

South Carolina's
Councils of Governments:

Partnerships,

Progress &

Promise



Promise

SCARC

South Carolina Association
of Regional Councils



South Carolina Councils of Governments



1. APPALACHIAN COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

PO Box 6668
Greenville, SC 29606
(864) 242-9733
www.scacog.org
(Anderson, Cherokee, Greenville, Oconee, Pickens & Spartanburg Counties)

2. UPPER SAVANNAH COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

Box 1366
Greenwood, SC 29648
(864) 941-8051
www.uppersavannah.com
(Abbeville, Edgefield, Greenwood, Laurens, McCormick & Saluda Counties)

3. CATAWBA REGIONAL COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

Box 450
Rock Hill, SC 29731
(803) 327-9041
www.catawbacog.org
(Chester, Lancaster, Union and York Counties)

4. CENTRAL MIDLANDS COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

236 Stoneridge Drive
Columbia, SC 29210
(803) 376-5390
www.centralmidlands.org
(Fairfield, Lexington, Newberry & Richland Counties)

5. LOWER SAVANNAH COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

P. O. Box 850
Aiken, SC 29802
(803) 649-7981
www.lscog.org
(Aiken, Allendale, Bamberg, Barnwell, Calhoun & Orangeburg Counties)

6. SANTEE LYNCHES REGIONAL COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

Box 1837
Sumter, SC 29150
(803) 775-7381
www.slkog.state.sc.us
(Clarendon, Kershaw, Lee & Sumter Counties)

7. PEE DEE REGIONAL COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

Box 5719
Florence, SC 29502
(843) 669-4392
(Chesterfield, Darlington, Dillon, Florence, Marion & Marlboro Counties)

8. WACCAMAW REGIONAL COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

1230 Highmarket Street
Georgetown, SC 29440
(843) 546-8502
(Georgetown, Horry & Williamsburg Counties)

9. BERKELEY-CHARLESTON-DORCHESTER COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

5290 Rivers Avenue, Suite 400
Charleston, SC 29406
(843) 529-0400
www.bcdkog.com
(Berkeley, Charleston & Dorchester Counties)

10. LOWCOUNTRY COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

Box 98
Yemassee, SC 29945
(843) 726-5536
(Beaufort, Colleton, Hampton & Jasper Counties)

This report was compiled by the COG Impact Committee of the South Carolina Association of Regional Councils with the cooperation of all ten Councils of Governments.

IMPACT

- Since their inception, COGs have assisted in securing over **\$1.5 billion in federal and state grants**, enhancing the economy and quality of life in their regions.

- Over time, COGs have made a **total of 552 small business loans totaling more than \$82 million and creating or retaining over 10,000 jobs.**

- **Workforce training funds administered by the COGs have totaled nearly \$150 million and have resulted in more than 28,000 South Carolinians being placed in jobs.**

- During the past year alone, South Carolina's COGs have generated **an impressive Return on Investment of \$340 for every \$1 in combined investment** by local governments and the South Carolina General Assembly.



Partnerships Progress Promise

AN INTRODUCTION:

Meeting Needs: Exceeding Expectations

Launched more than three decades ago by visionary state leaders, the earliest missions of South Carolina's Councils of Governments focused on regional planning, keeping track of all types of statistical information, obtaining and administering grants and supporting regional economic development.

Today, the Councils still do those things - and so much more.

Thanks to local initiatives and statewide cooperation, we are taking better care of our elderly, training our workforce, improving transportation, making loans to growing businesses, expanding basic infrastructure, enhancing the environment and responding to unique regional challenges as new conditions and trends develop.

When the Councils of Governments were created, few could have foreseen the profound and positive impact these new "COGs" would ultimately have on South Carolina's prosperity and quality of life. More than 30 years later, the story of the COGs is a story of Partnerships, Progress and Promise - one that continues to unfold and impress.

A Uniform Geographical Framework

The story began in 1967 when South Carolina Governor Robert E. McNair signed legislation dividing the state into ten official planning districts, marking the birth of the Palmetto State's Councils of Governments.

As the Governor officially introduced the state's citizens to this new regional concept of cooperation among counties, he described new entities created to provide a "uniform geographical framework within which the planning, programming and delivery of services by state, federal and local government might be undertaken with maximum efficiency and effectiveness."

