# WIOA REGIONAL PLAN
# Local Areas 14 & 15

## 2024-2027

Updated

July 2026

## Acronym Guide

| | |
|---|---|
| ACS | American Community Survey |
| ADA | Americans with Disabilities Act |
| AEFLA | Adult Education & Family Literacy Act |
| AOP | Agricultural Outreach Plan |
| ARPA | American Rescue Plan Act |
| ASL | American Sign Language |
| BER | Benefits Eligibility Review |
| BGLI | Burning Glass Labor Insight |
| BLS | Bureau of Labor Statistics |
| BSU | Business Services Unit (housed in GDOL) |
| CAD | Computer-Aided Design |
| CAP | Client Assistance Programs |
| CAP | Corrective Action Plan |
| 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 |

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|---|---|
| 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 |

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|---|---|
| GED | General Educational Development test |
| GEPS | Georgia Enterprises for Products & Services |
| GLME | Georgia Labor Market Explorer |
| GOTSR | Governor's Office of Transition, Support & Reentry |
| GSE | Georgia Standards of Excellence |
| GVRA | Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency |
| GWROPP | Georgia Work Ready Online Participant Portal |
| GWS | Georgia Workforce System |
| HDCI | High Demand Career Initiative |
| IATSE | International Association of Theatrical & Screen Employees IAWP International Association of Workforce Professionals |
| ICR | Information Collection Request |
| IDEA | Individuals with Disabilities Education Act |
| IELCE | Integrated English Literacy & Civics Education |
| IEP | Individualized Education Plan |
| IPE | Individualized Plan for Employment |
| IPS | Individualized Placement & Support |
| ISY | In-School Youth |
| ITA | Individual Training Account |
| ITP | Individualized Transition Plan |
| IWT | Incumbent Worker Training |
| JFF | Jobs for the Future |
| JTD | Job Training Division |
| LEOs | Local Elected Officials |
| LVERs | Local Veteran Employment Representatives |
| LWDA | Local Workforce Development Area (the local 14 & 15 areas) |
| 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 Training |
| 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 Veterans' Services |
| SE | Supported Employment |
| SES | Supported Employment Services |
| SETA | Southeastern Employment & Training Association |
| SILC | Statewide Independent Living Council |
| SIWDG | Strategic Industries Workforce Development Grant |
| SMA | State Monitor Advocate |
| SNAP | Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program |
| SPC | Statistical Process Control |
| SPMI | Serious & Persistent Mental Illness |
| SRC | State Rehabilitation Council |
| SSDI | Social Security Disability Insurance |
| SSDR | State Service Delivery Regions |
| SSI | Supplemental Security Income |
| STAR | Staff Technical Assistance & Review |
| STEM | Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math |
| SUP | State Unified Plan |
| SWAT | Special Workforce Assistance Team |
| SWDB | State Workforce Development Board |
| SWIS | Statewide Workforce Investment System |
| TAA | Trade Adjustment Assistance |
| TANF | Temporary Assistance for Needy Families |
| TCSG | Technical College System of Georgia |
| TCSG, OWD | Technical College System of Georgia, Office of Workforce Development |
| TEGL | Training Employment Guidance Letter |
| TFSP | TANF Family Service Plan |

| | |
|---|---|
| UCX | Unemployment Compensation for Ex- service members program |
| UGA | University of Georgia |
| UI | Unemployment Insurance |
| UI and RO | Unemployment Insurance & Regional Operations |
| 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 |

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# Strategic Elements, Governance and Structure

## 1. Identification of the Fiscal Agent

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

Area 14 Fiscal Agent is:

Columbus Consolidated Government Berry “Skip” Henderson, Mayor (CLEO)

Chester Randolph, LCWDB Board (Chair)

Dr. Valerie Richardson, WIOA Director

1111 1st Avenue, Second Floor, Suite 2145 Columbus, GA 31901

706-225-3168

http://www.columbusga.gov/jtd

Area15 Fiscal Agent is:

River Valley Regional Commission Shane Tondee, Work Source Middle Flint CLEO

Janice West, Workforce Director

James Livingston, Executive Director

Middle Flint Workforce Development Board 228 West Lamar Street Americus, GA 31709

Phone # 706-256-2910

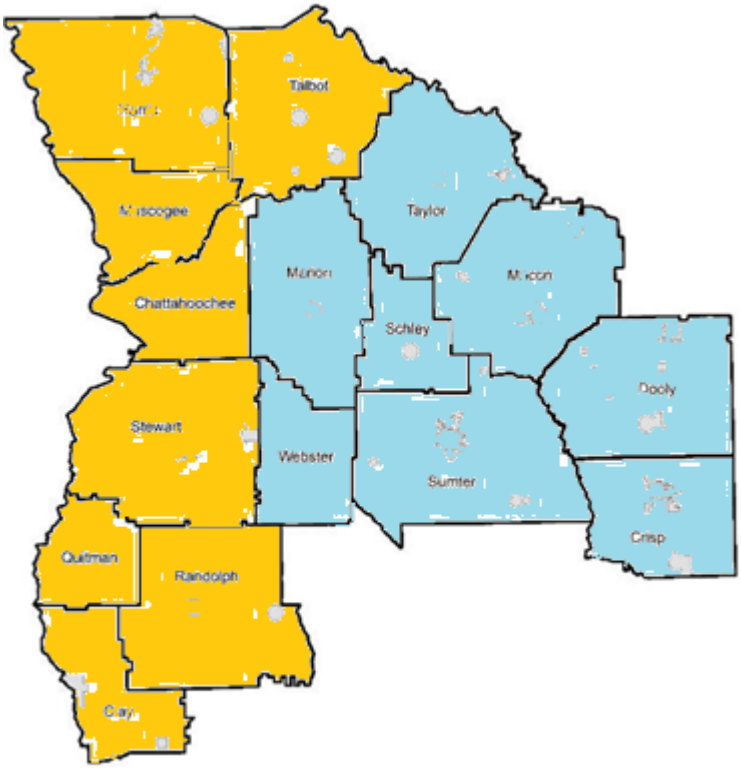
https://rivervalleyrc.org/workforce-development/

## 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 and will describe how the information was gathered and what stakeholders were consulted.

a. 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.

Region 8 consists of two (2) local Work Source areas —Area 14 – WorkSource Lower Chattahoochee and Area 15 - Middle Flint WorkSource. The counties served are Harris, Talbot, Muscogee, Chattahoochee, Stewart, Quitman, Randolph, Clay, Marion, Webster, Taylor, Schley, Sumter, Macon, Dooly, and Crisp. Below is a map of the region's counties.



The Lower Chattahoochee area continues to experience significant investment in Muscogee County and the surrounding areas. Businesses in the area currently benefit from affordable business costs and a favorable business climate. The area is advancing its business ecosystem by leveraging a blend of public and private investment. Leaders with the Regional Prosperity Initiative (RPI) recently unveiled their new 2026 – 2030 regional strategy, designed to drive economic momentum, cultivate talent, and build a thriving community. The new plan is built on the foundations of the "Columbus 2025" plan. The five-year plan is updated to bring in more stakeholders, non-profits, and citizens.

A groundbreaking $480 million private investment is planned for our community at Ranger's Speedway. Wisemen Multimedia LLC has announced the concept for the EXE Sports Entertainment District—a 150-acre, mixed-use destination featuring competition fields, a waterpark, 600 riverfront residences, and a 1.2-mile racetrack. With a civilian labor force of 108,308 in WorkSource Lower Chattahoochee (WDA-14), this flagship project will generate 2,100+ direct and indirect jobs, providing a massive boost to local economic development and workforce retention. This project will bring jobs and workforce development, increased tourism, and small business growth, new amenities for families, and youth athletics.

GDOL's Local Area Labor Profile for WorkSource Lower Chattahoochee (WDA-14) had a civilian labor force in April of 108,308, of which 124,600 were employed, and 5,400 were unemployed. The region has consistently had some of the highest unemployment rates within the State. The region's unemployment rate for 2024 was 3.5% while Georgia's unemployment rate was 2.8%.

The area's population is expected to decrease by 0.4% between 2025 and 2030, a loss of 1,095 persons. From 2020 to 2025, the number of jobs declined by 2.2% from 137,819 to 134,852. This change fell short of the national growth rate of 10.6% by 12.8%. As job numbers declined, the labor force participation rate fell from 57.3% to 54.9% between 2020 and 2025. Labor market data was analyzed using Lightcast in partnership with the Development Authority of Columbus, Georgia, and Columbus Technical College.

Area 14 has an above-average of 58,072 millennials (ages 25-39). The national average for an area this size is 55,086. The retirement risk is about average in this area. The national average for an area this size is 81,368 people 55 or older, while there are 76,333 here retiring soon.

## Middle Flint WIOA Area 15

The areas of Americus and Cordele have 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 conditions as a part of a study to assist the Cordele Inland Port, a multi-million-dollar transfer station effort to expand capacity at the Port of Savannah for shipping container traffic.

In 2024, the Middle Flint area's population was 93,693, which is an increase from the 2023 population of 93,380. Middle Flint area population increased by 313. Middle Flint Workforce Development Board (WDB) has concerns that several of the growth occupations listed on the 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's Local Area Labor Profile for the Middle Flint Workforce Area, has a civilian labor force in April 2026 of 37,720, of which 36,393 were employed, and 1,327 were unemployed. Middle Flint area counties have consistently had some of the highest unemployment rates within the State. Middle Flint's unemployment rate for 2024 was 3.5% while Georgia's unemployment rate was 2.8%.

Average weekly wages for the Middle Flint Area are around $963 with an average annual wage of $50,076. The averages for the Middle Flint Area fall well below the Georgia average weekly wage of $1,440 and an average annual wage of $74,880.

Area 15 has a below-average of 16,935 millennials (ages 25-39). The national average for an area this size is 19,180. The retirement risk is high. The national average for an area this size is 28,331 people 55 or older, while there are 31,935 retiring soon in Area 15.

**Labor Force and Unemployment, April 2026**

| Area | Labor Force | Employed | Unemployed | Unemployment Rate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Georgia | 5,475,353 | 5,320,184 | 155,169 | 2.8% |
| River Valley RC | 145,763 | 140,699 | 5,064 | 3.5% |
| Lower Chattahoochee Local Workforce Development Area | 108,043 | 104,306 | 3,737 | 3.5% |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Middle Flint Local Workforce Development Area | 37,720 | 36,393 | 1,327 | 3.5% |
| Source: Georgia Dept. of Labor, Workforce Statistics Division, Local Area Unemployment Statistics Unit. | | | | |

| Employment and Wage Statistics, Q4 2025 | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Area** | **Number of Employees** | **Average Hourly Wage** | **Average Weekly Wage** | **Average Annual Wage** |
| Georgia | 4,921,092 | $36.00 | $1,440 | $74,880 |
| Lower Chattahoochee Local Workforce Development Area | 103,427 | $27.35 | $1,094 | $56,888 |
| Middle Flint Local Workforce Development Area | 27,989 | $24.08 | $963 | $50,076 |
| Source: Georgia Dept. of Labor, Workforce Statistics Division, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages Program. Assumes a 40-hour week worked the year round. | | | | |

Limited technology availability and transportation are major concerns within the Middle Flint area. Middle Flint Area has had difficulties attracting new business to the area. Broadband grants have been awarded in all eight counties, enabling agencies to work together to lay the foundation for adequate internet access to rural communities. Partners often work together to provide information, assistance, and services in rural areas when possible.

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

### Lower Chattahoochee

The top industries by gross regional product (GRP) were Government, Finance & Insurance, and Manufacturing. The Government contributed over 6 billion dollars. Finance and Insurance contributed roughly $2.5 billion, and Manufacturing contributed over $1 billion.

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 TIS (formerly TSYS) employ nearly 50% of all workers in the metropolitan Columbus area. Other major employers include Synovus (and Pinnacle Financial Partners, Inc., formerly Columbus Bank and Trust), local hospitals, the public-school system, and Columbus State University. The number of advanced manufacturers is also significant, with KIA Suppliers and Pratt Whitney with significant presences in the local industrial sectors. In the rural counties, the industry mix includes

agricultural and other manufacturing sectors. Despite these strengths, there is a need to grow and diversify further the industries represented in the area.

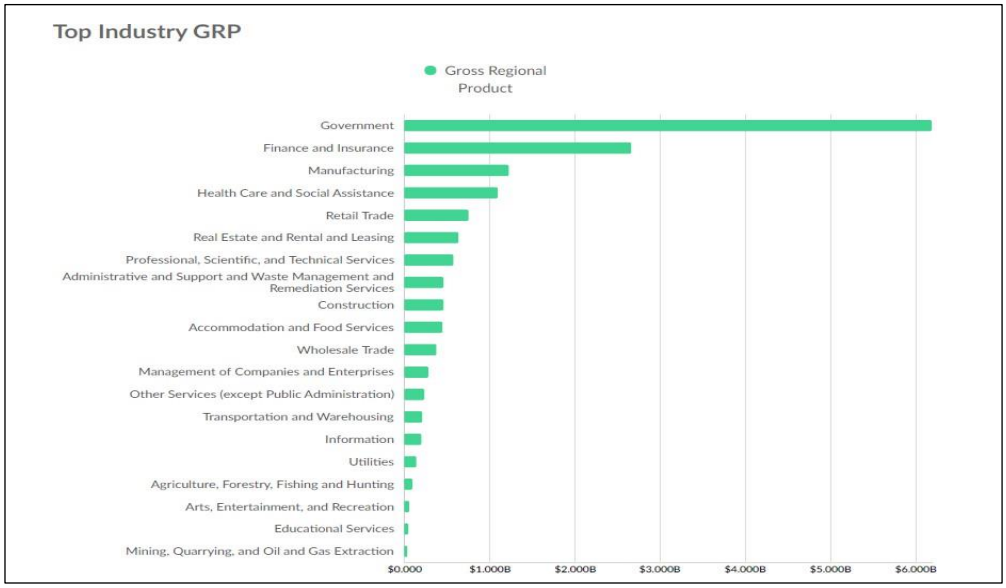
The Regional Prosperity Initiative, based on empirical evidence gathered through surveys, censuses, and other data, identified the following Areas of Economic Activity and suggested the Targeted Business Sectors. Healthcare is not included in these targeted business sectors, but from a workforce perspective,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

**Source: Regional Prosperity Initiative**

As for economic indicators, the gross regional product (GRP) for Q3 was over $21 billion, with Greater Columbus's GRP being over $18 billion. The imports for the region totaled over $28 billion, while the exports totaled over $37 billion. Below is a chart of the Q3 Economic Indicators. Source: Lightcast

Q3 Economic Indicators

| | Cost of Living | Gross Regional Product | Imports | Exports |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Region | 92.8% | $21.07B | $28.33B | $37.56B |
| Lower Chattahoochee Area 14 | 93.2% | $17.51B | $22.79B | $32.51B |
| Middle Flint Area 15 | 92.5% | $3.56B | $5.82B | $5.21B |



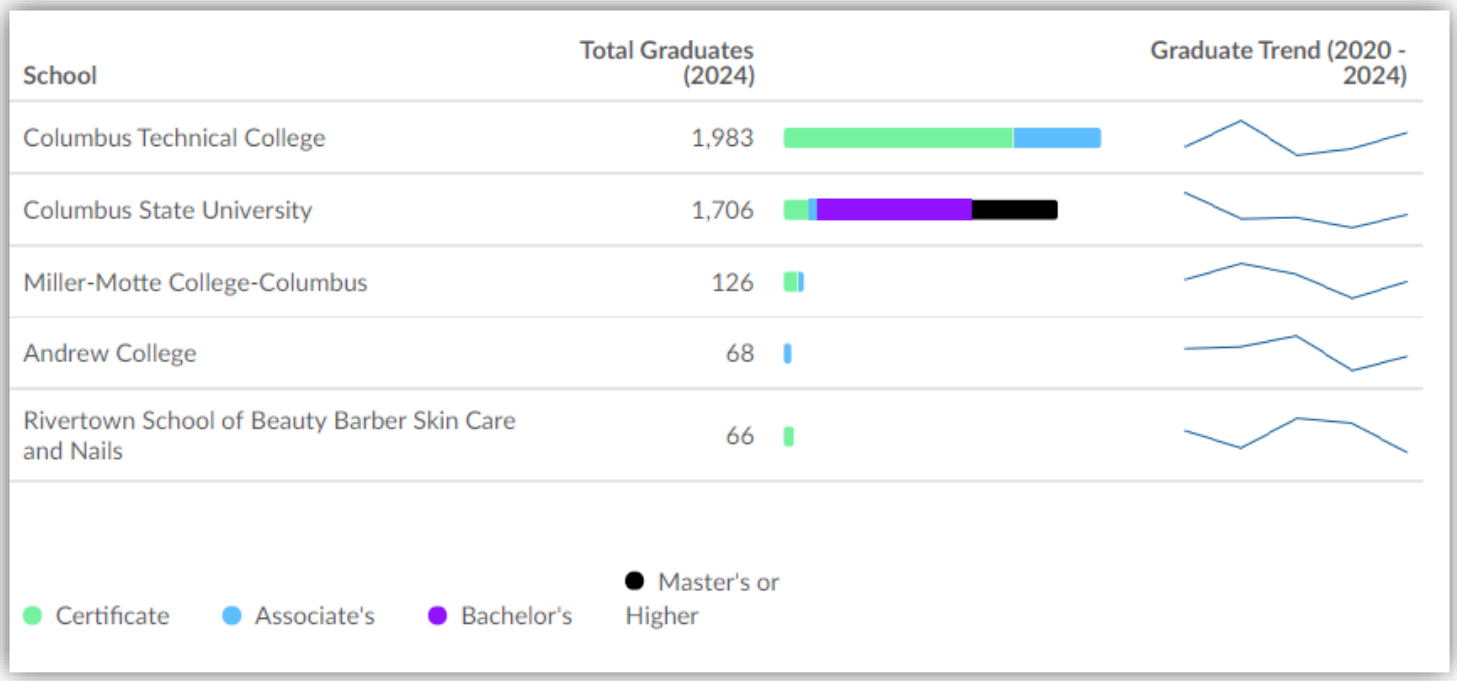

## Middle Flint

According to the Georgia Dept. of Labor Industry Mix 3rd Quarter 2025, the Middle Flint area has 2,183 firms, with a total employment of 27,677. The top industries of the Industry Mix are Goods-Producing and Service-Providing; Unclassified; Private Sector; and Government sectors. Work Source Middle Flint has 378 goods-producing companies with 6,545 employees. There are 1,488 Service-Providing firms with 15,122 employees. The Area's top industries by number of firms are Retail Trade, Health Care and Social Assistance, Accommodations and Food Services, Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting, and Other Services (except Public Administration). The area's largest Goods-Producing employers include Global Cellulose Fibers, Eaton-Cooper Lighting, Interfor South, IMERYS, Marv Air, Technical Coating International, and House of Raeford Farms. The area service-providing employers include hospitals such as Phoebe-Sumter and Crisp Regional Hospital; Nursing Homes and Rehabilitation Centers; Crisp Power Commission; Flint Energies; Sumter EMC; and hospitality employers in multiple counties. The local area also has numerous public, charter, and private schools in the Middle Flint Area. Work Source Middle Flint has one technical college, South Georgia Technical College, and one four-year university, Georgia Southwestern State University. There are other technical colleges, universities, hospitals and nursing homes, and advanced manufacturers that pull employees from the Middle Flint area. Despite the strengths, the Middle Flint area needs growth to diversify the Industry Mix.

b. 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.

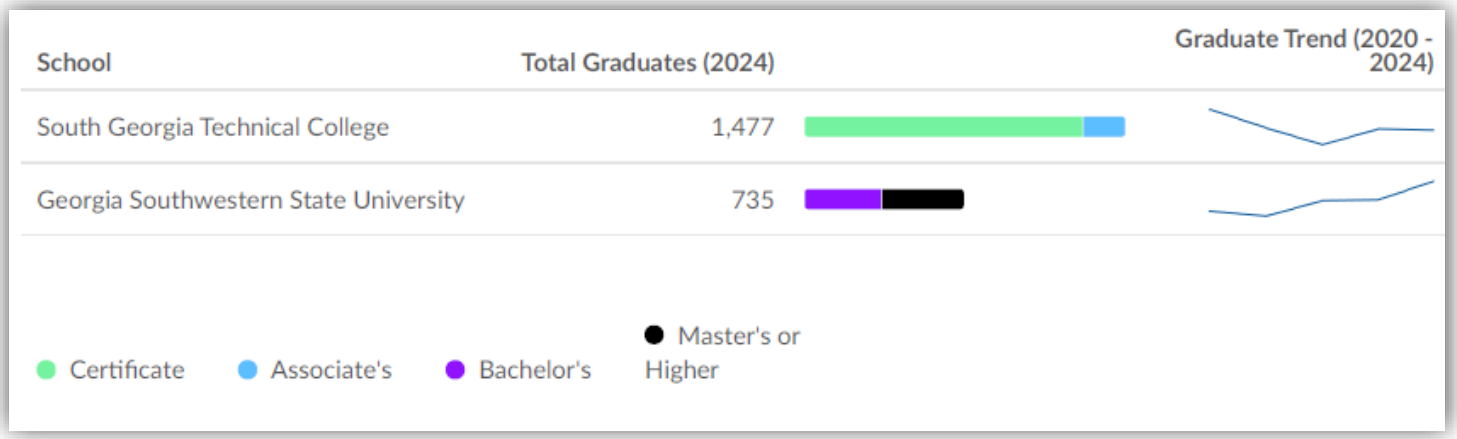
Lower Chattahoochee

In 2024, there were 3,949 graduates in River Valley Region (Area 14). This pipeline has grown by 2% over the last 5 years. The highest share of these graduates comes from "Mechanic and Repair Technologies/ Technicians, Other" (Associate's), "Registered Nursing/Registered Nurse" (Bachelor's), and "Criminal Justice/Safety Studies" (Certificate). Source: Lightcast




Middle Flint

In 2024, there were 2,212 graduates in River Valley Region (Area 15). This pipeline has shrunk by 4% over the last 5 years. The highest share of these graduates comes from "Truck and Bus Driver/Commercial Vehicle Operator and Instructor" (Certificate) "Criminal Justice/Safety Studies" (Certificate), and "Welding Technology/Welder" (Certificate). Source: Lightcast




The Area Profiles for Lower Chattahoochee and Middle Flint Local Workforce Development Areas, from the Georgia Department of Labor, Workforce Statistics & Economic Research, show the industries with the highest total annual percent changes for the 2022-2032 time period. Lower Chattahoochee's top two industries are Food Service and Drinking Places and Administrative and Support Services. Middle Flint's top two industries are Warehousing and Storage and Animal Production and Aquaculture.

