

Annual **REPORT**

Serving South Carolina's Appalachian Region

ANDERSON • CHEROKEE • GREENVILLE • OCONEE • PICKENS • SPARTANBURG







LETTER FROM THE BOARD

*Neal Collins, Board Chair
ACOG Board of Directors*

Our purpose is to enhance the lives of people living in the six-county South Carolina Appalachian Region. Since our establishment in 1965, we have maintained a commitment to provide quality services to local governments and other service providers in Anderson, Cherokee, Greenville, Oconee, Pickens, and Spartanburg County.

The heart of the organization is its team of board members and staff who are trusted, committed, and solutions-oriented individuals who love the Appalachian Region we serve. We build and foster regional relationships, provide solutions for communities, and fill gaps in staff and administrative resources. The team serves as a regional facilitator, bringing diverse stakeholders to the table to address the key issues facing the region.

The ACOG improves the lives of the region's citizens through services to local governments, economic and community development, planning, transportation, infrastructure development, resource management, senior advocacy, and workforce development. Our programs for the elderly, such as home-delivered meals, congregate dining, transportation, and counseling, benefit seniors across our region every day. Our focus on work skills development ensures people in our region keep up with the ever-changing skill sets required by business and industry. Our work

with economic development through our InfoMentum Economic Development Support System, assistance with grant funding for infrastructure, workforce development programs, and transportation planning, ensures our region is equipped to compete in a global economy.

While our programs are broad and widely varied, they all come back to serving the people of the Upstate. Whether it is general administration, assistance with grants, planning, or economic development support, we want to be a key resource for getting the job done.

We are pleased to provide this Annual Report for the Appalachian Council of Governments, covering our activities and accomplishments in 2023. I hope you find it informative. Thank you for supporting our region.

Respectfully,

Neal Collins
ACOG Board Chair

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Neal A. Collins". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.



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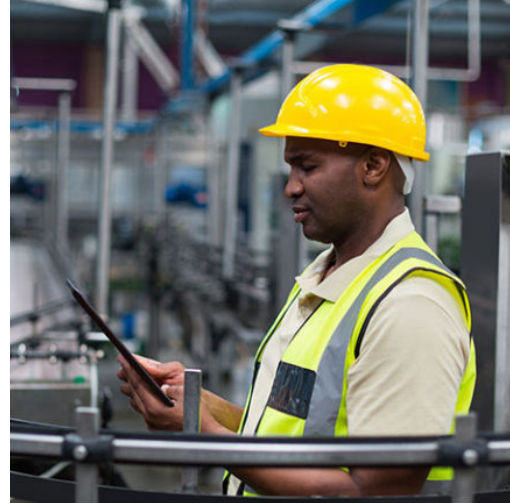
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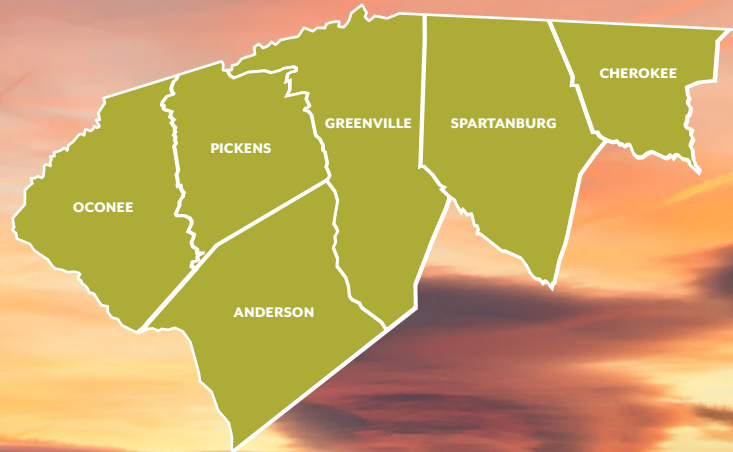
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ABOUT ACOG

The Appalachian Council of Governments (ACOG) was established in 1965 to advise the Governor on the use of Appalachian Regional Commission funds. In 1971, the organization became one of 10 COG districts created by the South Carolina General Assembly. ACOG represents a 6 county area that includes Anderson, Cherokee, Greenville, Oconee, Pickens, and Spartanburg counties in the Appalachian Region of South Carolina. ACOG operates as a multifaceted service organization for local governments, providing a regional forum where elected officials, industry experts, community leaders, and community members come together to discuss issues and share ideas to solve local challenges. ACOG works in close collaboration with our community partners toward building a competitive economy and promoting healthy, livable communities.





