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# **WIOA REGIONAL PLAN**

## **Local Areas 14 & 15**

**2020-2024**

**Updated**

## Acronym Guide

ACS	American Community Survey
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
AEFLA	Adult Education & Family Literacy Act
AOP	Agricultural Outreach Plan
ASL	American Sign Language
BER	Benefits Eligibility Review
BGLI	Burning Glass Labor Insight
BLS	Bureau of Labor Statistics
BSU	Business Services Unit (housed in GDOL)
CAD	Computer Aided Design
CAP	Client Assistance Programs
CAP	Corrective Action Plan
CAPI	Customized Apprenticeships & Paid Internships
CCR	College & Career Readiness Standards
CCSS	Common Core State Standards
CEDS	Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy
CIL	Centers for Independent Living
CJCC	Georgia Criminal Justice Coordinating Council
CLEO	Chief Local Elected Official
CNC	Computer Numerical Control Operator
CR	Customized Recruitment
CRC	Certified Rehabilitation Counselors
CRCC	Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification
CRP	Community Rehabilitation Programs
CSB	Community Service Boards
CSPD	Comprehensive System for Personal Development
CSPM	Client Services Policy Manual
CSU	Constituent Services Unit
DBHDD	Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities
DCA	Georgia Department of Community Affairs
DCH	Georgia Department of Community Health
DCS	Georgia Department of Community Supervision
DFCS	Division of Family & Children Services (DHS)
DHS	Georgia Department of Human Services
DJJ	Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice
DOAS	Georgia Department of Administrative Services
DOC	Georgia Department of Corrections

Dodd	Division of Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD)
DSU	Designated State Unit
DVOP	Disabled Veteran Outreach Program
EG	Employ Georgia (GDOL)
EMSI	Economic Modeling Specialists Intl
ERP	Eligibility Review Process
ES	Employment Services
ESP	Extended Services Plan
ETA	Employment & Training Administration (USDOL)
ETP	Eligible Training Provider
ETPL	Eligible Training Provider List
EXCEL	Executive Commitment to Excellence in Leadership
FB	Federal Bonding
FY	Fiscal Year
GA DOE	Georgia Department of Education
GALIS	Georgia Adult Learners Information System
GA-PRI	Georgia Prisoner Reentry Initiative
GDEcD	Georgia Department of Economic Development
GDOL	Georgia Department of Labor
GED	General Education Development test
GEPS	Georgia Enterprises for Products & Services
GLME	Georgia Labor Market Explorer
GOTSR	Governor's Office of Transition, Support & Reentry
GSE	Georgia Standards of Excellence
GVRA	Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency
GWROPP	Georgia Work Reedy Online Participant Portal
GWS	Georgia Workforce System
HDCI	High Demand Career Initiative
IATSE	International Association of Theatrical & Screen Employees
IAWP	International Association of Workforce Professionals
ICR	Information Collection Request
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
IELCE	Integrated English Literacy & Civics Education
IEP	Individualized Education Plan
IPE	Individualized Plan for Employment
IPS	Individualized Placement & Support
ISY	In-School Youth
ITA	Individual Training Account
ITP	Individualized Transition Plan

IWT	Incumbent Worker Training
JFF	Jobs for the Future
LEOs	Local Elected Officials
LVERs	Local Veteran Employment Representatives
LWDA	Local Workforce Development AREA (the local area)
LWDB	Local Workforce Development Board
LWIOA	Local Workforce Investment AREA
MHS	Migrant Head Start
MIS	Management Information System
MOA	Methods of Administration
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSFW	Migrant & Seasonal Farmworkers
MVR	Muskogee Vocational Rehabilitation
NAICS	North American Industry Classification System
NASWA	National Association for State Workforce Agencies
NDI	Non-Destructive Inspectors
NDT	Non-Destructive Testers
NDWG	National Dislocated Worker Grants
NEG	National Emergency Grant
NFJP	National Farmworker Jobs Program
NPRM	Notice of Proposed Rulemaking
NRS	National Reporting System
O*Net	Occupational Information Network
O.C.G.A.	Official Code of Georgia Annotated
OA	Office of Apprenticeship (USDOL)
OAE	Office of Adult Education (TCSG)
OCTAE	Office of Career, Technical & Agricultural Education (USDOE)
OJT	On-the-Job
OOS	Order of Selection
OSY	Out-of-School Youth
PIP	Performance Improvement Plan
PLC	Programmable Logic Controller
PWP	Personal Work Plan
PY	Program Year
RESEA	Reemployment Assistance Program
RESEA	Georgia's Reemployment Services & Eligibility Assessment
RFA	Request for Application
RSA	USDOE Rehabilitation Services Administration
RVRC	River Valley Regional Commission

SCSEP	Senior Community Service & Employment Program
SDVS	Georgia Department of Veteran's Services
SE	Supported Employment
SES	Supported Employment Services
SETA	Southeastern Employment & Training Association
SILC	Statewide Independent Living Council
SIWDG	Strategic Industries Workforce Development Grant
SMA	State Monitor Advocate
SNAP	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
SPC	Statistical Process Control
SPMI	Serious & Persistent Mental Illness
SRC	State Rehabilitation Council
SSDI	Social Security Disability Insurance
SSDR	State Service Delivery Regions
SSI	Supplemental Security Income
STAR	Staff Technical Assistance & Review
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math
SUP	State Unified Plan
SWAT	Special Workforce Assistance Team
SWDB	State Workforce Development Board
SWIS	Statewide Workforce Investment System
TAA	Trade Adjustment Assistance
TANF	Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
TCSG	Technical College System of Georgia
TEGL	Training Employment Guidance Letter
TFSP	TANF Family Service Plan
UCX	Unemployment Compensation for Ex- service members program
UGA	University of Georgia
UI	Unemployment Insurance
UI and RO	Unemployment Insurance & Regional Operations
UIRESEA	UI Re-Employment Assistance
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
USDOE	United States Department of Education
USDOL	United State Department of Labor
USG	University System of Georgia
VR	Vocational Rehabilitation
VRP	Vocational Rehabilitation Program
WARN	Worker Adjustment & Retraining Notification
WFD	Workforce Division (TCSG)

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

# 1. Strategic Elements, Governance and Structure

## Identification of the Fiscal Agent

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

Area 14 Fiscal Agent is:

Columbus Consolidated Government  
Howard Pendleton, Director  
Berry “Skip” Henderson, Mayor  
420 Tenth Street, First Floor  
Columbus, GA 31902-1340  
706-225-3168  
<http://www.columbusga.org/>

Area15 Fiscal Agent is:

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

## 2. Description of Strategic Planning Elements

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

### a. Regional economic conditions

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

The Technical College System of Georgia Office of Workforce Development serves as the state WIOA Administrator and Grant Recipient. Region 8 consists of the WIOA AREAs 14 and 15. Together Area 14 and 15 serve 16 counties. Counties are Harris, Muscogee, Chattahoochee, Stewart, Webster, Georgetown-Quitman, Randolph, Clay, Talbot, Marion, Taylor, Schley, Sumter, Macon, Dooly and Crisp.





## Lower Chattahoochee Workforce Development Area 14

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

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

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

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



## *Middle Flint WIOA Workforce Development Area 15*

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

Middle Flint area population is estimated to be 106,241 which ranked as 19th (last) of the nineteen workforce areas.

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

According to the GA Dept. of Labor Area Labor Profile, Labor Force for the Middle Flint Workforce Area in Georgia in March 2020 was 42,293 of which 40,829 were employed, 2,251 were unemployed. Middle Flint area counties have consistently had some of the highest unemployment rates within the State.

Middle Flint unemployment rate as of March 2020 was 5.3% while Georgia's unemployment rate for the same period was 4.3%. The Middle Flint area in 2018 is ranked as #3 of the highest unemployment rates for the State workforce development regions.

### **Middle Flint Employment and Unemployment Data Table**

Mar-20

Area	Civilian Labor Force	Number Employed	Number Unemployed	Unemployment Rate
Middle Flint Local Workforce Development Area	42,293	40,042	2,251	5.3%
Georgia	5,160,139	4,936,480	223,659	4.3%
United States	162,537,000	155,167,000	7,370,000	4.5%

Source: GA Dept. of Labor - LMI Data

Average weekly wages for the Middle Flint area for 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter 2019 was \$725 with an average annual wage of \$37,700. The averages for the Middle Flint area fall well below the Georgia average weekly wage of \$1,026 and an average annual wage of \$53,352.

### Employment Wage Statistics Distribution Table

Wage Information as of the 3rd Quarter 2019

Rank	Area	Number of Employees	Average Hourly Wage†	Average Weekly Wage	Average Annual Wage†
1	City of Atlanta	901,157	\$35.55	\$1,422	\$73,944
2	Fulton County	901,157	\$35.55	\$1,422	\$73,944
3	Cobb County	375,459	\$28.28	\$1,131	\$58,812
4	DeKalb County	302,619	\$27.48	\$1,099	\$57,148
5	Central Savannah River	119,373	\$25.33	\$1,013	\$52,676
6	Atlanta Regional	739,735	\$24.03	\$961	\$49,972
7	Coastal Georgia	281,619	\$21.53	\$861	\$44,772
8	Georgia Mountains	250,857	\$21.35	\$854	\$44,408
9	Macon-Bibb Local	82,614	\$21.18	\$847	\$44,044
10	Lower Chattahoochee	106,381	\$20.80	\$832	\$43,264
11	Northeast Georgia	208,896	\$20.15	\$806	\$41,912
12	Middle Georgia	117,008	\$20.05	\$802	\$41,704
13	West Central Georgia	171,755	\$19.90	\$796	\$41,392
14	Northwest Georgia	271,820	\$19.53	\$781	\$40,612
15	Southwest Georgia	125,014	\$19.03	\$761	\$39,572
16	East Central Georgia	61,937	\$18.50	\$740	\$38,480
17	Middle Flint	30,643	\$18.13	\$725	\$37,700
18	Workforce Development Area	86,152	\$17.68	\$707	\$36,764
19	Southern Georgia	143,842	\$17.48	\$699	\$36,348

† Assumes a 40-hour week worked the year round.

Source: GDOL LMI Data

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

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

### Lower Chattahoochee

Top employers in the Lower Chattahoochee WIOA include one of the US Army’s largest training bases as well as two Fortune 1000 Companies. This is the largest concentration of Fortune 1000 Companies in Georgia outside of Atlanta, and one of the largest concentrations of large companies in the Southeastern United States. Together Ft. Benning, AFLAC and TSYS employ nearly 50% of all workers in the metropolitan Columbus area. Other major employers include Synovus (and Columbus Bank and Trust), local hospitals, the public-school system, and Columbus State University. The number of advanced manufactures is also significant, with KIA Suppliers 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 survey, census and other data identified the following Areas of Economic Activity and suggested the Targeted Business Sectors. Healthcare is not included in these targeted business sectors, but from a workforce perspective, it is one of the most important economic activities in the area. The Healthcare Sector is one of the largest employers in the area and has the most in-demand career needs.



### Middle Flint

According to the Georgia Dept. of Labor. The Industry Mix of Top Employers in the Middle Flint Area are numerous Crop Producing farms employers in the a RESEA, Good- Producing Employers in the Middle Flint Area include Tyson Foods and Tyson Farms, Eaton- Cooper Lighting, Interfor South LLC, International Paper, IMERYYS, and Norbord. The LWDA also has Service- Providing industry in the a RESEA that include numerous Hospitals such as Phoebe- Sumter and Crisp Regional Hospital, Nursing Homes and Rehabilitation Centers, Crisp Power Commission, Flint Energies, Sumter EMC, hospitality industry, in multiple counties, the area also has Middle Flint Behavioral Healthcare and Habitat for Humanity that are also big employers. Middle Flint also has numerous Public, Charter, and Private Schools in each county. Middle Flint has one (1) Technical Colleges – South Georgia Technical College and 1 University- Georgia Southwestern State University. There are other Technical Colleges, Universities and Hospitals and Nursing Homes and Advanced manufacturers that pull from the Middle Flint Area. Despite the strengths, the Middle Flint AREA is in need of growth to diversify the Industry Mix.

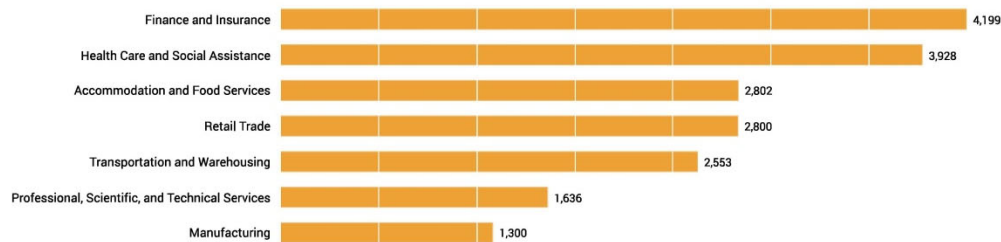
### Employment needs of employers in those industry sectors and occupations

#### Lower Chattahoochee

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

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

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

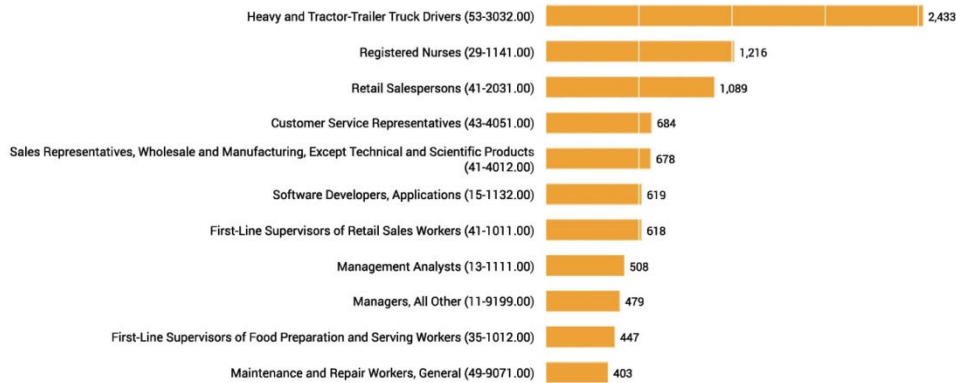


Source: BGLI

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

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

#### Top Occupations (BGLI)



### Middle Flint

The following chart information has been gathered from the Department of Labor, Workforce Statistics & Economic Research, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages Program.

According to the Area Profile for Middle Flint Local Workforce Development Area, Georgia Department of Labor, Workforce Statistics & Economic Research. The table below shows the Industries with the highest total annual percent changes in the Middle Flint Local Workforce area for the 2016-2026 time period. Middle Flint Area Top 2 Industries include Animal Production and Aquaculture and General Merchandise Stores. See Full list below:

#### Industries by Projected Growth Table

Rank	Industry	2016 Estimated Employment	2026 Projected Employment	Total Annual Percent Change
1	Animal Production and Aquaculture	146	220	4.19%
2	General Merchandise Stores	971	1,452	4.11%
3	Private Households	158	195	2.13%
4	Telecommunications	79	96	1.97%
5	Support Activities for Agriculture and Forestry	350	425	1.96%
6	Social Assistance	635	737	1.50%
7	Specialty Trade Contractors	456	522	1.36%
8	Crop Production	4,659	5,239	1.18%
9	Health and Personal Care Stores	232	258	1.07%
10	Support Activities for Transportation	169	187	1.02%

Source: Georgia Dept. of Labor, Workforce Statistics & Economic Research, Projections Unit

### *Listing of occupations in demand within the local area*

Top occupations in-demand for the area is based on the Occupations by Projected Growth Table analysis conducted by the GA Department of Labor, Workforce Statistics & Economic Research, and Projection Unit. Rankings is based on the number of projected employments for 2026.

<b>Lower Chattahoochee LWDA</b>	<b>Middle Flint LWDA</b>
1. Office and Administrative Support	1. Management
2. Sales and Related	2. Office and Administrative Support
3. Food preparation and Serving Related	3. Sales and Related
4. Management	4. Farming, Fishing and Forestry
5. Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	5. Transportation and Material Moving
6. Education, Training and Library	6. Production
7. Business and Financial Operations	7. Education, Training and Library
8. Production	8. Food Preparation and Serving Related
9. Installation, Maintenance and Repair	9. Healthcare Practitioners and Technical
10. Transportation and Material Moving	10. Construction and Extraction

Source: GA Dept of Labor, Workforce Statistics & Economic Research, Projection Unit

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

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

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 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.

1. [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 associate degree or bachelor’s degrees.

2. [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.



3. [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 are 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 that focuses on the types of jobs (particularly civilian and contractor) who are currently or will be relocating to the region. This sustained focus on up-to-date new job impact numbers will require follow-up of the economic impact analysis as well as dissemination of information to collaborative partners in the region.
- Continued assessment of education, and skill levels and job categories of projected population.
- Continued discussion of strategies to address the area's workforce-related challenges, such as basic literacy skills, customer service skills, work ethic, and hands-on, technical experience.
- Conduct periodic surveys as needed to better understand the types of jobs, qualifications, and to what extent job seekers plan to work.

## **Strategic efforts to improve workforce training and support**

- Prepare for a major workforce initiative, which includes identifying priority job creation and workforce shortages and the training needs required.
- Identify and prepare for infrastructure needs in education and health care services.

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

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

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

Recommendations in this report included building the digital skills of citizens in the region to prepare for a 21<sup>st</sup> 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.

### *Middle Flint*

According to employers in the local area workforce the labor force is facing issues with knowledge and skills needed to meet the employment needs of the area. Issues are 1. Recruitment of Skilled Workers, 2- Gaps in Work Ethics and Basic Skills, 3- Inadequate Support Services. Each of these issues are addressed in this section, followed by a discussion of the in-demand sectors occupations.

## Ten Largest Employers – Region 8

### Top Employers

Lower Chattahoochee	Middle Flint
American Family Life Assurance Company	Cooper Lighting, LLC
Columbus State University	Crisp Regional Hospital, Inc.
JCG Foods of Georgia, LLC	Georgia Department of Corrections
Pratt & Whitney Aircraft	Georgia Southwestern State University
St Francis Health, LLC	International Paper Co.
Synovus Financial Corp.	Magnolia Mano, Inc.
The Medical Center, Inc.	Phoebe Sumter Medical Center, Inc.
TSYS Campus	Thrift Savings Plan
Walmart	Tyson Farms, Inc.
WellPoint, Inc.	Walmart

Source: Area Labor Profile, GA Dept. of Labor

The list above represents employers covered by unemployment insurance including all government agencies except correctional institutions, state and local hospitals, state colleges and universities. Employers are listed alphabetically by area, not by the number of employees.

### *Workforce in the region*

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

The age of the working population in the region trends slightly older than the state average, as there are fewer future young entrants into the workforce and more who are 65+ and likely exiting the workforce than is true, on average, across the state. Service- Providing, Government and Good- producing have the highest number of job openings in the Region.

## Current labor force employment – Super Sector Industries

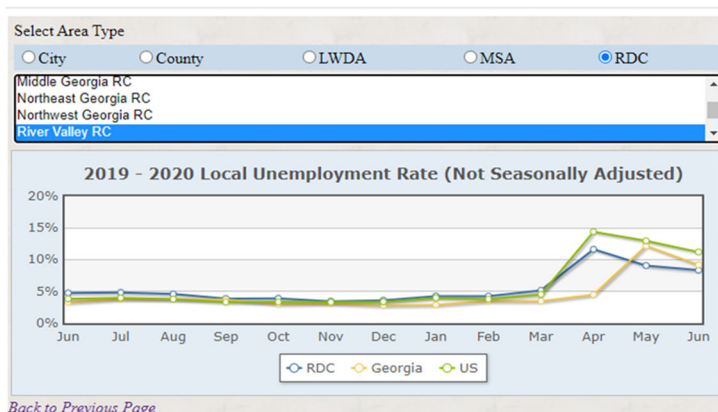
Sector	Region 8
Sector Name	Employment
Construction	4,506
Education and Health Services	19,054
Financial Activities	12,247
Information	1,221
Leisure and Hospitality	15,600
Manufacturing	13,754
Natural Resources, Mining and Agriculture	2,491
Other Services	2,826
Professional and Business Services	15,196
Trade, Transportation and Utilities	20,849
Unclassified	196
Government	28,470

Source: GDOL LMI Area Profile

### Unemployment data

The Unemployment Rate in the Local area as of March 2020 is higher than the unemployment rates for the state of Georgia and the nation. The most recent unemployment rate, for the Local area 5.3% in the Middle Flint area, 4.3% in Georgia, and 4.5% in the US.

