

YEAR IN REVIEW

— 2019 —



SOUTHWESTERN COMMISSION

ANNUAL DINNER

The Southwestern Commission’s 2019 Annual Dinner was held on July 29 at Bloemsma Barn in Franklin, North Carolina. Keynote speaker for the evening was Lanier Cansler, President of Cansler Collaborative Resources, speaking about Medicaid expansion and the need for community based services, especially for older adults across North Carolina. Elected officials, community partners, municipal and county managers, commission staff, and guests, gathered for an evening filled with conversation, food, and friends.



2019 Annual Dinner

HOMEGROWN LEADERS

Four Southwestern Commission staff members; Kellie Dula, Laura Grindstaff, Linda Lamp, and Sarajane Melton, attended a 3-day Homegrown Leaders program on the campus of Western Carolina University in May 2019. Homegrown Leaders is a regional leadership and economic development program of the NC Rural Center that develops and supports highly motivated leaders who are committed to building regional collaboration across multi-county regions in the state.



(L to R) Linda Lamp, Laura Grindstaff, Kelli Dula, and Sarajane Melton

HOW A LEADERSHIP TRAINING LED TO A COLLABORATIVE PROJECT BETWEEN COMMISSION DEPARTMENTS

During a team building activity at the 2019 Homegrown Leaders leadership training, participants were asked to think of a project they would like to see in their hometown. Commission staff members Kellie Dula and Laura Grindstaff, along with a diverse group of other community members, developed an “art box” prototype. The idea behind the box was that someone with dementia could have a take-home kit to use for creating art. The concept was simple: with dementia, oftentimes communicating can become difficult. The hope was that through art, emotions and memories may be triggered in people that typically struggle to communicate and make those connections.



Commission staff join colleagues at a NC Rural Center leadership training alumni gathering

The project became a collaboration between two Southwestern Commission Departments, Kellie with the Area Agency on Aging, and Laura with WorkForce Development. The two began researching the positive impacts of art therapy and dementia. This included attending the Sense and Nonsense about Dementia program by Long-Term Care Ombudsman Larry Reeves, reading art therapy studies, and meeting with caregivers and facility supervisors. Boxes were created and distributed throughout the region and have so far received positive feedback.

NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS

Southwestern Commission employees are continuously serving on boards and committees, obtaining certifications, and furthering their education. In 2019, we noted these accomplishments:

Executive Director Sarah Thompson was chosen to serve on the Board of Directors for Dogwood Health Trust.

Workforce Development Director David Garrett was chosen to serve as Secretary for the North Carolina Workforce Directors Council. He also graduated from the North Carolina Rural Center Rural Economic Development Initiative XXIX.

Business Services Representative Linda Lamp served as Board Chair for the Center for Agricultural Food Entrepreneurship.

AREA AGENCY ON AGING

SENIOR RESOURCE GUIDE

“SENIORS: The Resource Guide for Older Adults” was published in August of 2019. The inaugural edition of the resource publication contains a wealth of information with articles related to Aging, Family Caregiving, Senior Centers, Nutrition, Transit, In home Aide Services, etc. The guide also contains a list of resources denoted by county. The Area Agency on Aging staff wishes to thank all of their partners as well as the Mountaineer Publishing Company for their collaborative work. We plan to publish a guide annually.

SENIOR CELEBRATION 2019

Seniors from across the region visited the Ramsey Center on the campus of WCU in September 2019 for Senior Celebration. Laughter, fun, food, fellowship, music, and Bingo were all enjoyed during the day of festivities with the theme “History of Trains in WNC”. The annual event is an opportunity to show appreciation for our older adults and what they mean to Region A. Larry Reeves, Southwestern Commission’s Long-Term Care Ombudsman was the days emcee as he did a wonderful job of explaining the importance of trains in our region, now and in the past. Over 100 WCU students volunteered their assistance to make this senior event memorable.



