

# Lower Chattahoochee, Middle Flint Workforce Areas

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Regional Plan

## Acronym Guide

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ACS	American Community Survey
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
AEFLA	Adult Education & Family Literacy Act
AOP	Agricultural Outreach Plan
ASL	American Sign Language
BER	Benefits Eligibility Review
BGLI	Burning Glass Labor Insight
BLS	Bureau of Labor Statistics
BSU	Business Services Unit (housed in GDOL)
CAD	Computer Aided Design
CAP	Client Assistance Programs
CAP	Corrective Action Plan
CAPI	Customized Apprenticeships & Paid Internships
CCR	College & Career Readiness Standards
CCSS	Common Core State Standards
CEDS	Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy
CIL	Centers for Independent Living
CJCC	Georgia Criminal Justice Coordinating Council
CLEO	Chief Local Elected Official
CNC	Computer Numerical Control Operator
CR	Customized Recruitment
CRC	Certified Rehabilitation Counselors
CRCC	Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification
CRP	Community Rehabilitation Programs
CSB	Community Service Boards
CSPD	Comprehensive System for Personal Development
CSPM	Client Services Policy Manual
CSU	Constituent Services Unit
DBHDD	Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities
DCA	Georgia Department of Community Affairs
DCH	Georgia Department of Community Health
DCS	Georgia Department of Community Supervision
DFCS	Division of Family & Children Services (DHS)
DHS	Georgia Department of Human Services
DJJ	Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice
DOAS	Georgia Department of Administrative Services
DOC	Georgia Department of Corrections
DoDD	Division of Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD)
DSU	Designated State Unit
DVOP	Disabled Veteran Outreach Program
EG	Employ Georgia (GDOL)
EMSI	Economic Modeling Specialists Intl
ERP	Eligibility Review Process
ES	Employment Services
ESP	Extended Services Plan
ETA	Employment & Training Administration (USDOL)
ETP	Eligible Training Provider
ETPL	Eligible Training Provider List
EXCEL	Executive Commitment to Excellence in Leadership
FB	Federal Bonding
FY	Fiscal Year
GaDOE	Georgia Department of Education

GALIS	Georgia Adult Learners Information System
GA-PRI	Georgia Prisoner Reentry Initiative
GDEcD	Georgia Department of Economic Development
GDOL	Georgia Department of Labor
GED	General Education Development test
GEPS	Georgia Enterprises for Products & Services
GLME	Georgia Labor Market Explorer
GOTSR	Governor's Office of Transition, Support & Reentry
GSE	Georgia Standards of Excellence
GVRA	Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency
GWROPP	Georgia Work Ready Online Participant Portal
GWS	Georgia Workforce System
HDCI	High Demand Career Initiative
IATSE	International Association of Theatrical & Screen Employees
IAWP	International Association of Workforce Professionals
ICR	Information Collection Request
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
IELCE	Integrated English Literacy & Civics Education
IEP	Individualized Education Plan
IPE	Individualized Plan for Employment
IPS	Individualized Placement & Support
ISY	In-School Youth
ITA	Individual Training Account
ITP	Individualized Transition Plan
IWT	Incumbent Worker Training
JFF	Jobs for the Future
LEOs	Local Elected Officials
LVERs	Local Veteran Employment Representatives
LWDA	Local Workforce Development Area (the local area)
LWDB	Local Workforce Development Board
LWIOA	Local Workforce Investment Area
MHS	Migrant Head Start
MIS	Management Information System
MOA	Methods of Administration
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSFW	Migrant & Seasonal Farmworkers
MVR	Muskogee Vocational Rehabilitation
NAICS	North American Industry Classification System
NASWA	National Association for State Workforce Agencies
NDI	Non-Destructive Inspectors
NDT	Non-Destructive Testers
NDWG	National Dislocated Worker Grants
NEG	National Emergency Grant
NFJP	National Farmworker Jobs Program
NPRM	Notice of Proposed Rulemaking
NRS	National Reporting System
O*Net	Occupational Information Network
O.C.G.A.	Official Code of Georgia Annotated
OA	Office of Apprenticeship (USDOL)
OAE	Office of Adult Education (TCSG)
OCTAE	Office of Career, Technical & Agricultural Education (USDOE)
OJT	On-the-Job
OOS	Order of Selection
OSY	Out-of-School Youth
PIP	Performance Improvement Plan

PLC	Programmable Logic Controller
PWP	Personal Work Plan
PY	Program Year
REA	Reemployment Assistance Program
RESEA	Georgia's Reemployment Services & Eligibility Assessment
RFA	Request for Application
RSA	USDOE Rehabilitation Services Administration
RVRC	River Valley Regional Commission
SCSEP	Senior Community Service & Employment Program
SDVS	Georgia Department of Veteran's Services
SE	Supported Employment
SES	Supported Employment Services
SETA	Southeastern Employment & Training Association
SILC	Statewide Independent Living Council
SIWDG	Strategic Industries Workforce Development Grant
SMA	State Monitor Advocate
SNAP	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
SPC	Statistical Process Control
SPMI	Serious & Persistent Mental Illness
SRC	State Rehabilitation Council
SSDI	Social Security Disability Insurance
SSDR	State Service Delivery Regions
SSI	Supplemental Security Income
STAR	Staff Technical Assistance & Review
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Math
SUP	State Unified Plan
SWAT	Special Workforce Assistance Team
SWDB	State Workforce Development Board
SWIS	Statewide Workforce Investment System
TAA	Trade Adjustment Assistance
TANF	Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
TCSG	Technical College System of Georgia
TEGL	Training Employment Guidance Letter
TFSP	TANF Family Service Plan
UCX	Unemployment Compensation for Ex- service members program
UGA	University of Georgia
UI	Unemployment Insurance
UI and RO	Unemployment Insurance & Regional Operations
UIREA	UI Re-Employment Assistance
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
USDOE	United States Department of Education
USDOL	United State Department of Labor
USG	University System of Georgia
VR	Vocational Rehabilitation
VRP	Vocational Rehabilitation Program
WARN	Worker Adjustment & Retraining Notification
WFD	Workforce Division (GDEcD)
WDB	Workforce Development Board (local)
WEX	Work Experience
WIOA	Workforce Investment Act
WIG	Workforce Implementation Guidance Letter
WIOA	Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act
WOTC	Work Opportunity Tax Credit
WP	Wagner-Peyser Act/programs

WSP	TANF Work Support Program
YDC	Youth Detention Center

## 1. Strategic Elements, Governance and Structure

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### Identification of the Fiscal Agent

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*Provide an identification of the entity responsible for the disbursement of grant funds described in WIOA §107(d)(12)(B)(i)(III) as determined by the chief elected official.*

Area 14 Fiscal Agent is:

Columbus Consolidated Government  
Howard Pendleton, Director  
Theresa Tomlinson, Mayor  
420 Tenth Street, First Floor  
Columbus, GA 31902-1340  
706-653-4724  
<http://www.columbusga.org/>

Area 15 Fiscal Agent is:

River Valley Regional Commission  
Janice West, Workforce Director  
Patti Cullen, Executive Director  
228 West Lamar Street  
Americus, GA 31709  
706-256-2910  
<http://www.rivervalleyrc.org/index.php/workforcehome>

## 2. Description of Strategic Planning Elements

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*Provide a description of the strategic planning elements listed below. A complete answer will rely on a variety of data sources and employer input. Also describe how the information was gathered and what partners and employers were consulted.*

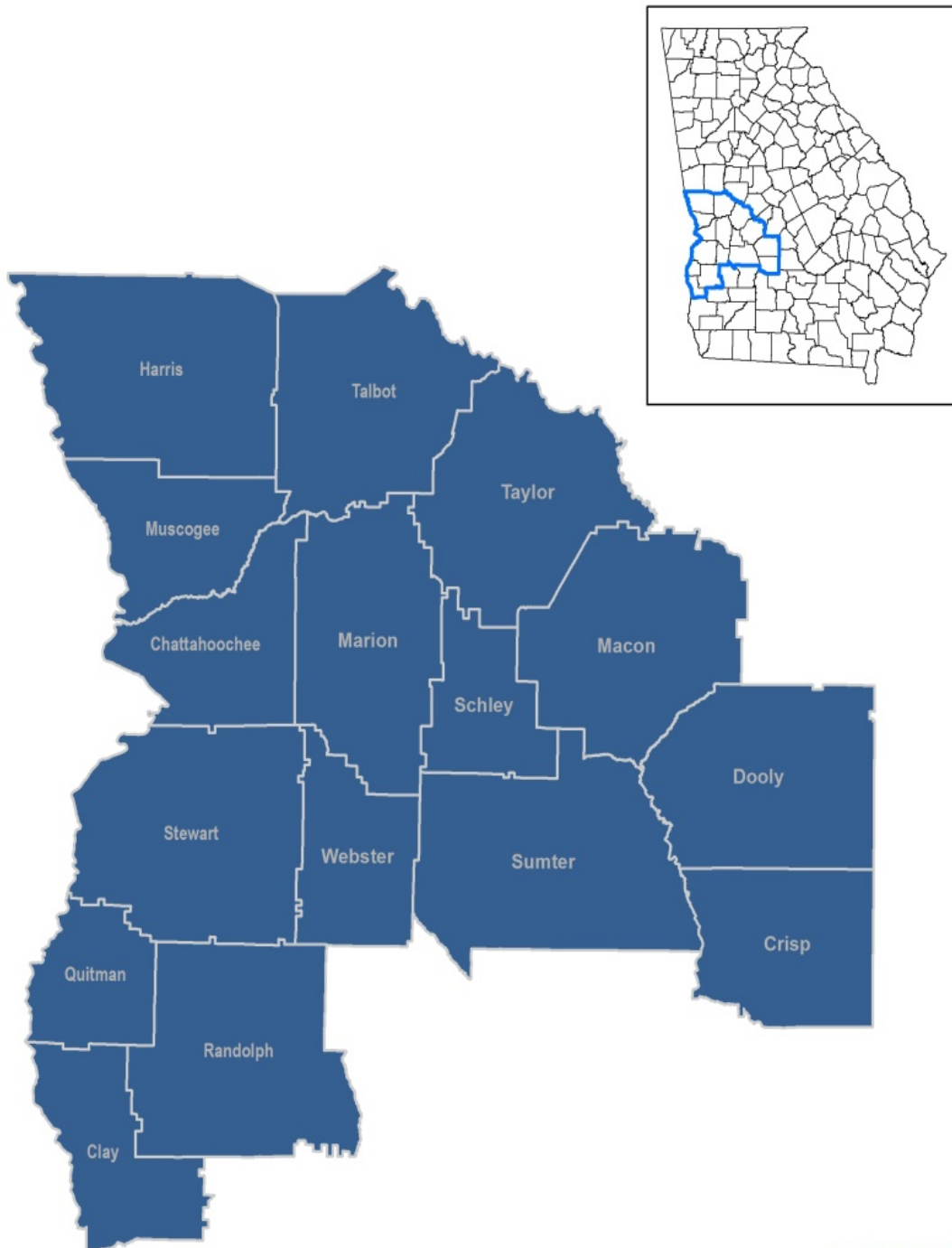
### a. Regional economic conditions

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*Provide an analysis of the regional economic conditions including existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors and occupations; and the employment needs of employers in those industry sectors and occupations. Include the listing of occupations in demand within the region and describe how the list was developed citing source data.*

The Georgia Department of Economic Development Region 8 consists of the WIOA Areas 14 and 15. It also matches the Georgia Department of Community Affairs Region 8 as well as the River Valley Regional Commission. This region of the state is in west-central Georgia and had a population of 370,887 in the 2010 Census. The region includes all of Harris, Muscogee, Chattahoochee, Stewart, Webster, Georgetown-Quitman, Randolph, Clay, Talbot, Marion, Taylor, Schley, Sumter, Macon, Dooly and Crisp counties. The region has seen a growth rate since the 2010 Census slower than other regions in the state. The major city in the region is Columbus, with smaller cities of Americus and Cordele being the only other areas of the region with significant infrastructure to support hospitals, technical colleges and universities. Overall, there are 16 counties in the region and 35 cities.

## Georgia Department of Economic Development Region 8





## Lower Chattahoochee WIOA

The City of Columbus has undergone a significant study to help guide its economic development. The Columbus 2025 was commissioned by the Columbus Chamber of Commerce and completed by Market Street Consultants. It analyzed the local economic development strengths and weaknesses, and made targeted suggestions for improvement. More information about the Columbus 2025 plan can be found both in Chamber resources and at <http://regionalprosperityinitiative.org>. While the plan was written for the Greater Columbus area (which included for the purposes of this plan Talbot, Harris, Muscogee, Marion, and Chattahoochee Counties), there is much in the plan that has application throughout the region. The plan outlines in great detail the economic issues facing Columbus and the outlying region of high poverty rates, lower levels of educational attainment and the corresponding social issues and lack of opportunity those issues create for a community.

Significant public input was used to develop the Columbus 2025 plan, including over 1,800 survey responses to a detailed set of questions and multiple meetings with a steering committee of community leaders from a wide sampling of the community.

The initiative constitutes a rethinking of the most active Areas of Economic Development (see diagram below) as well as the local economic development delivery. A new organization, Columbus 2025, is emerging as a 501c3 organization that will advocate for the guiding principles of the Columbus 2025 plan, including Increasing Prosperity, Reducing Poverty, and Improving the Quality of Life.



Source: Regional Prosperity Initiative

### *Middle Flint WIOA*

The areas of Americus and Cordele have also undergone significant thinking about their economic development in the last few years. The One Sumter Initiative in Americus has a five year goal to improve the economic development, marketing and workforce development in Sumter County. Likewise, the Crisp County Industrial Development Council undertook an extensive look at their economic development and local economic and real estate conditions as a part of a study to assist the Cordele Inland Port, a multi-million dollar transfer station effort to expand capacity at the Port of Savannah for shipping container traffic.

In 2015 the Middle Flint area population was 108,517 which ranked as 19th (last) of the nineteen workforce areas.

Middle Flint Workforce Development Board (WDB) has concerns that several of the growth occupations listed on following pages have low paying wages, usually have no fringe benefits and can be part-time positions. The local WDB seeks to fund training that will lead to employment and self-sufficiency to enhance and enrich the lives of customers in the Middle Flint workforce area.

The civilian labor force for the Middle Flint Workforce Area in Georgia in May 2016 was 40,984, of which 38,475 were employed, 2,509 were unemployed. Middle Flint area counties have consistently had some of the highest unemployment rates within the State. Middle Flint unemployment rate for May 2016 was 6.1% while Georgia's unemployment rate for the same period was 4.7%. The Middle Flint area in May 2016 is ranked as #2 of the highest unemployment rates for the State workforce development regions.

Average weekly wages for the Middle Flint area for 4th Quarter 2015 was \$682 with an average annual wage of \$35,464. The averages for the Middle Flint area fall well below the Georgia average weekly wage of \$1,002 and an average annual wage of \$52,104.

Limited available transportation is also a major concern within the Middle Flint area. Limited availability of any transportation options, including even taxi service, restricts a customer's ability to have access to services and employment opportunities. Partners make an effort whenever feasible to go out into the rural counties to provide information, assistance and services to assist with transportation issues.

### *Existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors and occupations*

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Top employers in the region include one of the US Army's largest training bases as well as two Fortune 1000 Companies. This is the largest concentration of Fortune 1000 Companies in Georgia outside of Atlanta, and one of the largest concentrations of large companies in the Southeastern United States. Together, Ft. Benning, AFLAC and TSYS employ nearly 50% of all workers in the metropolitan Columbus area. These are also three of the largest employers in the region.

Other major employers in the region include Blue Cross/Blue Shield, Synovus (and Columbus Bank and Trust), local hospitals in Columbus, Cuthbert, Americus and Cordele, the public school systems in each of the 16 counties in the region, and the local universities. These colleges and universities include Columbus State University, Georgia Southwestern State University, Albany State University (all three a part of the University System of Georgia) as well as Andrew College, and private institutions in Columbus. There are also two technical colleges based in the region – Columbus Technical College and South Georgia Technical College in Americus. There are also two other technical colleges that serve the area: Albany Technical College and Southern Crescent Technical College.

The number of advanced manufacturers in Columbus is also significant with KIA Suppliers, NCR and Pratt and Whitney in the local industrial sectors. Other major employers in the region include Norboard in Cordele as well as Eaton-Cooper Lighting and Habitat for Humanity in Americus. In the rural counties, the industry mix includes agricultural and other manufacturing sectors. Despite these strengths, there is a need to grow and diversify further the industries represented in the area.

### *Employment needs of employers in those industry sectors and occupations*

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The following analysis of industrial sectors draws from data provided by Burning Glass (BGLI)– a private data provider that pulls information about job postings.

Most job postings for regional data in Burning Glass are in Healthcare and Social Assistance (4,725) followed by Finance and Insurance (4,385 positions available). Most of these Finance and Insurance positions are in the Columbus area; Columbus has over 4,000 of these listed jobs in the Lower Chattahoochee data. This matches anecdotal evidence from the companies in that sector (TSYS, AFLAC) that they are always on the search for qualified candidates to work. Another notable needed top industry sector that WIOA organizations often focus on is Transportation and Warehousing (3,320 jobs advertised in the region according to the Burning Glass database).

## Top industry Sectors, (Burning Glass - BGLI)

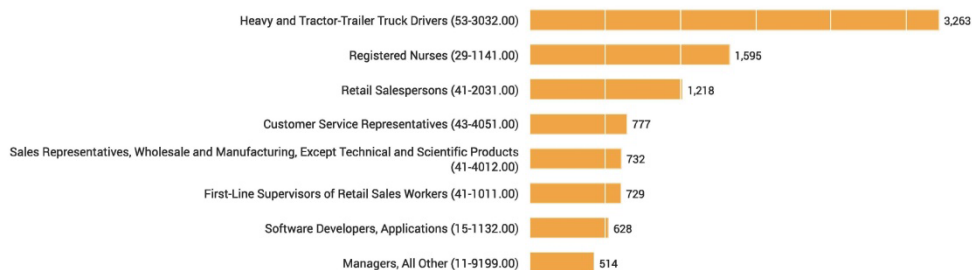


Source: BGLI

### *Listing of occupations in demand within the region*

Top Occupations in demand by far for Region 8 were for truck drivers (3,263) followed by Registered Nurses (1,595). Software Developers had a notable 628 positions available. Most of these positions are available in the Columbus market only. The top three occupations in demand that were listed were identical in both the Lower Chattahoochee and Middle Flint areas, as well as within the region.

### *Top Occupations (BGLI)*



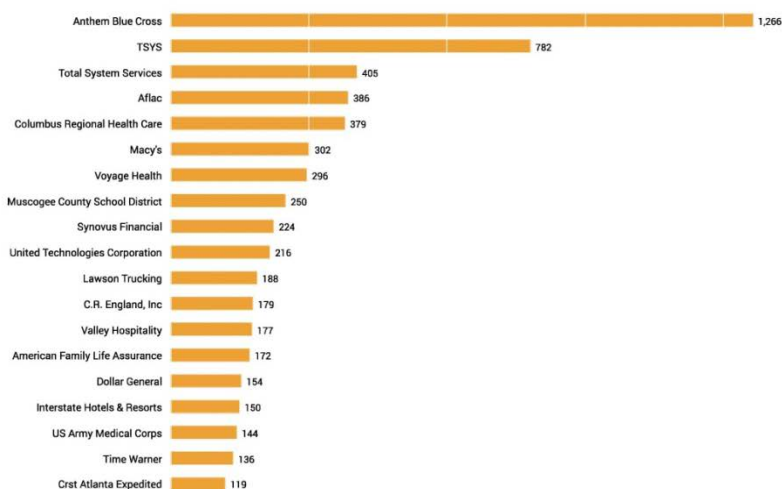
Source: BGLI

## **b. Knowledge and skills needed to meet the employment needs of the employers in the region**

*Provide an analysis of the knowledge and skills needed to meet the employment needs of the employers in the region, including employment needs in in-demand industry sectors and occupations.*

A 2013 analysis conducted by the Columbus Chamber of Commerce and Columbus Technical College indicates that the local workforce area is facing the following key workforce issues as it continues to prepare for economic and population growth: 1- Recruitment of Skilled Workers, 2- Gaps in Work Ethic and Basic Skills, 3- Inadequate Support Services. Each of these issues is addressed here, followed by a discussion of the in-demand sectors and occupations.

### Top Employers



Source: BGLI

The company with the largest recent demand for workers is Anthem Blue Cross (1,266). This is because Anthem Blue Cross recently opened a new call center facility in the Columbus Technology Park and are actively hiring for that facility. Other major employers in Columbus routinely have openings available and are searching for employees - TSYS (782), AFLAC (386) and Synovus (224). It is indicative of the size of the Columbus job market that most of the largest employers are located there. Those companies looking for employees outside of the Columbus market are trucking companies like C.R. England and Crst Atlanta. The other major employers looking for employees are service, retail and healthcare-related companies.

In the Lower Chattahoochee Area plan, there is a significant discussion of the employment needs of the IT and FinTech companies based in Columbus. The Columbus area has become an important center of activity for these businesses with several Fortune 1000 companies headquartered there. It is critical for the regional economy that these businesses have the employees they need to be successful. Recommendations in this report included building the digital skills of citizens in the region to prepare for a 21st century workforce needs, as well as a targeted effort to ensure that the Fortune 1000 companies in the region are able to attract, and critically, to retain top engineering talent.

### c. Workforce in the region

*Provide an analysis of the workforce in the region, including current labor force employment, unemployment data, information on labor market trends and the educational and skill levels of the workforce in the region, including individuals with barriers to employment. List all data sources used to gather this information.*

The age of the working population in the region trends slightly older than the state average, as there are fewer future young entrants into the workforce and more who are 65+ and likely exiting the workforce than is true, on average, across the state. For those in their working prime, there are fewer middle age professionals in the region (which would account for fewer families).

#### Age of population 15+

	<b>GDEcD Region 8</b>	<b>Georgia</b>
<b>0-15</b>	20.46%	21.40%
<b>15 – 24</b>	15.26%	14.30%
<b>25 – 34</b>	13.57%	13.80%
<b>35 – 44</b>	12.50%	14.40%
<b>45 – 54</b>	13.95%	14.40%
<b>55 – 64</b>	11.80%	11.00%
<b>65+</b>	12.45%	10.70%

Source: ESRI Business Analyst, RVRC Analysis

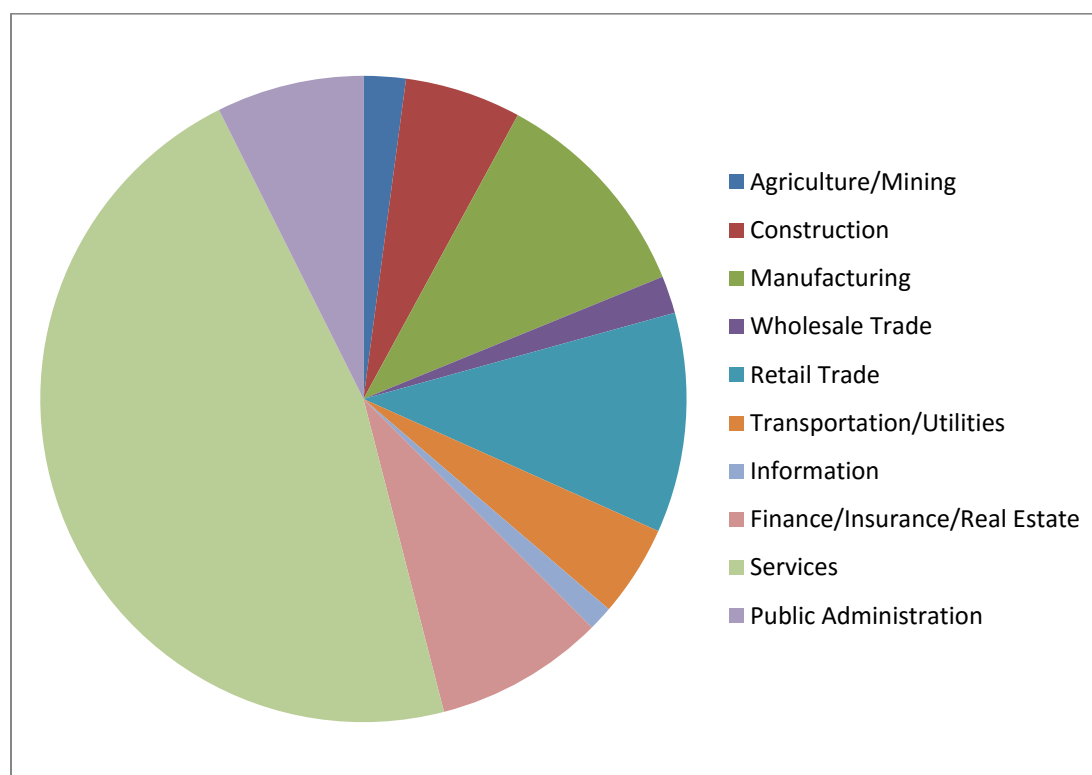
#### Current labor force employment

##### **ESRI Business Analyst – 2016 Employed Population 16+ by Industry**

	<b>GDEcD Region 8</b>	<b>Georgia</b>
Total	149,694	4,523,860
Agriculture/Mining	2.1%	1.1%
Construction	5.8%	6.4%
Manufacturing	10.9%	10.2%
Wholesale Trade	1.9%	2.6%
Retail Trade	11.0%	12.2%
Transportation/Utilities	4.6%	6.4%
Information	1.2%	2.0%
Finance/Insurance/Real Estate	8.5%	6.2%
Services	46.6%	47.8%
Public Administration	7.4%	5.0%

Source: ESRI Business Analyst

The area has higher than state average numbers of workers employed in Public Administration (7.4% as opposed to 5.0%) and Agriculture/Mining (2.1% as opposed to 1.1%). These increased percentages are influenced by the presence of Fort Benning and the increased federal payroll in the area and the rural nature of work in much of the region. There is also a higher than average representation in the area in Finance/Insurance/Real Estate (8.5% vs. 6.2%) due to the presence in Columbus of AFLAC, TSYS, and Synovus.



Source: ESRI Business Analyst

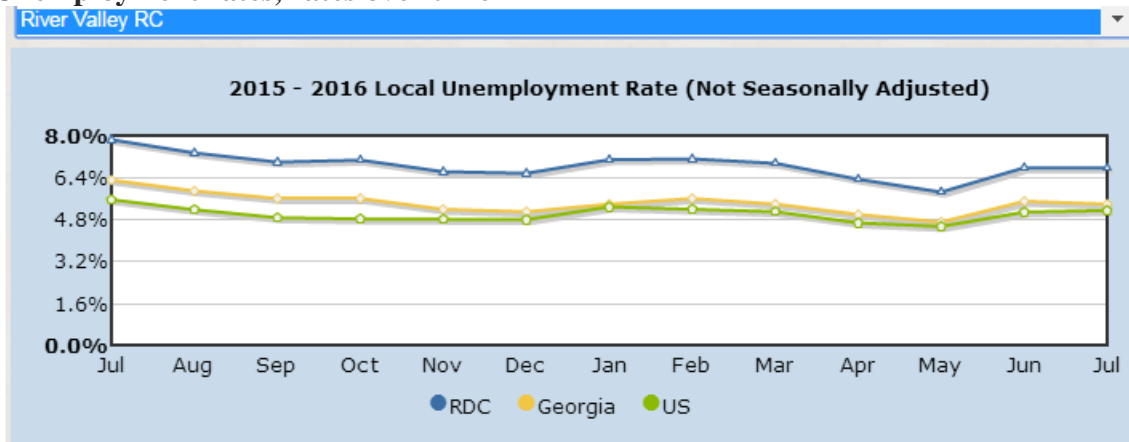
The numbers of businesses in all industries were expected to grow from 2013 to 2015, as indicated from the most recent data available from the Georgia Department of Labor. The number of those employed in Government, Information and Agriculture, during the same period, was expected to decline.

### *Unemployment data*

The Unemployment Rate in the region over the past 12 months has shown similar trends as the unemployment rates for the state of Georgia and the nation. But, while the trends are similar, the regional unemployment rate

has been consistently higher, showing a higher rate between 0.8 and 1.5 %. The most recent unemployment rate as of the writing of this report (May, 2016) was 5.8% in the region, 5.0% in Georgia, and 4.5% in the US.

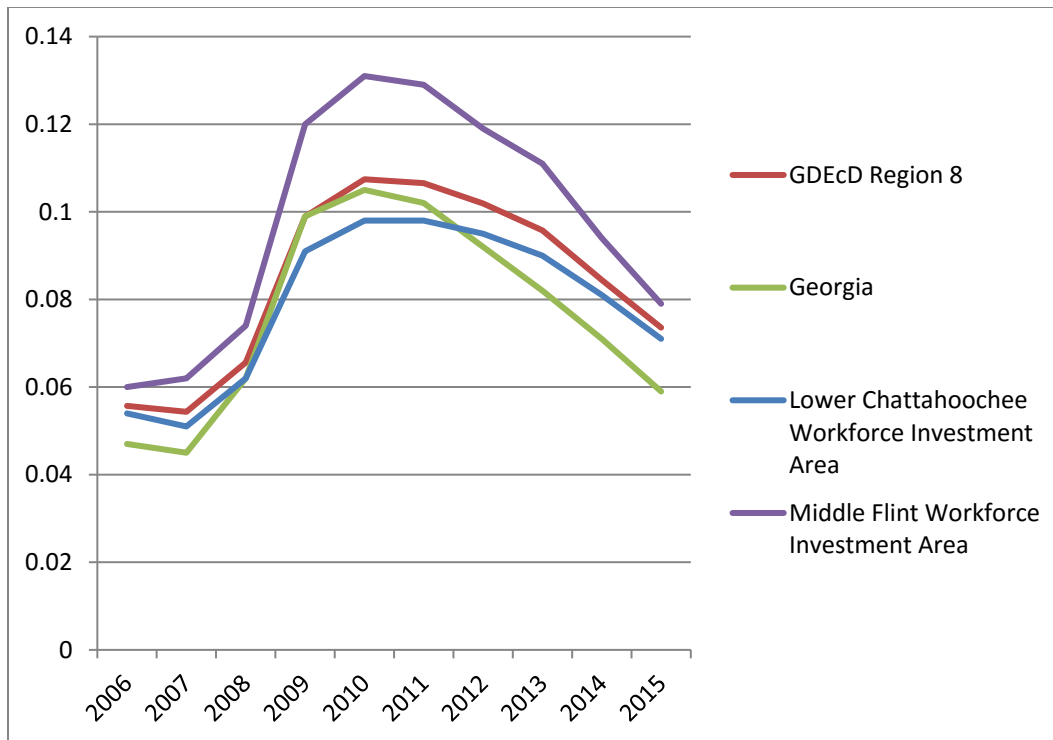
### Unemployment rates, rates over time



Source: GDOL

The 10 year unemployment rate shows that this region did not suffer the high peak of unemployment that the rest of the state did in the Great Recession of 2009, but the region also did not recover as quickly. In fact, the gap in the unemployment rate between GDEcD Region 8 and the rest of the state is greater in 2015 (7.3% in Region 8 vs. 5.9% in Georgia) than in 2006 (5.1% vs. 4.7%)





Source: GDOL, RVRC Analysis

#### Information on labor market trends

#### Educational and skill levels of the workforce in the region

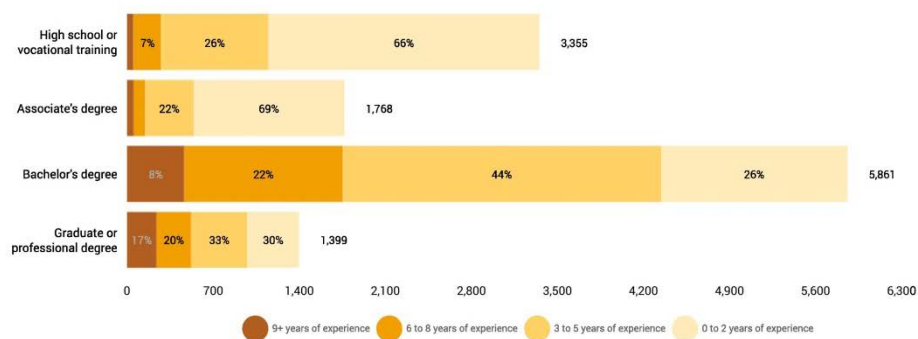
Within the region, the rate of adult residents without a high school diploma roughly matches the state average (14.3% as compared to 14.2%), but the percentages of residents in the GDEcD Region 8 with a Bachelor's Degree or higher professional degree are notably lower than state averages (21.3% as compared to 29.3%)

#### Educational attainment (ESRI)

	GDEcD Region 8	Georgia
<b>Total</b>	<b>251,816</b>	<b>6,724,494</b>
Less than 9th Grade	6.0%	5.3%
9th - 12th Grade, No Diploma	11.1%	8.9%
High School Graduate	25.6%	23.6%
GED/Alternative Credential	5.5%	4.8%
Some College, No Degree	23.6%	21.1%
Associate Degree	7.0%	7.0%
Bachelor's Degree	12.9%	18.3%
Graduate/Professional Degree	8.4%	11.0%

Source: ESRI Business Analyst, RVRC Analysis

The percentage of jobs requiring at least a Bachelor’s Degree or a graduate degree in the region is nearly 60% of all advertised jobs. However, the percentage of individuals with a bachelor or higher degree is only 21.3% of the adult population. This suggests a significant gap between the employment needs in the region and the skills of many members of the workforce.



