Lower Chattahoochee Workforce Development – Area 14

Local Area Plan

Acronym Guide

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
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, Area 14)
LWDB	Local Workforce Development Board
LWIA	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
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
WIA	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

Strategic Elements, Governance and Structure

Identification of the Fiscal Agent

Provide an identification of the entity responsible for the disbursal 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/

Description of Strategic Planning Elements

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.

Regional economic conditions

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 Lower Chattahoochee Area Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act area consists of 8 counties in
west-central Georgia. They are: Harris, Muscogee, Chattahoochee, Stewart, Georgetown-Quitman, Clay,
Randolph, and Talbot Counties. The largest city in the area is Columbus, which is a consolidated
government with Muscogee County.

Lower Chattahoochee WIOA
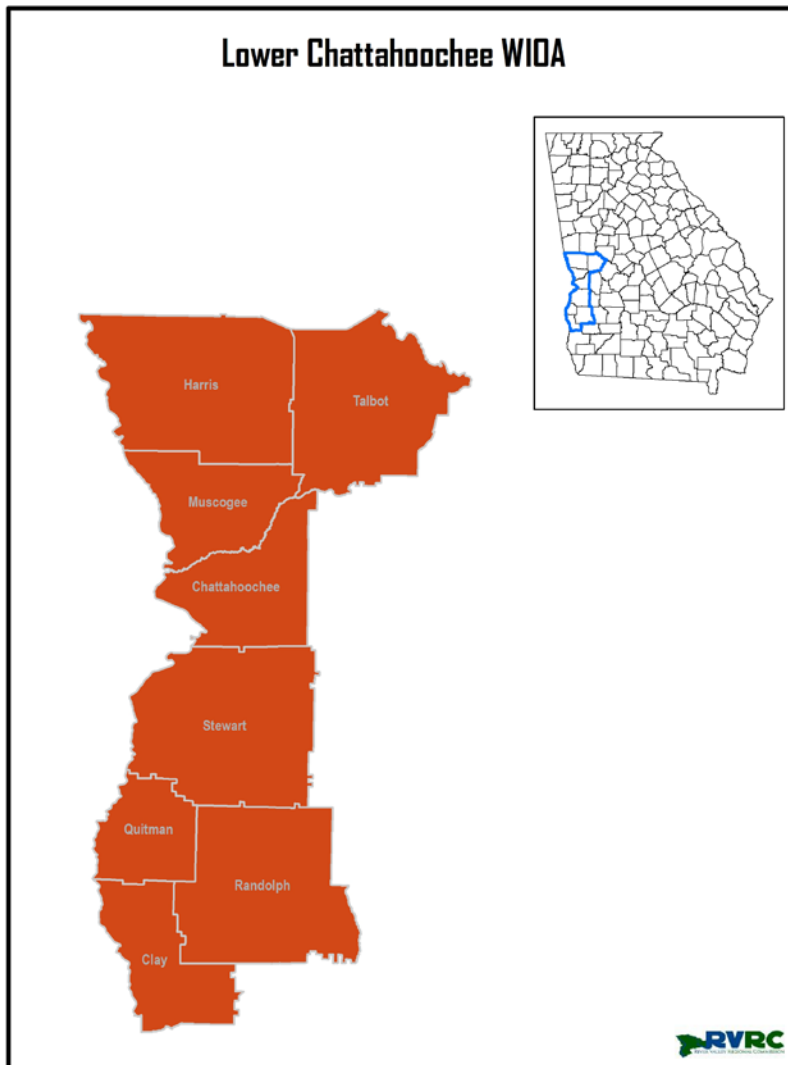
The Columbus Chamber of Commerce recently commissioned a study by Market Street Consultants that analyzed the local economic development strengths and weaknesses, and made targeted suggestions for improvement. Results of this study, as well as appropriate data are included throughout this section and serve as a basis to discuss the regional economic conditions.

The Regional Prosperity Initiative was designed not only as a strategic planning effort around economic development, but it also created a call for continued cooperation in using local public-private partnerships to further community growth. The plan included a detailed market study, analysis of economic activity, and recommendations for future improvements.

Significant public input was used to develop the Regional Prosperity Initiative, 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 principals of the Regional Prosperity Initiative, including Increasing Prosperity, Reducing Poverty, and Improving the Quality of Life.

Source: Regional Prosperity Initiative

Existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors and occupations

Top employers in the Lower Chattahoochee WIOA 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. Other major employers include Synovus (and Columbus Bank and Trust), local hospitals, the public school system, and Columbus State University. The number of advanced

manufactures is also significant, with KIA Suppliers, NCR and Pratt and Whitney with significant presences in the local industrial sectors. 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.

The Regional Prosperity Initiative, based on empirical evidence gathered through survey, census and other data identified the following Areas of Economic Activity and suggested the Targeted Business Sectors. Healthcare is not included in these targeted business sectors, but from a workforce perspective it is one of the most important economic activities in the area. The Healthcare Sector is one of the largest employers in the area and has the most in-demand career needs.


Source: Regional Prosperity Initiative

Employment needs of employers in those industry sectors and occupations

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 per Burning Glass are in Finance and Insurance (4,199 positions available). This matches anecdotal evidence from the companies in that sector (TSYS, AFLAC) that they are always on the search for qualified candidates to work. Other notable top industry sectors that WIOA organizations often focus on include healthcare and manufacturing.
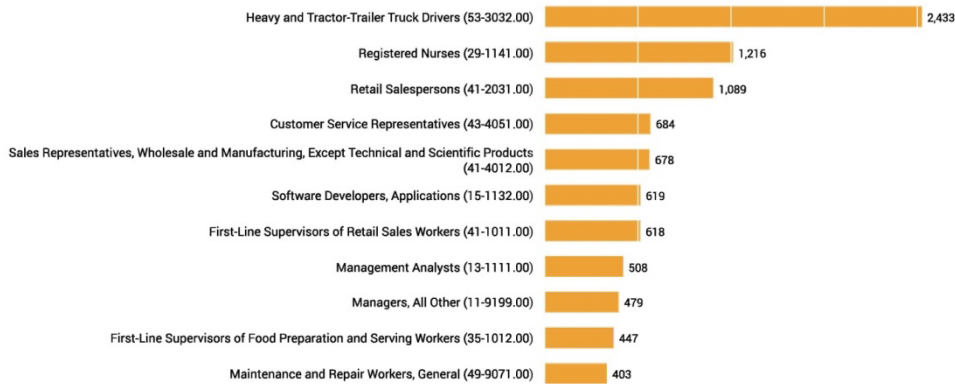
Top industry Sectors, (Burning Glass - BGLI)
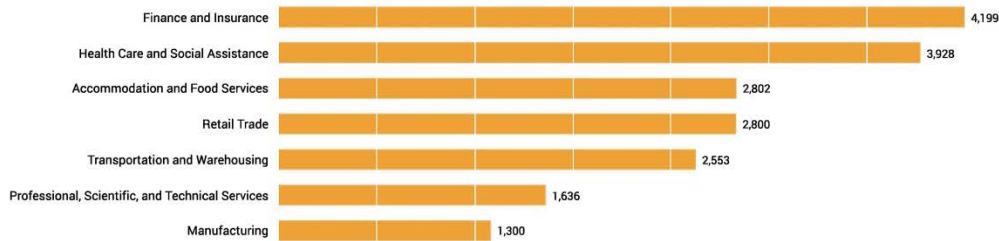
Source: BGLI

Listing of occupations in demand within the region

Top Occupations by far for Area 14 were for truck drivers (2,433) followed by Registered Nurses (1,216). Software Developers were a notable 619 positions available.