Area Agency on Aging staff at the 2019 Senior Celebration

THE INTERN EXPERIENCE AT THE AREA AGENCY ON AGING

For years, the Southwestern Commission Area Agency on Aging (AAA) has had the pleasure of hosting interns from the Social Work Department of Western Carolina University. The social work internship at the AAA comes from a different perspective than most. The AAA is a macro agency covering the 7 southwestern counties of NC and serves older adults. Macro means working at the community and systems level. Interns have a unique opportunity to learn outside of the one-on-one perspective that most people associate with social work. Quality time is spent with each AAA staff member learning their various job duties, as well as being a part of a team that reaches far outside the walls of Southwestern Commission, learning how each county and community work to meet the needs of their citizens. While each student gains quality information and skills during the internship, they undeniably contribute their unique talents and skills to the AAA, leaving the agency better than before.

Here are a few of their experiences

Interning at the AAA was an eye-opening experience for me as a social work major. At first, the idea of covering an entire region was overwhelming. I had never considered macro social work and didn't know much about it. As a college student not knowing exactly what I wanted to do, being able to see so many agencies and communities at work helped me figure out my path. I was one of the many AAA interns who got a job directly related to my internship. Some have gone to work in nursing facilities, hospitals, and various other jobs that work with older adults. Another intern and I were fortunate enough to be hired here at the commission. This is so refreshing considering how much experience many employers want from applicants. Fortunately for any AAA



Attendees at the 2019 Senior Celebration

AREA AGENCY ON AGING'S CONSUMER DIRECTED PILOT

Concerns about costs of long-term care have made policymakers more open to alternative home care approaches, such as North Carolina's Consumer Directed Services, or Home Care Independence (CDS-HCI). CDS-HCI gives an individual more choice over what, when, and by whom they receive in-home services. The Area Agency on Aging is piloting this program in 3 counties: Clay, Haywood, and Jackson. The key difference between consumer directed services and the traditional approach of providing care is the shift of responsibility from professionals to recipients. The shift involves some flexibility when a client needs care at untraditional hours or needs help with services not approved by a home care agency.

Linda's story:

Linda broke her foot and has been unable to work on her farm. As part of the consumer directed services program, Linda can pay her daughter in law to help her daily with wound care, help with the animals, and nighttime and early morning care. Linda also "falls between the gap", meaning she is slightly over income to qualify for Medicaid CAP but does not earn enough in her social security to be able to afford to pay privately for services. All these factors meant traditional in-home services did not work for her. Consumer directed has been a lifesaver for this family. Participants with cognitive impairment and physical disabilities are given the option to appoint a representative to advocate for their preferences. The representative is then able to direct the care on the participants behalf.

Debra, a consumer directed client, and her husband are perfect examples of this. Debra has Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) and is unable to move independently. Her husband has been her primary caregiver for years, and with consumer directed services was appointed her representative. He continues to work in order to afford to pay for her care. Debra has around the clock care while her husband works, which is an extreme financial burden on the family. CDS-HCI covers some of the cost of Debra's care.

With these services, they have chosen to pay a family friend who is a retired massage therapist. She gives Debra deep tissue massages, gives her manicures, and keeps her entertained throughout the day. This adds an immeasurable amount of quality to Debra's life and takes some of the burden off her husband. Because consumer directed care eliminates most agency involvement and overhead costs, it's estimated that costs will be significantly lower. The recent shortage of home care workers has also made alternative modes of service delivery more appealing. Research suggests that actual risks to clients with self-directed services is no greater than those receiving agency-based services.



Southwestern Commission AAA, in collaboration with NC State Employees Credit Union and the Senior Centers across the region, supported approximately 800 participants during the Elder Abuse Awareness walks on June 15, 2019.

intern, interning here in itself is an experience. Most days were rollercoasters, I found myself floating around between visiting nursing facilities all over the region, doing presentations at senior centers, delivering meals on wheels, doing exercises at adult day programs, meetings at hospitals, and occasionally doing office work. You name it and I was there. Although sometimes this meant arriving at the crack of dawn, I got to cover an entire region, an experience no other intern in my class had. Now I know more about every mountain and valley in this area than I ever wanted to know. I am so grateful to have gotten connected with an agency that is willing to take a chance on young people.

