



2015

NADO
INNOVATION AWARDS

The logo features a purple silhouette of a human head in profile, facing left. Inside the head, several green circles of varying sizes are arranged in a cluster, representing innovation or thought. To the right of the head is a large green circle containing the year '2015' in white. Below the head, the word 'NADO' is written in a purple serif font, followed by 'INNOVATION' in a large, bold, green sans-serif font, and 'AWARDS' in a smaller, purple sans-serif font to the right.



The National Association of Development Organizations' (NADO) annual Innovation Awards program has been acknowledging creative approaches to regional community and economic development since 1986. More than 1,600 projects have been honored through this program, which is open to all NADO member organizations.

The 2015 Innovation Award winners are making a difference in their regions through a variety of program areas including business and economic development, transportation, health and human services, emergency planning, technology and data, workforce development, among others. The award-winning projects are organized under categories that capture the nature of the innovative work they are achieving in their regions; contact information for each project is provided under each description for further information.

This awards program is made possible with support, in part, from the Appalachian Regional Commission (CO-13176-C16), the Ford Foundation (Grant # 0130-0301), the U.S. Economic Development Administration (Awards 04-79-06700 and 04-06-06694 from the Atlanta Regional Office, and 04-06-06694 from the Philadelphia Regional Office). Funding from these organizations should not be construed as an endorsement of any products, opinions, or services.

The photos throughout the report were provided by the organizations who received Innovation Awards in 2015. Photos have been placed next to the corresponding projects.



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Aging, Health, & Human Services

The **Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester Council of Governments (BCDCOG)** organized **Project STAND**, a four-month holistic approach to helping participants with the tools and knowledge to make better choices and turn their lives in a new direction. Participants make a commitment to remain drug-



and alcohol-free, are required to attend weekly AA/NA meetings, and meet with drug counselors for additional counseling sessions and random drug testing. The group meets three times a week at BCDCOG's facility, attends Jobs for Life, group counseling, and courses focused on healing and accountability for life choices past, present, and future. Those in need of a GED or skills training are referred to BCDCOG's partner agencies including the SC Works Center. Ultimately, Project STAND builds a stronger community by working with residents, local leaders, local churches, and the police department to improve citizens' lives.

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Medication-related errors endanger the lives and wellbeing of a high percentage of individuals, especially aging populations. The **Bluegrass Medication Management Program**, administered by the **Bluegrass Area Development District's Area Agency on Aging and Independent Living**, is designed to address these important safety and quality-of-life issues and prevent unnecessary and costly hospitalizations. The program, which uses the national evidence-based HomeMeds System, requires case managers to make in-home visits to undertake a complete medication review and analysis of any past medication-related illnesses. Placing these caregivers in the patient's home allows the staff to get a complete picture of the client's medications and medication use. Information collected during each visit is then entered into the HomeMeds System in order to generate a computerized medication risk assessment and alert process and a comprehensive and detailed medication report. If the report

reveals any medication-related alerts, a pharmacist is consulted to identify any serious threats. Since the implementation of the program, the agency has served a total of 357 clients, of which 38 percent revealed medication alerts.

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The Simpson County Economic Development District (EDD) commissioned the **Simpson County Health Care Zone Master Plan** as a result of Governor Phil Bryant's Mississippi Health Care Industry Zone Act (HB 1537) of 2012. The Simpson County EDD, with the support of the Cities of Magee and Mendenhall and Simpson County, contracted with **Central Mississippi Planning and Development District** to develop the master plan. This plan was important because there are two qualified health care zones in the county that need to work together rather than in competition. The Simpson County EDD utilized the Health Care Zone Master Plan as a two-pronged tool: first assessing target businesses, potential economic impacts, market analysis, and workforce demographics, then identifying physical locations for target and supporting businesses and land use plan and zoning ordinance amendments that allow location within the zones easier for health care related business development. It is unique in that it was funded by the local governments, not a private developer.

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Keystone Development, Incorporated, a nonprofit wing of the Johnson City Housing Authority, built the **Alan Street Veteran Apartments** with grant funding secured by **First Tennessee Development District (FTDD)** from the Tennessee Housing Development Agency and the Federal Home Loan Bank of Cincinnati.



The veterans living in the seven, one-bedroom apartments are participating in the Department of Housing and Urban Development's Veterans

Affairs Supportive Housing program, which combines Housing Choice Voucher rental assistance for homeless veterans with case management and clinical services provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs. Recognizing the need to provide much needed housing and case management services for homeless veterans, FTDD applied for and administered the grant funding that facilitated the construction of the Alan Street Apartments.

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The Green River Area Development

District (GRADD) provides more than 115,000 home delivered meals each year to 520 low-income older adults across the region, yet hundreds remain on the Meals on Wheels waiting list. To address this pressing need, GRADD developed **Senior Nutrition Initiatives**, which brought together local county governments, businesses, community organizations, and



individuals to find alternative sources of support for the region's most vulnerable citizens. In 2015, the fiscal courts in each of the seven area counties voted to appropriate a total of \$280,000 extra to add 175 older adults to the regional Meals on Wheels program. GRADD also worked with local partners to sponsor the fourth annual Stop Senior Hunger food drive, which generated more than four tons of food donated to stock the pantries of 369 area seniors with two weeks' worth of groceries. In addition, GRADD partnered with local churches to obtain funding for three months of meals for 52 additional seniors. Over the past year the Meals on Wheels waiting list has been cut by more than 50 percent.

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The **Kerr-Tar Area Agency on Aging**, a program of the **Kerr-Tar Regional Council of Governments**, designed the **Surfing the Silver Tsunami: A Boomer, Senior and Caregiver Expo** to serve as an outlet for numerous health screenings and vaccinations for senior citizens from five counties within the region. The agency planned, coordinated, promoted, and financially supported the Expo, which included securing the venue, arranging performances from all five counties, advertising the event, and coordinating volunteers. The Expo raised awareness of health services in the area, provided 60 individuals with flu shots, and discovered chronic conditions in three participants. The Kerr-Tar Area Agency on Aging has now partnered with Vance Granville Community College to provide classes in the Agency's Living Healthy series. The Expo also sparked the creation of two support groups, one for caregivers, and another for aging LGBTs.



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For the last five years, the **Lower Savannah Council of Governments (LSCOG)** has operated an Aging, Disability, and Transportation Resource Center (ADTRC) that provides integrated information and assistance with benefits counseling, family care-giving, and long-term care options. LSCOG has expanded the program through the **LSCOG ADTRC and Savannah River Site Retirees Association Partnership**. The Savannah River Site is a Department of Energy installation that has been one of the region's largest employers for decades, and its retirees live in all counties of the region. During the past year, the partnership has added a center to provide assistance with new benefits for SRSRA members. The SRSRA Resource Center is staffed by a part-time volunteer coordinator and a large and dedicated group of volunteers. Together the two organizations have been able to reach many more retirees than before, and at a recent celebration, U.S. Senator Lindsay Graham referred to the partnership as "unique in the country and worthy of replication!"

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After a newspaper article identified Northern Kentucky as “heroin ground zero,” **Northern Kentucky Area Development District** brought regional partners together to form the **Northern Kentucky Heroin Impact Response Task Force** in response to the area’s rising number of heroin overdoses. The mission of the task force, which includes a multi-disciplinary group of concerned consumers, professionals, and public officials, is to ensure that the people of Northern Kentucky will have access to life-saving and life-restoring resources for addiction. In 2013, the task force released a comprehensive plan of action and has since worked to implement it through trainings and monthly task force meetings. Recently, the efforts of the task force were influential in the passage of comprehensive heroin legislation through the Kentucky Legislature. The enacted legislation reflects many key priorities of the task force and greatly advances their work towards eradicating the heroin epidemic.

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Business Development, Financing, & Investing

In an effort to support economic development related to Ohio's Marcellus and Utica Shale Play, the **Buckeye Hills-Hocking Valley Regional Development District** (Buckeye Hills) convened necessary partners to gain buy-in on the **Utica Shale Real Estate Marketing Initiative** concept. The real estate project featured industrial, commercial, land, and building sites and properties that would be strategic for the shale industry expanding in the region. Buckeye Hills coordinated a Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping system as well as marketing collateral materials to present to industry leaders at key regional oil and gas symposiums. The Eastern Ohio Development Alliance Utica Shale Real Estate Effort was notable because it was a first-of-its-kind effort in Ohio's Appalachian region. Following the launch of the websites, development of the site-specific marketing tools, and six networking events with an average of 15-20 agents in attendance at each, measurable results include 47 good or high quality leads (received at or following the events). Sponsorship support was provided by AEP-Ohio, Buckeye Power, Colliers International, Appalachian Partners for Economic Growth, Ohio Mid-Eastern Government Association, Buckeye Hills, and Columbia Gas.



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Central Mississippi Planning and Development District (CMPDD) worked with the Town of Pelahatchie and a major regional employer, Multicraft International, to secure financing and additional industrial space for a new product line. The **Town of Pelahatchie—Multicraft International Expansion** project facilitated the redevelopment and renovation of available space in the Pelahatchie Industrial Park. CMPDD worked to secure grant funding and convened local officials, the mayor of Pelahatchie, Knox Ross, Jr., and the CEO of Multicraft International to develop a plan for the expansion. Community Development Block Grant funding, a grant from the U.S Economic Development Administration, and local funds were used for building and infrastructure improvements. As a result of CMPDD's assistance, Multicraft International has committed to hiring 50 additional full-time employees, and the building is ready for production of the new product line.

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The strong partnerships with Warren County and the Warren County Economic Development Commission, enabled the **City of Norwalk** to offer incentives to commercial and industrial projects in an attempt to attract new business development. Through these incentives, the city attracted and facilitated the opening of its largest private employer, Loffredo in 2014. Loffredo recently decided to expand its operations in Norwalk to add **Produce Innovations** and reached out to local officials for assistance. The public-private partnership initiated to facilitate Loffredo's expansion amounted to a three-month process that included a rezone, a negotiated development agreement, an urban renewal amendment, site plan approval, and the issuance of industrial revenue bonds. Due to the partnership's quick action, the Produce Innovations 45,000-square-foot facility is currently under construction, and Loffredo is hiring an additional 145 employees.



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Three years after constructing an 111,000-square-foot bakery and distribution center in Oakwood, King's Hawaiian announced the expansion of the facility in March 2014. **King's Hawaiian Expansion Project** created 126 new jobs and leveraged \$48,000,000 in private investment. In early 2014, the company decided to expand the facility with three new production lines. King's Hawaiian committed to create 481 new jobs over five years and bring over \$25 million in private investment for the project. **Georgia Mountains Regional Commission** (GMRC) compiled necessary data and information, completed narratives, and submitted the three grant applications that were utilized for the project. Additionally, GMRC utilized a successful working relationship with the municipality, development authority, and the state agency personnel to determine the project scope and priorities and match them with funding opportunities. The project's accomplishments include the creation of job opportunities, improved regional competitiveness, and diversification of the local economy.



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Business leaders, government agencies, nonprofit, educational, political leaders, and local community leaders united at **Juneau Economic Development Council's** (JEDC) fourth **Innovation Summit** to cultivate ideas and develop strategies to strengthen the key industries in Southeast Alaska. The two-day summit was developed to engage these stakeholders



around concepts of collaboration, shared values, and innovation relevant to the unique business climate for the region's industry clusters. JEDC facilitates regular meetings of cluster working groups as a forum for advancing industry-specific initiatives in Southeast Alaska. The Innovation Summit facilitated interaction between each of the region's key economic cluster working groups, shared best practices, and promoted cross-fertilization of innovative ideas between clusters. In addition, the summit featured presentations from world-class keynote speakers and speeches from the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, and Native Alaskan leaders. Relationships formed and ideas exchanged at the Innovation Summit have led to a wide variety of new business development, industry collaboration, and peer-to-peer mentoring throughout the region.