### Unemployment rates, rates over time

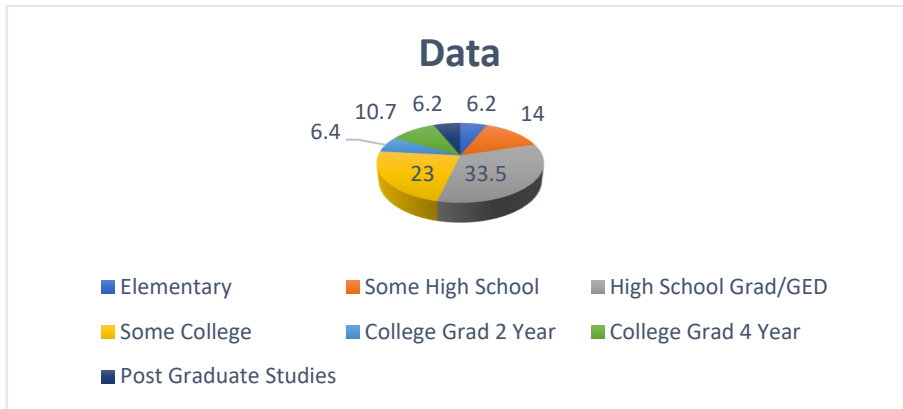


Source: GDOL

Labor Force Activity shows the LWDA had a labor force of 172,118 with 162,092 employed and 10,026 unemployed in June 2020. At that time, the unemployment rate was 5.8%.

**Information on labor market trends**

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



In 2019, the Region had a total of 3,476 High School graduates from public schools. In 2019 Technical Colleges within the Region had graduates in many in-demand occupations such as, Aircraft Power plant Technology, Heavy Equipment Maintenance Technology, Line worker, Allied Health & Medical, Licensed Practical Nursing, Machine Technology, Truck Drivers and Welding Technology. The Region also have 4 Year College graduates in Registered Nursing Programs.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau - 2010 Decennial Census, LMI

**At Risk Populations**

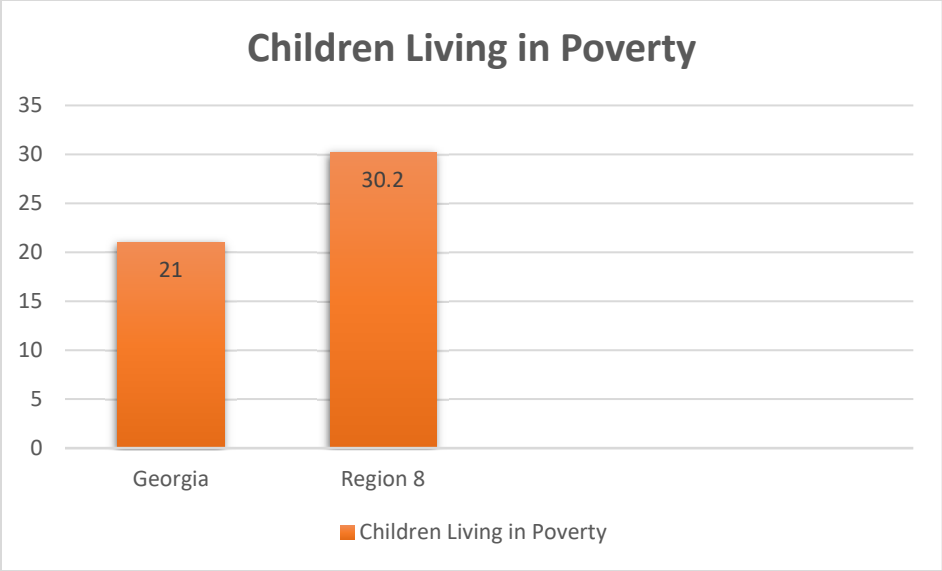
Some of the highest at-risk populations are teens who are neither working or in school. Based on Annie E Casey Foundation Kids Count data, this numbered a relatively high 5,000 youth in Congressional District 2, which includes most of the region (as well as portions of Albany, GA).

<i>Teens ages 16 to 19 not attending school and not working</i>		
Georgia, Congressional District 2	Number	5,000
	Percent	12%

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

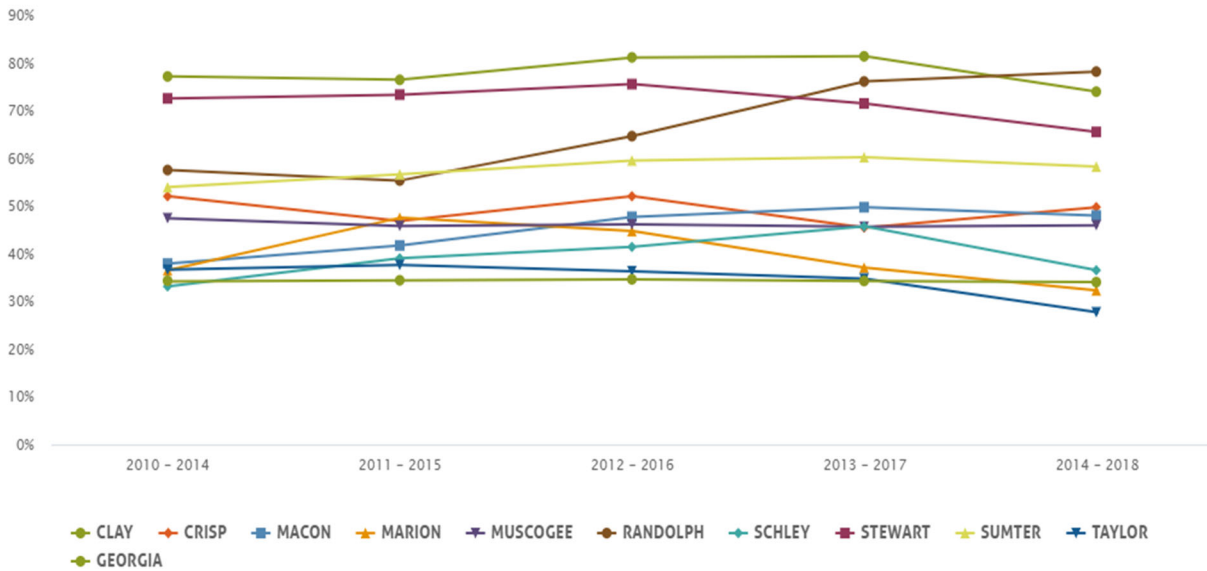
**Children living in Poverty**

Another example of at-risk populations is the percentage of children living in poverty. According to 2018 data, the most recent available, the percentage in the River Valley Region is higher than State averages. The Region has a 34.0% rate of children living in poverty. These are children whose families’ household income is below the federal poverty level.



**Children living in single-parent families**

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

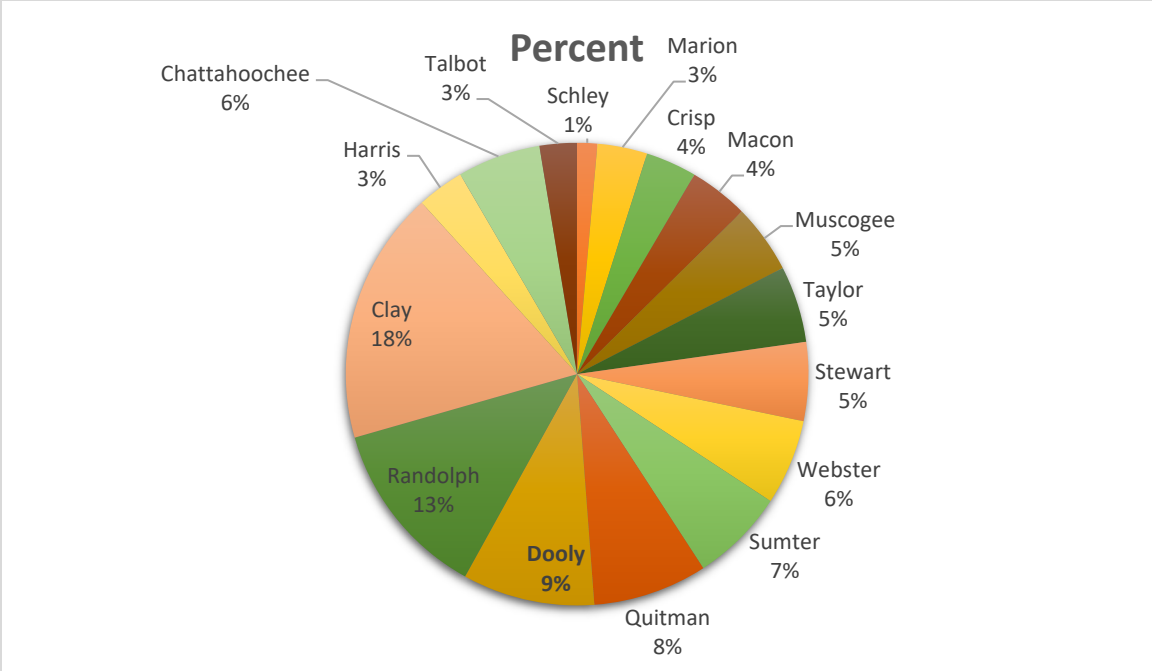


## Children Living In Single-Parent Families (Percent)

Georgia Family Connection Partnership  
 KIDS COUNT Data Center, [datacenter.kidscount.org](http://datacenter.kidscount.org)  
 A project of the Annie E. Casey Foundation

### Children whose parents lack secure employment -

As of 2020, Region 8 has a wide range of children whose parents lack secure employment in Georgia. Dooly and Sumter counties have the highest percentage, while Schley and Marion counties both have the lowest percentages. Children living in families lacking secure parental employment are vulnerable. Without at least one parent employed full time, children are more likely to fall into poverty. Yet too many parents who want full-time work are forced to piece together part-time or temporary jobs that do not provide sufficient or stable income; some lack the education and skills needed to secure a good job. Even a full-time job at low wages does not necessarily lift a family out of poverty.



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

Special Populations at Risk	Georgia
Ex-Offenders	17,268
Homeless	9,499
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

High unemployment rates, low percentage of college degrees, and high levels of poverty. Middle Flint Area also have a low annual income of \$37,700 for the Middle Flint Local Workforce Development Area with average hourly wage of \$18.13, compared to the state annual income \$53,352 with average hourly wage of \$25.65.



**Median Household Income – Middle Flint Workforce Development Area**

County	2018 Median Household Income	2018 Per Capita Income	% Persons in Poverty
Crisp	\$35,096	\$21,581	27.4%
Dooly	\$35,629	\$20,259	29.1%
Macon	\$31,999	\$15,924	30.5%
Marion	\$44,309	\$22,478	22.8%
Schley	\$41,276	\$20,585	18.1%
Sumter	\$36,205	\$20,191	25.7%
Taylor	\$33,422	\$19,068	22.9%
Webster	\$35,755	\$21,586	22.7%
<b>Georgia</b>	<b>\$55,679</b>	<b>\$29,523</b>	<b>14.3%</b>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

	Region 8	Georgia
2018 Median Household Income	\$39,342	\$55,679
2018 Per Capita Income	\$32,931	\$29,523

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

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

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

Workforce development activities in the area include state initiatives, both Lower Chattahoochee and Middle Flint WIOAs and their partners, South Georgia Technical College, Columbus Technical College, as well as 4 Year Universities located throughout the Region. Region 8 has increased attention on workforce issues by the Greater Columbus Chamber of Commerce, One Sumter, and the Cordele Industrial Board, among others. These combined resources are being coordinated and deployed throughout the Region. The strengths, weaknesses, and capacity of these programs are discussed below.

**Workforce Activities**

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

Region 8 has seven higher education institutions Georgia Southwestern State University and South Georgia Technical College are both in Sumter county. Andrew College is in Randolph county and Columbus

State University, Columbus Technical College, Georgia Military College with campuses in Fort Benning and Columbus are all located in Muscogee county.

Region 8 has two designated Comprehensive One-Stop Centers (Americus and Columbus). The One-Stop Operator services under WIOA were competitively procured (formal advertising - Sealed Bid) to identify appropriate service providers to 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 locations and any affiliate sites in the workforce areas within Region 8. In addition, public libraries and other access points are available within the region for individuals to receive career information. One Stop Affiliate sites (Eckerd Connects and South GA Technical College are also access points in the local area. The Middle Flint AREA 15 provides Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) services with area colleges and technical colleges and other approved eligible training providers. ITAs are in demand in growth and occupational areas where employment opportunities are expected.

The Middle Flint Area 15 provides Case Management, and Training to service providers approved by the Local Workforce Boards (WDB). On-the-Job Training (OJT) is contracted through competitive procurement and awarded to providers by the WIOA WDBs.

OJT is a business service which engages local area employers to provide employment training opportunities to eligible WIOA customers. OJT provides employer 50% percent reimbursement for participant training costs. OJT is a direct hands-on-training for employment opportunities. Local area employers volunteer to participate as an OJT worksite.

GED PLUS (Work Readiness, Work Experience & Career Pathways) services are available for eligible adults, dislocated workers, and youth who are in need of obtaining a GED diploma. Individuals who have a High School Diploma or GED can participate in the Work Readiness, Work Experience, and Career Pathways services as well. Work Readiness includes Soft Skills Training, Resume Development, Job Search Training, Financial Budgeting, Interviewing Skills, and Job Placement all part of the activity. Work Experience is a business service which engages local area businesses to provide work sites for hands-on-training opportunities whereby wages, Workman's Comp, and Liability Insurance are provided by the service provider.

Middle Flint benefits from having South Georgia Technical College in the area. Both campuses are strategically located throughout the Area to ensure individuals have access to a variety of in-demand training programs. WIOA works closely with the Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG), which the state has identified as the primary mechanism for creating a job-driven education. Technical colleges are

actively involved in providing both jobs and workers to fill them, workers who by all accounts had both academic and employment barriers to employment.

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

## Work Readiness

### **Sector Partnerships -**

Sector Partnerships have become an integral part of Georgia's Workforce system. Sector Partnerships began in Georgia in 2016 to strengthen Georgia's workforce system and better align with system needs of employers across the state. It has evolved to participation with all twelve (12) regions of the State to better serve the needs of their regional industries. It has increased understanding of the statewide workforce needs and has enabled greater coordination between partner and community agencies. Partnerships work directly with employers to develop strategies to address and meet current and future needs to develop strategies to address and meet current future needs.

The region (Lower Chattahoochee AREA 14 & Middle Flint AREA 15 Workforce AREAs) submitted an application for funding of a Sector Partnership grant in May 2019 and was awarded a Sector Partnership Grant in July 2019. The Region will be focusing on two sectors of Finance/Insurance and Healthcare. Lower Chattahoochee Area 14 will be focusing on the Finance /Insurance sectors as the area has several large employers such as Total Systems Services Inc. (TSYS), AFLAC, Anthem Blue Cross/Blue Shield, and large banking institutions. The Middle Flint AREA 15 will be focusing on the Healthcare sector for the 2019-2021 time period.

The region sector partnerships will work towards the goal of developing a pipeline of career pathways for the healthcare, financial and insurance occupations to meet the needs of regional employers.

Middle Flint will work to develop a pipeline of individuals interested in careers within the Healthcare sector to meet the employer's needs. Educational and training opportunities within the healthcare field will be available thru local colleges and universities. One of the goals is to work with high school students to develop their interest in the healthcare occupations and then guide them into post-secondary educational opportunities for future careers and self-sufficient wages and employment advancement opportunities.

The region has initiated a contract with the Greater Columbus Chamber of Commerce and CHMURA to core group that will implement the Sector Partnership work in the region. COVID 19 impacted the planned implementation schedule of the Sector Partnership work in the region. Lower Chattahoochee Area 14 was initially scheduled to begin Sector Partnership work in the spring 2020 and the Middle Flint Area 15 Implementation was initially scheduled for the fall of 2020. The revised timeline for implementation will be November 2020 – January 2021. CHMURA has been hired as the consulting firm and will analyze the impact of COVID 19 pandemic, forecast recovery, identify skills gaps, identify educational deficiencies and opportunities and labor demand for the region.

### Common Trends

Sector Partnership identified common trends in the area. There were certain key trends that were common among many of the represented companies and industries. (1) There is a growing problem with an aging workforce throughout the state. Many employers have older employees and expect a large percentage of employees to retire in the near future. Specifically, 19 companies in a variety of industries specifically cited aging workforce as a concern. (2) Soft skills/workplace skills are a crucial need. Nearly every employer discussed the importance of soft skills, such as communication, teamwork, problem solving, intellectual curiosity, critical thinking, and work ethic. Many employers stated that they found these skills especially lacking in younger employees. (3) Employers also have increasing difficulty in recruiting employees that can pass background screenings and drug tests. (4) Additionally, there is great demand for basic educational skills. Employers stated that they were looking for individuals with “work ready skills,” such as proficiency in reading, mathematics, statistics, and writing. (5) There is a great need to begin introducing STEM to students at a much younger age. Employers reported that STEM career fields need to be introduced to students at a younger age and made a key part of the curriculum. Employers agreed that educators play a large role making STEM fields appealing to youth. Further, companies in various sectors highlighted the need to attract more women and minorities into STEM-related jobs. There is a talent shortage in these career fields and recruiting women and minorities would help to better fill the talent pipeline. Companies seek to match Georgia’s diverse population with hiring practices and employee make up. (6) Another common trend was the shortage of local skilled trades’ workers in the state. Employers expressed interest in hiring Georgians but found many lacked the requisite skills. This was expressed across many of the industries, but it was especially prevalent in the industries that require skilled workers, such as manufacturing and entertainment (television & film production).

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

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

- a. Launch communication campaigns to reach different target audiences about job opportunities, to include information about career pathways opportunities, and local higher education institutions that offer related degree programs through the one-stop centers. Include a series of presentations in neighborhoods, churches, and other gathering places.
- b. Expand local involvement through collaboration with the local school district, technical colleges, and the manufacturing sector to educate young people on the value of learning a skills trade. For several years, the Muscogee County School District and Columbus Technical College have been instrumental in spearheading a successful initiative with the manufacturing sector to provide apprenticeship training for high school students. The local workforce area will build on its existing partnership and collaboration with these partners to involve WIOA as another venue and service in promoting the Go Build Georgia Initiative in our local workforce area.
- c. Increase opportunities for high school and college students to acquire work readiness and work ethics through work experience during summer months; in addition to school-year internships primarily for out-of-school and college students. To increase access to services and opportunities that result in an increase in graduation rates and entry into institutions of higher learning or employment in high growth, high-demand occupations.
- d. Work with regional non-profit organizations, government entities and businesses to identify volunteer and internship opportunities for high school students.
- e. Continue to evaluate additional education and training programs and/or services needed to prepare the workforce for projected positions.
- f. Continue to collaborate with stakeholders to develop continual strategies.

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

In the Middle Flint area, there are an array of WIOA services to include Career Services, educational and Training Services to the following group of adults, dislocated workers, and youth. These services are provided through partnerships, basic career services, Individual Training Accounts (ITA's), On-the-Job Training (OJT), and Work Experience (WEX), and provide assistance to GA Department of Labor for Rapid Response events in the local area.

### Career Services

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

- Outreach, intake, and orientation to services
- Eligibility Determination for assistance
- Assessments of skills levels, aptitude, interest, abilities, and supportive service needs
- Career counseling as necessary
- Job search / placement assistance
- Information on Labor Market Information (LMI), demand occupation, education requirements and wage analysis
- Information on Eligible Training Providers List
- Information on supportive services available in area and referral to those services if needed
- Information on filing Unemployment Insurance compensation claims
- Comprehensive and specialized assessments (skill levels, interviewing, evaluation, diagnostic testing)
- Counseling (individual or group)
- Development of Individual Employment Plan (IEP)
- Work Readiness services including resume development, interviewing skills, attendance Punctuality, appropriate dress in the workplace, communication skills, how to conduct a job search etc...
- Financial literacy services which may include developing personal/household budgets, banking services, applying for credit or loans, credit score and analysis, how to maintain credit score, understanding payroll deductions etc.

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

### Training Services

Training services are for individuals who need more intensive level of services to obtain employment or have been retained in employment. The following criteria is reviewed to ensure that individuals are in need of training: (1) Individual must meet the WIOA eligibility requirements, (2) determined in need of training services based on an assessment and evaluation, have knowledge and ability to successfully

participate in a training service, (3) desired program of training will enable employment opportunities in local area or reasonable commuting distance and (4) meet the qualification requirements for desired training program.

