Appalachian Council of Governments
2019 Annual Report

APPALACHIAN
COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

Serving the Counties of Upstate South Carolina
Anderson | Cherokee | Greenville | Oconee | Pickens | Spartanburg

Our

purpose is to enhance the lives of people living in the six-county South Carolina Appalachian Region. Since our establishment in 1965, we have maintained a commitment to provide quality services to local governments and special purpose districts in Anderson, Cherokee, Greenville, Oconee, Pickens, and Spartanburg County.

The heart of the organization is its team of board members and staff who are trusted, committed, multi-disciplined, analytical, and solutions oriented individuals who love the Appalachian Region they serve. We build and foster regional relationships, provide solutions for communities, and fill gaps in staff and administrative resources. The team serves as a regional facilitator, bringing diverse stakeholders to the table to address the most important issues facing the region, delivering holistic and collaborative planning, and facilitation for a wide range of constituents.

In 2019, the Appalachian Council of Governments improved the lives of the region's citizens through economic and community development, transportation, infrastructure development, resource management, senior advocacy, and workforce development. Our programs for the elderly, such as home-delivered meals, congregate dining, transportation, and counseling, benefit seniors across our region every day. Our focus on work skills development ensures people in our region keep up with the ever changing skill sets required by business and industry. Our focus on economic development through our InfoMentum economic development support system, assistance with grant funding for infrastructure, workforce development programs, and transportation planning, ensures our region is equipped to compete in a global economy.

While our programs are broad and widely varied, they all come back to serving the people of the Upstate. Whether it is general administration, assistance with grants, planning, or economic development support, we want to be a key resource for getting the job done.

We are pleased to provide this Annual Report for the Appalachian Council of Governments, covering our activities and accomplishments in 2019. I hope that you find it informative and thank you for supporting our region.

Respectfully,

Joe Dill, Chair
Board of Directors

"The most enjoyable part of the [Volunteer Ombudsman] program is simply bringing a little companionship and happiness to the resident. Since I visit a memory care facility, the relationships are a bit different from other types of long term care residents. The humanity that I see beneath the memory struggles is truly inspiring. The stories of these men and women are amazing."

—Stewart, Volunteer Ombudsman

Contents

About ACOG

The Appalachian Council of Governments (ACOG) is a voluntary organization of local governments in Anderson, Cherokee, Greenville, Oconee, Pickens, and Spartanburg Counties of Upstate South Carolina. The organization began in 1965 as the Appalachian Advisory Commission, a 12-member board created to advise the Governor on the use of Appalachian Regional Commission funds. In 1971, the Council of Governments system emerged. The organization became the Appalachian Council of Governments with a 44-member Board of Directors to set policy for the organization.

In the years since 1971, ACOG has evolved into a multifaceted service organization for local governments, providing public administration, planning, information systems and technology, grants, workforce development, and services for the elderly population. The ACOG works in close collaboration with our community partners toward building a competitive economy and promoting healthy, livable communities that preserve our residents' quality of life.

Funding for ACOG's programs and services comes from a variety of sources, including grants from federal and state agencies, as well as dues from member local governments. Major federal funding sources include the Appalachian Regional Commission, Economic Development Administration, US Department of Housing and Urban Development, Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), and Older Americans Act. In 2019, approximately 75% of ACOG revenue came from federal sources, allowing us to provide many services at no charge. We encourage all community partners in our region to utilize this funding.

54	6	42	7	42
Years	**Counties**	**Municipalities**	**Program Areas**	**Employees**

Who We Serve

Anderson	Cherokee	Greenville	Oconee	Pickens	Spartanburg
Anderson	Blacksburg	Fountain Inn	Salem	Central	Campobello
Belton	Gaffney	Greenville	Seneca	Clemson	Central Pacolet
Honea Path		Greer	Walhalla	Easley	Chesnee
Iva		Mauldin	West Union	Liberty	Cowpens
Pelzer		Simpsonville	Westminster	Norris	Duncan
Pendleton		Travelers Rest		Pickens	Greer
Starr				Six Mile	Inman
West Pelzer					Landrum
Williamston					Lyman
					Pacolet
					Reidville
					Spartanburg
					Wellford
					Woodruff

ACOG Board of Directors

Joe Dill | Greenville County | 2018-2020 Board Chair
Representative Mike Forrester | Spartanburg County | Vice Board Chair
Mayor Henry Jolly | Cherokee County | Board Secretary

Dennis Claramunt | Anderson County
Mayor Mack Durham | Anderson County
Ray Graham | Anderson County
Ted Mattison | Anderson County
Mayor Terence Roberts | Anderson County
Jeff Roberts | Anderson
Representative Anne Thayer | Anderson County
Cindy Wilson | Anderson County
David Cauthen | Cherokee County
Lyman Dawkins, III | Cherokee County
Ed Elliott | Cherokee County
Representative Dennis Moss | Cherokee County
Mayor Brandy Amidon | Greenville County
Representative Mike Burns | Greenville County
Reverend Grady Butler | Greenville County
Ennis Fant, Sr. | Greenville County
Lillian Brock Flemming | Greenville County
George Fletcher | Greenville County
Don Godbey | Greenville County
Butch Kirven | Greenville County
Willis Meadows | Greenville County
Senator Thomas Alexander | Oconee County
Julian Davis, III | Oconee County
John Elliott | Oconee County
Dana Moore | Oconee County
Marta Whalen | Oconee County
Mayor Larry Bagwell | Pickens County
Representative Neal Collins | Pickens County
Roy Costner | Pickens County
Ensley Feemster | Pickens County
Mayor Fletcher Perry | Pickens County
Margaret Thompson | Pickens County
Mayor Larry Chappell | Spartanburg County
Michael Fowler | Spartanburg County
Jane Hall | Spartanburg County
Manning Lynch | Spartanburg County
Jack Mabry | Spartanburg County
Roger Nutt | Spartanburg
Mildred Tillerson | Spartanburg County
Mayor Junie White | Spartanburg County
Francis Crowder | Regional
Ernest Riley | Regional

List is representative of the ACOG Board Members as of December 2019

WorkLink

The WorkLink Workforce Development Board (WDB) links employers and employees in Anderson, Oconee, and Pickens Counties. The volunteer board of directors ensures that the local workforce development system is market-driven and responsible in meeting the employment and training needs of businesses and job seekers. The board implements the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014 in partnership with local service providers through a comprehensive SC Works system that provides access points for employment and training services.

WorkLink funds programs for adults, dislocated workers, and youth ages 17 to 24, along with supporting employers and businesses through the On-the-Job Training and Incumbent-Worker Training programs. In 2019, WorkLink partnered with SCDEW and other partner agencies in their three-county service region to offer a variety of hiring events, workshops and job fairs, as well as the Business & Industry Showcase, to connect companies with job seekers and ensure those jobseekers have the skills needed to find employment.

- **7,918** unique customers accessed job search services
- **19,131** customers visited SC Works Centers in Anderson, Clemson, Easley, and Seneca
- **467** job seekers served through **60** hiring events
- **713** job seekers found employment
- **581** dislocated workers assisted through **14** rapid response events
- **429** workshops held including soft skills and other group activities
- **4,500** eighth-graders attended the Anderson/Oconee/Pickens Business & Industry Showcase through assistance with transportation funding provided by WorkLink.
- **$358,395** invested in Incumbent Worker Training to support skill upgrades for existing industry and their employees.