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A vacant healthcare facility in Clinton, MO, was purchased at a discounted rate with the stipulation it be repurposed for education. State Fair Community College was interested in using the location for a satellite campus, and after funding was secured, renovations were underway. The **Truman Regional Education Center** (TREC) was made possible when the **Kaysinger Basin Regional Planning Commission** (KBRPC) created the Community Association of Regional Enterprises (CARE) as a 501(c)(3) entity to apply for grants for which KBRPC was not eligible. KBRPC has provided the management and oversight of the operations of CARE. All grants, loans, and meetings were conducted by KBRPC personnel on behalf of CARE. In addition to establishing the education portion, the lower level of the facility was also renovated to include a business incubator which hosts the KBRPC offices as well as five other businesses. The incubator has created over 25 jobs and assisted 12 businesses. Each semester, between 400 and 600 students frequent this facility, which has created over 60 jobs locally.

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The **Lee-Russell Council of Governments (LRCOG)** provided gap financing to a local project that was unlikely to receive conventional financing from a bank, supporting **CyberZone: A Gap Financing Success Story**. CyberZone, a laser tag and arcade facility located in Opelika, Alabama, is ranked in the top five laser tag facilities in the nation in terms of square footage and number of vests for participating players. It is also the largest arcade in the state of Alabama. After two years of successful operation, and with working capital from LRCOG, CyberZone was able to fund the construction of BounceZone, which opened in May 2015 in a renovated grocery store that was previously an eyesore in downtown Opelika. With the additional working capital, CyberZone has expanded its entertainment offerings, doubled its employment, developed an online booking system for parties, and set up a kitchen to offer refreshments in-house. As of May 2015, CyberZone was in the process of trademarking in order to begin franchise sales within the next year.

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The **Northern Maine Development Commission**, in partnership with the Aroostook Partnership for Progress, organized and secured funding for the **Northern Maine Forest Products Industry Cluster**. The



NMFPIC includes firms and organizations that support primary and secondary wood products manufacturing and a broad spectrum of forest ecosystem services. This includes geographically concentrated, interconnected economic activities and linkages to customers and suppliers that will be especially important to the many small companies that service forest-harvesting operations in Aroostook.

Private timber contractors, equipment sales, equipment services, fuel suppliers, and banks are just some of the interconnected businesses that are positively impacted by the NMFPIC. Attraction of capital, value-added processing, management training, joint R&D, and technical standard setting are key focus areas of the NMFPIC.

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SEDA-Council of Governments (SEDA-COG) serves as the project manager for **CORE PA Global**, which is supported by Make It In America funding. The targeted 53-county region was selected in order to focus the federally-funded portion of the initiative on rural parts of the Commonwealth where public and private resources for economic, industrial, and workforce development activities are often scarce. CORE PA Global was created to bring rural areas together to attract foreign direct investment and re-shoring prospects of the CORE region of Pennsylvania. The robust work plan includes international and domestic show participation, familiarization tours, international prospect trips, training programs and quarterly meetings for economic development partners, website, social media, and marketing material development. Numerous partners are involved CORE PA Global, including five other Economic Development Districts, state agencies, a foreign trade zone, and many local and regional chambers of commerce, industrial development corporations, and regional marketing groups. Its trade show and other activities have generated hundreds of investment and re-shoring leads since the initiative began in fall 2013.



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Small businesses often cite a number of challenges to launch and grow their businesses. Among the often mentioned hurdles—financing, regulatory requirements, and workforce issues—businesses also report a lack of available market data to help identify and market effectively to their target audience. To alleviate this, the **Sonoma County Economic Development Board** (EDB) organized the **Sonoma County Business Development Tools** program to offer free, customized market research to help local businesses start and grow in Sonoma County through industry reports,



customized demographics, real estate site location information, and targeted marketing lists. The Business Development Tools program has provided 430 unique assists to local companies, utilizing 998 customized market research tools. EDB staff have completed 165 business assists in 2013 and 181 in 2014, a 9 percent increase, year-over-year. The EDB has worked with 60 businesses in the first quarter of 2015, which is on track to meet or exceed annual totals. The program is funded through the Transit Occupancy Tax paid by visitors to Sonoma County staying in local lodging facilities.

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PACE (Property Assessed Clean Energy), a financing tool used to assist commercial and industrial businesses (including agri-business) with improvements that substantially increase energy efficiency, has allowed businesses to make fixture improvements without the upfront capital outlay. Originally facilitated by the **Southwest Regional Development Commission (SRDC)**, PACE has produced two completed retrofit projects. The first provided Blue Line Travel Center in Worthington, Minnesota, with upgrades to their indoor and outdoor lighting, saving energy and money. The second provided energy efficient upgrades for assisted living and senior care locations in Parkwood Place in Mountain Lake, Minnesota. The goal of the project and the region has been to not only produce more energy than it consumes, but to continue to reduce the overall consumption of energy. The PACE program also helps to stimulate the local economy by providing work for contractors and installers of energy systems. Funding was received through a combination of American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds through the Minnesota Department of Commerce, and loans from the Rural Electric Economic Development Fund.

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Three Rivers CDE, a subsidiary of **Three Rivers Planning and Development District**, recently received a \$25 million allocation from the Department of Treasury through the New Market Tax Credit (NMTC) program which allocates tax credit authority to CDE's on a competitive basis, ultimately spurring development in distressed areas. The **Three Rivers NMTC Allocation** is the first

time such an award allocation has gone to an entity like Three Rivers. Funds for the program are raised from private investors, who can utilize the tax credits allocated to Three Rivers. The CDE can make loans and other investments to businesses in eligible areas that lack adequate access to capital, particularly in rural areas. The funds raised will be utilized to help facilitate new manufacturing development and other high-community-impact projects in low-income areas of rural Mississippi.

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The Alaska Business Retention and Expansion Initiative, a collaborative effort between the **University of Alaska Center for Economic Development** (UACED) and the State of Alaska Division



of Economic Development (DED), was designed to introduce the practice of business retention and expansion (BR&E) to communities statewide—a core economic development practice that was largely unknown in Alaska until recently. The initiative provides communities with intensive multi-day trainings, an implementation plan, access to Executive Pulse BR&E software, and ongoing programmatic support. The three-day trainings assume no prior knowledge of BR&E, as many practitioners and stakeholders have not had exposure to it. The curriculum includes an introduction to BR&E, the mechanics of running a program, training on the Executive Pulse software (which tracks survey results and business contacts), and the development of an implementation plan. Groups representing 11 communities throughout the state, ranging from populations of 1,200 to 100,000, received the training and began their own BR&E programs as a result. These communities receive ongoing technical assistance from the DED-UACED team through regularly scheduled conference calls and follow-up sessions.

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Communicating Results & Public Engagement

After 46 years in operation, the New River Valley Planning District Commission board of directors recognized the need to change the name of the organization to better represent services offered and its role serving the region. The board chose **New River Valley Regional Commission** for two purposes: it removed 'planning' since the organization offers services well beyond planning and included 'regional' because that is the primary focus. The **Renaming and Branding of the New River Valley Regional Commission** has already helped decrease public confusion as local governments in Virginia have planning commissions for land use purposes. The new brand has helped create an excitement around the organization which is grounded in the new tagline, "Strengthening the Region through Collaboration." The fresh new logo conveys the innovative and sometimes bold strategies the organization is known to champion in leading the region collaboratively.

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Telling the Regional Government Story Differently is a coordinated marketing and outreach effort to enhance communications to regional stakeholders throughout **Region Nine Development Commission's** nine-county service area including elected officials, local businesses, entrepreneurs, citizens, and other organizational partners. The effort, almost entirely developed and implemented in-house, consisted of increased activity on organizational social media accounts such as Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn, the distribution of a monthly e-newsletter, the creation of informative videos about the organization and its programs, and the development of more user-friendly, readable planning documents that incorporate info-graphics and visual storytelling. In addition, Region Nine uses their robust communication network to advertise the work of their regional partners. As a result of this effort, local stakeholders have been able to gain a better understanding of the value of Region Nine, its partnerships, and the programs it administers.

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Inspired by the 2014 NADO Photo Contest, and as a follow-up to a “This Place Matters” project conducted during Historic Preservation Month, the **River Valley Regional Commission (RVRC)** ran the **Show Your Love of the River Valley Photo Contest** to showcase places of importance to people in the region. Entries were accepted in four categories: Our Towns, Historic Sites, Scenery, and Life in the River Valley. Additionally, online voting was conducted on the RVRC Facebook page and the photo with the most likes received the People’s Choice Award. The project helped create awareness about historic sites, downtowns, natural resources, and the places people consider important and beautiful in the River Valley. The contest also served as a means to further promote the RVRC’s mission to increase tourism and other economic development endeavors in the region, increase brand awareness, and build a Facebook audience.

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Three Rivers Regional Commission (TRRC) launched the **Three Rivers Regional Commission’s Updated Website** which provides a wealth of information about TRRC’s services, staff contact information, and an online form to request services. In 2013, TRRC coordinated with 365 Degree Total Marketing, a Georgia marketing firm, for the purpose of gaining more positive exposure on the internet. TRRC is comprised of four departments including Planning, Aging, Governmental Services (Transportation), and Workforce Investment. The organization needed a website that could help to break down the various levels of services provided without losing the interest of, or confusing, information seekers. The updated website has had a tremendous digital impact on the agency. Additionally, impact/branding cards are used as a source of advertising and marketing at exhibitor tables during conferences and other public events.

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Emergency Preparedness & Recovery

The **Apalachee Regional Planning Council** developed and conducted a regional full-scale terrorism exercise for the Region 2/North Florida Regional Domestic Security Task Force. Known as **Operation Deep Freeze**, planning for this large, multifaceted event took over six months. Council staff facilitated a discussion-based tabletop exercise to prepare for the



full-scale exercise, which took place in multiple locations around the region. The Big Bend Regional Bomb Squad and other regional first responders collaborated to respond to a simulated explosion at the Florida State University National High Magnetic Field Laboratory. Actors played the role of victims badly burned by liquid nitrogen and had to be rescued from the facility. Meanwhile, the regional Urban Search and Rescue team deployed to an offsite demolished building. This was also the first regional exercise to use the North Florida Fusion eXchange, the region's intelligence sharing organization comprised of a team of highly specialized analysts.

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The **Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester Council of Governments (BCDCOG)** sponsored the **Study to Assess and Mitigate Maritime Traffic and Military Activities along the Cooper River and Charleston Harbor**. The Charleston Harbor and its tributaries generate \$7 billion in economic output including 50,700 port-related jobs, of which 24,700 are directly related to the physical movement of cargo. In addition, there is a significant military presence in the region with Joint Base Charleston's Air Force, Navy, and Army facilities, as well as the Naval Weapons Station. Due to the incredible significance of the port to the regional economy, the military, and the safety of its residents, BCDCOG convened a representative group of regional leaders to evaluate the port's existing operations, anticipate impacts to industry due to a closure scenario, and identify possible mitigation strategies. Published in March 2015, the study provides regional leaders with a greater understanding of the impacts a closure

scenario would create for local maritime industries. It also includes a formalized communication plan to aid in alerting all maritime businesses in the event of a potential security threat and port closure.

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Following the 2011 Bastrop County Complex fire which destroyed over 34,000 acres and 1,700 structures, the **Capital Area Council of Governments'** (CAPCOG) Solid Waste Program held disaster debris management workshops to introduce the tools, training, and resources required to adequately address the significant challenges of managing debris after a catastrophic incident. Identifying the need for a common approach to **Regional Disaster Debris Management Plan Development** across the region, CAPCOG set out to create a standardized approach that could be used by each county and would be valuable to the Regional Solid Waste Program. From June 2014 through May 2015, CAPCOG completed the master template for a county disaster debris management plan, established a working group of representatives from each of the 10 counties, facilitated three disaster debris management workshops, and is working with each county to finalize individual plans.

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Following a devastating tornado in April 2014, the **Central Arkansas Planning and Development District, Inc.** (CAPDD) and its partners led recovery efforts in the small cities of Mayflower and Vilonia through the



Faulkner County Disaster Recovery Project. The project had many focuses: opening communication channels, development of economic and community capacity, funding aggregation, and education of the municipalities' staff and local leadership. CAPDD also hired a Disaster Recovery Manager and two administrative staff to serve as the everyday "boots on the ground." The main

focus of the project was coined the “Recovery Trifecta” which encompassed citizen-based Recovery Plans, urban designs that showcased the citizens’ vision of the city as shown in the recovery plans, and codes and zoning that were based from the urban designs.

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The **North Country Council** initiated **Business Disaster Planning** throughout the region to identify, analyze, and prioritize natural and man-made threats to area businesses in order to reduce economic loss and recovery time in the event of a disruption. An initial business survey determined that 33 percent of local small businesses could only afford to stay closed for two days after a disaster event. North Country Council conducted individual interviews with approximately 20 businesses, held 25 meetings and other public events, and provided additional counseling on business continuity planning and preparedness tools. In total, the project engaged over 300 small business owners throughout the region. North Country Council also developed a unique risk management tool that helps businesses identify the disasters they are most vulnerable to and determine investments the businesses could make to mitigate for future disruption.



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After seeing the negative impact that past disaster events had on local businesses and the regional economy as a whole, **South Central Tennessee Development District (SCTDD)** instituted the **SCTDD Regional Disaster Preparedness and Business Resiliency Planning Program**. An initial survey of companies revealed that many did not have a comprehensive disaster resiliency plan in place to address immediate post-disaster issues such as employee safety, communication, building reconstruction, and post-disaster operation. To address this critical situation, SCTDD partnered with local and state emergency management agencies, the University of Tennessee Center for Industrial Services, and other regional stakeholders to develop a locally specific approach to disaster planning. Using funding from the U.S. Economic Development Administration, SCTDD prepared an “operation template” which outlines numerous steps that companies would need to implement in order to effectively continue operations after a disaster event. In addition, two workshops were conducted in the SCTDD region to train business leaders on continuity planning and the operation template.

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The **Disaster Recovery / “High Availability”** project is a regional initiative between the **Three Rivers Planning and Development District** and 11 counties in Mississippi. Once implemented, the project will be an advanced, state-of-the-art disaster recovery solution that will enable Three Rivers and its partners to maintain a primary computer system at the Three Rivers Data Center in Tupelo, MS and a second, disaster recovery (or “mirrored”) computer system at a secondary data center (owned by CSpire) in Starkville, Mississippi. Three Rivers will provide the up-front funding and employ its experience and expertise in relation to hazard mitigation, information technology, and collaborative regional partnerships. This proactive approach to disaster recovery will allow Three Rivers and its partners to be more disaster resilient from an information technology standpoint, significantly decreasing the amount of downtime following a disaster event.

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In September 2014, the **Santee-Lynches Regional Council of Governments** (SLRCOG) suffered a serious electrical fire at its headquarters office building that displaced the entire staff and threatened to stymie the entire organization's momentum and critical work on behalf of the region. One local agency, the Santee-Wateree Regional Transportation Authority (SWRTA), went above and beyond in offering to shift its footprint within its recently renovated headquarters building and sacrifice some of its flexibility to accommodate the staff of SLRCOG. By **Adapting in the Face of Crisis: The Santee-Lynches RCOG Fire and Recovery**, the task of transitioning SLRCOG operations to SWRTA was accomplished within three days of the fire. Co-location of SWRTA and SLRCOG, though temporary, has initiated several collaboration opportunities with regard to transit and transportation planning. Additional customer and visitor traffic generated by SLRCOG has elevated SWRTA and the Clyburn Intermodal Transportation Center as assets within the community.

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Environment & Sustainability

The emerald ash borer is an invasive insect that has destroyed trees in 99 counties in Iowa, leading to economic devastation and an environmental threat. The **MIDAS Council of Governments** assembled a team of partners to produce **Emerald Ash Borer - Community Tree Management Plans** to address the problem. MIDAS and partners, including the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, scheduled workshops in each of the region's six member counties, inviting both the public and local officials to learn about topics including threats to trees and tree management plans. Participants' surveys showed the workshops were helpful, and other counties in Iowa are now beginning to replicate them. Funding was obtained from the State of Iowa Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP) program and a local match by partners.

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Realizing the negative impact hazardous waste is having on the Lake Superior watershed, the **Northwest Regional Planning Commission** received U.S. Environmental Protection Agency funding to implement the **Hazardous Waste Collection, Education, and Mapping Project** under the Agency's Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. During the project, four Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) collection sites were constructed, three of which are located on Native American Reservations. Over 40 tons of toxins were removed from the Lake Superior Basin and 24 residential HHW collection events were. In addition, a GIS data layer that identifies the locations of businesses and industry that contain hazardous material was developed for emergency preparedness and disaster mitigation purposes and a video titled "The Truth about Household Hazardous Waste and E-Waste in the Environment" was created and disseminated to regional partners and local schools. The project has resulted in a safer, cleaner, and more livable Lake Superior Basin, and more increased awareness among residents and school children of the damage hazardous contamination can have on their local environment.

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Delta Bioenergy is a project facilitated by Communities Unlimited to form a wealth creation value chain around local production of feedstocks and processing of biodiesel for local consumption.

Southeast Arkansas Economic Development District (SEAEDD) has worked with other regional and local partners as part of the

Arkansas Green Energy Network to grow this project from a single, local micro-refinery that processes bio-products into usable biofuels in the town of DeWitt, Arkansas to a region-wide strategy for local wealth creation and long term economic development around biofuel. SEAEDD has facilitated planning activities, worked to secure funding for the project, and provided technical support from the solid waste district on the recycling portion of the project. To date, 2,500 gallons of waste vegetable oil has been collected from 15 local businesses, 11 participating farmers are growing over 100 acres of the oilseed camelina, and 1,500 gallons of biodiesel have been produced at the micro-refinery and used in city vehicles and farming equipment.

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The Waccamaw Regional Council of Governments

(WRCOG) was the lead facilitator of the **Murrells Inlet Watershed Plan**. The agency helped establish a steering committee consisting of representatives from local county governments, nonprofit organizations, engineering consultants, and local research institutes. WRCOG solicited input from several external stakeholders from across the state and region to obtain information



about previous research studies and potential long-term funding sources. WRCOG utilized the assistance of Coastal Carolina University and Earthworks to analyze available water quality data and to create sub-watershed scale maps of Murrells Inlet. This information provided the baseline data necessary to assess water quality conditions in the estuary. The resulting watershed plan document is supported by detailed scientific data collected by the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control and other agencies, while also structured to be utilized by the county storm water departments, local businesses, and the general public.

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Infrastructure

The **Lowcountry Council of Governments** facilitated the creation and development of the **Lowcountry Regional Water System**. This newly formed regional system was the culmination of many studies, meetings, and strategic planning involving elected officials, municipal employees, lawyers, engineers, and regulators. This effort has increased the overall viability of the individual systems and bonding capacity is increased for future water and wastewater projects. The results have included shared and upgraded infrastructure, higher quality and quantity of source water, improved training and access to certified operators, economies of scale and reduced cost by pooling staff and procurement, improved managerial effectiveness, and accelerated paths to solving compliance and customer service issues.



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Marshall County, Mississippi was the applicant for the **Public Infrastructure Improvements** on behalf of Roxul, Inc. to secure funding for water, sewer, wastewater, gas, and access road improvements for the first U.S. site of Rockwool International, a global company headquartered in Denmark. The **Northeast Mississippi Planning and Development District** was the liaison agency between the State of Mississippi and Marshall County, Mississippi in obtaining funding through a Community Development Block Grant and Mississippi's Economic Development Highway Program Grant. The company invested over \$165 million and created 134 jobs, exceeding the projected 100 positions. The company runs two twelve-hour shifts daily and may expand, bringing additional benefit on top of the secondary job creation it has spurred.

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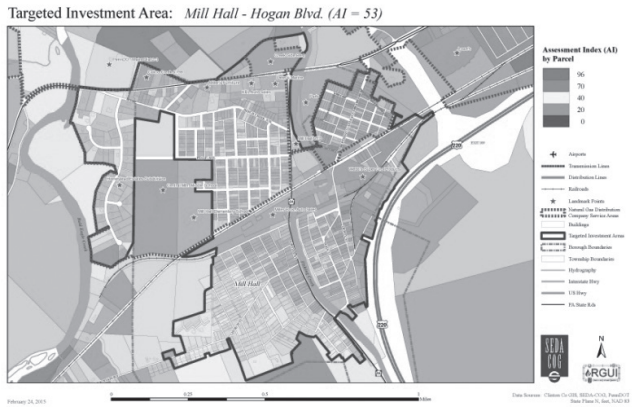
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The **Community Improvements to Increase Economic Stability**, or **CITIES Program**, was developed by the **Omaha-Council Bluffs Metropolitan Area Planning Agency (MAPA)** to provide a funding mechanism, to be leveraged by other community resources, to support infrastructure/public facilities, beautification, and housing (nonprofit or governmental) improvements throughout rural Pottawattamie County, Iowa. The CITIES program allows communities to continue to pursue local economic development activities while maintaining essential infrastructure needed to provide basic city services, which is imperative in small communities where the rising costs of providing basic services and infrastructure upkeep costs are particularly pronounced. The CITIES program addresses the Iowa West Foundation funding priorities of economic development in rural communities in the area, by growing the tax base. MAPA partnered with the Western Iowa Development Association to provide administration for the program, delivered technical assistance in rural towns, administer grant applications, and assist the Organizational Committee Governing Board. The long-term vision for the project is to improve and sustain the region's communities of all sizes to provide a home of which residents are proud.

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SEDA-Council of Governments developed the **Regional Gas Utilization Initiative**, a pilot project to identify key investments in Centre, Clinton, and Mifflin counties that will help sustain existing economic activity and facilitate the expansion of new activity by providing increased access to natural gas utility service and to establish a decision-making body to fund and construct needed



infrastructure development on a continuing basis. This project encourages job growth and business expansion by identifying targeted investment areas in the region where existing potential users are clustered closely to maximize the benefit of providing gas service. New natural gas service can support future development in the areas where previous investments in infrastructure can most effectively support it, creating a cost advantage to support existing industry and facilitate the development of new industry that pays family-sustaining wages.

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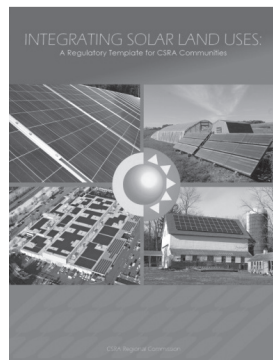
Local Government

In January 2015, immediately preceding the start of a two-year state legislative cycle, the **Catawba Regional Council of Governments** organized and hosted the first **Catawba Regional Elected Officials Forum**. This was the first time that elected officials from all levels of government throughout the region gathered to discuss issues and topics that affect quality of life, economic development, and government services. The forum included short presentations by state representatives and senators, along with County Council chairs. Catawba Regional COG was the organizer of this event, generating interest and support throughout its four member counties and over 30 units of local government and school districts. In the Catawba Region, two counties are growing rapidly, and two counties have little to no growth. The discussion united elected officials as they vetted common problems, solutions, and issues. Over 100 elected officials participated in the event, including state senators, state representatives, county councils, city councils, school board members, and other elected officials, as well as members of the COG Board from the private and higher education sectors.

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Due to an increasing interest to construct solar energy generation facilities throughout the region, the **Central Savannah River Area Regional Commission (CSRA)** developed a comprehensive planning and regulatory document for local and county governments: **Integrating Solar Land Uses: A Regulatory Template for CSRA Communities**. The document provides a regulatory analysis and a model ordinance to educate CSRA elected officials, staff, and residents on the construction of solar generation facilities in codes, both on the utility scale and for personal use. The development of the regulatory template not only educates local communities on the development of solar energy infrastructure but also encourages them to consider solar production as a means to supplement the local economy and provide a source of clean energy to the region.

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Listing a property on both the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register for Historic Places is a complex, monumental task which requires a diverse skill set and a minimum time commitment of a year just to complete the nomination form. The Virginia Farm Bureau and Caroline County reached out to the **George Washington Regional Commission (GWRC)** for assistance in the **nomination of “The Meadow,” Birthplace of Secretariat, to the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places.** The designation of The Meadow, which is now home to the Meadow Event Park which hosts the Virginia State Fair and equestrian events, was especially complicated given its nature as a discontinuous district and the multiple criteria needed for approval. GWRC assembled a team of staff and volunteers including a Secretariat historian, a historic preservation expert, a planner with historic preservation and photography skills, and a GIS specialist to complete the application. As a result of the team’s efforts, The Meadow was placed on both the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register in 2015.

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The **Middle Georgia Regional Commission (MGRC)** has developed a service model that leverages its existing staff and investment in technology resources to provide high quality websites for its member local governments and partner agencies. Using free, open-source website development and content management platforms and in-house development capabilities, MGRC provides comprehensive website development and support services at a significantly reduced cost, enabling member governments and partner agencies with limited resources to achieve a quality web presence in support of their economic development and community engagement initiatives. The **Regional Website Service Program** provides member local governments and partner agencies with high-quality websites that improves the competitiveness of the Middle Georgia region for economic development projects and enhances local governments’ ability to inform and engage its citizenry.

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Behind every local government service, there are budgets, payrolls, invoices, timekeeping, and many more workflows to keep it running smoothly. The **Southern Georgia Regional Commission** (SGRC) developed the **Local Government Finance Software Suite** that delivers several advantages to local governments over traditional one-size-fits-all software packages. SGRC's software suite includes modules such as general ledger, payroll, accounts payable, business license, property tax, daily payments, utilities billing, and juror payments and was written entirely by SGRC's software developers. All business is done through highly secure transactions with servers located within the SGRC offices and backed up throughout each day. While SGRC funded the entirety of the initial development costs, SGRC's investment is recovered through resale of this software and components of the suite to participating local governments.

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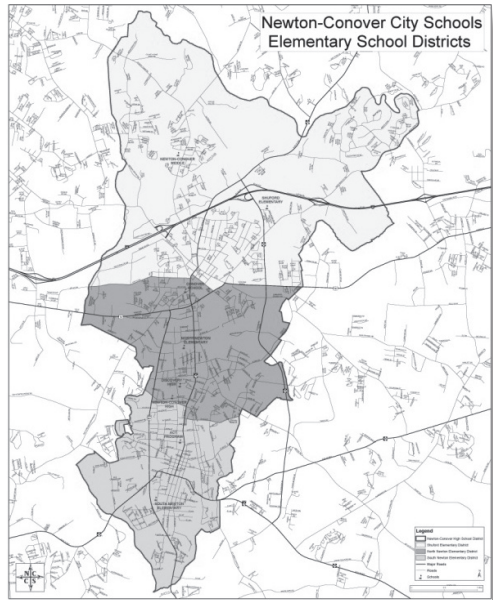
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In partnership with the North Carolina Association of Regional Councils of Government, the **Piedmont Triad Regional Council** developed the **CDBG Handbook** for the State of North Carolina to assist local governments and sub-grantees in the development, implementation, and administration of local public facility infrastructure and economic development projects funded through the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program. The handbook was created to provide a technically accurate guide—complete with best practices in community development projects using CDBG funds and is intended to serve as a resource and training manual for non-entitlement community staff leaders who are seeking funds to build infrastructure for enhanced community development. Over 50 handbooks have been distributed statewide since April 2015. The handbooks have been used to administer state economic development and housing grants and for planning for new water and sewer grants.

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In summer 2014, the Newton-Conover School System asked the **Western Piedmont Council of Governments (WPCOG)** for technical assistance in creating several redistricting options that would help alleviate student overcrowding at Shuford Elementary and better utilize building capacity at North Newton and South Newton Elementary Schools. The **Newton-Conover School Student Growth Estimation Model (NCGEM)** was created by WPCOG to project student enrollments at the three elementary schools based on the redistricting options presented to the Newton-Conover School



Board, as well as to project enrollments at Newton-Conover Middle, Newton-Conover High, and Discovery High. Using Geographic Information System (GIS) technology, the NCGEM produced forecasts of student population growth based on its analysis of selected growth indicators. Inputs into the model include the projected number of new housing units, current student enrollments, grade retention rates, birth rates, dropout rates, land use, and economic conditions. Student enrollments were projected through the 2021 – 22 school year. The new elementary school district boundaries are effective for the 2015-16 school year. Creating a student growth estimation model for the school district also provides the Newton-Conover School System with better tools for planning and forecasting student growth and future demand for school facilities.

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Physical Redevelopment

A Brownfields Area-Wide Planning Grant was awarded to **Central Florida Regional Planning Council** by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for the East Lake Parker-West North Combee area to develop a comprehensive plan and implementation strategies for brownfield remediation and redevelopment. At the heart of the 57-acre project site is a 60-year old power generation plant surrounded by a blighted neighborhood. The **Central Florida Regional Planning Council Areawide Plan** will identify reuse plans for the catalyst site as well as improvements for the surrounding area. The goal of developing the plan is to draw attention to the needs of the impacted community and to direct future public and private investment in the project site and surrounding area. The plan also provides a foundation for future assessment, cleanup, and reuse of brownfield properties throughout the region to promote area wide revitalization for economic development.

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The **East Central Planning and Development District (ECPDD)** worked with the City of Philadelphia to locate available funding for the **Philadelphia Log Cabin Restoration** to reconstruct a log cabin that was destroyed by an F-5 tornado in 2011. The log cabin was located in Northside Park and was a designated Mississippi Landmark. Prior to the tornado it had been used as a



community center. With assistance from the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, the log cabin was reconstructed using as many original logs as could be salvaged. The city also was able to save the wagon wheel light fixtures and stored them until the project could be reconstructed. ECPDD prepared the grant application and worked with the City and the Department of Archives and History to coordinate the necessary activities required for the project.

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The Dannenberg Department Store was an institution in downtown Macon from the time it opened in 1875 until it closed its doors in 1965, remaining vacant for the following decades. In 2008, Macon and Bibb County were hit hard by a series of tornadoes, creating an opportunity for the City of Macon to apply for a total of \$1.5 million in disaster recovery funds through the Community Development Block Grant program. The **Middle Georgia Regional Commission** took on the task of serving as the grant writer and administrator for this CDBG project unlike any other to be funded in the state—one that would lend the total sum of the grant to a private developer for the purpose of removing slum and blight, and which would in turn be repaid to the city for the purpose of establishing a revolving loan fund for future downtown revitalization. The **Historic Dannenberg Building Revitalization** project led to 69 new loft developments in downtown Macon and three new retail spaces, totaling over 90,000 square feet of revitalized property in the urban core.



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When a proposal arose to realign a state route from downtown, community leaders grew concerned with the remaining historic properties in the City of Braselton. As a historic town on the National Register of Historic Places, the need to address dilapidated and unmarketable buildings led to the development of the Braselton Downtown Revitalization Plan. The **Northeast Georgia Regional Commission (NEGR)** partnered with the City to save the historic Braselton Brothers Store complex, a plan called the **Braselton Bros. Store Rehabilitation**. NEGR developed the project's concept and strategic planning, identified and applied for grant funding, and managed the project and its administration. The project resulted in the sensitive rehabilitation of a 29,000-square-foot historic property that created and retained 45 jobs with all rehabilitated office spaces being leased after completion. In April 2015, the Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation recognized the project with an award for "Excellence in Rehabilitation." It was funded by a Community Development Block Grant and local funds.

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The City of Guthrie, located in western Kentucky, is a small town full of rich cultural and historical significance; it was the point of entry into Kentucky for the Trail of Tears as well as many stagecoach lines in the 1800s. With a vision



that began with the Main Street director in the early 2000s, the **Pennyrile Area Development District** supported the redevelopment of the historic Jenkins Building into the new **Guthrie Transportation Museum and Welcome Center**. Pennyrile ADD played a supporting role in the development of the project, preparation of grant applications and acquisition of funding, and administration of the Community Development Block Grant funds. Pennyrile ADD has continued to promote the project regionally and statewide, while assisting the City of Guthrie in seeking funding sources to complete Phase III of the project. The Guthrie Transportation Museum and Welcome Center has received the Kentucky American Institute of Architects' "Merit Award" and the 2015 Architizer "A+ Award" for best architecture/preservation project in the world. The Guthrie Transportation Museum and Welcome Center serves as a local point of education for the vast transportation heritage that exists in Guthrie.

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The Northwest Piedmont Service Corps (organized under the **Piedmont Triad Regional Council**), the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and the Veteran's Administration National Cemetery Administration collaborated to restore more than 114 panel sections of wall at the Raleigh National Cemetery in Raleigh, North Carolina. The **HOPE Crew Project** brought together corps members and military veterans to gain hands-on preservation experience while rehabilitating a historic site. The project gave Corps members exposure



to masonry training techniques within the cemetery. The masonry training and supervision of the project was led by staff from the National Park Service's Historic Preservation Training Center and the masonry section staff. The Service Corps members, which included ten young adults and two U.S. veterans, were given the chance to embrace history and have a sense of pride and honor with the work they completed.

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The **SEDA-Council of Governments (SEDA-COG)** supported the redevelopment of a blighted brownfield site in downtown Lewistown into the **Mann Edge Terrace Elderly Housing Facility**. While not suitable for future industrial use, the Mifflin County Industrial Development Corporation (MCIDC) purchased the site as a community development project.



After considering housing developers, the MCIDC and the SEDA-COG Housing Development Corporation (HDC) agreed to collaborate. The SEDA-COG HDC is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation that was created for the purpose of managing affordable housing for the region's population that are on a fixed income. SEDA-COG assisted with the Downtown Master Plan that included redevelopment of the former Mann Edge site as a priority. Working with the MCIDC, the SEDA-COG HDC obtained Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection Agency's Act 2 Release of Liability Clearance, clearing the way for the developer to construct a residential apartment complex that meets all the environmental condition requirements.

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In 1996, the Governor's House program was created as a way to provide reasonably sized, affordable homes to income-qualified individuals and families. The **South Eastern Development Foundation (SEDF)**, staffed by the South Eastern Council of Governments (SECOG), is serving as the nonprofit housing developer of **SEDF's Governor's House Developments** in core neighborhoods in Sioux Falls with the assistance of multiple state and local partners. SEDF received a grant from the South Dakota Housing Development Authority to help defray the cost of attorney fees to obtain clear title to the lots. SECOG donated its commission for selling the Governor's House to SEDF to assist with purchasing appliances for the families. The homes are built by prison inmates in Springfield, South Dakota and moved onsite when completed. The program provides inmates with valuable job skills to better prepare them for life after prison. Putting three new houses into a neighborhood within two blocks of each other will help to stabilize the neighborhood and will likely spur surrounding improvements from other property owners.

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Planning & Economic Development

Recognizing the economic development challenges facing eastern Kentucky due in large part to the restructuring of the coal industry, Governor Steve Beshear and Representative Hal Rogers collaborated across party lines to develop an initiative to move eastern Kentucky forward. **Shaping Our Appalachian Region (SOAR)** brings numerous state, regional, and local stakeholders together to begin an honest dialogue and to work together to create a more hopeful future. Area Development Districts, including **Big Sandy Area Development District**, have been instrumental in engaging citizens, facilitating meetings, and assisting with the SOAR planning process. A SOAR Summit was held in late 2013 and attended by over 1,700 people. Working groups focused on 10 areas including business incubation, regional identity, infrastructure, health, tourism, agriculture, business recruitment, broadband, and youth have been established and meet regularly. A follow-up summit was held in May 2015 focused on commitment to action and saw 1,300 attendees convene keeping the momentum going forward. SOAR is leading efforts in diversifying the economy, opening doors to opportunities, and engaging a cross-section of citizens in action items that will change the direction of eastern Kentucky's economy.



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In partnership with Friends of Southwest Virginia, five Planning District Commissions (PDCs) – **Cumberland Plateau PDC**, **LENOWISCO PDC**, **Mount Rogers PDC**, **New River Valley Regional Commission**, and **West Piedmont PDC** – received funding from the first round of the Rural Jobs and Innovation Accelerator Challenge Program to initiate **Appalachian Spring: Southwest Virginia's Outdoor Recreation**



Initiative. Appalachian Spring has two primary goals: to identify, enhance, and connect eight major natural recreation areas to contribute to an overall

Southwest Virginia brand as a major outdoor recreation destination; and to develop an outdoor recreation industry that supports economic and community development throughout the region by improving overall quality of life and making the area more attractive to new and expanding businesses and industry. To date, a comprehensive inventory of regional outdoor recreation assets has been developed; five staff members have been hired; the first Outdoor Expo was held, which attracted nearly 70 vendors and 1,000 attendees; and the Appalachian Spring consortium has worked with three towns on revitalization projects that use outdoor recreation assets as the basis for economic restructuring.

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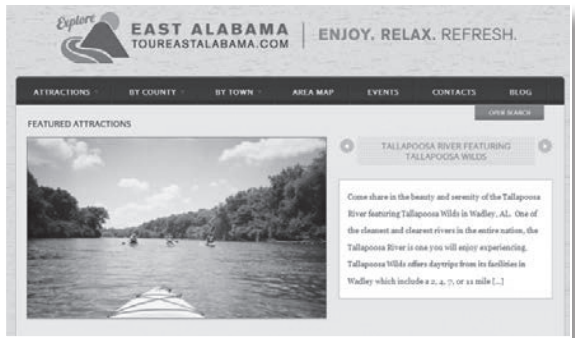
CLEAR Plan 2030 is a livable communities planning project that accomplished the first unified, region-wide vision for the East Alabama Region. Serving as the lead agency for the consortium of regional partners, **East Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission** applied to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development for funding and coordinated the activities of the 10-county project. Initiated by a comprehensive, grassroots planning effort that worked to identify barriers to livability throughout the region, engage stakeholders (specifically marginalized populations), and raise local government awareness of the benefits of livability practices, the project ultimately brought regional partners together and emphasized the importance of local communities working together. Data gathered during the planning process has been used by multiple consortium partners for research, grant applications, and as a resource for future service planning. CLEAR Plan 2030 also undertook a review of existing regional planning documents in an effort to eliminate contradicting goals, and provide a unified regional scope for development, quality of life decisions, and resource utilization.

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Through **Tour East Alabama**, a diverse group of industrial development boards, chambers of commerce, county commissions, cities, and government agencies joined forces to identify tourism opportunities in nine counties in northeast Alabama. Utilizing a wide range of community outreach methods, a process was developed to link venues, amenities, and services that would support tourism on a regional level and create economic opportunities for jobs and business. The **East Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission**

(EARPDC) supported in this initiative, which became a grassroots effort promoted primarily by the chambers of commerce and the University of Alabama Center for Economic Development. A staff person attended the planning meetings and the EARPDC GIS staff was available for mapping required by the group. The most tangible end result of this effort is the new Tour East Alabama website where attractions and events for the region are published.



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The **Florida Regional Councils Association** prepared the **Statewide Coordinated Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDs)**, the first time a coordinated approach has been used by all 11 Economic Development Districts (EDDs). The strategies use a common format, common nomenclature, as well as common data and analyses. The documents use the Florida Chamber Foundation's Six Pillars of Florida's Future Economy as the organizing framework. Each CEDs provides a description of current economic and demographic conditions of the EDD, an analysis of strengths and weaknesses and an analysis of the region's industry clusters. The CEDs documents also list their economic development goals and objectives as well as the priority project areas developed by the Strategy Committees. This project was funded by the U.S. Economic Development Administration.

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Trough an annual planning grant, the **Greater Eastern Oregon Development Corporation** (GEODC) supports strategic planning and project development in the district. Developing the **Greater Eastern Oregon Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) 2014-2019**, included facilitation of strategy committee and public outreach meetings, economic research, development of a survey and its tabulation, and writing and editing the final document. In addition to meeting the existing requirements, this CEDS document was developed using the new CEDS Content Guidelines: Recommendations for Creating Impactful CEDS. A collaborative approach was used to develop the strategy; it included demographic and economic research, an extensive public involvement effort, active participation among stakeholders on the project's Strategy Committee, and engagement with Business Oregon, the State's economic development agency and the State's Regional Solutions Team.

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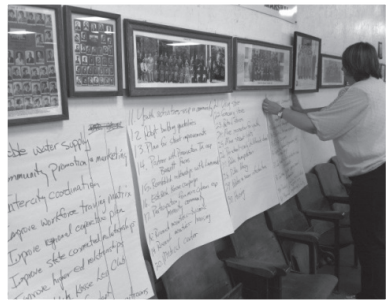
Recognizing the need for technical information, cultural inquiry, and practical tools to solve regional issues, the **Heart of Texas Council of Governments** (HOTCOG) partnered with a group of regional partners from five rural counties, 38 municipalities, and 20 organizations, agencies, and institutions to form the **Heart of Texas Efficient Towns and Counties Co-op**. In 2012, HOTCOG secured a

planning grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to develop a comprehensive, regional sustainable communities plan. Anchored by locally raised matching funds, the effort was staffed primarily in-house and by regional partners and supplemented with expertise from technical consultants. This grassroots approach strengthened local resources, significantly built capacity among county and municipal leaders and citizens, and leveraged deep ownership and pride in the region among its communities and its people. Long after the planning funding is gone the knowledge and tools obtained by the co-op will remain in the region and continue to grow.

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To help small cities attract economic development downtown, the **Houston-Galveston Area Council** (H-GAC) launched an initiative aimed at helping local governments, nonprofits, businesses, and other stakeholders learn to work together to implement successful revitalization programs. Based on extensive research, interviews, and information provided at workshops, H-GAC compiled **Bringing Back Main Street: A Guide to Downtown Revitalization for Local Governments**.



This how-to guide focuses on four characteristics of successful downtowns: community-based vision, attractive streetscapes, variety of uses, and effective marketing. In early 2015, H-GAC hosted a series of workshops with experts from throughout Texas providing tips on how to create an economically vibrant Main Street. Each workshop focused on a different component of the revitalization process and included case studies presented by those working in successful downtowns. Public and private entities provided funding, including H-GAC, the Houston-Galveston Area Local Development Corporation, the Trull Foundation, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture through its Rural Community Development Initiative.

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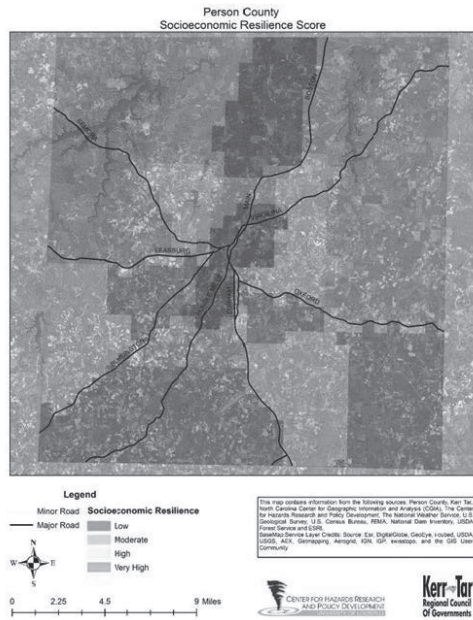
What initially began as a multi-stage effort identified in **Kaysinger Basin Regional Planning Commission's** Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, the **Regional Economic Development Program** resulted in the ability to measure jobs created, private investment generated, and also increased sales tax revenue to the cities. Over 25 jobs have been created to date—a large number for Bates County, Missouri, with a population of only 17,049. The project formed economic development committees comprising individuals nominated by each community within the county. The committees then encouraged the county and cities to take actions regarding the importance of business incentives. The county commissioners set aside a portion of funding to be matched by the three largest cities in the county, Adrian, Butler, and Rich Hill, to create an economic

developer in the county to bridge gaps and create incentives. The RPC contracts with each of the cities and county directly for their portion of the funding and each entity is billed quarterly at the beginning of each quarter.

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As a planning project, **Building Economic Resilience in the Kerr-Tar Region** identifies ways to align comprehensive economic development strategies (CEDs) and local multi-jurisdictional hazard mitigation plans (HMPs). The project, developed by the **Kerr-Tar Regional Council of Governments (COG)**, provides identification and analytical review of parallels between the CEDs and HMPs and attempts to recognize ways for the COG to more closely align the two planning processes. Both plans require a synopsis of data about the community, a risk or vulnerability assessment, and the development of a strategy stemming from this information. The report qualitatively concludes, with quantitative evidence, that both planning processes share an outcome of reducing the impacts of identified risks and vulnerabilities and, in doing so, makes the region stronger and better able to withstand natural or man-made shocks in the future. The COG served as a convener for stakeholder meetings and information liaison for HMP and CEDs committees. The COG also provided data collection and analytical review, project team site visit logistics, and outreach and project promotion while moving forward toward implementation. This project was supported by the U.S. Economic Development Administration.



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Granite State Future represents New Hampshire's largest coordinated project in decades. The collaborative planning project, led by the **Nashua Regional Planning Commission**, brought the nine New Hampshire regional organizations together with state partners through a three-year, three-phase project. Funded through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant program, Granite State Future has become a national model for innovative partnerships and statewide collaboration around how to preserve what is best about local communities and how to confront regional challenges. Each RPC throughout the state used the project to develop individual regional plans that work to integrate housing, transportation, water, natural resources, economic development, cultural and historic resources, public health, climate adaptation, and energy efficiency. The project's culminating report, a Statewide Snapshot, presents the compilation of the regional plans, numerous statewide technical studies, and the robust outreach efforts conducted at the state and regional level.

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Framework for Our Future: A Regional Prosperity Plan for Northwest Michigan

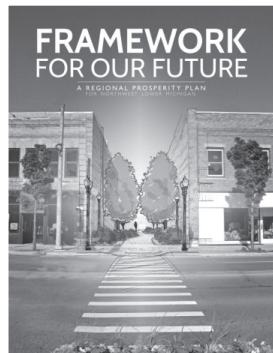
was undertaken by **Networks Northwest** as part of Michigan's Regional Prosperity Initiative. The Framework for Our Future is a regional resource for local governments, community organizations, and others working to meet local goals. It includes information and tools that can help stakeholders address issues related to housing, transportation, arts and culture, workforce and economic development, community health, food and farming systems, natural resources, and recreation in a coordinated and regionally-focused manner. Data

and information will help communities supplement their local planning and decision-making processes, and will help to identify the steps a community can take to address a local issues. The framework also includes a special emphasis on traditionally underrepresented populations to ensure that disabled individuals, minorities, youth, and those in poverty have a voice in the planning process.

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The **Ristra Project** was conceived by the **New Mexico Association of Regional Councils** (NewMARC) during the completion of the New Mexico Statewide Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (SCEDS) using the U.S. Economic Development Administration’s updated content guidelines. The Ristra Project is New Mexico’s first statewide, integrated system to empower and assist all community and economic development leaders to better plan, manage, and measure growth and prosperity. The project has led to the development of a tool to capture, coordinate, and communicate all development initiatives in a centralized, easy-to-use online database. The tool enables NewMARC and other statewide and regional partners to track, manage, and measure all projects in one location and evaluate projects using the “investability score”—a system that uses objective criteria to analyze projects for investment. Ultimately, the Ristra Project, which puts all projects under equal analysis, will enable rural communities throughout the state to compete on a level playing field for limited resources.

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The **Pioneer Valley Planning Commission** (PVPC) prepared the **Pioneer Valley Plan for Progress: 2015-2025**, the new CEDS document for the region, and orchestrated an innovative virtual rollout of the Plan that reached hundreds of stakeholders and interested individuals. With the assistance of a rollout committee, PVPC devised a strategy that defined the audience, developed core messages, identified the most relevant media, and tailored messages to each medium and audience. Media included public television, public radio, newspaper, business newsletters and magazines, regular email, online articles and videos, and social media. PVPC partnered with the local public television station to create a series of eight-minute episodes on themes correlated to the Plan for Progress goals, and invited well-known community leaders to appear on the show, beginning on the day of the rollout.

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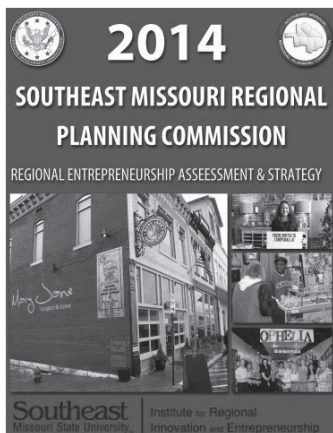
The **South Carolina Appalachian Council of Governments (SCACOG)**, a Local Development District serving six counties and 42 municipalities in the northwestern corner of the state, developed **The Entrepreneur Friendly Toolkit (EF Toolkit)** planning program for supporting small business development. The EF Toolkit is a seven-month, seven-step planning curriculum for individual communities that is delivered through an interactive website. Participating in the process enables communities to become more supportive of and attractive to entrepreneurs. The steps in the curriculum are: market research, business planning resources, business capital, local networks and incubators, business compliance, marketing and promotion, and centralized information. The Appalachian Regional Commission provided a planning grant, while the SCACOG provided matching funds.

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Southeast Missouri State University's Institute for Regional Innovation and Entrepreneurship (IRIE) has completed **Regional Entrepreneurship Assessment and Strategy Reports for four Economic Development**

Districts (EDDs) in Missouri this fiscal year. The purpose of the reports was to develop a systemic approach to link cluster and regional asset analyses to a regional entrepreneurial ecosystem. The research included a regional survey, focus group sessions, an analysis of National Establishment Time Series, innovation index, and industry cluster data for each of the EDDs. The research and data analysis provides the basis for the reports, which identify the regional entrepreneurial infrastructure needed to advance opportunities to strengthen clusters and drive technology innovation. This assessment approach not only provides targeted efforts to develop and expand high-impact technologies and firms to bolster existing assets and strengths. The project also brought together stakeholders from the region through a collaborative effort between the university and the EDDs, providing an avenue for academia to provide their expertise to rural regions of Missouri.

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Through the **Southwest Region Executive Directors Association's** (SWREDA) **Southwest Peer Exchange**, SWREDA has improved the peer review process and promoted more collaboration throughout the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) Austin Region. SWREDA surveys economic development districts and matches them based on similarities of staff size, program areas and interests, and a region's urban or rural focus. Required documents are submitted electronically in advance of the scheduled review. The setting provides for multiple reviews conducted at a central location, timed adjacent to training or other SWREDA or other related events. SWREDA's Peer Coordinator and Peer Committee coordinate the exchanges, solicit survey responses, facilitate conversations, assess evaluations, and share results of the peer exchange. This approach minimized costs and intrusions on time, reduced demands for travel, streamlined EDA coordination and logistics, formed peer learning environments, and created capacity building opportunities.

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The **Southwest Tennessee Development District** (SWTDD)

sought to develop a program to assist current and newly elected officials to more effectively establish

and execute an economic development plan or vision for their communities. SWTDD created **Strategic Opportunities to Advance our Region** (SOAR) in a collaborative effort with the eight counties it represents. The program was established to be an economic preparedness program designed to assist rural communities in evaluating, planning, and implementing strategies for economic sustainability. Counties must have their commission pass a resolution to participate and agree to assist in coordinating the program locally. SOAR will assist counties increase the tools in their economic development toolbox and help local leaders identify their strengths and weaknesses.



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Partnering with local economic development entities and Grayson College, **Texoma Council of Governments** facilitated the development of the **Texoma Craft Beverage Strategic Plan** to expand on the college's award-winning viticulture and enology programs and identify emerging opportunities across the region in the craft beverage and winemaking industries. The project began with input from a steering committee that included members from education, development, vintners and winemakers, craft brewers, and craft distilleries. In its first year, Texoma accomplished 11 major goals identified in the strategic plan, which included developing all of the marketing and outreach materials for the Texoma Craft Beverage project, setting up the project website, creating an interactive "Wine and Craft Beverage" map of the region, and assisting in the development of the Texoma Craft Beverage Conference and the Texoma Craft Beverage Alliance.



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Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission (TRORC) organized **East Central Vermont: What We Want** in support of local transportation, economic development,



energy use, water supply, waste water treatment, housing, and climate change. The three-year effort of several organizations resulted in a clear and comprehensive set of policy statements and recommended actions in the area. It created inter-organizational cooperation at a new level for the region by generating a region-wide consortium of over 30 organizations. Some issues being tackled include town zoning for more housing, incorporating health into local planning, and grants improving the role of food and arts in the economy.

The project is the region's vision for long-term growth and development. It was supported by a U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Regional Sustainability Planning grant and matching funds from TRORC and sub-grantee partners.

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With a region that has the lowest population density of any state-designated planning region in Michigan at fewer than 14 persons per square mile the **Western Upper Peninsula Planning and Development Region (WUPPDR)** has many challenges to overcome in terms of administering its programs and working to develop the regional economy. As part of the statewide Regional Prosperity Initiative, WUPPDR is leading an effort to more effectively deliver economic development services in the Western Upper Peninsula (U.P.) titled **Economic Development Service Delivery**. In order to improve access to services, expand services to areas of unmet need, and to improve organizational communication to eliminate the duplication of services, WUPPDR partnered with seven other regional workforce, economic development, and business support organizations to expand the role of the workforce development centers that are located in each county throughout the Western U.P. The “one stop” service centers serve as a single point of contact for residents interested in utilizing economic and business development services.

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Technology & Data

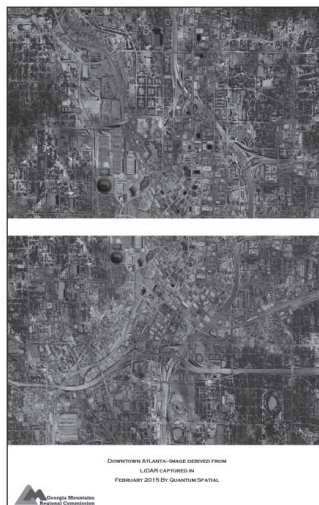
The **Coastal Regional Commission** developed the Quality Growth Effectiveness Assessment Survey, a **Regional Plan Digital Implementation Tool**. It is used as an evaluation and monitoring tool to measure performance standards as they relate to ongoing implementation of the Regional Plan. The results are a comprehensive collection of activities and processes that local governments undertake, assessed for consistency with the regional plan. The tool helps monitor the implementation and effectiveness of the plan's strategies by uncovering the gap between actual and targeted performance, systematically helps coordinate and align resources, and determines how the plan might be modified in the future. The web-based interface assists in tracking and analyzing relevant indicators related to topics of regional importance which are evaluated based upon performance standards. Automation adds structure to implementing performance standards and transforms data into information and sound knowledge to communicate performance information.

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Georgia Mountains Regional Commission (GMRC) coordinated 25 participants for the purpose of acquiring aerial photography, Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR or digital elevation), and oblique imagery for their **2015 GMRC Aerial Photography/LiDAR Consortium Project**. This collaborative project includes 22 counties and three cities and has spread into five Regional Commissions and covers over 6,400 square miles. The project cost of \$1.6 million dollars comes from the participating cities and counties. Participants have seen a savings of up to 50 percent compared to conducting a similar single-county project. The aerial photography and oblique imagery acquired for this project will be used by the local governments' tax assessors for property evaluation, E911 dispatch, and economic development



for project development. LiDAR will be used for flood mapping and modeling and by engineering departments for infrastructure, such as water, sewer, roads, broadband, storm water, and gas.

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In 2014, the Georgia Technology Authority initiated a statewide digital economy planning effort with a concentrated regional approach. The **Middle Georgia Regional Commission** (MGRC) was tasked with undertaking the development of the **Middle Georgia Digital Economy Plan** as well as providing project management for all regional plans across Georgia. Using stakeholder input from a broad cross-section of the community, MGRC staff analyzed the current state of digital resources in the region and outlined a path forward. The plan outlines strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges facing the region and potential strategies for funding and implementation. As a result of the planning process, the region's first ever Digital Economy Summit was held to engage regional stakeholders in a discussion about the future of the digital economy in Middle Georgia. The plan development also directly led to the creation of Middle Georgia's first makerspace, called SparkMacon, a workshop that provides tools, equipment, and training.



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The **Mo-Kan Regional Council** developed **Mo-Kan My Map**, a web-based, visual inventory of community and economic development investments. The listed projects are those where Mo-Kan has participated and highlights specific aspects for each enhancement, such as cost, public and private investment, the number of people impacted, and the long-term benefits. The goal is to create a better informed region. Mo-Kan worked with local communities to identify and secure



funding for each of the inventoried projects. Using this list, the Mo-Kan My Map inventory was created, which was subsequently entered into a web-based mapping tool. Mo-Kan My Map is also accessible on smart phones and tablets, allowing staff and constituents to quickly share vital information with their elected officials.

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The **Piedmont Triad Regional Council (PTRC)** launched a new approach for using **GIS as a Tool for Targeting Efforts in Housing Rehabilitation Programs**. The tool targets specific neighborhoods for major repairs under the Single Family Rehabilitation (SFR) Program, a state-funded program that PTRC administers. Prior to instituting the tool, PTRC was having difficulty receiving eligible applications for the SFR program from especially rural areas throughout the region. After using the GIS-based approach, PTRC staff were able to target specific neighborhoods that display a high density of potentially eligible households, per the program's requirements, thus saving time, money, and resources by reducing advertising budgets, staff time, and fuel costs. Funding of the tool's development cost under \$1,000 and is ultimately paying for itself as it better utilizes limited staff resources. In addition, the tool can be built upon to create additional efficiencies that target areas of the most need, improving overall communication between PTRC and its customers.

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The **Southern Georgia Regional Commission (SGRC)** developed an ArcGIS web application to assist with improved **GIS Utility Management** to address Lowndes County deeded drainage easements that had not been updated or created in GIS for many years. The ArcGIS web application has enabled SGRC to generate large quantities of previously un-mapped easements at low costs. Storm water personnel are able to use a tablet in the field with an ArcGIS online app where they create a digital inspection report. The information generated out in the field can be viewed immediately by the storm water manager back in the office who can now run inspection reports in ArcGIS for any day, week, or month from a simple query.

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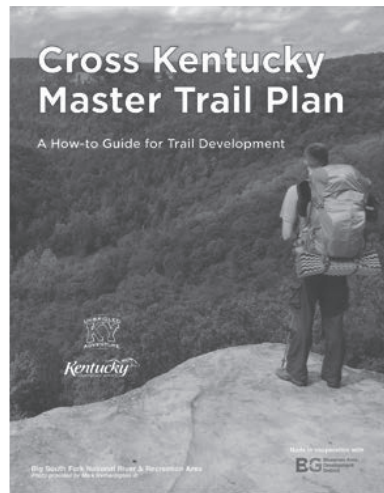
Transportation

The **Ark-Tex Council of Governments** (ATCOG) developed communications and tracking software to streamline the Rural Transportation District's demand response system over a nine-county, 5,924 square-mile region. The **Ark-Tex Transit Scheduling Software** (CaBAW) system uses a data-enabled tablet or PC to run an in-house developed software that allows immediate and streamlined scheduling and updates via the cloud. The system has increased efficiency, since drivers have real-time access to schedules without calling dispatchers. The tablets also allow for push-to-talk, messaging, and location tracking and history. By using their own software rather than commercially available solutions, ATCOG has saved about \$15,000 per year on recurring operations costs for similar software, along with \$2,000 in savings per each hardware installation. Reporting is completed more quickly and easily, and improved data collection and access has allowed the Rural Transportation District to implement needed improvements and adapt service. For example, evaluation of the para-transit service under the Urban Transportation District allowed ATCOG to separate our ambulatory passengers and reduce the overall cost of trips by contracting out services for those individuals.

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The **Bluegrass Area Development District** (BGADD) and the Kentucky Office for Adventure Tourism worked together to draft the **Cross Kentucky Master Trail Plan**. The plan is a comprehensive how-to guide for trail development, including how to plan a trail, organize stakeholders, acquire the land needed, and construct and maintain trails. All of the state's Area Development Districts and other leaders worked together to identify planned routes for 11 major trails that will cross the state. Individual communities are expected to tie their trail systems into the larger arterial trails as part of a process to receive state designation as "trail towns," a concept developed in the plan. As a result of the new plan, several



communities have already applied to the Office of Adventure Tourism for the designation, and new efforts are being made to create new trails or tie existing trails into the planned network.

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The **Missouri Mobility Management Planning** is improving transportation accessibility in more than 18 counties through the work of three regional planning commissions (RPCs), **Boonslick RPC, Meramec RPC, and Mid-Missouri**



RPC. These programs provide access to resources and services for older adults, people with disabilities, and individuals with lower incomes, as well as the general public. With initial planning funds from the Missouri Developmental Disabilities Council, each RPC conducted a deliberate planning phase and brought together stakeholders to form regional coordinating councils. Although each RPC is implementing separate Mobility Management Programs, all three RPCs have worked to coordinate planning and implementation, with a goal of supporting a statewide program in the future using the MO RIDES referral model established by Boonslick RPC. The Mobility Management programs are funded primarily through Federal Transit Administration grants administered by the Missouri Department of Transportation.

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The **Walk Bike Columbia Plan** envisions an expanded and ADA-accessible network of transit, sidewalks, greenways, trails, and on-street bicycle connections linking people to jobs, schools, destinations, adjacent communities, and one another. In the study process, **Central Midlands Council of Governments** and the City of Columbia, South Carolina learned that residents are already walking, biking, and accessing transit with a combined total of 40 million trips annually,

equal to 30 million miles traveled by bike or on foot. The city is already accruing over \$15 million in community-wide benefits from existing walking and bicycling activity. Incremental increases in mode share for walking and bicycling are expected to exponentially grow those monetary benefits to the community.

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In spite of major strides to improve coordination and efficiency of transit service throughout a 10-county region of Georgia over the past six years, the **Coastal Regional Commission** still identified opportunities to enhance efficiency and decrease fragmentation of service. This led the region to develop the **Public/Private Partnership for Transit Program Enhancement** over the last year. The new service model maintains quality of service, is affordable and accommodating to all customers, cuts operational costs, and increases efficiencies. Already, the public/private partnership is optimizing the ability for the regional system to invest in new technologies, expand the service area, create new employment, and enhance commitment to a livable communities strategy.

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In 2011, the **East Central Iowa Council of Governments (ECICOG)** completed the Comprehensive Regional Development Strategy, a joint planning document that serves as both the region's Long-Range Transportation Plan and Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. Based on the extensive public input, the primary transportation issue identified was improving the safety of the regional transportation network. As a result, ECICOG formed the **Region 10 Multi-Disciplinary Safety Team** comprising key stakeholders such as transportation, safety, and enforcement officials. The team members



meet regularly to discuss and address local safety concerns; review data on crashes, citations, and roadway characteristics for decision making about safety intervention strategies such as enforcement, education, and engineering; and plan for or react to local celebrations, flooding, storm damage, or other events. This low-cost safety effort is funded through ECICOG's rural transportation planning work program and helps the region to meet its identified priorities.

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Land of Sky Regional Council (LOSRC) is meeting a critical mobility need for Buncombe County residents through the new program **Transportation Resource Center – Expanding Local Services**. Under contract to the county, LOSRC completes transportation assessments of clientele eligible for Medicaid transportation, scheduling or coordinating trips to Medicaid providers through authorized vendors, managing vendor contracts and invoices, reimbursing mileage, and providing bus tickets. This arrangement provides several benefits to those involved: streamlining the clients' experience for multiple services, streamlining funding sources for transit service, lower per-trip operating costs, a cost-savings to the county of \$500,000, and a reallocation of staffing to focus on core needs.

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Seeing a need to enhance mobility for low-income individuals in the rural and urban portions of their region, the **Lee-Russell Council of Governments** sought Federal Transit Administration Job Access and Reverse Commute funds to create the state's first mobility manager staff position. Through the program **Providing Reliable, Safe, and Affordable Transportation Options for At-Risk Families through Mobility Management**, the mobility manager conducts outreach efforts and matches individuals with low incomes who need transportation to employment or employment related activities with the most appropriate transportation provider. Ridership in the program increased 111 percent in just the first year and has continued to grow. The program is making a significant impact by making reliable transportation available: over 75 program participants

in the past five years have moved out of low-income housing or purchased their own vehicle, and many more have maintained steady employment. In addition, the coordination with public and private transportation providers has helped to extend the service areas and times, reaching more rural clients and offering service on weekends, holidays, and after hours including during weekdays.

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In order to promote bicycle-related recreation and tourism throughout the region, **North Central Florida Regional Planning Council** developed a bicycle trail inventory and created interactive easy-to-use maps of the trails and related recreation information. **Bicycling Trails of Natural North Florida** provides the best available single-source of information for tourists



interested in bicycling and related recreation within the 11-county Northeast Florida region. An online region-wide map and 11 individual county maps were designed to display local bicycle trails, complete with mileage and hyperlinks to additional information on state parks and local recreation opportunities. The maps are all available to be accessed on the Original Florida Tourism Task Force website. Recognizing tourism as a significant source of future economic growth, the development and marketing of these maps helps promote regional tourism development as they increase awareness of the hundreds of miles of beautiful biking trails located throughout the region.

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Art by Bus promotes the regional fixed-route transit service, Valley Metro, through partnerships with artists and art and culture organizations. By bringing art, music, and literature onto the bus, RIDE Solutions, a program of the **Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission**, worked to raise the profile of Valley Metro, initiated a conversation in the community about transit's role in the region's quality of life, and surprise loyal riders with great experiences. This occurs through a three-pronged approach with support from the Roanoke Arts Commission. Three works from Roanoke, Virginia's public art collection were reproduced as large panels and installed on the outside of three different buses, bringing art into the neighborhoods. Four musicians held unannounced, short musical performances on the Start Line Trolley at various times over a two-month period. Ride Solutions commissioned a local poet to ride the bus for a month and compose a series of poems based on her experience, with the poems published online, in print, and in a series of readings, including one held at a bus station in fall 2015.



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The **South Plains Association of Governments** established the **South Plains Rural Planning Organization (SPRPO)** to enhance rural involvement in the Lubbock District of the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), which includes 17 counties. Uncommon within Texas, the RPO is only the second region to receive funding from TxDOT to complete rural transportation planning tasks, and the RPO's boundaries match those of the TxDOT District. The SPRPO assists county officials with information, acts as a liaison between the Lubbock TxDOT District county judges and engineers, and coordinates quarterly meetings for collaboration between the Lubbock TxDOT district and the 17 county judges. The RPO has become an important platform for communicating and collaborating. For example, sharing information has led to quick decision-making about areas to locate Dynamic Interactive Message Boards for traveler information and the conversion of two herbicide machines to spray brine on roads as needed for winter maintenance, freeing up TxDOT resources.

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The **Waccamaw Regional Council of Governments** developed the **Grand Strand Routing and Wayfinding Plan** to ease travel in the 60 mile-long urbanized area around Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, an area that draws an estimated 14.6 million visitors annually to its popular beach communities. The plan identifies improvements

including those to existing signage, installation of a changeable message board system displaying travel time information, and a zone wayfinding system in which smaller destinations can associate themselves with the larger beach zone name, color, and logo. The plan also defines the preferred routing to major destinations for both the existing and future transportations systems so that information provided through online mapping or in-vehicle navigation providers is consistent, efficient, and matches highway signage. A separate document, the Grand Strand Routing and Wayfinding Guide, provides local governments a template for installing a local destination signage that complements the regional and highway guides. The plan and guide were completed following an inventory of existing route and destination signage, an origin-destination study conducted with Bluetooth technology, and facilitated an extensive public input process. Project partners included the departments of transportation for both South Carolina and North Carolina, as well as local governments and the Federal Highway Administration.



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To support the daily fixed-route transit service of Greenway Public Transportation, the **Western Piedmont Council of Governments (WPCOG)** staff collected details on the 349 bus stops in the bus routes. Using ArcGIS Online, WPCOG created the **Web-Map Application for Public Fixed-Route Bus Service** to make this information on location, schedule, and details of each bus stop available to the public and Greenway dispatchers. The availability of a sidewalk, bench, or shelter and a photo of each bus stop aides riders in planning their trips. The map is available on Greenway's website and is available to Android and Apple mobile users. Map users can search for a specific location or use their current location to find the closest stop. This project is part of a larger partnership between Greenway Public Transportation and WPCOG in which staff help determine current and future transit needs, use GIS to support map creation and route planning, and provide passenger sampling services to develop statistical data about the transit service. The new web-map application is seen as a cost-effective model for providing information to the public, with other small transit providers seeking to replicate the map.

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Workforce Development

The **CSRA Veterans' Partnership**, developed by the **Central Savannah River Area Regional Commission (CSRA)**, engages service members who will be exiting the military within the next 180 days in active duty internships. The program ties professional education with job experience by bringing together service members with local employers—including Cisco channel partners—to receive classroom instruction and on-the-job training, thereby boosting veterans' marketability. Upon completion of the first six weeks of academics, participants earn a certificate from Aiken Technical College; all of the credit hours apply toward an Associate in Applied Science (AAS) degree. Veterans will also be eligible to compete for a slot in the VET2 program that includes a three-week internship opportunity with an IT employer, allowing them to demonstrate their skills and capabilities. CSRA provided case management and marketing for the program. To date, all of the service members who participated in the internship component of the program have secured employment with the company at which they interned.

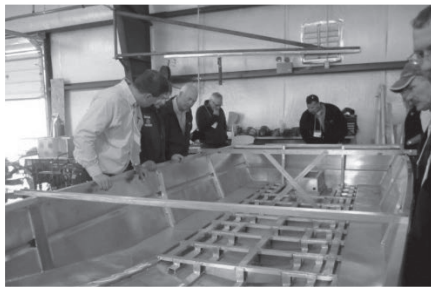
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Clearwater Economic Development Association (CEDA) has worked with north-central Idaho partners to plan and implement activities aimed at **Addressing the Skill Needs of the Metal Manufacturer Supercluster.**

As a result of a 2007 Northwest Intermountain Manufacturers Association needs assessment that identified workforce development as the highest priority industry need, CEDA built a coalition of diverse partners to craft and implement a long-term workforce strategy. Coalition partners include stakeholders across state lines in Southeast Washington and representatives from local tribes. Important to their efforts was the need to consolidate the efforts of separate, but similar industry clusters in the region, which they named the Metal Supercluster. Identification and naming of the supercluster has allowed for a more targeted and coordinated strategy to building workforce skills for all



industries within the supercluster. Activities within the strategy are divided into three main categories: career awareness and recruitment, educator professional development, and career pathway development.

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In conjunction with the Georgia Department of Economic Development Workforce Division and Goodwill of North Georgia, the **Georgia Mountains Regional Commission** provided the **Training 2 Work (T2W) Offender Job Training Program** during the summer of 2014. The T2W program is part of Governor



Nathan Deal's administration's plan to assist former inmates in becoming productive members of society once released. Georgia Mountains Workforce Development (GMWD) received grant funds available from the Governor's Office of Workforce Development to provide training to 11 female participants from the Arrendale Transitional Center. All 11 participants received multiple forms of training to develop job skills, including: CPR/First Aid/AED from the American Heart Association; Highway and Utility Flagging from Ivey Flagging Consultants (approved by the Georgia Department of Transportation); Occupational Safety and Health Administration 10-hour general industry safety; Class-B written exam and pre-trip; and National Center for Construction Education and Research certifications in Construction Safety, Construction Math, Hand Tools, and Power Tools.

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The **Mid-Ohio Valley Regional Council**, led by its affiliated Mid-Ohio Valley Workforce Investment Board, has undertaken a multi-year process that is leading to a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy that supports **Workforce and Economic Development Integration**. With help from a consultant, a study of the existing workforce and an analysis of job growth opportunities was undertaken. Five target industries were identified: oil and gas extraction, plastics and polymers, construction, government, and health care. MOVRC

also partnered with Buckeye Hills-Hocking Valley Regional Development District to commission an Ethane Cracker Supply Chain Study. Through data analysis and a review of three communities with existing cracker facilities, an inventory was developed of industries linked with ethylene production. Recommendations were made regarding actions that could be taken to enhance retention, expansion, and recruitment success.



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In late 2011, the **Northern Maine Development Commission (NMDC)** was one of 20 regions nationwide awarded a Jobs and Innovation Accelerator Challenge Grant (JIAC). GreenME was designed to support the implementation of the Renewable Energy Economy Strategy crafted by community and energy industry cluster business leaders the previous year. In addition to immediate impact on this workforce segment, GreenME proposed the design of a regional **Workforce Center of Excellence (WCOE)** supporting the energy sector. WCOE is outcome-oriented and serves as a systematic model that can be applied to targeted sectors of the regional economy, beginning with the energy sector in Aroostook and Washington Counties. NMDC served as the owner and developer of the Workforce Center of Excellence. A performing WCOE in the region creates attractive climate for current and new employers and workforce prospects from inside and outside the region. NMDC was one of 20 regions nationwide to be awarded a JIAC grant, which funded WCOE.

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In May 2014, phase two of an Investing in Manufacturing Communities Partnership (IMCP) designation placed a national spotlight on Northwest Georgia's industrial, workforce, and educational leadership, particularly in the floor covering sector. The **Northwest Georgia Regional Commission (NWGR)** identified a strategic opportunity to meet the needs of manufacturers in Northwest Georgia at this critical time. NWGR provides staff support to the **Northwest Georgia IMCP Floor360 Consortium** working groups to grow and

sustain the manufacturing support system in the region. Specific efforts include implementing consortium guidelines, assisting with application development and review, and outreach to industries, Chambers of Commerce, school systems, workforce development partners, industries and suppliers, community leaders, and cities and counties.

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The **Pennyrile Area Development District** has undertaken an organized effort to recognize and promote entrepreneurial success in order to develop an entrepreneurial culture in the Pennyrile region of Western Kentucky, entitled the **Pennyrile Entrepreneur Network**. The creation of strong partnerships and networks with multiple Chambers of Commerce and economic development organizations region-wide has led to an increased awareness of entrepreneurial opportunities. Pennyrile ADD has provided support for regional events, completed referrals for funding and business plan development, and developed an entrepreneurial network website. Over 160 jobs have been created either directly or indirectly through this project. Pennyrile ADD has also provided assistance to a multitude of microenterprises, believed to have created approximately 35 new jobs through self-employment in the region.

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The Northwest Piedmont Workforce Board of the **Piedmont Triad Regional Council** created the **Survive, Thrive, Grow Winston-Salem Small Business Development Pilot** that provides unemployed individuals and college students with opportunities to experience small business operations firsthand. This new model incorporates soft skill development and work ethic into the training, but has a strong focus of hands-on training in areas of very specialized skills. The project has worked with a variety of small businesses in Winston-Salem to provide training in areas such as aviation technology, nonprofit management, E-Commerce, software development, design and marketing, and content writing. Individuals work for up to a six-month period and during that time they also have access to support services including financial literacy, professional business

coaching, professional networking opportunities, and mentoring. At the end of the training period the businesses are often in the position to employ the trainees.

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Thanks to the **Purchase Area Development District, the Career Discovery Center** began providing services in May 2015. The new 6,733-square-foot building houses multiple agencies of the Kentucky



Career Center, including Office of Employment and Training, Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, and Workforce Investment Act services. This will provide an opportunity for services to be functionally streamlined and more conveniently located for both job seekers and employers. The center includes space for job fairs, employer interviews, candidate assessments, trainings, and conference rooms. Purchase ADD worked throughout the entire project from submitting the original loan application to working on behalf of the Murray-Calloway Economic Development Corporation/Murray-Calloway Industrial Development Authority to satisfy all the U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development requirements to obtain permission to advertise the project for bid. Career Discovery Center services demonstrate the reemployment strategies the Kentucky Cabinet for Education and Workforce Development has been implementing to modernize the state's workforce development system.

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Region XII Council of Governments is the managing partner of Western Iowa Advantage (WIAD), an eight-county cooperative marketing group that counts among its fold the seven county economic development groups, three investor-owned utilities, the U.S. Economic Development Administration University Center, the state workforce employment agency, and several rural electrical cooperatives. Although WIAD was first conceived as a mechanism for business attraction, it became quickly apparent that the region's workforce could not meet the needs of potential businesses. As a result, the **Western Iowa Advantage Employer-Educator Summit** was held to get CEOs and school officials in the same room to discuss their needs, barriers, attitudes, and solutions. Building off of the first summit, WIAD enlisted the assistance of the region's workforce center and hosted the second Employer-Educator Summit in 2014, attended by over 150 people. Both industry and school officials left feeling empowered to positively impact the future workforce. Since the summit, follow-up committees have met and their membership grew, and schools have invited local companies and WIAD partners to speak at career fairs and to parents groups. Based on the positive feedback and the action underway as a result of the 2014 summit, a 2015 summit is being planned for this coming fall.

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When Harrah's Tunica property ceased operations in Tunica County, several states felt the impact of losing over 650 jobs. **South Delta Planning and Development District, Inc.** aided employees that were laid off with the **Harrah's Tunica National Emergency Grant and Partnerships**. After the closure, South Delta Planning and Development District immediately applied to the U.S. Department of Labor for a National Emergency Grant (NEG). Additionally, they reached out to other states and hired an NEG Coordinator with an office on the Tunica Harrah's location, all while coordinating Rapid Response activities with Mississippi Department of Employment Security. Out of the 329 enrolled in the programs offered, 152 have been placed in jobs, with 81 being in other casinos.

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Realizing that residents throughout the region lacked the necessary skills to obtain employment, the Turning Point Workforce Development Board, an affiliate of the **Upper Coastal Plain Council of Governments**, initiated the **Turning Point Workforce Development Board Simulation Lab Project**. The project centered on the idea that using workplace simulations not only assesses prospective employees' skills in relevant technical areas but also assesses broader problem solving, communication, and team orientation capabilities. The simulations also provide a demonstrative, hands-on experience for the candidates, helping them build their knowledge and skill set for future employment. The labs were built to be easily transformed but were focused on the region's two leading sectors: healthcare and advanced manufacturing. To date, 196 participants have enrolled in the Healthcare Simulation Lab, 48 have been employed after participating, and 33 of those in healthcare settings.

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The **Western Piedmont Council of Governments** and the Western Piedmont Workforce Development Board developed a comprehensive and collaborative workforce development website through the **Workforce Anytime, Anywhere, for Anyone project**. The website provides regional recruitment event information, Hot Jobs in four counties, updates on regional initiatives such as the NCWorks Certified Work Ready Communities, workforce success stories showcasing both the employer and job seeker prospective, and other tangible workforce news and events that benefit the region. Having one portal where the region's workforce information can be found is vital to growing and developing the talent pipeline because it eliminates confusion of where to go for information, and it is appropriate to the job placement, training, and recruitment activities that are taking place on a day-to-day basis.

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Youth & Education

The **Barren River Area Development District** (BRADD) supported the Warren County Tech Center's "**Be the Change**" career and technical education programming for students. This program supports strong work ethic, attendance, respect, and character building. BRADD was the primary partner in developing the ACE workshop, which kicked off with a Monster.com event on WKU's South Campus. Students participated in training sessions with dynamic speakers and were encouraged to qualify for the ACE program. The event followed up with monthly training sessions incorporating soft skills, character building skills, and leadership development. Students who qualified for the program were placed at the end of school and were eligible for \$8,000 tuition reimbursement.



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The **Bluegrass Area Development District** (BGADD) has worked with the Bluegrass Healthcare Consortium to plan, develop, and run the **Medical Career and Science Institute Youth Career Camps**, a series of one-week non-residential health careers camps that provide students the opportunity to jump start careers in the healthcare field. The camps are designed for Bluegrass Area middle and high school students who are seriously interested in pursuing careers in healthcare professions. Students first participate in a structured educational curriculum that includes lectures and labs in algebra, anatomy/physiology, and trigonometry. This is followed up with more advanced educational curriculum that includes lessons in biology, fetal pig dissection, muscular and skeletal system, microbiology, and eyeball dissection. BGADD's Workforce Services Department has been heavily involved in the development of this project since inception, raising support and donations, maintaining the fiscal integrity of the camps, purchasing supplies, marketing, reviewing applications, coordinating site logistics, and other responsibilities to ensure the success of the program.

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In 2014, **Greater New Orleans, Inc.** (GNO Inc.), in partnership with the University of New Orleans, set out to equip the future of regional workforce in coastal restoration by developing the **Coastal Engineering and Sciences Programs at the University of New Orleans** (UNO). The graduate certificate programs offer specialized classes unique to the coastline of Louisiana. Curriculum is informed by local coastal restoration industry representatives to ensure core class offerings directly address current industry needs. The certificate program is designed for two types of graduate students—those that are pursuing a graduate degree in a related field, and professionals returning to enhance their skills and expertise. GNO, Inc. worked closely with UNO to coordinate the development of key components of the certificate program and leveraged industry partners to market and promote the program regionally. As only the second program of its kind in the country, the certificate program provides a new pathway for strengthening the quality of local talent and growing New Orleans' Emerging Environmental economic sector.

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The **Kerr-Tar Regional Council of Governments** has worked collaboratively across business and education communities and with elected officials to strengthen the focus on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education and STEM-related careers in the rural five-county region. The **Kerr-Tar Regional STEM Education Summit** was held on April 21, 2015 with over 120 attendees, featuring sessions from experts in the business-education collaboration field. At the end of the day, participants were divided into teams that developed a set of policy recommendations and action steps to move forward regional STEM initiatives throughout the region. Kerr-Tar Regional Council of Governments and the Kerr-Tar Workforce Development Board served as the convener and organizer for the event.

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In November 2014, the **Southern Georgia Regional Commission** (SGRC) partnered with the Valdosta State University Environmental Geography Department on the **Building a Tradition** project, developed to promote GIS, educate future GIS professionals, and continue to grow the University's GIS

database at no cost to either partner. SGRC staff visited the University to teach a classroom group how to use and create data with a free GIS app. Students gathered point data over all VSU campuses from their phones and transmitted the location and attribute information they recorded back to a server at SGRC. These points included light poles, handicapped ramps, and handicapped access doors. The collected information will be used by the University's Facility Maintenance department and the University's Security department in existing and future projects.



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The **Helping Our People Excel (HOPE) GED Program** is a collaborative effort made possible through the partnership of agencies serving on the Fannin County Literacy Council. **Texoma Council of Governments'** public housing program, Texoma Housing Partners, is a founding partner of the Literacy Council and provides the HOPE program with classroom and computer lab space at their



Teaching, Empowering, Assisting, and Motivating (TEAM) Center. Unlike conventional GED programs where specific schedules must be adhered to, the HOPE GED program offers open-entry and open-exit schedules, allowing students to work at their own pace. The need for such flexibility originally arose from court probation requirements, as probationers were unable to fulfill the court's order to obtain a GED due to scheduling conflicts with employment, another court-mandated requirement. The program has expanded its services to students from throughout the community and to date over 130 students have successfully earned their GED through the HOPE program.

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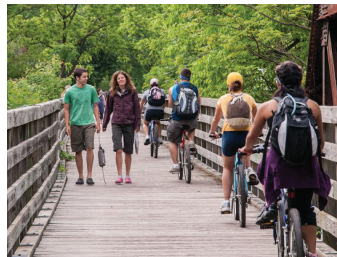
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