Dear Citizens:

We are pleased to present the fiscal year 2017-2018 Annual Report for the Lowcountry Council of Governments. In this report you will find important highlights about our accomplishments, and insights into future direction. I hope that you will be as impressed as I am when you read about the number of customers we have served, the programs we administer, and the financial health of the agency. In addition to the statistics, you will also be able to read about the communities, businesses, and people impacted by the work of the Lowcountry Council of Governments.

The accomplishments and activities are organized into four program areas:
- Community and Economic Development
- Planning and Transportation
- Workforce Development
- Aging and Disability Resources

The progress and success demonstrated by each program area illustrates the success of our ongoing regional commitment to cooperation and collaboration. We remain true to our mission: improving the lives of Lowcountry citizens through client programs and services to local governments; serving as a resource to the twenty-five local governments in the Region; and acting as a connection between the local governments and certain state and federal programs.

The Lowcountry Council of Governments is strong administratively, programmatically, and financially. We thank all of our member counties for their continued support. We believe the trust placed in Lowcountry Council of Governments is well-founded and deserved. Thank you to all of our member governments and citizens for helping make our region a great place to live. For more information on our services and accomplishments, please visit lowcountrycog.org.

Sincerely,

Thomas D. Johnson, Chair
Lowcountry Council of Governments Board of Directors
Community & Economic Development

Our local governments have learned to do more with less in order to efficiently deliver much needed services to growing populations. The Lowcountry Council of Governments is pleased to serve as an ongoing partner in these efforts in order to address community, economic, and housing development needs that benefit our region. Through the careful administration of federal and state-level funding programs, like Economic Development Administration and Community Development Block Grants, Lowcountry Regional HOME Consortium (LRHC), and the South Carolina Rural Infrastructure Authority, we are able to secure resources and provide technical assistance to our local governments in order to improve our communities.

Community & Economic Development

In 2017, our department successfully applied for CDBG Grants for local governments totaling $4,559,840 and updated the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), ensuring that our region has a plan for economic competitiveness, resiliency and growth.

Wastewater Treatment Plant Improvements Spur Economic Development in Walterboro

Walterboro’s wastewater system was experiencing some pressure: companies were expanding and regulatory requirements were changing. In order to provide efficient utilization of the available capacity, improvements were needed.

The Lowcountry Council of Governments was able to facilitate a discussion with key partners in order to secure funding for improvements that would boost capacity in this wastewater treatment plant. LCOG successfully applied for $2,040,000 in Public Works funds from the US Department of Commerce – Economic Development Administration and $500,000 from S.C. Rural Infrastructure Authority to assist the City of Walterboro in its expansion efforts of its wastewater treatment plant. The total project cost was $4,024,000 and remaining funding for the project was secured by the city with a loan through the S.C. Revolving Loan Fund (SCRLF).

Walterboro’s wastewater treatment plant previously had a permitted capacity of 2.64MGD. With the final improvements to its equalization basin and piping, they now have a solid foundation for future expansion efforts that will get them closer to a capacity of 4.5MGD - a big win for economic development efforts. A $4M investment into infrastructure has laid the groundwork for the expansion of seven industries over the next 3 to 5 years, resulting in $11.5M in private investment and 144 new jobs for the area.

“The service provided by LCOG allowed the city to undertake the daunting administrative burden of this major Waste Water Treatment Plant improvement and still attend to daily business.” Working with the LCOG staff “allow[s] us to accomplish more than a city or staff our size would normally be able to handle.” - The City of Walterboro

Active Projects:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community Development Block Grant</td>
<td>$11,885,197</td>
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<tr>
<td>HOME</td>
<td>$453,432</td>
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<tr>
<td>Economic Development Administration</td>
<td>$2,820,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rural Infrastructure Authority</td>
<td>$1,500,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Municipal Association of SC</td>
<td>$25,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 2017, our department successfully applied for 11 CDBG Grants totaling $4,559,840 for local governments.
Following the negative economic and population trends experienced in our region between 2007 and 2010, we are enjoying a healthier economy and growing population. The Lowcountry Council of Governments Planning & Transportation Department must take into account not just historical data, but also factor in future trends in order to assist our member communities with land use and transportation planning. Our efforts can make the difference between weathering the storm and prospering in adversity.

