The Global Cities Initiative is a joint project of Brookings and JPMorgan Chase.
As metro Atlanta begins its second year of the Global Cities Initiative (GCI), key public and private stakeholders are aligning and committing to position the 29-county region as one of the world’s most globally engaged, economically robust, and desirable destinations for foreign direct investment (FDI) in the 21st century.

The Metro Atlanta Foreign Direct Investment Plan raises an awareness that the region must address some glaring challenges for it to realize its full foreign investment potential. These issues were exposed during an analysis of regional data supplied by the Brookings Institution and in interviews with foreign-owned enterprises (FOEs) in metro Atlanta. This in-depth market assessment led to five key findings that are the cornerstone of the plan. These findings, along with strategies and tactics to address the challenges and build on metro Atlanta’s strengths, are explained in detail in this document.

The plan complements the Atlanta Metro Export Plan (MEP), which was also developed through GCI and launched in the summer of 2015. The “Cycle of Global Commerce” graphic below shows how inbound and outbound investments correlate to build strong and globally competitive industry ecosystems. Addressing both types of investments through the FDI and MEP strategies will help metro Atlanta become more competitive in the global economy.

**CYCLE OF GLOBAL COMMERCE**

1. **FOEs enter the U.S. market by selling their products and/or services (U.S. imports).**
2. More sales lead to an increased level of investment.
3. As FOEs gain a larger market share, they invest in a physical presence in the market, which often takes a form of greenfield or M&A investment.
4. Vibrant companies engaged in international trade help build a strong industry ecosystem.
5. Other firms (domestic and foreign) want to be a part of that ecosystem which leads to more investment.
6. More sales lead to an increased level of investment.

**INTRODUCTION**

**Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) and Aftercare**

In the traditional sense, economic development organizations structure their BRE programs around visiting companies, meeting with management and surveying for feedback. Aftercare services tend to be more comprehensive and provide companies with business development assistance, key introductions to local business leaders, enhanced networking opportunities, and workforce and talent development resources.

**Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)**

FDI occurs when a foreign company invests in a U.S. business enterprise either by opening a new operation (greenfield investment) or through a merger or acquisition. The foreign company must hold a majority stake in the U.S. operation for it to be considered “foreign-owned.”

**Global Cities Initiative (GCI)**

The GCI is a five-year project of Brookings and JPMorgan Chase aimed at helping the leaders of metropolitan America strengthen their regional economies by becoming more competitive in the global marketplace.

**North-American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)**

NAFTA is a comprehensive agreement that sets the rules for international trade and investment between Canada, the United States, and Mexico.

**The Atlanta Metro Export Plan (MEP)**

The Atlanta MEP is a localized export plan developed through a collaborative effort between regional civic, business and political leaders. The export plan applies market intelligence to develop targeted, integrated export-related services and strategies that help a region better connect its companies to global customers.
Global megatrends are changing the world and will have a significant impact on business in metro Atlanta, which has the 10th largest metro economy in the nation and is the economic hub of the Southeast. These trends include accelerating urbanization, climate change and resource scarcity, demographic shifts, technological breakthroughs and a shift in global economic power. With 31 percent of global economic growth from 2015 to 2020 projected to occur outside the United States2 and population estimates indicating that the majority of the global middle class will shift from the United States and Europe to Asia, U.S. businesses stand on the cusp of a tremendous opportunity to reach huge numbers of new foreign customers and attract large pools of foreign capital. At the same time, as the global middle class grows so will the number of new firms that have never invested in the United States. As the increase in new global businesses parallels the rise in population, there will be a growing wave of new-to-the-U.S. investment opportunities.

Export trade and FDI present two significant economic opportunities for the nation, its metro areas and individual businesses. On the trade side, the United States is the world’s largest exporter. However, just five percent of U.S. firms export3, which signals an opportunity for many more companies to engage in trade. On the FDI side, while the United States is the number one FDI destination in the world, the share of foreign investment coming into the United States has decreased from 26 percent in 1999 to just 12 percent in 2012.4 Global FDI continues to increase, but the United States faces stiffer competition for FDI as other countries offer new opportunities for investment. In order for the United States to be globally competitive for the long-term, both export trade and FDI must be a top economic development priority. This is especially true for the country’s large metros. Urban regions such as metro Atlanta have the majority of the nation’s population, businesses, workforce, innovation and investment activity, and therefore it is these areas that drive U.S. economic growth, exports, and FDI.

