GEORGIA ANNUAL STATE IT REPORT

FISCAL YEAR 2024

SHAWNZIA THOMAS

State CIO and GTA Executive Director

gta | GEORGIA TECHNOLOGY AUTHORITY

online version

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LETTER FROM THE STATE CIO

"AI will test us before it rewards us."

Shawnzia A. Thomas
State Chief Information Officer and
GTA Executive Director

Just how much and in how many ways will AI change our world? Are we, in state government, ready? Can we harness artificial intelligence to serve Georgians best today and into tomorrow? These are questions that can't be ignored in the current technology environment. It's daunting. Integrating AI into how we serve constituents will test our capabilities. It'll be disruptive in IT shops and across the entire public-sector operations. But if we meet the challenge, Georgia can reshape the landscape in the most positive ways.

In 2024, the Georgia Technology Authority (GTA) put on an event pivotal to laying needed foundations. Our second annual Emerging Technology Summit focused on widely agreed prerequisites for effective AI implementations. Critical considerations include security, data management, ethical guidelines and AI literacy for our workforce. Attended by business and IT leaders from agencies across Georgia government, the summit illustrated a shared commitment to making Georgia's AI usage innovative, responsible and secure.

Now, one event clearly doesn't accomplish the task. However, it's a key step towards informing a statewide approach, agreeing on ethical guidelines, and cultivating exchange among agency decision-makers. Coupled with other aspects of GTA's AI Program, it readies us for the challenge and the opportunity ahead.

The state of Georgia has reason to be confident that we can make the most of AI. We've built an impressive track record. This year, our state earned another "A" grade (the highest possible) in the Digital States Survey conducted by the Center for Digital Government. That's national recognition of our state government's IT achievement.

Alongside other successes you can read about in this annual IT report, it confirms we've established IT maturity, which is readying us to embrace transformative technologies. That's not achieved overnight or with only a few players capitalizing on technology. An "A" for Georgia is an "A" for all of us in state government, built on collaboration across agencies.

To succeed with AI, we'll need more of the same, plus an extra dose of innovation. Increasingly, it'll be infused into so much of what we do, from cybersecurity to digital service delivery, procurement, and more. AI fuels automation that can promote efficient operations, and it enables self-service options today's consumers expect. Yes, it's a tall order, but it promises rich rewards. GTA is proud to work alongside Georgia agencies to extend our positive momentum and achieve even better outcomes for Georgians.

PURPOSE

When the Georgia Technology Authority (GTA) was created in 2000, the General Assembly charged GTA with compiling information from state agencies about their IT expenditures and presenting a report to state leaders every year. This charge was placed in state law (see **O.C.G.A. 50-25-7.10**). With comprehensive and accurate information, state leaders can make facts-based decisions about the allocation of limited state resources to support technology. The Georgia Annual State Information Technology Report conveys the current state of technology in Georgia state government as assessed by the State Chief Information Officer (State CIO).

The report represents information technology for the state's executive branch agencies only, i.e., those reporting to the Governor. It does not address information technology matters concerning the legislative branch, judicial branch, statewide constitutionally elected officeholders, or the University System of Georgia. Data used to create the report comes directly from executive branch agencies and enterprise systems of record. The data is compiled by GTA and reflects the efforts of the State CIO to improve the use of technology in supporting state government operations. The report contains the major sections listed below.

- **Executive Summary**

- **Information Technology Investment**

- **Cybersecurity**

- **Appendix**

- **Georgia's Information Technology Excellence**

- **Georgia's Approach to AI**

- **Georgia's Approach to Broadband**

- **Information Technology Vision and Strategy**

- **Digital Services and Solutions**

- **Technology Services**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The state's success over the past decade using technology to enable improved government services for Georgians has cemented a national reputation. Innovative technology projects across agencies continue to earn headlines. Noteworthy examples include the following, with details starting on page 6.

- The Georgia Department of Driver Services worked with Apple and Google to enable Georgians to add their **driver's license or state ID seamlessly and securely to Apple and Google Wallets** on their mobile devices. Georgia became one of the first states to introduce this innovation to residents.

- The Georgia Student Finance Commission (GSFC) developed **Georgia Match** to better serve Georgia high school students looking for high-quality, affordable public higher education. The Georgia Match portal streamlines the application process, enabling one-stop access to a user's eligible institutions.

- Accountability and transparency were primary drivers in the launch of the **Health Care Workforce Dashboards** housed within the Georgia Data Analytics Center (GDAC), a central warehouse of information powered by aggregate data from across state government. The easy-to-follow dashboards present counts and distribution by county of physicians, physician assistants, dentists, dental hygienists, and nurses across Georgia. Data is now easily accessible to lawmakers, state agencies, academic institutions, and public and private researchers.

When it comes to making government more accessible, responsive, accountable, and secure, Georgia agencies are firmly committed to capitalizing fully on technology to advance those efforts. The Georgia Technology Authority (GTA) shares their commitment and is pleased to collaborate.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

GTA continues to advance **IT Vision and Strategic Planning** for the state. Strategic planning efforts included the annual GTA-hosted virtual Technology Summit attended by business and IT leaders from many state agencies. Details can be found on page 10.

Tracking state IT expenditures is a statutory responsibility for GTA. In FY 2024, agencies reported spending **$595 million** on IT infrastructure services, network services, application development and support, and related activities. The **IT Investment section** on page 19 explores these expenditures and how the state manages its technology investments. Spending details also appear in the **Appendix** on page 31.

Through its evolving **Artificial Intelligence (AI) Program**, GTA champions innovative, responsible and ethical deployment of AI in state government operations. GTA provides oversight on AI policy formulation and implementation, ensuring transparency, fairness, and accountability. To learn more turn to page 17.

The **Office of Digital Services and Solutions (DSGa)** manages GovHub, the state's official web-publishing platform which is home to dozens of state agency websites. GovHub allows for a consistent online experience for citizens seeking state government services and information. DSGa also manages digital strategy for agencies and elected officials to cultivate an effective digital presence for the state of Georgia. Read more on page 19.

Georgia prioritizes safeguarding state systems and data. Among information technology concerns, cybersecurity consistently tops the list. The state continues to bolster defenses through security policies, services, and tools, and by cultivating information sharing across varied governmental cyber defenders. The **Cybersecurity** section of this report on page 22 outlines these efforts.

The **Georgia Broadband Program** promotes expansion of high-speed broadband service to all Georgians. Over the last year, the state made meaningful strides, including securing significant funding for broadband infrastructure. This will help support deploying broadband networks to reach previously unserved and underserved locations. Details on program status and accomplishments can be found on page 24.

A cloud-first approach for IT services has been central to GTA's technology services in the last couple years. Georgia shifted from a largely on-premises model to a cloud-based computing model for hosting technology services. This year GTA continued to expand cloud options available to agencies. It introduced additional automation and self-service options for customers of its shared IT services program. The **Technology Services** section is found on page 28.

GEORGIA'S INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY EXCELLENCE

Georgia Earns an "A" Grade Again in Digital States Survey

Georgia earned an **"A" grade** – the highest possible – in the 2024 survey. That follows the state's "A" in 2022, 2020 and 2018. The survey is conducted every two years by the Center for Digital Government, a national research and advisory institute focused on information technology policies and best practices in state and local governments. The Digital States Survey provides information to evaluate states' use of technology to improve service delivery and constituent engagement, increase capacity, streamline operations and achieve other state priorities—assigning a letter grade based on quantifiable results.

The survey evaluates each state's survey responses based on criteria that include actions to support their state priorities and policies to improve operations/services, hard- and soft-dollar savings/benefits, adoption of innovative approaches and/or technology solutions, effective collaboration and demonstrated progress since the last survey. States receiving high grades demonstrate strong results across all the criteria.

GEORGIA'S INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY EXCELLENCE

Georgia Boasts a Winner and a Finalist in NASCIO IT Awards

The state's Orchard web design system, implemented and managed by GTA's Office of Digital Services and Solutions, has earned a prestigious NASCIO state IT award. Honored in the information communications technology category, it was one of this year's winners announced in October 2024.

