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GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FISCAL YEAR 2022 FIRST QUARTER HIGHLIGHTS

During the first quarter of fiscal year 2022, for an unprecedented eighth consecutive year, Georgia earned the “Top State for Doing Business” ranking from Area Development.

In addition to Top State, Georgia earned a No. 1 ranking in five categories, including:
- Overall cost of doing business.
- Cooperative and responsive state government.
- Competitive labor environment.
- Workforce development programs.
- Available real estate.

Rankings are based on a variety of factors, which can be attributed to Georgia’s proactive – and responsive – approach to doing business. This ranking adds to additional accolades the state has earned over the last year, and it serves as an inspiration for the future.

Georgia maintains the following top rankings:
- **Eighteen companies in Fortune 500/1000 Rankings**, with Georgia-based Global Payments entering for first time. Thirty-three companies are ranked in the Fortune 1000.
- **No. 1 Business Climate** for a record-setting eighth year by Site Selection.
- **“Top State for Doing Business”** for the eighth consecutive year by Area Development.
- Ranked among **“Top Ten” Exporting States** in 2020, according to U.S. Census Bureau.
- **“E Star Award” for Export Services** for an unprecedented fourth year from U.S. Department of Commerce.
- **No. 1 State for Aerospace Manufacturing Attractiveness** by Pricewaterhouse (PwC).
- **No. 1 Tech Hub**, Atlanta by Business Facilities.

Throughout the quarter, **Georgia Council for the Arts** continued its work supporting arts, culture, education, and the overall vitality and vibrancy of the state by distributing state and federal grants to support entities and programs across Georgia. Additionally, artwork created by southwest Georgia residents is now on display as part of the “Art of Georgia” exhibits in the Governor’s Office and Governor’s Mansion.

At the **Center of Innovation**, the team engaged with more than 100 clients statewide, reported more than 54 engagements with industry partners, and supported at least 25 economic development recruitments, expansions, or other related activities within the state. The Center of Innovation is developing updated messaging related to their mission that will help remind Georgia businesses the COI can help them solve problems and rise to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing marketplace.

The **Film, Music & Digital Entertainment Office** has continued to support unprecedented levels of industry activity and growth in Georgia. Both Georgia-based Gray Television and United Talent Agency made announcements during the quarter that solidify the industry’s investments here, creating further jobs and opportunities for Georgians.

During the first quarter of 2022, the **Global Commerce** division has already reported $2 billion in investments, creating more than 9,100 new jobs spanning the state and a diverse array of industries.

The **International Trade** division secured a second State Trade Expansion Program (STEP) Grant from the Small Business Administration. The award makes an additional $240,000 available in financial support to eligible Georgia small business exporters through GDEcD’s Go Global Georgia initiative.

Each division received support from the **Marketing, Communications, and International Engagement** division, including new videos and assets to reach key markets and clients, new advertising, and earned media for initiatives that benefit Georgia businesses or to develop new opportunities. Additionally, the team supported overseas economic development missions to Greece and Germany.
The **Explore Georgia** team earned the prestigious Mercury Award by the U.S. Travel Association for the “Explore Georgia from Home” campaign. The same inspiration – with the get out and “go” idea, has guided the new “Ready. Set. Georgia.” campaign that continues to evolve based on consumer sentiment. Additionally, at the Governor’s Tourism Conference in August, Governor Kemp announced the allocation of $5.8 million in federal relief funds for marketing efforts and announced a new slate of appointments to the Georgia Tourism Foundation Board of Directors.

To follow GDEcD’s work between board meetings, the Department maintains a comprehensive list of digital resources with links to our divisions’ social media channels, key web pages, and e-newsletters at: [georgia.org/online-resources](http://georgia.org/online-resources).
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. Bridge, Project, and Arts Education Grantees announced
   Georgia Council for the Arts (GCA) awarded 266 Bridge, Project, and Arts Education Grants across the state in July. Bridge Grants provide general operating support for arts organizations, Project Grants support single arts projects, and Arts Education Grants support programs for K-12 students.

