

UPPER SAVANNAH COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
 Annual Report to the Board Members Representing Laurens County
 For the Fiscal Year Ending 2022

Financial Review - Upper Savannah COG Revenue Highlights

Local Government Funding	\$154,019
State Aid to COGs	40,965
Federal & State	2,292,373
General, In-kind & Miscellaneous	83,900
Contractual & Direct Services	<u>3,428,697</u>
TOTAL	\$5,999,954

Return on Investment – Laurens County – Fiscal Year 2022

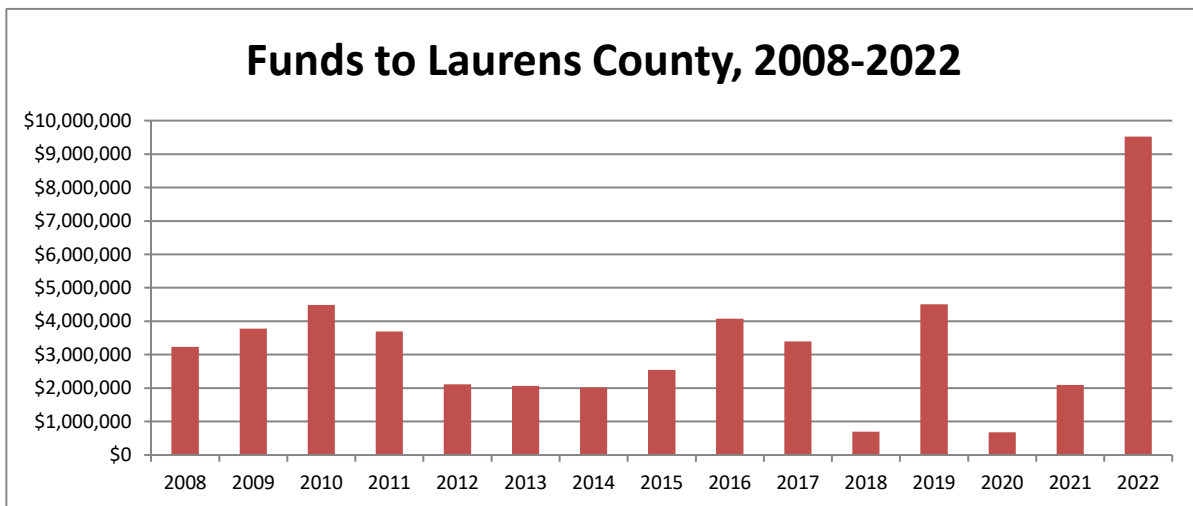
Local Government Investment	\$47,245
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Funds to Laurens County

Aging Direct Services	\$488,417
Workforce Development Direct Services	236,788
Grants by USCOG Initiation – FY 2022 (see page 2)	<u>8,795,857</u>

TOTAL	\$9,521,062
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Return on Investment: 202:1



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 2022:

- **CDBG - \$500,000** – Clinton Fire Truck Purchase
- **CDBG - \$710,000** – Additional funding for Clinton Mill Sewer Upgrade
- **EDA - \$2,000,000** – Fibertex Sewer Upgrade
- **EDA - \$5,422,800** – Laurens County Metric Road Water Upgrades
- **CDBG-CV Cares Act - \$161,237** – Laurens School District 55 air purifiers
- **CDBG-CV Cares Act - \$1,820** – Home Delivered Meals

Laurens County Highlights

Clinton Fire Truck - The City of Clinton received \$500,000 in CDBG funding in November 2021 for the purchase of a new fire truck to replace a 2008 model currently used by the city. A \$250,000 local match brought project total cost to \$775,000. The project is currently in start-up phase and out for bid.

Laurens School District Air Purifiers - USCOG applied for and was awarded CDBG-CV funds for air purifiers for the 10 schools in Laurens County School District 55. The CDBG-CV funding is used to help prevent, prepare for, or respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. The air purifiers were funded to cleanse the air in the school buildings, helping to prevent the spread of bacteria and viruses, allowing for students to stay healthy and continue learning by face-to-face instruction. The project is complete.

Clinton-Joanna WWTP Upgrade - USCOG staff submitted CDBG application in 2022 spring infrastructure round in April to help upgrade the Clinton-Joanna Wastewater Treatment Plant located in Kinards. Improvements include removing the existing drying beds and upgrading the WWTP process by installing two large sludge holding tanks, aeration, mixers, pumps, controls and other necessary fittings for liquid land application of the digested sludge. Project cost is estimated to be \$3,026,000, including \$1 million from State Revolving Fund (SRF) and \$526,000 from Laurens County Water and Sewer Commission. Project will benefit an estimated 8,078 people of which approximately 65 percent are considered LMI. The grant was officially awarded in July 2022. Project is in start-up phase.

Clinton Mill Sewer Upgrade – The project was awarded in September 2020, with \$750,000 in CDBG funds, \$500,000 from the Rural Infrastructure Authority (RIA) and a \$149,720 local match for a total project cost of \$1,399,720. The project involves upgrading sewer lines in the Clinton Mill Village area, an LMI neighborhood in the City of Clinton. The City was under a Consent Order from SCDHEC due to sanitary sewer overflows in its collection system. The project will aid in reduction of inflow and infiltration to the City’s collection system. It will benefit an estimated 180 units. The bids were opened in July 2021, and all bids were over budget. USCOG worked with the Department of Commerce to secure an additional \$710,000 awarded in August 2021 and the City of Clinton contributed an additional \$250,000 to continue with the entire project which will be approximately \$2,359,720. The project has been completed.