Approved Eligible Training Providers Lists (ETPL) provides information on available providers and programs. ETPL is available via the WorkSource Georgia website or other resources.

### **WIOA Services**

WIOA services in the local area include comprehensive and specialized assessments of educational and skill levels identified services needed by customers. This includes: Development of Individual Service Strategy (ISS) for youth customers; Development of Individual Employment Plans (IEP) for adults and dislocated workers; Referral to community services and educational and training opportunities or Case management and service coordination for customers. WIOA funded training activities include: (1) Individual Training Accounts (ITA's) for individuals seeking educational and occupational skills training available by eligible training providers such as public colleges, Technical Colleges and Universities and private training providers. (2) GED Remediation/Work Readiness and Work Experience which provides basic skills literacy remediation to individuals who lack a high school diploma or GED. Individuals receive instructor led remediation over the four subject areas of the GED examination with the goal of GED attainment. Work Readiness provides soft skills, employability skills, and life skills training to assist individuals with obtaining employment and retention in employment. Work Experience provides work-based learning opportunities where individuals are placed on actual worksites with participating employers and (3) On-The-Job Training (OJT) offers work-based learning opportunities where individuals are placed with an employer for a designated employment position and training period. Training Agreements are developed to identify job duties and skills to be learned during the training period. Employers are reimbursed 50% of the participants' wages during the training period. Individuals are placed in permanent employment upon successful completion of the OJT activity.

### **Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency Services (GVRA)**

Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency Services (GVRA) provides services to individuals with disabilities. Services include education; work-based learning and training services in preparation for employment. Services include counseling, assistive technology, job placements, vocational assessments, medical evaluations, work adjustments, and physical restoration services. GVRA monitors employer satisfaction to ensure that individuals with disabilities seeking employment meet businesses' skills requirements and

that the services provided through GVRA are aligned with the needs of employers. Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Services is an electronic partner at the comprehensive One Stop Center.

### Technical Colleges in the Region

Region 8 has several Technical Colleges ( South GA Technical College, Columbus Technical College, and Miller-Mott Technical College) that offer Adult Education services. All Technical Colleges provide Adult Education. Adult Education services provide remediation on basic literacy skills to assist individuals in GED attainment. They also offer at least one Integrated Education & Training (IET) opportunity for their students. IET provides individuals with adult education, training, and workforce preparation activities concurrently, with the goal of helping students obtain jobs in regionally in-demand occupations. English as Second Language (ESL) classes are available as well. Technical Colleges has multiple site locations in the Region which offer both day and evening classes to accommodate individuals' schedules. Technical Colleges in the Region also offers a GED program for criminal offenders at the local Correctional Institution. The offender program goal is to assist with removing barriers to employment to provide the resources needed to affectively transition offenders into employment or post-secondary educational opportunities.

### WIOA Services List for Region 8

Type of Training Services	Description of Service, Requirements and Providers Contact Information
<i>Individual Training Accounts (ITA's)</i>	Individuals that are interested in attending occupational skills training under an Individual Training Account (ITA) with a Georgia approved eligible training provider such as Technical College, public College, or University, or private training provider. Program of study must be a locally approved training program which has an expected employment opportunity available upon completion of training. <b>Eligible Training Provider List is available at <a href="http://www.worksourcegeorgia.org">www.worksourcegeorgia.org</a></b>
<i>Requirements</i>	Individuals must meet income eligibility requirements for Adults (ages 18 – up) and determination of need and suitability for training. Individuals who have been dislocated from their employment (Dislocated Worker) due to an employment layoff, business or plant closure, and/or reduction in labor force who are determined to be in need of training to return to employment. Individuals must apply for financial aid if available thru training institution. Training must be completed within 2 years (104 weeks) and cost of training is within local training limits of \$6,000 maximum. Individuals interested in attending a 4-year training institution must be a junior or senior academic status to be considered for services. Individuals must be a full-time student (12 or more credit hours per training period).



<i>Benefits</i>	Financial assistance with costs of tuition, books, and training related supplies after other forms of financial aid have been applied. Supportive service may be available to assist with costs of attending training such as travel to training etc. Supportive services are paid based on individual's need and daily attendance in training as verified by Attendance Timesheet. Payments are not paid for days not in training, holidays, sick days, or breaks between semesters.
<i>Local Approved Training Providers</i>	<b>South Georgia Technical College AND Georgia Southwestern State University (Americus &amp; Cordele Campuses) . For a 4-Year school, must be a Junior or Senior Academic status.</b>
<i>Out of AREA Training Providers</i>	Approved Training Providers which are located outside the Middle Flint eight county area may be approved on a case by case basis. Training Providers must be located within a reasonable commuting travel distance (50 miles) from the individual's residence. Out of the Area approved Training Providers within commuting distance are Albany Technical College, Albany State University, Fort Valley State University, Central Georgia Technical College, Southern Crescent Technical College, Columbus Technical College, Columbus State University, Truck Driver Institute (TDI). Training costs must be within local training limits.

### **Eliminating Duplication of Efforts**

The Region continues 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 Region 8, 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".

### **Strengths of the Region**

The Region 8 has several higher educational institutions (Georgia Southwestern State University, Andrew College, Columbus State University and Georgia Military College) and private educational and training

providers. All of the mentioned educational institutions are located throughout the Region to ensure individuals have access to a variety of educational and training services.

The Region is fortunate to have these resources, and they are a critical part of our overall strategy. We use these resources in part to provide training for a wide range of programs. The WIOA funded GED/Work Readiness /Work Experience activity as well as other WIOA programs provided helps strengthen the area by focusing on educational improvement, improvement in soft skills training, and providing work experience which helps with work- based learning opportunities. The Technical College Adult Education programs also offer basic skills literacy improvement training which strengthens the educational level. The Middle Flint area operates an On-the-Job (OJT) and Work Experience work-based learning activity in the area. OJT connects job seekers and employers who have job openings. OJT services have been an ongoing training activity in the local area for more than 33 years. 2 Technical Colleges that have developed strong partnerships with businesses such as Eaton Lighting, International Paper, Sumter EMC, Flint EMC, Crisp Power Commission, Norbord, Interfor LLC, John Deere, Caterpillar, Tyson Foods, Pratt and Whitney, KODAK, AFLAC, Anthem Blue Cross Blue Shield, and many other businesses in the local area. South Georgia Technical College serves as the eastern U.S training site for Caterpillar and John Deere.

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

The Region has several initiatives such as Columbus 2025, the One Sumter initiative with the Sumter County Chamber of Commerce and Development Authority. Crisp County Industrial Development Authority is also studying the economic issues facing their area in order to better prepare for the future growth and prosperity of the area.

The Region offers many opportunities for personal growth, education, and career/job employment success. Our Region continues to experience growth in high-demand sectors, healthcare as well as manufacturing and transportation. One of those focuses is on the industry sector and high-demand occupations, for example in healthcare, (LPNs, RNs, Medical Assistants, Certificated Nurses Assistant (CNA), and Patient Care Tech (PCT) etc.).

## **Georgia Department of Labor (GDOL)**

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

Georgia Workforce System and Employ Georgia (EG) are the data collection and reporting systems. These systems allow for tracking of all participants including information related to demographics, employment status, customer service plans, barriers to employment, employer-searchable resumes etc. Employ Georgia is the job search data system that individuals seeking employment can upload resumes, apply for job opportunities, allows employers to list available job opening, receive applicant referrals, and serves to connect the job seeker with employers seeking to fill available job openings.

GDOL collects, analyzes, and publishes the state's labor market information (LMI). This information provides a snapshot of Georgia's economy, job market, businesses, and its workforce. Data provides information on the labor force, employment and unemployment, industrial and occupations growth, occupational trends, and wage rates that allow Georgia to remain competitive in the global marketplace.

GDOL offers online services to businesses to file quarterly tax and wage reports and makes payments, participate with State Information and Data Exchange System (SIDES) and SIDES E-Response, submit job postings, and apply for the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC). Youth Work Permits requirements can be processed and completed online.

GDOL website post information on career expos, employer seminars, labor market information, download workplace posters, information on unemployment insurance (UI) claims, etc. GDOL also utilizes social media (Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and RSS Feed) as resource to provide information to the public. GDOL which also serves as the State Rapid Response coordinator to assist employers with transitioning workers that will be laid off during businesses closures or lay-off events.

The Region's Employer Committees provide a link between core partners and the business community. Provides a venue for local business representatives to identify needs and seek guidance from other community employers who may be faced with the same issues. These groups can identify workshops,

provide guest speakers on specific subject areas of interest, assist with sponsoring job fairs, and allow employers to form a peer group for seeking guidance or information sharing.

### Weaknesses for the Region

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

Many of the employment opportunities are in food services and retail occupations which are often minimum or lower paying jobs which only offer part-time employment hours and lack employment advancement opportunities.

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

The weaknesses of the Workforce system in the Region also is there are a lot of rural counties that not only lack transportation but also lack employment opportunities. The rural counties do not have an available mass transit system which could enable individuals to readily attend training and employment opportunities. The rural areas also have high poverty levels which prevents individuals from having personal transportation. Youth customers do not always have personal transportation and therefore have no options to get to training or employment. Without reliable transportation options, their ability to attend the strong technical, and university systems are very limited. This is largely related to the large geographic region with a dispersed population. There is a rural transit system, but it is typically not used because of scheduling issues and limited availability.

The other major issue for the Region is the lack of employment opportunities. High unemployment rates combined with lack of opportunity are reflected by the fact there have not been enough new industries. This also means that where there are jobs, they are often low wages. Employers often want to hire individuals with more than high school education and skill levels; however, the wage levels are not equivalent for those requirements. Individuals who seek post-secondary educational training generally increase their skill level and are able to earn the higher wages. Individuals often are required to commute to employment opportunities within the Region or out of the area for better employment opportunities.

The Middle Flint local area lacks available childcare options which are also a barrier to employment. During the downturn in the economy, a number of public daycare facilities closed. Americus and Cordele being two of the largest cities in the Middle Flint area had the largest number of public daycare center facilities. Some of the more rural counties throughout the local area have limited or no available daycare facilities. Many families have to rely upon family or friends to provide daycare for their children. As this can be an unreliable source of childcare, many families struggle to maintain employment. Public daycare in the local area operates on a Monday – Friday, dayshift only operational hours. This presents challenges for individuals who work evenings or weekends.

The Region also lacks access or availability of quality internet connectivity. Rural areas of Georgia suffer from the lack of internet services that impact our communities from attracting new businesses to the area, limits on-line learning opportunities, and impeded existing business expansions are impacted. Many rural communities are limited cellphone, satellite internet or other broadband services which are often expensive and of poor quality. Many of our communities are low income populations that cannot afford to pay for the internet services. Investment in the infrastructure for broadband services to improve internet connectivity would allow the rural areas of the Georgia to grow and be more global competitive.

The COVID 19 disaster that required quarantine of schools impacted the student’s ability to complete school assignments online due to lack of quality or affordable internet access. The businesses were also challenged to be able to continue the same quality of work as many individuals were working from home and lacked quality internet connectivity to continue business as usual. Rural Broadband services has been a hot topic for several years with Georgia Legislators as they work to find solutions that improve internet services in the rural areas of Georgia. Improvements to internet services in the rural areas would significantly improve the quality of life for individuals and businesses in the area.

### Capacity

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

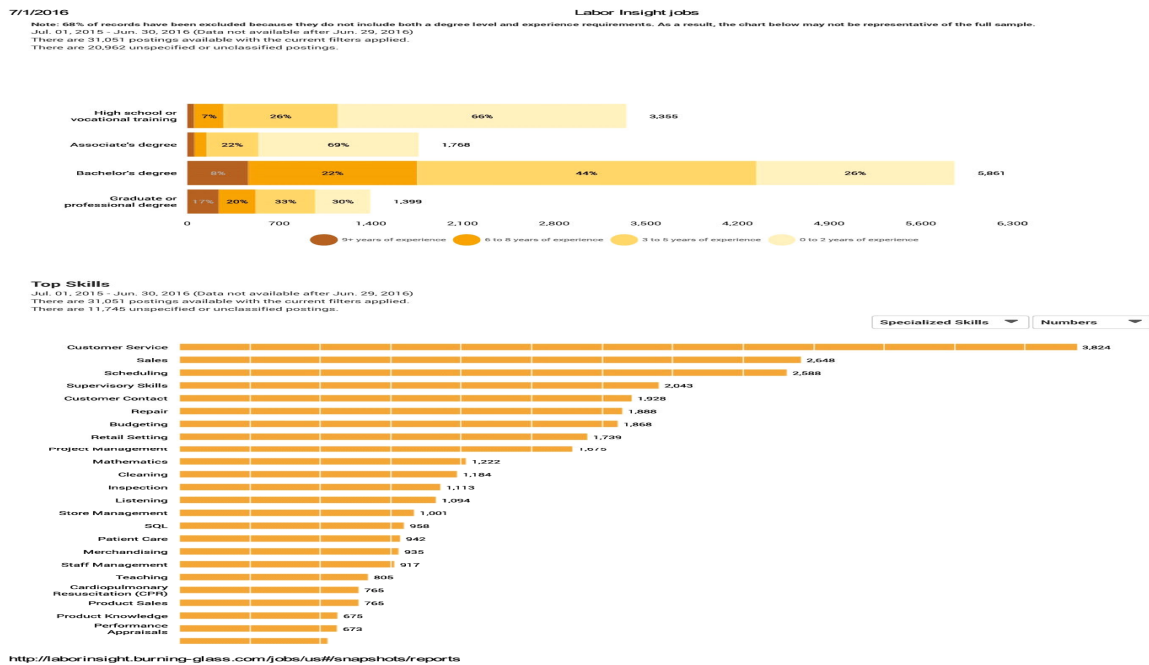
- Increasing the number of employers utilizing OJT and/or incumbent services
- Achieving and accurately reporting WIOA Performance measures
- Providing quality educational and training services to meet needs of participants and employers
- Identifying demand occupations and providing services to meet the demand

- Building relationships with Partners to enhance service delivery in area
- Providing training opportunities to Service Providers to ensure best practices are utilized
- Participation with local Employer Committee groups and improving business services
- Expand work-based learning opportunities in local area employers with Work Experience activity.

The Region will continue to work with training providers (Columbus State University, Columbus Technical College, South Georgia Technical College, Georgia Southwestern State University, Albany State University and other providers) to ensure that a wide array of training programs and options are available to customers. Business services are available to local area business/employers through On-the-Job Training (OJT) and Work Experience activities. OJT Service Provider will recruit and engage the Region’s area employers to participate in OJT services to increase enrollments. The Region has expanded the Work Experience (WEX work-based learning) activity to the Adult & Dislocated Workers based on an identified need to enhance existing skills or development additional work skills to retain self-sufficient employment. Eligible individuals are placed on worksites with an employer to expand their work-based learning skills.

### Employment needs of employers in the Region

#### Top Skills



Source: BGLI

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

### **Statewide Successes of the High Demand Career Initiative –**

#### **Expansion of HOPE Career Grant (formerly known as Strategic Industries Workforce Development Grant (SIWDG))**

The Hope Career Grant, formerly known as the Strategic Industries Workforce Development Grant (SIWDG) is available to students enrolled in Georgia’s Technical Colleges. This initiative began in 2013 and continues to be expanded in years following. It assists students to get rewarding jobs with Georgia employers who have openings in the occupational fields. It assists employers in developing a pipeline of skilled workers to meet their employment needs. In 2020, seventeen (17) programs of study are eligible for the Hope Career Grant. Individuals must qualify for and be receiving Hope Grant. The two grants together will cover all tuition in the seventeen (17) program of study.

The seventeen (17) programs of study include; 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.

The HOPE Career Grant is a financial award for TCSG students meeting certain criteria who are enrolled in approved programs. It allows students to receive educational training opportunities in demand occupations without accumulating high financial student debt.

#### **Georgia Film Academy**

USG and TCSG are working together to establish the Georgia Film Academy by building key partnerships with leaders in the film, television, and entertainment industries. These partnerships will assist USG in determining how current and future offerings can be used to address workforce needs in these industries. Recently, funding was approved during the legislative session for this effort. The Georgia Film Academy

has a campus at Columbus State University. Andrew College and Southwest Georgia University also have film programs not directly associated with the Georgia Film Academy.

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

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

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

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:**

The vision of Lower Chattahoochee Workforce Development Area 14 is to 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.

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

The vision of the Middle Flint Workforce Development area is to provide educational and training opportunities to eligible individuals to increase knowledge and skill levels that can lead to personal self-sufficiency and meeting the needs of business and employers. Collaborate with the businesses and employers to identify their needs and coordinate with area community resources (Technical Colleges,



Universities, Colleges, etc...) To align educational, programs of study, and training services to meet those needs. By increasing educational and skills levels, the area seeks to attract new business and industry into the local area to provide more available job opportunities.

Middle Flint plans to utilize Sector Partnerships to inform and guide workforce development strategies and enhance local and regional partnership coordination. The Region was awarded a Sector Partnership grant in July 2019 and is in the implementation phase for moving the project forward to accomplish desired local Healthcare sector goals.

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

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

Our System Building Goals:

- Meet or exceed the performance goals established by the Lower Chattahoochee Workforce Area Board and the State Workforce Development Office.
- Promote continual development and improvement of a workforce system with multiple access points and services tailored to meet the needs of the community and workforce area.
- Increase ongoing training opportunities for WIOA partners and staff; and, promote continual cross-training of local programs and services
- Promote information and data sharing among partnering agencies that will seek to eliminate duplication of services and enhance the quality of training programs and service that are available to our citizens and that are conducive to the demands of local employers.
- Broaden the pool of skilled, job ready workers needed by local businesses.
- Increase collaboration with local businesses to address the growing skill gap between education and training outcomes that meet business and industry needs; and encourage employer participation that promotes program services and employment opportunities.
- Identify required skill sets needed to assist jobseekers of our local workforce community enhance their quality of life and to become more competitive and marketable in the local labor market.
- Identify the needs of our employers through continuous partnership and collaboration to ensure appropriate services are being identified and delivered
- Operate as a talent development system that meet local industry needs and foster a collaborative partnership with economic development to enhance economic prosperity of the local workforce area
- Increase the partnership of private sector businesses in training and employment opportunities for individuals participating in WIOA programs
- Enhance customer satisfaction. Assist workers who face unprecedented challenges to retool their skills and re-establish themselves in viable career paths.
- Continuously develop and refine the local workforce development system with innovative service delivery strategies.

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

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

### **Improving Educational and Skill Levels**

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

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

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

### **Collaboration and Coordination with Partners and Stakeholders**

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

## Promote Awareness

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

## Provide Work Based Learning Opportunities

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

## Performance Goals

WIOA federally mandated performance measures for its core programs. Listed below are the performance measures and methodology:

- Entered Employment Quarter 2 -- Measures the percentage of participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the programs. Youth participants also include the percentage that was in education or training activities during the second quarter after exit.
- Entered Employment Quarter 4--Measures the percentage of participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the fourth quarter after exit from the programs. Youth participants also include the percentage that was in education or training activities during the fourth quarter after exit.

- Credential Attainment Rate--Measures the percentage of participants who obtain a recognized post-secondary credential or secondary school diploma, or its recognized equivalent, during participation in or within one year from exit from the program.
- Measurable Skill Gains--Measures the percentage of participants who, during a program year, are in an education or training program that leads to a recognized post-secondary credential or employment and who are achieving a measurable skill gains, which are defined as documented academic, technical, occupational, or other forms of progress toward such a credential or employment.

The Local area negotiate local performance measures annually and track measures based on goals set in service providers' contracts which list performance goals for specified services. The goals for performance measure accountability are reviewed and adjusted based on WorkSource Georgia data system reports, quarterly state generated reports to track effectiveness of performance goals. Performance accountability is reported to local workforce boards to support regional growth and economic self-deficiency.

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

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

f. **Strategy to coordinate core programs to align resources available to the local area to achieve the strategic vision and goals**

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

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

The WDBs will continually look to align available resources. For both organizations, the key component is the Comprehensive One Stop Center 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 Center. The Comprehensive One Stop Center (Georgia Department of Labor, Americus Career Center, Columbus Career Center) located in Americus and Columbus.