**Lower Chattahoochee Industries by Projected Growth Table**

| Rank | Industry | 2022 Estimated Employment | 2032 Projected Employment | Total Annual Percent Change | Total 2022-2032 Employment Change |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Food Services and Drinking Places | 9,956 | 10,725 | 0.75% | 769 |
| 2 | Administrative and Support Services | 7,447 | 8,033 | 0.76% | 586 |
| 3 | Ambulatory Health Care Services | 5,439 | 5,959 | 0.92% | 520 |
| 4 | Hospitals | 5,632 | 6,060 | 0.74% | 428 |
| 5 | Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services | 5,305 | 5,706 | 0.73% | 401 |
| 6 | Crop Production | 3,071 | 3,470 | 1.23% | 399 |
| 7 | Social Assistance | 1,938 | 2,238 | 1.45% | 300 |
| 8 | Insurance Carriers and Related Activities | 3,070 | 3,282 | 0.67% | 212 |
| 9 | Credit Intermediation and Related Activities | 4,344 | 4,552 | 0.47% | 208 |
| 10 | Educational Services | 8,677 | 8,862 | 0.21% | 185 |

Source: Georgia Dept. of Labor, Workforce Statistics Division, Projections Unit

| Middle Flint Industries by Projected Growth Table | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Rank** | **Industry** | **2022 Estimated Employment** | **2032 Projected Employment** | **Total Annual Percent Change** | **Total 2022-2032 Employment Change** |
| 1 | Warehousing and Storage | 178 | 292 | 5.07% | 114 |
| 2 | Animal Production and Aquaculture | 140 | 170 | 1.96% | 30 |
| 3 | Amusement, Gambling, and Recreation Industries | 48 | 56 | 1.55% | 8 |
| 4 | Crop Production | 3,136 | 3,545 | 1.23% | 409 |
| 5 | Rail Transportation | 39 | 44 | 1.21% | 5 |
| 6 | Social Assistance | 493 | 535 | 0.82% | 42 |
| 7 | Accommodation | 379 | 402 | 0.59% | 23 |
| 8 | Repair and Maintenance | 317 | 334 | 0.52% | 17 |
| 9 | Ambulatory Health Care Services | 1,242 | 1,295 | 0.42% | 53 |
| 10 | Hospitals | 1,070 | 1,109 | 0.36% | 39 |
| Source: Georgia Dept. of Labor, Workforce Statistics Division, Projections Unit | | | | | |

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

The top occupations in demand for the area are reported in the Occupations by Projected Growth table analysis conducted by the GA Department of Labor, Workforce Statistics & Economic Research, Projections Unit. Rankings are based on the number of projected employment opportunities and projected wages for 2022-2032. The top three occupations in the Lower Chattahoochee Area are Fast Food and Counter Workers, Retail Salespersons, and Cashiers. The top three Occupations in the Middle Flint Area are Fast Food and Counter Workers, Cashiers, and Hand Material Movers. The charts below show the occupations expected to have the most annual openings in each Local Workforce Development Area for the 2022-2032 time period.

| Lower Chattahoochee Occupations by Projected Growth Table | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Rank** | **Occupation** | **2022 Estimated Employment** | **2032 Projected Employment** | **2022-2032 Annual Avg. Percent Change** | **Annual Openings** |
| 1 | Fast Food and Counter Workers | 4,147 | 4,423 | 0.65% | 1,006 |
| 2 | Retail Salespersons | 3,260 | 3,376 | 0.35% | 493 |
| 3 | Cashiers | 2,244 | 2,171 | -0.33% | 419 |
| 4 | Waiters and Waitresses | 1,738 | 1,774 | 0.21% | 367 |
| 5 | Customer Service Representatives | 2,491 | 2,450 | -0.17% | 328 |
| 6 | Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand | 2,124 | 2,269 | 0.66% | 297 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 7 | Stockers and Order Fillers | 1,559 | 1,790 | 1.39% | 291 |
| 8 | Cooks, Restaurant | 1,169 | 1,475 | 2.35% | 229 |
| 9 | Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners | 1,452 | 1,539 | 0.58% | 217 |
| 10 | Office Clerks, General | 1,788 | 1,682 | -0.61% | 196 |
| Source: Georgia Dept. of Labor, Workforce Statistics Division, Projection Unit | | | | | |

**Middle Flint Occupations by Projected Growth Table**

| Rank | Occupation | 2022 Estimated Employment | 2032 Projected Employment | 2022-2032 Annual Avg. Percent Change | Annual Openings |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Fast Food and Counter Workers | 1,141 | 1,133 | -0.07% | 259 |
| 2 | Cashiers | 901 | 826 | -0.87% | 159 |
| 3 | Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand | 1,201 | 1,209 | 0.07% | 157 |
| 4 | Retail Salespersons | 884 | 848 | -0.41% | 122 |
| 5 | Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers | 932 | 969 | 0.39% | 103 |
| 6 | Stockers and Order Fillers | 478 | 510 | 0.65% | 82 |
| 7 | Office Clerks, General | 554 | 498 | -1.06% | 57 |
| 8 | Nursing Assistants | 391 | 376 | -0.39% | 52 |
| 9 | Customer Service Representatives | 420 | 386 | -0.84% | 51 |
| 10 | Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners | 359 | 356 | -0.08% | 50 |
| Source: Georgia Dept. of Labor, Workforce Statistics Division, Projection Unit | | | | | |

**Occupations by Employment Wage Table**

Occupations with the highest mean (annual) wages in the Lower Chattahoochee Local Workforce Development Area, GA in 2022.

| Rank | Occupation | Mean Annual Estimated Wage |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Obstetricians and Gynecologists | $208,000 or more |
| 2 | Physicians, All Other | $208,000 or more |
| 3 | Judges, Magistrate Judges, and Magistrates | $199,013 |
| 4 | Chief Executives | $182,058 |
| 5 | Family Medicine Physicians | $169,922 |
| 6 | Dentists, General | $159,383 |
| 7 | Pediatricians, General | $156,804 |
| 8 | Computer and Information Systems Managers | $154,392 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 9 | Personal Financial Advisors | $153,446 |
| 10 | Financial Managers | $139,659 |
| Source: Georgia Dept. of Labor, Workforce Statistics Division, Projection Unit | | |

| Occupations by Employment Wage Table<br>Occupations with the highest mean (annual) wages in the Middle Flint Local Workforce Development Area, GA, in 2022. | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Rank** | **Occupation** | **Mean Annual Estimated Wage** |
| 1 | Personal Financial Advisors | $208,000 or more |
| 2 | Judges, Magistrate Judges, and Magistrates | $169,606 |
| 3 | Computer and Information Systems Managers | $155,011 |
| 4 | Architectural and Engineering Managers | $144,925 |
| 5 | Dentists, General | $140,791 |
| 6 | Chief Executives | $134,642 |
| 7 | Nurse Practitioners | $131,708 |
| 8 | Pharmacists | $126,841 |
| 9 | Marketing Managers | $123,989 |
| 10 | Industrial Production Managers | $117,849 |
| Source: Georgia Dept. of Labor, Workforce Statistics Division, Occupational Employment & Wage Statistics Program | | |

According to employers in the Local Workforce Area, the labor force is facing issues with the knowledge and skills needed to meet the employer requirements. Issues are recruitment of skilled workers, gaps in work ethic and basic skills, and inadequate support services. Each of these issues is addressed in this section, followed by a discussion of the occupations for the most in-demand sectors.

**Ten Largest Employers – River Valley Region**

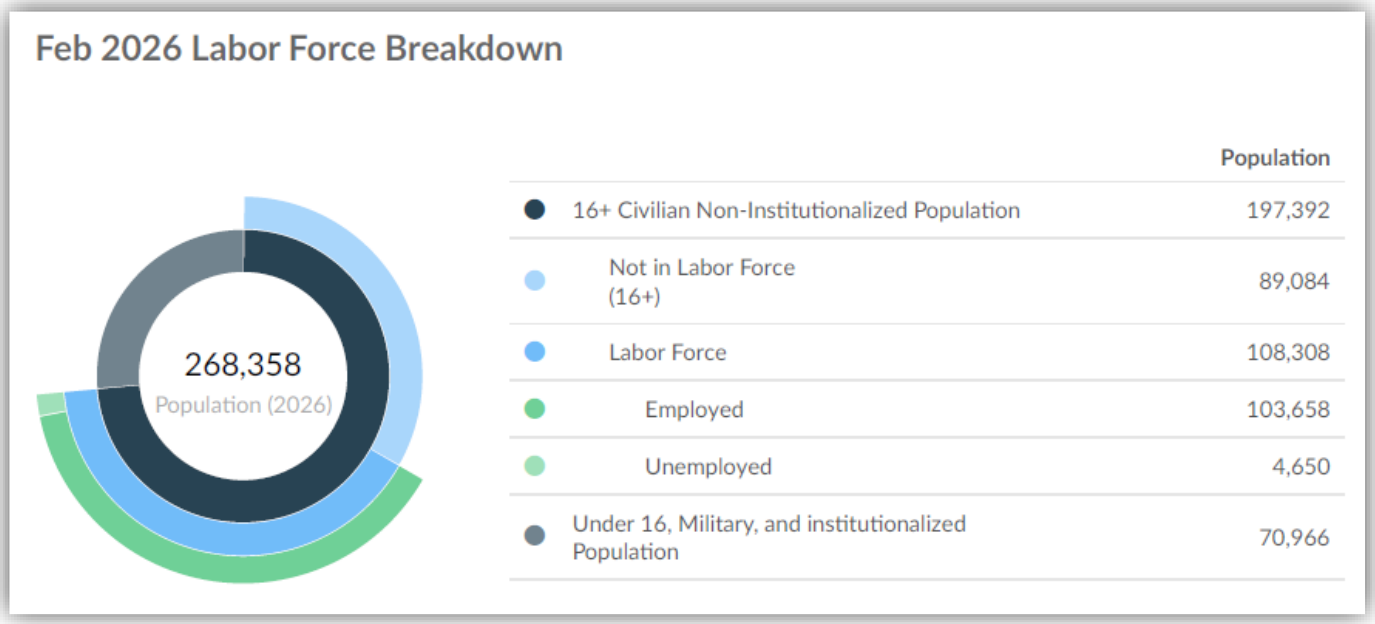
American Family Life Assurance Company
Columbus State University
House Of Raeford Farms, Inc.
Piedmont Columbus Regional Hospital (formerly The Medical Center, Inc.)
Pratt & Whitney Aircraft
Publix Super Markets, Inc.
St. Francis - Emory Hospital
TIS (formerly TSYS) Campus
Walmart
Wellpoint, Inc.

Source: GA Dept. of Labor, Workforce Statistics & Economic Research
The list above represents employers covered by unemployment insurance. Employers are listed alphabetically, not by the number of employees.

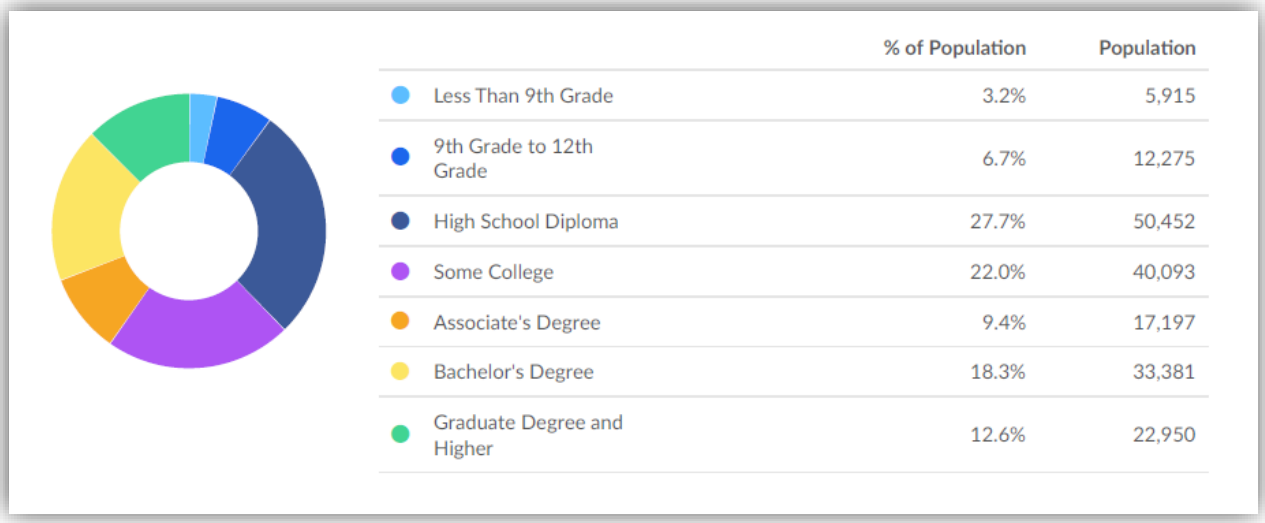
c. Provide an analysis of the workforce in the region, including current labor force employment, unemployment data, information on labor market trends, and the educational and skill levels of the workforce in the region, including individuals with barriers to employment. List all data sources used to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

Lower Chattahoochee

Labor market data for the region (below) was analyzed using Lightcast in partnership with the Development Authority of Columbus, Georgia, and Columbus Technical College. (May 2026 update).

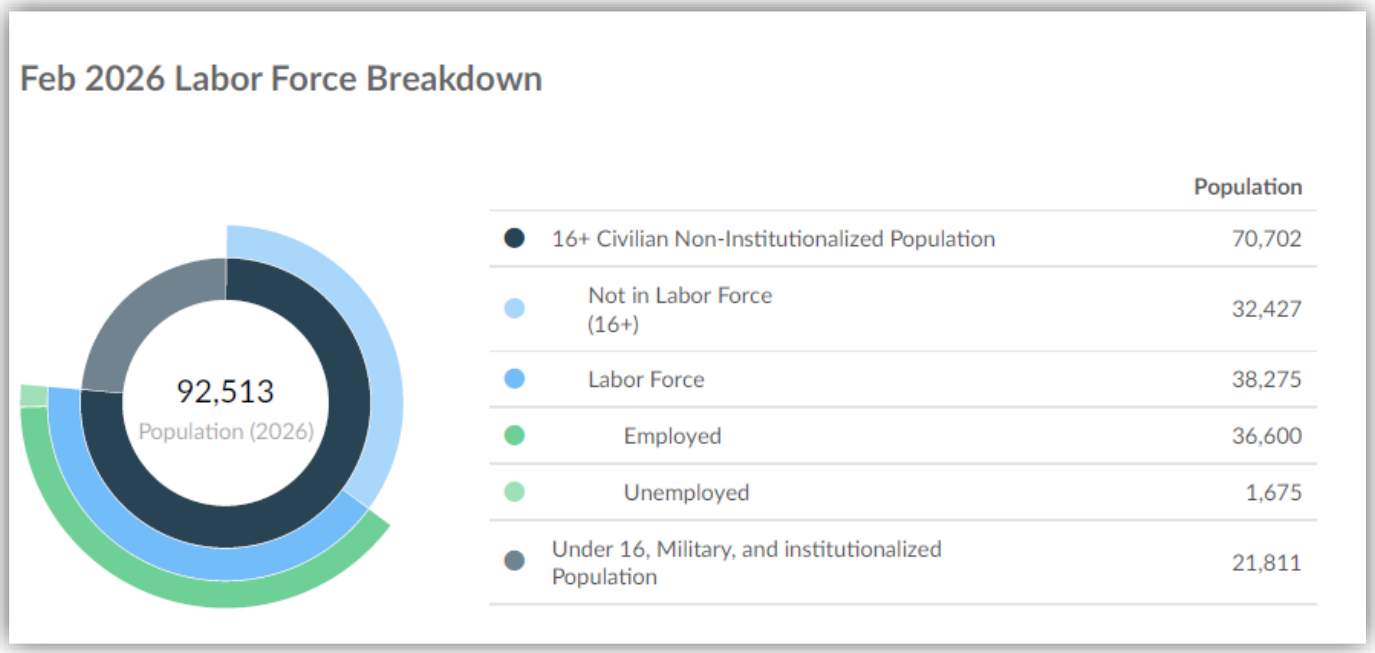



Concerning educational attainment, 18.3% of Lower Chattahoochee's residents possess a bachelor's degree (3.5% below the national average), and 9.4 % hold an associate's degree (0.6% above the national average).



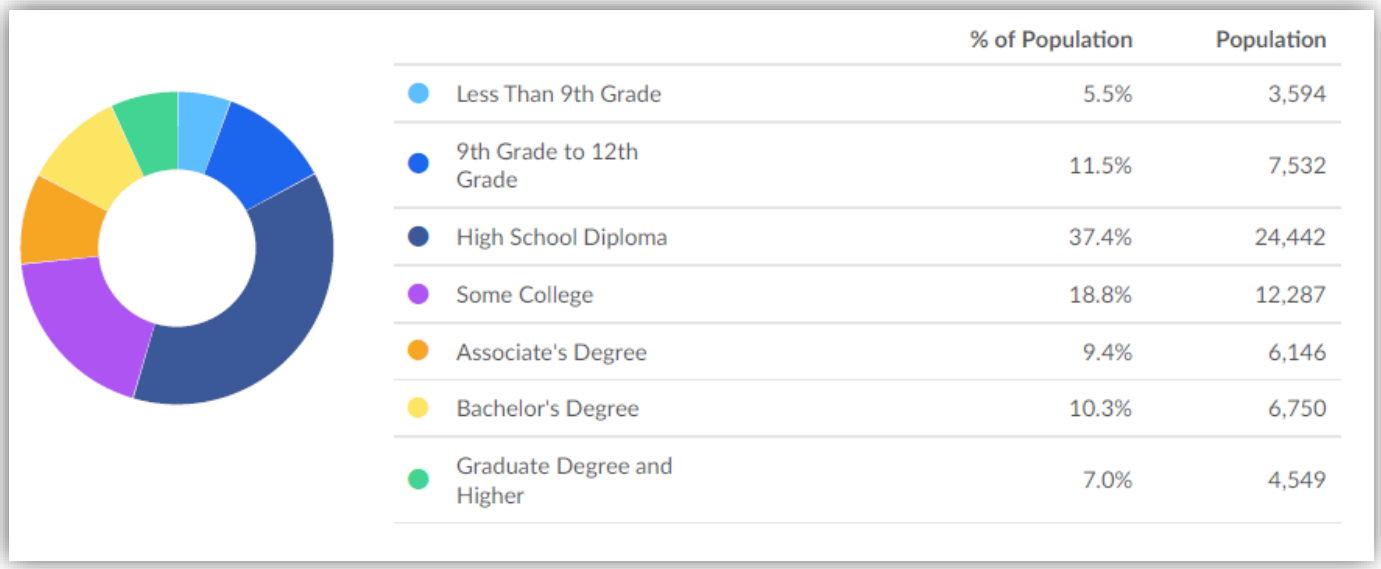
| | % of Population | Population |
|---|---|---|
| Less Than 9th Grade | 3.2% | 5,915 |
| 9th Grade to 12th Grade | 6.7% | 12,275 |
| High School Diploma | 27.7% | 50,452 |
| Some College | 22.0% | 40,093 |
| Associate's Degree | 9.4% | 17,197 |
| Bachelor's Degree | 18.3% | 33,381 |
| Graduate Degree and Higher | 12.6% | 22,950 |

Middle Flint




| | Population |
|---|---|
| 16+ Civilian Non-Institutionalized Population | 70,702 |
| Not in Labor Force (16+) | 32,427 |
| Labor Force | 38,275 |
| Employed | 36,600 |
| Unemployed | 1,675 |
| Under 16, Military, and institutionalized Population | 21,811 |

Concerning educational attainment, 10.3% of Middle Flint's residents possess a bachelor's degree (11.5% below the national average), and 9.4 % hold an associate's degree (0.6% above the national average)




The largest age group in the workforce in the 16-county region is 25-54, with a population of 137,521. This age group has 93,019 employed and 3,725 unemployed, with a labor force participation rate of 70.3%

| 2024 Civilian Labor Force Profile, River Valley Region | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Age Group** | **Population** | **Employed** | **Unemployed** | **Unemployment Rate** | **Labor Force Participation Rate** |
| 16+ | 292,450 | 149,945 | 7,466 | 4.7% | 53.8% |
| 16-24 | 44,858 | 21,028 | 3,141 | 13.0% | 53.9% |
| 25-54 | 137,521 | 93,019 | 3,725 | 3.9% | 70.3% |
| 55-64 | 45,234 | 24,514 | 496 | 2.0% | 55.3% |
| 65+ | 64,837 | 11,384 | 104 | 0.9% | 17.7% |
| **Source: ESRI Business Analyst, Civilian Labor Force Profile** | | | | | |

Trade, Transportation and Utilities had the highest number of employees, followed by Professional and Business Services, and Education and Health Services.

| River Valley Region Super Sector Industries - Quarterly Comparison | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Establishments** | | | **Employment** | | | **Weekly Wage** | | |
| | **2024** | **2025** | **% Change** | **2024** | **2025** | **% Change** | **2024** | **2025** | **% Change** |
| Construction | 568 | 568 | 0.0% | 4,745 | 4,619 | -2.7% | 1,351 | 1,385 | 2.5% |
| Education and Health Services | 1,271 | 1,254 | -1.3% | 20,396 | 20,480 | 0.4% | 1,088 | 1,117 | 2.7% |
| Financial Activities | 861 | 822 | -4.5% | 9,184 | 8,984 | -2.2% | 1,631 | 1,617 | -0.9% |
| Information | 115 | 110 | -4.3% | 1,014 | 874 | -13.8% | 1,257 | 1,333 | 6.0% |
| Leisure and Hospitality | 939 | 941 | 0.2% | 15,592 | 15,411 | -1.2% | 452 | 473 | 4.6% |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Manufacturing | 282 | 270 | -4.3% | 12,274 | 12,690 | 3.4% | 1,282 | 1,318 | 2.8% |
| Natural Resources, Mining, and Agriculture | 232 | 220 | -5.2% | 2,250 | 2,247 | -0.1% | 1,132 | 1,103 | -2.6% |
| Other Services | 612 | 614 | 0.3% | 3,094 | 3,019 | -2.4% | 769 | 802 | 4.3% |
| Professional and Business Services | 1,212 | 1,151 | -5.0% | 13,825 | 13,751 | -0.5% | 1,237 | 1,369 | 10.7% |
| Trade, Transportation and Utilities | 1,912 | 1,843 | -3.6% | 22,177 | 22,465 | 1.3% | 828 | 852 | 2.9% |
| Unclassified | 429 | 452 | 5.4% | 201 | 283 | 40.8% | 1,679 | 1,317 | -21.6% |
| Government | 489 | 491 | 0.4% | 26,905 | 26,591 | -1.2% | 1,020 | 1,050 | 2.9% |
| Total | 8,922 | 8,736 | -2.1% | 131,655 | 131,416 | -0.2% | 1,031 | 1,066 | 3.4% |

Note: All figures are for the 3rd Quarter of 2024 and 2025.
Source: Georgia Department of Labor, Area Labor Profile, May 2026 Update.

### *Unemployment data*

The average annual unemployment rate in the River Valley Region of 4.1% was higher than the Unemployment rate for the state of Georgia of 3.4%, but slightly below the nation's 4.3%. The Region had a labor force of 145,633 with 139,702 employed and 5,931 unemployed.

**River Valley Region Labor Force Activity Annual Averages**

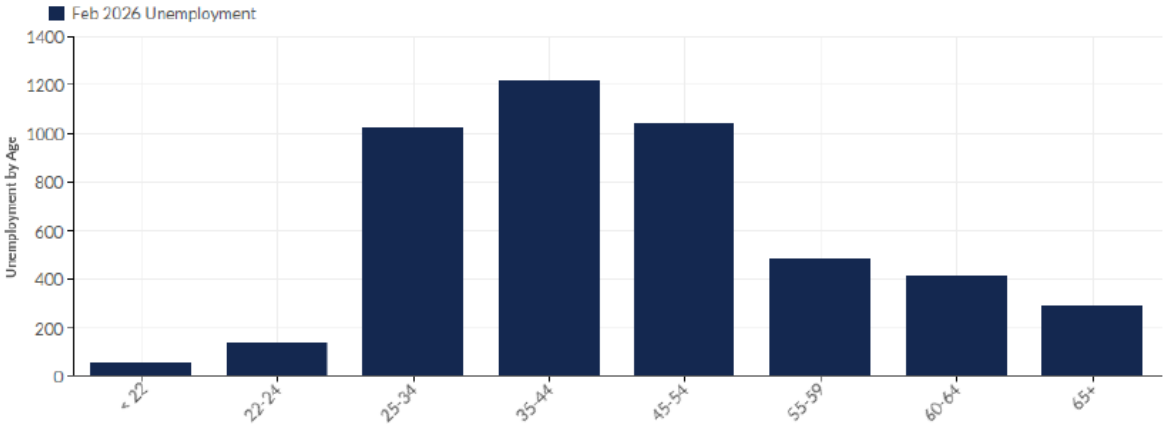
| | Labor Force | | | Employed | | | Unemployed | | | Rate | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **2024** | **2025** | **% Change** | **2024** | **2025** | **% Change** | **2024** | **2025** | **% Change** | **2024** | **2025** | **% Change** |
| Chattahoochee | 1,222 | 1,213 | -0.7% | 1,135 | 1,124 | -1.0% | 87 | 89 | 2.3% | 7.1% | 7.3% | 2.8% |
| Clay | 949 | 929 | -2.1% | 893 | 872 | -2.4% | 56 | 57 | 1.8% | 5.9% | 6.1% | 3.4% |
| Crisp | 9,391 | 9,116 | -2.9% | 9,060 | 8,812 | -2.7% | 331 | 304 | -8.2% | 3.5% | 3.3% | -5.7% |
| Dooly | 3,822 | 3,950 | 3.3% | 3,664 | 3,802 | 3.8% | 158 | 148 | -6.3% | 4.1% | 3.7% | -9.8% |
| Harris | 15,970 | 16,145 | 1.1% | 15,453 | 15,635 | 1.2% | 517 | 510 | -1.4% | 3.2% | 3.2% | 0.0% |
| Macon | 4,398 | 4,172 | -5.1% | 4,197 | 3,980 | -5.2% | 201 | 192 | -4.5% | 4.6% | 4.6% | 0.0% |
| Marion | 3,056 | 3,129 | 2.4% | 2,941 | 3,018 | 2.6% | 115 | 111 | -3.5% | 3.8% | 3.5% | -7.9% |
| Muscogee | 82,040 | 82,276 | 0.3% | 78,575 | 78,874 | 0.4% | 3,465 | 3,402 | -1.8% | 4.2% | 4.1% | -2.4% |
| Quitman | 663 | 696 | 5.0% | 621 | 649 | 4.5% | 42 | 47 | 11.9% | 6.3% | 6.8% | 7.9% |
| Randolph | 2,582 | 2,531 | -2.0% | 2,481 | 2,428 | -2.1% | 101 | 103 | 2.0% | 3.9% | 4.1% | 5.1% |
| Schley | 2,020 | 1,882 | -6.8% | 1,950 | 1,818 | -6.8% | 70 | 64 | -8.6% | 3.5% | 3.4% | -2.9% |
| Stewart | 1,372 | 1,426 | 3.9% | 1,313 | 1,349 | 2.7% | 59 | 77 | 30.5% | 4.3% | 5.4% | 25.6% |
| Sumter | 12,168 | 11,969 | -1.6% | 11,572 | 11,405 | -1.4% | 596 | 564 | -5.4% | 4.9% | 4.7% | -4.1% |
| Talbot | 2,326 | 2,358 | 1.4% | 2,229 | 2,252 | 1.0% | 97 | 106 | 9.3% | 4.2% | 4.5% | 7.1% |
| Taylor | 2,972 | 2,889 | -2.8% | 2,853 | 2,769 | -2.9% | 119 | 120 | 0.8% | 4.0% | 4.2% | 5.0% |
| Webster | 985 | 952 | -3.4% | 949 | 915 | -3.6% | 36 | 37 | 2.8% | 3.7% | 3.9% | 5.4% |
| **River Valley RC** | **145,936** | **145,633** | **-0.2%** | **139,886** | **139,702** | **-0.1%** | **6,050** | **5,931** | **-2.0%** | **4.1%** | **4.1%** | **0.0%** |
| Georgia | 5,401,400 | 5,421,934 | 0.4% | 5,211,103 | 5,236,759 | 0.5% | 190,297 | 185,175 | -2.7% | 3.5% | 3.4% | -2.9% |
| United States | 168,106,000 | 170,807,000 | 1.6% | 161,346,000 | 163,493,000 | 1.3% | 6,761,000 | 7,314,000 | 8.2% | 4.0% | 4.3% | 7.5% |

Source: Georgia Department of Labor; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Updated May 2026.

