

# Commonwealth Regional Council (CRC)



**July 1, 2009 – June 30,**

## **Annual Report**

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## **Message from the Chairman**



This has been a year of extraordinary challenges for this region and its local governments and institutions of higher education. Like so many entities and organizations within this region, the Commonwealth Regional Council (CRC) has not been untouched by the current economic downturn. Many steps were taken this past year to help continue to position the organization to get through these tough times. The organization may look a little different from when it was first created in 2005 as a regional planning and marketing organization, but we have continued to perform essential services for our members that are aimed at one purpose – to make the region a better place for all who live and work here.

The CRC's Marketing Operation was first initiated in February 2006. In the past fiscal year due to the lack of crucial economic development program funding and a budgetary shortfall, the Council had to reduce its initiatives geared toward marketing and economic development. This included the unfortunate loss of both the President/CEO and Marketing Associate. The cost of economic development/marketing activities were largely funded by a special General Assembly appropriation of \$250,000. The funds ran out on June 30, 2009. Therefore, activities carried out during this past year were funded by cash fund reserves.

The Council's Planning Operation continued to perform vital services for member localities. Whether it involved grant writing and grant/project administration, development of Comprehensive Plans, regional planning initiatives or any of the other services, planning staff continued to be a resource for the region and its members. This past year, CRC staff assisted members with grant writing services on 13 grant applications. As of June 30, 2010, approximately \$1.2 million in grant funds had been awarded, with \$2.3 million still pending.

Therefore, on behalf of the Commonwealth Regional Council, I am pleased to present a summary of activities and projects during the 2010 Fiscal Year (July 1, 2009 – June 30, 2010). This year's report was designed to showcase accomplishments on behalf of our Council Members.

Sincerely,

Gary Walker, Chairman



## **Mission Statement**

The Commonwealth Regional Council (CRC) provides regional leadership for economic development, responsible growth, and consolidated services enhancing opportunity and quality of life for our citizens.



## **Operating Principles**

We pledge to:

- Educate citizens and decision-makers on development options and opportunities;
- Obtain resources necessary to implement projects;
- Foster and support cooperative efforts among localities and organizations;
- Provide land use planning services;
- Support critical infrastructure development;
- Ensure development is compatible with the rural character of the region;
- Communicate effectively with our partners and stakeholders; and
- Market the region to attract appropriate development.

## **Our Vision**

We strive to:

- **Provide regional governmental services** to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery to area residents;
- **Improve recognition and respect for the region**, as well as additional resources from outside the region;
- **Leverage higher education resources** to improve economic opportunities;
- **Improve the region's infrastructure** to increase economic development and tourism potential;
- **Maintain the quality and character of the region** by helping to ensure that future development will be compatible with our rural character;
- **Develop and implement a successful marketing campaign** that will inform both internal and external customers about opportunities and potentials; and
- **Create an education-sensitive community** that understands the impact quality education systems have on increasing economic opportunity and improving the overall quality of life.

## **Council Leadership**

Representative

Alternate

**Amelia County**

Ellsworth J. Bennett

Ralph Whitaker, Jr.



**Buckingham County**

Dr. Brian Bates  
*(Interim Treasurer/Secretary)*

F.D. LeSueur



**Charlotte County**

Gary Walker  
*(Chairman)*

Haywood Hamlet



**Cumberland County**

Bill Osl

Van Petty



**Lunenburg County**

Wayne Hoover

David Wingold



**Prince Edward County**

William G. Fore, Jr.  
*(Vice-Chairman)*

Don Gantt



**Longwood University**

Brenda Atkins

Dr. Wayne McWee



**Commonwealth Regional Council**

**Planning Activities  
July 1, 2009 – June 30, 2010**

**Providing Regional Governmental Services – Grant Writing Services  
(Construction/Planning)**

- **Amelia/Lunenburg Regional Energy Efficiency Community Block Grant (EECBG) Project**  
Total Budget – \$2,943,827  
CRC staff assisted Amelia County/Lunenburg County in the completion of an application for funds to improve energy efficiency in their County public facilities (schools/governmental). The four priority activities of the project were: 1) HVAC and Energy Management System (EMS) Upgrades, 2) Lighting and Lighting Controls, 3) PC Power Management, and 5) Other (Domestic Water, Time Clocks and Waste Oil Heaters). This funding opportunity was through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009.

