Upper Coastal Plain Council of Governments

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)

2018 Annual Report
This report serves to highlight key activities of the past year performed by Upper Coastal Plain Council of Governments and partners, as it relates to the region's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. This report also serves as an annual update per US EDA DOC regulations. No significant changes were made to the UCPCOG Region's CEDS before September 30, 2018.
VISION

The Upper Coastal Plain Region will...

Think Regionally

Act Locally

Compete Globally
GOAL 1: Build on the Region’s Competitive Advantages & Leverage Marketplace

OBJECTIVE 1: Improve Upper Coastal Plain Region’s ability to attract, retain, and grow the diversity of investment and new employers.

STRATEGIES AND TACTICS: Increase Capacity, Increase Connectivity (partnerships), Leverage Investments.

A $2 million Economic Development Administration grant will:
- help Halifax Community College build an Advanced Manufacturing and Corporate Training Center.
- expand programs within its industrial systems curriculum.
- create more that 120 jobs and nearly $19 million in private investment.

The College is currently in the process of hiring an architectural firm to design the facility.

The new Advanced Manufacturing and Corporate Training Center will help provide local businesses with an able workforce, stimulating future growth in the community. The training center will house curriculum and short-term training programs for industrial systems technology, welding technology, and automotive systems technology. The grant will allow the college to expand the welding area and its Industrial systems program which includes solar training, robotics, and computer training. The funds may also lead to an expansion of the school’s automotive technology area, which could lead to programs in diesel technology. The facility will serve as a venue where area businesses and industries can upgrade the skills of their current employees as well as new hires, and schedule other training needs. The grant was part of the regional planning efforts of the Upper Coastal Plain Council of Governments. The Upper Coastal Plain Council of Governments strives to bring together the public and private sectors to create an economic development roadmap to strengthen the regional economy, support private capital investment, and create jobs.

The Upper Coastal Plain Council of Governments received a 2018 Innovation Award from the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) on behalf of their work with the region’s local community colleges and the construction of new facilities. The association’s Innovation Awards program recognizes regional development organizations and their partners for improving the economic and community competitiveness of regions and local communities. These facility development projects demonstrate the ability of the COG to capture and leverage federal funds for our local Community Colleges, so they can better serve citizens and businesses.
OBJECTIVE 2: The Region requires an effective “entrepreneurial ecosystem” to encourage development of new start-ups, support existing small business growth, and develop other entrepreneurial initiatives.

STRATEGIES AND TACTICS: INCREASE entrepreneurial activity through creation and coordination of support programs.

UCPCOG’s Business Development Corporation previously identified the need to convert/modify the Wilson BDC to a more modern co-working space. In cooperation with the City of Wilson and Wilson County, a successful proposal was forwarded by the Innovation 20/20 (now called Wilson Forward) initiative to the GoldenLeaf’s Community Based Grantmaking Initiative to create an innovation space. This award supports the needed modifications to the BDC facility on Nash St. in Downtown Wilson and the space was proposed for use to fulfill the grant. As part of the deal structure, the BDC proposed modifying its lease as the city will take ownership of the building. EDA approval is expected to be needed due to a prior investment to allow the transfer. During the last 6 months, negotiations with the City of Wilson continued. The building was evaluated by engineers for needed improvements to the facility to meet the needs of the new Innovation Center. A second building is also under consideration and the City is currently leaning in that direction. If the City does not choose the BDC building, a new process and plan will need to be created to better utilize the building.

After the retirement of long-time Executive Director, Greg Godard, the BDC’s Director, Greg Godard, the BDC’s Revolving Loan Fund Responsibilities were transferred to the PDS Director Ron Townley. This EDA backed RLF was found to be largely inactive and a Corrective Action Plan was created, submitted to, and accepted by EDA. The purpose of the plan is to investigate new administration and management structures to make the fund more active and sustainable.

PDS Director worked with 3 small business start-ups and expansions. Most notably, staff assisted Oh My Goodness Pimento Cheese expand from a part-time, home-based business to a commercial kitchen in downtown Wilson. The company has hired 3 part-time employees for the manufacture of product and has obtained its first commercial wholesale contract. Other consults have included Casa Mia in Littleton, a local brewery startup in Weldon, and a coffee shop in Wilson.

Staff began work with NC Common Enterprise to conduct a workshop training area SBC Directors, ED officials, and others on facilitating small business owners on the transfer of small business ownership to employees. This work addresses the need of many retiring business owners looking for options to sell their concerns upon retirement when heirs and outside buyers are not interested in procuring the company as a going operation.
OBJECTIVE 3: The Upper Coastal Plain region must focus on our unique areas of proficiency and innovation and how best to exploit competitive advantages.