-Kellie Dula, AAA Intern BSW Spring 2018

AAA has shown me how a group of dedicated people who are passionate about their work of serving older people can help many people spread throughout a large geographic level. I

have also learned that the coming together of thoughtful people from diverse backgrounds can result in amazing solutions to significant challenges.

-Edward Jones, AAA Intern MSW Spring 2020

Being an intern at the Area Agency on Aging allowed me to witness great community partnerships, as well as great teamwork among staff. Not only did I have the amazing staff at the Area Agency on Aging to learn from, I also had staff from the senior centers/ adult day programs, the department on aging, DSS, and the community advisory boards. This internship helped me grow into a better communicator, listener, evaluator, and organizer. The wonderful knowledge that I have gained from being an intern at the Area Agency on Aging will help me throughout my life as a social worker.

-Morgan McCoy, AAA Intern BSW Spring 2020

AREA AGENCY ON AGING

SENSE AND NONSENSE ABOUT DEMENTIA: ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE AND RELATED DISORDERS

The Area Agency on Aging presents numerous types of training seminars to a wide variety of groups including classes at high schools, community colleges, and Western Carolina University; groups at senior- centers across the region; religious and faith-based gatherings; civic clubs; public library community education events; healthcare facilities; and caregiver support groups. One seminar that is often requested is titled, "Sense and Nonsense about Dementia- Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders".

This seminar explores the basics of dementia- What is dementia? How is it diagnosed? What are the causes of dementia? How do the different types of dementia present themselves? What types are irreversible? What types "may be" reversible? What are the causes of problem behaviors? What are the stages of dementia? What about treatment options? What are some of the areas where research is being done? Can the onset of dementia be prevented and/or delayed? The information is presented in a realistic, practical, humorous, and compassionate manner.

Larry Reeves, Long-Term Care Ombudsman, leads a dementia workshop



COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

THE SOUTHWESTERN COMMISSION CONTINUES TO WORK ON BROADBAND ACCESS

In May of 2019, the Commission received a grant from the Appalachian Regional Commission to conduct an inventory of vertical broadband assets in the region. A vertical asset typically refers to any elevated structure where broadband equipment can be located, and this method of broadband delivery is commonly referred to as “fixed wireless”. Fixed wireless is one of the ways that broadband deployment is increasing throughout the region. The Southwestern Commission contracted with ECC Technologies to inventory these assets and this information has been shared with internet service providers.



Representative Kevin Corbin, NC Rural Center President Patrick Woodie, and Representative Joe Sam Queen at the Regional Broadband Summit in October 2019.

On October 25, the Southwestern Commission hosted a Regional Broadband Summit, where participants were able to meet with and learn from partners who are making strides in improving broadband access in the seven

western counties. Experts in the field were there to provide information on funding, legislative updates, technology and more.

A panel of Internet Service Providers who currently have customers in our region provided valuable insight into this issue, and speakers also provided information about what efforts are currently underway. In 2019, three Internet Service Providers from the region received grants from the state to expand infrastructure into hard-to-serve census tracts. The state invited grant applications at the close of 2019 for the next round of state grants and Commission staff are assisting potential applicants with that process.

