UPPER SAVANNAH COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
Annual Report to the Board Members Representing Laurens County
For the Fiscal Year Ending 2026

Local Government Funding	$153,607
State Aid to COGs	110,533
Federal & State	2,717,323
General, In-kind & Miscellaneous	88,500
Contractual & Direct Services	3,699,497
TOTAL	**$6,769,460**

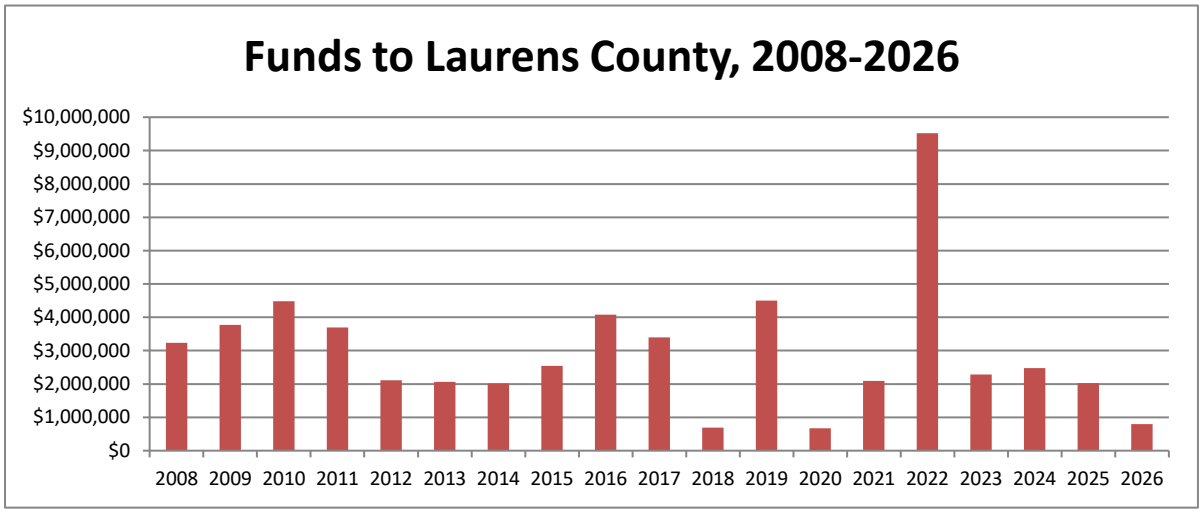
Return on Investment – Laurens County – Fiscal Year 2026

Local Government Investment	**$49,382**

Funds to Laurens County

Aging Direct Services	$440,402
Workforce Development Direct Services	331,112
Rural Guideshare Allocation (SC 101 and SC 14 intersection)	26,408
TOTAL	**$797,922**

Return on Investment: 16:1



Direct Services funding consists of federal and state dollars for Workforce Development and Aging program services provided to the counties in the Upper Savannah Region based on performance, need and eligibility. The COG administers these two programs under contract for direct service delivery and is responsible for the allocation and fiscal administration of these dollars. The funds assist in delivering services that provide for the health, welfare and employment of certain segments of a county's population, thus easing the financial and administrative burden on local governments. Rural Guideshare funds are Federal Highway Administration dollars designated for highway system improvements. USCOG Board of Directors prioritizes the projects for final consideration by the SCDOT Commission.

Laurens County Highlights

Laurens County Joanna Sewer Rehabilitation - Laurens County was awarded $1,321,050 in June 2025 to upgrade water and sewer in the Joanna community. Improvements are proposed on W. Calhoun Street, E. Calhoun Street, Reeder Street across Workman Street, across N. Main Street (HWY 76), along Taylor Street, and crossing under the railroad to Sumter Street. Water construction will consist of 1,600 linear feet (LF) of 6" water line, 70 LF of 12" steel casing pipe (bored and jacked under SC Hwy 76), four fire hydrants assemblies, re-connection to the existing water mains, and 43 water service re-connections. Sewer construction will consist of 1,850 LF of 8" gravity sewer line (remove and replace), 580 LF of HDPE pipe bursting, 180 LF of 20" steel casing pipe (bored and jacked under SCDOT roads and railroad), six manholes, rehabilitation of approximately eight existing manholes and 33 sewer service re-connections. The project required no acquisition and is estimated to cost approximately $1,688,300, including $367,280 from Laurens County Water & Sewer Commission. Construction began in July 2026.