Because of the specific needs of both areas, there is great distances between facilities for customers, there is limited coordination possible using the GDOL One Stop Center in the Local areas. There may be, however, opportunities to work with non-profit agencies such as Georgia BEST.

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

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

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

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

The Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Services (GVRA) utilizes its funding to assess TANF and potential rehabilitation clients, in addition to providing normal services to eligible customers. Other WIOA funds are utilized to provide eligibility determination services, assessment services, case management services, and funding of various training activities.

### **3. Description of Strategies and Services**

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

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

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

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

#### **Employment Services**

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

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

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

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

### *Small employers*

Small employers are often difficult to integrate into the workforce development system because of limited capacity on both ends of the system. All services, including OJT, are available to small employers throughout the region. Small business often are the best customers to utilize the OJT services and OJT employer reimbursements help offset their training costs for new employees.

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

The Region is focusing on Healthcare occupation as part of their Sector Partnership grant for 2020-2021. Other in-demand sectors for the local area include manufacturing, retail, and customer service occupations. Both Local Areas utilizes the WIOA Individual Training Account (ITA) as one activity to train individuals in healthcare occupations such as nursing, medical assisting, EMT, certified nursing assistants. OJT and ITA services provide training opportunities for manufacturing related occupations.

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

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

### **Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act**

The Region both Lower Chattahoochee and Middle Flint areas takes advantage of programs offered through TCSG OWD aimed at connecting with and providing workforce solutions to employers. State initiatives such as Great Georgia Jobs and Sector Partnerships provides a platform for local areas to connect with employers, engage them in implementing sector partners, identifying current and future employment needs specific to the Local Areas and develop strategies to address the needs. The Local areas also connects with employers through the LWDA's Rapid Response efforts, local job, and resource fairs, and through participation in regional employer meetings.

The LWDA's provide a variety of customized services to employers in various formats. For example, labor market information can be self-accessed by employers or acquired with varying levels of staff assistance. Employer centers in comprehensive One Stop 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's also work with 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's also provide information through the One-Stop system regarding workforce development services provided by other local area agencies. Middle Flint Area Comprehensive One Stop Center is operated at the GDOL Americus Career Center. Lower Chattahoochee One Stop Center is operated at the GDOL Columbus Career Center. One Stop affiliate sites are also located throughout the Region that allows other access points. There is no mobile service center, and transportation issues continue to be an issue throughout the region.



The Region has limited availability of business and organized labor representatives located in the area. This presents challenges in filling local Workforce Development Board membership requirement. As of 2020, two members from organized labor representatives serve on the Middle Flint Workforce Development Board who regularly attend meetings and provide insight to Board functions.

### **Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency**

GVRA will focus to increase its capacity to meet the needs of individuals with disabilities in their goal in achieving competitive integrated employment by expanding collaborative partnerships with other state agencies that serve this population. The goal is to streamline service delivery and align efforts of multiple agencies and eliminating duplicated or redundant efforts and costs.

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

Georgia's technical college system is a local partner in the Region efforts to recruit and train skilled talent for employers. Training services can be offered by the technical colleges, usually through their Economic Development Divisions and programs of study. These services can provide skills and professional certifications that are commonly required in the workplace. Examples could include customer service, Serv Safe, 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 Quick Start program. Quick Start 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 Quick Start 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 Quick Start program is a unique opportunity which is leveraged alongside other business services from core partners.

The Region has 4 Technical Colleges that serve this region. Columbus Technical College serves most counties in the Lower Chattahoochee WIOA and Albany Technical College serves Clay and Randolph Counties in the southern part of the region. South Georgia Technical College in Americus and Cordele serves the counties in the Middle Flint WIOA with the exception of Taylor County which is served by Southern Crescent Technical College.

## **Eliminating Duplication of Efforts**

The Region will 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 Local Workforce areas, external coordination is made with partners and agencies to identify other supportive services and community 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.

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

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

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

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

There are several notable initiatives in local economic development that are in various stages of deployment in the region. Cordele and Crisp County commissioned an intensive study they are working to implement now. Americus and Sumter County used local resources to help them set up their One Sumter initiative that they are currently in the process of implementing phase 2 of the project. Randolph County has hired an economic development and site consultant to help them develop their first county economic development strategy.

### ***Middle Flint WDB***

The One Sumter initiative in particular has taken on the task of identifying Workforce Development as a critical area to address for Sumter County. The WIOA Administrator works with the Sumter Payroll Development Authority that developed the initiative. Their initial goals are to further define the workforce development challenges and issues to be addressed relevant specifically to Sumter County, as well as discuss best practices for work-based learning. Local community partnerships have been developed to implement the One Sumter objectives. An application was submitted in August 2018 to the State for the approval of a College and Career Academy for Sumter County. Upon approval and implementation of the College and Career Academy, the Middle Flint WDB partnered to coordinate services as appropriate or needed based on funding availability.

Cordele-Crisp Industrial Development Authority (IDA) focus is to assist in the retention of existing jobs and to foster employment opportunities that raise the per capita income of area citizens by assisting new and existing business and industry to locate and/or expand in Crisp County.

Cordele has three major railroads: CSX, Norfolk Southern, and Heart of Georgia Railroad. Cordele is 200 miles by rail from Savannah Port Authority and conveniently located in relation to other Southeastern Ports at Charleston, S.C., Brunswick, Georgia, and Jacksonville, FL. Cordele has the Inland Port logistics benefits and incentives that make Cordele/Crisp County an ideal location to grow business needs.

Cordele-Crisp IDA also assists existing businesses and industry with expansion efforts to provide additional jobs, thereby, improving the quality of life for residents of Crisp County.

### ***Lower Chattahoochee WDB***

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

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

#### Talented, Educated People

In an increasingly competitive and knowledge-based economy, communities must provide a skilled, educated workforce in order to remain competitive. Many businesses – and not just those in traditional white-collar sectors now consider talent to be the most important factor influencing their location decisions. And on an individual level, there is clear evidence to suggest that as a person’s level of educational attainment increases, they become more likely to earn a higher wage and less likely to be unemployed. Further underscoring the need for top talent, in February 2014, the annual Corporate Survey results in Area Development magazine reported that “availability of skilled labor” topped the list of most important site location factors for the first time in 27 years. With the line between “economic development” and “workforce development” increasingly becoming blurred, it is readily apparent that the region needs to make a significant investment in education in order to increase the area’s competitiveness and improve the region’s future economic opportunities for wealth creation.

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

#### KEY FINDINGS FROM RESEARCH AND INPUT:

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

#### OBJECTIVE 1.1: ALIGN OUR EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE SYSTEMS

As the research phases of this process demonstrated, there is a critical need to grow and develop a skilled and talented workforce in the area. Fortunately, the community already has many organizations that are dedicated to improving residents' educational outcomes, increasing community involvement, and

providing important social services. These organizations are already making strides towards improving educational attainment levels and opportunities in the community, but stakeholder feedback revealed that many organizations are “working in silos.” In order to maximize the impact of these efforts, the region should ensure that these organizations and their work is aligned, coordinated, and optimized.

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

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

#### **Potential Actions:**

- Work with educational providers, nonprofits, and the business community to research C2C and other “business education partnership” models to identify the appropriate fit for Greater Columbus and the region
- Formally establish a partnership “backbone” entity and pursue public and private sources of funding to ensure that it is professionally staffed and operated
- Recruit a broad network of organizations to join the partnership
- Identify an initial set of focus areas inclusive of the tactical recommendations in this strategy and any other issues deemed appropriate by the relevant partners (potential examples could include parental advocacy programs, expanding dual enrollment, etc.)

## OBJECTIVE 1.2: DEVELOP HOMEGROWN TALENT

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

### **1.2.1 Ensure that three- and four-year-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 expecting parents have access to comprehensive child development and family support services.**

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

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

#### **Potential Actions:**

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

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

Many organizations in the area are working to ensure that young children are introduced to career and educational opportunities from a young age. These include the Chamber of Commerce's Partners in Education program and summer camps such as CSU Activ8 and Summer Camp Benning. But stakeholders familiar with the region's K-12 education systems expressed a desire for the community to go even further in exposing children to career opportunities, the work required to achieve them, and the value in doing so. Input participants said this is an important task given the pervasiveness of generational



poverty in the community, as children from low income households may not be aware of opportunities or view them as unrealistic.

**Potential Actions:**

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

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

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

**Potential Actions:**

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

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

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

**Potential Actions:**

- Work with a range of partners including K-12 school systems, higher education institutions, community organizations and foundations, faith-based groups, and private-sector leadership to oversee a broad-based campaign to boost adult educational attainment and training levels

- Secure significant commitments from public, private, and philanthropic funding sources to advance a variety of initiatives and provide subsidized entry/testing fees and tuition
- Expand enrollment in the Catapult Academy for high school dropouts and other high school equivalency programs to boost diploma and equivalency attainment; offer tuition subsidies or forgiveness to qualifying students who enroll in and complete programs
- Work with area colleges to identify and reach out to former students who began but did not complete a degree or certificate program; offer expedited re-enrollment procedures and waive application fees, etc.
- Work with employers to offer workers incentives, including flexible work hours around class schedules, guaranteed raises upon employment, etc., to complete high school equivalencies and enroll in and/or complete certificate and degree programs

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

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

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

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

Before proceeding, it should be noted that while a region’s educational systems are sometimes referred to as a “talent pipeline,” this is not at all to suggest that these institutions exist simply to supply local businesses with talent. Instead, the term is intended to highlight the fact that these providers are the region’s most important source of talented, educated workers, and that creating additional synergies between their programmatic offerings and the needs of local businesses can be mutually beneficial to

employers, educational institutions, and the local populace who make up the majority of their student bodies. Stakeholders should coordinate communications between the private sector and various education partners to identify additional training and education opportunities that can support target sector growth.

**Potential Actions:**

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

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

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

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

- 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 is not 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 River Park 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.

### *Regional Coordination*

Workforce development is economic development and the local area WIOA partners 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 and are able to 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 Business Services Representatives and other community partners are focused on partnering with economic developers that are located local, regionally, and statewide by executing customized solutions to workforce issues. Located in the 12 service-delivery regions in the State, Business Services Representative can help economic developers identify data critical for the successful location and expansion of industry. The GDOL Business Services Representative for Region 8 was a critical partner in their leadership to the local Workforce Development Board roles and responsibilities and involvement in community efforts.

With the Region'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, Georgia Best, GDOL SWAT, and Rapid Response services are employer focused. The collaboration of the area's WIOA programs with GDOL 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 Middle Flint area 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 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.

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### *Economic development partners*

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

The River Valley Regional Commission is a Regional partner and author of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for the federal Economic Development Agency. State partners at GDOL, Technical College System and University System of Georgia as well as Georgia Power and the Electrical Cooperatives also assist and are partners in economic development, with members on the Middle Flint Workforce Development Board and Lower Chattahoochee Workforce Development Board.

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

Economic development partners consulted in the development of this local plan include the Georgia Department of Labor, local Chambers of Commerce, and the Economic Development District as identified by USEDA. The River Valley Regional Commission has worked with multiple entities on developing this Regional Plan.

## **d. 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, Unemployment Insurance (UI) serves as the entryway into the workforce system. As the provider of UI and Wagner Peyser (WP) employment services, GDOL is uniquely poised to welcome customers into the workforce system and provide comprehensive and targeted referrals to the other core partners. While a large amount of WP referrals come from UI, that system is not the only source of workforce customers. GDOL also utilizes BSU to attract customers. These tools used by the BSU were outlined earlier in this Regional Plan. GDOL offers training services such as intensive interviewing techniques, administering career assessments, providing and interpreting labor market information (LMI), customize service strategies for employers and job seekers, identifying need for soft skills and skills gaps

training, developing workforce partnerships, identifying available supportive services, resume 'writing expertise and counseling to address barriers to employment and to assist with career selection.

GDOL staff training is provided in the following areas: business recruitment events, connecting qualified jobseekers with employers, providing workforce statistics and prevailing wages, guidance on employment laws related to the workplace.

Employment services are available to all individuals eligible to work in the United States. Individuals looking for better career opportunities, those who have lost their jobs and those seeking employment for the first time.

The reemployment of UI claimants lowering the UI claim duration and reduction of erroneous UI payments continue to be a high priority for Georgia and the U.S. Department of Labor. Georgia's RESEA program addresses all of these priorities.

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

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

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

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

Other staff development activities include:

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

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

The UI and Re-Employment (REU) Division of GDOL provides subject matter expertise and technical assistance on UI policies, rules, procedures, and systems to all staff. In the training modules, staff is educated on how to detect, address, and resolve issues that affect UI eligibility. While in-depth training is

provided to career center staff managing the UI claims process, an overview of the UI process is also available to WIOA and other workforce partners.

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

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

### *Meaningful Assistance*

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

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



- Daily referrals of customers from workforce partners to UI specialists to ensure that customers have access to all benefits to which they are entitled(c) The AREA’s strategy for providing reemployment assistance

### All Customers

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

### RESEA Program

Currently GDOL has nine (9) One Stop Centers that deliver RESEA services across the state. Georgia has a large population of customers in high populous areas of the State in need of intensive reemployment services. Many of the customers are in areas of the State where there are military bases, resulting in a high number of Unemployment Compensation for Ex-service members (UCX) claimants processing barriers to employment. As a result of these direct customer needs, Georgia redesigned its RESEA 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 RESEA 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 RESEA 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 tools assessment results, and development of a reemployment plan. Staff provides referrals to in-house workshops (e.g., résumé development, job search, and financial management), training, and other community workforce and supportive services as needed. Customers receive relevant labor market information and learn about helpful web sites which could enrich their job search. Work history evaluation is conducted, and job matches are identified in the EG system.

Georgia's robust and intensive approaches to facilitating the reemployment of UI recipients, including initiatives such as the RESEA programs, have directly contributed to the lowest average UI duration average in Georgia. 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 areas 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 Tap Dance 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 and job fair events
- 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
- Over 383,000 job seekers received employment related services in 2018 at GDOL Career
  - Centers and via its upgraded online systems. In 2018, GDOL staff provided workforce
  - Services to over 19,000 veterans resulting in JVSG Employment Rate of 59.4%, and referred
  - Over 9,840 UI claimants to the RESEA program resulting in a completion rate of 88.7%.
- To meet the employment needs of these job seekers, Georgia businesses listed approximately 100,000 available jobs on a daily basis thru the GDOL's Employ Georgia system. Job postings are a result of the continued growth in the local economy and strengthening of employer relationships with the workforce system. As a result of the focus reemployment strategies of connecting job seekers to meaningful job opportunities, Georgia's Entered Employment Rate has shown steady recovery and surpassed 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. Claimants are given up to 10 days after the issuance of their first benefit payment to complete the ES registration process. A letter is mailed to the claimant and a payment stop is placed on the claim if the claimant fails to register by the deadline. The Claimant is then given 7 additional days to register before being disqualified for benefits.

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, can 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 State UI System

Individuals receiving UI benefits in Georgia must be able to work, available for work and actively seeking full-time work. Individuals who earn the majority of wages in the base period used to establish the claim doing part-time work are allowed to restrict their work search to part-time work. The only exception to the work search requirements is for the following:

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

In Georgia's automated workforce system, customers enter work search information weekly. Staff have access to that information 24/7 and can contact a customer should questions arise or concerns be raised. In addition, EG captures a customer's résumé, job referrals, and information regarding a customer's response to an employer's request. Should an employer contact GDOL that a job candidate did not respond to a request for an interview, that claimant can be contacted to determine if compliance with the required work test occurred. To ensure accessibility to the automated system, staff is always on hand to assist claimants with the use of the labor market exchange. In addition, if the customers do not have a résumé, EG will build one for them. All claimants are subject to a work search audit and can be called into the office should questions arise.

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

Individuals referred to the UI RESEA program must report to their initial RESEA 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, and RESEA) staff review the individual's work search, discuss the individual's availability, and any barriers to work.

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

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

ES staff have contact with employers and receive notice when individuals fail to report to an interview or refuse work – resulting in an issue on the individual's claim. In the event a potential issue is discovered from any source, a BER is scheduled with a claim's 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.

#### Provisions of Referrals and Application Assistance

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 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

### Agriculture Outreach Plan (AOP)

Georgia Department of Labor (GDOL) administers the Agriculture Outreach Plan (AOP) which details the activities planned for providing services and outreach to both domestic Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers (MSFSW), H2-A MSFW's and agricultural businesses for PY 2020. The AOP is prepared in accordance with the Workforce Innovations Opportunity Act (WIOA) planning and guidance and is a four-year plan.

Agriculture is a large business in the Middle Flint local area and a driving force for local economies across Georgia. Georgia has a long-shaped state history of Agriculture. The 2019 Agriculture Snapshot brief on Georgia's agriculture economy is based on the 2017 Georgia Farm Gate Value Report, an annual, county-level economic valuation for all food and fiber production in the state. Together, these commodities directly represent a value of \$13.75 billion to the Georgia economy.

The Center for Agribusiness and Economic Development via the 2017 US Census of Agriculture data, reports that Georgia has 42,439 farms totaling 9,953,730 acres. The average size of a farm in Georgia is 235 acres. The total harvested cropland in Georgia is 3,628,707 acres. Through the activities of GDOL Career Centers, Telamon Corporation, local workforce partners and education agencies, the workforce system has made every effort to growers' and workers' increasing needs.

An area of agricultural activity which continues to blossom is Agritourism. This unique experience combines traditional agriculture with tourism, and includes visits to working farms, orchards, ranches, wineries, and other agriculture operations. This win-win model supports and sustains Georgia's farmlands, while providing tourists with educational and relaxing outdoor adventures. Georgia has used a unique identify with Georgia Grown to promote awareness of agriculture products grown and produced in Georgia. Shopping and dining experiences are also part of the agritourism opportunities and operators are continuously updating their operations to incorporate new activities and events.

The Region area produces the following agriculture products in the area, cucumbers, cotton, green beans, peaches, strawberries, watermelons, and squash. Cordele Georgia is known as the “Watermelon Capital”. The State Farmer’s Market is located in Cordele which serves as distribution hub for many of the agricultural products listed above. The region also has several privately owned farm market stands which also sale the agriculture products grown in the local area.

The GDOL Americus Career Center has a staff person who serves as the Migrant Seasonal Farm Worker (MFSW) who works directly with the growers and migrant seasonal workers employed in the agricultural harvesting operations.

#### **4. Regional Service Delivery**

##### **a. 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*

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

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

The Middle Flint and Lower Chattahoochee Workforce areas have collaborated and shared information on operational processes, procedures, and policies used by both local areas. However, we do not share the same employers or higher educational training providers because of the geographic demands. Both local areas do provide some the same basic WIOA funded activities such as On-the-Job Training, Individual Training Accounts (ITA’s), Work Experience (WEX) and Youth services. The Lower Chattahoochee and Middle Flint areas have also coordinated and collaborated on services such as Supportive Services Policies, and Rapid Response Events, Sharing Best Practices/Policies, Participant Referrals for Training,



coordinate/collaborate on sector strategies for existing and new industries in the Region, and pursue grant funding opportunities for the region. The local area anticipates the two areas will continue to collaborate and share information on WIOA services delivery that benefits the region.

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

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

## **b. Coordination of administrative cost arrangements**

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

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

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

## **c. Coordination of Eligibility documentation and participant outreach**

Due to the travel distance (70 plus miles one way) between the two (2) local areas (Area 14 & 15), currently there is not coordination efforts for eligibility documentation and participant outreach. Our customers do not generally cross over between the two local areas. We do occasionally share copies of locally developed eligibility documentation forms between the two local areas. Participant outreach efforts are done by each local area. If a customer from one of our areas is interested in attending a training provider/training program that is located in the other workforce area location, we to coordinator as appropriate to ensure the customer is able to get the desired training provider/program.

The local area where the customer would be receiving training services would agree to enroll the customer assuming the eligibility requirements for the area is met.

#### **d. Coordination of work – based- Learning contracts such as OJT, IWT, CT, and Apprenticeship**

Due to the travel distance between the two local areas 14 & 15, we generally do not share the work-based learning sites. In 2020, an employer located in the Middle Flint Area 15 counties was utilizing On-The-Job Training (OJT) services. This large employer draws employees from several counties for employment. Middle Flint had an OJT Employer Agreement with the employer. Applicants from counties in the Middle Flint and Lower Chattahoochee local areas were applying for available employment with the employer. Workforce Directors from Middle Flint and Lower Chattahoochee coordinated the training services for OJT so that eligible WIOA customers from both local areas could be served by the Middle Flint Area 15 as the employer facilities were in the area. Middle Flint Area 15 served customers that were in neighboring counties located in Area 14 to the employer's location in Area 15. Middle Flint Area 15 was responsible for services to the customers and share services information and outcomes with the Lower Chattahoochee Area 14 staff. It was a win-win situation for all parties (employer, customers, and both local WIOA areas).

