

# Table of Contents

Click on the article of interest to go directly to that article.

## *Cover Story* \_\_\_\_\_ Page 2-3

### **In the Spirit of Excellence**

A recent Georgia Tech assessment survey of quality management practices among Accredited Economic Development Organizations (AEDOs) reveals several benchmarks for being a high-performance organization.

## *Special Feature* \_\_\_\_\_ Page 4

### **Pioneering Perspectives from Some of Georgia's Best**

Georgia Tech student interns unveil their research into key innovation issues: Hispanic microbusinesses, creative capacity, biofuel, and the digital music industry.

## *Partner Spotlight* \_\_\_\_\_ Pages 5-6

### **A Q&A with OneGeorgia's Nancy Cobb**

OneGeorgia Authority Director Nancy Cobb discusses the canvas of rural economic development today and in the future.

## *Impact* \_\_\_\_\_ Pages 7-8

### **Environmental Management Effort Pays Off**

A collaborative effort by Georgia Tech and Bartow County government and industry partners has created a model for community-based management of environmental issues.

### **Attracting Retirees Makes Economic Development Sense**

Research reveals that drawing more active adult and continuing care retirement communities could boost jobs and government revenues in Georgia.

## *In Action* \_\_\_\_\_ Pages 9-10

### **In this issue:**

Recent developments regarding helping a region be TechSmart, examining readiness for sustainable development, profiling pockets of innovation, and more.

## *Elsewhere at Georgia Tech* \_\_\_\_\_ Page 11

### **Developing a Workforce of Excellence for the 21st Century**

In diverse ways, Georgia Tech partners with communities and schools to hone the math, science, and computing skills necessary to meet the business needs of today and tomorrow.

## *Professional Development*

## *Planner* \_\_\_\_\_ Page 12

### **Courses and Events**

Knowledge-building for economic developers.

# FOCUS on Communities

Innovative and Technology-driven Solutions

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## In the Spirit of Excellence

“The difference between a successful [organization] and others is not a lack of strength, not a lack of knowledge, but rather a lack of will,” said famed football coach Vince Lombardi. Indeed, it is willpower—fueled by dynamic leadership—that is often the litmus test for excellence among economic development organizations. Simply put, those with the willpower develop the know-how to excel.

In search of excellence, economic development executives want to operate as effectively as possible, to realize the highest possible impact, and to have a knowledge system in place for tracking performance, which will enable continual improvement.

In truly top-notch organizations, excellence is the norm, not the exception—in every activity. Employees at every level “walk, talk, and breathe” excellence. Empowerment, innovation, and inclusion are everyday occurrences. Staff are developed beyond their function rather than limited to their current position. Continual improvement is a core principle, not a special or occasional event. And, simply put, these organizations provide a culture of learning for their staff.

### Principles of Excellence

Numerous experts have focused on principles of organizational excellence for businesses, but few have concentrated their efforts specifically on economic development organizations. Most such principles identified for businesses are appropriate to economic development entities; however, the latter can claim some operational areas of particular relevance.

To assist in this arena, Georgia Tech’s Enterprise Innovation Institute has designed the Calibration Program<sup>SM</sup> that helps local economic development organizations (EDOs) achieve higher performance. The program draws on quality management standards from the International Economic Development Council’s (IEDC) Accredited Economic Development Organization (AEDO) program, the International Organization of Standardization, and Malcolm Baldrige Award criteria.

As part of this program, a team from the Enterprise Innovation Institute has identified 114 indicators that fall within 10 key areas of quality management. These include seven Baldrige areas and three based on operational criteria of particular importance to economic development. They are Leadership, Human Resource Focus, Strategic Planning, Customer and Market Focus, Use of Technology, Performance-Tracking System, Communications System, Process Management, Partnerships and Relationships, and Results.

### The Best of the Best

To provide quality management benchmarks for EDOs interested in pursuing enterprise excellence via the Calibration Program<sup>SM</sup>, Georgia Tech conducted an assessment survey—based on 10 quality management areas—of 18

AEDOs across the country during winter 2006. The AEDOs represented 12 of 14 states housing such organizations, ranging from Georgia to California and Florida to Wisconsin. They were selected for participation in the survey because they have been recognized by the IEDC for their excellence and, therefore, represent the “best of the best” in economic development. The survey’s results were released at the IEDC 2006 Annual Conference in New York City on Sept. 19, 2006.

AEDOs scored well (4.0 or above) in seven key areas of quality management, indicating enterprise excellence. Customer and Market Focus received the highest overall rating at 4.4. Fol-

lowing is a summary of key findings.

