



AEOA

ANNUAL REPORT

2021

NEW LEADERSHIP



Emily Bombich was selected as the new Planning Director in July 2021. Emily's educational background includes a Master of Business Administration from Bemidji State University, Bachelor's Degree in Quality Management from the University of Minnesota and an Associate of Arts in Liberal Arts from Lake Superior College.

She previously worked for seven years at Cleveland Cliffs Minorca Mine as a Lab Analyst/Lead Department Trainer and held the Next Generation District Coordinator position with the United Steelworkers.

Emily brings a passion for helping people and looks forward to helping community members change their life for the better. When asked what are three words that describe you Emily said motivated, passionate, and dependable.



Ryan O'Connell was selected as the new Information Systems Director in September 2021. Ryan holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from the College of St. Scholastica (CSS) with a double major in Computer Science/Information Systems & Organizational Behavior, and continued his education into the Master of Arts in IT Leadership program. He also holds IT industry certifications from Microsoft & CompTIA.

He previously worked for nearly 10 years at St. Louis County in various IT support roles. Prior to that, he worked for over two years as an Information Systems Technology Specialist II here at AEOA.

Ryan looks forward to unifying the IT team, creating greater efficiency in the delivery of IT service & support, and further securing the IT infrastructure & environment at AEOA. When asked what are three words that describe you Ryan said friendly, helpful, and techie.

OUR IMPACT



12 Counties



31,175
Individuals Served



56 Years in Action



320 Households
maintained safe,
affordable housing



493 Individuals
successfully exited
workforce programing



414 Children provided with
school readiness skills



13,091 Seniors maintained
independent living



389,194 Transportation
services provided



2,130,986 lbs of food
distributed during the
COVID-19 pandemic

Legislatively-designated to serve Cook, Lake, and St. Louis Counties.

INCREASING FOOD ACCESS

The Rutabaga Project is a partnership with AEOA and Iron Range Partnership for Sustainability. AEOA welcomed Heather Mahoney in April 2021 as the new Food Access and Rutabaga Project Manager.

Heather's position is currently funded by a Farmers Market Promotion Program (FMPP) grant from the USDA. She works with local food shelves, farmers, farmers markets, schools, and community-based initiatives such as the Food Forest, which is open to the public and located across from Salvation Army in Virginia, MN and the Community Garden for Pine Mill Court residents. The Rutabaga Project aims to increase access to healthy, local food by supporting both producers and consumers.

COVID-19 forced many businesses to get creative with the way they sell their goods. In 2020, farmers markets were deemed essential businesses but many switched to online sales platforms to reduce the customer interaction time. We found out that online sales brought a new group of customers to some markets. This year, we worked with five local producers to offer their products using an online sales platform. This platform allows customers to pre-order and pick up directly from the farmer or at a specific market location. It also allows wholesale customers like grocery stores and restaurants to view real time inventory and order directly from the farmer.

The Rutabaga Project recently launched it's 'Arrowhead Grown' campaign. Arrowhead Grown promotes the production and consumption of local food in Northeast MN. We've created a website (www.arrowheadgrown.org) which features a regional directory of local markets. We also have a Facebook page that features videos filmed at 10 local markets. In addition to promoting the market and vendors, we also share information about markets that offer SNAP EBT and Farmers Market Nutrition Programs (FMNP).



AEOA administers the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) EBT program at the Hibbing, Virginia, Tower, and Cook farmers markets. During the 2021 market season, a total of 226 SNAP EBT customers used their benefits at those four local markets. Of the 226 customers, 97 were brand new to attending the market. Customers accessed a total of \$4739 in EBT dollars, and thanks to MN Hunger Solutions, customers were able to receive an additional \$1975 to spend on EBT eligible goods. AEOA employees work with customers to process the EBT card transactions and manages reimbursements to the farmer.

SNAP EBT customers can purchase produce, meat, eggs and more with the SNAP EBT dollars at the Farmers Market.

