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The background image is a composite. It shows a city at night with a prominent clock tower. Overlaid on the right side is a large, dark industrial machine, possibly a drill or a part of a manufacturing process, with bright orange sparks emanating from its base. The entire image has a blue and purple color cast with a network of glowing blue lines and squares, suggesting a digital or technological theme.

WELCOME TO THE THE MIDDLE GEORGIA INNOVATION PROJECT

THE MIDDLE GEORGIA INNOVATION PROJECT

INNOVATION ECOSYSTEM WORKING GROUPS

Meeting 2: Brainstorm how to Build the Ecosystem

April 14, 2021



This program has been prepared under contract with the Middle Georgia Regional Commission (MGRC), as fiscal agent for The Middle Georgia Innovation Project, with financial support from the Office of Local Defense Community Cooperation U.S. Department of Defense. The content reflects the views of The Middle Georgia Innovation Project and does not necessarily reflect the views of the Office of Local Defense Community Cooperation, the U.S. Department of Defense

THE MIDDLE GEORGIA INNOVATION PROJECT

INNOVATION ECOSYSTEM WORKING GROUPS

Program

Time	Details	Group	Duration
9:00 am	Welcome from Angie Gheesling, Executive Director – Development Authority of Houston County	Angie	5 min
9:05 am	Recap on findings from Meeting 1: Assimilate Data and Analysis	Future iQ	10 min
9:15am	What are the gaps that need to be filled in the region?	Group	30 min
9:45am	Best practice examples from Case Studies	Group	30 min
10:15am	What actions can be taken in Middle Georgia?	Group	30min
10:45am	Next Steps in preparation for April 28 Meeting	Future iQ	15min
11:00am	FINISH		