# Unemployment by Demographics

Lower Chattahoochee

## Unemployment by Age

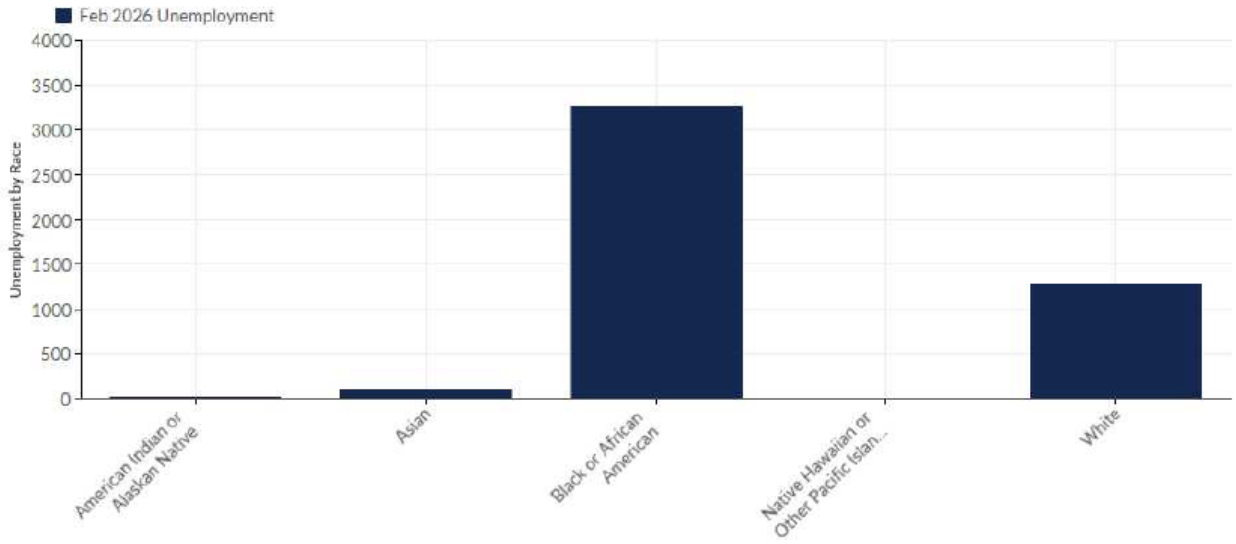



| Age | Unemployment (Feb 2026) | % of Unemployed |
|---|---|---|
| < 22 | 55 | 1.18% |
| 22-24 | 136 | 2.92% |
| 25-34 | 1,025 | 22.04% |
| 35-44 | 1,216 | 26.15% |
| 45-54 | 1,039 | 22.34% |
| 55-59 | 484 | 10.41% |
| 60-64 | 412 | 8.86% |
| 65+ | 284 | 6.11% |
| Total | 4,650 | 100.00% |

## Unemployment by Gender

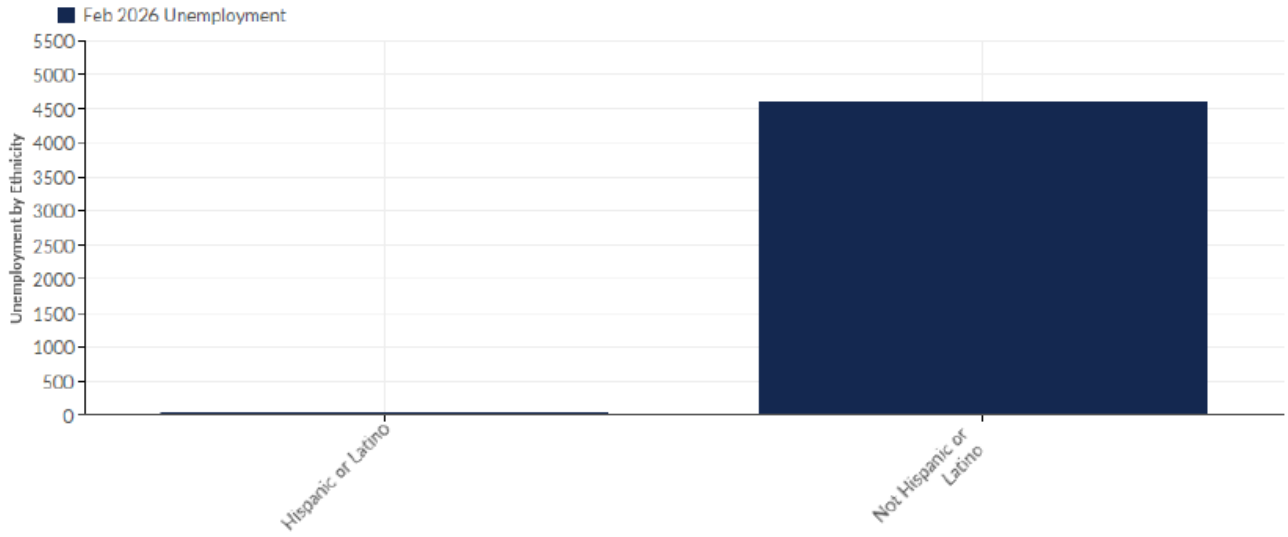
| Gender | | Unemployment (Feb 2026) | % of Unemployed |
|---|---|---|---|
| Females | | 2,311 | 49.70% |
| Males | | 2,339 | 50.30% |
| | Total | 4,650 | 100.00% |

## Unemployment by Race




| Race | Unemployment (Feb 2026) | % of Unemployed |
|---|---|---|
| American Indian or Alaskan Native | 12 | 0.26% |
| Asian | 98 | 2.11% |
| Black or African American | 3,254 | 69.98% |
| Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander | 0 | 0.00% |
| White | 1,286 | 27.66% |
| Total | 4,650 | 100.00% |

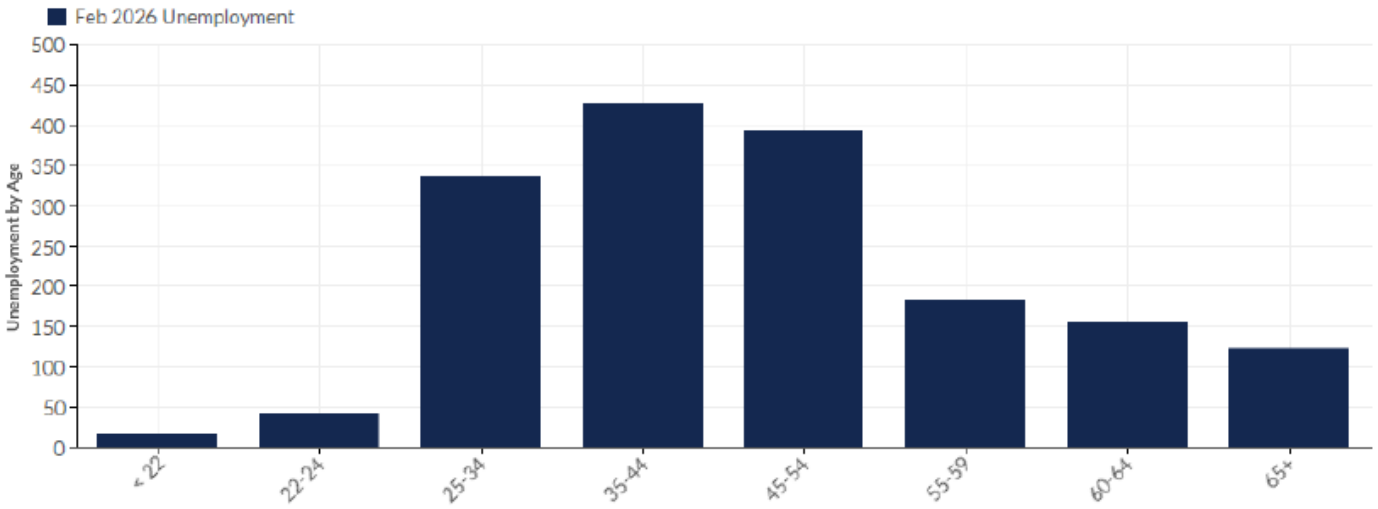
## Unemployment by Ethnicity




| Ethnicity | | Unemployment (Feb 2026) | % of Unemployed |
|---|---|---|---|
| Hispanic or Latino | | 46 | 0.99% |
| Not Hispanic or Latino | | 4,604 | 99.01% |
| | Total | 4,650 | 100.00% |

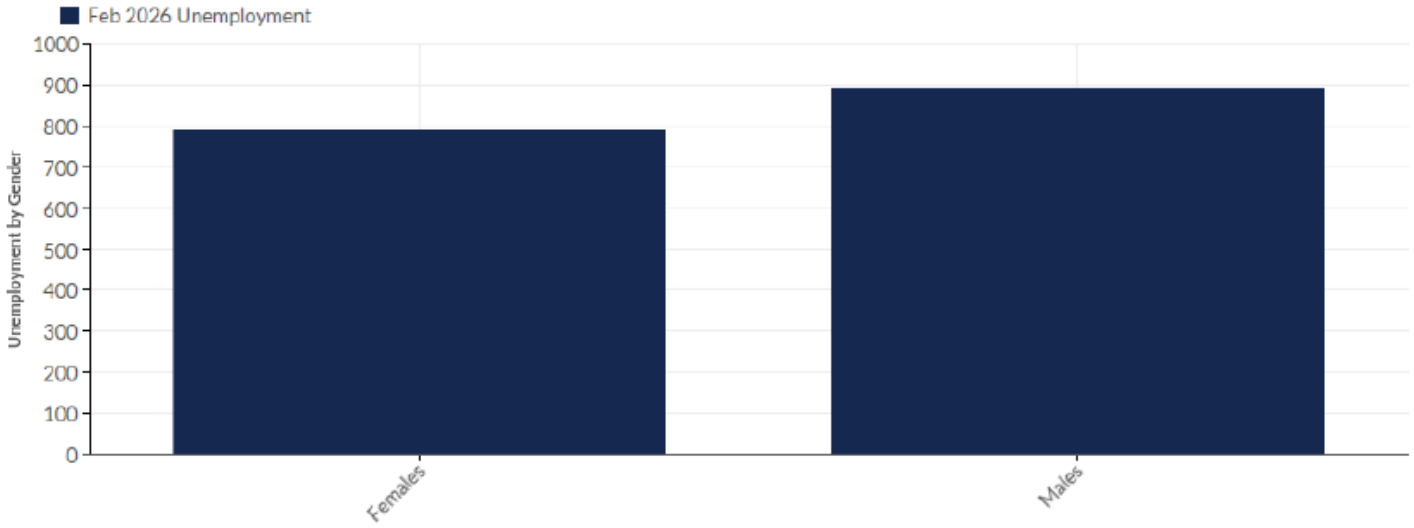
Middle Flint

## Unemployment by Age



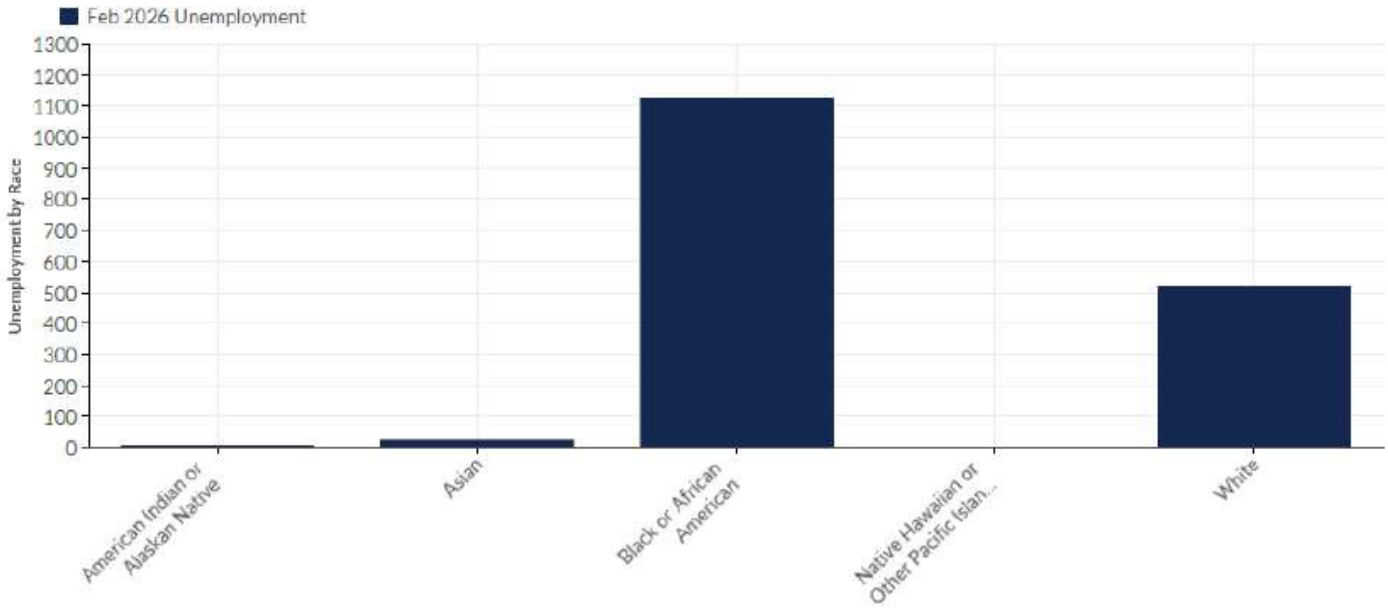

| Age | | Unemployment (Feb 2026) | % of Unemployed |
|---|---|---|---|
| < 22 | | 18 | 1.07% |
| 22-24 | | 44 | 2.63% |
| 25-34 | | 336 | 20.06% |
| 35-44 | | 426 | 25.43% |
| 45-54 | | 392 | 23.40% |
| 55-59 | | 183 | 10.93% |
| 60-64 | | 155 | 9.25% |
| 65+ | | 123 | 7.34% |
| | Total | 1,675 | 100.00% |

## Unemployment by Gender



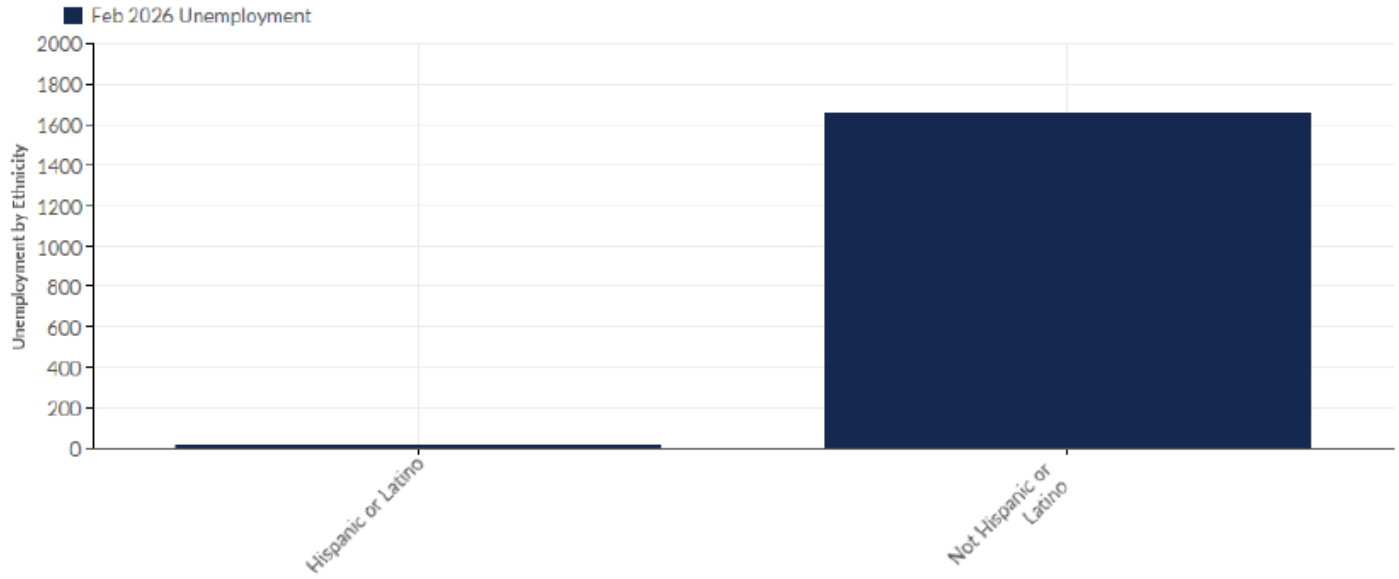

| Gender | | Unemployment (Feb 2026) | % of Unemployed |
|---|---|---|---|
| Females | | 788 | 47.04% |
| Males | | 887 | 52.96% |
| | Total | 1,675 | 100.00% |

## Unemployment by Race




| Race | Unemployment (Feb 2026) | % of Unemployed |
|---|---|---|
| American Indian or Alaskan Native | 4 | 0.24% |
| Asian | 26 | 1.55% |
| Black or African American | 1,126 | 67.22% |
| Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander | 0 | 0.00% |
| White | 519 | 30.99% |
| Total | 1,675 | 100.00% |

## Unemployment by Ethnicity




| Ethnicity | | Unemployment (Feb 2026) | % of Unemployed |
|---|---|---|---|
| Hispanic or Latino | | 18 | 1.07% |
| Not Hispanic or Latino | | 1,657 | 98.93% |
| | Total | 1,675 | 100.00% |

Education of the labor force across the region is shown below. Percentages are based on the portion of the labor force aged 18-65+. The highest percentage of workers, 31.3%, are high school graduates or hold GEDs, and 25.1% of the labor force has some college, with 8.2% of the workforce having completed two years of college. Graduates of four-year colleges make up 13.4% of the workforce, and 8.2% have completed postgraduate studies.

**Education of the River Valley Region Labor Force**

**Percent Distribution by Age**

| | Percent of Total | 18-24 | 25-34 | 35-44 | 45-64 | 65+ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Elementary | 4.0% | 1.6% | 2.3% | 2.9% | 3.2% | 9.2% |
| Some High School | 9.9% | 11.8% | 8.6% | 9.3% | 9.0% | 11.6% |
| High School Grad/GED | 31.3% | 37.4% | 29.0% | 28.8% | 31.2% | 31.5% |
| Some College | 25.1% | 37.3% | 26.7% | 24.2% | 23.3% | 19.0% |
| College Grad 2 Yr | 8.2% | 4.0% | 9.4% | 10.8% | 9.0% | 6.4% |
| College Grad 4 Yr | 13.4% | 7.6% | 16.8% | 14.2% | 14.7% | 11.4% |
| Post Graduate Studies | 8.2% | 0.4% | 7.1% | 10.0% | 9.7% | 10.8% |
| Totals | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% |

Note: Totals are based on the portion of the labor force between ages 18 - 65+. Some College category represents workers with some coursework but no degree.

Source: Georgia Department of Labor, Area Labor Profiles for River Valley Regional Commission, U.S. Census Bureau - 2021: ACS 5-Year Estimates.

In 2024 (most recent data available as of May 2026), Technical Colleges within the River Valley Region had certificate and diploma graduates in many in-demand occupations such as Welding Technology/Welder, Heating and Air Conditioning, Ventilation, and Refrigeration Maintenance Technology, Truck and Bus Driver, Commercial Vehicle Operator and Instructor, and Licensed Practical/Vocational Nurse Training. The top

diplomas awarded were for Mechanic and Repair Technologies/Technicians, Nursing, Heating, and Criminal Justice. The top degrees in 2024 were awarded for Criminal Justice, Administrative Assistants, Parks and Recreation, and Heavy Equipment Maintenance.

| River Valley Region Technical College Certificate Graduates - 2024 | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **PROGRAMS** | **TOTAL GRADUATES** | | | **PERCENT CHANGE** | |
| | **2022** | **2023** | **2024** | **2022-2023** | **2023-2024** |
| Welding Technology/Welder | 367 | 302 | 314 | -17.7 | 4.0 |
| Child Care Provider/Assistant | 123 | 86 | 177 | -30.1 | 105.8 |
| Truck and Bus Driver/Commercial Vehicle Operator and Instructor | 150 | 246 | 142 | 64.0 | -42.3 |
| Heating, Air Conditioning, Ventilation and Refrigeration Maintenance Technology/ | 90 | 203 | 140 | 125.6 | -31.0 |
| Automobile/Automotive Mechanics Technology/Technician | 116 | 147 | 137 | 26.7 | -6.8 |
| Business Administration and Management, General | 197 | 97 | 132 | -50.8 | 36.1 |
| Criminal Justice/Safety Studies | 133 | 146 | 132 | 9.8 | -9.6 |
| Data Processing and Data Processing Technology/Technician | 60 | 68 | 113 | 13.3 | 66.2 |
| Electrician | 77 | 100 | 98 | 29.9 | -2.0 |
| Nursing Assistant/Aide and Patient Care Assistant/Aide | 26 | 77 | 83 | 196.2 | 7.8 |
| Source: Georgia Department of Labor, Area Labor Profiles for River Valley Regional Commission, Technical College System of Georgia | | | | | |

| River Valley Region Technical College Diploma Graduates - 2024 | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **PROGRAMS** | **TOTAL GRADUATES** | | | **PERCENT CHANGE** | |
| | **2022** | **2023** | **2024** | **2022-2023** | **2023-2024** |
| Welding Technology/Welder | 26 | 29 | 88 | 11.5 | 203.4 |
| Carpentry/Carpenter | 10 | 20 | 79 | 100.0 | 295.0 |
| Licensed Practical/Vocational Nurse Training | 66 | 61 | 63 | -7.6 | 3.3 |
| Heating, Air Conditioning, Ventilation and Refrigeration Maintenance Technology/ | 21 | 26 | 29 | 23.8 | 11.5 |
| Cosmetology/Cosmetologist, General | 28 | 47 | 26 | 67.9 | -44.7 |
| Criminal Justice/Safety Studies | 31 | 43 | 25 | 38.7 | -41.9 |
| Administrative Assistant and Secretarial Science, General | 15 | 17 | 24 | 13.3 | 41.2 |
| Medical/Clinical Assistant | 42 | 17 | 23 | -59.5 | 35.3 |
| Business Administration and Management, General | 25 | 22 | 22 | -12.0 | 0.0 |
| Electrician | 28 | 16 | 22 | -42.9 | 37.5 |

Source: Georgia Department of Labor, Area Labor Profiles for River Valley Regional Commission, Technical College System of Georgia

| River Valley Region Technical College Degree Graduates - 2024 | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **PROGRAMS** | **TOTAL GRADUATES** | | | **PERCENT CHANGE** | |
| | **2022** | **2023** | **2024** | **2022-2023** | **2023-2024** |
| Mechanic and Repair Technologies/Technicians, Other | 242 | 248 | 263 | 2.5 | 6.0 |
| Registered Nursing/Registered Nurse | 61 | 65 | 83 | 6.6 | 27.7 |
| Criminal Justice/Safety Studies | 45 | 48 | 29 | 6.7 | -39.6 |
| Business Administration and Management, General | 16 | 21 | 22 | 31.3 | 4.8 |
| Administrative Assistant and Secretarial Science, General | 13 | 14 | 21 | 7.7 | 50.0 |
| Early Childhood Education and Teaching | 44 | 26 | 18 | -40.9 | -30.8 |
| Parks, Recreation and Leisure Studies | 13 | 16 | 17 | 23.1 | 6.3 |
| Radiologic Technology/Science - Radiographer | 13 | 15 | 16 | 15.4 | 6.7 |
| Dental Hygiene/Hygienist | 15 | 14 | 15 | -6.7 | 7.1 |
| Liberal Arts and Sciences, General Studies and Humanities, Other | 19 | 12 | 15 | -36.8 | 25.0 |
| Source: Georgia Department of Labor, Area Labor Profiles for River Valley Regional Commission, Technical College System of Georgia | | | | | |

d. 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 region include state initiatives, the Lower Chattahoochee WIOAs and the Middle Flint WIOAs, and their partners, the Columbus Technical College, Columbus State University, South Georgia Technical College, and Georgia Southwestern State University. Additionally, increased attention is being focused on a regional strategy for 2026-2030, creating a bold roadmap to drive economic momentum, cultivating talent, and building thriving communities. Through Columbus Ahead, One Sumter, and the Cordele Industrial Development 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.

Both the Lower Chattahoochee and the Middle Flint Areas utilize labor market information provided by the Georgia Department of Labor, local Career Centers, the Georgia Department of Economic Development, the US Census Bureau, and employer feedback, along with identified community needs, to develop the list of demand and growth occupations for the Region.

The Lower Chattahoochee Area has two public higher education institutions, Columbus Technical College and Columbus State University. In comparison, the Middle Flint Area has two public higher education institutions, Georgia Southwestern State University (Americus) and Albany State University (Cordele), all of which are part of the Georgia University System. South Georgia Technical College has campuses in Americus and Cordele.

