HENRY MCMASTER
GOVERNOR

January 19, 2024

Mr. Brandon McBride
Executive Director
Appalachian Regional Commission
1666 Connecticut Avenue NW, Suite 700
Washington, DC 20009-1068

Dear Mr. McBride,

I am pleased to submit the State of South Carolina's 2024-2027 Appalachian Regional Commission Development Plan. This document identifies the South Carolina Appalachian Region's targeted investment priorities as economic development, education, workforce development, and critical infrastructure. It also summarizes South Carolina's Appalachian Regional Commission program process and criteria for assistance.

We continue to work towards making South Carolina a more competitive economic environment while improving quality of life. I look forward to working with the Commission to continue the significant progress being made in South Carolina's Appalachian Region. If you have any questions or need additional information, please call Jordan Marsh, my state alternate, at 803-509-0581.

Yours very truly,

Henry McMaster

cc: Mr. Jordan Marsh
South Carolina's State Alternate

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2024-2027
Appalachian Regional Commission Development Plan

State of South Carolina
Governor Henry McMaster

Prepared by
SC Department of Commerce
Business Incentives and Community Development Division
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Introduction and Background

Introduction

In accordance with Section 5.3 of the Appalachian Regional Commission Code, this document will serve as the State of South Carolina's Appalachian Development Plan. The purpose of this Plan is to set forth a strategic agenda for Appalachian South Carolina, 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 Appalachian South Carolina by targeting resources and strategies supported by Governor Henry McMaster and that meet ARC's defined goals and objectives.

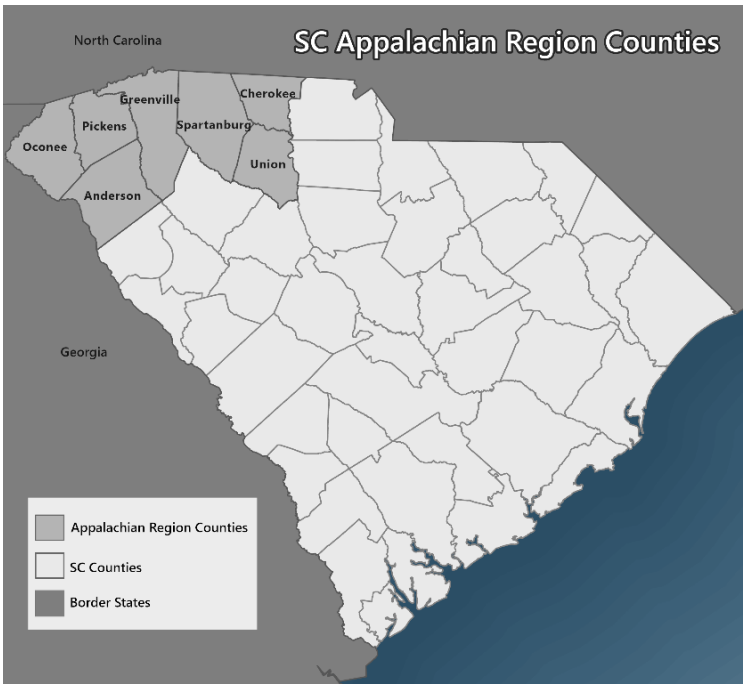
As required by Section 5.3 of the Appalachian Regional Commission Code, this Development Plan accomplishes the following:

- Reflects the Appalachian Regional Commission's strategic plan, its goals and objectives, and its guiding principles;
- Describes the inter-relationship between economic development in the Appalachian portion of the state and the Appalachian Development Highway System corridors located in 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 Appalachian area, and shall explain the derivation, rationale and application of such methods;
- Describes the state's Appalachian development and planning organization and coordination process, including the roles of LDDs and citizens.

Background

Appalachia, as defined in the legislation from which the Appalachian Regional Commission derives its authority, is a 206,000-square-mile region that follows the spine of the Appalachian Mountains from southern New York to northern Mississippi. The Appalachian Region includes all of West Virginia and parts of 12 other states:
Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, Maryland, Mississippi, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia. Appalachia is home to more than 25 million people.

The Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) is a regional economic development agency representing a unique partnership of federal, state, and local government. Established by an act of Congress in 1965, the Commission is composed of the governors of the 13 Appalachian 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, and civic leaders. Each year Congress appropriates funds for Commission programs, which ARC allocates among its member states. The governors draw up annual state Appalachian strategies and select projects for approval by the federal co-chair. ARC has made many investments in essentials of comprehensive economic development such as a safe and efficient highway system; education, job-training, and health care programs; water and sewer systems; and entrepreneurial and capital market development.



In South Carolina, the northwestern counties of Anderson, Cherokee, Greenville, Pickens, Oconee, Spartanburg and Union are within the Appalachian Region. Because only seven 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 ARC Program has been delegated to the South Carolina Appalachian Council of Governments and Catawba Regional Council of Governments.

The South Carolina Appalachian Council of Governments (SCACOG) and Catawba Regional Council of Governments (created in 1970), evolved from the South Carolina Appalachian Advisory Commission, established in 1965 by Governor Robert McNair as a Local Development District (LDD) to administer the Appalachian Regional Commission Program. Today, these two Council of Governments (COGs) serve Appalachian South Carolina through a variety of functions including regional planning, local administration of several federal and state programs, management assistance to local governments,

information systems and technology, workforce development and small business lending. These COGs also have developed mechanisms for local level involvement in preparing plans and recommending projects for Appalachian South Carolina.

The South Carolina Department of Commerce (SCDOC) undertakes a planning process, community and economic development that includes local government and public participation. A series of surveys, focus groups, and public hearings were held to identify needs and establish priorities. Many aspects of state and local Appalachian activity coincide since only seven counties in South Carolina are covered under the ARC program. With policy direction from the Governor's Office and SCDOC, the SC Appalachian Council of Governments and Catawba Regional Council of Governments are involved in the planning and project development activities required for implementation of the State's Appalachian program. These COGs have developed mechanisms for local level public involvement in preparing plans and recommending projects for Appalachian South Carolina. These activities serve the dual function of fulfilling requirements for local input at the district level and the state level.

The South Carolina Appalachian Development Plan for FY 2024-2027 is consistent with ARC's mission to innovate, partner, and invest to build community capacity and strengthen economic growth to help the region achieve socioeconomic parity with the nation. 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 ARC's Strategic Investment Goals to build: Businesses; the Workforce Ecosystem; Infrastructure; Regional Culture and Tourism; and Community Leaders and Capacity.

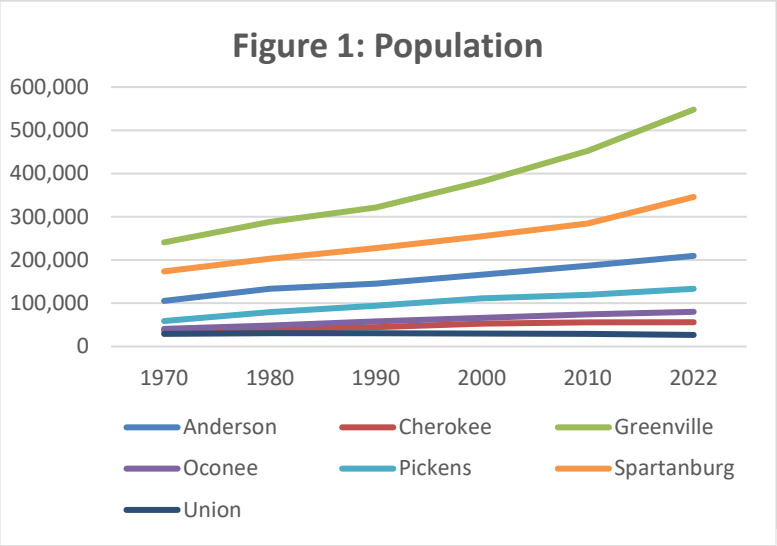
Overview & Assessment of Appalachian South Carolina

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 orde7r 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 Appalachian South Carolina and throughout the entire State.

Appalachian South Carolina covers about 4,330 square miles. With 123 square miles being a National Forest, partially within the sparsely settled Blue Ridge Mountain Range, but mainly in the more prosperous Piedmont Crescent stretching from Greensboro, North Carolina southward to Atlanta, Georgia. Appalachian South Carolina displays highs and lows in economic and quality of life indicators. The more urban areas rank higher, but the rural areas still face significant challenges to increased prosperity.

The People

There are an estimated 1,399,877[1] persons currently residing in the seven counties, representing 27 percent of the entire state's population. The region's population increased 18.2 percent from 2010 to 2020 and is expected to increase about 17.1 percent by 2035[2]. Appalachian South Carolina exceeds the United States' expected increase of 5.3 percent by 2035[3]. Figure 1 shows the population growth in each county of Appalachian SC.