STRATEGIES AND TACTICS: Develop sector-based approaches for implementation and establish more evidence-based process for investments.

PDS Director worked extensively with both Halifax and Northampton County representatives in preparing project proposals for the GoldenLeaf Community Based Grantmaking Initiative. The comprehensive projects proposals developed focus on getting “hard to employ” residents into the job market and address many areas of this report including workforce development, transportation, childcare, and more. Continued project development with leaders from numerous sectors is expected to continue into the next reporting period.

GOAL 2: Establish & Maintain a Robust Infrastructure

OBJECTIVE 1: Water and wastewater systems have increasing costs in operations and maintenance, and respond with associated fee increases. To create economies of scale, water and sewer systems can be better integrated and coordinated. Deferred maintenance creating operational efficiencies can also be addressed.

STRATEGIES AND TACTICS: Establish resources management, planning, coordination, and investments as well as build technical capacity with local water and sewer utility providers.

Water/Sewer Projects

Under Development

- Enfield 2018 NC DEQ Drinking Water State Revolving Fund Grant/Loan
- Enfield 2018 NC CDBG-I combined Water & Sewer
- Hobgood 2018 DEQ Clean Water State Revolving Fund Grant/Loan
- Saratoga 2018 NC DEQ Drinking Water State Revolving Fund Grant/Loan
- Saratoga 2018 CDBG-I
- Seaboard 2018 NC CDBG-NR
- Seaboard 2018 NC DEQ Drinking Water State Revolving Fund Grant/Loan
- Whitakers 2018 CDBG-I Sewer Project
- Whitakers 2018 NC DEQ Clean Water State Revolving Fund Grant/Loan
- Woodland 2018 CDBG-I

Ongoing

- Enfield 2016 Disaster Recovery Act Grant# H-SAP-D-17-0012
- Saratoga 2015 CDBG-I Speight School Rd. Sewer Grant# 15-I-2756
- Saratoga 2016 NC DEQ Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (Hwy 222) Grant# WIF1922
- Scotland Neck 2014 CDBG-I Water Improvements Grant# 15-2753
- Scotland Neck 2014 CDBG-I Sewer Improvements Grants# 15-I-2752
- Seaboard 2014 CDBG-I NC 305 Sewer Grant# 14-I-2664
- Seaboard 2016 CDBG-I Town Wide Sewer Grant# 16-I-2926
- Seaboard 2017 NC DEQ Drinking Water State Revolving Fund Grant/Loan# H-SRP-17-0070
- Seaboard 2017 GoldenLeaf End Stage Lagoon Rehabilitation Grant# 17-096
Objective 2: Areas of our region lack adequate broadband access. High-speed broadband is a necessity for the development of resilient and successful communities. It is required for businesses to thrive and ultra-high-speed broadband is critical to global competitiveness.

Strategies and Tactics: Improve robust and affordable broadband access to unserved and underserved areas to meet present and future needs.

The Upper Coastal Plain continues engaging with State officials to brainstorm rural broadband deployment strategies. Demand aggregation and community individuation in deployment are key principles in implementing rural broadband deployment.

Staff continues to compile resources such as sample surveys, other regional processes, etc. for evaluation and fit to our region. Meetings have been held with the state broadband office, service providers, program operators, potential funders and others to help determine approaches.

Currently soliciting area input with a survey to member governments and localities in the region. Survey is targeted on determining broadband speeds at the community level, current providers, service satisfaction, and interest in participating in discussions with other leaders around the region on possible cooperative strategies to move forward.

Staff regularly participated in national broadband training and resource webinars like, “Successful Models and Best Practices for Rural Broadband Deployment” on May 16, 2018 and “NTIA’s Broadband USA Practical Broadband Conversation: Federal Broadband Funding” and keeps these resources on file for future use.
OBJECTIVE 3: Continue progress in emerging clean energy sectors while maintaining necessary traditional energy sources in a manner that sustains growth while increasing resiliency.

STRATEGIES AND TACTICS: Encourage balanced use of all available energy sources and promote accessibility to communities throughout the region.

