ANNUAL UPDATE
FOR THE
COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (CEDS)
2020
UPPER COASTAL PLAIN COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
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, 2020.
The Vision of the Upper Coastal Region is to:

Think Regionally

Compete Globally

Act Locally
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 is helping Halifax Community College in Weldon build an Advanced Manufacturing & Corporate Training Center. The United States Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration (EDA) announced the awarding of the grant on Dec. 21, 2017. The project is expected to create more than 120 jobs and nearly $19 million in private investment. Construction of the new Advanced Manufacturing & Corporate Training Center began on July 13, 2020. As of the end of this reporting period, construction was over 13% complete and is on schedule.

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 facility will also 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.

Staff continued to work very closely with Northampton County to administer a $560K NC Department of Commerce grant to build a new sewer connection line from a West Fraser Timber to the Town of Seaboard’s Wastewater Treatment Plant. The Town is permitted to turn on the new sewer connection as soon as the contractor purchases and installs final meters and fencing. In close coordination with this effort, the Town of Seaboard was awarded $992,576 from EDA on 3/30/2020. It supports required wastewater treatment plant improvements at the town. The grant is matched by $200,000 from the Golden LEAF Foundation with additional match/gap funding from West Fraser Timber. The project supports West Fraser’s 3-phase plant expansion and modification project needed to stay internationally competitive and retain approximately 150 jobs in the region. It also builds additional capacity at the town for future growth opportunities. This economic development partnership was recognized with a 2020 Aliceann Wohlbruck Impact Award from the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO).

UCPCOG Planning and Development Services (PDS) received $400,000 in EDA allocated CARES Act funding to assist the region’s economic response, recovery and resiliency efforts related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The effort will help identify, prioritize, and implement timely projects for UCPCOG, members and allies. As an important early step, the CEDS Strategy Development Group will convene to develop a Pandemic Response Addendum to current CEDS 2022. The Pandemic Response Addendum will focus on all areas of the CEDS with emphasis on economic recovery, response, and preparation.

UCPCOG previously received a 2019 Innovation Award from the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) on behalf of their work creating the Simulation Station project. EDA also featured this effort in their EDA NC Monthly Newsletter. The NC Simulation Station is an on-line platform that is making electronic software games available to help those in and out of school learn more about career opportunities and their work environments. Through this partnership, simulations are available to help students play games where they can visualize themselves owning a computer workshop, serving as an independent truck driver, working inside a car garage, serving as a hospital manager, running a farm-based business, serving as a transit business operator, serving as a heavy machine operator, and more. Coupled with curriculum that is being made available to students, this resource is serving as a structured approach to exploring a career occupation in a way that aligns with how students consume information.
UCPCOG’s Business Development Corporation previously identified the need to convert/modify the Wilson BDC to a more modern working space. In cooperation with the City of Wilson and Wilson County, a successful proposal was forwarded by Wilson Forward to the Golden LEAF Foundation’s Community Based Grantmaking Initiative to create an innovation space. This award supported the needed modifications to the BDC facility on Nash St. in Downtown Wilson, which was proposed for use to fulfill the grant. However, a second building under consideration by the City was ultimately selected. As a result, a new process and plan has begun to better utilize the BDC building in Downtown Wilson.

The third floor of the building, a large open space, was cleaned out and new AV equipment was added. The City’s art council contributed art for display and the large meeting space is now getting regular use by the COG and government agencies. BDC is working with architects and the City Fire Marshall to determine maximum capacities and other details to open the space for public rental use.

The BDC’s Revolving Loan Fund responsibilities were previously transferred to the PDS Director, Ron Townley. 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. A formal partnership that was underway with one lender was completed with a formal MOU signed. A new RLF Plan was also completed to meet updated EDA guidelines.

PDS Director worked with 9 prior and 2 new small business start-ups and expansions. Efforts have included OMG Pimento Cheese in Wilson, Casa Mia in Littleton, a local brewery startup in Weldon, a coffee shop in Wilson, a retail strip mall in Hollister, a café/bakery startup as well as a grocery in Scotland Neck, and a potential mental health & addiction treatment facility in Enfield, an on-line clothing retail start-up in Wilson, a day care provider in the Nashville area and a video/gaming arcade in Wilson.
PDS staff has coordinated with the Town of Nashville on preparing for an EDA Public Works grant application to construct a new water line loop around the West Commerce Industrial Park in Nashville. Early steps include updating engineering cost estimates and connecting with potential funders who may provide match funding. Additional concerns that currently hinder economic development at the West Commerce Industrial Park include wetland mitigation and roadway improvements.

