SEDA-COG AT A GLANCE

A History of
Public and Private Collaboration
in 11 Central Pennsylvania Counties

SEDA-Council of Governments

SEDA-COG

is a regional multi-county developent agency, which under the guidance of a public policy board, *provides* leadership, expertise, and service to communities, businesses, institutions, and residents. SEDA-COG seeks to enhance *growth* opportunities in an environmentally sensitive manner while retaining the region's predominantly *rural* character. The organization is both a direct service provider and a link to other *resources* that can be applied to a wide range of community and economic needs. SEDA-COG is also an advocate for the interests of its *communities* at the state and federal levels. SEDA-COG's strengths include a county-based policy board representing both public and private interests, a high level of staff *expertise*, a commitment to innovation, and the flexibility to respond to new *opportunities* and *challenges*.

Central Pennsylvania: *tradition*... beauty... abundance... Marked by mountains and forests, secluded streams, the Susquehanna and Juniata rivers... It's a region of *small towns*, enveloped by the blues and greens of Mother Nature.

There's space to grow here, space for the qualities not always found in crowded areas. The people are generous in spirit, curious, and compassionate. Hard work and common sense are a way of life here. So is independence — and interdependence.

Quick to come to the aid of others, Central Pennsylvanians are often uncomfortable asking for help. We are eager to take on *challenges*, but recognize that sometimes issues extend beyond community boundaries, and beyond a community's *ability* to go it alone.

Since 1957, Central Pennsylvania has addressed many of these issues through the *SEDA-Council of Governments*, a public organization created by the region's 11 counties: Centre, Clinton, Columbia, Juniata, Lycoming, Mifflin, Montour, Northumberland, Perry, Snyder, and Union.

The organization is overseen by a Board made up of County Commissioners, business *people*, and local elected officials. SEDA-COG's staff is made up of professionals with expertise in a wide range of fields — everything from transportation and international sales, to *information* technology and financial packaging. We work with Central Pennsylvania's counties, communities, companies, and individuals. *We help them make things happen.*

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The Setting

The 11-county SEDA-COG region (Centre, Clinton, Columbia, Juniata, Lycoming, Mifflin, Montour, Northumberland, Perry, Snyder, and Union counties) is predominately rural, and is situated in Pennsylvania's Heartland. Scattered across the region are a number of mostly small urban centers. Its topography, chiefly the Susquehanna River system and the ridges of the Appalachian Mountains, have markedly influenced the region's economic development.

The urban centers are overwhelmingly found along the Susquehanna and its tributaries, where most of the region's economic activity, development, and growth have also occurred in the form of industry, commerce, and services. These same centers are subject to significant periodic flooding which has served as a barrier to long-term economic growth.

The region has a favorable geographical location and is in close proximity to 50% of the U.S. population. It also has an abundance of land potentially available for development; seven institutions and numerous satellite sites of higher education; a large amount of recoverable anthracite coal; hardwood timber; and shale gas reserves. The north and east sections of the SEDA-COG region are home to a portion of Marcellus and Utica Shale - a geological formation that contains high concentrations of natural gas deposits. The Marcellus Shale formation continues to receive a considerable amount of attention as new

technologies have been developed to less expensively extract the natural gas which is now in high demand across the nation and world. Forest resources are extensive and increasing, providing timber for what was an expanding wood industry that has recently been impacted significantly by the downturn in the national housing market, as well as a natural setting that favors the increasingly important tourism and recreation sectors of the economy, particularly along the river corridors. A large percentage of the region is in public state forest ownership.

SEDA-COG covers a land area of 6,317 square miles, which represents 14.1% of Pennsylvania's total land area of 44,817 square miles. In contrast, the region's 2010 Census population of 691,365 represents only 5.4% of the total population of Pennsylvania. The 2010 Census population density in the region is 109.4 persons per square mile, compared to a statewide density of 283.5 persons per square mile. According to the 2012 U.S. Census Bureau's County Business Patterns (the most recent version of County Business Patterns available), manufacturing jobs accounted for about 18.7% of all jobs in the region. It should be noted that the SEDA-COG region is considerably more dependent on the manufacturing sector than is the state as a whole at 11.4%.

The most recent (2010) update of the region's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy lists five prominent industry clusters, which were based on the Industry Cluster Analysis prepared by the Central Pennsylvania Workforce Development Corporation:

Table 1 - Central Pennsylvania Industry Clusters

Industry	Percent of the Total Regional Employment
Advanced Materials and Diversified Manufacturing	6.06%
Lumber, Wood, and Paper Products	3.79%
Education	15.13%
Health Care	13.05%
Energy	*2.2%

Note this figure is for 2013. Employment in the region's energy sector totaled 6,680 in 2013, and is projected to grow by 37% over the next ten years.

In recent years there has been significant focus on the energy cluster, due to natural gas reserves in Pennsylvania's Marcellus Shale region. Among SEDA-COG's member counties, exploration and drilling have occurred in Centre, Clinton, and Lycoming counties. However the true impact of natural gas exploration extends well beyond these three counties. Hotels and other facilities have been constructed to accommodate those from out of state who are working in the gas fields. Colleges are offering curriculum to prepare the work force needed to further the region's energy industry. The Lycoming Valley Railroad, one of the SEDA-COG Joint Rail Authority's six short lines, has seen a substantial increase in carload traffic - hauling fracking sand, pipes, and drilling equipment. The increase was over 6,000 carloads last year.

In October 2013, SEDA-COG, in conjunction with Centre, Clinton, and Mifflin counties began a project to increase the utilization of regionally developed natural gas in Central Pennsylvania. The project is intended to make natural gas more accessible for residential, industrial, and vehicular use. Funding has been provided through SEDA-COG, three of its counties, Mifflin County Industrial Development Corporation, Standard Steel (located in Burnham, Mifflin County), and an $80,000 grant from the federal Economic Development Administration.

Diversification

In general, SEDA-COG takes the broadest possible approach to industry clusters. While cognizant of those which exist, as *Table 1 – Central Pennsylvania Industry Clusters* shows, we support opportunities where and when they occur. As powdered metal firms sought to locate in the Philipsburg area of Centre County, SEDA-COG assisted the Moshannon Valley Economic Development Partnership in providing adequate, appropriate space. We have also worked with other industrial development organizations in the region, to establish incubators for technology-based companies.