Starting in the 1970's the region began to urbanize, and in 2000, the region had a 63 percent urban population, which fell far behind the national population of 79 percent urban. In 2010, that rate increased to 72 percent urbanization for Appalachian South Carolina, while the national rate only increased to 81 percent. As of 2022, 70.5 percent of the population is within Census urban blocks. Within the region, Greenville County

[1] Annual Estimates of the Resident Population as of July 1, 2022. US Census. Modified March 2023. Accessed 10 Jan 2024.
[2] Population Projections 2010-2035 – Revised 2021. *South Carolina Revenue and Fiscal Affairs Office*. Modified 2021. Accessed 10 Jan 2024.
[3] 2023 National Population Projections Tables: Main Series, Table 1. *US* Census. Modified November 2023. Accessed 10 Jan 2024.

has the highest urbanization rate at 88.1 percent, followed by Spartanburg at 70.5 percent.[4]

As in much of the south, population growth in Appalachian South Carolina during the 1950s and 1960s lagged behind that of the nation. The area's slow growth in population was due to the net migration of persons who sought employment opportunities outside of the region. However, in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s this trend of out-migration from the region was reversed due to the expansion of economic opportunities and more attractive living conditions. The recent migration of both domestic and foreign populations reflects the attractiveness of the quality of life, geographic advantages, and nearby amenities within the growing southeast. It also reflects the success of efforts to attract foreign and out of state investment and jobs.

Education

Educational attainment is directly related to economic opportunity, both for individuals and families as well as for entire communities. For an individual, a higher level of educational attainment reduces the risk of poverty, improves ability to compete for higher paying jobs, and thereby increases lifetime earnings capacity, correlating directly with many indicators of well-being. At the community level, workplace needs are changing as technology development and change are occurring at faster levels. Educational attainment levels within the community indicate capacity for workforce productivity, as well as adaptability and soft skills increasingly required by employers. Higher educational attainment is also directly related to financial literacy.

Table 2: Percent of Population with At Least a 4-Year College Degree

Area	2000	2010	2013	2017	2021
Appalachian SC[1]	20.6	23.1	24.7	24.1	30.5
South Carolina[2]	20.4	23.5	25.1	27.8	27.5
Nation[2]	24.4	27.5	28.8	32.3	37.7

Source: [1]Appalachian Council of Governments InfoMentum; [2]ACS 2022 1-year Estimate Survey

Like other ARC counties, Appalachian South Carolina has fewer adults with four-year college degrees compared to the nation, as shown in Table 2. Additionally, compared to South Carolina as a whole, all Appalachian Counties, with the exception of Greenville, have lower educational attainment levels. 4-year college attainment increased at the same rate in Appalachian South Carolina and South Carolina between 2010 and 2013, which is an improvement over the 2000-2010 period, where Appalachian South Carolina lagged behind the rest of the state. Although the region saw a decrease in the percentage of attainment between 2013 and 2017, it surpassed the state in 2021. Two public universities, two public technical colleges, and sixteen additional for profit or independent colleges all have campuses in the seven county, Appalachian Region of South Carolina.

[4] State-level Urban and Rural Information for the 2020 Census and 2010 Census. *US Census*. Accessed 10 Jan 2024.

Table 3: Percent of Population with At Least a High School Degree

Area	2000[1]	2010[1]	2013[1]	2017	2021
Anderson[1]	73.4	80	81.7	86.9	86.6
Cherokee[1]	66.7	73.7	75.0	80.9	81.8
Greenville[1]	79.5	83	85.7	88.6	89.3
Oconee[1]	73.9	81.6	83.1	85.0	86.3
Pickens[1]	73.7	81	82.2	86.7	86.7
Spartanburg[1]	73.1	78.8	82.2	87.1	87.0
Union[2]	67.0	75.6	78.1	81.1	82.8
South Carolina	76.3	82.2	84.5	88.2	88.6

Source: [1]Appalachian Council of Governments InfoMentum; [2]ACS 5-year

The rate of high school completion also significantly impacts the ability of workers to find jobs with good wages. Unfortunately, five out of the seven counties in Appalachian South Carolina have a lower percentage compared to the state. Table 3 shows the percentages of high school graduates in Appalachian South Carolina. However, completions have improved over the last decade, closing the gap between Appalachian South Carolina and the rest of the State.

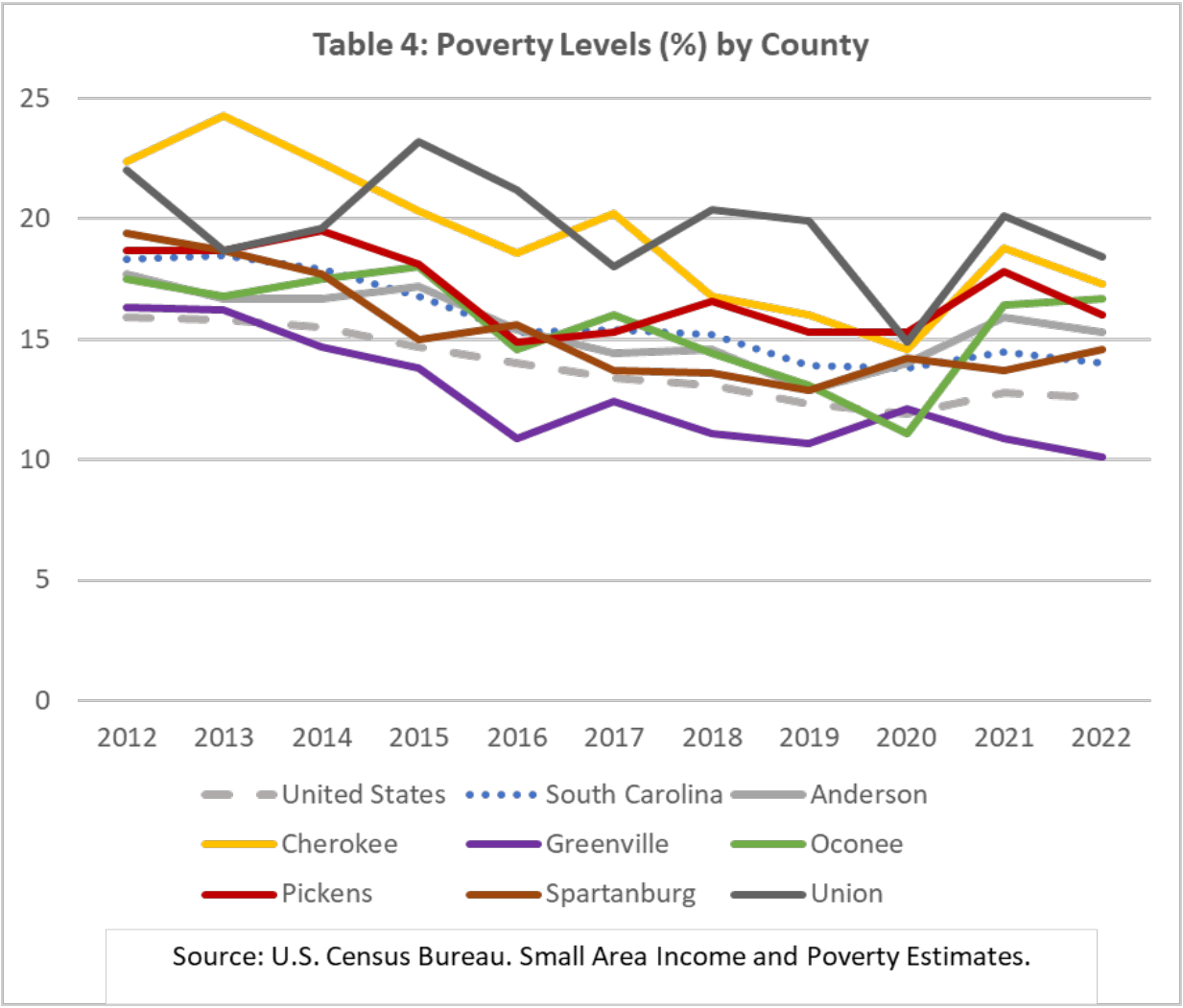
Another area of concern is the lack of basic literacy skills. Cherokee County's rate of illiteracy is higher than the rest of the region's as well as the state's 15 percent rate, followed closely by Union County[5]. Adult education programs are needed to provide remedial training.

Health Care

Access to quality, affordable health care sustains a productive workforce and is a primary quality of life resource. According to the United States Department of Health and Human Services, communities in every county of Appalachian South Carolina qualify as Medically Underserved Areas (MUA) or Medically Underserved Populations (MUP). Designation as a MUA/MUP is based on the availability of health professional resources within a thirty-minute travel time, the availability of primary care resources in contiguous areas, and the presence of unusually high need, such as high infant mortality rate or high poverty rate. Oconee County and Union County are designated as MUP in their entirety. The other five counties are partially designated.

Health Professional Shortage Areas may have shortages of primary medical care, dental or mental health providers. Dental Professional Shortage Areas either meet specific ratios of professional to population, or are over-utilized, excessively distant, or inaccessible to the population of the area. All of the counties in their entirety are designated as primary care Health Professional Shortage Areas. The lack of adequate health care places citizens in Appalachian South Carolina at a disadvantage when it comes to being prepared for work.

[5] Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) 207. *National Center for Education Statistics*. Published April 2020. Accessed 10 Jan 2024.



Poverty

Appalachian South Carolina has experienced decreasing poverty levels and increasing per capita income levels for the past ten years. All the counties have higher poverty levels than the nation along the years except Greenville, which mostly has lower levels than the nation. Overall, since 2012, the poverty levels of South Carolina Appalachian region had dropped to the lowest level of 14% in 2020, which was similar to the state average and slightly above the national average (13%). Then, the level rose to 16% in 2021, having similar trend to both the state and national averages. Though 2021 showed sharp increase in poverty levels from 2020, they dropped again in 2022 for all the counties except Oconee and Spartanburg. This phenomenon was probably due to the starting of Covid-19 with job losses followed by governmental measures/policies (such as CARES Act and expansion of Unemployment Insurance) to relief the losses, thus, reducing poverty[1]. Table 4 shows poverty levels of each county in the Appalachian region, South Carolina, and the United States.

