

LOWCOUNTRY COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS  
ANNUAL REPORT  
2021 - 2022





*The Lowcountry Council of Governments is a member of the South Carolina Councils of Governments, a network of 10 regional councils of governments working to positively affect quality of life and economic development in South Carolina. [sccogs.org](http://sccogs.org)*

The Lowcountry Council of Governments (LCOG) offers creative regional solutions to the four counties and twenty-one cities and towns within Beaufort, Colleton, Hampton, and Jasper Counties. Guided by a thirty-member board of directors appointed by the participating local governments, LCOG partners with local governments, human service agencies and local nonprofits to leverage the best resources possible in order to serve the people who need us most.

**As a result, we are a stronger region that strives to have:**

- a healthy aging population
- an educated and well-trained workforce
- incentives to help small businesses thrive and grow
- safe, affordable housing
- planning resources that connect our land, transportation, environmental and economic assets

**DEAR LOWCOUNTRY REGION,**

I am proud to present the Annual Report for fiscal year 2021-2022. This Annual Report summarizes the programmatic success of each program Aging, Workforce, Planning & Transportation, and Community & Economic Development, and the overall financial success of the COG following the peak COVID years.

Lowcountry COG could not survive the COVID years with endurance alone. These were no ordinary times; difficult times required difficult measures, so we made major changes to our performance, our growth, and wellbeing. We worked through these times, adapting our processes, learning new skills, and growing our services. We became more resilient.

The Aging Department did not waste a single dollar of the additional ARPA funds received. We added more seniors to programs and expanded the services provided to our existing clients. The Business Services team, in Workforce, deployed new techniques to serve our businesses that needed help following COVID. They created the Workforce Weekly podcast and established a Business HUB to provide numerous services from one location.

The Planning and Transportation Department completed major studies over this last year including the first resiliency study of a military installation. This study has spurred state and national attention and positioned the COG to receive additional federal funding for further study and project implementation. Community and Economic Development has more active projects than ever before and welcomed two new staff members to the team. We aggressively pursued funding made available to local governments due to COVID and other state and federal initiatives.

As you enjoy reading this report, know we are far from business as usual. We are a better, stronger, and more resilient team that has adapted, learned and grown to continue serving the citizens of Beaufort, Colleton, Hampton, and Jasper counties, and the 21 municipalities therein. As Board Chairman, I would like to sincerely thank the Board of Directors, and the LCOG staff for your contributions to where we stand today as an organization. Our future is bright thanks to your support.

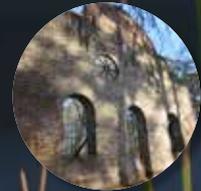
Sincerely,

**John Carroll**, Board Chairman  
Lowcountry Council of Governments  
Board of Directors

**Sabrena P. Graham**, Executive Director  
Lowcountry Council of Governments



BEAUFORT COUNTY



COLLETON COUNTY



HAMPTON COUNTY



JASPER COUNTY



# Community & Economic DEVELOPMENT

**Community and Economic Development** has grown, adapted and adjusted quickly to ever-changing circumstances over the last 18 to 24 months. We have always been local government service-oriented and hands-on in working with communities to assist with their needs. We had to learn to do that even when the only option was to work remotely. We have learned to utilize technology in ways that were previously not even considered prior to the pandemic's onset. The use of online video conferencing for collaborative meetings, editing and signing documents electronically, using mapping tools to a greater degree to work on projects and using our smartphones more like the minicomputers they are. These are some of the ways we have individually grown and adapted to the current business environment. Consequently, our efforts were not in vain because even as we had to operate in a more restrictive environment, we continued to manage projects and win projects for our communities. Our current project load is greater than before we instituted these technologies in our department. Community and Economic Development has established that we are indeed resilient and can grow as opportunities grow for our local governments.