Clinton-Joanna WWTP Upgrade Phase II – Laurens County was awarded $1,618,000 in July 2024 for Clinton-Joanna Wastewater Treatment Plant Upgrade Phase II. In June 2023, the project for the plant was bid for construction, including installation of a second 750,000-gallon sludge holding tank as an alternate bid item. However, due to the high bids the second tank was unable to be funded. As a result, the project was awarded with the construction of only one 750,000-gallon tank. In the spring 2024 CDBG application round, funds were requested to continue upgrading the plant including the purchase and installation of the second sludge holding tank, aeration, mixers, pumps, controls, and other necessary fittings. Project cost is estimated to be $1,780,000, including $162,000 in matching funds provided by Laurens County Water & Sewer Commission. The improvements consist of installing the 750,000-gallon tank. The drying beds were removed as part of the original scope in Phase I. The location is already cleared and will provide the space necessary to house the second tank and its equipment, without acquisition and/or land clearing. This additional tank was the completion of the 2022 original scope, providing the plant its necessary capacity to not only sustain its increasing wastewater volume, but to handle the facility's maximum capacity. Construction began July 2025, was completed in the spring of 2026, and has been closed out.

Preliminary Engineering – A total of $26,407.65 in Rural Guideshare funds from the Federal Highway Administration designated for highway system improvements were used for preliminary engineering for the S.C. Highways 101 and 14 intersection improvement project in the Town of Gray Court during FY '26. The USCOG Board of Directors prioritizes the projects for final consideration by the S.C. Department of Transportation Commission.

Piedmont Tech Health Sciences Building - Piedmont Technical College received an $11,271,697 grant award from the Economic Development Administration (EDA) in December 2024 for its Health Sciences Building project. This project consists of the construction of a new 27,000 square foot building for the Health Sciences programs. The two-story building is located on 1.5 acres on the Piedmont Technical College Greenwood Campus adjacent to the existing Health Sciences Building. This project will provide spaces that simulate real-world conditions which align with industry standards to prepare students from the Upper Savannah Region to be work-ready upon graduation. The building will feature nursing simulation spaces, six skills labs and multiple classrooms. The project cost is estimated at $14,089,621. As of October 2026, this project is approximately 60 percent complete.

Water Line Replacement Project Application - Laurens County Water and Sewer Commission (LCWSC) has submitted a funding request to EDA's Disaster Supplemental Grant Program to complete the Laurens County Hwy 221 Water Line Replacement Project. The project proposes to replace approximately three (3) miles of waterline that hinders the overall capacity in the central and western portions of Laurens County (35 percent of the LCWSC Service Area). The project will replace this line with approximately 15,400 linear feet of 24-inch ductile iron waterline along Highway 221, including the associated appurtenances and multiple connections to the existing water system.

Malouf Companies Water Upgrade Completed - Laurens County Water and Sewer Commission was awarded a $5,422,800 EDA grant to fund water system improvements to serve Malouf Companies and generally upgrade water services in the area around the Interstate 385 and US 221 interchange. The infrastructure improvements will help the company create 240 jobs and leverage $47,200,000 in private investment. The total project cost is $6,778,500. The grant funds 29,500 linear feet of 16-inch water line and a 500,000-gallon elevated water tank on Metric Road. This project was bid out in March 2024 and bids were opened April 9, 2024. Construction on both project components is complete.

Revolving Loan Fund Programs - Staff are currently servicing four small business loans in Laurens County. The original loan amount on all these loans total $299,400.

Economic Development Administration (EDA) – Updated the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) to keep the Upper Savannah Region eligible for EDA funding. Continued administering one funded project in Laurens County and one for the main campus of Piedmont Technical College in Greenwood. The PTC Health Sciences building grant for $11.27 million was awarded in FY '25.

