



ANNUAL FINANCIAL REPORT • FISCAL YEAR 2023

North Georgia Regional Educational Service Agency Elijay, Georgia

Including Independent Auditor's Report

Greg S. Griffin | State Auditor



DOAA
Georgia Department
of Audits & Accounts

North Georgia Regional Educational Service Agency

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INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

The Honorable Brian P. Kemp, Governor of Georgia
Members of the General Assembly of the State of Georgia
Members of the State Board of Education
and
Dr. Steve Miletto, Executive Director and Members of the
North Georgia Regional Educational Service Agency Board of Control

Opinion

We have audited the Statement of Revenues, Expenditures, and Changes in Fund Balance and the related notes (financial statement) of the North Georgia Regional Educational Service Agency (RESA), a component unit of the State of Georgia, as of and for the year ended June 30, 2023.

In our opinion, the financial statement referred to above presents fairly, in all material respects, the respective changes in fund balance of the general fund and the related notes of the RESA for the year ended June 30, 2023, in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America.

Basis for Opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America (GAAS). Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the *Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statement* section of our report.

We are required to be independent of the RESA, and to meet our other ethical responsibilities, in accordance with the relevant ethical requirements relating to our audit. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our audit opinion.

Emphasis of Matter

As discussed in Note 2 to the financial statement, the Statement of Revenues, Expenditures and Changes in Fund Balance was prepared for the purpose of meeting the requirements of the RESA and the Georgia Department of Education and is not intended to be a complete presentation of the RESA's assets, liabilities, revenues and expenses nor does it constitute a complete set of financial statements in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles. Our opinion is not modified with respect to this matter.

Responsibilities of Management for the Financial Statement

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial statement in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America and for the design, implementation, and maintenance of internal control relevant to the preparation and fair presentation of the financial statement that is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statement, management is required to evaluate whether there are conditions or events, considered in the aggregate, that raise substantial doubt about the RESA's ability to continue as a going concern for twelve months beyond the date of the financial statement, including any currently known information that may raise substantial doubt shortly thereafter.

Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statement

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statement as a whole is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance but is not absolute assurance and therefore is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with GAAS will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control. Misstatements are considered material if there is a substantial likelihood that, individually or in the aggregate, they would influence the judgment made by a reasonable user based on the financial statement.

In performing an audit in accordance with GAAS, we:

- Exercise professional judgment and maintain professional skepticism throughout the audit.
- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statement, whether due to fraud or error, and design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks. Such procedures include examining, on a test basis, evidence regarding the amounts and disclosures in the financial statement.
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the RESA's internal control. Accordingly, no such opinion is expressed.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of significant accounting estimates made by management, as well as evaluate the overall presentation of the financial statement.
- Conclude whether, in our judgment, there are conditions or events, considered in the aggregate, that raise substantial doubt about the RESA's ability to continue as a going concern for a reasonable period of time.

We are required to communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit, significant audit findings, and certain internal control related matters that we identified during the audit.

Restriction on Use

Our report is intended solely for the information and use of the RESA's management, members of the Board of Control, and the Georgia Department of Education and is not intended to be and should not be used by anyone other than these specified parties.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Greg S. Griffin". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line at the end.

Greg S. Griffin
State Auditor

January 3, 2025

North Georgia Regional Educational Service Agency

NORTH GEORGIA REGIONAL EDUCATIONAL SERVICE AGENCY
STATEMENT OF REVENUES, EXPENDITURES AND CHANGES IN FUND BALANCE
GOVERNMENTAL FUND
YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2023