However, in terms of focusing on one industry or another, SEDA-COG and its member counties are guided by the first of the Strategy Goals listed in its Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy 2013 Annual Report, i.e.:
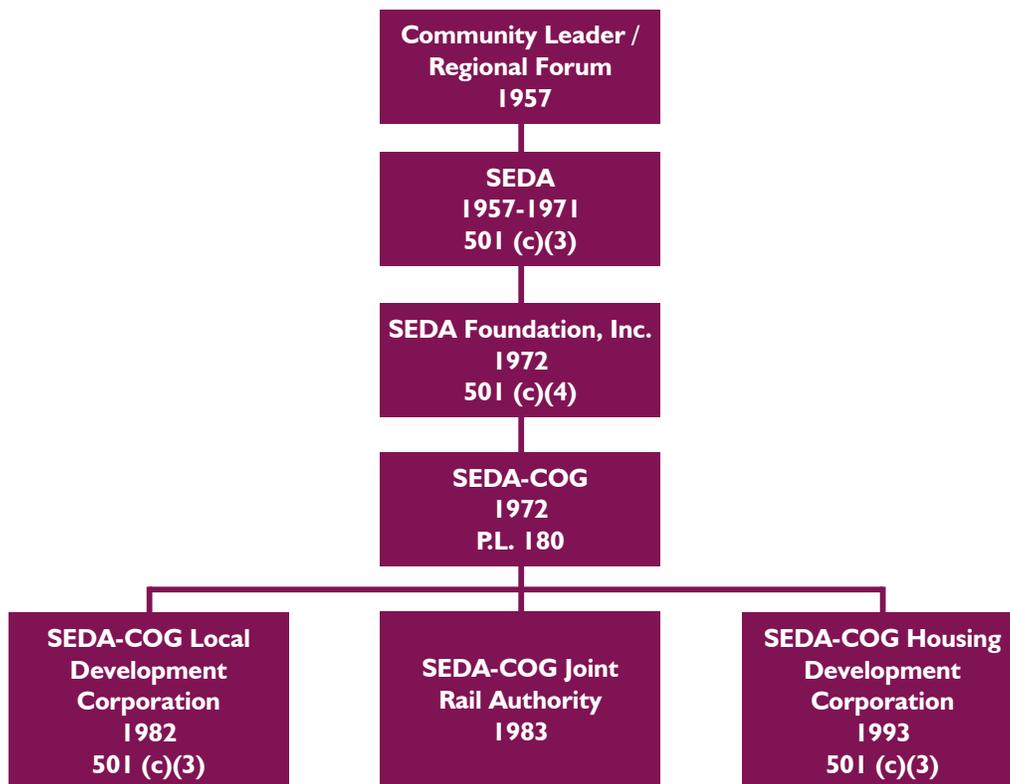
- Encourage the protection, modernization, or expansion of existing businesses and job opportunities where appropriate, and encourage the recruitment of new business and industry consistent with the character of the region.

SEDA-COG has played an important part in the evolution of Central Pennsylvania, and has helped maintain the very qualities that make the region special. Diversified manufacturing has been identified as the prominent industry cluster in the Central Pennsylvania region and undoubtedly will remain so.

The Agency

SEDA-Council of Governments (SEDA-COG) is a regional multi-county planning and development agency, which, under the guidance of a 22-member public policy board, provides leadership, expertise, and services to communities, businesses, institutions, and residents. It has access to all levels of government, and is the delivery arm for a host of local, state, and federal programs. The Council has a relatively long timeline for morphing into what it is today as shown on this chart, Notable Organizational Events.

Notable Organizational Events

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                    ┌─────────────────────────┐
                    │  Community Leader /      │
                    │  Regional Forum          │
                    │  1957                    │
                    └─────────────────────────┘
                    ┌─────────────────────────┐
                    │  SEDA                    │
                    │  1957-1971               │
                    │  501 (c)(3)              │
                    └─────────────────────────┘
                    ┌─────────────────────────┐
                    │  SEDA Foundation, Inc.   │
                    │  1972                    │
                    │  501 (c)(4)              │
                    └─────────────────────────┘
                    ┌─────────────────────────┐
                    │  SEDA-COG                │
                    │  1972                    │
                    │  P.L. 180                │
                    └─────────────────────────┘
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SEDA-COG Local Development Corporation 1982 501 (c)(3)	SEDA-COG Joint Rail Authority 1983	SEDA-COG Housing Development Corporation 1993 501 (c)(3)

The genesis of SEDA-COG dates back to 1957, as community leaders from Columbia, Montour, Northumberland, Snyder, and Union counties began meeting as a community forum, in an effort to address common concerns of Central Pennsylvania. These concerns evolved around inadequate transportation to markets; a deficiency in the availability of health care services; low wages; under-employment and unemployment conditions; and out-migration of residents to areas having better employment potential. Although it was just a forum for discussion purposes, the original five counties formally organized and established the Susquehanna Economic Development Association (SEDA), a 501(c)(3) agency. Ten years later, as a result of becoming a designated Local Development District (LDD) through the auspices of the federal Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), a small professional staff was hired and, in 1968, Centre, Clinton, Juniata, Lycoming, Mifflin, and Perry counties joined the other five, thus bringing the total compliment of counties to its current configuration of 11 in Central Pennsylvania.

Solutions to issues are pursued and resolved with SEDA-COG's professional staff assistance. It involves intergovernmental cooperation, public-private partnerships, and nonprofit organizations. In its work with private business, public utilities, and developers, SEDA-COG helps cut through the red tape that can often delay the best of efforts. In its work with industrial development agencies, local governments, revitalization groups, and others, SEDA-COG strives to forge the links that enhance the impact of all of the cooperating groups while focusing on the needs of the people of the region.

SEDA-COG's services fall into three broad categories: economic development, community development, and direct municipal and county support. We help the region's counties and local communities meet needs in areas such as business and manufacturing services, housing, community revitalization, water systems, and other infrastructure improvements. We provide supplemental financing to assist new and expanding businesses. The SEDA-COG Joint Rail Authority owns nearly 200 miles of rail line, preserving transportation service vital to key employers in the region. We have established programs that help families rehabilitate or weatherize their homes. The list goes on and on.

Collaboration

In general, two distinct benefits are realized by the eleven Central Pennsylvania counties served by the SEDA-Council of Governments:

1. Working together, they speak with one voice on issues of importance to the region's 691,365 people. They jointly lobby for legislation that will benefit them, share expertise, and obtain the financial resources for projects and services which will have a beneficial impact beyond their own respective borders. As an example, the previously mentioned regional rail line preservation was one such endeavor, which clearly demonstrated this and resulted in the formation of a Joint Rail Authority, which owns over two-hundred miles of line and leases the operation to the Susquehanna Union Railroad Corporation - the holding company for the six short line railroads.

2. Individually, SEDA-COG's eleven county-members also benefit because they can take advantage of opportunities which often are only available through the Council. Federal project funding from the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), which created Local Development Districts in 13 states in 1968, and the Economic Development Administration (EDA), which created Economic Development Districts, are two examples.

As one of Pennsylvania's seven Local Development Districts, SEDA-COG can secure resources from such federal organizations as the Appalachian Regional Commission and Economic Development Administration. This enables funding and expertise to be directed toward local needs. ARC has provided significant funding for transportation, education, health, community facility and community infrastructure development, over the last four decades. Examples resultant of ARC grants were the development of ten primary health care centers; construction of a regional landfill centered in Lycoming County; and funding of community colleges, as well as for sewer and water systems. A major transportation arterial system as part of the "ADHS" Appalachian Development Highway System was designated within the 13-state Appalachian Region, and ARC has provided funds for its development. Projects such as those just mentioned, not only improved the quality of life in Central Pennsylvania, but began to lay a foundation for new economic growth and development.

