



**Arrowhead Regional
Development Commission**

2021 Annual Report

“Building Bridges”



A MESSAGE FROM ARDC'S EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:

2021 was a year of evolution at ARDC. Slowly, it bridged the gap between the pre-pandemic era and (hopefully) post-pandemic era. Some staff returned to the office, most others chose a “hybrid” situation where working from home is an option. The people of the Region started talking about traditional planning projects again and ARDC responded – “rebuilding bridges” if you will.



Keeping up with national trends, outdoor recreation came to the forefront. Trail planning kept us busy with work being done for the cities of Tower, Nashwauk, and Ely; the North Country National Trail; and the Gitchi-Gami Trail Association. A new section of the Gitchi-Gami State Trail was constructed, including a beautiful bridge over the Fall River near Grand Marais.

ARDC helped many small businesses in the Region bridge the gap between mandated closure and reopening their doors by lending out over \$3 million in urgent loans.

Transportation planning also had our attention, including working with Minnesota and Wisconsin to begin planning the future of the Blatnik Bridge.

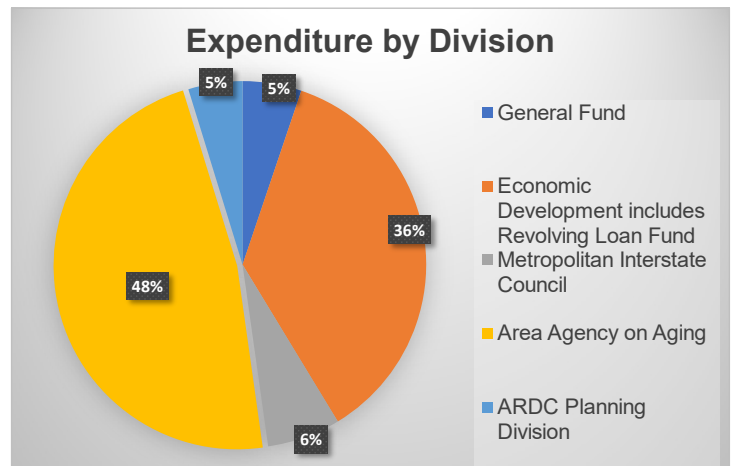
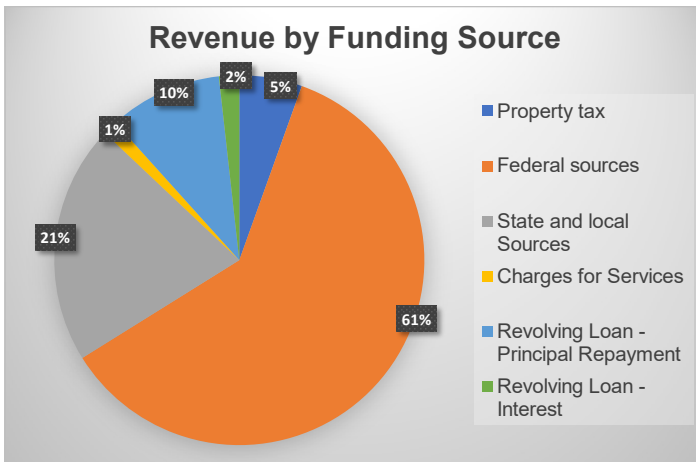
Services for older Americans also evolved from a COVID-19 focus back to our more traditional duties of advising seniors and caregivers and planning programs.

ARDC is a unique, somewhat fluid organization. That flexibility is what has carried us through the pandemic and helped us meet the needs of the region. We are proud of our work in 2021.



~Andy Hubley

The charts below reflect unaudited amounts regarding ARDC’s FY 2021 expenditures and revenues. To view this information in greater detail and other information pertaining to ARDC’s financial summary, please visit: ardc.org/finance.



ARDC’s Revolving Loan Fund

The ARDC Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) supports business activities for which credit is not otherwise available. The objective of the program is to stimulate private investment to create and maintain productive, permanent employment through the establishment of new businesses or the expansion of existing businesses. Financing provided in conjunction with this program is intended to complement – not compete with – private lending institutions. As such, securing private sector involvement is a critical factor in qualifying for this program.

