#1 STATE FOR BUSINESS 8 YEARS IN A ROW

BOARD OF DIRECTORS
BRIEFING BOOK
February 17, 2021
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Commissioner Pat Wilson Op-Ed, Georgia Momentum Means Optimism for 2021 .... 3

Georgia Council for the Arts ................................................................. 4

Centers of Innovation........................................................................... 6

Film .................................................................................................... 8

Global Commerce............................................................................... 10

International Trade........................................................................... 12

Marketing, Communications & International Engagement............... 14

Rural Georgia Initiatives ................................................................. 16

Tourism .............................................................................................. 17
GEORGIA MOMENTUM MEANS OPTIMISM FOR 2021

Despite 2020’s uncertain realities and significant change, Georgia turned those 2020 buzzwords - “pivot,” “adapt,” even “unprecedented” - into good news.

By partnering with our employers and communities in confronting challenges from COVID-19 head-on, we’ve regained our economic momentum while developing industries that will provide the jobs of the future. In fact, despite the downturn in our service industries, the number of people working in Georgia actually reached an all-time high during the COVID-19 pandemic!

Jobs and investment numbers from July through December are higher than the same period last year. During December, a month when the Georgia Department of Economic Development (GDEcD) has traditionally seen a drop in secured locations and expansions, we’ve seen an increase over last year. Key industries like automotive, food processing and advanced manufacturing grew substantially during 2020, and the Georgia Centers of Innovation continue to build critical ecosystems to fuel additional growth and remain competitive.

To expand markets, small businesses are utilizing the specialists in GDEcD’s International Trade division, which earned an unprecedented fourth President’s “E-Star” Award for Export Services last year.

Across government and business, Georgia’s vital life sciences communities have supported COVID-19 response and developed life-saving vaccines. Vaccines are now being distributed with help from Georgia’s extensive logistics networks and Georgia-based Fortune 500 companies such as UPS and Delta. Vaccine effectiveness and availability has improved job creators’ confidence levels, too.

Our metro areas are seeing continued growth in Health IT, cybersecurity, and financial technology, and in Atlanta along with esports, have reinforced the city’s ranking as the No. 1 tech hub in the U.S.

Companies are also increasing investments in equipment and automation, and because highly automated facilities require fewer overall workers, our rural communities can compete for projects that normally would locate only in highly populated areas. Our education systems continue to play a vital role in securing these projects, adapting curricula and course offerings to accommodate in-demand higher skilled, higher paying jobs. Last month, three more College and Career Academies were announced, proving to businesses that our local communities are also 100% committed to developing a critical workforce infrastructure.

The electric vehicle (EV) industry is already creating more “jobs of the future.” High demand and rapid growth over the next 20 years will cause dramatic innovation and change. As the center of the southeast automotive corridor with close proximity to the region’s automotive original equipment manufacturers, Georgia is positioned to capitalize on these trends to support the entire EV supply chain. In addition to SK Innovation’s game-changing battery production facility, we recently announced Turkish manufacturer TEKLAS and German company GEDIA Automotive chose Georgia for new EV part production facilities.

Renewable energy is also growing direct and indirect jobs across the state as businesses seek a cleaner carbon footprint. As a Top 10 solar installations state, Georgia is able to meet those needs. Dalton is home to Q CELLS, which opened in 2019 as the largest solar panel manufacturing facility in the Western Hemisphere. The largest operational solar photovoltaic (PV) plant in the Southeast is in Twiggs County in central Georgia. Our University System of Georgia researchers and professors are leading this cutting-edge movement and supplying the needed workforce.

The electric vehicle (EV) industry is already creating more “jobs of the future.” High demand and rapid growth over the next 20 years will cause dramatic innovation and change. As the center of the southeast automotive corridor with close proximity to the region’s automotive original equipment manufacturers, Georgia is positioned to capitalize on these trends to support the entire EV supply chain. In addition to SK Innovation’s game-changing battery production facility, we recently announced Turkish manufacturer TEKLAS and German company GEDIA Automotive chose Georgia for new EV part production facilities.