ARC project funding necessitates that the 11 counties act collectively and come to agreement each year on project priorities for ARC dollars. Thus, a regional approach for investment is mandated and the counties - working together - consider the needs of all members, and balance those needs against their own.

This county-dominated regional approach toward projects, growth, and economic development remains the hallmark of SEDA-COG to this day - a distinction that largely sets the organization apart from those whose concerns and obligations require a much more narrow focus. As previously stated, SEDA-COG was also designated as an Economic Development District under the federal Economic Development Administration (EDA). Here too, the use of EDA dollars is based on regional project priorities developed and agreed upon by the 11 counties. Significant economic impacts through agreed upon targeted investments has laid the foundation for county-wide cooperation.

There are other benefits in addition to ARC and EDA regional agency designations. The counties can jointly resolve issues agreed upon, regarding quality of life and economic development concerns in the region. They have created and retained jobs and provided community and infrastructure investments for business parks, transportation facilities, and flood protection. Throughout the organization's history — well over 50 years — the region's counties which have enjoyed the greatest success are those which viewed themselves as part of the larger entity. While individual county focus must be on their own constituents and providing essential functions, their active participation in a regional multi-county organization allows them to provide their citizens with increased services, specialized and diverse professional staff capacity, and thus, more opportunity for economic development.

SEDA Foundation, Inc.

In 1972, Susquehanna Economic Development Association (SEDA) reorganized under Section 501 (c)(4) as a public, nonprofit foundation. It is exempt from federal and state income taxes. SEDA Foundation, Inc. owns the office facilities, the capital equipment, and the furnishings. The Foundation is SEDA-COG's landlord, and invoices its monthly operational expenses directly to SEDA-COG. The current rent is less than $11 per square foot for the 22,000 square foot office complex (see photo).

A warehouse was constructed on the premises and is used for SEDA-COG's general storage needs and for material and supplies needed by SEDA-COG's seven-county Weatherization Program.

A 15-member SEDA Foundation, Inc., Board is comprised of ten Representatives appointed by the region's respective County Commissioners and another five Representatives appointed by the SEDA-COG Board. SEDA Foundation Members also serve on the Board's Local Loan Review Committee (LLRC) and the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Committee, which are both advisory committees of the Board – engaged in business and manufacturing loans and economic project development.

SEDA-Council of Governments

In addition to the Foundation, the SEDA-Council of Governments was also established in 1972 as a county council of governments, which became the policy, planning, and implementation arm for the agency. SEDA-COG was organized under Pennsylvania's Intergovernmental Cooperation Act (Public Law 180) and is the only regional county council of governments within Pennsylvania, organized under this law.

SEDA-COG has the ability to borrow funds in order to meet its responsibilities, provided that all such borrowing be nonrecourse as to the Counties. It further provides that all notes, loan agreements, and any other agreement related to such borrowing shall specifically provide that no County shall have any liability. SEDA-COG directs its function to the general welfare within its jurisdiction which can be more effectively executed on an inter-county basis as determined by the Board of Directors, including but not limited to the following:

- Provide leadership, expertise, and services to communities, businesses, institutions, and residents.
- Enhance growth opportunities in an environmentally sensitive manner, while retaining the region's predominately rural character.
- Provide direct services as well as links to other resources that can be applied to a wide range of community and economic needs.
- Advocate the interests of its region, counties, and communities at the state and federal levels.
- Respond to new opportunities and challenges.

Each County in the SEDA-COG region appoints one County Commissioner and a second representative to serve on the 22-member SEDA-COG Board. Appointments are certified annually by each county's Board of County Commissioners. Members recommended by the counties are drawn from the following: cities, boroughs, townships, and the private sector. The counties, in effect, form an intergovernmental association of counties whose powers and functions are purely governmental. Under the Intergovernmental Cooperation Act, the counties transfer certain of their planning and development functions.

As an intergovernmental cooperation organization, SEDA-COG is certified as eligible to receive Federal and State funds. As a body performing governmental functions, it is not subject to sales or income tax. SEDA-COG stands in the same position as each of the counties. Simply stated, each county is exempt, and, the fact that eleven counties cooperate to perform certain functions does not change their exempt status. In the past SEDA-COG has been confused with a non-profit corporation status. SEDA-COG is not, and, indeed, could not be a non-profit corporation since it is merely a governmental extension of each county. It can therefore generate revenues.

Local governments are not required to go through the competitive bid process in order to secure services from SEDA-COG. The counties have transferred certain of their planning and development functions to SEDA-COG and accordingly SEDA-COG performs various governmental functions.

As a general rule, a local government is not required to engage in a competitive bid process in order to secure services from a County Government. Because SEDA-COG performs governmental functions on behalf of the Counties, local governments within its jurisdiction are able to contract for such services without the necessity of obtaining competitive bids. Because SEDA-COG is merely a governmental extension of each County, it is exempt from the competitive bidding process to the same degree that services of the County are exempt. Additionally, even if SEDA-COG were not performing governmental functions but instead rendering services involving professional expert advice then that too is exempt from the competitive bid process.

The County Regional Council of Governments under Public Law 180 forms the underpinning for SEDA-COG's services and for revenue generation capabilities to support its staff (currently 90) and operational expenses (currently $7,200,000 for 2013-2014). In essence:

- We are an extension of County Government and our Board reflects this.
- No competitive bids are necessary for SEDA-COG to provide services to any public-sector governmental unit.
- We are certified and eligible to be able to receive federal and state grants.
- We are not a non-profit organization and therefore can generate surplus revenues.
- We are tax exempt as are the counties.

Since its inception, SEDA-COG has also created other legal entities to carry-out additional programs, projects, and services under the umbrella of SEDA-COG. They include:

SEDA-COG Local Development Corporation

- The Small Business Administration (SBA) designated SEDA-COG as a 504 Local Development Corporation in 1982. The Local Development Corporation has a membership consisting of the 22-member SEDA-COG Board, 4 Local Loan Review Committee (LLRC) Representatives, and 3 or more individuals representing the additional counties covered by the SBA-504 Program. Appointments are for one year, and Officers of the Corporation are the same as those serving the SEDA-COG Board of Directors. The Local Development Corporation must be endorsed by the regional Economic Development District, which is the SEDA-COG Board of Directors. The LDC provides loan monies to both manufacturers and commercial establishments throughout the entire state. SEDA-COG also services the loans and generates income from them. SEDA-COG has done a total of $150 million in SBA 504 loans, including $62 million in active loans.

Joint Rail Authority

- SEDA-COG Joint Rail Authority was established in 1983. It is a municipal authority that works closely with the Board. The Authority is responsible for overseeing and administrating all aspects of the organization, rehabilitation, and operation of 200 miles of rail line in eight counties. It is comprised of two members from each of the eight counties. They are appointed by the County Commissioners.