Accordingly, it is important for governments at all levels, businesses, and economic development organizations (EDOs) in metro Atlanta’s 29 counties to recognize that shifts in global populations call for a new approach to economic growth that integrates global realities into everyday practice and provides more support to existing businesses. The Great Recession of 2008 hit metro Atlanta hard—causing the loss of hundreds of thousands of jobs, widening income disparity, and proving in the process that the region’s economy is susceptible to domestic and global headwinds. If the region is reactionary in responding to global trends, it will miss opportunities that its peer metros likely will seize. If that were to occur, metro Atlanta would fall behind other metros in attracting FDI and would also fail to seize its full economic potential – not only in becoming a truly globally fluent region but also in the quality of jobs FDI typically adds to a region’s employment picture. While metro Atlanta has a strong foundation of global commerce, generating $26 billion annually in exports and creating approximately 135,000 jobs under foreign ownership5, more can be done to heighten international awareness that metro Atlanta is a top venue for global commerce. More can be done to accelerate FDI and export activity in metro Atlanta. More can be done to leverage metro Atlanta’s unique global assets, including approximately 2,500 FOEs, 750,000-plus foreign-born residents, 78 consular and trade offices, 17 bi-national chambers of commerce, and nonstop air service to nearly 70 international destinations. More can be done to nurture metro Atlanta’s foreign ownership6, more can be done to coordinate international trade and investment opportunities.

Export trade and FDI present two significant economic opportunities for the nation, its metro areas and individual businesses. On the trade side, the United States is the world’s largest exporter. However, just five percent of U.S. firms export3, which signals an opportunity for many more companies to engage in trade. On the FDI side, while the United States is the number one FDI destination in the world, the share of foreign investment coming into the United States has decreased from 26 percent in 1999 to just 12 percent in 2012.4 Global FDI continues to increase, but the United States faces stiffer competition for FDI as other countries offer new opportunities for investment. In order for the United States to be globally competitive for the long-term, both export trade and FDI must be a top economic development priority. This is especially true for the country’s large metros. Urban regions such as metro Atlanta have the majority of the nation’s population, businesses, workforce, innovation and investment activity, and therefore it is these areas that drive U.S. economic growth, exports, and FDI.

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1. Foreign firms in the United States hire more skilled workers and invest more in worker training than domestic firms.
2. Foreign firms spend significantly more than double the private sector average on benefits per worker.
3. Jobs in foreign-owned firms tend to be highly productive and concentrated in capital-intensive, high-skilled industries.
4. Foreign firms in the United States purchase significantly more inputs from domestic U.S. firms than they do from non-U.S. firms.
The metro Atlanta business community is embracing new forward-thinking economic development strategies to keep pace with a rapidly-evolving 21st century global economy and to make the 29-county Atlanta area a world-class marketplace. The engines which will power this transformation are in place in the form of high-growth industry clusters, a tech-savvy and globally-minded workforce pipeline, business-friendly education collaborations, global connectivity, a business-friendly environment and a top-notch infrastructure. Growing and retaining existing businesses in health IT, mobile technologies, financial technologies, cybersecurity, digital media, supply chain and advanced manufacturing marks a refined shift in economic development. The traditional sole focus on company recruitment has given way to a more diversified approach that emphasizes the importance of aftercare services for the existing base of FOEs and domestic companies and creates an innovative and entrepreneurial ecosystem for startups.

In 2013, metro Atlanta was selected to participate in the GCI and develop a comprehensive regional export plan as a way to make the region’s businesses and economy more globally diversified, sustainable and competitive through international trade. The MEP was released in 2015 and outlines objectives and strategies for metro Atlanta companies to increase their international sales and to establish a global brand for Atlanta-made products and services. Also in 2015, the Brookings Institution selected metro Atlanta to participate in the second phase of the GCI, which called for the region to develop a plan to attract and grow FDI in the region.

Along with the GCI, several metro Atlanta organizations have launched an array of initiatives to grow global competencies in the region and have addressed issues of talent availability, regional infrastructure and a business-friendly ecosystem that supports innovation and entrepreneurship. These combined efforts are integral to developing a modern global trade and investment strategy and elevating metro Atlanta’s profile as one of the world’s leading global regions. Examples of these initiatives include:

- **Atlanta Regional Commission’s Regional Economic Competitiveness Strategy** builds on extensive input from stakeholders across the region to create a roadmap for metro Atlanta on issues affecting regional competitiveness, such as education and workforce development, business retention and expansion (BRE), innovation and entrepreneurship and quality of place.

- **The Atlanta Center for International Arbitration and Mediation** seeks to position metro Atlanta as one of the world’s most hospitable venues for international dispute resolution.

- **Annual Global Legislative Agenda** ensures a positive quality of place by working with regional leaders and policymakers at the state legislature to support pro-business measures and defeat bills that would negatively impact foreign companies in the region.

- **The Atlanta Aerotropolis Alliance** aims to transform the economic power of the Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport vicinity into a world-class business center attractive to international corporations and others that would benefit from proximity to the world’s most-traveled airport.
In the summer of 2015, the FDI Plan Steering Committee, a regional coalition comprised of leaders from the business and academic communities and the public sector, including local, state and federal government representatives, formed a research team to study Brookings' FDI data for metro Atlanta. At the same time, the Steering Committee conducted interviews with FOEs to gain an in-depth understanding of their investment in the 29-county metro region, their relationships with EDOs in the area and the parent company in the home country, their successes and challenges in doing business in metro Atlanta and their future expansion plans. Five key findings emerged from the work of the research team and the company interviews. These findings are the cornerstone of this FDI Plan. They paint a clear picture of the opportunities to strengthen metro Atlanta’s international business ecosystem as well as the gaps that must be addressed to achieve that goal.
The role of metro Atlanta as a gateway is the central and indispensable story in marketing the region globally. However, the global vision of metro Atlanta as an entry point to the United States is too often limited to just Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport, the world’s most-traveled passenger terminal. Metro Atlanta’s untold story is that the region’s gateway advantages extend far beyond the end of the airport’s runways. Those advantages are what make metro Atlanta globally relevant as a gateway not just to the United States but to North and South America and other international destinations. Metro Atlanta’s gateway story has been a difficult narrative to tell because the region’s many assets that would benefit FOEs are scattered across a geographically large 29-county area and cover multiple industry clusters. Compounding the issues that the sheer size and diversity of the metro area present, the region also lacks a comprehensive and easy-to-find list of its globally important assets.