- **Town of Dillwyn Virginia Community Development Block Grant (VCDBG) Application – Downtown Revitalization**  
Total Budget - \$1,268,257  
CRC staff assisted the Town in the completion of an application for funds to undertake a Downtown Revitalization Project within the Town. Components of the project include storefront (façade) improvements; a loan pool for businesses; and marketing/branding materials.

- **Buckingham County Streetscape 2010 VDOT Enhancement Application – Phase II**

Total Budget - \$554,566  
CRC staff assisted the County in the completion of an application for funds to continue streetscape improvements in the core of the Buckingham Court House Village. Improvements include sidewalks, crosswalks, curb and gutter upgrades, landscaping, benches, and traffic calming measures.



- **Buckingham Volunteer Rescue Squad - Rescue Squad Assistance Fund (RSAF) Application**  
Total Budget - \$112,000  
CRC staff assisted the Buckingham Volunteer Rescue Squad in the completion of a grant application requesting funding to re-chassis an ambulance.
- **Town of Drakes Branch USDA Rural Development Grant/Loan Application**

**(Water/Sewer Improvements & Upgrades)**

Total Budget - \$18,000,000

CRC staff assisted the Town in the completion of an application for Town waste/sewer upgrades as it relates to the future location of a proposed 2,000 bed Minimum Security Prison.

- **Town of Victoria Safe Routes to School Grant Application**

Total Budget - \$494,626

CRC Staff assisted the Town in the completion of an application for funds to implement physical improvements in the area around Victoria Elementary School. These improvements were intended to make walking and/or biking to and from school safer and more appealing for students in grades K-8.

- **Town of Kenbridge Safe Routes to School Grant Application**



Total Budget - \$499,697

CRC Staff assisted the Town in the completion of an application for funds to implement physical improvements in the area around Kenbridge Elementary School. These improvements were intended to make walking and/or biking to and from school safer and more appealing for students in grades K-8.

- **Town of Victoria Streetscape 2010 VDOT Enhancement Application - Phase IB**

Total Budget – \$509,612

CRC Staff assisted the Town in the completion of an application for funds to complete the activities of Phase IB of the Victoria Streetscape VDOT Enhancement Project – including additional sidewalks, crosswalks, curb and gutter upgrades, landscaping, benches, and traffic calming measures in the downtown area.

- **Town of Victoria Department of Conservation (DCR) Recreational Trails Grant Application (Part I and Part II)**



Total Budget - \$128,399

CRC Staff assisted the Town in applying for grant funding from the DCR to construct a recreational trail within the Town. The trail would run from the western end of the Victoria Railroad Park to Twin Cemetery Road. This trail would be part of a larger trail network planned by the town.

- **Granite Falls Conference and Hospitality**

**Training Center Project – Technical Assistance on CDBG Application**

Budget – \$13,615,000

CRC Staff provided technical assistance/application review services to Prince Edward County on this CDBG application. Grant funds were being requested for the construction of a “regional” hospitality workforce training center to be located in Prince Edward County.

- **Prince Edward County Energy Efficiency Community Block Grant (EECBG) Application – STEPS Inc. Energy Efficiency Building Retrofit**

Total Budget – \$2,300,762

CRC Staff assisted the County in applying for grant funding on behalf of STEPS Inc. to remove the existing HVAC system and replace it with a new, more energy efficient HVAC system. This funding opportunity was through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009.



- **Prince Edward Volunteer Rescue Squad - Rescue Squad Assistance Fund (RSAF) Application**

Total Budget - \$18,250

CRC staff assisted the Prince Edward Volunteer Rescue Squad in the completion of an E-application to request grant funding to purchase 5 Panasonic Toughbooks (laptops). The Toughbooks would be used to submit electronic call sheets in the field.

- **Robert Russa Moton Museum 2010 VDOT Enhancement Application Tourist Center Project - Phase II**



Total Budget - \$575,000

CRC Staff assisted the Moton Museum in the completion of an application for requesting funds to construct a pavilion with restrooms and informational facilities to enhance the tourism experience in this region. In addition, redesign of the parking lot was an activity.

**Providing Regional Governmental Services - Project Administration**  
**(Construction Projects)**

- **Buckingham County VDOT Enhancement Project – Courthouse Village Streetscape**  
Budget - \$276,555

CRC Staff are assisting the County of Buckingham in the implementation of a VDOT Enhancement Project which is centered in the Court House Village. Construction activities include sidewalks, period street lighting, signage, and landscaping.

