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PRESS RELEASE

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EDA Awards \$400K to Upper Coastal Plain Council of Governments for COVID-19 Economic Recovery Assistance

EDGECOMBE, HALIFAX, NASH, NORTHAMPTON, WILSON, NC,

The Upper Coastal Plain Council of Governments (UCPCOG) received a \$400,000 grant from the US Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration (EDA) to assist regional local governments in preparing for, responding to, and recovering from the economic impacts of the coronavirus pandemic. The UCPCOG is a regional council of governments that includes Edgecombe, Halifax, Nash, Northampton, and Wilson Counties, and 41 municipal governments located within the five-county area.

The UCPCOG will utilize the \$400,000 funding by carrying out the following activities:

- Develop a regional disaster recovery and resiliency plan
- Provide funding to coordinate regional pandemic-related economic impacts
- Enhance local government capacity building programs
- Expand the UCPCOG's technological capabilities to improve service to member governments

The funding will also be used to support the workforce development activities of the Turning Point Workforce Development Board and increase direct support to the region's workforce and business community. UCPCOG staff will identify and foster cross-sector partnership opportunities, explore options to coordinate virtual career fairs, and implement other pandemic-response activities that support increased access to job training.

According to Executive Director, Robert Hiett, "Our region's local governments, businesses, and residents have faced economic challenges because of this pandemic. This strategic use of CARES

Act Funding by EDA provides the UCPCOG with resources to plan and implement coordinating activities that help our member governments.”

The UCPCOG has worked in close partnership with EDA to promote regional prosperity for decades as the region’s lead Economic Development District. Ron Townley, UCPCOG Planning and Development Services Director shared “with this funding, we will have the tools necessary to respond directly to regional pandemic recovery. We look forward to working closely with our stakeholders to tailor recovery efforts to the needs of this region.”

To develop the disaster recovery and resiliency plan focused on pandemic economic recovery, UCPCOG staff will look to the region’s existing Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). The new pandemic-response plan will be presented as an addendum to the CEDS and will include specific priorities to guide the UCPCOG’s coronavirus economic development response activities. The UCPCOG’s CEDS Strategy Development Group, an existing group of regional public and private stakeholders, will reconvene to guide the development of the proposed addendum.

The UCPCOG Board of Directors Chairman Gregory Browning shares support for this approach to pandemic recovery planning. According to Browning, “we will gather regional buy-in and foster a multi-disciplinary approach to the region’s pandemic-response efforts because this pandemic has affected us all in such unique ways. We must band together if we want to have a lasting, measurable impact.”

Throughout all pandemic-response efforts, the UCPCOG staff will identify economic development funding opportunities and grant-eligible projects, serve as liaison between local, state, and federal partners, respond to the needs of the region’s workforce and business community, and will assist local government organizations in implementing disaster recovery focused economic development projects.

The UCPCOG, established in 1971 under NC General Statute 160A-47, is the regional council of governments for the local governments located within Edgecombe, Halifax, Nash, Northampton, and Wilson Counties. The UCPCOG is also the lead organization for the region’s Economic Development District, established through the United States Department of Commerce’s Economic Development Administration. For more information about UCPCOG, visit ucpcog.org. For more information about the regional UCPCOG pandemic-response efforts, please contact Ron Townley, rtownley@ucpcog.org or (252)-234-5965.

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