



Work Program | FY 2024

Appalachian Council of Governments



FY 2024 Work Program

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Introduction

The Mission Statement of the Appalachian Council of Governments is to assist the local governments of Anderson, Cherokee, Greenville, Oconee, Pickens, and Spartanburg Counties, and such other organizations as may be decided by the Board, through providing relevant approaches to local and regional needs in economic development, social planning and development, and public administration.

The baseline mission of ACOG is to enhance the lives of the residents of the six-county South Carolina Appalachian region. Since its formation in 1965, the way the COG has carried out its mission has changed and evolved. While services to local governments remains a core mission of the agency, the impact of the agency is quite broad. In terms of budget and staff size, ACOG's largest program area is Aging Services. Over the years, activities of the Grant Services program have often been of greatest interest to local governments. Public funding is a continuing challenge at all levels of government with demands for services expanding. In response, Government and Planning Services are becoming increasingly sought after components of ACOG's services. The Economic Development Services program has a direct impact on the people and entities served by the agency through the support of economic development activities in the region in addition to supporting other related projects in our communities. While the agency's primary focus is to serve the public sector, it is understood that private sector success is critical to the prosperity of the region and the well-being of its citizens. Of course, promoting strong government enhances private sector success. In addition, the agency's workforce development and entrepreneurial loan services provide direct impact to businesses that invest in the region.

Expectations and needs of clients and stakeholders continue to evolve. Councils of Governments must be flexible to adapt to these changing conditions. The constant question is "how do we apply our core mission to the changing environment?" It is a challenge to maintain excellence in existing areas of service while exploring new opportunities. The extent to which ACOG meets this challenge will determine its success, as well as its relevance in the future.

The Appalachian Council of Governments FY 2024 Work Program is focused on accomplishing our historic mission while meeting the needs of the future. Services to local governments, services in support of economic development, and services to people remain our focus. Regionalism also remains at the core of the COG's mission. However, it is not regionalism simply for regionalism's sake. Rather, ACOG's efforts are focused on the promotion of regional efforts that target areas of common challenges and regional solutions that create the best outcomes for everyone involved.

Aging Services

Overall Mission

The overall mission of the Appalachian Area Agency on Aging (AAA) is to assist seniors, their caregivers and those with disabilities by maintaining their dignity and independence in their homes and communities. The AAA is the designated regional lead agency for the development of a comprehensive, coordinated, and cost effective home and community based service system. The AAA contracts with local service providers to provide group dining, home delivered meals, in-home services, and transportation services. Services for the Family Caregiver, Long Term Care Ombudsman, Information and Assistance, and Benefits Counseling programs are provided directly by the AAA.

Program Area: Family Caregiver

Purpose

The Family Caregiver Support Program (FCSP) is designed to reduce the stress of caregivers in order for them to continue to provide quality care in the home. The program assists those who are providing care to: a person(s) 60 years or older who is unable to do at least two (2) activities of daily living without significant assistance, or has a diagnosis of Alzheimer's or one of its related diseases by offering support, identifying needs, and procuring services.

The Older Relative Caregivers Program (ORC) is another component of the FCSP. This program assists older relative caregivers (55+) serving as the primary caregiver for a child under the age of 18 or an individual with a disability (18 and over; under 60). The child must live with the relative caregiver fulltime and be related by blood, marriage, adoption, or be of fictive kin. Assistance through this program provides older relative caregivers with support, resources, respite, counseling, and/or supplemental supplies (limited).

Activities

Family Caregiver Advocates provide the following to all Caregivers:

- Information, referral, and assistance to identified services
- Options counseling that promotes problem solving and decision making
- Respite Services
 - Caregiver's choice of in-home respite, respite at an overnight facility, or respite with an adult day center
 - ORC's choice of summer camps, field trips, extracurricular activities, tutoring, etc.
- Counseling Services
- Education and training
- Supplemental supplies such as safety equipment/hardware, incontinence supplies, and nutritional supplements

Outcomes/Results

When family caregivers contact the Family Caregiver Support Program, they are connected with a caregiver advocate who assesses their needs using a person-centered approach in order to provide the appropriate support for each caregiver.

Through respite care services, caregivers are given the opportunity to take a much-needed psychological, emotional, and/or physical break from the duty involved in providing daily care.

The in-home education component of the FCSP is an additional support service to assist family caregivers in their journey providing the necessary tools on how to be the best caregiver they can be. Knowing how to care for their loved ones can reduce the stresses of caregiving, with the hopes of preventing caregiver burnout.

Changes from Past Year

- The Older Relative Caregiver Program has grown exponentially due to outreach initiatives and building relationships within the kinship care support community.
- The FCSP's in-home education component has proven to be successful. There is now a substantial wait list of family caregivers who have requested this service, and the list is growing by the day.

Program Area: Ombudsman

Purpose

The Regional Long Term Care Ombudsman Program investigates complaints made by or on behalf of residents in long-term care facilities.