For more information on the SNAP program, visit www.aeo.org/snap-outreach-application-assistance

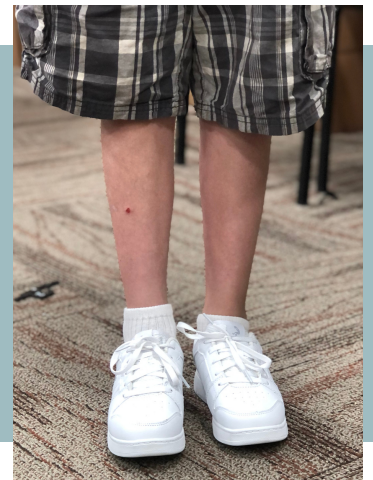
A NEW PAIR OF SHOES MEANS SO MUCH MORE

This summer, staff noticed children without shoes or wearing shoes too big, too small, or incredibly worn out. The Back-to-School Shoe Event was created for local children in need within communities near the Central Office building in Virginia, with aspirations for it to be an annual event. The goal was to collect and purchase at least 250 pairs of shoes and distribute before school started.

According to the Foot & Ankle Institute, 65% of kids wear the wrong size shoes, which can impact a child's ability to be mobile and exercise, potentially resulting in short to long term physical implications. Shoes too small can cause pain, discomfort, nerve damage, and deformities. Shoes too big may cause overuse of foot muscles in attempts to maintain stability. Worn out shoes elevate risk of heel pain, Achilles' tendonitis, ankle sprains, and stress fractures. It may prevent kids from playing and participating in activities, which could impact their mental health.

5,338 kids under age 18 live in poverty in St. Louis County (MN Compass). Often perceived as inability to meet food and housing needs.

Families also have needs frequently overlooked, such as clothing and shoes.



The realization that shoes and socks were a vital part of hygiene was established, allowing us to distribute not only new shoes and five pairs of socks, but also various types of kits. Families could choose from personal hygiene, baby nutrition or hygiene, and cleaning supply kits, as well as baby diapers and formula.

The Agency provided fun activities for kids, including a jump rope, ball, crayons, bubbles, and more. Additionally, the Rutabaga Project donated healthy snack bags that included a juice box, peanut butter crackers, a fruit cup, granola bar, and a fruit leather strip.

AEOA distributed 310 pairs of shoes, 1,550 pairs of socks, 277 snack bags, 371 Hygiene kits, and 112 packs of diapers. No kid was turned away and 310 kids started out the school year with healthy, happy feet!

BILL'S HOUSE RENOVATION



AEOA has owned and operated Bill's House Homeless Shelter for over 20 years. It was constructed in 2000 and consists of four units for emergency housing, eight units for transitional housing, a single shared kitchen, and a private bedroom and bathroom for staff. Individuals can reside in emergency housing units for a maximum of 30 days and transitional units for up to 90 days.

For most of the last 20 years, Bill's House was the only option for homeless individuals north of Duluth. Guests of the shelter are tracked upon entry and exit from the shelter, as are those who must be turned away due to lack of space. In 2020, the shelter served 222 households and was forced to turn away 2,054 people due to lack of capacity. The COVID-19 pandemic has only made this situation worse.

The shelter has run at capacity since the day it opened and, in addition to normal wear and tear over the years, it has deferred maintenance due to funding limitations so it is in dire need of several repairs. AEOA has secured \$630,994—mostly from St. Louis County—needed to complete the rehabilitation.

The rehabilitation project includes interior and exterior upgrades, safety measures, and architectural work. The interior work includes a new kitchen and bathrooms, flooring, doors, lighting, paint, appliances, insulation, locks, storage, as well as a new security system, electrical work, and HVAC system. The exterior upgrades include a new roof, windows, doors, siding, gutters, heat pump enclosure, as well as creating two sidewalks and a parking lot that are ADA compliant.

AEOA anticipates the project will be completed by December 31, 2021. We expect Bill's House to serve roughly 100 individuals through the remainder of 2021 and about 160 individuals each year after that. This much needed rehabilitation project will ensure Bill's House will remain viable for the next 20 years to serve individuals and families experiencing housing insecurity.

ADAPTING TO COVID-19

Many had hoped 2021 would bring us back to previous “norms.” However, that hasn’t been the case. 2021 still saw many changes and battles while trying to navigate a world-wide pandemic. The world may seem to be changing daily, and that is not so different here at AEOA. Over the last year, AEOA has learned to adapt, change, and grow so that we can still serve our communities.

