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1

**STATE
FOR
BUSINESS**

SEVEN YEARS IN A ROW!

2013

2014

2015

2016

2017

2018

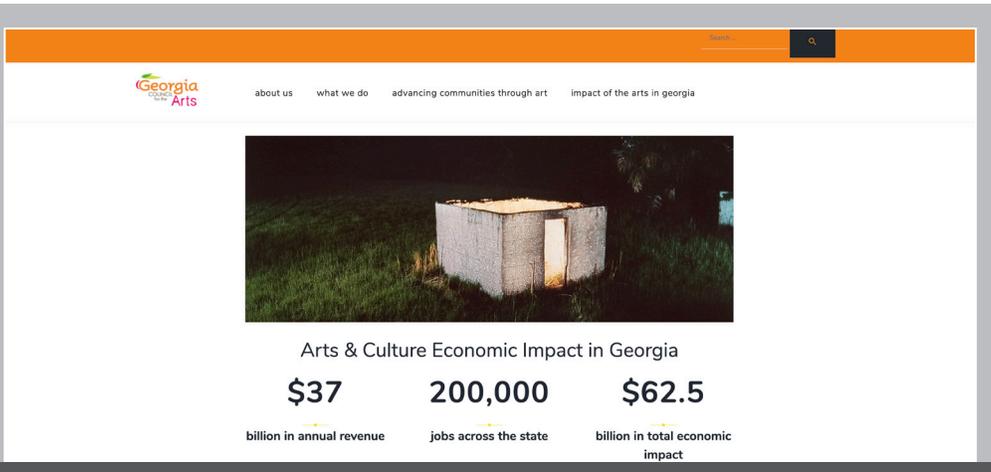
2019



GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BOARD BOOK

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This quarter, Georgia Council for the Arts debuted their new website.

DIVISION PROFILE

Georgia Council for the Arts (GCA) empowers the arts industry in Georgia and artists around the state to cultivate healthy, vibrant communities that are rich in civic participation, cultural experiences and economic prosperity. As a division of the Georgia Department of Economic Development, Georgia Council for the Arts provides grant funding, programs and services statewide that support this vital industry, preserve our cultural heritage and create increased access to high quality arts experiences.

QUARTERLY DIVISION HIGHLIGHTS

- 1. Fall Grant Programs:** This August, GCA opened applications for the Vibrant Communities Grant. The VC Grant supports single art projects such as an art exhibit, a theatre production, a series of art workshops, or an artist residency in counties in which no other arts education, project or partner grants have been funded in the fiscal year. In addition, this August, GCA opened applications for the new Cultural Facilities Grants. Funding through this grant program supports the construction, renovation or acquisition of a building, or the addition of equipment to support arts programs. Grant awards for both grant programs will be announced in November of 2019.
- 2. In September, GCA launched a new website.** Designed to make navigating content easier for the general public, and to allow GCA to more readily share our programming that is not grant related, the new site is more visually in line with GCA's brand. Through easy to navigate pages and images, the site provides quick access to information on GCA grants and programs, resources on the role of arts in local communities, and economic impact data for the arts sector in Georgia. Check it out at www.gaarts.org!

UPCOMING EVENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

- Poetry Out Loud Registration for Georgia High Schools is open through December 20, 2019. Poetry Out Loud is an innovative program that encourages

By the Numbers

On July 1, GCA Announced FY20 Partner, Project and Arts Education Program Grants

Total Number of Applicants:

248

Total Number of Peer Review Panels:

13 (3 Project, 6 Partner, 4 AE)

Total Number of Citizen Panelists:

78

Total Dollars Requested:

\$2,768,885

Total Number of Awarded Grants:

135

Total Grant Dollars Awarded:

\$1,094,000

Contact Information

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GEORGIA COUNCIL FOR THE ARTS

high school students to learn about great poetry through memorization and performance of the written word. It incorporates the dynamic aspects of slam poetry, spoken word, and theater into English and drama classes. Poetry Out Loud is coordinated locally by Georgia Council for the Arts in partnership with the Atlanta History Center and helps students improve public speaking skills, build self-confidence, and learn about great poetry. Functioning much like a spelling bee, the Poetry Out Loud competition uses a pyramid structure that begins in the classroom. Winners of each classroom recitation competition advance to a school-wide contest, then each school's top winner goes to a semi-final, regional competition. Finalists from these semi-final competitions will advance to compete in a regional competition. Finalists from each regional competition will be selected to advance on to State competition. Finally, one Georgia winner will compete at the National Final in Washington, D.C. To register visit: <https://www.atlantahistorycenter.com/for-schools/educator-resources/poetry-out-loud>



A team consisting of COI, Rural Georgia Initiatives, and the Advanced Technology Development Center (ATDC) visited the City of Woodbury to support entrepreneurship, innovation, and economic development efforts.

DIVISION PROFILE

Exclusive to Georgia, the Centers of Innovation provide the technical expertise, collaborative research, and partnership opportunities to help Georgia's strategic industries connect, compete and grow.

QUARTERLY DIVISION HIGHLIGHTS

1. COI Regional Innovation Tours – COI continued efforts to support the growth of local innovation ecosystems across the state:

- **Augusta** - Representatives from all the Centers of Innovation hosted a group of entrepreneurs participating in the StartUp Life program through Augusta's The Clubhou.se. The individual Centers presented information on how they assist startup entrepreneurs and provided several connections to each of the entrepreneurs in attendance.
- **Sandy Springs** - COI Associate Director David Nuckolls, COI Logistics Associate Director Sandy Lake and StaffWrx CEO Justin Rainer (a COIL client) were the featured speakers at the Innovation in Action luncheon series event in Sandy Springs. The Innovation in Action Speaker Series is a collaboration between the Georgia Centers of Innovation, the Sandy Springs Economic Development Agency, and the Sandy Springs Innovation Center to bring together industry leaders to share their stories on how they innovate within their business, whether startup entrepreneurs or Fortune 500 corporations.
- **Woodbury** – A team consisting of COI, Rural Georgia Initiatives, and the Advanced Technology Development Center (ATDC) visited the City of Woodbury to support entrepreneurship, innovation, and economic development efforts the city is embarking on as it seeks to provide wireless broadband across the entire city. Woodbury has some exciting plans and each organization came away with action items for follow up.
- **Warner Robins** – COI visited the Robins AFB Innovation Spark Hub in Warner Robins to foster better connection between the base and other companies in Georgia, as well as discuss the potential for more collaborative university research.

By the Numbers

178

COI engagements across all 12 regions of the state so far during FY20

45%

Engagements outside of metro Atlanta

28

Supported 28 Collaborations or Projects with GDEcD and other EcD organizations so far during FY20