Housing Development Corporation

- The Housing Development Corporation (HDC) was formed in 1993. It has focused on development of elderly apartment complexes utilizing Federal tax credit financing and rental management. We are about to embark upon the construction of our eighth apartment complex this fall.
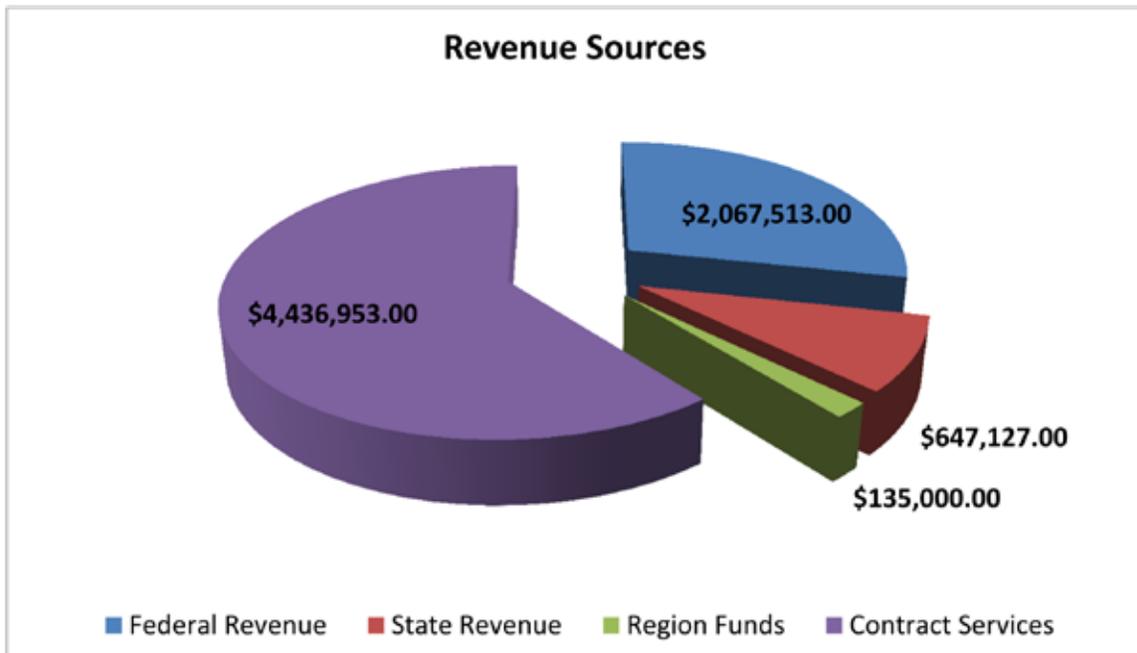
Mann Edge Terrace, Lewistown, Pennsylvania

- To date, seven affordable housing projects with low-income housing tax credits have been completed. The total investment has been $24,580,000 and the total equity received from investors is $16,200,000. Total annual real estate taxes which have benefitted the communities tax base, has been approximately $147,000 annually.

- During a 20+ year span we have also rehabilitated 866 homes, and invested over $19,200,000. The investment has created jobs for local contractors and materials are purchased from local suppliers. SEDA-COG's Housing Rehabilitation Program also tests homes for lead paint, which has proven to be a safety factor for residents.

In summary, the governing bodies of the SEDA-Council of Governments, SEDA Foundation, Inc., SEDA-COG's Joint Rail Authority, Local Development Corporation, and the Housing Development Corporation, each include representatives from the counties within our region. This indicates the strong regional county-collaboration activities within the 11-county SEDA-COG's region and beyond.

Consolidated Budget

SEDA-COG's revenue for operations was approximately $7,200,000 for 2013-2014 (July 1, 2013-June 30, 2014). This estimated operational budget can move upward or downward somewhat, depending on obtaining new programs and services and concluding some. We have a fund balance of $1,685,000, which includes both unrestricted and restricted funds. Currently our agency operational costs are stabilized. There has been a rather severe recession since 2008, which decreased SEDA-COG's budget significantly; however, this past year it has remained relatively flat and is improving.

SEDA-COG, from its inception, operated primarily from obtaining federal and state grants. Local support is generated via a county per capita assessment. It is currently $.20 per capita and generates approximately $135,000 in cash annually. The assessment is used primarily as match for state and federal grants. The $.20 per capita assessment has not been increased for the past 21 years. Since 1982, we have stressed development of services that generate revenue; and since then, we have made significant strides in our eliminating major dependence on state and federal grants. The pie chart entitled Revenue Sources depicts our revenue sources for the current year (2013-2014):

Revenue Sources

$2,067,513.00

$4,436,953.00

$647,127.00

$135,000.00

■ Federal Revenue ■ State Revenue ■ Region Funds ■ Contract Services

A substantial amount - $4,436,953 - is revenue generated via contract services. The $7.2 million annual operating budget leverages the annual counties' per capita contribution of $135,000 on a ratio of 53:1. The major revenue generating sources have been SEDA-COG's Joint Rail Authority; Housing Development Corporation; area utility company Weatherization program contracts; and Business Development Financing loan activities.

Management meets frequently with its 13 program and services department directors to pursue strategies for rebuilding services, developing new programs, and exploring business development and fees-for-service opportunities. Grant opportunities at federal and state levels have been diminishing due to regulatory changes and budget cuts. However, they are still important to retain the diversity of SEDA-COG's professional staff expertise. This is particularly important in rural areas such as Central Pennsylvania.

Flood Mitigation

Economic development is defined in many ways, but has been a cornerstone for SEDA-COG. In 2013 the Philadelphia Regional office of EDA awarded its largest grant ever - $15 million for flood mitigation activities, funded by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. It was coupled with an H2O PA grant for $11.8 million and commitments from local impacted industries of approximately $2.2 million. Project grants totaled $29 million for the construction of a flood protection system to protect the former Windsor Foods site and Autoneum, which employs approximately 800 in the Town of Bloomsburg, Columbia County. SEDA-COG not only prepared the EDA grant application, but was selected by the Columbia County Commissioners, who were the applicant, to manage the grant and oversee the project's development.

Partnerships for Regional Economic Performance

SEDA-COG's professional staff has long maintained a close relationship with the region's dominant industrial development organizations. They are the county Industrial Development Corporations and area Chambers of Commerce. For some time this relationship was supported via a Business Retention and Expansion Program and Enterprise Development Program, funded by the state's Department of Community and Economic Development. The Programs were replaced several years ago and funded by the Partnerships for Regional Economic Performance (PREP), a state budget line item, and expanded to include other economic development organizations, such as the state's Small Business Development Centers (SBDC) and Industrial Resource Centers (IRC). SEDA-COG manages the Central Region PREP, which includes twelve Industrial Development Corporations; two Industrial Resource Centers; three university-based Small Business Development Centers; and SEDA-COG - the Local Development District for Central Pennsylvania. Under the PREP, regional coordination of major economic service providers is enhanced.

Rail Line Preservation

SEDA-COG's Joint Rail Authority (JRA), established in 1983, has been a national model for short line railroad preservation. Thirty years ago the region was faced with the loss of rail service. Rail lines serving area industry were to be abandoned by Conrail and literally pulled from the ground. With few choices available to them, SEDA-COG's Board made the bold decision to purchase the rail lines from Conrail and ensure that they remained in public ownership for use by the region's manufacturers. The JRA's system of short line railroads originally included two lines serving 25 freight shippers along 80 miles of track. Today there are six lines in the system, serving 80 shippers along 200 miles of track. From hauling 1,100 car loads in 1983, the lines now haul over 33,000 car loads annually.

