



Inaugural Economic Development Academy graduates 129 municipal leaders across Alabama

*Alabama League of Municipalities, Alabama Community College System partner to strengthen communities
with Academy experience*

November 8, 2022

ORANGE BEACH – Nearly 130 municipal officials from across Alabama who committed time to studying how to strengthen economic development in their communities graduated from the inaugural Alabama League of Municipalities (ALM) Economic Development Academy (EDA) on Tuesday, November 8. A ceremony celebrating their completion was held during the League’s Municipal Leadership Institute at Perdido Beach Resort in Orange Beach.

The inaugural class consists of 129 municipal officials from across the state of Alabama and 27 communities. Each graduate was presented a certificate of municipal economic development from the League and the Alabama Community College System (ACCS). Developed in conjunction with the Alabama Community College System (ACCS) and supported by an advisory council of industry leaders, the League’s EDA engages local leaders to help them better understand their critical role in the economic development process. The Academy is specifically designed to educate and engage municipal officials and designated community business leaders on best practices and strategies for successful economic and community development. Additionally, the Academy focuses on the role of elected officials regarding evaluating abatements, legal processes and implications, correctly marketing the community, gaging the community’s expectations, workforce development as well as other key aspects of the development process.

The Academy took place over a full year and consisted of an orientation and four one-day sessions that include community assignments, which were completed across 16 of Alabama’s 24 community and technical colleges. To graduate, participants had to complete an economic vitality survey of their communities, complete a community assessment/project, and attend all sessions.

“The more partnerships that you can have in a community, the better you are because more people are involved with helping move the community forward, and there’s not often a better partner with as far of a reach as Alabama’s community colleges,” said Neil Wade, consultant to the League. Wade facilitated the Academy across the state.

“The EDA wasn’t superficial. It started at the core of communities – its local leaders – and deeply investigated their economic vitality and their capacity to strengthen their economic DNA. They determined what they needed to learn more about and how to leverage the resources to get where they want to be. It’s one of the most rewarding experiences I’ve had to watch local government at work in the academy to better their communities.”

Academy participants engaged with community college presidents across the state to learn more about how to collaborate on workforce and economic development in the future.

“Every single aspect of what we do as a community college system goes back to community – from the programs we create to the opportunities we build for every person in Alabama to be able to reach success through their local community college. The Economic Development Academy is an example of how working together with partners already within the community can yield great results,” said Jimmy H. Baker, Chancellor of the Alabama Community College System and commencement speaker for the graduation ceremonies. “I’m excited about what the future holds as the leaders in dozens of communities who participated in the Academy bring to life the projects they conceptualized during the training.”

Bryan Parker, Director of Governmental Affairs for the League, stated that the EDA was a vision of League Executive Director Greg Cochran to enhance the focus on economic development for the 464 municipalities the League represents.

“We consistently ask our members what’s important to them, and most of the feedback we receive is focused on economic development. Through the EDA we created a team atmosphere for communities to focus in on the economic vitality, their strengths and weaknesses and how to use the resources in their communities, such as their community college, to garner maximum success,” Parker said.

“We appreciate the opportunity to work with the colleges on this project. It was great for municipalities to learn about all the colleges are doing in workforce and economic development.”

Graduates of the inaugural Economic Development Academy, along with the municipalities they represent, are listed below:

Region 1

- Mike Ashburn, Scottsboro
- Richard Bailey, Scottsboro
- Nathan Lee, Scottsboro
- Roy Light, Scottsboro
- Jim McCamy, Scottsboro
- Matt LeDuke, Guin
- Mineo Lindsey, Guin
- Phil Segraves, Guin
- Virginia Alexander, Hartselle
- Ken Doss, Hartselle
- Randy Garrison, Hartselle
- Jeremy Griffith, Hartselle
- Jeff Johnson, Hartselle
- Anita Bedwell, Rainbow City
- Clark Hopper, Rainbow City
- Jeff Prince, Rainbow City
- Joe Taylor, Rainbow City
- Allie Allcorn, Oneonta
- Sherry Pierce, Oneonta
- Bekah Phillips, Oneonta
- Jerry Bartlett, City of Good Hope
- Christie Chamblee, City of Good Hope
- Susan Eller, City of Good Hope
- Corey Harbison, City of Good Hope
- Eric Phillips, City of Good Hope
- Terry Shabel, City of Good Hope
- Brad Williams, Cullman Co Ed/
City of Good Hope

