



HENRY McMASTER
GOVERNOR

April 18, 2023

Dr. Jennifer Clyburn Reed
Federal Co-Chair
Southeast Crescent Regional Commission
1901 Assembly Street Suite 370
Columbia, SC 29201

Dear Dr. Clyburn Reed,

I write to submit the State of South Carolina's Economic and Infrastructure Development Strategic Plan for the thirty-nine South Carolina counties designated by the Southeast Crescent Regional Commission ("SCRC") statute as eligible areas and is in accordance with 40 U.S.C. 15502 (a) of Public Law 110-246, the Food, Conservation and Energy Act of 2008.

South Carolina's Economic and Infrastructure Development Plan identifies my priorities for investing in the eligible SCRC-South Carolina areas to improve the region's economic development potential. The implementation of this plan will meet the diverse and dynamic needs of the areas by targeting state resources and strategies consistent with the SCRC's Strategic Plan.

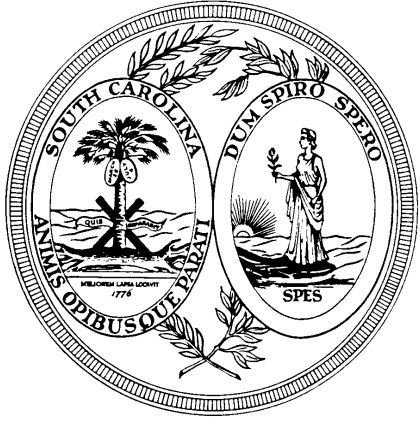
Thank you for your leadership, and do not hesitate to contact me should you need further information.

Yours very truly,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Henry McMaster".

Henry McMaster

HM/jm



2023-2027 Southeast Crescent Regional Commission Economic and Infrastructure Development Strategic Plan

**State of South Carolina
Governor Henry McMaster**

Prepared by
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www.centralmidlands.org

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Introduction and Background

Introduction

In accordance with 40 U.S.C. 15502 (a) of Public Law 110-246, the Food, Conservation and Energy Act of 2008, this document will serve as the State of South Carolina's Southeast Crescent Regional Commission Economic and Infrastructure Development Plan. The purpose of this Plan is to set forth a strategic agenda for South Carolina's thirty-nine SCRC counties, based on issues and needs identified within the region, and to define how development projects will be prioritized based on available resources. The implementation of this Plan will meet the diverse and dynamic needs of SCRC South Carolina by targeting resources and strategies supported by Governor Henry McMaster and that meet SCRC's defined goals and objectives.

As required by 40 U.S. C. 15502 (a) of the Act, this Development Plan accomplishes the following:

- Reflects the Southeast Crescent Regional Commission's strategic plan, its goals and objectives, and its guiding principles;
- Describes the inter-relationship between economic development in the SCRC portion of the state;
- Describes the methods used to measure the relative financial resources of project applicants and to ensure an equitable allocation of state contributions for projects to its Southeast Crescent area, and shall explain the derivation, rationale and application of such methods;
- Describes the state's SCRC Economic and Infrastructure development and planning organization and coordination process, including the roles of LDDs and citizens.

Background

Southeast Crescent, as defined in the legislation from which the Southeast Crescent Regional Commission derives its authority, is a region of seven states and 426 counties that follows the southern coast of the Atlantic Ocean over to the north western coast of the Gulf of Mexico from northern Virginia to southeast Mississippi. The Southeast Crescent Region includes the following states: Alabama, Georgia, Florida, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia. The Southeast Crescent is home to more than 51 million people.

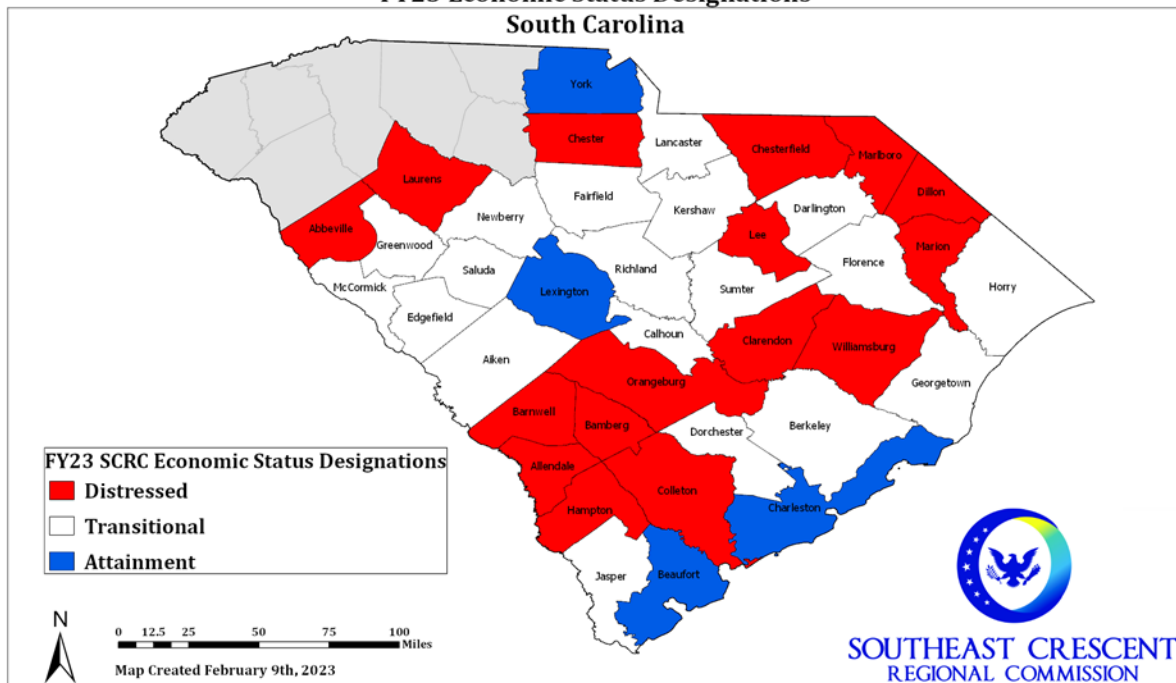
The Southeast Crescent Regional Commission (SCRC) is a regional economic development agency representing a unique partnership of federal, state, and local government. Established by an act of Congress in 2008, the Commission is composed of the governors of the seven Southern states and a federal co-chair, who is appointed by the president. Local participation is provided through multi-county local development districts with support from community, business, non-profit and civic leaders. Each year Congress appropriates funds for Commission programs, which SCRC allocates among its member states. The governors draw up annual state strategies and select projects for approval by the federal co-chair. SCRC's mission is to make investments in such

essentials of comprehensive economic development as critical infrastructure; workforce capacity; health care and public service programs; assessments of affordable housing; entrepreneurial and capital market development; and environmental conservation and recreation.

