Walking a "Tightrope" – Using Data to Seek the Right Balance
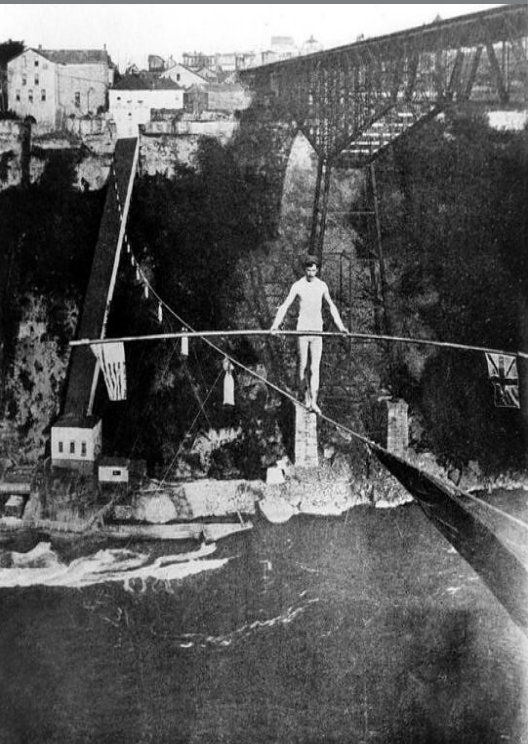
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Today, we want to …

- **Describe South Carolina's "balancing act" as we re-engineered our SNAP & TANF business processes**

- **How we tried to strike that "balance" using data**

- **Tell you about our "falls"**

- **How we continue to modify**

With our

"2010 Initiatives",

South Carolina

set off to walk

its Tightrope

Preparation for our Tightrope Walk Began with our "2010 Initiatives"

- **Imaged SNAP & TANF paper files**

- **Revamped imaging system to assign cases & developed queues**

- **Started Universal Caseload**

  - **First, counties**

  - **Next, with a region**

  - **Then planned to take it statewide**

A New Governor
A New Director

Change in Plans

- Specialized technique – the eligibility functions broken into components & the function is specialized

- 1 component would be a call center where clients "call into" interviewers at the client's convenience

Answer

the Question:

How many staff were needed and to be put where?

.

Long Before Specialization, Used Administrative Files & Reports to Analyze

- **Types of Actions that came in**

- **# of Actions**

- **How Long (on Average) did each Action take**

- **# of Staff needed to perform these Actions**

Planning, More Planning, More Data

A long

"To Do" list …

- Prepared assignments to rotate within SCOSA
- Trained workers
- Reviewed data again
- Communicated to the agency
- Communicated to clients & partners

- **State divided into regions**

- **Each region assigned a function based partly on # of workers with 1 exception**

- **Pee Dee Region has high poverty, high unemployment & little turnover in DSS staff**

- **Pee Dee Region chosen for the Call Center (phone interviewers)**

Planned to

"Flip the Switch"

in July 2012

Not Quite As Planned

Anticipated 40,000 – 60,000 calls /mo.

Got 2.2 million calls in 1st 2 weeks

What went wrong?

