



### **Our Need:**

AEOA leases a 12,500-square-foot area at Rich Lees' Central Business Center at 2900 East Beltline in Hibbing. The yearly rental expense for this space is \$87,979. Although we have occupied this facility since 2015, our operational needs have surpassed capacity. We also rent a 2,627-square-foot kitchen in the Lee Center in Hibbing, one of our largest kitchens. We risk losing this rental, which would be detrimental to our operation and impact seniors across the entire service area.

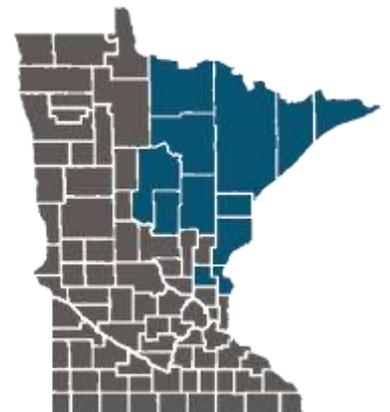
### **Our Ask:**

AEOA is actively seeking funding to construct a new facility for our Housing and Senior & Nutrition Services Programs, with the aim of establishing a regional hub in Hibbing. A crucial aspect of this initiative is AEOA's objective to own the new building, enabling us to manage long-term costs effectively. Currently, these programs operate in rented facilities, imposing constraints on their potential growth and limiting the number of clients served in northeast Minnesota due to rental expenses.

AEOA has collaborated with the City of Hibbing to secure a piece of land and develop a new facility spanning approximately 34,000 square feet. This strategically located facility in Hibbing will meet our present needs and position itself as a regional hub for our Housing and Senior Nutrition Services Programs, facilitating outreach and services across northeast Minnesota. **The total project cost is \$16 million, and AEOA is requesting \$10 million to cover the expenses associated with designing, constructing, and establishing this new facility.** AEOA has engaged with St. Louis, Aitkin, Carlton, Itasca, Koochiching, and Lake counties and plans to engage with IRRR to fulfill the remaining balance of this funding requirement. We tentatively have agreements with Cook, Lake, and St. Louis counties. This expansion will involve a substantial investment by the Agency, which is equivalent to \$5 million, encompassing our staff, training, vehicles, and equipment.

### **About AEOA:**

For over 59 years, the Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency (AEOA) – a private, 501(c)3 nonprofit Community Action Agency – has served as a major provider of self-sufficiency services to low-income and disadvantaged persons. AEOA's service delivery area includes 12 primarily rural counties in Northeastern and Central Minnesota, including Aitkin, Carlton, Cass, Chisago, Cook, Crow Wing, Isanti, Itasca, Koochiching, Lake, Pine, and St. Louis. Over the past five decades, the Agency has grown in response to community needs and currently offers services through six service departments, including Employment and Training, Head Start, Housing, Senior and Nutrition Services, and Transit. In 2023, AEOA touched the lives of over 38,000 people experiencing social and economic challenges.



**Senior and Nutrition Services** helps individuals meet the demands of daily living, improve the quality of their lives, and gain access to nutritious food in Aitkin, Cook, Itasca, Lake, St. Louis, Carlton, and Koochiching counties.

702 Third Ave South, Virginia, Minnesota 55792-2797  
(218) 749-2912 · (800) 662-5711 · FAX: (218)749-2944

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ARROWHEAD ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY AGENCY

This department collaborates with 25 subcontractors, from small community restaurants to medical facilities, to provide meal services across an expansive geographical area. Five agency-operated onsite kitchens are also rented, with the two largest being Duluth and Hibbing.

On an annual basis, the Hibbing kitchen prepares 64,000 meals for seniors in the Northland region, covering Chisholm, Hibbing, Keewatin, Nashwauk, and providing bundled frozen meal delivery to Aitkin (440 meals/month), Itasca (815 meals/month), and northern St. Louis (1,050 meals/month) counties. A dedicated team of six part-time staff members, working 5 to 6 hours a day, diligently prepares 300 meals daily, five days a week.

Establishing a new regional Hub would enable us to enhance our operations, serving more seniors cost-effectively and efficiently. Furthermore, it would increase our capacity to deliver frozen meal services to Koochiching, Lake, and South St. Louis. This expansion also opens opportunities for existing staff to transition into full-time roles and allows for the hiring of an additional three to four staff members.

Last year, Senior Nutrition Provided **378,782 meals to 8,492 seniors** across the programs service area.

Over **187,000 meals** were delivered to **homebound seniors**.

In partnership with Second Harvest Heartland, we distributed **36,100 frozen meals** to individuals who were homeless, had a **disability**, or members of **BIPOC communities**.

**Housing Services** builds our communities in Cook, Lake, and St. Louis Counties by helping people meet their basic living needs, have affordable, quality housing, and improve their quality of life.

In Hibbing, we have a workforce of 43 Housing staff members, and we are expanding our team to approximately 80 staff members. The goal is to address the increasing demands of our communities, and we will persist in these efforts with the support of our partners.

**Energy Assistance & Weatherization**

- Weatherization insulates, air seals, and performs mechanical work for **316** income-eligible **households** last year.
- Energy Assistance Program provided mechanical work & inspections to **75 families** last year.
- Conservation Improvement Programs in partnership with utilities to make energy efficient programs helped **567 homeowners** last year.

**Home Rehabilitation**

- The Rehab program makes basic home improvements to the safety, livability, energy efficiency and accessibility for eligible community members. Last year this program served **32 households** and has **60 projects in the works**.
- In partnership with St. Louis County the Septic System Program completed **15 projects** last year and has **18 projects in the works**.

**Housing Supports**

- Emergency Housing Programs assisted **25 households** last year with \$20,000 in funding.
- The Live Well at Home Program made safety and accessibility repairs to homes of **29 seniors** allowing them to safely age in place.

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