



BRIEFING BOOK

Board of Directors Meeting
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FY26 Q2



BRIEFING BOOK

GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
SECOND QUARTER HIGHLIGHTS, FISCAL YEAR 2026

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On the cover: Atlanta is a dynamic arts and culture hub, anchored by institutions investing in Georgia’s creative future. From the Woodruff Arts Center to the National Center for Civil and Human Rights and the Fernbank Museum of Natural History, these organizations are constantly evolving. With the FIFA World Cup 2026™ on the horizon, Atlanta’s cultural leadership will again play a defining role in how the world experiences Georgia.

CENTER OF INNOVATION



The Center of Innovation hosted Invest Georgia board members in Savannah to engage with the region’s collaborative innovation ecosystem, including a tour of the Port of Savannah.

HIGHLIGHTS

1. Cross-team collaboration at Forestry Solutions Summit

Members of the Center of Innovation, Trade, and Global Commerce teams participated in the inaugural Forestry Solutions Summit in Liberty County. The gathering brought together industry, government, and economic development leaders to discuss shared challenges and emerging opportunities for Georgia’s forestry sector. During a panel discussion, members of the AgTech and Trade teams provided insights on trade and investment strategies to align private-sector growth with regional strengths.

2. Accelerating sports tech innovation

Georgia’s rise as a leading sports tech hub is supported by the Information Technology (IT) team’s efforts to foster innovation and growth. By sponsoring the inaugural GENEXSIS 2025 sports innovation summit in Atlanta, the team is helping to nurture Georgia’s burgeoning sports technology sector. This industry uses data and digital tools to enhance everything from game-day operations to fan experiences. The IT team’s participation, along with the Center’s role in forming the Georgia Sports Innovation Coalition, highlights Georgia’s growing global influence in sports tech.

3. Growing the statewide entrepreneurship network

The Center continued to strengthen entrepreneurship across the state through engagements in Augusta, Atlanta, Columbus, and beyond. The team celebrated the opening of Accelerate Augusta, a new innovation and entrepreneurship center, connected with entrepreneurs at Venture Atlanta, and supported StartUP Columbus during its LaunchCon event. These interactions reflect the Center’s commitment to expanding opportunities for businesses in every region of Georgia.

COUNCIL FOR THE ARTS



A 2025 Governor's Awards honoree, the Atlanta Drum Academy performed during an awards celebration at the State Capitol. With a strong mentorship focus, the Academy helps young people grow into confident leaders.

HIGHLIGHTS

1. Governor's Awards celebrate and honor Georgians

Georgia Council for the Arts partnered with Georgia Humanities to present the annual [Governor's Awards for the Arts and Humanities](#). This year's Capitol ceremony honored seven individuals and three organizations for their outstanding work, including the preservation of historic buildings and archives, the launch of new events that attract visitors, the use of the arts to teach students discipline and commitment, and other efforts that strengthen communities throughout the state.

2. Grants uplift rural communities, improve facilities

Sixty-two organizations in 48 counties have been awarded a combined \$600,000 through the Vibrant Communities and Cultural Facilities grant programs. Vibrant Communities grants support arts programming in rural areas, while Cultural Facilities grants fund capital improvements for arts venues. Together, [these investments](#) ensure that communities statewide, including those without dedicated arts organizations, can benefit from arts experiences.

3. Advancing STEM/STEAM through arts leadership

GCA played an active role in the Georgia Department of Education's (GaDOE) STEM/STEAM Forum in Athens, which emphasized an integrated curriculum focused on exploratory, project-based learning and student-centered development of ideas and solutions. GCA assembled and moderated a panel featuring five Georgia-based leader organizations that build community through arts education, and showcased GCA's resources for educators. GCA Arts Education staff were also recognized with the GaDOE CTAE Golden Key Award for Employer-Driven work.

STRANGER THINGS BY THE NUMBERS

SEASONS 1-5

100+ | \$17.2M | \$2.2M

FILMING
LOCATIONS

LOCATION
PERMITS

SUPPLEMENTAL INCOME
FOR FIRST RESPONDERS

AVERAGE OF

2,600

GEORGIANS HIRED EACH SEASON



With production starting in 2015, Netflix series “Stranger Things” spent more than \$800 million in Georgia.

HIGHLIGHTS

1. Record-breaking ‘Stranger Things’ wraps run in Georgia

The fifth and final season of “Stranger Things” premiered in November, continuing its legacy as a global Netflix phenomenon and an economic powerhouse for Georgia. As Georgia’s largest production, Season Five spent 804 days filming in the state, with more than 3,700 Georgians hired and \$198 million paid to the local crew. Tourism thrives as towns like Jackson attract worldwide visitors with “Stranger Things” tours, themed shops, and events.

