

CENTER FOR RURAL PROSPERITY AND INNOVATION

Operational Outline

2020



GEORGIA'S
RURAL CENTER

Powered by Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College

WELCOME FROM THE CENTER

The Center for Rural Prosperity and Innovation (Georgia's Rural Center) was created to be a comprehensive resource dedicated to advancing the interests of rural Georgia. The challenges facing our rural communities are widely known and have been well-researched through the years. In fact, as our society has become more urbanized, the challenge of revitalizing rural communities has been a common enigma across the country. There are no quick-fix solutions. However, inducing positive change and producing tangible results are possible with long-term focus and commitment. To maximize state resources, the center will act as an information hub for rural communities in addition to hands-on leadership through the establishment of partners across the state of Georgia. Georgia's Rural Center will work to rediscover the great potential in rural Georgia alongside you and your rural communities.

Dr. David Bridges
Interim Director
dbridges@abac.edu

Scott Blount
Associate Director
sblount@abac.edu

Bridgett Mobley
Logistics and Operations Manager
bmobley@abac.edu

Janet Cochran
Project Manager
janet.cochran@abac.edu

Jessica Akins
Communication Manager
jessica.akins@abac.edu

Loren Lindler
Communication Specialist
llindler@abac.edu



MISSION

Georgia's Rural Center exists to build healthy, vibrant rural Georgia communities with managed support and collaborative partnerships.

CORE PRINCIPLES

Rediscover - We look to rediscover all that is unique and extraordinary in the state's less populated areas.

Reconnect - We remind all Georgians of the vital role that rural people and places play in statewide success.

Recreate - We find ideas that are working in rural Georgia and create them in other communities throughout the state.

Reinvest - We place human capital in small towns and rural communities through internships and special projects.



VISION

Management - project management that results in completed projects benefiting rural communities

Advocacy - recommend policy change and/or implementation to benefit rural Georgia

Development - create a portfolio of completed projects to share with other rural communities

Communication - share the stories of rural Georgia and their impacts to the entire state

Networking - establish relationships within rural communities to aid in advocacy and development of policy and prospective projects



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Section Title	Page
Background	6
Creation of the Center for Rural Prosperity and Innovation	7
Function of the Center	8



BACKGROUND

A year-long study by the House Rural Development Council of the Georgia House of Representatives concluded:

1. Since 2010, the State of Georgia has experienced tremendous job growth, adding more than 500,000 new private sector jobs;
2. Georgia's economic successes during this period have resulted from a favorable tax structure, regulatory environment, and aggressive economic development initiatives;
3. In 2019, Site Selection Magazine once again designated Georgia to be the best state in the nation for business, for the 7th year in a row.
4. This economic success has not extended into all of Georgia's rural areas to a desired level;
5. As a result, Georgia's rural areas are faced with challenges distinct from other regions of this state, including loss of population, insufficient health care access, degraded or lacking infrastructure, diminished opportunity for quality education, scarcity of employment opportunities, overall lack of economic growth, and sometimes lack of cultural amenities;
6. A thorough, intensive, and systematic study of the existing issues in Georgia's rural areas is necessary and appropriate; and
7. The objective of such a study should be to identify policies and ideas to enhance economic opportunity across the entire state, particularly in rural areas.

“Georgia is a growing and prosperous state, and we are thankful for that, but that prosperity isn't being felt in every community across Georgia. Some of our rural areas are still struggling, and we must do everything we can to help private businesses grow jobs in every corner of our state.”

Georgia House Speaker, David Ralston



INTENT AND CREATION: “THE CENTER FOR RURAL PROSPERITY AND INNOVATION”

The Center for Rural Prosperity and Innovation, often referred to as Georgia’s Rural Center and referred to as the “center” in the remainder of this document, was created by HB 951 (Appendix 1 - HB951 as passed and signed by Governor Nathan Deal). The center is located at Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College, Tifton, Georgia.

HB951 Intent

As stated in HB951, the mission of the center is to foster community and economic development through innovation in rural Georgia. A more operational statement of mission and vision is provided in the section labeled “Function of the Center.”

Duty and Responsibilities

According to HB951, it shall be the duty of the center to be a central information and research hub for rural leadership training and best practices, which may include:

1. Community planning models for proactively identifying value-added gaps or strengths;
2. Industry-specific assistance; and
3. Cooperative efforts with nonprofit organizations, religious organizations, and other higher education partners.

Authority, Oversight, and Accountability

HB 951 re-created the 12-member Georgia Rural Development Council, which shall offer guidance to the center. Furthermore, the bill instructs the director of the center will prepare and submit a ten-year strategic plan outlining the center’s use of resources for the upcoming fiscal years to the General Assembly annually for review by the House and the Senate standing committees on agriculture and economic development. These committees may, by majority vote, approve the plan and submit recommendations to the Appropriations Committees of the House and the Senate, respectively, for consideration in developing the budget.



