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Arrowhead Regional Development Commission
221 West First St.
Duluth, MN 55802

2006 Performance Assessment

The mission of the Arrowhead Regional Development Commission is to serve the people of the Arrowhead Region by providing local units of government and citizens groups a means to work cooperatively in identifying needs, solving problems and fostering local leadership.

Executive Director:
John Chell

Phone: 218-722-5545
MN Toll Free: 800-232-0707
Fax: 218-529-7592
Website: www.ardc.org

Introduction

When the Regional Development Act was passed and regional development commissions were established, it was mandated that each commission must issue a report every five years assessing its performance in fulfilling the purposes of the Regional Development Act, Minnesota Statute 462.393, Subd. 2. The report must address whether the existence of the Commission is in the public welfare or interest. The following is an overview of ARDC's current assessment in which we demonstrate our compliance and fulfillment of the mandate. We've also included a few respondent comments as well as a list of our new divisional websites. A copy of the 2001 assessment is available on our website.

Assessment Method

This year we contacted ARDC's Board of Directors and Commission members, local governments, federal and state agencies, and key stakeholders in the Arrowhead Region via email. The email letter instructed the recipient to click on a link to the survey which was to be completed on line.

We sent 948 emails and approximately 250 emails came back as undeliverable. Several came back with automated out-of-office replies or new contact information. At the close of the response period, we had 111 valid responses. The data was downloaded to a spreadsheet and analyzed.

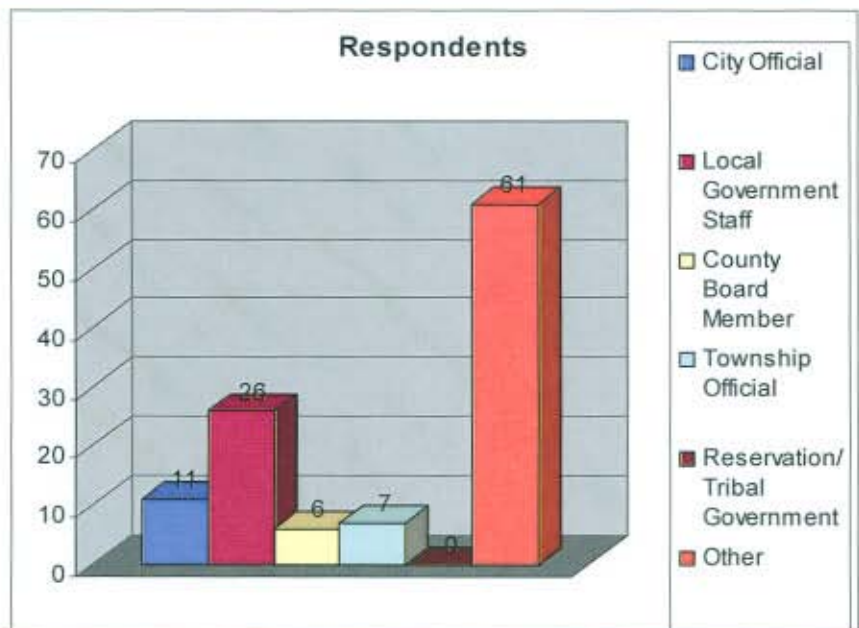
Outcomes

The number of responses was low, yet they still revealed a considerable amount of information as to how ARDC has been interacting with various groups and if it has been fulfilling the purposes as set forth in the Regional Development Act. It also has shown us how technology is playing a greater role in communications and how we've relied upon it to be accurate until tested.

The following are key areas that we feel support our ability to fulfill the purpose of the Regional Development Act.

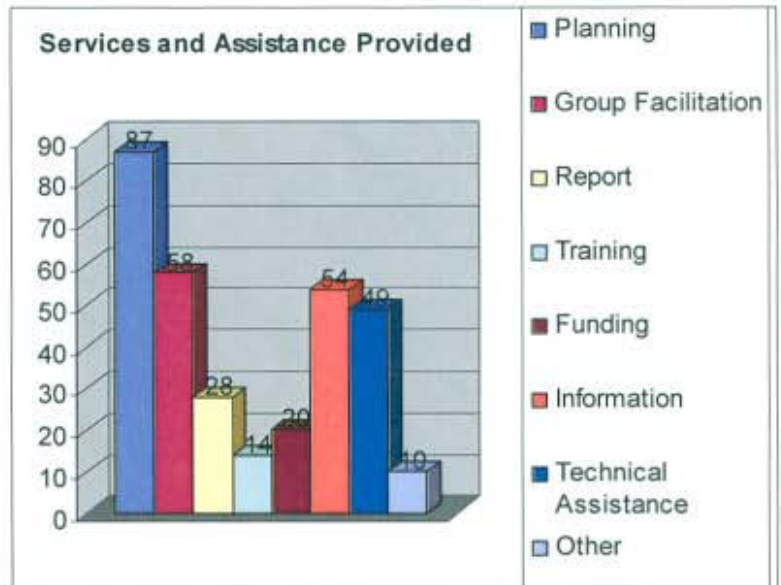
Respondents

The following graph indicates that most respondents are in the Other category. This was true also in 2001. Only one area did not have respondents, though we did have representation in the 2001 assessment. In reviewing the types of respondents in the Other Category, there were State and Federal Agency staff, non-profits staff, private citizens, business and industry persons.



