CENTRAL SAVANNAH RIVER AREA · EDITION 1

# State of the Workforce: The CSRA

Work, workers, wages, talent, land, incentives, risk and law in the Central Savannah River Area: a planning reference for employers, site selectors, lenders and public officials.

**Edition 1 · Fall 2026** · Data as of October 30, 2026
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# 1. The short version

The CSRA is an unusually good place to be an employer right now, and an unusually easy place to misjudge. Jobs are plentiful, hiring is rising, and a national spotlight has landed on Augusta. At the same time, the people who run local businesses are working inside a labor market that is only balanced, not loose, with pay that trails the nation, a college pipeline that loses many students before the finish line, and a legal and insurance environment that changed materially in the last eighteen months. This edition puts those facts side by side.

**UNEMPLOYMENT, AUGUSTA METRO**

**4.0%**

September 2026, not seasonally adjusted. Georgia 3.3%, South Carolina 4.0%, U.S. 4.2% (seasonally adjusted)

**CIVILIAN LABOR FORCE**

**281,932**

September 2026, seasonally adjusted (St. Louis Fed), rising five straight months. BLS unadjusted count: 283,000

**ANNOUNCED NEW JOBS**

**~1,100**

six industrial and data projects, 2025 to 2027 (0.4% of the labor force)

**RECENT LAYOFF NOTICES**

**719**

six notices since October 2025 in the verified sample

## Twenty-eight findings

1. **The market is balanced, and it swings with the seasons.** Unemployment in the Augusta metro ran from 4.8% in January to 3.3% in April and has settled at 4.0%. About 11,200 people in the metro are looking for work. Hiring plans that assume a flat market will miss the winter surplus and the spring squeeze.
2. **Augusta is a national story.** LinkedIn ranked Augusta first among its 2026 "Cities on the Rise," based on workers moving in, hiring activity and job postings. Attention brings candidates and competitors in equal measure.
3. **The growth pipeline is real but narrow.** Six announced projects add roughly 1,070 to 1,110 direct jobs through 2027, plus a $1.6 billion Fort Gordon construction program through 2028. For skilled production, maintenance and cyber roles that is a large pull. For the 282,000-person labor force it is under half of one percent.
4. **The region leans on one anchor.** Fort Gordon employs about 31,900 people and supports an estimated $7.5 billion a year in economic activity. A contractor transition just cut 77 jobs there. Concentration is both the strength and the exposure.
5. **Pay trails the nation, except in production.** Where the Bureau of Labor Statistics publishes local data, Augusta medians run 9% to 17% below the national median. Production

occupations as a group pay slightly above the national average, which means factory and warehouse employers compete harder for labor than the headline gap suggests.

6. **The college pipeline leaks.** Augusta Technical College reports a 31% graduation rate and Aiken Technical College 33.5%. At Augusta University, 48% of a first-time cohort graduates within six years against 60% across the University System of Georgia. Completion, not enrollment, is the bottleneck.
7. **Output is growing where demand is growing, with gaps.** Augusta University conferred 3,538 degrees in fiscal 2026, up 37% in four years, and fall 2026 enrollment is 12,788. Yet Augusta Tech's mechanical, precision production and construction completions total 465 a year against roughly 910 announced industrial jobs.
8. **Internships are the missing data.** No public source counts internships or work-based learning in the CSRA. Good programs exist, including a free eight-week construction pre-apprenticeship at Augusta Tech that places 97% of participants, but nobody measures the whole. This report proposes a way to start.
9. **Insurance costs eased while liability rules tightened.** Georgia workers' compensation loss costs fell 8.8% on March 1, 2026, and the 2025 tort reform laws changed how negligent-security, medical-damages and fee claims are handled.
10. **Fewer residents are in the labor force than the nation average, and job growth is slow.** The author's estimate puts the metro's labor force participation near 55%, against 61.8% nationally, driven by an older population (18% are 65 or older) and a large military and student presence. Nonfarm jobs rose only 0.5% over the year to September 2026 and Richmond County employment fell 1.2% in the first quarter. Section 3 shows the arithmetic.
11. **The CSRA has land, but few sites are ready.** Four large named sites total about 3,350 acres, including a 1,150-acre South Augusta megasite that still lacks industrial sewer ($25 million requested) and a 1,900-acre Columbia County technology park proposed for data centers. We found no state-certified shovel-ready industrial site in the Augusta area, and no public consolidated inventory of buildings. Section 5 sets out what is known and what a site selector must verify.
12. **Cost and incentives are competitive, with a clear local package.** Georgia's corporate income tax rate is 4.99% in 2026, manufacturing equipment and energy are exempt from sales tax, and Augusta offers $4,000 per new job each year for five years plus bond-financed abatements near 50%. Industrial water lines reach 20 inches with 38 million gallons a day of capacity. Section 6 compiles the package.
13. **Housing is affordable for professionals and a strain for entry-level workers.** The median home price of about $215,400 is 3.3 times the median household income, and the average apartment rent is $1,243 a month. At that rent, a worker paid the local median for packers, stockers or sewing operators spends 40% to 46% of gross pay on rent, against 25% for the

average worker. The cost of living is a draw at the top of the labor market and a retention problem at the bottom. Section 14 works through it.

14. **Capital and start-up support exist but are thinly measured.** Augusta has a coworking and accelerator hub, a Georgia Tech incubator office, a 337,000-square-foot cyber center and a new medical-device initiative. Georgia recorded 6,411 high-propensity business applications in September 2026. No public source counts Augusta-area business licenses, incubator graduates or small-business lending by county, and the SBA lending data we found conflict. Section 15 sets out the ecosystem and what to measure.
15. **Few firms fail through bankruptcy; most simply close, and credits are in flux.** Business bankruptcy filings in Georgia's Southern District ran 18 in the third quarter of 2026 against 1,196 personal filings. About half of new U.S. employer establishments are gone in five years, and Georgia's five-year rate (about 49.9%) trails South Carolina's (about 55.9%). Meanwhile the federal Work Opportunity Tax Credit lapsed on December 31, 2025, and the Opportunity Zone map is being redrawn for January 2027. Sections 16 and 17 set out the evidence and the watch list.
16. **The unemployment rate understates the gap; participation is the real one.** In July 2026 Augusta's 4.0% rate was tied for the highest among Georgia metros, against Savannah at 2.7% and Atlanta at 3.2%. Yet if the metro participated in the labor force at the national rate, it would have about 33,000 more workers (the author's estimate). Section 20 turns the evidence into a ten-line scorecard and defines new indicators, including a pipeline coverage ratio of about 0.5 for skilled industrial roles.
17. **Six things standard reports miss, and what is known about each here.** Georgia's broad unemployment measure (U-6) runs 6.7% against a headline rate of 3.3%, so about twice as many people are underemployed or discouraged as the headline shows. Augusta's transit leaves workers on four-route, ninety-minute trips for what is a fifteen-minute drive. Georgia has an estimated one in nine adults with a felony conviction. Commuting flows, gig work and local immigrant employment are not measured publicly. Section 21 sets the federal talent strategy against these blind spots and defines indicators for each.
18. **Cyber is the region's defining professional workforce, and the evidence on it is dated.** A 2022 impact study, using 2020 data, counted about 13,800 cyber-related jobs in Richmond County, roughly 9% of all county jobs, split between the Army's Cyber Center of Excellence and Cyber Command and about 140 private firms. About 20,000 Army signal and cyber soldiers train at Fort Gordon each year, and a Top Secret clearance for a new hire takes about 243 days. The binding constraint is not interest in cyber but cleared, experienced people. Section 22 covers the cluster, the pipeline, the clearance bottleneck and four proposals.
19. **AI is arriving as a power-and-property-tax story first and a jobs story second.** Columbia County has approved a memorandum for a data-center investment of at least $17 billion by

an Alphabet subsidiary, with $40 million a year to the county for seven years aimed at homestead property tax relief that depends on a November referendum. A second campus of about $2 billion has been filed near Fort Gordon. Neither has published a permanent job count. National research finds the labor effect so far concentrated on workers aged 22 to 25 in exposed occupations, a 13% employment decline since 2022 in one study, driven by fewer new entrants rather than layoffs. Section 23 sets out the investment, the transition, the expansion and the impact, and what the region should require.

20. **Work ethic is built before the first job, and the region cannot yet see how many young people have the chance.** Programs exist: 4-H clubs in Richmond County, a Boys and Girls Club whose South Augusta site is full with a waiting list, a new state work-based-learning diploma that Richmond County is still planning, and technical-college dual enrollment. No source counts participation by county, and the three public figures for the largest youth club's reach, from about 1,200 to more than 7,000 children a year, have not been reconciled. National evidence says early work experience helps when it is structured and linked to employers, and is mixed otherwise. Section 26 sets out the inventory, the evidence and five proposals.
21. **School-to-work programs raise earnings, but the region cannot see whether its young people stay employed, and no program is built to repair the readiness gaps employers describe.** A rigorous national study of career academies found earnings 11% higher over eight years, with no gain in graduation or college. Richmond County reports a 98.18% CTAE pathway graduation rate for the Class of 2025, but no public source counts completers placed in jobs or still employed a year later. Employers nationally rate new graduates least well on communication, professionalism and critical thinking. Georgia has 386 students per school counselor against a recommended 250 (the source does not give the year). Section 27 sets out the four handoffs a pipeline has to make, what is measured at each, and what is not.
22. **Autistic and other neurodivergent young people are an under-used pipeline, and the region has no visible bridge to employers.** Nationally, large employers report 90% to 95% retention in neurodiversity hiring programs, and half of employer accommodations cost nothing. Georgia has Project SEARCH sites in 14 locations, none of them in the CSRA on the list we read, and a state program for students with a documented disability. We found no CSRA employer program. Section 28 sets out the evidence, the gap and the practices that remove it.
23. **Health care is the region's largest professional workforce, and it is about to compete with itself.** Education and health services is the metro's largest private job group and grew 2.8% in the last year, faster than any larger group; the five largest health employers on the development authority's list, which may date from 2021, employ more than 13,000 people. A new 100-bed hospital in Columbia County is expected to bring more than 1,200 jobs,

Piedmont plans about $1 billion of capital by 2032, and Georgia has 8.47 registered nurses per 1,000 residents against 9.43 nationally. Pay is 9% to 10% below the national mean for both practitioners and support staff. Section 24 sets out supply, demand and what is not known.

24. **Two of the metro's seven counties, and the Savannah River Site, are in South Carolina, and the report had treated them lightly.** The Savannah River Site employed 13,510 people in March 2025 and its leaders talked of reaching 18,000, including about 5,000 temporary construction workers, but the site's own figures differ and we could not confirm the 2026 position. Aiken County's unemployment was 4.3% in 2025 and Aiken Technical College served 3,146 students. Section 25 sets out the South Carolina side, its incentives and what remains to be obtained.
25. **Shortages differ by skill tier.** Unskilled labor is available but turns over; semi-skilled and skilled trades are the tightest tier; professional supply is strong in health care and thin in cyber and engineering. Section 29 grades each tier and Section 30 sets local programs against need.
26. **Nine hindrances explain why growth is not faster.** Section 13 ranks them: worker supply and participation, a thin credential and degree base, wages below the nation, site readiness, federal concentration, weak local job growth, poverty and school attendance, housing cost and legal uncertainty. Each is tied to evidence and to what would ease it.
27. **The rules about who is an employer are in motion.** The National Labor Relations Board narrowed joint-employer liability in February, the Department of Labor proposed new joint-employer and contractor tests in the spring, Georgia's July 1 laws added a portable-benefits option for contractors, and South Carolina is revisiting its work-authorization verification law.
28. **Education tracks employability, and the sharpest cliff is at the high school diploma, but the region cannot see its own pipeline.** Nationally, unemployment falls from 4.7% without a diploma to 2.7% with a bachelor's degree, and weekly pay rises from $770 to $1,578. About 43% of adults in the Augusta metro stop at or before high school. Richmond County's Class of 2026 graduation rate of 84.2% is a record but trails Georgia's 88.5%. Georgia passed a workforce-education restructuring in 2026; the South Carolina credential-goal bill and federal reauthorization stalled. Section 31 sets out the evidence and three proposals.

**HOW TO USE THIS REPORT**

Sections 3 and 4 are about demand and growth. Section 5 covers land and buildings, and Section 6 covers employers, costs, incentives and infrastructure; read them first if you are deciding where to locate. Sections 7 and 8 are about supply: wages and the talent pipeline. Section 9 covers internships and apprenticeships. Sections 10 through 12 cover disruption, insurance and law. Section 13 ranks what is slowing growth, Sections 14 through 32 examine housing, capital and start-up support, business survival and leading indicators, credits and grants, the region against its peers, the operating environment, a scorecard, the federal talent strategy and six hidden measures, cyber in full detail, artificial intelligence, health care, the South Carolina side, youth pathways, the school-to-work pipeline, neurodivergent talent, skill tiers, education attainment and the law, education programs and demographics, Section 33 names the catalysts, and Section 34 proposes changes and the path to carry them out. Section 35 turns it into guidance. Section 36 says plainly what we could not verify and how the next edition will close those gaps. Edition 1 is a first complete pass. Where a number is missing, the page says so rather than guessing.

# 2. What we measured, and how

**Geography.** The CSRA here means the Augusta-Richmond County, GA-SC metropolitan area as the federal government defines it: Richmond, Columbia, Burke, McDuffie and Lincoln counties in Georgia and Aiken and Edgefield counties in South Carolina. The 2020 Census counted about 611,000 residents in those seven counties, and a 2023 estimate puts the metro at 629,429.

**Sources.** Every figure in this report comes from a public source and carries a date. We lean on the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), the Georgia Department of Labor, the University System of Georgia and its institutions, the Technical College System of Georgia colleges, the Department of Energy, the Georgia and South Carolina legislatures, the National Labor Relations Board, the Department of Labor, and local and trade reporting that is clearly attributed. We do not use the author's firm's own placement or payroll data as a source, because a report meant to inform the whole community should rest on evidence anyone can check.

**Honest limits.** A few cautions apply throughout. The Augusta unemployment rate we cite is not seasonally adjusted, while the state and national rates are, so small gaps between them are not meaningful. October 2025 has no Augusta reading because of a lapse in federal appropriations. Layoff counts come from public WARN notices, which cover only larger layoffs, and our list is a verified sample rather than a census. Wage medians describe base and incentive pay and leave out overtime and benefits. Where a figure rests on a single secondary source, we say so.

**Author, publisher and interest.** This report is researched, written and published by Michael R. Frazier. The author is also the founder of Peak Employment Solutions, a staffing firm in Augusta. The firm appears in this report only where it owns a data series described in Section 20, and where the author's own work is used as an example in Sections 27 and 28. Its placement and payroll data are not used as a source. Where a statement is the author's judgment, it is labeled as one, and where the author has a commercial interest in a topic, the report says so.

## Review, corrections and updates

**Review status.** Edition 1 has not yet been reviewed by outside experts. It was researched and written by one author from public sources, and several figures rest on a single source or on a news report of an official release. The author intends to invite review before the next edition from people in six roles: an economist at the state labor agency, a university economic-research center, the local economic development authority, the Fort Gordon community-relations office, a hospital or health-system human-resources leader, and a technical-college institutional-research office. Reviewers will be named in the report only with their consent, and a named reviewer is not an endorsement of every statement. No reviewer is named in this edition.

**Corrections.** A reader who finds an error may write to the author at the address on the cover. Each correction will be dated and listed in a public corrections log that states the original text, the

corrected text and the source for the change. A correction that changes a conclusion will be marked as such, and the report will be reissued with an edition number (1.1, 1.2) so that a cited version can be identified. Figures that rest on one secondary source, and statements that two sources contradict, are labeled where they appear and listed in Section 36.

**Updates.** The indicators in the web edition are designed to refresh weekly. The report itself is intended to be reissued yearly, with a fall edition. Where a figure is revised between editions, the log will say so.

## Two geographies, and what this edition covers

This report measures the seven-county Augusta-Richmond County metropolitan area because that is the unit federal labor data are published for. The Georgia planning region the CSRA Regional Commission serves is larger: 13 counties (Burke, Columbia, Glascock, Hancock, Jefferson, Jenkins, Lincoln, McDuffie, Richmond, Taliaferro, Warren, Washington and Wilkes), nearly 6,500 square miles by the Technical College System of Georgia's description. Eight of those counties lie outside the metro, and they are the counties where poverty is highest and where the worker who drives an hour to Augusta lives. Section 32 shows the difference. Edition 2 will extend every county table to the full 13 Georgia counties plus Aiken and Edgefield in South Carolina.

## What standard workforce reports leave out, and where this report stands

Most regional workforce reports rest on unemployment insurance records, headline unemployment and broad industry codes. Those sources are accurate for what they count and silent on several things that decide whether an employer can hire. The table sets out the known blind spots, what this edition does about each, and what would close it.

| BLIND SPOT | WHY IT MATTERS HERE | THIS EDITION | TO CLOSE IT |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Federal and contractor workforce, and clearances** | Soldiers, federal civilians and cleared contractors at Fort Gordon, NSA and the Savannah River Site are undercounted or invisible in state wage records, and security clearances decide who can be hired for the core cyber and nuclear jobs | Counts the installations' headcount (Fort Gordon, NSA, SRS 13,510) but has no count of cleared or certified workers | Anonymous survey of cleared-job employers and the colleges; clearance and Security+ holding by graduate cohort |
| **Quits, turnover and underemployment** | Low unemployment can hide churn and workers in part-time or below-skill jobs | Reports unemployment and participation; turnover and the underemployment rate are not local figures | Georgia turnover survey by industry (in the data service) and a local employer survey |

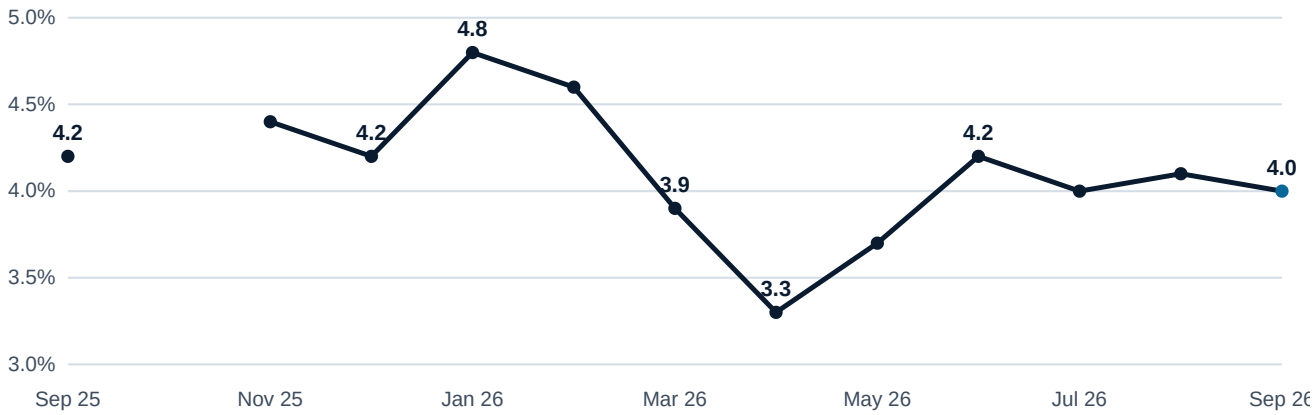
| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Paper skills against real skills** | Degree counts overstate readiness where jobs require clearances and certifications | Program and completion counts, with the gap stated in Section 30 | Certification and clearance rates by program |
| **Commuter shed and the rural counties** | Workers cross county and river lines every day; rural workers drive long distances for lower-wage jobs; transit and child care are thin | Unemployment for all fifteen counties and wages for six (Section 3); poverty by county in Section 32; commuting flows for Aiken County only, with limits | Census commuting-flow data for all 15 counties; a transportation study for plant commutes |
| **Gig, 1099 and multiple jobs** | Military spouses, transitioning service members and veterans often work in non-traditional arrangements that payroll data miss | Mentions Georgia's July 2026 portable-benefits law; no local count | Census nonemployer statistics and the American Community Survey |
| **Remote work** | A quarter of local listings are remote, which both exports local jobs and imports outside workers | LinkedIn figure (26.5% remote, 3.5% hybrid) only | Remote-work and commuting shares from the American Community Survey |
| **Peer-metro comparison** | A site selector compares Augusta with Savannah, Columbia, Charleston and others, not with the national average | Compares with the nation and the two states | Side-by-side table of peer metros |
| **Occupation projections** | State long-term projections show which occupations will grow | Not included; tier grades are judgments | Georgia and South Carolina projections by occupation |
| **Equity, disability and veteran employment** | Participation among groups with lower employment is where capacity can grow | Population shares, and Section 28 on neurodivergent talent | American Community Survey tables |
| **Power, water and broadband capacity** | Site and data-center decisions turn on delivered capacity and its price | Provider names and industrial water capacity; no power capacity or rates | Written utility letters per site |

**What is not legal, tax or insurance advice.** Sections 11 and 12 summarize laws and rates so that employers know what to ask their attorneys, brokers and carriers. They are not a substitute for that advice.

# 3. The labor market now

Four percent unemployment, a labor force near 282,000 and still growing: a market where a determined employer can hire, and a careless one will lose candidates to a faster competitor.

**Unemployment rate, Augusta-Richmond County, GA-SC metro (not seasonally adjusted)**




Source: Georgia Department of Labor, metropolitan unemployment release. October 2025 is missing because of a lapse in federal appropriations. Readings are preliminary and subject to revision.

The pattern across the year is the story. The rate climbed to 4.8% in January, the post-holiday trough when seasonal jobs end, then fell to 3.3% in April as spring hiring, construction and tournament season pulled people in. It has held between 3.7% and 4.2% since May. For an employer, that means two predictable windows: winter, when candidates are plentiful and the best time to build a bench, and spring, when the same job takes noticeably longer to fill.

The civilian labor force, which BLS smooths and seasonally adjusts, was 281,932 in September 2026, up from 280,876 in May. It added about 610 people between August and September. A growing labor force with a stable unemployment rate means the metro is generating jobs roughly as fast as it is attracting workers, which is exactly what a healthy growth market looks like.

| AREA | UNEMPLOYMENT RATE | BASIS | DATE |
|---|---|---|---|
| Augusta-Richmond County, GA-SC metro | 4.0% | Not seasonally adjusted | Sep 2026 |
| Georgia | 3.3% (3.4% a year earlier) | Seasonally adjusted | Sep 2026 |
| South Carolina | 4.0% (4.7% a year earlier) | Seasonally adjusted | Sep 2026 |
| United States | 4.2% | Seasonally adjusted | Sep 2026 |

Sources: Georgia Department of Labor; BLS State Employment and Unemployment, released October 20, 2026; BLS Employment Situation, released October 2, 2026; Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis (FRED) for the labor force.

## Workforce participation: how many people are actually in the labor force

The unemployment rate counts only people looking for work. Participation asks how many adults are working or looking at all, and it is where the CSRA differs most from the nation. The Bureau of Labor Statistics does not publish a participation rate for the Augusta metro, so the author estimated one from published pieces: the Census population estimate for 2024 (636,402), the age structure, and the BLS civilian labor force for September 2026 (283,000, not seasonally adjusted).

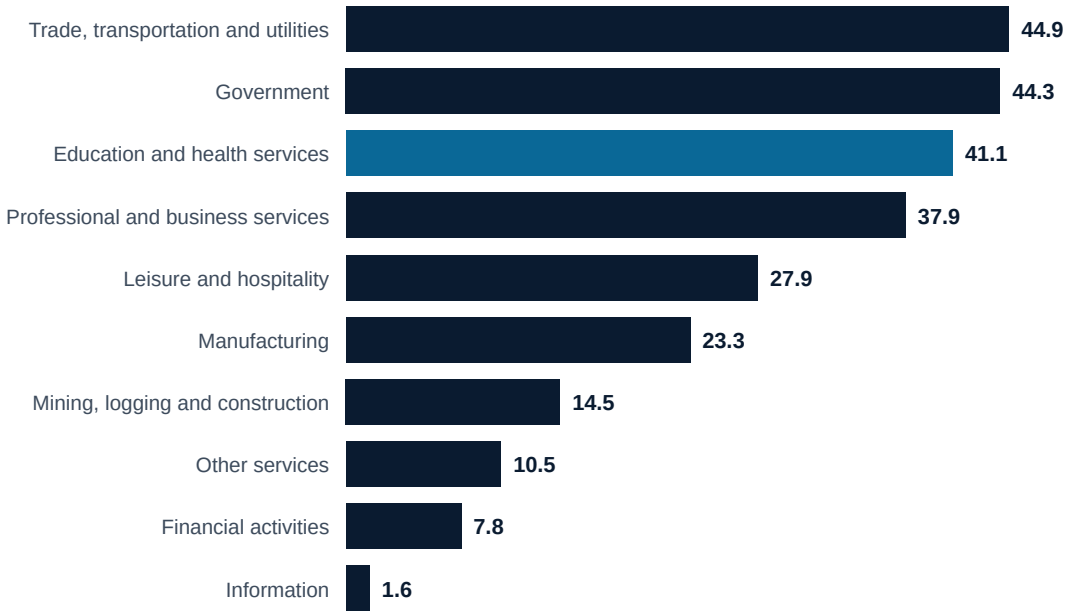
| ESTIMATE | VALUE | HOW DERIVED |
|---|---|---|
| Population age 16 and over | about 511,000 | Total 636,402 less ages 0 to 14 (116,734) less one-fifth of ages 15 to 19 |
| Labor force participation | about 55% | 283,000 labor force divided by about 511,000 |
| Employment-to-population | about 53% | 271,800 employed divided by about 511,000 |
| United States participation | 61.8% | BLS, September 2026 |
| Residents age 65 and over | 115,266 (18.1%) | Census age estimates, 2024 |
| Prime-age population (25 to 54) | about 244,000 | Census age estimates, 2024 |

This is the author's estimate, not a published rate. The Census population includes soldiers in barracks and people in institutions, who are outside the official civilian measure, so the official figure is probably a few points higher. Even so, the direction is clear and it matches the age structure: nearly one resident in five is 65 or older.

Two practical reasons the gap matters. First, a region cannot grow jobs faster than it grows available workers, and with an unemployment rate near 4% the pool of idle workers is small; growth has to come from raising participation, from in-migration, or from retention of graduates. Second, participation differs sharply by group: the largest untapped pools are likely older workers, spouses of military and contractor families, and residents with a high school education or less who face transportation, childcare or credential barriers. Section 13 treats those as hindrances. The Census American Community Survey publishes participation by county and demographic group, and Edition 2 will add it.

## Jobs by industry

### Nonfarm jobs by industry, Augusta metro, September 2026 (thousands, preliminary)




Source: BLS Current Employment Statistics, Augusta-Richmond County, GA-SC, not seasonally adjusted. Total nonfarm 253.8 thousand, up 0.5% over twelve months.

| INDUSTRY | JOBS (THOUSANDS) | 12-MONTH CHANGE |
|---|---|---|
| Education and health services | 41.1 | +2.8% |
| Leisure and hospitality | 27.9 | +1.5% |
| Manufacturing | 23.3 | +0.4% |
| Trade, transportation and utilities | 44.9 | 0.0% |
| Government | 44.3 | −0.7% |
| Professional and business services | 37.9 | −0.3% |
| Mining, logging and construction | 14.5 | −5.2% |
| Total nonfarm | 253.8 | +0.5% |

Health care and education are carrying the metro; construction, which should be rising with $1.6 billion of Fort Gordon work, is down 5.2%, and government is down 0.7%. Total employment growth of half a percent is slower than the new-project announcements suggest, which is consistent with projects that have been announced but are not yet hiring at scale.

## County jobs and weekly wages

| FIRST QUARTER 2026 (QCEW) | EMPLOYMENT | OVER-THE-YEAR | AVERAGE WEEKLY WAGE | WAGE CHANGE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Richmond County, GA | 104,109 | −1.2% | $1,226 | +4.7% |
| Columbia County, GA | 44,430 | not published | $960 | not published |
| Burke County, GA | 7,442 | not published | $2,159 | not published |
| McDuffie County, GA | 7,420 | not published | $903 | not published |
| Jefferson County, GA | 4,891 | not published | $1,008 | not published |
| Lincoln County, GA | 1,449 | not published | $824 | not published |
| Washington County, GA | 6,507 | not published | $1,102 | not published |
| Wilkes County, GA | 2,491 | not published | $945 | not published |
| Hancock County, GA | 1,483 | not published | $985 | not published |
| Warren County, GA | 1,445 | not published | $1,069 | not published |
| Jenkins County, GA | 1,690 | not published | $922 | not published |
| Taliaferro County, GA | 197 | not published | $769 | not published |
| Glascock County, GA | 383 | not published | $738 | not published |
| Georgia | 4,865,200 | 0.0% | $1,539 | +3.3% |

Source: BLS County Employment and Wages in Georgia, first quarter 2026 (released September 2, 2026). Richmond County's average weekly wage is about 80% of the state's. The release publishes over-the-year changes only for Georgia's 12 largest counties. Employment is the March 2026 level. All thirteen Georgia counties in the planning region and the metro are now in this table; the two South Carolina counties are not.

Burke County's average weekly wage of $2,159 is the highest of the counties shown and more than twice Lincoln County's $824. The author's reading, which the release does not state, is that Burke's figure reflects a small number of very high-paying jobs at the nuclear power plant, and that it says little about what most Burke residents earn. The wage a rural resident earns by driving to Augusta, and the wage a rural employer must match, are different numbers, and this report does not have the second one.

The BLS metro labor force (283,000, not seasonally adjusted) differs from the St. Louis Fed's smoothed, seasonally adjusted series (281,932) used earlier in this section. Both are shown because each is useful for its purpose.