HOUSING STUDIES

The Southwestern Commission made housing a strategic priority for 2019 and decided that the first step to addressing the issue was to collect data on the current situation. The Commission worked with the WNC Housing Partnership and a housing consultant, and all seven counties now have data identifying what the housing needs and opportunities are in their community. These reports can be viewed on our website at: regiona.org/community

SUMMARY OF HOUSING NEED IN THE SOUTHWESTERN COMMISSION REGION

TYPE OF HOUSING	SENIOR FOR SALE	SUBSIDIZED: SENIOR, FOR RENT	AFFORDABLE SENIOR, FOR RENT	MARKET RATE: SENIOR FOR RENT	FAMILY, FOR SALE	SUBSIDIZED: FAMILIES, FOR RENT	AFFORDABLE: FAMILIES, FOR RENT	MARKET RATE: FAMILIES, FOR RENT
Haywood County	168	380	100	118	36	1,450	360	0
Macon County	0	80	48	47	0	333	150	0
Graham County (Robbinsville)	0	32	0	0	0	30	0	0
Clay County	0	43	0	0	0	44	0	0
Swain County	0	56	0	0	0	149	50	0
Jackson County	18	121	44	0	33	775	209	92
Total	186	721	192	165	69	2,781	769	92

NORTH CAROLINA HOSTS APPALACHIAN REGIONAL COMMISSION ANNUAL CONFERENCE

In September of 2019, Western North Carolina was host to hundreds of community and economic development professionals from all over the Appalachian region. From September 4th through the 6th, the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) held its annual conference in Asheville where participants gathered to attend workshops, network with peers, and celebrate successful efforts of recent years. Our region was highlighted in a presentation by Graham County Commission Chairman Dale Wiggins and County Manager Becky Garland as well as a video highlighting an ARC-funded water and sewer project for the Town of Fontana Dam.

The Appalachian Region Commission was created in 1965 and has been a vital partner in the seven western counties, funding a wide variety of projects in every county of the region, including water and sewer expansion, broadband infrastructure, and leadership training. To help ARC make the most impactful and strategic investments, the Southwestern Commission serves as the Lead Development District to the region. In this role, commission staff assist with both the development of projects and with reviewing grant applications in order to help make them as competitive as possible. Please contact our staff to discuss any project ideas you think might be a good fit for ARC.

THE SOUTHWESTERN COMMISSION CONTINUES TO SUPPORT THE MOUNTAIN WEST PARTNERSHIP BY CONVENING PARTNERS AND SUPPORTING KEY INDUSTRIES

The Mountain West Partnership, the group of economic developers and educational institutions in the region, hosted a Healthcare and Economic Development Summit on June 5, 2019, where our regional health services partners sat down with economic development partners for a round table discussion on how these two groups can better work together to accomplish shared goals and objectives to benefit the communities of our region. Throughout the discussion several themes began to emerge, including the need for social and community infrastructure, workforce, and wellness.



Graham County Commission Chairman Dale Wiggins speaks to a group about the community projects taking place in Graham County.

On November 6, the Mountain West Partnership hosted a Tourism and Economic Development Summit. Key items emerging from this discussion included the need for improvements in workforce development, workforce housing, and the need for greater collaboration among businesses and across county lines.

A report was compiled for each of these events that contains summaries of information shared at these events. Go to gownc.org to view these reports in their entirety.



Economic Developers from the Mountain West Partnership meet with tourism leaders from around the region.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

ON-THE-JOB TRAINING

In 2019 the Southwestern Workforce Development Board acquired funds to bolster the On-the-Job Training (OJT) program. The purpose of OJT is to provide instruction for workers who want to develop the necessary skills for a good job and for employers who need a pipeline of skilled workers to remain competitive. OJT provides reimbursements to employers for the costs associated with skills upgrade training and loss of production for newly hired employees who qualify as dislocated workers. Funding for this program is part of the federal Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA) to ensure that employment and training services provided through core programs are coordinated and complimentary so that dislocated workers acquire skills and credentials to meet employer needs. During the fiscal year, seven OJT contracts were underway with local employers such as Jackson Paper Manufacturing in Sylva.



Pictured is successful OJT recipient, Robert Stites with Angie Rogers and Josh Carnes.



TERO Director Terri Henry and others.

TRIBAL EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS OFFICES "TERO" 2019 OUTSTANDING EMPLOYER

The TERO program of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI) was the recipient of the 2019 Governor's NCWorks Award of Distinction as an "Outstanding Employer". Oconaluftee Job Corps Civilian Conservation Center (JCCCC), the nominating agency, recognized the TERO program and Mother Town Healing Program.

