

COGNIZANCE

September The official newsletter of the Lower Savannah Council of Governments

2020

Working together to advance our region.

Aiken | Allendale | Bamberg | Barnwell | Calhoun | Orangeburg

Update from the Executive Director

Dear Communities, Partners and Clients,

Greetings! I am happy to report that the organization and staff continue to stay healthy and are working hard to serve our communities. In August, the COG moved to a modified Phase II staffing situation (per Accelerate SC) with most of the staff working from the office at least 2/3 of their time. That said we are still closed to visitors.

During this time, we are pressing ahead and continuing to fully serve our communities. Last month all Workforce Development Centers in the six county region reopened. Economic and Community Development staff continue to work with our counties and municipalities on CDBG, EDA and planning projects. In addition, our Human Services staff have not stopped serving our seniors and making sure that (in Aiken), the buses run on time.

I want to thank our Board and partners for their continued support during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Thank you and best wishes,

Bill Molnar

Recognition

Workforce Development Staff Member Retiring

Sharon "Tina" McKerley will be retiring at the end of September. Tina has been a valued member of the Workforce Division's Business Service Team here at the Lower Savannah Council of Government (LSCOG). Her energy (of which she has a lot) and 'can do' spirit makes her a positive example of the type of people here at LSCOG working to better the lives of the individuals and communities we serve. We congratulate Tina on this milestone.



Human Services Family Caregiver Advocate Position

Hannah Williams is taking the reins as the new Family Caregiver Advocate. Hannah has been with LSCOG Human Services Aging department since August 2019 as the Information and Referral Specialist. Hannah is a graduate of USC-Aiken with a degree in Sociology. Prior to coming to LSCOG Hannah worked as a children's early interventionist and has worked as an in-home care aid. She has extensive knowledge on the Medicare, Information and Referral, Assessment and Family Caregiver Programs. She has a passion for serving people in need. She can be reached at hwilliams@lscog.org or 803-508-7057.

Planning, Community and Economic Development (PCED)

On August 26, 2020, U.S. Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross announced that the Department's Economic Development Administration (EDA) is awarding \$3.2 million in CARES Act Recovery Assistance grants to eight EDA Economic Development District organizations across South Carolina to update economic development plans and fortify programs to assist communities in responding to the coronavirus pandemic.

As part of EDA's CARES Act Recovery Assistance, EDA is providing a supplemental financial assistance award of \$400,000 to the Lower Savannah Council of Governments (LSCOG), of Aiken, South Carolina, to help respond to the unusual and compelling urgency of the coronavirus pandemic.



The scope of work will include following pre-approved activities: (1) the development of an economic recovery and resilience plan, tied to the applicant's approved Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), to address the economic impacts of the coronavirus pandemic, (2) the deployment of a disaster recovery coordinator to orchestrate the region's response to the pandemic, (3) the provision of technical assistance, as necessary, to local governments, businesses, and other stakeholder organizations, and (4) the funding of appropriate technology and staff support for these pandemic-response activities. By executing these four areas, LSCOG will be able to assess the region's economic injury as a result of the coronavirus and develop short, mid and long term plans and strategies to make the region more resilient in the future.

Additional Resources

The **SRSRA Retiree Resource Center** sponsored by the Savannah River Site Retiree Association is continuing to assist SRS retirees and their families with Medicare enrollments, SRS stipend benefits, and SRS claims for reimbursement with WageWorks, now called Health Equity. You can call the Retiree Resource Center's telephone message line and leave a message at **803.508.7065**, email them at SRSRA@LSCOG.org or drop claims materials in the document collection box in front of the LSCOG building.



Medication Assistance Program

The Medication Assistance Program (MAP) is operating by phone two days per week with concentration on the current client's refills for medications. They can be reached at 803-508-7066.

Upcoming Committee Events

Visit www.lscog.org/events for details.

- Oct. 6 | Workforce Development Board Meeting–*virtual*
- Oct. 8 | LSCOG Full Board Meeting – Virtual
- Nov. 10 | Tourism Advisory Committee meeting - TBD
- Nov. 12 | LSCOG Executive Committee – TBD
- Dec. 1 | Workforce Development Board Meeting–TBD
- Dec. TBD | Legislative Breakfast–TBD
- Dec. 10 | LSCOG Annual Meeting–TBD

Please remind your communities to go online and complete their Census Form

www.2020census.gov



Workforce Development and SC Works Centers

In these challenging times, the Lower Savannah Council of Governments and the Aiken SC Works Center found innovative ways to assist customers seeking employment opportunities and financial security.



