



ARDC

Arrowhead Regional
Development Commission



2020 Annual Report

"Keeping Connected"





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

2020 was a difficult year for many people. Despite the struggles we faced and must continue to face, ARDC is grateful for the people of our region and their ability to adapt to challenging circumstances. Now we look forward to continuing our important work in 2021 and beyond.

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.

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.

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

Commission * denotes members of the ARDC Board

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

- Carlton Cities >10K: Roger Maki (Cloquet)
- Carlton Cities <10K: David Lucas (Kettle River)
- Carlton Townships: Jason Paulson (Thomson)
- Cook Cities <10K: Anton Moody (Grand Marais)
- 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: Carlene Perfetto (Silver Bay)
- Lake Townships: Vacant
- St. Louis Cities >10K: Gary Anderson (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 Holliday*
- Grand Portage Tribal Council: Robert Deschampe
- School Districts: Pat Medure (ISD #318, Grand Rapids)
- School Districts: Walter Hautala (ISD #2711, Mesabi East)

COUNTY BOARD REPRESENTATIVES (8)

- Aitkin: Don Niemi*
- Carlton: Dick Brenner*
- Cook: Ginny Storlie*
- Itasca: Terry Snyder*
- Koochiching: Wade Pavleck*
- Lake: Jeremy Hurd*
- St. Louis: Frank Jewell*
- St. Louis: Beth Olson

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*
- NEMNATP: Jason Holliday*
- DSMIC Policy Board: Earl Elde*

OFFICERS

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

ARDC thanks its Commission and Board members for their service to our Region!



ARDC's Management Team, 2019

Ron Chicka, Kristi Kane, Sister Mary Mathew Morrisroe, Krista Mattila, Andy Hubley

A MESSAGE FROM THE ARDC MANAGEMENT TEAM:

Not much can keep the staff at ARDC down, including a worldwide pandemic. Early in 2020 the management team closely monitored growing unease around the Covid-19 virus. In preparation for the unknown, we shored up our remote work practices, building policies and procedures and made sure staff had the equipment they needed to work remote. The decision to offer a remote option for ARDC happened on Friday the 13th of March – along with Governor Walz's Executive Order 20-01 declaring a peacetime emergency.



Remote work at ARDC became mandatory on the 26th. The amount of change that happened in those 13 days set a precedent for the pace that staff would follow the duration of the year. In addition to internal operational changes, there were programmatic changes to address regional needs as well as regional and statewide pandemic response. In short, there were new people to work with and we expanded our connections.

The planning division assumed the work of the Revolving Loan Fund and quickly created a COVID Response Loan Fund. The Aging Division allocated supplemental COVID relief funding that more than doubled their original allocations to the region and created a crisis response fund to aid sustainability. MIC allocated staff to support Central Services and technology changes within the agency and Central Services dealt with policy changes, increased volume of grants, contracts and loans, and met ample deadlines without complaint.

All division staff rose to the challenge with professionalism, humor and grace, taking on increased work duties, homeschooling and caregiving during the workday - and they did it well. We all made new connections. New connections in dealing with the emergency and new connections in the form of meeting each other's pets, frequent sightings of children and other household members.

In hindsight, 2020 was a year that stretched our boundaries, broadened our connections and challenged our stamina. ARDC rose to the challenge and proudly supported the Arrowhead.





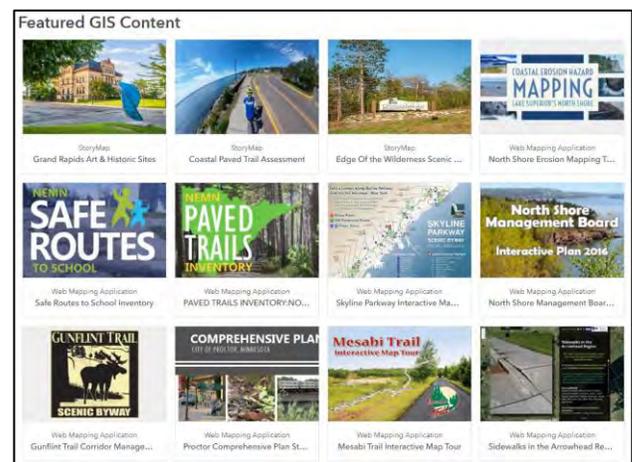
2020 gave the ARDC Planning Division staff members an opportunity to stretch our skillsets as we forged meaningful connections within ARDC, and with our partners across the Arrowhead Region. ARDC continued to engage stakeholders, utilizing video and audio teleconferencing, surveys, and new public input tools. While we missed seeing people in 3-D, we know that we put our best 2-D presence forward during this challenging year.

