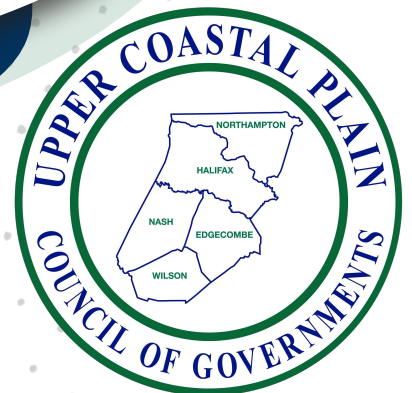


UPPER COASTAL PLAIN

COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

ANNUAL REPORT

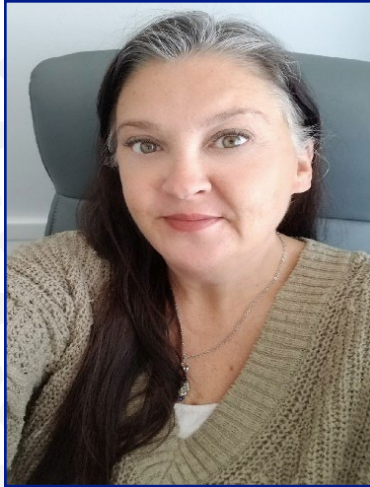
Fiscal Year 2023-2024



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



CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE



I am pleased to present our Fiscal year 2023- 2024 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 2023- 2024 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.

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 Hiett, 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 Planning and Aging Departments for food system planning, regional disaster recovery training, and grandparents raising grandchildren projects. Those projects strengthened our economic development resiliency, increased local government capacity to respond and recover from disasters, and to help our senior caregivers work assisting children with special needs.

The UCPCOG provided services to more than 15,000 area citizens and played a large role in regional food security by funding more than 155,000+ meals to older adults. New grant awards were more than \$29 million, and there were 73 planning projects underway during Fiscal Year 2023- 2024. In addition, the Planning and Development Services Department administered approximately \$120+ million of infrastructure grants on behalf of member governments in the region. The Workforce Development Department provided support to 298 businesses in the region, participated in 30 career fairs, and provided over 7,000 support services to area 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 Chairperson 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 53rd year of service to the citizens of our region, and a successful year ahead.

Miranda Boykin
Chairperson
UCPCOG Board of Directors

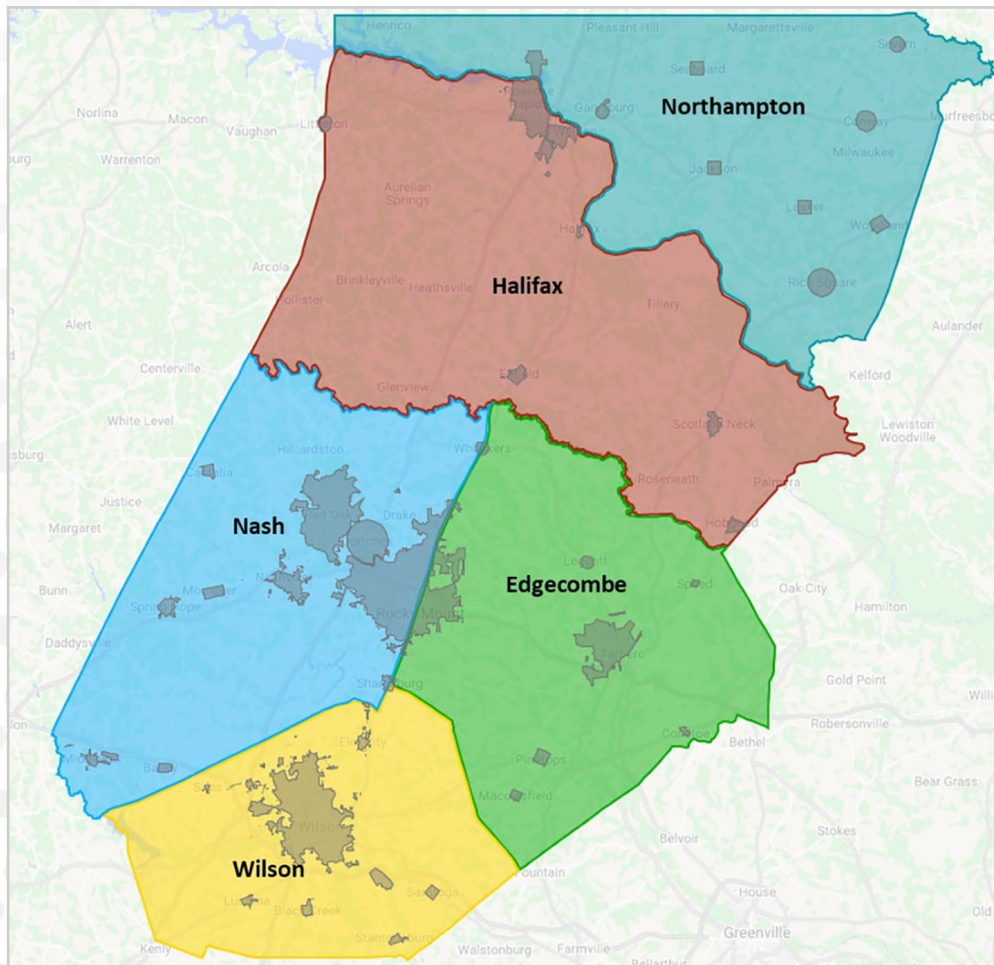


MISSION STATEMENT:

“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 MAP

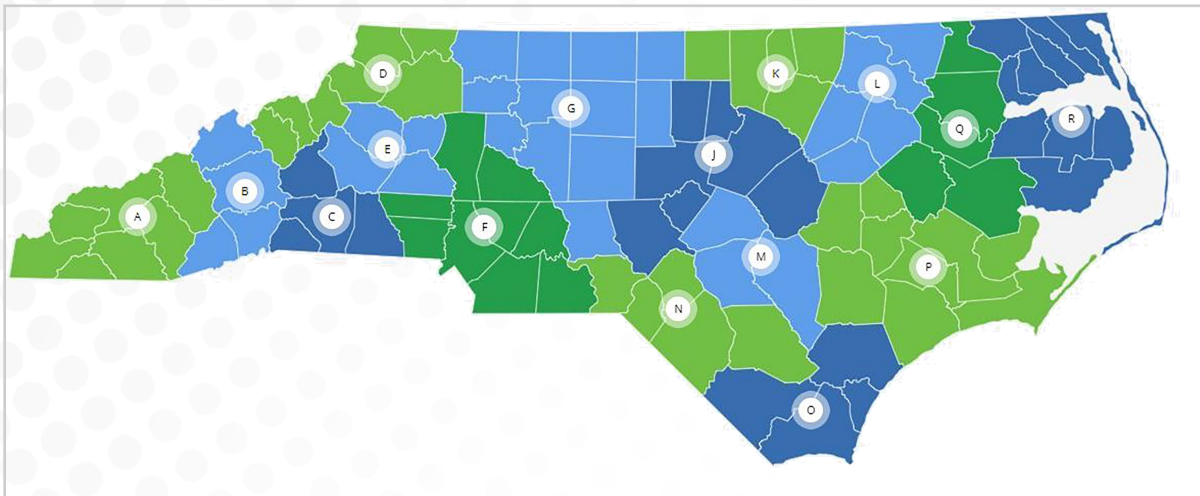




The Upper Coastal Plain Council of Governments is one of sixteen multi-county planning and development regions in the State. Regional Councils are governed by local public and private sector officials. The councils are funded in part by the member local governments. These Councils are forums where local 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.

