



**Executive Committee
February 23, 2022
Hybrid Meeting In-Person And via Zoom
Land of Sky Regional Council
339 New Leicester Highway, Suite 140, Asheville, North Carolina 28806**

AGENDA

1. Call to Order (11:30am)

2. Consent Agenda

Consent Agenda items are considered routine and noncontroversial in nature, and are considered and approved by a single motion and vote. If any member of the Executive Committee requests an item be removed from the Consent Agenda for separate consideration and action that item will be placed under the Business, Updates and Discussion section of the agenda.

- A. January 26, 2022 Executive Committee Meeting Minutes
- B. Budget Amendment #5

3. New Business

- A. Mountain Mobility Staff Bonus
- B. Healthy Opportunities update

4. Other Items

- A. Executive Director Report

6. Adjournment

**Land of Sky Regional Council
Executive Committee
Regular Meeting
January 26, 2022**

Minutes

Land of Sky Regional Council's Executive Committee held a meeting through the Zoom platform on Wednesday, January 26, 2022. Executive Committee members participating in the meeting included Chair Barbara Volk, Larry Harris, Bob Tomasulo, Norris Gentry, Preston Blakely, and Matt Wechtel, constituting a quorum.

Land of Sky staff participating in the meeting included Nathan Ramsey, LeeAnne Tucker, Charlotte Sullivan, Glenda Brown, Christina Giles (Zoom Host), and Danna Stansbury, and Zia Rifkin (Minutes). Land of Sky's Legal Counsel, Susan Russo-Klein was present, too.

Call to Order –Chair Volk called the meeting to order at approximately 11:00 am.

Approval of Consent Agenda – The consent agenda composed of items A. December 1, 2021, Executive Committee Minutes; and B. Budget Amendment #4, was presented for approval with no modification requested.

Norris Gentry moved to approve the consent agenda as presented. Larry Harris seconded, and the motion carried unanimously upon a roll call vote, and without further discussion.

New Business

Land of Sky Regional Council FY 21-22 Audit Contract

Charlotte Sullivan provided information regarding the Audit contract with Anderson Smith & Wike PA, which is required by the Local Government Commission to be approved on an annual basis. Anderson Smith & Wike PLLC served as the Council's external auditor for FY20-21. The proposed contract is for FY21-22 (fiscal year ending June 30, 2022). The audit fee will be \$26,000 and the cost for writing the Council's financial statements will be \$3,000. The audit fee is an increase of \$500 from the prior year.

Larry Harris moved to accept LOSRC entering into the FY 21-22 Audit Contract with Anderson Smith & Wike, PLLC at a cost of \$29,000. Maureen Copelof seconded and the motion carried upon a roll call vote and without further discussion.

Governmental Relations Contract with EQV Strategic

Nathan Ramsey communicated that EQV Strategic is a governmental relations firm in Raleigh, NC. The firm represents the NC Association of Regional Councils of Government (NCARCOG). The engagement by Land of Sky Regional Council will help support local projects in the region for local governments and economic development. Two projects specifically would be to secure part of the funding to implement the plan proposed by the 18-county EDA "Build Back Better" application and funding space at the Asheville Regional Airport to establish a Port of Entry/Foreign Trade Zone at the airport. The proposed fee is \$2000 per month with Land of Sky Regional Council paying 60% (\$1,200 per month) and Southwestern Commission paying 40% (\$800 per month). The term of the contract would be seven months through July 2022. The funding source would be local government dues. The purpose of a separate contract with EQV is for them to advocate for the special projects for the LOSRC region.

Larry Harris moved to approve the Governmental Relations Contract with EQV Strategic and to direct the Executive Director to execute the contract with a term of seven-months (through July 2022) with EQV Strategic, supporting that with funding from Local Dues at 60% of the total expense (\$1200 per month) and for Southwestern COG to support 40% of the monthly expense (\$800). Norris Gentry seconded and the motion.

Discussion occurred regarding the funding that might support the contract with EQV after the seven month term is over and Nathan Ramsey noted that LOSRC has many pots of funding (State and Federal), but this contract cannot be funded with government funding and Local Dues can support the expense. He noted too, that a future conversation is slated to review the current level of dues paid by Member Governments and there may be a proposal to peg local dues to population growth. The overall effect of the current dues structure, which hasn't changed in over 20 years, is that this funding is used for many of the things that LOS does that cannot be paid with other funding and where flexibility is needed (staff holiday bonuses, match for State/Federal grants, local

contracts (like EQV), etc.). Long term the organization has an issue with the current structure for local dues and Member Governments would need to engage in a conversation about the structure of local dues beyond FY 22.

