

GARC PARTICIPATES IN GMA'S AGENCY ROUNDTABLE

The Georgia Municipal Association (GMA) hosts "Interagency Roundtable" meetings each quarter of the year. These meetings include GMA staff and federal, state, and regional agencies to provide updates and information about their respective programs. It also serves to provide coordination and deployment opportunities where local governments can access programs and funding. The Georgia Association of Regional Commissions (GARC) participates in the meetings and **Burke Walker**, NEGRC Executive Director, attended the August 8, 2024 meeting representing the GARC. The meeting was also attended by many governmental agencies including: Department of Audits and Accounts (DOAA), Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA), U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Georgia's Environmental Protection Division, Georgia Department of Revenue, UGA's Carl Vinson Institute of Government, and others. The meeting provided new and helpful information about resources for local governments and partnerships for Regional Commission with state and federal agencies.



Attendees at the Georgia Municipal Association's (GMA) Interagency Roundtable Quarterly meeting. DOAA, FHWA, DCA, HUD, EPD, CVI, GDR, and others.

MAYOR FRED PERRIMAN ELECTED GMA PRESIDENT

The Georgia Municipal Association's (GMA) annual conference was held in Savannah, Georgia from June 21-25, 2024. At this year's conference, **Mayor Fred Perriman**, City of Madison, was elected as GMA President on June 23, 2024 and honored at a Mayor's Reception that evening. Mayor Perriman takes over the top leadership position from **Mayor Randall Walker**, City of Perry, as Immediate Past President.

Mayor Perriman is currently the municipal representative from Morgan County on the NEGRC's Council. As a councilmember, he serves as Chairperson to the Audit & Finance Committee as well as a member on the Executive Committee.

The reception was attended by elected officials, city and GMA staff. **Burke Walker**, NEGRC Executive Director, attended the reception after staffing the Georgia Association of Regional Commissions' (GARC) booth at the buyers' mart. Congratulations to Mayor Perriman on his election as GMA President for 2024-2025!



Mayor Fred Perriman (right) and Burke Walker at GMA's President reception.

SUMMER 2024 NEGA CONNECTS EDUCATORS AND BUSINESSES THROUGH EXTERNSHIPS

During the week of June 3rd, NEGA CONNECTS provided 90 educators from 6 Northeast Georgia Counties the opportunity to connect with 23 businesses and industries. In the Summer 2023, all 12 counties had one or more educators participate. With less Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Sector Strategy funds available in 2024, it was determined to utilize the limited WIOA/Sector Strategy funds to support counties with less than two years of previous participation: Elbert, Jackson, Oglethorpe, and Oconee Counties. Ultimately, Oglethorpe County was not able to participate, leaving 18 externships funded by WIOA/Sector Strategy funds in Jackson, Elbert, and Oconee Counties.

The remaining 72 externships were funded by public and private funds, including Georgia Power, local governments, development and industrial authorities, and Department of Education (DOE) funds. Please see the chart for specific information.

The format of the weeklong program remained the same, beginning with an orientation/kickoff day on Monday, three days of on-site job shadowing, and concluding with a report-out day. On the final day, educators shared what they learned from the industries and their plans for conveying information about employment opportunities and lessons learned to their students and colleagues. The externships also allowed educators and businesses to establish relationships, which they indicated would continue throughout the school year in various ways, including businesses speaking to students and staff during the school year and serving as worksites for student work-based learning. Participating educators received a stipend for their involvement.

2024:

County	Total # of Externships	# of NEGRC funded externships	# and funding source of other externships in County	Industries
Clarke	17	0	ACCED – 3 GA Power - 14	Pilgrim's, EFI, Boehringer Ingelheim, ABB, Authentic Brewing, Classic Center, Piedmont Athens Regional
Elbert	12	6	6 – Rural Grant	Matthews International, Pilgrim's Pride, EMS, Elbert County Hospital, City of Elberton
Jackson	9	8	1 - TICA	EMS, SK Battery, TICA
Newton	19	0	19 (CTAE funded)	Bridgestone Golf, Clairon Metals, Nisshinbo, SRG Global, Takeda, Michelin
Oconee	4	4	0	EFI, ABB, Boehringer Ingelheim
Walton	10	0	10 Walton Co Dev Authority,	Takeda, Leggett and Platt, ER Snell Walton EMC

FOOD BANK OF NORTHEAST GEORGIA HOSTS RIBBON CUTTING IN JULY

On July 18th, the Food Bank of Northeast Georgia (FBNEG) celebrated a major milestone by hosting a ribbon cutting ceremony for its new facility on Newton Bridge Road north of downtown Athens. The FBNEG serves 15 counties throughout the Northeast Georgia and Georgia Mountains regions. Two facilities, a main distribution center in Athens-Clarke County and another smaller facility in the City of Clayton, work together to provide cold and dry storage for the organization. The new main distribution center

more than doubles the Food Bank's capacity to serve the region and increases their footprint from 37,000 sq. ft. to 63,000 sq. ft. The project was a culmination of three years of work between multiple project partners and will significantly improve the region's food security.