FOEs that enter the U.S. market in metro Atlanta can be confident that this array of assets makes the entire 29-county area a top-tier international business center which can support a full cycle of their growth – from initial local and domestic sales and distribution to manufacturing, HQ, operations, and robust R&D supporting a dynamic global presence. FOEs are not going to “outgrow” the abundance of business support resources that the Atlanta region offers.

**METRO ATLANTA’S MAJOR GLOBAL GATEWAY ADVANTAGES**

- 2,500 foreign-owned operations
- 66 universities with 275,000 students enrolled each year
- 78 consular and trade offices and 37 bi-national chambers of commerce
- 28 FORTUNE 500/1000 companies
- #1 lowest cost of doing business among 10 largest U.S. metros
- 250 miles from Port of Savannah, nation’s fastest growing container port
- 70 direct flights to international destinations
- 101.5 million passengers, and the world’s most-traveled airport

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*Metro Atlanta Chamber analysis of 2016 KPMG Competitiveness Alternatives*
Metro Atlanta’s IT industry ecosystem is truly unique among America’s metropolitan areas. While some competing metros also have strong IT industry ecosystems, none of them can offer foreign technology firms the extensive global gateway advantages combined with an IT industry hub resources. The validity of metro Atlanta’s claim to being the Western Hemisphere’s hub for four key IT industry sectors – financial technologies, mobility and wireless technologies, health IT, and cybersecurity – lies in a set of impressive statistics:

- Georgia’s 115 information security companies generate more than 25 percent of global cybersecurity revenue.
- Georgia financial technology firms process more than 118 billion transactions per year supporting nearly 4 million merchants. This represents 70 percent of all U.S. financial card transactions.
- There are more than 50 incubators, accelerators and co-working spaces in the region, which allow metro Atlanta to strengthen the technology industry ecosystem by supporting startup companies, innovation, and entrepreneurship.
- Georgia’s health IT sector is the largest in the nation with more than 200 companies employing 30,000 people.

These statistics underscore another important point about the strength of the region’s IT ecosystem: it is unsurpassed in its ability to support sustainable growth of foreign technology companies both large and small. In this regard, metro Atlanta’s higher education institutions have a significant role to play. For example, Georgia Institute of Technology (Georgia Tech), a globally recognized leader in IT research based in downtown Atlanta, has a capacity to support both foreign startups as well as large R&D projects commissioned by multinational companies.
M&A is a major driver of FDI in the metro Atlanta market – 62 percent of the jobs under foreign ownership in metro Atlanta are in M&A firms, which is a larger share than the national average of 54 percent 12 – but state and local EDOs in the 29-county metro Atlanta region traditionally focus their FDI activities solely on greenfield investment. The rub for EDOs with M&As vs. greenfield investment is that foreign M&A transactions do not always produce new jobs. Rather than growing jobs, the initial outcome with foreign M&As is often only a shift of ownership from domestic to foreign. Even so, there can be substantial benefits of such transactions – knowledge of global markets, new technologies, innovative ideas, new financial resources that the new parent company brings – to the regional business ecosystem. Equally important, M&A firms could be in close competition with other establishments of the global parent. This is why it is imperative that EDOs are able to present a value proposition to the parent firm for continued investment in metro Atlanta.

One in four companies the Steering Committee interviewed started in the United States via an M&A. Moreover, many of the interviewed companies are planning to leverage M&A activity to grow in the United States by getting time-efficient access to new markets and technologies.


“An important finding of the Atlanta FDI Plan is the need for local economic development organizations to focus more attention on mergers and acquisitions. It is clear that the metro Atlanta area is prime territory for companies to grow jobs and investment through M&A activities and, working with our regional partners, we can develop the necessary strategies to help promote and support quality job growth in the region.”

Greg Wright, President, Coveta County Development Authority Chair, Georgia Economic Developers Association (GEDA)

“DEKRA has an aggressive M&A strategy. We are continually looking for great targets within the Testing, Inspection and Certification field that fit our culture and have the same vision of high customer service and bringing extreme value to our customers. We have found Atlanta and Georgia in general to be target rich for DEKRA. Our very first acquisition and the start of our North America footprint was in Atlanta and from there we have grown our business in good and rapid fashion throughout the USA, Canada and Mexico. Working with the regional economic development organizations has proved very beneficial for my company.”

