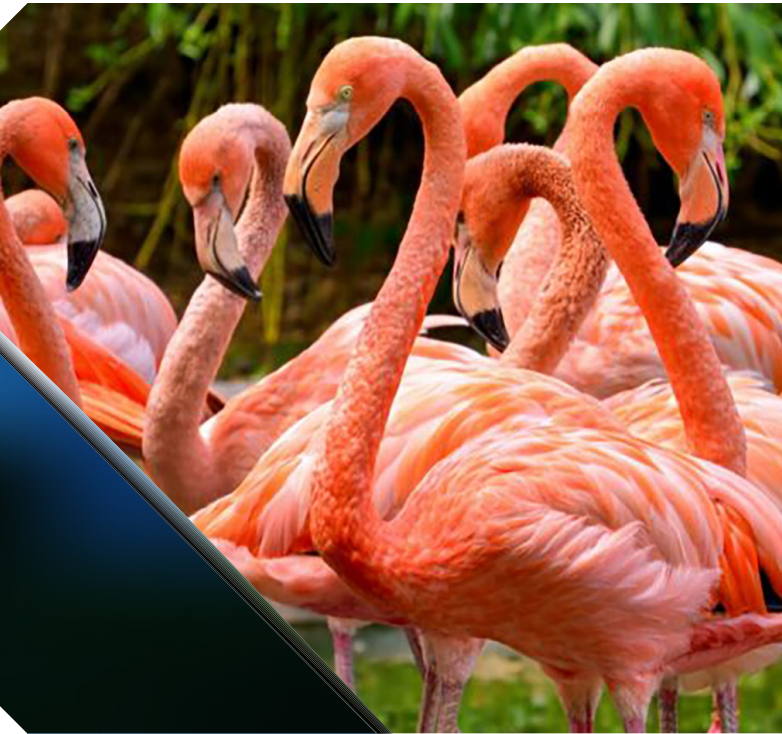


UPPER COASTAL PLAIN COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS



ANNUAL REPORT

FISCAL YEAR 2021-2022

SERVING EDGECOMBE, HALIFAX, NASH, NORTHAMPTON AND WILSON COUNTIES SINCE 1971

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE



I am pleased to present our Fiscal year 2021- 2022 Annual Report for Upper Coastal Plain Council of Governments (UCPCOG). This report contains valuable information about the many services and programs delivered in this region.

Fiscal Year 2021- 2022 has been another outstanding year of achievements and accomplishments. The UCPCOG Board of Directors have been engaged in setting the direction for the agency and working to promote regional collaboration and cooperation to address aging, economic development, infrastructure, and workforce development priorities.

I would also like to commend the UCPCOG board members and the staff for their rapid response to continue operations during the COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-19 required everyone to execute a rapid shift to virtual meeting technology in order to maintain ongoing operations and oversight. The UCPCOG board members quickly adapted to the new format, they have been active and engaged with subcommittees and new program initiatives, and their rate of attendance at regularly scheduled meetings has been outstanding.

The accomplishments of the Region during the last year are due in large part to the hard work of our staff. Superbly lead by our Executive Director, Robert Hiatt, the departmental staffs of Workforce Development, Area Agency on Aging, Planning and Development Services, Finance and General Administration have done an outstanding job. The UCPCOG won three national excellence awards for work in the Aging, Planning, and Workforce Departments, and several new initiatives have gotten underway.

The UCPCOG provided services to more than 10,000 area citizens and played a large role in regional food security by funding more than 139,000 meals to older adults. New grant awards were more than \$15 million, and there were 65 active planning projects underway during Fiscal Year 2021 – 2022. In addition, the Planning and Development Services Department administered approximately \$50 million of infrastructure grants on behalf of member governments in the region. The Workforce Development Department provided support to 350+ businesses in the region, supported more than 133 work-based learning opportunities, and provided over 100,000 workforce services to citizens and employers.

The UCPCOG will continue to look for new ways to improve its services, and to develop beneficial partnerships with private, public and non-profit sector organizations in the region. The UCPCOG will support the local and regional priorities of its member governments and continue to work on vital programs and projects that improve regional prosperity.

I am honored to serve as Chairman of the UCPCOG Board, and I look forward to working with our local governments and staff over the next fiscal year. We will continue to work on those areas where we can improve our value for our member governments and deliver critical services and programs to citizens within the region. Please join me in celebrating our 51st year of service to the citizens of our region, and a successful year ahead.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bobbie D. Jones".

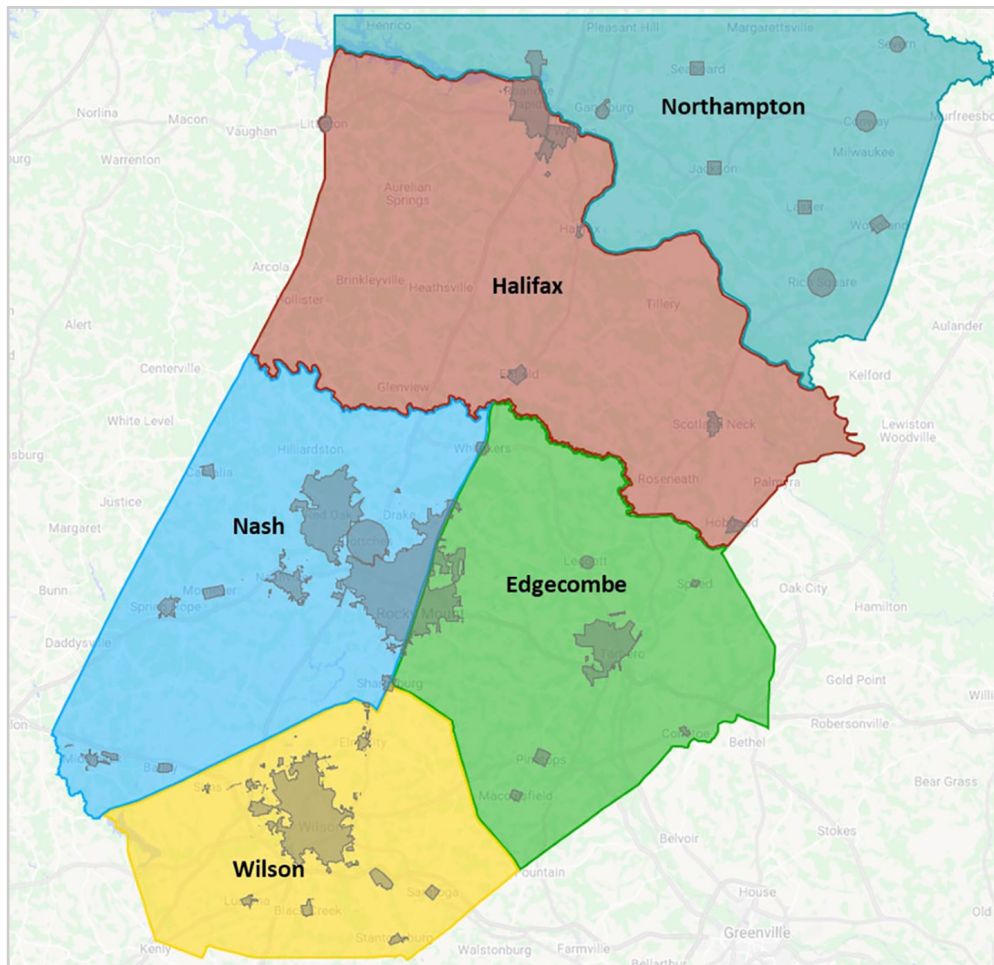
Chairman
UCPCOG Board of Directors

MISSION STATEMENT:

"The UCPCOG, which consists of the municipal and county governments of Edgecombe, Halifax, Nash, Northampton and Wilson Counties, is committed to successful regionalization; therefore, we plan, administer, and deliver quality state and federal programs and services for the benefit of our citizens."

VISION STATEMENT:

"The vision of the Upper Coastal Plain Council of Governments region which consists of Edgecombe, Halifax, Nash, Northampton and Wilson Counties and its municipalities is that all its citizens enjoy healthy, happy and productive lives for themselves and their families."

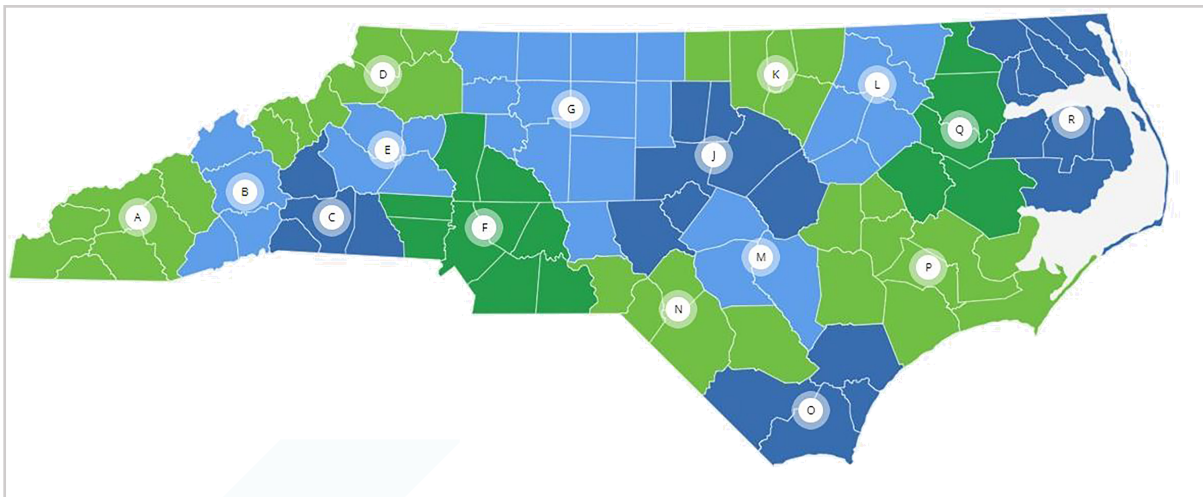


UCPCOG REGION

The Upper Coastal Plain Council of Governments is one of sixteen multi-county planning and development regions in the State. Regional Councils are governed by local public and private sector officials. The councils are funded in part by the member local governments. These Councils are forums where local officials determine priorities for the larger area of which their communities are integral parts.

Regional Councils provide a wide variety of services and programs including economic and community development assistance, job training, aging services, data and information, fiscal management, facilitation, and strategic planning. The Upper Coastal Plain Council of Governments (State Planning Region L) encompasses 2,707 square miles, a region population of 288,747 persons according to the 2020 Census.

Upper Coastal Plain Council of Governments is comprised of county governments and local municipalities in Wilson, Nash, Edgecombe, Halifax and Northampton Counties. The Board of Directors include one elected official from each member government and three non-elected members from each county. The Board is responsible for establishing policy and providing direction and guidance to the staff. The Board meets bi-monthly to consider items of importance to the regional community.



NORTH CAROLINA PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT REGIONS

The UCPCOG works with a wide variety of partner organizations to coordinate aging, planning and community development, and workforce services throughout the five county region. Regional coordination and cooperation ensures that services are successfully delivered, and creates opportunities to leverage new funds for member governments.



Every \$1 in local government dues returned \$133 in state or federal funds to the region!



10,000+ Citizens Served



133 Entered WorkBased Learning



139,644 Senior Meals Served



121,853 Workforce Services Provided
356 Businesses Directly Supported



21,328 Transportation Trips



100 Information Workshops



65 Active Planning Projects



Administering \$50 Million in Projects



\$15.9 Million in Grant and Funding Awards

UCPCOG REGIONAL IMPACT FY 2022

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION STAFF



ROBERT HIETT,
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



KELLY SKINNER,
EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT

The logo for the Turning Point Workforce Development Board features a stylized diamond shape composed of several overlapping triangles in shades of blue, green, and grey. Below this graphic, the text "TURNING POINT" is written in a large, blue, serif font, and "WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD" is written in a smaller, blue, sans-serif font below it.

TURNING POINT

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD

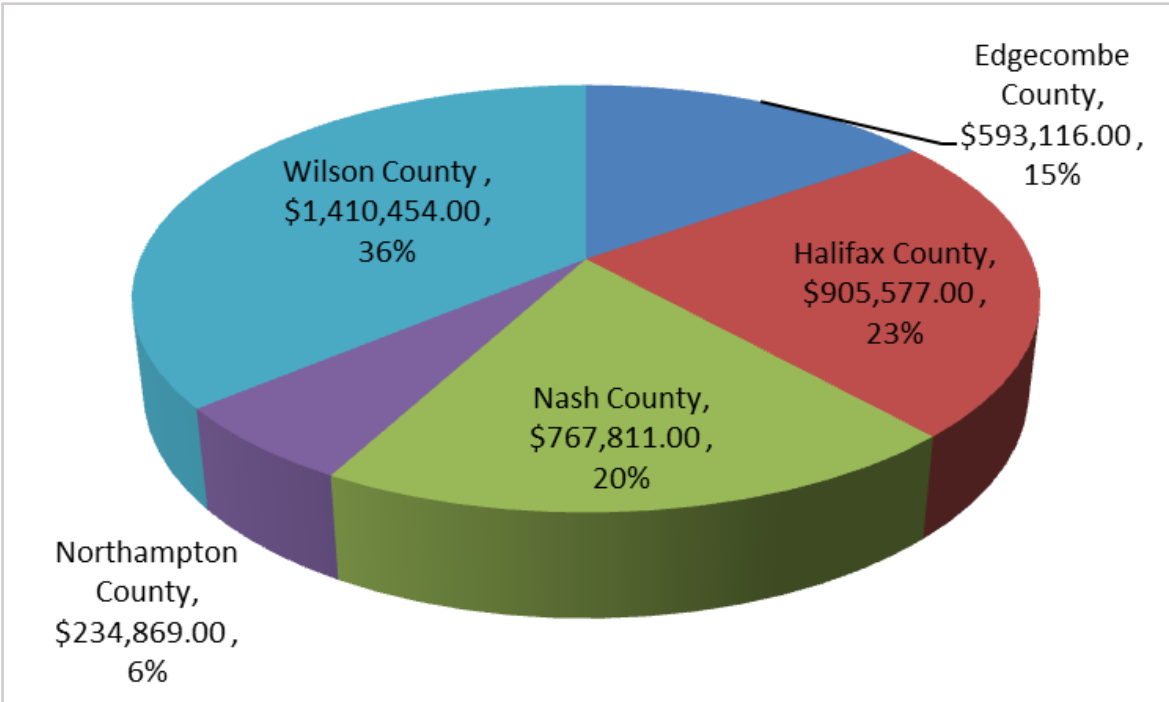
Turning Point WDB programs train citizens for high demand careers within our region, and works with area businesses to develop a talent pipeline. Upper Coastal Plain Council of Governments administers the program, and Turning Point Workforce Development Board provides program oversight.

The role of the Turning Point Workforce Development Board is to:

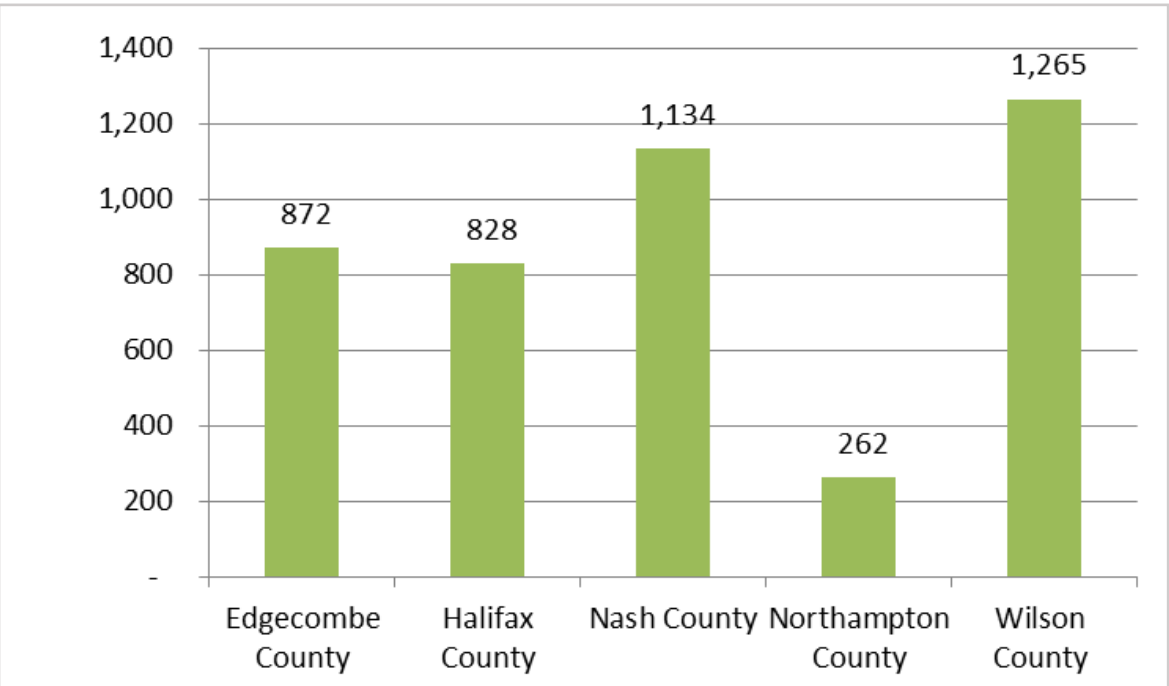
- *Be the convener of conversation and center of community/regional leadership to identify workforce challenges;*
- *Work in collaborative partnership with key stakeholders, (especially economic development and education);*
- *Bring resources to assist in resolving workforce challenges; and*
- *Act as the accountability agent to ensure the work is completed.*

Turning Point WDB utilizes tools such as NCWorks.gov online and Labor/Economic Analysis Division (LEAD) data to annually approve the region's high demand skill occupations. As a result, 4,361 Adults/Dislocated Worker citizens were served and 74.70% entered employment. The Integrated Service Delivery (ISD) system average median earnings outcome is \$6,566. Turning Point NextGen enrolled 235 in the youth programs funded by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) in which 81.7% entered employment (subsidized/unsubsidized), 74.80% retained employment through the 4th quarter after exit, 14 entered Post-Secondary Education and 102 received their High School Diploma/GED.

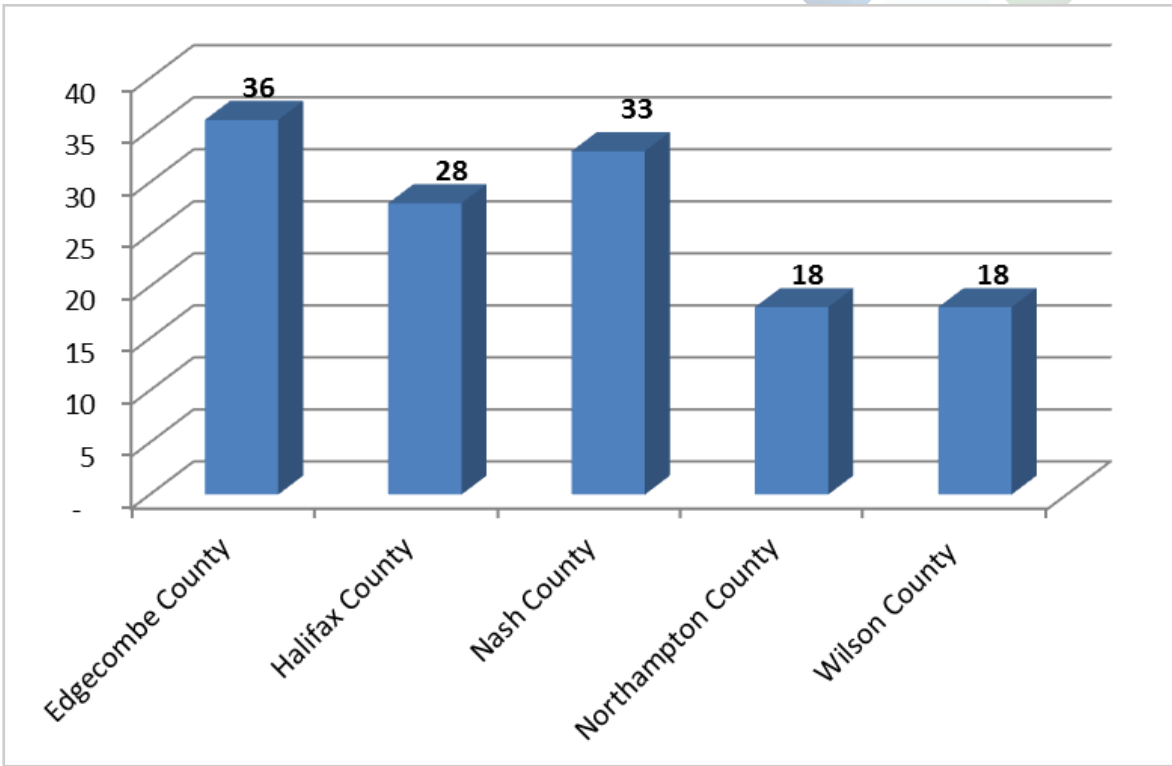
FY21-22 Expenditures by County



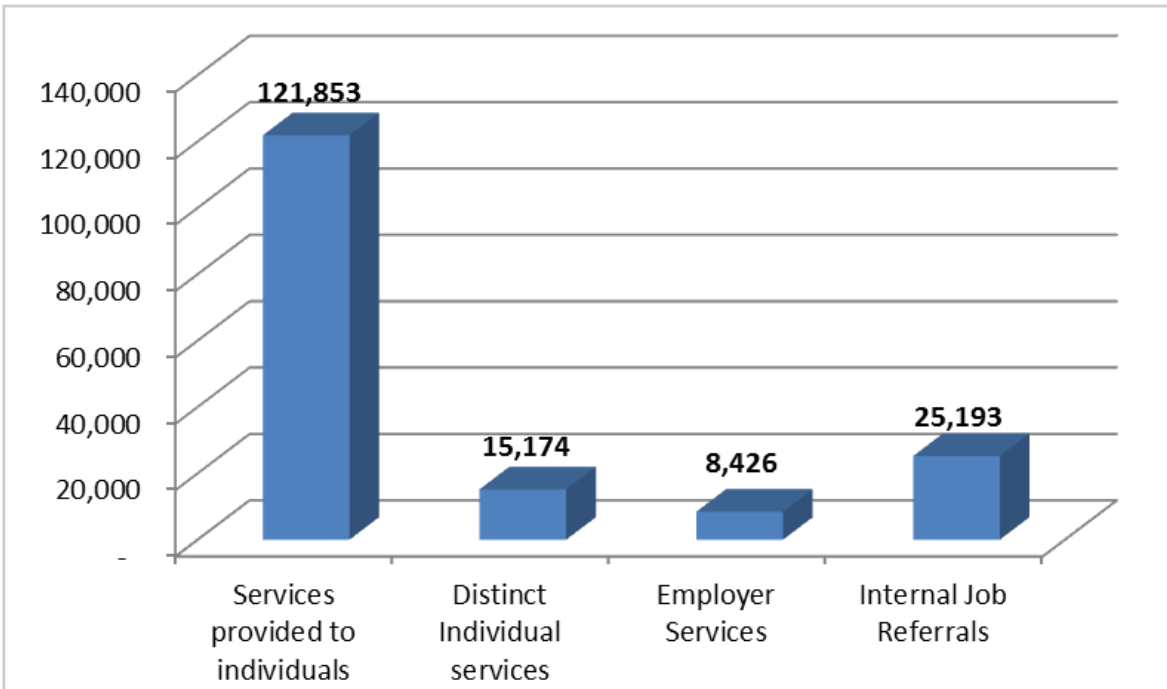
Program Services Provided



Work-Based Learning by County



Program Services Provided



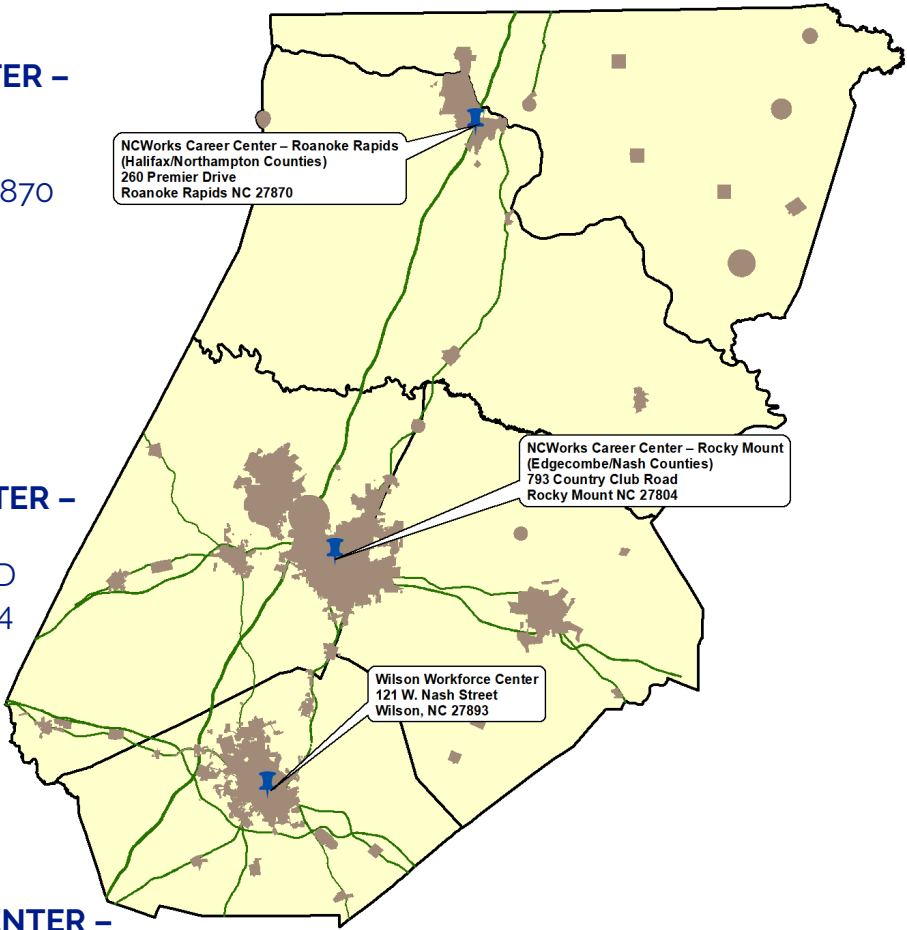


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NCWORKS CAREER CENTER – ROANOKE RAPIDS
406 PREMIER BLVD.
ROANOKE RAPIDS, NC 27870
(252) 537-4188

NC WORKS CAREER CENTER – ROCKY MOUNT
793 COUNTRY CLUB ROAD
ROCKY MOUNT, NC 27804
(252) 977-3306

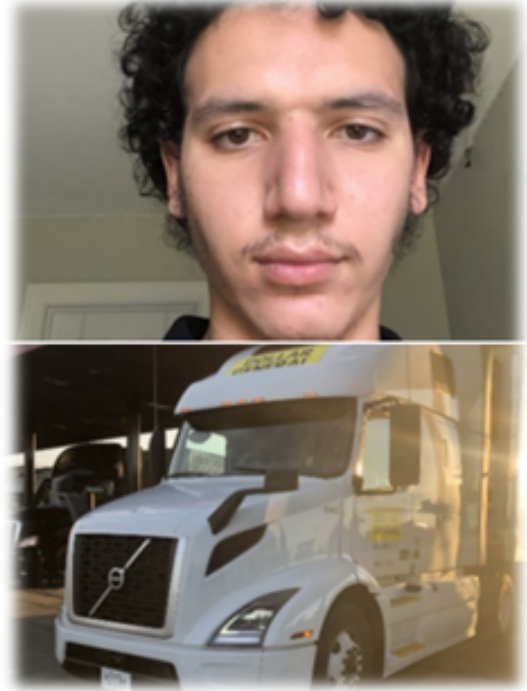
WILSON WORKFORCE CENTER – WILSON
121 W. NASH STREET
WILSON, NC 27893
(252) 281-6387



Workforce Development At its Finest

Bilal Bounemia

As a young man Bilal Bounemia was determined to make things better for himself and change his career path. After being unemployed since October 2021, he realized he needed assistance and scheduled an appointment to see a Career Advisor at the NCWorks Career Center in Wilson, NC. Together, they identified a career pathway through WIOA and developed a plan that Bilal could navigate to new opportunities and career possibilities. Though young, Bilal was eager, determined, and dedicated to making this plan work and pursue a career in the Trucking and Transportation Industry. The support of his family and friends motivated him even more! His lifelong friend's uncle introduced him to trucking, and Bilal occasionally accompanied him over the road on trips. This experience enlightened him into the dream of becoming a Truck Driver, which opened his vision to a brand-new spectrum of opportunities. Shifting to a new paradigm that would eventually change his life, Bilal attended his CDL Class A training with A2Z Trucking Academy in Wilson, NC. His passion and drive for this chosen training helped him finish as one of the top students in his class.



After successfully completing his training and earning the credential of a CDL Class A license, Bilal had completed the first phase of his plan and was one step closer to becoming self-sufficient. He had gained new skills and obtained the credential necessary to not only find a job, but securing a "Chosen Career". With this new qualification, Bilal immediately reaped the benefits and had several interviews lined up in which he was hired in less than three weeks with Family Dollar. Mr. Bounemia started his new career as a Truck Driver in the Trucking and Transportation Industry earning wages of \$25.00/ hour.

Bilal is very thankful for the opportunity that was created through WIOA and the guidance, encouragement, and counseling from his Career Advisor and the other Wilson Staff. He was excited and happy to say:

"I am so thankful for the WIOA program in providing the necessary funding that allowed me to achieve my goal. If they hadn't taken a chance on me, my window of opportunity and vision wouldn't had happened this soon."

"Congratulations" to Bilal Bounemia for achieving his vision and being a prominent reason why Workforce Development is essential to the communities we serve.



TURNING POINT WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD



OIC OF ROCKY MT



UPPER COASTAL PLAIN COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

Workforce Development At its Finest

Youth
Next Gen

The Future Starts Here.

ANTONIO

Antonio enrolled into the NextGen program through Weldon City Schools of Halifax County in June 2021. When Antonio enrolled, he faced barriers that blocked the pathway to success academically and developmentally. He and his siblings were adopted at an early age. During the time of transition, he experienced social, emotional, and physical obstacles before being placed within a supportive foster family that provided the foundation of morals and values that encouraged success.

Through his participation in the WIOA, his social, emotional, and developmental skills grew exponentially. He learned essential skills through Pre-Employment Training where a Career Advisor assisted him in completing job applications, resumes, and interviewing concepts. With Adult Mentoring and Financial Literacy, Antonio learned the importance of positive social interactions, academic excellence, and financial stability through career choices. The present barriers were slowly being dismantled and Antonio understood that his journey to becoming successful would not be a sprint, but a marathon run of timing, dedication, discipline, and hard work.

A Career Advisor enrolled him into Work Experience (WEX) to assist in developing more workforce knowledge, skills, and abilities. Antonio worked at Weldon Elementary Global Academy as an Office Assistant where he assisted with various types of hands-on tasks and activities. Antonio gained a fresh perspective on the goals he needed to achieve next!

Antonio began to improve academically with guidance through NextGen services and graduated from High School in May 2022, with the honor of Class Salutatorian! In addition, Antonio is enrolled in the Summer Bridge program at NC State, where he will attend this Fall in pursuit of an Engineering Degree and is currently employed at Applebee's as a Sanitation Specialist. Antonio's determination truly exemplifies the phrase "adversity fuels success". However, with all he has learned the most exciting part is, the best is yet to come for Antonio!



TURNING POINT WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD



WELDON CITY SCHOOLS



UPPER COASTAL PLAIN COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

Workforce Development At its Finest

Youth Next Gen

NextGen Greatness

Opportunities Industrialization Center (OIC) of Rocky Mount has operated The Leadership Academy for 15 years, serving youth in Nash and Edgecombe Counties. It is an honor to see the NextGen students grow in leadership, academics, and life throughout the years. However, the 2022 graduating class has been exceptionally rewarding. For the first time in the history of the OIC Leadership Academy, 28 Seniors graduated from High School. In addition, this occasion is momentous as it was achieved while navigating school and life during the world-altering COVID 19 Pandemic. During the school year, the youth expressed that they were struggling academically during Virtual Learning at home.

The Case Managers collaborated and came up with the great idea of starting a Virtual Learning Experience by rotating small groups of students daily in a designated computer lab. This lab was available to help the students return to the environment of classroom learning. The youth took initiative to come to the OIC to log on to their courses with their various schools. This offered students the support needed to maintain passing grades. Case Managers were able to provide students with Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling, Tutoring, Study Skills Training, Instruction, feedback, and encouragement to help navigate assignments and courses. Students were able to focus, work hard, improve grades, and rebound from the threat of failure. Some students received scholarships, graduated with honors, and enrolled into college for the fall.

This is just a reflection of the many barriers that were dismantled by the NextGen program during a time when the youth needed guidance the most. The Turning Point Workforce Development Region will remember the 28 Seniors, Class of 2022 accomplishments as Trailblazing, Talented, Persevering, Tenacious NextGen Youth! "Well Done" and "CONGRATULATIONS" to all of them, as they move forward to change the future for the better!



TURNING POINT WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD



OIC OF ROCKY MT



UPPER COASTAL PLAIN COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

QVC - NATIONAL DISLOCATED WORKER



Pictured: Rapid Response Team: Lead by the Turning Point Workforce Development Board Pictured L to R: Diane Thomas NC Works-RMT, Andrae Howard Veteran Rep. DWS/NC Works, Burwell Stark NC Works Wilson, Carisa Rudd Turning Point WDB, Frince Williams Turning Point WDB, Duna Long Turning Point WDB Seated: Sharon Williams NC Works RMT, Taylor Hawkins NC Works Roanoke Rapids

Not pictured: State Partners: Antwon Keith DES-UI, Chinita Arceneaux DES-UI, Yolanda Farrington, Commerce/DWS

The Turning Point Workforce Development Board partnered with NC Works and the Rocky Mount Event Center to assist dislocated workers of the Rocky Mount QVC Facility, which ended numerous careers in December 2021. 340 QVC employees attended, with 38 employers. Prior to this in-person event, a virtual hiring event was also held with 68 employers and over 100 QVC employees participating.

The Turning Point Workforce Development Board Business Services team is the lead in Rapid Response services for this employer, working in collaboration with QVC (the employer), and the Edgecombe County Manager's office since the tragic fire in December 2021 destroyed a large part of the building. Staff remained in contact with the Department of Commerce/DWS to update the State on efforts in the Local Area, as well as other partners in the Region.

Numerous resources have been offered including meals, donations, job opportunities, access to programs for financial assistance, etc. Staff, County Management and others have provided requested updates to the media regarding this ongoing situation. Several months after this tragic situation, partners continue to reach out to the Turning Point Workforce Development Board to offer additional resources or ways to assist those that need further assistance. Many are now re-employed with several employers still in the Turning Point Region. Some have found employment in neighboring Regions, which is encouraged as we work to promote Board to Board, Region to Region collaboration if it is in the best interest of the client. The Business Services Team of Turning Point has worked collaboratively with counterparts in other Local Areas as they reach out to continue efforts to assist those that have now exhausted Unemployment, severance or have decided not to retire.

The partnership between the Turning Point Local Area and the QVC Management team has been very successful across state lines to ensure information could reach former teammates. Efforts to provide career services, training, etc. to dislocated workers will continue into the near future. As a result of the efforts led by this team, a National Dislocated Worker Grant (NDWG) was federally released to allow further funding aside from programs typically offered in Workforce Development Board areas. Staff and partners are currently working on outreach to dislocated workers to visit the NC Works Career Centers to find out how to access more resources. Numerous employers continue to support these efforts by seeking to recruit and even hire workers. The Board anticipates continued success with these efforts.

INNOVATION: RE-ENTRY PROGRAM



Brief Project Summary:

Citizen reentry poses many challenges for formerly incarcerated individuals and their communities of residence. These challenges include, among others, securing and retaining jobs, identifying, and renting affordable housing, accessing educational and other social services, and public fears and concerns about safety and recidivism. As such, the partnership of Turning Point Workforce Development Board (TPWDB), Center for Energy Education (C4EE) and The Family Resource Center South Atlantic (FRCSA) is built on evidence-based models and practices that have shown effectiveness to help returning citizens thrive in their families, communities, and the workforce. Our goal is to provide long term employment in high demand fields, with an emphasis on the Solar Energy field for justice-involved residents of Halifax County.

In 2019, the partnership identified Halifax County as an ideal location for reentry work based on the North Carolina Public Safety statistics. Leaders from the partnership (TPWDB, C4EE and FRCSA) talk about the state of the Halifax reentry roundtable. At that time, the Halifax reentry roundtable needed help to organize and have consistent meetings. The FRCSA applied for two reentry-focused grants to run two programs in Halifax County: The New Start Glow program (funding via Golden LEAF Foundation), and the New Start Pathway Program (funded through the US Department of Labor).

FRCSA and TPWDB worked together to revitalize the Halifax reentry roundtable. FRCSA became acting co- chair of the Halifax reentry roundtable. The New Start director has been organizing and facilitating the reentry roundtable meetings since 2020. One of the challenges faced was the stigma of hiring justice-involved persons. On April 20th, 2022, New Start Glow, the Center for Energy Education, and the Turning Point Workforce Development Board hosted a job fair with Evaluated Staffing, a solar hiring company. The job fair resulted in 15 participants being hired to work in various solar companies, which was a 150% increase in solar company hires. With this new partnership, we are excited and confident that we will continue to increase solar-based employment for our participants.

What was your organization's direct role in the project:

Upper Coastal Plain Council of Government's workforce development department, Turning Point Workforce Development Board, served as the point of contact, convener of partners, promoted strategies to encourage life-long learning and improve workforce skills, and assisted in the development of new training programs to benefit the region's workforce. Turning Point WDB provided recruitment of jobseekers through our local NCWorks Career Center integrated service that were suitable for the project. Also, Turning Point WDB Business Service team connected business/industry champions in need of qualified skilled workers. Turning Point WDB provided financial assistance for training with Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act funds (WIOA).

TURNING POINT WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT STAFF



AMY BROWN



MICHAEL WILLIAMS,
TPWD DIRECTOR



DUNA DICKINSON LONG



BRIAN ATKINSON



SUSAN PHIPPS



CARISA RUDD



ROSE MOTLEY-SUMNER



FRINCE WILLIAMS

FAMILY CAREGIVER



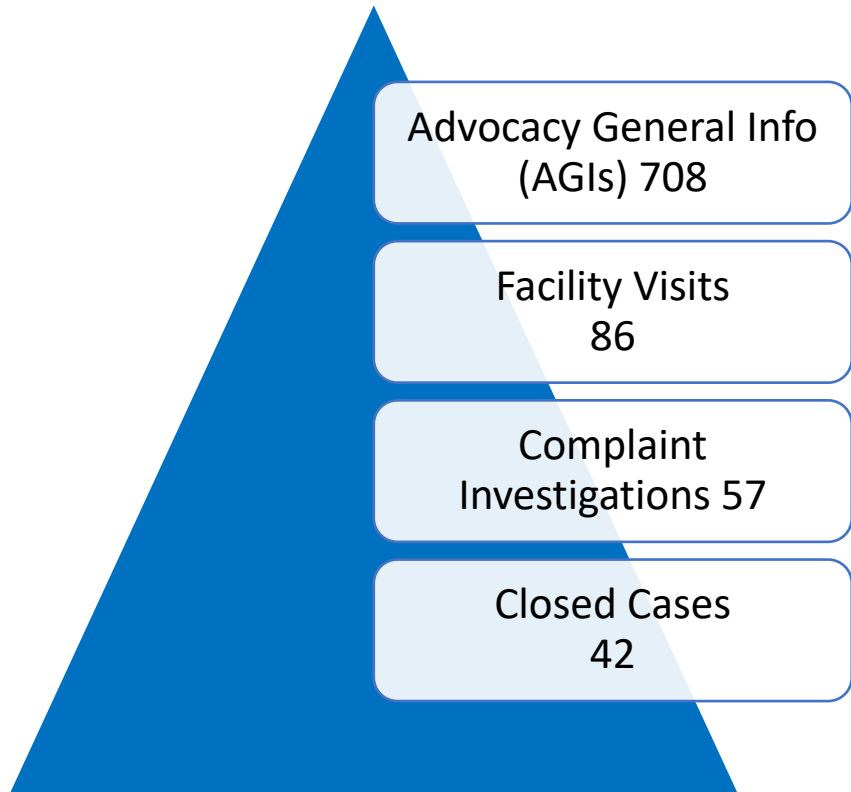
OMBUDSMAN PROGRAM



ANETTA BROWN
LTC OMBUDSMAN



TYRONDA WHITAKER
LTC OMBUDSMAN



HOME & COMMUNITY CARE BLOCK GRANT



LINDA BARFIELD,
ASSISTANT
AGING PROGRAM
DIRECTOR



139,644

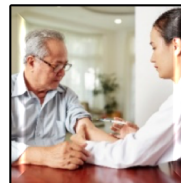
- Number of Meals Served



MICHAEL STANFORD,
AGING PROGRAM
SPECIALIST

55,450

- Hours of In Home Aide Service

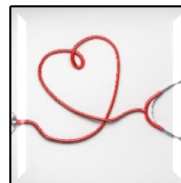


21,328

- Medical & General Transportation Trips

2,879

- Hours of Adult Day Health/Care

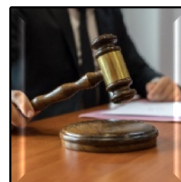


3,187

- Number of Senior Center Participants

1,032

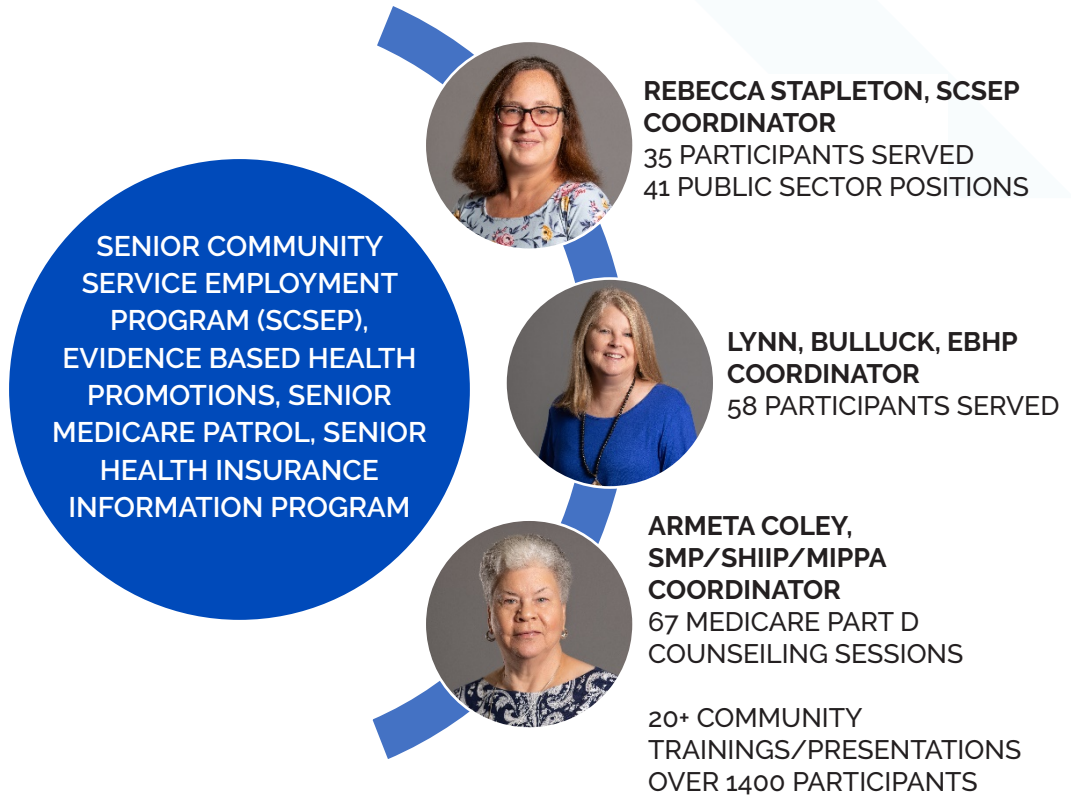
- Hours of Legal Services



41

- Housing & Home Improvement Services

OTHER AAA PROGRAMS & NEW INITIATIVES



COVID-19 VACCINE OUTREACH:



Dawn Tillery is the newest addition to the AAA team. She is the COVID-19 Vaccine Outreach Coordinator and has conducted outreach through educational packets, mass mailings, live presentations, radio ads/ interview, health fairs/covid events as well as newspaper articles. She will continue to provide educational information, ads and attend events in which COVID-19 information can be shared until the program ends on 9-30-2022. Since November of 2021, there have been 331,624 contacts made via live outreach and other methods of outreach.

Dawn Tillery, Aging Program Specialist

NADO AWARD - RESILIENT LEADERS INITIATIVE

UCPCOG AAA is part of the Resilient Leaders Initiative which is a 9-month accelerator program that provides resources and expertise to public agencies to implement practices that support healing from trauma and stress and is based in rural communities.

We serve older relatives as caregivers who are now responsible for raising relative minor children who have experienced trauma and whose parents are no longer actively caring for them. The children may be demonstrating behaviors that the caregivers do not have experience dealing with. We are learning about and providing tools that will help the caregivers be more successful in this journey. In addition, we hope to provide the children with tools to overcome generational cycles of trauma. We have spent time exploring trauma-informed learning and resilience tools while examining our own practices in our organization and are in the process of designing a little bet (or a way to first try an idea in a small way, so we can get feedback quickly and make fast improvements) to implement within the Family Caregiver program. We have already begun to implement small lessons learned along the way, like using empathy interviews to collect information of program effectiveness and we invited Rural Opportunities Institute (ROI) to present and bring awareness of adverse childhood experiences (ACES) and trauma during our annual aging conference. Many on our team have participated in the "Reconnect for Resilience Training" offered by the ROI and Resources for Resilience. We plan to implement and share the tools learned in the Reconnect for Resilience trainings in various meetings, trainings, and events. Other changes will be considered and implemented to ensure that all programs incorporate trauma-informed care as we continue the learning process provided during the Resilient Leaders Initiative.

We have been engaged in a human-centered design process and are receiving support from coaches and Rural Opportunity Institute. We are currently in phase 2 of the initiative. We are reimagining processes and trying out little bets that lead to healing. We are becoming more knowledgeable of strategies for healing and recovery from trauma and are working to advance equity in our projects and team.

This program has supported our region's vision for economic development and improved quality-of-life by teaching us to implement human-centered designed little bets that can improve the resilience of individuals and communities and help to leverage additional funding to continue the healing of ACES and trauma endured by so many within our region; thereby, positioning individuals to lead their most healthy and productive lives. By facilitating healing, reconciliation and collaboration across diverse organizations and communities, we can continue to "develop assets, skills, and technologies from local to regional levels, creating value greater than the sum of individual parts," as indicated in goal one of the regional CEDS. Additionally, this process will lead to revitalized, healthy, and resilient communities that will develop talented and innovative people (goals three and four of the current CEDS).



Mary Marlin, Aging Program Director

The Planning and Development Services (PDS) department works to improve our region by providing planning, economic, and community development services to member local governments and partners at the local and regional levels. Work is primarily focused on the Region's 5-year Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. This year included a strong focus on providing American Rescue Plan Act local fiscal recovery fund technical assistance and redeveloping the region's CEDS (CEDS 2023-2027).

Planning and Development Services provides:

- Project Planning & Management
- Grant Development & Administration
- Infrastructure Planning & Implementation
- Mapping, GIS, & Data Services
- Land Use, Zoning & Ordinance Support
- Convening & Facilitation

PRIMARY VISIONS

Ensure all residents of the Upper Coastal Plain region have the resources necessary to lead a healthy and prosperous life

Bolster the region's ability to train, develop, and foster its diverse and talented population

Generate community wealth throughout the Upper Coastal Plain region

SERVICE AREAS

Planning

Economic Development

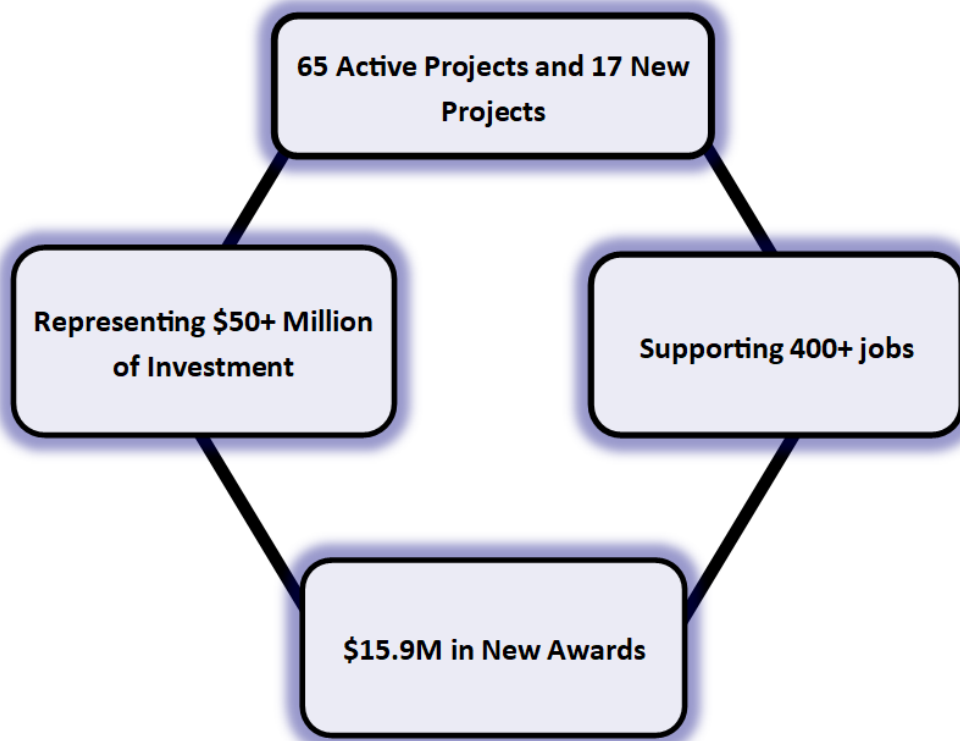
Community Development

Disaster Recovery & Resiliency

Grant and Loan Sampling:

- Brownfields and Land Revitalization
- Community Development Block Grant
- Community Foundations
- NC Department of Environmental Quality
- NC Department of Commerce
- Economic Development Administration
- Environmental Protection Agency
- Parks & Recreation Trust Fund
- Recovery & Resilience
- USDA – Rural Development
- And more

PDS FY 2022 IMPACT



Planning & Development Staff



BEN FARMER
PDS DIRECTOR



ALEXIS WHITLEY



BETSY KANE



HELEN PAGE



MARY JANE
LYONNAISE



RON TOWNLEY



TIRENCE HORNE

PDS efforts supporting economic development, infrastructure, community development, and human development were significant this year, totaling \$15,926,929 in new funds brought into the region. Of that funding, over \$14.08M was received supporting 10 local projects, and \$1.85M was received for regional efforts. Overall, sixty-five (65) total projects were active during the year, of which 15 are in development, 41 are ongoing, and 9 are completed or in the process of closing out. Many projects have numerous funders and sub-projects within. Efforts are estimated to support over **400 area jobs**.

Fourteen of our 41 municipalities received critical water and/or sewer infrastructure assistance on 27 separately funded projects. Three of these projects were new with over **\$2.1M** in new funding. Six projects were completed during the year and 12 additional projects are in pre-award development **seeking over \$50M in funds** to meet local needs. PDS also doubled the number of towns receiving assistance in our housing replacement program, going from 5 to 10 towns, while maintaining continued deep involvement with Princeville's comprehensive recovery efforts from Hurricane Mathew, including a pending **BRIC award for \$12M that is not included** in the above summary numbers.

PDS Regional Projects

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDs) Development: UCPCOG was designated as an Economic Development District (EDD) by the United States Department of Commerce - Economic Development Administration (EDA) on June 26, 1996. This designation allows member local governments and allies across the region to access EDA funds for public works and other projects in an effort to leverage job creation, community development, regional infrastructure, and workforce development projects of regional concern. A key benefit for the UCPCOG/EDD members and allies is funding to create and maintain for the five-county region an economic development strategy, entitled the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDs). The CEDs is reviewed annually and substantially updated every five years in order for the UCPCOG to maintain the EDD designation, provide priority access federal funding, and, most importantly, help guide the region toward sound and sustainable growth.

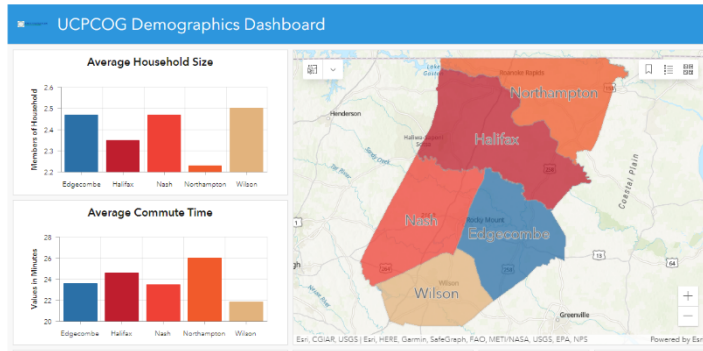
Work began to redevelop the region's 5-year CEDs this year. The UCPCOG Board of Directors, also the CEDs Advisory Committee, appointed a CEDs Strategy Development Group which convened several times to begin redeveloping the CEDs. The current CEDs, CEDs 2022, will be actively implemented by PDS until the new CEDs is adopted by the CEDs Advisory Committee. The new CEDs (CEDs 2023-2027), will be available on UCPCOG's website once adopted.



TRI-COG FEEDS

Local Food: UCPCOG received a \$311,500 grant award from EDA for its Tri-COG Food Ecosystem Economic Development Study (Tri-COG FEEDS) Economic Adjustment Assistance grant application, which funds a \$397K mega-region local food system

supply chain effort in partnership with Triangle J and Kerr Tar COGs. The Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust awarded the matching funds. To lead this effort, a Food Systems Regional Planner joined the PDS Department, a new position focused primarily on this project. Once a lead consultant is procured, advisory committee members (partners from each region and each sector of the food system) will guide the project and ensure that the economic food system models are impactful, sustainable, and feasible. The Food Systems Regional Planner will also develop other local and regional projects to meet the region's visions and needs.



Disaster Recovery & Resilience:

The EDA CARES Act Award scope of work was completed this year. PDS leveraged the \$400,000 to attract and seek additional funds for local and regional projects and to develop an online regional data center. Projects developed with support of this EDA investment include five affordable housing grants, seven water/wastewater grants, two digital

inclusion/broadband grants, and three economic development grants. The regional data center provides a public-facing information portal and a member government portal for hosting online GIS maps. The data center can be accessed on UCPCOG's website.

Member government ARPA technical assistance was provided throughout the year. Work continued on building a member government ARPA resource page, determining what technical assistance member governments require to successfully administer and expend their ARPA local recovery funds, accessing the US Treasury final rule on ARPA, and working closely with the state partners to educate and utilize appropriated ARPA funds. Dozens of member governments relied on PDS's ARPA technical assistance in preparing their first required federal report and in determining appropriate uses for ARPA funds. A Senior Regional Planner was hired to lead the ARPA technical assistance effort, which will occur throughout the ARPA fund timeline at no cost to member governments. PDS's ARPA efforts include convening the region around issues of highest importance and providing training opportunities for local governments and their partners.

Broadband: The Upper Coastal Plain Broadband Task Force continued to meet this year on a quarterly basis to share information and ideas related to broadband infrastructure expansion and digital equity and inclusion. The EDA grant that initially funded the task force was completed, but focus will remain on the topic as new funding opportunities are released.

The Enfield Broadband Study, funded by Rural LISC and administered by PDS, is well under way as CTC Technology and Energy collects data and interviews stakeholders throughout Enfield and the surrounding areas. The study will focus on Enfield's unique public safety connectivity needs and will lead to a generalizable "mini-playbook" for the benefit of other communities in and beyond the region. Rural LISC recognizes this effort as a capacity building opportunity for PDS, which will likely lead to additional broadband projects.

Brownfields: PDS continued administration and implementation of the EPA Brownfields Assessment grant to address priority sites for Coalition member governments. Previously, UCPCOG applied for and received a new \$300,000 EPA Assessment Grant Award to address the JAECO and Westpoint Stevens (Sonrise) sites in Roanoke Rapids, the M&M Grill in Littleton, and other potentially contaminated sites with redevelopment potential.

- JAECO Phase 1 Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) is complete.
- M&M Grill Phase 2 work including asbestos removal, building demolition and clearing, removal of 9 underground storage tanks, and lot repaving was completed.
- Sonrise continues to move toward a Brownfields Agreement through additional needed assessment work.

The Brownfields Coalition is considering additional priority projects for another EPA Brownfields grant which will be submitted next fiscal year.

PDS Local Projects

Water and Sewer Infrastructure: PDS continued water, sewer and stormwater infrastructure support including grant writing and administration, planning, mapping, and technical assistance throughout the year. This is a major focus area of PDS with a large commitment of dedicated staff, contractor, and other resources. New projects total approximately \$2.1 million for member governments. Thanks to these efforts, UCPCOG continues as a leader in public sector awards for water and sewer infrastructure improvements that connect or repair hundreds of homes and improve member government systems' assets and operations. Developing projects requires a substantial fiscal commitment that, if awarded, is often recovered years later. Grant development and administration usually include project scoping and design, housing income verifications, preliminary engineering work and estimates, environmental review and compliance, Fair Housing Analysis of Impediments, engineer selection and management, and more.

Housing: PDS continued to assist member governments with affordable housing needs, primarily through the continued housing replacement efforts underway in Enfield, Lucama, Scotland Neck, Seaboard and Whitakers. New housing replacement grants were awarded this year totaling \$2.99M for the towns of Garysburg, Hobgood, Saratoga, Sharpsburg, and Speed. The housing program in total has brought over \$6.7M to the region through the NC Department of Commerce's Community Development Block Grant Neighborhood Revitalization Program.

Mapping & GIS Services: Utilizing an additional award of \$26,500 in NC 205(j) and contracted funds, staff continued mapping the stormwater system for the City of Roanoke Rapids. GIS and mapping services are regularly included as components of many of the other services listed above, and will be a major focus of PDS as the regional data center is further developed.



RWI Airport: Leveraging the EDA CARES Act Investment and thanks to a referral from Nash County Economic Development, PDS wrote an Economic Development Administration (EDA) Economic Adjustment Assistance application on behalf of the Rocky-Mount Wilson Airport Authority (RWI) for a joint landside and aviation industrial park feasibility study. As a result, RWI received \$320,000 to develop the study, which is likely to lead to additional projects at RWI to support the region's industry and develop the new industrial park.



Downtown Development: Leveraging the EDA CARES Act Investment, PDS wrote a NC Department of Commerce Rural Transformation Grant Fund application on behalf of the Town of Stantonburg to repair and study the potential use of the town's Seal Building property. The Seal Building, also known as the Applewhite Lumbar Building, is mostly demolished with a preserved, stilted façade in an effort to preserve the town's history and character. As a result of PDS's grant writing assistance, the Town of Stantonburg received \$50,000 to hire a landscape architecture firm to study the Seal Building site and present "test-fits," or detailed

options for the Town Council to consider to further develop the centrally located site in the future. This effort was also leveraged by PDS's previous assistance with a Stantonburg Economic Strategic Planning process hosted by the NC Department of Commerce's Rural Planning Center. PDS continues to work with NC Commerce to develop strategic plans in communities across the region, with one currently scheduled in Whitakers.

Princeville Recovery: PDS continued to work extensively with the Town of Princeville, Edgecombe County, state and federal agencies, and community partners still recovering from Hurricane Matthew. Efforts included forwarding utilities and road engineering on the 53-acre town expansion site, levee floodgate engineering and permitting, the completion of the Town Hall and nearby Senior Center renovations, Heritage Park improvements including constructing a new farmers market with commercial kitchen, relocation of the fire station and public works buildings, stormwater and street paving work, and a previously submitted \$12M dollar BRIC grant application.



Project Spotlight

Upper Coastal Plain Broadband Task Force – A National Association of Development Organizations Award Winner



The Upper Coastal Plain Broadband Task Force has provided a vast array of stakeholders with the tools necessary to attract, expand, and ensure equitable access to high-speed broadband internet, and through a regionally-led, grassroots effort, has taken promising steps towards improving internet connectivity across the Upper Coastal Plain region.

Project Summary:

What began as a call to action during a Board of Directors meeting became a shining example of the effectiveness of the CEDS planning process, broad regional collaboration, intergovernmental partnerships, and UCPCOG's ability to build resilience and enhance the region's quality of life. Expansion of high-speed internet or broadband across rural communities has never been a simple topic to discuss. To complicate things further, North Carolina state law restricts the public sector's ability to own broadband networks and limits its ability to effectively partner with a third-party internet service provider to expand service. Before the Upper Coastal Plain Broadband Task Force was established in April 2019, communication and collaboration between member local governments (some of whom were discussing broadband expansion, others who were not) was limited.

UCPCOG's CEDS Advisory Committee (also its Board of Directors) recognized the need for more collaboration between the region's local governments when they included "establishment of a regional broadband task force" in the region's CEDS. PDS initiated the Broadband Task Force as a result, which began as only a handful of local governments. During the first gathering, members determined a need for further meetings and for further collaboration across the region to ensure no corner of the Upper Coastal Plain region is left behind as the world becomes more connected all around us. Eighteen meetings, a handful of targeted trainings, two grants, and years of collaboration later, the task force, which now consists of local governments, internet service providers, community colleges, state and federal officials, private industry, and others, has shown results that prove it to be a successful model for regional collaboration on topics as complex as broadband expansion in rural North Carolina.

The most significant example of the task force's success is the EDA-funded Broadband Initiative. EDA invested in the task force to prepare the region's stakeholders, primarily its local governments, to be broadband-ready, or able to proactively seek expanded broadband connectivity. The task force guided UCPCOG staff as they implemented the Broadband Initiative, which defined the task force's purpose and greatly expanded its reach. The results of the broadband initiative included a survey of local governments, a public survey of homes and businesses across the region (in partnership with the NC Broadband Infrastructure office), five workshops targeting the region's unique broadband opportunities,

three Requests for Interest (RFI)s for high-speed broadband, a handful of meetings with internet service providers (ISP)s interested in serving the region, and ultimately, an offer from a national ISP to serve over 9,000 unserved or underserved households.

The task force attracted additional funding to the region, including a digital inclusion planning grant and a grant to conduct a public safety connectivity study in one of its most underserved towns. Recognizing its success, task force members decided to continue meeting on a regular basis to keep the momentum going upon completion of the broadband initiative. The Broadband Task Force serves as a model for how the Upper Coastal Plain region may tackle other complex topics in the future.

Accomplishments:

Streamlined the region's broadband infrastructure planning efforts, offering member governments, internet service providers, subject matter experts, and others a platform to collaborate.

Implemented a \$92,000 EDA grant to develop the Regional Broadband Initiative.

Leveraged the Regional Broadband Initiative to attract \$20,000 from the Institute for Emerging Issues to develop the Upper Coastal Plain Digital Inclusion Plan.

Leveraged the Upper Coastal Plain Digital Inclusion Plan and Regional Broadband Initiative to attract a \$125,000 Rural LISC grant for the Enfield Public Safety Connectivity Study.

Collected over 2,600 responses to the NC Broadband Survey, ensuring the region's needs are well represented in the survey data which will guide broadband funding decisions statewide.

Released three Requests for Interest for High-Speed Broadband, one regional and two local, which each gathered helpful information from internet service providers interested in connecting portions of the region.

Assisted the Town of Lasker and Northampton County with securing fiber internet for Northeast Academy Christian School.

Increased collaboration between the UCPCOG, NC Department of Information Technology, NC League of Municipalities, Internet Service Providers, Non-Profits, and Local Governments.

Project Partners:

CloudWyze, Inc

NC Department of Commerce

Economic Development Administration

NC League of Municipalities

Edgecombe Community College

NC Telehealth Network Association

Halifax Community College

Roanoke Connect

Institute for Emerging Issues at NCSU

Rural Local Initiatives Support Corporation

Lake Gaston Computer Club

Turning Point Workforce Development Board

Member Local Governments

Upper Coastal Plain Area Agency on Aging

Nash Community College

Vidant Health

NC Broadband Infrastructure Office

Wilson Community College



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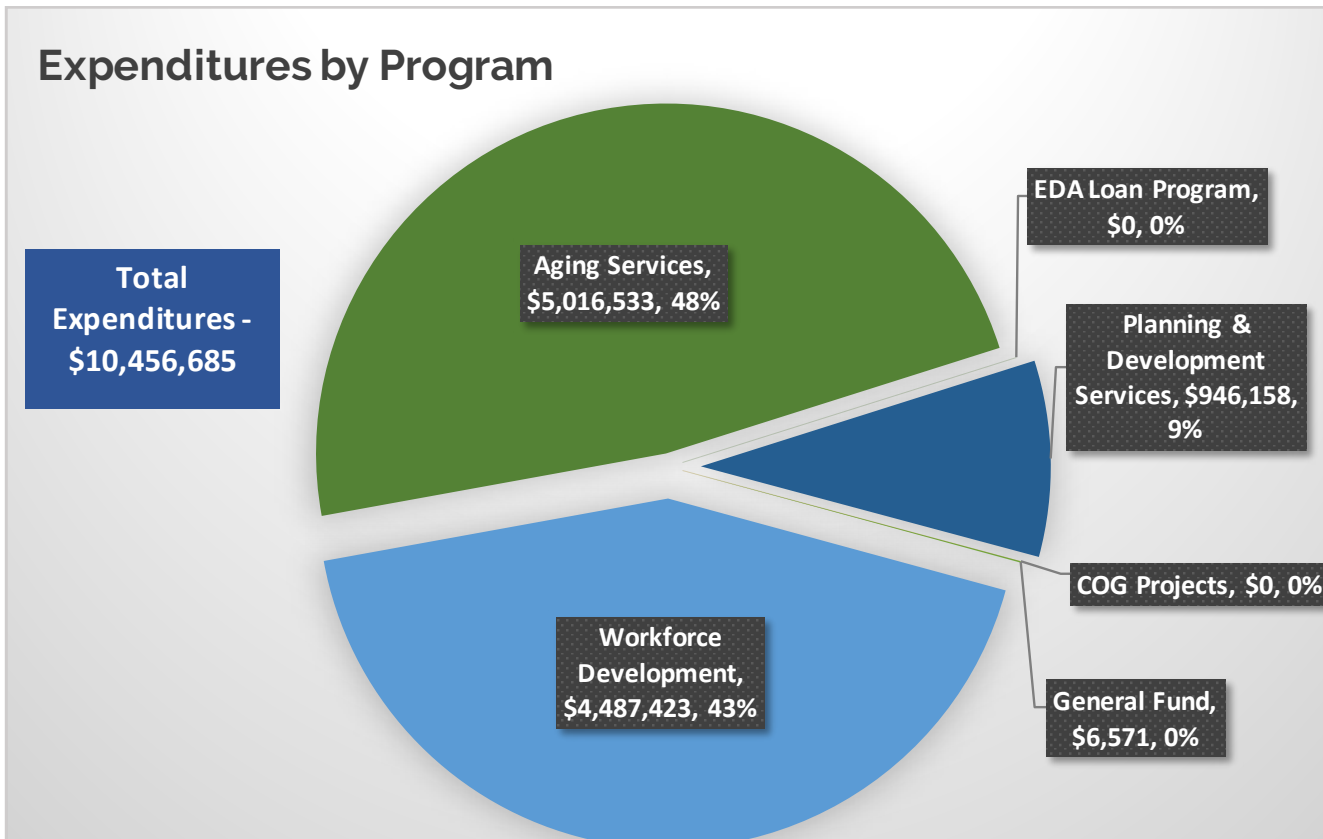
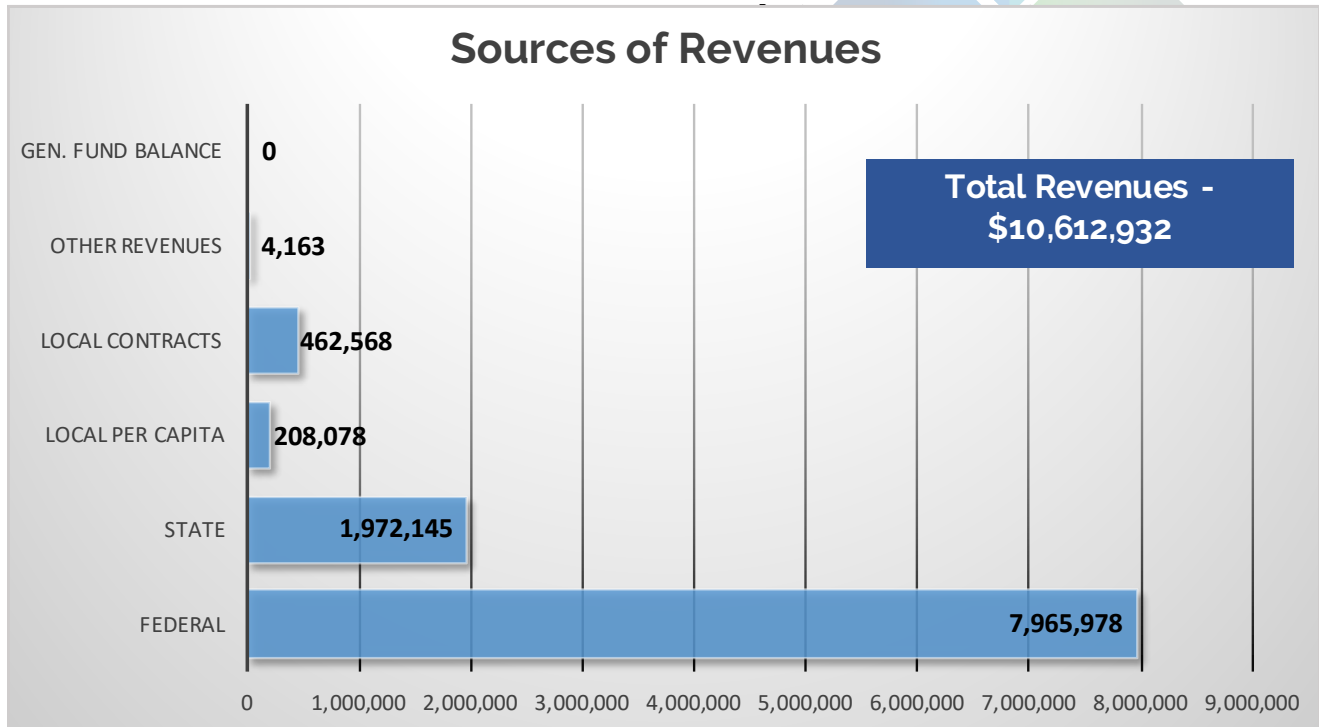
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REGINALD HARRIS
SHERRY LUCAS
TAWANDA MOORE

COUNCIL MEMBER, CITY OF WILSON
MAYOR, TOWN OF SIMS
WILSON COUNTY AT-LARGE
COUNTY COMMISSIONER
MAYOR, TOWN OF ELM CITY

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Lucas, Martha	Commissioner, Town of Momeyer	White, Reginald	Mayor, Town of Rich Square
Lynch, Gerry	Mayor, Town of Conetoe	Wiggs, Tim	Wilson County At-Large
Pair, Joshua	Northampton County At-Large	Vacant	Halifax County



GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

Executive Director	Robert Hiett	rhiett@ucpcog.org	252-234-5950
Executive Assistant	Kelly Skinner	kskinner@ucpcog.org	252-234-5951

FINANCE

Finance Director/HR/IT	Mark Hill	mhill@ucpcog.org	252-234-5953
Finance Coordinator/AAA Evidence-Based Health Promotions Coordinator	Lynn Bulluck	lbulluck@ucpcog.org	252-234-5954
Assistant Finance Director	Kelly Lancaster	klancaster@ucpcog.org	252-479-2103

AREA AGENCY ON AGING

Program Director	Mary Marlin	mmarlin@ucpcog.org	252-234-5956
Assistant AAA Program Director.....	Linda Barfield	lbarfield@ucpcog.org	252-234-5957
Reginal Ombudsman	Annetta Brown	abrown@ucpcog.org	252-234-5962
Senior Medicare Patrol Coordinator.....	Armeta Coley	acoley@ucpcog.org	252-234-5964
Family Caregiver Specialist	Ashleigh Glover	aglover@ucpcog.org	252-234-5984
Family Caregiver Program Asst.....	Anna Grace Snead	fcsphelp@ucpcog.org	252-479-2090
Aging Program Specialist.....	Michael Stanford	mstanford@ucpcog.org	252-234-5977
Aging Program Specialist.....	Rebecca Stapleton	rstapleton@ucpcog.org	252-234-5958
Regional Ombudsman	Tyronda Whitaker	twhitaker@ucpcog.org	252-234-5963

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

Program Director	Ben Farmer	bfarmer@ucpcog.org	252-234-5966
Consultant	Joe Dooley		252-234-5969
Regional Planner	Tirence Horne	thorne@ucpcog.org	252-234-5967
Senior Planner	Betsy Kane	bkane@ucpcog.org	252-234-5902
Food Systems Planner	Mary Jane Lyonnais	mlyonnais@ucpcog.org	252-479-2101
Regional Planner.....	Helen Page	hpage@ucpcog.org	252-234-5968
Administrative Assistant	Alexis Whitley	awhitley@ucpcog.org	252-234-5952

TURNING POINT WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT | 252-443-6175 Ext.

Program Director	Michael Williams	mwilliams@turningpointwdb.org	1031
Youth Services Manager	Brian Atkinson	batkinson@turningpointwdb.org	1034
MIS/ISD Manager	Susan Phipps	sphipp@turningpointwdb.org	1033
Business Services Manager	Carisa Rudd	crudd@turningpointwdb.org	1032
Business Engagement Coordinator.....	Frince Williams	fwilliams@turningpointwdb.org	1035

Special Programs Outreach Coordinator.....	ddickinson@turningpointwdb.org		252-428-7468
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WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT FIELD STAFF

Workforce Specialist- Edgecombe/Nash Amy Brown	amy.w.brown@ncworks.gov	252-977-3306	Ext. 218
Workforce Specialist- Halifax/Northampton Rose Motley	motleysumner2019@gmail.com	252-537-4188	Ext. 203



