

June 2021

PINNACLE

Georgia Mountains Regional Commission

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Cover Photo:

Victoria Bryant State Park
Courtesy of Adam Hazell,
GMRC Planning Director

Executive Director's Report



*Heather Feldman
Executive Director*

- I am so excited to report that GMRC has a new Finance/HR Director, Alicia Page. Alicia started on June 1st. Alicia is no stranger to Regional Commissions, having recently spent the last several years as the Comptroller for the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission. She is Level I and Level II Certified in local government finance. She has already hit the ground running and will be closing out the year soon and starting audit season! Welcome Alicia!
- I want to wish Forsyth County and the City of Cumming all the best in their transition to the Atlanta Regional Commission. We valued their partnership for 58 years and wish the county all the best.
- I would like to thank all of our outgoing council members for serving the Georgia Mountains Regional Commission. Each member plays an important role in shaping policy and procedure, and their input over the years has been invaluable. A huge thank you to Gerald Voyles who has served on the RC council for 27 years and is the longest serving member; Bill Black who has served for 20 years; and the Forsyth County delegation – Cindy Mills, Jason Evans, and Scott Evans. We hope that everyone will stay in touch!
- Gayle Manchin has recently been appointed by President Biden to serve as the Appalachian Regional Commission's Federal Co-Chair.
- Congratulations to Patrick Larson, Senior Project Manager for receiving the Silver Shovel Award from the Greater Hall Chamber of Commerce. Patrick does an outstanding job for GMRC and proud of him on this achievement.
- **Save the Date – Rural Zone applications are due on August 13th!!** The Rural Zone program targets rural downtown areas that have been adversely impacted by local economic conditions by creating Rural Zones and offering economic development incentives. The establishment of up to 10 zones per year will enable businesses and investors to obtain tax credits for qualified activities occurring within designated Rural Zones. Credits will be available for job creation activities, investment in downtown properties, and renovation of properties to make them usable.



In Region 2, the following cities have Rural Zone designations: **Cornelia, Hartwell, Hiawassee, and Toccoa**. For more information, please contact Adam Hazell, GMRC Planning Director at ahazell@gmrc.ga.gov or 770-538-2617.

- I am excited to report that next month's council meeting will be in person in Union County. The meeting will be jointly hosted by **Union County** and the **City of Blairsville**, and will be held at the Union County Community Center, located at 129 Union County Rec Road, Blairsville. We will revert back to our normal start time of 6:00 p.m. More details to follow, but I look forward to seeing everyone.



Sincerely,

Heather Feldman

Heather Feldman
Executive Director



Georgia Mountains Downtown Network

Our region has an abundance of historic and attractive downtowns. These places are often the social, civic, and commercial hubs of our communities, providing us with places to work, dine, shop, and play. They are also a critical part of our identities and, by extension, a large reason tourists come to the Georgia Mountains area. These town centers provide the small town charm of unique rural destinations, offering places where locals and visitors often come together to celebrate what makes each community special.

The GMRC recognizes the importance of downtowns for the region's economy, and recognizes they also have special needs. We've worked with our communities to create revitalization plans, pursue funding assistance for capital improvements, and update of local codes and policies to various downtowns continue to progress.

Beginning this fall, the GMRC will be foster a regional network among stakeholders for our local downtowns. We'll be working with Main Street directors, Downtown Development Authorities, and other key officials striving to make their downtowns the best possible! The idea is to not only strengthen peer-to-peer communication, but to be more proactive in creating training opportunities for stakeholders in the region, and to ensure we're doing all we can in supporting their efforts with grant writing, special designations, and economic assessments.



If you would like to participate in this process, please contact Joe Rothwell at 770-538-2619 or jrothwell@gmrc.ga.gov.

Economic Development

- On behalf of **Hall County and the Boys & Girls Club of Lanier**, a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) application was recently submitted. The request is for \$750,000 for the construction of a multipurpose gymnasium to benefit youth at the Joseph F. Walters Club. The total project cost is \$1,409,375.
- On behalf of the **City of Clayton**, a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) application was recently submitted. The request is for \$750,000 to make improvements to its water system in a low to moderate income target area. The total project cost is \$864,000.

REVOLVING LOAN FUND

We are here to help! We can make loans to companies for purposes that include: acquisition and improvement of real estate; the purchase of machinery; equipment or inventory; and working capital. Terms and conditions will vary with each loan application and are based on a review of the collateral, finances, and market risk associated with each request.

Micro Loan

- Business owners may apply for a low interest loan from \$10,000-\$20,000 repaid within 1-5 years.
- Loans below \$20,000 may be eligible with a personal guarantee.
- Documentation to show COVID-19 impact.



Traditional Loans

- Loan amounts above \$20,000 will require a personal guarantee and dollar-for-dollar collateral.
- The loan maximum amount is \$300,000.
- Years of business in operation will be a consideration.
- Job creation and/or retention, and training will be a consideration.
- Documentation to show COVID-19 impact.

