going. We know that no one person, no matter if their title is Champion or not, can do all of this. It needs a team and a team that can be sustainable over the long term. So as Champions we look to colleagues and others who are willing to help and keep the theme alive. That is where our next*

*steps are.”*

**Bob McLean, “When you look at this process—what we have done is continuous improvement –what do you think are the strengths of the Champion model, and what are the areas of weakness?”**

*Todd Holman, “I think the strength of the Champion model is that it is a laser-focused mechanism to find people who are active today and now within those theme areas.*

*“One of the challenges is going to be trying to keep that energy. I think many of the Champions have their day life and work that may not be dedicated to this project. They have to zoom in and contributed to the best of their ability, and then zoom back to their day life. So to try to keep components of the plan alive and for implementation, which is the next step—these Champions are going to have to look for other Champions and find other people to help carry those messages.”*

**Bob Mclean, “How do you draw in—how do you develop other Champions?”**

*Todd Holman, “How do I draw in other Champions? I draw in whoever I think has even the most modest capacity if they have even a little bit of time and I get a sense that their passion aligns with the theme—I grab them and I introduce them to this work. I think some of the successes really come from seeing a measurable outcome from their participation. Hopefully they will be engaged and they will stay engaged. That has happened on a number of fronts already in these early stages of implementation.”*



Todd Holman

**Bob McLean, “How have the Champions worked together?”**

Todd Holman, “The Champions working together has come from regularly scheduled meetings. It has been great to have orchestration and expertise of all of the partners in the group coordinating the Resilient Region. But for that leadership, I am not sure that they would have worked together.”

“Now that we have established four times a year to pull all the Champions together, that is to me one of the greatest pieces of the whole process. Getting an opportunity to hear all those other themes—which are not what I do for a living—is tremendously enriching! That has been a key!”



**Bob McLean, “From a Champion’s perspective, why does this work matter?”**

Todd Holman, “I don’t think any of us as Champions or participants would have given the time (we have been in this for two years) if we didn’t care and have tremendous passion—not only for, our themes, but for the idea regarding the scale and the scope of this project. That is what matters, the ability [through the Resilient Region Planning process] to coalesce hundreds of voices and thoughts. And using the University of Minnesota and other professionals to organize the plan into chapters that we can read. It helps us pull a page from The Resilient Region Plan and bring it to our local unit of government or our local interested parties. Being able to say, ‘Here points A and B are the two or three things we can work on. Here is a transportation component or here is a housing component. Because so many people participated, we hope this information carries weight with the people who get to make these decisions—policy decisions on where a community is going and how—at least on the natural resources and land use front.”

**Bob McLean, “How does the work you have done as a Champion enrich the work in your day to day job?”**

Todd Holman, “In my work, we work at a scale that is statewide and even broader than that. This is a great project where I have had an opportunity to listen as an independent entity to a large region coalesce their ideas. So now we can take this document as a reasonable representation of what this region’s values are, what the priorities are, and what people think are a step one, two, and three. Potentially I can assist and bring capacity to common goals that overlap with my work, connecting to this in a way that is relevant and meaningful.”

**Bob McLean, “Any impact from your Champion work that you have experienced?”**

Todd Holman, “One of the outcomes I will hold as an example that I think is representative of several of the outcomes we hope for: I serve on a city council and we had a housing project come in, providing an opportunity to talk about a local city playing a role supporting a grant for funding. When I was able to hold up the Resilient



Region Plan and I was able to say, ‘Remember when we supported this as a resolution. This is one of the priorities that came out of that and it had to do with that particular type of housing.’ I could use that to back up and help lift up that priority from the city perspective. And the rest of the city council nodded too ‘that is a city goal and that is in line with what our whole region is looking at too.’ It gave credibility and gives the ability to actually implement something. So that is one example.”

**Bob McLean, “What is the role of the Ex Officio?”**

*Todd Holman, “The Ex Officio member was the chief cat herder in our bunch. All of the Champions in every theme area are very busy people. They have their day lives and their night lives. The Ex Officio member is the one who kept sending out reminders and prompts to keep everybody focused and to keep us in line with deadlines for getting reports in and to help protect the day of the Champion meetings. So in addition to their expertise and their input, that person kept us focused on the right time and place to get all the people together and the ideas shared.”*



**Bob McLean, “What are strengths and areas of improvement on the Ex Officio role?”**

*Todd Holman, “I really like the Ex Officio role in the process and going forward. Strengths: I think selecting people who have a strong organizational part to their core is critical. We have had that. So that was a strength, the people who were selected were really good people. Going forward, we can’t lose track of that. So in addition to their expertise that might have called them to the theme, we also need that organizational piece to come with them.”*

**Bob McLean, “What are the strengths and weaknesses of using a distributed leadership model to bring about change in the region?”**

*Todd Holman, “In my mind, one of the strengths is the diverse representation of expertise. I really enjoyed not just the leadership, but the diverse industry and theme connectivity—that was helpful throughout. The fact that the leadership team was able to meet on the side and keep their eye on the prize—to keep the plan and the implementation development front and center—we needed that core group to be doing that. Some of us that were off doing champion work or doing work within the themes may not have been as cognizant of the whole process, but the leadership team seemed to do that. They kept focused on the prize while the theme groups did their work.”*



