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VIEWPOINT

Appalachian Council of Governments Quarterly Newsletter

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New Website Highlights Valuable Research and Mapping Resource

The ACOG Department of Planning and Economic Development is pleased to announce the launch of www.infomentum.org! This informative web site was developed - using solely in-house resources - as a means of spreading the word about *InfoMentum* - a decision support system developed by the COG almost 20 years ago to support economic growth in Upstate South Carolina.

Historically, *InfoMentum* has primarily served the economic development community. In recent years, however, users from other professions - including researchers, educators, planners, and others - have come to realize it's value and application in other sectors. Nevertheless, the vast majority of Upstate professionals outside the world of economic development are unfamiliar with this amazing resource! Thus, the role of this new website is to raise awareness of what we call the *InfoMentum* Suite of Services.

See for yourself - browse the site at www.infomentum.org! Afterwards, if you need more information or would like to become an *InfoMentum* partner, please contact David Shellhorse at the ACOG.

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Low Interest Loans Available for Water and Sewer Projects



The Office of Local Government at the South Carolina Budget and Control Board is again offering low interest loans for water and sewer projects through the State Revolving Fund (SRF) for Wastewater and the SRF for Drinking Water.

The SRF for Wastewater is sponsored by EPA under authority of the Federal Clean Water Act. For FY 2014, over \$100 million is available for wastewater projects at interest rates ranging from 1.00% to 2.00%. Municipalities, counties, and special purpose districts are eligible to apply for loans to construct all types of wastewater facilities, including relocation of sewer lines due to highway widening, storm water projects, and "green" projects. The program allows up to 100% financing of all eligible costs. Projects must be on the DHEC priority list to be eligible for a loan, but projects may be added to the list at any time by submitting a project questionnaire to DHEC.

The SRF for Drinking Water funds are available for drinking water supply or distribution system improvements, including relocation of water lines due to highway widening, "green" projects, and radio-read meters. The SRF for Drinking Water operates virtually the same as the SRF for

Wastewater. For FY 2014, over \$60 million is available through this program. The interest rates for both programs are as follows:

Standard Rate – 2.00%: Applies to all systems with more than 10,000 population and all systems with Median Household Income (MHI) greater than \$43,939 (State 2006-10 MHI) regardless of size.

Small System Rate – 1.50%: Incentive rate for small systems of less than 10,000 population, MHI less than State MHI, and Level of Effort (LOE¹) at least 1.00%.

Hardship Rate – 1.0%: Available to systems with less than 20,000 population, MHI less than 80% of State MHI, and LOE at least 1.50%.

These low interest rates significantly reduce annual debt service costs, as well as the total amount paid over the life for the loan. Such savings directly benefit the rate paying customers and the system.

For more information on either loan program, contact Ms. Trish Comp at the S.C. Budget and Control Board in Columbia (803-737-3808 or comp@olg.sc.gov), or Dirk Reis at the ACOG. Additional information is also available on the Budget and Control Board's website at olg.sc.gov.

¹LOE is annual cost of water or sewer based on 6,000 gallons monthly usage divided by system MHI.

Spreading Christmas Cheer to Facility Residents

On December 18, the Ombudsman Group, which consisted of Jessica Winters, Debra Brown, Jennifer Hardee and Kim Bridges, were able to be a part of making Christmas 2013 a memorable one for fifty-four individuals in three assisted living facilities. Two of the facilities were in Anderson County and the other was in Greenville County.



Through donations from ACOG staff, these residents received items such as socks, gloves, scarves, stocking caps, tooth brushes, tooth paste, soap, shampoo, stuffed animals, crossword puzzles, coloring books, crayons, pens/pencils, and snacks. One of the facilities was able to provide a short "wish list" for some of their residents, and these residents received what they requested, thanks to monetary donations. The requested items included such things as new socks, undergarments, religious books, coloring books, a pretty doll, night lights, and cherry candy. A couple of residents even ventured out to ask for a new pair of shoes and an electric razor, and they were given these items. The program hopes to be able to provide this service in future years.



