**Background:** As an institution dedicated to teaching, research, and public service excellence, the University of Georgia aspired to enhance connectivity between the university and the communities to address the state’s critical community economic development needs. Building on a nearly century-long pursuit of its outreach mission, the university sought to expand and simplify access to higher education resources to cities and counties throughout Georgia. In 2005, the Archway Partnership was born – an exciting initiative of “portal” counties through which communities gain the wealth of faculty and student expertise, who, in turn, gain practical experience outside of the classroom. Collaborative projects are tailored to address priority issues uniquely identified by each community.

**How it Works:** The Archway Partnership process begins with the development of an Executive Committee of community leaders who guide the process and commit financial resources to the partnership. Community leaders from local governments (cities, county commissions), businesses, hospitals and health authorities, school boards, chambers of commerce, development authorities, local higher education institutions and technical colleges all sit on the local Executive Committees. They help create the Steering Committee of other community stakeholders willing to commit time and energy to developing and prioritizing community issues. Interested residents are recruited for Issue Work Groups, chaired by Steering Committee members, focused on developing strategies to resolve specific issues.

Community stakeholders and Archway sign a partnership agreement for sustained participation in community problem solving. This helps insure long-term commitment to implementing strategies developed by Issue Work Groups. Also important to implementation is communication between the partners, which is formalized in quarterly meetings of Archway Professionals (APs) with Archway management and monthly meetings of APs with Executive and Steering Committee members.

Communities in partnership with Archway initially focus on the central county and its municipalities as portal communities. The partnership is intended to involve the region as it develops, with the portal communities acting as hubs.

**Community Investment:** Shared project cost is vital to a successful partnership. UGA provides facilities and staffing, and facilitates the process for discovering and prioritizing community issues. The community, comprising city and county governments, development authorities, chambers of commerce, school systems, and healthcare providers, commits human and financial resources and invests in solving the community issues.

The portal communities each share in the cost of retaining an AP who lives in the community and organizes the Archway Partnership process. Each AP is the direct link to higher education resources needed to implement strategies for resolving community issues.
Portal Counties
- Colquitt
- Washington
- Glynn
- Clayton
- Hart
- Sumter
- Pulaski
- Whitfield