South Carolina Infrastructure Improvement Program (SCIIP) - Assisted local governments and utilities in administering South Carolina Infrastructure Improvement Act (SCIIP) funds for water, sewer, and stormwater projects through the South Carolina Rural Infrastructure Authority (RIA). These funds were originally American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) dollars directed to the state. Sixteen projects totaling $79,891,066 were awarded throughout the region in 2023, with projects in all six counties. USCOG assisted in the implementation of nine of those awarded projects in the Region totaling $26,598,719 including projects for City of Abbeville, Town of Due West, Town of Edgefield, Ninety Six CPW, Town of Ware Shoals, City of Clinton, Laurens CPW, McCormick CPW and Town of Ridge Spring. Laurens County SCIIP projects include City of Clinton Miller's Fork Basin Sewer Rehabilitation, $4,250,000 SCIIP, $500,000 RIA; Laurens CPW Water System Improvements, $10,000,000 SCIIP, $500,000 RIA; and Laurens County Water & Sewer Commission Hospital Area Water System Improvements, $7,922,850 SCIIP. Three of those planning projects (Town of Ridge Spring, Town of Ware Shoals, Ninety Six CPW) and one construction project (Laurens CPW) have been monitored and closed out. The rest of the projects should begin to be monitored in the coming year. The Laurens County projects are listed below.

> The City of Clinton Miller's Fork Basin Sewer Rehabilitation project involves the rehabilitation of aging sewer lines to prevent sanitary sewer overflows and to satisfy an existing DHEC consent order. It is expected to directly serve approximately 500 households and 10 businesses.

The Laurens CPW Water System Improvements project involved the construction of a new water tank, as well as water treatment plant and waterline upgrades that will allow decommissioning of booster pumps stations and multiple water tanks to address water pressure problems. This project increases capacity to provide quality services to current and future customers. It was expected to directly serve approximately 5,551 households and 757 businesses. The project has been completed.

The Laurens County Water & Sewer Commission Hospital Area Water System Improvements project involves the construction of booster pump stations, an elevated water tank and waterline improvements to increase water capacity and reliability in the hospital service area. This project increases capacity to provide quality services to current and future customers. It is expected to directly serve a total of approximately 3,965 households and 115 businesses.

Southeast Crescent Regional Commission – Continued working with the Southeast Crescent Regional Commission to connect potential local project with federal grant resources. Assisted the Town of Ware Shoals with an application review for a parking lot renovation project at Katherine Hall that was funded.

Transportation Planning – Continued to maintain the regional Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) with assistance from SCDOT. Began the process of updating the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). Organized a meeting with local and state transportation officials to discuss transportation needs in Uptown Greenwood. Continued to work with a statewide group to develop a template to encourage the construction of more sidewalks, bike paths, and trails.

Transit – Received, reviewed, and ranked transit grant applications from regional providers and forwarded them on to SCDOT. Continuing to pursue grants and partnerships to expand transit in all counties and throughout the region. Completed work with transit partners on a study to determine the feasibility of public transit in the counties of Abbeville, Laurens, and Saluda, which do not currently have public transportation. The SC Office of Public Transit requires a feasibility study to be completed before federal funds are made available. The Western Transportation Institute took the lead on completing the study with financial assistance from the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) and the US Department of Agriculture. No local funds are being used for this study.

Small Business Development Center Advisory Board – Continued meeting regularly with the regional advisory board to connect potential entrepreneurs with available resources and encourage local business development.

SC Drought Response Committee – Continued meeting with the state Drought Response Committee on a regular basis to report on local drought conditions in our region.

Small Business Development Committee – Continued meeting regularly with the regional Small Business Development Committee to connect potential entrepreneurs with available resources and encourage local business development.

South Carolina Textile Communities Revitalization Act – Completed research and finished three letters of determination of economic distress for developers to use in seeking tax credits to potentially redevelop abandoned textile sites.

Regional meetings – Hosted public administrators and county and municipal clerks for lunch meetings to discuss topics of mutual interest.

Hurricane Helene Response – Worked with the Economic Development Administration, the SC Office of Resilience, and local governments to help access funds available to address the widespread impact of Hurricane Helene in SC.

Americans with Disabilities Act – Continued updating ADA plans for local governments as needed by the Community Development program.

Environmental Reviews – Completed environmental reviews for Community Development Block Grant projects.