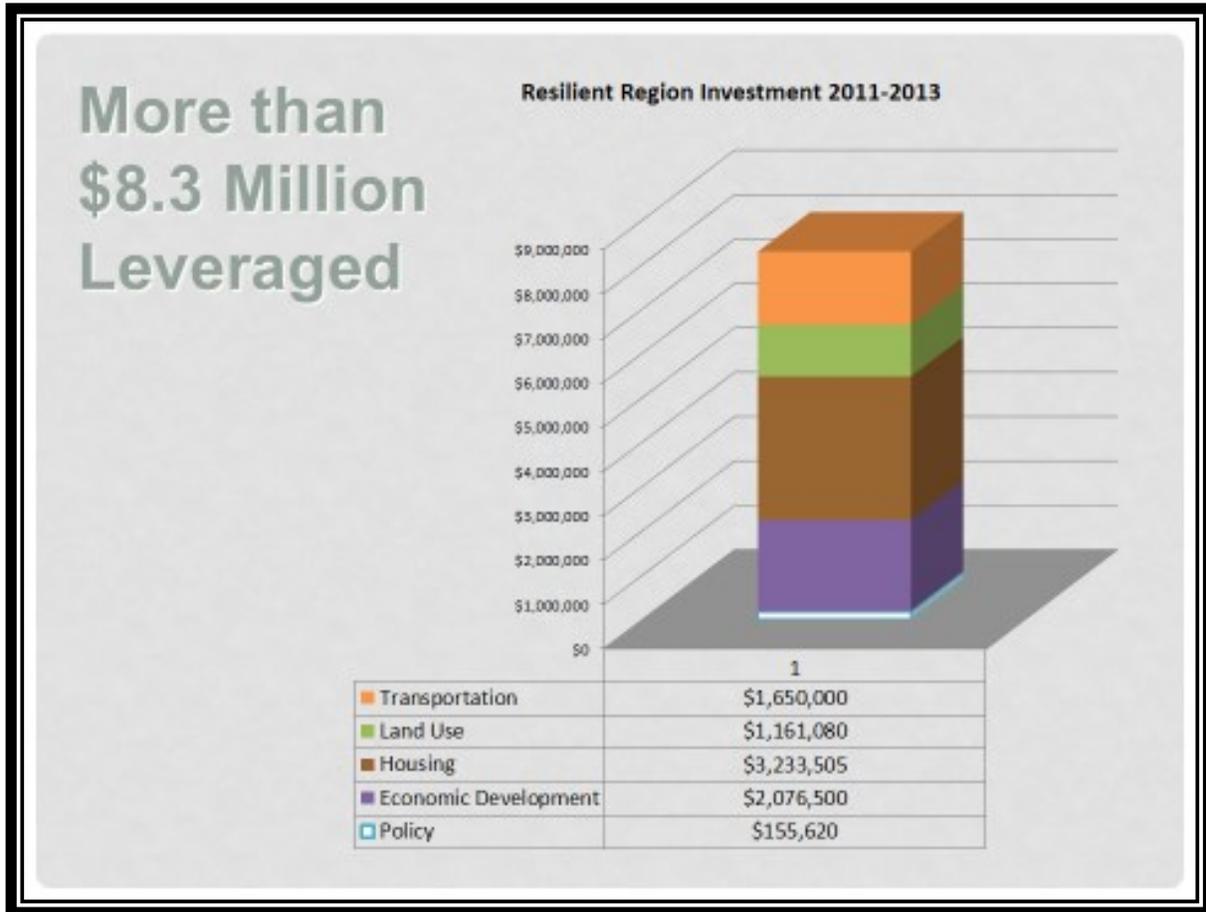
**Bob McLean, “How can we make the distributed leadership model even better?”**

*Todd Holman, “I think we have a bandwidth of what people expect out of any process. So some people are focused on the metrics—how do we measure what we got out of this. Some people really enjoy the process. So somewhere in that middle ground is where we really need to produce. We need to come to common ground on what is an acceptable outcome of this management process.*

*So in my mind I think it is important to determine: What is the metric we are shooting for, how do we know when we get there, and how do we measure it? So that will satisfy all the folks that want all the mathematics in the world and all the other people that really want it done right. As a participant it wasn’t really clear what that metric is, so it might be good to ask that question often: What is the metric for this model? What is the measure of success?*

**What has been the impact of using a Distributed Leadership Model to implement the Resilient Region Plan?**

More than \$8 million has been leveraged to support the work to accomplish the recommendations and action steps included in the Resilient Region Plan (as of October 2013).



**This does not include:**

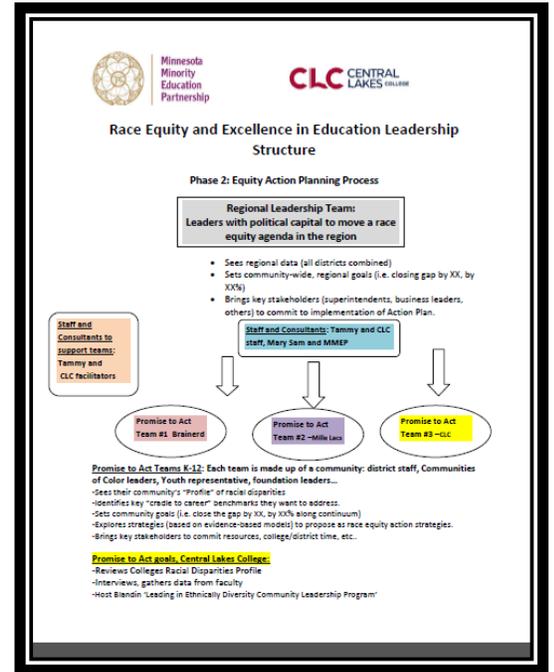
- **\$6,188,825** from Minnesota Housing/Investors for affordable housing project (Low Income Housing Tax Credit project) to Central MN Housing Partnership (CMHP).
- **\$3,200,000** of the \$13,500,000 from US Department of Labor to 3 colleges including Central Lakes College for manufacturing training/workforce development.
- **\$8,400,000** for Leech Lake area watershed foundation projects for sensitive shoreline project through LSOHC.
- **\$3,700,000** from a newly announced grant to CLC (as part of an \$18 million grant to help Minnesota Community & Technical Colleges develop and expand innovative training programs for high-demand fields).

**Applications in various stages of production include:** 1) Crow Wing County/Essentia/Cuyuna Regional Medical Center/Lakewood Health System Public/Private Community Case Management Project, 2) \$25 Million Statewide Manufacturing Innovation Engine Project, and 3) The Virtual Highway Broadband Expansion Project.

Highlights from the July 2013 Theme Champion Reports.

