

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
ARPA	American Rescue Plan Act
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
CAP	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
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	Muscogee 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
TCSG, OWD	Technical College System of Georgia, Office of Workforce Development
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
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 (1)

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

Area 14 Fiscal Agent is:

Columbus Consolidated Government
Berry "Skip" Henderson, Mayor (CLEO)
Chester Randolph, LCWDB Board (Chair)
Dr. Valerie Richardson, Director
1111 1st Avenue, Second Floor, Suite 2145
Columbus, GA 31902-1340
706-225-3168
<http://www.columbusga.gov/jtd>

Description of Strategic Planning Elements (2)

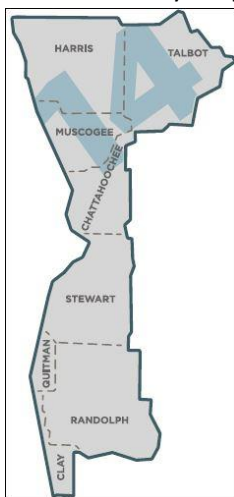
Provide a description of the strategic planning elements listed below. A complete answer will rely on a variety of data sources and employer input. Describe how the information was gathered and what partners and employers were consulted.

Regional economic conditions (2a.)

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.

Lower Chattahoochee, located in the western-central part of Georgia, provides data-driven workforce development activities for eight (8) counties. The counties are Harris, Muscogee, Chattahoochee, Stewart, Quitman, Clay, Randolph, and Talbot. The largest city in the area is Columbus, which is a consolidated government with Muscogee County. Below is a map of the area's counties.

Area 14 County Map



As of 2025, the population of the area is 268,490 (2025). Since 2020, the area's population has decreased by 2.0%, falling by 5,342 persons. The area's population is expected to decrease by 0.4% between 2025 and 2030, losing 1,095 persons. From 2020 to 2025, the number of jobs declined by 2.2% from 137,819 to 134,852. This change fell short of the national growth rate of 10.6% by 12.8%. As the number of jobs declined, the labor force participation rate decreased from 57.3% to 54.9% between 2020 and 2025.

Below is a chart of the Region's Q2 Population and Labor Force Statistics. This data was provided by the Development Authority of Columbus, Georgia, using Lightcast.

Q2 Population and Labor Force Statistics

	Population (2026)	Labor Force (2026)	Jobs (2025)
Region (Area 14 & 15)	360,871	146,583	168,612
Lower Chattahoochee	268,358	108,308	134,852
Middle Flint	92,513	38,275	33,760

Source: Lightcast & GDOL

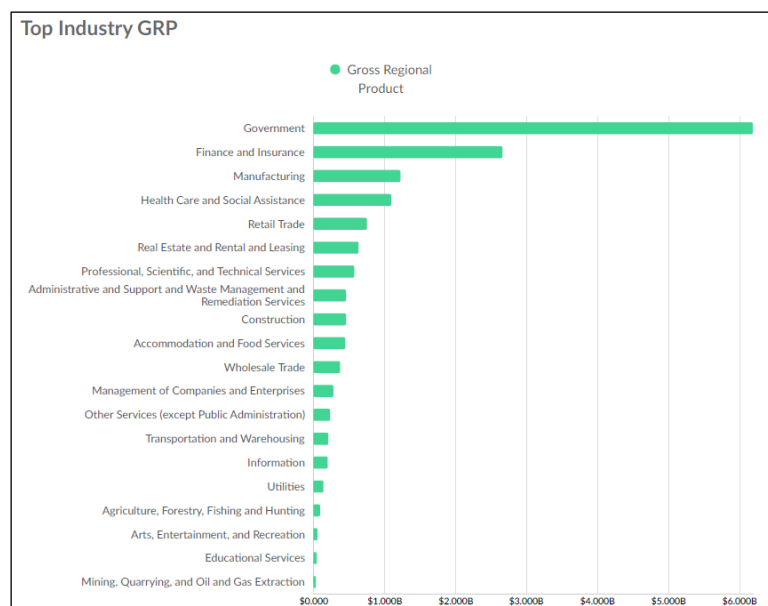
As for economic indicators, the gross regional product (GRP) for Q2 was over \$21 billion, with Lower Chattahoochee's GRP being roughly \$17 billion. The imports for the area totaled over \$23 billion, while the exports totaled over \$30 billion. Below is a chart of the Q3 Economic Indicators.

Q2 Economic Indicators

	Cost of Living	Gross Regional Product	Imports	Exports
Region	92.8%	\$21.07B	\$28.33B	\$37.56B
Lower Chattahoochee	93.9%	\$17.51B	\$22.79B	\$32.51B
Middle Flint	92.5%	\$3.56B	\$5.82B	\$5.21B

Source: Lightcast

The top industries by GRP were Government, Finance & Insurance, and Manufacturing. The Government contributed over \$6 billion dollars. Finance and Insurance contributed roughly \$2.5 billion, and Manufacturing contributed over \$1 billion.



Source: Lightcast

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



Source: Regional Prosperity Initiative

The Lower Chattahoochee continues to experience significant investment in Muscogee County and the surrounding areas. Businesses in the area currently benefit from affordable business costs and a favorable business climate. Furthermore, the area is committed to improving its business environment through public and private funding. In 2023, the area saw investment in resurfacing/restriping roads, signals & lights construction, and spider web. Columbus Council approved the Judicial Center and Golden Park/South Commons Redevelopment. The area is also investing in its broadband; Columbus alone has

budgeted \$3 million dollars of ARPA funds to upgrade its broadband, and the total amount expected to be invested is \$6 million.

Lower Chattahoochee has a civilian labor force of 130,000. The table below shows the area's employment data for February 2026. The area's unemployment rate was 4.29%, decreasing from 4.66% five years before. In February 2026, the U.S. unemployment rate stood at 4.4%, with the nation losing 92,000 nonfarm payroll jobs. During the same month, Georgia's unemployment rate was lower at 3.6%

Feb 2026 Employment Data for Lower Chattahoochee

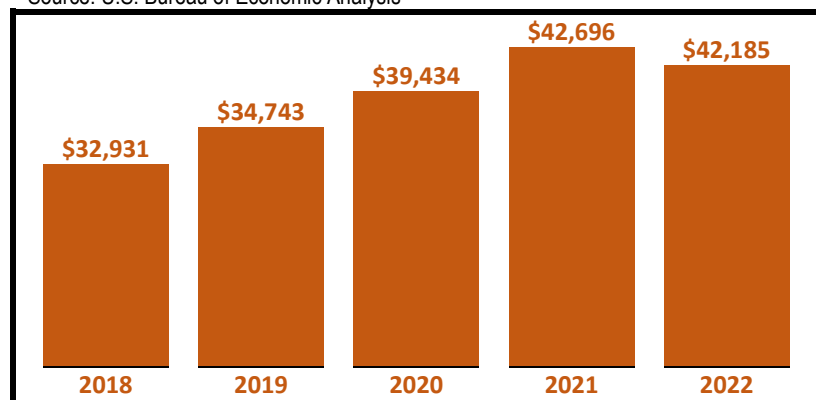
Area	Civilian Labor Force	Number Employed	Number Unemployed	Unemployment Rate
Lower Chattahoochee	108,308	124,600	5,400	4.29%
Georgia	5,445,612	5,250,000	194,230	3.6%
United States	172,300,000	164,700,000	7,600,000	4.4%

Source: Local Area Unemployment Statistics (GDOL)

As for income, the per capita income has steadily increased from 2018 to 2022, according to the Georgia Department of Labor. In 2018, the department estimated the per capita income at \$32,931. By 2022, it had increased to \$42,185.

Lower Chattahoochee Per Capita Income

Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis



Lower Chattahoochee
Q4 2023 Employment Wage Statistics Table

Area	Average Hourly Wage	Average Weekly Wage	Average Annual Wage
Lower Chattahoochee	\$23.10	\$924.13	\$48,055
Georgia	\$33.28	\$1,331	\$69,212
United States	\$33.10	\$1,324	\$68,848

Source: Labor Market Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages Program

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 manufacturers is also significant, with KIA Suppliers and Pratt 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 surveys, censuses, 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.

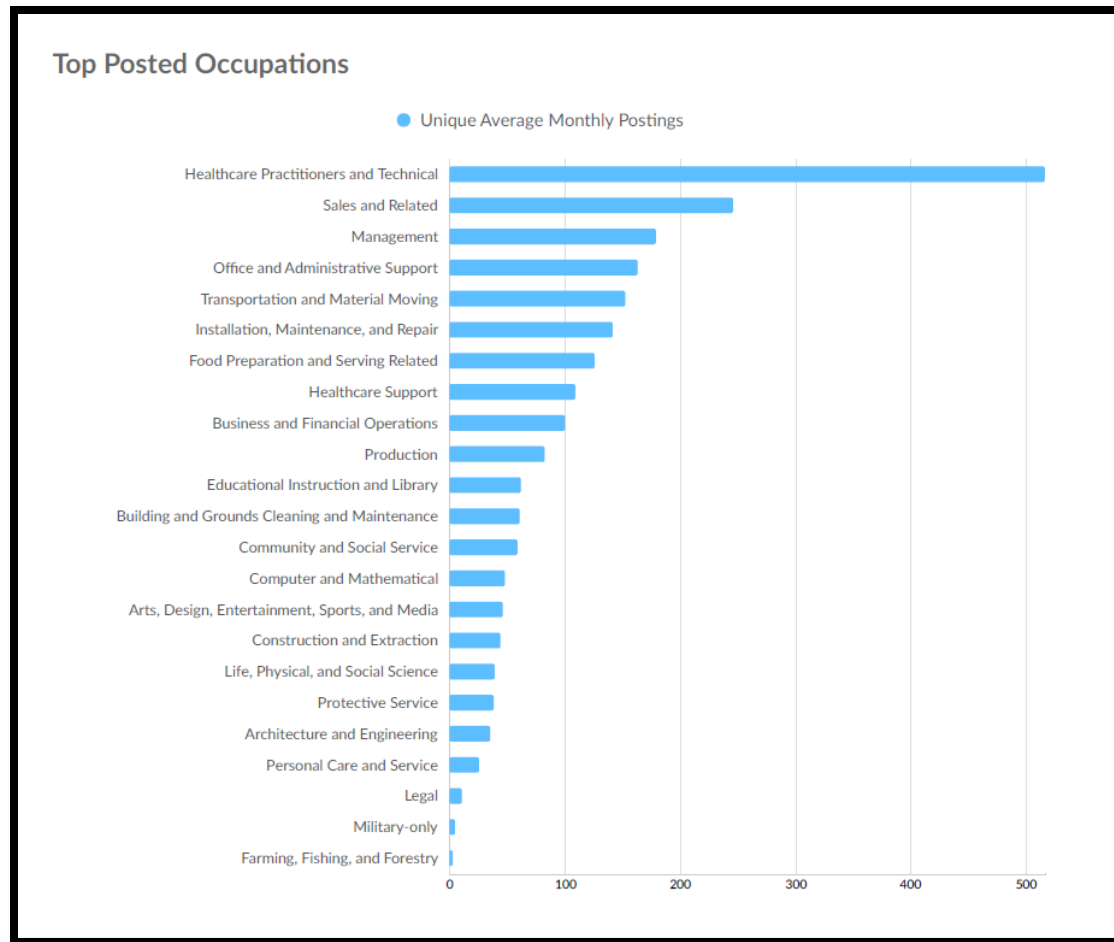


Source: Regional Prosperity Initiative

Employment needs of employers in those industry sectors and occupations (2b.)

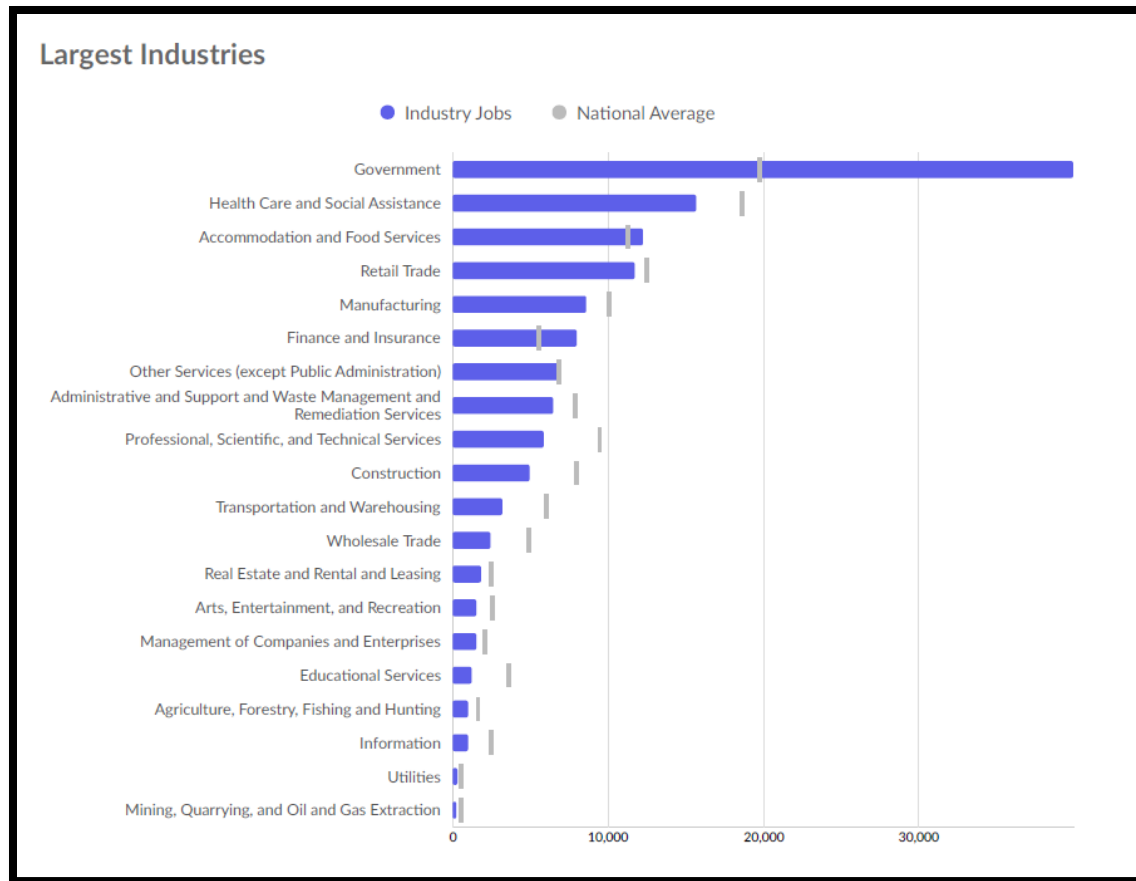
The following analysis of industrial sectors draws from data provided by Lightcast, a private data provider that pulls information about job postings.