- The best organizations focus on customer service, achieving results, and leveraging partnerships. Such focus has probably enabled AEDOs to have great impact on their surrounding communities, region, and state, as recognized in this survey by stakeholders. These entities would be ideal candidates to provide valuable mentorship to other EDOs.

- By far, the greatest opportunities for improvement appear to lie in the Performance-Tracking area. In addition to receiving low ratings for the performance-tracking systems



Continued – page 3

**Excellence** — continued from page 2

in place, organizations appear to lack implementation of such systems. Without a performance-tracking system, EDOs are less able to: (1) monitor the changing environment and adapt accordingly, (2) identify inefficiencies and implement corrective actions, (3) make informed decisions regarding the setting of future organizational priorities, (4) communicate progress and heighten community recognition of accomplishments, and (5) go from “good to great.” The ratings signal that performance-tracking is likely a pervasive challenge and an area for potential programmatic assistance.

**Issues of Innovation**

■ Several AEDOs appear to reside in a potentially non-supportive environment for innovation, with stakeholders providing relatively low marks for community leadership embracing change and new ideas. This would naturally translate into lower tolerance for new ideas by EDO board members—who often are community leaders—as also reflected in stakeholder ratings. However, despite this apparent lack of support for innovation, AEDOs received relatively high marks for being innovative. Stakeholders gave fairly high marks to staff for their ability to create and apply new ideas. Focusing efforts on improving the support environment for creativity and innovation would leverage this talent and could potentially bolster EDOs’ impact.

■ Leadership development—specifically for board of directors leadership—appears to be another significant area of opportunity for improvement. Participation in board member training programs was the third lowest indicator among the 114. In addition to lower marks for support of creativity and innovation, knowledge-sharing between board members and staff received lower relative marks. Also, given that EDOs often represent community-wide interests, board composition is impor-

tant. However, composing the board to represent a community’s diversity seems to be another common challenge.

■ Although AEDOs appeared to use many technology tools, it appears some improvement could occur in provid-

ing staff with training to learn about and apply new technologies. Relating to this, stakeholders provided relatively low marks when asked to consider whether the AEDO is viewed as a community leader in the use of technology. Why is this important? Because technology is a value-added enabler, helping organizations reach their optimal levels in productivity, efficiency, and effectiveness. Also, the availability of technology infrastructure and services continues to be growing in importance as criteria for investment. Because EDOs are often the first and main point of contact for investors, their use of technology conceivably can reflect whether the community can suit the investors’ technology needs.

**Useful Benchmarks**

From the review of the AEDO survey findings, several best practices emerged, which could provide useful programmatic ideas for the profession. Specifically, the benchmarks represent very tangible action steps for EDOs interested in pursuing enterprise excellence.

“The assessment survey reveals successful characteristics of IEDC-accredited economic development organizations, as well as common challenges. This information serves as a benchmark for organizations to improve performance,” says IEDC CEO/President Jeffrey Finkle. ❖

**Calibrating for High Performance**

The goal of Georgia Tech’s Calibration Program<sup>SM</sup> is to help economic development organizations (EDOs) in their efforts to achieve excellence. It is designed to provide organizations with independent feedback that enables the following:

- Better understanding of operational gaps and opportunities related to positive change.
- Improved management systems to operate more effectively and efficiently.
- Heightened community recognition of an EDO’s professionalism.
- Improved readiness to participate in IEDC’s process to become an AEDO.

In 2005, a selection of EDOs were chosen to participate in Calibration Program<sup>SM</sup> pilots, an effort sponsored by the Georgia Rural Economic Development Center at East Georgia College. Says JoAnne Lewis of the Douglas-Coffee County Chamber of Commerce of her organization’s pilot experience, “I can’t think of anyone who wouldn’t benefit [from participating in the program]. It really gives you an avenue to look at where you are and where you need to go to improve.”

For more information on the Calibration Program<sup>SM</sup>, contact Joy Wilkins (404.895.6115; joy.wilkins@innovate.gatech.edu).

## Pioneering Perspectives from Some of Georgia's Best

In mid-September, five Georgia Tech graduate students participating in the Innovative Economic Development Internship Program, jointly sponsored by Georgia Tech's Enterprise Innovation Institute and School of Public Policy and supported by Georgia Power Company, gave presentations on their research projects to an audience of state and local economic development practitioners, Georgia Tech faculty, and fellow students. Their recommendations carried potential for application and utility in communities statewide.

The institute's Todd Greene said the idea was to bring together students, economic developers, and ideas. The Georgia Department of Economic Development's Gilda Watters called the students "a tremendous resource" and the effort "a win-win scenario." The project deliverables, she said, help Georgia meet its goals.

