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VIEWPOINT

Appalachian Council of Governments Quarterly Newsletter

Second Quarter 2015

ACOG to Launch Entrepreneur Friendly Toolkit

ACOG will soon launch the newly developed Entrepreneur Friendly (EF) Toolkit community planning program for supporting small business development. The EF Toolkit is a seven-month, seven-step planning curriculum for local governments, delivered through an interactive website. Going through the seven-step process will enable cities and counties to become more "entrepreneur friendly" and supportive of local entrepreneurship.

THE PROCESS: The EF Toolkit calls for a local city or county public-private task force to work through "seven steps" guided by an interactive website, www.EFToolkit.com. A password protected feature enables the website to save and store the online work completed by the local task force. That "work", or series of goals, objectives and strategies, ultimately populates the community's "Entrepreneur Friendly Action Plan" - which serves as a strategic plan upon completion of the seven-step process.



The EF Toolkit guides a community through the necessary steps for developing an Entrepreneur Friendly Action Plan.

WHAT ARE THE SEVEN STEPS? The "steps" are local economic development topics for

which the task force is asked to develop goals and strategies. There is a full task force meeting for each step/topic. The steps are: (1) Market Research, (2) Business Planning Resources, (3) Business Capital, (4) Local Networks and Incubators, (5) Business Compliance, (6) Marketing and Promotion, and (7) Centralized Information. At the end of each topic meeting there is a blank "strategic plan table" that the task force will complete based on feedback from the group. The accumulation of strategic plan tables for each of the seven steps ultimately combines to form the final EF Action Plan.

OTHER PROGRAM DELIVERABLES: Task force members are asked to do more than just come to monthly meetings and brainstorm over goals and strategies. Each member is asked to serve on one of three subcommittees which concurrently work to complete a "special project". These special projects include: administration of a Small Business & Entrepreneur Survey to help determine the challenges and opportunities of starting/running a local business; the preparation of a locally customized Business Assistance Guide; and the planning and hosting of a Small Business Resource Fair. Additional deliverables include development of a "Capital Matrix" (a local/area capital directory and reference document), a Recommended 12-Month Timeline for Starting a Local Business (including zoning, permitting, etc.), and a group SWOT Analysis, evaluating "strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats". Substantial guidance and templates for each of these items are provided on the website.

For more information, contact David Shellhorse, Economic Development Services Manager, at (864) 241-4649 or dshellhorse@scacog.org.



Annual Distribution of Farmers Market Vouchers Now Underway!

Once again the Appalachia Area Agency on Aging has partnered with agencies in Greenville and Spartanburg Counties to promote the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP) Program. These efforts are intended to provide fresh, nutritious fruits and vegetables to eligible seniors and to help support small farms in South Carolina. Vouchers are provided for seniors age 60 and older with a limited income to use at their local farmers markets. Each voucher recipient receives five \$5 checks totaling \$25 which may be used at participating farmers markets throughout the Upstate until October 15, 2015.



Upstate seniors wait to receive vouchers.

Voucher distribution in Anderson County is administered by the Anderson County Recreation Department (864-231-2237), in

Oconee County by the United Way of Oconee County (864-882-9743) and in Pickens County by Pickens County Meals on Wheels (864-855-3770). Thus far, the program has not been expanded to include Cherokee County due to limited funding and lack of vendor participation.

The Appalachia Area Agency on Aging uses these events to bring awareness of available agency services and further solidify relationships with community members and businesses. For more information on this program, please contact Tim Womack at 864 - 242 - 9733 or by email at twomack@scacog.org.

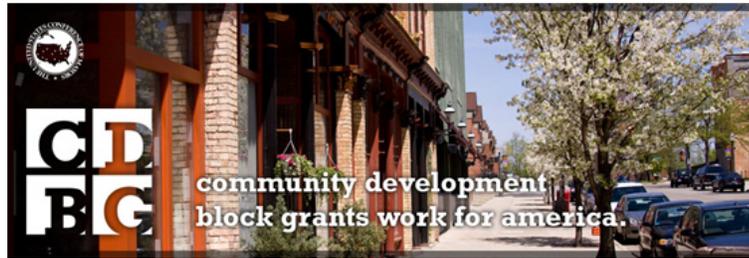


**Tim Womack
Named
ADRC Director**

Tim Womack was recently named director of the Appalachian Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC). Tim has been with the Council of Governments for five years, and for the past four years, he has been the information and referral/assistance specialist at the Appalachian ADRC.

After graduating from Winthrop in 1990, Tim spent many years in textile management. He has volunteered with several agencies, including AID Upstate and local food pantries. He lives in Greenville and enjoys cooking, traveling and entertaining.





Community Development Block Grant Program Fall 2015 Funding Opportunities

The Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program is designed to provide assistance to units of general local government in improving economic opportunities and meeting community revitalization needs, particularly for persons of low and moderate income (LMI). The Fall 2015 funding round provides opportunities to apply for CDBG funds in two categories - Community Enrichment and Neighborhood Revitalization Programs. These application requests are due to the SC Department of Commerce (DOC) on August 14, 2015.

The Community Enrichment Program is designed to fund facilities, services and other activities that strengthen existing communities and support a high quality of life within the following state priority areas:

- **First priority - Increasing Economic Competitiveness :** This category includes Brownfield projects or demolition of obsolete buildings; downtown streetscape infrastructure where there is significant business activity and prior investments; planning for regional infrastructure or brownfields cleanup and redevelopment; or public facilities modifications to ensure accessibility for disabled persons or for energy efficiency improvements to CDBG eligible facilities.
- **Second priority - Education and Workforce Development:** This includes library facilities or computer equipment with broadband capability to enhance skills training and education; publicly owned facilities that offer extended educational opportunities for adult literacy or to serve at risk LMI children or youth; or transportation-oriented public facilities or services to serve LMI workforce populations.
- **Third priority - Safe and Healthy Communities:** This category can assist with public safety facilities and services in LMI neighborhoods; demolition of vacant, dilapidated structures to address and support crime prevention efforts in targeted LMI neighborhoods; fire substations or trucks serving LMI residential areas that provide significant improvement in service for in-town locations or near business centers; and health clinic facilities or equipment in underserved area.

The Neighborhood Revitalization Program is designed to assist in the development of sustainable communities through revitalization of in-town residential neighborhoods. Projects must incorporate comprehensive strategies for linking commercial revitalization successes with improvements to neighborhoods that are generally adjacent to downtown or business centers. Such neighborhoods should be within walking distance to downtown or business centers (typically no more than ½ mile from the downtown or business center).

A local neighborhood revitalization plan is a pre-requisite to the receipt of funding for project implementation, and the plan must be submitted to DOC with the application for funding. Implementation of comprehensive neighborhood revitalization must involve multiple activities, including a public safety component. Activities may include infrastructure; public facilities; limited housing improvements; demolition and clearance of vacant and dilapidated properties; and public services, such as a crime watch program, drug or gang education, and awareness or prevention programs.

For more information, or to discuss a potential CDBG project, contact Dirk Reis at (864) 242-9733 or reis@scacog.org.



Roving Administrator Program - a Successful Year!

Last year, for the first time in many years, the Appalachian Council of Governments began a Roving Administrator Program. ACOG was fortunate to enter into a yearlong agreement with the Town of Duncan and the City of Inman to provide local government administrator services to these two communities. ACOG is proud to announce that this program will be celebrating its one-year anniversary on July 1, 2015. The program has been so successful that all parties have agreed to continue the program for another year.

During the past year, ACOG has helped the City of Inman transition from a strong mayor form of government to a council form of government. The city has started its own magazine; increased its visibility in the area;

attracted several businesses to the community; developed a structure to govern itself; opened a farmers market; and improved parks and other areas. It is truly a city "moving forward".

The Town of Duncan has had a successful year also. Much needed improvements have been made to its water park; staff and equipment have been added and improved in its sewer department; and the fire service area has been drastically improved with the passage of a referendum that allowed for the purchase of new fire trucks and the construction of a new fire station in the Wellford area.

ACOG is proud to have played a role in the success of these two communities, and hopes that the momentum created this year will continue into next year. The future looks bright for both communities!



WISHING YOU A SAFE AND HAPPY INDEPENDENCE DAY!