SERVICES

In carrying out our mission, ACOG convenes elected officials and local practitioners to develop strategies for improving quality of life. Acog prioritizes state and federal investments into social services and public infrastructure throughout the region.

We provide comprehensive expertise and resources to support and facilitate a wide variety of programs and services for citizens and leaders. Funding for ACOG's programs and services comes from a variety of sources, including grants from federal and state agencies, as well as dues from member local governments. In 2023, approximately 75% of ACOG revenue came from federal sources, allowing us to provide many services at reduced or no charge. The total financial return to the region from ACOG programs in 2023 exceeded \$123 million.

PROGRAM AREAS

The Appalachian Council of Governments provide services through five program areas and two partner organizations:

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

GRANTS SERVICES

PLANNING SERVICES

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

SENIOR ADVOCACY

APPALACHIAN DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

WORKLINK

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Economic Development Program supports regional community and economic development through professional planning, grant support, and the delivery of InfoMentum, a national award-winning suite of services that includes customized GIS-based tools, web applications, research, and technical support. By providing assistance to communities and organizations in the six ACOG counties and beyond, the Economic Development Program strives to facilitate growth and development, improving the quality of life of our communities throughout the region.

2023 CAPITAL INVESTMENT *in the region*



46
announcements



\$1.6B
investment




3,851
jobs

INFOMENTUM


Whether promoting a site, a building, or an entire community, economic developers and strategic planners require timely, accurate, and geography-specific information in a quick and easily accessible format. The GIS-based mapping and data tools of ACOG's InfoMentum Online program give investing organizations a competitive advantage when attracting capital investment and jobs and supports overall community enhancement efforts throughout the region.



121
data layers
created




346
custom maps
developed



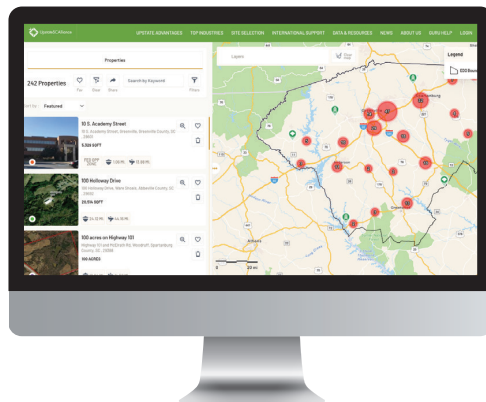
24,003
demographic
variables
available



940
reports
generated



94
data requests
fulfilled



ANDERSON

6
announcements
\$95.9M
investment
472
jobs

CHEROKEE

2
announcements
\$103M
investment
288
jobs

GREENVILLE

17
announcements
\$596M
investment
1,500
jobs

OCONEE

4
announcements
\$85.9M
investment
267
jobs

PICKENS

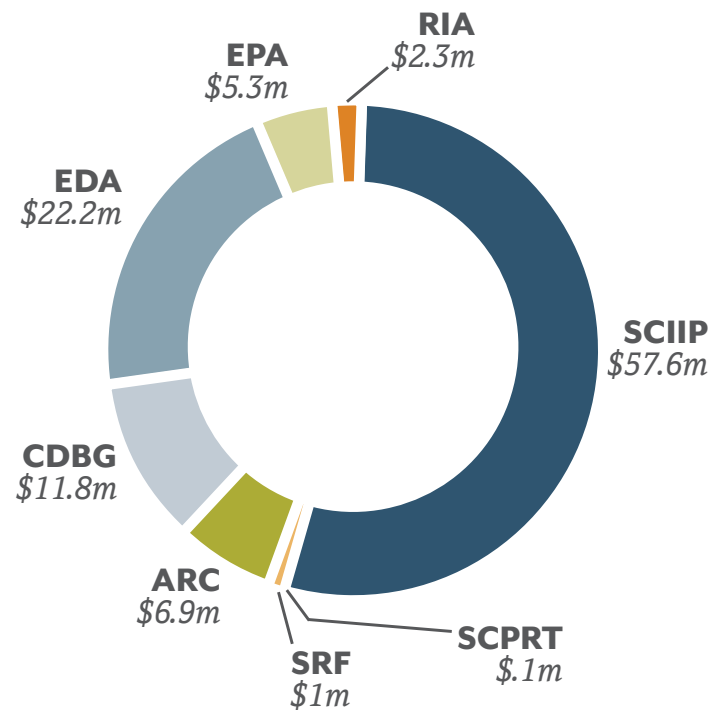
2
announcements
\$38.3M
investment
201
jobs

SPARTANBURG

15
announcements
\$672M
investment
1,123
jobs

GRANT SERVICES


The Grants Services team collaborates with local elected leaders, economic development officials, and state and federal agencies to identify, secure, and administer grant funds for a wide range of community and economic development activities. Staff brings expertise and the capacity to help communities receive grants and assists in building a strong, resilient regional economy. Services include assisting communities with planning and packaging grant applications to address community needs. Staff support includes structuring the application, organizing target area surveys, holding public hearings and completing the full application. The team also provides grant administration after they are awarded.