The Top Posted Occupations for Area 14 were positions in healthcare practitioners and technical, sales and related, management, and office and administrative support. The least posted were military-only, farming, fishing, & forestry.



Source: Lightcast

The largest industries in Lower Chattahoochee by the number of jobs are government, healthcare & social assistance, and accommodation & food services. The change in the area's top industries can be attributed to COVID-19. Governments expanded to administer programs aimed at combatting the pandemic and aiding the economic recovery. Prior to the pandemic, healthcare was experiencing a shortage of workers, and the pandemic only worsened it, especially among nurses. Studies have cited burnout and high-stress work environments as the top reasons nurses are leaving their jobs, followed by pay and benefits. Lastly, the region is experiencing increased need in accommodation & food service to replace the jobs lost during the pandemic.

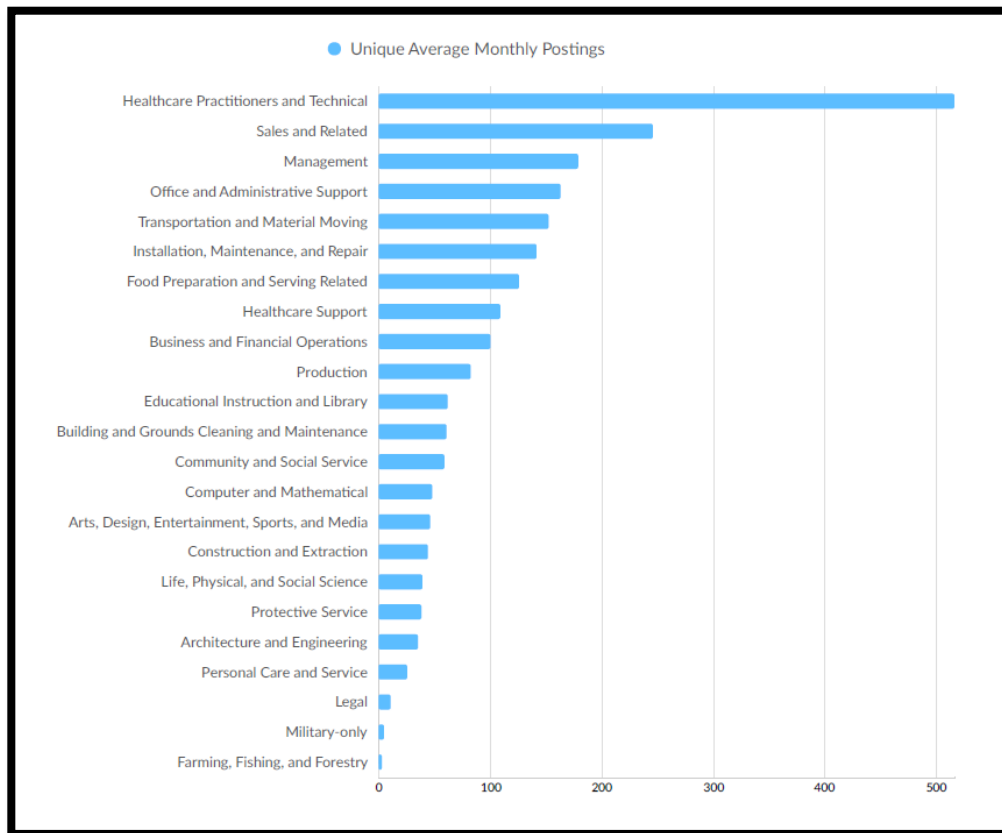


Source: Lightcast

Listing of occupations in demand within the region (2b.)

Top Posted Occupations for Area 14 were Healthcare Practitioners and Technical, with over 500 postings, followed by Sales and Related, around 250; Office and Administrative Support and Transportation and Material Moving had notable postings as well.

Top Post Occupations - Georgia Labor Market Explorer



Source: Georgia Labor Market Explorer

Knowledge and skills needed to meet the employment needs of employers in the region (2b.)

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

Columbus Chamber of Commerce projects employment in Greater Columbus will increase by nearly 9,600 during the next decade. 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 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. 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. In 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. However, 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 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 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, skill levels, and job categories of the 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.

Employment needs in in-demand industry sectors and occupations (2b.)

Top Companies and Top Companies Posting - Source: Lightcast

Top Companies	Profiles	Top Companies Posting	Unique Postings
United States Army	4,760 	Piedmont Healthcare	1,321 
Aflac	2,349 	Emory Healthcare	664 
Muscogee County School District	1,894 	Columbus Consolidated Govern...	473 
TSYS Merchant Solutions	1,587 	RTX	449 
Columbus State University	1,329 	Pratt & Whitney	293 
Synovus	961 	Columbus State University	281 
Piedmont Healthcare	942 	Soliant Health	280 
Elevance Health	857 	GPAC	215 
Pratt & Whitney	688 	Dollar General	211 
Columbus Consolidated Govern...	620 	HCA Healthcare	209 

Piedmont Healthcare (1,321) has the greatest recent hiring demand in the Columbus area, closely followed by Emory Healthcare (664). Across the local market, significant employment opportunities are also available in service, production, manufacturing, and other healthcare sectors.

The technical needs of the IT and FinTech companies in Columbus mirror those in the state and nationally. More programmers, more engineers, and 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 and notably at Columbus State University, where the TSYS School of Computer Science has recently expanded its offerings with the new Center for Cybersecurity.

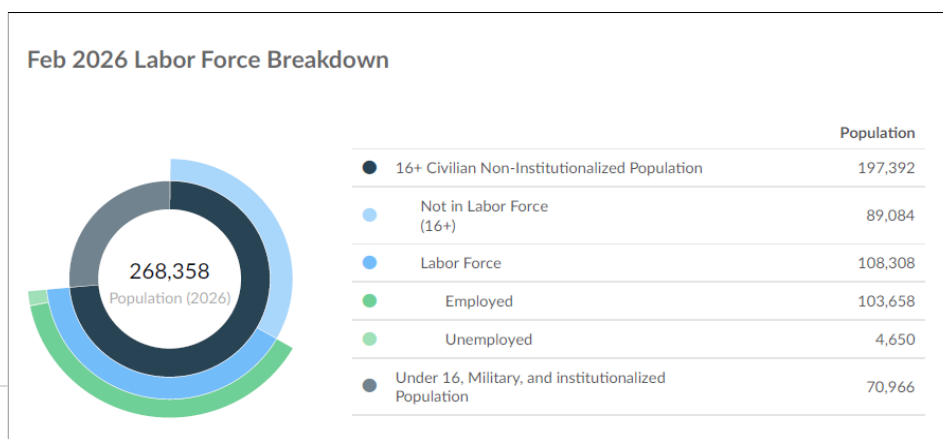
The need for technical workers for 21st-century jobs in IT was echoed in the Digital Economy Plan for the River Valley Regional Commission published in 2015. This report noted, in part, the need for high-tech skills and workforce as identified by the IT and FinTech companies in the region, especially 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 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 (2c.)

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.

Lower Chattahoochee Labor Force Breakdown as of February 2026 is below. Source: Lightcast.io



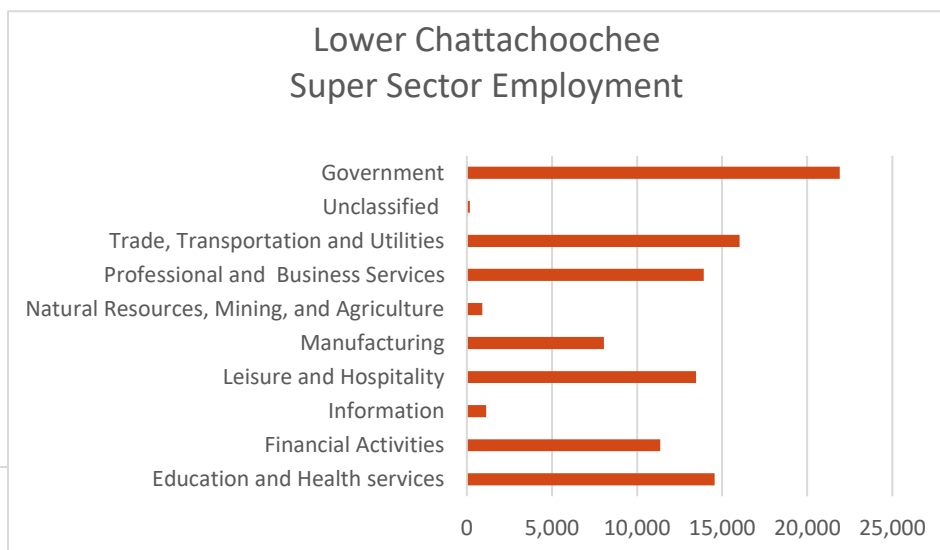
Demographics of the Workforce

Age	Lower Chattahoochee	Georgia
14 – 18	1.91%	2.21%
19 – 21	6.98%	4.85%
22 – 24	7.47%	5.87%
25 – 34	23.55%	21.81%
35 – 44	21.15%	21.98%
45 – 54	19.61%	21.90%
55 – 64	14.63%	15.86%
65+	4.70%	5.51%
Total	100%	100%

Source: Technical College System of Georgia Office of Workforce Development

Current labor force employment

Government is the largest sector of Lower Chattahoochee’s workforce. It employs 20.29% of the workforce, which is higher than 14.5% seen at the state-level. The increased percentage is influenced by the presence of Fort Benning and the increased federal payroll in the area. The second and third largest sectors are Trade, Transportation and Utilities (14.84% of the workforce) and Education and Health Services (13.48% of the workforce), respectively.



The area also has higher percentages for Education and Health Services and Leisure and Hospitality. Education and Health Services (13.48% locally as opposed to 12.92% statewide) is higher because the area has two large medical facilities—St. Francis Health, LLC and The Medical Center, Inc.— and Columbus State University, a public four-year institution. Leisure and Hospitality (12.47% locally as opposed to 8.81% statewide) is higher due to the outdoor recreational activities, entertainment venues, and hotels found throughout the area. Lastly, there is a higher-than-average representation in the area of Financial Activities (10.52% locally compared to 5.39% statewide) due to the presence in of AFLAC, TSYS, and Synovus in Columbus. Below is a table of the area’s industry mix for the first quarter of 2022.

Lower Chattahoochee Industry Mix (2022 Q1)

Industry	Number of Employed	Percentage of Local Workforce
Health Care and Social Assistance	16,805	16%
Retail Trade	11,882	12%
Accommodation and Food Services	11,015	11%
Educational Services	9,336	9%
Finance and Insurance	8,345	8%
Administrative and Support and Waste Management	7,417	7%
Manufacturing	7,326	7%
Public Administration	7,061	7%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	5,436	5%
Construction	3,828	4%
Transportation and Warehousing	2,694	3%
Other Services (except Public Administration)	2,527	2%
Wholesale Trade	2,447	2%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	1,858	2%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	1,583	2%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	1,120	1%
Information	930	1%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	557	1%
Utilities	236	0.23%
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	167	0.16%
Total	102,570	100%

Source: Georgia Department of Labor, Workforce Statistics & Economic Research

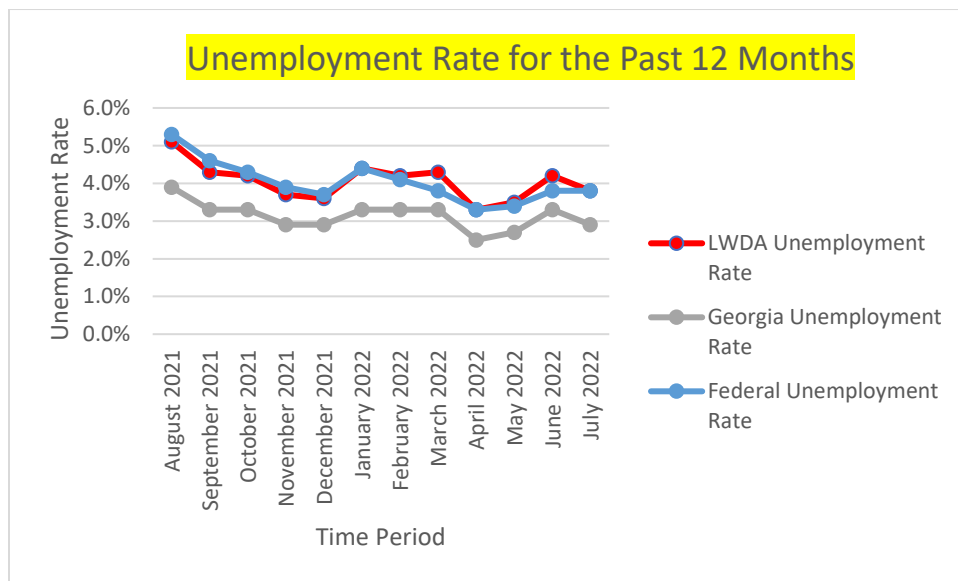
Overall, GDOL predicts that Lower Chattahoochee's workforce will grow by 11.76% by 2026, and the majority of the industries will see increases in employment. The largest growth will occur in construction (26.17%) and Information (19.58%). The only industry with a predicted decline is Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction with an expected decline of 32.85%.

