



Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

Annual Update 2021

Southeast Alabama Economic Development District
Barbour, Coffee, Covington, Dale, Geneva, Henry and Houston Counties



December 2021



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Executive Summary

The Southeast Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission (SEARP&DC) was created in June 1969 and is located in the extreme Southeast corner of Alabama. Elected officials and civic leaders initiated action to join several counties together in a common cause to promote and improve the economic status of all citizens residing in the six-county area. The counties consisted of Barbour, Coffee, Dale, Geneva, Henry and Houston, and the initial byline of the organization was “Planning Today to Preclude Problems of Tomorrow”.

The organization was originally known as the Southeast Alabama Economic Development District. The name was changed to the Southeast Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission with the addition of Covington County in 1971. The commission now consists of a seven county area and is dedicated to the theme of “Progress through Planning”.



SEARP&DC has a staff of 153 individuals: Executive Director; Community and Economic Development Director; Community and Economic Development Specialist/Loan Program Manager; Associate Planner; Executive Secretary; Fiscal Director and 2 fiscal assistants; IT Director and IT assistant; Human Resources Director; 20 employees in the Transportation Department, including Director; 47 employees in the Senior Aides Department, including Director; and 75 employees in the Early and Head Start Department, including Director.

Services provided by SEARP&DC include:

- Grant Services – SEARP&DC assist communities in the district with grant writing and grant administration. SEARP&DC has written and administered hundreds of state and federally-funded grant projects. The Economic and Community Development Departments assist communities with Community Development Block Grants, Economic Development Administration grants, Economic Development Infrastructure grants, Planning Fund grants, USDA/Rural Development grants, FEMA grants including Hazard Mitigation, Firefighter Assistance and Law Enforcement grants, Land and Water Conservation Fund and Recreational Trail grants, and Industrial Access grants.
- Economic Development – The Economic Development Department provides vital development assistance through various grant and small business loan programs which assist start-up and expanding businesses and industries create permanent jobs for the



region. SEARP&DC manages 3 types of small business loan programs including the Intermediary Relending Program, Revolving Loan Fund and Microloan Program.

- Community Development – The Community Development Department provides a variety of planning services including: comprehensive planning, zoning ordinance creation and revision, transportation planning, land use planning, subdivision regulation planning and mapping services.
- Rural Planning Organization (RPO) – SEARP&DC oversees the Southeast Alabama RPO, which is a consultation process that emphasizes communication and transmittal of information between ALDOT and rural areas of the state for rural transportation planning. The last federal transportation bill, SAFETEA-LU, has provisions for states to allow consultation for rural transportation planning outside of urbanized areas.
- Head Start and Early Head Start– SEARP&DC operates 5 Head Start centers and 2 Early Head Start centers within the region. This effort directly touches the lives of over 300 children and their families. Head Start works toward bringing about a greater degree of social competence in pre-school age children of low income families. The program provides two meals and one snack per day and yearly medical, dental, eye and mental health examinations.
- Senior Employment Program – The Senior Employment Program places senior adults in host agencies throughout the region. Currently, SEARP&DC serves over 80 senior adults. Senior adults are afforded opportunities for growth, skill enhancement and economic independence. Participants must be age 55 or older and incomes based on the federal poverty level.
- Wiregrass Transit Authority – WTA provides transportation services to the general public in Dothan and Houston County. WTA also provides contract transportation to social services agencies within the Houston County and Dothan area.

SEARP&DC is governed by a 42-member Board of Directors, seven of which are at-large members. Each county in the EDD is represented by five directors. The Executive Director is responsible for the overall administration of all departments and personnel. SEARP&DC also has a Fiscal Department that is responsible for tracking and monitoring all costs.

SEARP&DC is a designated Economic Development District. Economic Development Districts are designated by EDA to create and retain full-time permanent jobs and increase income for the unemployed and underemployed in areas of economic distress. The Five-Year Plan and subsequent Annual Updates are a collaboration of over 40 people who participated in the development of this strategy.