Anderson-Oconee-Pickens Business Industry Showcase

The mission of the Business Industry Showcase is to partner Business & industry with local schools to inspire and develop tomorrow's workforce by exposing students to career opportunities in the tri-county area.

The Showcase is designed to help the young people in our counties understand the decisions that they need to make now in order to thrive in their future careers. During this event, students have an opportunity to interact with company representatives from a wide variety of industries to learn more about the pathway they need to take to gain the skills and knowledge needed for specific career clusters.
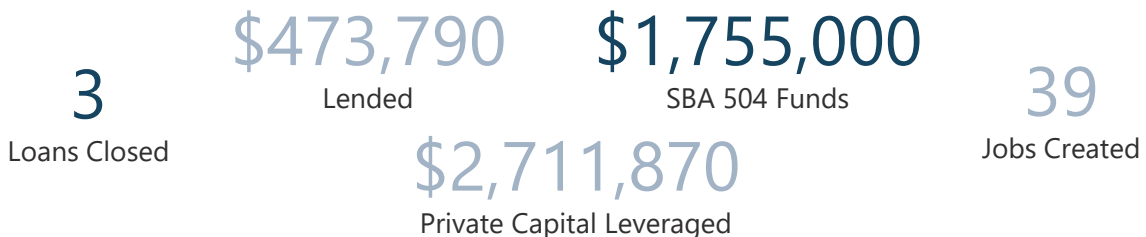
This event is also an excellent opportunity to showcase just a small taste of the amazing things our local industries and businesses are doing. The students and teachers who participate in the Showcase are always amazed by the number of high-demand and high-paying opportunities available in their own backyard.

Appalachian Development Corporation

The Appalachian Development Corporation (ADC) is a non-profit economic development lending corporation offering multiple financing options that can be structured to meet client needs through "gap-financing" loans. The ADC works in conjunction with local lending institutions to provide a structure that works by including long-term, fixed-rate funding sources that lower the overall debt service requirements and allows for the maximum leverage of the applicant's resources. The funding comes primarily from public dollars, thus the ADC's purpose is to create jobs for our area.

Among the ADC programs is the Appalachian Loan Fund (ALF). The ALF is a loan pool capitalized by grants from the Appalachian Regional Commission and the State of South Carolina. The ALF is a locally controlled source of low-cost, long-term, fixed-rate financing for businesses whose projects will result in the creation of permanent full time jobs and leverage private sector investment.

3
Loans Closed

$473,790
Lended

$1,755,000
SBA 504 Funds

39
Jobs Created

$2,711,870
Private Capital Leveraged

Economic Development

The Economic Development Program works to create a regional environment that is conducive to economic and community growth. The program's primary role is support of regional economic development efforts through its delivery of the national-award-winning InfoMentum suite of GIS-based economic information services. Staff also assist local communities in the areas of research and localized economic development plans that help improve the local business environment and quality of life for business owners and residents.

InfoMentum

Whether promoting a site, a building, or an entire community, economic developers and strategic planners require timely, accurate, and geography-specific information in a quick and easily accessible format. InfoMentum enables investors to generate radius or drive time reports, area demographic and market profiles, and agency-branded maps. An agency-branded property search tool is also available to embed into each county's economic development website. The GIS-based mapping and data tools of ACOG's InfoMentum Online program give investing organizations a competitive advantage for supporting capital investment, job creation, and overall community enhancement. Through the Infomentum Online application, users were able to interact with data, generate analytic reports, create data layers, and generate custom maps utilizing Esri Business Analyst and ArcGIS Online.

313	112	735	2,653
Data Layers Created	Custom Maps Created	Data Interactions Executed	Reports Generated

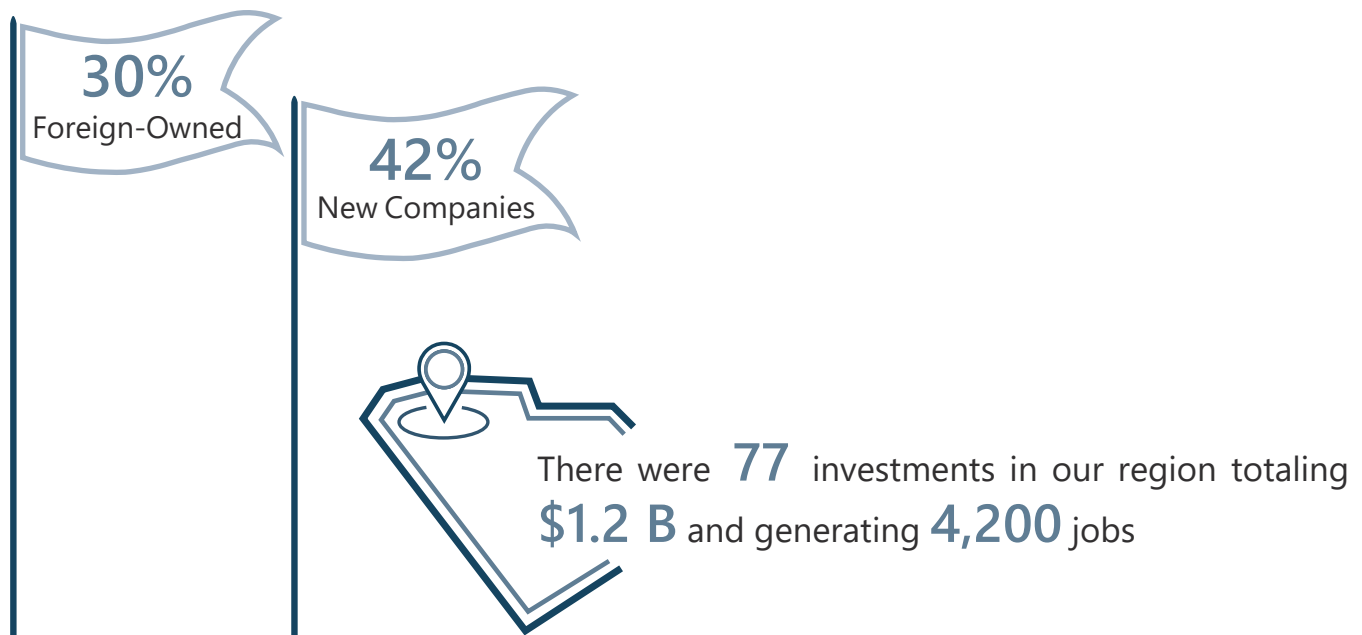### Fact Finder Is Now Data Center

In March of this year, InfoMentum added a new application to its suite of services. Built on the Tableau platform, the new Data Center application has transformed the static excel tables of Fact Finder into interactive charts, graphs, and maps. The application has data on a range of topics including population, labor market, housing, education, income, business & industry, infrastructure, banking & finance, and quality of life. The application allows users to actively select filters to curate the data to their needs and to hover over data points to learn more information. Beyond this, Data Center allows users to download a single chart or the full dataset as an image, HTML table, CSV file, PDF, PowerPoint, or Tableau Workbook. It also gives users the option to share the visualizations by link or to embed it in their own websites. The visualizations are available from our website: www.scacog.org/Statistics--Population

Learn More about the Region

Our Fact Sheets are published each year for the region's six counties and 42 municipalities, as well as one for the ACOG Region as a whole. These documents utilize a series of tables, charts, and illustrations to show the socioeconomic characteristics of the subject geography. The Economic Development Program also maintains Fact Sheets for an expanded geographic area to assist the Upstate SC Alliance in promoting the 10-county Upstate Region. In total, 80 Fact Sheets were updated in 2019 utilizing data from ESRI Business Analyst and government sources, such as the Census Bureau, Bureau of Labor Statistics, and the South Carolina Department of Revenue. These sheets are available in PDF format and may be accessed at www.scacog.org/InfoMentum-Fact-Sheets

