



ANNUAL REPORT 2025

PROSPERITY IN PROGRESS



TABLE OF CONTENTS

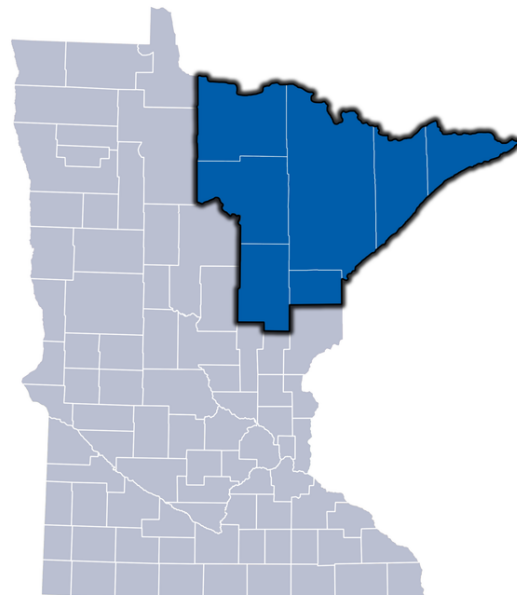
WHO WE SERVE	3
WORDS FROM WISDOM	4
ARDC FINANCE	5
ARDC IMPACT	6
REVOLVING LOAN FUND	7-8
ARDC PLANNING	9-12
ARROWHEAD AREA AGENCY ON AGING	13-16
METROPOLITAN INTERSTATE COUNCIL	17-19
ARDC BOARD AND COMMISSION	20



WHO WE SERVE



Arrowhead Regional Development Commission is proud to serve the seven counties (Aitkin, Carlton, Cook, Itasca, Koochiching, Lake, & St. Louis) in our region, providing local units of government and citizens groups a means to work cooperatively in identifying needs, solving problems, and fostering local leadership.



- 70 CITIES AND TOWNS
- 180 TOWNSHIPS
- 34 SCHOOL DISTRICTS
- 4 TRIBAL NATIONS



- ABOUT 325,716 PEOPLE LIVING IN THE REGION
- 29,334 RACIALLY DIVERSE PEOPLE LIVING IN THE REGION
- 2ND LARGEST METRO AREA IN THE STATE



- 19,946 SQUARE MILES
- 3 COMMERCIAL PORTS
- 13,650 MILES OF HIGHWAY



- 2 NATIONAL FORESTS
- 63% OF THE REGION IS PUBLIC LAND
- OUR REGION IS 23% OF THE STATE'S LAND

WORDS FROM WISDOM



From the ARDC Board and Commission Chair:

In the 11 years that I have worked alongside the Arrowhead Regional Development Commission (ARDC), I have seen many roles played out and I can't underscore the importance of having an agency like ARDC available to provide technical assistance and needed support to our local units of government, especially during the past few years when local government capacity is limited for much of our region, compliance has increased and funding has become more competitive. I have had the fortune to work with ARDC on projects ranging from bike trails to housing efforts. Most of the time ARDC's role is quiet, in the background, supporting, connecting, and planning. They are not meant to be an out-front

agency, yet, they are present, and their impact is tremendous. For ARDC, 2025 was a year focused on the Community Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) update, strengthening internal operations, looking at our finance department to ensure capacity and acumen to cover regional needs and changing governmental requirements, hiring new leadership, and setting ARDC up for a strong transition into prosperity and progress. I am excited to see these investments play out in the region.

Ginny Storlie

COOK COUNTY COMMISSIONER
ARDC BOARD AND COMMISSION CHAIR

From the Executive Director:

This report shares a snapshot of the Arrowhead Regional Development Commissions (ARDC) 2025 footprint in the region. Our theme this year is Prosperity and Progress, drawing on the Board and Commissions vision to use ARDC to meet the needs of the region by being the driving force in a regionally driven roadmap designed to diversify economies, spur job creation, and build resilience collaboratively. In 2025 ARDC focused on internal development, filling all leadership positions, training, and cross training staff, accessing internal programs, controls, systems and equipment and preparing to engage our region in a Community Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) process in 2026. ARDC focused on creating strong and resilient communities in Northeast MN through its three divisions: ARDC Planning, the Arrowhead Area Agency on Aging, and the Duluth-Superior Metropolitan Interstate Council. These divisions, supported by the ARDC Board and Commission, have specific designations and purpose written in statute and designed to help local units of government achieve their goals. Each division works within their limits to meet the needs of the region. In 2025 the divisions worked on assessing impact, several transportation plans, comprehensive plans, assisting citizens with changes to Medicare and access to services. ARDC loaned more than \$1.1 million in gap financing to small businesses through its revolving loan fund supporting childcare, retail, tourism, and housing and passed through more than \$1.7 million in grant funds to the region. ARDC staff worked hard to cultivate prosperity and progress for the region through ARDC mission to provide local units of government and citizens groups a means to work cooperatively in identifying needs, solving problems, and fostering local leadership.