Donald Nicholson, President and Chief Executive Officer, DEKRA North America
The majority of the 2,500 FOEs in metro Atlanta entered the market as a M&A or a small to mid-size greenfield operation with an average of 30 employees.12 These FOEs tend to feel isolated – they have not assimilated into cultural and business communities beyond those from their own countries; they mistakenly think the main reason they face challenges is because they are foreign-owned; they feel left out of their industry mainstream; and they don’t know what they don’t know about doing business in the United States. In addition, expats and their families who are new to metro Atlanta often encounter obstacles getting settled. The initial cultural shock is amplified by difficulties in obtaining important documentation such as a driver’s license and a Social Security number, and in establishing credit necessary to purchase a vehicle or a home, getting insurance and opening a bank account.

Despite these challenges and the acute need of so many for support, EDOs typically do not know these foreign firms to the same extent as they do the big greenfield wins. In addition, economic development efforts such as BRE services and incentives tend to favor the biggest companies because the EDOs structure their services around the substantial job growth and new capital investment the greenfield wins create.

Some of the FOEs interviewed in the FDI Plan market assessment phase expressed dissatisfaction with the existing traditional approach to BRE. In fact, one firm revealed that they located an additional investment in a competing region due to dissatisfaction with the existing traditional approach to BRE. The INTERVIEW FEEDBACK: section below reflects these findings.

FOEs are at the forefront of resolving metro Atlanta’s workforce development challenges. Despite numerous workforce development service providers in metro Atlanta14 and the region’s top national workforce development rankings, companies in all industry sectors and throughout the 29-county region often struggle to find, attract and retain talent. Foreign firms that the Steering Committee interviewed in the market assessment cited several challenges regarding the local workforce. These include an across-the-board shortage of skilled workers in high tech industry sectors, which leads to practices of employee poaching by competing companies in the region; problems connecting with workforce development service providers who can introduce FOEs to the talent they seek; and difficulties with attracting millennials to live and work in outlying rural counties where the quality of place is far different from the city’s trendy restaurants and clubs and its cultural and arts events.

However, the interviews also revealed multiple success stories of FOEs addressing these challenges head-on. From teaching K-12 students the latest coding techniques, to working directly with technical schools and universities to design customized curricula, metro Atlanta FOEs are at the forefront of creating a talent pipeline of tech-savvy and globally minded employees.

We are proud to be the global leader in eye care and have been expanding our site in Johns Creek since 2013. With our multiple expansions, we have added more than 500 jobs with more scheduled in 2016 and beyond. In 2014, we were pleased that Alcon was among the highly regarded corporations included in Governor Nathan Deal’s High Demand Career Initiative. As our work cover two critical segments - Technology and Health Care - we bring terrific job opportunities to the Atlanta area for those who have high levels of skills and expertise in engineering, physical sciences and manufacturing.

Of particular interest and need for Alcon, are strong process engineers, electro mechanics and production technicians. We have state-of-the-art equipment and processes and have great need for incredibly talented and motivated individuals who seek a very fast-paced environment and bring solutions to the challenge of a new startup as well as a mature stable operation.

We find that in the Atlanta area there is quite a shortage of trained and experienced electro mechanics we seek as we expand our operations. That said, we are able to employ and train some candidates who graduate from the Technical College System of Georgia with backgrounds in the Industrial Maintenance programs and some directly out of the military.

We have benefited greatly from our partnerships with Georgia Quick Start and Gwinnett Technical College. The process related training provided by Quick Start and the job aides they have partnered with us to produce are of great quality and have helped us grow in an efficient and high-quality manner. Beyond that, in 2016 we are in process of identifying very specific skill courses, such as critical thinking, that can be provided to our technicians.

Thus far, we have had great success with our Engineering Co-op and Internship programs with Georgia Technical Institute (Georgia Tech) and Kennesaw State University, including the former Southern Polytechnic State University. Each semester we plan on up to 10 strong students rotating between work at Alcon and pursuing their respective engineering degrees. We are pleased to have an acceptance of a very talented engineer who was the first to complete the program. We have found that these engineering students can do some incredibly valuable work for us, which makes them stronger candidates as they conclude their studies. The talent that is available from these engineering schools has been impressive, and we intend to reach out to other universities with engineering programs as well.

Robert Meyers, General Manager, Atlanta Site Manufacturing, Alcon – a Novartis company

14Metro Atlanta X-Change for Workforce Solutions, http://www.moxworkforce.org

*Note: A longer version of this article and case study can be found on the FDI Plan website.
The metro Atlanta FDI Plan will be implemented during a period of five years. Achieving the goal of the plan will depend upon successfully meeting four key measurable objectives:

1. Establish metro Atlanta as top of mind for foreign investors in the region’s key industry sectors and critical global markets. Success in achieving this objective will be defined as adding 190 new FOEs – both greenfield and M&As – to the region by 2021, which would be a 36 percent increase in the currently reported five-year regional average.

2. Continue a positive trajectory of FDI employment growth.

3. Grow FOE satisfaction from their investment in metro Atlanta. Measure success by analyzing results of the biannual FOE CEO survey. The results of the 2017 survey will create an FOE satisfaction baseline.