		<u>GENERAL FUND</u>
<u>REVENUES</u>		
State Funds	\$	2,606,290.89
Federal Funds		738,656.00
Investment Earnings		1,106.72
Miscellaneous		1,518,567.12
Total Revenues		<u>4,864,620.73</u>
 <u>EXPENDITURES</u>		
Current		
Instruction		1,051,733.83
Support Services		
Pupil Services		168,943.72
Improvement of Instructional Services		1,968,490.50
General Administration		305,949.65
School Administration		426,639.54
Business Administration		161,404.02
Maintenance and Operation of Plant		177,757.33
Total Expenditures		<u>4,260,918.59</u>
Net Change in Fund Balance		603,702.14
Fund Balance - Beginning		<u>1,724,909.15</u>
Fund Balance - Ending	\$	<u><u>2,328,611.29</u></u>

NORTH GEORGIA REGIONAL EDUCATIONAL SERVICE AGENCY
NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENT
JUNE 30, 2023

NOTE 1: DESCRIPTION OF REGIONAL EDUCATIONAL SERVICE AGENCY

Reporting Entity

The North Georgia Regional Educational Service Agency (RESA), a component unit of the State of Georgia was created by the General Assembly to provide shared services to improve the effectiveness of educational programs and services of local school systems, to provide instructional programs directly to selected local school systems, and to provide Georgia Learning Resources System services.

RESAs are neither county nor independent school systems. Rather, they are service agencies, partly funded by the state, created to provide educational and support services to a group of school systems. Official Code of Georgia Annotated (O.C.G.A.) §20-2-270.1 and §20-2-271 enumerates the specific kinds of assistance RESAs must provide to member school systems. Each RESA is governed by a board of control composed of the school superintendent of each member school system, the president or highest administrator of each member postsecondary institution, and a local public or regional library director appointed by the director of the Office of Public Library Services of the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia. RESAs are subject to the rules of the State Board of Education that govern local school systems except where explicitly stated otherwise.

RESAs may acquire, lease, purchase, or dispose of real or personal property and may incur debts for those purposes subject to the approval of the board of control. The property will be held in the name of the RESA. RESAs may sell or provide at a reasonable cost, goods to Georgia private schools. RESAs also may provide services relating to non-educational areas such as sales and service of audio-visual equipment, sales of office supplies and consumable educational materials. RESAs have latitude to identify and provide within their available resources other non-educational services to member school systems.

NOTE 2: SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT ACCOUNTING POLICIES

The accompanying Statement of Revenues, Expenditures and Changes in Fund Balance of the RESA has been prepared for the purpose of meeting the requirements of the RESA and Georgia Department of Education. The Statement of Revenues, Expenditures and Changes in Fund Balance is not intended to be a complete presentation of the RESA's assets, liabilities, revenues, and expenses nor does it constitute a complete set of financial statements in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles. The more significant of the RESA's accounting policies are described below.

Basis of Presentation

The RESA reports one major governmental fund, the general fund, which is the RESA's primary operating fund.

Basis of Accounting

The basis of accounting determines when transactions are reported on the financial statement. The RESA uses funds to report on its financial position and the results of its operations. Fund accounting is designed to demonstrate legal compliance and to aid financial management by segregating transactions related to certain governmental functions or activities. A fund is a separate accounting entity with a self-balancing set of accounts.

Governmental funds are reported using the current financial resources measurement focus and the modified accrual basis of accounting. Under this method, revenues are recognized when measurable and available. The RESA considers certain revenues reported in the governmental funds to be available

NORTH GEORGIA REGIONAL EDUCATIONAL SERVICE AGENCY
NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENT
JUNE 30, 2023

if they are collected within sixty days after year end. The RESA considers intergovernmental revenues to be available if they are collected within 120 days after year end. Interest is considered to be susceptible to accrual. Expenditures are recorded when the related fund liability is incurred. Capital asset acquisitions are reported as expenditures in governmental funds.

The RESA funds certain programs by a combination of specific cost-reimbursement grants, categorical grants, and general revenues. Thus, when program costs are incurred, there are both restricted and unrestricted resources available to finance the program. It is the RESA's policy to first apply grant resources to such programs, followed by cost-reimbursement grants, then general revenues.

