Fiscal Year 2023 River Valley Regional Commission

Jerry “Pops” Barnes, Chair

Jimmy Babb
Timothy Biddle
Danny Blackmon
Kevin Brown
Eugene Cason
Charles Coffey
Melvin Crimes
James Davenport
Joshua Deriso
Greg Dominy
J. R. Dowdy
Ransom Farley
Rob Grant
Matt Gunnels
Tameka Harris
B. H. “Skip” Henderson

Bruce Hill
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Lee Kinnamon
Tony Lamar
Carvel Lewis
Jeff McCarter
Bill McClellan
Carl Oliver
Jessie Smith
Larry Sparks
Kenneth Sumpter
Barry Whitley
Joe Lee Williams

State Appointees

Richard McCorkle
Maggie McGruther

Private Sector Appointees

Doug Ethridge
Jayson Griffin
Randy Howard
Terrell Hudson

Chip Jones
Xavier McCaskey
Tom Queen
Rebecca White
Dear Community,

This marks yet another year of growth for the River Valley Region. With several new initiatives and sources of funding in place, the RVRC has been earnestly working for and with the communities in the River Valley Region.

During FY23, the RVRC helped secure approximately $32,052,385 for the region. For every dollar of dues received by the RVRC from our local governments, their return on investment was $86.86 in funding, programs, and services. Funding received this year was 92.8% federal and 7.2% state.

Within the past year, RVRC’s planning department has worked diligently with the University of Georgia’s Carl Vinson Institute and Fort Moore to develop the RVRCCD plan, which, once implemented, will help maintain the region’s rural character and support a good quality of life for area residents.

In FY23, the AAA received ARPA funds and began a partnership with Adult Protective Services to provide priority services for their clients. They are also continuing their partnership with the West Central Georgia Health District to expand the public health workforce by funding four (4) positions as health educators.

The WIOA has helped secure $1,116,491 in funding during the Program Year (PY22) and Fiscal Year (FY) 2023. These grant awards are for a two-year period, which ends June 30, 2024. The WIOA also enrolled a total of 127 individuals who received training services.

I would like to express my gratitude for my time as Chair and extend my thanks to RVRC’s dedicated staff, local governments, and citizens within the River Valley Region for their role in the betterment of the region. Through their continued efforts, the RVRC can foster a sense of understanding and collaboration to achieve a shared goal—the enhancement, orderly growth, and economic prosperity of the region.

Finally, I welcome Carvel Lewis as the next Chair of the River Valley Regional Commission. The future of our region is promising, and with Lewis at the helm, I look forward to our continued efforts to create a more connected region so that we may empower our communities. Together, we will make FY24 even better.

Sincerely,

Jerry “Pops” Barnes
FY23 River Valley Regional Commission Council Chairman
Mission
The mission of the RVRC is to create, promote and foster the orderly growth and economic prosperity for our region.

Vision
Foster a region where current and future generations succeed at home, at work, and in their communities.

Core Values
- Accountability
- Collaboration
- Community
- Innovation
- Diversity
- Integrity
- Good Stewardship

River Valley Regional Commission Staff

Executive Director
Jim Livingston

Assistant Executive Director/Area Agency on Aging Director
Katie Howard

Administration
Emily Chambers, Finance Officer
Tammy Collins, Finance Officer
Kristal Blue, Financial Analyst
SheKella Prince, Financial Assistant
Annie Thompson, Assistant to the Executive Director
Debbie Zwaga, Executive Secretary
Merri Spence, Human Resources Manager/Executive Secretary

Planning and Government Services
Gerald Mixon, Director of Planning
Rick Morris, Director of Planning
Allison Slocum, Assistant Director of Planning
Grant Richardson, Assistant Director of Government Services
Tracie Hadaway, Senior Planner
Mariyana Kostov, GIS Manager
Will Griggs, Community Developer
Laura Schneider, Environmental/GIS Planner
John Morgan, Regional Community and Bicycle-Pedestrian Planner
Blaine Hoskins, Regional Planner
Camille Bielby, Regional Planner
Destinee Williams, Regional Planner
Ian Perry, Regional Planner
Michael Murray, Regional Planner
Brittney Harris, Regional Planner