**Changing Populations Theme**

- **Senior transportation.** We have continued to gather information on existing senior transportation availability in the five-county region. We are doing this in partnership with the Transportation theme and will then be contacting our resource people to see if they can identify any additional services. This includes volunteer, government and private efforts. Once we understand what the gaps are we will be looking at possible models that could be used to fill those gaps.
- **Preventative health as a strategy to keep seniors independent and in their own homes.** We are staying informed about the various discussions that are happening within the health and connectivity themes that relate to prevention and using technology to provide monitoring and health services in people’s homes. As these strategies are ready to roll out we will be working to promote them throughout the region to those working with seniors.
- **Race equity and excellence in education leadership.** Mary Sam is working with school districts around the region to improve results and help erase the achievement gap that most impacts students of color as well as those of low income. This program helps them understand their racial disparities, identify key cradle-to-career benchmarks that they want to address, and set community goals for reaching those benchmarks.



**Housing & Affordable Housing Themes**

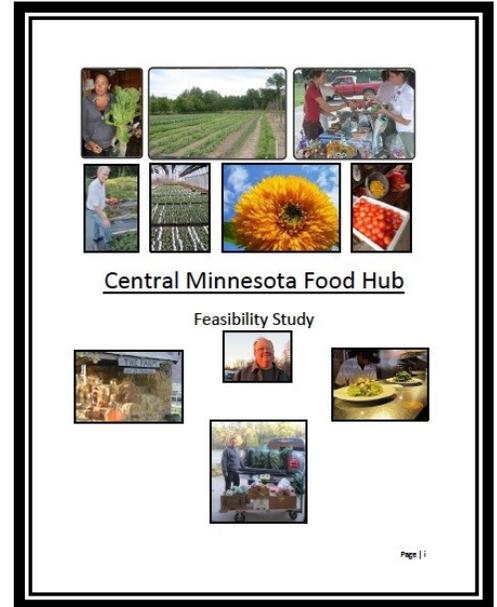
- Bergman is submitting a proposal for funding to create a website to allow landlords to list available rentals in the area.
- Supporting adoption of green/resilient policies for housing: William Mitchell Community Development Clinic put together model ordinances for the Resilient Region Plan.
- The Brainerd HRA/City of Brainerd received \$715,000 for a housing and commercial rehabilitation program for SE Brainerd from the Department of Employment and Economic Development Small Cities Development Program.
- The Brainerd HRA through the Healthy Community Partnership Housing Task Force purchased a home in 2012 at 509 E Street that was dilapidated. We demolished the house and cleared the lot. In July, we will be selling the lot to the Lakes Area Habitat for Humanity who will be working with the Women Build project to build a new single-family home for a qualified family.
- CMHP received an award for the city of Staples for small cities funding through the Department of Employment and Economic Development for commercial and owner-occupied rehabilitation. That amount is for \$765,000.
- CMHP received an award for the city of Deerwood for small cities funding through the Department of Employment and Economic Development for owner-occupied rehabilitation. That amount is for \$295,200.
- CMHP is working on breaking ground on Sprucewood Townhomes in Baxter (34 units of affordable housing new construction rental). Those units are anticipated to break ground in August 2013. The total development cost is \$6,188,825.



**Economic Engine Theme**

Development and accomplishments of Local Food HUB “SPROUT” (Sustainable Products Raised on Ur Turf =SPROUT Inc.)

- Harvested and sold nearly 100,000 pounds of locally grown commodities to regional institutions; school districts, hospitals, restaurants and more.
- Inclusion of Amish and Latino growers who have not had access to local markets
- 40 local (typically low-income) growers are now part of the SPROUT grower consortium.
- Feasibility studies for 3 processing facilities within our region are underway, all with unique qualities that fill needs and build on assets.
- SIDE DISH food truck travels regional remote rural food deserts and provides chef demonstrations of under-appreciated commodities. The majority of the food for the Food Truck comes from the local farmers markets and SPROUT.
- Solar Thermal High Tunnels installed at low income grower sites to provide 365 days of growing and season extension. Data being collected by solar thermal firm: Rural Renewable Energy Alliance.
- Hosted training for 25 growers on good agricultural practices, led by the University of MN.
- SPROUT deliver truck is BIO- fueled with diesel and canola oil, installed by Central Lakes College mechanics class. Used oil comes from CLC campus.
- Newly established “Health and Recreation Alliance” a consortium of 4 non-profits including Mount Ski Gull, the Lakeshore Conservation (gun club), the Gull Lake Yacht Club and SPROUT. The program is targeted to soldier families and provides healthy activity and a membership to a SPROUT - “CSA” community supported agriculture annual share.
- Policy and Research conducted through the Resilient Region Policy Tool-kit.
- USDA Rural Development has asked SPROUT and Region Five to participate in a national pilot with 4 other rural food HUBS throughout the nation.
- Hunger Free Minnesota is working with the SPROUT team to identify a pilot site for a hospital or clinic located food shelf.
- The Little Falls School District is working with Central Lakes College and National Joint Powers Alliance to understand the value of high school agricultural instruction that is CLC credit based.



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## Enter the Champions: Lessons Learned from the Distributed Leadership Model

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Using the Rural Minnesota Assistance Program (RMAP-Micro Lending) for financing projects:

- Long Prairie MN–Value added business package with the local food theme including growth of the local foods, packaging, distribution and sales using the Latino heritage as owners, workers, and promoters in the Long Prairie, Todd County area.
- Wadena MN–Using the value added business package with a bakery theme. A new business start-up in a closed bakery facility. Embracing the local food theme for the local growth, packaging, distribution, and sales of product. This format also includes diversification into providing a home base for the local seniors' in-home food delivery program.
- Menahga MN–Using a unique existing value added food footprint of an existing local foods grocery business, the addition of a health bakery goods extension of that business allows this established business the opportunity to expand into a publically requested diversification of local foods in the Wadena County Area.