In July 2020, ARDC undertook the administration, marketing, distribution, and collection of a Federal EDA Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act Revolving Loan Fund. Upon developing a plan, ARDC outlined terms and processes for distributing up to \$3.88 million in loans to businesses and non-profits in the seven-county region under the expedited time frame of two years, to respond to borrowing needs due to COVID-19. ARDC disbursed 49 CARES Act RLF Loans between January and December 2021, totaling \$3,130,000 and retaining 275 jobs in the region.

To learn more about ARDC’s Revolving Loan Fund programs, visit: ardc.org/rlf.



2021 was a busy, productive year for the ARDC Planning Division. In addition to the new Revolving Loan Fund, staff focused on the following several areas.

Transportation: Our partnership with MnDOT continued, as ARDC led community transportation plans in International Falls, Fond du Lac, and the Highway 169 Corridor in eastern Itasca County. We continued to provide staff to the Gitchi-Gami Trail Association and the North Shore Scenic Drive Committee, helping to coordinate projects and events. Our largest transportation effort is the Arrowhead Regional Transportation Coordinating Council (RTCC). ARDC facilitates this organization and works to implement new transit projects. In concert with that, ARDC started the Local Human Services Transit Plan. Safe Routes to School planning occurred in several communities, as did Scenic Byway planning. Finally, ARDC continued to facilitate the Northeast Minnesota Area Transportation Partnership, an organization that works to fairly distribute federal transportation funding in the region.

Economic Development: On behalf of the Federal Economic Development Administration, ARDC serves as the Economic Development District in northeast Minnesota. As part of those duties, we coordinate funding applications for major infrastructure and planning projects. We started the year with EDA CARES Act awards for public works infrastructure to Duluth and Grand Rapids for \$6.4 million. Several types of projects have been awarded funds recently, including projects in Cohasset, Grand Rapids, and Grand Portage. 2021 saw the development of our latest Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). This seemingly Herculean effort involves the development of goals and action steps for the improvement of the Region's economy. We engaged with nearly 250 people from across the region through 24 public meetings. We also presented multiple times to more than 100 people and organizations about EDA funding opportunities. Aiding in this effort was the Arrowhead Growth Alliance, a committee of ARDC's economic development partners. We look forward to working with more communities to access federal funding to help achieve our vision for a more prosperous Northeast Minnesota for all.

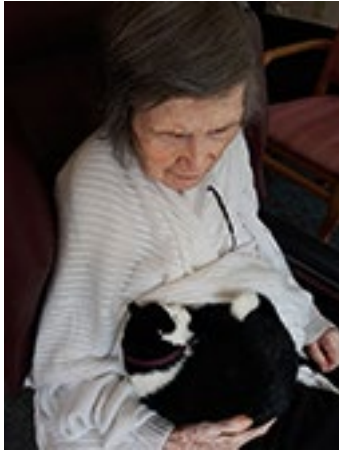
Recreation: It was exciting to see the implementation of past recreations plans facilitated by ARDC, including the development of mountain bike trails in Lake County, in 2021. A mountain bike plan was also kicked off in Nashwauk.

Community Planning: Plans were completed for Gnesen and Fredenberg Townships in southern St. Louis County. The North Shore Management Board and its effort to address erosion on the Lake Superior shore continued in 2021 with our Phase III of the Coastal Erosion Hazard Mapping process. ARDC contracted with the University of Minnesota-Duluth U-Spatial Lab to assist in implementing a standardized methodology for monitoring long term Lake Superior coastal shoreline change through a USGS-GIS tool called the Digital Shoreline Analysis System (DSAS). The results will advise North Shore Management Board on the effectiveness of their minimum shoreland standards into the future.

Learn more about our current projects at: arrowheadplanning.org



Arrowhead Area Agency on Aging



The Arrowhead Regional Development Commission is designated by the Minnesota Board on Aging as the Area Agency on Aging for the Planning and Service Area under authority of Title III of the Older Americans Act. The Arrowhead Area Agency on Aging (AAAA) is committed to helping older adults maintain their highest level of independence.

AAAA introduced solutions to bridge social isolation in the Arrowhead, providing on demand learning tools like Trualta for Caregivers and lifelike robotic companion pets, positively impacting community members throughout the region. During 2021, staff continued to work offsite with COVID protocols in place.