Source: BGLI

### At Risk Populations

Some of the highest at-risk populations are teens who are neither working or in school. Based on Annie E Casey Foundation Kids Count data, this numbered a relatively high 5,000 youth in Congressional District 2, which includes most of the region (as well as portions of Albany, GA). The only county not included in this analysis for the region is Harris County and parts of Muscogee County at the far northern boundary of the region which is in Georgia Congressional District 3.

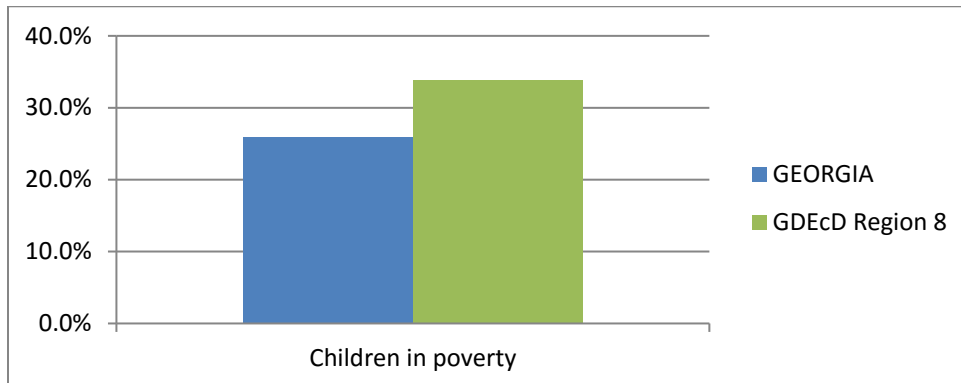
<i>Teens ages 16 to 19 not attending school and not working</i>		
Georgia, Congressional District 2	Number	5,000
	Percent	11%

Source: Kids Count – Annie E Cassy Foundation, Georgia Family Connections

## Children living in Poverty

Another example of at-risk populations is the percentage of children living in poverty. According to 2014 data, the most recent available, the percentage in the River Valley Region is higher than State averages.

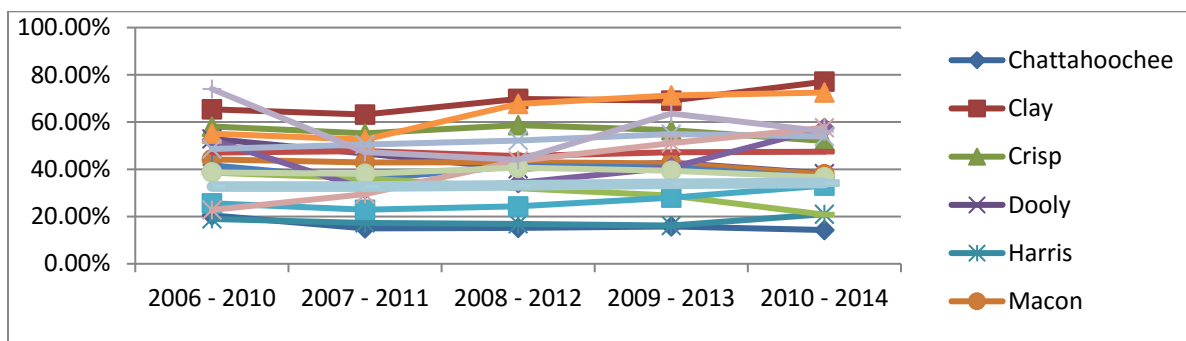
Disaggregating the data by county shows that some counties have a higher percentage of their children living in poverty than others, indicating pockets of poverty. This is shown in the difference in county data in Single Parent families shown below.



Source: Kids Count – Annie E Casey Foundation, Georgia Family Connections, RVRC Analysis

## Children living in single-parent families

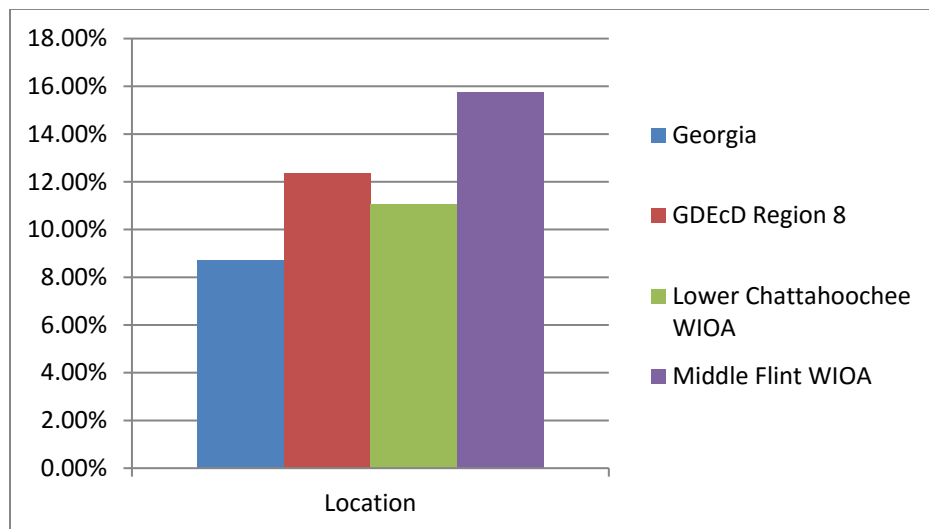
Clay and Macon Counties have the highest percentage of children living in single parent households. Often in single parent households, that parent juggles work, child care, and possibly training or schooling without a support network. Muscogee County's percentage of children living in single-parent households is also consistently higher than the state average, but the percentages in Harris and Chattahoochee Counties are well below the state averages. This suggests that the number of at-risk children is unevenly distributed across the region.



Source: Kids Count – Annie E Casey Foundation, Georgia Family Connections

### Children living in families where no parent has full-time, year-round employment

The percentage of children who are growing up in homes where no parent is working full time will take a toll on not only the family income but also the long-term prospects for success for both the children and the family. In 2014, the percentage of children in the region who have no household member working full time is a high 12.4% compared to the state average of 8.7 %. At 15.8%, the number of children living in families where no parent has full-time, year-round employment are significantly higher in the Middle Flint Workforce area than both state averages and that of the Lower Chattahoochee Workforce area.



Source: Kids Count – Annie E Casey Foundation, Georgia Family Connections, RVRC Analysis

Other populations who are at risk are identified in the State’s WIOA plan.

Special Populations at Risk	Georgia
Ex-Offenders	19,665
Homeless	4,977
Youth Aged out of Foster Care	728
English Language Learners	523,087
Low Levels of Literacy	1,082,210
Single Parents	703,815
Persons below Poverty Level	1,763,339
Disconnected Youth	56,000
SNAP Recipients (past 12 months)	505,12

Source: State WIOA Plan

The higher unemployment rates, lower percentage of college degrees, and higher levels of poverty show up in the lower median income (\$39,342 for the region) and per capita income (\$22,237) than state income (\$50,384 and \$26,467 respectively).

#### Median Household Income

	GDEcD Region 8	Georgia
2016 Median Household Income	\$39,342	\$50,384
2016 Per Capita Income	\$22,237	\$26,467

Source: ESRI Business Analyst, RVRC Analysis

#### d. Workforce development activities (including education and training) in the region

*Provide an analysis of the workforce development activities (including education and training) in the region, including an analysis of the strengths, weaknesses and capacity of such services to address the identified education and skill needs of the workforce, and the employment needs of employers in the region.*

Workforce development activities in the area include state initiatives, the work of the Lower Chattahoochee and the Middle Flint WIOAs and their partners, the work of Columbus Technical College and South Georgia Technical College as well as an increased attention to workforce issues by the Greater Columbus Chamber of Commerce, One Sumter, and the Cordele Industrial Board among others. These combined resources are being coordinated and deployed throughout the region. The strengths, weaknesses and capacity of these programs are discussed below.

#### Workforce Activities

The Region utilizes labor market information provided by the Georgia Department of Labor, local Career Centers, the Georgia Department of Economic Development, Census Information, employer feedback, and community identified needs to develop the list of demand and growth occupations for the Region.

Region 8 has three public higher education institutions (Georgia Southwestern (Americus), Columbus State (Columbus), Albany State University (Cordele), and part of the Georgia University System. Also, there are ten other private colleges/universities within the Region. The Region also includes Columbus Technical College (Columbus), South Georgia Technical College (Americus), and Miller-Mott Technical College (Columbus).

Region 8 also has two designated One-Stop Centers (Americus and Columbus). The One-Stop Centers under WIOA will be competitively procured by a bidding process in 2017. In addition, public libraries and other access points are available within the region for individuals to receive career information. WIOA Area 14 has a mobile unit that can be utilized in the area for various functions.

The Region provides Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) services with area colleges and technical colleges and other approved eligible training providers. ITAs are in demand in growth and occupational areas where employment opportunities are expected.

The Region provides Case Management, and Training to service providers approved by the Local Workforce Boards (WDB). On-the-Job Training (OJT) is contracted through competitive procurement and awarded to providers by the WIOA WDBs.

OJT is a business service which engages local area employers to provide employment training opportunities to eligible WIOA customers. OJT provides employer 50 to 75 percent reimbursement for participant training costs. OJT is a direct hands-on-training for employment opportunities.

GED PLUS (Work Readiness, Work Experience) service is available for eligible adults, dislocated workers, and youth who are in need of obtaining a GED diploma. Work Readiness includes Soft Skills Training, Resume Development, Job Search Training, Financial Budgeting, Interviewing Skills, and Job Placement is imbedded with the GED PLUS activity. Work Experience is a business service which engages local area businesses to provide work sites for hands-on-training opportunities whereby wages and workman's comp liability insurance is provided by the service provider.

Our region benefits from having two technical colleges Columbus Technical College as well as South Georgia Technical College. Both are strategically located throughout our region to ensure individuals have access to a variety of in-demand training programs. We have teamed up with the Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG), which the state has identified as the primary mechanism for creating a job-driven education. Technical colleges are actively involved in providing both jobs and workers to fill them, workers who by all accounts had both academic and employment barriers to employment.

Additionally we are partners with the University System of Georgia (USG), Columbus State University as well as the Columbus State University Continuing Education Department, which is also located on CSU's campus. Our region has had a long-term working relationship with both learning institutions. One of our Providers are located on Columbus Technical College campus.

Our Region partners with non- profit as well as for-profit education and training providers; these partnerships allows our Region to provide customers with educational programs that will give our customers a full array of choices; which was mandated by USDOL. Upon successful completion of the training, candidates are then offered first consideration for employment opportunities.

## Work Readiness

### High Demand Career Initiative

The State's High Demand Career Initiative (HDCI) was kicked off in April of 2014. HDCI was created to allow those state partners involved in training Georgia's future workforce – primarily USG, TCSG, and WFD – to hear directly from the private sector about specific workforce needs (i.e., degrees/majors, certificates, courses, skillsets, etc.). With that goal in mind, GDEcD partnered with the Carl Vinson Institute of Government at the University of Georgia to organize 13 listening sessions around the state in 2014, including one in Columbus. At each session, private-sector participants were asked to discuss workforce needs and challenges with Georgia workforce training leaders. Representatives from GDEcD, TCSG, and USG were on hand to connect businesses with current resources, and develop solutions to workforce challenges. Over 80 private sector partners representing targeted industries participated in the sessions.

## Common Trends

During the 13 meetings across Georgia, there were certain key trends that were common among many of the represented companies and industries. (1) There is a growing problem with an aging workforce throughout the state. Many employers have older employees and expect a large percentage of employees to retire in the near future. Specifically, 19 companies in a variety of industries specifically cited aging workforce as a concern. (2) Soft skills/workplace skills are a crucial need. Nearly every employer discussed the importance of soft skills, such as communication, teamwork, problem solving, intellectual curiosity, critical thinking, and work ethic. Many employers stated that they found these skills especially lacking in younger employees. (3) Employers also have increasing difficulty in recruiting employees that can pass background screenings and drug tests. (4) Additionally, there is great demand for basic educational skills. Employers stated that they were looking for individuals with "work ready skills," such as proficiency in reading, mathematics, statistics, and writing. (5) There is a great need to begin introducing STEM to students at a much younger age. Employers reported that STEM career fields need to be introduced to students at a younger age and made a key part of the curriculum. Employers agreed that

educators play a large role making STEM fields appealing to youth. Further, companies in various sectors highlighted the need to attract more women and minorities into STEM-related jobs. There is a talent shortage in these career fields, and recruiting women and minorities would help to better fill the talent pipeline. Companies seek to match Georgia's diverse population with hiring practices and employee make up. (6) Another common trend was the shortage of local skilled trades' workers in the state. Employers expressed interest in hiring Georgians, but found many lacked the requisite skills. This was expressed across many of the industries, but it was especially prevalent in the industries that require skilled workers, such as manufacturing and entertainment (television & film production).

To assist in solving these problems, many employers expressed the need for more apprenticeships, internships, on-the-job (OJT) training, and co-op programs. Employers that currently use internships and co-op programs find these programs valuable in identifying, assessing, and training future employees. Employers also emphasized the importance of OJT in the employee development process. These programs help them fill positions that require years of specialized experience in addition to relevant training or educational background requirements. Several employers expressed a desire for assistance from the state with OJT training. Additionally, there was a desire for more productive partnerships with workforce development resources. Employers in various sectors reported that partnerships with LWDAs, local boards of education, TCSG, and USG institutions were very productive. Georgia Quick Start was a key part of the hiring and training processes for many companies.

### Most High Demand Careers & Skills

Participating companies identified 162 unique high demand careers and 96 unique high demand skills and attributes. Many of the skills and careers crossed industries. The critical careers mentioned most often by participating companies and the critical skills and attributes that were most often identified by the participants are listed below.

#### High Demand Careers

- Mechanical Engineer
- Software Developer
- Electrical Engineer
- Business Support Roles (Accounting, HR, Marketing)
- Welder
- Computer Programmer
- Machinist
- Maintenance Technician
- Computer Numerical Control (CNC) Operator
- Manufacturing Associate
- Programmable Logic Controller (PLC)



## High Demand Skills/Attributes

- Soft Skills
- Robotics
- Mathematics
- Analytical
- Work Ethic
- Business Acumen
- Customer Focus
- Problem Solver
- Project Management Teamwork

## Key Sectors

The HDCL identified nine different industry sectors that were outlined in the State WIOA plan with specific careers and skills/attributes that are needed to meet the future demands of Georgia. These nine sectors are:

- Agriculture and Food
- Aerospace
- Automotive Manufacturing
- Defense
- Film, Televisions and Interactive Entertainment
- Healthcare and Life Sciences
- Information Technology
- Logistics and Transportation
- Manufacturing

Several of these sectors have application and match not only the existing industry in the area, but also the identified Key Sectors as outlined in the Columbus 2025 plan. More on the specific careers and skills needed for these careers can be found in the state WIOA plan.

## Recommended Steps and Programs to address these deficiencies in the Lower Chattahoochee WIOA

- a. Launch communication campaigns to reach different target audiences about job opportunities, to include information about career pathways opportunities, and local higher education institutions that offer related degree programs through the one-stop centers. Include a series of presentations in neighborhoods, churches, and other gathering places.
- b. Expand local involvement through collaboration with the local school district, technical colleges, and the manufacturing sector to educate young people on the value of learning a skills trade. For several years, the Muscogee County School District and Columbus Technical College have been instrumental in spearheading a successful initiative with the manufacturing sector to provide apprenticeship training for high school students. The local workforce area will build on its existing partnership and collaboration with these partners to involve WIOA as another venue and service in promoting the Go Build Georgia Initiative in our local workforce area. South Georgia Technical College has been doing the same in the Middle Flint WIOA area.

- c. Increase opportunities for high school and college students to acquire work readiness and work ethics through work experience during summer months; in addition to school- year internships primarily for out-of-school and college students. To increase access to services and opportunities that result in an increase in graduation rates and entry into institutions of higher learning or employment in high growth, high-demand occupations.
- d. Work with regional non-profit organizations, government entities and businesses to identify volunteer and internship opportunities for high school students.
- e. Continue to evaluate additional education and training programs and/or services needed to prepare the workforce for projected positions.
- f. Continue to collaborate with stakeholders to develop continual strategies.

### Recommended Steps and Programs to address these deficiencies in the Middle Flint WIOA

In the Middle Flint area, there are an array of WIOA services to include Career Services and Training Services to the following group of adults, dislocated workers and youth. These services are provided through partnerships, Individual Training Accounts (ITA's), On-the-Job Training (OJT), and Work Experience (WE).

#### Career Services

Career services include the following items and are provided based on the needs of the customer.

- Outreach, intake, and orientation to services
- Eligibility Determination for assistance
- Assessments of skills levels, aptitude, interest, abilities and supportive service needs
- Career counseling as necessary
- Job search / placement assistance
- Information on Labor Market Information (LMI), demand occupation, education requirements, wages analysis
- Information on Eligible Training Providers List
- Information on supportive services available in area and referral to those services if needed
- Information on filing Unemployment Insurance compensation claims
- Comprehensive and specialized assessments (skill levels, interviewing, evaluation, diagnostic testing
- Counseling (individual or group)
- Development of Individual Employment Plan (IEP)
- Work readiness services including resume development, interviewing skills, attendance punctuality, appropriate dress in the workplace, communication skills, how to conduct a job search etc..

- Financial literacy services which may include developing personal/household budgets, banking services, applying for credit or loans, credit score and analysis, how to maintain credit score, understanding payroll deductions etc..

Career services may be offered by or in coordination with partner agencies, community resources, or WIOA Service Providers.

### Training Services

Training services are for individuals who need more intensive level of services to obtain employment or have been retained in employment. The following criteria is reviewed to ensure that individuals are in need of training: (1) Individual must meet the WIOA eligibility requirements, (2) determined in need of training services based on an assessment and evaluation, have knowledge and ability to successfully participate in a training service, (3) desired program of training will enable employment opportunities in local area or reasonable commuting distance and (4) meet the qualification requirements for desired training program.

Approved Eligible Training Providers Lists (ETPL) provide information on available providers and programs. ETPL is available via the Internet or other resources.

### WIOA Services

WIOA services in the local area include comprehensive and specialized assessments of educational and skill levels identified services needed by customers. This includes: Development of Individual Service Strategy (ISS) for youth customers; Development of Individual Employment Plans (IEP) for adults and dislocated workers; Referral to community services and educational and training opportunities or; Case management and service coordination for customers. WIOA funded training activities include: (1) Individual Training Accounts (ITA's) for individuals seeking educational and occupational skills training available by eligible training providers such as public colleges, Technical Colleges and Universities and private training providers. (2) GED Remediation/Work Readiness and Work Experience which provides basic skills literacy remediation to individuals who lack a high school diploma or GED. Individuals receive instructor led remediation over the four subject areas of the GED examination with the goal of GED attainment. Work Readiness provides soft skills, employability skills, and life skills training to assist individuals with obtaining employment and retention in employment. Work Experience provides work based learning opportunities where individuals are placed on actual worksites with participating employers and (3) On-The-Job Training (OJT) offers work based learning opportunities where individuals

are placed with an employer for a designated employment position and training period. Training Agreements are developed to identify job duties and skills to be learned during the training period. Employers are reimbursed 50% - 75% of the participants' wages during the training period. Individuals are placed in permanent employment upon successful completion of the OJT activity.

#### Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Services (GVR)

Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Services (GVR) provides services to individuals with disabilities. Services include education; work based learning and training services in preparation for employment. Services include counseling, assistive technology, job placements, vocational assessments, medical evaluations, work adjustments, and physical restoration services.

#### South Georgia Technical College (SGTC) Adult Education

SGTC Adult Education provides remediation on basic literacy skills to assist individuals in GED attainment. English as Second Language (ESL) classes are available as well. SGTC has multiple site locations in the area which offer both day and evening classes to accommodate individuals' schedules. SGTC also offers a GED program for criminal offenders at the local Correctional Institution. The offender program goal is to assist with removing barriers to employment to provide the resources needed to affectively transition offenders into employment or post-secondary educational opportunities.

Type of Training Services	Description of Service, Requirements and Providers Contact Information
<b>Individual Training Accounts (ITA's)</b>	Individuals that are interested in attending occupational skills training under an Individual Training Account (ITA) with a Georgia approved eligible training provider such as Technical College, public College or University, or private training provider. Program of study must be a locally approved training program which has an expected employment opportunity available upon completion of training. <b>Eligible Training Provider List is available at <a href="http://www.workreadyga.org">www.workreadyga.org</a></b>
<b>Requirements</b>	Individuals must meet income eligibility requirements for Adults (ages 18 – up) and determination of need and suitability for training. Individuals who have been dislocated from their employment (Dislocated Worker) due to an employment layoff, business or plant closure, and/or reduction in labor force who are determined to be in need of training to return to employment. Individuals must apply for financial aid if available thru training institution. Training must be completed within 2 years (104 weeks) and cost of training is within local training limits of \$5,000 maximum. Individuals interested in attending a 4 year training institution must be a junior or senior academic status to be considered for services. Individuals must be a full-time student (12 or more credit hours per training period).
<b>Benefits</b>	Financial assistance with costs of tuition, books, and training related supplies

	after other forms of financial aid have been applied. Supportive service may be available to assist with costs of attending training such as travel to training etc... Supportive services are paid based on individual's need and daily attendance in training as verified by Attendance Timesheet. Payments are not paid for days not in training, holidays, sick days, or breaks between semesters.
<b>Local Approved Training Providers</b>	<b>South Georgia Technical College AND Georgia Southwestern State University (Americus &amp; Cordele Campuses) Must be a Junior or Senior Academic status.</b>
<b>Out of Area Training Providers</b>	Approved Training Providers which are located outside the Middle Flint eight county area may be approved on a case by case basis. Training Providers must be located within a reasonable commuting travel distance (60 miles) from the individual's residence. Out of area approved Training Providers within commuting distance are Albany Technical College, Albany State University, Fort Valley State University, Central Georgia Technical College, Southern Crescent Technical College, Columbus Technical College, Columbus State University, Truck Driver Institute (TDI). Training costs must be within local training limits.

### Strengths of the Region

The Region has a number of higher educational institutions (Columbus State University, Georgia Southwestern College, Albany State University, Columbus Technical College, South Georgia Technical College) and private educational and training providers. All of the mentioned educational institutions are located throughout the Region to ensure individuals have access to a variety of educational and training services.

The Region is fortunate to have these resources, and they are a critical part of our overall strategy. We use these resources in part to provide training for a wide range of programs. The WIOA funded GED/Work Readiness/Work Experience activity as well as other WIOA programs provided help strengthen the area by focusing on educational improvement, improvement in soft skills training, and providing work experience which helps with work based learning opportunities. The Technical College Adult Education programs also offer basic skills literacy improvement training which strengthens the educational level. The Region also operates an On-the-Job (OJT) work based learning activity in the Region. OJT connects job seekers and employers who have job openings. OJT services have been an ongoing training activity in the Region for more than 29 years. The two Technical College systems have developed strong partnerships with businesses such as Pratt Whitney, KODAK, AFLAC, Blue Cross Blue

Shield, John Deere, Caterpillar, Kauffman Tire, Weyerhaeuser, Tyson Foods, and Metro Power. South Georgia Technical College serves as the eastern U.S training site for Caterpillar.

Training is available through Columbus Technical College and the South Georgia Technical College for these business partnerships. Training through these partnerships lead to employment opportunities with higher rates of pay. The South Georgia Technical College also offer the Business Enterprise Center (BEC) which is available to assist businesses to start up using its facility space, computers, and equipment as they begin to set up new businesses in the area.

The Region has several initiatives such as the Columbus 2025 Chamber initiative, the One Sumter Chamber initiative, as well as Crisp County Industrial Development Authority that are studying the economic issues facing their areas in order be better prepared for the future growth and prosperity of the Region.

The Region offers many opportunities for personal growth, education, and career/job employment success. Our Region continues to experience growth in high-demand sectors, healthcare as well as manufacturing and transportation. One of those focuses is on the industry sector and high-demand occupations, one example is healthcare, (LPNs, RNs, MAs, Dental Hygienists/Assistant, etc.).

Georgia Department of Labor (GDOL) Career Centers are focusing on new strategies to provide services that extended beyond the idea of being the Unemployment Insurance (UI) office. They are working with area partners and local employers to place customers in the right job fit or helping them assess the training opportunity to build skills with the goal of achieving long term job retention. Another goal of GDOL is to lessen the number of customers that are constant repeaters seeking employment services.

Georgia BEST is being implemented in the WIOA Region by funding training services through Paxen Learning. Paxen staff has become “GeorgiaBEST trainers” and can include this soft skills initiative in addition to their existing Work Readiness activities.

The Region’s Employer Committees provide a link between core partners and the business community. Provides a venue for local business representatives to identify needs and seek guidance from other community employers who may be faced with the same issues. These groups can identify workshops, provide guest speakers on specific subject areas of interest, assist with sponsoring job fairs, and allow employers to form a peer group for seeking guidance or information sharing.

## Weaknesses for the Region

One of the region's weakness is we do not always benefit from those program successes. Our region focuses on the industry sector/high-demand occupations, one example is healthcare, (LPNs, RNs, MAs, Dental Hygienist/Assistant, etc.) But, once trained, many seek jobs outside the region; many relocate to Atlanta or other Northern States.

However, the weakness in our region, is to market strategies to attract career/job seekers who are willing to stay or relocate to our region.

The weaknesses of the Workforce system in the Region's rural counties revolve not only around a lack of transportation but also a lack of employment opportunities. The rural counties in the Region do not have an available mass transit system which could enable individuals to readily attend training and employment opportunities. The rural area of the Region also has high poverty levels which prevents individuals from having personal transportation. Youth customers do not always have personal transportation and therefore have no options to get to training or employment. Without reliable transportation options, their ability to attend the strong technical and university systems are very limited. This is largely related to the large geographic region with a dispersed population. There is a rural transit system, but it is typically not used because of scheduling issues and limited availability. The other major issue for the rural area of the Region is the lack of employment opportunities. High unemployment rates combined with lack of opportunity are reflected by the fact there have not been enough new industries. This also means that where there are jobs, they are often low wages. Employers often want to hire individuals with more than high school education and skill level, however, the wage levels are not equivalent for those requirements. Individuals who seek post-secondary educational training generally increase their skill level and are able to earn the higher wages. Individuals often are required to commute to employment opportunities within the Region or out of the area for better employment opportunities.

The local area of Middle Flint lacks available childcare options which are a barrier to employment as well as some rural counties in the Lower Chattahoochee area. During the down-turn in the economy, a number of public daycare facilities closed. Americus and Cordele being two of the largest cities in the Middle Flint area had the largest number of public daycare center facilities. Some of the more rural counties throughout the Region have limited or no available daycare facilities. Many families have to rely upon family or friends to provide daycare for their children. As this can be an unreliable source of

childcare, many families struggle to maintain employment. Public daycare in the local area operates on a Monday – Friday, dayshift only operational hours. This presents challenges for individuals who work evenings or weekends.

### Capacity

The Region hopes to improve capacity by developing strategies to improve the One Stop services to meet the needs of eligible participants, ensure staff and Service Providers have training to improve the flow of participants through services, implementing best practices, and building effective relationships with Regional partners. The local area services and training will focus on the following:

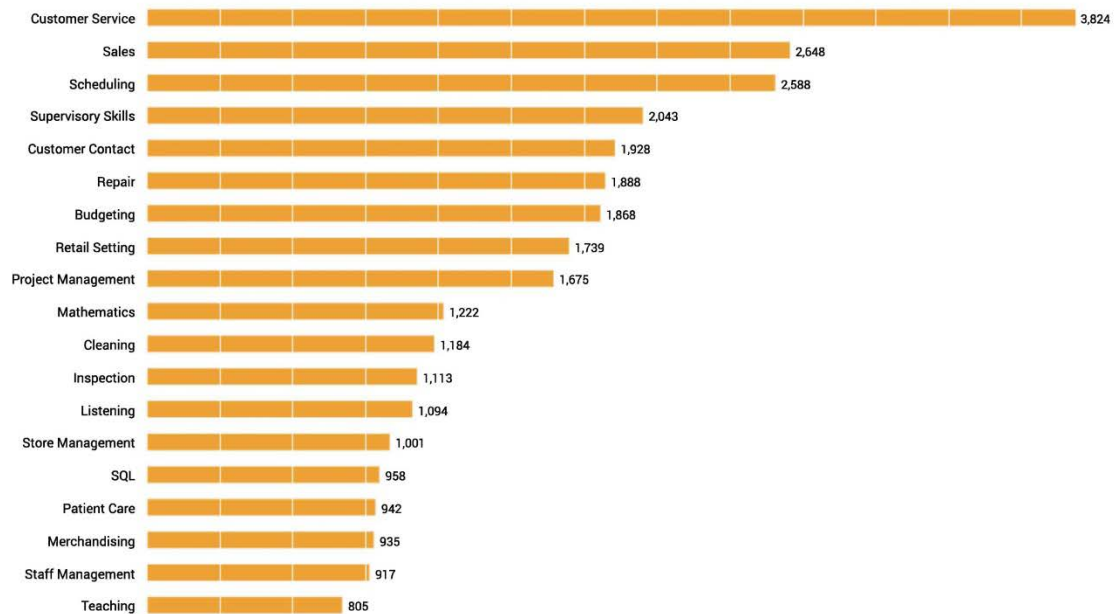
- Increasing the number of employers utilizing OJT and/or incumbent services
- Achieving and accurately reporting WIOA Performance measures
- Providing quality educational and training services to meet needs of participants and employers
- Identifying demand occupations and providing services to meet the demand
- Building relationships with Partners to enhance service delivery in area
- Providing training opportunities to Service Providers to ensure best practices are utilized
- Participation with local Employer Committee groups and improving business services
- Expand work based learning opportunities in local area employers with Work Experience activity.

Local areas within the Region will continue to work with training providers (Columbus State University, Columbus Technical College, South Georgia Technical College, Georgia Southwestern State University, Albany State University and other providers) to ensure that a wide array of training programs and options are available to customers. Business services is available to local area business/employers through On-the-Job Training (OJT) and Work Experience activities. OJT Service Provider will recruit and engage the Region's area employers to participate in OJT services to increase enrollments. The Region has expanded the Work Experience (WE – work based learning) activity to the Adult & Dislocated Workers individuals by development of employer worksites to expand work based learning for individuals enrolled in Work Experience activities.



## Employment needs of employers in the Region

### *Top Skills*



Source: BGLI

Top skills required by employers looking for work are focused on customer services (which matches state and local surveys of companies noting the importance of soft skills for employment). In fact, 2 of the top 5 skills employers are looking for in this area rely heavily on soft skills: Customer Service (3,824 job advertisements) and Customer Contact (1,928 job advertisements). Software skills, including mathematics, SQL, and Mainframe expertise are also notable.

### Top Computer Program Skills Required

Microsoft Excel

Microsoft PowerPoint

Microsoft Windows

JAVA

JavaScript

LINUX

SQL Server

.NET Programming

Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP)

C++

jQuery

Scrum

Word Processing

Source: State WIOA Plan

## Statewide Successes of the High Demand Career Initiative

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### Expansion of Strategic Industries Workforce Development Grant (SIWDG)

The SIWDG is a financial award for TCSG students and was first presented by the Governor's Office in the fall of 2013. It awards funds to students meeting certain criteria who are enrolled in approved programs. As a result of the 2014 HDCI meetings, Governor Deal proposed to expand the target areas of this grant to include: film set design, computer programming, precision manufacturing, and certified engineering assistant. The General Assembly approved the Governor's proposal during the 2015 legislative session.

### High School Computer Programming

In response to the need consistently expressed by HDCI-participating companies for Software Developers and Computer Programmers, Governor Deal proposed that the State Board of Education amend state policy to allow computer programming courses to satisfy core requirements in the place of math, science and foreign language in high schools.