Industry	2016 Estimated Employment	2026 Projected Employment	Total 2016-2026 Employment Change	Total Percent Change
Accommodation and Food Services	11,444	12,034	590	5.16%
Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	5,663	6,450	787	13.90%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	3,060	3,576	516	16.86%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	1,034	1,073	39	3.77%
Construction	3,615	4,561	946	26.17%
Educational Services	8,515	9,577	1,062	12.47%
Federal Government	6,844	7,238	394	5.76%
Finance and Insurance	10,254	12,066	1,812	17.67%
Health Care and Social Assistance	14,064	16,805	2,741	19.49%
Information	1,180	1,411	231	19.58%
Local, Excluding Education and Hospitals	5,139	5,493	354	6.89%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	1,359	1,558	199	14.64%
Manufacturing	7,261	8,053	792	10.91%
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	137	92	-45	-32.85%
Other Services (except Public Administration)	4,522	5,061	539	11.92%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	4,980	5,386	406	8.15%
Public Administration	1,498	1,517	19	1.27%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	1,516	1,791	275	18.14%
Retail Trade	11,808	12,723	915	7.75%
Transportation and Warehousing	1,712	2,033	321	18.75%
Utilities	271	301	30	11.07%
Wholesale Trade	2,640	2,975	335	12.69%
Total, All Industries	114,408	127,862	13,454	11.76%

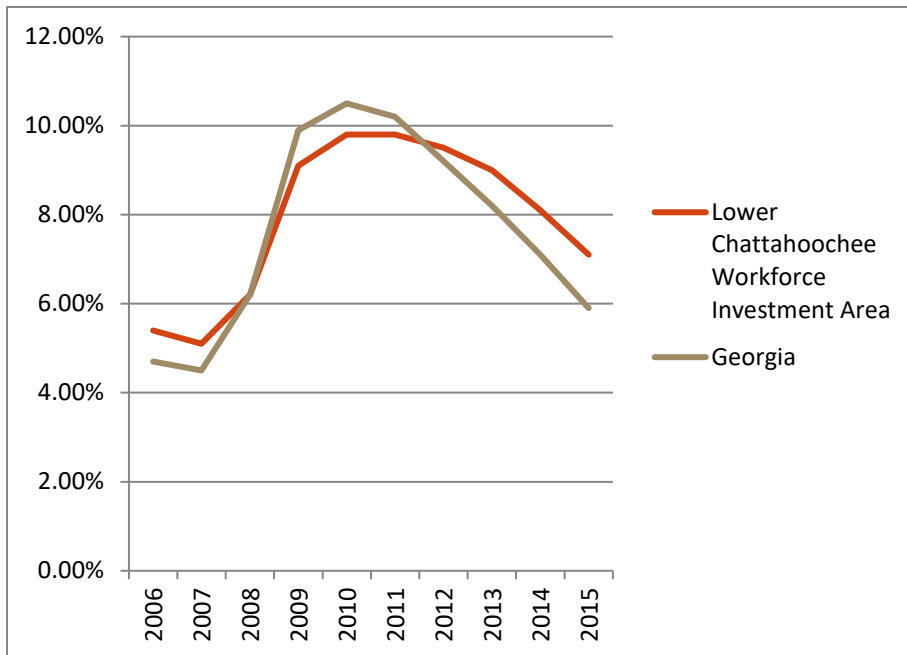
Source: Technical College System of Georgia Office of Workforce Development

Unemployment data

The unemployment rate in the local area over the past twelve months has shown similar trends as the unemployment rates for the state of Georgia and the nation. But, while the trends are similar, the local unemployment rate has been consistently higher, showing a higher rate between 0.7% and 1.2%.



Source: Georgia Department of Labor, Workforce Statistics & Economic Research and the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics



Source: GDOL, RVRC Analysis

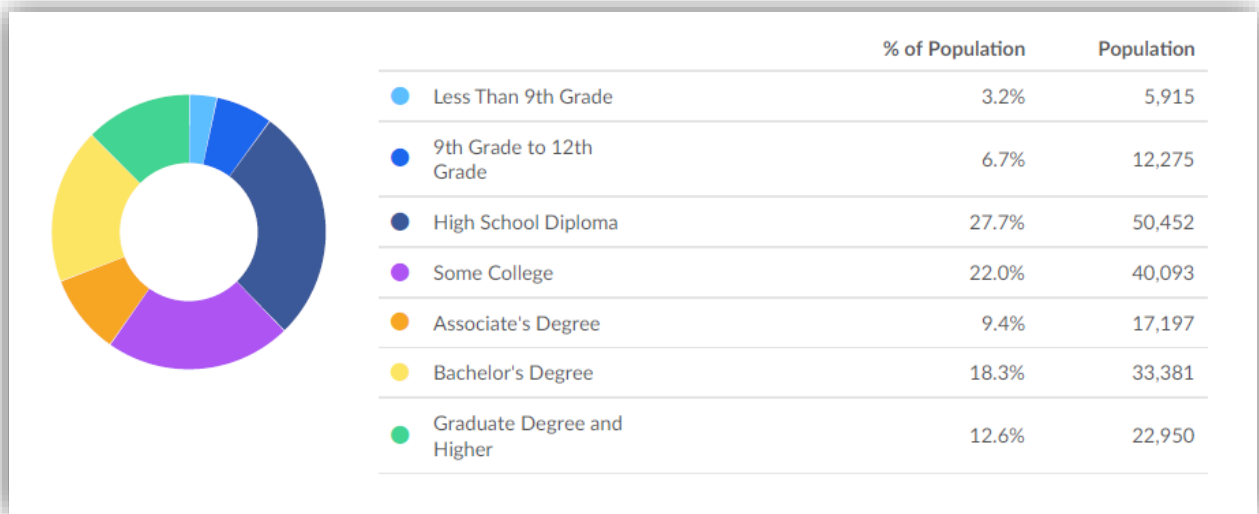
The 10-year unemployment rate shows that this region did not suffer the high peak of unemployment that the rest of the state did in the Great Recession of 2009, but the region also did not recover as quickly. In fact, the gap in the unemployment rate between Area 14 Lower Chattahoochee WIOA and the rest 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%).

Educational and skill levels of the workforce in the region

Within the area, the rate of adult residents without a high school diploma roughly matches the state average (11.8% as compared to 14%).

Concerning educational attainment, 18.3% of Lower Chattahoochee's residents possess a bachelor's degree (3.5% below the national average), and 9.4 % hold an associate's degree (0.6% above the national average).

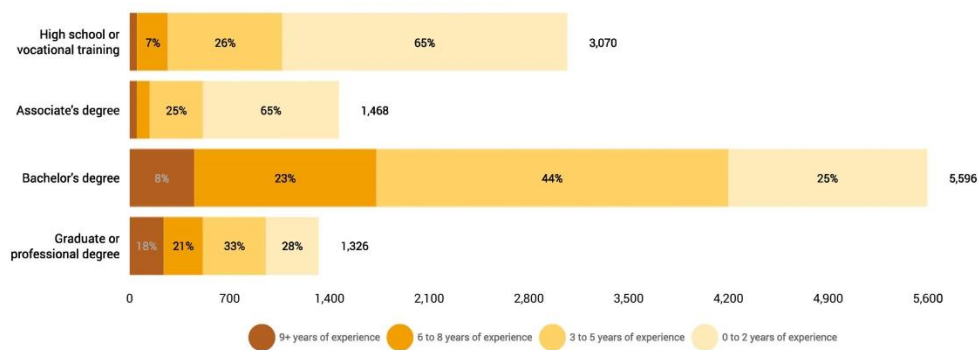
Educational Attainment - Source: Lightcast.io



Education Level	Lower Chattahoochee	Georgia	National
Less than 9th Grade	3.2%	6%	7%
9th - 12th Grade	6.7%	8%	7%
High School Diploma	27.7%	28%	28%
Some College	22.0%	20%	21%
Associate Degree	9.4%	7.0%	8%
Bachelor's Degree	18.3%	18%	19%
Graduate Degree and Higher	12.6%	11%	12%

Source: Technical College System of Georgia Office of Workforce Development

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's or higher degree is only 24% of the adult population. This suggests a significant gap between the employment needs in the region and the skills of many members of the workforce.



Source: BGLI

At Risk Populations

Some of the highest at-risk populations are teens who are neither working or in school. Based on Annie E Casey Foundation Kids Count data, this numbered a relatively high 5,000 youth in Congressional District 2, which includes most of Columbus and the southern portion of the WIOA Area 14 (as well as portions of Albany, GA).

Teens aged 16 to 19 do not attend school and are not working. UPDATE FROM KIDS COUNTS

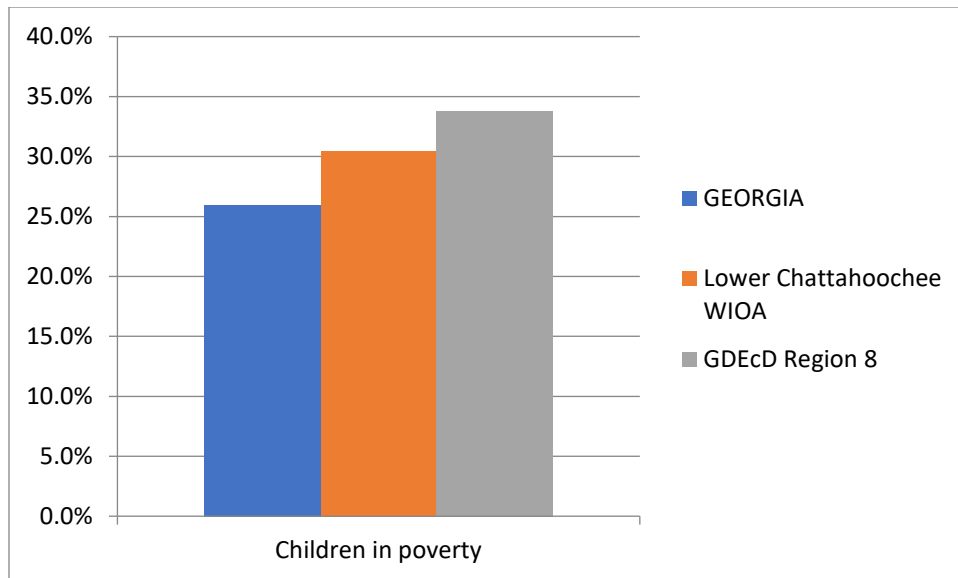
Georgia, Congressional District 2	Number	5,000
	Percent	11%

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

Children living in Poverty

Another example of at-risk populations is the percentage of children living in poverty. According to 2014 data, the most recent available, the percentage in 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 data in single-parent families shown below.

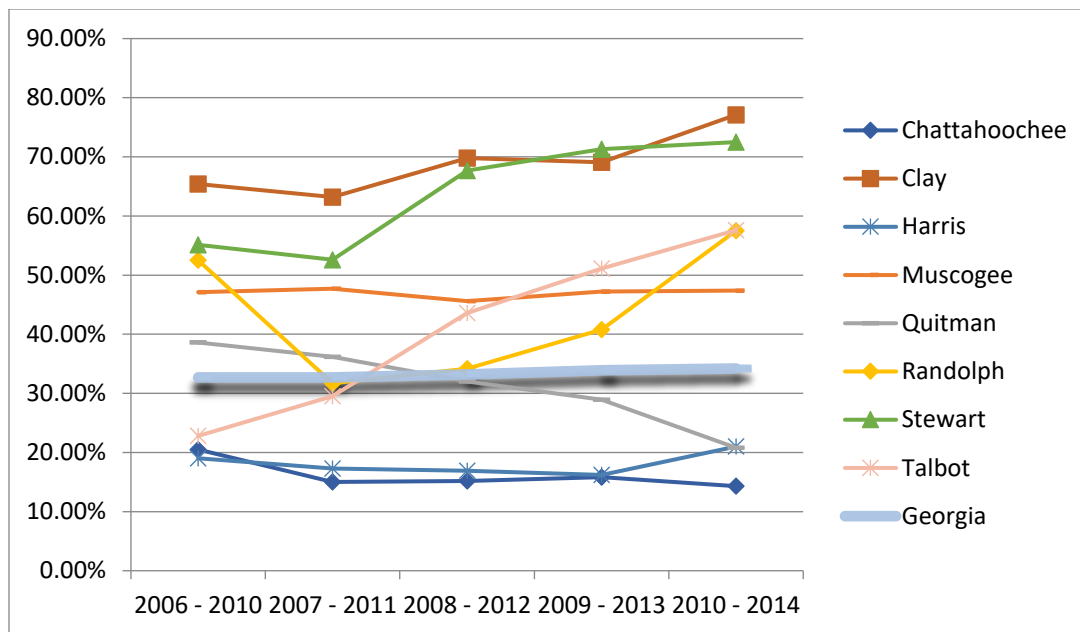
TCSG, OWD in the chart below



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

Children living in single-parent families: UPDATE FROM GDOL OUR LOCAL AREA

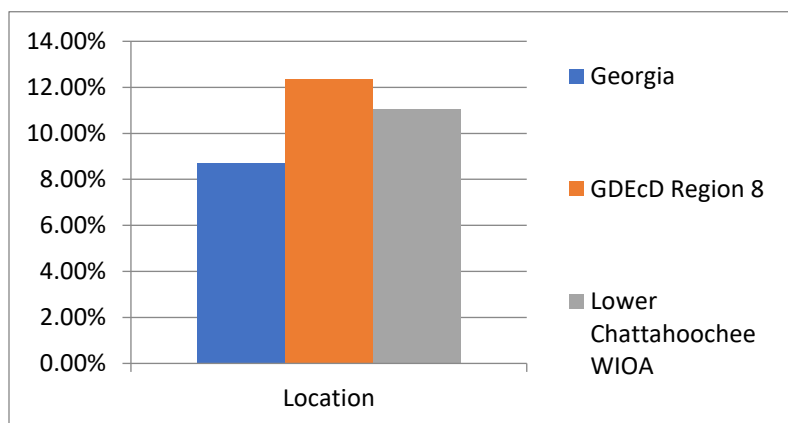
Clay and Stewart Counties have the highest percentage of children living in single-parent households. Often in single-parent households, that parent necessarily juggles work, childcare, and possibly training or schooling without a support network. Muscogee County’s percentage of children living in single-parent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



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

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

The percentage of children who are growing up in homes where no parent is working full-time will take a toll on not only the family income but also the long-term prospects for success for both the children and the family. In 2014, the percentage of children in the Lower Chattahoochee WIOA who have no household member working full-time is a high 11% compared to the state average of 8.7 %.