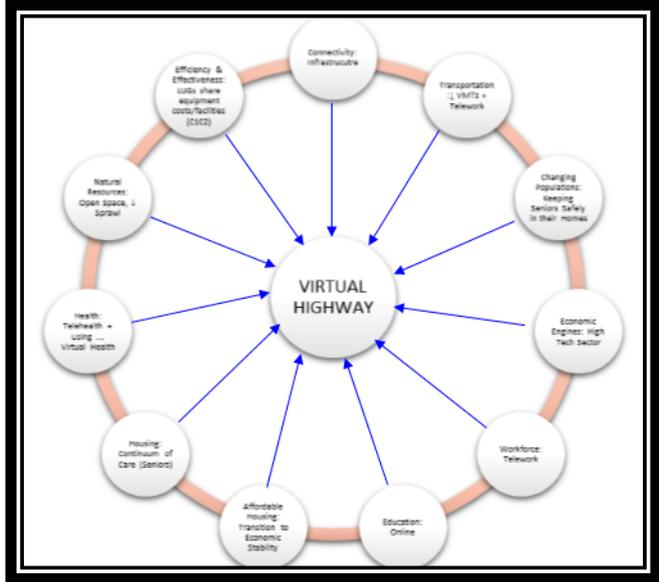
Five Wings Arts Council has worked to establish a comprehensive list of all regional cultural and arts organization in efforts to being communication with local units of government and community leaders as well as increase community engagement.

Two new champions have been added to help with this work: Vicki Chepulis (Grants Coordinator) Five Wings Arts Council and Arlene Jones (Owner Operator) The Farm at St. Mathias and (Manager) SPROUT Food Hub.



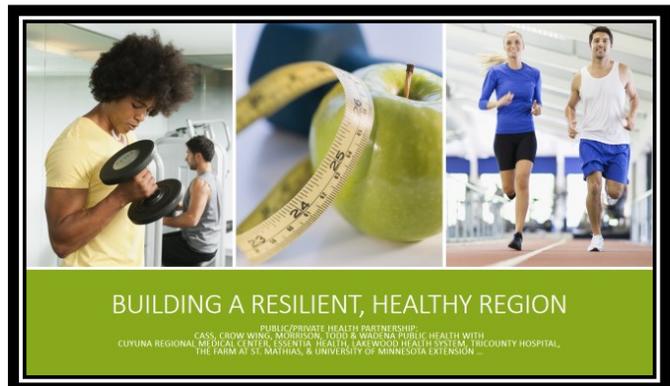
**Connectivity/Broadband Theme**

- Submitted (via Region V) a full grant application to Blue Cross Blue Shield for ~\$100,000 to perform a Health Impact Analysis on building the virtual highway. Side benefits to this effort include:
  - Creating a process to identify broadband gaps, research potential broadband applications and tools, and develop sustainable business plans.
  - Blandin Foundation has agreed to provide technical support via Bill Coleman—this is a huge asset!
  - Have brought Maureen Ideaker aboard as a supporter and advisor. She is a member of the Minnesota Broadband Task Force and a trailblazer for using telemedicine at Tri-County in Wadena many years ago.
  - Beginning to create a cohesive rural broadband policy message.
  - Made further refinements to White Paper which can be used for other grant applications.
- PCs for People–In collaboration with the Shop (Youth Center in Brainerd) Region Five was instrumental in drafting a \$6,000 grant application to the Best Buy Foundation to support innovative ways to integrate technology into the lives of disadvantaged youth. The grant was written with the assistance of Shelby Wilds, a volunteer intern who is on break from Gustavus Adolphus College. Shelby has a passion for social justice issues that affect the Millennial generation. Her assistance in areas of grant writing, coordination and marketing will be valuable as the program transition from Region Five to the Shop. If awarded, this grant will assist the Shop in taking over the operations of PCs for People.



**Healthcare Theme**

- Virtual Highway Project submitted to Blue Cross Blue Shield for HIA grant (collaboration between Healthcare and Connectivity Champions) with many other champions serving as members of the Virtual Highway Task Force.
- Crow Wing County/Essentia Health/Cuyuna Regional Medical Center Community Care White Paper written. Next step will be to meet with Joann Birkholz (CEO Medica Foundation) per her request to learn more about the model.
- CEDs application submitted to continue to build a public/private health collaborative across the five-county region was selected as a vital project.
- A new partnership between Essentia and Crow Wing County has resulted in a collaboration to jointly support a SHIP Coordinator.
- Two new Champions have been added to assist with the work of the health theme: Adam Rees (CEO) Essentia Health and Mike Larson (COO) Essentia Health.





**Natural Resource and Land Use Theme**

• Crow Wing County Water Plan up for public review: Model adopted by MHB, and described as the “gold standard” by BWSR Board for future local water plan models. MHB suggested all eight member counties adopt the same format/model. This is a major change toward “watershed based” planning rather than geo-political boundary administration and implementation. Several other counties are in the queue for water plan updates now.

• The Mississippi Headwaters Board BWSR-CWF grant planning is near completion. Legislation for funding was approved and now MHB is considering adding back an Executive Director. This fall 2013 a strategic planning effort will look at new opportunities based on the above outcomes.

- Baxter Comprehensive Plan process begins April 3, 2013: Now selected Stantec as the consultant. Should begin the process by mid-August.
- Cuyuna State Trail (NR/LU, Economic Development, Health/active living). Bonding bill effort to secure funding for the “book ends” of the trail (2014 session). CWC planning for the crossing of Mississippi River Northwood’s project.
- Baxter and Brainerd cooperated with CWC SWCD for Central Region Sustainable Development Partnership Grant: Whiskey Creek watershed assessment: storm water focus.
- Leech Lake Area Watershed Foundation and the counties of Cass, Hubbard, Crow Wing, and Aitkin are expanding the sensitive shore line protection project with a second LSOHC proposal for \$8.4 million. This proposal continues the work to acquire donated and acquired shoreland easements. Critical shoreline habitat is the focus combining the DNR sensitive shore assessment with the new Cisco refuge lakes plan from DNR. If successful this should represent 7000-feet of shoreland on Roosevelt Lake and 9000-feet of shoreland on Little Boy Lake. This second proposal includes integration of forest protection within lake watersheds to reach a metric of 75% of the watershed protected.