### University System of Georgia (USG) Cyber Security Initiative

During the HDCI meeting in Augusta, which was focused on the information technology industry, there was a consistent message from employers about the growing need for cyber security workers in the Augusta area. As a result, USG created the Cyber Security Initiative in late 2014 with the mission of providing recommendations on how USG can develop and deliver more cyber security capable graduates. The committee is composed of members from seven USG institutions with cyber security education capabilities. This committee prepared recommendations in a comprehensive USG plan that was presented to senior USG leaders and ultimately the Board of Regents for approval. Topics under consideration include: creating new degree programs, revising certain existing degree programs, inter-institutional standardization and collaborations, prior learning assessments and creation of courses delivered by our Professional and Continuing Education programs providing graduates with certifications to meet specific industry skills needs. Programs will be combined with distance learning technologies and fully integrated into the USG career service organizations at each institution. Columbus State University is a key home for this initiative, and is actively working with students on career pathways in cyber security.

### Georgia Film Academy

USG and TCSG are working together to establish the Georgia Film Academy by building key partnerships with leaders in the film, television, and entertainment industries. These partnerships will assist USG in determining how current and future offerings can be used to address workforce needs in these industries. Recently, funding was approved during the legislative session for this effort. The Georgia Film Academy has a campus at Columbus State University. Andrew College and Southwest Georgia University also have film programs not directly associated with the Georgia Film Academy.

### Georgia WorkSmart

In response to employers consistently expressing the value of work-based learning programs and encouraging the development of more programs throughout the state, GDECD launched a statewide work-based learning initiative, Georgia WorkSmart. The program assists participating companies in developing, implementing, and hiring for apprenticeships, internships, co-ops, and other work-based training models.

#### e. Strategic vision and goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce

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*Provide a description of the local board's strategic vision and goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce (including youth and individuals with barriers to employment), including goals relating to the performance accountability measures based on primary indicators of performance in order to support regional economic growth and economic self-sufficiency.*

#### The strategic vision of the Lower Chattahoochee WIOA is:

Lower Chattahoochee Workforce Area 14 will create a seamless workforce development system that increases the pool of job ready, skilled workers through access to education and employment, programs, services, and training opportunities that foster career pathways designed to enhance the skill sets and marketability of its citizens; thus, resulting in a rise out of poverty to self-sufficiency;

Seek to leverage the area's strong visibility to raise public awareness of the growing sustainable job opportunities in the various high-demand, target sectors. Doing this by specifically reaching out to residents and students underrepresented in the job market: displaced worker, ex-offenders, veterans, long-term unemployed, youth connected to the foster care system, single pregnant women /parents, disabled individuals, homeless individuals, older individuals, and low income or poverty level individuals.

Address the needs and demands of local businesses for skilled workers and the economic growth of our communities; to enhance the productivity and competitiveness of our citizenry, strengthen the collaborative partnership of economic development businesses; and, ensure the transparency and accountability of workforce funds; and, align programs and leverage local resources that create an effective and efficient workforce development system that will continue to work to eliminate barriers to employment through job-driven training, internships and education.

#### **The strategic vision of the Middle Flint WIOA is:**

The vision of the Middle Flint Workforce Development area is to provide educational and training opportunities to eligible individuals to increase knowledge and skill levels that can lead to personal self-sufficiency and meeting the needs of business and employers. Collaborate with the businesses and employers to identify their needs and coordinate with area community resources (Technical Colleges, Universities, Colleges, etc...) To align educational, programs of study, and training services to meet those needs. By increasing educational and skills levels, the area seeks to attract new business and industry into the local area to provide more available job opportunities.

*Goals relating to the performance accountability measures based on primary indicators of performance in order to support regional economic growth and economic self-sufficiency.*

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#### **The goals of the Lower Chattahoochee WIOA are:**

- Meet or exceed the performance goals established by the Lower Chattahoochee Workforce Area Board and the State Workforce Development Office.
- Promote continual development and improvement of a workforce system with multiple access points and services tailored to meet the needs of the community and workforce area.
- Increase ongoing training opportunities for WIOA partners and staff; and, promote continual cross-training of local programs and services
- Promote information and data sharing among partnering agencies that will seek to eliminate duplication of services and enhance the quality of training programs and service that are available to our citizens and that are conducive to the demands of local employers.
- Broaden the pool of skilled, job ready workers needed by local businesses.

- Increase collaboration with local businesses to address the growing skill gap between education and training outcomes that meet business and industry needs; and encourage employer participation that promotes program services and employment opportunities.
- Identify required skill sets needed to assist jobseekers of our local workforce community enhance their quality of life and to become more competitive and marketable in the local labor market.
- Identify the needs of our employers through continuous partnership and collaboration to ensure appropriate services are being identified and delivered.
- Operate as a talent development system that meet local industry needs and foster a collaborative partnership with economic development to enhance economic prosperity of the local workforce area.
- Increase the partnership of private sector businesses in training and employment opportunities for individuals participating in WIOA programs.
- Enhance customer satisfaction. Assist workers who face unprecedented challenges to retool their skills and re-establish themselves in viable career paths.
- Continuously develop and refine the local workforce development system with innovative service delivery strategies.

#### The goals of the Middle Flint WIOA are:

- Improve educational and skill levels to provide more job opportunities.
- Provide array of services that is valuable to customers and employers to meet their needs.
- Collaborate with partners, economic development agencies, employers, community resources to develop a workforce system that is responsive to employers and individuals.
- Promote awareness of educational opportunities and occupational skilled trades, demand and growth job sectors to prepare individuals for employment. Utilizing labor market information and data as a tool to make informed decisions.
- Provide work based learning opportunities for individuals with barriers to employment, limited work experience, and improve skill levels.

### Improving Educational and Skill Levels

A key element in businesses locating operation in an area is educational and skill levels of the residents in the area. Businesses want to have an available pool of individuals that can readily meet their employment needs. The local area strives to improve the education and skill levels needed for regional growth and economic development. This includes encouraging individuals to attain a GED if they lack a high school diploma or GED. Promoting continued education thru higher education training opportunities which builds educational knowledge and skills.

### Provide an array of services that is valuable to meet the needs of customers and employers

The local workforce area works with partner agencies and other community resources will provide a wide array of services in areas that will be helpful to both customers and employers. Identifying service needs in the area and then determining which partner agency or community resource can best meet that need.

### Collaboration and Coordination with Partners and Stakeholders

One Stop Partner's meetings provide an opportunity for core partners to provide awareness and information of their services, share achievements and success stories, identify gaps in services and develop strategies to address any new or existing area needs. Efforts are made by partners not to duplicate services that maybe offered through another agency. Employer Committee groups that are active in the local area is another resource to identify employer needs. Economic development agencies also provide insight into the business and employment opportunities that are available or coming into the area.

### Promote Awareness

The Middle Flint WDB develops a WIOA services list which provides information on activities and services available in the area. WIOA services list is available at the One Stop Center resource area and shared by GDOL staff in their workshops. WIOA Services List is distributed in the area as a marketing resource of information. Core partners also promote awareness of their services at the One Stop Center and other venues as well. WIOA and contractor staffs give presentations at various meetings in the area as a method to promote awareness. Labor market information data available thru the Georgia Department of Labor website is another tool that is useful in providing information on occupational skilled trades, demand and growth job sectors.

### Provide Work Based Learning Opportunities

The Middle Flint WDB offers On-The-Job Training (OJT) and Work Experience as work based learning activities. OJT offers participating employers wage reimbursements from 50% up to 75% level for hiring WIOA eligible participants. OJT Career Facilitator markets OJT services to the business community to recruit employer participation. Work Experience (WE) is another work based learning opportunity available to eligible participants and interested businesses / employers. Career Facilitator markets Work Experience services to businesses / employers to recruit participation as training worksite. The WE Career Facilitator matches eligible participants to businesses and employers in which the participant has an occupational interest. These efforts provide hands on learning experience in an actual work environment where the participant has an interest.

### Performance Goals

WIOA federally mandates six (6) performance measures for its core programs. Listed below are the six (6) performance measures and methodology:

- Entered Employment Quarter 2 -- Measures the percentage of participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the programs. Youth participants also include the percentage that was in education or training activities during the second quarter after exit.
- Entered Employment Quarter 4--Measures the percentage of participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the fourth quarter after exit from the programs. Youth participants also include the percentage that was in education or training activities during the fourth quarter after exit.
- Median Earnings Quarter 2--Measures the median earnings of participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program.
- Credential Attainment Rate--Measures the percentage of participants who obtain a recognized post-secondary credential or secondary school diploma, or its recognized equivalent, during participation in or within one year from exit from the program.
- In-Program Skill Gains--Measures the percentage of participants who, during a program year, are in an education or training program that leads to a recognized post-secondary credential or employment and who are achieving a measurable skill gains, which are defined as documented academic, technical, occupational, or other forms of progress toward such a credential or employment.
- Employer Measures - Definition has not yet been determined by USDOL.

Both local WIOA Areas 14 and 15 separately negotiate local performance measures annually and track measures based on goals set in service providers' contracts which list performance goals for specified services. The goals for performance measure accountability are reviewed and adjusted based on GWR Workready System reports, quarterly state generated reports to track effectiveness of performance goals. Performance accountability is reported to local workforce boards to support regional growth and economic self-sufficiency.

The Region seeks to develop service deliver strategies to meet performance measures requirements. The Region will also seek to serve adults, dislocated workers, and youth customers with barriers to employment as defined in WIOA regulations, Section 3 (24) and any other groups determined by the Governor to have barriers to employment.

The regional goals will be to work with community partners to identify and serve individuals who may have barriers to employment to assist them with education or training services that will enhance their ability to enter or return to employment, employment retention, and to become self-sufficient.

f. [Strategy to coordinate core programs to align resources available to the local area to achieve the strategic vision and goals.](#)

*Taking into account the analyses described in previous sections, provide a strategy to coordinate core programs to align resources available to the local area to achieve the strategic vision and goals.*

The local area will collaborate with core partners, area employers, community stakeholders, and Workforce Development Board members thru various meetings that occur during the year to discuss needs, identify gaps or other issues, develop strategies etc. to continually work to improve service delivery and accessibility in the local area.

The WDBs for both the Lower Chattahoochee WIOA and the Middle Flint WIOA continually look to align available resources. For both organizations, a key component is the One Stop Shop and the partner agencies co-located there. The model to coordinate core programs and integrate services revolves around the delivery of services from the One Stop Shop. There is a One Stop Shop located in Columbus for the Lower Chattahoochee WIOA and one located in Americus for the Middle Flint WIOA.



Because of the specific needs of both WDBs, as well as the great distances between facilities for customers, there is limited coordination possible using the One Stop Shops in each area. There may be, however, opportunities to work with non-profit agencies that have regional scopes such as the Columbus Literacy Alliance and Georgia BEST.

In the Lower Chattahoochee area, the strategy for coordination involves the integration of services, particularly of those available at the One Stop Shop.

Various fund sources are utilized to develop integrated service strategies for adult customers, especially for TANF, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and other low-income individuals, including the Georgia Fatherhood Program. (TEN 35-09).

The local Department of Labor Columbus Career Center utilizes Wagner-Peyser and other related Employment Service funding to provide many core services at the Career Center Comprehensive One-Stop site for all customers.

Although the local Career Center has sought ways to conduct regularly scheduled registration and services to individuals residing in outlying counties, the availability of staff had limited its capability to provide sufficient access to services, especially to those in the rural counties of this workforce area. The institution of a mobile assessment unit has greatly mitigated these issues.

The Muscogee County Board of Education helps defray the cost of instructors and other personnel at sites within the local area by conducting basic skills training, remediation, and GED preparation. Currently, Columbus Technical College, Chamber of Commerce and the Columbus Consolidated Government have formed a partnership using local funding to administer a transition program for transitional inmates. The local WIOA has joined this partnership through the provision of on-the-job training opportunities for interested employers who hire these individuals.

The Division of Rehabilitative Services utilizes its funding to assess TANF and potential rehabilitation clients, in addition to providing normal services to eligible customers. Local WIOA funding has previously awarded the Division to provide work experience for out-of-school youth with special needs. Other WIOA funds are utilized to provide eligibility determination services, assessment services, case management services, and funding of various training activities.

### 3. Description of Strategies and Services

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*Provide a description of the strategies and services that will be used in the local area in order to accomplish the items listed below.*

#### a. Engaging employers in workforce development programs

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*How will the area engage employers in workforce development programs, including small employers and employers in in-demand industry sectors and occupations?*

To realize the Governor's vision and goals for the region's one-stop workforce system, each local area required partners to elevate business services to the forefront of workforce strategies. While many partners have created independent business services units, these partners coordinate with one another to present a unified array of services to businesses.

#### **Employment Services**

The Business Services Unit (BSU) of the Georgia Department of Labor (GDOL) emphasizes an employer-driven service delivery, and access to a market driven staff dedicated to fulfilling the needs of Georgia employers. The GDOL has a commitment to the business community and provides a venue for a more proactive and employer friendly partnership through the following initiatives:

- The Regional Coordinator Program partners with economic developers, locally, regionally and statewide by executing prompt turn-around data and customized solutions to workforce issues.
- The Business Services Recruiters devote their efforts towards developing and maintaining relationships with employers regionally.
- The SWAT (Special Workforce Assistance Team) team currently has fifty plus expert staff prepared to assist job seekers with résumé assistance and the marketing tools necessary to impress hiring managers.
- Regional Career Expos that can be tailored to targeted industries, job seekers, and skill requirements.
- Georgia Department of Labor's Customized Recruitment (CR) is a specialized resource offered to eligible businesses (new to Georgia).

- GeorgiaBEST for Employers will assist employers with their existing workforce issues relative to soft-skills deficiencies.
- GeorgiaBEST for Students is incorporated in middle, high school and technical colleges preparing students with soft skills for their future careers.
- The Employer Committee provides a critical link between GDOL and the business community. The committees provide input and guidance in the development of policy and legislation by the Department of Labor as it impacts Georgia employers and employees.
- Regional Summits are designed to help business owners, managers, hiring professionals, and others better understand and conquer compliance challenges in the workplace. This program has been approved for 3.75 recertification credits through the Human Resources Certification Institute (HRCI).

Each core partner brings unique programs and strategies to employers which can be leveraged in partnership with one or more of the other regional partners. For example, GDOL's BSU routinely partners with the LWDA to work with employers seeking to quickly fill demand positions. GDOL may provide Customized Recruitment to identify the unique skills and experience required for the positions. Working with the LWDA's Rapid Response Team during employer layoffs, GDOL can identify UI claimants to quickly create a pool of qualified candidates. If the employer is looking for training to train these new hires in place, the LWDA can also funnel selected applicants through work-based learning such as Incumbent Worker or Customized Training.

### *Small employers*

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Small employers are often difficult to integrate into the workforce development system because of limited capacity on both ends of the system. All services, including OJT, are available to small employers throughout the region.

### *Employers in in-demand industry sectors and occupations*

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The region has several shared in-demand sectors such as healthcare, manufacturing, retail and customer-service occupations. Both WIOAs use the Individual Training Account (ITA) as one activity to train individuals in healthcare occupations such as nursing, medical assisting, EMT, certified nursing assistants. OJT and ITA services provide training opportunities for manufacturing related occupations.

## b. Supporting a local workforce development system that meets the needs of businesses in the local area

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*How will the area support a local workforce development system that meets the needs of businesses in the local area? Discuss the area's workforce services to businesses and how business and organized labor representatives on the Local Workforce Development Board (LWDB) contributed to the development of these strategies. Provide a listing of business services available through the area(s) such as employer workshops and assessment and screening of potential employees.*

### Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act

The region, through both Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDA), takes advantage of programs offered through WFD aimed at connecting with and providing workforce solutions to employers. State initiatives such as Go Build Georgia, Georgia WorkSmart, HDCI, and Operation: Workforce are designed to connect with employers, engage them in a dialogue concerning their future workforce needs, and deliver solutions appropriate to those specific needs.

The region also connects with employers through the LWDA's Rapid Response Team, local job and resource fairs, and through participation in regional employer meetings.

Both LWDAs provide a variety of customized services to employers in various formats. For example, labor market information can be self-accessed by employers or acquired with varying levels of staff assistance. Employer centers in one-stop/information center locations are used by employers in a self-service mode for recruitment and interviewing or with staff-assisted screening and testing.

Various marketing materials are also available and used to educate employers and facilitate employer involvement. Both LWDAs also market to employers consistently by providing information related to employment, unemployment and partial unemployment benefits, tax and wage reports and payments, employing individuals with disabilities, employer committees, layoff information and resources, child labor info, labor market info, tax credits and incentives, workforce and business development services and resources, employment law issues, and recruiting new employee services.

Both LWDAs also provide information through the One-Stop system regarding workforce development services provided by other local area agencies. The Area 14 One Stop Shop is located at the Columbus GDOL service center. Area 14 citizens access local area services through a wide variety of avenues and

the local area is actively working to educate each agency on what is offered through the workforce system to ensure each eligible participant is reached and will use technology based systems, such as webinars and video conferencing to meet the needs of customers throughout the area. There is also a mobile unit that travels to provide services in the rural areas of its territory. The Area 15 One-Stop system is based in the GDOL service center in Americus. There is no mobile service center, and transportation issues continue to be an issue throughout the region.

Both LWDBs have business and organized labor representatives which provide input at regularly scheduled meeting. In addition, those members participated in the development of this plan.

### **Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency**

GVRA recently established a “Business Division” to create a single focused approach and strategy to engage employers in the most meaningful way. Under the GVRA business division, all agency efforts of engaging, contacting and relating to local businesses and corporate entities will be coordinated into a unified approach. The agency has hired a Director of the Business Division and all VR program staff will be supervised through this division. The overall goal of the GVRA business division will be to interface with employers to identify specific employer job and workforce needs and to provide the employers with qualified candidates to meet the employer's’ needs through outreach, employer-based training education opportunities for individuals with disabilities, and connecting employers with resources for hiring individuals with disabilities.

In addition, the GVRA Business Division will also serve to provide education and training to VR program staff regarding the unique needs of specific employers’ Area-wide, in order to work hand-in-hand with the VR field staff to more effectively place individuals with disabilities in jobs and careers.

### **Technical College System of Georgia**

Georgia’s technical college system is a regular partner in the region’s efforts to recruit and train skilled talent for employers. Training services can be offered by the tech colleges, usually through their Economic Development Divisions. These services can provide skills and professional certifications that are commonly required in the workplace. Examples could include customer service, ServSafe, forklift safety, computer skills, manufacturing fundamentals, CPR, First Aid, and many others. Each training program can be customized to meet the employer’s requirements for employees. This partnership is often leveraged by providing business services through the nationally renowned QuickStart program.

QuickStart offers customized training to eligible companies who are seeking to rapidly train a large group of employees in the Biotech/Healthcare, Warehousing/Distribution, Automotive, Advanced Manufacturing, Food/Agribusiness, or Services Industries. The staff at QuickStart is able to work with the company to develop proprietary curriculum and administer the training based on the employer's preferences. Training can be offered in classrooms, mobile labs or directly on the plant floor. The QuickStart program is a unique opportunity which is leveraged alongside other business services from core partners.

There are four technical colleges that serve this region. Columbus Technical College serves most counties in the Lower Chattahoochee WIOA and Albany Technical College serves Clay and Randolph Counties in the southern part of the region. South Georgia Technical College in Americus and Cordele serves the counties in the Middle Flint WIOA with the exception of Taylor County which is served by Southern Crescent Technical College.

### **Eliminating Duplication of Efforts**

Local workforce areas continue to work toward developing a regional coordinated service strategy that will promote uniformity with eligible training providers and uniformity in maximum allowable training and supportive service amounts.

In addition to the comprehensive one-stop center and itinerate sites strategically located within the Lower Chattahoochee Workforce area, external coordination is made with partners and agencies to identify other supportive services and resources that are not available at the workforce development sites that may be necessary to meet the needs of customers and ultimately ensure successful completion of training (e.g. Urban League's Clothing Bank, Community Reinvestment Services, Prison Reentry, HOPE NOW Alliance to maximize homeownership and prevent unnecessary foreclosures, and public libraries aimed at improving the quality and quantity of employment and training services for job seekers). (TEN 30-09, TEN 50-09).

The WIOA Administrators both realizes that there is a continual need to determine and promote better ways to serve the customer and to provide quality services to the customers seeking services in our one-stop environment. Expanding the knowledge of our partners and promoting a sense of camaraderie among agencies will continue to be the ongoing strategy to unify the workforce system and coordinate agency resources that are necessary to eliminate obstacles for individuals who face "unprecedented challenges to retooling their skills and reestablishing themselves in viable career pathways".

### c. How will the area better coordinate workforce development programs and economic development

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*How will the area better coordinate workforce development programs and economic development? Additionally, identify economic development partners and describe the involvement of the economic development community in developing strategies.*

The coordination of the region requires working with multiple chambers of commerce, development authorities, and other state and local officials. The River Valley Regional Commission also serves as a conduit to work with economic development professionals on the local and state level.

There are four notable initiatives in local economic development that are in various stages of deployment in the region. Cordele and Crisp County commissioned an intensive study they are working to implement now. Americus and Sumter County used local resources to help them set up their One Sumter initiative that they are currently in the process of implementing now. Randolph County has hired an economic development and site consultant to help them develop their first county economic development strategy.

#### *Middle Flint WDB*

The One Sumter initiative in particular has taken on the task of identifying Workforce Development as a critical area to address for Sumter County. The WIOA Administrator works with the Sumter Payroll Development Authority that developed the initiative. Their initial goals are to further define the workforce development challenges and issues to be addresses relevant specifically to Sumter County, as well as discuss best practices for work-based learning. Their principal partner in this discussion is South Georgia Technical College. The One Sumter team is working to understanding training and programs already "on the ground," in Sumter County, particularly in the educational campuses throughout Sumter County-both at higher education institutions, as well as K-12 systems.

#### *Lower Chattahoochee WDB*

In Columbus, the Columbus 2025 plan study has identified key factors impacting economic development in the area. This is designed as a multi-year initiative that will set the tone for how economic development is practiced and expresses the goals.

Findings from the Columbus 2025 plan were:

1. Population Trends: Slow Growth and Limited In-Migration
2. A Critical Need for Top Talent – Although there is sufficient working-age people in the region, their levels of educational attainment make many of them unprepared for the higher-skilled jobs available
3. Economic Realities
4. Income and Poverty – Core underlying issues for the area
5. Quality of Place and Quality of Life – Despite the income and poverty issues that Columbus deals with, the Quality of Life is higher than peer communities
6. Homegrown Talent: PK-12 and Higher Education – Identifying a need to keep the PK-12 systems strong and increase participation in Higher Education at local and regional Technical Colleges and Universities
7. Business and Entrepreneurial Climate – Entrepreneurial Climate described by the plan as anemic
8. Fort Benning: A Vital Asset – The importance and influence of Ft. Benning on the area cannot be underemphasized
9. Philanthropy, Leadership, and Champions – Strong backbone for the community

As it pertains to workforce, the Columbus 2025 plan focused on “Talented and Educated People” as a key component to measure success. What follows is a review of the Columbus 2025 plan’s analysis of a broad need to address workforce issues in the area. Both quantitative and qualitative measures underscored the fact that workforce issues critically need attention in the area. This is the best local example of the intersection of local education, economic development, and workforce development working together to identify and address community needs.

### [Talented, Educated People](#)

In an increasingly competitive and knowledge-based economy, communities must provide a skilled, educated workforce in order to remain competitive. Many businesses – and not just those in traditional white-collar sectors now consider talent to be the most important factor influencing their location decisions. And on an individual level, there is clear evidence to suggest that as a person’s level of educational attainment increases, they become more likely to earn a higher wage and less likely to



be unemployed. Further underscoring the need for top talent, in February 2014, the annual Corporate Survey results in Area Development magazine reported that “availability of skilled labor” topped the list of most important site location factors for the first time in 27 years. With the line between “economic development” and “workforce development” increasingly becoming blurred, it is readily apparent that the region needs to make a significant investment in education in order to increase the area’s competitiveness and improve the region’s future economic opportunities for wealth creation.

Findings from research clearly demonstrate that educational attainment rates in the area are lagging behind, and the region must make significant improvements just to keep up with national trends. Simply put, any effort to increase levels of prosperity in the region must involve across-the-board improvements to its talent base. This will require a comprehensive approach that focuses on optimizing the region’s ability to produce “homegrown” talent, retaining skilled and educated workers who already live in the region, and attracting new ones who do not.

#### KEY FINDINGS FROM RESEARCH AND INPUT:

- The area's workforce is not in dire straits, but the proportion of adults with a bachelor's degree or higher is well below the national average and last among a competitive set of 10 Southeastern metros. The community also has elevated levels of adults who started but did not finish college or have a high school diploma or less.
- If current trends hold, the area will fall even further behind on the educational attainment metric, as its younger residents are relatively less educated than their counterparts nationwide and the region is not attracting new residents in significant numbers to account for the difference.
- The region's core PK-12 education system, the Muscogee County School District (MCSD), enjoys a tremendous level of community support and does a good job of graduating students relative to peer systems.
- But MCSD students are relatively less likely to enroll in college and succeed once there, and performance within the system is uneven. Input participants noted that many students would benefit from additional intervention and assistance at various stages of their academic lives.
- The region has strong higher education institutions, but retaining graduates – and attracting more students from outside Greater Columbus to them in the first place – is critical to a healthy talent pipeline.
- Greater Columbus is not a strong attractor of outside talent, and data and anecdotal evidence suggests the region is losing many residents to markets such as Atlanta.

## OBJECTIVE 1.1: ALIGN OUR EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE SYSTEMS

As the research phases of this process demonstrated, there is a critical need to grow and develop a skilled and talented workforce in the area. Fortunately, the community already has many organizations that are dedicated to improving residents' educational outcomes, increasing community involvement, and providing important social services. These organizations are already making strides towards improving educational attainment levels and opportunities in the community, but stakeholder feedback revealed that many organizations are "working in silos." In order to maximize the impact of these efforts, the region should ensure that these organizations and their work is aligned, coordinated, and optimized.

### **1.1.1 Create a comprehensive cradle-to-career (C2C) partnership to align education, training, business, and social services around increasing talent levels in Greater Columbus.**

There are multiple models that Greater Columbus could adopt or emulate to align its talent efforts, such as the "Alignment" program that was first applied in Nashville and the "Strive Partnership" model that began in Cincinnati. These systems generally follow the "collective impact" model wherein government entities, non-profit organizations, and the private sector work together on a common agenda – in this case aligning and improving educational and training services with which individuals interact "from cradle to career." Participating organizations come together under a professionally staffed "backbone" entity that is responsible for aligning the existing efforts of its various members and identifying ways in which services can be improved. This backbone organization might include multiple "committees" that tackle a specific issue, such as early childhood education or dropout prevention. Many of the other proposed tactical recommendations in this strategy should be advanced by this new partnership, potentially through a dedicated committee, and the Chamber's Partners in Education (PIE) activities could also fall under this umbrella. The cradle-to-career partnership will be tasked with tracking performance metrics in order to gauge the impact of programs and adjust focuses accordingly to maximize their effectiveness and improve outcomes.

#### **Potential Actions:**

- Work with educational providers, nonprofits, and the business community to research C2C and other "business education partnership" models to identify the appropriate fit for Greater Columbus and the region
- Formally establish a partnership "backbone" entity and pursue public and private sources of funding to ensure that it is professionally staffed and operated

- Recruit a broad network of organizations to join the partnership
- Identify an initial set of focus areas inclusive of the tactical recommendations in this strategy and any other issues deemed appropriate by the relevant partners (potential examples could include parental advocacy programs, expanding dual enrollment, etc.)

## OBJECTIVE 1.2: DEVELOP HOMEGROWN TALENT

Research revealed that Greater Columbus is a less educated place relative to its peer communities, and if the status quo holds, this gap is highly likely to grow. Reversing this trend will be critical to the future health of the region, and doing so requires a multi-pronged approach of talent development, retention, and attraction. But among these, producing “homegrown” talent is particularly important. Educational attainment is one of the top factors influencing a person’s lifetime earning potential and economic opportunities. Ensuring that the community’s residents have access to and are engaged in high-quality educational experiences is vital to reducing poverty and securing a strong economic future. Educational outcomes are influenced by many factors, and the C2C partnership (see 1.1.1) may choose to focus on a wide range of initiatives. The tactical recommendations proposed in this objective represent a handful of high-impact initiatives that can address specific needs identified during the research phases of the process.

### **1.2.1 Ensure that three- and four-year-olds have access to high-quality early childhood education.**

The importance of high-quality early childhood education is supported by a growing body of research. Studies have shown that Pre-K programs produce higher standardized test scores and narrow the “achievement gap,” with program participation having a larger effect on student outcomes than race, family income, and parental educational attainment. Children who participate in Pre-K are more likely to graduate high school, own a home by age 27 and earn higher wages, and they are less likely to be incarcerated or unemployed. As such, the region can make long-term investments to improve the likelihood of addressing many of its most significant challenges by ensuring that high-quality early childhood education programming is available to all three- and four-year-olds in the region.

#### **Potential Actions:**

- Work with relevant partners including MCSD and other school districts to identify additional services needed, e.g. expansion of enrollment slots at Early Success Centers or creation of new centers

- With relevant partners, develop messaging and an outreach strategy to communicate the importance of early childhood education to elected officials, C-level executives, and other senior leadership
- Take a multi-pronged approach to pursuing funding, including lobbying at the state level for additional Pre-K program funding, seeking grants from the federal government and national foundations, working with local philanthropic organizations, and potentially identifying an additional local public revenue stream
- Partner with other early childhood service providers such as the Ferst Foundation for Childhood Literacy to expand opportunities for childhood learning beyond Pre-K programs

### **1.2.2 Ensure that infants, toddlers, and expecting parents have access to comprehensive child development and family support services.**

The phase from a child's time in the womb to his or her fourth birthday is a critical span for development, as the child builds social and emotional skills, learns to talk and count, and develops problem-solving skills. Research from the National Center for Infants, Toddlers, and Families shows that developmental delays emerge as early as 9 months and that "by age 2, toddlers in the lowest socioeconomic quintile are behind all other children in measures of cognitive skills and emotional attachment." The region suffers from a high child poverty rate, with nearly one third of children between the ages of five and 17 (the age group for which statistics are available) living in households below the poverty line. It stands to reason that the rate is similarly high for the region's youngest residents. Stakeholders also noted that poverty in the region tends to be generational.

Breaking this cycle requires a multi-faceted approach, but a key area of focus should be on supporting very young children and their parents given the importance of this time in an individual's life.

#### **Potential Actions:**

- Evaluate the viability of increasing the availability of Early Head Start programs in Greater Columbus and pursue an Early Head Start Grant and other state, federal, and philanthropic funding to start the program if warranted
- Work with social service providers and other relevant entities to identify existing resources, specific areas of need, and potential funding sources

### **1.2.3 Expand efforts to introduce students to education and career possibilities from a young age.**

Many organizations in the area are working to ensure that young children are introduced to career and educational opportunities from a young age. These include the Chamber of Commerce's Partners in Education program and summer camps such as CSU Activ8 and Summer Camp Benning. But stakeholders familiar with the region's K-12 education systems expressed a desire for the community to go even further in exposing children to career opportunities, the work required to achieve them, and the value in doing so. Input participants said this is an important task given the pervasiveness of generational poverty in the community, as children from low income households may not be aware of opportunities or view them as unrealistic.

**Potential Actions:**

- Incorporate opportunities for exposure to potential careers into elementary school curricula, including online and hands-on learning experiences, in-class presentations, off-site travel, and other programs
- For middle and high school students, facilitate tours of college and university campuses in and around the region, and continue classroom discussions and goal-setting exercises throughout the year
- Conduct regular field trips to a variety of workplaces to demonstrate the benefits of aspiring to and completing post-secondary education; work with Partners in Education and other private-sector partners to facilitate these tours
- Tie in expanded internship and apprenticeship opportunities (see 1.3.2) with work at the high school level to demonstrate the immediate availability of opportunities
- With community non-profits and service organizations, expand the availability of summer camps and other summer programming for low-income students

**1.2.4 Leverage existing programs to coordinate a community-wide mentoring program for at-risk K- 12 students.**

Keeping students engaged and on track in their studies will be critical to raising the region's educational attainment levels and ensuring that future generations have opportunities to succeed. Accordingly, stakeholders should pursue a community-wide mentoring program that connects volunteers with K-12 students who are at risk of falling behind, struggling, or dropping out. Greater Columbus has many existing programs that engage in some type of youth mentoring, including Girls, Incorporated of Columbus, the Literacy Alliance, Empowered Youth of Columbus, Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Chattahoochee Valley, and many others. A community-wide mentoring program would not replace or duplicate any of these initiatives but would instead begin with an assessment of existing programs and a determination of whether existing capacity is needed. The ultimate goal of the

program should be making a mentor-mentee relationship available to all interested students through the coordination of existing programs and – potentially – the creation of new ones. Given the collaborative nature of such an effort, it represents an ideal opportunity for coordination through the C2C.