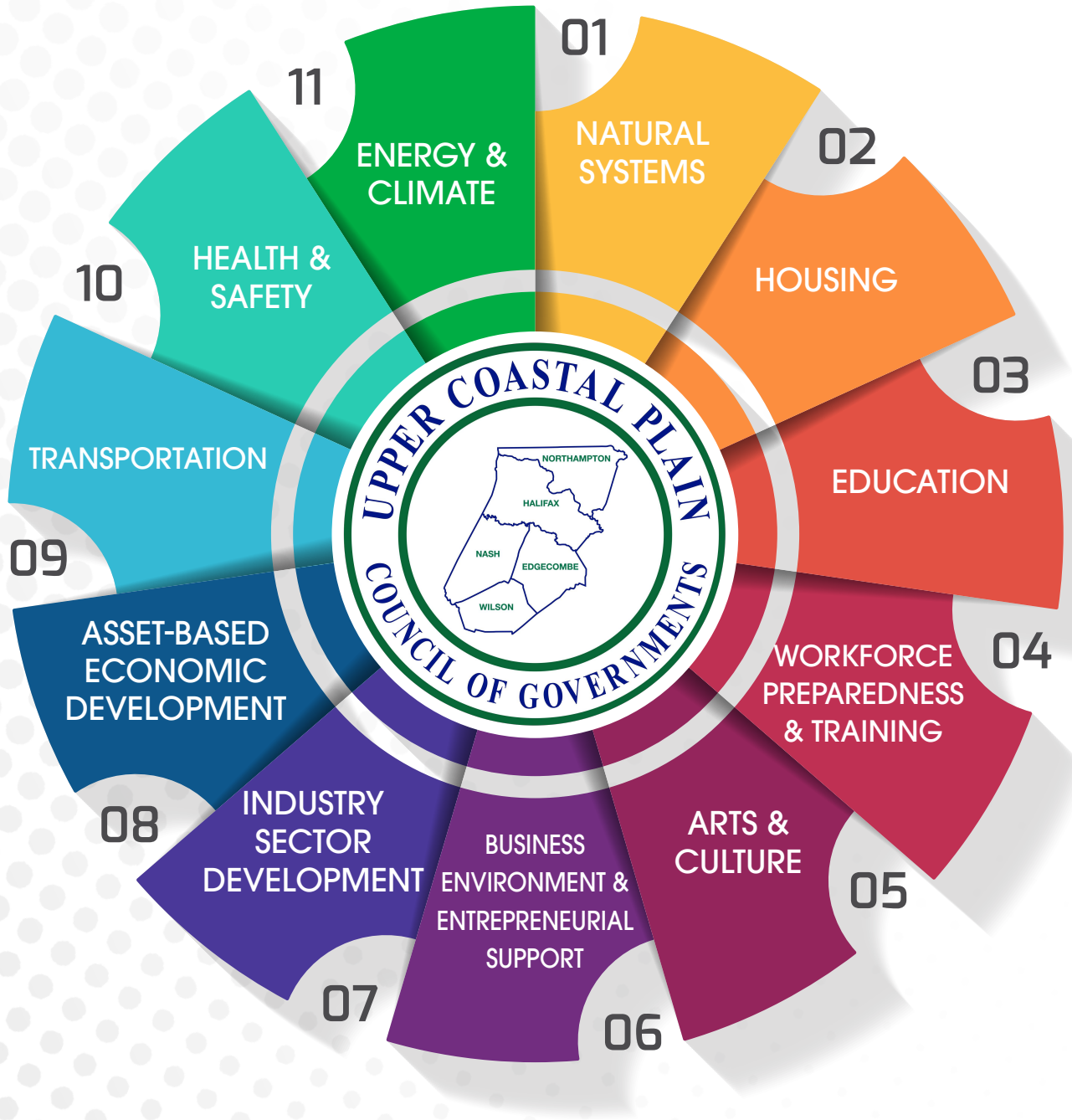
Upper Coastal Plain Council of Governments is comprised of county governments and local municipalities in Wilson, Nash, Edgecombe, Halifax and Northampton Counties. The Board of Directors include one elected official from each member government and three non-elected members from each county. The Board 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

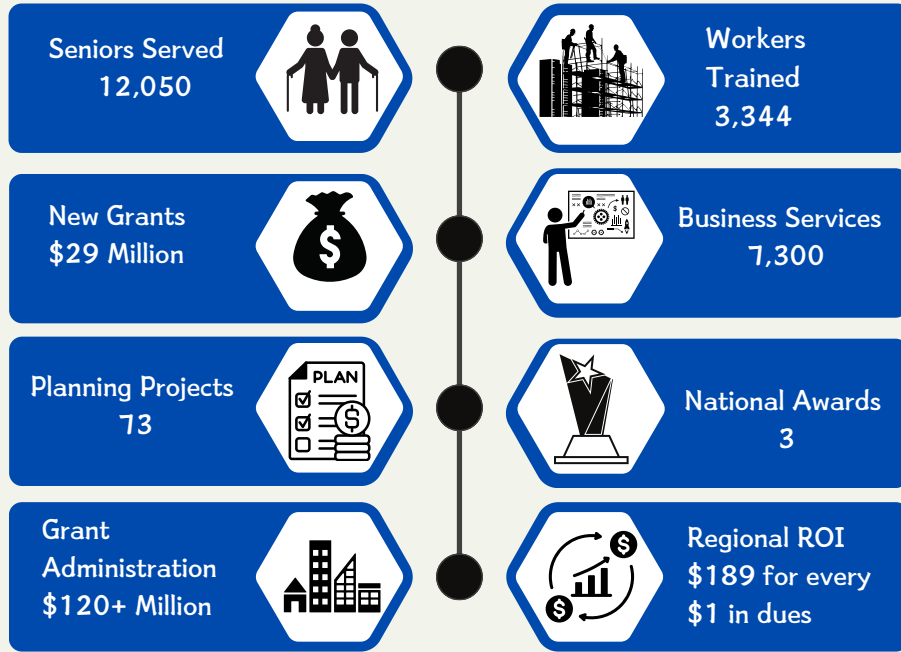


The UCPCOG works with a wide variety of partner organizations to coordinate aging, planning and community development, and workforce services throughout the five county region. Regional coordination and cooperation ensures that services are successfully delivered, and creates opportunities to leverage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





UCPCOG Regional Overview



Fiscal Year 2023 - 2024

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION STAFF



Robert Hiett,
Executive Director



Kelly Skinner,
Executive Assistant



TURNING POINT WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD

Turning Point Workforce Development Board programs train citizens for high demand careers within our region and works with area businesses to develop a talent pipeline. The 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:

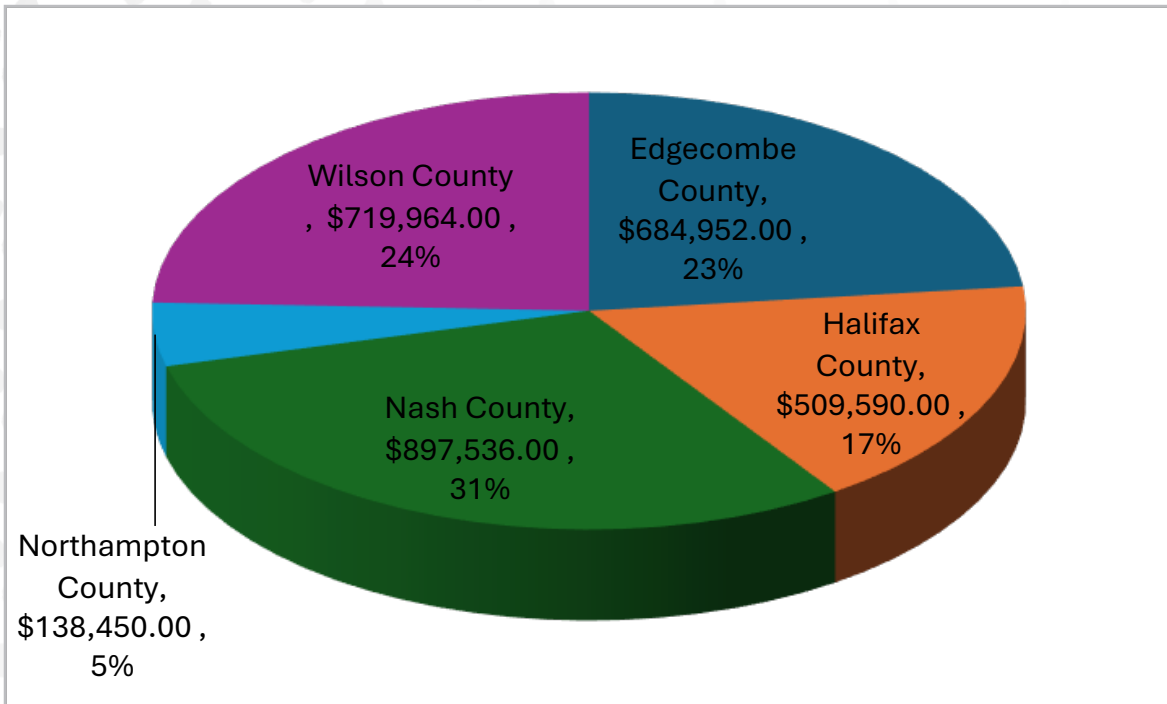
- Be the convener of conversation and center of community/regional leadership to identify workforce challenges.
- Work in collaborative partnership with key stakeholders, (especially economic development and education).
- Bring resources to assist in resolving workforce challenges.
- Act as the accountability 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, over 3,690 Adults/Dislocated Worker citizens were served and 83.3% entered employment. The Integrated Service Delivery (ISD) system average median earnings outcome is \$8,691. Turning Point NextGen enrolled 134 in the youth programs funded by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) in which 70.6% entered employment (subsidized/unsubsidized), 70.3% retained employment through the 4th quarter after exit, 16 entered Post-Secondary Education and 28 received their High School Diploma/GED.

