



NRVRC
new river valley regional commission

2023 - 2024
ANNUAL REPORT





Chair's Message

Fiscal Year 24 was another great year for the New River Valley Regional Commission. During this period, the board and staff continued to work hard on multiple programs, projects, and collaborations in our region, which are essential for our continued growth and wellbeing. The Regional Commission has been there to support all our local governments and businesses and has played a significant role in supporting the region.

Several key programs continue throughout the year, including Broadband, Passenger Rail, NRV Recovery Ecosystem, Tech Hubs, and the NRV Regional Housing Trust Fund, to name a few.

We continue to grow the Regional Commission staff to support the increased project load which recently reached its largest to date. We added exceptional personnel in key areas and reorganized our whole organization to be more efficient and responsive to all our members. We are also very excited about the possibility of

moving the Regional Commission offices to a larger facility in Christiansburg by the end of this coming fiscal year.

As board chair, I would like to recognize Dr. Doug Warren, a board member of the New River Valley Regional Commission from 2010 until his passing in June 2024. Doug was respected by many in the community, beginning with his service to the area's students through his career with New River Community College and eventually serving as a dean until his retirement in 1996. He also served on the Pulaski County Planning Commission (1986-2021) and the Pulaski County Public Service Authority (2003-2020). He will truly be missed.

I believe that the Regional Commission is positioned to continue to be the outstanding partner that it has always been for all our members, helping to bring continued growth and development to the New River Valley and working hard for everyone who calls this area home.

HIL JOHNSON
Chair
Fiscal Year 2023-2024

FY23-24 Commissioners

FLOYD COUNTY

Mr. Michael Maslaney
Ms. Linda DeVito Kuchenbuch

GILES COUNTY

Mr. Richard McCoy
Mr. Leon Law, Treasurer

MONTGOMERY COUNTY

Mr. Anthony Grafsky
Mr. Brian Wheeler

PULASKI COUNTY

Mr. Jeffery Reeves
Dr. Doug Warren

CITY OF RADFORD

Mr. David Horton
Mr. Jeff Martin

TOWN OF BLACKSBURG

Mr. Daniel Breslau
Ms. Susan Anderson

TOWN OF CHRISTIANSBURG

Ms. Tanya Hockett
Mr. Hil Johnson, Chair

TOWN OF FLOYD

Mr. Will Griffin
Mr. Chris Bond

TOWN OF NARROWS

Mr. Tom Spangler

TOWN OF PEARISBURG

Ms. Amanda Davis

TOWN OF PEMBROKE

Mr. Robert Lawson

TOWN OF PULASKI

Mr. Larry Clevinger
Mr. Michael Reis

TOWN OF RICH CREEK

Mr. Roger Jones

RADFORD UNIVERSITY

Dr. Angela Joyner

VIRGINIA TECH

Ms. Mary Trigiani
Ms. Liza Morris

NEW RIVER COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Ms. Angie Covey

Regional Cooperation

NRVRC Annual Awards

The Regional Commission board of directors celebrated award recipients at their annual dinner held in October 2023 at Volvo's Customer Experience Center in Dublin, VA. Delegate Jason Ballard, 12th House District in Virginia, and Robert Graham, Superintendent of Pulaski County Schools, received the Champion of the Valley award (elected/appointed official). Cathy Hanks, Friends of Peak Creek & New River Conservancy, received the Citizen of the Valley award.



NRV Recovery Ecosystem Program

The Regional Commission provides oversight and integration of the New River Valley Recovery Ecosystem five-year program. The Virginia Opioid Abatement Authority (OAA) funded program coordinates programming in prevention, treatment, education, and harm reduction to develop structural changes that address underlying impacts of addiction and support wellbeing in the region. The Regional Commission provides staff assistance to the technical teams, delivers fiscal and performance tracking, supports communication and educational outreach, and troubleshoots issues to ensure the work is adaptive and innovative to address opioid impacts on the region.



Highlights of the first year of program implementation include:

FISCAL & PERFORMANCE TRACKING

- Implemented protocols and templates from localities and agency partners for sharing performance tracking and fiscal reports.
- Designed an aggregate data REDCap survey to support all agency OAA key performance indicator data input.
- Crafted individual REDCap surveys for each agency partner to track services at an individual level using HIPAA-compliant identifiers to ensure no duplication across providers.
- Established business and data-sharing agreements across agencies to ensure the ability to share information about referring clients appropriately and within HIPAA guidelines.
- Achieved successful submission and award of a year-two cooperative program with the Virginia Opioid Abatement Authority.

COMMUNICATIONS

- Developed "We're in This Together" branding & NRV Recovery Ecosystem logo.
- Initiated social media presence.
- Produced and sent two mailers to targeted audiences.
- Created monthly blog content.
- Rolled out monthly stakeholder digest emails.

EDUCATION & TRAINING

- Trained over 100 people in trauma and resiliency.
- Certified over 35 people as trainers in trauma, resiliency, Adverse Childhood Experiences, and Mental Health First Aid through partnerships with NRV Resiliency Network, Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services, and Cooperative Extension.
- Coordinated a collaborative, eight-month training series for early childhood educators titled "Building Resiliency: Trauma-Informed Strategies for Early Childhood Classrooms." Key collaborators include First Steps and Virginia Tech Early Childhood Education Initiatives.

OUTREACH, TREATMENT & FACILITIES

- Strengthened "Rise Above" mobile outreach and harm reduction services.
- Secured a grant for recovery pod services in the regional jail.
- Enhanced referral processes for recovery and treatment.
- Provided support for architectural and engineering design in treatment and housing partner efforts.

TRANSPORTATION & HOUSING

- Transported over **500** participants.
- Increased participation each month.
- Created inventory of existing Recovery Residences, Supportive Housing, Oxford Homes, and Residential Treatment facilities.
- Hosted Permanent Supportive Housing Charrette.
- Developed proposals for vouchers for recovery and permanent housing support.

JUSTICE INVOLVED

- Facilitated the hiring of three clinicians for the Recovery Court Program.
- Oversaw the review and support of a new drug screening contract.

Community Health

NEW RIVER HEALTH DISTRICT

The American Rescue Plan Act funding continues to provide resources for the Regional Commission's support of the Healthy Roots governance structure in collaboration with the Community Foundation of the New River Valley. Additionally, the Regional Commission is continuing to provide website and mapping services to the New River Health District through a data-sharing agreement.