## 🏆 Accomplishments

- Awarded **5 CDBGs** (Community Development Block Grants) totaling **\$3,491,547**
- Awarded **1 CDBG CV** grant totaling **\$858,483**
- Awarded **1 HOME ARP** grant totaling **\$2,321,952**
- Awarded **2 EDA** (Economic Development Administration) grants totaling **\$6,234,000**

## ★ Awards

- Kimberly Mullinax named to SC Community Development Association Board of Directors
- Jessica Dailey and Kimberly Mullinax participated in the SC Economic Development Institute

## ➤ Active Projects

- **29** CDBG - **\$15,852,599**
- **16** HOME - **\$522,633**
- **10** EDA - **\$31,991,072**
- **2** RD (rural development) - **\$1,340,519**
- **1** RIA (Rural Infrastructure Authority) - **\$500,000**
- **1** FEMA - **\$109,500**



“After losing power at the Town Hall complex for over a week following Hurricane Matthew’s landfall in Jasper County, the Town of Ridgeland was urgently seeking solutions to prevent a similar shutdown from occurring in the future. LCOG’s assistance proved invaluable and we are confident that going forward, Ridgeland can safely maintain emergency operations during a hurricane impact.”

**Dennis Averkin,**  
Town Administrator,  
Town of Ridgeland

## T E S T I M O N I A L

Nestled among the Lowcountry live oaks and the wandering waterways of Jasper County lies the **Town of Ridgeland**. About 4,000 residents and businesses call this small, rural town their home. Life in the Lowcountry has many beautiful, picture-perfect days; however, it is also prone to severe weather such as hurricanes, dangerous thunderstorms and extreme flooding.

After years of enduring power outages to critical functions, Ridgeland began looking for funding for an emergency generator for Town Hall, which also serves as their Emergency Operations Center. There were times when the power was out for up to eight days, causing quite the financial strain to move critical infrastructure equipment and staff to alternate locations.

In January 2020, LCOG and Ridgeland worked together to write a FEMA Pre-Disaster Mitigation grant. The grant was funded in December 2020 to install an 80 KW capacity generator with an automatic transfer switch, fueled by a 1,000-gallon propane tank, and all supporting work. The total cost was **\$103,479.76** with FEMA paying for 75 percent of the project. Work was complete by June 2022 and the generator is working properly. It has automatically started several times already due to severe thunderstorms. It is comforting to know that the town’s functions should be able to continue without major interruptions, especially during hurricane season.





# PLANNING & Transportation

**Resilience** is now a required element of all comprehensive plans in the state, considering the impacts of flooding and natural hazards on individuals, communities, economic development, public infrastructure and public health, safety and welfare.

Not only is resilience required in comprehensive planning, but it is also a key factor in transportation planning. Transportation resilience is about systems working together to provide the flexible and resilient infrastructure that helps people move safely through natural disasters or other major challenges. It means planning ahead and being thoughtful about our long-term infrastructure and investments. Resilience was one of the key considerations when completing the new long-range transportation plans. LCOG has updated the 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) and Rural Area LRTP. These plans will identify transportation needs for the urbanized and rural areas. Completion of these plans would not have been possible without our colleague Christian Dammel who passed away in June 2022.

The department also completed the Lowcountry Military Installation Resilience Review (MIRR) for the communities surrounding the military installations. Military installation resilience is the capability of a military installation to avoid, prepare for, minimize the effect of, adapt to and recover from extreme weather events that could adversely affect the military installation.

## ★ By the Numbers

### 208 Certifications

- Projects: 55
- Housing Units: 4,094
- Commercial and Industrial Projects: 17

### Grants/Contracts

- Transportation Planning (LATS & Rural combined): \$420,870
- Community Planning Services: \$74,000
- 208 Conformance Review: \$19,821

### Transportation Projects

*(funds committed between 2022 to 2026):*

- Miles of roads, bridges, and highway projects: 527,108 miles
- Dollar amount of construction: \$957,709,939

## 🏆 Accomplishments

- Completed the 2045 Urban Long Range Transportation Plan and the 2045 Rural Long Range Transportation Plan.
- Updated the People and the Economy Report with the new 2020 Census data.
- Completed the Lowcountry Military Installation Resilience Review.
- Completed Comprehensive Plans for the Town of Hampton.
- Completed Market Study for the Town of Varnville.
- Completed Program Evaluation for the Lowcountry Area Agency on Aging (AAA).