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- **Macon** – COI Executive Director Steve Justice attended the Macon Startup Week making several good connections with the local innovation ecosystem that will result in future activities.
- 2. As a partner in the Georgia Tech led Georgia Smart Communities program, COI participated in the Georgia Tech Smart Cities and Inclusive Innovation Georgia Smart Fall Workshop. The Georgia Smart program enables communities around the state to invest in their Smart Cities infrastructure and to gain access to Georgia Tech researchers to help them along the way. COI has been a partner with this program since the beginning, and this year’s workshop formally kicked off year 2 programs with the communities of Columbus Consolidated Government, Macon-Bibb County, City of Milton, and the City of Woodstock.
- 3. Under the Israel-Georgia Innovation MOU, COI supported the Southern Company in launching two projects with Israeli companies. COI IT collaborated with Georgia Tech and the Global Center for Medical Innovation on a project with RAMBAM in Israel for medical technology development.
- 4. COI Energy began efforts with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (Georgia EPD) on a \$140K grant award to develop a first-of-its-kind state Life Cycle Materials Tool. COI, EPA, and the Georgia EPD launched efforts with two communities simultaneously, one rural and one urban. A comment from the grant manager – “The approach of working with the State and Local Economic Development teams, civic hacking groups, etc. to develop local tools is innovative for EPA.”
- 5. COI Energy connected local companies Nexus Fuels (plastics to Petroleum) and Ecologix Systems (water purification systems) to Project Green Acres of the Hartsfield Jackson Atlanta International Airport as part of a larger effort to a build a robust, and economically beneficial, sustainability sector in Georgia.
- 6. COI Manufacturing has connected several local companies with manufacturing resources. Connections this year so far include: Black Mermaid Bath and Body in Snellville; assisting Premier Automation, a company expanding operations in Alpharetta; Spenergy in Cumming; Farmer Automatic in Statesboro; Huxley Medical in Atlanta; Divergent Minds, a small Atlanta-based consulting firm; and Criterion Technology, Inc. in Thomaston.
- 7. COI Logistics, in partnership with the Georgia Motor Trucking Association (GMTA), released a survey to trucking companies for feedback on issues and topics related to freight mobility in Georgia. The survey was distributed by GMTA to their statewide membership and will be shared with partner organizations throughout the US to solicit responses from Georgia-based companies as well as out of state companies that do business in Georgia.
- 8. COI Aerospace Director Amy Hudnall, along with GDEcD Director of Corporate Solutions and Cyber Security Randall Toussaint, and SBDC State Director Allan Adams, presented at the Georgia Economic Developer Association (GEDA) Annual Conference on “Cybersecurity in Your Community.” This is part of a larger effort led by COI Aerospace, and supported by COI IT, to help local defense contractors comply with new DoD cyber security requirements.
- 9. Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) are still a hot topic in Georgia with COI Aerospace working with the Blue Sky Group in Athens on the use of drones to support rural health care. This was a follow on to earlier connections to the Georgia Clinical and Translational Science Alliance (Emory, Georgia Tech, and University of Georgia)
- 10. COI IT continued efforts in the emerging Esports sector attending a Georgia Tech forum on Esports and STEM education. This forum discussed how schools including Georgia Tech are beginning to take a look at how Esports will impact more and more colleges. COI IT Director Glen Whitley and Global Commerce Project Manager Asante Bradford also met with the Metro Atlanta Chamber’s Esports Working Group to help define the Esports industry and possible economic opportunities. The COI IT sponsored Georgia Tech study on Esports in Georgia should be completed in Q2FY20.

UPCOMING EVENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

- **Georgia Innovation Summit – February 2020 in Atlanta**
- **Georgia Logistics Regional Summit – March 24, 2020 in Macon**
- **Supplier Opportunities & Aerospace Resources (SOAR) Conference – April 21-22, 2020 in Macon**



Woody Harrelson and Jesse Eisenberg on set for the filming of "Zombieland: Double Tap," released on October 18.

DIVISION PROFILE

The Georgia Film, Music & Digital Entertainment Office develops the state's film, television, and commercial production industries by marketing the state to production companies; location scouting; and coordinating the filming needs of companies with other state agencies, local governments, and citizens. The office actively works to develop the industry's infrastructure and workforce, certifies projects under the Georgia Entertainment Industry Investment Act, and oversees the Camera Ready Community program to engage municipalities throughout Georgia.

QUARTERLY DIVISION HIGHLIGHTS

The Film Division reported a record high direct spend of \$2.9 billion on Georgia-licensed film and television projects in FY19.

Here are some highlights from FY19 production:

Total number of productions: **391**

Direct spend of productions: **\$2.9B**

Georgia is currently hosting more than 40 film and television projects. Notable projects include:

- Netflix is in preproduction on the tent pole feature "Red Notice." The film is a globetrotting action heist thriller that moves from Universal Pictures and has added Ryan Reynolds to star alongside Dwayne Johnson and Gal Gadot.
- HBO is currently filming statewide on its 10-part television series "Lovecraft Country" which is being directed by Jordan Peele.
- Chris Pratt is starring in the Adam McKay directed sci-fi feature "Ghost Draft," about a father who is drafted from the past to fight a war in the future that relies on his ability to confront his past.
- NBC's television series "Council of Dads" is currently shooting season one in Savannah. The project, inspired by Bruce Feiler's best-selling memoir, had been a standout throughout the pilot process.