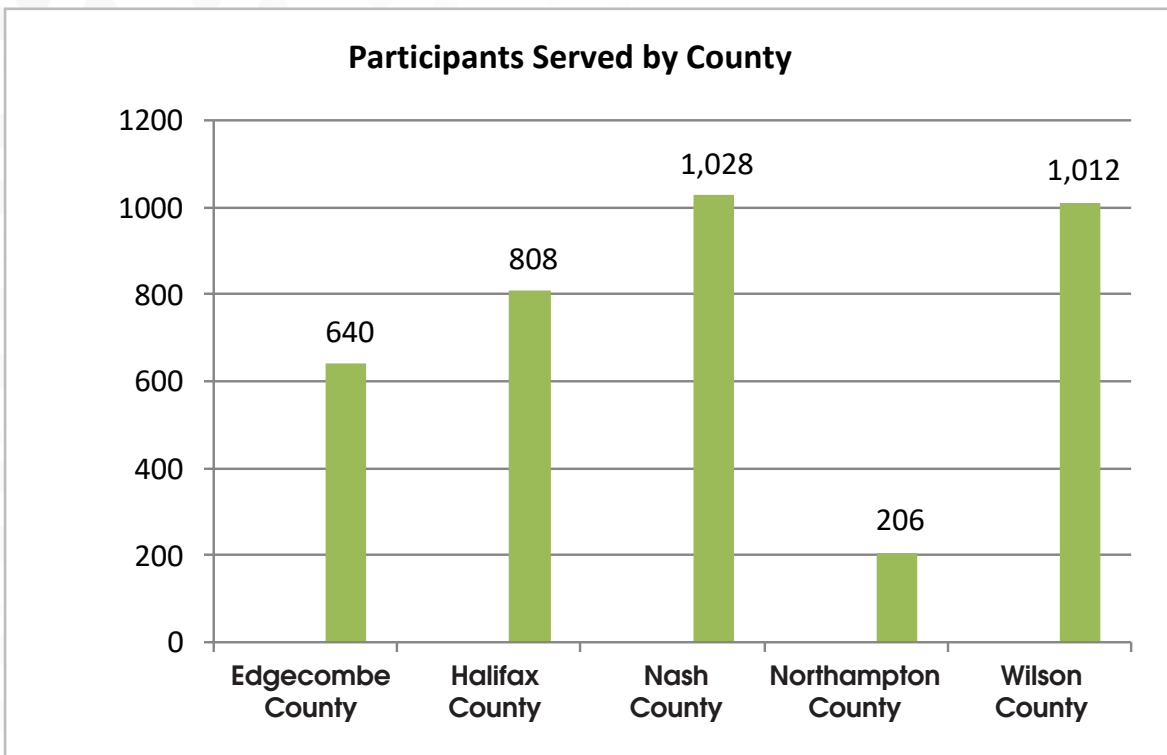




FY22-23 Expenditures by County

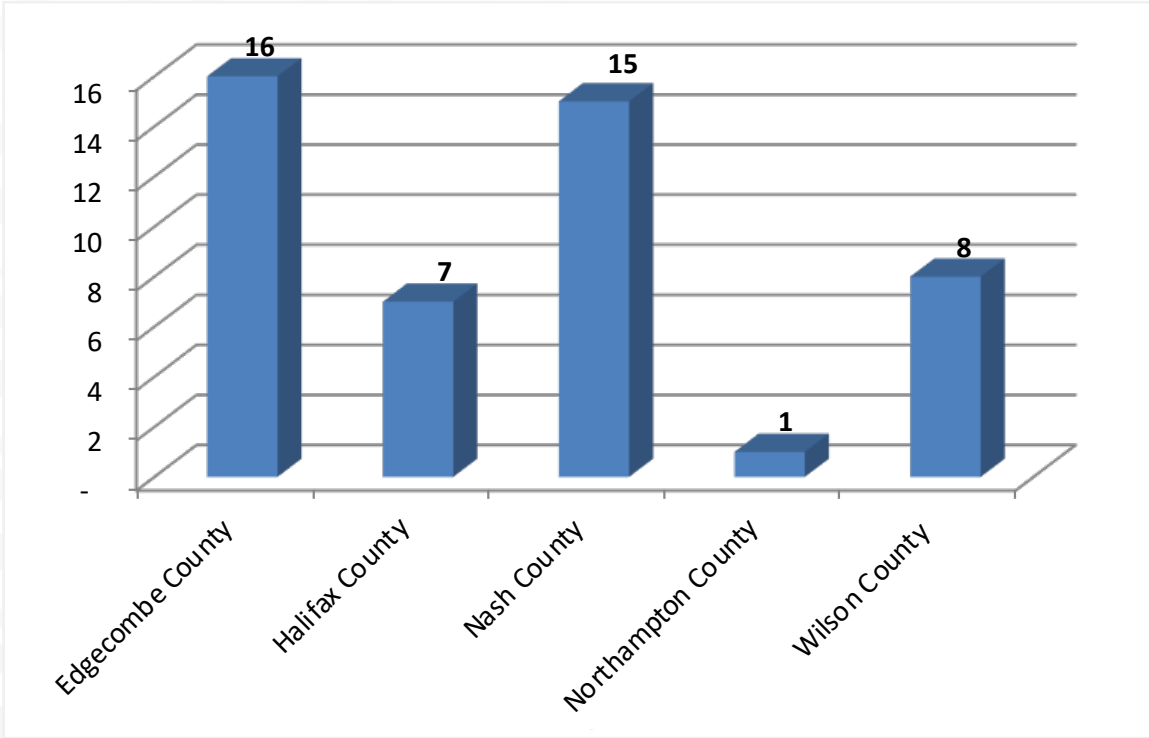


Program Services Provided

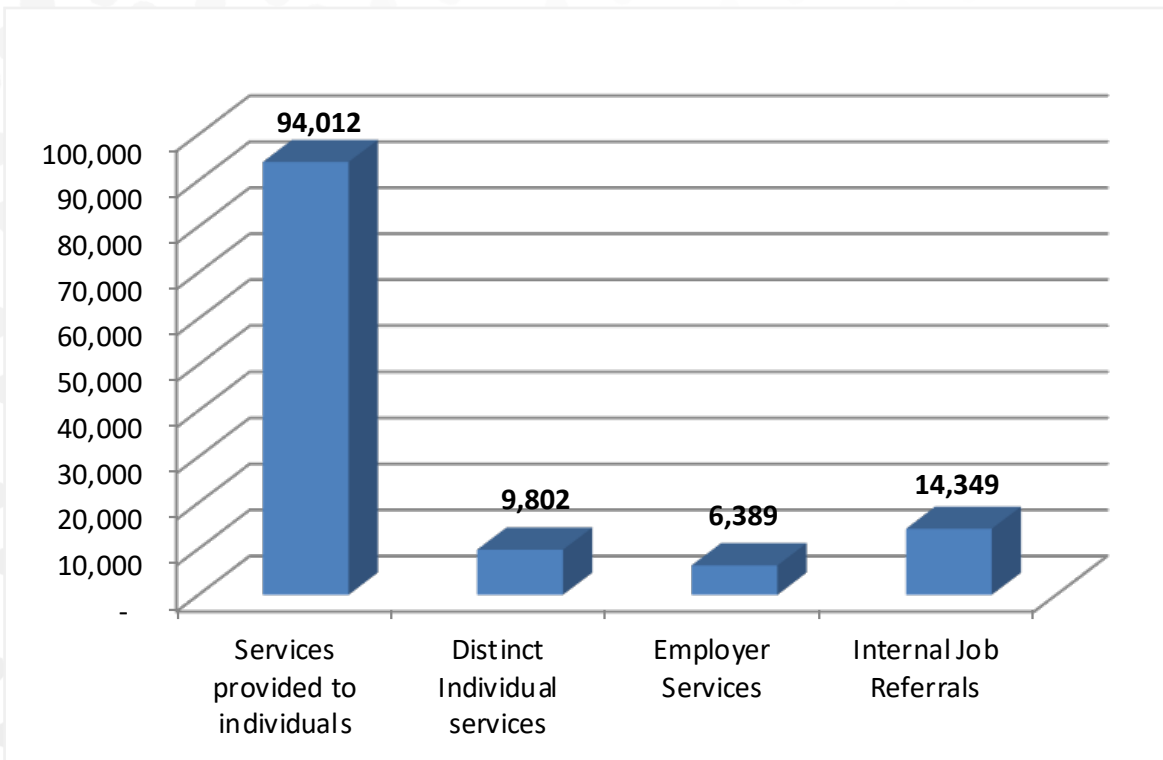




Work-Based Learning by County



Program Services Provided





A proud partner of the
AmericanJobCenter[®]
network

**NCWORKS CAREER CENTER -
ROANOKE RAPIDS**

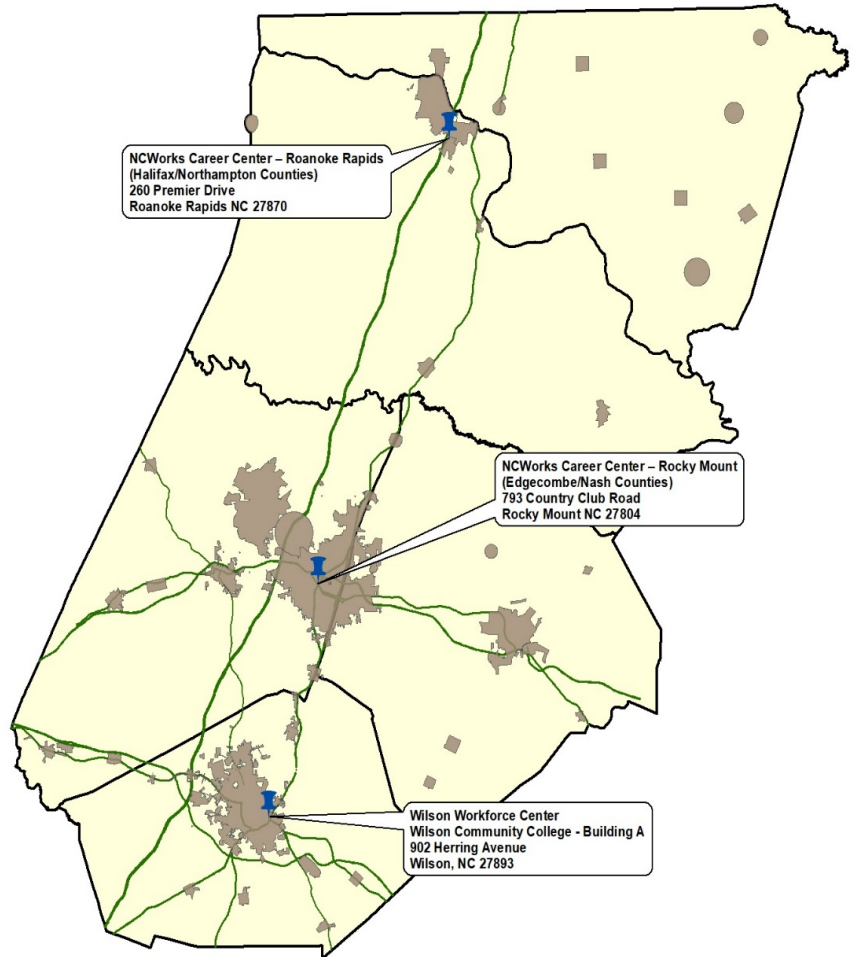
406 PREMIER BLVD.
ROANOKE RAPIDS, NC 27870
(252) 537-4188

**NC WORKS CAREER CENTER -
ROCKY MOUNT**

793 COUNTRY CLUB ROAD
ROCKY MOUNT, NC 27804
(252) 977-3306

**WILSON WORKFORCE CENTER -
WILSON**

WILSON COMMUNITY COLLEGE - BLDG. A
902 HERRING AVE.
WILSON, NC 27893
(252) 281-6387



The Future Workforce Of Today

Jaquan

Jaquan enrolled in the NextGen Program through OIC of Rocky Mt in June of 2020, as an In-School Youth. When Jaquan began, he faced barriers that challenged his ability to progress academically, and limited his development socially. He experienced social and physical obstacles that dramatically affected his confidence and altered his ability to communicate, learn, and advance in his studies.

Through his participation in WIOA, Jaquan's academic and social awareness increased steadily! With a focus on Leadership and Development, Jaquan developed essential skills that cultivated leadership, career planning, and academic success. Jaquan engaged in outreach events, social forums, and summer activities. Recognizing change and growth, Career Advisor further assisted him with study skills and career concepts to prepare for Post-Secondary Education and the future workforce. With Leadership and Development opportunities, the present challenges began to erode as Jaquan learned the importance of positive social interactions and academic excellence leading to exciting career choices.

With new expectations, Career Advisor assisted him by enrolling Jaquan into Work Experience (WEX) at a local Warehouse and then on to the Boys and Girls Club to gain more developmental skills in team work, career exploration, and self-development. Through his roles in WEX, Jaquan developed a strong passion for helping others, and a deeply devoted interest in community activities, youth, and criminal law.

With fresh determination and a focused perspective on educational and career goals, Jaquan graduated with his High School Diploma with the Class of 2024! With guidance, he has chosen to further his education and will be attending Wesleyan University in Rocky Mount, NC, where he will be pursuing a degree in Criminal Justice this Fall! Making achievements, Jaquan will be a first-generation college student for his family, and an empowering voice for youth of the future, in his chosen career pathway.



TURNING POINT WORKFORCE
DEVELOPMENT BOARD



OIC OF ROCKY MT



UPPER COASTAL PLAIN
COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS



WIOA-Success Story

Bradley Watson entered into the adult WIOA program in the Fall of 2022. At that time, Mr. Watson was working part-time as a CNAI at Vidant in Greenville, NC, making \$16 an hour. Mr. Watson realized he needed to improve his self-proficiency and career to enhance his pay to better support his family. Since Mr. Watson was already a CNAI, he began to research the next step in the nursing field for him. That next step would be to become a Registered Nurse, which would earn him anywhere between \$25-\$35 dollars an hour. Mr. Watson knew becoming a Registered Nurse would be challenging, however, it will also be an important transition to help financially enhance support for his family. So, with his mind made up on a career, and no money to pay for it, Mr. Watson set out in search of funding for his RN training. He found that the WIOA program would pay for your tuition, books, and any required items, for an approved occupation. Which was exactly what he needed.

Fast forwarding, to after applying to the RN program at Wilson Community College and being offered a seat, Mr. Watson proudly accepted. His next step was approval into the adult WIOA program. Once eligibility and suitability were established, Mr. Watson became a recipient of WIOA program funding. Mr. Watson successfully passed all 5 semesters with a GPA higher than a 3.0. May 2024, Mr. Watson was recognized during his pinning ceremony with a nursing pin. This pin symbolized a nurse's transition from student to professional and their dedication to the nursing profession.