Top Occupations (BGLI)

Source: BGLI

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 local 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.

The Columbus 2025 also spent significant time addressing workforce issues. Their plan discusses in great detail the need for a Talented and Engaged Workforce, with specific recommendations on how to accomplish this. Working committees continue this work, and more details about their specific recommendations are found later in this document.

Recruitment of skilled workers—According to projections, significant job growth is expected in the region. The Columbus region therefore needs to better prepare its current workforce for higher-skilled positions and to recruit more new workers to the region. Addressing broader quality of life issues will be important to building a strong workforce. Local employers have stated that it is difficult to entice professionals with four-year degrees to move to the region, particularly if they are young professionals. This inability to attract and retain top talent is a particular concern for the high tech, software development and IT employers in the region. Strong educational and training foundations are needed for the high-skilled positions for both of our Fortune 1000 companies, and have been specifically identified with the Regional Digital Economy Plan as well as the Governor's High Demand Career Initiative.

In its efforts to grow and strengthen the workforce, the Columbus region has both strengths and weaknesses. Notably, the region is home to regional colleges and university that provide programs that prepare students for most job growth areas. Collaborations between the colleges and universities, the local governments, and the business communities are strong, and new efforts continue to arise to further strengthen these collaborations. At the same time, there remains significant need to improve the quantity of local individuals who are taking part in these programs, as the area has a notable deficit in those with associates degree or bachelor degrees.

Addressing work-ethics and work readiness skills of current labor and workforce- Employers are very concerned with the lack of basic skills and work readiness skills that job seekers and current employees possess. As noted in one study by the Chamber of Commerce, overall poor work-ethic seems to be the new normal (2013). Workforce partners and higher education institutions are all involved in looking at ways to address this issue through programs and services. To be successful, these programs need sustained involvement and feedback by the business community. Most importantly, they will need students and workers themselves to be committed to this training.

An important topic that resurfaces frequently is that the region's adult and youth populations lack soft skills (including communication and interpersonal skills). Although distinctions during planning discussions were made between employability skills (technical know-how) and soft skills (e.g. punctuality, loyalty, work ethics), there is little question that both are important pre-requisites for success in the region's workforce.

Adequate Support Services - Support services are services that workers need in order to be able to

attain and retain employment. Two services that are not readily available in the local workforce area, especially in the rural areas, are childcare and transportation. Even in the more urban areas of Columbus and Muscogee County, quality childcare and transportation is very difficult to find for parents who work non-traditional shifts. In addition, many of the better childcare facilities have long waiting lists; and, the hours of operation for public transit is not conducive to the hours of workers performing jobs with non-traditional shifts. But, even when childcare and transportation services are available, they are often unaffordable to shift workers with low wages. Short and mid-term action steps will be necessary to address the current workforce concerns as well as to prepare for future needs of the workforce development system.

Workforce and economic development groups are working together to ensure that a skilled workforce is in place to fill the jobs that will be created in the local area and that business leaders are looking for in their workforce. The local area must ensure that action is taken to implement and refine the recommendations that were presented during the strategic planning process as pertinent information becomes available. Recommendations for action are included here, but more focus is needed to ensure success. The end results of these efforts will be one of the Columbus region's key assets - an improved and highly skilled workforce. Important steps in these efforts include:

Information gathering and assessment

- Continued exploration of updated information that focuses on the types of jobs (particularly civilian and contractor) that are currently or will be relocating to the region. This sustained focus on up-to-date new job impact numbers will require follow-up of the economic impact analysis as well as dissemination of information to collaborative partners in the region.

- Continued assessment of education and skill levels and job categories of projected population.

- Continued discussion of strategies to address the area's workforce-related challenges, such as basic literacy skills, customer service skills, work ethic, and hands-on, technical experience.

- Conduct periodic surveys as needed to better understand the types of jobs, qualifications, and to what extent job seekers plan to work.

Strategic efforts to improve workforce training and support

- Prepare for a major workforce initiative, which includes identifying priority job creation and workforce shortages and the training needs required.

- Identify and prepare for infrastructure needs in education and health care services.

-

Top Employers
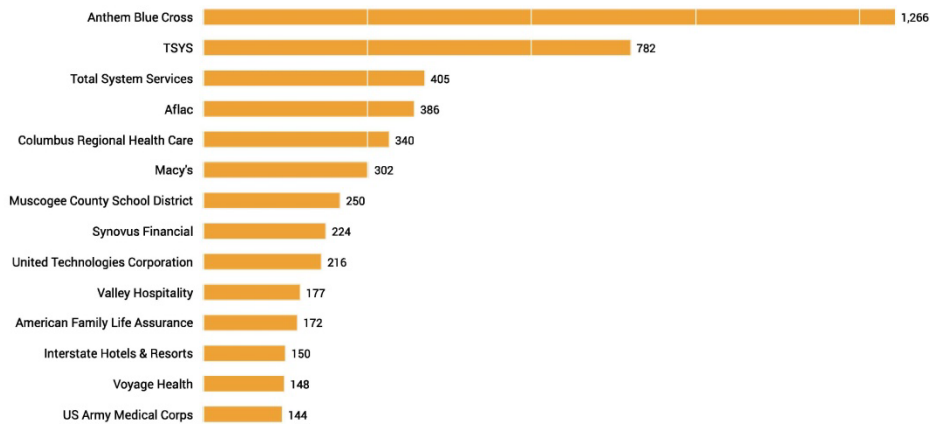
Source: BGLI

The company with the largest recent demand for workers is Anthem Blue Cross (1,266). This is the case because Anthem Blue Cross recently opened a new call center facility in the Columbus Technology Park. Other major employers in Columbus routinely have openings available and are searching for employees - TSYS (782), AFLAC (386) and Synovus (224). Other major employers looking for employees are service, retail and healthcare-related companies.

The technical needs of the IT and FinTech companies in Columbus mirror those in the state and nationally. More programmers, more engineers, more software developers are needed everywhere, and in Columbus, this takes on added significance because employers are constantly looking from outside the area to bring in and retain top talent. This will continue to be an important area in which to both import and develop skills. Efforts to bolster these needs continue at both Columbus Tech, but notably at Columbus State University where the TSYS School of Computer Science has recently expanded its offerings with the new Center for Cybersecurity.

The needs for technical workers for 21st century jobs in IT were echoed in the Digital Economy Plan for the River Valley Regional Commission published in 2015. This report noted, in part, the need for high tech skills and workforce as identified by the IT and FinTech companies in the region, especially in Columbus, while noting that the skills in the workforce were not meeting demand.

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.

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 Lower Chattahoochee WIOA trends slightly older than the state average, as there are fewer young entrants into the workforce and more who are 65+ and likely exiting the workforce than is true, on average, across the state.

Age of population 15+

|	Lower Chattahoochee WIOA	Georgia
0-15	19.45%	21.40%
15 – 24	13.72%	14.30%
25 – 34	14.76%	13.80%
35 – 44	12.63%	14.40%
45 – 54	11.30%	14.40%
55 – 64	12.14%	11.00%
65+	15.99%	10.70%

Source: ESRI Business Analyst, RVRC Analysis

The area has higher than state average numbers of workers employed in Public Administration (7.2% as opposed to 5.0%) and Services (48.3% as opposed to 47.8%). These increased percentages are influenced by the presence of Fort Benning and the increased federal payroll in the area. There is also a higher than average representation in the area in Finance/Insurance/Real Estate (10.3% vs. 6.2%) due to the presence in Columbus of AFLAC, TSYS, and Synovus.