By the Numbers

Film Production Breakdown:

FEATURE, INDEPENDENT, TELEVISION & EPISODIC PRODUCTION

Feature: **26**

Independent: **31**

Television & Episodic: **214**

Total Combined Productions: **271**

Total Combined Budgets:

\$2.8B

COMMERCIAL PRODUCTION

Commercials: **91**

Total Combined Budgets:

\$24M

MUSIC VIDEO PRODUCTION

Music Videos: **29**

Total Combined Budgets:

\$2.6M

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UPCOMING EVENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

The film office sponsors and participates in numerous local film festivals, and typically has passes available if you would like to attend a screening. Here is a list of upcoming festivals.

Atlanta Jewish Film Festival, Atlanta (Feb. 10 - 27, 2020) - The Atlanta Jewish Film Festival (AJFF) is a multi-week cinematic exploration of Jewish life, culture and history. Seeking to use the power of film to both entertain and educate, AJFF challenges conventional perspectives on complex and challenging issues facing both the Jewish and global communities.

SCAD aTVfest, Atlanta (Feb. 27 - 29, 2020) - SCAD's aTVfest is an international festival that brings together professionals from all spheres of TV and media content production to discuss industry trends, showcase the best work in the field, and participate in master classes with students.

South Georgia Film Festival, Valdosta (March 6 - 8, 2020) - The South Georgia Film Festival showcases the art and industry of filmmaking across the region. It includes feature films and shorts, with a broad educational component featuring panels and Q&A's of visiting filmmakers. These include PBS directors, professionals from Hollywood and Atlanta, and independent filmmakers. Projects from college and high school filmmakers are also included, as they compete for potential scholarships to Valdosta State University.



On September 10, senior staff, the Global Commerce division, and other members of Team GDEcD joined Governor Kemp to announce that Georgia has been named the “Top State for Business” for the sixth year in a row by Area Development Magazine. On November 6, the group gathered again with the Governor in Augusta to announce that Site Selection Magazine has ranked Georgia’s business climate No. 1 for a record-breaking seventh year in a row.

DIVISION PROFILE

The Global Commerce division seeks to increase jobs and investment through locating and expanding businesses, as well as growing small businesses. The Global Commerce division includes statewide and existing industry project teams, small business resources and international representatives in strategic regions around the world.

QUARTERLY DIVISION HIGHLIGHTS

1. On September 10, Governor Kemp announced that Georgia has been named the “Top State for Business” by Area Development, a leading publication covering corporate site selection and relocation, for the sixth year in a row. On November 6, the Governor joined with state and local leaders in August to announce that Georgia’s business climate has been named No. 1 in the nation by a separate publication, Site Selection Magazine, for an unprecedented seventh year in a row. Georgia is the only state that has received the distinction seven consecutive times in the history of Site Selection’s rankings.
2. The Global Commerce team started off the new fiscal year with the location or expansion of 107 companies, resulting in 6,562 new jobs and over \$1.9 billion investment.
3. This past August, members of the Global Commerce team took part in a three-day tour of 14 communities in southwest Georgia. Electric Cities of Georgia sponsored the event, which included stops in Cordele, Fitzgerald, Douglas, Sylvester, Albany, Doerun, Moultrie, Adel, Quitman, Thomasville, Whigham, Cairo, Camilla and Blakely.

UPCOMING EVENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

- Atlanta will serve as the host city for the **Site Selectors Guild Annual Conference in March 2020**. The Site Selectors Guild is the only association of the world’s foremost professional site selection consultants. Guild members provide location strategy to corporations across the globe and for every industry, sector, and function. Members of the Global Commerce team, as well as GDEcD leadership, will take part in various activities as Georgia hosts the group.

By the Numbers

In the first fiscal quarter of the year, the Global Commerce team has generated:

194 new projects.

These projects have the potential to create nearly

17,000 jobs and **\$4.3B** investment.

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Governor Kemp with the Consul General of Canada, Nadia Theodore.

DIVISION PROFILE

Georgia's International Relations division strengthens Georgia's reputation as a welcoming location for international business and tourism by strategically cultivating and expanding Georgia's international relationships. The office oversees communications and activities with foreign governments and is the state's liaison to members of the Consular Corps. The division also manages the Governor's trade and investment missions, welcomes international delegations and dignitaries, provides community outreach and education opportunities, and coordinates international efforts among state departments and agencies.

