



**Georgia Downtown Association Annual Board Retreat**  
**Teri Smiley, Facilitator – Starfish Partnerships, LLC**  
**January 16-17, 2024**  
**Thomasville, GA**

**Attendees**

Board Members: President Emily Hopkins, Past-President Jeffrey Fowler, Aundi Lesley, Suzanne Roberts, Velinda Hardy, Kira Harris-Braggs, Abigail Strickland, Taylor Smith, Kendrick Ward, Tonya Parker, April Norton, Abbey McLaren, Qaijuan Willis

Staff Members: Renée Coakley, Cindy Eidson, Sharon Collins, Emily Davenport

Partners: Scott Purvis, Jessica Worthington

**Day 1: January 16, 2024 | 1 pm – 5 pm**

**Welcome**

**2024 GDA Board President**

**Overview of the Retreat**

**Teri Smiley, Owner**  
**Starfish Partnerships, LLC**

**Introductions – Board Members, Partners & Staff**

**MIND DESIGN Team Building Activity**

This is an activity of your “Human Thinking Style”, developed by Dr. Alan Black of Athens, Georgia.

**A Roadmap for Board Excellence**

Teri reviewed training for non-profit board members and a full copy of the power point presentation is included as part of the retreat final report.

**Team Building Activity**

Part of the desire for the retreat was for board members to get to know one another better so we did several activities through-out the retreat. This particular one was the 2 truths and a lie activity.

## **Defining Roles – Staff | Partners | Board Members**

We worked in small groups to identify the specific roles of each and here are the results:

**Board Members:** Vision, Strategic Planning, Sets Direction, Sets Policy, Accountability – self & board members, Advocates, Conference Planning, Recruiting members and volunteers, Plan implementation, Onboarding new board members & volunteers, Serve as committee chairs, Be cheerleaders for GDA, Good stewards of the finances, Represents voice of members, Support Staff and Attends and engages in meetings

**Partners:** Financial Support, Big Picture Thinking, Advocates for GDA, Shares resources, Provides expertise and experience, Facilitates connections, Cheerleaders for GDA, Supports the goals, initiatives and programs, Identifies potential new partners, Provides technical assistance  
*\*while partners do not serve on a committee, they can be asked to step in to help with advice or resources.*

**Staff:** Day-to-Day operations, Keeps organization, Cheerleader for GDA and programs, Connectivity between board, partners and members, Ensures programs meet state and national required standards, Liaison between members and board, helps to bring goals to life, Administrative, Accounts Receivables and Payables, Budget Development, Assists with Plan Implementation, Conference Implementation and follow-through, Lisason between GMA and GDA and Keeps financial and membership data.

## **Processes – Onboarding Board Members & Volunteers**

The board members held a lengthy discussion on the onboarding process for new board members and the full new outline is include in the committee overview from Day 2 – as well as the volunteer onboarding process.

## **Adjourn Day 1**

### **Day 2: January 17, 2024 | 9 am – 5 pm**

#### **Team Building Activity**

This activity was on Social Styles – What shape are you – triangle, square, circle or squiggly? This was a fun assessment of how the board members interact with others.

#### **2023 Business Plan Overview**

Each Committee chair review accomplishments from 2023 and we celebrated wins!

#### **2023 GDA Board President**

#### **Visioning**

In a perfect world, we looked at what could be done in these committees and here are the outcomes from the visioning process, small group discussion and presentations back to the group.

#### **Teri Smiley**

## **Education Committee** – Chair Jeffrey, Cassidy, Aundi – Partner Jessica Worthington

- Mentoring Program Process
- CDP Marketing & Program Growth
  - Scholarships?
  - Review after June 1 Year
  - Promote to Nationals
  - Market to Other cities
  - Expand to cities – specialty training on downtowns through GMA (under committee review now)
- Review Survey topics from Conference Surveys
- Conference Topics – share with partners

## **Marketing & Membership** – Tonya, Suzanne, Abigail – Partner Emily

- New Member structure promotions
- Social Media Presence
- Level 1 Tier Membership- Review & contact for upgrades
- Webinar GMA Reps & DCA Reps
- Promotions on City Connect Calls
  - Marketing, Member Benefits, Impact of GDA, Updates, Etc
- Presentation on Regional Meet-ups – update and also offer as a webinar
- New downtown hires
  - Explain what, who and why of GDA and other organizations they need to know about
- Grow Membership in GDA
  - Evaluate who is missing in the membership
  - Regional contacts – board member accountability in place for contacting those in their region
- Brand Emails