Also, among the NASCIO award finalists was a Georgia Board of Health Care Workforce online dashboards initiative accomplished in tandem with the Governor's Office of Planning and Budget.

Georgia among StateScoop 50 award winners

Georgia was represented among the winners of the StateScoop 50 awards with honorees in two categories. State CIO and GTA Executive Director Shawnzia Thomas won a Golden Gov State Executive of the Year award, a distinction she also earned in 2022, and GTA's digital connectivity program, Let's Connect Georgia, was selected as a State IT Innovation of the Year.

Georgia places finalist in TAG technology awards

Georgia's digital equity program, Let's Connect Georgia, led by GTA, was a finalist for the Technology Association of Georgia (TAG) Tech for Good award. This distinction, given annually by TAG, honors projects that capitalize on technology to promote inclusiveness and equity of opportunity in Georgia. GTA's digital connectivity manager, Oneisha Freeman Rojales, was also a TAG award finalist in the Emerging Leader of the Year category on the strength of her work to equip Georgians to participate fully in the digital community. Robbie Vickers and Ananias Williams III, CIOs of the Technical College System of Georgia and the Department of Revenue respectively, were also finalists for Public Servant Tech Leader.

GEORGIA'S INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY EXCELLENCE

Technology Innovation Showcase

This year, GTA held its 13th annual Technology Innovation Showcase. Each showcase project is a testament to the public sector's high-caliber efforts to use technology to improve the way government operates and to better serve constituents. The 2024 showcase honorees are facilitating new levels of service delivery through their exemplary IT-enabled initiatives. Five projects and the teams behind them were honored:

- **Canvas Badges:** The TCSG Roadmap for Launching Micro-credentials System-wide - *Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG)*
- **Georgia Match** - *Georgia Student Finance Commission (GSFC)*
- **Health Care Workforce Dashboards** - *Georgia Board of Health Care Workforce (GBHCW) and the Governor's Office of Planning and Budget (OPB)*
- **Peach Pass and E-Z Pass Interoperability** - *Georgia State Road and Tollway Authority (SRTA)*
- **Re-imagining Driver Services: Georgia Digital Driver's License and ID in Apple and Google Wallets** - *Georgia Department of Driver Services(DDS)*

Canvas Badges: The TCSG Roadmap for Launching Micro-credentials System-wide

Aiming to help students gain targeted skills and earn credentials in key industry areas, TCSG created a system-wide micro-credentialing process. With Canvas Badges, students can take short courses to certify their knowledge in areas relevant to their career path. In 2023, TCSG became the first two-year college system in the nation to adopt micro-credentials system-wide. With the badges, employers can more easily fill skill gaps and improve their workforce quality, and students can focus on training that addresses a precise, practical need for their future career.

Georgia Match

GSFC developed Georgia Match to better serve Georgia high school students looking for high-quality, affordable public higher education. The Georgia Match portal streamlines the application process, enabling one-stop access to a user's eligible institutions. In addition, letters are mailed to each high school student, showing them, the Georgia colleges and universities holding a spot for them to pursue their higher education goals.

GEORGIA'S INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY EXCELLENCE

Health Care Workforce Dashboards

Accountability and transparency were primary drivers in the launch of the Health Care Workforce Dashboards housed within the Georgia Data Analytics Center (GDAC), a central warehouse of information powered by aggregate data from across state government. The easy-to-follow dashboards present counts and distribution by county of physicians, physician assistants, dentists, dental hygienists, and nurses across Georgia. Data is now easily accessible to lawmakers, state agencies, academic institutions, and public and private researchers.

Peach Pass and E-ZPass Interoperability

SRTA has worked over the past decade to expand Peach Pass for Georgians, allowing toll-lane travel in more states. Through SRTA's partnership with E-ZPass, the largest electronic toll system in the northeast, Georgians can now travel using any E-ZPass lane in 19 states using their Peach Pass account. The project modernized and combined Peach Pass and E-ZPass in

Georgia, and SRTA worked to make Peach Pass multi-protocol transponder-, 6B-, 6C-, and TDM-friendly, so it could be used in any E-ZPass toll lane.

Re-imagining Driver Services: Georgia Digital Driver's License and ID in Apple and Google Wallets

DDS worked with Apple and Google to enable Georgians to add their driver's license or state ID seamlessly and securely to Apple and Google Wallets on their mobile devices. Georgia became one of the first states to introduce this innovation to residents. The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) has designated select airport security checkpoints and lanes in participating airports as the first locations customers can use their driver's license or state ID in their mobile wallets. Built with privacy at the forefront, digital driver's licenses and IDs provide a more secure and convenient way for customers to present their information.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
VISION & STRATEGY

GTA collaborates with technology leaders across Georgia state agencies to understand business priorities and gather insights from other federal, state, and private sectors to leverage proven technologies. This work identified the following long-term IT priorities:

- Promoting customer service and citizen engagement with the use of technology and digital services.
- Continuing to advance and strengthen the state's cybersecurity posture.
- Implementing transformational solutions such as artificial intelligence and mitigation technology resulting in an increase in operational efficiency and productivity.
- Increasing Georgians' access to information and services through the expansion of broadband connectivity.

Georgia's vision for information and communications technology is captured in the Georgia Enterprise IT Strategic Vision. The vision is intended to aid Georgia government leaders in making informed technology decisions. It defines IT focus areas and goals and sets the technology direction for the state's IT enterprise to align with the governor's current initiatives. A full review of the current Enterprise IT Strategic Vision, which can be found at https://gta.georgia.gov/about-us/it-strategic-plan-2025, is currently underway and will be available in January 2025.

VISION & STRATEGY

Information Technology Governance

GTA continues to advance its IT governance processes by continually assessing the effectiveness and strategic alignment of the existing policies, standards, and guidelines. Occasionally, there are instances that require the activation of alternative but compliant and customer-centric solutions. The Business Solutions Review process is one such solution that assures that Enterprise IT investments generate business value, while mitigating the risks.

Strategic Planning and Georgia's IT Strategy Cycle
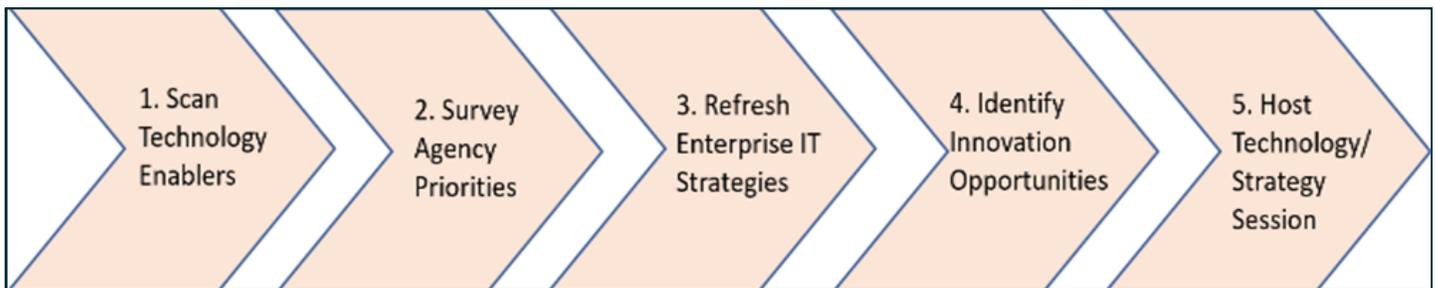
GTA serves as a facilitator and technology guide in identifying common needs, as well as technology-enabled business strategies that have proven successful in other organizations. It advocates for agency solutions that show promise for the enterprise. GTA supports and encourages a collaborative environment where agencies recognize shared objectives and work together to achieve greater enterprise benefits. The IT strategy cycle is the framework for supporting Georgia agencies in their effective and efficient use of technology to achieve the governor's vision.