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

Ex-Offenders**	17,268
Homeless	9,489
Youth Aged out of Foster Care	700
English Language Learners	536,445
Low Levels of Literacy	919,657
Single Parents	742,410
Persons below Poverty Level	1,679,030
Disconnected Youth *	48,000
SNAP Recipients (past 12 months)	1,575,637

Source: State WIOA Plan

Moreover, seven (7) of the LWDA's eight (8) counties have higher poverty rates and lower median household incomes than the State. Clay has the highest poverty at 32.7%, and Randolph has the lowest median household income at \$29,400.

Median Household Income – Area 14

County	2020-2024 Median Household Income	2020-2024 Per Capita Income	% Persons in Poverty
Chattahoochee	\$45,700	\$33,166	18.1%
Clay	\$32,434	\$38,731	32.7%
Harris	\$78,860	\$51,168	5.8%
Muscogee	\$41,736	\$48,080	20.0%
Quitman	\$34,394	\$48,498	14.3%
Randolph	\$29,400	\$37,204	29.7%
Stewart	\$34,028	\$25,041	28.2%
Talbot	\$40,020	\$38,621	15.4%
Georgia	\$61,224	\$32,427	14%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Workforce development activities (including education and training) in the region (2d.)

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 Sector Partnership grant offered by Technical College Systems of Georgia (TCSG), Office of Workforce Development, has become essential. The sector partnership grant is to support the development and successful launch of high-demand career industry sector partnerships in regions across the state. Sector partnerships are a required practice of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and will support workforce development efforts across the region. Sector strategies are a targeted approach that focuses on meeting the shared human capital needs of a single industry sector (e.g., health care, manufacturing, and financial business operations) by bringing together employers, workforce development, education, government, and other relevant partners. The Partnerships will work with employers to develop strategies to address and meet current and future needs. In May 2019, Lower Chattahoochee and Middle Flint Workforce Development Areas applied to receive funding of a Sector Partnership Grant. Lower Chattahoochee and Middle Flint were awarded the grant in July 2019. Lower Chattahoochee will focus on the Finance and IT sectors for the period 2019 through 2021.

Common Trends

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. 19 companies in a variety of industries cited an 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 who 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. Lower Chattahoochee Workforce Development Area¹⁴ has participated in the Let's Grow Stem X Expo hosted Each year in our local area. The Expo helps identify students who may be interested in a future in science, technology, engineering and math. 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 skilled local 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 cross 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	Business Support Roles (Accounting, HR,
Software Developer	Marketing)
Electrical Engineer	Welder

Computer Programmer

Machinist

Maintenance Technician

Computer Numerical Control (CNC) Operator

Manufacturing Associate

Programmable Logic Controller (PLC)

High Demand Skills/Attributes

Soft Skills

Robotics

Mathematics

Analytical

Work Ethic

Business Acumen

Customer Focus

Problem Solver

Project Management Teamwork

Key Sectors

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

Agriculture and Food

Aerospace

Automotive Manufacturing

Defense

Film, Television, and Interactive Entertainment

Finance

Healthcare and Life Sciences

Information Technology

Logistics and Transportation

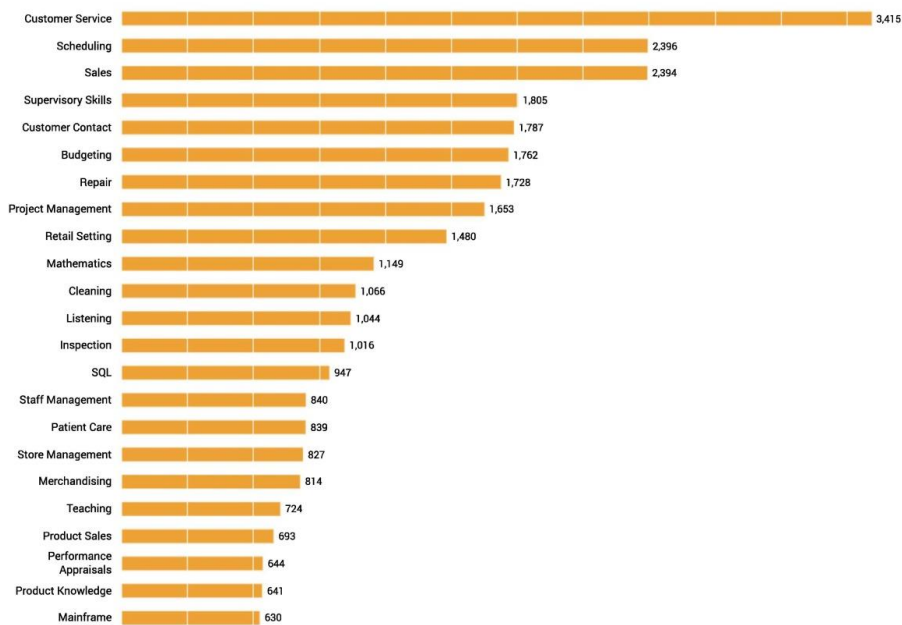
Manufacturing

Several of these sectors have application and match not only the existing industry in the area, but also the identified Key Sectors as outlined in the 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.

Top Skills



Source: BGLI

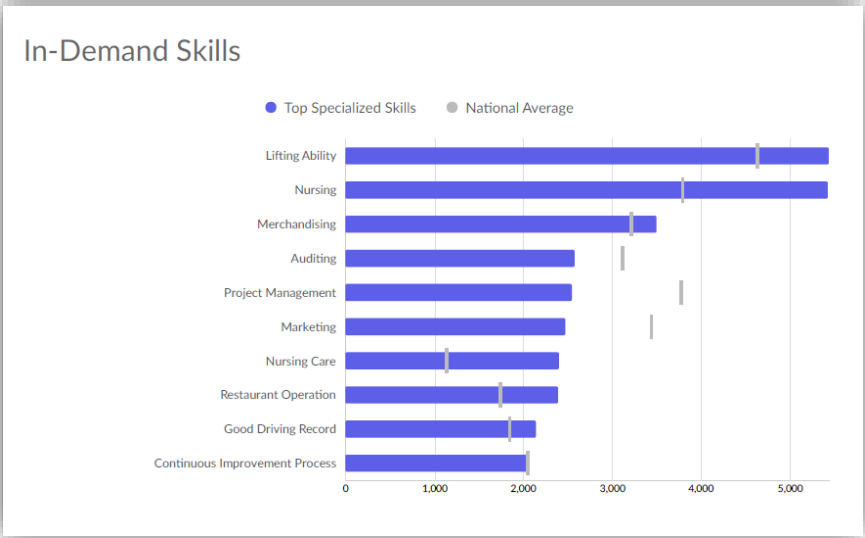
Top skills required by employers looking for work are focused on customer services (which matches state and local surveys of companies noting the importance of soft skills for employment). In fact, 2 of the top 5 skills employers are looking for in this area rely heavily on soft skills: Customer Service (3,415 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

In the second quarter of 2026, the top specialized skills needed were lifting ability, nursing, merchandising, auditing, project management, and marketing. Before the pandemic, the area was already facing a shortage of nurses, so nursing was designated as an in-demand occupation. Since the pandemic, the need for nurses has only grown. As for merchandising and marketing, the need can be attributed to the area’s large retail industry sector; retail accounts for 12% of the area’s workforce and is the area’s second-largest sector by the number of employees and the number of establishments.



Source: Lightcast

Statewide Successes of the High Demand Career Initiative

Expansion of Strategic Industries Workforce Development Grant (SIWDG)

The HOPE Career Grant, formerly known as the Strategic Industries Workforce Development Grant (SIWDG). The HOPE Career Grant is a financial award for TCSG students who enroll in select majors that are specifically aligned with industries in which there are more jobs than skilled workers to fill them. Students must meet a certain criterion and be enrolled in an approved program. Another benefit of the HOPE Career Grant, it creates a pipeline of skilled workers to meet employers’ needs. Currently, there are seventeen programs eligible for the HOPE Career Grant. The programs of study are as follows: Automotive, Aviation Technology, Certified Engineer Assistant, Commercial Truck Driving, Computer Programming, Computer Technology, Construction, Diesel Equipment Technology, Early Childhood Care Education, Electrical Lineman, Health Sciences, Industrial Maintenance, Logistics/Transportation Technology, Movie Production Set Design, Practical Nursing, Precision Manufacturing, and Welding and Joining Technology.

Georgia Film Academy

Both UGA and TCSG are collaborating 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 funding the legislative session for this effort. The Georgia Film Academy has a campus at Columbus State University. Andrew College and Southwest Georgia University also have film programs not directly associated with the Georgia Film Academy.

Strategic vision and goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce (2e.)

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.

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 services 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 job seekers of our local workforce community to 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 meets local industry needs and fosters a collaborative partnership with economic development to enhance the 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. (2f.)

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 funding 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 has 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, the 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 commits to the business community and provides a venue for a more proactive and employer-friendly partnership through the following initiatives:

- The Regional Coordinator Program partners with economic developers, locally, regionally, and statewide by executing prompt turnaround 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 in-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 OWD aimed at connecting with and providing workforce solutions to employers. State initiatives such as Go Build Georgia, Georgia, HDCl 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 have 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-old 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-old 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 expectant parents have access to comprehensive child development and family support services.

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

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

Potential Actions:

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

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

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

Potential Actions:

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

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

Keeping students engaged and on track in their studies will be critical to raising the region's educational attainment levels and ensuring that future generations have opportunities to succeed. Accordingly, stakeholders should pursue a community-wide mentoring program that connects volunteers with K-12 students who are at risk of falling behind, struggling, or dropping out. Greater Columbus has many existing programs that engage in some type of youth mentoring, including Girls, Incorporated of Columbus, the Literacy Alliance, Empowered Youth of Columbus, Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Chattahoochee Valley, and many others. A community-wide mentoring program would not replace or duplicate any of these initiatives but would instead begin with an assessment of existing programs and a determination of whether existing capacity is needed. The ultimate goal of the program should be making a mentor-mentee relationship available to all interested students through the coordination of existing programs and – potentially – the creation of new ones. Given the collaborative nature of such an effort, it represents an ideal opportunity for coordination through the C2C.

Potential Actions:

- Bring together existing organizations providing mentoring services with representatives from schools and school districts, businesses and nonprofits to assess existing programs and capacity
- Pursue the widespread availability of programs that seek commitments of up to three years for monthly meetings and weekly check-ins to ensure the at-risk students receive needed engagement

- With the help of the private sector, community and faith-based organizations, and other nonprofits, issue a community-wide call for volunteers
- Begin the program at the middle school level and gradually expand to other grades

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

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

Potential Actions:

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

OBJECTIVE 1.3: RETAIN OUR BEST AND BRIGHTEST WORKERS

Just as producing homegrown talent is important, so too is retaining educated workers who already live in the community. Evidence indicates, however, that Greater Columbus is losing residents to Metro Atlanta and other nearby markets. According to stakeholders who participated in the input process, many of these out-migrants are recent college graduates and talented young professionals. Many of the tactical recommendations in this strategy are aimed at improving quality of life and boosting levels of community attachment in The area,

but the following initiatives are aimed specifically at strengthening job opportunities and professional and social networks for talented individuals, ultimately reducing their incentive to leave the community.

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

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

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

Potential Actions:

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

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

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

Offering internships and apprenticeships for manufacturing and other trade jobs could help address this issue by exposing more young people to career opportunities in an important sector of the regional economy.

Potential Actions:

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

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

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

Potential Actions:

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

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

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

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

Potential Actions:

- Work with public- and private-sector employers to develop a one-stop resume-matching database capable of connecting individuals with available jobs based on skill sets; this database would also have utility for existing residents of The area and would not necessarily be limited to any one group, though it would be most useful for individuals without roots or connections in the community
- Create a volunteer network of human resources managers and corporate executives to meet informally with new job-seekers who have followed a relocating family member to the community to help these individuals learn about the job market in Greater Columbus and begin developing a professional network
- Develop an attractive, user-friendly, and regularly updated “welcome website” with information on community programs, youth sports leagues, parks, utilities, religious organizations, etc.; this website would also be useful as a talent and business recruitment tool to highlight the region’s quality of life to prospective new residents or companies

OBJECTIVE 1.4: ATTRACT TALENTED INDIVIDUALS TO GREATER COLUMBUS

Growing and retaining talent in the area is critical to the region’s future, but strategies to improve educational outcomes can take years or even decades to pay dividends. In the meantime, many firms in Greater Columbus have immediate needs for talented workers. Additionally, the community’s younger residents are relatively less educated than those in many similar communities. In other words, Greater Columbus isn’t just playing “catch-up” – it must attract new educated residents just to keep pace with its peers. But research revealed that Greater Columbus has consistently low levels of 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 USED A.

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 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 MOCs to identify matches based on corresponding high-demand careers at a variety of levels – for each specific MOC, for similar MOCs, 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 in 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 job seekers 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;

All Customers

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- Information on community resources, labor market information, GED, occupational training, OJT, and support services that make training possible to enhance an individual's ability to return to work
- Integrated workforce services for citizens released from correctional facilities through the Governor's GA-PRI
- An Events tool on the Department's website to allow customers to access hundreds of career fairs, hiring events, and other activities to connect with hiring businesses
- A strong network of faith-based organizations that support reemployment efforts
- Collaborative services for claimant trainees and TAA-eligible customers
- Collaboration with Home Safe 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
- Community Reinvestment

RESEA Program

Recently, GDOL operated a REA targeting UI claimants in five GDOL career centers. As Georgia worked with the REA customer population, it became apparent that there were thousands of customers in other areas of the State in need of intensive 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 EGsystem.

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

Coordination of and provision of labor exchange services for UI claimants as required by the W-P Act

Georgia’s UI and WP labor exchange systems are each administered by GDOL, and UI staff has access to all ES job referral, case management, employment, and other information as needed. Staffing is funded in accordance with Federal circulars, to the allowable benefiting fund source.

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

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

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

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

Staff-assisted employment services are provided to more than 500,000 individuals annually, and tens of thousands of additional individuals receive self-services made available by GDOL at career centers and online. Also, Georgia businesses list approximately 150,000 available jobs

on a daily basis, with a goal of increasing that number to 300,000 in the subsequent year, and more than 1.6 million job referrals were provided last year. This increased number of job openings are a result of growth in the local economy and the strengthening of employer relationships with the workforce system. As a result of the improving economy and the focused reemployment strategies of connecting job seekers to meaningful job opportunities, Georgia's Entered Employment Rate shows steady recovery and is approaching pre-recession rates.