ESRI Business Analyst – 2016 Employed Population 16+ by Industry

	Lower Chattahoochee WIOA	Georgia
Total	106,966	4,523,860
Agriculture/Mining	0.8%	1.1%
Construction	5.4%	6.4%
Manufacturing	9.4%	10.2%
Wholesale Trade	1.7%	2.6%
Retail Trade	11.4%	12.2%
Transportation/Utilities	4.3%	6.4%
Information	1.3%	2.0%
Finance/Insurance/Real Estate	10.3%	6.2%
Services	48.3%	47.8%
Public Administration	7.2%	5.0%

Source: ESRI Business Analyst
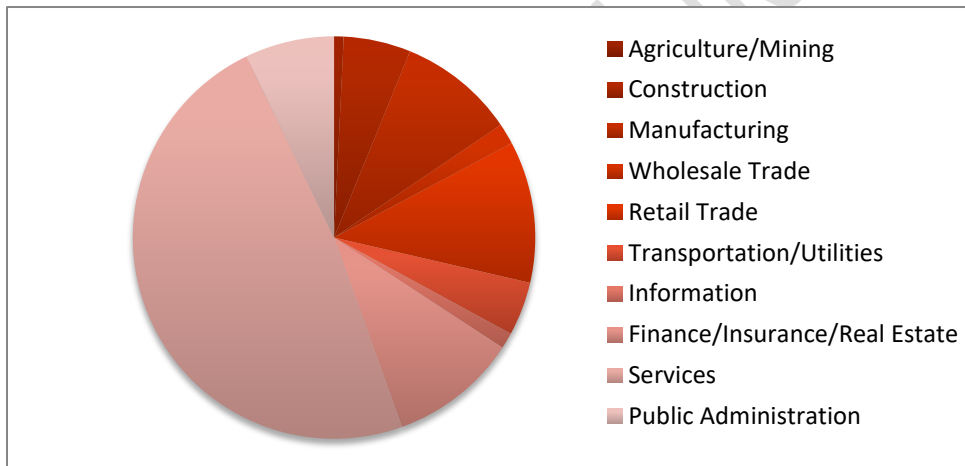
Source: ESRI Business Analyst

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.

Number of businesses

| NAICS CODE	Industry Title	2013 Base Year Employment	2015 Projected Year Employment	# Total Change in Employment	% Percent Change in Employment	% Projected Annual Growth Rate
000000	**Total All Industries**	**120,080**	**123,180**	**3,100**	**2.58%**	**1.28%**
000671	**Total Self-Employed and Unpaid Family Workers, All Jobs**	**7,040**	**7,370**	**330**	**4.75%**	**2.35%**
110000	**Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting**	**1,250**	**1,150**	**-100**	**-7.53%**	**-3.84%**
210000	**Mining**	**180**	**180**	**0**	**3.39%**	**1.68%**
220000	**Utilities**	**230**	**230**	**0**	**-0.43%**	**-0.22%**
230000	**Construction**	**3,710**	**3,930**	**220**	**5.79%**	**2.86%**
236000	Construction of Buildings	830	920	90	10.36%	5.05%
237000	Heavy and Civil Engineering Construction	580	670	90	14.07%	6.80%
238000	Specialty Trade Contractors	2,300	2,350	50	2.00%	1.00%
310000	**Manufacturing**	**7,390**	**7,400**	**10**	**0.20%**	**0.10%**
311000	Food Manufacturing	1,630	1,540	-90	-5.46%	-2.77%
313000	Textile Mills	490	510	20	3.25%	1.61%
	All other Manufacturing	3,850	3,770	-80	-2.12%	-1.06%
420000	**Wholesale Trade**	**2,740**	**2,910**	**170**	**6.02%**	**2.97%**
440000	**Retail Trade**	**11,600**	**11,890**	**290**	**2.50%**	**1.24%**
480000	**Transportation and Warehousing**	**2,670**	**2,880**	**210**	**7.99%**	**3.92%**
481000	Air Transportation	430	500	70	16.59%	7.98%
482000	Rail Transportation	150	140	-10	-3.36%	-1.69%
484000	Truck Transportation	620	610	-10	-0.97%	-0.49%
485000	Transit and Ground Passenger Transport	90	90	0	5.62%	2.77%
486000	Pipeline Transportation	*	*	*	*	*
488000	Support Activities for Transportation	370	520	150	39.35%	18.05%
491000	Postal Service	440	450	10	2.51%	1.25%
492000	Couriers and Messengers	230	240	10	4.74%	2.34%
493000	Warehousing and Storage	290	270	-20	-5.90%	-3.00%
510000	**Information**	**1,280**	**1,100**	**-180**	**-14.22%**	**-7.38%**
511000	Publishing Industries	*	*	*	*	*
512000	Motion Picture and Sound Recording Industries	360	270	-90	-24.23%	-12.96%
515000	Broadcasting (except Internet)	270	280	10	1.85%	0.92%
517000	Telecommunications	510	410	-100	-20.04%	-10.58%
518000	Internet Service Providers, Web Search Portals, and Data Processing Services	*	*	*	*	*
519000	Other Information Services	*	*	*	*	*
520000	**Finance and Insurance**	*	*	*	*	*
522000	Credit Intermediation and Related Activities	5,350	5,870	520	9.72%	4.75%
523000	Securities, Commodity Contracts, and Other Financial Investments and Related Activities	300	300	0	-1.97%	-0.99%
524000	Insurance Carriers and Related Activities	*	*	*	*	*
530000	**Real Estate and Rental and Leasing**	*	*	*	*	*
540000	**Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services**	**5,150**	**5,370**	**220**	**4.33%**	**2.14%**
550000	**Management of Companies and Enterprises**	**1,330**	**1,360**	**30**	**2.25%**	**1.12%**
560000	**Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services**	**5,220**	**5,390**	**170**	**3.16%**	**1.57%**
610000	**Educational Services**	**9,560**	**9,580**	**20**	**0.21%**	**0.10%**
620000	**Health Care and Social Assistance**	**14,700**	**15,330**	**630**	**4.28%**	**2.12%**
710000	**Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation**	*	*	*	*	*
720000	**Accommodation and Food Services**	**11,920**	**12,310**	**390**	**3.24%**	**1.61%**
810000	**Other Services (Except Government)**	**4,790**	**4,960**	**170**	**3.68%**	**1.82%**
900000	**Government**	**13,470**	**12,920**	**-550**	**-4.09%**	**-2.07%**
999100	Federal Government, Excluding Post Office	6,790	6,240	-550	-8.20%	-4.19%
999200	State Government, Excluding Education and Hospitals	1,590	1,520	-70	-4.71%	-2.38%

| 999300	Local Government, Excluding Education and Hospitals	5,080	5,160	80	1.59%	0.79%