FY24 HIGHLIGHTS:

- Reorganized the Road to Wellness website.
- Incorporated the NRV Recovery Ecosystem web presence into the Road to Wellness site.
- Established the Healthy Roots Advisory Council.
- Integrated New River Health District into NRV Recovery Ecosystem programming and outreach.
- Prepared a funding application for recovery pod services in the regional jail.
- Trained and certified relevant staff to support HIPAA data protection.
- Supported New River Health District's Certified Harm Reduction Site status with Virginia Department of Health (VDH).



**NRV
PRSA**

NRV Passenger Rail

Efforts to bring passenger rail service back to the New River Valley are ongoing and continuing to advance. The New River Valley Passenger Rail Station Authority (NRVPRSA), the entity responsible for owning and operating the station, in conjunction with the Virginia passenger Rail Authority (VPRA), the entity leading the project for the Commonwealth, have been working diligently to identify a final station location in Christiansburg.

The VPRA conducted an environmental review and developed 30% of the design on two sites identified near the Uptown Christiansburg Mall. It was determined that the environmental and engineering needs of the two sites would be cost-prohibitive. With this information,

the VPRA renegotiated with Norfolk Southern (NS) and is now proposing to locate the passenger rail station in the Cambria area of Christiansburg with a layover facility in Radford on the Norfolk Southern Main Line.

Currently, the VPRA and NS are in the process of developing a Comprehensive Rail Agreement that will outline the process for the NRV project to proceed to Cambria.

New River Watershed Roundtable

The New River Watershed Roundtable continued to serve as a convener of water quality interests across the region. At quarterly meetings, partners gathered to learn about regional watershed projects, discuss water quality, and elevate ideas for collaboration. The region participated in the annual ReNew the New cleanup with 500 volunteers who helped pick up 150 tires and more than 20 tons of trash from the New River this year.

Planning Commissioners Training 2024

This year's Planning Commissioners Training offered two sessions. The first was an interactive panel discussion on common tricky topics such as the Freedom of Information Act, conflict of interest, zoning, and proffers. The second was a panel suggestion on housing featuring panel members Chris Thompson, Virginia Housing; Lydeana Martin, Floyd County; Kim Thurlow, Town of Blacksburg; and Jennifer Wilsie, NRV Regional Commission. The event was hosted at the Montgomery County Government Center, and 70 people were in attendance.



New River Valley HOME Consortium

The New River Valley HOME Consortium was created in 2007 and utilizes an annual funding allocation from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development to construct or rehabilitate affordable housing for low-to moderate-income households in the New River Valley.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- Executed a contract for the Claremont Apartments in the Town of Pulaski with developer Landmark Development. The project consists of both new construction and adaptive reuse of the old Claremont School and totals 50 units of affordable rental housing.
- Completed the construction of seven townhomes near the Town of Floyd through Habitat for Humanity with an affordable sales price of approximately \$140,000. All homebuyers were existing Floyd residents.
- Continued planning efforts to expend \$2.1M in HOME American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding for 10-15 supportive housing units in the region. New River Community Action intends to build its capacity to manage these units and coordinate the wraparound services needed. Site selection is currently underway.



Planning/Technical Assistance

Town of Rich Creek Comprehensive Plan

The Town of Rich Creek, in collaboration with the Regional Commission, is completing its updated Comprehensive Plan. This plan outlines the goals, objectives, and policies that aim to address identified issues and opportunities in the Town and includes the elements of future land use, infrastructure, economic development, housing, and more. Through gathering public input, the community helped to define the future vision for the Town in alignment with current and future needs. The plan will be ready for adoption by the Town Council in fall 2024.



Town of Rich Creek ARPA

The Town of Rich Creek received State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds from the ARPA, intended to aid local governments in addressing the economic and public health impacts of COVID-19. The Regional Commission provided grant administration of these funds, which the Town has directed towards building a new fire department station.


Town of Christiansburg Comprehensive Plan

The Town of Christiansburg started updating its Comprehensive Plan last year and completed the project's second phase, which included a community assessment and gathering community input.

The team organized engagement activities at local events, conducted focus group meetings, launched an online engagement platform and community survey, posted video and content on social media, and issued a press release. Over 1,000 people have participated in the engagement effort. The gathered information will help identify community needs and priorities and capture the shared vision.



 **1,900**
visits to the
project page

 **1000**
survey
submissions

 **970+**
total project
tool interactions

Christiansburg Community Engagement

Town of Christiansburg Community Gathering Space

The Town of Christiansburg secured funding from the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) to build a community gathering space and farmers market structure in the downtown area. With project management and grant administration assistance from the Regional Commission, the project is advancing into the design phase this year.



Town of Narrows Comprehensive Plan

The Town of Narrows completed the update to its Comprehensive Plan in November 2023. The Town set out to develop a fresh vision for its future in the preparation of the new plan. To shape this vision, the town solicited input from all sections of the community – residents from all age groups, business owners, visitors, and other stakeholders contributed.

The town formulated creative ways to encourage community participation. The results of the community engagement activities revealed that the most valued town assets are a sense of community, rural character, safety and security, and high-quality schools. Some of the desired improvements and priorities are attracting and retaining businesses, business opportunities, retaining young adults, job growth, youth activities, tourism amenities, and outdoor recreation.

Town of Pembroke ARPA

The Town of Pembroke has fully spent its ARPA funding to implement local projects such as upgrading the water system within town limits. The funding also supported upgrades to town systems and services. The recovery program is intended to provide support for local governments in responding to the economic and public health impacts of COVID-19.

Town of Floyd Subdivision Ordinance

The Town of Floyd recently adopted its revised Subdivision Ordinance to address regulation gaps, reduce complexity, simplify its usage, modernize the code, streamline processes, and ensure consistency with the recently adopted Zoning Ordinance. Significant changes were made, including adding new chapters to address administration procedures, appeals, enforcement, penalties, the plat vacation process, and design and improvement standards.