Upper Savannah Land Trust – Continued providing technical assistance to the Upper Savannah Land Trust, which is helping protect 60,140 acres of land with more than 150 easement projects across Abbeville, Aiken, Anderson, Edgefield, Greenwood, Laurens, McCormick, Newberry, Oconee and Saluda counties since its establishment in 2000.

HOME – Continued monitoring completed projects with the HOME Investment Partnership Program. HOME is a HUD-funded program that provides rehab or new construction funding for homes of low-income individuals and rental units. Monitoring tenant income and rent levels will continue for the next 12 years. There is no more local funding in this program.

Planning – Continued assisting various municipal and county planning commissions with development or zoning questions as needed. Completed a comprehensive plan update for the Town of Edgefield.

Grant writing – Assisted with grant writing for municipalities as requested.

Aging & Disability Resource Center (ADRC) Services – The Upper Savannah Aging & Disability Resource Center (ADRC) provides, coordinates and contracts for services to the Upper Savannah Region's senior population. In addition to the regional services through the ADRC described in the next 12 paragraphs, Upper Savannah contracts with the Region's senior centers and other providers to meet the needs of senior adults. Contracted services include transportation, home-delivered meals, congregate dining with activities, home care, and health and wellness promotion.

Aging Services in FY '26 – A total of 413 seniors were served congregate dining meals across the Upper Savannah Region with 29,353 meals served at the Region's senior centers during FY '26. A total of 703 seniors were served home-delivered meals with 100,151 meals delivered in our region. A total of 323 seniors received transportation services across our region which includes congregate dining transportation, medical and essential shopping transportation, with a total of 146,732.95 miles traveled.

Aging Services in Laurens County – Seniors in Laurens County were served 2,252 congregate meals and 15,746 home-delivered meals during FY '26; seniors traveled 36,056 miles to meals, appointments and essential services, six seniors received minor home repair, and there were 995 hours of home care spent in the County. A total of 69 clients from Laurens County received respite

from the Family Caregiver Support Program, 22 received supplemental services such as incontinence supplies, and there were five families from the County in the Seniors Raising Children program.

State Health Insurance Program (SHIP) – The SHIP program helps seniors and individuals with disabilities research and understand Medicare coverage options with their Medicare prescription drug plans and Medicare Advantage plans. This Program also counsels and assists beneficiaries with Medicare Part A & B issues and Medigap coverage, and alerts seniors to fraudulent Medicare and Medicaid practices through the Senior Medicare Patrol Program. The Upper Savannah SHIP Program made 2,457 contacts and attended 61 outreach events in FY '26. A total of 228 Medicare beneficiaries were assisted in enrollment plans.

Family Caregiver Support Program (FCSP) – Program provided funding to 48 seniors raising children and 283 family caregivers, and served 67 seniors with Alzheimer's respite. A total of $306,475.44 was spent on these programs during FY '26. Also, information, assistance, education, support, and referrals were provided to many more clients throughout the Region. The FCSP program provides respite, which is a temporary break from daily caregiving that is important in helping reduce caregiver burnout so they can provide better care for their loved one. The program also helps caregivers with supplemental services, such as incontinence supplies, counseling and assistive technology; a total of 137 caregivers provided with that support service. The FCSP also continues to be available for seniors ages 55 and older caring for children 18 and younger through the Seniors Raising Children (SRC) Program. Many seniors take on the parental role to keep the child(ren) out of the overburdened foster care system due to parents being unable to do so themselves for various reasons including death, incarceration, drug problems, etc. The program provides children with a chance to be a part of after-school care and activities such as sports and camps. The program provides them with clothing vouchers twice a year to help with the cost of clothes. The Family Caregiver Advocate attended 76 outreach events in FY '26 to share our services with the Region, reaching 3,788 seniors.

Information, Referral and Assistance (IR&A) – The IR&A program is designed to provide seniors and people with disabilities access to helpful resources. Upper Savannah staff includes one certified IR&A specialist. A total of 2,741 contacts were made with seniors throughout the Region concerning services in FY '26. The Community Resource Specialist attended 58 outreach events in FY '26 to share information about the AAA and community services.

Assessments – Assessment specialists provided holistic, person-centered assessments to identify seniors' needs and to determine service eligibility for aging programs. The assessment team completed 1,586 assessments in FY '26.