Source: GDOL

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
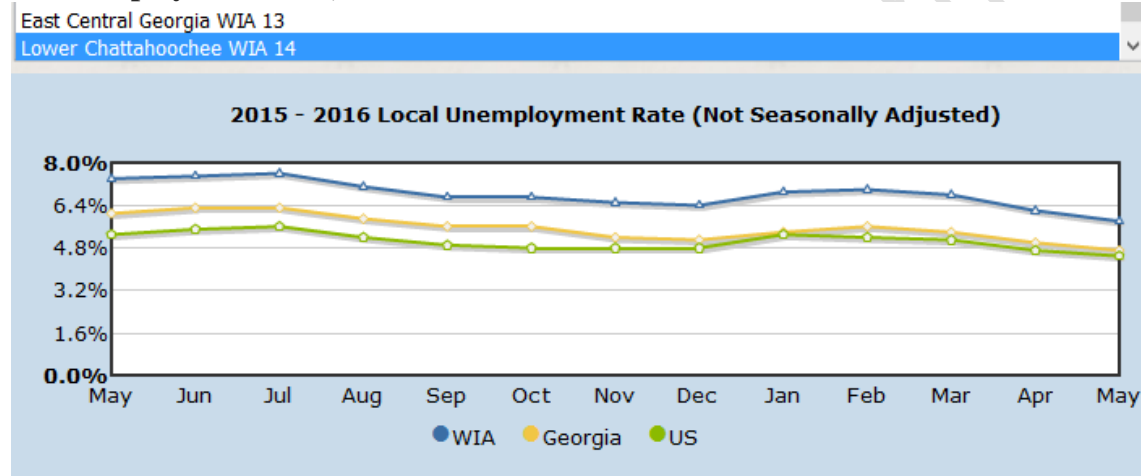
Source: GDOL

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 Area 14 Lower Chattahoochee WIOA and the rest of the state is greater in 2015 (7.1% in Area 14 vs. 5.9% in Georgia) than in 2006 (5.4% vs. 4.7%)
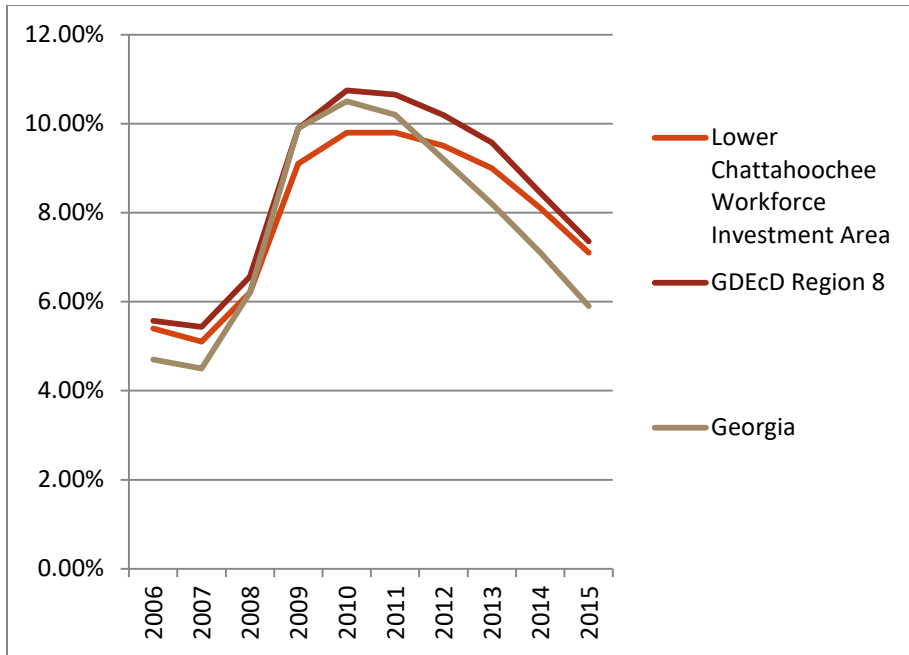
Information on labor market trends

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 state average (14.3% as compared to 14.2%), but the percentages of residents in the Lower Chattahoochee WIOA with a Bachelor's Degree or higher professional degree are notably lower than state averages (24.1% as compared to 29.3%)

Educational attainment (ESRI)

	Lower Chattahoochee WIOA	Georgia
Total	177,823	6,724,494
Less than 9th Grade	4.9%	5.3%
9th - 12th Grade, No Diploma	9.4%	8.9%
High School Graduate	23.7%	23.6%
GED/Alternative Credential	5.1%	4.8%
Some College, No Degree	25.2%	21.1%
Associate Degree	7.6%	7.0%
Bachelor's Degree	14.9%	18.3%
Graduate/Professional Degree	9.2%	11.0%

The percentage of jobs requiring at least a Bachelor's Degree or a graduate degree in the region is 60% of advertised jobs. However, the percentage of individuals with a bachelor or higher degree is only 24.1% 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.

	9+ years of experience	6 to 8 years of experience	3 to 5 years of experience	0 to 2 years of experience	Total
High school or vocational training		7%	26%	65%	3,070
Associate's degree			25%	65%	1,468
Bachelor's degree	8%	23%	44%	25%	5,596
Graduate or professional degree	18%	21%	33%	28%	1,326
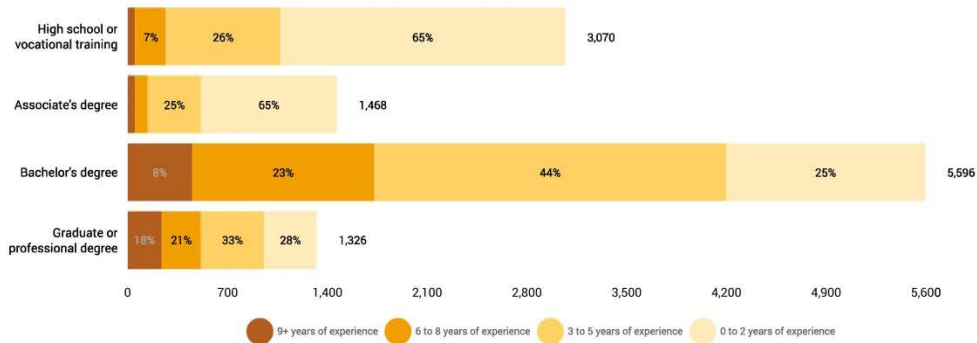
At Risk Populations

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 Columbus and the southern portion of the WIOA Area 14 (as well as portions of Albany, GA).