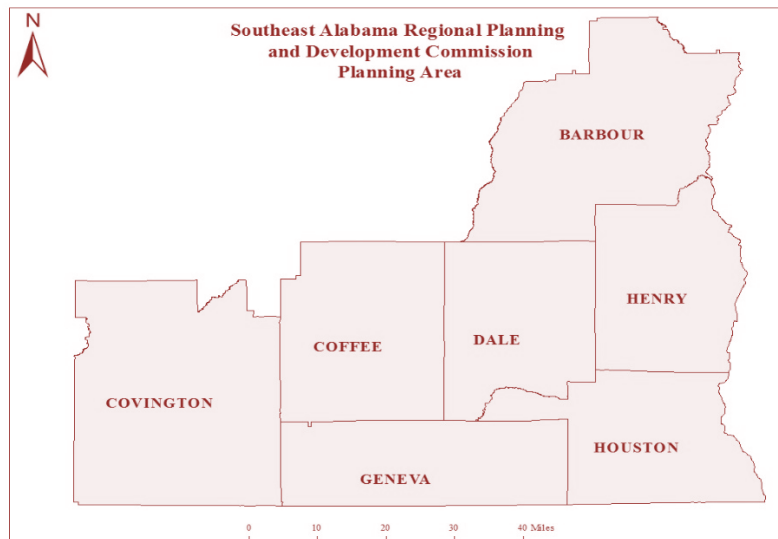


CHAPTER 1 CEDS PLANNING PROCESS

The Southeast Alabama Region

The Southeast Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission was created by Legislative Act 1126 in 1969 and is one of twelve regional councils in the state of Alabama. That act, with subsequent amendments, has provided the statutory authority for the operation of the regional councils in Alabama since that time. Much of the impetus for the creation of regional planning organizations in Alabama came from the passage of the Public Works and Economic Development Act of 1965 which provided for the establishment of Economic Development Districts (EDDs). Administrative funding was provided through the Economic Development Administration (EDA) for operation of districts tasked with responsibilities for strategic policy development to address economic development and quality of life issues on a multi-jurisdictional basis.

The Southeast Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission consists of 7 counties and 57 towns/cities.



The CEDS Planning Structure

The SEARP&DC is the regional planning agency for the southeast Alabama region. The SEARP&DC is governed by a 42- member board representing all of the seven counties in the region. The Commission is supported by a staff of full and part-time employees in the areas of Economic Development, Community Development, Transportation, Senior Employment, Head Start and Accounting/Administration.

The Southeast Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission provides staff support to the CEDS Committee. The Economic Development Director is the CEDS Project Manager.



The SEARP&DC staff is responsible for but not limited to the following:

- ✓ Arrange and Facilitate the CEDS Committee meetings
- ✓ Provide various demographic data to assist in analysis, including employment, unemployment, population, housing, building permits and income statistics
- ✓ Gather data and record input from members and prepare meeting minutes
- ✓ Guidance and support in the development of goals and objectives
- ✓ Final organization and preparation of the CEDS
- ✓ Submit final document to CEDS Committee Members for approval

The SEARP&DC CEDS staff consists of the Executive Director, Economic Development Director, Economic Development Specialist, and Executive Secretary. One staff member is a graduate of the University of Oklahoma Economic Development Institute course. Two staff members are National Development Council Certified Economic Development Finance Professionals. In addition, one staff member is a graduate of the Community Development Institute and is a Professional Community and Economic Developer. SEARP&DC continues to expand and diversify by encouraging staff to further professional development training.

Southeast Alabama Regional Planning and
Development Commission

Board of Directors

29 Elected Officials

9 Business Executives

1 Chamber of Commerce Representative

3 Education Representatives

12 Minorities

CEDS Staff

Executive Director

CED Development Director

CED Development Specialist II

Executive Secretary

CEDS Strategy Committee

The CEDS Committee for the Southeast Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission District consists of forty-two members representing the public and private sectors. The Committee includes representation from local governments, economic development organizations, chambers of commerce, financial institutions, real estate companies, community colleges, vocational-technical schools, farming associations and local private businesses. The Committee represents all stakeholders as required by the CEDS process to make certain that viewpoints of the entire district have been considered and that local skills and resources have been utilized.

The role of the CEDS Committee is to provide the SEARP&DC Region with a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy and a Plan of Action. The CEDS process is driven by the CEDS Committee and involves setting goals, examining options to reach them, and the selection of courses of action. It is a continuous process designed to guide the economic growth of the District.

The mission of the CEDS Strategic Committee is to emphasize regional cooperation and collaboration, support existing business, encourage development of new technologies and promote the regional workforce.



Community and Private Partnerships

There have been many efforts in recent years to enhance the relationship between the public and private sector in the Southeast Alabama region. The private sector has become much more involved in the community and the CEDS.

Grow Southeast Alabama

Grow Southeast Alabama formerly known as The Southeast Alabama Council for Economic Development was formed in 1994 by regional economic developers. Grow Southeast is a group of eleven counties working together to market the region for growth and economic development opportunities. Many of these members are involved in the CEDS process and in assisting with the implementation by fostering job creation through business recruitment.

