BOARD OF DIRECTORS
BRIEFING BOOK
May 19, 2021
# GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BOARD BOOK

**FISCAL YEAR 2021, QUARTER 3**

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

- Third Quarter Highlights, Fiscal Year 2021 ................................................................. 3
- Georgia Council for the Arts .......................................................................................... 5
- Centers of Innovation....................................................................................................... 7
- Film .................................................................................................................................. 9
- Global Commerce........................................................................................................... 11
- International Trade......................................................................................................... 13
- Marketing, Communications & International Engagement ............................................. 15
- Tourism .......................................................................................................................... 17
GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FISCAL YEAR 2021 THIRD QUARTER HIGHLIGHTS

The Georgia Department of Economic Development has continued to have the opportunity to share good news regarding our mission of creating opportunities for Georgians throughout the first three months of 2021 – the third quarter of fiscal year 2021. It’s an honor to continue to help businesses confront the present and develop the future through any obstacles, including a global pandemic.

Georgia’s creative industries have historically had a $62.5 billion impact on the economy, generating roughly $37 billion in revenue and accounting for about 200,000 jobs in the state. Like the worldwide arts community over the last year, these industries have undergone challenges that will take sustained effort to return to full scale, and Georgia Council for the Arts continues to be a critical resource. A seasoned veteran, Tina Lilly has been named new executive director for Georgia Council for the Arts to lead the organization into a bright future. March saw deadlines met for grant programs that will provide operating support for organizations and K-12 students in the state.

The Centers of Innovation grew to six teams this period – energy, internet technology, logistics, manufacturing, aerospace, and now agriculture technology, “AgTech.” Additionally, the division expanded support for the IT industry by adding resources that focus on the creative technology and cybersecurity industry sectors. Across divisions, the team also ensured the success of a virtually delivered 2021 Georgia Logistics Summit. With experts safely together in the room, the entire program was delivered professionally to hundreds of participants, providing insights about the pandemic’s effect on supply chains and logistics, issues affecting trucking, and Georgia’s leadership on the road forward.

Our Film, Music & Digital Entertainment division is busier than ever. Stage space in Georgia is full, and more TV and film productions are ongoing around the state, keeping talented and trained Georgians and small businesses at work. More digital entertainment, virtual reality, and other production companies are consistently announcing operations in Georgia. Currently, Georgia has about 3.6 million square feet of stage space (1.8 million square feet of purpose built soundstage space and also about 1.8 million of warehouse space) in the state. In the coming year, we anticipate the amount of purpose built soundstage space in Georgia to grow by another 1 million square feet. Our quarterly meeting will highlight some of this positive news.

In Global Commerce during this period, we’ve welcomed 24,000 jobs in all 12 regions of the state created by economic development projects totaling more than $8.43 billion in investments. These numbers represent a 67% increase in new investments compared to the first nine months of the previous fiscal year. Likewise, job creation is up 49% over the same period during fiscal year 2020.

Our International Trade team announced in February that Georgia entered the Top Ten states for exporting for the very first time in 2020. Georgia merchandise exports reached 215 unique countries and territories and experienced the lowest rate of export contraction among all Top Ten states, despite headwinds from a global pandemic. $38.8 billion in goods was exported as the state’s diverse industry base and global connectivity continued to drive its competitiveness. Total trade reached $137.7 billion in 2020, spanning 221 countries and territories.

Our Marketing, Communications, and International Engagement division continues to support department-wide efforts, as well as those needs of our sister agencies as an executive branch department and large Georgia-based Consular Corps. In addition to supporting events like the 2021 Georgia Logistics Summit, this team ensures Georgia’s positive stories are reaching the right audiences through internal and external integrated marketing, public relations, and communications efforts across the state and around the world.

Explore Georgia, the department’s tourism division, has been officially verified with the coveted blue check on Instagram: @exploregeorgia. They also brought home three industry awards for marketing efforts! Across the state, evidence shows that tourism has remained strong, and the division is also implementing changes that will align and mobilize the division to best continue to meet the needs of Georgia’s tourism industry while launching the next phase of Georgia’s tourism recovery, the “Ready. Set. Georgia.” campaign.
While they do not have official reports in our Board Book, our international offices provide another bridge for Georgia businesses to markets and partners worldwide. Our human resources and administrative teams continue to welcome top-notch new members to our GDEcD offices, ensure seamless operations during a time when stitching together a worldwide network is more challenging than ever, and work closely with our legal division to keep our office environments safe and welcoming more staff, more frequently, back to in-person operations.