### Transportation Theme

- Contacted each transit provider to gather coverage maps. Still working to create one transit converge map for region.
- Continue to act in supporting role to other themes.
- Accountability, transparency and communication: presented at conference in Walker on Active Transportation projects in the region. Continued work through CTG grant in Active Living and Active Transportation initiatives in region. Recently developed yearly work plan for Active Transportation.
- Continues work around bicycle initiatives in region, including bike rodeos, bike lane and marking designation (Staples & Brainerd), Trail development (Brainerd & Walker).

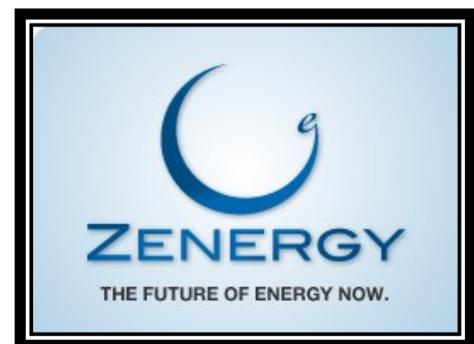


### Energy Theme

- The REPoCC planning efforts continue! Exciting new activities include: We are developing a collaboration with Bio Business Alliance (BBAM). Through the REPoCC planning process, we have identified ways to prevent duplication of efforts and discovered that BBAM has already developed an “Innovation Engine,” which is a key piece of what the PoCC would do—help entrepreneurs develop their business concept, prepare to present it to investors, and then connect them with investors.

• Together, we and some other organizations are looking to apply for a large, \$25 million statewide manufacturing initiative that would, among a multitude of other things, roll out their Innovation Engine on a statewide basis. As currently planned, the grant application would also facilitate opportunities for manufacturers to access dollars for talent development and R&D. All of the grant dollars would be focused on rural areas. The NOFA has not been released yet. Minnesota just recently hosted the ONLY federal “listening session” in a rural area. USDA is funding two out of six of the grants, and they of course want to fund grants focused in rural areas. In other words, I think we have a pretty good shot at getting this award.

- Zenergy continues to keep busy installing mainly solar PV for a mix of mostly local small business/residential (generally 2-10 kW), and the larger (10-80 kW) DNR-type projects. We have shied away from solar water simply because “plumbing” is less within our “core competencies” than electrical. We did a big push on solar thermal air in the past and plan to launch another soon promoting the new solar thermal rebate! We have also shied away from wind because, frankly, we have found it to be a lot of hassle for what it’s worth—especially around here where the wind resource isn’t as good as down south or out west. However, we haven’t totally given up and still work with some companies, such as the one we had speak at our CERTs tour way back when, who are trying to develop a “better mousetrap.”



- Solar Ventilation for Poultry: RREAL is courting the regional turkey producers to find an ideal site for the technology. Partner TBD soon.
- Solar Thermal for Schools: Many schools have been analyzed around the region, but we have several more elementary schools to look at.
- Growing season extension through Solar Thermal: Installations at the Farm at St. Matthias starting in a couple weeks.
- Small Wind Turbines became a semi-finalist in the Clean Tech Open.
- Xcel Energy grant regarding the Wind Turbine project at CLC is pending. Should be decided soon.
- East Side Glass in St Cloud, MN was awarded the Solar Rewards and Made in MN bonus incentives for a 40 kilowatt solar array to be installed on the roof of their building in St Cloud.
- Small Wind Turbines has established a manufacturing partner for its breakthrough generators in New Ulm, MN. Windings Inc., a 65-year-old manufacturer of motors and generators, will be building the initial orders of the new generators, which could be as large as 1000 units.



**Efficiency and Effectiveness Theme**

**Aggregate Resource Mapping**

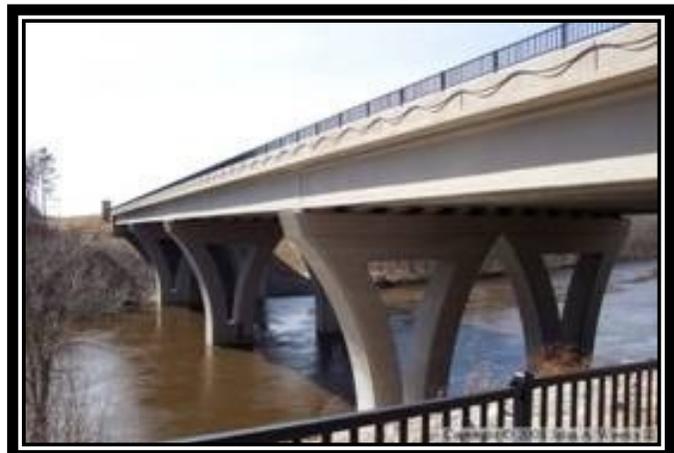
- Todd, Wadena, Cass, Beltrami, and Hubbard Counties. Each county has agreed by County Resolution to provide a cash match and in-kind service of time to support the current proposal to the Legislative Citizens Commission on Minnesota’s Resources that seeks funding for the project of mapping the county’s construction aggregate resources. The total request is: \$971,980.

**Minnesota Rural Water Association**

- Are there potential opportunities to expand on the Blandin Lightspeed grant by using the equipment to stream training to other county or municipal departments. In discussions with MN Rural Waters, a potential exists to stream their Nov 6<sup>th</sup> finance officers meeting to those who cannot be present. Topics include municipal bonding, DEED, Rural development, MDH and Rural MN Bonding.

**County Intern BMP**

- The development of a work plan for a student research assistant to provide policy, program, and process mapping for counties across the region has been postponed. The participating counties did not have an agreed upon work plan. Potentially reconsider this project at a later time.





**Education and Workforce Development Theme:**

- *FastTRAC* - Implementation of a region FastTRAC program in manufacturing to engage low-skill adults in a career development program. Partners include Brainerd Adult Basic Education (ABE), Central Lakes College (CLC) and Rural Minnesota CEP, Inc. (RMCEP). This is the first part of a two-year grant from DEED. Fifty adults will participate over a 2-year program. RMCEP/Brainerd ABE/CLC—Completing training with the first cohort of students in a manufacturing FastTRAC career pathway. RMCEP starting a second cohort in August 2013 using the newly developed DOL TAACCT curriculum.

