



2014

NADO  
**INNOVATION**  
AWARDS





# 2014 NADO INNOVATION AWARDS

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The National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) annual Innovation Awards program has been acknowledging creative approaches to regional community and economic development since 1986. Since the program's inception, more than 1,500 projects have been honored.

The 2014 Innovation Award winners are making a difference in their regions through a variety of program areas. These include business and economic development, emergency planning, sustainability, technology, and workforce development programs. The award winners' projects are profiled according to various categories; contact information for each awardee can be found in the project descriptions.

This awards program is made possible with support, in part, from the Ford Foundation (Grant # 0130-0301); U.S. Economic Development Administration Austin Regional Office (Grant # 08-79-04379); U.S. Economic Development Administration Atlanta Regional Office (Grant # 04-79-06700); Federal Highway Administration (Contract # DTFH61-10-C-00033); and U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (as a sub-recipient to the Institute for Sustainable Communities). Funding from these organizations should not be construed as an endorsement of any products, opinions, or services.

*Front cover images (from top to bottom): Coastal Regional Commission, Leadership SE Georgia; Region Five Development Commission, Choose Health; CSRA Regional Commission, Thomson-McDuffie Downtown Depot and Walkway Revitalization*

*The photos throughout the report were provided by the organizations who received Innovation Awards in 2014. Photos have been placed next to the corresponding projects.*

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# AGING, HEALTH, AND HUMAN SERVICES

The **Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham's (RPCGB) Pop-Up Project** promotes active modes of transportation and economic development. Aiming to improve experiences for pedestrians and cyclists in targeted parts of the region, RPCGB designed Pop-Up days with street fairs featuring bike maintenance stations, bike rodeos and rides, farmers markets, and yoga and dance classes. These events also stimulated economic activity in areas with vacant properties, displaying the market potential and attracting local businesses to invest in currently underserved communities. The Pop-Up Project left significant imprints in each host community including the construction of bike lanes geared towards students, the development of an arts park, and the installation of a much-needed seating area at a major transit hub. Through this type of creative programming RPCGB encourages citizens to walk and cycle beyond recreational purposes while also empowering local residents to reshape their communities.



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The **Southern Georgia Regional Commission's Area Agency on Aging (AAA)** has become noteworthy for its use of social media to promote services for the elderly and disabled. The **Area Agency on Aging on the Forefront of Social Media Marketing** program uses Facebook to connect with seniors who use the network, all with a low impact on the agency's budget. The AAA's Facebook page is updated daily with headlines, events, resources, and other appropriate topics regarding aging, senior issues, and caregiver resources. The program has had great success so far. Within the first week almost 1,500 people were reached by users sharing the information posted by the AAA with fellow Facebook friends.

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To support the work of localities utilizing the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Neighborhood Stabilization Program, **Region XII COG** set up the **Housing Loans to Support Neighborhood Stabilization Program** for citizens having difficulty obtaining financial assistance to secure home ownership. HUD's program requires income eligible persons purchasing new or rehabilitated homes to also receive down payment assistance in order to secure a 30-year fixed-rate mortgage. The COG set a precedent by providing loans directly to the homebuyer so the purchase could be financed under HUD's program requirements. To fund this project, \$200,000 was set aside from the COG's housing revolving funds which set up escrow accounts for taxes and insurance. As a result, not only were all low income persons assisted able to become homeowners and the communities able to reuse funds from the sale of the houses, but the COG also established a new service and will be able to provide similar loan servicing in the future.

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Recognizing that social factors are a leading cause of hospital readmissions, the **Bluegrass Area Development District's** Area Agency on Aging and Independent Living (AAAIL) developed the **Bluegrass Transitional Care Program** to provide non-medical in-home services to qualifying individuals in the district. Because hospital readmission rates may be attributed to inadequate access to post-hospital care and lack of care coordination of services, AAAIL staff visit patients in the hospital, at home, and follow up with them to determine any support needs such as transportation to doctor visits, shopping for needed items, home delivered meals, and medication reconciliation. The hospital pays for the Bluegrass Transitional Care Program but if readmission rates decrease as much as expected it will be a cost savings for the hospital, the patients, and the overall healthcare system.

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**The Pennyrile Area Development District's**

Area Agency on Aging and Independent Living (AAAIL) is tackling occurrences of senior bullying. During the process of addressing the issue, and through additional research, AAAIL recognized that senior bullying is



a common problem. One in five senior citizens report being bullied by other senior citizens. AAAIL staff developed “**Senior Bullying**,” a unique training aimed at addressing senior bullying through awareness to senior citizens, service providers, social workers, and others that are in settings with senior citizens. Seeing the need in other regions, the development district provides training to other organizations such as at conferences in Kentucky and Florida making this a program that can be easily replicated in other regions.

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Discussions at quarterly mayoral meetings in the **Pennyrile Area Development District** often centered on the staggering health statistics of the citizens. This prompted area mayors to form “**Get Up and Go: Where in the Pennyrile are the Mayors?**” to take action against obesity, diabetes, and smoking-related diseases on a regional level. Setting an example for their residents by participating in active outdoor activities, including horseback riding, kayaking, and hiking, the goal of “Get Up and Go” is for citizens to see their leaders participate in an active lifestyle. While promoting affordable family activities and regional tourism destinations, the group also hopes to develop collaborative relationships between mayors and cities to build and foster a cooperative atmosphere throughout the region.

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The **Purchase Area Development District** and its partners created the **Innovative Readiness Training Partnership** to improve military readiness and training to doctors and nurses in



the military reserves while simultaneously providing quality health care to the local community. Tapping into the extensive military reserve resources, the partnership meets urgent civilian needs and expands access to basic health care throughout the region. Residents received services on a walk-in basis, regardless of residence, medical insurance status, or income level. Members of the U.S. Army Reserve, with funding from the Delta Regional Authority, provided free medical, dental, and optical services via the Innovative Readiness Training in Mayfield, Kentucky. During the eight-day training 937 individual people were provided 1,818 services, a value of \$298,212.

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Administered by the **Region Five Development Commission, Choose Health** helps families gain access to healthy foods by partnering with their local healthcare providers. The health care



providers identify potential participants as food-insecure, low-income families and offer access to locally grown food via prescriptions redeemed bi-weekly for a community supported agriculture (CSA) box of produce aggregated from over 40 local growers and valued at \$250. Every CSA box includes recipes with nutritional values and cost-savings tips on how to stretch meal budgets while promoting better health. Equally important, the program supports the incomes of local growers associated with the regional food hub “SPROUT, MN.” The project is largely funded through a Hunger Free Minnesota grant and local matches.

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Recognizing the importance of patient medication compliance, **Golden Triangle Planning and Development District, Inc. (GTPDD)** developed the **Golden Triangle PDD Pharmacy**, a closed-door pharmacy geared to elderly, disabled, and home-bound residents. The goal is to educate seniors about their medication and encourage proper usage in order to improve overall patient health, reduce hospital readmission, and extend the time patients are able to live independently. The GTPDD Pharmacy is currently the only one of its kind in Mississippi and serves 162 patients. The program is seeing positive results with patients better managing their medication, resulting in improved health benefits.



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The **North Central Planning and Development District's Montgomery County Diabetes Coalition** aims to improve the quality of life for people who are age 55 and over by equipping them with skills to take control of their health. The coalition develops and coordinates activities that encourage local citizens of all ages to build a healthier lifestyle including: exercise programs such as walking, yoga, and tai chi; a smart shopper program that teaches residents to make smart food choices when shopping; a diabetes self-management program; and a "Safe Routes to School" program that promotes walking to school in order for children to develop good exercise habits early. This coalition has been successful in educating the public about the importance of exercise and eating right in order to prevent or control diabetes all with a minimal amount of funding.

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**West Central Nebraska Development District (WCNDD)** launched the **Nuisance Abatement** program in 2007. It has since become a statewide program administered by all economic development districts. In most nuisance abatement cases communities have historically used a complaint-driven process that seeks corrective action through fines and lawsuits. WCNDD's approach calls for a more positive, community approach that is designed to get the whole community to strive for cleanup instead of isolating individuals. This approach has had a positive impact and allows for results in a timelier, more peaceful manner. With their extensive background on nuisance abatement, WCNDD provides training to others through annual conferences and an informational DVD. Over the years WCNDD has proven that this program can be a vital community development tool that lays the foundation for economic development activities while creating social sustainability and local pride in the appearance of one's community.

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West\\_Central\\_Nebraska\\_Development\\_District/Nuisance\\_Abatement.html](http://www.west-central-nebraska.com/West_Central_Nebraska_Development_District/Nuisance_Abatement.html)**

The **Piedmont Triad Regional Council** Area Agency on Aging (PTRC AAA) has partnered with a diverse group of stakeholders to change the way health care is delivered through their **Coordinating Across Long Term Care and Health Systems** program. The PTRC AAA and the Northwest Community Care Network partnered in 2013 to serve frail and impaired adults residing in Adult Care Home (ACH) facilities to improve care coordination. Under this pilot initiative, the working group is developing best practices that will inform a model of care suitable to residents, and striving to reduce inappropriate use of ambulance and emergency services, decrease avoidable hospital admissions and readmissions, and improve the quality of, and access to, care for ACH residents. The best practices and lessons learned will be utilized across the state and throughout the North Carolina Community Care network.