Registration of UI claimants with the State's employment service

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

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

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

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

- Individuals with a job attachment - This would include individuals for whom their employer has filed a "partial" unemployment claim for them or those individuals with a definite recall to work within six (6) weeks of their last 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 relationship with TCSG, OWD at the state level. Area 14 has and will continue to be in a close relationship with TCSG, OWD and the local workforce 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.

Lower Chattahoochee Area-14 and Middle Flint Area-15 were awarded a Sector Partnership grant for 2019-2020. The two local Workforce Areas selected the Financial and 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 throughout the region. Lower Chattahoochee Area – 14 selected Finance/Banking, for their sector strategy, due to the area being home to several financial institutions as well as having a large number of employees who are currently working in this sector. Middle Flint Area – 15 selected Healthcare for their sector strategy, as healthcare is in demand in their local area.

Partners participating in sector strategy development.

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

Information will be addressed in the Regional Plan

Partners

Sector partnership will be developed with individuals with knowledge and expertise in both financial/ Banking and healthcare sectors. All partners will be expected to participate as mandated.

Meetings

After being awarded the Sector Partnership Grant in July 2019, Lower Chattahoochee Area-14 began meeting with LCWD Board Members as well as Area-15. The two local areas are currently identifying and talking with financial and healthcare partners to plan a meeting in the Fall 2020. Topics for discussion include identify healthcare and financial 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 and financial field. Additional meetings will be ongoing several times a year and as needed to ensure that the healthcare and financial sectors will continue to thrive in the region.

Research and data used to identify sector strategies for training.

Describe the research and the data that were used to identify the sector that was chosen for the sector's strategies training.

The two local areas (region) reviewed labor market information (LMI) from the Georgia Department of Labor, Burning Glass data, and data prior to WIOA performance and training data, and determined that the healthcare sector was a common sector between the two local workforce areas. The occupations in the 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 as well as banking and other financial institutions.

ii. Target occupations;

Target occupations will include nursing (LPN, RN), medical coding, pharmacy technician, certified nursing assistant (CNA), medical assisting, and Dental Hygienist, Bankers, Payroll clerk and specialist, bookkeepers, accounts receivable, accounts payable, technicians, Accountants, CPA, credit analyst, tax accountants etc.

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. Financial programs offered through technical colleges and universities.

iv. Target Populations.

WIOA eligible adults, dislocated workers, and youth interested in educational training for careers in the healthcare occupations. Individuals who will be required to meet training providers' entrance requirements for the 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 and Financial sectors for the PY 26 and PY27 time period. The region will then review data to select another common shared sector. In April 2020, Financial 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 One Stop. Various affiliate 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 Operator system, identifying partners at each comprehensive site and those affiliate 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 are provided through the competitively procured One Stop Operator, which was procured during program year 2025 in 2026.

[Columbus GDOL Career Center](#)

Currently, the local Department of Labor Columbus Career Center provides 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 Operator was conducted, and the IN THE DOOR, LLC was chosen as the One Stop Operator in June 2026.

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 enhance the accessibility of GDOL and other services to residents residing in the rural counties, the local WDB's procurement of a mobile 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 one affiliate site in the local workforce area.

Vocational Rehabilitation Services is a partner at the 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.

A collaborative partnership with Columbus Technical College, Chamber of Commerce, and the Columbus Consolidated Government Crime Prevention Department formed a program called "Let's Talk 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 One Stop site.

[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, IN THE DOOR, LLC 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 with and in 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, which is not being done by our staff.
- 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 Operator continually looks for improvements to its operations, including in its efficiency, and encourages 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 an opportunity for continuous improvement from 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 operator has designed a process to ensure the high volume of customers seeking WIOA services receive timely services and/or referrals. Alternative (affiliate) 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.

To bridge the gap in rural communities where a physical partner presence is limited, the local WIOA utilizes a mobile resource center.

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 proximity of Chattahoochee, Harris, and Talbot counties to the local area, one-stop centers in Muscogee County, and accessibility to services is not challenging for many of the residents in these areas. The mobilized unit, however, also travels to these areas to ensure ease of accessibility for those customers who do have challenges accessing the centers to services and information offered.

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

Workforce Services to Businesses through the One-stop Operator

The local board includes: (a) members of the local business community who 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. During the 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 have been instrumental in maintaining the strong working relationship experienced in this local area between the employer community and the One-Stop Operator. Some members of the local workforce development board are also active members of the employer committee. Members of this committee take active roles in promoting the various services available through the local one-stop Operator among the employment community and continue to assist local agency partners in identifying and recommending 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 Operator and to facilitate communication between the business communities of Georgia and this workforce development area.

The One-Stop Operator and affiliate 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 layoffs or business closures
- 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 Operator 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.

One Stop. Operator	Other Partners	
One Stop Operator and Service Provider IN THE DOOR, LLC (Effective July 1, 2023 & Competitively procured for Program Year 2026) Located at the Comprehensive One-Stop GDOL 700 Veterans Parkway Columbus, Georgia 31901 Phone: 706-649-7423		Oversight: At a minimum, coordinate and manage the delivery of services provided by the required one-stop partners and service providers within the comprehensive One-Stop location and any affiliate sites in the workforce area. Services: WIOA Outreach & recruitment Eligibility Determination On-the-Job Training Job Search Assistance Follow-Up Services Referral to post-secondary education Resume Preparation
	Georgia Department of Labor— One Stop Partner 700 Veterans Parkway Columbus, Georgia 31901	Employment Services Unemployment Insurance Veterans Services Employer Services Job Referrals Assessments Job Search Assistance Labor Market Information Resume Preparation Workshops Referral to community services Migrant Seasonal Farm Worker TOP Step and Federal Bonding
	Partner: Technical College Systems of GA Adult Education and Columbus Technical College Dept. of Technical Adult Education	Employment Services Veterans Services Employer Services Job Referrals Assessments Job Search Assistance Labor Market Information Resume Preparation Workshops Referral to community services Migrant Seasonal Farm Worker

	Affiliate Site: Columbus Technical College 918 Manchester Expressway Columbus, Georgia Phone(706) 649-1856	Contractor: Assistance with occupational skills training & retraining through ITAs, in addition to career counseling and case management.
	Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency (Electronic Presence)	Assistance with training & retraining of the disabled population. Career Counseling & Case Management.
	Dept of Community Reinvestment-Columbus Consolidated Government (Electronic Presence)	Community Services Block Grant employment and training programs
	Housing and Urban Development (Electronic Presence)	Department of Housing and Urban Development employment and training activities

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.

Lower Chattahoochee Area 14 procured their area One Stop Operator during PY25 in 2026. Marketing research and cost-price analysis comparisons were made as part of the process, selection, and award of the contract for the One Stop Operator services.

Each local area and its partners competitively procured the One-Stop Operator in accordance with guidelines issued by the State Workforce Division.

In both the Middle Flint and Lower Chattahoochee Areas, 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 Proposals. These RFPs are developed by WDB staff at the recommendation of the board, and the RFPs are then solicited and advertised. Advertisements are distributed in the local legal organs. The RFPs are reviewed by a board committee that then makes a recommendation to the full board. The local boards then make their decision on service providers. This process is uniform by federal guidelines with local agency guidance to adhere to as outlined below.

The Columbus Consolidated Government Job Training Division, as the fiscal and procurement agent for the Lower Chattahoochee Workforce Development Board, releases a Request for Proposals (RFP). Public Notices are advertised in the local area's legal sections before the release date of the RFP. The notice will advise the provision of services being solicited, counties/communities or region to be served, the age or population targeted, the expected number of WIOA-eligible participants to be served, the amount of the total funding to be awarded, the contractual period, and the release date and submission deadline of proposals. Programs funded as a result of the solicitation will adhere to policies and procedures outlined by WIOA and administered by the Columbus Consolidated Government Job Training Division. A "Bidder's conference shall be held shortly after the release date and shall be the only time questions concerning the content and preparation of a proposal will be answered. A complete set of minutes of the Bidders Conference, in addition to the Q and A will be available to the public up until the submission date.

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

considered provisional pending receipt of any additional documentation requested and the successful completion of contract negotiations and contract completion.

EEO and Grievance Procedures

Established policies and procedures regarding grievance and complaint resolution 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. The Lower Chattahoochee Equal Opportunity Complaint & General Grievance Policy and Procedure is found in [Appendix 1](#).

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 Innovation and Opportunity 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 for ensuring that Workforce Development Area Fourteen has a robust system that is comprehensive, effective, responsive, and customer-focused. The Board is composed of a member representation from a cross-section of organizations within its workforce area, to include public sector, non-profit, and for-profit organizations that govern the local workforce development system. A list of board members is found in [Appendix 2](#).

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.

Lower Chattahoochee Local Workforce Development Board

Board Member Name	Affiliated With	Title/Position held with Affiliated Organization	County of Residence	Entity(s) Representing
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	Calloway & Assoc., Inc.	Regional Vice President/Owner	Muscogee County	Business
Deppe, Jeff	IBEW Local 613	Union Representative	Muscogee County	Organized Labor/Joint Labor Management/Apprenticeship
Domineck, Joel, Jr.	TCSG	Regional Operations Manager	Muscogee County	Wagner Peyser / Veteran Employment Activities / Disabled Vet Outreach Programs
Dupree, Kianca "KeKe"	GA Vocational Rehabilitation Services	District 5 Supervisor	Muscogee County	Vocational Rehabilitation
Evans, Jonathan	Housing Authority of Columbus, Georgia	Director, Community Initiatives	Muscogee County	Community-based, Housing Auth. E&T Programs
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
Jackson, Barbara	Columbus Regional Health	Professional Recruiter	Muscogee County	Business
Jackson-Sparks, Betty	BBC Services	Finance Project Manager	Muscogee County	Business
Johnson, Will	Columbus Consolidated Government Dept. of Community & Economic Development	Planning Director	Muscogee County	Title I, Economic Development
Kelly, Andrew	Valley Hospitality	HR Director	Muscogee County	Business

Lewis, Carvel	Lewis Mortuary II	Owner	Quitman County	Business
Loyd, Jamie	Columbus Technical College	Vice President, Economic Development	Muscogee County	Post-Secondary/Adult Education & Literacy, Title II/Apprenticeship/Post-Secondary Vocational Education (Carl Perkins)
Obleton, Eddie	Second Chance WORKS	Consultant	Muscogee County	Business
Ramsey, Ernestine	YMCA of Metropolitan Columbus	Director/Manager/Retired	Muscogee County	Community-based
Randolph, Chester	C. Randolph & Associates, LLC Caldwell Banker KPDD	Owner / Agent	Muscogee County	Business
Ruff, Gwendolyn	Columbus Water Works	Senior Vice President, Strategic Planning & Employee Services	Muscogee County	Business
Rutledge, Wanda	Kinetic Credit Union	Vice President, Community Relations	Muscogee County	Business
Smith, Dexter	Communication Workers of America Local 3212	Secretary/Treasurer	Muscogee County	Organized Labor
Timmons, Wendy	Sixty-Two Graphic Studio	Owner/Operator	Muscogee County	Business
Watson, Eddie	Clay Hill Hunting	Owner/Operator	Clay County	Business
Weaver, Kim	Georgia Power Company	Workforce Coordinator	Muscogee County	Business
Williams, Arlena, PhD	Enrichment Services Program, Inc.	Director of Community Services	Muscogee County	Community-based
Williams, Joe Lee	Stewart County Board of Commissioners	Chairman	Stewart County	Public
Willoughby, B. Ryan	Jordan Vocational High School College & Career Academy (MCSD)	Chief Executive Officer	Muscogee County	Secondary Education, Adult Education, & Literacy

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))

For the Local Area, Board members are appointed by the Chief Local Elected Official (CLEO) 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 three-year term. In the Middle Flint WDB, members are also solicited from area chambers of commerce, payroll and industrial development authorities, business organizations, education agencies, and partner agencies. Board member nominees are presented to the Chief Local Elected Official (CLEO) for consideration and approval. Representatives from Adult Education are nominated by the local Technical Colleges providing adult education services. Nominations for Labor representatives are solicited from business or labor organizations.

New member orientation process

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

Upon appointment to the local WDB, all new members are required to participate in an orientation program. These onboarding sessions—conducted on an as-needed basis via individual or group formats—provide a thorough introduction to the Board's strategic objectives and WIOA requirements. Members are furnished with essential governance materials, including the Board's By-Laws, meeting protocols, and a comprehensive overview of local WIOA services and workforce activities.

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 the planning region).

The Local Workforce Development Board (WDB) intentionally embeds representation from local and regional economic development agencies within its core membership. This structural alignment ensures that regional economic growth strategies directly drive the local workforce development system.

Economic development board members serve as the primary conduit for real-time labor market information between business leadership, WDB members, and WIOA core partner staff. To operate this collaboration, regular WDB meetings feature a dedicated, standing information-sharing segment. This segment provides actionable briefings on regional economic activities.

Engagement of local board members

Describe how local board members are kept engaged and informed.

The Local Workforce Development Board (WDB) maintains an informed membership through a structured, multi-channel communication strategy that extends beyond seasonal meetings. This ensures board members remain subject matter experts on local labor market trends and WIOA regulations through:

- **Strategic Briefings:** Distribution of data highlighting local performance metrics, economic indicators, and workforce system successes.
- **Targeted Onboarding:** Provision of a comprehensive orientation program for new members covering WIOA governance, fiscal responsibilities, and regional workforce ecosystems.
- **Just-in-Time Training:** Regular professional development snippets during board meetings focusing on emerging federal policies and sector strategies.

Two-Way Feedback Loops and Inter-Agency Collaboration

Board meetings are designed as interactive forums rather than static presentations. Engagement is sustained by prioritizing active dialogue and cross-sector strategic planning:

- **Standing Intelligence Exchange:** Utilizing dedicated floor time for economic development, education, and private-sector members to cross-report on real-time market shifts.
- **Coordinated Business Solutions:** Involving board members directly in regional sector panels to align workforce training curricula with immediate employer hiring demands.
- **Public-Private Networking:** Facilitating structured networking segments during meetings to build stronger collaborative ties between core WIOA partners and business leaders.