City of Radford East Main Downtown Plan

The City of Radford continues to implement improvements identified in the East Main Downtown Plan (2022). The team at the Regional Commission is working closely with city staff, Halcyon Landscape Architecture and Planning, Hurt & Proffit, and local stakeholders to develop plans that enhance the downtown area and make it a more vibrant destination. Design features include the adaptive reuse of a surface parking lot into a downtown gathering space, a bike/pedestrian trail connecting Radford University at Tyler Avenue that weaves through downtown to Bisset Park, and enhanced lighting and wayfinding signage.

The design is now complete and ready to go to bid. It is anticipated that construction will start this fall and may continue into the spring of 2025.



Virginia Department of Health: Water System Improvement Project

In 2022, Montgomery County received \$3.9M in ARPA funding through the Virginia Department of Health – Office of Drinking Water to extend public water to four sites in the County previously abandoned by a private owner.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- Partners included the Montgomery Public Service Authority (PSA), Hurt & Proffitt Engineering, and the Regional Commission.
- Completed in early 2024, the funds have now assisted with replacing water connections for 142 households.
- Water pressure was improved and residents were provided with clean and reliable drinking water.
- The Regional Commission created an interactive project story map, which can be viewed at www.arcg.is/fyau51



Town of Pulaski Direct Injection Sewer Improvement

In July 2024, the Town of Pulaski and a local manufacturer completed a public sewer improvement project that will significantly increase system-wide reliability well into the future. The project increases the capacity of more than two miles of sewer main, reduces stress that is currently experienced across multiple pump stations, and allows critical operations to continue when the public system requires maintenance or repair.

The Town of Pulaski partnered with the U.S. Economic Development Administration, the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development, the Appalachian Regional Commission, James Hardie Industries, and the Regional Commission to complete the project. The Regional Commission is pleased to have supported the Town by securing \$2.45M in grant funding to address these improvements. The improvements also ensure that more than 400 jobs stay in the region due to increasing the reliability of water and wastewater systems.

Floyd County Industrial Access Grant Administration

The Regional Commission continues to support Floyd County's road extension in the Floyd County Commerce Center to support new pad sites with transportation access and utility extensions. Grant funding is being provided by the Tobacco Commission and the Appalachian Regional Commission. In order to cover significant construction cost increases before the project can be successfully bid, an additional \$2,720,000 has been secured from the US Economic Development Administration.

Giles County New River/Trail Center

Giles County invited regional partners to celebrate the grand opening of the Giles County Trail Center in May 2024. The new trail hub is located on the historic grounds of Mountain Lake Lodge and connects visitors to outdoor recreation opportunities and local community businesses. The 3,000-square-foot trail center is specifically designed to help users shape a unique itinerary that allows visitors to discover all that Giles County and the greater New River Valley offer. In addition to trail maps, brochures, and local videos, the center also provides changing rooms and restroom facilities that are open daily from 9 a.m. to dusk.

The Giles County Trail Center is a \$1.2 million project that was funded through the Appalachian Regional Commission, Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development, Appalachian Trail Conservancy, Eastern Federal Lands Highway Division, Virginia Department of Transportation, Giles County, and Giles County Industrial Development Authority. Federal funding was secured and administered by Friends of Southwest Virginia. The Regional Commission was pleased to support the project with pre-contract activities and wage compliance.





Town of Blacksburg Hale Garden Propagation Center and Plant Natives Guide

This robust initiative was completed through a partnership with the Virginia Outdoors Foundation, the Town of Blacksburg, Live Work Eat Grow, Plant Virginia Natives, the Regional Commission, and numerous volunteers and contributors. The initiative involved more than 300 participants, the

distribution of more than 6,300 native plants, the development and distribution of "A Guide to Gardening with Southwest Virginia Native Plants," and the construction of a propagation center at the five-acre Hale Community Garden. The Plant Guide can be found online at the QR code.



Town of Christiansburg Crab Creek Beautification Project

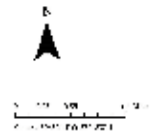
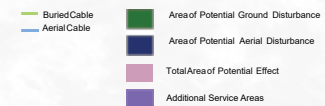
Through a collaboration with the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), Town of Christiansburg, the Regional Commission, Downtown Christiansburg Institute, Balzer and Associates, and several program participants, the Crab Creek Beautification Phase #1 project was completed. A total of 13 Best Management Practices (BMP) and/or stormwater improvement projects were completed in the summer and fall of 2023. Seven conservation landscape areas were installed for a total of 17,845 square feet. Three rain barrels totaling 2,964.75 gallons; and three impervious surface areas were readapted to 4,700 square feet of permeable area.

Staff at the Regional Commission registered each BMP in the State Clearinghouse and submitted verification to DEQ partners. Program participants were reimbursed more than \$51,000 for BMP improvements and, in total, contributed more than \$28,000 in cash and volunteer time towards improving water quality within the Crab Creek watershed.

Painter School Road Broadband Project

Painter School Road Broadband Project met with some unforeseen challenges this past year. However, PemTel (Pembroke Telephone Cooperative) has been diligently working toward a resolution and is anticipating project completion by mid-August 2024.

The Regional Commission secured a \$124,600 grant from the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), matched by over \$132,000 in local private investment, to expand broadband services to Painter School Road and the surrounding community, an area identified as underserved or unserved in Giles County.



This project will close the digital divide for local businesses and residents alike. It will increase economic development and job growth opportunities, allow residents to work from home, and provide virtual learning and telehealth experiences. Additionally, this project will provide the infrastructure needed to continue building out the network to other underserved and/or unserved areas in Giles County.

To date, the contractor has installed more than 33,402 linear feet of fiber that will allow connectivity to pass more than 90 households.

Narrows Parks & Recreation Strategic Plan

The project team kicked off the Narrows Parks and Recreation Strategic Planning process in January 2024. The team assisted the Town of Narrows with Parks and Recreation Ordinance updates along with asset mapping and documentation of existing park facilities. The team facilitated conversations with the Narrows Parks and Recreation Commission to refine the community parks and recreation survey and engagement platform. The collaborative approach is designed to provide opportunities for individuals to help shape the goals for the town's parks and recreation programs and assets.



The Montgomery/Bland Counties Broadband Project

The Montgomery/Bland Counties Broadband Project aims to bring broadband internet connectivity to unserved and underserved households throughout Montgomery County and Bland County. This work has significantly progressed in the past year.



PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- Montgomery County, partnering with GigaBeam Networks, received a \$919,569 2021 Virginia Telecommunication Initiative (VATI) grant from the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). The county and GigaBeam together are providing an additional \$488,068 in matching funds. The goal of this project is to provide broadband services to 1,248 households and 44 businesses in the communities of Allegheny Springs, Elliston, Lafayette, and Shawsville. This project is scheduled to be complete by December 2024.
- Currently, GigaBeam has deployed 5.8 miles (of the total 7.4 miles in the project area) of fiber and installed eight optical line termination (OLT) boxes within the VATI 2021 project area. These OLT boxes serve as hubs for the Internet Service Provider. GigaBeam is continuing to build out the network and is working on securing permits for crossing required of the railroad and US Route 460.
- The Regional Commission, partnering with Montgomery County, Bland County, and GigaBeam Networks, received a \$39,233,355 VATI grant from DHCD. Together, the counties and GigaBeam are providing an additional \$38,247,340 in matching funds. The goal of this project is to install approximately 619 miles of fiber to provide access to broadband services to 11,587 households and 507 businesses throughout the remaining unserved and underserved areas of Montgomery County and Bland County.
- GigaBeam has deployed more than 35.2 miles of fiber and installed more than seventeen OLT cabinets in various locations throughout Montgomery County and Bland County. GigaBeam is continuing to build the network and is working on securing permits for crossings required by the railroad and several roadways managed by VDOT.

Pulaski County Parks & Recreation Planning

The Regional Commission continues to support the Pulaski County Parks and Recreation Department with park planning efforts. In FY24, the team worked on small area plans for Pulaski County parks, including Loving Field and Randolph Park. This included working with county staff to craft programming and conceptual design elements. Construction on Loving Field is now underway. The team also developed park asset maps and inventory to aid in the planning and prioritization of future enhancements.



SVSWMA Website Support

The Regional Commission is collaborating with the Southwest Virginia Solid Waste Management Association (SVSWMA) to redevelop the organization's website and redesign its logo and branding styles. The new website will launch in fall 2024.



NRV Hazard Mitigation Plan Update

The New River Valley Hazard Mitigation Plan update provides a comprehensive reassessment of natural and man-made hazards and establishes mitigation strategies that better prepare local communities to meet and recover from natural disasters. The plan update includes the identification of additional hazards that could impact the region, performing a risk assessment and capability assessment, and updating mitigation objectives and strategies.

Freezing Temperatures Lightning Snowfall High Winds Flooding Utility Disruption Ice Storms	HIGH MED LOW
Infectious Disease Outbreak & Pandemic Cybersecurity Wildfire Drought	
Karst Tornado Rockfall Landslide Technological & Urban Rescue Earthquake Active Attack or Act of Terrorism	

The Regional Commission formed a steering committee to guide the planning process and convened working groups to develop analysis and strategies for hazards. The committee includes representation from all participating governments of the Regional Commission, including various local government departments, state and federal agencies, citizens, and private businesses. The work to date included data collection and analysis, community outreach, and coordination with partners and other stakeholders across the region.

The project continues into FY2025 with additional stakeholder input and

plan drafting. Opportunities to participate and progress on the project will be posted at engagenrv.org/hazard-mitigation-plan.

Economic Development & Human Services

Regional Economic Strategy Annual Update

Each year, the Regional Commission reviews and updates the Regional Economic Strategy (RES), also known as the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). The purpose of the RES is to continue federal and local partnerships to address economic development initiatives in the region. The RES also documents the planning efforts to identify economic development needs in the region, which is required for grant applications to the U.S. Department of Commerce, the Economic Development Administration, and the Appalachian Regional Commission.

MAJOR RES SECTIONS INCLUDE:

- An overview of regional economic conditions through summary data.
- Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats analysis.
- Priority goals and strategies.
- Prioritized regional and local economic development projects.

The Regional Commission continues to enhance the accessibility and engagement of the RES and key information through an interactive digital format and a data dashboard, providing user-friendly demographic, economic, and community health data for local governments, grant writers, nonprofits, and citizens.

An interactive online version (ArcGIS StoryMap), as well as the full PDF version and consumer one-pager are posted at nrvc.org/economy.



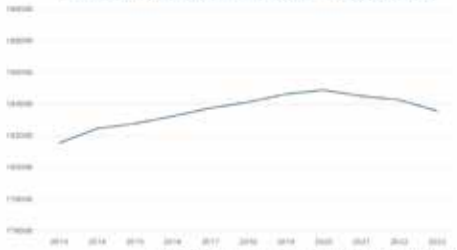


The New River Valley Regional Economic Strategy (RES), also known as the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), is the main focus of the Commission's economic development planning efforts. The RES is outlined in an annual planning document that is used to broadly inform economic development activities and desires in the region.

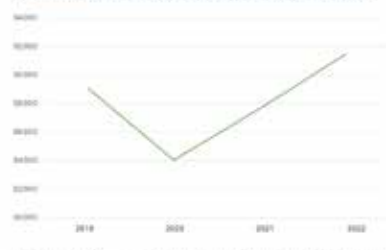
REGIONAL ECONOMIC PRIORITIES

1. Support Business Development & Entrepreneurship
2. Preparation & Continued Support of Qualified, Available Workforce
3. Utilize Available Land & Expand Quality Infrastructure
4. Preserve & Promote the Natural and Cultural Resources in the Region
5. Encourage Business Friendly Governance & Organizational Representation

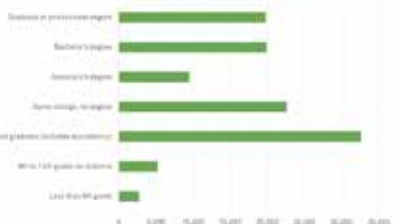
Total Population of the New River Valley 2013-2023



Employment for the New River Valley 2019-2022



Educational Attainment



Household Income



TOP PROJECTS

Target Period: 2022-2026

1. Develop Broadband Infrastructure and Internet Availability.

Estimated Funding: \$68,000,000
Responsible Agency: Private Internet Service Providers and NRV localities

2. Lead regional coalitions that aim to support additive manufacturing and applied materials.

Estimated Funding: \$500,000
Responsible Agency: NRVC, Virginia Tech, Onward NRV, local industries, and NRV localities