4. Create a strong “metro Atlanta team” mindset for foreign investment among the EDOs in the 29 counties. Success in achieving this objective will be measured by comparing the current level of regional partner engagement to the level achieved as a result of implementing the FDI Plan.
Establish metro Atlanta as a gateway for FOEs expanding into the United States, NAFTA, and beyond.

Metro Atlanta boasts some major global gateway advantages. They include unparalleled access to markets via extensive ground, air and sea transportation options to reach U.S. and global customers, the third largest concentration of FORTUNE 500 company headquarters in the United States, numerous globally minded professional service providers in industry sectors critical to supporting HQ operations, low cost of living and doing business and a higher education system that offers new technologies and R&D opportunities via the region’s 66 colleges and universities and seven technical colleges.

Despite these global gateway assets, regional EDOs have used the general term “global gateway” based almost exclusively on the ranking of Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport as the world’s most-traveled passenger terminal. However, while beating the airport drum as loudly as possible is a sound marketing strategy, it does not tell the region’s complete and truly compelling global gateway story. This story is about how foreign firms will find enduring support through metro Atlanta’s many business assets and that this support will help them thrive and be successful in the region throughout their full growth cycle – from opening a sales office to establishing an R&D center. In addition, the region’s assets will give FOEs easy access to customers across the United States, NAFTA and around the world.

This strategy defines the meaning and impact of metro Atlanta as a global gateway. It will engage EDOs and business community leaders throughout the 29-county region to create innovative and strategic opportunities to tell metro Atlanta’s story to foreign companies abroad as well as to those already in the United States.

Tactic 1: Global Gateway Regional Task Force

Establish a Global Gateway Task Force and charge them with the responsibility to (1) clearly define the gateway concept and (2) show how the concept makes metro Atlanta relevant nationally and globally. The task force will consist of EDOs, business executives, and higher education leaders from the region’s 29 counties. The objective of the Task Force will be to turn its definition of metro Atlanta as a global gateway into a region-wide digital branding strategy so that EDOs can market this message to the world.

Tactic 2: A metro Atlanta guide for FOEs

Launch ATL Global Gateway, an online guide for FOEs to metro Atlanta’s numerous diversified assets, and engage a search engine optimization (SEO) expert to drive traffic to this virtual portal. This guide will provide FOEs with useful industry and startup community contacts, workforce development resources, K-12 and higher education information and international community connections. In addition, the portal will provide a step-by-step guide to investing in metro Atlanta, from incorporation through finding an office to hiring the right talent.

Tactic 3: A recruitment toolkit for EDOs

Develop an online toolkit for metro Atlanta EDOs active in FDI recruitment, retention and expansion as well as for those that engage with foreign companies on an irregular, ad-hoc basis. The goal of this resource will be to ensure that EDOs work together as a team and tell a single and consistent story about metro Atlanta.

This portal will include resources such as:

- A library of Why Metro Atlanta for Business PowerPoint slides with information highlighting the region’s global gateway assets. In addition to general slides focused on the regional assets as a whole, the library will include customized slides with information about each of the 29 counties in the region as well as information about each key industry cluster.
- A directory of professional service providers, consulates and bi-lateral chambers of commerce.
- Research data points about the region that EDOs can use when preparing their request for information (RFI) responses to foreign prospects. This tool would include information such as metro Atlanta’s key economic indicators, data comparing metro Atlanta to its peer metros, business rankings, new location and expansion announcements and a list of FOEs in metro Atlanta.

Complement the portal with a series of cultural immersion sessions for EDOs to give them a thorough understanding of basic savoir-vivre when dealing with foreign investors. Help them ensure that their marketing presentations and materials are appropriate for companies from various international markets.

Tactic 4: Business recruitment and trade missions to foreign markets

Continue to collaborate among metro Atlanta EDOs – including export-promotion partners – to organize business recruitment and trade missions to key foreign markets, such as Germany, United Kingdom, China, India and countries with which the United States has free trade agreements. The purpose of these visits will be to promote the Atlanta region as a source of quality products and services and to stake a claim that metro Atlanta is the premiere global gateway for starting a business in the United States. In order to maximize the ROI of these business trips, utilize global networks of metro Atlanta-based companies and organizations, as well as professional service providers and consultants, bi-lateral trade organizations, consulates, as well as the international connections offered by the U.S. Department of Commerce, such as the U.S. Commercial Service and SelectUSA.
This strategy will strengthen the region’s rank as America’s top-tier platform for foreign technology companies because it reinforces to the tech industry around the world that IT players in metro Atlanta are part of something special on a global scale. The Atlanta area is not only one of the top global tech hubs, especially in financial technologies, cybersecurity, mobility and wireless technologies, digital media and health IT, but the region also boasts unprecedented access to a range of global gateway assets. Importantly, this strategy will provide EDOs with an opportunity to enhance the region’s IT ecosystem by attracting even more foreign technology firms, including startups, increasing growth opportunities for existing IT companies, and building more collaborations between businesses and higher education institutions to support innovation and R&D.