## The fifteen counties: unemployment in August 2026

The metro rate of 4.0% hides a spread. Among the fifteen counties of the metro and the Georgia planning region, August 2026 unemployment ran from 2.9% in Jenkins County to 5.1% in Hancock County. Richmond and Burke counties, at 4.6% and 4.7%, were among the twelve highest in Georgia, while Columbia County, at 3.3%, sat among the lower third. The employers who say they cannot find workers and the residents who cannot find work are, to a large degree, in different counties, and the commute between them is where the problem lives (Sections 13 and 21).

| COUNTY | RATE, AUG 2026 | CHANGE FROM AUG 2025 | RANK |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Metro counties** | | | |
| Burke, GA | 4.7% | +0.3 points | 11th highest of 159 Georgia counties |
| Richmond, GA | 4.6% | −0.3 | 12th highest of 159 |
| Aiken, SC | 4.2% | −0.6 | 35th highest of 46 South Carolina counties |
| McDuffie, GA | 4.1% | −0.2 | 31st highest of 159 |
| Lincoln, GA | 4% (published rounded) | unchanged | 37th highest of 159 |
| Edgefield, SC | 3.8% | −0.5 | 43rd highest of 46 South Carolina counties |
| Columbia, GA | 3.3% | −0.2 | 109th highest of 159 |
| **Planning-region counties outside the metro** | | | |
| Hancock, GA | 5.1% | unchanged | 5th highest of 159 |
| Warren, GA | 4.1% | unchanged | 34th highest of 159 |
| Jefferson, GA | 4% (published rounded) | −0.4 | 39th highest of 159 |
| Wilkes, GA | 3.9% | +0.2 | 44th highest of 159 |
| Washington, GA | 3.7% | −0.2 | 61st highest of 159 |
| Glascock, GA | 3.5% | +0.1 | 79th highest of 159 |
| Taliaferro, GA | 3% (published rounded) | −0.9 | 139th highest of 159 |
| Jenkins, GA | 2.9% | −0.5 | 146th highest of 159 |

Source: BLS Local Area Unemployment Statistics as reported by USAFacts, August 2026, not seasonally adjusted. Georgia county rates in August ranged from 2.6% to 7.3%. The metro rate in the table above is for September; county rates for September were not available when this edition was written. Several pages report a whole-number rate only, as marked. County rates are produced by a statistical model, and in counties with only a few thousand workers they move more from month to month than the economy does, so a single month should be read as a range.

An unemployment rate says little about a county where most people have stopped looking. Burke County's resident labor force was 10,687 in September 2026, up 2.7% from a year earlier, and the author did not obtain participation rates for the rural counties. A county can show a low rate because it is thriving or because its workers have left or given up, and the data here cannot tell which.

## Three different "CSRAs"

A careful reader will meet three different regions under the same name, and their numbers are not interchangeable. The seven-county federal metropolitan area (Richmond, Columbia, Burke, McDuffie and Lincoln in Georgia, Aiken and Edgefield in South Carolina) is the one this report uses for its main figures. The CSRA Regional Commission serves thirteen Georgia counties. The Georgia Department of Labor's Central Savannah River region, in its published releases, names twelve: Burke, Columbia, Glascock, Hancock, Jefferson, Jenkins, McDuffie, Richmond, Taliaferro, Warren, Washington and Wilkes. For June 2026 that twelve-county region had an unemployment rate of 4.1%, a labor force of 216,267 and 207,390 employed (WRDW, citing the state labor department). A local news story we read lists Screven County in place of Wilkes, which does not match the state's list; we followed the state's. Any comparison of "the CSRA" across sources should begin by asking which one is meant.

## Commuting: what is known and what is not

The best public source for who works where is the Census Bureau's employer-household data, which South Carolina's labor market agency publishes by county. For Aiken County in 2023 it shows 34,462 people who live and work in the county, 30,991 who work in Aiken but live elsewhere, and 17,511 who live in Aiken and work elsewhere in South Carolina. The agency states that its figures cover employment within South Carolina only. That matters here: an Aiken resident who commutes across the river to Augusta or Columbia County is not counted among the outbound commuters, so the largest flow in the metro is missing from this table, and the reported gap between inbound and outbound cannot be read as a net. No comparable Georgia county profile was obtained.

The commuting pattern is visible in other measures. In Edgefield County in 2019, 83.3% of workers drove alone, 8.4% carpooled, 1.6% used public transit and 6.8% commuted 60 minutes or more each way. The Census Bureau's interactive tool that would give county-to-county flows for all fifteen counties could not be reached from the workspace used for this report. The data-request letter to the state labor agencies (letter 16) asks for the Georgia side.

## The thirteen Georgia counties: workers who live there and jobs that are there

The Georgia Department of Labor publishes the number of residents in the labor force and employed, county by county. The federal quarterly census of employment and wages publishes the number of jobs located in each county. The two measure different things: the first counts where workers live, the second where the jobs are. Set side by side, they show which counties send workers out and which draw them in, which is the commuting question the report could not answer directly.

| COUNTY | LABOR FORCE, SEP 2026 | CHANGE IN A YEAR | RATE, SEP 2026 | EMPLOYED RESIDENTS | JOBS IN COUNTY, MAR 2026 | JOBS PER EMPLOYED RESIDENT |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Richmond | 88,067 | +2.8% | 4.7% | 83,903 | 104,109 | 1.24 |
| Columbia | 77,429 | +2.9% | 3.5% | 74,752 | 44,430 | 0.59 |
| Burke | 10,687 | +2.7% | 4.5% | 10,206 | 7,442 | 0.73 |
| McDuffie | 9,494 | +2.7% | 4.1% | 9,100 | 7,420 | 0.82 |
| Washington | 7,998 | +2.6% | 3.8% | 7,692 | 6,507 | 0.85 |
| Jefferson | 7,057 | +5.1% | 4.0% | 6,774 | 4,891 | 0.72 |
| Wilkes | 4,094 | +6.9% | 4.1% | 3,927 | 2,491 | 0.63 |
| Jenkins | 3,927 | +5.2% | 3.1% | 3,807 | 1,690 | 0.44 |
| Lincoln | 3,328 | +2.3% | 4.0% | 3,194 | 1,449 | 0.45 |
| Hancock | 2,724 | +4.2% | 4.9% | 2,590 | 1,483 | 0.57 |
| Warren | 2,456 | +3.9% | 3.8% | 2,362 | 1,445 | 0.61 |
| Glascock | 1,493 | +4.6% | 3.8% | 1,437 | 383 | 0.27 |
| Taliaferro | 701 | +3.9% | 4.1% | 672 | 197 | 0.29 |

Sources: Georgia Department of Labor, County Labor Force Estimates, September 2026 (preliminary), place of residence, not seasonally adjusted; BLS, County Employment and Wages in Georgia, first quarter 2026 (preliminary). The ratio and the percentage changes are the author's calculation. The two sources differ in month, in coverage and in what they count: residents include the self-employed and people who work in other states, while covered jobs exclude most self-employed workers and military personnel. The labor force figures are modeled estimates that the state revises, and every county's estimate rose over the year, which a single model can produce. Read the ratio as a signal and not a measurement.

The pattern is stark. Richmond County is the only county of the thirteen with more jobs than employed residents, about 1.24 jobs for each employed resident. Columbia County has about 0.59, roughly 30,000 fewer jobs than employed residents, which is what a bedroom county on the edge

of a large employer looks like. Every county other than Richmond has fewer jobs than employed residents, by a modest margin in McDuffie and Washington and by a wide one elsewhere; in Glascock and Taliaferro the figure is under 0.3, and in Jenkins and Lincoln it is under 0.5. Together Richmond and Columbia hold about 75% of the thirteen counties' labor force. The author's reading is that the region's labor market is one hub with a dozen counties that supply it, and that an employer's hiring radius, and a rural resident's commute, are the variables that matter more than any county's own unemployment rate. Where the pay is highest, Burke, the jobs belong to a few employers, and a rural job paying under $1,000 a week competes with the drive to a metro job paying $1,226. The state's September table also gives exact rates for Lincoln, Jefferson and Taliaferro, which the August source above had rounded to whole numbers.

## The national backdrop is softening

Nationally the September report was weak: employers added only 29,000 jobs, the unemployment rate was 4.2%, labor force participation was 61.8%, and average hourly earnings of private-sector workers were $37.81, up 3.0% over twelve months. Health care added 17,000 jobs and manufacturing 9,000, so even a soft month leaned on the same sectors that dominate the CSRA. A slower national market tends to loosen local labor supply with a lag, and it raises the odds that the CSRA's recent hiring momentum cools in 2027. That is the main reason this report treats current tightness as a reading, not a promise.

> **WHAT THE NUMBERS MEAN FOR HIRING**
> With about 11,200 people unemployed in the metro, the pool is real but finite, and many of those job seekers are not a match for the roles employers are posting. The practical constraint is not headcount but fit: the right skills, the right shift, the right reliability. Sections 7 and 8 take up fit.

BLS reports 11.2 thousand unemployed in the metro for September 2026, not seasonally adjusted (preliminary). Multiplying the rate by the seasonally adjusted labor force gives about 11,300; the published count is used here.

# 4. Why the CSRA is growing, and how much

Augusta's growth has a recognizable shape: a federal cyber and defense anchor, a medical and education core, an energy and nuclear base, and a new wave of industrial investment that is finally reaching Burke and Richmond counties.

## The national spotlight

In July 2026 LinkedIn named Augusta the number one city on its list of 25 "Cities on the Rise," measuring year-over-year changes in people moving to a metro for work, hiring activity and job postings. LinkedIn's profile of Augusta listed hospitals and health care, higher education and power generation as the top hiring industries, and Savannah River Nuclear Solutions, the U.S. Army and Augusta University as the top employers. It reported that about 26.5% of local roles are remote and 3.5% hybrid, a median household income near $55,485, and an average listing price near $396,195. LinkedIn has not released its raw numbers, so we treat the ranking as a signal of momentum rather than a measurement.

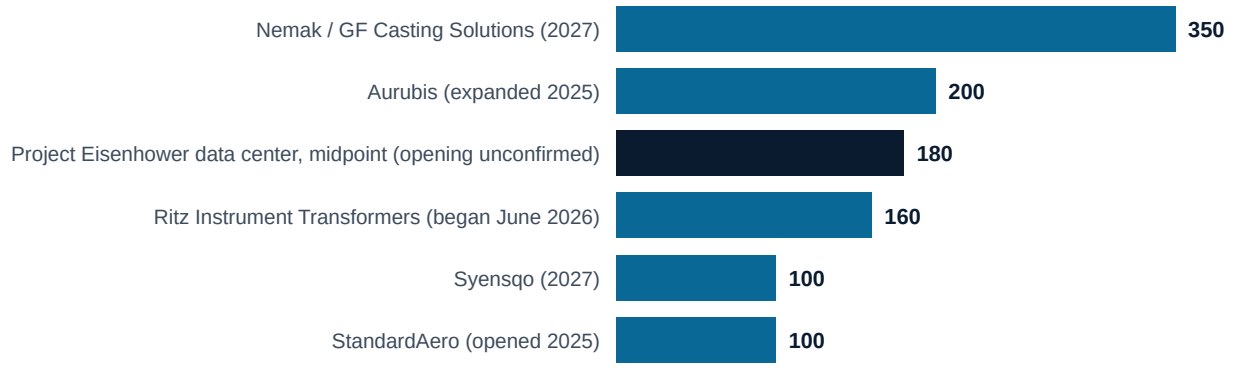
## The anchor: Fort Gordon

*A note on the name.* The Army renamed the installation Fort Eisenhower in 2023 and restored the name Fort Gordon in June 2025. Local and Army sources in 2026 use Fort Gordon, which this report follows, but some federal documents and databases still say Fort Eisenhower, so searches for either name should be run in both.

Fort Gordon and the U.S. Army Cyber Center of Excellence are the region's largest employer, with about 31,900 people by the Fort Gordon Alliance's count and an estimated annual economic impact above $7.5 billion, supporting more than 63,000 community jobs under a standard two-to-one multiplier. The NSA Georgia Cryptologic Center employs at least 4,300. A multiyear $1.6 billion construction program for the Cyber Center of Excellence is projected to finish in 2028, which keeps construction trades, engineering and electrical work busy through the window of this report. The Fort Gordon Alliance does not date its workforce figure, and the Selig Center describes the same number as military and civilian employees, so treat it as approximate.

## The new industrial wave

### Announced direct jobs by project




Sources: Georgia Trend, Selig Center (September 30, 2026). Several figures are stated as minimums (\u201cover 200,\u201d \u201cmore than 160\u201d). The data-center bar shows the midpoint of a 160 to 200 range and is a proposal, not a commitment.

Aurubis, which runs the first copper smelting and multi-metal recycling facility in the United States, expanded in 2025 to a total investment of $800 million and more than 200 jobs. GF Casting Solutions, now part of Nemak, is investing over $184 million for 350 jobs at full operation in 2027. Ritz Instrument Transformers, a German maker of high-voltage instrument transformers, began operating in June 2026 at a Burke County industrial park and will support more than 160 jobs. Syensqo is building a plant expected to be fully operational in 2027 with about 100 high-skill jobs. StandardAero's engine overhaul expansion at Augusta Regional Airport opened in 2025 with about 100 jobs, and OXERRA finished a regional distribution center in 2026. Project Eisenhower, a $2 billion data center on Gordon Highway in west Augusta (originally T5@Augusta, now developed by Eagle South, with plans prepared for QTS Data Centers), is put at 2.15 million square feet by one December 2025 report and at more than 1.4 million by another, and is expected to create 160 to 200 long-term jobs. Its state filing projected completion in the second quarter of 2026; we found no report that it has opened.

Add the five committed industrial projects and you reach about 910 jobs; including the data center, 1,070 to 1,110. Plant Vogtle in Waynesboro, with about 1,700 employees since Unit 4 opened in 2024, and Piedmont Healthcare's expected $1 billion in capital investment by 2032 round out the base. Against a labor force of 281,932, the industrial wave equals about 0.4%. It is large for the specific trades, process operators, technicians and engineers the projects need, and small for the market as a whole.

## Demographic and housing facts that shape hiring

About 18% of the metro's residents are 65 or older, which sustains demand for health care and signals a wave of retirements in the trades. Foreign-born residents are 3.8% of the population

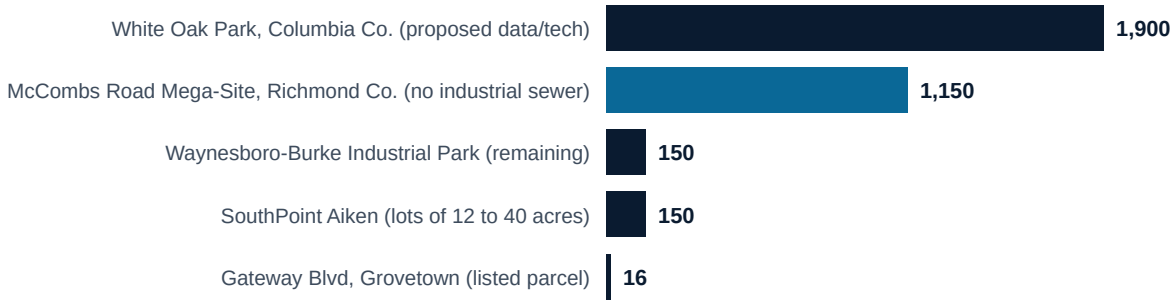
against 14.1% nationally, so the region has less of the immigrant labor that fills production and construction roles elsewhere, and relies more on domestic recruitment. Home prices in early 2026 stood 72% above their pre-pandemic peak and rose 4% over the year, which is still affordable by national standards but is no longer a free recruiting advantage. Source: Georgia Trend, Selig Center.

# 5. Land, buildings and sites

A company deciding where to build asks three questions in order: is there a site that can be built on in time, is there a building it can occupy sooner, and what will the power, water and sewer cost and when will they arrive. This section answers what can be verified from public sources today and says plainly where the public record stops.

## The large sites

**Acres at the CSRA's largest named industrial and technology sites**




Sources: The Augusta Press and Yahoo News (McCombs Road); The Augusta Press, April 21, 2025 (White Oak Park); WRDW, June 19, 2025 (Burke); Hollingsworth Companies (SouthPoint); Avison Young (Gateway Blvd). The White Oak figure is a rezoning request, not completed development.

| SITE | ACRES | WHAT IS VERIFIED | WHAT IS MISSING |
|---|---|---|---|
| McCombs Road Mega-Site, South Augusta (Richmond Co.) | 1,150 | Developed by the Augusta Economic Development Authority since 2021. Goal: a single employer investing $1 billion or more. Missing utility is industrial sewer: a new pump station, gravity sewer and a trunk main along Little Spirit Creek to the Spirit Creek Pump Station. Cost $25 million, requested from the penny sales tax; about four years to build. The authority projects more than $500 million a year in economic impact and $82 million in property taxes over 25 years. | Sewer capacity, zoning, ownership, rail and highway access are not stated in public material. Whether voters or commissioners approved the funding is not confirmed. |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| White Oak Park, Appling (Columbia Co.), I-20 and Morris Callaway Road | 1,900+ | The Development Authority of Columbia County requested rezoning from residential-agricultural to a special district for a phased technology park: more than 25 single-story data buildings, four substations of 7 to 12 acres each. Trade press reported an 8-million-square-foot concept and The Augusta Press reported Google as the end user of a data center in Appling. | Outcome of the rezoning and the build schedule are not confirmed here. Not a general-purpose manufacturing site. |
| Waynesboro-Burke Industrial Park, off U.S. 25 (Burke Co.) | 150 remaining | Received a $35,278 state grant in June 2025 toward Georgia Ready for Accelerated Development (GRAD) certification, funding surveys, wetland, geotechnical, environmental, cultural-resource and endangered-species studies. | Certification not confirmed. Georgia's 2026 certification announcement named no Augusta-area site. |
| SouthPoint Aiken (Hollingsworth Companies), Aiken, SC | 150+ | Lots of 12 to 40 acres with direct I-20 access; two Class A buildings complete and available; nine single-tenant buildings planned; more than 1.6 million square feet planned in total. | Building sizes, rents and delivery dates are not published on the project page. |

## Smaller parcels and buildings seen on the market

Listings are asking prices and availability can change daily, so treat these as evidence of what exists, not what is available today. A 15.79-acre industrial parcel on Gateway Boulevard in Grovetown, near I-20, is listed by Avison Young at $2,590,500, or about $164,000 an acre. A 100,000-square-foot build-to-suit industrial opportunity (Georgialina Gateway Industrial Park) and an 18.28-acre heavy-industrial-zoned tract are advertised in Augusta. Brokers also advertise warehouse and flex space from roughly 11,000 to 55,000 square feet in Augusta and a 66,000-square-foot pad in Aiken. The Augusta Economic Development Authority names Augusta Corporate Park as a location where it will fund on-site utilities, soil borings and grading, but publishes no acreage.

## Market rents and vacancy

| SOURCE | INDUSTRIAL VACANCY | INDUSTRIAL ASKING RENT | NOTES |
|---|---|---|---|
| Meybohm Commercial, mid-year report (Aug 23, 2026) | not reported | about $7.92/SF | Describes rents as well below comparable Georgia markets and rising. Basis (NNN or gross) not stated. |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| TenantBase, Q2 2026 | about 6.2% | $6.40 to $6.70/SF NNN | Rent growth 4.0% year over year. The publisher states the report was synthesized from third-party sources and AI tools, so we treat it as indicative. |

The two sources disagree on rent and neither states a total inventory or a verified square footage under construction. We therefore do not state a metro vacancy rate or inventory in this edition. Both describe a balanced market with rents rising, and TenantBase notes occupiers expanding into second-generation space and selective completions in the Aiken corridor. Other property types, per Meybohm: office vacancy about 6.5% on roughly 15 million square feet, with 1.1 million square feet available and Class A asking about $30; retail vacancy about 3.9%, with roughly 270,000 square feet of positive absorption and 260,000 square feet delivered.

> **WHAT A SITE SELECTOR MUST VERIFY BEFORE RELYING ON ANY SITE ABOVE**
>
> 1. Zoning and entitlement status, and whether the site is certified under Georgia's GRAD program or South Carolina's equivalent.
> 2. Utility capacity and delivery date: electric service and substation, industrial water and sewer, natural gas line size, and fiber.
> 3. Phase I environmental status, wetlands and floodplain.
> 4. Rail service and a written highway-access plan.
> 5. Ownership, price and whether incentives attach to the site.

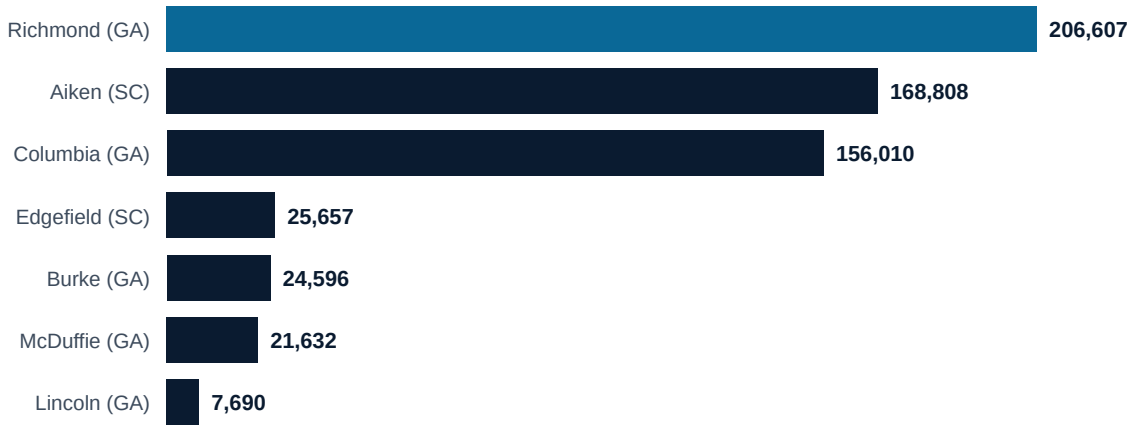
The authority's property search portal (augustaga.giswebtechguru.com) is the system of record for Richmond County sites and buildings. Columbia, Burke, McDuffie, Lincoln, Aiken and Edgefield counties each publish through their own development offices. Edition 2 will assemble a single parcel and building inventory from those sources.

# 6. The business case: employers, cost, incentives and infrastructure

The CSRA pairs a federal and medical employment base with a low-cost, incentive-rich environment. Most of the headline numbers below come from the state and the Augusta Economic Development Authority, so read them as the official case and verify terms in a written proposal.

## Population and income

**2020 Census population by county, Augusta-Richmond County metro**




Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2020 counts as compiled by Wikipedia. The 2023 metro estimate is 629,429.

The seven counties held about 611,000 people in 2020. Median household income in the metro was $64,851 and per-capita income $34,401 (2022 estimates); about 15% of residents lived at or below the poverty line, and 40% of households earned under $50,000. The population is 52% White, 34% Black, 6% Hispanic or Latino and 2% Asian. Those income levels mean the region is a cost-of-labor advantage for employers, and a purchasing-power constraint for consumer-facing ones.

## Who employs the region

| EMPLOYER | SECTOR | EMPLOYEES |
|---|---|---|
| U.S. Army Cyber Center of Excellence and Fort Gordon | Military and civilian | 29,252 |
| Augusta University | Education | 6,775 |
| NSA Augusta | Government | 6,000 |
| Augusta University Hospitals | Health care | 5,341 |
| Richmond County School System | Education | 4,398 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| University Hospital | Health care | 3,000 |
| Augusta-Richmond County | Municipal government | 2,840 |
| VA Medical Centers | Health care | 2,082 |
| Doctors Hospital | Health care | 1,837 |
| Automatic Data Processing | Customer service | 1,542 |
| EZGO Textron | Golf cars and utility vehicles | 1,350 |
| Graphic Packaging | Paperboard | 963 |
| Ferrara USA | Cookies and crackers | 900 |
| FPL Food | Beef products | 660 |

Source: Augusta Economic Development Authority employer lists. The page does not state the year of the counts (its footer reads 2021, last modified March 2026), so use them for ranking, not as current headcount. The Authority's Fort Gordon figure (29,252) differs from the Fort Gordon Alliance's 31,874 cited in Section 4; the sources count different groups. Other manufacturers on the list include Morgan Thermal Ceramics (400), Cardinal Health (390), Nutrien (390), Augusta Coca-Cola (300), Solvay Advanced Polymers (300), Starbucks (260), Carole Fabrics (250), Standard Textile (190), Manus Bio (185) and StandardAero (154). Nine of the 34 listed manufacturers are headquartered in Augusta.

## The Savannah River Site

The Department of Energy's Savannah River Site, across the river in South Carolina, is the other great anchor. Its headcount report for the second quarter of fiscal 2025 (data as of March 31, 2025) counted 13,510 workers: Savannah River Nuclear Solutions 6,969, Savannah River Mission Completion 3,735, Savannah River National Laboratory 1,390, Centerra-SRS 721, the Savannah River Ecology Laboratory 94, Ameresco 32, and 569 federal employees. Contractor headcount at that scale makes the site, together with Fort Gordon, a deep source of technical, nuclear and security talent and a source of subcontract demand. It also ties local fortunes to federal budgets and contract awards.

## Taxes and state incentives (Georgia)

- **Corporate income tax:** 4.99% for 2026, with single-factor apportionment.
- **Property:** no state property tax on real or personal property or inventory; counties levy their own.
- **Sales and use tax:** manufacturing machinery, repair parts, molds, dies, tooling, raw materials, packaging and supplies are exempt, and so is energy essential to manufacturing (4% state rate plus 1% to 3% local). Distribution-center handling and storage equipment may qualify with an investment of at least $5 million.

- **Job credits:** Quality Jobs tax credits apply to new jobs paying 110% or more of the county average wage. Georgia ranks counties into tiers each year for the Job Tax Credit, and the 2026 ranking was delayed by 90 days; confirm the current tier for the specific county.
- **Freeport:** most counties exempt manufacturers' inventory held 12 months or less from local property tax, on annual application.

## Augusta-Richmond County local package

| INCENTIVE | TERMS PUBLISHED BY THE AUGUSTA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY |
|---|---|
| Local job credit | $4,000 per new job, claimed each year for five years |
| Industrial revenue bond abatement | Typically about 50% of ad valorem taxes for the life of the bonds, up to 20 years; company may lease the property for a nominal $10 a year while amortizing the bonds |
| Freeport exemption | 100% exemption for raw materials and goods in process, finished goods made in Georgia within 12 months, and goods stored for out-of-state shipment; application due April 1 |
| Site preparation | Funds for on-site utilities, soil borings and grading at Augusta Corporate Park |
| Other | Access roads and infrastructure scoped per project, negotiated utility rate reductions, concierge permitting or reduced fees, and Amendment 74 tax assistance for manufacturing |

The authority also acts as bonding agency for revenue bonds on industrial, hospitality, educational, medical and technology investments. South Carolina incentives for the Aiken and Edgefield side of the metro (job development credits, county fee-in-lieu arrangements and others) are not summarized here because we could not verify current terms; Edition 2 will add them.

## Utilities

- **Electric:** Georgia Power serves most of the region (2.35 million customers statewide); Jefferson Energy Cooperative and Planters EMC serve rural parts, including Burke and Richmond counties. The authority says rates are well below the national average but publishes no tariff figures.
- **Natural gas:** Atlanta Gas Light delivers gas; most industrial supply lines in the Augusta area are 4 inches in diameter, which matters for large process loads.
- **Water and sewer:** Augusta Utilities serves Augusta and Richmond County with industrial water lines up to 20 inches and 38 million gallons a day of capacity. Industrial sewer is the binding constraint at the largest site, as described in Section 5.
- **Fiber:** multiple providers serve the region; speeds and routes are not published.

## Moving people and goods

Augusta sits about two hours by road from Atlanta, Charleston, Savannah and Charlotte, on I-20 with access to the I-520 loop. Augusta Regional Airport has an 8,001-foot primary runway and a 6,002-foot crosswind runway. American Eagle flies to Charlotte, Dallas/Fort Worth and Washington National, and Delta to Atlanta; the airport handled 586,558 passengers in 2023, and weekly passenger traffic rises about 60% in Masters week each April. The airport is self-funded, hosts aircraft service and repair operations and has hosted Fort Gordon widebody charters. Public material does not report cargo volumes. The Georgia Ports Authority operates inland rail hubs elsewhere in the state and a past study examined Augusta as a possible inland port, but we found no operating inland terminal in the CSRA. Rail service by site (CSX, Norfolk Southern or short line) must be confirmed parcel by parcel.

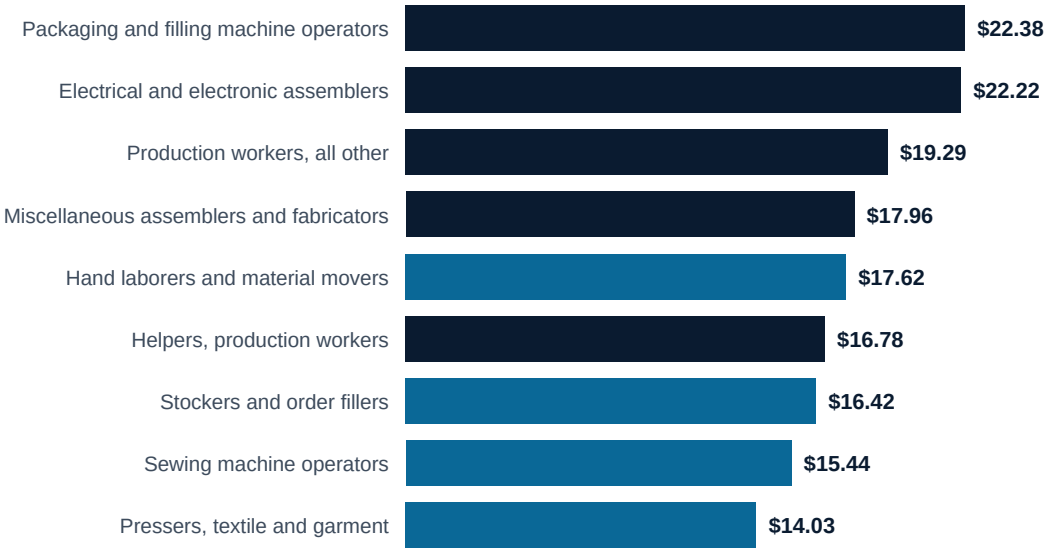
> **THE AUTHOR'S READ: WHERE THE CSRA IS STRONG AND WHERE IT IS THIN**
>
> **Strong:** a deep technical and cleared workforce from Fort Gordon, NSA and the Savannah River Site; low wages relative to the nation; a 4.99% state corporate rate; an authority with a documented local package; very large land parcels; a metro hospital and university base.
> **Thin:** certified shovel-ready sites; published industrial sewer capacity at the megasite; a public consolidated building inventory; cargo air service; and any metro inland port.
> Employers needing speed should look first at the two completed SouthPoint buildings and second-generation space; employers needing scale should treat the megasite as a four-year proposition unless the sewer funding is already secured.

