



APPENDIX M. PARTNERSHIP IN MIDDLE GEORGIA: NATIONAL EMERGENCY GRANT CASE STUDY

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*“But I thought **they** were responsible for that...”*

A common thread of confusion across Middle Georgia became apparent when companies were approached about solutions to their workforce challenges. The Georgia Department of Labor. The Middle Georgia Consortium. The Middle Georgia Regional Commission. And what about the Georgia Department of Economic Development? Who was responsible for what? Wasn't everyone talking about the same services? Or were they different things? It's not hard to imagine how providing quality business services quickly became stuck in the mud of organizational confusion.

So how is it that the Middle Georgia region has become “unstuck?” How have multiple partners joined together to meet an immediate need for industry partners? As if by design, the opportunity to participate in a Sector Partnership National Emergency Grant pulled these partners together to provide immediate growth in how the region collaborates to meet industry needs.

Georgia's Sector Partnership National Emergency Grant (SP NEG) is a collaboration between the Georgia Department of Economic Development, the Georgia Department of Labor, the Middle Georgia Regional Commission, and the Middle Georgia Consortium. Through the SP NEG, the team of workforce partners are working to pair the high skills and passion of dislocated workers with the immediate need of employers in the manufacturing industry. To help fill a number of openings and quickly on-ramp these individuals, many of the participating companies are using on-the-job training strategies. When paired with other traditional training strategies, the SP NEG is providing the Middle Georgia region with a number of resources to build the capacity and create a model for collaboration that benefits the workforce environment.

The success through the first year of the SP NEG has been founded on collaboration and communication. Although each of the partners participating in the grant has a unique strength that benefits the project, they are exponentially more valuable when leveraged as a part of the SP NEG process. In the initial phases of the grant, the partners gathered to discuss how the goals would be achieved and outline the process for recruiting, screening, referring, and placing dislocated workers into work-based learning opportunities.

Georgia's SP NEG is working because all partners have the fundamental understanding that their programs complement one another. Through this open, constant communication, the entire workforce system is informed about potential leads with companies, where there is a need for placement, and the total impact the effort has had in the region. This communication also allows for these opportunities to be referred to the appropriate expert in the process. The successful sector partnership is not dependent upon the notion that each partner must stay in their lane; rather, success stems from each partner actively yielding to one another as appropriate when those lanes merge.

Over the final year of the grant, the partners will be working to leverage the SP NEG as a model for collaboration. The capacity that is being built through relationships and teamwork will allow the region to continue to coordinate and serve industry needs using their regular funding. It will also be readily replicated to serve all of the region's strategic industries. The SP NEG will be able to leverage the HDCI sector partnership work to continue to build bridges within the workforce system. It will be engaging in constant dialogue with regional employers and applying proven solutions to meet the immediate and long-term needs for a sustainable workforce pipeline in the Middle Georgia region. The dialogue has already begun to shift such that the business community recognizes that the entire workforce system is one unit responsive to its needs.