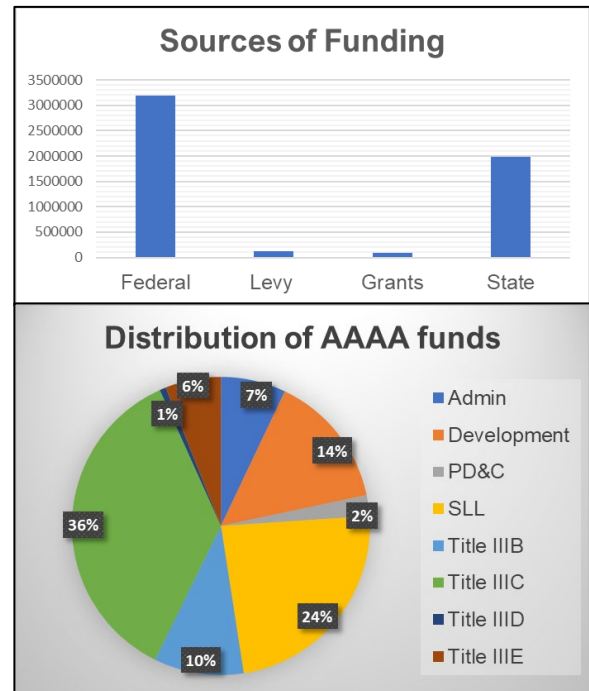
Area Plan Development and Coordination Team distributed 34 grants totaling 2.3 million dollars in Title III funding to 19 agencies. The Title IIIB funds supported 847 individuals. The Title IIIC provided 363,730 meals to older adults. The Title IIIE funds provided 2734 individual counseling sessions to 402 caregivers and 4149 hours of respite to 44 caregivers.

Eldercare Development Partnership participated in the development of regional healthcare career education and recruitment, presented 13 Aging Impact Awards, provided educational webinars on housing and social isolation and supported the launch of two AARP age-friendly communities.

The evidence-based Juniper® program held both in-person and virtual classes with 64 workshops improving the health of 429 participants.

AAAA Senior LinkAge Line® (SLL) service provides direct support to individuals and providers. SLL staff served 8,966 persons through 13,385 sessions and 4,218 secure mail sessions. Pre-Admission Screening (PAS) Specialists completed 3,501 screens. SLL volunteers, 26 total, donated 762 hours. 131 outreach events occurred. Community Living Specialists (CLS) provided Return to Community (RTC) support to 4,687 duplicated individuals. Over 65% of those served by CLS in the 4th quarter signed on to a service.

For more details on our programs or how to reach us our website can help: arrowheadaging.org



PD&C: Program Development & Coordination, SLL: Senior LinkAge Line, Title IIIB: Supportive Services, Title IIIC: Nutrition Service, Title IIID: Disease Prevention/Health Promotion Services, Title IIIE: Caregiver Support Services



Duluth-Superior Metropolitan Interstate Council

The MIC, as our region’s designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), works to encourage local policy decisions and to prioritize infrastructure projects that will provide a transportation system that serves all users.

Key 2021 Planning Initiative: Central Entrance Vision Plan

MnDOT has scheduled a full reconstruction of Central Entrance from Mesaba Avenue to Trinity Road in 2026, which prompted the MIC to undertake a planning initiative to set the vision and provide direction for MnDOT’s upcoming preliminary design and public engagement processes.



This question was the focus of extensive public engagement activities that involved residents and businesses along the study corridor.

The goal of the Central Entrance Vision Plan was to re-imagine the roadway as a walkable, bikeable, transit-oriented urban thoroughfare that (1) is safe and comfortable to use by both motorized and non-motorized users and (2) encourages new types of residential and commercial development.

The final plan includes conceptual renderings of how the corridor could potentially look and function. The plan recommendations do not identify a final overall concept, rather, the pros and cons of three different configurations are discussed; a 3-lane roadway, a 4-lane option with various bike/ped amenities and a one-way pairs option.



4-lane and 3-lane roadway configurations with pedestrian, bicycling and transit improvements are proposed and examined for Central Entrance.