Looking ahead, the SK Innovation electric battery project is fully charged. Hiring at the Jackson County site has expanded to fill 1,000 jobs at the first production facility by the end of 2021. We’re already welcoming new investments from the electric mobility industry, new suppliers for SK, and we are focused heavily on creating jobs of the future in very corner of the state.

Along with our many partners, we’re excited to continue building for the future and leveraging Georgia’s assets to benefit the people of our state.
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. **Grant deadlines:** Deadlines for Project, Bridge, and Arts Education Grants were in February and March. Project Grants fund single arts projects, Bridge Grants provide operating support for arts organizations, and Arts Education Grants support arts projects that serve K-12 students.

2. **Poetry Out Loud:** Karma Hudnall, a junior at DeKalb School of the Arts in Avondale Estates, Georgia, took home first prize in the 2021 Poetry Out Loud state championship. A senior at Etowah High School in Woodstock, Sophia Stewart, was runner-up in the competition. Poetry Out Loud is a national program sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the Poetry Foundation, and is managed in Georgia by GCA and the Atlanta History Center.

3. **New Executive Director:** Tina Lilly was named the new Executive Director of Georgia Council for the Arts (GCA). She has served GCA for 14 years, most recently as the Grants Program Director. In that role, she managed all aspects of the $2 million grant program, including the distribution of federal CARES Act funds in response to COVID-19, and the creation of both the Vibrant Communities and Cultural Facilities Grant programs.

By the Numbers

**FY22 Grant Applications:**
- 149 Bridge grant applications requesting $1.6 million
- 61 Project Grant applications requesting $347,197
- 82 Arts Education Grant applications requesting $390,197

**FY21 Poetry Out Loud involved:**
- 61 schools in 39 counties
- 5,688 students
- 340 teachers

**COVID**
- FY22 Bridge Grant applicants (149) report more than $58 million in total losses from COVID as of February 2021.
- $4.5 billion in lost revenue by artists and arts organizations in Georgia, as estimated by Americans for the Arts.
- 57% of Georgia’s unemployed through July 2020 are creative workers, as estimated by Americans for the Arts.

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Prior to her work with Georgia Council for the Arts, Lilly served as Executive Director of the Madison-Morgan Cultural Center in Madison, Georgia, as Administrative Director at 7 Stages Theatre in Atlanta, and as Managing Director at Live Bait Theatre in Chicago. She also worked as an Adjunct Professor at The Theatre School in Chicago, and a Freelance Director at various theatres in Chicago, Atlanta, and New York. Lilly holds a Master’s in Fine Arts degree in directing from The Theatre School at DePaul University (formerly the Goodman School of Drama) and a bachelor’s degree in theatre from Birmingham-Southern College.

UPCOMING EVENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

• **May 2**: Poetry Out Loud National Championship: poetryoutloud.org

• **May and June**: Grant Review Panel Meetings

• **Underway**: Poet Laureate’s Prize: High school students submit original poems, and a winner and four runners-up are selected by Chelsea Rathburn, Georgia’s Poet Laureate.
DIVISION PROFILE
Exclusive to Georgia, the Centers of Innovation help Georgia businesses “clear the path” to innovation and growth through expert advice and navigation to the right resources.

QUARTERLY DIVISION HIGHLIGHTS

1. Announced on February 1 by Commissioner Pat Wilson, the Centers of Innovation (COI) team expanded to include two additional industry areas. Chris Chammoun rejoined the Center of Innovation team as Director, Agricultural Technologies, where he will build out a new program to help position the state well to grow and attract new AgTech companies. In addition, Asante Bradford, who previously served the Global Commerce division, joined the COI IT team as Industry Engagement Manager, where he will increase the team’s focus in Creative Technologies.

