

South Carolina's Councils of Governments: Partnerships, Progress & Promise—Part IV

(This is Part IV of a five-part series detailing the contributions of South Carolina's Councils of Governments to the state's economy and quality of life.)

Return on Investment

In the private sector, a key measure of progress is Return on Investment. Simply put, this measure answers the question: "What do we get back for the money we invested?" When it comes to the state's councils of governments, the number is impressive.

Last year local governments across the state and the S. C. General Assembly combined, invested a total of \$2,921,026 in the operations of the ten COGs. The return on that investment was \$712,267,961 – a return of \$340 for every \$1 invested.

The return included more than \$121 million from federal and state grants programs, followed by over \$500 million from the COGs and S. C. Department of Transportation highway bond program. It also included more than \$7 million from loans made by the COG Revolving Loan Funds, along with another \$38.5 million from private capital investment resulting from the loans. Workforce Investment Program subcontracts accounted for \$31 million in returns, while Aging Program subcontracts were responsible for \$14.2 million.

Grant Programs

The \$1.5 billion in grants obtained through the COGs over the years have been used for a host of critical needs – infrastructure, community revitalization, downtown development,

housing construction and rehabilitation, public safety, recreation, social services, education, historic preservation, energy conservation and environmental protection.

As facilitators, the COGs help develop projects, prepare applications, act as advocates, provide liaison with funding agencies, and often administer the project funds after grants are awarded.

Loans and Capital Investment

Many South Carolina businesses benefit from COG Revolving Loan Funds, which provide money for business expansion and new job creation. In addition to Revolving Loan Funds, many COGs facilitate small business lending through one or more additional loan programs sponsored by the Small Business Administration or other federal or state agencies.

These programs represent an important source of capital. Most of these loans would not have been made through conventional lending sources without the involvement of the COGs. Over the past several years, COGs have made a total of 552 small business loans, totaling \$82.3 million. These loans have leveraged \$252 million in private capital investment through owner-injected equity and conventional lenders' capital. A total of 10,149 jobs have been created or retained as a result of these loans.

Workforce Contracts

During the past year, the COGs contracted for \$31 million in services through Workforce Investment Pro-

grams. These programs offer comprehensive services designed to increase employment, retain jobs, develop occupational skills for unemployed and under-employed workers, youths, persons with disabilities, and veterans. These funds helped provide jobs for 3,100 people during the past year.

Total Workforce Investments coming through the COGs over the years have totaled \$148.5 million. A total of 45,188 clients have been served, and 28,428 South Carolinians have been placed in jobs through this program.

Highway Improvement

In a partnership arrangement with the S. C. Department of Transportation, the COGs provide rural transportation planning services at the regional level. In addition, several COGs administer the Urban Program in their regions.

Many COGs have entered into a long-term bonding program with the S. C. Department of Transportation, resulting in nearly \$2 billion in highway improvement funds being made available to local governments. Over the past 12 months, the programs under the COGs' administration included more than \$500 million worth of projects. COGs also work with local governments to prioritize new road and highway improvement projects for inclusion in future funding and to monitor projects throughout construction.

Aging Contracts

Most Councils operate or otherwise administer programs under the

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ARC Federal Co-Chair Visits Region

Ms. Anne Pope, Federal Co-Chair of the Appalachian Regional Commission, visited the Appalachian Region of South Carolina on November 20-21. Ms. Pope was appointed to the position by President Bush and confirmed by the Senate on November 18, 2002. Prior to her ARC appointment, she served as the commissioner of the State of Tennessee's Department of Commerce and Insurance. She was named to that position by Governor Don Sundquist in November 1999. Accompanying Ms. Pope was Guy Land, Special Counsel and Congressional Affairs Director, and Amy Arnold, Policy Advisor. They were joined on the visit by Scott English, Policy Advisor to Governor Sanford, and Elizabeth Kovacs, ARC Program Manager in the S. C. Department of Commerce.

ACOG Executive Director Bob Strother and Dirk Reis, Grants Services Director, conducted the tour, beginning with a visit to the ACOG offices where Joe Newton, Governmental Services Director, gave a brief presentation concerning the work being done through the ACOG's Small Towns Technical Assistance and the Terrorism Awareness Training programs. Carol Andersen, Information Services Director, also gave a presentation on the GIS/InfoMentum activities being conducted by the Information Services staff.

