

UPPER SAVANNAH COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
 Annual Report to the Board Members Representing Laurens County
 For the Fiscal Year Ending 2021

Financial Review - Upper Savannah COG Revenue Highlights

Local Government Funding	\$153,497
State Aid to COGs	40,965
Federal & State	2,097,411
General, In-kind & Miscellaneous	83,700
Contractual & Direct Services	<u>3,677,189</u>
TOTAL	\$6,052,762

Return on Investment – Laurens County – Fiscal Year 2021

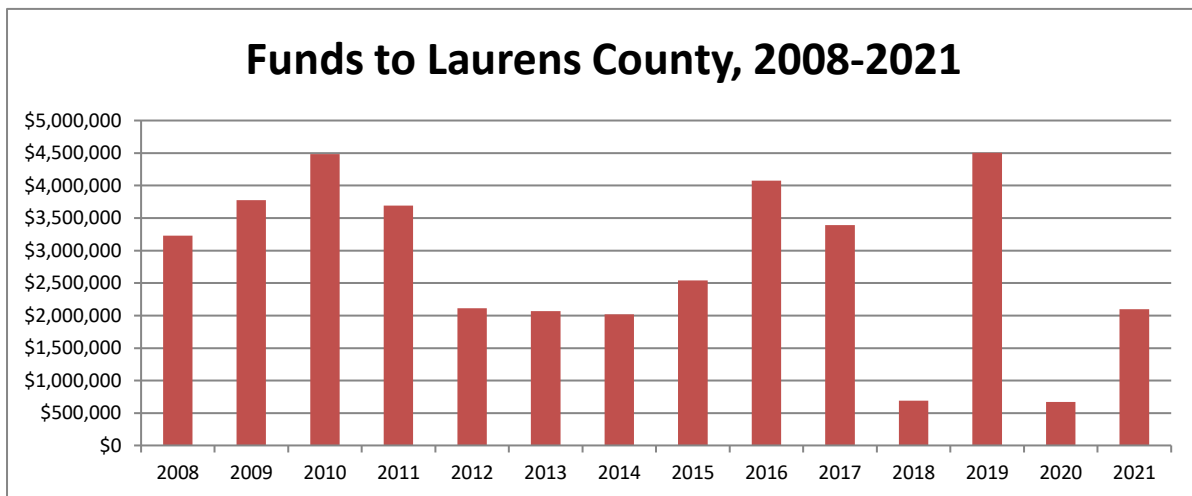
Local Government Investment	\$46,896
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Funds to Laurens County

Aging Direct Services	\$400,921
Workforce Development Direct Services	230,456
Grants by USCOG Initiation – FY 2021 (see page 2)	<u>1,465,000</u>

TOTAL	\$2,096,377
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Return on Investment: 45:1



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 grants awarded in Fiscal Year 2021:

- **CDBG - \$750,000** – Clinton Mill Sewer Upgrade
- **CDBG - \$715,000** – Highway 56/76 Sewer Upgrades

Laurens County Highlights

Clinton Mill Sewer Upgrade – Project awarded to City of Clinton in September 2020, with \$750,000 in CDBG funds, \$500,000 from the Rural Infrastructure Authority (RIA) and a \$149,720 local match for an original total project cost of \$1,399,720. Project involves upgrading sewer lines in Clinton Mill Village area, an LMI neighborhood in City of Clinton. City is currently under Consent Order from SCDHEC due to sanitary sewer overflows in its collection system. Project will aid in reduction of inflow and infiltration to the City’s collection system. Project improvement will benefit an estimated 180 units. All project bids were over budget. (The COG was later notified that an additional \$710,000 in CDBG funds has been awarded and the City will contribute an additional \$250,000 to continue the entire project, bringing the total project cost to \$2,359,720).

Highway 56/76 Sewer Upgrades – Project awarded to Laurens County in September 2020, with \$715,000 CDBG funds, \$120,000 local match for total project cost of \$835,000. Project involves repairing two major sections of trunk line at intersections of Hwy 76/Springdale Drive and Hwy 56/Springdale Drive. Improvements to intersections would include installing new lines, pipes and manholes and reconnection of force mains. Project improvement would benefit an estimated 2,300 households and businesses, approximately half of the City of Clinton’s population. Engineering and bid package are complete. Acquisition is being completed and will go to bid November 2021.

Lydia Mill Sewer Upgrade Phase II – CDBG request of \$750,000 funded to Laurens County in June 2019, with local match of \$107,700. Partnering with Laurens County Water & Sewer Authority, the upgrade included Sycamore, Peachtree, Oak, Elm, Chestnut, Magnolia, Spruce, Pine and Poplar streets in City of Clinton. In addition to the residential areas, the project included section of trunk sewer line which not only serves the entire Lydia Mill area but also other areas of the City of Clinton. Project was completed in FY 21.

Waterline Upgrade and Water Tank – Laurens County Water & Sewer Commission (LCWSC) was awarded a \$3,100,000 grant to upgrade a waterline along Stagecoach Road and to construct a water tank at Milam Road. Both project components will enhance the LCWSC’s water system operations and help maximize the benefits of the new water plant. The project is under way and the Upper Savannah COG staff is administering the project on behalf of the Commission. The grant was awarded under EDA’s supplemental funding in response to natural disasters occurring in 2017. The damage and impacts of Hurricane Irma resulted in a presidentially declared disaster in South Carolina which made this project eligible. The total project cost is \$3,875,000. Two reimbursement requests have been paid by EDA. Project is near completion.