Each area has one designated Comprehensive One-Stop Center and One-Stop Affiliate Sites. Lower Chattahoochee is in Columbus (Georgia Department of Labor Columbus Career Center) and Middle Flint's is in Americus (Georgia Department of Labor Americus Career Center). The One-Stop Center under WIOA was competitively procured through a bidding process, effective July 1, 2026 (Lower Chattahoochee) and July 1, 2025 (Middle Flint). In addition, public libraries and other access points are available within the region for individuals to obtain career information. One Stop Affiliate sites, Columbus Technical College, Eckerd Connects, South Georgia Technical College, and a mobile career center, a fully accessible computer lab that provides the latest in workforce and job skills development services, are also access points in the region's service delivery area. Both the Lower Chattahoochee Area 14 and the Middle Flint Area 15 provide relevant training programs, create work-based learning opportunities (ex., apprenticeships and OJT), and develop talent pipelines tailored to the regional economy. Training Services available include customized training, classroom training, occupational skills training, work experience (WEX), Registered Apprenticeships, Leadership Development, Supportive Services, and comprehensive guidance and counseling. In addition to serving individual job seekers, these workforce activities help employers find skilled workers needed to fulfill employment opportunities within the region through the assistance of the One-Stop Career Centers.

Area 15's GED PLUS (Work Readiness, Work Experience & Career Pathways) services are available for eligible adults, dislocated workers, and youth who need a GED diploma. Individuals with a High School Diploma or GED can also 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 activities. Work Experience is a business service that engages local area businesses to provide work sites for hands-on training opportunities whereby wages, Workers' Compensation, and Liability Insurance are provided by the service provider.

Both Lower Chattahoochee and Middle Flint benefit from having Technical College campuses within the region. Campuses are strategically located within the region 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, including workers who had both academic and employment barriers to employment.

These partnerships allow our region to provide customers with educational programs that will give our customers the full array of choices, as mandated by USDOL. Upon successful completion of the training, candidates are then offered first consideration for employment opportunities.

*Strengths, weaknesses, and capacity of such services to address the identified education and skill needs of the workforce*

## Work Readiness

### Sector Partnerships (High Demand Career Initiative)

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 the needs of employers across the state. All twelve (12) regions of the State utilize sector partnerships to better serve the needs of their regional industries. Region 8 currently does not have any Sector Partnerships funded at this time. However, the Region 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.

Both Lower Chattahoochee and Middle Flint have worked to develop a pipeline of individuals interested in careers within the Healthcare sector to meet employers' needs. Educational and training opportunities within the healthcare field are available through local colleges and universities. One goal is to work with high school students to develop their interest in healthcare occupations and then guide them into post-secondary educational opportunities for future careers, self-sufficient wages, and employment advancement opportunities.

## Common Trends

Sector Partnerships 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 cited an aging workforce as a concern. (2) Soft skills/workplace skills are a crucial need. Nearly every employer discussed the importance of soft skills, such as communication, teamwork, problem-solving, intellectual curiosity, critical thinking, and work ethic. Many employers reported finding these skills especially lacking in younger employees. (3) Employers also have increasing difficulty in recruiting employees who can pass background screenings and drug tests.

(4) Additionally, there is great demand for basic educational skills. Employers stated that they were looking for individuals with "work-ready skills," such as proficiency in reading, mathematics, statistics, and writing. (5) There is a great need to begin introducing STEM to students at a much younger age. Employers reported that STEM career fields need to be introduced to students at a younger age and made a key part of the curriculum. Employers agreed that educators play a large role in making STEM fields appealing to youth. Further, companies in various sectors highlighted the need to attract STEM-related workers to jobs. There is a talent shortage in these career fields.

(6) Another common trend was the shortage of local skilled trade 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 and film production).

To assist in solving these problems, many employers expressed the need for more apprenticeships, internships, on-the-job (OJT) training, and co-op programs. Employers that currently use internships and co-op programs find these programs valuable in identifying, assessing, and training future employees. Employers also emphasized the importance of OJT in the employee development process. These programs help them fill positions that require years of specialized experience in addition to relevant training or educational background requirements.

Several employers expressed a desire for assistance from the State with OJT training. Additionally, there was a desire for more productive partnerships with workforce development resources. Employers in various sectors reported that partnerships with LWDAs, local boards of education, TCSG, and USG institutions were very productive. Georgia Quick Start was a key part of the hiring and training processes for many companies.

### At-Risk Populations

According to the Kids Count data center, in 2023 (the most recent data available), 13.6% of Region 8's teens were not in school and not working, compared to 7.5% in the State of Georgia. These are youth between the ages of 16-19 who are not in the armed forces, are not enrolled in school, and are not working.

| Teens not in school and not working, ages 16 to 19 in Region 8, 2019 - 2023 | | |
|---|---|---|
| Georgia | Number | 45,087 |
| | Percent | 7.5% |
| Region 8 | Number | 2,567 |
| | Percent | 13.6% |
| Source: Annie E. Casey Foundation, Kids Count Data Center. | | |

### Children living in Poverty

According to the Kids Count Data Center, Region 8 has 28.0% of children living in poverty in 2023. The Middle Flint Area counties have some of the highest rates of child poverty in Georgia. The State of Georgia has 18.8% of children under the age of 18 who are living in families with income below the federal poverty level.

| Children living in poverty in Region 8, 2019 - 2023 | | |
|---|---|---|
| Georgia | Number | 469,680 |
| | Percent | 18.8% |
| Region 8 | Number | 22,869 |
| | Percent | 28.0% |
| Source: Annie E. Casey Foundation, Kids Count Data Center. | | |

### Children living in single-parent families

In Region 8, 46.3 percent of children live in single-parent households, compared to 33.7% at the State level. Often in single-parent households, parents juggle work, childcare, and possibly training or schooling without a support network.

| Children living in single-parent families, 2019 - 2023 | | |
|---|---|---|
| Georgia | Number | 733,411 |
| | Percent | 33.7% |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Region 8 | Number | 33,010 |
| | Percent | 46.3% |
| Source: Annie E. Casey Foundation, Kids Count Data Center. | | |

### Children whose parents lack secure employment

As of 2023, Region 8 has 12.9% of children whose parents lack secure employment, compared to 8.0% at the State level.

| Children whose parents lack secure employment, 2019 - 2023 | | |
|---|---|---|
| Georgia | Number | 190,644 |
| | Percent | 8.0% |
| Region 8 | Number | 10,173 |
| | Percent | 12.9% |
| Source: Annie E. Casey Foundation, Kids Count Data Center. | | |

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. Crisp, Taylor, and Macon Counties had the highest level of parents without secure employment.

### Populations with Barriers to Employment – State of Georgia

| Special Populations at Risk | Georgia |
|---|---|
| **Returning Citizens (Ex-Offenders)** | **12,012** |
| **Homeless** | **12,290** |
| **Youth Aged out of Foster Care** | **519** |
| **English Language Learners** | **216,699** |
| **Low Levels of Literacy** | **1,882,508** |
| **Single Parents** | **391,990** |
| **Persons below Poverty Level** | **1,423,159** |
| **American Indians and Alaska Natives** | **29,103** |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Native Hawaiians or Other Pacific Islander** | **5,331** |
| **Veterans** | **608,876** |
| **Adults with Disabilities** | **1,244,646** |
| **Older Individuals (65+)** | **1,581,263** |
| **Households Receiving SNAP** | **513,900** |
| **Total Population** | **10,822,590** |
| **Source: Georgia WIOA Plan, 2024 - 2027** | |

| **Median Household Income – River Valley Region** | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **County** | **2024 Median Household Income** | **2024 Per Capita Income** | **% Persons in Poverty** |
| Chattahoochee | $61,042 | $29,560 | 13.9% |
| Clay | $49,147 | $32,259 | 21.0% |
| Crisp | $45,105 | $28,809 | 23.3% |
| Dooly | $60,987 | $27,589 | 15.7% |
| Harris | $97,302 | $44,650 | 9.0% |
| Macon | $41,031 | $24,614 | 25.1% |
| Marion | $51,667 | $29,446 | 20.9% |
| Muscogee | $58,073 | $33,739 | 19.0% |
| Quitman | $40,179 | $26,057 | 15.7% |
| Randolph | $28,380 | $21,770 | 30.0% |
| Schley | $58,875 | $30,247 | 13.9% |
| Stewart | $33,250 | $22,784 | 26.4% |
| Sumter | $42,653 | $27,246 | 23.7% |
| Talbot | $41,597 | $28,882 | 25.2% |
| Taylor | $41,788 | $26,145 | 32.1% |
| Webster | $46,792 | $23,991 | 22.3% |
| Georgia | $79,991 | $41,996 | 12.6% |
| Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2024 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimate Subject Tables | | | |

| **Regional Profile for Lower Chattahoochee & Middle Flint Local Workforce Development Area, GA Employment Wage Statistics Table, Fourth Quarter 2025** | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Area** | **Number of Employees** | **Average Hourly Wage*** | **Average Weekly Wage** | **Average Annual Wage*** |
| **Lower Chattahoochee Workforce Development Area** | 103,427 | $27.35 | $1,094 | $56,888 |
| **Middle Flint Local Workforce Development Area** | 27,989 | $24.08 | $963 | $50,076 |
| **Georgia** | 4,921,092 | $36.00 | $1,440 | $74,880 |
| * Assumes a 40-hour work week year-round. | | | | |

Source: Georgia Department of Labor, Workforce Statistics Division, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages Program, Georgia Labor Market Explorer.

## Recommended Steps and Programs to address these deficiencies in Region 8 WIOA

There is a full array of WIOA services offered within the region to include: Intensive/Career Services, Comprehensive Assessments, Follow-up Services, and Case Management, Occupational and Classroom Training Services, On-the-Job Training, Incumbent Worker Training Program, Work Experience opportunities, Supportive Services and Rapid Response efforts to address company closures as they arise for adults, dislocated workers, and in-school and out-of-school youth through both community partnerships and direct service channels.

### Career Services

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

- Outreach, intake, and orientation to services
- Funding Eligibility Determination
- Comprehensive Assessments
- Career counseling, as necessary
- Job search/placement assistance
- Labor Market Information (LMI), demand occupations, education requirements, and wage analysis
- Eligible Training Providers List
- Supportive services
- Unemployment Insurance compensation claims filing
- Individual Employment Plan (IEP)
- Work Readiness services
- Punctuality, appropriate dress in the workplace, communication skills, how to conduct a job search, etc...
- Financial literacy

## Region 8 Workforce Development Activities

### Title 1: WIOA Services

Training services are strategically aligned with regional core workforce development programs to coordinate the needs of both job seekers and employers. WIOA Program Specialists offer in-depth one-on-one evaluation interviews to interested parties who express an interest in taking advantage of available WIOA services. During the interview, Program Specialists perform a needs assessment to assist with determining career interest and aptitude. The specialists are then best prepared to discuss and refer to the numerous services

available, including the programs provided through the state's Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL), sub-recipient partners, and other community partners throughout the region. Through one-on-one interaction, the Program Specialists can effectively create Individual Employment Plans, Individual Service Strategies, when applicable, and discern whether possible participants would benefit from Supportive Services assistance. Training services are for individuals who need a more intensive level of services to obtain employment or to be retained in employment. The following criteria is reviewed to determine participant eligibility and priority of service ensure that individuals need training: (1) individual must meet the WIOA eligibility requirements; (2) be determined to need training services based on an assessment and evaluation, and have the knowledge and capability to participate in a training service successfully; (3) the desired program of training will enable employment opportunities in the local area or reasonable commuting distance; and (4) meet the qualification requirements for the desired training program. Both areas provide information on available providers and programs and is available via the WorkSource Georgia website or other resources.

WIOA services in the local areas include comprehensive and specialized assessments of educational and skill levels identified as services needed by customers. This includes development of an Individual Service Strategy (ISS) for youth customers; development of Individual Employment Plans (IEPs) 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 (ITAs) 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 and 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

**NOTE: WIOA funds in the Lower Chattahoochee region typically do not directly pay testing fees for a GED, but GED preparation and referrals are provided at** no cost **through local adult education networks**. Work Readiness provides soft skills, employability skills, and life skills training to assist individuals with obtaining employment and retaining employment. Work Experience provides work-based learning opportunities for the individuals who are placed on actual worksites with participating employers. (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 for up to 50% of the participants' wages

during the training period. Individuals are placed in permanent employment upon successful completion of the OJT activity.

### Title 2: Adult Education Services

Columbus Technical College (CTC), Central Georgia Technical College (CGTC), and South Georgia Technical College (SGTC) Adult Education. The Region has three technical colleges, CTC, CGTC, and SGTC, that offer Adult Education services. CTC Adult Education provides adult education services in Muscogee and surrounding areas; CGTC Adult Education provides adult education services in Dooly County. SGTC Adult Education offers services in the seven (7) counties of Crisp, Macon, Marion, Schley, Sumter, Taylor, and Webster. CTC, CGTC, and SGTC Adult Education provide remediation of basic literacy skills to assist individuals in GED attainment. They also offer Integrated Education and Training (IET) opportunities for their students. IET provides individuals with adult education, training, and workforce preparation activities concurrently to help students obtain jobs in regionally in-demand occupations. English as a Second Language (ESL) classes are available as well. CTC and SGTC have multiple site locations in the area that offer both day and evening classes to accommodate individuals' schedules. They also offer a GED program for criminal offenders at the local Correctional Institution. The offender program's goal is to assist with removing barriers to employment by providing the resources needed to effectively transition offenders into employment or post-secondary educational opportunities.

### Title 3: Wagner-Peyser (WP) services, TCSG

As of July 2022, Governor B. Kemp designated TCSG as the provider of Wagner-Peyser (WP) Employment Services for the State of Georgia. TCSG is uniquely positioned to welcome customers into the workforce system and provide comprehensive and targeted referrals to core partners, both online and in person. Georgia's workforce system provides easy access through many entry points. A large number of referrals are from the Unemployment Insurance program through the Georgia Department of Labor and the TCSG Business Services Unit.

Career services are first provided to customers through Wagner-Peyser. Services are provided through the Comprehensive and Affiliated One Stop locations. The sites are currently located at the Georgia Department of Labor offices located in Columbus, GA (Area 14), and Americus, GA (Area 15), for customers who want to meet in person. Services are also available online. Once an individual completes career services and is determined to be ready for gainful employment, Wagner-Peyser (WP) staff provide job search assistance, job

development, and placement services. For customers requiring occupational training, WP staff coordinate direct referrals to appropriate partner programs based on localized individual needs assessments

### Title 4: Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency Services (GVRA)

Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency Services (GVRA) provides services to individuals with physical and/or mental disabilities to prepare for, secure, retain, advance in, or regain competitive integrated employment. GVRA also partners with businesses seeking to hire qualified individuals with significant 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 are provided in the local area by way of an electronic partner at the Comprehensive One Stop Center.

### *Non-Core Programs and Partners*

a. **Perkins:** Carl Perkins Career and Technical Education Act grant funding is also administered in part by TCSG. This is in collaboration with the Georgia Department of Education. Referrals are made available upon request.
b. **UI & TAA:** The State's Unemployment Insurance and Trade Adjustment Act programs are administered by GDOL. Coordination and collaboration efforts between TCSG and GDOL are ongoing at the State level.
c. **FLC:** The Foreign Labor Certification program recently transitioned from GDOL to TCSG. Coordination and alignment efforts with core programs are ongoing at the State level.
d. **Job Corps:** Georgia has two Job Corps locations (Albany and Brunswick). Job Corps is a federally funded program under WIOA that provides free education and training to youth. The local area can make referrals to Job Corps under the SWDB-issued guidance through a Memorandum of Understanding. Referrals are made available upon request.
e. **YouthBuild:** YouthBuild grantees are present throughout the State of Georgia. Area 15 has a Memorandum of Understanding with the YouthBuild program located within the Area. Referrals and resource connections can be made available upon request.
f. **The Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP):** The SCSEP is also known as Legacy Link, and programs are administered in the majority of Georgia's 159 counties through the Georgia Department of Human Services, Division of Aging Services.
g. **SNAP/TANF:** The State of Georgia Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families programs are housed within the Georgia Department of Human Services. These programs are not included in the State of Georgia Combined Plan. Coordination and collaboration efforts are ongoing at the State level. Although partnership is not mandated due to the Governor's exemption of SNAP and TANF programs from inclusion, both areas do have a partnership on the local level, and referrals are available upon request.

## Strengths of Region 8

The Lower Chattahoochee local area has several higher education institutions (Columbus State University and Columbus Technical College, Albany Technical College, and Miller-Motte College), and private educational and eligible training providers. In addition, the Lower Chattahoochee Area rotates a Mobile Career Center throughout the service delivery counties, providing a one-stop affiliate option to accommodate the region's needs for WIOA services. The Middle Flint local area has several higher education institutions (Georgia Southwestern College, Albany State University [Cordele campus], and South Georgia Technical College) and private educational and training providers. All of the educational institutions mentioned 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-provided programs, strengthens the region by focusing on educational and soft skills training improvement and providing work experience, which promotes work-based learning opportunities. Adult Education programs at technical colleges provide basic literacy training to raise educational levels. Both the Lower Chattahoochee Area 14 and Middle Flint Area 15 provide On-the-Job Training (OJT), Incumbent Worker Training (IWT), Apprenticeship, and Work Experience (WEX) opportunities to the region. These OJT opportunities connect job seekers to employers who have job openings. OJT services have been an ongoing training activity in the local areas for more than 33 years. Columbus State University and Columbus Technical College, located in the Lower Chattahoochee Area 14, have developed strong community partnerships with Pratt & Whitney, St. Francis – Emory Health Hospital, Piedmont Columbus Regional Hospital, Georgia Power, Columbus Water Works, Fort Benning Military Base, and AFLAC, to name a few, that allow the Lower Chattahoochee an enhanced opportunity to provide WIOA Services to the service delivery area. The Col. Ralph Puckett Workforce Development Center (The Puckett Center), an employer-centered hub of Columbus Technical College that connects veterans, service members, military families, and the broader Columbus community to education, credentials, and direct employment pathway operates as an extension of Columbus Technical College and is aligned with Georgia's statewide VECTR network, delivering flexible training, industry drive programs, and wrap-around support that shorten the path from learning to meaningful work. Fort Benning's education center and Columbus State University have partnered to launch the Military Spouse Career Accelerator (MSCA) Fast-Track Pilot Program to assist military spouses in moving into high-demand careers in Nursing, Health Sciences, Cybersecurity, education,

and IT. This initiative is designed to provide extra academic and workforce support to those who qualify as dislocated worker participants for WIOA Title 1 funding. In addition, Columbus Ahead, a five-year regional economic strategy for 2026-2030. Unveiled in January 2026 by the Regional Prosperity Initiative (formerly known as Columbus 2025), it builds on prior regional economic efforts to drive workforce and business growth in the Chattahoochee Valley. The strategy focuses on driving economic momentum, cultivating local talent, and building a thriving community. The region has multiple initiatives.

Middle Flint's South Georgia Technical College (SGTC) has developed strong partnerships with businesses such as Eaton Lighting, Global Cellulose Fiber, Sumter EMC, Flint EMC, Crisp Power Commission, Interfor, John Deere, Caterpillar, House of Raeford Farms, 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 for business partnerships. Training through these partnerships can lead to employment opportunities with higher rates of pay.

South Georgia Technical College offers 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.

Middle Flint local area has the One Sumter initiative, as well as the Crisp County Industrial Development Authority, which are studying the economic issues facing their areas 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, such as healthcare, manufacturing, and transportation. One of those focuses is on industry sectors and high-demand occupations; for example, in healthcare (LPNs, RNs, Medical Assistants, Certified Nurse Assistant (CNA), and Patient Care Techs (PCT), etc.).

**Georgia Department of Labor (GDOL)**

Georgia Department of Labor (GDOL): The Columbus Career Center and the Americus Career Center are focusing on new strategies to provide services that extend 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 help them assess the training opportunities 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.

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 occupational 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 make payments, and participates with the State Information and Data Exchange System (SIDES) and SIDES E-Response. The GDOL website posts information on career expos and employer seminars. Labor market information, workplace posters, information on unemployment insurance (UI) claims, etc. can be downloaded. GDOL also utilizes social media (Facebook, YouTube, X, and RSS Feed) as resources to provide information to the public. TCSG serves as the State Rapid Response coordinator to assist employers with transitioning workers that will be laid off during business closures or lay-off events.

## Weaknesses for Region 8

One weakness is that participants often seek employment outside the Local Areas. Each area focuses on the industry sector/high-demand occupations, such as healthcare (LPNs, RNs, MAs, Dental Hygienist/Assistant, etc.) But once trained, many seek jobs outside the Local Area/Region. Many relocate to Atlanta or other areas with higher wages.

Many local jobs are in retail and food service. They usually pay minimum wage, offer part-time hours, and have no room for advancement. Weak market strategies hinder the Middle Flint area from attracting career/job seekers who are willing to stay or relocate to our region.

Other weaknesses include rural workforce systems struggling with a lack of jobs and mass transit. Because rural counties lack public transit, individuals cannot easily reach training or employment. Furthermore, high poverty levels prevent many residents, especially youth, from owning personal vehicles. Without reliable transportation, their ability to attend the region's strong technical colleges and universities is severely limited. This challenge stems from the vast geographic region and its highly dispersed population. While a rural transit system exists, its limited availability and scheduling conflicts make it impractical for daily work or training. The Lower Chattahoochee Area struggles with a lack of knowledge of available resources and ineffective resource coordination to the service areas, coupled with duplicated efforts that fail to reach those most in need. There are multiple overlapping workforce development and job training resources centered around the One-Stop partnership model.

The Middle Flint Local Area's other major issue is the lack of employment opportunities. High unemployment rates combined with lack of opportunity are reflected by the fact that there have not been enough new industries. This also means that where there are jobs, they often offer lower wages. Employers often want to hire individuals with higher than high school education and skill levels; however, the wage levels offered are not equal to those requirements. Individuals who seek post-secondary educational training generally increase their skill level and are able to earn higher wages. Individuals are often required to commute to employment opportunities within the Region, but out of Area 15 for better employment opportunities.

The Middle Flint area has experienced an improvement in the availability of quality internet connectivity. However, many in rural areas of Georgia find the cost of internet services prohibitive, which limits online learning opportunities. Many of the region's communities have low-income populations who cannot afford to pay for internet services. The investment in the infrastructure for broadband services has improved internet connectivity and is expected to help the rural areas of Georgia to grow and be more globally competitive.

During COVID-19, poor rural internet access prevented many students from completing online coursework—a setback they are still working to overcome. Recent connectivity upgrades are finally helping them catch up. Continued expansion of rural broadband will drastically improve the quality of life and economic outcomes for local communities.

### Capacity

The Lower Chattahoochee and Middle Flint local areas aim to expand capacity by upgrading One-Stop services for eligible participants through four key steps: upgrade services to match participant needs, train staff and providers to guide participants smoothly, use best practices in daily operations, and build strong ties with regional partners. The local area services and training will focus on the following:

- Increasing the number of employers utilizing OJT, IWT, and Apprenticeships
- Achieving and accurately reporting WIOA performance measures
- Providing quality educational and training services to meet the needs of participants and employers
  - Identifying demand occupations and providing services to meet the demand
  - Building relationships with partners to enhance service delivery in the areas
  - Providing training opportunities to service providers to ensure best practices are utilized
  - Expanding work-based learning opportunities in the local area employers with Work Experience activities.

The region will continue to work with training 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. The region's OJT Service Provider will recruit and

engage the region's area employers to participate in OJT services to increase enrollments. As the Lower Chattahoochee Area has existing work experience (WEX work-based training) for Adults and Dislocated Workers, the Middle Flint area has expanded the Work Experience (WEX work-based learning) activity to the Adult and Dislocated Workers based on an identified need to enhance existing skills or develop 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 Local Area*

There are a variety of in-demand skills required by employers in the Region. Skills include, but are not limited to, healthcare skills, technical skills, and soft skills. For most entry-level positions in the region, individuals will need a high school diploma or GED to obtain employment. Higher education is increasingly important for career advancement. The local area's employers also emphasize the importance of certifications and skills development to meet employer needs.

e. 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.

### 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 continued to expand in the following years. It prepares students for rewarding jobs with Georgia employers who have openings in the targeted occupational fields. It assists employers in developing a pipeline of skilled workers to meet their employment needs. Individuals must qualify for and be receiving the Hope Grant.

The 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, Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice, and Welding and Joining Technology.

The HOPE Career Grant is a financial award for TCSG students who meet certain criteria and are enrolled in approved programs. It allows students to receive educational training opportunities in demand occupations without accumulating high financial student debt. A HOPE Grant recipient must maintain a minimum 2.00 cumulative postsecondary grade point average to remain eligible. The grant provides tuition assistance to students enrolled at a HOPE Grant eligible college or university in Georgia.

## Georgia Film Academy

USG and TCSG worked together to establish the Georgia Film Academy and build 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 Georgia Southwestern University also have film programs not directly associated with the Georgia Film Academy.

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

The vision of the Lower Chattahoochee Workforce Development Area is to create a seamless workforce development system that increases the pool of skilled, job-ready workers through education, training, career pathways, and strategic partnerships that promote economic growth and self-sufficiency. Their mission is to partner with business, education, labor, economic development, and community organizations to deliver high-quality workforce services that prepare residents for in-demand careers and provide employers with the skilled talent needed to compete and grow. With Core Values:

- Accountability
- Equity
- Access
- Collaboration
- Innovation
- Customer-Centered Service
- Data-Driven Decision-Making
- Responsible Stewardship of Public Funds

## 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 for eligible individuals to increase knowledge and skill levels that can lead to personal self-sufficiency and meet the needs of businesses and employers. Collaboration with businesses and employers to identify their needs increases coordination with area community resources (Technical Colleges, Universities, Colleges, etc...), in order 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 Middle Flint area 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 performance accountability measures based on primary indicators of performance in order to support regional economic growth and economic self-sufficiency.***

## The strategic goals of the Lower Chattahoochee Area WIOA (2026 – 2029) are:

- Increase credential attainment by 5% within each grant category.
- Achieve an 85% employment rate (Q2 after exit) in adults; 75% employment rate in Dislocated Workers; and 65% employment rate in Youth.
- Expand the Business Services Division and work-based learning opportunities.
- Increase measurable skills gains rate to 61% in adults; 70% in Dislocated Workers; 56% in Youth
- Expand the Mobile Unit travel rotation and program services to the outlying counties in our area
- Expand community partnerships with CTC (Puckett Center/Skill Bridge/Apprenticeships) and CSU (Dislocated Workers Military Spouses Pilot Program)
- Create additional revenue streams for WIOA programming opportunities
- Develop a streamlined service delivery system to accommodate the discontinuation of sub-recipient service contracts for Adults and Dislocated Workers work experience, and Youth OJT and work experience opportunities in-house
- Create onboarding and training programs for all positions within the area's WIOA Staff.

