



CENTRALINA
REGIONAL COUNCIL



Fiscal Year 2022

JULY 1, 2021 - JUNE 30, 2022

**ANNUAL
REPORT**

A letter from our EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

On behalf of the Centralina Board of Delegates and staff, I'm pleased to share this report on our achievements for the year ending June 30, 2022. As the region continues to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, Centralina has renewed our commitment to collaboration, connection, service and innovation across the spectrum of our work. The following report highlights how we have fulfilled this commitment at our three levels of impact: regional coordination, support to local governments and innovative service delivery to individuals.

We focused this year on visionary planning initiatives as well as strategic implementation to transform ideas into action. We worked with several communities on strategic planning processes, launched the region's five-year **Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy** and began the critical task of implementing key recommendations from the **CONNECT Beyond** regional mobility initiative. Collectively this work demonstrates our commitment to the big ideas that move our region forward and fulfilling our role in ensuring that positive change occurs at the local level.

Each year, we select five initiatives to highlight from our year to showcase our impact across the region. This year we did the following – learn more on page 2-6:

- ◆ Launched a **Regional Dialogue Series** to hear from stakeholders and inform our three-year strategic planning process.*
- ◆ Proactively engaged our members about the **American Rescue Plan Act** and provided a range of supports to aid local governments in implementing their ARPA funds.
- ◆ Completed the pilot year of the **Regional Resilience Collaborative** to build capacity in our regional emergency management so that we can better recover from future disasters.*
- ◆ Created and managed a regionwide **COVID-19 vaccine outreach campaign** to engage older and disabled adults.
- ◆ Got creative in our approaches to **connecting our workforce and businesses** to fill our talent pipeline and address the changing nature of work due to the pandemic.*

Centralina was delighted to welcome new Board members this year and two new communities to Centralina membership: the Towns of Norwood and Stanfield, both in Stanly County. Our Board also revised the dues structure for smaller communities, which reduces financial barriers to membership and supports our commitment to our smaller municipalities. Our year ended with our highly anticipated move to upgraded office space at a new building in the University Research Park in Charlotte. Our new location has a smaller footprint, but it's a more efficient use of space with light-filled work areas and training rooms for our team to work, collaborate and engage.

With gratitude,



Geraldine I. Gardner
Executive Director
Centralina Regional Council

*Received a 2022 National Association of Development Organizations Impact Award

Top Five

PLANNING A NEW, BOLD VISION FOR CENTRALINA

Read our FY22-23 Workplan and FY22-25 Strategic Plan at www.Centralina.org/Plans

Over the last 54 years, Centralina Regional Council has evolved as an organization in response to the needs of a rapidly changing region. However, the rate of change and disruption over the last two years has been unprecedented. While we stepped up to lead, innovate and adapt in response to the pandemic, it hindered our capacity to forecast and plan for future needs. Emerging from the pandemic, we seized the opportunity to chart a fresh course toward the type of organization that our employees deserve, our members expect and our region needs.

Over the last year, we developed a three-year **Strategic Plan** that will serve as a roadmap for organizational growth and fiscal stability in service of our mission and in line with our core values. The plan was informed by robust engagement with our staff, Board and regional stakeholders. In the fall of 2021, we held the **Regional Dialogue Series**,

which re-engaged partners and stakeholders to understand changes in their communities since the pandemic and explore opportunities for regional collaboration.

Through this strategic planning process, we imagined a vision for Centralina that is rooted in regional trust, collaboration and hope for a thriving, prosperous future. Our vision anchors the goals, strategies and annual actions that we will undertake over the next three years. The plan is flexible, but demonstrates our firm commitment to organizational excellence, fiscal responsibility and service. Centralina's Board of Delegates and Executive Board actively shaped the direction of the final plan that was recently adopted. Our team begins the new FY22-23 fiscal year on a clear path to leading change in the region and within our organization.

VISION: *Centralina is a collaborative organization and a trusted partner leading the region, communities and individuals towards a thriving future.*

GOALS:

- 1 Lead regional engagement to prepare, plan and act on issues that respond to today's needs and tomorrow's opportunities.
- 2 Build local government capacity, efficiency and innovation in service to Centralina communities and the region.
- 3 Grow our portfolio of person-centered services that enhance an individual's ability to thrive in their careers and in their communities.
- 4 Strive for organizational excellence by investing in our employees, promoting our work and building efficient systems.

