

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S UPDATE

Like so many of you and our communities, the NEGRC, over the past two months, has adjusted to a variety of changing work conditions posed by COVID-19. Our offices have remained closed to the public with, most recently, staff working both remotely and in the office—on a limited, staggered basis. Across the NEGRC's three programmatic Divisions, we've coordinated our efforts and relied on regular communications to ensure continuation of the NEGRC's services while following state and local orders and recommendations.

One of our major adjustments, shared by all our local governments, is the need to meet by conference call, video conference, or other means. This arrangement is new to me and, I know, many of you. Several of our meetings have been postponed. Over the last two months, however, NEGRC Council Committees met telephonically to conduct necessary business, as authorized in Georgia Code under emergency conditions. These meetings, I'm pleased to report, were successful and prevented delays in our operations. While our Council did not meet in March or April, it will need to meet this month to conduct necessary business. This meeting, obviously, will not be possible in our traditional location or arrangement. At the time of this writing, we are tentatively planning a "virtual" or video-conference format. Meeting details and call-in instructions will be announced in early June and also posted on the NEGRC's website.

During the period too, the NEGRC is staying updated on CARES Act funding that affects all our programmatic divisions. In most cases, this funding and the programs are benefitting our region and to our local governments. Please contact our office should you have specific needs or questions about CARES funding related to AAA, Planning & Government Services, or WIOA. In this *Update* issue, you will also find information on some of these opportunities.

I would also like to express my appreciation to NEGRC Chairperson **Billy Pittard**, the NEGRC's Executive Committee members **Linda Blechinger** and **Bill Palmer**, and NEGRC Committee Chairpersons **Amrey Harden** and **Kevin Little** for making themselves available during the last two months. With their involvement and guidance, we've been able to navigate these new and very different waters.



## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION CARES ACT FUNDING

The U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) recently released a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for nearly \$1.5B in grant funding, provided through the CARES Act, as an addendum to the EDA's Public Works and Economic Adjustment Assistance FY20 NOFO. The EDA Atlanta Regional Office has been allocated \$248M of that funding.

According to the NOFO Addendum, "successful projects will enable affected communities to respond to the impacts of the coronavirus pandemic by supporting affected businesses and communities, including by providing technical assistance to retain existing and hire new employees; by providing a range of skills-training and workforce development projects to help employees compete for high-quality jobs; and by developing and implementing strategies to diversify regional economics for create jobs in new or existing industries."

Potential projects include: economic recovery planning, broadband, business incubators, construction projects (including water and sewer), and other economic development-related efforts to boost economic resilience. All applications should consider "how the proposed project would 'prevent, prepare for, and respond to the coronavirus' or respond to 'economic injury as a result of coronavirus'" and should be consistent with the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). The Northeast Georgia CEDS is available here: <https://negrc.org/planning-government-services/community-economic-development>.

The EDA expects to provide a minimum 80% match for awarded projects (compared to traditional EDA Public Works funding, which generally provides a 50% match).

While the application period is open through September 30, 2022, the CARES Act funding is expected to go extremely quickly. (In addition to the State of Georgia, the EDA Atlanta Regional Office serves Alabama, Florida, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee.) Interested applicants are being recommended to submit applications by mid-June, 2020.

Planning & Government Services (PGS) Division staff are available to assist with preparing EDA applications. If you have a potential project that you would like to discuss, contact **Eva Kennedy**, NEGRC PGS Director, at [ekennedy@negrc.org](mailto:ekennedy@negrc.org).

More information and the complete NOFO with CARES Act Addendum are available on the PGS News webpage: <https://negrc.org/planning-government-services/news>.

## NEGRC'S COVID-19 RESPONSE HUB

In March of 2020, the NEGRC Planning & Government Services Division created a response hub for the COVID-19 pandemic. The hub is a webpage, hosted by ESRI, offering COVID-19-related resources, such as maps, statistics, grant information, and public health information. The hub is updated daily and also highlights public health and economic data for each Northeast Georgia County. If you would like to request this data for your community, please contact **Jon McBrayer**, NEGRC GIS Specialist, at [jmcbayer@negrc.org](mailto:jmcbayer@negrc.org).