## The goals of the Middle Flint WIOA are:

- Improve educational and skill levels to provide more job opportunities.
- Provide an array of services that are valuable to customers and employers to meet their needs.
- Collaborate with partners, economic development agencies, employers, and 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 and limited work experience to improve skill levels.

### Improving Educational and Skill Levels

A key element in businesses locating an operation in an area is the 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 and promoting continued education through higher education training opportunities, which builds educational knowledge and skills.

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

Both the Lower Chattahoochee WDB and Middle Flint WDB work with partner agencies and other community resources to provide a wide array of services that will be helpful to both customers and employers by identifying service needs in the region and then determining which partner agency or community resource can best meet that need.

### Collaboration and Coordination with Partners and Stakeholders

One Stop Partner 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 regional needs. Efforts are made by Partners to ensure services offered are not duplicated. Economic development agencies also provide insight into the business and employment opportunities that are available or coming into the area. Quarterly Employer Roundtable meetings provide peer-based discussions to share ideas and give feedback to create more productive and collaborative employer partnerships.

### Promote Awareness

The Lower Chattahoochee Area 14 supports Brand Awareness as a key to successful outreach. Agency websites and social media interaction blend digital design, direct communication, and engagement to turn online visitors into active brand communities. Promotional and informational brochures, Public Service Announcements, and community volunteerism and participation also assist with program awareness.

Participating in community partner events is an effective way to gain awareness and benefit from collaborative efforts. Both the Lower Chattahoochee WDB and the Middle Flint WDB develop a WIOA services list which provides information on activities and services available in the region. The WIOA services list is available at the One Stop Centers resource areas and shared by GDOL staff in their workshops. The WIOA Services List is distributed in the region as a marketing resource. Core partners also promote awareness of their services at the One Stop Centers and other venues as well. WIOA and contractor staff give presentations at various meetings in the area as a method of promoting awareness. Labor market data available through the Georgia Department of Labor website is another tool that is useful in providing information on in-demand occupational skilled trades and growth job sectors.

### Provide Work-Based Learning Opportunities

Both the Lower Chattahoochee WDB and Middle Flint WDB offer On-The-Job Training (OJT), Incumbent Worker Training (IWT), and Work Experience (WEX) as work-based learning activities. OJT offers participating employers wage reimbursements of up to 50% for hiring WIOA-eligible participants. The Business Services Representative and OJT Career Facilitator for the Lower Chattahoochee Area and Middle Flint Area market IWT, OJT, and work experience opportunities to the business community to recruit employer participation.

### Performance Goals

WIOA federally mandates performance measures for its core programs. Listed below are the five (5) 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 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 in education or training activities during the fourth quarter after exit.
- Median Earnings Quarter 2--Measures the median earnings of participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program.
- Credential Attainment Rate--Measures the percentage of participants who obtain a recognized post-secondary credential or secondary school diploma, or its recognized equivalent, during participation in or within one year from exit from the program.
- 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 gain, which is defined as documented academic, technical, occupational, or other forms of progress toward such a credential or employment.

Both the Lower Chattahoochee WDB and Middle Flint WDB negotiate local performance measures annually and track them against goals set through direct service or in the service providers' (sub-recipient) contracts, which outline performance goals for specified services. The goals for performance measure accountability are reviewed and adjusted based on WorkSource Georgia data system reports and quarterly State-generated reports to track the effectiveness of performance goals. Performance accountability is reported to the local workforce boards to support regional growth and economic self-sufficiency.

Each Local Area seeks to develop service delivery strategies to meet performance measure requirements, and goals will be to work collaboratively with community partners to identify and serve individuals who may have barriers to employment, and assist them with education or training services that will enhance their ability to enter or return to employment, retain employment, and become self-sufficient. is 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, retain employment, and to become self-sufficient.

f. Taking into account the analyses described in sections "2. a-e" (above), provide a description of how the region utilizes this data to drive decision-making; and include the strategies utilized to coordinate core programs to align resources available to the local area to achieve the strategic vision and goals. Provide a description of how the local board supports and carries out strategic partnering to help address local and regional challenges.

Each local area collaborates with core partners, area employers, community stakeholders, and Workforce Development Board members to discuss Workforce needs, identify employment barriers and training gaps to develop strategies designed to improve service delivery and accessibility.

Both the Lower Chattahoochee WDB and the Middle Flint WDB and WIOA continually look to align available resources. For both organizations, a key component is the Comprehensive One Stop Center and the partner agencies co-located there.

While the Lower Chattahoochee area benefits from a mobile career center unit, the Middle Flint area suffers from wide gaps between facilities and poor coordination at the local GDOL One Stop Center, making access difficult for its customers.

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

The Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Services (GVRA) utilizes its funding to assess TANF and potential rehabilitation clients, in addition to providing customary 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. How will the area support a local workforce development system that meets the needs of businesses in the local area? Provide a list of business services available through the area(s), such as employer workshops and assessment and screening of potential employees.***

Georgia's workforce development strategy accelerates economic growth by aligning state resources with industry demands. We build a highly skilled talent pipeline to ensure Georgia employers thrive and our economy remains globally competitive.

### Small Employers

Small employers often have difficulty integrating into the workforce development system due to capacity limits. All services, including OJT, are available to small employers throughout the region. Small businesses often make great OJT service users, and reimbursement funds help cover new employee training costs.

### Employers in in-demand industry sector

The region is focusing on healthcare, transportation, and manufacturing occupations as part of their in-demand occupations. Other in-demand sectors for each local area include retail and customer service occupations. Both Lower Chattahoochee and Middle Flint use the WIOA Individual Training Account (ITA) for healthcare jobs like nursing and medical assisting. They also use ITAs and On-the-Job Training (OJT) for manufacturing jobs.

### Business Services

The One Stop Centers offer services to employers including recruitment, 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, and employment law issues. The One Stop Centers' Employer Centers are available for employers in a self-service mode for recruitment and interviewing or with staff-assisted screening and testing.

***b. Describe how local employers play a central role in defining in-demand skills, validating training models, and identifying credentials of value. How does the LWDB ensure training programs are designed around employer competency requirements rather than academic program availability?***

**Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act**

The region takes advantage of programs offered through TCSG OWD focused on connecting with and providing workforce solutions for employers. State initiatives, such as Great Georgia Jobs and Sector Partnerships, provide a platform for Local Areas to connect with employers. This platform engages them in implementing sector partnerships, identifying current and future employment needs specific to each Local Area, and developing strategies to address those needs. The local areas also connect with employers through the LWDA's Rapid Response efforts, local job and resource fairs, and through participation in regional employer meetings.

The LWDAs provide a variety of customized services to employers in various formats. For example, labor market information can be self-accessed by employers or acquired with varying levels of staff assistance. Employer centers in the 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 LWDAs 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 LWDAs and TCSG Business Services Representatives also provide information through the One Stop system regarding workforce development services provided by other local area agencies. Both the Lower Chattahoochee Area and Middle Flint Area Comprehensive One Stop Centers are operated at the GDOL Career Centers. One Stop affiliate sites are also located throughout the region, which allow other access points. Transportation issues continue to be a concern throughout the region.

The Middle Flint area has limited availability of business and organized labor representatives located in its area. This presents challenges in filling the local Workforce Development Board membership requirement. As of 2026, each LWDB has two members from organized labor serving and regularly attending meetings and providing insight to Board functions.

### Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency

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

### Technical College System of Georgia

Georgia's technical college system is a local partner in the region's 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 include customer service, ServSafe, forklift safety, computer skills, manufacturing fundamentals, CPR, First Aid, and many others. Each training program can be customized to meet the employer's requirements for employees. This partnership is often leveraged by providing business services through the nationally renowned 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 that is leveraged alongside other business services from core partners.

The Lower Chattahoochee Area has Columbus Technical College (CTC) that serves the counties in the local area; and Middle Flint Area has South Georgia Technical College (SGTC), which has two campuses that serve seven counties in the local area. The Southern Crescent Technical College located in Thomaston (outside the LWDA service area) serves the Taylor County area.

### Eliminating Duplication of Efforts

The region will continue to establish a unified service strategy to standardize training provider criteria and equalize funding caps for training and supportive services.

Beyond our comprehensive One-Stop Centers, we partner with external agencies to connect customers with outside community resources.

WIOA Administrators continually seek better ways to deliver high-quality services in our One-Stop Centers. Our ongoing strategy relies on expanding partner knowledge and building agency camaraderie. By unifying the workforce system and pooling resources, we can eliminate obstacles for individuals who face unprecedented challenges to retool their skills and reestablish themselves in viable career pathways.

### *c. How will the area engage employers in workforce development programs, including small employers and employers in in-demand industry sectors and occupations? Provide examples of co-designed curricula, employer advisory roles, or industry-validated credentials.*

The coordination of the Local areas requires working with multiple chambers of commerce, development authorities, and other state and local officials. The Lower Chattahoochee Area 14 collaborates with Columbus Ahead, a unified regional blueprint, whose success depends on a powerful ecosystem of dedicated community partners. Rather than depending upon a single organization, Columbus Ahead is co-owned and executed by a network of leading regional entities, each bringing specialized expertise.

The Regional Prosperity Initiative (RPI), a Columbus Ahead community partner in Columbus, has transitioned directly from the foundational successes of the Columbus 2025 initiative into the expanded 2030 vision. Jobs – Aiming to rank in the top half of all Georgia metros for job growth, targeting the creation of over 6,500 new jobs by expanding local companies, supporting entrepreneurs, and attracting new industries. Talent – Cultivating and attracting a robust workforce, including efforts to increase immigration (such as remote worker incentive programs) and aligning local education options. Place – Enhancing overall quality of life, increasing tourism and visitors, and boosting local civic engagement.

Cordele and Crisp County commissioned an intensive study that they are working to implement now. Americus and Sumter County used local resources to establish the One Sumter Economic Development Foundation to build community collaboratives to tackle issues such as workforce development, rural broadband infrastructure, public safety, economic development, and branding. The Grow Sumter 2025-2029 strategic plan focuses on collaborative leadership, the in-demand workforce, a vibrant and safe community, and effective communications.

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

**Lower Chattahoochee WDB**

The LCWDB's strategic plan is a comprehensive, data-driven framework for delivering WIOA direct career services, partner-coordinated services, contracted/outsourced services, and work-based learning in the Lower Chattahoochee Area 14. It focuses on improving employment outcomes, strengthening employer partnerships, and increasing access for priority populations through an integrated, customer-centered service delivery model, providing a framework for aligning workforce, education, economic development, and community partners to create pathways leading to self-sufficiency and regional prosperity. It supports the vision and mission of the LCWDB and aligns with WIOA, Georgia's State Workforce Development Plan, and regional economic priorities. Business and community leaders in the region have been working together since 2014 on a regional strategy to increase prosperity, reduce poverty, and enhance the quality of life. The Regional Prosperity Initiative, a community partner of Columbus Ahead, focuses on regional economic momentum, talent cultivation, and community development across the region. Successful implementation hinges on the extent to which its implementation partner organizations can work together effectively to align toward moving the needle on the various metrics associated with the goals. The catalyst – Invest in projects and programs to achieve the goals. Provide forums to track goals, make course corrections when/where necessary, and promote accountability for the outcomes. Identify emerging issues and inform community residents of evidence-based solutions to regional opportunities and challenges. Some of the accomplishments include: the creation of StartUP Columbus to develop and support the entrepreneurial ecosystem in the region, and the launch of Choose Columbus to drive traditional regional economic development, attracting new residents through the MakeMyMove program, narrowed achievement gaps through Community Schools United and The Basics program – RPI/Columbus Ahead.

**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. Local community partnerships

have been developed to implement the One Sumter objectives. The Middle Flint WDB coordinates services with the Sumter School System's Ignite College and Career Academy as appropriate or needed, based on funding availability. The academy was constructed on-site at the Sumter County High School Campus and has utilized a new model of experiential learning that accelerates the development of a quality and capable workforce since Fall 2021. The model was developed with local industry leaders and educational professionals identifying career pathways for students and pursuing critical relationships with Sumter County's business community.

The 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 businesses and industries 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 the Savannah Port Authority and conveniently located in relation to other Southeastern Ports at Charleston, South Carolina, Brunswick, Georgia, and Jacksonville, Florida. 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.

### 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. The workforce system, through its partners, can identify the demand, help create solutions, and assist USG and TCSG in efforts to produce 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 and other community partners. The Middle Flint Area is focused on partnering with economic developers that are located locally, regionally, and statewide by executing customized solutions to workforce issues. Located in the 12 service

delivery regions in the State, Business Services Representatives can help economic developers identify data critical for the successful location and expansion of industry.

Key stakeholders in economic development are able to connect employers, educators, and workforce representatives on an almost daily basis. Additionally, the Lower Chattahoochee Area and the Middle Flint Area workforce development systems continue 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 One Stop 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 list of services and resources available in the local workforce area is produced and published each program year that includes program offerings and contact information for WIOA and non-WIOA services. This list, along with others, is used by partners and agency representatives of the One Stop workforce system as a resource and referral guide for coordinating services.

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

### Economic development partners

The Lower Chattahoochee area's economic development partners include Georgia Power Company, Columbus Water Works, Piedmont Columbus Regional, St Francis – Emory Healthcare, Greater Columbus Georgia Chamber of Commerce Strategic Engagement, Development Authority of Columbus, Regional Prosperity Initiative, Inc., A partner of Columbus Ahead, Board of Commissioners in Harris, Talbot, and Stewart Counties, Valley Hospitality, Kinetic Credit Union, Vocational Rehabilitation with members on our local workforce board, Columbus State University, Columbus Technical College, and Fort Benning Georgia Military Installation.

The Middle Flint area, the Crisp-Cordele Industrial Development Board (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, GDEcD, 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.

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

Economic development partners consulted in the development of this regional plan include the Georgia Department of Labor, local Chambers of Commerce, and the Economic Development District as identified by USEDA, area technical colleges, and local development authorities. The Local Areas have worked with multiple entities on developing this Regional Plan.

***e. Describe how the local area helps job seekers identify, document, and communicate their existing skills – including through competency-based assessments, digital credentials, badges, or skills portfolios. How are One-Stop Center staff trained to use skills-based tools for career counseling and job matching? How are employers in the area engaged to recognize skills and prior experience in lieu of traditional degree requirements?***

Each local area helps job seekers identify, document, and communicate their existing skills through a combination of individualized assessment, career exploration, resume development, and work-based learning documentation. Career facilitators (program specialists) use skills and interest assessments such as CareerScope and O*NET-based occupational exploration, along with WorkSource Georgia tools, labor market information, prior work history, and case notes developed through the Individual Employment Plan (IEP) or Individual Service Strategy (ISS), to help participants identify transferable skills and occupational strengths. Customers are guided to translate prior work experience, military service, volunteer activities, informal learning, and training into clear skill statements that can be used in resumes, interviews, and job matching. These tools help staff and participants connect existing abilities to local in-demand occupations and determine whether short-term training, work experience, or occupational skills training is needed to fill any remaining gaps. CareerScope, O*NET, and the WorkSource Georgia portal are used as practical tools to organize skills and align them with employment opportunities.

Each Local Area also supports the documentation of skills through recognized credentials, certificates, and other records of demonstrated competency earned through technical college training, adult education, Work Experience, and On-the-Job Training. While the Middle Flint area does not currently operate a stand-alone local badging platform, participants are encouraged to document occupational skills through industry-recognized credentials, training completion records, and employer evaluations that can function as portable evidence of competency. At the state level, the Technical College System of Georgia has expanded use of digital badges and micro-credentials to verify specific skills, and these developments strengthen the overall workforce ecosystem available to local participants. In addition, state efforts to expand credit for prior learning and recognition of existing competencies create future opportunities to better connect prior experience to training and credential attainment for adult learners. Local staff use these documented achievements to build stronger resumes, support job referrals, and help participants communicate their value to employers in a more skills-based format.

One-Stop Center staff are trained to use skills-based tools for career counseling and job matching through cross-training, partner meetings, policy guidance, and day-to-day service delivery coordination in the comprehensive centers and affiliate sites. Staff training includes the use of labor market information, WorkSource Georgia registration and resume functions, O*NET occupational research, assessment interpretation, eligibility and case management procedures, and development of IEPs and ISSs that connect participant skills to realistic career pathways. Cross-training among partners helps front-line staff understand available tools, referral options, and how to guide customers from assessment to training and employment. This ongoing training supports a more consistent skills-first approach to counseling, including helping staff identify transferable skills, compare them to occupational requirements, and match customers to employers, work-based learning, or training aligned with local demand occupations.

Employers in the local area are engaged to recognize skills and prior experience through employer outreach, business services, On-the-Job Training, Work Experience, Rapid Response contacts, technical college partnerships, and ongoing discussions with economic development and workforce partners. Through these relationships, employers help validate the skills needed for available jobs and provide direct feedback on work readiness, occupational competencies, and hiring expectations. Work-based learning strategies allow employers to observe and evaluate participant skills in actual job settings, which can reduce reliance on traditional degree requirements for entry-level and middle-skill positions. The local area also promotes industry-recognized credentials, technical college certificates, and documented work experience as evidence of job readiness. As employers participate in OJT and Work Experience activities, they are encouraged to focus

on demonstrated competencies, prior relevant experience, and the ability to learn quickly on the job, rather than relying solely on academic credentials where business needs can be met through skills-based hiring.

### *f. Describe how real-time, localized labor market data is being used to guide career counseling, individual employment plan development, and training investments. How do these tools help participants understand career options and take clear steps toward better-paying jobs?*

Real-time and localized labor market data is used throughout the Lower Chattahoochee and the Middle Flint Areas to help participants make informed career decisions, develop realistic Individual Employment Plans (IEPs), and target training investments toward occupations that offer stronger wages and long-term opportunities. Career facilitators (program specialists) use current labor market information from the Georgia Department of Labor, including Georgia LaborMarket Explorer, Local Area Profiles, Occupational Outlook Data, Wage Information, Unemployment Trends, and Industry Projections, along with WorkSource Georgia tools and O*NET occupational information. These data sources allow staff to show participants which occupations are growing in the Middle Flint Area, what wages those jobs pay locally, what education or credentials are required, and how those jobs compare to occupations with lower wages or limited advancement potential.

In career counseling and IEP development, staff use these tools to connect a participant's interests, skills, barriers, and prior experience to occupations that are both attainable and economically meaningful. Labor market data helps staff and participants identify career pathways rather than just immediate job openings. For example, participants can compare entry-level positions with occupations that require short-term training or a targeted credential but lead to higher wages, greater job stability, or advancement opportunities. The IEP can then be built around specific steps such as improving foundational skills, completing a short-term training program on the Eligible Training Provider List, earning an industry-recognized credential, participating in Work Experience or On-the-Job Training, and moving into employment aligned with local demand. This approach helps ensure that training investments are not based only on program availability, but on documented labor market demand, local wages, and the likelihood of employment after completion. Work Source Middle Flint specifically includes labor market information, individualized career services, and IEP development as core parts of service delivery.

## 4. Regional Service Delivery

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

The local Workforce Boards of Region 8 consist of the Lower Chattahoochee (Area 14) and Middle Flint (Area 15) and are dedicated to coordinating regional services. The Local areas continue to work toward developing, and Lower Chattahoochee's Mobile Career Center could prove instrumental in advancing service delivery in neighboring counties such as Talbot-Taylor, Chattahoochee-Marion, and Stewart-Webster Counties within the region. Expanding the regional service strategy ensures consistent training provider standards, funding caps, and support amounts across the local boards. 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 its commitment to local workforce development and federally funded economic development planning efforts.

Although the Lower Chattahoochee and Middle Flint Workforce areas have collaborated with and shared information on operational processes, procedures, and policies, we do not share the same employers or higher-education training providers due to geographic demands. Both local areas do provide some of 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, 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 pursuing 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 The Urban League of the River Valley, Inc., Clothing Bank, Community Reinvestment Services, Housing Authorities, and food banks.

The WIOA Workforce System goal is to continue exploring ways to bridge the gap between education and employment. Region 8 recognizes the need for regional planning and intends to be fully dedicated to the needs of the region.

***b. 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 is 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. Describe plans for 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 coordinate 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 are met.

### *d. Describe plans for coordination of work-based- learning contracts such as OJT, IWT, CT and Apprenticeships*

Due to the travel distance between the two local areas, 14 and 15, we generally do not share the work-based learning sites. In 2022, 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 in both the Lower Chattahoochee and Middle Flint counties for employment. Middle Flint has 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 located in the Middle Flint 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 shared 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 it 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.

## 5. Sector Strategy Development

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

The Region has not had any sector strategy development or sector partnership grant since July 2019; the two local Workforce areas of Lower Chattahoochee Area 14 & Middle Flint Area 15 were 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 local areas have a long history of supporting educational and training opportunities within their chosen sector. The Region currently does not have a sector strategy development/ grant at the current time.

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

Partners

The Sector Partnership was developed with individuals with knowledge and expertise in the Financial/Banking and Healthcare sectors. Partners from the sectors included individuals with expertise in the Financial/Banking and Healthcare fields. Additional partners from higher education, as well as mandated WIOA One Stop Partners that have expertise in the sector were included. Community resource partners with knowledge of the sectors were invited to participate.

***b. Describe the meetings that have taken place and the strategy by which partners will continue to be engaged***

The Region has not had any meetings in regard to sector strategies.

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

The Region has not collected any research or data in relation to sector strategies.

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

### *i. Participating employers;*

None at this time.

### *ii. Target occupations;*

None currently.

### *iii. Training programs;*

None currently.

### *iv. Target Populations.*

None currently.

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

None currently.

## 6. One Stop Delivery System

***Provide a description of the One Stop delivery system in the local area that includes the items detailed below.***

Lower Chattahoochee

The Lower Chattahoochee Workforce Development Board (LCWDB) mission is to partner with business, education, labor, economic development, and community organizations to deliver high-quality workforce services that prepare residents for in-demand careers and provide employers with the skilled talent needed to compete and grow.

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

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

The One-Stop Operator and affiliate sites in the local workforce area are fully prepared to market workforce services to businesses and job seekers. Employer/employee briefings resulting from mass layoffs and coordination with collaborative partners to provide mass recruitment/job fairs and Quick Start services to new or expanding businesses in the area are other services offered at the local comprehensive one-stop center. Other examples of services offered to businesses through the One-Stop include:

- Knowledge about Unemployment Taxes and Benefits
- Tax filing and Wage Reports
- Assistance with petitions and layoffs or business closures
- Partial unemployment insurance claims filing
- Information regarding employment law or employment issues
- Recruitment
- Tax credits and incentives
- Labor Market Information
- Local Workforce and business development resources

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

The Lower Chattahoochee's Workforce Board designates the local Georgia Department of Labor (GDOL) Columbus Career Center 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, 2026, through a competitive procurement process. The first-year of this new award will be for Program Year 2026 (July 1, 2026 through June 30, 2027) with two subsequent contract years contingent upon WIOA regulations, funding, and performance. The subsequent contract years will run for twelve months, July 1st to June 30th of each year. IN THE DOOR, LLC continues to be located at the Georgia Department of Labor Columbus Career Center location. Various affiliate 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 consistently sought ways to conduct regularly scheduled registration and other employment-related services to individuals residing in outlying counties, the availability of staff limits its capability to provide sufficient access to services, especially to those in the rural counties of this workforce area. In efforts to strengthen the presence of our one-stop services and enhance the accessibility of GDOL and other services to residents residing in the rural counties, the local WDB's procurement of a mobilized assessment unit has met these challenges, increasing WIOA, GDOL, and other partnering agency presence in these rural counties.

The LCWDB's exploration of new information technology, artificial intelligence, and cybersecurity is being developed to enhance the delivery of services. For outreach and recruitment, leverage social media alongside resources from TCSG, OWD, and partnering agencies.

In addition to the assistive technology listed above, the One Stop Operator is fully handicap accessible in accordance with ADA and Section 504 laws and regulations. The LCWDB ensures employers are providing reasonable accommodations to enable individuals with disabilities to perform their job duties, unless doing so would impose an undue hardship on the employer. Places of accommodation are also required to remove physical barriers that prevent access by individuals with disabilities. ADA inspections are conducted routinely to ensure the provisions of the ADA are compliant.

## 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, and Job Corps. 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 the 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.

### Middle Flint

The GDOL Americus Career Center is designated by the Middle Flint Workforce Development Board as the local area Comprehensive One Stop site. In 2025, Requests for Proposals were publicly available for One Stop Operator/Coordinator Services. Eckerd Connects was selected by the Middle Flint Workforce Board to be the One Stop Operator/Coordinator.

The Comprehensive One Stop Center will have two affiliate access sites (Eckerd Connects and SGTC WIOA Offices). Eckerd Connects and SGTC WIOA are training Service Providers in the area.

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

- Provide a variety of services to customers
- Facilitate partner 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 funding sources are utilized to develop integrated service strategies for customers. Priority of Service will be given to individuals who are: Veterans/eligible spouses; Public Assistance recipients; low income; basic skill deficient; and have barriers to employment.