Miguel Granier examined Hispanic microenterprises, with a focus on **Gainesville** and **Vidalia**. This is a dynamic arena, he observed, because the Hispanic population these enterprises serve is growing quickly, "and they take advantage of that." His project entailed qualitative, geographic, and policy analyses. Among other things, he found that these businesses have low participation in government-agency assistance programs, relying instead on sources such as suppliers and local consultants, even informal incubators. Such businesses also often have difficulties with credit and financing, he observed. Part of his study used Google Map to show enterprise formation trends in Gainesville and Vidalia, revealing that Hispanic-owned businesses develop in linear fashion rather than clustering in one area.

**Savannah's** creative capacity was explored by Mark Farmer who identified people and emerging products (e.g., patents) and collaboration representing both fine arts and creative efforts in science/technology. He found the fine-arts scene to be "in transition," that is, growing and becoming more networked, but it could use more support. The Savannah College of Art and Design is a big plus, he noted, but the area must take better advantage of it. The region also must play to its strengths, such as leveraging oceanographic research, explained Farmer.

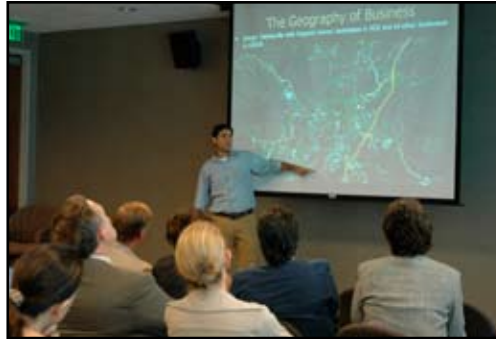
John Kim and Kenwin Hayes investigated the feasibility of an ethanol facility in **Swainsboro**, covering aspects from fiscal and economic impact to process design to incentives.

Ample feedstock already exists in the form of waste from timber processing, they reported. Such a facility would run \$235.8 million in total project investment, but in 20 years it could generate more than 600 jobs and \$167.4 million in economic activity, according to their research. Potential benefits, in addition to economic development, include energy security and greenhouse gas reduction, according to Kim and Hayes. Disadvantages they identified range from high dollar costs to logistics problems to increased water pollution.

And Alexa Stephens looked at possibilities for expanding Georgia's digital music industry, already a hot item in metro **Atlanta**. The decentralized industry, she said, fosters entrepreneurship, is accessible to those of varying socioeconomic status and without traditional education backgrounds, and rewards innovation. The state already claims artists, researchers, and studios contrib-

uting digital music, and it enjoys more than \$272 million in estimated annual sales, according to her research. In addition, six higher-educational institutions in Georgia reportedly have offerings related to digital music. She noted, however, that Georgia could benefit from more collaboration among professionals and researchers, more knowledge transfer to local firms, added resources outside metro Atlanta, and more visible educational options.

The full reports are available at [www.stip.gatech.edu/stip/](http://www.stip.gatech.edu/stip/). ❖



Georgia Tech graduate student Miguel Granier discusses Hispanic small businesses.

### In Step with STIP

Established in 2005, the Science, Technology, and Innovation Program (STIP) represents a collaboration between Georgia Tech's School of Public Policy and Enterprise Innovation Institute. Directed by Professor Phil Shapira, Jan Youtie, Ph.D., and Todd Greene, CEcD, STIP supports the internship program, hosts visiting researchers and economic development practitioners, issues reports, offers forums on innovations in economic development, and undertakes projects impacting Georgia and Georgia communities. In September, STIP co-hosted the 2006 Technology Transfer Society annual conference in Atlanta. More information about STIP is available on its Web site ([www.stip.gatech.edu](http://www.stip.gatech.edu)).

## Interview with Nancy Cobb – Helping Rural Areas Excel

*The six-year-old OneGeorgia Authority helps rural areas excel in various aspects of economic growth. Here, director Nancy Cobb discusses some of those communities' challenges and the authority's efforts to help address them.*

**FOCUS:** What is OneGeorgia Authority's mission?

**COBB:** The mission of the OneGeorgia Authority, legislatively created in 2000 and utilizing one-third of the state's tobacco settlement money, is to provide financial resources to support projects and activities in Georgia's economically distressed rural areas, thereby serving as a catalyst to spur the creation of new jobs and private investment. We encourage collaborative partnerships and sustainable economic development strategies as we work to achieve our goal of "bridging the economic divide."