Planning in the Upstate

Initiating planning efforts in your community is one way to improve your residents' welfare and create a community that is a more equitable, healthful, efficient, and attractive place for present and future generations. Effective planning processes provide civic leaders, businesses, and citizens the opportunity to play a meaningful role in creating plans for better communities. The resulting plans create communities that offer better choices for where and how people live, often offering real solutions to long standing community problems. Over time, planning efforts also provide elected and appointed officials with the information needed

to make effective decisions that balance issues such as promoting new development with maintaining essential services or community preservation and innovative change as they set the path for the future of their communities.

The Appalachian Council of Governments (ACOG) Planning Services Division is involved in a wide array of planning activities, from supervising efforts, to promoting regional wastewater treatment services, to assisting communities with neighborhood and community development plans. In some cases, ACOG plays the role of team member by serving on committees or as a resource for planning efforts. Staff also takes the role of project lead for local planning projects such as the City of Pickens comprehensive planning process or the Anderson HOME Consortium's housing rehabilitation program.

In many instances, there are roles that ACOG's Planning Services Division staff can play to assist in planning efforts throughout the region. Currently, staff is noticing an increase in local planning requests, as many communities are looking to update their comprehensive plans to meet state requirements. If your community is considering initiating a planning effort, please feel free to contact us to discuss how we may be able to assist your community. If you have any questions or requests please contact either Chip Bentley or Jennifer Vissage at the ACOG.



The ACOG / Area Agency on Aging is excited to announce a new partnership with TimeBanks USA. TimeBanks USA has a track record of engaging seniors and their families and generating thousands of hours of service to the elderly. As the senior citizen population grows - at a rate far faster than available funding for needed services - innovation is necessary if needs are to be met. Consequently, this new partnership is both advantageous and timely.

The clientele we serve share a desire to remain in their homes, age in their communities, and to avoid being institutionalized in nursing homes. We hope to help the entire state to cope with the needs of its residents and comply with a legal requirement that stems from a major court decision. In 1999, the Supreme Court determined in *Olmstead v. L.C. ex rel. Zimring*, 527 U.S.581 (1999) that the unnecessary institutionalization of individuals with disabilities

is a form of discrimination under Title II of the Americans with Disability Act.

Given the shortage in funding for in-home care, persons with disabilities are at risk of being unnecessarily institutionalized in nursing facilities - segregated and isolated from their families, friends, and communities. In response to this urgent need, this initiative was developed in collaboration with TimeBanks USA to enlist clients and community members to utilize time banking as a form of "volunteering-plus". The result will be advanced compliance with the Olmstead "integration mandate", increased support and respite for caregivers, and increased receptivity and commitment to patient engagement through development of informal supports.

The pilot project In South Carolina will begin in Spartanburg County involving a collaboration with the Senior Centers of Spartanburg County. TimeBanks USA is currently in 43 states and 37 countries. For more information, please contact Karen Carter at the ACOG.

SC Department of Commerce Awards Grant to Liberty

The SC Department of Commerce recently awarded \$500,000 in Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds to the City of Liberty to undertake improvements to Commerce Street. These funds are allocated to South Carolina through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to undertake a variety of community revitalization and economic development activities.

Commerce Street is the “downtown” business district of Liberty, and this enhancement will not only beautify the area, but will also alleviate existing hazardous conditions and provide much needed infrastructure upgrades. The Commerce Street road surface is concrete and was installed in the early 1920s. The infrastructure was installed several years prior to the road surfacing. The concrete road has experienced considerable differential settlement. This has created several safety hazards for pedestrians. The existing storm sewer has deteriorated to the condition that it takes considerable infiltration and has created several sinkholes and undermined areas below the concrete roadway. This has created a hazardous condition that requires constant maintenance by refilling with sand or quarry dust. The project will also bring the city into compliance with accessibility codes

by providing additional handicap parking spaces, handicap access ramps and designated crosswalks.