Kristi Kane

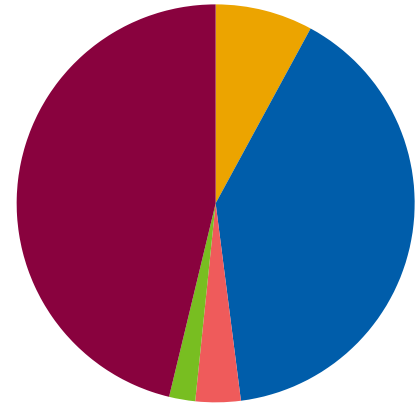
ARDC EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



The information below reflects unaudited figures regarding ARDC's unaudited FY 2025 expenditures and revenues. For more information pertaining to ARDC's finances, please visit: ardc.org/finance.

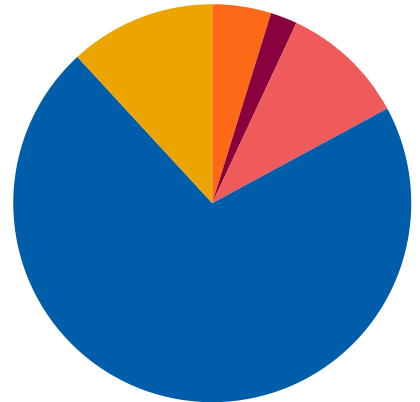
REVENUE BY FUNDING SOURCE:

● Property Tax:	\$ 756,743	8%
● Federal Grants:	\$ 3,826,437	40%
● Charges for Services:	\$ 350,465	4%
● Interest Income:	\$ 202,897	2%
● State and Local Grants and Contributions:	\$ 4,417,701	46%
Total Revenue:	\$ 9,554,243	



EXPENDITURE BY DIVISION:

● General Government:	\$ 425,784	11%
● Economic Development (Includes Revolving Loan Fund):	\$ 193,412	2%
● Metropolitan Interstate Council:	\$ 905,227	9%
● Area Agency on Aging:	\$ 6,328,779	67%
● Regional Planning:	\$ 1,056,154	11%
Total Expenditures by Major Division:	\$ 8,909,356	



REFERENCES

1. *ARDC's Finances*: ardc.org/finance



ARDC ECONOMIC IMPACT ACROSS THE REGION 2020-2025

The chart below represents a very brief version of a larger document describing all the money ARDC leveraged for the seven communities it has served over the last five years (2020-2025).

These categories are separated by department and major programs. In the extended document, the charts are separated by program rather than division. Totals are based on best estimates adding together all leveraged dollars and subtracted by the Tax Levy to create a Total Return tab on the right.

The Multi-County row is where projects that involve several counties are separated into their own category. To avoid redundancy in numbers being calculated several times, we put them in their own separate row. For more detail about what counties are impacted by what projects in the Multi-County row, please see the extended chart here:

	ARDC Planning Division	Metropolitan Interstate Council	Area Agency on Aging	Revolving Loan Fund	EDA	Total Tax Levy Investment: (2020-2025)	Total Return on Investment: (2020-2025)
Aitkin	\$269,865	\$0	\$1,984,512	\$125,000	\$0	\$375,399	\$2,003,978
Carlton	\$1,252,013	\$0	\$2,937,791	\$113,000	\$1,200,000	\$393,901	\$5,108,903
Cook	\$1,068,030	\$0	\$835,459	\$360,000	\$5,500,000	\$200,942	\$7,562,547
Itasca	\$661,235	\$0	\$3,358,780	\$1,017,300	\$1,900,000	\$686,482	\$6,250,833
Koochiching	\$92,567	\$0	\$1,453,954	\$1,080,000	\$0	\$131,020	\$2,495,501
Lake	\$1,277,491	\$0	\$1,842,638	\$107,000	\$0	\$225,493	\$3,001,636
St. Louis	\$3,059,471	\$568,836	\$8,537,194	\$3,791,000	\$9,744,000	\$2,235,841	\$23,464,660
Fond Du Lac	\$248,000	\$0	\$93,194	\$0	\$0		\$341,194
Grand Portage	\$0	\$0	\$71,664	\$0	\$0		\$71,664
Bois Forte	\$0	\$0	\$21,666	\$0	\$3,600,000		\$3,621,666
Leech Lake	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0		\$0
Multi-County**:	\$1,647,090**	\$50,077,024**	\$10,523,915**	\$0	\$5,379,455**		\$67,627,484**
Tracked through to October of 2025*						\$4,249,018	\$118,950,065

REVOLVING LOAN FUND

WHAT IS THE REVOLVING LOAN FUND?