Agencies were surveyed to ensure that their IT strategies aligned with Governor Kemp's stated initiatives and their underlying priorities. These can be found at https://gov.georgia.gov/about-us/initiatives-and-priorities.

Environmental Scan for Technology

GTA relies on numerous sources for information about new business uses of technology, including but not limited to: Center for Digital Government, Gartner, and the National Association of State Chief Information Officers (NASCIO). In addition, GTA monitors a broad range of publications and participates in professional organizations, national summits, conferences, and symposia targeting the effective application of technology to business problems.

VISION & STRATEGY

Survey Agency Priorities

GTA places high value on understanding agency business needs and continues to review agency strategic plans, conduct agency surveys, and hold regular meetings with agencies to ensure a clear picture of the business objectives that drive technology needs. In addition to one-on-one meetings with agency leaders, the State Technology Annual Report Register (STARR) is used to conduct an annual IT strategy survey of all agency CIOs or IT directors.

Refresh Enterprise IT Strategy

The Georgia Enterprise IT Strategic Vision provides a vision of future technology use and establishes focus areas for the state's IT enterprise in a multi-year look ahead. It guides agency IT leaders in choosing new technology solutions that align with the state's enterprise IT vision and direction.

Identify Innovation Opportunities

GTA continues to recognize agency successes in using technology to deliver services in new and improved ways. Top innovations are recognized at the annual Georgia Digital Government Summit. Examples of these successes can be found beginning in the section titled **Technology Innovation Showcase** on page 7.

GTA works closely with and supports the Governor's Office and Office of Planning and Budget (OPB) to leverage technology in support of business process improvements identified each year by OPB. GTA also provides leadership in identifying and adopting proven technologies to solve pressing government issues.

Host Technology/Strategy Summit

The GTA-hosted virtual Technology Summit saw participants getting ready for the future. Summit speakers illustrated how technologies are making digital transformation a priority for government to best serve its constituents.

Featured speaker Steve Bennet of SAS offered examples of using AI as a tool in digital transformation and how to manage the risks. Cybersecurity expert Gerald Auger provided a picture of today's cyber threat landscape. As he does on his Simply Cyber YouTube channel, Mr. Auger illustrated the perils of inadequate cyber defense and encouraged vigilance and rigor in security regimens. Rounding out the discussion at the virtual summit, innovation leader Ray Holder of Maximus made a case for prioritizing innovation, not just to shape a preferred future but to succeed in that future. He shared illustrations of varied organizations, public- and private-sector, that are thriving on the strength of digital transformation.

Panelists provided in-depth insights on universal IT topics to an audience representing over 130 agencies. The annual summit drew together over 350 business and IT leaders from Georgia's state and local government entities, as well as members of the IT vendor community.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY INVESTMENT

The state makes significant annual investments in information technology, including services, equipment, applications, personnel, software licensing, development, and maintenance. How much is spent in total, where the money goes, and what taxpayers get in return can be difficult to pinpoint. That's not to say there isn't need to better understand whether Georgia is receiving best value for its IT investment.

The Georgia General Assembly has charged GTA with compiling IT expenditure information from executive branch agencies. GTA presents a report every year as defined in O.C.G.A. 50-25-7.10. This data allows state leaders to make facts-based decisions about allocation of state resources for technology.

To collect the data, GTA uses the State Technology Annual Report Register (STARR). Information is requested from executive branch agencies about application, infrastructure, network, other IT costs, and projects.

Application

Infrastructure
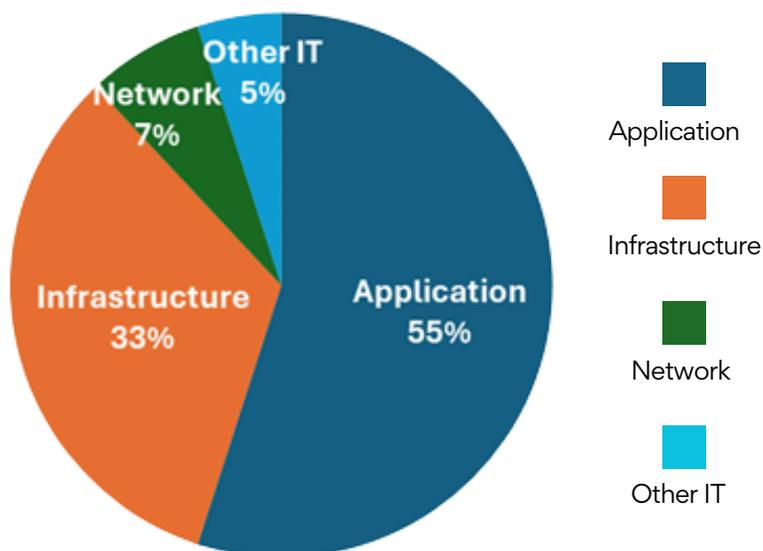
Network

Other IT

ENTERPRISE IT SPEND

This graph illustrates the distribution of IT expenditures for fiscal year 2024, categorized by infrastructure, network, application, and other IT costs. This visualization offers insights into how the budget is distributed among various IT functions, allowing for a clear understanding of spending priorities within the enterprise.

Agency Participation in IT Reporting

Complete listings of the agencies reporting information and their expenditures are in the **Appendix** on page 31. In addition to constitutional agencies, other state entities with large IT budgets (e.g., the University System of Georgia) are not required to report their IT expenditures.

IT Expenditures FY 2024

Participating agencies spent over **$595 million** on technology in FY 2024. GTA continues collaborating with agencies to increase both the quantity and quality of IT spend data received.

Annual Investment Strategy Sessions

GTA's investment strategy sessions in FY 2024 included agency decision-makers in business, operations, and finance. The agenda was targeted to increase awareness of the challenges associated with technology investments while also providing tools and best practices for a variety of investment scenarios. The information gathered in these sessions provides the baseline for annual reporting on planned new investments as shown on page 16.

Procurement Reviews

GTA enhanced the procurement review process to provide more proactive support as agencies plan for large investments. GTA's procurement review process continues to provide valuable feedback as agencies navigate complex requests for proposals (RFPs) and provider service agreements. Over the past year, GTA reviewed more than 30 sets of procurement documents, including business cases, RFPs, requests for information (RFIs), scopes of work (SOWs), and contracts representing approximately **$513 million** in investments.

IT Application Portfolio

The state's IT application portfolio included 463 applications in FY 2024.
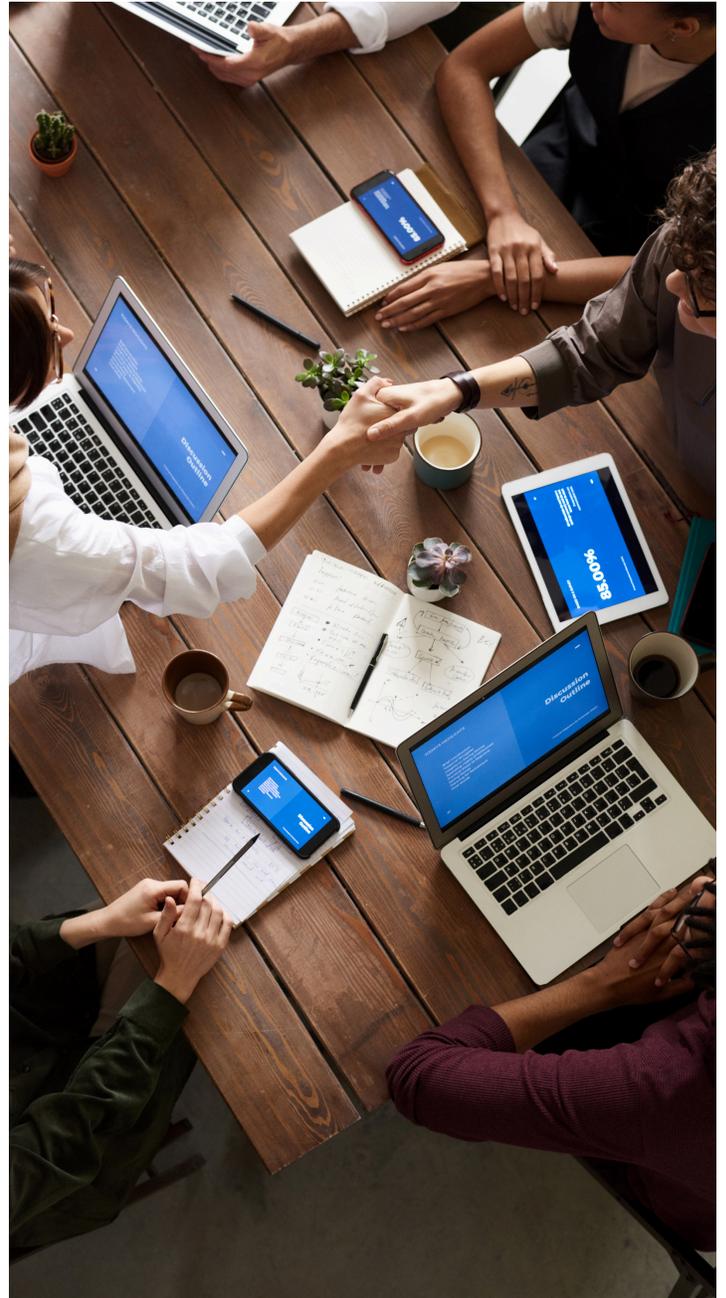
Investments by Agency