The goal for the hub is to be a one-stop-shop for local governments to access available COVID-19 information and resources, helping Northeast Georgia community leaders stay informed. For questions or to request a resource be added to the hub, please contact Jon McBrayer. You can access the hub through the NEGRC's Planning & Government Services homepage: <https://negrc.org/planning-government-services>.

## APPALACHIAN REGIONAL COMMISSION (ARC) CONFERENCE NEWS

The Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), a state-federal partnership program, is guided by a supporting non-profit organization in Development District Association of Appalachia (DDAA). Each of the thirteen ARC states (that includes Georgia) are represented on the DDAA Board of Directors. ARC and DDAA each year hold a business meeting at their annual conference in Washington, D.C. This year's conference, scheduled for March 15-18, 2020, was cancelled due to COVID-19.

Last month, the ARC/DDAA held its postponed, annual-business meeting "virtually" on a video conference call since it was not held in March. At this meeting, **Jim Dove**, was presented the

John Whisman "Vision" Award by Jim Baldwin, DDAA Past President. The award is one of two presented annually and recognizes "an individual who best supports intergovernmental cooperation as exemplified in the ARC-state-LDD partnership." Congratulations to Jim for a well-deserved award!

At this meeting too, **Burke Walker**, NEGRC Executive Director, was nominated to serve as the Georgia DDAA Board member. He will be joined by **Heather Feldman**, Georgia Mountain Regional Commission Executive Director, whom will serve as an officer on the board as DDAA Secretary. Both will represent Georgia in the upcoming year and the 37 ARC counties among five Regional Commissions in Georgia.

## WIOA DIVISION RELAUNCHES "WORKFORCE WEDNESDAYS"

In an effort to stay connected with participants, partner agencies and colleagues, **WorkSource Northeast Georgia** retrieved a training program from our archives, and modified it for today's job seekers.


Almost 10 years ago when the US economy was in a recession, the Workforce Development Division created "**Workforce Wednesdays**." Workforce Wednesdays was a series of PowerPoint presentations developed to help unemployed clients "prepare" to join the workforce, PowerPoint topics included:

- How to Dress for Success
- How to Apply for Jobs Online
- How to Write a Winning Resume
- How to use Microsoft Office


At that time, Workforce Development staff travelled to counties in our service area, and met with clients at the Technical Colleges, Dept. of Labor, Housing Authority, and Parent Accountability Courts. The unemployment rate was high, so we brought the services to the clients! Fast forward to 2020, here we are again. Creating ways to deliver essential information and stay connected while practicing "**Social Distancing**". We pulled out the Workforce Wednesdays PowerPoints, and modified them to fit the demands and requirements of COVID-19.

### Workforce Wednesdays!


Join us each Wednesday in April...



**Kim Meadows**



**WORK  
SOURCE  
GEORGIA**



**Olivia Wintz**

*WorkSource Northeast Georgia's promotional announcement distributed for Workforce Wednesdays.*

During the month of April, WorkSource Northeast Georgia offered a four-week webinar series, called Workforce Wednesdays – a 30-minute Lunch & Learn Series. The webinars were delivered “virtually,” using Zoom™ so anyone with internet service could join using a computer, smartphone or laptop. As the platform is free and widely used, connectivity was simple and multiple people were able to participate from the safety of their homes. It offered a fantastic way for the NEGRC to offer assistance ‘from a distance’ during Covid-19. Webinar topics presented were:

- Resume Readiness
- Dealing with Emotions
- Telephone Interviews
- Job Tips for the Hard to Employ

With Workforce Wednesdays’ success, participants asked WorkSource Northeast Georgia to continue the series. The program will continue this month to meet the region’s workforce needs.