It also identifies intersections with crash rates that exceed statewide averages and highlights areas of economic development potential using more intensive land use scenarios that are consistent with the City of Duluth’s Comprehensive Plan, *Imagine Duluth 2035*.

For more information about the plan and the planning process, see dsmic.org/centralentrance/.

Key 2021 Planning Initiative: MIC Public Involvement Plan

Reaching out to and engaging with the people who live and work here is a critical component in the MIC’s transportation decision-making process. The 2021 update of the Public Involvement Plan details the tools and strategies we use to carry out our responsibility to provide full, fair and meaningful opportunities for participation.

For more details on our efforts to improve the reach and effectiveness of our public involvement go to dsmic.org/pip2021.



A note from Commissioner, Dick Brenner, ARDC Board/Commission Chair:

“What a year! Amid continued pandemic challenges, ARDC is tremendously grateful for the collaborative partnerships that lead to several accomplishments in 2021. We look forward to continued opportunities to serve our great communities across our region in 2022.”

OUR MISSION

The mission of the Arrowhead Regional Development Commission (ARDC) is to provide local units of government and citizens groups a means to work cooperatively in identifying needs, solving problems, and fostering local leadership.

COMMISSION

*denotes members of the ARDC Board

REPRESENTATIVE OF CITIES, TOWNSHIPS, TRIBAL NATIONS, AND SCHOOL DISTRICTS (21)

- Aitkin Cities >10K: Sharon DeWitt (Palisade)
- Aitkin Townships: Vacant
- Carlton Cities >10K: Roger Maki (Cloquet)
- Carlton Cities >10K: David Lucas (Kettle River)
- Carlton Townships: Jason Paulson (Thomson)
- Cook Cities <10K: Michael Garry (Grand Marais)
- Cook Townships: Vacant
- Itasca Cities >10K: Dale Adams (Grand Rapids)
- Itasca Cities <10K: Calvin Saari (Nashwauk)
- Itasca Townships: Larry Salmela (Effie)
- Koochiching Cities <10K: Brian Briggs (International Falls)
- Koochiching Townships: Kevin Adee (Koochiching County)
- Lake Cities >10K: Vacant
- Lake Townships: Vacant
- St. Louis Cities >10K: Terese Tomanek (Duluth)
- St. Louis Cities >10K: Tim Harkonen (Hibbing)
- St. Louis Cities <10K: Steven Johnson (Virginia)
- St. Louis County Townships: Warren Tinker (Lavell)
- Bois Forte Tribal Council: Sidra Starkovich
- Fond du Lac Tribal Council: Jason Hollinday*
- Grand Portage Tribal Council: Robert Deschampe
- School Districts: Pat Medure (ISD #318, Grand Rapids)
- School Districts: Walter Hautala (ISD #2711, Mesabi East)

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION AT ARDC

ARDC is committed to building an inclusive culture that encourages and supports the diverse voices of our employees and of the communities we serve. ▼▼▼

COUNTY BOARD REPRESENTATIVES (8)

- Aitkin: Don Niemi*
- Carlton: Dick Brenner*
- Cook: Ginny Storlie*
- Itasca: Terry Snyder*
- Koochiching: Wade Pavleck*
- Lake: Pete Walsh*
- St. Louis: Frank Jewell*
- St. Louis: Ashley Grimm

AT-LARGE (CITIZEN) MEMBERS (8)

- Jim Berg (McGregor)
- Dirk Davis (Morcom Township)
- Mike Hoops (Silver Creek)
- Joel Hoppe (McGregor)
- Paul Nevanen* (International Falls)
- Allen Rasmussen* (International Falls)
- Gordon Salisbury (Hovland)
- Mary Somnis* (Grand Marais)

ADVISORY MEMBERS (3)

- AAAA Advisory Board: Pam Franklin*
- DSMIC Policy Board: Tom Szukis*

OFFICERS

- Dick Brenner, Chair
- Don Niemi, Vice Chair
- Allen Rasmussen, Treasurer
- Jason Hollinday, Secretary

ARDC is an EOE/AA/M/F/Vet/Disability Employer



ARDC

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**221 West First Street
Duluth, MN 55802**