- **Town of Dillwyn VDOT Enhancement Project (Phase III)**



Total Budget - \$200,352

CRC Staff continue to assist the Town of Dillwyn with Phase III of its VDOT Enhancement Project. This project involves the following improvements within the downtown area: decorative street lighting, new and replacement sidewalks, new street signage, crosswalks, new outdoor seating areas, new storm water control facilities and various outdoor furniture.

- **Charlotte County Southern Rivers/VCDBG Emergency Sewer Project**

Total Budget - \$1,767,150

CRC Staff began assisting the County in the implementation of this project in late 2008. In Fall 2009, CRC Staff assisted the County in the closeout of the project. The project entailed the installation of approximately 23,000 LF of six-inch force main and appurtenances, connecting critical high volume users in the area of the Town of Charlotte Court House to the Town of Drakes Branch Wastewater Treatment Plant.



- **Drakes Branch Southern Rivers Wastewater System Improvements Project**

Total Budget - \$502,538

CRC Staff are currently assisting the Town in its newly awarded Southern Rivers Grant Project which entails improvements to its existing wastewater system. Activities include the installation of emergency pump connections at three pump stations; purchase of a portable trailer mounted generator and sewage pump; replacement of various manholes; replacement of existing sewer line; and purchase of sewer inspection equipment.

- Town of Victoria VDOT Enhancement Streetscape Project ( Phase I – Design)**  
 Total Budget - \$250,000  
 This project includes the design of sidewalks and sidewalk improvements, crosswalks, street lights, landscaping, and other activities in the Town’s central business district. In FY 09-10, CRC staff continued to assist the Town in the implementation of the project. Final design plans were submitted to VDOT for approval in January 2010. This project was officially closed out.
- Town of Victoria VDOT Enhancement Streetscape Project ( Phase IA)**  
 Total Budget - \$478,750  
 CRC began assisting the Town in the implementation of this project in early 2010. This project includes the following construction activities within a two-block area along Main Street in downtown Victoria: sidewalks, crosswalks, curb and gutter upgrades, landscaping, benches and traffic calming measures. Construction is anticipated to begin in early 2011.
- Town of Burkeville VDOT Enhancement Norfolk Southern Train Station Restoration (Phase IV)**  
 Total Budget - \$458,000  
 CRC Staff continue to assist the Town of Burkeville in the administration of VDOT Enhancement Project (Phase IV) for the Train Station. The goal of the restoration is to preserve the Train Station for use as a railroad museum, community center, bus stop, tourist rest stop, park & ride, and stop for bicyclists along US Route 1.
- Robert Russa Moton Museum Tobacco Grant (Facility Renovations)**  
 Total Budget - \$116,000  
 The Moton Museum will install 10,000 SF feet of insulation in the facility’s attic; restore or repair the window systems; and install UV windows for thermal effects.

**Providing Regional Governmental Services - Project Administration (Planning Projects)**

- Amelia County CDBG Telecommunications Planning Grant (Preliminary)**



Total Budget - \$3,000  
 During FY 09-10, CRC Staff assisted the County in the completion of the preliminary planning activities for this project (public meeting, management team meetings, survey and draft RFP for professional services). CRC Staff submitted products to DHCD in 2009, with DHCD deeming project complete in August 2009. With assistance from the CRC, the County applied in December 2009 for additional money.

- **Amelia County CDBG Telecommunication Planning Grant (Implementation)**  
Total Budget - \$43,000  
The CRC is assisting the County of Amelia in the implementation of its awarded CDBG Telecommunications Planning Grant. The grant funds received will help fund the development of a complete Telecommunications Plan for the County.

- **Town of Dillwyn Comprehensive Plan**  
Total Budget - \$16,000  
In mid-2007, CRC staff began assisting the Town of Dillwyn in the development of a new Town of Dillwyn Comprehensive Plan. The Town of Dillwyn adopted the new plan in June 2009. In August 2009, the CRC provided hard copies of the adopted plan, along with the CD. Thus, the project was complete.

- **Town of Dillwyn Downtown Revitalization VCDBG Planning Grant**

Total Budget - \$35,000

In early 2007, CRC staff began assisting the Town of Dillwyn in the implementation of its Downtown Revitalization VCDBG Planning Grant. During FY 08-09, CRC staff continued to assist the Town in developing/finalizing the products of the Planning Grant. The Town elected not to submit a VCDBG application in the Spring 2009. However, the Town did submit (with assistance from the CRC) in Spring 2010. Once submitted, the CRC staff assisted the Town in the final closeout of its VCDBG Planning Grant.