The Georgia Film Office has been a leader in film industry growth, and was first to provide safety guidelines so Georgia production crews could return to work. This quick adaptation to new protocols afforded economic opportunities for small businesses who provide construction, catering, personal services and more. Our sound stages are booming, and studios are growing in Georgia to accommodate demand. Georgia was named No. 1 in the U.S. for film production in FY20 by Business Facilities magazine.

In Georgia, we continue to nurture all aspects of our high quality of life, including tourism and the arts. Recent data provides optimism for Georgia’s tourism industry, and our tourism division, Explore Georgia, is positioning our state to help lead the U.S. travel industry out of the pandemic. Georgia Council for the Arts continues to work with our creative industries to provide a lifeline through grants and connections, especially as people crave healthy creative escapes.

Georgia’s future-focused leaders have established policies that ensure Georgia’s continued growth, and have helped us earn the No. 1 State for Business designation for a record-setting eight years in a row.

The University of Georgia’s recent Economic Forecast was optimistic for 2021 because Georgia has developed countless critical assets needed to support our diverse economic base through consistent future planning. So we begin 2021 with full confidence in both our foundation and our plans for a productive future for all Georgians.
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. Governor’s Awards for the Arts and Humanities: Georgia Council for the Arts (GCA) partners annually with Georgia Humanities and the Office of the Governor to present the Governor’s Awards for the Arts & Humanities. This year, 40 individuals and organizations were nominated, and 10 were selected for the honor. The 2020 award features a poem composed by Georgia Poet Laureate Chelsea Rathburn, and it was designed, illustrated, and letterpress printed in a limited edition by Tennille Shuster. Because an in-person event was not possible this year, a video was created and released that honors the awardees and their contributions to the state. The video can be viewed here: https://gaarts.org/what-we-do/programs/governors-awards-for-the-arts-humanities/.

2. Reading of commissioned play: In November, a final reading was held for a play commissioned by GCA from Out of Hand Theatre. This play is intended for middle and high school students and addresses human trafficking. Each production will be followed by guidance from professionals and school counselors on how to recognize trafficking and who to reach locally with questions or to report trafficking situations. Next, a small numbers of performances will be scheduled to finalize the script and structure for the event.

By the Numbers

$300,000
in Cultural Facilities grant funding was awarded to 7 organizations for the restoration, preservation, and repair of arts facilities.

$285,000
in Vibrant Communities grant funding was awarded to 70 organizations in rural communities for arts projects.

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3. Published FY22 grant guidelines amended for COVID: In December, GCA released grant guidelines for two programs. COVID had a devastating impact on the arts sector this year, with a majority of organizations remaining closed and most reducing staff. Because these organizations are operating with reduced earned income and fewer staff members, GCA made significant changes in the grant programs offered to make the application process less time-intensive, to require less of a cash match for applicants, and to support new types of programs such as virtual events.

UPCOMING EVENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

• Project and Bridge Grant Deadlines: The deadlines for Project and Bridge Grant applications is February 2.

• Arts Education Program Grants: The guidelines for the Arts Education Program Grant will be released in January, and the deadline will be in March.

• Grant Announcements: Project, Bridge, and Arts Education Grant announcements will be made in July.
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) continued to support Georgia companies manufacturing and supplying critical items needed to fight COVID-19. In addition to the Georgia Suppliers List and Interactive Map, which features more than 350 companies, the COI team continued to work with companies who are making PPE production or distribution a more permanent part of their business. Some examples of companies the COI team supported include face shield producer and automotive supplier TSG Resolute in Americus, Newnan-based Thermopore who recently received NIOSH certification on their N95 equivalent mask product, and Commercial Interiors Manufacturing in Jasper. The team received media coverage highlighting these efforts in the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, the Atlanta Business Chronicle, and Macon’s 13WMAZ, among others.