In South Carolina, there are thirty-nine SCRC designated counties. These counties by state region are: Catawba Region (3 counties) - Chester, Lancaster and York; Lowcountry Region (4 counties) - Beaufort, Colleton, Hampton and Jasper; Lower Savannah Region (6 counties) - Aiken, Allendale, Bamberg, Barnwell, Calhoun and Orangeburg; Midlands Region (3 counties) - Fairfield, Lexington and Richland; Pee Dee Region (6 counties) Chesterfield, Darlington, Dillon, Florence, Marion and Marlboro; Trident Region (3 counties) - Berkeley, Charleston and Dorchester; and Upper Savannah Region (6 counties) - Abbeville, Edgefield, Greenwood, Laurens, McCormick and Saluda.

Southeast Crescent Regional Commission

FY23 Economic Status Designations



Because these thirty-nine counties are eligible under the program, many aspects of state and local administration have been combined. The Governor has designated the Department of Commerce, Division of Business Incentives and Community Development, to provide policy direction, to oversee the planning and project development process, to maintain central fiscal management, and to coordinate activities among organizations at the sub-state level.

However, a portion of actual planning, technical assistance, and local administration required to successfully implement the SCRC Program has been delegated to the Regional Councils on Governments in the Southeast Crescent region of SC.

COG's/LDD Role & Responsibilities

The South Carolina Department of Commerce undertakes a planning process for housing, community and economic development that includes local government and

public participation which involves a series of surveys, focus groups, and public hearings to identify needs and establish priorities. Many aspects of state and local activity coincide and will be covered under the SCRC program. With policy direction from the Governor's Office and the SC Department of Commerce, the Regional Councils of Governments (COG) will be involved in the planning and project development activities required for implementation of the State's SCRC program. The COG's have developed mechanisms for local level public involvement in preparing plans and recommending projects. These activities serve the dual function of fulfilling requirements for local input at the district level and the state level.

South Carolina's first COG's were formed in 1967 when Governor Robert E. McNair signed legislation dividing the state into ten official planning districts. In South Carolina there are currently ten COG's, nine of which are located in the SCRC footprint: Upper Savannah Regional COG, Catawba Regional COG, Central Midlands Regional COG, Lower Savannah COG, Santee-Lynches Regional COG, Pee Dee Regional COG, Waccamaw Regional COG, Berkeley-Dorchester Regional COG, and Lowcountry COG.

The South Carolina Southeast Crescent Economic and Infrastructure Development Strategic Plan for FY 2023-2027 is consistent with SCRC's mission to build sustainable communities and strengthen economic growth. The plan focuses on the need to make investments in jobs, infrastructure, education and training while considering the needs to protect natural resources, and strengthen communities. Implementation of the plan will involve a network of partnerships from the federal, state and local level involving public, private and non-profit efforts and resources. The State's efforts will be based on the SCRC's Strategic Goals and Guiding Objectives: Invest in Critical Infrastructure, Improve Health and Support Services Access and Outcomes, Strengthen Workforce Capacity, Foster Entrepreneurial and Business Development Activities, Expand Affordable Housing Stock and Access, and Promote Environmental Conservation, Preservation, Recreation and Tourism opportunities.

Overview & Assessment of Southeast Crescent South Carolina

As part of this planning effort, the State has undertaken an assessment of its strengths, weaknesses, needs, and opportunities relative to sustainability and economic competitiveness. The resulting plan provides a framework to increase prosperity and economic opportunities for its citizens. In order to achieve this, South Carolina has developed priorities to ensure that our State provides a more competitive economy and a sustainable quality of life for the citizens within the Southeast Crescent region of South Carolina and throughout the entire State.

The Southern Crescent counties of South Carolina include Abbeville, Aiken, Allendale, Bamberg, Barnwell, Beaufort, Berkeley, Calhoun, Charleston, Chester, Chesterfield, Clarendon, Colleton, Darlington, Dillon, Dorchester, Edgefield, Fairfield, Florence, Georgetown, Greenwood, Hampton, Horry, Jasper, Kershaw, Lancaster, Laurens, Lee, Lexington, Marion, Marlboro, McCormick, Newberry, Orangeburg, Richland, Saluda, Sumter, Williamsburg and York.

The People

The population in the region was 3,773,287 based on American Community Survey data for 2016 through 2020. This represents more than 72% of South Carolina's total population. Annual average population growth in the region since 2010 is 1.2%, equaling that of the state as a whole. There are 148.2 people per square mile.

The region has a civilian labor force of 1,798,975, with a participation rate of 59.6%.

Education

Of individuals aged 25 to 64 in the region, 29.4% have a bachelor's degree or better, compared with 34.3% in the nation. 89.6% had attained at least a high school diploma, compared with 89.5% percent nationally.

Health Care

According to Countyhealthrankings.org, the region had an average life expectancy of 74.5 years. 13% of the region's adults suffer from diabetes. 8% of the region's residents have limited access to healthy foods. Among the region's counties, only 4 lack a hospital: Calhoun, Marlboro, McCormick and Saluda. The lack of adequate health care places citizens in South Carolina at a disadvantage when it comes to being prepared for work.

Poverty

The poverty level in the region was 15.1% based on American Community Survey data for 2016 through 2020. 11.7% of households were receiving food stamps/SNAP. 10.4% of households were uninsured.

The Economy

The median household income in the region is \$55,772.

The average worker in the region earned annual wages of \$51,701 as of the 3rd quarter of 2022. Average annual wages per worker increased 6.5% in the region from

one year prior. For comparison purposes, the national average wage at that time was \$68,132.

As of the 3rd quarter of 2022, total employment for the region was 1,610,076 (using a four-quarter moving average). Over the prior year, employment increased 3.1%. The unemployment rate for the region was 2.8% as of November 2022. This is lower than the national rate of 3.4%. One year prior, the region's unemployment rate was 3.3%.

The region's cost of living is indexed 5.8% lower than the U.S. average.