Because of the pandemic it has become difficult for our employers to find employees. Our traditional ways of hosting job fairs and hiring events were no longer considered safe options, so we decided to host a drive-thru event to let job seekers know that there is still employment opportunities during the pandemic.



The job seekers picked up a packet of information containing employment opportunities without ever leaving the confines of their vehicle. The Aiken drive-thru event was a huge success with nearly 30 employers and 160 job seekers participating.



2021 JOB FAIR
DRIVE TO SUCCESS
SC WORKS
LOWER SAVANNAH

30 EMPLOYERS
160 JOB SEEKERS

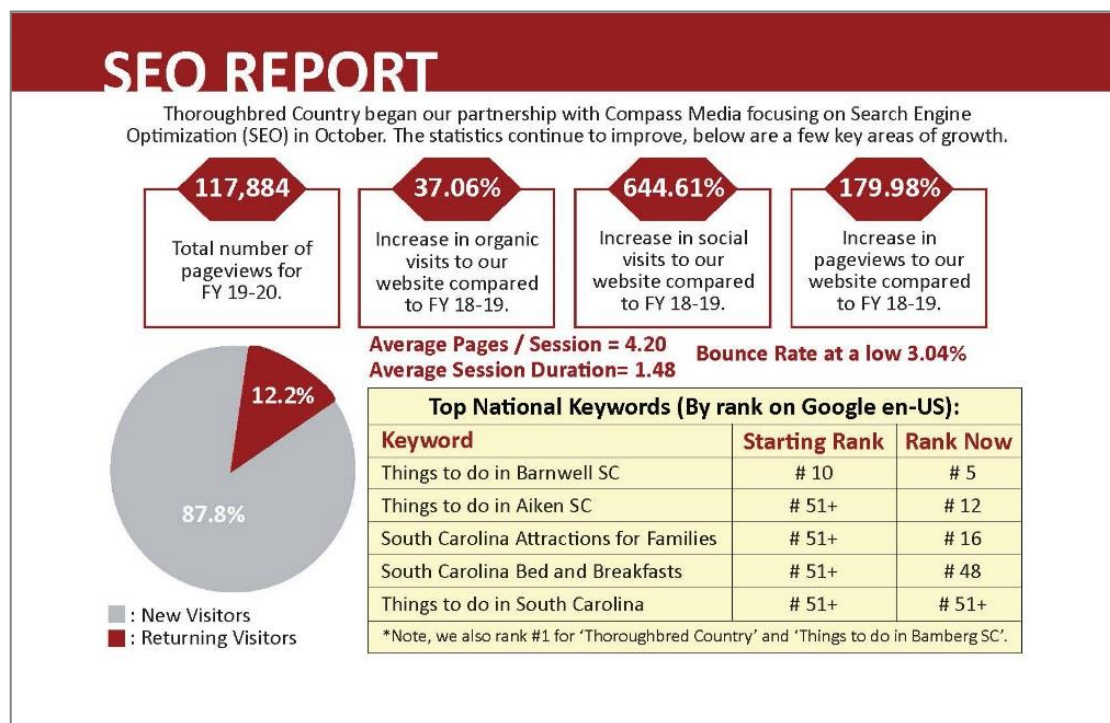
Tourism

COVID-19 U.S. Travel Sentiment Survey

U.S. travelers continue to be cautious in their own travel plans and about safety in their local community. Rebuilding this confidence is imperative to tourism's recovery and it will only be possible once the pandemic is better contained and managed. Read the full survey findings by clicking here: <https://longwoods-intl.com/news-press-release/covid-19-travel-sentiment-study-wave-18>

Thoroughbred Country FY 19-20 Annual Report is out

The Thoroughbred Country FY19-20 annual report, published in August 2020, shows positive indicators despite COVID-19. One key area of growth is our new Search Engine Optimization (SEO) campaign with Compass Media. Learn more about this campaign and other tourism highlights by clicking here: <https://www.tbredcountry.org/Resources/3144.pdf>.



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