2. Film Office connects with global industry at trade market

The Film Office attended the American Film Market (AFM) in Los Angeles to connect with the industry and underscore the competitive advantages of filming in Georgia. AFM brought together sales and production companies, buyers, financiers, film commissions, and representatives from every corner of the independent film industry across 83 countries for a dynamic week of deal-making, screenings, conferences, networking, and events.

3. ‘The Walking Dead’ lives on 15 years after premiere

Georgia celebrated 15 years since the premiere of “The Walking Dead” on AMC on October 31. The long-running show transformed the town of Senoia, growing the downtown from seven storefronts in 2009 to more than 150 during its 11-season run. Today, fans still visit The Woodbury Shop, dine at Nic & Norman’s, and explore filming locations that made the town famous, demonstrating the long-tail effects of film tourism.

GLOBAL COMMERCE



Governor Brian P. Kemp met with existing industries in Korea, thanked them for their 40 years of friendship, and looked toward the future.

HIGHLIGHTS

1. Success in every size and shape

[Underwood Ammo](#), [Socomec](#), and [Grupo Vialume](#) selected Georgia for their new manufacturing operations, while existing industries, including [BioTouch](#), [Virginia Transformer](#), and [Salesforce](#), expanded their footprints. Together, these investments represent hundreds of new jobs over the next several years across communities statewide. Georgia's successes come in every shape and size, from international companies establishing their first U.S. manufacturing operations to global tech leaders doubling down in the state.

2. Positioned for the future

Georgia's partnership approach to economic development aids in achieving sustainable growth. GDEC's Georgia Ready for Accelerated Development (GRAD) program, which recently added the [Wayne Commerce Center](#) to its portfolio, works with communities to market their development-ready sites. Workforce development and training also remained a focus, highlighted by the opening of the [Hyundai Mobility Training Center of Georgia](#) and through strategic messaging to business and community leaders.

3. Georgia connections support growth across the globe

Governor Kemp continued to reinforce Georgia's longstanding international partnerships through strategic economic missions to [Korea](#), [Japan](#), and [Panama](#). Key investment markets such as Korea and Japan value the state's commitment to building world-class infrastructure that makes it easier to move goods efficiently. The Georgia Ports Authority-led mission to the Panama Canal illustrated Georgia's collaborative approach to economic development, supporting key pillars such as connectivity that bring business to communities statewide.



The 2026 Georgia Travel Guide is designed to inspire visitation and spending across all regions of the state.