As of June 2024, Mr. Watson is working full-time at ECU Health as a Staff Nurse, making \$31.49 an hour. Mr. Watson stated he was very proud of himself, how he never gave up, and most importantly, grateful to how the WIOA program assisted him financially from start to finished with becoming a Registered Nurse. The WIOA team commends and congratulated Bradley Watson for successfully utilizing the program to aid him to become self-sufficient and establish his future career as a Registered Nurse. Kudos to Bradley!!!

Oprah Blackmon-Career Advisor-Wilson Workforce Center





Kwmane Battle
 CDL-A Truck Driver Training
 A2Z Trucking Academy
 National Dislocated Worker Grant (NDWG)



Kwmane Batte experienced the tragedy of being laid off. He visited NCWorks Career Center, Edgecombe/Nash County office, seeking employment and training assistance. He resided in Edgecombe County and had two children to support.

Kwmane met with a Career Advisor and received career counseling to assist him with career choices for employment. The Career Advisor assisted Kwmane in enrolling in Wagner-Peyser. Kwmane expressed that he needed to work before his unemployment benefits were exhausted. He stated that he was in desperate need of obtaining employment to provide for his children. Kwmane said he was interested in becoming a CDL-A truck driver.

The Career Advisor interviewed Kwmane and provided him with an assessment tool to explore his career interests, skills, and abilities. The Career Advisor then reviewed and discussed these valuable assessment results with Kwmane. Based on his findings, Kwmane had a strong interest, ability, and strengths that could benefit a career as a truck driver in the transportation industry. Kwmane explained to the Career Advisor the importance of receiving this training to be employed as a CDL-A driver. The Career Advisor also reviewed labor market information with Kwmane, stating and discussing the high demands in the transportation industry that supported him in finding employment as a truck driver.

Kwmane saw a positive change in his life when he became eligible and enrolled in the National Dislocated Worker Grant (NDWG) through the Turning Point Workforce Development Board. Rocky Mount OIC was the contractor. He took advantage of this opportunity and enrolled in the CDL-A training program at A2Z Trucking Academy in Wilson, NC, funded by the NDWG. The NDWG was a valuable source of support, paying for his tuition, books, and CDL-A license. Kwmane saw this short-term training program as a lifesaver, a chance to complete in five weeks and secure a job before unemployment ended. He was optimistic that finding a job with a higher salary and benefits would allow him to overcome poverty and support his children on his own.

Kwmane completed this five-week CDL-A Truck Driving Training Program at A2Z Trucking Academy. He earned his CDL-A certificate of completion and CDL-A permanent license. Kwmane started working at Carolina Eagle Distribution in Rocky Mount, NC, on November 6, 2023 earning higher wages and good benefits to help support his family. He is deeply grateful to NCWorks Career Center, the NDWG program, and the Turning Point Workforce Development Board for this life-altering opportunity. He acknowledges that without their support, he wouldn't have been able to improve himself, acquire a trainable skill, and work as a truck driver to provide for his children.

Submitted by: NCWorks – Edgecombe/Nash County Career Center
 Rocky Mount OIC Contractor





Turning Point WDB staff assistance to Pfizer Pharmaceutical with the mobile unit during rapid response session for dislocated workers.



Nash County employer recruitment - GXP-Storage, a leading provider of regulatory compliant storage solutions life sciences research, manufacturing, and healthcare-related biomedical and biodefense clients, has selected Nash County and the Research Triangle region to build its international headquarters campus.



Apprenticeship collaboration between Turning Point WDB, Choanoke Area Development Association, Inc. and Halifax Community College.