2. As a follow up to the Regional Leaders Summit, COI IT Director Glen Whitley participated as a panelist at the Montreal Connect virtual event in October. This panel included other participants from the RLS Digitalization Working Group from Upper Austria, Bavaria, and São Paolo, Brazil.

3. The COI Aerospace team continues their efforts supporting companies as they prepare for the Department of Defense’s Cybersecurity Model Maturity Certification, which will place new requirements of defense contractors. Webinar topics ranged from “Practical Advice and CMMC Compliance” and “A Conversation with Businesses on the Frontlines of CMMC Compliance.” In addition, the COI Aerospace team worked alongside GDEcD’s Regional Project Managers to provide companies with specific information to help them prepare for the new requirements.

By the Numbers

276 engagements with clients across all 12 regions of the state through Q2.

52 engagements in support of recruitment projects with either GDEcD or other economic development organizations in Georgia during Q2.

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4. In December, COI Manufacturing Senior Industry Engagement Manager Alyssa Rumsey was featured in a column with Forbes online in which she discussed the challenges and opportunities for off-the-shelf advanced technologies like augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality to be successfully implemented in small and medium-sized manufacturing companies.

5. The Centers of Innovation team continues to support many business recruitment projects alongside the Global Commerce team. In November, TEKLAS, a Turkish advanced research and development, manufacturing company, and supplier of electric vehicle parts, announced their location of a new facility in Calhoun, creating a $6.5 million investment and 120 jobs. COI Logistics supported this project with freight analysis that was influential in the company’s decision.

6. COI Aerospace Director Amy Hudnall was featured in the Georgia Trend article “Above and Beyond: Aerospace Soars in Georgia,” which highlighted the state’s aerospace industry and featured many of the Center’s clients.

7. It was announced on December 1, that David Nuckolls would become the next Executive Director of the Centers of Innovation division. David has been a member of the COI team for more than eight years, most recently serving as the division’s Associate Director.

**UPCOMING EVENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES**

- 2021 Georgia Logistics Summit: The 2021 Georgia Logistics Summit will be held this year as a virtual event on March 23. This year’s Summit will focus on the pandemic’s effect on supply chains and issues affecting trucking as a result, as well as the impacts of the overnight spike in online shopping. More information for this year’s event can be found at [GALogisticsSummit.com](https://www.GALogisticsSummit.com).
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. The film and television industry has rebounded quickly from the pandemic shutdown, putting thousands of people back to work, and utilizing the products and services of hundreds of support service companies. By mid-January, Georgia was host to more than 35 television series and 12 feature films in pre-production or production.

2. In 2020, revised Film Tax Credit legislation, HB1037, was passed, and went into effect January 1, 2021. This bill will serve to further tighten the requirements for earning the film tax credit. Going forward, audits will be mandated, proof of distribution will be required before the allowance of the 10% Georgia Entertainment Promotion uplift, and more requirements will be required of companies seeking to become a Georgia vendor for purposes of the Film Tax Credit. Georgia’s incentive, combined with Georgia’s diverse locations, deep crew base, infrastructure, temperate climate, ease of access, and quality of life – make Georgia a great home for film production.

3. The Georgia Film Office hosted a booth and served on panels at the Georgia Production Summit 2021 - a two-day virtual conference put together by the Georgia Production Partnership (GPP) aimed to collectively share and celebrate efforts to expand Georgia’s film industry.

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4. Cinelease Studios - Three Ring, a purpose-built studio located in Covington has completed construction and has been leased by the Lionsgate television series “First Ladies.” This new facility has 130,000 square feet of sound stage space with 21,000 square feet of stage support space, 30,000 square feet of office space, 60,000 square feet of mill space, as well as 800 parking spaces.