HIGHLIGHTS

1. Travel Guide debuts ahead of FIFA World Cup 2026™

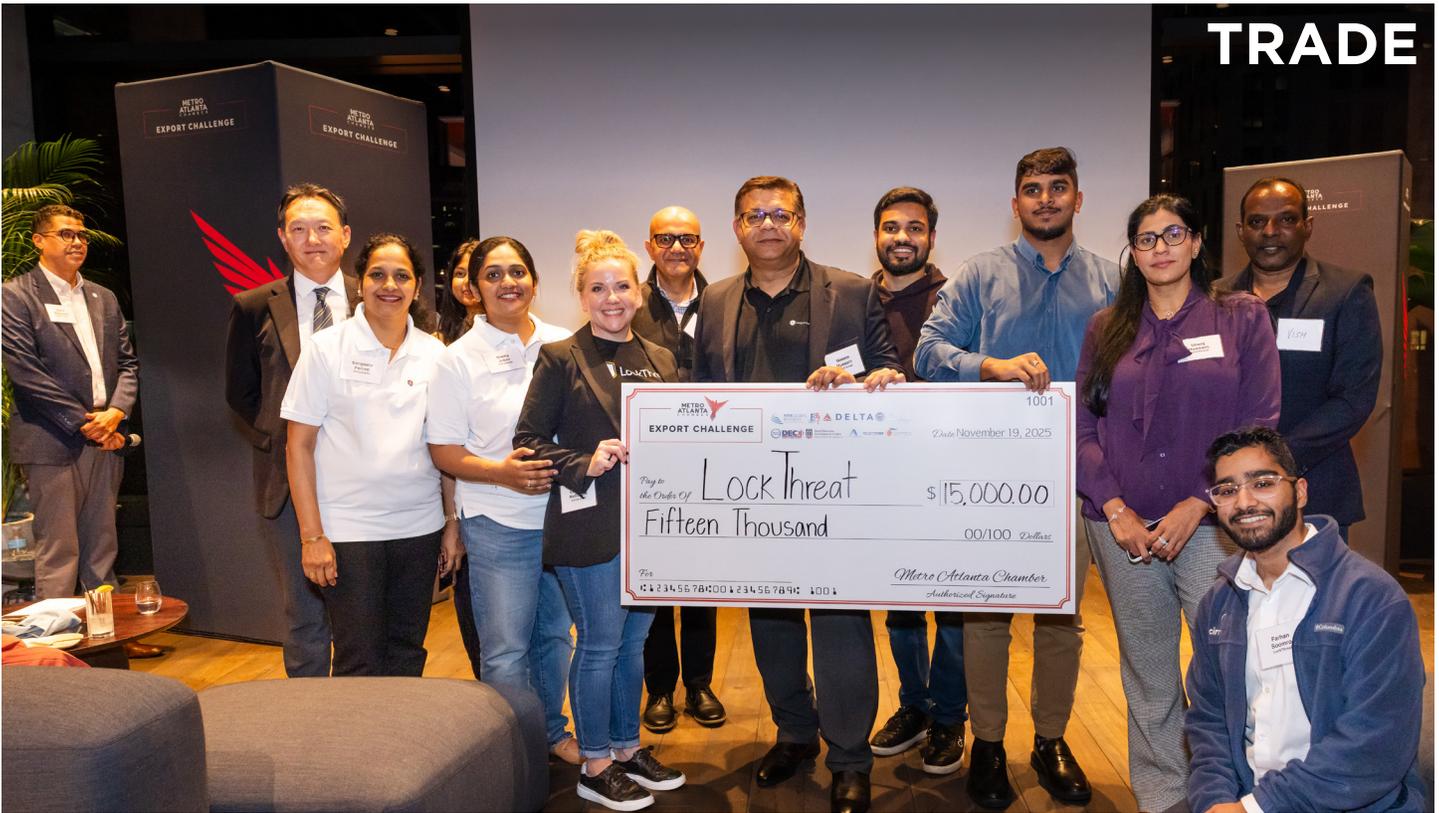
In December, the Tourism team released the [2026 Georgia Travel Guide](#), a key resource designed to inspire visitation across all regions as the state prepares to welcome the world for the FIFA World Cup 2026™. Building on three consecutive years of record-breaking tourism, the guide showcases Georgia's diverse experiences and vibrant communities that also make it a premier destination to live, work, and start a business.

2. Georgia250 spotlights statewide commemorations

With America's 250th anniversary year underway, working in partnership with Georgia Humanities and Georgia Historical Society, GDEcD has launched the [Georgia250.com](#) website to promote commemorative events statewide. Leveraging its marketing expertise, GDEcD will help spotlight community-led celebrations throughout the year, inspiring visitors to experience the stories, landmarks, and legacies that helped shape both the state and nation.

3. Promoting Georgia to the world

Major industry events provided opportunities to elevate the state's global presence. At Brand USA Travel Week in London and Travel South International Showcase in Kansas City, Missouri, Georgia's delegation connected with international buyers and media to drive long-term visitation and spending. In Atlanta, the U.S. Civil Rights Trail Connectivity Conference drew more than 100 tourism professionals from eight states to the metro area to explore regional opportunities for the trail's growth.



Trade client LockThreat won first place and \$15,000 at the 2025 Atlanta Metro Export Challenge.

HIGHLIGHTS

1. Gateway to exports: European markets

Georgia's Trade representative for Europe and the United Kingdom met with Georgia exporters in Atlanta, Savannah, and Augusta for one-on-one sessions that explored export potential, addressed market-specific questions, and provided tailored insights into doing business in key European markets. This practical guidance helps exporters pursue international opportunities and supports continued economic growth in Georgia.

2. Hitting home runs at Atlanta Metro Export Challenge

Trade clients LockThreat and ZCorum placed first and second, respectively, at the 2025 Atlanta Metro Export Challenge Pitch Day. Hosted by the Metro Atlanta Chamber, the yearlong program supports local companies' global business development efforts, and culminates in a Pitch Day competition to win \$30,000 in additional grants. Working with the Trade team helps Georgia companies refine their strategies for continued growth.

3. Global collaboration in key sectors

Georgia reinforced global ties at the 12th Regional Leaders Summit (RLS) in Cape Town, South Africa. The state's delegation discussed potential collaboration across trade, technology and innovation, workforce development, and industry recruitment with representatives from Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Americas. Additionally, team members met with aerospace companies to bolster relationships in one of the state's key manufacturing sectors and top export producers.



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