The Planning & Transportation Department undertakes varied projects in the areas of community and economic development planning, transportation, housing, economic diversification, infrastructure, and history—all with a regional perspective. We are demographers and statisticians and use the most up-to-date ESRI technology to generate GIS mapping features for our constituents.

The small town of Walterboro (5,121) has employment opportunities, but residents may lack the necessary skills to do the job, or may not be able to get to them due to a lack of transportation options. Working with our colleagues in Lowcountry Workforce Development - who offered training opportunities, and Lowcountry Regional Transportation Authority/Palmetto Breeze (LRTA/PB), who are skilled at transportation services, we were able to coordinate the implementation of a new bus service in the City of Walterboro. Today, a brand-new 15-passenger bus operates six hours a day, Monday through Friday, making two circuits during both the morning and afternoon commuting hours to key workforce destinations. The Palmetto Breeze is the region’s only state-designated transit provider. Together, we are bridging the gap between training and employment needs with a reliable transportation option.
A strong workforce supports and sustains a healthy economy. Our staff works with job seekers at every stage in their career path to cultivate core competencies, job training, and skills enhancement. We also work with employers to support on-the-job, advanced, and incumbent worker training opportunities. By listening to the needs of both parties - the workers and the employers - we are able to identify and deliver creative solutions that positively impact our region.

$321,450 provided in aid to 407 clients in the region.

Occupational Skills Training = $212,614.00
On the Job Training = $45,708.00
Work Based Learning = $63,128.00

When Tyrie Fields was attending Whale Branch Early College High School, he attended a career presentation offered by the Workforce Development staff of the Lowcountry Council of Governments. He spoke with Tiffany Lloyd, Beaufort & Jasper Youth Workforce Developer, that day in the spring of 2017. She gave him a card and said to contact her after graduation.

After graduating, Tyrie walked into the Beaufort SC Works Office eager and ready to start the path to his career. In order to bring his math and reading scores up, Tyrie attended classes with Beaufort County Adult Education before beginning the NCCER Welding Program in December 2017 at Palmetto Training Facility in Walterboro, SC. He successfully completed the program in May 2018.

The Workforce Development program was able to provide Tyrie with the support he needed to obtain the necessary skills, training, and education to successfully gain employment in a competitive job market. He received transportation assistance, new steel toe boots and a welding kit. Tyrie is now employed full-time as a welder at Comact in St. George, SC and makes $15/hour. Per Tyrie, he is thankful he found a program to help a young kid make life decisions.

Training dollars spent in each board-approved career cluster.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Career Cluster</th>
<th>Training Dollars Spent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>$59,855</td>
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<tr>
<td>Welders, CNC Operators, Machinists</td>
<td>$85,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Healthcare</td>
<td>$53,191</td>
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<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
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<td>Information Technology</td>
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<td>Supportive Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>Youth Incentives for GED Attainment</td>
<td>$5,250</td>
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<tr>
<td>Youth TABE Increases</td>
<td>$6,250</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

407 individuals received their GED. (5 youth/young adults and 4 adults)
Aging & Disability

The Lowcountry Area Agency on Aging (AAA) and the Aging & Disability Resource Center (ADRC) offer a comprehensive resource system that provides information, education, and access to services for individuals and local agencies that will improve the lives of the elderly and disabled adults in our region. Our staff works with multiple partners to ensure that all seniors and adults with disabilities have access to services they need to safely age in place.

Family Caregiver Support

The Family Caregiver Support Program provides information and education to caregivers as it relates to their situation and the health conditions of their loved ones. They offer counseling and services to family caregivers in order to provide support, respite care/relief, and assistance by reimbursing expenses associated with being a caregiver.

Over $278,000 awarded to 388 family caregivers.

Willie Jacobs, 73, lives in Beaufort County and is currently providing housing and care for two of his children and four of his grandchildren, ages 6, 8, 9, 13, 15, & 16.

Mr. Jacobs has been enrolled in the Family Caregiver Support Program for Grandparents Raising Grandchildren for three years. Through this program, Mr. Jacobs receives help to purchase school supplies and clothing for his grandchildren.

Information, Referral & Assistance

6,505 contacts for resource referrals

The AAA serves as an access point for seniors seeking help, and advocates for those who need help navigating the system in order to gain access to entitlement programs.