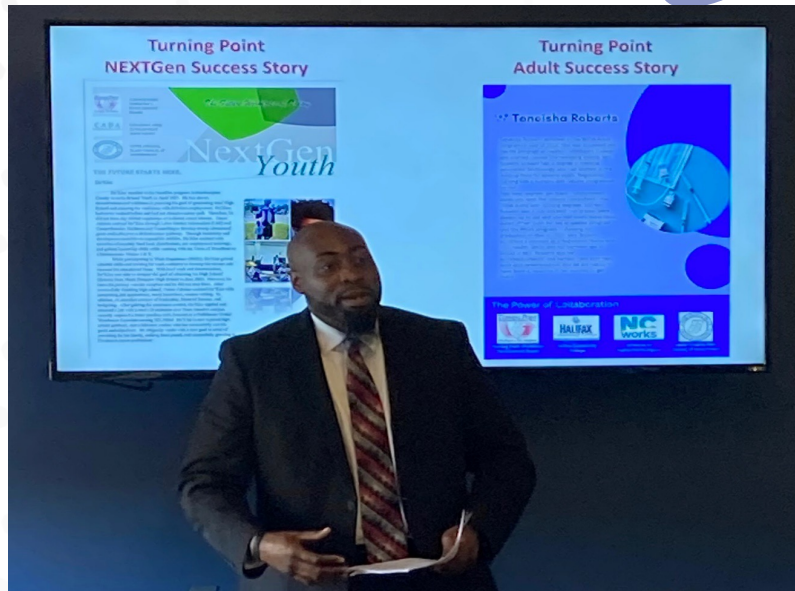
Turning Point WDB staff assistance to Pfizer Pharmaceutical with the mobile unit during rapid response session for dislocated workers. Upper Coastal Plain Council of Government staff recognition during annual banquet.



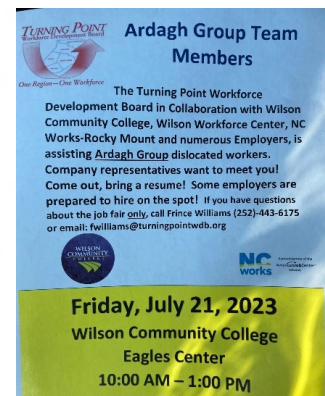
Congratulations to Poppies Bakeries on an Incumbent Worker Grant award from the Turning Point Board area this quarter! Employer Driven!! Skilled Up! Well done to Ms. Rhonda and a great team of leaders! #NashCounty #WorkforceDevelopment

Turning Point WDB staff continues to support efforts with our Re-Entry Partners! What an amazing turnout for Halifax





Your testimony tells it all. Thank you to our partners, Board and team for the work that makes positive client stories possible. Turning Point Bi-Annual Consortium meeting was able to hear the great works of our Board staff and programs. Thank you to our NextGen Youth Manager, Brian Atkinson for such a powerful update of youth that succeeded in our WIOA program!



Thank you to our wonderful employer partners and Wilson Community College in assisting a closing company with new opportunities! All tables were filled, on-site interviews held and some offers made. There was much going on for a good cause! #WilsonNC #TurningPointWDB



Upper Coastal Plain Council of Government staff recognition during annual banquet



NCWorks Career Center-Rocky Mount open house ceremony Rocky Mount Chamber



TURNING POINT WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT STAFF



Michael Williams,
TPWD Director



Brian Atkinson



Susan Phipps



Carisa Rudd



Duna Dickinson Long



Rose Motley-Sumner



Frince Williams





AREA AGENCY ON AGING



The Area Agency on Aging (AAA) is an organization working within a federal mandate to inform, advocate and plan for community services on behalf of older adults and caregivers. The agency is part of the National Network set in place by the Older Americans Act of 1965. There are 622 AAAs in the US, and 16 in North Carolina. The Upper Coastal Plain Council of Governments covers Edgecombe, Halifax, Nash, Northampton, and Wilson counties.

The Area Agency on Aging provides funding or direct services for the following activities:

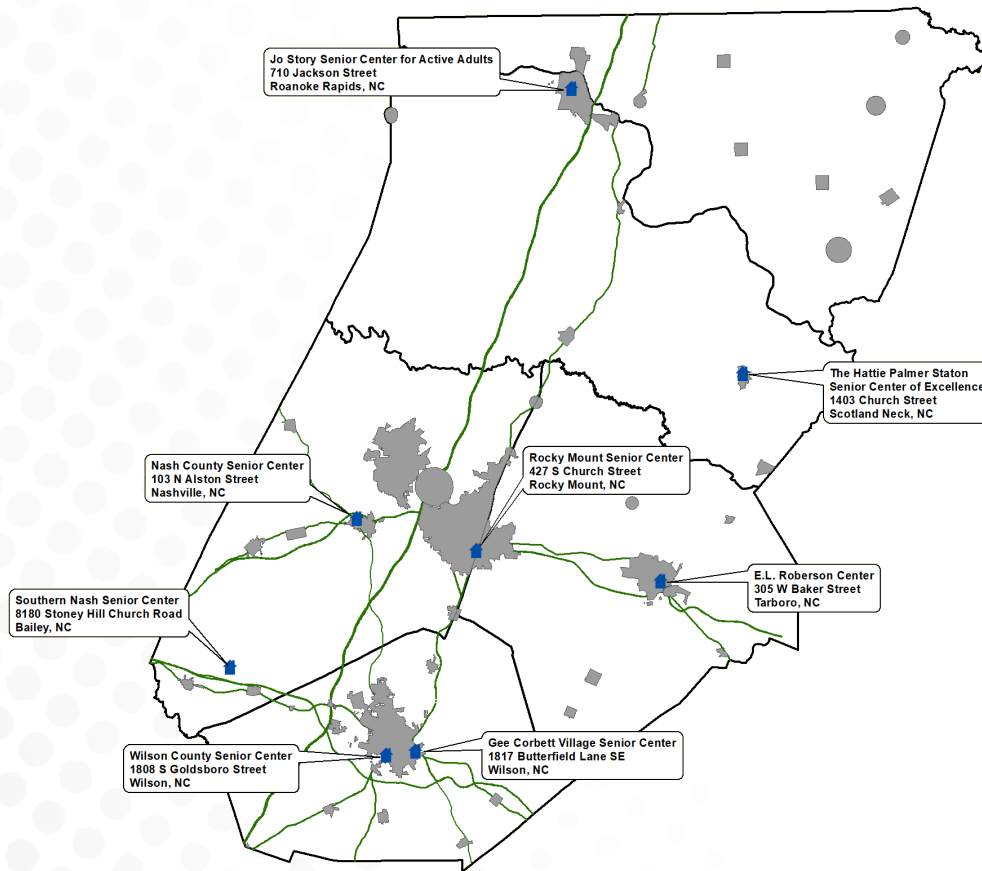
- Senior Center Operations
- Adult Day Care
- Transportation
- Information & Options Counseling (I&OC)
- Community Education
- Long Term Care Ombudsman
- Home Delivered Meals
- Legal Services
- In-Home Aide/Respite
- Evidence Based Health Promotion
- Advocacy for Disabled & Older Adults and their caregivers



MARY MARLIN
Aging Program Director
 252-234-5956



FUNDED SENIOR CENTERS



Edgecombe E. L. Roberson Center
305 W. Baker St.
Tarboro, NC 27886-0220
Telephone: (292) 641-4263

Nash The Southern Nash Senior Center
8180 Stoney Hill Church Rd.
Bailey, NC 27807
Telephone: (292) 235-4303

Halifax Jo Story Senior Center for Active Adults
701 Jackson Street
Roanoke Rapids, NC 27870
Telephone: (252) 533-2849

Nash Rocky Mount Senior Center
427 S. Church Street
Rocky Mount, NC 27802
Telephone: (252) 972-1152

Halifax Hattie Palmer Staton Senior Center
1403 Church Street
Scotland Neck, NC 27874
Telephone: (252) 826-3891

Wilson Wilson County Senior Center
1808 Goldsboro St. S.
Wilson, NC 27893
Telephone: (252) 206-4059

Nash Nash County Senior Center
103 N. Alston St.
Nashville, NC 27856
Telephone: (252) 459-1375

Wilson Gee Corbett Village Senior Center
1817 Butterfield Lane
Wilson, NC 27893
Telephone: (252) 243-4855





FAMILY CAREGIVER



Congratulations!

Your organization has been recognized with a

2024 NADO Aliceann Wohlbruck Impact Award!

Purrfect Connections: Enhancing the Lives of Exceptional Children through Innovative Caregiver Support





NADO IMPACT AWARD

The Family Caregiver Support Program launched an innovative pilot program called Purrfect Connections. This program collaborates with Forest Hills Middle School to provide “Joy for All” robotic cats to exceptional children’s classes. These classes include many children being raised by older adult relatives, including grandparents.

Purrfect Connections leverages the therapeutic benefits of robotic pets to bring joy and emotional support to exceptional children and their caregivers. Robotic cats are designed to provide realistic, interactive companionship, which can be particularly beneficial for children with special needs. The program focuses on children who are primarily being raised by older relatives, acknowledging the unique challenges and stresses faced by these intergenerational families. Additionally, robotic cats appeal to all children, reducing the stigma often associated with special needs by providing a common, relatable experience.

Impacts of the program include:

Emotional Benefits: The interactive pets reduce anxiety and stress in children with special needs, providing a source of comfort and companionship.

Caregiver Relief: Older caregivers feel more supported, knowing that their children have a reliable source of emotional comfort.

Community Engagement: The program has strengthened community ties, involving teachers, caregivers, and local organizations in a collaborative effort to support exceptional children and their caregivers.