ARDC provides loans to businesses and non-profit organizations that are located in the seven county Arrowhead Region (Aitkin, Carlton, Cook, Itasca, Koochiching, Lake, St. Louis Counties). We use the interest from these loans to reinvest in other businesses in the Region.

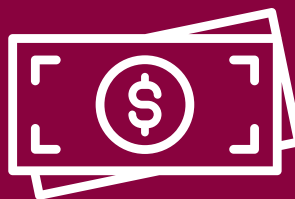
TYPES OF LOAN PROGRAMS

ARDC has two types of RLF programs - with a third being introduced next year. They are:



LEGACY

All types of uses, maximum loan is \$250,000. Interest Rate is the market rate. Primarily used for gap financing.



CARES

Working capital for entities negatively impacted by the pandemic, natural disasters, and also for supporting childcare. Maximum of \$75,000 for a 10-year loan, first year is interest only. Interest rate is 75% of the market rate.

LENDING PRIORITIES AND GOALS

The priorities this funding provides is in the aim to:

- Create and or retain permanent employment.
- Encourage and support entrepreneurship sustained through economic disasters.
- Encourage growth of the region's existing business and industry with priority given to those directly impacted by economic injury.
- Reduce unemployment and underemployment in the region in response to economic injury.

REVOLVING LOAN FUND

DISTRIBUTION OF THE RLF LOAN PROGRAM

To date, over **260** loans have been loaned all across the region. And with those loans:

- Over **\$18 million** in funding has been distributed
- **1,333 jobs** were **created**
- **4,032 jobs** were **saved**

RLF STORIES



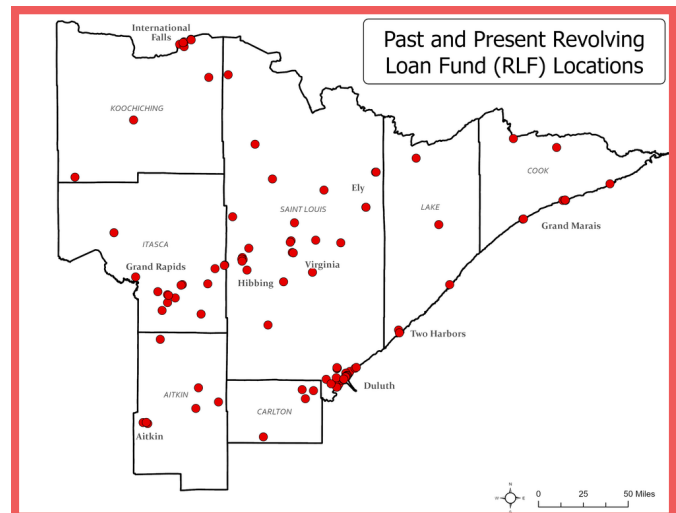
GRAND MARAIS HOUSING

In September of 2024 the ARDC Board approved \$250,000 in a participation loan of \$750,000 originated by the Entrepreneur Fund. ARDC dispersed the loan in early 2025. The CCREF Hwy 61 Housing project, officially known as The Heights Bluffs supported a 36 multi unit family residential development in Grand Marais, MN The project broke ground on June 5th of 2025 and held a ribbon cutting in November of 2025.



ROOTS & WINGS EARLY LEARNING CENTER, LLC

Roots & Wings Early Learning Center, LLC broke ground in June of 2025. Roots & Wings ELC is a nature based early learning center located in Laprairie MN. The center serves children from 6 weeks to 12 years old and offers a range of care options from ECEAP programs and summer camps.



CHAD RICORD
ARDC LOAN ADVISOR
LOANS@ARDC.ORG
(218)-349-3115

THINK YOU COULD BENEFIT FROM THE RLF?

The Revolving Loan Fund spans across all seven counties. If you think you may be a qualified candidate for gap funding to go towards your business, organization, or project, get in contact with us!

ARDC Planning works alongside the people of Aitkin, Carlton, Cook, Itasca, Lake, Koochiching, and Saint Louis Counties as Northeast Minnesota's designated regional development organization since 1969 and the planning organization for the Economic Development District (EDD). We are a regional and community planning consultant to strengthen and advance the Arrowhead Region as a great place to live, work, play, and learn. We provide local units of government and citizens groups a means to work cooperatively in identifying needs, solving problems, and fostering local leadership.