# 7. What the work pays

Pay in the CSRA runs below the national level for most jobs and above it in production, which is where the competition for labor is fiercest.

| MEASURE (BLS OEWS, MAY 2025) | AUGUSTA METRO | UNITED STATES | GAP |
|---|---|---|---|
| All occupations, mean hourly wage | $28.85 | $33.54 | −14.0% |
| Production occupations, mean hourly wage | $25.35 | $24.81 | +2.2% |
| Transportation and material moving, mean | $20.19 | $23.96 | −15.7% |
| Office and administrative support, mean | $21.98 | $24.79 | −11.3% |
| Sewing machine operators, median | $15.44 | $17.63 | −12.4% |
| Hand laborers and material movers, median | $17.62 | $19.35 | −8.9% |

**Median hourly wage, selected Augusta metro jobs, May 2025**




Source: BLS Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics, Augusta-Richmond County, GA-SC. Blue bars are the textile and warehouse roles most often requested by local employers.

Two features of that chart matter for any employer. First, the competition for entry-level factory and warehouse labor is not other warehouses; it is assembly and machine-operation jobs that start in the high teens and reach $22. A material handler paid $17.62 and a stocker paid $16.42 can find a $17.96 assembler job or a $22.38 packaging-machine job within the same labor shed. Second, the textile trades pay the least on the page, with sewing operators at $15.44 and pressers at $14.03, and the metro employs only about 160 sewing machine operators in total. That is a small, specialized market, and employers who need those skills cannot expect to recruit them from the open labor pool; they must train or relocate.

Cost of living partly offsets the pay gap. BLS regional price parities put the Augusta metro at about 91.9 against 100 for the nation in 2024, roughly eight percent cheaper, though the housing price run-up noted in Section 4 is eroding that margin.

Source: BLS Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics, May 2025; BEA regional price parities, 2024. Wage figures include base and incentive pay and exclude overtime premiums and benefits. BLS does not publish every occupation for every metro area, so we show only published values.

# 8. The talent pipeline: who graduates, who doesn't, and what employers need

The CSRA has two strong educational engines and one persistent weakness. Output is rising. Completion is not keeping pace.

## High school graduation

**Four-year high school graduation rate, CSRA districts and Georgia**




Sources: Georgia Department of Education rates as reported by WRDW (September 28 and 30, 2026) and The Augusta Press (class of 2025). Burke, Lincoln and Aiken County districts were not reported in these sources.

| DISTRICT | RATE | CLASS | CONTEXT |
|---|---|---|---|
| Richmond County | 84.2% | 2026 | Record; 81.7% in 2025 and 71.66% in 2022; 4.3 points below the state |
| Columbia County | 92.96% | 2025 | Nearly six points above the 87.2% state rate that year |
| McDuffie County | 95.9% | 2026 | All-time high; more than seven points above the state |
| Georgia | 88.5% | 2026 | All-time high |

Richmond County's gain of about 12.5 points since 2022 is the largest improvement in the region and is a genuine pipeline story: roughly one more student in eight now finishes on time. By school in 2026, Hephzibah graduated 87.55%, George P. Butler 83.25%, Lucy C. Laney 81.32% and T.W. Josey 75.88%, while three magnet schools (A.R. Johnson Health Science and Engineering, John S. Davidson Fine Arts and the Richmond County Technical Career Magnet) reported 100%. Attendance remains a leading indicator of the next cohort: about 40% of Josey students were chronically absent, an improvement from more than half the year before.

The gap between a 92.96% rate in Columbia County and 84.2% in Richmond County is the same gap that appears later in income, poverty and employer access to skilled labor, and it is why

employer programs that start in high school, such as dual enrollment and career pathways, pay off most in the lower-rate districts.

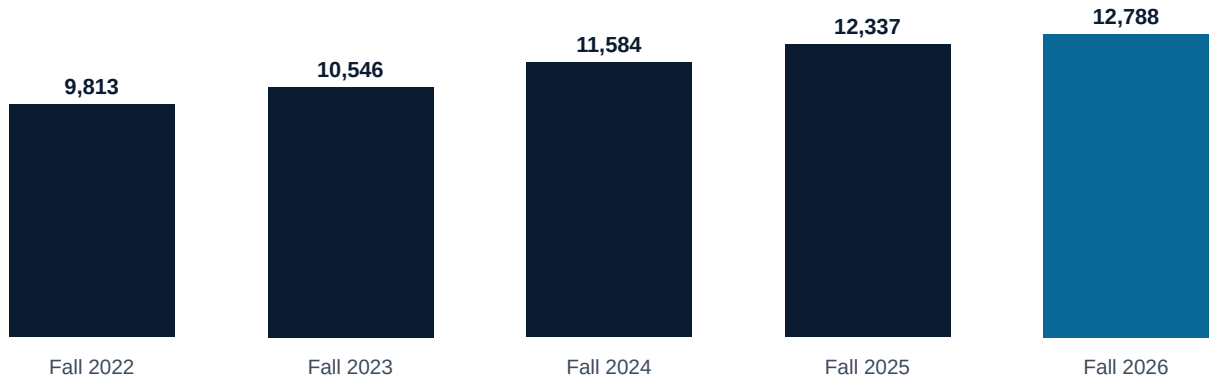
## Educational attainment of adults

Of the roughly 420,000 residents age 25 and older in the metro, 43% have a high school diploma or less, 21% have some college, 9% an associate degree, 16% a bachelor's degree and 10% a graduate degree. That puts the share with a bachelor's degree or higher near 26%, and the bachelor's-only share of 16.4% is about 3.7 points below the national figure. The associate-degree share, at 9.3%, is 0.7 points above the national figure, which fits the technical colleges' role. Source: Augusta Economic Development Authority, from Census data (year not stated); shares computed by the author.

## Augusta University

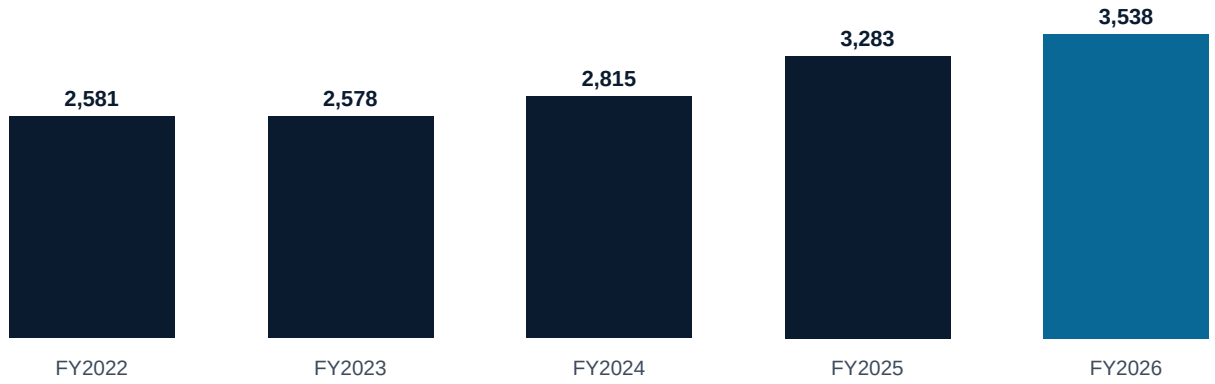
| FALL 2026 ENROLLMENT | DEGREES, FISCAL 2026 | FIRST-YEAR RETENTION | SIX-YEAR GRADUATION |
|---|---|---|---|
| **12,788** | **3,538** | **77.7%** | **48.2%** |
| up 30.3% from 9,813 in fall 2022 | up 37.1% from 2,581 in fiscal 2022 | fall 2024 cohort; University System 85.5% | fall 2019 cohort; University System 59.8% |

### Augusta University fall enrollment




Source: Augusta University Institutional Effectiveness fact book.

**Augusta University degrees and certificates conferred**




Source: Augusta University Institutional Effectiveness. Fiscal years run July 1 to June 30.

Augusta University has grown faster than almost anyone expected. It conferred 1,049 bachelor's degrees, 1,075 master's degrees, 444 education specialist degrees, 407 professional doctorates, 326 advanced certificates and 146 research doctorates in fiscal 2026. Master's degrees have doubled since fiscal 2020. The University System of Georgia as a whole awarded a record 86,660 degrees in fiscal 2026, and a Selig Center analysis estimates Augusta University's presence supports about $1.78 billion in output and 12,325 jobs across the region.

The enrollment mix shows where the pipeline points. Fall 2026 counts include 2,547 students in arts, humanities and social sciences, 2,450 in education, 1,448 in science and mathematics, 1,371 in the Medical College of Georgia, 1,016 in nursing, 919 in allied health, 848 in computer and cyber science, 686 in business, 536 in dentistry and 252 in public health. Health professions together (medicine, nursing, allied health, dentistry and public health) account for 4,094 students, which matches the metro's top hiring industry, health care. Cyber science, at 848, is small next to the federal cyber workforce next door.

The weakness is completion. Only 48.2% of the fall 2019 first-time cohort finished a bachelor's degree within six years, against 59.8% across the system, and first-year retention of 77.7% trails the system's 85.5%. The university lists higher targets for the fall 2025 and 2026 cohorts, but those are institutional goals, not results. Each student who leaves without a degree is a loss to the region's skilled labor supply and, often, a student loan without the earnings to repay it.

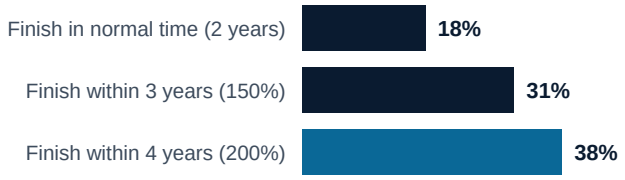
## The technical colleges

| 2024 (FEDERAL DATA VIA DATAUSA) | AUGUSTA TECHNICAL COLLEGE | AIKEN TECHNICAL COLLEGE |
|---|---|---|
| Enrollment | 4,455 | 2,307 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Graduation rate | 31.1% | 33.5% |
| Awards, all levels | 1,573 | 492 |
| Largest completion areas | Mechanical technologies 180; precision production 154; construction 131; welding certificates 42; cosmetology 34; electrician 27 | Health 212; associate in liberal arts 82; registered nursing 57; practical nursing 18 |

Augusta Tech reported fall 2025 enrollment of “nearly” or “over” 5,000 in its own announcement, which uses both phrasings. Undergraduate tuition at Augusta Tech was $3,210.

**Share of Augusta Technical College students who complete, by time allowed**




Source: federal completion data via DataUSA, 2024. Percentages are the share of an entering cohort who complete within 100%, 150% and 200% of normal program time.

The technical colleges train the people the new factories need. They also lose most of them. At Augusta Tech, only 18% of an entering cohort finishes in the normal time and 38% finishes even with twice as long. Many students enter for a single credential, such as a welding certificate, and leave once they are employable, so the headline rate overstates the problem for short programs. Even so, the gap between students who enroll and employers' ability to count on completers is the largest single leak in the regional pipeline.

## Setting local demand against local output

| DEMAND SIGNAL | SCALE | LOCAL SUPPLY SIGNAL | SCALE |
|---|---|---|---|
| Announced industrial jobs (Aurubis, Nemak, Ritz, Syensqo, StandardAero) | about 910 | Augusta Tech completions in mechanical technologies, precision production and construction (2024) | 465 |
| Health care, top hiring industry (LinkedIn) | n/a | Augusta University health-profession students enrolled (fall 2026) | 4,094 |
| Federal cyber workforce (NSA Georgia at least 4,300; Cyber Center of Excellence) | 4,300+ | Augusta University computer and cyber science students (fall 2026) | 848 |
| Skilled trades shortage (more retiring than entering, per Construction Ready) | n/a | Augusta Tech electrician and welding certificates (2024) | 69 |

This table compares scale, not need. New plants hire from outside the region and from other employers, and graduates leave the region too. But the comparison shows where the system is thin. Industrial and skilled-trades hiring is large next to the trades-credential output of the area's biggest technical college, while health care is the opposite: abundant students and a persistent demand for licensed and support workers. Cyber demand is dominated by federal and contractor employers with their own clearance, experience and certification requirements, which a four-year program alone does not meet. A Technical College System of Georgia and Augusta University agreement on cybersecurity transfer pathways is one response.

**Skills.** A workable skills inventory for the region would map federal occupational skill profiles (the O*NET database) to the occupations above and to program completions. We have not completed that mapping for this edition; Section 36 explains the plan. The directional read is consistent across sources: the shortages are in skilled trades, process and technician roles, licensed health workers, and cleared or certified cyber talent, while entry-level service and general labor are in comparatively ample supply.

# 9. Internships, apprenticeships and work-based learning

The pathway from school to job is the least measured part of the regional economy. Programs exist. Counts do not.

We looked for any public dataset that counts internships, co-ops or work-based learning in the CSRA and found none. The National Association of Colleges and Employers surveys employers nationally but does not publish metro data, student career-center data is not released in aggregate, and the federal apprenticeship database reports by state and occupation rather than by metro area. What follows is therefore a set of verified program facts, not a count.

## What exists

- **Construction Ready and the Home Builders Institute** run a free eight-week pre-apprenticeship at Augusta Technical College. The sponsors report more than 2,000 workers trained since 2014 across Georgia, Alabama and Florida, 97% placed in jobs by the end of training and 70% still with the same company a year later, at average starting pay of $13 to $19 an hour. A hiring fair and graduation were scheduled for September 8 and 9, 2026. The sponsors attribute the program to a trades labor gap in which more Georgians retire from the trades than enter them. (WRDW, August 19, 2026.)
- **Augusta University** launched its first Jags On-Campus Internship Program, run by its internships and campus partnerships office, and offers a career fair, a pre-screening and on-campus interview service for employers, mentorship and research partnerships. The university does not publish participation counts or pay.
- **Federal military-transition and apprenticeship channels** exist around Fort Gordon, including a Department of Defense SkillBridge page at Augusta University and previously announced registered cyber apprenticeship partnerships with Augusta Tech. We could not verify current enrollment in either.

## Why it matters

The one program with outcome data, Construction Ready, shows what measuring does: a 97% placement rate and 70% one-year retention are exactly the numbers an employer needs to decide whether to hire from a pathway. Every other program is an unknown. Employers cannot compare pathways, colleges cannot show results, and policymakers cannot tell whether the region is producing enough early-career talent for the 910-plus industrial jobs coming online.

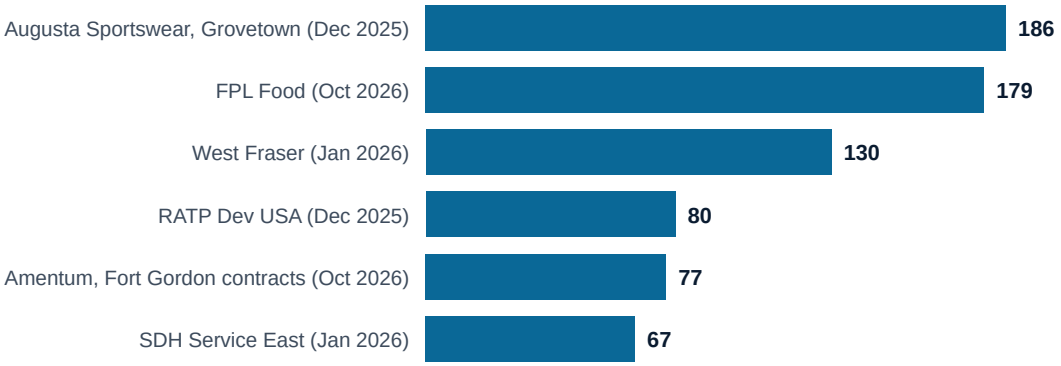
**A PROPOSAL FOR EDITION 2**

The author will invite the area's colleges, the Augusta Economic Development Authority and willing employers to report four numbers each year using a shared definition: internships offered, internships filled, share converted to a job offer, and share still employed after twelve months. Participation is voluntary, only aggregate figures will be published, and no individual student or employer will be identified without consent.

# 10. Disruption and exposure

Growth announcements make headlines. Layoff notices make fewer, and employers should read both.

**Recent layoff notices, Augusta area (workers affected)**




Sources: public WARN notices compiled by WARNTracker; WRDW (September 15, 2026) for Amentum. A verified sample of six notices totaling 719 workers, not an exhaustive list. Months show the layoff date.

Six notices since October 2025 account for 719 workers. Augusta Sportswear's Grovetown operation notified 186 workers in October 2025 with layoffs on December 19. RATP Dev USA, a transit contractor, notified 80 with layoffs on December 31. West Fraser's Doug Barnard Parkway operation notified 130 workers in November with layoffs on January 5, 2026, and SDH Service East notified 67 with layoffs on January 31. FPL Food notified 179 workers on August 31, 2026, with layoffs on October 31, and its filings total 364 workers across two notices. Amentum, a defense contractor, announced a permanent reduction of 77 jobs tied to Fort Gordon intelligence contract transitions, including 27 guards, 22 computer operators and 17 alarm monitors, with first separations on October 31.

Two patterns stand out. The manufacturing and food-processing layoffs are the type of work that feeds directly into the roles the new plants will hire for, which means a pool of experienced, available workers exists now and the new plants may draw on it. And the federal-contract cuts are a reminder that Fort Gordon's economic weight comes with contract risk: when a mission transitions to a different contractor, the jobs move even if the base does not shrink.

## Other exposure worth watching

- **Concentration.** One installation and a handful of large employers account for a large share of regional payroll.
- **An aging workforce.** With 18% of residents 65 or older and trades retiring faster than they are replaced, the loss of tacit skill will outrun formal training.

- **A weakening national market.** September's national payroll growth of 29,000 is a reminder that local momentum can cool quickly.
- **Federal funding cycles.** A lapse in federal appropriations cost the metro an unemployment reading in October 2025. Longer or repeated lapses would affect contract-dependent employers directly.

# 11. The cost of risk: workers' compensation and liability

Insurance costs for employers eased in 2026 even as the legal rules about liability changed. Both matter for the true cost of a job.

## Workers' compensation in Georgia

The National Council on Compensation Insurance's filing reduced Georgia workers' compensation loss costs by 8.8% effective March 1, 2026, and cut assigned-risk market rates by 9.3%, according to a law-firm summary that attributes the decline to lower claim frequency and severity in policy years 2022 and 2023. Benefits for injured workers did not change as a result: temporary total disability remains capped at $800 per week and temporary partial disability at $533 per week under House Bill 480, which took effect in July 2023. We could not retrieve the filing itself, so this figure rests on one secondary source and should be confirmed with a broker or the Georgia State Board of Workers' Compensation before it is used in a budget.

Loss costs are not the premium an employer pays. Carriers apply their own multipliers, class codes and each employer's experience modification, so two employers in the same industry can see very different results. The practical lesson is that safety performance is the one input an employer controls: a lower experience modification applies a credit to every dollar of payroll in the same class.

## Injury rates as the benchmark

The standard public benchmark for workplace safety is the BLS Survey of Occupational Injuries and Illnesses, which publishes the number of recordable cases per 100 full-time workers by industry and, for many states, by state. Employers compare their own rate with the industry rate, and underwriters do the same. The report builder behind this edition pulls that benchmark for any industry and lets a client compare its own loss runs against it. General liability has no equivalent public benchmark, so client-level claim figures are shown alone.

## Liability law changed in 2025

Georgia's 2025 tort reform package, Senate Bills 68 and 69, signed in April 2025, changed several rules that shape general liability claims against businesses. The negligent-security provisions narrow when a property owner or security contractor can be liable for a third party's wrongful act, generally requiring knowledge of prior wrongful conduct on or within 500 yards of the property, and create a presumption that most of the fault belongs to the third party. Restrictions on “anchoring” limit how plaintiffs' lawyers argue dollar values for noneconomic damages. Defendants may present evidence of the amounts providers actually accept for medical care, not only the amounts billed, and arrangements in which providers treat patients in exchange for a share of

recovery may be discoverable. Seat-belt use is admissible on fault. Recovery of attorney's fees is limited to prevent duplicate recovery, and litigation financiers must register with the Georgia Department of Banking and Finance beginning January 1, 2026. Most provisions apply to pending cases, while negligent security, medical-expense evidence, seat-belt evidence and financing discovery apply to claims arising on or after April 21, 2025.

> **WHAT TO ASK YOUR BROKER**
> Ask how the 2026 loss cost change reached your premium, whether your experience modification reflects your most recent clean years, whether your general liability pricing reflects the 2025 tort changes, and whether your loss runs show open claims that could be closed or reserves that could be reviewed.

Sources: workers' compensation figures from a March 2026 law-firm summary of the NCCI filing; tort reform from Jones Day, Georgia Enacts Major Tort Reform Legislation (April 2025). This is not insurance or legal advice.

# 12. Law, courts and enforcement

The rules about who counts as an employer, who must be verified and what a business owes its workers are changing at the federal and state levels at once.

### Federal changes that matter to staffing and contractor arrangements

The National Labor Relations Board published a final joint-employer rule on February 27, 2026, under which an entity is a joint employer only if it exercises substantial, direct and immediate control over essential terms of another employer's workers, such as wages, hours, hiring, discharge and supervision. Reserved or indirect control does not qualify. The rule returns largely to the 2020 standard and, by narrowing joint-employer exposure, lowers the risk to businesses that use staffing agencies or subcontractors.

The Department of Labor moved in the opposite direction on some points. On February 26, 2026, its Wage and Hour Division proposed to rescind the 2024 independent-contractor rule and return to a test that weights control over the work and the worker's opportunity for profit or loss. On April 22, 2026, it proposed a joint-employer rule under the Fair Labor Standards Act using four factors for staffing-type arrangements: whether the putative joint employer hires or fires the worker, supervises and controls schedule or conditions to a substantial degree, sets the pay rate and method, and keeps employment records. Comments closed June 22, 2026. We could not confirm whether either proposal has since become final, so employers should check current status. Federal rules also do not bind courts or override stricter state tests.

### Georgia

Laws effective July 1, 2026 relevant to employers include the Voluntary Portable Benefits Act (House Bill 987), which lets independent contractors receive voluntary contributions for health insurance, paid time off and retirement without jeopardizing contractor status; House Bill 1097, which requires criminal and registry background checks for caregivers and staff at facilities serving children, older adults and people with disabilities; Senate Bill 570, which requires human-trafficking awareness training for hotel, inn and short-term rental employees; and House Bill 1470, which adds remedies meant to deter abusive website-accessibility lawsuits. Georgia's 2022 amendment to its unemployment law (House Bill 389) sets a stricter test for treating workers as independent contractors for unemployment insurance purposes and can be applied beyond that statute.

### South Carolina

House Bill 4797, pending in the House Labor, Commerce and Industry Committee since January 2026, would amend the state's new-employee verification law so that private employers who must complete federal I-9 forms verify work authorization within three business days through E-Verify, the federal SAVE program or another program the South Carolina Department of Employment and

Workforce approves as comparable. Noncompliance continues to put an employer's licenses at risk. The bill had not passed as of its last status page we could confirm.

## Immigration enforcement and verification

In September 2025 federal agents arrested 475 people at a Hyundai battery plant construction site in Ellabell, Georgia, an operation the news coverage described as months in the making. It illustrated that worksite enforcement reaches large projects and their subcontractors, not only small employers. For CSRA employers, the practical points are consistent E-Verify use, clean I-9 files, and clear contractual allocation of compliance duties among general contractors, subcontractors and staffing partners.

## Courts and records: what we could and could not check

The request for this edition included court records. We reviewed public enforcement records, layoff filings and legal developments, but we were not able to search individual court dockets. Federal dockets for the Southern District of Georgia and the state and superior court records of Richmond, Columbia and Aiken counties require registered access or per-page fees and are not searchable through the open sources used here. We therefore make no statement about the volume of employment, wage-and-hour, discrimination or workers' compensation litigation in the CSRA. Edition 2 will add a monitored feed of federal employment dockets through free public docket archives, of Occupational Safety and Health Administration inspections and citations, of Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and Department of Labor enforcement releases, and of National Labor Relations Board filings, all reported in aggregate.

# 13. Hindrances: what is slowing growth

Every growth story has friction. This section names nine hindrances to growth in the CSRA, shows the evidence for each, and states what would ease it. The ranking is the author's judgment; the evidence is cited from the sections above and from the CSRA Regional Commission's economic development strategy.

| # | HINDRANCE | EVIDENCE | WEIGHT | WHAT WOULD EASE IT |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | **Worker supply and low participation** | Estimated participation near 55% against 61.8% nationally; 18.1% of residents are 65 or older; unemployment near 4% leaves a small idle pool. The regional commission's strategy lists a "severe worker shortage that could halt business and industry expansion." | High | Retention of graduates, childcare and transportation access, older-worker and military-spouse programs, in-migration |
| 2 | **Thin degree and credential base** | 43% of adults have a high school diploma or less; bachelor's attainment 16.4%, 3.7 points below the nation; technical college graduation 31% (Augusta) and 33.5% (Aiken); University retention 77.7% and six-year graduation 48.2%. | High | Completion supports, stackable short credentials, employer-paid tuition and apprenticeships |
| 3 | **Wages below the nation** | Average wage for all occupations 14.0% below the U.S.; Richmond County weekly wage is about 80% of Georgia's; per-capita income is below the state average in every regional commission county except Columbia. | Medium | Higher-wage employers entering the market; skill upgrading; retention pay in contested roles |
| 4 | **Site readiness** | No state-certified shovel-ready site identified in the Augusta area; the 1,150-acre megasite lacks industrial sewer ($25 million, about four years); no consolidated public building inventory. | High | Fund the sewer extension, complete GRAD certification, publish a single inventory |
| 5 | **Federal concentration** | Fort Gordon about 29,000 to 32,000 workers, Savannah River Site 13,510, NSA 6,000 or more; a 77-job contractor transition at Fort Gordon; an appropriations lapse removed a data month in October 2025. | Medium | Diversified private employers; contract-transition hiring plans |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6 | **Slow local job growth** | Nonfarm jobs up 0.5% over twelve months; Richmond County employment down 1.2% in the first quarter; construction down 5.2%; government down 0.7%. The regional commission notes goods-producing jobs fell nearly 7% since 2009 and retail nearly 44% since 2000. | Medium | Announced projects reaching hiring; construction pipeline turning into payrolls |
| 7 | **Poverty and school attendance** | About 15% of metro residents are in poverty; Richmond County 25.5% and Burke 20.0% (2020); about 40% of Josey High students chronically absent; Richmond graduation 84.2% against 88.5% statewide. | Medium | Attendance, transportation and mentoring programs; employer-school partnerships |
| 8 | **Housing cost and quality** | Home prices 72% above the pre-pandemic peak; the average apartment rent takes 40% to 51% of gross pay in entry-level roles (Section 14); the regional price advantage (RPP 91.9) is narrowing. | Medium | Workforce housing near job centers; employer housing assistance |
| 9 | **Legal and regulatory uncertainty** | Pending federal joint-employer and contractor rules; changing Georgia and South Carolina verification and liability laws; tort-reform effective dates. | Low to medium | Counsel review of staffing and contractor arrangements; clean I-9 files |

## Structural threats the regional commission names

The CSRA Regional Commission's 2023 strategy (covering fiscal years 2023 to 2028) adds structural threats that sit behind the nine hindrances above: manufacturing decline from changing markets and overseas competition; competition for new businesses from Savannah, Charleston and Memphis; rising incentive packages that favor communities with large offers; projected population loss in 11 of 13 rural counties by 2040; limited highway infrastructure in places, which deters distribution; and local incentives that cannot always offset national and international factors. Its stated strengths include the Atlanta, Savannah and Columbia crossroads, port access, adequate long-term water supply, higher-education capacity and Augusta's international brand. Its data are from 2020 to 2022 and some of its tables could not be read for this edition.

## Not measured, and likely to matter

Childcare availability and cost, public transportation coverage, rural broadband, drug-testing and background-check failure rates, and occupational licensing barriers are widely reported hindrances elsewhere, and employers in the region mention them. No public CSRA data on any of them was found for this edition, so they are not ranked. Edition 2 will invite a short employer survey to measure them. Access to capital and the friction of starting a business are treated in Section 15.

**HOW TO READ THE WEIGHTS**

High means evidence from more than one independent source that the factor limits current hiring or investment decisions. Medium means one strong source or a clear but smaller effect. Low means a risk more than a present constraint. These are judgments, and the author will revisit them each edition as data arrives.

# 14. Housing, rents and the draw and retention of talent

Where a worker can afford to live decides whether the worker comes, and whether the worker stays. The CSRA's housing market is a draw for people who earn professional salaries and a pressure on people who earn entry-level wages, and the two stories have to be told together.