## Comprehensive One Stop Center

GDOL Americus Career Center served as the Comprehensive One Stop Center. Eckerd Connects was selected in 2025 to be the One Stop Operator/Coordinator. One Stop Partners meetings were held quarterly, and an electronic referral-tracking data system was developed. Cross-training was provided between the Eckerd Connects staff and Partners to enhance the understanding and knowledge level of activities, services, and training opportunities that are available in the local area. The One Stop Operator has added Partners' information (brochures, flyers, contact information, etc...) to the resource area in the One Stop Center. This information could be handed out to customers seeking information on available services. A One Stop Center Information handout was developed that identified all the Partners and services that were available through the One Stop Center. The One Stop Operator and Partners all share a one-page information sheet at various meetings, events, speaking engagements etc., as a means of outreach and recruitment efforts for the One Stop center. This has enhanced the customer referrals to partner services in the local area.

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, and very limited private transportation services such as Uber, Lift or taxi services. As the local area covers eight counties and covers a large geographic travel area, the GDOL Americus Career Center typically has customers from four or five counties in the area that frequent the One Stop Center.

## 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 (ITAs) training opportunities. SGTC WIOA Provider has offices at the SGTC campus to provide WIOA services as an affiliate One Stop Center.

## Eckerd Connects/Paxen

Eckerd Connects/Paxen has one facility located in the eight (8) county area. Eckerd's staff participates at the Comprehensive One Stop center on a part-time basis. At the One Stop Center, Eckerd staff will provide

information on their services to customers visiting the One Stop Center. Staff also participate in outreach and recruitment efforts. Eckerd Connects also serves as an affiliate access point in the local area and delivers WIOA educational and training services at their facility.

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

Both WDBs in the Region 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 developed 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. Provider monitoring and performance reporting are another method of ensuring compliance and continued improvement.

The Lower Chattahoochee Area has elected to offer more WIOA direct services with limited subrecipient partners in an effort to expand participant services and community resources. 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 losing 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 training courses held for all providers. The region will continue to provide this 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. 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 ability to get their citizens to services. There are rural transit systems in a limited number of counties served, but not all. And to complicate matters, those rural transit services often have limited ability to get residents to trainings or other services. Rural transit services give priority of need to individuals with health/medical appointments and have limited travel routes and time schedules in which they operate. The WDB works 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 in available or reliable internet connectivity. The two large cities have reliable internet connectivity usually within the city limits. Internet connectivity outside of the city limits is only available through a broadband connection, which is becoming available.

Many customers rely on smartphones for internet connectivity which is often limited with reception in many counties in the area. Improvements to rural broadband connectivity or other available internet services has greatly improved 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 systems have designed processes to ensure customers seeking WIOA services receive timely services and/or referrals. Alternative (itinerant) 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 Lower Chattahoochee Area 14 has a Mobile Career Center equipped with a state-of-the-art, fully

accessible computer lab, high-speed internet connection, and fully accessible ADA-compliant workstations with movable stations and auxiliary equipment.

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

The local board includes: (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 through 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 layoffs 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 Employer

***c. 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 One-Stop Comprehensive locations in Americus and Columbus are equipped with assistive technology devices (hearing/vision, furniture with adjustability, etc.) that can assist individuals with disabilities to access to services. The Centers meet the ADA requirements for accessibility to customers who require accommodation. GVRA, when requested, can assess the physical accessibility of the center based on the ADAAA Accessibility Guidelines. One-Stop Comprehensive locations have an annual compliance review to ensure centers are in compliance with all ADA and other regulatory requirements. GVRA, when requested, can assess the physical accessibility of the center based on the ADAAA Accessibility Guidelines.

### *d. Provide a comprehensive description of the roles and resource contributions of the partners.*

There are two Comprehensive One-Stop Centers in the Region. One-Stop partners can contribute virtually or on- site. WIOA service providers are on-site periodically. One-Stop Comprehensive sites are based in Americus and the other in Columbus. The WIOA service providers in Columbus are IN THE DOOR, providing One-Stop Operator Services, and Columbus Technical College as a one-stop affiliate site, case management, and classroom training for Adults and Dislocated Workers. Americus includes RVRC/WIOA, Eckerd Connects, and South Georgia Technical College staff are on-site periodically.

## *One-Stop & Affiliate Sites & Services*
## Lower Chattahoochee

| One-Stop Operator/One-Stop Partners/ Affiliate Sites | Major Services Provided |
|---|---|
| One-Stop Operator and Service Provider<br>IN THE DOOR, LLC (Effective July 1, 2026), located at the Comprehensive One-Stop GDOL<br>700 Veterans Parkway<br>Columbus, Georgia 31901<br>Phone: 706-649-7423 | Oversight: At a minimum, coordinate and manage the delivery of services provided by the required one-stop partners and service providers within the comprehensive One-Stop location and any affiliate sites in the workforce area.<br>Services:<br>WIOA Outreach & Recruitment and Job Search Assistance<br>Follow-Up Services<br>Referral to post-secondary education<br>Resume Preparation<br>Business Services (OJT and WEX) |
| Georgia Department of Labor—One Stop Partner, 700 Veterans Parkway<br>Columbus, Georgia 31901 | Unemployment Insurance Migrant Seasonal Worker<br>TOP Step and Federal Bonding |
| Technical College System of Georgia-One Stop Partner (Wagner-Peyser & JVSG) | Employment Services Unemployment Insurance Veterans Services Employer Services<br>Job Referrals Assessments<br>Job Search Assistance Labor Market Information Resume Preparation Workshops<br>Referral to community services |
| Columbus Technical College<br>(One-Stop Partner) & One-Stop Affiliate Site, 928 Manchester Expressway, Columbus, Georgia<br>Phone: 706-649-1856 | Serves as an Affiliate Site for collaboration among One-Stop System partners on basic services and referral to the comprehensive One-Stop Center for further processing. Assistance with occupational skills training and/or retraining through ITAs, in addition to career counseling and case management.<br><br>Also:<br>Adult Basic Education Literacy / GED Preparation Corrections Education<br>English Second Language Integrated Education & Training<br>Workplace Preparation Activities |

| | |
|---|---|
| Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency (One-Stop Partner)(virtual communication) 233 12th Street, Suite #100 B<br>Columbus, GA 31901<br>(706) 649-7411 | Programs authorized under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act.<br>Services are as follows: Career Counseling, Assessments<br>Job Development, Case Management, Training Workshops<br>Accessibility |
| Department of Family & Children Services Clay, Quitman, Randolph, and Stewart Counties<br><br>Family Connections<br>LCWDB | 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.<br><br>Oversight of Itinerant 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. |

## *One Stop and Affiliate Sites and Services*
## *Middle Flint*

| Lead Partner/One Stop Operator and Other Partners | Major Services Provided by Each Partner |
|---|---|
| Adult Education and Literacy<br>South Georgia Technical College<br>Central Georgia Technical College | Adult Basic Education Literacy / GED Preparation Education<br>English Second Language<br>Integrated Education & Training<br>Workplace Preparation Activities |
| Wagner Peyser - TCSG | Employment Services<br>Employer Services<br>Job Referrals<br>Assessments<br>Job Search Assistance<br>Labor Market Information<br>Resume Preparation<br>Workshops<br>Referral to community services |
| GDOL<br>120 West Church Street<br>Americus, GA 31709<br>229-931-2520 | Veterans Services<br>Unemployment Insurance<br>Migrant Seasonal Farm Worker<br>TOP Step and Federal Bonding |

| | |
|---|---|
| Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency | Career Counseling<br>Assessments<br>Job Development<br>Case Management<br>Training Workshops<br>Accessibility |
| River Valley Regional Commission<br>WIOA Administrator<br>228 West Lamar Street<br>Americus, GA 31709 | WIOA Administrative Entity and Grant Recipient<br>Program Oversight and Management<br>Labor Market Information |
| Eckerd Connects / Paxen Inc.<br>119 Habitat Street, Suite A1S<br>Americus, GA 31709<br>(229) 931-8990 | WIOA Outreach & Recruitment<br>Eligibility Determination<br>Assessments<br>GED Basic Skills Remediation<br>Work Experience<br>Job Search Assistance<br>Work Readiness Training<br>Financial Literacy<br>Follow-Up Services<br>Referral to post-secondary education<br>Resume Preparation<br>Referral to community resources<br>Labor Market Information<br>Supportive Services<br>Career Counseling and On-The-Job Training |
| South Georgia Technical College<br>900 S Georgia Tech Pkwy<br>Americus, GA 31709<br>(229) 931-2553 | Admissions information<br>Occupational Skills Prep<br>Adult Literacy/ESL<br>WIOA Eligibility Determination<br>Assessments<br>Case Management<br>Job Search Assistance<br>Referrals to Community Resources |

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

Lower Chattahoochee

Effective July 2026, the Lower Chattahoochee Workforce Development Board designated the private provider IN THE DOOR as the designated One Stop Operator. IN THE DOOR operates the One-Stop Services at the GDOL Columbus Career Center location. The Lower Chattahoochee Workforce Board designates the GDOL Columbus Career Center as the Lower Chattahoochee Area's comprehensive site. A competitive bid process is utilized through a Request for Proposals (RFP) procurement process to select the Comprehensive One-Stop Operator.

Submitted proposals were reviewed and evaluated to determine if the proposer has the capacity to meet the proposal requirements. Cost and price analysis are included as part of the review and evaluation process.

Middle Flint

Effective July 1, 2025, Eckerd Connects has served as the One Stop Coordinator/Operator. Eckerd One Stop Coordinator staff will be co-located on a part-time basis at the GDOL Americus Career Center location. A competitive bid process was utilized through a Request for Proposals (RFP) process every four years to select the Comprehensive One Stop operator. Submitted proposals was reviewed and evaluated to determine if the proposer has the capacity to meet the proposal requirements. A cost and price analysis are included as part of the review and evaluation process. GDOL Americus Career Center is the designated comprehensive One Stop location for the local area.

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

A Request for Proposal (RFP) is solicited on a three-year bid cycle (Lower Chattahoochee) and a four-year bid cycle (Middle Flint). Marketing research and cost/price analysis comparisons were made as part of the process of selection and award of contract for the One Stop Operator services.

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

Both local boards use a competitive 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.

### Lower Chattahoochee

Advertisements are distributed in the local legal organs. The RFPs are reviewed by a board committee, which then makes a recommendation to the full board. The local boards then make their decision on service providers. This process is uniform under federal guidelines, with local agency guidance to adhere to as outlined below.

The Columbus Consolidated Government Job Training Division, as the fiscal and procurement agent for the Lower Chattahoochee Workforce Development Board, releases a Request for Proposals (RFP). Public Notices are advertised in the local area's legal sections before the release 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 number of WIOA eligible participants to be served, the amount of the total funding to be awarded, the contractual period, and the release date and submission deadline of proposals. Programs funded because 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 is held two weeks after the release date and is the only time questions concerning the content and preparation of a proposal are answered. A complete set of minutes of the Bidders Conference, in addition to the Q and A, is made 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 are reviewed and ranked using the criteria outlined in the solicitation package. (During the determination of Responsiveness, no evaluation of the proposal content occurs. The reviewer only checks whether 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 any additional documentation requested and the successful completion of contract negotiations and contract completion.

### Middle Flint

The Middle Flint Workforce Development Board uses 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.

A bidder's conference will be held to answer questions or provide clarification. Submitted Proposals are reviewed and evaluated based on the specified criteria, for cost 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.

## 8. EEO and Grievance Procedures

### Grievances and Complaint Resolutions

Established policies and procedures regarding grievance and complaint resolution 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 E0/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 Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), State and Federal policies. 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 by 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 before 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 Opportunity 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, Columbus City Hall Bldg., Job Training Division, Post Office Box 1340, 1111 1st Avenue (2nd floor), Suite 2145, Columbus, Georgia 31902-1340, Attention: E.O. Officer.

Local Resolution: A 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. The 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 the 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 complaint 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, Attention Director, Civil Rights Center, US Department of Labor, 200 Constitution Avenue NW, Room N-4123, Washington, DC 20210, for processing. Such an appeal must be filed within thirty (30) days of receipt of the adverse decision, or within ninety (90) days of the original filing.

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

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

For the Lower Chattahoochee Area 14 WIOA, you may contact Mrs. Kristie George, WIOA EO Officer, at (706)225-3990; or 1-800-255-0056 (Hearing impaired), 1-877-819-6348 (English as a second language).

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).

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 of discrimination based on a 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 Lower Chattahoochee WIOA, you may contact Mrs. Kristie George, WIOA EO Officer, at (706)225-3992, or 1-800-255-0056 (Hearing impaired), or by email at jobtraining@columbusga.org. The WDA-14 EO Officer is located at the Georgia Department of Labor Columbus Career Center, 700 Veterans Parkway, Columbus, Georgia 31902.

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. The WDA-15 EO Officer is located at the River Valley Regional Commission – Americus Office, 228 West Lamar Street, Americus, Georgia 31709.

# Local Boards and Plan Development:

### *1. Local Boards*

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

Lower Chattahoochee

The Lower Chattahoochee Workforce Board (LCWDB or Board) is responsible for ensuring that Workforce Development Area Fourteen has a robust system that is comprehensive, effective, responsive, and customer-focused. The Board is composed of member representation from a cross-section of organizations within its workforce area, including 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 a 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.

## Middle Flint

The Middle Flint Workforce Development Board is responsible for ensuring that Workforce Area 15 has 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 their 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 Innovation and Opportunity 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.

***a. Describe how local board members are identified and appointed. Include a description of how the nomination process occurs for adult education and labor representatives. (20 CFR § 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. 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. Describe the area's new member orientation process for board members.***

Upon joining the local WDB, all new members must complete an orientation program. These onboarding sessions are held as needed, either individually or in groups. They provide a thorough introduction to the Board's strategic objectives and WIOA requirements. Members receive essential governance materials, including Board By-Laws, meeting protocols, and an overview of local WIOA services and workforce activities.

***c. 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 (WDBs) include members from the local/region economic development agencies. These members keep the WIOA staff and WDB updated on economic development activities in the local area. WDB meetings regularly include an information-sharing segment provided by economic development representatives on current or upcoming activities such as new business/industry recruitment, job fairs, business expansions, employer needs identified, etc., within the local areas. Information on WIOA and partners' services may also be included as resources for business prospects or existing business and industry.

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

Both Local Workforce Development Boards (WDBs) maintain informed membership through a structured, multi-channel communication strategy that extends beyond seasonal meetings. This ensures board members remain subject-matter experts on local labor market trends and WIOA regulations through distribution of data highlighting local performance metrics, economic indicators, and workforce system successes. 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 allow information sharing and networking opportunities.

### *2. Local Board Committees*

***Provide a description of board committees and their functions. If committees have not been utilized, provide a description of why.***

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 promptly, which would affect the administration and operation of the WIOA system that includes services, activities, and programs administered in accordance with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity 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.

ADMINISTRATIVE AND PROGRAMMATIC OVERSIGHT AND COMPLIANCE (APOC) COMMITTEE:

Members of the APOC Committee represent a cross-section of members of the Board. In coordination with the Program Administrator, the committee is responsible for reviewing employment and training needs in the area, determining population target groups for the area, overseeing workforce systems functions, and coordinating with the Program Administrator staff in preparing program plan(s) as required. The committee is further responsible for reviewing solicitation applications submitted by potential service providers within the one-stop

system and making recommendations regarding the provision of services in accordance with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2013. This committee is also responsible for overseeing program activities and internal and external operations of the Workforce Development System that decrease 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 on behalf of the LCWDB at the next full board meeting for formal confirmation by 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 make 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 on behalf of the LCWDB at the next full board meeting for formal confirmation by 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 on behalf of the LCWDB at the next full board meeting for formal confirmation by 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 for the youth population. The Youth Committee is composed of local workforce members with specialized expertise in youth programming, 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 for 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, when required, the Board's Executive Committee

Middle Flint WDB

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 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. The 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.

Board Support Staff

As of the 2024-2028 WIOA Plan development, there have been no changes to the Workforce Development Board staff or administering entity. The Lower Chattahoochee Board (LCWDB) serves as the WIOA administrative entity on behalf of the Columbus Consolidated Government (grant recipient) and the Local Elected Officials from the eight-county area, and on behalf of the Middle Flint Workforce Development Board (WDB), River Valley Regional Commission (RVRC), serves as the WIOA administrative entity and WIOA grant recipient. Both have extensive knowledge and a history of serving as the JTPA/WIA and WIOA administrative entities and fiscal grant agents for more than 35 years. In this capacity, they employ staff to administer the WIOA services in the local areas. WIOA staff is the support for the governing workforce development boards. WIOA staff work with local workforce boards to administer and operate WIOA services in the local areas.

## 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 by which the local board provides a public comment period prior to the submission of the plan to solicit input on the development of the plan.***

Lower Chattahoochee

The Lower Chattahoochee Local Workforce Plan was developed following guidance issued by the State TCSG Office of Workforce Development and review of the Georgia State WIOA Plan. The Local Plan was updated accordingly as required. WIOA staff reviewed the draft State Workforce Plan for guidance on development of local and regional plans. Required partners were notified of the availability of the State Plan and encouraged to review the plan for guidance in developing and submitting their agency's activities, services, and any other pertinent information to be included in local/regional plans. Labor Market Information (LMI) data from the Georgia Department of Labor website, Lightcast data, Census Bureau data, etc. were collected and utilized in the development of the local/regional plan. The WDB members will review and approve Lower Chattahoochee's Local Plan.

Process to provide a comment period

Upon approval of the Local Plan, a copy of the Plan will be posted on the City of Columbus website http://www.columbusga.gov/jtd for a 30-day public comment period. Any comments received during the public comment period will be included in the Plan upon submission to the State Workforce Office.

Changes to Policies

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

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. The Local Plan was updated as required. The Workforce Development Board and/or Executive Committee will review and approve the developed Middle Flint Area local WIOA Plan.

Once the local Middle Flint WIOA Plan is approved by the WDB and/or WDB Executive Committee, the local WIOA Plan will be posted for a 30-day public comment period. The 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, Census Bureau, local partners' contributions, etc. were collected and utilized in the development of the local WIOA Plan.

#### Process to provide a comment period

Upon approval of the WIOA Plan, a copy of the WIOA Plan will be posted on the RVRC website for a 30-day 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.

#### Changes to Policies

Middle Flint policies are developed and updated for compliance with federal and state policies and requirements. As of the 2026 Plan update, no changes to policies have been made in the attachments.

## Service Delivery and Training

### 1. Serving Disconnected and Underemployed Workers

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

Lower Chattahoochee

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

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

The LWDB is working to implement new strategies to engage, serve, and connect these individuals to employment, educational, and/or training opportunities by strengthening business engagement, retention, and expansion efforts. The Lower Chattahoochee Job Training Division is partnering with Ft. Benning's education center and Columbus State University to launch a Military Spouse Career Accelerator (MSCA) Fast-Track Pilot Program to help military spouses transition into high-demand careers. In addition, the Job Training Division is expanding its partnership with Columbus Technical College's COL Ralph Puckett Workforce Development Center, a purpose-built, student- and employer-centered hub that connects veterans, service members, military families, and the broader Columbus Community to education, credentials, and direct employment pathways. The Puckett Center is aligned with Georgia's statewide VECTR network, which delivers flexible training, industry-driven programs, and wrap-around support that shorten the path from learning to meaningful work. By partnering with employers from the outset and focusing on high-demand, high-wage careers, the Center strengthens the regional workforce, retains military talent in the Chattahoochee Valley, and serves as a welcoming front door to opportunity for all who seek to learn, serve, and succeed. The Lower Chattahoochee Area maintains an up-to-date list of key priorities that enhance the area's economic competitiveness to ensure alignment between workforce supply and demand by resource sharing in-demand occupations, evolving skill requirements, and available training programs. The Lower Chattahoochee Area boosts awareness of career and employment

opportunities in the service delivery area for all educational levels and provides a continuous communication and talent pipeline for active engagement. Deploying the Mobile Career Unit weekly to Chattahoochee, Harris, Stewart, Randolph, Quitman, Clay, Talbot, and Muscogee counties, creating a continuous visitation schedule to establish consistent service delivery within the service delivery area, will re-energize the area by providing job training, computer access, and employment services directly to local communities. In addition, the Lower Chattahoochee Area is expanding Business Services in the service delivery area, offering On-the-Job Training (OJT), Work Experience (WEX), and Incumbent Worker (IWT) opportunities by developing partnerships with area employers and actively engaging them in Quarterly Employer Roundtables to bring business leaders and human resources professionals together to exchange best practices and collaborate on industry solutions.

## Middle Flint

The Middle Flint area will have an awareness of Special populations assistance. Middle Flint will assist customers with identifying the types of organizations that can address unique needs (i.e., food banks, shelters and housing assistance, childcare, clothing, physical and mental health assistance, etc.) Middle Flint currently does not have mobile units available in the Area. WIOA staff and service providers will continue to travel throughout the area to continue to better serve customers who have these unique situations. Each county in the Area has a library and public housing. Several Technical Colleges have smaller campuses that are located throughout the Local Area. The Middle Flint area will continue to work with strategic populations to increase access points to individuals and businesses in remote areas. The Middle Flint goal is to assist the State in enhancing the workforce system's ability to serve rural Georgia and increase statewide prosperity.

WIOA Staff/Providers Staff participate in weekly workshops sponsored by Georgia Department of Labor Americus Career Center for Unemployment Insurance (UI) claimants. Staff provide information on WIOA educational and training services that are available in the local area. Partner agencies' services information is also made available during the workshops. Transportation is a critical barrier that impacts many individuals when seeking employment and/or training opportunities. The local area does not have mass transit service available and limited ride sharing resources such as Uber, Lyft, taxi service etc. There is some limited available in some counties for private transit services, but these services have limited travel routes, charge fees, and priority for travel is given to medical transit appointments.

The Middle Flint Workforce Development Board makes available supportive services to WIOA enrolled participants to assist them with funds that help with the cost of their transportation to participants in WIOA

funded training services. Job search assistance and resume' development is available through the comprehensive One Stop center to help the long-term unemployed, under-employed, and unemployed individuals seeking employment opportunities. WIOA participants also receive job search assistance, resume development, career exploration, and referrals as part of their educational and training services. Georgia Department of Labor staff provide workshops on interviewing, resume development, soft skills training, dress for success, etc. to individuals who need assistance with entering or returning to employment. WorkSource GA portal is also a resource to help job seekers with resume development, job search assistance, labor market information etc. for those registering for this service.

## 2. 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 credential.***

Lower Chattahoochee

The Lower Chattahoochee Workforce Development Area 14 Local Workforce Development Board (LWDB), will use the WorkSource Georgia one-stop delivery system to reduce barriers, strengthen coordination among workforce partners, and ensure that eligible individuals—particularly individuals with barriers to employment—have meaningful access to services that lead to sustainable employment, career advancement, and economic self-sufficiency.

The Local Board will work collaboratively with WIOA core program partners, including Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs; Wagner-Peyser employment services; Adult Education and literacy providers; Vocational Rehabilitation; and other required one-stop partners. Through the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), infrastructure and resource-sharing arrangements, partner meetings, referral processes, and integrated service delivery, the Local Board will promote a coordinated system in which individuals can access appropriate services regardless of the program through which they initially enter the workforce system. The Lower Chattahoochee Area will prioritize outreach, recruitment, assessment, and service strategies designed to reach individuals who face significant barriers to employment. These

populations may include individuals with disabilities, individuals with low levels of literacy or educational attainment, individuals who are English language learners, economically disadvantaged individuals, justice-involved individuals, veterans and eligible spouses, individuals experiencing homelessness or housing instability, individuals with limited work experience, long-term unemployed individuals, and individuals with transportation, childcare, or other barriers that interfere with participation in employment and training. The Local Board will facilitate co-enrollment among WIOA core programs and other partner programs when doing so is appropriate and beneficial to the participant. Co-enrollment will be based on individual needs, eligibility, program requirements, and the services necessary to achieve the participant's employment and career objectives.

The Lower Chattahoochee Area staff and partner agencies will coordinate assessments, referrals, case management, and employment and training services to minimize duplication and improve continuity of services. When an individual can benefit from services provided by more than one program, staff will work collaboratively to establish a coordinated service strategy rather than requiring the participant to navigate multiple disconnected systems. The Lower Chattahoochee Area Local Board will encourage the development of consistent referral protocols, shared communication practices, cross-training among partner staff, and coordinated case-management processes, while maintaining compliance with applicable confidentiality, eligibility, data-sharing, and program-specific requirements. Co-enrollment will be used strategically to leverage available resources and provide participants with a more comprehensive package of services.

### Middle Flint

The local Middle Flint WDB, staff, and partners will work toward expanding access to services for eligible individuals and strive to provide a pipeline of skilled workers to meet the needs of area businesses and employers. Efforts to improve basic education literacy levels and to provide training opportunities that increase skills levels and employability will help attract new business and industry to the local area. One Stop Partners will hold meetings to identify needs and accessibility options, and to develop strategies to expand outreach and recruitment efforts in the community. An important part of expanding access to services is to develop an effective referral process and cross-training among partners' staff to ensure individuals are directed to the appropriate service or partner agency for assistance.

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 certification enhances employment, retention in employment, and increases in wages. 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, enter employment, and retain long-term employment.

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

Soft skills training is a locally identified need and embedded in various core and intensive training services available in the local area.