The Mother Town Healing Program is helping members of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians in recovery from addiction to find a new path in life. The program provides job skills and education to give people a healthy future and produce employable community members.

Thirty people have gone through the program, with the support of the Tribal Employment Rights Office (TERO), since its inception in April 2017, with a success rate of 75 percent – meaning they have gone on to full-time or part-time employment or sought further education by going back to school.

The Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians Tribal Employment Rights Offices (TERO) Director Terri Henry says, "Our goal is to provide a support system to our people and to let them know that they can be part of society. So many of our clients feel that because of their past, society has thrown them away, and that's simply not true."

TRAIN UP PROGRAM

A program devised to provide a fresh look at solutions to help employers in our region with their training needs is Train Up. The goal with Train Up is to provide funding to help eligible businesses effectively train and retain existing, full-time employees by providing skills upgrades and process improvements. This grant program provides up to \$10,000 in grant funds for businesses to train existing employees due to demands from expansion, new technology, retooling, organizational structuring, new services or product lines. During the year, six Train Up grants were awarded to D&L Body Shop, Ward Plumbing & Heating, Innovation Brewing, Blue Moon Elise, Aegis Power Systems and Industrial Opportunities, Inc.

FINISH LINE GRANT SUCCESSES

Adam Atkins

For years, Adam, a single father, lived with financial hardships. In December 2019 he graduated Summa Cum Laude from the Collision Repair program at Haywood Community College with a 4.0 grade point average.

"I still have a long path towards more financial freedom, but I now have the skillset and opportunity to achieve that goal. I am proud to say, I quickly found work within my industry. I found employment at a place where I can continue learning and honing my trade at a local automotive collision and repair shop with an owner who's investing in my future, not only giving work experience, but contributing to the purchase of tools. The path to graduation was a long and arduous one, but through the help of the individuals within the Financial Aid Office at HCC, the amazing staff at NCWorks and WIOA program, and the Finish Line Grant, I would not be in the position I am so gratefully in today. I have been given the opportunity to succeed in my

student path, my career path, and as a father. I will continue to be grateful for all that has been done to help me prosper in my endeavors to better the life of myself and my family."



TRI-COUNTY AREA WIOA YOUTH PROGRAM

The highlight in the WIOA Youth Program for the Tri-County area in 2019 was the strengthening of the relationship with its partners Tri-County Community College and Clay County Department of Social Services. The enhancements to these partnerships resulted in the development of a cross-referral system that increased the number of youth served in the Tri-County area. Working together, these strong partnerships helped youth in this area overcome difficult barriers and obtain their High School Equivalency Diploma. Achieving this milestone allows our youth to contribute to their communities by either joining the workforce or going on to further their education.



Southwestern Commission Workforce Development Youth Specialist Sharee Thompson and program participants.

SOUTHWESTERN RURAL PLANNING ORGANIZATION (RPO)

North Carolina established Rural Transportation Planning Organizations (RPOs) almost 20 years ago under General Statute Chapter 136, Article 17. The Southwestern Rural Planning Organization includes Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Jackson, Macon, and Swain counties. Two committees provide direction to the RPO staff – the Transportation Advisory Committee consists of elected officials and the Technical Coordinating Committee consists of local government staff. Among the core duties of the RPOs are:

- Develop local and regional multimodal transportation plans
- Provide a forum for public participation in transportation planning processes
- Develop and prioritize projects the organization believes should be included in NCDOT's State Transportation Improvement Program.
- Provide transportation-related information to local governments

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

Southwestern RPO staff works collaboratively with NCDOT and local governments to develop transportation plans for each county, called Comprehensive Transportation Plans (CTPs). These plans forecast the transportation needs of a county about 30 years into the future, based on the vision for growth that the county has identified in local land use plans. In 2019, RPO staff focused on updating Macon County's Comprehensive Transportation Plan, which will be completed in 2020. We also assisted planning boards with local plans, and provided input in several regional, statewide, and national planning efforts, such as NC Moves 2050 and the NC State's Rural Freight Study.