As a result of the Wilson effort choosing to renovate another location, as mentioned in Objective 2, item 1 above, UCPCOG staff have been supporting the promotion of that new space and its GigEast Exchange, an “Innovation Hub” promoting and supporting small business development and entrepreneurship. This has included, strategic meetings with their staff, and discussions on possible uses of EDA funds.

UCPCOG continues development of a “High Demand Career Initiative”. Primary objectives include to: Develop a regional talent management plan / workforce analysis to identify high demand occupations in the region; Link high demand occupations with local training providers to produce a skilled workforce; Create a regional talent management / career planning system with an easy onboarding process; Recruit and/or retain skilled workers for jobs in the region; Develop a sustainable planning and awareness campaign to support the partnership over the next 5 to 10 years.

Previously, UCPCOG initiated the UCP Regional Simulation Partnership that uses electronic software games to help in school and out of school youth learn about career occupations and their work environments. In addition, the RSP will work to provide assistance and referrals to participating youth to help them obtain additional education, training, and/or work experience needed to advance their career opportunities. The NC Simulation Station is a web resource sponsored by the Upper Coastal Plain Council of Governments (UCPCOG) and the Turning Point Workforce Development Board (TPWDB).

During this year, numerous developments continued including partnerships with software developers, Northampton school system purchases of over 20 laptops to begin program implementation, and more. Regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, the simulation project is moving forward in Northampton County Schools even with the school’s closing. The Turning Point Career and Technical Education advisor shared students are distance learning using laptops provided to them and taking advantage of the truck driver and farming simulations while at home.

UCPCOG staff engage with federal, state, regional and local partners on a regular basis to meet various sector needs and other elements of this plan. These included NC Rural Center’s Rural Day, NCSU’s Institute for Emerging Issues Re-Connect Rural & Urban Forum, NC Mainstreet Conference, Rural Center Housing Needs assessment workgroup, NC Inclusive Disaster Recovery Network, and others.
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.

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<tr>
<th>Completed Projects</th>
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<td>Saratoga 2016 NC DEQ Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (Hwy 222) Grant #WIF1922</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lucama 2017 NC DEQ Drinking Water State Revolving Fund Grant/Loan #H-SRP-D-17-0088</td>
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<td>Enfield 2017 NC DEQ Clean Water State Revolving Fund Grant/Loan #E-SRP-D-17-0107</td>
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<td>Sharpsburg 2017 NC DEQ Drinking Water State Revolving Fund Grant/Loan #H-SRP-D-17-0068</td>
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<td>Seaboard 2016 CDBG-I Town Wide Sewer Grant #16-I-2926</td>
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<td>Seaboard 2017 NC DEQ Drinking Water State Revolving Fund Grant/Loan #H-SRP-D-17-0070</td>
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<td>Enfield 2019 NC CDBG – NR #18-C-3072</td>
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<td>Hobgood 2019 CDBG – I Sewer #15-I-3082 &amp; 19-I-3106</td>
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<td>Lucama 2017 NC DEQ Drinking Water State Revolving Fund Grant/Loan #H-SRP-D-17-0088</td>
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<td>Sharpsburg 2019 NC DEQ Clean Water State Revolving Fund Grant/Loan #CS370698-01</td>
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UCPCOG was awarded $72,000 from EDA for a Regional Broadband planning initiative in March 2020. The scope of work includes asset mapping, broadband literacy and education, private sector provider engagement, and other activities for underserved areas needing improvement for resilience and future growth. The grant funding will be matched with $18,000 in in-kind match generated by Broadband Task Force members and others through assisting staff in carrying out the scope of work. The overall goal of the project is the attract reliable, affordable internet service providers to the rural communities across the Upper Coastal Plain region to leverage economic opportunities and improve quality of life.

PDS advised the City of Wilson’s Greenlight Community Broadband on the development of an EDA CARES Act grant application to extend fiber internet to the Towns of Black Creek, Saratoga, Stantonsburg, and Lucama. The application has been submitted and is currently pending.

Leveraged by the EDA CARES Act Supplemental funding, PDS is working with the Town of Enfield on developing a CDBG-CV application to extend Roanoke Electric Membership Cooperative’s fiber internet to town limits. The new connection will serve a community building to allow community access to reliable broadband for telehealth visits and virtual learning.

PDS partnered with NC Broadband Matters and NC Hearts Gigabit to host a virtual webinar Broadband 101+ with UCPCOG on 05/08/20. The webinar was focused on the needs and current broadband landscape in the Upper Coastal Plain region. This workshop was part of a larger effort to educate the region’s local government leaders to further enable them to attract broadband providers.