Printed cards with the interview phone number & gave to all clients

- Took all of 1st month to fix problem

- Because clients could not get through, began receiving complaints from the Governor's Office, Legislators, & Budget Committee
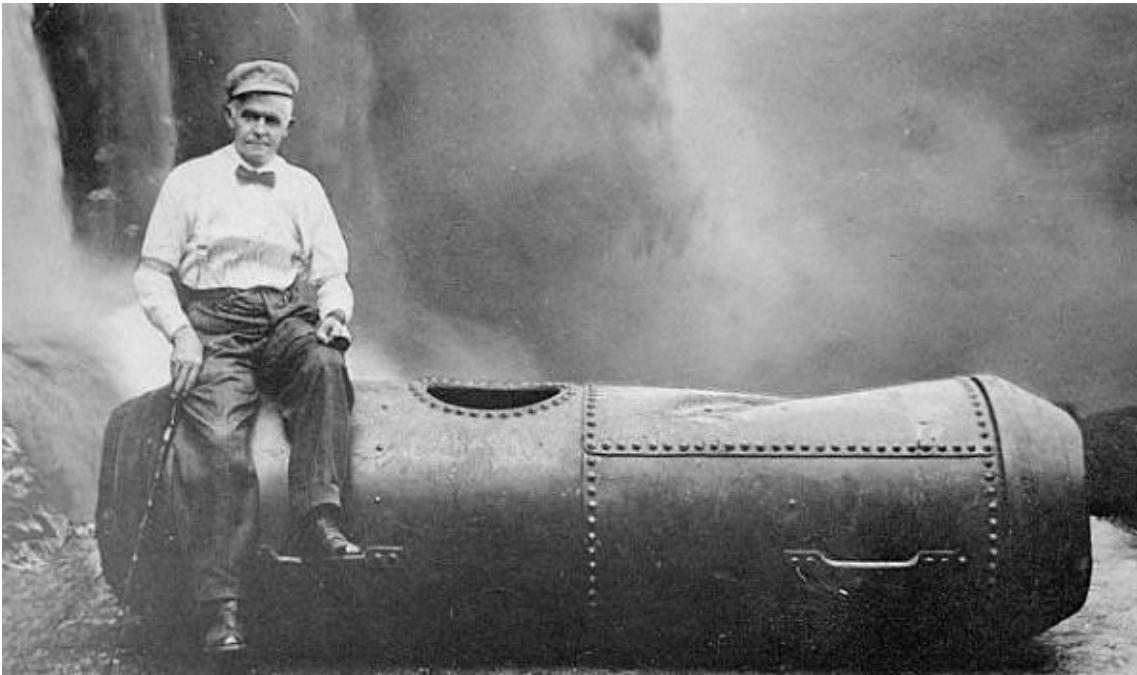
The Aftermath

- **Internal databases had "complaints" skyrocketing**
- **Charts from phone provider documented volume of calls**

How we solved it …

- **Created 3 "individualized" 8 digit pin numbers for state (1 just for TANF, 2 for SNAP)**
- **Letters to clients gave pin # & new instructions**
- **Created an "Interview Message"**

Learned that Our Phone Provider Not Adequate to Support Volume

- Dealt with Issues like

    Dropped & Garbled calls

    Queue overloads (in the cloud, out of the cloud, waiting in cloud …)

    Garbled messages

    - And … Phone Vendor on a state sole source contract

The Interview Gates Finally Opened

- **Eligibility workers in 2 regions doing processing of New Applications / Annual Reviews were - at 1st - blissful**

- **When the Interview gates opened, workers flooded with cases already untimely**