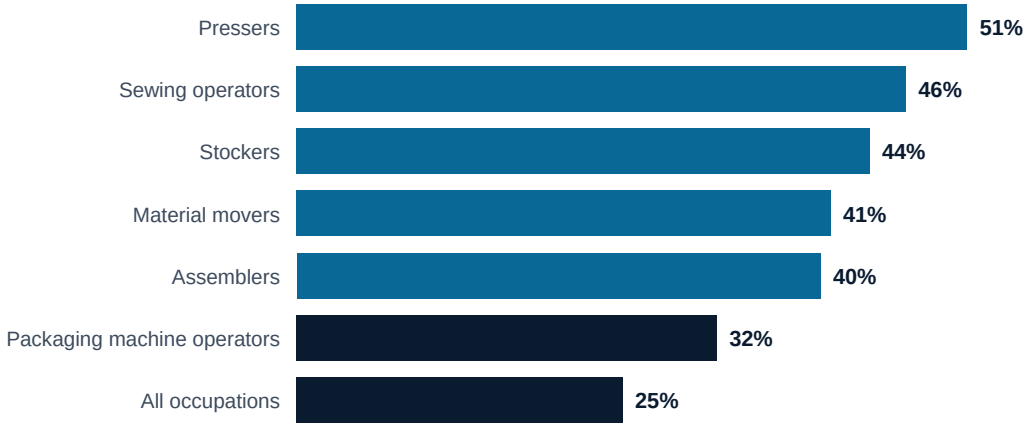
### Residential: what the market looks like

| MEDIAN HOME PRICE | HOMES SOLD | DAYS ON MARKET | AVERAGE APARTMENT RENT |
|---|---|---|---|
| **$215,397** | **517** | **60** | **$1,243** |
| Augusta-Richmond County, September 2026, up 0.2% over the year (Redfin) | down 10.9% over the year | up 30 days over the year; sale-to-list 97.0% | September 2026, up 1.1% over the year (Point2) |

The Richmond County market has cooled to the point where a typical home sits two months and sells slightly under asking; Redfin scores it 42 out of 100 for competitiveness, with Evans in Columbia County at 57 and Aiken at 37. Home prices are flat over twelve months but, per the Selig Center, remain about 72% above their pre-pandemic peak, which is where the strain lives: prices rose fast and wages did not follow. Against the metro's median household income of $64,851 the median home costs 3.3 times annual income, which is moderate by national standards and a real draw for professionals relocating from higher-cost metros. We did not obtain a current published figure for Columbia County, so the numbers above describe Richmond County.

## Rent against wages: the retention gap

### Share of gross monthly pay needed for the average apartment rent ($1,243)




Author's calculation: May 2025 Augusta median or mean hourly wage times 2,080 hours, divided by 12, against the September 2026 average apartment rent. The common affordability threshold is 30% of gross income. Orange bars are roles under $20 an hour.

| ROLE | HOURLY WAGE | GROSS MONTHLY PAY | RENT SHARE |
|---|---|---|---|
| Pressers, textile and garment | $14.03 | $2,432 | 51% |
| Sewing machine operators | $15.44 | $2,676 | 46% |
| Stockers and order fillers | $16.42 | $2,846 | 44% |
| Hand laborers and material movers | $17.62 | $3,054 | 41% |
| Miscellaneous assemblers | $17.96 | $3,113 | 40% |
| Packaging and filling machine operators | $22.38 | $3,879 | 32% |
| All occupations, mean | $28.85 | $5,001 | 25% |

A worker earning the local median in the five roles at the top of that table needs 40% to 51% of gross pay for the average apartment, well over the 30% threshold that housing economists treat as affordable. Paying the 30% standard on $1,243 requires about $49,700 a year, or $23.90 an hour, a wage that few entry-level production or warehouse jobs in the metro pay. A smaller or shared unit costs less, and the average rent covers all unit sizes, so the table overstates the burden for a single worker and understates it for a family. The direction matters more than the decimal: at current pay, an entry-level worker who lives alone is rent-burdened, and one who lives with a child is also paying for care.

Child care compounds it. Georgia families paid an average of $11,066 a year for center-based care and $8,407 for home-based care in 2026, there is a statewide gap of 21% between supply and potential need, and 65% of children five and under live in households where every available parent

works. Child care workers earn a median $13.83 an hour. These are state figures, not CSRA figures, and local measurement is a gap we intend to close, but a shift worker with a toddler faces the problem in every county of the metro.

## Commercial: what the property market says about professional demand

| TYPE | VACANCY | RENT | READING FOR TALENT |
|---|---|---|---|
| Office | 6.5% to 7.0% | about $16 to $22/SF average; Class A about $30 | Low vacancy and little under construction: room for professional employers to locate, with limited new space |
| Retail | 3.9% to 4.5% | about $17/SF | Tight and growing: part-time and service jobs; amenities that attract talent |
| Industrial | about 6.2% (one source) | about $6.40 to $7.92/SF | Balanced; rents below comparable Georgia markets; second-generation space in demand |

Sources: Meybohm Commercial (August 2026) and TenantBase (Q2 2026); see Section 5 for caveats.

Commercial rents in the CSRA are low enough to be a recruiting advantage for employers weighing a back-office, customer-service or technology location, which is consistent with the metro's call-center and cyber presence. The same low rents mean few developers are building offices, so a professional employer that needs 50,000 square feet in one place may need to build.

## How housing affects each tier of talent

| TIER | HOUSING EFFECT | NET |
|---|---|---|
| Professional | Home prices at 3.3 times income and moderate rents offset the 14% wage gap; strong draw from higher-cost metros and for military and federal-contractor transitions | Draw |
| Skilled | Wages of $25 and up cover rent comfortably, so housing is a modest draw; the constraint is the credential, not the cost of living | Neutral to draw |
| Semi-skilled | Wages of $18 to $22 leave rent shares of 32% to 40%; sensitive to commute and child care | Retention risk |
| Unskilled | Wages of $14 to $17.62 leave rent shares of 41% to 51%; the most likely tier to churn between employers for small differences | Strong retention risk |

The practical consequence for employers is that a 50-cent raise for an entry-level role can matter less than a commute, a shift schedule, or child care, because the budget is so tight that any one of those can end an employment. Section 34 proposes workforce housing and child care steps for exactly this reason.

# 15. Capital, licensing, entrepreneurship and incubators

Jobs come from two places: companies that relocate here and companies that start here. Sections 5 and 6 cover the first. This section covers the second, and the money, permits and support a founder needs to get from an idea to a payroll. The CSRA has more of the ingredients than it is given credit for, and almost none of them are measured in public.

**GEORGIA BUSINESS APPLICATIONS**

**6,411**

high-propensity applications, September 2026, not seasonally adjusted (Census Bureau via FRED)

**GEORGIA SMALL BUSINESSES**

**~1.4 million**

UGA Small Business Development Center, 2026 report

**SBA 7(A) LOANS, AUGUSTA**

**21 to 25**

calendar 2025; sources disagree on the count and on $18 million versus $26.1 million

**CYBER CENTER SPACE**

**337,000 SF**

two buildings, opened 2018 and 2019; a third of about 250,000 SF has no timeline

## Capital: who lends and invests

Small-business lending in the Augusta market runs through community and regional banks, the SBA 7(a) program, and a small number of nonprofit and venture sources. A third-party summary of SBA records for calendar 2025 lists Augusta-area 7(a) activity of roughly 21 to 25 loans and $18 million to $26.1 million, an average interest rate near 10.4% and about 349 jobs supported, with GBank ($6.3 million), PromiseOne ($4.4 million) and Peoples Bank ($3.5 million) among the largest lenders by dollars. The same page gives two different loan counts and dollar totals, so the author treats these as indicative, not as a measurement; the SBA's own records, requested by ZIP code or county, would settle it. We did not find a published figure for Augusta bank deposits by institution, for lines of credit extended, or for commercial and industrial loan balances by county, and we report none.

Augusta University's Entrepreneurship and Community Innovation office lists the funding sources it points founders to: CSRA Business Lending, a nonprofit lender serving Georgia and South Carolina; the Georgia Research Alliance Venture Fund; VentureSouth; Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Businesses; and MassChallenge. It also lists technology-licensing and Savannah River National Laboratory business arrangements as routes for research-based companies. Angel and venture investment inside the CSRA is not tracked in any public source we found, and the author makes no estimate of it.

One large local buyer deserves its own line. The Savannah River Site's management and operating contractor reported spending about $1.3 billion with small businesses over five years, with 60 cents of every dollar going to small business in 2022, and the Department of Energy credited site spending with supporting about 15,700 local jobs and 82,800 regional jobs since 2018 (April 2023). The Savannah River Site Community Reuse Organization also exists to move site-related capital and jobs into the region; its loan and grant detail was not available for this edition. For a founder with a federal or site-contractor customer, the prime contractor's small-business office may matter more than a bank.

## Licensing: what it takes to open the door

In Augusta-Richmond County, a business operates under an occupation tax and business tax certificate, computed from gross receipts and a profitability ratio, due January 1 each year. A late payment draws a 10% penalty after 30 days plus 1.5% interest per month. The consolidated government's license office is at 535 Telfair Street, Suite 300, (706) 821-1796. The rules cover the consolidated city and exclude Hephzibah and Blythe, which have their own. Columbia County, Aiken County and the other counties and municipalities in the commuting area have separate processes. The public page we reviewed gives no fee schedule, step list or typical turnaround, and no source counts new licenses issued by county. Whether it takes a founder a day or a month to get a license, a zoning check and a health or fire inspection in each jurisdiction is the most useful number a founder-facing report could carry, and it does not exist in public. The author proposes to compile it (below).

## The start-up ecosystem: what exists

| RESOURCE | WHAT IT IS | WHAT IS NOT PUBLIC |
|---|---|---|
| **theClubhou.se**<br>100 Grace Hopper Lane, Augusta | Augusta's innovation center: coworking, accelerator and incubator programming, a code bootcamp and apprenticeships, a makerspace and entrepreneurship classes | Member counts, companies launched, survival |
| **ATDC Augusta**<br>Georgia Tech | The Advanced Technology Development Center, founded in 1980 and described as the oldest university-based incubator in the country, has an Augusta presence with a start-up catalyst. Georgia-wide, its graduates report more than $6.2 billion in investment and more than $14 billion in revenue | Augusta-specific companies and outcomes |
| **Accelerate Augusta** | A program from Augusta Technical College and the Downtown Development Authority | Cohort sizes, outcomes |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Georgia Cyber Innovation and Training Center** | 337,000 square feet in two buildings. Tenants include Augusta University, Augusta Tech, the Georgia Bureau of Investigation's cyber crime unit, the National Cyber Range, and contractors including Parsons, Booz Allen, Leidos, Peraton and ECS, plus the start-up Todyl. Its page does not describe incubator space | Start-up space, tenant counts |
| **Medical-device initiative**<br>February 2026 | Georgia Tech and Augusta University announced an ecosystem effort with the Georgia Manufacturing Extension Partnership and ATDC, supported by the Augusta Economic Development Authority and the Georgia Cyber Center. Augusta has five hospitals, the Medical College of Georgia and a BioReady Gold designation from Georgia Life Sciences | Funding, targets, timeline |
| **The Garage Makerspace and university pitch competition** | Prototyping space and a competition that gives student founders early exposure | Participation |
| **Georgia Small Business Development Center** | 17 offices statewide. Over five years its clients statewide launched more than 2,200 businesses, created more than 15,000 jobs, secured $1.27 billion in financing and generated more than $9.7 billion in sales | Augusta-region client and loan counts |

## The author's grade: strong ingredients, no scoreboard

The author's judgment is that the CSRA's start-up support is better than its reputation and worse than its marketing, because the pieces are real but nobody publishes results. A site selector or a founder cannot answer the basic questions: how many companies started here last year, how many survived, how much capital they raised and where it came from. Compared with a metro that publishes an annual ecosystem report, the CSRA looks smaller than it is. The biggest structural advantage is the talent spillover: cleared and technically trained people leaving Fort Gordon, the National Security Agency, the Savannah River Site and the medical center are exactly the people who start contracting, security and medical-device companies, and the region's incubators sit close to them. The biggest gap is growth capital: the lenders we could identify serve loan-sized needs, and the equity sources named above are mostly statewide, not local.

## What the author proposes

| PROPOSAL | OWNER | FIRST STEP | MEASURE |
|---|---|---|---|

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **A. One-page startup path.** Publish the steps, fees and typical time to open a business in each of the seven metro counties and the largest municipalities | Local governments with the Augusta Economic Development Authority and the chambers | Ask each license and permit office for its step list and median days (the author will send the request letter in the packet) | Median days from application to open; published once a year |
| **B. An annual ecosystem scoreboard.** Count business formations, incubator and accelerator participants and graduates, SBA and community lender activity, and capital raised | theClubhou.se, ATDC, Augusta Tech, Augusta University, the SBDC and lenders, convened by the author for Edition 2 | Agree on five common counts and request the SBA's loan file for the metro | One published table each fall |
| **C. A growth-capital bridge.** Convene community banks, CSRA Business Lending, the state venture sources and site-contractor small-business offices around a shared pipeline of local companies | AEDA and the lender group | Invite lenders to share, at the aggregate level, applications received and declined by reason | Dollars lent and invested in start-ups and growth firms in the metro |

What the author could not verify: Augusta bank deposits and lending by county; the number of new business licenses; incubator and accelerator participation; angel and venture activity inside the region; and the SBA 7(a) totals for Augusta, which conflict across a single source. Georgia's business-application figure is statewide and not seasonally adjusted, and we did not retrieve the figure for the same month a year earlier, so no trend is stated.

# 16. Business health: start-up survival, bankruptcy and leading indicators

A region that wants to attract and grow companies should know how many survive, how they fail, and which signals move before the payroll numbers do. The honest answer for the CSRA is that the national and state evidence is good, the local evidence is almost absent, and the leading signals worth watching are mostly available if someone assembles them.

## How long businesses last

The Bureau of Labor Statistics tracks employer establishments born in March 2013. Of every 100, about 80 were still operating after one year, about 51 after five years and about 35 after ten. The largest single loss is in the first year. These rates describe employer establishments only; solo businesses without payroll are not counted, and an exit can mean a sale, a merger, a retirement or a relocation, not necessarily a failure.

| INDUSTRY (NATIONAL, MARCH 2013 COHORT) | 1 YEAR | 5 YEARS | 10 YEARS |
|---|---|---|---|
| All private sector | 79.6% | 50.6% | 34.7% |
| Manufacturing | 82.6% | 57.7% | 43.6% |
| Retail trade | 84.2% | 58.3% | 41.7% |
| Construction | 76.0% | 53.9% | 40.1% |
| Accommodation and food services | 82.5% | 55.3% | 38.2% |
| Health care and social assistance | 82.7% | 55.1% | 35.7% |
| Administrative and waste services (includes staffing) | 76.9% | 48.9% | 34.2% |
| Transportation and warehousing | 79.4% | 50.1% | 34.0% |
| Professional, scientific and technical services | 77.0% | 46.3% | 30.9% |
| Wholesale trade | 78.2% | 46.5% | 30.1% |
| Information | 74.9% | 44.3% | 29.1% |

Source: BLS Business Employment Dynamics, via the BLS Economics Daily (2024). Industries abbreviated to those most relevant to the CSRA; the full table has 19 sectors.

By state, a summary of BLS tables through March 2025 puts Georgia's one-, five- and ten-year survival at about 75.1%, 49.9% and 32.1%, and South Carolina's at about 82.3%, 55.9% and 35.7%. Georgia ranks 32nd of 51 on five-year survival in that summary; South Carolina ranks second. The same summary warns that high survival is not proof of a better market, since slow-growth states

often have fewer new entrants. The author found these state figures through a secondary source and treats them as indicative. No source we found gives survival for the Augusta metro or any CSRA county.

## Why they fail

The BLS data say who survives, not why. Its own pages do not attribute failure to causes such as under-capitalization, weak demand, owner health or management, so the author will not borrow a tidy list of reasons from a trade-press survey and present it as measurement. What the evidence does support is a pattern: survival is lowest where entry is cheap and customers are few or concentrated (information, professional services, wholesale) and highest where the business owns equipment or serves a steady local base (manufacturing, retail, health care). The author's judgment, flagged as such, is that three local conditions bear on the odds: capital that is thinner for growth than for startup (Section 15), a customer base concentrated in a few federal installations, and the retention pressure on entry-level labor in Sections 14 and 29. Edition 2 will ask founders directly, through the employer survey, why they closed or nearly closed.

## Bankruptcy: a lagging and narrow signal

**FILINGS, SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF GEORGIA**

**1,214**

third quarter 2026: 429 in July, 380 in August, 405 in September (U.S. Courts)

**CHAPTER 13 SHARE**

**79%**

960 of 1,214; Chapter 7 was 248 and Chapter 11 was 5

**BUSINESS FILINGS**

**18**

of 1,214 (1.5%); 1,196 were personal

The federal Southern District of Georgia covers Augusta and the Savannah, Brunswick, Dublin, Statesboro and Waycross divisions, so these figures are regional, not Augusta-only. Personal Chapter 13 reorganizations, the kind a household files to keep a home or car, dominate. Business filings were two to seven a month, and only five of the 18 were Chapter 11 reorganizations. That does not mean few businesses are in trouble. A small firm that cannot pay usually closes, sells or stops without filing, so bankruptcy undercounts distress and trails it by months. We did not obtain the Augusta-division split for 2026 or any prior-year comparison, so the author states no trend. A 2014 court table for the Augusta division alone shows 2,523 filings that year, 1,851 of them Chapter 13; it is cited only to show the long-standing dominance of personal filings and is not comparable to the district figures above. Court dockets, including business collection suits and evictions, were not searched (Section 12).

## Leading indicators: what moves first

Unemployment and payroll counts confirm a turn after it happens. These signals tend to move earlier. The table shows what each would tell an employer or site selector, what the CSRA has now, and where it stands.

| INDICATOR | WHY IT LEADS | CSRA STATUS | CADENCE AND SOURCE |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Initial jobless claims** | Layoffs show up here before the monthly rate moves | In the web edition sidebar (statewide, weekly) | Weekly, U.S. Department of Labor |
| **Layoff notices (WARN)** | Sixty days' warning of large layoffs | 719 in six notices since October 2025 (Section 3) | As filed, Georgia Department of Labor |
| **New business applications** | Start-up intent precedes hiring by quarters | Georgia 6,411 high-propensity applications in September 2026; no county detail | Monthly, Census Bureau |
| **Building permits** | Construction starts and housing supply | 269 in January 2026 against 282 a year earlier (about 4.6% lower, a single month, metro, not seasonally adjusted) | Monthly, Census Bureau, via Redfin |
| **Home days on market and inventory** | Wealth and relocation demand | 60 days, up 30 over the year; 517 sales, down 10.9% (Section 14) | Monthly, Redfin |
| **Temporary and contract staffing hours** | Employers add temporary labor before permanent hires and cut it first | Not published locally. The author's staffing firm holds this series for its own business and could publish an anonymous index | Weekly, the author |
| **Job postings** | Employer demand before hiring | LinkedIn figures only (Section 3); no posting counts by occupation | Weekly, job-board data |
| **Sales tax and hotel tax receipts** | Consumer and visitor spending, including the Masters week effect | Not obtained for this edition | Monthly, Georgia Department of Revenue and local governments |
| **Airport passengers** | Business travel and visitors | Not obtained for this edition | Monthly, Augusta Regional Airport |
| **Business bankruptcies and commercial delinquencies** | Distress, but late | 18 business filings district-wide in Q3 2026; delinquency data not obtained | Monthly, U.S. Courts |

Forecasters at the University of Georgia's Selig Center said at their February 2026 Augusta outlook event that Georgia's growth would be slower than in the past but positive, citing U.S. trade and policy uncertainty, slower population growth and a labor force that has not grown enough to support the economy. The Augusta Economic Development Authority also presented there, but its figures were not reported in the coverage we found. No public composite leading index exists for the Augusta metro. The author proposes to publish one from the series above that are available weekly or monthly, starting with claims, permits, business applications, home inventory and a staffing-hours index.

Sources: Bureau of Labor Statistics Business Employment Dynamics; U.S. Courts, Table F-2 (September 2026); Redfin via Stacker (permits); WRDW (February 10, 2026). Section 3 and Section 14 for the other series.

# 17. Credits, grants and incentives: local, state and federal

An employer deciding where to hire or build wants one list: what is available locally, from the state and from the federal government, what it is worth, and what has changed. This section gathers what the author could verify and marks what it could not. Terms change, and any employer should confirm eligibility with counsel or the agency before relying on a number here.

## Local

| PROGRAM | WHAT IT OFFERS | NOTE |
|---|---|---|
| Augusta job incentive | $4,000 per new job each year for five years | From the Augusta Economic Development Authority (Section 6) |
| Bond-financed property tax abatement | Abatements near 50% through a development authority | Terms vary by project and county (Section 6) |
| Freeport inventory exemption | Exempts local property tax on manufacturers' goods held 12 months or less | Most Georgia counties offer it; a company must apply each year. Georgia levies no state property tax |

## Georgia

| PROGRAM | WHAT IT OFFERS | NOTE |
|---|---|---|
| Corporate income tax | 4.99% in 2026 | Section 6 |
| Job Tax Credit | Credit for new jobs in qualifying industries; in some locations it can reduce payroll-withholding obligations | The amount depends on the county's annual tier ranking, which Georgia delayed in 2026. We did not verify the amounts or Richmond and Columbia counties' tiers |
| Quality Jobs Tax Credit | Earned on new jobs paying 110% or more of the county's average wage | Amount not verified |
| Manufacturing sales and use tax exemption | Machinery, repair parts, molds, dies, tooling, raw materials, packaging and energy essential to manufacturing; exempts the 4% state tax and local taxes of 1% to 3% | Section 6 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Distribution center exemption | Sales tax exemption on handling and storage equipment | Requires an investment of at least $5 million |
| Georgia Quick Start | Customized training for new employees in skill-based jobs at no cost to the company, including assessment, instructors, space and materials | A significant cost offset for plants; the page gives no dollar value |
| HOPE Grant | Tuition help for technical degrees and certificates at Georgia's technical colleges | Helps the worker, and a retention tool for employers who point staff to it |

Not verified in this edition: the Retraining Tax Credit, Investment Tax Credit, Port-related credits, the research and development credit, state grant programs for rural counties, and every South Carolina program. Section 36 lists these as gaps.

## Federal

| PROGRAM | STATUS | WHAT IT MEANS FOR AN EMPLOYER |
|---|---|---|
| **Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC)** | Lapsed December 31, 2025; no renewal enacted as of a September 22, 2026 report | Normally up to $2,400 per hire for most targeted groups and up to $9,600 for disabled veterans. The Labor Department holds requests for 2026 hires and certifies none until Congress acts. Past renewals have often been retroactive, but none is guaranteed. Employers should keep submitting Form 8850 within 28 days of each start date so a renewal can be claimed |
| **Opportunity Zones** | Made permanent by the 2025 federal budget law. New zones take effect January 1, 2027 and run through 2036. Governors nominated tracts between July 1 and September 28, 2026; Treasury certifies later in 2026 | New rules require tract income at or below 70% of the state or metro median, drop the contiguous-tract provision and add benefits for rural tracts. We did not find the list Georgia nominated, so we cannot say which CSRA tracts qualify |
| **Employer paid family and medical leave credit (45S)** | Made permanent and enhanced | Credit for employers who provide paid leave |
| **Employer-provided child care credit (45F)** | Made permanent; cap raised to $500,000, or $600,000 for small businesses | Relevant to the child care retention gap in Section 14 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Disabled access credit (44) and barrier-removal deduction (190)** | Available | Up to $5,000 a year credit and up to $25,000 a year deduction |
| **Empowerment Zone employment credit** | Lapsed December 31, 2025 | Previously up to $3,000 per employee a year |
| **SBA 7(a) and related lending** | Active | See Section 15; the federal grant landscape (Department of Energy, Department of Defense and workforce grants) was not catalogued |

The federal rows rest partly on a September 2026 summary from a financial-publishing site and on the Kiplinger and IRS-guidance coverage of the Opportunity Zone rules, not on primary agency pages, so the author treats them as current guidance to confirm, not as tax advice. Two items deserve a decision this quarter: whether to file Form 8850 for new hires in case the credit is renewed, and whether any site under consideration sits in a tract Georgia nominated.

# 18. The region and its peers

Site selectors and corporate planners do not compare Augusta with the national average. They compare it with Savannah, Columbia, Charleston, Macon and Atlanta, and with the rest of its own region. This section sets the CSRA against those peers on the indicators that are comparable, and says plainly which are not.

### Unemployment against peer metros

| METRO | UNEMPLOYMENT RATE | READING |
|---|---|---|
| **Augusta-Richmond County, GA-SC** | 4.0% | Tied for highest among Georgia metros |
| Columbus, GA-AL | 4.0% | Tied with Augusta |
| Columbia, SC | 4.0% (3.6% in September) | Fell during the summer |
| Macon-Bibb County, GA | 3.8% | |
| Charleston, SC | 3.7% | Lowest among the South Carolina peers with Greenville |
| Greenville, SC | 3.7% | |
| Atlanta, GA | 3.2% | |
| Savannah, GA | 2.7% | Among Georgia's lowest |
| United States | 4.4% | Not seasonally adjusted |

Source: BLS, metro unemployment, July 2026, not seasonally adjusted, preliminary; Columbia's September figure from FRED. The metros are at July 2026 so that they compare on the same month.

The ranking cuts two ways. Against the nation, Augusta is below the 4.4% rate and so is not a weak labor market. Against its direct competitors it carries more unemployed workers than Savannah and Atlanta and about as many as Columbus and Columbia. A site selector can read that as available labor or as weak demand; Section 3 shows it is closer to the first, but the participation gap (Section 3) shows the idle pool is not the whole reserve. If the metro participated at the national rate of 61.8%, its 16-and-older population of about 511,000 would supply about 316,000 workers rather than 283,000, roughly 33,000 more. Some of that gap is age and military status and will not close, so the author treats 33,000 as the outer bound of the reserve and not as a forecast.

**Not compared in this edition:** peer wages, rents, industrial costs, incentives and graduation rates. We found the unemployment figures in one place and found no comparable peer-metro source for

the rest; building the table from the same federal wage and price series for each peer is the first task for Edition 2.

## The 15-county planning region

The CSRA Regional Commission covers 13 Georgia counties and the labor market extends into Aiken and Edgefield counties in South Carolina, 15 counties in all. The Georgia Department of Labor's regional release puts the Central Savannah River Area's September 2026 unemployment at 4.1%, not seasonally adjusted, close to the metro's 4.0%. The metro itself covers Burke, Columbia, Lincoln, McDuffie and Richmond counties in Georgia and Aiken and Edgefield in South Carolina. The release gives a regional rate, not county rates. We could not retrieve current county unemployment, labor force or wage figures for Glascock, Hancock, Jefferson, Jenkins, Taliaferro, Warren, Washington and Wilkes, so the eight rural counties outside the metro are still thin in this edition. Poverty by county is in Section 32.

Commuting is the other missing link. Workers cross the Savannah River and county lines every day, and the metro counts Aiken and Edgefield residents among its labor force. Census commuting-flow data for all 15 counties would show how many Aiken and Columbia County residents work in Richmond County and the reverse, which decides whether an employer in Augusta draws from 7 counties or 15. We did not obtain those flows; the author will request them for Edition 2 from the state labor agencies.

# 19. The operating environment: power, tax, safety, schools and veterans

Beyond labor, a company weighs what it costs to power and tax a plant, whether the community is safe, whether schools will feed the workforce, and where the next hires come from. This section gathers what we could verify and marks the rest.

### Power

Georgia's average retail electricity price was 11.40 cents per kilowatt-hour in 2024, ranked 26th among states by the U.S. Energy Information Administration; we did not obtain the industrial-class price or the South Carolina comparison, so the author makes no claim on the CSRA's rate advantage. What is changing is who is competing for power. Georgia's Public Service Commission adopted rules in January 2025 under which new customers above 100 megawatts, including data centers and other power-intensive industries, can be charged higher rates and must carry the added generation and transmission cost of serving them. Georgia Power reports contracts with data centers totaling more than 9,000 megawatts, and data centers are planned in Columbia, Richmond and McDuffie counties, including a proposal tied to the White Oak Park expansion in Columbia County that drew resident concern at town halls in August 2025. The utility is building a 1,500-megawatt gas plant and a 500-megawatt battery at Plant Wansley, in the western part of the state, expected in 2029 and 2028, which is not an Augusta-area plant. For manufacturers, the practical questions are whether a site has capacity for the load, whether the utility will commit to a date, and how a data-center neighbor changes the rate class; those need a utility conversation, which the request letters can prompt.

### Property tax

| ITEM | 2026 | CHANGE |
|---|---|---|
| Augusta-Richmond net tax digest | $8.70 billion | up 3.3% (about $276 million) |
| Augusta-Richmond gross digest | $10.01 billion | up 5.5% (about $520 million) |
| Augusta net maintenance and operations millage | 6.193 mills | down from 6.277 |
| Augusta maintenance and operations levy | $53.8 million | up 1.9% |
| Columbia County school millage | 14.997 mills | down from 16.234; lowered six years running (18.30 in 2020) |

Sources: WRDW, September 7 and September 18, 2026 (Augusta); WRDW, August 12, 2026 (Columbia County schools). These are single components of a bill, not total millage, and are not directly comparable across jurisdictions.

The direction is the story: digests are growing and rates are being cut, which is the opposite of a fiscal squeeze. A total effective rate for a $50 million plant in each CSRA jurisdiction, after abatements, is what a site selector wants, and it requires each tax assessor's full millage schedule. Aiken and Edgefield millage were not obtained.

## Safety

| AGENCY | VIOLENT 2023 | VIOLENT 2024 | PROPERTY 2023 | PROPERTY 2024 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Richmond County Sheriff | 1,159 | 1,024 (-11.6%) | 6,701 | 6,752 (+0.8%) |
| Columbia County Sheriff | 115 | 107 (-7.0%) | 1,078 | 947 (-12.2%) |
| Burke County Sheriff | 38 | 38 (flat) | 271 | 184 (-32.1%) |
| Aiken County Sheriff | 331 | 301 (-9.1%) | 2,258 | 2,074 (-8.1%) |
| Aiken Public Safety | 111 | 189 (+70.3%) | 1,235 | 1,319 (+6.8%) |
| North Augusta Public Safety | 24 | 9 (-62.5%) | | not listed |

Source: WRDW, August 5, 2025, citing FBI annual crime reports. Counts by agency, not rates per resident, and agencies cover different territory, so the table shows direction within each agency and not a ranking.

Violent crime fell at most agencies in 2024, the exception being the City of Aiken. Because the counts are not per resident and cover different areas, the author does not rank the jurisdictions. We did not obtain 2025 figures.