Creative problem solving was needed. Taking our work as the Federal Economic Development District to the next level using 2020 CARES Act funding included the creation and implementation of an Urgent Working Capital Revolving Loan Fund. Dozens of local small businesses are taking advantage of this necessary program. To facilitate this, ARDC created a new loan assistant position and added a loan advising consultant. CARES Act funding also allowed ARDC to enhance the breadth of our new Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, increasing opportunities for stakeholder input and regional analysis.

Transportation planning in 2020 spanned all modes and areas of the region and included work in International Falls, Bigfork, Cohasset, Grand Rapids, Keewatin, Nashwauk and at the Fond du Lac Band Ojibwe school. Our work with the Northeast Minnesota Area Transportation Partnership (ATP), Transportation Alternatives (TA), the State Health Improvement Partnership (SHIP), and trail user counts continued in 2020. ARDC worked with several Scenic Byway committees, assisting with grant applications, wayside planning, and the development of new logo and signage plans ARDC continued efforts facilitating the Regional Transportation Coordinating Council (RTCC), whose advisory committee met the Pandemic challenges by finding solutions related to transit, looking to connect people to places, food, and COVID related testing and vaccine sites.

Community planning efforts in 2020 included working with communities on zoning codes, providing Geographic Information Systems (GIS) support, and completing Comprehensive Plans.

Interactive maps have been useful to ARDC by gathering public feedback, sharing data, and displaying information in a safe remote setting throughout 2020. For example, ARDC worked with communities on virtual Art and History Walking Tours. ARDC developed an interactive public input map to gather points of interest along a trail corridor that the North Country Trail Association (NCTA) is in the process of planning. These points of interest will be used when identifying the future trail route.



ARDC conducted a trail condition assessment for paved trails in the Arrowhead Region using our new “data bike.” The data bike has multiple technical collecting devices that are used to determine trail pavement conditions.

Phase II of the Coastal Erosion Hazard Mapping process occurred in 2020. ARDC worked with a wide base of stakeholders in developing a standardized methodology for monitoring long term Lake Superior coastal shoreline change through GIS. This methodology will advise North Shore Management Board on the effectiveness of their minimum shoreland standards. Our strong commitment and connections to people, communities and partners in the Arrowhead region are showcased in our work.

Visit us online at ardcplanning.org to learn more about our current projects.



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.

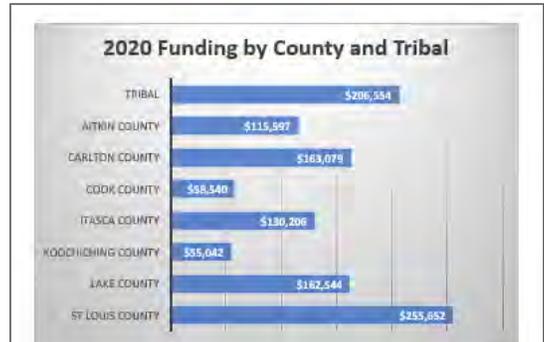
The relationships of AAAA expanded to meet the challenges of 2020. Connecting people, providers, dollars and diligence resulted in needs met and services secured in each county.

Area Plan Development and Coordination Team distributed 1.3 million dollars in Title III funding and 1.3 million in COVID relief funding. Additionally, the Team facilitated crisis response, encouraged coordination, relayed information, and trained providers, county public health and others in each of the seven counties.

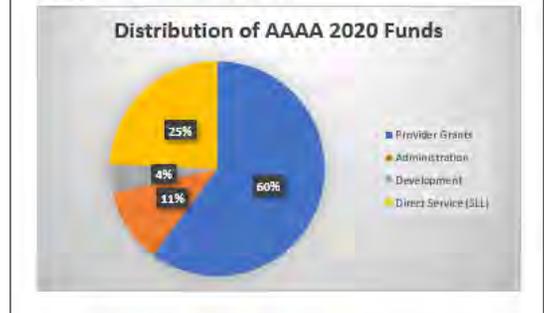
Eldercare Development Partnership Team trained caregiver consultants and rapid screeners, expanded volunteer driver programs, hosted universal design online workshops, and secured grant funds for expanding the healthcare workforce.

The evidence-based Juniper® program made the transition from in-person to virtual with 43 workshops improving the health of 230 participants.

AAAA Senior LinkAge Line® (SLL) service provides direct support to individuals and providers. SLL staff served 13,103 persons thru 24,449 sessions and 8,558 follow-ups. SLL Community Living Specialists provided Return to Community (RTC) support to 368 individuals. Pre-Admission Screening (PAS) Specialists completed 3,699 screens and increased 10 & 30 day follow-ups. 40



Additional Region-wide funding of \$3,252,754 for Access, Consultation, Technology, Homemaker, Legal Aid, Caregiver Counseling, Respite Services and Telephone Reassurance calls.