Georgia Mountains

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WorkSource.GM

*ojt.com/structured-on-the-job-training-benefits

ON-THE-JOB TRAINING

WHAT IS IT?

On-The-Job Training is a solution for employers that need to expand their workforce by providing wage reimbursements for new employees! First, employers interview potential candidates and make their selections. Next, WorkSource Georgia Mountains (WSGM) confirms the applicant is eligible under the National Dislocated Worker Grant. After eligibility is determined, employers hire the OJT candidate, train them while they work AND then receive reimbursements to offset training costs!

WHY USE IT?

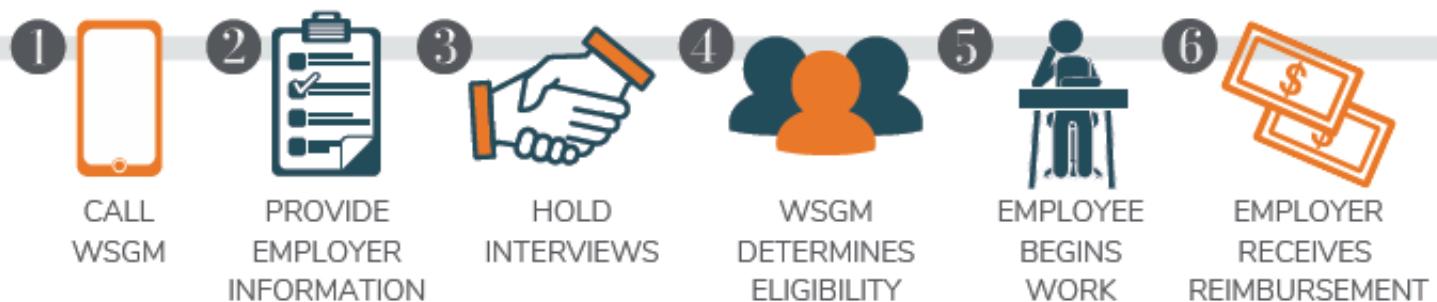
- Reduces cost of hiring and training by reimbursement of OJT trainee wages at a rate between 50% to 75% for up to 5 months; max of \$12,000 per employee
- Enables businesses to expand and train additional staff with specialized skills
- Higher employee retention because OJT trainees are 30% happier with their careers than those who receive no training.*

BUSINESS ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

- Hiring for full-time, permanent positions with a minimum wage of \$11.47 per hour
- Positions must require more than 81 hours of On-the-Job Training
- Contributing and in full compliance with local, state, and federal tax obligations
- Maintain Worker's Compensation Insurance that covers OJT trainees
- Potential new hires must be deemed eligible by WIOA before being hired

POTENTIAL NEW HIRE ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

- Applicants must live in or have been laid off from one of the WSGM Area counties—Banks, Dawson, Forsyth, Franklin, Habersham, Hall, Hart, Lumpkin, Rabun, Stephens, Towns, Union, and White; and fit one of these scenarios:
 - Permanently laid off due to COVID-19
 - Currently receiving or exhausted unemployment
 - Self-employed and lost income (or a large portion) as a result of COVID-19
 - Unemployed for 27 or more consecutive weeks
 - Never worked or been employed
- Must be a citizen, US permanent resident, or qualified alien or non-immigrant
- Be 18 or older
- Males must be registered with Selective Service





GMRC Staff Spotlight!

Danielle Avelar, Outreach Coordinator

This month we celebrate Danielle Avelar, who is approaching her 10th anniversary of service with the GMRC/ WorkSource Georgia Mountains. She loves the opportunities for outdoor recreation in the region, including hiking, biking, paddling, and gardening.



"As an Outreach Coordinator I have the privilege of tapping into my passion for helping people by developing programs to meet the needs of individuals and giving them the tools to develop their skills, enabling them to find a job that is fulfilling and meaningful. ... In my role, I enjoy the creativity and marketing aspects to promote the programs as well as helping the people we serve complete applications to WorkSource and start the journey forward. The ultimate reward is seeing someone regain confidence in themselves and finding a job that they love doing!"

My family moved to Clarkesville, Georgia in 1986. I attended school there and graduated from North Georgia Technical College with a Computer Science degree.

I am married to a wonderful husband and am a dog mom to a very stubborn Bull Terrier. We both have 3 siblings and it's nice to have most of our families and our parents living nearby."

UPCOMING GMRC COUNCIL MEETINGS AND PROGRAMS



- ⇒ July 29, 2021* Union County and City of Blairsville
- ⇒ Aug. 26, 2021 City of Lavonia and Franklin County
- ⇒ Sept. 30, 2021 White County
- ⇒ Oct. 28, 2021* City of Dahlonega/Lumpkin County

GMRC Council Meetings begin at 6:00 PM; Executive Committee meets prior at 5:00 PM.

****WD Board Meeting at 4:00 PM***