The motion carried upon a roll call vote, and without further discussion.

Appropriation to Nonprofit

Land of Sky Regional Council needs to provide "seed money" to Friends of Land of Sky to support operational expenses. Charlotte Sullivan shared that the initial bank account for the nonprofit was started with JMBE funding. Now, the JMBE funding needs to be transferred back to LOSRC and in order not to close the bank account for the nonprofit, LOSRC should provide \$5000 in seed money to pay for expenses that the nonprofit has coming up.

Maureen Copelof moved to approve the transfer of \$5000 in local money from Land of Sky Regional Council to Friends of Land of Sky Regional Council. Larry Harris seconded, and the motion carried upon a roll call vote, and without further discussion.

Staff Bonus Healthy Opportunities

Land of Sky Regional Council has been working for several years with Dogwood Health Trust on the Healthy Opportunities Medicaid Managed Care Pilot. Vicki Jennings, Mountain Mobility Manager, has led this work at Land of Sky. Land of Sky Regional Council has been selected by Dogwood Health Trust to be the Healthy Opportunities transportation lead serving 18-counties in Western North Carolina. The Council has received \$400,000 for capital improvements and notice has been received of \$250,000 in operational funding from DHT to begin the operational portion of this initiative.

Vicki Jennings has committed countless hours working on this project. This work is in addition to her responsibilities as Mountain Mobility Manager. The bonus is to compensate her for the work she has done above and beyond to bring a major new program to Land of Sky. The funding for the bonus (\$5000) will come from local funds.

Bob Tomasulo moved to approve a one-time \$5000 bonus, paid from local funds, for Vicki Jennings for her extraordinary work on the Healthy Opportunities Initiative at Land of Sky. Preston Blakely seconded, and the motion carried upon a roll call vote, and without further discussion.

Staff Pay Adjustment

Per the Land of Sky Regional Council Pay and Classification Plan the Communications and Administrative Services Coordinator position is a Pay Grade 27 with the range of minimum \$54,069, midpoint \$67,587 and maximum is \$81,104. The current pay for this position is \$62,254 and this individual has been employed with the Council for over 16 years. There is sufficient funding to pay for this salary adjustment to \$70,000. In addition, per the Land of Sky Regional Council Pay and Classification Plan the NEMT Lead Specialist minimum is \$44,482, midpoint \$55,603 and maximum is \$66,724. The individual in this role is managing the operations for NEMT and has been an exceptional leader during a time of transition and is also a member of the LOSRC Leadership Team. There is sufficient funding in the NEMT budget to pay for this salary adjustment to \$53,930.

Larry Harris moved to approve the staff pay adjustments as presented and as consistent with the LOS Pay and Classification Study and effective the next pay period. Bob Tomasulo seconded, and the motion carried upon a roll call vote, and without further discussion.

Proposed Temporary Salary Adjustment for Aging Staff

LeeAnne Tucker, AAA Director shared that since January 2021, Land of Sky Regional Council has collaborated with NC Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to lead the Money Follows the Person (MFP) transition work in Region B. This program assists long term care residents to move back home or back into the community. In late 2021, DHHS asked Land of Sky Regional Council to temporarily cover six central counties (Davidson, Davie, Forsyth, Stokes, Surry, and Yadkin counties) for six months, January through June of 2022, until a new agency can be found to perform the work. Ginger Hill, MFP Transitions Coordinator, agreed to the additional workload. Covering these six additional counties will double Ms. Hill's caseload.

LOSRC proposes a temporary increase of \$5000 in Ginger's salary for the next six months (\$51,500 to \$56,500). Additionally, she may need to work up to 10 hours extra per week as needed to perform the work. Ms. Hill will be paid overtime at 150% of her hourly rate for the 10 hours per week beyond 40 hours. This proposal is supported by DHHS. Funding is available for this increase as well.

Maureen Copelof moved to approve the temporary salary adjustment as presented effective the next pay period. Larry Harris seconded, and the motion carried upon a roll call vote, and without further discussion.

Proposed Salary Adjustment and Job Title Change for Mountain Mobility Manager

Nathan Ramsey shared that Land of Sky Regional Council has been selected as the Transportation Lead for the Dogwood Health Trust Healthy Opportunities project. Dogwood Health Trust has provided the Council \$400,000 for capital and an initial payment of \$250,000 for operating expense.

Currently, the Mountain Mobility Manager is Pay Grade 32 pursuant to the Land of Sky Regional Council Pay and Classification Study. The minimum pay is \$69,008, midpoint is \$86,261 and maximum is \$103,513. The current Mountain Mobility Manager salary is \$72,100. We are proposing to rename this position to Healthy Opportunities Transformation Manager/Mountain Mobility Manager and increase the salary from \$72,100 to \$80,000.