Active Committee Structures and Distributed Leadership

Engagement is operationalized by embedding members into high-impact, functional subcommittees aligned with their specific expertise. This decentralized structure drives deeper engagement by:

- Action-Oriented Agendas
- Peer-Led Discussions
- Focused Time Commitments

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 promptly, that affect the administration and operation of the WIOA system, that includes 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 a 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.

YOUTH COMMITTEE:

As an established standing committee of the Lower Chattahoochee Workforce Development Board (WDB), the Youth Committee is a diverse cross-section of local stakeholders and workforce professionals. Membership is intentionally selected

based on proven expertise in youth development, education, and specialized support services for the regional youth population.

Vested with operational authority by the Lower Chattahoochee WDB, the Youth Committee serves as the primary advisory body for youth-related workforce investments. The committee utilizes a formal governance structure to vet and advance recommendations:

- **Strategic Recommendations:** All policy, funding, and procurement recommendations are presented directly to the full Lower Chattahoochee WDB for final action.
- **Expedited Governance:** When time-sensitive actions are required, recommendations are presented to the WDB Executive Committee for immediate review and approval.
- **Accountability Reporting:** The committee maintains transparent governance by submitting regular, comprehensive summary reports of its activities to the full WDB and Executive Committee.

The Youth Committee operates in close coordination with the Board Administrator to drive the regional youth service delivery strategy. Core responsibilities include:

- **Needs Assessment & Coordination:** Continually identifying the unique workforce and supportive service needs of local youth, ensuring a seamless, coordinated delivery system across the region.
- **Resource Mapping:** Evaluating and tracking funding availability across both WIOA and non-WIOA funding streams to leverage community assets and maximize financial impact.
- **Procurement Oversight:** Reviewing, evaluating, and recommending the approval or disapproval of all competitive solicitations and proposals from youth service providers.
- **Plan & Policy Development:** Assisting the Administrator in drafting youth-specific sections of the Local and Regional Plan, as well as developing local policies and procedures that govern the administration and implementation of youth programs

ADMINISTRATIVE AND PROGRAMMATIC OVERSIGHT AND COMPLIANCE (APOC) COMMITTEE:

The Administrative and Programmatic Oversight and Compliance Committee is comprised of a representative cross-section of the Lower Chattahoochee Workforce Development Board (LCWDB) membership. To ensure comprehensive system integration, committee membership may also include designated representatives from One-Stop partner agencies. The committee operates under a strict governance reporting structure to ensure board-wide alignment:

- **Board Approval:** Summary reports of all committee meetings and strategic recommendations are presented directly to the full LCWDB for official action.
- **Executive Committee Intermediation:** In time-sensitive scenarios where the Executive Committee acts on behalf of the Board, this committee routes its actions and recommendations directly to the Executive Committee.
- **Board Affirmation:** Any actions executed on behalf of the LCWDB via this pipeline are formally presented at the next full convening board meeting for final affirmation.

Core Responsibilities and System Strategic Planning

Operating in close coordination with the WIOA Program Administrator, the committee ensures the regional workforce system remains compliant, data-driven, and responsive. Core responsibilities are categorized across four operational areas:

- **Strategic Planning & Population Targeting:** Continually evaluating regional employment and training needs to identify and establish priority target populations for local service delivery. The committee collaborates directly with WIOA administrative staff to formulate required program plans.
- **Procurement & System Evaluation:** Reviewing and evaluating formal proposals and applications submitted by eligible service providers within the One-Stop delivery system. Based on these evaluations, the committee delivers funding and service delivery recommendations to the Board in strict accordance with WIOA regulations.
- **Fiscal and Performance Compliance:** Providing rigorous oversight regarding WIOA programmatic execution, federal performance metrics, and fiscal compliance to ensure optimal return on workforce investments.

- **One-Stop Operations & Accessibility (ADA/Section 188):** Providing actionable guidance and operational oversight to optimize the One-Stop delivery system. This includes ensuring absolute compliance with WIOA Section 188 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 by auditing and enforcing:
 - Full programmatic and physical access to all One-Stop services, facilities, and activities.
 - Specialized training for American Job Center staff on providing appropriate supports, accommodations, and targeted employment pathways for individuals with disabilities

BUDGET AND FINANCE COMMITTEE:

The Budget and Finance Committee is comprised of a representative cross-section of the Lower Chattahoochee Workforce Development Board (LCWDB) membership. The committee is charged with executing rigorous oversight, fiscal accountability, and absolute transparency for all local workforce system investments. This includes the strategic governance and monitoring of all primary allocations under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), alongside any supplementary federal or emergency funding streams administered by the local area

Fiscal monitoring operates via a direct, structured data pipeline provided by the WIOA Program Administrator staff. To facilitate objective analysis and strategic decision-making, the administrative staff generates comprehensive system-wide financial statements for committee review. These reports detail:

- **Allocation and Obligation Levels**
- **Expenditure Rates**
- **Cost Categorization**

The Budget and Finance Committee formulates actionable recommendations based on its fiscal reviews. Financial actions move through a formal, multi-tiered governance structure to ensure regulatory compliance and continuous operation.

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.

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.

Draft local and regional plans were developed in alignment with the goals and guidance outlined in the draft State Workforce Plan. Required partners were notified of the State Plan available and encouraged to review the plan for guidance in developing

and submitting their agency's activities, services, and any other pertinent information to be included in local/regional plans. Labor Market Information (LMI) data from the Georgia Department of Labor website, Burning Glass data, Census Bureau data, etc., were collected and utilized in the development of the local/regional plan. The WDB members will review and approve the Local 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.gov/jtd>) for a 30-day public comment period. Any comments received during the public comment period will be included in the Plan upon submission to the State Workforce Office.

Changes to Policies

Lower Chattahoochee's policies are developed and updated in accordance with federal and state policies and requirements to ensure compliance and operation within the letter and spirit of the law.

Service Delivery and Training

Serving Disconnected and Underemployed Workers

Identify the populations in the local area who are most disconnected from the labor force (e.g., individuals not in education, employment, or training, long-term unemployed, etc.) or face barriers to meaningful access and participation in the workforce system. Describe specific strategies the LWDB has in place – or plans to implement – to engage, serve, and connect these individuals to employment, educational, and/or training opportunities? How does the local plan address the structural and/or systemic barriers these populations face?

In the Lower Chattahoochee Area, populations most disconnected from the labor force include low-income households, individuals who lack higher education, and disengaged youth, particularly those aged 18 to 24. With a local prime-age labor force participation rate near 57.6%, systemic barriers like limited low-skill transit, childcare gaps, and historical wealth disparities contribute heavily to long-term economic disengagement.

Populations experiencing the highest rates of labor force disconnection in the area feature the following demographics. Minorities in distressed zip codes, disconnected youth (18-24) who often lack the foundational skills needed for entry-level positions, adults without post-secondary education, of which about 10% of the population over 25 lack a high school diploma, and only 25% hold a bachelor's degree. Another population of note is the marginally attached workers and veterans. While our local area has a large veteran and military spouse population, frequent relocation cycles, physical/mental health challenges, and skill-translation gaps lead to higher rates of long-term non-participation among certain military-affiliated and civilian groups.

The LWDB is working to implement new strategies to engage, serve, and connect these individuals to employment, educational, and/or training opportunities, developing talent, strengthening employers, and expanding economic opportunity for all walks of life.

- Strengthening business engagement, retention, and expansion efforts. Consult with employers regularly about growth opportunities and lead generation based on their customer needs and/or supply chains.
- Maintain an up-to-date list of key priorities that enhance the area's economic competitiveness.
- Ensure there is alignment between workforce supply and demand by resource sharing about in-demand occupations, evolving skill requirements, and available training programs.

- Boost awareness of careers in the local area that require postsecondary but less than a bachelor's degree. Conduct outreach to students and parents and measure engagement. Learn from existing programs in other communities.
- Ensure that every student has access to education and work-based learning opportunities to complete industry-recognized credentials that will prepare them for careers in our local area.
- Re-establish a Military Affairs function to ensure that marginally attached workers and veterans' development opportunities (and elimination of barriers) are explored in partnership with Fort Benning.
- Encouraging employers to actively participate in Columbus Technical College's Veterans Education Career Transition Resource (VECTR) Center to provide soldiers with on-ramps toward industry-recognized credentials and local employment opportunities.
- Expanding initiatives with demonstrated track records of measurable outcomes to economically distressed areas.
- Improving chronic absenteeism and grade-level readiness. Key contributing factors for improving workforce readiness and strengthening the talent pipeline.

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 businesses and employers. Efforts to improve basic education literacy levels and provide 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 partners' staff to ensure individuals are directed to 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 credentials enhances employment, retention in employment, and increases in wage performance outcomes of WIOA.

Describe how the board is expanding access to short-term, industry-recognized credentials and stackable training pathways that lead to self-sufficiency. How are credentials vetted for labor market value? How are pathways structured to allow participants to enter employment and continue advancing their skills over time?

The local WDB is expanding access to short-term, industry-recognized credentials and stackable training pathways by aligning Individual Training Accounts, Work-based Training (work experience), On-the-Job Training, Apprenticeships, and Technical College partnerships around occupations that offer stronger wages and clearer opportunities for advancement. Rather than requiring participants to commit to long-term programs immediately, the local WDB supports entry through shorter training options that can lead to recognized certificates, technical/trade stacking certificates, licensure, or other industry-valued

credentials tied to local demand occupations. This approach helps more participants, including adults with barriers to employment, enter training quickly, gain a marketable credential, and move into employment with the option to continue their education over time. South Georgia Technical College and the wider Technical College System of Georgia offer short-term programs and credit-bearing pathways in fields that are relevant to the Middle Flint area.

Credentials are vetted for labor market value through a combination of labor market data, employer input, state policy, and Eligible Training Provider List requirements. Training programs funded through WIOA must generally be connected to occupations that are in demand and support employment outcomes that justify the investment. Georgia’s Eligible Training Providers List and related state procedures emphasize performance, informed customer choice, and accountability, while the state’s High-Demand Career List helps identify occupations with strong growth potential, regional relevance, and earnings value. At the local level, these tools are reinforced by feedback from employers, business services contacts, workforce board members, and technical college partners who help confirm which credentials are actually valued in hiring and advancement decisions.

Pathways are structured to allow participants to enter employment and continue building skills over time by combining short-term milestones with longer-term advancement options. In the Middle Flint area, this can include pathways such as Certified Nursing Assistant or patient care preparation leading into Practical Nursing and, over time, higher-level nursing or allied health advancement; Commercial Truck Driving leading into logistics, warehousing, dispatch, or transportation supervision; Welding and Joining Technology leading into more advanced manufacturing, maintenance, or fabrication roles; and industrial, electrical, HVAC, or heavy equipment maintenance training that supports progression into higher-skill technician positions with local manufacturers and utilities. These examples reflect the local employer base, regional demand sectors, and available college programming. South Georgia Technical College highlights nursing, electrical line worker, and employer-connected technical training, while statewide HOPE Career Grant support helps expand tuition-free access to high-demand fields such as Commercial Truck Driving, Practical Nursing, Industrial Maintenance, Health Science, Precision Manufacturing, and Welding and Joining Technology. In practice, the local area uses IEPs, labor market information, employer referrals, and case management to help participants map the next credential or work-based learning step after entering employment, so advancement remains part of the plan rather than an afterthought.

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 closures occur. Local Area staff communicates and works 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 layoff but before actual job loss is also provided by WIOA staff and collaborative partnering agencies.

Dislocated workers must 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 and 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.

Year-Round On-The-Job Training

Contractor will sequentially integrate Work Readiness Skills Training coupled with On-The-Job Training for a specified period for

Out-of-School Youth between the ages of 18-24 years of age will receive skills necessary to obtain unsubsidized employment.

Individual Training Accounts

The Local Workforce Board has elected to use Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) 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 applying for the 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 completed all of their assigned WIOA youth services before 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 offer 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 or she has the resources available to complete the training program and seek employment.

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

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

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

Describe how the board is expanding access to short-term, industry-recognized credentials and stackable training pathways that lead to self-sufficiency. How are credentials vetted for labor market value? How are pathways structured to allow participants to enter employment and continue advancing their skills over time?

The local WDB also works to align the Title I Youth program with Title II Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) services, Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services, and Job Corps opportunities for youth who may benefit from co-enrollment or coordinated referrals. Out-of-school youth who need a high school equivalency, basic skills remediation, English language support, or integrated education and training may be jointly served by WIOA Youth and local adult education providers such as South Georgia Technical College and Central Georgia Technical College, while youth with disabilities may also be connected to the Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency for Pre-Employment Transition Services, transition counseling, work-based learning, and, when appropriate, an Individualized Plan for Employment. Through the One-Stop system, co-located or regularly connected staff coordinate referrals, share information as permitted, avoid duplication of services, and align case management so that youth can move more smoothly between academic remediation, career exploration, work readiness, training, and employment. For youth who would benefit from a more intensive residential training model, the local area may also refer eligible participants to Job Corps or other available youth training options, consistent with current state guidance and program availability. This coordinated approach helps ensure that youth with multiple barriers can access the combined strengths of workforce, education, disability, and supportive service systems rather than being served in isolation.

These tools help participants understand career options by turning labor market data into practical decision-making information: which jobs are in demand, where wages are higher, what credentials are needed, how long training may take, and whether the expected earnings support self-sufficiency. Staff uses wage comparisons, growth projections, annual openings, and local employer demand to guide participants away from low-wage dead-end employment and toward occupations with stronger earnings potential in healthcare, manufacturing, transportation, logistics, skilled trades, and other priority sectors. By linking assessment results, labor market data, and available training and work-based learning options, the local area helps participants take clear steps toward better-paying jobs with a defined plan for advancement rather than short-term placement alone. O*NET career exploration tools also support this process by helping individuals connect their interests, abilities, and work values to occupations and related local labor market opportunities.

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 Georgia Department of Corrections 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 Technical College Systems of Georgia, Office of Workforce Development 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.