THE MIDDLE GEORGIA INNOVATION PROJECT

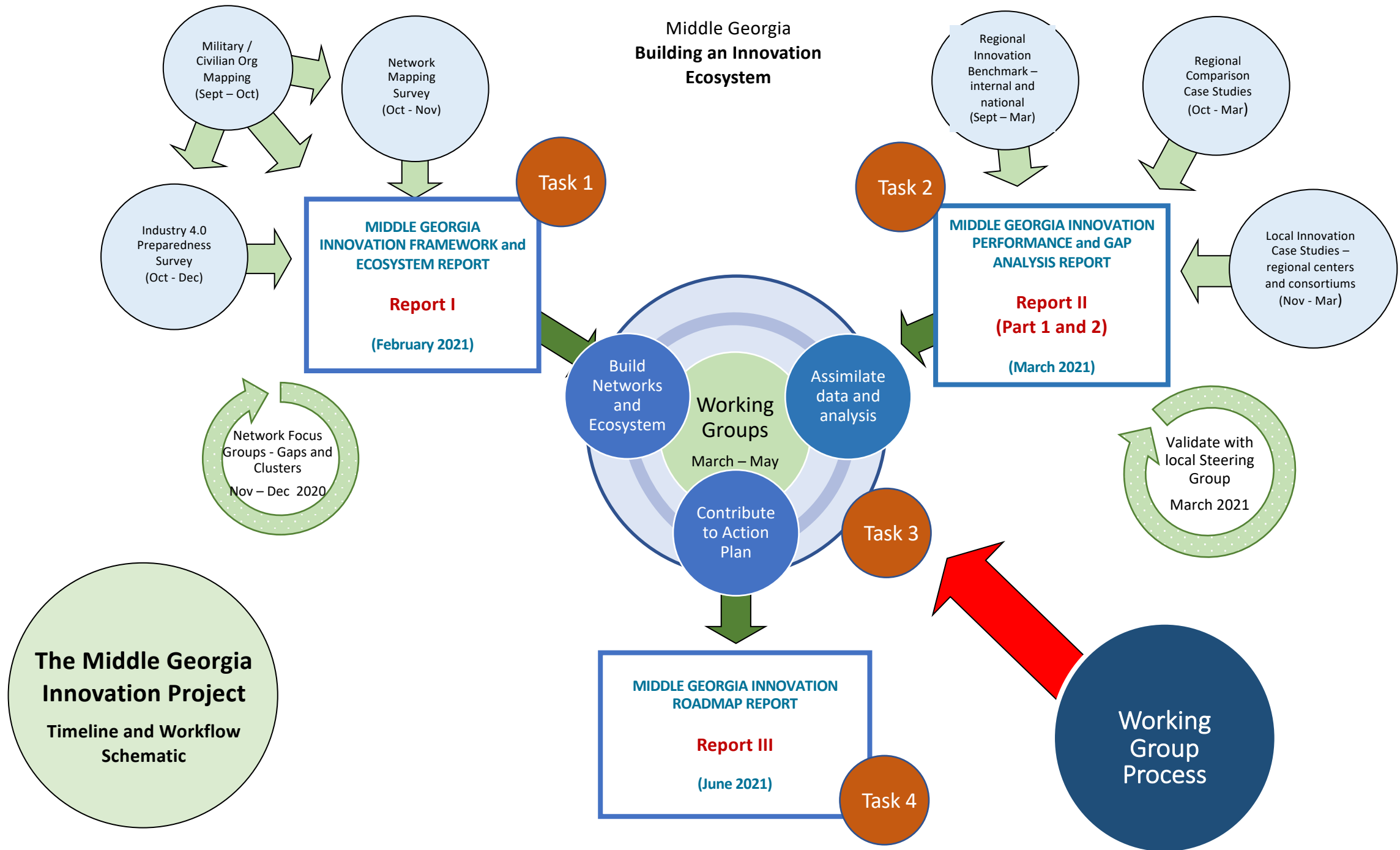
INTENDED OUTCOMES

Overall
Outcomes

- Develop the Middle Georgia innovation ecosystem
- Provide a road map for Middle Georgia to become a 'Software Center of Excellence'
- The project will advance the efforts building the workforce that Middle Georgia needs for the future
- The outcome will be a Middle Georgia Innovation Roadmap Report and Path Forward recommendations



Middle Georgia Building an Innovation Ecosystem



Working group process.



Steps in
process

- **STEP 1 – ASSEMBLE**
 - Identify and invite key stakeholders to each Working Group (March)
- **STEP 2 - CONVENE WORKING GROUPS** (March – May)
 - Meeting 1 - Assimilate data and analysis
 - Meeting 2 - Brainstorm how to Build Ecosystem
 - Meeting 3 - Contribute to Action Plan
- **STEP 3 - PRESENT** (May)
 - Host Regional Future Summit where Working Groups present their finding and recommended Action Plans. (May)

Each working group will meet (virtual) three times (over two months), and then all groups join for a Future Summit. Working sessions will be approximately two hours in length and will be supplemented by surveys and conference calls as required

Three key 'Innovation Ecosystem' Working Groups

- **Start-Up Innovation Ecosystem**

Focus on building a connected ecosystem that fosters start-up and entrepreneurial culture.

- **Industry 4.0 Technologies Ecosystem**

Focus on building regional capability and readiness for Industry 4.0 technologies.

- **Software Engineering Ecosystem**

Focus on building local capability for software engineering and creating a relevant industry cluster.



Recap from Meeting 1: Assimilate Data and Analysis – Start-Up Innovation Ecosystem

Recap

- Concentration of existing innovation centers and partnerships
- Need to create a connected ‘innovation start-up’ environment in the region
- No comprehensive network exists for innovators to come together and share ideas.
- Atlanta companies and proximity to students, innovators and ideates. Need this in the Middle Georgia region
- Need more maker spaces and there is a lack of entrepreneurial mindset or ‘vibe’ in the region
- There is a lack of venture capital/private investment from start up to incubation
- Need a pathway to get an idea into production and scale up
- Pandemic has removed the gravity towards Atlanta with virtual platforms. Start up ideas can be packaged and promoted from the region in an easier manner now



Recap from Meeting 1: Assimilate Data and Analysis – Industry 4.0 Technologies Ecosystem

Recap

- Middle Georgia is slow in using and being prepared for Industry 4.0 Technologies
- The pandemic has increased automation and the need to learn about these technologies
- Need to adopt/produce knowledge around Cloud Computing, Software and Data Engineering and Cybersecurity .. Also need to focus on emerging areas of AI and 5G/IoT
- Need to improve and enhance Industry 4.0 technology training from K-12 through to post-secondary
- Need to teach cutting edge technologies as this will be the workplace of the future for Middle Georgia students. This will retain talent in the region once industry connects with education via internships, etc
- There is a need for demonstration projects and one place to go to to view these projects. Industry would be able to demonstrate these new technologies
- GTRI and MERC are at leading edge of looking at Industry 4.0 technologies and communicate well. There is a need to tell the 'good news' stories. Macon Start Up week seems to be building traction



Recap from Meeting 1: Assimilate Data and Analysis – Software Engineering Ecosystem

Recap

- Need to build 'off base' ecosystem of businesses to serve future needs/drive innovation
- Partnerships between industry, education, govt and RAFB could provide 'go to' group to trigger 'Software Center of Excellence'. Partnerships need to be intentional.
- Important to collaborate with Center of Software Innovation (Middle GA State University)
- How do we attract venture capitalists? Need to create the innovation culture and then invite the funders. Take Firestarter Lab and grow it
- There is a need to build an intentional industry cluster at a grass roots level such as the TAG – Middle Georgia Chapter. There are lots of silos in sectors, however there are instances of cross pollination.
- Need internships and mentorships
- Need a targeted audience if building a ecosystem. Dichotomy between the base and outside the base



WHAT ARE THE GAPS THAT NEED TO BE FILLED IN THE REGION? – 30 MIN



BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLES FROM CASE STUDIES? - 30 MIN



WHAT ACTIONS CAN BE TAKEN WITHIN THE MIDDLE GEORGIA REGION?– 30 MIN



NEXT STEPS FOR INNOVATION ECOSYSTEM WORKING GROUPS

- **Meeting 3: Contribute to Action Plan (Wednesday 28 April)**
 - Develop recommendations and input into 5-year action plan with a list of achievable key actions
- **Future Summit (Wednesday 12 May)- Virtual**
 - The 3 Working groups present findings and recommended Action Plans

