

B+ Georgia

In 2003, when Governor Sonny Perdue decided to set up his Commission for a New Georgia, it sounded like a recipe for one more unread manifesto doomed to gather more dust than interest. Even the governor's desire to include the state's "best and brightest" minds in assembling the report wasn't easily fulfilled. Many of the best and brightest had long since become jaded about the benefits of this kind of effort.

But the governor meant business. He ultimately pressed more than 300 private-sector representatives into service, promising to do everything possible to implement their recommendations. And since its creation, the commission has been slowly, quietly and deliberately infiltrating Georgia state government with best practices from private industry—"like a special forces invasion," says Joe Rogers Jr., chief executive officer of Waffle House, and co-chairman of the commission.

Key among the commission's accomplishments is an intense focus on customer service and on managing for results. The new Governor's Office of Customer Service has collaborated with front-line state employees to create a more consistent—and productive—experience for citizens seeking help. By aggressively training employees, leveraging technology and monitoring outcomes, the state has driven down wait times at call centers and has shrunk the rate at which citizens just get tired of waiting and hang up. And the state follows up to determine if citizens' concerns were satisfactorily addressed.

To make sure that the focus on service pervades all levels of government, Georgia has undertaken new efforts to recruit and retain a qualified workforce. Based on employee satisfaction surveys, Georgia is overhauling its compensation and benefits packages by linking pay to performance and raising salaries for new hires.

This is critical for the future. Georgia faces a wave of retirements over the next few years, while below-average salaries and the state's booming economy have made it difficult for government to lure and retain young workers. The state also is confronting an unintended consequence of its

own civil service reforms of 1996, which eliminated most civil service protections and allowed state agencies to make at-will hires on their own. Although the decision has made hiring more efficient, it also has resulted in some inequity across agencies. The Department of Transportation, for example, pays higher salaries than other departments and is sometimes accused of "hoarding" the best employees. Other agencies, by contrast, have struggled to fill some positions—often for long periods of time.

To address those imbalances, Georgia is taking a step back toward a standardized personnel system, trying to instill worker loyalty to the state as a whole, not to a particular agency. "If the Army can recruit for any job in the entire Army with one sergeant sitting behind a desk in a courthouse in a small town in south Georgia, why can't the state of Georgia do something similar?" asks Frank Heiny, assistant commissioner for personnel.

When it comes to performance budgeting, Georgia's efforts have generated a difficult turf battle. The agencies produce reams of data, and the governor's office is using the numbers to hold them accountable. But the Senate Budget Office, unimpressed by either the quality or the reliability of executive branch performance measurement, wants to take another approach. The conflict, says Alan Essig, executive director of the Georgia Budget and Policy Institute, is in fact "over power, and who's really responsible for different parts of the budget."

The governor and the legislature would do well to reach consensus on this issue. The politics will always be tricky—but there's a straightforward first step: Key performance measures can be made available to a wider group of citizens, managers and legislators. Right now, the measures are maintained in separate systems and accessible only to the respective agency managers. "It's great that we're doing a better job of performance measurement," says Jim Lientz, the state's chief operating officer, "but we need a way to share that information across the enterprise."

For additional data and analysis, go to pewcenteronthestates.org/gpp

Money B+

Long-Term Outlook	●
Budget Process	●
Structural Balance	●
Contracting/Purchasing	●
Financial Controls/Reporting	●

People A-

Strategic Workforce Planning	●
Hiring	●
Retaining Employees	●
Training and Development	●
Managing Employee Performance	●

Infrastructure B

Capital Planning	●
Project Monitoring	●
Maintenance	●
Internal Coordination	●
Intergovernmental Coordination	●

Information B+

Strategic Direction	●
Budgeting for Performance	●
Managing for Performance	●
Performance Auditing & Evaluation	●
Online Services & Information	●

Population (rank):	9,363,941 (9)
Average per capita income (rank):	\$23,716 (27)
Total state spending (rank):	\$34,944,785,000 (12)
Spending per capita (rank):	\$3,732 (49)
Governor:	Sonny Perdue (R)
First elected:	11/2002
Senate:	56 members: 22 D, 34 R
Term Limits:	None
House:	180 members: 73 D, 107 R
Term Limits:	None