In February, PDS Director, Ron Townley, facilitated an industrial solar workshop for public officials for the second consecutive year. The event was held at the Center for Energy Education (C4EE) in Halifax County and included sessions on State and local permitting, health and safety impacts, taxes, real estate values and revenues, legal considerations and more. Local officials participated from around the region and from across the state. The C4EE is an eastern united states hub for the renewable energy industry, a hands-on training ground for solar installations, a destination for students and families to learn about renewable energy resources, and an education and training facility for our workforce to provide the knowledge and skills needed to pursue a career in the growing renewable energy industry. A similar workshop was also held again in November.

UCPCOG continues as lead applicant on a US Department of Energy EERE-LEAP Grant application titled, “Powering Energy Efficiency & Impacts Framework”. UCPCOG was awarded the DOE EERE-LEAP grant in the amount of $477,202 with an additional $56,740 offered as match from partners and members. The grant period is from October 1, 2016 to December 31, 2018 serves as a national pilot and model. The project addresses energy efficiency needs in underserved low-income neighborhoods. The partners include the NC Clean Energy Technology Center, NC State Center for Geospatial Analytics, NC Sustainable Energy Association, University of Vermont Law School, NC Justice Center, ResiSpeak, two electric utility service providers and others. The project combines various sets of cross-referenced meta data, with smart grid technologies to identify and implement improvements to help the economic conditions of specific communities.

This is one of the most complex and ambitious projects in the PDS department’s history and has the potential to be of significant industry and national interest. During the last 6-month period, the tool has been completed and both national and state level webinars conducted. A project website with ARC-GIS storyboard was developed for the public to view the project. Results for the partners with confidential access has received excellent feedback. The final quarter will be primarily focused on potential sustainability of the tool.

OBJECTIVE 4: The region must continue its vigilance and ensure a fair share of both state and federal transportation funds. Also, the region has had limited multi-modal transportation options, particularly in the more rural areas.

STRATEGIES AND TACTICS: Continue collaboration in and between the regional MPO and two RPO transportation planning groups and State to ensure that critical transportation needs are met. Design and implement a regional strategy to take the fullest advantage of CCX multi-modal distribution and transportation hub.

PDS staff attends the Upper Coastal Plain Rural Transportation Planning Organizational Meetings on a continuing basis to ensure coordination on activities and opportunities. A full scope of work continues to be fulfilled. UCPCOG staff regularly participates in meetings with member governments.

The Peanut Belt RPO administration was taken over by Halifax County and UCPCOG staff monitor that group’s activities.

The Region’s CSX multi-modal project is moving forward but at a smaller scale than originally projected. PDS will continue to monitor the situation and access opportunities for cooperation.
**OBJECTIVE 5:** Incorporate the region’s natural “Green and Blue Infrastructure” assets into development strategies, particularly the area’s primary rivers, the Roanoke and the Tar, as well as nature trails.

**STRATEGIES AND TACTICS:** Promote the regional economic benefits of developing a green infrastructure. Increase collaboration and participation between jurisdictions in both recreational planning and the utilization of heritage tourism associated with the Tar and Roanoke Rivers. Prioritize ways to connect open spaces, watersheds, parks, and other natural areas to maintain quality of life.

Greg Godard and PDS staff partnered with Roanoke River Basin Association and Key Log Economics to host a Lower Roanoke River Basin Ecosystem Services Workshop at Halifax Community College in April 2018. Through a NC Department of Environmental Quality grant funded from the US EPA, GIS Stormwater Infrastructure mapping began in January for The City of Roanoke Rapids and efforts are expected to continue into 2019. Participated in Outdoor Recreation Session in Granville County in May 2018.

**GOAL 3: Create Revitalized, Healthy & Resilient Communities**

**OBJECTIVE 1:** Communities must develop in a way that facilitates safe and healthy outdoor activities.

**STRATEGIES AND TACTICS:** Raise awareness about the importance of government planning in ensuring that residents have transportation, housing, and job center choices that could contribute to healthier, safer communities. Create new “impactful” recreational options that serve broader regional needs.

PDS is working closely with the Town of Princeville, Edgecombe County, state and federal agencies and others on rebuilding and expansion after Hurricane Mathew. The effort includes as needed assistance as well in 10 other hard-hit communities in the NE region of eastern North Carolina. Primary work in the last six-months were focused on Princeville, which received over 50 acres of land purchased by the state to aid in town expansion and redevelopment efforts. Additionally, staff have been serving on the state level NC Inclusive Recovery Group to facilitate the development of new policies and practices that better serve those effected by natural disasters. This is an EDA funded effort.

