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Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency
2017 Annual Budget
Total Annual Budget as of 6/30/2017 = $45,601,309

Employment & Training $4,899,949 11%

Senior Services $5,298,165 8%

Housing $20,352,460 46%

Head Start $3,011,823 7%

Transit $3,306,608 27%

Central $3,396,447 2%

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2017 Annual Report

AEOA STRENGTHENS COMMUNITIES BY PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR
PEOPLE EXPERIENCING SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CHALLENGES
AEOA’s Employment & Training Department has over five decades of experience moving individuals of diverse backgrounds from Public Assistance to employment. Two of our key programs, Lives in Transition (LIT) and Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP), saw drastic increases in funding this year, allowing for expansion of services to more people.

### Lives in Transition (LIT)
LIT is an income-based, pre-employment program which helps participants develop pre-employment skills such as job search skills, life skills, and employment skills. The focus is to help participants and their families achieve self-sufficiency. To be eligible for LIT, a participant must have provided unpaid household services for at least two years, have lost their primary source of income, and now find that they must support their family and themselves. This loss of the primary source of income can happen through separation, death, divorce, disability of a spouse or partner, deployed military member or returning veteran, or loss of Public Assistance. Additionally, we partner with community agencies, WorkForce Center partners, and DEED/DHS programs and services.

Based on program performance and an increase in participants served, AEOA not only received a portion of a legislative direct appropriation, but overall achieved a 26% increase in funding. This allowed for expanding services to new territories and serving more individuals in-transition in the areas already served.

### Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP)
SCSEP is designed to promote part-time, temporary employment through which program participants are engaged in community service and receive work experience and job skills that can lead to unsubsidized employment. It is AEOA’s goal to enhance employment opportunities for older individuals and to promote older workers as a solution for businesses seeking a trained, qualified, and reliable workforce. This program serves individuals age 55 and over and has income eligibility guidelines.

The SCSEP program saw a $264,090 increase in funding this year through a partnership with Senior Service America, Incorporated (SSAI). SSAI is a national non-profit organization that provides employment opportunities to low-income and other adults 55+ in 34 states, DC, and Puerto Rico.

As one of only 19 funded projects, these new dollars will allow for an additional 36 seniors to be served in Cook, Itasca, Koochiching, Lake, and St. Louis Counties.

### Expanding Employment Services
**CONNECTING OLDER ADULTS AND THOSE IN TRANSITION WITH EMPLOYMENT SUPPORTS**

In August of this year, Arrowhead Transit was able to fill the gaps in their bus service using a 2.37 million dollar two-year grant from MnDOT’s Greater Minnesota New Service Expansion Program for each of their larger Dial-a-Ride services. In Virginia, an additional bus provides top-of-the-hour service to the new Walmart located a mile out of town. This additional bus service significantly decreases wait time for passengers during heavy usage. In Carlton County, an additional bus provides daily transportation from Esko, Carlton, and Scanlon into Cloquet. This bus also provides better service for the Cloquet Dial-a-Ride passengers. In Pine City, the Dial-a-Ride buses are able to begin operating at 7:00 AM, allowing people to use the bus service to get to work. This bus also decreases wait time during the busy morning hours.

In International Falls, an additional bus from 8:00 to 9:00 AM and from 2:00 to 5:00 PM resolved several bottlenecks that were a barrier to using the bus service for those with employment. Ridership response has been immediate. In both Virginia and International Falls, rides increased 15%; in Pine, 12%; and in Grand Rapids, 6%.

Also with the grant, Arrowhead Transit was able to start a brand new seven-day-a-week Dial-a-Ride service in Hermantown. Monday through Friday, already 15 to 30 individuals are using the service; and anywhere from 10 to 20 individuals use the service on Saturdays and Sundays.

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“Arrowhead Transit is a premier public transportation system. They do things right up on the Arrowhead.”

Ed Murphy, Executive Director Open Your Heart to the Hungry and Homeless
Four of AEOA’s youth programs collaborated across counties to create a vegetable garden at our Grand Rapids facility. Youth from AEOA’s Free at Last Program in Grand Rapids, YouthBuild in Virginia, and Pathways to Employment Readiness (PERY) in both communities came together to build raised bed gardens, install sand and dirt, and plant herbs and vegetables.

Free at Last provides at-risk youth with independent living skills, while PERY and YouthBuild are career pathway programs intending to provide youth the skills needed to succeed in high-wage, in-demand industries. The youth also partnered with Itasca Life Options, a program aimed at providing employment for people with developmental disabilities.

