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

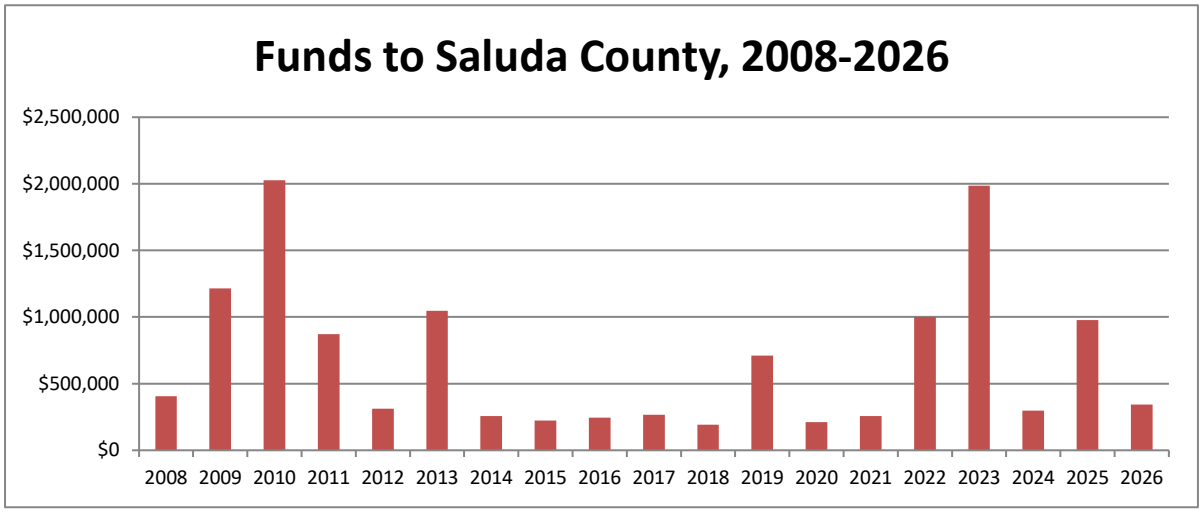
Financial Review - Upper Savannah COG Revenue Highlights

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 – Saluda County – Fiscal Year 2026

Local Government Investment	**$13,616**
Funds to Saluda County	
Aging Direct Services	$188,639
Workforce Development Direct Services	88,552
Grant by USCOG Initiation – FY 2026 (see page 2)	65,872
TOTAL	**343,063**

Return on Investment: 25:1



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.

Direct grant awarded in Fiscal Year 2026:

- **CDBG - $65,872 –** Saluda County EMS Station Blood Storage Equipment

Saluda County Highlights

Saluda County EMS Station Blood Storage Equipment - Saluda County was awarded $65,872 in December 2025 to provide residents and visitors with life-saving pre-hospital blood to aid in medical trauma calls. The County does not have any emergency medical facilities to aid in trauma calls, relying on the availability of air medical services and ambulance transportation to nearest emergency medical facility. Medical facilities can range from 40 minutes to an hour and a half away, depending on the extent of medical needs. Funds will purchase equipment to store, transport, and administer blood while on scene or during transport to the nearest medical trauma facility. The funds will provide for an autonomous portable refrigerator unit, cables, adaptors, vehicle mount, blood warmer, backup battery, and blood. Project was scheduled to go out to bid in October 2026.

Saluda County Library Improvements - Saluda County was rewarded $750,000 in December 2024 to renovate the new Saluda County Library location at 307 W. Butler Ave. The current library behind the courthouse consists of approximately 2,000 square feet of space, whereas the new library location consists of approximately 6,900 square feet. Improvements to include interior construction, parking improvements, ADA accessibility, and new HVAC unit. Improvements will provide this county with a much larger facility, allowing for more educational materials, resources, and space for free library-hosted activities and programs. The bid package at SC Department of Commerce waiting on approval to sign contract.

Town of Ridge Spring Sewer Rehab - Town received $1,700,000 in CDBG funds in August 2022 to rehabilitate three major sections of the Town's main sewer trunkline. A study completed in 2005 indicated excessive inflow and infiltration within the Town's system. Recent inspections indicated conditions significantly worsened. Project includes approximately 2,541 linear feet (LF) of 8" gravity sewer, 2,151 LF of 10" gravity sewer, 200 LF of 16" steel encased pipe (bore), 3,361 LF of CIPP and installation of approximately 42 manholes. Project costs are estimated to be $2,086,090, including $386,090 from Town. Upper Savannah and the Town recently completed right of way acquisitions. This project bid package at SC Department of Commerce waiting on approval to sign contract.

Town of Saluda Streetscape - The Town received $721,212 in CDBG funding in November 2021 for streetscape at North Main and West Church streets. The project focused on beautification throughout downtown in hopes of providing a welcoming atmosphere for economic development, while improving and providing accessibility for all. Improvements would encourage foot traffic, potentially stimulating business opportunities within the available storefronts. The project included a $102,562 local match for total cost of $823,774. Construction was completed in spring 2026 and project has been officially closed out.

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.

Revolving Loan Fund Programs - Staff are currently servicing three small business loans in Saluda County. The original loan amount on all these loans totals $96,000.

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. The rest of the projects should begin to be monitored in the coming year. Saluda County SCIIP projects include Town of Ridge Spring Water System & Storm Drainage Evaluation, $500,000; and Saluda County Water & Sewer Authority Wastewater Treatment Plant Upgrade, $2,918,750 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 Saluda County projects are listed below.

> The Ridge Spring Water System and Storm Drainage Evaluation project involved the development of a plan to consider asset conditions, capacity, financial conditions and rates. This project helped a very small system comprehensively assess and prioritize system needs as well as evaluate various options for achieving long-term viability. It was expected to directly serve approximately 502 households and 92 businesses. The project has been completed.
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> The Saluda County Water & Sewer Authority Wastewater Treatment Plant Upgrades project involves the installation of sludge components at the new wastewater treatment plant, which will also serve the Saluda Commission of Public Works. The project also includes installation of bypass pumps at five pump stations. This project implements a regional solution that will strengthen multiple utilities, leading to greater reliability of critical services. It is expected to directly serve a total of approximately 127 households and six businesses.

Southeast Crescent Regional Commission – Continued working with the Southeast Crescent Regional Commission to connect potential local project with federal grant resources.

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.

Planning Commissioner Training – Hosted numerous workshops to provide planning commissioners, zoning appeals board members, and staff with state-mandated training. Across the region, 83 people received the required training during FY '26.

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 Center Advisory Board – Continued meeting regularly with the regional advisory board 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 Saluda County – Seniors in Saluda County were served 5,811 congregate meals and 5,959 home-delivered meals during FY '26; seniors traveled 9,430 miles to meals, appointments and essential services, six seniors received minor home repair, and there were 462 hours of home care spent in the County. A total of 13 clients from Saluda County received respite from the Family Caregiver Support Program, two received supplemental services such as incontinence supplies, and there was one family 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

- **Saluda County**: Recorded 18 center visits, 127 newly registered job seekers, 103 job-search services, and 21 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

- **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 counties in the Region. Saluda County's locations include Saluda County Library – Main Branch, Ridge Spring Branch Library
- **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.
- **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.