2. American Rescue Plan funds distributed
   GCA received $904,000 in American Rescue Plan (ARP) funds from the National Endowment for the Arts. The funds were used to supplement the money available for Bridge Grants, which provide general operating support for arts organizations. These grants will allow arts organizations, many of which have been closed for up to 18 months, to keep staff employed, pay for facility costs, and present different types of programs that adhere to COVID safety standards.

3. Art of Georgia installation
   The Art of Georgia program allows artists in rotating regions of the state to submit their work for consideration to be exhibited in the Governor’s Office and the Governor’s Mansion. The landscapes submitted show the diversity and beauty of the state. Artists from the southwestern part of the state submitted work for consideration in August, and the work selected will be installed in October.

By the Numbers
FY22 Bridge, Project, and Arts Education Grants:
$2.1 million distributed to 221 organizations in 50 counties

GCA’s FY21 Grants:
2.4M people reached through program funding

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UPCOMING EVENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

• GCA Council meeting
  A Georgia Council for the Arts meeting was held on Thursday, Oct. 7 via Zoom.

• Southern Prize Exhibit
  The Southern Prize exhibit begins at the Bo Bartlett Center in Columbus/South Arts reception on October 28 at 5:00 pm. South Arts is a regional arts organization that annually presented the Southern Prize, a program that selects one visual artist from each of the nine southern states and then awards a $50,000 prize to the top artist. Executive Directors from the nine state arts agencies in the service region sit on the South Arts board. The exhibit will tour to promote southern artists. bobartlettcen ter.org

• Poetry Out Loud
  Registration is for the Poetry Out Loud competition opens for schools that wish to participate. Poetry Out Loud is a recitation competition for high school students, and last year, more than 5,000 students participated in Georgia.

• Cultural Facilities and Vibrant Communities Grantees announced in October
  Cultural Facilities Grants support the renovation, restoration, preservation, or acquisition of an arts facility, or the acquisition of permanent equipment. Vibrant Communities Grants are available to counties in which no organization received a Bridge, Project or Arts Education Grant.
DIVISION PROFILE
Exclusive to Georgia, the Center 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. Visit to Curiosity Lab at Peachtree Corners
In July, the Center of Innovation team visited the Curiosity Lab at Peachtree Corners to learn more about this “living laboratory” and this unique asset to the state. The Curiosity Lab at Peachtree Corners has a 3-mile autonomous vehicle test track, is 5G enabled, and is home to its own business incubator supporting companies in communications, V2X technologies, autonomous technology, and smart cities innovation. In addition, the Lab provides a unique urban testing environment for companies in the electric mobility and autonomous vehicle sector to demonstrate their technology in a real-world setting.

2. Québec Government visit
In July, Center of Innovation Executive Director David Nuckolls, Director of Aerospace Amy Hudnall, and Office of Economic Adjustment (OEA) Grant Initiatives Project Manager Cassia Baker, met with the Québec Government to make introductions and share information on the Aerospace team’s work with Georgia defense contractors and Cybersecurity Maturity Model Certification (CMMC). Both Georgia and Québec are home to robust aerospace industries and there are ample opportunities for our teams to work together.

3. Georgia Grown Innovation Center visit
Executive Director David Nuckolls and Director of Agricultural Technologies Chris Chammoun visited with the Georgia Grown Innovation Center team in Metter to learn more about how the center is becoming an example of rural innovation. To continue to provide support for the agricultural technologies companies currently using this facility, Chris visited the facility again in September and spoke at their Lunch and Learn event, as well as met with several companies.