Ombudsman staff advocate for residents by providing mediations and consultations as needed. Special trainings are offered and provided per request for facility staff on Residents Rights, the laws regarding Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation, and Dealing with Difficult Behaviors. Community presentations are provided to help educate those in the community about the Ombudsman Program. In addition, information about Advance Directives is provided.

Ombudsman staff provides friendly visits to facilities to monitor and ensure residents have access to an Ombudsman.

Activities

- Unannounced on-site visits are made to facilities for conducting investigations.
- Continuous efforts are made to ensure timely and responsive access to the services of the Long Term Care Ombudsman Program. The large volume of cases received requires staff to prioritize cases based on the severity of the complaint. The most serious cases of abuse and neglect are given top priority.
- Friendly visits to facilities are completed by staff and trained volunteers.
- Ongoing community education and training are offered to educate staff on various issues.

Outcomes/Results

- Providing a resource for residents, families, agencies, and any other interested parties to obtain information and assistance will help resolve problems with long term care facilities.
- Public awareness of factors related to abuse, neglect, and exploitation will result in increased reporting.
- The Friendly Visitor Program will continue to grow as new volunteers are consistently entering the program when experienced volunteers retire. This will prevent service gaps in the participating facilities.

Changes from Past Year

- Ombudsmen are again visiting the sites/residents in person, full time and no longer restricted by COVID-19 protocols limiting visitation.
- The Friendly Visitor Program has returned to a normal schedule of conducting friendly visits and continues to recruit and train new volunteers to increase friendly visits.
- The Ombudsman Department is fully staffed with eight Ombudsman after limited staffing in the previous year due to staff turnover.

Program Area: Information & Assistance/Benefits Counseling

Purpose

This program provides personal assistance in a “one-stop-shop” environment to older adults, people with disabilities and their caregivers. All pertinent aspects of the individual’s situation are reviewed to ensure that the most appropriate referrals are made to meet their needs. An evaluation is made of: financial resources, age, diagnoses, current insurance coverage, activities of daily living, transportation, family supports, rent/mortgage, nutrition, advance directive/legal needs, and physical/mental well-being. All of these factors assist in determining qualifications for obtaining assistance to their request.

Activities

- Link older adults, caregivers, and disabled adults with needed services.
- Provide information and assistance to consumers unable to access other channels and who prefer locally based services.
- Increase targeted outreach to identify and enroll consumers in eligible benefit programs.
- Develop working partnerships with individuals, groups, and organizations that can assist in identifying resources and expand outreach efforts.
- Educate consumers on methods to prevent Medicare waste, fraud, and abuse.
- Provide up-to-date information on Medicare, supplements and health insurance to older adults, caregivers, and disabled adults.
- Provide information on Medicare Prescription programs, Medicare Advantage Plans, Healthy Connections PRIME, Healthcare Marketplace, and Prescription Assistance Programs.
- Train and recruit volunteers.

Outcomes/Results

- Consumers will be able to understand and access services in their local community.
- Increase in the number of beneficiaries contacting the Appalachian Area Agency on Aging (AAAA) for assistance.
- Provide consistent, accurate, up-to-date information available through the AAAA website at www.scacog.org.
- Increase the number of new and regular visitors to the AAAA website (www.scacog.org).
- Develop additional partnerships to expand outreach efforts.

Changes from Past Year

- Call volume continues to increase as result of the COVID19 pandemic, the COVID19 vaccination efforts, and the growth in the aged population.
- A third full-time Information and Referral Specialist was hired in 2021 to replace the part-time position previously in place.
- Client waiting lists are now increasing for all services offered.

Program Area: Nutrition

The Nutrition Program provides congregate meal dining and home delivered meals to 21 sites located in the region. The purpose of this program is to provide a nutritious meal to those over age 60 and at nutritional risk. The dining sites also provide socialization and activities to reduce isolation. In addition to a noon-time meal, programs and activities are planned such as structured fitness and exercise classes, day trips and outings to local points of interest, educational programming, games, computer classes, music and dance, language classes, arts, and crafts and other creative programs.

Activities

Home delivered meals benefit seniors age 60 and over who are:

- Ill and incapacitated.
- Unable to leave home unassisted except for medical/other essential appointments.
- Unable to purchase and/or prepare food.
- Without anyone in the home who is available to prepare a meal on a daily basis.
- A spouse of any age in the home of an eligible senior.

Outcomes/Results

- The expected outcomes of this program are to reduce hunger and food insecurity, promote increased socialization for older individuals, promote the health and well-being of older adults, and delay adverse health conditions through access to nutrition, disease prevention, and health promotion services.

Changes from the Past Year

All dining sites closed on March 16, 2020, due to the COVID19 pandemic. The majority of dining sites in the region have reopened. Attendance has gradually increased at centers as pandemic fears and restrictions have relaxed. Many of the congregate sites in the region now have wait lists for clients who want to participate in the congregate dining program.