A ribbon cutting ceremony for the Food Bank of Northeast Georgia's new facility on July 18, 2024 with project partners.

The project originated following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. During that time, Georgia's Food Banks and partnering food pantries were faced with a significant increase in need for food goods by Georgia residents. In some cases, in the Northeast Georgia region, food banks were experiencing lines up to one mile long at distribution locations. This emphasized needs in infrastructure investment that are key contributors in the state's ability to provide essential goods and services in response to a national emergency. As part of the CARES Act of 2020, the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) received federal dollars to provide relief in response to the pandemic through funding from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). In total, Georgia received \$82,850,707 from HUD for the Community Development Block Grant – Coronavirus program (CDBG-CV), including administration. DCA determined that Feeding Georgia (a 501(c)3 organization comprised of seven regional food banks) was an organization that provided an essential service to Georgians during the emergency and that had a significant need for facility improvements throughout the state. Therefore, an application process was created and the FBNEG partnered with the Unified Government of Athens-Clarke County (ACC) to seek funding for an expansion. Due to the NEGRC's extensive history with CDBG funding programs, ACC engaged with the NEGRC's Planning & Government Services Division to assist with CDBG grant writing and administrative services.

In December 2021, the project was funded by an \$8.89 million grant through the CDBG-CV program administered by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs. The FBNEG was required to raise an additional \$8-9 million to contribute as local match to the grant and cover additional costs associated with property acquisition and construction. Construction was completed in June, allowing the FBNEG to move to the new location across the street from its previous facility.

This project serves as a great example within our region of multi-jurisdictional support and long-term planning. Within the FBNEG

service area, it is estimated that over 68,000 residents are considered food insecure, a term used by the United States Department of Agriculture to define residents who experience limitations to food access. Annually, the FBNEG distributes over 11 million pounds of food to residents within its service area and partners with dozens of organizations to assist with the logistics of food delivery. They truly are an essential non-profit to our region's resiliency and will now be even more prepared to respond to future emergencies and functionally eliminate food insecurity in the region.



The entrance of the new facility for the Food Bank of Northeast Georgia, located at 890 Newton Bridge Rd, Athens, GA 30607

NEGRC AND GEORGIA TECH TO HOST GA-AIM CYBERSECURITY WORKSHOP IN OCTOBER

Georgia Tech's Center for Economic Development and Research (CEDR) is leading a statewide effort to accelerate the adoption of artificial intelligence across the state's legacy industrial sectors, such as manufacturing. The study is referred to as Georgia AI Manufacturing (GA-AIM) and is the result of a grant awarded by the Economic Development Administration within the U.S. Department of Commerce. With the coronavirus pandemic's acute impact on global supply chains, there has been renewed urgency for reshoring critical manufacturing activities. EDA recognizes artificial intelligence (AI) will soon be a ubiquitous feature of any successful manufacturer. The GA-AIM coalition hopes to establish the United States as a leader in AI manufacturing while ensuring these systems complement rather than replace existing workers and aims to serve as a national model for how to accelerate the transition to automation in manufacturing while diversifying the next generation of AI leadership.

Georgia Tech's CEDR team is framing their effort around Regional Commission boundaries. As a result, each of the twelve Georgia regions will have an economic development strategy that focuses on the use and expansion of AI in the manufacturing sector.

As part of a GA-AIM pilot program, the NEGRC and Georgia Tech will be hosting a cyber-security workshop to be catered to local governments, manufacturers, and small businesses. Staff

from Georgia Tech Artificial Intelligence Hub and UGA's CyberArch program will lead the workshop and provide an overview of best practices to use toward securing your organizations from AI and cyber-security threats. The target audience would be administrators, chief financial officers, and executives as they are usually the most vulnerable to attacks.