- *NCRC Certificates* - Implementation of introduction of the National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC) at Central Lakes College and area businesses. Goals to include the NCRC in all technical education offerings at CLC. A cumulative total of over 100 businesses in the five-county region now recognize the NCRC as a valuable tool for recruitment and in employee development. DEED received a \$78,000 grant from Otto Bremer Foundation to expand the NCRC training and tracking through their “Talent Community” concept. Rural MN CEP has integrated the NCRC into the high school setting with over 70 NCRC awarded to Brainerd High School seniors. RMCEP has plans to expand BCRC services to 10–12 schools in the five-county area.

- *Career Advising* - Implementation of the Brainerd High School Career/NCRC Advisor. This is a two-year project to introduce high school students to careers. This is a collaborative project between ISD 181, the Bremer Foundation, The Initiative Foundation and Rural Minnesota CEP, Inc. (RMCEP). This project will provide the foundation for a better career pathways for high school student to higher education. Through a Bremer grant, DEED is planning for an additional five schools in the five-county area in the next year.

- Bridges Career Academies and Workplace Connection championed by Brainerd Lakes Chambers and regional K-12 districts are being expanded, and additional high schools are being added through a \$250,000 Bremer grant obtained by the Chamber to expand Bridges Academies and Workplace Connection. Developing camps include: I.T, Farm/Ag, Hospitality, Engineering and Manufacturing Camps. Other new initiatives: Educators in the Workplace (Oct. 2013) and Business in the Schools. Bridges Career Academies has 15 school districts resulting in a total of 67 academies. For the first time 125 seniors received green honor cords and certificates of completion for Bridges Academies (spring 2013).





- BLADC’s Retired Exec Program and the CLC Lifelong learning center support the goal to capitalize on experienced professionals to mentor others.
- *Central MN Manufacturing Alliance* - A group has started in Central MN to aid manufacturers in development of a workforce to aid the local manufacturing sector. The Brainerd Lakes Chamber has headed up the group, with partners including Central Lakes College, area manufactures, and Rural Minnesota CEP, Inc. We are looking at providing not only open houses in select manufacturing companies this fall, but also considering an event involving a reception for elected officials at one of our facilities.
- Tech services work supports the action step of concentration of a specific economic cluster. Lakes Area Chamber, BLAEDC, CLC, and RMCEP are working on development of an IT initiative to increase the number of qualified IT professionals in the area. DEED is beginning to work on some teleworks initiatives that will support tech services work.
- *Welding Training* - A Welding Training Course (160 hours) will be developed and offered in the five-county area. This is a program made possible through a grant from the Minnesota Jobs Skills



Partnership (MJSP). Partners include: Rural Minnesota CEP (RMCEP), Minnesota State Colleges and Universities, M-State, and area manufacturers. This program aids low income families with free training to enter a high demand occupation that is growing in central Minnesota. RMCEP has scheduled the 160-hour welding course to be held in August 2013 in the Little Falls Development Center.

- *DOL/MFG Grant*—Central Lakes College (CLC) is starting to develop the \$13.1 million advanced manufacturing career program made possible through a TAACCT, Department of Labor Grant. Plans include curriculum development this year, with enrollment starting next year 2013–2014. Advanced Manufacturing Grant Director and various personnel are in place. Customized training representative will begin making business visits immediately to identify training needs. New advanced manufacturing programs in mold making; tool & die; robotics, and welding have been approved to start at CLC Fall 2013. Advanced certificates in machine tool and in robotics automation will also be offered in the next academic year to enhance the skills of area manufacturing employees and to provide additional pathways for area manufacturing students. Advanced lab equipment to support these new programs is being purchased through the grant. The first Mediated Tele-Presence (MT) equipment units were delivered and installed in June 2013. These allow shared training and distance learning opportunities for area manufacturers by connecting the 4 college DOL Grant partners to 15 manufacturing companies in the central Minnesota region.



When asked, at Meeting #4, a full year after we first began, why champions remained at the table, their words were inspirational. Everyone also made a commitment at the end of the meeting (where it was safe, in private) to continue for another year. We even were able to bring on board five new members. **So all in all the Distributed Leadership Model worked well: It continued to inspire inspirational community leaders and the proof was in the pudding—important work was getting done!**

**Summary of responses to question by Chair, Tim Houle, What keeps you coming back?**



*Tim Houle, Administrator, Crow Wing County, “Who are you—where you—what keeps you coming back? I am still impressed by the **number of people**. The **return on investment** and the fact that so many of you are still in the room is impressive to me.*



*Janelle Riley, CEO Syvantis Technologies, “What attracts me to the Resilient Region Connectivity team is that it relates, tangentially, to my business. It is also interesting to see what is happening and what is **accomplished in our region**.”*

*Pam Mahling, Corporate Resource Specialist, West Central Telephone Association, “We are located in Sebeka and provide fiber to homes. We are committed to rural lifestyle and rural Minnesota. We are wanting to be a part of anything that is trying to get at the root of problems and solve problems. I love the **efficiency of the way things are getting done**.”*

*Jason Edens, President, Rural Renewable Energy Alliance, “The Renewable Energy Alliance includes solar design firms, solar heat, electric, and wind. What makes us unique is providing solar assistance to low-income households on energy fuel poverty. **The vast majority of our population takes energy for granted. They don’t realize the impact on economic development, connectivity, health. We all realize energy is a part of our region’s success.**”*



*Molly Zins, Executive Director, University of Minnesota Central Minnesota Sustainable Development Partnership, “The Title of our organization University of Minnesota Central Minnesota Sustainable Development Partnership—the title is important. It does connect us to the work of the Resilient Region. There were a number in my organization who for a number of years have been a partner in this work. I am lucky enough to continue some of that work. My focus is how to **connect University resources with Central MN to foster sustainable development**.”*