A quick drive through the new Pickens County Industrial Park showed what Pickens County has to offer industrial prospects that are looking for a Class A Industrial Park. ARC funds were used to assist Pickens County in constructing the roads and storm drainage system in the new park, which also has other utilities including gas, sewer, water and fiber optic cable available. The group also saw the recently completed entrance and exit ramps off of Highway 123 to serve the industrial park.

The group next met with Jim Alexander, Director of the Oconee County Economic Development Com-



ARC Federal Co-Chairman Ann Pope tours the Beacon Blanket manufacturing plant in Westminster. Pictures are Jim Alexander, Economic Development Director for Oconee County, and Ann Pope.

mission, at the Oconee County Commerce Center at Highway 123 and Highway 11. Mr. Alexander explained the benefits of a proposed project to undertake much needed water system improvements in the Westminster/Highway 11 area. An ARC and an EDA application are pending for the proposed \$2 million project.

Mr. Alexander also accompanied the group to the Westminster Beacon manufacturing facility in Westminster. This business was a recent recipient of a \$200,000 loan from the ACOG's Revolving Loan Fund Program, which was capitalized by ARC, to restart a closed textile factory and rehire 100 workers. Ms. Deborah Chapman, the plant manager, gave the group a very informative tour of the plant and talked about the positive impact its re-opening will have on the town, the workers, and their families.

The tour continued with a quick drive through the Newry Mill Village, where ARC funds were combined with CDBG, State and local funds to completely rebuild the water and sewer system that serves the 110 homes in the village. The project eliminated a health hazard caused by inadequate water service and raw sewage discharges in Newry, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Ms. Pope and the others were informed that this project received the Award of Excellence from the South Carolina Commu-

nity Development Association last May.

The group returned to Greenville through the City of Pickens, which was also a recent beneficiary of an ARC/CDBG project to upgrade the water system, including a new elevated water tank. This project is expected to help spur development in the downtown area of Pickens.

On Friday, after a tour of the BMW plant arranged for the group by Max Metcalf, Assistance Manager for Corporate Communications at BMW, the group visited Spartanburg Technical College (STC). Bob Isenhower, VP for Planning and Information, and Jo Ellen Cantrell, VP of Continuing Education, among others, spoke about the training that was provided by STC for BMW and also the mission of the college. STC also discussed with Ms. Pope and the group the importance that ARC funding has had through the years in helping the college to upgrade training equipment and to keep up to date with industry demands.

Ms. Pope, Mr. Land, and Ms. Arnold all thanked the State officials and the COG staff for arranging the visits to the various sites. Because of time constraints, we were not able to visit projects in all six counties in the region, but invited Ms. Pope back to see other projects in the near future.

Medicare Prescription Drug Bill

Congress recently enacted, and President Bush signed, the Bipartisan Medicare Prescription Drug Bill. If you would like to receive a summary of the Medicare Conference Agreement outlining resolutions to the major issues in the bill or the perspectives of AARP, Families USA, National Association of Area Agencies on Aging, and the Select Committee on Aging, please contact the ACOG's Area Agency on Aging at 242-9733.

(Drug Bill continued on page 3)

Eddie Wynn Wins Statewide SCARC Award



Meeting in Myrtle Beach recently, the S. C. Association of Regional Councils (SCARC) bestowed its highest recognition for COG Board members on Appalachian COG Vice-Chairman Eddie Wynn. Mr. Wynn received the *Volunteer of the Year Award* from King Dixon, SCARC Awards Committee Chairman.

Eddie has been a member of the Appalachian Council of Governments Board for over 20 years. In addition to being the current Board Vice-Chairman, he is chairman of the 208 Water Quality Advisory Committee and a member of the COG Budget and Executive Committees. He has served on the SCARC Board of Directors for over 15 years, and was president of the State Association in 1993-1994. During this past year, Eddie served as chairman of the COG Impact Report Committee for SCARC, a role which produced the highly touted report *South Carolina's Councils of Governments: Partnerships, Progress & Promise*. Our congratulations go out to Eddie Wynn for his outstanding achievements and this well-deserved statewide honor and recognition.

SCARC President Christopherson Presides At Annual Conference

The S. C. Association of Regional Councils (SCARC) President Chris Christopherson addressed 265 participants at the recent SCARC Annual Conference. In recounting the Association's accomplishments over the past year, Mayor Christopherson said he was most proud of the statewide COG Impact Report, *South Carolina's Regional Councils: Partnerships, Progress & Promise*. "Last year I said that South Carolina's COGs were the unsung heroes of our state's economy and quality of life," Christopherson told the group. "Over this past year, with the help of all ten regional councils, we have made significant progress in telling our story of success."



