



LET'S TALK
BUSINESS



**BOARD OF DIRECTORS
BRIEFING BOOK**

August 26, 2020

GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BOARD BOOK

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GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FISCAL YEAR 2020 FOURTH QUARTER HIGHLIGHTS

While the last quarter of fiscal year 2020 presented numerous challenges due to the ongoing effects of COVID-19, the Georgia Department of Economic Development (GDECD) continued our mission of creating job and investment opportunities across the state; and in a challenging year, Georgia's economic growth and recovery is on the right track.

Between March 14 and June 30, 2020, alone, 72 new projects were announced, creating more than 7,863 jobs and \$2.12 billion in investment. Roughly 4,000 of these jobs are coming to Georgia's rural areas. SK innovation announced it will invest another \$940 million expansion in Commerce, creating 600 jobs and bringing their total announced investment in Georgia to an unprecedented \$2.61 billion.

In June, [Georgia received its 12th Shovel Award](#) by Area Development, recognizing the state's excellence in attracting investments and creating jobs.

More than 1,750 companies responded to Georgia Governor Brian Kemp's call for Georgia manufacturers and suppliers in March to help provide critical personal protective equipment (PPE) for the state. This roster of businesses was shared with the Governor's Office and the Georgia Emergency Management/Homeland Security Agency, and nearly 300 Georgia companies are now on the publicly available ['COVID-19 Suppliers: Interactive List and Map.'](#) which displays businesses supplying these critical resources and where they are located.

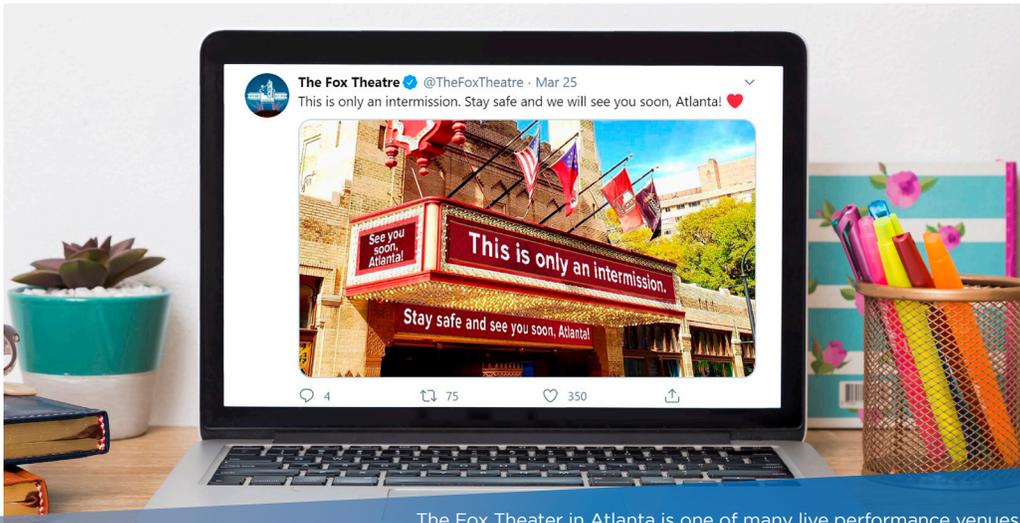
Eighteen companies headquartered in Georgia [were recognized this year as Fortune 500 companies](#); and 34 Georgia businesses were included on the Fortune 1,000 company list.

Governor Kemp announced that the major motion picture, television, and streaming companies plan to bring back and hire an estimated 40,000 production workers in Georgia, who will be employed on an expected 75 production projects, which will generate more than \$2 billion of investment in Georgia's economy during the next 18 months. This includes plans to purchase goods and services from over 17,000 small Georgia businesses. Also in June, Georgia-lensed "Watchmen" and "Stranger Things" both earned prestigious Peabody Awards, which are based at the University of Georgia's respected journalism school.

After a record-setting year for trade in 2019, the International Trade team continued to arm Georgia companies with important resources to navigate the evolving global business environment. During the last two weeks of March, the Trade team engaged with 200 Georgia businesses as well as local, state and federal partners to streamline assistance, provide resources, updates and webinars to the state's business community and further develop the [Export Georgia, USA Directory](#) international marketing tool.

Explore Georgia announced 25-year marketing veteran Mark Jaronski as their new Deputy Commissioner, and the team's efforts during COVID-19 resulted in the highest website traffic in five years and have increased engagement in our social media channels. Facebook audience growth was nearly double that of surrounding state travel offices, positioning Georgia to safely welcome travelers as recovery begins.

Georgia Council for the Arts (GCA) amended and extended grant contracts, worked with partners to offer a series of webinars regarding funding and operational resources for the arts industry, and held virtual office hours to provide support. In May, the Georgia Council for the Arts saw the state's largest participation ever in the national [2020 Poetry Out Loud competition](#), with 106 schools from 59 different counties, 11,645 students and 574 teachers involved. GCA also received and administered \$507,000 of CARES Act funding to 63 organizations through the National Endowment for the Arts, along with the traditional Partner, Project and Arts Education Grants to 148 organizations.