As a result of all the below activities and programs, a UCP Broadband Taskforce was created to work together regionally to address unserved and underserved communities. An initial meeting was held on April 2, 2019, where initial objectives and tasks were set including applying to EDA for a Planning and TA funds. The Task Force will carry out the EDA scope of work, mentioned above in item 1. Additional meetings have been held every other month that include strategic project development and technical education. The Task Force continues to meet throughout the COVID-19 pandemic with virtual meeting tools.

The Upper Coastal Plain continues engaging with State officials about rural broadband deployment strategies.
As previously reported, 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.

UCPCOG completed its US Department of Energy EERE-LEAP Grant titled, “Powering Energy Efficiency & Impacts Framework”. UCPCOG was awarded $477,202 with an additional $56,740 offered as match from partners. 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 complex and ambitious project has significant industry and national interest. A project website with a full final report and results has been published at https://www.ucpcog.org/planning_and_development/energy_efficiency.php.

As Part of NC Governor Cooper’s Executive Order 80:

- PDS Director participated in the development and review of the new NC Energy Efficiency Roadmap led by Duke University’s Nicholas Institute that resulted in a new Energy Efficiency plan for the state
- Provided input on the NC DOT Clean Energy Plan at a workshop in Rocky Mount
- Staff worked closely with the NC Dept. of Environmental Quality to host a Regional Resiliency Workshop on November 12, 2019. Member governments turned out from across the region and the NCDEQ Secretary was in attendance.

Pictured right: PDS Director, Ron Townley and NC DEQ Secretary Michael S. Regan at the 11/12/19 EO 80 workshop.
PDS staff and/or the Executive Director attends the Upper Coastal Plain Rural Transportation Planning Organizational Meetings on a continuing basis to ensure coordination on activities and opportunities. 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.

After CSX corporate headquarters reconsideration of a new strategic multi-modal inland port on the eastern seaboard, the region’s CSX high-tech intermodal terminal project, the Carolina Connector, is once again moving forward at a strong pace. The facility will have a lift capacity of 110,000 containers per year. PDS continues to monitor the situation and access opportunities for any needed support or cooperation.

UCPCOG, in partnership with the City of Wilson and NC Department of Transportation executed a Complete Streets Workshop May 7th, 2019. This workshop brought together a diverse group of stakeholders to focus on incorporating complete streets, or context-based design, into development and redevelopment within the UCP region. The workshop was an opportunity to share information about the State’s Complete Streets Policy and help decision makers how to utilize complete streets in working with transportation agencies to support the policy’s implementation.

GOAL 2:

GOAL 2: **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.

The UCPCOG’s COMPASS (Center on Maintaining Preferred Aging Services & Solutions) non-profit is developing a "Tiny Home" community for underserved older adults. They worked to make sure connection to greenspace and ensuring some green space on their pilot “tiny lot” was considered to maintain quality of life for those who participate in this project. This project received a 2020 Aliceann Wohlbruck Impact Award from the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO).

The UCPCOG partnered with NC Conservation Fund and the Collaborative to host a workshop reviewing the nexus of agritourism and recreational tourism opportunities. The workshop was held 5/22/2019 and presented findings from the mapping of both asset categories.

Through a NC Department of Environmental Quality grant funded from the US EPA, GIS Stormwater Infrastructure mapping continued for The City of Roanoke Rapids. UCPCOG has reapplied for this grant (205j funding) and will continue this effort.

The Area Agency on Aging participated in the Bike-Ped Plan for Wilson to ensure the aging demographic needs were recognized and considered.

UCPCOG’s PDS staff advised both the Towns of Littleton and Weldon on their rail to trail and river park greenway assets respectively. Consultations revolved around how to better develop the green infrastructure for use by both local residents and visitors.
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.

The UCPCOG continues assisting the Town of Princeville, Edgecombe County, state and federal agencies on Hurricane Matthew recovery projects and wherever possible leveraging those efforts. The crux of the recovery is focused on rebuilding a more resilient community. This is an EDA funded effort and partners include NCSU, ECU, FEMA, NCEM, and many others. The project has received continuation funding from EDA with match funds from the State/Town. Recovery efforts include the areas of housing, land use, town hall, school, senior/community center, museum, parks, infrastructure, fire station, and more. Very strong progress has been made by and for the town.

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. Completed projects during this grants’ life cycle include the Towns of Sims, Scotland Neck, Saratoga, Enfield, Lucama and Seaboard. Additional projects were developed and submitted for grant funding for the Town of Garysburg, Princeville, and Saratoga (but were not awarded). New project (re) applications were evaluated during this period and one or two applications are expected for the next round.