QUARTERLY DIVISION HIGHLIGHTS

1. The International Relations division coordinates a series of casual breakfast events to gather members of the Consular Corps and GDEcD leadership, with the goal of educating our "local" diplomats about GDEcD's work and strengthening our relationship with the international community. July's event, which hosted a dozen Consuls General from across Europe, Asia, the Americas, and Africa, focused on Global Commerce, specifically the team's efforts in foreign direct investment (FDI).
2. This quarter Georgia welcomed four new Consuls General, diplomats who assumed their post in Atlanta and who will represent their country's interests here for the next 3 years. Israel, Peru, France, and Japan all named new Consuls General. Governor Brian Kemp hosted a welcome meeting for them in September, as well as hosted courtesy meetings for several other Consuls General who came to pay their respects.
3. Kagoshima Prefecture is a province in southern Japan that has enjoyed a sister-state agreement with Georgia since 1966. Governor Satoshi Mitazono of Kagoshima paid a visit to Georgia this August, meeting with Lieutenant Governor Geoff Duncan and signing a confirmation of the Friendship Agreement between the two states. As Japan is a top investor nation in Georgia, both in terms of investment and jobs, and Georgia is regarded as the center of Japanese industry in the U.S. Southeast, this visit carried heavy significance to our Japanese visitors.

By the Numbers

26

Consuls General in the Consular Corps; new arrivals in Q1 from Israel, Peru, France, and Japan

46

Honorary Consuls in the Consular Corps; Honorary Consul of Lebanon newly named

25

Diplomatic visits and business meetings with dignitaries and officials from 19 countries

3

Countries visited by Commissioner Wilson and GDEcD leadership, which included 20 business meetings and marketing events across 6 cities

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UPCOMING EVENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

- On December 12, the Governor and First Lady will host the Consular Corps for a luncheon at the Governor's Mansion.
- Plans are underway for the 2020 International VIP Tour, which hosts members of the Consular Corps on a 3-day series of community visits, highlighting the industry, tourism, education, culture, and education opportunities each location has to offer. Though details are yet to be confirmed, the tour will be held in early March and will take the Corps to South Georgia.



In October, Georgia agriculture companies co-exhibited with GDEcD at the 2019 Anuga trade show in Cologne, Germany.

DIVISION PROFILE

GDEcD's nationally recognized International Trade division works to bolster Georgia exports and brand the state as a competitive source of quality products and services. The division includes international representatives located in 12 strategic global markets and assists Georgia companies to expand their sales worldwide. The Trade division provides Georgia businesses with the Global Insight and Global Connections they need to successfully diversify their international customer base.

QUARTERLY DIVISION HIGHLIGHTS

1. UK Reps Visit Georgia

GDEcD's Managing Director of Trade for the UK and Ireland, Colin McCullagh, and UK Trade Representative, Conor Griffiths, traveled to Georgia in August to meet with Georgia companies and share best practices on doing business in the UK and Ireland. In addition to one-on-one meetings, the reps conducted industry-focused roundtable discussions and seminars for Georgia companies in the life sciences, technology, defense and security sectors. Representatives from all 12 of GDEcD's international offices will visit Georgia in March 2020.

2. DSEI 2019

In September, Georgia companies co-exhibited with GDEcD at DSEI, one of the world's leading defense and security trade shows. Held every two years in London, the event attracted more than 36,000 military and civilian buyers from 114 countries. GDEcD's trade representatives in the UK coordinated pre-qualified B2B appointments for Georgia businesses and provided on-site support at the show. Georgia exhibitors reported substantial leads as a result of show participation with total projected sales estimated at more than \$2 million.

3. Deputy Commissioner, Mary Waters, named Vice President of SIDO

Deputy Commissioner for International Trade, Mary Waters, was recently named Vice President for the State International Development Organization (SIDO). SIDO is a national non-profit, nonpartisan organization focused exclusively on state international trade development and provides a forum for state trade organizations to come collaborate and share best practices. Each year, members of the GDEcD's international trade team participate in the SIDO Best Practices and Training Forum

By the Numbers

263

Trade leads provided to Georgia companies

380

Georgia businesses received customized export assistance

116

Key clients worked with International Trade Managers

\$5.1M

Exports supported by the trade team

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and its Washington, D.C. Forum. Ms. Waters has served on the SIDO Executive Board since 2015 representing the Southern U.S. member states and looks forward to continuing SIDO's efforts to promote state trade development in her role as Vice President.