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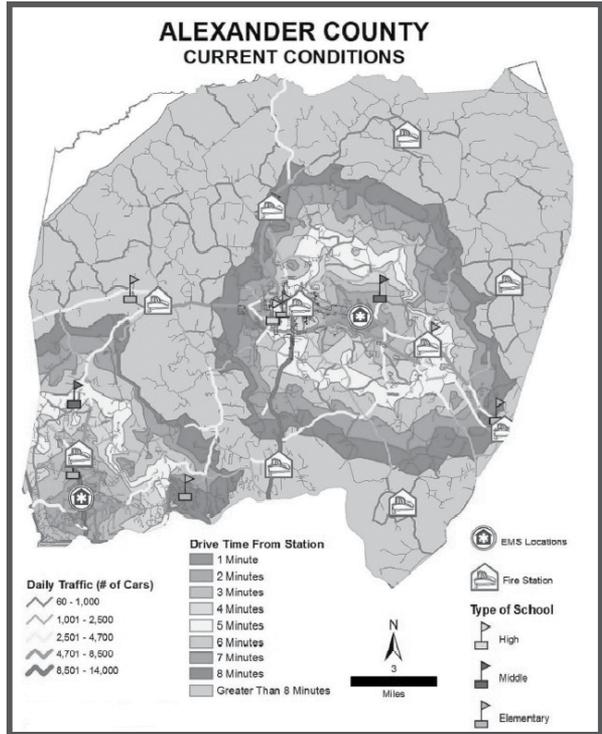
Prompted by the Affordable Healthcare Act, the **Upper Coastal Plain Council of Governments** (UCPCOG) and local partners developed the **Community Care Transitions Project** to reduce hospital readmission rates. Federal government funding pays for a nurse transition coach to visit with patients both prior to discharge as well as 30 days post-discharge and make referrals to UCPCOG's Area Agency on Aging regarding patient needs such as home delivered meals or medical transportation, and/or personal care. During the first nine months, 600 patients were served and their readmission rate dropped from a baseline of 25.5 percent to 16.5 percent.

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In reaction to high EMS response times, the **Western Piedmont Council of Governments** instituted the **Alexander County, NC – Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Response Study** which called for an analysis and recommendations to improve the situation. Leveraging available response statistics, local knowledge, GIS tools, and planning expertise, the study found that the primary causes for slow EMS response times were typically high call/incident volume and extended return to service times for

EMS crews. Without a hospital in the county, EMS teams make long trips to the nearest hospital. The project team concluded that the addition of an EMS crew at either of the two existing base stations would alleviate some of the slow response time issues and is the most practical financial option. A third EMS station has been identified as another option, pending land and funds availability.

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The **Appalachian Council of Governments** Area Agency on Aging, in partnership with four area hospitals, has received approval for a **Community-Based Care Transitions Program** (CCTP) funded by the Affordable Healthcare Act. The CCTP goals are to improve patient transitions from the hospital to other care facilities, to improve quality of care, to reduce readmissions for high-risk beneficiaries, and to document measureable savings to the Medicare program. The program consists of a hospital visit, a home visit, follow-up phone calls, and a short-term supplemental services package as needed. As of April 2014, the program was at 83 percent enrollment and already seeing a reduction in the rate of hospital readmissions. Equally important, program organizers have found patients more engaged and empowered in their own health care.

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Wanting to continue their tradition of working towards a healthy workforce, the **Lower Savannah Council of Governments** developed the **Healthy Workplace Initiative** with four focus areas: employee health and comfort; reduce, reuse, and recycle; indoor air quality; and indoor water quality and conservation. Tracking results has proved challenging but the COG has worked to consistently observe trends so it can refocus efforts on those headed in the wrong direction. The initiative was well received by staff and has continued to get positive feedback. The recycling efforts have resulted in a huge reduction in trash, office plants have reduced the formaldehyde levels in the air, and regularly held yoga sessions are well attended.

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The **Waccamaw Regional Council of Governments** runs the **Assisted Rides Program** to address the unmet transportation needs of adults over 60; the program also provides rides to disabled adults over 21. Volunteers provide transportation in their own privately-insured vehicles to qualified individuals. The program utilizes a low cost web-based software program, Ride Scheduler, to coordinate riders with drivers and track data. In the first three



months there have been a total of 5,514 rides provided totaling 430,376 miles and utilizing 68 volunteer drivers. The program has been such a success that it may be expanded in a partnership with the Low Country Veterans to help with long distance transportation needs to VA medical facilities.

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The **First Tennessee Development District (FTDD)** Area Agency on Aging and Disability joined a local partnership to manage **SeniorConnectKpt.org**, to build on support services for persons 60+ and other adults with disabilities in the region. SeniorConnectKpt.org is the result of work that set out to determine what the “perfect world” would look like for seniors in the FTDD community. Through research and community outreach the website was developed. One major gap that the website addresses was around seniors having access to aging-related information. In the first year, the site had over 4,000 visitors and provided users with an easy-to-use search engine containing a plethora of local resources and relevant information including a calendar of events and news.

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The **Brazos Valley Council of Governments** administers the Housing Choice Voucher **BVCOG Family Self-Sufficiency Program** (FSS) which receives federal funding to provide housing assistance to low-income families. Community resources, along with individual development accounts that include a match, are coordinated for the participants to build pathways towards supporting themselves with no public assistance. Families that complete the program may withdraw funds from these accounts to buy a home, obtain post-secondary training, or start a business at the completion of their FSS contract. The FSS program currently has 300 active participants and 55 families have graduated from the program since 2010. Of those graduates, six families have become home owners, 31 continued their education, and some have achieved business ownership.

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# BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

The **Sonoma County Economic Development Board** created the **Sonoma County Business Assistance Hotline** program to offer direct, one-on-one assistance to small- and micro-businesses seeking resources to help them start-up and expand. The program is designed to help new and growing businesses address the many obstacles they face through in-person consultations, by phone or email. The program provides business assistance services that include: obtaining permits, licenses, and loan resources; and finding qualified employees and regional institution connections. Since starting in 2013, the hotline has evolved from a pilot program to permanent economic development tool that has already reached 205 businesses representing over 1,600 employees. Sonoma County Economic Development Board employees staff the hotline which is funded by the County Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT), a 9 percent tax assessed to lodging rates, paid by visitors.

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**SCAPE, the Southwest Colorado Accelerator Program for Entrepreneurs**, creates more high-growth and job-creating companies in rural SW Colorado through an accelerator program administered by **Region 9 Economic Development District of SW Colorado**. SCAPE is built around a 15-member founders group of advisers, company founders, owners, and venture investors willing to contribute their time to mentor and provide seed funding. The goal is to prepare the individual businesses to enter the market, raise capital, and increase their chances of success. The program focuses on business wanting to market and compete outside of the local area, but physically remain in the region. Five businesses graduated from the program during the first year. The Colorado Office of Economic Development is supporting the effort as a possible pilot for other rural regions in the state that do not have the population or physical spaces for incubators.

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After a nine-month period of exploring regional partner buy-in and raising funds, **Northeast Oregon Economic Development District** entered into a contract with Springboard Innovation to start the **NE Oregon Community Capital Collaborative**. The project's goal is to make more capital available to local businesses by shifting a portion of the money that typically leaves the region back into local investment by targeting local people who are willing to invest their money and care about the region in which they live. The project is in the early stages, but has already secured an investment in a start-up food cart. There are a number of components to this growing initiative including: raising public awareness and providing training; creating Local Impact Investing Opportunity Networks (LIIONs) in each county; providing training and exposure to investment vehicles such as direct public offerings; providing access to a crowdfunding site; establishing a local loyalty point system for goods and services purchased from locally-owned businesses; and implementing an education campaign for the professional community to understand the project's goals.

