

2012 NADO Innovation Awards



The National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) annual Innovation Awards program has been acknowledging creative approaches to regional community and economic development since 1986. Since the program's inception, more than 1,300 projects have been honored.

The 2012 Innovation Award winners are making a difference in their regions through a variety of program areas. These include business and economic development, emergency planning, sustainability, technology, and workforce development programs. The award winners' projects are profiled according to various categories; contact information for each awardee can be found in the project descriptions.

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Cover images (from top to bottom): Northwest Michigan Council of Governments - Community Placemaking Guidebook; Green River Area Development District - Stop Senior Hunger (on L); Purchase Area Development District - Emergency Preparedness Backpacks for Child Care Centers (on R)

Back cover: Great Falls Development Authority - West Bank Redevelopment Project

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AGING, HEALTH, AND HUMAN SERVICES

A partnership of over 80 local primary care and specialty physicians helped consolidate two rural hospitals into the **Ty Cobb Regional Medical Center**. The 144,000-square-foot center offers patients and physicians a modern healthcare facility that enhances the quality of care and strengthens the delivery of services. The new hospital also provides specialty health services not previously offered in the region. The **Georgia Mountains Regional Commission** prepared grant applications and secured funding from a variety of sources to support the project. In addition to increasing access to quality healthcare, the project is an economic driver for northeast Georgia and makes the region more competitive in attracting businesses.

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Credit: Georgia Mountains Regional Commission

Residents in the town of Pachuta, Mississippi contacted the **East Central Planning and Development District (ECPDD)** noting the lack of a facility for senior citizens in the area to use for gatherings. ECPDD worked with the Mississippi Development Authority to secure funding to construct the **Town of Pachuta Senior Citizen Center**. Since the opening of the 7,200-square-foot facility, the town and local churches have come together to coordinate activities for seniors, increasing the sense of community among older adult residents. Several organizations have held classes and workshops at the center, offering diverse learning opportunities. The Town of Pachuta has identified 340 seniors that have been able to access programs at the center.

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Recognizing the need for a central repository for information about citizens' needs in eastern North Carolina, the **Mid-East Commission** helped develop the **Beaufort County Resource Connection (BCRC)**. Regular meetings of community leaders to share information about available resources led to the creation of a website and a distribution list to share needs with community providers. The BCRC provides residents easy access to the resources and information they need, enables agencies to better serve people, promotes collaboration and communication among agencies, and maximizes resources among multiple organizations. The commission's Area Agency on Aging led project partners through the establishment of BCRC and continues to play an active role in its management. Following Hurricane Irene, approximately 100 people received assistance through the BCRC listserv.

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The Green River Area Development District (GRADD) partnered with Independence Bank, Comfort Keepers, and Specialty Foods Group to coordinate the regional **Stop Senior Hunger** food drive. The drive primarily serves clients on waiting lists for home delivered meals a variety of shelf-stable foods to help fill the client's pantry for about a week. GRADD led the project partners in recruiting and communicating with clients, reaching out to grocery stores, recruiting volunteers, developing promotional materials, and coordinating delivery. In its first year, the food drive served nearly 300 people, and it has grown to serve 500 low-income older adults in seven counties in western Kentucky. The addition of cash contributions has helped provide additional groceries and allows the committee to make sure there are staple items in every delivery.

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Credit: Green River ADD

The goal of the **Bluegrass Help-At-Home Worker Registry** is to provide a searchable, web-based, and up-to-date listing of potential workers, without endorsement or liability, that others can use to help find reliable, safe, capable, and caring in-home assistance for themselves or a loved one. The registry lists basic contact information, availability, and a brief description of experience and relevant certifications to help locate potential employees. A second goal of the registry is to assist in providing gainful and meaningful employment to individuals looking to provide direct-care services to others. The **Bluegrass Area Development District** and the Bluegrass Area Agency on Aging and Independent Living are responsible for the design, development, operation, maintenance, and promotion of the registry.

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The **South Carolina Appalachian Council of Governments (ACOG)** developed the **Upstate Aging and Disability Resource Center Website** to supplement and update traditional methods of communicating with consumers and caregivers. Three main groups of beneficiaries—those in need of care, care providers, and community advocates—use the website to access information on long-term care and referrals to resources such as transportation, financial assistance, food assistance, and housing in each county in the region. The site also contains a calendar of events and application information for assistance programs. ACOG staff designed, tested, and produced the site to be accessible to people with disabilities, enabling visually impaired or physically limited visitors to easily navigate the site.

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Medical Towers at Tuscan Court was founded on a local commitment to attract economic growth, create new jobs, and improve and expand medical services available to the citizens of Magee, Mississippi and surrounding areas. The facility provides access to a wide range of essential and specialized medical services without the need to travel to larger facilities many miles away. In addition, the project created at least 45 new full-time jobs and attracted a broader base of skilled, specialized health care professionals. The **Central Mississippi Planning and Development District** worked closely with the city to find innovative ways to fund drainage and access improvements to the site.

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Credit: Central Mississippi PDD

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Western North Carolina (WNC) produces some of the finest hardwoods and non-timber forest products in the country, yet production and marketing have not fulfilled their potential. The **Land-of-Sky Regional Council** is the lead agency for the **WNC Forest Products Cooperative Marketing Project**, whose goal is to generate jobs for forest producers through diversifying products, marketing, and regional cooperation. Fifteen businesses in nine counties were selected to receive technical assistance to make their business more efficient and profitable. The project primarily funded payroll and training, leading to 164 direct jobs and more than 60 additional jobs. Other initiatives include workshops, market analysis and consumer surveys, and a forest products directory.