300 STAKEHOLDERS ENGAGED
1 bilingual survey WITH **108** responses
11 focus groups WITH **57** participants
6 meetings WITH **220** participants

Top Five

SUPPORTING LOCAL GOVERNMENTS WITH RECOVERY

The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) provided unprecedented, direct financial support to units of local government nationwide. The funding is designed to support the public health response to COVID-19, address negative economic impacts, replace lost revenue, implement premium pay for essential employees and make vital broadband and infrastructure improvements. This historic opportunity means that approximately \$800 million in funding is flowing to our region's local governments. Not all our communities have experience managing federal funding and some lack the staff for strategic planning, administration and monitoring.

Centralina stepped up and stepped in to help our local governments navigate the complex challenges with planning and administering ARPA funds. With financial support from the NC Association of Regional Councils of Government

through the NC General Assembly, we are actively providing guidance and technical assistance to local governments. Under this directive, Centralina developed a range of programming and supports for Centralina communities, including:

- ◆ **ARPA Peer Consortium** – A local government peer-learning group for resources, strategic support and best practice sharing. We worked with the UNC School of Government to develop content with initial efforts focused on meeting the US Treasury reporting deadline.
- ◆ **Monitoring Oversight** – Tools and staff guidance to ensure members comply with federal ARPA guidelines and state regulations.
- ◆ **On-Demand Technical Assistance**
- ◆ **Regional Information Exchange**

12 communities assisted with developing spending plans, facilitating ARPA discussions and monitoring reporting requirements

17 ARPA BRIEFINGS HELD: **5** member governments' council/board meetings
8 Regional Managers Group meetings
4 Centralina Board meetings

2 ARPA tools created including an ARPA planning playbook and a project and expenditure report quick guide

Top Five

LEADING REGIONAL RESILIENCE COLLABORATION

Natural and manmade disruptions will continue to emerge, threatening the health, safety and economic vibrancy of our communities and impacting our residents. To assist jurisdictions and municipalities with building adequate capacity and enhancing resiliency, the Centralina Economic Development District partnered with Centralina and the nine-county emergency management directors to launch the Regional Resilience Collaborative (RRC) in April 2021, backed by a U.S. Economic Development Administration Disaster Relief Coordinator Grant.

The RRC program examines the viability and resiliency of emergency management disaster recovery plans and economic resilience needs to ensure the region benefits from greater efficiency in responding to current and future natural and man-made disasters and economic shocks. Research on the regional landscape and an extensive review of existing emergency plans identified a significant gap in the recovery plans and processes. Additionally, long-term disaster recovery requires local governments to include recovery management protocols in their day-to-day operations to ensure response and recovery costs when incurred can meet federal and state reimbursement requirements. To meet the needs of local governments and fill the planning gap, the RCC produced the following events and tools:

- ◆ **87 program meetings and 3 workshops, touching over 500 contacts**
- ◆ **GIS Equity and Resilience Mapping Tool**
- ◆ **Pre-Disaster Recovery Plan Template**
- ◆ **Pre-Disaster Recovery Plan Guide**
- ◆ **Local Leader Disaster Recovery Coordination Guide**

The key impact of the Centralina RRC project is the establishment of a regional pre-disaster working group of emergency management leaders, community organizations, non-profit entities and local government leaders working collaboratively to prepare for economic shocks and community disruptions caused by natural and man-made disasters.



Top Five

PROMOTING VACCINE AWARENESS

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), older unvaccinated adults are more likely than other populations to be hospitalized or die from COVID-19. To protect these older adults from severe illness and death and reduce the spread of the COVID-19, Centralina worked in partnership with the CDC, the Administration for Community Living and the Department of Health and Human Services to increase vaccine rates.

The project team, consisting of Centralina Area Agency on Aging and Centralina Regional Planning staff, developed educational materials, an outreach campaign and an online portal with a custom mapping tool. The portal gives users critical information about vaccine options, transportation methods, local resources, disease spread and other updates. It was intended to build vaccine confidence in older adults and their caregivers.