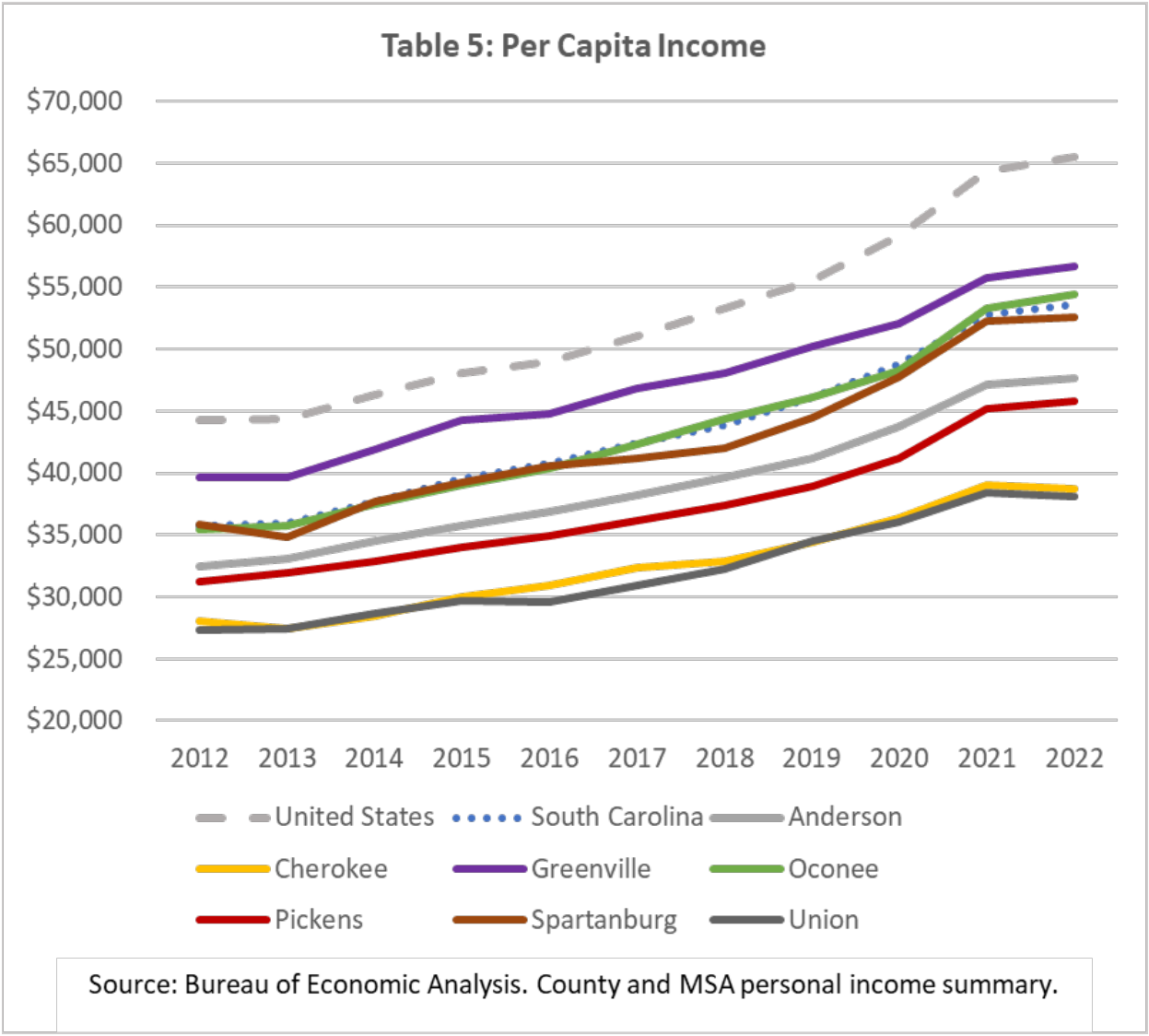


Table 5 shows per capita income for each county in Appalachian South Carolina, South Carolina, and the United States. Trends in Appalachia have mirrored the State and the rest of the United States, with steady growth from 2012-2021. What is concerning about per capita income in Appalachian South Carolina is that five of the seven counties lagged behind the State's per capita income. Oconee was on par with the State while Greenville exceeded it. When averaged, Appalachian South Carolina performs less favorably compared to the rest of the State. Additional notable observation for the per capita income was its slower growth since 2021 for most of the counties, South Carolina, and the United States. On the other hand, Cherokee and Union had a slight decline of per capital income in 2021-2022.

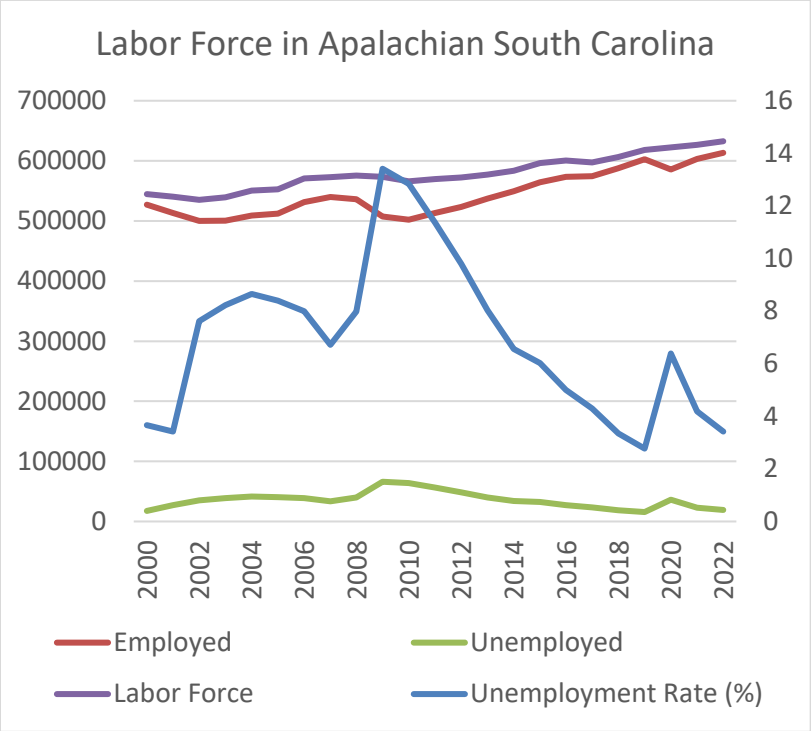
According to the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development's analysis on ACS 5-Year 2011-2015 data, all counties, except Pickens in the Appalachian South Carolina region, show the percentage of persons qualifying as low and moderate incomes are on par with or lower than the state's average[2]. Persons are considered to

be low and moderate income if their incomes are less than 80 percent of the area median income. Pickens County exceeds the State by 5 percent.

The Economy

Since 2018, Appalachian South Carolina accumulated more than $7.3 billion in total announced capital investments along with the creation of more than 18,000 jobs[6]. These totals account for 23 percent of the total announced capital investment in the state and 27 percent of the jobs created in the state during that time[6]. Job creation has been affected by the economic downturn, with 2009 in particular having the second lowest number of jobs created over the seven-year span and the lowest amount of capital investment over the same time period.

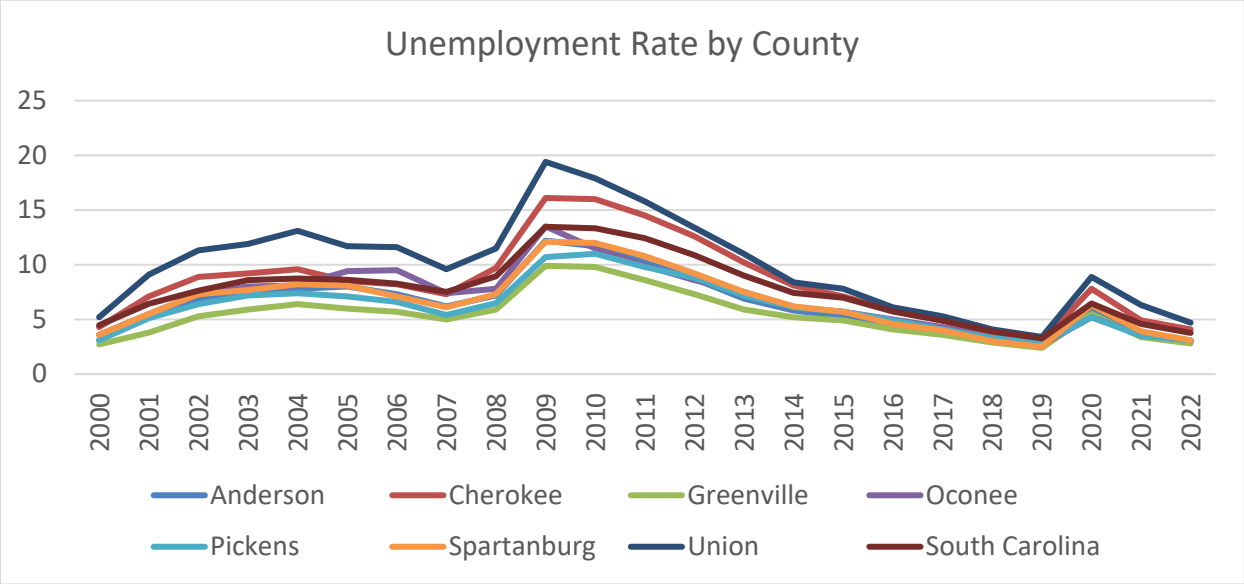
Labor force in the Appalachian region of South Carolina has seen a 16 percent increase from 2000 to 2022[7]. The numbered of employed persons has fluctuated throughout the same time period, dropping from 2000-2003, from 2008-2010, and in 2020. After the drop in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of employed persons bounced back to quickly, exceeding 2019 levels in 2021 and 2022. The unemployment rate spiked in 2020 and, while it fell in 2021 and 2022, it has not returned to its pre-pandemic low in 2019.