The Virginia YouthBuild Program wrote and received a youth entrepreneur grant for $1,000 from the Northland Foundation, aimed at building raised gardens for the Virginia Rutabaga Project. They used their learning from the Rutabaga Project to construct the additional beds at the AEOA Grand Rapids Service Center to help youth and Itasca Life Options participants engage in the life-long skill of gardening.

The YouthBuild participants built the raised beds and Hawkinson Construction of Grand Rapids delivered the sand, rock, and top soil for the raised beds. Itasca Life Options’ clients assisted in filling the beds with the rock and sand. It was a big project; so to help with the filling of the beds, Casper Construction came with an ASV to fill the raised beds. Finally, youth in the Free at Last and PERY Programs planted seeds for the garden.

Youth watched as tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, pumpkins, onions, basil, and rosemary grew in the garden. Youth are enjoying the fruits of their labor as they harvest plants throughout the season. This project will benefit youth for years into the future, as they are learning to plant their own vegetables and enjoying the harvest.

At the age of 22, Joe was transitioning from Public Assistance after having taken care of his ex-girlfriend’s kids while she grew her career. They broke up after two years, leaving him no choice but to move in with his father. He was struggling to care for his financially unstable elderly father while attending college. A friend at Hibbing Community College referred him to the Lives in Transition Program. After meeting with LIT Counselor Amanda, they began working on his resume, on-line appearance, teaching him how to interview for jobs, and etiquette when applying for higher paying positions. Now he is expecting a child with his new girlfriend, and both are about to graduate from Hibbing Community College.

Joe was very motivated to find employment and applied to Personal Dynamics for an Aquatic Invasive Species Inspector position, Cliff’s Natural Resources, Keefac, US Steel, and ERP. After countless hours of tailoring his resume with the assistance of the Grand Rapids WorkForce Center, he was called for not just one, but two jobs! He feels assistance with the mock interview and follow-up networking through LinkedIn is what landed him both positions.

Joe secured his position with US Steel at $24.00 an hour as an electrical utility worker. He is very happy and proud that he can support his new family. He is grateful for the extra support LIT provided for his success!
Pride in Success

A TESTAMENT TO THE HUMAN SPIRIT

Jayne was mom of twins, working three part-time jobs when a sudden layoff occurred. Her partner struggled with chemical dependency issues that overtook his life and ended his connection with Jayne and her kids. Jayne was faced with trying to provide for her children, keep her car working, and prevent foreclosure on her home.

Jayne’s friends, two Virginia WorkForce Center employees, Kris and Renee, connected her with AEOA’s Carissa Ebnet. After talking for a while, both realized that Jayne would be a great fit for Lives in Transition (LIT) and the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP).

Jayne’s history as a home decorator, cosmetologist, and reiki practitioner made her a great fit for working with the Rutabaga Project. Given Jayne’s outgoing personality and drive to help others, she has flourished in the position helping to further establish the Virginia Market Square Farmers Market and reinvent the Hibbing Farmers Market.

Jayne serves food stamp recipients with Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) assistance and processes all payments for market matches with vendors. She has used her marketing skills to further expand the customer base of both markets.

Along her journey, Jayne has met many people she attributes for helping her toward success. She says Brian, Chris, Emily, Jeannie, and Marlise have welcomed her with open arms and embraced her skills, allowing her inner spirit to shine at the Market.

At the Market, Jayne has learned others’ stories and testifies to the unbreakable human spirit that through reaching out for help, finding welcoming partners in the work, and bearing witness to your personal story, a person can begin the journey to success.

AEOA’s Housing Department continues to seek funding to allow Jayne a more permanent position with the Rutabaga Project. Jayne is thrilled to be working and appreciates all of AEOA’s programs that are offered to the community, especially the ones that helped her get back to work!

Arrowhead Transit

One of our best means of getting the word out is through billboards. This one advertises new services in the area.

Housing Services

Malita Spears visits the Virginia Market Square Farmers Market with her son

Head Start

Classroom teachers help their young attendees learn the basics of personal hygiene

Senior Services

The annual carnival is always fun!

Bone Builder class for seniors

Jayne working with a vendor at the Virginia Market Square Farmers Market

Jayne sharing her bright spirit with GreenCorps service member, Emily, at the Farmers Market

Jayne working with a vendor at the Virginia Market Square Farmers Market

Jayne sharing her bright spirit with GreenCorps service member, Emily, at the Farmers Market