The largest industry sector in the region is Health Care and Social Assistance, with 209,106 workers. Other significant sectors in the region are Retail Trade (195,406 workers) and Accommodation and Food Services (177,351). The region's sectors with higher than average concentrations of employment are Utilities (1.44 times the national average), Accommodation and Food Services (1.30x) and Public Administration (1.30x).

The largest major occupation group in the region is Office and Administrative Support Occupations, with 209,326 workers. Other significant groups are Sales and Related Occupations (163,835 workers) and Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations (158,747). The region's occupations with higher than average concentrations of employment are Production Occupations Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations (1.25 times the national average), Production Occupations (1.19x) and Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance Occupations (1.17x).

The highest average wages per worker in the region are found in are Management Occupations (\$104,400), Computer and Mathematical Occupations (\$88,700) and Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations (\$88,100). The unemployment rate among major groups ranged from 0.9% among Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations to 6.0% among Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations.

For the ensuing 12 months, the fastest growing occupation group is predicted to be Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations, at +1.8% annual growth. The strongest increase is expected for Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations (+2,916 jobs) and Transportation and Material Moving Occupations (+1,518). The highest separation demand (that is, demand caused by retirements and workers moving from one occupation to another) is expected in Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations (31,145 jobs) and Office and Administrative Support Occupations (25,821).

The most prevalent industry cluster - i.e., a concentration of related industries and occupations -- in the region is Textile/Leather, with 2.38 times the national average. This cluster has 8,397 workers in the region with an average wage of \$47,020. The Textile/Leather cluster is predicted to grow in this region by about 1.4% per year over the coming decade.

Transportation and Infrastructure

The region contains multiple airports, including international airports in Charleston and Myrtle Beach, Columbia Metropolitan Airport and also smaller airports in Florence and Hilton Head Island.

The interstate highways of I-77, I-20, I-26, I-95 and a I-385 (a spur of I-85) cross the region. More than 20 Major US highways additionally pass through, including Highways 1, 29, 301, 401, 501 and 601. The region is otherwise served by state and county roads.

For rail, CSX and Norfolk Southern railroads as well as multiple short lines cross the region.

An average of 41% of the region's workers had a long (>30 minute) commute, according to countyhealthrankings.org.

Average broadband access in the county was 74%, according to countyhealthrankings.org.

Southeast Crescent South Carolina County Status

The SCRC developed a county economic classification system to target counties in need of special economic assistance. Four economic levels were created based on the comparison of three county economic indicators (three-year average unemployment, per-capita market income, and poverty) to their respective national averages. SCRC defines the four economic levels used to classify counties as: Distressed, Transitional, Attainment and Isolated areas of Distress. **SCRC county designations are updated annually, please click the below link to find the current listing:** <https://scrc.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/SCRC-Counties-by-Economic-Designation31935.pdf>.

Attainment Counties/Isolated Areas of Distress

The Southeast Crescent Regional Commission recognizes that some of the Region's counties have closed or are closing the gap with the rest of the United States. Attainment Counties are the economically strongest counties and rank in the best 10 percent of the nation. For fiscal year 2023, 4 counties in the state of South Carolina have been designated as attainment counties and cannot benefit from SCRC funds except under certain exceptions. South Carolina counties that are designated as "Attainment Counties" are: York, Lexington, Beaufort, and Charleston. These counties also have some areas that are designated as "Isolated Areas of Distress". SCRC defines Isolated Areas of Distress as an area that have high rates of poverty, unemployment, or out migration. A listing of isolated areas of distress also be found at <https://scrc.gov>.

Transitional Counties

Transitional counties are those transitioning between strong and weak economies. They make up the second largest economic status designation. Transitional counties rank between the worst 25 percent and the best 25 percent of the nation's counties. There are currently 19 counties in South Carolina that meet the transitional designation. The counties meeting the criteria as "Transitional" are Aiken, Berkeley, Calhoun, Darlington, Dorchester, Edgefield, Fairfield, Florence, Georgetown, Greenwood, Horry, Jasper, Kershaw, Lancaster, McCormick, Newberry, Richland, Saluda, and Sumter. Transitional counties can qualify for up to 50 percent of eligible project costs from SCRC.

Aiken County had a population of 169,947 based on American Community Survey data for 2016 through 2020. The median household income is \$53,385.

The largest sector in the county is Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services, with 9,198 workers. The most prevalent industry cluster in the county is Utilities, with 19.39x the national average for workers.

Berkeley County had a population of 222,103 based on American Community Survey data for 2016 through 2020. The median household income is \$65,443.

The largest sector in the county is Retail Trade, with 8,253 workers. The most prevalent industry cluster in the county is Metal & Product Manufacturing, with 4.84x the national average for workers.

Calhoun County had a population of 14,608 based on American Community Survey data for 2016 through 2020. The median household income is \$49,844.

The largest sector in the county is Manufacturing, with 1,510 workers. The most prevalent industry cluster in the county is Chemical, with 14.51x the national average for workers.

Darlington County had a population of 66,858 based on American Community Survey data for 2016 through 2020. The median household income is \$37,141. The largest sector in the county is Manufacturing, with 4,053 workers. The most prevalent industry cluster in the county is Wood/Paper, with 11.22x the national average for workers.

Dorchester County had a population of 161,309 based on American Community Survey data for 2016 through 2020. The median household income is \$63,501. The largest sector in the county is Manufacturing, with 5,855 workers. The most prevalent industry cluster in the county is Auto/Auto-related, with 3.55x the national average for workers.

Edgefield County had a population of 27,021 based on American Community Survey data for 2016 through 2020. The median household income is \$52,491. The largest sector in the county is Manufacturing, with 1,646 workers. The most prevalent industry cluster in the county is Textile/Leather, with 30.68x the national average for workers.

Fairfield County had a population of 22,406 based on American Community Survey data for 2016 through 2020. The median household income is \$43,861. The largest sector in the county is Manufacturing, with 1,109 workers. The most prevalent industry cluster in the county is Coal/Oil/Power, with 13.26x the national average for workers.

Florence County had a population of 138,237 based on American Community Survey data for 2016 through 2020. The median household income is \$49,645. The largest sector in the county is Health Care and Social Assistance, with 13,280 workers. The most prevalent industry cluster in the county is Food Manufacturing, with 2.69x the national average for workers.

Georgetown County had a population of 62,150 based on American Community Survey data for 2016 through 2020. The median household income is \$52,488. The largest sector in the county is Health Care and Social Assistance, with 4,712 workers. The most prevalent industry cluster in the county is Wood/Paper, with 4.51x the national average for workers.