Teens ages 16 to 19 not attending school and not working

Georgia, Congressional District 2	Number	5,000
	Percent	11%

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 Lower Chattahoochee WIOA is lower than it is for the region, but it is higher than State averages. Disaggregating the data county by county shows that some
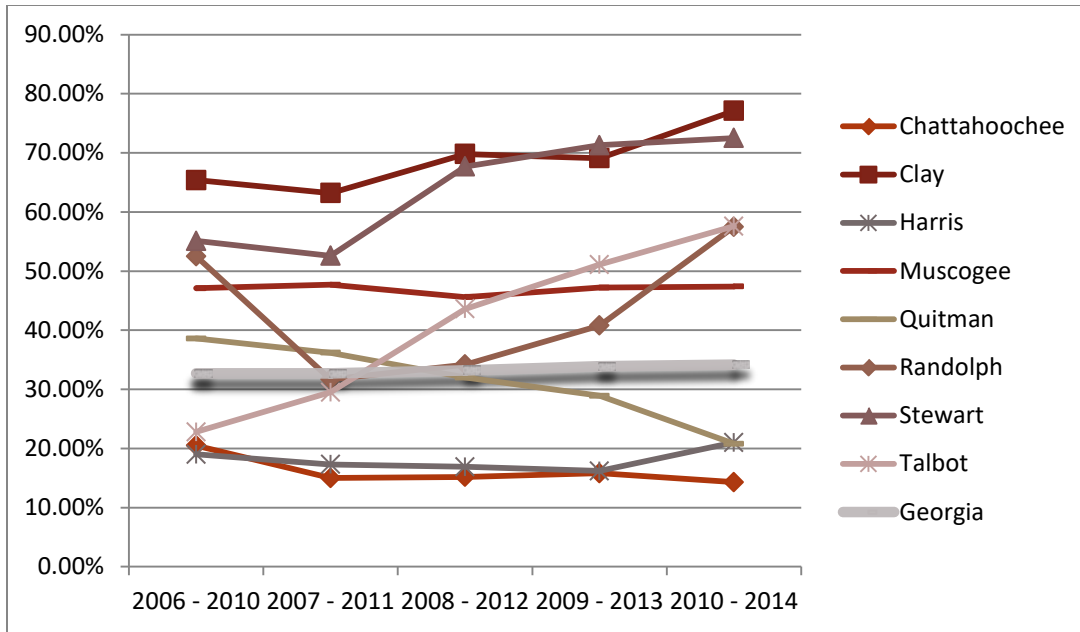
counties do have a high percentage of their children living in poverty. This is shown in the difference in county date in Single Parent families shown below.

# Children living in single-parent families

Clay and Stewart Counties have the highest percentage of children living in single parent households. Often in single parent households, that parent necessarily 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.

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 Lower Chattahoochee WIOA who have no household member working full time is a high 11% compared to the state average of 8.7 %.
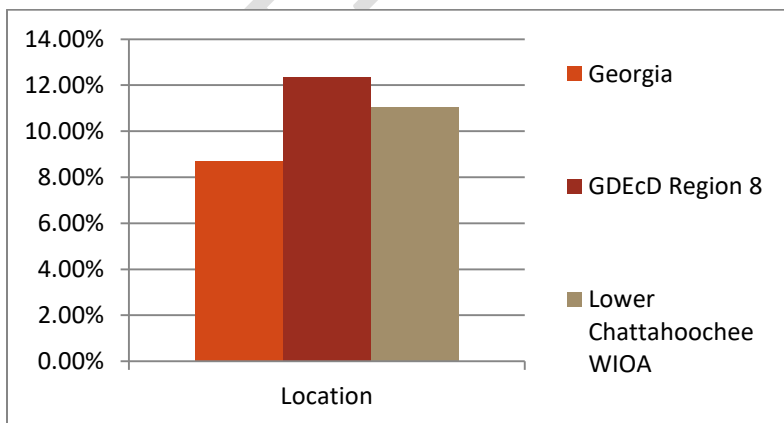
Special Populations at Risk	Georgia
Ex-Offenders**	19,665
Homeless	4,977
Youth Aged out of Foster Care	728
English Language Learners	523,087
Low Levels of Literacy	1,082,210
Single Parents	703,815
Persons below Poverty Level	1,763,339
Disconnected Youth *	56,000
SNAP Recipients (past 12 months)	505,12

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 ($42,288 for Area 14) and per capita income ($23,987 for the area) than state income ($50,384 and $26,467 respectively).

Median Household Income

	Lower Chattahoochee WIOA	Georgia
2016 Median Household Income	$42,288	$50,384
2016 Per Capita Income	$23,987	$26,467

Source: ESRI Business Analyst, RVRC Analysis

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 WIOA and its partners, the work of Columbus Technical College, and an increased attention to workforce issues by the Greater Columbus Chamber of Commerce. These combined resources are being coordinated and deployed locally. The strengths, weaknesses and capacity of these programs are discussed below.

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

High Demand Skills/Attributes

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

Key Sectors

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

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

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 Regional Prosperity Initiative. More on the specific careers and skills needed for these careers can be found in the state plan.
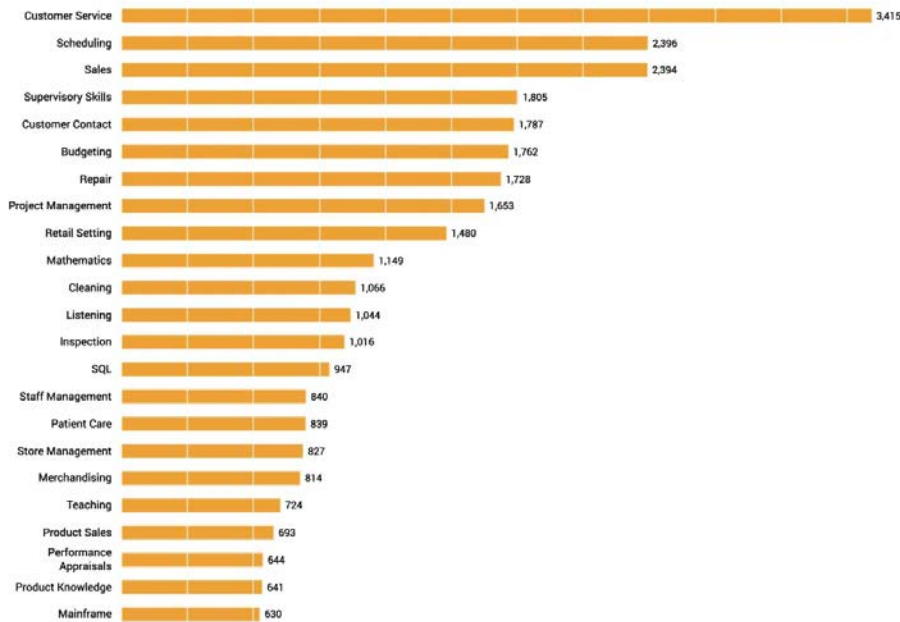
Recommended Steps and Programs to address these deficiencies

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.

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.

Employment needs of employers in the region.

Top Skills

Skill	Value
Customer Service	3,415
Scheduling	2,396
Sales	2,394
Supervisory Skills	1,805
Customer Contact	1,787
Budgeting	1,762
Repair	1,728
Project Management	1,653
Retail Setting	1,480
Mathematics	1,149
Cleaning	1,066
Listening	1,044
Inspection	1,016
SQL	947
Staff Management	840
Patient Care	839
Store Management	827
Merchandising	814
Teaching	724
Product Sales	693
Performance Appraisals	644
Product Knowledge	641
Mainframe	630

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 (3,415 job advertisements) and Customer Contact (1,787 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

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.

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.

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.

Strategic vision and goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce

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.

In keeping with Georgia Governor's vision to meet the needs of the State and the counties and municipalities of Workforce Area 14's growing economy through the alignment of programs and leveraging of resources, the development of this strategic plan outlines the establishment of a local workforce system designed to achieve the vision.

Our Vision:

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;

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.

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

Our System Building Goals:

• 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.

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 WDB continually looks to align available resources, and a key component of this effort 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.

Integration of Services

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.

Description of Strategies and Services

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

Engaging employers in workforce development programs

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 Area's one-stop workforce system, the 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 provide 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

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.

Employers in in-demand industry sectors and occupations

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

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 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.

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

The LWDA provides 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. The LWDA also markets 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.

The LWDA also provides information through the One-Stop system regarding workforce development services provided by other local area agencies. 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.

The Mobile Unit used by Area 14 reaches not only to residents where they are in the Columbus area, but also is used on a bi-weekly basis in the rural counties of the Area to bring services available to the entire geography served by the WIOA. This unit is equipped with satellite communications, 10 workstations, and is staffed by three individuals, one of whom is a veteran representative.