The workshop will be held on October 22, 2024 from 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. at the Georgia Department of Labor meeting room at 150 Evelyn C Neely Dr, Athens, GA 3060. An email invitation will be sent by the GA-AIM team to target audiences. However, if you are interested in attending or have questions, you may contact **Mark Beatty**, Director of Planning & Government Services, at mbeatty@negrc.org or (706) 369-5650.

REGIONAL TRANSIT DEVELOPMENT STUDY IS COMPLETED FOR NORTHEAST GEORGIA

The Georgia Department of Transportation, in partnership with Blue Cypress Consulting, has nearly completed its process of assisting the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission (NEGRC) with creating a regional, transit-development plan (TDP) that explores alternatives for public transit service throughout the 12-county area. This is part of a statewide initiative to develop transit service throughout Georgia's 159 counties to eliminate barriers to economic opportunity for residents. The plan provides robust documentation of regional mobility conditions and contributing context and identifies next steps to advance specific transit service recommendations. Where relevant, the plan identifies alternative service options that advance long-term transit goals but require further regional consideration. The overarching goal of the Regional TDP is to facilitate public transit accessibility to all community members in the region with particular focus on residents who are transit dependent. This document will serve as an informational resource and decision-making tool for local governments in the years to come. Once adopted, the document will be available on the NEGRC website.



Stakeholder engagement session hosted earlier in 2024 at the NEGRC main office

NEGRC SECURES TWO \$350,000 SOUTHEAST CRESCENT REGIONAL COMMISSION GRANT AWARDS

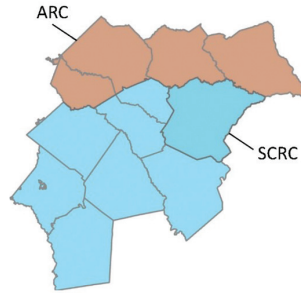
NEGRC's Workforce Development Division partnered with Clarke, Newton and Walton Counties, building on existing partnerships and initiatives, to submit an inaugural grant application to the Southeast Crescent Regional Commission (SCRC). The preapplication process began in July 2023 and grant announcements were made on July 16, 2024.

The NEGA Stem Connects \$350,000 grant was awarded to support efforts in the three counties around six activities focusing on preparing the future workforce in the occupational areas of bioscience and manufacturing. These six activities are: Educator Externships, Educator Professional Development, student work-based learning, obtainment of industry recognized credentials, establishing a high school sophomore leadership program and developing and implementing a regional marketing strategy utilizing a mobile lab to provide access to information about the job opportunities in each community.

About the Southeast Crescent Regional Commission (SCRC)

The Southeast Crescent Regional Commission (SCRC) is a federal-state partnership authorized in the 2008 Farm Bill to promote and encourage economic development in areas of Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, and Florida. SCRC invests in projects that support basic infrastructure, business development, natural resources, and workforce/labor development. SCRC's mission is to help create jobs, build communities, and improve the lives of those who reside in the 428 counties of the seven-state region. The SCRC received its first congressional allocation of funding in fiscal year 2024 and began offering planning assistance to Local Development Districts (LDD), including the NEGRC, and offered the first round of a State Economic and Infrastructure Development (SEID) grant program.

In 2021, Jasper County received Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding through the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) to assist the Jasper County Food Bank with a relocation and expansion project. Similar to the Food Bank of Northeast Georgia, the Jasper County Food Bank received a significant increase in service delivery need during the COVID-19 pandemic which caused them to pursue an expansion. Due to rising construction costs, there were not enough funds available through the CDBG grant award to enable the relocation and expansion to move forward. Therefore, Jasper County partnered with the NEGRC's Planning & Government Services Division (PGS) to apply to the SCRC SEID grant program for gap funding to account for the difference in estimated construction costs. A \$350,000 SEID grant was awarded in July 2024, bringing the total federal grant contribution to \$1.1 million for the food bank. The project is now able to continue forward with an estimated completion of Spring 2026.



Southern Crescent Regional Commission service area within the Northeast Georgia region.

For further information on workforce initiatives or programs, please contact the NEGRC's Workforce Development Division at (706) 369-5703. For information on the NEGRC's Planning & Government Services Division (PGS) and grant writing and administration services, contact **Mark Beatty**, NEGRC PGS Director at mbeatty@negrc.org. For further information about the SCRC, visit: www.scrc.gov.