5. GDEcD has introduced a music directory of small businesses, vendors, and venues that work in Georgia’s thriving music industry. Modeled after the successful Georgia Film Production Directory, this music business directory will allow small businesses to register free of charge using some of the following categories: venues, industry services, equipment rental, recording services, and media production. This project has partnered with the Entertainment Business Program at Kennesaw State University, where students are helping to curate the music directory data.
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, and international representatives in strategic regions around the world.

QUARTERLY DIVISION HIGHLIGHTS

1. The State of Georgia shattered its own record by being named No. 1 for business climate for the eighth consecutive year by Site Selection magazine. In 2019, Georgia became the only state to earn this distinction seven consecutive times in the history of Site Selection’s rankings, and it is now the only state to receive the honor eight times in a row. The announcement presentation took place at Bridgestone Golf’s headquarters and research and development facility in Covington, on November 12, 2020.

2. After 31 years of service in the State of Georgia’s Tokyo office, Managing Director Yumiko Nakazono has announced her retirement. Ms. Nakazono has been instrumental in the Georgia-Japan partnership, and as a result, Japanese companies now employ over 30,000 Georgians. Examples of recent Japanese investment announcements include expansions of Toyota Compressor Parts America in Jackson County and F&P Georgia in Floyd County. Upon Ms. Nakazono’s retirement, Senior Project Manager Joseph Huntemann will assume duties as managing director in Tokyo starting on March 1, 2021.

3. Robins International Industrial Park, located at 101 Leamington Boulevard in Byron, has earned the Department’s newest certification as a “Georgia Ready for Accelerated Development” (GRAD) site with “Select” status. The site’s new “GRAD Select” status provides an additional seal of approval that makes it especially attractive for future industrial development. Located east of Interstate 75, the almost 600-acre Robins International Industrial Park is being developed to serve as the gateway into the City of Warner Robins and Robins Air Force Base.

By the Numbers

75 locations or expansions
6,100 jobs created
$2.3 billion investment

New locations in Q2 FY21:
2,400 jobs
$702 million investment

Expansions in Q2 FY21:
3,700+ jobs
$1.6 billion investment

International investment (FDI) Q2 FY21:
2,200+ jobs
$966 million investment

Notable FDI projects:
• La Regina Atlantica (Bacon County)
• Hyundai TRANSYS (Troup County)
• Teklas (Gordon County)

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UPCOMING EVENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

• Small Business Rock Stars Awards 2021: Will be announced during Small Business Week in May. The Entrepreneur & Small Business team is currently working with the finalists to gather and create content for a virtual awards ceremony.

• Georgia Ready for Accelerated Development (GRAD) Sites: 69 active sites (GRAD Select: 7 and GRAD Legacy: 62). An additional 31 sites are under review for new or renewal certification in the coming months. Since the GRAD program began, there have been over 8,000 jobs created on certified sites.

• SelectUSA Investment Summit: Will take place virtually in June 2021. Georgia will once again be a Diamond Sponsor of the event, along with key partners from utilities and local EDOs. The SelectUSA Investment Summit is the preeminent event showcasing inbound investment opportunities throughout the United States, typically attracting more than 3,000 participants annually, half of which are highly qualified global investors representing over 70 markets.
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 provides Georgia exporters with global insight and connections to grow their international business opportunities. Leveraging the state’s International Representatives located in 12 strategic markets, the Trade division helps qualified Georgia exporters enter and expand into markets across the globe.

QUARTERLY DIVISION HIGHLIGHTS

1. The Georgia Department of Economic Development’s GLOBE Awards were created in 2014 as a way to recognize companies contributing to Georgia’s economic growth and competitiveness through global trade. In December, 31 companies were recognized for successfully entering new international markets during the previous calendar year. Four of these companies were further recognized as outstanding Exporters of the Year: Sunnyland Farms in Albany, Poriferous in Newnan, Vital 4 in Marietta, and Z-Corum in Alpharetta. The 2020 winners are located across the state, with local employment ranging from 2-500. Approximately 84% of this year’s winners are small businesses with fewer than 100 employees. GLOBE winners collectively expanded their sales into 75 new countries, with some of the more active markets including China, Switzerland, Spain, Brazil, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Hong Kong, Singapore, the United Arab Emirates, and Vietnam. Nearly half of the 2020 winners expanded into markets where GDEcD has international representation.