Norris Gentry moved to approve the name change for the Mountain Mobility Manager position and the salary adjustment as presented effective the next pay period. Larry Harris seconded, and the motion carried upon a roll call vote, and without further discussion.

Nathan Ramsey shared that there will be two positions that need to be hired immediately for the Healthy Opportunities Initiative. These positions are already part of the Pay and Classification Study, and no action is needed from the Executive Committee in order for the organization to proceed with hiring for these positions.

Other Items

Executive Director Report

Nathan Ramsey shared that his current report is included in the agenda packet, and he encouraged Executive Committee members to reach out with any questions or comments regarding the report.

Nathan Ramsey noted that the LOSRC indirect rate is going down about 4% to 40.62%. Staff expense for the State Health Plan is going to increase substantially and he shared that a pay plan for staff going into FY23 would be presented to the Executive Committee at a future meeting. A COLA may be proposed for staff.

Nathan Ramsey shared that DHT is reviewing a proposal to provide \$300 thousand per year to assist with broadband development, ARPA activities and technical assistance. This funding would go to the ECD, and they are experiencing capacity issues with current staff operating at full capacity. He noted also that the state budget included funding for COGs to deploy broadband and provide other services. (Most of the challenges currently facing the organization are challenges of opportunity.

Nathan Ramsey noted that more Covid cases have been seen among staff than at any time during the pandemic. The office will remain open to the public, but staff are required to work remotely except for NEMT, Finance and Administrative staff.

Discussion occurred regarding the funding that the General Assembly (GA) has allocated to COGS and Nathan Ramsey shared that the GA has graciously provided \$10 million to the COGs in the State and the NCACOG Director is currently working on a plan to allocate that funding. This funding is meant to assist COGs to expand capacity. This funding would be directed to LOSRC's ECD, which doesn't have dedicated funding but rather relies on local contracts with units of governments and through other funding sources (state and federal). In addition, DHT is planning to commit \$300 thousand to LOSRC in order to expand capacity enabling ECD to provide technical assistance to local government entities to assist them to comply with the requirements and regulations of ARPA and other funding. Nathan Ramsey shared that LOSRC is working closely with the NC League of Municipalities, the NC Association of County Organizations and the NCACOG to deploy the funding allocated in the State Budget. He noted that this is the first time in many years that the GA has allocated funding to COGs. Executive Committee members concurred that all of the funding available is an additional burden on local government staff.

Adjournment

Chair Volk adjourned the meeting, as there was no further business.

Respectfully submitted by Zia Rifkin



BUDGET AMENDMENT RESOLUTION #5

BE IT ORDAINED by the governing board of the Land of Sky Regional Council that the following amendment be made to the annual budget ordinance for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2022.

SECTION I. To amend the appropriations as follows:

| | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Area Agency on Aging | \$ 60,497.00 |
| Workforce Development | 4,999.00 |
| Economic & Community Development | 307,500.00 |
| General Operations | - |
| Total Appropriations | <u>\$ 372,996.00</u> |

SECTION II. It is estimated that the following revenues will be available for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2021 and ending June 30, 2022.

| | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------|
| Area Agency on Aging -Federal | \$ 53,982.00 |
| Area Agency on Aging- State | 6,515.00 |
| Area Agency on Aging – Local | |
| Area Agency on Aging – Local Dues | |
| Area Agency on Aging – Private | - |
| Area Agency on Aging – In Kind | - |

| | |
|---|----------------------|
| Area Agency On Aging – Fees | |
| Appropriated Fund Balance | - |
| Total Area Agency on Aging | \$ 60,497.00 |
| | |
| Workforce Development - Federal | \$ - |
| Workforce Development - State | - |
| Workforce Development - Local | - |
| Workforce Development - Local Dues | |
| Workforce Development - Private | 4,999.00 |
| Workforce Development - In Kind | - |
| Workforce Development - Fees | |
| Total Workforce Development | \$ 4,999.00 |
| | |
| Economic & Community Development - Federal | \$ 250,000.00 |
| Economic & Community Development - State | - |
| Economic & Community Development - Local | 57,500.00 |
| Economic & Community Development - Local Dues | - |
| Economic & Community Development - Private | (48,000.00) |
| Economic & Community Development - In Kind | - |
| Economic & Community Development - Fees | |
| Appropriated Fund Balance | 48,000.00 |
| Total Economic & Community Development | \$ 307,500.00 |
| | |
| General Operations -Local Dues | |
| General Operations - Appropriated Fund Balance | |
| General Operations - Fees | |
| General Operations - Other | |
| Total General Operations | - |
| Total General Operations | - |
| | |
| Total Estimated Revenues | \$ 372,996.00 |

SECTION III. The finance officer is authorized to allocate the amounts of projects, programs and functions to appropriate objects of expenditures in accordance with the requirements of the contract concerning each project, program or function. The Finance Officer is authorized to reallocate departmental appropriations among various line item objects of expenditures and revenues as necessary during the budget year. However, any changes to salary or compensation of any employee for any reason shall be approved by the Executive Director and the Executive Committee before such changes takes effect.