2019 Capital Investments in the Region

30%
Foreign-Owned

42%
New Companies

There were **77** investments in our region totaling **$1.2 B** and generating **4,200** jobs

2019 Capital Investments by County

Anderson
Announcements | **9**
Investment | **$72.2 M**
Jobs | **204**

Cherokee
Announcements | **5**
Investment | **$248 M**
Jobs | **393**

Greenville
Announcements | **30**
Investment | **$401.9 M**
Jobs | **2,178**

Oconee
Announcements | **3**
Investment | **$37.7 M**
Jobs | **147**

Pickens
Announcements | **5**
Investment | **$53.5 M**
Jobs | **467**

Spartanburg
Announcements | **27**
Investment | **$354.1 M**
Jobs | **811**

Grants

The primary function of the Grants Services Program is to assist local governments in identifying, securing, and administering funds for a wide range of community and economic development activities. These include water and sewer facilities, road improvements, community and senior centers, downtown and neighborhood revitalization projects, and streetscaping.

Services include determining community needs, project identification and development, application development, and project management. The following are some of the funding sources available:

Appalachian Regional Commission

ARC's mission is to innovate, partner and invest to build capacity and strengthen economic growth in Appalachia through:

- Economic Opportunities
- Ready Workforce
- Critical Infrastructure
- Natural and Cultural Assets
- Leadership and Community Capacity

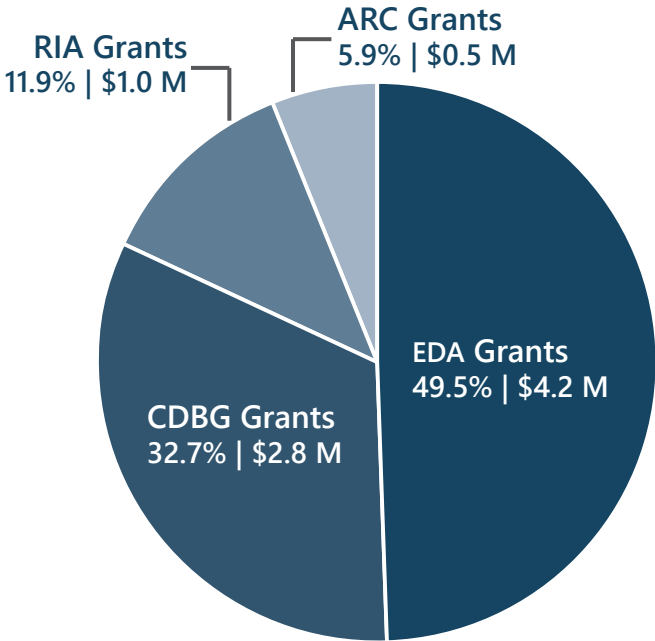## Community Development Block Grant

The South Carolina Community Development Block Grant Program is designed to provide assistance in improving economic opportunities and meeting community revitalization needs, particularly for persons of low and moderate income through:

- Community Infrastructure
- Community Enrichment
- Neighborhood Revitalization

Economic Development Administration

EDA invests in infrastructure, capacity building and business development that attract private capital investments and high quality jobs through:

- Recovery and Resilience
- Critical Infrastructure
- Workforce Development and Manufacturing
- Exports and Foreign Domestic Investment

SC Rural Infrastructure Authority

RIA programs and assistance are designed to meet one or more of the following objectives:

- Increase community sustainability by helping to maintain reliable and affordable infrastructure
- Improve the quality of life by addressing public health, environmental and regulatory concerns
- Create opportunities for economic impact by building the infrastructure capacity to support economic development

RIA Grants
11.9% | $1.0 M

ARC Grants
5.9% | $0.5 M

EDA Grants
49.5% | $4.2 M

CDBG Grants
32.7% | $2.8 M

*ARC: Appalachian Regional Commission, CDBG: Community Development Block Grant, RIA: SC Rural Infrastructure Authority

2019 In Review

24 Grant projects facilitated

36,104 Residents benefiting

2,191 Students and workers trained and educated

26,587 Sq Ft of building renovations

2 Miles of new trails and sidewalks built

9.5 Miles of sewer line infrastructure added

3 Miles of water line infrastructure added

163 Jobs created

15,136 Annual visitors are expected from the improvements

Ready Workforce

This year, ACOG facilitated

$978,000

in grants to increase the education, knowledge, and skills of residents in the region to work and succeed.

Critical Infrastructure

This year, ACOG facilitated

$11.5 Million

in grants to improve and develop critical water and wastewater infrastructure in the region.

Natural & Cultural Assets

This year, ACOG facilitated

$2.3 Million

in grants to leverage the economic potential of the region's natural and cultural heritage.

Economic Opportunity

This year, ACOG facilitated

$980,500

in grants to maximize economic opportunities in the region through infrastructure improvements.

Community Enrichment

This year, ACOG facilitated

$1.4 Million

in grants to build a better future for communities in our region through neighborhood revitalization and brownfield clean ups.

Total

This year, ACOG facilitated

$17.2 Million

in grants to improve the region's economy and the quality of life of its residents.

Government Services

The Government Services Program offers expertise in human resources, communications, finance, and government administration to serve the needs of our partner municipalities, counties, and special purpose districts in the six-county region of the Upstate. An Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) grant supports the Government Services Program activities. This allows our member communities to benefit from our cost effective services and technical assistance without incurring the on-going costs required for additional in-house personnel.

The program's goal is to provide a source of experienced personnel to meet the evolving needs of communities in a broad range of service areas. Staff offers a suite of training services for employees and management teams, from supervisor and manager training classes to board/council retreats and strategic planning sessions. Assistance with financial management services for long-range planning, interim administration services, and mentoring for senior staff is also available.

In 2019 the Government Services Program:

- Facilitated planning retreats and goal setting sessions for **5 communities**
- Conducted **3 seven-week courses** covering a supervisory and management training program with **54 total attendees** from around the region
- Worked with local communities to provide an orientation for **18 newly elected officials** covering information and materials pertaining to the role of a local government elected official
- Provided **Interim City Administrator** services for City of Inman and facilitated the administrator search
- Provided training on topics such as annexation, leadership, and sexual harassment to **9 local governments** including Worklink, APWA, and the Local Government Leadership Institute
- Provided budgeting assistance to **3 municipalities** including budget development, formatting, and capital budgeting
- Assisted many jurisdictions with **updating and developing ordinances** in numerous areas
- Hosted **3 Municipal Elected Officials Institute sessions** for upstate elected officials on behalf of the Municipal Association of South Carolina
- Assisted **4 communities with staffing searches** including directly facilitating the recruitment, background checks, and interview processes for administrators and department heads
- Provided **technical assistance to local governments and special purpose districts** in the areas of personnel, utilities, compensation and classification research, finance and budgeting, and other local government issues

Planning Services

The Planning Services Program works with communities to enhance local and regional efforts to promote community development and improve quality of life. The role of the program is broad, ranging from transportation and regional sewer coordination to local planning efforts and planning administrative services. The program focuses on assisting communities by developing goals and identifying actions to help achieve their vision.