## Schools

Graduation rates are in Section 8. For the broader measure of school quality, Georgia's College and Career Ready Performance Index, we could not retrieve a current score for Richmond, Columbia or the other districts. The only comparison we found is from 2017, when Columbia County scored 81.7 and Richmond County 64.5, a 17-point gap nine years old, shown here only to indicate that the gap between the two largest districts has long been wide. Richmond County reported growth in every readiness category in December 2024 and a record 84.2% graduation rate in 2026. The 2026 scores belong in Edition 2.

## Veterans and transitioning service members

A 2020 note from the Georgia Cyber Innovation and Training Center reported that more than 150 active-duty service members leave the military at Fort Gordon each month, and that about two-thirds said in exit surveys they would like to stay in the Augusta area. The author's arithmetic from

that source is about 1,800 separations a year and about 1,200 who would stay if jobs were available. The figures are six years old and predate the post's renaming and restoration as Fort Gordon in June 2025, so the author treats them as order-of-magnitude. The Army's own separation counts for the post, and the clearances those soldiers hold, are the single most valuable data request for this report, and the author will ask for them in the Fort Gordon request.

**Not verified:** broadband availability by county, tourism and Masters-week economic impact and seasonal hiring, transit coverage, and child care supply by county. Searches for them returned either state-level or non-authoritative sources, so none is reported.

# 20. The CSRA workforce scorecard and new indicators

A report this long needs a short answer to the question "how is the CSRA workforce, really?" This section gives one, built only from the evidence in the report, and defines a set of new indicators that the author will publish so that the answer can be updated every week and quarter. The ratings are the author's judgment, and the arithmetic behind every number is shown.

## The scorecard

| DIMENSION | EVIDENCE | READING |
|---|---|---|
| **Labor availability** | Unemployment 4.0% in September (U.S. 4.2%, seasonally adjusted); about 11,200 unemployed; Georgia's highest-unemployment metros tied | Balanced |
| **Participation** | About 55% against 61.8%; about 33,000 fewer workers than the national rate would imply | Weak |
| **Wages** | Medians 9% to 17% below the nation where published; production roles near or above | Weak, with an exception |
| **Skills pipeline** | Technical college graduation 31% and 33.5%; skilled-trade completions cover about half of announced industrial jobs | Weak |
| **Sites and buildings** | 3,350 named acres, no certified shovel-ready site, sewer gap at the megasite | Weak |
| **Cost and incentives** | 4.99% corporate rate, equipment and energy exempt, $4,000 per job local incentive, rising digest with falling rates | Strong |
| **Entry-level housing** | Rent takes 40% to 51% of gross pay at the median wage for entry-level roles | Weak |
| **Safety** | Violent crime fell at most agencies in 2024; one city rose sharply | Mixed |
| **Resilience** | Fort Gordon, the Savannah River Site and the NSA concentrate federal jobs; 719 recent layoff notices | Exposed |
| **Start-up capital and survival** | Ingredients exist; no local measurement of formation, survival or capital | Unmeasured |

## The indicators the author will publish

Each indicator below is a number a reader can compute and check. The first six can be computed today from the evidence in this report; the rest begin publication with Edition 2 and the weekly

sidebar.

| INDICATOR | DEFINITION | VALUE TODAY | CADENCE |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Pipeline coverage ratio** | Annual technical-college completions in the mechanical, precision production and construction clusters, divided by announced industrial jobs | 0.51 (465 divided by about 910) | Annual |
| **Idle-pool ratio** | Unemployed residents per announced industrial job (headcount only, not skill) | about 12 (11,200 divided by 910) | Monthly |
| **Participation gap** | Workers the metro would have at the national participation rate, minus its actual labor force | about 33,000 | Annual |
| **Housing wage gap** | Hourly wage needed for the average rent at 30% of pay ($23.90) minus the entry-level median wage | $5.94 to $9.87 an hour | Monthly |
| **Layoff intensity** | Workers named in layoff notices over twelve months, divided by the labor force | 0.25% (719 divided by about 283,000) | Monthly |
| **Announced-job intensity** | Announced new jobs divided by the labor force | about 0.39% (1,100 divided by 283,000) | Quarterly |
| **Temporary Staffing Hours Index** | Temporary and contract hours billed by the author's staffing firm across Augusta-area employers, indexed to 100 at launch, published without client names | new; baseline set at launch | Weekly |
| **Employer Pulse** | Share of surveyed local employers planning to hire, hold or cut, and reporting turnover, wage increases and difficulty filling roles | new; first wave in Edition 2 | Quarterly |
| **Transition flow** | Service members separating at Fort Gordon and the share who stay, from the Army's records | about 150 a month (2020 figure) | Quarterly |
| **Start-up scoreboard** | New business licenses, incubator participants, SBA and community lending, capital raised (Section 15) | not measured | Annual |

The first six indicators are arithmetic on figures already in this report, so a reader can check them, and the author will recompute them when the inputs change. They are not a composite index. The author has deliberately not collapsed them into one score, because the weights would be judgment and would hide the cases a site selector cares about most: a metro can show a balanced unemployment rate and a sharp skills shortage at once. When the weekly series (claims, permits, home inventory and the staffing-hours index) have a year of history, the author will test whether a composite predicts hiring and publish the weights openly.

The web edition's sidebar already carries jobless claims and the labor-force and unemployment series. The author will add the staffing-hours index and the monthly ratios above to it as their inputs are published.

# 21. The federal talent strategy and what standard reports miss

In August 2025 the Departments of Labor, Commerce and Education published America's Talent Strategy, a plan to build an employer-driven workforce system. Its priorities decide which local programs get money, and its demand for outcome data is exactly the data this report lacks. This section reads the strategy for the CSRA, and then takes six things that regional workforce reports routinely leave out and says, for each, what is known here, what is not, and which new indicator the author will publish.

### What the strategy says, and what it means locally

| ELEMENT | WHAT IT SAYS | READING FOR THE CSRA |
|---|---|---|
| **Industry-driven training** | Employers shape training and credentials; the strategy criticizes a "train and pray" model and favors pathways with a job or an interview at the end; proposes a state fund that reimburses employers on outcomes, including for incumbent workers | Fits the announced plants, Savannah River Site and data-center projects. The fund is a proposal; we did not verify that it has been enacted, so local employers should not budget on it |
| **Registered apprenticeships** | Target of more than one million active apprentices, simpler registration and pay-for-performance payments to employers and intermediaries | Augusta Tech and Aiken Tech run registered and pre-apprenticeships but publish no counts (Section 9). Employers who sponsor apprentices could qualify for payments; cohort counts are the first data to collect |
| **Workforce Pell** | Short, high-quality training becomes eligible for Pell Grants. In Georgia it took effect July 1, 2026 for programs of 150 to 599 clock hours lasting 8 to 14 weeks. Programs must keep a 70% completion rate and a 70% job placement rate, and need state and federal approval | This is the biggest near-term lever for semi-skilled and skilled trades. The Technical College System of Georgia's approved list was still listed as to be announced when we read the page, and Augusta Technical College was not named, so which local programs qualify is unknown |
| **Consolidated funding (MASA)** | A proposed single flexible grant replacing several workforce programs, with state waivers and possible folding of local workforce boards into community colleges | Would affect WorkSource CSRA, whose performance data we have not obtained. A proposal, not law, as far as we could verify |

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|---|---|---|
| **Program cuts in the FY2026 budget proposal** | Job Corps, the Senior Community Service Employment Program and adult education would be eliminated | Proposed; we did not verify the outcome. Adult education matters locally because 43% of adults have a high school diploma or less (Section 8) |
| **Data and accountability** | A public Credentials of Value scorecard, stricter eligible-training-provider lists using wage records, earnings change as a primary indicator, and funding tied to outcomes | This is the data the author is requesting from the colleges and agencies. Programs that cannot show completion, placement and wages will lose ground |
| **Work authorization** | Participants must be verified as legally authorized to work before receiving services | Adds an eligibility check for training programs; it interacts with the verification rules in Section 12 |
| **Priority sectors** | Semiconductors, aerospace, shipbuilding, biopharma, data centers, energy including nuclear, manufacturing and artificial intelligence | Matches the Savannah River Site, the planned data centers, the medical-device initiative and the new plants. Cyber, the region's largest professional pull (Section 22), is not named |
| **Rural areas** | The strategy does not address rural areas specifically | The eight rural counties in the planning region will not be helped by a design that ignores them; see the second blind spot below |

For an employer, the practical reading is that money is shifting toward short credentials that lead to a job, toward apprenticeships, and toward programs that can prove outcomes. For the CSRA, that favors Augusta Tech and Aiken Tech if they can document completion and placement, and it raises the value of the employer commitments Section 34 proposes. The author's judgment is that the region should identify now which of its short programs can meet the 70% completion and placement thresholds and have employers commit to interviews, because that is what the approval process asks for.

## Six hidden measures

| BLIND SPOT | WHAT IS KNOWN FOR THE CSRA | WHAT IS NOT | INDICATOR THE AUTHOR WILL PUBLISH |
|---|---|---|---|
| **1. Commuting inflow and outflow** | The metro counts Aiken and Edgefield residents in its labor force, and workers cross the river and county lines daily (Section 18). Census county-to-county mover data show families relocating between Richmond and Columbia counties, but those measure moves, not commutes | Commuting flows between the 15 counties; how many people in Augusta jobs live elsewhere | **Inflow share and outflow share** from Census employer-household data, by county, annually |
| **2. Informal, gig and non-standard work** | Georgia's July 2026 law adds a portable-benefits option for contractors, and federal contractor rules are under proposal (Section 12) | Any local count of independent contractors, side jobs, multiple-job holders or cash work. Payroll data do not see them | **Non-employer share** from Census non-employer statistics by county, plus a worker-side question in the Employer Pulse |
| **3. Rural and sub-county detail** | Poverty by county shows Richmond at 25.5% and Burke at 20.0% (Section 32); metro averages hide the rural counties. The regional rate is 4.1% | Unemployment, wages and single-employer dependence for Glascock, Hancock, Jefferson, Jenkins, Taliaferro, Warren, Washington and Wilkes; tract-level data inside Richmond County | **County dispersion:** the gap between the highest and lowest county rates, and a county-by-county scorecard |

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|---|---|---|---|
| **4. Underemployment and functional unemployment** | Georgia's broad unemployment measure (U-6) averaged 6.7% from July 2025 to June 2026 against a 3.3% headline rate, a gap of 3.4 points. South Carolina's was 7.4% against 4.3% (3.1 points) and the nation's 8.2% against 4.4% (3.8 points). Local wages run 9% to 17% below the nation, which means a person can be employed and still unable to afford the average rent (Section 14) | U-6 or any underemployment figure for the Augusta metro, which BLS publishes only for states; skills mismatch by occupation | **Underutilization gap:** U-6 minus the headline rate, state benchmark; and the **housing wage gap** (Section 20) as the local functional measure |
| **5. Immigrant and temporary workers** | Immigrants held about 15.7% of Georgia jobs in 2024 and were concentrated in education and health, professional and business services and construction. About 13.1% of employed foreign-born workers are in construction against 6.0% of native-born workers. In the Augusta metro, a single Census-based summary lists Mexico, Germany, India, Vietnam and China as the top countries of origin, with Mexico at 17% of foreign-born residents; the author's arithmetic from it implies about 27,600 foreign-born residents | The local immigrant share of employment by industry, temporary-visa workers, and how verification changes (Georgia and South Carolina) and federal enforcement are altering supply. The September 2025 enforcement action at a Georgia plant showed how fast supply can change | **Foreign-born share of employment** by industry from the American Community Survey, and an employer question on verification-related vacancies |

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|---|---|---|---|
| **6. Barriers: child care, transit and criminal records** | **Child care:** Georgia families paid an average of $11,066 a year for center-based care and the state has a 21% gap between supply and need (Section 14). **Transit:** Augusta Transit reported to local media that a South Augusta cleaner faced a trip of about an hour and a half with four connections for a 15-minute drive, and the agency was considering microtransit; schedules were revised in January 2026. **Records:** A 2020 Georgia policy study estimated nearly 600,000 Georgians, about one in nine adults, have a felony conviction, with an extrapolated 15% unemployment among returning citizens, and called Georgia's record-restriction law one of the nation's most limited | Child care supply by county; the share of industrial jobs reachable by transit at shift start; the number of local workers with records, and the share of employers who hire them. The records figures are from 2020, statewide and partly extrapolated, and the law may have changed since | **Transit access index** (share of the metro's industrial and warehouse jobs within walking distance of a bus stop that runs at shift start); **barrier prevalence** (share of employers reporting lost workers to child care, transit or records); **fair-chance hiring share** |

Sources: Departments of Labor, Commerce and Education, America's Talent Strategy (August 2025); Technical College System of Georgia, Workforce Pell; BLS alternative measures of labor underutilization, July 2025 to June 2026 (October 2025 excluded); USAFacts (Census 2024); Stacker (2024 American Community Survey five-year estimates); WRDW (September 2022 and January 2026); Georgia Budget and Policy Institute (February 2020).

## What changes in Edition 2

Four of the six measures can be built from public data once the county and commuting files arrive: the commuting shares, non-employer share, county dispersion and foreign-born employment share. Two need the author's own collection: the barrier prevalence and the transit access index, because no agency counts them. For those, the author will add barrier questions to the Employer Pulse and map employer addresses against the transit schedules. None of them replaces the unemployment rate; each is a lens that shows what the headline conceals.

# 22. Cyber: the region's defining professional workforce

Cyber is what makes Augusta unlike other metros of its size. Two Army headquarters, a national intelligence center, a state-built training campus and more than a hundred private firms sit within a few miles of one another. It is also the sector where the region's data are oldest and its bottleneck, the security clearance, is least visible to outsiders. This section sets out what the cluster is, who trains its workers, what the clearance bottleneck costs, and what the region should do about it. It is as complete as public sources allow, and it says where they stop.

### The cluster: what is here

**CYBER-RELATED JOBS, RICHMOND COUNTY**

**~13,800**

2020 data, including indirect and induced jobs: 10,913 direct (5,961 Army, 4,952 private) and 2,891 spillover

**SHARE OF COUNTY ECONOMY**

**9.1% of jobs**

and 10.3% of value added, about $1.43 billion (2020)

**SOLDIERS TRAINED A YEAR**

**~20,000**

signal and cyber soldiers at Fort Gordon (Army, June 2026)

**TOP SECRET CLEARANCE, NEW HIRE**

**243 days**

Secret 197 days; industry initial clearances, fiscal 2026 third quarter

| ANCHOR | WHAT IT IS | SCALE (SOURCE AND DATE) |
|---|---|---|
| **U.S. Army Cyber Center of Excellence** | Trains and develops the Army's cyber, signal and electronic-warfare force at Fort Gordon. A 35-project construction program is rebuilding the campus; the first major building, a training platform, was formally transferred to the post on May 29, 2026, with fit-out running to 2028 | Over 2,300 people on the staff (about 1,356 enlisted, 490 civilians, 515 contractors) in 2020; about 20,000 students a year |
| **U.S. Army Cyber Command** | The Army's cyber operational headquarters, moved from Fort Meade to Fort Gordon under a 2013 decision | About 3,600 people (about 1,500 enlisted, 1,500 civilians, 600 contractors) in 2020 |
| **NSA/CSS Georgia** | One of four U.S. cryptologic centers outside Maryland | At least 4,300 employees (Section 4) |

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|---|---|---|
| **Georgia Cyber Innovation and Training Center** | State-built, $100 million in the first phase, described as the largest state investment in a cyber facility; 337,000 square feet in two buildings; houses colleges, the Georgia Bureau of Investigation's cyber unit, the National Cyber Range and contractors (Section 15) | Tenant and job counts not published |
| **Private cyber firms** | Nearly 140 firms in Richmond County in the study's taxonomy; 53 Technology Association of Georgia member cyber firms in the metro; the largest category is investigation and security services | Nearly 5,000 jobs; 1,813 in investigation and security services (2020) |

Source: Cybersecurity in Augusta, Georgia: An Impact Assessment and Workforce Study (January 2022), data for 2020; U.S. Army, May and June 2026. The study's figures are six years old and describe the cluster before the Fort Gordon renaming, the 2025 restoration and the current construction wave; the author recommends treating them as the last published count, not a current one.

Two features of the study deserve emphasis. First, cyber is concentrated: Richmond County's cyber employment rose from 5,470 in 2015 to 6,118 in 2020, while the metro's total fell from 9,218 to 8,290 and its location quotient stood at 0.48, so the metro as a whole was less specialized in cyber than the nation even though Richmond County's core was growing. Second, the cluster is government-anchored: the Army's own workforce is more than half of the direct jobs. A private-sector cyber economy of about 5,000 jobs is real but small next to the federal base, and a software or services company can only grow here by hiring into it or alongside it.

## Demand: what employers say they need

The only local employer survey we found is the one inside the 2022 study, and it is small: 36 firms were contacted, 42% responded (about 15), and together they reported over 3,200 employees, of whom 383 (12%) worked in cybersecurity. They had added 925 jobs in three years and expected cyber headcount to grow by about a third, roughly 126 people, in the next twelve months. Hiring was hard at both ends. For entry and mid-level roles, 67% reported some difficulty and 13% reported it as very difficult. For experienced professionals, 40% called it very difficult and another 46% some difficulty. The most important hiring requirement was a Secret or Top Secret clearance, ahead of any certification; of the certifications, Certified Information Systems Auditor and two Microsoft credentials led. Every responding firm offered medical, dental and vision coverage and education or certification reimbursement; 93.3% offered a retirement plan; 53% had seen premium increases at renewal. CyberSeek, the national workforce tool, counted about 1,500 cyber workers and about 1,200 job postings in the Augusta metro in that study; we did not obtain a current local reading. Nationally, the tool recorded nearly 500,000 cybersecurity postings between April 2024 and March 2025, led by analyst, engineer and penetration-tester titles, and says employer demand continues to outpace supply and takes longer to fill than other technology jobs.

The sample is too small to publish a percentage with confidence, and it predates the current hiring cycle. It remains the only structured evidence, which is why the author's first proposal below is to repeat it at a scale that can bear weight.

## Supply: who trains the cyber workforce here

| SOURCE | WHAT IT PROVIDES | WHAT WE KNOW |
|---|---|---|
| **Augusta University, School of Computer and Cyber Sciences** | Bachelor of Science in cybersecurity and in cybersecurity engineering; graduate degrees in cybersecurity management and technology, intelligence and security studies, and a doctorate in intelligence, defense and cybersecurity policy; academic-excellence designation from the National Security Agency and Homeland Security | 848 computer and cyber science students in fall 2026 (Section 8); the Army-university announcement says more than 1,000 students study computer science and cybersecurity with more than 40 faculty, while the Cyber Institute page lists 22 faculty. Nearly 1,800 military-connected students in the university, 870 of them using military education benefits |
| **Army and Augusta University memorandum** | Signed July 7, 2026, renewing a partnership begun in 2016 and expanded in 2023: eligible military training can count toward select graduate programs | No count of soldiers using it; no scholarships or positions stated |
| **Augusta Technical College Cyber Institute** | Two-year cybersecurity degree since 2015 (first graduates Fall 2016), networking, computer support including data-center operations and programming; Cisco academy for more than 20 years; discounted CompTIA Security+ and Cisco certification exams; NSA and Homeland Security academic-excellence designation (2018) | No enrollment, completion or placement figures published |
| **Technical-college to university pathway** | Starting fall 2024, an associate degree in cybersecurity from any Georgia technical college transfers into the university's bachelor's program | More than 250 students have transferred into the school since 2021 (all transfers, not only this pathway) |
| **Aiken Technical College and USC Aiken** | Named as training providers by 15.4% of surveyed employers each | Programs not reviewed for this edition |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **K-12** | Summer cyber camps for high school students, a coding club for girls in grades 6 to 12, a Richmond County cyber academy, and a university-supplied lab platform in Burke, Columbia and Richmond schools | Participation counts not published |
| **Soldiers leaving service** | The largest single stream of experienced, already-trained and often already-cleared people | More than 150 soldiers leave Fort Gordon each month (2020 figure); counts and clearances are an open request (Section 19) |

The surveyed employers named Augusta University as their main source of trained workers (61.5%), followed by Augusta Tech (38.5%). That is consistent with the supply picture: a four-year pipeline that is large relative to the private market and small relative to the federal one, and a two-year pipeline that feeds both. What is missing is the conversion rate, how many of the people who finish a cyber program are working locally in cyber a year later, and whether they are cleared.

## The clearance bottleneck

A clearance is the gate to the region's best-paid cyber work, and it is a time and cost problem the employer cannot speed up. The Defense Counterintelligence and Security Agency reported for the third quarter of fiscal 2026 that initial industry clearances averaged 243 days end to end for Top Secret (20 days to start, 97 to investigate and 126 to adjudicate) and 197 days for Secret (21, 59 and 117). The agency changed its method to report the overall average, so these cannot be compared with the older, faster figures. In practical terms, a company that hires an uncleared graduate for a classified contract may wait six to eight months before the person can do the work, and has to carry the salary meanwhile. A soldier who is already cleared on leaving service avoids that wait, which is why transitioning soldiers are worth more to cyber employers than their résumés suggest and why the separation counts in Section 19 matter so much. The one national measure we found is clearance time; the author has not found a local count of cleared residents, cleared job openings or cleared people between jobs, and no public source exists.

## Pay

This edition does not report local pay for cyber occupations. The wage figures we used in Section 7 cover major groups and a selected set of roles, and the occupation-level wage lookups for information security analysts, network administrators, software developers and support specialists in the Augusta metro could not be retrieved in this session. the author's own compensation survey tool is built on the same federal wage series and will produce those figures, with the caveat that national wage data underrepresent cleared roles, which are often paid on a contractor bill rate that does not appear in government wage statistics. The author does not publish bill rates.

## Risks specific to cyber

- **Federal concentration.** The Army's own staff is more than half of the direct jobs, and a contract transition has already removed 77 intelligence-related positions at Fort Gordon this fall. A reorganization or a budget lapse hits cyber first and hardest.
- **Clearance drag.** A 243-day clearance means private growth depends on how many already-cleared people live here.
- **Poaching and churn.** Employers compete for the same cleared people. Retention data, tenure and quit rates are not available locally (Section 2).
- **Thin entry-level pathway into the cleared market.** A graduate with no clearance has fewer options than a soldier with one. Internships that start the clearance before graduation are not tracked.
- **Automation of entry-level work.** The author's judgment, not a measured finding, is that artificial intelligence tools will reduce the number of entry-level monitoring and help-desk tasks first, which makes the apprenticeship ladder more important and the first rung less certain. We did not find local evidence either way.
- **Operational technology.** The new plants, the Savannah River Site supply chain and the planned data centers all need industrial and operational-technology security, a skill set that the programs named above do not clearly address.

## What the author proposes

| PROPOSAL | OWNER | FIRST STEP | MEASURE |
|---|---|---|---|
| **A. An annual cyber workforce census.** Count cyber occupations by employer type, openings, time to fill, pay ranges, clearance levels (in aggregate) and turnover, with a large enough sample to publish | The Georgia Cyber Center and the Augusta Economic Development Authority, with the author as research partner | Repeat the 2020-21 employer survey at 100 or more firms and add the questions above | Published census each year; response rate above 50% of firms contacted |
| **B. A clearance bridge.** Make it easier for employers to hire and hold people who are cleared or about to be: a voluntary registry of transitioning soldiers who consent to share, employer-sponsored interim hiring for those awaiting clearance, and clear guidance on the Department of Defense SkillBridge program | Fort Gordon's transition office, the Fort Gordon Alliance, employers and the author; counsel to review privacy and security rules | List the employers already using SkillBridge locally and the number of soldiers placed | Share of separating soldiers placed locally; cleared people between jobs |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **C. A published cyber ladder.** Map the path from a high school cyber academy to Security+ to the technical degree to the university degree to the master's, with Army credit and employer apprenticeship slots at each step | Augusta Tech, Augusta University, the Army Cyber Center of Excellence and employers | Produce a one-page ladder from the existing pathway agreements and ask employers to commit apprenticeship slots | Apprentices in registered cyber apprenticeships; transfers completed; graduates employed locally in cyber after twelve months |
| **D. An industrial-cyber program.** Add operational-technology and industrial control security training for the new manufacturing plants, the Savannah River Site supply chain and data centers | Augusta Tech and Aiken Tech with the plants and the Savannah River site contractors | Ask the new plants and site contractors what they need and whether they would hire from a program | Employer commitments; graduates placed in operational-technology security roles |

## Cyber indicators the author will publish

| INDICATOR | DEFINITION | STATUS |
|---|---|---|
| **Clearance time** | Average days for Secret and Top Secret initial clearances, with the national value alongside local hiring plans | Available now: 197 and 243 days |
| **Cyber postings per cyber worker** | Open cyber postings divided by employed cyber workers, from CyberSeek | 2020 reading about 0.8 (1,200 over 1,500); current reading to be pulled |
| **Cyber cluster size** | Direct cyber jobs in Richmond County and the metro, with the Army and private split | 2020 reading 10,913; updated by the census (Proposal A) |
| **Soldier-to-civilian flow** | Soldiers leaving Fort Gordon each quarter, share cleared, share staying | Awaiting Army data |
| **Local conversion rate** | Share of cyber graduates working locally in cyber after twelve months | Awaiting college data |
| **Apprentices in cyber** | Active registered cyber and operational-technology apprentices | Not published |

Not verified in this edition: current cyber employment and openings, cyber wages by occupation, the number of cleared residents, enrollment and completion in the Augusta Tech and Aiken Tech cyber programs, the number of cyber apprentices, tenant counts at the Georgia Cyber Center, and current cyber employer headcounts. A recruiting-firm article that circulated in searches was not used because it gave no headcounts or wages and cited a single external source, the clearance timeline.

# 23. Artificial intelligence: investment, transition, expansion and impact

Artificial intelligence reaches the CSRA through four channels: the data centers that power it, the Army and university programs that use and teach it, the employers who adopt it, and the workers whose tasks it changes. Each channel moves on a different clock and with a different amount of public evidence. This section takes them in turn, says plainly what the evidence supports, and states what the region should ask before it commits land, tax relief, power and trades labor.

### Investment: what is being built or announced

| PROJECT OR PROGRAM | WHAT IS PUBLIC | WHAT IS NOT |
|---|---|---|
| **Alphabet (Google) campus, Columbia County, Appling** | The Economic Development Authority of Columbia County approved an agreement and the county a memorandum of understanding in August 2026 for an investment of at least $17 billion by Kinetic Infrastructure Solutions, an Alphabet subsidiary, described as one of the largest private investments in county history. A bond-for-title structure puts the bonds on the company, not the county. The county is to receive $40 million a year for seven years and the Development Authority about $5 million a year; officials estimate the property taxes over 25 years at several billion dollars. Site work is underway on a campus reported at more than 3,300 acres off Interstate 20 | Permanent and construction job counts, megawatts, abatement terms, payments to the school system, a construction timeline. Acreage differs between sources: Section 5 reports a 1,900-acre technology park proposed in 2025, and a September 2026 report says 3,300 acres |
| **Project Eisenhower (Eagle South LLC), Gordon Highway** | About $2 billion; a phased campus of more than 2.1 million square feet in six two-story buildings at 2883 Gordon Highway near Fort Gordon; a state filing estimated completion in mid-2026; a nearby Georgia Power substation is part of the site's appeal. An earlier, smaller proposal on the same site was withdrawn in 2022 | Whether it was built or opened, its power load, and its jobs. We did not verify its current status |
| **Other projects** | Data centers are reported in Richmond and McDuffie counties as well (Section 19). Georgia had about 17 operating data centers and 83 projects in planning or construction in September 2026 | Project-level detail for Richmond and McDuffie |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Augusta University, AI and Health** | A department of the Medical College of Georgia led by a Georgia Research Alliance Eminent Scholar, with five stated priorities: translational research, education and workforce development, ethics and governance, health-system integration, and community and industry engagement; plans to build AI content into existing degrees and certificates | Degrees, enrollment, funding |
| **U.S. Army Cyber Command** | A phased roadmap, begun in 2023, moving from AI-assisted operations toward semi-autonomous digital agents by 2033. As of July 2025: a continuous-monitoring platform that detected malicious activity 87% of the time in prototyping and entered a 12-month production pilot; AI simulations for red-team operators; an AI coding-assistant pilot; an automated document reviewer; a users group giving soldiers and civilians AI tools; and an AI governance board | Headcount effects at Fort Gordon; contractor requirements |
| **Federal strategy** | The Department of Labor is creating an AI Workforce Research Hub and AI literacy frameworks, and names data centers and AI among priority sectors (Section 21) | Local funding |

Sources: WRDW (July 25, July 28, August 26, August 28 and September 23, 2026); Yahoo News (Project Eisenhower); U.S. Army (July 31, 2025); Augusta University; Augusta Press. WRDW's July 25 report on the county ordinance gives a noise limit of 70 decibels at the property line, and its August 26 report on the Google project gives 65; the two have not been reconciled, and the ordinance text should be checked. The Appling campus is reported at more than 3,300 acres in one source, at 3,500 acres with 33 buildings in WRDW's July 28, 2026 report (which places it in Harlem and says Google will occupy two complexes), and the White Oak technology park at 1,900 acres in another; whether the last is the same site was not established. The July 28 report says the county ordinance has noise limits but gives no numeric decibel figure, so the 70 and 65 remain unreconciled.

## The money: tax relief and who pays

The Columbia County arrangement is as much a fiscal story as a jobs story. Property taxes make up about 40% of the county's budget, and county officials say the $40 million a year could go toward its roughly $25 million in annual homestead property taxes, so that residents could eventually see relief. Full relief depends on voters approving House Bill 439 in a November referendum, and the county is also lobbying to lift the state's $18,000 per-home cap on relief. The county has set rules for the site: 500-foot buffers from homes, closed-loop cooling, a ban on private wells, full-cutoff lighting and a decommissioning requirement, and the company must pay for any utility upgrades.