Wiregrass Incubator Alliance

In 2007, SEACED applied for and received a USDA/Rural Development grant to create the Wiregrass Incubator Alliance. The Wiregrass Incubator Alliance is comprised of regional Incubator Managers. Grant funds have been used to purchase marketing supplies including banners, brochures, pens, and trade show booths. The Wiregrass Incubator Alliance joined the National Business Incubator Association (NBIA). The Alliance has conducted several seminars including a Home-based Business Seminar and a Government Contracting Seminar.

Grow Dothan

Grow Dothan is a public/private partnership for economic development for Dothan, Houston County, and the Wiregrass. Its mission is to work with businesses, governmental entities and citizens to build a thriving regional business network.

The Wiregrass Foundation

This is a private foundation that promotes philanthropy and a spirit of giving in the region. The mission of the Wiregrass Foundation is to energize the spirit and potential of our local community through charitable investments that will have significant, measurable impact on our health, education and quality of life. The Wiregrass Foundation has provided grant funds to the SEARP&DC Dothan/Houston County Microloan program, as well as SEACED, to fund the development of a regional economic development marketing plan.

Southeast Alabama Rural Planning Organization (RPO)

The RPO is a consultation process that emphasizes communication and transmittal of information between ALDOT and rural areas of the state for rural transportation planning. The last federal transportation bill, SAFETEA-LU, has provisions for states to allow consultation for rural transportation planning outside of urbanized areas.

Southeast AlabamaWorks!

The mission of the Southeast AlabamaWorks is to facilitate implementation of the programs and services that support economic and workforce development in the region. Each program's ultimate goal is to address the workforce needs of new and existing businesses and industries. The council is business led and market driven and is an integral part of a comprehensive workforce development system serving individuals and employers.



CHAPTER 2

CEDS ACTION PLAN ACCOMPLISHMENTS

VISION STATEMENT FOR THE SOUTHEAST ALABAMA REGION

The Southeast Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission envisions a regional comprehensive economic development strategy that emphasizes regional cooperation and collaboration, supports existing businesses, encourages development of new technologies, and promotes the regional workforce. This will be accomplished by strengthening local community capacity for planning and management resulting in greater opportunities for meaningful employment and improved quality of life.

Goal 1: Provide adequate infrastructure throughout the Region that will improve the quality of life for citizens and support the expansion needs of existing and development of new industries that will provide employment opportunities and increase tax revenues.

Objectives:

- Maintain and improve critical public infrastructure, such as water, sewer, highways, rails, telecommunications, and broadband to meet the needs of existing population and future growth.
- Support local government efforts in developing and maintaining adequate infrastructure to support attractive development and future employment opportunities.
- Take advantage of vacant buildings and developed industrial parks throughout the Region to locate new industries.
- Improve public highway infrastructure in smaller, rural communities throughout the Region.

Strategies:

- Support efforts to obtain federal, state and regional funding to upgrade and maintain aging infrastructure (water, sewer, streets), while supporting the expansion of infrastructure to underserved areas.



- Work with local governments to develop and maintain Capital Facilities Plans in order to identify and prioritize capital improvement and maintenance project needs.
- Identify sources of funding to implement the capital facilities and infrastructure improvements.
- Expand availability of high speed broadband access in the Region for business, citizens, education and healthcare. Identify funding sources to implement.
- Identify and promote vacant buildings to potential businesses (new or expanding) and continue to develop industrial parks with adequate infrastructure to attract new industries.
- Promote the utilization of the Region's airports by making sure the airports are well-maintained, kept up to date, and meet public and business needs.
- Collaborate with the efforts of the Human Services Transportation Program to improve public transportation.
- Identify and pursue funding opportunities for Emergency Medical Services (EMS) throughout the region including adequate facilities and equipment and training opportunities.

Accomplishments:

- SEARP&DC Staff are providing on-going administrative services to the following community development projects:

Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)/Recreational Trails Program (RTP) Projects Currently Being Administered:

<i>Community</i>	<i>Project</i>
<i>Covington County</i>	
<i>Floral</i>	Walking Trail/Boardwalk Resurfacing
<i>Geneva County</i>	
<i>Geneva</i>	Construction of Soccer Fields
<i>Henry County</i>	
<i>Headland</i>	Construction of Walking Trail

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Projects Currently Being Administered:

<i>Community</i>	<i>Project</i>
<i>Coffee County</i>	



Coffee County	Water and Sewer Improvements
Covington County	
Floral	Sewer System Improvements
Dale County	
Ariton	Street Improvements
Daleville	Water Rehabilitation
Level Plains	Streets and Drainage Improvements
Ozark	Street Improvements
Henry County	
Headland	Housing Rehabilitation
Henry County	Rail Improvements
Houston County	
Cottonwood	Sewer System Improvements
Gordon	Sewer System Improvements