The Fox Theater in Atlanta is one of many live performance venues that has been a partner during COVID-19, even as the effects of the pandemic has harmed regular business.

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. In response to the swift and detrimental impact of COVID-19 on the arts industry and artists in Georgia, GCA launched a series of webpages in the Emergency Preparedness section of our website: COVID-19 Impact on GCA Grants; Useful Resources for Nonprofit Arts Organizations; and Useful Resources for Artists. In addition, GCA offered current grantees an opportunity to amend their current grant contracts by extending the term of the grant by six months, converting project support to operating support, or amending contract goals to align with the work happening during the pandemic.
2. In addition to funding and operational resources for the arts industry, in April GCA partnered with the Georgia Center for Nonprofits to offer a series of webinars over a three-week period of time. Topics included: Arts: Loans and Other Funding Information; Arts: Unemployment, Tax Credits, and More - What you need to Know; and Arts: Strategy for Development, Board Engagement and What Comes Next. In addition, the GCA Executive Director was asked to serve as a guest speaker on a webinar for the Georgia Grantmakers Alliance to educate private grantmakers of the impact of COVID-19 on the arts industry.

By the Numbers

- **GCA Resiliency Grant:**
171 applications
Totaling **\$1.78M** in requests
Total available budget:
\$507,000
- **FY20 Grant Change Form #'s:**
43% of grantees requested changes to FY20 contracts (**89 of 205 grantees**)
6 Project Grantees,
23 Partner Grantees,
17 Arts Education Grantees,
39 Vibrant Community Grantees,
3 Cultural Facilities Grantees and
1 Literary Program CFS

Contact Information

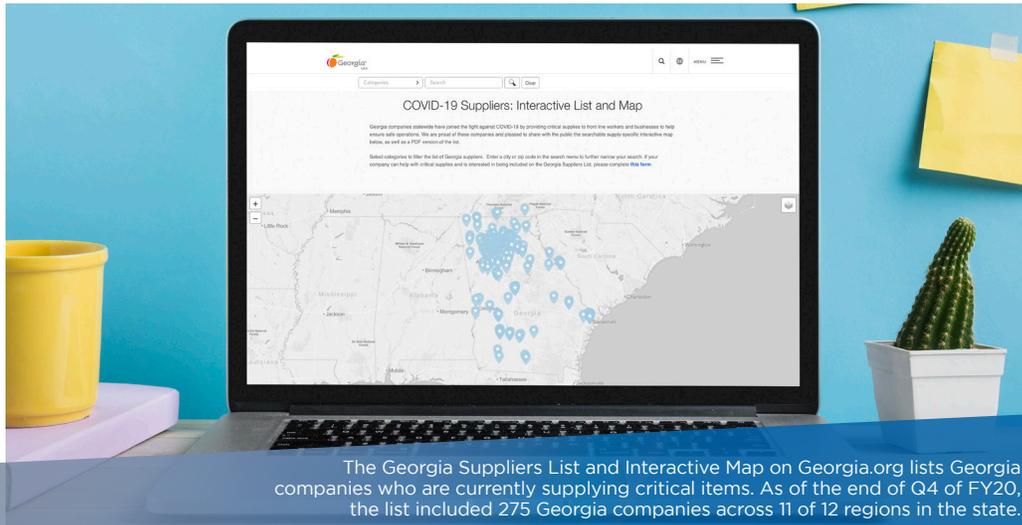
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3. In May, GCA was the recipient of \$507,000 of CARES Act funding through the National Endowment for the Arts. Funding was appropriated to support salary and administrative expenses for nonprofit arts organizations recovering from COVID-19 shutdowns. GCA in turn released guidelines for our Resiliency Grant, funded with the CARES Act award, and offered to nonprofit arts organizations to support recovery and long-term sustainability. Awards range from \$5K to \$20K based on the applicant's budget size. Grant applications went through a two-stage review: first financial documents (balance sheets, P&Ls and audits) were reviewed by a team of nonprofit accountants, then their reports were sent along with the applications to 25 panelists who reviewed and scored applications in the month of June. Award announcements were made to 63 organizations in early July.
4. GCA Executive Director Karen Paty announced in June that she would be stepping down. Karen served as Executive Director for nine years, but a total of sixteen years on the GCA staff. Her last day was July 10, 2020.

UPCOMING EVENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

- FY21 GCA Grant announcements for Partner, Project and Arts Education Grants, as well as the Resiliency Grant, will be made in early July 2020.
- Vibrant Communities Grant guidelines will be available in late July to support single art projects in counties in which no organization receives a Project, Partner or Arts Education Program Grant.