By the Numbers

110 engagements with clients across the state
54 engagements with industry partners
25 engagements linked to economic development recruitment, expansion, or other activity within the state

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4. EF Block event
In September, the Center of Innovation’s energy technology team, in collaboration with the Tech Square Social Club, the City of Atlanta, and EF Block Georgia co-hosted the Future of Sustainability event. The event marked the launch of a city-wide recycling initiative to educate the community about polystyrene recycling. The event also included demonstrations of the use of EF Blocks and also launched the EF Block Collegiate Recycling Program. If you’re not familiar with EF Blocks – the company is a new to Georgia company who makes safe and fire proof building materials from recycled Styrofoam. The Georgia Center of Innovation team has been helping them make in-state connections after their location through partnerships like this one.
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. MBS Equipment Company East Coast Headquarters Announced
In October, Governor Kemp announced that MBS Equipment Company, the largest studio-based equipment company in the world for film, television, and events, is opening its new East Coast headquarters in Georgia. MBS came to Georgia in 2014 as one of the founding production support companies in the media park at Trilith Studios (then Pinewood Atlanta Studios) and its Atlanta operation quickly expanded to its current 45,000-square-foot building. The new purpose-built space will house an office for its nearly 100 team members, 75 who are full-time staff, as well as a creative work space for working crew members to collaborate and connect. This new headquarters will also house MBSi (MBS Innovations) team members, who will work on lighting solutions for upcoming projects that require unique technical requirements. Due to the volume of work in Georgia, and at Trilith specifically, MBS will be housing a major share of its TV and film rental inventory, the largest in the world, in the State of Georgia.

2. Georgia-based Gray Television acquires Third Rail Studios
Gray Television, Inc. has purchased Third Rail Studios, a movie and television production facility developed by The Integral Group in 2016 in Doraville, Georgia. Third Rail Studios is adjacent to Gray’s entertainment-centric studio and community development called Assembly, and will now be incorporated into the new facility—currently called Iconic Studios at Assembly.

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3 United Talent Agency opens Atlanta office
In late September, The United Talent Agency (UTA), one of the largest talent agencies in Hollywood, announced it would be opening a full-service office in Atlanta, and 3Arts, a thirty-year-old talent management and film and television production company, will begin putting down roots in Georgia in December 2021.

UPCOMING EVENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

• Film Festivals
  The film office sponsors and participates in numerous local film festivals, and typically has passes available if board members would like to attend a screening.

• Upcoming festivals:
  Cinema Italy Atlanta, Atlanta (November 4-7, 2021) - Cinema Italy Atlanta returns for its fourteenth year, showing the six films selected for the postponed 2020 festival.

  Georgia Film Festival, Gainesville (November 5-6, 2021) - Hosted by the Communication, Media and Journalism department at the University of North Georgia, the Georgia Film Festival features more than 60 films from independent filmmakers, and high school and college students from Georgia or an adjoining state.

  Rome International Film Festival, Rome (November 11-14, 2021) - Since its inception, RIFF has prided itself on providing filmmakers with a truly unique, sophisticated, and welcoming experience, featuring two full days of screenings, parties, and professional networking and development opportunities.

  RKDS Film Fest, Valdosta (November 12-13, 2021) - The RKDS Film Fest is a film festival created to highlight the film industry in Valdosta and South Georgia and features films from all over the world.

  Buried Alive Film Festival, Atlanta (November 13-17, 2021) - The Buried Alive Film Fest strives to promote true underground filmmaking in the Southeast and beyond, while providing the Atlanta area with the best independent horror it can offer.

  African Film Festival Atlanta (November 19-21, 2021) - The African Film Festival Atlanta is a signature event of the African Film & Arts Foundation Inc., a non-profit organization whose mission is to magnify and celebrate the visions, voices, lives, and stories of people from Africa and the African Diaspora.
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. $500 Million, 1,200-job expansion by Intuitive
   On August 4, 2021, Governor Kemp announced plans by Intuitive, a pioneer in robotic-assisted surgery and a global leader in minimally invasive care, to invest more than $500 million in its current campus in Gwinnett County, creating approximately 1,200 jobs in Peachtree Corners. The expansion will add to the approximately 180 professionals already based at Intuitive’s offices in Peachtree Corners. Present in Georgia for a decade, the company plans to grow its campus to include more than 750,000 square feet of manufacturing and engineering operations, state-of-the-art training facilities for surgeons and hospital care teams, and administrative offices.