Nancy Cobb

**FOCUS:** What do you see as the most critical issues and key challenges facing rural Georgia communities today?

**COBB:** The most critical issues and key challenges facing rural Georgia communities today include the development of "forward-thinking" local leadership, an educated/skilled workforce, regional partnerships, and 21st-century infrastructure investments. It is critical that our rural communities understand the impact of globalization and how it has forever changed the way we do business. Local leaders must be willing to work across geographic and political boundaries to promote strong regional economies focused on the development of business clusters and niche markets that are competitive and fully engaged in global commerce utilizing 21st-century technology.

**FOCUS:** How does OneGeorgia assist communities in addressing these issues/challenges?

**COBB:** Since our start-up, OneGeorgia has continually evaluated and/or expanded its programs to address the challenges in our rural areas. In late 2000, the OneGeorgia Authority began with two financing programs, EDGE and

Equity; both continue to be important resources for our rural communities today. In 2002, OneGeorgia announced the Regional E-911 Fund, aimed at providing grants to the remaining 31 rural communities without basic or enhanced E-911 services.

OneGeorgia also provides funding to support The Centers of Innovation program, established in 2003. Each center provides support to researchers and entrepreneurs in the areas of aerospace, agriculture, life sciences, manufacturing, and maritime logistics and creates an environment where you can connect with state leaders, academic and business experts, and government organizations to nurture ideas and forge new relationships. This program also features regional entrepreneur outreach specialists who provide grass roots, hands-on technical expertise and business-development mentoring in our rural areas to entrepreneurs and new businesses.

The development of the ESB (Entrepreneur-Small Business) Loan Guarantee Fund was a result of Governor Perdue's 2004 Executive Order calling for increased access to capital for rural start-ups and expansion and is available in 112 rural counties. The ESB Loan Guarantee Fund is recognized as being user-friendly (the on-line application is only two pages) and a non-bureaucratic approach with a quick turnaround response of usually 24 to 48 hours because we're all about encouraging business start-ups and expansions in our rural areas. Conversely, the Strategic Industries Loan Fund (SILF) was created in 2005 to provide low-interest loans to support emerging or development-stage companies in identified strategic industry sectors, including aerospace, agribusiness, energy, life sciences, logistics, and transportation. The loan fund was developed as an additional incentive to encourage companies located in a Georgia incubator, Center of Innovation or partnered with a state research university or college to remain in Georgia, providing quality jobs with above-average wages and benefits in an eligible rural area. In 2006, we announced two new programs focused on needed rural infrastructure investments: BRIDGE (Broadband Rural Initiative to Develop Georgia's Economy) and AIRGeorgia (Airport Infrastructure for Rural Georgia).

**FOCUS:** What have been OneGeorgia's key milestones of which you're particularly proud?

**COBB:** I would separate our financial milestones from our policy/program milestones. Over the last six years,

*Continued – page 6*

**Cobb** — continued from page 5

OneGeorgia has invested more than \$200 million in rural economic development activities, with over \$150 million being awarded directly to 114 rural communities in support of economic development activities and projects leading to the creation of more than 20,000 new jobs to date. We are proud that our investments are leveraged against more than \$2.3 billion in total project costs and long-term job creation on projects awarded to date estimated at more than 31,000.

Recognizing that Georgia is second only to Texas in the number of counties (with Texas more than four times the geographical size of Georgia), OneGeorgia Authority is a strong supporter of regional partnerships. In 2005, we altered our scoring criteria and created tiered levels of funding for the Equity program to encourage multi-county projects and collaboration across city and county borders. Over the last two years, we have seen a significant increase in the number of applications from multi-county or joint development authorities. For instance, the largest Regional E-911 Center in Georgia was funded through the Regional E-911 program and provides emergency services for seven rural counties. And, last July, we announced the first five-county BRIDGE award to support technology assessments in **Baker, Calhoun, Early, Miller, and Mitchell** counties.

**FOCUS:** In the past four years, what strides has rural Georgia made generally? Which rural communities do you see as being models for others, and why?

**COBB:** Rural Georgia leaders understand that there is no “magic bullet” or single strategy that will work for everyone. Over the last two years, we have seen a tremendous increase in GDEcD’s “Entrepreneur Friendly” program, of which OneGeorgia is a financial supporter.

There are many rural communities that are working diligently to position their communities and regions for growth in the 21st century. Some of these role models would include:

- The Joint Development Authority of **Franklin, Hart, and Stephens** counties was created in 1998 following the completion of a road-map feasibility study by Georgia Tech. Since then with OneGeorgia assistance, they have successfully developed the 150-acre regional “Gateway Technology Park” along the I-85 corridor and in 2004 recruited TI Automotive as their anchor tenant, with a \$30 million private investment and commitment of 130 new jobs.

