

# CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER

The Georgia World Congress Center Authority (GWCCA) | Atlanta, GA





# Georgia World Congress Center Authority

**No. 1 Convention, Sports, and Entertainment destination in the world.**

The Georgia World Congress Center Authority, established in 1971, oversees the operation and development of a 200-acre campus in downtown Atlanta, which includes the Georgia World Congress Center (GWCC), Centennial Olympic Park, Mercedes-Benz Stadium, and the Signia by Hilton Atlanta. The GWCCA is a self-sustaining state agency governed by a 15-member board, appointed by the Governor of Georgia, with day-to-day operations led by the CEO. The campus hosts over 3 million visitors annually for events ranging from conventions to sporting and entertainment events.

The GWCC is a 4 million-square-foot convention center with 6,000 parking spaces, while Centennial Olympic Park serves as a 22-acre public space honoring the 1996 Summer Olympic Games. Additionally, the GWCCA owns the Mercedes-Benz Stadium and manages its operations through various agreements (site coordination agreement, stadium license agreement, etc.). The Authority also serves as the asset manager for the 976-room Signia by Hilton Atlanta, with Hilton overseeing hotel management. In partnership with the Savannah Georgia Convention Center Authority, the GWCCA manages the Savannah Convention Center, which is undergoing an expansion. This 330,000-square-foot venue is poised for future growth with a potential adjacent hotel development.

Over the last decade, the GWCCA has invested more than \$360 million in improvements to better connect its facilities to Atlanta's hospitality district, all in line with its mission to drive economic benefits and improve the quality of life for Georgia's citizens.

## **Our Mission**

The State of Georgia established the Georgia World Congress Center Authority to develop and operate the Georgia World Congress Center, Centennial Olympic Park, and related facilities. These facilities exist for the primary purpose of promoting and facilitating events and activities that generate economic benefits to the citizens of the State of Georgia and the City of Atlanta as well as enhance the quality of life for every Georgian.

## **Our Vision**

To be globally recognized as the No. 1 convention, sports, and entertainment destination in the world.

## **Our Values**

**We Are Accountable:** Accountable means embracing proactive and responsible behaviors that create ownership of outcomes for the individual and the business.

**We Are Authentic:** Authentic means to operate with transparency; encourage vulnerability and expression of self and others to foster an inclusive environment for OUR Customers.

**We Are One:** One describes the collaborative effort to move with a unified purpose and voice to ensure OUR Customers experience radical hospitality.

# CHAMPIONSHIP CAMPUS

## Centennial Olympic Park

The crown jewel of Atlanta's downtown entertainment district and a year-round destination for locals and visitors alike. No trip to downtown Atlanta is complete without a visit to Centennial Olympic Park, a 22-acre greenspace that serves as Georgia's legacy of the 1996 Summer Olympic Games.

Today, the Park is a catalyst for Atlanta's downtown revitalization efforts and anchors a thriving entertainment and hospitality district spurring billions of dollars of economic development. We invite you to cool off in the iconic Fountain of Rings, locate your commemorative brick, take a selfie at The Spectacular, enjoy the playgrounds, gardens, and expansive lawns, and explore the many landmarks and features designed to enhance the visitor experience.

## Georgia World Congress Center

Located in the heart of downtown Atlanta, Georgia World Congress Center (GWCC) features 1.5 million square feet of prime exhibit space and is the world's largest LEED-certified convention center. Consisting of three interconnected buildings, the GWCC offers a variety of flexible and dynamic spaces and hosts hundreds of world-class events each year.

## Mercedes-Benz Stadium

Not just a stadium, a destination. Corporate events, conferences, trade shows, exhibitions, special events. With over 20 different event rooms and unmatched event space – Atlanta's Mercedes-Benz Stadium provides premium amenities, fully customizable experiences, dedicated event team staff, and state-of-the-art technology that will transform your event into a unique and unforgettable experience.