Enterprise Development

The early '80's also saw a marked and steady decline in the availability of federal public funds for bricks and mortar and infrastructure projects. SEDA-COG's member counties recognized their responsibility to foster an environment in which family-sustaining jobs were created, new businesses and manufacturers started, and established ones expanded. SEDA-COG's program of Enterprise Development services, another of the organization's long-standing successes, was created. Enterprise Development provides direct staff service to small- and medium-sized manufacturers in the following ways:

- Business Development Financing - Loans are provided for a variety of purposes for new companies or the expansion of existing ones. SEDA-COG has provided nearly 900 small business loans for a total of $200,000,000 and currently has 300 active loans with a balance of $80,000,000. The original objectives for the loan program were to create or retain jobs, increase sales, and generate new tax revenues for the region.

- Government Procurement Assistance - Staff works with area businesses, assisting them in selling their goods and services to state and federal government buying agencies, matching products where applicable, and ensuring that client firms are included on all appropriate bidder lists. Our Procurement program, known as the Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC), currently serves 355 clients. Funding for PTAC is provided by the Defense Logistics Agency. In FY 2012-2013, our clients were awarded a total of 1,011 contracts with a dollar value exceeding $95,000,000.

- Export Development - this has been one of SEDA-COG's key business assistance services for 30 years. Recognizing the growing importance of international markets to the growth and expansion of regional businesses, SEDA-COG's staff provides assistance with export marketing strategies, market identification, personalized training, response to inquiries, and participation in international trade shows.

  The number of firms we actively assist annually with international sales and marketing is generally around 130; the dollar value of the region's export sales continues to rise and was approximately $130,000,000 last year. Detailed metrics are utilized in measuring the success of the program. Statistics are maintained on active clients, new clients, actual exporters, export dollars, projects (referrals to Pennsylvania's trade representatives), and export actions, e.g., meeting with distributors, participating in trade shows.

  Every effort is made to promote the program through the usual means — public information, special events, and social media. However, the most efficient means of disseminating information is through the network of export service providers with whom we have developed relationships — banks, freight forwarding companies, export packaging companies, and law firms with international business expertise. These are the companies that interact with our existing and potential clients via our facilitation. They have essentially become ambassadors for our Export Development program.

- Foreign Direct Investment – SEDA-Council of Governments, along with numerous partners across the state, is poised to begin a program to attract international investment which will generate economic growth across Pennsylvania's rural counties.   A large portion of the funding for the program has been provided through a federal "Make It in America" Challenge Grant - one of just ten

such grants approved nationwide by the Obama Administration. The program will be carried out in the rural 53 counties that comprise the "T" region (between the Philadelphia and Pittsburgh areas) of Pennsylvania, and is an initiative to accelerate job creation and encourage business investment. The program is designed to encourage U.S. companies to keep, expand, or re-shore their manufacturing operations – and jobs – in America, and to entice foreign companies to build facilities and make their products here.

Funding is nearly $3,000,000 and for a three-year period. Key funding sources include the federal Economic Development Administration (EDA), Employment and Training Administration (ETA), and National Institute of Standards and Technology/Manufacturing Extension Partnership (NIST-MEP).

The initiative will facilitate collaboration among manufacturers, colleges, and research institutions in the area, while developing a pipeline of skilled manufacturing workers, all with the goal of generating foreign and domestic investor interest. The project's collaborative industry model will build a strong pipeline of middle-skilled and highly-skilled manufacturing workers through new and/or expanded training courses in industrial maintenance, computer numeric controls machining, and various trades along the industrial production career pathway.

SEDA-COG was the applicant and award recipient, and will manage the entire 53-county program. The EDA-funded portion of the grant will also involve five other Pennsylvania Local Development Districts, in addition to SEDA-COG. The state Office of International Business Development (OIBD) and the state's Team Pennsylvania Foundation will also partner in this endeavor. The Local Development Districts are all members of Pennsylvania's Regional Export Network (REN), working closely with OIBD's Center for Trade Development and with its Center for Reinvestment.

The EDA-funded portion of the program will employ a comprehensive plan of "reverse investment," encouraging foreign companies to expand into Pennsylvania, as well as domestic companies that have moved their production overseas. The initiative will match the economic development assets of Pennsylvania with the needs and objectives of the world's manufacturing community.

A major role will be played by the Commonwealth's Center for Direct Investment. As a division of the Pennsylvania Office of International Business Development, the Center is familiar with foreign trade show participation and exhibitions. In addition, the Center works with authorized investment representatives around the globe. The investment representatives will be "our eyes and ears" on the ground and will play a major role in the success of the program.

The project, as stated, will be carried out over three years, and much of the first year will be devoted to training and preparation by all major partners. They include Pennsylvania's Industrial Resource Centers, which will identify and analyze the state's "industry clusters," i.e., independent companies, congregated together, and sharing complementary interests and requirements. It is hoped that international companies will find great opportunities relative to meeting the needs of our industry clusters, whether in terms of supplies, manufacturing, or distribution. As industry clusters and additional opportunities are identified, Workforce Investment Boards will be charged with training the labor force needed to meet companies' requirements.

Extensive training will also be provided to area economic development corporations and their professionals, who will interact directly with potential foreign investors. They are going to learn how to attract and host foreign investors, learning about their cultures and protocol.

Community Development

SEDA-COG has made a commitment to more livable communities in its region. That commitment is why county and community officials call on SEDA-COG. Like them, we understand that public infrastructure and community facilities are more than bricks, concrete, and steel. They are the things that shape the places we live. That commitment is why SEDA-COG's Community Development Program received a statewide Community Building Award for Pennsylvania's Best Practices. SEDA-COG has been successfully helping the region's counties and communities make needed public improvements since 1982. For over 32 years, SEDA-COG has been involved with more than 900 public infrastructure and community facilities projects – projects representing an investment of $120,000,000 in Central Pennsylvania.

SEDA-COG's Community Development Program administers the Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG) for two-thirds of our region. All of the counties and major municipalities receive Housing and Urban Development (HUD) CDBG funding. Most recently, the Program utilized roughly $3,500,000 in CDBG federal fiscal year 2012 monies, which belongs to the communities that staff serves. The monies funded 40 projects. Typically staff oversees the development, implementation and construction of approximately 35-40 projects each year. In most cases, the money awarded to the communities leverages considerable local and other funds. Within the last twenty-five years, the Community Development Program has completed approximately 900 public community facility projects. The projects had significant impact on improving the quality of life in our area. SEDA-COG serves as Community Development Block Grant coordinator for seven of the eleven counties and eight municipalities. As part of the process, we assist the counties in updating their three-year Community Development Plan, which includes long- and short-term goals and priorities for CDBG projects and funding.

Other projects grow out of long-term relationships we have developed with our communities. With little or no staff, few resources, and limited finances, our communities often turn to SEDA-COG for assistance in developing projects, securing funds to implement them, as well as overseeing projects as they're constructed.