PRIORITIZATION

Comprehensive Transportation Plans form the basis for selecting projects to be submitted to NCDOT for potential funding and construction. This process is called Prioritization and occurs every two-three years. In 2019, RPO staff worked with local governments and NCDOT to identify potential projects for Prioritization 6.0, which will result in the State Transportation Improvement Program for 2023-2032. Due to NCDOT funding issues, these results are now expected to be released in early 2022.



The RPO created and distributed these flyers advertising the public input survey for the Macon County CTP. Close to 700 people responded to the survey.



NC Governor Roy Cooper visited Southwestern Community College to discuss the Finish Line Grants program in August 2019. He is pictured here at the event with Southwestern Commission's Workforce Development Director David Garrett.



2019 Homegrown Leaders training participants. Homegrown Leaders is a regional training program conducted by the NC Rural Center for people involved in community development in rural NC counties. WCU hosted the group in May 2019.



Linda Lamp, Sarah Thompson, and Lisa Ledford, at the 2019 staff retreat



Cory McCall, Macon County business owner, Arthur Salido with WCU, and Sarah Thompson with Southwestern Commission at the 2nd Annual WNC Outdoor Economy Conference, October 2019 in Asheville, NC. The three were also panelists on UNG TV's "NC Impact" show in June of 2019, discussing the outdoor recreation economy in WNC.



Southwestern Commission employees during their 2019 Staff Retreat, held at Snowbird Wilderness Outfitters in Andrews, NC.

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

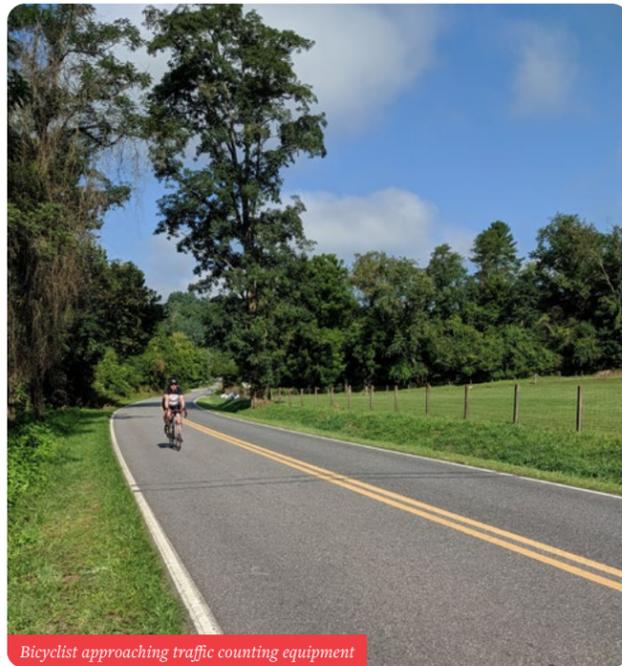
Southwestern RPO staff works closely with NCDOT, local governments, and the public during the development of projects to help ensure that local plans and visions are incorporated into the final transportation product. During 2019, our region had over 20 active projects in development and RPO staff participated in over 50 project-related meetings on behalf of local governments.