The Georgia Suppliers List and Interactive Map on Georgia.org lists Georgia companies who are currently supplying critical items. As of the end of Q4 of FY20, the list included 275 Georgia companies across 11 of 12 regions in the state.

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. The Centers of Innovation (COI) led the effort by Governor Brian Kemp to gather a listing of companies that could manufacture and supply critical items needed to fight COVID-19. To date, more than 1,750 companies have responded to the web form on Georgia.org where the information was shared with the Governor’s Office and the Georgia Emergency Management/Homeland Security Agency. In addition, the COI team created the Georgia Suppliers List and Interactive Map on Georgia.org, which lists Georgia companies who are currently supplying critical item, and by the end of Q4, nearly 275 companies were listed in this directory with companies including from 11 out of Georgia’s 12 regions.
2. The Centers of Innovation also engaged in various other initiatives to help Georgia companies fighting the COVID-19 pandemic:
 - a. Through a partnership with the Georgia Department of Administrative Services (DOAS), the COI team also provided the initial Georgia PPE Suppliers List to more than 600 state and local government emergency management organizations, to better connect them to local suppliers of PPE.
 - b. Various members of the COI team engaged partner organizations like the Global Center for Medical Innovation, Georgia Bio, and the Georgia Manufacturing Extension Partnership to provide companies interested in switching over their operations to manufacture PPE with resources and support. Members of the COI team directly connected with more than seven) companies.
 - c. The Center of Innovation for Logistics coordinated a series of conversations with a select group of companies representing food supply/distribution in Georgia to get an “on the ground” perspective on the status of the food supply chain as well as any positive or negative leading indicators about food distribution that the state should be aware of.

By the Numbers

579

COI engagements with clients across all 12 regions of the state through Q4

54%

Engagements outside of metro Atlanta or statewide

79

Collaborations and projects with **GDEcD** and other **EcD organizations** through Q4

275

The number of companies who are listed in the Georgia Suppliers List and Interactive Map

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3. The Centers of Innovation continue their work in expanding Innovation activities throughout Georgia. COI has led both the Innovation Clusters Working Group and the IP/Technology Transfer Working Groups within the Lt. Governor's Georgia Innovates Task Force. The Innovation Clusters Working Group seeks to connect innovation communities throughout the state through the sharing of best practices and resources and the IP/Technology Transfer Working Group seeks to make IP more available and licensable.
4. The Center of Innovation for Aerospace launched the Georgia CybersecurityEdge Initiative as a response to new Department of Defense (DoD) cybersecurity guidelines - the Cybersecurity Maturity Model Certification (CMMC). This certification will require Georgia's 4,000 defense contractors to demonstrate their cybersecurity compliance before bidding on DoD contracts. CMMC could have a major impact on Georgia's \$7.3 billion defense contracting sector. COI Aerospace developed a partnership with Technology Association of Georgia to create the Defense Industrial Base Task Force to provide defense contractors with information and resources. The Georgia Manufacturing Extension Partnership and the Georgia Small Business Development Center have also joined the task force efforts.
5. The Center of Innovation for Energy Technology, Georgia Tech, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and Georgia EPD began two projects with the City of LaGrange and also with six communities in Southeast Georgia as they continue the development of the Materials Life Cycle Tool. Once complete, this tool is designed to foster informed decisions while creating connections that turn waste streams into revenue streams that lower the cost of material input during production. Georgia will be the first state with this tool to analyze the economic and environmental impacts in 389 industry sectors.
6. The Center of Innovation for IT along with other members of the COI team is coordinating with the Regional Leaders Summit (RLS) - Sciences Digitization Group, which discussed a potential new effort in Digital Health in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. COI reached out to Georgia Tech, Augusta University, Emory University and the Global Center for Medical Innovation to get them engaged in the discussions focused on a virtual RLS-Sciences summit in September 2020.
7. The Center of Innovation for Logistics coordinated efforts with the Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce on an updated Logistics Workforce Education Report with the intention to create one final product that will showcase to potential employers and workers what Georgia offers in terms of logistics education and training.
8. The Center of Innovation for Manufacturing started an Innovation Grant project for research with the University of Georgia for Rayonier Advanced Materials in Jesup to convert a waste byproduct into a chicken feed additive. If successful, Rayonier will then develop the production process, leading to a plant expansion at the Jesup facility.
9. COI Executive Director Steve Justice announced in June that he would be stepping down. Steve initially served as Director of the COI for Aerospace, before stepping up to lead the larger Centers of Innovation program in 2016, serving more than a decade in total with GDEcD. His last day was July 20, 2020. David Nuckolls is serving as Interim Executive Director.



Socially distanced filming takes place on the set of Georgia-lensed "Doom Patrol," which part of the DC Universe. The show is streaming on HBO Max. Streaming services have seen a boom, especially as shelter in place orders were implemented around the globe.