## **Legislative Committee** – Taylor Chair, Jason, Kendrick (Scott Partner)

- Advocacy is critical as a benefit of membership to GDA
- Build potential partnerships
  - Identify additional public, private, non-profits
  - Give GDA a bigger voice
- Education on how the legislative process works...and how it “really works”
- Presence at Cross-Over Day
- Legislative Calendar to members of GDA
- Legislative Committee involvement
- Host a luncheon for legislators
- Hire a lobbyist or leverage GMA’s lobbyist
- Educate legislators on Downtown importance and on GDA

## **Conference Committee** – April, Velinda, Qajuan – Partner/Staff Sharon & Renee

- August Board meeting – rework what this looks like – use it as an opportunity to promote GDA and its committee work
- Conference App – continue and add to
- Round tables – cannot be “salesy”
- The agenda – less or duplicate mobile workshops, more educational topics, possibly content other than “first time or 101 classes” on first day
- Awards – categories review, shorten speeches, photos, highlight all applicants, not just winners, ask GA Trend to feature winners, Awards review committee and process needed
- Grow Sponsors
- Grow Attendance
- Invite out of state attendees
- Possibilities to add Education content on the last day
- MOU agreement for host cities clearly outlining expectations and commitment

## **Policy & Procedure Committee** – Emily, Kira, Abbey – Partner Cindy

- Edge Scholarship – Application & Selection
- New Board Member Onboarding Process
- Volunteer Onboarding Process
- Committee Calendar
- Review bylaws
- Visit, Review and update manual
- Board member commitment forms

## **Lunch Break (30 minutes)**

### **Team Building Activity**

This team building activity was all about “picture cards” and how it relates to them as a leader and their service on the board and in their day job roles.

### **Goal Setting – Small Groups**

For this section, the small groups spent time turning the visions into SMARTER Goals for measurability for 2024.

The information from these presentations can be found as the 2024 Business Plan Report included with the final retreat reports for the following committees: Legislative Committee, Marketing & Membership Committee, Education Committee, Policy & Procedure Committee and the Conference Committee.

### **Board Commitment Forms**

Teri reviewed the commitment forms for all board members and asked that those who needed to, sign the form.

### **Gratitude Activity & The Starfish Story**

Teri shared the Starfish Story and the group wrote a positive quote then “snowball threw” them into the center and each board member took one with them to remember the retreat. Teri reminded them of the difference they make in their communities each and every day and thanked them for allowing her to facilitate the retreat for them!

**Final Comments** A few of the board members commented on the progress made at the retreat and we adjourned the retreat.

### **Adjourn Day 2**

## Legislative Committee

Legislative Chair: Taylor Smith    Committee Members: Jason Ford (co-chair), Kendrick Ward					
	Extra Information	Responsibility	Due Date	Notes	Status
Create a Legislative Calendar	-Ask GMA for the calendar and then review for legislation relative to GDA -Set dates to visit including Cities United Day Breakfast 1.29.24 and Crossover Day 02.29.24	Team	January Calendar and February Crossover Day Attendance		
GMA – LPC Committee	GDA Representative to serve on sub-committee	Emily Davenport - GMA	This 2024 Session	Emily will help navigate this	
Membership updates	-Monthly Updates January through April and Quarterly after Session -Summer Recap at Conference, Fall send advocacy agenda and December – 2025 Calendar	Team	April Meeting		
Legislative Letter & Marketing Materials	-To send in November to include GDA Award winners, advocacy agenda and economic impact -Rack Card – 5 Action items -I am a GA Downtown Professional Buttons	Team			

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**GDA Vision:** A statewide network of thriving downtowns and equipped professionals that are recognized as Georgia’s most valuable economic engine.

GMA/GDA Legislative Process Training	-Training for Downtown Professionals on Legislative Process -Potential to work closely with GMA lobbyists Possibility of hosting or co-hosting a breakfast or lunch for legislators-Fall 2024 or Spring 2025	Team	Summer/Fall 2024		
Recruitment of Potential New Partners	Explore possibilities to include Historic Trust, Rural Development Council, Planning Commissions, UGA, Georgia Tech, College Archway, other non-profits or for profit organizations	Team	June		
Downtown advocacy: website promotion	Continue legislative effort promotions on GDA website	Team	August		

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## Executive Committee (Internal Operations)