SUMMARY OF 2025 KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

NORTHLAND CLIMATE RESILIENCE COLLABORATIVE

Northland Climate Resilience Collaborative (NCRC) is a \$1.85 million National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA) supported project serving Saint Louis, Carlton, Cook, and Lake Counties, and the Bois Forte, Fond du Lac, and Grand Portage Reservations. Significant progress was made in 2025. Five staff have been hired to support regional resilience work. The leadership team established a strong foundation through regular meetings. Dozens of presentations were given across the region and meetings with over 30 interested entities were conducted to raise awareness about this initiative. In May 2025, over 20 Collaborative members affirmed the five working group topics, and the charter was approved in September. Additional funding was also brought into the region. ARDC's NOAA Fellow obtained a \$50,000 energy planning grant. Looking ahead, 2026 will be a year of framing up the content of the Regional Resilience Plan via working groups and community engagement.



NOAA Fellow Ann Seigfreid learning to parch Manoomin (Wild rice) from Bois Forte DNR Staff.



Here the Northland Climate Resilience Collaborative Leadership team is learning about resilience projects at Grand Portage Reservation including; water quality monitoring and the first of its kind Genawaaboonaagak Indigenous Coast Guard.



Created by local artist Sam Zimmerman

Multi-Jurisdictional Cooperation and the Gitchi-Gami State Trail

ARDC Planning staff have long supported the development, promotion, and funding of the Gitchi-Gami State Trail through their work with the Minnesota Departments of Natural Resources and Transportation, and by staffing the nonprofit Gitchi-Gami Trail Association. The trail corridor stretches from Two Harbors to Grand Marais, with more than 37 miles completed to date. In 2025, staff supported Transportation Alternatives grant applications, helped coordinate ribbon-cutting events for two new trail segments, and hosted the 25th Annual North Shore Bike Ride.



Gitchi-Gami Trail Association at ride on the new segment of trail that opened in May of 2025 in Lutsen, MN)

Economic Development District (EDD)

In 2025, ARDC supported communities across the region in preparing and submitting applications to the U.S. Economic Development Administration's Disaster Supplemental Program. While awards for the 2025 submissions have not yet been announced, we remain optimistic and expect decisions soon.

ARDC also launched the planning process for the region's next Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). The current CEDS continues to demonstrate its value—helping secure more than \$7 million in EDA funding for infrastructure projects. The new CEDS will build on this progress by identifying strategies that strengthen economic resilience and support long-term regional prosperity.

ARDC Planning Director, Beth Ann Teskey also joined the ARDC leadership team in February 2025.

Carlton Transportation Plan

ARDC completed the Carlton Transportation Visioning project with the City of Carlton. The purpose was to gauge community priorities pertaining to Highways 210 and 45 corridors, passing through the City of Carlton. The project concluded in 2025 and involved meetings with our consultant contractor to finalize our report, providing that information to project stakeholders, and a presentation to the Carlton County Board of Commissioners. This work benefits the City, County, and Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) as further corridor studies will leverage our findings as vehicle speeds, pedestrian crossings, trails, freight movement and interchange design are considered.



Northeast Minnesota Area Transportation Partnership (NEMNATP)

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Northeast Minnesota Area Transportation Partnership (NEMNATP) (Cont.)

...Board of Commissioners. This work benefits the City, County, and Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) as further corridor studies will leverage our findings as vehicle speeds, pedestrian crossings, trails, freight movement and interchange design are considered.

North Shore Management Board (NSMB) Facilitation

The North Shore Management Board met quarterly throughout the year of 2025. During this period, ARDC staff responsibilities to the NSMB shifted from Lynelle H (Aging) to Travis Houle (Planning). ARDC supported multiple special projects of the NSMB, including the North Shore Management Plan (NSMP) update, as well as the Coastal Erosion Hazard Mapping (CEHM) project. While the NSMP update serves as a routine long range plan update, the CEHM project serves as a major enhancement to a dataset that will be leveraged by local government units, as they discuss and rule on local land use determinations. Work on these projects continue into 2026.

Regional Transportation Advisory Committee (RTAC) and Scenic Byways

Scenic Byway Committee support included quarterly meeting facilitation in partnership with committee leaders. These included the North Shore Scenic Drive (NSSD), Avenue of Pines (AOP), and Superior National Forest (SNF) Scenic Byways. Scenic Byway committees reviewed operating procedures and bylaws to confirm enhancements/clarifications. Members also discussed special project interests, partner activities we could support, and other intrinsic quality enhancements along each corridor.

William Kelley Safe Routes to School Plan

The William-Kelley School Safe Routes to School (SRTS) project in Silver Bay, Minnesota, was completed during 2025. During the first half of the year, stakeholder engagement activities were finalized, including coordination with school staff, local partners, and community members, while additional data collection and analysis were completed to support project recommendations. The final SRTS planning document was prepared and submitted to the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) for publication on its website. In early fall 2025, the completed plan was presented to the Lake County School District for formal adoption, providing a framework to improve student safety and increase walking and bicycling opportunities.