2. ‘GRAD Certified Select’ Sites Recognized
   During the 2021 Georgia Economic Developers Association (GEDA) Annual Conference in Savannah, the Georgia Department of Economic Development (GDEcD) announced new ‘Georgia Ready for Accelerated Development (GRAD) Certified Select’ sites across the state. Economic developers representing each newly recognized and newly renewed ‘GRAD Certified Select’ property were presented with a special certificate.

   • Newly announced ‘GRAD Select’ sites that were recognized include:
     • Dublin-Laurens County Development Authority’s Georgia Highway 257 Rail Served Site in Dublin
     • Development Authority of Peach County’s Robins International Industrial Park in Byron
     • Development Authority of Columbia County’s White Oak Business Park – Phase 2 in Appling
     • Authority of Polk County’s Cedartown North Business Park – Phase 3 in Cedartown

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By the Numbers
During FY22Q1:
87 companies assisted with locations or expansions by GDEcD, creating
$2 billion in investments, and
9,146 new jobs
3. New Visa hub
On September 29, 2021, Governor Kemp announced that Visa, a world leader in digital payments, will open a new hub in Midtown Atlanta. This major expansion is expected to create approximately 1,000 jobs in the region over the next several years. Visa’s new 123,000-square-foot office, located at 1200 Peachtree Street, is expected to open in 2022. The office will represent a wide range of Visa teams and functions, with a particular concentration of technology and client services teams.

4. Project announcement highlights
The new quarter began with the announcement that InFlex, a subsidiary of Georgia-based plastics manufacturing leader Amcor, Inc., will invest nearly $8 million in expanding its operations to Bacon County, creating 100 jobs in Alma, Georgia. Metro Atlanta welcomed several new projects and expansions in addition to Intuitive and Visa, including Korean construction company SUNGDO ENG USA’s U.S. corporate headquarters in Gwinnett County, online fashion and beauty retailer ASOS’s $100 million expansion in Fulton County, and a $59 million, 500-job expansion by global material handling and logistics company Vanderlande in Cobb County. In northeast Georgia’s Franklin County, American Trailer World is hiring immediately as part of their $20 million expansion. In Chatham County, bioplastics company NANTRenewables, a subsidiary of NantWorks, will invest up to $29 million to build a manufacturing facility at SeaPoint Industrial Terminal Complex in Savannah.

UPCOMING EVENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

- **Area Development Executive Summit**
  Deputy Commissioner Scott McMurray will attend the Area Development Executive Summit, an invitation-only event designed to bring together a limited and select group of economic development executives with 20-plus of the industry’s most active site selection consultants and advisors. This event will take place November 1-3, 2021.
DIVISION PROFILE
GDEcD’s nationally recognized International Trade Division works to bolster Georgia exports and brand the state as a competitive source of quality products and services. The division includes International Representatives located in 12 strategic global markets and assists Georgia companies with expanding 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. **Money 20/20**
   In September, GDEcD’s International Trade division exhibited at Europe’s largest FinTech event, Money20/20, in Amsterdam, in collaboration with the Metro Atlanta Chamber. Two Georgia based companies, DataSeers and Safely, joined International Trade Manager Stefan Harrigan at the show. Stefan was on the ground assisting Georgia companies to leverage trade resources, meet with new customers to increase export sales, and expand into new global markets. Georgia’s Trade Representative in the UK, Ireland and Benelux, Conor Griffiths, identified leads and secured meetings for the Georgia companies in support of their international goals. Georgia is home to more than 200 FinTech companies, who collectively process more than 300 billion financial transactions annually and 70% of financial transactions in the U.S. alone.