Former U.S. Ambassador Phil Lader and SCARC President Chris Christopherson.

Former Ambassador to the United Kingdom Phil Lader spoke to the attendees at the Conference luncheon, telling them that the COGs did indeed have an impressive record of success over the years. "You have positioned yourselves to take advantage of great opportunities in the coming months and years," he said. "You must now ensure that you continue to maintain the vision to recognize the changes that may occur, and the flexibility to respond effectively to those challenges."

There are ten regional councils of governments in South Carolina. The Association Board of Directors consists of three representatives from each council. Representatives from the Appalachian COG include Chris Christopherson, Eddie Wynn, Gloria Butler, and Ken Huckaby, who serves as alternate.

2004 Medicare Premium Amounts

Part A (Hospital Insurance) Premium: Most people do not pay a monthly Part A premium because they (or a spouse) have 40 or more quarters of Medicare covered employment. The cost is \$343 per month (for those individuals who are not otherwise eligible for premium-free hospital insurance and have less than 30 quarters of Medicare covered employment) and \$189 per month (for those individuals otherwise not eligible and have 30-39 quarters of Medicare covered employment).

Part A Deductible is \$876 per benefit period. Part A Co-insurance is \$219 a day for the 61st-90th day each benefit period; \$438 a day for the 91st-150th day for each lifetime reserve day (total of 60 lifetime reserve days - non-renewable); \$109.50 a day for the 21st-100th day each benefit period for skilled nursing facility co-insurance.

Part B (Medical Insurance) Premium: \$66 per month (Medicare + Choice plans may charge an additional premium). Part B deductible is \$100 per year.

For more information, visit <http://www.medicare.gov>, or call the ACOG's Area Agency on Aging office.

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You can also get additional information by visiting www.aarp.org; www.n4a.org; www.aging.senate.gov; www.medicare.gov; www.kff.org and www.familiesusa.org.

Mayor Christopherson Ends Term as SCARC President

In November Easley Mayor Chris Christopherson ended his term as President of the S. C. Association of Regional Councils (SCARC). Presiding over 265 delegates to the Association's Annual Conference on November 23-25 in Myrtle Beach, President Christopherson highlighted SCARC's accomplishments over the past year. "Last year as incoming President, I told you that I believe South Carolina's Regional Councils of Governments to be the unsung heroes of our state's economy and quality of life," he said. "Today, with your help, we have published a document that tells the story of our success –

“South Carolina’s Councils of Governments, Partnerships, Progress & Promise”

The publication highlights the contributions of the state's councils of governments (COGs) and details the COGs' return on investment made by local governments and the General Assembly. "Last year our local governments and the state legislature invested about \$2.9 million in the operations of the ten COGs," Christopherson told the Conference delegates. "The return was over \$712 million; a return of \$340 for every \$1 invested." Areas of investment included state and federal grants to local governments, small business loans, highway improvements, workforce training, services to the state's elderly population, and several other categories impacting the state's economy and quality of life.

Under President Christopherson, the Association also prepared a "job description" for members of COGs' boards of directors, outlining roles and responsibilities designed to mutually benefit the COG organizations and the appointing bodies for the membership.

A third goal for the year was an expanded awards program, recognizing



ing members of the state legislature, state employees, COG board member volunteers, and special COG projects.

Mayor Christopherson serves on the SCARC Board of Directors as a delegate from the Appalachian Council of Governments, where he has been a member since 1991.

(S. C. COGs continued from page 1)

Older Americans Act. During the past 12 months, the COGs contracted for \$14.2 million in Aging Program services. These funds are disbursed into the state and regional economic base and provide South Carolina's elderly population with congregate and home-delivered meals, adult day care, health screenings, home health care, transportation to medical and other vital services, insurance counseling, and a variety of other critically needed services.

Sewer Permit Reviews

Many COGs are charged by the S. C. Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) with creating and maintaining regional water quality management plans. As part of that responsibility, the COGs review all applications requesting sewer discharge permits. These reviews, done to ensure compliance with a regional water quality plan, are necessary before DHEC will issue permits for new or expanded business, industry, or residential development. During the past 12 months, COGs reviewed 1,244 such applications.