The total portfolio of in-flight and planned projects overseen by the Georgia Technology Authority is **$1.5 billion**; the FY 2024 active project portfolio is **$739 million**. The FY 2024 portfolio is tracking more than 42 active projects in 19 agencies, with several projects spanning multiple years. In addition to the active projects, several large projects totaling $718 million are in the planning phase.

IT spend managed by Georgia agencies reported in STARR is **$195 million**. (Not included in the graph below). The following chart and graph depict each agency's percentage of the total budget for all GTA- managed active projects.
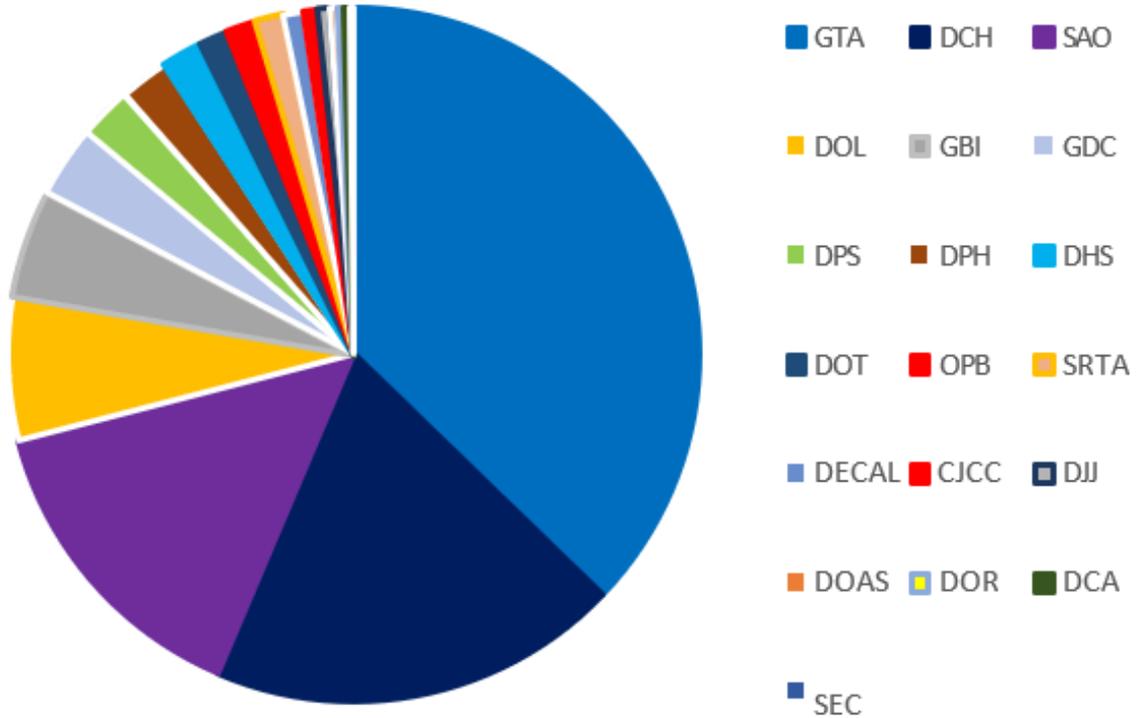
Georgia Technology Authority	$275,000,000	37.2%
Department of Community Health	$141,954,407	19.2%
State Accounting Office	$108,000,000	14.6%
Department of Labor	$49,600,000	6.7%
Georgia Bureau of Investigation	$36,955,000	5.0%
Georgia Department of Corrections	$24,933,256	3.4%
Department of Public Safety	$17,911,866	2.4%
Department of Public Health	$17,000,000	2.3%
Department of Human Services	$14,001,340	1.9%
Department of Transportation	$10,000,000	1.4%
Office of Planning and Budget	$10,000,000	1.4%
State Roadway and Toll Authority	$10,000,000	1.4%
Department of Early Care and Learning	$7,155,450	1.0%
Criminal Justice Coordinating Council	$4,834,154	0.7%
Department of Juvenile Justice	$3,965,625	0.5%
Department of Revenue	$2,300,000	0.3%
Department of Administrative Services	$2,300,000	0.3%
Department of Community Affairs	$2,000,000	0.3%
State Ethics Commission	$1,394,918	0.2%