Area Agency on Aging
Kia Barrow, Assistant Director of Aging
Sheree Stewart, HCBS Program Manager
LaCarole Lloyd, MDS-Q Options Counselor
LaTanya Albright, ADRC Case Manager
Marie Peterson-Barnes, AAA Monitor
Annie Poles, Lead ADRC Counselor
Eboni Goff, ADRC Counselor
Jennifer Prescott, ADRC Counselor
Joretta Cuba, ADRC Counselor/ Caregiver Specialist
Kemberly Daniel, ADRC Counselor
Latasha Green, ADRC Counselor
Elizabeth Young, Data Resource Specialist/ADRC Counselor
Sara Standridge, Administrative Assistant/Data Resource Specialist
Franetta Miles, Wellness Coordinator
Robbie Monfort, Dementia Care Specialist
Janet Long, AAA Financial Analyst

Workforce Innovation Department
Janice West, WIOA Director
Tenisha Tookes, WIOA Program Specialist
River Valley Communities
16 Counties • 35 Cities

UNIFIED GOVERNMENT OF CUSSETA-CHATTAHOOCHEE COUNTY
CLAY COUNTY
Bluffton
Fort Gaines

CRISP COUNTY
Arabi
Cordele

DOOLY COUNTY
Byromville
Dooling
Lilly
Pinehurst
Unadilla
Vienna

HARRIS COUNTY
Hamilton
Pine Mountain
Shiloh
Waverly Hall

MACON COUNTY
Ideal
Marshallville
Montezuma
Oglethorpe

MARION COUNTY
Buena Vista

MUSCOGEE COUNTY-COLUMBUS CONSOLIDATED GOVERNMENT

UNIFIED GOVERNMENT OF GEORGETOWN-QUITMAN

RANDOLPH COUNTY
Cuthbert
Shellman

SCHLEY COUNTY
Ellaville

STEWART COUNTY
Lumpkin
Richland

SUMTER COUNTY
Americus
Andersonville
DeSoto
Leslie
Plains

TALBOT COUNTY
Geneva
Junction City
Talbotton
Woodland

TAYLOR COUNTY
Butler
Reynolds

UNIFIED GOVERNMENT OF WEBSTER COUNTY

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Regional Impact

FY23

It is the responsibility of the RVRC to be good stewards of the funds entrusted to us. We do this by being efficient and effective administrators of the local, state, and federal funds we receive or secure. For Fiscal Year 2023, over $32 million in funding was secured for projects and development across the region.

Every community in the River Valley region gains access to the services provided by the RVRC through annual dues, which amounts to one dollar per capita. For Fiscal Year 2023, there were 368,993 people in the region by census estimates, resulting in $368,993 in annual dues paid by the communities.

RVRC calculates return on the investment for the region by dividing the number of funds received in federal, state, and other dollars by the amount of annual dues. For FY23, the ROI is $86.86 for every one dollar of dues. This means that for every one dollar paid by each community, the RVRC was able to generate $86.86 in programs and services.

Photo provided by Taylor County Development Authority.
RVRC STAFF

Years of Service

Three staff members were recognized for a combined 40 years of service at the River Valley Regional Commission.

30 YEARS
Tammy Collins, Financial Officer

4 YEARS
Laura Schneider, Environmental/Geographic Information System Planner
Williams Griggs, Community Developer

GERALD MIXON
Dedicated Service

The River Valley Regional Commission has said goodbye to Mr. Gerald Mixon after nearly 46 years of dedicated service. Mixon, who served the RVRC as a Planning Director, retired on February 28, 2023. During a retirement party held in Americus on February 17, Mixon was presented with a plaque acknowledging his contributions to the communities in the River Valley Region by US Congressman Sanford Bishop.
Area Agency on Aging

The River Valley Area Agency on Aging provides services to seniors and persons with disabilities in the 16-county region. The goal of these services is to help seniors remain in their homes for as long as possible. Because Caregiving is critical to safely keeping seniors at home, support is given to Caregivers to prevent burnout. Classes are also provided to help seniors and their caregivers improve and maintain their health. The Aging and Disability Resource Connection provides information on resources available to callers as well as screening to determine eligibility for certain programs.