<b>Executive Chair:</b> Emily Hopkins <b>Committee Members:</b> April Norton, Jeffrey Fowler, Emily Hopkins, Aundi Lesley, Renée Coakley					
	Extra Information	Responsibility	Due Date	Notes	Status
Board Meeting Locations	To be located in different citizens around Georgia.	Policy & Procedure Committee	March Meeting	Will have 3 location meetings at board member cities	
Annual review of contracts	Review the GDA/GMA Contract at least once per year.	Board of Directors	March Meeting		
D&O Insurance	Review the insurance policy once per year.	Board of Directors	April Meeting		
Budget Review	Review the budget for approval for the new year.	Board of Directors	November Meeting		
Scholarship Review	Scholarships are to be reviewed on a monthly basis.	Board of Directors	Monthly	Will review as received	Ongoing
Welcome letter from President to New Managers or Downtown Professionals	Sent on a monthly basis.	President	Monthly	Welcome email goes out to new managers/DT professionals inviting to membership	Ongoing
Review Monthly Calendar	To ensure all items are being met.	Board of Directors	Monthly	Renée ensures tasks are met	Ongoing
In-person Workplan Review	This document should be reviewed at every in-person meeting.	Board of Directors	Bi-Monthly		Ongoing

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# Marketing & Membership Committee

M&M Chair: Abigail Strickland Committee Members: Tonya Parker and Suzanne Roberts					
	Extra Information	Responsibility	Due Date	Notes	Status
Grow Membership					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Level 1 (1-3) Review</li> <li>Promote New Structure</li> <li>Identify missing Cities</li> <li>Join Cities Connect Call for GDA presence</li> </ul>		All Renee GDA Board Abigail	On-going Identify missing cities by August 1	Talk to Allen Dickerson (GMA) for date	
Social Media Creation		Policy/Procedures Committee			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Content Build-out</li> <li>Schedule biweekly</li> </ul>		All to Create Tonya – google calendar Abigail – content scheduling	On-going Schedule January 31	Savings, benefits of memberships, Highlight BOD, Highlight Member Cities, Regional Meetings, CDP, Conferences, Edge Scholarship and testimonials	On-going
Additional Marketing					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review &amp; Update Marketing Materials</li> <li>GDA info videos – not sales pitch</li> <li>Order Swap</li> </ul>		All – Abigail and Renee	Review by 1.31.24 Videos by 3.15.24 Order Swag 5.15.24-GDA Conference and 2.29.24 – National Conference	-BOD Preview at March Meeting -Buttons for Legislative Days	
Educate					

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop Videos all about GDA</li> </ul>		All	3.26 Atlanta Meeting	New members, GMA, DCA and any new partners or new managers	
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# Education Committee

Education Chair: Jeffrey Fowler    Committee Members: Elizabeth Elliot, Cassidi Kendrick, Aundi Lesley					
	Extra Information	Responsibility	Due Date	Notes	Status
Mentorship Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Pairing Process Set up</li> <li>-Follow-Up</li> <li>-Webinar about program</li> <li>-Before Conference/End Process of zoom before conference, in person at conference, use regional meet-ups</li> </ul>	Full Process managed by 3 board members – Jeffrey, Cassidi, Aundi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Complete Process by March</li> <li>-Applications in April</li> <li>-Open June/Close July</li> <li>-Conference in person August</li> </ul>	Repeat annual responsibilities for Spring & Fall Meetups  CDP  Conference Content	
CDP Marketing & Program Growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Follow-up with UGA on internal marketing</li> <li>-Follow-up with GMA on marketing plan</li> <li>-Evaluate after each class cluster (June 2024 – full year)</li> <li>-Goal of 15% growth per cluster</li> </ul>	Jeffrey Fowler	Follow Ups in February and evaluate after June 2024	See 3 <sup>rd</sup> note after evaluation/surveys	
CDP Program Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Is it sustainable – locations, hotel costs, attendance, how much did we make?</li> <li>-Breakdown costs and evaluate by attendance numbers</li> <li>-Should we buy-out other owners?</li> <li>-Begin scholarship</li> </ul>	Education Committee	After June 2024 Review & Evaluation		

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-conversation – money for this or comping classes?</li> <li>-Incentives?</li> <li>-Out of state promotions?</li> </ul>				
Exhibit at NMSC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Partnership with other committees</li> <li>-CDP Promotions, Sell Merch? Need decision by end of January</li> <li>-Regional Meetups – set goals</li> </ul>	Education Committee	January	Price to exhibit \$925 and conference date is 2.9.24	
Education Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Review Surveys</li> <li>-Ensure meeting needs of attendees/members</li> <li>-Work with partners</li> <li>-Specific asks for topics?</li> <li>-Speaker discounts?</li> <li>-Review session content</li> <li>-Advertise Conference training topics</li> </ul>	Education Committee	<p>Surveys – out by April</p> <p>Review – May</p> <p>Set &amp; Advertise – June, July, August</p>		