DATA COLLECTION

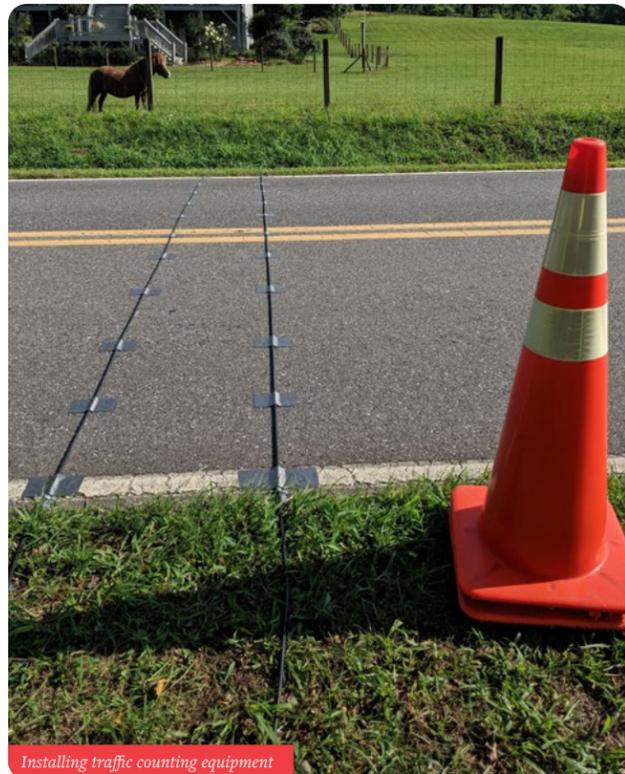
In 2019, the RPO acquired traffic counting equipment and is able to conduct independent traffic counts as needed. The counter can be used in mixed-use traffic and can identify 14 different types of vehicles, from bicycles and motorcycles to six-axle trucks with multiple trailers. These data can be valuable in evaluating facilities for project prioritization and establishing the need for a project.



NC 107 Project Meeting. Photo courtesy of Asheville Design Center

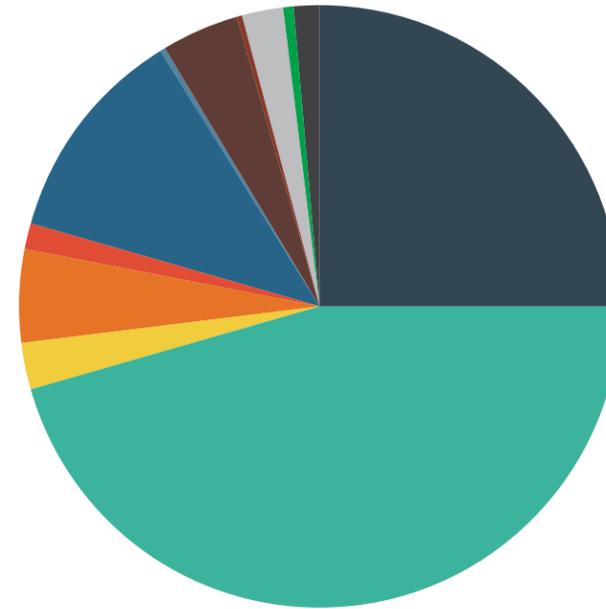


Bicyclist approaching traffic counting equipment



Installing traffic counting equipment

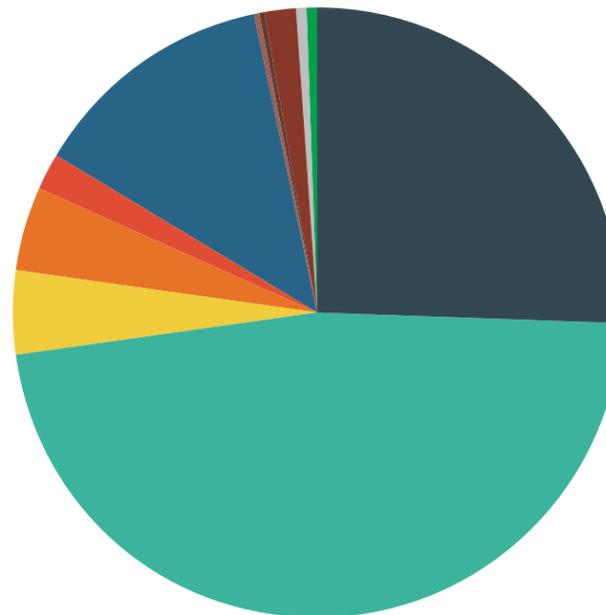
GENERAL FUND RECEIPTS JANUARY-DECEMBER 2019