In 2019, the Planning Services Program assisted municipalities in the region with updates to their comprehensive plans and zoning ordinances, developed new land development regulations, and provided Zoning Administration. In addition, the Planning Services Program provides program administration services to the Anderson HOME Consortium including development of the Annual Action Plan, CAPER, and oversight of the rehabilitation of 13 homes for low and moderate income families in Anderson County.

Through the coordination of the 208 Regional Water Quality Management Plan, the program oversaw 214 Section 208 Conformance Reviews for sewer projects in the region, as well as provided technical assistance and facilitation of discussions on issues in the Tyger, Enoree, and Saluda River Basins.

Transportation

The Planning Services Program also manages the Appalachian Long Range Transportation Plan and the Rural Transportation Improvement Program, coordinating the implementation of the projects identified in these documents with SCDOT. This year, approximately $8.9 million of funding was provided to projects in Anderson, Cherokee, Oconee, Pickens, and Spartanburg Counties for right-of-way, engineering, and construction of access roads and intersection improvements.

The program also assisted human service transit providers with grants for funding the purchase of vehicles for transit needs. Of the applications received, five were granted funding totaling $275,000.

2	3	13	82
Comprehensive Plan updates	Zoning Ordinances updates	Homes rehabilitated through the Anderson HOME Consortium	Persons attended planning education and training courses

214	$275,000	$8.9 M
Section 208 Water Quality Conformance Reviews	Funding awarded to the region for the purchase of transit vehicles	Funding to local road improvements

Senior Advocacy

The Appalachian Council of Governments (ACOG) serves as the Area Agency on Aging (AAA) for the six-county Appalachian Region. The AAA provides information and assistance to older adults, persons with disabilities and caregivers. We also operate the Regional Long Term Care Ombudsman Program, the Regional Family Caregiver Program, and the State Health Insurance Program.

Services

Family Caregiver Support Program

The Family Caregiver Support Program provides information, referral, and assistance for services needed, options counseling, support groups, and limited short-term financial help for respite care and supplemental supplies. The Family Caregiver Support Program helps those who are responsible for persons age 60 or older who cannot perform essential tasks without aid, those with Alzheimer's, or those raising a child (0-18). In 2019, the program provided $776,554 in supplies, in-home respite, educational tutoring, clothes, shoes, and school supplies to 850 families.

Home Care Program

Our Home Care Program works with 8 vendors to provide approved seniors with potential caregivers. In-Home Care services are provided to persons 60 or older to help them stay in their homes longer. Our goal is to ensure you live in a clean, safe, and healthy environment. These services range from bathing and dressing to light housekeeping such as laundry or dishes. In 2019, the Home Care Program provided 20,328 hours of in-home help to 308 seniors in our region.

Information & Referral

In 2019, our Information & Referral Assistance specialists assisted 14,968 seniors and caregivers in our region by answering their questions and concerns. Our Information & Referral Program conducts in-home assessments of persons 60 or older to connect them with needed services and assistance programs. This year, our four assessors assessed over 3,900 seniors in our region.

State Health Insurance Program

The State Health Insurance Program (SHIP) provides up-to-date information on Medicare, supplements, and health insurance to older adults, caregivers, and disabled adults.

Our Certified Insurance Counselors provided on-site awareness, education, and enrollment assistance to more than 4,300 Medicare beneficiaries in 2019. SHIP also led 56 outreach events providing more than 5,300 attendees with the information they need to make informed decisions. Additionally, 1,700 Farmers' Market vouchers were distributed to seniors in the region totaling $42,500 for fresh, local produce.

Nutrition Program

The Nutrition Program receives federal funds through the Older Americans Act, in addition to state and local funds to provide meal services to adults 60 and over and their spouses of any age. Isolation is one of the top issues older adults in our region experience. To combat isolation, our 27 local congregate meal sites provide more than just a meal. Congregate sites provide exercise, art classes, games, activities, and host speakers for educational programming on topics impacting the aging population, their families and caregivers. Eating meals at congregate dining facilities, even if just once a week, greatly reduces the sense of isolation many elderly residents in our communities experience.

The Nutrition Program oversaw the opening of 6 new congregate dining sites in 2019. In total, our congregate dining sites served 102,000 meals to 2,695 seniors in our region. Our program also coordinated the delivery of 167,245 hot, frozen, and shelf-stable meals to the homes of 3,700 seniors.

Ombudsman Program

The Long Term Care Ombudsman Program provides complaint resolution for residents of long-term care facilities. This year, the program consulted with over 2,000 people, providing information to seniors, family members, caregivers, and facilities in the region. The Ombudsman Staff investigated over 700 cases concerning abuse, neglect, exploitation, or other quality of care issues on behalf of residents living in long term care facilities. The most common complaint in nursing homes was physical abuse, in community residential care facilities it was medication management, and in disability and special needs facilities it was dignity and respect.

In 2019, our Ombudsmen staff led 149 trainings and 12 community education events on topics such as the Long Term Care Ombudsman Program, recognizing and reporting abuse, neglect, and exploitation, resident's rights, dealing with difficult behavior, communication, and dementia dialogue. These trainings and community education events are crucial to building awareness in the region.

More than 60% of the residents living in long term care facilities in South Carolina have no visitors. The lack of social contact and a support system often results in depression and an overall decline in health. Our 30 Volunteer Ombudsmen went on 612 "friendly" visits, to 34 facilities in our region. Our volunteers greatly reduce the sense of isolation many long-term care residents experience. Our volunteers alone, visited with over 4,000 long-term care residents in our region.

Seniors from the Landrum Community Center, a congregate dining facility, visited an apple orchard in October for an out-of-facility activity.
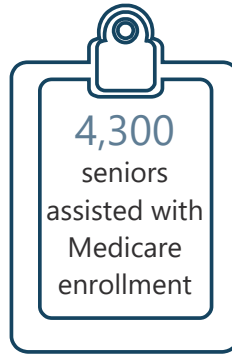

Seniors, family members, and caregivers from across the region celebrate World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (June 15th) at the Lyman Event Center at Pacific Place.
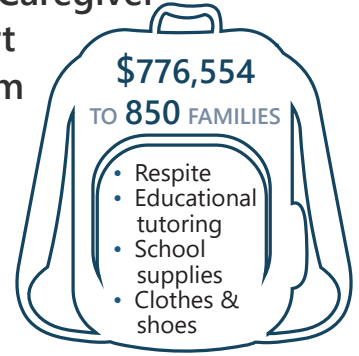
State Health Insurance Program

54 outreach events provided more than **5,300** attendees with the information they need to make informed decisions
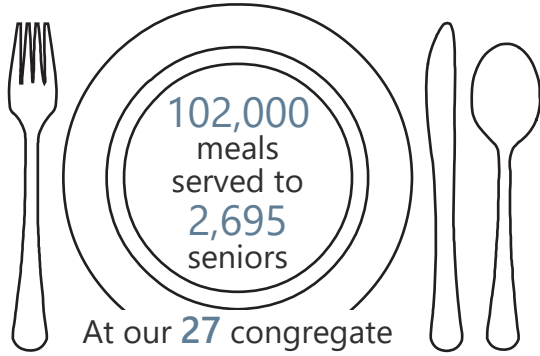
1,700 Farmers' Market vouchers distributed to seniors in the region totaling **$42,500** for fresh, local produce

4,300 seniors assisted with Medicare enrollment

Family Caregiver Support Program

$776,554 TO **850** FAMILIES

- Respite
- Educational tutoring
- School supplies
- Clothes & shoes

Nutrition Program

102,000 meals served to **2,695** seniors

At our **27** congregate dining sites

&

167,245 hot, frozen, and shelf-stable meals were delivered

to the homes of

3,700 seniors
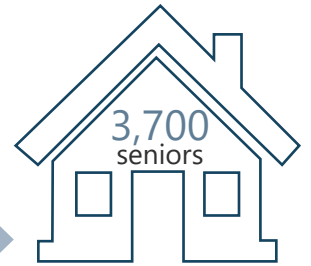
The Appalachian Region is home to an estimated **311,000** people 60 years or older, more than any other COG in the state. In fact, our region accounts for **25%** of the total South Carolina senior population.