Even in their formative years, the state's new Councils of Governments did not disappoint. Today, even as COG missions and programs have been broadened to address today's challenges, the founding principle remains the same: to work cooperatively with local governments in all 46 counties, enhancing their capacity to guide growth and development and improving the quality of life for all South Carolina residents. The early charge to achieve "efficiency and effectiveness" still lies at the heart of the COG mission and has become the defining hallmark of all ten Councils.

Partnerships

Progress
Promise



*“The COGs remain
first and foremost
a partnership of
local governments
and the people
they serve.”*

A Partnership of the People

In more than three decades of operation, the Councils of Governments have forged fruitful local, regional and national partnerships that have produced beneficial and lasting results.

Over the years, the COG commitment to partnership has led to unprecedented cooperation among local governments, enduring relationships with key federal, state and local agencies, increased effectiveness of numerous community-based organizations and job-producing connections with the private sector.

Despite the long-term positive impacts of these alliances, the COGs remain first and foremost a partnership of local governments and the people they serve.

People are always at the core of every COG program. They are our reason for existence - and they drive our progress. Palmetto State residents participate in every aspect of COG operations. They fund us. They lead us. They volunteer in our programs. And, most importantly, they need us.

Thousands of state residents today depend on COG services and capabilities for a host of critical functions that affect quality of life and economic growth. From extension of water and sewer lines in rural areas to providing ready transportation to the doctor and government offices, to overseeing compliance with clean water standards, COG programs are filling vital community needs.

Helping to make these contributions possible, 342 South Carolinians serve on the COGs' Boards of Directors. Of that number, 245 - or 72% - are elected officials; 210 are county or municipal officials; 35 are members of the South Carolina General Assembly. Another 902 state residents are involved with COG committees or affiliated entities. Throughout the state, a total of 1,244 citizens are actively involved in volunteering with COG-related work.

As the COGs began their work in South Carolina more than 30 years ago, the Departments of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Health Education and Welfare (HEW), the Appalachian Regional Commission and the Economic Development Administration (EDA) were among our earliest partners.

They or their successor agencies remain key allies today, even as our list of partners has grown along with the needs and expectations of our regions. Other key COG partnerships in recent years have included:

Budget & Control Board

The COGs act as Affiliate Data Centers for the Board's Office of Research and Statistics, housing and distributing all types of statistical information.

Office of the Adjutant General

The COGs work with the Office's Emergency Management Division, preparing Natural Hazard Disaster Mitigation Plans for each county in South Carolina.

Health & Human Services

Many COGs serve as Area Agencies on Aging, contracting with Health and Human Services to provide a variety of state-sponsored programs such as the Nursing Home Ombudsman program and Family Caregiver Program. These COGs oversee millions of dollars in funds contracted to service provider organizations.

Department of Transportation

The COGs and the South Carolina Department of Transportation have entered into a long-term working relationship focused heavily on rural highway planning and project development and in some cases on urban transportation needs. COG Boards of Directors make recommendations to DOT and its commissioners regarding priorities for highway improvements.

In 1998, the COGs began a long-term bonding program with SCDOT, leveraging millions of dollars in highway improvement funds, recommending road improvement priorities and administering the program at the regional level. This partnership brings transportation planning to the county and regional level, allowing for greater local input into improvement priorities which are updated annually.



Employment Security Commission

Many COGs contract with the Commission to administer the Workforce Investment Act Program which provides for labor force training in each county.

Department of Health & Environmental Control

Many COGs contract with DHEC to develop and maintain regional water quality management plans. The partnership with the COGs promotes water quality planning focused on individual basins which are shared by several service providers. This reduces local conflicts while enhancing efficiency and cost effectiveness. COGs also have responsibility for reviewing sewer discharge permit requests for compliance with the regional plans. They also have assisted in hosting regional air quality meetings.

Department of Commerce

The COGs and the South Carolina Department of Commerce have had a long standing relationship relating to the state's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program.

At the local level, the COGs help with project and application development, ranking and grant administration. This is an especially useful service for smaller communities that do not have internal capacity to prepare applications and administer grants. COG assistance is critical to citizens receiving the benefit of grants.