SECTION IV. The Chairman and/or appropriate officers are authorized to execute all contracts or grants necessary to implement this budget, including federal and state grants, contracts for assistance to local governments and agencies, and subcontracts to local entities necessary to implement Council programs and activities.

SECTION V. Copies of this resolution shall be furnished to the finance/budget officer as directions in carrying out her official duties.

Adopted this 23rd day of February, 2022.

Mayor Barbara Volk, Chair

Nathan Ramsey, Attest

Budget Amendment #5 - "AAA"

| Grant # | Grant Description | Amount | Comments | Federal | State |
|---------|---|-----------|---|-----------|----------|
| 502 | Transition- Money Follows the Person | 49,965.00 | Additional Funding to add counties- Partial Amendment | 43,450.00 | 6,515.00 |
| 524 | Families First Coronavirus Response Act | 10,532.00 | Adjust to Actual | 10,532.00 | |

Budget Amendment #5 - "ECD"

| Grant # | Grant Description | Amount | Comments | Federal | State | Local | Private | In-kind | Fees | Appropriated FB |
|------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|-------|------------------|--------------------|---------|------|------------------|
| 4A1 | Village of Flat Rock (ARP) | 15,000.00 | New Funding | | | 15,000.00 | | | | |
| 4A2 | Mars Hill (ARP) | 30,000.00 | New Funding | | | 30,000.00 | | | | |
| 463 | Stormwater Management | 12,500.00 | Additional Funding | | | 12,500.00 | | | | |
| 70A | Healthy Opportunities- Operations | 250,000.00 | Additional Funding | 250,000.00 | | | | | | |
| 428 | DHT-WNC Broadband/Mapping | - | Adjust Source of Funding | | | | (48,000.00) | | | 48,000.00 |
| Total ECD | | \$ 307,500.00 | | 250,000.00 | | 57,500.00 | (48,000.00) | | | 48,000.00 |

| Grant # | Grant Description | Budget Amendment #5 "Workforce" | | | Federal | State | Private |
|---------|--|---------------------------------|------------------|-------------|-------------|--------------------|---------|
| | | Amount | Comments | | | | |
| 212 | Education & Workforce Collaboration -Belk Foundation | 4,999.00 | Adjust to Actual | | | 4,999.00 | |
| | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| | Total Workforce | \$ 4,999.00 | | \$ - | \$ - | \$ 4,999.00 | |



EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AGENDA ITEM

Item: 3A - Staff Bonus – Mountain Mobility

Nature of Item: Action Requested

Attachment(s): N/A

Background:

Since Land of Sky has named Vicki Jennings as the Transformation Manager to lead the Healthy Opportunities Pilot, the Mountain Mobility team, and specifically Charlie Lee, has taken on many new roles and responsibilities to ensure Land of Sky continues to fulfill its obligations to Buncombe County under our contract to provide administrative support. Charlie's willingness to learn new tasks and to increase his responsibilities will provide valuable leadership to the restructured Mountain Mobility team. The funding for this bonus will come from the current Mountain Mobility budget.

Responsible Staff: Nathan Ramsey, Executive Director and Vicki Jennings, Mountain Mobility Manager and Transformation Manager.

Suggested Motion: Motion to approve the one-time staff bonus of \$4,000 to Charlie Lee as proposed.



EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AGENDA ITEM

Item: 3B – Healthy Opportunities Update

Nature of Item: Information

Attachment(s): N/A

Background:

Land of Sky Regional Council has been named by Dogwood Health Trust to be the Transformation Lead for the Healthy Opportunities Medicaid pilot serving 18-counties in Western North Carolina. The pilot has four focus areas: Food Insecurity, Housing, Transportation and Toxic Stress. DHT has provided the Council with a \$400,000 grant for office renovations as well as funding for operating costs. This pilot is one of three in North Carolina focused on the social determinants of health.