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) COVID-19 Projects Being Administered:

County	Project
Barbour County	Utilities Assistance; Food Bank Assistance; Medical Center Barbour
Coffee County	Construct Emergency Operation Center
Dale County	PPE Equipment
Geneva County	PPE Equipment Construct Rescue Squad Facility
Henry County	PPE Equipment; Boys/Girls Club Assistance; Renovations to EMS
Houston County	Purchase Mobile Unit Construct PPE Storage Warehouse

- The Southeast Alabama Rural Planning Organization (RPO) is a consultation process that emphasizes communication and transmittal of information between ALDOT and rural areas of the state for rural transportation planning. The last federal transportation bill, SAFETEA-LU, has provisions for states to allow consultation for rural transportation planning outside of urbanized areas. SEARP&DC conducted the spring RPO county meetings. The State-Wide Regional RPO administrators participated in a teleconference



with ALDOT to discuss the future of RPO's. The purpose of the RPO is to determine transportation safety issues, regional transportation projects, and coordinate public transportation issues, including the regional coordinated transportation public transit plan.

- SEARP&DC continues to work on the feasibility study of widening state route 167 and state route 52 that was funded by a \$450,000 FHWA BUILD grant application.
- SEARP&DC submitted an application for the Fort Rucker Compatible Use Study to the Office of Economic Adjustment for \$101,670. The application was approved. This will provide a study of encroachment and incompatible land uses near Fort Rucker.
- SEARP&DC continues to participate in broadband meetings throughout the Region to discuss broadband expansion to areas not adequately served.
- The Southeast Alabama region has worked to improve emergency preparedness in medical services in rural areas through different methods. Each county is required to have an adopted hazard mitigation plan that studies risks and vulnerabilities in the local areas. These plans assist counties, cities, and emergency responders in prioritizing needs in the event of a disaster. Each county also has adopted emergency operation procedures that delineate responsibilities in the event of a disaster. Multiple area emergency responder organizations have applied for Homeland Security, Community Development Block Grant, and other funds to supply for equipment and training used to improve emergency services in rural areas of the region.
- Wiregrass Foundation is a private foundation promoting philanthropy and a spirit of giving in the local community which covers the Southeast Alabama EDD. The mission of the Wiregrass Foundation is to energize the spirit and potential of the wiregrass area through charitable investments that will have significant, measurable impact on our health, education and quality of life. The grants have covered education, health, and quality of life. Some of these grants have included funding for the following: first grade reading program, purchase of novels for High School English department, computers and software for Dothan Technology Center, pilot lab for a computer program for a middle school, Head Start Pre-K program, a college foundation for Wallace Community College, and Focus First: An Alabama Student Vision Initiative.
- Airport and area officials continue to attend the JumpStart conference meeting with new air carriers that may have an interest in expansion. Efforts to date have led to many meetings, but the overall market nationally is negative for expansion of new routes.
- Meetings continue with air carrier providers in the Dothan market to encourage more competitive pricing and service.
- Billboards, magazines, website, and business meetings continue to promote air service out of Dothan.



- Alabama Governor Kay Ivey recently signed into law SB149, the Alabama Broadband Accessibility Act, authorizing the creation of a broadband accessibility grant program to be administered by the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs. Through this legislation Alabama encourages accelerated private investment in broadband infrastructure by telecommunications companies, cable companies and electric cooperatives in rural areas. Grants awarded by ADECA under this act may only be awarded for projects in unserved areas.
- SEARP&DC prepared and submitted ADECA COPS LETS grants for the Town of Clayhatchee (police vehicle) and the City of Samson (police vehicle).

Goal 2: Promote a balanced regional economy with a broad business, industry, and employment mix capable of supporting quality employment opportunities, including high wage, high skill jobs.

Objectives:

- Continue to reach out to existing businesses and industries to determine expansion plans and projected employment and training needs.
- Strengthen communication and collaboration between industrial businesses and community colleges, workforce organizations, Small Business Development Centers, chambers of commerce, economic developers, and state and federal agencies.
- Continue to market assistance programs for new and existing business.
- Promote use of local, state and federal financing tools to assist in attraction of potential employers and expansion of existing business.
- Promote entrepreneurship and small business start-up by providing technical and information resources.
- Solicit and retain young professionals by emphasizing to local governments the importance of innovation and technology in the type of businesses that are recruited.

Strategies:

- Assess the region's resources, advantages and limitations as a guide to determine appropriate opportunities for new and existing businesses.
- Focus recruitment, expansion and retention efforts on growing value-added industries that pay at or above the national average wage, with special attention to identified regional clusters.