Development Corporation News

The Board approved a loan to Innovative Container Corporation in West Greenville in the amount of \$115,000. Funds are to be used to purchase equipment for a second manufacturing line. The company makes 55-gallon drums used for shipping. The project will help create at least six additional jobs.

A loan in the amount of \$25,000 was approved for Indexx, Inc., to update equipment used in its printing operation. The business currently employs forty-seven people and will add two more.

The Board approved a loan for Billhorn Board and Paper, LLC, in the amount of \$147,000 to help provide permanent financing for a new warehousing and converting operation in Spartanburg County. The business is to create at least eight new jobs with this project.

A loan was approved for 3 G Mermet to provide permanent funding for the purchase of its manufacturing facility in Cowpens. The Appalachian Development Corporation (ADC) will fund up to \$360,000. The company employs in excess of seventy people and will expand by at least eight more.

A loan to ACT Southeast of Easley was closed in the amount of \$50,000, enabling this nine-year old business to remain in existence. The company welds saw blades for metal saws. The business will employ up to six people.

An Appalachian Development Corporation SBA 504 loan was approved for funding in the amount of \$450,000. This project involves a Zaxby's restaurant in the Spartanburg area. Central Carolina is the primary financial institution on this project.

A loan of \$37,500 to Aunt Bee's Quilting was closed and funded, allowing this quilting supply store to open in the Simpsonville area.

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SCDOT Enhancement Grants 2004

It's Never Too Early to Start Planning

The S.C. Department of Transportation (SCDOT) Transportation Enhancement Grant Program does not officially begin until mid-January, but now is the time for local governments to begin thinking about the program. Commonly known as Enhancement Grants, these grants fund community improvement projects that have a relationship to transportation. Most recently, the City of Landrum and the Town of Williamston have used these grants for sidewalk and pedestrian improvements. For jurisdictions in rural (non-MPO) areas, the SCDOT announces the application process in January, with an application deadline in the spring. The SCDOT is currently updating the timetable for this program.

There are 12 eligible Transportation Enhancement Grant categories, which are:

1. Provisions of facilities for pedestrians and bicycles.
2. Safety and educational activities (pedestrians and bicyclists).
3. Acquisition of scenic easements and scenic or historic sites.
4. Scenic or historic highway program (tourist and welcome center facilities).
5. Landscaping and other scenic beautification.
6. Historic preservation.
7. Rehabilitation and operation of historic transportation buildings, structures, or facilities.
8. Preservation of abandoned railway corridors.
9. Control and removal of outdoor advertising.
10. Archeological planning and research.
11. Mitigation of water pollution due to highway run-off or reduction of vehicle caused wildlife mortality while maintaining connectivity.
12. Establishment of transportation museums.

The maximum amount of



Recently, the City of Belton received Enhancement Grants to improve the City's Square.

funding a jurisdiction can receive is \$200,000. Grants require a 20% local match. The SCDOT will institute an education program to assist local jurisdictions with the necessary information to apply for the grants. At these workshops, the SCDOT will explain the Enhancement Grant application process, identify which organizations can apply for the grants, review the timeline for submittal, and answer any questions that participants may have. The Appalachian COG will host an Enhancement Grant workshop in early 2004.

Look for more updates concerning Enhancement Grants in upcoming *Viewpoint* publications and SCDOT mailings. For more information concerning the Transportation Enhancement Program, contact Shawn Colin or Dan Wagner at the COG, or visit the SCDOT web site at <http://www.dot.state.sc.us/community/tep.html>.

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A loan to Keystone Packaging in the amount of \$160,000 was closed and funded. This project allowed Keystone Packaging to purchase a larger facility in Anderson.

Graham's Ice Cream Company (Bruster's Ice Cream and Yogurt Shop) received its permanent funding through the ADC/SBA 504 program for its second location in Boiling Springs.