The mapping tool was developed to identify populations in the region that were at the highest risk and in most need of assistance. The project team indexed census tracts with the following data points: vaccination rate, age (60+), disability status, lack of internet access, lack of vehicle access, poverty, limited English, those living alone, lack of health insurance and those with less than a high school education. In addition, the index prioritized communities with high proportions of Black and Hispanic residents.

Health equity and equality was addressed in every facet of outreach. The Hispanic portion of the bilingual campaign included billboards, print materials, newspaper ads and Spanish radio PSAs in addition to webinars and a Q&A radio interview with a Spanish-speaking physician. Outreach also included vaccine clinics, health fairs, Spanish-speaking events, community meetings and other various events. In the greater Mecklenburg County area, the team focused on community engagement with underserved populations, especially those with English as a second language, who face barriers in accessing and using healthcare services. Centralina AAA also partnered with county health departments, Atrium Health, Novant Health and Healthier Together on this initiative.

Top Five

WORKFORCE SERVICES REACHES NEW AUDIENCES

From our Regional Dialogue Series, we heard that the top concern from employers in the region was the availability of skilled talent both now and in the future. The nature of work has changed since the pandemic, so too have the needs and aspirations of career seekers. To remain competitive our region we must be creative and innovative in how we engage career seekers and align workforce and economic development systems. The ongoing Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy planning process and initiatives from the Centralina Workforce Development Board (WDB) highlight our approach to meeting this challenge.

CENTRALINA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD MOBILE APP

To increase customer access, Centralina WDB developed a mobile app to house hiring events, workshops, employer services, event details, career assessments and more. The app was designed to serve as a one-stop access point to valuable opportunities and resources for career seekers and employers. Use the QR code to download the app.



Centralina Board Secretary and Anson County Commissioner Chair Jarvis Woodburn stands with Centralina WDB NextGen Specialist Solomon McAuley at the Youth Opportunity Site opening in the Town of Morven.

OPPORTUNITY SITES FOR YOUNG ADULTS

Centralina WDB opened Youth Opportunity Sites in the Towns of Burnsville, Morven and Polkton utilizing a Youth Initiative grant from NC Department of Commerce to provide assessment, training and employment opportunities to youth and young adults in marginalized and underserved areas.

CENTRALINA CAREER PIVOT

This online tool helps workers in highly automatable occupations identify alternative career pathways. The goal is to find ways to pivot from low-skill jobs at risk of automation to related jobs that are more stable and offer better pay.

Two million PEOPLE REACHED

Vaccine rate increase of **47%** in the African American community; **52%** in the Latino community

Over **one million** billboard views

10,000+ materials (masks, hand sanitizers and COVID test kits) distributed

400 app downloads

app downloads

50% participation increase

in app usage

BUILDING LOCAL GOVERNMENT CAPACITY

Our technical services enable communities in our region to receive expert support for reduced fees compared to private sector companies. Over the past fiscal year, our staff provided close to 100 services in a variety of categories for over 40 local governments. Learn more about our service offerings and read success stories featuring the communities we serve at www.Centralina.org/Annual-Report.

HR Assistance

Centralina Regional Council and Centralina Workforce Development Board provided a variety of HR-related services including assessment centers, staffing studies, promotional assessments, pay and classification studies, recruitment services and workforce simulations.

Success Story: *Understanding the Reentry Needs of Previously Incarcerated Individuals*

Planning Assistance

Centralina Regional Planning provided land use planning, redistricting and on-call planning services to 10 local governments.

Success Stories: *Land Use Planning in Dallas, Stanley and Wingate; Statesville's Best Redistricting Scenario; Meeting the Requirement – Chapter 160D*

Grant Support

Our staff helped with the development, application preparation and administration of various grants including the North Carolina Volkswagen Settlement, Essential Single Family Repair Loan Pool 2000 program, Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and CDBG Neighborhood Revitalization.