The COGs have also assisted the South Carolina Department of Commerce with statewide water and sewer system mapping and providing databases on industrial sites and buildings and quality of life attributes.

CDBG Program is a Long-Term Partnership

Bonnie Ammons,

South Carolina Department of Commerce

In 1982, the federal government gave the State of South Carolina \$26.4 million and the opportunity to design an effective community development program. With this mission, the State turned to the Councils of Governments to help set up the procedures and guidelines for the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program.

The State immediately recognized the opportunities available in a long-term partnership with the Councils of Governments (COGs). "From the start, the partnership between the Regional Councils of Governments and the State CDBG Program has been a perfect fit," according to Bonnie Ammons, the CDBG Program Director at the South Carolina Department of Commerce.

Since the State CDBG Program began in 1982, over \$500 million in CDBG funds have been awarded to improve South Carolina's communities. The State CDBG Program helps local governments meet critical infrastructure, housing, community facility, and economic development needs for the state's low and moderate income population.

Local governments need capable and experienced administrators to ensure that CDBG projects reach completion on schedule and that funds are spent in accordance with the federal and state requirements. Local governments typically have limited resources with which to design projects, develop applications, meet federal and state requirements, and manage project implementation. A team approach between the COGs and the State helps meet the local needs and in so doing, helps South Carolina reach its community development goals.

Over the past 21 years, the State CDBG Program has evolved, and the roles of the COGs have adapted to the changes. CDBG allocates \$500,000 annually to the COGs to conduct local needs assessments and undertake planning activities, technical assistance, and local capacity building. The COG Boards are involved in establishing regional priority recommendations for the selection of projects for funding in the CDBG Community Investment Program. The COGs currently manage over \$130 million in CDBG funds for over 350 projects.

Other states view our relationship as a model for CDBG grant administration. "The reciprocal relationship between the Department of Commerce and the COGs is essential for the positive development of our state, and we depend on that relationship in the CDBG Program," said Ammons. "The involvement of the COGs ensures that the resources of the State CDBG Program make the greatest impact possible."



*"A team approach
between the COGs
and the State helps
meet the local needs."*

*- Bonnie Ammons,
SC Department of Commerce*





*“The input received
from COGs is essential
in the development
of the statewide
transportation program.”*

*- Elizabeth Mabry,
SC Department of Transportation*



Working with Councils of Governments: South Carolina DOT Experience

Elizabeth S. Mabry, Executive Director

When I was first appointed Executive Director of the South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) in 1996, I was asked to serve on a Legislative Committee formed to study the state's infrastructure needs.

Also serving were directors of four of the state's ten Councils of Governments (COGs). We all gained a much better understanding of regional concerns and state transportation issues. As a result, SCDOT dramatically elevated the role of the COGs in the transportation planning and development process.

The first major change came with the SCDOT Commission decision to allocate a portion of highway improvement funds to the COG geographical areas. The funds are prorated among the ten areas based on population. SCDOT staff served as advisors to the COGs as they quickly formed groups to develop transportation plans. Each COG Board recommends a list of those priorities to the SCDOT Commission. Upon approval by the Commission, the projects are added to the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) based on available funding.

SCDOT continues to work with the COGs to improve their transportation planning capacity and to develop the best strategies to pursue full and effective consultation. To help further that goal, SCDOT annually distributes \$500,000 of State Planning and Research (SPR) funds among the COGs to support transportation planning in the non-Metropolitan geographical areas. The input received from COGs is essential in the development of the statewide transportation program.

SCDOT also began a partnering program with the COGS, the Metropolitan Planning Organizations, the Federal Highway Administration, the Federal Transit Administration, and other groups interested in transportation issues. Meetings are held quarterly to discuss issues. Some of the topics are transportation funding, SCDOT's bus lease program, and the impact on transportation planning by air quality regulation changes or by the National Environmental Protection Act provisions.

Over the past two years, SCDOT relied on partnerships with the COGs to update the Statewide Multi-Modal Transportation Plan, which used as its base plans developed by the COGs for each region. The COGs also provided significant input to the pedestrian and bicycle elements of the statewide plan.