SLL volunteers donated 862 hours. 156+ outreach events occurred. Care Transitions, includes Housing w/ Services, RTC and PAS, was the most frequent inquiry with 12,000+ queries.

Staff seamlessly moved to offsite operations with COVID protocols and continued to provide long term care options counseling, education, training to individuals, caregivers, partners and providers.



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



Duluth-Superior Metropolitan Interstate Council

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

Public involvement is a critical component in the MIC’s transportation decision-making process, allowing for meaningful consideration and input from interested individuals. A defining feature for us over the past year was learning how to connect with people in a socially-distanced manner during the COVID-19 pandemic.

By hosting virtual meetings using Microsoft Teams, we were not only able to maintain regular contact with our Policy Board and advisory committees, but actually boosted participation.

For example, attendance at quarterly meetings of the Harbor Technical Advisory Committee (HTAC) increased significantly (averaging 43 participants per virtual meeting versus 26 for in-person meetings). And with less room set-up and travel time, the virtual meeting format allowed us to offer three public meetings in a single day for each of the Duluth and Superior Transportation Improvement Programs and were subsequently better-attended than in previous years.

After experiencing firsthand how virtual public involvement improved accessibility and complemented our efforts to engage the public, even when we can return to in-person gatherings we will supplement face-to-face meetings with online options and hybrid formats.

Key 2020 Planning Initiative: Proctor Transportation Plan

Numerous community and government stakeholders were involved in bringing forward common themes about what makes Proctor a special place and how an integrated, multimodal transportation system can contribute to that. The result is a plan that defines the community’s vision for how Proctor’s transportation system will look, feel and function.

A central theme of the Plan is supporting the safe and efficient movement of people of all ages, abilities and incomes, as well as the safe and efficient movement of goods in and through the City and adjacent neighborhoods. The final Plan recommends short- and long-term strategies to implement the vision. This work will position Proctor well into the future with a direction for upcoming transportation projects.



As part of the Proctor Transportation Plan, the project team installed two demonstration projects to engage the community and demonstrate potential future active transportation street changes.

The plan document as well as more information about the plan and planning process can be found at www.dsmic.org/proctor.



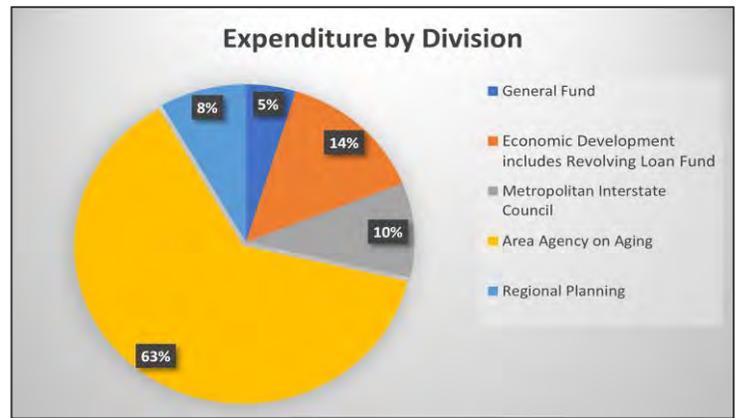
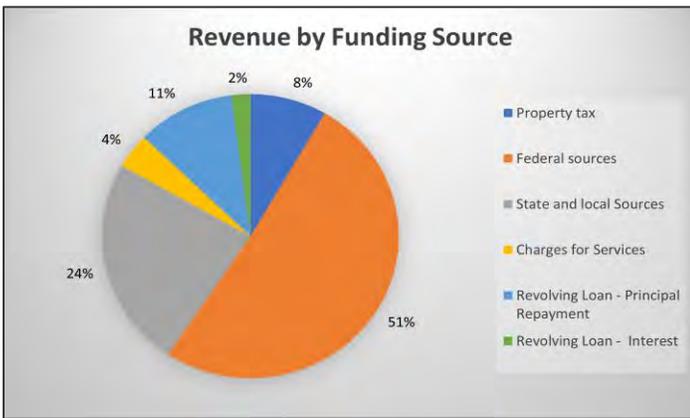
Key 2020 Planning Initiative: Blatnik Bridge Planning

Minnesota and Wisconsin DOTs have started planning efforts for the future improvement or replacement of the Blatnik Bridge. MIC staff members are serving on four advisory committees and specialty work groups that are scheduled to be ongoing over the next four to five years.

For more details on what we are up to check out our website: dsmic.org



The charts below reflect unaudited figures regarding ARDC’s FY 2020 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 eight CARES Act RLF Loans between July and December 2020, totaling \$442,000 and retaining 62 jobs in the region.

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