New Accounting Pronouncement

In fiscal year 2023, the RESA adopted Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) Statement No. 96, *Subscription-Based Information Technology Arrangements*. This statement defines subscription-based information technology arrangements and provides uniform guidance for accounting and financial reporting for transactions that meet that definition. Under this statement, a government is required to recognize a subscription liability and an intangible right-to-use asset for contracts that meet the definition of a subscription-based information technology arrangement. The adoption of this statement did not have an impact on the RESA's financial statement.

Depreciation Expense

The RESA does not have any depreciation expense.

Amortization Expense

The RESA does not have any amortization expense.

Use of Estimates

The preparation of the financial statements in conformity with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States requires management to make estimates and assumptions that affect the amounts reported in the financial statements and accompanying notes. Actual results may differ from those estimates.

NOTE 3: OTHER POST-EMPLOYMENT BENEFITS (OPEB)

Georgia School Personnel Post-Employment Health Benefit Fund

Plan Description: Certified teachers and non-certified public school employees of the RESA as defined in §20-2-875 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated (O.C.G.A.) are provided OPEB through the School OPEB Fund - a cost-sharing multiple-employer defined benefit post-employment healthcare plan, reported as an employee trust fund and administered by a Board of Community Health (Board). Title 20 of the O.C.G.A. assigns the authority to establish and amend the benefit terms of the group health plan to the Board. Information about the OPEB plan is available in the Annual Comprehensive Financial Report, which is publicly available at <https://sao.georgia.gov/statewide-reporting/acfr>.

Benefits Provided: The School OPEB Fund provides healthcare benefits for retirees and their dependents due under the group health plan for public school teachers, including librarians, other certified employees of public schools, regional educational service agencies and non-certified public school employees. Retiree medical eligibility is attained when an employee retires and is immediately eligible to draw a retirement annuity from Employees' Retirement System (ERS), Georgia Judicial Retirement System (JRS), Legislative Retirement System (LRS), Teachers Retirement System (TRS) or

NORTH GEORGIA REGIONAL EDUCATIONAL SERVICE AGENCY
NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENT
JUNE 30, 2023

Public-School Employees Retirement System (PSERS). If elected, dependent coverage starts on the same day as retiree coverage. Medicare-eligible retirees are offered Standard and Premium Medicare Advantage plan options. Non-Medicare eligible retiree plan options include Health Reimbursement Arrangement (HRA), Health Maintenance Organization (HMO) and a High Deductible Health Plan (HDHP). The School OPEB Fund also pays for administrative expenses of the fund. By law, no other use of the assets of the School OPEB Fund is permitted.

Contributions: As established by the Board, the School OPEB Fund is substantially funded on a pay-as-you-go basis; that is, annual cost of providing benefits will be financed in the same year as claims occur. Contributions to the School OPEB Fund from the RESA were \$88,590.00 for the year ended June 30, 2023. Active employees are not required to contribute to the School OPEB Fund.

NOTE 4: RETIREMENT PLANS

Teachers Retirement System of Georgia (TRS)

Plan Description: All teachers of the RESA as defined in O.C.G.A. §47-3-60 and certain other support personnel as defined by O.C.G.A. §47-3-63 are provided a pension through the Teachers Retirement System of Georgia (TRS). TRS, a cost-sharing multiple-employer defined benefit pension plan, is administered by the TRS Board of Trustees (TRS Board). Title 47 of the O.C.G.A. assigns the authority to establish and amend the benefit provisions to the State Legislature. The Teachers Retirement System of Georgia issues a publicly available separate financial report that can be obtained at www.trsga.com/publications.