Responsible Staff: Vicki Jennings, Transformation Manager

Suggested Motion: N/A

Land of Sky Regional Council
Executive Director's Report
Respectfully submitted by Nathan Ramsey
February 23, 2022

1. Finance

- We are excited about MIP (finance software) training which is happening the first week in May.
- Our team has started working with Dr. Jim on Pivot tables and we are gearing up for the FY 22/23 budget.
- The auditors will be here in March to begin compliance work.

2. Economic & Community Development & Transportation Planning

a. Planning Services.

- We are excited to share that Sara Nichols, Regional Planner, presented at the Net Inclusion 2022 Conference on a panel about Coalitions and Digital Equity Planning. <https://www.digitalinclusion.org/net-inclusion-2022/>
- January 25 & 27 the Clean Cities team hosted a workshop series to educate local government and school personnel on how fleet and building decisions can improve air quality while strengthening public budgets. These sessions included AICP credits for sustainability and hosted over 50 people.
- We have released an RFP to seek a Creative Manufacturing Consultant. The RFP closed and candidates were interviewed by the selection committee. The project will be moving forward with a contract soon.
- The WNC Innovation Park was selected as a Duke Sanford School of Public Policy's Spring Consulting Project. We are working with staff and students as they begin their project. Staff continues to seek funding for a feasibility study/strategy to develop the WNC Innovation Park with the coalition of 5 COGS, Dogwood Health Trust, WCU, Montreat College, Community College System, and many other partners.
- We have kicked off a Regional Economic Collaboration and Analysis led by the Region's Chambers of Commerce and business sector. Ernst and Young was selected as the Consultant for this effort and is being funded by the EDA and Dogwood Health Trust.
- Staff continues working with several local governments and partners on applications for economic development, community development, transportation, and infrastructure implementation with BRIC/FEMA, EDA, and foundations. These projects will support transportation connections, resilience, job growth, industry expansion, and place-based development.
- Staff are working with several jurisdictions to support ARPA projects and administration. Please connect with Erica if you would like to learn more: erica@landofsky.org ARPA information can be found here: <https://www.nc.gov/agencies/pandemic-recovery-office/american-rescue-plan-act-information-and-resources>
- The NCGS 160D requires all Comprehensive Plans be updated to meet the new guidelines by July 1, 2022. Please contact erica@landofsky.org if you have questions or would like assistance updating your plans.

- Staff is working with the EPA's Office of Research & Development to explore future growth scenarios for the region through 2045 based on land use, transportation, population and employment using UrbanSim. Contact Mary for more information: mary@landofsky.org
- LOS has been awarded a 205j grant to support continued development of the WNC Stormwater Program. LOSRC has launched the Regional Stormwater Services Program to support small MS4s and interested communities with stormwater management and MS4 stormwater compliance. Contact Mary for more information: mary@landofsky.org
- Staff is wrapping up stormwater system inventories and integrated MS4 reporting field app deployment with Fletcher and Woodfin.
- Staff has been working with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on a local GAC (Greening America's Communities) Project through a Pilot Program. The Project entails green infrastructure and stream restoration concept designs for A-B Tech's campus. Designs were completed and presented at 6 stakeholder and public meetings.
- Staff secured 319 funding for a new bioretention system for stormwater management in Black Mountain, part of the continued implementation of the Upper Swannanoa River Watershed Management Plan.
- Staff are wrapping up Student Connect- A partnership with NC Department of Natural and Cultural Resources and Southwest Commission to help reduce connectivity barriers for students across the state. This was a fast-moving effort with a tight timeframe to use CARES Act funds to distribute laptops, hotspots and materials throughout Regions A and B.
- Staff have contracted with the Department of IT to distribute and purchase service for 130+ hotspots for telehealth providers in the western region. The hotspots are being prepared to be distributed to the partner agencies.
- LOS partnered with NC DIT and the Division of Rural Health to distribute hotspots with 12 months service, for telehealth programs in WNC. To date 130 hotspots have been distributed to programs in three counties.
- LOS is partnering with the Institute of Emerging Issues and Dogwood Health Trust to assist develop and implement Digital Inclusion Plans in WNC.
- Clean Cities Program is assisting local governments prepare for VW Settlement projects. Please contact Sara Nichols with any questions or requests: sara@landofsky.org
- Staff are completing the survey, analysis and final products with Outdoor/Recreation Sector manufacturers to determine opportunities in supply chains, workforce and economic diversity in cooperation with High Country Council, Southwestern Commission and Riverbird Research. Final documents to be shared soon!
- Staff are working with several communities for planning and zoning assistance including Hot Springs, Mars Hill, Montreat, Woodfin, Flat Rock, Maggie Valley, Andrews. We are partnering with Region A staff to assist with communities in their region.