**Potential Actions:**

- Bring together existing organizations providing mentoring services with representatives from schools and school districts, businesses and nonprofits to assess existing programs and capacity
- Pursue the widespread availability of programs that seek commitments of up to three years for monthly meetings and weekly check-ins to ensure the at-risk students receive needed engagement
- With the help of the private sector, community and faith-based organizations, and other nonprofits, issue a community-wide call for volunteers
- Begin the program at the middle school level and gradually expand to other grades

**1.2.5 Launch a broad-based adult education campaign to connect individuals who did not complete high school or college coursework with opportunities for advancement and employment.**

Increasing educational attainment must be about more than just the K-16 degree pipeline and talent attraction efforts. Communities must also focus work to ensure that adults are aware of and capitalizing on opportunities to receive high school equivalency degrees and post-secondary training as needed. Generally speaking, for each additional level of educational attainment an individual obtains, he or she is more likely to earn a higher wage and less likely to be unemployed. Additionally, changes in technology and the global economy are eliminating many traditional positions such as those that involve repetitive manual labor or technology services that can be sourced overseas. Jobs in the modern economy – even those in traditionally “blue collar” sectors – will increasingly go to individuals with more advanced skills and training. But research and stakeholder input noted that many adults in the area may not fall into this category. Relative to both the nation and the state of Georgia, the region had elevated levels of adults without high school diplomas, had never attended college, and who have attended some college but have not received a degree award. There are roughly 140,000 individuals over the age of 25 in Greater Columbus who have not received a college degree, and there are certainly many more between the ages of 18 and 24 who have not completed high school or have not

enrolled or stayed on track in a post-secondary program. To address this issue, the region should launch a major campaign to reengage adults with opportunities for educational advancement.

**Potential Actions:**

- Work with a range of partners including K-12 school systems, higher education institutions, community organizations and foundations, faith-based groups, and private-sector leadership to oversee a broad based campaign to boost adult educational attainment and training levels
- Secure significant commitments from public, private, and philanthropic funding sources to advance a variety of initiatives and provide subsidized entry/testing fees and tuition
- Expand enrollment in the Catapult Academy for high school dropouts and other high school equivalency programs to boost diploma and equivalency attainment; offer tuition subsidies or forgiveness to qualifying students who enroll in and complete programs
- Work with area colleges to identify and reach out to former students who began but did not complete a degree or certificate program; offer expedited re-enrollment procedures and waive application fees, etc.
- Work with employers to offer workers incentives, including flexible work hours around class schedules, guaranteed raises upon employment, etc., to complete high school equivalencies and enroll in and/or complete certificate and degree programs

### OBJECTIVE 1.3: RETAIN OUR BEST AND BRIGHTEST WORKERS

Just as producing homegrown talent is important, so too is retaining educated workers who already live in the community. Evidence indicates, however, that Greater Columbus is losing residents to Metro Atlanta and other nearby markets. According to stakeholders who participated in the input process, many of these out-migrants are recent college graduates and talented young professionals. Many of the tactical recommendations in this strategy are aimed at improving quality of life and boosting levels of community attachment in the area, but the following initiatives are aimed specifically at strengthening job opportunities and professional and social networks for talented individuals, ultimately reducing their incentive to leave the community.

**1.3.1 Connect business and education providers to develop post-secondary programs and high school curricula that support target business growth and introduce young people to job opportunities.**

One prime opportunity for alignment through a C2C partnership (see 1.1.1) is identifying the specific needs of employers in key local business sectors and evaluating whether existing programs at higher education institutions and K-12 schools are generating graduates with the appropriate degrees, certificates, or skill sets.

Before proceeding, it should be noted that while a region's educational systems are sometimes referred to as a "talent pipeline," this is not at all to suggest that these institutions exist simply to supply local businesses with talent. Instead, the term is intended to highlight the fact that these providers are the region's most important source of talented, educated workers, and that creating additional synergies between their programmatic offerings and the needs of local businesses can be mutually beneficial to employers, educational institutions, and the local populace who make up the majority of their student bodies. Stakeholders should coordinate communications between the private sector and various education partners to identify additional training and education opportunities that can support target sector growth.

**Potential Actions:**

- Working with employers in identified target business sectors, identify specific degree and certificate programs that are absent or in need of further development and to build awareness about existing programs
- As part of business retention and expansion (BRE) activities, survey local employers across a broad range of business sectors to determine the existing programs that support their workforce and what types of post-secondary degrees, certifications, and skill sets they must recruit from outside the region or otherwise have difficulty finding
- Share findings collectively with the region's higher education providers and develop strategies for implementing programs when warranted and eliminating or refocusing underutilized programs
- Work with the University System of Georgia's Cybersecurity Initiative Consortium to secure funding for and maximize the potential of the TSYS Cybersecurity Center for Financial Services to support talent development for the finance and insurance sectors
- Convene private-sector partners, higher education institutions, and K-12 school systems to ensure that existing and emerging STEAM programs (science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics) are optimized; additionally, ensure that all programs properly emphasize arts and other forms of creativity



### **1.3.2 Challenge the region's business community to leverage, expand, and develop internship and apprenticeship opportunities for high school and college students.**

Internships are an effective way to retain college students by helping them to establish professional networks and ties to full-time employers. A 2015 survey of businesses conducted by the National Association of Colleges and Employers indicated that more than 50 percent of all interns accept full-time employment with the company where they completed their internship. Creating internship opportunities for high school students could have a similar impact on community attachment. Many regional employers – notably manufacturers – also noted difficulty in finding qualified workers, in part because many young people do not view careers in manufacturing as desirable or viable. Offering internships and apprenticeships for manufacturing and other trade jobs could help address this issue by exposing more young people to career opportunities in an important sector of the regional economy.

#### **Potential Actions:**

- Work with employers and existing student-employment efforts at higher education institutions to create an inventory of existing internship and apprenticeship opportunities and publish via an interactive website, updated regularly as new opportunities come online. Informed by the inventory, issue a challenge to all regional employers to develop internships and/or apprenticeships for both high school students and college students and graduates
- Encourage companies to make internships and apprenticeships paid and part-time; consider offering subsidies to firms that could not otherwise make these commitments
- Work with higher education institutions to expand or establish cooperative education programs

### **1.3.3 Develop a formal retention program for individuals retiring from or exiting the military.**

The presence of Fort Benning benefits the area's workforce in a variety of ways. One of the biggest is the supply of work-ready individuals who retire from or exit the military while stationed at the base. Many stakeholders expressed a desire for the community to take more proactive steps to tap this valuable resource and influence more soldiers to remain in the community. Stakeholders acknowledged that there are already systems in place to connect individuals tied to Fort Benning with local employers, such as the Soldier for Life Job Transition Summit hiring fair and other initiatives. But input participants also said that there is a knowledge gap that must first be closed before the region can pursue an effective talent retention strategy.

**Potential Actions:**

- Convene Fort Benning and private-sector leadership to determine the skill sets that exiting soldiers (and their family members) possess
- Begin by working with base leadership to determine specific skill sets, demographics, etc. of exiting soldiers
- Determine factors influencing the location decisions of soldiers exiting the military, including leveraging existing research and national data from the Soldier for Life Transition Assistance Program
- Evaluate whether an assistance program for military spouses and partners in finding employment or acquiring state-specific certifications (e.g. teaching) would aid in retention efforts
- Work with base leadership including the Soldier for Life Center to devise a survey of soldiers, veterans, retirees, and spouses/family members to obtain data specific to Fort Benning and Greater Columbus; leverage the next Soldier for Life Job Transition Summit as a contact point for conducting a survey
- Utilize findings to develop a formal attraction and retention program in cooperation with base leadership and the private sector

**1.3.4 Welcome and engage new residents who move to the area with a relocating family member.**

To find workers with the most specialized skill sets or experience, many firms must conduct talent searches that spread well beyond the borders of their home region. This is especially true in Greater Columbus, which has a high concentration of major corporate operations relative to its size and levels of educational attainment.

According to stakeholders familiar with recruitment and human resources matters, attracting these individuals is only half the challenge. The community must also seek to retain these workers by ensuring that they and their families are happy and engaged in their new home region. According to the input participants, this means connecting the spouses and partners to jobs and opportunities for social engagement – and doing so quickly. The area should therefore develop a formal program to welcome and integrate relocating families into the community.

**Potential Actions:**

- Work with public- and private-sector employers to develop a one-stop resume-matching database capable of connecting individuals with available jobs based on skill sets; this database would also have utility for existing residents of The area and would not necessarily be limited to

any one group, though it would be most useful for individuals without roots or connections in the community

- Create a volunteer network of human resources managers and corporate executives to meet informally with new job-seekers who have followed a relocating family member to the community to help these individuals learn about the job market in Greater Columbus and begin developing a professional network
- Develop an attractive, user-friendly, and regularly updated “welcome website” with information on community programs, youth sports leagues, parks, utilities, religious organizations, etc.; this website would also be useful as a talent and business recruitment tool to highlight the region's quality of life to prospective new residents or companies

#### OBJECTIVE 1.4: ATTRACT TALENTED INDIVIDUALS TO GREATER COLUMBUS

Growing and retaining talent in the area is critical to the region's future, but strategies to improve educational outcomes can take years or even decades to pay dividends. In the meantime, many firms in Greater Columbus have immediate needs for talented workers. Additionally, the community's younger residents are relatively less educated than those in many similar communities. In other words, Greater Columbus isn't just playing “catch-up” – it must attract new educated residents just to keep pace with its peers. But research revealed that Greater Columbus has consistently low levels of immigration, and the competition for talent among regions is only growing more intense. Greater Columbus must face the reality that it is competing against much larger metro areas with more diverse and faster-growing job markets yet similar cost-of-living and quality-of-life advantages. In this environment, a general talent attraction campaign aimed at any individual would be a poor investment. Greater Columbus should instead focus on a targeted effort geared toward people who already have a connection with the region in addition to leveraging the ability of the region's four-year universities to attract talented newcomers.

##### **1.4.1 Attract educated expatriates back to Greater Columbus through a “boomerang” marketing program.**

In order to maximize its return on an investment to attract new workers to the region, Greater Columbus should focus on a “boomerang” talent marketing campaign that targets educated individuals who already feel a connection with Greater Columbus. The region also has a strong value proposition for individuals who have started families or are thinking of doing so. Stakeholders said that many of these individuals feel “pulled home” during this time in their life, and may generally prefer smaller,

more family-friendly communities to larger metros where commutes are longer, housing markets are more competitive, and so on. As such, the region should focus on individuals who may have been out of the community for a number of years in addition to recent college graduates who attended high school in Greater Columbus or moved away after graduating from a local college or university. There will be some challenges to overcome in order to do so. According to young professionals in the region contacted through the input process, many individuals who have moved away still think of the region as being “old Columbus” and may have limited awareness of the many positive changes that have occurred in the region in recent years. Changing these perceptions will be an important task.

**Potential Actions:**

- Convene relevant partners, including private-sector representatives, the Young Professionals organization, colleges and universities, and K-12 school systems to develop and oversee the campaign
- Sustain and support the growth of the Young Professionals organization and leverage the group’s capacity and expertise for the marketing program and to host/influence relocation candidates
- Partner with area higher education institutions and alumni associations to identify individuals from institutions such as Columbus State and Troy University who have moved to other markets
- Work with K-12 school systems to identify top college-bound students to establish communications and relationships to maintain their connection to Greater Columbus regardless of where they attend school; maintain these contacts even after the students graduate to create an ongoing list for focused advertisements, etc.
- As part of internship programming (see 1.3.2), challenge local employers to open up opportunities to local and out-of-region students with a connection to Greater Columbus; develop programming and other career-focused resources for winter and summer breaks
- Develop a targeted advertising campaign for alumni publications and websites for selected colleges and universities in Alabama and Georgia (e.g. Auburn, UGA, Georgia Tech, etc.), including profiles of successful alumni in Greater Columbus
- Coordinate with CSU Alumni and Friends to develop one-off or quarterly networking events in Metro Atlanta and, potentially, other markets of size, for CSU alumni; promote Greater Columbus through word of- mouth marketing at these events and through follow-up communication with attendees
- Promote Greater Columbus at high-value job and career fairs

**1.4.2 Support the promotion of Columbus State and Troy University’s Phenix City campus as schools of choice for students from outside the region.**

Another way in which the area can address its low levels of educational attainment and in-migration is by attracting more individuals from outside the region to attend Columbus State University and Troy University's Phenix City campus and connecting them to quality employment upon graduation. Research revealed that slightly more than half of entering freshman at Columbus State were from the Greater Columbus region while just 16.6 percent of students were from Metro Atlanta. By contrast, 40.9 percent of freshman at Georgia Southern University were from Metro Atlanta while just 16.4 percent were from the Savannah and Statesboro areas. (Data for Troy's Phenix City campus was not available.) While it is certainly a good thing that Columbus State is serving so many graduates of local high schools, attracting more outsiders to local institutions will broaden the pool of individuals with connections to the region who might be tempted to stay upon graduation or return at a later date. The timing is perfect to promote these institutions outside the region. Columbus State's "First Choice" capital campaign is underway and has the goal of improving the university's academic and collegiate environment in order to make it a preferred destination for students and faculty. CSU has also made significant investments in its RiverPark campus, is transforming the former Ledger-Enquirer building and relocating the College of Education and Health Profession to Uptown Columbus, and is expanding its cybersecurity training capacity with the TSYS Cybersecurity Center for Financial Services. Meanwhile, Troy University has already transformed the riverfront in Phenix City with its new campus, and additional expansions are planned. Columbus Technical College, while more regional in nature, remains a critical partner in the workforce development ecosystem in Columbus and the region and should continue to provide training and opportunities.

**Potential Actions:**

- Support Columbus State and Troy's Phenix City campus in promoting the schools through a variety of channels (social media, advertisements, college fairs, etc.) in other markets such as Metro Atlanta Ensure the successful completion of the First Choice Campaign Work to integrate the universities into the region's talent marketing (see 1.4.1) and earned media campaigns
- Evaluate expanding out-of-state tuition waivers for Columbus State beyond Russell County

### *Regional Coordination*

Workforce development is economic development and the local area WIOA partner will be operating at the center of a public-private conversation. With the local area's strong alliances with its WDB, Regional Commission and WIOA partners, it is positioned to help facilitate these discussions. The growth

in employment within demand occupations provides a perfect illustration of the power of connecting the needs of employers with the educational systems that train individuals in those skills.

One goal of WIOA is that the workforce system should continue to find ways to bridge this gap between education and employment. Each core partner has a role in ensuring that the local area's workforce continues to meet the needs of the employers do business. The workforce system, through its partners, can identify the demand, help create solutions, and assist USG and TCSG in producing a skilled workforce.

Furthermore, Georgia is focused on empowering front-line employees in the one-stop system with the leadership and tools necessary to proactively engage with local economic developers. For example, GDOL and WIOA Regional Coordinators are focused on partnering with economic developers, locally, regionally, and statewide by executing customized solutions to workforce issues. Located in the 12 service-delivery regions in the State, Regional Coordinators can help economic developers identify data critical for the successful location and expansion of industry. The GDOL regional coordinator for Region 8 was a critical partner to create not only the local area plans, but also this regional plan.

With the Area's focus on employer services, work-based learning including OJT and customized training will be expanded through further capacity building and increased collaboration with LWDA economic development entities. Many state programs, such as Fast Track and Georgia WorkSmart are employer focused. The collaboration of the Area's WIOA programs with DOL Career Centers closely aligns workforce services with the Area's economic development needs. The plans include co-location of workforce services, increased virtual access, and data interface processes to facilitate the sharing of key workforce data between core partners.

Key stakeholders in economic development are able to connect employers, educators, and workforce representatives on an almost daily basis. Additionally, the Area's workforce development system continues to utilize labor market and educational data in coordination with local data to inform and guide strategic workforce development decisions. Further, the working groups facilitate unprecedented

interagency cooperation and coordination in designing the future of the Area's workforce development system.

Collaborative strategies to strengthen the methods of coordinating with partners and services not available at the comprehensive site are accomplished through the institution of ongoing one-stop meetings held at the comprehensive center to promote involvement of internal and external agencies and staff from both governmental and non-governmental sources. This collaboration has enhanced information sharing, reduced duplication of services, and the cultivation of additional resources needed to facilitate a seamless service delivery system rather than an array of separate programs with separate processes.

A directory of services and resources available in the local workforce area is produced and published each program year that include program offerings and contact information for both WIOA and non-WIOA services. This directory along with others is used by partners and agency representatives of the one-stop workforce system as a resource and referral guide for coordinating services.

Collaboration with other agencies that provide support or other resources in the local area will continue to be ongoing. In alliance with representatives from the one-stop workforce system, these agencies will be invited to take an active part in our quarterly meetings to enhance awareness of all partners and local agencies of local resources that may serve as referral tools to meet customer needs.

#### *Economic development partners*

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The economic development partners are critical for successful workforce development. In Columbus, that partnership revolves around the Greater Columbus Chamber of Commerce. Talbot County, Harris County, and Randolph County Chambers are also partners. In the Middle Flint area, the Crisp-Cordele IDB, Americus-Sumter Chamber and Payroll Development Authority, Vienna and Dooly County Development Authority, and the chambers of commerce in Macon County and Taylor County are all partners for the deployment of the WIOA.

The River Valley Regional Commission is regional partners and authors of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for the federal Economic Development Agency. State partners at GDOL and GDEcD as well as Georgia Power and the Electrical Cooperatives also assist and are partners in economic development, with members on the boards of both the Lower Chattahoochee WDB and Middle Flint WDB.

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*Involvement of the economic development community in developing strategies.*

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Economic development partners consulted in the development of this local plan include the Georgia Department of Labor, local Chambers of Commerce, and the Economic Development District as identified by USED. The River Valley Regional Commission has worked with both areas to develop their plans as well as the Regional Plan.

#### **d. Strengthening linkages between the one-stop delivery system and unemployment insurance programs**

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*How will the area strengthen linkages between the one-stop delivery system and unemployment insurance programs?*

In many ways, UI serves as the entryway into the workforce system. As the provider of UI and WP services, GDOL is uniquely poised to welcome customers into the workforce system and provide comprehensive and targeted referrals to the other core partners. While a large amount of WP referrals come from UI, that system is not the only source of workforce customers. GDOL also utilizes BSU to attract customers. These tools used by the BSU were outlined earlier in this Regional Plan.

Veterans receive re-employment services from GDOL through a FY15 UI Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) program. RESEA provides focused case management services, including reemployment orientation, individualized career assessment, and job search assistance.



In addition, GDOL's EG system provides specialized services to job seekers who are veterans. Conventional approaches to veterans' job placement are normally based on USDOL's Military Occupational Classification-Standard Occupational Classification (MOC-SOC) crosswalk which maps each military occupation to its civilian equivalent. However, these mappings are very literal, do not account for market demand, and fail the majority of service members whose combat occupations have no civilian equivalents. EG's Focus Career Explorer uses a proprietary crosswalk of military and civilian occupations to ensure that every veteran receives matches for in-demand civilian jobs, including those whose military occupations do not have civilian equivalents (e.g., infantry). EG has undertaken a detailed review of each of the nearly 10,000 MOC's to identify matches based on corresponding high-demand careers at a variety of levels – for each specific MOC, for similar MOC's, and overall.

Consistent and strategic investment in staff development reflects Georgia's commitment to integrated workforce services. Employment services staff of GDOL are trained in both employment services and UI programs, enabling customers to receive seamless services geared to facilitate their return to employment.

Staff completes a structured training curriculum to equip them to provide high-quality services to both jobseekers and business. Training is comprised of intensive interviewing techniques, administering career assessments, accessing and interpreting labor market information, customized service strategies for employers and jobseekers, identifying the potential need for soft skills and skills gap training, developing workforce partnerships, identifying available supportive services, résumé writing expertise, and counseling to address barriers to employment and to assist with career selection.

Additional staff training is provided in the following areas: strategies for business recruitment events, as well as multiple methodologies to connect qualified jobseekers with employers, providing workforce statistics and prevailing industry wages, guidance on employment laws as it relates to the workplace, UI, FB, the WOTC, and other workforce services. Staff members also have access to customer service training to enhance services to jobseekers and businesses.

Other staff development activities include:

- Comprehensive online resources on GDOL's website at [www.dol.georgia.gov](http://www.dol.georgia.gov)
- Comprehensive internal online resources at [www.theSource.gdol.ga.gov](http://www.theSource.gdol.ga.gov)
- Job shadowing for new staff at local offices
- Active participation in IAWP
- Active participation in NASWA;
- Active participation in SETA;
- Departmental leadership training program through EXCEL, offered through the Carl Vinson Institute of Government at the University of Georgia;
- Ongoing assessment of GDOL and partner staff training needs by local GDOL career center managers;
- Participation on LWDBs to keep abreast of information on local, State, and national issues;
- Regular reviews by the STAR team, delivering on-site extensive technical assistance and staff training during site visits, and identifying training needs based on policy changes, new initiatives, etc.

GDOL offers training, technical assistance and support to partner staff who serve local job seekers and employers to ensure that program partners are highly engaged in local and State workforce partnerships that allow for the constant exchange of information on core programs, UI legislation, new workforce training providers, and available programs.

The UI and Re-Employment (REU) Division of GDOL provides subject matter expertise and technical assistance on UI policies, rules, procedures, and systems to all staff. In the training modules, staff is educated on how to detect, address, and resolve issues that affect UI eligibility. While in-depth training is provided to career center staff managing the UI claims process, an overview of the UI process is also available to WIOA and other workforce partners.

In addition to providing UI training, the UI & REU Division provides a dedicated customer service line staffed by experienced benefits analysts who address UI issues, questions and concerns; specify the benefits of ES; and resolve WIOA inquiries. The robust training and partnerships encourage exemplary service delivery to jobseekers and employers, and create opportunities to identify and/or create new training opportunities as laws and regulations change.

Finally, workforce partners have access to select data elements, such as customer contact information and work history from GDOL. Sharing data between organizations assists staff in providing comprehensive, unduplicated services while eliminating unnecessary trips or contacts for the customer.

### Meaningful Assistance

The ability to file a UI claim will be available at each and every comprehensive one-stop center. Access and meaningful assistance is critical, whether the customer is in rural Georgia, relies on public transportation, or needs access to the Internet. Assistance is assured through:

- UI orientation provided to every new claimant explaining the full range of workforce services available to help them return to work
- Online access via [www.dol.georgia.gov](http://www.dol.georgia.gov) where customers can file electronically from career centers, home, libraries or any other Internet portal
- Dedicated, experienced staff at every one-stop
- Fully staffed resource centers at all career centers, including Internet access, copies, phones, fax and resource libraries
- A dedicated toll-free number for customers filing for UI at one-stops
- Access points at over 40 one-stops and career centers across the state
- An opportunity for each claimant to access in-person reemployment services as they come to career centers and one-stops to complete the UI filing process
- The use of state-of-the-art EG résumé and job matching service as a requirement for ES registration for claimants
- The availability of staff, technology, and written materials in a variety of languages to meet the needs of all customers
- Fully accessible services, online and in person, to serve any customer with a disability
- Joint participation of UI staff with other workforce partners in large layoff events
- Daily referrals of customers from workforce partners to UI specialists to ensure that customers have access to all benefits to which they are entitled(c) The Area's strategy for providing reemployment assistance

### All Customers

With Georgia's recovering economy, GDOL and partner staff has the opportunity to provide more in-depth services to customers who are most in need and face multiple barriers to reemployment.

Employment services provided with WP funding are available to all individuals eligible to work in the United States – those with jobs looking for better career opportunities; individuals who have lost their jobs; and those seeking employment for the first time. These services form a continuum ranging from self-service online, to group presentations, to customized one-on-one assistance. Individuals with more

specialized needs (e.g., veterans, migrant and seasonal farmworkers) receive customized services to further their career goals.

Per State law, all UI recipients must register for ES. Georgia continues to run its federal profiling model when job seekers file their UI claims, at which time claimants are made aware of the requirements for reemployment services and the varied services available to them. These services may include: an assessment of skills relative to available jobs; workshops on effective job search, interviewing techniques and résumé development; an overview of multiple self-service employment resources; detailed labor market information related to growth occupations and industries, and wage surveys to assist with decision making; and direct referrals to job training, educational and supportive service opportunities in the community.

Profiling is a federally-mandated program designed to assist UI claimants who may be unlikely to find employment before their benefits are exhausted. The UI claim process links information from intake records and employers' files to assess each claimant's likelihood of finding another job within the period of UI eligibility. Those UI claimants who are least likely to find work quickly will receive structured job search services.

The claimant's occupation, job tenure, education, last employer's industry, and the area's unemployment rate are factors used in calculating a percentile score. The higher the score, the more likely a claimant will exhaust benefits before finding work. For workload management purposes, career center managers monitor the number of profiled claimants served each week, and, if necessary, adjust their career center's threshold (minimum score) to ensure that workshops are neither over- nor under-utilized, and that services can be delivered.

All claimants who are identified by the system as meeting or exceeding the career center's threshold and are mandated to participate in required services must complete either a Service Needs Evaluation/Assessment or a Quick Initial Assessment.

Other activities to promote reemployment of UI claimants include claimant access to:

- Information on community resources, labor market information, GED, occupational training, OJT, and support services that make training possible to enhance an individual's ability to return to work
- Integrated workforce services for citizens released from correctional facilities through the Governor's GA-PRI
- An Events tool on the Department's website to allow customers to access hundreds of career fairs, hiring events, and other activities to connect with hiring businesses
- A strong network of faith-based organizations that support reemployment efforts
- Collaborative services for claimant trainees and TAA-eligible customers
- Collaboration with HomeSafe Georgia for citizens needing mortgage assistance
- Job clubs sponsored by GDOL, faith-based organizations, and others
- Older worker workshop – the SCSEP
- Veteran work study program sponsored by the Veterans Administration that allows veterans in training to work part-time in career centers
- Transitioning Military Initiative supported by Columbus Tech

#### RESEA Program

Recently, GDOL operated a REA targeting UI claimants in five GDOL career centers. As Georgia worked with the REA customer population, it became apparent that there were thousands of customers in other areas of the State in need of intensive reemployment services. Many of the customers are in areas of the State where there are military bases, resulting in a high number of UCX claimants. As a result of these direct customer needs, Georgia redesigned its REA program to target UI claimants who are profiled and are most likely to exhaust their weekly benefits. This redesign will increase the number of GDOL career centers delivering RESEA services across the state to nine, including four new offices with the highest UCX claimant population in the State. Georgia's REA program will provide RESEA intensive services to a large percentage of traditionally underserved UI claimants with low education levels, language barriers, limited skill sets, and/or who are homeless veterans, justice-involved individuals, and seniors. This population includes a large percentage of food service workers and other workers in low-paying service jobs who cycle through the UI system regularly. They experience multiple layoffs and move laterally from one low-paying job to another, never developing the skills or solid work history needed to advance to a more stable position in the workforce. The expansion of the RESEA program over its REA predecessor allows it to serve more customers across a larger area of the State, and allows the State to evaluate the impact of delivering the intensive reemployment services to a significant number of veterans with workforce challenges.

The RESEA service delivery strategy focuses on UI claimants who are profiled and identified as most likely to exhaust all UI benefits. Customers are identified upon being determined eligible for UI benefits, and are advised of RESEA's mandatory participation requirements immediately upon being notified of their selection to participate. RESEA intensive customer services begin with an orientation to services, individual review and discussion of O\*Net My Next Move assessment results, and development of a reemployment plan. Staff provides referrals to in-house workshops (e.g., résumé development, job search, and financial management), training, and other community workforce and supportive services as needed. Customers receive relevant labor market information and learn about helpful web sites which could enrich their job search. Work history evaluation is conducted and job matches are identified in the EG system.

Georgia's robust and intensive approaches to facilitating the reemployment of UI recipients, including initiatives such as the former REA and emerging RESEA programs, has directly contributed to the lowest average UI duration average in the nation for the eight consecutive quarters (9.8 weeks through CY15 Q2).

Coordination of and provision of labor exchange services for UI claimants as required by the W-P Act  
Georgia's UI and WP labor exchange systems are each administered by GDOL, and UI staff has access to all ES job referral, case management, employment, and other information as needed. Staffing is funded in accordance with Federal circulars, to the allowable benefiting fund source.

Aside from a limited number of exempt UI recipients, all receive reemployment services, as they are required to register with the Area ES. Approximately 60% of ES registered customers are UI claimants.

Each GDOL career center has a resource area which customers can access for their employment needs. Some of the resources available to all customers include: the Job Information System which includes jobs in Georgia, throughout the Southeast, and across the nation; labor market information, including GLME, O\*Net tools and others; over 40 TapDance Live! self-directed career exploration and assessment tools; instructional software for typing and résumé development; automated job referral options; training and education resources; financial aid information; online filing of initial UI claims; telephones, fax machines and copiers.

Services routinely provided to ES job seeker customers (including UI claimants) throughout the Area include:

- Self-service resources such as EG labor exchange services, unemployment claims application, books, videos, and pamphlets in several languages
- Access to computers and job search software
- Résumé development and typing tutorials
- Job openings in Georgia, the Southeast, and across the nation
- Labor market information for career exploration, fields in demand, average salaries, etc.
- Training and education resources, financial aid options
- Vocational assessment
- Automated referral assistance
- Workshops on a variety of employment-related topics (e.g., effective job search, interviewing, résumé development, coping with job loss, financial management)
- Career expos
- Job search assistance and job referral
- Job development
- Job clubs
- Individualized assistance for customers with unique needs
- Specialized assistance for veterans, other eligible individuals and migrant and seasonal farm workers
- Assistance for ex-offenders
- Assistance with federal bonding; and
- Referral to partner and community provider services

Staff-assisted employment services are provided to more than 500,000 individuals annually, and tens of thousands of additional individuals receive self-services made available by GDOL at career centers and online. Also, Georgia businesses list approximately 150,000 available jobs on a daily basis, with a goal of increasing that number to 300,000 in the subsequent year, and more than 1.6 million job referrals were provided last year. This increased number of job openings are a result of growth in the local economy and the strengthening of employer relationships with the workforce system. As a result of the improving economy and the focused reemployment strategies of connecting job seekers to meaningful job opportunities, Georgia's Entered Employment Rate shows steady recovery and is approaching pre-recession rates.

### Registration of UI claimants with the State's employment service

Georgia law requires that UI claimants register with the State's ES. This process is fully integrated into the claims application process. In addition, the process will be enhanced as the EG labor exchange is enhanced and becomes the State's ES registration process in 2015. Until a claimant registers, benefits are not released.

Once Georgia UI claimants are approved for their first UI payment, they are required to create an account and at least one searchable résumé in the EG system described previously. WP and UI staff, in addition to the job seeker, are able to manage and track job match alerts and job search activities.

Georgia maintains an active ERP through which UI customers are evaluated, typically at the 5th, 9th, and 14th weeks of their claim. At each of these dates, they receive additional guidance and resources for effective reemployment. Centers also offer workshops during these visits, on topics including interviewing techniques, networking, and dressing for success. These strategies contribute to the State's unmatched low average duration of UI claims noted above.

Administration of the work test for the State UI system, making eligibility assessments (for referral to UI adjudication, if needed), and providing job finding and placement services for UI claimants; Individuals receiving unemployment benefits in Georgia must be able to work, available for work, and actively seeking full-time work. If an individual earned the majority of wages in the base period used to establish the claim or part-time work, the individual would be allowed to restrict their work search to part-time. The only exception to the work search requirements are for the following:

- Individuals with a job attachment - This would include individuals for whom their employer has filed a "partial" unemployment claim for them or those individuals with a definite recall to work within six (6) weeks of their last dayworked.
- Union members in good standing.
- Individuals who are approved and enrolled in a Commissioner-approved training program.

In Georgia's automated workforce system, customers enter work search information weekly. Staff have access to that information 24/7 and can contact a customer should questions arise or concerns be



raised. In addition, EG captures a customer's résumé, job referrals and information regarding a customer's response to an employer's request. Should an employer contact GDOL that a job candidate did not respond to a request for an interview, that claimant can be contacted to determine if compliance with the required work test occurred. To ensure accessibility to the automated system, staff are always on hand to assist claimants with the use of the labor market exchange. In addition, if the customers do not have a résumé, EG will build one for them. All claimants are subject to a work search audit and can be called into the office should questions arise.

During the initial claims filing application, individuals are asked questions regarding their availability. Negative responses require adjudication of the potential availability issue by GDOL claims examiners or services specialists.