- The JDA of **Brooks, Colquitt, Grady, Mitchell, and Thomas** counties was instrumental in landing National Beef, the very first project funded by OneGeorgia. Perhaps the importance of this multi-county partnership is best reflected in the recent announcement that National Beef in **Moultrie** is going strong as a regional employer with 575 employees with its fourth expansion under way. This multi-county partnership works well together and at last count had collaborated on more than 14 projects garnering some \$12 million in JDA assets.

- We are also seeing collaboration and partnerships form among the agricultural community, such as the 65-member grower group located in 12 southwest Georgia counties, known as the American Peanut Growers Group. Applying on behalf of the grower group, the **Donalsonville/ Seminole** Development Authority received a \$500,000 loan from the Equity fund to support the \$27 million grower-owned, peanut-shelling plant located in Donalsonville. A similar Equity loan award was made to the **Tift County** Development Authority in support of Tift Quality Peanuts, with 106 peanut grower/owners located in 11 south-central Georgia counties.

**FOCUS:** OneGeorgia’s role has continued to evolve over the years. What can we expect from OneGeorgia in the future?

**COBB:** It’s important to remember that the Master Tobacco Settlement is a 25-year agreement with OneGeorgia receiving an estimated \$1.8 billion over the life of the settlement. The OneGeorgia Authority, only in its sixth year, can already point to evidence of success across many areas of rural Georgia. We understand that change is inevitable; our goal is to make sure that our rural communities are not left behind. Our stakeholders can expect our board, chaired by Governor Sonny Perdue, to continue to be aggressive in the development of new policies and programs. ❖

## Environmental Management Effort Pays Off

An award-winning environmental management system (EMS) program in **Bartow County** continues to demonstrate positive impact.

In August 2005, a joint effort of Georgia Tech, Bartow County, and local industries received national recognition at a conference in St. Louis convened to discuss cooperative conservation on state and local levels. There were 500 nominations from Georgia alone, and only two were selected—the Atlantic Station redevelopment project in Atlanta and the Bartow County EMS. According to Donna DeLeon, a deputy administrator in the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, “The Bartow County environmental management system is the model for cooperative conservation in the nation and the wave of environmental protection for the future.”

“Says Clarence Brown, Bartow’s sole county commissioner, “I support fully the Environmental Management System program. The program is good for the environment and for Bartow County. It’s the right thing to do.”

In commending all who were involved in developing the first countywide EMS, Governor Sonny Perdue says, “Thanks to their efforts, Bartow County has a resource to manage environmental impacts. This new environmental management system will improve the quality of life and help to preserve the county’s natural resources for generations to come.”

Bartow’s comprehensive EMS, which began in 2004, initially focused on air quality. A major emphasis was on the vehicle fleet encompassing 175 school buses, more than 200 city and county vehicles, some 100 federal and state

vehicles, and more than 1,000 commercial and industrial vehicles, plus agricultural equipment. Teams examined everything from idling procedures and fueling policies to hybrid vehicles and off-road equipment procedures.

According to Deann Desai, who manages Georgia Tech’s EPA-sponsored PEER Local Resource Center, the Bartow effort’s goals comprised clean air, clean and safe water, land preservation and restoration, and healthy community and ecosystems, as well as compliance and environmental stewardship. Initial results included a 25 percent

reduction in air emissions, a 30 percent reduction in water usage, and a tool to help in business development.

The collaborative effort has achieved other milestones, as well. For example, Bartow County has seen an improvement in the community’s fire rating, resulting in savings to homeowners and businesses. Also, the county has determined that green space is an important community asset benefiting everyone, and has determined to increase green space via land purchases. This, in turn, will improve the area’s biodiversity, provide recre-

ational and park opportunities, and improve greenways and connectivity within the community.

The PEER center, one of 11 nationwide, helps Georgia communities with EMS guidance, training, and technical assistance. Public facilities, including wastewater treatment plants, departments of public works, electric utilities, solid-waste operations, and transit authorities, have benefited from implementing an EMS. For more information, contact Deann Desai (770.605.4474; deann.desai@innovate.gatech.edu). ❖



Bartow County EMC

*Envirofest is part of Bartow County’s Earth Week observance.*

## Attracting Retirees Makes Economic Development Sense

Georgia has considerable potential to realize economic development gains from attracting retirees, but it lags behind neighboring states in doing so, according to a study completed earlier this year by Georgia Tech's Enterprise Innovation Institute for the Georgia Rural Economic Development Center at East Georgia College.