Over the next five years, the population of the region is expected to grow by **6%** while our senior population, alone, is expected to grow by **16%**.

Funding for Aging Services in 2019 was **$5,110,501** allowing us to provide services to **35,270** seniors.

Ombudsman Program

Consulted with over **2,000** seniors, family members, caregivers, and facilities in the region

711 Cases investigated

concerning quality of care issues on behalf of residents living in long term care facilities

Additionally, our Ombudsmen staff led **149** trainings and **12** community education events that are crucial to building regional awareness

Volunteer Ombudsman Program

60% OF RESIDENTS LIVING IN LONG TERM CARE FACILITIES IN SOUTH CAROLINA HAVE NO VISITORS

Our 30 Volunteer Ombudsmen visited with **4,072** long-term care residents in **34** of our region's facilities

14,968 phone calls to seniors and caregivers, answering their questions and connecting them with needed services.

Information & Referral

Home Care Program

20,328 hours of in-home help to **308 seniors**

Senior Angel Tree Project

Each year the Appalachian Council of Governments' Long Term Care Ombudsman Program organizes the Senior Angel Tree Project. ACOG selects a senior facility from our region and has the residents fill out a "wish list" of items that will make their holiday special. This year's Angel Tree Project benefited 46 residents at two facilities in Inman, South Carolina. This facility accepts Medicaid residents and many do not have family or friends to visit them.

Those who donate to the program can adopt a senior and purchase the items on the residents' wish list or give a monetary donation. The Ombudsman Program collects the donations in hopes of providing each resident with the items from their wish list, as well as toiletry items, socks, hats, gloves, snack foods and activity books.

This year, ACOG staff members, ACOG Board of Directors, RAAC Board of Directors, and community members adopted all 46 residents and provided monetary donations. It was great to see the local community joining in to give back to the seniors in need. Thanks to everyone's continued support, we were able to provide each resident with the items on their wish list, as well as a blanket, toiletries, socks, hat, gloves, snack foods, and activity book.

The Appalachian Region

ACOG Region

The region is nestled in the lush foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains in the northwest corner of South Carolina. It is home to an estimated 1.3 million people in six counties: Anderson, Cherokee, Greenville, Oconee, Pickens, and Spartanburg. The region's location along the Interstate 85 corridor places it two hours between the largest business centers of the Southeast: Atlanta and Charlotte. The Appalachian Region is highly connected, offering new and existing businesses a network of highways and rail lines, proximity to major U.S. airports, access to Inland Port Greer and proximity to the Port of Charleston. This makes it a logistically cost effective location for regional, national, and international companies in industries such as advanced materials, aerospace, automotive, bioscience, and energy.
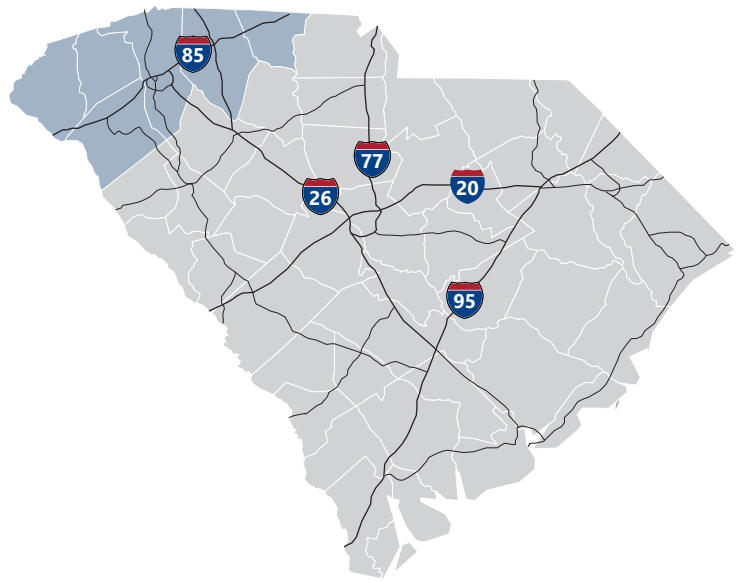
ACOG Region Demographics

	2010	2019	2024
Total Population	1,171,497	1,289,447	1,369,070
Total Households	457,029	500,855	531,141
Total Families	312,287	336,696	354,837
Average HH Size	2.50	2.51	2.51

ACOG Region Population by Age

	2010	2019	2024
Under 5	6.5%	5.9%	5.8%
5 to 9	6.5%	6.2%	6.0%
10 to 14	6.6%	6.2%	6.3%
15 to 24	14.2%	12.9%	12.6%
25 to 34	12.3%	13.0%	12.0%
35 to 44	13.4%	12.3%	12.8%
45 to 54	14.4%	12.9%	12.2%
55 to 64	12.3%	13.4%	13.0%
65+	13.8%	17.3%	19.3%
Median Age	37.9	39.6	40.6

38.2% of the 2019 ACOG region population is prime working age

ACOG Region Median Household Income

	2019	2024
ACOG Region	$51,901	$58,127
South Carolina	$51,389	$57,210
United States	$60,548	$69,180

ACOG Region Per Capita Income

	2019	2024
ACOG Region	$28,133	$32,162
South Carolina	$28,244	$32,417
United States	$33,028	$37,585

High School Diploma or Higher
86.8%
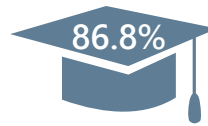
Bachelor's Degree or Higher
28.3%
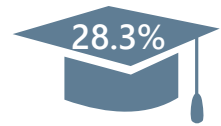
County Demographics

Anderson County

	2010	2019	2024
Total Population	187,126	205,882	216,212
Total Households	73,829	80,668	84,531
Total Families	51,922	55,941	58,344
Average HH Size	2.50	2.52	2.52

Cherokee County

	2010	2019	2024
Total Population	55,342	58,189	59,416
Total Households	21,519	22,331	22,778
Total Families	14,941	15,284	15,517
Average HH Size	2.54	2.55	2.55

Greenville County

	2010	2019	2024
Total Population	451,225	520,932	560,313
Total Households	176,531	204,104	219,570
Total Families	119,362	135,923	145,471
Average HH Size	2.49	2.50	2.50

Oconee County

	2010	2019	2024
Total Population	74,273	79,435	82,466
Total Households	30,676	32,854	34,129
Total Families	21,118	22,284	23,036
Average HH Size	2.40	2.39	2.39

Pickens County

	2010	2019	2024
Total Population	119,224	128,097	133,156
Total Households	45,228	48,608	50,573
Total Families	29,540	31,234	33,325
Average HH Size	2.48	2.49	2.49

Spartanburg County

	2010	2019	2024
Total Population	284,307	320,379	339,835
Total Households	109,246	122,705	130,084
Total Families	75,404	83,471	88,057
Average HH Size	2.53	2.54	2.55