By the Numbers

Governor Kemp announced that the major motion picture, television, and streaming companies plan to bring back and hire an estimated **40,000** workers, who will be employed on an expected **75** production projects that will invest over **\$2 billion** into the Georgia economy during the next 18 months. This includes plans by producers to purchase goods and services from over **17,000** small Georgia businesses.

DIVISION PROFILE

The Georgia Film, Music & Digital Entertainment Office develops the state’s film, television, & 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

1. Due to COVID-19, all television and feature film production temporarily shut down in the State of Georgia by late March. To assist the more than 51,000 Georgians who work in film and TV production while these projects are/were on hiatus, the film office developed support resources and assistance for industry professionals and businesses available on the Georgia Film Office website. The COVID-19 Information and Resources for Georgia’s Entertainment Industry is updated as new information becomes available and can be found here: <https://www.georgia.org/covid19film>.
2. There have been numerous stories of Georgia’s film workforce using their talents to provide critical help during the pandemic. While these projects have been on hiatus, many crew workers have adapted their skills to assist front line efforts. The Georgia Film Office spotlighted a few of these efforts here: <https://www.georgia.org/newsroom/blogs/spotlight-georgia-film-industry-efforts-help-during-covid-19>.
3. On May 22, Governor Kemp announced the “best practices” guide for Georgia’s thriving film and television industries to help reduce the spread of COVID-19 for productions as they resume production in Georgia. The guide was developed by the Georgia Film Office in close cooperation with officials from studios as well as production companies who maintain a presence in Georgia. The guide can be found here: <https://www.georgia.org/covid19filmguide>.

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4. On May 26, the Georgia Music Foundation hosted a free online concert showcasing Georgia's diverse talent of musicians like Amy Grant, Indigo Girls, and Jontavious Willis. The annual Georgia On My Mind concert, normally held at the famous Ryman Auditorium in Nashville, Tennessee, became an opportunity for music lovers worldwide to learn about the influence and inclusivity of Georgia's musical community. Nearly 100,000 viewers from across the country and internationally tuned in during the 24-hour period that the show was available to stream.
5. The Georgia Grown concert series was developed to allow fans to experience live music safely during the pandemic. Artists take the stage with full production, lights, and sound while fans enjoy the experience from a designated parking space at either the Jesup or Tiger drive-in theaters. The first weekend of the series entertained 490 attendees in Jesup with 184 cars!
6. On June 12, Governor Kemp announced that the major motion picture, television, and streaming companies plan to bring back and hire an estimated 40,000 workers, who will be employed on an expected 75 production projects that will invest over \$2 billion into the Georgia economy during the next 18 months. This includes plans by producers to purchase goods and services from over 17,000 small Georgia businesses, according to the Motion Picture Association-America, which compiled the data from its member companies: Warner Bros., Netflix, Paramount, Sony, Disney and NBC/Universal. In addition to working with these companies, the film office is in constant contact with film and television production companies planning projects in the state.



By the Numbers

Assisted with the location or expansion of **343** projects for the fiscal year. These projects will create over **\$7** billion investment and **23,459** jobs.

Despite the economic downturn associated with COVID-19, project activity has remained strong. From March 14 – June 30, the team has located **72** projects that will create

\$2.12 billion investment and **7,863** jobs.

82% of locations were outside the 10-county metro Atlanta region (**59**), **87%** of investment outside metro Atlanta (**\$1.85 billion**), and **54%** of jobs created outside metro Atlanta (**4,246**).

DIVISION PROFILE

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

QUARTERLY DIVISION HIGHLIGHTS

1. Georgia has received its 12th Shovel Award – its 11th consecutive such award – recognizing the state's excellence in attracting investment and creating jobs. Georgia's Silver Shovel Award is presented by Area Development, the leading executive magazine covering corporate site selection and relocation.
2. Georgia Department of Economic Development recognized the four Small Business ROCK STARS for their outstanding, unique and impactful work across the state. This year's 2020 Small Business ROCK STARS are: Southern Baked Pie Company in Gainesville (Hall County), Hatchworks Technologies in Chamblee (DeKalb County), Blackhawk Fly Fishing in Clarkesville (Habersham County), and High Road Craft Brands: Marietta (Cobb County).
3. In May, Governor Kemp announced that Augusta University received a \$400,000 donation from SK innovation to support Augusta University and Augusta University Health's response and associated expenses pertaining to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Major projects announced

Company	Investment	Jobs	Location
Amazon Fulfillment Center	\$200,000,000	800	Columbia County
SatisPie	\$23,275,000	162	Fulton County
RWDC Industries	\$260,000,000	200	Athens-Clarke County
A-1 Trusses	\$17,000,000	130	Decatur County
Microsoft	\$75,000,000	1500	City of Atlanta
Try-Con Tufters, Inc.	\$5,000,000	104	Chattooga County
Mytex	\$8,500,000	15	Newton County
Taizhou Huali New Materials Co. Ltd	\$16,300,000	315	Murray County

Contact Information

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Major projects announced

Company	Investment	Jobs	Location
Perspecta	\$1,715,000	178	Augusta-Richmond County
CFL Flooring	\$67,000,000	300	Gordon County
Milletech Systems Inc.	\$412,500	465	City of Atlanta
SK Innovation	\$940,000,000	600	Jackson County
Wellmade [®] Performance Flooring	\$35,000,000	240	Bartow County



Deputy Commissioner Mary Waters facilitates a live audience Q&A with Atlanta Trade partners during World Trade Day on June 26.