The staff of the River Valley Agency on Aging are committed to providing the information and services needed by seniors and persons with disabilities in the region.

FEEDING THE REGION

179,025
Home Delivered Meals to 841 Clients

79,144
Congregate Meals were Provided to 482 Clients

3,853
Seniors Received Vouchers for Locally Grown Produce at Senior Farmers’ Markets

35
Senior Farmers’ Markets Were Conducted
On February 15, 2023, the River Valley Regional Commission/Area Agency on Aging accompanied Carolyn Lipscomb as she was honored as the 2023 Distinguished Older Georgian at Senior Day by the Georgia Council on Aging. Lipscomb had her husband, Hew, join her as she accepted the award and recognized him for being by her side, working together for 20 years.

The award was created to honor individuals aged 70 and older who are role models for positive aging, have rendered service to seniors on a large scale, and/or have made significant contributions to society through occupation or volunteer efforts. Lipscomb has been committed to serving and addressing the needs of seniors for over 20 years. Lipscomb, along with her husband, Hew, manage the Adventist Community Services South Georgia (ACS/SGA), a faith-based social service agency that operates under the 501 (C) 3 of the Georgia Cumberland Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. She also created the Food Bags for the Elderly program in 2001 to address senior hunger in Crisp County. The program now serves 26 counties in South and Central Georgia.

The 2023 Senior Farmers’ Markets took place during the months of July, August, and September 2023. AAA Staff were able to work closely with Senior Center Managers, Senior Housing Managers, coordinators, and community volunteers to conduct 35 farmers’ markets. With these markets, River Valley was able to provide 3,853 people with vouchers for locally grown produce.

What We Do

- Nursing Home Transitions
- Medicaid Waiver Services for Persons with Limited Financial Resources
- Options Counseling and Money-Follows-the-Person Program
- Home and Community Based Services
- Senior Center Programs
- Case Management
- Wellness and Evidence Based Services
- Caregiver Support
- Elderly Legal Services
Wellness Classes

AAA hosted several wellness training classes and awarded certificates to a total of 56 completers. The Chronic Disease Self-Management (CDSMP) and Diabetes Self-Management (DSMP) Cross Training classes met once a week for six weeks, awarding six participants certificates of completion. Tai-Chi classes saw 26 completers, which is over double the number of last year’s classes. The A Matter of Balance (MOB) program trained 8 coaches and awarded 16 certificates of completion.

Dementia Care Specialist Program

A new position was funded in FY23 for all the Area Agencies on Aging across the state by the Georgia General Assembly. The Dementia Care Specialist program provides training and information on Alzheimer’s Disease and other dementias for professionals as well as families. Information includes Virtual Dementia Tours, Dealing with Dementia Behaviors, as well as a Dementia Friends program designed to give basic information to the community. The goal of the Dementia Care Specialist, in partnership with others in the community, is to make our community more Dementia Capable.

AAA STATISTICS

10,731 Units of In-home Respite Care Were Provided to 61 Clients

32,323 Vouchers for Respite Care were Provided to 30 Clients

15,155 Homemaker Aid Units Were Provided to 237 Clients

8,689 Personal Care Aid Units Were Provided to 55 Clients

1,719 Units of Case Management Were Provided to 67 Clients
**Transportation Investment Act (TIA)**

On December 31, 2022, the last Transportation Infrastructure Act 1 (TIA-1) tax money was collected for the River Valley Region. Over a 10-year period, the region collected $512,301,207.20 for transportation-related projects through the 1% sales tax voters approved in 2012.

This funding will continue until 2032 through the TIA-2 referendum that was passed by the region in May 2022. In the most recent quarter of 2023, $9,743,023.12 in TIA-2 funding has been collected throughout the River Valley Region.