- **Data - wild again - timeliness issues**

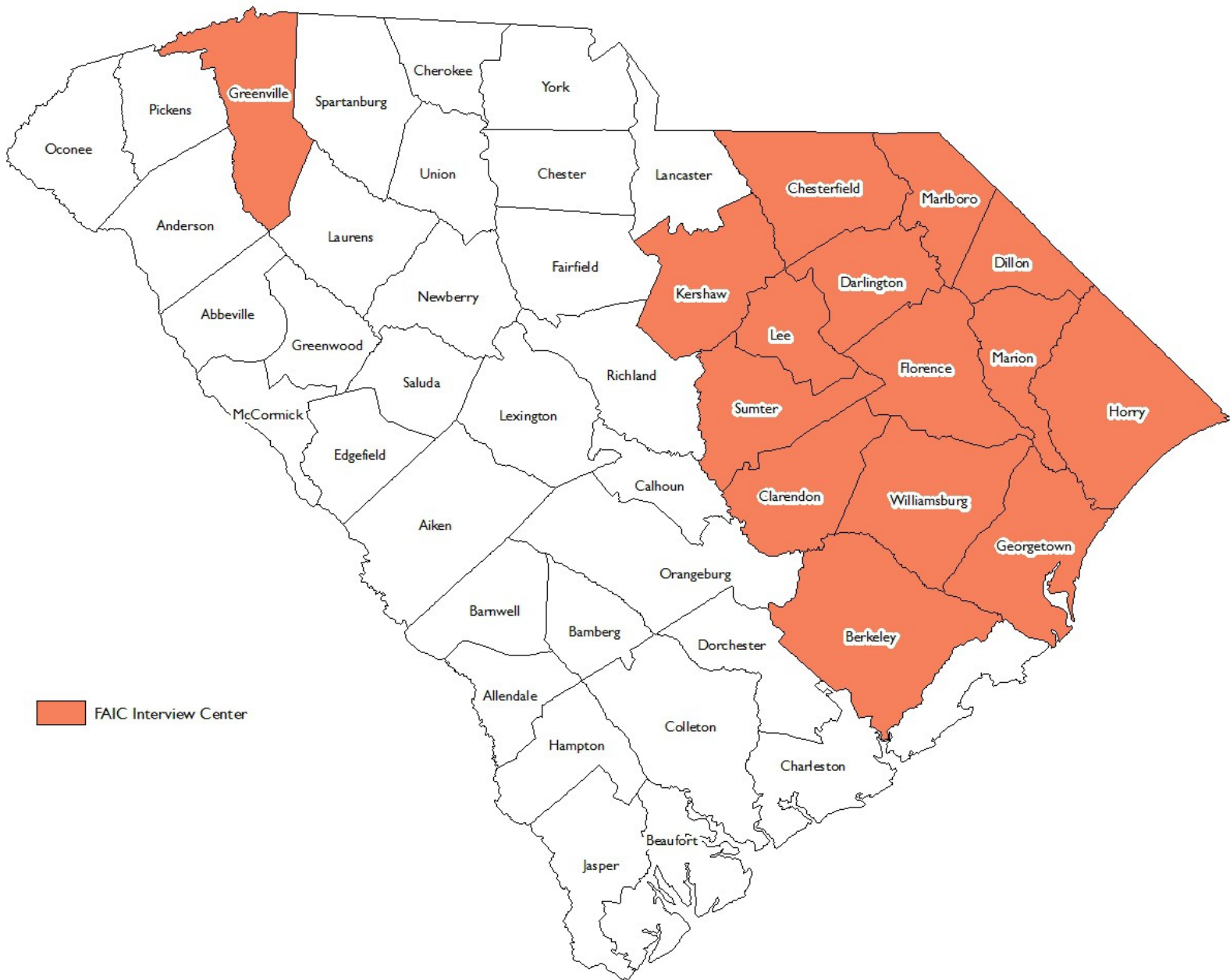- **More data analyses to examine the question "More processors needed?"**

- After analyzing the # of changes workers did, decided to specialize even more with a "Change Center"