Source: BLS, LAUS 2000-2022

Between 2000 and 2022, the non-seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for each of the counties in the South Carolina Appalachian Region closely mirrored trends in South Carolina's state unemployment rate. The Great Recession pushed unemployment rates up in 2008, and the state did not return to 2007 lows until 2014. By 2019, all Appalachian counties except Union had unemployment rates lower than the state average. The COVID-19 pandemic caused a spike in unemployment rates in 2020, and while recovery has progressed, none of the Appalachian counties or the state have yet returned to pre-pandemic lows[7].

[6] Announced Opportunities (SC Department of Commerce, 2024)
[7] Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS) (US Bureau of Labor Statistics: bls.gov, 2023)



Source: BLS, QCEW 2000-2022

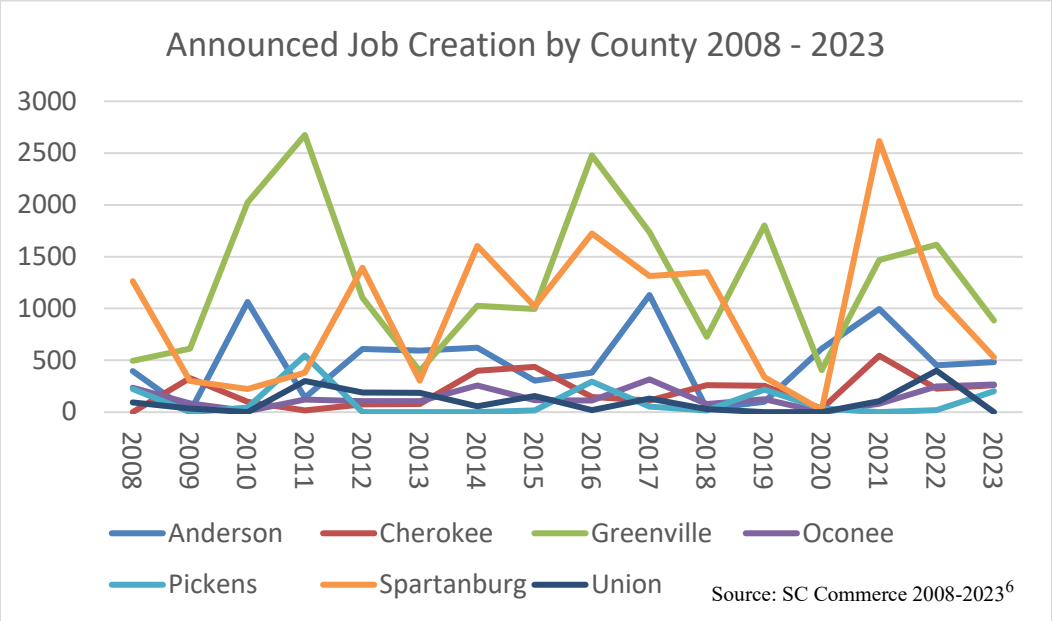
The local spikes could be related to dependence on specific segments, such as textiles and on manufacturing jobs in general. When the domestic textile industry began to cut production in favor of cheaper foreign labor, local economies saw drastic job losses. Recovery from such significant job losses is still in progress and will take time.

Economic growth and development are critical to creating a modern, competitive, and prosperous Appalachian Region. Appalachian South Carolina has traditionally been dominated by manufacturing, specifically in the textile industry with its minimum skill, low-wage jobs. The manufacturing industry had, until recently, been the principal support of the economy, as well as the largest single type of economic activity in the region. With a total workforce of 103,613 in 2023 (Q2), manufacturing accounted for about 15.9 percent of all jobs[8], down from 42 percent in 1980.

In spite of the economic downturn resulting from the pandemic, the S.C. Department of Commerce has been successful recently in attracting new industry and developing the necessary infrastructure to support new and expanded activity and to create new jobs. Since 2011, the S.C. Department of Commerce announced the creation of over 167,000 new jobs and over $57 billion in new capital investment in the state[6]. Notably in 2009 the state won one of the most significant economic development projects of the year when Boeing announced that it had selected North Charleston for its second 787 Dreamliner aircraft assembly plant. As the only commercial aircraft manufacturer headquartered in the United States, Boeing's selection of South Carolina has impacted the entire state by creating new opportunities for existing businesses, focusing national attention on the state and helping to attract new businesses, investment, and jobs. Boeing began production in 2011 and expanded operations in 2013 to create almost 7,000 new jobs to date. Additional jobs and investment are expected throughout South Carolina as other new companies seeking a location closer to Boeing and as existing

[8] JobsEQ Industry Spotlight Appalachian South Carolina (Chmura: chmuraecon.com/jobseq, 2024)

companies expand. Michelin and General Electric (GE), both located in Appalachian South Carolina, make aircraft tires and turbine blades for the 787.



South Carolina has also been home to BMW's only North American assembly operations since 1993. In 2008, BMW announced the single largest investment in Spartanburg County history, significantly expanding its manufacturing presence. The new facilities opened in October 2010, adding a new 1.5 million square foot facility to BMW's existing 2.5 million square foot campus, and increasing the company's overall investment to $4.6 billion. In March 2014, BMW announced another $1 billion investment to expand its production capacity at the Spartanburg facility. BMW announced an additional $600 million investment in June 2017 to expand its current Spartanburg location creating an additional 1,000 jobs. BMW now employs more than 11,000 people and automotive-related manufacturing accounts for more than 30,000 jobs statewide. Since BMW's original location in South Carolina, hundreds of component manufacturers and suppliers have also located and expanded in the area. More recently, in October of 2022, BMW announced a $1.7 billion dollar investment to expand its manufacturing capacity and footprint in South Carolina. $1 billion of the total investment was to prepare of the production of electric vehicles at Plant Spartanburg, and $700 million to build a new high voltage battery assembly facility in nearby Woodruff, SC, creating 300 new jobs.

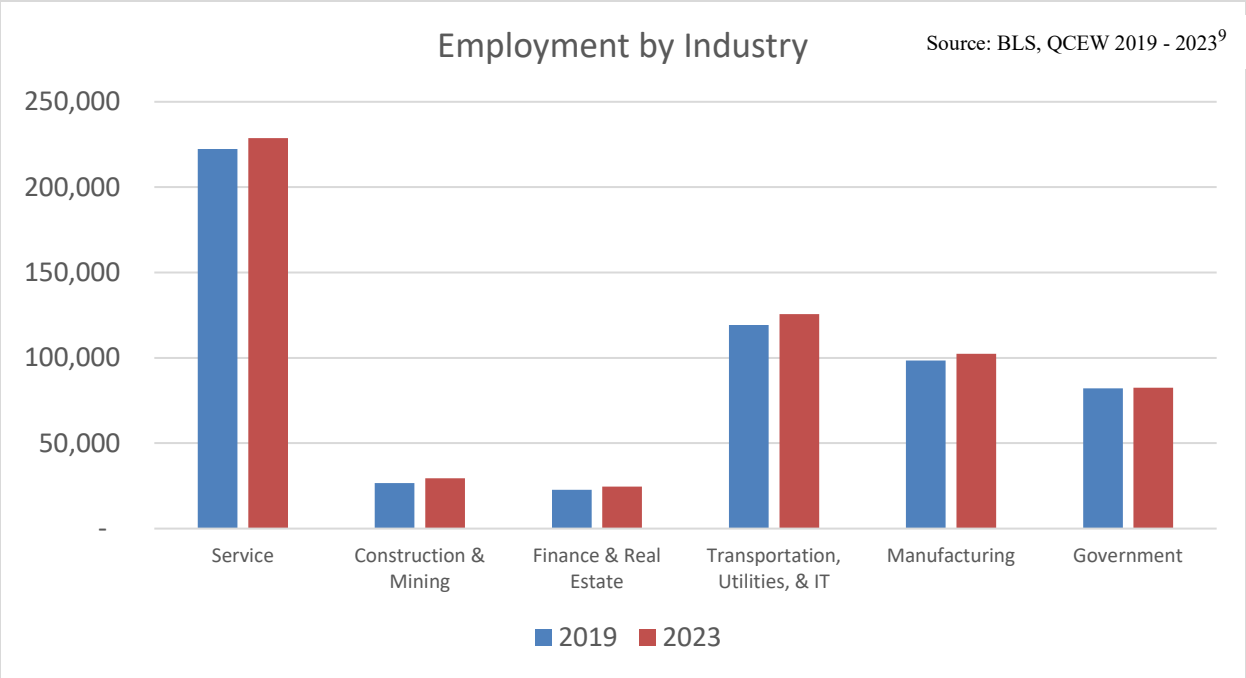
Manufacturing, and in particular higher wage manufacturing and technology-intensive manufacturing, is targeted for economic development because of the high level of economic spin-off or indirect benefit attributable to manufacturing, as well as the contribution of manufacturing-related capital investment to the local tax base in areas where new and expanding facilities locate. However, increasing industrial diversification and economic growth have contributed to changes in the character of the region and its economy. Green technology and "clean" renewable energy companies have also figured significantly into recent economic successes. Wind, biomass, and solar energy producers are developing facilities around the state. GE