Laurens County Water & Sewer Commission (LCWSC) – The LCWSC received notification from the Economic Development Administration (EDA) that its sewer upgrade project to serve the Fibertex expansion in Gray Court had been selected for further consideration. LCWSC applied for these grant funds with the help of the Upper Savannah COG staff. The potential grant award is \$2,000,000 and the total cost estimate is \$2,735,000. The Fibertex expansion will generate

\$50,000,000 in capital investment and create 50 jobs. The project will likely be approved in FY 2022 if EDA funding is available.

CARES Revolving Loan Fund Program – The RLF closed three loans to businesses in Laurens County totaling \$65,950. The loans helped create one job and retain 11 jobs.

Water Tank – The Laurens County Water & Sewer Commission (LCWSC) was awarded a \$3,100,000 EDA grant to upgrade a waterline along Stagecoach Road and to construct a water tank at Milam Road. Both project components will enhance the LCWSC’s water system operations and help maximize the benefits of the new water plant. The project is nearing completion and the Upper Savannah COG staff is administering the project on behalf of the Commission. The grant was awarded under EDA’s supplemental funding in response to natural disasters occurring in 2017. The damage and impacts of Hurricane Irma resulted in a presidentially declared disaster in South Carolina which made this project eligible. The total project cost is \$3,875,000.

Workforce Development – Workforce development staff assisted with a job fair for county employers. Staff also helped Whitten Center find essential workers during pandemic.

Focus on Manufacturing – The largest need in the Upper Savannah area is preparing workers for jobs in manufacturing. There are hundreds of jobs which are unfilled and several thousand job seekers in the Upper Savannah region. The Upper Savannah Workforce Development Board works with both businesses and job seekers to address short-term and long-term needs. Upper Savannah developed linkages with workforce boards in Anderson, Greenville and Spartanburg to start improving the pool of manufacturing workers in the Greater Upstate Region.

Response to Healthcare Hiring Needs – Upper Savannah received a \$500,000 grant to train 100 EMT/Paramedics over the next four years. The Upper Savannah Workforce Development Board prioritized training for healthcare workers in response to the pandemic.

SC Works – SC Works Centers are the focal point of the workforce development system. More than 1,000 job seekers were matched with jobs through the SC Works system.

Outreach to High School Students – Upper Savannah is best known for its innovative approaches to reaching job seekers and employers. It offered pop up job fairs in conjunction with high school graduation practices. Booklets were distributed to more than 2,000 graduating seniors in the region listing companies which hire current high school students or recent graduates.

Economic Development Administration (EDA) Update – Maintained the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDs) to keep the Upper Savannah region eligible for EDA funding. Assisted in the development of project applications for Laurens County. Hired an Economic Recovery Specialist for the region with grant funds to help local governments deal with federal and state COVID related requirements and funding opportunities.

Planning Commissioner Training – Hosted numerous workshops to provide planning commissioners, zoning appeals board members, and staff with state-mandated training. Across the region, 81 people received the required training. COVID requirements have reduced the numbers this year because in-person training and certification were limited and individual on-line training was allowed.

Upper Savannah Land Trust – Continued providing technical assistance to the Upper Savannah Land Trust, which has preserved almost 53,000 acres in an eight-county area that includes the USCOG region.

Transportation Planning – Continued working with SCDOT on various transportation planning projects. Represented USCOG in statewide virtual meetings on updating the state bicycle and pedestrian plan and the Upstate regional freight plan.

Transit – Received, reviewed, and ranked transit grants from regional providers and forwarded them on to SCDOT. Participated in transit discussion groups in Greenwood and Laurens counties. Continuing to pursue grants and partnerships to expand transit in all regional counties.

Community Development Block Grants - Submitted applications for both CDBG-CV1 Public Services and Public Facilities funding. Received grant awards and began start-up process with the City of Abbeville, Laurens County School District 55, and funding for food services region-wide and transit services in Saluda County.

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

Americans with Disabilities Act – Continued updating ADA plans for local governments as needed.

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 17 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.

Ageing & Disability Resource Center (ADRC) Services – The Upper Savannah Ageing & 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 below, 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.

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 1,793 contacts and attended 60 outreach events from July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021.

Family Caregiver Support Program (FCSP) – Program provided funding to 283 caregivers as well as information, assistance, education, support, and referrals to many more throughout the

region. The program provides respite, which is a break from daily care-giving that is important in helping caregivers do a better job over a longer period of time. The program also helps caregivers with supplemental services, such as incontinence supplies and assistive technology. The FCSP also continues to be available for grandparents 55 and older caring for grandchildren 18 and younger. Many grandparents take on the parental role in order to keep the grandchildren out of the overburdened foster care system. The FCSP helps those grandparents who have stepped into the role of parent due to death, incarceration or other parental problems with some funded services as well as information and support groups.

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 two certified IR&A specialists.

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 51 people in the Home Safety Program throughout the region during FY 2021.

Assistive Technology (lifelines) – Program assisted approximately 30 seniors throughout the region with lifelines.

Legal Services Program – Program served 25 seniors with various legal concerns such as Power of Attorney, will preparation, and grandparent custody issues. Attorneys throughout the region have agreed to work with the ADRC at reasonable rates to better serve the senior population.

Home Care Program – Upper Savannah AAA provides a Home Care Program that helps seniors who are in need of 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 persons in their homes as long as possible. The program served 101 people in FY 2021.

Advocate for Senior Citizens – Continued to serve as an advocate for 2,242 seniors in the region's nursing homes and residential care 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.