The state-level picture is less settled. Georgia's data-center sales tax exemption is scheduled to expire on December 31, 2031. The state's tax expenditure report raised the estimated cost of the exemptions to about $2.5 billion for the current year from an initial $327 million, and press

coverage describes more than $1 billion in savings in fiscal 2025, with a University of Georgia study projecting more than $700 million a year from 2027. Bills were introduced in the 2026 session to end, suspend or pause the exemption or data-center construction, and the governor vetoed a 2024 suspension. We did not verify the outcome of the 2026 bills, so the author does not state whether the exemption stands as written. Local officials argue that property tax revenue offsets the state's sales tax loss; critics say local abatements and low assessments reduce that offset.

## Transition: what the evidence says about jobs

The best national evidence is cautious. A January 2026 Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas analysis found that AI exposure was linked to employment declines only among younger workers. It cites a Stanford study that found a 13% decline in employment since 2022 among workers aged 22 to 25 in the most-exposed occupations, and shows that this age group's share of total employment fell from 16.4% in November 2022 to 15.5% in September 2025. The most-exposed occupations include customer service representatives, secretaries and administrative assistants, and first-line retail supervisors. The decline comes mainly from fewer young people moving from outside the labor force into jobs, not from layoffs, and the job-finding rate for new entrants in the most-exposed group has fallen by more than three percentage points since late 2023. The authors caution that the link may not be causal, that sample sizes are small, that occupation data can hide AI-related unemployment, and that if the entire decline became unemployment it would raise the national rate by only about 0.1 percentage point. They describe the effects so far as small but possibly growing.

For the CSRA, three readings follow, and they are the author's judgment, not local findings. First, the exposure falls where the region has volume: customer-service and administrative work, which the metro's call-center and back-office base depends on (Section 10), and entry-level technical roles such as monitoring and help-desk work. Second, the effect would show up as fewer entry-level openings, not as layoffs, which is why unemployment and layoff notices will not reveal it. Third, the occupations the strategy and the new plants favor, skilled trades, nursing and the technician roles in Section 29, are among the least exposed, so the region's own shortages are not threatened by the technology. We found no local data on AI adoption by employers, no entry-level hiring series for the metro, and no count of exposed jobs.

## Expansion: what comes next

Three items will define the next two years. Construction comes first: a $17 billion and a $2 billion campus, the $1.6 billion Fort Gordon program through 2028, and six announced industrial plants will draw on the same electricians, welders, pipefitters and controls technicians. Augusta Technical College's electrician and welding certificates totaled 69 in 2024 (Section 29), and no source totals the trades demand from these projects together. Power comes second: new customers above 100

megawatts carry added cost under Georgia's rules (Section 19), and the utility has contracted over 9,000 megawatts for data centers statewide, so the question for a manufacturer is whether a data-center neighbor takes capacity or lowers the cost per unit for everyone. Third is the shift of Army cyber operations toward AI-assisted work by 2033, which will change the mix of entry-level and experienced roles at Fort Gordon (Section 22).

## Impact: what it means for the workforce

| DIMENSION | READING | BASIS |
|---|---|---|
| **Construction labor** | Strong demand surge for the skilled trades; the tightest tier gets tighter | Project scale against 69 electrician and welding completions; the author's judgment |
| **Permanent jobs** | Likely few relative to investment; facility technician roles pay well (one company listing for Georgia facility technicians shows salaries above $100,000) | No local permanent job count published; one national company listing |
| **Local fiscal effect** | Potentially large for Columbia County homeowners; dependent on a referendum and on terms not yet published | County statements, August 2026 |
| **Entry-level hiring** | Risk of fewer openings in exposed clerical, customer-service and junior technical roles; not measured locally | National research (Dallas Fed, Stanford); the author's judgment |
| **Cyber and defense** | AI will change task mix; experienced and cleared people become more valuable relative to entry-level monitoring | Army roadmap; the author's judgment |
| **Health care** | Augusta University is positioning AI and Health as a research and education priority; effects on jobs not yet measurable | University announcements |
| **Power and water** | Site rules limit water use (closed-loop cooling, no private wells); power cost allocation is under state rules | County ordinance; state commission rules |

## What the author proposes

| PROPOSAL | OWNER | FIRST STEP | MEASURE |
|---|---|---|---|

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **A. Treat data-center approvals as workforce agreements.** Before relief or abatements, require published construction and permanent job estimates, local hiring and apprenticeship commitments, and an annual report | County commissions and development authorities | Ask the developers for job and trades estimates, and publish them with the tax terms | Jobs and apprentices against commitments; local share of construction hours |
| **B. A combined trades demand schedule.** One quarterly forecast of electrician, welder, pipefitter and controls demand across Fort Gordon construction, data centers, plants and the Savannah River Site, so the colleges and apprenticeship sponsors can plan against it | The Augusta Economic Development Authority, Augusta Tech, Aiken Tech and the Fort Gordon Alliance, with the author | Collect project schedules and trade counts from the major contractors | Completions and apprentices against forecast demand |
| **C. Measure AI adoption and its effect on entry-level hiring.** Add questions on AI use, roles changed and entry-level openings to the Employer Pulse, and track hiring of workers aged 22 to 25 from state wage-record data | The author, with the Georgia Department of Labor | Add the questions to the first Employer Pulse wave; request the age-by-industry hiring series from the state | Share of employers using AI; change in entry-level openings year over year |
| **D. A one-page impact statement for every large project.** Taxes paid and abated, relief to residents, jobs, megawatts, water use and decommissioning, published before the vote | Local governments | Draft the template from the Columbia County terms | Share of approvals with a published statement |
| **E. AI literacy for the incumbent workforce.** Short courses, tied to employers' real tools, for supervisors and for entry-level staff in exposed roles | The technical colleges and employers, using the federal Workforce Pell and apprenticeship channels (Section 21) | Identify which short programs could meet the 70% completion and placement thresholds | Enrollment and placement in AI-literacy programs |

## AI indicators the author will publish

| INDICATOR | DEFINITION | STATUS |
|---|---|---|
| **Contracted AI investment** | Dollars announced and approved, by project and status | Available: at least $17 billion and about $2 billion; construction status unverified |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Permanent jobs per $1 billion invested** | Published permanent job commitments divided by investment | Not yet computable: no job counts |
| **Local relief per homestead** | Annual relief divided by homesteads, with the cap | $40 million a year against about $25 million in homestead taxes, pending the referendum |
| **Entry-level hiring rate, ages 22 to 25** | New hires of 22- to 25-year-olds divided by employment in the age group, by industry | Awaiting state wage-record data |
| **Employer AI adoption** | Share of surveyed employers using AI tools in at least one role | Employer Pulse, first wave |
| **Trades demand coverage** | Annual trades completions divided by forecast trades demand | Pipeline coverage ratio 0.51 for industrial jobs alone; AI projects not yet included |

Not verified in this edition: permanent and construction job counts for any data center, current status of Project Eisenhower, details of the Richmond and McDuffie projects, the outcome of the 2026 data-center tax bills, the November referendum result, any local measure of AI adoption or entry-level hiring, and the effect of AI on the Army's contractor workforce at Fort Gordon. National findings are not local findings.

# 24. Health care: the region's largest professional workforce

Health care is the one part of the CSRA economy where students, employers and anchor institutions are all large, and it is the sector that makes the region a regional medical center. It is also where supply and demand are about to collide. New hospital capacity, a state-wide nursing shortage and pay below the national mean point the same way: the region will compete with itself for the same nurses, technicians and support staff, and the data to see it coming are thin.

## Size and growth

Education and health services is the largest private employment group in the Augusta metro, at 41.1 thousand jobs in September 2026, up 2.8% over twelve months, the fastest of the larger groups (Section 3). Health practitioners and technical workers are 7.9% of metro employment against 6.3% nationally, and health-care support workers are 4.5% against 5.1% (BLS, May 2025). The metro is therefore more concentrated in the professional health occupations than the nation and less in the support jobs beneath them, which is what a regional referral center looks like.

| EMPLOYER | EMPLOYEES | NOTE |
|---|---|---|
| Augusta University Hospitals | 5,341 | Development authority list; the list carries a 2021 footer, so counts may be older than the page date |
| University Hospital | 3,000 | Same list. We believe this is the hospital now called Piedmont Augusta; the two should not be added |
| Piedmont Augusta | more than 4,000 | Piedmont fact sheet, 2024: 812 beds, 20,750 inpatient admissions, two campuses |
| VA medical centers | 2,082 | Development authority list; names the VA system without naming a campus |
| Doctors Hospital | 1,837 | Development authority list |
| East Central Regional Hospital | 1,400 | Development authority list |

Sources: Augusta Economic Development Authority, largest employers; Piedmont Augusta fact sheet (March 2025). Eisenhower Army Medical Center is not on the authority's list, and we did not obtain its staffing.

## New capacity that has to be staffed

Wellstar's Columbia County Medical Center in Grovetown is a 100-bed campus that Becker's Hospital Review prices at $378 million (an earlier report said nearly $350 million), with six

operating rooms, robotic surgery and catheterization labs. The ribbon was cut August 4, 2026 and the hospital began receiving patients August 26, 2026. An adjacent 92,000-square-foot medical office building with 11 outpatient clinics opens in November, and the emergency department grows from 17 rooms to 40 in spring 2027 (an earlier report described a 19-bed department; the sources differ). The company has said the hospital will bring "more than 1,200 jobs"; we did not confirm how many are filled, and the 1,200 figure is the company's. Piedmont has said it expects about $1 billion of capital investment by 2032 (Section 4). Whatever the final hiring numbers, an employer adding hundreds of clinical and support positions in a market of this size draws from the same pool as every other hospital in it.

## Where the professionals come from

The Medical College of Georgia's first-year class of 304 positions is described as the fourth largest in the nation, with 1,132 medical students across its campuses and 812 at the Augusta main campus (MCG fact sheet, 2026). Of the Class of 2026, 269 matched into residencies in 30 specialties across 29 states; 31% will stay in Georgia for their first postgraduate year, and the college says nearly half of its graduates remain in Georgia to practice. It runs residencies in 48 accredited programs. MCG's own pages are inconsistent on the Athens campus, which one page treats as a four-year campus and another says moved to the University of Georgia in 2026, so this edition uses only the main-campus and first-year figures. No source gives how many of MCG's graduates, or of the nurses and allied-health graduates in Section 30, stay in the CSRA, and that is the number that decides whether the region keeps what it trains.

Nursing is the tighter supply. Georgia has 8.47 registered nurses per 1,000 residents against 9.43 nationally, faces a projected nursing shortfall of 20% by 2038 (tied for the second highest in the nation), and a 10% shortage of nursing faculty; 13% of Georgia's nurses left or retired because of the pandemic, against 10% nationally (Atlanta Journal-Constitution, June 2026). Nearly 93,000 qualified nursing applications were turned away nationwide in the last year, which schools attribute to too few faculty, clinical placements and classroom space. Georgia has responded with grants of up to $500,000 for schools with waitlists, faculty loan repayment of up to $25,000 over two years, and two new schools at Mercer University and the University of Georgia, neither in the CSRA. Locally, Augusta University enrolls 1,016 nursing students (Section 30), Augusta Technical College added an LPN-to-RN program in 2024, and Aiken Technical College offers RN, LPN, LPN-to-RN and patient-care-technician programs and began building a Nursing Education Center in August 2025. We found no published local vacancy rates, no count of travel or agency nurses in use, and no local nursing-graduate retention figure.

## What it pays

| MAY 2025, AUGUSTA METRO | SHARE OF JOBS (U.S.) | MEAN HOURLY WAGE | U.S. MEAN | GAP |
|---|---|---|---|---|

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Healthcare practitioners and technical | 7.9% (6.3%) | $47.31 | $52.26 | −9.5% |
| Healthcare support | 4.5% (5.1%) | $17.63 | $19.62 | −10.1% |

Source: BLS Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics, Augusta-Richmond County, GA-SC, May 2025 (released July 7, 2026). The release gives no wage for registered nurses alone.

Both groups earn about a tenth less than the national mean. The support figure, $17.63, matters most: these are the aides, technicians and assistants at the base of every hospital, and at that wage the rent burden shown in Section 14 applies to them in full. The ladder from a support job to a licensed one is the part of the pipeline a regional program can shorten, and it is also the first place a competing hospital's higher offer pulls people away.

## The author's reading

These are judgments, not findings. First, the region will see a wave of hiring in 2026 and 2027 that its own training output cannot meet without drawing from existing employers, so the risk is wage competition and churn among local hospitals more than new entrants to the profession. Second, the support tier is the weak link, because it is the best-fit entry point for the people in Sections 27 and 28 and the lowest paid. Third, health care is among the least exposed occupations to the automation discussed in Section 23, so the shortage will not be solved by technology. Fourth, the metro trains many more health professionals than almost any other field (Section 30), and a modest rise in retention would add more workers than any new program.

## What is not known

Vacancy and turnover rates by employer, use of agency and travel staff, the registered-nurse wage, how many local nursing and allied-health graduates take their first job in the region, Eisenhower Army Medical Center's and the VA's current staffing, and the hiring plans of the Wellstar and Piedmont expansions. A hospital employer is a rare source for these, which is why the data-request letter to the health systems is in the packet.

## What the author proposes

| PROPOSAL | OWNER | FIRST STEP | MEASURE |
|---|---|---|---|
| **A. A shared health-workforce count.** The health systems report vacancies, turnover and agency use in the same four categories, as ranges | Piedmont, Wellstar, Augusta University Health, Doctors Hospital, the VA | Send the letter in the packet; agree on definitions at one meeting | A quarterly regional vacancy and turnover range |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **B. Clinical placements and preceptors.** Pay and recognize preceptors and share placements so schools can admit the students they now turn away | The health systems, Augusta University, the technical colleges | Ask each school how many qualified applicants it declined last year, and why | Seats added; applicants declined |
| **C. A support-to-licensed ladder.** A guaranteed path from aide or technician to LPN or RN with paid class time and a work commitment | The health systems and the technical colleges | Pilot with one hospital and one college | Support workers entering licensed programs; retention after licensure |
| **D. Track where graduates go.** The colleges report first-job location for nursing, allied-health and medical graduates | Augusta University, Augusta Tech, Aiken Tech, USC Aiken | Ask the state for aggregate wage-record matches | Share of graduates working in the CSRA at one and three years |
| **E. Use hospitals as hosts.** A hospital or the university hosts a Project SEARCH site and work-based placements (Sections 27 and 28) | One health system, the school systems and the state council | Feasibility letter | A yes or no and a date |

## Indicators to publish

| INDICATOR | DEFINITION | STATUS |
|---|---|---|
| **Health-care hiring pressure** | Open health positions per 1,000 health jobs, from the employers' ranges | Awaiting employer data |
| **Graduate retention** | Share of nursing, allied-health and medical graduates working in the CSRA one year later | Awaiting college and state data |
| **Support-tier pay gap** | Healthcare-support mean wage against the national mean | −10.1% (May 2025) |

Sources: WRDW (November 14, 2025); SmithGroup (2026); Augusta University Medical College of Georgia fact sheet (May 2026) and expansion page; Atlanta Journal-Constitution (June 2026); Augusta Technical College (WRDW, February 2024); Aiken Technical College; BLS OEWS; Augusta Economic Development Authority; Piedmont Augusta.

# 25. The South Carolina side: Aiken, Edgefield and the Savannah River Site

Two of the metro's seven counties, Aiken and Edgefield, lie in South Carolina, and so does the Savannah River Site, one of the region's largest employers. A workforce report written from the Georgia bank sees only part of the labor market, and most Georgia sections of this edition say so. This section gathers what the edition found on the South Carolina side and says what it could not obtain.

## The labor market

| MEASURE | AIKEN COUNTY | EDGEFIELD COUNTY |
|---|---|---|
| Unemployment rate, August 2026 | 4.2% (−0.6 points; 35th highest of 46 counties) | 3.8% (−0.5; 43rd highest of 46) |
| 2025 annual: employed, unemployed, rate | 76,460; 3,475; 4.3% | not obtained |
| Workers living and working in the county, 2023 | 34,462 | not obtained |
| Work in the county, live elsewhere (2023) | 30,991 | not obtained |
| Live in the county, work elsewhere in South Carolina (2023) | 17,511 | not obtained |

Sources: BLS, via USAFacts; South Carolina Department of Employment and Workforce, Aiken County community profile. The commuting counts include South Carolina employment only, so residents who commute to Georgia are not in the outbound figure (Section 3).

The largest industries in Aiken's workforce region, the Lower Savannah, were manufacturing (18,147 jobs), retail (13,221) and health care and social assistance (11,700) in 2022 (South Carolina labor market agency). A newer regional snapshot gave different counts, and its layout made several figures uncertain, so this edition uses the 2022 figures with the year stated. The agency's Edgefield profile lists the Upper Savannah region's largest industries as manufacturing (24,237), health care (9,996), retail (8,010) and education (7,681) for 2022; Edgefield is one county within that region.

## The Savannah River Site

The Department of Energy's quarterly headcount for March 31, 2025 shows 13,510 people at the site: 12,941 contractor employees (Savannah River Nuclear Solutions 6,969, Savannah River Mission Completion 3,735, the Savannah River National Laboratory 1,390, Centerra-SRS 721, the Ecology Laboratory 94 and Ameresco 32) and 569 federal employees. The Aiken Standard

reported in April 2025 that a site leader expected the workforce to reach up to 18,000, including about 5,000 temporary construction workers, mainly for the Savannah River Plutonium Processing Facility, within about two years, and that operations hiring for that facility would reach almost 1,000 by 2028 and 2,100 shortly after. The same article gave the September 30, 2024 headcount as 13,387 and also quoted "about 12,000", and did not reconcile the two. Those projections are a year and a half old. The same article said the facility's construction was targeted for completion by 2032, with pit production shortly after. We did not confirm the 2026 headcount or construction schedule, and the site's quarterly reports should be read each quarter.

The scale matters for the whole metro. A construction ramp of several thousand workers over two years competes for the same electricians, welders, pipefitters and craft supervisors as Fort Gordon's $1.6 billion of construction and the Columbia County data-center campus (Sections 22 and 23), and the labor supply for those trades is thin (Section 29). Clearance requirements for some of the work narrow the pool further (Section 21), and a site hiring at that scale will draw skilled workers from Georgia employers as well.

## Training and education

Aiken Technical College served 3,146 students in 2024 to 2025, 71% of them from Aiken County. Its industrial and skilled-trades programs include nuclear science, industrial maintenance and machine tool technology, and it offers RN, LPN and patient-care programs; a Nursing Education Center began construction in August 2025. Its graduation rate in federal data is 33.5% (Section 30). The University of South Carolina Aiken expects record enrollment in 2026 to 2027 (the count was due in October), with housing full for the first time since the pandemic, a new bachelor's degree in electrical engineering, engineering courses moving to an Advanced Manufacturing Collaborative, and a business school accredited by the AACSB. These are the programs closest to the Savannah River Site's needs, and neither reports completions in a form that can be matched to the site's openings.

## South Carolina's incentives, as a Georgia reader should understand them

South Carolina's Job Development Credit refunds a share of the state withholding tax on new jobs. A 2026 presentation to South Carolina's county association puts the credit at 2% to 5% of wages by wage tier: 2% for $13.04 to $17.37 an hour, 3% for $17.38 to $21.71, 4% for $21.72 to $32.58 and 5% for $32.59 and up. The credit requires health insurance with the employer paying at least half the premium, generally applies only to jobs paying at or above the county average wage, and is scaled by county tier from 55% to 100% of the allowable credit. Companies have five years to meet job and investment targets and collect for up to ten years (fifteen for significant projects). A 2026 provision targets high-wage, low-investment projects with at least 25 jobs and wages at 2.5 times county per capita income. On property tax, the fee-in-lieu arrangement allows an assessment ratio as low as 6% and a millage rate locked for up to 30 years for investments of at least $2.5 million

within five years, with larger thresholds for the enhanced fee, and special source credits can be applied against the fee. This summary comes from a county association's slide deck, not from the statutes or the Commerce Department, and the terms should be confirmed there before any decision. We did not verify the terms of the state's readySC customized training program. Georgia's programs are in Section 17.

## What this edition could not obtain

Edgefield's labor force and commuting, Aiken and Edgefield wages by industry, the South Carolina peer metros' wages, South Carolina workers' compensation rates, whether the two states' occupational licenses are honored across the river, and the 2026 Savannah River Site headcount. Letters 6 and 8 ask for part of this.

## What the author proposes

| PROPOSAL | OWNER | FIRST STEP | MEASURE |
|---|---|---|---|
| **A. One cross-river labor picture.** Georgia and South Carolina agencies publish the metro's commuting and wage data in one table | The Georgia Department of Labor and the South Carolina Department of Employment and Workforce | Request the cross-state commuting counts (letter 16) | One metro table, updated yearly |
| **B. A shared trades calendar.** Augusta Tech, Aiken Tech and the apprenticeship sponsors align cohorts with the site's, Fort Gordon's and the plants' construction schedules | The two technical colleges, the site contractors, the Fort Gordon Alliance | Collect project schedules and trade counts (Section 29) | Completers by trade against projected demand |
| **C. A licensing inventory.** List the licensed occupations where Georgia and South Carolina differ for nursing, teaching, electricians and others | The two states' licensing boards, with the colleges | Ask each board for its reciprocity rules | A published list |
| **D. Treat South Carolina as part of the metro.** Edition 2 extends every county table to Aiken and Edgefield | The author, with the two state labor agencies | Request the county series | Same tables for all seven metro counties |

Sources: BLS via USAFacts; South Carolina Department of Employment and Workforce community profiles (Aiken and Edgefield); U.S. Department of Energy, Savannah River Site headcount report, second quarter of fiscal 2025; The Aiken Standard (April 7, 2025); Aiken Technical College; WRDW (August 6, 2026); South Carolina Association of Counties presentation (2026); South Carolina Department of Commerce.

# 26. Youth pathways: where work ethic and participation begin

A workforce is built long before a person's first job. Habits of showing up, finishing, leading and learning a trade are formed in clubs, classrooms, farms, after-school programs and part-time work. The hypothesis behind this section is that places with more of these outlets, and with stronger links from them to employers, produce more people who enter and stay in the labor force. That is plausible and worth testing. It is not proven, and this section says what the evidence supports, what exists in the CSRA, and what the region cannot yet measure.

### What the evidence supports, and what it does not

| CLAIM | EVIDENCE | STRENGTH |
|---|---|---|
| Youth development programs benefit participants | The Tufts University study of 4-H followed more than 7,000 young people in 42 states from fifth to twelfth grade across eight annual waves (2002 to 2010) and reported strong evidence of benefit; the summary we reviewed gave no figures. Georgia 4-H's 2024 national index survey found 95% of members saying the program lets them explore things they care about, 87% rating it a positive use of time, and 82% saying it influences their desire for community engagement | Association and self-report. Families who choose a program may differ from those who do not, and the survey measures attitudes, not later employment |
| Early work experience improves later employment | A Federal Reserve Bank of Boston review found the evidence mixed: some studies find that early labor-force attachment predicts better later outcomes, and others attribute the link to who chooses to work. Moderate hours, roughly under 15 to 20 a week during the school year, appear to help, with an inverted-U relationship to school performance | Mixed |
| Structured summer youth jobs help | The same review cites rigorous evaluations with different results: New York City participants had higher later employment and wages and fewer incarcerations; Washington, D.C. found reduced employability after the program; Chicago found a 43% drop in crime over sixteen months. Boston's program raised job readiness and neighborhood connection in a short-term, self-reported survey | Promising but program-specific; effects depend on design |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Many young people are disconnected from both school and work | Nationally, 16.0% of 18- to 24-year-olds were neither working nor in school between 2017 and April 2024, with 20.2% in rural areas, 17.1% in principal cities and 15.6% in other metro areas (St. Louis Fed) | National; no CSRA figure found. The rural gap matters for the eight rural counties |
| Places with more youth outlets have more robust workforces | The author found no study that tests this across regions | Untested; a reasonable hypothesis, and the reason to measure |

Sources: Tufts University and National 4-H summary (Utah State Extension); Georgia 4-H 2024-2025 infographic; Federal Reserve Bank of Boston, Community Development Issue Brief (2016); St. Louis Fed (August 2024).

The honest conclusion for an employer or a planner is this. The strongest case is for programs that give young people real responsibility and a connection to a real employer, and the weakest is for any claim that a count of clubs predicts a region's participation rate. The practical step is to build the inventory, track who participates, and follow the cohort to the first job. That turns an appealing idea into a measurement.

## What exists in the CSRA

| OUTLET | WHAT WE FOUND | WHAT IS NOT PUBLIC |
|---|---|---|
| **4-H** | Georgia 4-H had 201,973 participations in 2024-25 and enrolled 193,518 youth in 2023-24. Richmond County 4-H, run by UGA Cooperative Extension, offers gardening, fishing, horse, small-animal and a community club for fourth and fifth graders in Hephzibah whose schools do not have 4-H, for $5 to $10 a year, plus state contests such as LifeSmarts and a leadership program. Columbia County's report says middle-school membership nearly doubled and it hosted the district's largest number of middle-school summer campers | Membership counts for Richmond, Columbia and Burke counties; South Carolina's Clemson 4-H in Aiken and Edgefield was not reviewed |
| **FFA and agricultural education** | National FFA reported a record 1.05 million members in nearly 9,600 chapters in August 2026. Georgia's agricultural education program publishes a county map of schools with programs | Which CSRA schools have chapters, their membership, and their completion of industry credentials; the map could not be read for individual counties |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Boys and Girls Clubs of Greater Augusta** | In its 75th year. Its J. Hebbard Club in South Augusta has 250 spots, is full and has a waiting list. The organization says about 30,000 school-aged children live in Richmond County. Its summer programs include workforce-readiness training, mentorship, and cosmetology and barber shops and a cyber lab for exploring careers. Nearly $5 million of its $9 million budget comes from government sources outside Augusta | Reported reach conflicts: one 2026 article says 1,183 children are served; a 2025 article says over 6,500 across the CSRA with about 1,300 a day; a WRDW story of October 26, 2026 says the clubs now serve more than 7,000 children a year at 11 locations in five counties. The figures probably count different things (a single site, a daily attendance, an annual unduplicated total), but no source says so. The club also says that 98% of children who attend every day finish high school on time, which is the organization's own claim for a self-selected group. We report all of them and use none to compute coverage |
| **Federal after-school funding** | In July 2025, more than $200 million in federal education grants expected in Georgia, including 21st Century Community Learning Center funds, was on hold and local clubs warned of possible closures | How the hold was resolved and what each local program received; we did not verify the outcome |
| **School-based work-based learning** | Georgia launched a work-based-learning diploma pathway in 2026 that pairs classes with paid work in high-demand careers. Richmond County treats it as a fourth diploma option and was still planning it in June 2026; Columbia County has students working in it. A 2021 report put Columbia County at nearly 20 skill and trade pathways, about 100 students in work-based learning and about 40 in a summer internship program, with technical classes available from ninth grade | Current enrollments, employer slots, and Richmond, Burke and McDuffie participation |
| **Dual enrollment and career grants** | Students can earn technical-college credit in high school; the HOPE Career Grant covers tuition for programs including welding, carpentry, nursing and cyber (Section 22) | Participation counts by school system |
| **Youth summer jobs** | We found no published municipal or regional summer youth employment program for the CSRA; searches returned programs in other cities | Whether one exists and its size |

Sources: Georgia 4-H; UGA Cooperative Extension county pages; National FFA (via Oklahoma Farm Report, August 2026); WRDW (July 16, 2025, June 12, June 22 and August 25, 2026); The Augusta Press (2021).

## What the inventory shows about capacity

The clearest local capacity signal is a full club with a waiting list in the part of the county with the longest transit trips (Section 21). The Boys and Girls Club's own figure of about 30,000 school-aged children in Richmond County, set against a reach that its public statements put at anywhere from about 1,200 to more than 7,000 a year across the larger region, suggests that even the largest community program reaches a minority of children, and that the answer depends on which figure is right. The author will not publish a coverage percentage until the organization states which count it means by each figure. A related risk is funding: about half of the club's budget comes from government sources outside Augusta, and the 2025 federal hold showed how quickly that can change. The regional workforce is therefore exposed to decisions in Washington and Atlanta about after-school money.

The work-based diploma pathway is the strongest single link between the youth system and the labor market, because it pairs school with paid work at a real employer. It is also the least developed in the largest district, which is still planning it. That is where employer commitments matter most, and where the employer slots proposed below would come from.

## What the author proposes

| PROPOSAL | OWNER | FIRST STEP | MEASURE |
|---|---|---|---|
| **A. A youth opportunity inventory.** One list of the 4-H, FFA, after-school, summer, mentoring and work-based programs in each county, with enrollment, capacity and waiting lists | School systems, UGA Extension (and Clemson Extension), the Boys and Girls Clubs, the Family Y and the technical colleges, convened by the author for Edition 2 | Send the request letter in the packet and agree on four common counts | Participants per 1,000 school-age children by county, published annually |
| **B. Employer-linked work experience.** Employers commit paid slots for teens: summer jobs, work-based diploma placements and apprenticeship on-ramps, with moderate hours and a supervisor trained for it | Employers, the school systems and WorkSource CSRA | Ask the first ten employers to commit three slots each, and ask Richmond County for the pathway's start date | Slots committed and filled; share converted to part-time or full-time work |
| **C. Future-focused tracks.** Align 4-H, FFA and after-school programs with the local industries: manufacturing, cyber, nuclear and health, so that a project or club leads to a credential or a visit to an employer | Extension, ag-education teachers, the technical colleges and plants | Pick two programs and two employers to pilot with | Credentials earned in high school; students visiting employers |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **D. Protect and diversify after-school funding.** Local employers and governments fund slots so programs are not dependent on a single federal stream | Local governments, employers and the United Way | Ask each major club for its funding sources and what a one-year gap would cost | Share of funding from local sources; programs closed or capped |
| **E. Follow the cohort.** Track a class of participants through graduation to the first job to test whether participation predicts work | The Georgia Department of Education and Department of Labor, with a research partner | Ask for a data-sharing agreement for one class | Employment and earnings at age 20 for participants against similar non-participants |

## Youth indicators the author will publish

| INDICATOR | DEFINITION | STATUS |
|---|---|---|
| **Youth program coverage** | Participants in structured youth programs per 1,000 school-age children, by county | Awaiting enrollment counts and confirmed reach |
| **Youth disconnection rate** | Share of 16- to 24-year-olds neither working nor in school, by county, from the American Community Survey | National 16.0%, rural 20.2%; county figures to be pulled |
| **Teen summer employment** | Employed 16- to 19-year-olds in June to August, from state wage records | Awaiting state data |
| **Work-based learning participants** | Students in paid work-based pathways as a share of juniors and seniors | Not published; Richmond County pathway still in planning |
| **Waiting list** | Children on waiting lists for after-school and summer programs | One site known: J. Hebbard Club, 250 spots full |
| **First-job conversion** | Share of work-based students employed locally at age 20 | Needs a cohort agreement (Proposal E) |

Not verified in this edition: membership in 4-H and FFA by county; which schools have FFA chapters; the outcome of the 2025 federal after-school hold; the Family Y's current programs; whether the Jobs for Georgia's Graduates program operates locally; any local summer youth employment program; Aiken and Edgefield youth programs; and any county figure for youth disconnection.