Greenwood County had a population of 70,672 based on American Community Survey data for 2016 through 2020. The median household income is \$41,081. The largest sector in the county is Health Care and Social Assistance, with 5,959 workers. The most prevalent industry cluster in the county is Chemical, with 5.80x the national average for workers.

Horry County had a population of 344,186 based on American Community Survey data for 2016 through 2020. The median household income is \$51,570. The largest sector in the county is Accommodation and Food Services, with 31,300

workers. The most prevalent industry cluster in the county is Consumer Services, with 1.98x the national average for workers.

Jasper County had a population of 29,558 based on American Community Survey data for 2016 through 2020. The median household income is \$45,924. The largest sector in the county is Health Care and Social Assistance, with 2,111 workers. The most prevalent industry cluster in the county is Construction, with 2.89x the national average for workers.

Kershaw County had a population of 65,926 based on American Community Survey data for 2016 through 2020. The median household income is \$53,980. The largest sector in the county is Retail Trade, with 4,067 workers. The most prevalent industry cluster in the county is Textile/Leather, with 10.04x the national average for workers.

Lancaster County had a population of 95,378 based on American Community Survey data for 2016 through 2020. The median household income is \$65,421. The largest sector in Lancaster County is Retail Trade, with 3,742 workers. The most prevalent industry cluster in the county is Textile/Leather, with 7.76x the national average for workers.

McCormick County had a population of 9,495 based on American Community Survey data for 2016 through 2020. The median household income is \$47,402. The largest sector in the county is Health Care and Social Assistance, with 363 workers. The most prevalent industry cluster in the county is Public Administration, with 2.85x the national average for workers.

Newberry County had a population of 38,329 based on American Community Survey data for 2016 through 2020. The median household income is \$46,038. The largest sector in the county is Manufacturing, with 5,332 workers. The most prevalent industry cluster in the county is Wood/Paper, with 8.12x the national average for workers.

Richland County had a population of 414,660 based on American Community Survey data for 2016 through 2020. The median household income is \$54,441. The largest sector in the county is Health Care and Social Assistance, with 32,890 workers. The most prevalent industry cluster in the county is Public Administration, with 2.44x the national average for workers.

Saluda County had a population of 20,292 based on American Community Survey data for 2016 through 2020. The median household income is \$43,410. The largest sector in the county is Manufacturing, with 2,015 workers. The most prevalent industry cluster in the county is Food Manufacturing, with 29.40x the national average for workers.

Sumter County had a population of 106,675 based on American Community Survey data for 2016 through 2020. The median household income is \$46,570. The largest sector in the county is Manufacturing, with 6,770 workers. The most prevalent industry cluster in the county is Textile/Leather, with 4.48x the national average for workers.

Distressed Counties

The Southeast Regional Crescent Commission recognizes these counties that are the most severely and persistently economically distressed and underdeveloped and have high rates of poverty, unemployment, or out migration. The following 16 counties are currently designated as “Distressed”: Abbeville, Allendale, Bamberg, Barnwell, Chester, Chesterfield, Clarendon, Colleton, Dillon, Hampton, Laurens, Lee, Marion, Marlboro, Orangeburg, and Williamsburg. Distressed Counties qualify for up to 80 percent of eligible costs from SCRC.

Abbeville County had a population of 24,582 based on American Community Survey data for 2016 through 2020. The median household income is \$ 43,090. The largest sector in the county is Manufacturing, with 1,862 workers. The most prevalent industry cluster in the county is Textile/Leather, with 28.55x the national average for workers.

Allendale County had a population of 8,789 based on American Community Survey data for 2016 through 2020. The median household income is \$26,074. The largest sector in the county is Manufacturing, with 743 workers. The most prevalent industry cluster in the county is Wood/Paper, with 20.19x the national average for workers.

Bamberg County had a population of 14,236 based on American Community Survey data for 2016 through 2020. The median household income is \$42,830. The largest sector in the county is Education Services, with 674 workers. The most prevalent industry cluster in the county is Textile/Leather, with 5.66x the national average for workers.

Barnwell County had a population of 21,170 based on American Community Survey data for 2016 through 2020. The median household income is \$37,572. The largest sector in the county is Manufacturing, with 1,071 workers. The most prevalent industry cluster in the county is Wood/Paper, with 6.47x the national average for workers.

Chester County had a population of 32,260 based on American Community Survey data for 2016 through 2020. The median household income is \$43,985. The largest sector in Chester County is Manufacturing, with 3,504 workers. The most prevalent industry cluster in the county is Chemical, with 20.98x the national average for workers.

Chesterfield County had a population of 45,833 based on American Community Survey data for 2016 through 2020. The median household income is \$41,937. The largest sector in the county is Manufacturing, with 4,874 workers. The most prevalent industry cluster in the county is Textile/Leather, with 14.28x the national average for workers.

Clarendon County had a population of 33,865 based on American Community Survey data for 2016 through 2020. The median household income is \$43,881. The largest sector in the county is Health Care and Social Assistance, with 1,476 workers. The most prevalent industry cluster in the county is Textile/Leather, with 6.04x the national average for workers.

Colleton County had a population of 37,624 based on American Community Survey data for 2016 through 2020. The median household income is \$36,748. The largest sector in the county is Retail Trade, with 1,723 workers. The most prevalent industry cluster in the county is Wood/Paper, with 4.66x the national average for workers.

Dillon County had a population of 30,473 based on American Community Survey data for 2016 through 2020. The median household income is \$36,429. The largest sector in the county is Transportation and Warehousing, with 1,779 workers. The most prevalent industry cluster in the county is Textile/Leather, with 11.48x the national average for workers.

Hampton County had a population of 19,223 based on American Community Survey data for 2016 through 2020. The median household income is \$38,178. The largest sector in the county is Health Care and Social Assistance, with 707 workers. The most prevalent industry cluster in the county is Wood/Paper, with 7.75x the national average for workers.

Laurens County had a population of 66,990 based on American Community Survey data for 2016 through 2020. The median household income is \$44,374. The largest sector in the county is Manufacturing, with 7,493 workers. The most prevalent industry cluster in the county is Textile/Leather, with 9.59x the national average for workers.

Lee County had a population of 17,144 based on American Community Survey data for 2016 through 2020. The median household income is \$32,851. The largest sector in the county is Health Care and Social Assistance, with 621 workers. The most prevalent industry cluster in the county is Utilities, with 7.24x the national average for workers.

