

Georgia Mountains Digital Economy Plan - 2014

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Executive Summary

The Georgia Mountains region consists of 13 counties in a growing and dynamic part of northeast Georgia. It is shifting from a traditionally agrarian and rural-industrial region to one with deeper ties to metro Atlanta, burgeoning suburban development and a very strong tourist industry. As the region transforms it has become, like elsewhere around the globe, more heavily reliant on technology to support jobs and businesses, foster education and services, and to enhance communication.

This document, the Georgia Mountains Digital Economy Plan, is one of several such plans being developed for each region across Georgia. They've been designed to identify and coordinate the resources and efforts related to improving the region's infrastructure in support of hi-tech industries and economies. As each regional plan is completed, the State and its partners can begin directing their energy and resources with clearer focus and understanding of needs from every part of Georgia.

With input from key stakeholders from throughout the region, the Georgia Mountains Regional Commission (GMRC) created this first-generation plan in accordance with standards defined by the Georgia Technology Authority (GTA). The document outlines the major strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges faced by the region as communities seek to engage and enhance their hi-tech economies. While specific investment actions have not been identified as part of this initial process, the Plan provides a work scope that addresses key focus areas and recommendations that will help the GMRC, its member governments and regional stakeholders move forward with an understanding of the regional and state context for building network connectivity, improving educational resources and fostering technology hubs. With continued coordination and monitoring of progress, it is hoped these efforts will make the region a more effective and efficient place enabling all manners of business to realize their potential in accessing and utilizing electronic data.

The GMRC will regularly work with its partners to incorporate the Plan's objectives and recommendations into local policies and programs, will update the document as needed, and will continue to work with the State to provide supporting resources to local technology initiatives.

Digital Economy Planning

What is the Digital Economy?

The Digital Economy consists of business conducted through computers and computer networks. Farmers use wireless moisture sensors on farms to increase yield and use the Internet to advertise and sell their crops. Doctors see patients using telemedicine, detectives use social media to investigate crime and lawyers search and find legal precedents through online search rather than through paralegals and clerks. It is difficult to find a business or institution in Georgia that does not rely on the Internet and digital technology to improve service, lower cost, automate work, or expand into new markets.

The Digital Economy is not a replacement of our economy but an evolution of using technology to adapt business to global innovation. The Digital Economy is enabled by access to information technology infrastructure, skilled workforce and funding to incorporate these technologies and services into business operations. Computers, mobile phones, tablets, sensors, software applications and broadband networks are basic ingredients. Education, a skilled workforce, adult learning, and the financial resources to incorporate new technologies are critical enablers.

As business adoption of the Internet reaches critical mass, competition will intensify for companies and workers alike. It can produce benefits that include wider access to resources, more effective health-care and education systems, and a workforce with greater skills. Georgia's ability to incorporate and use them directly affects its competitiveness.

Why is a Digital Economy Strategy Important to Georgia?

Georgia's economy will increasingly be impacted by the Digital Economy, therefore, a long term strategy and planning is critical in providing stability and opportunity for future generations.

The Digital Economy is creating new industry and new business opportunities such as one Georgia startup company, AirWatch, that sold in 2014 for over \$1.5B. New technologies have lowered the costs and opened access to markets anywhere in the world by anyone in Georgia who has access to the technology, knowledge, skills and the drive to pursue them.

The Digital Economy disrupts businesses and institutions that took decades to build. Jobs are being lost to offshoring of manufacturing enabled by the technologies and networks of the Digital Economy. Many video and record stores, bookstores, and even shopping malls were other early victims. This trend will accelerate. One study done by Oxford Professors indicates 47 percent of current professions could be at risk for automation by 2025¹.

The Pew Research Center's Internet Project has been analyzing the impact of the Internet for over a decade. Its most recent study in August 2014 analyzes how daily life will be changed by 2025 through the Internet, artificial intelligence and robotics after speaking with almost 2,000 widely quoted technologists and analysts. The conclusions directly quoted below emphasize how large a role the Digital Economy will play in the future²:

Key themes: Reasons to be Concerned

- 1) Impacts from automation have thus far impacted mostly blue-collar employment; the coming wave of innovation threatens to upend white-collar work as well.
- 2) Certain highly-skilled workers will succeed wildly in this new environment—but far more may be displaced into lower paying service industry jobs at best, or permanent unemployment at worst.
- 3) Our educational system is not adequately preparing us for work of the future, and our political and economic institutions are poorly equipped to handle these hard choices.

Key themes: Reasons to be Hopeful

- 1) Advances in technology may displace certain types of work, but historically they have been a net creator of jobs.
- 2) We will adapt to these changes by inventing entirely new types of work, and by taking advantage of uniquely human capabilities.
- 3) Technology will free us from day-to-day drudgery, and allow us to define our relationship with “work” in a more positive and socially beneficial way.
- 4) Ultimately, we as a society control our own destiny through the choices we make.

What does the Regional Digital Economy Plan accomplish?

The Regional Digital Economy Plan examines local and regional abilities to participate in the Digital Economy and identifies important resources, organizations, leaders, programs and investments that already exist, that can be leveraged in the future. The plans also identify each region's gaps in infrastructure, workforce and access to capital and align, prioritize and convert these gaps into actionable projects with goals that can be measured.

The planning process analyzes the Digital Economy capacity of each region in at least three distinct areas:

² Pew Internet, *AI, Robotics, and the Future of Jobs*, Aaron Smith and Janna Anderson, August 2014, <http://www.pewinternet.org/2014/08/06/future-of-jobs/>

1. Workforce capabilities and needs
2. Supporting infrastructure and services for Internet connectivity
3. Access to capital to invest in each region's plans to increase participation in the Digital Economy

The most important value of these plans is to raise awareness, develop community and regional collaboration, prioritize objectives and establish plans to use our assets and strengths to be competitive.

The key to success for any region in the future will be cooperatively working together to leverage opportunities and mitigate threats brought about by the ever-growing Digital Economy.

Regional Identification

The Georgia Mountains Region is thriving. The region is a dynamic and beautiful part of northeastern Georgia, a region steeped in Appalachian culture and aggressively pursuing the future. It hosts a mixture of small towns and part of burgeoning metro Atlanta, of strong agrarian economies and cutting edge industry. Even in times where unemployment rates remain high, local governments are investing in their future. The region is a leader in the State of Georgia and strongly involved in transportation, water, renewable energy, broadband, and tourism development for long term economic sustainability and improved quality of life for the 647,976 residents that call the Georgia Mountains home.

The current theme for the Georgia Mountains region is learning to coordinate and maximize programs that blend economic development with overall community development. Traditionally economic development meant business attraction, business retention, and new business growth. Over the past decade, these have expanded to include other areas like workforce development, entrepreneurship, asset-based economic development, from job creation programs to workforce skill enhancement efforts, and to other quality of life issues.

In today's competitive global environment, economic development success requires effective public policy to attract the knowledge and innovation-based jobs that can raise the quality of life of Georgia's citizens. For business recruitment and retention, a region must be able to provide quality infrastructure and an educated and trained workforce. Business attraction efforts need to be coordinated, planned strategically, adequately supported, and sustained.

People live in the Georgia Mountains for a host of reasons. Quality of life due to an abundance of natural amenities and resources tops the appeal of persons in the community, creating strong bonds to the culture and landscape. For people to stay in the region and prosper the economy must perform at a higher level. The right investments in the arts, recreation, education system, and infrastructure will positively improve the quality of life *and* helps attract economic opportunity.

The ability to efficiently and safely move people, goods, and information is a crucial element to the economic health of the Georgia Mountains Region. The GMRC region cannot survive without a strong and reliable infrastructure network consisting of transportation, water and wastewater, communication, and energy efficient practices. The region needs to make sound investments in road, water, sewer, and telecommunications or maintain infrastructure in a manner that is supportive of the region's economic goals. Broadband capacity – backbone networks, redundancy, and connectivity continue to be a priority for industry recruitment and retention in the Georgia Mountains Region.

Micro businesses and entrepreneurs are very important to the regional economy, particularly in the rural mountain communities. Local communities need to improve the small business environment with business assistance services, access to capital, and market development.

Tourism has been an integral part of the Georgia Mountains economy for several decades and continues to be a significant driver of the regional economy, impacting nearly all geographic areas and many businesses throughout the region. There is an immediate need to improve infrastructure that supports tourism product development, particularly quality roads, hotel facilities, and certain amenities such as road signage, restroom facilities, trailhead parking, etc. There is also a need to develop improved regional organizational capacity through the education of tourism leadership and the community at all levels.

There is a need for value-added product development opportunities encouraging people to “buy local”. Lastly, there is a need to develop sustainable and natural-based tourism opportunities, which take advantage of the region’s natural resources, including agri-tourism products.

Research has shown that regions with a highly educated workforce also experience economic growth in terms of business attraction and development, as well as higher income levels. Obtaining a college degree or returning to school for advanced training is important to assure that skills match the needs desired by employers and to ensure that jobs remain in the Georgia Mountains Region. The region needs to work to raise the attainment levels of adults, increase the skill base of the workforce, and create opportunities within growth sectors of the economy.

Another priority issue for the region is the need for affordable housing for not only the workforce. A housing strategy will be critical to meeting the housing needs of today and in years to come.

The Georgia Mountains Regional Commission

The Georgia Mountains Regional Commission is a sub-state district created by local governments in 1962 under provisions of Georgia Enabling Law. The purpose of the GMRC is to locally promote and guide proper development of human, natural, physical, social and economic resources in the Georgia Mountains Region. The area covers 3,500 square miles, and includes Banks, Dawson, Forsyth, Franklin, Habersham, Hall, Hart, Lumpkin, Rabun, Stephens, Towns, Union, and White Counties.

The GMRC offers a wide variety of services to its fifty-one local governments, which include thirteen counties and thirty-eight municipalities. The GMRC works with these entities to formulate goals and strategies for area growth and development. Upon request, the GMRC

provides a variety of technical assistance that will improve community services and the quality of life for residents.

The GMRC is guided by a forty-four member Council and is composed of individuals appointed by the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Speaker of the House and one county elected official, one city elected official and one private sector individual from each of our thirteen counties. City, County and private sector representatives are chosen by the cities and counties they represent. The Council is responsible for all policy decisions.

The GMRC interacts with many agencies at regional, state, and federal levels. These agencies work with the GMRC to coordinate and complement the delivery of services to governments and citizens of the Georgia Mountains area.

The GMRC is funded by a variety of sources, including federal, state, and local funds. The annual RC budget is reviewed and approved by the Council.

Currently the GMRC employs thirty-four staff in the realms of planning, economic development, information technology, workforce development, human resources and general administration.

GMRC Digital Economy Plan Process and Participation

In conjunction with the Georgia Technology Authority (GTA), and funded through the American Recovery Reinvestment Act, the twelve Georgia Regional Commissions have embarked upon a Digital Economy and Broadband planning program. As part of this planning program, Georgia Mountains Regional Commission (GMRC) was tasked with creating a regional Digital Economy Plan whereby we analyzed broadband access and usage across our thirteen county region. The focus of this plan is to document both the resources and unmet needs of the region's digital assets, broadband infrastructure, services and related technology utilization and to form on-going efforts to fill identified gaps.

GMRC signed a Memorandum of Agreement with Middle Georgia Regional Commission in July of 2013 and were assigned to be a part of Planning Group C (January 2014 – September 2014). We attended the Project Kick-off meeting with all Regional Commissions and GTA on July 10th, 2013 held in Macon at MGRC. We were instructed to not start the project until the MGRC staff conducted a project required kick-off meeting which was held in February 2014. At that time, we were provided access to BaseCamp and DropBox resources containing maps, charts, graphs and templates.

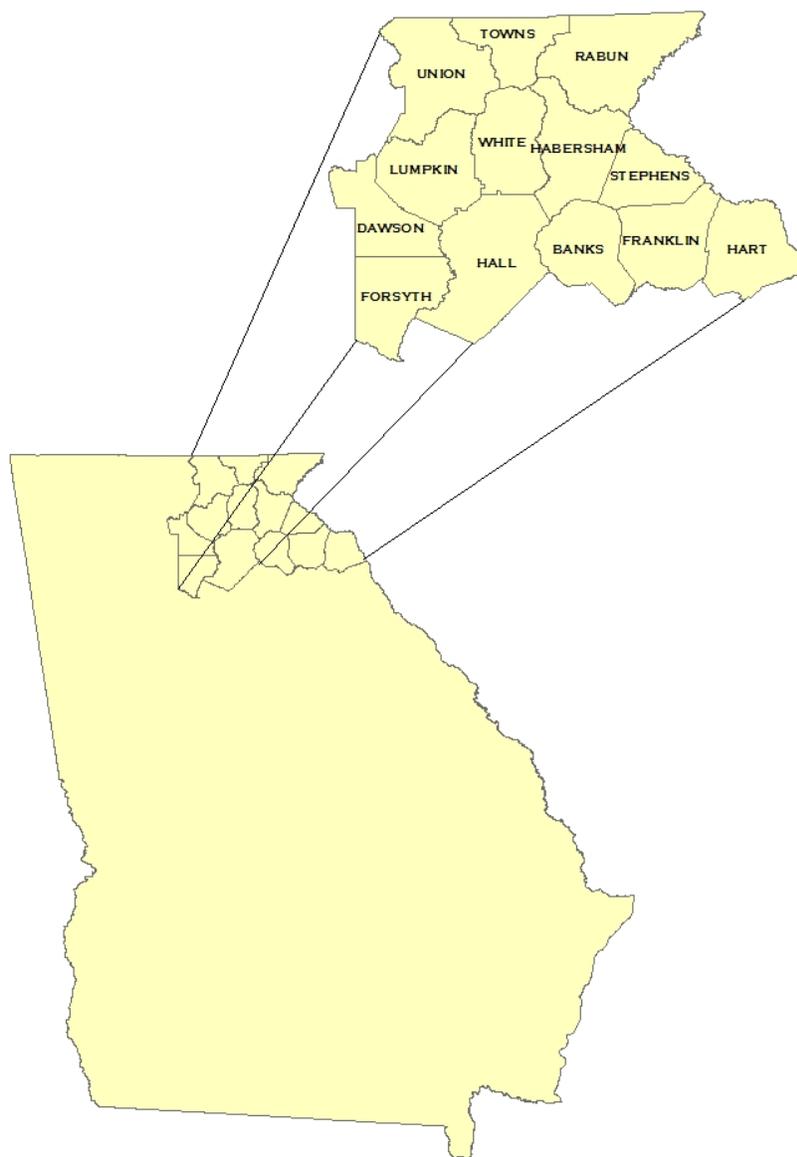
Shortly thereafter, the GMRC department heads gathered to identify regional stakeholders in the following: Agriculture, Economic Development, Public Utilities, Healthcare, K-12 Education, Higher Education, Local Governments, Chambers of Commerce, Workforce Development,

Libraries, Local Broadband and Internet Service Providers, Tourism, Local Entrepreneurs, Small Business Leaders, Creative Industry and Artisans.