- Develop and sustain strategies to promote the establishment of new target industries and quality jobs.
- Identify local, state, federal and private funding sources available for business expansion/retention programs in the Region.
- Educate and encourage local governments to actively work to attract new or expanding business that complement existing business.
- Partner with local and regional businesses to educate high school students, their parents, teachers and school counselors about the types of employment available within the region and the training or education required for the positions.
- Solicit input from the agri-business and farming sector about the needs of the agricultural community in order to maintain its importance in the local economy.
- Support and utilize the Young Professionals organizations in retaining and attracting young professionals and families.

Accomplishments:

- Most of the Regional Chambers and/or Economic Development organizations have quarterly existing industry meetings where local business leaders come together to network.
- The Economic Development Partnership of Alabama has statewide initiative, Alabama Launchpad that provides opportunities for individuals with a business idea to receive expert guidance and establish working relationships in the business, academic and banking communities.
- SEARP&DC continues to make small business loan to new and expanding businesses in the Region. SEARP&DC has Revolving Loan Funds, USDA/Intermediary Relending Program funds, USDA/Microloan funds and Dothan Houston County Microloan Program funds. During the most recent period, 13 new loans were made resulting in job creation/retention of 111 jobs. The dollars loaned was \$1,676,900 which leveraged \$5,581,600 in private investment.
- SEARP&DC continues to market loan funds received through the EDA CARES Act.
- The Wiregrass Incubator Alliance markets local incubators to entrepreneurs in the region. The region has four small business incubators in Enterprise, Ozark, Dothan and Andalusia.
- The Dothan Area Chamber of Commerce, SEARP&DC and Troy University partnered together to create a Small Business Toolkit. The purpose of the toolkit is to provide individuals interested in starting a new business with information, including definitions of



commonly used terms, sample business plan, sample financial documents, and important phone numbers and addresses. The toolkit is available online at www.dothan.com.

- Grow Southeast continues to be an active marketing group for the EDD. Members have attended the following events: National Business Aviation Association Trade Show; ASIS International Trade Show; Heli-Expo Trade Show; Consultants Forum; Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul Trade Show; International Council of Shopping Centers Trade Show; Existing Industries Luncheon; and Farnborough International Airshow.
- The State of Alabama, through the Office of Workforce Development, has consolidated all workforce development efforts under one office. The Office of Workforce Development oversees and coordinates the activities of numerous organizations that engage in workforce information, education and training. They coordinate many statewide initiatives and provide staff support to the local Workforce Investment Boards. Dothan, Eufaula and Enterprise all have One Stop Centers, state offices for workforce and employment issues.

Goal 3: Continue to coordinate secondary, technical training and community college curriculums with needs of business and industry.

Objectives:

- Through coordination with workforce development programs, monitor the educational resources to ensure the needs of the region's employers are met.
- Encourage effective input from employers on course and program development.
- Monitor changes and issues with educational institutions. Support and promote improvements that will benefit students and area businesses and allow for growth.

Strategies:

- Identify funding sources for secondary schools and other educational institutions that assist in providing skills training to supply new industries with qualified employees.
- Develop initiatives to raise awareness among the unemployed members of the workforce about the training opportunities that are available to them.
- Support workforce development programs and technical education programs aimed at improving the skill level of the labor pool.



- Support initiatives and programs that train, retrain and upgrade skills of the area's labor force such as School-to-Work programs and On-the-Job training programs.
- Business and industries, educational institutions as well as local and state agencies, should coordinate programs and efforts to provide a workforce with the necessary skills and training required of new and/or expanding industries in the region.
- Develop more training programs for businesses and create programs for better communication between businesses and educators to ensure that businesses' needs are met.
- Educate the public about job assistance programs and retraining opportunities for laid-off employees to regain employment, as well as, older adults that are re-entering the workforce.

Accomplishments:

- Troy University Small Business Development Center provides free consulting to help new entrepreneurs evaluate their business ideas and existing businesses remain competitive in today's dynamic, global marketplace.
- Troy University in Dothan offers a NexLevel Training course, which is an intensive thirteen-week course that focuses on starting a new business.
- The State of Alabama formed 10 Regional Workforce Development Councils (WDCA) to provide a direct link to the workforce needs of business and industry at the local level. The Councils are business-driven and business-led and work with their member counties to develop a regional strategic plan and comprehensive workforce development system that supports local economic and job development activities. The Legislature approved funding for staff to run these councils, and these regional workforce directors work closely with the business community as well as the Alabama Department of Commerce, Alabama Community College System, K-12, the Alabama Department of Labor, the Career Center System and other related agencies, to identify and meet the needs of industry and workers. The legislature also required that at least 75 percent of the voting members come from the business community within each region. This raises the level of engagement with Alabama businesses.
- Alabama's Career Readiness Certificate (CRC) is an assessment-based credential based on ACT's WorkKeys that gives employers and career seekers a uniform measure of key workplace skills. The Career Readiness Certificate is a portable credential allowing employers and employees to use it anywhere in the nation.
- Alabama Industrial Development Training (AIDT) provides quality workforce development for Alabama's new and existing businesses, and expands the opportunities of its citizens through the jobs these businesses create. AIDT encourages economic



development through job-specific training. Training services are offered in many areas, and are free of charge to new and expanding businesses throughout the State.

- The Alabama Technology Network links two-year colleges, the University of Alabama system, Auburn University and the Economic Development Partnership of Alabama together to solve the needs of the state's existing manufacturing industry. ATN has 15 centers located throughout Alabama to provide local points of contact to manufacturers in need of assistance. The Southeast Alabama EDD has one ATN center located at Wallace College in Eufaula, Barbour County.
- Wallace Community College, Dothan campus, has an annual event titled "Counselor-In-Service". The program is designed to assist counselors in showing their students the relevancy between local post-secondary school and training opportunities, community needs, and available career paths.
- Most of the high schools in the Region offer dual-enrollment programs allowing students to not only receive a high school diploma, but also work towards an associate's degree.

Goal 4: Enhance public and private partnerships in determining and executing economic development policies and projects.

Objectives:

- Serve as an economic development resource to local elected officials and economic development professionals and organizations.
- Improve coordination and collaboration between and among all levels of government as well as the private sector, including enhancing public-private partnerships, and make strategic investments that align with future regional priorities.
- Improve regional awareness of economic development concepts and challenges.
- Foster a strong and diverse economy by nurturing the emerging industries and strengthening the existing competitive clusters in the Region.
- Educate Congressional delegation on needs of rural communities throughout the Region.

Strategies:

- Encourage local governments to plan for industrial and commercial development.
- Strengthen, expand, and create new partnerships between organizations and individuals traditionally involved in economic development and those that do not typically work in economic development.



- Work with local economic developers to locate funding to finance and administer job training and other forms of assistance to businesses locating in the Region.
- Encourage local elected leaders to meet with state and federal elected officials on an annual basis and provide updates on needs of communities and accomplishments.
- Assist Region communities in identifying eligible projects and prepare proposals and applications for EDA funding.

Accomplishments:

- The CEDS Committee for the Southeast Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission District consists of public and private sectors. The Committee includes representation from local governments, economic development organizations, chambers of commerce, financial institutions, real estate companies, community colleges, vocational-technical schools, farming associations and local private businesses. The CEDS Committee meets at least once a year to discuss regional economic development and community development needs.
- SEARP&DC has provided Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC)/DHR Jobs Program services in Dothan and Houston County for almost twenty years through the use of vendor relationships with local for profit transportation providers and other social service agencies. Through the use of this program transportation dependent low income individuals have been able to access employment opportunities that were not available outside of normal operation hours of traditional transit services.

Goal 5: Protect and promote the diversification of the region's agricultural economy.

Objectives:

- Promote the continued recognition of agriculture as a viable long-term and short-term land use activity.
- Encourage local officials, economic developers and citizens to recognize agribusiness as an economic asset to the Region and a major sector of the Region's economic base.
- Consider developing alternative agriculture products to diversity the Region's agricultural economy.
- As the agricultural labor force is aging, encourage educational institutions to develop curriculums for students interested in agriculture.
- Promote local farmers markets as an economic development opportunity for the Region.



Strategies:

- Assist local farmers in taking advantage of available Conservation Reserve Programs (CRP), through which farmers can receive annual rental payments and cost-share assistance to establish long-term, resource conserving covers on eligible farmland.
- Explore the opportunities for branding local agricultural products and other marketing strategies.
- Seek opportunities for local farmers to develop value added products.
- Explore funding opportunities for educational institutions to promote agribusiness through hands-on learning, i.e. outdoor classrooms.
- Continue to support poultry processing plants and increase federal awareness of the importance of poultry to the regional economy.
- Work with communities to develop a plan for marketing the Region's farmers markets including locations, produce availability and names of local growers.

Accomplishments:

- SEARP&DC works with local schools in pursuing grant opportunities through various funding agencies including the Wiregrass Rural Conservation and Development agency. Funding has included expenses related to the Classroom in the Forest program and the Groundwater Festival at Landmark Park operated by 4-H. The programs educate a total of almost 500 fourth- and fifth-graders about soil and water conservation.