- We continue to partner with the Chambers of Commerce, Small Business Support Agencies, nonprofits, and economic developers to assist small businesses through COVID-19 impacts.
- Staff continues to serve as a Steering Committee member for the statewide RISE project for NC Department of Public Safety, NC Office of Recovery and Resilience.
- The TDM Coordinator is working with Workforce, Inspire, and employers to develop a vanpool for under-resourced individuals to access job sites.
- LOSRC's Waste Reduction Partners program is providing free water-use management assessments for large customers of the City of Asheville's Water Resources Department. These on-site assessments help identify utility costs savings for the City.
- LOS received CMAQ funding to continue support of air quality outreach initiatives in WNC.

b. Transportation Services

- MPO & RPO staff continue to work with local partners and NCDOT on project design and development.
- Staff is assisting in TAB, STIP and CTP development and Board meetings.
- RPO staff serving as NCARPO Association President, the NCARPO is the statewide organization representing Rural Transportation Planning Organizations in NC
- MPO and RPO staff are serving on the state's Prioritization Workgroup with other representatives from MPOs, RPOs, and NCDOT.
- The MPO is providing funding to several special studies in the region getting ready to being in FY 2022: Haywood County Greenway Master Plan, Reed Creek Greenway Extension Feasibility Study (City of Asheville), and the Buncombe County Multimodal Master Plan.
- The MPO has completed corridor studies on Hendersonville Road and Tunnel Road, in cooperation with the City of Asheville, Buncombe County, and NCDOT. The Studies can be found here: <http://frenchbroadrivermpo.org/local-plans/>
- The MPO recently accepted the Regional Transit Feasibility Study. More information is available here: <http://frenchbroadrivermpo.org/regional-transit-feasibility-study/>
- The MPO-supported Richland Creek Greenway Study was recently completed by the Town of Waynesville.
- The MPO-supported studies for McDowell/Biltmore Avenue (City of Asheville), Close the GAP (City of Asheville), and Bike/Ped Counters (City of Asheville) are on-going.

3. Aging

Calendar of Events

- The Regional Aging Advisory Council will meet on Thursday, March 10, at 10:00am. Guest speaker will be Grant Weather, Low Vision Services and Outreach Coordinator with the Community Low Vision Center at Industries for the Blind.
- Save the date: Planning has begun for next year's Southeastern Area Agencies on Aging (SE4A) Conference to be held at the Grove Park Inn on August 27-30, 2023.

- Every May, the Administration for Community Living (ACL) leads the nation's observance of Older Americans Month. In 2022, ACL will be focusing on aging in place – how older adults can plan to stay in their homes and live independently in their communities for as long as possible. The [2022 theme is *Age My Way*](#), an opportunity to explore the many ways older adults can remain in and be involved with their communities.

Family Caregiver Support Program

- Staff is facilitating the Caregiver Harnessing Tech to Connect Committee which presented a webinar on February 15, 2022. Two local pharmacists discussed how caregivers can leverage technology options for safer and easier medication management.
- Staff is part of a Kinship Caregiver Stakeholder Roundtable that is working on improving delivery of services to Kinship Caregivers in Transylvania and Henderson Counties.
 - Staff is on a sub-committee to explore possibility of an all-inclusive facility where Kinship Caregivers can go to receive assistance with finding and signing up for services to help meet their needs.
- Staff is working with providers to assist family caregivers of those who have been affected by the closing of the adult day care facility in Transylvania County.

Ombudsman Program

- Donna Case has been hired as a new Ombudsman and will begin on 02/28/2022.
- Staff continues to await new Community Advisory Committee training plans and regulations.
- Staff is working with the state in order to create the new Community Advisory Committee training expectations.

Money Follows the Person (MFP) Community Inclusion Specialist: Carol Allison joined the MFP team as the new Community Inclusion Consultant. She is currently training on the many parts of MFP with the team out of Raleigh. The Consultant position will be responsible for promotion and education of the MFP program for the 37 western NC counties.

Senior Companion Program: The Senior Companion Program has a waiting list for referrals and most of our volunteers are back volunteering. Six volunteers retired recently but five new volunteers are completing the on-boarding process. Staff is in the process of volunteer annual reviews and updating our Volunteer Station Memorandums of Understanding. In March, staff will send out the annual survey to clients, to gauge the impact of the program.

American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA): Staff is still waiting on additional guidance from the Division of Aging and Adult Services (DAAS) before moving forward with the Nutrition contracts. However, award letters have been sent to providers. We are still waiting for approval from DAAS for the remainder of the proposed ARPA plan.

