

S. C. Department of Commerce to Use CDBG Funds for Small Business Development

Last month's *Viewpoint* contained information about the 2004 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program and the assistance available for infrastructure, housing, and commercial revitalization projects. In addition to these programs, the S. C. Department of Commerce has initiated a new category of funding for Small Business Development. This program will focus on creating a competitive environment for businesses by addressing opportunities to support new and existing small businesses through access to capital and entrepreneurial development.

Types of assistance available under this program include, but are not limited to:

- Educating current and future low to moderate income entrepreneurs by providing scholarships for approved programs on how to start or expand a small business
- Small business development counseling programs to assist in development of business plans, technical and managerial assistance, and other support services
- Community-based training to nurture and support small business development and networking opportunities and contribute to the development of sustainable local economies



- Development of "one-stop-shop" small business resource centers and/or incubators, particularly in downtowns, which provide non-financial resources for entrepreneurs or expanding small businesses
- Improving access to capital for expanding small businesses that propose creation of jobs
- Other innovative approaches that will result in the desired outcome

There is \$1,500,000 available in this program for 2004. The maximum grant that can be requested is \$250,000, and there is a minimum 10% match required. Applications are due at the S. C. Department of Commerce by October 1, 2004. For more information on the Small Business Development program or other CDBG programs, contact a member of the Grants Services staff or visit the DOC website at www.sccommerce.com

ACOG Makes Change in Telephone Service

As part of a major review of operational expenses, the Appalachian Council of Governments has determined that most governmental agencies and many non-profit agencies with whom we are in daily contact are under state contract for telephone service. The state contract provides a special discount rate for most governmental calls placed within the "864" area code.



In an effort to reduce costs and improve efficiency, the ACOG will switch to the state contract effective June 1, 2004. As a part of this change, the local calling numbers from Anderson (225-3268), Cherokee (489-6960), Oconee (882-7538), Pickens (855-0163), and Spartanburg (582-1403) Counties will be eliminated.

Beginning June 1, 2004, all calls should be placed to our (864) 242-9733 number, or dialed directly to a staff member's telephone. Any calls placed through the former "county" numbers will activate a message directing the caller to dial (864) 242-9733. That message will be in place for 90 days.

This change should reduce our telephone cost significantly in the future. If your jurisdiction is not under the state contract and you would like more information about this service, contact your local BellSouth representa-

(ACOG Phone Service continued on page 2)

Landrum Updates Comprehensive Plan

The Landrum City Council will review updates to the Comprehensive Plan at their June meeting. The Plan update is part of Landrum's efforts to meet the requirements of the South Carolina Comprehensive Planning Enabling Act of 1994 (SC Code, Title 6, Chapter 29). This legislation requires all counties and municipalities with planning programs



to review their comprehensive plans at least once every five years.

The Landrum Comprehensive Plan reflects new growth and development trends, examines changing land use conditions, and assesses previous goals and the progress made in achieving those goals. The Plan is intended to set priorities for community development and creates a framework for balancing competing interests while planning for improving infrastructure and services and guiding decisions on land use changes in the future. The Planning Commission reviewed new data provided by the 2000 Census and updated land use information to assess their current policies and their effectiveness. Changes to the future land use map, used as a guide for land use decisions, were made to better reflect the City's existing and desired growth pattern.

This effort was initiated by the City of Landrum, who identified continued planning as a priority. The Planning Commission took on the challenge of preparing the plan update with assistance from Council of Governments

staff. The updated Plan will be presented to City Council at their June meeting. City Council will hold a public hearing before final approval to allow for community input. For more information, please contact the City of Landrum, or Chip Bentley with the Council of Governments.

Scenic Upstate Note Cards Available from ACOG

High quality note cards showcasing the scenic highlights of the region are now available through the Appalachian Council of Governments. The initial card set includes characteristic scenes from each of the six Upstate counties. Future sets will include series of picturesque buildings, wildlife, and seasonal splendor. The images come from the large database of original photographs maintained by the Information Services Department for use in publications.

Each card includes a short explanation of ACOG services and logo on the back. In addition to serving as a source of revenue, card sales present an opportunity to market the ACOG and encourage recipients to visit the website for more information. The cards will be produced in-house to minimize production costs.

A set of 12 cards with envelopes sells for \$8.00, or \$21.00 for a bundle of 3 sets. Cards are now available in the ACOG lobby and on-line purchase at www.scacog.org. Click on the PUBLICATIONS link to get full details and to order products. Future marketing plans may include local retail stores and chambers of commerce. Please contact the Information Services Department for more information.

Terrorism/WMD— Training Opportunities for First Responders



Local first responders seeking basic and advanced Terrorism/WMD (Weapons of Mass Destruction) instruction have a number of training opportunities available to them. Most instruction is free, and in many cases all expenses are covered by the U. S. Department of Homeland Security.

Information on schools and courses can be found at the **South Carolina Emergency Management Division** Website at www.state.sc.us/emd/training/courses.htm. Highly advanced training is available at facilities across the country. Alternatively, mobile training teams can be brought in to teach here in our own backyard, and excellent online courses are also available.

The **Appalachian Council of Governments** continues to offer monthly basic Terrorism/WMD training. Students who attend the ACOG/COBRA course are issued U. S. Department of Homeland Security training certificates which satisfy prerequisite training for some advanced courses. ACOG has instructed more than 700 local responders to date.