2. In January, the Center of Innovation in partnership with Augusta University and the Georgia Cyber Center, announced the creation of a new shared Industry Engagement Strategist position filled by Rachel Morris. This joint shared position will provide additional support for the COI IT team by further connecting the team to the growing cybersecurity ecosystem in the Augusta region.

3. In February, Sandy Lake was promoted to the position of Director over the COI for Logistics team. Sandy previously served as the team’s Associate Director since 2008.

4. The COI Aerospace team continues their efforts supporting companies as they prepare for the Department of Defense’s Cybersecurity Model Maturity Certification (CMMC), which will place new requirements on defense contractors. The COI Aerospace team continues to work alongside GDEcD’s Regional Project Managers to connect companies throughout the state with specific information that will help companies prepare to meet these new requirements. In addition, the team is partnering with the Technology Association of Georgia to host the CMMC Cyber Summit in May.

By the Numbers
549
COI engagements with clients across all 12 regions of the state through Q3.

61%
Of Q3 engagements outside of metro Atlanta or statewide.

91
Q3 engagements to support recruitment projects with GDEcD or other Economic Development organizations in the state.

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5. The Center of Innovation for Logistics hosted the 2021 Georgia Logistics Summit in a first-ever all-virtual format. Topics for this year’s event included:
   a. Resiliency in Crisis and Lessons Learned
   b. Shifts and Acceleration of Technology in the Trucking Industry
   c. Impacts of Overnight Spike in Online Shopping
In addition, the event was keynoted by Rebecca Brewster with the American Transportation Research Institute and provided national and state trucking perspectives.

6. The Center of Innovation for Manufacturing sponsored the People’s Choice Award for the Georgia Tech InVenture Prize competition. This competition brings together student innovators from all academic backgrounds across campus in an effort to foster creativity, invention, and entrepreneurship. Six teams competed for the 1st place, runner up, and People’s Choice awards this year. The 1st place winner and winner of the People’s Choice award was Delta Jacket, which has created an inflatable, stylish jacket that can be used to keep people warm, cool, and as a bed. The idea came from the team’s desire to provide homeless people with a much-needed jacket and bed so they can survive harsh conditions. The team’s next step is tooling up for manufacturing, and the COI Manufacturing team will assist.

7. The Centers of Innovation continue to support Global Commerce’s recruitment efforts through research and industry expertise. For example, the COI Manufacturing team provided support for the location of Kirchhoff Automotive, which opened their first facility in Georgia investing $15 million and adding 73 new jobs. COI Logistics also provided support for Global Commerce’s location of TEKLAS, who announced a $6.5 million investment and 120 new jobs in 2020.

UPCOMING EVENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

• May 18: CMMC Summit
  The Georgia Defense Industrial Base Task Force, a partnership of the Georgia Department of Economic Development’s (GDEcD) Center of Innovation for Aerospace and the Technology Association of Georgia (TAG), will host a series of panel discussions that will prepare and offer next steps for companies on their CMMC journey. The CMMC Summit features peer businesses sharing lessons learned on the path to CMMC, a free training focused on NIST 800-171 Rev. 2, and a cyber-professional’s panel presenting tools and services to support compliance goals. Registration is available at: CMMCSummit2021.
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
The film and television industry in Georgia 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.

Because Georgia was first in the United States to release best practices for set safety, it set the stage for film and television industry producers to understand that Georgia would be ready when they were ready. Once the studios and unions had completed several revisions of stringent safety mandates and cast and crew were comfortable that they could return to work safely, Georgia allowed productions to self-regulate and resume their work. Temperature checks, regular COVID-19 testing, zoning, sanitizing, and maintaining social distancing were some of the methods employed by productions to mitigate the possibility of transmission and put thousands of Georgians and Georgia businesses working and supporting the industry in our state back to work. According to the local IATSE 479, these methods have been highly successful—with a less than 1% positivity rate on cast and crew on Georgia sets.

As a result of these measures, by mid-March, Georgia was host to a record number of projects – more than any time in the history of Georgia’s film industry, which caused a shortage of available stage space.

Fortunately, the Georgia World Congress Center was able to accommodate numerous film and television projects, since trade shows had come to a halt. According to GWCC Sales Manager Lidija Ahmetovic, the facility’s TV and film business has been booming since June 2020. She said 19 productions either filmed or are confirmed to film there, and approximately 10 more opportunities are in the pipeline.