All photos on this page are provided by Georgia Transportation Investment Act Office.
Vienna
Community Infrastructure
Special Project Funding

In FY 2023, the RVRC secured $475,471 in CDBG funding on behalf of the City of Vienna to upgrade deteriorating water delivery and sewer infrastructure.

The funding from this grant will allow the city to replace existing two-inch water mains with larger, more durable water mains. This replacement is intended to correct long-lasting supply and main break issues in the target area. This funding will also be used to replace two clay sewer pipes in the target area.

When completed, this project is expected to directly benefit a total of 298 Vienna residents, 75 percent of which are individuals with low-to-moderate incomes. 225 minority residents will directly benefit from the improvements.

These infrastructure upgrades will address water accessibility issues, issues with pipe leaks, inadequate drainage and sewage backup in the community without creating a financial burden on the residents of Vienna.

The Feeding the Valley Food Bank Project in Columbus, GA using 2021 CDBG funds.

Construction of the water well in Shellman using 2020 CDBG and ARPA water funds.
**Broadband**

Provide short-term and long-term economic development planning and coordination to implement the disaster recovery and resiliency economic development plan goals and objectives.

- Tracked projected broadband service availability for unserved Census Blocks.
- Used the Digital Economy Plan to address telecommunication deficiencies.
- Provided technical assistance for municipalities and seeks broadband expansion investment.

**What We Do**

- Work to develop and manage comprehensive broadband expansion through the Georgia Broadband Deployment Initiative.
- Assist local governments to identify and address deficiencies of infrastructure systems.
- Develop and expand trail networks to connect the region’s green and blue infrastructure.
- Draft Broadband Elements for incorporation into the Comprehensive Plans and Broadband Ordinances.

**CDBG & ARPA FUNDING**

FY 2023

Through Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) and the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds, the RVRC was able to secure $23,514,344.44 in funding in FY23 to benefit residents across the River Valley Region.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMMUNITY</th>
<th>AMOUNT</th>
<th>PROJECT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Buena Vista</td>
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<td>Water Improvements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shellman</td>
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<td>Improvements</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cuthbert</td>
<td>$2,200,000.00</td>
<td>Recreation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marshallville</td>
<td>$348,646.10</td>
<td>Recreation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stewart County</td>
<td>$2,199,542.40</td>
<td>Recreation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taylor County</td>
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The River Valley Regional Commission serves as the grant recipient and administrative entity for the local area Workforce Innovations Opportunities Act (WIOA) services. These services are governed by the Middle Flint Workforce Development Board (MFWDB), which is comprised of local area private and public sector members. The local WIOA area serves an eight (8) county area consisting of Crisp, Dooly, Macon, Marion, Schley, Sumter, Taylor, and Webster counties. WIOA services offer educational and training opportunities to eligible individuals ages 17 and up within the area to assist and enhance employment opportunities which will lead to employment, retention in employment and individual self-sufficiency.

WIOA has twelve (12) Performance Measures reporting standards. Local areas negotiate performance measures annually with the State Workforce Division for their area performance goals. WIOA exceeded or met every applicable performance measure.

**PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Performance Measure</th>
<th>Level Achieved</th>
<th>Goal / Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adult</td>
<td>Entered Employment Rate Q2</td>
<td>83.7%</td>
<td>Met</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult</td>
<td>Entered Employment Rate Q4</td>
<td>78.6%</td>
<td>Exceeded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult</td>
<td>Credential Rate</td>
<td>82.5%</td>
<td>Exceeded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult</td>
<td>Skills Gains</td>
<td>71.1%</td>
<td>Exceeded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dislocated Worker</td>
<td>Entered Employment Rate Q2</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>Exceeded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dislocated Worker</td>
<td>Entered Employment Rate Q4</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>Exceeded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dislocated Worker</td>
<td>Credential Rate</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dislocated Worker</td>
<td>Skills Gains</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth</td>
<td>Entered Employment Rate Q2</td>
<td>77.7%</td>
<td>Exceeded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth</td>
<td>Entered Employment Rate Q4</td>
<td>77.4%</td>
<td>Exceeded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth</td>
<td>Credential Rate</td>
<td>66.6%</td>
<td>Exceeded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth</td>
<td>Skills Gains</td>
<td>80.0%</td>
<td>Exceeded</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* N/A (Dislocated Workers) no participants enrolled in Dislocated Worker cohort.