Region 2

- Tiffany Bittner, Chelsea
- Chris Grace, Chelsea
- Casey Morris, Chelsea
- Tony Picklesimer, Chelsea
- Scott Weygand, Chelsea
- Melody Whitten, Chelsea
- Jesse Matthews, Bessemer
- Donna Thigpen, Bessemer
- Lisa Baker, Tarrant
- Veronica Freeman, Tarrant
- Buddy Aydelette, Center Point
- D.M. Collins, Center Point
- Ebonee Copeland, Center Point
- Bobby Scott, Center Point
- Glenn Williams, Center Point
- Tonja Baldwin, City of Lipscomb
- Christine Burrell, City of Lipscomb
- Barbara Moore, City of Lipscomb
- Lakendria Poellnitz, City of Lipscomb
- Michelle Proctor, City of Lipscomb
- Vanessa Reed, City of Lipscomb
- Cindy Cuellar, Irondale
- James Saucier, Irondale
- Aaron Sims, Irondale
- James Stewart Jr., Irondale
- Lisa Bright, Trussville
- Buddy Choat, Trussville
- June Mathews, Trussville
- Alan Taylor, Trussville
- Kent Back, Gadsden
- David Hooks, Gadsden
- Kenneth Kirkland, Gadsden
- Kathy Murphy, Gadsden
- Deverick Williams, Gadsden

Region 3

- Kim King, Columbiana
- David Mitchell, Columbiana
- Ashley Phillips, Columbiana
- Charlene Tucker, Columbiana
- Danielle Wooten, Selma
- Clay Carmichael, Selma
- Lesia James, Selma
- Susan Youngblood, Selma
- Billy Young, Selma
- James Perkins, Jr., Selma
- Sheryl Smedley, Selma
- Johnny Ford, Tuskegee
- Tony Haygood, Tuskegee
- Derrick Swanson, Tuskegee
- Liz Craig, Pike Road
- Doug Fuhrman, Pike Road
- BoBo Giplin, Pike Road
- Rob Steindorff, Pike Road
- Gordon Stone, Pike Road
- Chris Myers, Pike Road
- Don Mack, Centerville
- Mike Nichols, Centerville
- Mike Oakley, Centerville
- Woody Baird, Alexander City
- Scott Hardy, Alexander City
- Al Jones, Alexander City
- Romy Stamps, Alexander City
- Audrey "Buffy" Colvin, Alexander City

Region 4

- Charles Andrews, Monroeville
- Tameika Hunt, Monroeville
- Kenneth Ruffin, Monroeville
- Al Brewton, Monroeville
- Stanley Enfinger, Ozark
- Mark Blankenship, Ozark
- Leah Harlow, Ozark
- Winston Jackson, Ozark
- Les Perault, Ozark
- Holle Smith, Ozark
- Sheldon Day, Thomasville
- Alexandria Huckabee, Thomasville
- Roy Madison, Thomasville
- Nathan Reid Smith, Thomasville
- Rosalyn Sales, Thomasville
- Daniel Coleman, Geneva
- Kim Gillespie, Geneva
- David Hayes, Geneva
- Lisa Johnson, Geneva
- Ryan Tidwell, Geneva
- Jeff Gray, Geneva
- Annie Latham, Coffeerville
- Jenny Pope, Coffeerville
- Bessie Thomas, Coffeerville
- Dwight Pugh, Coffeerville
- Becky Bracke, Opp
- Rick Clifton, Opp
- Lavaughn Hines, Opp
- Charlotte Hunt, Opp
- Gary Strickland, Opp
- Tom Maddox, City of Elba
- Amy Giles, City of Elba
- G. Wise, City of Elba
- Laurie Chapman, Elba
- Hannah Pendleton, Elba
- Jacob Pendleton, Elba
- William Cooper, Enterprise
- Scotty Johnson, Enterprise
- Greg Padgett, Enterprise
- Turner Townsend, Enterprise
- Jonathan Tullos, Enterprise

About ACCS

With 24 community colleges in more than 130 locations, the Alabama Community College System (ACCS) is Alabama's gateway to first-class, affordable education and technical training to compete in a constantly evolving workforce. More than 144,000 Alabamians benefit from the various certification, credential, dual enrollment and degree programs ACCS offers alongside leading industry partners. The System includes the Alabama Technology Network, which provides extensive training and service offerings directly to business and industry. ACCS is governed by the Alabama Community College System Board of Trustees.

About Alabama League of Municipalities

The Alabama League of Municipalities is a nonpartisan membership association of over 450 incorporated cities and towns. Since 1935, the League has worked to strengthen municipal government through advocacy, training and the advancement of effective local leadership. As the recognized voice of Alabama's cities and towns, ALM's member municipalities benefit from a variety of member programs, services and activities that are impossible to accomplish alone.