The Community Development staff emphasizes assisting counties and communities with the funding and implementation of activities related to public infrastructure, community facilities, recreation, and public services. Our Program has also provided community technical assistance, grant administration, and training on a statewide basis. The Program provides oversight with economic development-grants coordination, management, and project development services, as listed below:
- Initial project development
- Preparation of Community Development Block Grant applications
- Preparation of grant applications from additional related funding sources
- Grant administration and fiscal management of CDBG, EDA, and other applicable federal programs
- Environmental reviews
- Project construction management
- Federal labor standards management
- CDBG Technical Assistance
- CDBG Administration Training

Energy Resource Center

SEDA-COG's Energy Resource Center (ERC) provides energy conservation and renewable energy

education, training and technical assistance to residents, local governments, businesses, hospitals, building trades, non-profit agencies and schools, and a host of other land-uses. The Center's services:

- Minimize the financial burden of local taxpayers by reducing the energy-related operating costs of municipalities and schools.

- Assists public and private sector clients to increase their use of efficient and renewable energy technologies.

- Creates market demand within the public and private sector for efficient and renewable energy technology and expertise within the SEDA-COG region through education, outreach and technical assistance.

- Assists homeowners to reduce their utility bills by identifying and prioritizing opportunities to reduce energy use.

- Increases the opportunities for existing manufacturers, technical service providers and new technology developers to participate in the worldwide efficient and renewable energy market.

- Fosters local ownership of renewable and efficient energy technology projects and expertise.

New Berlin Energy Independence – A Community-Wide Pilot Project

The SEDA-COG Energy Resource Center (ERC) recently published Energizing Small Communities: A Guide to Greater Energy Independence and Economic Resiliency, a how-to manual for America's small, rural towns to develop and implement community-wide conservation programs that reduce reliance on conventional energy sources and help the communities achieve greater economic resiliency. The manual is based on the New Berlin Energy Independence Project, for which SEDA-COG provided technical assistance from 2009 through 2012 to assist the entire small community of New Berlin, located in Union County, save money by reducing its reliance on conventional fuels.

The federal Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) sponsored the pilot project to assist not only the New Berlin community increase its economic resiliency by spending less on energy, but to also provide a blueprint for other communities to reduce their energy costs. The ARC recognized that to achieve greater economic parity with the rest of the nation, communities in Appalachia could retain more local wealth by simply using less energy.

Using the social networks that exist within every community and partnering with other regional organizations to provide technical and financial resources to the project, the Energy Resource Center delivered energy reduction information, utility bill analyses, energy assessments, and community connections to qualified contractors to every sector of the community using a process that can be replicated by other communities.

The community documented a greater than 10% energy reduction and cost savings at the conclusion of the 3-year project. Many of the households and organizations achieved energy savings of 30-40% by reducing their energy use through conservation and efficient energy equipment. Several facilities also invested in solar technology to further reduce their reliance on conventional fuels. The community has invested more than $2 million to date, supplemented by almost $1 million in utility rebates, tax credits, and federal and state grants. Documented annual energy savings exceed $200,000. Households and organizations continue to invest in recommended measures provided through free energy assessments.

The New Berlin community and SEDA-COG received the 2011 NADO Innovation Award for the design and delivery of this ground-breaking project and the 2014 NADO Innovation Award for its authorship of a manual to assist other communities in replicating New Berlin's energy reduction success. The competitive NADO (National Association of Development Organizations) Innovations Award honors cutting-edge, forward-thinking projects in a variety of regional development areas including environmental initiatives, regional innovation strategies, and sustainable development.

Weatherization and Residential Energy Services

Home heating bills can make a significant dent in any family's budget, especially when money is short and many people are on a fixed income. SEDA-COG's Weatherization program can help. It's a free service available to qualified families and individuals in seven of SEDA-COG's member counties. Logistically, regarding the large land area served, it is the largest program in the state.

Funds for Weatherization services are provided by the federal government and Pennsylvania utility companies, primarily for low-income and elderly persons. There is no charge for the service and no liens are placed against homes. Home heating costs have doubled in recent years. Electric rates are anticipated to increase by at least 30%. The demand for these services continues to rise.

Since the inception of SEDA-COG's program in 1976, over 35,000 homes have been weatherized by SEDA-COG's direct hire employees. Throughout the state, over 476,500 low-income households have been weatherized. As part of the statewide Weatherization Assistance Program, SEDA-COG received a Citation from the Department of Community and Economic Development, in recognition of staffs' efforts and significant accomplishments.

The Weatherization Program assists individuals of limited financial resources by making home improvements designed to increase their home's energy efficiency. Specific services and activities are listed below:

- Energy education
- Free services to low-income individuals
- Furnace repair or replacement
- Cold weather Crisis intervention
- Residential diagnostic audits
- Residential energy consumption profiles
- Delivery of public utility energy programs
- Home energy ratings

Regional Transportation Planning

From 1982 to 2013, SEDA-COG functioned as a Rural Planning Organization (RPO) for eight counties in the region. The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) had initiated and funded the rural transportation planning program to complement ongoing Metropolitan Planning Organization activities (MPO) in the state. RPOs were essentially treated the same as MPOs. RPOs assisted in carrying out the portion of the statewide transportation planning program covering areas outside of established MPOs, so SEDA-COG's RPO staff coordinated with PennDOT to develop and maintain the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), and other federally required documents for the eight county region.

Within the SEDA-COG region, the 2010 decennial census, identified the Bloomsburg-Berwick urbanized area, which included portions of three of the eight counties served by the SEDA-COG RPO. As a result, the entire eight county area was designated as an MPO, and over the past year and a half, transportation staff have facilitated changes in the organizational structure to include local municipal representation and continue county level, transit, freight/multi-modal, and elected official representation.

The MPO continues to serve as a platform for local engagement in the transportation planning process. Through the MPO, local representatives continue to provide input into the development of the TIP, to take an active role in the development and selection of projects for funding through the Transportation Alternatives Program, and to consider access road, railroad and airport development projects. PennDOT developed a new system for incorporating land use planning and environmental information early in project development for the 2013 TIP update.

Through this system, transportation staff facilitated local input on over 100 projects for the update, including links to local zoning, local and county level comprehensive plans, and projects administered through other state agencies. Efforts for the coming TIP update include the development of applications that will use locally held GIS data to reliably determine transportation context. In addition to the MPO

efforts, two of the member counties have been able to obtain additional funding for comprehensive plan updates through the MPO UPWP in the last ten years, to enable them to conduct a more in-depth analysis of transportation issues in the comprehensive plan. Staff has worked with area partners and consultants to complete other special studies through the UPWP (interchange corridor studies, new river bridge design studies, intermodal studies, freight facility inventories, grade crossing safety studies, gateway corridor studies, etc.)

Along with highway and bridge programs, the MPO supports local transit operators in developing TIP projects and capital planning, and facilitates applications to federal funding programs. The RPO completed the first coordinated Public Transit-Human services Transportation Plan for the RPO region, and as an MPO, is completing an update in 2014 that will jointly provide a unified plan for two MPOs (SEDA-COG and Williamsport) and a nine-county area. Outside of TIP development and the coordinated plan, the program facilitates a six-county task force to consider rural transportation needs and has completed a public transportation needs analysis for that same area. As an outcome of that study, the MPO is currently facilitating participation of eight counties in a study conducted by PennDOT to determine if cost savings can be obtained by better coordinating or combining existing services.