## Savannah Convention Center

The Savannah Convention Center offers a unique and memorable venue for your next successful meeting, tradeshow, or special event. The Savannah Convention Center is a 330,000 sq. ft. waterfront complex on the Savannah River featuring 100,000 sq. ft. of divisible exhibit space, 50,000 sq. ft. of prime meeting space, including 13 meeting rooms, four executive board rooms, a 25,000 sq. ft. Grand Ballroom, and a state-of-art 367-seat auditorium. Clark Construction was hired by the Georgia State Financing and Investment Commission (GSFIC) in 2018, and an additional 100,000-square-foot exhibit hall, 40,000-square-foot ballroom, 15 meeting rooms, and 900+ parking spaces are being constructed for the Savannah Convention Center, with completion scheduled by the end of 2024.

## Signia by Hilton Atlanta

Connected to Georgia World Congress Center, our downtown Atlanta hotel features 976 rooms and more than 100,000 sq. ft of meetings and events space. Dine at our six restaurants and bars, relax in our wellness center, lounge in an outdoor pool, or book your room with the elevated Club Signia experience. Find Mercedes-Benz Stadium, Georgia Aquarium, State Farm Arena, and other attractions close by.





## POSITION SUMMARY

The Chief Operating Officer (COO) of the Georgia World Congress Center Authority (GWCCA) is a visionary leader responsible for the seamless operation of the Authority's iconic facilities, including the Georgia World Congress Center, Centennial Olympic Park, and Mercedes-Benz Stadium. The COO plays a pivotal role in driving operational excellence, sustainability, and innovative strategies that enhance guest experiences, ensure fiscal health, and build a dynamic workplace culture.

This role requires a forward-thinking leader who thrives in a fast-paced environment and embraces the evolving demands of large-scale venues and events. The COO will work closely with the CEO to implement the Authority's long-term strategic vision while fostering partnerships with customers, partners, local and state agencies, private sector leaders, and community organizations.

Reports to the GWCCA's CEO.

Manages an operating budget of 65% of the overall GWCC budget of \$60M

## SUPERVISORY RESPONSIBILITIES

In conjunction with the CEO, responsible for Facility Operations, Facility Maintenance, Public Safety/Police, and Project Management along with key in-house partners such as Edlen and KBS (housekeeping).

### Georgia World Congress Center/Centennial Olympic Park

- Authority Responsibilities: The Authority oversees the management and daily operations of the convention center, parking facilities, and Centennial Olympic Park.
- Operating Budget: For details on the overall operating budget of the GWCC, refer to the May 2024 Board of Governors' budget presentation, which includes the FY25 budget.
- COO Responsibilities: The COO will manage day-to-day operations, engage with key customers regarding operational matters, oversee public safety, and ensure project management, operational efficiencies, leadership development, and succession planning are in place.

### Mercedes-Benz Stadium

- Authority Responsibilities: The Authority serves as the landlord, with the Falcons as the tenant.
- Oversight: The GWCCA approves the Falcons' Annual Capital Program submission, Annual Expense Budget, and Annual Maintenance Plans, which are reviewed and approved by the Authority.
- COO Responsibilities: The COO will administer the site coordination agreement and manage the stadium license agreement, ensuring the Authority's responsibilities are met.

### Signia by Hilton Atlanta

- Authority Responsibilities: The Authority owns the hotel and acts as its asset manager.
- Hilton Responsibilities: Hilton serves as the managing operating partner.
- COO Responsibilities: The COO will coordinate campus events related to the hotel, ensuring smooth operations for safety, security, traffic, and people flow around the hotel's surrounding campus.

### Savannah Convention Center

- Authority Responsibilities: The Authority fulfills the management agreement with the Savannah Georgia Convention Center Authority (SGCCA). Funding is provided through self-generated revenues and hotel taxes collected via the SGCCA.
- COO Responsibilities: The COO will act as the liaison between the GM/SVP and the GWCC operations teams, focusing on relationship management, best practice implementation, and ensuring necessary support from Atlanta for the Savannah team. This role does not involve direct oversight of the convention center.