By the Numbers
By mid-January, Georgia was host to:

35 television series

12 feature films in pre-production or production

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“With the majority of meetings and trade shows canceled or rescheduled, the last nine months have provided us the opportunity to host the film and television industries like never before,” Ahmetovic said. “By doing so, it has brought in unplanned revenue and helped to keep many of our team members working. Our ability to partner with the film and television industries truly has brought optimism and reassured us that things are on a positive track to recovery.”

In addition to being able to direct film and television projects to the GWCC, there were numerous expansion plans announced – including additional space planned for Blackhall Studios, Trilith Studios, and Eagle Rock Studios.

Another big infrastructure announcement was made in early April. Atlanta media company Gray Television has purchased Doraville’s Assembly project and will turn it into a film and entertainment hub.

Formerly owned by the Integral Group, Gray Television and developer The Gipson Co. partnered to buy and redevelop Assembly. Gray owns or operates stations and digital properties in more than 90 U.S. television markets including Savannah, Augusta, Albany, and Columbus. Its TV stations cover approximately 24% of U.S. households.

Gray’s plans for the more than 100 acres of Assembly include more than 500,000 square feet of film production studios. A facility for e-Gaming, digital media, and robotics is also planned.
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. **Bluestem Brands**, a business operating multiple national e-commerce retail brands, will expand their distribution center in Putnam County, more than doubling their presence in the state and delivering over 130 full-time jobs to Eatonton.

2. **KB Autosys**, a brake pad supplier, will invest $38 million in opening their first U.S. advanced manufacturing facility in Georgia. The company will create 180 jobs in Meriwether County to meet product demand from several automotive customers in the region, including GM, Hyundai, and Kia Motors.

3. **Danimer Scientific**, a leading developer and manufacturer of biodegradable materials, plans to invest $700 million in expanding their Bainbridge manufacturing operations. The project will add 400 new jobs -- more than quadrupling the company’s workforce in Decatur County. Danimer and Mars-Wrigley announced a partnership to develop an innovative home compostable packaging, with SKITTLES® as the brand’s first product to use the new packaging.

4. **Sailfish Boats**, headquartered in Cairo, Georgia, will invest more than $1 million and increase their workforce by more than 30% to expand manufacturing operations in Grady County due to a sharp increase in customer demand for fishing and recreational boats. This investment will add 70 new jobs to their current workforce of 130 employees in southwest Georgia.

5. **Georgia Made**: The Georgia Made program is growing with new businesses becoming officially certified. Additional information about the program, benefits of certification, and details about how to become Georgia Made-certified, along with a series of “success stories” from featured businesses can be found at: [georgia.org/georgia-made](http://georgia.org/georgia-made). GDEcD’s social media channels regularly feature these companies and highlight new additions to the portfolio of certified companies.

**By the Numbers**

- **24,000** jobs announced in Q3
- **$8.43** billion in new investments have been created across all regions of the state
- **49%** increase in job creation through March
- **67%** increase in investments through March

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6. **Small Business**: The Small Business team is consistently working to serve the state’s small businesses who have survived during the COVID-19 pandemic, in conjunction with partners. The Department’s COVID-19 resource pages continue to serve as a guide to additional resources, funding, and other information, such as the webinar series sponsored by GDEcD, in partnership with the University of Georgia’s Small Business Development Center and Department of Community Affairs. Related social media channels continue to broadcast this information to reach a wider audience.

**UPCOMING EVENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES**

- **May 3-8, 2021**: Georgia Small Business Week was declared by Governor Brian Kemp. The 2021 winners of the Small Business Rock Stars Awards will be announced during this time.
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. Georgia Breaks into Top 10 Exporting States: Georgia became the 10th largest exporting state in the U.S. in 2020 despite a challenging year for trade across the globe. Georgia’s $38.8 billion in exports represented only a 6% decline from 2019’s record export values, outperforming U.S. exports (which declined nearly 13%) and faring better than all other states represented in the top 10. These numbers highlight the state’s strong connectivity to the world and the resilience of Georgia’s business community. With the 2020 numbers now available, Georgia’s Interactive Trade Map has been updated to reflect trade between Georgia and its top 50 export partners and includes top exported products and trade trends over time. During 2020, a number of new countries broke into Georgia’s top 50 markets. These include Egypt, Finland, Sweden, Bangladesh, and Ecuador. Countries and territories that were among the top 50 in 2019, but not in 2020, include Algeria, Argentina, Macau, Norway, and Qatar.

