PROJECT SUMMARY

Embrace Wellness

An initiative focused on Holistic Financial Wellness

Plan Profile

The Gwinnett County Retirement Program is managed by the Retirement Plans Management Committee (“RPMC”) and includes a frozen defined benefit plan and the following two defined contribution plans:

1. **401(a) Defined Contribution Plan**: The 401(a) Plan is mandatory for employees hired January 1, 2007 (date the defined benefit plan was frozen) and later. Under current provisions, participants choose one of two irrevocable participant contribution elections: 5%, or 7.5%. If no election is made, the employee’s contribution percentage is defaulted to 5%. Gwinnett County also contributes an additional 7% of eligible earnings to the employee’s 401(a) Plan account. As of December 31, 2026, 7,746 participants were in the 401(a) plan, holding $666.1M in assets.
2. **457(b) Deferred Compensation Plan**: Newly hired employees are automatically enrolled in the 457(b) Plan at a 3% before-tax contribution rate. If employees continue to contribute at least 3% to the 457(b) Plan, Gwinnett County contributes an additional 1% to the 401(a) Plan. Contribution rates are then automatically escalated by 1% each subsequent year until they reach 10%.

   As of December 31, 2025, 8,261 participants were in the 457(b) Plan, holding $470.9M in assets. Total plan participation includes participants in the Defined Benefit Plan. The participation rate was 93.1% with an average deferral rate of 6.34% for pre-tax contributions, and 6.58% for Roth contributions.

While not subject to ERISA, Gwinnett County elected to default participants to an age-corresponding target date fund, based on a retirement age of 65, in the event no investment election is made.

Background Information

Many Gwinnett County employees reported high levels of financial stress, driven by concerns over debt, lack of emergency savings, and uncertainty about achieving long-term financial goals and retirement. Feedback from employees revealed that the immediate financial demands of everyday life—healthcare, student loan debt, inflation, housing, and unexpected expenses often take priority, making it difficult to set money aside for the future.

Given these challenges, it became clear that addressing the issue of employees not being able to save for retirement due to today's financial demands was crucial due to its impact on their long-term financial security and overall well-being. Without the ability to build adequate retirement savings, individuals may face significant hardship in their later years, placing additional strain on families and social support systems.

Goals

Our goal was to help employees manage their current financial demands so they would be able to save more for the future. Specifically:

1. Increase the number of employees engaged in financial wellness resources.
2. Help employees improve their current financial situation.
3. Increase voluntary contribution rates to the 457(b) Plan.

Commentary

Giving employees the resources to address their financial wellness, no matter where they are on their financial journey, has improved the overall wellbeing of our workforce. Employees and their families are more equipped now than they were just a couple of years ago to set a realistic budget, plan for unexpected expenses, and plan for their future.

- Karissa Calvert, Human Resources Division Director - Benefits

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Project Overview and Purpose

Gwinnett County partnered with multiple benefit providers to develop the Embrace Wellness program, a unified environment where employees and their families can access resources that support their journey to physical, mental, and financial wellness. Through coordinated retirement education and broader financial wellness initiatives, employees receive consistent messaging and support across benefits, retirement plans, and educational programs.

This holistic approach addresses the needs of the "whole participant," empowering employees to make informed decisions about their long-term financial security and well-being, helping them tackle the challenge of long-term savings and retirement preparedness.

Tactics and Strategies

We launched a series of targeted initiatives designed to address these needs and empower employees with practical financial tools. These initiatives not only improved financial literacy and confidence among employees but also contributed to a more engaged and satisfied workforce.

One of our key innovations was the introduction of "**Financial Fridays**," a monthly program featuring expert-led sessions on a range of topics including retirement planning, wills and estate management, and budget preparation.

In addition, we piloted our first in-person **SmartDollar** program, which brought together 15 employees for an intensive, hands-on approach to financial education.

1. **Financial Fridays seminar series**. This monthly program provides practical guidance, tools, and resources to help employees take charge of their financial future. The topics and content were developed and presented in partnership between the Gwinnett County Benefits team and Voya. The sessions were held virtually on the second Friday of each month in 2025.
   - January 17th: *Know Your Plan - Introduction to Financial Fridays*
   - February 14th: *7 Secrets to Financial Success*
   - March 14th: *Understanding your 457(b) Deferred Compensation Plan*
   - April 11th: *The 4 Stages of Savings and Budgeting*
   - May 9th: *Understanding Your Benefits After Retirement*
   - June 13th: *Preparing for Retirement - Social Security 101*
   - July 11th: *Available Benefits After Retirement*
   - August 8th: *Understanding Distribution Options After Retirement*
   - September 12th: *BEST Credit Training*
   - October 10th: *Personal Finance Basics – Retirement Tips for Everyone*
   - November14th: *Wills and Estate Planning*
   - December 12th: *In-person Outreach*

2. **SmartDollar In-Person Seminar Pilot**. In June 2025, a joint initiative between Gwinnett County Benefits Team, Ramsey Solutions, and Voya was launched to establish an on-site, in-person classroom-based delivery model for the SmartDollar program. The thought was that in-person meetings would complement the existing online experience by providing personalized coaching and foster accountability and motivation.