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

The Lower Chattahoochee Area's local development board approach to expanding access to short-term, industry-recognized credentials and stackable training pathways that allow participants to obtain marketable skills quickly, gain employment, and advance education and earnings over time is to connect WIOA-funded training investments directly to employer demand, regional labor-market conditions, and career opportunities that can lead to economic self-sufficiency. The local board will work with WorkSource Georgia, WIOA core partners, technical colleges, approved eligible training providers, industry associations, and community partners to identify training opportunities that provide a clear return on investment for both participants and employers. An example of such access is Columbus Technical College's Puckett Center, which offers the SkillBridge program as an opportunity for our active-duty service members to gain valuable employer-aligned, accelerated training pathways within their final 180 days of service. Eligible participants earn college credit and industry-recognized credentials while preparing for immediate employment in high-demand career fields.

Both local area boards are expanding access to short-term, industry-recognized credentials and stackable training pathways by aligning Individual Training Accounts, Work Experience, On-the-Job Training, adult education, and Technical College partnerships around occupations that offer stronger wages and clearer opportunities for advancement. Rather than requiring participants to commit immediately to long programs, the local area supports entry through shorter training options that can lead to recognized certificates, technical certificates of credit, licensure, or other industry-valued credentials tied to local demand occupations. This approach helps more participants, including adults with barriers to employment, enter training quickly, gain a marketable credential, and move into employment with the option to continue their education over time. South Georgia Technical College and the wider Technical College System of Georgia offer short-term programs and credit-bearing pathways in fields that are relevant to the Middle Flint area.

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

Pathways are structured to allow participants to enter employment and continue building skills over time by combining short-term milestones with longer-term advancement options. In the Middle Flint area, this can include pathways such as Certified Nursing Assistant or patient care preparation leading into Practical Nursing and, over time, higher-level nursing or allied health advancement; Commercial Truck Driving leading into logistics, warehousing, dispatch, or transportation supervision; Welding and Joining Technology leading into more advanced manufacturing, maintenance, or fabrication roles; and industrial, electrical, HVAC, or heavy equipment maintenance training that supports progression into higher-skill technician positions with local manufacturers and utilities. These examples reflect the local employer base, regional demand sectors, and available college programming. South Georgia Technical College highlights nursing, electrical line worker, and employer-connected technical training, while statewide HOPE Career Grant support helps expand tuition-free access to high-demand fields such as Commercial Truck Driving, Practical Nursing, Industrial Maintenance,

Health Science, Precision Manufacturing, and Welding and Joining Technology. In practice, the local area uses IEPs, labor market information, employer referrals, and case management to help participants map the next credential or work-based learning step after entering employment, so advancement remains part of the plan rather than an afterthought.

## 3. 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 collaborate and coordinate with their Service Providers to provide a wide array of services to adults and dislocated workers. Services available include, but are 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 available job openings, new business openings or existing business expansions may indicate those occupational areas are in-demand.

Additionally, 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 additional employees 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 offered 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.

### 4. 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 layoff events that happen in the local areas. 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 layoff information to the State Rapid Response staff. Local partners' staff can provide information and make referrals on available local area services, training information, assist with UI claims filing, participate in employee layoff informational sessions if held, make referrals to other employers in the local area that are hiring, etc.

## 5. Youth Services

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

### Year-Round Work Experience

Lower Chattahoochee 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

The 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 and 24, who will receive skills necessary to obtain unsubsidized employment.

### Individual Training Accounts

The Local Workforce Board has elected to use Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) for Older Youth as prescribed in the following adopted policy:

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

The youth meet the policy guidelines outlined in the ITA Policy and Procedures, including applying 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 it 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. The youth must have completed all their assigned WIOA youth services before being deemed suitable/eligible for an older youth ITA. The youth must have undergone career counseling, including career assessments, to ensure he or she makes an informed choice.

The youth must be informed of:

a. The list of approved providers that offer training in his or her chosen career.
b. The program performance of the providers that offer such training; and

c. The financial resources that will be required are available to assist in paying for the cost of the training.
d. 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.
e. 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.
f. 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.
g. Youth must receive a minimum of twelve months follow-up services upon completion of training.

## Middle Flint

### Youth Work Experience

The Middle Flint area provides Work Experience (WEX) for eligible youth enrolled in WIOA services. Youth are paid wages and provided Worker's Compensation Insurance coverage for the designated WEX training period. Local area businesses 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 make 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 are to ensure a good WEX job match so the participant develops a knowledge of employment and enhances skills that can be carried forward with future employment opportunities.

### GED Remediation

The Middle Flint area has a need for improvement in Youth basic skills literacy, and high school dropout rates. The local area also has a high number of pregnant/parenting youth, single-parent households, families living

in poverty, reliance on 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 who were 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 WBD has successfully operated this Youth services training model from 2006 to the present. Many Youth participants have successfully obtained their GED credential and then moved on to attend post-secondary education or obtain employment. The Middle Flint area has successfully met or exceeded state/federal WIOA Youth performance measures outcomes.

### In-School Youth Services

Beginning in July 2021, the Middle Flint area began implementing Youth In-School (ISY) services with several county school districts. ISY services include, but are not limited to; career pathways, mentoring/tutoring, career exploration, work experience, assistance with applying to college/universities, and assistance with financial aid applications, etc. Youth WIOA Service Providers will work with Local Area high schools to identify potential eligible youth in need of ISY services.

### Individual Training Accounts

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

***Include a description of the alignment and coordination, as appropriate, between the Title I Youth program, Job Corps centers in the State, Title II AEFLA program, and Title IV VR program for youth who could be co-enrolled in programs and served by program staff who are co-located in the One-Stops.***

The local areas also work to align the Title I Youth program with Title II Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) services, Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services, and Job Corps opportunities for youth who may benefit from co-enrollment or coordinated referrals. Out-of-school youth who need a high school equivalency, basic skills remediation, English language support, or integrated education and training may be jointly served by WIOA Youth and local adult education providers such as South Georgia Technical College and

Central Georgia Technical College, while youth with disabilities may also be connected to the Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency for Pre-Employment Transition Services, transition counseling, work-based learning, and, when appropriate, an Individualized Plan for Employment. Through the One-Stop system, co-located or regularly connected staff coordinate referrals, share information as permitted, avoid duplication of services, and align case management so that youth can move more smoothly between academic remediation, career exploration, work readiness, training, and employment.

For youth who would benefit from a more intensive residential training model, the local area may also refer eligible participants to Job Corps or other available youth training options, consistent with current state guidance and program availability. This coordinated approach helps ensure that youth with multiple barriers can access the combined strengths of workforce, education, disability, and supportive service systems rather than being served in isolation.

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

## 6. Implementation of 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.***

Lower Chattahoochee

Promoting On-the-Job Training (OJT)

Lower Chattahoochee, 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 the 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 a case-by-case basis.

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 Apprenticeship

Lower Chattahoochee does not currently have Registered Apprenticeships available in the local area. Like the Middle Flint area, Lower Chattahoochee 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.

## Middle Flint

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

The Middle Flint Area has a long history (35 + years) of offering work-based learning initiatives through On-The-Job Training (OJT) services. While the OJT enrollment numbers are smaller than 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 in 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 those occupational areas. OJT Career Facilitators must build a vast knowledge base of the local employers and the types of occupational jobs of the employers. The goal for OJT is to place the participant with an employer that offers occupations within the participant's interest area(s). OJT participant(s) develop a resume' that documents their education, skill 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 the 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 employer's training cost. OJT employer reimbursement is currently 50% of wages paid during the designated training period.

### Work Experience

The Middle Flint Area also utilizes Work Experience (WEX) as a work-based learning service. WIOA participants interested in participating in 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 make the effort to locate worksites, whenever possible, within the occupational area in which the participant has demonstrated an interest. The Work Experience (WEX) activity has resulted in participants becoming interested in pursuing post-secondary educational opportunities and/or obtaining permanent employment in the occupational area.

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 to help the employer to remain competitive. Incumbent workers will be served on a case-by-case basis.

Middle Flint provided Incumbent Worker Training (IWT) with a local employer in 2017 – 2018.

WIOA funding cuts over the past years have impacted the local areas' ability to provide Incumbent Worker Training (IWT) services. Currently, in 2024, 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.

***Describe the LWDB's current and planned investments to expand Registered Apprenticeships in the local area. Include priority occupations and industries for new or expanded apprenticeship programs; partnerships with employers, sponsors, industry intermediaries, and technical colleges to develop or adopt program standards; and how the LWDB is simplifying pathways for employers to launch or expand apprenticeship programs.***

Currently, the Lower Chattahoochee and the Middle Flint local areas have no Registered Apprenticeships. However, Columbus Technical College is working to develop them 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.

***Describe how the local workforce system is building career pathways that begin with pre-apprenticeship or early career exposure (including for in-school youth) and connect to Registered Apprenticeship or other work-based***

***learning opportunities. How are these pathways coordinated with local school districts, CTE programs, and postsecondary institutions?***

Currently, the Lower Chattahoochee and the Middle Flint local areas have no Registered Apprenticeships. However, Columbus Technical College is working to develop them 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.

***Beyond Registered Apprenticeships, describe the full spectrum of work-based learning opportunities the board is investing in – including OJT, IWT, transitional jobs, and internships. How does the LWDB ensure these investments lead directly to employment or advancement in high-wage occupations? Describe any employer commitments (i.e., job guarantees, interview guarantees, etc.) associated with these investments.***

The Middle Flint local area is rural and non-metropolitan, consisting mainly of small businesses and industrial employers that have less than 100 employees. The area does have a few businesses which employ more than 100 employees. These large-size employers are manufacturing occupations that pay higher wages. Often, in many of the more rural areas, the local Board of Education will be the largest employer for that county. The local WIOA does provide On-The-Job Training (OJT) services with employers that are hiring and willing to participate with OJT services. As many of the businesses are considered smaller businesses, there are very limited credentials that can be attained for OJT participants. The OJT Service Provider provides outreach and recruitment with local area employers that are hiring. Many local area businesses chose to use temporary staffing agencies for their employment needs, which has had an impact on local area OJT services.

Currently, there are no known pre-apprenticeship/apprenticeship services available in the local area. As many of the local area businesses/industry are smaller size employers, there will be limited apprenticeship/pre-apprenticeship opportunities that will potentially be available in the local area. The Middle Flint area would be receptive to working with local area employers who develop pre-apprenticeship/apprenticeship opportunities as they become available.

WIOA does have ITA training funds that would be available through the local Technical College that could be utilized to assist with the training portion of the apprenticeship. Due to the WIOA funding allocation cuts that Georgia has been dealing with over the past nine years, the local area does not currently have sufficient funding to pursue IWT, transitional jobs or internships at this time. The local area would be willing to pursue these opportunities if WIOA funding allocations were to increase and the local area had an identified need.

OJT service is the only activity which has some employer commitment in respect that if the OJT participant

trainee successfully completes the OJT training services, the employers will retain them in employment upon completion of the training period. The local ITA training services at South Georgia Technical College has employer connections in and surrounding areas that assist their graduates with obtaining job interviews, internship opportunities, etc.

## 7. 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.***

Both Local Areas offer Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) training services to eligible Adults, Dislocated Workers, and Youth who need educational or occupational skills training available under an ITA.

ITA training is available through approved Eligible Training Providers. Programs 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, and 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 cost limits. Training should also lead to a self-sufficient wage. Lower Chattahoochee and Middle Flint have two approved Eligible Training Providers located at Columbus Technical College and South Georgia Technical College.

WIOA financial assistance for ITA training includes assistance with tuition related fees, books, required training supplies, tools, uniforms, specialty shoes, and support services. Financial aid funds available through the Training Provider and WIOA funds can be combined to cover the costs associated with training.

The Administrator accepts and reviews eligible provider applications throughout the year. The local Administrator maintains a Bidder List that contains all prospective bidders who have requested to receive any and/or all solicitations for the provision of programs/services under WIOA proposed by the local Board. An open solicitation is posted on agency websites and other media outlets.

The local Boards evaluate providers and proposed training programs for initial eligibility, based on (at a minimum) criteria of proven effectiveness, local employer/industry demand, accreditation, and customer accessibility. The evaluation includes an evaluation of program content, verification of performance information, outcomes, and costs, etc. A comparison of local services and a cost analysis will be conducted,

including an evaluation of state performance against local measures. Where adequate information is not provided, letters will be forwarded to providers for additional information or documentation. Updated applications may be reviewed upon submission of additional information.

The Administrator will prepare summary reports on the evaluation of training provider applications and submit them 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 and must deliver results and provide accurate information to retain their 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 the information being utilized is current. Any changes are presented to the LWIB for approval. A quarterly monitoring process of eligible providers will be conducted similar to the process utilized for WIOA Funded Contracted Services to ensure that providers are meeting performance guidelines established.

Customer Accessibility to Individual Training Accounts (ITAs)

Customers, regardless of eligibility for program services, accessing the one stop system are informed of the full array of programs and services that are available. Customers are provided access or provided instruction material that allows access to the State eligible provider list. This is a list of all approved training providers and institutions in the State that have partnered to provide services to WIOA customers.

For the local workforce area, individual training accounts (ITAs) are issued only to eligible customers seeking WIOA assistance for occupational skills training. Customers, however, who are considered eligible for receipt of ITAs, must also be determined WIOA eligible for services; to be "in need of 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 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 documents shall be maintained in the participant file and in the Work Source Portal.

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

As part of the Middle Flint local area 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.

## 8. 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.***

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.

Middle Flint

The Middle Flint area has Entrepreneurial training materials that are available upon request by 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 from 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 and community meetings to stay informed of entrepreneurial activities and services in the community.

## 9. 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.***

Lower Chattahoochee

The Lower Chattahoochee Workforce Development Board (WDB) has members from the secondary and postsecondary 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 in a 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 study and trainings to a diverse population throughout the surrounding areas.

Columbus State University (CSU) is a four-year university that 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 its 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 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.

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 the post-secondary sector. 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 higher 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.

## 10. 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 determine the type of supportive services that will be available based on needs, funding availability, and approval by the Local WDBs. Supportive services offered by the local area must comply with the State and federal guidelines.

Lower Chattahoochee

The Lower Chattahoochee WIOA will follow policies based on its Supportive Services policy for the WDB. Two services 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 a 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 a copy of enrollment.

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

Exceptions:

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

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

## Middle Flint

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 help to prevent duplication of services.

Transportation in rural areas 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 of hours or pickup/drop-off points.

The Middle Flint WDB has approved supportive service benefits in the local area to assist individuals to 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 completed for each eligible participant that requests 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.

## 11. Coordination with Social Programs

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

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 through WIOA. Lower Chattahoochee maintains a great working relationship with the local DFCS office. In the past, Lower Chattahoochee's director served on committees for the agency, and we attended its welfare-to-work seminars.

Currently, we mainly work with them through One-Stop Partner Meetings. As for the referral process, DFCS refers its clients to our office for an initial assessment, and we determine the services an applicant is eligible to receive. Moreover, we also refer individuals to DFCS for food assistance. Intake and eligibility staff coordinate with local area DFCS offices for referrals and coordinate resources for customers.

Middle Flint

Middle Flint Area is a rural, poverty-stricken area that serves a large customer base that is largely dependent on Public Assistance benefits such as SNAP, TANF, and Medicaid etc. WIOA, as well as other Partners, give priority of service to individuals/family members that receive Public Assistance benefits. Middle Flint WDB has identified Public Assistance benefit recipients as targets 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 awarded 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 a large number of TANF recipients in the area. SNAP benefits are the most common type of Public Assistance benefits received in the local area.

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

## 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.).***

***What formal partnerships or MOUs are in place? How are shared goals, referral protocols, and co-enrollment processes established? Describe specific examples where cross-system alignment has improved outcomes for job seekers or employers. What challenges currently limit implementing such alignment?***

Lower Chattahoochee

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

Every individual entering the comprehensive center receives information with 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 to obtain employment, or employed, but have been determined by a one-stop representative to need intensive services 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, a 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, not all partners provide all the above services. However, through the 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 who 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.

## Middle Flint

The Middle Flint Area currently has an MOU in place. The MOU consists of the following Partners: Georgia Department of Labor (GDOL), Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation, Central Georgia Technical College- Adult Ed., South Gorgia Technical College-Adult Ed., Ed., South Georgia Technical College and SW Georgia YouthBuild. The MOU addresses the One Stop Comprehensive Agreement as well as services offered by Partners. The Middle Flint Area designated Comprehensive One Stop Center is the GDOL Americus Career Center, as well as other affiliate access sites in the local area are 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 by providing virtual services. Referrals are made between partner agencies as appropriate based on the identified needs of the customer. A customer who is receiving Unemployment Insurance benefits and is experiencing difficulties returning to employment can be referred by GDOL staff to WIOA services for assistance with a training service that can enhance their skills and abilities to re-enter employment.

## Provision of Core and Intensive Services through the One Stop System

Partners co-located in the comprehensive center both physically and electronically include Georgia Department of Labor, TCSG OWD Staff, Eckerd Connects, South Georgia Technical College, Central Georgia Technical College (Adult Ed), Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency and SWGA YouthBuild.

Collaborating with Technical Colleges as training providers and an educational institution for the 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 who entered the Comprehensive One Stop Center received information regarding the full array of services available. As part of Board policy, core and intensive services should be provided to youth, as well as adults and dislocated workers. It was not required that a customer be provided with all of the above services. However, the services provided should be based on an individualized assessment of the customer's needs.

## Training Services

Intensive Services will be provided by all partners in the One Stop center. Services are provided to all customers of the local workforce area that require significant assistance. Intensive Services are specifically designed for services provided to adults and dislocated workers who are:

- Unemployed and have been unable to obtain employment through core services, or determined by a One Stop representative to need more intensive services or intervention to obtain employment.
- Employed, but have been determined by a One Stop representative to need more intensive services to obtain or retain employment that allows for self-sufficiency.

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

- Job search, placement, and training targeting particular labor market needs.
- Job search, placement, and training targeting particular groups or populations.
- Comprehensive and specialized assessment of skill level and service needs such as diagnostic testing and use of other assessment tools.
- 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 the 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 pre-vocational 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.

In an ongoing effort to meet the skill needs of existing or new regional employers and to address the concerns of business leaders regarding the lack of soft skills, work readiness and work ethics of the current workforce, the Middle Flint Area 15 has tailored its work experience activities that occur during intensive services to adults and dislocated workers, as well as older and younger youth.

An expansion of WIOA assistance for short-term training in high demand occupations has been incorporated in its design in an effort to fill high growth and demand occupations, and to create a seamless career pathway 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, not all partners provide all of the above services. However, through involvement of business, organized labor, and the economic development community, as the local workforce development system evolves, the availability of these and other services will be improved as the system becomes more fully integrated into a comprehensive workforce development system.

## Target Population Served

Target populations served in the regional WIOA area include:

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

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

Career Services

- Outreach, intake, and 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 the areas

Training Services

- Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) for individuals 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 up to 50% (Area 14) to 75% levels (Area 15).
- 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 to encourage employment retention.
- Work Experience (WE) provides work-based learning for a designated period of time to receive hands-on employment knowledge and experience.
- Follow-up services for 12 months following training.

***Describe how the LWDB is leveraging multiple funding streams – including WIOA Title I, Wagner-Peyser, Perkins V CTE, and other federal and state resources – in a coordinated or braided manner to maximize service delivery. What barriers currently limit funding integration, and what steps are being taken to address them?***

Region 8

The LWDBs coordinate WIOA Title I, Wagner-Peyser, Perkins V CTE, Adult Education, GVRA, and other federal, state, and local resources through the One-Stop system to expand access to career, training, and support services.

- WIOA Title I funds eligibility, case management, ITAs, OJT, Work Experience, GED/work readiness, and supportive services, while Wagner-Peyser provides core career services, labor exchange, and referrals that connect customers to additional programs.
- Perkins V CTE, technical college programs, Adult Education, and GVRA strengthen career pathways by supporting occupational training, basic skills remediation, disability-related supports, and employer-aligned credentials in high-demand sectors.
- Funding is used in a coordinated service model rather than fully blended fiscal braiding, with partners aligning services around customer needs while operating within separate funding rules, eligibility requirements, and administrative systems.
- Key barriers to fuller funding integration include rural geography, limited transportation, technology gaps, differing program requirements, separate administrative structures, and the limited formal inclusion of some partner programs such as SNAP and TANF.

To address these barriers, the LWDAs are providing cross-training, continued revisions of the referral systems, and employer and economic development partnerships to improve service coordination and access across the Local Area.

## 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.***

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 that 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.

Middle Flint

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 Work Source Georgia Portal 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.

Wagner-Peyser services include, but are not limited to, the following: business services, career guidance, job search/job placement services, testing facilities, assistance with Unemployment Insurance (UI) filing and claims review, various workshops, Rapid Response coordination, federal bonding, TOPPSTEPP for veterans and offenders, Veterans services, Work Opportunity Tax Credits, facility space for employers and/or partners, migrant seasonal farm workers, and referrals to WIOA and other partner services. Labor Market Information (LMI) is available through GDOL website. LMI provides a vast array of information on local, regional, and statewide labor statistics.

As of Program Year 2024 Eckerd Connects/Paxen serves as the One Stop Operator for the Middle Flint Area. Eckerd Connects/Paxen One Stop Operator location has facility space and access to computers, a conference room, electronic partner access, and internet availability that can accommodate use by core partner staff as needed.

## 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.***

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 through both the Literacy Alliance of Columbus as well as Columbus Tech. Columbus Tech Adult Education offers 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 help 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 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 the 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 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 collaborations to promote, support, and enhance local community literacy efforts. CLCP works to develop a network to coordinate business, faith-based groups, volunteers, 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, including the correctional facilities. In addition to WIOA, other core partners also refer individuals in need of 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 in the number of individuals with GED will promote economic growth and a pipeline of available workers eligible to apply for employment.

## 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 to, 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 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.

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

English as a Second Language (ESL) is offered to those individuals that need 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 collaboratives 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 of 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 in the number of individuals with GEDs will promote economic growth and a 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.

## 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 Columbus and Americus. GVRA remains active with office locations in Columbus and Albany areas. GVRA closed its operations 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 service

delivery. GVRA assists eligible individuals with permanent physical and mental impairments that interfere with employment.

The GVRA team includes Certified Rehabilitation Counselors, Counselor Assistants, 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 phone.

GVRA provides a wide range of services to help individuals with disabilities prepare for meaningful work. Services are received, arranged for, and provided based on an individual's needs. The 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 a qualified pool of candidates for employment positions, jobsite coaching, helping employers identify the right solutions/accommodations for employees 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, Eligible Training Providers Lists and Use of Technology

### 1. 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 negotiate with the TCSG OWD staff for the WIOA Performance Measures. WIOA Staff reviews 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.

Lower Chattahoochee and RVRC WIOA staff, via conference calls with the TCSG OWD staff, will negotiate the Local Areas' 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 each of the Local Areas.

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

Both Lower Chattahoochee and RVRC WIOA staff review and track the local area quarterly WIOA performance reports to ensure the performance measures are aligned to the planned performance outcomes for their areas. These performance reports indicate the local areas are on track and meeting or exceeding the planned performance outcomes. Measures that are not on target for meeting 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 needed to improve the performance outcomes.

Chattahoochee and RVRC WIOA staff share Quarterly WIOA Performance Measure reports with their respective Workforce Development Boards (WDB) and CLEOs during the program year. A copy of the Quarterly Report is included in board members' agenda/meeting packets or provided digitally through electronic mail (email) for their information.

Annually, the State agency, TCSG OWD, allows the local delivery areas to re-negotiate their performance measure outcomes if needed. Lower Chattahoochee and Middle Flint utilize this option to tweak their objectives where appropriate based on Performance Measure reports.

Lower Chattahoochee and Middle Flint Areas have successful histories of meeting or exceeding local area performance measure outcomes.

## Eligible Training Providers List

Lower Chattahoochee and Middle Flint WDBs review and evaluate the performance of local Eligible Training Providers based on their performance achievements. Both Lower Chattahoochee and Middle Flint have several Eligible Training Providers located in their areas. They provide educational/occupational training services under the Individual Training Account (ITA) system and services.

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 are provided by the Eligible Training Provider (ETP). In previous monitoring surveys, the WIOA participants were very satisfied with the services provided by the Eligible Training Providers.

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

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

Lower Chattahoochee's local policy states that vendors seeking to provide services to clients in our local workforce area must apply locally for the provision of services to residents in the Lower Chattahoochee Area (Area 14). An approved program is available to all Georgia WDB's and cooperative states. Upon approval of the local Board, the WIOA Administrator shall enter into a Memorandum of Agreement (Master Agreement) with the vendor to serve. The Master Agreement outlines the performance expectations, whereas the Vendor's initial customer referrals approved by the WIOA Administrator to the Vendor's training programs will be limited to five (5) WIOA customers per program year (July 1st through June 30th). Once the training agency has enrolled the initial limit approved by the WIOA Administrator, no additional WIOA referrals will be made until a program evaluation has been completed by the WIOA Administrator and that based upon the evaluation, the Vendor has been deemed in compliance with the terms of their agreement and that the required placement and performance outcome goals, to include retention are achieved for the customers completing the training. Additional referrals (beyond the initial 5) during a program year shall be contingent upon the Vendor's performance outcomes, funds availability, and at the discretion of the WIOA Administrator.

All Eligible Training Providers are now required to report on all students who participate in a program of study approved by TCSG, OWD, and listed on the State ETPL, including students who are not WIOA participants. This data will be used for approval of training courses in the future.