The SCDOT experience in working closely with COGs is considered an unqualified success. The entire state has benefited economically from the improved efficiency and effectiveness we have achieved. However, the most beneficial aspect has been the open communication, the sharing of knowledge and the greater understanding of issues that are important to each organization and the citizens of south Carolina. It is anticipated that our successful partnerships will continue to address issues and will be extended to other areas as opportunities arise.

Partnerships Progress Promise

When it comes to progress, the numbers tell much of the story.

- Since their inception, COGs have assisted in securing over \$1.5 billion in federal and state grants, enhancing the economy and quality of life in their regions.
- Over time, COGs have made a total of 552 small business loans totaling more than \$82 million and creating or retaining over 10,000 jobs.
- Workforce training funds administered by the COGs have totaled nearly \$150 million and have resulted in more than 28,000 South Carolinians being placed in jobs.
- During the past year alone, South Carolina's COGs have generated an impressive Return on Investment of \$340 for every \$1 in combined investment by local governments and the South Carolina General Assembly.

There are more programs and more impressive numbers. But they all point to the same result - steady progress toward accomplishment of the twin COG missions of "efficiency and effectiveness" in delivering services to improve the state's economy and enhance the quality of life.

"During the past year alone, South Carolina's COGs have generated an impressive Return on Investment of \$340 for every \$1 in combined investment by local governments and the South Carolina General Assembly."

Return on Investment

In the private sector, a key measure of progress is Return on Investment. Simply put, this measure answers the question: "What did we get back for the money we invested?"

When it come to the state's Councils of Governments, the number is impressive.

Last year, local governments across the state and the South Carolina General Assembly combined invested a total of \$2,921,026 in the operations of the ten COGs. The return on that investment was \$712,267,961 - a return of \$340 for every one dollar invested.

The return included more than \$121 million from federal and state grants programs followed by over \$500 million from the COG and South Carolina Department of Transportation highway bond program. It also included more than \$7 million from loans made by the COG Revolving Loan Funds along with another \$38.5 million from private capital investment resulting from the loans. Workforce Investment Program subcontracts accounted for \$31 million in returns while Aging Program subcontracts were responsible for \$14.2 million.



Grant Programs

The \$1.5 billion in grants obtained through the COGs over the years have been used for a host of critical needs - infrastructure, community revitalization, downtown development, housing construction and rehabilitation, public safety, recreation, social services, education, historic preservation, energy conservation and environmental protection.

As facilitators, the COGs help develop projects, prepare applications, act as advocates, provide liaison with funding agencies and often administer the project funds after grants are awarded.

Loans and Capital Investment

Many South Carolina businesses benefit from COG Revolving Loan Funds which provide money for business expansion and new job creation. In addition to Revolving Loan Funds, many COGs facilitate small business lending through one or more additional loan programs sponsored by the Small Business Administration or other federal or state agencies.

These programs represent an important source of capital. Most of these loans would not have been made through conventional lending sources without the involvement of the COGs. Over the past several years, COGs have made a total of 552 small business loans, totaling \$82.3 million. These loans have leveraged \$252 million in private capital investment through owner-injected equity and conventional lender's capital. A total of 10,149 jobs have been created or retained as a result of these loans.

Workforce Contracts

During the past year, the COGs contracted for \$31 million in services through Workforce Investment Programs. These programs offer comprehensive services designed to increase employment, retain jobs, develop occupational skills for unemployed and underemployed workers, youths, persons with disabilities and veterans.

These funds helped provide jobs for 3,100 people during the past year.

Total workforce investments coming through the COGs over the years have totaled \$148.5 million. A total of 45,188 clients have been served, and 28,428 South Carolinians have been placed in jobs through this program.



Highway Improvement

In a partnership arrangement with the South Carolina Department of Transportation, the COGs provide rural transportation planning services at the regional level. In addition, several COGs administer the Urban Program in their regions.

Many COGs have entered into a long-term bonding program with the South Carolina Department of Transportation resulting in nearly \$2 billion in highway improvement funds being made available to local governments.

Over the past 12 months, the programs under the COGs administration included more than \$500 million worth of projects. COGs also work with local governments to prioritize new road and highway improvement projects for inclusion in future funding and to monitor projects throughout construction.