Energy, which makes half of all wind turbines used in the United States, manufactures major components in Greenville and a number of other South Carolina companies produce wind turbine units. The economic development marketing arm of Appalachian South Carolina is aggressively focusing on proven cluster development in order to create high-tech, high-paying jobs to include the Advanced Materials, Automotive, Life Sciences, Distribution & Logistics and Plastics Industries. For example, one of the State's strategies has been to pursue Biotech and Research and Development industries for the State. As a result, Clemson University, in partnership with BMW, launched the International Center for Automotive Research. Additionally, Clemson has developed a state-of-the-art Biotech Research Complex and these facilities are both a catalyst for present and future economic development. Furthermore, to capitalize on the new wave of automotive and aviation manufacturing that is locating in South Carolina, in 2011 Clemson University announced a partnership with technical colleges throughout the state to create the Clemson University for Workforce Development. The center has helped to drive workforce development by educating and training technicians for the State's new manufacturing industries, specifically the automotive and aviation industries, that need a labor force with more a more developed skill set. Appalachian South Carolina has benefited from the proximity of Clemson University and the graduates with advanced technical degrees.

Capital investment is important to the growth of an economy because it represents expenditure in anticipation of an increased return. These investments can either be through public investments such as infrastructure improvements of downtown renewal projects, or through private investment in new equipment or facilities. In the past it was typically true that the greater the investment, the more jobs that were created. However, the situation has changed in part because the costs of buildings and equipment have increased, often dramatically. At the same time, changes in technology have led to a more efficient process, often requiring fewer, but more highly trained or skilled workers.

The service industry employs roughly 39 percent of the seven counties' private sector work force[9]. This includes jobs in professional and business services, education and health services, leisure and hospitality services, and other services. Retail and service employment typically pays lower wages than manufacturing. The transition from manufacturing to services signals a maturing economy for the region. In 2014, the Greenville MSA and the Spartanburg MSA were both ranked by Forbes as two of the top 150 places for Business and Careers in the United States. Greenville is home to Michelin's North American Corporate Headquarters as well as Facility Solutions, a construction company, ranked 56th for the fastest growing private companies in the 2014 INC 5000. The success of these businesses is evidence that the investment in human capital through education is paying off.

[9] Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (US Bureau of Labor Statistics: bls.gov, 2019-2022)



Since an increase in service industries is mainly an urban phenomenon, the rapid economic growth and positive gains experienced by Appalachian South Carolina have not been shared equally by each of the counties or uniformly within the individual counties. Much of the growth has occurred in the City of Greenville. Many of the more rural areas of the region continue to be plagued with problems of economic stagnation.

In a community survey conducted in 2010, economic development was considered to be a critical issue, with emphasis on the development of facilities and resources for improving workforce skill levels. Infrastructure, especially water and sewer issues, was a topic of considerable concern as was the identification of sites and buildings to encourage business development. The survey results also revealed that the elimination of obstacles to economic development, such as demolition of dilapidated buildings, brownfield redevelopment, and adaptive re-use of existing structures, such as textile mill buildings, was a concern. The need to encourage and provide assistance to small businesses was also identified.

Transportation and Infrastructure

Infrastructure concerns relate to both developing sustainable economic opportunity and to suitable living environments offering a high quality of life for residents. Existing systems in many of the smaller, more rural communities in particular are in need of replacement or upgrade. Without adequate infrastructure businesses will not come to the region or expand existing operations.

Appalachian South Carolina is served by two federal interstate highways. I-85 passes through all but one (Pickens County) of the seven counties. This interstate route connects Appalachian South Carolina to markets to the north such as Charlotte and Greensboro, North Carolina, and the larger northeastern cities. To the southwest, I-85 provides access to Atlanta, Georgia and Birmingham, Alabama. This highway also

connects the primary road growth centers of the district. Federal interstate highway I-26 passes through only one of the district's counties but provides access between the mountains of the northwestern portion of the state with the Atlantic coast. This route connects the urban areas of Spartanburg, Columbia, and Charleston in South Carolina as it passes diagonally across the state. Until recently, I-26 terminated at federal interstate highway I-40 near Asheville, North Carolina, a primary connecting route between the Southeastern and Midwestern states. The extension of I-26 to I-81 south of Kingsport, Tennessee has provided additional opportunities and access as major trucking route from New Orleans to Syracuse, New York. Appalachian South Carolina is also served by a network of U.S. highways. U.S. Route 25, 29, 76, 123, 176, 178, 221, and 276 serve much of the newly expanded urban development within the district.

With a $44 million investment from the South Carolina Ports Authority and $7 million from Norfolk Southern, the South Carolina Inland Port opened in October 2013. The Inland Port extends the Port of Charleston's reach 212 miles inland to Greer, S.C., and provides shippers with access to more than 95 million consumers within a one-day drive. The inland port boosts efficiency for international freight movements between the Port of Charleston and companies located across the Southeast, Norfolk Southern serves the inland port through its main rail line, and the facility is positioned along the interstate 85 corridor between Charlotte and Atlanta, where Norfolk Southern operates additional rail yards. Rail service maximizes tonnage moved per gallon of fuel for importers and exporters, helping them save costs and lower their carbon footprint. The inland port adds an additional benefit – access to empty containers – for regional shippers, who can send trucks to Greer for the containers they need to move their goods.

The Charleston Harbor is now the deepest East Coast port. The Harbor Deepening project increased the depth to 52 feet. The project began in 2016 and continued to receive funding and support to enable progress with the completion in 2022. A new terminal was developed that allowed for an additional 268-acres and an access road that connects it directly to I-26. Charleston Harbor is a key to economic success in South Carolina allowing it to remain competitive with ease of access for imports and exports.

South Carolina has benefited from having a portion of the State designated as part of the Appalachian Region and the counties that make up Appalachian South Carolina have had an added advantage over the remaining 39 counties within the State. Without the resources and funding available through the Appalachian Regional Commission, the State would not have seen as much progress in these seven counties over the past 40 years. Overall, economic progress has resulted in increased employment opportunities, increased development and a more diversified economy. There has also been an increase in per capita income, although income continues to lag behind that of the nation as a whole.

In spite of economic gains, obstacles to economic prosperity remain and positive outcomes have not been uniform throughout the counties. There are divergent trends in urban and rural areas of the region. There continues to be pockets of poverty that rely on growth areas within the region but that still have challenges with education,

employment, job training, health care and transportation. Some areas remain substantially below the national average for various socio-economic indicators.

Appalachian South Carolina County Status

The ARC 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. As shown in Table 10, thresholds define the five economic levels used to classify ARC counties: distressed, at-risk, transitional, competitive, and attainment.

ARC County Economic Status Designation by National Index Value Rank

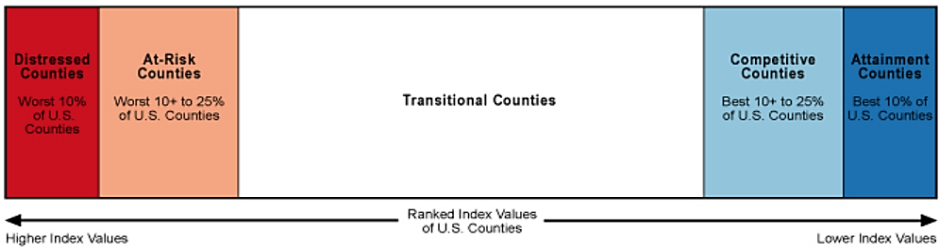


Table 10: ARC County Economic Status Designation by National Index Value Rank

Source: www.arc.gov

Attainment Counties

The Appalachian 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 2024, 4 counties in the 13-state Appalachian Region have been designated as an attainment county and can no longer benefit from ARC funds except under certain exceptions. South Carolina currently has no counties in the region designated as an attainment county.

Competitive Counties

Competitive counties are defined as those counties who are able to compete in the national economy but are not in the highest 10 percent of the nation's counties. There are currently 11 counties in the 13-state Appalachian Region that meet competitive county status. For projects located in ARC-designated competitive counties funding is usually limited to 30 percent of project costs. South Carolina currently has one county that is designated as a competitive county.