Program Area: Home & Community Based Services

These supportive services enable seniors to remain in their homes for as long as possible. The services provided in this region include:

- Transportation
- Chore/housekeeping (Level 1)
- Homemaker with some personal care (Level 2)
- Legal Assistance
- Respite Care
- Evidence Based Health Programs
- Minor Home Repair

Transportation includes rides to doctors' offices, grocery stores, pharmacies, senior centers meals sites, and other critical daily activities. Personal care, homemaking, and chore services provide assistance to seniors that are unable to perform (ADLs) Activities of Daily Living (such as eating, dressing, bathing) or (IADLs) Instrumental Activities of Daily Living (such as shopping, housework). Legal assistance provides support for determining client's rights, benefits, and entitlements.

Changes from Last Year

- The Home & Community Based Services program will maintain the same level of service in the coming year although many of these services are experiencing wait lists due to growth of the senior population and inflation, which has increased overall demand for senior services.

Grant Services

Overall Mission

The Grant Services Department provides resources to assist local governments and their agencies, focusing on a wide range of community and economic development related projects that contribute to ensuring a strong economically viable region.

Program Area: Economic and Community Development

Purpose

The Grant Services staff assists local and state economic and community development officials and service providers with project planning, project development, and grant writing. The staff serves as consultant, liaison, problem solver, and project manager to make certain the project is feasible and contributes to a healthy, safe, and sustainable community.

Activities

Determine Community Needs – Research, analyze, and compile documentation on community development needs, including obstacles to community competitiveness.

- Identify citizens and organizations that provide assistance, guidance, and input on community needs.
- Solicit input from the broad community and conduct outreach.
- Prioritize needs.
- Prepare needs assessment documents.

Project Identification – Evaluate Priority Needs

- Determine the most appropriate project to achieve the desired outcome.
- Identify a project based on a needs assessment.
- Review any existing plans relevant to a potential project.
- Determine project feasibility and eligibility.
- Seek collaborative partners.

Determine Funding Source - The objective is to match the needs of the community to the grant funding available to maximize opportunities and resources.

Discuss the potential project with funding agencies and obtain technical assistance from:

- Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program/SC Department of Commerce
- Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC)
- Economic Development Administration (EDA)/US Department of Commerce

- USDA Rural Development (RD)
- State Department of Commerce/Coordinating Council for Economic Development
- State Department of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism
- US Department of Homeland Security/FEMA
- SC Rural Infrastructure Authority

Project Development – Compile the documentation needed to establish project needs and outcomes.

- Identify the project service area and beneficiaries.
- Obtain supporting documentation for distressed community conditions and infrastructure needs.
- Determine how the project will work.
- Analyze project design and feasibility issues.
- Develop cost estimates and budgets.
- Prepare the project proposal addressing selection criteria.

Outcomes/Results

The outcomes of these efforts include construction of new, or upgrade of existing, infrastructure including water lines, water storage tanks, sewer lines, storm drainage, and streets. Other outcomes include the construction of new workforce training facilities, community centers, parks and recreation facilities, and health clinics. The results of these activities include a healthier or cleaner environment, an increased quality of life for the citizens of the region, a better prepared workforce, and new job creation.

Program Area: Project Management

Purpose

Project management can be a very complicated and time consuming aspect of federal and state grant programs. The Grant Services staff provides project management to local governments to assure efficient management, project accountability, and conformance with federal and state regulations.

Activities

Program Start Up Requirements – The completion and execution of documents and agreements required before receiving grant funds.

- Execution of grant award and agreement.
- Technical assistance meeting to establish roles and responsibilities.

Environmental Review – The process is to analyze the effect the project will have on the people and the natural environmental components within the project area.

- Classify the activity and conduct the appropriate level of review.
- Provide project description and supporting documentation to required agencies.

- Document compliance with federal laws and authorities.
- Prepare notice allowing for public comment period.
- Submit Environmental Review Record for approval.

Financial Management – Effective financial management is the key to grant management.

- Provide guidance on a financial accounting system that meets federal and state requirements.
- Review invoices to ensure the costs are allowable.
- Monitor expenditures and maintain project budget.
- Prepare budget revisions.
- Prepare requests for reimbursement.
- Document local fund expenditures.
- Compile documents needed for financial monitoring.
- Report audit requirements.

Procurement and Contracting – The primary purpose of the procurement procedures is to assure free and open competition is achieved.

- Ensure federal and state requirements are followed.
- Assist in the preparation of requests for proposals, invitations to bid, and bidding/contract documents.
- Attend bid openings.
- Submit contract documents for approval.

Construction Management and Labor Standards – The overall planning, coordination, and control of a project from inception to completion.

- Attend pre-construction and construction progress meetings.
- Monitor project scope and accomplishments.
- Determine eligible costs and monitor total costs within budget.
- Process change orders.
- Ensure compliance with Fair Labor Standards Act, Davis-Bacon Act, and Copeland Anti-Kickback Act.

Real Property Acquisition – Any property needed for project implementation such as fee simple title, easements necessary, long-term leases, and right-of-ways.