Individuals referred to the UI REA program must report to their initial REA appointment, and must participate in all subsequent in-person and telephone appointments. During the in-person appointments, UI ERPs are performed, and staff question the individual about availability for work and any barriers to work they may be facing during all contacts. During all eligibility reviews (i.e., UI, REA, and REU) staff review the individual's work search, discuss the individual's availability, and any barriers to work.

Weekly UI benefit certification includes a question about whether the individuals are able, available, and actively seeking employment. A negative response places an issue on the certification which cannot be removed until a statement is obtained regarding availability. If an issue is determined, a benefits eligibility review is performed by the GDOL services specialist or claims examiner and a determination released, if in order.

Employers and anonymous individuals can report suspected UI fraud on the GDOL web site. This can include employers reporting individuals who do not report for interviews, individuals who are incarcerated, or are otherwise not able, available, and/or actively seeking work.

ES staff have contact with employers and receive notice when individuals fail to report to an interview or refuse work – resulting in an issue on the individual’s claim. In the event a potential issue is discovered from any source, a BER is scheduled with a claims examiner or GDOL services specialist. If the individual is not able, available, and actively seeking work (and is not exempted from work search), an appropriate determination regarding UI benefits is released.

*Provision of referrals to and application assistance for training and education programs and resources.*

The coordination of service delivery is a primary principle of WIOA, which brings together the core programs of Federal investment in skill development.

GDOL embraces WIOA’s primary goal of service delivery integration to provide a more seamless experience for participants in federal skills development and employment services programs, as indicated below:

- Providing information to GDOL customers on community resources, labor market information, GED, occupational training, OJT, and support services that make training possible to enhance an individual’s ability to return to work
- As the “front door” to the workforce system, staff from the more than 40 career centers throughout the state identify customers’ needs, assist them with UI, employment and reemployment assistance, trade services, automated resources, workshops and referrals to more intensive services such as training, which are provided by WIOA through LWDBs, and other partners

## 4. Regional Service Delivery

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### a. Establishment of regional service delivery strategies

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*Describe the plans for the establishment of regional service delivery strategies, including the use of cooperative service delivery agreements*

Local areas continue to work toward developing a regional coordinated service strategy that will promote uniformity with eligible training providers, matched maximum allowable training and supportive service amounts to better coordinate the local WDBs.

The Boards of Region 8 consists of Lower Chattahoochee (Area 14) and for Middle Flint (Area 15). We are dedicated in the coordination of regional services. Areas 14 and 15 work closely together with regular communication between the directors. The Regional Commission, the RVRC, is writing the WIOA Regional Plan. With the shift in coordination at the state level, Region 8 continues their commitment to local workforce development and federally funded economic development planning efforts. As outlined previously, there is a close working relationship between local economic development planning efforts, in particular the Columbus 2025 plan and workforce development.

The Middle Flint and Lower Chattahoochee Workforce areas have collaborated and shared information on operational processes, procedures and policies used by both local areas. However, we do not share the same employers or higher educational training providers because of the geographic demands. Both local areas do provide some the same basic WIOA funded activities such as On-the-Job Training and Individual Training Accounts (ITA's). The Lower Chattahoochee and Middle Flint areas have also coordinated and collaborated on services such as Supportive Services Policies, and Rapid Response Events, Sharing Best Practices/Policies, Participant Referrals for Training, coordinate/collaborate on sector strategies for existing and new industries in the Region, and pursue grant funding opportunities for the region. The local area anticipates the two areas will continue to collaborate and share information on WIOA services delivery that benefits the region.

There is an effort to promote uniformity with eligible training providers and maximum allowable training and supportive service amounts. In addition, external coordination is being made with partners and agencies to identify other supportive services and resources that are not provided at the regional level, such as Metro Urban League, Clothing Bank, Community Reinvestment Services, Housing Authorities and food banks.

The goal is that the WIOA workforce system continues to find ways to bridge the gap of education and employment. Region 8 recognizes the need for regional planning and intends to be fully dedicated to the needs of the region.

## b. Coordination of administrative cost arrangements

*Describe the plans for coordination of administrative cost arrangements including the pooling of funds for administrative costs (if applicable).*

The WIOA plan was coordinated to reduce costs, but otherwise, the administrative cost arrangements are not applicable.

The two local areas have different administrative entity structures and funding allocations. Due to the travel distances between the two local areas, the pooling of funds for administrative costs or sharing of resources are not currently feasible. The local areas would certainly consider coordination in areas where it was deemed appropriate, beneficial and logistically feasible to the region.

## 5. Sector Strategy Development –

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*Provide a description of the current regional sector strategy development for in-demand industry sectors.*

The two local Workforce Areas selected the Healthcare sector strategy as it was a common sector with significant hospital and workforce needs in both areas. Both local areas have a long history of supporting educational and training opportunities with WIOA funding for healthcare related occupations. The region has several higher education resources which offer programs of study in healthcare related fields such as nursing, radiology technology, pharmacy technician, etc.

### a. Partners participating in sector strategy development.

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*Describe the partners that are participating in the sector strategy development.*

#### **Partners**

Sector partnership will be developed with individuals with knowledge and expertise in the healthcare field such as hospitals, nursing home administrators, high education partners, physical therapy associates, home healthcare providers, Georgia Department of Labor (GDOL), Georgia Vocational

Rehabilitation (GVR), Health Departments, and others partners with knowledge in the healthcare sector.

## b. Meetings

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Sector Strategy training meetings were held in March 2016 by the State Workforce Division staff to provide guidance to the local WIOA areas in implementing sector strategy. The two local areas are currently identifying and talking with healthcare partners to plan a meeting in the Fall 2016. Topics for discussion include identify healthcare employment opportunities and needs, evaluating the existing and future educational training opportunities available in the region, identifying gaps, and developing strategies to meet the needs of job seekers, and employers in the healthcare field. Additional meetings will be several times a year and as needed to ensure that the healthcare sector will continue to thrive in the region.

## c. Research and data used to identify sectors strategies training

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*Describe the research and the data that was used to identify the sector that was chosen for the sectors strategies training.*

The two local areas (region) reviewed labor market information (LMI) from Georgia Department of Labor, Burning Glass data and data prior WIOA performance and training data and determined that healthcare sector was a common sector between the two local workforce areas. The occupations in healthcare sector have been in demand in both local areas (region) and provide excellent wages and employment retention.

The Governor's High Demand Initiative Report was also reviewed to identify the industries sector. The CEDS (Community Economic Development Strategy) developed by the River Valley Regional Commission which encompasses the 16 county Region identified development clusters in the medical, logistical, advanced manufacturing, agricultural, defence, and automotive clusters.

## d. Outline of the sector strategy

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*Provide a completed outline of the sector strategy for the previously identified sector that includes the following details:*

### i. Participating employers;

Participating employers in the healthcare sector will include area hospitals, clinics, nursing homes, physical or rehab therapy and home healthcare agencies.

Columbus Regional Hospital, St. Francis Hospital, Northside Medical Center, Jack Hughston Memorial Hospital, Martin Army Hospital, Hospice of Columbus, John B. Amos Cancer Center and Love Dental Clinic, Phoebe Sumter Medical Center, Crisp Regional Hospital, Magnolia Manor, Lillian Carter Nursing Home, The Oaks Nursing Home, Sumter Retirement Village, Perfect Care, Innovative Senior Solutions, Taylor County Health and Rehab, Pinehill Nursing Home (Dooly County), Cordelia Manor (Cordele), among others.

#### *ii. Target occupations;*

Target occupations will include nursing (LPN, RN), pharmacy technician, certified nursing assistant (MA, CNA), medical coding, and dental hygienist, dental assistant.

#### *iii. Training programs;*

Training programs available in the region include nursing (LPN & RN), pharmacy technology, dental assisting/hygiene, surgical technology, medical assisting, certified nursing assistant (CNA), and health records management. Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG), University System of Georgia (USG), Region 8 administrative entities as well as approved eligible training providers.

#### *iv. Target Populations.*

WIOA eligible adults, dislocated workers and youth interested in educational training for careers in the healthcare occupations. Individuals will be required to meet training providers entrance requirements for desired training program and who are determined to be WIOA eligible and in need of educational and training services will be the targeted population.

#### *e. Plans for future strategy development for future sectors*

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*Describe the plans for future strategy development for future sectors. If applicable, discuss the next sectors to be targeted.*

The local areas (region) will focus on the Healthcare sector for PY 16 and PY 17 time period. The region will then review data to select another common shared sector. In March 2016, Manufacturing was the second most common sector shared between the two local areas (region). Once the region is ready to select an additional sector, labor Market Information, Burning Glass and other current local information

will be reviewed and presented to the two local area Workforce Development Boards (WDB) to approve the next sector for the region to focus on. Implementation and selection of additional sectors will be based on funding availability.

## 6. One-Stop Delivery System

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*Provide a description of the one-stop delivery system in the local area that includes the items detailed below.*

The local Georgia Department of Labor (GDOL) Columbus Career Center is designated by the Lower Chattahoochee's Workforce Board as the Lower Chattahoochee Area's comprehensive site. The GDOL Americus Career Center is designated by the Middle Flint Workforce Board as the Middle Flint's comprehensive One-Stop site.

The Region and its partners are preparing to conduct a competitive bid procurement of the One-Stop Operator for Spring 2017 in accordance with and following all appropriate protocols of the Guidelines issued by the Georgia Department of Economic Development's Workforce Division (WFD) released for the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). Cost analysis will be based on available sites as well as the going rental rates for each of the WIOA areas.

The Lower Chattahoochee WDB also has various itinerate sites that have been strategically established throughout the workforce area as resource centers and information networks to aid customers unable to access information or services provided at the comprehensive site. The Lower Chattahoochee also has a mobile unit which is a critical component to serve the rural area outside metro Columbus.

The Middle Flint WDB objective is to increase educational and employment opportunities, improve referral process, cross training among partners and staff to increase the knowledge levels of available services and expand awareness and marketing of services to businesses and other community resources.

- Provide variety of services to customers
- Facilitate partners meetings and coordination of services
- Report on services and activities of the one-stop
- Staffing of one-stop sites, staff education and training

- Provide career services to customers
- Marketing of services available at one-stop

Various fund sources are utilized to develop integrated service strategies for adult customers, especially for TANF, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and other low-income individuals, including the Georgia Fatherhood Program. (TEN 35-09).

#### [Columbus GDOL Career Center](#)

Currently, the local Department of Labor Columbus Career Center utilizes Wagner-Peyser and other related Employment Service funding to provide many core services at the Career Center Comprehensive One-Stop site for all customers residing in the local workforce area. The procurement process to select a One-Stop site will be conducted for July 2017.

Although the local Career Center has effortlessly sought ways to conduct regularly scheduled registration and other employment-related services to individuals residing in outlying counties, the availability of staff limits its capability to provide sufficient access to services, especially to those in the rural counties of this workforce area. In efforts to strengthen the presence of our one-stop services and enhances the accessibility of GDOL and other services to residents residing in the rural counties, the local WDB's procurement of a mobilized assessment unit has met these challenges, increasing WIOA, GDOL, and other partnering agency presence in these rural counties.

#### [Americus GDOL Career Center](#)

In Americus, the Middle Flint uses the GDOL Americus Career Center as their Comprehensive One-Stop site. A procurement process to select a One-Stop shop will likewise be conducted in July 2017. There remains issues with transportation to get customers to the One-Stop site in Americus from various rural counties without significant sources for reliable public transportation.

#### [Columbus Technical College](#)

Columbus Technical College operates two itinerate sites in the Lower Chattahoochee workforce area. Additionally, with procurement of adult education from Muscogee County School District, the institution serves as a referral source for individuals seeking Adult Education by helps conducting basic skills training, remediation, and GED preparation.



A collaborative partnership with Columbus Technical College, Chamber of Commerce and the Columbus Consolidated Government Crime Prevention Department formed a program that offers transitional services to inmates. The local WIOA joined this partnership utilizing the provision of on-the-job training opportunities as an incentive for interested employers to hire these individuals back into the workforce.

### South Georgia Technical College

South Georgia Technical College is a key partner for the One Stop system in the Middle Flint workforce area. They, along with GDOL, GVRA and the Title V Employment Program, and WIOA Service Providers provide the core and intensive services for the WIOA.

#### a. Continuous improvements

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*a. Provide a description of how the local board will ensure the continuous improvement of eligible providers of services through the system and ensure that such providers meet the employment needs of local employers, workers and jobseekers.*

Both WDBs in the region utilized a competitive procurement process based on Requests for Proposals to select WIOA contractors to provide educational and training opportunities. WIOA contractors are required to follow policies and procedures development to ensure consistent delivery of services. WIOA participant training services is tracked and reported using the State Georgia WorkReady system. Expenditures of Contractors are also tracked and monitored to ensure compliance with local and federal policies. Providers monitoring and performance reporting is another method of ensuring compliance and continued improvement.

Both the One Stop Shops in Americus and Columbus continually look for improvements to their operations, including in its efficiency and encouraging partners to coordinate their services. System improvements come from a series of trainings held for all providers. The region will continue to provide these quality trainings to all providers and interested parties. This ensures that there is the opportunity for continuous improvement of the providers.

#### b. Facilitating access to services

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*Provide a description of how the local board will facilitate access to services provided through the one-stop delivery system, including in remote areas, through the use of technology and through other means.*

### Access to services

Although the city of Columbus serves as the largest metropolitan area in the region (and one of the larger cities in the State of Georgia), much of the region is very rural. The Middle Flint WDB has two larger cities – Americus and Cordele which have regular access to trainings through the universities and technical colleges located there, but many of the counties served both there and by the Lower Chattahoochee WDB are very rural, small and with limited abilities to get their citizens to services. There are rural transit systems in many of the counties served, but not all. And to complicate matters, those rural transit services often have limited ability to get residents to trainings or other services. The WDB work with these transit services to make sure they are aware of the trainings and services offered by the one-stop delivery system.

Technology is a tool utilized to facilitate trainings, but in areas outside the rural cities and towns, internet service is marginal at best, and very often not available or affordable. Within city limits however, it is used as a tool to find work by local residents.

### Customer-focused System

An important feature of the customer-focused system under WIOA is increased options for accessing workforce services. The Lower Chattahoochee Workforce Area one-stop comprehensive system has designed process to ensure the high volume of customers seeking WIOA services receive timely services and/or referrals. Alternative (itinerate) access points have been strategically located in various cross-sections of our workforce development area to ensure ease of access to informational, referral, and other services are readily available.

In rural area communities that have a limited physical presence of all partners and access to workforce service, the local WIOA has a mobilized resource center equipped with electronic access to informational and/or self-help services that visit these areas each month.

In addition, a WIOA staff representative is out- stationed in the Randolph County DFCS office and provides services to Randolph, Stewart, Clay, and Quitman counties. This staff person has an assigned office in each county DFCS office on a rotating basis. Due to the close proximity of Chattahoochee, Harris, and Talbot counties to the local area one-stop centers in Muscogee County, accessibility to

services is not challenging for many of the residents in these areas. The mobilized unit, however, also travels these areas to ensure ease of accessibility for those customers who do have challenges accessing the centers to services and information offered.

### Workforce Services to Businesses through the One-stop

The local board include: (a) members of the local business community that are also members of the local Department of Labor "Employer Committee", (b) members of organized labor, and (c) a representative of a local economic development organization. Some of the local board members are also members of various chambers of commerce in the local area. During development of this plan, members of the local board identified and accepted, at a minimum, the following business services that are available through the local One-Stop center.

An active 'Employer Committee' formed by the local GDOL Career Center, has been ongoing for many years and is comprised of a group of business representatives whose diligent efforts in identifying the local needs of the business community has been instrumental in maintaining the strong working relationship experienced in this local area between the employer community and the One-Stop Center. Some members of the local workforce development board are also active members on the employer committee. Members of this committee take active roles in promoting the various services available through the local one-stop centers among the employment community and continue to assist local agency partners identify and recommend ways to meet local and state employment related needs. The mission of the 'Employer Committee' is to enhance the employment related services provided by the One-Stop and to facilitate communication between the business communities of Georgia and this workforce development area.

The One-Stop Center and itinerate sites in the local workforce area are fully prepared to market workforce services to businesses and job seekers. Employer/employee briefings resulting from mass layoffs and coordination with collaborative partners to provide mass recruitment/job fairs and Quick Start services to new or expanding businesses in the area are other services offered at the local

comprehensive one-stop center. Other examples of services offered to businesses through the One-Stop include:

- Knowledge about Unemployment Taxes and Benefits
- Tax filing and Wage Reports
- Assistance with petitions and layoff or business closure
- Partial unemployment insurance claims filing
- Information regarding employment law or employment issues
- Recruitment
- Tax credits and incentives
- Labor Market Information
- Local Workforce and business development resources
- Find Workforce Development Act information for Employers

### c. Compliance with accessibility laws

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*Provide a description of how entities within the one-stop delivery system, including one-stop operators and the one-stop partners, will comply with WIOA § 188, if applicable, and applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.) regarding the physical and programmatic accessibility of facilities, programs and services, technology and materials for individuals with disabilities. This should include the provision of staff training and support and addressing the needs of individuals with disabilities.*

In addition to the assistive technology listed above, the One Stop Shop in Columbus and Americus are fully handicap accessible in accordance with ADA and Section 504 laws and regulations.

For both the Middle Flint and Lower Chattahoochee WIOA areas, the Comprehensive One-stop Center's resource area is also equipped with assistive technology to assist citizens who require accommodations.

### d. Roles and resource contributions of the one-stop partners.

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*Provide a comprehensive description of the roles and resource contributions of the one-stop partners.*

There are two one-stop shops in the region – one based in Americus, one in Columbus. Both One-Stop Shops are located in GADOL resource centers.

## ***Itinerate Area Sites and Services***

Lead Partner/One-Stop Operator and Other Partners	Major Services Provided by Each Partner
<p>Lead Partner (Itinerate Site) Columbus Technical College Itinerate One-Stop Site 918 Manchester Expressway Columbus, Georgia Phone#: 706-649-1856</p> <p><b>**One Stop Operator</b> Columbus Consolidated Government Job Training Division</p>	<p>Serves as an Itinerate Site for collaboration of One-Stop System partners for basic services and referral to comprehensive One-Stop Center for further processing. Assistance with occupational skills training and retraining through ITAs, in addition to career counseling, Case Management.</p> <p>Oversight of Itinerate site location of One-Stop System operation. Outreach &amp; Recruitment, support services and counseling. Intake and funding assistance for training and retraining. Comprehensive assessment of WIOA/Recovery eligible individuals and referral.</p>
<p>Lead Partner (Itinerate Site) Columbus Technical College (Benning Hills Itinerate Site) 190 Munson Drive, Room #30 Columbus, Georgia 31903</p> <p><b>**One Stop Operator</b> Columbus Consolidated Government</p>	<p>Serves as an Itinerate Site for collaboration of One-Stop System partners for basic services and referral to comprehensive One-Stop Center for further processing. Provide information on Adult Education to include Basic Skills &amp; GED instruction.</p> <p>Oversight of Itinerate site location for One-Stop System operation. Intake and funding assistance for training and retraining. Comprehensive assessment of eligible individuals and referral. Outreach &amp; Recruitment, support services, counseling.</p>
<p>Lead Partner (Itinerate Site) Columbus Technical College (Benning Hills Itinerate Site) 190 Munson Drive, Room #30 Columbus, Georgia 31903</p> <p><b>**One Stop Operator</b> Columbus Consolidated Government</p>	<p>Serves as an Itinerate Site for collaboration of One-Stop System partners for basic services and referral to comprehensive one-stop center for further processing. Provide information on Adult Education to include Basic Skills &amp; GED instruction.</p> <p>Oversight of Itinerate site location for One-Stop System operation. Intake and funding assistance for training and retraining. Comprehensive assessment of eligible individuals and referral. Outreach &amp; Recruitment, support services,</p>

	counseling.
Department of Family & Children Services Randolph, Stewart, Quitman, Clay Counties DFCS Offices	Itinerate Site serves as resource center and access point for basic services and referral to comprehensive one-stop center for further processing, where appropriate; to include employment services, WIOA, or referral to other agencies for non-WIOA services.
**One Stop Operator Columbus Consolidated Government	Oversight of Itinerate site One-Stop System operation. Intake and funding assistance for training and retraining. Comprehensive assessment of eligible individuals and referral for training and/or retraining, career counseling, Case Management.
Lead Partner (Itinerate Sites) (Columbus Career Center) GDOL Career Center 700 Veterans Parkway, Columbus, Georgia Phone #: 706-649-7423	Outreach & Recruitment, Support Services, Counseling, Pre-vocational Assistance, Occupational, Job Search/Placement, Employment, UI Claim Assistance, Trade Assistance
One-Stop Operator: Columbus Consolidated Government	Assistance with WIOA screening, referral for training & retraining for adult/dislocated worker/youth services. Career Counseling & Case Management
Vocational Rehabilitation	Assistance with training & retraining of disabled population. Career Counseling & Case Management.
Dept. of Technical Adult Education	Outreach & Recruitment, Pre- vocational assistance.
Department of Family & Children Services	TANF assistance; childcare and transportation support services; medical aide provisions; pre-vocational training assistance.
Other Partners: Job Corps	Assistance with training & retraining. Career Counseling & Case Management
Enrichment Services	Assistance with vocational skills training & retraining. Career Counseling & Case Management. Outreach & Recruitment, Support

Adult Education and Literacy	Services, Pre-vocational assistance and training Basic Skills and GED preparation and some soft skills training
Housing Authority of Columbus (HUD Programs)	Housing assistance & counseling
Lead Partner (Itinerate Site) Columbus Technical College Itinerate One-Stop Site 918 Manchester Expressway Columbus, Georgia Phone #: 706-649-1856	Serves as an Itinerate Site for collaboration of One-Stop System partners for basic services and referral to comprehensive one-stop center for further processing. Assistance with occupational skills training & retraining through ITAs, in addition to career counseling, Case Management.
**One Stop Operator Columbus Consolidated Government Job Training Division	Oversight of Itinerate site location of One-Stop System operation. Outreach & Recruitment, support services, counseling. Intake and funding assistance for training and retraining. Comprehensive assessment of WIOA/Recovery eligible individuals and referral.
Lead Partner (Itinerate Site) Columbus Technical College (Benning Hills Itinerate Site) 190 Munson Drive, Room #30 Columbus, Georgia 31903	Serves as an Itinerate Site for collaboration of One-Stop System partners for basic services and referral to comprehensive one-stop center for further processing. Provide information on Adult Education to include Basic Skills & GED instruction.
**One Stop Operator Columbus Consolidated Government	Oversight of Itinerate site location for One-Stop System operation. Intake and funding assistance for training and retraining. Comprehensive Assessment of WW Recovery eligible individuals and referral. Outreach & Recruitment, support services, counseling.

<p>GDOL Americus Career Center 120 West Church Street Americus, GA 31709 (229) 931-2520</p>	<p>Employment Services Unemployment Insurance Veterans Services Employer Services Job Referrals Assessments Job Search Assistance Labor Market Information Resume Preparation Workshops Referral to community services Migrant Seasonal Farm Worker TOP Step and Federal Bonding</p>
<p>Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency</p>	<p>Career Counseling Assessments Job Development Case Management Training Workshops Accessibility</p>
<p>River Valley Regional Commission WIOA Administrator 228 West Lamar Street Americus, GA 31709</p>	<p>WIOA Administrative Entity and Grant Recipient Program Oversight and Management Labor Market Information</p>
<p>Paxen Learning Inc. 301 S. Tripp St. Americus, GA 31705 (229) 931-8990</p> <p>605 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue Cordele, GA 31015 (229) 273-4568</p>	<p>Outreach and recruitment Eligibility Determination Assessments GED Basic Skills Remediation Work Experience Job Search Assistance Work Readiness Training Computer Skills Training Follow-Up Services Referral to post-secondary education Resume Preparation Referral to community resources Labor Market Information Supportive Services Career Counseling On-The-Job Training</p>



South Georgia Technical College  
900 S Georgia Tech Pkwy  
Americus, GA 31709  
(229) 931-2553

Admissions information  
Occupational Skills Prep  
Adult Literacy/ESL  
WIOA Eligibility Determination  
Assessments  
Case Management  
Job Search Assistance  
Referrals to Community Resources

#### e. Current one-stop operator

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*Identify the current One-Stop Operator in the local area(s) and describe how the region/local area is preparing for the competitive process for operator selection. Describe how market research, requests for information and conducting a cost and price analysis are being conducted as part of that preparation.*

The local Georgia Department of Labor (GDOL) Columbus Career Center is designated by the Lower Chattahoochee's Workforce Board as the Lower Chattahoochee Area's comprehensive site. The GDOL Americus Career Center is designated by the Middle Flint Workforce Board as Middle Flint's comprehensive One-Stop site.

*How the region/local area is preparing for the competitive process for operator selection.*

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The Region is preparing for the publicly available competitive procurement of the One Stop Center/Operator Services. Marketing research and cost price analysis comparisons will be made as part of the Request for Proposal (RFP) procurement process and selection of the operator services. The Region will discuss with other workforce areas price comparisons as part of this process.

Also, the Region is addressing this by talking with various interested parties about the upcoming RFP. As of yet a RFP has not been developed.

Each local area and their partners are preparing to conduct a competitive bid procurement of the One-Stop Operator in accordance with and following all appropriate protocols of the guidelines issued by the Georgia Department of Economic Development's Workforce Division (WFD) released for the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

In the Middle Flint area, business services available at the comprehensive one-stop center include the following: provision of employment statistics, access to economic development information, performance information and program services provided by eligible providers and other agencies that are available to assist local employers in their recruitment efforts for skilled and trained workers to fill job openings, access to talent banks, provision of labor law information, job auditing, testing, and other activities. The area will contract all these services out to the new One Stop Shop once the new procurement process is completed.

A business service center is available within the center for employers, equipped with interview rooms, technology and other resources for interviewing, conducting recruitment efforts, et cetera. Rapid response activities, employer committee seminars, workshops, job fairs, and proficiency skills testing services are also available. Provision of the above services through the Local Workforce System helps to ensure that employers have access to the best employees.

## **7. Awarding Sub-grants and Contracts**

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*Provide a description of the competitive process to be used to award the sub-grants and contracts in the local area for activities carried out under this Title I.*

Both local boards use a procurement process based on Requests for Proposal. These RFPs are developed by WDB staff at the recommendation of the board, and the RFPs are then solicited and advertised. Advertisements are distributed in the local legal organs. The RFPs are reviewed by a board committee who then makes a recommendation to the full board. The local boards then make their decision on service providers. This process is uniform by federal guidelines with local agency guidance to adhere to as outlined below.

The Columbus Consolidated Government Job Training Division, as the fiscal and procurement agent for the Lower Chattahoochee Workforce Development Board, releases a Request for Proposals (RFP).

Public Notices are advertised in the local areas legal sections prior to the release date of the RFP. The notice will advise the provision of services being solicited, counties/communities or region to be served, the age or populace targeted, the expected amount of WIOA eligible participants to be served, the amount of the total funding to be awarded, the contractual period and the release date and submission deadline of proposals. Programs funded as a result of the solicitation will adhere to policies and procedures outlined by WIOA and administered by the Columbus Consolidated Government Job Training Division. A “Bidder’s conference shall be held two weeks after the release date and shall be the only time questions concerning the content and preparation of a proposal will be answered. A complete set of minutes of the Bidders Conference in addition to the Q and A will be available to the public up until the submission date.

Once the submission date has expired, proposals to be considered for funding must be responsive to the solicitation package and RFP. All responsive proposals will be reviewed and ranked using the criteria outlined in the solicitation package. (During the determination of Responsiveness, no evaluation of the proposal content will occur. The reviewer will only be checking to determine if the proposal meets the criteria established in the solicitation package.) A proposal that does not satisfy the responsive standards, does not qualify for further consideration in the competitive evaluation. Proposals that meet the minimum criteria will be reviewed and ranked by the Administrative and Programmatic Oversight and Compliance Committee (only those members of the committee who do not have any fiduciary interest in bidding for the program solicited under the proposal shall be part of the review and evaluation process). The recommendations of the Administrative and Programmatic Oversight and Compliance Committee will be presented through the LCWDB Workforce Development Board for validation of approval. All contract awards are considered provisional pending receipt of the any additional documentation requested and the successful completion of contract negotiations and contract completion.

The River Valley Regional Commission, WIOA Administrative Entity/Grant Recipient on behalf of the Middle Flint Workforce Development Board will prepare and release a Request for Proposals (RFP). Public Notices of availability will be posted on the agency web site both social and other media sources prior to the release date of the RFP when deemed necessary. Notice of RFP availability will be made available to individuals on the bidder’s list. A bidders’ conference will be held to allow for

clarification and question/answer comments regarding the RFP specifications. Minutes from the bidders' conference will be made available until the RFP due date.

Submitted RFP proposals will be reviewed and evaluated using the criteria in the RFP packets. Proposals meeting the minimum criteria will be considered responsive and will be ranked accordingly by selected staff and/or WDB Member/Committee Members. The recommendations from the review evaluation process will be submitted to the Middle Flint Workforce Development Board for selection and final approval. Contracts will be developed based on Board approval.

Both Local Workforce Development Board reserves the right to accept or reject any and all proposals (bids) received as a result of the RFP, to negotiate with any source the Board deems qualified, or to cancel any bid in part or in its entirety, if it's in the best interest of the Local Workforce Development Area. Bids that are determined by the Local Board to be acceptable, but which are not funded will be placed on a prioritized contingency list for future use should funding become available and should the request meet the needs of the Local Board.

For the Lower Chattahoochee, members of the Administrative and Programmatic Oversight and Compliance committee shall represent a cross section of members of the Board. It shall be the responsibility of this committee, in coordination with the WIOA Program Administrator, to review employment and training needs in the area and to determine population target groups for the area. It shall further be the responsibility of this committee to oversee the systems functions and to coordinate with the WIOA Program Administrator staff in preparing program plan(s) as required. Members of this committee shall review proposing applications and/or proposals submitted by potential deliverers of service within the one-stop delivery system, and make appropriate recommendations to the Board regarding services to be funded and provided in accordance with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014.

Program Administrator staff in preparing program plan(s) as required. Members of this committee shall review proposing applications and/or proposals submitted by potential deliverers of service within the one-stop delivery system, and make appropriate recommendations to the Board regarding

services to be funded and provided in accordance with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014.

For the Middle Flint, members of the Middle Flint Executive Committee and other designated individual board members, as well as staff of the administrative entity, shall be selected to serve in the evaluation process of the RFP procurement process.

## **8. EEO and Grievance Procedures**

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### **Grievances and Complaint Resolutions.**

Established policies and procedures regarding grievance and complaint resolution policies are in place in both the Lower Chattahoochee Area and the Middle Flint Area to respond to problems, disputes, and appeals in accordance with the Act, State and local policies. An EEO representative is designated to receive all such complaints and to address all issues in accordance with these policies and procedures. Applicants are made aware of this process during initial orientation.

Applicants, clients, WIOA funded employees, and/or recipients of WIOA funds, One-Stop partners, and other interested parties affected by the local Workforce Development System, who allege violations of the Workforce Development Act, regulations, grants, or other agreements/contracts (other than complaints of discrimination,) will use the Lower Chattahoochee Area grievance policy to respond to problems, disputes, and appeals. An EEO representative is appointed to receive and address all complaints and issues in accordance with the policies and procedures established by the local workforce area.

The Region has a Complaint and Grievance Policy and Procedures form that is publicly available at various locations in the area (One Stop Centers, WIOA offices, Contractors/Providers locations, and websites etc..) which provides information on compliance with Section 181 and 188 of the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA), State and Federal policies. A Complaint / Grievance Policy and Procedures is publicly available which provides general policy information, Equal Opportunity is The Law, Discrimination Complaints, Complaints of Abuse, Fraud and Other Alleged Criminal Activity and All

Other Complaints and Grievances. The form provides contact information (agency name, address, telephone numbers and TTY/TDD phone number ) for local, State, Federal and Office of Inspector General if an individual would like to file a complaint/grievance. Efforts are made at the local WIOA level administrators to be responsive and to resolve all complaints/grievances upon receipt of the complaint. Individuals interested in WIOA services are provided a copy of the Complaint/Greivance Policies and procedures form during the career services and intake appointments. WIOA customers/ applicants/participants are required to sign the form and a copy is palced in their participant records.

#### Types of Complaints/Grievances:

Terms and Conditions of Employment: Complaints involving terms and conditions of employment as alleged by WIOA-funded staff will be processed and exhausted under the employing agency's established procedures prior to submitting a complaint in accordance with these procedures.

Bidders: Bidders wishing to file a complaint must have their complaint addressed under the administrative dispute procedures established by the Lower Chattahoochee Workforce Development System and the Middle Flint Workforce Development System prior to submitting such complaints in accordance with these procedures. (Such complaints may be filed only if the complaint is based on a violation of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act, federal and State regulations, and local procurement requirements and/or procedures).