- **Buckingham County/Town of Dillwyn Regional Water Supply Planning Grant (Phase I)**  
Total Budget - \$5,500  
In FY 09-10, CRC staff assisted the County and Town in the completion of Phase I activities of the Virginia State Water Control Board Water Supply Planning Regulations. The tasks completed included an analysis of existing water sources and existing water use conditions in both localities.

- **Town of Drakes Branch Comprehensive Plan Amendment**  
Total Budget - \$16,000  
CRC Staff began assisting the Town in the development of a Comprehensive Plan Amendment in Fall 2009. This Amendment will be attached to the current Charlotte County Comprehensive Plan for adoption by the Town. Town Council adoption is anticipated for July 2010.

- **Lunenburg County Safe Routes To School Plan**

Total Budget - \$25,000

In Spring 2009, CRC staff began assisting the County in the development of a School Travel Plan. The Plan would identify methods to encourage more students in the County's two (2) elementary schools and one (1) middle school to walk and/or bike to and from school. During FY 09-10, CRC staff presented the Final Plan to the School Board, local governing bodies and VDOT. Final copies were made and disseminated in February 2010.

- **Lunenburg/Kenbridge/Victoria Broadband Planning Grant Project**



Total Budget - \$35,600

CRC staff began assisting these localities on this project in Spring 2009. The project entailed the identification and development of elements necessary to create a successful community broadband network. The planning project was completed in March 2010.

- **Lunenburg/Kenbridge/Victoria Regional Water Supply Plan (Phase II)**

Total Budget - \$5,000

In FY 09-10, CRC staff assisted the County and both Towns in the completion of Phase II activities of the Virginia State Water Control Board Water Supply Planning Regulations. The tasks completed included water demand management and drought response and contingency plans for the County and both Towns.

- **Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan (Planning District #14) – Update**

Total Budget - \$75,000

The CRC is undertaking an update of the Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan for Planning District 14. The Plan will identify ways to make the region safer from hazards. As part of the Plan Update, Amelia County will be incorporated into the Regional Plan (they elected to not participate in the original Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan).



## **Commonwealth Regional Council Tourism/Marketing Activities July 1, 2009 – June 30, 2010**

- **CRC Package Giveaway Drawn**

In early 2009, the CRC submitted a 2-day/3-night vacation package promoting regional history to the Virginia Tourism Corporation (VTC) for their February through November 2009 “Travel Passions Sweepstakes,” which celebrates the VTC’s 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. “*A Sojourn through Virginia’s Historic Heartland*” was accepted by VTC and was showcased August 20-27, 2009. The prize drawing was held on August 28, 2009. The winner was from New York. Through the sweepstakes listing, the Heartland Region received 44 weeks of good Internet exposure.

- **CivilWar.com Advertorial**

The CRC received a free advertorial that ran on the CivilWar.com website in August 2009. The CRC received 18 visits to the CRC website from this free advertorial and on average were staying on the CRC website at least 15 minutes. CivilWar.com received 758 hits on the CRC advertorial.

- ***Virginia Travel Values Publication Fall Edition***



In the Fall 2009 edition of the “Virginia Travel Values” the CRC had various regional advertisements. The Virginia Travel Values is inserted four times a year in the following Media General daily newspapers: [The Richmond Times Dispatch](#), [Bristol Herald-Courier](#), the [Lynchburg News and Advance](#), and [Charlottesville Daily Progress](#), the [Potomac News Record](#), the [Danville Register & Bee](#), the [Culpeper Star Exponent](#), and the [Waynesboro News Virginian](#).

- ***Regional Driving Tour Map***

Using the driving tour created for the Virginia Tourism Corporation (VTC) vacation package, CRC staff created a driving tour more generic so that anyone could use the information to visit the area. A map was created to be used with the written driving route. The map and driving directions were made available on the CRC’s tourism website for download. Furthermore, copies were also distributed at hotels and motels, restaurants, and stores throughout the region.