- Notification to property owners of the interest in acquiring property and informing them of their rights in compliance of the Uniform and Relocation Act.
- Procurement of appraisal services.
- Guidance on purchase offer/negotiations.

Reporting – Monitoring tools representing accountability in grant activities.

- Implementation schedule
- Quarterly report
- Contract and subcontract activity
- Annual accomplishments reports
- Section 3 reports
- Project amendments
- Grant extensions and adjustments
- Close out report

Outcomes/Results

Proper project administration ensures grantee compliance with state and federal regulations. Non-compliance could lead to grantee repayment of all or a portion of improperly spent funds. Additionally, future funding decisions are often linked to previous compliance with grant rules and regulations.

Changes from Last Year

There are no anticipated changes in the coming year.

Economic Development Services

Overall Mission

The mission of Economic Development Services (EDS) is to support regional economic development through professional planning, grant support, mapping, and database-driven technical services for communities in the Upstate of South Carolina. The EDS staff provides research services and products to facilitate the competitive growth and development of the Upstate.

Program Area: InfoMentum Suite of Services

Purpose

The InfoMentum suite of services provides GIS-based research tools, robust market data, and an online industrial and office property database that assist economic developers' efforts to attract industry and create jobs. InfoMentum is integrated into the economic development activities of its investors, including county economic development organizations, the Upstate SC Alliance, neighboring Councils of Government, and utilities. A board of program investors, the Economic Development Information Systems (EDIS) Partnership, provides direction for and oversight of the InfoMentum program.

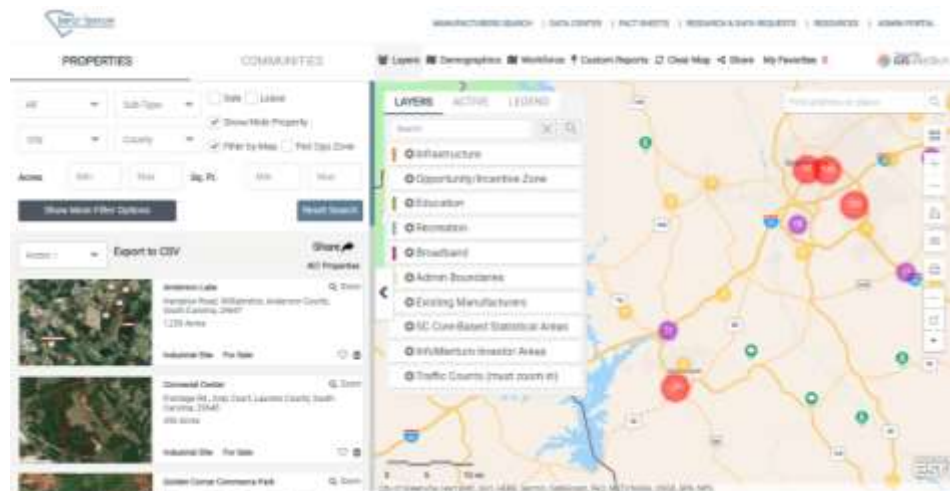
Services

InfoMentum Online —

This web application is available exclusively to InfoMentum investors to help meet their recruitment, marketing, research, and planning needs. With its ability to generate a large variety of demographic and economic reports,

investors use this tool to evaluate market conditions within a specific radius or drive-time distance from any point they select on the map. Multiple data layers are also available (traffic counts, surrounding manufacturers, nearby colleges/universities, etc.) to enable the creation of informative maps that can be printed or exported for use in documents and presentations.

InfoMentum Online utilizes Guru, an Esri-based platform developed by GIS WebTech specifically for economic developers. This application is similar to previous versions of InfoMentum Online, but has additional tools including 3-D visualizations and a more streamlined user experience. The GIS WebTech team is responsible for maintaining the technical aspects of Guru and the property feed from SC Commerce, while EDS staff continues to develop and maintain multiple map layers available within the application.