By the Numbers

- Outreach to **2,278** companies in **156** Georgia counties
- 919** Georgia businesses received customized export assistance
- 296** trade successes reported by export clients
- \$35.5** million export sales supported

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 Representative located in 12 strategic global markets and assists Georgia companies 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. With changes brought about by COVID-19, the International Trade team has continued to arm Georgia companies with important resources to navigate the evolving global business environment. During the last two weeks of March alone, the Trade team engaged with 200 Georgia businesses as well as local, state and federal partners to streamline assistance to the business community and provide timely resources. The team facilitated communication with key partners and generated a weekly distribution of key resources, COVID-19 updates and timely webinars to Georgia companies across the state. Deputy Commissioner Mary Waters remains in close communication with Trade officials and colleagues across the U.S. to stay abreast of evolving export restrictions, unexpected supply change disruptions, and best practices to support small business exporters in the current environment.
2. The Trade team has pivoted its services to assist small businesses identify and access new opportunities presented by COVID-19. Two examples include J&S Chemical, and Patientory. J&S Chemical responded to a call by the National Association of Manufacturers to shift production to critical supplies, including hand sanitizer. Due to disruptions in domestic supply chains, the company's procurement department reached out to the Trade team for assistance sourcing key raw materials and ingredients globally. A list of global suppliers was provided, J&S was able to successfully pivot its manufacturing line, and a key partnership with the Bobby Dodd Institute was developed. While J&S was able to secure raw materials to produce hand sanitizer, the company was limited in its packaging and distribution capabilities which was BDI's core business. Comments from Mary Waters and the division's work with J&S were featured in an article titled "Fundamentally Strong" in Georgia Trend magazine's July 2020 issue.

Contact Information

- For further information or details - please contact:

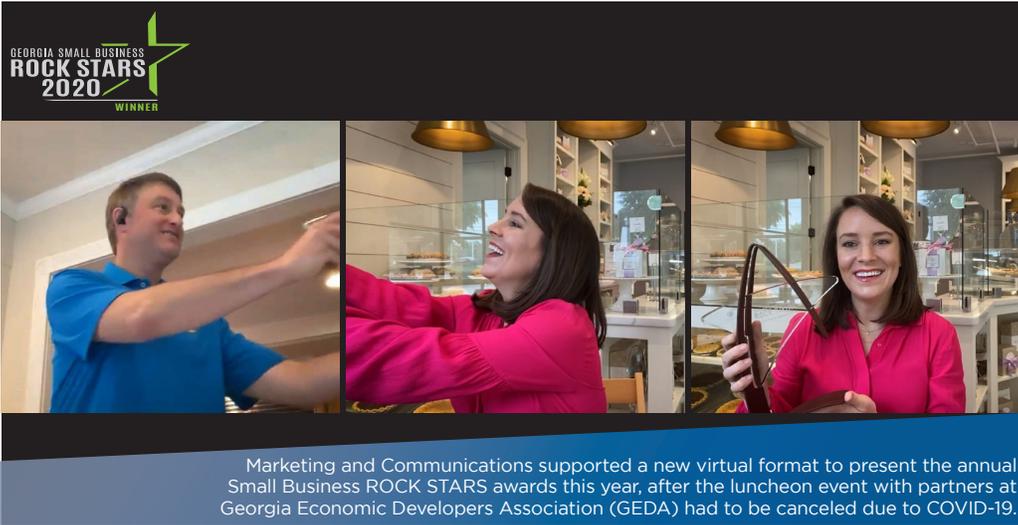
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Patientory, a population health management and analytics company, pivoted operations during COVID-19 to provide PPE to U.S. municipalities via vetted suppliers in India, Korea and China. Due to supply chain disruptions in early April, the company engaged with GDEcD's team in Korea seeking introductions to additional Korean PPE suppliers. As a result of assistance by the Trade team in Atlanta and Seoul, Patientory was able to supply domestic customers as well as respond to export leads provided by the U.S. Commercial Service in Latin America. This resulted in a new export market for Patientory. The company also continues to contribute to the pandemic response by developing a real-time COVID-19 patient tracking and reporting tool which evaluates users' current health condition. The company's mobile app alerts users prior to entering COVID-19 hot spots.