3. Provide technical assistance services to regional manufacturers.

Estimated Funding: \$6,000,000
Responsible Agency: Onward NRV, Virginia Tech, local economic development, private business

4. Implement "sector strategies" focus for workforce development programs to meet needs in target industry sectors.

Estimated Funding: \$25,000,000
Responsible Agency: NRMH WCB, Education providers, local industries

5. Manage, promote and expand local and regional revolving loan fund programs.

Estimated Funding: \$300,000
Responsible Agency: NRVC, local economic development

6. Encourage micro and small business success in downtown and commercial districts.

Estimated Funding: \$10,000,000
Responsible Agency: NRVC, NRV localities, local economic development, Radford University, SBOC

7. Support local agriculture, growers, and producers.

Estimated Funding: \$100,000
Responsible Agency: Cooperative Extension office, local economic developers, Thrive network, farmers markets, SBOC



Full project descriptions and RES document can be found at: nrvc.org/economy

8. Promote and coordinate the development of a New River Valley passenger rail station.

Estimated Funding: \$4,500,000
Responsible Agency: NRV localities, Higher Ed, State Agencies, Public/Private Railroad Companies, NRVC

9. Support regional and local efforts to develop outdoor recreation tourism amenities related to the New River Water Trail.

Estimated Funding: \$2,500,000
Responsible Agency: NRVC, NRV localities, New River Watershed Roundtable, National Park Service, VA Dept of Wildlife Resources, Friends of New River, local DMOs, Radford, SBOC

10. Industrial Site development and upgrades.

Estimated Funding: \$15,000,000
Responsible Agency: Virginia's First RITA, local economic development

11. Develop a wider range of homeowner and rental opportunities.

Estimated Funding: \$100,000,000
Responsible Agency: Private and non-profit developers, NRV localities, NRV HOME Consortium

12. Bio-Tech, Digital Health & Life Science Cluster

Estimated Funding: \$600,000
Responsible Agency: Virginia Tech, Radford University, private industry, Montgomery County, SBOC

13. Perform analysis combined with consensus building to result in a recommended alignment of the Valley to Valley Trail.

Estimated Funding: \$100,000
Responsible Agency: VDOT, NRVC, NRVMPD



NEW RIVER VALLEY



Floyd County Housing Rehabilitation Project

In 2020, Floyd County was one of the first communities to be awarded “scatter-site” housing rehab funding by the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development, with an award totaling \$1,080,000.



PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- Completed construction on five housing rehabilitations and one substantial reconstruction.
- Continued highly collaborative project management coordination through partnership with Floyd County, Floyd Initiative for Safe Housing (FISH), and Southeast Rural Community Assistance Project, Inc (SERCAP).
- Exceeded financial and in-kind leverage commitment by over \$70,000.
- Awarded \$50,000 in additional planning grant funds to prepare for a second round of construction funding.

Regional Housing Trust Fund (PDC Housing Development Grant)

In 2021, the Regional Commission was awarded a \$2M grant from Virginia Housing for the development of at least 20 affordable housing units in the region. The Regional Commission used that funding to pilot a regional housing trust fund.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

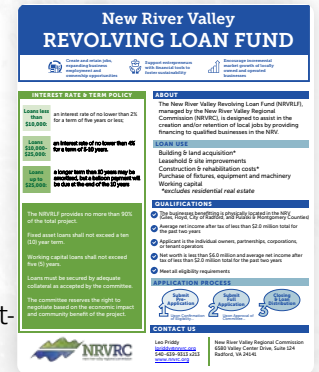
- Awarded \$1.8M to Claremont Apartments (Town of Pulaski) and Legacy on Main Apartments (Town of Blacksburg) for a total of 106 new affordable rental units.
- Pursued FY25 funding of \$600,000, to be split between government and non-government partners. To date, \$300,000 has already been committed.
- Met bi-monthly with NRV Housing Trust Fund Oversight Board.
- Initiated incorporation of a 501(c)(3) nonprofit to administer the Fund long-term.



New River Valley Revolving Loan Fund

The Regional Commission operates a regional revolving loan fund designed to support the start-up and expansion of local small businesses. A committee of public and private sector representatives appointed by the Regional Commission oversees the program’s guidelines, loan approvals, and impact. Loan funds can be used to finance expansions, capital purchases, or start-up costs. These loans, typically ranging from \$10,000 to \$25,000, are offered at low interest rates, enabling businesses to access funds that might not otherwise be available or to leverage other, more traditional financing options. Qualifying businesses must complete a pre-application and go through a formal application process for approval.

The loan fund received several inquiries this year and is currently servicing loans to businesses in Floyd County and Christiansburg. The fund has approximately \$38,000 loaned out to clients, with approximately \$70,000 available to lend.



New River Water Trail Expansion

FY24 was a busy year for the New River Water Trail Expansion project. The project team navigated the Environmental Review Record process with support from state and local agencies. An engagement strategy was developed with the support of the National Park Service-River, Trails, Conservation Assistance program consultant, Solid Ground. River stakeholders and project management team members attended engagement sessions to share valuable insight on future operations and governance to foster a shared vision of the New River Water Trail.



The diversity of perspectives will ultimately aid in the development of a collaborative structure to oversee water trail activities well into the future. ARC POWER funding, matched with local cash and in-kind support, makes the components of this project possible. Funds will be used to build and enhance four boat access facilities with accompanying signage, expand wayfinding signage, and update the website newriverwatertrail.com to include the participating localities (Giles, Montgomery, Pulaski, and the City of Radford), while continuing to support stewardship opportunities.

New River Valley/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Area

The New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Investment Area Consortium Board includes the chief elected official or chief administrative officer from each local government in the New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Area (NR/MR WDA). This area covers 13 jurisdictions: the counties of Bland, Carroll, Floyd, Giles, Grayson, Montgomery, Pulaski, Smyth, Washington, and Wythe, and the cities of Bristol, Galax, and Radford.

The Consortium Board serves as the Area's policy board, including making appointments to the Workforce Development Board.