**AMERICA’S IT LEADER**

Position metro Atlanta as the nation’s next great IT hub driven by specializations in financial technologies, cybersecurity, mobility and wireless, digital media and health IT combined with an array of global gateway assets.

**STRA TEGY 2:**

**Tactic 1**  
Atlanta Tech Gateway for foreign startups

Explore opportunities to grow the Atlanta Tech Gateway into a program that combines services with a physical incubator/accelerator space to assist foreign tech startups in becoming successful in metro Atlanta. The Atlanta Tech Gateway assists foreign tech startups in successfully accessing the metro Atlanta IT ecosystem’s resources, business opportunities, partners and industry networks. This initiative is spearheaded by a group of partners which includes the Georgia Department of Economic Development, the Metro Atlanta Chamber, the American-Israel Chamber of Commerce and the Technology Association of Georgia. It fills in the gap between traditional FDI recruitment services, such as site selection and incentives; it also provides assistance that foreign IT companies seek, including one-on-one mentoring, networking opportunities, connections to the industry clusters and introductions to their potential first customers in the United States.

**Tactic 2**  
IT trade shows and conferences

Identify and participate in global technology trade shows in which metro Atlanta does not now have a presence. Ratchet up participation in shows EDOs already attend – such as Finovate in London for financial technologies and the Mobile World Congress in Barcelona for mobility and wireless technologies. Instead of the traditional approach in which EDOs promote the region’s assets, put metro Atlanta’s C-level executives front and center at these events by securing top-level speaking engagements and media interviews. This approach will position these business leaders to become spokespersons and ambassadors for the region.

On the domestic side, work with foreign government trade offices in the United States to increase international attendance at metro Atlanta’s high-profile IT sector events, including the Health IT Leadership Summit, GSMA/Mobility LIVE!, Venture Atlanta and E-Commerce Show USA.

**Tactic 3**  
Corporate Research Centers

Explore how to better tap into the research and collaboration resources at the region’s 66 colleges and universities and seven technical colleges. Central to this strategy is Georgia Tech in downtown Atlanta. Georgia Tech has become one of the nation’s leading destinations for R&D with 12 FORTUNE 500 companies opening their corporate innovation centers on the campus. This resource should be better utilized in attracting, supporting and retaining technology FOEs. Several other colleges and universities in particular should figure prominently into this tactic; they include Emory University, Georgia State University, and Kennesaw State University.

**AMERICA’S IT LEADER**  

Position metro Atlanta as the nation’s next great IT hub driven by specializations in financial technologies, cybersecurity, mobility and wireless, digital media and health IT combined with an array of global gateway assets.
TAKE A FRESH LOOK AT FOREIGN M&As

Embrace foreign M&A transactions as a key channel of global investment in metro Atlanta.

Build a broad-based awareness among local EDOs, community leaders, elected officials, media and business executives that foreign M&A transactions can have long-term advantages that may sometimes (though not always) include immediate job growth. Make sure they understand, however, that M&A transactions can have downsides. This is why EDOs must learn to manage all aspects of M&As better. Position EDOs to create and provide a new set of key services directed specifically at foreign M&A firms pre- and post-acquisition. This open-minded approach to M&As will support a more diversified, competitive and growing regional economy.

Tactic 1
M&A crash course
Design an M&A crash course to raise awareness of foreign M&As among metro Atlanta EDOs, the media, elected officials, and the general public by highlighting the frequent positive results of such transactions, even though they aren’t always in the form of new jobs, and by educating about possible downsides. Highlight local M&A successes by regularly talking about them on online resources and social media and by encouraging area media to report about them. Educate the media about the positive aspects of M&As to help ensure that members of the media “get” M&As and report about these transactions in a positive light.

Tactic 2
Metro Atlanta companies owned by PEGs
Identify metro Atlanta’s companies owned by private equity groups (PEGs). The PEG’s goal is to grow the acquired company’s sales and improve its profitability so it can get maximum value for its investment when it takes the company public via an IPO or when it sells the company to a competitor or another PEG. On average, the exit occurs within three to seven years after the initial investment. Use this information to create a BRE “target list” to ensure that such companies are tied to the region and are well connected to other companies in metro Atlanta before being sold to a foreign investor.

Tactic 3
M&A Quick Response Teams
Organize M&A Quick Response Teams of local, state, and utility partners to welcome the new foreign parent’s local leadership to metro Atlanta at the earliest opportunity. Provide the new leadership with comprehensive information about the local business ecosystem and benefits of doing business in metro Atlanta, inform them of economic development resources and aftercare services, connect them to appropriate consulates and relevant industry associations, and continue the dialog about their challenges and how the Quick Response Team can assist them.

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Expand the traditional BRE services offered by metro Atlanta EDOs into a comprehensive regional aftercare program which will help FOEs minimize their sense of isolation and reach their full investment and growth potential, thus enabling them to maintain and justify their metro Atlanta location. This program would provide the region’s numerous smaller foreign firms with business development services, key introductions to local business leaders, enhanced networking opportunities, and workforce and talent development resources. This expanded BRE program would also address challenges of expats and their families who are new to the region and who often struggle to "get started" in metro Atlanta.