Planned New Investments by Agency

The following graph depicts several large projects totaling over **$718 million** that are in the planning phase.
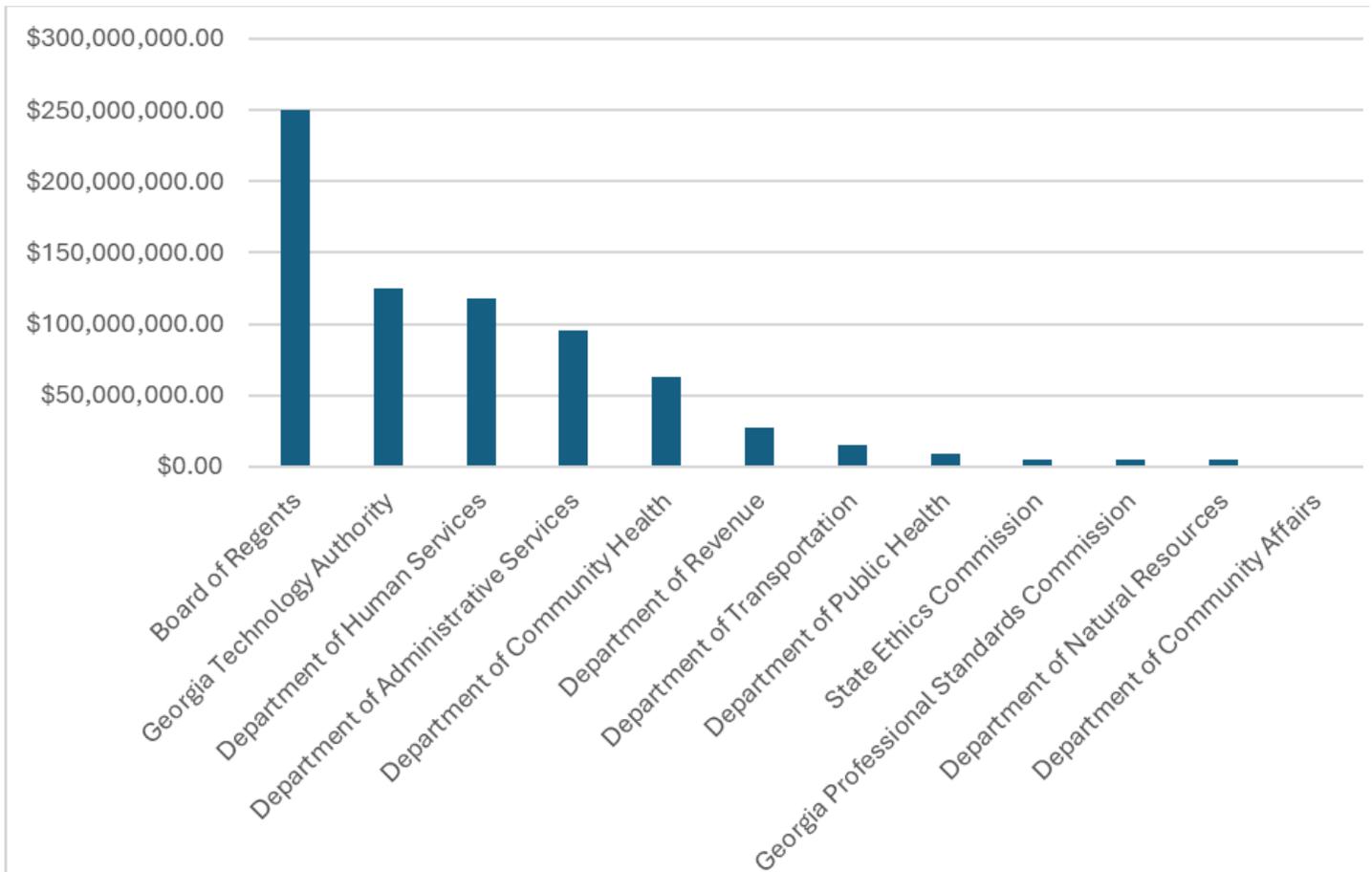
Board of Regents	$250,000,000.00	34.81%
Georgia Technology Authority	$125,000,000.00	17.41%
Department of Human Services	$117,335,256.00	16.34%
Department of Administrative Services	$95,863,750.00	13.35%
Department of Community Health	$63,000,000.00	8.77%
Department of Revenue	$26,999,572.00	3.76%
Department of Transportation	$15,000,000.00	2.09%
Department of Public Health	$9,097,500.00	1.27%
State Ethics Commission	$5,258,069.07	0.73%
Georgia Professional Standards Commission	$5,100,000.00	0.71%
Department of Natural Resources	$5,000,000.00	0.70%
Department of Community Affairs	$500,000.00	0.07%

Technology Empowerment Fund (TEF)

The Technology Empowerment Fund (TEF)was established by the Georgia General Assembly to provide funding for various projects, initiatives, and systems that will demonstrate cost savings and improved service delivery through technology and training. This is defined in **O.C.G.A.§ 50-25-7.1**. Special advisory input and oversight are also directed to key technology-enabled projects administered via TEF. The number of TEF projects has grown from three in FY 2024 to seven. Each of these projects entails a sizeable IT investment and will benefit from oversight from a cross-functional team of state government leaders, including participation from GTA.

Each TEF Project is unique. GTA's engagement includes but is not limited to assisting state agencies deliver successful projects by aiding in developing and reviewing Business Cases and Procurement Solicitations for Supplier selection; reviewing and providing feedback on project deliverables; identifying and mitigating risks; and helping to develop and track project scope, budgets, and resources allocated to the project. Through verification and validation, whether performed independently by a supplier or a member of the project team, the overall project health is assessed and managed as GTA helps guide successful implementations.

GEORGIA'S APPROACH TO ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Through its Artificial Intelligence (AI) Program, the Georgia Technology Authority champions responsible and ethical deployment of AI in state government operations. GTA provides oversight on AI policy formulation and implementation, ensuring transparency, fairness, and accountability.

Link to GTA's Guiding Principles for AI
https://gta-psg.georgia.gov/psg/enterprise-artificial-intelligence-responsible-use-ps-23-001

Through continuous evaluation and collaboration with state agencies, GTA strives to safeguard against biases, mitigate risks, and promote the development of AI solutions that enhance the wellbeing of Georgians. By fostering a culture of responsible AI governance, the program aims to establish Georgia as a model for ethical AI practices.

GOVERNANCE

GTA established an AI Advisory Council to provide guidance on developing a robust AI governance framework that aligns with Georgia's strategic priorities. In the past year, GTA introduced a foundational AI policy and standard, demonstrating its commitment to responsible AI use.

POLICY

GAI Responsible Use (SS-23-001)

Link to Policy
https://gta-psg.georgia.gov/psg/enterprise-artificial-intelligence-responsible-use-ps-23-001

STANDARD

Responsible Use (SS-23-002)

Link to Standard
https://gta-psg.georgia.gov/psg/artificial-intelligence-responsible-use-ss-23-002

The AI Advisory Council continues its work in critical areas, focusing on Generative AI, Procurement, Data Privacy, Ethics, and developing a statewide AI Training Program. This approach is essential to advancing ethical, secure, and responsible AI adoption across state agencies.

INNOVATION LAB

GTA released a Request for Qualified Contractors (RFQC) to identify potential partners for advancing emerging technology solutions within Georgia's government. The Innovation Lab serves as a dedicated environment for experimentation and development in AI and other emerging technologies. In collaboration with GTA, agency partners can explore AI solutions and prototype implementations that align with state priorities. GTA envisions establishing a network of qualified providers eligible to support a variety of emerging technology needs across state agencies.

EVENTS

In 2024 GTA presented the second annual Emerging Technology Summit focused on widely agreed prerequisites for effective AI implementations. The full-day event explored critical considerations like security, data management, ethical guidelines and AI literacy for the workforce.Attended by businessand IT leaders from agenciesacross Georgia government, the summit illustrated a shared commitment to making Georgia's AI usage innovative, responsible and secure. It marked a key step toward informing a statewide approach, agreeing on ethical guidelines, and cultivating exchange among agency decision-makers.

PARTNERSHIPS

TRUIST Center for Ethical Leadership
Recognizing the need for ethical considerations in AI, GTA has partnered with the TRUIST Center for Ethical Leadership at the University of North Georgia to develop Ethics DNA, an ethics framework for Georgia state agencies. This framework will be complemented by a comprehensive training program for employees at all levels, including executive leadership. GTA aims to release a draft framework and pilot the first training by winter 2025.

Paragon Policy Fellowship
GTA is also collaborating with AI policy research fellows from Georgia Tech, University of Pennsylvania, University of Georgia, Emory University, and University of North Carolina Chapel Hill to advance insights into state-level AI policy, addressing complex governance and ethical questions posed by AI integration in state services.

Tech Executive Leadership Initiative (TELI) - Aspen Policy Hub
Through a partnership with The Tech Talent Project and the Aspen Institute's Tech Policy Hub, GTA is engaged in the Tech Executive Leadership Initiative, reinforcing its leadership in AI policy and ethics on a national stage.

DIGITAL SERVICES AND SOLUTIONS

The Office of Digital Services and Solutions (DSGa)continues to drive digital innovation across Georgia's state government, improving website accessibility, usability, and security for constituents and agencies alike. In FY 2024, DSGa made significant advancements in digital infrastructure, service delivery, and collaborative engagement.

Chatbot on Georgia.gov

In collaboration with Ivy, DSGa launched a chatbot on Georgia.gov, accessible via an icon on every page. This AI-powered chatbot, trained by content managers, processes approximately 20,000 messages each month, primarily answering questions on key topics such as driver services, elections, and assistance programs. This service exemplifies our commitment to enhanced, responsive public service.

GovHub Infrastructure and Security

The team upgraded GovHub to Drupal Version 10 in October 2023, working through 175 modules and three themes to ensure platform security, stability, and scalability. This update fortified GovHub's infrastructure, providing a more secure and resilient digital experience for constituents. In FY24, DSGa also executed 25 production deployments, including security updates and dependency enhancements, ensuring uninterrupted access to essential government information.