*Bob Shaffer, Instructor, Central Lakes College, “This process has been a joy and I love being immersed in this kind of environment-it has raised my IQ. At the Ag Center we are involved in the Distributed Energy concept raising our own energy crops, processing them and utilizing the fuel for our farm operations. I love being able to **transfer this technology to the rest of the region/farms** and helping them become sustainable in terms of energy and local foods. I’ve been sucked into this process and enjoy where it is taking us.”*



*Cheryal Hills, Executive Director of Region Five Development Commission (R5DC), “It is interesting I was trained in nursing. And when I was in nursing those there felt the world revolved around healthcare. Those in housing believe the world revolved around housing. We have come to realize how connected we are in all these disciplines. Not just economic vitality but also as environmental stewards. **Our environment is our lifeline—and we are learning we can have our cake and eat it too. We can have economic vitality—and maintain our quality of life.**”*

*Deanna Hemmesch, Executive Director, Central Minnesota Housing Partnership (CMHP), “Seeing the project like **Sprucewood, a 6-Million-Dollar-Project come to life. We submitted that application three times. It was the third time approved because the people around this table (Jason, Jennifer, Todd) helped us strengthen the proposal from a multidisciplinary way. It matches the Resilient Region Plan and I am excited do more.**”*



*Jennifer Bergman, Executive Director, Brainerd HRA and Crow Wing County HRA, “What keeps me coming back—we provide housing, we do redevelopment—and to do that successfully we need to think about all the pieces to make our project successful. I have been most impressed with the people here **and the connections I have made.**”*

*Janie Weston, Executive Director, Greater Lakes Association of Realtors, “I work with the realtors and want to **help make network connections.** The information from this group I share with realtors so they can step out of the box.”*



*Colleen Faacks, Executive Director, Mid-MN Builders Association, “Ditto—I come back because **of the cross reference, collaboration, of people at the table.** It is neat to see the work and efforts—the collaborating done—and what we are looking at doing.”*





*Amy McLain, Board Member, Happy Dancing Turtle, “I was raised here, I am raising my kids here. I come because I care about this area.”*



*Lynn Hunt, Executive Director, Resilient Living Council, “We are focused on housing and energy.*

*Here we are able to focus in on that, **we are able to see the collaboration** and that all is very exciting.”*



*Tim Houle, Administrator, Crow Wing County, “**The disciplines coming together.** This part of the organization is thriving. There are other parts in this region who are not thriving. All boats have to rise. I have been reading Margaret Wheatly Leadership in New Science, where she writes about homeostasis within the body organization, so one system does not stamp out the other system. My own reason for being here and to remain is that this has to work and it has produced results—tangible dollars; \$6,000,000 is real tangible. So when I measure the reason for coming, I can measure it on the esoteric and the tangible, fundamentally by both.”*

*Mel Radermacher, (R5DC), “I love to **see the passion** everyone has here for the whole group and for the whole region.”*



*Mary Sam, Director of Intercultural Services, Diversity & Tribal Relations, Central Lakes College, “My title shows that I work with technical and disability programs; cultural competency; Indian studies.*



*With Mille Lac’s Band of Ojibwa—like Cheryal this is about quality of life—part of my commitment it to both quality of life and equity for all. **We have some work to do.** It won’t be done at CLC at schools alone. We need to partner and become concerned about closing achievement gaps and race equity gaps. Some of these conversations are scary and hard and courageous. We are not even sure how to talk to each other; appreciate we can talk about hard data and folks in our community.*

Dan Frank, Senior Program Manager for Community & Economic Development, Initiative Foundation, “The main thing I enjoy about this group is that **basically it does work**. We all jump in and everyone does their thing. It is neat to see the silos broken down. I am not sure of another area that is successful in bringing all these people and all these areas of expertise together—connections and crossover is so evident when we are together.”



Merritt Bussiere, University of Minnesota, Extension Educator, “I am new to the area. My service area is region 5 plus 3 counties. So far we have become active with the connectivity efforts, we are also active with the local foods effort. The reason I got invited to be part of the Resilient Region Plan, and why I am here is because **it is a framework for my work**. It is a way to target applied research I do around region.”



Tim Houle, Civil Engineer, Widseth, Smith, & Nolting, “My area is the transportation theme. Why I am still here? We have all been involved in a lot of studies and plans. The frustration is the implementation. **I like this implementation part - that is why I am here.**”

Joe Schulte, Business & Loan Developer, R5DC, “I love the challenge of putting puzzle pieces together. **What keeps me coming back is the collaboration—the intellectual partners.**”

Joe Schulte, Business & Loan Developer, R5DC, “I love the challenge of putting



Rick Utech, Executive Director, Todd County Economic Development Corporation, “As a lender, and part of the SBDC office, **the reason I am here is what happens in this room—all of this is economic development!** I am picking up great information and great networking on so many different facets. Thank you!”



Todd Holman, Program Director, The Nature Conservancy, “The first chunk of my work is with the Nature Conservancy; in the evening I am a commissioner on the Baxter City Council. I represent the Natural Resources and Development Patterns Theme. **I have been the benefactor and can testify for the value of regional awareness. It has been very helpful in our work. I leave here energized and informed. I leave here with more than I bring. I thank you all for that.**”



*John Sumption, President, Sumption Environmental, “I was a former engineer for Cass County. I am also a local grower of organic food. I helped with the Crow Wing County and other Local Units of Government update ordinances and zoning maps. **What keeps me coming back, selfishly, I invested 33 years in preserving natural resources. I am hooked on that. I think this group stands the best chance I have seen to truly make that a regional effort.**”*

*John Solheim, CEO, Cuyuna Regional Medical Center, “We are located in Crosby. **The mission of our organization is to improve the health of residents. I can’t accomplish that in a vacuum; we need to collaborate with the healthcare providers across the region.**”*



*Tim Rice, CEO, Lakewood Health Systems, “One of the neat things about this—you get so busy in your own profession, your own work each day; just the exposure to all the different perspectives broadens my awareness. **Healthcare systems in this region want to make a difference. The opportunity to get together is exciting.**”*

*Jani Wiebolt, retired COO, Essentia SMJC, “I worked at Essentia for 30 years at the St. Joe Medical Center. **Improving community health is what brought me to the table.** There are a lot of good projects that go beyond narrow scope. **The 11 themes provide a format and structure to network across the disciplines.**”*