Both the Lower Chattahoochee Area 14 & Middle Flint Area 15 are committed to continue to coordinate work-based learning services when is beneficial to customers, employers, and local areas. The two local areas will coordinate services when it is feasibly possible to meet the needs in the region.

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

The Lower Chattahoochee Area 14 & Middle Flint Area 15 region was first awarded a Sector Partnership Grant in July 2019. The two local area will be focusing on different sectors. Lower Chattahoochee Area 14 will be initially focusing on the Financial/Banking Sector and Middle Flint Area 15 will be focusing in the Healthcare sector for the 2019-2021 time period. The Sector Partnership work began in the Lower Chattahoochee Area 14 in March 2020 and is projected to begin in the Middle Flint Area 15 in the late fall 2020. The two local areas will focus on the chosen sectors for the next two-year period. If the opportunity is available for another round of Sector Partnership grants, the two locals areas will work together to target the next sectors that will be identified based on the regionally needs

at that time. Manufacturing is a common sector in both local areas, so this could be the next sector that the local areas would possibly choose at the appropriate time.

## 5. Sector Strategy Development –

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

In July 2019, the two local Workforce areas of Lower Chattahoochee Area 14 & Middle Flint Area 15 was awarded Sector Partnership grants for 2019-2021. Lower Chattahoochee Area 14 chose Financial/Banking and Insurance sectors as this area has several companies that have many employees working in this sector. Middle Flint Area 15 selected the Healthcare sector strategy as it was an in-demand occupation in this local area. Both two local area a long history of supporting educational and training opportunities within their chosen sector. The region has several higher education resources which offer programs of study in the sectors.

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

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

#### **Partners**

Sector partnership will be developed with individuals with knowledge and expertise in the Financial/Banking and Healthcare sectors. Partners from the sectors will include individuals with expertise in the Financial/Banking , Insurance and Healthcare fields. Additional partners from higher education, mandated WIOA One Stop Partners that have expertise in the sector will be included and community resource partners with knowledge of the sectors will be invited to participate.

### b. Meetings

Region 8 initially began having sector partnership meeting in 2016-2017 during the early implementation of Statewide sector partnership services. Middle Flint hosted a healthcare partnership meeting in 2017 to bring healthcare partners to begin the discussion on healthcare needs in the Middle Flint area. Region 8 did not receive a Sector Partnership grant in the first round of grant awards in 2016-2017. However, the region continued to have discussions on sector partnership initiatives for the region

at various meetings in the region such as Chamber of Commerce meeting, Workforce Development Board meetings, Employer Committee meetings, and other regional meetings.

Region 8 was awarded Sector Partnership grant in July 2019 and is in the early implementation of the work at this time. Middle Flint Area 14 & Lower Chattahoochee Area 15 have held several information sessions as part of the Workforce Development Board meetings to update the members on planned Sector Partnership ideas and strategies for the region.

Additional meeting will be held as the region moves forward with the Sector Partnership work. COVID 19 has delayed the implementation of sector partnership work in the region. The Region anticipates sector partnerships meeting will be held as the project implementation process begins in fall 2020.

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

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

Middle Flint Area 15 utilized data from several sources (GDOL Labor Market Information and Burning Glass )to identify the sectors of Healthcare and Manufacturing as the two leading sectors to focus on for Sector Strategy work in the local area. Healthcare was the common sectors for both local areas of Middle Flint and Lower Chattahoochee region.

The Lower Chattahoochee Area 14 utilized sources from the Columbus Chamber of Commerce 2025 Plan, identified employer and community needs, and other labor market information to identify their chosen sectors. The Columbus Chamber of Commerce developed a detailed report that identified a number of needs of the area and developed strategies towards the vision and goals of the area.

### **d. 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;***

Middle Flint Area 15 will target employers in the healthcare field such as Phoebe Sumter Medical Center, Crisp Regional Hospital, Health Departments, and the numerous Nursing home facilities in the local area. Additional information will be addressed in the Regional WIOA Plan.

Lower Chattahoochee Area 14 will target employers in the Financial/Banking and Insurance sectors such as Total Systems Services Inc. (TSYS), local banking and finance institutions, Synovus, AFLAC, and Anthem Insurance companies.

***ii. Target occupations;***

Middle Flint will target occupations in the healthcare sector will include Licenses Practical Nurses, Registered Nurses, Certified Nurses Assistants, Patient Care Techs, Medical Assistants, physical therapy, and Labs assistants etc.

Lower Chattahoochee area will target occupations in financial/banking and insurance sector will include Information Technology, finance, customer service, claims processors, technical support, customer credit etc.

***iii. Training programs;***

Educational and training opportunities will included but not limited to the following training programs; healthcare occupational training, Licenses Practical Nursing, Registered Nursing, Medical Assisting, Certified Nurses Assistants, Patient Care Technicians, Physical Therapy Assistants, Medical Coding, Information Technology, Finance, Accounting, Customer Service, Business etc..

***iv. Target Populations.***

The Region LWDA's will work to develop career pathways with K-12, Technical Colleges and Universities. Target populations can also include military veterans seeking to start a new career after military service. Individuals seeking to change careers will also be a target population.

***e. 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 Region will focus on the Healthcare, Financial/Banking, and Insurance sectors thru 2022.

Manufacturing has been identified is another common sector in the region. As the Region progresses with the first phases of sector partnership, additional sectors may be added beginning in 2022.

Educational and training opportunities will be developed with career pathways to develop a pipeline for the identified sectors opportunities.

## 6. One-Stop Delivery System-

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

### Middle Flint

The GDOL Career Centers designated by the Middle Flint Workforce Board as the Middle Flint's comprehensive One-Stop site beginning in July 2017 and will end on June 30, 2021.

The Middle Flint Area will conduct a Request for Proposals (RFP's) competitive bid procurement in early 2021 for the next four-year cycle. Middle Flint area will follow all appropriate protocols issued by the State and Federal guidance.

In addition to the Comprehensive One Stop Center (GDOL Americus Career Center) the local area has two affiliate access sites (Eckerd Connects & SGTC WIOA Offices) located in the area. Eckerd Connect and SGTC WIOA are training Service Providers in the area.

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

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

Various fund sources are utilized to develop integrated service strategies for customers. Priority of Service will be given to individuals that are; Veterans/eligible spouses, Public Assistance recipients, low income, basic skill deficient, and have barriers to employment. (TEN 35-09)

### Columbus GDOL Career Center – Comprehensive One Stop Center

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

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

IN THE DOOR, LLC has been contracted to provide One-Stop Operator Services beginning July 1, 2020 through a competitive procurement process. The first-year award will be for Program Year 2020 (**July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021**) with two subsequent contract years contingent upon WIOA regulation, funding, and performance. The subsequent contract years will run twelve months, July 1<sup>st</sup> to June 30<sup>th</sup> of each year. IN THE DOOR, LLC will be located at the Georgia Department of Labor Columbus Career Center location. Various affiliates sites are strategically established throughout the workforce area in a collaborative effort to provide a variety of human services made accessible to employers and jobseekers. The goal is to improve the level of workforce development services available, while reducing the duplication of services. Lower Chattahoochee area's mobile unit is a critical component for the rural areas outside metro Columbus in the outlying counties.

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

### **GDOL Americus Career Center – Comprehensive One Stop Center**

GDOL Americus Career Center was designated the Comprehensive One Stop Center in 2017. Over the past three years, the One Stop Operator and staff have developed a Business Plan, hold quarterly One Stop Partners meetings, developed an electronic referral tracking data system, provided cross training session between the GDOL staff and Partners to enhance the understanding and knowledge level of activities, services and training opportunities that are available in the local area. One Stop Operator has added Partners information (brochures, flyers, contract information etc...) to the resource area in the One Stop Center. This information can be handed out to customers seeking information on available services. One Stop Center Information handout was developed that identified all the Partners and services that are

available thru the One Stop Center. The One Stop Operator and partners all share this one-page information sheet at various meetings, events, speaking engagements etc.... as a means of outreach and recruitment efforts for the One Stop center. WIOA Service Provider staff from Eckerd Connect and SGTC WIOA are co-located on a part-time basis each week at the center to provide information on their services. Partner's staff are invited to participate in the weekly Unemployment Insurance claimants' workshops to give a brief overview of their services for outreach and recruitment efforts. This has enhanced the customer referrals to partner services in the local area. Six Partner agencies utilize an electronic method access for customers to contact them regarding their services. An electronic referral process was developed by the One Stop Operator to enable the GDOL Staff and Partners to make and track referrals. A WorkSource Georgia Middle Flint sign was placed at the GDOL Americus Career Center office as an identifier for WorkSource Georgia State branding initiative.

Transportation for individuals in the local area is a major concern that impacts the number of customers that utilize the One Stop Center. The local area lacks available public transportation, very limited private transportation services such as Uber, Lift, or taxi services. As the local area covers eight counties and covers a large geography travel area, the GDOL Americus Career Center typically has customers from four or five counties in the area that frequent the One Stop Center.

### **Columbus Technical College**

Columbus Technical College (CTC) is a key partner for the One Stop system in the Lower Chattahoochee Workforce Area. They, along with GDOL, GVRA, Job Corp. and the Title V Employment Program (Legacy Link), and WIOA Service Providers provide the core and intensive services for the WIOA. CTC serves as a referral source for individuals seeking Adult Education by conducting basic skills training, remediation, and GED preparation. CTC Campus also offers WIOA funded Individual Training Accounts (ITA's) training opportunities. CTC WIOA Service Provider is co-located weekly at Comprehensive One Stop Center on a part-time basis. CTC WIOA Provider has offices at the CTC campus to provide WIOA services as an affiliate One Stop Center.

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



## South Georgia Technical College

South Georgia Technical College (SGTC) is a key partner for the One Stop system in the Middle Flint Workforce Area. They, along with GDOL, GVRA and the Title V Employment Program, and WIOA Service Providers provide the core and intensive services for the WIOA. SGTC Americus and Cordele Campuses offer WIOA funded Individual Training Accounts (ITA's) training opportunities. SGTC WIOA Service Provider is co-located weekly at Comprehensive One Stop Center on a part-time basis. SGTC WIOA Provider has offices at the SGTC campus to provide WIOA services as an affiliate One Stop Center.

## Eckerd Connects

Eckerd Connects is a WIOA Service Provider who is co-located part-time at the Comprehensive One Stop Center to provide information on their services to customers visiting the One Stop Center. Staff(s) also participate in the GDOL weekly Unemployment Insurance (UI) claimant(s) workshops to conduct outreach and recruitment efforts. Eckerd Connects also serves as an affiliate access point in the local area and deliver WIOA educational and training services at their facilities. Eckerd Connects provides GED remediation, Work Readiness, Work Experience, Career Pathways and On-The- Job Training services in the Middle Flint area.

### a. Continuous improvements

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

The Both WDBs in the Region will utilize a competitive procurement process (formal advertising – sealed bid) to select WIOA contractors to provide educational and training opportunities. WIOA contractors are required to follow policies and procedures development to ensure consistent delivery of services. WIOA participant training services is tracked and reported using the WorkSource Georgia data system. Expenditures of Contractors are also tracked and monitored to ensure compliance with local and federal policies. Providers monitoring and performance reporting is another method of ensuring compliance and continued improvement. The area has several Eligible Training Providers located in the local area to provide educational and training opportunities. Eligible Training Providers performance outcomes are evaluated to ensure that the Provider is offering quality training and meeting the WIOA federal performance outcomes. Eligible Training Providers must provide quality services and achieve mandated

performance outcomes to remain on the State Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL). Training Providers that do meet the desired performance outcomes are subject to lose funding availability.

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

One Stop Certification is another tool to review the process, operations, outcomes, and overall performance of the Comprehensive One Stop Center and affiliate sites to ensure the minimum requirements and outcomes are being achieved.

## **b. 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.*

### **Access to services**

Columbus serves as the largest metropolitan area in the Region. Americus and Cordele both have regular access to trainings through the universities and technical colleges located there, but many of the counties served are very rural, small and with limited abilities to get their citizens to services. There are rural transit systems in a limited few county served, but not all. And to complicate matters, those rural transit services often have limited ability to get residents to trainings or other services. Rural transit services give priority of need to individuals with health/medical appointments, have limited travel routes and time schedules in which they operate. The WDB work with these transit services to make sure they are aware of the trainings and services offered by the one-stop delivery system.

The Middle Flint area is considered a “rural” area which is deficient of available or reliable internet connectivity. The large two cities have reliable internet connectivity usually within the city limits. Internet connectivity outside of the city limits is only available thru a broadband connection if available.

Many customers rely on the Smart phones for internet connectivity and is often limited with reception in many counties in the area. Improvements to the rural broadband connectivity or other available internet services would greatly improve electronic connectivity in the Middle Flint area. Often our low-income

customers served by WIOA and other partner agencies lack funds to purchase internet services, computer/laptop, and Smartphone devices to use electronic connectivity.

One Stop Operator staff, WIOA Service Providers and other partner agencies staff routinely travel out into the counties for outreach and recruitment efforts. Lack of transportation and electronic connectivity in the more rural areas impacts residents receiving the desired services.

### **Customer-focused System**

An important feature of the customer-focused system under WIOA is increased options for accessing workforce services. Both Lower Chattahoochee and Middle Flint Areas One-Stop comprehensive system has designed process to ensure customers seeking WIOA services receive timely services and/or referrals. Alternative (itinerate) access points have been strategically located in various cross-sections of our workforce development areas to ensure ease of access to informational, referral, and other services are readily available.

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

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

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

The One-Stop Center 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 layoff or business closure
- Partial unemployment insurance claims filing
- Information regarding employment law or employment issues
- Recruitment
- Tax credits and incentives
- Labor Market Information
- Local Workforce and business development resources
- Find Workforce Development Act information for Employers

### **c. Compliance with accessibility laws**

*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.*

Both GDOL Centers located in Americus and Columbus are equipped with assistive technology devices (hearing/vision, furniture with adjust, etc.) that can assist individuals with disabilities to access to services. The Centers meet the ADA requirements for accessibility to customers who require the accommodations. GDOL State office has staff that review the One Stop Center to ensure compliance with all the ADA federal laws. GVRA when requested can assess the physically accessibility of the center based on the ADA Accessibility Guidelines. GDOL Career Centers have an annual compliance review to ensure centers are in compliance with all ADA and other regulatory requirements.

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

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

There are two Comprehensive One-Stop Centers in the Region. One is based in Americus and the other in Columbus. Both One-Stops are located in the GDOL Resource Centers.

## **One Stop & Affiliate Sites & Services**

### **Middle Flint**

Lead Partner/One-Stop Operator and Other Partners	Major Services Provided by Each Partner
Adult Education and Literacy	Adult Basic Education Literacy / GED Preparation Corrections Education English Second Language Integrated Education & Training Workplace Preparation Activities
GDOL Americus Career Center 120 West Church Street Americus, GA 31709 (229) 931-2520	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
Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency	Career Counseling Assessments Job Development Case Management Training Workshops Accessibility
River Valley Regional Commission WIOA Administrator 228 West Lamar Street Americus, GA 31709	WIOA Administrative Entity and Grant Recipient Program Oversight and Management Labor Market Information
Eckerd Connects 1588 Suite B Americus, GA 31705 (229) 931-8990  605 15 <sup>th</sup> Avenue Cordele, GA 31015	WIOA Outreach & recruitment Eligibility Determination Assessments GED Basic Skills Remediation Work Experience Job Search Assistance Work Readiness Training Financial Literacy Follow-Up Services

(229) 273-4568	Referral to post-secondary education Resume Preparation Referral to community resources Labor Market Information Supportive Services Career Counseling & On-The-Job Training
South Georgia Technical College 900 S Georgia Tech Pkwy Americus, GA 31709 (229) 931-2553	Admissions information Occupational Skills Prep Adult Literacy/ESL WIOA Eligibility Determination Assessments Case Management Job Search Assistance Referrals to Community Resources

### Lower Chattahoochee

One-Stop Operator/One-Stop Partners/ Affiliate Sites	Major Services Provided
<p><b>One Stop Operator</b></p> <p>Georgia Department of Labor (July 1, 2017 thru June 30, 2020)            700 Veterans Parkway            Columbus, Georgia 31901            Phone: 706-649-7423</p> <p>IN THE DOOR, LLC (Effective July 1, 2020)            Located at the Comprehensive One-Stop GDOL            700 Veterans Parkway            Columbus, Georgia 31901            Phone: 706-649-7423</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>Services are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Employment Services</li> <li>Unemployment Insurance</li> <li>Veterans Services</li> <li>Employer Services</li> <li>Job Referrals</li> <li>Assessments</li> <li>Job Search Assistance</li> <li>Labor Market Information</li> <li>Resume Preparation</li> <li>Workshops</li> <li>Referral to community services</li> <li>Migrant Seasonal Farm Worker</li> <li>TOP Step and Federal Bonding</li> </ul>
<p>Technical College System of Georgia            Columbus Technical College            (One-Stop Partner) &amp; One-Stop Affiliate Site</p>	<p>Serves as an Affiliate Site for collaboration of One-Stop System partners for basic services and referral to comprehensive One-Stop Center for</p>

<p>928 Manchester Expressway Columbus, Georgia Phone: 706-649-1856</p>	<p>further processing. Assistance with occupational skills training and/or retraining through ITAs, in addition to career counseling, case management.</p> <p>Also:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adult Basic Education Literacy / GED Preparation</li> <li>Corrections Education</li> <li>English Second Language</li> <li>Integrated Education &amp; Training</li> <li>Workplace Preparation Activities</li> </ul>
<p>Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency (One-Stop Partner)(virtual communication) 233 12th Street, Suite #100 B Columbus, GA 31901 (706) 649-7411</p>	<p>Programs authorized under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act. Services are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Career Counseling</li> <li>Assessments</li> <li>Job Development</li> <li>Case Management</li> <li>Training Workshops</li> <li>Accessibility</li> </ul>
<p>Legacy Link (One-Stop Partner)Co-Located at the Comprehensive One-Stop GDOL 700 Veterans Parkway Columbus, Georgia 31901 Phone: 706-649-7423</p>	<p>Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP), authorized under title V of the Older Americans Act of 1965 (42 U.S.C. 3056 et seq.)</p>
<p>Department of Family &amp; Children Services Clay, Quitman, Randolph, and Stewart Counties</p>	<p>Affiliate Site serves as resource center and access point for basic services and referral to comprehensive one-stop center for further processing, where appropriate; to include employment services, WIOA, or referral to other agencies for non-WIOA services.</p> <p>Oversight of Itinerate site One-Stop System operation. Intake and funding assistance for training and retraining. Comprehensive assessment of eligible individuals and referral for training and/or retraining, career counseling, case management.</p>

## **e. Current one-stop operator**

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

The GDOL Americus Career Center is designated by the Middle Flint Workforce Board as the Comprehensive One-Stop Center. In July 2020, the Lower Chattahoochee Workforce Development Board designated the private provider In The Door as the designated One Stop Operator. In The Door will operate One Stop Services at the GDOL Columbus Career Center location. The GDOL Columbus Career Center is designated by the Lower Chattahoochee Workforce Board as the Lower Chattahoochee Area's comprehensive site.

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

The Region solicited publicly available competitive procurement of the One Stop Center/Operator Services since spring 2017. The next One Stop Procurement for the Middle Flint area will occur in 2021. Lower Chattahoochee Area 14 procured their area One Stop procurement in 2020. Marketing research and cost price analysis comparisons were made as part of the process, selection and award of contract for the One Stop Operator services.

Each local area and their partners conducted a competitive bid procurement of the One-Stop Operator in accordance with and following all appropriate protocols of the guidelines issued by the State Office 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. The area will contract all these services out to the new One Stop Shop once the new procurement process is completed.

A business service center is available within the center for employers, equipped with interview rooms, technology, and other resources for interviewing, conducting recruitment efforts, et cetera. Rapid response activities, employer committee seminars, workshops, job fairs, and proficiency skills testing



services are also available. Provision of the above services through the Local Workforce System helps to ensure that employers have access to the best employees.