Aging Contracts

Most Councils operate or otherwise administer programs under the Older Americans Act. During the past 12 months, the COGs contracted for \$14.2 million in Aging Program services. These funds are dispersed into the state and regional economic base and provide South Carolina's elderly population with congregate and home-delivered meals, adult day care, health screenings, home health care, transportation to medical and other vital services, insurance counseling and a variety of other critically needed services.

Sewer Permit Reviews

Many COGs are charged by the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) with creating and maintaining regional water quality management plans. As part of that responsibility, the COGs review all applications requesting sewer discharge permits. These reviews, done to ensure compliance with the regional water quality plan, are necessary before DHEC will issue permits for new or expanded business, industry or residential development. During the past 12 months, COGs reviewed 1,244 such applications.

Partnerships Progress Promise

South Carolina's Councils of Governments will continue to play a critical role in generating prosperity across our state. While unique challenges specific to each region will continue to evolve, the promise of the Councils of Governments lies in our pledge to continue to work together to address the common challenges that affect the future of our state. These include the need for excellent government, strategic planning, economic development, environmental management, human services, worker training and up-to-date information.

As South Carolina continues to grow, communities once geographically separate are merging together. Old barriers - political, social and cultural - are being broken down. Events and actions in one community are having ever greater impacts on surrounding areas. Opportunities for inter-jurisdictional cooperation are on the rise.

The result? Regionalism is assuming increasing importance in our state and those who facilitate and promote a regional approach, as our Councils of Governments do, are positioned for even greater opportunities for contributions and leadership as the 21st Century progresses.

But there is more to our promise. Without question, our Councils will retain the wide-ranging and highly relevant expertise developed over 30 years of service. But we will also continue to adapt to meet the evolving challenges faced by our local governments and our state as a whole.

As Regional Councils, we have been called upon repeatedly in recent years to face new opportunities and meet new challenges. In the most recent examples, we have expanded our roles in transportation planning, assumed greater responsibility for environmental management, become central players in natural hazard mitigation and stepped up to meet the threat of terrorism with an increased role in homeland security.

These examples well illustrate the point that today's Call to Action is fluid and dynamic. South Carolina's Councils of Governments remain poised to answer that call - no matter what form it may take.

The vignettes on the following pages illustrate the breadth of COG involvement in the daily lives of South Carolinians and help describe the full positive impact of COG activities on our quality of life.



“We will continue to adapt to meet the evolving challenges faced by our local governments and our state as a whole.”

Terrorism Training for Emergency Responders

Appalachian Council of Governments

Appalachian Council of Governments helped lead South Carolina's response to the tragic events of September 11 by conducting terrorism awareness classes during the Fall of 2001 for local elected officials and water system operators.

The courses were taught in conjunction with the South Carolina Adjutant General's Office and the U.S. Departments of Defense and Justice, including the FBI.

Soon thereafter, the Council sent staff for instructor training in terrorism awareness at Fort McClellan, Alabama. After certification, ACOG staff began scheduling classes for fire, law enforcement and emergency medical services personnel in Upstate South Carolina.

To date, more than 300 first responder personnel have participated in the ACOG courses, receiving certificates qualifying them for advanced training at the Department of Homeland Security's Center for Domestic Preparedness at Fort McClellan.

The course covers an array of topics on weapons of mass destruction, including radiological, chemical and biological weapons, and basic emergency response measures. Participants become familiar with chemical detection kits, nerve agent antidotes, geiger counters and other test devices.

"The ACOG training is fulfilling a critical role in preparing Upstate first responders to deal with events we hope will never happen," Scot Wendelken, Emergency Management Coordinator for Greenville County and member of the Greenville County Advanced COBRA Emergency Response Team, said.



The Cooper River Bridge

Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester Council of Governments

As the structure of a once-in-a-lifetime bridge gradually rises over the Cooper River between Charleston and Mount Pleasant, Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester Council of Governments is playing a key role in a project that has been 40 years in the making.

Since the 1960s, Charleston area planners and policymakers have been discussing plans to replace the old Grace Memorial Bridge and the Pearman Bridge which have become functionally obsolete. Those plans are now being realized thanks to a cooperative effort at the local, state and national levels.

