



FAQ: EXPLORE GEORGIA ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGES

MARCH 16, 2021

To help answer a few of the common questions about Explore Georgia's recent organizational changes, we have outlined responses below. Explore Georgia is the tourism division of the Georgia Department of Economic Development (GDEcD), and the official destination marketing organization for the State of Georgia.

Why were the organizational changes made?

There are several goals of the organizational changes:

- Align existing resources to best meet the demands of the situation we face: recovering from the pandemic;
- Streamline the division into two areas of focus: Tourism Consumer Marketing and Tourism Partner Marketing;
- These functions are supported by Tourism Research, Tourism Planning & Budget, tourism division leadership, and the entire GDEcD division and our leadership;
- An outline of our new organizational structure can be [found here](#).

Who are the new regional marketing managers and how do I connect with them?

Our four regional marketing managers and their responsibilities by GDEcD service region are:

- **Mandy Barnhart:** 1 - Northwest, 2 - Northeast, 5 - East Central
- **Lori Hennesy:** 8 - West, 10 - Southwest, 11 - Southeast
- **Sarah Anne Rhodes:** 7 - East, 9 - South, 12 - Coastal, and
- **Nija Torrence:** 3 - Metro Atlanta, 4 - West Central, 6 - Middle.

You can find their contact information [here](#). To visually see the regions and who your regional marketing manager is, we have created a map you can reference [here](#).

What is the purpose of the Tourism Partner Marketing team?

The partner marketing team will assist with Explore Georgia's industry offerings and services available to our partners. Your regional marketing manager will be your liaison to all of Explore Georgia, be it handling your request directly or connecting you with another tourism team member on Explore Georgia's products and services, e.g., co-op opportunities, trade missions, ExploreGeorgia.org listings, and more. They will also work hand in hand with the Consumer Tourism Marketing team to showcase the amazing products each of you offer our visitors.

What is the Tourism Consumer Marketing team?

The Tourism Consumer Marketing team does just that - markets the state as a travel destination to consumers. The team consists of members who work to showcase the state through integrated marketing campaigns, traditional advertising, website, social media, email newsletters, public

relations, and more. The team focuses on promoting to the core visitors to Georgia, including U.S.-based leisure (domestic), international, groups and conventions, and rural.

What is the role of the Tourism Research team?

This team forms the building blocks for everything the Explore Georgia team does. They are responsible for managing all secondary research sources and interpreting and disseminating tourism research to support all aspects of Explore Georgia's marketing planning, development, and optimization. The research team is also a resource for our industry partners and can provide reports, articles, survey results, and briefings. These assets can be found [here](#) on the Tourism Industry Portal.

What is the role of the Tourism Planning & Budget team?

This team is Explore Georgia's liaison to the GDEcD administrative team, including finance, legal, procurement, and human resources. The Tourism Planning & Budget team will ensure compliance with GDEcD policies and procedures, maintain a deep understanding of State of Georgia policies and procedures, develop divisional policies and practices, manage contract negotiations with partners and vendors, and assist in developing and managing Explore Georgia's annual budget.

Are there plans to change the tourism regions based on the new regional marketing manager roles?

No, the nine consumer-facing regions will remain the same for all external communications. Our use of the 12 service regions used by GDEcD is only for internal purposes to help us better align our efforts and reporting with all of GDEcD.

If I want to get in touch with someone at Explore Georgia, who do I reach out to?

For new requests, please contact your [regional marketing manager](#).

Who will be able to assist me with my listing on ExploreGeorgia.org?

Your [regional marketing manager](#) will assist with listings. Lori Hennessy is now part of the Tourism Partner Marketing team and will continue to assist partners with their listings until the regional marketing managers are fully trained. Soon, this responsibility will be handled by the entire team of regional marketing managers, not just Lori.

How will RTAs be affected?

The RTAs are not impacted by these changes. The regional marketing managers will work together to ensure RTAs are served by our new structure. In fact, because of this reorganization and the reimagining of the regional team, we have increased our capacity to serve and believe we are better equipped to work with every RTA throughout the state.

What will happen to the RVIC program?

There are no changes to the RVIC program. The day-to-day management of the program will shift to the newly created VIC Operations Manager, once that position is filled. In the meantime, [Brittney Gray](#) is managing the program.

Are the open positions available to the public?

Yes, all open positions are posted on the GDEcD careers page: georgia.org/careers.

What will happen to the Tourism Product Development program?

Tourism Product Development is now part of the Tourism Partner Marketing team so we may streamline our efforts across the state's regions. We also intend to evaluate and optimize the Tourism Product Development program for the future.

Will Explore Georgia still conduct Tourism Product Development resource team visits?

As we realign and adapt to our updated organizational structure, the existing TPD resource team program is on hold and all scheduled resource teams are canceled. Explore Georgia is continuing to evaluate and optimize the Tourism Product Development program for the future.

Will there still be a Tourism Product Development grant?

The final round of TPD grants for FY21 are closed and have been awarded. The entire TPD program - including grants - will be evaluated and optimized for FY22.