- Vacancies in Interview Center (FAIC) justified a Trainer just for that region

- Call Center data indicated need for specialized Spanish-speaking sub unit

- "Find It, Fix It" became "Find It, Report It" – data is now determining repeat error-prone workers
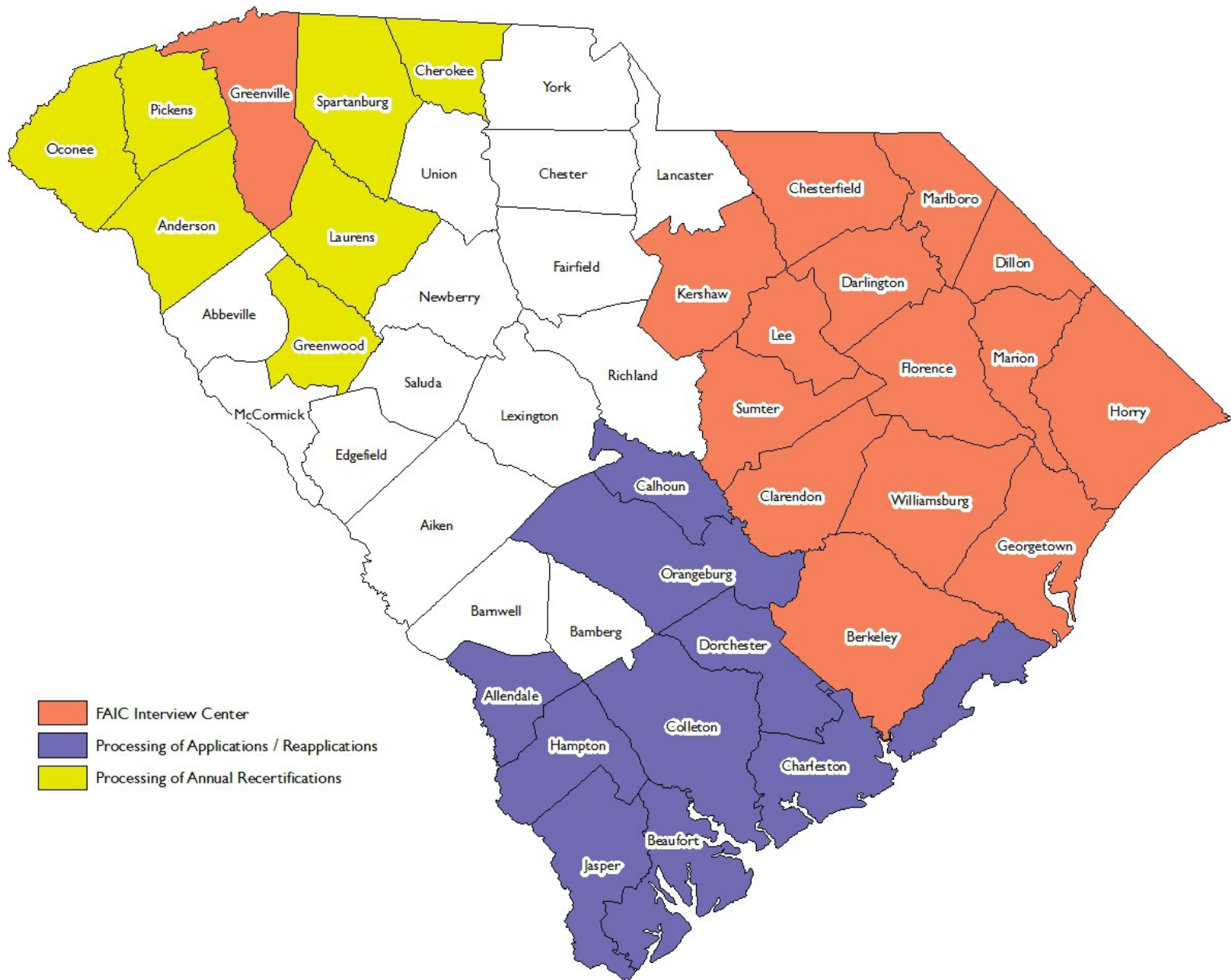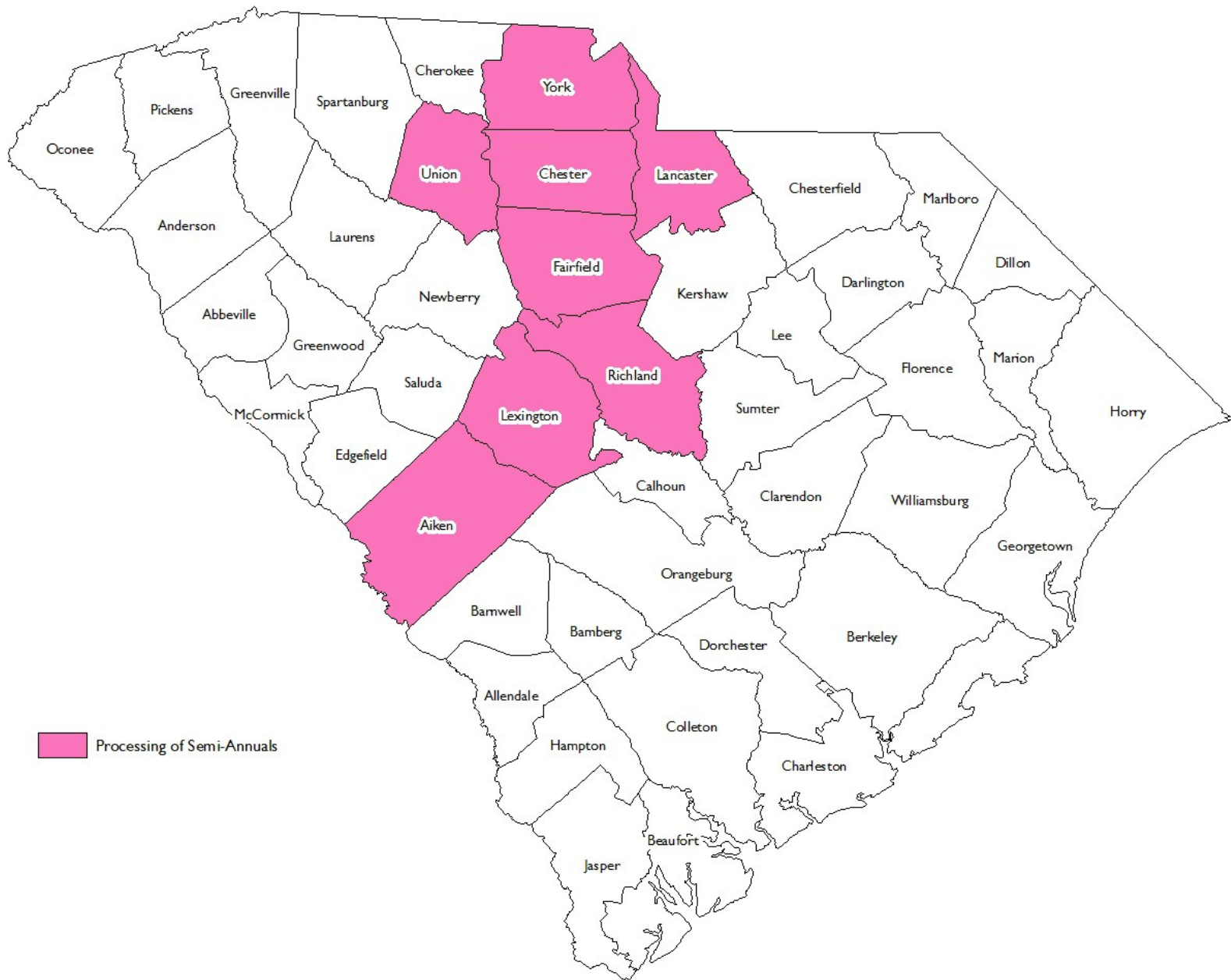
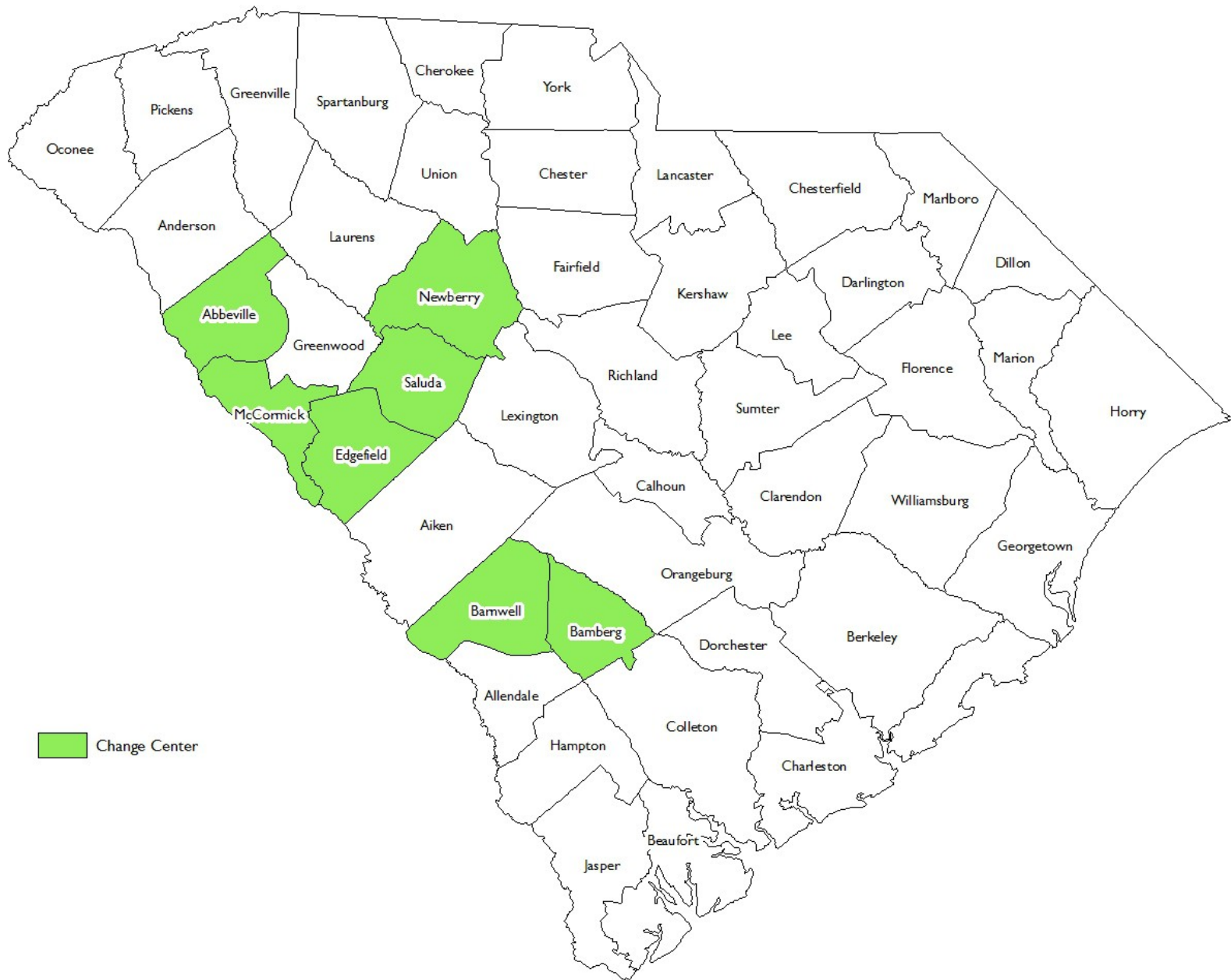How does
our Tightrope Work
Now?