2. **GDEcD receives second STEP Award**
   Georgia was awarded a State Trade Expansion Program (STEP) Grant from the Small Business Administration for the second consecutive year in September. The grant year will run from September 30, 2021, to September 29, 2022. The award makes an additional $240,000 available in financial support to eligible Georgia small business exporters through GDEcD’s Go Global Georgia initiative. Go Global Georgia provides reimbursement for activities that build export capacity and promote increased international sales.

   A new video was produced to guide businesses through the process of determining their eligibility for the grant and promoting the activities cover by the grant that can be viewed at: [www.georgia.org/go-global-ga](http://www.georgia.org/go-global-ga). A social media campaign to promote the grant is scheduled to kick off on October 25.

By the Numbers

During Q1:

- Go Global Georgia applications approved: 64
- Export successes supported: 75
- Georgia companies engaged: 356
- Trade leads provided to Georgia exporters: 588
- Total outreach (through monthly trade newsletter): 5,505

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3. SIDO Annual Best Practices Conference
Deputy Commissioner Mary Waters became the incoming president of the State International Development Organizations (SIDO) in July. SIDO is the premier U.S. organization dedicated to supporting state international trade agencies and focuses exclusively on state international trade development. International Trade Managers Alice Carson and Stefan Harrigan attended the SIDO best practices conference August 16-18, 2021, in Detroit, Michigan, to contribute to conversations centered around best practices related to navigating international trade in a COVID world, including virtual trade events, e-commerce and digital tools, supply chain and resiliency initiatives, and other ways in which states have adjusted operations to support exporters. The conference also served as the official launch of the second annual Thunderbird Advanced Certificate in Global Development program. Two Trade staff members will take part in this year’s training, aimed at providing comprehensive training for international trade professionals.

4. GLOBE AWARDS
2021 GLOBE (Georgia Launching Opportunities by Exporting) Award nominations opened on October 1. Created in 2014, this annual award celebrates statewide businesses that contribute to Georgia’s economic growth by entering new global markets. In addition to celebrating these successes, three companies will be recognized as Exporters of the Year in the small, medium and large business category. Since its inception, 195 businesses from across Georgia have been recognized. Last year’s winners expanded their sales into 75 new countries and nearly half entered markets where GDECD has representation. Applications close on November 1, 2021, at 6:00 p.m.

UPCOMING EVENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

- **Medica**
  GDEcD will once again be exhibiting at Medica in Düsseldorf, Germany November 15-18, 2021, with four Georgia exporters co-exhibiting with the state. The event is the world’s largest show for medical devices and technologies that has proven to provide sales opportunities for Georgia exporters in Europe and beyond. On-site support and assistance will be provided by Trade Manager Maxine Bier and GDEcD’s trade representative in Germany, Ulrike Schauerte.

- **Medtec China Catalog Exhibition and Webinar**
  GDEcD is currently accepting applications for companies interested in connecting with China’s medical device industry at the 17th edition of Medtec China in Shanghai, December 20-22. Through a catalogue show, companies will be promoted by GDEcD’s trade representative in China. Medtec China 2021 promises to draw over 500 exhibitors from 25 countries and over 40,000 visitors. Ninety percent of the visitors are looking for suppliers and 80% of attendees are purchasing decision makers or purchase influencers. GDEcD will host a free webinar, “Opportunities & Challenges for Georgia Med Tech in China,” on November 3 to brief Georgia companies on trends and opportunities in China’s medical device market and how to comply with local regulations. Topics include: (1) a China medical device market overview; (2) Strategies for Entering the China Market; (4) Regulatory Insights; (5) IP Protection for U.S. manufacturers, and a full Q&A session. Speakers will include: Maxine Bier, International Trade Manager; Cathy Gu, GDEcD Trade Representative in China; and Helen Chen, Senior Partner, Zhong Lun Law Firm.
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, and digital 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. New microsite on Georgia.org
In July, Governor Kemp launched the Electric Mobility and Innovation Alliance, an initiative tasked with generating recommendations to grow the electric mobility ecosystem in the state and strengthening Georgia’s position in electrification-related manufacturing and innovation. The marketing team launched a series of new pages on Georgia.org for the alliance, featuring charging infrastructure maps, innovation news and information, and company profiles. The site, which is available in multiple languages that reach the state’s primary EV and mobility target markets, went live in early July.