2. Go Global Georgia: The Trade team continues to promote its new small business grant program, Go Global Georgia. Approximately 60% of Georgia’s federal award from the Small Business Administration has been earmarked for grants to Georgia small business exporters. Out of 62 applications received, 25 businesses have been approved for trade activities that include trade show costs, international travel expenses, design and translation of marketing materials, and website globalization. The diverse pool of grant recipients includes rural, veteran owned, women-owned, and minority-owned awardees. As promotion of the grant continues, the Trade team is already working on a continuation grant application to provide additional funding for exporters in FY22. The goal is to ensure that Georgia companies receive available federal funds to accelerate their market expansion, grow their business, and remain competitive through greater international sales. Help us spread the word about this new grant program to small business exporters in your communities!

By the Numbers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>1,896</td>
<td>Georgia businesses engaged monthly</td>
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<tr>
<td>4816</td>
<td>Trade leads developed</td>
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<tr>
<td>167</td>
<td>Export successes supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$162,488</td>
<td>in grant funds available for Georgia exporters</td>
</tr>
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3. **Exporter Spotlights:** Thomas County’s Hurst Boiler: Each month, the Trade Division features an interview with a successful Georgia exporter in its newsletter. Questions such as “What motivated your company to sell internationally?,” “What is the biggest lesson you have learned about exporting?,” and “What advice do you have for companies just starting to export?,” allow businesses to learn from one another and share helpful resources. The latest spotlight features Hurst Boiler, located in Thomas County. With 23 years of export experience, Hurst’s Georgia Made™ boilers can be found in a tequila plant in Mexico, a COVID-19 hospital in Saudi Arabia, a turkey farm in North Carolina, and a brewing company in Africa - to name just a few. From humble beginnings, this company has used exporting to help it become one of the world’s largest manufacturers of boilers.

4. **Leaning in to New Opportunities:** Despite limitations brought on by the pandemic, the Trade Division has engaged in a number of non-traditional and innovative opportunities to generate leads for Georgia business and support their global market expansion goals.

5. **Webinars:** Five webinars in Q3 brought the world to Georgia businesses. These webinars introduced the state’s International Representatives to exporters and provided pertinent information about the various markets.

6. **USA Aerospace & Defense Virtual Showcase:** Georgia secured a booth in a virtual global aerospace and defense trade show through Kallman Worldwide. The showcase provides a 365 day-24/7 platform that allows Georgia to be promoted throughout the year and around the world. Kallman is an organizer of U.S. Pavilions at many global trade shows. This platform will highlight Georgia’s aerospace and defense assets at trade events in Europe, Australia, Poland, South Korea, the UAE, and many others throughout the year, allowing Georgia businesses to ‘test the market’ and promote their products even if not traveling.

7. **International Reps promoting Georgia business at in-country events:** Though travel to China was not possible, GDEcD’s Trade Representatives in China, Tony Wang and Cathy Gu, promoted six Georgia companies representing a diverse array of products from poultry and nuts to beer and ice cream at a mini food and beverage exhibition in Chengdu. The event, hosted by USDA’s Agricultural Trade Office in Beijing, attracted key contacts including importers, retailers, wholesalers, foodservice distributors, and trade associations.

### UPCOMING EVENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

- **May 11, 2021: SEUS Canada Procurement Webinar**
  Georgia, in cooperation with the Southeastern United States-Canadian Provinces (SEUS-CP) Alliance, will host a virtual procurement webinar featuring procurement professionals from Delta Air Lines, Southern Company, NCR, and the Georgia Ports Authority. The goal of the event is to encourage procurement and supplier opportunities for small businesses in the Southeast and Canada. This event is a prelude to an in-person conference hosted by Georgia in 2022. The SEUS-CP Alliance was established in 2007 to present opportunities for businesses to enhance commercial ties, promote two-way trade and investment, and encourage technological exchanges between the member states and Canadian provinces. SEUS-CP strengthens the long-standing U.S.-Canadian relationship and expands commercial opportunities in underdeveloped sectors and markets through new partnerships.

