



# VIEWPOINT

## Appalachian Council of Governments Quarterly Newsletter

Fourth Quarter 2013

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*Serving six  
counties and 42  
municipalities  
since 1965.*

### Cowpens and Pacolet Receive PIP Grants for Senior Service Facilities

In June, the Spartanburg County municipalities of Cowpens and Pacolet were awarded funds through the Lt. Governor's Office on Aging (LGOA) from the Senior Center Permanent Improvement Program (PIP). The Senior Center PIP was established by the South Carolina State Legislature in 1991 from state bingo tax and licensing fee revenues to fund seventy-four (74) identified capital improvement projects. The total amount of funding required to complete the projects was reached in 2000. The original legislation was amended by the General Assembly in 1997 to continue the program under the responsibility of the LGOA.

There are three types of grants available: Emergency for 60 days; Renovation in 12 months; and New Construction to be completed in 24 months. Pacolet's is a renovation project, while Cowpens has new construction. This program has been created as a competitive grant process for securing funds for senior center capital improvement projects. The Appalachian Council of Governments/Area Agency on Aging (ACOG/AAA) holds the agreement with the LGOA, and the projects must first be approved by the ACOG/AAA. Each town received grant funds of \$350,000, with a \$150,000 match requirement. There were ten applications this year, and four awards went to Pacolet, Cowpens, the Central Midlands Region, and Charleston County in the Trident region.

Construction has begun in Cowpens on a new facility that will house a host of activities and programs for the senior population in the town and surrounding area. The town is collaborating with several community partners, including - but not limited to - the Spartanburg County Library System, Spartanburg Community

College, Spartanburg County School District 3, Mobile Meals of Spartanburg, and the Boys and Girls Club of Spartanburg.



*Construction is underway on the new Cowpens Senior Center, which will house a host of activities and programs for the senior population living in Cowpens and the surrounding vicinity.*

Pacolet has plans to renovate the Pacolet Mill Historic Cloth Room into a senior center, and the building will also be utilized as rental space for events. The Town is coordinating services with The Spartanburg Council on Aging, Spartanburg County Parks & Recreation, Spartanburg Housing Authority, Mobile Meals of Spartanburg, DHEC, AARP, the Mary Black Foundation, Spartanburg Regional Hospital, and the Spartanburg County Library System.

Mayor Elaine Harris stated, "'Close to Everything, Far from Ordinary' is more than just Pacolet's community slogan; it's a new attitude. Our multifaceted community master plan - of which the Historic Cloth Room is a major component - is reuniting a community, reviving an economy, and promoting an active lifestyle. The PIP Grant is allowing us to implement this important part of our master plan. With this grant, we are celebrating our real places, promoting a healthy lifestyle, and encouraging others to explore what we have to offer."





### **Town of Williamston on the Move!**

Over the past year, the Town of Williamston has worked diligently to improve its governmental operations, decrease reliance on its fund balance and determine if the town is best served by providing in-house services, as opposed to contracting with private providers. Mayor Mack Durham has requested the assistance of the Appalachian Council of Governments as he works to improve service delivery and provide services as economically as possible.

Mayor Durham solicited input from the ACOG immediately upon taking office, asking for a review of budgets spanning several years to determine if revenue and expenditure predictions were reasonable. A three-year profile was developed, and it was quickly determined that the town was relying heavily on reserve funds to meet budget expectations. Mayor Durham immediately took action to reduce expenditures, and an originally projected \$350,000 reliance on the reserves became an appropriation of only \$52,000 from the reserve account.

Mayor Durham then asked the ACOG to examine the workloads and functions of several town departments. ACOG initiated this evaluation process and has made recommendations to the Mayor regarding workload and potential relocation of several town employees. Two departments are still

under review at this time, but it is hoped that, when completed, this process will result in a more streamlined approach to service delivery.

Finally, Mayor Durham asked the ACOG to develop a Request for Proposal (RFP) to explore the possibility of privatizing the town's garbage collection service. To date, the RFP has been written, solicitations requested and submitted, interviews conducted, and the town is currently exploring its options. It is hoped the most cost efficient method will be identified and implemented in the near future.

Mayor Durham, after numerous conversations with ACOG staff, has also moved to create a main street program for the town. A main street coordinator has been hired, and meetings are currently underway to discuss the direction the town should take.

It is fantastic to see one of the region's municipalities moving forward and addressing some very complex and often political issues. ACOG is proud to have assisted Williamston in these endeavors, and we are confident that - with Mayor Durham's and the rest of Council's guidance - the town will continue to make great strides in its efforts to improve services and enhance the quality of life for all its residents.



### **Ed Elliott Elected as New SCARC President**

ACOG Board member Ed Elliott was installed as the 2013-14 president of the SC Association of Regional Councils (SCARC) during the November annual conference. As president, Mr. Elliott will lead SCARC's mission to enhance and promote the statewide COG network. He assumes leadership at a critical time. In light of state and federal budget reductions, an increasingly important role of councils of governments is to provide a statewide service delivery system for many state and federal programs. To be effective in that role, several factors must be in place. A consistency of service quality must be maintained among all members; efficient mechanisms for communication and coordination must be in place; and expertise must be available to all regions.

Also at this time, COGs across the state are seeing significant change in leadership, both at the board and executive director levels. In other states, similar changes have negatively impacted the statewide network. South Carolina must be proactive to ensure that our network becomes even stronger in the face of

transition. Mr. Elliott's emphasis as president will be to address these opportunities and challenges.

Mr. Elliott is a lifelong resident of Gaffney. He is a former radio station executive and currently manages the Gaffney office of the Correll Insurance Agency. He has been a citizen representative on the ACOG Board of Directors since 2006. During that period, he has served in several leadership positions, including board chair from 2010 through 2012.



*Mr. Elliott presents a plaque to outgoing SCARC president, Larry Hargett.*



*Senator Alexander with ACOG executive director, Steve Pelissier.*

### **Senator Thomas Alexander Named SCARC Volunteer of the Year**

Longtime ACOG Board member Senator Thomas Alexander was presented with the Volunteer of the Year Award at the SC Association of Regional Councils (SCARC) annual conference in November. This award is presented to a COG board member who has made significant contributions toward the missions of councils of governments or who has made significant contributions toward promoting the concept of regionalism.

In presenting the award, SCARC president, Larry Hargett, noted Sen. Alexander's leadership in the Senate to secure \$6 million in state funding to provide services for seniors across South Carolina. Sen. Alexander's work on behalf of the elderly is only one example of the leadership he provides to COG programs across the state, as well as to the Appalachian Council of

Governments in particular. When disagreements arise, he is often called to serve as a mediator. His friendly manner, preparation, ability to generate positive solutions, and high degree of personal integrity make him valuable in that role.

With 26 years of service, Sen. Alexander is ACOG's longest tenured current board member. Over that period, he has held many leadership positions, including serving as chair of the Board Officer Nominating Committee and as a member of the Executive, Finance, and Regional Aging Advisory Committees. The Appalachian Council of Governments is pleased by the state organization's recognition of Sen. Alexander's enthusiastic work on behalf of councils of governments, our clients, and the citizens of South Carolina.

### **ARC Awards Grants for Infrastructure and Job Training Projects**

The Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) recently awarded grants to enhance economic development, infrastructure, and job training efforts in the region.

**Oconee County** was awarded \$500,000 to construct a pump station to serve the county-owned Golden Corner Commerce Park and, eventually, other parts of southern Oconee County. The pump station will connect to the thirteen-mile force main - known as the Sewer South Project - to transport wastewater to the Coneross Wastewater Treatment Plant. The pump station cost is estimated at \$1.2 million.

The city of **Walhalla** was awarded \$500,000 to undertake a streetscape project along a four-block section of Main Street, between Tugaloo and Ann Streets. The project will include the upgrade of water and sewer lines, street lights, street improvements, sidewalks and landscaping. The estimated cost of the project is \$1.5 million.

A grant of \$220,800 was awarded to the town of **Blacksburg** to upgrade the Brugg Street Pump Station for increasing capacity to accommodate additional wastewater flow anticipated due to commercial and industrial growth. The estimated cost of this project is \$276,000.

**Tri-County Technical College** was awarded an ARC grant of \$250,000 to expand and upgrade the college's welding program in order to increase the number of skilled workers to meet

local industry demands. Total cost is estimated to be \$721,256.



**Spartanburg Community College** received \$500,000 for renovation of space in the main building on the Tyger River Campus to expand the Center for Business and Entrepreneurial Development. This space will include offices, a conference room, a library, training facilities, and space for assembly and light manufacturing operations, along with access to a wide range of support services. The Center for Business and Entrepreneurial Development provides assistance to developers and entrepreneurs to launch, build or reorganize successful companies by providing assistance in the form of flexible space for administrative and operational activities. The Economic Development Administration (EDA) has also approved a grant of \$782,445. The project is estimated to cost \$1.7 million.

For additional information on these projects, or the Appalachian Regional Commission programs, call Dirk Reis at the COG.

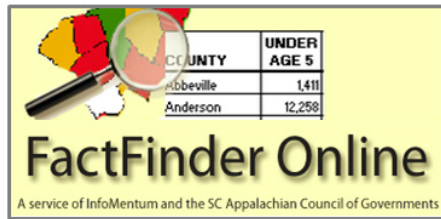


### **WorkLink Receives Funding to Strengthen Manufacturing in Region**

In October, Worklink was one of only ten applicants nationwide to be awarded a portion of the \$20.5 million "Make it in America" Challenge. This program - sponsored by the US Departments of Labor and Commerce, along with the Delta Regional Authority - is part of an Obama administration initiative to accelerate job creation and encourage businesses to keep, expand or re-shore their US manufacturing operations, and also to attract foreign investment.

The challenge builds on and promotes the factors that make America a good place to do business - namely its strong business climate and highly-skilled and productive workforce. The initiative also encourages collaboration among federal agencies to make smarter, more effective investments that provide stakeholders with a seamless process for applying for federal resources.\*

\*Cited from the 10/24/13 "The DOL Newsletter - October 24, 2013



### InfoMentum Fact Finder Wins 2013 NADO Innovation Award

The National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) Research Foundation recently selected the *InfoMentum Fact Finder* for a 2013 Innovation Award.

The *InfoMentum Fact Finder* is a comprehensive collection of tables containing vital demographic and economic information for the SC Upstate Region, available through a custom built, user-friendly web-interface. The new online *InfoMentum Fact Finder* is fully accessible from the ACOG website ([www.scacog.org](http://www.scacog.org)) as a readily-available resource for economic developers, grant writers, city officials, planners, entrepreneurs, social service professionals and members of the general public.

This newly-refurbished, web-based tool is the modernization of a resource which has been the backbone of economic development research in Upstate South Carolina for almost 20 years. The *Fact Finder* database encompasses data categories ranging from population and labor market to quality of life.

The new online interface enables users to easily retrieve desired information by allowing the selection of both primary and secondary data categories and then filters results by either "current and trend" or "historical" data. The user can download an Excel spreadsheet from the list of results to use for site selection

questionnaires, grant writing, land use planning, social services, and many other data-intensive purposes. The content of the *InfoMentum Fact Finder* is guided through input from partner organizations, whose roles are to market the region to new industries from across the globe. Their input ensures that the most-used information is "front and center".

NADO is a Washington, DC-based association that promotes programs and policies that strengthen local governments, communities, and economies through regional cooperation, program delivery, and comprehensive strategies. The association's Innovation Awards Program recognizes regional development organizations and partnering organizations for improving the economic and community competitiveness of our nation's regions and local communities. Award winners were showcased during NADO's 2013 Annual Training Conference, held August 24 - 27 in San Francisco, California.

"For nearly 30 years, NADO's Innovation Award has provided regional development organizations the opportunity to be recognized for their hard work and dedication to promoting economic development in rural and small metropolitan communities across the country. Building on the unique strengths and challenges of each region and community, award recipients continue to promote sustainable economic growth not only now, but for many years to come," said NADO President John Leonard, Executive Director of the Southern Georgia Regional Commission in Valdosta, GA.

For more information about the award-winning *InfoMentum Fact Finder*, contact the SC Appalachian Council of Governments at 864-242-9733.



## SC Department of Commerce Releases 2014 Annual Strategy Statement

The SC Department of Commerce (DOC) has released its 2014 Annual Strategy Statement for Appalachian South Carolina, which guides the use of federal Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) funds in the six-county region. This document describes the grant amounts available, the matching requirements, and eligible projects. The Strategy Statement also focuses on implementation of priorities to enhance the state's economic competitiveness as follows:

1. Economic development that increases income levels
2. Education and workforce development
3. Infrastructure and other public facilities to improve quality of life

A deadline of January 15, 2014 has been established by DOC for receiving ARC project proposals, which will serve as pre-applications. Selected proposals will be invited to submit a full application, and projects not selected will be notified. The full application must be submitted to the ARC program manager within thirty days of invitation. Application forms to be used in the submission will be provided by the ARC program manager.

The 2014 Annual Strategy Statement for Appalachian South Carolina can be accessed from the Council of Governments website at [www.scacog.org](http://www.scacog.org).



### ACOG Staff Members Recognized

A number of ACOG staff members were recently recognized by the Board for having 10+ years of service with the ACOG. The following individuals received tokens of recognition at recent ACOG Board meetings:

<b>Employee</b>	<b>Current Position</b>	<b>Departments Served</b>	<b>Employee Since</b>	<b>Years of Service</b>
Carol Andersen	GIS Analyst	Planning / Ec. Dev. Information Services	1995	18
Chip Bentley	Planning & Economic Development Director	Planning / Ec. Dev. Planning Services	1996	17
Mia Fuller	Administrative Assistant	Administration	1999	14
Beth Lewis	Economic Information Analyst	Planning / Ec. Dev. Information Services	1999	14
Jeri Bennett	PC Support	Administration	2002	11
Cricket Jenkins	Economic Researcher / Webmaster	Planning / Ec. Dev. Information Services	2002	11
Jennifer Vissage	Planner	Planning / Ec. Dev. Planning Services	2002	11

The dedication of these individuals and their contributions to the region are greatly appreciated!