## ESSENTIAL DUTIES & RESPONSIBILITIES

- **Strategic Leadership:** Shape and drive both short-term and long-term operational goals that align with GWCCA's mission and vision, ensuring a forward-looking approach to industry trends, technology, and sustainability. Participate in the Master Planning process for future growth and development.
- **Operational Excellence:** Oversee the operations, policies, and procedures of GWCCA's facilities, optimizing performance and ensuring seamless, cost-effective operations. Foster a culture of innovation and continuous improvement.
- **Sustainability and Innovation:** Champion environmental sustainability efforts, energy-efficient operations, and green initiatives across all facilities. Lead the integration of new technologies to enhance efficiency and improve the guest experience.
- **People Leadership:** Build and sustain a high-performing, inclusive, and engaged workforce. Implement employee recruitment, retention, and development programs that attract top talent, foster leadership at all levels, and ensure effective succession planning.
- **Customer Experience:** Elevate customer service initiatives, ensuring GWCCA continues to deliver unparalleled experiences for event organizers, attendees, and visitors.
- **Fiscal Management:** Collaborate with the finance team to develop and maintain fiscal policies and controls that drive cost-effective operations. Oversee operational and capital budget development, ensuring alignment with strategic goals.
- **Partnership Development:** Serve as a key representative of GWCCA in its working relationships with government entities, non-profit organizations, and private-sector stakeholders. Actively engage in industry associations to promote the Authority's leadership and influence.
- **Crisis Management and Safety:** Ensure the highest standards of safety, security, and risk management for all facilities and events. Lead crisis management efforts, including business continuity planning and emergency preparedness.

## QUALIFICATIONS

- **Experience:** Minimum of 10 years of senior leadership experience in the management of large-scale venues, convention centers, or multi-purpose facilities. A strong track record in operational leadership, strategic planning, and staff management.
- **Education:** A Bachelor's degree is preferred. The "Certified Facilities Executive" (CFE) designation is desirable.
- **Leadership Skills:** Proven ability to lead large, diverse teams with a collaborative and transparent management style. Strong decision-making, problem-solving, and conflict-resolution abilities.
- **Industry Knowledge:** Deep knowledge of the convention, sports, and entertainment industries, including trends, best practices, and technological advancements. Experience working with governmental agencies is a plus.
- **Sustainability Focus:** Demonstrated commitment to sustainability and environmental initiatives, with experience implementing energy-efficient programs or green operations.
- **Communication and Relationship-Building:** Exceptional verbal and written communication skills. Ability to represent the GWCCA at high-profile events and meetings with community, political, and business leaders.
- **Financial Acumen:** Strong analytical skills with the ability to manage budgets, financial reports, and long-term fiscal planning.

### Why GWCCA?

As a key player in Atlanta's vibrant events ecosystem, the GWCCA offers the opportunity to lead one of the most well-regarded venue authorities in the world. Join a team that is passionate about innovation, sustainability, and delivering outstanding guest experiences. The COO will have a unique opportunity to shape the future of a world-class destination and contribute to the ongoing development of Georgia's tourism and hospitality industry.

## KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Excellent Communicator
- Strong Leader & Consensus Builder
- Motivator & Influencer
- Inspiring & Collaborative
- Visionary & Strategic Thinker
- Entrepreneurial Spirit
- High Integrity & Transparent
- Nimble, Tolerant & Resilient
- Innovative & Accountable
- Genuine, Self-Aware & Ethical
- Forward-Facing
- Financially Astute

## TOP PRIORITIES

- Arrive with a spirit of learning, listening, and observing.
- Evaluate organizational culture, goals, and accountability metrics.
- Build trust with your team; evaluate structure and resource deployment.
- Assess organization structure, upcoming retirements, and succession planning.
- Assess operational efficiency and business processes within GWCC.
- Engage with leadership, department heads, and staff to understand operations.
- Foster strong relationships with departments, customers, partners, and vendors.
- Understand the 2030 Master Planning Process and strategic goals. Gain insight into the continued development of an entertainment campus.
- Review the budget, funding sources, and capital plans.
- Develop a strategy for preventative maintenance.
- Understand the commercial team's booking processes and customer needs.
- Review key partner agreements (Edlen, KBS, Levy, SP+).



**Mark Gnatovic**

President of Retained Search  
SearchWide Global  
info@searchwideglobal.com  
Direct/Cell: 817.789.9879

**If interested in learning more about this great opportunity, please send your resume to our SearchWide Global Executive, Mark Gnatovic.**

**SearchWide Global is a full-service executive search firm primarily for companies in the event, tradeshow, convention, tourism, and hospitality industries. We specialize in C-Level, Director, and Management level executive searches for companies ranging in size from Fortune 500 corporations to mid-sized public and private companies.**