- ***CRC Participation in Longwood University's Involvement & Volunteer Fair***  
In September 2009, CRC Staff participated in Longwood University's Involvement & Volunteer Fair on campus. CRC Staff handed out brochures and a survey to students. The survey collected data on student's aspirations, career choices and what they would like to see in the region that would entice them to stay and work in the community.
- **Regional Meeting with Newly Hired VEC Business Development Specialist**  
On September 25, 2009, the CRC hosted a meeting between the Economic Developers within the region and the newly hired VEC Business Economic Development Specialist from the Virginia Employment Commission (VEC) – Marilyn Carter. Ms. Carter represented the Central Virginia Region. VEC has hired her to help localities within this region in the reduction of the unemployment rate.
- **CRC Participation on Fast Facility Website**  
The CRC was a member of Fast Facility until March 31, 2010. This master website is a national catalog of available buildings and/or sites maintained by economic developers. CRC Member sites and buildings were included on the website. If prospects wanted to obtain further details and/or pricing on a specific building or site, they were required to contact the CRC. CRC staff then forwarded the contact information to the applicable jurisdiction.



#### PROPERTY SEARCH



**Commonwealth Regional Council  
Regional Activities  
July 1, 2009 – June 30, 2010**

- **Commonwealth Regional Council Transportation Long Range Plan (Phase III)**  
CRC staff began Phase III Activities (Public Outreach and Recommendation Development) of the CRC Rural Transportation Long Range Plan. The state-procured Consultant took information received from the CRC Transportation Task Force and conducted an analysis and prepared recommendations on identified transportation deficiencies within the region. The information was forwarded to local governments and all CRC Transportation Committee Members for review and comment in June 2010.
- **VDOT Sidewalk Survey (Buckingham, Charlotte, Cumberland and Prince Edward)**



CRC Staff, with assistance from Longwood University, conducted a VDOT Sidewalk Survey within the localities in the Lynchburg VDOT District (Buckingham, Charlotte, Cumberland and Prince Edward). Longwood students (supervised by CRC staff) collected the data by using hand-held GPS units and utilizing Google earth maps to ultimately create a GIS Map showing the location of the sidewalks in these areas. The goal was to document the location of

sidewalks within the Lynchburg District in order that VDOT could have an up-to-date data base.

- **CRC Regional Hazard Mitigation Update**  
In October 2009, the Commonwealth Regional Council was awarded disaster mitigation funds (\$56,250) to update the Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan for Planning District #14. As part of the plan update, the Amelia County Hazard Mitigation Plan will be incorporated into the Regional Plan Update. Updating the Plan will keep the localities in Planning District 14 in compliance with the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000. This Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 requires that localities maintain and update a local Hazard Mitigation Plan to remain eligible for certain types of FEMA funding.

- **Commonwealth Regional Council Chief Administrative Officers Advisory Committee Monthly Meetings**

The Advisory Committee of the Chief Administrative Officers met with staff of the Commonwealth Regional Council on a monthly basis. This allowed for continuous dialogue on regional issues/concerns, networking, and sharing of information pertinent to the localities in the region.

- **Commonwealth Regional Council/Virginia Cooperative Extension Partnership - “2010 Local Food Symposium”**



On March 2, 2010, the Virginia Cooperative Extension in partnership with the Commonwealth Regional Council and Prince Edward County held a conference entitled “2010 Local Food Systems Symposium” for the region. This Symposium provided local governments and agency representatives, agricultural producers and other local food advocates of Planning District #14 an opportunity to explore ideas and resources for development of robust local food systems. Based on the success of this regional workshop, the Virginia Farm Bureau has asked the Virginia Cooperative Extension to use the program presented as a model and offer the session throughout the State of Virginia.

- **Commonwealth Regional Council/ VDMME Partnership – Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant Program**