Use of Statewide Eligible Provider List

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

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 – Columbus Makes IT 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 – 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 the 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 working 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 WIOA training. Need-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 WIOA Director. All requests for support assistance paid directly to the participant must occur utilizing direct deposit or prepaid card draft. Appropriate forms must be reviewed and submitted by case managers to the WIOA Finance Office. The WIOA Finance Office will prepare a schedule for time sheet submission and payment dates for participants receiving supportive payments. A copy of the schedule will be submitted to all contractors/vendors on a quarterly basis, or as required.

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

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

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

.Support payment while enrolled in an online course is not allowed; and shall only be considered for potential approval by the

WIOA Director when client is utilizing resources that are physically located at the institution or training facility and shall be only for those days which class is scheduled.

Exceptions:

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

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

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

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
- STEM x Expo
- 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 provide a statewide Career Pathways initiative. Career Pathways is seeking to increase the number of youths completing high school and attaining post-secondary credentials that translate into value for the labor market.

Economic Development and Adult Education division of Columbus Technical College are partnering to provide the Integrated Education and Training (IET) Program. The (IET) program is a three-week intensive program that prepares select Adult Education students to enter the workforce for a career in manufacturing.

The introductory manufacturing training program is designed to help participants obtain the skills and knowledge required to safely and competently perform task required for an entry-level position in the manufacturing sector while completing their GED. In addition, the program includes the several certifications to make participants more marketable to employers.

Credentials Earned:

.OSHA 10-Hour General Industry

- . Forklift Safety Certification
- . CPR, First Aid, and AED
- . National Career Readiness Certification
- . NorthStar Basic Computer Skills Certificates in Microsoft Word, Excel, and PowerPoint.

Georgia is expanding their options for HSE attainment and Columbus Tech Adult Education program has been selected to be one of five HSE Pilot sites.

HISSET (Which is a standardized test like the GED. It also provides a flexible approach that does not require testing). Replicates the High School dual enrollment process and participants complete necessary HS credit recovery classes and obtain a technical credential.

Lower Chattahoochee Workforce Development will assist with the following: Determine eligibility, student's registration/admin. fee, additional fees, & tuition, fees, books & materials, supportive services and exit and follow-up.

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 established 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

– (OWD 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.

Change in the strategies used to meet local performance goals, particularly as a result of COVID-19 pandemic

To continue serving the public during the pandemic, we modified parts of our service-delivery model and found new ways to use our existing technology to fill in the gaps. For example, we began covering tuition for online classes for in-demand occupations, and we encouraged participants to use the WorkSource Portal to submit documents. We also participated in virtual fairs and community events. Moreover, we continued leveraging our partnerships to provide referrals and wraparound services. For example, we worked with the Georgia Institute of Technology (Georgia Tech) to help transitioning servicemembers find careers after serving, and we worked with the Georgia Department of Labor to help UI recipients return to work.

We also ran two special programs. First, we were awarded the National Dislocated Worker Grant (NDWG), a two-year, emergency grant from the US Department of Labor, to help individuals whose employment was affected by COVID-19. Through the NDWG program, we helped individuals find temporary employment and enroll in training programs from LWDB-approved training providers. During FY21, we enrolled three participants in our NDWG program. Two enrolled in local training institutions and earned credentials, and one participant worked for a local technical college to mitigate the spread of COVID-19.

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.

Georgia Department of Labor was selected as Lower Chattahoochee Workforce Development Area-14, One Stop Operator. Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and Resource Sharing Agreements (RSA) identify roles and responsibilities for One Stop partners.

As the local area implements One Stop procurement and selection of Provider during PY 19, 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) criterion 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 appeal 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

Describe how the area will adopt and utilize the state brand.

Lower Chattahoochee has adopted the state brand, WorkSource Georgia, Connecting Talent with Opportunity. The Georgia Department of Labor was chosen as the Lower Chattahoochee Workforce Development Area-14, One Stop Operator. The signage has been placed on the Georgia Department of Labor Building as well as all Lower Chattahoochee Workforce Development websites, printed materials, and advertising.

State Initiatives

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

WorkSource Lower Chattahoochee and WorkSource Middle Flint (Collectively referred to as region 8) have collaborated with Greater Columbus Georgia Chamber of Commerce (GCGCC) to apply for the Sector Partnership grant offered by Technical College Systems of Georgia (TCSG), Office of Workforce Development. The sector partnership grant is to support the development and successful launch of high demand career industry sector partnership in regions across the state. Sector partnerships are a required practice of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and will support workforce development efforts across the region. Sector strategies are a targeted approach that focuses on meeting the shared human capital needs of a single industry sector (e.g., health care, manufacturing and financial business operations) by bringing together employers, workforce development, education, government, and other relevant partners.

The Carl Vinson Institute of Government at the University of Georgia proposes to assist region 8 with the successful implementation of a sector partnership strategy in west central Georgia. Specifically, the Institute of Government will provide technical assistance, meeting facilitation, and coaching during the sector partnership development process. The ultimate goal is to build the capacity and skills of the team from all three organizations to fully implement sector partnership

in region 8 and build additional sector partnership practices and share insight, lessons learned and best practices gleaned from other sector partnership efforts.

The first phase will be a needs assessment phase and will involve collecting the occupational, skill, and training needs from finance and IT employers. The needs assessment process will involve a steering committee planning session, a needs assessment meeting with employers, and a strategic planning workshop to set implementation priorities. The second phase will be the implementation of the finance and IT sector partnership. The launch of the sector partnership will start with the rollout of the needs assessment report and re-engagement of employers and other partners. The goal of phase two is to transition and build capacity to sustainably manage the ongoing implementation by employer leaders, partners, the WorkSource Lower Chattahoochee team, and the Greater Columbus Georgia Chamber of Commerce Staff.

The third phase will be a replication phase designed to help develop and implement a similar sector partnership with WorkSource Middle Flint. While the second region 8 sector partnership will be health care rather than finance and IT, the team will use the capacity, skills, and process knowledge develop in phase 1 and 2 to replicate a partnership with new stakeholders in Americus and the surrounding area.

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 OWD 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 TCSC to enhance collaboration, believing that strong workforce development leads to economic development successes. The relocation of Title I programs to TCSG 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 OWD. 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 OWD 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 [Get state plan information for this section](#)

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

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

WIOA places an increased emphasis on the development and use of career pathways. Every Youth is required to have an objective assessment conducted in order to identify appropriate services and career pathways for the participant. Following the objective assessment, WIOA-eligible youth work in tandem with their case manager to develop an Individual Service Strategy (ISS), which heavily stresses career pathways. Youth are strongly encouraged to pursue credentials that will lead them into a sustainable, rewarding career. Additionally, the local area and schools work closely to ensure that K-12 schools are connected with local industry representatives. The LWDA is committed to providing educational opportunities through career pathways that will ultimately optimize the progress and success of individuals with varying levels of abilities and needs. Through the development and use of career pathways, the LWDA's youth will be equipped to enter the working world with marketable credentials and valuable skills.

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

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 provided for all new WIOA staff and service provider staff as needed. In addition, 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 change to include monitoring of Priority of Services for eligible clients. In addition, Priority of Services will be 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 2025-2026 or until another update occurs.
Income levels effective: April 22, 2026

Program Years 2025 – 2026 Six-Month Income Guidelines for WIOA Low Income Level Figures Effective April 22, 2026		
Family Size	Metropolitan Areas	Non-Metropolitan Areas
1	\$7,825	\$7,825
2	\$10,575	\$10,575
3	\$13,724	\$13,325
4	\$16,944	\$16,301
5	\$19,998	\$19,236
6	\$23,389	\$22,496
7	\$26,780	\$25,756
8	\$30,171	\$29,016
For each over 8 Add:	\$3,391	\$3,260

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 expand 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

Technical College Systems of Georgia, Office of Workforce Development

<https://tcsg.edu/worksource>



Equal Opportunity Complaint & General Grievance Policy and Procedure

For Applicants, Participants, Other Interested or Affected Parties

- SECTION I:** Equal Opportunity Complaint Policy
SECTION II: General Grievance Policy
SECTION III: Complaints of Fraud, Abuse, or Other Alleged Criminal Activity
SECTION IV: Complaints against Public Schools

I. EQUAL OPPORTUNITY COMPLAINT POLICY

Lower Chattahoochee (Lower Chatt) WorkSource Georgia/Lower Chattahoochee Workforce Development Board (LCWDB) adheres to the following United States law: “Equal Employment Opportunity Is the Law”. It is against the law for this recipient of Federal financial assistance to discriminate on the following basis: race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy, childbirth, and related medical conditions, sex stereotyping, transgender status, and gender identity), national origin (including limited English proficiency), age, disability, or political affiliation or belief, or, against any beneficiary of, applicant to, or participant in programs financially assisted under Title I of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), on the basis of the individual's citizenship status or participation in any WIOA Title I-financially assisted program or activity.

The recipient must not discriminate in any of the following areas: (1) Deciding who will be admitted, or have access, to any WIOA Title I-financially assisted program or activity; (2) providing opportunities in, or treating any person with regard to, such a program or activity; or (3) making employment decisions in the administration of, or in connection with, such a program or activity.

Recipients of federal financial assistance must take reasonable steps to ensure that communications with individuals with disabilities are as effective as communications with others. This means that, upon request and at no cost to the individual, recipients are required to provide appropriate auxiliary aids and services to qualified individuals with disabilities.

What To Do If You Believe You Have Experienced Discrimination

If you think that you have been subjected to discrimination under a WIOA Title I-financially assisted program or activity, you may file a complaint within 180 days from the date of the alleged violation with either:

- The recipient's Equal Opportunity Officer (or the person whom the recipient has designated for this purpose); or
- The Director, Civil Rights Center (CRC), U.S. Department of Labor, 200 Constitution Avenue NW., Room N-4123, Washington, DC 20210 or electronically as directed on the CRC Web site at www.dol.gov/crc.
- If you file your complaint with the recipient, you must wait either until the recipient issues a written Notice of Final Action, or until 90 days have passed (whichever is sooner), before filing with the Civil Rights Center.
- If the recipient does not give you a written Notice of Final Action within 90 days of the day on which you filed your complaint, you may file a complaint with CRC before receiving that Notice. However, you must file your CRC complaint within 30 days of the 90-day deadline (in other words, within 120 days after the day on which you filed your complaint with the recipient).
- If the recipient does give you a written Notice of Final Action on your complaint, but you are dissatisfied with the decision or resolution, you may file a complaint with CRC. You must file your CRC complaint within 30 days of the date on which you received the Notice of Final Action.

A **complaint** is an allegation of discrimination on the grounds a person, or any specific class of individuals, has been or is being discriminated against on the basis of race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy, childbirth, and related medical conditions, transgender status, and gender identity), national origin (including limited English proficiency), age, disability, political affiliation or belief, citizenship status, or participation in any WIOA Title I-financially assisted program or activity as prohibited by WIOA or part 29 CFR 38.69. An allegation of retaliation, intimidation or reprisal for taking action or

participating in any action to secure rights protected under WIOA will be processed as a complaint.

Note: A complaint cannot be processed as both a program complaint and as a discrimination complaint.

FILING COMPLAINTS OF DISCRIMINATION (under Equal Opportunity Complaint Policy)

Who May File: Any person requesting aid, benefits, services or training through the Lower Chatt WorkSource Georgia workforce system; eligible applicants and/or registrants; participants; employees, applicants for employment; service providers, eligible training providers (as defined in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act), and staff with the workforce system that believes he/she has been or is being subjected to discrimination prohibited under the Nondiscrimination and Equal Opportunity Provisions 29 CFR Part 38 and Section 188 of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

Lower Chatt WorkSource Georgia/LCWDB is prohibited from discriminating against a person, or any specific class of individuals, on the basis of race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy, childbirth, and related medical conditions, transgender status, and gender identity), national origin (including limited English proficiency), age, disability, political affiliation or belief, citizenship status, or participation in any WIOA Title I-financially assisted program or activity as prohibited by WIOA or part 29 CFR 8.69 in admission or access to, opportunity or treatment in, or employment in the administration of or in connection with, any WIOA funded program or activity. If you think that you have been subjected to discrimination under a WIOA funded program or activity, you may file a complaint within 180 days from the date of the alleged violation with:

**KRISTIE GEORGE, EO OFFICER
LOWER CHATT WORKSOURCE GEORGIA
POST OFFICE BOX 1340
COLUMBUS, GEORGIA 31902-1340
(706) 225-3990
TDD: 711, voice: 1-800-255-0056,
george.kristie@columbusga.org**

Each complaint must be filed in writing, either electronically or in hard copy, and must contain the following information:

- (A) The complainant's name, mailing address, and, if available, email address (or another means of contacting the complainant).
- (B) The identification of the respondent (the individual or entity that the complainant alleges is responsible for the discrimination).
- (C) A clear description of the allegations in sufficient detail including the date(s) and timeline that the alleged violation occurred to allow the recipient, as applicable, to decide whether: (1) what agency has jurisdiction over the complaint; (2) the complaint was filed in time; and (3) the complaint has apparent merit; in other words, whether the complainant's allegations, if true, would indicate noncompliance with any of the nondiscrimination and equal opportunity provisions of WIOA or part 29 CFR Part 38.
- (D) The written or electronic signature of the complainant or the written or electronic signature of the complainant's representative.

Complaint Processing Procedure

An initial written notice to the complainant will be provided within fifteen (15) days of receipt of the complaint. The notice will include the following information pursuant to part 29 CFR 38.72

(b) At a minimum, the procedures must include the following elements:

(1) Initial, written notice to the complainant that contains the following information:

- (i) An acknowledgment that the recipient has received the complaint; and
- (ii) Notice that the complainant has the right to be represented in the complaint process;
- (iii) Notice of rights contained in §38.35; and
- (iv) Notice that the complainant has the right to request and receive, at no cost, auxiliary aids and services, language assistance services, and that this notice will be translated into the non-English languages as required in §§38.4(h) and (i), 38.34, and 38.36.