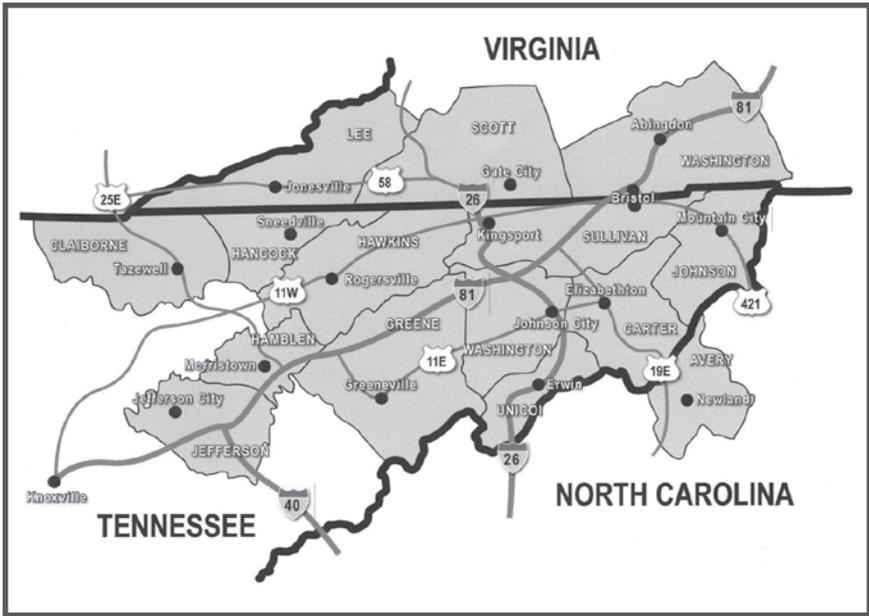
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Seeking to develop a new market for local business, the **Southern Alleghenies Planning & Development Commission (SAP&DC)** mobilized the **Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Booth at Expomin 2014** in Santiago, Chile. Expomin 2014 is the largest international mining exhibition in Latin America and SAP&DC showcased its region's mining sector, one of the region's leading industries, with eight mining companies at Expomin 2014. SAP&DC works to make it affordable for local companies to have an international presence driving economic development. Just weeks after the conclusion of the show, the businesses reported they are following up on 175 qualified leads, there is an estimated \$2 million in sales in process, nine agreements are being negotiated, and one business has already signed a distributor agreement and responded to an order that was placed.

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The **First Tennessee Development District** was the recipient of a USDA grant to update, publish, and distribute a **2013 Directory of Manufacturers** covering over 15 counties in Tennessee, Virginia, and North Carolina. The directory helps manufacturers more easily communicate with one another, collaborate, and purchase goods from one another when appropriate. The directory has been widely used by the Northeast TN Valley Regional Industrial Association as a recruiting tool and has been valued for cataloging regional manufacturers and presenting opportunities for manufacturers to form clusters, set up supply chains, and network with each other.

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# COMMUNICATING RESULTS AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

In response to changes to the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), **Greater New Orleans, Inc.** initiated the **Coalition for Sustainable Flood Insurance** (CSFI) to educate citizens, advocate for affordable flood insurance, and increase local participation in the flood mapping process. Flood insurance premiums were set to skyrocket in coastal and riverine communities and, if left unaddressed, the potential consequences could have strongly impacted local communities. Although CSFI's goals were initially locally-focused, the initiative has grown from a regional coalition of business and elected leaders in southern Louisiana to a national organization with 250 business, civic, and trade organizations in 35 states.

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The **Sumrall Park Renovation** was initiated when the **East Central Planning and Development District** joined with local partners to address a blighted local park that was in need of major repairs and updates. The project utilized a self-help CDBG grant, funding from the Mississippi Development Authority, matching funding from Clarke County, and the time and skills of numerous volunteers. The renovation included clearing out overgrown areas and constructing four multi-purpose courts, bathrooms, a playground area, walking paths, fencing, and lighting. Now Sumrall Park is a source of pride for the community and a safe place for local youth to play.

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The **Mississippi Gulf Coast Plan for Opportunity** is a collaborative planning project that includes **Southern Mississippi Planning and Development District**. The partnership engaged residents and communities along the Gulf Coast in a three-year dialogue about the role that the economy, housing, transportation, water, food, and other elements play in a more vibrant, healthy, and prosperous region. Published in December 2013, the final plan outlines specific priority action steps, strategies, and responsibilities to address the region's needs. In some cases, the plan will strengthen and embolden what is already working along the Gulf Coast. In other cases, it will create new initiatives to fill gaps and complete connections. The Plan for Opportunity is a living document that has been, and will continue to be, refined throughout implementation over the next 20 years.

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The **Mo-Kan Regional Council** played a major leadership role in the facilitation of the **Block Walk St. Joe and St. Joe Design Center** projects, both of which were greeted with strong support from local residents and businesses. Block Walk St. Joe, funded by a Healthy Eating, Active Lifestyle (HEAL) Grant, is a mobile application that encourages people to walk the downtown and take in its architecture and history, building on the Better Block program that was first created to showcase the downtown. Through the St. Joe Design Center, students from the College of Architecture, Planning, and Design at Kansas State University (KSU) created landscape design plans for downtown St. Joseph. Thanks to generous local businesses the students were able to present and showcase their designs in empty stores during the Better Block event which allowed local residents the opportunity to see the potential of downtown.

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**St. Joseph, MO | 816.233.3144 | [www.mo-kan.org](http://www.mo-kan.org) | [www.blockwalkstjoe.com](http://www.blockwalkstjoe.com)**

**Land of Sky Regional Council's Senior Corps Programs, HandsOn Asheville-Buncombe, and AmeriCorps** came together to celebrate Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s work by creating an opportunity for community residents of all ages to give back to their neighbors, friends, and community through the **2014 MLK Day of Service**



**Project.** The community's response to the project was overwhelming: over 280 volunteers gathered at Land of Sky Regional Council to work on eight service projects and 1,059 community members were touched by the work done that day. The 800 hours that the volunteers put into this project generated over \$18,000 in donated volunteer time, making this event a best practice for the organization as the return on time and investment is not only cost-effective but it also reaches out to help address local needs throughout the community.

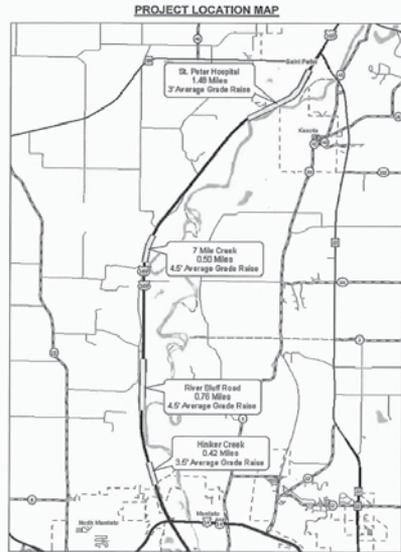
**Stacy Friesland | Foster Grandparent Program Manager | [stacy@landofsky.org](mailto:stacy@landofsky.org)  
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[www.landofskyrsvp.org/special-events/mlk-day-of-service](http://www.landofskyrsvp.org/special-events/mlk-day-of-service)**

**Land of Sky Regional Council** worked with a strategic marketing and public relations firm to develop and launch **Refresh - Making the Land of Sky Regional Council Brand** project. Land of Sky's goal was to establish a vision for the regional council to be better recognized within their community. Among other aspects of the rebranding process, Land of Sky has innovatively designed brochures, rack cards, and other print materials that are able to be custom-packaged to suit the end user's needs so new partners are not overwhelmed with irrelevant information. Thanks to the rebranding project the Council has seen relationships with local governments improve and there has been increased interest in what Land of Sky does and how they do it – a positive change allowing the Council to better showcase the collaborative work of its departments and staff.

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# EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND RECOVERY

After years of chronic flooding and road closures, the **Region Nine Development Commission** worked with EDA and MnDOT to obtain funding for the **Highway 169 Reconstruction/Flood Mitigation Project**. The Minnesota River flooded seven times in the last twenty years closing Highway 169 and causing crippling detours and loss of productivity as this is a major artery for the regional economy. The market value for agriculture products alone amounts to nearly \$2 million per day. This regionally critical project would have taken years to make it to the top of the MnDOT funding list, but due to a unique collaboration between Region Nine, EDA, and MnDOT construction will begin in 2016.



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**[www.dot.state.mn.us/d7/projects/floodmitigation/index.html](http://www.dot.state.mn.us/d7/projects/floodmitigation/index.html)**

In 2009, the **Southeast Nebraska Development District (SENDD)** staff began working with local partners on the **Regional Early Warning Sirens** project, building on previous disaster mitigation experience. The project involved identification of local early warning siren needs; securing firm commitments from local governments to participate in the project; obtaining federal funders; distribution of Requests for Proposals; and negotiation of final services and prices. With EDA funding and local matching funds totaling \$1.4 million, SENDD was able to install 69 units in 45 political subdivisions. SENDD maintains ownership of all equipment purchased through the grant, but participating political subdivisions entered into a twenty-year lease agreement with SENDD and will obtain ownership at the end of the lease.

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After a series of significant natural disasters during the last decade, the **First Tennessee Development District (FTDD)** established the **First Tennessee Development District Disaster Recovery and Response Plan**. The plan is a “one stop” resource guide with information about local, state, and federal disaster assistance programs, disaster response organizations, and technical assistance programs. The plan focuses on local resources in the event a disaster is not recognized by the state or federal government for assistance, including FTDD for its ability to provide services such as case management, volunteer management and training, GIS services, technical assistance, project management, and grant writing and administration.