Reducing Stigma: By incorporating robotic cats that appeal to all children, the program helps reduce the stigma around special needs. Children without special needs also enjoy interacting with the cats, creating an inclusive environment that fosters acceptance and understanding.

Behavioral Improvements: Teachers have observed a decrease in unwanted behaviors among children with special needs in the classroom, as robotic cats provide a calming presence and engaging activity that helps maintain focus and reduce anxiety.

Addressing Vulnerable Populations: Purrfect Connections specifically targets two of the most vulnerable populations in our community: children with special needs and older adult caregivers. By addressing the unique needs of these groups, the program not only enhances individual lives but also supports the broader community. Children with special needs benefit from the emotional support provided by robotic pets, while older adult caregivers receive respite and support, helping them manage the stresses of caregiving more effectively.

We look forward to many more innovative partnership opportunities to provide support to caregivers in the region!





OMBUDSMAN PROGRAM



Advocacy General Info
(AGIs) 576

Facility Visits
200

Complaint Investigations
64

Closed Cases
43



ANETTA BROWN
LTC Ombudsman


MAKING A DIFFERENCE THROUGH ADVOCACY



TYRONDA WHITAKER
LTC Ombudsman

The Nelson family only has two remaining members, siblings Sharon and Frank. Frank lives in Massachusetts and Sharon lived in a long-term care facility in our region. The two were separated by miles but connected by love. Here's a glance into their story and how advocacy from a long-term care ombudsman connected the two.

The Nelson family has ties to a small town in the region. Their parents grew up there and later traveled up North and settled in Massachusetts. They enjoyed life in the city, but their mom and sister decided to move back to NC. Their father passed away some years ago. Frank decided to stay. Things were going well for the mom and Sharon until Sharon fell ill and suffered a stroke. The mom became her caregiver and tried her best to love her daughter through this situation. Eventually, the mom ran out of options and placed her daughter into a long-term care facility. The stroke had debilitating effects on Sharon rendering her unable to use one side of her body or communicate using words. Sharon used body language, facial expressions, etc. to express herself. Her mom remained committed to her care and visited daily until she passed away suddenly.



Frank made the trek from Massachusetts to NC and filled the void left by their mom and became Sharon’s guardian and caregiver. He helped Sharon to get settled and worked with facility staff to ensure her needs were met. He encountered some issues with her care and contacted the ombudsman’s office for assistance. Frank’s goals for Sharon were to make sure her television was on her favorite shows daily, her hair to be styled and braided, to get out of bed, received proper testing to determine if she could swallow, and transfer to Massachusetts to be near family and childhood friends. The facility didn’t always take Frank seriously when he expressed himself. Frank called Ty daily and phone conversations spanned over 2 hours most of the time. Ty arranged care plan conferences with facility staff, physicians, and Frank monthly to keep him updated on Sharon’s condition. Ty assisted the facility social worker by sending referrals to nursing facilities in Massachusetts. Ty researched and provided resources to assist with payment and transportation for the move. Frank’s story made it to the State Ombudsman’s office in Massachusetts and she began to assist in the transfer efforts. Sharon was transferred to Massachusetts via a medical flight from Raleigh-Durham International Airport in November 2023. She is thriving and embraced in the love from her big brother.

CONSUMER DIRECTED SERVICES: HALIFAX COUNTY



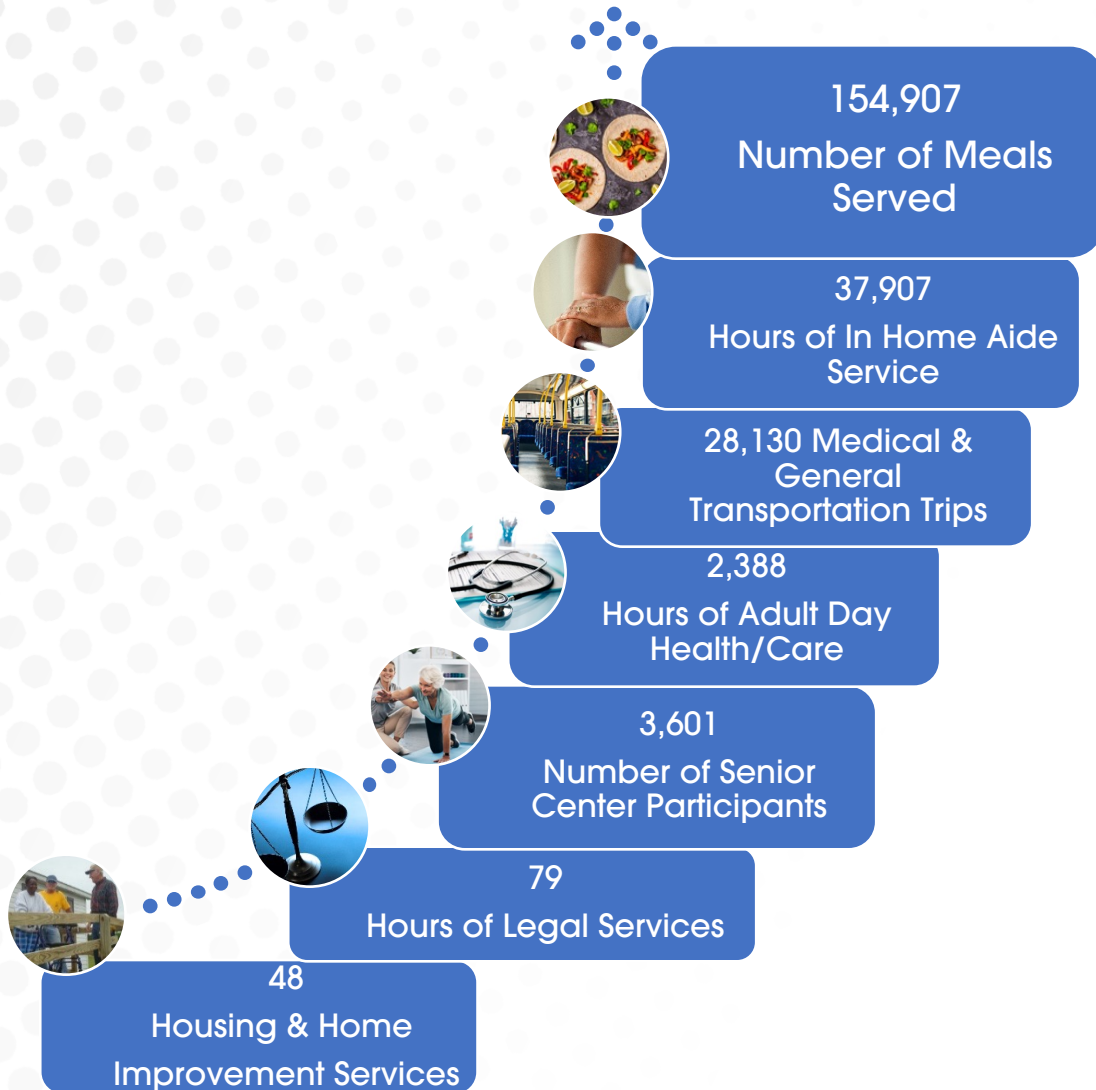
Dawn Tillery
Aging Program Specialist

Dawn Tillery will transition from her role with the Consumer Directed Services (CDS) Program to the new Choosing Home Program October 1, 2024.

The CDS program with its person-centered approach, allows recipients to choose a friend or family member to deliver the necessary assistance, promoting a sense of comfort and personal connection. This program has provided services for eleven participants in Halifax County that would otherwise have remained on the waiting list for In Home Aide and with ARPA funding being exhausted, they will return to the waiting list. The impact of the CDS program in Halifax County has been profound and we are continuing to work with the Home and Community Care Block Grant Committee to explore ways to bring the service back soon.



HOME & COMMUNITY CARE BLOCK GRANT



MICHAEL STANFORD
Transportation
Aging Program Specialist



OTHER AAA PROGRAMS & NEW INITIATIVES

Information & Options Counseling (I & OC), Evidence Based Health Promotions, Senior Medicare Patrol, Senior Health Insurance Information Program



Demetria Ellis, I&OC Aging Program Assistant
Participants Served:
65 Edgecombe Co
62 Halifax Co
102 Nash Co
89 Northampton Co
118 Wilson Co



Lynn Bulluck EBHP Coordinator
13 workshops
129 Participants Served
114 Participants Completed the programs



Armeta Coley SMP/SHIP/MIPPA Coordinator
45 Medicare Part D Counseling Sessions

80+ Community Trainings/Presentations
Over 5000 Participants served

A letter of thanks

I would like to say thank you to Lynn and her crew for the information shared doing the past six weeks.

Thru this class I have learned how to read and understand labels, how to respond to different situations, how to eat more healthy foods, and most important I have learned the importance of exercise.

We were also taught to check our blood sugar and pressure two hours after eating.

I strongly advise any one with diabetes to take this class. Great information offered.

*Joseph Taylor
10-2-2023*





April 22, 2024. Monday 1-3:30

Today we end our workshop with Upper Coastal Plains, geared to improving my Diabetes Self Management with Lynn and Dawn.

It has been an eye opening learning experience with my health condition. It has taught me new skills in managing my Type II diabetes. It has

renew things I have heard before, ^{not wanting to} it has restored my confidence in what I have to do to continue to live a healthy life style with diabetes.