Students at William Kelley on a biking field trip to Split Rock State Park using the Gitchi-Gami State Trail.

Floodwood and Duluth Public Schools Safe Routes to School Planning

During the second half of 2025, Safe Routes to School (SRTS) planning projects began for the City of Floodwood and the City of Duluth. Project initiation included establishing steering committees, identifying key stakeholders, and engaging school districts, local governments, and community partners. Comprehensive data collection activities were completed, including walk audits, hazard zone observations, parent and caregiver surveys, and existing conditions assessments to identify barriers and opportunities for improving student safety. The information gathered will guide infrastructure and program recommendations that support safe walking and bicycling to school. The Floodwood SRTS Plan is scheduled for completion in July 2026, with the Duluth project concluding in January 2027.



Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant Program

During the second half of 2025, the Arrowhead Regional Development Commission (ARDC) was awarded an Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) to administer as a subgrant program for eligible local units of government across the seven-county Arrowhead Region. The program is designed to support communities with populations under 15,000 by funding energy efficiency improvements in municipally owned buildings. ARDC began developing the grant program, coordinating with regional partners, and preparing for implementation to help communities reduce energy costs, improve building performance, and advance long-term sustainability goals while increasing access to federal energy investment opportunities in rural northeastern Minnesota.

Regional Transportation Coordinating Council (RTCC)

The Arrowhead Regional Transportation Coordinating Council (RTCC) advanced regional mobility coordination through strategic partnerships, applied research, and technical assistance across northeast Minnesota. Key accomplishments included supporting the Empowering Small Minnesota Communities (ESMC) research project through focus groups and stakeholder engagement, securing approval of a transportation coordination initiative with the Arrowhead Health Alliance, facilitating collaboration through the Health Care Access Subcommittee and Arrowhead Regional Quality Council, evaluating regional transportation coordination software, explored solutions for improved transportation options for adults with cognitive disabilities through collaboration with the Arrowhead Regional Quality Control (ARQC) group, and worked with TrueNorth Goodwill on improving transportation for people accessing work skill training. Professional development and statewide partnerships further strengthened regional transportation planning and mobility management capacity.

Highway 61 Resilience Planning

ARDC Planning started work with Minnesota Department of Transportation and KLJ Engineering on development of a Resilience Improvement Planning Study, as outlined by the Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient, and Cost-Saving Transportation (PROTECT). This plan will include a risk-based assessment of vulnerabilities on the transportation system around Trunk Highway 61 in Lake and Cook Counties. The plan will also identify potential alternative route(s) for residents and visitors in the project area. The project timeline is July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2027.

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 (OAA). The Arrowhead Area Agency on Aging (AAAA) is committed to helping older adults maintain their highest level of independence. Through the work of our ElderCare Development Partnership team and our Minnesota Aging Pathways team, we support successful aging in the Arrowhead region.



Community Development Team at AAAA

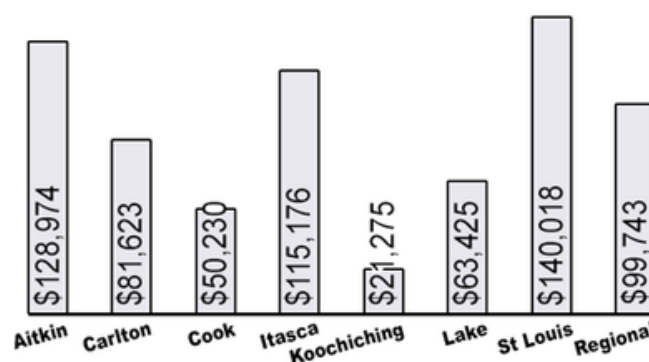
ARROWHEAD AREA AGENCY ON AGING 2025 HIGHLIGHTS

Over \$3 million distributed between **26 grants** (Title III, ARPA, NSIP, and State funds) to **15 agencies serving all seven counties.**

◦ Title IIIB:

- **Supported 19,713 units of supportive services** such as heavy household chores like snow removal and yard work, housekeeping assistance, grocery shopping, and arranging assisted transportation to medical appointments to **864 individuals.**

Title III
B, D, E
Funding



Title IIIC, NSIP, and State Nutrition regional funding equaled \$2,261,869.

◦ Title IIIC:

- **Delivered 192,648 meals to 1,491 older adults.**
- **Served 134,056 meals** in congregate settings to **6,498 older adults.**

◦ Title IIID:

- **Provided 4,073 evidence-based health promotion class units to 764 people.**

◦ Title IIIE:

- **Completed 2,906 counseling sessions with 352 caregivers.**
- **Furnished 6,701 respite care hours to 72 caregivers.**

Aging in Rural Minnesota

AAAA consulted for this comparative analysis of data and policy impacting aging in rural Minnesota. AAAA developed and presented the study results via an online webinar and a conference report. For more information, please visit [Aging in Rural Minnesota](#) on the m4a website.