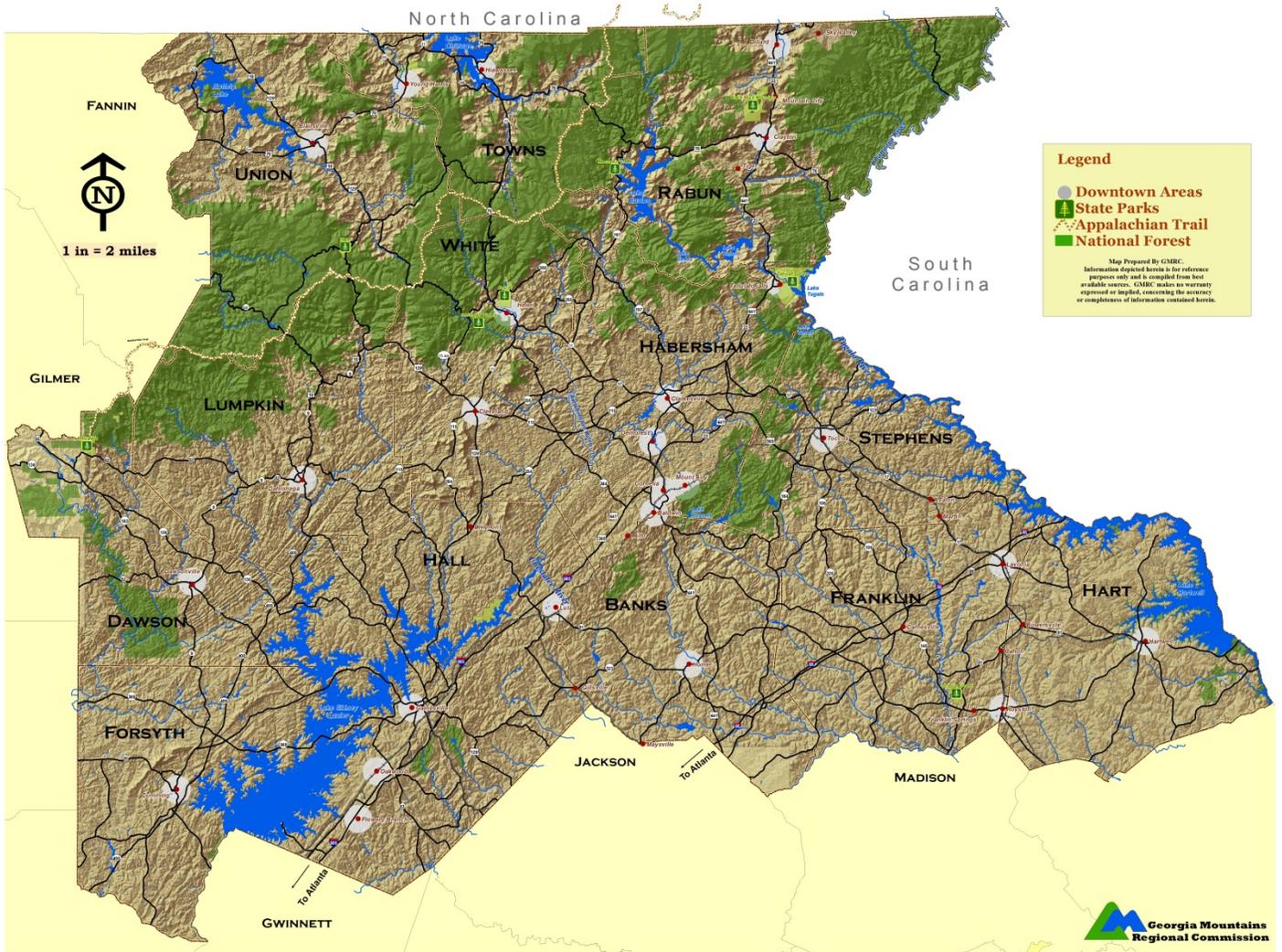
GMRC created a page on our website (www.gmrc.ga.gov), solely dedicated to the GMRC Regional Digital Economy Plan. Access to information regarding the statewide effort and details of funding sources were placed there along with maps, charts and surveys. Local broadband related projects and press releases were announced on the page as well.

Two surveys were collectively developed by all departments of the GMRC, one strictly for Residents and the other for Businesses and Local Governments. Details regarding these surveys can be found in the appendices of this document.

Map of Georgia Mountains Regional Commission Area in context of Georgia



Map of Georgia Mountains Regional Commission Area



Regional Stakeholders

During the GMRC inter-departmental meeting we identified the following as this region's stakeholders:

- GMRC Council Members
- City and County Managers
- Chambers of Commerce
- Regional Economic Development Professionals
- Airports
- Department of Economic Development Regional Tourism Director
- Workforce Development
- GMRC DCA Representative
- Hospitals
 - Northeast Georgia Medical Center
 - Ty Cobb Medical Center
- Region High School IT Departments/Personnel
- CEDS Committee
- Universities and Colleges
 - University of North Georgia
 - Brenau University
 - Piedmont College
 - North Georgia Technical College
 - Young Harris College
 - Emmanuel College
 - Truett-McConnell College
- Service Providers
 - Blue Ridge Electric Membership Corporation
 - Windstream
 - At&t
 - Comcast
 - Tru-Vista
 - Habersham Electric Membership Corporation
 - Municipal Gas Authority
 - Hart Electric Membership Corporation
 - North Georgia Network
 - Georgia Power
 - Connect North Georgia

Administrative staff created an email distribution list of all of the identified stakeholders for the region and GMRC invited all of those individuals to attend one of two Stakeholders Meetings set for April 10th and April 17th.



Digital Economy Plan Stakeholders Meeting

Through a state-wide effort to assess Broadband access and availability, Georgia Mountains Regional Commission has been tasked with creating a regional Digital Economic Plan. The purpose of this plan is:

- ◆ To improve the well-being and health of residents and the viability of business
- ◆ To spur on technology-based economic development of all kinds
- ◆ To identify and assess gaps in regional broadband access and infrastructure, education, healthcare, and economic development
- ◆ To develop a strategy that assesses the best way to leverage assets and resources in order to close the identified gaps
- ◆ To catalyze economically competitive communities to increase competitiveness, improve service delivery, and reduce costs

GMRC will be conducting two Stakeholders Meetings whereby we will be reaching out to you for your input on broadband needs and trends as it relates to your field of expertise. The meeting dates are:

April 10th and April 17th

**Where: GMRC Training Room
1310 W Ridge Rd, Gainesville**

Time: 9:00 am—2:00 pm

RSVP by April 4th

We are reaching out to leaders in the GMRC region in such fields as Agriculture, Economic Development, Public Utilities, Healthcare, K-12 Education, Higher Education, Workforce Development, Libraries, Local Broadband and Internet Service Providers, Local Governments, Tourism, Local Entrepreneurs, Small Business Leaders, Creative Industry and Artisans.

Choose a date and join us as we embark on this digital technology highway and work together to improve broadband access and availability across the region for our residents and businesses.

Questions or Comments?

Contact: Faith Bryan
Director of Information Services
(770) 538-2614
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During the months of February and March, we presented the upcoming GMRC Digital Economy Plan to our council members and during meetings of CEDS, Economic Development Professionals and City/County Managers. The flyer on the previous page was distributed during those meetings and an invitation was extended to all in attendance.

Stakeholders Meetings

GMRC held two stakeholders meetings that were comprised of half-day sessions. Agenda was as follows:

9:00	Welcome and Introductions	
9:15—10:00	Digital Economy Plan	
	What is it and Why are we here?	
10:00—10:15	Regional Progress	
	Dawson County Gig Center	Charlie Auvermann
	Next Generation Clubhouse	Bindy Auvermann
	Connect North Georgia	Bruce Abraham
	Northeast Georgia Network	Tim Martin
10:15—10:30	Break	
10:30—11:30	Group Breakout Sessions	Economic Development
		Workforce Development
		Planning
		Information Services
11:30—12:30	Group Session Wrap-up/Discussion	
12:30	Adjourn	

Thank you for your attendance!

If you are a local government, business owner, educational institution or resident of the Georgia Mountains Regional Commission area, please visit our website to participate in the Digital Economy Plan Survey:
www.gmrc.ga.gov

After introductions, we asked the attendees what digital economy meant to them. The answers we received were varied but valuable.

- Future
- Connected
- Access
- Better Jobs
- E Commerce Transactions
- Social Media
- Revenue
- Speed
- Tele-Commute
- Reaching
- Ease of Research
- Globalization
- Dependability
- Leisure
- Education
- Parity
- Choice/Competition
- Communication

Our invited speakers for the Stakeholders Meetings presented current projects in the GMRC region:

Charlie Auvermann with the Development Authority of Dawson County presented the Dawson GigCenter, the location to “Power Your Innovation”. This center provides State of the art 100% fiber internet capacity to allow start-up businesses access to the world. More than just high speed fiber internet, the Dawson GigCenter offers assistance with business plan development, business formation, connections, marketing, networking, technical business solutions, strategic planning, capital market access, product development, rollout & scale-up, and existing business growth strategies. (See flyer in appendices)

Bindy Auvermann with the Next Generation Clubhouse presented the offerings of one of three Prevention Clubhouse prototypes in the State of Georgia. The main focus of Next Generation is positive youth development for Dawson County students. (See flyer in appendices)

Bruce Abraham with Connect North Georgia presented the North Georgia Network, its history and capabilities. He stated that most middle and high schools within the GMRC region are connected to the North Georgia Network.

Tim Martin with the Stephens County Development Authority presented the Northeast Georgia Network. In order to provide high speed fiber to the rest of the GMRC region and the industries and businesses located there, the Joint Development Authority applied for grant funds to develop and implement the Northeast Georgia Network. It was connected to the North Georgia Network and through a more recent grant application the loop will be closed back to Atlanta.

After the speaker presentations, we broke out into group sessions based on color codes on the name tags. We asked each group, led by a GMRC department representative, to answer these questions:

As it relates to Broadband in the GMRC Region:

What are the Region's Strength's/Advantages?

- Fed government +/-
- Business competitors work together = partnerships
- Businesses realize the true cost of broadband improvements and value this cost
- Schools/hospitals/businesses realize the need for broadband expansion and quality
- Businesses in multiple locations that still can rely on quality service/speed/capacity
- Cooperative EMC's that deliver good products
- Everything is here to aid a growing workforce, but needs to speed up
- Dawsonville, Dahlonega various types of Wi-Fi network, creative service providers
- Creative advancement employees retention
- School system help needed
- North Ga Network
- University of North Georgia (other higher education institutions)
- GMRC Fostering Cooperation
- Tourism industry embracing new technology to reach potential clients and offer services to guests
- Utility use of social media to inform (outages) communication
- Collaboration attitude/effort/spirit/NGN/NEGN
- Location – Geographically /workforce/education (UNG)/Resources
- Organizational Resources – SBDC, GMRC, GIG Center
- Quick access to Augusta/Athens/Atlanta Metro and resources there – GA Tech, GA State, UGA
- Residents are able to telecommute
- Greenville, SC/BMW
- Location – access to fiber – GA 400/Technology corridor
- Cooperative region/partnerships
- Innovative thinking in the region
- University team (post-secondary)
- Leadership
- Providers (service)
- Quality of life

- Entrepreneurship
- Diversity
- Opportunity – Technology Evolving
- Network will be quality of life pay scale
- School or college
- Proximity to Atlanta – 400/85/985 corridors
- New jobs
- Young people knowledge
- Mix of quality of life and availability of broadband infrastructure
- Presence of direct sales (i.e. home based businesses – gunbrokers.com)
- More nimble in terms of response and operations
- Faster business start-up time
- Increased level of redundancy in NGN
- Potential availability of cost savings per budget
- Schools/Universities
- 85/985/400 corridor
- Young People
- Universities and related programs (REED); support structure
- Willingness to collaborate, cross pollination
- Quality Development Authorities and Joint Development Authorities
- GMRC Coordination; strong leadership and partners (ACCG, GMA, Pioneer RESA)
- Desire and ambition to make something happen
- A place where people want to be
- Beginnings of Hi-tech education in primary and secondary
- Many businesses in the area already using
- Medical facilities?
- Planning process; NGN
- Foundation for Information Infrastructure
- Willingness to work together
- University of North Georgia
- Infrastructure/existing – superior to other region
- Region is ready /ripe for technology
- Location/non-urban life style
- Quality of life
- Standard of education increasing

What do you see as the Region’s Disadvantages?

- How to get top quality talented people to stay in the area (beyond 1-2 years, unless local) after leaving before further education training
- Fiber theft due to copper related theft
- Terrain creates problems – mountains, ice, forest area
- Aerial at mountain areas, underground costs
- Pole attachment fees, vandals, exposure to elements

- Competition with Atlanta region, how to get companies to relocate beyond perimeter
- Minimum criteria to make sure – affordability, reliable to get customers to seriously to consider
- Customer climate has to be right to ensure service area will be used – if you build it, they will come but what if they don't? Investment is stagnant and wasted.
- Large scale Wi-Fi network needed but money to create cloud based Wi-Fi
- Mutual aid
- Rural anchor institutes
- Geographical challenges to connectivity (service forest lands)
- Lack of population density (business perspective)
- Service Cost vs per capita income
- Age demographic
- Georgia ranked low in education
- Perception is GA education is poor
- Pockets of high education but there are areas of poor quality
- Statewide government needs to put more emphasis on education
- Workforce – future
- Split want to work/don't want to work starts with parents
- Specialized workforce needed
- Keeping pace with ever changing technology – businesses
- Improved education
- Need redundancy in broadband services
- Speed of internet service/access
- Unreliability of service
- Local governments have not bought into it *status quo *disconnect – not seeing the big picture
- Mindset of people
- Topography
- Cost prohibitive
- Resistance to planning – government not seeing long range
- Population – retirees
- Geographic isolation
- Communication challenge
- Slow to adapt to economy
- Marketing and knowledge
- Lack of diversity in Internet Service Providers
- Lack of service beyond the core
- Lack of Cell towers due to citizens not wanting towers in scenery of the mountains
- Lack of internet availability
- Low family incomes
- Cost of devices (have to pursue grants)
- Slow information transmission times
- Overcoming terrain/topography; economy of scale
- Windstream capabilities, variety of service levels, promises not fulfilled
- Lack of incumbent capabilities

- Lack of knowledge – about need, options, potential
- Tech resources at local schools; outdated curriculum, more cultural vs. financial (boards)
- Can improve ongoing communication
- Continued rate of change in technology
- Can we keep up? Can we afford not to?
- Need space and time for future thinking
- Housing/village life for younger people
- Disconnect between the technology and how to use it/advantages
- Terrain/topography – high cost of installation
- Rural customer base
- Rural areas difficult to get broadband to/costs are high
- Legislative actions need to think outside of downtown Atlanta
- Fiber needs to be considered as a utility
- K-12 education/upgraded tech/FTE funding
- Need a better way to communicate what is going on in our region to state legislators

Identify Regional Partnerships/Alliances/Projects

- Film industry more in North Georgia – studio, not filming short term
- Presentations to companies and the right to people that understand the technology and can express what their needs are and demonstrates commitment
- UNG partnership-regional draw and creates the potential to create future jobs locally and ED impact to better education possibilities
- Education collective initiative for educational sharing in 2015 wide area network logistical issue to overcome
- UGA Small Business and Archway program
- School Systems – High School programs integrating
- Technical Colleges
- Medical Field
- State dept. agriculture, Economic Development, Community Affairs
- Local Economic Development Authorities
- Implementing Wi-Fi in all downtown squares
- Utility cooperation (open ditch cooperation)
- Economic development group
- Chambers get together
- Schools (10 districts)
- Public
- Non-profit collaboration
- Leadership programs
- Merchant coalition
- Industry collaboration
- North Georgia Network
- Electric Membership Corporation's
- Northeast Georgia Network

- Joint Development Authorities
- AT&T leadership, sponsorship opportunities
- Georgia Power
- Utilizing wireless network being able to change bills
- Water towers
- Joint development authority
- Reed – college and technical colleges
- RESA
- Schools connected to NGN and NEGN (10 GB Cloud)
- EMT's/911 centers across the region
- Fire departments/Police/Public safety organizations
- Local Governments
- Healthcare facilities
- Connect North Georgia
- GMRC
- Development Authorities/Main Street Programs/Better Hometown
- REED initiative (UNG)
- GMA/ACCG/GCCMA
- Universities/Colleges/Technical Colleges
- Dept. of ED/DCA/DOL
- Utility Companies
- ABT wireless
- Service providers
- Technical Advisory Group
- Chambers

Identify “Heavy Hitters/Users” in the Region

- Schools/ Colleges
- Call and Data Centers
- Hospitals
- North Georgia Technical School/Lanier Tech
- Tourism GA Department of ED/Tourism Industry
- Customers/users
- Healthcare
- News Service/Information Providers
- Entertainment industry (movies, etc.)
- Utilities
- Local governments/regional commission (GIS)
- Louver Shop
- Industrial park on I-85
- Banking
- Schools/Universities/Technical College
- Data Centers

- Hospitals
- Library Systems
- Small Business/Entrepreneurs/Big Box
- State Facilities
- Everyone Collectively (Wi-Fi)
- Educational institutions
- Dense pockets of residential (in migration of employees)
- Logistics
- Small business
- Poultry business
- News
- Military
- Small home-based businesses
- Healthcare facilities
- Government agencies
- Manufacturers
- Finance
- Atlanta Motor Sports Park
- Agri-Business – localized consumer activity
- Manufacturers – remote consumer activity
- Online production providers/managers – web hosting, site creation
- Tourism – virtual tourism, collaborative consumerism, I need connectivity, geo-cached consumer data
- Large retailers
- Home businesses
- Telecommuters
- Restaurants
- Private schools
- Industries

GMRC Digital Economy Plan Stakeholders Meeting			
Attendees List			
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SWOC Analysis

From our meetings with the GMRC stakeholders, we performed a SWOC (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Challenges) Analysis on the input we received from them regarding the broadband and internet access within the GMRC Region. The table below separates the analysis into three categories: Workforce/Education, Infrastructure and Local Government.

	Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Challenges
Workforce/Education	Higher Educational Institutions – University of North Georgia, Brenau, North Georgia Technical School, Lanier Technical School,	Limited existing hi-tech labor force	Economic and Demographic growth of metro Atlanta	Attraction/Retention of top technology talent
	Faster Business Start-up Time	Low family income	Job Fairs held within the region by GMRC Workforce Development	Competition from other metro areas
	Dawson GigCenter – Business Start-up			
	GMRC Workforce Development			
	Strong Development Authorities and Chamber Offices to assist start-up businesses and industries			
	Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Challenges
Infrastructure	Cooperative EMC’s that deliver good products	System Redundancy. Residents and Businesses need more choices for internet service.	Tourism/outdoor recreation related industry	Topographically the GMRC Region is difficult to traverse for aerial line installation
	North Georgia and Northeast Georgia Networks	Cost Prohibitive		
	Access to Metro Atlanta	Geographic Isolation		
	Ga 400 – Technology Corridor			
	Residents ability to tele-commute			
	Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Challenges
Local Government	GMRC Fostering Cooperation	Limited funding resources	Educating local government on importance of broadband access	Finding Grant funds for broadband projects
	Quality Development Authorities and Joint Development Authorities	State needs to put more emphasis on education		Need a better way to communicate to State Legislators what is going on in the GMRC Region regarding broadband needs, initiatives and projects

Regional Overview and Data Gathered

Region Profile

The Georgia Mountains region is comprised of 13 counties within the extreme northeast corner of Georgia, bordered by North Carolina to the north and South Carolina to the east. Eleven of the counties are classified as rural, while Forsyth County is included as part of metropolitan Atlanta and Gainesville/Hall County are their own urban unit for metropolitan transportation planning purposes.

Taken all together, the Georgia Mountains region covers approximately 3,500 square miles and a current population just over 620,000 people. The natural scenic beauty of the Georgia Mountains area is one of its most important resources. Approximately 463,013 acres of the Chattahoochee National Forest lies within nine of the thirteen Georgia Mountain counties. Ten state parks plus the Hart County Recreation Area in the region provide for visitors who wish to hike, camp, canoe or enjoy wildlife, while the region also harbors access to the Appalachian Trail and the Bartram Trail within the Blue Ridge Mountains. Visitors may also glimpse life of the early settlers and their relationship with the Georgia mountains through attractions like the Northeast Georgia History center, Travelers' Rest in Toccoa or the Gold Museum in Dahlonega.

Topographically over half of the area is mountainous with the remainder being rolling land and hills. Seven of the thirteen counties (Dawson, Habersham, Lumpkin, Rabun, Towns, Union and White) are either totally or partially located in the Blue Ridge Mountains province, which includes the highest mountain in the State (Brasstown Bald, elevation 4,784 feet) and several other prominent peaks rising above 4,000 feet. This part of the region is defined by steep slopes and mostly narrow valleys with many streams. The southern half of the region is predominantly part of the upper Georgia Piedmont, where there are many broad, fertile, level bottom valleys such as the Nacoochee, the Sautee, the Chestatee, the Chattahoochee, the Soque, and the Etowah. Mount Yonah, with an elevation of 3,173 feet, is the highest peak on the Georgia Piedmont.

The prevailing topography means the region is also known for streams and rivers and, through human intervention, many reservoirs. The largest body of water in Georgia is Lake Lanier located on the southwestern corner of the region along the Hall-Forsyth County line. The 38,500 acre lake was created during 1954-57 by damming the Chattahoochee River at Buford and currently boasts over 20 million visitors each year, making it among the most visited lakes in the United States. Another sizable reservoir is 56,000 acre Lake Hartwell, created on the Savannah River near the city of the same name. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers operates both lakes to provide flood control, electrical power, recreation and water supply in the GMRC area. Additional reservoirs within the region include Lake Chatuge and Lake Nottely (operated by the Tennessee Valley Authority), and Lakes Burton, Rabun, Seed, Tallulah, Tugaloo and

Yonah (all operated by the Georgia Power Company). Taken all together these lakes bring tourism, provide recreation and have bolstered housing for the region. This natural beauty has contributed to the tremendous growth experienced by the region over the past three decades. Some of these counties are among the fastest growing in the United States, and all have experienced continued positive growth, with most at rates higher than the state average. Much of the growth can be attributed to migration resulting from economic factors, retirement populations and the spillover from metropolitan Atlanta.

A major economic factor in the Georgia Mountains Region is tourism. Visitors are attracted by the history, outdoor activities, museums, mountain arts and crafts, antiques, natural scenic beauty and unique cuisine. Numerous festivals throughout the year, such as Oktoberfest in Helen, White County or the Georgia Mountain Fair in Hiwassee, Towns County, draw hundreds of thousands of visitors from many places. Outlet trade centers located in Banks County and Dawson County attract a heterogenous mixture of shoppers/visitors year round. The tourism industry is nearly a billion dollar a year industry in the Georgia Mountains area.

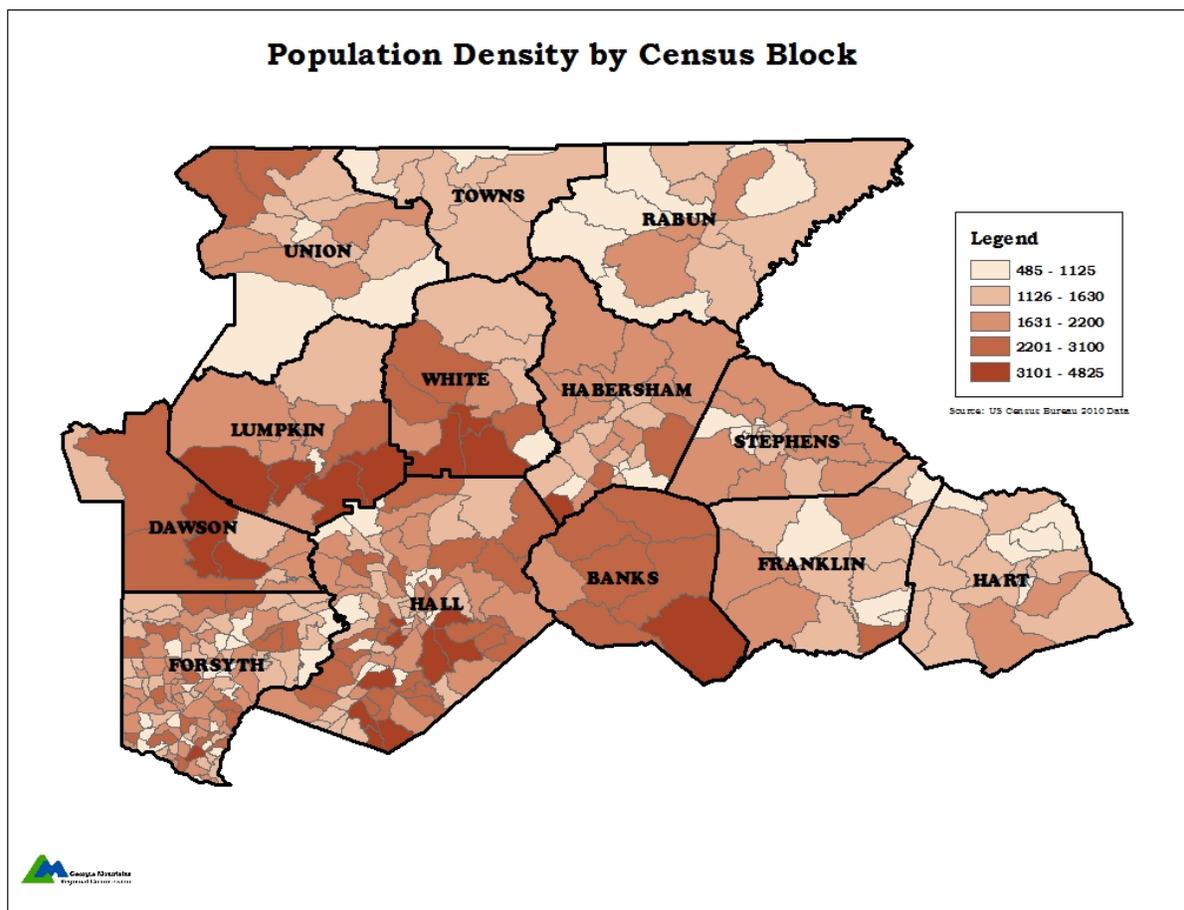
Land use in the Georgia Mountains region is primarily rural in nature, the exceptions being Forsyth and Hall Counties. The majority of land is undeveloped or used for agriculture or forestry. Most residential land use is concentrated around the small towns located throughout the region, with some retirement communities located in the mountain areas of the region. Commercial and industrial development tends to be located where necessary infrastructure is in place (i.e., along major transportation corridors and where water and sewer amenities are available). Because of its rural character, there are very few local land use regulations in the Georgia Mountains counties. Those regulations that do exist tend to be weak not because of the regulations themselves, but due to lack of enforcement. However, the recognition of the need for land use regulations or guides is being expressed by local governments and citizens as they observe the fast paced growth taking place within their communities.

Trends and Community Highlights

- The Georgia Mountains Region is known for its State Parks, water resources like Lake Lanier and Lake Hartwell, national forests and wildlife management areas. The prevailing topography defined by the Appalachian Mountains has produced many scenic areas, picturesque valleys and ridgelines that have become the defining traits of the area. The rural character of the communities and the quality of life associated with each city and town has become directly related to the natural landscape and terrain of the region, giving high priority to the preservation of these areas.
- The amenities that have attracted so many people to the area have also lead to a change in the predominant demographics of the population. In the metro areas of Forsyth and Hall Counties the mass influx of employment opportunities has brought

with it a higher ratio of minority and Latino households. Conversely, the rural counties to the north and surrounding reservoirs, has attracted a high volume of retirees and seasonal residents.

- The recent economic trends of the region have been marked by a decline of the goods production sectors and an increase in the commercial and medical services sectors. While this means the employment rates have been generally steady overall, and the volume of amenities and retail options have increased with the number of residents, the loss of manufacturing jobs has hampered the growth of household revenues.
- The one sector that has prospered has been that of tourism. Overall population growth of the surrounding metropolitan areas has increased the number of prospective visitors to the region, and tourism to the Georgia Mountains has increased dramatically over the past two decades. This includes visitors to the parks and national forests as well as visitors to the many towns, festivals and regional attractions (like the two outlet malls). Going forward most of the regions counties and municipalities have ambitions of sustaining or growing their regional tourist appeal.
- Surface water is the predominant source for public water in the Georgia Mountains area, and this dependence is expected to increase due to population growth within and outside the region. It is anticipated more regional reservoirs will be developed within the 13 county areas in the next 10-20 years. Not only will this require additional investments in infrastructure, but it will necessitate greater scrutiny with regards to environmental management. Lake Lanier provides 36% of drinking water to the Metro City of Atlanta area.



GMRC Population Projections 2015 - 2030

	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030
Banks	18,395	20,009	21,701	23,475	25,270
Dawson	22,330	24,644	27,029	29,507	32,022
Forsyth	175,511	211,849	256,307	316,359	383,258
Franklin	22,084	22,590	23,024	23,383	23,685
Habersham	43,041	45,856	48,705	51,629	54,623
Hall	179,684	201,310	226,172	252,433	282,164
Hart	25,213	25,851	26,389	26,855	27,240
Lumpkin	29,966	33,748	38,075	42,831	47,966
Rabun	16,276	16,792	17,201	17,535	17,762
Stephens	26,175	27,078	27,905	28,604	29,161
Towns	10,471	11,173	11,874	12,470	13,008
Union	21,356	22,500	23,570	24,458	25,219
White	27,144	29,117	31,057	32,994	34,841
	617,646	692,517	779,009	882,533	996,219

Source:

Estimates: 2010

US Census Bureau, 2011

Projections: 2015-2030

Georgia Residential Population Projections by County: 2015-2030, 2012 Series, Governor's Office of Planning and Budget

Economic Climate/Regional Economy

The Georgia Mountains Region has a diversified economic base in both domestic and international markets. There are many economic drivers in our region, including agricultural, automotive, industrial manufacturing, healthcare, tourism and asset based development, and educational sectors, which provide a stable business climate and environment. All of these factors enhance the quality of life and make the Georgia Mountains Region an ideal place to live and work.

The ten largest employers in the Georgia Mountains Region in 2013 were the following: Fieldale Further Processing, Ingles, Koch Foods of Cumming, LLC, Northeast Georgia Medical Center, Northside Hospital – Forsyth, PCS, Pilgrim’s Pride Corp, Publix Super Market, Inc., Tyson Poultry, Inc., and Wal-Mart.

Demographics

Efforts to predict the future economic profile of the Georgia Mountains Region can be assisted by an understanding of the historic population growth patterns of the region and the existing population profile. Through the understanding of current trends, decision makers can better prepare for regional changes in population age, location, and household makeup. Improving the economic health of the region is a common goal and requires policy makers to understand how changes in the region’s population will affect the opportunities for economic growth.

The Georgia Mountains Region has grown tremendously over the past several decades. In fact, the Georgia Mountains region population growth exceeded both the state and national rates, and it appears that this trend will continue in future years. Much of the growth taking place within the region is occurring in areas where transportation corridors are present. Other migration factors can be attributed to individual economic factors, retirement population, and urban sprawl and spillover from Metropolitan Atlanta.

Employment Trends

Of the total labor force in the Georgia Mountains Region, nine of the thirteen counties in the region enjoyed an increase in the number of people employed. In the four counties that experienced a downturn in employment, these decreases were relatively modest, with only two counties experiencing a change higher than 1.5%. See below for more details.

County	2012 Employment	2013 Employment	Change
Habersham	17,787	19,152	7.7%
White	11,757	12,106	3.0%
Hall	83,687	85,333	2.0%
Dawson	10,272	10,409	1.3%
Forsyth	88,732	89,918	1.3%
Lumpkin	11,760	11,916	1.3%
Rabun	5,658	5,727	1.2%
Union	10,115	10,037	0.8%
Stephens	11,957	12,007	0.4%
Franklin	8,950	8,819	-1.5%
Hart	8,908	8,777	-1.5%
Towns	5,392	5,054	-6.3%
Banks	9,604	8,989	-6.4%

Source: Georgia Department of Labor, Area Labor Profile

General employment levels throughout the region have stabilized compared to the recession of 2008-2012, though overall trends indicate some issues remain. The counties most affiliated with metro Atlanta (Dawson, Forsyth, Hall) showed notable gains, though it was the counties to their immediate north of White and Habersham that yielded the highest net growth during the past 18 months. Part of this stems from recent business openings and commercial expansions in those counties, including a new Walmart within White County. But while these employment figures are turning more positive the types of jobs and wages being offered are increasingly of the hourly wage term as opposed to higher, salaried pay.