The New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board (WDB) is made up of representatives from regional businesses (51%) and federally required members (e.g., Economic Development, Education, Labor, Community Organizations, and more). The WDB oversees the programs and initiatives specified in the Federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 (including programs for Adults, Youth, and Dislocated Workers) and other special grants and programs as available. The WDB is the designated convener for the region's workforce system to interface with the business community and economic development entities seamlessly.

The New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Foundation, in partnership with the CB and the WDB, was established to support the work of the WDB and the CB. The Foundation focuses its attention on meeting the needs of the jobseekers served by the WDB and CB programs that are fostering their prosperity through occupational skills training, personal development opportunities, and wraparound supportive services to maximize their employment success.

SUPPORTING REGIONAL ECONOMIC GROWTH AND VITALITY

The NR/MR WDB continues to lead the region in developing a workforce system that is agile and flexible, enabling the system to adjust and/or respond to economic disturbances and shifts by leveraging and braiding the various federal, state, and local funds that come to the region to serve both businesses and jobseekers.

During PY'23, the NR/MR WDB used the following projects to support this systemic change even through the unusual conditions that were created by the pandemic.

BUSINESS SOLUTIONS OUTCOMES

As the region's designated Workforce System Convener, the WDB provides businesses easy access to solutions to meet workforce needs without having to navigate the bureaucracy of dozens of program providers.

Job Fairs/Recruiting Events

- Hosted seven multi-company events with 178 companies participating and over 700 jobseekers attending.
- Assisted five companies in hosting company-specific initiatives.

Workshops

- Hosted two "5G@Work Revisited" workshops for businesses with 73 attendees.
- Hosted the first "Business Success Symposium" with 12 resource partners having booths, 10 breakout sessions and business networking with 118 in attendance.
- Hosted four "Train the Trainer: Employability Skills" workshops for partners with 80 attendees.
- Hosted six Workforce Exchange Events.
- Hosted three facility tours for partners.

Incumbent Worker Training Projects

- 15 Projects supporting 65 workers with \$27,000 in reimbursements to 11 companies.

Business Services

- Provided 686 services.
- Provided services to 324 companies.
- Provided multiple services to 84 companies.



Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Programs (WIOA)

The Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth Programs, under Title I of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014, are designed to provide quality employment and training services to assist eligible individuals in finding and qualifying for meaningful employment, and to help businesses find the skilled workers they need to compete and succeed in the marketplace.

DISLOCATED WORKERS

- Individuals that received individualized career services: 83.
- Number in training: 36.
- Placement rate of those exited: 91.6%.
- Avg. wage at placement: \$22.44.

ADULT PROGRAM

- Individuals that received individualized career services: 202.
- Number in training: 147.
- Placement rate of those exited: 85.3%.
- Avg. wage at placement: \$18.51.

YOUTH PROGRAM

- Individuals that received individualized career services: 181.
- Attained a credential: 53.
- Received training: 111.
- Placement rate of those exited: 77.4%.

Pathways to a Strong and Healthy Region

PARTNERSHIPS FOR OPPORTUNITY AND WORKFORCE AND ECONOMIC REVITALIZATION (POWER)

January 2021-December 2024

This project was designed to serve individuals going from recovery (from substance use disorder) to work and build capacity in the region to serve individuals with SUD.

PROJECT OUTCOMES:

- 144 individuals in recovery completed training to become a Certified Peer Recovery Specialist. 141 earned certifications, and 104 gained employment.
- 130 individuals in recovery completed training in an in-demand occupational sector. 87 earned certifications and gained employment.
- 173 individuals in recovery seeking employment services were connected to employment.
- 42 health/human practitioners earned specialized credentials to support individuals with substance use disorder.
- 66 businesses have become Second Chance Employers.
- Recovery Ready Ecosystem Plan will be completed by December 30, 2024.

Build Your Career - YouthBuild

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

July 2021-October 2025

YouthBuild targets disadvantaged and low-income youth between the ages of 16 and 24, most of whom are secondary school dropouts and are either members of a low-income family, foster care youth, youth who are homeless, offenders, youths with a disability, children of an incarcerated parent, or a migrant youth. In YouthBuild, participants earn a GED® or high school diploma as well as industry credentials in construction, healthcare, or manufacturing. They also acquire leadership skills and participate in community service to learn how to give back to the community.

PROGRAM OUTCOMES:

- 93 participants enrolled. 68 lack secondary credentials; 25 low-skilled youth with barriers to employment.
- 59 participants accomplished measurable skills gains and completed occupational training.
- 52 participants earned an Industry Recognized Credential.
- 56 participants obtained employment.

In July, the NR/MR WDB was awarded a second YouthBuild grant to serve 66 at-risk youth from 2024 to 2026.

Public Health Professionals Program

HUMAN RESOURCES AND SERVICES ADMINISTRATION (HRSA)

July 2022-July 2025 (Subrecipient of VRHA)

The HRSA project addresses the ongoing critical need in healthcare facilities for trained public health professionals serving rural communities in Virginia. The project aims to provide job development, training, and placement in community health fields for rural community members.

PROJECT OUTCOMES:

- 131 participants enrolled.
- 45 participants completed occupational training.
- 40 participants earned an Industry Recognized Credential.
- 36 participants obtained employment.



Pathways to New Beginnings

WORKFORCE OPPORTUNITIES FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES (WORC)

U.S. Department of Labor and the Appalachian Regional Commission

September 2022-September 2025

WORC seeks to address systemic and programmatic barriers for 180 recovering and justice-involved citizens by coordinating innovative training and business services, providing access to employment opportunities, and aligning workforce and economic development strategies and activities in our region. Training and credentialing focus on in-demand occupations in the targeted industries of Construction, Manufacturing, and Healthcare, resulting in the expressed competencies and credentials needed and valued by businesses.

PROJECT OUTCOMES:

- 142 participants enrolled.
- 118 participants completed occupational training and earned an Industry Recognized Credential.
- 99 participants obtained employment.

Ready SWVA

GOVERNOR'S SET ASIDE FUNDS (UNDER WIOA TITLE I ADULT, YOUTH AND DISLOCATED WORKER FUNDS)

October 1, 2022 – September 30, 2024

Ready SWVA project is a pilot project covering 21 localities created to build the region's capacity and quality of childcare availability.

PROJECT OUTCOMES:

- 147 new teachers placed.
- 91 centers participating in the shared alliance.
- 266 students enrolled in early childhood education.
- 78 completed training.