FAIC Interview Center

Map of South Carolina counties. Highlighted counties (Processing of Semi-Annuals): York, Union, Chester, Lancaster, Fairfield, Richland, Lexington, Aiken.

Legend:
- Processing of Semi-Annuals

Legend:
- Change Center (green fill)

Counties labeled on the map:
Oconee, Pickens, Greenville, Spartanburg, Cherokee, York, Anderson, Laurens, Union, Chester, Lancaster, Chesterfield, Marlboro, Abbeville, Newberry, Fairfield, Kershaw, Darlington, Dillon, Greenwood, Saluda, Richland, Lee, Marion, McCormick, Edgefield, Lexington, Sumter, Florence, Horry, Aiken, Calhoun, Clarendon, Williamsburg, Barnwell, Bamberg, Orangeburg, Georgetown, Allendale, Dorchester, Berkeley, Hampton, Colleton, Charleston, Jasper, Beaufort

1 Year Later…Would We Do it Again?

01AHRSAY * © Glasshouseimages RM|www.diomedia.com *
Woman Juggling Knives While Walking Tightrope, 19th Century Woodcut * 05 Aug 2013

Yes, counties for the most part love it

But … still trying to achieve that balance

- Redefinition of Roles

  Hired Social Workers

  Now Interviewers or Processors

  Some workers don't like the change

  - Losing Face to Face contact with clients **but** still responsible for the clients

  - "Must work like a factory" **but** working with humans with real problems

  - Helping Supervisors to "Supervise a Process"