Benefits Provided: TRS provides service retirement, disability retirement, and death benefits. Normal retirement benefits are determined as 2% of the average of the employee's two highest paid consecutive years of service, multiplied by the number of years of creditable service up to 40 years. An employee is eligible for normal service retirement after 30 years of creditable service, regardless of age, or after 10 years of service and attainment of age 60. Ten years of service is required for disability and death benefits eligibility. Disability benefits are based on the employee's creditable service and compensation up to the time of disability. Death benefits equal the amount that would be payable to the employee's beneficiary had the employee retired on the date of death. Death benefits are based on the employee's creditable service and compensation up to the date of death.

Contributions: Per Title 47 of the O.C.G.A., contribution requirements of active employees and participating employers, as actuarially determined, are established, and may be amended by the TRS Board. Contributions are expected to finance the costs of benefits earned by employees during the year, with an additional amount to finance any unfunded accrued liability. Employees were required to contribute 6.00% of their annual pay during fiscal year 2023. The RESA's contractually required contribution rate for the year ended June 30, 2023, was 19.98% of annual RESA payroll. For the current fiscal year, employer contributions to the pension plan were \$488,078.61 from the RESA.

NOTE 5: SUBSEQUENT EVENT

On June 5, 2024, the RESA entered into a loan agreement with South State Bank, National Association, to borrow the principal amount of \$1,530,000.00, at an interest rate of 6.750% per annum based, with a maturity date of June 5, 2029 to purchase a building.

NORTH GEORGIA REGIONAL EDUCATIONAL SERVICE AGENCY
FINDING
JUNE 30, 2023

FINDING

FS 2023-001 Internal Controls over Journal Entries

Internal Control Impact: Material Weakness
Repeat of Prior Year Finding: FS 2022-001

Description:

The Regional Educational Service Agency (RESA) did not have adequate internal controls over the journal entry process.

Criteria:

Management is responsible for designing and maintaining internal controls that provide reasonable assurance that journal entries are properly approved, posted properly and for appropriate purposes.

Condition:

A review of eighty-six journal entries revealed the following deficiencies:

- Two operating journal entries had no evidence of approval.
- Two operating journal entries were posted incorrectly, resulting in a \$504.00 overstatement of cash and understatement of expenditures. This resulted in a \$951.57 projected overstatement of cash and understatement of expenditures.
- Operating journal entries used to post revenue resulted in a \$269,521.13 overstatement of revenue and cash. Audit entries were proposed by the auditor and accepted by the RESA to correct \$118,959.09 of these overstatements.

Cause:

In discussing these deficiencies with management, they stated that the deficiencies were a result of RESA policies and controls that were not properly implemented and followed.

Effect:

The lack of adequate controls over the journal entry process exposes the RESA to unnecessary risk of error and misuse of funds. In addition, journal entry posting errors could impact the reporting of the RESA's financial position and results of operations.

Recommendation:

Management should strengthen the internal control procedures over the journal entry process to ensure that all journal entries are properly posted, reviewed, and approved. The preparer and approver should possess an appropriate knowledge and understanding of the journal entry process. The approver should be someone independent of the journal entry preparation/posting function.

Views of Responsible Officials:

We concur with this finding.



North Georgia Regional Educational Service Agency

"Excellence in Educational Support"

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December 10, 2024

CORRECTIVE ACTION PLAN - FINDING

FS 2023-001 Internal Controls over Journal Entries

Internal Control Impact: Material Weakness

Repeat of Prior Year Finding: FS 2022-001

Description:

The North Georgia Regional Educational Service Agency (RESA) did not have adequate internal controls over the journal entry process.

Corrective Action Plan:

North Georgia RESA will strengthen the internal control procedures over the journal entry process, which will include a review and approval of all journal entries by an individual separate from the journal entry preparation/posting process and ensuring that the preparer and reviewer sign off and date the journal entry document. Additionally, all journal entries and supporting documents will be maintained together.

Estimated Completion Date: A procedure has been implemented as of April 2024 in Fiscal Year 2024.

Signature:

Date:

12/10/24

Title:

Executive Director

Contact Person: Dr. Steve Miletto

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Email: steve.miletto@ngresa.org

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