WORKFORCE	\$1,769,293
AGING	\$3,174,136
ECON DEV	\$182,595
STEM	\$346,412
RPO	\$110,522
JCPC	\$810,747
REG BIKE PLAN	\$9,768
RURAL FOOD	\$8,998
RLF PMTS RECEIVED	\$285,772
RLF TRANS-IN	\$29,198
DUES	\$157,311
MINI GRANTS	\$1,411
BROADBAND	\$31,098
OTHER	\$88,075

TOTAL: \$7,005,336

GENERAL FUND DISBURSEMENTS JANUARY-DECEMBER 2019



WORKFORCE	(\$1,769,293.00)
AGING	(\$3,266,550.00)
ECON DEV	(\$301,459.00)
STEM	(\$305,309.00)
RPO	(\$146,386.00)
JCPC	(\$885,338.00)
REG BIKE PLAN	\$0.00
RURAL FOOD	(\$20,000.00)
RLF PMTS RECEIVED	(\$21,501.00)
RLF TRANS-IN	(\$118,739.00)
LOCAL	(\$42,742.43)
MINI GRANTS	\$0.00
BROADBAND	(\$24,721.00)
OTHER	\$0.00

TOTAL: (\$6,902,038.43)



Our pet friendly office building allows us the chance to enjoy each other's pups



Roger Wiggins, Southwestern Commission's Finance Officer and maintenance man will retire in 2020 after 25 years with the agency



Becca Scott



Commission staff holiday celebration

FROM THE CHAIRMAN



This fiscal year has been unusual, to say the least, due to the Covid-19 pandemic. City and county governments as well as the Commission had to find ways to conduct business remotely. New budgets have the unknowns of revenue due to decreased business and potential tax revenue loss. However, as this report shows, our Southwest Commission is financially stable. Not only that, but the Commission has moved forward with the Home Consortium initiative in addition to the staff assisting members with navigating Covid related loans and other government relief programs.

For all of this we owe a tremendous thanks to the leadership and staff of the Commission for their efforts under trying circumstances. One member that we regret leaving us is our Finance Officer, Roger Wiggins. His service has been impeccable and he will be missed greatly. However, we wish him well as he retires and enters a new chapter in his life.

Lastly, I have appreciated the honor of being the Chair for the last two years, but I regret that we were not able to meet for our annual dinner and celebration of all of the service that the Commission has given WNC this past year. I hope that a formal affair can be rescheduled. In the meantime, I wish you all good health!

HARRY BAUGHN
Chairman

FROM THE DIRECTOR



The Southwestern Commission has been working to bring capacity and resources to the far western region of North Carolina since 1965. Our departments and staff are structured to address regional issues with local solutions, tailoring each program and service to meet the unique needs of each community we serve.

We work every day for the overall health of your community. A healthy community has not only healthy citizens, but also a healthy economy, adequate infrastructure, and the human capacity to maintain and grow in a manner that meets the needs of every age group.

To maintain a healthy region we must work together. The Southwestern Commission is always seeking the appropriate channels of collaboration needed to achieve our region's collective goals. We value our member governments and the numerous non-profit and community organizations that exist in the region. The Southwestern Commission region has a strong history of collaboration and working across political boundaries for the greater good of our citizens and communities.

I'm honored to serve this region and proud of the work we did in 2019.

SARAH THOMPSON
Executive Director



**SOUTHWESTERN COMMISSION-
SUPPORTING THE REGION**

***SINCE
1965***

The mission of the Southwestern Commission is to improve the quality of life in its seven-county service area by assisting local governments in reaching their goals.

The Southwestern Commission is the council of government (COG) for North Carolina's Region A, covering the western most part of the state; Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Haywood, Jackson, Macon, and Swain Counties, the Qualla Boundary, and the 17 municipalities therein.



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