## 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.***

Lower Chattahoochee

Lower Chattahoochee Workforce Development Board (WDB) understands that the one-stop delivery system is the cornerstone of the comprehensive approach to the improvement of the workforce. They further understand that they must know what skills, motivations, growth potential, and productivity levels already exist in their workforce so they can make informed decisions that drive the best possible results for their local and regional one-stop systems. The WDB requires reliable feedback that helps them understand the one-

stop's current performance and the skills needed to grow. Performance management is key to mitigating the impact of potential talent loss, assessing the growth potential of talent that demonstrates potential for advancement, and aligning employees' career goals with employers' objectives. IN THE DOOR, LLC was selected as Lower Chattahoochee (Area-14), One Stop Operator through a competitive bid process. The One-Stop Partner Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) identifies roles and responsibilities for One-Stop partners.

### Middle Flint

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

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

***What feedback mechanisms are in place between employers, training providers, partner programs, and the LWDB to enable continuous improvement? How has the LWDB demonstrated agility in responding to significant economic disruptions or emerging opportunities in the past two years?***

### Region 8

Monitoring and feedback: Both local areas receive operational feedback through the One-Stop Operator and routine monitoring, follow-up, and quality assurance surveys. The operator prepares reports on One-Stop activities, including referrals, career and job fairs, and community outreach events.

Training and continuous improvement: The LWDAs ensure the One-Stop Operator is properly trained so services are delivered effectively and continuously improved.

Coordination with employers and partners: Both the Lower Chattahoochee Workforce Board and the River Valley Regional Commission are members of local Chambers of Commerce and Development Authorities. Both boards also have members from Chambers of Commerce and Development Authorities who share information at local meetings on events or new businesses that may be coming to their areas. The region works closely with local employers and partners to help prevent significant economic disruptions. LWDAs are

often requested to provide labor market information, information on available WIOA training services, etc., to Chambers and Development Authorities as new or expanding businesses are looking at their communities.

Recertification: The LWDB requires the One-Stop Operator to be competitively procured every three years. LWDAs maximize emerging opportunities for past years through the Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) and Resource Sharing Agreements (RSA), which identify roles and responsibilities for partners. The Lower Chattahoochee Area's current One Stop Operator is IN THE DOOR, and the GDOL as their Comprehensive One Stop Site. The Middle Flint Area currently uses Eckerd Connects as the One Stop Operator and the GDOL as their Comprehensive One Stop Site. Monitoring of the One Stop Operator and One Stop sites is also conducted quarterly (local) and annually by WIOA administrative entities.

## 3. Eligible Training Provider (ETPL) System

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

***a. Provide a description of the public notification to prospective providers.***

***b. Provide a description of how the board(s) evaluates providers and proposed training programs for initial eligibility, based on (at a minimum) criteria of proven effectiveness, local employer/industry demand, accreditation and customer accessibility.***

***c. Provide a description of the formal appeals process for aggrieved ITA***

***Customers and providers of unapproved training programs.***

***d. Provide a description of the ongoing process used to update the data on the eligible providers list (exclusive of the state-conducted continued eligibility process).***

***e. Provide a description of any regional policies or agreements for ITAs or training providers.***

***f. Provide a description of the process to track and manage all ITA activity. g. Provide a description of local board policy on use of statewide eligible training provider list (including financial and duration limits, out-of-area training, service to out-of-area customers, etc.).***

***h. Provide a description of how registered apprenticeship programs are added to the ETPL.***

### 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

The local areas also utilize the state's Eligible Training Provider (ETP) policy for evaluating providers and proposed training programs. The LWDBs have established minimum criteria that a training provider must meet to be considered for inclusion on the Eligible Training Providers List (ETPL). Applications for consideration that meet the established criteria will be presented to the LWDBs for consideration and approval. Upon approval by the local WDB, the application will be submitted to the State Office of 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.

Aggrieved individuals who are ITA customers residing in the Lower Chattahoochee Area 14 should contact the Lower Chattahoochee Workforce Board WIOA Staff (Area 14), or residing in the Middle Flint Area 15 should contact the River Valley Regional Commission Workforce staff (Area 15). The individual may be requested to provide supporting documentation to support requests for training in an unapproved ITA program.

The local workforce areas have established a formal appeals process for aggrieved ITA customers and providers of unapproved training assistance or training programs. The local organizational policies and procedures and individual training accounts manuals which outline the process are provided to WIOA-eligible individuals during the WIOA intake process. Providers are provided with a copy of 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 grievance, then the customer will be required to follow the local area grievance procedures.

### d. Updating the eligible providers list

Both local areas conduct reviews for eligible providers operating in their Areas. Participant performance outcomes for successful training completion, entered employment outcomes, employment wages, credential attainment, and follow-up are compiled, reviewed, evaluated, and kept by each local area. Eligible providers and programs that make satisfactory performance achievements will continue to be maintained in the Eligible Training Providers List. Providers or programs of study that are not making satisfactory results may not be continued as eligible and may be deactivated or removed from the State Eligible Training Providers List. Changes to information such as costs, program additions, location changes, or other critical information will be forwarded to the State office once the provider has notified the local areas. The local areas will send any changes or information on local Eligible Training Providers data to the state office.

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 apply 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, a 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

Regional Policies or Agreements will be further discussed in the Regional WIOA Plan

### 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

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

### h. How registered apprenticeship programs are added to the ETPL

Local WDBs will review and approve registered apprenticeship programs for inclusion on the ETPL when there is an identified interest in the local area. As of 2026 Middle Flint is a rural area and currently has no known registered apprenticeship programs active in the area. Middle Flint WDB would be receptive and responsive to Registered Apprenticeship programs services being offered in the area as they become available.

## 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 provide service delivery. One Stop Center and affiliate sites have computers, 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 service delivery and everyday operational needs. Data systems provide valuable data that enable staff and customers to effectively plan, evaluate, and monitor service flows

and performance measures and outcomes. Technology allows customers, businesses, and partner agencies to make informed decisions by reviewing data provided by technology as critical tools.

In general, rural areas of the State have challenges with the availability and quality of internet services. Many rural areas have to rely upon digital subscriber line (DSL) 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 from being competitive in attracting new businesses and industry to this part of the State and limits expansion for existing businesses that require high-speed, quality internet services. Grants to communities in the Middle Flint and surrounding areas are providing broadband internet availability to all counties.

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

## State Initiatives and Vision:

### 1. State Branding

***Provide a description for how the area has adopted and will continue to utilize the state brand.***

#### Connecting Talent with Opportunity through the provision of career services, education, and training

Lower Chattahoochee

Georgia's workforce development system is focused on Connecting Talent with Opportunity, aligning career services, education, and training. Lower Chattahoochee has adopted the WorkSource Lower Chattahoochee branding logo. Lower Chattahoochee has adopted the unified WorkSource Georgia state brand, producing branded outreach displays like banners and table covers, alongside professional collateral including pens, folders, and notepads. During outreach and recruitment, Lower Chattahoochee distributes informational materials with a strong focus on excellent customer service. This effort aligns with Georgia's employer-driven workforce system and supports and stimulates the State's economic growth. This collaboration and coordination ensure advancement towards Governor Kemp's goal to ensure that potential is not determined by zip code or county.

The state administration of the WIOA grant is well positioned within the Technical College System of Georgia (TSCG). The State's Adult Education and Carl Perkins Career and Technical Education Act grant funding are also administered in part by TCSG, which allows for better coordination with partner agencies and programs. This

also permits the workforce development system to establish a seamless flow of customers across programs and diverse areas of the state.

This planning document reflects the State's vision and goals to strengthen the workforce system's ability to align and coordinate among partners to best serve individuals and companies competing in today's and tomorrow's labor market.

Middle Flint

Georgia's workforce development system is focused on Connecting Talent with Opportunity through the provision of career services, education and training. Middle Flint has adopted the WorkSource Middle Flint branding logo. Middle Flint has purchased materials and utilized the WorkSource state brand through the use of banners, table covers and other materials such as pens, folders and notepads. Materials are given out during outreach and recruitment. WorkSource Middle Flint focuses on excellent customer service. Georgia's employer-driven workforce system supports and stimulates the State's economic growth. This collaboration and coordination ensure advancement towards Governor Kemp's goal to ensure that potential is not determined by zip code or county.

The state administration of the WIOA grant is well positioned within the Technical College System of Georgia (TSCG). The State's Adult Education and Carl Perkins Career and Technical Education Act grant funding are also administered in part by TCSG, which allows for better coordination with partner agencies and programs. This also permits the workforce development system to establish a seamless flow of customers across programs and diverse areas of the state.

This planning document reflects the State's vision and goals to strengthen the workplace system's ability to align and coordinate among partners to best serve individuals and companies competing in today's and tomorrow's labor market.

## 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 ones specified by state and federal policy.***

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

Priority for services will be given to all customers who are 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 individuals 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 meeting WIOA priority criteria.
- Third, veterans and eligible spouses who are not included in the WIOA priority group.
- Last, individuals outside the groups are 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 Disabled 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 Area Workforce Development Boards will approve all additional priorities of service target populations.

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

Policies for ensuring priority of service for covered persons (e.g., veterans and eligible spouses) and employment services for 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 Innovation and Opportunity Act, the local workforce area has identified priority level of services to 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 skills
- 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 training services using Workforce Development Act funds must meet the following guidelines:

1) Reside within the eight-county Middle Flint Area; and,
2) Have been determined eligible based on the income guidelines.

### *Veterans and Eligible Spouses*

The local GDOL One Stop staff includes a Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialist (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 for 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 is 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 to non-covered persons outside the group are given priority under WIOA.

Definitions:

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

- Veteran - an individual who has served at least one day in active military, naval or air service, and was discharged or released under "other than dishonorable" conditions. This includes full-time duty in the National Guard or a Reserve component, with the exception of full-time duty for training purposes.
- Eligible spouse - the spouse of any veteran who died of a service-connected disability;
- Any member of the Armed Forces serving on active duty who, at the time of the spouse's request for priority, has been listed for a total of more than 90 days as: missing in action; captured in line of duty by a hostile force; or forcibly detained or interned in line of duty by a foreign government or power;
- A veteran who has a total disability resulting from a service-connected disability (as determined by the Department of Veterans Affairs); or
- A veteran who died while a total disability resulting from a service-connected disability, was in existence.
- 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 an 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 transitioning out of 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 before non-covered persons, top 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.

Document 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 the 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 includes 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 people 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 an 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.

## *3*. Alignment with State Goals

### a. Utilize sector partnerships to inform and guide strategic workforce development strategies and enhance partnership coordination

The region continues to work with local employers, partners and community resources to identify demand occupations and help develop strategies that will support meeting the needs of area businesses. Education and work-based learning opportunities will help build a pipeline of available workforce to support the needs of businesses and employers in the area.

The region 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 have provided better coordination of efforts and service delivery needs that will help the region to grow and prosper. Building partnerships allows the area to come together to move in a positive direction to achieve common goals for the communities we serve.

### b. Further develop area integration to ensure streamlined services to both businesses and individuals

The region 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, streamlined approach to services for both individuals and businesses.

The region will continue to improve service coordination between agencies to provide a uniform approach to business services with common forms and processes. Technology will be used to provide a more efficient and effective way to work together and communicate across rural areas and the state. The region will continue to utilize the workforce system to increase statewide prosperity for rural and urban communities.

The region consists of rural communities. With each local area having one Comprehensive One Stop Center for its eight counties, we have placed several access points where information regarding services can be obtained through the One Stop affiliate sites that customers and businesses can access. Partner staff often travel to each of the counties to increase the services to customers and businesses. When customers want to access training opportunities that are outside of the local areas, staff help to make those connections and training opportunities available by working with partner agencies in neighboring areas. Interagency agreements between partner agencies allow services to 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's a rural or urban area. Sharing facilities, sharing resources, and using technology are all ways to enhance services.

### c. Capitalize on the workforce system's strengths to create opportunities for all Georgia communities to prosper

The region uses all locally available education systems, including local Board of Education K-12, Technical Colleges and Universities, to align education with training services provided through the workforce system, preparing individuals for careers that support the needs of businesses to grow and our communities to advance. Education is critical for a community to grow and to attract new companies to an area. An educated workforce helps local businesses grow the economy and create jobs, keeping our residents employed and close to home. Higher education institutions offer a large array of education programs that allow college students to live at home and attend college. They also offer programs of study that align with and lead to employment opportunities in the local area or nearby communities.

Higher educational institutions quickly add new training programs when local businesses need them. WIOA uses the educational providers as training vendors for ITA customers seeking education and occupational skills training.

Leaders and communities now see that southern and rural Georgia need more economic growth. As Georgia has been the number one State in the nation in which to do business for the past seven years, new businesses have been coming to Georgia and bringing employment and growth opportunities. The region and community partners will continue to coordinate local area services to develop a local workforce that can support new and

existing businesses. We will work with our educational partners to ensure that each local area has educational and occupational training opportunities that will support businesses/employers.

### d. Continuously align workforce and education system objectives to current and future occupational skills requirements

The region has education partners, Technical Colleges and State Universities, which offer post-secondary educational and occupational training options. The local areas' Board of Educations had introduced programs at the local high schools, working with high school students to explore occupational career paths. Both the Lower Chattahoochee Workforce Board and the Middle Flint Workforce Development include members from the secondary and post-secondary sectors to bring insight and expertise to the Board to align workforce and educational opportunities. The LWDBs also include members from economic development agencies who have awareness of business needs in the local areas. Lower Chattahoochee Area 14 is developing an Employer Advisory Council, and the River Valley Regional Commission (RVRC) also has a Community Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) committee that works within the sixteen-county region, developing strategies and identifying needs in the region to work toward making the region prosper.

### e. Expand the pool of available employees by increasing the number of participants in WIOA Strategic Populations in the workforce system

With worker shortages causing greater challenges for many employers than ever before, the need to help individuals reenter the workforce through skills training and other support services is critical to the economy. The State's workforce system is the ideal place to train and prepare this population for inclusion in the labor market. To identify and serve individuals not considered active in the workforce system, the core WIOA partners continue to promote resources and opportunities among strategic populations. These populations include, but are not limited to, transitioning veterans, opportunity youth, returning citizens, English language learners, individuals who are basic skills deficient, and individuals with disabilities.

The region's services will continue to work with the Georgia Department of Labor and other community partners to identify and assist individuals who are not currently employed, promoting educational and training opportunities to enter in/return to gainful employment. The region will utilize work-based training opportunities such as On-the-Job Training to meet employers' needs. Individuals who need to upgrade their employment skills can take advantage of post-secondary educational and occupational training services to improve their employment options.

***WIOA Income Guidelines Six-Month Period***
***Program Year 2025-2026***

***EFFECTIVE DATE: April 22, 2026***

| Six-Month Income Guidelines for WIOA | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Family Size** | **Metropolitan Areas** | **Nonmetropolitan Areas** |
| 1 | $7,980 | $7,980 |
| 2 | $10,820 | $10,820 |
| 3 | $13,989 | $13,660 |
| 4 | $17,271 | $16,693 |
| 5 | $20,384 | $19,700 |
| 6 | $23,840 | $23,038 |
| 7 | $27,297 | $26,377 |
| 8 | $30,753 | $29,715 |
| For Each Over 8 Add: | $3,457 | $3,339 |

Area 14 Additional Eligibility Policy (Adults):

In an effort to increase the number of customers served through the workforce development system, WIOA Income eligibility guidelines for ADULTS ONLY expand the maximum income eligibility limit to $50,000 per household and are based on total household income.

*Middle Flint WIOA – Area 15*

*WIOA Income Guidelines Six-Month Period*
*Program Year 2026-2027*

***EFFECTIVE DATE: April 22, 2026***

*Non-Metropolitan Area*

| **Family Size** | **Funding Stream Category** | |
|---|---|---|
| | **Youth Ages 14 – 24** | **Adult / Self-Sufficiency (150%) Ages 18 – Up** |
| 1 | $7,980 | $11,970 |
| 2 | $10,820 | $16,230 |
| 3 | $13,660 | $20,490 |
| 4 | $16,693 | $25,039 |
| 5 | $19,700 | $29,550 |
| 6 | $23,039 | $34,557 |
| 7 | $26,377 | $39,565 |
| 8 | $29,715 | $44,572 |
| For Each Over 8 Add: | $3,339 | $5,008 |

## **Attachment 1:** Lower Chattahoochee Local Workforce Development Board

| Board Member Name | Affiliated With | Title/Position held with Affiliated Organization | County of Residence | Entity(s) Representing |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Calloway, Tony** | Calloway & Assoc., Inc. | Regional Vice President/Owner | Muscogee County | Business |
| **Deppe, Jeff** | IBEW Local 613 | Union Representative | Muscogee County | Organized Labor/Joint Labor Management/Apprenticeship |
| **Domineck, Joel, Jr.** | TCSG | Regional Operations Manager | Muscogee County | Wagner Peyser / Veteran Employment Activities / Disabled Vet Outreach Programs |
| **Dupree, Kianca "KeKe"** | GA Vocational Rehabilitation Services | District 5 Supervisor | Muscogee County | Vocational Rehabilitation |
| **Evans, Jonathan** | Housing Authority of Columbus, Georgia | Director, Community Initiatives | Muscogee County | Community-based, Housing Auth. E&T Programs |
| **Hopson, April** | Columbus Technical College | Director of Adult Education | Muscogee County | Adult Education & Literacy |
| **Jackson, Barbara** | Columbus Regional Health | Professional Recruiter | Muscogee County | Business |
| **Jackson-Sparks, Betty** | BBC Services | Finance Project Manager | Muscogee County | Business |
| **Johnson, Will** | Columbus Consolidated Government Dept. of Community & Economic Development | Planning Director | Muscogee County | Title I, Economic Development |
| **Kelly, Andrew** | Valley Hospitality | HR Director | Muscogee County | Business |
| **Lewis, Carvel** | Lewis Mortuary II | Owner | Quitman County | Business |
| **Obleton, Eddie** | Second Chance WORKS | Consultant | Muscogee County | Business |
| **Ramsey, Ernestine** | YMCA of Metropolitan Columbus | Director/Manager/Retired | Muscogee County | Community-based |
| **Randolph, Chester** | C. Randolph & Associates, LLC Caldwell Banker KPDD | Owner / Agent | Muscogee County | Business |
| **Rutledge, Wanda** | Kinetic Credit Union | Vice President, Community Relations | Muscogee County | Business |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Smith, Dexter** | Communication Workers of America Local 3212 | Secretary/Treasurer | Muscogee County | Organized Labor |
| **Tidmore, Jansen** | Cols. Chamber of Commerce | President/CEO | Muscogee County | Business |
| **Timmons, Wendy** | Sixty-Two Graphic Studio | Owner/Operator | Muscogee County | Business |
| **Watson, Eddie** | Clay Hill Hunting | Owner/Operator | Clay County | Business |
| **Williams, Arlena, PhD** | Enrichment Services Program, Inc. | Director of Community Services | Muscogee County | Community-based |
| **Williams, Joe Lee** | Stewart County Board of Commissioners | Chairman | Stewart County | Public |
| **Willoughby, B. Ryan** | Jordan Vocational High School College & Career Academy (MCSD) | Chief Executive Officer | Muscogee County | Secondary Education, Adult Education, & Literacy |

## **Attachment 1:** Local Workforce Development Board

| Middle Flint Workforce Development Board | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Member Name** | **Affiliation** | **Organization Position** | **Designation** |
| Janet Teele<br>WDB Chairperson | The People's Bank of GA<br>Buena Vista | Personal Banker | Private Business<br>Marion County |
| Mark Lewis | TCSG Business Services | Business Services Coordinator | Economic Development, Veterans Services Area |
| Norman Graves | Middle Flint COA<br>Golden Gourmet | Executive Director | Private Business<br>Sumter County |
| Dr. John Watord | South Georgia Technical College | President | Adult Literacy, Education, Economic Development |
| Rhonda Lamb-Heath | Dooly Co. Chamber of Commerce | Executive Director | Private Sector Business<br>Dooly County |
| Chez Mansfield | GA Vocational Rehabilitation Services | District Supervisor | Vocational Rehabilitation Services Area |
| Emory Parker | Synovus Bank | Market President | Private Sector Business<br>Sumter County |
| Gerald Beckum | Macon Co. Chamber of Commerce & Development Authority | Executive Director | Private Sector Business<br>Macon County |
| Willie Patrick | South Georgia News | Owner | Private Sector Business<br>Crisp County |
| Mathis Wright Jr. | IBEW 2194 | President | Organized Labor<br>Area |
| Ed Shattles | Golden Gourmet | President | Private Sector Business<br>Sumter County |
| Angela Love | Interfor U.S. Inc. | Human Resources | Private Sector Business<br>Webster County |
| Sarah Howell | Crisp County Power Commission | Human Resources Manager | Private Sector Business<br>Crisp County |
| Jayson Griffin | Ameris Bank | Market President | Private Sector Business<br>Schley County |
| Caleb Bullard | Global Cellulose Fiber | Human Resources Manager | Private Sector Business<br>Macon County |
| Natalie Bradley | Flint Energies | Community Specialist | Private Sector Business<br>Taylor County |
| Grady Burrell | Teamsters Local 728 | Assistant Business Agent | Organized Labor<br>Dooly County |
| Nicole Acree | Taylor Co. Chamber & Development Authority | Executive Director | Private Sector Business<br>Taylor County |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Richard McCorkle | Chattahoochee Flint RESA | Executive Director | Education Area |
| Shane Tondee | City of Ellaville | Mayor | Chief Local Elected Official (CLEO) Area |

## **Attachment 2:** Local Negotiated Performance

### Lower Chattahoochee Area 14 – WIOA Performance Metrics for PY 26 and PY 27

| WIOA Performance Measures Adult Program | PY26 Negotiated Levels | PY27 Negotiated Levels |
|---|---|---|
| *Employment Rate 2nd Quarter After Exit* | 85.0% | 85.5% |
| *Employment Rate 4th Quarter After Exit* | 79.8% | 80.3% |
| *Median Earnings 2nd Quarter After Exit* | $10,250 | $10,300 |
| *Credential Attainment within 4 Quarters After Exit* | 78.5% | 78.9% |
| *Measurable Skills Gains* | 61.0% | 61.0% |

| WIOA Performance Measures Youth Program | PY26 Negotiated Levels | PY27 Negotiated Levels |
|---|---|---|
| *Employment Rate 2nd Quarter After Exit* | 64.9% | 65.4% |
| *Employment Rate 4th Quarter After Exit* | 65.1% | 65.5% |
| *Median Earnings 2nd Quarter After Exit* | $3,651 | $3,651 |
| *Credential Attainment within 4 Quarters After Exit* | 65.0% | 65.5% |
| *Measurable Skills Gains* | 55.5% | 55.5% |

| WIOA Performance Measures Dislocated Workers Program | PY26 Negotiated Levels | PY27 Negotiated Levels |
|---|---|---|
| *Employment Rate 2nd Quarter After Exit* | 74.8% | 75.3% |
| *Employment Rate 4th Quarter After Exit* | 84.6% | 85.1% |
| *Median Earnings 2nd Quarter After Exit* | $12,392 | $12,392 |
| *Credential Attainment within 4 Quarters After Exit* | 88.8% | 88.8% |
| *Measurable Skills Gains* | 70.0% | 70.4% |

## **Attachment 2:** Local Negotiated Performance

**Middle Flint Area 15 – WIOA Performance Metrics for PY 26 and PY 27**

| WIOA Performance Measures | PY 26 Negotiated Levels | PY 27 Negotiated Levels |
|---|---|---|
| **Adult Program** | | |
| *Employment Rate 2nd Quarter* | *87.3%* | *87.8%* |
| *Employment Rate 4th Quarter* | *80.0%* | *82.5%* |
| *Median Earnings 2nd Quarter* | *$10,013* | *$10,063* |
| *Credential Attainment within 4 Quarters after Exit* | *73.0%* | *75.5%* |
| *Measurable Skills Gains* | *78.0%* | *80.0%* |
| **Dislocated Workers** | | |
| *Employment Rate 2nd Quarter* | *80.5%* | *81.0%* |
| *Employment Rate 4th Quarter* | *80.0%* | *82.0%* |
| *Median Earnings 2nd Quarter* | *$8,500* | *$8500* |
| *Credential Attainment within 4 Quarters after Exit* | *80.0%* | *$82.0%* |
| *Measurable Skills Gains* | *65.0%* | *68.5%* |
| **Youth Programs** | | |
| *Employment Rate 2nd Quarter* | *79.8%* | *80.3%* |
| *Employment Rate 4th Quarter* | *70.0%* | *72.5%* |
| *Median Earnings 2nd Quarter* | *$2,800* | *$3,000* |
| *Credential Attainment within 4 Quarters after Exit* | *77.2%* | *77.7%* |
| *Measurable Skills Gains* | *72.0%* | *75.0%* |

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

| Comment 1 |
| --- |
| **Originating Entity:** |
| **Comment:** |

| Comment 2 |
| --- |
| **Originating Entity:** |
| **Comment:** |

| Comment 3 |
| --- |
| **Originating Entity:** |
| **Comment:** |

| Comment 4 |
| --- |
| **Originating Entity:** |
| |

**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 agrees to adhere to all applicable Federal, State, and local laws, regulations, and policies in performing any duty associated with the funds made available under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.

Name: Dr. Valerie Richardson

Title: Local Workforce Area Director

Entity Representing: Lower Chattahoochee WDB

Signature: _____

Name: Berry “Skip” Henderson

Title: Chief Local Elected Official - Mayor

Entity Representing: City of Columbus

Signature: _____

Name: Chester Randolph

Title: Local Workforce Development Board Chair

Entity Representing: Lower Chattahoochee WDB

Signature: _____

## **Attachment 4:** Signature Page

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

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

Signature: _____

## **Attachment 4:** Signature Page

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

Name: Shane Tondee

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

Signature:_____

## **Attachment 4:** Signature Page

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

Name: Janet Teele

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

Signature: _____