The LWDB has 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 Area'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.

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 Administrator 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".

How will the area better coordinate workforce development programs and economic development

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 local Chamber of Commerce in 2015 undertook a multi-month examination of the local economic development strategies and system as a part of their Regional Prosperity Initiative. One major finding was a need to address workforce solutions not only for youth, but also for adults. The Lower Chattahoochee WIOA has been a part of the conversation and will be engaged with the new Columbus 2025 organization that is being created to direct economic development for Columbus. This study was focused on the Greater Columbus area that included Harris, Muscogee and Chattahoochee Counties, as well as Russell County in Alabama. Much of what was determined as a part of the study holds true for other counties in WIOA Area 14. The findings reported below reflect the greater need of the area.

Findings from the Regional Prosperity Initiative 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 Regional Prosperity Initiative focused on "Talented and Educated People" as a key component to measure success. What follows is a review of the Regional Prosperity Initiative'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 broadbased 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 Solider 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 in-migration, 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 a smaller, more family-friendly community 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

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 and area 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.

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 are 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

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. Other counties in the region do not have local chambers of commerce.

Involvement of the economic development community in developing strategies.

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 USEDA.

Strengthening linkages between the one-stop delivery system and unemployment insurance programs

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.

To do this, the BSU uses the following tools:

- 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).

- The Area has made an effort to expand reemployment activities and to expand the reach of new employment services strategies, thereby increasing job seekers' abilities to reconnect to the workforce. Collaborating with UI to offer customized reemployment services through the REA strategies, provides a structured plan of employability to long-term unemployed job seekers and has shown to significantly increase their ability to get a job.

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 complete 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 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;
- Comprehensive internal online resources at 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 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;

<u>All Customers</u>

With Georgia's recovering economy, GDOL and partner staff have 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

<u>RESEA Program</u>

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).

<u>Coordination of and provision of labor exchange services for UI claimants as required by the W-P Act</u>
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 day worked.
- 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 customer does 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 is 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.

Regional Service Delivery

Establishment of regional service delivery strategies

Describe the plans for the establishment of regional service delivery strategies, including the use of cooperative service delivery agreements (if applicable).

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 working relationship between Area 14 and Area 15 – both of which are in GDEcD Region 8 is close, with regular communication between the two directors. The Regional Commission, the RVRC, is writing the WIOA plans for both Area 14 and Area 15 as well as the Regional Plan. As with the shift in coordination at the state level, there is and will continue to be a closer relationship between local workforce development and the federally funded economic development planning efforts. As outlined previously, there is a closer working relationship between local economic development planning efforts, in particular the Columbus 2025 plan and workforce development.

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 plans were coordinated to reduce costs, but otherwise, the administrative cost arrangements are not applicable.

Sector Strategy Development –

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.

Partners participating in sector strategy development.

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.

Meetings

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.

Research and data used to identify sectors strategies training.

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.

Outline of the sector strategy

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.

ii. Target occupations;

Target occupations will include nursing (LPN, RN), medical coding, pharmacy technician, certified nursing assistant (CNA), medical assisting, and Dental Hygienist.

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.

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.

Plans for future strategy development for future sectors

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.

One-Stop Delivery System

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. Various itinerate sites have also 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 mobile unit is also a critical component for the rural area outside metro Columbus.

The following outlines the current structure of the Lower Chattahoochee One-Stop system, identifying partners at each comprehensive site and those itinerate sites located within the workforce area and the major services provided at those locations.

In addition, a host of services are also offered and made available at the various one-stop locations in the local workforce area to promote greater integration of information and delivery of service, decrease duplication of services and increase efficiencies of the workforce system that would ultimately improve system results and promote quality customer service.

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).

All of these duties will transfer to the new One Stop operator once it is procured in 2017.

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.

Columbus Technical College

The Columbus Technical College operates two itinerate sites in the local 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.

Division of Rehabilitative Services

The Division of Rehabilitation Services utilizes its funding to assess TANF and potential rehabilitation clients, in addition to providing normal services to eligible customers. Local WIOA works as a collaborative partner with this agency to identify and access accommodations for individuals with special needs and/or disabilities. The Department of Vocational Rehabilitation Services is a partner at the Comprehensive One-stop Site. Training of all One-Stop Partner staff regarding their services has been ongoing and includes conducting physical accessibility surveys at partner/provider sites.

Function of the One-Stop Operator(s)

The Lower Chattahoochee Workforce Development Board accepted the concept of a one-stop workforce development system being formulated by a consortium of the following agencies: The Columbus Consolidated Government, Georgia Department of Labor, Division of Rehabilitation Services, Columbus Technical College, and the Muscogee County School District. With this acceptance, the Lower Chattahoochee Workforce Development Board also acknowledged that the one-stop operator for the Lower Chattahoochee Workforce Development Area would be the function of the Columbus Consolidated Government as Administrator and Grant Recipient of WIOA funds. The Columbus Consolidated Government, thus further delegated the responsibility of One-Stop Operator to the Job

Training Division, with all responsibilities promulgated under the federal statute to ensure appropriate coordination, planning and administration of programs, activities and services, and governance of a workforce development system that best meet the spirit of the law and fulfill its role in conceptualizing an educated and prepared workforce able to compete in local and global economy.

As the One-Stop Operator, the Columbus Consolidated Government Job Training Division is responsible for:

- Coordinating the provision of services according to the One-stop System Memorandum of Understanding;
- Prepare and maintain a system operational procedure in conjunction and agreement with all partners;
- Ensure that the system operates according to applicable laws and regulations and the local board policy;
- Oversee the collection and analysis of customer satisfaction data; and,
- Make recommendations to the local board for possible adjustments and/or changes.

System improvements

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.

The One Stop Shop continually looks for improvements to its 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 area 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.

Facilitating access to services

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.

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.

The Comprehensive One-stop Center's resource area is also equipped with assistive technology to assist citizens who require accommodations.

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

Compliance with accessibility laws

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 is fully handicap accessible in accordance with ADA and Section 504 laws and regulations.

Roles and resource contributions of the one-stop partners.

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

Itinerate Area Sites and Services

Additional Service Sites (Itinerate Sites)	Lead Partner/One Stop. Operator Other Partners	Major Services Provided by Each Partner
Columbus Technical College Itinerate One-Stop Site 918 Manchester Expressway Columbus, Georgia Phone#: 706-649-1856	Lead Partner (Itinerate Site) Columbus Technical College	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.
Columbus Technical College (Benning Hills Itinerate Site) 190 Munson Drive, Room #30 Columbus, Georgia 31903	Lead Partner {Itinerate Site): Columbus Technical College Benning Hills	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 eligible individuals and referral. Outreach & Recruitment, support services, counseling.

Department of Family & Children Services (varying locations)	**Lead Partners (Itinerate Site):** 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.