UPCOMING EVENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

- **2019 GLOBE Awards**

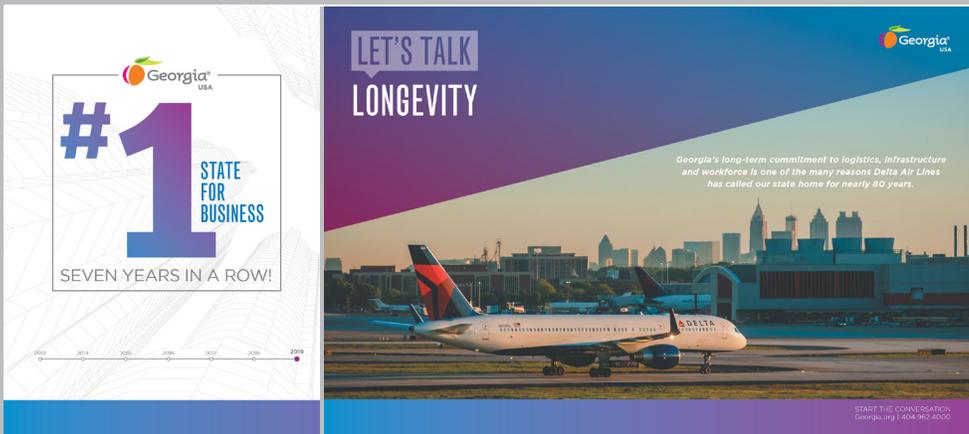
In December, the 2019 Georgia Launching Opportunities by Exporting (GLOBE) Award Winners will be recognized at a special event at the State Capitol. The GLOBE Award program began in 2014 as a way to recognize local businesses contributing to Georgia's economic growth through global trade. Since its inception, the GLOBE Awards have recognized more than 150 Georgia businesses from 43 counties across the state who have entered new international markets.

- **Domotex Hannover 2020** – January 10 – 13, 2020

GDEcD's trade division will exhibit with companies from Georgia's flooring industry at Domotex Hannover in January. The Georgia booth is co-sponsored by the American Floor Covering Alliance (AFA) based out of Dalton, GA. Georgia's flooring industry supplies more than 45% of the world's carpeting and rugs, and in 2018 the state exported \$442.6 million in floor covering products.

- **Arab Health 2020** – January 27 – 30, 2020

2020 marks Georgia's 7th consecutive year exhibiting at Arab Health, the largest healthcare exposition in the Middle East. Last year's edition welcomed nearly 85,000 visitors from 159 countries. The region represents a growing market for the nearly \$2 billion in medical device/equipment exports from Georgia each year. Eight Georgia businesses will co-exhibit this year in the Georgia, USA booth.



The We Speak Business campaign has a new look. The refreshed creative will fully launch by January, and will be visible in pieces ranging from one-pagers, pop-up banners, print and digital ads, videos and tradeshow graphics.

DIVISION PROFILE

The Marketing & Communications division manages the agency's reputation and promotes Georgia's business, tourism, arts and entertainment assets throughout the state, U.S. and world. Through the creative integration of print, digital, social media, outdoor and broadcast channels, the division supports the department's eight operating divisions. This includes new advertising campaigns, the creation of sales and marketing materials, digital advertising, all internal and external communications, media outreach, more than a dozen social media platforms across multiple divisions and the growth of the department's targeted websites.