## Professional Development

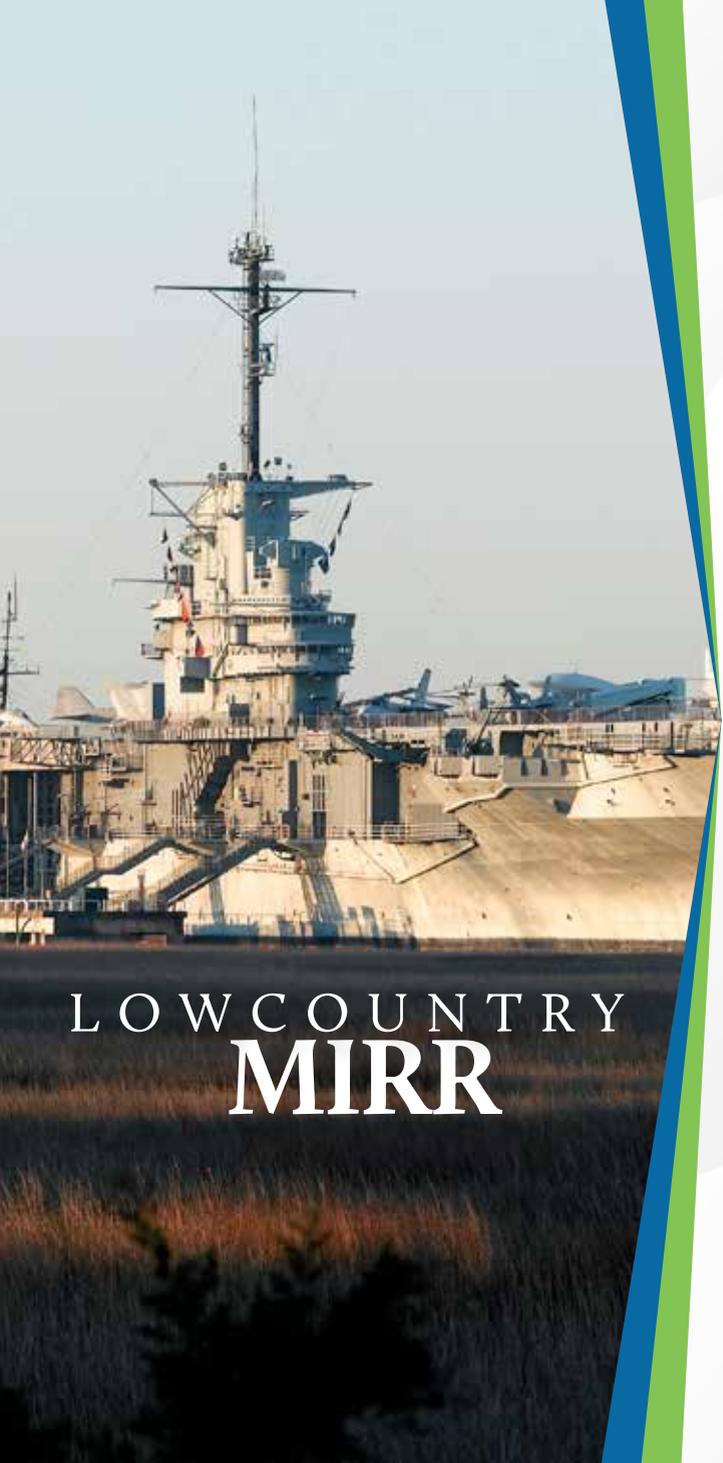
- Department staff completed training and webinars to learn how to better incorporate resilience in our planning activities.
- Staff completed the training course on the requirements of the water quality standards regulations and the applicable portions of the Clean Water Act.
- Director Stephanie Rossi presented the Lowcountry Military Installation Resilience Review (MIRR) project at several national and regional events. The Lowcountry MIRR is one of the first to be completed in the nation.

## ★ Town of Varnville Market Study

Market potential and demand for small businesses in Varnville tend to be site-specific and vary greatly based on the needs of the local residents and people who work in and visit Varnville. According to the retail inventory, lack of available space is not constraining downtown development. In addition, niche opportunities for small scale businesses may exist, especially with the new agricultural technology cluster located less than 15 minutes away from Varnville.

As a result of the demographic and market analyses, along with input from relevant agencies, recommendations revolve around three basic functions of the Town: to live, to do business, and to visit. Recommendations focus more on business attraction, retention, and expansion, as well as public attraction to enhance economic development in downtown Varnville.