The bulk of the region, however, remains stagnant or still in decline. The counties along the region's eastern arm, along the I-85 corridor, continued to lag as the recession was weakening. These are among the least populated counties and also home to many of the region's commercial agricultural operations. The absence of a broader, established industrial base in these communities translates into a less dynamic labor force able to lure more goods production or other major industry. In response to these conditions these counties and cities are working to develop their labor pool and increase skill sets and educational resources, knowing that their relatively small size also means even single new employers can yield great impacts on local economies.

Employment Wage Statistics

The table below shows estimated average wage information for the Georgia Mountains Workforce Investment Area for the third quarter, 2013. Wage levels are monitored as an indicator of a local economy’s fiscal health, ensuring households have the means to afford decent housing and lifestyles.

Area Name	Total Average Employment	*Average Hourly Wage	Average Weekly Wage	*Average Annual Wage
Georgia	3,920,080	\$21.68	\$867	\$45,084
GMWIA**	212,205	\$18.48	\$739	\$38,428

* = Assumes a 40-hour week worked the year round.

** = Georgia Mountains Workforce Investment Area

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

The wage levels for the Georgia Mountains region are approximately 85.24% that of the state average. Adjusting for cost of living indices and the impact of metro Atlanta on the state figures, the region should ideally be higher and preferably above the 90% threshold. The 2013 data reflects the recession’s impact on local hiring as hourly wage positions became a larger percentage of the area’s employment. It also suggests the new service and goods production jobs that have come into the area are not offering notably higher wages to offset the other trends. Some of this may be the time needed to adjust labor force skill sets and the region’s industries turn over in the new economy, and these figures are expected to show some improvement in the near term as new medical and educational positions are brought into the region.

Industry Employment Distribution

The table below shows the distribution of industries in the Georgia Mountains Workforce Investment Area for the third quarter 2013. Monitoring the industrial make-up of a community provides an indication of labor skills and educational resources needed as well as highlighting the markets that provide the community's positive economic base.

Rank	Industry Sector	Establishments	Employees	
			#	%
1	Manufacturing (31-33)	846	37,539	17.8%
2	Retail Trade (44 & 45)	2,076	27,030	12.8%
3	Health Care and Social Assistance	1,340	26,623	12.6%
4	Accommodation and Food Services	1,083	20,634	9.8%
5	Education Services	358	20,153	9.5%
6	Admin., Support, Waste Mgmt., Remediation	944	13,804	6.5%
7	Wholesale Trade	1,159	11,560	5.5%
8	Construction	1,775	10,749	5.1%
9	Public Administration	230	9,439	4.5%
10	Professional, Scientific & Technical Svc	1,820	7,724	3.7%
11	Transportation and Warehousing (48 & 49)	416	5,493	2.6%
12	Finance and Insurance	777	5,001	2.4%
13	Other Services (except Public Admin.)	923	4,236	2.0%
14	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	206	2,986	1.4%
15	Information	222	2,310	1.1%
16	Management of Companies and Enterprises	65	1,889	0.9%
17	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting	120	1,534	0.7%
18	Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	581	1,493	0.7%
19	Utilities	34	1,100	0.5%
20	Mining	20	125	0.1%

For the Georgia Mountains region manufacturing remains the most prominent form of employment, providing more than 37,000 jobs throughout the 13 counties - Almost 1 out of every 5 positions. A very significant number of those employees come from the food processing industry concentrated around Gainesville, particularly for poultry. These businesses and their affiliated partners oversee a significant employment base generating varieties of food products for export around the globe and bringing money into the region. Many of these employees, however, at hourly wages or low-level salaries because the jobs themselves do not require advanced education or skills sets.

After manufacturing related employment, the region's next most prominent sectors are for the retail trade, health care and accommodation/food services. The retail and food services components have grown rapidly a more businesses seek to capitalize on cheap labor to populate shops and restaurants, especially as franchising dominates modern commercial

practices. While this provides an entry point for low-skilled and new-to-market employees seeking experience, often these wages are not designed to sustain careers or households.

The health care industry has grown within the region due to expansion of existing hospitals and the current construction of a new hospital and medical center in south Hall County. These have been in response to the region's overall population growth, particularly the popularity of the area to older households seeking to enjoying more serene settings within proximate distance to metro Atlanta amenities and services. This growing employment base is a strong asset to the region, yielding high wage levels and encouraging a more highly skilled labor force, provided these facilities can maintain high quality performance rates for services.

Education is the last of the significant industrial sectors for the region and is regarded as a favorable asset to any community. The abundance of post-secondary institutions within the region is a major benefit to residents and employers, particularly as the State adjusts the technical college system to even better serve industrial education. The region is working to grow these institutions and to increase the area's profile as a home for higher learning.

All remaining industrial sectors provide benefits to the region but produce less than 40% of regional employment combined. Their well-being remains important, and some sectors should receive special attention for strong wage levels and overall economic activity, but individually they're not as critical to the Georgia Mountains region's economic base in the near term.

Occupational Employment Distribution

Comparable to industrial employment patterns, evaluating employment by job types provides insight into local labor force skill sets and indications of skills needed in the future. The following table shows the distribution of occupations in Georgia Mountains Workforce Investment Area for the 2010-2020 time period.

Unlike the data for employment by industrial sector, the region's occupational distribution is more balanced, indicating a relative diversity of skill sets among the labor force. The Office and Administrative Support category is the most prominent, indicative of the volume of general office staff available to all the different industries within the area. While these may not rank among the highest paying of positions they do tend to offer salaries and benefits as well as skills that are easily translated across business types.

Similar highlights can be gleaned from the figures for Sales positions, the second most populous occupation another form of employment that cuts across industry type. However sales positions can offer significant wage levels at certain industries, but this category is also marked mostly for retail employees and supporting staff. Strong figures in this category typically

indicate a stable economy but are not a reflection on levels of disposable income or overall economic growth.

Rank	Occupation Group	2010 Employment		2020 Employment
		#	%	- Projected
1	Office and Administrative Support	32,972	15.1%	40,235
2	Sales and Related	24,359	11.1%	28,676
3	Production	24,807	11.3%	27,363
4	Transportation and Material Moving	17,438	8.0%	21,680
5	Food Preparation and Serving Related	16,595	7.6%	20,811
6	Education, Training, and Library	15,896	7.3%	19,770
7	Management	14,391	6.6%	16,127
8	Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	10,205	4.7%	14,417
9	Construction and Extraction	10,454	4.8%	12,980
10	Installation, Maintenance, and Repair	8,914	4.1%	10,657
11	Business and Financial Operations	7,739	3.5%	10,160
12	Building/ Grounds Cleaning/ Maintenance	7,197	3.3%	9,078
13	Personal Care and Service	6,327	2.9%	8,896
14	Healthcare Support	4,205	1.9%	6,111
15	Protective Service	4,095	1.9%	4,639
16	Computer and Mathematical	2,817	1.3%	3,665
17	Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media	2,468	1.1%	2,936
18	Community and Social Services	2,036	0.9%	2,750
19	Farming, Fishing, and Forestry	2,393	1.1%	2,279
20	Architecture and Engineering	1,412	0.6%	1,591
21	Legal	1,132	0.5%	1,362
22	Life, Physical, and Social Science	722	0.3%	825

Source: Labor Market Statistics, Occupational Employment Projections Unit

Goods Production is the third most prominent occupation type in the region and the only other one above 10% share of area employees. This is the sector most associated with economic growth and industrial economies, with most employees in this sector earning notable wage levels and benefits which can in turn stimulate local economies. 11% is a healthy level for this occupational type pending the distribution as a whole, but the local communities will be striving to see that figure grow is possible.

Of the remaining occupational categories the most significant marks for the Georgia Mountains Region are those within rankings 6-11 for 2010. This grouping of occupations reflects the bulk of professional careers and services associated with higher education levels, salary levels and burgeoning economies. If these sectors grow as shares of area occupations it would indicate the formal transition of the Georgia Mountains area from an older, agrarian and industrial economy to one of more modern and diverse industrial base.

Occupations by Employment Wage

Complementing the previous discussions of wage levels and occupations, the table below shows the occupations with the highest paying 2012 estimated mean (annual) wages in Georgia Mountains Workforce Investment Area, Georgia. This overview of top-paying positions provides an indication of the economic ceiling achieved within the region. Most significantly, identifying categories that are among transmutable occupations, as opposed to traditional health care categories, further demonstrates the diversity of a local economy and the potential of other native industries to foster high-paying positions.

For the Georgia Mountains region the bulk of local high-paying occupations do lie within the health care and legal fields. While this is expected considering the area’s growing medical industries, the drop off in wage levels to other common occupations suggests the region would benefit from fostering new employment in other fields such as computer technology and engineering.

Rank	Occupation	2012 Estimated Mean Annual Wage
1	Physicians and Surgeons, All Other	\$231,188
2	Pediatricians, General	\$223,031
3	Dentists, General	\$208,179
4	Family and General Practitioners	\$199,160
5	Chief Executives	\$169,412
6	Lawyers	\$129,190
7	Computer and Information Systems Managers	\$127,941
8	Architectural and Engineering Managers	\$115,382
9	Training and Development Managers	\$111,679
10	Physician Assistants	\$110,219

Wage Source: Occupational Employment Statistics and Wages Program

25th percent and 75th percent wage rates represent the 25th and 75th percentile of the wage distribution, respectively

Labor Force Estimates October 2013 and October 2014

County	Unemployment Rate		Total in Labor Force		Total Unemployed	
	Oct-'13	Oct-'14	Oct-'13	Oct-'14	Oct-'13	Oct-'14
Banks	6.00%	5.40%	8,915	9,810	568	529
Dawson	6.30%	5.70%	11,084	11,179	702	632
Forsyth	5.80%	5.40%	89,686	96,338	5,476	5,227
Franklin	9.00%	7.50%	9,539	9,851	855	735
Habersham	7.10%	6.40%	20,503	20,249	1,458	1,292
Hall	6.40%	5.70%	91,104	92,301	5,868	5,290
Hart	9.50%	8.40%	9,521	9,803	909	820
Lumpkin	8.20%	7.10%	12,903	13,302	1,055	944
Rabun	9.70%	8.60%	6,323	5,978	615	512
Stephens	7.60%	6.50%	12,846	13,029	970	852
Towns	6.60%	6.10%	5,570	5,733	367	348
Union	6.10%	5.40%	10,704	11,036	654	596
White	7.10%	6.40%	13,182	13,446	4,083	856

Source: Georgia Department of Labor, "Georgia Labor Force Estimates by County" and are not seasonally adjusted

The unemployment rate in the thirteen county Georgia Mountains Regional Commission area has declined as seen in the above chart from October 2013 until October 2014. The labor force within the area has grown in eleven of the region's counties. This possibly can be attributed to discouraged individuals leaving the workforce. Georgia Mountains Workforce Development is working with all thirteen counties through the Workforce investment Act to train and retrain individuals to be better suited for an ever changing workforce market.

Educational Attainment

Educational attainment levels are indications of the training and knowledge base inherit within a region’s adult population. The higher the education level, the higher the likelihood that populace can produce and sustain a strong and diverse labor pool capable of supporting quality industries.

The most recent data for the Georgia Mountains region illustrates the disparity of education levels throughout the region, and the need for increased support in select counties. Forsyth scores the highest due to that community’s growing identity as a suburb of metro Atlanta and a hot spot for technical and medical related employment. The percentage share of residents with at least a college degree is almost twice the range for any other county. Their immediate neighbor along the Ga 400 highway, Dawson County, features comparably high marks and is likely experiencing proximity benefits of the location.

Several communities show weaker rates regarding high school equivalency but various rates of collegiate education. This is likely due to the attrition happening as once agrarian communities evolve into havens for educated retirees and/or executives for local industry, even as the younger generations become the first with significant demand for at least a high school education. Now that more and more employment comes from technical and specialized fields, traditional farming or low-skilled employment opportunities are not as readily available for area youth. This is most notably reflected in the region’s eastern half, as all the counties east of the 985/365/441 corridor, which harbors the bulk of remaining agricultural industries, exhibit the lowest scores within the region.

Minimum Education Levels - Percentage of Adults Age 25+ (year?)

County	High School Diploma	Bachelor’s Degree
Forsyth	90.6	43.6
Towns	86.5	20.8
Dawson	84.6	18.8
White	83.3	19.6
Union	82.9	21.6
Lumpkin	80.9	19.5
Rabun	80.5	24.7
Hall	76.5	21.0
Hart	75.3	15.2
Habersham	75.0	18.7
Stephens	74.8	13.3
Franklin	74.3	13.6
Banks	73.0	10.5

Plant Closings

While the overall economy of the Georgia Mountains Region is on the upward recovery from the recession, several communities have been largely impacted by layoffs experienced by private industries located within their community. These layoffs impact not only the community where the industry is located, but also the adjoining communities in the region where the employees reside. Companies have a responsibility to notify Georgia’s Rapid Response Team of impending layoffs and this information is provided to the public as part of the federal WARN system. The number of layoffs in the region during the last year was 351 and was significantly lower than in previously reported years.

Business	Jobs Lost
CCA North GA Detention Center	125
Schreiber Foods	115
Shenanegans Pub **	30
Sweet Breads, Natalie Janes, Sharky’s **	26
PSS Dispensing	25
Moschetto’s Restaurant	10
Standard Register	10
Toccoa Clinic	10
Totals	351

**Denotes loss of jobs due to fire

GMRC Workforce Development

The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998 was the first major reform to the education and training opportunities funded by the federal government in over 15 years. The funding provides education and training to eligible individuals to enhance their current skills or learn a new trade. Individuals seeking assistance through the Georgia Mountains Workforce Development must be a resident in one of the Georgia Mountains counties or is/was employed by a company whose business is/was within the Georgia Mountains service area.

The GMRC Workforce Development Department offers education and training services in the following areas: Youth, Adult/Dislocated Workers and via our two Mobile Training Units.

Youth Services

- GED Services – assist youth that have withdrawn or dropped out of school, obtain their GED and transition to post-secondary education or employment.
- College or Technical College Assistance – Assist the youth in endeavoring post-secondary education, in a two year program. Must be an approved program of study and an approved provider.
- Y.E.A.R. – Youth Employment Apprenticeship Resource allows youth, who have successfully completed a Summer Work Experience or who are highly recommended by school coordinators, opportunity for a subsidized work experience throughout the year. (Restrictions apply, ie. Must keep grades up in school.)
- Credit Recovery Program – assists youth who have failed courses necessary for graduation and desire to be in a credit recovery program. (Incentives offered for completion of each credit earned.)
- Summer Work Experience – 6 week program in which youth are assisted in obtaining work experience in area businesses.
- After School Tutoring – Provides after school tutors for youth who are falling behind in school, have a learning disability.

Adult/Dislocated Worker Services

- Training must be in a field considered in demand for the Georgia Mountains Workforce Area.
- Training must result in an employment wage sufficient to maintain or increase income.
- GMWD assists with costs related to training, including but not limited to the following: books, tuition and fees, general supplies, tools, uniforms and shoes, certification, licensing, testing fees, drug testing for entrance into training, medical requirements for training entrance, etc. We also assist with supportive services: Transportation and child care.
- Programs should not exceed 104 weeks (two years).
- All customers must maintain full-time training status.