An ambitious and impressive project, the new Arthur Ravenel Jr. Bridge will be twice as long as any span in North America, and its engineering concepts will push the limit of bridge construction technology worldwide. The \$650 million project is the longest cable-stayed bridge in North America and features two diamond-shaped towers 570 feet tall. Towering 1,546 feet over the Cooper River, the main bridge deck will accommodate eight lanes of vehicular traffic and includes a 12-foot-wide bicycle and pedestrian lane.

BCDCOG is staff to the Charleston Area Transportation Study (CHATS) Policy Committee, which serves as the primary entity for planning and programming state and federally funded transportation projects in the Charleston Metropolitan area.

BCDCOG served as staff for several Cooper River Bridge replacement committees, including a citizens advisory committee, charged with investigating and reporting on various bridge replacement strategies.

After another committee was formed to recommend potential funding sources for the bridge replacement project, the BCDCOG staff prepared the South Carolina Infrastructure Bond Bank Loan application which led to awarding of a \$325 million grant for the bridge's construction.



GIS Computer Maps: Forecasting the Future *Catawba Regional Council of Governments*

GIS computer mapping provides a powerful, high-tech, cost-efficient tool to help guide local land use policies for counties, cities and towns.

At Catawba Regional Council of Governments, computer-generated GIS maps are allowing York County to visually see how different land use and zoning policies would change future land use patterns and, by extension, the cost and requirements for government services.

GIS work by Catawba Regional COG has enabled York County's Comprehensive Planning Study Committee to answer a critical up-front question: What will York County look like if present growth trends continue with no change in government policy?

The ability to visually answer this question has been a key component of the committee's discussions on drafting plans for the county's future.

"Having computer-based GIS maps has made a world of difference in helping our advisory committee members understand what the impact of growth would be if we just let things happen," David Vipperman, chairman of the York County Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee, said. "The maps have given the committee a key tool to guide its work and its recommendations to York County Council. The Council of Government's ability to take complex information and quickly create an easily understood map was of great benefit to our work."

"The evolution to a modern-day fleet began when the Central Midlands Council of Governments formed a Regional Transit Authority Study Group."

Improving Public Transit *Central Midlands Council of Governments*

For many years, Columbia, South Carolina, was the last U.S. city where public transit services were operated by a private, for-profit utility company. The bus fleet was outdated, and there was little incentive for the operator to modernize.

Today, it's a different story. The newly formed Central Midlands Regional Transit Authority (CMRTA) system consists of an all-new fleet of 43 buses operating seven days a week, six replica trolleys operating five days a week, and over 20 small-bus para-transit vehicles providing transit services to the disabled seven days a week.

The evolution to a modern-day fleet began when the Central Midlands Council of Governments formed a Regional Transit Authority Study Group, comprised of county and municipal representatives from within the four-county CMCOG region.

CMCOG staff facilitated the RTA Study Group's formation, meeting for over a year to research the types of services and programs that can be implemented and the challenges associated with each. That same close working relationship continues today as Central Midlands COG provides direct administrative and management staffing for the Central Midlands Regional Transit Authority. The Authority was formed in 2001 and assumed responsibility for operating what is now the state's largest urban transportation system in 2002.

Simultaneously, the CMCOG secured over \$10,000,000 in federal state and local funding to purchase a fleet of 43 new transit buses. CMCOG conducted the entire procurement process, and delivery of the new buses began in early October 2002. All 43 buses were received and placed into operation by mid-December 2002.

Supporting Older Adults

Lowcountry Council of Governments

You may have seen a volunteer delivering a hot, nutritious meal to an older neighbor's door or a van taking an older person to a doctor's appointment. But have you ever wondered what makes these services possible?

Area Agencies on Aging throughout all ten of South Carolina's regions help adults gain access to a wide range of services, many designed to meet specific local needs. Lowcountry Council of Governments acts as the Area Agency on Aging (AAA) in its region and provides a variety of comprehensive services to older residents including:

- Information & Referral
- Homemaker
- Health Insurance Counseling
- Nursing Home Complaint Investigation
- Employment Services
- Senior Centers
- Legal Assistance
- Volunteer Opportunities
- Elder Abuse Prevention
- Congregate & Home Delivered Meals

Through the Lowcountry COG effort, many older South Carolinians may live independently, even if they are not fully able to take care of themselves and are able to spend their retirement years in good health, independence and dignity.