Highway 56/76 Sewer Upgrades – The project was awarded in September 2020, with \$715,000 in CDBG funds, \$120,000 local match for total project cost of \$835,000. The project involves repairing two major sections of trunk line at intersections of Hwy 76/Springdale Drive and Hwy 56/Springdale Drive. Improvements would include installing new lines, casings, manholes and reconnection of force mains. Project will benefit an estimated 2,300 households and businesses, approximately half of the City of Clinton’s population. There was a delay in the arrival of materials. Construction is expected to begin in December 2022 or January 2023.

Fibertex Sewer Upgrade - Laurens County Water and Sewer Commission was awarded a \$2,000,000 EDA grant to upgrade the sewer facilities serving the Fibertex manufacturing facility in Gray Court. Specifically, the existing pump station and existing sewer line serving the plant will be replaced providing additional capacity to accommodate the increased flow. The infrastructure improvements will help the company create 50 jobs and leverage \$50,000,000 in private investment. The total estimated project cost is \$2,735,000.

Malouf Companies Water Upgrade – The 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 water system improvements grant amount is \$5,422,800 and the total project cost is \$6,778,500. The infrastructure improvements will help the company create 240 jobs and leverage \$47,200,000 in private investment.

Home-Delivered Meals - CDBG-CV (Coronavirus) funds were used to fund home-delivered meals to qualifying seniors in the County. These seniors include those on waiting lists for meals funded by State Unit on Aging dollars and some congregate diners. A total of 280 meals were served in Laurens County from March 7, 2022, through June 30, 2022.

CARES Revolving Loan Fund Program – The RLF closed two loans to businesses in Laurens County totaling \$68,000. The loans helped leverage \$209,000 in private investment. These loans helped create one job.

Water Tank - Laurens County Water & Sewer Commission 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 now complete. 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.

Laurens County SC Works Center – Responded to Muffin Mam closure by expanding SC Works Center hours the week of closure and having a job fair the next week.

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. Upper Savannah is helping new and expanding industries in all counties.

Response to Healthcare Hiring Needs – Upper Savannah received a \$500,000 grant to train 100 emergency medical technicians (EMTs) and paramedics over last year and is halfway towards meeting the goal. The Upper Savannah Workforce Development Board prioritized training for healthcare workers in response to the pandemic.

SC Works Centers – SC Works Centers are the focal point of the workforce development system and are located in all seven counties in the Upper Savannah Workforce Area. More than 1,000 job seekers were matched with jobs through the SC Works system. During the year there were 8,294 distinct individuals receiving services. More than 5,000 employer services were logged.

Outreach to High School Students – Upper Savannah is best known for its innovative approaches to reaching job seekers and employers. Booklets were distributed to more than 2,000 graduating seniors in the region listing companies which hire current high school students or recent graduates. Career exploration events were held for eighth grade students.

Federal CAREER Dislocated Worker – Received federal grant to find and train laid off workers. Upper Savannah is providing technical support to four other workforce development areas who were also part of the grant award. Postcards were mailed out to more than 20,000 SC residents.

Economic Development Administration (EDA) – Updated the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDs) to keep the Upper Savannah region eligible for EDA funding. Assisted in the development of project applications for Greenwood County and Laurens County.

South Carolina Infrastructure Improvement Program (SCIIP) - Assisted local governments and utilities in applying for 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. USCOG staff attended two grant workshops and assisted in the writing and review of numerous grant applications in the region. Applications were due on September 12 and awards should be made by the first quarter of 2023. USCOG will also assist in the implementation of awarded projects in the region.

Transportation Planning – Continued working with SC Department of Transportation on various transportation planning projects. Represented USCOG in statewide virtual meetings on updating the state bicycle and pedestrian plan, the Upstate regional freight plan, the statewide Interstate Truck Parking plan, and discussion of Electric Vehicle policy for the state.

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

Planning Commissioner Training – Hosted numerous workshops to provide planning commissioners, zoning appeals board members, and staff with state-mandated training. Across the region, 126 people received the required training.

Community Development Block Grants – Received grant awards for both CDBG-CV1 Public Services and Public Facilities funding. Public service projects included air purifiers for school in Laurens County School District 55, food services region-wide, and limited public transit services in

Saluda County. The air purifiers for the schools have been completed, and both the food services and transit projects are underway. Public facilities projects included a HVAC upgrade and air filtration installation at the City of Abbeville Civic Center, and air filtration installation at the Opera House. Both projects have been completed.

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

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 has preserved over 53,000 acres in an eight-county area that includes the USCOG region.

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 16 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.

Grant writing – Assisted with grant writing for local governments, non-profits and community groups 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 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 2,537 contacts and attended 20 outreach events from July 1, 2021, to June 30, 2022.

Family Caregiver Support Program (FCSP) – Program provided funding to 270 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 47 people in the Home Safety Program throughout the region during FY 2022.

Assistive Technology (lifelines) – Program assisted approximately 24 seniors throughout the region with lifelines.

Legal Services Program – Program served 34 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 96 people in FY 2022.

Advocate for Senior Citizens – Continued to serve as an advocate for 2,208 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.