   With Ramsey Solutions offering their expertise, local Voya representatives were trained to lead the seminars by facilitating discussions that bolster the online experience. With training complete, we launched a pilot program in September of 2025 consisting of weekly meetings over nine weeks that provided online video review, group discussion, and workbook activities. The feedback received from participants in the pilot was so positive that we officially implemented the seminar for 2026 (30 people from various departments are participating so far.)

3. **EveryDollar app by Ramsey Solutions**. To continue to reinforce the county's commitment to financial freedom for their employees, Gwinnett has provided free premium access to employees and their spouses to the EveryDollar app by Ramsey Solutions, recognizing that improving financial health is most effective when the entire household is involved. The premium app is a zero-based budgeting tool that automatically links bank accounts to track and organize

transactions in real time, helping users assign every dollar a purpose while offering benefits such as goal setting, debt reduction planning, savings tracking, spending insights, and personalized financial guidance. The app was first introduced in 2024, but as the focus on financial wellness grew stronger, Gwinnett placed greater emphasis on its use in 2025. By extending access to spouses, Gwinnett County supports stronger communication around money, encourages shared financial goals, reduces household financial stress, and increases accountability.

4. **Health Benefits Hub**. In partnership with our vendor ShareCare, we built the Health Benefits Hub, allowing employees to access their benefits on the go from their mobile devices. The Health Benefits Hub is a unique and dynamic resource designed to simplify access and reduce barriers for employees seeking financial resources and accessing their retirement accounts. The Hub features a streamlined single sign-on that allows employees to conveniently and efficiently manage all of accounts in one place.

5. **Integration of financial wellness and education into ShareCare**. To provide a unified environment for benefits resources, the Gwinnett County Benefits team includes the following financial literacy activities and education on their employee wellness platform administered by ShareCare.
   - **Ramsey Solutions SmartDollar**. SmartDollar is a workplace financial wellness program designed to help employees build healthy money habits, reduce debt, and increase savings. Based on Dave Ramsey's "Baby Steps," it's a self-paced online experience providing budgeting tools, video lessons, and one-on-one coaching to help users improve their financial situations.
   - **Financial Wellness Assessment**. Originally added in 2024, Voya's Financial Wellness Assessment continued to be offered through the Sharecare platform in 2025 as an activity employees can complete to earn wellness points. The Financial Wellness Assessment asks the user questions about their saving and spending habits to help them get a clear picture of their current financial situation.
   - **Single sign on accessibility**. Employees now benefit from the addition of single sign-on access to their Voya accounts from the workplace, making it easy to view and manage their retirement information.

6. **Weekly Wellness Bulletin**: The weekly wellness bulletin "*Week-in-Wellness*" is a short, structured communication that is used to support our employee's overall well-being, physical health, mental health, financial health, and work/life balance.

   The bulletin promotes upcoming wellness activities and provides employees with access to the tools and resources needed to support overall health on an ongoing basis. The overall objective in utilizing the mode of communication to promote Financial Fridays is to make financial wellness feel manageable and practical.

   Instead of overwhelming employees with financial information this approach allowed employees to take small, consistent actions throughout the year at their own pace. By clicking on the hyperlink, employees are able to register for various wellness events, including Financial Fridays.

Significance to Plan Operations

1. **Improved processes**
   Employees who are prepared and actively planning for retirement are more knowledgeable about their benefit plans. They understand the significance of will and estate planning, recognize the importance of proper beneficiary designations, and maintain greater financial stability as they approach retirement. This level of preparedness supports more effective planning while enhancing the overall benefits employees receive from their retirement accounts when ready to retire.

2. **Increased efficiency**
   - The single sign on function with ShareCare and Voya has increased the number of visits to Voya's retirement website, making it quicker and easier to access retirement information.
   - The Financial Fridays series has decreased the number of duplicative employee questions coming into the Gwinnett County staff.

3. **Better participant experience**
   Employees and their spouses have access to everything they need to improve their financial health.

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AND RESULTS

Financial Fridays Seminar Series

- **1,900** employers attended the 12 Financial Fridays seminars in 2025.