PDS continues work 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. The effort assisted a potential electric vehicle charging station grant in Rocky Mount, a tour of the Cummins Engine Plant near Weldon, and we began work on a public clean vehicles event for the region.

The PDS and Area Agency on Aging Director are members of the Wilson Forward Wellness Collaborative. The group completed a new wellness plan and collaborators have been working to begin meeting the plan’s goals that include efforts in the areas of food, recreation, and other elements of the CEDS.

GOAL 3: 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 developed and submitted a grant application to the Kate B. Reynolds Foundation requesting funds to map the region’s local healthy food asset value chain, with an emphasis on underserved and at-risk communities. The application garnered numerous committed formal partners supporting the need to identify current assets and gaps in the chain in order to more strategically develop new economic and community development opportunities. The project was funded in December 2019 and was kicked-off to a regional local food partnership on February 5, 2020 as the Healthy Food Access Mapping Project (Healthy FAM). The Project Coordinating Committee is working diligently to carry out the scope and engage communities throughout the region during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Project Coordinating Committee is hosting a data team and community engagement team consisting of interested project partners from across the region. Staff and Project Coordinating Team are beginning to look forward at upcoming grant opportunities to continue local healthy food work in the region after this project is closed.

The Upper Coastal Plain’s Area Agency on Aging (AAA) has received Aging CARES Act Nutrition Funding to
help ensure at risk seniors throughout the region have access to affordable and nutritious food during the COVID 19 pandemic crises and its aftermath. Approximately $200,000 is available for the effort. Funds must be utilized by October 2021. Eligible activities include the purchasing, processing, storage, transportation, and delivery of food to senior residents. PDS is assisting AAA in leading this effort, leveraging the momentum of the Healthy Food Access Mapping project.

PDS Director continues to serve on the Twin County Just Foods Collaborative 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. The Area Agency on Aging also sits on the Wilson Food Council and the Twin County Just Foods Advisory Council.

PDS expanded services to member governments through new partnerships with Stewart Inc. and CodeWright Planners, LLC in association with the Timmons Group, Both& Planning, and the Brough Law Firm. This provides members quick access to qualified planning services firms authorized to operate in North Carolina. Partner firms possess expertise in Comprehensive and Master Plans, administration of zoning ordinances, code enforcement, and regulatory amendments to Zoning Ordinances, Subdivision Ordinances, UDOs, and land use regulations as required by NCGS Chapter 160D. Members can contract directly with these firms without going through an RFQ process.

**GOAL 3:** **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 more 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.

PDS staff has partnered with the NC Department of Commerce, Main Street & Rural Planning Division to develop economic development-focused strategic plans in Stantonsburg and Pinetops. Both planning processes were kicked off in a virtual meeting with town officials during this reporting period. As the partnerships progress, PDS staff will work to bring Main Street & Rural Planning resources to other towns in the region. The EDA CARES Act Supplemental funding will enable staff to work diligently on both planning processes. After Main Street & Rural Planning workshops/strategic plans are complete and presented to the town, PDS staff will continue the efforts to pursue downtown economic development goals to leverage each community’s unique economic development opportunities.

UCPCOG facilitates and manages a Regional Brownfields Coalition. The Coalition formed over 10 years ago and has helped assess dozens of sites throughout the region, leveraging over $58M in redevelopment. During this reporting period, UCPCOG applied for and received a new $300,000 EPA Assessment Grant Award to address the JAECO and Westpoint Stevens sites in Roanoke Rapids, the M&M Grill in Littleton, and other potentially contaminated sites with redevelopment potential.

PDS submitted a final draft of the Town of Spring Hope’s Land Use Plan during this reporting period. The plan has not been formally adopted by the Town’s planning board or council and may need additional revisions. Staff stands by the see the process through the end to assist Spring Hope with guiding future growth.
GOAL 3: **OBJECTIVE 4:** Our region has an inadequate supply of new and rehabilitated workforce housing to meet current demand or compete for new residents.

**STRAATEGIES 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.

PDS submitted 4 applications to the North Carolina Department of Commerce’s CDBG Neighborhood Revitalization (CDBG NR) program in addition to administering two CDBG NR application from a former round. The new applications were submitted in partnership with the Towns of Whitakers, Scotland Neck, Lucama, and Saratoga.

PDS staff remains in the loop on Northampton County’s development of affordable workforce and teacher housing in Jackson. As the project progresses, PDS staff will assist Northampton County in searching for and applying for funding opportunities and will provide additional technical assistance as needed.

