



Alabama
Communities
of Excellence

HELPING SMALLER COMMUNITIES PLAN, GROW AND PROSPER

TRAINING WORKSHOP TO APPLY TO BECOME AN ACE COMMUNITY

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www.alabamacommunitiesofexcellence.org

Moderator

Brandon Bias

- Vice President,
Alabama
Communities of
Excellence
- Goodwyn, Mills and
Cawood

**WELCOME
AND
INTRODUCTIONS**

Alabama
Communities of
Excellence

Candace Skelton

- ACE Associate
Council Chair
- University of
Alabama Center for
Economic
Development

**Overview of
ACE Organization
and
Three-Phase Approach**

ACE PARTNERS AND BOARD

WHO WE ARE:

Partners working together to provide Alabama communities with the community development program and tools needed to ensure their long-term success

- Alabama Association of RC&D Councils
- Alabama Association of Regional Councils
- Alabama Department of Commerce
- Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs
- Alabama Historical Commission
- Alabama League of Municipalities
- Alabama Mountain Lakes Tourist Association
- Alabama Municipal Electric Authority
- Alabama Power Company
- Alabama Small Business Development Network
- Auburn University Government & Economic Development Institute
- Goodwyn, Mills and Cawood
- Information Transport Solutions, Inc.
- PowerSouth Energy Cooperative
- Regions Bank
- Southeast Alabama Gas District
- United States Department of Agriculture- Rural Development
- University of Alabama Center for Economic Development
- University of West Alabama



Alabama Communities of Excellence

ACE Communities- 32 cities across 26 counties have been designated as ACE Communities

ACE Participant Communities-

6 towns across 6 counties are currently working to become designated as ACE Communities

2017 Class- 4-6 new communities will be selected for ACE program using a competitive application process



WHAT WE DO:

Provide technical assistance to select communities in order to strengthen their long-term economic success

Core Values

- ❑ **Active involvement by community stakeholders across a broad demographic spectrum**
- ❑ **Development of local leaders and leadership capacity**
- ❑ **Emphasis on the importance of developing and implementing short and long-term plans to further the realization of a town's vision**

ACE offers communities access to a broad range of technical expertise and assistance

Technical Assistance Available

- **Planning**
- **Grants/Financial**
- **Historic**
- **Health Care**
- **Work Force**
- **Economic Development**
- **Leadership Development**
- **Design**

ACE Program is a comprehensive three-phase approach:

ACE is an economic and community development initiative that targets communities with populations ranging from 2,000 to 18,000

□ Phase I:

Assessment

□ Phase II:

Leadership Development & Strategic Planning

□ Phase III:

Implementation & Comprehensive Planning

Definition of an ACE Community

Communities in the ACE program strive to meet these ideals spanning a range of topics

Overview of ACE Community Definition Topics

- ❑ **Leadership**
 - Community Leadership and Engagement
 - Leadership Development
- ❑ **Planning**
 - Vision and Strategic Planning
 - Comprehensive Planning
- ❑ **Economic Development**
 - Strategy
 - Infrastructure
 - Organizational Structure
 - Information and Marketing
 - Existing Business Program
 - Commercial/Retail Business Development and Tourism
- ❑ **Quality of Life**
 - Amenities and Aesthetics
 - Education/Work Force/School System
 - Healthcare
 - Public Safety/Emergency Services

Value of Being an ACE Community

The Alabama Community of Excellence designation showcases that your town has completed a comprehensive three-phase program that helps communities insure long-term success

Benefits Received by ACE Communities

- ❑ **On-site assessment visit from ACE Team of topical experts**
- ❑ **Assessment Report summarizing the findings and recommendations from the ACE Team of topical experts**
- ❑ **Assistance from a skilled facilitator in developing a vision statement and strategic plan**
- ❑ **Access to ACE Team advice about selecting effective strategies and locating resources needed to implement the plan**

Value of Being an ACE Community

The Alabama Community of Excellence designation showcases that your town has completed a comprehensive three-phase program that helps communities insure long-term success

Benefits Received by ACE Communities (con't)

- ❑ Consultation and assistance in establishing a leadership development program
- ❑ Recognition as an Alabama Community of Excellence and promotion on the ACE website
- ❑ On-going access to the resources and expertise of the ACE Team members and partner organizations
- ❑ Periodic scholarships exclusively available to ACE communities to attend selected workshops and conferences

**City of
Montevallo**

The Honorable
Hollie Cost

Mayor, the City of
Montevallo

**Discussion of the
ACE Program
From the Perspective of an
ACE Community**

Becoming an ACE Community

Mary Shell

- ACE Board of Directors
- Preservation Planner for Alabama Historical Commission