Bloom Rollout and Training

Every GovHub website received a refreshed look and feel with the new Bloom theme, offering a modernized design and enhanced accessibility. Alongside this rollout, DSGa updated the GovHub Knowledge Base and hosted best practice webinars, empowering agency partners to maximize the benefits of their improved websites.

Orchard Design System Release

DSGa introduced Orchard, a web design system aimed at creating a consistent, accessible, and brand-compliant experience across Georgia's digital properties. Orchard supports user experience uniformity and accessibility while potentially lowering implementation costs for agencies. Orchard, Georgia's official design system for state agency websites, won a 2024 National Association of State CIOs (NASCIO) State IT Recognition Award in the Information Communications Technology Innovations category.

Site Analyses for Enhanced Content Quality

To help agencies improve their web content, accessibility, and search rankings, the DSGa content team conducted site analyses, striving to maintain a benchmark score of 80 across all state websites. Collaborations in FY24 with agencies such as GOSA, DBHDD, DPH, and OCI resulted in enhanced content strategies and elevated scores, ensuring that all agencies deliver high-quality digital experiences.

Engagement Initiatives – GOVChats and GOVTalks

DSGa launched GOVChats, a monthly webinar series focused on best practices and insights from peer government organizations. Additionally, the annual GOVTalks event in May 2024 attracted nearly 40 state agencies. The event covered updates to the GovHub platform, introduced the Orchard web design system, and prepared agencies for content integration with generative AI.

Digital Content Center of Excellence (DCoE)

This year the Content Committee updated Georgia's Social Media Standards to address new challenges like AI use, automation, deepfakes, and misinformation. These standards help agencies navigate emerging digital trends while maintaining a high standard of transparency

GTA Website Refresh

To better serve agency customers, DSGa overhauled the GTA website, adding a "Working With GTA" section to provide clear guidance on services, customer support, and vendor interactions.

Service Catalog Improvements

The Product Management Team collaborated with GTA businessowners and service providers, including Capgemini/MSI, to enhance GTA's service catalog. By clearly presenting service offerings, eligibility, pricing, SLAs, and fulfillment processes, the catalog now better meets the needs of agency customers.

New Service Portal

In partnership with Capgemini/MSI, DSGa introduced a public-facing, browse-only GTA service catalog, allowing prospective customers to explore available GTA services and contact relevant GTA representatives, further promoting transparency.

Agency Insights for Future Services

The Product Management Team conducted in-depth interviews with agencies to understand their experiences with Amazon Web Services (AWS) and future needs. Insights gathered will guide service delivery improvements, enabling GTA to better serve agency partners and foster a culture of continuous digital innovation.

Through these initiatives, the Office of Digital Services and Solutions remains committed to enhancing digital interactions, fostering accessibility, and advancing Georgia's role as a leader in digital government transformation.
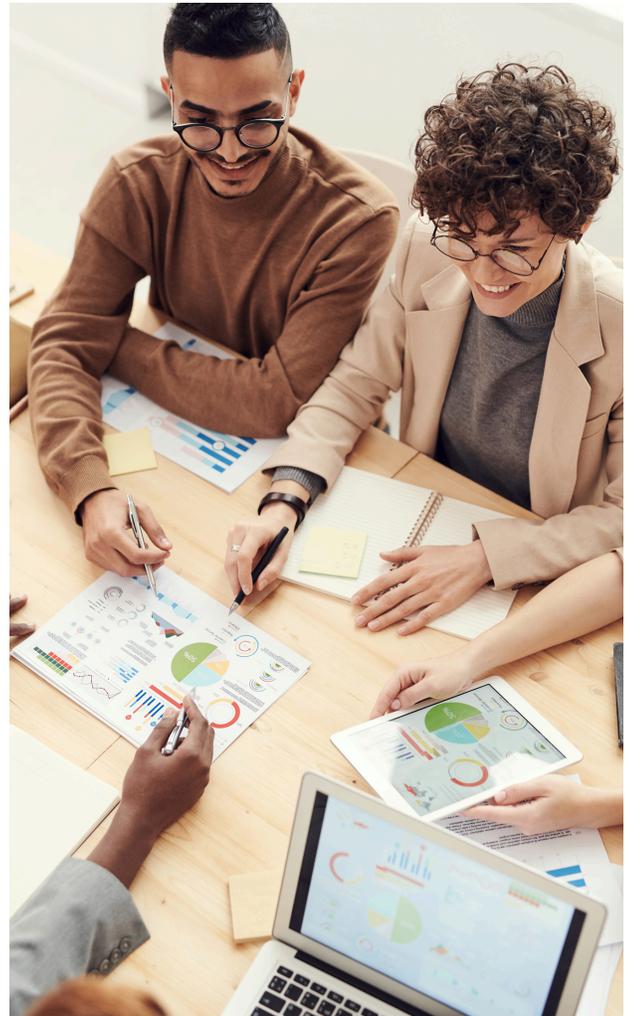
CYBERSECURITY

New and Continued Threats

Cyber adversaries employed new tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) in 2024 while also making use of improved versions of some older methods GTA's Office of Information Security (OIS) distributes warnings and intelligence bulletins from organizations such as the Multi-State Information Sharing and Analysis Center(MS-ISAC), Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), InfraGard, and other partners to maintain agency awareness. Infiltrations of government agencies' systems have been attempted by hostile nation-state actors and sympathetic hacktivists to create chaos and confusion. Pro-Palestinian hacktivists continue to protest western support of Israeli defense efforts. These protests include massive distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) campaigns targeting state government websites nationwide. As most prominently demonstrated in the war between Russia and Ukraine, it is common for both ideologically motivated hackers and cybercriminals to remotely join the chaos on either side of an escalating conflict by attacking government systems or other institutions. As 2024 was also a United States election year, there have been groups attempting to interfere in voting processes as well.

Incident Reporting

Between January and September 2024, a total of 21 incidents were reported to state authorities as required by HB 156. The events included ransomware, data exfiltration, phishing, and account compromise. There are likely unreported security incidents across county and local government statewide that would add to the counts.

Continued Support for Responsible Use of Generative AI

Governments at every level are grappling with the use of artificial intelligence, especially generative AI. The state's Enterprise Generative AI Acceptable Use policy, issued in2023, establishes that agencies shall submit software, applications, tools, and services using generative AI for business operations to GTA for review prior to procurement. The policy is designed to promote responsible use of AI tools, while also minimizing the potential for misuse, unethical outcomes, potential biases, use of sensitive data, and information security breaches. An Enterprise Generative AI Acceptable Use standard supports the policy.

Security Services Extended Across Executive Branch

Increasing the resilience of state networks and systems remains a top priority for GTA as threat activity intensifies. In March 2024, GTA began extending core security services across Georgia's executive branch organizations. These services include incident response, threat hunting, cybersecurity training support, endpoint security, and vulnerability management to name a few. GTAOIS has positioned itself to be able to provide more services and cybersecurity products for not only state agencies but also local governments. GTA provides a better price than local or other non-enterprise state agencies could procure themselves.

Cyber Dawg Exercise

Seventeen state and county government organizations and 105 security professionals participated in the annual GTA-hosted, hands-on cybersecurity training exercise, Cyber Dawg. It allowed Georgia government cyber defense team members to practice their skills in a live-fire exercise.

GTA OIS staged the event in partnership with the Georgia Cyber Center and Army National Guard. Teams of agency cybersecurity professionals defended against a fabricated cyber-attack waged by the guard's cyber protection team. The "attack" and response unfolded in the safety of the Cyber Center's Cyber Range.

Agency participants gained authentic experience without actually being targeted. They returned to their organizations better equipped to safeguard systems and data.

Federal Cyber Grant Program

September also saw the release of the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for the third round of the Federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) State and Local Cybersecurity Grant Program. While this NOFO release had a short timeline from release to application, the state successfully submitted a request for the grant funds to meet the program's deadline. Funds are now being released by the federal government for the previous rounds of grants.