Anderson County

Anderson County lies along I-85 in the northwestern portion of South Carolina, equidistant to Atlanta, GA and Charlotte, NC. The area, with one of the lowest costs of living in the United States, is a thriving industrial, commercial, and tourist center. With more than 15 universities and colleges within 50 miles of Anderson, there are many great higher education options for students. With all of these, Anderson County has the integrated resources available to help train and develop a highly skilled workforce with the prestigious education and training programs of institutions including Anderson University, Clemson University, and Tri-County Technical College. Anderson County is also home to 55,950 acre Lake Hartwell, a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers lake with nearly 1,000 miles of shoreline for residential and recreational use. Its communities have a small town feel that make people want to stay. From a temperate southern climate and Lake Hartwell, to leading universities and a variety of arts programs, Anderson County offers an unmatched combination of quality of life features that makes for an ideal location for all of its citizens.
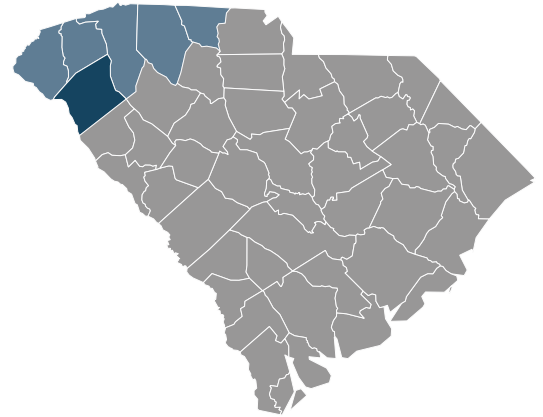
WorkLink: Connecting People and Jobs

Early in 2019, Mr. Oscar Sanchez came to SC Works WorkLink knowing he needed to do something different with his life. He had over ten years' experience working various types of jobs: apprenticing as an Auto Mechanic, masonry, maintenance and repairs, and even office clerk work. He was currently working for an auto towing service, but none of those jobs were a fit for him. He wanted something better, a stable career and a higher wage to help support himself and his son. He settled on Truck Driving as his career goal, but he didn't have the funds to pay for it. He also knew finding a better job would be difficult without a high school diploma and having something in his background.

Oscar contacted SC Works, and through their Information Session, learned about the employment services they offered, including scholarships available through the WIOA Program. This confirmed his decision to pursue his GED and a Class A Commercial Driver's License through classes at Tri-County Technical College. His WIOA Career Coach helped him complete all the necessary steps to enroll into the WIOA Program, and as a result was able to take advantage of scholarship funding to cover the cost of his classes.

Within a month of enrolling in WIOA, Oscar completed his GED training. He took all four sections of the GED test on April 10, 2019, and passed them all. Then, in May 2019, Oscar started CDL training at Tri-County Technical College. He completed it on July 2 and got his CDL that same day. Oscar gained employment at Gaines Mechanical on August 26, 2019 as a Driver/Laborer working full-time, earning $17.00 an hour. He is very appreciative of the assistance he received from SC Works. SC Works, Adult Education, Tri-County Technical College, and the WIOA program made a big difference in his life.


2019 Return on Investment | Anderson County

Community Development Block Grants	$602,500
Services to Seniors	$690,091
Transportation Improvement Program	$970,000
Workforce Development	$917,225
Total Funding into Anderson County	**$3,179,816**
Annual County Contribution to ACOG	**$93,885**
Return on County Investment (per dollar)	**$33.87**

Cherokee County

The county was named for the Cherokees who once made it their home. It was formed in 1897, and the county seat is Gaffney. Iron mining was such an important activity in this region before the Civil War, it is sometimes called the Old Iron District. Today, Cherokee County enjoys a thriving and profitable local economy and an abundance of natural and manufactured resources. Cherokee County sits in a prime location just off I-85 between Charlotte, NC and Greenville/Spartanburg, SC. Charlotte's Douglas International Airport and the Greenville-Spartanburg International Airport are both within 45 miles and the mainline of Norfolk Southern Railroad runs through Cherokee County. The Port of Charleston is easily accessible via major highways. Cherokee County offers an unbeatable combination of such factors as an abundant and educated work force with customized training by South Carolina Special Schools, a diversified industrial base, a high standard of living and quality of life, pro-business local governments, and easy access to transportation routes.
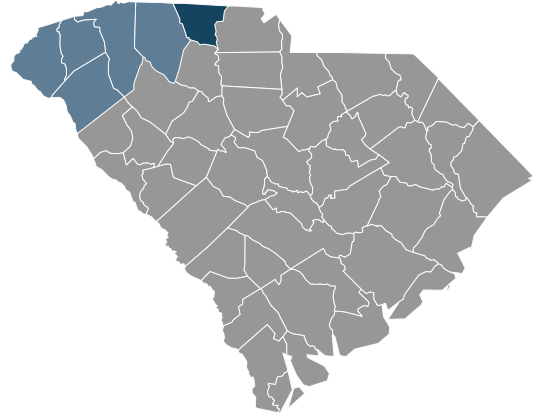
Communities Overcoming Administrative Challenges

Communities throughout the Upstate have a wide range of administrative staffing needs. From large cities with hundreds of employees, to small towns with a clerk and mayor that do it all, successful administration often hinges on access to guidance in areas like human resources, finance, and planning. Many of these communities recognize the need for expertise on specific issues while also realizing it doesn't warrant hiring additional staff. In these situations, the Appalachian Council of Governments (ACOG) staff is able to step in to consult and provide expertise to meet these challenges. Two prime examples from 2019 are the City of Gaffney and Town of Blacksburg.

While the City of Gaffney is well staffed and organized, they approached ACOG staff for assistance in revamping their performance evaluation process. ACOG staff met with the administrator and department heads to develop new procedures and evaluation forms. ACOG staff also provided guidance to department heads on how to implement the process.

When the Town of Blacksburg's administrator pursued a new role in early 2019 and the town promoted from within to fill the position. While the new administrator understood the strengths and needs of the community, they were taking on roles where they had no previous experience. ACOG staff served as a mentor over the last year providing guidance on everything from budgeting to personnel issues, which eased the transition to new leadership.

Communities face administrative challenges on a regular basis. ACOG can partner with local communities to guide staff as they navigate through specific problems and challenges. In addition, we provide trainings to managers and supervisors in our region to stay informed on the best way to tackle these issues and build on their skillset.

