



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION OF ALABAMA

WINTER CONFERENCE – FEBRUARY 2, 2016

“Alabama Communities of Excellence (ACE) Program Update”

www.alabamacommunitiesofexcellence.org

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Why Should Recruiters Care about the ACE Program?

- ❑ Community development and business recruiting are both important parts of economic development
- ❑ Unfortunately, communities often focus too much on marketing and sales, and too little on developing their product
- ❑ Economic development needs a base on which to build
– community development helps create that foundation

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

is about

“Product Development”

- Civic Infrastructure
 - Leadership
 - Citizen Engagement
- Physical Infrastructure
- Human Infrastructure

BUSINESS RECRUITMENT

is about

“Marketing and Sales”

- Industrial Recruitment
- Existing Business
- Entrepreneurship
- Retail & Commercial
- Tourism

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

MILESTONES:

- 1999 Initial talks
- 2002 Tax exemption
- 2003 1st ACE class
- 2009 Graduated 15th ACE town
- 2015 Graduated 31st ACE town
- 2017 9th ACE class

ACE PROGRAM OVERVIEW

- ❑ Offers a systematic 3-phase approach to community development
- ❑ Partners provide necessary technical resources and tools
- ❑ Focuses on each town's unique resources and assets
- ❑ Targets communities with populations from 2,000 to 18,000
- ❑ Selection based on highly competitive application process
- ❑ Maintains ongoing ties with its ACE communities



ACE Communities- 31 cities across 26 counties have been designated as ACE Communities

ACE Participant Communities- 7 towns across 7 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



ACE Designated Communities

31 Cities Across 26 Counties Have Earned Designation as Alabama Communities of Excellence

1. **Alexander City** (Tallapoosa County)
2. **Arab** (Marshall County)
3. **Atmore** (Escambia County)
4. **Brewton** (Escambia County)
5. **Childersburg** (Talladega County)
6. **Demopolis** (Marengo County)
7. **Elba** (Coffee County)
8. **Eufaula** (Barbour County)
9. **Evergreen** (Conecuh County)
10. **Fairhope** (Baldwin County)
11. **Fayette** (Fayette County)
12. **Foley** (Baldwin County)
13. **Guntersville** (Marshall County)
14. **Graysville** (Jefferson County)
15. **Guin** (Marion County)
16. **Gulf Shores** (Baldwin County)
17. **Haleyville** (Winston County)
18. **Hartselle** (Morgan County)
19. **Headland** (Henry County)
20. **Heflin** (Cleburne County)
21. **Jackson** (Clarke County)
22. **Jacksonville** (Calhoun County)
23. **Leeds** (Jefferson County)
24. **Livingston** (Sumter County)
25. **Millbrook** (Elmore County)
26. **Monroeville** (Monroe County)
27. **Montevallo** (Shelby County)
28. **Rainsville** (DeKalb County)
29. **Saraland** (Mobile County)
30. **Thomasville** (Clarke County)
31. **Valley** (Chambers County)

ACE Participant Communities

7 Additional Cities Are Currently Working to Achieve Designation

1. **Abbeville** (Henry County)
2. **Geneva** (Geneva County)
3. **Helena** (Shelby County)
4. **Jasper** (Walker County)
5. **Oneonta** (Blount County)
6. **Red Bay** (Franklin County)
7. **Spanish Fort** (Baldwin County)

2017 ACE Class

Will Include 4-6 New Communities

- ❑ Applications for 2017 ACE Class will be accepted beginning January 2017
- ❑ Selection process is highly competitive
- ❑ 4-6 new communities will be chosen to participate in the 2017 ACE Class
- ❑ 2017 ACE Class will be announced at Alabama League of Municipalities Annual Convention in May 2017

WHO WE ARE:

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

ACE PARTNERS AND BOARD

- 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 Municipal Electric Authority
- Alabama Power Company
- Auburn University Government & Economic Development Institute
- Goodwyn, Mills and Cawood
- Information Transport Solutions, Inc.
- Jackson Thornton & Company
- 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

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

WHAT WE DO:

Offer 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**

Value of Being an ACE Community

The Alabama Community of Excellence designation showcases that the town has competed 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 the 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 Towns 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

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

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

ACE Team visits the community to develop a comprehensive “report card” that details the community’s assets and outlines some recommended strategies

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 II: Leadership Development & Strategic Planning

Create or enhance leadership development program, develop strategic plan, and establish or select a nonprofit development organization

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 III: Strategic Plan Implementation & Comprehensive Planning

Begin the comprehensive planning process and work on implementing the strategic plan that was developed during Phase II of the program

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE:

Typically 1 to 3 years depending on a community's initial readiness and its pace of progress

Time to Complete the 3-Phase Process:

- **The time it takes for a given community to move through the three ACE Phases varies**
- **If a community already has an active leadership program and a current strategic plan, it might complete the three phases in as little a year, while one with less of a head start might require up to 3 years**

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

Value to ACE Communities Skills – Knowledge – Confidence

- **Know how to access resources to achieve their goals**
- **Broad based community vision**
- **Working from a specific implementation plan**
- **Demonstrated commitment to planning and growth**
- **Committed and knowledgeable leadership base**
- **Have the capacity to move forward**

QUESTIONS?



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