ARROWHEAD AREA AGENCY ON AGING



Age-Friendly Arrowhead Business Program

AAAA launched this program aimed at promoting inclusivity and addressing the needs of older adults. Training components encompass marketing strategies, creating an Age-Friendly environment, enhancing customer experience, implementing effective hiring and staffing practices, and gaining valuable insights and tools to better serve their entire consumer base. To explore this further, please watch [our business program information session](#).

Advisory Committee on Aging (ACA)

ACA Officers proudly wear AAAA branded vests to show their support of AAAA. The ACA Review Task Force evaluated \$1,311,000 of requests for \$550,000 of available funds during the current Title III competitive grant cycle. To learn how you may serve on the ACA, please visit the [AAAA ACA webpage](#).

Age-Friendly Exchange at Discovery Center

AAAA coordinated this first annual regional exchange to update the Blueprint on Aging, discuss priorities and solutions, and showcase the many local efforts with elected officials and regional leaders. To learn more, please read the [Arrowhead Age-Friendly Exchange document](#).



AAAA Advisory Committee on Aging Officers

Older Americans Act

AAAA faced significant challenges at the start of 2025 as a new federal administration introduced large scale changes to funding structures and program expectations. These shifts that would ultimately cascade down to states and then to Area Agencies on Aging. We approached these challenges with resilience and adaptability, maintaining essential services, strengthening key partnerships, disseminating critical information in a timely manner, and laying the groundwork for long term success. For additional details, visit the [Older Americans Act webpage](#).

Minnesota Aging Pathways

- Served 7,332 individuals (3,567 new clients), created 9,672 distinct cases.
- Resource coordinators served 1,226 people, secured services for 353 individuals and processed 463 online referrals.
- 12 Minnesota Aging Pathways volunteers donated a total of 342 hours, which included 3 volunteers providing Medicare counseling to 46 clients.
- Participated in 32 outreach events and gave 93 educational presentations—35 presentations and outreach events were focused on Healthcare Fraud, Waste, and Abuse.



Members of AAAA's Minnesota Aging Pathways Team.

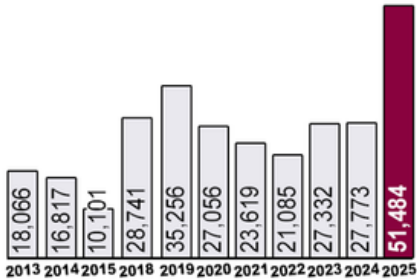


AREA AGENCY ON AGING SUCCESS STORIES

2025 Medicare Open Enrollment Period (OEP)

was one for the books! Each year between Oct. 15 – Dec. 7, people on Medicare can review their coverage for the coming year. Minnesota Aging Pathways received a historic 51,484 calls. Call volume increased due to UCare ending their Medicare Advantage plans, other insurers exiting counties or reducing plan options, and many provider network changes.

Call volume was the highest on record



AAAA’s Minnesota Aging Pathways team rose to the challenge – focused on assisting one person at a time. Staff and volunteers helped clients with personalized Medicare counseling, gave community presentations, processed increased mailings, and connected clients to local resources.

AAAA’s Minnesota Aging Pathways team rose to the challenge – focused on assisting one person at a time. Staff and volunteers helped clients with personalized Medicare counseling, gave community presentations, processed increased mailings, and connected clients to local resources.

Aitkin	Carlton	Cook	Itasca	Koochiching	Lake	St. Louis	Total
\$20,078	\$138,366	\$8,917	\$208,264	\$5,474	\$16,842	\$235,486	\$633,427

Minnesota Aging Pathways staff and volunteers assisted 1,778 Arrowhead residents with Medicare plan enrollments, resulting in \$633,427 in prescription drug savings.

While OEP was challenging, the hard work and collaboration among staff was impressive and we’re proud of the impact made in the lives of older Minnesotans.