# 27. The school-to-work pipeline: what it builds, and what it cannot

A talent pipeline is a chain of handoffs, and it is only as strong as its weakest one. A student has to enter a pathway, finish it, be placed in a job that uses it, and still be there a year or three years later. Most regional reports count the first two and stop. This section sets out what school-to-work programs do well, what the CSRA can and cannot show at each handoff, and the part of the problem that no placement program is designed to address: whether a young person arrives at work able to manage frustration, take feedback, show up, and ask for help.

### Four handoffs, and what is measured at each

| HANDOFF | WHAT IT ASKS | WHAT THE CSRA CAN SHOW TODAY | WHAT IS MISSING |
|---|---|---|---|
| **1. Entry** | How many young people start a career pathway, dual-enrollment course, apprenticeship or work-based placement | Pathway programs exist in the school systems and technical colleges (Sections 8, 9 and 24); the state work-based-learning diploma launched in 2026 | Enrollment counts by program, school system and county |
| **2. Completion** | How many finish with a credential or certification | Richmond County reported a CTAE pathway graduation rate of 98.18% for the Class of 2025; the source gives no number of students and does not define the denominator | Completers and industry credentials earned, by pathway; Columbia County and the South Carolina districts |
| **3. Placement** | How many are hired into a job that uses what they learned, in the region | Nothing public. Student stories in the news, and a state pathway that Richmond County was still planning in June 2026 | Placement by pathway and employer; share who stay in the CSRA |
| **4. Retention** | How many are still employed, and still in the region, after one, three and five years | Nothing public | A match of graduates to state wage records, which the state holds and the region does not see |

The pipeline-coverage ratio of 0.51 in Section 20 is a supply-and-demand estimate. It is not a measure of these handoffs. Sources: The Augusta Press (Class of 2025 pathway graduation rates); WRDW (June 12, 2026).

## What school-to-work programs do well

The best evidence on structured programs that connect school to work comes from MDRC's long-term random-assignment study of career academies, which followed students for eight years after their expected graduation. Academy students earned 11% more per year than the comparison group, or $2,088 a year in 2006 dollars, which adds to $16,704 over the eight years. Young men gained the most: $3,731 a year, or 17%, nearly $30,000 over eight years, which the study attributes to higher wages, more hours worked and more stable employment. The study also found that academies did not raise high school graduation or college completion: more than 90% of both groups graduated or earned a GED, and half of each group finished a postsecondary credential.

Two lessons follow for the CSRA. The first is that the gains came from work, not from additional schooling. A program that puts students in front of real employers early and builds a record of reliable attendance and performance is doing something the classroom alone does not. The second is that one study of one model does not prove that any pathway works. It is evidence that a well-designed program can, and a reason to measure local programs instead of assuming they do.

## What employers say is missing

The National Association of Colleges and Employers' Job Outlook 2026 Spring Update, a survey of 185 employers conducted from February 12 to March 17, 2026, found that employers see communication, teamwork, professionalism and critical thinking as the most important competencies in new graduates. They rated teamwork highest and were less impressed with communication, professionalism and critical thinking. Most described new graduates as reasonably well prepared, and more than 20% as very well prepared. The survey covers college graduates nationally, comes from a small sample of employers, and measures perception. It tells us what employers notice. It does not measure what young people lack, and it says nothing about the CSRA.

## What a placement program is not built to do

A school-to-work program is built to deliver skills, credentials, exposure and a connection to an employer. It is not built to repair the things that decide whether a person keeps the job once the placement ends: managing frustration, accepting correction, handling a conflict with a supervisor, recovering from a mistake, asking for help before a problem becomes an absence, and holding a sense of belonging in a workplace unlike the one at home. Employers' complaints about new graduates cluster around professionalism and communication, and these are usually called a skills gap. The author's judgment is that much of it is a readiness gap. That is a judgment. No local study measures it, and this report does not claim that CSRA young people have particular deficits.

What can be measured is the capacity that stands behind readiness. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that 33.3% of U.S. high school students in its 2025 Youth Risk

Behavior Survey said they had felt persistently sad or hopeless, 43.4% of girls and 23.9% of boys. Of the students with those feelings, 29.6% had received counseling or therapy, 28.8% reported an unmet need, and 41.5% said they perceived no need. The CDC pages we read gave no Georgia figure, so this report does not state one. In Georgia, the ratio of students to school counselors is 386 to 1, against 250 to 1 recommended by the American School Counselor Association (Atlanta Journal-Constitution, May 2026; the article does not give the year of the ratio). Georgia also runs the Apex program, which places community mental health providers in schools. In its sixth year (July 2020 to June 2021) it reached 731 schools in 125 districts and 116 counties and served 10,962 students; the brief we read does not name the counties, so we cannot confirm which CSRA schools take part.

| WHAT A YOUNG WORKER NEEDS | WHAT SCHOOL-TO-WORK PROGRAMS USUALLY PROVIDE | WHAT IS USUALLY LEFT TO CHANCE |
|---|---|---|
| Technical skill and a credential | Pathway courses, certification, dual enrollment | Nothing, if the program is funded and the seats exist |
| Exposure to a real workplace | Job shadowing, internships, work-based diploma placements | Whether the supervisor is trained to manage a teenager |
| Self-regulation, resilience and the ability to take feedback | Occasional workshops | Almost everything. These are formed at home, in school and in the community long before the placement |
| Stable mental health and access to care | School counselors, where the ratio allows, and school-based providers where a program like Apex is present | Care for the student who needs it and is not asking |
| An adult who models steady work and checks in after the first month | A teacher or coordinator during the school year | The first ninety days after the job starts, when the placement has ended and no one owns the relationship |

Sources: MDRC, Career Academies long-term impacts; NACE, Job Outlook 2026 Spring Update; CDC, MMWR Supplement on the 2025 Youth Risk Behavior Survey; Atlanta Journal-Constitution (May 2026); Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities, Apex Year 6 brief. The right-hand column is the author's reading of how these programs are designed, not a finding from a study of CSRA programs.

## An example of a readiness layer: Before Day One

**The need.** A placement ends when the student starts the job. The first weeks after a placement starts are, in the author's judgment, the most exposed period, and neither the school nor the employer owns it. A readiness layer is a short, structured step placed between the offer and the first shift, that teaches workplace norms (attendance, communication, handling correction), lets the candidate practice them, and gives the employer a view of the person before day one. It should be

evaluated like any other program: by whether the people who take it stay longer than people who do not.

**An example.** The author is building one such tool, Before Day One (beforeday1.com), a job-seeker site meant to prepare candidates for the workplace before their first day. The author also works on a youth readiness curriculum for ages 14 to 24 under The MIND Foundation, a Georgia nonprofit, with separate tracks for general, higher-risk and neurodiverse participants, in which a facilitator, who can be a parent, is required for participants under 18. **Neither has published outcomes, and this report does not claim any.** They are described here because they are the author's own attempts at the problem, and the reader should weigh them as such. The principles matter more than the products: a short module, a trained facilitator for minors, a plan for the first ninety days, and a measure of retention that an independent party can check.

## What the author proposes

| PROPOSAL | OWNER | FIRST STEP | MEASURE |
|---|---|---|---|
| **A. A pathway scorecard.** For each pathway, publish entry, completion, placement and one-, three- and five-year retention | School systems, technical colleges and the Georgia Department of Education, with the state labor agency | Send the request letter in the packet; ask the state which agency can match graduates to wage records without releasing names | Four published counts per pathway |
| **B. An employer definition of readiness.** Employers state, in plain language, the five behaviors they need in the first ninety days, and every program teaches to that list | Chamber, employers and the school systems | Convene a panel of ten employers from three sectors | One shared list, adopted by each pathway |
| **C. A readiness layer in every work-based placement.** A short module before day one and a check-in at thirty and ninety days, with supervisors trained to manage a first-time worker | School systems and participating employers | Pilot with three employers in the state work-based diploma pathway | Ninety-day retention against non-participants |
| **D. Map counselor and mental-health access.** Students per counselor, school-based provider presence and wait times, by district | School systems, the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities | Ask each district for its counselor count and Apex status | A table by district, updated yearly |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **E. Follow the first year.** Employers report early separations by reason, with no names, to a shared tally | Employers and the Chamber, with a research partner | Agree on four reasons and a reporting date | Early-separation rate for under-25 hires |

## Indicators to publish

| INDICATOR | DEFINITION | STATUS |
|---|---|---|
| **Pathway conversion** | Share of pathway completers placed in a job in the CSRA within six months | Awaiting school and state data |
| **First-year retention** | Share of work-based-learning graduates still employed a year later | Awaiting a wage-record match |
| **Counselor load** | Students per school counselor, by district | Georgia 386 to 1 reported; district figures not obtained |
| **Supervisor readiness** | Share of work-based placements whose supervisor has completed training | Not measured anywhere |

# 28. Neurodivergent talent: an under-used pipeline

Autistic people, and people with ADHD, dyslexia and related differences, are a large group of capable workers, and most employers have no way to reach them. A region that can build a bridge between its schools, its vocational-rehabilitation system and its employers gets more workers from a population it already has. This section sets out what is known, what exists in Georgia, what the CSRA appears to lack, and what employers can change. It does not assume that every autistic person has a particular talent, and it does not treat difference as a deficit. Its claim is narrower: many of these workers do well when the hiring process and the job are designed around what the work requires, and most hiring processes are not.

## A note on terms

"High-functioning" is a phrase many autistic people and researchers reject, because it describes how a person appears to others, not what support the person needs. This report uses "autistic and neurodivergent workers who can do the job with accommodations." Support needs vary widely, and some people need considerable support throughout their working lives. The pipeline described here concentrates on people whose main barrier is the process of getting hired and the way the workplace is run.

## What the evidence shows

| QUESTION | EVIDENCE | STRENGTH AND LIMITS |
|---|---|---|
| How often do autistic young adults work? | A Drexel University fact sheet using 2009 data found that 58% of autistic young adults aged 21 to 25 had ever worked after high school, against 74% for those with an intellectual disability and more than 90% for those with emotional disturbance, speech or language impairment or a learning disability. Those who worked earned an average of $9.11 an hour part time and $8.08 full time, and nearly 80% worked part time | Old (2009) and national. Employment among young adults with other disabilities was higher, which is the point. We did not obtain a current figure |

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|---|---|---|
| Do employer programs work? | As of January 2020, SAP (since 2013) reported more than 160 autistic employees and 92% retention, JPMorgan Chase (2015) more than 155 and 95%, Microsoft (2015) more than 100 and 92%, and EY (2016) more than 80 and 90% or more. Roughly 50 other large U.S. employers had launched programs in the previous two to four years | Employer-reported retention; no productivity data were given. The source calls the field "nascent", notes that the pool is narrowed by degree and skill requirements, and is written by the head of an advisory firm that works in this field. Almost all roles were in technology |
| What do accommodations cost? | The Job Accommodation Network, a service of the U.S. Department of Labor, surveyed more than 3,500 employers from 2019 through 2022: 49.4% reported that the accommodation cost nothing, 43.3% a one-time cost with a median of $300, and 7.2% an ongoing cost with a median of $3,750 a year | Self-reported by employers that sought advice; covers all disabilities, not autism alone |

Sources: Drexel University Life Course Outcomes Program, Employment fact sheet; Autism Spectrum News, Corporate Neurodiversity Hiring Programs: Scratching the Surface (January 2020); National Industries for the Blind, reporting the JAN study (June 2023).

## What exists in Georgia and the CSRA

| PROGRAM | WHAT IT DOES | WHAT WE FOUND LOCALLY |
|---|---|---|
| **Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS)** | The Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency offers five services to students aged 14 to under 22 who have an IEP, a 504 plan or other disability documentation: job exploration, counseling on post-secondary options, workplace readiness training, work-based learning and self-advocacy instruction | The agency page does not name an Augusta office. A U.S. Department of Labor directory lists one. Referral numbers and caseloads for the CSRA were not obtained |
| **Project SEARCH** | A one-year internship program hosted at a business, usually a hospital, for young adults with significant disabilities. In Georgia, 18 sites in 14 locations were listed; nine were recognized for 100% placement, the statewide employment rate was about 75%, and interns averaged $9.61 an hour for about 25 hours a week | None of the listed locations is in the CSRA. The list may be dated, and the program is aimed at people with greater support needs than the group this section mainly addresses |

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|---|---|---|
| **Federal Schedule A hiring authority** | Lets federal agencies hire people with an intellectual disability, a severe physical disability or a psychiatric disability without competing with the general public. A licensed medical professional, a certified rehabilitation professional or a disability benefits agency writes a letter that states the person qualifies, without naming a diagnosis. Hires serve two years on probation and may then be made permanent | Relevant to Fort Gordon and other federal employers (Section 21). We did not find how often local agencies use it |
| **Employer neurodiversity hiring programs** | The national programs above | We searched for an Augusta-area employer program and found none. A search that finds nothing does not prove nothing exists, and employers may run quiet programs |

Sources: Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency, Pre-Employment Transition Services; Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities, Project SEARCH in Georgia; U.S. Department of Labor Office of Disability Employment Policy, Schedule A guide.

## Where the bridge breaks

The following is the author's reading of where the pipeline breaks, based on how these programs are built. The sources do not measure it locally, and it should be read as a hypothesis for the data requests to test.

**The student without a plan.** Pre-ETS reaches students who have a documented disability and a plan. Many capable autistic young people are diagnosed late or never, or have a plan that stops at graduation. They are the people the programs were not built for, and the employer programs at the national companies are mostly built for the college-educated.

**The interview.** Most interviews reward eye contact, small talk and improvised answers. These measure social fluency, which has little to do with the job in many technical roles. A candidate who would do well in a work trial can be screened out in the first conversation.

**The employer who does not know what to ask for.** The accommodations are cheap, as the Job Accommodation Network data show, but the manager has to know to offer them, and the candidate has to be willing to ask. Under the Americans with Disabilities Act, an employer cannot ask about a disability before an offer, so a process that works only for people who disclose will miss most of them. The practical answer is to change the process for everyone.

**The small employer.** Almost 60% of U.S. workers are employed by companies with fewer than 1,000 employees (as the Autism Spectrum News article notes), and these firms rarely have a recruiter to run a program. The national models were built by firms that do.

## Where the fit is likely

The author's judgment, not a local finding, is that the CSRA has more roles suited to a process-based hiring approach than most regions its size. Cyber operations and security testing (Section 22), data and records work, quality assurance and inspection, logistics and inventory, precision manufacturing, and the operation of the data centers described in Section 23 all have tasks that are defined, repeatable and checkable. Fort Gordon's mission adds a federal channel through Schedule A. Fit depends on the person and the job, and the claim that autism confers a particular aptitude is not one this report makes.

## Practices that remove the barriers

| PRACTICE | WHAT IT REPLACES | COST |
|---|---|---|
| **Work trial or skills task before the interview** | A conversation that tests social fluency | A few paid hours |
| **Written, specific job descriptions and instructions** | Verbal instructions and unstated expectations | Management time once |
| **Questions sent in advance** | Surprise questions | None |
| **A named mentor for the first ninety days** | Learning the unwritten rules by trial and error | Part of a mentor's time |
| **A quieter workspace, predictable schedule or noise-reducing headphones, offered to everyone** | Requiring each person to ask | The Job Accommodation Network median is $300 for a one-time cost |

## An example from the author's own work

The youth readiness curriculum described in Section 27 includes a separate track for neurodiverse participants, chosen by a professional facilitator, with a parent or guardian involved for those under 18. It is mentioned here because it is the author's own approach to the problem. It has no published outcomes, and a program designed by the author of this report should be held to the same test as any other: do its participants get and keep work, compared with those who did not take part.

## What the author proposes

| PROPOSAL | OWNER | FIRST STEP | MEASURE |
|---|---|---|---|
| **A. A regional neurodivergent hiring network.** Employers share one toolkit: work trials, written instructions, mentor training | The Chamber, the Economic Development Authority and three founding employers | Recruit one employer each from cyber, health care and manufacturing | Employers using the toolkit; hires; ninety-day retention |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **B. A Project SEARCH feasibility study.** Ask whether a hospital, Fort Gordon activity or the university can host a site | Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities, the school systems and a host employer | Send the request letter in the packet; ask the council what a new site requires | A yes or no and a date |
| **C. A bridge for the student without a plan.** Technical college and university disability services, school transition coordinators and the Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency agree on how a capable student without a plan reaches an employer | Augusta Technical College, Augusta University, the school systems and the agency | Convene one meeting; ask each for its current process | A written referral path |
| **D. Use Schedule A at Fort Gordon.** Federal hiring managers in the region identify roles and recruit through the vocational-rehabilitation system | Fort Gordon human resources and equal employment offices | Ask how many Schedule A hires the installation made in the last three years | Count of hires and conversions |
| **E. Count what exists.** Aggregate numbers only: transition-age students with plans, Pre-ETS participants, Project SEARCH graduates employed | School systems and the agency | Request aggregate counts with no names | Three published counts |

## Indicators to publish

| INDICATOR | DEFINITION | STATUS |
|---|---|---|
| **Transition reach** | Pre-ETS participants per 1,000 students with an IEP or 504 plan, by county | Awaiting agency and school counts |
| **Employer readiness** | Employers offering a work trial or a structured-interview option, as a share of employers surveyed | To be added to the employer survey |
| **Placement and retention** | Employment at six and twelve months for program graduates | Awaiting program data |

# 29. Talent by skill tier: surplus, shortage and fit

"Workforce shortage" is not one condition. It means plenty of people for some jobs, and too few for others, and a metro can have both at the same time. This section grades each tier on the evidence collected in this report. The grades are the author's judgment; the occupation-level supply and demand counts that would turn them into hard numbers are not published for the CSRA and are a stated gap.

| TIER (EXAMPLES) | PAY AND ENTRY PATH | SUPPLY AND DEMAND | GRADE |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Unskilled** laborers, stockers, sewing and food processing, general warehouse | $14 to $17.62; on-the-job training, no credential | The idle pool (about 11,200 unemployed) and 719 recent layoffs supply volume. The shortage is reliability and retention, driven by rent burden, child care and attendance, not headcount. | Surplus in volume; retention shortage |
| **Semi-skilled** machine and process operators, assemblers, CNAs, truck drivers | $18 to $22; short certificate or six to twelve weeks of training | About 910 announced industrial jobs compete for the same operators; laid-off food and textile workers are an experienced source this year, but the new plants will absorb them quickly. | Tightening, with a temporary layoff cushion |
| **Skilled** industrial maintenance, electricians, welders, machinists, nuclear and process technicians, registered nurses, network and cyber technicians | $25 and up; apprenticeship, associate degree or license | Augusta Tech's three trade clusters produced 465 completions in 2024 and electrician and welding certificates only 69, against 910 announced industrial jobs, plus Fort Gordon construction and the retirement of an aging trades workforce. Registered apprenticeships exist but publish no counts. | Shortage: the tightest tier |
| **Professional** physicians, engineers, analysts, teachers, accountants, cyber and data professionals | Bachelor's degree or higher; wage gap of about 14% below the nation | Strong output in health professions (4,094 students) and education (2,450); thin in computer and cyber science (848 students) against federal demand of 4,300 or more at NSA Georgia alone; bachelor's attainment of 16.4% is below the national rate. | Balanced in health and education; shortage in cyber and engineering |

## What the grades imply

The pressure falls on the middle. Entry-level labor can be found, and the professional pipeline is deep in the fields with the most students, but the roles that new plants, the Savannah River Site and Fort Gordon construction need most are the ones that require a credential somewhere between a

high school diploma and a bachelor's degree. That tier takes the longest to build, because an apprenticeship takes years, and so it deserves the first call on any new training investment. It is also the tier where completion matters most: Augusta Tech's graduation rate is 31.1% and Aiken Tech's 33.5%, so enrollment alone does not produce skilled workers.

A second implication concerns supply from outside. With foreign-born residents at 3.8% of the population against 14.1% nationally and a labor force growing only about 1% a year, the metro cannot lean on migration to fill the middle tier as other Southeastern metros do. It has to grow its own, retain its graduates, and recruit transitioning military personnel and displaced workers with transferable skills.

# 30. Higher and technical education: programs against need

The CSRA has a research university, two technical colleges with a cyber and nuclear specialization, and a set of apprenticeship pathways. The question is whether the programs match the jobs coming, and where they do not.

| EMPLOYER NEED | PROGRAMS THAT EXIST (VERIFIED) | FIT AND GAP |
|---|---|---|
| Industrial maintenance, multi-craft technicians (new plants, Savannah River Site) | Augusta Tech mechanical technologies (180 completions in 2024); Aiken Tech industrial maintenance, electrical/maintenance and HVAC in its WORC scholarship program; registered Industrial Maintenance Apprenticeship with Shaw Industries | Programs exist. Capacity, apprenticeship cohort size and completion are not published. |
| Machinists and precision production | Augusta Tech precision production (154 completions); Aiken Tech machine tool technology, with a Rolls-Royce machine tool pre-apprenticeship | Programs exist; no published count of placements. |
| Welders | Augusta Tech welding (42 certificates); Aiken Tech welding | Small output compared with industrial hiring. |
| Electricians | Augusta Tech electrician (27 certificates) | The smallest verified trade output against construction and plant demand. |
| Nuclear and radiation operators | Aiken Tech nuclear fundamentals and radiation protection technology; registered Nuclear Operator Apprenticeship with Savannah River Site contractors | Strong, employer-linked pathway. Cohort sizes not published. |
| Construction trades | Augusta Tech construction (131 completions); Construction Ready eight-week pre-apprenticeship (97% placement); Aiken Tech construction pre-apprenticeship | Best-measured pathway; scale is small next to demand. |
| Production and process operators | Aiken Tech production operator pre-apprenticeship | Generic operator training exists. Chemical, metals and casting process-technician programs for Aurubis, Nemak and Syensqo were not found in the sources reviewed; confirm with the employers. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Network, cyber and data center technicians | Augusta Tech Cyber Institute: cybersecurity degree (since 2015), networking (the first in the Technical College System of Georgia), computer support including data center operations, programming; Cisco and Microsoft academies; NSA and Homeland Security academic-excellence designation (2018). Augusta University computer and cyber science (848 students) | Deep and well recognized. Seat capacity and graduate counts are not published; the largest local employers need cleared and experienced staff that degrees alone do not supply. |
| Nurses, allied health, physicians | Augusta University nursing (1,016), allied health (919), medicine (1,371), dental (536), public health (252); Aiken Tech health programs (212 awards) | Strong pipeline into the top hiring industry; retention in-region of graduates is not measured. |
| Teachers and public-sector professionals | Augusta University education (2,450) and 444 education-specialist degrees in 2026 | Large output. |
| Engineers and business managers | Augusta University science and mathematics (1,448), business (686) | The region has no large engineering college listed among the sources; engineering supply for plants and utilities is unmeasured and likely imported. |

## Where programs fall short of need

Four gaps follow from the table. First, output in welding and electrical trades is a small fraction of what industrial and construction demand implies. Second, no public source reports apprenticeship cohort sizes, completions or placement rates, so a decision to expand cannot be tied to evidence. Third, the process-technician and metals programs that the new smelter, casting and chemical plants need were not found among the programs reviewed. Fourth, completion at the technical colleges is about one in three, so any expansion of seats without a plan for completion will produce modest results.

The strengths are equally clear: a nationally recognized cyber institute, a nuclear and industrial-maintenance pathway built with Savannah River Site and manufacturing employers, and a university whose output has grown 37% in four years. The challenge is to match capacity to demand with numbers, which requires employers to commit to hiring targets. Section 34 proposes the mechanism.

# 31. Education, readiness and the law: does attainment track employability, and what is being done about it

The question is whether the region's education system produces the workforce its employers describe, and whether anyone with power to change it is acting. The data say that attainment and employability move together, that the pay gap matters more than the unemployment gap, that Richmond County's graduation rate trails the state, and that Georgia acted on workforce education in 2026 while South Carolina and Congress, on the evidence found, mostly did not.

## Does attainment line up with employability?

Yes, in direction and in every year the national data cover. Each step up in education lowers the unemployment rate and raises median pay. In August 2026, among Americans 25 and older, the unemployment rate was 4.7% for those without a high school diploma, 4.4% for high school graduates with no college, 3.7% for those with some college or an associate degree, and 2.7% for those with a bachelor's degree or more, against 3.4% overall (BLS). The 2025 annual figures show the same ladder with earnings added.

| ATTAINMENT (AGE 25+) | UNEMPLOYMENT, 2025 | MEDIAN WEEKLY EARNINGS, 2025 | SHARE OF ADULTS IN THE AUGUSTA METRO (AUTHOR'S CALCULATION) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Less than a high school diploma | 6.1% | $770 | 12.4% |
| High school diploma | 4.3% | $966 | 30.9% |
| Some college, no degree | 3.8% | $1,062 | 21.3% |
| Associate degree | 3.0% | $1,135 | 9.3% |
| Bachelor's degree | 2.8% | $1,578 | 16.4% |
| Master's, professional or doctoral | 1.8% to 2.6% | $1,876 to $2,307 | 9.7% |

Sources: BLS, Education pays; BLS, unemployment rate by education, August 2026; Augusta Economic Development Authority, demographics. The 2025 national figures are 11-month averages because October 2025 data were not collected during the federal shutdown, and earnings are for full-time wage and salary workers. The local shares are the author's calculation from the population counts on the Authority's page, which states percentages only for associate (9.3%) and bachelor's (16.4%) degrees and does not give a year or an age range. The 12.4% combines 3.7% with less than ninth grade and 8.7% with ninth to twelfth grade and no diploma.

Three readings follow, and the second is the one most often missed. First, the dropout is the most exposed: a worker without a diploma was unemployed twice as often in 2025 as one with an associate degree (6.1% against 3.0%), and earns about 20% less than a high school graduate ($770 against $966 a week). Second, the unemployment gap between a high school graduate and a worker with an associate degree is under a point, while the pay gap is about 17%, and the gap to a bachelor's degree is about 63%. Attainment does less to decide whether a person has a job than to decide what the job pays. Third, the national table does not separate a technical certificate or a trade credential from other categories; a certificate holder appears under high school or some college, depending on how the person answered. The data therefore cannot say whether trade school outperforms a general degree, and nobody should claim they do. They say that completing something beats stopping, and that the steepest cliff is at the diploma.

Applied to the Augusta metro, the Authority's counts put about 12% of adults below a diploma and about 31% at a diploma with nothing further, so roughly 43% of adults stop at or before high school. About 35% hold an associate degree or more, and 26% a bachelor's or more. If the national unemployment rate for each group applied here, the metro's adults would show an unemployment rate near 3.8%, against 3.4% nationally. This is an illustration by the author, not an estimate; it ignores participation, which the data do not provide, and local conditions. The comparison is rough, because the metro's 4.0% covers all ages, but it suggests that part of the gap may reflect who lives here and not only what jobs exist.

## Where the pipeline loses students

Georgia's statewide graduation rate for the Class of 2026 reached a record 88.5%. Richmond County's was 84.2%, up from 81.7% the year before, and McDuffie County's was 95.9% (WRDW, citing the state Department of Education). The article does not give Columbia, Burke or other districts' rates, or say whether all use the same cohort method. For the Class of 2025, The Augusta Press reported 92.96% for Columbia County and 81.7% for Richmond County against 87.2% statewide, with Richmond's special-education students at 75.7%; Class of 2026 figures for Columbia, Burke and the South Carolina districts were not found. Richmond County's rate sits 4.3 points below the state. The author's reading is that Richmond County is where the gap to the state is widest, and also where the one-year improvement was largest of the two districts reported. The dropout counts by district, and where those students are two and five years later, are not published in any source the author obtained, and this is the largest gap in answering the question locally.

## Readiness in middle and high school: some, versus none

Georgia does not leave middle and high school students with no career preparation on paper. The BRIDGE Act of 2010 requires career counseling and regularly scheduled advisement, and a school summary of its requirements lists them by grade: a career cluster inventory in sixth grade, a career cluster finder and three careers in seventh, a learning style inventory and a first Individual

Graduation Plan in eighth with a dual enrollment survey, three careers explored in ninth, a career interest and aptitude inventory in tenth, three postsecondary options and research into one state or local workforce initiative in eleventh, and a saved "next step" plan in twelfth, whether a four-year school, a two-year school, an apprenticeship, the military, a technical college or work. Students in grades 9 to 11 are told about dual enrollment by February 1 each year. The sixth-to-eighth-grade parts now fall under two newer laws, SB 3 and SB 401, according to the same summary, which is a school's page and not the statute.

So the answer to "readiness versus none at all" is that on paper nearly every Georgia student gets something. What the requirements describe is information: inventories, plans and a list of options. They do not require time with an employer, a work-based placement, a credential or a paid job, and the sources the author found report whether the activities were completed, not whether they changed what students did. The author's judgment is that exposure to information is not readiness, and that the region cannot say how many of its students leave high school with a credential, a work experience or a funded next step, because that count was not obtained. Section 9 covers internships, and Section 27 the school-to-work pipeline and its limits. The South Carolina side's requirements for Aiken and Edgefield students were not obtained and should not be assumed to match.