In addition, many South Carolinians currently serve in family caregiving roles for persons over age 50. That number will continue to increase as the population ages and medical science continues to extend life. The Lowcountry COG AAA focuses on the needs of these caregivers through a new, truly consumer-directed program, the National Family Caregiver Support Program which provides funding to help assist family members struggling to care for loved ones. The family caregiver advocate decides how the money can best be spent to ease care-giving responsibilities.



Regional Cooperation in Municipal Waste Disposal

Lower Savannah Council of Governments

South Carolina's Councils of Governments exist in part to help find creative solutions to unique regional challenges that often vex local leaders and threaten to stall economic growth. Sometimes those solutions find broader application beyond the COG boundaries and occasionally even serve as a national model for others to emulate.

The Three Rivers Solid Waste Authority is a case-in-point.

With more than a decade of support from Lower Savannah Council of Governments, Three Rivers recently celebrated its tenth anniversary as an innovative regional alliance formed to share the cost and responsibility of disposing of locally-generated solid waste.

Chartered in 1992, the Authority operates the state-of-the-art Three Rivers Landfill, the 13th largest in terms of permitted airspace in the United States. The facility was one of the first in South Carolina to meet more stringent Subtitle D regulations of the Environmental Protection Agency. It serves nine counties – Aiken, Allendale, Bamberg, Barnwell, Calhoun, Edgefield, McCormick, Orangeburg and Saluda.

Three Rivers was formed and staffed with initial organizational and personnel support from Lower Savannah COG. Today, the COG continues to provide key management, office space, administrative support and financial management for the Authority. In addition, many Lower Savannah COG Board members serve on the Three Rivers Board of Directors and a related board which directs the Solid Waste Technology Center established to oversee development of new waste disposal technologies.

With Lower Savannah COG assistance, Three Rivers is also enhancing South Carolina's environment through collection and shredding of used tires, collection of used oil and grinding of surplus wooden pallets - all of which pose difficult disposal challenges for local governments.

"Over the past ten years, Three Rivers has emerged as an unqualified success story," Authority Chairman David Summers, a Lower Savannah COG Board Member from Calhoun County, said. "Since Opening Day in 1998, Three Rivers capacity, technology and overall management have kept pace with the waste disposal demands of this region. We are confident we can continue to meet those demands for years to come."



Workforce Training and Development *Pee Dee Regional Council of Governments*

After Betty Adams' mother died when Betty was four, she lived in a series of foster homes with a scant support system. The Patrick, South Carolina, native dropped out of school in the tenth grade, eventually returning in 1986 to get her GED.

Soon after, Betty learned that the Workforce Investment Program administered by Pee Dee Regional Council of Governments could help her accomplish her lifetime goal of becoming a nurse. Despite personal setbacks, Betty persevered – attending classes and eventually receiving her nursing license. She was immediately hired by a Cheraw pediatrician.

Betty is only one of thousands of South Carolina citizens positively impacted since Pee Dee Regional Council of Governments began its participation in workforce training and development in 1989.

The workforce program was created to increase employment, retention and earnings of participants and enhance occupational skills. The purpose is to improve the quality of the workforce, reduce welfare dependency and enhance the productivity and competitiveness of the nation.

The Federal Workforce Investment Act created a strong role for local Workforce Investment Boards required by law to represent local businesses and industries. Pee Dee Regional Council of Governments has a 30-member board that requires the COG's staff to stay in close communication with area chambers of commerce, county economic development offices and county councils in the Pee Dee region.

The South Carolina Workforce Investment Board has honored the Pee Dee Board with its Joe A. Young Local Workforce Investment Board Award. Seven other South Carolina Councils of Governments are also involved in administration of the Workforce Investment Act.

*“A formerly high-risk
youth is transformed
into one with focus
and personal potential.”*

*-Michelle Cobb,
Camden, S. C. Police Department*

Rescuing Our Youth

Santee Lynches Regional Council of Governments

For nearly ten years, Santee Lynches Council of Governments has served as administrator and grant coordinator for a multi-jurisdictional Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) project.