Marion County had a population of 30,954 based on American Community Survey data for 2016 through 2020. The median household income is \$30,791. The largest sector in the county is Health Care and Social Assistance, with 1,529 workers. The most prevalent industry cluster in the county is Textile/Leather, with 2.39x the national average for workers.

Marlboro County had a population of 26,376 based on American Community Survey data for 2016 through 2020. The median household income is \$31,528. The largest sector in the county is Manufacturing, with 2,183 workers. The most prevalent industry cluster in the county is Textile/Leather, with 51.26x the national average for workers.

Orangeburg County had a population of 86,953 based on American Community Survey data for 2016 through 2020. The median household income is \$36,802. The largest sector in the county is Manufacturing, with 5,079 workers. The most prevalent industry cluster in the county is Machinery Manufacturing, with 4.74x the national average for workers.

Williamsburg County had a population of 30,810 based on American Community Survey data for 2016 through 2020. The median household income is \$35,681. The largest sector in the county is Manufacturing, with 2,377 workers. The most prevalent industry cluster in the county is Pharmaceutical, with 16.80x the national average for workers.

Southeast Crescent Regional Strategic Goals & State Objectives

Enormous progress has been made in the State of South Carolina. Gaps have been narrowed and economic gains have resulted. However, much remains to be done before the entire state reaches national parity in income, health care, education, employment, and housing. In December 2022, the Southeast Crescent Regional Commission approved a strategic plan that sets forth a vision for the region's future:

Southeast Regional Crescent Commission is a region of great opportunity that will achieve socioeconomic parity with the nation.

With this in mind, SCRC seeks to make investments and use the full range of its resources and tools to help transform the Region's assets and opportunities into real results by advancing this core mission:

SCRC is committed to building on the development, job growth, and socio-economic outcomes.

SCRC has identified six strategic priorities to advance its vision and mission and to guide its work over the next five years. These goals reflect consensus among local, state, and federal partners on the most critical investment opportunities in Southeast Crescent Region. While the investment goals are distinct, they are also interdependent, with progress on one goal often requiring investment in another.

Goal 1: Critical Infrastructure

Invest in critical infrastructure (transportation, basic, public, telecommunications, and energy)

Goal 2: Healthcare and Public Access

Improve health and public service access and outcomes

Goal 3: Workforce Capacity

Strengthen workforce capacity

Goal 4: Economic Opportunities

Foster entrepreneurial and business development activities

Goal 5: Affordable Housing

Expand affordable housing stock and access through training and technical assistance

Goal 6: Conservation and Preservation

Promote environmental conservation, preservation, recreation, and tourism

Southeast Crescent Regional Strategic Goals & State Objectives

SCRC-South Carolina focuses on implementation of the following priorities to enhance the State's economic competitiveness:

- **Economic development that increases income levels-**
 - This includes projects that encourage revitalization of declining downtowns; projects that assist small and medium size businesses to locate and access markets for their products that will enable them to participate in the global markets; and projects that support the development of industry networks, trade organizations and services for small businesses and entrepreneurs that promote collaboration, resource sharing, and the coordination of business-assisted services.

- **Education and workforce capacity-**
 - This includes projects that enhance workforce skills through education and training; projects that support apprenticeship programs conducted by technical institutions in direct response to industry needs; projects that enhance relationships between training institutions and businesses to improve workforce readiness, and projects that promote the development of skills in math and sciences providing opportunities for future employment in the fields of engineering, technology and entrepreneurial development.

- **Critical infrastructure-**
 - This includes projects that result in private sector investment and substantially enhance the community and economic development potential of an area; projects promoting multi-county and regionalized approaches to infrastructure management and development; and projects that support collaboration and coordination between transportation, economic development and trade interests to strengthen access to markets and maximize economic benefits.

The State will use SCRC funds to support programs and objectives. The State will also maximize the return on investment of SCRC dollars by using other funds and resources to support planning and implantation of program goals and objectives.

The State of South Carolina will seek SCRC support for projects that achieve the objectives outlined below. SCRC funds cannot be used to supplant existing funds.

SCRC Goal #1: Invest in Critical Infrastructure - Invest in critical infrastructure (transportation, basic, public, telecommunications, and energy).

SCRC Objective 1.1 Expand the Region's basic water and sewer infrastructure to be more resilient.

State Objective 1.1 Develop the basic infrastructure and facilities needed to support community and economic development.

Strategies:

- 1.1.1 Support projects that result in private sector investment and substantially enhance the community and economic development potential of an area.
- 1.1.2 Provide financial and technical assistance to communities for the development of industrial sites, parks and shell buildings that will have a significant impact on an area's development potential.
- 1.1.3 Provide assistance for the construction of access roads that are publicly owned.

SCRC Objective 1.2: Expand and improve access to affordable and reliable digital infrastructure (e.g., broadband, cellular).

State Objective 1.2: Develop telecommunications infrastructure and improve access to broadband.

Strategies:

- 1.2.1 Support installation of telecommunication conduit in the construction of public infrastructure.
- 1.2.2 Invest in telecommunication initiatives and plans for accessibility in rural and non-rural areas.
- 1.2.3 Encourage the use of telecommunications for business, education, health, government and other uses.
- 1.2.4 Enhance the use and development of telecommunications and technology to enhance workforce and economic development.

SCRC Objective 1.3: Support expanded regional transportation infrastructure systems and transit services.

State Objective 1.3: Promote sustainable development practices in infrastructure including system regionalization and energy efficiencies.

Strategies:

- 1.3.1 Promote multi-county and regionalized approaches to infrastructure management and development.
- 1.3.2 Provide education and training regarding energy efficiency techniques and encourage energy conservation and efficiency strategies in the design and operation of infrastructure and public facilities.
- 1.3.3 Support local-level planning that encourages regional solutions to infrastructure problems and sustainable policies for development that prioritize and target limited resources.

Infrastructure is the foundation on which economic growth and development build upon. More importantly, infrastructure must be resilient and sustainable to provide the long-term services necessary for communities and economies to function and prosper.

