

**Arrowhead Regional  
Development Commission**



**2023 Annual Report  
“Intentionally North”**





## Arrowhead Regional Development Commission

### ***A MESSAGE FROM ARDC BOARD & COMMISSION CHAIR:***




I joined ARDC 9 years ago representing Cook County as a Commissioner. Since then I have seen so much progress reaching out to the communities across northern Minnesota. From bike trails to social services ARDC and staff have contributed to the well-being of folks.

This past year I became the chair of ARDC and looking forward to a great year ahead in the planning process and collaboration with the many areas ARDC represents.

Ginny Storlie  
Cook County Commissioner

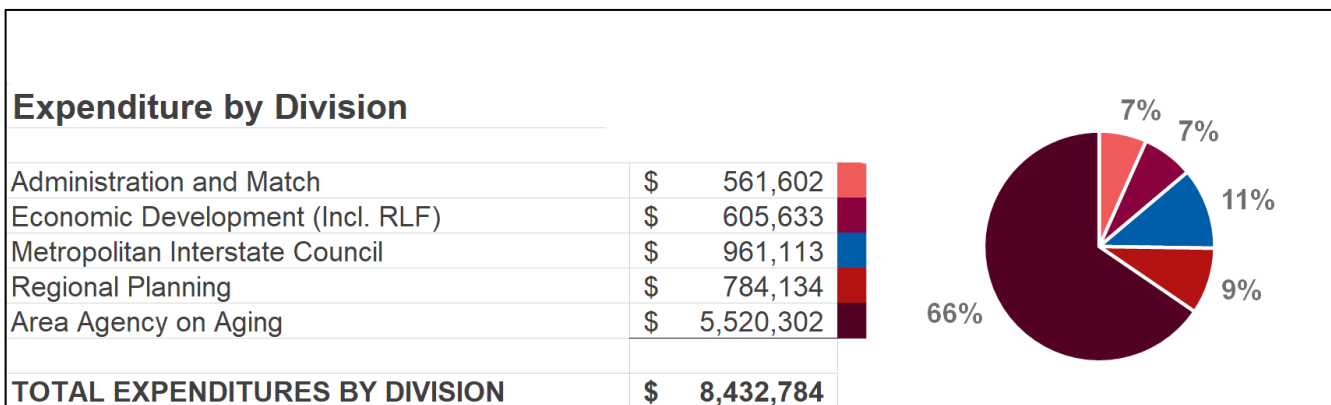
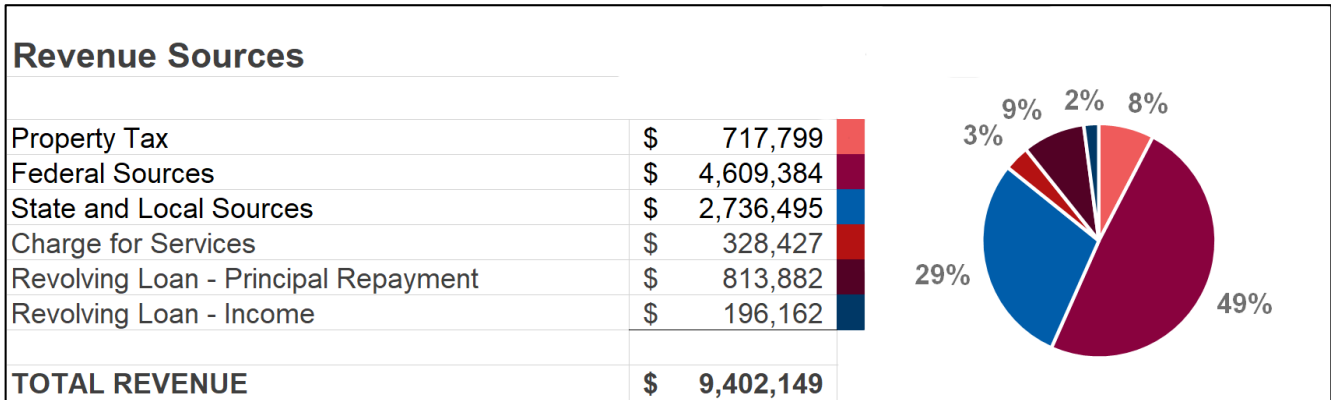
### ***A MESSAGE FROM THE ARDC MANAGEMENT TEAM:***

The Arrowhead Regional Development Commission (ARDC) focuses 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 carry out key functions tailored to our northern communities including; serving as regional community planning consultants that make northeast Minnesota a great place to live, work, play, and learn; acting as a catalyst in building communities where older adults live with dignity, mutual respect, and engage in shared responsibilities across generations and cultures; and supporting policy decisions and multi-modal infrastructure projects that provide effective transportation in the Duluth-Superior metropolitan area. We are intentional about preserving and enriching the northern way of life. Our mission is to provide local units of government and citizens groups a means to work cooperatively in identifying needs, solving problems, and fostering local leadership. Each division in our organization does this in its own unique way. Our division directors lead staff to bring communities, residents, and agencies together with the goal of a better northeast Minnesota for all and ARDC is committed to building an inclusive culture that encourages and supports the diverse voice of our employees and of the communities we serve in northeast Minnesota. ARDC staff have faced incredible challenges in 2023 including changes to budgets, tools, governmental policies affecting operations, oversight, and procurement of funds. They have navigated changing policy and stakeholder groups, and they have sought out and applied for new opportunities for our communities. The management team is proud of the combined knowledge and determination that the ARDC team consistently provides to intentionally create a resilient, strong, and wonderful place to live and work in our corner of the state.

We are *Intentionally North.* 



The information below reflects unaudited figures regarding ARDC’s FY 2023 expenditures and revenues. For more information pertaining to ARDC’s finances, please visit: [ardc.org/finance](http://ardc.org/finance).



### ARDC’s Revolving Loan Fund

ARDC has a Defederalized Revolving Loan Fund (Legacy RLF) that supports business activities in our region for businesses where 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. ARDC has 19 Defederalized RLF loans outstanding at 12/31/2023 totaling \$2,229,006.

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act appropriated funds to the Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration (EDA) to “prevent, prepare for, and respond to coronavirus”. The ARDC was the grant recipient of these EDA funds and was awarded \$3.88 Million dollars to create a separate revolving loan fund to respond to the economic impacts resulting from the coronavirus and other economic disasters within the region. ARDC has 58 CARES Loans outstanding at 12/31/2023 totaling \$3,029,132.

Learn more about ARDC’s Revolving Loan Fund at: [www.ardc.org/rlf](http://www.ardc.org/rlf)



ARDC Planning Division staff members continued to work around the region on a wide variety of transportation, community, public health, economic development, and recreation planning projects in 2023.

Pedestrian and bicycle safety along Highway 33 through Cloquet was finalized and reflected important conversations within the community. A Transportation Plan in the Aitkin area was developed and strives to improve safety for all modes of transportation in the area. Working with partners from East Central RDC, MnDOT and stakeholders from Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe, staff evaluated options and opportunities to improve walk and bikeability along Minnesota Highway 65. A grant from Age-Friendly Minnesota was awarded and enables staff to develop strategies to codify trail systems in the region to display trail difficulty ratings. This project was enhanced by ARDC's use of its "data bike", a bicycle outfitted with equipment to measure trail elevation profiles and trail conditions.

Other important transportation projects included facilitating the Arrowhead Regional Transportation Coordinating Council (RTCC), continued facilitation of the Northeast Minnesota Area Transportation Partnership, and supporting efforts of several scenic byway committees. In addition to facilitating the North Shore Scenic Drive Council, and coordination with the Superior National Forest Scenic Byway Council, staff also support the Avenue of Pines Byway Council. Fall 2023 saw the scenic byway council work with the Western Itasca County Trails Group to finish a byway corridor trail plan, work with Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe members and organizations to add information about indigenous culture and history to the Avenue of Pines story map and updated the social media strategy.



*Carson Polomis showcases ARDC's data bike*

In 2023, staff facilitation of the Gitchi-Gami Trail Association Board resulted in large appropriations to the MnDNR to further expand the trail system along the North Shore of Lake Superior. A Safe Routes to School Planning process kicked off in the City of Aurora working with Mesabi East School District families, staff, and other community stakeholders to work on efforts to encourage more students to walk and bike to school, and to develop a list of recommendations to improve the built environment and systems in regard to safe walking, biking, and rolling to school.

Community planning initiatives saw ARDC staff continuing in its role of Planner on Retainer for the City of Two Harbors for the year.

ARDC Planning staff also continued to work with partners on Coastal Erosion Hazard mapping, working with communities with Brownfields initiatives, economic development planning, and facilitating the North Shore Management Board.

Learn more about our current projects at: [arrowheadplanning.org](http://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 (OAA). The Arrowhead Area Agency on Aging (AAAA) is committed to helping older adults maintain their highest level of independence.

In 2023, AAAA provided Title III OAA grantee training sessions, completed our St. Louis Co.

COVID-19 response and recovery efforts, worked on sustainability for ARCHS and SCRUBS camps, implemented new Senior Linkage Line Program tools, and worked with Medicare Partners serving all Minnesotans. We accepted a statewide award supporting ALS caregiving education and respite. AAAA navigated a new Intrastate Funding Formula process and a new Planning and Service Area (PSA) process.

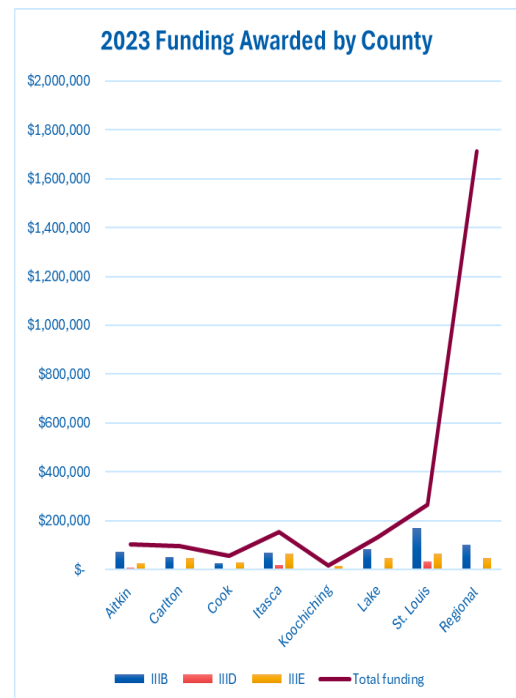
Area Plan Development & Coordination distributed 52 grants totaling \$3.1 million dollars in Title III, ARPA, NSIP and State funding to 20 agencies. The Title IIIB funds supported 2,756 individuals. Title IIIC provided 352,633 meals to 7,299 older adults. The Title IIIE funds provided 3,529 counseling sessions to 431 caregivers and 6,860 hours of respite to 72 caregivers.

Eldercare Development Partnership (EDP) conducted 3 Mental Health First Aid classes, supported 9 LWAH and 15 Age-Friendly projects, undertook region wide asset mapping, presented 5 Aging Impact Awards, provided educational webinars in Age-Friendly transportation, diversity, and workforce. EDP engaged 2 communities in AARP age-friendly network and held a Caregivers and an Age-Friendly conference.

SLC COVID-19 Response and Recovery grant surveyed 280+ community members. Results are found here: [www.arrowheadaging.org/community](http://www.arrowheadaging.org/community).

AAAA Senior LinkAge Line (SLL) service provides direct support to individuals and providers. The Contact Center staff served over 2,931 clients and created 8,751 unique cases. PAS processed 5,737 screens. Resource Coordinators served 1,368 people with 155 signed on to service and processed 366 online referrals. SLL volunteers processed 116 intake forms, including Medicare in-person or on the phone counseling sessions. 29 SLL volunteers donated 1068 hours. A total of 241 outreach events, either online or in-person, at health fairs and events included 26 Healthcare Fraud Waste and Abuse presentations.