2024 NORTHEAST GEORGIA SENIOR FARMERS MARKET NUTRITION PROGRAM

The Northeast Georgia Area Agency on Aging (AAA) Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program Farmers' Markets began on July 2, 2024. Peggy Jenkins, NEGRC AAA Director and Toshia Lewis, NEGRC Quality Assurance Senior Manager, coordinated farmers markets at each Senior Center in the Northeast Georgia and at other community locations within Northeast Georgia.

The farmers' markets provide access to locally grown fruit and vegetables to senior center participants and community members. The NEGRC's AAA worked with three farmers this year; Larry Doolittle, owner of The Garden Market of Wilkes County, Joseph Nesbit, owner of Red Clay Produce of Greene County, and Traves Hyman, owner of Hyman Agriculture and Consulting of Walton County. The AAA was allotted 2,500 slots and continues to offer farmers markets to utilize all benefits issued to the Northeast Georgia AAA area. The participating seniors in the farmers' markets report that they do not have access to fresh produce and generally only eat fruit and vegetables provided through the AAA's Congregate and Home Delivered meals programs.

For anyone knowing any seniors that need nutritional support, please contact your local senior center for information and support or call the **Aging and Disability Resource Connection** at **1-888-808-8020**.



The Garden Market Produce



The Garden Market Staff:
Larry Doolittle, owner (right)



The Red Clay Produce Staff:
Joseph Nesbit, owner (right)



AAA Staff took a break to pose for the picture with the Happy Seniors of Walton County Senior Center



Red Clay Produce Selection



CYBERSECURITY SUPPORT AVAILABLE FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

Cybersecurity is an area of growing concern for a lot of organizations and governmental entities. Many of these provide their own security through their information-technology (IT) staff, state agencies, or IT consultants. For others, The University of Georgia (UGA) may provide a resource for those wanting to learn more or to address cybersecurity preparedness.

UGA's CyberArch, facilitated by the University of Georgia Carl Vinson Institute of Government, addresses the challenges of cybersecurity for Georgia's communities and businesses. The program, a collaboration between UGA's academic and public service units, works to raise awareness about cybersecurity threats and enhance the cyber readiness of city and county governments, K-12 school systems, rural hospitals, and small businesses.

In addition to regular webinars, UGA CyberArch provides a no-cost cybersecurity risk review service for partner organizations. The service is conducted by student interns, who work in teams to conduct a cybersecurity risk review based on the CIS Security Controls, v8.0, Implementation Group 1 safeguards combined with an onsite visit. The review process culminates in a final report with recommendations to improve the organization's security. Partner organizations' identities are kept confidential to add an extra layer of security to the program.

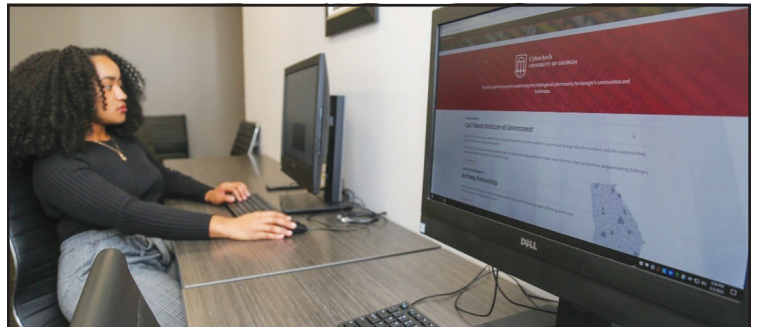
Visit cviog.uga.edu or email cyberarch@uga.edu for more information.



Hyman Agriculture and Consulting Staff: Traves Hyman, owner (right) and his daughter, the future owner



Hyman Agriculture and Consulting Produce



Workstations in use at the CyberArch Program.

Update

UPCOMING REGIONAL MEETINGS

SEPTEMBER

19 th	NEGRC Council Meeting	Noon	Trumps Catering
25 th	UOBWA	9:00 a.m.	NEGRC

OCTOBER

17 th	NEGRC Council Meeting	Noon	Trumps Catering
22 nd	GA-AIM Cybersecurity Workshop	10:00 a.m.–Noon	GA DOL, Athens

NOVEMBER

6 th –8 th	GARC Conference		King & Prince, St. Simon's Island
13 th	Solid Waste Authority	1:00 p.m.	NEGRC
20 th <i>(date subject to change)</i>	UOBWA	9:00 a.m.	NEGRC
21 st	NEGRC Council Meeting	Noon	Trump's Catering
28 th –29 th	Thanksgiving Holiday	All Day	NEGRC Closed