Workforce Innovations

November 2022-March 2024

The project's intent was to provide innovative solutions and activities to address our worker shortage and provide businesses with the skilled workers they need, ultimately helping people with barriers obtain employment in a career pathway that offers competitive wages with opportunities for growth and advancement.

PROJECT OUTCOMES:

- 55 participants enrolled.
- 55 participants completed occupational training.
- 42 participants earned an Industry Recognized Credential.
- 43 participants obtained employment.

Soft Skills Training

Addresses the skills needs explicitly stated by the business community by assisting 50 participants in gaining valuable soft skills toward employment entry or retention. Foundational training and work experience are being offered to participants.

PROJECT OUTCOMES:

- 50 participants enrolled.
- 40 participants completed occupational training.
- 40 participants earned an Industry Recognized Credential.
- 36 participants obtained employment.

Technical Skills Training

The Technical Skills Training aims to supply skilled workers to manufacturing businesses and healthcare establishments who need in-demand jobs filled to sustain operations and potentially grow.

PROJECT OUTCOMES:

- 39 participants enrolled.
- 29 participants completed occupational training.
- 24 participants earned an Industry Recognized Credential.
- 24 participants obtained employment.

Supplemental Training Grant

PROGRAM GOALS:

- Offer HBI training to jobseekers interested in employment in a skilled trade as well as behind the walls at a correctional institution who are interested in the skilled trades.
- Provide training to our lead construction trainer to obtain HBI certifications in carpentry, brick masonry, electrical, HVAC, plumbing, weatherization, and more.
- Grow the skilled trades employer base for expanded work-based learning.
- Develop entrepreneurial training.

PROGRAM OUTCOMES:

- 27 participants enrolled.
- 18 participants completed occupational training.
- 18 participants earned an Industry Recognized Credential.
- 16 participants obtained employment.



Filling the Trades Gap

CONGRESSIONAL COMMUNITY PROJECT GRANT THROUGH US DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

December 2023-November 2025

The focus of the Community Project is to provide activities and services to address workforce challenges in the region.

PROGRAM GOALS:

- Engage in sector strategies to identify industry trends and needs, education development, training or other strategies, and the implementation and coordination of services.
- Coordinate or provide sector-based training programs targeting disadvantaged populations with barriers to employment.
- Develop capacity and efficiencies.
- Grow the workforce system and its partners.

PROGRAM OUTCOMES:

- 83 participants enrolled.
- 28 participants completed occupational training.
- 17 participants earned an Industry Recognized Credential.
- 13 participants obtained employment.
- 3 Sector Partnerships Convened (Construction/Skilled Trades, Healthcare and Manufacturing).

Transportation

RIDE Solutions

RIDE Solutions outreach has expanded in the post-COVID environment with community outreach and employer events. Staff promoted Bike to Work Week in May and attended various community events throughout the year. The program experienced growth in its online app users and fielded requests for carpool matches.

Participation in supporting partner efforts includes:

- Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce Expo.
- Virginia Tech Sustainable Transportation Fair.
- New River Valley Job Fair Expo.
- Presentation to the Pulaski County Industrial Employee Resource Council.

The RIDE Solutions app remains the primary online resource for individuals looking for carpool matches and transportation choices. All metrics in this fiscal year outperformed FY2023 except for the carpool match rate.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS:

- Current NRV app user stats: nearly 1,400 commuters in the NRV – 67% of those commuting within the NRV; and 155 employers represented.
- More than 2,700 carpool matches were requested and 32% found matches.
- This fiscal year RIDE Solutions' NRV members reduced 153,256 vehicle miles and 8,308 trips.
- Active users accumulated a combined savings of \$99,537.

The RIDE Solutions app is now connectingVA by DRPT

Switch to the new app without losing your points!

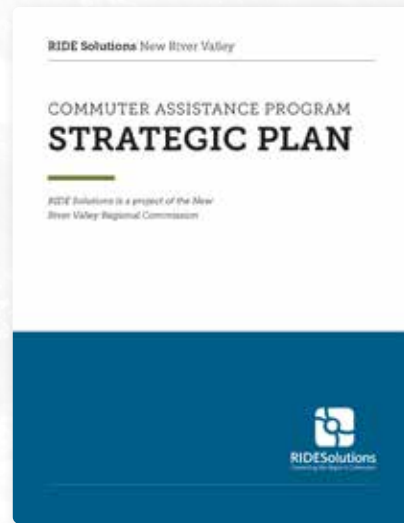
1. Download the ConnectingVA app from the app store
2. Log in using your RIDE Solutions login
3. Delete the old RIDE Solutions app

RIDE Solutions
www.ridesolutions.org

Commuter Assistance Program Strategic Plan

The Commuter Assistance Program Strategic Plan will help steer the course for the next five years and serve the commuters in the New River Valley. The plan was created using census data, stakeholder input, and resident feedback. During FY24, staff met with people from the business, nonprofit, and transit sectors to gain additional insight into the needs of area commuters.

In June of 2024, the plan was presented to the Regional Commission Board and approved. This project was funded by the Virginia Dept of Rail and Public Transit along with the NRV Metropolitan Planning Organization.



Finance & Personnel

Volunteer Contributions

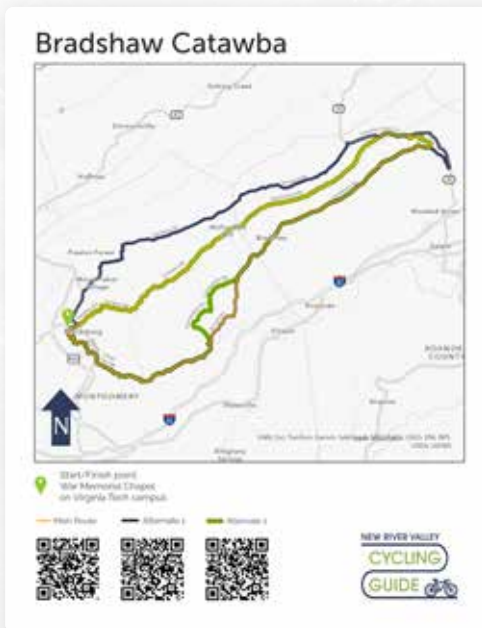
Regional Commission staff members are committed to serving communities both through their work and by volunteering their time and expertise to organizations throughout the region.