For more details on our programs or how to reach us our website can help: [arrowheadaging.org](http://arrowheadaging.org)



Older American Act Title III, ARPA, and NSIP and State funding; IIIB: Supportive Services, IIIC Nutrition, IIID: Disease Prevention/Health Promotion Services, Title IIIE: Family Caregiver Support Services



# Duluth-Superior Metropolitan Interstate Council

*The MIC, as our region's designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), works to plan and prioritize infrastructure projects and encourage local policy decisions to provide a transportation system that serves all users throughout the greater Duluth-Superior area.*

## Key 2023 Planning Initiative: Duluth Area I-35 Corridor Plan



*The MIC's I-35 Corridor Plan provides a detailed guide for MnDOT's short- and long-term investments into this essential transportation route.*

In 2023, the [Duluth Area I-35 Corridor Plan](#) was finalized after a 2-year planning process and will support the continued safe and efficient movement of people and goods into and through the Twin Ports area.

This plan is one of the most extensive projects the MIC has undertaken. Its core product is a 20-year implementation plan that identifies critical maintenance needs, enhancement opportunities and strategies to guide and prioritize MnDOT's future investments into this essential transportation route.

Focused on a 14-mile segment from County Road 61 in Midway Township to 26th Avenue East in Duluth, the 2-year planning process included robust public engagement initiatives to define a community-supported vision for the future of the corridor, as well as detailed assessment of land use, transportation infrastructure, people and goods movements,

design and safety issues, and operational performance.

In addition, an unexpected but significant outcome of this plan was that it provided strong support for a grant application by the City of Duluth focused on the Spirit Valley/West Duluth and Downtown Duluth areas adjacent to the I-35 study area. The U.S. DOT subsequently awarded \$1.8 million to Duluth through its Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods grant program to build upon the foundation of the MIC's work and study those areas in greater detail.

## Key 2023 Planning Initiative: MIC Area Safety Action Plan

The MIC received a \$250,000 federal Safe Streets for All (SS4A) Planning Grant to develop a comprehensive MIC Area Safety Action Plan. It will provide a holistic, well-defined strategy to prevent serious injuries and fatalities on roads and at intersections throughout the Duluth-Superior area. It will incorporate the MIC's extensive data collection work conducted over the past two years, as well as input from an intensive public engagement initiative, to identify high risk/high priority locations, prioritize safety improvements and support targeted transportation investment decisions. The goal is to create safer roadways, not only for people who drive, but also for those who walk, bicycle, and take the bus.



## 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: Jim Berg (McGregor)  
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: 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: Laurence Cuffee, Jr. (Virginia)  
St. Louis County Townships: Cal Warwas (Eveleth)  
Bois Forte Tribal Council: Vacant  
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)

## 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: Travis Leiviska\*  
Carlton: Dick Brenner\*  
Cook: Ginny Storlie\*  
Itasca: John Johnson\*  
Koochiching: Destry Hell\*  
Lake: Jeremy Hurd\*  
St. Louis: Annie Harala\*  
St. Louis: Ashley Grimm

### AT-LARGE (CITIZEN) MEMBERS (8)

Dirk Davis (Morcom Township)  
Mike Hoops (Silver Creek)  
Joel Hoppe\* (McGregor)  
Paul Nevanen\* (International Falls)  
Don Niemi (Aitkin)  
Allen Rasmussen\* (International Falls)  
Vacant (2)

### ADVISORY MEMBERS (3)

AAAA Advisory Board: Pam Franklin\*  
DSMIC Policy Board: Vacant\*

### OFFICERS

Virginia Storlie\*, Chair  
John Johnson\*, Vice Chair  
Allen Rasmussen\*, Treasurer  
Jason Holliday\*, Secretary





**Arrowhead Regional  
Development Commission**



221 West 1st Street, Duluth, MN 55802

218-722-5545



800-232-0707

info@ardc.org

ardc.org

*EOE/AA/M/F/Vet/Disability Employer*