GEORGIA'S APPROACH TO BROADBAND

Closing the Digital Divide

Over the last year, the state has made great strides to expand broadband access, including obligating significant funding for broadband infrastructure deployment. This funding is designed to reduce the cost to deploy broadband networks into the remaining unserved areas (locations with no access to terrestrial broadband speeds of at least 25 Mbps download and 3 Mbps upload) and underserved areas (locations with access to terrestrial broadband speeds of at least 25 Mbps download and 3 Mbps upload but that lack access to terrestrial broadband speeds of at least 100 Mbps download and 20 Mbps upload) that are primarily in rural communities.
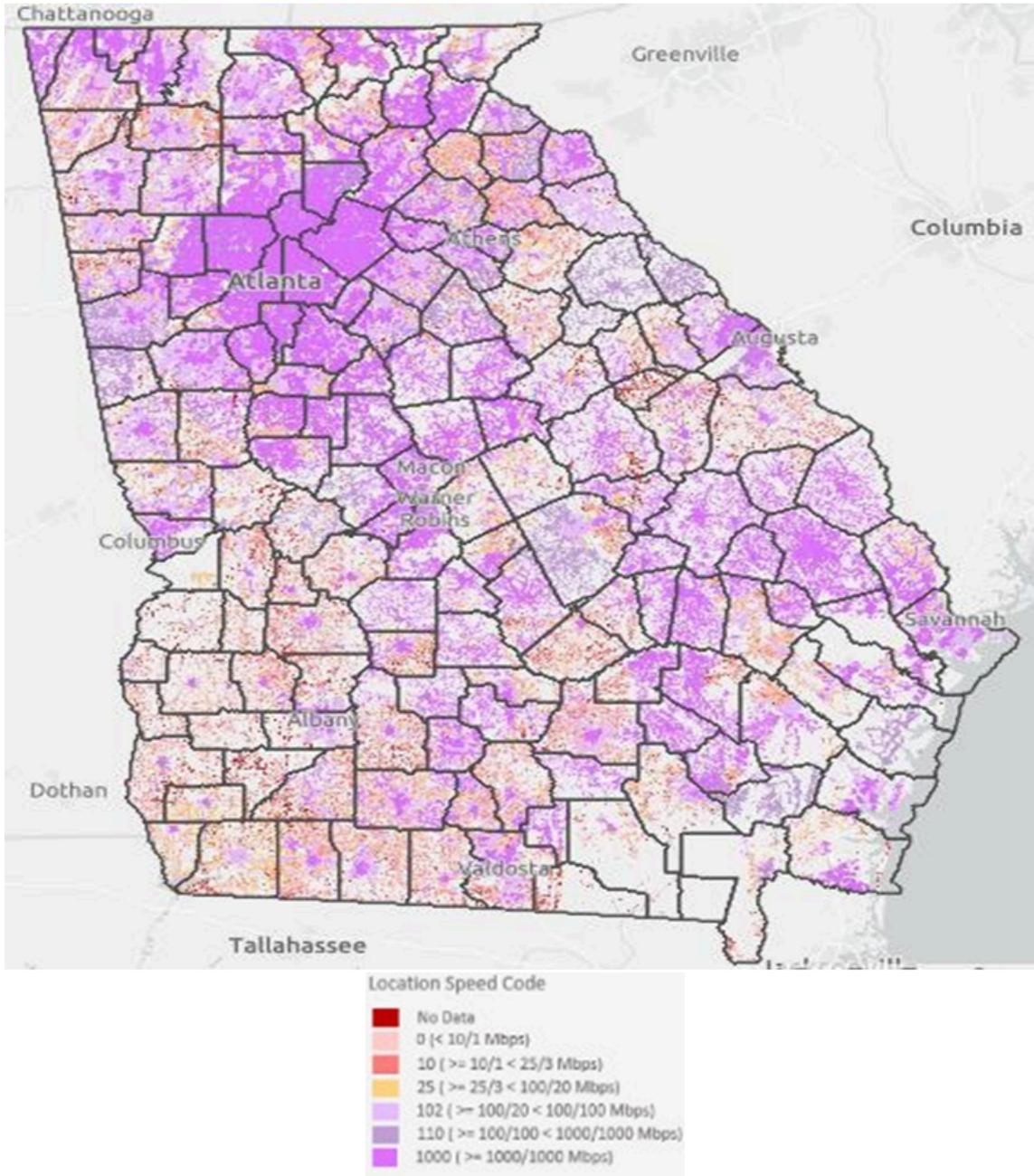
Program Objectives

The Georgia Broadband Program's mission is to promote the expansion and buildout of high-speed broadband to all Georgians. With significant funding recently deployed and additional funds becoming available in the future, the roles of state agencies associated with the program are critically important to the successful administration of the funds. To accomplish this work, the program is focusing on its strategic objectives:

1. Bridge the broadband gap in the most cost-effective, timely way possible. Specifically, the state seeks to optimize the cost and time to implement a statewide broadband strategy to avail high-speed reliable internet service to Georgia's households, businesses, and institutions.
2. Enable sustainable, reliable, and affordable broadband service to end users.
3. Increase the impact of capital investments by expanding internet usage for remote education, telehealth, small business operations, agriculture, and telework.
4. Achieve government objectives for public safety, emergency response, and modern and efficient government administration and customer service with reliable broadband connectivity statewide.
5. Ensure safe and effective end user experiences through digital literacy.
6. Establish workforce development programs to support future broadband expansion efforts, maintenance, and technical support.

State of Broadband Service in Georgia

The 2024 Georgia Broadband Map documents 71,776 unserved locations and 93,298 underserved locations. This is a significant improvement from the 204,968 unserved locations that were identified in the 2023 annual report. This dramatic reduction in unserved locations not only accounts for expanded service availability but also reflects the state converting to the Federal Communication Commission's (FCC) master location dataset which reflects fewer overall locations in Georgia.

Location Speed Code

- No Data
- 0 (< 10/1 Mbps)
- 10 (>= 10/1 < 25/3 Mbps)
- 25 (>= 25/3 < 100/20 Mbps)
- 102 (>= 100/20 < 100/100 Mbps)
- 110 (>= 100/100 < 1000/1000 Mbps)
- 1000 (>= 1000/1000 Mbps)

Of the approximately 3.8 million locations in the data (i.e., homes, businesses, and institutions in Georgia), 3.64 million locations, or 95.7 percent, are served at speeds of at least 25 Mbps download and 3 Mbps upload (25/3) via terrestrial technologies. Of the 71,776 unserved locations, about 90 percent are outside of urban areas.

Recent Broadband Investments

American Rescue Plan Act

In 2022, Governor Kemp announced almost $408 million in preliminary awards which will provide communities, households, and businesses in 70 Georgia counties access to faster and more reliable broadband. The projects targeted with the awards could serve 183,615 locations, of which 132,050 are currently unserved based on state data. These grant projects represent an investment of more than $738 million when matching funds are contributed.

NTIA Broadband Infrastructure Program

Georgia received funding in 2022 from the National Telecommunication and Infrastructure Agency's (NTIA) Broadband Infrastructure Program (BIP) in addition to the ARPA funding. An application submitted jointly by Windstream and Lumpkin County was approved for last-mile infrastructure investment. The project will serve 1,846 locations through a total budget of almost $5.2M. Of this, $3.2M will be covered by the BIP grant with Windstream contributing a private match of nearly $2M.

Enabling Middle Mile Broadband Infrastructure Program

The Enabling Middle Mile Broadband Infrastructure Program created and funds a $1 billion initiative for the construction, improvement, or acquisition of middle-mile infrastructure. This can reduce the cost of connecting unserved and underserved areas to the internet. Eligible applicants included states' political subdivisions; tribal governments; technology companies; electric utilities; utility cooperatives; public utility districts; telecommunications companies and cooperatives; nonprofit foundations, corporations, institutions, and associations; regional planning councils; native entities; and economic development authorities.