Comprehensive Area Site, Partners, and Senr1ces

Comprehensive Service Sites	Lead Partner / One-Stop Operator. Other Partners	Major Services Provided by Each Partner
GDOL Career Center 700 Veterans Parkway, Columbus, Georgia Phone #: 706-649-7423	**Lead Partner:** Ga. Dept. of Labor (Columbus Career Center)	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 WIA screening, referral for training & retraining for adult/dislocated worker/youth services. Career counseling & case Management
	Other Partners: Vocational Rehabilitation	Assistance with training & retraining of disabled population. Career counseling & Case Management.
	Dept. of Technical Adult Education	Outreach & Recruitment, Pre-vocational assistance.
	Dept. of Family & Children Services	TANF assistance; childcare and transportation support services; medical aide provisions; prevocational training assistance.
	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 Services, Pre-vocational assistance and training
	Adult education and Literacy	Basic Skills and GED preparation and some soft skills training
	Housing Authority of Columbus (HUD Programs)	Housing assistance & counseling

Itinerate Area Sites and Services

Additional Service Sites Itinerate Sites)	Lead Partner/One-Stop. Operator Other Partners	Major Services Provided by Each Partner
Columbus Technical College Itinerate One-Stop Site 918 Manchester Expressway Columbus, Georgia Phone #: 706-649-1856	**Lead Partner (Itinerate Site)** Columbus Technical College	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 WIA/Recovery eligible individuals and referral.
Columbus Technical College (Benning Hills Itinerate Site) 190 Munson Drive, Room #30 Columbus, Georgia 31903	**Lead Partner (Itinerate Site):** Columbus Technical College Benning Hills	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.

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

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 area is preparing for the competitive procurement of the One Stop Shop services by discussion with potential bidders about the upcoming RFP. As of yet a RFP has not been developed.

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.

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.

Awarding Sub-grants and Contracts

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.

The local board uses a procurement process based on Requests for Proposal. These RFPs are developed by staff at the recommendation of the board, and the RFPs are then solicited and advertised. Advertisements are distributed in the local legal organs, including the Columbus Ledger-Enquirer. The RFPs are reviewed by a board committee who then makes a recommendation to the full board. The board then makes their decision on service providers.

EEO and Grievance Procedures

Established policies and procedures regarding grievance and complaint resolution policies are in place in the Lower Chattahoochee 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, 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

Local Boards and Plan Development:

Local Boards

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

The Lower Chattahoochee Workforce Board (LCWDB or Board) is responsible to ensure that Workforce Area Fourteen has a robust system that is comprehensive, effective, responsive and customer-focused. The Board is 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.

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. 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.

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.

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

				Disabled Vet Outreach Programs /Programs under State Unemployment Compensation Law
Jones, Rick	Columbus Consolidated Government Dept. of Community & Economic Development	Director	Muscogee County	Title I, Economic Development
King, Brian	IBEW Local 613	Union Representative	Muscogee County	Organized Labor/Joint Labor Management/Apprenticeship
LaMee, Beverly	Housing Authority of Columbus, Georgia	Director, Community Initiatives	Muscogee County	Community-based, Housing Auth E&T Programs
Llewellyn, Tricia	Goodwill Industries of the Southern Rivers	Vice President of Mission Services	Muscogee County	Private Non-Profit/Community-based
Loyd, Jamie	Columbus Technical College	Vice President, Economic Development	Muscogee County	Post Secondary/Adult Education & Literacy, Title II/Apprenticeship/Post Secondary Vocational Educational (Carl Perkins)
Martin, John	The Martin Firm	Attorney At Law	Muscogee County	Business
McNeer, Patricia "Ann"	Master Tax Solutions, INC.	President	Muscogee County	Business
Murphy, William P.	Greater Columbus Georgia Chamber of Commerce	Executive Vice President of Economic Development	Muscogee County	Business / Economic Development
Ramsey, Ernestine	YMCA of Metropolitan Columbus	Director/Manager	Muscogee County	Community-based
Randolph, Chester	C. Randolph & Associates, LLC Caldwell Banker KPDD	Owner / Agent	Muscogee County	Business
Reed, Marva	Department of Health & Human Services	Director	Muscogee County	Department of Health & Human Services
Ruff, Gwendolyn	Columbus Water Works	Senior Vice President, Strategic Planning & Employee Services	Muscogee County	Business

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

Identification and appointment process for local boards

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.

New member orientation process

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

New Workforce Development Board (WDB) members 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.

Board coordination of workforce development activities

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 Board (WDB) includes 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.

Engagement of local board members

Describe how local board members are kept engaged and informed.

The local Workforce Development Board (WDB) receives information and updates on WIOA activities and developments at board meetings. Information such as job fair announcements, workshops or training events, committee events, 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.

Local Board Committees

Provide a description of board committees and their functions.

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.

Plan Development

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

Upon approval of the Plan, public notice will be posted on the City of Columbus website (http://www.columbusga.org/) for the 30-day public comment period.

Service Delivery and Training

Expanding Service to Eligible Individuals

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.

Services to Adults and Dislocated Workers

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

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.

Since its designation as workforce development area, the Columbus Consolidated Government as Grant Recipient and Administrator, at the direction of board and youth committee direction, has contracted with various institutions of higher education and other training providers, either through formal procurement or through individual training accounts.   These efforts have been ongoing to ensure the availability of training in high- demand occupations to workforce customers of the local workforce area and to expand customer choice of available WIOA eligible training providers and services in the workforce area.

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 area Columbus Technical College as other educational institutes in the area are looking at instituting 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.

Rapid Response Services

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, Chamber 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

Youth Services

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 will operate a program of work experience for that population. The local area has procured services with a 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 Board has 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; and,
•   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 of 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.

Work-Based Learning Initiatives

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 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 of the work of the Lower Chattahoochee Workforce Area and an improved local economy is helping provide the opportunities for training.

Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) in Area-14

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.

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 Board 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. All applications submitted to Area 14 will be reviewed and evaluated by WIOA Administrative Staff. The evaluation will include 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.

ALL STUDENTS — Past Performance Information

Measure	Minimum Performance Level	Definition
Unsubsidized Employment Rate	55%	Number and Percent of Completion exiting the program during the applicable period who obtained employment
Completion Rate	55%	Number and Percent of total students exiting or scheduled to exit the program during the applicable period who meet the training program's completion requirements
Average weekly Earnings at Placement	$254/wk	Average weekly earnings at placement of completers obtaining employment during the applicable period

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.

<u>Use of Statewide Eligible Provider List</u>

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.

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 should 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.

Entrepreneurial Skills Training and Microenterprise Services

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

Entrepreneurial Skills Training and Microenterprise Services have also been identified in the Columbus 2025 plan as being a key driver for 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.

Microenterprise Services and information about entrepreneurial skills are also taught at Columbus Tech and Columbus State University. There can be much more done, however, to highlight the skills needed to own and operate your own business. The local Small Business Development Center is well versed in helping entrepreneurs turn their dreams into businesses.

Coordination with Education Programs

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 Lower Chattahoochee Workforce Development Board (WDB) has 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 and Albany Technical College) and University System of Georgia (Columbus State University) are both very active and involved with the local area. They strive to offer educational 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.

As a partner of the Lower Chattahoochee One-Stop Delivery System, Columbus Technical College provides the following 'core' and 'required' services:

- Adult education and literacy programs and activities authorized under Title II (including but not limited to):

    - Initial assessment of skill levels (including literacy, numeracy, and English language proficiency), aptitudes, abilities (including skills gaps), and supportive service needs;

    - Educational Skills Development: provision of education skills from basic literacy through high school completion, including ESOL services.

    - Provision of referrals to, and coordination of activities with other programs and services, including programs and services within the one-stop delivery system and other workforce development programs as needed;

- Career and technical education programs at the postsecondary level authorized by the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (including but not limited to):

    - Vocational Skills Training - Instruction conducted on campus, or worksite setting to provide or upgrade the technical skills required to perform a specific job or group of jobs for an individual.