# LOWCOUNTRY MIRR

Funded by the Department of Defense’s Office of Local Defense Community Cooperation (OLDCC), **LCOG completed one of the first Military Installation Resilience Reviews (MIRR) in the nation this past year.** This study is the first of a series of funding MIRR efforts and stands as a model for future coastal military installation resilience practices throughout the nation.

The MIRR is a program designed to help communities partner with local commands to make informed decisions that respond to, address, and mitigate activities impairing or likely to impair the use of the installation. It is intended to increase the value of the military installation while preserving its military mission.

The Lowcountry MIRR project study area includes Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Beaufort and Marine Corps Recruit Depot (MCRD) Parris Island Military installations and their respective surrounding communities. The project objective was to identify threats and vulnerabilities and present recommendations that enhance the resilience and adaptation capacity of the bases and the surrounding communities. The Lowcountry MIRR includes an extensive public planning process, with a Policy Committee and a Technical Committee made up of local residents, businesses and officials and engaged stakeholders in Beaufort County, the City of Beaufort, the Town of Port Royal, MCAS, MCRD and the Lowcountry Council of Governments. The public input received throughout this effort has shaped the findings and recommendations.

The Lowcountry MIRR focuses on infrastructure and vulnerabilities related to the most likely hazards to occur in and around the military installations. The effort focuses on six hazards: hurricanes, tidal inundation, coastal flood inundation, coastal erosion, sea level rise, and extreme rainfall events.

Not all hazards can be contained, but it’s possible to improve both physical structures and procedures in order to minimize disruptions and reduce management costs to rebuild. The Lowcountry MIRR recommends a multi-layered toolkit of

structural and non-structural interventions with an emphasis on nature-based solution sets which help to preserve ecosystem services. The Lowcountry MIRR suggests many opportunities to be proactive and prevent future disruptions. This report provides a usable foundation that Lowcountry communities can use to advance strategic, fund-able and executable resilience efforts moving forward with a consistent framework that enables the county to build a comprehensive approach to future adaptation for the region.

## ★ Town of Hampton Comprehensive Plan

The Town of Hampton’s new Comprehensive Plan is an update of the Town’s 2010 Plan. The plan was prepared according to the requirements of the Comprehensive Planning Act of 1994, as amended in 2007 and 2020, describing the history, current state, and future vision for the community. The plan includes ten planning elements: population, economic development, natural resources, cultural resources, community facilities, housing, land use, transportation, priority investment, and resiliency.

LCOG undertook information gathering and analysis, coordinated public participation and stakeholder engagement, and developed goals statements and implementation strategies with time frames and funding alternatives, in support of the Town’s needs.

The final Comprehensive Plan provides a 10-year future vision and guides the creation of land use planning policies to balance community values and character with future growth and development.





# Workforce DEVELOPMENT

The Workforce Development Department and its programs have learned to pivot and adapt its service model as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. We now have the capability to:

- Operate completely in a virtual environment and still provide high-quality job seeker services.
- Provide effective and non-stop employer engagement via a virtual environment on an as-needed basis.
- Perform mock interviews, soft skills training, and resume preparation all accomplished through virtual instructions.
- Provide employers and job seekers with options of attending onsite hiring events or attending virtually.
- Understand our workforce staff can operate and be just as effective working remotely as they would in the office.
- Focus on a regionalism concept that allows neighboring workforce areas to share resources and staff to reduce cost and pass the saving onto participants for career training opportunities.

## ► Highlights

- **Launched Lowcountry Biz Connect:** Employers gained easier access to the public workforce development system, which provides various tools, training and funding through multiple programs.
- **Launched Workforce Weekly:** A video podcast hosted by the LCOG business service team. The podcast covers a range of topics, such as post-COVID employer engagement, best practices and interview tips.