3. While COVID-19 has impacted small businesses differently, many companies have used this time to evaluate their current global strategies, and engage with the Trade team to research new global sales opportunities. The Trade division has launched a new webinar series designed to drive Georgia company engagement with the state's international representatives, while highlighting emerging global opportunities. As a result of these webinars, trade has seen an uptick in work order requests from our international representatives. Trade's webinar series will continue in FY21 to introduce Georgia business to GDEcD's international reps, and provide insight into a continuously-evolving trade environment around the world.

UPCOMING EVENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

- Money 20/20 Europe - Amsterdam, Netherlands, September 22-24, 2020 *Postponed to 2022*
This event, originally planned for June, has been postponed due to COVID-19. The Trade Division is working with show organizers to support a delegation of companies and partners to Europe's premier event for the financial services and technology industry. This conference provides a unique opportunity for Georgia's information technology companies to network with key players in Europe's emerging FinTech markets. With nearly 70% of all U.S. transactions processed in Georgia and 60% of all payment-processing companies headquartered in or having operations in Georgia, this is an important show for Georgia's FinTech industry.
- SIAL Paris - Paris, France, October 18-22, 2020 *Postponed to 2022*
Despite the postponement of SIAL Paris 2020 and the uncertainty of trade shows due to COVID concerns in the near future, GDEcD's Trade Division continues to support Georgia companies who normally would attend these opportunities. For instance, the recent webinar on food and beverage exports to the UK and France, initially conceived as a springboard for companies interested in SIAL Paris, generated work orders for both the UK and France and will provide market research and connections to international buyers.
- MEDICA, Düsseldorf, Germany, November 16-19, 2020
Global opportunities for Georgia health care and life sciences companies continue to grow, with exports exceeding \$1.9 billion in 2019. International Trade Manager Maxine Bier is currently recruiting Georgia health care and medical device companies to exhibit with GDEcD at MEDICA. MEDICA is the world's largest trade event for medical devices and technologies, and attracts buyers and distributors from across the world. 2020 marks 15 years that GDEcD has had a presence at this important show. Georgia exports of medical devices and pharmaceuticals to the EU totaled \$720.8 million in 2019, a 21% increase over 2018.



Marketing and Communications supported a new virtual format to present the annual Small Business ROCK STARS awards this year, after the luncheon event with partners at Georgia Economic Developers Association (GEDA) had to be canceled due to COVID-19.

DIVISION PROFILE

The Marketing, Communications & International Engagement 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 seven operating divisions. This includes new advertising campaigns, leveraging international relations and events, the creation of sales and marketing materials, digital advertising, all internal and external communications, media outreach, overseas missions, more than a dozen social media platforms across multiple divisions and the growth of the department’s targeted websites.

QUARTERLY DIVISION HIGHLIGHTS

1. In April, through a series of public health emergency executive orders, Governor Kemp named GDEcD the state agency authorized to issue guidance to help clarify emergency regulations and guidelines for Georgia businesses. The digital marketing and communications teams moved swiftly, launching new landing pages, FAQ guides, and informational graphics in multiple languages for business owners to better understand how to safely and legally operate. Across the Department, teams were formed to respond to inquiries and help clarify the legal guidelines. You can find the latest COVID-19 updates, resources, and guidelines here (<https://www.georgia.org/covid19>).
2. To recognize Georgia’s four 2020 Small Business ROCK STARS, some of the most outstanding small businesses in the state, a series of videos was created showing Commissioner Pat Wilson virtually “handing” over the awards. The videos, created quickly after COVID-19 prevented the annual awards ceremony from taking place, highlight the companies’ unique and impactful contributions and demonstrate the quality and breadth of the small business community. Award recipients include Blackhawk Fly Fishing, Hatchworks Technologies, High Road Craft Brands, and Southern Baked Pie Company.

By the Numbers

Georgia.org

- Page views up **90%**
- Unique page views up **97%**
- Average time on page is up **21%**
- Bounce rate down **27%**
- Homepage traffic up **60%**
- Top industry/content pages aside from Covid-19:
 - Supply Chain logistics up **4,000%**
 - Cyber Security/Technology up **600%**
 - Start a Small Business up **134%**
 - Automotive up **1,700%**

Top Increases International website visit:

- South Korea up **1,110%**
- India up **600%**
- Mexico up **300%**
- Canada up **90%**
- UK up **72%**

ExploreGeorgia.org

- Page views up **17%**
- Unique page views up **20%**
- Average time on page up **19%**
- Top Content/page visits:
 - 9 great spots to camp up **280%**
 - 5 drives in Georgia you can’t miss up **291%**
 - Travel Guide request/view up **122%**

Domestic/State visits to the website:

- Illinois up **121%**
- South Carolina up **43%**
- Florida up **32%**
- North Carolina up **20%**