Labor Standards Violations: Complaints alleging violations under 29 CFR Part 27 and Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Section 188 and subsequent rules shall use these procedures, or choose to submit grievances to a binding arbitration procedure, if a collective bargaining agreement covering the parties to the grievance so provides.

Public Schools: Grievances which pertain to disciplinary actions of teachers or students, grading policy, or teacher employment contracts, will be handled by the grievance procedures outlined in 20-2-1160, Official Code of the State of Georgia. Grievances, which pertain to the terms of contracts between the school and the Workforce Development System, shall be handled by these procedures.

When to File: All complaints, except those alleging fraud, criminal activity, discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, handicap, national origin, political affiliation, sexual orientation, gender identity, or belief, must be filed within one (1) year of the occurrence of the action upon which such complaints are based.

What to File: All complaints must be in writing, and shall contain the following: (1) the full name, telephone number [if any], and address of the person making the complaint; (2) the full name and address of the respondent against whom such complaint is made; (3) a clear and concise statement of the facts, including pertinent dates, constituting the alleged violation; (4) the provision of the Act, regulations, grant, or other agreements under the Act believed to have been violated, if known; and (5) relief requested.

Where to File: All complaints shall be delivered to the Columbus Consolidated Government Annex, Job Training Division, Post Office Box 1340, 420 Tenth Street (1st floor), Columbus, Georgia 31902-1340. Attention: Ms. Feleshia Marshall, E.O. Officer.

Where to File: All complaints shall be delivered to the Middle Flint Workforce Office/River Valley Regional Commission Office, 228 West Lamar Street, Americus, Georgia 31709. Attention: Ms. Tenisha Tookes, E. O. Officer.

Local Resolution: Reasonable effort shall be made to resolve all complaints and grievances filed at the local level. A request for resolution of a complaint or grievance will be considered to have been filed when the reviewing authority, or his/her designee, has received the written statement from the complainant. Written statement must contain sufficient facts and arguments necessary to evaluate the complaint. The reviewing authority shall make written acknowledgment within ten (10) days of receipt of the complaint/grievance.

Grievance Hearing: Should such complaint/grievance necessitate a hearing, reasonable notice will be given to both parties by registered or certified mail; or hand delivered with means of documenting verification of receipt by affected parties. Such notice will contain: 1) time, date, and place of hearing;

2) specific charges involved; 3) right of both parties to be represented by legal counsel; 4) right to present evidence (both written and thru witnesses); 5) reference to the particular sections of the Act, regulations, subgrant, or other contract under the Act involved; 6) statement of the authority and jurisdiction under which the hearing is to be held; 7) statement of the right of each party to cross examination; and, 8) the right to an impartial decision maker who has not been directly involved in the events from which the complaint arose.

If either party to the complaint is aware of facts or circumstances that put the hearing officer's independence or impartiality in question, the appointing body will be notified immediately.

#### Selection of Hearing Officer:

The hearing officer shall: have complete independence in obtaining facts and making decisions, and must be in a position to render decisions that are both fair and not be a subordinate of the Grant Administrator involved in administering the program and is not involved in the matter that gives rise to the grievance.

The hearing officer may be a member of the Workforce Development System who has no direct or indirect involvement in the matter that gives rise to the grievance.

Decisions: The Director, Job Training Division, or his/her designee, will render final decisions except in cases that result in a hearing. The appointing hearing officer shall render final decisions of such hearings.

A request for review by the State level may be made if the complainant does not receive a decision within thirty (30) days of filing, or if the decision rendered is unsatisfactory.

#### Appeal to State Level:

If a complainant does not receive a decision within thirty (30) days of the date of filing of his/her complaint, or receives a decision that is unsatisfactory to the complainant, he/she has a right to request review of the complaint by the Georgia Department of Economic Development, Workforce Division. The request for review shall be filed within ten (10) days of receipt of the adverse decision(s) or ten (10) days



from the date on which the complainant should have received a decision. Such a request shall be submitted to State WIOA Title I Equal Opportunity Officer, or Deputy Commissioner of Workforce Development, Georgia Department of Economic Development Workforce Division (GDECD), 75 Fifth St, NW Suite 845, Atlanta, Georgia 30308. The State EO Officer, or other responsible designee, shall conduct a review of the complaint and issue a decision within ninety (90) calendar days from the date of receipt of the review request. If State official, GDECD does not respond to you in the allotted ninety (90) days, you will have the opportunity to file a request for review by the Executive Council Officer. The decision rendered by the State, or his designee, will be final.

Federal Review:

Should the State fail to provide a decision within the established time frame, the complainant may request a determination as to whether reasonable cause exist to believe the Act, or its regulations, have been violated. Such request shall be submitted to the Secretary, U.S. Department of Labor, Washington DC 20210, Attn: ASET within ten (10) days of the date the Governor's decision should have been issued. The Secretary shall act within 120 days. Except for complaints arising under WIOA Section 184(f) or Section 188, grievances or complaints made directly to the Secretary will be referred to the appropriate State or local area for resolution in accordance with this section, unless the parties are notified that the Georgia Department of Economic Development Office of Workforce Development will investigate the grievance under the procedures at 667.505.

Discrimination: Complaints involving any type of discrimination must be filed directly with the U.S. Department of Labor within 120 days of the occurrence. Questions about or complaints alleging a violation of the nondiscrimination provisions of WIOA Section 188, may be directed or mailed to the Director, Civil Rights Center, U.S. Department of Labor, Room N4123, 200 Constitution Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20210, for processing.

Nothing precludes a grievant or complainant from pursuing a remedy authorized under another Federal, State, or local law.

- Special Procedure for Complaints of Discrimination on Basis of Disability

Complaints pertaining to discrimination on the basis of handicap must be filed within 180 days of the occurrence, and must be processed by the State within sixty (60) days of filing a grievance. If a complaint in such case does not receive a decision, or receives an adverse decision from the State, an appeal may be filed with the U.S. Department of Labor, Directorate of Civil Rights. Such an appeal must be filed within thirty (30) days of receipt of the adverse decision, or within ninety (90) days of the original filing.

Forms may be accessed through the Civil Rights Center website at:

<http://www.dol.gov/oasam/programs/crc/Cife.pdf>. For the Lower Chattahoochee WIOA, you may contact Ms. Feleshia Marshall, WIOA EO Officer at (706) 653-4539; or 1-800-255-0056 (Hearing impaired), 1-800-855-2884 (English as a second language; or by email at [jobtraining@columbusga.org](mailto:jobtraining@columbusga.org). The WDA-14 EO Officer is located at the WIOA Unit, Georgia Department of Labor Columbus Career Center, 700 Veterans Parkway, Columbus, Georgia.

<http://www.dol.gov/oasam/programs/crc/Cife.pdf>. For the Middle Flint WIOA, you may contact Ms. Tenisha Tookes, WIOA EO Officer at (706) 256-2910; or 1-800-255-0056 (Hearing impaired), 1-877-819-6348 (English as a second language).

Director, Civil Rights Center, U.S. Department of Labor, Room N4123, 200 Constitution Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20210, for processing.

Nothing precludes a grievant or complainant from pursuing a remedy authorized under another Federal, State, or local law.

- Special Procedure for Complaints of Discrimination on Basis of Disability

Complaints pertaining to discrimination on the basis of handicap must be filed within 180 days of the occurrence, and must be processed by the State within sixty (60) days of filing a grievance. If a complaint in such case does not receive a decision, or receives an adverse decision from the State, an appeal may be filed with the U.S. Department of Labor, Directorate

of Civil Rights. Such an appeal must be filed within thirty (30) days of receipt of the adverse decision, or within ninety (90) days of the original filing.

Forms may be accessed through the Civil Rights Center website at:

<http://www.dol.gov/oasam/programs/crc/Cife.pdf>. For the Lower Chattahoochee WIOA, you may contact Ms. Feleshia Marshall, WIOA EO Officer at (706) 653-4539; or 1-800-255-0056 (Hearing impaired), 1-800-855-2884 (English as a second language; or by email at [jobtraining@columbusga.org](mailto:jobtraining@columbusga.org). The WDA-14 EO Officer is located at the WIOA Unit, Georgia Department of Labor Columbus Career Center, 700 Veterans Parkway, Columbus, Georgia 31902.

For the Middle Flint WIOA, you may contact Ms. Tenisha Tookes, WIOA EO Officer at (706) 256-2910; or 1-800-255-0056 (Hearing impaired), 1-800-855-2884 (English as a second language; or by email at [jwest@rivervalleyrc.org](mailto:jwest@rivervalleyrc.org). The WDA-15 EO Officer is located at the River Valley Regional Commission – Americus Office, 228 West Lamar Street, Americus, Georgia 31709.

## 9. Local Boards and Plan Development:

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### Local Boards

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*Provide a description of the local board that includes the components listed below.*

The Lower Chattahoochee Workforce Board and the Middle Flint Workforce Development Board are both responsible to ensure that Workforce Area Fourteen and Fifteen respectively have a robust system that is comprehensive, effective, responsive and customer-focused. The Boards are comprised of a member representation from a cross-section of organizations within its workforce area, to include public sector, non-profit and for-profit organizations that govern the local workforce development system. A list of board members is found in Appendix 1.

Board subcommittees, are established to ensure programs are designed to meet the economic demands of the workforce area and to promote accountability and transparency in accordance with the intent

and spirit of the Workforce Development Act. For the Lower Chattahoochee WDB, as grant recipient and administrator, the Columbus Consolidated Government has been delegated the responsibility to ensure that programs and systems are designed, coordinated, implemented, and administered to meet the full compliance requirements of WIOA and to address the needs of the local labor market. For the Middle Flint WDB, the River Valley Regional Commission serves that role.

The establishment of subcommittees enhances the Board's oversight responsibilities in accordance with the Act. The WIOA Administrator provides detailed reporting of program performance, funding and budgetary status, compliance and programmatic external and internal operation of the workforce system. Membership on each subcommittee requires a cross-section of Board representation, which further enhances the assurances of integrated services provided in the local workforce system.

#### *a. Identification and appointment process for local boards*

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*Describe how local board members are identified and appointed. Include a description of how the nomination process occurs for adult education and labor representatives. (Proposed § 679.320(g))*

Board members are appointed by the Chief Elected Official for each local government. Board and staff will help identify appropriate candidates to fill the positions necessary for adult education, vocational rehabilitation, and organized labor. Board members are nominated to serve a two year rotation. In the Middle Flint WDB, members are also solicited from area chambers of commerce, payroll and industrial development authorities, business organizations, education agencies, and partner agencies. Board member nominees are presented to the Chief Local Elected Official (CLEO) for consideration and approval. Representatives from Adult Education are nominated by the local Technical Colleges providing adult education services. Nominations for Labor representatives are solicited from business or labor organizations.

#### *b. New member orientation process*

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*Describe the area's new member orientation process for board members.*

New Workforce Development Board (WDB) members for both areas are provided orientation information upon appointment to serve on the local WDB. One-on-one sessions or groups sessions may

be conducted as needed. Members are provided information on local WIOA services and activities, By-Laws, meetings, etc.

#### c. Board coordination of workforce development activities

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*Describe how the local board will coordinate workforce development activities carried out in the local area with regional economic development activities carried out in the region (in which the local area is located or planning region).*

Local Workforce Development Boards (WDB) include members from the local/region economic development agencies. These members keep the WIOA staff and WDB updated economic development activities in the local area. WDB meeting regularly include an information sharing segment from the economic development representatives on current or upcoming activities such as new business/industry recruitment, job fairs, business expansions, identified needs of employers, etc. in the local area. Information on WIOA and partners services may also be included as resources to business prospects or existing business and industry.

#### d. Engagement of local board members

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*Describe how local board members are kept engaged and informed.*

The local Workforce Development Boards (WDB) receive information and updates on WIOA activities and developments at board meetings. Information such as job fair announcements, workshops or training events, committee events, RVRC quarterly newsletters, WIOA participants' success stories, may also be distributed as a way to keep board members engaged and informed. WIOA Service Contractors may also engage Board members by visiting them when they are in their locations or inviting members to visit their training sites, or be guest speakers or serve as mentors. WIOA Administrative staff, Contractors staff and Board Members are often in attendance at the same community meetings which allows for information sharing and networking opportunities.

## 10. Local Board Committees

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*Provide a description of board committees and their functions.*

The Lower Chattahoochee WDB has more committees than the Middle Flint area. Both have an Executive Committee that is responsible for day to day operations. Descriptions of these committees are below.

### *Lower Chattahoochee WDB*

#### EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:

Under the authority of the local Board, the Executive Committee is responsible for making decisions on behalf of the Board, when convening of the full Board cannot be accomplished in a timely manner, that affect the administration and operation of the WIOA system that include services, activities, and programs administered in accordance with the Workforce Development Act. The Executive Committee is required to keep the Board informed of actions taken on its behalf at the next appropriate meeting of the full Board.

Members of the Executive Committee are comprised of the Chairperson of each subcommittee as established by the Board Chairperson. To avoid the appearance of a conflict of interest, contracted agencies and/or providers of service in the system are not appointed to this committee.

However, should a partner representative be selected as a chairperson of a committee, to avoid the appearance of a conflict of interest such individuals may not be excluded from serving on the Executive Committee; but, such representative must abstain from any voting or discussions relevant to any such voting regarding the agency that may be represented as a provider of service under the local workforce development system.

#### PROGRAM/EVALUATION/SELECTION COMMITTEE:

Members of the Program/Evaluation and Selection Committee represent a cross section of members of the Board. In coordination with the Program Administrator, the committee is responsible to review employment and training needs in the area, to determine population target groups for the area and

oversee the functions of the workforce systems functions, and to coordinate with the Program Administrator staff in preparing program plan(s) as required. The committee is further responsible for reviewing solicitation applications submitted by potential deliverers of service within the one-stop system, and make appropriate recommendations regarding the provision of appropriate services in accordance with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2013. A summary of each meeting and recommendations held by this committee shall be presented to the LCWDB or to the Executive Committee convened on behalf of the LCWDB for appropriate action. In circumstance where the Executive Committee is the approval authority, the Executive Committee shall subsequently report any actions taken by the committee on behalf of the LCWDB at the next full board meeting for confirmation of the full board.

#### MONITORING/OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE:

Members of this committee represent a cross section of members of the LCWDB, with responsibility to oversee program activities and internal and external operations of the Workforce Development System that decreases potential disparities, while strengthening the Board's oversight capabilities. Program Administrator staff shall conduct internal and external reports of the system and provide reports to the committee for oversight and monitoring purposes. A summary of each meeting and recommendations held by this committee shall be presented to the LCWDB or to the Executive Committee convened on behalf of the LCWDB for appropriate action. In circumstances where the Executive Committee is the approval authority, the Executive Committee shall subsequently report any actions taken by the committee on behalf of the LCWDB at the next full board meeting for confirmation of the full board.

#### BUDGET AND FINANCE COMMITTEE:

Members of this committee shall represent a cross section of members of the Board, responsible for conducting oversight of the fiscal accountability and transparency of the local workforce system administered and operated by funds allocated under WIOA and Recovery Act funds, as applicable, and makes recommendations where appropriate. Oversight shall be conducted via reports generated by the Program Administrator staff. The Program Administrator staff shall provide report of the system(s) finances in respect to WIOA and Recovery Act allocations, as applicable, for this purpose. A summary of each meeting and recommendations held by this committee shall be presented to the LCWDB or to the

Executive Committee convened on behalf of the LCWDB for appropriate action. In circumstances where the Executive Committee is the approval authority, the Executive Committee shall subsequently report any actions taken by the committee on behalf of the LCWDB at the next full board meeting for confirmation of the full board.

#### MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE:

Members of this committee shall represent a cross section of members of the Board, with responsibility, to ensure compliance with board membership. Meetings of the membership committee shall occur once during a program year, or when necessary to ensure compliance and oversight of board membership issues. A summary of each meeting and recommendations held by this committee shall be presented to the LCWDB or to the Executive Committee convened on behalf of the LCWDB for appropriate action. In circumstances where the Executive Committee is the approval authority, the Executive Committee shall subsequently report any actions taken by the committee on behalf of the LCWDB at the next full board meeting for confirmation of the full board.

#### YOUTH COMMITTEE:

As a subpart of the Lower Chattahoochee Workforce Development Board, the Youth Committee is also comprised of a cross section of individuals from the local area with expertise in services to the youth population. The Youth Committee includes members from the local workforce who possess expertise in youth services.

As vested by the local Workforce Development Board, the Youth Committee is responsible for identifying the service needs of youth in the local area and to coordinate such services to youth in the local area; to determine the funding availability of such services (e.g. WIOA and non-WIOA); and, to review and recommend approval/disapproval of solicitations for rendering such services; and, present such recommendation(s) to the local board for approval/disapproval; or, present recommendations to the Executive Committee, if necessary.



It is further the responsibility of the Youth Committee to coordinate with the Administrator in the development of portions of the local plan related to youth in the area; to assist the Administrator in developing policy and procedures governing administration and implementation of youth services in the local area; and to make summary reports to the Lower Chattahoochee Workforce Board and/or where required the Board's Executive Committee.

### *Middle Flint WDB*

Local Workforce Development Board (WDB) currently has an Executive Committee and can appoint other committees are deemed necessary. The Executive Committee may act on behalf of the full board when a quorum is not present at a meeting. Executive Committee may also hold a meeting if a decision or matter needs to be made quickly and time does not allow for full Board meeting to be held.

Additional committees such as proposal review, nominating committee, youth committee, etc. may be appointed as deemed necessary by the Board.

## 11. Plan Development

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*Provide a description of the process by which the plan was developed including the participation of core partners, providers, board members and other community entities. Also describe the process used by the local board to provide a 30 day comment period prior to the submission of the plan including an opportunity for public comment, including comment by representatives of businesses and comment by representatives of labor organizations, representative of education and input into the development of the local plan.*

WIOA staff reviewed the draft State Workforce Plan for guidance on development of local and regional plans. Required partners were notified of the State Plan available and encouraged to review the plan for guidance in developing and submission of their agencies activities, services and any other pertinent information to be included local/regional plans. Labor Market Information (LMI) data from the Georgia Department of Labor website, Burning Glass data, Census Bureau data, etc. was collected and utilized in

the development of the local/regional plan. Copies of the Plan will be provided to WDB members for review and upon approval of the Plan.

#### Process to provide a 30 day comment period

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Upon approval of the Plan, public notice was posted on the City of Columbus and River Valley Regional Commission websites (<http://www.columbusga.org/> and <http://rivervalleyrc.org/> ) for the 30-day public comment period. Local Area Plans and the Regional Plan were available on these sites. Emails were sent to interested parties notifying them of the 30 day comment period. No comments were received.

## 12. Expanding Service to Eligible Individuals

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*Provide a description of how the local board, working with the entities carrying out core programs, will expand access to employment, training, education and supportive services for eligible individuals, particularly eligible individuals with barriers to employment. Include how the local board will facilitate the development of career pathways and co- enrollment, as appropriate, in core programs, and how it will improve access to activities leading to a recognized postsecondary credential, academic or industry- recognized.*

The local WDB, staff and partners will work toward expanding access to services for eligible individuals and strive to provide a pipeline of skilled workers to meet the needs of area business and employers. Efforts to improve basic education literacy levels and providing training opportunities that increase skills levels and employability will help attract new business and industry to the local area. One Stop Partners will hold meetings to identify needs, accessibility options and develop strategies to expand outreach and recruitment efforts in the community. An important part of expanding access to services is to develop an effective referral process and cross training among partner's staff to ensure individuals are directed in the appropriate service or partner agency for assistance. Training needs to include Identifying individuals' barriers to employment and training as services may need to be provided by multiple partners. Career pathways and co-enrollment have been implemented in many of the WIOA education and training activities. Helping individuals to remove or work around barriers can lead to achieving desired training objectives and outcomes. The attainment of education credentials and/or industry

recognized enhances the employment, retention in employment, and increases in wages performance outcomes of WIOA.

### 13. Services to Adults and Dislocated Workers

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*Provide a description and assessment of the type and availability of adult and dislocated worker employment and training activities in the local area.*

Both local WDB areas in GDECD Region 8 collaborate and coordinate with their providers to provide a wide array of services to the adult and dislocated worker. Services available include, but not limited to, the following: job search/job placement assistance, comprehensive assessments, various workshops, assistance with Unemployment Insurance (UI) claims, resume training and development, Rapid Response, veterans' services, federal bonding, Work Opportunity Tax Credits, and Labor Market Information. WIOA funded services include Individual Training Accounts (ITA's), On-the-Job Training (OJT), GED preparation, Work Readiness training, Work Experience, career guidance, assessments, job search and job placements and referral to other services as deemed appropriate.

#### Adult Services

In ongoing efforts to enhance services to the adult and dislocated workers that offer potential unsubsidized permanent employment and retention leading to self-sufficiency, the local area, through the normal competitive procurement process, contracts with an intensive service provider annually to provide work experience for WIOA eligible adults and dislocated workers that includes linkage with adult and dislocated recent graduates from local post-secondary and vocational schools who are placed in positions that provide work exposure in the field for which they received occupational classroom training.

As part of the local area's plans to increase the availability of training in high-demand occupations to workforce system customers, the local area has contracted with institutions of higher education and other training providers with emphasis placed on training in these occupations.

Additionally, in efforts to provide skills training that meets the needs of existing manufacturing employers in the local area and to deter continued downsizing and outsourcing of remaining manufacturing plants still in existence, and hopefully re-stimulate the resurgence and growth of new employers to the region. South Georgia Technical College and Columbus Technical College as well as other educational institutes in the region are looking to institute more short term occupational specific coursework based upon employer needs.

On The Job Training (OJT) is a critical component of the Adult Services provided by the local area. This will continue to be the case, with the local board soliciting companies to partner with to provide OJT slots and current companies to continue to use the program. More information is provided below in the Work Based Learning Initiatives.

## 14. Rapid Response Services

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*Provide a description of how the local board will coordinate workforce development activities carried out in the local area with statewide rapid response activities.*

The coordination with all available services will be leveraged to maximize resources to ensure UI claimants return to the workforce.

The local system coordinates with the local GDOL Career Center, Chambers of Commerce, and State Rapid Response Unit (RRU) when layoffs or business closing occur. Local Area staff communicates and work closely with the State RRU in responding expeditiously to layoffs or closures to expedite enrollment in training for dislocated workers so their UI benefits are likely to last throughout the training period. Pre-layoff assistance to employers and their employees following notice of lay off but prior to actual job loss is also provided by WIOA staff and collaborative partnering agencies.

It is extremely important that dislocated workers be identified during intake, regardless of the services they are requesting. Since the Trade Act provides for adjustment allowances (TRA) to individuals whose

unemployment is linked to imports of foreign made products, dislocated workers will be assessed to determine their eligibility for TRA/TAA. When eligible for TRA/TAA, an enrollment can be done providing an opportunity for them to engage in long-term training/retraining while receiving cash payments and other re-employment benefits.

Quarterly training is conducted for providers and one-stop partners in the local area. Quarterly performance, programmatic, compliance, and fiscal monitoring are conducted that is reviewed by the local workforce board. The local area is discussing ways in which various reports could be added to the CCG Website regarding WIOA financial reporting. Bi-weekly reviews of data reports have begun to ensure tracking of participant enrollments and outcomes. Additionally, the local area mandates heavy utilization of E-verify system to ensure that individuals provided WIOA assistance for employment or educational opportunities are eligible to work in the United States.

## 15. Youth Services

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*Provide a description and assessment of the type and availability of youth workforce development activities in the local area, including activities for youth with disabilities. This description and assessment shall include an identification of successful models of such youth workforce development activities.*

### Year-Round Work Experience

Area 14 provides year round work experience for in-school (younger) and out-of-school youth for a specified time period. Youth must have work readiness or basic skills goals identified, as applicable. Work experience for out-of-school youth must lead to unsubsidized employment upon completion of training, entry into post-secondary or occupational education, or the military.

In its ongoing efforts to promote services to youth with disabilities, Area 14 has procured services with the Georgia Committee for Employment of Individuals with Disabilities, High School/High Tech Program, establishing an innovative pilot program that provides year-round work experience specifically designed for out-of-school youth with disabilities. Through this program, youth may enter work experience or post-secondary education.

### Individual Training Accounts

The Local Workforce Boards for both the Lower Chattahoochee WIOA and the Middle Flint WIOA have elected to use Individual Training Accounts (ITA)'s for Older Youth as prescribed in the following adopted policy:

Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) will be used for "Older Out-of-School" youth if deemed appropriate and the following criteria are met:

A. The youth meet the policy guidelines outlined in the ITA Policy and Procedures including, apply for PELL Grant and HOPE Scholarship/Grant, in addition to full acceptance into an occupation-specific program, funding limitations, etc.:

The youth must meet the eligibility criteria for youth and adult programs; and, has been determined through comprehensive counseling and case management that the occupation skills training through the ITA system is appropriate and necessary for the youth to find full-time employment in the field of his or her choice upon completion of training that leads to self-sufficiency.

B. The youth must have successfully completed all of their assigned WIOA youth services prior to being deemed suitable/eligible for an older youth ITA.

C. The youth must have undergone career counseling including career assessments to ensure he or she makes an informed choice

D. The youth must be informed of:

- The list of approved providers that offers training in his or her chosen career
- The program performance of the providers that offer such training
- The financial resources that will be required and are available to assist in paying for the cost of the training

E. The youth must develop a financial plan to determine that he or she has the resources available to complete the training program and seek employment.

F. All fourteen of the WIOA required Youth Elements, as applicable, must be available to the youth throughout his or her program of study. The local workforce area requires one additional element (citizenship) to be provided to youth in the workforce area.

G. Career advisors and/or case managers must be available to assist youth in making the transition to post-secondary training and his or her career.

The Youth must receive a minimum of twelve months follow-up services upon completion of training.

## 16. Work-Based Learning Initiatives

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*Provide a description of how the area will implement initiatives such as incumbent worker training programs, on-the-job training programs, customized training programs, industry and sector strategies, career pathways initiatives, utilization of effective business intermediaries and other business services and strategies designed to meet the needs of employers in the corresponding region in support of the business service strategy.*

### Promoting On-the-Job Training (OJT)

The Middle Flint Area 15 has a long history (29 years) of offering work based learning initiatives through On-The-Job Training (OJT) services. While the OJT enrollment numbers are smaller than they previous were in the past, the Middle Flint WDB has continued to support and view this work based learning as a needed service in the local area. WIOA allows for the OJT reimbursement rate to be 50% and 75% if specific criteria is met as follows:

1. Employer is a small business as defined by Small Business Administration or
2. OJT training will result in participant attainment of industry recognized credential or
3. Participant is determined to be individual with “barriers” to employment as listed in WIOA § 3(24) to include individuals who are long-term unemployed, or
4. OJT participant’s job title must be on the state’s in-demand occupations list.

### Work Experience

Middle Flint Area 15 also utilizes Work Experience (WEX) as a work based learning service. WIOA participants interested in participating with the Work Experience activity are placed on local area employer volunteer worksites to receive hands-on training for a specific occupation. Participants are paid wages and covered by workers’ compensation insurance. Staff makes the effort to whenever possible to locate worksites which the participant has an interest in that occupational area. The Work

Experience activity has resulted in participants becoming interested in pursuing post-secondary educational opportunities and/or permanent employed in the occupational area.

#### Incumbent Worker and Apprenticeships

Middle Flint Area 15 is not currently operating Incumbent Worker training services due to staffing and funding availability or identified interest from an employer. The area would be receptive to providing this service should changes occur that would make it feasible.

Registered Apprenticeships are not currently available in the local area. The area would also be receptive to providing this service based on funding availability and the opportunity for apprenticeships to become available.

The Lower Chattahoochee Workforce Area, per approval of state waiver, provides On-the-Job Training (OJT) with an adjustable reimbursement rate criteria based upon employer labor size. The local area continues to form collaborations and partnerships with the area business community. Previous collaboration with the GDAC initiative of Columbus Technical College and the Columbus Consolidated Government's Crime Prevention Department to provide On-the-Job Training for offenders transitioning into the workplace has proven to be a very successful initiative. Additionally, Area 14 is promoting the on- the-job training program as another venue of service to employers as part of Georgia Department of Corrections job development efforts to serve ex-offenders transition back into the labor force.

OJT is becoming a more important part tool to provide training experiences for the local workforce. An improved local economy is helping provide the opportunities for training throughout the region.

There is a need for a skilled and qualified workforce. A lack of trained individuals is a major economic impact of the region. Reaching the necessary target audiences about job opportunities, to include information about career pathways opportunities and higher education institutions that offers the necessary degree programs has been a challenge.

It is a privilege for Region 8 to be able to collaborate with regional economic development agencies, universities, and technical colleges systems to offer the most complete solutions to fulfilling both existing and future employment needs.



OJT is becoming a more preferred tool to provide training experiences for the local workforce. The Region promotes the on- the-job training program as another venue of service to employer’s job development efforts to transition into the labor force.

Both areas, per approval of state waiver, provides On-the-Job Training (OJT) with an adjustable reimbursement rate, up to 50%, criteria based upon employer labor size. The regional area continues to form collaborations and partnerships with the area business community.

The Incumbent Worker Training Program (IWT) provide funding for eligible businesses to effectively train and retain employees by providing skills upgrades and process improvement training for existing full-time employees and employer to remain competitive. Incumbent workers will be served on case-by-case bases.

Area 14 provides a work experience program for the youth population. The work experience program allows the participant to experience 12 weeks of full wages paid. All participants placed at a work site will receive training regarding workplace expectations, whether in a classroom setting or one-on-one. The employer has the option to hire once the customer completes the program; nevertheless, both the customer and the employer receive benefits and opportunities.

## 17. Individual Training Accounts (ITAs)

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*Provision of ITAs – Provide a description of how training services in WIOA §134 will be provided through the use of ITAs. If contracts for the training services will be used, describe how the use of such contracts will be coordinated with the use of ITAs and how the local board will ensure informed customer choice in the selection of training programs regardless of how the training services are to be provided.*

Individual Training Accounts are not an entitlement and are available only to adults and dislocated workers, age 22 years of age or older; and youth, age 18 to 24 years of age who are in need of assistance to attend approved WIOA eligible post-secondary or vocational training. This program is used throughout the region with only small differences between the Middle Flint and Lower Chattahoochee WIOAs.

Training provider applications are available to any provider wishing to be included on the Governor's Office of Workforce Development Georgia Eligible Provider Listing. Individuals may submit applications to any workforce area for consideration.

The Administrator accepts and reviews eligible provider applications throughout the year. The local Administrator maintains a Bidder List that contains all prospective bidders who have requested to receive any and/or all solicitations for the provision of programs/services under WIOA proposed by the local Board. An open solicitation is published in the local area's newspapers and further solicitations may be offered on an as needed basis.

The local Boards evaluate providers and proposed training programs for initial eligibility, based on (at a minimum) criteria of proven effectiveness, local employer/industry demand, accreditation, and customer accessibility. The evaluation includes an evaluation of program content, verification of performance information and outcomes, costs, etc. The comparison of local services and a cost analysis will be conducted to include evaluation of state performance against local measures will also be conducted. Where adequate information is not provided, letters will be forwarded to providers for additional information or documentation. Applications may be reviewed upon submission of additional information.

The Administrator will prepare summary reports on evaluation of training provider applications and submit to the Program Evaluation/Selection Committee for review and recommendation to the local Board. Information on eligible providers will be input in the VOS Provider database to the appropriate State office for approval and inclusion on the State Eligible Provider List. Notification of approval will be provided via email or letter to state-approved training providers. Subsequent reviews shall be the responsibility of the State Office.

For Providers who provide universal services to Georgia residents, but whose services are available in the local workforce area through the Eligible Provider List, a Master Agreement must be entered into

between the local WIOA office and training provider before WIOA Funds can be approved. The local area has used ITA Master Agreements with a variety of educational programs offered by schools across Georgia and in Alabama. We continually welcome opportunities to establish ITA Master Agreements with occupational skills provider programs in demand.

Providers will be informed that WIOA will only initially approve a maximum of five (5) clients. Upon satisfactory review of at least 60% of the outcome of these clients, the WIOA Director may approve more referrals throughout the program year.

Careful monitoring will take place to ensure appropriate programmatic, financial, performance, and compliance with regulations, local policies and procedures are in place.

#### Removal of Providers from the EPL List

Eligible training providers may be removed from the statewide list in accordance with federal regulations under 20CFR §663.565, must deliver results and provide accurate information to retain its status as an eligible training provider. In accordance with State and local policy if a vendor's program fails to meet established performance levels, the program will be removed from the eligible provider list.