## ★ By the Numbers

- **594** employers served in Beaufort, Colleton, Hampton and Jasper Counties
- **1,276** employer services provided
- **267** participants served in all four counties
- **\$325,111** total training dollars expended on participants
- **\$148,173** expended for on the job training contracts to employers
- **\$176,938** occupational skills training

### Career Sector Training

- Manufacturing: **\$217,282**
- Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics (CDL): **\$91,250**
- Healthcare: **\$11,365**
- Technology: **\$5,215**

**Supportive Services:**  
**\$27,867**

**Youth Work Experience Work-Base Learning:**  
**\$41,117**

### Accomplishments

- **\$148,173** On-the-Job (OJT) contracts for 44 employers
- Dislocated Worker Career Grant totaling **\$629,338** for five SC workforce area consortiums
- **\$559,875** COVID-19 Public Assistance Grant
- **\$392,729** SC State Workforce Board Resiliency Grant



“Working with Mr. Tony Pollen, Business Services Coordinator, and his team is always a pleasure. We especially appreciate the expertise, dedication and professionalism of the Workforce Development Career Specialists throughout the region for promptly assisting in processing our reverse referral job candidates to ensure our production schedule is not hindered. The Workforce Development Programs offer a valuable service to the community, and I encourage every company to utilize its services.”

**Dennis Averkin,**  
*Town Administrator,*  
Town of Ridgeland

## W O R K F O R C E D E V E L O P M E N T T R I U M P H

Evanescence Inc., a producer of biodegradable drinking straws located in Early Branch, SC, has been in business since September 2021 and has worked with the Lowcountry Business Services Team since that time. The organization participated in talent recruitment events, leading to 25 full-time employment opportunities as a

result of the On-The-Job Training program (OJT) via the Lowcountry Council of Governments.

Evanescence Inc. saved thousands of dollars on its training budget by utilizing Workforce Training Programs.





# Area Agency ON AGING

The Lowcountry Region had a very successful year with our **I-CARE Department**. Using additional Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) funds for digital marketing, the SHIP program produced an animated SMP commercial. Our staff also partnered with Good Neighbors, Volunteers in Medicine, and other nonprofit agencies to reach those new to Medicare or underserved communities.

The **Minor Home Repair Program** spent over \$102K to assist residents with ramps, septic tanks, bathroom modifications, and other minor repairs. This was the second highest amount spent statewide in the Minor Home Repair Program.

The **Legal Services Team** was in such high demand for FY21/22 that the budget had to be adjusted to accommodate the requests. The budget for FY22/23 will be doubled in hopes that the needs in our regions will be met in that area.

Nationally, much attention is now on nursing and assisted living facilities due to COVID-19. **The Lowcountry Ombudsman** has worked to ensure that proper monitoring of the facilities within our region was provided consistently. Care packages were distributed throughout the facilities, reaching 800 residents during World Elder Abuse Awareness Day. PRIME brochures were also distributed to ensure that residents were aware of their rights as it pertains to their well-being and how to deal with issues of neglect, abuse, and exploitation.

Attention has also been on the role of caregivers, recognizing the burnout and stress that many Caregivers are under. The Lowcountry **Family Caregiver Support Program** had another extremely successful year with the virtual peer support group, Tea Time for Caregivers. This year brought on the opportunity for deeper dives into the issues plaguing caregivers and created a private, trusted space for them to share and release some of the stress they carry. The sessions will continue and are open to Caregivers in our region.

This year, the Lowcountry Area Agency on Aging had the opportunity to host Senior Day. This was a day of fun and celebration held in Varnville and attended by participants throughout the Lowcountry region. The day was filled with games, entertainment, physical activities and prizes and included a meal.

The Lowcountry Council of Governments Planning department worked with the Aging Department to complete the Lowcountry Area Agency on Aging Program Evaluation Report. This report involved seniors throughout our region who completed surveys indicating their levels of satisfaction with the current services, reasons why some do not attend senior centers, and the perspective of services from service

providers. This guidance will help the Lowcountry Area Agency on Aging improve the services offered and attract the “new age” seniors entering their Golden Years.

Next year, the Aging Department will use ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) funds towards the improvements suggested by the program evaluation report to include: the FoodShare partnership, expanding the Seniors Raising Children services, providing tablets for seniors for Evidence-Based Programs, and enhancing existing services.





## 🏆 Program Accomplishments

### SCDOT 5310 Funding

The AAA acquired SCDOT (5310) funding for the sixth year on behalf of three out of four counties to help with the purchase of transportation services. By securing this SCDOT funding for transportation services, the Lowcountry AAA is able to leverage Title III-B funds to help provide additional Title III-B services to seniors across the region and give contracted providers the opportunity to expand existing routes and/or create new routes. The amount awarded for FY 21/22 was \$187,500 (with match).