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3. The Communications team continues to provide substantial support for the department's ongoing COVID-19 response. The small team responds to press requests, shares internal announcements, produces blog posts and op-eds, and continues to keep the business and economic development communities up-to-speed on changing guidelines and regulations related to COVID-19. In the fourth quarter of FY20 alone, the team issued 32 press releases, posted 27 blog posts, and handled more than 14 speaking engagements and interviews for Commissioner Pat Wilson and COO Bert Brantley.
4. The Georgia Safety Promise was rolled out at the end of the quarter, a statewide public/private campaign spearheaded by GDEcD to encourage both businesses and their customers to do their part in stopping the spread of the COVID-19. The initiative encourages Georgians to say "I'm in," agreeing to simple, but critical, measures that will minimize spread of COVID-19 and keep Georgia open for business.
5. Nico Wijnberg, former Director of Foreign Direct Investment on GDEcD's Global Commerce team, has stepped in to serve as the division's Director of International Relations and Chief of Protocol. The team has maintained communications between the state and the representatives of foreign governments, sharing vital and timely information about changing business guidelines, virus "hot spots" in different communities, testing, states of emergency, and other concerns of interest to the Consular Corps.



Rural Georgia Initiatives Deputy Commissioner Amy Carter captures on camera a COVID-safe staff meeting at the Okefenokee Swamp Park on May 15 in Waycross, the day before the park opened back up to the public.

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. The RGI team completed a calling campaign to all rural economic developers throughout the state to see how GDEcD could advocate for and support communities during the COVID-19 shutdown.
2. Deputy Commissioner Amy Carter represented the RGI team through being named to two of the Georgia Innovates Taskforce subcommittees—Education & Training, and Connectivity, participating in DCA’s Georgia Academy curriculum discussion, and working with the Council of State Government’s National Workforce Committee as co-chair of the Embracing the Future Workforce Committee.
3. Division Director Chris Chammoun participated in the quarterly Georgia Certified Economic Developers Advisory Committee meeting, assisted DCA on a project to update the broadband capabilities in Chubbtown, Georgia, and joined the Tourism Product Development team during their visit to Bainbridge.
4. The division released three blogs during the quarter including Make Rural Georgia Count in Census, Rural Georgia Businesses Shift to Making Critical Medical Supplies, and Tackling the Brain Drain.

UPCOMING EVENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

- RGI will be releasing its Rural Works video highlighting six Georgia companies located in rural Georgia.
- RGI will be emailing its first newsletter to give monthly updates of the divisions’ happenings across the state and rural strategies.

By the Numbers

56

collaborations and engagements recorded during this quarter with local communities and economic development organizations.

The RGI team completed community meetings and visits in **4 communities (Baldwin, McIntosh, Wilkes and Ware Counties)**.

134

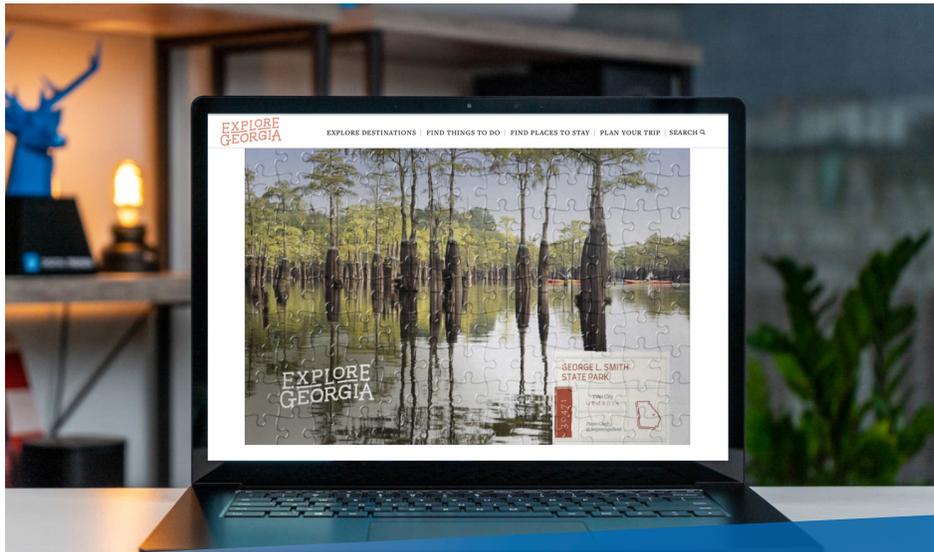
economic developers called to see how the Rural Georgia Initiatives Division could assist during the COVID-19 crisis.

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The successful online “Explore Georgia From Home” campaign included activities such as digital puzzles and coloring book pages that were promoted on social media and in news articles to keep travelers engaged during COVID-19.