"While Georgia ranked 6th nationally in the total number of in-migrating retirees from 1995 to 2000, (it) had a net loss of retirees to Alabama, Tennessee, and South Carolina," says the study's report. "Further development of housing options along with coordinated marketing of the viability of Georgia as a retirement destination can reverse the negative trend with these three neighboring states."

Capturing market share in the senior-housing arena requires multidisciplinary approaches to address regulatory, policy, infrastructure, and other issues, but, according to researchers, the benefits are "enormous," especially given the coming surge of retiring baby boomers. "With Georgia ranking in the top 10 of states attracting retirees," they report, "it is not unreasonable to expect that it could, with proper attention to policy changes, improve its share of the retirement services market to a projected 10 percent."

What does that mean economically? According to the research, with a 10 percent share of the market in continuing care retirement communities (CCRC) and active adult retirement communities (AARC), Georgia would see sizable gains in jobs and revenues. For example, jobs related to CCRCs would increase by some 2,700, with each of the smallest regions gaining about 200 industry-related jobs. Net state revenue for the industry's expansion would be \$6.43 million, and net local government revenues would rise by \$2.483 million. With AARCs, total jobs would increase by approximately 28,000, and even the smallest rural region would see an additional 1,000 jobs. Net state revenue would increase by \$82 million and local government revenues by \$31 million.



BigStockPhoto

*Golf is a popular activity among active adult retirees.*



Getty Images

Two keys to success of both CCRC and AARC development, according to the study, are having sufficient capital for predevelopment work (e.g., market assessment, site location) and knowing building requirements and pricing for the prospective market and its particular needs.

The report states that several rural and suburban communities in Georgia can position themselves to reap significant economic, health care, and quality-of-seniors-housing benefits. "We're at the beginning of what can be a tsunami of health care and elder care economic opportunity," says Georgia Tech's Rick Duke of the study.

The project team included East Georgia College, Georgia Southern University, and Georgia State University, in addition to Georgia Tech. ❖

## Housing Choice in Metro Atlanta: An Economic Development Issue?

In late July, the Mixed-Income Communities Initiative (MICI), a joint effort of the Atlanta Neighborhood Development Partnership (ANDP) and the Enterprise Innovation Institute, facilitated “Think Regionally, Act Locally: Community Economic Development Roundtable.” The meeting explored the economic development implications of housing choice in metro **Atlanta**.

The meeting connected a diverse group of some two dozen economic development leaders and local government officials to discuss the availability of housing choice and mixed-income housing, and how this affects the region’s economic development. Issues ranging from rising land costs and gentrification to job-home proximity and lack of concern about affordable housing were raised.

The Enterprise Innovation Institute is continuing to partner with ANDP to further explore housing choice and economic development and the various dimensions of this issue. ❖

## Clarke County Seeks PEER Assistance

Having helped **Bartow County** get on the sustainability track, Georgia Tech’s PEER Center is now undertaking a project in **Athens-Clarke County** to devise an environmental management system (EMS) for the Landscape Division of the Central Services Department, the Landfill Division of the Solid Waste Department, and the Leisure Services Division of Natural Resources. These three groups will act as a pilot project for Athens-Clarke County. Based on results, other areas in local government could see similar efforts, according to PEER’s Deann Desai, who adds that the project has been well-received by local agencies.

The kickoff session took place in late August, and the project has a two-year time line. Specific objectives and goals will be identified and selected this fall.

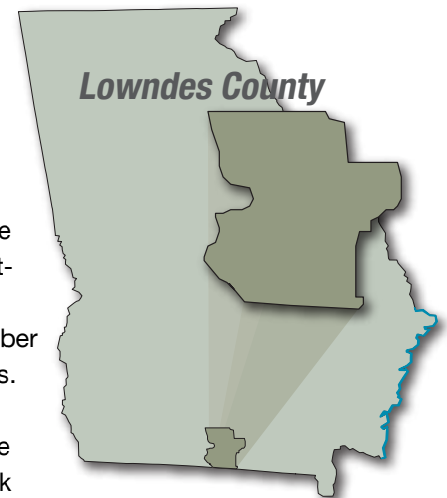
For more information on PEER and its services, contact Deann Desai (deann.desai@innovate.gatech.edu; 770.605.4474). ❖

## Valdosta-Lowndes County Becomes TechSmart

The **Valdosta-Lowndes County** Chamber of Commerce and fellow organizations in four neighboring counties recently engaged TechSmart services to determine how they can use information technology (IT) to help address certain development goals. The effort is an outgrowth from a 2005 Georgia Tech study that identified three emerging business clusters—IT, medical technology, and environmental technology—to target and develop.