2. Georgia is ‘Ready for What’s Next’
Quickly following the Governor’s announcement about the Electric Mobility and Innovation Alliance, a new advertising campaign was launched to promote the electric mobility industry, with a creative concept encouraging companies to consider Georgia with a play on the use of “EV.”

LEVERAGE our supply chain prowess
EVOLVE in a supportive business climate
ACHIEVE with a skilled and diverse workforce

By the Numbers
Website visits:
41% increase to Georgia.org home page
133% increase from Japan
111% increase from China

Webpage visits:
160% increase GRAD certified Site Selector
102% increase Small Business Grants/Loans

Additional communications:
35 e-newsletters distributed with news about GDEcD divisions, initiatives
18 press releases circulated
15 blog posts on Georgia.org

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The campaign asserts that Georgia’s formidable automotive industry is evolving to support the growing demand for electrification. The tagline, “Georgia is ready for what’s next,” connotes immediacy and preparation, and the design demonstrates smooth movement with a futuristic treatment. The campaign, which launched in August and targets domestic, Korean, and German audiences, includes SEM/SEO and paid social media (featuring new “conversation” ads on LinkedIn), as well as ads in automotive industry print and digital publications.

3. Videos: Expanding exports, unlocking innovation
Two videos were created for the Department this quarter. The first explains the process of qualifying for and applying for the Go Global Georgia grants, a funding reimbursement program for export activities that is allocated by the International Trade Team. This animated video carefully breaks down who is eligible to receive these grants, and what activities are qualified. It directs viewers to the Georgia.org/go-global-ga website in order to qualify and apply.

The second video created this quarter introduces the Center of Innovation with a lighthearted approach that highlights several Georgia companies across the state that have worked with the Center. The 1-minute video makes “innovation” approachable and relatable, demonstrating how it can be achievable for business of all sizes and locations.

4. Georgia Ready for Accelerated Development: GRAD certified sites across the state
The GRAD certified site program, a portfolio of pre-qualified industrial sites for which due diligence has been completed, poses an incredible benefit to all of Georgia’s communities, in particular those located in rural areas. Since the program’s success hinges on the site owners and communities providing accurate and updated site information, a digital marketing campaign was launched in August to promote awareness of the benefits of the program.

5. Commissioner Wilson’s international outreach
In July, Delta Air Lines recommenced several of the nonstop flights to European destinations that were suspended due to the travel restrictions around COVID-19. In conjunction with the first flight directly connecting Atlanta and Athens, Greece, the International Relations team worked with GDEcD’s Europe office to coordinate a mission for Commissioner Wilson to Greece, where he met with prospective companies, including several in the energy and telecoms sectors. In September, Commissioner Wilson traveled to Germany, where he visited with major active prospects across the country. A few weeks later, a WABE story covered some of the details of this important relationship between Georgia and Germany.
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 grow Georgia’s tourism industry that represented $68.82 billion and supported 484,000 jobs in 2019.

QUARTERLY DIVISION HIGHLIGHTS
1. Georgia Governor’s Tourism Conference
Explore Georgia hosted the annual Georgia Governor’s Tourism Conference, August 30 - September 1, at Legacy Lodge at Lake Lanier and drew nearly 400 attendees. The conference is the state’s leading tourism industry event with a track record of providing attendees the opportunity to gain access to world-class marketing strategies and leadership lessons from global experts and industry thought leaders. During the event, Governor Brian P. Kemp announced the allocation of $5.8 million in federal coronavirus relief funds to Explore Georgia, applauding the industry’s success and recognizing the impact of travel and tourism on the state. Governor Kemp also announced a new slate of appointments to the Georgia Tourism Foundation Board of Directors. The group of top-level executives and business owners from across Georgia’s tourism and hospitality industry will collaborate with GDEcD and Explore Georgia leadership to drive innovative and entrepreneurial strategies designed to further enhance Georgia’s position in the global travel marketplace.