## The legislative picture: action and inaction

Georgia acted, and acted on structure and money. South Carolina and Congress produced less that could be verified. The table separates what became law from what stalled, and it marks what this edition could not establish.

| LEVEL | MEASURE | STATUS | WHAT IT DOES |
|---|---|---|---|
| Georgia | HB 1302, Education and Workforce Strategy Act | Signed May 11, 2026 | Renames the Governor's Office of Student Achievement the Office of Education and Workforce Strategy and attaches the State Workforce Development Board to it. Requires combined Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and Perkins plans, designates the Technical College System of Georgia as the State Apprenticeship Agency, creates one unified state workforce plan, prioritizes pre-apprenticeships and apprenticeships, and improves data for student advising. |
| Georgia | SB 556, DREAMS Scholarship | Signed May 11, 2026 | The state's first needs-based aid for undergraduates, up to $3,000 a year as last-dollar aid, with $325 million in the budget to endow it. It also lets fine arts count in the HOPE GPA and raises the 529 contribution cap. |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Georgia | HB 541; SB 553; HB 1254; SB 432 | Signed May 11, 2026 | Tuition Equalization Grant for nursing students at certain proprietary schools (HB 541); clearer licensure pathways for certain construction professions (SB 553); licensing boards moved to the Secretary of State (HB 1254); tuition and fee funds kept from lapsing through 2030 (SB 432). |
| Georgia | FY2026 and FY2027 budgets (HB 973, HB 974) | Adopted | $10 million for a career navigator tool; $70 million for school-based and $18.5 million for regional literacy coaches in FY2027. |
| Georgia | HB 1293; HB 1193; Math Matters Act; HB 1107 | Listed in the state talent office's summary of the 2026 session; signing dates not confirmed here | Dual Achievement Program for students who left high school to earn a diploma and a credential together (HB 1293); a literacy coach for each public elementary school (HB 1193); advanced math access in grades 6 to 10 (Math Matters); outcomes added to educator preparation reports (HB 1107). |
| South Carolina | H. 3197, Workforce readiness | Not enacted: reported out of committee March 26, 2026; recommitted to committee May 13, 2026 | Would set a goal that 60% of working-age South Carolinians hold a postsecondary degree or recognized industry credential before 2032, require senior-year literacy and math remediation, require seniors to file the federal student aid form unless they opt out, and require the Department of Employment and Workforce to publish the economic value of college majors from July 1, 2026. |
| South Carolina | H. 4956, South Carolina Technical College System Day | Adopted January 20, 2026 | A concurrent resolution with more than 120 House sponsors recognizing the technical college system. It creates no program, appropriates nothing and changes no law. |
| Federal | Workforce Pell | Set to launch July 1, 2026; rules were not final in the briefing used | Extends Pell eligibility to programs of 8 to 15 weeks. About 40 states were working with a national governors' readiness academy on implementation. |
| Federal | WIOA reauthorization | Stalled: advanced through a House committee; Senate not expected to take up the House bill | The House proposal's main feature is block-granting formula funds to states. |

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|---|---|---|---|
| Federal | FY2027 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education appropriations | Passed House Appropriations Committee in June 2026; final outcome not established | Includes a $5 million increase for apprenticeship; a national advocacy group describes the bill as proposing deep cuts to workforce and education programs. |
| Federal | Executive order on skilled trades | Issued; implementing plans not released as of May 2026 | Adds priority points for apprenticeship in Department of Labor discretionary grants. |

Sources: Georgia Top State for Talent, 2026 session summary; WTVM, Kemp signs legislation supporting workforce (May 11, 2026); South Carolina General Assembly, H. 3197; South Carolina General Assembly, H. 4956; Workforce Matters, policy briefing recap (published June 22, updated September 24, 2026). Bill descriptions come from news reports and summaries, not from the statutes; the sixth through twelfth grade requirements come from a school's summary of the BRIDGE Act.

The inaction is as informative as the action. The one South Carolina measure that would have set a credential goal, required a financial aid filing and funded senior-year remediation went back to committee, while the measure that passed in January praised the technical colleges and did nothing else. Congress did not reauthorize the federal workforce law, and the funding bill that includes apprenticeship money also draws sharp criticism for cuts, with no final outcome found. In Georgia, the 2026 session's workforce and education agenda was passed, but the summaries reviewed do not report which workforce or education bills died, and this edition did not search for them. The state summary also does not mention career, technical and agricultural education funding or counselor staffing, so whether those were addressed or left alone is not established. Neither the Georgia nor the South Carolina measures, as described, require the reporting that would answer this section's first question: where each high school's graduates and dropouts are one and five years later.

## What the Georgia changes mean for the region

These are the author's judgments. First, HB 1302 pulls the Perkins plan, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act plan and apprenticeship under the same office and the same technical college system, which should make it easier for a CSRA employer, high school and technical college to build one program instead of three, if the regional boards are given the staff to do it. Second, the DREAMS Scholarship removes a cost barrier for low-income students after graduation, which matters in a metro where Richmond County's graduation rate trails the state, but it does nothing for the student who does not graduate. Third, the $10 million career navigator tool will be only as useful as the local job and credential data behind it, and this region's data are thin (Section 36). Fourth, the literacy and math measures address the early grades where later dropout begins, and will take years to show in the graduation rate.

PROPOSALS

**1. A destination report for every high school.** For each public high school in the metro and the planning region: graduates, dropouts, and where each group is one and five years later (college, technical college, military, apprenticeship, work, none). **Who:** the school districts, the Technical College System of Georgia, the Georgia and South Carolina education and labor agencies, and the publisher of this report. **First 90 days:** request the data under letter 24 and agree what can be released without identifying students. **Measure:** the share of graduates and dropouts whose outcome is known.

**2. A readiness count that goes beyond inventories.** Report each year how many students finish a pathway, hold a credential, complete a paid or unpaid work placement, or file the federal student aid form. **Who:** districts and the state office created by HB 1302. **Measure:** percent of seniors with at least one of the four.

**3. A regional legislative agenda for the 2027 session and for Congress.** Georgia: ask that the career navigator tool be built on local job-posting and wage data and that the CSRA counties be early adopters; ask that the state publish which education and workforce bills failed and why. South Carolina: ask Aiken and Edgefield delegations to revive the credential goal, the financial aid filing and senior-year remediation in H. 3197. Federal: local employers and the technical colleges should comment on which 8-to-15-week programs qualify for Workforce Pell. **Who:** chambers, the Authority, the technical colleges and the regional commission, speaking jointly. **Measure:** the number of these items on a delegation's agenda.

# 32. Demographic determinants of a healthy, motivated workforce

Workforce health depends on who lives here, how old they are, what they earn, what care and housing cost, and whether they believe the next step is available. This section collects the determinants that research and employers treat as most important, with the CSRA's current reading and the gaps in measurement.

| AGE GROUP (2024) | RESIDENTS | SHARE | WORKFORCE MEANING |
|---|---|---|---|
| 0 to 19 | 158,646 | 24.9% | Future entrants; about 8,400 a year turn 20 |
| 20 to 34 | 127,696 | 20.1% | Early-career core; the group graduates and employers compete to keep |
| 35 to 54 | 157,350 | 24.7% | Prime-age experience; leaders and skilled workers |
| 55 to 64 | 77,445 | 12.2% | Retirement horizon; about 8,000 turn 65 a year |
| 65 and over | 115,266 | 18.1% | Out of the labor force for most; large demand for health care |

Source: Augusta Economic Development Authority from Census estimates; groups and annual cohort estimates computed by the author.

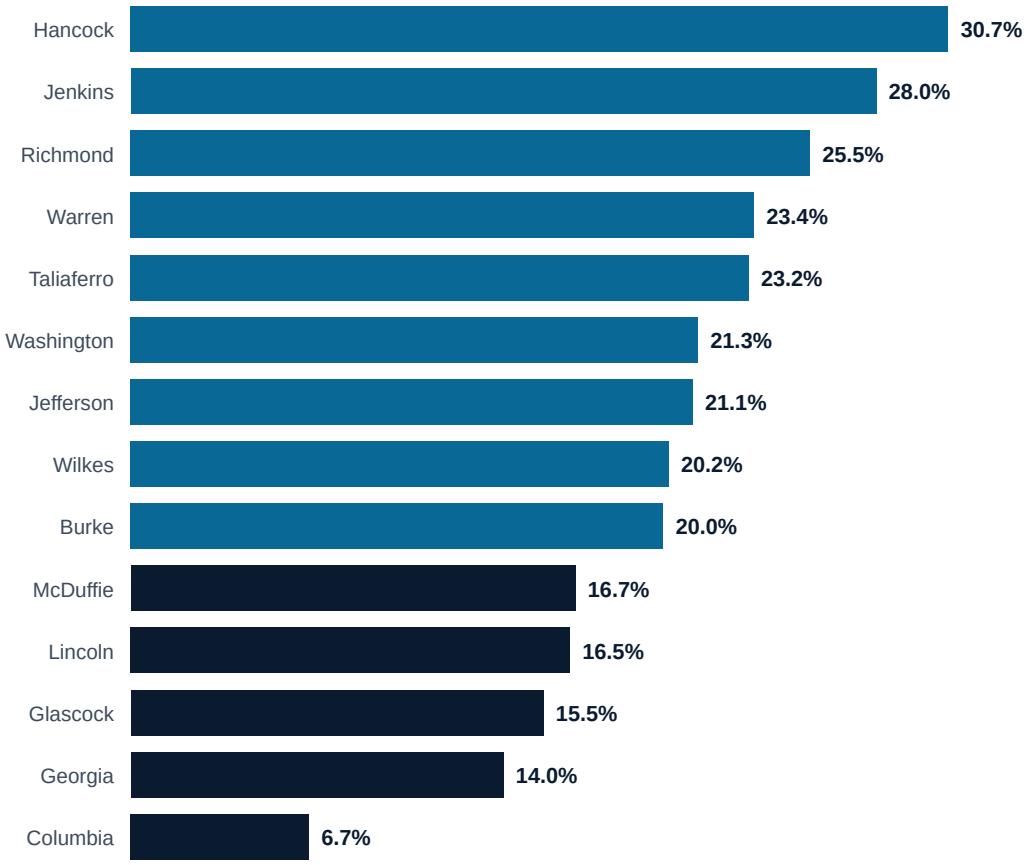
The age profile is healthier than the headline "18% over 65" suggests. Roughly 8,400 residents turn 20 each year and about 8,000 turn 65, so replacement at the base is near one-for-one; the metro's population grew about 0.9% (5,530 people) between 2023 and 2024. The pressure is on participation and on the number of experienced workers, not a looming cliff. The 20-to-34 group, at 20% of the population, is the group that a metro competes for hardest, and its size says the region currently holds its own.

| DETERMINANT | CSRA READING | WHY IT MATTERS |
|---|---|---|
| Education attainment | 43% high school or less; 16.4% bachelor's; 9.3% associate | Predicts earnings and the mix of jobs a region can fill |
| Income and poverty | Median household $64,851; per capita $34,401; about 15% poverty metro-wide, 25.5% in Richmond County (2020) | Poverty is linked to attendance, transportation and health barriers to work |
| Race and ethnicity | 51.96% White and 36.13% Black (non-Hispanic, 2024); about 6% Hispanic or Latino (2022) | Hiring pools and wage-equity analysis; any gap in pay or promotion between groups is an employer risk and a talent opportunity |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Foreign-born share | 3.8% against 14.1% nationally | Less migrant labor for production and construction |
| Child care | Georgia infant center care $11,066 a year; 21% supply gap (state) | A widely reported barrier to participation by parents and shift workers |
| Housing cost | Home price 3.3 times income; rent share 40% to 51% for entry roles | Draw for professionals, strain for entry-level pay |
| Wages | 14% below the nation; production above it | Determines retention and out-migration of graduates |
| Military and veteran presence | Fort Gordon about 29,000 to 32,000; military transition flow | A recurring supply of cleared and technical talent; spouses are a participation opportunity |
| Students | 12,788 at Augusta University; about 6,800 at the two technical colleges (2024) | The pipeline and a part-time labor pool |

## The urban and rural divide

### Poverty rate by county, CSRA planning region, 2020




Source: CSRA Regional Commission, Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy FY2023-2028. Blue bars are counties at or above 20%. Georgia's rate was 14.0%.

Nine of the region's 13 Georgia counties had poverty rates of 20% or higher in 2020, against 14.0% for the state, while Columbia County was at 6.7%. Seven of the nine are outside the Augusta metro. The workforce consequences follow: living-wage jobs are concentrated in Richmond, Columbia and Aiken counties and at the installations, while rural residents with limited transportation and few nearby employers commute long distances for lower-paid work or do not work at all. The CSRA Regional Commission projects that 11 of the region's 13 counties will lose population by 2040. Employer decisions about plant location, shuttle service and satellite training sites are therefore also decisions about whether rural counties stay connected to the regional economy.

## Motivators and the evidence for them

Beyond what the census counts, employers and researchers consistently identify a short list of motivators of a healthy workforce: pay that clears the cost of living, a visible path to advancement, schedule predictability, a manager the worker trusts, safety, and a sense of belonging in a place. The first is measured above. The path to advancement is where apprenticeships and stackable

credentials matter. Schedule predictability and management quality are the cheapest levers for an employer, which is why Section 35 puts them first for small employers. Safety is measured in Section 11. Belonging is the least measurable and is where Augusta's recent national ranking helps.

## Demographic data we do not yet have

Commuting distance and mode, vehicle access, disability employment, veteran employment, out-of-state graduate flow, youth not in school or work, health-insurance coverage and household size by income are all published by the Census Bureau and the federal statistical system, and the data service will add them in Edition 2.

# 33. Catalysts: what is pulling growth forward

Section 13 named what is slowing growth. These are the forces speeding it, and how the region can amplify them.

| CATALYST | EVIDENCE | EFFECT ON TALENT | HOW TO AMPLIFY |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Fort Gordon and the Cyber Center of Excellence** | About 29,000 to 32,000 workers; $7.5 billion impact; $1.6 billion construction through 2028 | Draws cleared technical talent and construction trades; military transition pipeline | Pre-staged hiring for contractor transitions; spouse employment programs |
| **Savannah River Site** | 13,510 workers; registered nuclear operator apprenticeship | Stable skilled technical employment across the river | Scale the apprenticeship; publish cohort and placement data |
| **Augusta University and health care** | Enrollment up 30.3%; degrees up 37.1%; education and health jobs up 2.8%; Piedmont expects about $1 billion of capital by 2032 | Deep professional pipeline and the metro's top hiring industry | Paid clinical placements that convert to offers; measure graduate retention |
| **The industrial wave** | About 910 direct jobs announced across five plants, plus a proposed data center | Higher-paying production, maintenance and engineering jobs; raises the pay floor for operators | Employer-college hiring compacts; site readiness |
| **Cost and tax position** | Georgia corporate rate 4.99%; $4,000 per job local credit; rents below comparable markets | Lowers the cost of locating and operating | One-stop proposal packages with written terms |
| **National attention** | LinkedIn number one among 2026 Cities on the Rise | Raises awareness among mobile professionals and remote workers (26.5% remote roles) | Recruitment marketing that pairs the ranking with real job and housing data |
| **Location and logistics** | About two hours from Atlanta, Charleston, Savannah and Charlotte on I-20 | Regional commuting and distribution advantage | Inland-port and rail study; confirm rail service by site |
| **Technical-college specializations** | Cyber Institute; nuclear and industrial-maintenance pathways; Construction Ready | Employer-aligned skills | Fund completion; add process-technician programs |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Housing value for professionals** | Home price at 3.3 times income | Draws professionals from costlier metros | Market it; protect it with workforce housing supply |

# 34. Proposed changes and the path to carry them out

A report that stops at diagnosis leaves the work to others. These ten proposals follow from the evidence in Sections 3 through 33. Each names who would have to act, a first step within 90 days, what success looks like, and how it would be measured. Targets marked as proposals are the author's suggestions to be set with the partners, not commitments.

### 1. Make large sites ready: certify and fund utilities

The 1,150-acre megasite cannot serve a billion-dollar user without industrial sewer, and no Augusta-area site holds state certification. **Who:** Augusta Economic Development Authority, the Richmond County Commission, county development authorities and the Georgia Department of Economic Development. **First 90 days:** confirm the status of the $25 million sewer request, and file for certification on the Burke and other sites. **Year one to four:** design and build the sewer extension, complete certification studies, and publish one inventory of sites and buildings. **Measure:** certified acres, months from inquiry to a delivered proposal.

### 2. Build a skilled-trades compact between employers and colleges

Skilled tiers are the tightest and the least measured. **Who:** Augusta Tech, Aiken Tech, Augusta University, the new plants, Savannah River Site contractors and Fort Gordon contractors. **First 90 days:** a demand survey asking each employer to state hires needed by occupation for 2027 to 2029. **Year one:** sign hiring compacts in which employers commit to interview and hire completers in return for capacity added in welding, electrical, process technology and industrial maintenance. **Measure:** seats, completers and hires by occupation, published yearly. Proposal: raise electrician and welding completions from 69 a year toward the level the demand survey supports.

### 3. Fix completion before adding seats

Graduation is 31.1% at Augusta Tech, 33.5% at Aiken Tech and 48.2% at six years at Augusta University. **Who:** the colleges, with employer and foundation funders. **First 90 days:** identify where students leave, by program and term. **Year one:** emergency micro-grants for rent, car and child care crises, employer tuition coverage tied to part-time schedules, and stackable certificates so that every student leaves each term with something that pays. **Measure:** 150% completion rate. Proposal: raise the Augusta Tech rate from 31% toward 40% over three years.

### 4. Workforce housing and rent relief where wages lag

Entry-level workers pay 40% to 51% of gross pay for the average apartment. **Who:** large employers, the Augusta Housing Authority, the Georgia Department of Community Affairs and

developers. **First 90 days:** a survey of employees at participating employers to measure rent burden and commute by plant. **Year one:** employer-assisted rent, relocation stipends for skilled hires, and a pilot of workforce units near plants and the hospital campuses using existing state and federal financing. **Measure:** 12-month retention of entry-level hires in participating employers.

### 5. A shift-worker child care solution

Child care is a widely reported barrier to participation, and the state's gap is 21%. **Who:** employer consortia, the United Way and child care providers, Bright from the Start. **First 90 days:** measure demand among plant and hospital employees. **Year one:** extended-hours or employer-supported care at the largest shift employers and a provider-wage supplement. **Measure:** participation among parents of children under six; absenteeism.

### 6. Replicate the career-magnet model in Richmond County high schools

Three Richmond County magnet schools graduate 100% of students, and comprehensive high schools range from 75.88% to 87.55%. **Who:** the school system, Augusta Tech and employers. **First 90 days:** identify which magnet features (pathways, employer exposure, dual enrollment) can run inside comprehensive schools. **Year one:** expand dual enrollment and industry-credential pathways where attendance is weakest. **Measure:** chronic absence and four-year graduation by school.

### 7. Keep the graduates: paid internships and a first-job pipeline

The region trains thousands but does not measure how many stay. **Who:** the three institutions, the Chamber, employers and the author. **First 90 days:** agree four common internship measures (Section 9). **Year one:** a paid internship registry, a shared career fair calendar, and a request to the state for graduate-employment-by-region data. **Measure:** share of graduates working in the CSRA after twelve months.

### 8. Raise participation by opening doors to more of the population

Participation near 55% against 61.8% nationally is a supply problem and an opportunity. **Who:** employers, WorkSource CSRA, Fort Gordon family support offices and re-entry programs. **First 90 days:** obtain official participation by group from the Census Bureau. **Year one:** target programs for military spouses, workers over 55 and people returning from incarceration, with employers committing flexible schedules and fair-chance hiring policies. **Measure:** participation rate and employment of each group.

### 9. Contract-transition rapid response

Seventy-seven Fort Gordon jobs were cut in one contract transition, and 719 workers received layoff notices in a year. **Who:** WorkSource CSRA, the Georgia Department of Labor, Fort Gordon

contractors and staffing firms. **First 90 days:** a standing list of employers hiring cleared or technical workers and a protocol for the first week after a notice. **Measure:** weeks to re-employment.

### 10. Make the numbers public and annual

Most of the gaps in this report are gaps in measurement. **Who:** The author, the Authority, the colleges, the regional commission and the Georgia Department of Labor. **First 90 days:** agree data-sharing for placements, apprenticeship cohorts, site inventories and rent. **Year one:** publish Edition 2 with the measures above, and keep the sidebar on the web edition current. **Measure:** the share of indicators in this report that are current to the quarter.

> **SEQUENCING**
> Do the measurement, the demand survey and the completion work first, because they cost little and change how every other dollar is spent. Start housing and child care pilots in parallel with two or three employers. The sewer and certification work takes years, so it must begin now to matter for projects that decide in 2027 and 2028.

Sections 24 through 28 each end with their own proposals: a shared health-workforce count, clinical placements and a support-to-licensed ladder (Section 24), a cross-river labor picture and a shared trades calendar (Section 25), a youth opportunity inventory and employer-linked work experience (Section 26), a pathway scorecard, a readiness layer in every work-based placement and a counselor-access map (Section 27), and a regional neurodivergent hiring network, a Project SEARCH feasibility study and a bridge for the student without a plan (Section 28). They are not repeated in the table above.

Section 31 ends with three more: a destination report for every high school, a readiness count that goes beyond inventories, and a regional legislative agenda for the 2027 session and for Congress.

# 35. Outlook and guidance for 2027 and 2028

What follows is the author's judgment, built on the facts above. It is a forecast, and forecasts are wrong; the assumptions are stated so that you can test them.

## Three plausible paths

**Base case: steady and tighter at the edges.** The industrial projects open on schedule, Fort Gordon construction continues, and the national market stays soft but positive. Unemployment in the metro stays in a 3.5% to 4.5% band with the usual winter and spring swing. Wages for production, maintenance and technician roles rise faster than the national average as new plants compete for the same pool, narrowing the pay gap for those jobs while the overall gap persists.

**Upside case: the spotlight converts.** LinkedIn-style attention and the Cyber Center of Excellence expansion draw more workers and firms. The labor force grows faster than jobs, unemployment drifts up slightly even as employment rises, and housing costs consume more of the cost-of-living advantage.

**Downside case: the national market breaks.** A weakening national economy, a federal funding disruption or further contractor transitions at Fort Gordon push unemployment above 5%. Recent layoffs add to the pool. Employers gain bargaining power, but turnover falls and hiring slows, and the region's growth story pauses.

The signals that tell you which path you are on are in the data this report tracks: the unemployment rate against its seasonal pattern, the labor force trend, the count of WARN notices, and whether announced projects hit their opening dates.

## Guidance by type of employer

| IF YOU ARE A... | THE PRESSURE | WHAT TO DO NOW |
|---|---|---|
| Manufacturer or processor | New plants will compete for operators, maintenance techs and supervisors from the same pool, at $17 to $22 an hour. | Build an apprenticeship or pre-apprenticeship pipeline with Augusta Tech. Benchmark pay against assemblers and machine operators, not other warehouses. Recruit in winter. |
| Warehouse or logistics operation | Material movers median $17.62; stockers $16.42. Competing production jobs pay more. | Compete on schedule stability, advancement and reliability screening rather than on a few cents of pay alone. Track 90-day turnover. |
| Health care provider | Top hiring industry with a large local student pipeline but steady demand for licensed and support workers. | Partner on clinical placements and convert them to offers. Protect experienced staff; replacement is the expensive part. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Cyber, defense or federal contractor | Cleared and certified talent is scarce, and contract transitions move jobs overnight. | Cultivate transitioning-military and university channels, and plan for contract-transition hiring windows. |
| Small business or franchise | Competing with employers who can pay more. | Win on training, flexibility and management quality. Management is a leading reason people leave, and it is the cheapest lever you control. |

## Five questions every employer should answer this quarter

1. Where does my starting pay sit against the 25th percentile and median for the jobs I fill, and against the competing jobs next door?
2. What is my 90-day and one-year turnover, and how does it compare with the industry benchmark?
3. Which of my roles depend on a credential that the local colleges produce in small numbers?
4. Does my experience modification and liability pricing reflect my safety record and the 2025 and 2026 changes?
5. Have I reviewed my staffing, subcontractor and contractor arrangements against the federal and Georgia changes, and are my I-9 files clean?

# 36. What this edition does not yet cover

A report that claims to be complete should say where it is not. Edition 1 leaves these gaps, which we intend to close:

- **Pipeline handoffs and readiness.** Entry, completion, placement and retention counts for each school-to-work pathway (Section 27); Georgia and CSRA youth mental-health survey figures; counselor ratios by district; Apex participation by school.
- **Neurodivergent employment.** Current employment rates for autistic adults, local Pre-ETS and Project SEARCH counts, federal Schedule A hires at Fort Gordon, and any Augusta-area employer program (Section 28).
- **Health care.** Vacancy and turnover by employer, agency and travel staffing, the registered-nurse wage, local graduate retention, and the staffing of Eisenhower Army Medical Center and the VA (Section 24).
- **South Carolina.** Edgefield's labor force and commuting, Aiken and Edgefield wages by industry, South Carolina peer wages and workers' compensation, licensing reciprocity, the 2026 Savannah River Site headcount, and the terms of the readySC program (Section 25).
- **Outside review.** Edition 1 has not been reviewed by outside experts (Section 2).
- **Education outcomes and legislation.** Dropout counts and graduation rates for Columbia, Burke and the other districts, and for Aiken and Edgefield; where graduates and dropouts are one and five years later; current attainment by county; South Carolina middle and high school career requirements; bills that died in Georgia, South Carolina's other education bills, and the final federal appropriations and Perkins status. Statutes were not read; bill descriptions come from news reports and summaries.
- **Court dockets.** Not searched, for the reasons in Section 12.
- **Skills-to-program mapping.** We have enrollment and completions but have not yet matched program codes to occupations and to national skills profiles, nor to state long-term occupational projections for Georgia and South Carolina. That match turns this report's directional read into a quantified shortage or surplus by occupation.
- **Industry detail.** County employment, establishments and weekly wages by industry are published quarterly by BLS and will be added, along with job openings, hires, quits and layoffs by industry from the national turnover survey.
- **Injury and claims benchmarks.** Industry injury rates by state will be added; liability claims have no public benchmark.
- **Internships.** See the proposal in Section 9.
- **Site and building inventory.** No consolidated count of industrial square footage, vacancy, buildings under construction or certified acres exists in public sources we could verify. Edition 2

will compile one from the county development authorities' property portals and broker data.

- **South Carolina incentives, utility tariffs, rail service by site and water and sewer capacity.** Not verified in this edition.
- **Population detail.** Official participation rates, commuting flows and attainment by county from the Census Bureau's American Community Survey will replace the estimates in Sections 3 and 8.
- **Peers, counties and commuting.** Peer-metro wages, rents and incentives; industry detail and occupational wages for the eight rural counties (their unemployment, labor force and wages are now in Section 3); commuting flows for all 15 counties, of which only Aiken County's in-state flows were obtained; the industrial electricity price against South Carolina; Aiken and Edgefield millage; current CCRPI scores; broadband, tourism and transit; and the Army's separation counts. Section 18 and Section 19 say what was found and what was not.
- **The full planning region.** The Georgia counties outside the metro now have unemployment rates, labor force, covered jobs and wages in Section 3; industry detail by county, occupational wages and true commuting flows are still missing, and the South Carolina counties' labor force and wages were not obtained.
- **Occupation-level shortage counts.** The tier grades in Section 29 are judgments. State long-term projections, job-posting data and employer surveys would turn them into counts by occupation.
- **Housing detail.** Current Columbia and Aiken county prices, rents by unit size, cost burden and housing supply by county are not in this edition. HUD fair market rent figures found online conflicted with one another, so they are not used.
- **Capital, licensing and start-ups.** Bank deposits and lending by county, new business licenses by jurisdiction, incubator and accelerator outcomes, and venture and angel activity are not public. Section 15 proposes how to collect them.
- **Business survival, bankruptcy and incentives.** No local survival rates, Augusta-division bankruptcy filings or prior-year comparison, Georgia Job Tax Credit and Quality Jobs amounts, the Retraining, Investment, Port and R&D credits, South Carolina programs and the Georgia Opportunity Zone nominations are not in this edition (Sections 16 and 17).
- **Weekly indicators.** Jobless claims are weekly and statewide; the sidebar on the web edition updates weekly, while unemployment, labor force and jobs data update monthly.

## Standard public sources: what this edition used

| SOURCE | USED? | WHERE |
|---|---|---|

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| BLS Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (OEWS) | Yes, in part | Section 7: mean wages by major group and selected occupations for Augusta, May 2025. The full 22-group table and location quotients are not reproduced. |
| BLS Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) | Yes, in part | Section 3: Richmond and Columbia counties, first quarter 2026. Industry detail by county is in the data service and will be added. |
| BLS metro employment and unemployment (CES and LAUS) | Yes | Sections 3 and 6: labor force, employment, industries. |
| Georgia Department of Labor monthly releases | Yes | Section 3: monthly metro unemployment, September 2025 to September 2026. |
| Georgia LaborMarket Explorer (Local Area Profiles) | No | Interactive tool; not retrievable as a document. Edition 2. |
| CSRA Regional Commission strategy (CEDS) | Partly | Section 13: threats and strengths from the 2023 plan; participation and attainment tables could not be read. |
| WorkSource CSRA (federal workforce training program) | No | No public performance data located. Edition 2 will request it. |
| Georgia's Career Pipeline workforce-needs dashboard | No | Interactive dashboard. Edition 2. |
| Cyber, engineering and health care concentration (location quotients) | No | Reported by other sources but not verified here. Edition 2 will compute it from OEWS. |

The author maintains an automated data service that refreshes the unemployment, wage, turnover, county jobs and injury-rate data from the federal sources and builds client-specific editions of this report around an employer's industry, roles and counties. This first edition was written from the sources below.

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