Success Stories: *Stanly and Lincoln County Families Benefit from Housing Repair Programs; Monroe Improves Sidewalks for ADA Compliance; Helping Counties Expand Community Development HUD Funds*

Strategic Planning, Board Training & Facilitation

Success Story: *City of Albemarle's Strategic Planning for the Future*

Code Enforcement

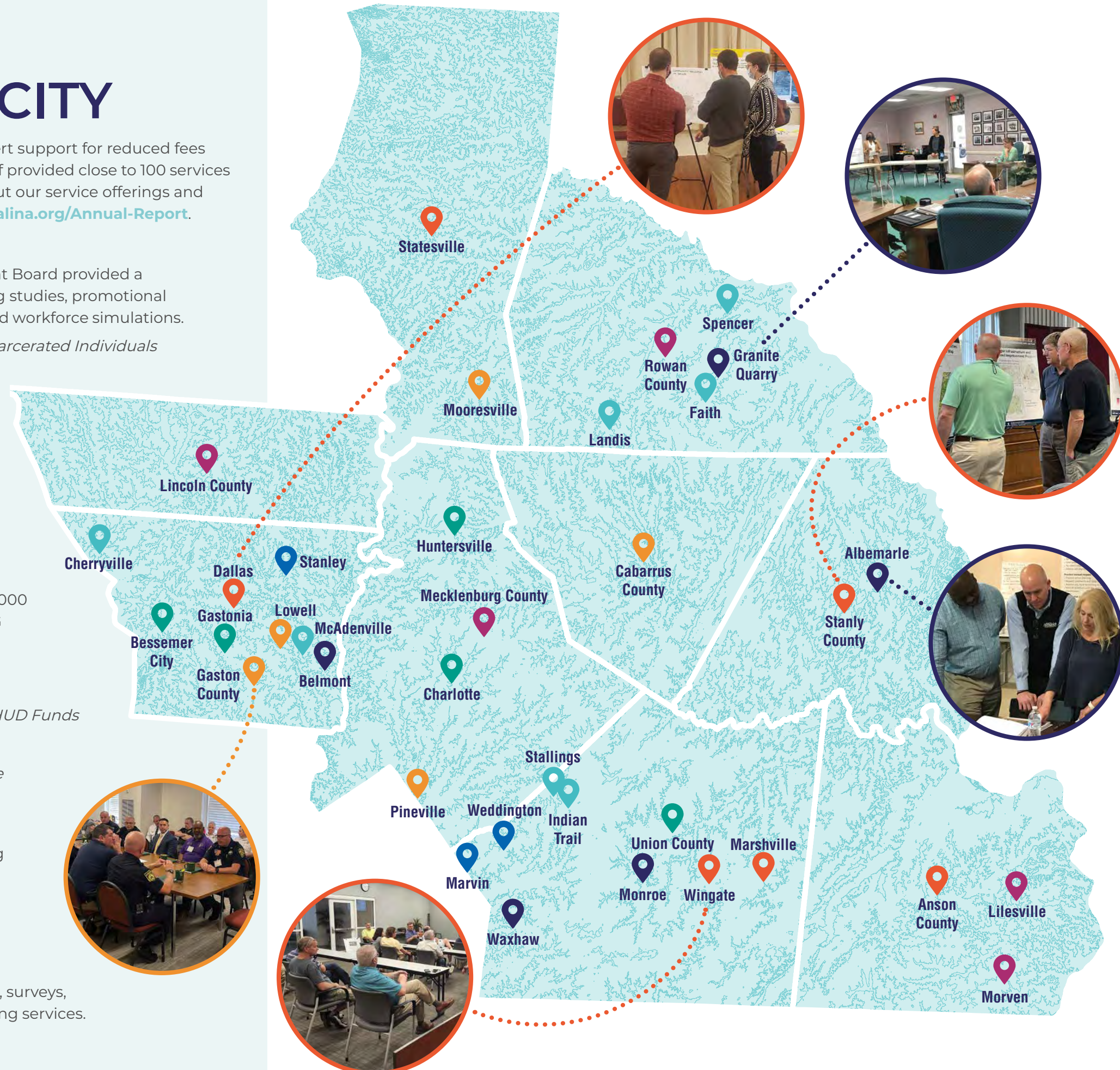
Centralina Community Economic Development staff investigated substandard building and housing complaints in addition to zoning and nuisance complaints for local governments in our region.

Housing & Mobility Assistance, Pedestrian Safety

Success Story: *Walk Audits – Tackling Barriers to Pedestrian Safety*

ARPA Assistance

We helped a dozen communities with spending plan development, surveys, State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds administration and monitoring services.