Organizational Structure

The Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College (ABAC) president shall have the authority to appoint the director of the center, subject to approval by a vote of members of the Rural Development Council (Georgia HB951, p. 2).

Center personnel will consist of:

1. Director, to be named by the ABAC President and approved by the Rural Development Council,
2. Associate Director, to be named by the ABAC President,
3. Staff - adequate to perform the duties of the center.

More details on organizational structure as of January 2020 can be found on page 9.

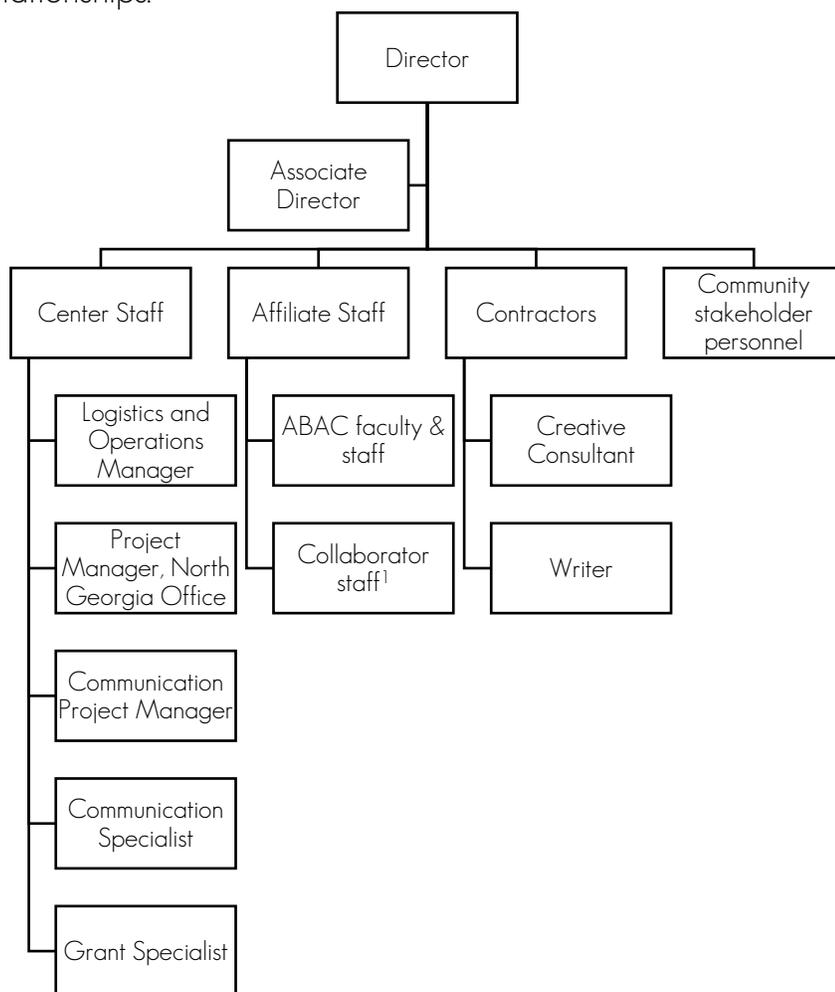
FUNCTION OF THE CENTER

The center will employ an outcome-based approach; thus, focusing on highly coordinated project management drawing on the functional assets and resources of cooperating agencies and institutions, specifically those listed in HB951. The center will leverage the human talent and facility assets of ABAC and other educational institutions in the state with the financial and skill assets of various public and private entities to identify target communities and their respective opportunities. Then, the center will plan and manage projects from start to completion.

In addition to its core staff, the center will rely on affiliate personnel, to include ABAC faculty and staff, the staff of collaborative public partners, private partners, and contract personnel to meet its functional obligations.



Figure 1. Staffing and relationships.



¹Collaborators are expected to include the Georgia Department of Agriculture, the Georgia Department of Economic Development, the Georgia Department of Community Affairs, the Georgia Department of Labor, the U.S. Department of Agriculture - Rural Development, and personnel affiliated with the University System of Georgia, the Technical College System of Georgia, and the Georgia Department of Education.

HB951 broadly defined the mission to foster economic development, prosperity, and innovation in rural Georgia (Code Section 20-18-4). As is the case with all institutions, defining a set of shared values and stating a vision for the future is helpful in defining the institution's mission.



The work of the Center and its staff will be guided by a view that we must:

- Remind all Georgians of the vital role that rural people and places play in statewide success and that,
- When we find ideas that are working in rural Georgia, we should recreate them in other communities throughout the state and that,
- An essential step in **rediscovering**, **reconnecting**, and **recreating** rural Georgia is to **reinvest** in people by infusing inspired, educated, and energetic human capital in small towns and rural communities.