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

*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.*

### **Middle Flint**

The Middle Flint Workforce Development Board use a Request for Proposals (RFP's) competitive procurement process for the solicitations of services funded by WIOA Title I. A public notification of RFP availability is placed on the RVRC WIOA agency website, social media platforms, posted for public viewing, and notices to agencies listed on the Bidder's List. Requests for Proposal are issued to the public for a defined time period in which interested parties can submit a proposal.

Bidder's conference will be held to answer questions or provide clarification. Submitted Proposals are reviewed and evaluated based on the specified criteria, for costs analysis, prior knowledge and experience of the Proposer, ability of proposer to meet requirements etc. Proposals meeting the established criteria are presented to the Middle Flint Workforce Development Board (WDB) for consideration of funding.

WDB will make the final decision for awarding contracts to Proposer for funding. Contracts for services will be developed based on WDB approval.

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

### **Lower Chattahoochee**

Both local boards use a procurement process based on Requests for Proposal. These RFPs are developed by WDB staff at the recommendation of the board, and the RFPs are then solicited and advertised. Advertisements are distributed in the local legal organs. The RFPs are reviewed by a board committee who then makes a recommendation to the full board. The local boards then make their decision on

service providers. This process is uniform by federal guidelines with local agency guidance to adhere to as outlined below.

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

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

## 8. EEO and Grievance Procedures

### Grievances and Complaint Resolutions.

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

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

The Region has a Complaint and Grievance Policy and Procedures form that is publicly available at various locations in the area (One Stop Centers, WIOA offices, Contractors/Providers locations, and websites etc...) which provides information on compliance with Section 181 and 188 of the Workforce Innovations Opportunity Act (WIOA), State and Federal policies. A Complaint / Grievance Policy and Procedures is publicly available which provides general policy information, Equal Opportunity is The Law, Discrimination Complaints, Complaints of Abuse, Fraud and Other Alleged Criminal Activity and All Other Complaints and Grievances. The form provides contact information (agency name, address, telephone numbers and TTY/TDD phone number) for local, State, Federal and Office of Inspector General if an individual would like to file a complaint/grievance. Efforts are made at the local WIOA level administrators to be responsive and to resolve all complaints/grievances upon receipt of the complaint.

Individuals interested in WIOA services are provided a copy of the Complaint/Grievance Policies and procedures form during the career services and intake appointments. WIOA customers/applicants/participants are required to sign the form and a copy is placed in their participant records.

Types of Complaints/Grievances:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Grievance Hearing: Should such complaint/grievance necessitate a hearing; reasonable notice will be given to both parties by registered or certified mail; or hand delivered with means of documenting verification of receipt by affected parties. Such notice will contain: 1) time, date, and place of hearing; 2) specific charges involved; 3) right of both parties to be represented by legal counsel; 4) right to present evidence (both written and thru witnesses); 5) reference to the particular sections of the Act, regulations, sub grant, or other contract under the Act involved; 6) statement of the authority and jurisdiction under which the hearing is to be held; 7) statement of the right of each party to cross examination; and, 8) the right to an impartial decision maker who has not been directly involved in the events from which the complaint arose.

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

#### Selection of Hearing Officer:

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

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

#### Appeal to State Level:

If a complainant does not receive a decision within thirty (30) days of the date of filing of his/her complaint, or receives a decision that is unsatisfactory to the complainant, he/she has a right to request review of the complaint by the Technical College System of Georgia Office of Workforce Development. The request for review shall be filed within ten (10) days of receipt of the adverse decision(s) or ten (10) days from the date on which the complainant should have received a decision. Such a request shall be submitted to the recipient's Equal Opportunity Officer, The Technical College System of Georgia Office of Workforce Development, Brittany, Compliance & Legal Affairs Director, 1800 Century Place N.E., Suite 150, Atlanta, GA 30345. The State Equal Opportunity Officer, or other responsible designee, shall conduct a review of the complaint and issue a decision within ninety (90) calendar days from the date of receipt of the review request. If State official, TCSG does not respond to you in the allotted ninety (90) days, you will have the opportunity to file a request for review by the Civil Rights Center. You must file your CRC compliant within 30 days of the date on which you received the Notice of Final Action.

#### Federal Review:

Should the State fail to provide a decision within the established time frame, the complainant may request a determination as to whether Reasonable e cause exist to believe the Act, or its regulations, have been violated. Such request shall be submitted to 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 website at. Compliant must be filed within ten (10) days of the date the Governor's decision should have been issued. The Secretary shall act within 120 days. Except for complaints arising under WIOA Section 184(f) or Section 188, grievances or complaints made directly to the Secretary will be referred to the appropriate State or local area for resolution in accordance with this section, unless the parties are notified that the Technical College System of Georgia will investigate the grievance under the procedures at 667.505.

Discrimination: Complaints involving any type of discrimination must be filed directly with The Director, Civil Rights Center (CRC) within 120 days of the occurrence. Questions about or complaints alleging a violation of the nondiscrimination provisions of WIOA Section 188, may be directed or mailed to the Director, Civil Rights Center (CRC), U.S. Department of Labor, 200 Constitution Avenue NW, Room N-4123, Washington, DC 20210, for processing.

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

- Special Procedure for Complaints of Discrimination on Basis of Disability

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

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

<http://www.dol.gov/oasam/programs/crc/Cife.pdf>

For the Middle Flint WIOA, you may contact Ms. Tenisha Tookes, WIOA EO Officer at (706) 660-5369; or 1-800-255-0056 (Hearing impaired),

1-877-819-6348 (English as a second language).

For the Lower Chattahoochee WIOA, you may contact Ms. Feleshia Marshall, WIOA EO Officer at

(706) 653-4539; or 1-800-255-0056 (Hearing impaired),

1-877-819-6348 (English as a second language).

Director, Civil Rights Center, U.S. Department of Labor, 200 Constitution Avenue NW, Room N-4123, Washington, DC 20210, for processing.

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

- Special Procedure for Complaints of Discrimination on Basis of Disability

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

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

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

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

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



## Local Boards and Plan Development:

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

### Middle Flint

The Middle Flint Workforce Development Board is responsible to ensure that Workforce Area 15 respectively have a robust system that is comprehensive, effective, responsive and customer focused. The Boards are comprised of a member representation from a cross-section of organizations within its workforce area, to include public sector, non-profit and for-profit organizations that govern the local workforce development system. A list of board members is found in Appendix 1.

Board subcommittees, are established to ensure programs are designed to meet the economic demands of the workforce area and to promote accountability and transparency in accordance with the intent and spirit of the Workforce Innovations Opportunities Act For the Middle Flint WDB, the River Valley Regional Commission serves that role.

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

### Lower Chattahoochee

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

Board subcommittees are established to ensure programs are designed to meet the economic demands of the workforce area and to promote accountability and transparency in accordance with the intent and spirit of the Workforce Development Act. 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.

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

*b. New member orientation process*

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

New Workforce Development Board (WDB) members are provided orientation information upon appointment to serve on the local WDB. One-on-one sessions or groups sessions may be conducted as needed. Members are provided information on local WIOA services and activities, By-Laws, meetings, etc.

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

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

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

### **d. Engagement of local board members**

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

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

## **2. Local Board Committees**

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

Middle Flint has 19 Board members with an Executive Committee that is responsible for day to day operations. Descriptions of these committees are below.

### ***Middle Flint WDB***

Local Workforce Development Board (WDB) currently has an Executive Committee and can appoint other committees when deemed necessary. The Executive Committee may act on behalf of the full board when

a quorum is not present at a meeting. Executive Committee may also hold a meeting if a decision or matter needs to be made quickly and time does not allow for full Board meeting to be held.

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

### *Lower Chattahoochee WDB*

#### **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:**

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

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

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

#### **PROGRAM/EVALUATION/SELECTION COMMITTEE:**

Members of the Program/Evaluation and Selection Committee represent a cross section of members of the Board. In coordination with the Program Administrator, the committee is responsible to review employment and training needs in the area, to determine population target groups for the area and oversee the functions of the workforce systems functions, and to coordinate with the Program Administrator staff in preparing program plan(s) as required. The committee is further responsible for reviewing solicitation applications submitted by potential deliverers of service within the one-stop system and make appropriate recommendations regarding the provision of appropriate services in accordance

with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2013. A summary of each meeting and recommendations held by this committee shall be presented to the LCWDB or to the Executive Committee convened on behalf of the LCWDB for appropriate action. In circumstance where the Executive Committee is the approval authority, the Executive Committee shall subsequently report any actions taken by the committee on behalf of the LCWDB at the next full board meeting for confirmation of the full board.

**MONITORING/OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE:**

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

**BUDGET AND FINANCE COMMITTEE:**

Members of this committee shall represent a cross section of members of the Board, responsible for conducting oversight of the fiscal accountability and transparency of the local workforce system administered and operated by funds allocated under WIOA and Recovery Act funds, as applicable, and makes recommendations where appropriate. Oversight shall be conducted via reports generated by the Program Administrator staff. The Program Administrator staff shall provide report of the system(s) finances in respect to WIOA and Recovery Act allocations, as applicable, for this purpose. A summary of each meeting and recommendations held by this committee shall be presented to the LCWDB or to the Executive Committee convened on behalf of the LCWDB for appropriate action. In circumstances where the Executive Committee is the approval authority, the Executive Committee shall subsequently report any actions taken by the committee on behalf of the LCWDB at the next full board meeting for confirmation of the full board.

**MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE:**

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

**YOUTH COMMITTEE:**

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

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

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

### 3. 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.*

#### Middle Flint

The Middle Flint Local Workforce Plan was developed following guidance issued by the State TCSG Office of Workforce Development and reviewing the Georgia State WIOA Plan. Local Plan was updated as required.

Workforce Development Board and/or Executive Committee will review and approve the developed Middle Flint Area local WIOA Plan.

Once local Middle Flint WIOA Plan is approved by the WDB and/or WDB Executive Committee the, the local WIOA Plan will be posted for a 30-day public comment period. Local WIOA Plan will be placed on the RVRC WIOA website during the 30-day comment period. Comments received during the public comment period will be included with the local Plan when submitted to the State TCSG Workforce Office. Labor Market Information (LMI) data from the Georgia Department of Labor website, Burning Glass data, Census Bureau, local partner's contributions etc. was collected and utilized in the development of the local WIOA Plan.

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

Upon approval of the WIOA Plan, a copy of the WIOA Plan will be posted on the RVRC website for a 30-public comment period. Any comments received during the public comment period will be included in the WIOA Plan upon submission to the State Workforce Office.

#### Lower Chattahoochee

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

review and upon approval of the Plan.

Process to provide a 30-day comment period

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

## Service Delivery and Training

### 1. 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.*

Region 8 Local WDBs, staff, and partners will work toward expanding access to services for eligible individuals and strive to provide a pipeline of skilled workers to meet the needs of area business and employers. Efforts to improve basic education literacy levels and providing training opportunities that increase skills levels and employability will help attract new business and industry to the local area. One Stop Partners will hold meetings to identify needs, accessibility options and develop strategies to expand outreach and recruitment efforts in the community. An important part of expanding access to services is to develop an effective referral process and cross training among partner's staff to ensure individuals are directed in the appropriate service or partner agency for assistance. Career pathways and co-enrollment have been implemented in many of the WIOA education and training activities. Helping individuals to remove or work around barriers can lead to achieving desired training objectives and outcomes. The attainment of education credentials and/or industry recognized enhances the employment, retention in employment, and increases in wages performance outcomes of WIOA and other partners programs. Service to individuals with barriers to employment may require the services of multiple partner agencies. Effective Case Management and services coordination will be critical elements in identifying and assessing barriers to employment. Partner and community resources may be utilized to remove barriers that will enable the customer to achieve self-sufficiency, entering employment and retention in employment long-term.



Credentials are often achieved thru the various educational and training programs such as GED achievement, ITA training programs which will provide a credential such as but not limited to; higher education Diploma, Degree or State/Federal Licensure or Certificate.

Soft Skills training is a local identified need and imbedded in various core and intensive training services available in the local area.

## **2. 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.*

Both Local WDBs collaborates and coordinates with their Service Providers to provide a wide array of services to the adult and dislocated worker. Services available include, but not limited to, the following: job search/job placement assistance, comprehensive assessments, various workshops, assistance with Unemployment Insurance (UI) claims, resume training and development, Rapid Response, veterans' services, federal bonding, Work Opportunity Tax Credits, business services, job fairs, and Labor Market Information. WIOA funded services include Individual Training Accounts (ITA's), On-the-Job Training (OJT), GED preparation, Work Readiness, Work Experience, career pathways, career guidance, assessments, customized training (CT), incumbent worker training (IWT) job search and job placements and referral to other services as deemed appropriate.

### Adult Services

In ongoing efforts to enhance services to the adult and dislocated workers that offer potential unsubsidized permanent employment and retention leading to self-sufficiency, the local area, through the normal competitive procurement process, contracts with Service Providers to offer On-The-Job Training (OJT), Work Experience, Career Pathways, Individual Training Accounts (ITA), Incumbent Worker (IWT), or other appropriate services in the local area.

As part of the local area plans to increase the availability of training in high-demand occupations to workforce system customers, the local areas work with institutions of higher education and other training providers with emphasis placed on training in these occupations. Labor Market Information is a source

used to identify in-demand occupations and well as available job openings, new business openings or existing business expansions may indicate those occupational areas are in-demand.

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 local area. South Georgia Technical College as well as other educational institutes in the region is looking to institute more short term occupational specific coursework based upon employer needs. In 2020 manufacturing has been identified as an in-demand occupation for the Middle Flint Area. Manufacturing employers have increased their hiring to fill open employment positions for retiring employees. Several manufacturing employers have expansions to their current operations which require addition employers to support operations.

On- The- Job Training (OJT) is a critical component of the Adult Services provided by the local area. OJT is a direct business work-based learning service offer to local businesses to fill their employment needs. Large employers as well as smaller local employers currently use the OJT services to fill their vacant employment positions. More information is provided below in the Work Based Learning Initiatives.

Multiple Career and Job Fair events are held annually in the local area to bring employers and job seekers together. Outreach and recruitment events are held by various partners during the year attract.

### 3. 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.*

Both Local Areas will provide assistance to the State Rapid Response Coordinator (GDOL Rapid Response) with any identified business closures or employee lay-off events that happen in the local area. WIOA and Partner services will be made available to individuals who are dislocated from their employment that are part of a Rapid Response event. Local WIOA staff can help gather and provide important business/employer contact and lay-off information to the State Rapid Response staff. Local partners staff can provide information and make referrals on available local areas services, training information, assist with UI claims filing, participate in employee lay-off Informational sessions if held, make referrals to other employers in the local area that are hiring etc.

### 4. Description of Youth Services (p149- 155 Policy Manual)

*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.*

#### Middle Flint

Middle Flint area provides Youth assessments using TABE 11/12 and Career Scope Interest & Aptitude assessments for youth participating in the GED remediation activity. . Youths that have dropped out of school and do not have a Diploma or its recognized equivalent are encouraged to participate and complete the GED Program to receive a secondary diploma equivalent. Youth who currently have a Diploma or GED may participate in Work Readiness and/or Work Experience services. Youth participants may also obtain certifications in Occupational Skills Training areas that align with in-demand industry sectors or occupations in the LWDA.

#### Youth Work Experience

Middle Flint area provides Work Experience (WEX) in eligible youth enrolled in WIOA funds services. Youth are paid wages and provided Worker's Compensation Insurance coverage for the designated WEX

training period. Local area business and employers are recruited to serve as WEX worksites. Youth participate in Work Readiness/Career Pathways training prior to participation in the WEX activity. Provider staff makes a concerted effort to place Youth at WEX worksites based on the career interest assessment results so the Youth can observe and have hands on training in their occupational interest area. The WEX activity can confirm that the participant has a desired interest in the occupational area that would lead to additional educational training after the WEX activity.

It may also indicate to the participant that they may want to explore other occupational areas. The goal is to help youth participants explore occupational choices and learn about the world of work. WEX can direct the next educational or training steps needed so the participant can make an informed choice in post- secondary education programs of study needed for employment in the occupation. Worksite mentors can play an important role in helping youth to decide on future educational and career choices.

The Provider staff wanted to ensure a good WEX job match so the participant develops a knowledge of employment and enhance skills that can be carried forward with future employment opportunities.

### **GED Remediation Plus**

The Middle Flint area has a need for improvement in the Youth basic skills literacy and high school dropout rates. The local area also has a high number of pregnant/parenting youth, single parent households, and families living in poverty, reliance public assistance benefits, transportation and childcare issues, and youth offender barriers.

In 2006 the Middle Flint WDB decided to focus on Out-of-School Youth who lacked either a High School Diploma or GED and youth that was either not attending school and/or employed. The WDB saw a need to help the Youth obtain a GED that would then enable them to enter employment or post-secondary educational training. As the local area has the smallest allocation of WIOA funds in the State, WDB directed their WIOA Youth funds to serve Out of School Youth. A Youth training path was implemented to begin a GED remediation with additional training activities such as Work Readiness, Youth Work Experience, and Career Pathways training services. The Middle Flint has successfully operated this Youth services training model from 2006 to current 2020. Many Youth participants have successfully obtained their GED credential and then moved onto to attending post-secondary education or employment. Middle Flint area has successfully met or exceeded state/federal WIOA Youth performance measures outcomes.

Career Pathways is a work readiness component that builds on soft skills development, career exploration and life skills.

#### Individual Training Accounts

Youth participants that desire to attend post-secondary education training may also be served with an Individual Training Account (ITA) at eligible training provider locations. Youth Services Provider will make referrals to eligible training providers and assist the participant with Admission and Financial Aid Applications.

#### **Lower Chattahoochee**

##### 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 (ITA)'s for Older Youth as prescribed in the following adopted policy:

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

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

program, funding limitations, etc.:

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

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

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

D. The youth must be informed of:

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

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

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

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

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

## 5. 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.*

### Middle Flint

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

The Middle Flint Area has a long history (32 + years) of offering work-based learning initiatives through On-The-Job Training (OJT) services. While the OJT enrollment numbers are smaller than they previous were in the past, the Middle Flint WDB has continued to support and view this work-based learning as a needed service in the local area. Employer participation is a critical element with providing OJT services. OJT Service Providers conduct outreach and recruitment efforts with local employers in the area. OJT Career Facilitators strategically job match participants seeking employment with employers who have employment openings. Facilitators utilize participant career interest results to identify high interest occupational areas and then job match them to employers who offer employment opportunities within the occupational areas. OJT Career Facilitators must build a vast knowledge base of the local employers and the types of occupational jobs areas of the employers. The goal for OJT is the place the participant with an employer that offers occupations within the participant interest area(s). OJT participant(s) develop a resume' that aligns their educational, skills levels and prior work history. Individual Employment Plans (IEP) are also developed which assist in the OJT job matching process.

WIOA participants must meet the hiring requirements of the employer. Employers interview the WIOA participants and make the final hiring decision. The WIOA participant is hired by the employer and becomes an employee. An OJT Training Agreement is developed that specifies the job duties/skills to be learned and estimated timeframe for duties/skills to be mastered. The length of the training period, wages to be paid, and an evaluation of training mastery are included in the OJT Training Agreement. WIOA allows for the OJT employer reimbursement to offset the employers training cost. OJT employer reimbursement is currently 50% of wages during the designated training period.

#### Work Experience

Middle Flint Area also utilizes Work Experience (WEX) as a work-based learning service. WIOA participants interested in participating with the Work Experience activity are placed on local area employer volunteer

worksites to receive hands-on training for a specific occupation. Participants are paid wages and covered by workers' compensation insurance. Staff makes the effort to whenever possible to locate worksites which the participant has an interest in that occupational area. The Work Experience (WEX) activity has resulted in participants becoming interested in pursuing post-secondary educational opportunities and/or permanent employed in the occupational area.

### **Incumbent Worker (IWT)**

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

Middle Flint has also provided Incumbent Worker Training (IWT) with a local employer in 2017 – 2018. Currently in 2020 Middle Flint is not offering IWT training due to funding availability. The area would be receptive to offering IWT training if there was an identified need and funds were available to support the activity.

### **Registered Apprenticeships**

The Middle Flint local area has very limited number Registered Apprenticeships available in the local area. The Middle Flint area would also be receptive to providing this service based on funding availability and the opportunity for apprenticeships as they become available in the region.

## **Lower Chattahoochee**

### **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 criterion 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.