QUARTERLY DIVISION HIGHLIGHTS

1. A new video highlighting the growth of Life Sciences in Georgia over the past 10 years was completed in September. The video provides an overview of the depth of the Life Sciences community in Georgia- from Global Health Organizations to the CDC to top-ranked colleges and universities - as well as Georgia's strength across biosciences, health IT, and cybersecurity. The video premiered on Oct 8 at the Georgia BIO Innovation Summit, the largest Life Sciences conference in the Southeast, and will also be used for recruitment at two of the largest Life Sciences conferences in the U.S, reaching a potential audience of 60,000.
2. The International Trade Export Directory has been updated and enhanced. The Directory was previously hosted by a 3rd party resulting in limited functionality and high management costs. A series of new web pages was incorporated within georgia.org and made the tool much more user friendly, and by hosting and maintaining in house, there will be significant savings to the International Trade team.
3. The Georgia Council for the Arts website was previously hosted by Miles agency on an outdated CMS that was costly- there were also security risks with this system. Budgetary constraints led to the interactive team developing a new website in-house, saving GAArts.org a significant amount of money. The new website has a more modern look and feel, and navigation is much more user-friendly.

By the Numbers

19 The number of press releases drafted and released by the communications team

Q1 FY20 (Over Q1 FY19)

ExploreGeorgia.org

- Page views: **+11.25%**
- Number of unique users: **+7%**
- Average session duration: **+10.5%**
- Top increases in international traffic:
 - France **+48%**
 - Sweden **+14%**
- Mobile traffic **+21%**
- Desktop decreased **-16%**
- Traffic sources:
 - Organic Search **+10.5%** (indication of strong brand and SEO)
 - Paid Search **+365%** (key word optimization is strong)
 - Referral from our social channels **+20%**, as did traffic from our bi-monthly e-newsletter.
- Traffic from our Facebook channel **+5%** and Pinterest **+4%**
- Pages visited:
 - The homepage traffic **+38%**
 - Georgia-weather **+130%** (likely due to Hurricane Dorian) - over 9,000 page views of our special crisis communications/resource page travel-alerts.

Georgia.org

- Sessions from Facebook and LinkedIn **+45%**
- Bounce rate **+16%**
- Page views from social channels **+54%**
- Time on web pages **+12%**
- International traffic:
 - Japan **+117%**
 - Italy **+20%**
 - Spain **+17%**
 - Australia **+13%**
- Page views to film related content **+25%**

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4. The bi-annual GDEcD Business Incentives brochure underwent a design and content refresh in July. New legislation and incentives for rural growth are featured in the content. One of the most popular collateral pieces, the brochure is developed for the Global Commerce division.
5. The We Speak Business campaign underwent a refresh in order to stay modern and relevant. The campaign is primarily used by the Global Commerce division, though elements can be found in creative across the department. Laid against a crisp, clean white background, the new campaign creative features one prominent image for each individual piece, overlaid with a color gradient formed from the department's brand colors. The look stands out next to the competition's ads, and quickly calls attention to the subject of the ad as well as one or two quick facts. The We Speak Business tagline has proven successful, and this new iteration includes a call to action telling the audience "let's talk." The refreshed look will fully launch by January, and will be visible in pieces ranging from one-pagers, pop-up banners, print and digital ads, videos and tradeshow graphics. The first print ads will run in the November issues of *Georgia Trend*, *Site Selection*, *Delta Sky* and *Automotive News*.

UPCOMING EVENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

- **New Georgia.org regional landing pages, January 2020**
- **Statewide business success stories video, January 2020**



RGI's Amy Carter and Taylor Walden, along with Global Commerce's Michelle Shaw, tour rural Georgia's Polar Southern Bottling plant in Fitzgerald-Ben Hill County with economic developer Jason Dunn.

By the Numbers

The RGI team has held community meetings in **123** counties across the state in every region

6 companies were interviewed for Rural Georgia Initiatives' rural living video to be released January 2020

RGI has assisted in **98** total collaborations where support has been provided to rural communities and/or economic developers, statewide project managers, or regional project managers

DIVISION PROFILE

The Rural Georgia Initiatives (RGI) division's mission is to help rural Georgia communities become more competitive for economic development projects and identify new strategies for attracting jobs and investment. This division works diligently to advance these strategies, thereby improving the quality of life for those residing in Georgia's rural communities.