2. In October, the International Trade division earned the President’s “E Star” Award for Export Service from the U.S. Department of Commerce in recognition of “continuing significant contributions to an increase in U.S. exports.” This award is the highest national honor given to organizations that serve U.S. exporters. GDEcD is the only organization to earn a fourth “E Star” Award in the 59-year history of the award. The U.S. Department of Commerce noted that GDEcD’s achievements “have contributed to national export expansion efforts that support the U.S. economy and create American jobs.” The Atlanta staff along with Georgia’s international representatives, continue to facilitate connections that generate economic success – even in this virtual environment. GDEcD views this award as a testament to the quality of Georgia’s goods and services, our state’s world class logistics infrastructure, and the commitment and dedication of the trade team in-state and around the world.

By the Numbers

1,891
Georgia businesses engaged monthly

2,565
Trade leads developed

137
Export successes supported

$162,488
in grant funds available for Georgia exporters

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3. Local community partners are critical to promoting the importance of exports to businesses statewide. Developed with community leaders in mind, International Trade’s electronic resource guide was created to educate economic developers and chamber of commerce executives on the benefits of trade to a community. The guide can help local leaders understand the international impact in their community, shares specific trade resources in Georgia, encourages communities to support and inform local companies that are interested in international trade, and highlights the importance of leveraging the resources and expertise of GDEcD’s International Trade team to help companies succeed at exporting. Please contact Mary Waters (mwaters@georgia.org) to receive a digital copy of the resource guide.

4. As the pandemic made international travel for companies and trade staff impossible, the team shifted to keep exporters engaged and connected. Trade invested in an integrated, multi-channel digital campaign (Facebook, LinkedIn, and Smart Briefs) to promote new resources, including Export Georgia USA, GDEcD’s online export directory, and Go Global Georgia. GDEcD’s new grant program. To date, the investment has delivered excellent results. Overall the campaign has delivered 17K new users to Georgia.org Trade pages, with a significant increase in Trade page views and average time spent on Trade’s website. GDEcD will continue to capitalize on digital and social media strategies to drive engagement in the second half of the fiscal year.

UPCOMING EVENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

• **Webinars with Georgia’s International Representatives**
  To keep Georgia exporters engaged with our network of international representatives, Trade will coordinate four industry-specific webinars in Q3. These webinars are designed to familiarize Georgia businesses with GDEcD’s international representatives, while providing important global insights to help them expand internationally. Upcoming webinars include:
  - Brazil – Defense & Security, January 27
  - China – eCommerce, February 25
  - Israel – Food & Agriculture, March 9
  - Canada – Emerging Export Opportunities, March 31

  For more information, go to www.georgia.org/international-trade-events

• **Go Global Georgia**
  Recruitment continues for Go Global Georgia, a new export grant program launched in partnership with the U.S. Small Business Administration. The Trade division will support a series of educational webinars for communities, partner agencies, and companies statewide; collaborate with state and federal trade partners to assist with recruitment of export-ready and new-to-export companies; and market the program heavily on social media. Companies can apply for reimbursement for approved export activities such as export training courses, website localization costs, development of international marketing materials, foreign market travel, and virtual international trade shows. Export-ready small businesses from all industry sectors are strongly encouraged to apply. More information is available at www.georgia.org/go-global-ga.
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. Governor’s Awards for Arts and Humanities: Every October, the state honors a group of outstanding individuals and organizations that have made significant contributions to Georgia’s civic and cultural vitality through the arts and humanities. Typically, the recipients are honored in a ceremony with the Governor and First Lady at the Capitol, but as with so many events this year, this recognition was transformed due to COVID-19. A moving tribute video was created instead, featuring dozens of testimonials and performances, with remarks from Governor Kemp and Commissioner Pat Wilson, as well as images of art, architecture, photography, museum displays, venues, and more. The video can be viewed online here.