### ICARE/SHIP Programs

With the help of two SMP grants, a Senior Medicare Patrol animated commercial was created, produced and released encouraging seniors to be aware of fraud and to utilize the services available to them. We had a successful Medicare open enrollment period with healthcare savings averaging \$66,000 which is a 97% increase compared to the previous year. The goal for annual contacts for SHIP was 2,260, which was exceeded by 129% with 5,180 contacts being made.

### Ombudsman Program

During Residents' Rights Month in October 2021, with the help of the design team at Alpha Graphics of Beaufort, we developed a Lowcountry Residents' Rights brochure with information on identifying improper care and ideas for advocacy. The Ombudsman team

created care packages for 800 residents for World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD). Outreach coordinators have been distributing PRIME Brochures during events to educate the public on the SC PRIME Ombudsman program that can provide advocacy for beneficiaries of Healthy Connections PRIME health insurance.

### I&R/A

In FY21/22, we partnered with Helping Hands to complete five ramps and conduct 34 outreach events. We were also able to provide the following home repairs:

- 44 ramps
- 11 septic tanks
- 21 bathroom modifications
- 3 well repairs
- 2 hot water heater repairs
- 8 HVAC repairs
- 6 step/railing installations

### Family Caregivers Support Program

Powerful Tools for Caregivers (PTC) is a highly effective, evidence-based, self-care educational program for family caregivers that builds the skills caregivers need to take better care of themselves as they provide care for others. Caregiver participants learn to minimize the potentially negative impacts of caregiving in a six-week program emphasizing self-care and empowerment. LCOG conducted Powerful Tools for Caregivers over a period of six weeks for ten caregivers, of whom six received a certificate of completion.

## ➤ Data

- **114** seniors served through the homecare program
- **1,531** comprehensive assessments conducted
- **\$328,673** expended for **114** clients enrolled in the Family Caregiver Support Program
- **\$100,237** in minor home repair services for **95** projects
- **15,368** hours of in-home care services provided to **114** seniors
- **\$10,230** provided in legal fees for **35** seniors
- **190,610** home-delivered meals
- **20,173** congregate/group dining meals served
- **7,697** emergency shelf-stable meals served

## ★ Professional Development

- Zoë Perpall obtained her Long-Term Care Ombudsman certification on June 14, 2022.
- Assessor Rhonda Lowther obtained a Certification to teach the Powerful Tools for Caregivers (PTC) six-week classes with the Family Caregiver Support Program.





## T E S T I M O N I A L

As patients reach Medicare age, they are no longer eligible for care or medications through Good Neighbor Medical Clinic (GNMC), a health care clinic in Beaufort County. To help provide their patients with guidance in navigating the process of Medicare enrollment, GNMC reached out to LCOG. Diessha Hicks, a state health insurance program specialist at LCOG, took the time to answer patients' questions and help them enroll in the correct Medicare program.

***“We have been so fortunate to have created this collaboration!”***

Prior to Diessha's services, patients were not successful in signing up for Medicare, which would result in them calling GNMC without coverage and being unable to afford their medications. GNMC's staff would have continued to take the time to assist these former patients through their crisis of having to procure their medication needs and navigating Medicare enrollment on their own, often resulting in an unnecessary emergency department visit. Since Diessha's involvement, the clinic has not had any calls from former patients needing help with Medicare enrollment.

## T E S T I M O N I A L

Jan Kendrick, 76, is the primary caregiver for his wife who has Alzheimer's. Jan's stress level was high, and his caregiving responsibilities were affecting his health. In desperate need of a break, he applied for the Family Caregiver Support Program (FCSP). Mr. Kendrick received the FCSP grant as well as the Alzheimer's and Disease Related Dementia (ADRD) grant. He successfully finished the Powerful Tools for Caregivers (PTC) 6-week classes and obtained a certification of completion.

Mr. Kendrick said the FCSP gave him hope that someone really understood his situation and was available to help him face daily caregiving issues. The program provided education and tools to assist with dealing with Alzheimer's and continued to work with him on preparing for the future as well as financial support to assist with respite.

***“I've learned so much about planning and self-care to help reduce my daily stress. I feel better equipped to cope with this very difficult situation.”***

Mr. Kendrick meets monthly with the “Tea Time for Caregivers” support group. This group of experienced people with excellent knowledgeable leadership discuss different issues each person faces on a daily basis and how to best deal.