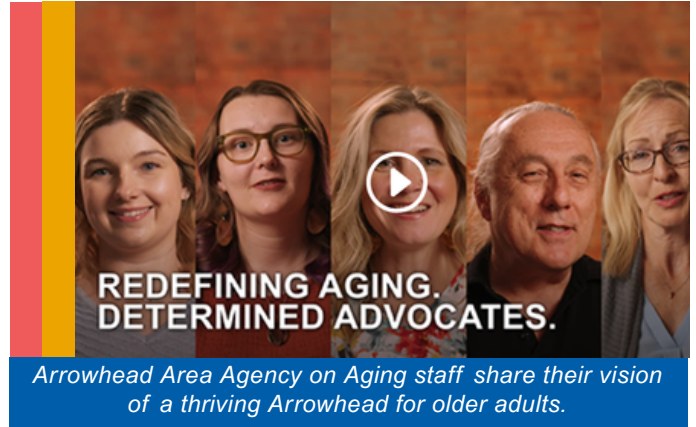
Get Your Ducks in a Row launched as a regional effort to normalize advanced care planning for people of all ages — building individual preparedness and strengthening community resilience. The campaign’s success relied heavily on our longstanding regional relationships. Partners including Justice North, Essentia Health, Aspirus, Fairview Health, community hospitals, county public health departments, and Home and Community-Based Service providers came together to deliver educational webinars, a social media toolkit, and community workshops. The campaign website, ducksinarowmn.org, serves as an ongoing resource hub offering planning tools, downloadable forms, and a webinar archive. We hosted nine community workshops across the region. Community organizations regularly share Ducks resources with the people they serve, extending our reach well beyond direct outreach.



AREA AGENCY ON AGING SUCCESS STORIES (CONT.)

We're proud to share our video: [Redefining Aging. Determined Advocates.](#)

This short film tells the story of the Arrowhead Area Agency on Aging and the many ways we support older adults in rural Minnesota. From advocacy to essential services, we're working to ensure aging is supported with dignity, connection, and care.



REFERENCES

1. **Aging in Rural Minnesota:** <https://mn4a.org/aging-in-rural-minnesota-webinar/>
2. **Age-Friendly Arrowhead Business Program:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oamYbPCWt6A>
3. **Advisory Committee on Aging:** <https://arrowheadaging.org/volunteer-opportunities/advisory-committee-on-aging-section/>
4. **Arrowhead Age-Friendly Exchange document**
https://mn.gov/dhs/assets/Arrowhead%20Regional%20Exchange%20Summary%202025_final_tcm1053-722793.pdf
5. **Older Americans Act** <https://acl.gov/about-acl/authorizing-statutes/older-americans-act>
6. **Get Your Ducks in a Row** <https://ducksinarowmn.org/>
7. **Redefining Aging. Determined Advocates video** https://arrowheadaging.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/arrowhead_area_agency_on_aging-720p.mp4

METROPOLITAN INTERSTATE COUNCIL



The Duluth-Superior Metropolitan Interstate Council (MIC) conducts transportation planning and programs federally-funded projects for the bi-state (Minnesota and Wisconsin) area that includes Duluth, Superior, Hermantown, Proctor, Rice Lake and surrounding townships. The MIC works to improve how people and goods travel safely and efficiently throughout this region.

SUMMARY OF 2025 KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Highlights of the MIC's major accomplishments in 2025 include implementation of our 25-year transportation plan, completing an update of our Title VI & Language Access Plan, beginning Phase II of the Safety Action Plan, assisting WisDOT and MnDOT in planning for the Blatnik Bridge reconstruction project, and strengthening regional coordination across multiple transportation modes. Many of these important initiatives will continue into 2026 and include:

Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP)

In 2025, we began implanting our long-range Metropolitan Transportation Plan, Sustainable Choices 2050, for the greater Duluth-Superior area.

- The MIC's State Transportation Block Grant Program (STBGP) project application was updated to include more information and to better align with the performance-based planning approach adopted in Sustainable Choices 2050;
- The MIC's definition of "regionally significant" was updated to provide clarity and consistency with the Duluth- and Superior- area TIPs;
- The MTP's goals, objectives, and overall vision were regularly emphasized in presentations to the Transportation Advisory Committee and MIC Policy Board.

MIC Area Comprehensive Safety Action Plan

The MIC received \$312,500 in federal and state grants (\$250,000 SS4A and \$62,500 MnDOT IIJA Discretionary Match) to develop a comprehensive Safety Action Plan (SAP). This project will build on the Safety Analysis & Strategy and Project Selection work (completed in 2024 under our regular UPWP) to complete the remaining six SAP components. In 2025, the MIC selected Zan Associates and Alliant Engineering as consultants through a competitive procurement process. Following an August kickoff meeting, other key accomplishments included:

- Developing a Public Engagement Plan and timeline and launching the project website;
- Identifying key community, agency and jurisdictional stakeholders and establishing the project advisory committee;
- Updating the crash data analysis and drafting policy recommendations for review by the MIC's Transportation Advisory Committee;



- Planning focus groups with high-risk roadway users (pedestrians, bicyclists, people with disabilities and residents of historically underserved neighborhoods);
- Conducting one-on-one interviews with Policy Board members, focused on committing to a goal of zero traffic-related fatalities and serious injuries in the Duluth-Superior area.