CHAPTER 3 IMPLEMENTATION AND PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Southeast Alabama Regional Planning & Development Commission COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (CEDS)

The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) is mandated to contain a performance measures component and should be an element of an ongoing planning process. The evaluation should answer the questions of *“How are we doing?”* and *“What can we do better?”* Performance measures are to be an integral part of the evaluation process so that the progress of development activities can be identified in achieving the vision and goals of the CEDS.

The Southeast Alabama Regional Planning & Development Commission CEDS Committee and the Economic Development Staff (Economic Development Director and Economic Development Specialist) will be responsible for periodically evaluating the CEDS to ensure that regional economic development goals and objectives are being accomplished. The CEDS evaluation will be completed on an annual basis and any recommendations from the CEDS Committee will be incorporated into the annual CEDS update submitted to the Economic Development Administration (EDA). It is important to include broad and diverse regional participation into the CEDS evaluation process through the membership of the CEDS Committee.

This evaluation method will measure the performance and effectiveness of the CEDS and will include the following measurement criteria:

- ❑ Number and amount of state and/or federally funded investments which improved or provided infrastructure/facilities in the Southeast Alabama Region (approved projects);
- ❑ Number and amount of state and/or federally funded investments which will improve or provide infrastructure/facilities in the Southeast Alabama Region (submitted projects);
- ❑ Number and amount of state and/or federally funded investments which provided technical assistance and/or planning assistance in the Southeast Alabama Region;
- ❑ Estimated number of new jobs created/retained in the Southeast Alabama Region as a result of project(s);
- ❑ Estimated amount of private sector investment generated by project(s) in the Southeast Alabama Region;
- ❑ Estimated amount of public sector investment generated by project(s) in the Southeast Alabama Region; and
- ❑ Changes in the economic environment of the Southeast Alabama Region.



Southeast Alabama Regional Planning & Development Commission Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Evaluation

Number and amount of state and/or federally funded investments which improved or provided infrastructure/facilities or will improve or provide infrastructure/facilities in the Southeast Alabama Region. All submitted projects are listed with the approved projects highlighted.

A total of 30 state and/or federal applications were submitted and/or funded during the period January 1, 2021 to November 30, 2021 totaling \$10,986,194. A total of 9 projects submitted have been approved to date totaling \$3,279,116. This includes project applications submitted to Community Development Block Grant (CDBG); Community Development Block Grant-Covid (CDBG-CV); USDA/Rural Development; Land and Water Conservation Funds (LWCF); Local Law Enforcement Grant (LETS); and Recreational Trail Program (RTP). This list represents community and economic development projects submitted within the past year for regional local governments and applicants that address local needs and provide long-term benefits.

Applicant:	Project Description:	Year:	Program:	Project Amount:
City of Samson	Police Car	2021	LETS	\$33,000
Town of Clayhatchee	Police Car	2021	LETS	\$39,635
City of Slocomb	Bike/Nature Trail	2021	RTP	\$110,040
City of Headland	Walking Trail	2021	RTP	\$228,300
City of Florala	Walking Trail/Boardwalk Resurfacing	2021	RTP	\$495,100
City of Midland City	Senior Van	2021	St of AL	\$85,716
Barbour County Commission	Utilities Assistance; Food Assistance; Medical Equipment	2021	CDBG-CV	\$300,000
Coffee County Commission	Emergency Operation Center	2021	CDBG-CV	\$770,000
Dale County Commission	PPE Equipment	2021	CDBG-CV	\$400,000
Geneva County Commission	PPE Equipment; Rescue Squad Facility	2021	CDBG-CV	\$300,000
Henry County Commission	PPE Equipment; Boys/Girls Club Assistance; Renovations to EMS	2021	CDBG-CV	\$300,000
Houston County Commission	Mobile Unit; PPE Storage Warehouse	2021	CDBG-CV	\$400,000
City of Andalusia	Water/Street Improvements	2021	CDBG	\$755,000
Town of Lockhart	Street Improvements	2021	CDBG	\$325,000
Town of Babbie	Street Improvements	2021	CDBG	\$159,000
Town of Madrid	Street Improvements	2021	CDBG	\$185,900
Town of Pinckard	Street Improvements	2021	CDBG	\$281,700
Town of Midland City	Housing Rehabilitation	2021	CDBG	\$385,000
Town of Newville	Water Improvements	2021	CDBG	\$360,000
City of Samson	Senior Center	2021	CDBG	\$360,000
Barbour County Commission	Senior Center	2021	CDBG	\$465,396
Town of Clayhatchee	Recreational Improvements	2021	CDBG	\$320,000
City of Clayton	Street Improvements	2021	CDBG	\$332,489
Geneva County Commission	Street Improvements	2021	CDBG	\$450,000
City of Opp	Street Improvements	2021	CDBG	\$352,580