> **Greenville County** is Appalachian South Carolina's most economically diversified and most populous county with a 2022 population of approximately 547,950. There has been a steady decline in nonagricultural employment in manufacturing and an increase in the services industry as the City of Greenville and its suburbs have become a more densely populated urban area. The top three industries of employment are:

- Healthcare and Social Assistance: approximately 43,000 employees (14 percent of county)
- Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services: approximately 22,600 employees (7.3 percent of county)
- Construction: approximately 18,000 employees (5.8 percent of county)

While Greenville County in general has shown much progress in providing economic opportunities during the last two decades, there remain portions of the county where little economic growth has taken place and a largely rural economy remains. This has been evident by the cycles of economic downturn and the change in designation status over the last ten years from an Attainment County, down to a Transitional County and now a Competitive County.

Transitional Counties

Transitional counties are those transitioning between strong and weak economies. They make up the largest economic status designation. Transitional counties rank between the worst 25 percent and the best 25 percent of the nation's counties. The counties meeting the criteria as "Transitional" are Anderson, Oconee, Pickens and Spartanburg. Transitional counties can qualify for up to 50 percent of eligible project costs from ARC.

Anderson County has an estimated 2022 population of 204,592. Of all the municipalities within the county only one has a population over 5,000. Anderson County is also rural, with many of the smaller municipalities being old mill villages that have lost their textile companies. The county's per capita income of $47,693 lags behind the entire Appalachian Region, as well as the nation. The southern portion of the County is especially poor and rural. Many of the mill villages suffer from old and failing infrastructure.

Oconee County population in 2022 was estimated at 78,775. The county is 94 percent rural and approximately half of the county is part of a national forest. The western portion of Oconee County is most like the rest of Appalachian, with mountains, winding roads and few job opportunities. It is the third most impoverished Appalachian County in South Carolina.

Pickens County ranks fourth in population in the South Carolina Appalachian region with an estimated 2022 population of 131,106. The demographics of the county have changed over the past decade, with the small cities seeing more growth. While much of the county remains rural, the City of Easley (population 23,135) the City of Clemson (population 17,557), and the Town of Central (population 5,272) each contain more than 5,000 persons. The City of Easley is essentially a bedroom community to the City of Greenville, with many of Easley's residents working in Greenville. The City of Clemson houses Clemson University and a disproportionate percentage of its residents receive the relatively higher University salaries. The two affects both per capita income and poverty figures for Pickens County, as the rest of the county, especially the northern portion, is sparsely populated and poor. Pickens County is the only county in the region that

does not contain an interstate highway, which creates a serious economic disadvantage.

Spartanburg County has become economically diversified over the past decade and is the second most populous county with a 2022 population of approximately 330,119. Although positive changes have occurred, including population growth and increased economic diversity, continued investment will keep the County from falling further behind and allow for permanent instead of temporary changes. Non-agricultural employment continues to shift, and 28.2 percent is in manufacturing, with a steady increase over the past several years. While the areas around the City of Spartanburg have shown great economic progress during the last decade, large portions of the county remain mostly rural with little economic growth. Spartanburg County has only two municipalities that have populations greater than 5,000 persons.

At-Risk Counties

At-Risk counties are those at risk of becoming economically distressed. They rank between the worst 10 percent and 25 percent of the nation's counties. For projects in ARC-designated at-risk counties, grants can be up to 70 percent of total project costs.

Cherokee County has a 2022 population estimate of 56,200[10] with a per capita personal income of $38,740[11]. It is estimated that the county's unemployment rate has increased from 3.6 percent in 2018 to 4.1 percent in 2022[12]. Cherokee County has only three incorporated areas, the Town of Blacksburg, the City of Gaffney, and the City of Chesnee (which lies in both Cherokee County and Spartanburg County). Most of the industrial-grade utilities in the county lie within or near these incorporated areas, leaving few viable industry-ready sites. However, the county's location between Greenville and Charlotte improves the potential for development

[10] DP05 2022: ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles. U.S. Census Bureau, accessed January 10, 2024, https://data.census.gov/table/ACSDP5Y2022.DP05?q=population&g=050XX00US45021.

[11] CAINC1 County and MSA personal income summary: personal income, population, per capita personal income. U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, accessed January 10, 2024, https://apps.bea.gov/itable/?ReqID=70&step=1&_gl=1*fwdur*_ga*MTQzOTIzOTQ0Mi4xNzA0OTIxMjk0*_ga_J4698JNNFT*MTcwNDk4NjgxOS4yLjEuMTcwNDk4NzQ5OS4xNy4wLjA.#eyJhcHBpZCI6NzAsInN0ZXBzIjpbMSwyOSwyNSwzMSwyNiwyNywzMF0sImRhdGEiOltbIlRhYmxlSWQiLCIyMCJdLFsiTWFqb3JfQXJlYSIsIjQiXSxbIlN0YXRlIixbIjQ1MDAwIl1dLFsiQXJlYSIsWyI0NTAyMSJdXSxbIlN0YXRpc3RpYyIsWyIzIl1dLFsiVW5pdF9vZl9tZWFzdXJlIiwiTGV2ZWxzIl0sWyJZZWFyIixbIi0xIl1dLFsiWWVhckJlZ2luIiwiLTEiXSxbIlllYXJfRW5kIiwiLTEiXV19

[12] Unemployment Rates by County 2012-2022. South Carolina Revenue and Fiscal Affairs Office, accessed January 11, 2024, https://www.rfa.sc.gov/data-research/population-demographics/census-state-data-center/socioeconomic-data/unemployment-rates-by-county-2012-2021.

along the I-85 corridor. With the assistance of ARC and other federal programs, the municipalities and the county can further develop infrastructure along I-85.

Distressed Counties

Distressed counties are the most economically depressed counties. They rank in the worst 10 percent of the nation's counties. There is one designated "Distressed" county within the South Carolina Appalachian Region, but there is at least one ARC designated "distressed" area in six of the seven counties with Greenville being the exception. ARC grants in designated distressed counties can account for up to 80 percent of total project costs.

Union County is a recent addition to South Carolina's list of ARC counties, and the only one carrying the ARC designated "distressed" status. The county has a small population of 26,752 people[13] sharing an unemployment rate of 3.7 percent, a poverty rate of 20.9 percent[14], and a per capita market income of $23,572 in 2021[13]. Union County is 65.4 percent rural[15] and The City of Union is the only incorporated area with a population greater than 5,000[16]. The county contains no major interstates. It is bypassed by interstate I-26 to Greenville to the West; however, the four-lane U.S. Highway 176 links the county to Spartanburg and interstate I-85 to the North. Employment in Union County declined in the year ended 2023 (Q3) by 0.6 percent compared to growth of 1.9 percent in the greater Appalachian region of South Carolina[14]. Manufacturing is the largest sector in Union County, making up 23.7 percent of local employment; nearly three times the national average[14]. The industry is concentrated in textiles and leather production, a sector that is expected to contract over the next 10 years.[14]

[13] County Economic Status in Appalachia, Fiscal Year 2024 (Appalachian Regional Commission: arc.gov, 2024)
[14] JobsEQ, Economic Overview Union County, South Carolina (Chmura: chmuraecon.com/jobseq, 2024)
[15] County Rural Lookup (US Census: census.gov, 2020)
[16] Intercensal Estimates of the Resident Population of Incorporated Places (US Census: census.gov, 2020)

Appalachian Development Highway System

Transportation is essential to the economic competitiveness of the region. In order to promote economic development, the construction of the Appalachian Development Highway System (ADHS) was authorized under the Appalachian Development Act of 1965. The ADHS was designed to target previously isolated areas, supplement the interstate system, connect Appalachia to the interstate system, and provide access to areas within the region as well as to markets in the rest of the nation.

South Carolina became the first state to complete its entire ADHS miles among all 13 Appalachian states in FY 2013. Corridor W (U.S. 25) begins at I-85 near Greenville north to the North Carolina state line to I-26 near Hendersonville, North Carolina. It serves as an important contribution to economic growth and includes 22.9 miles of road.

South Carolina supports completion of the ADHS system to complement the intermodal network of transport options currently available in Appalachian South Carolina. Appalachian South Carolina is served by two of the state's five interstate highways, two rail systems, an international airport and a "multi-modal" airport industrial park with highway and railway access. The availability of these transportation networks provides a framework for continued economic development efforts in order to achieve our ultimate goal of providing the opportunity for Appalachian South Carolina to have high-wage, sustainable employment. The coordination and development of Appalachia South Carolina's transportation and logistical capabilities will enhance the global competitiveness of our existing businesses, attract industry and provide jobs to the citizens of Appalachian South Carolina.

Local Access Road Program (LAR)

Local access roads include relatively short roads needed to provide access to industrial parks, commercial and service areas, or education and health centers. Upon completion of the South Carolina's portion of the ADHS (US Highway 25) remaining Federal Funds have been set aside to be used to fund local access roads that facilitate economic development and maximize the investment in the ADHS. South Carolina has approximately $11 million in funds remaining for the LAR Grant Program.

The State has a review and approval process for LAR projects. Project depends on ARC's County designation, ability to present match and the State's discretion. Applicants are limited to governmental entities and LAR applications may be submitted anytime throughout the year. All LAR Projects require South Carolina Department of Transportation's (SCDOT) approval, Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) approval and ARC approval. Federal aid highway procedures govern project implementation and must be included in the State's Multi-year Transportation Plan.

