

BRIEFING BOOK

Board of Directors
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GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
FIRST QUARTER HIGHLIGHTS, FISCAL YEAR 2027

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On the cover: Hyundai’s newest award-winning EV and hybrid models, produced at the Hyundai Motor Group Metaplant America (HMGMA) in Ellabell, Georgia, are a modern presence in Savannah’s bustling historic downtown neighborhoods. With over \$7.6 billion in planned direct investment, HMGMA is adding to the region’s economic momentum, providing long-term jobs and significant investment in an area that is also attractive to tourists, thanks to its thriving culture and attractions. In 2025, visitors spent \$3.74 billion in Bryan, Bulloch, Chatham, and Effingham counties, which make up the Savannah Harbor-Interstate 16 Corridor Joint Development Authority that recruited HMGMA. Those tourism dollars supported nearly 30,000 jobs and generated \$313.6 million in state and local tax revenues.



At Georgia Tech-Savannah's "Make It, Move It Camp," the Center helped students explore a variety of logistics and supply chain-related career pathways using hands-on activities.

HIGHLIGHTS

1. Strategic engagements strengthen the manufacturing industry

In partnership with Next Generation Manufacturing, the Manufacturing team strengthened existing industry relationships through on-site connections with MANA Nutrition, Polar Beverages, and Muscadine Products Corporation in South Georgia on July 15. Meetings like these help the team identify industry needs, explore opportunities for solutions-based improvements, and better understand how the Center can support manufacturing companies across the state.

2. Building the future logistics workforce

At Georgia Tech-Savannah's "Make It, Move It Camp" on July 6, the Logistics team taught participating middle and high school students about the journey products take from raw materials to consumers. The hands-on learning opportunity helps students better understand supply chain concepts and career pathways, strengthening the state's future logistics talent pipeline.

3. Connecting local communities to entrepreneurship resources

The Center of Innovation joined community leaders in Macon for the Georgia Power Economic Development CREATE (Cultivating Resilient Entrepreneurs and Transforming Economies) Summit on August 13. The team promoted their services and contributed to conversations about opportunities for Georgia's next generation of business leaders. Through continued activity statewide, the Center is connecting entrepreneurs and communities with resources, expertise, and relationships to advance ideas and strengthen Georgia's innovation ecosystem.

COUNCIL FOR THE ARTS



FY27 grants support a variety of arts programming across the state, from theater productions to children’s workshops to music festivals.

HIGHLIGHTS

1. FY27 first-round grants awarded

Georgia Council for the Arts (GCA) awarded 179 organizations \$1.3 million through three FY27 grant programs in July: Project, Arts Education Program, and General Operating Support. The funds will support K-12 learning, programming expenses for arts organizations, public art projects, and community events that help attract tourists, foster a sense of community, enhance downtowns, and support small businesses.

2. Traveling art exhibit wraps

“Reimagine: Contemporary Georgia Artists,” GCA’s 10-city traveling art show to rural communities featuring works from the State Art Collection, completed its final leg in Dawsonville in July. In addition to immediate, direct results such as higher community engagement in the arts, art sales, and investments in host facilities, the exhibit also created new avenues for future collaboration. Business leaders who attended gained a better understanding of the potential for integrating art into commercial and community spaces, and local leaders interacted directly with artists, seeing firsthand the arts’ role in community development, from tourism to education to downtown revitalization.

3. Connecting with organizations at the South Georgia Arts Symposium

Georgia Council for the Arts team members promoted available Council programs and led a grant writing breakout session at the second annual South Georgia Arts Symposium in Moultrie on September 3. Hosted by The Arts Center of Moultrie, the symposium is a one-day gathering of arts leaders, advocates, and organizations focused on strengthening the region’s arts community through collaboration and capacity-building.



“Will Trent” season four filmed on location across the state and employed more than 900 Georgia crewmembers.

HIGHLIGHTS

1. Film production remains steady

While the film industry continues to evolve and production budgets have declined industrywide, Georgia production activity remained steady in FY26, with 280 film, television, and commercial productions spending a combined \$2 billion across the state. Georgia’s overall value, stable incentive, and experienced crew base mean repeat business for the state, and communities continue to see the benefits in direct and indirect industry jobs and long-tail tourism interest.

2. Independent film production heats up

Independent productions are experiencing a major resurgence industrywide and in Georgia, where production increased by 83% in FY26. Driven by fresh perspectives and innovative approaches, and by Georgia’s wealth of creative industries, independent film producers in Georgia may qualify for tax incentives, while statewide film festivals further strengthen the talent pipeline and support the state’s growing independent film community.