City of Slocumb	Street Improvements	2021	CDBG	\$404,663
City of Andalusia	Fire Station Improvements	2021	CDBG-CV	\$660,900
City of Opp	Street Improvements	2021	CDBG-CV	\$400,000
Geneva County Commission	Hospital Equipment	2021	CDBG-CV	\$485,000
City of Geneva	Sewer Improvements	2021	CDBG-CV	\$841,775
TOTAL				\$10,986,194

Number and amount of state and/or federally funded investments which provided technical assistance and/or planning assistance in the Southeast Alabama Region

<u>Organization</u>	<u>Grant</u>	<u>Investment</u>
1) SEARP&DC (Planning & TA)	\$243,426	
2) SEARP&DC EDA TA (annual)	\$ 70,000	\$30,000
3) SEARP&DC RPO	\$ 51,000	\$12,750
4) SEARP&DC EDA CARES Act	\$165,000	
5) SEARP&DC EDA CARES Act – RLF TA	\$ 80,000	

Estimated number of new jobs created/retained in the Southeast Alabama Region as a result of project(s)

During the period, jobs were created and/or retained through projects undertaken by the regional staff. Most of these jobs are above the average hourly rate and will provide higher net income to these employees.

	<u>Jobs Created/Retained</u>
Small Business Loan Programs	<u>111</u>
Total:	111

Estimated amount of private sector investment generated by project(s) in the Southeast Alabama Region

	<u>Private Sector Investment</u>
Small Business Loan Programs	<u>\$5,581,600</u>
Total	\$5,581,600

Estimated amount of public sector investment generated by project(s) in the Southeast Alabama Region



	<u>Public Sector Investments</u>
SEARP&DC TA	\$ 30,000
SEARP&DC - Loans	\$1,676,900
SEARP&DC – ALDOT	\$ 12,750
Other Municipal/State/Federal Projects	<u>\$ 630,638</u>
	\$2,350,288

Changes in the economic environment of the Southeast Alabama Region.

There have been no major changes in the economic environment of the Southeast Alabama Region.



CEDS STRATEGIC COMMITTEE

NAME	COUNTY	OCCUPATION	RACE
BARBOUR			
Jack Tibbs, Jr.		Mayor	W-M
Frances Crews		Commissioner	B-F
Thomas E. Crossley		Businessman	B-M
Earl Gilmore		Chairman, Co Commission	W-M
Ken Novak		Businessman	W-M
Rachel Smith		Commissioner	B-F
COFFEE			
Rod Morgan		Businessman	W-M
Gladys Yelverton		Attorney	B-F
Tom Maddox		Mayor	W-M
Dean Smith		Commissioner	W-M
AL Britt		Commissioner	W-M
Johnathan Lockett		City Councilwoman	B-M
COVINGTON			
Patricia Gunter		Mayor	W-F
Terry Holley		Mayor	W-M
Sammy Glover		Businessman	B-M
Charlotte Hunt		City Councilwoman	W-F
Joe Richburg		Businessman	W-M
Greg White		Chairman, Co Commission	W-M
DALE			
Steve McKinnon		Commissioner	W-M
Leah Harlow		City Councilwoman	W-F
Jayne Stayton		Mayor	W-M
Charles Gary		Commissioner	W-M
Mark Blankenship		Mayor	W-M
Diane Flournoy		Educator - Early Child Ed	B-F
GENEVA			
William Birdsong		Agriculture	W-M
Toby Seay		Chairman, Co Comm	W-M
Rob Hinson		Attorney - Mayor	W-M
Neil Strickland		Mayor	W-M
Kevin Ammons		Educator	W-M
Kelli Brannon		Businesswoman	W-F
HENRY			
Henry Grimsley		Commissioner	B-M
David Money		Judge of Probate, Chairman	W-M
Jimmy Money		Mayor	W-M
Gregory Reynolds		Commissioner	B-M
Tinesha Murphy		Education	B-F
John Glover		Councilman	B-M
HOUSTON			
Kevin Dorsey		City Commissioner	B-M
Lori Wilcoxon		Businesswoman	W-F
Matt Parker		Chamber President	W-M
Mark Culver		Chairman, Co Comm	W-M
Kim Trotter		Mayor	W-F
Adam Hartzog		Businessman	W-M