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The Northern Aero Alliance's vision is to "increase the economic prominence of north-east Minnesota's and northwest Wisconsin's aeronautics stakeholders by providing a common voice and working collaboratively to enhance industry-wide success." The **Arrowhead Regional Development Commission (ARDC)** secured funding for marketing and branding early in the project and continues to provide technical assistance, such as meeting preparation and website maintenance. Collaboration and communication in the cluster have helped attract two new major aviation industry facilities to the region, whose leaders have already become members of the alliance. ARDC is using the successes of the Northern Aero Alliance as a model to explore a similar effort for another cluster, industrial sewing.



Credit: Arrowhead RDC

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The **Accounts Receivable Lending Program** allows tenants of partner business incubators to borrow up to the lesser of \$25,000 or 80 percent of the value of outstanding current receivables for 30 days at a low interest rate. Loans are used to fund activities related to the receivables such as the purchase of materials, payroll payment, and other costs. The **Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham** administers the loans from applicant review through loan closing, management, and collection. Since its inception in October 2010, the program has produced approximately 115 loans totaling \$2.8 million. Many of the participants in this small lending program become strong candidates for the commission's larger, long-term revolving loan fund program.

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The **Northeast Oregon Economic Development District (NEOEDD)** supports **Microenterprise Development** through **Individual Development Accounts and Business Education**. The accounts, or IDAs, provide a match of three dollars for every dollar saved by an individual over a period of 6 – 36 months with the funds then invested in the savers' business or education at an accredited institution. Those saving for a business are required to complete a business planning class, supported by CDBG funds, and prepare a business plan. NEOEDD recruits, screens, and provides individualized assistance at all steps of the saving and withdrawal process to those participating in the IDA program, including business planning classes scheduled at night for greater flexibility. Since it began in 2007, 34 individuals have graduated from the program, with another 43 currently enrolled.

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In order to stay in business, successful produce company **Montana Eggs** needed to start carrying the USDA quality assurance label, which required a major expansion and the purchase of a \$1.5 million grader. The **Great Falls Development Authority** arranged innovative financing that helped the company not only stay in business but expand and increase sales, saving 50 jobs and creating 63 new direct jobs. The City of Great Falls contributed to water and sewer expansions, while a variety of loans, including a commercial loan from a local bank, financed capital costs such as the purchase of the grader and construction of a new building. This project is also notable for the improved relationship between the City of Great Falls and the Hutterite Colonies in the region.

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Credit: Great Falls Development Authority

COMMUNICATING RESULTS AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

The **Texoma Council of Governments (TCOG) Economic Impact Statement** aims to measure and communicate the return on investment for jurisdictions that are served by TCOG. TCOG presents the impact of all of its programs, projects, and activities on the regional economy, including the spin-off effects that result from direct expenditures. After developing a custom economic impact model with the help of a consultant, TCOG staff designed an infographic for public release and consumption. In a time of decreasing budgets and revenues, this project allows TCOG to clearly express the value that regionalism plays in local economies. In future years, TCOG plans to add an analysis of the actual return on investment of each dollar spent in membership dues in an effort to further strengthen membership and partnership commitments.

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The **State of the County Breakfast** in Sonoma County, California is a means to inform and engage the community with the progress and plans of the Board of Supervisors in improving the county economy and quality of life. The event includes an address by the incoming chair of the Board of Supervisors, a forecast by a noted economist, and an update on local economic development activities. The **Sonoma County Economic Development Board** organizes the event and coordinates media coverage and a webcast. Attendance grew from 150 to 500 within three years of beginning the event, which now sells out in advance.

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Built NRV, A Planning Game for Public Engagement is an opportunity to get community groups involved in the **New River Valley Planning District Commission's** Livability Initiative regional planning process. In the game, citizens come together and talk about the things that are most important to them when it comes to their neighborhood and communities through a series of hands-on interactive exercises. BUILT NRV was developed following strong opposition to the Sustainable Communities Planning Grant program as an alternative way to engage the public and discuss local and regional issues. Participants across the region quickly identify their own priorities and explore how they fit in with community values and resource constraints.

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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The **Northeast Mississippi Planning and Development District** served as the local economic development liaison working closely with Tishomingo County on **Dennen Steel/Yellow Creek Industrial Port Authority Improvements**. A private steel company invested \$7.4 million to build a 50,000-square-foot facility that created 50 new jobs, a significant boost to the local and regional economies. An additional \$4.2 million was used for site work and infrastructure improvements. The project is part of Tishomingo County's longtime investment in the Yellow Creek Industrial Port Authority, which provides access to 4,500 miles of navigable waterways and connections to other freight networks.

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Credit: Northeast Mississippi
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The **Alabama Association of Regional Councils** and its 12 member Regional Councils developed a program to further enhance and expand their support for economic development throughout the state by creating the **Alabama Consolidated Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy**. The document recognizes the distinct economic assets of functional economic regions to more fully realize their respective competitive advantages, with a focus on four principles: global awareness, regional competitiveness, community livability, and a sustainable future. The Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs and the Center for Business and Economic Research at the University of Alabama were important project partners.