UCPCOG’s PDS staff have a long history of working on small town parks and recreation projects that included the creation of Master Plans and Park and acquiring Park and Recreation. Trust Fund grants to build phases of parks in small towns. Current projects are going in the Towns of Sims, Lucama, Scotland Neck, Saratoga, and Enfield. An Additional project is in early development for the Town of Princeville.

PDS has partnered with the NC State Clean Energy Technology Center as an Education and Outreach Partner under their Clean Fuels Advanced Technology (CFAT) project to reduce transportation related air emissions in the nonattainment counties of Edgecombe and Nash. Staff worked with partners to execute a Clean Vehicle training and test day at the NC CAR facility in Northampton County for Emergency Service Providers across parts of NC and VA. Vehicles on hand included unmarked and marked police sedans, SUVs, Motorcycles, Fire Engines and more.
OBJECTIVE 2: Galvanize economic and community development opportunities in the healthy, local, export, and value-added foods clusters. Adequately and affordably provide healthy food options to communities. Leverage the burgeoning local foods movement in the region as consumers express a desire for fresh, healthy, and affordable produced foods.

STRATEGIES AND TACTICS: Develop a food network in the region. Increase Community Economic Self Reliance with Local Food. Promote community gardens and urban agriculture.

PDS completed its partnership with the Rural Center to implement a USDA-RD funded Rural Food Business Assistance project that worked in two primary areas: 1) Building local and regional local and healthy food collaboratives, 2) Providing direct technical assistance to businesses and others in the food value chain. The 24-month effort is in its final quartile and has helped yield great results including 3 emerging food councils, new and expanded programs and markets, a regional social network and web site, support on an organics opportunity economic prospectus, as well as direct assistance to farmers, processors and others in the food value chain.

The Town of Garysburg is working with the PDS, Northampton Cooperative extension, UNC, NCSU and Resourceful Communities to establish a central kitchen serving early childhood care centers. The old elementary school is the focal point of the effort. The Town of Garysburg has a small legislative appropriation to leverage for USDA RD community facilities funding. The Town is currently seeking quotes for UST removal.

PDS Director Serves on the Twin County Just Foods Advisory Council, OARS (Organic Agriculture Revitalization Strategy) Advisory Council, and Wilson Food Council Strategic Development Team. Through these efforts, various strategies, action plans, scopes of work, community-based events, and other work is being conducted to improve the local & healthy food scene. For example, planning has begun for a Business of Agriculture Event to be held by the COG and three Community College Business Development Centers in November of 2018.

OBJECTIVE 3: Most of the region’s downtowns need to attract new businesses, residents and visitors. A few are now gaining momentum with the improved state and national economy, but need additional support.

STRATEGIES AND TACTICS: Revitalize both large and small downtowns throughout the region. Invest in repurposing commercial and residential buildings for emerging economic activities. Ensure that local building codes and code enforcement measures are ensuring safety, while not unnecessarily deterring renovation of downtown buildings.

The Upper Coastal Plain is working with the Town of Enfield to leverage the town center to attract new businesses. Enfield is looking to develop a vacant rail road depot to attract investment by focusing on the town’s agrarian roots.

The Upper Coastal Plain Council of Governments’ PDS staff assisted the City of Wilson in the environmental review of a Community Development Block Grant for the construction of ten (10) new units of public housing. Additional housing for low and moderate-income residents is sorely needed, as units have aged out and/or been damaged by flooding associated with hurricanes. The CDBG Economic Development Grant was awarded by the North Carolina Department of Commerce to the City of Wilson on June 11, 2018, in the amount of $750,000.00.
SMALL TOWN PLANNING SERVICES

With PDS assistance, the Town of Seaboard completed and adopted its triennial Affirmatively Forwarding Fair Housing Assessment and Plan as required by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Work was concluded with updates to the Town of Leggett’s Zoning Ordinance and the preparation of a digital version of the Zoning Map, and assistance in the rezoning of a property.

Work was completed on the Town of Red Oak’s Zoning Ordinance revisions. The revised and updated document was officially adopted on August 6, 2018.

Progress continues with the Town of Pinetop’s Subdivision Ordinance. A new Town Manager was hired in the Fall and the document is currently under review.

**OBJECTIVE 4:** Our region has an inadequate supply of new and rehabilitated workforce housing to meet current demand or compete for new residents.

**STRATEGIES AND TACTICS:** Increase workforce housing development through financial incentives for developers. Align economic development, business recruitment, and housing development efforts to ensure attractive and appropriate housing is available for new workers. Preserve historic and period homes and neighborhoods as part of a larger tourism and placemaking strategy.