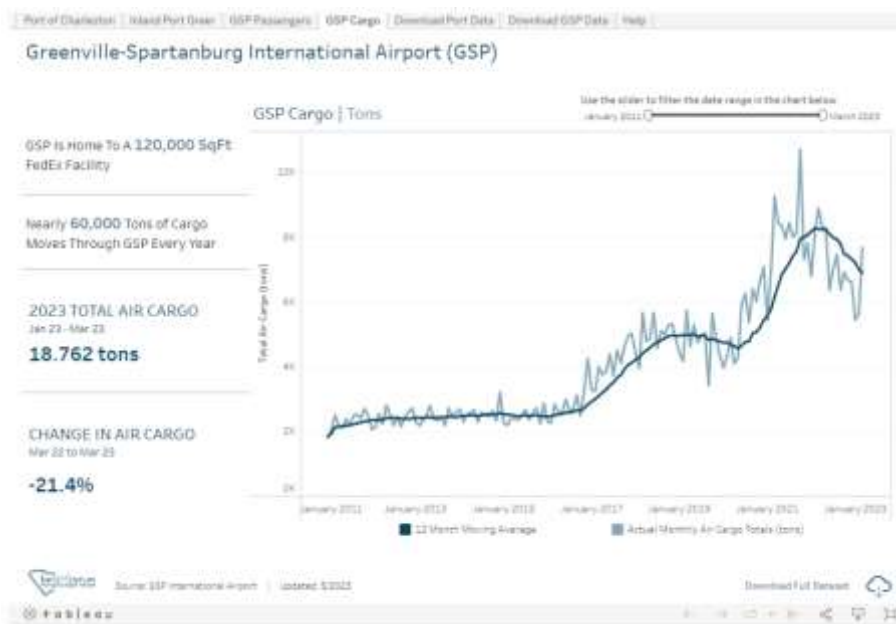


InfoMentum Investor-Branded Property Search Websites — Powered by InfoMentum's central industrial property database, customized property search websites can be embedded in the websites of economic development organizations (EDOs) who invest in InfoMentum. Current EDOs who utilize the investor-branded property search websites include:

- Alliance Pickens
- Greenville Area Development Corporation
- Anderson County Economic Development Office
- Oconee Economic Alliance
- Cherokee County Development Board
- Spartanburg Economic Futures Group
- City of Anderson Economic Development Dept.
- Upstate SC Alliance
- City of Mauldin Economic Development Dept.

These sites help each organization market their available industrial sites and buildings and provide visitors with the ability to download not only a property's informational flyer, but also a geographic drive-time report that details the surrounding demographic and market conditions.

Data Center — Now in its fourth year, the Regional Data Center is an interactive, comprehensive,



socioeconomic database for Upstate SC built using the Tableau data visualization software platform. This tool enables users to manipulate charts, graphs, and tables on the fly and provides a centralized location for many frequently used data sets. These visualizations are exportable as graphics for utilization in documents and presentations or as tables to enable more detailed analysis. Free to the public, the Data Center

is linked to the ACOG website (www.scacog.org) and used by economic developers, planners, and researchers throughout the region.

Fact Sheets — InfoMentum provides data-rich, 4-page fact sheets for the 10 counties of the upstate and 2-page fact sheets for the 43 municipalities of the ACOG region. Updated annually, the fact sheets provide a snapshot of current market and demographic conditions throughout the Upstate.

User Group Meetings and Training — The EDS team offers hands-on technical assistance and regular training opportunities to help users of InfoMentum Online develop the skills needed to maximize their utilization of the application. User Group Meetings are typically held 4-6 times per year, depending upon

the needs of the group as whole. Individual training sessions and technical assistance are also available by request throughout the year.

Program Marketing — In FY 2024, the EDS team will conduct personal meetings, capitalize on public speaking engagements, and execute written marketing efforts (print, website, and social media) to identify and secure new investors.

Economic Development Information Systems (EDIS) Partnership — The EDIS Partnership is the governing board for the InfoMentum program. Consisting of county governments, businesses, schools, utilities, and other investors the EDIS Partnership Board has oversight responsibilities for work program, budget, and policy development.

Special Projects — Throughout the year, EDS staff will work on unique projects for investors and other agencies and organizations as requested.

Outcomes/Results

EDS staff will:

- Continue working with InfoMentum investors to integrate custom data centers into their websites in order to provide each economic development organization with a unique, interactive research tool for prospects, site selectors, and researchers.
- Market the InfoMentum suite of services to potential public and private sector users.
- Work with GIS WebTech staff to integrate new tools into the InfoMentum Guru web application and ensure timely and accurate transfer of site and building data from SC Department of Commerce to InfoMentum Guru and each economic development organization property search site.
- Develop new data sets and visualizations for the Regional Data Center and customized data centers as requested.
- Provide innovative analytical tools for the public, economic developers, planners, and researchers.
- Support the EDIS Partnership Board and InfoMentum User Group by hosting meetings and providing staff support as needed.

Program Area: Economic Development Planning

Purpose

Economic Development Services offers a variety of local and regional economic development planning assistance. This is necessary not only to help guide and coordinate economic development efforts in the Upstate, but also to increase the region's competitiveness for federal economic development grant funding from key partner agencies such as the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) and the US Economic Development Administration (EDA). Economic development planning services undertaken by the EDS staff include development of the regional comprehensive economic development strategy (CEDS), local community market analysis, and other planning and research initiatives as requested.

Activities

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) — The CEDS document provides a roadmap of economic development throughout the ACOG region. In order for economic development projects to be eligible and competitive for US Economic Development Administration (EDA) grant funding, applicants must be able to demonstrate that the project is consistent with the goals of the CEDS. A new CEDS for 2023-2027 was written and submitted to the US EDA in the fall of 2022. This new document includes an expanded Economic Resilience section that addresses pandemic recovery and response strategies. In FY 2024, staff will complete the first annual performance report and submit it in December 2023.



2023-2027

**Comprehensive Economic
Development Strategy**



Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Analysis

— The EDS staff will continue to offer GIS services to support communities and organizations, which has been identified as a need in the region. In addition, EDS staff will provide GIS support for ACOG projects, related grant applications, planning efforts, special studies, and analysis needs.

Special Economic Development Planning Projects — Staff will continue to provide planning assistance to communities in areas such as neighborhood revitalization, business retention and expansion analysis, and other specialized areas as requested.

Outcomes/Results

- The 2023-2027 CEDS Annual Performance Report will be completed in December 2023.
- GIS analysis and special economic development planning projects will continue to be performed upon request in FY 2024.

Changes from Last Year

In September 2022, Economic Development Services added a GIS Specialist to the team, expanding the depth of GIS services available to support communities within the region.

Program Area: Grant Support

Purpose

The EDS team is regularly involved in grant applications produced by ACOG. This grant support comes in three categories: (1) technology grant applications that support the InfoMentum suite of services, (2) collaboration with the ACOG Grant Services Division on economic development grant applications, and (3) GIS support for grant applications produced by the Grant Division.

Activities

- **Collaboration with the Grant Services Program** — EDS staff will continue to provide support for economic development grant applications, particularly when the application narrative requires a CEDS reference or data that is more easily produced by the EDS team. In addition, the EDS staff will collaborate with Grant Services to seek grant support for InfoMentum projects when opportunities arise.
- **GIS Support** — EDS staff will continue to provide map-making and geographic analysis services to the Grant Services Division to support applications to the US Economic Development Administration, Appalachian Regional Commission, and other entities.

Outcomes/Results

- Successful collaboration with the Grant Division on economic development grant applications as demonstrated by multiple grant awards in FY 2024.

Changes from Last Year

The EDS, Grant, and Planning Departments now have access to IMPLAN economic impact analysis software and will begin collaborating to develop models to be utilized for projects in the region.

Planning Services

Overall Mission

The overall mission of the Planning Services Program is to support activities that promote prosperity and orderly development of the South Carolina Appalachian region. The primary focus of the program is facilitating planning efforts of local governments and public service providers around issues related to economic development, growth management, natural resource management, transportation, and infrastructure and service provision. In addition, the staff provides a wide range of technical assistance to local governments on planning administration and other growth management related issues that support the overall objective of the Planning Services Program.

Program Area: Transportation Planning

Purpose

Regional growth and development continue to increase pressure on the region's transportation network. Coordinated planning among the state and local governments is increasingly important to address the increased pressures on infrastructure. Disjointed planning areas, multiple funding sources, and limited overall funding make coordination a challenge at times. The ACOG works with SCDOT and other planning agencies to help promote efforts and projects that will improve traffic conditions and safety in the rural and urban areas in the region. Activities range from identification of projects eligible for federal and state programming to working with SCDOT to support transportation modeling efforts. The goal of this program is to provide the technical tools to assess trends in land use and transportation and provide technical assistance to local governments and state partners as they identify strategic projects that improve the transportation system.

Activities

Rural Planning Work Program – The Rural Planning Work Program (RPWP) for the Appalachian Region is developed biennially and documents major transportation planning and related activities within the rural areas of the Appalachian Region for the upcoming two (2) fiscal years (July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2025). The purpose of the RPWP is to identify work program tasks and present budget allocations for planning activities to be undertaken within the ACOG Study Area. The document also serves as the basis for federal (the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA)), state (the SCDOT), and local funding assistance for transportation planning activities.

The ACOG will work closely with local government officials in all six counties of the ACOG Region and with the Anderson Area Transportation Study (ANATS), the Greenville-Pickens Area Transportation Study (GPATS), and the Spartanburg Area Transportation Study (SPATS), the three MPO's in the Appalachian region, to coordinate transportation planning. Facilitating regional coordination amongst the planning partners will promote better coordination between cities and counties in their planning efforts and help develop an integrated multimodal transportation system for the Appalachian Region.

Appalachian Regional Travel Demand Model Program – ACOG, in a partnership with SCDOT and Upstate MPOs, assumed responsibility for maintaining the Appalachian Regional Travel Demand Model at the beginning of 2019. This project will allow ACOG to support the MPOs with their Long Range Plan update processes. This will allow staff to help coordinate transportation planning efforts for the region moving forward across planning agency boundaries. It also allows ACOG staff to work with regional agencies to improve the accuracy of the information used as inputs in the model. This allows for a more accurate model which makes for a better predictive tool in efforts to identify the impacts of highway improvements. In addition, this will create the potential for ACOG staff to help with small area transportation studies for local communities in the future as the model is developed.

Due to recent changes to U.S. Census Urban Area Boundaries, planning area boundaries for MPOs will change, requiring MPOs to adopt new LRTPs by winter of 2025. ACOG anticipates a travel model update will begin in 2024 if it is to be completed in time to aid any of our regional partners in meeting the aforementioned LRTP deadline.