Home Safety Program – The program has helped many individuals throughout the Region with projects that improve unsafe areas in the home, including the building of handicap accessible ramps and installation of handrails, grab bars, etc. Partnerships with area churches have maximized the funding potential. The AAA helped 44 seniors in the Home Safety Program throughout the Region during FY '26.

Assistive Technology (lifelines) – The program assisted approximately 18 seniors throughout the Region with lifelines in FY '26.

Legal Services Program – Program served 28 seniors with various legal concerns such as Power of Attorney, will preparation, housing, income and grandparent custody issues in FY '26. Attorneys throughout the Region have agreed to work with the Aging & Disability Resource Center at reasonable rates to better serve the senior population.

Home Care Program – Upper Savannah AAA provides a Home Care Program that helps seniors who need services such as light housekeeping and some personal care. The program provides consumer choice for the seniors and their families and adds support to keeping older people in their homes as long as possible. The program served 59 seniors with home care and personal care services and provided 4,987.5 hours to seniors in our region during FY '26.

Advocate for Senior Citizens – Continued to serve as an advocate for 2,078 seniors in the Region's nursing homes and residential care facilities (total of 31 facilities) through the continued administration of the Regional Ombudsman Program. The Regional Long-Term Care Ombudsman investigates and works to resolve problems or complaints affecting residents in nursing homes and residential care facilities. The Ombudsman also educates residents and family members about long-term care and related issues while advocating for the protection of the resident's rights.

Regional Long Term Care Ombudsman Facilities in the Region
1,301 Nursing Home beds - 12 facilities
777 Community Residential Care Facility beds – 19 facilities
2,078 beds in 31 facilities

Advocate for Individuals with Disabilities and Special Needs, and Mental Health – The Long-Term Care Ombudsman has continued to serve as an advocate for residents in residential, home shares, and intermediate care facilities operated or contracted for operation under the Department of Disabilities and Special Needs (DDSN) and the Department of Mental Health (DMH) through the continued administration of the Regional Ombudsman Program. The Ombudsman investigates and works to resolve problems or complaints affecting consumers in DDSN and DMH facilities. The Ombudsman also educates residents, family members, and staff about long-term care and related issues while advocating for the protection of the resident's rights. The Ombudsman has continued to increase in-person staff training on topics such as resident rights; abuse, neglect and endangerment, and reporting to improve quality of care and life for all consumers who reside in these facilities.

Long Term Care Ombudsman Facilities in the Region
1,377 slots/beds – 5 Office of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (OIDD) Day Programs
612 slots/beds -105 OIDD facilities
8 beds - 8 DMH home shares
1,977 beds in 118 facilities

Workforce Program Update

For the Upper Savannah Workforce Development Board, Program Year 2025–2026 has been defined by substantial service growth, strategic operational modernization, and targeted investment in high-demand career pathways.

Our results across Abbeville, Edgefield, Greenwood, Laurens, McCormick, Newberry, and Saluda counties illustrate the vital role the SC Works system plays in sustaining regional economic health. During PY '25 (FY '26), our system recorded 12,360 customer visits, registered 3,362 new job seekers, and delivered 33,458 individualized job-search services—representing nearly a fourfold increase in job-search service volume compared to the prior program year. Our business services team delivered 4,013 employer services, assisted 2,144 regional businesses, and connected 1,467 job seekers through targeted hiring events.

Federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) performance benchmarks were met or exceeded across all core areas. Upper Savannah achieved an overall program score of 116.4 percent of goal for Title I Adult, 116.2 percent for Dislocated Workers, and 99.8 percent for Title I Youth. Performance highlights include an Adult Credential Rate of 78.1 percent (128 percent of goal), a Dislocated Worker Measurable Skill Gains rate of 100 percent (148 percent of goal), and a regional Measurable Skill Gains indicator score of 135.3 percent.

These achievements reflect the dedication of our board members, front-line workforce specialists, and regional partners who turn workforce strategy into lasting economic mobility.