SEDA-COG's MPO also maintains links with 212 municipalities through the Local Technical Assistance Program that covers the eight SEDA-COG MPO counties, plus the Centre County MPO area. In addition to scheduling road safety and maintenance classes, staff has facilitated direct technical assistance sessions, participation in walkability and local road audits, participation in a bulk purchasing program for LED signal indicators, underwritten participation in Dirt and Gravel Roads Maintenance Workshops, and facilitated municipal applications to the Automated Red Light Enforcement funding program at the municipal level. Additionally, staff facilitated the closure or removal of redundant local bridges and a complete inventory of locally owned bridges between eight feet and twenty feet in length.

SEDA-COG has been fortunate to be the MPO for eight counties in its eleven-county area, and is closely working with the MPO's in the other three. Land use, transportation, and economic development are integrated for targeted investments with maximum impacts. SEDA-COG and its array of regional development programs, aligns itself well in this regard.

Natural Gas Utilization Pilot Project

SEDA-COG, in conjunction with Centre, Clinton, and Mifflin counties, has begun a project to increase the utilization of regionally developed Marcellus and Utica Shale natural gas deposits in Central Pennsylvania. A $160,000 project is intended to make natural gas more accessible for residential, industrial, and vehicular use. Funding has been provided through SEDA-COG, the three counties, Mifflin County Industrial Development Corporation, Standard Steel (located in Burnham, Mifflin County), and an $80,000 grant from the federal Economic Development Administration. Central Pennsylvania has been sitting on the second largest natural gas reserve in the world.

There are homeowners in the region who want to heat their houses with natural gas, but can't. Through this project, appropriate investments will be identified and the type of coordinating body needed to make this resource available for those who want it, will be created. The intent is that this will not be just another government program, but rather a private/public partnership facilitated by SEDA-COG and county governments. The partnership would develop investment capital and work cooperatively with the gas companies to expand the distribution system for natural gas to area communities.

SEDA-COG plans to work with gas companies that have established a presence in the Marcellus Shale region, with business leaders, community officials, planning departments, and economic development groups – a solid public-private partnership of stakeholders.

As a first step, the project will explore the creation of a municipal authority, co-op, corporation, or other entity, to facilitate and expand natural gas service throughout the project area. Appropriate areas for service expansion will be identified, such as business parks or industrial sites with access to needed infrastructure. Priority will be given to locations that can also provide natural gas accessibility to residential areas.

As the gas utilization project moves forward, targeted investment areas will be identified, i.e., concentrations of potential users of natural gas. They will be evaluated in terms of potential gas consumption, cost of providing service, economic impacts, and potential for future development.

In terms of vehicular use, the project will identify the infrastructure needed to make natural gas available for locally-operated vehicle fleets, both private, (e.g., trucking companies); and public, (e.g., county-or municipally-owned cars.)

If America is going to take full advantage of its abundant natural gas reserves, domestic markets must be established. This natural gas utilization project has the potential to be expanded to other counties in SEDA-COG and Central Pennsylvania, resulting in permanent, sustainable markets for this important resource.

Information Technologies Group

Technology services are provided for the staff and management of SEDA-COG, its member counties, county-designated organizations and agencies, other public sector entities, non-profit groups, and clients receiving other SEDA-COG assistance. These services are provided at reduced cost whenever possible or for cost-recovery based fees, and can be provided to private companies on an as-available, for-fee basis. Services include:

- Technology needs identification, assessment, and training
- Technology acquisition assistance as a trusted client/vendor intermediary
- Database and application programming
- Web site development, software development
- Web hosting for local governments
- Assisting local citizens, private companies, and municipalities, obtain broadband services

SEDA-COG has been involved with the evolution of the information and technology age since the mid-eighties. For rural areas to progress and develop economically, they had to have available expertise to stay competitive with the wealthier and more urbanized areas of the country.

Over the years, we have helped counties and local governments through the complexities of applying for grant funds by providing or verifying technical details, defining their needs in technical terms and helping them develop a project which uses technology as a core service instead of an afterthought or add-on. We believe that such projects will ultimately be more successful and more useful.

Technology is a prime force in conducting business today. There is no reason to expect that importance to fade in the future. For thirty years our mission has been the integration of technology into the daily business of our regions citizens, businesses, and government agencies. Our experience shows that it is a continuing process rather than a one-time effort.

The following are examples that highlight some of SEDA-COG's information technology success stories over a period of years. The timeline begins in the mid-eighties and concludes with a more recent project for use by our Finance Department, as well as for other state-supported local loan agencies:

Mid 1980's

- One of our earliest information technologies projects took place nearly 30 years ago with a project entailing the construction of an emergency radio tower system which would cover 95% of all the geography across our eleven counties. Gaining the cooperation and agreement of all the various emergency medical services and communications departments in the counties, was as difficult as negotiating the design and construction of the physical towers – which are still in use today. The partnerships forged in this effort were continued later as a joint purchase of aerial photography was arranged. Negotiating the purchase of such large tracts of land pushed the cost down by more than 50%. Using these orthophotos, GIS services were provided by SEDA-COG for many years until the individual counties were able to staff their own GIS teams and departments.

Early 1990's

- Continuing with the concept of large group purchases, SEDA-COG joined with the Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit, which serves the school systems with specialized services, to create a fiber network across the region. After studying a "build it – own it – maintain it" concept, it was decided that a more reasonable course was to partner with a regional internet service provider (ISP) – PenTeleData (PTD). The project offered anchor tenants at various locations across the region, allowing PTD to build out a fiber network with confidence that it would financially breakeven or become profitable. Every school, half of the counties, and some municipalities got connected during the first phase. Because of this project, the availability of broadband happened several years earlier than otherwise expected.

Mid 1990's

- At that time, email was still an untested, untrusted, slightly risky process in the minds of many. To encourage the adoption of this new media, SEDA-COG provided "free" email accounts on our server for a limited time to county officials. By the end of our offer, they wouldn't let us take it away so to retain those capabilities, counties then arranged their own email services.

The 2000's - today

- Pushing forward with technology, and encouraging its adoption by our member counties and local municipalities, became a major goal of the department. Many of our local governments were not focused on technology, of course, so they seldom planned ahead. Our internal capacity was expanded in order to be able to provide appropriate assistance as it was requested. State and federal grant funds, from the Appalachian Regional Commission, were critical during this period. To this day, our services help people through the daunting process of deciding what technology they need, then through the purchase, installation, and finally, providing training on the new capabilities.

- At the turn of the century, our Information Technologies Group (ITG) was heavily involved in working with the counties and their equipment and software manufacturers to be ready for "Y2K" – the time when dates stored in old style format would not accommodate the year 2000. Everything from servers to workstations to security systems were checked and many were corrected or replaced. By the time January 1, 2000 arrived it was a non-event – everything went smoothly.