Appalachian Regional Priorities & State Objectives

Enormous progress has been made since the Appalachian Program began. Gaps have been narrowed and economic gains have resulted. However, much remains to be done before the entire region reaches national parity in income, health care, education and employment. In 2022, the Appalachian Regional Commission approved a strategic plan that set forth a vision for the region's future:

Appalachia is a region of great opportunity that will achieve socioeconomic parity with the nation.

With this in mind, ARC 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:

ARC's mission is to innovate, partner, and invest to build community capacity and strengthen economic growth in Appalachia.

ARC has identified five strategic investment goals to advance its vision and mission and to guide its work illustrated in the 2022-2026 plan. These goals reflect consensus among local, state, and federal partners on the most critical investment opportunities in Appalachia. While the investment goals are distinct, they are also interdependent, with progress on one goal often requiring investment in another.

Goal 1: Building Appalachian Businesses
Strengthen and diversity the Region's economy through inclusive economic development strategies and investments in entrepreneurship and business development.

Goal 2: Building Appalachia's Workforce Ecosystems
Expand and strengthen community systems (education, healthcare, housing and childcare) that help Appalachian obtain a job, stay on the job and advance along a financially sustain career pathway.

Goal 3: Building Appalachia's Infrastructure
Ensure that the residents and businesses of Appalachia have access to reliable and affordable utilities and infrastructure in order to successfully live and work in the region.

Goal 4: Building Regional Culture and Tourism
Strengthen Appalachia's community and economic development potential by preserving and investing in the region's local, cultural heritage and natural assets.

Goal 5: Building Community Leaders and Capacity
Invest in the capacity of local leaders, organizations and communities to address local challenges by providing technical assistance and support to access resources, engage

partners, identity strategies and tactics and conduct effective planning and project execution.

State Objectives
Appalachian 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 development**
    - 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 entrepreneurial development and health care.

- **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 project that support collaboration and coordination between transportation, economic development and trade interests to strengthen access to markets and maximize economic benefits.

The State of South Carolina will seek ARC support for projects that achieve the objectives outlined below.

The State will use ARC funds to fill gaps in un-funded or under-funded programs, and not supplant existing funds that fall within these objectives. The State will also maximize the return on investment of ARC dollars by also using other funds and resources to support and implement program goals and objectives.

ARC Goal #1: Building Appalachian Businesses: Strengthen and diversity the region's economy through inclusive economic development strategies and investments in entrepreneurship and business development.

State Objective 1.1: To 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:

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

State Objective 1.2: To increase the competitiveness of the existing economic base.

Strategies:

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

State Objective 1.3: To increase the number of business start-ups and expansions, particularly focusing on small businesses.

Strategies:

- ✓ Provide entrepreneurial education, technical assistance, business services and information to new and expanding businesses.
- ✓ Analyze gaps in existing services, research the needs of entrepreneurial enterprises, promote awareness of programs and organizations and coordinate and sponsor activities and services for entrepreneurs in the South Carolina Appalachian region.
- ✓ 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.
- ✓ Provide access or referrals to capital for new and expanding small businesses through revolving loan funds (RLF) or other capital access programs.

ARC holds itself and its local, state, and regional partners accountable for setting and achieving the performance outcomes associated with ARC-supported investments. ARC measures the effectiveness of investments by tracking progress on performance targets. Projects proposed for funding under ARC Goal #1 should have one or more of the following performance metrics:

Economic Opportunities	
Potential Success Output Metrics:	**Potential Success Outcome Metrics:**
▪ Number of businesses served ▪ Number of businesses created ▪ Number of entrepreneurial programs created and/or expanded ▪ Number of collaborative (philanthropic, private-sector, and other) networks created ▪ Number of firms, especially small to medium-sized, engaged in international trade ▪ Access to capital for Appalachian businesses	▪ Businesses created ▪ Businesses created in targeted sectors ▪ Businesses expanded ▪ Businesses expanded in targeted sectors ▪ Jobs created ▪ Jobs created in targeted sectors ▪ Jobs retained ▪ Leveraged Private Investment

ARC Goal #2: Building Appalachia's Workforce Ecosystem: Increase the education, knowledge, skills and health of residents to work and succeed in Appalachia.

State Objective 2.1: To strengthen the capacity of the region to work collaboratively to identify workforce training and education needs, health care deficiencies, and other quality of life issues, and to implement solutions.

Strategies:

- ✓ Develop plans, programs and community capacity to prepare the workforce for future employment needs.
- ✓ Develop 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.

State Objective 2.2: To enhance workforce skills through education and training.

Strategies:

- ✓ 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.
- ✓ Build the capacity of training institutions to upgrade work-force skills and increase productivity.
- ✓ Target the workforce of declining industries and develop plans and programs for re-training affected workers.
- ✓ Promote technology education and training through the state's higher education system.

State Objective 2.3: To increase basic education attainment by encouraging school readiness, after-school care, child care, drop-out prevention, mentoring, teacher retention and school-to-work transition.

Strategies:

- ✓ Support initiatives for teacher retention, training, and performance.
- ✓ Provide the region's early childhood, kindergarten and elementary children with the skills they need to be successful in the first years of school.
- ✓ Develop after-school programs that reinforce basic skills and provide mentoring opportunities
- ✓ Support initiatives for high school completion and drop-out prevention.
- ✓ Support basic skills programs for secondary students specifically to improve employability and improve their ability to pursue further training and education opportunities.
- ✓ Support initiatives that help workers have access to quality childcare.

- ✓ Promote the development of skills in math and sciences and provide opportunities for future employment and training in the fields of engineering, technology and entrepreneurial development.
- ✓ Increase access to educational opportunities for adults such as advanced technology applications and adult literacy.
- ✓ Increase access to childcare to support workforce.

State Objective 2.4: To improve access and affordability of health care, prevention and wellness for residents in the region.

Strategies:

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

Projects proposed for funding under ARC Goal #2 should have one or more of the following performance metrics:

Ready Workforce	
Potential Success Output Metrics:	**Potential Success Outcome Metrics:**
▪ Number of students served ▪ Number of workers served ▪ Number of patients served ▪ Number of students enrolled in work ready/career skills training ▪ Number of local institutions accredited for career pathways training in promising sectors ▪ Programs implemented	▪ Improved educational attainment levels of students/workers/trainees ▪ Region's residents employed in promising sectors ▪ Number of residents credentialed in the Region's growing sectors ▪ Increase in labor force participation rates ▪ Increase in average earnings per job (high-wages) ▪ Plans or reports developed

ARC Goal #3: Building Appalachia's Infrastructure: Invest in critical infrastructure – especially broadband, transportation including the Appalachian Development Highway System, and water/wastewater.

State Objective 3.1: To develop the basic infrastructure and facilities needed to support community and economic development.

Strategies:

- ✓ Support projects that result in private sector investment and substantially enhance the community and economic development potential of an area.
- ✓ 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.
- ✓ Provide assistance to the construction of local access roads that enhance economic development.

State Objective 3.2: To promote sustainable development practices in infrastructure including system regionalization and energy efficiencies.

Strategies:

- ✓ Promote multi-county and regionalized approaches to infrastructure management and development.
- ✓ 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.
- ✓ Support local-level planning that encourages regional solutions to infrastructure problems and sustainable policies for development that prioritize and target limited resources.

State Objective 3.3: To develop telecommunications infrastructure and improve access to broadband.

Strategies:

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

State Objective 3.4: To promote the use of Appalachian South Carolina's Appalachian Development Highway System.

Strategies:

- ✓ Support collaboration and coordination between transportation, economic development and trade interests to strengthen access to markets and maximize economic and employment benefits.
- ✓ Work with federal and state departments of transportation to identify local access road opportunities and promote the use of the ADHS highway.
- ✓ Support development and application of advanced transportation technologies that reduce energy consumption and help ensure continued competitiveness of the region's businesses.

State Objective 3.5: Support efforts to develop an intermodal transportation network.

Strategies:

- ✓ Encourage intermodal coordination of the ADHS and the local access roads program as a link to global supply chains.
- ✓ Encourage the development of key transportation corridors (highway, rail, water, aviation) that enhance the competitiveness of businesses.
- ✓ Identify and develop intermodal transportation facilities or expand the use of existing facilities.
- ✓ Provide assistance for construction of local access roads that enhance economic development.

Projects proposed for funding under ARC Goal #3 should have one or more of the following performance metrics:

Critical Infrastructure	
Potential Success Output Metrics:	**Potential Success Outcome Metrics:**
▪ Upload and download speeds of broadband access (Mbps) ▪ Number of businesses and households served with critical infrastructure (broadband, water, wastewater, power) ▪ Linear feet of water, sewer, gas lines ▪ Square feet of public facilities (sq. ft.) ▪ Access road miles completed	▪ Number of businesses and households improved (broadband, water, wastewater, power) ▪ Increase in number of homes with high-speed internet access ▪ Increased access to safe, clean drinking water and wastewater systems ▪ Businesses created/expanded ▪ Jobs created, retained, improved ▪ Leveraged Private Investment

ARC Goal #4: Building Regional Cultural and Tourism: Strengthen Appalachia's community and economic development potential by preserving and investing in the region's local, cultural heritage and natural assets.

State Objective 4.1: To 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:

- ✓ Support efforts to maximize asset-based and heritage tourism development.
- ✓ Promote the use and development of local foodways.
- ✓ Develop programs to encourage revitalization of declining downtowns.
- ✓ Support creative economic development approaches that have the potential to spur economic activity in areas that are struggling.