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

Working through UCPCOG non-profit COMPASS (Center on Maintaining Preferred Aging Services & Solutions) to develop a "Tiny Home" community for underserved older adults, the group acquired property and submitted for funding for site preparation. They have engaged the Engineer and have received the preliminary plan. The board should be approving the plan soon and moving forward to clean up the property and meet with city council for necessary approvals. Recently, this project received a 2020 Aliceann Wohlbruck Impact Award from the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO).

The Upper Coastal Plain is providing technical assistance to Princeville and Edgecombe County in the effort to create affordable housing opportunities for the new employees that will be employed in the Kingsboro Industrial Park. Partnerships with private and non-profit development groups are being developed. The area is located in an Opportunity Zone.

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.

**STRAATEGIES 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 702 unemployed persons from April 2020 to September 2020. There has been a major increase for Adults/Dislocated Workers since the COVID-19 pandemic began for those needing Unemployment Insurance services.

Turning Point WDB Business Service Team and regional NCWorks Career Centers continues 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 in FY ’17-’18, 61 in FY ’18-’19, and 40 in FY ’19-’20. These seniors are placed with a variety of employers willing to help re-train seniors on-the-job for vacant positions. The amount of participants served during FY ’19-’20 is lower due to the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.
As previously noted, PDS Director worked with the NC Rural Center to facilitate and coach both Northampton and Halifax County leaders and stakeholders in project development for the Golden LEAF Foundation’s Community Based Grantmaking Initiative. The efforts revolved around youth preparedness and workforce development at the educational and community levels. Proposals were submitted and the Halifax proposal was funded and implemented. Community College and other classes have begun with some initial completion certificates issued. A ribbon cutting & launch event with partners was also held.

Under the leadership of Executive Director, Robert Hiett, the new initiative with the working title, “Regional Prosperity Initiative”, continued 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.”

- See UCPCOG “High Demand Career Initiative" under Goal 1, Objective 3, Item 2 above.
- See UCPCOG UCP Regional Simulation Partnership under Goal 1, Objective 3, Item 3

The Turning Point Workforce Development Board registered 41 additional youth participants for appropriate positions during this reporting period. Since the last reporting period, youth numbers decreased due to many youth service providers complying to the Stay At Home mandates and the temporary closure of many youth employment businesses (hospitality businesses such as restaurants, hotels, retail stores).

We 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. Metrics are now being gathered to update data that supports these current efforts. Additionally, the Agriscience Pathway is now being revisited for submittal to the State team for review for certification and local implementation.

UCPCOG continues participating in the Regional Advanced Manufacturing Pipeline – East (RAMP East) initiative that is a regional partnership between Region Q WDB, Turning Point, regional community colleges and economic development partnerships to enhance recruitment efforts in the Advance Manufacturing sector. This is a proactive approach for recruiting underserved populations of the 10 counties building a pipeline of potential candidates for immediate and future AM jobs.

**GOAL 4:**

**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 unique challenges of special populations of adult workers.
The Turning Point Workforce Development Board conducted 9 Employer Recruitment Events, which is low compared to previous reporting periods due to the COVID-19. Staff is beginning to increase business recruitment by utilizing virtual recruiter events and expect employer recruitment to gradually increase soon.

TP previously participated in several meetings with employers and apprenticeship staff to answer questions and engagement interested parties in apprenticeship information. Apprenticeship interests continue to grow in the Turning Point Region during this period. A state-assigned Consultant provides technical assistance to both Community College training staff and interested employers through the connection of the Business Engagement Coordinator (Turning Point staff member). There is a pending contract for apprenticeship with a Nash County employer and future contracts in the pipeline awaiting further TA. We hope these contracts will be active in the next few months.

UCPCOG has partnered with NCHQA (North Carolina Healthcare Quality Alliance), which has been awarded a $1 million HRSA RCORP Implementation grant for the three-year period from Sept. 1, 2020 to August 31, 2023 to address prevention, treatment, and recovery for substance use disorder in Edgecombe, Halifax, and Northampton counties. This will provide a great opportunity for UCPCOG to build experience with opioid grants and partners, and chase after some other opportunities down the road. Substance abuse is an issue with the region's workforce and economic development strategies, and a growing issue with older adults.

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. The TP Region continues to offer assistance to Wilson County in their efforts to become Work Ready certified. Staff provides TA for meeting goals such as encouraging employer support and obtaining CRC numbers. Efforts are provided in collaboration with the Community College.

- Links workforce development to education
- Aligns with the economic development needs of communities, regions, and states
- Matches individuals to jobs based on skill level