Long Term Care and the Holidays

The holiday season can bring on its own type of stress and bad days...now add caring for an Alzheimer's patient and it's a whole new ball game! As caregivers (both in the home and in a facility) we need to remember to care for ourselves, too. If you are having a bad day, week or month, try these tips:

- Cut yourself some slack. No one is perfect or patient 100 percent of the time. Decide that tomorrow will be better!
- You can change your actions and reactions to stress. Start by taking slow, deep breaths and/or walk away from the situation for a minute or two.
- Count your blessings. Use your faith or belief for extra strength. Remind yourself of the good parts of each day or what's good in your life.
- Find a quiet hideout at work, at home, or in your head ~ a place, view, picture, fountain, plant, tree, or memory that calms and soothes your spirit or makes you smile.
- Give friends or co-workers a pat on the back if they do something nice. They will do the same for you when you need it.
- Use creativity. Do not let an old hobby or craft project just sit in the closet.
- Rediscover your sense of humor.
- Say "no" and mean it if you are at your limit. Too much work is bad for the soul.
- Get enough sleep, good food and exercise.
- Preserve real friendships.
- Say "I will not let this get to me. I will go with the flow."
- Get a massage, a facial, a manicure –

(Long Term Care continued on page 6)

The South Carolina General Assembly On-line — *The Next Best Thing to Being There*

The 115th General Assembly will be back in session soon in Columbia. The legislature will be making critical decisions concerning the FY 2004-2005 budget, property tax reform, home rule questions, Medicaid funding, annexation and other issues relevant to city and county governments. And while we all can't attend daily sessions in Columbia, we can follow legislative events very closely utilizing the internet at www.scstatehouse.net.



The following information and much more is available to the general public, 24 hours a day: A live web broadcast from the State House and Senate, Senate and House agendas, and pending bills, resolutions, and regulations. Also available is an excellent Who's Who legislative biographical summary, copies of the current budget and proposed versions of the new budget, and various legislative reports.

The entire Code of South Carolina Laws, the Code of Regulations, the State Constitution, weekly legislative journals, full-text search databases and information concerning agencies, boards & commissions are all conveniently accessible.

City and county officials interested in learning more about online resources should contact Mike Sell or Joe Newton at the Appalachian Council of Governments.



Alliance Pickens Benefits From On-Line Mapping



Alliance Pickens, the economic development agency for Pickens County, recently announced the launch of their new and innovative website at www.alliancepickens.com. In addition to a wealth of information about the county, the website includes the premier application of the state-of-the-art on-line mapping application provided as a component of ACOG's *InfoMentum* decision support system.

The web-based GIS mapping application allows users to interactively view, manipulate, and print maps and information on the region from anywhere in the world. Visitors to the site can create custom demographic reports and detailed searches of the industrial properties database. Map layers include county and municipal boundaries, census features, water bodies, roads, existing industries, and available industrial buildings, sites, and parks.

Staff from ACOG and Alliance Pickens worked closely with programmers from Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI) to create a unique application that provides tools to economic developers, site consultants, and decision makers. The Pickens site will serve as a template for similar applications provided to the Upstate Alliance and counties who invest in *InfoMentum*. This technology gives the partners an edge in attracting industry to create jobs in the Upstate.

Ray Farley, Executive Director of Alliance Pickens declared, "Alliance Pickens and the Appalachian Council of Governments have embarked upon a pioneering high tech economic development endeavor. With web-based GIS mapping, geo-referenced demographics, and detailed sites, parks, and buildings information, together, we are on the 'cutting edge' of economic development. This is just what the doctor ordered!"

Please contact Carol Andersen (andersen@scacog.org) for more information.

(Long Term Care continued from page 5)

have a day of pampering and relaxation!!

- Never lose sight of your big dreams; they make life seem bigger.

Remember that being a caregiver is the most amazing job anyone can do, whether it be at home or in a facility. Also, remember that those loved ones and/or residents are counting on you – so please take care of yourself and enjoy the Holidays! May the New Year bring all of you happiness, health and prosperity!

VIEWPOINT

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Workforce Investment Act Helps Train Eligible Workers

Thanks to Workforce Investment Act funding made available through the Pendleton District Workforce Investment Board, the South Carolina Employment Security Commission (SCESC) now can provide funding to help defray the cost of training new employees for companies in Anderson, Oconee, and Pickens counties. This On-the-Job Training (OJT) program allows SCESC to reimburse a company for one-half of the training costs for up to ten weeks of training for new hires who are eligible for WIA services. The total OJT funding for the Pendleton District is \$324,109 to serve 107 participants.

Each of the three Pendleton District One-Stop Workforce Centers has an OJT Contract Writer ready to help area businesses and potential participants. For more information, contact any of the three Pendleton District One-Stop Centers in Anderson (226-6273), Seneca (882-5638), or Liberty (843-9512) and ask to speak with someone regarding the OJT program.