Time Commitment

- From Mayor and Local Coordinator
- From City Council
- From Community Members

Program Requirements

- Community Assessment
- Strategic Planning
- Leadership Development Program
- Non-profit Development
- Comprehensive Planning
- Semi-annual reporting

Community Assessment

Time

Commitment

- Mayor
- Local Coordinator

Prepare for Assessment Visit by ACE Team

- Review ACE manual and self-assessment forms
- Provide community information packet to team members
- Distribute self-assessment forms to community members
- Meet with ACE Team Captain
- Review spaces for community meeting

Community Assessment

Time Commitment

- Mayor
- Local Coordinator
- City Council
- Community



Assessment Visit by ACE Team

- ❑ Arrange meeting location and logistics for team to meet with topic experts and for large community meeting
- ❑ Invite and encourage broad-based participation from all communities
- ❑ Promote ACE team visit and community meeting in media
- ❑ Arrange guided community tour for ACE team to show good and bad issues
- ❑ One or two-day visits have been used. Dinner with community leaders is common for two-day visit

Community Assessment Visits



Program Requirements

Time Commitment

- Mayor
- Local Coordinator
- City Council
- Community

Strategic Planning

- Set parameters for process with facilitator
 - Time frame and structure of process
- Organize and promote meetings
 - Recruit broad-based participation
 - Meeting logistics
- Develop Strategic Plan
 - Attend and participate in meetings
 - Review and comment on drafts
- Approve Strategic Plan
- Implement and Updates of Strategic Plan
 - Set committee meetings and assist with meeting schedules
 - Monitor progress and request reports

ACE Expectations for Strategic Plans

- Create a shared vision and defines priorities
- Establish community-wide goals and strategies
- Set specific actions to achieve stated goals
- Establish benchmarks and assessment process
- Include a mechanism for regular review and update (at least annually)

Participants in crafting, reviewing, and approving the strategic plan should include a diverse group of leaders and stakeholders

- **Representatives from a broad cross-section of the community's demographic and economic circumstances:**
 - Public sector entities and organizations
 - Community, civic, and volunteer groups/associations/foundations/clubs
 - Faith-based organizations and institutions
 - Neighborhood leaders

The strategic plan must answer four key questions:

- Where are we now?
- Where do we want to be?
- How will we get there?
- How will we measure our progress?

The plan should be reflective of community's assets and priorities

- **Topics to be considered include:** Leadership, economic development, quality of life/community development, education, work force, healthcare, infrastructure, tourism, housing, historic preservation, and arts and culture

Leadership Development Program

Time

Commitment

- Mayor
- Local
Coordinator
- Partner
Organization

Leadership Development

- ❑ Review existing program and request additions/modifications
- ❑ Establish new program
 - Create Steering Committee
 - Establish parameters of program mission, program leader(s), curriculum, budget, participants
 - Recruit and select participants
 - Conduct program – 3 to 6 month
 - Encourage class projects and involve youth

Non-profit Organization

Time

Commitment

- Mayor
- Local
Coordinator

Non-profit Development

- Identify or create non-profit organization to assist with ACE program
- Using existing non-profit is easiest approach
- Creating new non-profit requires filing legal documents with IRS and waiting on response

Comprehensive Planning

Time Commitment

- Mayor
- Local Coordinator
- City Council
- Planning Commission
- Community

Comprehensive Planning

- Work with regional planning commission and others to assist with funding
- Research consulting firms to find good fit for your community
- Develop community meeting schedule and promote for broad-based participation
- Communicate vision and goals to community
- Review and comment on draft plan
- Approvals by planning commission and city council

ACE Expectations for Comprehensive Planning

- ❖ Serve as a guide to develop community infrastructure and other facilities
- ❖ Promote good design principles
- ❖ Maximize physical features and other community assets for future growth
- ❖ Set goals and objectives with an action plan for implementation.

- Preserve community character
- Foster a distinctive, attractive community with a strong sense of place through design guidelines
- Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration (including the business community and public agencies) – community involvement and buy-in is **KEY** for implementation
- Encourage a range of housing opportunities to provide appropriate choices for different age groups, income levels, and family sizes
- Encourage complete streets/walkable neighborhoods
- Encourage the development of mixed-use areas to avoid sprawl and to maximize development potential in targeted growth areas
- Preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty, scenic byways/vistas, and critical environmental areas
- Provide a variety of transportation choices to ensure safety and accessibility throughout the community
- Encourage compact development to avoid sprawl, preserve open space, and maximize efficiency in public infrastructure and services

ACE Expectations for Comprehensive Plan –Desirable Elements

- ❖ Community Assessment
- ❖ Community Vision
- ❖ Community Facilities and Services
- ❖ Housing
- ❖ Transportation
- ❖ Future Land Use
- ❖ Implementation Strategies