2. The Year in Review publication highlights GDEcD’s economic development efforts through the lens of individual stories, organized across the 12 regions throughout fiscal year 2020. Snapshots of investment projects, innovation support, export assistance, film projects, and other activities demonstrate the variety of approaches we take to ensure the economic vitality of the state. This document, bound with a useful notebook, will be distributed to legislators at the State Capitol, as well as GDEcD Board Members, and is available for download here.

By the Numbers

Georgia.org

Website Traffic
78%
increase in page views
190%
increase in unique users
40%
increase in contact us/lead forms
22%
increase in e-newsletter sign ups
124%
increase in new users
241%
increase in advanced manufacturing page views

Additional Communications
23
e-newsletters sharing news about various GDEcD divisions and initiatives distributed
35
press releases circulated
22
blog posts on Georgia.org

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3. We Speak Business: Accompanying the November 2020 Site Selection magazine, which announced Georgia’s eighth year in a row as the #1 State for Business, was a special issue entirely focused on Georgia. Published at no cost to GDEcD, this 80-page “We Speak Business” edition shares industry studies and top projects of 2020, as well as stories about Georgia’s workforce development efforts, foreign trade support, and quality of life and tourism information. A digital copy of the publication can be found at siteselection.com.

4. At any given time, GDEcD is running a variety of digital marketing campaigns that are constantly evaluated and regularly refreshed. In the fall, the marketing team launched a successful LinkedIn campaign spotlighting International Trade – you will find details on page 13 of this document. That campaign included one ad that was recognized as a top performing piece of content on LinkedIn during the week of November 15-21; additionally, GDEcD was the #3 economic development organization (EDO) on LinkedIn for the month of October, measured by a combination of engagement and volume of sponsored posts. That “Top 5” is typically dominated by a handful of EDOs who have been spending heavily over a long period of time – Georgia’s significantly smaller investment and time frame is boosted by interest and people sharing our message and stories.

5. International Relations spotlight: Working to connect the Consular Corps to the vital information they need, in November the team coordinated a Zoom event for Dr. Kathleen Toomey, Commissioner of the Georgia Department of Public Health, to address the Georgia-based international representatives. Commissioner Wilson and Dr. Toomey gave a briefing on the on the status of the COVID-19 pandemic in Georgia and the state’s response efforts and answered questions on vaccine development and plans for deployment.
DIVISION PROFILE

Rural Georgia Initiatives’ mission is to help rural Georgia communities become more competitive for economic development projects and identify new strategies for attracting jobs and investment. The division serves as an extended resource from the Georgia Department of Economic Development to all communities and coordinates efforts between the many statewide entities and agencies through collaboration and communication. Traveling across rural Georgia, the team collects best practices and success stories amongst communities. 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. Rural Georgia Initiatives completed its webinar series on rural broadband by hosting the third webinar featuring partners from the Department of Community Affairs, Georgia Technology Authority, and the University of Georgia on how to deploy broadband at the community level.

2. Deputy Commissioner Amy Carter participated in “Pivoting for the Pandemic and Beyond” webinar hosted by West Georgia Technical College Foundation.

3. Division Director Chris Chammoun was a panelist on the webinar, “Georgia’s Farms: Connectivity, Technology Trends, and Policies” hosted by the Technology Association of Georgia, regarding state and federal funding for rural broadband.

4. The team released a November newsletter focusing on rural housing.

5. The team attended the National Rural Economic Developers Association virtual annual conference.

6. Deputy Commissioner Amy Carter moderated a panel entitled “Future of Rural Leadership,” featuring Georgia Municipal Association Executive Director and GDeCD board member Larry Hanson and Association of County Commissioners of Georgia Executive Director Dave Wills at the Georgia Chamber’s annual Rural Prosperity Summit.