### **Work Experience**

Lower Chattahoochee also utilizes Work Experience (WEX) as a work-based learning service. WIOA participants interested in participating with the Work Experience activity are placed on local area employer volunteer worksites to receive hands-on training for a specific occupation. Participants are paid wages and covered by workers' compensation insurance. Contracted service providers coordinate worksites for WIOA eligible participants in the occupational area they are interested in. The Work Experience (WEX) activity results in participant exposure in occupational area and pursuing post-secondary educational opportunities and/or full-time unsubsidized employment.

### **Incumbent Worker (IWT)**

The Incumbent Worker Training Program (IWT) provides funding for eligible businesses to effectively train and retain employees by providing skills upgrades and process improvement training for existing full-time employees. Both the employer and their employees benefit as a result. Incumbent workers are served on case-by-case bases.

Lower Chattahoochee provided IWT funding to assist the Columbus Water Works in training their full-time employees during their transition into their new operating system (March 2019 through February 2020).

Lower Chattahoochee will be ready and willing to offer IWT training contingent upon the availability of funds each program year; and, appropriate identified need be presented.

### **Registered Apprenticeships**

The Lower Chattahoochee does not currently have Registered Apprenticeships available in the local area. Like the Middle Flint area, Lower Chattahoochee local area would be receptive to providing this service contingent upon the funds availability each program year and the opportunity for apprenticeships as they become available in the region.

## **6. Provision of ITAs**

*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.*

Middle Flint and Lower Chattahoochee offers Individual Training Accounts (ITA's) training services to eligible Adults, Dislocated Workers, and Youth who need educational or occupational skills training available under an ITA.

ITA training is available under approved Eligible Training Providers. Program of study are also approved under the ITA services. ITA training is typically delivered by Eligible Training Providers such as but not limited to, Colleges, Technical Colleges, Universities, Public and Private training providers. ITA training should lead to the achievement of a recognized credential such as but not limited to, Diploma, Degree, Certificate or License. Training should be completed within the ITA training time and costs limits.

Training should also lead to a self-sufficient wage.

Both Local Areas 14 and 15 have approved Eligible Training Providers located in the Region, Columbus Technical College, Columbus State University, Georgia Military College, Central Georgia Technical College South Georgia Technical College and Georgia Southwestern State University. Middle Flint also utilizes the services from Eligible Training Providers located outside of the local area for participants desiring to attend training from one of these Providers.

WIOA financial assistance for ITA training include assistance with tuition related fees, books, required training supplies, tools, uniforms, specialty shoes, and support services. Financial aid funds available thru the Training Provider and WIOA work together to cover the costs associated with training.

The Administrator of Services 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 post on agency websites and other media outlets.

The local Boards evaluate 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. The evaluation includes an evaluation of program content, verification of performance information and outcomes, costs, etc. The comparison of local services and a cost analysis will be conducted to include evaluation of state performance against local measures will also be conducted. Where adequate information is not provided, letters will be forwarded to providers for

additional information or documentation. Applications may be reviewed upon submission of additional information.

The Administrator will prepare summary reports on evaluation of training provider applications and submit to the Program Evaluation/Selection Committee for review and recommendation to the local Board. Information on eligible providers will be input in the WorkSource GA VOS state data system for State office 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 and approvals will be made based on State policies.

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 ETPL List

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

#### Subsequent Data Update on Local Providers

The local workforce area periodically contacts providers to ensure that information being utilized is current. Any changes are presented to the LWIB for approval. Quarterly monitoring process of the eligible providers will be conducted like 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 designated ITA Service Provider will authorize the ITA training based on Contract requirements. 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 both 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.

## Lower Chattahoochee

### 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 if 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 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.

## **7. 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 micro-enterprise services.*

### **Middle Flint**

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

### **Lower Chattahoochee**

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.

## 8. Coordination with Education Programs

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

### Middle Flint

The Middle Flint local area is rich with educational programs with several strong public secondary school systems, as well as the TCSG system and USG system schools located in the area. The Middle Flint WDB has a member from post-secondary sectors. This member(s) brings a wealth of knowledge and resources to the table as WIOA coordinates with educational programs.

The Albany State University (Cordele Campus), South Georgia Technical College and Georgia Southwestern State University are the high education providers in the Middle Flint area. All these educational institutions are very active and involved with the local area communities.

All these educational resources strive to offer programs that are needed in the local area to support business and employers and to attract new business and industry to our rural area. They all have a clear understanding and work diligently to improve the educational levels of our residents is a key element to the growth and prosperity of the area.

### Lower Chattahoochee

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, Miller Mott Technical College) and University System of Georgia (Columbus State University, Georgia Military College) are both very active and involved with the local area. They strive to offer educational programs that are needed in the local area to support business and employers and to attract new business and industry to our rural area. They all have a clear understanding and work diligently to improve the educational levels of our residents is a key element to the growth and prosperity of the area.

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

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

- Initial assessment of skill levels (including literacy, numeracy, and English language proficiency), aptitudes, abilities (including skills gaps), and supportive service needs.
- Educational Skills Development: provision of education skills from basic literacy through high school completion, including ESOL services.
- Provision of referrals to, and coordination of activities with other programs and services, including programs and services within the one-stop delivery system and other workforce development programs as needed.
- Career and technical education programs at the postsecondary level authorized by the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (including but not limited to):
  - Vocational Skills Training - Instruction conducted on campus, or worksite setting to provide or upgrade the technical skills required to perform a specific job or group of jobs for an individual.
  - Post-Secondary Education - Programs of study beyond high school or its equivalency leading to an associate 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. Georgia Military College and Troy State University are also present in the Lower Chattahoochee area.

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



## 9. 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.*

Supportive Services are available in the Region to assist WIOA participants with their identified need to be able to participate in the activities and services funded by WIOA. Participants are determined eligible for supportive services based on an individual basis. Allowable supportive services may include the following: transportation, childcare, emergency healthcare and medical services. Both Middle Flint and Lower Chattahoochee determines the type of supportive services that will be available based needs, funding availability and approval by the Local WDBs.

Supportive services offered by the local area must comply with the State and federal guidelines.

### ***Middle Flint WDB***

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

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

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

WIOA supportive service funds will be available based on an individual determination of need. Supportive Services Determination of need form is complete for each eligible participant that request assistance with training related costs. Participants are required to identify if they are receiving assistance with supportive

services related type payments from any other agency. Participants must be physically attending training classes as verified by an attendance timesheet which is signed by the participant and training Instructor.

Supportive services payments are separate from the ITA training voucher limit of \$6,000.

### Lower Chattahoochee WDB

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

The local area's supportive service policy applies to any adult, dislocated worker, and youth customer determined eligible for, approved for, and assigned to WIOA training. Needs related payments are authorized only on a case-by-case basis and must receive prior approval from the Director, Job Training Division. Support service expenditures shall not exceed more than 35% of a funding stream's program year allocation unless waiver is submitted, and prior approval has been received from the State.

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

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

Support stipend shall be paid directly to the participant on a bi-weekly basis. All payments will be direct deposit to the individual's banking institution of choice. Participants approved to receive support stipends

will submit to their respective case manager a "Direct Deposit Disposition Form" with a void check from the respective banking institution. The case managers are responsible for submitting required documents to the WIOA Finance Office for processing in a timely manner.

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

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

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

Exceptions:

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

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

## 10. Coordination with Social Service Programs

*Provide a description of how the local board will coordinate with social service providers, including SNAP and TANF. The description should include utilizations of both as a referral source.*

## Middle Flint

Middle Flint Area being a rural poverty-stricken area serves a large customer base that is largely depended on Public Assistance benefits such as SNAP, TANF & Medicaid etc. WIOA as well as other Partners give a priority of service to individuals/family members that receive Public Assistance benefits.

Middle Flint WDB has identified Public Assistance benefit recipients as a target for priority of service.

WIOA Service Providers work directly with the area Department of Family and Children Services (DFCS) Office(s) to refer recipients to WIOA and community Partners services. As part of the WIOA Intake/Eligibility process, customer(s) and/or family household members who receive Public Assistance benefits require a DFCS official to verify the type of Public Assistance benefits award to customer(s) and/or family members. Service Providers provide information on WIOA services to each local DFCS office in the local area. The Middle Flint area currently does not have many TANF recipients in the area. SNAP benefits are the most common type of Public Assistance benefits received in the local area.

In PY 2018, the Middle Flint area served 227 individuals with sixty-six 66% of those individuals being recipients of Public Assistance (TANF & SNAP) benefits. During PY 2019, as of April 2020, 59% of enrollments were for individuals receiving public assistance benefits (SNAP).

RVRC WIOA staff annually provides copy of the WIOA Services List which details the types of WIOA funded activities area available in the area, brief description of the services and Service Providers contact information. WIOA staff request DFCS offices to post the WIOA Services List in the offices on a location that can be seen by the general public entering DFCS offices. WIOA also request that the information is shared with each DFCS staff member so it can be shared the clients as a resource for services. DFCS staff has been invited guest speakers a One Stop Partners meeting to share information with Partners on the DFCS services available in the area.

WIOA Service Providers as well as Partner agencies work with DFCS offices to coordinate resources for shared customers so no duplication of services or benefits are provided. In a rural area, it is a common occurrence for multiple partners to share customers and provide services coordination to maximize the best use of funds and services.

WIOA Services Providers and Partner agencies also refer customer(s) to area DFCS offices who may not be currently receiving Public Assistance benefits but need assistance. Referrals are also made for customers who may need Public Housing assistance. The referral process works both ways to best serve the area customer's needs.

### **Lower Chattahoochee**

Lower Chattahoochee Area 14 also works with social services programs in their area such as TANF and SNAP for referrals of customers that need assistance with educational, occupational training and other services available thru WIOA. During PY 2019, 1% of individuals received TANF and 22% received SNAP benefits, 56% of customers were low income eligible in the Lower Chattahoochee Area 14. Intake and eligibility staff coordinate with local area DFCS offices for referrals and coordinate resources for customers.

## **Coordination with Core Partners**

### **1. 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.).*

### **Middle Flint**

The Middle Flint area has a designated Comprehensive One Stop Center GDOL Americus Career Center as well as other affiliate access sites in the local area where workforce development information and services can be delivered. Partners in the local area collectively work towards common needs of both customers and business communities.

#### Provision of Career Services Training Services through the One-stop system

Partners co-located in the comprehensive one-stop center include: Georgia Department of Labor, Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency, Legacy Link, Eckerd Connects, South Georgia Technical College, Central Georgia Technical College (Adult Ed), SWGA YouthBuild.

As a training provider and an educational institution, collaborating with Technical Colleges for post-secondary level gives us access to the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (20U.S.C.

2301). It helps individuals gain access to vocational, educational, and occupational training programs. Individuals can get the skills and certifications they need to secure employment as they explore their options.

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

#### Career Services

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

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

#### Training Services:

Training 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 need more intensive services or intervention in order to obtain employment

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

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

To address the concerns of business leaders regarding lack of soft skills 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.

Currently all partners do not provide all 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 the Middle Flint WIOA area include:

- Underemployed or unemployed
- Offender
- Public Assistance Recipients (SNAP & TANF)
- Poor employability skills
- Poor work history
- Poor basic skill
- Lacks self-sufficiency
- Disabled
- Dislocated worker
- Youth (out of school)

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

#### Career Services

- Outreach, intake, eligibility determination for WIOA available activities and services
- Assessments to include basic skills literacy levels, interest and aptitude, and supportive service needs
- Labor market information (LMI) and employment data
- Resume development, Job search assistance and job placement assistance
- Referrals to community resources
- Assistance and information on filing Unemployment Compensation claims



- Information on Tax Credits and employment bonding services
- Veterans services
- Business services to employers
- Information on educational services available in area

#### Training Services

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

#### Lower Chattahoochee

#### 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 the above services, however, services provided should be based on the individualized assessment of the customer's needs.

#### Intensive Training Services:

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

Unemployed and have been unable to obtain employment through core services, determined by a one-stop representative to need more intensive services or intervention in order to obtain employment, or employed, but have been determined by a one-stop representative to need 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 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 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.

## **2. 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 both Local Area One-Stop systems are comprised of WIOA Title I and Title III Wagner-Peyser funded services that are provided for the universal population in all designated one-stop centers either on location or through the referral system. 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 Employ Georgia (EG) data system 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.

### **Middle Flint**

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

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

### **Lower Chattahoochee**

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.

### 3. Coordination with 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.*

#### Middle Flint

Adult Education has a large target population in the State as well as in the Region. South Georgia Technical College Adult Education provides services in the following Middle Flint Counties: Crisp, Macon, Marion, Schley, Sumter, Taylor, and Webster. Central Georgia Technical College Adult Education provides services Dooly County. Adult Education provides multiple activities in the area such as but not limited, Adult Basic & Secondary Education, Corrections Education, English Language, Family Literacy, Integrated Education & Training and Workplace Preparation Activities. Adult Education services are available in each county in the local eight county area. This includes individuals age sixteen and over, without a high school diploma, its equivalency, or a lack of English proficiency. This also includes those who have experienced barriers to education or employment.

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

Adult Education is offering Integrated Education & Training (IET) opportunities for all the students. IET will prepare students for local and regional in-demand occupations.

English Second Language (ESL) is offered to those individuals needs to learn or improve their English language skills.

The area Adult Education partners with many local and state agencies strive 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. Several communities in the Middle Flint area have received the CLCP achievement.

In addition to WIOA, other core partners also refer individuals in need to basic skills literacy remediation to Adult Education services in the area.

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

### Lower Chattahoochee

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 several 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. HISET (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.

#### 4. Coordination with Vocational Rehabilitation

*– Provide a description of the cooperative agreement between the local Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency 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 Agency (GVRA) has been a participating partner in the Region One Stop systems in Americus and Columbus. GVRA remains active with offices locations in Albany and Columbus areas. GVRA closed its operation in Americus several years ago and uses an electronic access method for referrals at the Comprehensive One Stop Center. GVRA staff from other regions travel to Americus as needed for services delivery. GVRA assists eligible individuals with permanent physical and mental impairments which interfere with employment.

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

GVRA 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 everyone.

GVRA 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.

GVRA 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**

- **Description of Performance Measures**

*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.*

Both Local Areas 14 and 15 annually negotiates with the TCSG OWD staff for the WIOA Performance Measures. WIOA Staff reviews and historical previous program years performance measures achievements with other local area conditions or events that may impact performance, additions or changes to planned activities and services, changes to Service Providers, staffing changes, or any other items that may impact WIOA performance measures outcomes for the upcoming year.

WIOA Administrative staff will propose recommendations for negotiated performance levels to the CLEO and WDB members for their review and comments. CLEO & WDB members will make the final decision on negotiated performance measures for the local area.

RVRC WIOA staff via conference calls with the TCSG OWD staff will negotiated the Middle Flint Local Area and Lower Chattahoochee Local Area WIOA performance measures outcomes for the upcoming year. Final negotiated performance measures for the local area will be submitted by the TCSG OWD staff to the Local Area.

The final negotiated performance measure outcomes will be implemented into the WIOA services delivery for the Local Area.

RVRC WIOA staff review and track the local area quarterly WIOA performance reports to see out the performance measures are aligning to the planned performance outcomes for the area. Performance reports that indicate the local area is on track and meeting or exceeding the planned performance outcomes. Measures that are not on track to meet goals may require adjustments. Services structure, local conditions, etc. may impact the local areas ability to meet the planned goals. Staff will be responsive to identify and implement changes as need to improve the performance outcomes.

RVRC WIOA staff share Quarterly WIOA Performance Measure reports to the Workforce Development Board (WDB) and CLEO during the program year. A copy of the Quarterly Report is included with members meeting packets or emailed out to members for their information.

Annually the State TCSG OWD allows the local WIOA areas to re-negotiate the performance measures outcomes if needed. Middle Flint will be utilizing this option as deemed appropriate based on Performance Measure reports.

Middle Flint Area has a successful history of meeting or exceeding local area performance measure outcomes.

### **Eligible Training Providers List**

The Middle Flint and Lower Chattahoochee WDBs reviews and evaluates the performance of local Eligible Training Providers based on their performance achievements. The Region has several Eligible Training Providers located in the Region. They provide educational training services under ITA's services.

Eligible Training Providers are required to provide information that can be reported on the State Eligible Training Provider List such as but not limited to; their costs, performance achievements, programs of study offered, available financial aid or other funding availability etc... This information is available at the ETPL website for the customers, Service Providers, and general public to review when making selections on training providers.

As part of the monitoring by the Administrative Entity, inquiries of WIOA participants are made by staff to ensure that quality education and training services was provided by the Eligible Training Provider (ETP). In previous monitoring surveys, the WIOA participants have been very satisfied by the services provided by the Eligible Training Providers.

Comments received from WIOA participants that were less than satisfied with the Providers services would be follow-up on by staff to ensure the any identified issues would were brought to the attention of the Provider.

The Middle Flint and Lower Chattahoochee WDBs want to ensure that participants are receiving quality training services from Eligible Training Providers. Providers that are determined to not be meeting satisfactory or high results are subject to lose their eligibility on the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL).

## **2. 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.*

### **Middle Flint WDB**

The Middle Flint Workforce Development Board (WDB) has the One Stop Operator to prepare report that provides information on One Stop services operations. Report provides information such as but not limited to; a report on the number of referrals made, report on number of career/job fair events are held in the area, number of Partners meetings held each year, report on community outreach events the One Stop Operator provides information One Stop services. One Stop Certification process is also conducted to review One Stop operations.

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) identify roles and responsibilities for One Stop partners. Local areas that use the Georgia Department of Labor (GDOL) as their comprehensive One Stop receive quarterly reconciliation reports that track and reports One Stop activities. Monitoring of the One Stop sites is also conducted annually by WIOA administrative entities.

### **Lower Chattahoochee WDB**

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) 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.

## **3. 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.*

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

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

cycles. Entities interested in being added to the Eligible Training Providers List (ETPL) may submit an application to the WDBs.

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

Both Local Areas also utilize 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 Office Workforce Development for final approval and inclusion on the State ETPL.

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

Individuals that are aggrieved ITA customers should contact the Lower Chattahoochee Area 14 or Middle Flint Area 15 staff if they to file a formal appeals process. The individual may be requested to provide supporting documentation to support their request for training in an unapproved ITA program.

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

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

**d. Updating the eligible providers list**

The Middle Flint area conducts reviews for eligible providers operating in their areas. Data such as participant performance outcomes for successful training completion, entered employment outcomes, employment wages, credential attainment, and follow-up are compiled and kept by the local area. Eligible providers and programs that are making satisfactory performance achievements will continue to be maintained in the Eligible Training Providers Lists. Providers or programs of study that are not making satisfactory results will be evaluated to determine whether or not continued eligibility will be maintained on the State Eligible Training Providers List. Changes to information such as costs, additions of programs,

locations changes, or other critical information will be forwarded to the State office once the provider has notified the local areas. Middle Flint local areas will send to the state office any changes or information on local Eligible Training Providers data.

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

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

#### **e. Regional policies or agreements for ITAs or training providers**

Currently there are no regional policies or agreements. Each local WIOA area utilizes their local developed policies or agreements.

#### **f. Process to track and manage all ITA activity**

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

#### **g. Local board policy on use of statewide eligible training provider list**

Local WDB allows use of statewide eligible training provider list when the Providers location is within a reasonable commuting distance of the area and costs is within local establish policy limits. Eligible Training Provider List is reviewed by staff to ensure the Provider and Training Program is approved for WIOA funding on the ETPL.

#### **h. How registered apprenticeship programs are added to the ETPL (P 203- State Policy)**

Registered Apprenticeship programs that are registered with the USDOL Office of Apprenticeship are automatically eligible to be included on the State ETPL. As of 2020, the Region as a rural area currently has no registered apprenticeship programs active in the area. The Region WDBs would be receptive and

responsive to Registered Apprenticeship programs services being offered in the area as they become available. The Region would follow the State policies and procedures for adding a registered apprenticeship program to the EPTL list.

#### 4. 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.*

Technology is a critical element that is used to enhance customer service and staff(s) ability to fully operate services delivery. One Stop Center and affiliate sites have computer, printers, scanners, phones, and internet connectivity as part of the daily operations. Computer stations within the Comprehensive One Stop Center are kept up to date with both hardware and software to ensure technology is available to meet the needs of customers and staff.