This class has given me skills and ways to help me in my struggles to accept what I need to do to live daily. Mainly it has taught me to plan. To have an action plan to help accomplish my tasks and daily goals. To Focus on Me and how I can help myself to live a healthy life ^{as} long as the Master allow me to be here on Earth.

Realizing that all things play an important part as to how I accept who I am and the health problems (Diabetics and others) that I have. Know the mental condition is equally as important as the physical. That's why I plan to continue with the Sunshine Club, Exercising, and learning all I can to have a healthy, near normal lifestyle.

Thank you for all your help, on my journey, each day I live. ☺

Phyllis Sexton

EATING STRESSING

PLANNING



The Planning and Development Services Department (PDS) provides a wide range of technical assistance services at the local and regional level. Work is primarily guided by the region's 5-year Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) and is focused on building local government capacity and community wealth across the Upper Coastal Plain region. PDS staff each have unique professional backgrounds, areas of expertise, and talents, and work together to provide a high level of service to our member governments and their partners.

PDS provides:

- Regional Project Planning & Management
- Grant Development & Administration
- Infrastructure Planning & Implementation
- Mapping, GIS, & Data Services
- Land Use, Zoning & Ordinance Support
- Digital Opportunities and Broadband Connectivity
- 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

Project Management

Economic Development

Community Development

Disaster Recovery & Resiliency

Grant and Loan Sampling:

- Brownfields and Land Revitalization
- Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)
- Community Foundations
- NC Department of Environmental Quality
- NC Department of Commerce
- Economic Development Administration
- Southeast Crescent Regional Commission
- Parks & Recreation Trust Fund
- Recovery & Resilience
- USDA - Rural Development
- And more





PDS FY 2023 IMPACT

73 Total Projects

Representing \$118.8M

12 Grants Awarded

Representing \$29M



Ben Farmer
Director



Betsy Kane
*Senior Regional
Planner*



**Elisabeth (Liz)
Raskopf**
*Community
Development
Manager*



Helen Stanford
*Senior Regional
Planner*



John Sugg
*Resilience Project
Coordinator*



**Mary Jane
Lyonnais**
Regional Planner



Ron Townley
Project Manager



PDS efforts supporting economic development, infrastructure, community development, and human development were very significant again during fiscal year 2024. As the year closed, PDS aided in bringing a record total of \$29,051,815 in new funds into the region for 12 new projects. All new funds were to support 12 new local projects. Overall, seventy-three (73) total projects were active during the year, of which 7 are in development, 61 are ongoing, and 5 were completed or are being closed out. PDS is administering \$118,857,408 in active projects overall. Many projects have numerous funders and sub-projects within.

Highlights this year include onboarding of a new Resilience Project Coordinator (Climate Action Corps Member) and SECU Public Service Fellow, implementation of a far-reaching regional disaster recovery effort, completion of a multi-regional food system study, establishment as a Southeast Crescent Regional Commission Local Development District, and submission of 40 grant applications, including a \$1.5M digital inclusion project request to the NC Department of Information Technology. PDS continued strong progress on parks and recreation planning, ARPA Local Fiscal Recovery Fund technical assistance, economic development, housing, and CEDS implementation, and forged new regional efforts related to flood mitigation, microgrids, and urban forestry.

Our member governments received critical assistance related to water/sewer system development, flood mitigation, parks and recreation planning assistance, housing replacement, urban forestry, local/regional food system, economic development, ARPA technical assistance, downtown development, and more. PDS staff engaged with experts within and beyond our region by attending trainings and conferences related to their program of work and utilize new skills to improve and refine the department's services.

PDS 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 to leverage job creation and generate community wealth through a variety of projects of high regional interest. 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. CEDS 2023-2027 visions match the department's primary visions. CEDS 2023-2027's action plan is framed around those visions with 9 distinct initiatives and 91 strategic activities, each with its own evaluation framework.



Local Food: PDS completed a \$311,500 grant award from EDA for its Tri-COG Food Ecosystem Economic Development Strategy (Tri-COG FEEDS), which partially funds a \$397K mega-region local food system supply chain effort in partnership with neighboring Triangle J and Kerr Tar COGs. The Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust awarded the matching funds. Led by PDS's Regional Planner in partnership with the other COGs and project consultant, RTI International, Tri-COG FEEDS provided a macro-level economic picture of the food landscape in our region, developed an inventory of existing food systems work and compiled reactions from policy making audiences (more information below under Project Spotlights). Since the closing of the Tri-COG Food Ecosystem Economic Development Strategy project at the end of fiscal year 2024, which was celebrated with a large gathering of food system stakeholders in May at the Rural Center (pictured above), PDS has been working with partners to develop an implementation plan that incorporates recommendations from the strategy to capture more of the food dollars spent in the region. PDS is also providing coordination support to the Just Foods Collaborative to implement the Action Plan, including advising on urban agriculture, support of childcare food access programs, and community garden support.

Disaster Recovery & Resilience: PDS completed a far-reaching regional disaster recovery effort made possible through an NC Association of Regional Councils of Governments Rapid Recovery grant that included local strategic planning, an analysis of electric vehicle infrastructure needs, local government infrastructure map digitization, two very detailed microgrid feasibility studies, and more. More information about this effort is below under Project Spotlights. Related to this effort, PDS hosted a two-part training on disaster recovery public assistance financial administration to teach emergency managers and local government leaders about preparing for, administering, and implementing FEMA Public Assistance funds. The training curriculum was comprehensive and will continue to benefit the region's knowledge of public assistance funds in the future.



Community Development: PDS continued to assist member governments with community development needs, including affordable housing and parks and recreation development, primarily through Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding. New **CDBG grants** were awarded during FY 23-24 that totaled **\$3,070,887** for four projects in Conetoe, Gaston, Macclesfield, and Severn. New this fiscal year was the ability for local governments to utilize the NC Department of Commerce's CDBG Neighborhood Revitalization program for community center and park upgrades, which is the case for three of the four new projects. PDS also developed a comprehensive parks and recreation plan and additional parks plan elements for the Town of Gaston and began administering the US Housing and Urban Development-funded Choanoke HOME Consortium, lead by Halifax County and eligible to attract new housing development funds to Bertie, Halifax, Hertford, Northampton, and Martin Counties.

Water and Sewer Infrastructure: PDS continues to conduct water, sewer and stormwater infrastructure grant writing and administration, planning, mapping, and technical assistance. This is a major focus of PDS with a large commitment of dedicated staff, contractors, and other resources. New projects in FY 23-34 totaled approximately **\$25.3M** for member governments. UCPCOG continues to serve as a leader in public sector awards for water and sewer infrastructure improvements that connect or repair hundreds of home connections 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 analyses, engineering selection and management, contractor selection and management, and more. In total, PDS is currently administering over \$109M in water and wastewater projects on behalf of its member governments.

Local Government Capacity Building:

PDS's American Rescue Plan Act Local Fiscal Recovery Fund technical assistance work is supported through a grant from the NC Association of Regional Councils of Governments and the NC Pandemic Recovery Office. The primary goal is to serve as a reliable, local resource for all of the region's local governments as they administer and allocate their local fiscal recovery funds provided by the US



Treasury through the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021. In total, the region's local governments received over \$93M in local fiscal recovery funds. PDS works closely with the NC League of Municipalities, NC Association of County Commissioners, UNC School of Government, and others to adequately serve as a resource for its member governments. With encouragement from funders and member governments, PDS uses this role strategically to build local government capacity, establish new productive partnerships, develop sustainable projects, and attract additional funds to the region.





Project Spotlights

Disaster Recovery

The Upper Coastal Plain Council of Governments (UCPCOG) provided planning and project management services in support of a statewide effort to expand the capacity of local governments susceptible to natural disasters so they can effectively plan for, mitigate, respond to, and recover from declared disaster events as well as restore and improve their communities. Through the Planning and Development Services (PDS) Department, UCPCOG and partners worked with the NC Office of Recovery & Resiliency's RISE Program to develop a regional vulnerability assessment and portfolio of priority projects that strengthen regional resilience. This includes high-priority projects and a list of the actions needed to implement proposed projects.

After that initial successful effort, through a state appropriation of funds to the North Carolina Association of Regional Councils, UCPCOG and the other lead regional organizations received sub-award contracts to uniformly develop and conduct Disaster Recovery Public Assistance Administration Training for our member local governments. The sub-award also allowed each COG to develop and implement unique elements to meet their regional and local needs relative to disaster resilience. Building off the NC RISE process, UCPCOG's PDS worked in partnership with various contractors to aid with:

- Local government resilience priority project identification and planning
- Water/sewer/stormwater project identification needs
- Food system resilience and response analysis
- Energy needs preparedness focused on microgrids development for local critical facilities and electric vehicle charging infrastructure, including the creation of a dynamic evacuation route analysis to evaluate present and future needs of EV infrastructure under different emergency scenarios
- Mapping, data, and GIS information storage for limited capacity member governments

UCPCOG's primary roles were multi-faceted. Staff contributed to the statewide development of the Public Assistance administrative Training that included heavy financial and administrative components about preparing for and utilization of federal preparedness and recovery funds. After development, both financial and administrative staff were trained on the use of course materials developed and then held in-region trainings for member governments on the materials. Staff hired and managed various contractors to aid in the local planning, energy, and GIS/Mapping components of the effort. For the local project planning and EV evacuation route modeling components, UCPCOG also initiated a partnership with the neighboring Eastern Carolina Council of Governments because we shared both a common watershed subject to flooding and the evacuation route being utilized.