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When a call center company wanted to open a facility in the region, the **East Central Planning and Development District (ECPDD)** assisted with the necessary infrastructure improvements, including water and sewer lines and a new access road. ECPDD coordinated with project partners to secure and administer grants for the **Lauderdale County Call Center Project**. This \$4 million investment in the community has brought over 200 jobs to East Central Mississippi, with plans for future expansions.

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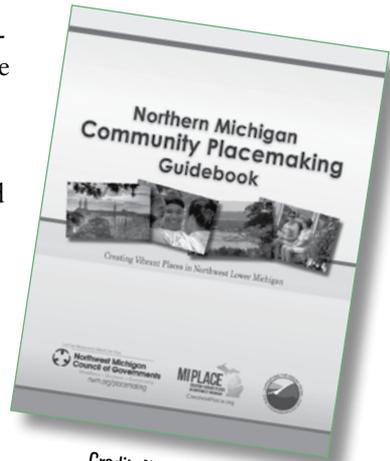
Since becoming an EDA-designated Economic Development District, the **North Central Florida Regional Planning Council** maintained two separate and distinct policy documents concerning economic growth and development of the region. In 2011, the council integrated the analysis of the regional economy and the economic development strategies from its Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy into the **North Central Florida Strategic Regional Policy Plan** as the economic development chapter of the Regional Plan. The council now has a single, unified economic development policy statement for the region. Significant engagement and involvement of the private sector and the civic community resulted in strategies that reflect the vision of the regional community and not just the council.

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The **Western Nevada Development District (WNDD)** was the motivating force in the introduction of USDA Rural Development's Stronger Economies Together (SET) program in Nevada. In particular, WNDD used the SET process to strengthen the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for its eight-county region. Combined **SET/CEDS Development** includes training focusing on the definition of economic development, the creation of a vision statement, best practices for nearby regions, alignment with the governor's economic development strategy, and networking opportunities. Coordinating the SET Regional Blueprint with the CEDS enhances opportunities for regional collaboration and capacity building. WNDD worked closely with the Nevada Rural Development Council as co-project manager.

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The Northwest Michigan Council of Governments helped coordinate the production of the **Community Placemaking Guidebook** of approaches to the planning, design, and management of spaces that have local and regional importance. The guidebook is designed to empower local citizens and unique collaborative groups in communities across the region with critical approaches to creating and managing successful public spaces to promote local pride, identity, and economic prosperity. Placemaking tools included in the guidebook support the goals established in the Grand Vision, a citizen-led regional initiative for the future of land use, transportation, economic development, and environmental stewardship across six counties in northwest lower Michigan.



Credit: Northwest Michigan COG

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Partners of the Heartland 2060 Consortium, including the **Central Florida Regional Planning Council (CFRPC)**, have committed to complete a regional vision and growth strategy for interior Florida. **Preparing for the Future in the Heartland** will enable development of regional plans to guide public and private investment decisions, strengthen linkages between regional and local government plans, and expand community involvement in the vision for the future. The project addresses education and economic disparities in areas such as housing, access to education and employment, and quality of life issues in all communities of the region. CFRPC's role focused on regional land use and affordable housing, including development and implementation of generalized future land use and affordable parcel inventory methodologies.

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The objective of the **North Central Pennsylvania Partnership for Regional Economic Performance (PREP)** initiative is to encourage a more coordinated and efficient approach to the delivery of economic development and business assistance. PREP is a statewide program launched in response to budget cuts that requires shared work programs among economic development agencies. The **North Central Pennsylvania Regional Planning and Development Commission** coordinates the partnership as one of four core providers in the area's PREP consortium. Targeted service providers are encouraged to identify their unique assets and business assistance competencies so that the group as a whole could identify where any critical gaps or duplications exist. The development of a strategic coordinated service delivery plan supports the long-term goal of a coalition-based strategy for the provision of critical economic development services.

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EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND RECOVERY

Extreme winds and tornado damage are common in West Texas and the South Plains. To protect citizens from future storms, the **South Plains Association of Governments (SPAG)** provided rebates of up to \$2,500 for 188 homeowners to build an approved safe room through the **Built to Weather Any West Texas Storm** project. The location of each completed safe room has its grid coordinates recorded and later provided to the local Emergency Management Coordinator to allow emergency responders to locate and check on these homeowners in the event of a disaster. SPAG applied for and managed the grant from the Governor's Division of Emergency Management and coordinated with the National Weather Service and media to promote the program.

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In meetings between the **Purchase Area Development District** and the U.S. Public Health Service Services Access Team, concerns surfaced regarding the lack of emergency preparedness of child care providers in the region and the EMS teams' limited knowledge of where centers are located. One childcare provider suggested **Emergency Preparedness Backpacks for Child Care Centers** as a way to increase preparedness. Each backpack has an individualized index card on the outside with quick reference information for evacuation plans and contains a training video, first aid kit, and filing system containing emergency forms for each child enrolled in the child care center.

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Credit: Purchase ADD

The **Three Rivers Planning and Development District** (Three Rivers) implemented a reverse 9-1-1 emergency notification and severe weather warning system, the **Three Rivers Regional Emergency Notification System**, which has two main components, Emergency Notifications and Severe Weather Warnings. By utilizing a regional approach, Three Rivers was able to negotiate a contract with a private vendor and standardize the service, including invoicing, signup, communications, and marketing, for the eight-county region. This approach also made the project financially feasible and affordable to the smaller counties. Three Rivers coordinated public informational meetings and promoted the service through various media outlets. Both the emergency and weather warning systems have been used, and these mass communication capabilities will continue to be a crucial tool in citizen awareness.