2019 Return on Investment | Cherokee County

Services to Seniors	$520,970
Transit Services	$55,000
Transportation Improvement Program	$750,000
Total Funding into Cherokee County	**$1,325,970**
Annual County Contribution to ACOG	**$29,055**
Return on County Investment (per dollar)	**$45.64**

Greenville County

Encouraged by abundant streams and rivers, textile manufacturers began operating in Upstate South Carolina in the 1820s. From those early days, Greenville County has gradually transformed from the textile capital of the world into a headquarters, technology, and advanced manufacturing center. In addition, the engineering industry has found success here. As South Carolina's most populous county, Greenville is situated in the northwestern corner of the state and is part of one of the nation's fastest growing areas, "The I-85 Corridor." Greenville is located on I-85 between Atlanta, GA and Charlotte, NC. The Atlantic Ocean and Port of Charleston are 200 miles to the southeast down I-26, and the Blue Ridge Mountains are just 15 minutes away. The Greenville-Spartanburg International Airport has been cited by Condé Nast Traveler as one of the most user friendly airports. Greenville County has a unique blend of southern traditions and international influences, gentle rolling hills, and beautiful majestic mountains—just the right mix for a great place to live, work, and visit.
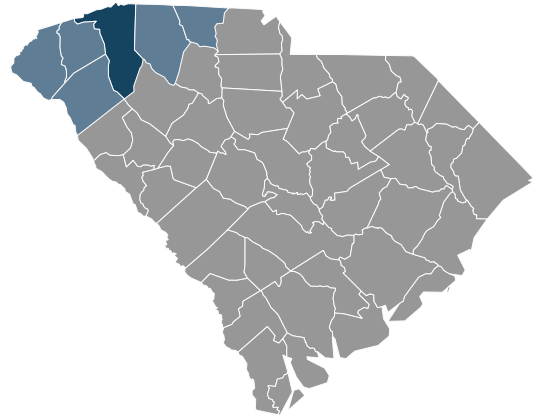
Simpsonville Receives Grant To Renovate Art Center

ACOG partnered with the City of Simpsonville to secure a $500,000 Appalachian Regional Commission Grant that contributed to Phase 1 of the Simpsonville Arts Center renovations. Located in the old Simpsonville Elementary School, the Arts Center has longed served the community as both school and community center. After many years of service, renovations are vital for the Center to continue to serve the community and reach its full potential for Simpsonville.

The ARC grant is a part of the Phase 1 project cost of $2.4 million. The renovations planned will include sliding panels over the auditorium's windows, new seats and lighting, as well as a new lobby with a ticket window and concessions booth. The building will also get all new exterior windows and a new HVAC system as part of the first phase of the renovation project.

This project will enable the City of Simpsonville to expand their community education programs, increase arts and cultural activities, and host city functions at the center. There is also a plan for the Mill Town Players, a Pelzer based community theatre group, to put on a full season of shows year-round. The Arts Center is a key piece of Simpsonville's downtown master plan and will help connect points of interest and create a more vibrant downtown with the hope it will attract more visitors and spur economic development downtown.


Photos courtesy of the City of Simpsonville

2019 Return on Investment | Greenville County

Appalachian Regional Commission	$500,000
Small Business and Entrepreneurial Loan Program	$473,790
Private Capital Leveraged from Loans	$2,711,871
Services to Seniors	$1,934,518
Total Funding into Greenville County	**$5,620,179**
Annual County Contribution to ACOG	**$180,306**
Return on County Investment (per dollar)	**$31.17**

Oconee County

The county was formed in 1868, and the county seat is Walhalla. This area was home to the Cherokees, who gave up their lands in treaties signed in 1777 and 1816. After the American Revolution, settlers from other parts of the state began moving in, including Germans from Charleston who founded Walhalla in 1850. Oconee County is in the foothills of the beautiful Appalachian Mountains and encompasses rivers, lakes, and forests. As one of South Carolina's most scenic and economically stimulating counties, Oconee County is situated in the northwestern corner of the state and is part of one of the nation's fastest growing areas, the I-85 Corridor. With a diversified economic base, Oconee offers a wide variety of occupational and recreational opportunities. The towns of Oconee County are also located on the South Carolina National Heritage Corridor, which extends from the Upstate to Charleston.
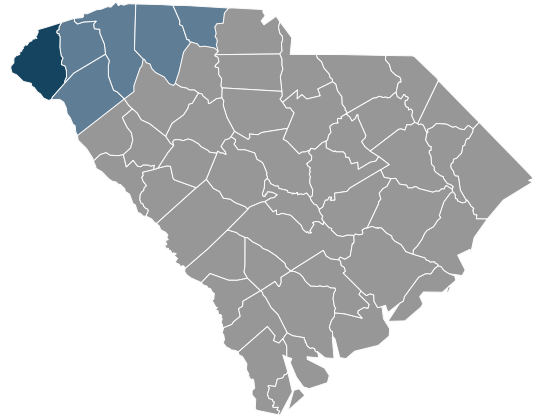
Local Governments Collaborate to Improve Utilities

The City of Walhalla, with assistance from ACOG, received a $473,000 Economic Development Administration Grant and an $118,400 SC Rural Infrastructure Authority Grant, to improve water system infrastructure for the Cities of Walhalla and Westminster as well as for the Oconee Industrial and Technology Park (OITP). Walhalla's water system had limited storage capacity which created potential for undependable pressure levels and flow volumes during peak need times at the OITP. In turn, creating potential for business disruptions and insufficient flows for combating fires. These funds will allow the Cities of Walhalla and Westminster to install 2,500 feet of 12-inch water mains supplying the OITP and surrounding area to alleviate the potential risk from limited capacity.

In addition, the new connection will help both cities, including the tenants at the OITP, to receive the benefit of an additional 500,000 gallons of storage that can be utilized during periods of high demand. The interconnection project helps ensure there will be no future disruption in supply for the OITP while also providing Walhalla and Westminster with additional storage that will help efforts to grow and develop.

The partnership between communities is a prime example of how you can address challenges for multiple stakeholders when you are able to work together. The partnership with ACOG was an additional benefit as it helped to secure almost 90% of the funding needed to implement this project. Enhancing the marketability of the OITP, improving Walhalla and Westminster's water system, and limiting cost to all partners is a model for how to create win-win projects when communities work together.
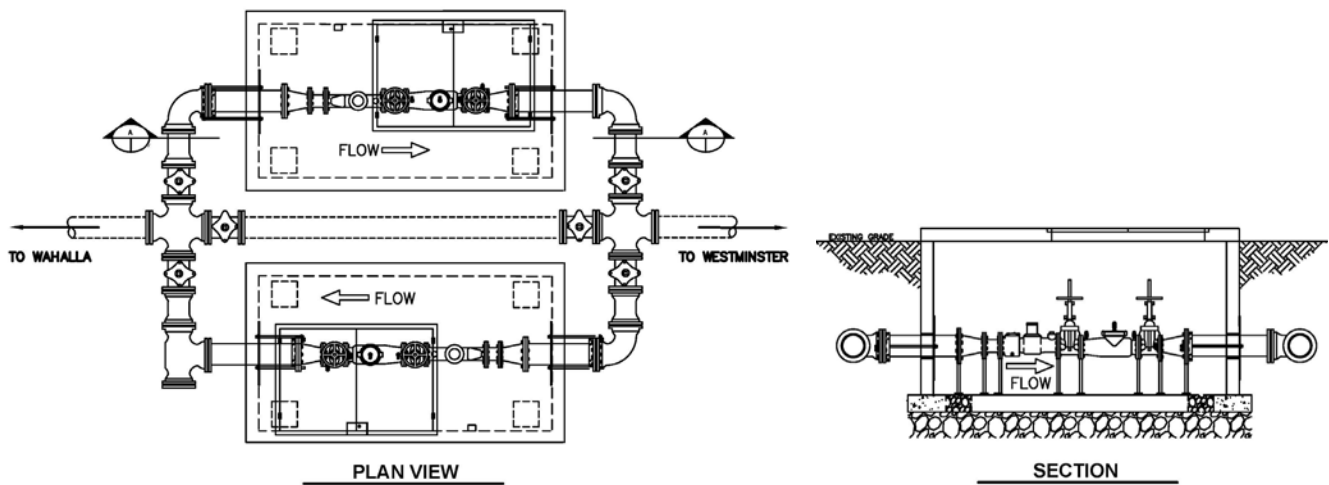