Central Services

AEOA’s Central Services Department, consisting of Fiscal, Human Resources, Information Technology, Planning, and Administration, continued operating during the pandemic but did so in a hybrid manner. Because of the electronic processes already in place, it easily allowed staff to transition to a virtual environment. While some Central Services remained onsite, most telecommuted. They worked with staff and external customers to adapt program delivery like payroll, accounts payable, hiring, etc. to allow for seamless services in an electronic manner. We understand that in-person to virtual services may create some challenges for those we serve; we are happy to report staff adapted well and it allowed services to be provided in flexible and diverse ways.

AEOA has numerous funding streams along with state and federal guidance related to the pandemic which have guided our decision making. This led to new policies, processes, and staff training which are still in place today. Throughout the pandemic, staff have shown their passion and dedication to getting work done, even if it meant shifting to a virtual setting and paperless environment.

Employees were finally able to go back to their offices on July 6, 2021. The reopening of the building meant the public was also allowed back so we could serve them in-person. The safety and health of our customers, employees, and community were of the utmost importance to AEOA, so masks have and are still required at this time. Virtual platforms are still being used when necessary. AEOA is proud of how we have adapted and continue to serve the community in one of the biggest times of need.

Employment & Training

E&T staff needed to still deliver services during the pandemic, even if it meant they had to be creative. CareerForce locations were closed, and staff continued to work remotely. Workshops, meetings, and trainings were moved to video conferencing, while Adult Education classrooms moved to an online delivery platform. Programs worked quickly to acquire the necessary technology to facilitate the new service delivery and participants had technology needs to be met in order to continue to participate and achieve their goals.

E&T was provided program funding that allowed the purchase of Chromebooks for a Lending Library to continue job search, GED preparation, education, and computer literacy. Virtual services were offered through email, phone, text, and web meetings. Participants were encouraged to continue to attend workshops via Zoom to assist in their education and employment goals. Moving forward, E&T will continue to provide hybrid services for participants as we transition to one-on-one services.



COVID-19: ADAPTING

Headstart

In March 2020, all educational activities went to virtual learning through Zoom with activity packets to accommodate families with limited online experiences and resources. We worked with Planning to assist families who did not have access to a computer and internet services by completing the application to purchase a \$20 computer through PCs for People and/or a \$20 T-Mobile Internet hotspot. Additionally, we provided free meal deliveries to family homes.

Through the summer 2020, we had more time to plan for the 2020-21 program year. We were able to offer more intentional lessons through Zoom, during times when schools were closed. When classrooms were open, staff and children were required to wear masks and follow social distancing. Further, parent meetings and socializations were offered to support the family service piece of Head Start. Any in-person activities followed strict social distancing and mask wearing requirements. Internally, staff continued with regular meetings using Zoom. We continue to use virtual meetings when there are school closures. While the weather is comfortable, we hold meetings outdoors.

Senior and Nutrition Services

In order to still provide for our communities, Senior and Nutrition Services had to adapt right away. Congregate sites had to close their indoor dining from March 2020 to June 30, 2021, however most of these places continued with curbside or takeout meals.

Before COVID-19 there were 46 congregate sites, 6 of these sites closed during the pandemic. Volunteers that brought meals were required to wear masks and gloves while delivering these meals. To limit exposure, they would knock on the door and hang the meal bags on the resident's doorknob.

Additional funding was allocated to the grocery service to make 1,500 reassurance calls to grocery and nutrition clients. In the first quarter of 2021, 2,100 ten meal kits were delivered to nutrition clients. Shelf stable meals kits were also delivered.

Housing

To limit exposure to COVID-19, staff had to become creative to still serve their clients. Case managers did daily contact over the phone, staff dropped off/picked up housing applications and verifications, as well as offered curbside pickup of food shelf boxes for those in need of help with food. Bill's House has been fully staffed, however, staff staggered shifts. Residents and staff were cautious about contact with others and sanitized living areas frequently.