DIVISION PROFILE

Explore Georgia, a division of the Georgia Department of Economic Development, is the state’s official destination marketing organization. Through its home office in Atlanta, nine visitor information centers, and a network of representatives across the globe, Explore Georgia inspires travel to and within the state. The division works to advance Georgia’s \$66.3 billion tourism industry that supports 478,000 jobs. As home to the biggest cities in the region, the most diverse population, and a geographical range from the mountains to the beach, Georgia has the South’s most unexpected sights and stories.

QUARTERLY DIVISION HIGHLIGHTS

1. While all sectors of Georgia’s economy were affected by COVID-19, tourism was one of the hardest hit with nearly 90% of the state’s tourism workers unemployed in the months of April and May.
2. Explore Georgia implemented its crisis communications plan to ensure that the state tourism office would both remain a trusted and respected tourism resource and could continue to provide support for its tourism partners. Given the complexity of the crisis, the team quickly evolved its plan to both inform visitors and provide inspiration for future travel. After a brief marketing hiatus, the team launched Explore Georgia from Home to keep Georgia on travelers’ minds even when they couldn’t travel. The campaign was built and deployed via web, social media, email and media relations, to cast a broad net.
3. To support tourism industry partners across the state, a COVID-19 page was created on the Explore Georgia Tourism Industry Portal, email updates were deployed, and hundreds of calls were made to connect partners with the latest state and federal guidelines, travel data and research, and resources.
4. A video was deployed to travel trade, tour operator, and media partners domestically and internationally, and virtual trainings were held and content was updated to educate partners on the state’s tourism product.

By the Numbers

Explore Georgia Social Media (April 1-June 30):

Total followers:
795,420

Total impressions:
5,776,411

Explore Georgia in the News (April 1-June 30):

203 mentions

190.4 million impressions (UVPM)

Contact Information

- For further information or details – please contact:

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5. While most state tourism websites saw a crash in traffic in March and April, many with drops of 60% or more, ExploreGeorgia.org experienced a less than a 25% decrease. The site had a quick rebound and even outperformed metrics from 2019. Explore Georgia also experienced increases on its social media channels, with audience growth on Facebook that was nearly double that of southeastern states.
6. Recognizing the full impact of COVID-19, the annual Georgia Tourism Conference, typically held in the fall, was postponed to the fall of 2021. In its place, the team created a one-day event, the Georgia Tourism Summit, as well as a free monthly webinar series. The Summit will be held at Lanier Islands on September 2, 2020, and will include national tourism experts, as well as a luncheon program with Governor Kemp.
7. All state-run Visitor Information Centers closed on March 13 due to COVID-19. While the centers were shuttered, the team was busy preparing for re-opening. The visitor services team collaborated with counterparts from southeastern states to determine reopening best practices. Extra precautions are being taken to keep both staff and guests safe, including installing new protective barriers, removing touch-points like brochures, posting social distancing signage and handwashing reminders, and updating cleaning protocols.
8. On June 9, 2020, the Georgia Department of Economic Development announced that Mark Jaronski, a 25-year travel and tourism industry leader will lead the Explore Georgia team as Deputy Commissioner. Jaronski spent 16 years at The Walt Disney Company in Florida in a variety of marketing roles that included Manager of Disney Cruise Line Public Relations, Brand Manager of Walt Disney World theme parks, and Director of External Communications for Disney Parks Worldwide at the company's headquarters in Burbank, California. Following Disney, Jaronski oversaw Global Communications for Visit Orlando, the official tourism association for Central Florida. Most recently, Jaronski has served as CEO of Select Registry Distinguished Inns of North America since 2016. Select Registry has been the industry's quality stamp of approval for nearly 50 years, marketing its collection of 300 independently run lodging businesses, including 12 in Georgia, to travelers nationwide. He began his role with Explore Georgia on July 17, 2020.

IN THE NEWS (APRIL 1-JUNE 30):

Examples of coverage:

- Atlanta Business Chronicle op-ed by Commissioner Pat Wilson, who shares his insights on COVID-19's impact on the state's tourism industry
- WSB-TV "Access Travel" program dedicated entirely to traveling in Georgia
- WABE, NPR Atlanta "City Lights" program featured coloring pages and the Explore Georgia from Home campaign
- GPB-TV shared ways to virtually explore the state with the Explore Georgia from Home campaign
- Georgia destinations in these Lonely Planet articles on the best trips in the South and gourmet gas stations worth a road trip
- Martha Stewart Living article on favorite destinations in the South a version of which is also in the July/August issue of the print magazine

UPCOMING EVENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

- Explore Georgia Webinar: Crisis Communications and Management – Aug. 11, 2020
- Georgia Tourism Summit: Lanier Islands, Buford, GA – Sept. 2, 2020
- Explore Georgia Webinar: Group Tour Primer: 5 Steps to Become More Group Tour Ready – Sept. 8, 2020
- Explore Georgia Webinar: Google Analytics Boot Camp for Tourism Marketers – Oct. 13, 2020