PY 2025 (FY '26) Regional Service Delivery

- **Laurens County**: Recorded 1,477 center visits, 692 newly registered job seekers, 1,571 job-search services, and 165 job seekers connected through hiring events.
- **Regional & Virtual Events**: Reached 625 additional job seekers, including 563 participants attending regional hiring events (such as the 242-participant Spring Job Fair at Piedmont Technical College) and 62 attendees participating in virtual sessions.
- **Systemwide Totals**: Reached 12,360 total customer visits, 3,362 newly registered job seekers, 33,458 job-search services, and 1,467 total job seekers engaged through hiring events.

Service Modernization & Infrastructure Enhancements

- **Laurens County SC Works Relocation**: Relocated the Laurens County SC Works Center to 291 Professional Park Road in Clinton, co-locating directly within the Laurens County Chamber of Commerce to bridge workforce initiatives directly with local economic recruitment and business retention.
- **Rural Connection Points**: Transitioned traditional physical affiliate sites in Abbeville, Edgefield, McCormick, and Saluda into community-based Connection Points, reducing facility overhead while sustaining in-person service via the SC Works Mobile Career Coach, local public libraries, and adult education centers. There are connection points in all seven Workforce System counties. Laurens County's locations include Laurens County Library – Main Branch, Clinton Public Library, Goodwill Job Connection, United Way of Laurens County.
- **Contractor Re-Procurement**: Successfully concluded the competitive four-year WIOA Request for Proposal (RFP) process, re-awarding service delivery to Eckerd Connects for Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, and One-Stop Operator services to ensure system stability and performance consistency.
- **Comprehensive Center Security**: Secured a $97,500 Statewide Reserve Security Grant to implement armed security services across comprehensive center locations, enhancing safety for patrons and staff.
- **Career Readiness Workshop Hub Launch:** Expanded digital accessibility across the seven-county

region by launching an online Career Readiness Workshop Hub offering 24/7, self-paced virtual modules—ranging from resume development to interview strategies—complementing in-person center sessions and extending barrier-free prep tools to rural job seekers

High-Demand Industry Pathways & Training Investments

- **Healthcare Credentials**: Focused WIOA funding, SC WINS, and Workforce Pell assistance on critical regional shortages, resulting in certifications across Registered Nursing, Patient Care Technician, Medical Billing and Coding, Phlebotomy, Certified Nurse Aide (CNA), and Dental Assisting.
- **Advanced Manufacturing & Trades**: Financed vocational training for in-demand manufacturing roles, including welding, mechatronics, industrial maintenance, and heavy equipment operation.
- **Layoff Aversion & Upskilling**: Secured and administered a $52,500 Rapid Response and Incumbent Worker Training grant for AluPress to train 32 workers, mitigating potential layoffs resulting from shifts in electric vehicle manufacturing demand.
- **Commercial Transportation**: Supported essential supply-chain careers through Commercial Driver's License (CDL) training pathways.

Youth Committee & Early Career Readiness

- **Work-Based Learning Performance**: Dedicated 25.64 percent of Title I Youth expenditures to work-based learning activities, surpassing the 20 percent statutory minimum.
- **Workforce Prep Days**: Integrated two-day career readiness clinics into local school districts, providing student workshops on resumes and interview techniques while briefing career center counselors on WIOA programs.
- **Foundational Career Literacy**: Expanded the elementary school program *"Show Up, Stand Out, Be On Time,"* instilling time-management and attendance accountability among primary-grade students.
- **Construction Skills Showcase**: Organized the Upper Savannah Invitational Building Construction Competition, engaging student teams in building outdoor furniture within a three-hour window using donated community materials.

Strategic Next Steps for Program Year 2026

- **Host Fall Regional Job Fair**: Execute the annual hiring event at Piedmont Technical College to connect job candidates with employers in manufacturing, healthcare, and logistics.
- **Synchronize with Regional Infrastructure**: Partner with the Upper Savannah Council of Governments to connect training programs with major developments, including the $11.27 million EDA-funded Piedmont Technical College Health Sciences Building and regional utility upgrades.
- **Align Training Approvals with Market Demand**: Update the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) by adding high-placement programs—such as Aiken Technical College's HVAC Certificate—while removing outdated or defunct providers.
- **Execute Board Governance Transition**: Enforce new two-year leadership term limits, seat private-sector representatives for vacant Abbeville and Saluda county positions, and orient new industrial and healthcare board members.