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The **Missouri Association of Councils of Government** (MACOG) engaged its 19 member regional planning commissions (RPCs) to complete the **Multi-Jurisdictional Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan for Missouri's Electric Cooperatives**. For each of the state's 47 cooperatives, an assigned RPC collected data, held planning meetings with stakeholders, and crafted a planning document that identified cooperative assets, specific hazard vulnerabilities, and prescribed mitigation strategies. These planning documents were assembled into one statewide planning document, and paired with overarching statewide data and mitigation strategies, to create a hazard mitigation plan encompassing the entirety of Missouri electric cooperatives. MACOG facilitated meetings between stakeholders, coordinated with state and federal agencies, and assisted individual RPCs throughout the project.

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In 2008, Tropical Storm Fay caused significant property damage in seven of the **North Central Florida Regional Planning Council's** 11 counties. In order to prepare the region to rebound economically from future natural disasters and to aid in a more rapid recovery effort, the council received funding from the EDA to complete the **North Central Florida Economic and Disaster Resiliency Study**. The study documents existing conditions in the 11 counties and reviews the potential impacts of a catastrophic event with respect to the regional economy. A vulnerability analysis identifies parcels at high risk from flooding and/or coastal storm surge, allowing for advance preparations. The council researched and wrote the plan, with assistance for hurricane forecast models from the Jacksonville Field Office of the National Weather Service.

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The **Community Economic Recovery Guidebook** provides economic development organizations, local civic leaders, elected officials, chambers and business support groups with a framework of action for local economic resiliency due to natural disasters. The **EDA Disaster Recovery Collaborative of Wisconsin**, led by the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC), partnered with four regional planning commissions on the project, including award applicant North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (NCWRPC). The guidebook connects disaster management functions with economic principles to identify key issues and suggest actions before and after disaster by providing a collection of case studies and best practice tools highlighting the scope of economic damage caused by floods. The manual's goal is to serve as a resource for designing better economic recovery efforts from future flooding.

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The City of Silex, Missouri is located in a floodplain that has experienced repeated flood losses, including a major impact by flash flooding in 2008. After this event, the **Boonslick Regional Planning Commission** (BRPC) helped create a vision for a community that was not susceptible to repetitive flooding. The **City of Silex Community Relocation Project** achieved this vision by relocating 73 residential properties to a new town site approximately one mile from the previous floodplain. Additional new construction, including the necessary infrastructure and 52 new homes in the community, added to the project's impact on the local economy. BRPC assisted the city by seeking and administering grant funds to offset the costs of the project and coordinating the individual needs and community relocation activities.

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The **Southwest Arkansas Planning and Development District** leveraged a variety of funding sources to develop a database using **Comprehensive GIS Data in Disaster Recovery**. The database contains locations of employers, public water and wastewater utilities, and other critical infrastructure. This data can be compared to tornado track data, or other geographic disaster information, to quickly estimate the likely number of impacted businesses and the number of employees affected by a disaster. It provides a valuable documentation of pre-disaster conditions and will be useful for affected communities seeking to repair or replace infrastructure. Other benefits include public awareness of pre-disaster mitigation activities, development of hazard mitigation plans, and improved economic resiliency of the region.

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INFRASTRUCTURE

The **Mid-East Commission** partnered with the **Greenville Utilities Commission** to complete the **Aquifer Storage and Recovery Project**, the first of its kind in North Carolina. The system uses innovative technology to ensure an adequate water supply to meet 20-year projected water demand needs at a reduced cost. Unprecedented multi-jurisdictional cooperation among 17 water utilities made it feasible to store in excess of 300 million gallons of drinking water underground, a regional solution to a potentially serious water shortage. The commission obtained financing for the project and facilitated communication among multiple communities. The project embodies a long-term, coordinated and collaborative approach to provide the necessary infrastructure to support regional economic development and now serves as a model for North Carolina.

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Credit: Mid-East Commission

The Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council implemented the **Regional Economic Adjustment Plan for Building Disaster Resilient Communities** (Regional EAP) that identifies capital improvement projects needed to address the region's infrastructure, flood control, and economic stability. The plan provides a framework for managing infrastructure, such as storm water systems. Land use characterization studies identify existing and projected future conditions over 10 to 20 years that may impact facility needs. To identify projects, the council created a scoring and priority system that will direct future investments. The Regional EAP also includes a regional centralized GIS database for projects and information on the 187 entities involved that will be available to the public and agencies within the region.

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PHYSICAL REDEVELOPMENT

The **First Tennessee Development District (FTDD)** facilitated a partnership with local governments and nonprofit agencies to address some of the issues with vacant, blighted, and foreclosed homes in three counties through the **Northeast Tennessee Neighborhood Stabilization Project**. Most of the funds, administered through FTDD from the HUD Neighborhood Stabilization Program, were used to rehabilitate housing in the areas of greatest need. The partnership acquired 17 homes that were vacant, foreclosed and/or blighted. These units were either demolished and rebuilt or totally rehabilitated and are now occupied. Additional blight reduction and demolition projects have created green space (which may be used for future development) and improved the appearance of a downtown area.