The region seeks to explore opportunities that could aid its efforts in the development of these emerging clusters, such as:

- Become a technology and innovation corridor in south Georgia.
- Attract new business and promote and support existing firms.
- Increase the number of high-wage jobs.
- Recruit a larger number of college graduates to work in the region.
- Become the ideal location for promoting and demonstrating new technologies and applications.
- Market the region as a creative community and “a cool place to live, work, and play.”
- Increase the opportunities for expanding broadband services in rural parts of the region.



Through TechSmart, Valdosta region leaders identified ways to increase return on IT investment for business, industry, local government, and non-profit agencies. The program provided a customized community technology road map to make the most of current technology investments, deploy more cost-effective technology, and make connections with technology experts. The road map also yielded vital information for technology and business plans, technical requirements, funding requests, and products or services. Georgia Tech IT will continue to partner with the Valdosta region as its leaders work together to implement the road map. ❖

## Ready, Set, Go

To revitalize its economic development program, the **Worth County** Economic Development Authority sought a Community Economic Development Readiness Assessment from Georgia Tech's Enterprise Innovation Institute. In late September, community leaders received the results of that assessment.

Tech staff identified six strategic goals for the county to implement:

- Develop the county's leadership and build a local cohesive team.
- Develop a long-term vision for economic development.
- Create local jobs by recruiting new industry.
- Provide greater support for existing business and industry.
- Develop a comprehensive marketing program for economic development.
- Improve the quality of the workforce.

Designed to evaluate a community's readiness for economic development, the assessment offers a checklist of essential questions concerning three prongs for sustainability—economic, environmental, and social. Nearly two dozen community leaders and statewide and regional economic developers participated in the assessment by participating in confidential one-on-one interviews.

The project was sponsored by the Georgia Rural Economic Development Center at East Georgia College. ❖



Terry Tomlinson, Worth County EDA

*Alex McCoy of the Worth County Economic Development Authority introduces the Community Economic Development Readiness Assessment to local stakeholders.*

## Identifying Pockets of Innovation Across Georgia

Independent inventors—that is, innovators—often account for the largest share of patents generated in Georgia, outnumbering those owned by a single corporation, university, or other entity. Given that their patents have not yet been assigned to a corporation or entity, it is safe to say that these innovators have developed products that have not yet been commercialized or put to productive use, and may represent untapped potential for economic development. Inventions of science and technology products are of particular interest.

Georgia Tech's Enterprise Innovation Institute is exploring this potential through the development of a new two-year pilot effort known as the Innovator Assistance Program and launched in July 2006. Sponsored by the U.S. Economic Development Administration, the pilot has at its heart the desire to advance productivity, innovation, and entrepreneurship among individuals in communities across Georgia.

The pilot program has begun with research to profile the needs of Georgia innovators. The team will explore local, regional, and state resources for addressing those needs and determine any gaps in assistance to address such needs. A wide range of opportunities to address unmet needs also will be examined during the pilot, ranging from on-line tools to workshops to one-on-one assistance. ❖



## A Catalyst for Small-Business Innovation Research

Housed in Georgia Tech's Enterprise Innovation Institute, the SBIR Assistance Program for Georgia educates Georgia firms about the federal Small Business Innovation Research and Small Business Technology Transfer programs and helps determine if interested companies should pursue the funding available through SBIR/SBTT.

These programs can provide companies with up to \$850,000 in research and development funding in the form of grants or contracts. Firms conduct research to fulfill a specified government need, but retain rights to any technology developed from their research and are encouraged to commercialize it.

The Tech program assists enterprises, at no cost, in identifying appropriate topics, then coaches them through the proposal-writing process. Staff also can review and critique a proposal to increase the chances of success.

**For more information,  
visit [www.innovate.gatech.edu](http://www.innovate.gatech.edu), e-mail [sbir@innovate.gatech.edu](mailto:sbir@innovate.gatech.edu), or call 404.385.2600.**

## Developing a Workforce of Excellence for the 21st Century

At the heart of workforce development is the ability to integrate science, technology, education, and mathematics—what many refer to as STEM. Such integration is vital for competing in the global economy, today and tomorrow. And, simply put, this is economic development at the most personal level. Georgia Tech has several STEM initiatives under way.

For example, **Foundations for the Future (F3)** is a program designed to help accelerate the application of telecommunications technology for interconnecting schools (K-12) for collaborative learning, for remote access to educational facilities such as libraries, and for Internet-based resources. To date, F3 has been active in 80 Georgia city and county school systems. But, notes F3's Claudia Huff, the scope is bigger than schools. It fosters a link between schools and communities; or to put it another way, schools and education are part of the community.