Mobile Training Units

- Testing as needed for applicants
- Career Center closing/ closest location of career center could be 45 minutes for some mountain areas. Several areas have or will be closing career centers, and WIA may help fill the gap in services.
- Provide tutorial and workforce skills training/The unit could be beneficial for training in computer skills and soft skills.
- OJT/GED/Occupational Skills program assessments.
- Enhance our response to emergencies and local workforce reductions/company closings
- Improve our involvement at trade shows, job fairs and expositions.
- Visit employer organization meetings to promote knowledge of and use of equipment and services
- On-line job search
- Resume and cover letter development

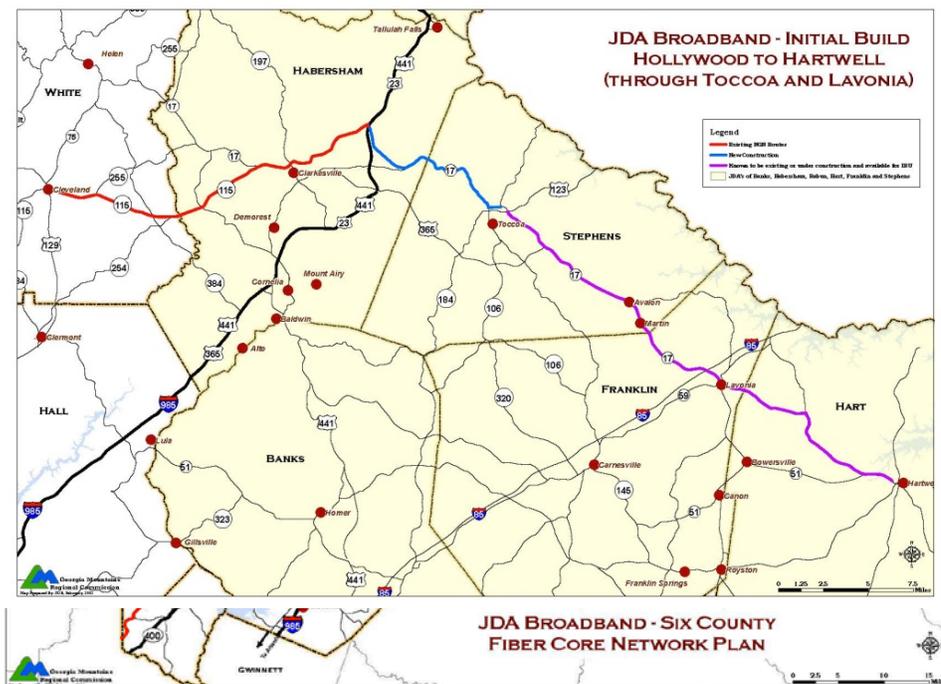
CURRENT DIGITAL ECONOMY PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS IN THE REGION

Broadband Service Summary

The counties of Union, Towns, Rabun, Habersham, White, Lumpkin, Dawson, Hall and Forsyth have access to the **North Georgia Network** (NGN) which was established 2009 with a \$36 million dollar investment. Currently, there are gigabit-plus speeds with terabit core capacity. It is a 100% fiber optic MPLS network. Gigabit fiber is available for the residents in some of these areas. The NGN consists of 1,200 local miles of fiber available through Electric Membership Corporations with affordable, redundant service.

The Joint Development Authority of Banks, Habersham and Rabun, in 2011, received grant funding of \$355,000 to connect into the North Georgia Network and run the fiber network to the Rabun Business Park.

In 2012 the Joint Development Authorities of Franklin, Hart and Stephens and Banks, Habersham, and Rabun submitted an application and received grant funding from OneGeorgia Authority in the amount of \$948,000, to create the **Northeast Georgia Network (NEGN)**. Routes were selected which would interconnect cities, towns and population centers within a four county area. In order to effectively and efficiently target this project, it was necessary to select a partner organization to provide a direct link to Atlanta. That partner was North Georgia Network. NEGN interfaced with NGN for network management and backhaul facilities to Atlanta and was provided at the existing NGN core network at the Habersham EMC Hollywood



sub-station.

The following development and business parks have connection to the North Georgia and Northeast Georgia fiber network:

1. Dawson Business Park, 135 Prominence Court, Dawsonville
2. Lumpkin County Technology Park, Georgia 400 and Highway 60, Dahlonega
3. White County Long Mountain Business and Technology Park, 192 Daybreak Road, Cleveland
4. Habersham Airport Industrial Park, 241 Industrial Park Road, Baldwin
5. Rabun Business Park, 400 Kelly's Creek Road, Rabun Gap
6. Union County Blairsville Airport Regional Industrial Park, Airport Industrial Drive, Blairsville
7. Stephens County Hayestone Brady Business Park, 10 Hammerstone Road, Toccoa
8. Central Franklin Industrial Park, Interstate 85 at Exit 166, Carnesville

9. Hart County Industrial Park, 189 Industrial Park Road, Hartwell

Current Projects

Joint Development Authority (JDA) of Franklin, Hart and Stephens Counties OneGeorgia Authority 2014 Grant Application - \$495,000

The JDA is seeking grant funding to create a fiber optic loop to provide reliability and performance to business/industries, healthcare organizations and educational institutions in the areas of Franklin, Hart, Stephens, Banks, Jackson and Madison.

The necessity to create a broadband loop was acknowledged and contemplated during pre-application discussions with the state authorities when the Northeast Georgia Network (NEGN) project was initially proposed, but the JDA was asked by the state to delay this project. Currently, the original project of 75-mile broadband network of fiber optic which traverses (west to east) Habersham, Stephens, Franklin and Hart Counties is very close to completion. The need for network redundancy and route diversity to ensure reliability is prevalent at this time in these rural areas. The project activities will include creating a loop by connecting the JDA's lateral from its termination point at Royston, which straddles Franklin, Hart and Madison counties, to a fiber optic network point in Atlanta.

Georgia Appalachian Center for Higher Education (GACHE) Appalachian Regional Commission Grant Funding 2014 Application - \$150,000 University of North Georgia Match - \$64,286

GACHE will work with the neediest high schools in the selected counties to provide programs, training, strategies, funds and assistance to encourage and prepare students to continue their education by enrolling in post-secondary institutions. In the past nine years, GACHE has worked with 45 high schools; served 124,405 students and 22,829 high school seniors. GACHE model program, as recognized by the Appalachian High Education Network (AHEN), provides training for teachers in implementing the state's curriculum with rigor, introduces students to college campuses through high school field trips, works with families to identify financial aid resources and collaborate with community agencies, economic developers and local businesses to establish work ready culture after high school.

White County Development Authority / City of Helen Businesses Appalachian Regional Commission Grant Funding 2014 Application - \$300,000 Local Match - \$161,790

Project will consist of approximately 2.75 miles of fiber optic cable construction. Currently, the City of Helen is at a distinct disadvantage when compared to other areas in terms of consistent high-speed fiber optic broadband services. Dependable internet connectivity is not available for credit card transactions, travel agency bookings, live stream conferences, data transfers,

businesses and artisans needing to market their goods in Helen. This project will provide the much needed connectivity to Helen's Public Safety, government, library, businesses, visitors and residents.

Lumpkin County Internet Marketing Business

*Georgia Department of Community Affairs – Employment Incentive Program –
2014 Application - \$166,909*

Project will construct a fiber optic cable from Highway 52 North along Long Branch Road to Copper Mines Road to support an internet marketing business. The company's current upload and download speed only has the capacity for 12 Mbps. In order to expand business and create more jobs, they need to connect to the fiber network for faster upload and download speeds.

White County Treatment Center

*Georgia Department of Community Affairs – Employment Incentive Program –
2014 Application - \$492,474*

Project will connect the Treatment Center to fiber network providing access to fast, dependable broadband network. The advent of telemedicine requires the Treatment Center to share information about their patients with their primary care physicians and/or specialist physicians via electronic communications to improve each patient's clinical health status.

Dawson GigCenter – The Location to “Power Your Innovation”

The Development Authority of Dawson County (DADC) working in cooperation with the Georgia Communication Cooperative and the Dawson Premier Office Park have formed a joint venture to provide State-of-the-Art 100% fiber internet capacity to allow start-up businesses access to the world. However, the Dawson GigCenter is more than just high speed fiber internet. The DADC has formed a collaborative of consultants and business experts into a rural business incubator designed to help your new business succeed. Locating your high tech business in the Dawson GigCenter provides you access to GSS Trailwave fiber service and to products that will help your business connect and grow without fear of slow internet speeds or limited product capabilities. The Dawson GigCenter surrounds your business team with experience and connectivity that will help you solve problems and grow your business.

Non-Digital Economy Projects

Georgia Mountains Regional Commission – Mobile Training Units – “Career Coaches”

The Georgia Mountains Regional Commission office of Workforce Development operates two ‘Career Coaches’, which are mobile extensions of Georgia’s One-Stop Workforce Delivery System. One coach is capable of seating 13 individuals, and the other coach is capable of seating 7 individuals. The Coaches are configured as mobile computer labs with satellite & cellular internet access, making the following services available anywhere they are needed throughout the Georgia Mountains region:

- Individualized Online Job Searches and Applications
- Resume and Cover Letter Development
- Career Interest Surveys and Assessments
- Information about Tuition Assistance Programs
- Immediate Response to Workforce Reductions and/or Business Closings
- Skills Assessments for Job Placement & WIA Program Applicants
- Workforce, Computer, Typing & MS Office Training and Practice
- Collaboration and Partnership with Primary and Secondary Schools
- Soft Skills/Job Interview Training and Simulations
- WIA Involvement at Trade Shows, Job Fairs and Expositions
- Mobile Command Post for Local Disaster Relief Efforts
- Specially Designed Services Based on Community Need

Both Career Coaches are wheelchair accessible, so they are able to assist individuals that may not otherwise be able to travel to the nearest Georgia Department of Labor One-Stop Centers. The Coaches are also able to operate and communicate independently of local infrastructure, and are made available to respond to large scale emergencies at the local government’s request.

By partnering with libraries, food banks, schools, and other community organizations, the Career Coaches and their operators have assisted over 1,200 individuals during the last fiscal year. Some individuals sought multiple forms of assistance, and the Coaches have provided almost 3,000 individualized services.

While the Career Coaches routinely support all Workforce Development programs, they have likely had the most impact providing Rapid Response services to those affected by disasters and workforce reductions. During the last fiscal year, the Coaches have responded to the closure of Schreiber Foods in Gainesville, a multi-building fire in Downtown Clarkesville, and a building fire in Downtown Dahlonega. In just these three incidents, the Coaches assisted over 150 individuals with a variety of on-site services including: filing for unemployment benefits,

computer skills training to include MS Word and Excel, GED test preparation, resume creation and submission, as well as job searches and applications.

Lanier Technical School – Economic Development

Advanced Manufacturing Technology Center

Programmable Logic Controllers - PLC's

Robotics

Basic Electrical and Mechanical Maintenance Skills

Rapid 3D Prototyping

Industry specific, or customized training, delivers the needed training when, where, and how it is wanted. Customized training varies from modification of an existing class to needs analysis and course development.

Customized training is offered to existing industries upon request. This service includes such activities as training consultation, training analysis, course development and course implementation. The training can take place in company facilities, Lanier Tech's Advanced Manufacturing Technology Center or other sites deemed appropriate for the training required. The costs of the courses vary according to the complexity of the training.

Customized training is available in the areas of supervisory and management development, human resources, security training, industrial safety, customer service, and technical skill areas.

Featherbone Communiversity

The creators of Featherbone Communiversity consider the community learning center as a natural extension of The Warren Featherbone Company's historic role in the life and welfare of Gainesville and the North Georgia region. Today, that legacy lives on but with a new emphasis on shared learning and a mission to foster creativity, entrepreneurship and community-wide dialogue.

Ultimately, the role of Featherbone Communiversity is to provide everyone in the North Georgia region an opportunity to make connections, engage in collaborative learning, imagine possibilities, and work together to create a better quality of life for all.

The founding members of Featherbone Communiversity are the Brenau University Department of Nursing, the Interactive Neighborhood for Kids, and the Lanier Technical College Manufacturing Development Center. It is also the home for the Gainesville offices of the

University of Georgia Small Business Development Center and the Georgia Tech Enterprise Innovation Institute.

The organizations making up Featherbone Communiversality have much more in common than might be obvious. And as they strengthen their relationships with each other and step outside of their own needs, new services will be provided that will benefit the community as a whole.

Capital Investments

The largest investment in the GMRC Region for broadband services is the North Georgia Network (NGN). NGN has partnered with Habersham and Blue Ridge Mountain Electric Membership Corporations to provide 3,600 miles of fiber to businesses and residents located here. The NGN was established in 2009 with an investment of \$36 million dollars. In 2012, the Northeast Georgia Network tied into the NGN to provide fiber to the counties of Banks, Franklin, Hart and Stephens with an investment of \$948K. The latest grant application will fund the connection of the NEGN back to Atlanta to complete the loop.

Other broadband providers and investors in the GMRC region include: AT&T, WindStream, ComCast and TruVista. It is unknown at this time what the investment capital is from these providers.

The GMRC Economic Development Department has written numerous grants for broadband projects. The following are applicable to broadband projects:

OneGeorgia

OneGeorgia Authority EDGE FUND	Amount generally approved for project need as recommended from State (Ex: GDEcD)	Local governments, Development Authorities, Joint Development Authorities (Rural Communities)	Public land acquisition & site development, public infrastructure, publicly owned machinery and equipment, and publicly owned/privately leased fixed assets
OneGeorgia Authority EQUITY FUND	Maximum of \$500,000	Local governments, Development Authorities, Joint Development Authorities	Public land acquisition & site development, public infrastructure, publicly owned machinery and equipment, Industrial Park development, workforce development, and tourism development
OneGeorgia Authority BRIDGE PROGRAM	Single County- \$200,000 Maximum Two Counties- \$400,000 Maximum Three or More Counties-No Maximum	Cities, counties, joint or multi-county Development Authorities. Sub-recipient is generally a for-profit entity	Technical Assistance, Engineering & Planning Services, Technology Infrastructure, Machinery & Equipment, Acquisition of Real Property

EIP

Community Development Block Grant-Employment Incentive Program (CDBG-EIP)	Maximum amount of \$500,000	All general-purpose local governments in the Georgia Mountains Region	Examples include: Public water and sewer systems, distribution and/or collection lines, wastewater treatment projects, rail spurs. Fixed assets, including land, new facilities, rehabilitation of existing facilities, machinery, equipment, etc. <u>Projects must create and/or retain jobs.</u>
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ARC

<p>Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC)</p>	<p>Limited to Competitive: 30% funding; Transitional: 50% of total project cost. Maximum grant amount is \$300,000</p>	<p>Federally-designated counties and cities within the 13 county GMRC area</p>	<p>Must follow in accordance with one of four ARC strategic goals. Projects include infrastructure, tourism, health care, education, access roads, etc.</p>
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Other potential funding sources for broadband may come from the Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) resources in the GMRC region. These are the RLF resources for potential project funding:

- Georgia Mountains Regional Commission
- Rabun County
- Hart County
- City of Lavonia

Strategic Focus Areas

DIGITAL ECONOMY STRATEGY

Goal and Policies

The following measures will be put into practices as recommended policies and/or long-term objectives for the GMRC and its partners in fostering a stronger digital communication infrastructure and hi-tech industry. Where they are able, each organization will adopt these measures as part of their own planning documents or established policies and practices.

Goal: *Ensure new telecommunication networks for needed accessibility and reliability to support the growth of the regional economy.*

Strategy: *Prepare to meet industry and business telecommunication needs by assisting with fiber optic network development.* The purpose of this strategy is to support, develop, and provide educational opportunities regarding telecommunication systems in the region.

Support the creation of regional broadband network. The GMRC will provide organizational, research, and data collection along with grant writing assistance to all PPP ventures within the region that seek to expand, infill, or interconnect general trunk fiber core networks within the region.

Develop a usable information database for technology development. The GMRC will develop a useable database of statistical information, enterprise contacts, and viable grant program information designed to support the counties in their efforts to understand the current broadband systems, capacities and utilizations; to provide meaningful application data and statistics for grant applications, develop baseline and incremental performance benchmarks, and to utilize in leverage of regional and local economic marketing efforts.

Provide incumbent support for the creation of telecommunication opportunities. The GMRC will establish contact with all regional incumbent service providers to understand their needs, requirements, and long-range goals within the region and incorporate those findings into the Community Economic Development Strategy and any broadband regional initiatives that may be surfaced by those incumbents and/or new PPP ventures.