Here is a list of organizations where staff volunteered their time over the past year:

- Blacksburg Farmers Market
- Blacksburg Striders
- Carilion Clinic NRV
- Dialogue on Race
- Freedom First Federal Credit Union
- Gaye Whittaker Memorial Fund
- Habitat for Humanity NRV
- Medical Reserve Corp
- Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce
- Montgomery Museum of Art & History
- New River Community Action
- Partnership for Floyd
- Procession of the Appalachian Species
- Red Cross
- Rural Planning Caucus of Virginia

New River Valley Cycling Guide

The Regional Commission received funding from Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) to update the New River Valley Cycling Guide, previously made by the New River Valley Bicycle Association. The cycling guide update includes creating an interactive interface with Ride with GPS, a third-party cycling navigation application. The interactive interface is integrated with static maps using QR codes. The work to date also includes creating the framework for the interactive ArcGIS Online story map, where users can search for routes based on starting points, ending points, and route length. This work continues into FY 2025.





Director's Message

The spirit of regional collaboration is often on display in the New River Valley, and more often than not, leaders in the region choose a collaborative pathway when addressing the most pressing opportunities and challenges. This past year numerous key issues such as rural broadband deployment, workforce housing, substance use disorder services, passenger rail expansion, outdoor recreation access, and economic opportunity through Tech Hubs were advanced through regional frameworks. Many of these could be approached by a singular member of the Regional Commission, whether a local government or higher educational institution; however, in each of those topics, the members decided a collaborative model would deliver the most significant impact.

In the fall, the Regional Commission was awarded a Strategy Development Grant for the New River Valley/Danville Additive Manufacturing and Advanced Materials Tech Hub by the US Economic Development Administration. This highly competitive program selected 18 regions for strategy development with applications exceeding 200 from across the country. The program is advancing rapidly in close coordination with partners at Virginia Tech and Onward NRV.

The New River Water Trail Expansion project is increasing access to outdoor recreation by adding three boat launches, improving an existing launch, and expanding the website beyond Giles County to include Montgomery and Pulaski counties as well as the City of Radford. New signage will be also installed at all the sites in the expanded geography with construction expected to start in FY25.

Several years ago, the region garnered attention of leaders in Richmond through a public-private-citizen collaborative to reintroduce passenger rail service to the area through the organization, NRV Passenger Rail. At the end of FY24, the Virginia Passenger Rail Authority announced a change in

the New River Valley station location in favor of Cambria, a historic area of Christiansburg on the Norfolk Southern main line. This location appears to deliver better project outcomes by many measures. The New River Valley Passenger Rail Station Authority will delve into station design in earnest this coming fiscal year with the goal of service starting prior to 2028.

Entering the second year of the NRV Recovery Ecosystem, the Regional Commission is coordinating a complex funding environment to deliver increased services for people with substance use disorders. Funding for the program from the Virginia Opioid Abatement Authority and local governments has served to expand transportation services for people accessing appointments, deliver training to school systems on trauma-informed care and adverse childhood experiences; increase operations of the New River Health District mobile clinic; and allow more people to participate in Recovery Fitness as a function of Recovery Court. The FY25 program will continue to address transportation barriers for services and begin investing in solutions to housing challenges for people in recovery.

The groundwork was laid in FY24 to launch the Commonwealth's first Regional Housing Trust Fund (RHTF) with participation to include the counties of Floyd, Giles, Pulaski, Montgomery, the City of Radford, and the towns of Blacksburg, Christiansburg, Floyd, and Pulaski. Several non-governmental partners are anticipated to join the trust fund as well. This new nonprofit established by the Regional Commission will serve a critical role in providing unrestricted matching funds for workforce housing needs. The first investments made by the RHTF with funds provided by Virginia Housing will result in over 100 units of affordable housing being delivered in the towns of Blacksburg and Pulaski.

Rural access to the internet is expanding quickly now that hurdles for project design and make-ready (attaching fiber to existing utility poles) have largely been cleared. The first connections for the approximately 20,000 that will be constructed by December 2026 went live at the end of this fiscal year. Be on the lookout for bucket trucks making fiber internet connections in rural areas across Montgomery, Pulaski, and Bland counties over the next year and encourage community members to sign up for service.

Each day, this organization works diligently to bring investment to the region's priorities that serve to improve the lives of residents and maximize economic opportunity for businesses. The trust our members place in the team at the Regional Commission to execute these ambitious projects is exciting and rewarding. This organization approaches each collaborative as a chance to build relationships that yield the greatest outcomes for everyone in the New River Valley.

Kevin Byrd, AICP

Executive Director

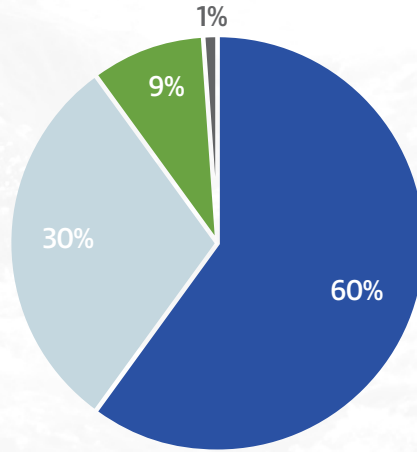
Finance Report

YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2024

Revenues

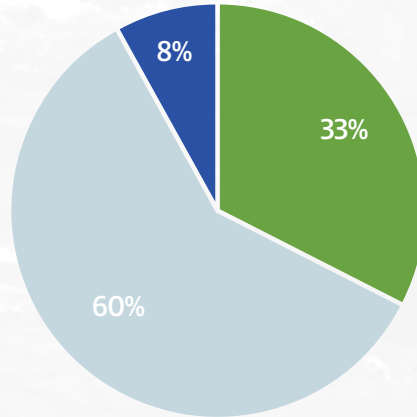
Grants and Appropriations

Federal.....	5,112,453
State	2,523,638
Local	786,843
Other	111,112
Total.....	\$8,534,046



Expenditures

Personnel	2,757,047
Contractual.....	5,043,580
Operations & Other	633,956
Total.....	\$8,434,583





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