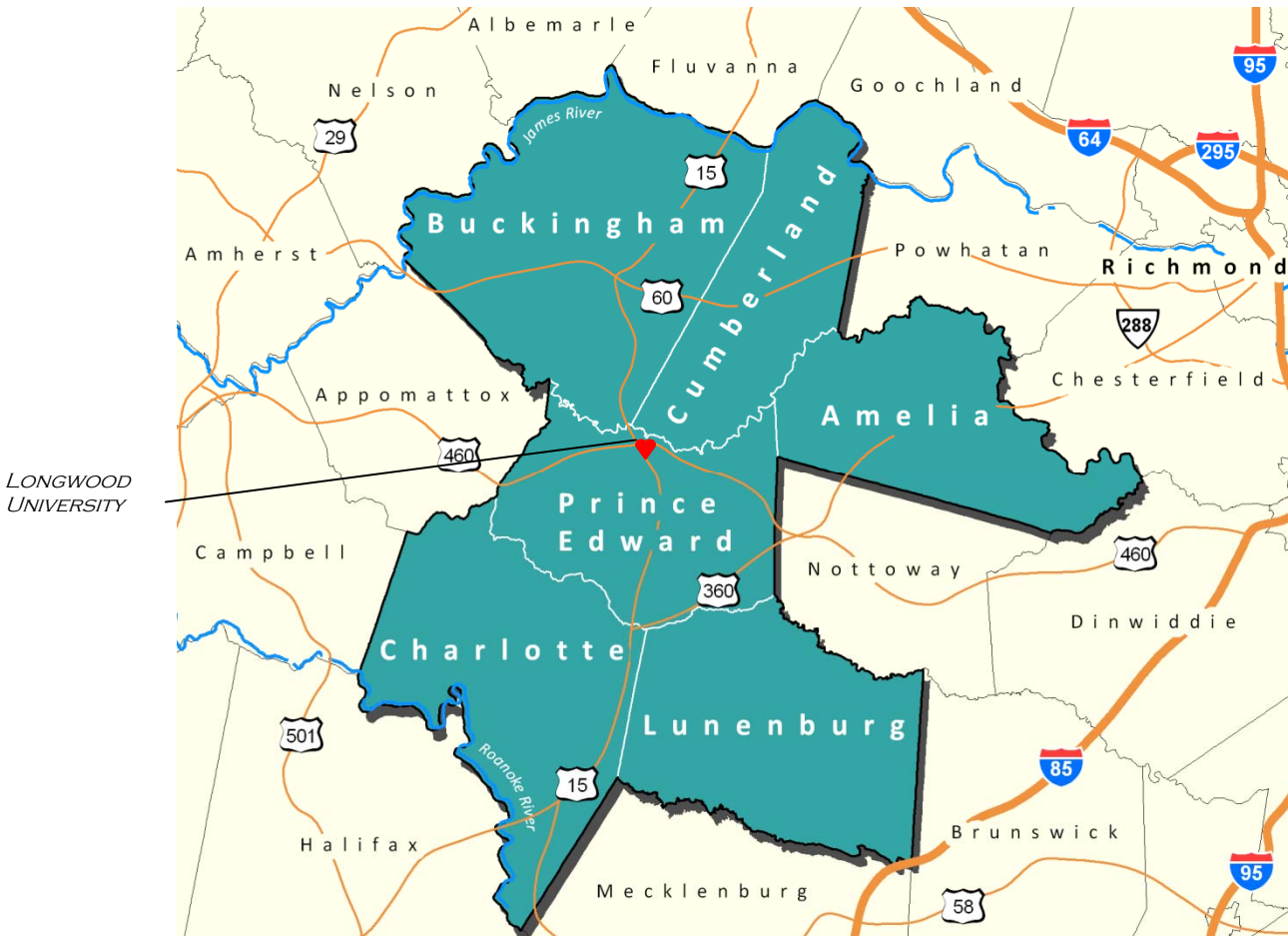
The Commonwealth Regional Council worked in partnership with the Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals, and Energy (VDMME) in coordinating the widespread communication of the Energy Efficiency Community Block Grant (EECBG) Program within Planning District #14. The CRC provided supportive services including widespread communications of the program, provided appropriate website support, provided technical support and informational resources for prospective applicants in the region, assisted localities with electronic submissions, and served as point of contact for receiving, cataloging and tracking the applications from Planning District #14.



- **Affiliate State Data Center**

The Commonwealth Regional Council continues to serve as the Affiliate State Data Center for the region. In this role, the CRC provides important information to businesses as well as citizens upon request.

- Commonwealth Intergovernmental Reviews (CIRPS)**  
 The CRC is the regional contact for the Commonwealth Intergovernmental Process and provides input for a host of agencies and commissions. During this fiscal year, the Commonwealth Regional Council conducted seventeen (17) Commonwealth Intergovernmental Reviews (CIRPS) for applications for aid from local governments, state agencies and non-profits within the region.



**IN PARTNERSHIP WITH**

**The counties of Amelia | Buckingham | Charlotte | Cumberland | Lunenburg |  
 Prince Edward |  
 And Longwood University**