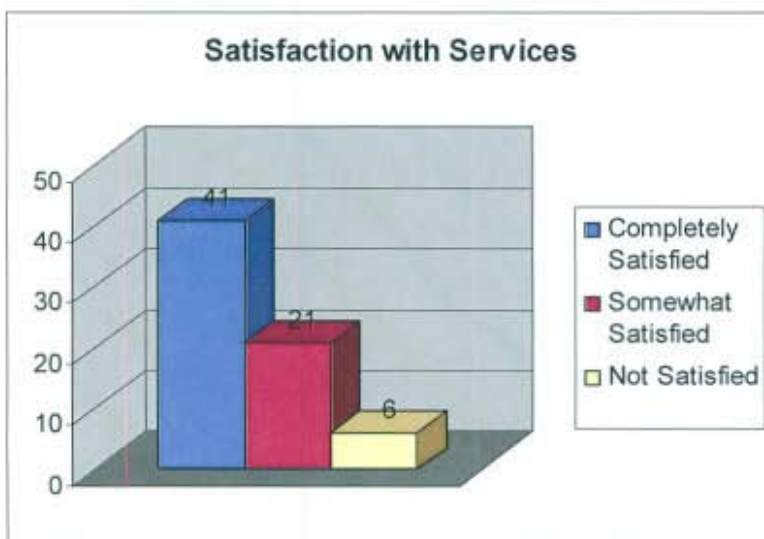
Services and Assistance

As in the previous assessment, planning services are used extensively. These services may have focused on transportation issues, recreational use, health and welfare or a number of other areas. ARDC has provided group facilitation, information and technical assistance in many different venues. Report preparation and assistance have also been used. Among other services there has been match funding, customized training and assistance in areas such as the JOBZ program and the North Shore Scenic Drive. Respondents also listed the services of the Small Cities Development Program, GIS, MIC, HTAC and the Laurentian Vision.



"Exceptional service-hard to improve."

From Survey Responses—How to Improve Service:



Satisfaction with Services

It is gratifying that 41 respondents were completely satisfied with services we have provided. However, our concern lies with those that were somewhat satisfied (24) and not satisfied (6) as well as those that chose not to respond (43). We will work with our Commission to identify areas of improvement.

"Sometimes there seems to be a disconnect between planning and implementation. I think that more clarification on what the parties involved are expecting for outcomes from ARDC's involvement and then specifics in what ARDC can provide would be valuable."

From Survey Responses—Suggestions for Other Services:

Quality of Services

Our quality of services has improved since the assessment of 2001. Of the 431 respondents then, 34% thought quality of service was excellent while 41% rated it as good. In the 2006 survey, with 110 respondents, 49% felt the quality of services they received were excellent while 35% said they received good quality.



From Survey Responses—Suggestions for Other Services:

“Coordinate the Aging group with the Economic Development group. Reduce the emphasis on social services and address the issues of Baby Boomer retirement and our soon-to-be-too-few available workers in the region. Economic Development is soon to be a non-issue without workers. It is a regional problem that ARDC should be in front of, not so far behind it.”

“Training for elected officials on planning, natural resources and development with the tough decisions that must be made with fewer dollars available. Community/regional discussion opportunities with real data from scientists regarding invasive species, the Seaway, the economy of fisheries in the area and already lost fishery with the fear of future losses in fisheries and the collapse of the Great Lakes fishery.”

From Survey Responses—How to Improve Service:

“Staff turn over has made it difficult to have an ongoing relationship. Quality of services was good to excellent. I also think that ARDC could be more proactive in reaching out to communities to see what gaps exist and what their needs are.”

“Provide more access to staff for planning initiatives in housing.”

“Additional resources/staff in the area of housing technical assistance and information dissemination.”

“ARDC could provide more two-way communication with state and feds, i.e. from area to state and feds as well as to area.”

We have completed many projects throughout our region in the past five years. However, there is one project that is has been internal—the creation of new divisional websites. Besides our main website, each division has designed a site highlighting their projects and activities. We invite you to visit them. Their sites are:

America's Byways® Resource Center — www.bywaysonline.org

Arrowhead Area Agency on Aging — www.arrowheadaging.org

Metropolitan Interstate Council — www.dsmic.org

Regional Planning — www.arrowheadplanning.org