Components of the project include the following:

- Sidewalk, Curb and Gutter Improvements
- Road Surface Improvements
- Landscaping, including irrigation, trees and shrubs, and island fill material
- Lighting, including 32 new light poles and fixtures.
- Water and Sewer Service Upgrades

The goal of the project is to attract new businesses, assist the current business owners, and to bring more people downtown. This revitalization is expected to result in an increase of foot traffic, visitors and citizens coming to the area which will in turn greatly assist the businesses that have remained loyal to the downtown district.

The ACOG Grant Services Department assisted with the CDBG application and will administer the grant to assure the funds are expended in compliance with state and federal guidelines. For more information on these projects, or the CDBG program, contact a member of the Grants Services staff at the ACOG.



CDBG funds will be used for a number of infrastructure improvements along Commerce Street in downtown Liberty.

Community Engaged Seniors Program

The Appalachian COG/Area Agency on Aging (AAA) is excited to announce a partnership with Clemson University on a nutrition project in the Appalachian Region. Karen Carter, AAA Director, will be working with Dr. Angela Fraser and staff on nutrition education, to become part of the services available in regional congregate dining sites.

Faculty from Clemson University will work with the Appalachian AAA to determine the feasibility of developing and delivering a nutrition intervention program through the congregate nutrition sites (CNS). We propose using a video-based, CNS-manager-facilitated delivery strategy. This strategy will lend itself to:

- increased standardization of delivery, specifically in terms of content;
- decreased costs, as trained professionals are not needed to deliver content; and
- an increased number of CNSs at which the curriculum can be presented.

Funding opportunities for hiring health professionals to teach within the community is decreasing, while the need for nutrition education is increasing. Therefore, an economical and easily-delivered intervention, which is specifically tailored to this population, is needed. The Appalachian AAA is an excellent partner for this project, as they provide oversight to the twenty CNSs within their region. They are well positioned to partner on a project of this nature.

Specifically, we will build on an existing curriculum titled "Cooking Healthy, Eating Smart" (CHES). CHES was developed under a grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Its purpose is to teach older adults how to make safe and healthy food choices. At present, there are nine nutrition and food safety lessons in the curriculum, which is designed to be delivered to rural, limited-resource, older adults at congregate nutrition sites. Our goal is to modify the current curriculum into five lessons (Food Safety, Protein, Energy, Fiber, and Water) and offer it over fifteen weeks to participants at four CNSs in Appalachian South Carolina. Three weeks will be devoted to the delivery of each lesson. We



The Appalachian COG / AAA will partner with Clemson University on a project to provide nutrition education to the region's seniors

will produce one 30-minute video per lesson for each CNS manager to show participants on two different days of the first week for each lesson. Each of the five videos will feature a food safety and nutrition professional presenting the lesson content. Every day (Monday-Friday) during the second and third weeks of each lesson, the CNS manager at each site will facilitate one hands-on, planned activity (ten total activities per lesson), designed to reinforce the lesson content presented in the video.

By focusing on food safety and food macronutrients (the lesson on energy will include discussion of carbohydrates and fats), we aim to equip participants with the foundational knowledge necessary for making safe and healthy food choices. Extending the intervention from nine to fifteen weeks will allow for increased reinforcement of lesson content and thus increase the likelihood that participants will remember the information.

In this proposed study, we will focus on the feasibility of *developing* this intervention in collaboration with our community partner, the Appalachian AAA. We will investigate the practicability of delivering this intervention to CNS participants via the CNS managers. This is a critical step, as we are currently in the process of applying for a National Institute on Aging grant to assess the feasibility of *implementing* and *evaluating* our complete fifteen-week intervention.

For more information, please contact Karen Carter at the ACOG.