It has been a community effort to keep people experiencing homelessness or at-risk of homelessness safe. The Virginia Fire Department donated masks, Salvation Army donated rubbing alcohol for disinfectant wipes, Aurora food shelf continuously donated food, and local churches helped when needed. AEOA partnered with St. Louis County Public Health to secure hotel rooms for people experiencing homelessness that exhibited COVID-19 symptoms so they could quarantine for 14 days and still have access to food, cleaning services, and mental health services. Being isolated has created a big impact on mental health for staff and clients.

Arrowhead Transit

Transit's focus throughout 2021 was attempting to return to normal operations. Employment issues have been the largest focus with driver and dispatch employment levels at or below operational needs.

We have continued our vehicle disinfection program for our buses and have utilized electrostatic fogging machines for possible and confirmed COVID-19 exposures in effected workspaces in Transit and in other Agency departments upon request.

Transit continues to provide fare free transportation in our service area through 2021 for anyone traveling to or from COVID-19 testing or vaccination sites.

Transit partnered with Scenic River Medical Center to offer free transportation to their pop-up vaccination clinic in Eveleth and offered several routes over a 60 day period that provided service to deep rural areas near Eveleth that did not have normal transit options.

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Central Services

Guides, supports, and unifies AEOA services to maximize resources and ensure progress and accountability in carrying out the mission of the Agency.

- Administration
- AEOA Foundation Fund
- Fiscal Services
- Human Resources
- Information Technology
- Planning

Employment and Training

To enhance the employability and skills of individuals so that they may achieve their life goals.

- Adult Education (ABE)
- Adult Scholarship Program
- Career Pathways
- Diversionary Work Program
- Dislocated Worker Program
- English Language Learning
- Free at Last and Freestyle
- Family Assets for Independence in Minnesota (Matched Savings Accounts)
- Minnesota Family Investment Program
- Minnesota Family Resiliency Program
- Senior Employment Programs
- SNAP Outreach
- Youthbuild

Arrowhead Head Start

To work with young children and families on healthy prenatal and early childhood development, school readiness, and supporting their success in life.

- Early Head Start
- Preschool Center-Based
- Preschool Home-Based

Housing Services

To build communities by helping people meet their basic living needs; have affordable, quality housing, and to improve their quality of living.

- Business Energy Retrofit
- Downtown Building Rehab
- Emergency & Transitional Housing
- Energy Assistance
- Healthcare Access
- Homeless Youth Housing
- Homeownership Education and Financial Assistance
- Homeless Prevention & Rehousing
- Permanent Supportive & Rental Housing
- Single-family Rehab
- Transitional Housing
- Weatherization

Senior and Nutrition Services

To help seniors live healthy, independent lives with nutritious meals and services.

- Arrowhead RSVP
- Bone Builders Exercise Class
- Food Access
 - Food Shelves
 - Rutabaga Project
- Grocery Delivery Service
- Medical Loan Closet
- Nutrition Services
 - Bundled Services
 - Meals on Wheels
 - Senior Dining
- Northland Volunteer Center
- Senior Expo/Carnival
- SNAP Outreach
- Tax Preparation Assistance

Arrowhead Transit

To provide affordable, safe, accessible, public transportation and supports independent living and self-reliance.

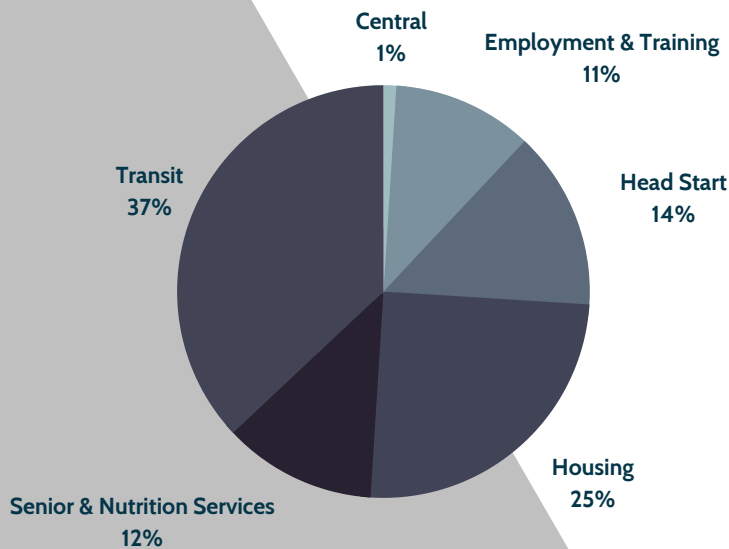
- Arrowhead Transit
- Dial-a-Ride
- Volunteer Driver Program