SCRC Target Impact Measurements for Goal #1

- **Target 1:** SCRC will measure the number of households and business that have new or improved access to clean and reliable water systems, reliable broadband infrastructure, and public transit systems.
- **Target 2:** SCRC will assess the jobs created and/or retained in both the public and private sector, including major industries like construction and engineering, utilities, transportation, and community planning.
- **Target 3:** SCRC will aggregate the number of communities that are directly and indirectly impacted by job creation, improved accessibility, and increases in property values due to these investments.
- **Target 4:** SCRC will track the return on investment through the following proxy measures:
 - **Internet:** Total number of households/businesses with improved access to broadband connectivity multiplied by 1.05 the average local property value, assuming improved access increases local property values on average of five percent.
 - **Public Transportation:** Total number of households and businesses with improved access to public transit multiplied by 1.15 the average local property value, assuming improved access increases local property values on average of 15 percent.

SCRC Goal #2: Improve Health and Support Public Service Access and Outcomes

SCRC Objective 2.1: Support initiatives that expand access to affordable, high-quality healthcare and services that support overall mental and physical health.

State Objective 2.1: Improve and support initiatives that create affordable, high-quality healthcare and services that support overall mental and physical health.

Strategies:

- 2.1.1 Develop healthcare plans, programs and community capacity to prepare the workforce for future employment needs and address overall wellness and healthcare needs of underserved communities.
- 2.1.2 Promote plans, programs and community capacity to address education, health care and other quality of life issues that will make the region more sustainable and economically competitive.

SCRC Objective 2.2: Provide support to build capacity for navigating and accessing support services.

State Objective 2.2: Improve access and affordability of health care, prevention and wellness for residents in the region.

Strategies

- 2.2.1 Increase access to health care professionals, facilities and telemedicine in medically underserved or health professional shortage areas.
- 2.2.2 Identify gaps in health care service delivery and provide reasonable cost-effective solutions to address the health care needs, particularly for the most vulnerable populations.

2.2.3 Support projects for healthcare prevention and wellness.

SCRC Target Impact Measurements for Goal #2

- **Target 1:** SCRC will measure households and businesses with increased access to quality healthcare facilities and affordable services, and increased enrollment in social services for eligible households.
- **Target 2:** Jobs created and/or retained may include those in the healthcare sector, public and non-profit social assistance workers, employees of support and educational services and pro-grams (e.g., wellness), as well as technical assistance providers.
- **Target 3:** SCRC will aggregate the number of communities that observe an increase in job opportunities, access to healthcare and services, and improved health outcomes.

SCRC Goal #3 - Strengthen Workforce Capacity

SCRC Objective 3.1: Promote workforce development programs (e.g., apprenticeships, internships, on the job training, programs at technical and community colleges) for local high-demand job opportunities (e.g., plumbers, electricians, etc.).

State Objective 3.1: Enhance workforce skills through education and training.

Strategies:

- 3.1.1 Establish or enhance relationships between training institutions and businesses to improve workforce readiness. Support workforce training and apprenticeship programs conducted by vocational/technical institutions in direct response to critical business/industry needs.
- 3.1.2 Build the capacity of training institutions to upgrade work-force skills and increase productivity.
- 3.1.3 Target the workforce of declining industries and develop plans and programs for re-training affected workers.

SCRC Objective 3.2: Increase enrollment in and completion of critical training programs by investing in wrap-around services.

State Objective 3.2: Enhance workforce skills through education and training.

Strategies:

- 3.2.1 Establish or enhance relationships between training institutions and businesses to improve workforce readiness.
- 3.2.2 Support workforce training and apprenticeship programs conducted by vocational/technical institutions in direct response to critical business/industry needs.
- 3.2.3 Build the capacity of training institutions to upgrade work-force skills and increase productivity.
- 3.2.4 Target the workforce of declining industries and develop plans and programs for re-training affected workers.
- 3.2.5 Promote technology education and training through the state's higher education system.

SCRC Target Impact Measurements for Goal #3:

- **Target 1:** SCRC will measure the number of individuals who gain access to job skills and training programs and higher-paying jobs, as well as businesses that hire locally trained talent and benefit from increased investments in workforce capacity.
- **Target 2:** SCRC will assess the jobs created and/or retained in support of these efforts, including those who administer or conduct job training programs, those who are enrolled and complete the programs, as well as those who benefit from increased enrollment in support services (e.g., childcare centers).
- **Target 3:** SCRC will count the communities that are directly and indirectly impacted by these investments. This includes communities that represent program enrollees, program leaders, and supportive services providers, and communities that benefit from increased access to high-demand specialized workers (e.g., plumbers, electricians).
- **Target 4:** SCRC will track return on investments through the following proxy measure:
 - Total number of people who accessed workforce training programs through SCRC efforts of investments multiplied by 1.14 of the regional median income, assuming program participants earn 14 percent more on average than individuals who don't participate in employment programs.

SCRC Goal #4: Foster Entrepreneurial and Business Development Activities Objectives

SCRC Objective 4.1: Support the expansion of access to business capital (e.g., micro loans) to support innovation, entrepreneurship, and economic equity.

State Objective 4.1: Strengthen communities by building local economies that capitalize on local assets or utilize innovative economic development approaches to diversify the economic base and create sustainable development.

Strategies:

- 4.1.1 Encourage a regional exchange of “best practices,” new technologies, and common experiences in support of economic development planning and implementation.
- 4.1.2 Promote the use and development of local food systems.
- 4.1.3 Develop programs to encourage revitalization of declining downtowns.
- 4.1.4 Support creative economic development approaches that have the potential to spur economic activity in areas that are struggling.

SCRC Objective 4.2: Invest in programs and business opportunities that address critical challenges facing SCRC communities while providing opportunities to attract and retain talent locally.

State Objective 4.2: Increase the competitiveness of the existing economic base.

Strategies:

- 4.2.1 Encourage the transfer of advanced manufacturing processes and product technologies that increase productivity and competitiveness.
- 4.2.2 Assist small and medium size businesses to locate and access markets for their products that will enable them to participate in the global market.
- 4.2.3 Support efforts to strengthen, modernize and promote energy efficiencies for existing businesses.

SCRC Target Impact Measurements for Goal #4

- **Target 1:** SCRC will measure the number of households and businesses with access to newly formed businesses, access to entrepreneurial community networks, and increases in entrepreneur funding and/or investment opportunities.
- **Target 2:** SCRC will assess the total number of jobs created and/or retained through the entrepreneurship and business development initiatives it supports.
- **Target 3:** SCRC will aggregate the number of communities impacted by newly formed local businesses, increased business tax revenue, and entrepreneurial investments and funding opportunities.
- **Target 4:** SCRC will track return on investments through the following proxy measure: Total number of jobs created through small business development multiplied by regional median income.