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The **Ark-Tex Council of Governments (ATCOG)** received funding from FEMA to construct an emergency operations center (EOC). In the event of a disaster, whether man-made or natural, the **Ark-Tex Council of Governments: Emergency Operations Center** is available for use by any of the jurisdictions served by the Homeland Security Program in the ATCOG nine-county region. The building is multi-functional in that it can also be used for EOC training purposes without disrupting daily operations. The EOC has numerous features and resources such as sleeping quarters, showers, a full kitchen, bathrooms, an interview room for interaction with the media, a briefing room, and the operations room. This is a great asset for the region as no single jurisdiction would have been able to build such a facility individually.

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With a unique geographical location along the U.S./Mexico border and a predominantly Spanish speaking population, the **Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council** (LRGVDC) recognized the need for Spanish translations to official disaster warnings and mandatory evacuation messages. As a result, LRGVDC established the **Spanish Language Severe Weather Early Warning Notification System** which translates early warning messages from English to Spanish and assists the National Weather Service, the State of Texas, and Local Emergency Management Officials in furthering their mission of providing imminent early warning message dissemination.

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The **South Plains Association of Governments** (SPAG) coordinated and sponsored the **Hale County Economic Recovery-Disaster Assistance Seminar** to inform small businesses in the region about SBA loans and other available financial resources for disaster recovery. Extreme droughts resulted in economic hardship for agricultural-focused businesses in the region, and the lack of feed and grazing pastures resulted in herds being liquidated and the closure of the Cargill Meat Solutions Plant. The plant closure was a major economic upset for the region as it employed 2,200 people in Hale County which accounted for 13 percent of total employment and \$60 million in wages. As a result, SPAG collaborated with federal officials, Texas officials, local governments, and nonprofits to bring in experts to help local businesses learn what resources were available for them and provide access to grants and loans.

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When severe droughts threatened the water supply, the **South Plains Association of Governments** (SPAG) partnered with local municipalities on the **White River Municipal Water District Disaster Drought Relief** project. SPAG secured federal and state disaster money enabling the region to leverage grant funding to over \$2 million dollars. With this financial support, existing wells were rehabilitated bringing water to the communities immediately. Additional water supplies are in the process of being constructed to provide alternate sources and avoid future depletion of White Water Lake.

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# ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY

Through a committee of local volunteers the **Northeast Florida Regional Council** (NEFRC) developed the **Regional Action Plan for Sea Level Rise**. The committee determined what parts of the region were vulnerable to sea level rise, analyzed the potential impacts, and established a planning timeframe. Engagement with local governments was incorporated into the action plan to provide best practices and lessons learned for dealing with sea level rise. One of the action plan's recommendations is to create a Public/Private Regional Resiliency Committee to develop a strategy that will incentivize residents and businesses to locate outside of vulnerable areas. In November 2013, the NEFRC endorsed the Regional Action Plan and instructed staff to begin implementation.

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The **Apalachee Regional Planning Council** secured funding for and managed the construction of **Wakulla Environmental Institute**, an off-the-grid, minimal impact environmental institute that demonstrates its daily contribution to energy independence and conservation. Emphasizing its zero carbon impact, the institute is a living laboratory for sustainability with ground loop air conditioning powered by solar photovoltaics and on-site water treatment and disposal. Funding for the institute has been provided by the Economic Development Administration, Tallahassee Community College, and the State of Florida.

**Bob Ballard | Director, Tallahassee Community College | [ballardb@tcc.fl.edu](mailto:ballardb@tcc.fl.edu)  
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The **River Valley Regional Commission (RVRC)** administered a grant from the Georgia Environmental Protection Division to develop the **Hog Removal and Pennahatchee Creek** program. As an invasive species, feral hogs thrive without natural predators and are a leading cause of poor water quality in the region. Traditional methods of removal proved unsuccessful so RVRC created a new approach to catch groups of hogs by baiting them into gated enclosures. The program has been a huge success with over 600 feral hogs captured within a 7.5-square-mile area. Since the program had limited funding, RVRC partnered with the University of Georgia to publish a manual about the technique for potential replication in other regions.

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The **Iowa Association of Regional Councils (IARC)** partnered with the Iowa State University Extension and Outreach (ISUEO) office to create a full-time position that the two entities share through the **ISUEO and IARC Joint Position** project. Creation of the joint position connects resources between two entities serving similar purposes and each organization leverages resources resulting in state-wide benefits. The partnership helps Iowa State increase outreach and connect their resources with state-wide governments, non-profits, and businesses. The partnership allows IARC to leverage Iowa State's resources to foster a stable and full-time position with benefits and provides a direct conduit to other university resources and networks.

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Needing to expand its local recycling capacity, the **Green River Area Development District** worked with local partners to launch the **Tri-County Recycling Alliance Expansion** (TCRA). Completed in June 2013, the new 18,000-square-foot facility can sort and package over one million tons of recycled materials per year. Additionally, the new facility enables TCRA to accept unsorted materials, making community participation easier. The expansion builds on years of strong support from the community, demonstrates environmental stewardship, and will result in significant taxpayer savings as partner governments drastically reduce landfill usage and earn additional income by selling packaged recycled goods.

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**Greater New Orleans, Inc.** worked with national and international partners to develop the **Greater New Orleans Urban Water Plan App** to present the details of the Greater New Orleans Urban Water Plan to local residents in a convenient format. While locals and non-residents alike are aware of the levee system that protects the region from large storms, most are unaware of a need to supplement current methods of dealing with normal stormwater management. The app focuses on broad concepts of the water plan including: details of the region's geology, the effects of soil subsidence, the current impact of rainfall on the region, the estimated financial benefits of the plan, a timeline for implementation, and detailed descriptions of projects. The app is a low cost way to educate the residences, business, and leaders towards a more sustainable solution of water management.

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**New Orleans, LA | 504.527.6900 | [www.gnoinc.org](http://www.gnoinc.org) | [www.gnoinc.org/waterapp](http://www.gnoinc.org/waterapp)**

## **Energizing Small Communities: A Guide to Greater Energy Independence and Economic Resiliency**

was written by **SEDA-Council of Governments** to help small communities achieve greater economic resilience through reduced



reliance on conventional fuels. The guide describes the process and lessons learned from the implementation of a community-wide energy independence project in New Berlin, Pennsylvania from 2009 through 2012. Economies of scale were achieved through the delivery of education and technical assistance, including energy audits for many households and organizations. A 10 percent energy reduction was documented in New Berlin, equating to more than \$1 million in cost reductions for a community of 848 residents. The guide's appendix provides sample methodologies, document templates, and other tools that can be easily adapted by communities to meet their own community-wide energy reduction program needs.

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The **Southern Alleghenies Planning & Development Commission's (SAP&DC) Energy Resource Center** assists local governments, non-profits, and small businesses with their energy conservation and management needs by providing tailored services including utility bill analysis, walk-through energy assessments, grant procurement, and low interest loans through SAP&DC's Energy Efficiency Revolving Loan Fund. All services strive to raise client awareness of potential efficiency savings and help them develop energy conservation projects. The program has had great successes, such as replacing traffic signals with LED bulbs which saves participating municipalities approximately 65-80 percent on associated electric bills. Knowing the value of keeping up with changing technology, SAP&DC is continuously monitoring energy efficiency technology and national/state policy to best serve its clients with energy efficiency financing and programs.

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# FINANCE AND INVESTING

The **Mid-Columbia Economic Development District** was actively involved in the development of the **Agora Investment Platform**, a web-based platform designed for rural communities with limited capacity for project development and for funders who wish to invest resources in rural areas but often lack visibility into community priorities. As an online marketplace to advance community and economic development priorities, the platform matches community needs with relevant funding sources across public, private, and philanthropic sectors. As of early 2014 the platform had 323 users, 96 deals, and 50 capital pools. The success has attracted the attention of additional private funders and the State of Oregon has committed funding to roll out similar programs in other economic development districts.

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# INFRASTRUCTURE

The **Georgia Mountains Regional Commission** worked with the City of Cornelia to obtain CDBG funding to improve the city's water supply. The **City of Cornelia – Community Revitalization** project was developed to provide safe, potable water to residents and provide fire protection. The project was able to correct the following deficiencies in the city's water system: undersized water lines; corroded galvanized or lead joint caulked cast iron water lines; increased levels of lead in the drinking water; inadequate fire protection flows or lack of fire hydrants; dead-end water lines; and frequent breaks in the lines. As a result of the project, a total of 1,249 people benefitted, 92 percent of which were considered to be of low or moderate income.

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The **Northeast Mississippi Planning & Development District** secured funding for and manages the **Alcorn County Natural Gas System Improvements Project**. The first phase of this project expanded a high pressure gas source, increasing the quality of supply for a charcoal plant (Kingsford) and also helping a major asphalt plant (APAC) to switch to natural gas. The previous gas main did not have sufficient capacity to cover the peak loads of both plants at the same time and the line was vulnerable to a shutdown if its regulator station had an equipment malfunction. Now, thanks to Phase I of this project the two plants can reduce their cost and environmental impact as they continue to provide services and jobs for the region.

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With support from Alcorn County, the City of Corinth, and Caterpillar Inc., the **Northeast Mississippi Planning & Development District** obtained and administers funding for the **Alcorn County/Caterpillar Industrial Road Improvements** project. The road improvements added a new section of road and improved another, allowing for the continual flow of traffic from U.S. 45 to the new Caterpillar facility. A new acceleration lane has resulted in a safer environment to receive supplies and ship finished projects from the facility. Caterpillar is a major employer in the region and provided \$7.6 million of the \$8.2 million needed to complete this project.

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The **Northeast Mississippi Planning & Development District** managed the **Tishomingo County/Public Building Rehabilitation and Barge Dock Construction**. Contract Fabricators, Inc. was able to relocate to the Yellow Creek State Industrial Port Authority in Iuka, MS as part of the project. They produce custom steel equipment for the oil, gas, chemical, petrochemical, and power generation industries. Because the equipment is often too large to be easily transported on conventional roads the company searched for a location that had water access for the transportation of their products. Construction of the new production facility and dock not only created access to the Tombigbee Waterway and the Tennessee River but also generated 40 new jobs at the same time.

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In 2007, the **Windham Regional Commission** (WRC) began studying and analyzing the significant regional economic, fiscal, socioeconomic, and cultural impacts of the eventual closure of the Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Station. When the plant announced it planned to close in 2014, the region was better prepared due to the **Windham Regional Commission: Proactive Planning for a Nuclear Plant Closure** initiative. Because the plant employs over 600 employees in the tri-state area (with a payroll of roughly \$65.7 million), it was important for WRC to remain politically neutral and focus on the best interests of the region. WRC's knowledge base about the many impacts of different closure and decommissioning scenarios positioned them to be an important resource for the tri-state region to understand the range of issues associated with decommissioning.

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**The Cumberland Plateau  
Planning District Commission  
and Lenowisco Planning  
District Commission**

partnered to address the lack of telecommunications infrastructure in their regions through the **Virginia Coalfields Wireless 4G Project - Phase 2**. They previously developed a broadband fiber optic backbone infrastructure in their respective districts making it possible to construct 11 new towers during Phase 2

and providing 4G coverage to some of the larger rural population centers across the region with funding from EDA and the Virginia Tobacco Commission. The mission of the project is to ultimately provide ubiquitous service to the seven-county area by building new towers through revenues generated through the initial agreement with Verizon Wireless and by making equipment upgrades to the 11 newly constructed towers.

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# LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Assisting a 15-member Transition Task Force, the **Middle Georgia Regional Commission** helped facilitate the **Macon-Bibb County Consolidation**. The recently-passed referendum charged the Transition Task Force with planning and preparing the consolidation to become effective January 1, 2014 but did not provide any specific guidance on the necessary process. As a result, MGRC planned and facilitated more than 115 meetings and conducted a series of briefing sessions with the newly-elected officials to bring awareness to the work of the Transition Task Force. The MGRC's role in navigating the creation of this newly formed government presents a unique role regional organizations can play in local government process.

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Striving to form a better relationship between local officials and Native American tribal leaders, the **Six County Association of Governments (AOG)** facilitated the **Native American Education Forum**. Past disconnects between local officials and Native American tribes resulted in complications that made regional projects more expensive and created frustration on both sides. The Education Forum, a three-day excursion, involved over 45 commissioners, mayors, state agency representatives, and AOG staff traveling to five reservations in Arizona and Utah. The group met with tribal leaders and learned about their culture, lifestyle, issues, and concerns. Those who participated were greatly appreciative of the opportunity to experience Native American culture and were more understanding of the need to better collaborate and coordinate on economic and community development projects. The success of the forum has already improved working relationships and built the foundation for continued corporation on future projects and programs.

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# PHYSICAL REDEVELOPMENT



The **CSRA Regional Commission** worked with the City of Thomson on the **Thomson-McDuffie Downtown Depot and Walkway Revitalization**. The project restored the original 1860 stone depot while following strict historic preservation standards and removing a coat of paint from the exterior to showcase the building's original stone and brickwork. Additional renovation was completed around the depot making it more pedestrian-friendly and aesthetically pleasing. With the addition of a meeting room, a kitchen, and office space, the Downtown Depot has been restored to its original use as an inviting community gathering place.

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The **Georgia Mountains Regional Commission** established the **Dahlonega Downtown Historic District Design Guidelines** to protect existing historic resources and guide future infill development in the popular downtown core. The new guidelines are concise and user-friendly helping the Historic Preservation Commission, property owners, and developers navigate the guidelines for their specific needs. Having the guidelines in place allows Dahlonega to take a proactive, socially responsible, and sustainable approach to economic development and investment in its historic core, while not sacrificing the wealth of historic buildings that contributes towards its regional identity and economic vitality.

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# PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

**Central Florida Regional Planning Council (CFRPC)** led a grassroots effort to develop **Heartland 2060**, a regional 50-year visioning plan. This planning effort incorporates six major initiatives: a resilient region plan, a housing toolkit/inventory, a regional energy baseline and greenhouse gas inventory, CFRPC's comprehensive economic development strategy (CEDS), an environmental and natural resources database, and a data-driven five-year strategic action plan. The Heartland 2060 partners are working to implement the action plan with strong support from local governments and the data collected throughout the planning process will be used on an ongoing basis to aid regional and local government decision-making.

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The **Coastal Regional Commission** partnered with McIntosh County Joint Economic Development to create the **McIntosh County Unified Economic Development Plan**, a holistic strategic plan for economic development. Recognizing McIntosh County's untapped potential, planners used research, public forums, interviews of key stakeholders, a SWOT analysis, and targeted industry analyses to identify 10 key factors for improvement. Divided into a variety of goals, each key factor contains implementable tasks assigned to associated partners and timeframes for completion. As McIntosh County strives to stimulate growth of high-quality jobs and capital investment, the time and effort put into their plan gives them a clear direction for the future.

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The **Middle Georgia Regional Commission's** region relies heavily on Robins Air Force Base (RAFB) for employment opportunities, private investment, associated economic development, and overall community stability. The **Middle Georgia Readiness Analysis** (MGRA) sought to analyze the relationship between RAFB and the region, identify opportunities and



challenges facing the base, and compare and contrast the reliance with 12 similar military installations and defense communities across the nation. The final report and analysis was presented to community leaders in economic development, education, healthcare, and public safety, among others. Moving forward, Phase II of the MGRA will incorporate the challenges and opportunities found in the initial phase of the project into a strategic plan.

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The **Bluegrass Area Development District** (BGADD) conducted the **Kentucky Chemical Weapons Disposal Project Layoff Aversion Study** to develop a sustainability plan for the lifecycle of the Blue Grass Chemical Agent Destruction Pilot Plant. The plant is currently under construction, operations are scheduled to begin in 2020 and will be completed in 2023, followed by a two-year closure phase. The facility requires a DoD investment in excess of \$5.4 billion and creates over 2,000 jobs over the entire course of the project, but its short life span has the potential to cause major economic hardship through loss of wages and property taxes when the plant is closed. Wanting to maximize the plant's economic benefit and prepare for a smooth transition after it is shuttered, BGADD has completed the first phase of a three-phase study by analyzing the future land use, infrastructure, employment, education, and policy needs of the community once the plant has completed its mission and is closed.

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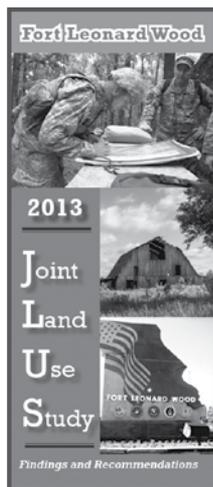
In 2012, **Lake Cumberland Area Development District** launched the **Lake Area Foundation/Lake Cumberland 360**. The Lake Area Foundation is a community foundation that promotes stability and self-sufficiency in local non-profits and public entities stymied by reduced federal and state funding through 24 different funds. Lake Cumberland 360 gives non-profit organizations a fundraising vehicle through an annual event that also promotes local tourism. Based on the success of the first annual Lake Cumberland 360, the district plans to expand the event next year. These two projects were accomplished through volunteer efforts, a grant from the Appalachian Regional Commission, and in partnership with Endow Kentucky.

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The **Central Mississippi Planning and Development District (CMPDD)** was selected as the primary contractor for the **Pearl River Valley Water Supply District Master Plan**. The plan strives to efficiently and effectively manage resources shared by five counties and three municipalities and includes land use, transportation, capital improvements, regional economic impact analysis, and a web-based GIS map. Feedback from residents, business owners, and other stakeholders was incorporated throughout the planning effort to ensure local support for the final product. CMPDD's dedication to the process has resulted in a plan that manages resources and infrastructure based on a regional perspective rather than on a parcel-by-parcel basis.

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The **Meramec Regional Planning Commission's** (MRPC) region has a strong relationship with Fort Leonard Wood, a U.S. Army Training Center. Due to pending military reductions, MRPC, with support from Lake of the Ozarks Council of Governments and South Central Ozark Council of Governments, developed the **Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri – Joint Land Use Study** to analyze reducing the risk of urban encroachment on the base which is a major factor for base realignment and closures. The completed study provides a framework for implementation through a series of actions that aim to foster compatible growth while strengthening communication and coordination between the civilian population and Fort Wood. The jurisdictions and stakeholders have provided resolutions and letters of support endorsing the study and have voluntarily begun the process of implementation.



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**GroWNC**, a three-year planning program for a five-county region administered by **Land of Sky Regional Council** developed a framework of voluntary, locally-implemented, market-based solutions, and strategies to ensure that regional growth has a positive impact on all communities.



GroWNC weaved together existing plans and strategies with extensive public input from people with a variety of backgrounds and interests in order to identify issues, goals, and objectives across multiple topic areas. The final products are accessible and flexible tools including a regional plan, a strategy toolkit, an online GIS tool for geographic data and land use, an agriculture assessment, and a cultural analysis. The community engagement, public involvement, and input of many individuals and organizations throughout this planning process will help the HUD-funded GroWNC region develop and prosper in the years to come.

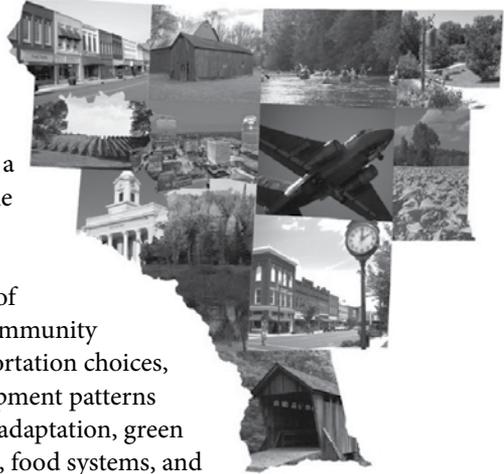
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**NC Tomorrow – Building Communities for Tomorrow’s Jobs** was developed by the **North Carolina Association of Regional Councils** to develop a strategy for comprehensive community and economic development that could be used locally, regionally, and statewide. The NC Tomorrow initiative identified the challenges that must be overcome to achieve their development goals, including: building on each region’s competitive advantage and leveraging the marketplace; establishing and maintaining a robust regional infrastructure; creating revitalized, healthy, and vibrant communities; and developing talented and innovative people. The implementation process helped inform the NC Economic Development Plan, and the final document was turned over to the NC Department of Commerce in early 2014. Additionally, the Association has identified several strategies and tactics they can implement throughout the state and will be seeking resources to keep that work on track.

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In 2010 the **Piedmont Triad Regional Council**, in partnership with the Piedmont Authority for Regional Transportation, received HUD funding to develop a comprehensive regional sustainable communities plan. **Piedmont**

**Together** is a three-year planning effort that addresses a wide range of issues, including economic and community development, housing and transportation choices, healthy communities, land development patterns and growth management, climate adaptation, green infrastructure, demographic shifts, food systems, and energy efficiency. By 2014, the key implementation outcomes included: unanimous adoption of the CEDS integrated into the regional plan; development of a web-based, 12-county regional GIS database and mapping system; kick-off of a \$600,000 EPA brownfield grant; and a two-day conference with guest presenters covering a wide range of topics on green infrastructure, alternative energy strategies, and regional climate adaptation issues.



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The **Hickory MSA Economic Indicators Newsletter** (EIN) is produced by the **Western Piedmont Council of Governments** (WPCOG). Distributed to a wide variety of stakeholders including local officials, state legislators, educational institutions, and banks, it helps them make better decisions and plan for the future. The 12-page publication is intended to provide readers with economic information and contains a “Spotlight” article providing a more detailed analysis about an aspect of the regional economy ranging from employment trends to healthcare. WPCOG covers about 75 percent of the cost to produce the EIN; the rest of the funding comes from sponsors and supporters.

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The **Partnership for Prosperity** plan was launched and funded by the **Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester Council of Governments** with assistance from the Federal Highway Administration to guide transportation and development investments for the next twenty years. With objectives such as creating transit nodes to attract high-skilled, high-wage jobs and providing diverse housing options in close proximity, the planning process required strong community involvement to establish the vision for the study area – especially given the scale of the proposed development and the capacity of the transportation network. Implementing the vision and plan will take a coordinated effort among many local, regional, and state entities over the coming years, but the plan provides a transportation and development framework that will help guide new public and private investments in responsible and cost efficient ways.

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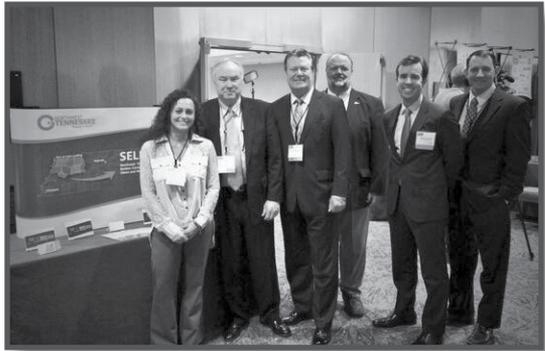
Using an analytical Geographic Information Systems (GIS) model, the **First District Association of Local Governments** designed the **County Site Analysis Program** to help participating counties identify potential rural properties with site development opportunities. The technical analysis provides leaders with research-based resources to foster well-informed decisions determining the potential role each site might play in supporting local economic development. The program is now supported by South Dakota Department of Agriculture and local officials, landowners, economic development groups, and state agencies all benefit from the site analysis as they now have access to a marketing tool based on proactive planning efforts.

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The **Memphis Area Association of Governments** (MAAG) partnered with Heritage Tours for the **West Tennessee Heritage and “Roots” Day Trippin’ Tour** to encourage visitors and local residents to go beyond Memphis and experience the heritage and culture of surrounding rural communities. Tours highlight the history of the African American experience by featuring historic stops on the Underground Railroad and the Alex Haley Museum. The three tours that were offered in February 2014 had 69 participants and visited the newly renovated Ripley Historic Downtown Square showcasing the Bank of Ripley’s annual Black History Month Exhibit and Covington Downtown Square, home of the Annual Chocolate Tour. Building on the tour’s success, MAAG is currently working with Heritage Tours on three new themed tours highlighting the Civil War, Antebellum Architecture, Blues, and “Roots” in West Tennessee.

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The **Northwest Tennessee Development District** formed the **Northwest Tennessee Economic Alliance** to bring employment opportunities to the region in a new and unique way. Recognizing rural counties were being overlooked by perspective employers who were focused on the larger



metropolitan areas, the Alliance meets regularly to better market the rural region, raise funds, and brainstorm innovative ideas to bring employment opportunities to the area. The Alliance has created a website that directs interested employers to the region and resources; published new marketing materials for distribution at conference and other engagements; received training from marketing consultants; and attended trade shows to spread the word about the economic opportunities in Northwest Tennessee.

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The **Capital Area Council of Governments** and regional partners teamed up with HUD to host the **Central Texas Sustainable Places Project** (SPP), a 2011-2014 project that demonstrated a new way of thinking about planning in Central Texas: place-making as economic development. From creative ideas for central-city development in Dripping Springs and Lockhart to innovative strategies for public lands in Hutto and Elgin, the project helped Central Texas cities create visions for growth and address code revisions, infrastructure improvements, and economic strategies. The SPP competitively selected cities for planning support and convened a stakeholder committee of property owners and community and business leaders to ensure buy-in and set the stage for implementation. Thanks to city plans, tool creation, and training sessions provided by SPP the region is set to continue to build capacity beyond the grant.

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# TECHNOLOGY AND DATA

Understanding the value of broadband, the **Northern Arizona Council of Governments** worked with partners on the **Broadband Mapping for Northern Arizona** project to analyze existing services and provide technical assistance to rural communities to improve access to broadband. The project builds on legislation that enables Arizona state highway rights-of-way to be utilized to help expand “middle mile” broadband fiber capacity. The mapping project collected local capacity data, compared it to national standards, and gauged local needs for different broadband speeds based upon four application areas: economic development, education, telemedicine, and public safety. The newly documented information has set the stage for private vendors to make needed broadband investments.

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Facilitated cooperatively by the **Central Florida Regional Planning Council**, **Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council**, and **Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council**, the **Florida Local/Regional Broadband Planning Project** has successfully completed two regional comprehensive broadband plans, developed a broadband planning toolbox, and published a broadband planning Training Manual. The broadband plans utilize “one-of-a-kind” GIS models to identify the current needs and future broadband demand in the study area. This project has inspired other cities and states to work collaboratively on broadband planning and the toolbox and training manual provide all the instruction necessary for a municipality, county, or region to engage in the broadband planning process.

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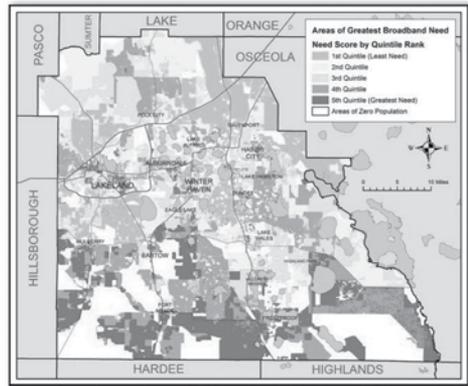


Figure 54. Areas of Greatest Broadband Need

During National Geography Awareness Week, the **Southern Georgia Regional Commission** partnered with Valdosta State University for **Making the Most of GIS Day**. The project promotes GIS, educates future GIS professionals, builds the University's GIS database at no cost to either partner, and provides students with valuable training. Students were given a free GIS app to gather points of data, such as bicycle racks, bus stops, emergency call stations, fountains, and sculptures from across VSU's campus. The collected information will be used by the University's facility maintenance and security departments for existing and future planning projects.

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**Greater New Orleans, Inc.** developed **Destination GNO** to help businesses attract more qualified employees to the region. Destination GNO is a website designed for individuals and families who are interested in learning more about region-wide quality of life indicators such as climate, arts and culture, recreation, and shopping and includes descriptions of specific communities. One of the most unique features is a community finder that allows each user to find their ideal location by selecting general categories such as city center, suburban simplicity, and life on the lakefront and then narrow their results based on features such as affordability, schools, or nightlife.

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Working with local partners, the **Pioneer Valley Planning Commission** launched the **Pioneer Valley Data Portal** through the Regional Organizations Advanced Data Sharing partnership which encourages collaboration and data sharing among regional organizations. The Pioneer Valley Data Portal provides key regional economic, planning, and workforce data to the general public. The portal includes hundreds of dataset with statistics on poverty, health, crime, education, employment, transportation, and housing. The development of this cloud-based database system was supported by the Western Massachusetts Electric Company as part of their work to encourage regional collaboration and economic development.

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The **Texoma Council of Governments** worked with Texoma Housing Partners (THP) to develop a powerful online GIS application for their **Infrastructure and Asset Mapping for Public Housing** project. The tool helps THP staff identify critical assets and infrastructure including water lines, meters, fire hydrants, and electrical shutoff points located on their properties in 18 cities throughout the region. The information is also available to first responders and is intended to help in emergency situations. The project has mapped over 1,400 unique asset points and will be a valuable resource for THP during future planning efforts.

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# TRANSPORTATION

The **Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency (CCRPA)** partnered with the Central Connecticut State University (CCSU) to establish the **CCSU Transportation Demand Management Strategy**. The project aimed to decrease vehicle miles driven, ease parking congestion, increase access to non-automotive transportation options, and improve campus sustainability. CCRPA conducted traffic counts, created apps to analyze bus ridership and parking utilization, and surveyed students. Implementation resulted in a number of successful initiatives such as a car-share program, increased information on available transportation options, and replacing the campus shuttle with unlimited public bus access which will include a new bus-rapid transit system. As a result of the collaboration between the two organizations additional projects are being implemented and will benefit both the university and the region.

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In an effort to strengthen the foundation for identifying and solving safety issues in the Long Range Transportation Plan, the **North Central Florida Regional Planning Council (NCFRPC)** initiated the **Incorporating Safety into Transportation Planning** project.

Guided by a state initiative to reduce the number of serious transportation injuries and fatalities by five percent each year, NCFRPC used GIS to analyze accident data and presented various strategies and countermeasures to improve safety within existing transportation plans. Using GIS helped display how accident trends change over time: a notable example is a section of road that averaged 273 accidents per year dropped to 54 accidents the first year after the safety upgrades.



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The **CSRA Regional Commission** established the **City of Harlem Active Transportation Initiatives** to enhance the city's efforts to procure trail funding, identify a larger trail network, and suggest complimentary development code revisions to support a broader trail network and other active transportation facilities. The initiative worked to implement tools identified in the previous planning process and maximize benefits to the local community. The initiative also tackled the issues limiting Harlem's ability to implement an active transportation network and positioned the city to become a regional leader in bicycle and pedestrian transportation option.

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In an effort to enhance traveler experiences, the **Lincoln Trail Area Development District** launched the **Lincoln Heritage National Scenic Byway Signage Project**. The project developed and installed signage for the entire 72-mile Kentucky Lincoln Heritage National Scenic Byway. Signage included 56 trail-blazing signs to help visitors better navigate the route; 12 interpretative panels to be distributed throughout the byway educating visitors on the byway's important historic and cultural themes; and four gateway signs enabling visitors to easily enter the byway and follow the interpretative path.

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The **Mid-East Commission** worked with local partners to create the **Northeast North Carolina Regional Locally Coordinated Public Transit and Human Service Transportation Plan**. The plan was the result of public workshops involving numerous stakeholders, including transit providers, health and human service staff, senior center and area agency on aging staff, city and county managers, NCDOT staff, and many others representing 17 counties and three RPOs. Interactive activities at the workshops allowed stakeholders to express their needs and concerns with others in the region, providing planners with detailed information on transportation issues. Due to the collaboration at the planning workshops, stakeholders were able to establish relationships that have led to funding proposals for important transportation-related developments.

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The **New River Valley Planning District Commission** partnered with the region's Metropolitan Planning Organization to create the **New River Valley MPO – Multimodal Transportation System Planning Tool**. As a component of the New River Valley MPO's Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan the online tool helps localities identify mode choice gaps within the existing transportation system; evaluate potential solutions based on the density of jobs and housing; and prioritize bicycle and pedestrian improvements. Using the tool helps users visualize the value of different corridors and their ability to move travellers within and between key activity nodes. The tool is being marketed to local governments within the MPO and two local governments are already using it to plan more pedestrian and bike friendly communities.

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# WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

The **Southeast Arizona Government Organization** teamed up with the **Southwest New Mexico Council of Governments** to create the **Borderless Solutions Campaign** throughout both regions to promote a sustainable regional economy for the betterment of the two regions' residents, businesses, and workforce. Building upon their good working relationship, the two neighboring organizations joined forces to address high unemployment by hosting two Borderless Career Fairs that attracted employers and job seekers from both states. The COGs are looking to build their partnership even more by submitting a Promise Zone application this fall. Their continued collaboration highlights how organizations can partner not only with other economic development organizations but those across state lines and in different Economic Development Administration districts.

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The **Eastern Maine Development Corporation** has worked to make the region more cohesive through their **E3: The EMDC Model Connecting Business, Education, and Workforce** program. E3 (Education, Employment and Economic Development) assesses the needs of the region's businesses while simultaneously determining the skill sets of the workforce and works to align the two through local educational institutions and training. The program continues to grow and during the first two years over 1,400 people enrolled. The program has also worked with over 2,400 businesses identifying their needs resulting in capital investments of \$3.1 million, which were then leveraged for an additional \$4.9 million and the creation or retention of over 5,000 jobs.

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The **East Central Planning and Development District** worked with local officials to fund the **Jasper County Workforce Development Center** which is maintained and operated by Jones County Junior College. The center comes to the agricultural region as its economy is becoming more diverse with various high skilled employers. Set up as a commuter facility, the center aims to benefit workers already in the region, save on transportation costs, and provide training on healthcare and other high-tech fields and technology. With a combined \$10 million investment, local industries are expanding their operations to better align with the goals of the center. The \$4.5 million center obtained funding from a variety of sources including EDA, DRA, Mississippi Capital Improvements Loan Program, and East Central Mississippi Non-Profit Corporation.

**Jenifer Buford | Community Development Director | [jbuford@ecpdd.org](mailto:jbuford@ecpdd.org)**  
**Bill Richardson | Executive Director | [mail@ecpdd.org](mailto:mail@ecpdd.org)**  
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### The **Southern Mississippi Planning and Development District**

administered funding and provided technical support for the **Gaston**



**Point Entrepreneurship Program (a.k.a. Dislocated Worker Entrepreneurship Program (DWEPP))**. The region has an unprecedented number of dislocated workers due to natural disasters and a devastating oil spill in recent years. The DWEPP worked to stimulate economic development and job creation along the Mississippi Gulf Coast through an initiative designed to assist dislocated workers with entrepreneurial skills. The program worked with the University of Southern Mississippi and other partners to provide a 12 week immersion into entrepreneurial studies including communication, marketing, management, negotiating, ethics, and more. All the graduates received monetary awards, from community donations, after pitching their business plans to local business owners and college professors.

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**Leonard Bentz | Executive Director | [lbentz@smpdd.com](mailto:lbentz@smpdd.com)**  
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The **Centralina Career Headlight: Prosperity and Jobs for the Greater Charlotte Region** program is an innovative web-based jobs training and career development tool developed by **Centralina Council of Governments** and its partners for students and workers in job transition. The program works to identify high-demand and high-wage jobs and match individual interests with education and training programs to fill those jobs. It also allows employers in the 17-county bi-state region to provide feedback on specific skills required and available career opportunities. Influenced by the shift in the local economy after the Great Recession away from growth in the finance sector towards growth in energy, advanced manufacturing, and IT, the program is part of the region's 2012-2017 CEDS and its accompanying jobs, workforce, and education alignment strategy.

**David Hollars | Workforce Development Program Director | [dhollars@centralina.org](mailto:dhollars@centralina.org)**  
**Jim Prosser | Executive Director | [jprosser@centralina.org](mailto:jprosser@centralina.org)**  
**Charlotte, NC | 704.372.2416 | [www.centralina.org](http://www.centralina.org) |**  
**[www.centralinacareerheadlight.com](http://www.centralinacareerheadlight.com)**

Working with local partners, the **South Central Oregon Economic Development District (SCOEDD)** instituted the **Innovation and Learning Center in Lake County**. SCOEDD worked to address the reality that Lake County is one of the most isolated communities in the state, often making it necessary for residents to leave the county in order to secure or retain a job. The center will help mitigate this problem by offering many degrees and services including professional certifications, two and four year degrees, dual credit programs for local high school students, and distance learning opportunities. As a result of creating these new opportunities, the center has been honored by the Governor's Office as an "Oregon Solutions" program that recognizes community governance, a process whereby community leaders join forces to define a problem, agree on a solution, and collaborate towards a resolution.

**Betty Riley | Executive Director | [betty@scoedd.org](mailto:betty@scoedd.org)**  
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The **Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester Council of Governments (BCDCOG)** developed and implemented the **Eligible Training Provider Scorecard** program to address concerns from the local workforce investment board and the U.S. Department of Labor regarding the ability of Eligible Training Providers (ETP) to successfully train individuals. The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) requires that training providers apply for a certification as an ETP to receive WIA funds. BCDCOG created a scorecard for each training institution to monitor a number of factors including total employed, average wages earned, and length of training. Thanks to this endeavor the local workforce board and those seeking training can now make informed decisions on which training providers produce the best results based on their individual scorecard.

**Ronald E. Mitchum | Executive Director | [andreak@bcdcog.com](mailto:andreak@bcdcog.com)  
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After a successful event in 2012, the **Santee-Lynches Education/ Workforce Summit** was expanded by the **Santee-Lynches Regional Council of Governments** in 2013 and has become a model for other councils of government in



South Carolina. Highlights from this year's summit include a focus on 1,600 new jobs that will soon be available at the Continental Tire Facility and a COG-led initiative to develop a high-quality mechatronics program at each career center. The mechatronics program will be aligned with the technical college so participants can leave high school with up to 22 credit hours based on proficiency testing. Thanks to momentum from the summits and spin off events, there is increased collaboration within the region spurring investments in both human and local capital.

**Michael Mikota | Executive Director | [mmikota@slcog.org](mailto:mmikota@slcog.org)  
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A record number of employers and job seekers attended **Upper Savannah Council of Governments'** (USCOG) recent bi-annual **Upper Savannah Regional Job Fair**. USCOG prepares job-seekers for the fair by offering several workshops throughout the year on interviewing, resume writing, application preparation, and appropriate dress. USCOG also produces a list of companies and the positions they are trying to fill prior to the fair so that job-seekers can be prepared to



visit with employers who have jobs available that best match their skills. This year marked the tenth year the job fair has been successfully attended, making it a local institution that both employers and those looking for work know they can rely on.

**Sandra Johnson | USCOG Workforce Development Administrator | [sjohnson@uppersavannah.com](mailto:sjohnson@uppersavannah.com)**  
**Patricia Hartung | Executive Director | [pchartung@uppersavannah.com](mailto:pchartung@uppersavannah.com)**  
**Greenwood, SC | 864.941.8050 | [www.uppersavannah.com](http://www.uppersavannah.com) | [www.upperscworks.com](http://www.upperscworks.com)**

Through the **Eagle Ford Consortium (EFC)** the **Middle Rio Grande Development Council (MRGDC)** organized stakeholders to address the economic impacts of the Eagle Ford Shale and promote sustainable planning for rural counties. The Eagle Ford Shale Play has added tens of thousands of job to the region and has the potential to add more. EFC commissioned the University of Texas at San Antonio to prepare an economic impact study; building on the findings from that study, EFC has held three conferences to promote sustainable planning. Grant funding has been obtained to further EFC's goals through the hiring of a staff person to conduct additional research and coordinate outreach efforts. EFC's success has been noticed by outside groups and they have been contacted by Mexican officials and other regions in West Texas to collaborate and share best practices.

**John Ruiz | Director of Planning and Operations | [john.ruiz@mrgdc.org](mailto:john.ruiz@mrgdc.org)**  
**Leodoro Martinez, Jr. | Executive Director | [leodoro.martinez@mrgdc.org](mailto:leodoro.martinez@mrgdc.org)**  
**Carrizo Springs, TX | 830.876.3533 | [www.mrgdc.org](http://www.mrgdc.org) | [www.eaglefordconsortium.org](http://www.eaglefordconsortium.org)**

# YOUTH AND EDUCATION

The **Coastal Regional Commission** was the lead agency for the revamped **Leadership SE Georgia** program that brought together public officials, policymakers, influential thinkers, and practitioners to improve the region.

The program focuses on confronting challenges, exploring new pathways for growth, and formulating leadership strategies on how best to approach today's challenges. The program also strives to increase participants' knowledge of SE Georgia, including demographics, economic indicators, the environment, and other valuable resources. Overall, it provides the region's leaders with a range of learning and networking opportunities.



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The **PROJECT SEARCH** High School Transition Program is a business-led, one year, school-to-work program that occurs entirely at the workplace. Supported by the **Georgia Mountains Regional Commission** (GMRC), the project's total workplace immersion facilitates a seamless combination of classroom instruction, career exploration, and hands-on training through worksite rotations. The program provides real life work experience and helps youth with disabilities transition from school to adult life. GMRC provides a number of services and products to the program's participants including scrubs and other supplies for the hospital; transportation assistance; and workshops that cover a variety of topics from independent living to preparing a resume. GMRC offers follow-up services such as job search assistance to program participants for 12 months, upon completion of active services.

**John Phillips** | Workforce Development Director | [jphillips@gmrc.ga.gov](mailto:jphillips@gmrc.ga.gov)  
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Realizing a need for more females in the advanced manufacturing field, the **Northern Kentucky Area Development District** organized the **Girl's Day Out, Women Building a Better World** program. The purpose of the pilot program was to let middle and high school girls know that non-traditional employment is available and the salaries are above entry-level positions in many other fields. The event involved local business and community partners, a tour of the local Area Technology Center, and featured female speakers working in the manufacturing field. Survey results revealed that the day was a great success with 100 percent of those who completed the survey saying they increased their knowledge of advanced manufacturing and 44 percent stating they were interested in careers in engineering/manufacturing.

**Barbara Stewart | Associate Director | [Barbara.Stewart@nkadd.org](mailto:Barbara.Stewart@nkadd.org)**  
**Lisa Cooper | Executive Director | [lisa.cooper@nkadd.org](mailto:lisa.cooper@nkadd.org)**  
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The **Piedmont Triad Regional Council** realized that soft skills employers were looking for the same social competencies that Head Start works to instill in its students and that elementary, middle, and high schools continue to develop. The **Head Start to Employment** program was developed to enhance educator's awareness of how soft skills follow youth all their lives and directly determine their success in the labor market. All eight of the public school systems in the six-county region have agreed to integrate soft skills into the established curriculum. Although specific strategies for implementation have varied, the understanding of the importance of soft skills is making this project a success.

**Althea Hairston | Workforce Board Director | [ahairston@ptrc.org](mailto:ahairston@ptrc.org)**  
**Matthew Dolge | Executive Director | [mdolge@ptrc.org](mailto:mdolge@ptrc.org)**  
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The **South Carolina Association of Regional Councils** tapped the institutional knowledge and resources of all the state's COG directors for the **WIA Peer Review Project**. Poor performance by contractors left Lower Savannah COG's workforce investment program in serious risk of losing S.C. Department of Employment and Workforce (SCDEW) funding. SCDEW agreed to a peer review of the Lower Savannah program in order to rebuild and strengthen the activities. The other COGs in South Carolina acted as peer reviewers and their final recommendations, along with the action steps taken by Lower Savannah, were able to turn the workforce investment program around. Now Lower Savannah's program is operating with good performance and meeting program goals.

**Connie Shade | Executive Director | [cshade@lscog.org](mailto:cshade@lscog.org)  
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