- **June 21-24, 2021: Arab Health**
  The 2021 Arab Health show will mark the first in-person trade show for GDEcD’s Trade Division since the onset of the pandemic. As the largest health care exposition in the Middle East, Arab Health serves as a key entry point for Georgia health care and life science companies looking to grow their sales in the region. The Middle East represents a growing market for Georgia’s $1.8 billion in annual medical device and pharmaceutical exports, and with COVID-19 safety protocols in place, Georgia exporters are looking forward to getting back to business at this year’s show. Five Georgia companies will co-exhibit in the Georgia, USA booth.
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. Esports: Level Up for the Jobs of the Future
An industry contributing $750 million to the state’s economy, esports had a record year in 2020, and Atlanta is widely regarded as the country’s esports capital. In February, GDEcD launched a video with the support of partners like the Metro Atlanta Chamber to highlight some of the outstanding programs preparing Georgia’s students to work in the gaming industry. The video, modeled after an esports broadcast between two sports anchors, was the result of collaborative efforts by team members across GDEcD, and it includes insights from major gaming companies and Georgia schools that have adopted esports curricula.

2. Georgia Logistics Summit: The Road Ahead
For the first time since its conception in 2009, the Georgia Logistics Summit was held in an all-virtual format on March 23. Georgia is a prominent leader in the logistics and supply chain industries, and well-suited to host a discussion featuring industry experts. The Center of Innovation-led event shared insights about the pandemic’s effect on supply chains and logistics, issues affecting trucking, and Georgia’s leadership on the road forward. Team members across GDEcD worked to ensure a smooth virtual experience for the audience and speakers. The new virtual format offered a safe opportunity for the 334 registered attendees to hear and interact with the panelists, and the event was preceded by in-kind promotional videos on Georgia CEO, as well as several paid ads on LinkedIn.

By the Numbers

On Georgia.org in Q3
43% increase in page views (over FY20Q3)
55% increase in unique viewers
99% increase in contact us/lead forms
18% increase in e-newsletter sign-ups
52% increase in new users
43% increase in advanced manufacturing page views

Additional Communications
47 e-newsletters about various GDEcD divisions and initiatives distributed
20 press releases
16 blog posts

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3. Leveraging Media Interactions
GDEcD frequently fields media inquiries about announcements, industry news, economic development trends and challenges, and new opportunities for Georgia businesses. A few examples of these high-profile interviews in FY21Q3 include Mary Waters, deputy commissioner of International Trade, speaking to the Atlanta Business Chronicle’s Crystal Edmonson about the state’s robust exports in 2020, and Commissioner Pat Wilson speaking to multiple outlets, including to industry reporters with Reuters, Bloomberg, HuffPo, Financial Times, and local journalists about the importance of the SK Innovation project in Jackson County and the growth of the electric vehicle ecosystem in Georgia. GDEcD’s Communications team helps pitch stories, craft communications, and get the most out of opportunities for the team sharing our stories. In the Explore Georgia division, the team also works to showcase firsthand travel experiences with influencers like Ava Roxanne Stritt, who visited Rome and Barnsley Gardens Resort, and Matt Long, who spent a few days in Atlanta and Savannah. Each visit resulted in multiple social media posts and digital articles that were syndicated across numerous publications.

4. Welcoming the World to Georgia
The International Relations team was excited to begin 2021 by resuming in-person courtesy meetings: On March 23, Governor Kemp presented the Georgia-based Consul of Greece with a proclamation honoring the country’s 200-year anniversary of independence. Visits like these are a key part of engaging our international community and solidifying the relationships that bolster international investment, trade, and tourism. These open doors strengthen Georgia’s reputation for being a welcoming state that is open for business. More in-person courtesy meetings have already taken place with the Governor and Commissioner Wilson, and plans are underway to start hosting international delegations once more.
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, and a network of representatives across the globe, Explore Georgia inspires travel to and within the state. The division works to advance Georgia’s $68.96 billion tourism industry that supports more than 484,000 jobs.