QUARTERLY DIVISION HIGHLIGHTS

1. Deputy Commissioner Amy Carter was named Co-Chair of the "What's Next? Embracing the Future" National Workforce Task Force Subcommittee with an upcoming meeting in San Juan, Puerto Rico December 3-7, 2019
2. Deputy Commissioner Amy Carter and Division Director Chris Chamoun presented at the Moultrie Regional Workshop and Development Authority Training for Southwest Georgia development authority board members
3. Deputy Commissioner Amy Carter spoke to the Georgia House Rural Development Council in Jasper, Georgia on rural education and workforce partnerships

UPCOMING EVENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

- The RGI Team will travel to Nashville, Tennessee to meet with USDA Rural Development, the Tennessee Rural Task Force, and the Tennessee Workforce Development team to discuss and share ideas of how other states are meeting needs of their rural communities
- The RGI team will be working to complete Region 6 and 11 community meetings
- Deputy Commissioner Amy Carter will participate in the National Rural Economic Developers Association Annual Conference in Kansas City, Missouri

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During the Georgia Governor's Tourism Conference, Georgia Tourism debuted its new campaign to officially rebrand the state tourism office as Explore Georgia.

DIVISION PROFILE

Georgia Tourism, through its network of regional and international representatives, Atlanta office and 11 visitor information centers, assists the state's communities and attractions in drawing potential travelers to their areas, and helps individual visitors and groups discover Georgia's unique vacation options. The division also helps communities develop well-planned and sustainable tourism products.

QUARTERLY DIVISION HIGHLIGHTS

1. During the first week of September, Hurricane Dorian was on an uncertain path toward the Southeast Coast. To help evacuees, Explore Georgia deployed its travel alerts page on ExploreGeorgia.org which provided information about available lodging, traffic conditions, weather, social media updates and more critical information to help travelers find their way to safety. The Explore Georgia Travel Alerts web page saw a more than 440% increase in traffic from Hurricane Florence (2018) to Dorian with a nearly 70% increase in time spent on the page. Not only did more people use the web page, but they spent more time on it. The site was distributed to and publicized by Governor Kemp, GEMA, FEMA, news outlets across Georgia and Florida, as well as through our social channels and partners. A total of 769 emails were opened by media outlets. During the storm, four PeachByte e-newsletters were distributed to tourism industry partners detailing Explore Georgia's crisis response and important/relevant storm information. The initial Dorian PeachByte newsletter saw nearly double the open rate of usual newsletters (44% vs the average of 25%).
2. Georgia Governor's Tourism Conference was held Sept. 8 – 11 in LaGrange at Great Wolf Lodge. This year's conference welcomed more than 500 participants. During its general session, Georgia Tourism debuted its new campaign to officially rebrand the state tourism office as Explore Georgia. This new brand is a call to action that will help tell visitors exactly what we want them to do - explore this great state. The new logo and branding have already been deployed on ExploreGeorgia.org, social media and the consumer newsletter, and will continue to be incorporated in all work throughout the next year.
3. On the final day of the Georgia Governor's Tourism Conference, the Joint House and Senate Economic Development and Tourism Committee met followed by

By the Numbers

ExploreGeorgia.org

- July to September 2019, overall traffic was up **11.19%** year over year.
- Unique page views were up **11.61%**, and the bounce rate decreased **11.16%**.

Social Media

- During Q1, Explore Georgia's social media channels had over **439,121** engagements with content and drove **48,163** link clicks to the website.
- Total numbers of followers increased by **10.7%** compared to the previous year.

E-Newsletter

- Subscribers: **198,432 (+.88%)**
- Opens: **12.25% (+8.12%)**
- Clicks: **2.41% (+50.63%)**

Contact Information

- For further information or details – please contact:

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Governor Brian Kemp addressing conference attendees to acknowledge the success of Georgia's tourism industry and to congratulate the work of the industry's professionals.

UPCOMING EVENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

- From **December 2 - December 5, 2019**, Explore Georgia will be attending the **8th annual Travel South USA International Showcase in St. Louis, Missouri**. This event includes networking events and appointments with 100+ qualified International tour operators from 20+ countries around the globe and 160+ Southern travel suppliers will be in attendance.
- **Tourism, Hospitality and Arts Day** will be held at the Georgia State Capitol on **January 21, 2020**.