State Objective 4.2: To make long term investments that will preserve and enhance natural resources, promote sustainability and improve the quality of life.

Strategies:

- ✓ Facilitate clean-up and reuse of brownfields and abandoned sites.
- ✓ Preserve and enhance natural assets.
- ✓ Implement projects that address public safety, neighborhood stabilization, access to transportation and other public services.

Projects proposed for funding under ARC Goal #4 should have one or more of the following performance metrics:

Core Natural and Cultural Assets	
Potential Success Output Metrics	**Potential Success Outcome Metrics**
▪ Number of sites redeveloped ▪ Number of asset-based economic development plans ▪ Number of daytime tourists ▪ Number of overnight tourists ▪ Number of tourist sites improved ▪ Plans or reports developed ▪ Communities and or businesses served	▪ Number of sector initiatives being implemented with a plan for sustainable, compatible resource use ▪ Number of promising sector interventions that include adaptive reuse or redevelopment of previously degraded natural assets ▪ Number of promising sector interventions driven by citizen input on resource use ▪ Increased number of tourist visitors ▪ Communities and or businesses improved ▪ Local tourism revenues increased ▪ Inbound tourism revenues increased

ARC Goal #5: Building Community Leaders and Capacity: Invest in the capacity and skills of current and next-generation leaders and organizations to innovate, partner, and advance community and economic development.

State Objective 5.1: To strengthen leadership and capacity in communities and regional organizations to include citizen participation, strategic planning, economic development and community revitalization.

Strategies:

- ✓ Support programs that foster leadership development and civic involvement for youth and community leaders.
- ✓ Support planning to develop strategies for long-term economic improvement.
- ✓ Help communities to develop partnerships (public, private, business, non-profit, or civic) that promote regional solutions and help to achieve long-term economic strategies.
- ✓ Provide training and technical assistance to local government and other non-profit organizations engaged in economic development.

Projects proposed for funding under ARC Goal #5 should have one or more of the following performance metrics:

Leadership and Community Capacity	
Potential Success Output Metrics	**Potential Success Outcome Metrics**
▪ Number of leadership programs ▪ Number of strategic plans created ▪ Number of local citizens directly involved in community plans ▪ Number of collaborative (philanthropic, private-sector, and other) networks created ▪ Number of community-based organizations and or participants served	▪ Number of programs implemented ▪ Number of collaborative projects with an economic impact on communities ▪ Increased youth participation in leadership of community and regional organizations, particularly LDDs. ▪ Number of community-based organizations and or participants improved

State Program Operations

The State has developed operating policies to govern the implementation of the state's ARC Strategies. These policies address the process for development and selection of state and community projects that are consistent with the State's Strategy Statement which is updated annually and the State Development Plan which is updated every four years.

Project Eligibility

All ARC assisted projects are required to comply with the following federal eligibility criteria:

- Relate to one or more goals and objectives set forth in the approved State Appalachian Development Plan.
- Be included in the state's Strategy Statement.
- Provide reasonable assurance that the project makes maximum use of all available federal and non-federal funds.
- Address a documented need.
- Provide reasonable assurance that the project is not inconsistent with applicable state and/or federal plans, policies and regulations.
- Provide reasonable assurance of the availability of non-federal shares of project costs, where matching funds are required.
- Provide reasonable assurance that there is management capability to carry out the project or program effectively and in a timely manner.
- Contain detailed outcome measurements by which grant expenditures may be evaluated.

Ineligible Projects

The State does not use ARC funding to support:

- Projects that are controversial in nature.
- Continued operations funding for organization beyond a startup period.
- Projects that support the displacement of residents or businesses.

Evaluation Criteria

In determining whether to approve and recommend a project for funding, the State of South Carolina will evaluate projects using the following criteria:

1. Establishment or significant enhancement of collaborative relationships, including local governments, non-profits, the private sector, and educational institutions.

2. The nature of the problems and extent of needs in the community.

3. Feasibility and cost reasonableness of the project proposal.

4. Construction projects should have a unit of local government or local government boards as the applicant.

5. Level of general fiscal effort of an applicant as compared to similar local units of government.

6. Commitment of appropriate match percentage.

7. The relationship to one or more goals and objectives sets forth in the approved SC Development Plan and Strategy Statement.

8. Substantial evidence that intended program benefits will result within a reasonable time period after project completion and that the proposed project's outcomes and outputs are measurable.

    - **For economic development projects**, level of private sector involvement. Private sector involvement includes, but is not limited to, the creation of new jobs, retention of existing jobs, capital investment in the project by private developers, new investment in the community without specific job creation or retention and expansion of existing commercial or industrial development. Private sector involvement may be considered but must be fully documented.

    - For **entrepreneurship opportunity projects**, evidence that project gives entrepreneurs greater access to capital; educates and trains entrepreneurs; encourages strategies to maximize the economic strengths of local communities; or provides strategic support for entrepreneurship. Business incubator projects should provide a business plan along with applications for funding.

    - For **education projects**, evidence that project will prepare students for further education, training or employment, or that the project promotes teacher retention or technology training.

    - For **workforce education projects**, evidence that clearly relates private sector needs to the objectives of the proposed project. The evidence should present workforce needs for the current period and should also be projected for the next three years; sources and/or methods for deriving these projections must be cited and explained when necessary. The evidence should include recommendations of an

advisory committee that includes representation of key business/industry to be affected by the proposed project and/or a recent industry survey of employer needs.

- For **infrastructure projects**, elimination of a documented health and safety threat and/or compliance with South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (SCDHEC) regulatory requirements. Projects may also support a commitment to create new jobs, or to retain existing jobs, capital investment in the project by private developers, new investment in the community without specific job creation or retention or expansion of existing commercial or industrial development.

Project Review

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

The ARC Program Manager, in consultation with the appropriate state and federal agencies, and the Secretary of South Carolina Department of Commerce along with the Governor's Alternate, 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 Appalachian Regional Commission, the applications 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 ARC's Federal Co-Chair.

Priorities

Priority will be given to projects that address economic development, workforce development, education, or infrastructure. 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.

The State will also give funding priority to projects that benefit ARC designated Distressed Areas. This 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 ARC goals is to target the most distressed areas of the region for assistance. ARC authorizes matching funds based on the level of distress in each Appalachian County. The more distressed the county, the least able it is to provide a matching contribution.

In Appalachian South Carolina, the seven counties fall into four designations based on ARC criteria. The counties of Anderson, Oconee, Pickens, and Spartanburg are "Transitional" counties. Cherokee County is designated as "At Risk". Greenville County is designated as a "Competitive" county. Union county is designated as a "Distressed County".

ARC funding will be limited to 50 percent for all projects, to include Local Development Districts (LDD) administrative grants, except projects in Cherokee County which are eligible for up to 70% ARC funding and projects Union County eligible for an 80% funding. Greenville County projects are eligible for up to 30% in ARC funding. Access road projects funded under Section 214 are available.

In addition to the above federal policies, the State expects a recipient of ARC project funds to contribute its own resources to a project to the extent it can do so and to seek additional non-ARC 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 Requirement

A basic agency (BA) has experience in managing federal construction projects. All construction projects must have an ARC approved basic agency to serve as the fiscal agent between the grantee and ARC. ARC approved basic agencies include the Economic Development Administration (EDA), USDA Rural Development, Federal

Highway Administration (FHWA), South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT), Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the South Carolina Department of Commerce (SCDOC). Grantees will be required to follow the programmatic and financial guidelines set forth by the respective BA. The applicant must provide documentation that the BA agrees to oversee the proposed project. If SCDOC is selected as the respective BA on a project, the project applicant must work with the appropriate COG to administer the project if awarded.

Maximum Grant Amounts

The funding maximums are as follows*:

- Construction Projects: $1,000,000
- Non-Construction Projects: $250,000
- Planning Projects: $60,000

  * The funding maximums can be waived by the Governor's Alternate for significant projects.

Project Development and Administration

Depending on the county location of a proposed project, the South Carolina Appalachian Council of Governments (SCACOG) or the Catawba Regional Council of Governments are involved in the planning and project development activities required for implementation of the state's Appalachian program. The staff with either SCACOG or Catawba Regional COG normally assists in the development of ARC construction applications, as well as applications submitted to the basic federal agency. Generally, the Board of Directors of the Appalachian Council of Governments or the Catawba Regional Council of Governments are made aware of projects prior to submission to the Governor and the South Carolina Department of Commerce for recommendation to the ARC.

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

Other Information

Economic development projects that involve job creation and that arise as a result of a company's plans for expansion or relocation or other projects of an urgent and compelling nature may be submitted on an as needed basis. The Governor reserves the right to maintain up to 10% of the funds available to respond to economic development or other critical needs that meet ARC goals, objectives and strategies.

[6] ACS Survey 2011 – 2015 – Low and Moderate Income Data

[7] US Census Data – 2017 (On the map)

[1] Béland, D., Dinan, S., Rocco, P., & Waddan, A. (2022). COVID-19, poverty reduction, and partisanship in Canada and the United States. *Policy and Society*, *41*(2), 291-305.

[2] US Department of Housing and Urban Development. FY 2023 ACS 5-Year 2011-2015 Low- and Moderate-Income Summary Data.