3. Film Office Director Lee Thomas retires



Following 30 years of service with the Georgia Film Office, including the past decade as Deputy Commissioner, Lee Thomas retired on June 30, at the end of FY26. Throughout her tenure, Lee strengthened Georgia’s industry reputation and its position as a leading destination for film and entertainment production. Under her leadership, Georgia welcomed thousands of productions, supported countless direct and indirect jobs, and helped communities across the state benefit from the industry’s presence. Her unwavering commitment to Georgia and the film industry leaves a lasting legacy.



Communities receiving shovel-ready site certifications celebrated their achievement at the 2026 Georgia Economic Developers Association's Annual Conference.

HIGHLIGHTS

1. Record-breaking investments in 13-time Top State for Business

September brought multiple reasons for celebration: the state announced record-breaking investments and year-over-year growth in job creation during FY26, as well as its 13th consecutive year as Area Development's No. 1 State for Business on September 24.

Georgia's performance in the survey directly reflects the consistency and solutions that make the state a top choice for site selectors and the companies they represent.

2. Reinforcing economic ties in Ireland, Chile, and Peru

Georgia's reputation for its responsive and cooperative government relies heavily upon maintaining open dialogue with existing employers. To hear directly from internationally based job creators, Governor Brian Kemp led a delegation to Ireland between July 7 and 14, and to Chile and Peru from August 24 through 28. The missions also reinforce ties with decision makers and partners who shape global supply chains, positioning Georgia as a gateway for global commerce.

3. Strong start for jobs statewide

FY27 is off to a strong start: household names such as Siemens, Walmart, and Pirelli announced plans totaling billions of dollars in combined investment and jobs in Jackson, Franklin, and Floyd counties, respectively, for new or expanded footprints in Georgia. Global companies continue to choose Georgia as their home for innovative U.S. manufacturing operations.



Governor Kemp expressed his appreciation for the state's tourism industry while announcing another year of record-breaking results to more than 450 attendees at the Governor's Luncheon, the capstone event of the annual state tourism conference.

HIGHLIGHTS

1. Breaking tourism records four years straight

During the 2026 Georgia Governor's Tourism Conference held on Jekyll Island in September, Governor Kemp announced that the state broke tourism records for the fourth consecutive year and ranked No. 5 in the nation for domestic overnight visitation for the sixth year in a row. In 2025, 175.6 million visitors spent \$46.2 billion across Georgia. Tourism remains the state's second-largest economic contributor, generating \$84.1 billion in economic impact and supporting 473,837 direct, indirect, and induced jobs.

2. Georgia represented at U.S. Travel Association's ESTO 2026

Tourism and Marketing & Communications team members attended the U.S. Travel Association's Educational Seminar for Tourism Organizations (ESTO) at the end of August in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. At the premier conference for destination marketing professionals, the team gained a stronger understanding of emerging trends, consumer expectations, and strategies to further strengthen destination marketing. Insights and ideas gathered at ESTO will help inform Georgia's marketing approach and support continued innovation as the state works to remain competitive and top of mind for travelers.

3. Driving visitation to Georgia's downtowns

The Tourism team brought their expertise to the Georgia Downtown Association's annual conference in Rome from August 17 through 20. In partnership with the Department of Community Affairs Office of Downtown Development, the team served as a "Downtown Doctor," providing one-on-one tourism insights, recommendations, and resources tailored to communities across the state. Their engagement helped downtown leaders identify opportunities to strengthen their tourism offerings and drive visitation.



Trade joins Governor Kemp's economic mission to Chile, with nine representatives from four Georgia companies participating in the mission.

HIGHLIGHTS

1. Chile-Peru mission offers opportunity to Georgia companies

The August mission to Chile and Peru, led by Governor Kemp and supported by GDECD, created opportunities for AGUAIR LLC, Noctis Technologies, Prodew, and Tensar to connect with potential partners in Santiago and Lima. Participating companies gained market insights, built international relationships, and identified potential export opportunities through in-market meetings and strategic engagements, helping Georgia-based businesses expand their reach and increase international sales.

2. Georgia defense companies build connections at MSPO

The Trade team partnered with three Georgia companies and Alabama at the MSPO International Defense Industry Exhibition, held September 8 to 11 in Kielce, Poland. Through Trade's participation, Georgia-based companies connected with international defense leaders, government representatives, and technology providers while showcasing the state's strength in defense, innovation, and advanced manufacturing. Through events like MSPO, GDECD helps Georgia exporters connect with international industry leaders and build relationships that support export opportunities.

3. Gateway to Exports: Israel brings expert insights to Georgia companies

Georgia companies met with GDECD's Israel representative, Yariv Shavitt, on September 28 and 29 to discuss export opportunities and doing business in Israel. As part of the engagement, Yariv also connected with the Israeli Consulate. Companies reviewed export opportunities, gained market insights, and received tailored guidance on doing business in Israel while exploring potential connections with partners and customers in the Israeli market.



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