**WIOA STATISTICS**

- **Total Individuals Receiving Training Services From WIOA**: 127
- **Grants Awarded to WIOA for a Two-Year Period Ending June 30, 2024**: $1,116,491
- **Individuals Served by Individual Training Accounts**: 68
- **Individuals Served by Youth Training Services**: 36
- **Businesses/Employers Benefited From Serving as a Worksite or Hiring WIOA Participants**: 36
- **Local Area Employers Participating with On-The-Job Reimbursements**: $40,795

**A Decade of Success**

Celebrating 10 years of operating in the US South
Kierra Holt, a recent high school graduate with limited work experience, contacted the WIOA Youth Services Office of Eckerd Connects. She needed guidance to begin a career pathway that would provide stability and financial support for her and her seven-month-old son.

An Eckerd case manager worked with Kierra to help her identify her goals and objectives and remedy barriers to employment. Through the assessments, Kierra was able to:

1. Identify and develop work readiness skills.
2. Develop a resume and conduct a job search.
3. Gain hands-on skills.

Kierra realized her interest in working with children and within a medical office. After several weeks of work-based training, Kierra decided to further explore the challenges of working in a medical environment. Eckerd Connects then placed Kierra in a medical office, where she became skilled in customer service, sterilizing patient rooms, properly handling medical records, verifying health insurance, and processing payments.

After her WIOA Work Experience training, the medical provider’s office offered Kierra a full-time position. Through this program, Kierra developed a sense of pride by building skills and experience that will provide financial security and set a great example for her son.

What We Do

- Administer the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act services on behalf of the Middle Flint Workforce Development Board.
- Provide assistance to Trade Act impacted customers with training applications, assessments, career advisement, case management, and referral to training activities.
- Provide Rapid Response services for companies and individuals affected by layoffs and closures.
Regional Planning

Our sixteen-county region is a diverse and remarkable place, home to 368,993 people during FY23. To help our communities and the region continue to grow, develop, and thrive, we provide professional planning assistance across several programs. The River Valley Regional Commission also began work on the River Valley Community Compatible Development Plan (RVCCDP) with the University of Georgia’s Carl Vinson Institute and Fort Moore to identify and implement opportunities to provide vibrant downtowns, foster job growth, and promote outdoor activities in counties surrounding Fort Moore. These efforts work toward attaining our regional goals outlined in our comprehensive and strategic plans.

Zoning

RVRC provides zoning services for communities located within the region. Zoning services have been available to our communities for over 30 years. Currently, staff provide zoning and subdivision review services to five communities.

2 Comprehensive Plans were Completed for Regional Government in FY 2023

2 Pre-disaster Mitigation Plans were Completed for Regional Government in FY 2023
What We Do

Regional Planning
• Assist local governments with comprehensive plans.
• Provide local planning technical assistance to planning commissions and local governments, including preparing zoning ordinances, zoning maps, subdivision regulations and ordinance amendments.
• Coordinate planning and implementation of Service Delivery Strategies
• Prepare and update the RVRC Regional Plan
• Review and solicit comments from affected parties on Developments of Regional Impact
• Prepare Pre-Disaster plans.
• Urban Redevelopment

Economic Development
• Develop Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)
• Provide staffing assistance to regional economic development groups.
• Assist small businesses and municipalities with assistance and applications for Revolving Loan Funds.
• Assist with downtown redevelopment efforts.
• Work with partners to address Brownfields redevelopment.

Community Development
• Write and administer CDBG and ARPA Grants
• Prepare applications for project funding to implement local plans.
• Provide public administration technical assistance.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Planning
• Assist with development of pedestrian and bikeway facilities planning.
• Coordinate with GDOT in the development of Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian plan and website
• Plan, develop, and execute bicycle events and programs that focus on bike education and connectivity.