SCRC Goal #5: Expand Affordable Housing Stock and Access

SCRC Objective 5.1: Increase access to wrap-around services and legal assistance to resolve title, heirship, land tenure, and eviction issues.

State Objective 5.1: Support access to services and legal assistance that promote solutions to eviction issues, land tenure and heirship with appropriate state and federal partners.

Strategies:

- 5.1.1 Coordinate access to programs that provide legal assistance to tenants and homeowners and landowners.
- 5.1.2 Provide information on existing legal assistance and programs.

SCRC Objective 5.2: Support enrollment in and access to homebuyer programs and encourage affordable workforce housing.

State Objective 5.2: Preserve and expand access to education that benefit homebuyers.

Strategies:

- 5.2.1 Promote initiatives and programs that provide first time homebuyer education that address workforce housing needs.
- 5.2.2 Implement projects that address the need for affordable first-time homebuyer education that addresses workforce housing needs.

SCRC Objective 5.3: Invest in efforts to improve the affordability and availability of quality workforce housing across the region.

State Objective 5.3: Make long term investments in services to support workforce housing across the region.

Strategies:

- 5.3.1 Work with partners to limit the conversion of affordable units to market rate and/or the loss of affordable units.
- 5.3.2 Support programs that provide solutions to making home buying affordable through planning and programming.
- 5.3.3 Partner with both federal and state agencies to encourage the implementation of projects that address affordable and workforce housing.

SCRC Target Impact Measurements for Goal #5

- **Target 1:** SCRC will measure households that are connected to pro bono legal assistance; households that resolve title, heirship, land tenure, and eviction issues; households that enroll in educational programs or homebuyer assistance programs; households that are first-time homeowners; households and businesses impacted by revitalized properties and assets (e. g., vacant, abandoned, distressed), as well as increases in the number of affordable housing units.
- **Target 2:** SCRC will assess the jobs created and/or retained through these initiatives, including social services workers and legal representatives who provide support to families seeking to resolve title, heirship, land tenure, and eviction issues; homebuyer program employees; and workers (e.g., construction, utilities) who support revitalization efforts.
- **Target 3:** SCRC will aggregate the number of communities that benefit from local zoning reforms; resolved title, heirship, land tenure, and eviction issues; revitalization efforts, and new homeownership.
- **Target 4:** SCRC will track the return on investment through the following proxy measures:
 - Total number of households and business impacted by revitalized properties and assets multiplied by \$5,000, assuming local property values increase by a minimum of \$5,000 due to revitalization efforts.
 - Total number of households that resolve title, heirship, and land tenure issues multiplied by \$20,000, assuming households gain a minimum of \$20,000 in property value.

SCRC Goal #6: Promote Environmental Conservation, Preservation, and Access

SCRC Objective 6.1: Invest in air, water, and soil clean-up efforts that impact historically disadvantaged communities.

State Objective 6.1: Strengthen communities by building local economies that capitalize on local assets or utilize innovative economic development approaches to diversify the economic base and create sustainable development.

Strategies:

6.1.1 Support efforts to maximize asset-based and heritage tourism development.

6.1.2 Promote the use and development of local floodways.

6.1.3 Develop programs to encourage revitalization of declining downtowns.

6.1.4 Support creative economic development approaches that have the potential to spur economic activity in areas that are struggling.

SCRC Goal 6.2: Preserve and expand access to the SCRC region's natural resources to increase outdoor recreation and tourism opportunities.

State Objective 6.2: Make long term investments that will preserve and enhance natural resources, promote sustainability and improve the quality of life.

Strategies:

6.2.1 Facilitate clean-up and reuse of brownfields and abandoned sites.

6.2.2 Preserve and enhance natural assets.

6.2.3 Implement projects that address public safety, neighborhood stabilization, access to transportation and other public services.

SCRC Target Impact Measurements for Goal#6:

- **Target 1:** SCRC will measure the number of households and businesses with new or improved access to parks, outdoor recreational spaces, infrastructure (e.g., bike trails, walking trails), and those impacted by air, soil, and water clean-up efforts.
- **Target 2:** SCRC will assess the jobs created and/or retained in environmental remediation, park services and management, community planning, and construction.
- **Target 3:** SCRC will aggregate the number communities that have increased access to green space, that are impacted through technical assistance, and that benefit from remediated sites.
- **Target 4:** SCRC will track the return on investments in environmental clean-up, preservation, and access through the following proxy measures:
 - Total number of households/businesses impacted multiplied by 1.05 of the average local property values, assuming remediation and/or increased access to natural assets increases property values by five percent on average.

SCRC partners are accountable for setting and achieving the performance outcomes associated with SCRC-supported investments. SCRC measures the effectiveness of investments by tracking progress on performance targets. Projects proposed for funding under SCRC the following performance targets:

	PERFORMANCE TARGETS	
	ANNUAL TARGET	FIVE-YEAR TARGET
HOUSEHOLDS AND BUSINESSES WITH IMPROVED ACCESS TO SERVICES	3,000	15,000
JOBS CREATED AND/OR RETAINED	220	1,100
NUMBER OF COMMUNITIES WITH ENHANCED CAPACITY	20	100
RETURN ON INVESTMENTS THROUGH COMMUNITY AND RESIDENT WEALTH ATTAINED OR BUILT (TRACKING ONLY)	2 TO 1 RATIO OF COMMUNITY AND RESIDENT WEALTH ATTAINED AND/OR BUILT TO VALUE OF SCRC INVESTMENT	

Note: These targets assume a FY 2023 launch of the SCRC grant program and annual funding of \$10 million over the five- year period. Changes in funding levels will require corresponding adjustments to the targets above.

State Program Operations

The State of South Carolina has developed operating policies to govern the implementation of the state's SCRC Strategies. These policies address the process for development and selection of state and community projects that are consistent with the objectives and strategies in the preceding section of this plan. These SCRC objectives and State strategies will be updated every four years with a State strategy statement presented annually.

Eligible Applicants

- 1.) State governments of Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia
- 2.) Local governments (village, town, city and county)
- 3.) Other political subdivisions of States (regional planning commissions, authorities of the state)
- 4.) Indian Tribes; § 200.54 Indian tribe (or “federally recognized Indian tribe”). Indian tribe means any Indian tribe, band, nation, or other organized group or community, including any Alaska Native village or regional or village corporation as defined in or established pursuant to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (43 U.S.C. Chapter 33), which is recognized as eligible for the special programs and services provided by the United States to Indians because of their status as Indians (25 U.S.C. 450b(e)). See annually published Bureau of Indian Affairs list of Indian Entities Recognized and Eligible to Receive Services
- 5.) Non-profit entities. The term ‘nonprofit entity’ means any organization described in section 501(c) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 and exempt from taxation under 501(a) of that Code. The non-profit entity must be able to demonstrate they have federal grant experience, federally acceptable accounting practices and principles, and organizational capacity related to economic development

Ineligible Applicants

The State will not use SCRC funding to support the following:

- 1.) For-profit entities, LLCs and other entities that are not a 501(c), 40 U.S.C. §15101(c).
- 2.) Those entities normally deemed eligible but, due to prior federal or state funding history, have been identified as ineligible for future investments.
- 3.) A non-profit identified by a state that does not have a federally recognized 501(c) status is not an eligible applicant.

Evaluation Criteria

In accordance with 40 U.S.C. § 15301, in considering programs and projects to be provided assistance, the SCRC State of SC program has established priority rankings of the requests for assistance that follow to the maximum extent practicable, consideration of the following:

- 1.) The applicant describes with specificity the ways in which its project complies with the applicable State economic and infrastructure development plan;
- 2.) The applicant provides adequate assurances that their project will be properly administered, operated and maintained;
- 3.) There are reasonable assurances that the project will not be used to assist a person or entity to relocate from one area to another; and
- 4.) The applicant provides reasonable assurance that the project makes maximum use of all available federal and non-federal funds.

SCRC Application Scoring Criteria

Criterion	Points (maximum)
I. Project Description	25
a. Description of project service area	5
b. Project design	15
c. Inclusion of persistent poverty county(ies)	5
II. Rationale	15
a. Description of community needs	10
b. Alignment with SCRC's strategic goals	5
III. Partnerships	10
a. Evidence of community engagement	7
b. Letters of engagement/commitment	3
IV. Anticipated Outcomes	15
a. Realistic and attainable outcomes	10
b. Alignment with SCRC's performance measurements	5
V. Work Plan	25
a. Deliverables	20
b. Timeline	5
VI. Budget	10
a. Alignment of budget and budget narrative	7
b. Evidence of matching funds	3

SCRC has established a technical review process to provide an objective evaluation of applications. The criteria set forth are based on the Commission's statutory purpose, strategic plan goals, and Administration priorities.

Project Review

The State's SCRC Program Manager will review project preapplication requests and all viable project applications will be invited to make full application for funding. Proposals will be reviewed for completeness in accordance with SCRC application requirements and a site visit may be conducted to determine the eligibility and feasibility of a project. If clarifications are needed, the SCRC Program Manager will notify the applicant and provide a timeline for a response. The projects will be reviewed using the criteria and priorities established in this plan.

The SCRC Program Manager, in consultation with the appropriate state and federal agencies, and the Secretary of Commerce will develop a funding recommendation for the Governor. The Governor or his designee will have final approval for submission of a project for funding. When projects are submitted to the Southeast Crescent Regional Commission, the application documentation will be accompanied by a letter of recommendation from the Governor or his alternate. *Final approval of all grants under this program will be made at the discretion of SCRC's Federal Co-Chair.*

Strategic Priorities

In accordance with SCRC's authorizing statute and strategic plan priority will be given to projects that address investment in critical infrastructure, improve health and public service access and outcomes, strengthen workforce capacity, foster entrepreneurial and business development, expand affordable housing, and promote environmental conservation, preservation, recreation and tourism. Consideration for projects that address other goals and objectives will be based on the relative level of impact the project will have on the program's goals and objectives. For skills training projects, priority consideration will be based on past institutional performance at delivering educational skills training with emphasis on coordination with local industry.

This evaluation process will ensure that those areas most in need are targeted for assistance. The State will give consideration to an equitable distribution of funds in the event there are multiple projects that benefit the same local government or organization or the same project area. Further, the State will take into consideration whether the request is for continued or recurring funding for additional project phases.

Match Thresholds

One of the SCRC goals is to target the most distressed areas of the region for assistance. SCRC authorizes matching funds based on the level of distress in each county. The more distressed the county, the least able it is to provide a matching contribution.

In Southeast Crescent Region of South Carolina, counties fall into two designations based on SCRC criteria "Distressed/Isolated" and "Transitional". SCRC funding will be limited to 80 percent for all projects for counties designated as "Distressed/Isolated", and 50 percent for "Transitional" counties; grants to include funding the administrative expenses of LDDs located in an attainment county.

In addition to the above federal policies, the State expects a recipient of SCRC project funds to contribute its own resources to a project to the extent it is able to do so and to seek additional non-SCRC funding assistance in a diligent manner. The State will give preference to those projects in which the jurisdiction commits more than the minimum amount, provided the project adequately addresses a Goal, Objective, and Strategy as set forth in this plan.

Basic Agency

A basic agency (BA) has experience in managing federal construction projects. All construction projects must have an SCRC approved fiscal agent which serves between the grantee and SCRC to ensure compliance with Federal rules and regulations. SCRC is in the process of negotiating these agreements with guidance to be provided on a state by state basis.

Maximum Grant Amounts

The funding maximums are as follows*:

- Infrastructure Construction Projects:
(Non-Construction or Construction) \$350,000
- Non-Infrastructure Projects:
(Non-Construction or Construction) \$200,000
- Multi State/Multi County Awards:
(Non-Construction or Construction) \$500,000
- (Non-Construction or Construction) \$350,000

*Funding maximums can be waived by the Governor’s Alternate based on financial need and alignment with SCRC objectives and State strategies.

Project Development and Administration - Local Development Districts

The Local Development Districts (LDD), or Council of Governments will be involved in the planning and project development activities required for implementation of the state’s SCRC program. The COG staff will assist in the development of SCRC construction applications. Generally, the Board of Directors of the COG’s are made aware of projects prior to submission to the Governor and the South Carolina Department of Commerce for recommendation to the SCRC.

Close coordination exists between the Council of Governments and the SC Department of Commerce in working on program review for the State’s Small Cities Community Development Block Grant Program; therefore, they are an excellent resource for post award project administration.

Sources

- 1.) 2023 State Economic & Infrastructure Development (SEID) Investment Program Description
- 2.) All County data is from JobsEQ, (unless otherwise specified)
- 3.) Southeast Crescent Regional Commission: Strategic Plan (2023-2027)