***“Without LCOG's help, it's scary. Mentally, I never thought I would say I can't deal with this disease, and really, I couldn't, without the support I have gotten since moving to Beaufort County. It is comfortable to have help in dealing with terrible diseases and assisting caregivers in keeping our loved ones out of state-run facilities. I honestly appreciate everything the FCSP has done for me and so many in the same situation. I feel better equipped to head into the next phase of my life.”***

**- Jan Kendrick**



# BOARD OF Directors

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 Chris Hervocho  
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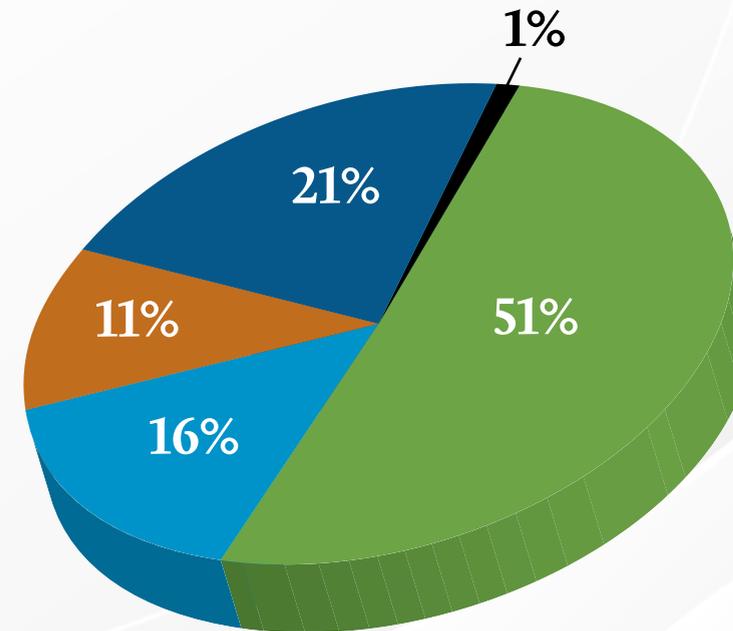
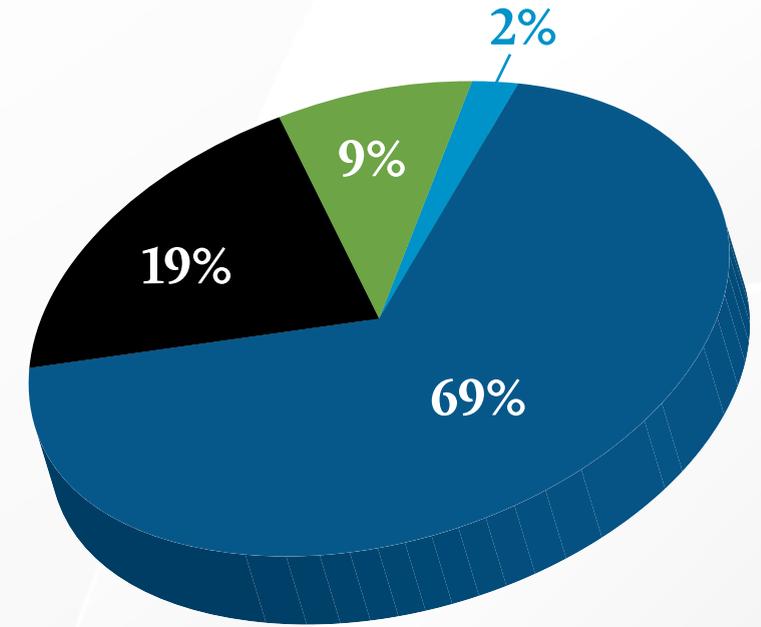
## Finance Report

YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2022

### R E V E N U E S

Federal .....	5,449,791
State .....	1,483,541
Local .....	745,681
Dues .....	185,244

Total.....**\$7,864,257**



### E X P E N D I T U R E S

Aging .....	3,930,103
Community & Economic Development .....	1,247,010
Planning .....	877,770
Workforce .....	1,605,842
Administration .....	114,428

Total.....**\$7,775,153**



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**Lowcountry**  
COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS