

Growing Southwest Georgia
**Stakeholder
Involvement Program**



Stakeholder Involvement Program

The Regional Plan is broader in scope than local comprehensive plans and has three components: Stakeholder Involvement Program (SIP), Regional Assessment and the Regional Agenda. The SIP must include identification of stakeholders, participation techniques and a plan development schedule. This document will describe the process that will be used to address the Stakeholder Involvement Program.

Stakeholder involvement and engagement is changing constantly with advancements in technology and the advent of social media. It is a vital component to the Regional Planning process since stakeholder engagement can change the entire fabric of the process, plan and the outcome.

Stakeholder involvement is more than just outreach, public relations or communication. Successful stakeholder involvement requires a commitment to actively engage with stakeholders, listen to them, build a relationship with them and then respond to their concerns in a mutually beneficial way. Sometimes during this process we only talk or engage those who speak the loudest.

Engagement is not an end in itself, but a means to help build better relationships in communities in which we work, live and play. Since this plan will affect the region, we need to hear from the region. The staff of the Southwest Georgia Regional Commission will utilize traditional and nontraditional ways to reach the diverse groups that makes up our region.



We are confident that with our efforts we can target leaders and influencers from government and both the public and private sectors. They all play an important role in creating, maintaining and implementing the plan. Our staff understands the importance of having stakeholders at the table, they inform us of what is really happening in our communities.

Our outreach will be intentional and built around a strategy of listening and understanding to identify champions and owners of future engagement activities. These individuals are our internal stakeholders and we will collaborate with them to build an overall strategy and plan.

We will continue our efforts of moving the region forward. The plan will detail the process and the techniques that will be used to effectively communicate with the public and receive input for further direction. A timeline of events is also included to keep us informed and on track.

Who are our Stakeholders?

Numerous communities make up our region from those with populations ranging from 300 to those numbering in the thousands. For this reason our approach to the Regional Plan has to be designed to be responsive and inclusive of both small and large communities.

The Regional Commission staff interacts with a broad range of stakeholders, from those in leaderships who have a vested interest in improving their communities and to those who are recipients of community services. We are learning new things about who a stakeholder is, what stakeholder involvement is and how stakeholders add value to the process. For these benefits to be realized, we recognize that stakeholder engagements must be intentionally embedded within each element of the plan. Through this document and related activities, we will integrate stakeholder engagement principles into the policies, strategies and day-to-day operations of each community. We welcome feedback!

Listed below is a list of stakeholders we will engage. This list is not all inclusive, but gives us a start and a way to tap into local knowledge of the issues, opportunities and strengths and weaknesses.



Regional Agencies & Organizations

- SOWEGA Council on Aging
- Family Connection
- Regional Libraries
- Department of Family & Children Services
- Regional Educational Services
- Habitat For Humanities
- Albany Advocacy Resource Center (ARC)
- Southwest Georgia Area Health Education Center (SOWEGA AHEC)
- Job Corps
- Southwest Georgia Community Action Council
- Realtors Associations
- United States Department of Agriculture
- Southwest Georgia Regional Partners Network, Inc.

State & Local Partners

- Southwest Georgia's 14 County and 44 Municipal Governments
- WorkSource Southwest Georgia
- Development Authorities
- Dougherty Area Regional Transportation Study (DARTS)
- Georgia Department of Community Affairs
- Georgia Department of Economic Development
- Georgia Department of Education
- Georgia Department of Corrections
- Georgia Department of Transportation
- Georgia Department of Natural Resources
- Georgia Emergency Management Agency
- Georgia Forestry Commission
- Georgia Department of Community Supervision
- Goodwill Industries
- Head Start Programs
- Housing Authorities
- Hospital Authorities
- Main Street and Better Hometown Programs
- Technical Schools, Colleges and Universities
- Local Radio, Television stations and other media outlets
- Georgia Department of Family and Children Services
- Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities
- Georgia Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Addictive Diseases
- Ministerial Alliances
- Albany Marine Corps Logistics Base



Proposed Methods of Engagement

Stakeholder engagement involves time, resources and commitment, so we will not start the process without the participation of local leaders. Without this support, a lot of effort is wasted, despite our best intentions or efforts.

Steering Committee & Stakeholder Feedback Sessions

A committee of the Region Commission Council will serve as the steering committee for the development of the Regional Agenda. The Council meets the last Thursday of each month and will provide feedback and direction to RC staff on the Agenda prior to presenting it to the full Council. The committee will meet at least quarterly and will have conference calls as needed which will serve as the discussion forum where committee members will provide feedback on the staff's development of plan element and set directives on the plan's development. RC staff will give updates at the monthly meetings and address questions, concerns and other issues regarding the Agenda. The current Performance Standards will also be reviewed by the committee. RC staff will also take into consideration any comments or revisions to the performance standards that have already been suggested by local governments during the previous implementation phase. The RC also has a nonprofit arm called the Regional Partners Network (RPN) which is comprised on regional and local human service agencies and other nonprofits. RPN members meet two times annually, but members will be sent potential performance standards and also drafts of the Assessment Stakeholder Program and Agenda for review and feedback.

Informational

The Regional Commission website will be the place to go to get current updates and any information pertaining to the Regional Plan. RC has recently updated the site with the addition of a comprehensive plan section and individuals that view the site will be able to link to their local plan. All written correspondence and other documents, upcoming meetings (date, time, location & purpose) will be included on the website. We will also be using our Facebook, Twitter Page and Instagram accounts for spreading the word. We will conduct online surveys, distribute electronic newsletters, conduct conference calls, exchange information via blogs, message boards and RSS feeds. The information will be collected and analyzed for utilization and inclusion in the Regional Plan.

Public Displays

Flyers will be posted in high traffic areas throughout the region and in all government buildings, libraries, groceries stores and other nontraditional highly visible places.

Public Meetings

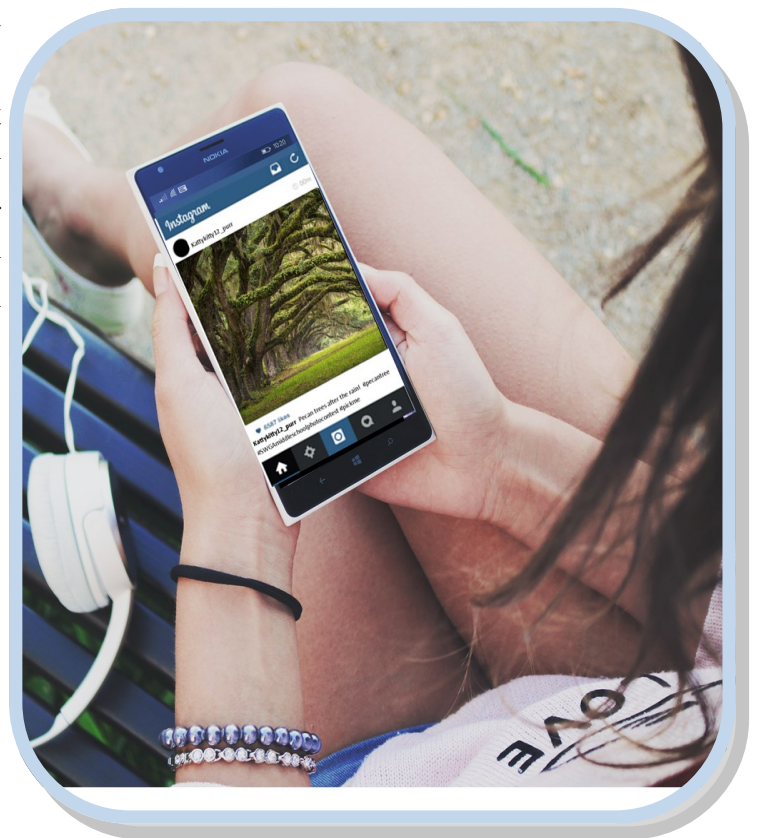
We will host eight informational meeting in targeted areas across the region. Meeting will be held in: Cairo, Camilla, Colquitt, Leesburg, Moultrie, and three other municipalities in the region. During these meetings, the community at large will be informed about the Region Plan process and why their participation is important. Participants will also have the opportunity to aide in the development of the Regional Plan and specific plan elements.

Regional Commission Facebook Page and Instagram

The RC's presence on the Facebook and Instagram will provide additional opportunities for those who are not able to participate in the meetings across the region to have their opinions taken into consideration on various Regional Agenda items. Various questions and updates will be posted to inform and stimulate discussion on a particular element of the Regional Agenda or other issues affecting the region. RC staff will also send email blasts through Constant Contact to elicit responses regarding the plan and plan elements. It will also be used to share updates about the plan and give dates and times of upcoming events and meetings.

InstaContest (Photography Contest)

The contest will be open to middle and high school students in the region. Participants will be encouraged to submit photographs about their community through Instagram, things they like or don't like about where they live. They will also be encouraged to share how they are making their communities better. These images will be used to shape



@swgrcorg
#SWGAinstacontest

Advertisements

Public Service Announcements

RC staff will develop Public Service Announcements about the Plan and any meetings held in the region. These Public Service Announcements will be distributed to local radio and television stations.



Newspaper Press Releases

RC staff will send out Press Releases to all regional newspapers regarding the Regional Plan Open Houses.

Monthly Newsletter Articles

RC staff will develop articles to appear in the Regional Commission's newsletter, which is produced once a quarter. Each article will discuss the Regional Plan and plan elements and how the local governments and community members can get involved. The articles will also be shared with other organizations in the region with a request that they be included in their newsletters.



Regional Plan Completion Schedule