Partners utilize various data systems in their services delivery and everyday operation needs. Data systems provide valuable data that enables staff and customers to effectively plan, evaluate and monitor services flows and performance measures outcomes. Technology allows customers, businesses, and partner agencies to make informed decisions by reviewing data and using technology as valuable tools.

In general, rural areas of the State have challenges with the availability and quality of services with internet services. Many rural areas must rely upon broadband internet connections, cellphone internet services, or satellite internet services to access the internet. This type of internet service is often of low speed or very poor quality.

The lack of quality internet service availability impedes the rural areas of the State to be competitive in attracting new businesses and industry to this part of the State and limits expansion for existing businesses who require high speed quality internet services.

Several surveys and studies have in done in the Middle Flint and surrounding areas on needs for improvement in internet broadband services. Georgia Legislators are also studying the needs of rural Georgia for internet services.



The Middle Flint area will continue to use technology as it is available to enhance services and operations in the area. Technology can be an important element when serving a large geographic service area.

## State Initiatives and Vision

- **State Branding**

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

In August 2016, the Georgia Department of Economic Development-Workforce Division introduced the statewide program, WorkSource Georgia. The brand has been fully implemented in all 12 regions across Georgia is to unify all 12 regions across Georgia to include the One-Stop system. Each local area has implemented WorkSource Georgia branding on websites, printed materials, signage, outreach, & recruitment, etc. . . .

The region has implemented the WorkSource Georgia statewide brand. We understand, with this brand, the intent is to promote the resources available from the core partners and potential customers. The local area will utilize this marketing strategy to bring awareness to the state/local brand as one-unit operation, and universal look for the entire state of Georgia. The region has implemented the WorkSource Georgia branding to be included in advertising, facility signage, such as, pull up banners used during job fairs and other events promoting the WIOA program, changing business cards, letterheads and envelopes, promotional ads on the radio, news releases, mobile units and social media implementing. Both Local Workforce Areas have provided information for community partners, elected officials, and the public on the WorkSource Georgia brand.

## 2. 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.*

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

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

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

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

- First, to veterans and eligible spouses who are also recipients of public assistance Low income individuals or who are basic skills deficient. Military earnings are not to be included as income for veterans and transitioning service members,
- Second, individuals who are not veterans or eligible spouses who meet WIOA priority criteria.
- Third, veterans and eligible spouses who are not included in the WIOA priority groups
- Last, to individuals outside the groups given priority under WIOA

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

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

Priority of Services for Covered Persons through One-Stop System Policy for ensuring priority of service for covered persons, e.g., veterans and eligible spouses, how local area service providers ensure priority of service, and how GDOL employment services to veterans, are integrated into the local workforce system.

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

In accordance with the Workforce Innovations Opportunities 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 region 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 provide 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.

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

Training and Employment Guidance Letter (TEGL) 3-15

Training and Employment Guidance Letter (TEGL) 10-09

Training and Employment Guidance Letter (TEGL) 22-04

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Definitions:

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

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

Eligible spouse - the spouse of:

Any veteran who died of a service-connected disability.

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

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

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

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

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

A pre-screening package will be provided to each individual seeking service through the one-stop center. This pre-screening package is a viable instrument used to 1) identify covered and non-covered

persons who are seeking services through the local one-stop center; 2) provides feedback as to the reason(s) why individuals are utilizing the one-stop center; in addition to 3) acquiring basic background information about the individual that will be needed to determine the appropriate access route customers must utilize to meet their service needs.

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

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

#### Phone/Email Accessibility

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

#### ***Serving Transitioning Service Members and Spouses***

Transitioning service members and their spouses are among the group considered for priority of service as well. Service members exiting the military including, but not limited to, recipients of Unemployment Compensation for ex-military members (UCX) generally qualify under WIOA as dislocated workers.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

At the core and intensive/training service level, the one-stop staff person providing the service would input updated information regarding the covered persons into the GWS system so that it would be



available to all persons who provide service to the covered person and have access to the system. For WIOA, the staff person who receives the referral for training will make a determination of appropriateness and then refer the individual to the appropriate service provider for consideration of enrollment into training. Referral documentation will indicate whether the individual is a covered person under this policy.

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

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

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

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

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

WIOA has monitoring procedures of its own and the Administrative Entity monitors the Service Providers regularly and issues reports to the Providers. The monitoring procedures will be changed to

include monitoring of Priority of Services for eligible clients. Also, Priority of Services will be made a part of all financial contract agreements.

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

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

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

*The income levels shown in the following table apply to WIOA eligibility and reporting in federal program years 2020-2021 or until another update occurs.*

*Income levels effective: May 1, 2020*

<b>Program Years 2020-2021 Six-Month Income Guidelines for WIOA:</b>		
<b>Effective Date: May 1, 2020</b>		
<b>Family Size</b>	<b>Metropolitan AREAs</b>	<b>Nonmetropolitan AREAs</b>
1	\$6,380	\$6,380
2	8,620	8,620
3	11,030	10,860
4	13,617	13,213
5	16,072	15,592
6	18,797	18,235
7	21,522	20,877
8	24,247	23,520
For each over 8 Add:	2,725	2,643

### 3. Alignment with State Goals

*Describe how the area will align with goals listed in the United Unified Plan.*

- Utilize sector partnerships to inform and guide strategic workforce development strategies and enhance partnership coordination

Both Local Areas will use sector partnerships to gather information directly from the partners and employers in the local area to identify local needs and plan strategies to meet future needs. Sector partnerships has allowed for better coordination of efforts and services delivery needs that will help the local area to grow and prosper. Building partnership allows the area to come together to move in a forward direction to achieve common goals for the communities we serve.

- Further develop area integration to ensure streamlined services to both businesses and individuals

Both Local Areas will continue to follow the State Office of Workforce Development (OWD) guidance as they implement ways to streamline common practices such as but not limited to Intake/Eligibility processes and procedures, training initiatives and opportunities, and use of technology to provide a smooth streamline approach to services for both individuals and businesses.

Improve services coordination between agencies to provide for a uniform approach to business services with common forms and processes. Using technology to provide for a more efficient and effective way to work together and communicate across rural areas and the state.

Utilize the workforce system to increase statewide prosperity for rural and urban communities

The Middle Flint Area consists of rural communities. With the area having one Comprehensive One Stop Center for the eight counties, we have placed several access points where information on services can be obtained thru the One Stop affiliate sites that customers and businesses can access information. Partner staff often travels out to each of the counties to increase the services to customers and business. When customers want to access training opportunities that are outside of the Middle Flint area, staff helps to make those connections and training opportunities available by working with partner agencies in neighboring local areas. Interagency agreements between partner agencies allow services extend beyond their normal county or area. It allows partners to work together to provide holistic approaches to meet the needs of customers and businesses whether it is a rural or urban area. Sharing facilities, sharing resources, using technology are all ways to enhance services.

- **Align the workforce system with education systems at all levels**

Both Middle Flint and Lower Chattahoochee will use all local available education systems from local Board of Education's K-12, Columbus State University, South Georgia Technical College, and Georgia Southwestern State University etc. to align education with training services provided thru the workforce system to prepare individuals for careers that support the needs of businesses to grow and our communities to advance. Education is critical part of a community to grow and to attract new companies coming to an area. An educated workforce allows businesses to support the local economy and create job opportunities that allow our residents to remain in our local area. The high education institutions offer a large array of education programs that allow college student to live at home and attend college. They also offer programs of study that align and lead to employment opportunities in the local area or nearby communities.

The higher educational institutions are always willing to implement new training opportunities that are identified as needed by the businesses and employers in the area.

WIOA uses the educational providers as training vendors for ITA customers seeking education and occupational skills training.

- **Alleviate a tightened labor market by increasing the participant of strategic populations in the workforce system**

The Georgia unemployment rates in shown a steady decrease during 2018 – 2019 as reported by Georgia Department of Labor (GDOL). The Georgia unemployment rates have seen the lowest unemployment rates that have occurred in decades. With the lower unemployment rates, a decrease in the number of individuals seeking employment impacts the workforce challenges and shortages. U.S. Labor statistics report a 63.3 % national civilian labor force participation rate, which indicates that 37% of the civilian working age population have the opportunity to meet the needs of employers facing workforce shortages. Georgia has a slightly lower at 62.2% than the U.S. statistics.

Beginning in March 2020 due to the COVID 19 national emergency declared disaster, the nation and Georgia's has seen a tremendous increase in unemployment rates. Many states issued Shelter in Place orders which closed business and laid-off their employees. A record number of unemployment rates

have been filed in Georgia and the nation as a whole. It is estimated that the unemployment rates could continue to be high through the summer or fall of 2020 or longer due to the COVID 19 Pandemic.

Georgia as well as other states has applied for National Emergency Grants (NEG) available from the U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration. The NEG funds will be utilized to assist Dislocated Workers who have been laid-off from the employment due to the COVID 19 disaster.

In late April 2020, Georgia was awarded \$12 million in NEG funds to help Georgia's get back to work in the upcoming months. Georgia's state workforce system will be an important part of re-building the workforce and helping Georgians return to work.

In addition to the large number of Dislocated Workers, WIOA and its partner agencies will work to promote resources and training opportunities to other strategic populations such as but not limited to; transitioning veterans, youth, English language learners, individuals who are basic skills literacy deficient and individuals with disabilities.

## Attachment 1: Middle Flint Local Workforce Development Board

Member Name	Affiliation	Organization Position	Designation
Janet Teele WDB Chairperson	The People’s Bank of Buena Vista	Personal Banker	Private Business Marion County
Amy Varnum	Georgia Department of Labor Business Services Unit Economic Development Coordinator	Business Services Economic Development	UI, Employment Services, Trade Act, and Veteran Services
Norman Graves	Golden Gourmet Middle Flint COA	Executive Director	Private Sector Business Sumter County
Dr. John Watford	South Georgia Technical College	President South Georgia Technical College	Adult Literacy Education Economic Development AREA
Rhonda Lamb- Heath	Dooly County Chamber of Commerce	Executive Director	Private Sector Dooly County
Nakisial Cromwell	Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Services	AREA Employment Manager	Vocational Rehabilitation AREA
Buddy Guth	Synovus Bank	President	Private Business Sumter County
Gerald Beckum	Macon County Chamber of Commerce	Executive Director	Private Business Economic Development Macon County
Willie Patrick	South Georgia News	Owner	Private Business Crisp County
Mathis Wright Jr.	IBEW 2194	President	Organized Labor AREA
Diane Harrison	Magnolia Manor	Administrator	Private Business Sumter County
Rhonda Holbrook Vice Chairperson	Interfor U.S. Inc.	Human Resources Manager	Private Business Webster County
Becky Fitzgibbons	Crisp Power Commission	Human Resources Manager	Private Business
Jayson Griffin	Ameris Bank	Market President	Private Business Schley County

Glenn Morgan	International Paper Inc.	Human Resources Manager	Private Sector Business Macon County
Jennifer Morton	Flint Energies (EMC)	Community Connections Specialist	Private Business Taylor County
Saleemah Sabree	Legacy Link Inc.	Regional Coordinator Senior Employment SCSEP	Community Based Organization
Grady Burrell	Teamsters Local 728	Assistant Business Agent	Organized Labor Representative Dooly County
Shonda Blair	Taylor County Chamber of Commerce & Economic Authority	Executive Director	Private Business Taylor County
Leah Clark	City of Ellaville	WIOA CLEO	AREA



## Lower Chattahoochee Local Board

<b>Board Member Name</b>	<b>Affiliated With</b>	<b>Title/Position held with Affiliated Organization</b>	<b>County of Residence</b>	<b>Entity(s) Representing</b>
<b>Bethune, Georgia</b>	L&S, Inc.	Human Resource Assistant Director	Muscogee County	Business
<b>Bloom, Richard, M.D.</b>	Dr. Richard R. Bloom, M.D. Brookstone Surgical Center	Surgeon	Muscogee County	Business
<b>Brown, Carl</b>	C. Brown & Associates, Inc.	President	Muscogee County	Business
<b>Calloway, Tony</b>	PRIMERICA - Calloway & Assoc., Inc.	Regional Vice President/Owner	Muscogee County	Business
<b>Chambers, Travis</b>	Elite Ventures Leasing & Mgt.	President	Muscogee County	Business
<b>Cromwell, Nakisial</b>	GA Vocational Rehabilitation Services	Rehabilitation Unit Manager	Muscogee County	Vocational Rehabilitation
<b>Degroot, Maryrose</b>	Valley Hospitality	HR Director	Muscogee County	Business
<b>Deppe, Jeff</b>	IBEW Local 613	Union Representative	Muscogee County	Organized Labor/Joint Labor Management/Apprenticeship
<b>Dorsey, Belva</b>	Enrichment Services Program, Inc.	Chief Executive Officer	Muscogee County	Community-based
<b>Echols, Monica (pending...)</b>	Governor's Office of Transition, Support and Re-entry	Community Coordinator	Muscogee County	Second Chance Act Program / Offender Re-entry
<b>Evans, Jonathan</b>	Housing Authority of Columbus, Georgia	Director, Community Initiatives	Muscogee County	Community-based, Housing Auth. E&T Programs
<b>Farley, Elsie</b>	Pearl's Catering	Owner	Harris County	Business
<b>Geter, Corey</b>	Pratt & Whitney Company	Facilities Projects & Engineering Manager	Muscogee County	Business

<b>Board Member Name</b>	<b>Affiliated With</b>	<b>Title/Position held with Affiliated Organization</b>	<b>County of Residence</b>	<b>Entity(s) Representing</b>
<b>Harp, Charles</b>	Swift Spinning	VP of Human Resources	Muscogee County	Business
<b>Hopson, April</b>	Columbus Technical College	Director of Adult Education	Muscogee County	Adult Education & Literacy
<b>Hugley, Carolyn</b>	State Farm Insurance Agency	Owner / Agent	Muscogee County	Business
<b>Jackson, Barbara</b>	Columbus Regional Health	Professional Recruiter	Muscogee County	Business
<b>Jones, Rick</b>	CCG Dept. of Community & Economic Development	Director	Muscogee County	Title I, Economic Development
<b>Lakes, Sendreka</b>	Greater Columbus Georgia Chamber of Commerce	Executive Vice President of Economic Development	Muscogee County	Business / Economic Development
<b>Lewis, Carvel</b>	Lewis Mortuary II	Owner	Quitman County	Business
<b>Llewellyn, Tricia</b>	Goodwill Industries of the Southern Rivers	Vice President of Mission Services	Muscogee County	Private Non-Profit/Community-based
<b>Lloyd, Jamie</b>	Columbus Technical College	Vice President, Economic Development	Muscogee County	Post-Secondary/Adult Education & Literacy, Title II/Apprenticeship/Post-Secondary Vocational Educational (Carl Perkins)
<b>Martin, John</b>	The Martin Firm	Attorney At Law	Muscogee County	Business
<b>McNeer, Patricia "Ann"</b>	Master Tax Solutions, INC.	President	Muscogee County	Business
<b>Ramsey, Ernestine</b>	YMCA of Metropolitan Columbus	Director/Manager/Retired	Muscogee County	Community-based
<b>Randolph, Chester</b>	C. Randolph & Associates, LLC Caldwell Banker KPDD	Owner / Agent	Muscogee County	Business

<b>Board Member Name</b>	<b>Affiliated With</b>	<b>Title/Position held with Affiliated Organization</b>	<b>County of Residence</b>	<b>Entity(s) Representing</b>
<b>Reed, Marva</b>	Department of Health & Human Services	Special Operations Director	Muscogee County	Department of Health & Human Services
<b>Ruff, Gwendolyn</b>	Columbus Water Works	Senior Vice President, Strategic Planning & Employee Services	Muscogee County	Business
<b>Rutledge, Wanda</b>	Kinetic Credit Union	Vice President, Community Relations	Muscogee County	Business
<b>Sabree, Saleemah</b>	Legacy Links, INC.	Participant Specialist	Muscogee County	Senior Community Service Employment, Older American Act
<b>Smith, Dexter</b>	Communication Workers of America Local 3212	Secretary/Treasurer	Muscogee County	Organized Labor
<b>Stoller, Frederick</b>	Job Corps	Admissions Counselor	Muscogee County	Job Corps
<b>Timmons, Wendy</b>	Sixty-Two Graphic Studio	Owner/Operator	Muscogee County	Business
<b>Varnum, Amy</b>	GDOL	Regional Coordinator (Region 8)	Muscogee County	Wagner Peyser / Veteran Employment Activities / Disabled Vet Outreach Programs /Programs under State Unemployment Compensation Law
<b>Vinson, Tim</b>	Muscogee County School District	Youth Apprenticeship Coordinator	Muscogee County	Secondary Education Adult Education & Literacy
<b>Watson, Eddie</b>	Clay Hill Hunting	Owner/Operator	Clay County	Business
<b>Williams, Joe Lee</b>	Stewart County Board of Commissioners	Chairman	Stewart County	Public
<b>(pending...)</b>	<b>(pending...)</b>	<b>(Pending...)</b>	Randolph County	Business

## Attachment 2: Local Negotiated Performance

Negotiated performance for Middle Flint WIOA Area 15 - Revised 7/23/20

<b>Adult Program</b>	<b>Agreed Goals PY20</b>	<b>Agreed Goals PY 21</b>
Employment Rate 2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter After Exit	80	82
Employment Rate 4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter After Exit	76	78
Median Earnings 2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter After Exit	\$6200	\$6300
Credential Attainment within 4 Quarters After Exit	76	72
Measurable Skills Gains	39	41
<b>Dislocated Workers</b>	<b>Agreed Goals PY20</b>	<b>Agreed Goals PY 21</b>
Employment Rate 2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter After Exit	79	80.5
Employment Rate 4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter After Exit	78	80
Median Earnings 2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter After Exit	\$6300	\$6400
Credential Attainment within 4 Quarters After Exit	78	79
Measurable Skills Gains	32	34
<b>Youth</b>	<b>Agreed Goals PY20</b>	<b>Agreed Goals PY 21</b>
Employment Rate 2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter After Exit	66	67.5
Employment Rate 4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter After Exit	66	67.5
Median Earnings 2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter After Exit	\$2500	\$2600
Credential Attainment within 4 Quarters After Exit	60	62
Measurable Skills Gains	38.5	40

## Negotiated Performance for Lower Chattahoochee WIOA Area 14

<b>Adult Program</b>	<b>Agreed Goals PY20</b>	<b>Agreed Goals PY 21</b>
Employment Rate 2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter After Exit	75	77
Employment Rate 4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter After Exit	75	77
Median Earnings 2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter After Exit	\$5,600	\$5,700
Credential Attainment within 4 Quarters After Exit	74	70
Measurable Skills Gains	31	32

<b>Dislocated Workers</b>	<b>Agreed Goals PY20</b>	<b>Agreed Goals PY 21</b>
Employment Rate 2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter After Exit	70	71
Employment Rate 4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter After Exit	74	75
Median Earnings 2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter After Exit	\$6,000	\$6,200
Credential Attainment within 4 Quarters After Exit	75	70
Measurable Skills Gains	30	31

<b>Youth Program</b>	<b>Agreed Goals PY20</b>	<b>Agreed Goals PY 21</b>
Employment Rate 2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter After Exit	70	71
Employment Rate 4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter After Exit	66	67
Median Earnings 2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter After Exit	\$3400	\$3500
Credential Attainment within 4 Quarters After Exit	66	67
Measurable Skills Gains	37	38

**Attachment 3: Comments that Express Disagreement –**

**Originating Entity:**

**Comment:**

**Originating Entity:**

**Comment:**

**Originating Entity:**

**Comment:**

**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: Janice West

Title: Middle Flint Workforce Director

Entity Representing: Middle Flint WDB/River Valley Regional Commission

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

**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: Leah Clark

Title: Chief Local Elected Official – Mayor, City of Ellaville  
Representing: Middle Flint WDB Local Elected Officials

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



**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: Janet Teele

Title: Local Workforce Development Board Chairperson  
Entity Representing: Middle Flint WDB

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

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

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

Name: Howard Pendleton

Title: Local Workforce Area Director

Entity Representing: Lower Chattahoochee WDB

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

#### **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: Berry “Skip” Henderson, Mayor

Title: Chief Local Elected Official – Mayor, City of Columbus, Georgia  
Representing: Lower Chattahoochee WDB Local Elected Officials

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

**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: Chester Randolph

Title: Local Workforce Development Board Chairperson

Entity Representing: Lower Chattahoochee Workforce Development Board

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