2023 REVIEW


53
 grant projects
 facilitated


101,159
 residents
 benefiting


62
 miles of water
 & sewer lines


1,550
 jobs created
 and retained

\$6.5M

Community Enrichment

Build a better future for communities
 through neighborhood revitalization

\$19.4M

Economic Opportunity

Maximize economic opportunities
 through infrastructure improvements

\$71.5M

Critical Infrastructure

Improve & develop critical water
 and wastewater infrastructure

\$9.2M

Natural & Cultural Assets

Leverage the economic potential of the
 region's natural and cultural heritage

\$106.8M

Total

Improve the region's economic and
 quality of life of its residents

*ARC: Appalachian Regional Commission; CDBG: Community Development Block Grant; RIA: SC Rural Infrastructure Authority;
 SCIIP: South Carolina Infrastructure Investment Program; EPA: Environmental Protection Agency; SRF: State Revolving Fund

PLANNING SERVICES

The Planning Services Program works together with communities to shape municipal plans and ordinances, resolve conflicts, and provide technical assistance addressing critical issues facing our member governments. Planning assistance services include training for local staff and advisory boards, supplemental staffing for zoning administration services, development or updates of neighborhood, comprehensive, and vision plans as well as development of planning ordinances.



7

comprehensive plan
and zoning updates



212

attendees at planning
education & training courses



250

Section 208 Water Quality
Conformance reviews



5

served as staff for
five communities



\$283,525

completed rehabilitation of
eight homes through
Anderson HOME Consortium



\$500,000

US 29 Transportation
Corridor Study in
Anderson County

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

Over the last year, staff worked with the ACOG Transportation Committee to update the region's Transportation Improvement Program, coordinated with SCDOT on the implementation of identified projects, and undertook a Transportation Corridor Study of US 29 in Anderson County to explore mobility options to better serve the community and traveling public.



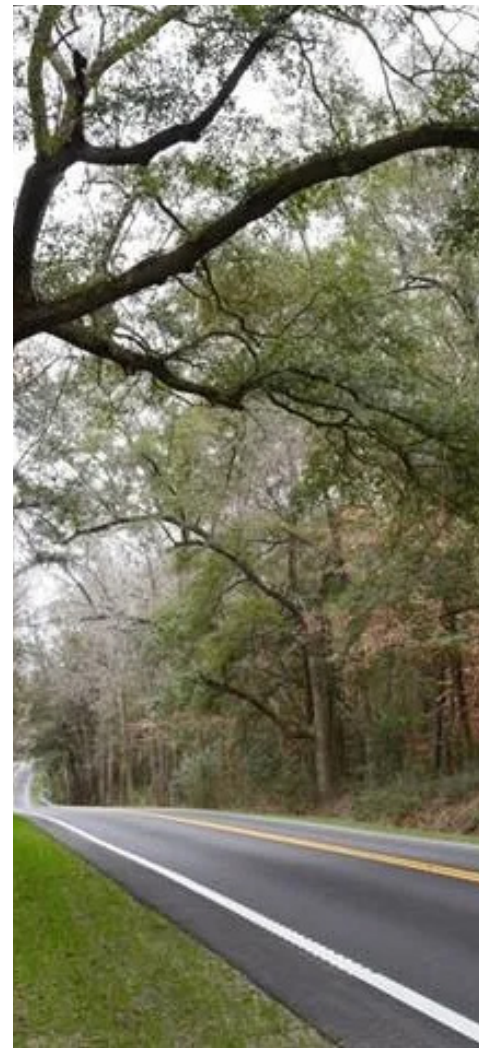
\$210,000

funding awarded to the
region for purchase of
human service transit vehicles



\$8.3M

funding to counties for
improving local roads &
construction of access roads



GOVERNMENT SERVICES

The Government Services Program offers technical assistance for local jurisdictions in the areas of personnel, utilities, finance and budgeting, and general administration issues. Services included serving as interim administrator for a community, facilitating staffing searches, and providing training for local government officials. Staff provides a range of services to meet the needs of our communities.

In 2023, when the City of Pickens' Administrator stepped down, ACOG staff stepped in as interim administrator and initiated the search for a new administrator. Staff was already providing regular administrative support to the Town which allowed them to continue working with ongoing projects without any delays due to the change. This has provided the town leaders the time necessary to conduct a thorough search for a new administrator that fits the needs of the community.