Tri-COG FEEDS

The goal of the Tri-COG Food Ecosystem Economic Development Strategy (FEEDS) was to identify the infrastructure needed to shorten food supply chains and increase rural-urban connectivity in the region served by three councils of governments (COGs) in Central and Eastern North Carolina. The project brought together government, community, research, business, and foundation partners to take a regional approach to food systems-driven economic development.

The aspirational future state of the Tri-COG food system is equitable and resilient. Achieving these dual goals by regionalizing value chains presents economic and social opportunities for the region. Increasing the amount of direct-to-consumer food sales from \$54 million (current) to \$6.6 billion (65% of the region's total food spending) would have a total economic impact of \$10.7 billion on the Tri-COG region. The evidence overwhelmingly suggests that the current state of the food system is not equitable along the dimensions of race and ethnicity, which presents an opportunity for focusing future policies and investments on that goal.

An infrastructure assessment based on the Community Capitals framework found that rural and urban regions tend to have different infrastructure strengths, so working together across geopolitical boundaries is beneficial. The types of infrastructure or capital that were examined included built, natural, financial, social, cultural, and human. Grower focus groups recommended community capital investments. When there is strong alignment between recommended farm and food business investments and the types of community capital local government is well-suited to support, local governments can lean into the areas of community capital cultivation. When there is weak alignment between recommended farm and food business investments and the types of community capital local government is well-suited to support, local governments can support organizations in their communities that do cultivate the recommended type of capital.



TRI-COG FEEDS





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Dia Denton
Vice-Chair



James Alston
Secretary / Treasurer

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Bobbie D. Jones
Ralph D. Webb
Othar Woodard

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County Commissioner
Mayor Pro-Tem, Town of Tarboro

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Commissioner, Town of Jackson
County Board Commissioner
Northampton County Manager

WILSON COUNTY

Michael S. Bell
Miranda Boykin
Paolo Ceyrolles
Sherry Lucas
Tawanda Moore

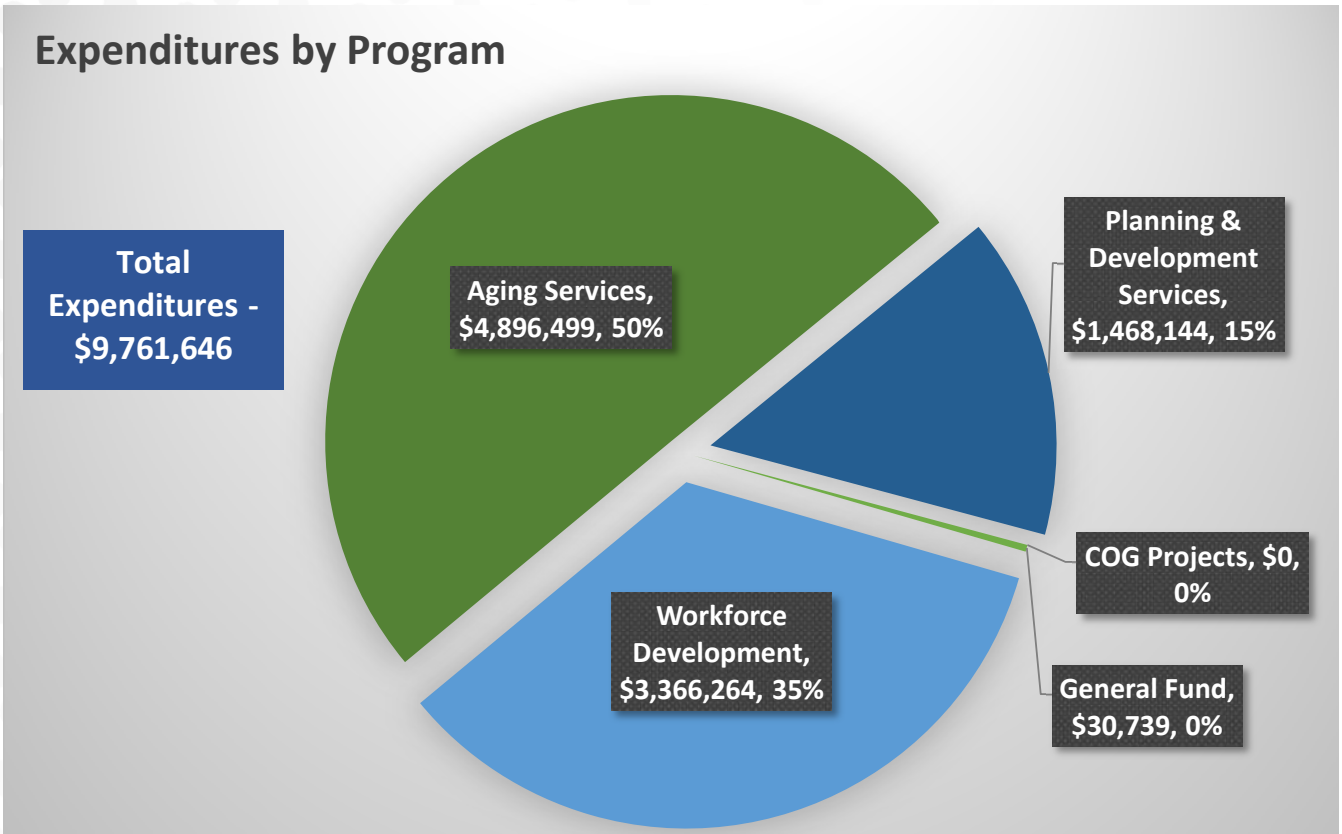
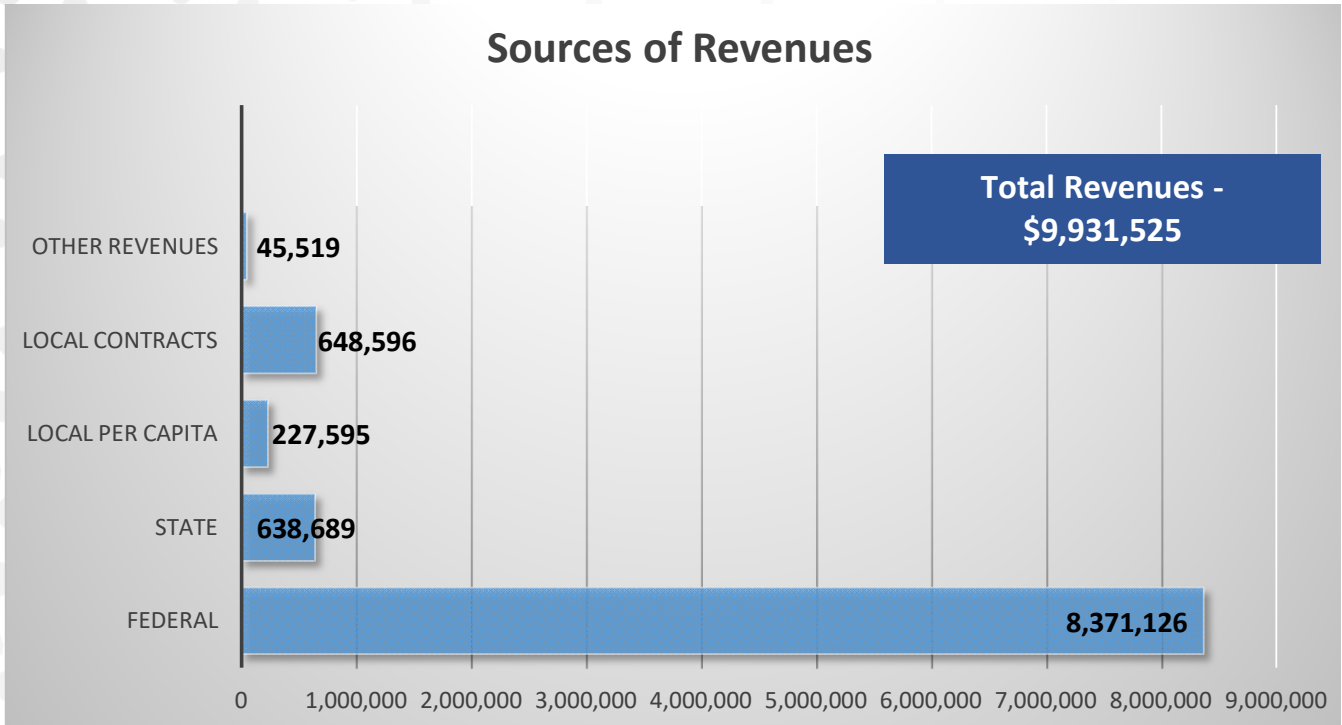
Council Member, City of Wilson
Mayor, Town of Sims
Wilson County At-Large
County Commissioner
Mayor, Town of Elm City



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