

Hi, just a reminder that you're receiving this email because you have expressed an interest in Western Piedmont Council of Governments. Don't forget to add [jason.toney@wpcog.org](mailto:jason.toney@wpcog.org) to your address book so we'll be sure to land in your inbox!

You may [unsubscribe](#) if you no longer wish to receive our emails.



## WPCOG - Newsletter

June 2020

### Area Agency on Aging

- World Elder Abuse Awareness Day

### Community & Economic Development

- Resources Available for Mortgage Assistance, Renter Protection & Scam Avoidance

### Community & Regional Planning

- Burke Co. Quality of Life Explorer Data Update  
- Summer EIN Highlights Hickory MSA Employment Losses from COVID-19 Pandemic

### Regional Housing Authority

- FSS Graduate Mary Danner Success Story

### Transportation Planning

- NCDOT Facing Unprecedented Revenue Crisis

## 2020 Census is Still Going!

What matters to you? Schools? Transportation? Hospitals? Data from the US Census Bureau help inform planning efforts for all these important community resources. To learn how census data impact you and your community, visit [2020census.gov](https://2020census.gov).

The decennial census is taking place, right now. Make sure you're counted! Your responses are confidential and important in shaping your community and the federal funds your community receives.

Catawba County, for example, has a response rate of 62.9%, which is the 9th highest response rate in North

# Workforce Development Board

- NCWorks Live Chat Feature!

Announcements | Calendar

Carolina.

There are several Census tracts which are close to surpassing the 2010 response rate. Tracts 109, 110 and 104.02 are still below a 50% response rate

## Workforce Development Board NCWorks Live Chat Feature!

You can now connect with an NCWorks Career Adviser via Live Chat at [www.ncworks.gov](http://www.ncworks.gov). During business hours, there will always be someone there to assist you.

The NCWorks Career Center staff have continued to offer job seeker and career services virtually including:

- Career Planning and Coaching
- Resume Review & Development
- Scholarships for Training
- Business Recruitment & Retention Services
- Skills Assessment & Labor Market Information

**Note:** The NCWorks Career Centers do not process Unemployment Insurance claims. This is handled by the Dept. of Employment Security exclusively online or by phone.

**Recruitment**

- Online Site for Posting Job Orders [www.ncworks.gov](http://www.ncworks.gov)
- Review Resumes Online
- Job Description Development
- Job Applicant Screening & Candidate Referrals
- Assistance with Recruitment Events
- Space to Conduct Job Interviews
- Federal Bonding Information
- Work Opportunity Tax Credit Information

**Training & Business Information**

- Labor-Market Information
- Employee Training Resources
- Paid Internships
- Layoff/Closure Prevention Resources

**Your Local Career Centers**

- NCWorks Career Center-Alexander**  
604 7th St SW | Taylorsville, NC 28681 | (828) 632-4831
- NCWorks Career Center-Burke**  
720 East Main St | Morganton, NC 28655 | (828) 434-8181
- NCWorks Career Center-Caldwell**  
1809 Hickory Blvd SE | Lenoir, NC 28645 | (828) 759-4800
- NCWorks Career Center-Catawba**  
403 Carver Station SE | Canton, NC 28613 | (828) 466-5535

The NCWorks Career Center does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age or disability in employment or the provision of services. Auxiliary aids and services for individuals with disabilities are available upon request.

WWW.NCWORKS.GOV

**HOW NOT TO GET THE JOB**

- SHOW UP LATE FOR THE INTERVIEW
- SMELL LIKE TOBACCO/ TOO MUCH COLOGNE/ SWEATY BODY ODOR
- WEAR PAJAMAS TO THE INTERVIEW
- WEAR HEADPHONES/ EARBUDS TO THE INTERVIEW
- CHEW GUM DURING THE INTERVIEW
- BRING YOUR KIDS TO THE INTERVIEW
- SPEAK NEGATIVELY ABOUT YOUR FORMER EMPLOYER
- HAVE MISTAKES IN YOUR RESUME & OUT-DATED REFERENCES
- BE UNFAMILIAR WITH THE COMPANY
- TALK TOO MUCH/ GIVE TOO MUCH PERSONAL INFORMATION
- TAKE PHONE CALLS DURING THE INTERVIEW
- ACT LIKE YOU HAVE NO INTEREST IN THE JOB

**\*If you need help preparing for a job interview, please contact your nearest NCWorks Career Center. Let us help you get the job.**

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403 Carver Station SE | Canton, NC 28613 | (828) 466-5535

**WESTERN Piedmont workforce development board**  
[www.westernpiedmontworkforce.org](http://www.westernpiedmontworkforce.org)  
1889 Second Ave NW  
Hickory, NC 28601  
828.372.9191

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**ACE YOUR VIRTUAL INTERVIEW**

- Practice Most Common Interview Questions
- Make Sure Surroundings are Neat & Clean
- Test All Technology Beforehand (Including Wi-Fi)
- Check Your Lighting
- Perform a Practice Recording
- Dress Nice from Head to Toe
- Limit Distractions (Pets, Children, TV, etc.)
- Have Your Resume in Front of You
- Use Professional Body Language
- No Food, Gum or Drinks
- Show Enthusiasm
- Immediately Follow Up/ Thank You

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Click on "Labor Market Information on NCWorks Online Jobs" to find:

- ◆◆ The employers with the most jobs posted;
  - ◆◆ The industries with the most jobs posted; and
  - ◆◆ The particular occupations with the most jobs posted.
- ◆◆ Employers: remember to use NCWorks to post your job opportunities where jobseekers will see them!



Article by Wendy Johnson

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## Area Agency on Aging Older Americans Month - Make Your Mark



For the last fourteen years, World Elder Abuse Awareness Day has continued to bring awareness to the issue of elder abuse, promote awareness of different types of abuse, and educate the community on ways it can help put an end to elder abuse. Elder Abuse Awareness Day also aims to provide individuals with the tools and courage to report an incident if they see one. In North Carolina alone reports of elder abuse have increased 96% in the last 10 years. The National Centers for Elder Abuse reports that one in ten seniors may experience elder abuse but only one in 23 incidents are reported. Most people assume this will never happen to them or someone they love. But the facts are, elder abuse is so under reported many do not realize it may already be happening to someone they love.

Elder abuse can come in many forms that can often be hard to recognize, such as physical abuse, sexual abuse, psychological abuse, financial abuse, neglect, verbal abuse and threats, and abandonment. The abuse can come from a spouse, family member, caregiver, or friend. It is most likely, the abuser is someone the victim knows. Often, the individual being abused may not be able to verbalize the abuse, so it is up to others to notice the signs of abuse and to report immediately. It is crucial that we are all aware of those who are at risk. Including individuals with dementia, women, and "older" elders.

If you suspect that you or someone you love is being abused, report it. If it is a life-threatening situation, call 911 immediately. Everyone has a responsibility to report abuse if they suspect it is happening. To report elder abuse contact the Department of Social Services, Adult Protective Services and/or local law enforcement. If you suspect abuse in a nursing facility, please contact your Regional Ombudsman or the Department of Health Service Regulations in North Carolina. There are also, many resources within the Area Agency on Aging that can help reduce an older adult's risk of being abused. To find out about these and other resources in your community visit our webpage at [www.wpcogaaa.org](http://www.wpcogaaa.org).

On June 15, 2020, we asked the community to come together to bring awareness to elder abuse by **WEARING PURPLE**.

To find out more information about World Elder Abuse Day, please visit:  
<http://eldermistreatment.usc.edu/weaad-home/about/>

## Community & Economic Development

### Resources Available for Mortgage Assistance, Renter Protection & Scam Avoidance

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the federal government has established resources to assist homeowners with foreclosure prevention, protect renters from eviction, and provide information in recognizing scams.

The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) has an outline of available programs and alerts at the following website: [www.consumerfinance.gov/coronavirus/mortgage-and-housing-assistance](http://www.consumerfinance.gov/coronavirus/mortgage-and-housing-assistance). Working in partnership with Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the CFPB has information on how the CARES Act can assist homeowners with mortgages that are federally or Government Sponsored Enterprise (GSE) backed or funded (by FHA, VA, USDA, Fannie Mae, or Freddie Mac). Consumer mortgages that are not federally backed, are not eligible for the federal relief, however, the mortgage servicers of these loans are working with homeowners in order to provide assistance.

Renters are also protected by the CARES Act. According to the CFPB, the legislation provides for a suspension or moratorium on evictions for tenants living in federal subsidized housing or are renting from an owner who has a federally or GSE-backed mortgage.

It's important to be aware that during disasters and times of crisis, there is an increased risk of scams and fraud. Protect yourself by asking questions, reading the materials provided to you, and avoiding any solicitations requiring up-front cash payments. Information on possible COVID-19 scams can be found at: [www.consumerfinance.gov/about-us/blog/beware-coronavirus-related-scams](http://www.consumerfinance.gov/about-us/blog/beware-coronavirus-related-scams).

June is National Homeownership Month, and the WPCOG is here to assist individuals who are facing mortgage challenges. For information about programs that are available, contact [Helen Whisenant](#), a HUD-certified housing counselor, at the WPCOG at 828-485-4220

Article by Helen Whisenant

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## Community & Regional Planning

### Burke County Quality of Life Explorer Data Update

During the winter and spring, Western Piedmont Council of Governments (WPCOG) Planning and GIS staff updated the Burke County Quality of Life (QoL) Explorer's datasets. This process involved editing and modifying existing data, and adding or removing data to reflect changes that have occurred over the past year. Updates included the most recent disease rates (cancer, COPD, diabetes, hypertension, kidney disease) obtained from Carolinas Health Care System Blue Ridge, as well as several key demographic measures from the Census Bureau's 2014-2018 American Community Survey.

The QoL is a free online interactive map that allows users to easily identify areas of Burke County that have the most pressing health and quality-of-life needs. Users can access and download key health indicators and demographics across multiple categories, including:

- Disease Rates (cancer, COPD, diabetes, hypertension, kidney disease)
- Census demographics (median household income, vehicle access, age, gender, vacant housing units, residents lacking health insurance, and residents living with a disability etc.)
- Food Sources (food deserts, farmers markets, grocery stores, gas stations, etc.)
- Health Care (doctors' offices, mental health care providers, etc.)
- Community (schools, child care centers, churches, shelters, etc.)

- Recreation (playgrounds, parks)
- Transportation (transit routes, traffic counts)

WPCOG staff will offer on-site training opportunities to help area nonprofits incorporate the QoL into their own project decision making processes. If you would like to schedule a QoL training session, please contact Todd Stroupe at [todd.stroupe@wpcog.org](mailto:todd.stroupe@wpcog.org) or Duncan Cavanaugh at [duncan.cavanaugh@wpcog.org](mailto:duncan.cavanaugh@wpcog.org). The Burke County Quality of Life Explorer can be accessed through the Western Piedmont Council of Government's website at [www.wpcog.org](http://www.wpcog.org).

Article by Duncan Cavanaugh

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## Community & Regional Planning

### Summer EIN - Highlights Hickory MSA Employment Losses from COVID-19 Pandemic

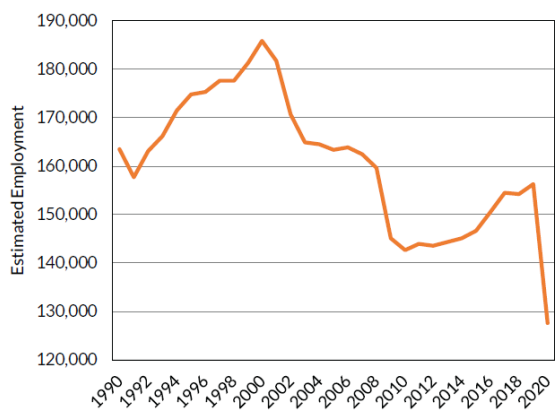
The latest issue of the Economic Indicators Newsletter (EIN) addresses Hickory Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) unemployment rates, Hickory Metro per capita personal income (PCPI), Hickory MSA employment losses caused by the COVID-19 pandemic based on data from Current Employment Statistics (CES) and Hickory MSA CES comparisons with other North Carolina MSAs.

Here are a few key highlights of the EIN:

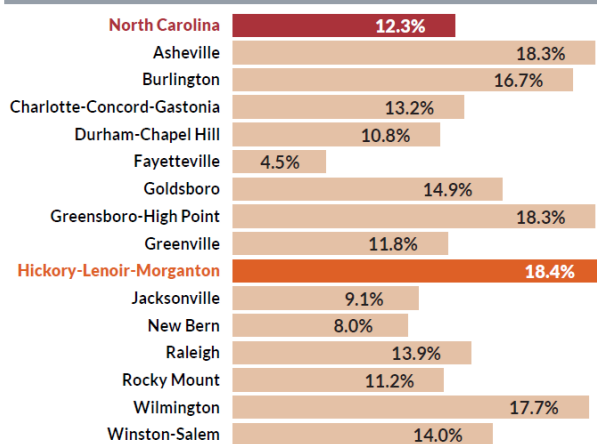
- The COVID-19 pandemic caused the Hickory MSA unemployment rate from 4.0% in March 2020 to 17.6% in April 2020.
- Between April 2019 and April 2020, the estimated number of employed persons decreased from 169,522 to 133,725 (-35,797), while the civilian labor force grew from 175,395 to 162,359 (-13,036).
- Hickory MSA Per Capita Personal Income (PCPI) grew from \$35,772 in 2015 to \$39,849 in 2018. The Hickory MSA's 11.4% PCPI growth was much higher than the United States inflation rate (5.6%) between 2015 and 2018.
- There is no question that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the Hickory MSA's economy. As of April 2020, employment in the region equaled just 127,600, according to results from the Current Employment Survey (CES). This is by far the lowest number of jobs in the region over the past 30 years. The April 2020 employment is 58,300 less than the peak number of jobs in April 2010 and is 27,600 jobs less than the March 2020 total.
- Hickory MSA goods-producing employment, which includes mining, construction and manufacturing, fell from 46,500 in March 2020 to 35,500 in April 2020.
- Most of the goods-producing employment losses occurred in furniture and textiles. The region lost more than 60% of its furniture jobs and over 40% of its textile jobs between March and April 2020. Fortunately, many of these workers are already back on the job, although it may take some time for all the jobs to return, due to continuing economic uncertainty nationally.
- Hickory MSA service-providing employment has also been severely hit by the pandemic. Since peaking in April 2019, the number of service-producing jobs has dropped from 109,800 to 92,100. The biggest service sector employment decrease (-8,100) since April 2019 occurred in leisure and hospitality services, which includes accommodations, restaurants and museums. More than 50% of all jobs in the leisure and hospitality sector have been lost over the past year.
- Comparisons with other NC MSAs show that the Hickory MSA has lost the greatest percentage decrease of jobs (-18.4%) among the 15 metro areas in North Carolina
- between April 2019 and April 2020 and from March 2020 to April 2020 as a result of COVID-19 pandemic.
- In total, the State of North Carolina lost more than 560,000 jobs between April 2019 and 2020. Nearly 30% of the State's total job losses occurred in the Charlotte MSA.
- The Hickory MSA also had the greatest percentage job loss among North Carolina Metro areas between March 2020 and April 2020.
- In total, the State lost more than 543,000 jobs between March and April 2020. In the Charlotte MSA, data from the Current Employment Survey reveals employment decreases of 171,300 from March to April 2020.
- The Hickory MSA had the second highest percentage job loss in goods-producing employment and the fifth highest percentage loss of service-producing employment between March 2020 and April 2020.

The EIN is produced quarterly and is a publication of the Western Piedmont Workforce Development Board. The EIN is now available digitally. To join the EIN subscription list, please click [here](#). For questions concerning the EIN, please contact Taylor Dellinger, Data Analyst at 828-485-4233 or by email [taylor.dellinger@wpcog.org](mailto:taylor.dellinger@wpcog.org)

**Figure 3. Hickory MSA Estimated Employment, April 1990-April 2020\***  
\*Employment numbers shown are not seasonally adjusted.  
 Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, CES Program, 2020.



**Figure 11. Percentage Loss in NC MSA Employment, Apr. 2019-20**  
Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, CES Program, 2020.



To download the current edition of the Economic Indicators Newsletter, use the link provided below.

[EIN - Vol. 23 - 2 \(Summer 2020\)](#)

Article by Taylor Dellinger

**Regional Housing Authority  
 FSS Graduate Mary Danner Success Story**



A bright smile, a calm demeanor, and a hefty dose of both resilience and faith are some of the gifts that guide Mary Danner through life. All those attributes served her well as she prepared to be our first REACH Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) participant to graduate during the COVID-19 crisis.

"I'm proud to graduate during a pandemic," Mary said. Typically, for a graduation, our Regional Housing Authority (RHA) staff gathers around a conference room table. There, the graduate and I recap the stories of pitfalls that were overcome and goals that were accomplished in a brief time of celebrating a graduate's efforts to move their life forward in a new and positive direction.

As the FSS Coordinator, I worried how Mary would feel about having just me and our RHA Director in the room. Especially with all of us wearing masks and sitting six feet apart.

Mary was not fazed. "I am so excited about this," she said several times. The only lament of the day was the same for me and Mary, "I'm a hugger and I don't like this," we both told my Director.

Mary enrolled in REACH in the spring of 2018 with a primary goal of completing her degree and becoming a nurse. She experienced several ups and down, including losing two jobs that both brought her to the monetary brink of self-sufficiency and then ended due to layoffs just before she was ready to graduate.

After each setback, Mary and I would discuss options. Then she would give herself some time to consider

them, regroup, and move forward. She used several partner resources while in the program and even received a scholarship from NCWorks to take a CNA class. Mary completed the CNA class and passed the state test. Then a job she had been pursuing at a pharmaceutical company, prior to taking the class, opened up. Within a few months of accepting the job, Mary was doing well and her income exceeded the FSS program guidelines, making her ready to graduate.

The pharmaceutical job has given Mary stable work during a time when so many have lost jobs. She was deemed essential and has even had to work some overtime in recent months.

"I have not wanted for anything during this crisis," Mary said. She plans to take online college prerequisite classes for now in hopes of one day becoming a nurse. She also will continue working with the coordinator of a partner program, Operation HOPE, to receive additional guidance on improving her credit and using the escrow funds that she received wisely.

Mary's graduation ended with a few tears, a mutual expression of appreciation for each other and the time we shared, and a promise - we will connect after social distancing ends and collect our hugs.

Article by Kim Duncan

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## Transportation NCDOT Facing Unprecedented Revenue Crisis

Transportation projects are largely funded through fuel tax receipts. With the recent pandemic, everyone has been encouraged to reduce their travel. In April and May, both travel and fuel consumption decreased about 40%. As a result, revenues decreased by over \$300 million. Back in the Great Recession, revenues had decreased by less than 7%, whereas now, the most recent quarter saw revenues drop by more than 30%. Unfortunately, even before this unprecedented loss, NCDOT was already operating on a thin margin. Their funding reserves had already been declining, due in large part, to the response and recovery for multiple hurricanes and heavy rainfall events across the state.

Before the pandemic, NCDOT responded to declining reserves by delaying project lettings, reducing the capital program, and decreasing routine maintenance. Now that their revenue challenges have been dramatically compounded, NCDOT has been forced to follow an even more aggressive approach. All work not yet under contract is suspended. This effectively delays or stops work on any project not already under construction. For the moment, this action even delays locally administered projects, which are funded upfront by local governments, but then reimbursed through NCDOT obligation of Federal highway funding.

WPCOG continues to advocate for our area local governments dealing with the impacts of this crisis. Transportation projects have significant local and regional economic benefits. WPCOG will continue to creatively collaborate with local and state governments and officials. The overarching goal remains that all projects throughout our region move forward again.

Article by Brian Horton

## ANNOUNCEMENTS



It is during times like this when our communities rely on their local government teams for so much, and the team at the Alliance is tremendously proud to work alongside you and support your efforts. We know there

are significant demands on your teams right now, and pivots you are making in your own organizations to keep operations running. And of course, the health and well-being of you and your teammates are our top priority.

To ensure your safety, and be mindful of the shifting priorities, **AFI has been able to move the TLG 2020 conference dates to Sept. 1-4.** These four days of fiery positive energy will be a welcome inspiration and a coming together of passionate local government professionals - just what we all will need to reboot and reenergize!

Anyone who has already registered for the conference under the original dates will have their registrations automatically transferred (while the some hotel blocks will be available, hotel reservations will need to be re-booked).

If you haven't registered, registration is still open at [transformgov.org/tlg2020](https://transformgov.org/tlg2020). And as a reminder, because of AFI's partnership, members can register now with discount code WPCOG to save \$50 off the registration cost. Follow along on Twitter at #TLG2020 to keep in touch with the latest conference updates, or reach out to our team at [conferences@transformgov.org](mailto:conferences@transformgov.org) with any questions.

## WPCOG CALENDAR

**All scheduled meetings are currently being conducted electronically.  
For a listing of upcoming meetings and information on how to participate or attend, please visit [www.wpcog.org/electronic-public-meetings](http://www.wpcog.org/electronic-public-meetings).**

Stay Connected



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[www.wpcog.org](http://www.wpcog.org)