SPECIALIZED PLANNING AREAS

Roadway

- Provided traffic modeling support for regional projects, including for the Blatnik Bridge reconstruction planning between Duluth and Superior;
- Participated in Minnesota and Wisconsin DOT's planning efforts for the Blatnik Bridge reconstruction project.

Transit and Multimodal

- Maintained partnership with Duluth Transit Authority (DTA) for regional transit planning;
- Participated in Greater Minnesota Transit Plan Advisory Group.

Harbor and Freight

- Facilitated quarterly meetings of the Harbor Technical Advisory Committee (HTAC) and its subcommittees and working groups;

Bicycle and Pedestrian

- Completed the 2025 update of the Duluth-Superior Area Bicycle Transportation Plan;
- Presented the final plan to the MIC Policy Board for adoption in March, followed by—
- Adoption by the City of Duluth, establishing it as the official bicycle plan for future planning efforts and infrastructure projects;
- Conducted quarterly meetings of the Bicycle-Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) and its subcommittees;



View of the newly opened Twin Ports Interchange

FUNDING AND PROGRAMS

Transportation Improvement Programs (TIPs)

- Managed the 2025-2028 Duluth and Superior TIPs, documents that program all federally-funded surface transportation projects for four years;
- Completed annual project solicitation and prioritization process for the 2026-2029 Duluth area TIP;
- Adopted updated state performance measure targets for safety.



FUNDING AND PROGRAMS (CONT.)

Administration and Coordination

- Maintained the MIC's coordinated planning role by conducting monthly meetings of the MIC Policy Board and its Transportation Advisory Committee and participating in local jurisdictional transportation planning initiatives;
- MIC Director participated in meetings as a member of the Association of Metropolitan Planning Organization's (AMPO's) Technical Advisory Committee and Washington DC fly-ins with Congressional members

KEY OUTCOMES

- Enhanced regional transportation safety planning.
- Strengthened interagency coordination and stakeholder engagement.
- Advanced multimodal transportation options.
- Helped to determine MPO priorities for the upcoming federal transportation bill reauthorization.

REFERENCES

1. *Sustainable Choices 2050* - <https://dsmic.org/long-range/>
2. *Duluth-Superior Area Bicycle Transportation Plan* - <https://dsmic.org/study/bicycle>





County Board Representatives (8)

Aitkin County: Michael Kearney*

Carlton County: Susan Zmyslony*

Cook County: Ginny Storlie*, Chair

Itasca County: John Johnson*, Vice Chair

Koochiching County: Destry Hell*

Lake County: Rick Goutermont*

St. Louis County: Annie Harala*

St. Louis County: Ashley Grimm

Representative of Cities, Townships, Tribal Nations, and School Districts (23)

Aitkin Cities <10K: Mark Jeffers

Aitkin Townships: VACANT

Carlton Cities >10K: Roger Maki (Cloquet)

Carlton Cities <10K: David Lucas (Kettle River)

Carlton Townships: Clayton Kauppila (Carlton)

Cook Cities <10K: Michael Garry (Grand Marais)

Cook Townships: VACANT

Itasca Cities >10k: Tony Yunk (Bovey)

Itasca Cities <10K: VACANT

Itasca Townships: Mike Baltus (Hill City)

Koochiching Cities <10K: Brian Briggs (International Falls)

Koochiching Townships: Kevin Adee (Koochiching County)

Lake Cities <10K: Richard DeRosier

Lake Townships: VACANT

St. Louis Cities >10k: Chris Whitney (Hibbing)

St. Louis Cities >10k: Lynn Nephew (Duluth)

St. Louis Cities <10K: Annie Bachschneider (Virginia)

St. Louis Townships: VACANT

Bois Forte Tribal Council: Perry Drift

Fond du Lac Tribal Council: Jason Hollinday*, Secretary

Grand Portage Tribal Council: Robert Deschampe

School Districts: Kim McLaughlin (ISD #701, Hibbing)

School Districts: Walter Hautala (ISD #2711, Mesabi East)

At-Large (Citizen) Members (8)

Dirk Davis (Morcom Township)

Pam Franklin (Duluth)

Mike Hoops (Silver Creek)

Joel Hoppe* (McGregor)

Paul Nevanen* (International Falls)

Allen Rasmussen* (International Falls)

Stephen Sydow (Duluth)

Pat Medure* (Grand Rapids)

Advisory members (2)

AAAA Advisory Board: Steve Lyons*

MIC Policy Board: VACANT*

Officers

Ginny Storlie*, Chair

John Johnson* Vice Chair

Allen Rasmussen*, Treasurer

Jason Hollinday*, Secretary



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