#### Subsequent Data Update on Local Providers

The local workforce area periodically contacts providers to ensure that information being utilized is current. Any changes are presented to the LWIB for approval. Quarterly monitoring process of the eligible providers will be conducted similar to the process utilized for WIOA Funded Contracted Services to ensure that providers are meeting performance guidelines established.

#### Customer Accessibility to Individual Training Accounts (ITAs)

Customers regardless of eligibility for program services accessing the one-stop system are informed of the full-array of programs and services that are available. Customers are provided access or provided instruction material that allows access to the State eligible provider list. This is a list of all approved

training providers and institutions in the State that have partnered to provide services to WIOA customers.

For the local workforce area, individual training accounts (ITAs) are issued only to eligible customers seeking WIOA assistance for occupational skills training. Customers, however, who are considered eligible for receipt of ITAs, must also be determined WIOA eligible for services; to be "in need training assistance"; and meet entry criteria of the training institution. Case Managers are required to complete all paperwork and submit the complete file with acceptance letters, and all relevant documents for approval for consideration of approval to the Administrator, who reviews it and authorizes the ITA. Upon authorization, copies of the ITA are transmitted to the Case Manager, the School authorized to train the customer, and the WIOA Administrator's Finance office.

#### Tracking and Managing ITA Activities

Case Managers are required to complete all paperwork required by the WIOA Director for making informed decisions regarding approval of ITAs. The entire case file for the participant will be submitted to the Administrator, who reviews and authorizes amount of WIOA assistance that will be provided under the ITA. A copy of the ITA will be distributed to the training agency; case manager, and WIOA Finance Office. Upon receipt of the approved ITA, the Case Manager will assign the appropriate services in the State data management System, to include amounts of assistance and supportive services (where applicable) to be provided. A printout of service assignment information and enrollment will be transmitted to the Finance Section for further processing in establishing the obligation. All approved documents shall be entered in the system in a timely manner and document maintained in participant file.

Once the school or training agency submits an invoice to the Finance Section, the Finance Staff will verify paperwork submitted by the Case Manager prior to the ITA Invoice being paid by the Administrator.

As part of the local area's criteria for determining the proven effectiveness of such programs, contracts identify specific performance goals expected of the providers in addition to quarterly programmatic, performance, compliance and fiscal monitoring to ensure transparency and accountability of funds.

#### Use of Statewide Eligible Provider List

Local board policy mandates that all individuals seeking WIOA services be informed of the full array of services that are available in the local area. This includes providing individuals with access to training providers approved on the State of Georgia Eligible Provider Listing.

#### *Lower Chattahoochee WDB*

The Lower Chattahoochee Workforce Development Board has established the funding limitations as follows:

- a. Certificate and Short-term Training: Up to \$4,000 in WIOA funding is authorized for training costs for the first year of training, unless otherwise approved by the WIOA director, excluding support.
- b. Postsecondary or Long-Term Programs: Up to \$4,000 for the first year of training, unless otherwise approved by the Director. For training that extends beyond one year, total training costs may not exceed \$8,000, excluding support, unless prior-approval by the WIOA Director.

If cost of training exceeds WIOA funding limitations not approved by the WIOA Director, WIOA staff will assist the individual in developing a financial plan to cover the remaining total costs of training that exceeds WIOA funding limitations.

All Individual Training Accounts' (ITA)'s approved by the local area must be in demand occupations as identified for the local workforce area.

Customers seeking WIOA assistance are not encouraged nor are they required to apply for student loans, or incur personal debt as a condition of participation in the WIOA program.

Customers seeking out-of-area training may be approved for such training as long as the training is within reasonable commuting distance of the customer's residence.

An individual whose residency is outside of the workforce area, but has been defined as a "dislocated worker" because place of dislocation was within Workforce Area 14 will be considered for services by the local area.

Other funds (e.g., Pell, HOPE Grant, loans or Scholarship, TANF subsidies, etc.) that have been awarded to an individual applying for WIOA assistance must be considered in addition to WIOA funds, consistent with TEN 11-09. Because many awards granted to individuals will cover most or all of the educational costs, a determination of need must be conducted for additional WIOA assistance and appropriate justification documented.

Local policy provides that determining WIOA assistance shall be based upon those funds required to complete training after all applicable financial aid and grant assistance and awards have been applied against the proposed cost. If a participant chooses to receive any loans, scholarships, or other financial incentives and such is applied to educational costs, these must be taken into consideration prior to determining amount of WIOA assistance that will be awarded.

Documentation of all awards received and documentation from the educational institution or training provider how awards have been applied to education costs must be provided as part of the determination of need.

### *Middle Flint WDB*

Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) services are available in the local area to eligible adults, dislocated workers and youth. The State Eligible Training Providers List (ETPL) provides information on training programs and providers in the State. The Middle Flint has several ETPL providers in the local area; South Georgia Technical College, Georgia Southwestern State University and Albany State University

(Cordele campus). The local area also utilizes training providers that are in close proximity to the area as well.

WIOA funds can be used to assist in the costs of attendance training such as assistance with tuition, books, supplies, training related necessities etc. WIOA funds are used after other forms of financial aid (HOPE, PELL, scholarships funds have been applied or are not available.

ITA training programs of study are in growth and/or demand occupations or if documentation can be provided of employment opportunities. Training should lead to the awarding of a certificate, diploma, degree or licensure. Training should lead to earning a self-sufficient wage without the need for public assistance benefits.

Local area has established an ITA training time limit of 2 years or less. Exceptions will be made to the 2 year time limit if the participant has a valid reason to extend the training period such as courses was not offered by training provider to complete with the time period, health/medical occurrences or for other extenuating circumstances. Training cost is limited to \$5,000 (excluding supportive service benefits) per participant.

## 18. Entrepreneurial Skills Training and Microenterprise Services

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*Entrepreneurial Skills Training and Microenterprise Services – Provide a description of how the area will coordinate and promote entrepreneurial skills training and micro-enterprise services.*

Entrepreneurial Skills Training and Microenterprise Services have also been identified in the Columbus 2025 plan as being a key driver to fully develop the local economy. There are several specific suggestions in that plan to enhance the local entrepreneurial culture and economy, one of which is to create a Makerspace as a tool to help facilitate the entrepreneurial culture of Columbus. The group creating the makerspace in Columbus – ColumbusMakesIT has opened the space in 8,000 square feet and has memberships to join available to the public. They have also partnered with several local groups including Urban League and Troy University to offer trainings to local youth and adults. This is a program that is

available throughout the region, with the potential to be mobile to other counties in both the Lower Chattahoochee and Middle Flint WIOAs.

The Middle Flint area has included an Entrepreneurial module in the GED Plus activity. This module provides information on how to start and operate your own business. The Service Provider invites local entrepreneurs into the class to discuss their business. Entrepreneurial courses are also available in the community by South Georgia Technical College, Georgia Southwestern State University and chambers of commerce. Staff and Service Providers are involved in and attend regularly held meetings with Chambers of Commerce, Employer Committees, community meetings to stay informed of entrepreneurial activities and services in the community.

## 19. Coordination with Education Programs

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*Coordination with Education Programs – Provide a description of how the local board will coordinate education and workforce development activities carried out in the local area with relevant secondary and postsecondary education programs and activities to coordinate strategies, enhance services and avoid duplication of services.*

The region is rich with educational programs with several strong public secondary school systems, as well as the TCSG system and USG system schools located in the region. Both the Lower Chattahoochee WDB and the Middle Flint WDB have members from the secondary and post-secondary sectors. These members bring a well of knowledge and resources to the table as WIOA coordinates with educational programs.

The TCSG (Columbus Technical College, South Georgia Technical College, Southern Crescent Technical College and Albany Technical College) and University System of Georgia (Columbus State University, Albany State University, and Southwest Georgia State University) are both very active and involved with the local area. Private colleges and technical school providers in Columbus as well as Cuthbert, GA (Andrew College) are also available.

All these educational resources strive to offer programs that are needed in the local area to support business and employers and to attract new business and industry to our rural area. They all have a clear



understanding and work diligently to improve the educational levels of our residents is a key element to the growth and prosperity of the area.

## 20. Supportive Services

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*Provide a description of how the local board will coordinate workforce development activities carried out under this title in the local area with the provision of transportation, including public transportation, and other appropriate supportive services in the local area. Describe the coordination of transportation and other supportive services regionally, if applicable. Please include the region/local area Supportive Service Policies.*

Supportive Services are available in the region to assist WIOA participants with an identified need to be able to participate in the activities and services funded by WIOA. Participants are determined eligible for supportive services based on an individual basis. Allowable supportive services may include the following; transportation, childcare, meals during the training day, emergency auto repair, emergency healthcare and medical services. Each local WIOA determines the type of supportive services that will be available.

Supportive services offered by the local areas must comply with the State imposed financial cap of no more than 35% of their WIOA allocations. Waivers to the 35% cap can be requested and must be approved by the State office.

### *Lower Chattahoochee WDB*

The Lower Chattahoochee WIOA will follow policies based on their Supportive Services policy for the WDB.

There are two services that are not readily available in the local workforce area, especially in the rural areas: childcare and transportation. Even in the urban core of Columbus, the problem of quality childcare and transportation is unavailable to parents h work non-traditional shifts. Services that are available are often unaffordable to shift workers with low wages. In addition, many of the better childcare facilities have long waiting lists, and the hours of operation for major transit services is not conducive to the hours of workers performing jobs with non-traditional skill. Supportive services are available to participants to help cover some of these expenses.

The local area's supportive service policy applies to any adult, dislocated worker, and youth customer determined eligible for, approved for, and assigned to WIOA training. Needs related payments are

authorized only on a case-by-case basis and must receive prior approval from the Director, Job Training Division. Support service expenditures shall not exceed more than 35% of a funding stream's program year allocation unless waiver is submitted and prior approval has been received from the State.

No supportive services that will exceed this amount shall be authorized prior to granting of written approval. Documents shall be maintained in the participant's case file.

A participant stipend may be authorized based upon a determination of need and shall be approved only by the WIOA Director. All requests for support assistance paid directly to the participant must occur utilizing direct deposit or prepaid card draft. Appropriate forms must be reviewed and submitted by case managers to the WIOA Finance Office. The WIOA Finance Office will prepare a schedule for time sheet submission and payment dates for participants receiving supportive payments. A copy of the schedule will be submitted to all contractors/vendors on a quarterly basis, or as required.

Support stipend shall be paid directly to the participant on a bi-weekly basis. All payments will be direct deposit to the individual's banking institution of choice. Participants approved to receive support stipends will submit to their respective case manager a "Direct Deposit Disposition Form" with a void check from the respective banking institution. The case managers are responsible for submitting required documents to the WIOA Finance Office for processing in a timely manner.

For participants who are unable to provide the above due to his or her inability to get a bank account, pre-paid bank card account information issued to the participant and copy of bank card will suffice.

Payments of support stipend while the participant is in training shall be based on actual attendance in a physical classroom environment. Attendance must be recorded and verified on the official WIOA timesheet. Timesheets must be signed by the instructor and participant, and verified by the appropriate case manager before submitting to the WIOA Finance Office. No payment of support will be paid by the WIOA Finance Office until all signatures have been obtained on the timesheet. The case manager shall complete a WIOA Supportive Service Certification Form for participants that meet the requirement for supportive services. All requests and support documentation will be submitted to the WIOA Director for review and final approval. Upon approval by the WIOA Director, Case Managers must submit to the WIOA Finance Office, a copy of the form signed by the Director, Job Training Division with copy of enrollment.

Support payment while enrolled in an online course is not allowed; and shall only be considered for potential approval by the WIOA Director when client is utilizing resources that are physically located at the institution or training facility and shall be only for those days which class is scheduled.

Exceptions:

Approval of supportive services for eligible participants not attending WIOA funded occupational skills/classroom training activities, but participating in other WIOA funded activities for which such support is needed, must be obtained from the Director, Job Training Division. Consideration shall be on a case-by-case basis.

Only in-school (younger youth) in work experience activities are exempt from having a bank account or pre-paid bank card.

*Middle Flint WDB*

Middle Flint WIOA provides Supportive Service benefits to eligible participants to assist with costs associated with participation in a WIOA funded activity. Staff coordinates with other agencies and community resources to leverage resources to meet the participants' needs. Department of Family and Children Services (DFCS) has limited funds to assist their clients with child care and transportation assistance. Coordination and leverages of resources helps to prevent duplication of services.

Transportation in the rural area prevents barriers to participation in training, employment, and other areas. The area lacks available transportation systems (buses, trains, taxi services etc...) Several cities and counties in the area do operate local vans and small buses which charge a fee for service. These usually have a very limited range of travel and do not operate with any consist hours or pickup/drop-off points. Taxi services are only available in very limited capacity in two the larger cities in the area. Fees for usage are pricey and again have limited travel range and hours of operation.

The Middle Flint WDB has approved supportive service benefits in the local area to assist individuals participate in training. Supportive services may include but are not limited to the following services; transportation, child care, dependent care, and meals. WIOA supportive services are a much needed benefit in the rural area to allow eligible individuals engage in training.

WIOA supportive service funds will be available based on an individual determination of need. Supportive Services Determination of need form is complete for each eligible participants that request assistance with training related costs. Participants are required to identify if they are receiving assistance with supportive services related type payments from any other agency. Participants must be physically attending training classes as verified by an attendance timesheet which is signed by the participant and training Instructor.

Supportive services payments are separate from the ITA training voucher limit of \$5,000.

## 21. Coordination with Core Partners

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### Description of the Workforce System

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*Provide a description of the workforce development system in the local area that identifies all relevant programs and how the local board will work with the entities to carry out both core and other workforce development programs to deliver well aligned services in support of the strategies identified in the state plan. This should include programs of study authorized under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (20 U.S.C. 2301 et seq.).*

The region has two designated One Stop Centers (GDOL Americus Career Center and GDOL Columbus Career Center) as well as other access points in the region where workforce development information and services can be delivered. Partners in the region collectively work towards common needs of both customers and business communities.

#### Provision of Core and Intensive Services through the One-stop system

Partners co-located in the comprehensive one-stop center include: Georgia Department of Labor, Muscogee County Department of Family & Children Services, Georgia Department of Labor Rehabilitation Services, Columbus Technical College, Columbus Consolidated Government Job Training Division, Columbus Housing Authority, Enrichment Services Program, Experience Works, and Job Corps.

As a training provider and an educational institution, collaborating with Technical Colleges for post-secondary level gives us access to the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (20U.S.C. 2301). It helps individuals gain access to vocational, educational, and occupational training programs. Individuals can get the skills and certifications they need to secure employment as they explore their options.

Every individual entering the comprehensive center receives information regarding the full array of services available. As part of Board policy, core and intensive services shall be provided to youth, as well as adults and dislocated workers. The following is a summary of services and the agencies that provide these services:

#### Career Services

- Outreach, intake, and information regarding available services in the local workforce area
- Initial assessment of skills, aptitude, abilities and supportive services
- Job search and placement assistance, including career counseling (required)
- Provision of employment data and labor market information; Local, regional and national employment trends
- Information on job skills necessary to obtain jobs in the labor market
- Information relating to available services and the availability of support services such as childcare and transportation available in the local area, and referral to such, as appropriate
- Employment referral; (required for jobseekers under WIOA)
- Provision of information regarding filing claims for unemployment compensation
- Assistance in determining eligibility for other training activities, programs of financial aid assistance for training and education programs not funded under WIOA, that are available in the local area
- Follow-up services for customers attaining employment for not less than 12 months after first known date of employment

One or more of the above services are provided by the GDOL Americus and Columbus Career Center as customers enter the one-stop system. It is not required that a customer be provided all of the above services, however, services provided should be based on the individualized assessment of the customer's needs.

#### Training Services:

Intensive Services may be provided by all partners in the one-stop and provided to all customers of the local workforce area that require significant assistance, and is specifically designed for services provided to adults and dislocated workers who are:

- Unemployed and have been unable to obtain employment through core services, determined by a one-stop representative to be in need of more intensive services or intervention in order to obtain employment
- employed, but have been determined by a one-stop representative to be in need of intensive services in order to obtain or retain employment that allows for self-sufficiency

Services made available during this level of service may include, but are not limited to:

- Job search, placement, and training targeting particular labor market needs
- Job search, placement, and training targeting particular groups or populations
- Comprehensive and specialized assessment of skill level and service needs such as diagnostic testing and use of other assessment tools; and
- In-depth interviewing and evaluation to identify employment barriers and appropriate employment goals
- Development of an individual employment plan to identify employment goals, appropriate achievement objectives, and appropriate combination of services for the participant to achieve employment goals
- Group or individual counseling and career planning
- Case management for customers seeking employment or training
- Short-term prevocational skills, including development of learning skills, communication skills, interviewing skills, punctuality, personal maintenance skills, and professional conduct to prepare individuals for unsubsidized employment or training
- Value added services such as referral to childcare, transportation, individual and family counseling, temporary or emergency shelter, or other services pertinent to the local area
- Determinations of appropriate youth services are also conducted during services during this level of service

One or more of the training intensive services outlined above may be provided by various partners of the workforce development system.

To address the concerns of business leaders regarding lack of work readiness and work ethics of the current labor and workforce, the Lower Chattahoochee Workforce Area Fourteen has tailored its work experience activities that occur during intensive services, which for several years had been designed for older and younger youth, to adults and dislocated workers as well, in an ongoing effort to meet the skill needs of existing or regional employers.

An expansion of WIOA assistance for short-term training in high demand occupations has been incorporated in its design in efforts to fill high growth and demand occupations, and to create a seamless career pathways for customers to advance and persist through progressive levels of the system as quickly as possible to gain workforce skills of demonstrated value, in addition to meeting the needs of unskilled adults and dislocated workers in the area.

#### Other Business Services:

A business center is also available in the Columbus Career Center for employers', which consists of private offices for interviewing purposes, and includes telephones, computers, printers, copier, and fax accessibility. Additionally, free access to computers, software programs, printers, fax, local telephone lines, and the Internet is offered at no cost to the public.

Currently all partners do not provide all of the above services. However, through involvement of business, organized labor, and the economic development community as the local workforce development system evolves, the availability of these and other services will be improved as the system becomes more fully integrated into a comprehensive workforce development system.

#### Training Services:

#### Target Population Served

Target populations served in both the Middle Flint and Lower Chattahoochee WIOA areas include:

- Underemployed or unemployed
- Offender
- Food stamp or TANF recipient
- Poor employability skills
- Poor work history
- Poor basic skill
- Lacks self-sufficiency
- Disabled
- Older Worker
- Dislocated worker
- Youth (in school and out of school)

Area 15 works with the community program partners Georgia Department of Labor (GDOL), Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Services, South Georgia Technical College (TCSG), Department of Family and Children Services (DFCS), Family Connections, Georgia Southwestern State University, Albany State University etc.. to provide educational and training opportunities, need services, and referral to resources in the local area with the common goal strengthening and enhancing our community.

#### Career Services

- Outreach, intake, eligibility determination for WIOA available activities and services
- Assessments to include basic skills literacy levels, interest and aptitude, and supportive service needs

- Labor market information (LMI) and employment data
- Resume development, Job search assistance and job placement assistance
- referrals to community resources
- Assistance and information on filing Unemployment Compensation claims
- Information on Tax Credits and employment bonding services
- Veterans services
- Business services to employers
- Information on educational services available in area

#### Training Services

- Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) for individual desiring to attend educational or training opportunities. Coordination with financial aid assistance through HOPE and PELL. Development of Individual Employment Plans (IEP).
- On-The-Job Training (OJT) which provides hands-on training experience with a participating employer. OJT Employer reimbursements are available at the 50% - 75% levels.
- GED Remediation is available to individuals needing to obtain their GED.
- Work Readiness/Soft Skills training is available to enhance individuals' preparation for employment opportunities and encourage employment retention
- Work Experience (WE) provides work based learning for a designated period of time to gets hands-on employment knowledge and experience.
- Follow up services for 12 months following training

## 22. Coordination with Wagner-Peyser

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*Provide a description of plans and strategies for, and assurances concerning, maximizing coordination of services provided by the state employment service under the Wagner-Peyser Act (29U.S.C. 49 et seq.) and services provided in the local area through the one-stop delivery system, to improve service delivery and avoid duplication of services.*

The career and training services provided through the both area's one-stop systems are comprised of WIOA Title I and Title III Wagner-Peyser funded services that are provided for the universal population in all designated one-stop centers either on location or through the referral system. Through the established system of partner coordination that has been in place since 2000, flexibility of one-stop services ensures customers receive direct access to the services which best fit their identified needs. The local area has created a system which offers two levels of services for adults and dislocated workers: career services and training services. Wagner- Peyser staff will also provide Reemployment assistance, assistance with Unemployment Insurance and assistance to other unemployed individuals.



Georgia has also added an innovative enhancement to its reemployment initiatives for local area job seekers and employers. The EG Focus Career Explorer is a state-of-the-art software application that offers job seekers a self-service tool to manage their career path and interact with Wagner-Peyser staff and services online to support successful career placement. It is a user- friendly system with real-time data to support a successful career search that also allows participants to upload, paste, or create up to five résumés and evaluate them to identify gaps in skills, experience, and education.

The Middle Flint area has one Georgia Department of Labor (GDOL) Americus Career center in the eight county area. Up until June 2015, the local area had two GDOL locations. With the closing of the GDOL Cordele Career center, it requires the one available center to cover a larger geographic area. GDOL Americus Career Center provides Wagner-Peyser services to include, but not limited to, the following; business services, career guidance, job search/job placement services, testing facilities, assistance with Unemployment Insurance (UI) file and claims review, provide number of various workshops, Rapid Response coordination, federal bonding, TOPPSTEPP for veterans and offenders, Veterans services, Work Opportunity Tax Credits, facility space for employers and/or partners, migrant seasonal farm workers, and referrals to WIOA and other partner services. Labor Market Information (LMI) is available through GDOL website. LMI provides a vast array of information on local, region and statewide labor statistics.

GDOL Americus Career Center as the designated comprehensive One Stop has facility space and access to computers, conference room, internet availability that can accommodate use by core partner staff as needed.

## 23. Adult Education

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*– Provide a description of how the local board will coordinate workforce development activities carried out in the local area with the provision of adult education and literacy activities under title II in the local area, including a description of how the local board will carry out, consistent with subparagraphs (A) and (B)(i) of section 107(d)(11) and section 232 of the WIOA Law, the review of local applications submitted under title II.*

Adult Education has a target population of more than one million in Georgia. This includes individuals age sixteen and over, without a high school diploma, its equivalency or a lack of English proficiency. This also includes those who have experienced barriers to education or employment.

Adult Education is working with other state agencies to a statewide Career Pathways initiative. Career Pathways is seeking to increase the number of youth completing high school and attaining post-secondary credentials that translate into value for the labor market.

Adult Education partners with many local and state agencies to achieve the goals of improving literacy levels. Certified Literate Community Program (CLCP) was created in 1990 and asks a community to establish non-profit collaborative s to promote, support and enhance local community literacy efforts. CLCP works to develop a network to coordinate business, faith-based groups, volunteer, social services, local government, schools, media and other resources within a community to reach, influence, and support individuals who want to improve their education.

In addition to WIOA, other core partners also refer individuals in need to basic skills literacy remediation to Adult Education services in the area. The Literacy Alliance also assists with adult education, but also puts a tremendous effort towards making sure youth have the resources they need to avoid the need for future intervention to teach basic literacy.

Adult Education is a vital partner in the local areas in the efforts to improve the local area education levels and increase GED attainment levels. The increase the number of individuals with GED will promote economic growth and pipeline of available workers eligible to apply for employment.

## 24. Vocational Rehabilitation

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*– Provide a description of the cooperative agreement between the local Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation office and the local board which describes efforts made to enhance the provision of services to individuals with disabilities and to other individuals, cross-train staff, provide technical assistance, share information, cooperate in communicating with employers and other efforts at cooperation, collaboration and coordination.*

Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation (GVR) has been a participating partner in the local area One Stop systems in both Americus and Columbus. GVR remains active in Columbus, but closed its operation in Americus several years ago. GVR staff from other regions travel to Americus as needed for services

delivery. GVR assists eligible individuals with permanent physical and mental impairments which interferes with employment.

The GVR team includes Certified Rehabilitation Counselors, Counselor Assistant and other community resources as needed. GVR staff will visit the local area One Stop center to meet with clients face to face. Counselors are also available through email and phones.

GVR provides a wide range of services to help individuals with disabilities prepare for meaningful work. Services are received and arranged for and provided based on an individual's needs. Length of time to assist individuals prepare for employment is different for each individual.

GVR services include, but are not limited to: medical evaluations, certain physical restoration services, counseling and guidance, Work Adjustment training, on-the job training, supported employment, job coaching, assistive work technology, work readiness training, post-secondary support, vocational and technical training, school to work transition, deaf/blind services, and referrals to other agencies as needed.

GVR also provides services to employers including the following; identifying qualified pool of candidates for employment positions, jobsite coaching, helping employers identify the right solutions/accommodations for employee to be effective on the job through onsite job assessments, providing technical support and training on those accommodations to ensure long term employment success.

## 25. Performance, ETPL and Use of Technology

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### Performance Measures

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*– (WFD will issue instructions for the completion of local area performance negotiations upon receipt of federal guidance.) Provide a description of the local levels of performance negotiated with the Governor and chief elected official pursuant to WIOA § 116(c), to be used to measure the performance of the local area and to be used by the*

*local board for measuring the performance of the local fiscal agent (where appropriate), eligible providers under subtitle B and the one-stop delivery system, in the local area.*

### *Customer Satisfaction*

The local workforce system and continue to determine methodology for obtaining and utilizing customer feedback to ensure customer satisfaction. Currently, the local area is in the planning stages of developing a system that will allow customers to provide feedback electronically on services received through the One-Stop System rather than providing comment cards to customers (employers and job seekers) in order to obtain their remarks. This system will be similar to those currently utilized by many agencies to gather data that will assist with continuous improvement efforts of services.

Currently information disseminated by the State regarding workforce programs and needs is further distributed to local area partners, providers and customers. The common statewide system adopted by the State will be utilized. In addition the LWIB, Administrative Entity and partners will utilize the information to examine programs and/or services to improve the System.

## 26. One-Stop System Performance and Assessment

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*– Provide a listing of locally/regionally developed one-stop performance standards and describe the criteria used to develop the performance standards. Describe how the one-stop system and regional service delivery is assessed by the local board.*

The Lower Chattahoochee Workforce Development Board (WDB) has requested a period One Stop Activity report which provided information that includes the number of partner meetings held per year, the number of job related workshops held, the number of educational and or job related community events held, as well as the number of job fairs that partners held or participated in during the year.

As the local area implements One Stop procurement and selection of Provider during PY 16, the WDB and core partners will define the performance standards that will be used to assess the One Stop system.

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and Resource Sharing Agreements (RSA) identify roles and responsibilities for One Stop partners.

## 27. ETPL System

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*Describe the regional Eligible Training Provider System, including the elements listed below.*

- a. Provide a description of the public notification to prospective providers.*
- b. Provide a description of how the board(s) evaluates providers and proposed training programs for initial eligibility, based on (at a minimum) criteria of proven effectiveness, local employer/industry demand, accreditation and customer accessibility.*
- c. Provide a description of the formal appeals process for aggrieved ITA customers and providers of unapproved training programs.*
- d. Provide a description of the ongoing process used to update the data on the eligible providers list (exclusive of the state-conducted continued eligibility process).*
- e. Provide a description of any regional policies or agreements for ITAs or training providers.*
- f. Provide a description of the process to track and manage all ITA activity. g. Provide a description of local board policy on use of statewide eligible training provider list (including financial and duration limits, out-of-area training, service to out-of-area customers, etc.).*
- h. Provide a description of how registered apprenticeship programs are added to the ETPL.*

### *a. Public notification to prospective providers*

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Both the Middle Flint and the Lower Chattahoochee WDBs utilize a competitive bid process to select WIOA funded contractor services. Public notice of availability for prospective providers is made during bid cycles.

### *b. Evaluation of providers and proposed training programs*

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The local areas also utilizes an Eligible Training Provider (ETP) policy which is utilized by the WDB in evaluating providers and proposed training programs. The WDB has established minimum criteria that a training provider needs to meet to be considered for inclusion on the Eligible Training Providers List (ETPL). Applications for consideration that meet the WDB established criteria will be presented to the WDB for consideration and approval. Upon approval by the local WDB, Application will be submitted to the State for inclusion on the ETPL.

### *c. Formal appeals process for aggrieved ITA customers and providers of unapproved training programs.*

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Individuals that are aggrieved ITA customers should contact the City of Columbus Workforce staff or the River Valley Regional Commission Workforce staff if they are in the Middle Flint WIOA area. The

individual may be requested to provide supporting documentation to support their request for training in an unapproved ITA program.

The local workforce area has an established formal appeals process for aggrieved ITA customers and providers of unapproved training assistance or training program as set for in the local organizational policies and procedures and individual training accounts manual. WIOA eligible individuals during the WIOA intake process; and providers are provided a copy the local grievance policy as part of the Master Agreement between the local area and the respective provider.

Documentation may include letters from employers validating employment opportunities in the unapproved program etc. If the staff is unable to resolve the aggrieved customer, then the customer would be required to follow the local area grievance procedures.

#### [d. Updating the eligible providers list](#)

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Each local area conducts reviews for eligible providers operating in their areas. Data such as participant performance outcomes for successful training completion, entered employment outcomes, employment wages, credential attainment and follow-up are compiled and kept by the local area. Eligible providers and programs that are making satisfactory performance achievements will continue to be maintained in the Eligible Training Providers Lists. Providers or programs of study that are not making satisfactory results will be evaluated to determine whether or not continued eligibility will be maintained on the State Eligible Training Providers List. Changes to information such as costs, additions of programs, locations changes, or other critical information will be forwarded to the State office once the provider has notified the local areas. Both the Lower Chattahoochee and Middle Flint local areas will send to the state office any changes or information on local Eligible Training Providers data.

Once approved on the statewide Eligible Training Providers Listing (ETPL), an approved program is available to all Georgia WDBs and cooperative states. The appropriate course or program of study that a student is applying for must also be listed as part of the vendor's report card listing. All

vendors must comply with regulations as defined by WIOA, in addition to State and local requirements.

Because a Vendor must first submit an application to be evaluated by a local Workforce Development Board office for consideration and approval for inclusion on the ETPL, any updates/changes to the programs of study must be presented to the Local Workforce Board for consideration and approval. Once the LWDB grants approval of the updates/changes, recommendation will be submitted to the Georgia Department of Economic Development's Workforce Division (WFD) for final approval. The WFD will notify the LWDA of the approval and the Vendor's report card will be updated accordingly.

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e. [Regional policies or agreements for ITAs or training providers](#)

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Local areas have established ITA training services. ITA training services are available for WIOA eligible individuals who meet the ITA training criteria. ITA training is for specific or demand occupations in local area where an expectation of employment and self-sufficient wages are available. Training must be complete with the ITA time period and with cost limitations.

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f. [Process to track and manage all ITA activity](#)

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ITA training enrollments are tracked through the State Georgia WorkReady data system (GEO Solutions System). Participant records are maintained and data is reported in the Georgia WorkReady system. Reports on performance and monitoring are utilized to evaluate and follow performance.

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g. [Local board policy on use of statewide eligible training provider list](#)

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Local WDB allows use of statewide eligible training provider list when the costs is within a reasonable commuting distance of the area and costs is within local establish policy limits.

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h. [How registered apprenticeship programs are added to the ETPL](#)

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Local WDBs will review and approve registered apprenticeship programs for inclusion on the ETPL if they become available in the local area. Currently the local area does not have any registered apprenticeships programs.

## 28. Implementation of Technology

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*– Provide a description of the technology used to enhance customer (participant and business) experience and any additional data analytics used to enhance planning and measure outcomes beyond mandated performance measures.*

From the first step into the One Stop Shop, technology is used to enhance the customer experience. The computer labs are kept up-to-date with both hardware and software advances. Online sources and assisted technology are used regularly. The building is wired with the fastest available fiber connections to the internet.

However, service delivery in the rural multi-county areas is challenging. To counter these issues that residents often have, the rural areas are serviced by a van fully equipped with computer stations and the ability to access mobile internet. This ability to bring technology to the customer where they are greatly improves access to services.

However, internet availability remains to a barrier in the rural area. Many counties still lack access to reliable internet service. Several surveys and studies have been done in the local area with looking for ways to improve technology internet availability. The rural area also has locations that have no, poor or limited cellphone reception. The One Stop center offers access to computers and internet services that can be utilized to connect with core partners, job search, and other related resources.

Many partner agencies require that individuals apply for services via the websites to assist with travel and transportation issues. Improving technology in the Middle Flint area will increase access to technology and service delivery area wide.