*Adam Rees, CEO, Essentia Health, “I am new to this region. I am here because of the pushing by Bob and Jani. **It is really impressive the depth and breadth and level of commitment!** I am originally from the Boston area. Have spent part of my career mid-west in rural communities—hospital administration. What impresses me about this region is the willingness to come together, deep values. There is not one theme area report that does not impact quality of life and health wellness. It is interesting when I listen to all of you, all of you value what is at the heart of St. Joes, all the reports reflected justice, fairness for all, hospitality, good steward of resources, quality. This is*

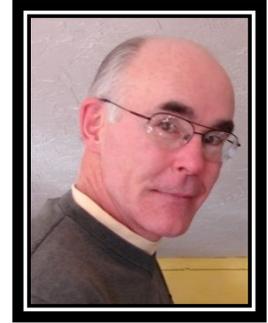


*impressive and I appreciate this opportunity be part of this work.”*



*Mark Larson, I am the new COO at Essentia SMJC, “When I was in Red Wing, Goodhue County I worked on a number of community collaboratives. **I am very impressed with what I see here; you are second to none. I am impressed. I hope to be a key player going forward.**”*

*Bob McLean, COO, Hunt Utilities Group. “What brings me back? **Collectively we are getting things done.** To actually get things done and on top of that to see the momentum. It is not just a feel-good project. There is still so much momentum and magnetism. People around the state and beyond—they know what we are doing—and that it is being done collectively and collaboratively. If we keep working collaboratively we **have a tremendous opportunity because we are delivering on so many fronts with momentum. That is a natural draw for all of us to come back!**”*



*Andrea Lauer, Mayor of Royalton, “The plan and implementation—we have been part of planning and planning and planning. **What keeps me coming back is this group gets stuff done. Every one of the 11 themes touches my city in some way that I can take back to my city. It is an invaluable learning experience and I can’t thank you enough for that.**”*

*Don Hickman, Vice President, Initiative Foundation, “I love rural character. **We have to collaborate and work together. We have 80% who are low income. There are not enough resources to waste; therefore we are required to work together.**”*



*Tad Erickson, Community Planner, R5DC, “**The most fascinating is the group and the process. The scope and scale, and potential impact of the virtual highway project. That is what keeps me coming back.**”*

*Larry Lundblad, Central Lakes College, “For a community to survive it needs an educated workforce. As companies look to regions to relocate to expand, they want to know how educated is the current workforce. Also what opportunities does the region have for further education and training? We are at the table with the Resilient Region Initiative because obviously we believe in what we do. We are educators, we know that jobs of the future require more education. We want to be there so we can link and know what the needs of the region are so we can provide the programs to do that.*



*“Regional planning and integration of efforts is in everyone’s best interest. Integration of plans developed in the Resilient Region framework for Central Minnesota is one of the best collective efforts I’ve have encountered my role supporting Work Force Development” Craig Nathan, Regional Director, Rural MN Concentrated Employment Program (CEP).*

*Cheryl Lee Hills, Executive Director, R5DC, “This model has been recognized on a national level including by The Presidents Rural Council. Stacey and I went out to present last fall. I have been invited back this fall again. **Federal and state partners ask, ‘How are you doing this?’ Our work is extremely unique; congratulations to all!**”*

**Indeed—congratulations to all and THANK YOU Bush Foundation! Your support is making a critical difference in Building a Resilient Region!**

## Appendix: Acronyms

ABE. Adult Basic Education.

BBAM. Bio Business Alliance of Minnesota.

BLAEDC. Brainerd Lakes Area Economic Development Corporation.

BMP. Best Management Practices.

BRIDGES. Bridges Career Academies and Workplace Connection.

BWSR. Board of Water and Soil Resources.

CEDS. Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies.

CEO. Chief Executive Officer.

CERTS. Clean Energy Resource Teams.

CLC. Central Lakes College.

COO. Chief Operating Officer.

CSAs. Community Supported Agriculture.

CTC. Consolidated Telephone Company.

CTG. Community Transformation Grant.

CWC. Crow Wing County.

CWC SWCD. Crow Wing County Soil and Water Conservation District.

CWF. Clean Water Fund.

DEED. Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development.

DNR. Department of Natural Resources.

DOL. United States Department of Labor.

DOT. United States Department of Transportation.

ED. Executive Director.

EDA. Economic Development Agency.

EDO. Economic Development Organizations.

EPA. United States Environmental Protection Agency.

FASTTRAC. University of Southern California's Entrepreneur Program.

HRA. Housing and Redevelopment Authority.

HS. High School.

HUD. United States Department of Housing and Urban Development.

IEP. Individualized Learning Plan.

IF. Initiative Foundation.

LSOHC. Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council.

MDH. Minnesota Department of Health.

MHB. Mississippi Headwaters Board.

MJSP. Minnesota Job Skills Partnership.

M-State. Minnesota State Community and Technical College, with campuses in Detroit Lakes, Fergus Falls, Moorhead, and Wadena, and online eCampus program.

MT. Mediated Tele-Presence.

NCEDA. North Central Economic Development Association.

NCRC. National Career Readiness Certificate.

NJPA. National Joint Powers Alliance.

NOFA. Notice of Funding Available.

NR/LU. Natural Resources/Land Use.

PV. Photovoltaic panels.

R&D. Research and Development.

R5DC. Region Five Development Commission.

REPoCC. Renewable Energy Proof of Concept Center.

RMAP. Rural Minnesota Assistance Program.

RMCEP. Rural MN CEP. Rural Minnesota Concentrated Employment Program.

RREAL. Rural Renewable Energy Alliance.

SBDC. Small Business Development Center.

SPROUT. Sustainable Products Raised On Ur Turf.

TAACCT. Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training.

TBD. To Be Determined.

USDA. United States Department of Agriculture.

WCTA. West Central Telephone Association.



***Building a Resilient Region: Enter the Champions-Lessons Learned from the Distributed Leadership Model***

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