46

attendees at our seven-week Supervisory and Management training course



10

local governments received administrative services and support



5

communities asked us to facilitate planning retreats and orientations sessions



9

local governments received training on annexation, leadership, and harassment



8

communities were assisted with staffing searches and budgeting assistance



SENIOR ADVOCACY

The ACOG serves as the Area Agency on Aging (AAA) for the Appalachian Region to advocate for seniors. Senior Advocacy's goal is to empower older adults and adults with physical disabilities to maintain a high quality of life in their homes and communities. Programs provide information and support services that focus on the physical, mental, and relational health of seniors throughout the region.

Direct assistance includes staff working with the elderly to conduct assessments and determine the level of need for clients. Identified needs are then addressed through partnerships with providers for in-home and community based services. This includes arranging for group dining and home delivered meals, transportation, home care, and health promotion programs. Primary programs available to seniors are the Information and Referral Assistance, Family Caregiver, Home Care, Long Term Care Ombudsman, Nutrition Programs, and the State Health Insurance Program.

NUTRITION PROGRAM

The Nutrition Program and its partners provide nutritionally balanced meals to seniors. The meals are delivered to their homes or served at congregate meal sites.

\$5.79M

in funding for
senior services

43,497

seniors
served

357,254

hot, frozen, and shelf-stable
meals were delivered to
3,372 seniors

FAMILY CAREGIVER PROGRAM

The Family Caregiver Support Program is focused on preventing burnout and social isolation for caregivers of older adults and seniors raising children through the provision of respite services.

661

families received **\$955,371** of respite relief from caregiving responsibilities

HOME CARE PROGRAM

The Home Care Program connects older adults with caregiver services for everyday activities.

587

seniors received in-home help

INFORMATION AND REFERRAL

Information and Referral Assistance specialists provide information about resources available in the region for challenges faced by seniors and their caregivers.

24,085

seniors and caregivers' concerns and questions were answered by our specialists

3,527

seniors advised for Medicare enrollment

STATE HEALTH INSURANCE PROGRAM

The State Health Insurance Program (SHIP) provides up-to-date information on Medicare, supplements, and health insurance to older adults and their caregivers.

10,801

Seniors received information on making informed Medicare decisions through **64** events and direct contacts

OMBUDSMAN PROGRAM

The Ombudsman Program investigates and works to resolve problems or complaints affecting long-term care facility residents. Staff advocate for individuals living in nursing homes and assisted living facilities. For the safety of residents, investigation of complaints and the resolution process incorporates virtual platforms to keep the line of communication open between residents, their families, facilities, and our staff.

464

individual complaints responded to about quality of care issues

291

cases investigated concerning quality of care issues

1,467

staff visits to facilities in the region

VOLUNTEER OMBUDSMAN PROGRAM

Volunteer Ombudsmen visit facilities and provide a voice for longterm care residents. They provide information about resident rights, observe conditions, and advocate for residents. On average, 60% of long-term care residents have no visitors and friendly visits play an important role for those residents.

1,123

volunteer hours spent with long-term care residents in our region's facilities



APPALACHIAN DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

The Appalachian Development Corporation (ADC) is a nonprofit economic development lender established to support economic development in the Appalachian Region. Business lending programs include multiple financing options. The goal of ADC is to work in conjunction with local lending institutions to structure “gap-financing” loans that improves the applicant’s overall debt service requirements. The funding comes primarily from public dollars and the primary purpose is to leverage local investments to maximize the applicant’s resources to create jobs for our area. The ADC manages the Appalachian Loan Fund (ALF) on behalf of the ACOG. The ALF loan pool is capitalized by grants from the Appalachian Regional Commission and the State of South Carolina. The ALF is a source of low-cost, long-term, fixed-rate financing for businesses whose projects will result in the creation of permanent full-time jobs and leverage private sector investment.

3
loans closed

\$579,055
loaned

43
jobs created
or retained

\$463,050
private capital
leveraged



WORKLINK

WorkLink develops the link between employers and employees in Anderson, Oconee, and Pickens Counties through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). The Act is designed to help job seekers access education, training, and support services to succeed in the labor market. WorkLink partners with local service providers to administer programs for adults, dislocated workers, and youth. These services increase the quality and accessibility of programs provided to job seekers and employers. WorkLink’s goal is to ensure the local workforce development system is market-driven and meets the employment and training needs of employers and job seekers.

11,966
customer visits to
SC Works Centers

297
soft skills workshops
and activities

166
occupational
trainees

\$292,185
WIOA
scholarships

\$51,145
in grant funding to local employers
for Incumbent Worker Training