COVID-19 Vaccine Outreach: In mid-February, Jenna Sharrits joined the Land of Sky team as the Aging Program Specialist with a focus on outreach and education of the COVID-19 vaccine to homebound older adults. Jenna, a native of Henderson County, holds a bachelor's of science

degree from University of North Carolina at Asheville where she majored in Health and Wellness Promotion with a minor in Religious Studies. She also has a master's degree in Aging Studies with a focus in Public Health through Wichita State University. Previously, she was the Wellness Associate at Summit Hills Retirement Community in Spartanburg, South Carolina. She was also a wellness intern at Givens Estates. In her spare time, she loves being outside whether it's running half marathons, going on a hike, or being by the lake. Jenna will work remotely and can be reached at jenna@landofsky.org.

Home and Community Care Block Grant: January 2022 Report of Services Provided

- Adult Day Care/Health Days = 2296
- Meals – delivered/congregate = 106,280
- In-home Aide hours = 7112
- Legal Services hours = 885
- Transportation trips – 29,389
- Home Improvement projects = 15

Money Follows the Person Transition Coordinator:

Western counties being served: Buncombe, Henderson, Transylvania, Polk, Madison, McDowell, Rutherford, Mitchell, Madison. The current caseload for the Western counties is seven.

- Four clients are waiting on housing before they can transition.
- Three clients are scheduled to transition April 1, 2022.

Central counties being served: Forsyth, Davidson, Surry, Davie, Stokes, Yadkin. The current caseload for the Central counties is 10.

- Four clients cannot locate housing.
- Four clients are scheduled to transition April 1, 2022.
- Two clients will be transitioning back home their loved ones.

Health Promotion and Disease Prevention

- Health Promotion and Disease Prevention staff welcomes Jenna Sharrits to the AAA team as the Vaccine Outreach Coordinator.
- Staff will co-present at the National Council on Aging Grand Rounds February 22, on behalf of the Advancing Equity and Inclusion in Evidence-based Health Promotion Programs Advisory Group. Topics will cover how to deliver evidence-based programs (EBPs) in the virtual/remote environment, successes of work, and lessons learned.
- Staff continues to work with Blue Ridge Pride and Generations Plus to bring content including the Rainbow Inspiration series and Pride Time to older LGBTQ+ adults.
- Staff will collaborate with Healthy Aging NC and UNCA to conduct future focus groups with former Tai Chi for Arthritis workshop attendees to learn how to better improve delivery and participation retention.

- Staff and Asheville Terrace Community Health Workers continue to partner with MANNA and OLLO volunteers to bring nutrition to residents. In January, 117 bags of groceries were distributed to residents.

Project C.A.R.E. (Caregiver Alternatives to Running on Empty)

- All Project C.A.R.E. State funds (\$46,337) have been distributed to caregivers in the 15-county region of the Western Project C.A.R.E. Office. Funds are distributed in the form of vouchers worth \$500 each. A caregiver may receive one to three vouchers per fiscal year. Caregivers pay for respite care services (in-home care, adult day care, overnight care in a facility) and are reimbursed upon submission of a request for reimbursement.
- 70% of the respite funds have been utilized so far.
- Project C.A.R.E. received federal funding this fiscal year. The Project C.A.R.E. Family Consultant is currently distributing \$11,000 in federal funds allotted for the Western Region.
- Staff is promoting the new North Carolina Caregiver Portal made available by the NCDHHS, Division of Adult and Aging Services. The NC Caregiver Portal is an educational website for caregivers that addresses the many aspects of caregiving.
- Staff is actively updating and sharing lists of dementia caregiver resources for each of the 15 counties in service area.
- Staff is participating in continuing education opportunities offered by MemoryCare, AARP, and Land of Sky's Family Caregiver Support Program.

Foster Grandparent Program

- Foster Grandparent Program begins a new partnership with Literacy Now that will allow Foster Grandparent Program to tutor kindergarten to third graders in their two new after school programs in the Asheville area. Seven Foster Grandparent volunteers will begin Literacy Now's 12-hour tutoring training the last week of February.
- Foster Grandparent volunteers continue to return to service. There are 11 volunteers that have been able to return to service at Eliada Child Development Center and Franklin School of Innovation. Staff has received confirmation that Buncombe County Schools will allow volunteers to return to the classrooms in the coming weeks.

4. Administration

- We are following Buncombe County Public Health Guidance so face coverings are no longer mandated at our office but they are strongly encouraged. We have rescinded earlier office restrictions when COVID-19 cases were more prevalent. Staff may continue working remotely as allowed by their supervisor.
- Waiting for cost estimates from Buncombe County for office renovations related to the Healthy Opportunities pilot.
- Health Benefits Rep training with state health plan
- Property/Liability meeting with NC League of Municipalities.
- Participated in numerous Foreign-Trade Zone (FTZ) meetings and partner discussions.