Initial funding came from the A&T Foundation through a \$2 million grant. The General Assembly began funding F3 in July 1998, which has now grown to \$300,000, and the program, says Huff, "has leveraged it into outside funding that has brought an additional \$6 million or \$7 million into the state."

Among F3's projects and activities:

- Explorers Guild, the program's professional development component enabling teachers to learn about new technological tools, cutting-edge applications, and funding strategies. Free monthly meetings are held in "a classroom of the future."
- An annual grant-writing workshop for teachers.
- *Outta Site!* is an e-newsletter for students and parents who want to explore the Internet.
- The F3 Funding Forecast, a regular e-blast informing schools, churches, agencies, etc. of funding opportunities.

Another highly recognized effort is the Georgia Internship for Teachers (**GIFT**) program operated by CEISMC, the Center for Education Integrating Science, Mathematics and Computing (see *Focus on Communities*, fall 2005). This program annually places dozens of middle and high school math and science teachers in summer fellowship positions with business, industry, research labs, and county or municipal agencies. Teachers become valuable contributors to the team through these positions and are matched according to specific areas of expertise. Such practical experience

exposes them to the skills and knowledge that enable them to better provide real-life applications for students in the classroom.

To date, 67 school districts across the state have placed a GIFT teacher. Since 1991, GIFT and its partnering organizations have offered more than 1,100 summer placements, chiefly in metro **Atlanta, Augusta, Columbus, Tifton, and Macon/middle Georgia**. Placement organizations have ranged from the American Peanut Council to Zoo Atlanta.

Other efforts by CEISMC to boost student performance include robotics competitions and demonstrations, discovery science camps for kids, and several programs geared toward curriculum development and teacher training.

A third initiative involves Tech's **College of Computing**, which recently received a \$2 million, three-year grant from the NSF Broadening Participation in Computing initiative,

the goal of which is to raise the number of women and minorities in graduate and undergraduate computer science programs.

The action starts at much lower levels, notes Assistant Dean Maureen Biggers, with the college developing and expanding existing partnerships with the Girl Scouts and the YWCA to

teach female students about computing. The project, called "Georgia Computes," also will embrace middle schools and high schools where efforts will continue with the Department of Education and support the Institute for Computing Education, which includes year-round teacher workshops and summer camps. And at the undergrad level, workshops will be offered for computing faculty throughout the University System of Georgia to disseminate curricular initiatives in engineering computing, media computation, and the new Microsoft-funded, robotics-centered courses. Calling it "a very exciting opportunity," she adds, "We will be educating teachers about the future of computing and the many opportunities it will provide all students." ❖



Jim Demmers

*F3 partnered with DeKalb County's SURE (Schools United Responding to Emergencies) program on a preparedness plan.*

**December**

- Emerging Trends in Business Location Analysis for 2006 (in partnership with CoreNet Global), Dec. 5-6, 2006, **Atlanta**

**March**

- IEDC Credit Analysis, Feb. 27-March 1, 2007, **St. Simons Island**
- 40th Annual Basic Economic Development Course, March 13-16, 2007, **Atlanta**

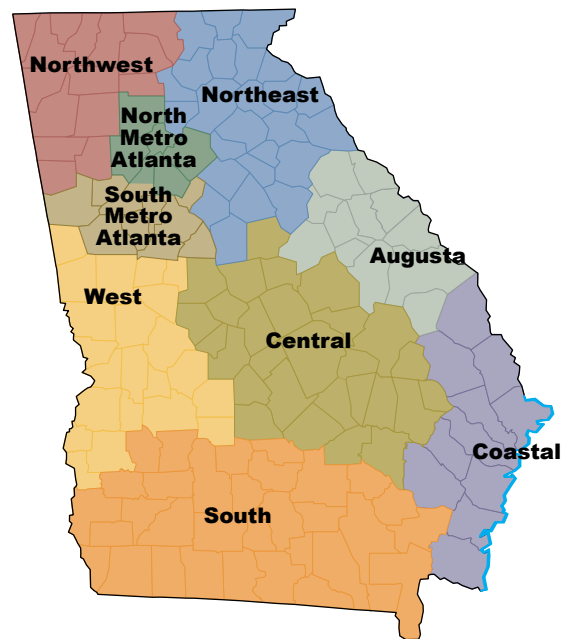
**June**

- IEDC Entrepreneurial and Small Business Development, June 6-7, 2007, **Atlanta**

For more information on these and other Enterprise Innovation Institute courses, contact Martha Schoonmaker, CECD, at 404.894.0332 or [martha.schoonmaker@innovate.gatech.edu](mailto:martha.schoonmaker@innovate.gatech.edu).

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