Environmental Planning
• Prepare Total Maximum Load (TMDL) implementation plans for impaired streams.
• Prepare and implement watershed management plans to improve water quality in impaired stream segments and maintain water quality in healthy stream segments.
• Assist with development of ordinances for the protection of environmental resources.
• Work with local government to inventory, characterize and assess the environmental liabilities at brownfield sites with the potential presence of hazardous substances, pollutants, or contaminants, develop site-specific cleanup plans, and conduct community engagement.

Transit
• Serve as a member of the Technical Advisory Committee for the Columbus Metropolitan Transportation Planning Organization
• Provide electronic data adhering to all format quality measures specified by GDOT.
• Assist with the development and administration of Transportation Enhancement Projects
• Provide staffing assistance to the Citizens Review Panel for implementation of the Transportation Investment Act

Historic Preservation
• Prepare applications for and administer preservation grants.
• Provide technical assistance to private businesses and individuals with nominations to the National Register of Historic Places and historic preservation tax credits.
• Coordinate with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources and perform historic resource surveys.
• Perform Section 106 Reviews.
• Provide technical assistance to Historic Preservation Commissions.
• Develop design guidelines.
Bicycle and Pedestrian

The Bicycle and Pedestrian program enhances quality of life for community residents by encouraging active transportation, promoting bicycle/pedestrian safety, and developing bicycle/pedestrian infrastructure. RVRC helps to support active cycling advocacy organizations in four communities, achieving the results below. One of these organizations, Bicycle Columbus, created two new signature events showcasing local African American heritage. RVRC planners assisted in the development of regional trails and partnered with the University of Georgia to develop plans for bicycle pedestrian improvements benefitting communities in the CDC’s high-obesity program.

Environmental

The term “River Valley Region” refers to a geographic area between the Flint and Chattahoochee Rivers. This 16-county territory is abundant with natural resources that must be cared for and maintained to ensure a healthy regional ecosystem. These two river systems are used to meet many needs including power generation, agriculture, aquaculture, drinking water, navigation, and recreation. Through several programs, RVRC’s environmental planning staff works to ensure that these resources remain healthy and safeguarded.

BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN
BY THE NUMBERS

56
Bike-To-Work-Day Participants

197
Cyclists in 13 Casual Group Rides

12
Business Partnerships Encouraged Casual Riders

45
Bicycle Helmets were Distributed

121
People Engaged in Safety Education programs
Transit

The River Valley Regional Commission, through its contracts with the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) and Department of Human Services (DHS), works in planning, developing, and executing transportation initiatives throughout the 16-county region. Transportation plays a key role in developing our communities’ connectivity, economic development, tourism, and active lifestyle.

Historic Preservation

The RVRC’s Historic Preservation staff works with local governments as well as federal and state entities to help preserve the region’s historical resources and assets. Currently, the region is home to 34 historic districts and hundreds of significant historic locations. Some of these organizations include the Georgia Department of Natural Resources and the National Park Service’s State Historic Preservation Office. Our efforts include grant writing, technical assistance, surveying, and consultation.

TRANSIT
BY THE NUMBERS

44,154
DHS Transit Trips Performed
RVRC PROGRAMS

Planning & Government Services
- Grant Writing and Administration
- Comprehensive Economic Dev. Strategy
- Revolving Loan Funds
- Comprehensive Plans
- Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plans
- Zoning Assistance
- Environmental Planning
- Historic Preservation
- CDBG Administration
- Transit Development
- Mobility Management
- Bicycle & Pedestrian Planning
- Transportation Investment Act
- Geographic Information Systems

Aging Services
- Elderly Legal Services
- Home Delivered Meals
- Congregate Meals
- Homemaker
- Personal Care
- Senior Centers
- Transportation
- Caregiver Respite
- Case Management
- Nursing Home Transitions

Workforce Development
- Individual Training Accounts
- Work Experience Services
- General Education Diploma Plus
- On-the-Job Training
- WIOA Grant Awards