Rural Transportation Planning and Coordination – ACOG works with a wide range of stakeholders on transportation issues throughout the region in support of SC Department of Transportation Planning efforts. Our partnership with SCDOT has evolved over the past couple of years as we have become more involved in project development and coordination with local governments. Planning Services staff is working better with SCDOT staff to connect them with stakeholders from the rural and urban areas of the region to identify solutions to transportation challenges. The improved coordination has helped with projects from implementation of a new Performance Measure Planning System to facilitating local input into project development and design processes. Staff will continue this work with local governments and SCDOT to help identify projects that promote more efficient and safer transportation systems in critical areas that improve communities.

Outcomes/Results

- Begin the US 29 Corridor study in Anderson County to assess both land use and transportation challenges along the corridor from I-85 to the City of Anderson.
- Work with SCDOT to update ACOG's TIP to a 10-year horizon window (FY 2024-2033).
- Assist local communities with SCDOT's new Transportation Alternatives program.
- Continue serving on ARC's Network Appalachia committee and engage with federal, state, and regional transportation partners across the Appalachia Region.
- Maintain public copies of STIP, DOT Plans, and DOT project announcements and attend regular DOT/ACOG/MPO partnering meetings.
- Serve on or coordinate with Greenville-Pickens Area Transportation Study (GPATS), Spartanburg Area Transportation Study (SPATS), and the Anderson Area Transportation Study (ANATS).
- Support communities' efforts to secure funding for transportation projects through facilitation of meetings with state and federal agencies and preparation of applications for funding.
- Oversee application process for 5310 transit funds and prioritize projects for SCDOT funding.
- Administer and manage the transportation program by: coordinating transportation planning activities; budgeting and managing transportation planning funds; sponsoring and conducting

meetings including providing support to policy and advisory committees; and coordinating and working with other agencies and organizations involved in planning, programming, and implementing transportation projects.

Changes from Last Year

- New U.S. Census designated urban areas were officially announced in spring 2023. Staff will assist SCDOT and our regional partners during the transition to new MPO boundaries by hosting workshops, facilitating discussions, and providing information as needed.
- Resume the update of the Appalachian Regional Travel Model in FY 2024 after delaying start of the project due to expected changes to regional MPO boundaries.
- Work under a newly adopted a new Long Range Transportation Plan (2023-2045) and Rural Planning Work Program (FY 2024-2025).

Program Area: Community Planning/Development

Purpose

Working with communities to promote growth while preserving their character and quality of life is a core goal of the Planning Program. Planning Services staff provide a range of services for communities from goal setting, strategic planning, and ordinance development to planning administration services. Planning Services also monitors regional planning issues, provides technical assistance, and coordinates with other regional partners to promote quality development of the region. Planning Services staff will participate in regional planning initiatives and assist planning efforts in the region as appropriate.

Activities

Anderson HOME Consortium – The Anderson HOME Consortium is a partnership of Anderson County, the City of Anderson, and the City of Belton. The Consortium receives HOME funding from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development to support housing rehabilitation efforts. Planning Services staff provides support services for the Consortium’s grant administration and housing rehabilitation activities.

Community Development Needs Assessments – Needs Assessments are required for communities to apply for Community Development Block Grants through the SC Department of Commerce. Planning Services staff work with the Grant Services Department to identify potential CDBG applicants and develop needs assessments to support applications for CDBG application periods during the year.

Local Planning Services – The Planning Services Program provides a variety of services to local governments, from plan development to meeting facilitation. Staff is currently providing assistance on plan and regulation updates for several communities. We will also respond to requests for information on issues from simple technical assistance to contractual projects for plan or ordinance development.

Planning Administration Services – Planning Services staff assists communities in the Upstate with ongoing planning and zoning administrative services on a contractual basis. Planning Services staff currently provide the City of Pickens, Liberty, and Central with Zoning Administration services.

Planning Awareness and Education – Planning Services staff provides continuing planning education for local planning officials and topic-specific training as requested by local governments. Staff will continue to

provide this training across the region to satisfy state requirements for local planning commission and board of appeals members to receive training through a state-certified program.

Outcomes/Results

- Work with the Anderson HOME Consortium - prepare Annual Action Plan and CAPER report; oversee administrative activities for the Consortium; and provide housing rehabilitation project oversight for Anderson County and City of Belton.
- Continue work with communities to update local plans and ordinances, including the update of Comprehensive Plans for the Towns of Liberty, Inman, and Pacolet, as well as the development of new zoning and land development regulations for the Towns of Reidville, Wellford, Campobello, Liberty, Central, and Belton.
- Begin a neighborhood planning effort with the City of Seneca and Oconee County for the Utica Mill area. The plan will identify potential investments for the neighborhood to assist with crime prevention, revitalization, and property maintenance. The plan will be used as part of a CDBG neighborhood revitalization grant in fall 2024.
- Provide planning administration services for the Cities of Pickens, Landrum, Liberty, and the Town of Central.
- Provide technical assistance as requested by local governments.
- Provide continuing planning education programs and planning orientation sessions during FY 2024 for planning commissions, board of appeals, and board of architectural review members.
- Participate in regional planning groups addressing concerns of local city and county governments.
- Develop the Land Use Modeling program via CommunityViz as a tool to better forecast future growth for our communities.