QUARTERLY DIVISION HIGHLIGHTS
1. In February, Explore Georgia announced organizational changes that will align and mobilize the division to best continue to meet the needs of Georgia’s tourism industry. The Explore Georgia team will organize around two central areas of focus: Tourism Consumer Marketing and Tourism Partner Marketing, with strong support from Tourism Research, Tourism Planning & Budget, tourism division leadership, and our GDEcD leadership team and colleagues. Please visit the Explore Georgia Tourism Industry Portal to view the new organizational structure.

2. Explore Georgia recently became verified by Instagram and received the coveted blue check. When a brand becomes verified on Instagram it prevents impersonation, provides trustworthiness to consumers, increases brand awareness, and comes with early access to the platform’s special features.

3. Explore Georgia was the recipient of three prominent industry awards. The Atlanta chapter of the AmericanAdvertising Federation for the Explore Georgia from Home campaign awarded Explore Georgia two Bronze Addy awards for crisis communications and social media. Explore Georgia also received a Gold Adrian Award from the Hospitality Sales & Marketing Association International for the Explore Your Georgia recovery marketing campaign.

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By the Numbers
A look back on 2020
• In 2020, Georgia ranked 8th nationally for travel spending.
• Travel spending in Georgia was down nearly $12 billion compared to 2019.
• Travel-generated state and local tax revenues were down $642 million during the pandemic.
Source: Tourism Economics

• The net labor loss for the Georgia Leisure & Hospitality industry from March 2020 – Dec. 2020 was 82,400 jobs.
Source: Georgia Department of Labor
4. Deputy Commissioner Mark Jaronski attended the U.S. Travel Association’s Board of Directors Meetings in Tampa, Florida, March 8-11. This event brings together travel leaders from across the country to discuss U.S. multiple travel industry priorities. The meetings also included a gathering of the industry-wide coalition, Meetings Mean Business.

5. Explore Georgia team members participated in Brand USA Global Marketplace Canada, geared to help U.S. travel partners gain insight and perspective, on Feb. 4; Focus on Mexico Feb. 8 and 9; and Focus on Germany on Feb. 23.

6. At Brand USA’s One-to-One Business meetings in March, the Explore Georgia international team held more than 40 meetings with trade professionals and buyers from Canada, Mexico, the U.K., and Europe.

7. In addition to other speaking events throughout the quarter, Deputy Commissioner Mark Jaronski joined Governor Brian Kemp and local leaders at the $271 million Savannah Convention Center expansion groundbreaking on March 17.

8. Explore Georgia team members attended the kick-off meeting for the UGA Hospitality and Tourism (HOST) Research Initiative at UGA. This new effort will support Explore Georgia’s work by providing novel and timely hospitality and tourism research resources, create research and professional development opportunities for students, and serve community-level public engagement efforts across Georgia.

9. On March 26, Governor Brian P. Kemp and First Lady Marty Kemp visited Jekyll Island to meet with tourism industry leaders and hold a press conference at the Jekyll Island Convention Center about the state of Georgia’s tourism industry. Commissioner Pat Wilson and Deputy Commissioner Mark Jaronski spoke at the event and were supported by members of Team GDEcD and Explore Georgia. The Governor also took a hard hat tour of the new $50 million Marriott Courtyard-Residence Inn hotel on Jekyll Island, scheduled to open later this summer.

10. As summer travel begins, Explore Georgia will build on the “Explore Your Georgia” campaign momentum by introducing a new tourism campaign, “Ready. Set. Georgia,” in May. The integrated campaign will be informed by the latest travel insight and is designed to highlight all aspects of the travel experience – planning (Ready), preparing (Set), and going (Georgia).

UPCOMING EVENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

- April 20-21: Focus on UK & Ireland [Virtual]
- May 17-19: Georgia Association of Convention and Visitors Bureau (GACVB) annual conference in Savannah
- August 15-17: U.S. Travel Association’s ETSO in Los Angeles, California
- August 30-Sept. 1: Georgia Tourism Conference at Lanier Islands in Buford
- September 18-22: U.S. Travel Association’s IPW in Las Vegas, Nevada