Legal Assistance

6,300 in legal fees for 27 seniors

Through our Legal Assistance program, we are able to assist individuals aged 60 and older obtain access to an attorney who can assist with their legal services, at no cost to the senior. Services can include assistance with issues related to Powers of Attorney, fraud, housing, and access to benefits.

Insurance Counseling

$338,000 saved for Medicare beneficiaries during the 2017 Open Enrollment Period.

Focus areas are Medicare benefits, Medicare Supplements, Medicare Savings Programs to help with premiums, Medicare Advantage Plans, Medicare Prescription savings plans, Medicaid and the Senior Medicare Fraud program (SMP).

Long-Term Care Residence Advocacy

2,433 residents in 34 facilities last year.

Our Long-Term Care Ombudsman monitors the quality of life and care of residents by investigating concerns and complaints, working closely with both the family and the facility to resolve problems.

$338,000 saved for Medicare beneficiaries during the 2017 Open Enrollment Period.

Focus areas are Medicare benefits, Medicare Supplements, Medicare Savings Programs to help with premiums, Medicare Advantage Plans, Medicare Prescription savings plans, Medicaid and the Senior Medicare Fraud program (SMP).
The Consumer Choice Home Care Program offers personal care services to homebound seniors, with a goal of keeping this population living independently in their homes for as long as possible.

The Nutrition Program offers a USDA-approved meal to individuals both homebound and those that attend locally contracted Senior Centers and Nutrition sites.

Pernell Coger, 82, and his wife Doretha Coger, 72, routinely attend the Robertsville Nutrition site in Jasper county. Pernell and his first wife attended the nutrition site together until her passing. Five years later, Pernell had another chance at love when he met Doretha at the Robertsville Nutrition Site.

In 2016, surrounded by friends, Pernell and Doretha married at the Robertsville Nutrition Site. The happy couple continue to receive congregate meals, as well as participate in trips, activities, exercise, and educational events at the site. These events help keep the Cogers active and socially engaged, while also allowing them to have a healthy meal.

Over 191,000 meals provided through congregate & home delivery.

17,000+ hours of In-Home Care services provided to 100 seniors

The Consumer Choice Home Care Program offers personal care services to homebound seniors, with a goal of keeping this population living independently in their homes for as long as possible.

The Nutrition Program offers a USDA-approved meal to individuals both homebound and those that attend locally contracted Senior Centers and Nutrition sites.
Historically, the services provided by Lowcountry Council of Governments typically included projects that the counties and municipalities found beneficial to their communities, but did not have sufficient staff time and or expertise to undertake. Today, our agency continues to be an extension of government, but also plays a facilitative role. Our qualified staff is able to work with our member governments to explore joint provision of services that have become too expensive to justify using the “go-it-alone” strategy.

Lowcountry Council of Governments serves as a forum for local officials, agencies, and nonprofits to identify and discuss issues of common concern, while also working to develop creative regional solutions to address them. We are that unique entity that can serve as a vehicle to ensure cooperative action in matters that cross local political boundaries. The regional approach offered by Lowcountry Council of Governments also serves to facilitate state and federal involvement in local projects, programs, and planning efforts.

During the last three years, our staff has very actively convened the region. These efforts have netted some positive results. For example:

- The Planning Department convened the emergency management officials from the four member counties and prepared the first Lowcountry Regional Multi-jurisdictional Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan.
- Community and Economic Development hosted regional grant information workshops for officials from our 25 member governments. As a result, we see an increase in the requests for writing grants and in the number of grants awarded in the region.
- The Aging and Disability Resource Department has formed new partnerships with nonprofit agencies in the region resulting in the addition of new programs and services being offered to seniors in the region.
- Through a state-level grant opportunity, Workforce Development and Planning convened regional community and economic development partners around the issue of transportation and its impact on workforce and economic development. The result is a grant-funded pilot transportation program in the City of Walterboro connecting workers to training and job opportunities.

Convening the region has given our smaller municipalities the opportunity to learn more about our services and to utilize them more. In our role as convener, collaborator and consultant to our local governments, we are making a positive difference in improving the region’s quality of life and making our region a great place to live.

Looking ahead, there is significant opportunity to improve the delivery of state-level programs and services to local governments by partnering with Lowcountry Council of Governments to implement both state and federal pass-through programs at the regional level. We are committed to evaluating and pursuing these opportunities on behalf of our member governments along with proactively providing services that meet local needs.