    - Post-Secondary Education - Programs of study beyond high school or its equivalency leading to an associate's degree or higher.

- Job Readiness - Services to ensure that participants/students have a general knowledge of workplace expectations and exhibit work behavior and attitudes necessary to compete successfully in the job market.

- Educational and Vocational outreach services for the Lower Chattahoochee Workforce Area including: post-secondary education opportunities, career advisement, academic assessment, cooperative interaction with other one-stop partners in ways that are consistent with assisting students/participants in identifying and achieving their career goals and/or academic success by providing accessible programs of studies and trainings to a diverse population throughout the surrounding areas.

Columbus State University (CSU) is a four year university which offers a wide selection of degree areas and a total enrollment of over 8,000 graduate and undergraduate students. CSU is well known in the state for their Nursing and Education degree programs. The university has a main campus in midtown Columbus as well as a satellite campus in uptown (downtown) Columbus. CSU has been recognized as being one of the best universities in the University System of Georgia.

WIOA offers ITA funded training opportunities at CSU, Columbus Tech, as well as other colleges serving the area.

Supportive Services

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.

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 WIA 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 25% of a funding stream's program year allocation unless waiver is submitted and prior approval has been received from the State.

Supportive services over $3,000 per participant per program year must receive prior approval and shall be considered on a case by case basis. 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 WIA 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 WIA Finance Office. The WIA 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 WIA 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 WIA timesheet. Timesheets must be signed by the instructor and participant, and verified by the appropriate case manager before submitting to the WIA Finance Office. No payment of support will be paid by the WIA Finance Office until all signatures have been obtained on the timesheet. The case manager shall complete a WIA Supportive Service Certification Form for participants that meet the requirement for supportive services. All requests and support documentation will be submitted to the WIA Director for review and final approval. Upon approval by the WIA Director, Case Managers must submit to the WIA 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 WIA 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 WIA funded occupational skills/classroom training activities, but participating in other WIA 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.

Coordination with Core Partners

Description of the Workforce System

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.).

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.

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:

Core 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; and

•   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 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.

Intensive 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, or
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 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 this area 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

Resources Available

The Columbus One-Stop Career Center coordinates and sponsors three major job fairs each year to support employers in finding qualified job seekers. These Job Fairs make it possible for all employers in Area Fourteen to recruit talented job seekers for their vacant positions.

In addition to the annual job fairs, other smaller career expos and job specific fairs are hosted and supported by WIOA and other local partners to assist area employers seeking to fill specific vacancies of local employers or recruiting students. These include, but are not limited to:

- Columbus Technical College;
- Career Expo St. Francis Hospital;
- Career Expo Columbus State University;
- Career Expo University of Phoenix;
- Career Expo Quitman County Family Connections;
- Engagement Day - Andrews College;
- Career Expo Miller-Motte Technical College
- Chattahoochee County Family & Friends Day
- Randolph County Family & Friends Day
- Harris County Back to School Rush
- Virginia College
- Housing Authority of Columbus

WIOA has also been involved in mass recruitments for employers looking to fill immediate vacancies. These mass recruitments are held at the Columbus Career Center with One-Stop staff providing screening and assessments where necessary to provide the employer with only those applicants that meet their requirements and are prepared to interview for the job.

The Columbus Career Center staff also schedules eligible applicants for interviews with the employer and makes the Business Center

available for the employer to conduct those interviews.

Coordination with Wagner-Peyser

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 Area's one-stop system 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.

Adult Education

– 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 Literacy services are available in the area by local area by both the Literacy Alliance of Columbus as well as Columbus Tech. Columbus Tech Adult Education offer classes in GED remediation, Basic Skills, and English as a Second Language (ESL) . They have a number of locations throughout the area. Adult Education services focus on GED attainment and education services below the post-secondary level that helps to increase the individual's ability to:

- ● Read, write and speak English and perform mathematics or other activities necessary
  for attainment of secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent
- ● Transition to post-secondary education and training and
- ● Obtain employment

Columbus Tech Adult Education has a GED program for criminal offenders to help individuals obtain their GED. Upon release from the facility, staff will assist individuals with GED recipients to enter post-secondary 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.

Columbus Tech Adult Education is also the designated entity to administer the state GED examination. GED examination testing sites have been establish in several locations in the area to include the correctional facilities.

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 area 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.

Vocational Rehabilitation

– 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 system. 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.

Performance, ETPL and Use of Technology

Performance Measures

– (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.

One-Stop System Performance and Assessment

– 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.

ETPL System

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.

Public notification to prospective providers

Lower Chattahoochee WDB utilizes a competitive bid process to select WIOA funded contractor services. Public notice of availability for prospective providers is made during bid cycles.

Evaluation of providers and proposed training programs

The local area 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.

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

Individuals that are aggrieved ITA customers should contact the City of Columbus Workforce staff. 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.

Updating the eligible providers list

Lower Chattahoochee local area would send to the State office any changes or information on local Eligible Training Providers data.

Regional policies or agreements for ITAs or training providers

Local area has an established ITA training service.   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.

Process to track and manage all ITA activity

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.

Local board policy on use of statewide eligible training provider list

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.

How registered apprenticeship programs are added to the ETPL

Local WDB 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.

Implementation of Technology

– 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.

State Initiatives and Vision

State Branding

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

Once official notice is received of the new branding, the area will begin the process of changing all signage, websites, printed materials and advertising.

State Initiatives

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 area 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. The local area plans to work with WFD to implement Georgia WorkSmart in Area 14.

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.

Special Populations

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 LWDAs to conduct pilot programs without using local formula funds. This alleviates much of the risk of building new programs while still promoting innovation.

Priority of Service

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.

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.

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 Guidelines for WIA: Low Income Level Figures Effective April 4, 2016			
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, and Quitman 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.

Sources

Regional Prosperity Initiative

http://regionalprosperityinitiative.org/

Georgia Department of Labor

http://dol.georgia.gov/

ESRI Business Analyst

https://bao.arcgis.com/esriBAO/index.html#

State Plan

http://www.georgia.org/competitive-advantages/workforce-division/resources/georgia-state-plan/

Georgia Department of Economic Development

http://www.georgia.org/competitive-advantages/workforce-division/resources/

Attachment 2: Local Negotiated Performance

PERFORMANCE MEASURES ARE IN PROCESS. Negotiations will be conducted by the end of September 2016

WIOA Performance Measure	PY16 Goal	PY17 Goal
Adult Q2 Entered Employment		
Adult Q4 Entered Employment		
Adult Median Earnings		
Adult Credential Rate		
Adult In-Program Skills Gain		
DW Q2 Entered Employment		
DW Q4 Entered Employment		
DW Median Earnings		
DW Credential Rate		
DW In-Program Skills Gain		
Youth Q2 Placement in Employment or		
Youth Q4 Placement in Employment or		
Youth Median Earnings		
Youth Credential Rate		
Youth In-Program Skills Gain		
Employer Measure		

Attachment 3: Comments that Express Disagreement

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 Pendleton

Title: Local Workforce Area Director

Entity Representing: Lower Chattahoochee WDB

Signature: _____

Name: Theresa Tomlinson

Title: Chief Local Elected Official - Mayor

Entity Representing: City of Columbus

Signature: _____

Name: _____

Title: Local Workforce Development Board

Entity Representing: _____

Signature: _____