(ACOG Phone Service continued from page 1)
tive, or Donna Kazia at the Council of Governments' office.

We expect a smooth transfer of telephone calls, but should you experience any problems, please let us know.

Job Creator Awards



Lt. Governor Andre Bauer distributed awards to 40 South Carolina companies at the annual 2004 Job Creator Award Presentation held April 14, 2004, in Columbia. The annual ceremony honors employers who have contributed to the state's economy during the previous year.

In 2003, there were a total of 1,812,500 jobs in South Carolina. This was a gain of 7,800 jobs (0.4%) from 2002. Leisure and hospitality rose by 5,300. Education and health services added 5,100 jobs. Manufacturing lost 12,600 in 2003.

The annual Job Creator awards are based on contributions to the state's economy during the previous year. Recipients may be nominated by the six sponsoring agencies and the twelve local Workforce Investment Boards for employing large numbers of people with the state's Employment Service and local One-Stop Career Centers, capital investment in industry or tourism, supporting the state's public and technical college system, or community improvement.

The Pendleton District Workforce Investment Board, serving Anderson, Oconee, and Pickens counties, nominated two of the forty recipients. The Pendleton District area recipients were AnMed HealthSouth Rehabilitation Hospital and Mergon Corporation.

AnMed HealthSouth Rehabilitation Hospital is a 40-bed, in-patient rehabilitation facility and a 50/50 joint venture between AnMed and HealthSouth. They created 150 jobs in 2003.

Mergon Corporation originated in Ireland and immigrated to Anderson

County in 1998 to set up shop as a plastic blow molding company. Last year the company moved into a new facility, which doubled its capacity. The company also hired 40 additional employees.

Also honored from the Pendleton District Workforce Investment Area, Inergy Automotive Systems of Anderson was nominated by the Governor's State Workforce Investment Board's Administrative Unit for utilizing the State's Incumbent Worker Training Program. The company is the number one producer of plastic fuel tanks worldwide and hired 30 new employees last year.

Congratulations to AnMed HealthSouth Rehabilitation Hospital, Mergon Corporation, and Inergy Automotive Systems!

Medicare Modernization Act of 2003 — May 19, 2004 Update



The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services recently announced additional steps to improve service for Medicare beneficiaries deciding whether a discount card is right for them. This includes adding 400 more customer service representatives to answer calls on the 1-800-MEDICARE

hotline and enhancing the "Price Compare" database at www.medicare.gov, <http://www.medicare.gov>.

Enhancements are also being implemented in Medicare's Price Compare services based on feedback from beneficiaries, customer service operators, and advocates. For example, www.medicare.gov now has a new, easily visible link, making the Price Compare database easier to find, and the "drug dictionary" of drugs included on Price Compare is being expanded. Website users and callers to 1-800-MEDICARE can now get an easy-to-use list of information to have available to help them find the best cards for their needs as quickly as possible.

The list includes pill bottles or a list of drugs and dosages, favorite pharmacies, whether the beneficiary has a preference for low- or no-fee cards, and income information if the beneficiary is interested in the \$600 credit and other low-income assistance programs.

When calling Medicare, beneficiaries should be prepared to answer a few important questions about their prescription drug needs. CMS call centers use this information to sort through all of the medicines, drug discount cards, and pharmacies to give beneficiaries the specific, individual facts they need to decide about the drug card program. This includes: Their ZIP code; Their medicines and doses (It's best to have pill bottles in front of them); Preference for a pharmacy, if they have one (otherwise they will get information on the closest pharmacies as well as mail-order options); Whether they are especially interested in low-cost or no-cost cards (the maximum card fee is \$30 per year, but many cards have lower or zero fees); Any specific Medicare-approved cards that they have heard about and want to find out more about; Their total monthly income, if they have limited means and are interested in the \$600 credit for drug costs and other programs to help them get much larger savings.

The best times to call 1-800-MEDICARE is later in the week – Thursday through Sunday – and between 6:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. Eastern time.

VIEWPOINT

Appalachian Council of Governments
P. O. Box 6668
Greenville, South Carolina 29606

PRSRT STD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
GREENVILLE, SC
PERMIT NO. 1604

South Carolina's State Unit on Aging (SUA) will be holding a series of public hearings regarding their State Plan for providing Aging Services for the next four years. The Older Americans Act (OAA) requires that each state submit a State Plan on Aging in order to be eligible for federal funding under the OAA. The purpose of this plan is to provide a blueprint for how South Carolina will manage aging programs, services, and other activities, including development of comprehensive and coordinated systems for the delivery of supportive services, multipurpose senior centers and nutrition services, and to serve as the effective and visible advocate for the elderly in South Carolina. Since South Carolina's Aging mission is to enhance the quality of life of all older citizens, the plan impacts all partners and allies who work to improve the lives of older citizens. The plan's success will only be possible through the support, cooperation, coordination and collaboration of many state agencies, private sector organizations, the Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) and local contractors and sub-grantees, and most importantly, the efforts of the many older citizens who volunteer their time to help others, participate in advocacy organizations, and provide input and guidance. Please make plans to attend one of the public hearings and offer your input!

Public hearings will take place across the state as follows:

- Walterboro: June 21, 2004, 1:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m., in the County Council Chamber Office
- Greenville: June 22, 2004, 1:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m., in the County Council Chamber Office
- Columbia: June 24, 2004, 10:00 p.m. – 12:00 p.m., in the Capitol Senior Center