The Georgia WorkReady data system and Georgia Department of Labor data systems are an important use of technology for reporting, planning and collecting data. WIOA Service Providers use various technology to administer computerized assessments such as CareerScope, TABE etc.

## 29. State Initiatives and Vision

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### State Branding

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*Provide a description for how the area will adopt and utilize the state brand.*

In August 2016, the Georgia Department of Economic Development-Workforce Division introduced the statewide program, WorkSource Georgia. The brand is to unify all 12 regions across Georgia to include the One-Stop system. Once official notice is received, of the new branding, the area will begin the process of changing all signage, websites, printed materials and advertising.

The Region 8 is excited to adopt the new statewide brand. We understand, with this new brand, the intent is to promote the resources available from the core partners and potential customers. The regional area will utilize this marketing strategy to bring awareness to the state/local brand as one unit operation, an universal look for the entire state of Georgia. Our plans will include advertising, such as, pull up banners, used during job fairs and other events promoting the WIOA program, changing business cards, letterheads and envelopes, promotional ads on the radio, news releases, and social media implementing. Both the Lower Chattahoochee/Middle Flint Workforce Areas will offer on-site information for community partners, elected officials, and the public the meaning of the new brand.

Local areas in the region have received State branding images for their local area branding. Georgia WorkSource Lower Chattahoochee and WorkSource Middle Flint are in the process incorporating branding logo's into signage, business cards, printed and media materials. Portable items such as pop-up banners/signs, display covering items will be available that can be easily transported for use at job fairs, community presentations etc. Lower Chattahoochee Area 14 will have the WorkSource logo placed on their mobile unit.

## 30. State Initiatives

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*Describe how the area will coordinate with WFD state initiatives, including: Go Build Georgia, Operation: Workforce, WorkSmart Georgia and the High Demand Career Initiative.*

Georgia Pathways to Work will change how organizations support the independence, employment, and career advancement of Georgians with disabilities. This will be accomplished by working with Area-wide initiatives such as Go Build Georgia and HDCI to be responsive to the known market demands for careers in Georgia, as well as supporting employer efforts to more effectively engage Georgians with disabilities. Furthermore, the overall goal of the Georgia Pathways to Work program is to increase the number of youth who achieve competitive, integrated employment through existing and customized pathways. Additionally, this demonstration project will be implemented to increase the average weekly wage and employer benefits of participants in each occupational cluster through successful completion of career pathways.

The local areas also promotes the use of the Fast Track program, which is an employer-driven training program unique to the State of Georgia. Fast Track leverages quantitative and qualitative data provided through available labor market information and HDCI to identify common workforce needs of multiple employers within a similar industry and region to develop a customized workforce training solution. Once the local area has worked with the employers to identify the specific staffing needs, the employers are able to provide feedback on the specific training elements that are needed or are generally lacking in traditional offerings. The LWDA then works with training providers to develop condensed training programs that meet the needs outlined by the employers and lead to industry-recognized credentials.

The local area takes advantage of programs offered through WFD aimed at connecting with and providing workforce solutions to employers. State initiatives such as Go Build Georgia, Georgia WorkSmart, HDCI, and Operation: Workforce are designed to connect with employers, engage them in a dialogue concerning their future workforce needs, and deliver solutions appropriate to those specific needs.

With the primary goal to create a unified workforce system, the Governor relocated Title I programs to GDECD to enhance collaboration, believing that strong workforce development leads to economic development successes. The relocation of Title I programs to GDECD ensures that leaders of Georgia's Title I programs have frontline access and collaboration with the Area's economic development initiatives. The collaborative relationship between local workforce development and economic development activities has resulted in highly successful programs like Georgia WorkSmart and HDCI.

Georgia WorkSmart is a work-based learning initiative operated by WFD. The initiative promotes apprenticeship programs as a workforce development tool and assists Georgia companies in developing and implementing customized programs to meet their specific hiring and training needs. Using the apprentice model can help businesses grow their own talent and build a motivated and qualified workforce. Employers use apprentice programs to recruit and train new employees and to upskill their current workforce.

Georgia WorkSmart can coordinate with the LWDA to enroll eligible apprentices in ITAs and OJTs, in order to leverage WIOA funding. By design, participants who complete these programs are exited with in-demand jobs, certificates and/or degrees from TCSG or other education providers, as well as the Registered Apprenticeship Certificate from USDOL. These credentials are transferable and can be built upon.

Georgia Pathways to Work will change how organizations support the independence, employment, and career advancement of Georgians with disabilities. This will be accomplished by working with Area-wide initiatives such as Go Build Georgia and HDCI to be responsive to the known market demands for careers in Georgia, as well as supporting employer efforts to more effectively engage Georgians with disabilities. Furthermore, the overall goal of the Georgia Pathways to Work program is to increase the number of youth who achieve competitive, integrated employment through existing and customized pathways. Additionally, this demonstration project will be implemented to increase the average weekly wage and employer benefits of participants in each occupational cluster through successful completion of career pathways.

The State launched Georgia WorkSmart in partnership with the Office of Apprenticeship to provide more access to the Registered Apprenticeship program. Georgia WorkSmart is another tool to provide to employers looking to train in place. Another resource Georgia has developed is Fast Track training. The combination of a shortened timeline, employer engagement, and use of classroom and on-the-job training has created a successful model for providing entry into growing industries. The Area is working to expand upon these services, providing added resources and technical assistance to aid local workforce partners and expand their offerings.

### 31. Special Populations

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*Describe how the area will provide services to the special populations specified in the state plan, to include ex-offenders, veterans, at-risk youth, long-term unemployed, adult learners and individuals with disabilities. If the region has identified additional target groups, please list.*

The LWDA also recognizes that in order to reach the broadest possible range of individuals, efforts must focus developing a unified system. The LWDA has programs focused on enhancing services to veterans and individuals within the criminal justice system. With Fort Benning located here, Area 14 is home to a large number of active duty and veteran service members.

The LWDA has been rethinking the approach to incarceration through education and rehabilitation. The LWDA participates as a vital partner to ensure that the LWDA rehabilitates ex-offenders and provides them with marketable skills and opportunities to succeed. Georgia's goal is to continue to partner with the criminal justice system to remove barriers to employment and provide the resources needed to affect successful transitions into the workforce. Re-Entry programs that teach job readiness, job search and occupational skills will continue within the Area.

WIOA places an increased emphasis on the development and use of career pathways. Every Youth is required to have an objective assessment conducted in order to identify appropriate services and career pathways for the participant. Following the objective assessment, WIOA-eligible youth work in tandem with their case manager to develop an Individual Service Strategy (ISS), which heavily stresses career pathways. Youth are strongly encouraged to pursue credentials that will lead them into a sustainable,

rewarding career. Additionally, the local area and schools work closely to ensure that K-12 schools are connected with local industry representatives. The LWDA is committed to providing educational opportunities through career pathways that will ultimately optimize the progress and success of individuals with varying levels of abilities and needs. Through the development and use of career pathways, the LWDA's youth will be equipped to enter the working world with marketable credentials and valuable skills.

The Area has determined that one of the most effective strategies for serving special populations is through the provision of targeted grants using Governor's reserve funding. The grants enable LWDA's to conduct pilot programs without using local formula funds. This alleviates much of the risk of building new programs while still promoting innovation.

## 32. Priority of Service

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*Describe how the region will identify and administer the state's priority of service policy. Identify if the region will add target populations in addition to one's specified by state and federal policy.*

The local areas in the region will follow the state's policy for Priority of Services. The Intake /Eligibility process will identify if applicants/customers are eligible for the meet the priority of service policy.

Priority for services will be given to all customers who are to recipients of public assistance or other low income individuals with added priority for individuals who are basic skills deficient. Individualized career services and training services are given on a priority basis, regardless of funding levels to:

- Public assistance recipients and other low income adults; and
- Individuals who are basic skills deficient

Veterans under WIOA § 3 (63)(A) receive priority of services as described in the Jobs for Veterans Act (38 U.S.C. 4215(2)). Veterans and eligible spouses of veterans who otherwise meet the eligibility requirements for adult programs must receive the highest priority for services. Priority must be provided in the following order:

- First, to veterans and eligible spouses who are also recipients of public assistance

Low income individuals or who are basic skills deficient. Military earnings are not to be included as income for veterans and transitioning service members,

- Second, individuals who are not veterans or eligible spouses who meet WIOA priority criteria.
- Third, veterans and eligible spouses who are not included in the WIOA priority groups
- Last, to individuals outside the groups given priority under WIOA

While Veterans receive priority through WIOA services, a referral process is in place for directing Veterans with significant barriers to employment to the Disable Veterans Outreach Program to ensure the most effect provision of services.

The region has not identified any additional target populations. Additional Priority of Services target populations will added if the need occurs in the region. Local areas Workforce Development Boards will approve all additional priority of service target populations.

#### Priority of Services for Covered Persons through One-Stop System

Policy for ensuring priority of service for covered persons, e.g., veterans and eligible spouses, how local area service providers ensure priority of service, and how GDOL employment services to veterans, are integrated into the local workforce system.

In accordance with 20 CFR Section 663.600, and WIOA Section 134(d)(4)(E), if limited funding is declared in the local area, recipients of public assistance and other low income economically disadvantaged adults would receive priority of service for intensive and training services. Additionally, in accordance with the Jobs for Veterans Act (P.L. 107-288) and its corresponding regulations (20 CFR Part 1010), in the context of the policy established by the local workforce area, veterans and eligible spouses are also identified as covered persons and are also entitled to priority of services over non-covered persons seeking assistance with employment, training, and placement services.

In accordance with the Workforce Development Act, the local workforce area has identified priority level of services be granted to certain populations.

In accordance with board-established policy, priority of service for intensive and training services for adults and dislocated workers when adult funds are limited (WIOA) will be given to individuals who

meet minimum eligibility requirements, but have one or more characteristics that act as barriers to employment or other factors that may limit an individual's ability to seek, find, and maintain employment.

These characteristics include:

- Underemployed or unemployed
- Offender
- Food stamp or TANF recipient
- Poor employability skills
- Poor work history
- Poor basic skill
- Lacks self-sufficiency
- Disabled
- Older Worker
- Dislocated worker

Priority will be given to adult and/or youth recipients of public assistance, low-income individuals, and other individuals meeting minimum eligibility requirements. Other individuals include those who have one or more of the characteristics listed below that may act as barriers to obtaining and/or retaining employment:

- Unemployed
- Under employed
- Lacks a high school diploma or GED
- Poor work history
- Poor basic skills
- Lacks self-sufficiency
- Limited English Proficiency
- Disabled

In determining priority of services for veterans and non-veterans seeking services under

WIOA, the following guidelines are as follows:

- **First Priority-** Veterans receiving public assistance and/or low-income.
- **Second Priority** - Non-veterans receiving public assistance and/or low-income.
- **Third Priority-** Veterans who are neither public assistance recipients nor low-income individuals will receive priority over non-veterans

Dislocated workers who are veterans will receive priority over non-veterans. However, dislocated worker funds cannot be used for veterans who have not been determined eligible as a dislocated worker.

With exception of dislocated workers, individuals eligible to receive intensive and training services using Workforce Development Act funds must meet the following guidelines;

- 1) Reside within the eight County Lower Chattahoochee Service Areas; and,
- 2) Have been determined eligible based on the income guidelines.

#### Veterans and Eligible Spouses

The local GDOL/One-Stop includes a veteran staff of Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialists (DVOP) and local Veterans Employment Representatives (LVER). These staff provides employment and outreach services to the local veteran population.

One-stop representatives conduct an initial inquiry on all individuals seeking services through the local one-stop center to determine service(s) requested, service needs, appropriateness of service(s), and the availability or accessibility of services through the one stop system. All unregistered persons seeking services through the local one-stop center are required to complete a pre-screening package that also contains a list of all available services in the one-stop center. Information contained in the pre-screening packages developed by the local office are designed to capture basic background information used by one-stop staff to provide quality customer service throughout the individual's transition through the one-stop system.

Once the individual has been identified as meeting the criteria of "covered persons", representatives of the Veterans Unit will place the individual on the career center's system notification log for further assistance. The Veterans Unit will assess eligibility and where applicable provide appropriate services and/or coordinate with other units/agencies to ensure that all services identified for veterans are given priority.



## Lower Chattahoochee Workforce Development Area-14 Priority of Services Policy

### Purpose:

This section covers local policy regarding Priority of Service for WIOA employment and training activities implemented in the local workforce area.

### References:

Jobs for Veterans Act (P.L. 107-288)

Training and Employment Guidance Letter (TEGL) 3-15

Training and Employment Guidance Letter (TEGL) 10-09

Training and Employment Guidance Letter (TEGL) 22-04

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014, Section 134(c)(3)(E)

WIOA-14 One Stop Center Standard Operating Procedures issued February 2010

Veterans and eligible spouses will receive priority of service for all Department of Labor (DOL) funded job training programs, to include WIOA programs. When programs are statutorily required to provide priority for a particular group of individuals, priority must be given to recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient in the provision of individualized career services and training services regardless of whether funds are limited, to include veterans and eligible spouses. Priority must be provided in the following order:

First, to veterans and eligible spouses who are also recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, or individuals who are basic skills deficient ;

Second, to non-covered persons (that is, individuals who are not veterans or eligible spouses) who are included in the group in “i”

Third, to veterans and eligible spouses who are not included in the priority group; and ,

Last, non-covered persons outside the group given priority under WIOA.

#### Definitions:

For priority of service purposes, a covered person is a:

1. Veteran - an individual who has served at least one day in active military, naval or air service, and was discharged or released under "other than dishonorable" conditions. This includes full-time duty in the National Guard or a Reserve component, with the exception of full-time duty for training purposes.

Eligible spouse - the spouse of:

any veteran who died of a service-connected disability;

any member of the Armed Forces serving on active duty who, at the time of the spouse's request for priority has been listed for a total of more than 90 days as: missing in action; captured in line of duty by a hostile force; or forcibly detained or interned in line of duty by a foreign government or power;

a veteran who has a total disability resulting from a service-connected disability (as determined by the Department of Veterans Affairs); or

a veteran who died while a total disability, resulting from a service-connected disability, was in existence.

A. Identification of covered persons at the point of service entry (including career services such as informational and self-service).

All unregistered persons seeking services through the local one-stop center will be asked to complete a pre-screening package that lists all available services in the one-stop center and to provide basic background information that will be used by one-stop staff in efforts to provide quality customer service throughout the individual's transition through the one-stop system.

A pre-screening package will be provided to each individual seeking service through the one-stop center. This pre-screening package is a viable instruments used to 1) identify covered and non-covered persons who are seeking services through the local one-stop center; 2) provides feedback as to the reason(s) why individuals are utilizing the one-stop center; in addition to 3) acquiring basic background information about the individual that will be needed to determine the appropriate access route customers must utilize to meet their service needs.

Once identified as a covered person, individuals will be served in accordance with the priority of service criteria identified above. Individuals who meet the criteria for first priority of service consideration are placed on the center's Client Services Daily Log in the one-stop center's customer data management system (CICS) and are seen by veteran representatives at the local one-stop.

All others based upon category will continue through the regular intake process or referred to appropriate agency for receipt of services.

#### Phone/Email Accessibility

Customers seeking assistance or services via phone/e-mail inquiries are properly screened to determine their status as a covered or non-covered person. For phone inquiries to Wagner Peyser partners, a web-based system is available that has specific questions embedded in its message line to assist one-stop staff in determining if an individual meets the definition of covered persons. All phone/email inquiries that meet the standards for covered persons shall be given priority of services. Individuals who do not meet the criteria for priority of service will be directed to appropriate unit for further processing. Individuals who meet the criteria will be processed to ensure priority of service is provided as appropriate.

#### Serving Transitioning Service Members and Spouses

Transitioning service members and their spouses are among the group considered for priority of service as well. Service members exiting the military including, but not limited to, recipients of

Unemployment Compensation for ex-military members (UCX) generally qualify under WIOA as dislocated workers.

Ensuring that an identified covered person has access to services or resources earlier than a non-covered person

The pre-screening package provided at point of entry contains two forms as part of the one-stop system process that must be completed by non-registered persons seeking services through the local one-stop career center. These forms help staff to identify covered and non-covered persons seeking services during the initial process of determining appropriate services and/or required agency referrals that may be needed to meet the customer's needs.

One-stop staff will immediately place all individuals meeting the criteria of "covered persons" on the career center's system notification log for further assistance by representatives of the Veterans Unit. The Veterans Unit will assess eligibility and where applicable provide appropriate services and/or coordinate with other units/agencies to ensure that all services identified for veterans are given priority.

When services or resources are limited, this section describes the priority of service for veterans/eligible spouses under the local area limited funding /priority of service policy for economically disadvantaged adults (see 20 CFR Section 663.600). Additionally, this section specifies the order in which priority will be given to covered persons when limited funding has been declared in a local area.

In accordance with 20 CFR Section 663.600, and WIOA Section 134(d)(4)(E), if limited funding has been declared in the local area, recipients of public assistance and other low income economically disadvantaged adults would receive priority of service for intensive and training services.

To ensure covered persons receive access prior to non-covered persons, first priority will be given to the covered person; second priority to recipients of public assistance and other low-income economically disadvantaged adults. This process, however, should in no way impact services that are currently being provided to non-covered persons. (For instance, if a workshop has been filled and a covered person has been identified in need of the workshop, efforts will be made to ensure that the covered person

receives the service. This may mean reallocating additional slots to ensure that the person receives the service).

Documenting veteran/eligible spouse status at the point of entry into an intensive or training service. This section describes the eligibility and documentation process for covered persons at the core service level and at the intensive/training service level.

At the core and intensive/training service level, the one-stop staff person providing the service would input updated information regarding the covered persons into the GWS system so that it would be available to all persons who provide service to the covered person and have access to the system. For WIOA, the staff person who receives the referral for training will make a determination of appropriateness and then refer the individual to the appropriate service provider for consideration of enrollment into training. Referral documentation will indicate whether the individual is a covered person under this policy.

Documenting the scope of services offered to covered persons to include the provision of core services. The following paragraphs describe the procedures used for documenting that priority of service to covered persons (to include youth programs) did occur at all levels of the service spectrum, from the informational and self-service level through the training services level.

The One-Stop staff that handles the provision of service to the covered persons will enter the information into the GWS so that it will be available to all persons who have access to the system. For youth, the individual who handles the youth services will transmit the information to the appropriate Administrative Entity staff for entry into the GWS so that the information is available to all persons with access to system.

Disseminating information to and verifying that service providers are in compliance with local area policies and procedures for priority of service to covered persons

The following section explains how information on priority of service for covered persons will be transmitted to One-Stop staff and service providers, as well as, how new staff will be trained to ensure the local area is in compliance. Describe monitoring procedures in place to verify that priority of services is being implemented according to policy.

Priority of Service for covered persons will be transmitted to One-Stop staff and service providers as well as new staff through our local area's quarterly training sessions with the providers and one-stop staff; and, through regular communication such as written memorandum, staff meetings, et cetera. Technical assistance is made available upon request and provided for all new WIOA staff and service provider staff as needed. Additionally, a new hire orientation for new staff members of the One-Stop Center which include Priority of Service information is provided for all new staff members.

WIOA has monitoring procedures of its own and the Administrative Entity monitors the Service Providers regularly and issues reports to the Providers. The monitoring procedures will be changed to include monitoring of Priority of Services for eligible clients. Also, Priority of Services will be made a part of all financial contract agreements.

Individuals seeking assistance via phone/e-mail inquiries are properly screened to determine their status as a covered or non-covered person. Additionally, the GDOL web-based system has embedded specific questions that assist one-stop staff in determining if an individual meets the definition of covered persons. Priority of services is given to all phone/email inquiries that meet the standards for covered persons as required. Internet referrals received at the local one-stop center through the local web-based system are highlighted in red and calls made to assess appropriate avenue of service. Those who self-identify are routed to Veterans Unit for continued determination. Individuals, who do not meet the criteria, will be redirected to appropriate unit for further processing. Individuals who meet the criteria will be further processed to ensure priority of service is provided as appropriate.

To ensure covered persons receive access prior to non-covered persons, first priority will be given to the covered person; second priority to recipients of public assistance and other low-income economically disadvantaged adults. This process, however, should in no way impact services that are currently being provided to non-covered persons. (For instance, if a workshop has been filled and a covered person has been identified in need of the workshop, efforts will be made to ensure that the covered person receives the service. This may mean reallocating additional slots to ensure that the person receives the service

Information regarding the individual's status under Priority of Service for covered persons will be transmitted to One-Stop staff and service providers as well as new staff through our local area's quarterly training sessions with the providers and one-stop staff; and, through regular communication such as written memorandum, staff meetings, etc. In addition, technical assistance is made available upon request and provided for all new WIOA staff and service provider staff as needed. Also, a new hire orientation for new staff members of the One-Stop Center is also provided; this will include Priority of Service information for all new staff members. WIOA has monitoring procedures of its own and the Administrative Entity monitors the Service Providers regularly and issues reports to the Providers. The monitoring procedures will be changed to include monitoring of Priority of Services for eligible clients. Also, Priority of Services will be made a part of all financial contract agreements.

*The income levels shown in the following table apply to WIOA eligibility and reporting in federal program years 2015-2016, or until another update occurs.*

Program Years 2015 – 2016 Six-Month Income		
Family Size	Metropolitan Areas	Nonmetropolitan Areas
1	\$5,940	\$5,940
2	8,010	8,010
3	10,150	10,085
4	12,531	12,449
5	14,790	14,691
6	17,298	17,181
7	19,806	19,670
8	22,314	22,160
For each over 8 Add:	2,508	2,490

*Metropolitan Area includes: Chattahoochee, Harris, and Muscogee Counties. Non-Metropolitan Area includes: Talbot, Stewart, Randolph, Clay, Quitman, Marion, Webster, Taylor, Schley, Sumter, Macon, Dooly, and Crisp counties.*

Additional Eligibility Policy (Adults):

In efforts to increase the number of customers served through the workforce development system, WIOA Income eligibility guidelines for ADULTS ONLY expands the maximum income eligibility limit to \$50,000 per family household and is based on total family household income.



## Attachment 1: Local Workforce Development Boards

The WDB for the Lower Chattahoochee WIOA is

Board Member Name	Affiliated With	Title/Position held with Affiliated Organization	County of Residence	Entity(s) Representing
<b>Beard-White, Georgia</b>	L&S, Inc.	Human Resource Assistant Director	Muscogee County	Business
<b>Bloom, Richard, M.D.</b>	Dr. Richard R. Bloom, M.D. Brookstone Surgical Center	Surgeon	Muscogee County	Business
<b>Brown, Carl</b>	C. Brown & Associates, Inc.	President	Muscogee County	Business
<b>Calloway, Tony</b>	PRIMERICA - Calloway & Assoc., Inc.	Regional Vice President/Owner	Muscogee County	Business
<b>Carlisle, Doreen</b>	GA Vocational Rehabilitation Services	Rehabilitation Unit Manager	Muscogee County	Vocational Rehabilitation
<b>Chambers, Travis</b>	Elite Ventures Leasing & Mgt	President	Muscogee County	Business
<b>Dorsey, Belva</b>	Enrichment Services Program, Inc.	Chief Executive Officer	Muscogee County	Community-based
<b>Doyle, Michelle</b>	Valley Hospitality	HR Director	Muscogee County	Business
<b>Echols, Monica (pending...)</b>	Governor's Office of Transition, Support and Re-entry	<del>Community Coordinator</del>	Muscogee County	Second Chance Act Program / Offender Re-entry
<b>Farley, Elsie</b>	Pearl's Catering	Owner	Harris County	Business
<b>Harp, Charles</b>	Swift Spinning	VP of Human Resources	Muscogee County	Business
<b>Holmes, Franklin</b>	K & K Hauling	Owner/Operator	Talbot County	Business
<b>Hopson, April</b>	Columbus Technical	Director of Adult Education	Muscogee County	Adult Education & Literacy

College				
<b>Hugley, Carolyn</b>	State Farm Insurance Agency	Owner / Agent	Muscogee County	Business
<b>Irvine, John J. (J.J.)</b>	GDOL Columbus Career Center	Career Center Manager	Muscogee County	Wagner Peyser / Veteran Employment Activities / Disabled Vet Outreach Programs /Programs under State Unemployment Compensation Law
<b>Jones, Rick</b>	Columbus Consolidated Government Dept. of Community & Economic Development	Director	Muscogee County	Title I, Economic Development
<b>King, Brian</b>	IBEW Local 613	Union Representative	Muscogee County	Organized Labor/Joint Labor Management/Apprenticeship
<b>LaMee, Beverly</b>	Housing Authority of Columbus, Georgia	Director, Community Initiatives	Muscogee County	Community-based, Housing Auth E&T Programs
<b>Llewellyn, Tricia</b>	Goodwill Industries of the Southern Rivers	Vice President of Mission Services	Muscogee County	Private Non-Profit/Community-based
<b>Loyd, Jamie</b>	Columbus Technical College	Vice President, Economic Development	Muscogee County	Post Secondary/Adult Education & Literacy, Title II/Apprenticeship/Post Secondary Vocational Educational (Carl Perkins)
<b>Martin, John</b>	The Martin Firm	Attorney At Law	Muscogee County	Business
<b>McNeer, Patricia "Ann"</b>	Master Tax Solutions, INC.	President	Muscogee County	Business
<b>Murphy, William P.</b>	Greater Columbus Georgia Chamber of Commerce	Executive Vice President of Economic Development	Muscogee County	Business / Economic Development
<b>Ramsey, Ernestine</b>	YMCA of Metropolitan Columbus	Director/Manager	Muscogee County	Community-based
<b>Randolph, Chester</b>	C. Randolph & Associates, LLC	Owner / Agent	Muscogee County	Business

	Caldwell Banker KPDD			
<b>Reed, Marva</b>	Department of Health & Human Services	Director	Muscogee County	Department of Health & Human Services
<b>Ruff, Gwendolyn</b>	Columbus Water Works	Senior Vice President, Strategic Planning & Employee Services	Muscogee County	Business
<b>Sabree, Saleemah</b>	Experience Works, INC.	Employment & Training Coordinator (ETC)	Muscogee County	Senior Community Service Employment, Older American Act
<b>Seda, Kike</b>	A-1 Postage Meters & Shipping Systems	President	Muscogee County	Business
<b>Smith, Dexter</b>	Communication Workers of America Local 3212	Secretary/Treasurer	Muscogee County	Organized Labor
<b>Stoller, Frederick</b>	CHP, International - Job Corps	Admissions Counselor	Muscogee County	Job Corps
<b>Taccati, Kim</b>	Staffing Connections, LLC	President/CEO	Muscogee County	Business
<b>Taylor, Clint</b>	Georgia Power Company	Regional Economic Development Manager	Muscogee County	Business
<b>Timmons, Wendy</b>	Sixty Two Graphic Studio	Owner/Operator	Muscogee County	Business
<b>Vinson, Tim</b>	Muscogee County School District	Youth Apprenticeship Coordinator	Muscogee County	Secondary Education Adult Education & Literacy
<b>Watson, Eddie</b>	Clay Hill Hunting	Owner/Operator	Clay County	Business
<b>Williams, Joe Lee</b>	Stewart County Board of Commissioners	Chairman	Stewart County	Public
<b>(Pending...)</b>		<b>(Pending...)</b>	Randolph County	Business

## The WDB for the Middle Flint WIOA is

Member Name	Affiliation	Organization Position	Designation
<b>Janet Teele</b> <b>WDB Chairperson</b>	Ameris Bank	Personal Banker	Private Business Marion County
<b>Candace Head</b>	Georgia Department of Labor Business Services Unit Economic Development Coordinator	Business Services Economic Development	UI, Employment Services, Trade Act, and Veteran Services
<b>Norman Graves</b>	Golden Gourmet Middle Flint COA	Executive Director	Private Sector Business Sumter County
<b>Wally Summers</b>	South Georgia Technical College	Vice President South Georgia Technical College	Adult Literacy Education Economic Development Area
<b>John Green</b>	Webster County Board of Education	Assistant Principal Webster County Board of Education	Education Webster County
<b>Doreene Carlisle</b>	Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Services	Area Employment Manager	Vocational Rehabilitation Area
<b>Melinda Posey</b>	Ameris Bank	Consumer Banker	Private Business Taylor County Schley County
Stephen Pollock	Region 8 Department of Human Services	Coordinator	TANF
<b>Willie Patrick</b>	South Georgia News	Owner	Private Business Crisp County
<b>Mathis Wright Jr.</b>	IBEW 2194	President	Organized Labor Area
<b>Barbara Mitchell</b>	Magnolia Manor	Administrator	Private Business Sumter County
<b>Rhonda Holbrook</b> <b>Vice Chairperson</b>	Interfor U.S. Inc.	Human Resources Manager	Private Business Webster County
<b>Becky Fitzgibbons</b>	Crisp Power Commission	Human Resources Manager	Private Business
<b>James Haugabook</b>	Haugabook Construction Co.	Owner / Manager	Private Business Macon County
<b>Robert (Bob) Maubry</b>	Weyerhaeuser Inc.	Operations Manager	Private Sector Business

<b>Jennifer Morton</b>	Flint EMC	Community Connections Specialist	Private Business Taylor County
<b>Saleemah Sabree</b>	Experience Works Inc.	Regional Coordinator	Community Based Organization
<b>Grady Burrell</b>	Teamsters Local 728	Assistant Business Agent	Organized Labor Representative Dooly County
<b>Randy Howard</b>	Sumter County Board Chairman	WIOAO CLEO	Area

## Attachment 2: Local Negotiated Performance

### Negotiated Performance for Lower Chattahoochee WIOA

Adult Program	Agreed Goals 16	Agreed Goals 17
Employment Rate 2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter After Exit	75	77
Employment Rate 4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter After Exit	75	77
Median Earnings 2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter After Exit	5500	5600
Credential Attainment within 4 Quarters After Exit	73	75
Dislocated Worker	Agreed Goals 16	Agreed Goals 17
Employment Rate 2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter After Exit	70	72
Employment Rate 4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter After Exit	75	77
Median Earnings 2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter After Exit	3250	3400
Credential Attainment within 4 Quarters After Exit	50	51
Youth	Agreed Goals 16	Agreed Goals 17
Employment Rate 2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter After Exit	60	62
Employment Rate 4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter After Exit	68	70
Credential Attainment within 4 Quarters After Exit	71	73

## Negotiated performance for Middle Flint WIOA

Adult Program	Agreed Goals PY16	Agreed Goals PY 17
Employment Rate 2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter After Exit	75.0%	78.0%
Employment Rate 4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter After Exit	68.0%	70.0%
Median Earnings 2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter After Exit	\$5,500	\$5,800
Credential Attainment within 4 Quarters After Exit	74.0%	77.0%
Dislocated Worker	Agreed Goals PY 16	Agreed Goals PY 17
Employment Rate 2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter After Exit	82.0%	85.0%
Employment Rate 4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter After Exit	77.0%	80.0%
Median Earnings 2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter After Exit	\$6,000	\$6,500
Credential Attainment within 4 Quarters After Exit	79.0%	83.0%
Youth	Agreed Goals PY16	Agreed Goals PY17
Employment Rate 2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter After Exit	55.0%	57.0%
Employment Rate 4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter After Exit	59.0%	61.0%
Credential Attainment within 4 Quarters After Exit	63.0%	66.0%

**Attachment 3:** Comments that Express Disagreement – There were no comments.

Comment 1	
Originating Entity:	
Comment:	

Comment 2	
Originating Entity:	
Comment:	

Comment 3	
Originating Entity:	
Comment:	

Comment 4	
Originating Entity:	
Comment:	



#### **Attachment 4: Signature Page**

The undersigned hereby agree to adhere to all applicable federal, State, and local laws, regulations, and policies in performing any duty associated with the funds made available to under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.

Name: Howard Pendelton  
Title: Local Workforce Area Director  
Entity Representing: Lower Chattahoochee WDB

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: Mayor Theresa Tomlinson  
Title: Chief Local Elected Official - Mayor  
Entity Representing: City of Columbus

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: Chester Randolph  
Title: Local Workforce Development Board Chairman  
Entity Representing: Lower Chattahoochee WDB

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

**Name: Janice West**  
**Title: Local Workforce Area Director**  
**Entity Representing: Middle Flint WDB/River Valley Regional Commission**

**Signature: \_\_\_\_\_**

**Name: Randy Howard**  
**Title: Chief Local Elected Official – Sumter County Commission**  
**Entity Representing: Middle Flint WDB Elected Officials**

**Signature: \_\_\_\_\_**

**Name: Janet Teele**  
**Title: Local Workforce Development Board Chair**  
**Entity Representing: Middle Flint WDB**

**Signature: \_\_\_\_\_**