The project seeks to incorporate citizens into a community-wide effort to identify - and incarcerate - criminal elements while, at the same time, enabling law enforcement to aid in neighborhood recovery from poor housing conditions, lack of organized recreational activities and increased interest in family support and youth performance in school.

The Santee Lynches COPS program focuses in part on enhancing the reading level of program participants commensurate with their age and grade level. Statistics show that poor performance in school resulting from poor reading and comprehension skills is a common denominator that impacts personal, social and economic success or failure.

The prevention-based program links COPS officers, schools and human service program providers with parents and guardians to focus on issues or barriers that contribute to a youth's patterns that are likely to lead to a high risk of incarceration.

Michelle Cobb, a COPS officer with the Camden, SC, Police Department, says she is amazed at the positive response a youth demonstrates when a person with responsibility focuses on the youth as an individual, and trust is established at an early stage. “A formerly high-risk youth is transformed into one with focus and personal potential,” she said.

Rehabilitation Extends Life of Homes *Upper Savannah Council of Governments*

Residents in Ware Shoals, South Carolina, appreciate the role of Upper Savannah Council of Governments in improving housing in their town.

Located in Greenwood, Upper Savannah COG serves a six county area that is predominantly rural. Much of the housing stock in the region is over 40 years old and is often owned or occupied by persons with limited incomes.

In 1980, Upper Savannah Council of Governments assisted the Town of Ware Shoals, a small mill town of 2,000 people in northern Greenwood County, in preparing a HUD Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) application. Grant funds would be used to repair 26 houses in a small minority area of the town. The grant was awarded, but the town did not have adequate staff to administer the Federally funded program loaded with many requirements.

Ware Shoals requested that Upper Savannah COG administer the housing rehabilitation program for them. As a result, the COG began providing trained staff to carry out the program requirements as well as a trained housing inspector who determined the type of work to be done and reviewed the contractor's work and authorized payments.

Since that time, the Community Development staff has provided CDBG project administration for similar projects in every major town and county in the region. Over 1,268 houses have been repaired through this program, and over \$25 million have been allocated to assist low income owners in the repair of their dwellings, extending the livability of their homes.

The majority of persons assisted through the housing programs are elderly and live in houses they have occupied most of their lives. All have incomes in the low to moderate range.

The Upper Savannah housing rehabilitation program has made a dramatic difference in many lives by providing repairs and conveniences that we often take for granted. Other more conventional funding is not available to these people because of their limited incomes and age. Without the participation of the local towns and counties and involvement by the COG, many residents would continue to live in substandard housing conditions.



Environmental Stewardship *Waccamaw Regional Council of Governments*

As a regional planning agency, Waccamaw Regional Council of Governments, like the state's other COGs, is able to transcend traditional governmental boundaries to assist in the orderly growth and sound development of the region.

In one example of regional environmental stewardship, Waccamaw is working to establish a segment of the East Coast Greenway. The Greenway is the nation's first long-distance, city-to-city, multi-modal transportation corridor for cyclists, hikers and other non-motorized users.

The Greenway's goal is to connect existing and planned trails that are locally owned and managed to form a continuous, safe, green route from Maine to Florida. Approximately 70 miles of the 2600 mile route is located in the Waccamaw region. The Greenway is important for recreation, exercise, transportation, commuting, safe routes to school and sustainable tourism.

Waccamaw Regional Council of Governments has helped planners address many of the challenges associated with implementing this geographically diverse project in an environmentally friendly way. The Council provided planning, coordination and sometimes arbitration among the varied interests. For example, project participants must be in agreement on trail locations and design standards – consensus that is not always easy to obtain among neighboring communities, private landowners, utility providers and other public agencies.

Although the project is national in scope, Waccamaw Regional COG helped ensure that adequate consideration is given to the needs and interests of local residents and visitors.

Waccamaw's environmental stewardship also extends to non-point source education for municipal officials. A joint program with Clemson Extension Service and South Carolina Sea Grant, the goal is to educate the region's city and county council members, planning commissions and others concerning how their land use and site design decisions directly affect water quality.

*“South Carolina’s
Councils of Governments
remain
first and foremost
a partnership of
local governments
and the people
they serve.”*



236 Stoneridge Drive
Columbia, SC 29210