2019 Return on Investment | Oconee County

Community Development Block Grants	$500,000
Economic Development Administration Grants	$4,173,000
Services to Seniors	$510,121
Transit Services	$110,000
Transportation Improvement Program	$1,850,000
Workforce Development	$370,680
Total Funding into Oconee County	**$7,513,801**
Annual County Contribution to ACOG	**$38,993**
Return on County Investment (per dollar)	**$192.70**

Pickens County

Pickens County is an area rich in history, beauty, and vision for the future. Pickens is part of one of the nation's fastest growing regions, the I-85 Corridor yet maintains a small town atmosphere, while located only 30 minutes from Greenville and two hours from Atlanta, GA and Charlotte, NC. The bordering Blue Ridge region provide a beautiful backdrop for natural attractions such as Lakes Jocassee and Keowee, Table Rock State Park, scenic Highway 11, and the SC Botanical Garden. Pickens County is also home to Clemson University, Southern Wesleyan University, and Tri-County Technical College, offering Pickens County companies a competitive advantage. Leaders from the education, business, and industrial communities work together to ensure Pickens County students possess the training and education they need when they enter the workforce. From consistently high academic achievement in schools, access to state-of-the-art medical care, consistently low crime rate, to a variety of recreational and cultural amenities, the quality of life in Pickens County, South Carolina is second to none.
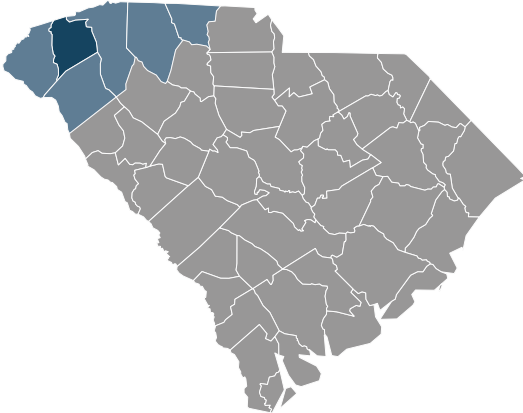
ACOG-Pickens Partnership Leads Way To Revitalization

Like many communities over the past two decades, Pickens saw a decline of its industrial base that was once the mainstay of the community. As leaders recognized the need to reinvent themselves and improve economic opportunities, city and community leaders worked together to develop programs and ordinances focused on business and community development. Part of Pickens' efforts were the establishment of overlay districts, design guidelines, and various ordinances to help preserve the character of downtown and improve the gateway corridors leading into the community.

Initially the transition to these new regulations were a challenge for everyone involved; staff, council members, and business owners (new and old). The goal was to stimulate private investments in improvements that enhance the appearance of buildings and properties and eliminate blight from key areas in the community. However, the new efforts were leading to more problems than they were solving as the City did not have anyone on staff qualified to administer the new ordinances and boards.

The City recognized the need for better staffing while also realizing there was not enough work for a full time person. At that point, Pickens reached out to the ACOG planning staff to step in and help. ACOG has served as the zoning administrator and staff to their planning boards for 10 years now. The partnership with ACOG has helped the City improve communication with the development community, streamline the application process, and provide the City's boards and commissions with professional planning guidance.

Although there were many challenges during the process, the new development approach and implementation of these strategies and ordinances has led to positive changes in the City. The downtown has been cleaned up and is booming with new and improved businesses and upgrades to the gateways into the City have created a more inviting entrance for visitors. The results of the City's efforts have been a steady increase in visitors, retail sales, and community pride that sets the path for better things to come for Pickens.

2019 Return on Investment | Pickens County

Community Development Block Grants	$750,000
Rural Infrastructure Authority Grants	$500,000
Services to Seniors	$688,300
Transit Services	$55,000
Transportation Improvement Program	$4,500,000
Workforce Development	$684,105
Total Funding into Pickens County	**$7,177,405**
Annual County Contribution to ACOG	**$61,631**
Return on County Investment (per dollar)	**$116.46**

Spartanburg County

Formed in 1785, Spartanburg County and its county seat were named for the Spartan Regiment, a local militia unit that fought in the Revolutionary War. The county has grown from a frontier trading post and later a major textile center to a more diversified manufacturing center. Spartanburg County also is an international business center with the highest per capita foreign investment and more than 110 international firms, including BMW Manufacturing Corporation. Spartanburg County offers businesses an excellent transportation system, including highways, rail and truck lines, Greenville-Spartanburg International Airport, and proximity to the Port of Charleston. Spartanburg's location at the crossroads of two major interstate highways, I-85 and I-26, put it at the top of the list for business and personal relocation.
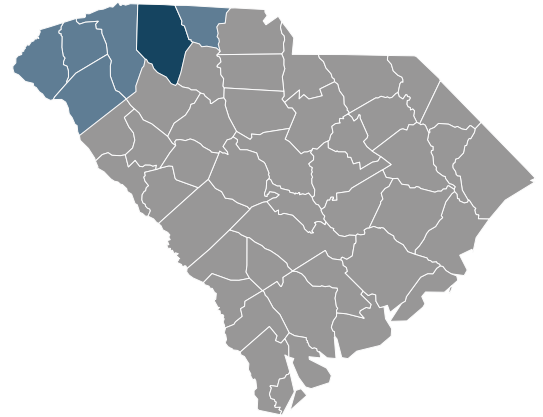
ACOG & Fifty Upstate Expand Services for Seniors

The Appalachian Council of Governments (ACOG), in their role as the Area Agency on Aging (AAA), works with local communities and senior organizations to plan for services and develop programs to meet the needs of citizens age 60 and over. Over the last two years, ACOG has worked with Spartanburg County to expand services for seniors by increasing the number of centers throughout the County. Funding provided through the AAA has helped the County partner with the non-profit organization, Fifty Upstate, to open 8 centers in Spartanburg County with the Landrum Aging Well Center the latest to open in August of 2019.

ACOG worked with the County, Fifty Upstate, and the City of Landrum in securing use of the Landrum Depot as a senior center site for residents in the northwest portion of the County. The center is a congregate dining site where seniors are served fresh meals and provided engaging activities such as exercise, art classes, games, activities, and host speakers for educational programming on topics impacting the aging population, their families and caregivers. For many seniors, visits to these centers is the only time they interact with others. Access to centers helps combat isolation which is a common issue older adults in our region experience that often results in depression and an overall decline in health.

Eating meals at congregate dining facilities, even if just once a week, greatly reduces the sense of isolation many elderly residents in our community experience. The network of senior congregate dining sites at centers across the county with locations in Boiling Springs, Chesnee, Cowpens, Landrum, Lyman, Pacolet, Spartanburg, and Woodruff has greatly enhanced the services available to seniors. Participation at centers around the County has increased by 33% from 2018. Over the course of 2019, 24,000 hot meals were served to seniors at the 8 centers and an additional 17,500 hot, frozen, and shelf-stable meals were delivered to homebound seniors.

The partnership between the County, Fifty Upstate, ACOG and the eight communities has made it possible to reach more seniors by leveraging available funding to expand programs and services. This has been successful in bringing the community together to reduce isolation and loneliness for seniors by keeping them active and engaged in their community.

2019 Return on Investment | Spartanburg County

Community Development Block Grants	$1,400,000
Rural Infrastructure Authority Grants	$500,000
Services to Seniors	$766,500
Transit Services	$55,000
Transportation Improvement Program	$800,000
Total Funding into Spartanburg County	**$3,521,500**
Annual County Contribution to ACOG	**$135,830**
Return on County Investment (per dollar)	**$25.93**

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