Ramsey Solutions Smartdollar In-Person Seminars

- **15** people attended all nine seminars in the series, resulting in:
    - **26% decrease** in total open credit card accounts
    - **27% increase** in total "liquid" cash available
    - **8% decrease** in non-mortgage debt
    - **Attendee feedback** highlighted the program's exceptional impact, with the majority reporting significant improvements in their financial understanding and confidence.
        - *"My family will witness that it's possible to be debt free and give like never before. We will be debt free!!!"*
        - *"It has motivated me to save! I have started a budget. I have saved $1,000.00 and I'm slowly lowering my debt."*
        - *"The course has made me aware of random spending on things I really do not need. The course taught me how I want to live and manage my money better."*
        - *"I have paid off around $1,200.00 of debt and kept myself from getting into more debt, which is what I was doing before."*
        - *"This seminar has given me the confidence that being debt free is attainable and that I can change my financial well-being to change my ultimate legacy."*
        - *"I was able to get the confidence and the knowledge to take that leap and start. I took a look at my finances and made positive changes in a lot of areas allowing me to save on average $500.00 per month."*

    As a result of the feedback, we have incorporated Ramsey Solutions into the 2026 Financial Friday seminar series in partnership with Voya and ShareCare.

Voya Financial Wellness Assessment

- **2,022** employees completed the assessment in 2025 (vs. 1,881 in 2024)

457(b) Average Contribution Rates

- **6.34%** average pre-tax contribution rate as of 12/31/25 (vs. 6.06% in 2024, and 5.99% in 2023)
- **6.58%** average Roth contribution rate as of 12/31/25 (vs. 6.14% in 2024, and 5.90% in 2023)

FEASIBILITY FOR USE BY OTHER GOVERNMENTS

An employee financial wellness education project offered by a government employer can be readily replicated across various government agencies and departments. The core principles — enhancing workforce financial literacy, promoting sound money management, and ensuring accessible educational resources—are universally relevant for public sector employees. A key component in the success of our specific program was the partnership and cooperation among our different benefit providers.

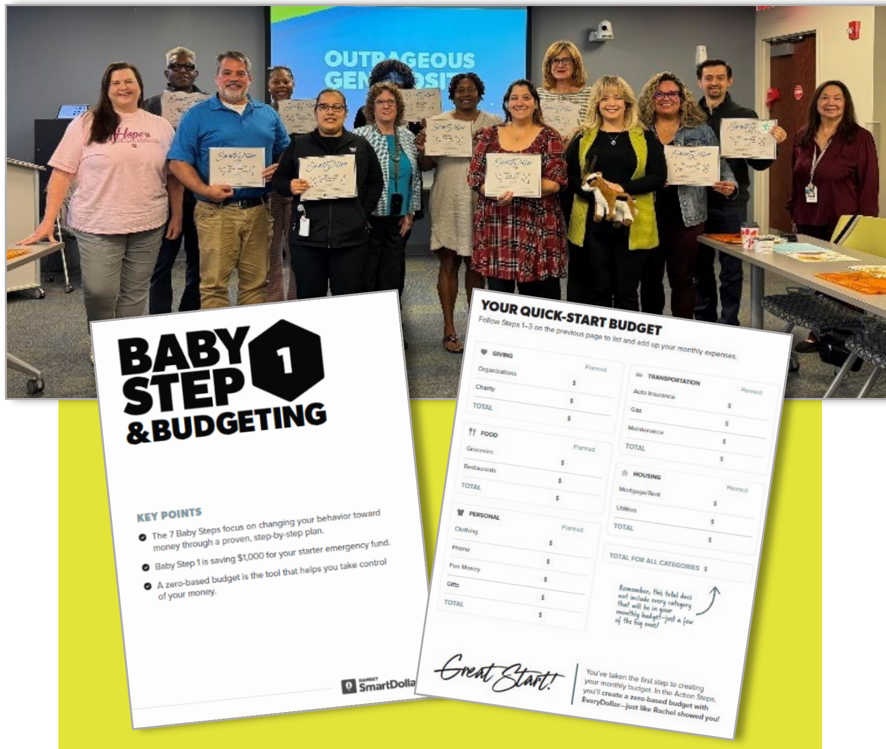
Such programs can be tailored to reflect the different job types, benefits, and demographics in a governmental organization allowing for customization. The scalability of financial wellness initiatives, whether delivered through workshops, online modules, or blended formats, enables broad participation and consistent results across diverse employee groups.

As these projects are implemented, governments can collect feedback and data, learning valuable lessons about what educational approaches resonate most, which resources are most effective, and how to foster lasting behavioral change among employees. This process not only improves financial wellbeing but also strengthens the overall workforce, helping them make smart financial decisions today that can lead to being ready when retirement comes.

EXAMPLES AND SUPPORTING MATERIALS

SmartDollar Flyer

Inaugural SmartDollar Class



Week in Wellness Bulletin

Financial Wellness Assessment

Health Benefits Hub mobile app