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Credit: Great Falls Development Authority

After decades of heavy industrial use, the 65-acre area of Great Falls, Montana along the Missouri River known as the West Bank was an eye sore. The **Great Falls Development Authority (GFDA)** partnered with the city on the **West Bank Redevelopment Project** to reconnect the area and help it reach its economic potential. The project began with a master plan and a brownfield assessment, followed by the establishment of the West Bank Urban Renewal District. Several major projects have since been completed, including a new federal courthouse and a hotel, with more retail, office space, and recreational facilities planned. GFDA received grants from the EDA and EPA and provided bridge loans to private developers, while tax increment financing funded public improvements.

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The **Picture Grovetown Urban Redevelopment Plan** provides a strategic five-year framework for abating conditions of slum and blight in center-city Grovetown, Georgia while creating a downtown core which has not previously existed. Led by the **CSRA Regional Commission**, the project combines aspects of redevelopment planning and downtown planning into a single process. Recommendations are supported by a model development plan that illustrates how residential and non-residential design goals can be implemented in the city. The plan not only provides the five-year implementation program, but also incorporates the graphic exhibits necessary to serve as a marketing tool for the community. The commission served as the sole project consultant responsible for preparation of the plan and its adoption by the city.

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The **Greenville Downtown Revitalization Project** brought new life to the once dormant downtown of Greenville, KY. The massive revitalization effort has included constructing new sidewalks, replacing deteriorated sidewalks, new lighting, restoring building facades, removing overhead utility lines, landscaping, and nature park development. Programmed events bring even more visitors into the area. These improvements, while enhancing the quality of life for area residents, have also spurred economic development and increased tax revenue through the opening of 14 new businesses in the downtown area, many in previously vacant buildings. **Pennyrile Area Development District** staff assisted the City of Greenville with grant application development, administrative services, financial structuring, and procurement activities.

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Credit: Pennyrile ADD

SUSTAINABILITY AND SMART GROWTH

The East Central Iowa Council of Governments (ECICOG) provided planning services for the development of **Linn County Strategic Growth Plans and Fringe-Area Agreements** between Linn County and four of its cities (to-date). Linn County, the second largest county in the state, has seen increasing growth in the last 20 years with development pressure extending beyond city limits into the rural fringe. By entering into these agreements, the new growth is managed through simple policies regarding subdivision and zoning approvals that promote incremental development. These inter-governmental agreements promote compact growth patterns, reduce public infrastructure costs, and encourage the retention of viable agricultural operations. ECICOG facilitated public meetings and mapping charrettes, developed and wrote plans, and assisted with the adoption process.

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Save-A-Ton is a regional environmental marketing program that seeks to be a one-stop portal to connect citizens of the region to local products and services to help them save money on energy costs. The **Roanoke Valley-Allegheny Regional Commission** coordinated with local governments to align environmental programs into a single, coherent marketing plan to maximize the use of media markets and public relations efforts, as well as local government staff time. The regional commission manages partnerships, website design and updates, and marketing for the program.

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WAYNE STRICKLAND, Executive Director: wstrickland@rvarc.org
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www.saveaton.org



Credit: Roanoke Valley-Allegheny Regional Commission

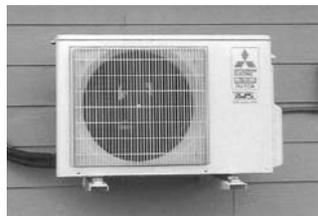
The Missouri Association of Councils of Government led the development of the Missouri Watershed Planning and Wastewater Study for communities of less than 5,000 across the state. Regional planning commissions surveyed communities in their respective jurisdictions and entered data into a web application for aggregation and analysis. The project assesses the existing conditions of municipal wastewater systems and provides an environmentally and economically sound plan for wastewater treatment and disposal over the next 20 years. The final community reports are designed to provide a “snapshot” of the existing system, a comparison of the system to others in the region and the state, and a forecast of future system capacity needs, options, and costs, with special consideration for facilities that discharge into sensitive watersheds.

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The South Central Oregon Economic Development District (SCOEDD) received stimulus funding through the Oregon Department of Energy for a **Woodstove Change Out Rebate Program** in the Klamath Falls and Lakeview areas to assist people who currently use old, inefficient wood stoves as a source of heat. The program offered a complete rebate for reasonably priced appliances for homeowners who qualify as low-income and a rebate of up to \$1,500 for all who qualify regardless of income. The primary goal of the program was to help bring the communities into compliance with air quality standards, and certified wood burning devices must meet EPA requirements for particulate matter emissions. SCOEDD coordinated with local vendors, assisted homeowners interested in participating, and managed paperwork and reimbursement for each replacement. Over 400 people participated in the program.



BEFORE



AFTER

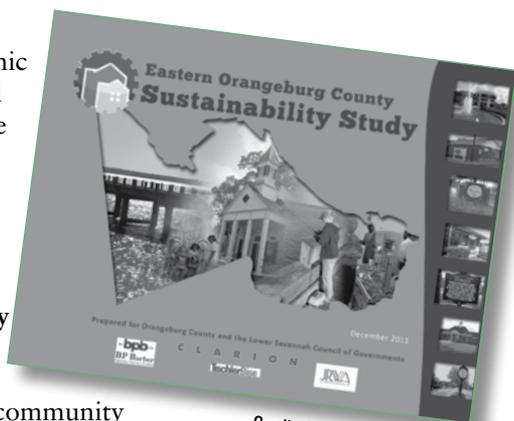
Credit: South Central Oregon EDD

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BETTY RILEY, Executive Director: betty@scoedd.org
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The **Capital Area Council of Governments** received funding from the Economic Development Administration to install and test smart meters on an energy internet as part of an emerging industry cluster in the Austin, Texas area. The **Pecan Street Innovation Cluster** is based in a mixed-use development where homeowners are driving demand for innovative solutions to monitor their energy use with software and systems that integrate multiple devices. In addition to reducing energy use, the smart grid also supports new clean energy businesses as the cluster develops and new technologies are tested.