Provide support for enterprise opportunities for technology. The GMRC will work to establish both private and not-for-profit enterprise relationships within the region where new or greater broadband capacity could result in expansion, job creation, improved market penetration, or improvements in communications for the entities

involved. The GMRC will surface any and all opportunities to promote the high-tech capacities of the region through these relationships.

Promote broadband education. The GMRC will promote greater education of the capabilities, utilizations, and future needs of broadband within the region. This will be accomplished through formal programs, partnering, social and educational networking, and issuance of information streams through normal and newly developed communication tools.

Develop and promote intra-state initiatives. The GMRC, through its connection with other similar organizations throughout the state, including the Appalachian Regional Commission, State Commissioners, and all other interactions will seek to promote broadband capabilities within the GMRC region and look for any and all areas where mutual cooperation might benefit the region and where potential funding streams that might prove advantageous to the region might surface.

Strategy: *Promote and support the use of health information technology (IT).* The purpose of this strategy is to encourage local partnerships between health providers and local leaders in using telecommunications and other information technology to improve care to patients and lower health costs.

Encourage innovation, promotion, and adoption of tele-health. Support and develop pilot projects that demonstrate health IT reform that will enable the appropriate reuse of information to support quality public health and research. Further efforts should be aimed at endorsement and support of active participation of consumers in accessing and engaging with their health information.

Provide access to modern technology. Efforts should be aimed at promoting and supporting modern technology practices and health care specialty resources for rural areas. The need for rapid sharing and transfer of medical data is critical and often times, a matter of life and death.

Public awareness campaign. Enhance communication and support a public awareness campaign about the value of health information technology for outreach to all health care stakeholders, including providers, payers, and consumers of care. Develop and implement a public awareness campaign about the basics, benefits, and privacy implications of health information technology for multiple audiences, including health care providers, other business professionals, and families.

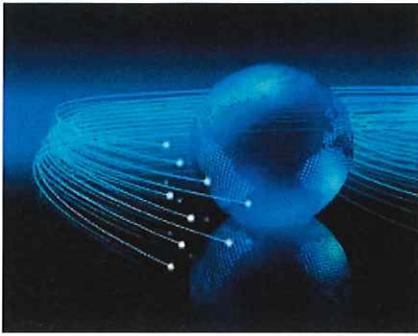
Technical assistance. Local leaders should encourage widespread adoption and use of health IT through incentives, grants, and other technical assistance. Efforts should also

be aimed at working with health practitioners to establish a baseline needs assessment.

Focus Areas and Work Program

Year	Action	Cost	Funding Options	Responsibility
2015	Develop a plan for using social media technologies to further promote the region.	\$5,000	EDA, DED	GMRC, DED
2015	Create a regional industry roundtable.	NA	EDA, DED	GMRC, DED
2015	Develop long-range telecommunications infrastructure improvement plan	\$15,000	Utilities	GMRC, Utilities
2016	Develop program linking local schools with area Technical Colleges.	\$5,000	EDA, DED	GMRC, DED
2016	Survey of medical facilities about tech infrastructure needs and abilities	\$15,000	TBD	GMRC
2016	Survey of colleges and universities about tech infrastructure needs and abilities	\$10,000	Ga. Board of Regents	GMRC, GBOR
2017	Develop and implement a public awareness campaign about health information technology	\$5,000	EDA, DED	GMRC, DED
2017	Develop inter-regional/state telecommunications strategy	TBD	EDA, DED	GMRC, EDA, DED

Appendices



Digital Economy Plan Stakeholders Meeting

Through a state-wide effort to assess Broadband access and availability, Georgia Mountains Regional Commission has been tasked with creating a regional Digital Economic Plan. The purpose of this plan is:

- ◆ To improve the well-being and health of residents and the viability of business
- ◆ To spur on technology-based economic development of all kinds
- ◆ To identify and assess gaps in regional broadband access and infrastructure, education, healthcare, and economic development
- ◆ To develop a strategy that assesses the best way to leverage assets and resources in order to close the identified gaps
- ◆ To catalyze economically competitive communities to increase competitiveness, improve service delivery, and reduce costs

GMRC will be conducting two Stakeholders Meetings whereby we will be reaching out to you for your input on broadband needs and trends as it relates to your field of expertise. The meeting dates are:

April 10th and April 17th

**Where: GMRC Training Room
1310 W Ridge Rd, Gainesville**

Time: 9:00 am—2:00 pm

RSVP by April 4th

We are reaching out to leaders in the GMRC region in such fields as Agriculture, Economic Development, Public Utilities, Healthcare, K-12 Education, Higher Education, Workforce Development, Libraries, Local Broadband and Internet Service Providers, Local Governments, Tourism, Local Entrepreneurs, Small Business Leaders, Creative Industry and Artisans.

Choose a date and join us as we embark on this digital technology highway and work together to improve broadband access and availability across the region for our residents and businesses.

Questions or Comments?

Contact: Faith Bryan
Director of Information Services
(770)538-2614
fbryan@gmrc.ga.gov





**Announcing
The Dawson GigCenter
The location to "Power Your Innovation"**

The Development Authority of Dawson County working in cooperation with the Georgia Communications Cooperative and the Dawson Premier Office Park have formed a joint venture to provide State-of-the-Art 100% fiber internet capacity to allow start-up businesses access to the world. However, the Dawson GigCenter is more than just high speed fiber internet. The DADC has formed a collaborative of consultants and business experts into a rural business incubator designed to help your new business succeed. We are here to help with;

- Business Plan Development
- Business Formation
- Business Connections, Marketing & Networking
- Technical Business Solutions
- Strategic Planning
- Capital Market Access
- Product Development, Rollout & Scale-Up
- Existing Business Growth Strategies

Locating your high tech business in the Dawson GigCenter provides you access to GCC Trailwave fiber service and to products that will help your business connect and grow without fear of slow internet speeds or limited product capabilities. The Dawson GigCenter surrounds your business team with experience and connectivity that will help you solve problems and grow your business.

**Join the move to the Fiberhood
The Dawson GigCenter -- "Power Your Innovation"**

Our Collaborateurs include;

- Development Authority of Dawson County & Beyond Connections
- Georgia Communications Coop
- Premier Office Park Association
- Dawson County Chamber of Commerce
- Connect North Georgia
- University of Georgia Small Business Development Center
- University of North Georgia MCCB Center for the Future of North Georgia
- University of North Georgia MCCB BB&T Center for Ethical Business Leadership

**Dawson GigCenter - Prominence Court - Dawsonville, GA 30534
For more information contact:
706.265.8761**

www.developdawson.org

development@dawson.org

developdawson 

DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY OF DAWSON COUNTY
DAWSON COUNTY, GEORGIA

Released on:
March 28, 2014
5:00 P.M.

Press Release – Development Authority Opens New Dawson GigCenter

Dawson County Georgia: The Development Authority of Dawson County (DADC) has rolled out a new incubator start-up concept that will bring the county into the ranks of the state's best Gig Villages. The DADC has established a multi-faceted joint venture that utilizes gigabit capacity 100 percent fiber technology to help small business and start-up firms compete from our rural setting. The new service makes the Premier Office Park located on Prominence Court a true GigCenter.

"This is more than just offering high speed and high capacity internet access to our new entrepreneurs," said Charlie Auvermann executive director of the authority. "We are offering problem solving, financial awareness and expertise designed to help young start-up companies realize their full potential."

He explained that a number of Gig Villages have appeared in municipal areas across the state but very few have opened in true rural areas. These villages bring together young entrepreneurs, business consultants, venture capitalists and high-speed internet capabilities in a common location with the goal of accelerating the growth of small business.

Examples of such villages include the Maker Village in Rome, the Atlanta Tech Village, Four Athens near UGA, the Atlanta Start-Up Village near GA Tech and the Clubhouse located in Augusta. All of these entities nurture start-up, high tech oriented businesses.

"There is no reason why all of the new ideas have to come from urban areas. There are many great ideas that spring from rural Georgia and we are here to help those ideas flourish," Auvermann stated.

The Dawson GigCenter is a partnership with the Premier Office Park Association in conjunction with the Georgia Communications Coop (GCC), the Dawson County Chamber of Commerce and Connect North Georgia amongst other organizations. It will work closely with the academic business expertise at the University of North Georgia's Mike Cottrell College of Business and with the University of Georgia Small Business Development Center located in Gainesville.

"The Dawson GigCenter is powered by GCC Trailwave which allows the office spaces to operate at very high internet speeds across the pure fiber NGN network directly to the internet hub located in Atlanta. That means start-ups that use significant computing capacity or that want to have a nationwide scope can be served without having to locate in expensive and congested Metro Atlanta office space," Auvermann noted.

The Dawson GigCenter becomes part of the Premier Office Park effective immediately. The DADC will provide a cash incentive to help reduce the fiber connection costs for any firms locating to the Dawson GigCenter. The Authority will also provide support on development hurdles new businesses encounter as they grow.

PRESS RELEASE – Development Authority of Dawson County -- Continued

Auvermann indicated this is not just a financial incentive to locate in the Dawson GigCenter but rather the desire to build long-term relationships so that young companies will realize they can grow in Dawson County and even become major corporations while still enjoying the natural amenities this region has to offer.

Auvermann explained, "I talk to young business entrepreneurs all the time that spend hours commuting down to Atlanta each day then face massive traffic jams to get back home. They are wasting their time, money and talents when they could be growing their businesses right here."

The Dawson GigCenter is designed to provide high capacity pure fiber internet plus the business contacts that are so vital to new companies. The Dawson location becomes one of but a very few that are located in rural areas.

He explained that the new digital economy encounters a substantial digital divide the further out it reaches from metropolitan areas. That was the reason the North Georgia Network was founded in the first place. Even with the fiber network the divide continues. It is through the efforts of organizations like Connect North Georgia, GCC and the development authority's Beyond Connections initiative that we are beginning to reduce that divide. As a team, we want to bring the North Georgia area into the real digital economy.

Auvermann said, "The Authority is bringing everything new business needs here so that they have a true fiberhood in the middle of our lakes, streams and mountains. The Dawson GigCenter is the community that will Power Your Innovation."

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Additional background:

NOTE the spelling of the Augusta facility is as typed the **Clubhou.se**

Cutline: -- None --

Photo/Image: -- None --

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Page 2 of 2

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AT&T INVESTS NEARLY \$5 BILLION OVER THREE-YEAR PERIOD TO ENHANCE LOCAL NETWORKS IN GEORGIA

Investment Expands Access to Nation's Most Reliable 4G LTE Network, AT&T U-verse Services; Brings Powerful Fiber-Optic Connections to More Georgia Businesses

ATLANTA, GA, MARCH 7, 2014 — AT&T* has invested more than \$4.95 billion in its best-in-class wireless and wired networks in Georgia between 2011 through 2013, driving a wide range of upgrades to enhance speed, reliability, coverage and performance for residents and business customers.

Advancing its Project Velocity IP (VIP), an investment plan to expand and enhance its wireless and wired IP broadband networks, AT&T in 2013 made 1,508 network upgrades in Georgia, including new cell sites, addition of wireless and wired network capacity, and new broadband network connections. Additionally, AT&T expanded the reach of its network, providing access to U-verse® Internet and video services to more than 39,000 new customer locations and delivering powerful fiber-optic connections to 16,161 business locations at 641 multi-tenant business buildings and business parks.

"Expanding the availability of mobile Internet services across our state will help Georgia's citizens and businesses compete and thrive in a global marketplace," said Lt. Governor Casey Cagle. "These investments are laying the technological foundation for continued economic growth and for new services and applications that will impact our lives in many areas, including education, medicine and commerce."

"AT&T's network investment is an investment in the economic future of Georgia," said Georgia Chamber President Chris Clark. "Wider availability of mobile Internet service ensures that people across the state have access to the online services and applications they need to succeed at home and

at work in a global economy. The pro-business policies of the Governor, Lt. Governor and General Assembly make such investments possible.”

“Georgia residents depend on our fast and reliable Internet connections more and more every day, whether it’s instant access to files and apps at work, watching a video at home, or even receiving updates from connected cars or home monitors,” said AT&T Georgia President Beth Shiroishi. “AT&T is making robust investments locally to make sure that residents can take full advantage of the latest services and tools, and that businesses have the speed they need to compete and grow.”

AT&T provides the nation’s most reliable 4G LTE network today, covering more than 280 million Americans with 4G LTE service. 4G LTE deployment is ahead of schedule; AT&T plans to be substantially complete with deployment by the summer of 2014. In 2013, several markets in Georgia were added to AT&T’s extensive LTE network, including: Albany, Athens, Atlanta, Augusta, Brunswick, Calhoun, Cedartown, Dalton, Gainesville, Jefferson-Commerce, Macon-Warner Robins, Milledgeville, Rome, Savannah, and Valdosta.

AT&T U-verse is delivered over AT&T’s advanced IP network and includes AT&T U-verse High Speed Internet, AT&T U-verse TV, and AT&T U-verse Voice.*** AT&T U-verse TV customers enjoy Total Home DVR®, apps for entertainment on the go, and integrated features. AT&T was named Frost & Sullivan Video Company of the Year for 2013.

AT&T operates the nation’s largest Wi-Fi network**** including more than 32,000 AT&T Wi-Fi Hot Spots at popular restaurants, hotels, bookstores and retailers, and provides access to more than 529,000 hotspots globally through roaming agreements. Most AT&T smartphone customers get access to our entire national Wi-Fi network at no additional cost, and Wi-Fi usage doesn’t count against customers’ monthly wireless data plans.

For more information about AT&T’s coverage in Georgia or anywhere in the United States, consumers can visit the AT&T Coverage Viewer. For updates on the AT&T wireless network, please visit the AT&T network news page.

* AT&T products and services are provided or offered by subsidiaries and affiliates of AT&T Inc. under the AT&T brand and not by AT&T Inc.

** Speed & Reliability claims based on analysis of independent third party data re nationwide carriers' 4G LTE. LTE is a trademark of ETSI. 4G LTE not available everywhere.

*** Geographic and service restrictions apply to AT&T U-verse services. Call or go to www.att.com/u-verse to see if you qualify.

**** Largest based on company branded and operated hotspots.

To define a market, we rely on the Core Based Statistical Areas (CBSA), as established by the United States Office of Management and Budget. Minor differences, if any, between annual totals reflect annual updating of market boundaries in our record systems.

About AT&T

AT&T Inc. (NYSE:T) is a premier communications holding company and one of the most honored companies in the world. Its subsidiaries and affiliates – AT&T operating companies – are the providers of AT&T services in the United States and internationally. With a powerful array of network resources that includes the nation's most reliable 4G LTE network, AT&T is a leading provider of wireless, Wi-Fi, high speed Internet, voice and cloud-based services. A leader in mobile Internet, AT&T also offers the best wireless coverage worldwide of any U.S. carrier, offering the most wireless phones that work in the most countries. It also offers advanced TV service with the AT&T U-verse® brand. The company's suite of IP-based business communications services is one of the most advanced in the world.

Additional information about AT&T Inc. and the products and services provided by AT&T subsidiaries and affiliates is available at <http://www.att.com/aboutus> or follow our news on Twitter at @ATT, on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/att> and YouTube at <http://www.youtube.com/att>.

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Next Generation Clubhouse

What's NEXT is what counts



Clubhouse

6th - 12th grade
One-to-One mentoring,
One-to-Group mentoring,
tutoring, life skills, job skills,
prevention curriculum,
field trips, family events,
community service

STeAM

Science, Technology,
Engineering,
Arts/Design, Math
Innovative thinking
Fore-front of education

Post-Secondary

18-24 years old
Previous NXTG students
from Clubhouse or
Mentoring

In-School Mentoring

2nd - 12th grade
One-to-One
One-to-Group

Join Us

Be part of the equation.
Mentor, tutor or
volunteer. Got a spark?
Let us know!