(2) A written statement of the issue(s), provided to the complainant, that includes the following information:

- (i) A list of the issues raised in the complaint; and
- (3) For each such issue, a statement whether the recipient will accept the issue for investigation or reject the issue, and the reasons for each rejection.
- (4) A period for fact-finding or investigation of the circumstances underlying the complaint.
- (5) A period during which the recipient attempts to resolve the complaint. The methods available to resolve the complaint must include alternative dispute resolution (ADR), as described in paragraph (c) of this section.
- (6) A written Notice of Final Action, provided to the complainant within 90 days of the date on which the complaint was filed, that contains the following information:
 - (i) For each issue raised in the complaint, a statement of either:
 - (A) The recipient's decision on the issue and an explanation of the reasons underlying the decision; or
 - (B) A description of the way the parties resolved the issue; and
 - (ii) Notice that the complainant has a right to file a complaint with CRC within 30 days of the date on which the Notice of Final Action is received if the complainant is dissatisfied with the recipient's final action on the complaint.
- (b) The procedures the recipient adopts must provide for alternative dispute resolution (ADR). The recipient's ADR procedures must provide that:
 - (1) The complainant may attempt ADR at any time after the complainant has filed a written complaint with the recipient, but before a Notice of Final Action has been issued.
 - (2) The choice whether to use ADR or the customary process rests with the complainant.

A party to any agreement reached under ADR may notify the Director in the event the agreement is breached. In such circumstances, the following rules will apply:

- (i) The non-breaching party may notify with the Director within 30 days of the date on which the non-breaching party learns of the alleged breach; and
- (ii) The Director must evaluate the circumstances to determine whether the agreement has been breached. If the Director determines that the agreement has been breached, the complaint will be reinstated and processed in accordance with the recipient's procedures.
- (3) If the parties do not reach an agreement under ADR, the complainant may file a complaint with the Director as described in §§38.69 through 38.71.
 - (1) Acknowledgement of complaint received including date received; notice that the complainant has the right to be represented in the complaint process; notice of rights contained in §38.35; and notice that the complainant has the right to request and receive, at no cost, auxiliary aids and services, language assistance services, and that this notice will be translated into the non-English languages as required in §§38.4(h) and (i), 38.34, and 38.36.
 - (2) A written statement of issue(s) which includes a list of the issues raised in the complaint; for each issue, a statement of whether or not the issue is accepted for investigation or rejected and the reasons for each rejection after performing a period of fact-finding.
 - (3) Notice that the complainant may resolve the issue Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) any time after the complaint has been filed, but before a Notice of Final Action has been issued.

If the complaint does not fall within the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act jurisdiction for processing complaints alleging discrimination under Section 188 or Equal Opportunity and Nondiscrimination provisions at 29 CFR Part 38.74, the complainant will be notified in writing within five (5) business days of making such determination.

The notification shall include the basis of the determination as well as a statement of the complainant's right to file with the Civil Rights Center (CRC) within thirty (30) days of the determination.

Upon determination that the complaint has merit and is within the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act jurisdiction and period of fact-finding or investigation of the circumstances underlying the complaint.

Complaint Processing Time Frame complaint will be processed, and Notice of Final Action issued within ninety (90) days of receipt of the complaint pursuant to 29 CFR 38.72. Complainant may elect to file his or her equal opportunity complaint with the Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG), Office of Workforce Development (OWD). OWD's address and information is as follows: Attention: TCSG OWD Compliance Director, 1800 Century Place N.E., Suite 150, Atlanta, GA 30345-4304, (404) 679-5449, wioacompliance@tcsgeu.edu; use form at: <http://www.georgia.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/WFD-Grievance-Form-110915.pdf>.

If Lower Chattahoochee WorkSource Georgia/LCWDB has not provided complainant with a written decision within ninety (90) days of the filing of the complaint, complainant need not wait for a decision to be issued. Complainant may file a complaint with TCSG, OWD or CRC within thirty (30) days of the expiration of the 90-day period. If complainant is dissatisfied with Lower Chattahoochee WorkSource Georgia/LCWDB's resolution of his or her equal opportunity complaint, complainant may file a complaint with TCSG,OWD. Such complaint must be filed within thirty (30) days of the date you received notice of WorkSource Lower Chattahoochee/LCWDB's proposed resolution.

OR

Complaints may be initially filed or appealed to the Director, Civil Rights Center (CRC) U.S. Department of Labor, 200 Constitution Avenue, N.W. Room N-4123, Washington, DC 20210 or electronically as directed on the CRC website at www.dol.gov/crc within thirty (30) days of complainant's receipt of either Lower Chatt WorkSource Georgia/LCWDB Notice of Final Action or TCSG, OWD Notice of Final Action. In other words, within one hundred twenty (120) days Complainant may file his or her appeal.

Resolution Process

Alternative Dispute Resolution: Complainant must be given a choice as to the manner in which they have their complaint resolved. After an investigation is conducted by the Equal Opportunity Officer, ADR may be chosen by the complainant to resolve the issues, as long as a Notice of Final Action has not been issued. Mediation is recommended ADR and will be conducted by an impartial mediator. Complainant must notify the Equal Opportunity Officer within ten (10) days of receiving the Notice of Issue Statement letter of whether ADR is selected to resolve the dispute. Lower Chattahoochee WorkSource Georgia/LCWDB will provide an impartial mediator and will provide interested parties information regarding the arrangements (date, time, and location).

Time Frame: The period for attempting to resolve the complaint through mediation will be thirty (30) days from the date the complainant chooses mediation; but must be performed within ninety (90) days of the initial filing date.

Successful Mediation: Upon completion of successful mediation, the complainant and respondent will both sign a conciliation agreement attesting that the complaint has been resolved. A copy of the conciliation agreement will be provided to Technical College System of Georgia, Office of Workforce Development within ten (10) days of the date the conciliation agreement was signed.

Unsuccessful Mediation: In the event mediation was not successful, Lower Chattahoochee WorkSource Georgia/LCWDB shall proceed with issuing a Notice of Final Action within the ninety (90) day limit.

Complainant Responsibility: The complainant may amend the complaint at any point prior to the beginning of mediation or the issuance of the Notice of Final Action. The complainant may withdraw the complaint at any time by written notification.

Breach of Agreement: Any party to any agreement reached under ADR may file a complaint in the event the agreement is breached with Britney Singer, Compliance Director, Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG), Office of Workforce Development (OWD), 1800 Century Place N.E., Suite 150, Atlanta, GA 30345-4304 or Director, Civil Rights Center (CRC) U.S. Department of Labor, 200 Constitution Avenue, N.W. Room N-4123, Washington, DC 20210. The non-breaching party may file a complaint within thirty (30) days of the date that party learns of the alleged breach (29 CFR 38.72).

II. GENERAL GRIEVANCE POLICY

Any person applying for or receiving services through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Title I (WIOA) paid for by Lower Chattahoochee WorkSource Georgia/Lower Chattahoochee Workforce Development Board (LCWDB) will be treated fairly. Lower Chattahoochee WorkSource Georgia/LCWDB will make every effort to resolve all general, non-discriminatory complaints informally between those involved before a grievance is filed. Grievances may be filed in accordance with the written procedures established by Lower Chattahoochee WorkSource Georgia/LCWDB. **If you believe a violation of Title I of Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act or regulations of the program has occurred, you have the right to file a grievance.**

A **grievance** is a complaint about customer service, working conditions, wages, work assignment, etc., arising in connection with WIOA Title I funded programs operated by WIOA recipients including service providers, eligible training providers, one-stop partners and other contractors.

FILING A GENERAL GRIEVANCE (violations of the act or regulations not alleging discrimination)

Who May File: Any person, including WIOA program participants, applicants, staff, employers, board members or any other interested parties who believes they have received unfair treatment in a WIOA Title I funded program.

Any person may attempt to resolve all issues of unfair treatment by working with the appropriate manager and/or supervisor and staff member, service provider, or one-stop partner involved informally prior to a written grievance being filed.

All complaints as described in the previous definition may be filed within one hundred twenty (120) days after the act in question by first completing and submitting the General Grievance Form to:

**DR. VALERIE RICHARDSON, WIOA DIRECTOR
LOWER CHATT WORKSOURCE GEORGIA
POST OFFICE BOX 1340
COLUMBUS, GEORGIA 31902-1340
(706) 225-4529**

JTD@columbusga.org

Grievance Processing Procedure

A complaint may be filed by completion and submission of the General Grievance Form located at www.columbusga.org/wia. Lower Chattahoochee WorkSource Georgia/LCWDB will issue a written resolution within sixty (60) days of the date the complaint was filed. Pursuant to Section 181 of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, Lower Chattahoochee WorkSource Georgia/LCWDB shall provide the grievant with an opportunity for a hearing within sixty (60) days of the complaint's filing, if requested in writing by the grievant. In the event a hearing is not requested, Lower Chattahoochee WorkSource Georgia/LCWDB shall issue a decision as to whether provisions of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act were violated. In the event the grievant is dissatisfied with Lower Chattahoochee WorkSource Georgia/LCWDB's decision, he or she may appeal the decision to the Technical College System of Georgia, Office of Workforce Development (OWD) within sixty (60) days of the date of the decision. If such an appeal is made, the WFD shall issue a final determination within sixty (60) days of the receipt of the appeal.

In the event Lower Chattahoochee WorkSource Georgia/LCWDB does issue a written resolution within the sixty (60) days of the complaint's filing as required, the grievant has the automatic right to file his or her complaint with the Technical College System of Georgia, Office of Workforce Development

Hearing Process

A hearing on any complaint filed shall be conducted as soon as reasonably possible, but within sixty (60) days of the complaint's filing. Within ten (10) business days of the receipt of the request for a hearing, Lower Chattahoochee WorkSource Georgia/LCWDB shall: (1) respond in writing acknowledging the request to the grievant; and (2) notify the grievant and respondent of a hearing date. The notice shall include, but not limited to: (1) date of issuance; (2) name of grievant; (3) name of respondent against whom the complaint has been filed; (4) a statement reiterating that both **parties may be represented by** legal counsel at the hearing; (5) the date, time, place of the hearing, and the name of the hearing officer; (6) a statement of the alleged violation(s) of WIOA ; (7) copy of any policies and procedures for the hearing or identification of where such policies may be found; and (8) name, address, and telephone number of the contact person issuing the notice.

The hearing shall be conducted in compliance with federal regulations. The hearing shall have, at a minimum, the following components: (1) an impartial hearing officer selected by Lower Chatt WorkSource Georgia/LCWDB; (2) an opportunity for both the grievant and respondent to present an opening statement, witnesses, and evidence; (3) an opportunity for each party to cross-examine the other party’s witnesses; and (4) a record of the hearing which Lower Chatt WorkSource Georgia/LCWDB shall create and maintain.

The hearing officer, considering the evidence presented by the grievant and respondent, shall issue a written decision which shall serve as WorkSource Lower Chattahoochee/LCWDB’s official resolution of the complaint. The decision shall include the following information: (1) the date, time, and place of hearing; (2) a recitation of the issues alleged in the complaint; (3) a summary of any evidence and witnesses presented by the grievant and respondent; (4) an analysis of the issues as related to the facts; and (5) a decision addressing each issue alleged in the complaint.

No applicant, participant, employee, service provider or training provider will be intimidated, threatened, coerced or discriminated against because they have made a complaint, testified, assisted or participated in any manner in an investigation, proceeding or hearing.

Appeal Process

An appeal may be requested by contacting the Technical College System of Georgia, Office of Workforce Development, Attention: TCSG OWD Compliance Director, Century Place N.E., Suite 150, Atlanta, GA 30345-4304, (404) 679-5449, wioacompliance@tcsge.edu within sixty (60) days of the date of the decision.

III. COMPLAINTS OF FRAUD, ABUSE, OR OTHER ALLEGED CRIMINAL ACTIVITY

In cases of suspected fraud, abuse or other alleged criminal activity, you should direct your concerns to the Office of Inspector General, U.S. Department of Labor, at 1-866-435-7644 or inspector.general@oig.ga.gov.

IV. COMPLAINTS AGAINST PUBLIC SCHOOLS

If the complaint is not resolved informally and it involves public schools of the State of Georgia, the grievance procedure will comply with WIOA and OCGA 20-2-1160.

I CERTIFY THAT I HAVE RECEIVED A COPY OF THIS POLICY AND PROCEDURE AND UNERSTAND THE INFORMATION PROVIDED WITHIN THIS DOCUMENT.

Parent/Guardian Signature* *If participant younger than 18 years of age	Date	Participant Signature	Date
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Lower Chatt – WIOA Performance Metrics for PY 26 and PY 27

Adult Program	Agreed Goals PY23	Agreed Goals PY 24
Employment Rate 2 nd Quarter After Exit	73%	75.7%
Employment Rate 4 th Quarter After Exit	67%	75.3%
Median Earnings 2 nd Quarter After Exit	\$5,690	\$5,690
Credential Attainment within 4 Quarters After Exit	62%	78%
Measurable Skills Gains	44%	50%

Dislocated Workers	Agreed Goals PY23	Agreed Goals PY 24
Employment Rate 2 nd Quarter After Exit	79%	81%
Employment Rate 4 th Quarter After Exit	86%	84.1%
Median Earnings 2 nd Quarter After Exit	\$9,000	\$11,812
Credential Attainment within 4 Quarters After Exit	81%	84.5%
Measurable Skills Gains	55%	55%

Youth Program	Agreed Goals PY23	Agreed Goals PY 24
Employment Rate 2 nd Quarter After Exit	51%	61%
Employment Rate 4 th Quarter After Exit	55%	60.6%
Median Earnings 2 nd Quarter After Exit	\$2,600	\$2,500
Credential Attainment within 4 Quarters After Exit	71%	74.6%
Measurable Skills Gains	54%	40%

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: Dr. Valerie Richardson

Title: Local Workforce Area Director

Entity Representing: Lower Chattahoochee WDB

Signature: 

Name: Berry "Skip" Henderson

Title: Chief Local Elected Official - Mayor

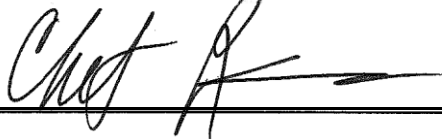
Entity Representing: City of Columbus

Signature: 

Name: Chester Randolph

Title: Local Workforce Development Board Chair

Entity Representing: Lower Chattahoochee WDB

Signature: 

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