Changes from Last Year

- Completed the West Pendleton Neighborhood Revitalization Plan in July 2023. A CDBG neighborhood revitalization grant was awarded to the Town of Pendleton in fall 2023.
- Completed updates to local plans and ordinances for the following:
 - Campobello Comprehensive Plan
 - Wellford Comprehensive Plan
 - Wellford Zoning Ordinance
 - Reidville Comprehensive Plan
 - Williamston Comprehensive Plan

Program Area: Natural Resource Planning

Purpose

Proper growth management and natural resource planning will facilitate continued growth and development in the region by ensuring infrastructure and services are available in a timely manner. Focus in this area is primarily on regional coordination of wastewater treatment services. Management principles are developed to utilize natural and man-made resources in a manner that provides for the greatest benefit to citizens, while ensuring that resources will be preserved into the future.

Activities

Appalachian Regional Water Quality Management Plan – The goal of the Regional Water Quality Management Plan is to ensure there is adequate wastewater treatment capacity in the region to meet growth and economic development related demands for a twenty-year period. Planning Services continues work to review existing basin plans and update them as needed to reflect needed changes to the current goals and strategies laid out in the Regional Water Quality Management Plan. Staff has completed significant updates to the Tyger and Enoree Basin plans in recent years. Staff will continue efforts to review basin plans through the 208 Committee during FY 2024.

Outcomes/Results

- 208 Conformance Review Process – ongoing permit review.
- Administer the 208 Water Quality Plan.
- Provide technical assistance to communities as they address sewer issues.

Changes from Last Year

Basin planning efforts by several agencies in the region will help set a path for accommodating growth in our region. In the coming year, staff will work to update the plan to incorporate these efforts into the Appalachian 208 Plan. Coordination of long range sewer plans between sewer service agencies is an ongoing effort that will continue to ensure efficient expansion of sewer service to support development without harming the environment or character of the region.

Government Services

Overall Mission

The mission of the Government Services Program is to provide informative, practical services to the local governments in the upstate region that aim to improve the knowledge, skills, and abilities of administrative and elected officials so they can better serve their communities.

Program Area: Training Coordination

Purpose

Effective governance is only as successful as the leaders that are guiding it. Elected officials and staff must be adequately trained and up-to-date regarding modern methods and means of conducting city/county government. From initial appointment to many years thereafter, it is critical that individuals making decisions are well-versed in all areas of government administration.

Activities

- Sexual Harassment Education
- ICMA Effective Supervisory Practices
- ICMA Certificate in Management Series
- Dealing with Problem Employees
- Customer Service, Time Management, Communications

Outcomes/Results

Helping foster more knowledgeable administrative staff and elected officials through providing classes and training sessions as needed for communities and special purpose district staff and council members.

Program Area: Personnel Services

Purpose

Many local governments do not employ a human resource director and rely heavily on ACOG to assist with issues such as personnel policies, FMLA, and FLSA. The program provides technical, legal and pragmatic information and solutions to our local governments.

Activities

- Policy and Procedure Manuals
- Employee Handbooks
- FMLA/FLSA Training
- Employee Evaluations and Forms
- Conduct staffing searches for administrators and other key staff members
- Compensation Surveys

Outcomes/Results

- Provide guidance on policy and procedures to help reduce the risk of litigation for communities resulting from human resource conflicts or disputes.
- Provide assistance to communities with hiring processes including recruitment, candidate review, and assisting with interview/selection process.

Program Area: Governmental Support

Purpose

Provide technical assistance and legal information to all appointed and elected officials.

Activities

- Interim Administration Services
- Budgeting Assistance
- Council Orientations and Retreats
- Organizational Plans
- Assistance with Personnel Matters
- Guidance on Home Rule Issues
- Seminars for Elected Officials
- FOIA
- A-Tax, H-Tax, LOST, MCIP
- Provide Model/Sample Ordinances
- Developing RFP/RFQs for services

Outcomes/Results

Providing support and technical assistance to communities to ensure administrative and elected officials are informed and knowledgeable about current issues. This includes:

- Providing ongoing consultation with new administrators
- Providing interim administrative services during staffing searches
- Providing technical assistance with preparation of budgets
- Consulting with staff and elected officials on personnel matters
- Providing recruiting services for vacant positions
- Continuing to engage with elected officials and City/County Administrators to discuss needs and challenges in their communities and looking for opportunities to assist with meeting those challenges where appropriate.

Changes from Last Year

Government Services has been very active on a wide range of issues during the past year as operations in our region have returned to normalcy. Staffing recruitment services continues to increase. Staff anticipates this level of need will continue along with an increased need for guidance on new funding opportunities and administrative tasks associated with funding sources. ACOG will continue to work as a centralized source of information and assistance for local administrators and staff moving forward to meet the ongoing needs of our communities.

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