As 70 percent of FDI growth typically originates from the existing investor base, a comprehensive aftercare approach would support this growth by leading to a more broad-based assimilation of FOEs into metro Atlanta’s business and cultural communities.

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STRATEGY 4: AFTERCARE, NOT AN AFTER-THOUGHT

Aftercare is not just a quick welcome, but a commitment to a long-term relationship with the new FOE.

Tactic 1
Aftercare roundtables with EDOs and FOEs

Begin changing the culture by conducting visits with EDOs in the metro region to assess their mindset towards BRE and analyze their approach to aftercare for foreign investors. Structure the visits as roundtable discussions with participation of local FOEs to obtain their feedback and suggestions about how to expand existing BRE services for foreign investors.

Tactic 2
“Getting Started in Metro Atlanta”

Create a “Getting Started in Metro Atlanta” informational pamphlet that explains “in a nutshell” how new foreign investors and their families can easily obtain identification and documents necessary for living in the United States — examples include a Social Security number, a driver’s license, vehicle insurance and credit cards. Assess the need for educational sessions for EDOs and other public administration representatives who often have the one-on-one encounters with foreign investors. These sessions would include time with local branches of the Department of Driver Services, the Social Security Administration, international schools, banks and insurance agencies.

Tactic 3
Foreign CEO survey

Every two years, conduct a survey of CEOs of foreign firms in the region to identify trends, reveal their most pressing challenges, measure their satisfaction and highlight their success stories. Share the results with metro Atlanta’s EDOs, business leaders and elected officials during a highly publicized regional event. This event will feature a moderated panel discussion with a selected group of CEOs on the most pressing issues facing foreign companies in metro Atlanta. This will be a bi-annual event that will set the tone for aftercare services in the region.

Tactic 4
Corporate Concierge Program

Get inside the companies to better understand their aftercare needs by developing a Metro Atlanta Corporate Concierge Program. This will be an initiative to provide a suite of aftercare services by teams of representatives from state, regional, and local EDOs, Consular Corps, bi-national chambers of commerce and industry-specific organizations. Customize these services to the needs of FOEs in various stages of growth in metro Atlanta:

New to Market: Organize “welcome to metro Atlanta” networking events for newly landed FOEs to introduce them to the local business community and connect them with key EDOs; assist with visas; help families integrate into the community; and promote local hiring opportunities.

Growing: Reach out to FORTUNE 500 and 1000 companies in metro Atlanta to compile a calendar of their local procurement events. This calendar can be shared with FOEs in the region to create networking opportunities and connections to key contacts to help those FOEs develop a local customer base.

Established: Address infrastructure needs; track public policy and legislative issues; connect FOE executives to local leadership boards; promote export opportunities; and help FOEs engage in local supply chains to sustain the overall goal of building a more vibrant global business ecosystem.

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*Organization for International Investment, Understanding Aftercare, 2015
Recruit, retain and train a workforce which will ensure a robust and sustainable talent pipeline for companies in metro Atlanta, including FOEs. Strengthen connections between FOEs and workforce development resources, including K-12, the University System of Georgia and the Technical College System of Georgia. Raise awareness about the importance of having a global mindset in today’s global economy, which strongly complements technical skills and knowledge.

**Tactic 1**

Initiatives to attract young talent

To meet the immediate challenge of attracting and retaining skilled young professionals to metro Atlanta, engage with the already established and successful ongoing initiatives – such as ChooseATL and AIESEC – to recruit millennials and position metro Atlanta as the place to live, work, and start a company. Connecting with such initiatives will provide access to a pipeline of talented millennials and create a way to promote the region as a hub that offers them global business career opportunities. Encourage local FOEs to utilize similar platforms to promote job openings and needs for specific kinds of talent.

**Tactic 2**

Foreign business-higher education synergies

Conduct roadshows to economic development partners and school districts in metro Atlanta to identify examples of highly successful co-ops, internships, apprenticeships, and language immersion programs led by FOEs or foreign governmental organizations. Engage business and community leaders to help promote these successes as sources of encouragement to other businesses in the region that struggle to find the right talent to replicate the efforts.

**Tactic 3**

Connections between K-12 and FOEs

Connect and engage FOEs in the region with metro Atlanta’s K-12 school systems and programs implemented by the Georgia Department of Education, such as the Career Technical and Agricultural Education (CTAE). The goal will be to develop basic platforms skills for students and help school districts create 21st century curricula. That curricula should have a focus on technical and computer skills (e.g. basic coding) to create a talent pipeline that will sustain metro Atlanta’s IT ecosystem. In addition to technical skills, promote cultural and language immersion programs for students to prepare them for entering the global workforce of tomorrow.