7. Division Director Chris Chammoun participated in the virtual Canton Tourism Product Development team visit hosted by Explore Georgia.

By the Numbers

900+
registered for the RGI rural broadband webinar series

200+
collaborations with communities, businesses, and local economic developers to help solve an issue or make a connection to resources available

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DIVISION PROFILE

Explore Georgia, the tourism 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 across Georgia, and a network of tourism representatives across the globe, Explore Georgia inspires travel to and within the state through marketing programs developed and executed in partnership with the state’s travel industry. The division works to advance Georgia’s tourism industry that represented $68.82 billion and supported 484,000 jobs in 2019.

QUARTERLY DIVISION HIGHLIGHTS

1. The “Explore Your Georgia” campaign was extended into 2021 after surpassing all media efficiency and visitor engagement goals. This digital marketing campaign was expanded into additional markets, including Alabama, Tennessee, South Carolina, Charlotte, N.C., and Raleigh, N.C., during the fall travel season and continued to include Georgia and central and north Florida. An additional element of the campaign, the “Georgia’s Great Escapes” giveaway, showcased safe travel in Georgia through inspirational safecation guides and a chance to win a trip to one of five destinations – Atlanta, Blue Ridge, Milledgeville, Savannah, or Thomasville. The giveaway received 19,123 entries, which resulted in 9,955 new email newsletter subscriptions and 26,997 website page views, making this giveaway the division’s most successful giveaway ever. A new article published on ExploreGeorgia.org this quarter, “10 Holiday Light Displays in Georgia,” became the top performing content for the entire year with more than 189,000 page views.

2. The tourism division partnered with Georgia-based IHG Hotels & Resorts for a special promotion called “Georgia, there’s more to explore.” For this promotion, guests could save up to 20% when they booked a stay for three nights or more at more than 80 properties across the state. This partnership highlighted five destinations – Atlanta, Athens, Augusta, Macon, and Savannah – as destinations to discover, and a full list of properties across the state were included in the promotion. Visitors were able to find this special offer on the Explore Georgia website and social media, as well as in IHG communications.

By the Numbers

75% higher travel spending than the national average

No. 1 for travel spending among the 12 Travel South USA states

*According to Tourism Economics

ExploreGeorgia.org
Website Traffic
Q4 performance
77.8% PY increase in page views
78.1% PY increase in sessions
77.4% increase in users to 2.27 million

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3. The Tourism Product Development (TPD) team reached a milestone of serving more than 200 communities since its inception in 2010. This quarter, recommendation report were delivered to Whitfield and Peach counties, and began virtual TPD assignments in Richmond Hill and Canton. Recipients of recent Tourism Product Development grants launched new products, including a virtual experience of Pasafest at Pasaquan, public viewing of Evans County’s African American Archives, Belle’s Flower Truck’s new brick and mortar store in Tifton, and a self-guided tour brochure for the Historic Pews & Pulpits Ramble.

4. The division’s Global Market Development team joined the Brand USA Global Marketplace, a virtual platform for international tourism events and connections. The team participated in the inaugural Virtual Travel Week Europe in late October where they met with more than 40 tour operators from key source markets for travel to Georgia and the Southeast. The team plans to continue to use the platform to conduct business until things return to normal.

5. Explore Georgia hosted three webinars that focused on Google Analytics, sales, and scenic byways that were attended by nearly 350 tourism partners throughout the state. More than 800 partners have benefited from these professional development webinars since the series began in July 2020 as a substitute for the annual tourism conference that had to be canceled due to COVID-19.

UPCOMING EVENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

• February 23 - 24: Southeast Tourism Society Domestic Discovery (Virtual)

• February 9: Explore Georgia webinar – Exploring Opportunities of Niche Markets: Agritourism & Heritage Tourism

• March 9: Travel Media: A Look at Current Best Practices

• April 13: International Marketing Update, Brand USA

• April 14: Travel South USA Global Summit

• May 17 - 19: GACVB Annual Conference in Savannah