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# Policy & Procedure Committee

Policy & Procedure Chair: Emily Hopkins Committee Members: Kira Harris-Braggs, Abbey McLaren					
	Extra Information	Responsibility	Due Date	Notes	Status
Volunteer Onboarding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Identify volunteer opportunities for committee members and at conference</li> <li>-Set up process and add to policy and procedures manual</li> </ul>	Committee Members	By February 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Follow-up process for interested committee members</li> <li>-Orientation packet/information</li> <li>-Application/Criteria</li> <li>-Committee Calendars</li> <li>-Timeline to align with retreat</li> </ul> <p>Conference Volunteers – March 2024</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Benefit for volunteers- swap, t-shirt, etc.</li> <li>-Orientation process</li> <li>-Establish volunteer coordinator board role</li> <li>-Hand over Volunteer Opportunities to Marketing by June '24</li> </ul>	
Establish Committee Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Outline Chair Responsibilities</li> </ul>	Staff, Committee	By February 2024 Board Meeting		

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Update/Review Committee descriptions to use in recruiting process</li> <li>-Responsibilities for meeting notices, agendas</li> <li>-Publish calendar for meetings</li> </ul>				
New Board Member Onboarding Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Prepare phone script outlining all expectations (time, financial, travel, etc) and review commitment letter</li> <li>-Once elected, host orientation prior to board member’s first meeting – in person or zoom</li> <li>-Develop orientation agenda and content – give content/template to marketing to brand power point and review and sign commitment form at orientation</li> </ul>	Committee	By April 2024 Board Meeting		
Edge Scholarship Selection Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Review Criteria for Edge Scholarship</li> <li>-Determine ultimate goal for scholarship</li> <li>-Create follow-up process for recipients – testimony, photo, report</li> <li>-Review reimbursement process</li> <li>-Review selection process</li> </ul>	Committee	By May/June 2024		

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	and determine if new process is needed – then establish if so -outline what is eligible for edge scholarship – make it more clear				
Review Policies & Procedures Manual	-Committee Members Review annually -Provide suggested updates -Board Reviews any updates -Board Votes on changes, additions, deletions	Committee	Ready by September 2024  Vote October 2024 Board Meeting		
Annual Responsibilities of Committee	-Review bylaws -Review Board Commitment Letter -Review Contracts – CDP, GMA, GACVB	Committee	June 2024 – Bylaws and Commitment Letter  March – CDP July – GMA December - GACVB		Ongoing annually

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# Conference Committee

Chair: April Norton Committee Members: Quaijuan Willis, Velinda Hardy – Staff - Sharon Collins, Renée Coakley					
	Extra Information	Responsibility	Due Date	Notes	Status
Annual August Board Meeting Agenda	-Make it more engaging -Include PowerPoint and celebrate victories -More educational	Marketing Committee Staff President	July 2024		
Conference Budget	-Follow 2024/Account Revenue -Develop/Vote on 2025	Board	Follow 2024 – Monthly Vote on 2025 by 10/24		
Target Additional Sponsors	Track Revenue & Numbers	Board	By July 15 <sup>th</sup>		
Create Promotional Video		Marketing			
Recruit Volunteers	Identify volunteer duties	Host City, Staff, Board	July 2024		
Transportation & Lodging	Identify and announce	Host & Staff	July – Transportation January – lodging		
Monthly Planning Meetings	Develop Timeline	Staff & Host	Monthly until conference		
Post Conference Survey		Staff	August		
Grow Conference Attendance	-Invite out of state – Florida & Alabama for 2024 -Personal contacts	Marketing and Board	Ongoing		
Conference Schedule	-More education classes -Mobile workshops outside of education sessions with multiple opportunities -Establish roundtable topics and shuffle process - speed dating	Committee	May 2024		

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Awards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Appoint ad hoc committee (March 2024)</li> <li>-Promote Winners GA Trend</li> <li>-Highlight Honorable Mentions (August 2024)</li> <li>-Review award ad hoc group to formalize process and include partners (May 2024)</li> <li>-Review award categories for relevance today (May 2024)</li> <li>Award speeches – add shortened version to application (May 2024)</li> <li>Award winner photo opportunities (July 2024)</li> </ul>	Marketing Staff Board Committee	See dates beside tasks		
Conference App		Staff	Before Conference		
MOU Agreement	-Establish for host cities to identify role and responsibilities as host – coordination, financial contributions, etc.	Policy and Procedures Committee, Staff	February 2024		
Review Conference RFP	-Review current RFP and recommend changes to board	Committee, Staff, Policy & Procedures Committee	February 2024		

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