Harness the expertise of local FOEs to create a robust talent pipeline of tech savvy and globally minded individuals.
PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

IMPLEMENTATION

The implementation of the Metro Atlanta FDI Plan mirrors that of the Atlanta MEP in that the office of Global Commerce at the Metro Atlanta Chamber will lead and coordinate the execution of the FDI Plan. The Steering Committee has formed two groups to support the implementation of the plan:

1. THE ADVISORY BOARD will be made up of the core members of the Steering Committee and executives from local companies, agencies, and interested organizations, such as academic institutions and key industry trade groups. Thus far, the core members carrying over to the Advisory Board include:
   - City of Atlanta – Office of the Mayor
   - Douglas County Economic Development Authority
   - Georgia Power
   - Invest Atlanta
   - JPMorgan Chase
   - Metro Atlanta Chamber
   - Partnership Gwinnett, Gwinnett Chamber
   - UPS

   The members of the Advisory Board will oversee progress of the implementation, with Metro Atlanta Chamber directly accountable to the Advisory Board for regular updates and progress reports. In addition, the Advisory Board will suggest any changes in strategy and tactics and determine ongoing policy recommendations related to the goals and objectives of the FDI Plan.

2. THE WORKING COMMITTEES will be comprised of the remaining members of the FDI Plan Steering Committee plus any additional interested parties from throughout the metro Atlanta region. The role of the Working Committees will be to:
   - Assist with delivering tactics outlined in the FDI Plan.
   - Raise awareness and public and financial support for the FDI Plan.
   - Deliver foreign investment-related programs and events as outlined in the FDI Plan.

   The goals and objectives for the FDI Plan are proposed as part of a five-year work plan to demonstrate and build the economic impact of foreign investment on metro Atlanta’s economy. Funding needed for each year of the plan may vary based on modifications to strategy and tactics.

It is difficult to establish specific region-wide FDI metrics because foreign investment activity is largely affected by global economic and political trends beyond the control of the many municipal and county governments and EDOs throughout the geographically extensive and diverse 29-county metro region. For instance, strengthening of the dollar would be a headwind for FDI. Therefore, the Steering Committee will use various performance measurement indicators to track metro Atlanta’s progress in implementing this plan. Examples include:

- National data that track the portion of the region’s economic output that is attributable to foreign investment.
- Numbers of new foreign companies and jobs in FOEs in metro Atlanta attributed to both greenfield and M&A transactions.
- Outcomes of investment/recruitment missions.
- Results from visits by international business and political delegations.
- Development of new FDI source markets (in addition to the key investment markets).
- Adoption of public policy changes and key proposals recommended in this FDI Plan.
- Number of local FOEs reached through the expanded BRE/aftercare company visits.
- Number of global industry conferences hosted in metro Atlanta.
- Increased local media coverage of FDI trends and activities in metro Atlanta.
- Increased metro Atlanta brand recognition abroad, including foreign media coverage.
SUMMARY OF KEY POLICY PROPOSALS

The Metro Atlanta FDI Plan Steering Committee has identified the following examples of policy issues that are of the utmost importance to continued growth of foreign investment in the Atlanta area:

Infrastructure and public transit: These are the top two quality-of-place issues mentioned during individual interviews with local FOEs in the research phase; an inadequate infrastructure could mean the loss of future investment and jobs; lack of sufficient public transit limits FOEs in reaching the full available workforce pool.

Talent retention and immigration: These are significant and growing concerns raised by many metro Atlanta FOEs; support national organizations that address visa programs to retain foreign STEM graduates of U.S. universities and technical colleges.

Tax treaties: A significant factor for foreign companies to expand into the U.S. market, as the treaties prevent double taxation.

Free trade agreements: A significant factor for local FOEs, which tend to be heavily involved in international trade and produce nearly 21 percent of all U.S. exports.17

State “Buy America” requirements: Monitor potential state regulations that address visa programs to retain foreign companies interested in doing business in metro Atlanta.

Virtual EDO portal: Streamline the communication and marketing efforts of EDOs in the region by providing them with the most up-to-date information, statistics, and data about metro Atlanta’s assets.

ATL Global Gateway at a Glance: Ensure consistent regional messaging to foreign companies interested in doing business in metro Atlanta.

MARKETING AND COMMUNICATION

The successful implementation of the Metro Atlanta FDI Plan will depend largely on developing a sustained and coordinated marketing and communication effort that will effectively tell the metro Atlanta story. To ensure that the implementation achieves the goals of the plan, the Steering Committee has developed the following marketing and communication approach to launch and support the plan throughout the five-year implementation period:

Launch the Metro Atlanta FDI Plan: Organize a launch event covered by major local media outlets with participation from the top public and private leadership and Consular Corps.

Existing marketing channels: Cross promote the inbound and outbound efforts of the Atlanta FDI and MEP plans through ongoing communication initiatives that include the AtlantaExportPortal.com, ChooseATL campaign, and iNav (Intern Navigators).

County roadshows: Promote the FDI Plan to EDOs, elected officials, and local media and other stakeholders in metro Atlanta’s 29 counties to get their buy-in and support.

Virtual EDO portal: Streamline the communication and marketing efforts of EDOs in the region by providing them with the most up-to-date information, statistics, and data about metro Atlanta’s assets.

ATL Global Gateway at a Glance: Ensure consistent regional messaging to foreign companies interested in doing business in metro Atlanta.