

ACE

ACE (Alabama Community of Excellence) is a program that provides technical assistance to smaller cities (populations of 2,000 to 18,000) in an effort to strengthen their long-term economic success. This technical assistance is furnished by specialists that evaluate several areas of a city's capabilities such as economic and industrial development, education, healthcare, historic preservation, leadership development, planning, tourism and community development. They assist each participating city with developing a vision based on its own unique sensibilities and assets.

The program was established in 2002 by the Alabama League of Municipalities as a means of utilizing the collective expertise of its partner organizations which include members from the private sector, banks, utilities, governments, and universities. These work together to provide tools needed to ensure the long-term success found through one organization. An understanding of the uniqueness of each community, recognizing that every city has different assets, values, concerns and priorities allows working partners to devise a plan tailored to each city.

The main criteria used in selecting ACE participants are: 1) the level of commitment to the ACE program; 2) the community's capacity to support the ACE program, and 3) the provision of complete and accurate information in the application. ACE also strives to achieve widespread geographic coverage across Alabama. Currently (2023) 46 Alabama communities are participating in the ACE program. There are 39 designated ACE communities with 7 additional communities currently working towards their designation.

Acceptance into the program is determined through a competitive application process. This method is used in selecting participant communities based on the level of local commitment to the ACE program and the community's capacity to complete the rigorous 3-phase ACE program. The [University of Alabama Center for Economic Development](#) is one of the partnering agencies guiding the Alabama Communities of Excellence.

The Three Phase Ace Program.

Phase I: Assessment

An ACE Team of experts across a range of topics visits the community, and based on their observations develops a comprehensive “report card” detailing community assets and recommending possible strategies.

Phase II: Leadership Development and Strategic Planning

With guidance from a skilled ACE facilitator, the community develops a strategic plan, including formal vision and mission statements and goals and actions items for implementing the strategies. Phase II also includes establishment of an ongoing Leadership Development Program.

Phase III: Implementation and Comprehensive Planning

During Phase III, the community begins implementation of the strategic plan created during Phase II, and initiates work on a comprehensive plan that will be a long-term guide for development of infrastructure and community facilities.

Graduation

Upon successful completion of all three phases, communities are designated an *Alabama Community of Excellence*. Graduating communities are recognized at the Alabama League of Municipalities annual convention.

After Graduation, the city continues the implementation and execution of the plans developed in phases 2 and 3. Fayette has done this through the creation of several permanent committees that are actively working to enhance the image and possibilities of Fayette. Each of these committees makes a regular report to the City Council on its progress in their respective area.

The creation of a Junior City Council has come about through efforts inspired by ACE. This gives young people an introduction to

government functions as they promote their own interests in the city.

A Leadership Committee serves to recruit new leaders for the community as they learn to develop vision and growth plans for an enhanced quality of life.

A Transportation Committee is working to bring new buses and schedules that will enable citizens to make trips to doctors, retrieve medications and groceries.

The Housing Committee is busy recruiting investors for much needed expansion of available houses. Fayette has a critical shortage of mid-priced housing.

The Annexation Committee is working to increase the boundaries, and the population, of the city. A larger population makes the city more appealing to outside businesses.

A Tourism Committee is putting together a plan that will highlight the attractive features of the area. The Aquatic Center, Fayette Art Museum and Multi-Purpose Building provide desirable activities.

Fayette is moving and preparing for the future as it continues to be
A City With Opportunity.

View the video of Fayette representatives talking about ACE.

<https://vimeo.com/260108501>