Next
GENERATION

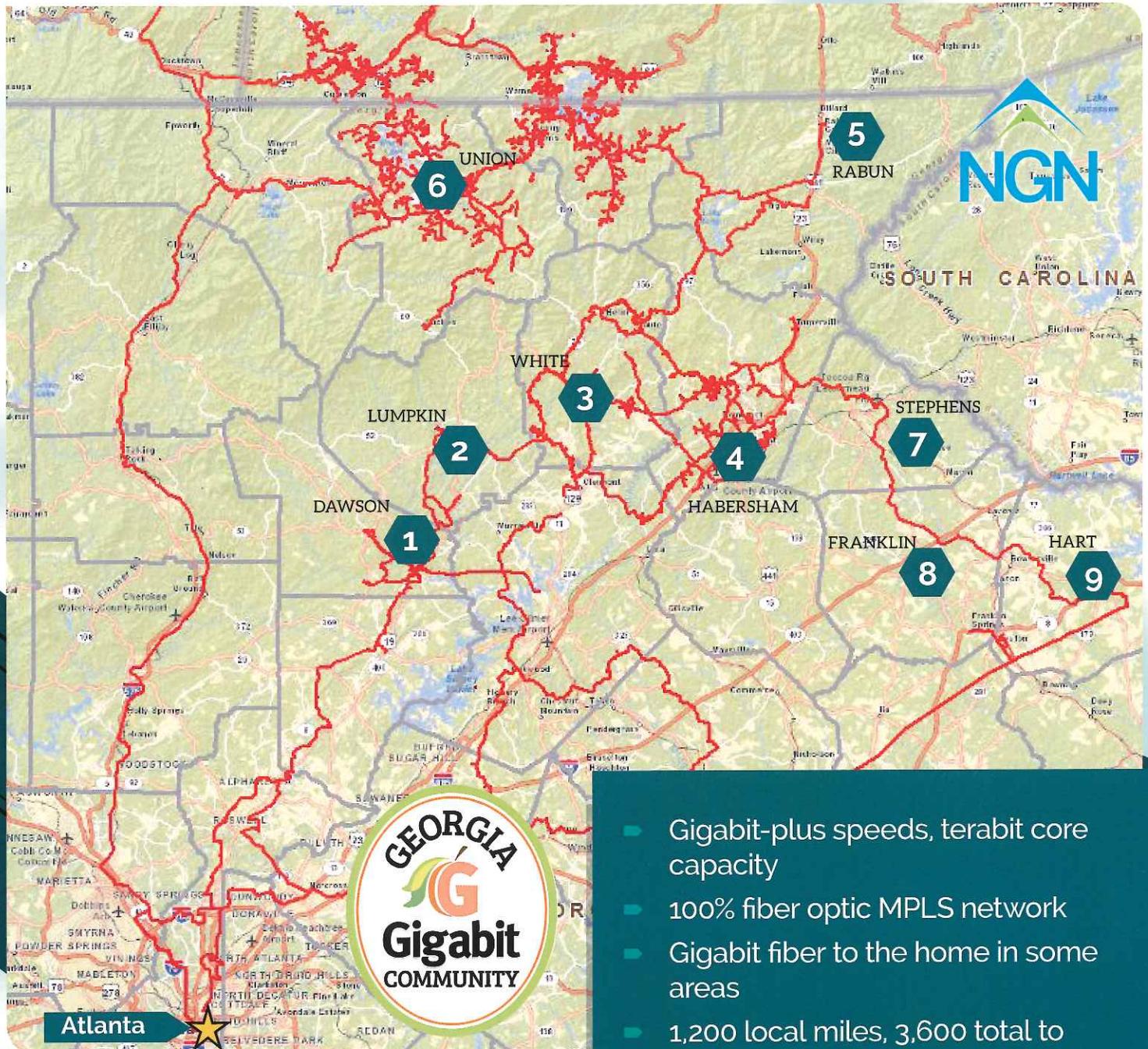
$E^3 = [\text{Experience} \times \text{Engage} \times \text{Empower}]$

Next Generation is all about positive youth development for Dawson County students. Our new Clubhouse is one of only three Prevention Clubhouse prototypes in the state of Georgia. Here, we empower youth to think beyond what's now to what's next.

Because what's next is what counts.

Next Generation
to the power of youth

NORTH GEORGIA'S NEW FIBER OPTIC NETWORK



- Gigabit-plus speeds, terabit core capacity
- 100% fiber optic MPLS network
- Gigabit fiber to the home in some areas
- 1,200 local miles, 3,600 total to major peers-- all fiber
- Electric membership corporations with affordable, redundant service

Big Data, Big Electricity,
BIG OPPORTUNITY.

1. Dawson Business Park

135 Prominence Court, Dawsonville

Up to 70 acres, located on Georgia 400, major four-lane divided highway. Located near major regional shopping and medical facilities. Lanier Technical College, Dawson Campus, nearby. Build-to-suit or possible lease available.

Contact:

Development Authority of Dawson County
www.developdawson.org
development@dawson.org

2. Lumpkin County Technology Park

Georgia 400 and Highway 60, Dahlonega

Up to 50 acres of graded business park property in new, mixed-use development with frontage on Georgia 400. Sites border the Etowah River and natural areas. University of North Georgia and local airport near. Build to suit, or possible lease available.

Contact:

Lumpkin County Development Authority
<http://www.picklumpkincounty.org>
steve.gooch@lumpkincounty.gov

3. White County Long Mountain Business and Technology Park

192 Daybreak Road, Cleveland

Up to 120 acres. Has graded lots 3-7 acres. Frontage on U.S. Highway 129 and new Cleveland Bypass. Mountain at your back door, retail amenities near North Georgia Technical College, Clarksville Campus.

Contact:

White County Community and Economic Development
<http://www.whitecountychamber.org/economic-development>
tobryant@whitecounty.net

4. Habersham Airport Industrial Park

241 Industrial Park Road, Baldwin

Up to 90 acres in public industrial park, located between two four-lane highways, adjacent to Habersham County Airport with 5,500 foot runway. Near North Georgia Technical College, Clarksville Campus. Build-to-suit up to 100,000 SF.

Contact:

Habersham County Development Authority
www.habdev.org
jrcharles@habershamga.com

5. Rabun Business Park

400 Kelly's Creek Road, Rabun Gap

Up to 800,000 SF of contiguous space. Can be subdivided. Fully renovated with 19 to 29-foot ceilings and is owned and operated by the public development authority.

Contact:

Development Authority of Rabun County
www.darcga.com
rcoulombe@darcga.com

6. Union County Blairsville Airport Regional Industrial Park

Airport Industrial Drive, Blairsville

Up to 102 acres of graded sites, adjacent to regional jet and helicopter-capable airport. At US Hwy 76 and Ga Hwy 515, 4-lane divided highway, near North Georgia Technical College, Blairsville Campus. Park tenants include Advanced Digital Cable, United Community Bank Operations Center, Cobb Vantress. Spec space to 20,000 SF, build-to-suit to 300,000 SF.

Contact:

Union County Development Authority
www.ucda.net
mitch@ucda.net

7. Stephens County Hayestone Brady Business Park

10 Hammerstone Road, Toccoa

This GRAD-certified park will have divided highway access to Interstate 85. Currently home to Caterpillar, Crown Resources and North Georgia Tech's Currahee Campus, with 25 degrees and certifications. Also has Georgia Quick Start and a conference center.

Contact:

Stephens County Development Authority
www.scdabiz
tim@scda.biz

8. Central Franklin Industrial Park

Interstate 85 at Exit 166, Carnesville

Five acres and up in new business park development of major US interstate highway. Sites available for build-to-suit, all infrastructure near. Near University of Georgia main campus and North Georgia Technical College, Currahee Campus.

Contact:

Franklin County Industrial Building Authority
www.franklin-county.com
frank@franklin-county.com

9. Hart County Industrial Park

189 Industrial Park Road, Hartwell

32,000 SF building, open floor, Established industrial park, fully fenced. Equipped with a large, paved parking lot and storage facility off US Highway 29. Tenants include Zymark, SD Automotive Millbro Refractors. Near University of Georgia main campus.

Contact:

Hart County Industrial Building Authority
www.hartiba.com
iba@hartcom.net

Data and electric
ready communities

To discuss North Georgia and your broadband
or electric needs, please contact:

NGN

6135 State Highway 115 West, Suite 1A
Clarkesville, GA 30523
706-754-5323
info@ngn.coop

Georgia Communications Cooperative

6135 State Highway 115 West, Suite 1B
Clarkesville, GA 30523
706-770-2022
info@gcc.coop

Blue Ridge Mountain Electric Membership Corp.

875 Main Street East
Young Harris, GA 30582
706-379-3121 x197
daniel.frizzell@brmemc.com

Habersham Electric Membership Corp.

6135 State Highway 115 West
Clarkesville, GA 30523
706-839-4131
david.foster@hemc.coop



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GMRC Business/Local Govt Broadband/Internet Survey - Page 1

Georgia Mountains Regional Commission (GMRC) is conducting this survey to assess the growing needs of local governments and businesses as it relates to increasing economic vitality of our region through broadband technologies. The information you provide will help GMRC and the State of Georgia better understand the needs of our local governments and businesses for high-speed internet and to create a viable Digital Economy Plan for GMRC and it's Region.

Please help us to gather information about broadband in your area by completing this survey. Your responses will be anonymous and will only be reported as part of a larger statistical analysis to determine the broadband needs of local governments and businesses. The survey will be available until May 15, 2014.

Thank you for your participation!

1* In what County is your local government or business located?

Banks

Dawson

Forsyth

Franklin

- Habersham
- Hall
- Hart
- Lumpkin
- Rabun
- Stephens
- Towns
- Union
- White

2 What classification best describes your local government or business?

- City Government
- County Government
- Accomodation and Food Services
- Administrative and Support Services
- Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting
- Arts, Entertainment and Recreation
- Construction
- Educational Services
- Educational Institution
- Finance and Insurance
- Health Care and Social Assistance
- Information Technology
- Medical
- Management of Companies and Enterprises
- Manufacturing
- Mining, Quarrying and Oil/Gas Extraction
- Professional, Scientific and Technical Services
- Public Administration
- Real Estate and Property Management
- Retail Trade
- Transportation and Warehousing
- Tourism
- Utilities
- Waste Management and Remediation Services
- Wholesale Trade

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

3* Number of Employees?

- Less than 10
- 10 to 25
- 26+

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GMRC Business/Local Govt Broadband/Internet Survey - Pg 2

4* Do you have access to the internet? (If no, skip to question #19)

- Yes
- No

5 What type of internet connection do you have?

- Dial-up
- Satellite
- Fiber
- DSL
- Cable
- T-1

6 What is your connection speed?

- Less than or equal to 200 kbps
- Greater than 200 kbps and less than 768 kbps
- Greater than 768 kbps and less than 1.5 mbps
- Greater than 1.5 mbps and less than 3 mbps
- Greater than 3 mbps and less than 6 mbps
- Greater than 6 mbps and less than 10 mbps
- Greater than 10 mbps and less than 25 mbps
- Greater than 25 mbps and less than 50 mbps
- Greater than 50 mbps and less than 100 mbps
- Greater than 100 mbps and less than 1 gbps
- Greater than or equal to 1 gbps

DO NOT KNOW

7 What is the reliability of your internet connection?

- Very reliable
- Good
- Fair
- Poor

8 Is cost a barrier to upgrading your internet service?

- Yes
- No
- NA

9 What percentage of your business is conducted over the internet?

- Less than 10%
- Less than 25%
- 50 to 75%
- More than 75%

10 For your local government or business, do you see conducting business over the internet increasing or decreasing in the future?

- Increasing
- Decreasing

11 A fast internet connection is critical for maintaining our competitiveness in today's global economy

- Strongly Agree
- Neutral
- Strongly Disagree
- Not Sure

12 A fast internet connection is critical for being able to produce and deliver services or products to our clients and/or customers

- Strongly Agree
- Neutral
- Strongly Disagree
- Not Sure

13 A fast internet connection is critical for the survival of our local government or business

- Strongly Agree
- Neutral
- Strongly Disagree
- Not Sure

- 25 to 50
- 50 to 100
- 100 to 250
- 250 to 500
- 500 or more

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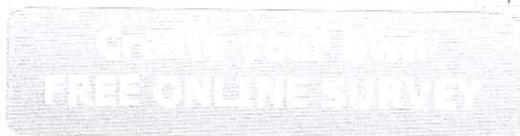
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GMRC Business/Local Govt Broadband/Internet Survey - Pg 3

Move to #9?

14 How does your local government or business use the Internet? (Choose all that apply)

- E-mail
- File Sharing
- Website
- Building/Monitoring/Maintenance
- On-line Education
- Social Media
- On-line Customer Support
- Streaming (music, movie, video)
- Business Promotion
- On-line appointments
- Video Conferencing
- E-Business
- Research
- Banking
- On-line Collaboration
- Teleworking
- Webinars
- On-line Retail
- On-line Customer Payment System

couple w/Q # 8715

15 What is the biggest obstacle to improving your on-line operations?

- Digital Infrastructure limitations (Speed, unreliable service)
- Customer Awareness
- Technical abilities of staff
- Technical abilities of customers

16 Do you have in-house staff (IT) to manage on-line services or is that provided by an outside consultant?

- In-house IT management
- Outside Consultant

17 Please rate your current internet speed on a scale of 1 to 5 (5 = Exceptional, 1 = Severely Limiting)

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

18 On a scale of 1 to 5, how likely is it that your organization will need a faster internet connection over the next three-year period (5 = Definitely, 1 = Definitely Not)

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

19 What is the number one reason why your local government or business does not have internet access?

- Internet service is not available in our area
- Internet connection is too slow in our area
- Upfront costs are too high
- Monthly charges are too expensive

- We do not need the internet to conduct day-to-day operations
- Another company supports our Internet needs

20 If you do not have internet service available, where do you go to access the internet?

- Personal Mobile Device
- Business Mobile Device
- Library
- Local Business offering Wi-Fi

21 Do you plan to incorporate internet usage/service in your local government or business within the next year?

- Yes
- No
- Already do*

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GMRC Residential Broadband/Internet Survey - Page 1

Georgia Mountains Regional Commission (GMRC) is conducting this survey to assess the growing needs of broadband and internet access as it relates to increasing economic vitality of our region through broadband technologies. This is an excellent opportunity for local residents to provide valuable feedback about broadband access throughout our region. The results of this survey will provide insights into opportunities for increasing broadband availability as well as assisting GMRC and the State of Georgia better understand the needs of our local residents for high-speed internet and to create a viable Digital Economy Plan for GMRC and it's Region.

Please help us to gather information about broadband in your area by completing this survey. Your responses will be anonymous and will only be reported as part of a larger statistical analysis to determine the broadband needs of local residents. The survey will be available until May 15, 2014.

Thank you for your participation!

1* What County do you live in?

- Banks
- Forsyth
- Habersham
- Hart
- Rabun
- Towns
- White
- Dawson
- Franklin
- Hall
- Lumpkin
- Stephens
- Union

2* Do you own a home computer (laptop, tablet, desktop)?

- Yes
- No

3 If yes, how many computers do you own? (laptop, tablet, desktop)

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- More than 5

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GMRC Residential Broadband/Internet Survey

- Pg 2

4* If you do not have a home computer, please check all the reasons that apply for not purchasing a computer. (Check all that apply)

- Cost/Too Expensive
- Other access to computers and internet
- Safety/Privacy/Security Concerns
- Do not need a computer
- Do not know how to use a computer
- My cell phone is all I need
- I do not have time to use a computer

5* Do you have a home Internet Service Provider (not including a cell/mobile/smart phone)? (If no, skip to question #17)

- Yes
- No

6 What type of internet connection do you have?

- Dial-up
- Satellite
- Fiber
- DSL
- Cable

7 What is your connection speed?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="radio"/> Less than or equal to 200 kbps | <input type="radio"/> Greater than 200 kbps and less than 768 kbps |
| <input type="radio"/> Greater than 768 kbps and less than 1.5 mbps | <input type="radio"/> Greater than 1.5 mbps and less than 3 mbps |
| <input type="radio"/> Greater than 3 mbps and less than 6 mbps | <input type="radio"/> Greater than 6 mbps and less than 10 mbps |
| <input type="radio"/> Greater than 10 mbps and less than 25 mbps | <input type="radio"/> Greater than 25 mbps and less than 50 mbps |
| <input type="radio"/> Greater than 50 mbps and less than 100 mbps | <input type="radio"/> Greater than 100 mbps and less than 1 gbps |
| <input type="radio"/> Greater than or equal to 1 gbps | <input type="radio"/> Do not know |

8 What is the reliability of your internet connection?

- Very reliable
- Good
- Fair
- Poor

9 How often do you access the internet at home?

- Daily
- Weekly
- Monthly
- Yearly
- Not at all

10 Do you have a wireless router set up in your home?

- Yes
- No

11 If yes, how many wireless (mobile) devices do you have in your home that have access to the internet (laptop, tablets, smart phones)?