Other Planning Elements --Recommended As Appropriate

- ❑ **Economic Development Plan**
- ❑ **Area Specific Plans, such as**
 - Downtown and/or neighborhood revitalization
 - Parks and open space
 - Corridor redevelopment
 - Greenways and/or sidewalks
- ❑ **Annexation Studies**

Semi-Annual Reporting

Time

Commitment

- Mayor
- Local Coordinator
- Committees

Semi-Annual Reports

Gather information from:

- Strategic planning committees
- Grant administrator
- Leadership program coordinator
- Other partners

Key Points to Remember

- **Application review and selection process is very competitive.**
- ❖ **Incomplete applications will not be considered**
- ❖ **On-line filing method is preferred**
- ❖ **Filing deadline is March 6, 2017**

SELECTION PROCESS

Characteristics considered when reviewing applications:

- Comprehensiveness and adequacy of responses to questions**
- Leadership commitment - letters of support from local leaders**
- Capacity of town to complete the program**
- Evidence of broad based community support**
- Commitment to process**

CAPACITY

- Focus on the ACE priorities of planning and leadership**
- Brag about community assets to show the town has momentum**
 - Do you have a strong Chamber of Commerce?
 - Have you managed a federal grant program?
 - Is community engaged through existing committees and boards?
 - Do you sponsor annual sports tournaments?
 - Are you a new Main Street Alabama member?
 - Have you made small steps toward a larger project?
- If you don't have formal leadership program, do you engage community leaders in other ways?**
- Have you developed any small plans for a specific area like industrial park, downtown, neighborhood?**

COMMITMENT

- ❑ Letters of Support are vital
- ❑ Broad-based support is needed
- ❑ Include all partners that will also be invited to participate with community assessment and planning activities:
 - Community organizations
 - Civic boards
 - Churches
 - Schools
 - City government – staff and elected officials
 - County government
 - Economic development groups
 - Parks and Recreation
 - Healthcare providers
 - Business owners

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SELECTION PROCESS

- ❑ Each application is reviewed for completeness before it is given to ACE Selection Committee
- ❑ ACE Selection Committee reviews each application and selects candidates to recommend for approval by ACE Board
- ❑ Selection decisions guided by criteria of commitment and capacity, but is some subjectivity
- ❑ Number of communities selected depends on available resources
- ❑ Communities not selected will be notified and receive feedback on how to improve future applications

ACE Application Process

Sidney Hoover

- Executive Director
- Alabama
Communities of
Excellence

2017 APPLICATION SCHEDULE

- **January 3** – invitation letters sent to mayors of eligible towns
- **March 6** – **FILING DEADLINE** for submitting applications
- **May 20-23** – Announcement of communities selected for **2017 ACE Class** (during the Alabama League of Municipalities annual convention)

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APPLICATION FORMS

- ❑ Application forms are available on **ACE website**
www.alabamacommunitiesofexcellence.org
- ❑ **Application form requests information about:**
 - **Community planning**
 - **Organizations for community and economic development**
 - **Leadership development**
 - **Education**
 - **Infrastructure**
 - **Health Care**
 - **Quality of Life**

Review of ACE Application Form

Contact Information

- Basic Identification and contact information

Community Information and Governance

- Demographics and website address
- Active Planning Commission
- Comprehensive Plan – provide PDF format copy of plan if have one
- Zoning ordinances
- Infrastructure development plans or policies

Review of ACE Application Form (con't)

□ Planning and Leadership

- Strategic plan – provide PDF format copy of plan if have one
- Leadership development programs
 - Adult program
 - Youth program
 - Minority participation
- Community strengths
- Community challenges
- Regionalism

Review of ACE Application Form (con't)

□ Industrial Recruiting and Business Development

- Involvement in industrial development
- Incentives
- Workforce training and development
- Active Industrial Development Board
- Industrial park and improvements
- Available buildings for new business and industry
- Chamber of Commerce
- Organizations involved in economic and community development
- Major businesses, industries and employers

Review of ACE Application Form (con't)

☐ Quality of Life

- List of amenities available in your community
- School system characteristics
- Special programs or services available in community schools
- Housing development authority
- Rate of home ownership
- Local heritage group and documentation of historic properties
- Tourism promotion
- Retiree attraction program

☐ Concluding Documentation

- Why your community should be selected (Limit 350 words)

Review of ACE Application Form (con't)

Checklist of Attachments (PDF format ONLY)

- Resolution from City Council for participation in ACE
- Letters of support for community participation in ACE (Chamber of Commerce, major businesses, civic groups, etc.)
- Comprehensive Plan (if applicable)
- Strategic Plan (if applicable)

Preferred Filing Method is via on-line Submission

- May be submitted by mail to address on application
- All applications must be received or postmarked by March 6, 2017

QUESTIONS?

**2017 TRAINING WORKSHOP TO APPLY TO
BECOME AN ACE COMMUNITY**





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