For more information on services and programs available through federal WIOA funding, contact the WorkSource Northeast Georgia through the **NEGRC’s Workforce Development Division** (WIOA) at **(706) 369-5703**.

## GEORGIA INITIATIVE FOR COMMUNITY HOUSING (GICH) PROGRAM REQUESTS APPLICATIONS

Vibrant neighborhoods with safe, affordable housing are the bedrock of every thriving community. Since 2004, the Georgia Initiative for Community Housing (GICH) has been helping communities across our state achieve this goal by improving quality of life and economic vitality through the development of locally- driven housing and revitalization strategies. The GICH program is a collaboration between the Georgia Municipal Association (GMA), the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) and The University of Georgia’s (UGA) Housing and Demographics Research Center and Office of the Vice President for Public Service and Outreach. We are also grateful for the financial support from Georgia Power.

### Current GICH Communities

#### Freshmen

- Adel
- Hartwell
- Ocilla
- Rossville/ LaFayette
- Statesboro

#### Sophomores

- Arlington
- Centerville
- Conyers
- **Social Circle**
- Smyrna

#### Juniors

- Byron
- McRae-Helena
- Norcross
- Cochran
- Troup County/ Hogansville/ LaGrange/ Westpoint

Note: Bold notes NEGRC community.

Local leaders often have a clear vision, but need help getting started. GICH helps communities develop a road map to achieve their vision. The program offers a platform for developing creative solutions, brainstorming ideas and

networking with housing professionals, city officials and staff, and community volunteers from across the state. Local governments participating in the current program are listed in the graphic. For a list of past participants, that includes many **NEGRC** cities and counties, visit: <https://www.fcs.uga.edu/fhce/gich-about-us>

The GICH program is now accepting applications for participation in this three-year program. A letter of intent is **due July 6, 2020** and the application will be due **July 31, 2020**. Additional information can be found on our website: <https://www.fcs.uga.edu/fhce/gich-how-to-apply>. For questions email GICH Program Director, Dr. Jermaine Durham, at: [Jermaine.Durham@uga.edu](mailto:Jermaine.Durham@uga.edu).

## NEGRC AIDED BY MASK MAKING FOR ATHENS

Last month, the volunteer group, *Mask Making for Athens*, met a critical need for the NEGRC and its staff. After the NEGRC made a formal request, the group made 40 protective masks for NEGRC staff to use while at work. *Mask Making for Athens* includes 1,000 total members with six administrators coordinating the mask making through its 300 volunteers. It is accessible through an established Facebook™ page. These volunteers accept material donations, make masks, and provide mask pick-up and delivery.

One of the group’s volunteers is Heidi Davison, former Mayor of Athens-Clarke County. Davison was the point person for the NEGRC whom helped coordinate the agency’s request. Kitty Donnan, a *Mask Making for Athens* volunteer, delivered the masks to the NEGRC. While the NEGRC headquarters has not been open to the public, the masks will provide safety and protection for staff while in the office working. With the personal, staff masks, it allows other, disposable protective masks to be used for other purposes and to conserve supplies.

The NEGRC continues to perform essential functions during COVID-19 including: delivered meals for the elderly and senior citizens, workforce-development assistance and support, and providing transit support, as well as other services to our cities, counties and authorities. During this pandemic, it is a testament to our communities and citizens how they respond and support one another. The NEGRC and its staff expresses its gratitude to *Mask Making for Athens* for their efforts in providing protective masks to allow our staff to safely perform their duties in the workplace.





305 Research Drive  
Athens, GA 30605

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

PRSRT. STD.  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
ATHENS, GA  
PERMIT NO. 502

*Update*

**REGIONAL MEETINGS**  
**JUNE**

18<sup>th</sup>

NEGRC Council Meeting

Location TBD

Please check the NEGRC website for the latest information concerning  
June's meetings or call the NEGRC at (706) 369-5650.