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- More than 5

12 A fast internet connection is critical to meeting my internet needs

- Strongly Agree
- Neutral
- Strongly Disagree
- Not Sure

13 It is critical that I have availability to the internet at home

- Strongly Agree
- Neutral

- Strongly Disagree
- Not Sure

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GMRC Residential Broadband/Internet Survey

- Pg 3

14 How do you and members of your household use the Internet? (Choose all that apply)

- E-mail
- File Sharing
- On-line Banking/Bill Pay
- On-line Education
- Social Media
- Entertainment
- Streaming (music, movie, video)
- Trip/Vacation Planning
- Read current news, weather and events
- Shopping
- Research
- Communication
- Home Based Business
- Teleworking/Telecommuting
- Gaming

15 Would it be beneficial to you if the existing broadband capacity/speed/reliability was enhanced in your area?

- Yes
- No
- Not Sure

16 Please rate your current internet speed on a scale of 1 to 5 (5 = Exceptional, 1 = Severely Limiting)

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

17 If you do not have home internet access, please indicate the reasons below. (Check all that apply)

- Internet service is not available in our area
- Internet connection is too slow in our area
- Monthly charges are too expensive
- Cell/Smart Phone is all I need
- No benefit to have internet access
- Lack of technical skills/knowledge to use the internet
- I do not have a home computer/laptop/tablet

18 If you do not have access to the internet at home, where do you go to access the internet?

- Personal Mobile Device/Smart Phone
- Educational Institution
- Library
- Local Business offering Wi-Fi
- Work
- Relative's or Friend's House

19

Do you have a mobile device or cell/smart phone with internet access?

Yes

No

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GMRC Residential Broadband/Internet Needs Survey - Pg 4

20 Do you have a landline telephone at your home?

Yes

No

21 How many people currently live in your household?

1

2

3

4

5

More than 5

22 What is your age?

Under 30

30 to 44

45 to 60

61 to 75

Over 75

23 What is the age of children living in your home? (Check all that apply)

No children in the home

Under 6 years old

6 - 11 years old

12 - 17 years old

Older than 17 years old

24 What is your gender?

Male

Female

25 Do you live in a rural area?

Yes

No

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Results for: GMRC Business/Local Government Broadband/Internet Needs Survey

Record No: 1

In what County is your local government or business located?

	Responses	Percentage
Banks ████████████████████	2	20.0%
Dawson ████████████████████	2	20.0%
Forsyth ████████	0	0.0%
Franklin ████████████████	1	10.0%
Habersham ████████████████	1	10.0%
Hall ████████████████████	2	20.0%
Hart ████████	0	0.0%
Lumpkin ████████	0	0.0%
Rabun ████████████████	1	10.0%
Stephens ████████	0	0.0%
Towns ████████	0	0.0%
Union ████████	0	0.0%
White ████████████████	1	10.0%

What classification best describes your local government or business?

	Responses	Percentage
City Government	4	44.4%
County Government	2	22.2%
Accomodation and Food Services	0	0.0%
Administrative and Support Services	0	0.0%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	1	11.1%
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	0	0.0%
Construction	0	0.0%
Economic Development	1	11.1%
Educational Services	0	0.0%
Educational Institution	0	0.0%
Finance and Insurance	0	0.0%
Health Care and Social Assistance	0	0.0%
Information Technology	0	0.0%
Medical	0	0.0%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	0	0.0%
Manufacturing	0	0.0%
Mining, Quarrying and Oil/Gas Extraction	0	0.0%
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	0	0.0%
Public Administration	0	0.0%
Real Estate and Property Management	0	0.0%
Retail Trade	0	0.0%
Transportation and Warehousing	0	0.0%
Tourism	1	11.1%
Utilities	0	0.0%
Waste Management and Remediation Services	0	0.0%
Wholesale Trade	0	0.0%

Number of Employees?

	Responses	Percentage
Less than 10	6	60.0%
10 to 25	1	10.0%
25 to 50	1	10.0%
50 to 100	0	0.0%
100 to 250	1	10.0%
250 to 500	1	10.0%
500 or more	0	0.0%

Do you have access to the internet? (If no, skip to question #19)

	Responses	Percentage
Yes	10	100.0%
No	0	0.0%

What type of internet connection do you have?

	Responses	Percentage
Dial-up	1	10.0%
Satellite	0	0.0%
Fiber	4	40.0%
DSL	3	30.0%
Cable	1	10.0%
T-1	1	10.0%

What is your connection speed?

	Responses	Percentage
Less than or equal to 200 kbps	0	0.0%
Greater than 200 kbps and less than 768 kbps	0	0.0%
Greater than 768 kbps and less than 1.5 mbps	0	0.0%
Greater than 1.5 mbps and less than 3 mbps	2	20.0%
Greater than 3 mbps and less than 6 mbps	0	0.0%
Greater than 6 mbps and less than 10 mbps	0	0.0%
Greater than 10 mbps and less than 25 mbps	2	20.0%
Greater than 25 mbps and less than 50 mbps	0	0.0%
Greater than 50 mbps and less than 100 mbps	0	0.0%
Greater than 100 mbps and less than 1 gbps	1	10.0%
Greater than or equal to 1 gbps	1	10.0%
Do not know	4	40.0%

What is the reliability of your internet connection?

	Responses	Percentage
Very reliable	4	40.0%
Good	3	30.0%
Fair	2	20.0%
Poor	1	10.0%

Is cost a barrier to upgrading your internet service?

	Responses	Percentage
Yes	4	40.0%
No	5	50.0%
N/A	1	10.0%

What percentage of your business is conducted over the internet?

	Responses	Percentage
Less than 10%	0	0.0%
Less than 25%	1	10.0%
50 to 75%	5	50.0%
More than 75%	4	40.0%

For your local government or business, do you see conducting business over the internet increasing or decreasing in the future?

	Responses	Percentage
Increasing	10	100.0%
Decreasing	0	0.0%

A fast internet connection is critical for maintaining our competitiveness in today's global economy

	Responses	Percentage
Strongly Agree	9	100.0%
Neutral	0	0.0%
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%
Not Sure	0	0.0%

A fast internet connection is critical for being able to produce and deliver services or products to our clients and/or customers

	Responses	Percentage
Strongly Agree	10	100.0%
Neutral	0	0.0%
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%
Not Sure	0	0.0%

A fast internet connection is critical for the survival of our local government or business

	Responses	Percentage
Strongly Agree	10	100.0%
Neutral	0	0.0%
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%
Not Sure	0	0.0%

How does your local government or business use the Internet? (Choose all that apply)

	Responses	Percentage
E-mail	10	100.0%
Video Conferencing	3	30.0%
File Sharing	7	70.0%
E-Business	3	30.0%
Website Building/Monitoring/Maintenance	6	60.0%
Research	8	80.0%
On-line Education	6	60.0%
Banking	5	50.0%
Social Media	7	70.0%
On-line Collaboration	3	30.0%
On-line Customer Support	6	60.0%
Teleworking	4	40.0%
Streaming (music, movie, video)	3	30.0%
Webinars	9	90.0%
Business Promotion	6	60.0%
On-line Retail	0	0.0%
On-line appointments	4	40.0%
On-line Customer Payment System	2	20.0%

What is the biggest obstacle to improving your on-line operations?

	Responses	Percentage
Digital Infrastructure Limitations (Speed, unreliable service)	7	70.0%
Customer Awareness	1	10.0%
Technical abilities of staff	1	10.0%
Technical abilities of customers	1	10.0%

Do you have in-house staff (IT) to manage on-line services or is that provided by an outside consultant?

	Responses	Percentage
In-house IT management	2	20.0%
Outside Consultant	8	80.0%

Please rate your current internet speed on a scale of 1 to 5 (5 = Exceptional, 1 = Severely Limiting)

	Responses	Percentage
1	1	10.0%
2	1	10.0%
3	5	50.0%
4	1	10.0%
5	2	20.0%

On a scale of 1 to 5, how likely is it that your organization will need a faster internet connection over the next three-year period (5 = Definitely, 1 = Definitely Not)

	Responses	Percentage
1	0	0.0%
2	1	11.1%
3	1	11.1%
4	3	33.3%
5	4	44.4%

What is the number one reason why your local government or business does not have internet access?

	Responses	Percentage
Internet service is not available in our area	0	0.0%
Internet connection is too slow in our area	1	50.0%
Upfront costs are too high	0	0.0%
Monthly charges are too expensive	0	0.0%
We do not need the internet to conduct day-to-day operations	0	0.0%
Another company supports our Internet needs	1	50.0%

If you do not have internet service available, where do you go to access the internet?

	Responses	Percentage
Personal Mobile Device	1	50.0%
Business Mobile Device	0	0.0%
Library	1	50.0%
Local Business offering Wi-Fi	0	0.0%

Do you plan to incorporate internet usage/service in your local government or business within the next year?

	Responses	Percentage
Yes	1	12.5%
No	0	0.0%
Already do	7	87.5%

Results for: GMRC Residential Broadband/Internet Needs Survey Record No: 1

What County do you live in?

	Responses	Percentage
Banks	4	6.6%
Dawson	2	3.3%
Forsyth	0	0.0%
Franklin	1	1.6%
Habersham	3	4.9%
Hall	33	54.1%
Hart	7	11.5%
Lumpkin	3	4.9%
Rabun	1	1.6%
Stephens	3	4.9%
Towns	2	3.3%
Union	1	1.6%
White	1	1.6%

Do you own a home computer (laptop, tablet, desktop)?

	Responses	Percentage
Yes	61	100.0%
No	0	0.0%

If yes, how many computers do you own? (laptop, tablet, desktop)

	Responses	Percentage
1	5	8.2%
2	24	39.3%
3	11	18.0%
4	12	19.7%
5	4	6.6%
More than 5	5	8.2%

If you do not have a home computer, please check all the reasons that apply for not purchasing a computer. (Check all that apply)

	Responses	Percentage
Cost/Too Expensive	0	0%
Other access to computers and internet	0	0%
Safety/Privacy/Security Concerns	0	0%
Do not need a computer	0	0%
Do not know how to use a computer	0	0%
My cell phone is all I need	0	0%
I do not have time to use a computer	0	0%

Do you have a home Internet Service Provider (not including a cell/mobile/smart phone)? (If no, skip to question #17)

	Responses	Percentage
Yes	47	90.4%
No	5	9.6%

What type of internet connection do you have?

	Responses	Percentage
Dial-up	1	2.2%
Satellite	0	0.0%
Fiber	3	6.7%
DSL	29	64.4%
Cable	12	26.7%

What is your connection speed?

	Responses	Percentage
Less than or equal to 200 kbps	0	0.0%
Greater than 200 kbps and less than 768 kbps	0	0.0%
Greater than 768 kbps and less than 1.5 mbps	0	0.0%
Greater than 1.5 mbps and less than 3 mbps	4	8.9%
Greater than 3 mbps and less than 6 mbps	4	8.9%
Greater than 6 mbps and less than 10 mbps	6	13.3%
Greater than 10 mbps and less than 25 mbps	4	8.9%
Greater than 25 mbps and less than 50 mbps	4	8.9%
Greater than 50 mbps and less than 100 mbps	1	2.2%
Greater than 100 mbps and less than 1 gbps	1	2.2%
Greater than or equal to 1 gbps	0	0.0%
Do not know	21	46.7%

What is the reliability of your internet connection?

	Responses	Percentage
Very reliable	13	28.3%
Good	18	39.1%
Fair	10	21.7%
Poor	5	10.9%

How often do you access the internet at home?

	Responses	Percentage
Daily	45	97.8%
Weekly	1	2.2%
Monthly	0	0.0%
Yearly	0	0.0%
Not at all	0	0.0%

Do you have a wireless router set up in your home?

	Responses	Percentage
Yes	45	97.8%
No	1	2.2%

If yes, how many wireless (mobile) devices do you have in your home that have access to the internet (laptop, tablets, smart phones)?

	Responses	Percentage
1	4	8.9%
2	6	13.3%
3	5	11.1%
4	9	20.0%
5	7	15.6%
More than 5	14	31.1%

A fast internet connection is critical to meeting my internet needs

	Responses	Percentage
Strongly Agree	40	88.9%
Neutral	5	11.1%
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%
Not Sure	0	0.0%

It is critical that I have availability to the internet at home

	Responses	Percentage
Strongly Agree	41	89.1%
Neutral	5	10.9%
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%
Not Sure	0	0.0%

How do you and members of your household use the Internet? (Choose all that apply)

	Responses	Percentage
E-mail	46	100.0%
Read current news, weather and events	44	95.7%
File Sharing	19	41.3%
Shopping	37	80.4%
On-line Banking/Bill Pay	40	87.0%
Research	41	89.1%
On-line Education	20	43.5%
Communication	30	65.2%
Social Media	39	84.8%
Home Based Business	10	21.7%
Entertainment	33	71.7%
Teleworking/Telecommuting	15	32.6%
Streaming (music, movie, video)	35	76.1%
Gaming	19	41.3%
Trip/Vacation Planning	39	84.8%

Would it be beneficial to you if the existing broadband capacity/speed/reliability was enhanced in your area?

	Responses	Percentage
Yes	43	93.5%
No	1	2.2%
Not Sure	2	4.3%

Please rate your current internet speed on a scale of 1 to 5 (5 = Exceptional, 1 = Severely Limiting)

	Responses	Percentage
1	3	6.5%
2	7	15.2%
3	21	45.7%
4	10	21.7%
5	5	10.9%

If you do not have home internet access, please indicate the reasons below. (Check all that apply)

	Responses	Percentage
Internet service is not available in our area	0	0.0%
Internet connection is too slow in our area	2	50.0%
Monthly charges are too expensive	3	75.0%
Cell/Smart Phone is all I need	1	25.0%
No benefit to have internet access	0	0.0%
Lack of technical skills/knowledge to use the internet	0	0.0%
I do not have a home computer/laptop/tablet	0	0.0%

If you do not have access to the internet at home, where do you go to access the internet?

	Responses	Percentage
Personal Mobile Device/Smart Phone	4	100.0%
Educational Institution	0	0.0%
Library	0	0.0%
Local Business offering Wi-Fi	0	0.0%
Work	0	0.0%
Relative's or Friend's House	0	0.0%

Do you have a mobile device or cell/smart phone with internet access?

	Responses	Percentage
Yes	44	91.7%
No	4	8.3%

Do you have a landline telephone at your home?

	Responses	Percentage
Yes	27	57.4%
No	20	42.6%

How many people currently live in your household?

	Responses	Percentage
1	6	12.8%
2	23	48.9%
3	9	19.1%
4	4	8.5%
5	5	10.6%
More than 5	0	0.0%

What is your age?

	Responses	Percentage
Under 30	9	19.1%
30 to 44	10	21.3%
45 to 60	18	38.3%
61 to 75	8	17.0%
Over 75	2	4.3%

What is the age of children living in your home? (Check all that apply)

	Responses	Percentage
No children in the home	29	64.4%
Under 6 years old	4	8.9%
6 - 11 years old	7	15.6%
12 - 17 years old	11	24.4%
Older than 17 years old	5	11.1%