IMPROVING PROSPERITY AND QUALITY OF LIFE

We deliver ongoing direct health, aging and workforce services to individuals and businesses in our region to create new opportunities and improve quality of life. The following are examples of some of our work over the past fiscal year.

WORKFORCE SERVICES

1,788 employers provided with **26,015** services

15,010 career seekers served with **147,465** services

79,303 referrals (27% increase from last year)

284 individuals attended **482** workshops (60% increase from last year)

12,296 individuals visited **Centralina WDB NCWorks Career Centers** (a 35% traffic increase from last year)

49 adult and NextGen work experiences and **43** adult and NextGen on-the-job trainings at local employers

AGING SERVICES

1700+ fans distributed for **Operation Heat Fan Relief** to help vulnerable adults at risk for heat-related illnesses

14 webinars held with **1400+** participants (28% increase from last year)

50 Family Caregiver Support Program clients helped by utilizing **\$135,000** in CARES relief funds

5 national and state recognitions awarded for **Pride in Care**, a cultural competency LGBT training program

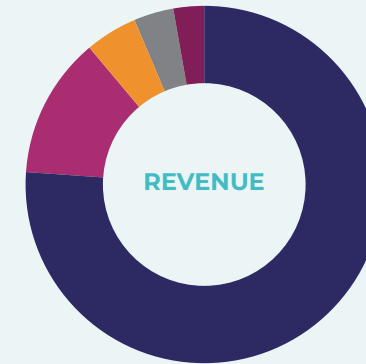
49 evidence-based workshops with **70** new leaders

2 new services: a falls prevention education program in partnership with BlueCross BlueShield of North Carolina, and **PEARLS**, an evidence-based mental health support program

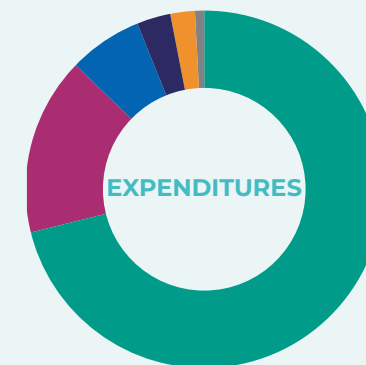
887 technical assistance and information requests completed for the public, long-term care residents and their families, **339** complaints addressed **276** cases completed and **855** facility visits and consultations

2021-2022

FINANCIAL REPORT



Intergovernmental	\$18,592,069	76.14%
Technical Assistance	\$1,180,164	4.83%
Other Revenue	\$620,514	2.54%
Membership Due	\$908,409	3.72%
Workforce Passthrough	\$3,119,460	12.77%
TOTAL REVENUE	\$24,420,616	100%



General Government	\$718,626	2.93%
Transportation	\$577,351	2.36%
Environmental Protection	\$137,728	0.56%
Economic and Physical Dev	\$1,636,427	6.68%
Human Services	\$17,474,988	71.35%
Workforce Development	\$3,948,196	16.12%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$24,493,316	100%

REVENUES OVER EXPENSES \$ (72,700*) *This loss is attributed to our one-time relocation expense

Affiliate Spotlight:

CENTRALINA CLEAN FUELS COALITION

Centralina Clean Fuels Coalition (CCFC) is the Department of Energy's Clean Cities affiliate for our region and has worked for decades preparing our communities for electric vehicles (EV) and other alternative fuels adoption through research, planning, pilot projects and corridor mapping. In February 2022, CCFC and project partners unveiled a PoleVolt EV charging station with Governor Cooper and Charlotte Mayor Vi Lyles. Centralina will continue to develop EV resources to support regional planning and federal funding activities with a focus on equity, specifically disadvantaged and rural populations. Our staff is also working with the NCDOT to update state clean transportation plans. More information can be found on the updated CCFC website at www.4CleanFuels.com.



Centralina Assistant Regional Planning Director Jason Wager, Centralina Executive Director Geraldine Gardner, NC Governor Roy Cooper and City of Charlotte Mayor Vi Lyles at the Polevolt EV Ribbon Cutting.



OUR COMMUNITIES. OUR REGION. OUR FUTURE.

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