2. ‘Ready. Set. Georgia.’
Explore Georgia’s tourism recovery marketing campaign, “Ready. Set. Georgia.” continued to experience tremendous success during the first quarter. Explore Georgia saw massive increases in website sessions well before other destinations. Traffic to ExploreGeorgia.org has recorded 16 consecutive months of record-breaking traffic and audience growth on Facebook has been approximately double that of competing destinations, with posts having nearly 10 million engagements compared to just over 100,000 for competitors.

By the Numbers
$2.9 billion in Georgia travel expenditures in July, up 55% YoY.
*Highest monthly expenditure since the pandemic began.
**Nationally, travel spending was down 6.5% on average in July.

8% increase in Georgia’s September road travel volume compared to 2020;
6% increase compared to 2019

Q1 – Exploregeorgia.org:
3.08 million website users
13.9% increase in users
14.5% increase in users
8.7% increase in page views
664% increase in newsletter signups

Top 5 out-of-state markets:
1. Orlando, FL
2. Tampa/St.Pete, FL
3. Chicago, IL
4. Birmingham, AL
5. New York City, NY

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Since the campaign launch in May, Arrivalist data shows Explore Georgia’s efforts have had a combined 65% Arrival Lift. This means that those consumers who were exposed to the State’s advertising have already been much more likely to make a trip to or within Georgia than those who have not seen this campaign. Likewise, advertising effectiveness research conducted by SMARI showed that compared to industry benchmarks “Ready. Set. Georgia.” advertising rated in the top 25% of all leisure travel advertising for showing a good place for families and an appealing place to visit.

3. **U.S. Travel Association’s Mercury Award**

Explore Georgia was awarded the prestigious Mercury Award by the U.S. Travel Association at the Educational Seminar for Tourism Organizations (ESTO) event in Los Angeles, California, in August. Explore Georgia captured the Mercury Award in the Virtual Programming category in recognition of its multi-sensory virtual Explore Georgia from Home campaign. This year, the U.S. Travel Association received more than 400 entries for 30 awards, a record for the award program. The Explore Georgia from Home campaign was focused on a virtual destination content hub for users to explore timely content. In addition, posts on Facebook, Instagram, and Pinterest helped inspire prospective visitors and kept locals informed, while media relations garnered coverage from local, regional, and national outlets.

**UPCOMING EVENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES**

- **Brand USA - Travel Week**: London, England; October 25-26
  This annual event will bring together key players in the U.S. and European travel industry to discuss trends, challenges, innovations, and the opportunity to drive future visitation to the United States.

- **Travel South International Showcase**: New Orleans, Louisiana; November 30 - December 3
  Travel South International Showcase is the premier Marketplace event in the South where over 500 tourism professionals gather for three days of intensive meetings with a goal of delivering more visitors, spending more time and more money in the South.

- **GACVB Sales Symposium**: Roswell, Georgia; November 30 - December 2
  The Group Sales Symposium is an educational and networking event for all meetings/convention sales professionals. Colleagues come together for sessions with industry experts and peers in various interactive formats to discuss new trends, tactics, and technology for improving meetings business and group market recruitment and production. The collaboration between GACVB and the Southeast Tourism Society (STS) allows professionals from not only the 13 STS-affiliated states and Washington, D.C., but also field experts from across the country, to network and learn applicable techniques.

- **GACVB Annual Conference**: January 31 - February 2, 2022
  At this multi-day event of statewide networking and leadership training, tourism professionals will join industry suppliers along with travel and hospitality affiliates to share successes and find solutions in promotions and product development.