www.aeoa.org / 800-662-5711 / 218-749-2912

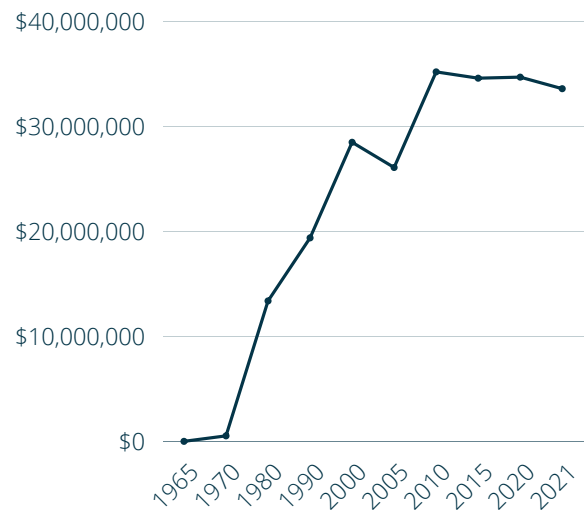
Aitkin - Carlton - Cass - Chisago - Cook - Crow Wing - Isanti - Itasca - Koochiching - Lake - Pine - St. Louis

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

Unaudited Annual Expenditures July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021



Historical Levels of Funding 1965-2021



Unaudited Statement of Financial Position as of June 30, 2020

Current Year Balance	
Assets	
Current Assets	
Cash and Cash Equivalents	8,970,601.63
Grant Receivables	3,124,761.83
Other Receivables	1,197,189.17
Inventory	269,794.65
Prepaid Expenses	383,020.99
Other Current Assets	133,873.79
Total Current Assets	14,079,242.06
Property and Equipment	
Property and Equipment, Net	14,169,743.21
Total Property and Equipment	14,169,743.21
Non Current Assets	
Loan Receivable	5,000,590.69
Other Receivable	400,000.00
Total Non Current Assets	5,400,590.69
Total Assets	33,649,575.96

Liabilities	
Current Liabilities	
Accounts Payable	799,621.26
Accrued Paid Leave	1,522,401.35
Unearned Revenue	485,735.75
Total Current Liabilities	2,807,734.23
Long Term Liabilities	
Deferred Revenue - loans	11,575,502.23
Long Term Debt	3,723,565.31
Total Long Term Liabilities	15,299,067.54
Total Liabilities	18,106,777.64
Net Assets	
Unrestricted - undesignated	1,492,353.80
Unrestricted-designated for programs	16,479,811.48
Current year change in net assets	555,340.64
Total Net Assets	15,542,798.32
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	33,649,575.96

2021 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

David Abazs
Consumer Sector

Ben DeNucci
Public Sector

Reggie Engebritson
Private Sector

Marisa Fontaine
Consumer Sector

Paul McDonald
Public Sector

Beverly Green
Private Sector

Bethany Johnson
Consumer Sector

Michael Jugovich
Public Sector

Robert Hietala
Private Sector

Jeff Kletscher
Chairperson
Consumer Sector

Kevin Adee
1st Vice-Chairperson
Public Sector

Laura Perry
2nd Vice-Chairperson
Private Sector

Thomas Cvar
Treasurer
Private Sector

Dana Waldron
Secretary
Private Sector

Cathy Zelinski
Consumer Sector

Les Northrup
Consumer Sector

Gary Peterson
Public Sector

Cherie Averill Manner
Private Sector

Diane Taylor
Consumer Sector

Laurie Westerlund
Public Sector

Bob Larkin
Private Sector

Robin Raplinger
Consumer Sector

Peter Walsh
Public Sector

Brianna Holland
Private Sector

Glenda Wickwire
Consumer Sector

Keith Nelson
Public Sector

David Mills
Public Sector

Strengthening communities by providing opportunities for people experiencing social and economic challenges.

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