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In anticipation of major economic growth in the next 20 years and the development of a 1,300-acre light industrial park expected to bring 7,000 jobs, the **Lower Savannah Council of Governments (LSCOG)** worked with Orangeburg County to create the **Eastern Orangeburg County Sustainability Study**. The project developed four critical tools for sustainable growth: a community assessment report, a fiscal and economic impact analysis, a sustainability study, and a toolbox for local governments to manage growth. The study also identifies sensitive natural and cultural areas and addresses the challenges of maintaining a rural quality of life along with major private investment. LSCOG secured a Community Development Block Grant, served on the project steering committee, and supported the development of the study.



Credit: Lower Savannah COG

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The **Appalachian Prosperity Project** is a collaborative partnership that uses a systems approach to simultaneously advance the inextricably linked fields of education, health, and prosperity. Examples of programs include bringing world-class executive education to Coalfield business leaders, piloting an innovative early language literacy intervention, and providing a bridge for engineering education. The **LENOWISCO and Cumberland Plateau Planning District Commissions (PDCs)** are members of this unique and powerful partnership that convenes public, private, and government agencies.” As a result of this collaboration, the executive directors of the LENOWISCO and Cumberland Plateau PDCs were invited to join the faculty of the University of Virginia College at Wise to coordinate with the Healthy Appalachia Initiative, and have also worked closely with the Virginia Coalfield Coalition.

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www.approject.org**

TECHNOLOGY AND DATA

The **Student Growth Estimation Models for the Catawba County School System** seek to measure and predict student population growth in the Catawba County school system. This information is used to determine the need for new school facilities, classroom additions, and changes to the boundaries of school districts. The model uses GIS technology with several data sources and indicators, including demographic and land use factors, to predict enrollment trends. The **Western Piedmont Council of Governments** initiated the pilot study at the request of county and school officials and continues to manage the project (the 2011 report represents the 11th time the model has been used). Over the last decade the results of the growth model have provided justification for investment in new schools and classroom additions, greatly reducing problems of overcrowding.

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The **Texoma Regional Economic Dashboard (TRED)** project is designed to provide an overall economic picture of a three-county region in North Texas. The **Texoma Council of Governments** collected various economic indicators from public data sources that will be analyzed and included in quarterly and annual reports that compare time periods and different geographic scales. An interactive dashboard tool with charts, graphs, and indicators of progress makes the data accessible for public consumption. TRED allows project partners and other interested parties to better understand the region's economy, plan for the future, identify strengths and weaknesses, and apply for grants to execute projects that improve indicators. Future studies will also contain the Southeast Oklahoma region to gain a comprehensive understanding of the entire Texoma laborshed.



Credit: Texoma COG

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<http://texomaedd.org/TEXOMA/Texoma-Regional-Economic-Dashboard-1>

The **Bluegrass Area Development District** developed a set of GIS tools that allows cities and counties to efficiently collect and maintain road sign inventory data. Since its implementation, the **Tool Set for Road Sign Inventory and Maintenance** has captured over 150,000 structure points which will help meet new federal guidelines for sign assessment and management, particularly regarding retroreflectivity. Using GPS technology, the system locates the position of a sign and the information associated with it and can generate reports to identify signs that need replacing or other testing. The ADD developed, implemented, tested, and distributed its customizable software to other jurisdictions and agencies by request, giving them an option to maintain a digital version of their sign inventory with minimal cost.

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The **Comprehensive Police Reporting System (CoPRS)** is a powerful new database and toolset that improves field efficiencies and helps solve crimes. Developed by the **Southern Georgia Regional Commission (SGRC)** for the Valdosta Police Department (VPD), it is a custom application that manages relationships between various elements of reports, such as witnesses and locations, with a new set of query tools and in-car interfaces. SGRC originally served as a technical advisor to VPD to identify needs and evaluate off-the-shelf applications, but led the creation of a custom program and acted as technical support as necessary modifications to the application were identified. SGRC continues to maintain the CoPRS servers and database, which reduce software costs and allow VPD to quickly retrieve comprehensive and relevant information.