- ITG has made local governments aware that Windows XP and Office 2003 are no longer supported by Microsoft. A large percentage of small governments were still using old computers with these programs loaded. After April 8, 2014, they became more vulnerable to hackers and other electronic infections – Virus, Trojan, and other malware. The only solution, short of disconnecting them from the Internet, is to replace them with newer computers and software packages. SEDA-COG offers recycled computers at no cost.

- Through procuring a state grant, we translated a spreadsheet which was used by our Finance department to evaluate loan performance into a web based application which can now be used by any local loan agency across the state. The use of this tool by agencies provides common ground, so that loans can be compared with consistency across different agencies or by fund managers at the state level.

Economic Development

The Economic Development Administration requires that SEDA-COG complete a detailed update of its Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) every five years as well as produce an annual report, which is presented to the Board. The most recent update of SEDA-COG's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, outlines several challenges facing the region. While specific statistics have changed somewhat over time, the same issues persist and contribute to the greatest obstacle facing our region — the lack of family-sustaining jobs.

The abilities and skill-set of the region's work force correlates to local job markets. Although the region is home to seven colleges and universities including Penn State, this abundance of educational opportunities has not resulted in a comparably high level of educational attainment for Central Pennsylvania residents. The percentage of residents in the region age 25 or older who have not completed high school is 15.6 %, slightly higher than the statewide percentage of 13.7%. In Juniata County, the rate of 23.6% is more than 9 percentage points higher than the state level. As the decline of higher paid manufacturing jobs in the state occurred over the last several decades, much lower-paying service-sector jobs have increased. You cannot sustain a family on jobs paying $8 - $11 per hour. This coupled with a severe recession since 2008, also leaves the region with a high rate of unemployment and under-employment.

Issues related to housing stock and health care also confront the region. The housing vacancy rate for the region is 12.1% compared to a rate of only 10.9% for the Commonwealth. Increasing the availability of affordable housing and maintenance of older rental housing is another concern. By providing quality housing for people of all income levels, communities can mitigate the environmental costs of auto-dependent development — development that leads to sprawl, which has been taking root in the region for some time.

In the area of health care, the region has 15 general hospitals with a total of 1,517 beds, for a rate of 2.3 beds per 1,000 population, which is below the state's rate of 2.8 beds per 1,000 population.

The Susquehanna River, among the region's major assets, also represents a significant challenge. Based on historic growth patterns, Central Pennsylvania's small urban centers are situated along the River, thus much of the regions industrial and commercial growth has occurred there. But these urban centers are subject to periodic, substantial floods — a barrier to long-term economic growth.

Organizational Capacity Building

In order to effectively address an "upswing" in economic development activities that would increase "good" middle-class jobs and improve both the region's economy and quality of life, professional staff expertise in a multitude of disciplines is needed to make meaningful decisions regarding investments and activities that produce high-impact results.

Organizations such as SEDA-COG have been created to help meet these challenges. It has provided the area with a large, diversified staff that can serve both public and private sector interests, in a variety of specialized ways, at minimal cost to the region.

As indicated in the Budget section, SEDA-COG has leveraged county assessments at $0.20 per capita at a 53:1 ratio this fiscal year. That is a significant return on investment, when measured with the results of 13 SEDA-COG programmatic areas, coupled with metrics that account for a high level of productivity and services.

Prior to the recession of 2008-09, which culminated in severe budget cuts at the state and federal levels, SEDA-COG had leveraged funds as high as 82:1. Despite its proven successes and impacts, the organization was forced to downsize its staff — an action which is detrimental to a rural area that needs professional assistance to help create and retain private and public sector employment. We have now stabilized and 2013-14 provided new opportunities to begin rebuilding staff capacity.

Goals

The 2013 SEDA-COG Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Annual Report, adopted by the SEDA-COG Board, includes the following Strategy Goals:

- Encourage the protection, modernization, or expansion of existing businesses and job opportunities, where appropriate. Encourage the recruitment of new business and industry consistent with the character of the region.

- Encourage the prudent utilization of the area's natural resources in an environmentally sustainable manner.

- Improve and expand community infrastructure to support continuing economic development and community conservation efforts in the older urban and rural centers throughout the area.

- Encourage energy conservation and actively foster the deployment of locally-owned, distributed energy projects as alternatives.

- Encourage the promotion of the region as a destination for travel and tourism.

- Aggressively encourage the deployment of technology and widespread accessibility to broadband services and capabilities.

- Encourage efforts to enhance a greater level of entrepreneurship throughout the region, including entrepreneurial opportunities in the energy and agribusiness/agricultural sector.

Objectives

Derived from the goals are the following objectives:

- Continue to foster economic development activities through the various components of the SEDA-COG PREP Program, including business finance assistance, export marketing, and government procurement technical assistance. In accordance with Goal 1, primary emphasis will be on fostering the maintenance and expansion of the region's existing industrial base.

- Cooperate with industrial development groups throughout the region to expand industrial/ business parks or establish new parks wherever such need is determined to exist, with particular attention to promoting the tax-free Keystone Opportunity Zones (KOZs) that have been established in this region by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

- Provide support and assistance wherever possible to the Keystone Innovation Zones (KIZs) throughout the region.

- Cooperate with the Innovative Manufacturers' Center (IMC) and Northeast PA Industrial Resource Center (NEPIRC) and other components of the region's economic development service delivery network to foster improved competitiveness through modernization of machinery, equipment, and techniques.

- Cooperate with the Central Pennsylvania Workforce Development Corporation and other workforce providers in targeting resources at identified industry clusters.

- Foster energy efficiency, energy conservation, and the prudent development of the region's indigenous energy resources.

- Seek means to further the development of advanced telecommunications and other non-traditional infrastructure.

- Cooperate with local tourist promotion agencies, the Commonwealth, and other interests to promote the region as a tourist destination.

- Assure that ongoing and emerging economic development activities do not diminish the attractiveness of the region to tourists.

- Cooperate with the Commonwealth in its efforts to provide service and assistance to entrepreneurs, farmers, and small business through the Partnerships for Regional Economic Performance program.

- Target the agricultural business sector including small family farms, in an effort to provide financial incentives to assist farmers with their capitalization or working capital needs.

- Provide technical assistance to businesses in the region looking to implement energy conservation and energy efficient projects.

- Support and encourage widespread use of natural gas to provide for long-term community development and economic development.

SEDA-COG's CEDS Advisory Committee, which includes representatives from each of our 11 member counties, provides input to the organization's economic development staff in preparing a five-year update, annual report, and annual EDA project priority recommendations. The annual report and goals within it provide the underpinning for SEDA-COG staff services for current years and beyond.

NEW PROGRAMS AND INITIATIVES EMERGE from the changing needs of the region, and as the pace of growth has increased in the 11 counties, the dynamics of change have accelerated. Working together and assisting each other is more essential than ever. SEDA-COG helps the counties make things happen. We work for the counties, communities, and companies of Central Pennsylvania.

We can work with you.

For more information

about any or all of

SEDA-COG's individual programs and services,

call us, e-mail us, send us a fax,

or visit us on the World Wide Web.

Speak to one of our staff, or we can send you a

brochure or information pertaining to

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