The Upper Coastal Plain is providing technical assistance to Princeville and Edgecombe County in the effort to create affordable housing for those employed in, and near, the Kingsboro Industrial Park.

The Upper Coastal Plain is assisting communities in implementing Hazard Mitigation Plan housing strategies for elevation and buyouts in flood prone areas.

As noted above in Goal 3 – Objective 3 – Item 2, The COG assisted the City of Wilson in completing the conditions of acceptance for the construction on new low-income housing.

**GOAL 4: Develop Talented and Innovative People**

**OBJECTIVE 1:** Develop, attract and retain workers with the necessary skills required for today’s, and tomorrow’s jobs.

**STRATEGIES AND TACTICS:** Prepare youth, unemployed and underemployed individuals for high-skill, in-demand jobs. Expand student and worker awareness of career opportunities, their requirements, and the pathways available to attain personal goals. Conduct a regionally coordinated marketing campaign that identifies and promotes middle-skill career opportunities to younger populations.

The Turning Point Workforce Development Board registered 482 unemployed persons initially in the NCWorks job search system.

Turning Point WDB Business Service Team and regional NCWorks Career Centers continue to assess the needs of our local
employers. Collaboration of partners (Community College, Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), Department of Social Services, etc. strategize to provide solutions such as On-the-Job training, Worker Experience, Incumbent Worker grants and Customize training.

Under the Area agency on Aging Senior Community Service Employment Program a total of 74 senior participants were served in the 5-county region. These seniors are placed with a variety of employers willing to help re-train seniors on-the-job for vacant positions.

**OBJECTIVE 2:** Further align and coordinate the region’s workforce and educational systems.

**STRATEGIES AND TACTICS:** Create stronger 5-county coordinated partnerships between educational institutions and key public/private workforce development interests. Launch region-wide sector and industry related workforce initiatives designed to align training and educational options to the skill needs for critical, in-demand occupations. Improve efforts to prepare workers for available jobs. Address the unique challenges of special populations of adult workers.

As noted above, PDS Director is working with the NC Rural Center to facilitate and coach both Northampton and Halifax County leaders and stakeholders in project development for the GoldenLeaf Foundation's Community Based Grantmaking Initiative. The efforts revolved around youth preparedness and workforce development at the educational and community levels. Proposals were submitted to GoldenLeaf and additional negotiations are expected in seeking an award.

Under the leadership of the Executive Director, Robert Hiett, a new initiative with the working title, “Regional Prosperity Initiative”, is being developed. The concept is, “To develop talented and innovative people for high demand careers in the region through a combination of strategic partnerships, technology solutions, and planning efforts.”

The Turning Point Workforce Development Board registered 23 youth participants for appropriate positions.

We now have (3) three State Certified Career Pathways – Healthcare, Advance Manufacturing and the newest Business Service Support. Business Service Support Career Pathways consist of (1) Business Administration and Support (2) Information Technology and (3) Logistics and Supply Chain Management. For example, Office Administration encompasses clerical staff and office managers, Finance jobs include bookkeepers, accounting technicians and financial officers, Information Technology jobs deal with computers, software, networking and the technical infrastructure of the company, Logistics and Distribution jobs are associated with analyzing, developing and implementing strategic plans that affect production, distribution, and inventory.

**OBJECTIVE 3:** Further address human resource development deficits through workforce development.

**STRATEGIES AND TACTICS:** Increase soft skills and life skills instruction in K-12 instruction and workforce development training, utilizing such tools as "Working Smart" and "Career Readiness Certifications". Leverage health related investments already occurring in the region, i.e. Partnership with Area L AHEC, the intermediary for the Turning Point WDB health awareness and sector training. Philanthropic investment in Healthy Places NC. Encourage older adults in the workforce to utilize services available through the Area Agency on Aging and the aging network.

The Turning Point Workforce Development Board conducted 22 Employer Recruitment Events.

The workforce development board arranged 10 work based learning placements (on the job training, apprenticeship, and internship opportunities).
Turning Point WDB region recently became certified as a WorkReady Community in Edgecombe and Nash County to accompany prior certifications for Halifax and Northampton County. We plan to continue working with Wilson County to become certified as a WorkReady Community in the near future.

**WorkReady Communities:**

- Link workforce development to education
- Align with the economic development needs of communities, regions and states
- Match individuals to jobs based on skill levels

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**UCPCOG**

121 W. NASH STREET (27893)  
P. O. BOX 9  
WILSON, NORTH CAROLINA 27894  
[www.ucpcog.org](http://www.ucpcog.org)