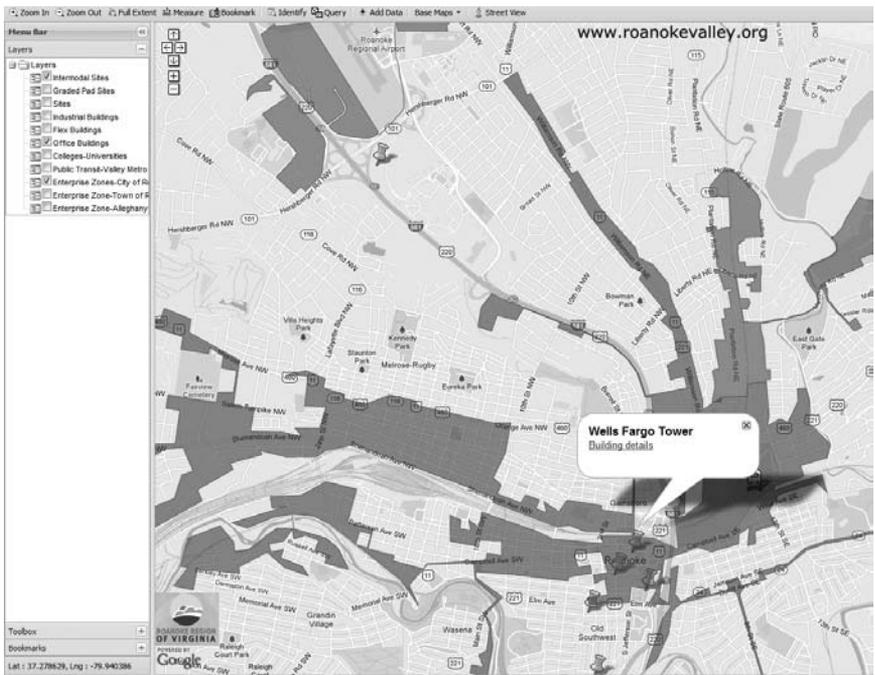
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The **Middle Georgia Regional Commission (MGRC)** developed the **Georgia Economic Development Fiscal Impact Model** to assist local governments with an estimation of the fiscal impact of economic development projects on local, regional, and state taxing jurisdictions. The model allows local and state decision makers to weigh the incentives offered to a company against the fiscal benefits of a company expanding or locating in their jurisdiction. MGRC compiled several data sources and developed a tool using Microsoft Excel to produce a concise report on the costs and benefits of each project. Projects across the state have used the model, which is easily adapted to different analyses and easily updated as new data becomes available. Future development plans include integrating the model into a more simplified web user interface.

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The Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission (RVARC) developed the Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Economic Development Map Tool, an online mapping system using open source software that can be used free of cost. The application can display GIS layers created by RVARC in GoogleMaps, giving economic development officials at the Roanoke Regional Partnership the ability to use the map tool to locate and view sites, buildings, parcels, and enterprise zones for internal reference and external marketing. RVARC staff updates the website as needed to add layers or make other minor changes.

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Credit: Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission

TRANSPORTATION

The **Mid-Minnesota Development Commission** facilitated the development of the **City of Willmar Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan** to identify gaps in the city's current system of trails. The plan identified major destinations and how they could be connected to the network plan (using trails and on-street routes) and addressed major safety concerns for pedestrians due to high traffic arterial streets. Willmar's police department provided valuable input in identifying safety concerns. One priority project has already been completed, with several others underway. Elements of the plan have been incorporated into other documents, including the comprehensive plan and a downtown development plan.

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The **East Central Intergovernmental Association (ECIA)** led an effort to improve the operations of the Jule transit system in the City of Dubuque, Iowa and help inefficient service adjust to years of regional growth and changing land use patterns. The **Smarter Travel Pilot Study** uses technology developed by IBM to collect anonymous data on how, when, and where volunteer participants travel within the community through smartphone and radio frequency identifier technology. The goal is to design a route system that will improve efficiency, increase ridership, and decrease vehicle miles traveled by implementing route optimization. ECIA staff played a crucial role in recruiting volunteers, aggregating and analyzing data, refining algorithms, and modeling travel demand. Once the first phase is complete, ECIA will revise the optimization recommendations for the pilot routes and the entire Jule system based on the newly gathered travel information.

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WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

The **Piedmont Triad Regional Council** partnered with area employers and community colleges to develop an **Advanced Manufacturing Academy** to make the region more competitive in the manufacturing sector. The project provides training to employees of local and regional manufacturers in a variety of areas, particularly where employers identified skill gaps. This partnership has allowed for identification of the necessary competencies, assessment of the existing workforce, development of a modularized training approach to build skills, and implementation of training for the workforce to deliver necessary skills along with industry-recognized certification and academic credit. Over 60 individuals have completed training, and more than 200 jobs have been created in the region.

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Recognizing a high percentage of the population lacked a post-secondary education, the **Western Piedmont Council of Governments** led the development of the **Future Workforce Alliance (FWA)** program for adult learners, those who may have dropped out of high school or been displaced from the workforce without transferrable skills. Armed with a vision and ambitious goals for the initiative, FWA has implemented a campaign that encourages adult learners to take control of their lives by re-engaging with education and provides critical supports that enable them to take those steps. Partnerships with three workforce development groups and several community colleges ensure regional collaboration and leadership. The initiative includes a multi-variable tracking system which monitors and evaluates model component efficacy, degree of practice adoption, and adult learner outcomes.

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Credit: North Central Wisconsin RPC

The **North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (NCWRPC)** aims to address an aging workforce in the forestry and wood products industry, which provides nearly one in five jobs in the region, with the **Wood Technology Center of Excellence**. The center, a 22,000-square-foot facility that opened in 2011, provides forestry workforce training to the next generation of skilled employees and will make the industry more competitive. Over 50 students enrolled in the first year, and regional firms also use the facility for staff training. NCWRPC, which facilitated the grant and initial development process, will maintain the center and provide continued educational programming. The project used grant funds to leverage a variety of funding from federal, state, county, and local sources.

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<http://www.ntc.edu/centers-excellence/wood-technology.html>**

The Northern Arizona Council of Governments (NACOG), anticipating the creation of new skilled jobs from investments in energy efficiency programs and the opening of new generating facilities, led the region in joining the State Energy Sector Partnership (SESP). SESP identified target occupations and new skill requirements that will allow Arizona residents to benefit from expanding energy industry sectors. NACOG and its partners, particularly community colleges, have developed training programs that lead to certification and employment and have helped with job placement by hosting job fairs and recruiting qualified SESP participants. Training focuses on skills in green energy, weatherization, and building performance.

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The Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester Council of Governments (COG) partnered with Trident Technical College (TCC) on **SC Works Trident and Trident Technical College Workforce Training Collaboration** to address workforce development issues in this three-county region in South Carolina. TCC offers approved occupational trainings, including Certified Production Technician certification through the Manufacturing Skills Standards Council. The COG communicates with area employers to understand their needs and provide information on this training to help them recruit qualified employees. Employers have the opportunity to interview candidates immediately following graduation, giving them access to a pipeline of skilled individuals. The program is effective in matching employers' needs with the participants' skills and making sure training leads to long-term employment.

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The South Delta Planning and Development District collaborated with several partners to provide job skills, career track, and business development training for unemployed or underemployed adults in the Mississippi Delta through the deployment of the Mobile Outreach Skills Training (MOST) program. An important partner is GE Aviation, which requires highly skilled workers for



Credit: South Delta PDD

manufacturing composite components for jet engines. The MOST program rapidly responds to GE's hiring and training needs, and the unique configuration of the Mobile Training Units allows flexibility in class sizes as hiring needs change. The PDD wrote the original grant and continues to manage other funding sources. Over 200 candidates have completed training and now work for GE Aviation, which has had a tremendous impact on the local economy and the surrounding counties.

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662-335-6889

<http://www.mostjobstraining.com>

The **Kerr-Tar Regional Council of Governments** received a planning grant to convene economic development partners to determine how to build a regional infrastructure for coordinating seamless workforce and economic development activities for the Research Triangle region of North Carolina. The resulting partnership, **Triangle Worksource** (TWS), supports regional business and economic development efforts for recruitment, expansion, and rapid response activities. TWS projects include a website to educate businesses about services, videos to promote the partnership, a regional candidate database, and job boards. Regular meetings allow business service representatives from all participating boards to coordinate on-the-job training opportunities, recruiting assistance, and candidate referrals for companies throughout the region.

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Maysville Community and Technical College (MCTC) received a grant to address the shortage of Registered Nurses (RNs) in the region, leading to the development of the **Increased Training for Regional Advancements in Nursing** (I-Train) program. Through this program, MCTC hired four new instructors for night and weekend classes. The **Buffalo Trace Area Development District** (BTADD) provided support for the Allied Health Care Case Manager position to guide the program's nontraditional students and enhance their success in obtaining their credential. The case manager is a member of the BTADD staff who meets with students, facilitates workshops, coordinates tutoring, and assists with interview techniques. While traditional RN programs have a graduation rate around 50 percent, 100 percent of students in the first cohort with access to these ongoing support services completed training.

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Many houseboat manufacturers in Wayne County, Kentucky faced drastic layoffs and plant closures through the economic downturn. A regional venture capital firm and the University of Kentucky School of Architecture worked together to develop the **Houseboat to Energy Efficient Residences** program, a creative way to address the need for improved energy efficient housing, utilization of an equipped manufacturing plant, and re-employment of a skilled and ready workforce. The **Lake Cumberland Area Development District** partnered in grant writing and administration of the project's funding. Architecture students have created prototypes for energy efficient houseboats, helping one business increase employment from 12 to 56 full-time staff. The project will potentially bring back 575 skilled houseboat builders and 1,000 related jobs in the region.

**DONNA DIAZ, Executive Director: donnad@lcadd.org
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YOUTH/EDUCATION

Today's Kids Under Attack is an innovative creation by the **South Plains Association of Governments'** (SPAG) law enforcement program staff. The program targets high risk youth with a pro-active approach to handling potential problems in school and home environments. Instructors present topics involving violence, teen suicide, damaging effects of video games, sexual assault, bullying, generational changes, and family issues. In addition to student training (over 6,000 youth have participated), the program also involves parents, social agencies, law enforcement officials, and school officials as part of the adult training component (over 250 participants to date). SPAG manages presentations, marketing, registration, and continuing education credit. The program has increased awareness of issues facing youth and has improved relationships between law enforcement and youth.

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The Forsyth County Real World Event's goal is to provide youth between the ages of 13 and 21 with the tools to be self-sufficient and successful in the real world. The youth must attend a budgeting class prior to the actual event, which covers the basics of planning a monthly budget to meet both needs and wants within a hypothetical income. At the event, participants visit booths where they must choose the best option in regards to their budget constraints. The Piedmont Triad Regional Council, a member of the planning committee, helps recruit youth, provides funding for the event, and assists with budgeting classes throughout the community. Approximately 175 – 200 youth participate in the event every year, which is supported by several partnerships.

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MATTHEW DOLGE, Executive Director: mdolge@ptrc.org
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The REDI College Access Program is the cornerstone of a program to increase educational attainment levels and improve workforce skill levels in rural West Tennessee. Mentors work in high schools across 11 counties to provide assistance to seniors on college exploration and the application and enrollment process. REDI focuses on first generation, economically disadvantaged students, but also works with any student. College Transition Coaches at two regional colleges help incoming REDI students transition to higher education and provide assistance with financial aid, tutoring, and other support services. The retention rate of REDI students is above average for both of the participating colleges. The Southwest Tennessee Development District serves as the parent organization for REDI staff and provides vision and leadership to the initiative.

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