- Performed 3 new employee orientations.
- Performed 1 employee exit interview.
- Participated in HRSA funding meetings with community partners.
- Leadership Team Retreat held on February 2.
- Met with Weaverville Town Manager and Transylvania County Manager
- Assisted in interviews for 3 open positions.
- Hosted COG directors meeting and FORUM via our zoom account.
- Hosted DEI committee meetings
- Arranged meeting LOS and Buckeye Hills Regional Council, OH
- Our contract with Craft HR Solutions will transition to an as needed basis on July 1 with at an agreed upon hourly rate.
- We are overseeing ARC INspire Recovery to Careers and ARC POWER Early Childhood Workforce projects which are each over \$1 million serving 11 counties in Western North Carolina.
- We are in conversations with Dogwood Health Trust about increasing COG capacity in WNC. Funding available would enable COGs to provide more support for local governments and communities.

5. Workforce

- Region's unemployment rate of 2.6% for December 2021 is the lowest in the region since September 1999 when it was 2.0%.
- We are hosting a federal, state, and local government job fair on Wednesday, March 23 at the Virginia Boone Building, WNC Agricultural Center in Fletcher.
- NC Department of Commerce, Division of Workforce Solutions (DWS) announced a Reduction in Force for the DWS staff as a result of declining WIOA funding for North Carolina. There will be reductions in staff at DWS in Raleigh and the NCWorks Career Centers across the state. There were sufficient number of DWS employees to take early retirement so there will not be involuntary separations.
- We are participating as one of 15 statewide collaboratives by ncIMPACT/UNC School of Government and my Future NC as regional efforts focused on increasing postsecondary credential attainment.
- We are supporting the workers at Continental as they announced several years ago this facility was closing and final operations will end this year.
- Our Board staff are working closely with multiple partners, including but not limited to the Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce, NC Community College System and AB Tech, to support the Pratt & Whitney project. We have received approval from our financial monitor for these expenditures and hopefully we will have the funding to support this project. We are committing \$50,000 to support virtual pre-employment training.
- The board received a grant from Appalachian Regional Commission to expand the number of early childhood educators in our region. This grant application was an effort to continue the work we have done supported by NCWorks Local Innovation Grant with Buncombe Partnership for Children and the Child & Family Resource Center. We are

partnering with the Southwestern Commission to expand the project to 11 counties and Dogwood Health Trust has graciously agreed to provide matching funds for this project.

- The board has around \$150,000 in NDWG funds to serve dislocated workers and the deadline for expending these funds has been extended to March 2023. The restrictions on these funds are more than contingency funds and we cannot use NDWG to pay for staff expense. A major focus of the board staff is to develop strategies on how to use these funds to support dislocated workers.
- We are applied for the EDA Good Jobs Challenge in partnership with Dogwood Health Trust, AB Tech and Blue Ridge Community College. The focus will be on the advanced manufacturing and healthcare sectors, the request is for \$10 million.
- The board is supporting incumbent worker training (Business Accelerator Grants) with 12 (twelve) local employers.

6. Mountain Mobility

- Mountain Mobility was negatively impacted by January's inclement weather, forcing us to close the system for three days during the month. Those closures led to an overall reduction in passengers served and trips performed.
- On a positive note, our Enka-Candler Trailblazer route continued to perform strong, even with the inclement weather and the MLK holiday during the month of January. Enka-Candler continues to be the most consistent of the three routes throughout Buncombe County.
- *Admin staff are spending several hours each week in cross-training as we have brought Sarah Marcin on full-time starting earlier in February. Sarah will take some of the responsibilities currently held by Vicki Jennings, who was recently promoted to Healthy Opportunities Transformation Manager. Vicki will continue to serve Mountain Mobility in a supervisory role. Sarah has been with the Admin staff for two years as the RIDE Program Coordinator. Sarah will continue her responsibilities to RIDE as well. Welcome, Sarah!

7. NEMT

- We are submitting monthly reports to Buncombe County on the number of clients and caseload. It appears we did not lose as many Medicaid clients during the transition to managed care.
- Total trips scheduled and total trips taken have increased compared to one year ago but the total active cases have declined.

8. Healthy Opportunities

- LOS has started the hiring process for a Transportation Finance Specialist to assist with the HOP project. We hope to have someone on board mid to late March.
- Work continues to build the network of transportation providers throughout the 18-county region. We are currently working with Impact Health to put together training and technical assistance plans for Human Service Organizations (HSOs) who want to be involved in this project. Over the next few weeks, we will begin sub-contracting with providers in our neighboring counties who would like to participate.