In 2023, NTIA announced $25.9 million in Middle Mile Program awards for Georgia associated projects.

American Rescue Plan Act Capital Projects Fund

ARPA includes the $10 billion Capital Projects Fund (CPF) for payments to states, territories, and tribal governments for critical capital projects that directly enable work, education, and health monitoring, including remote options. CPF allows for investment in high-quality broadband as well as other connectivity infrastructure, devices, and equipment.

In 2023, Governor Kemp announced a combined total of over $246 million in preliminary awards, which will provide communities, households, and businesses in 31 Georgia counties access to faster and more reliable broadband. The projects targeted with the awards could serve over 70,000 unserved locations. These grant projects represent an investment of more than $479 million when matching funds are contributed.

Future Funding Opportunities

Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program

In 2023, NTIA announced BEAD allocations, and Georgia will receive $1,307,214,371.30 to competitively award to fund service to the state's remaining unserved and underserved locations.

Upon approval by NTIA, Georgia will oversee the deployment of BEAD funding to reach three priority areas:
- Unserved locations
  - o No access to 25 Mbps download and 3 Mbps upload speeds
- Underserved locations
  - o No access to 100 Mbps download and 20 Mbps upload speeds
- Community anchor institutions
  - o Without gigabit symmetrical service

IIJA Digital Equity Act Program

The Digital Equity Act dedicates $2.75 billion to establish three grant programs. These programs promote digital inclusion and equity to ensure that all individuals and communities have the skills, technology, and capacity needed to reap the full benefits of a digital economy.

- The **State Digital Equity Planning Grant Program** is a $60 million formula grant program for states and territories to develop digital equity plans.
  - o Georgia allocation: $1,429,212.69
- The **State Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program** consists of a $1.44 billion formula grant program for states and territories. Funds are distributed via grant programs over five years to implement digital equity projects and support the implementation of digital equity plans.
  - o Georgia allocation: $22,455,639.68
- The **Digital Equity Competitive Grant Program** is a $1.25billion discretionary grant program which will distribute funds via annual grant programs over five years to implement digital equity projects. Eligible applicants include specific types of political subdivisions, agencies, or instrumentalities of states; tribal governments; nonprofit entities; community anchor institutions; local educational agencies; and entities that carry out workforce development programs.

Broadband Ready Program

Broadband Ready status is a designation awarded by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) that recognizes a community that has taken action to reduce obstacles for broadband expansion by:
1. Adopting an ordinance that streamlines permitting for broadband projects.
2. Including a "broadband element" in their local comprehensive plan that clearly states their goals and strategies for broadband expansion.

In 2018, to underscore the importance of local planning for broadband expansion, Georgia began requiring that a broadband element be included in all communities' comprehensive plans. Today, nearly every community in Georgia has updated their plans to include local coverage data, as well as specific goals and strategies for broadband in their jurisdiction. Many communities that have not yet been designated as Broadband Ready stated that recognition is a goal, and DCA is providing outreach to directly assist those seeking the designation. Currently, 63 communities have achieved Broadband Ready status across the state.

TECHNOLOGY SERVICES

Automation + Support = Improved Customer Experience

GTA technology services teams are prioritizing steps to make things easier for customers and promote more of the service outcomes customers are after. Those measures include more self-service options, increased automation in processes, more efficient service ordering, and improved customer support structures.

For agencies served by the state's shared IT services program administered by GTA, expanded **self-service** options can mean efficiency gains and time savings. And for help desk-type support services, some customers show a simple preference for self-service. With all those benefits in mind, the state's enterprise IT service desk is introducing additional support topics and guidance available from its virtual assistant, Chat With IT. For common questions and challenges ranging from phone to printer issues, agency staff can get help from the virtual assistant without ever needing to speak to a service desk agent. And if the virtual assistant comes up short, a direct transfer is made to an agent for resolution.

Self-service is now offered via more paths for password resets, a near-universal concern. Joining the long-available online self-service password reset option, a new voice bot option permits changing a password or unlocking an account by phone. That can be invaluable for staff who find they're locked out of their computers due to password issues.

Increased **automation** is helping eliminate redundant, manual tasks and increasing speed of processes. Agency IT administrators in particular appreciate the improvements this has brought to change management and incident management. Those two behind-the-scenes functions are critical to reliable, smooth-running IT systems used by agencies, as well as the constituents they serve. Automation is permitting less disruptive maintenance and speeding response efforts when incidents do arise.

Another meaningful way to ease agencies' burden is to make it simple to order IT services from GTA. That's for both existing and new customers. It motivates ongoing work to introduce a new widely accessible portal for ordering or learning about services and for seeking support. Expected to debut near the close of 2024, the new **service portal** will help take any guesswork out of which IT services are available and how to get them.

In tandem with all these steps, GTA technology services realigned its team of customer representatives (called **Customer Success Managers** or CSMs) to best serve agencies. Part of that refinement has CSMs now serving as conduits to services and information across the broad range of GTA's offerings. Much more than simply being order processors or "firefighters," today's CSMs consult with agencies to connect them with the GTA services that best meet their IT needs.

Other Work

To sustain the momentum of these service improvements, **procurements** are in the works to bring updated options to the state's shared IT services program in the categories of server services, personal computers, and service integration (MSI). Extending into 2025, the procurements seek to bring in top-tier technology services to continue to meet agencies' evolving requirements, while also making sound financial sense for the state.

GTA technology services teams have also completed upgrades to the state's leased space at the North Atlanta **Data Center**, trimming the computing area dramatically and updating power, network services and other infrastructure. Accomplished with minimal interruption to operation of state systems, the consolidation pairs with the state's increased reliance on cloud services.
That has produced less need for on-premises computing presence.

Cloud migration work spanning the last couple of years also continues with recent establishment of a Microsoft Azure platform. That give agencies still another cloud option to go along with already available Amazon Web Services and Oracle Cloud Infrastructure.

And, complementing the state's shared IT services program, the **GTA Direct** program continues to provide à-la-carte access to a range of managed IT services, mobile devices and services prominent among them. These are available to state and local agencies, public colleges and universities, and boards of education statewide. The program provides agencies an efficient procurement process where they purchase IT services from GTA-qualified suppliers.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX

Agencies Reporting Expenditures

#	Agency Name	2024 IT Spend
1	Department of Administrative Services	$11,293,655
2	Department of Banking and Finance	$2,442,705
3	Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities	$20,527,526
4	Department of Community Health	$101,259,260
5	Department of Community Supervision	*
6	Department of Corrections	$41,207,969
7	Department of Defense	*
8	Department of Driver Services	$9,231,605
9	Department of Early Care and Learning	$38,755,850
10	Department of Economic Development	*
11	Department of Human Services	$115,423,457
12	State Road and Tollway Authority	$5,252,835
13	Department of Juvenile Justice	$17,880,194
14	Office of State Treasurer	$680,345
15	Office of Inspector General	$101,753
16	Department of Natural Resources	$15,870,700
17	Department of Public Health	**$21,898,960
18	Department of Public Safety	*
19	Department of Revenue	$56,487,238
20	Department of Transportation	$50,220,972
21	Employees' Retirement System	$2,658,723
22	Georgia Bureau of Investigation	$14,045,963
23	Georgia Forestry Commission	$886,861
24	Georgia Public Broadcasting	$1,954,636
25	Georgia State Financing and Investment Commission	$1,700,661
26	Georgia Student Finance Commission	$1,932,511
27	Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency	*
28	Office of Planning and Budget	*
29	Office of State Administrative Hearings	$844,489
30	Georgia Technology Authority	$23,281,390
31	State Accounting Office	$31,572,635
32	State Board of Pardons and Paroles	$523,044
33	State Board of Workers' Compensation	$2,048,702
34	State Properties Commission	*
35	Teachers' Retirement System	*
36	Technical College System of Georgia	$5,785,020
	Total	**$595,769,659**

*Did not report   **partial financials reported

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