

ACTION

From the Editor

Regionalism is essential for long-term effective economic development, both in good economic times and challenging ones like the present. One such effort in Alabama is the **I-85 Corridor Alliance**. The alliance has created an environment for brainstorming, partnering and educating one another on ways to remain and to foster the region's competitiveness in the constantly changing economic climate.

The Economic and Community Development Institute (ECDI), a partnership of Alabama Cooperative Extension System (ACES) and Auburn University, publishes "Action" once each quarter. ECDI's vision is to become the state's preeminent change agent for positive economic and community development policy and practice. ECDI attempts to serve Alabama communities, especially small- and medium-sized rural and economically distressed areas and to maintain effective connections and communication among the many diverse economic development actors in Alabama. "Action" is one of the methods we use to accomplish these goals.

The I-85 Corridor Alliance is the focus of this summer 2009 issue of ECDI in Action. Allyson Martin, economic and community development training specialist with ECDI, is the coordinator for this segment of the newsletter, and Veronica Beasley with the University of West Alabama, is the author of one article. The final article is written by Mike Easterwood, senior outreach associate, and Arturo Menefee, assistant editor, both with ECDI.

The next issue of "Action," fall 2009, will highlight **small town success stories**. For more information on these topics or suggestions for additional topics, contact the editor at (334) 844-3517, fax (334) 844-4709, or e-mail chesnjt@auburn.edu.

J. Thomas Chesnutt, Editor
Extension Tourism Specialist, ECDI

I-85 Corridor Alliance

The I-85 Corridor Alliance is a regional partnership of government, civic, business and education stakeholders, who are dedicated to the promotion, innovation, prosperity, collaboration and competitiveness along Interstate 85 in Alabama.

Organized in 2002 by Auburn University working with the OTF Group of Watertown, Mass., the I-85 Corridor Alliance was formally established in 2005 as a nonprofit organization with a growing list of partners and a representative board of directors.

Drawing on examples of other university-based economic partnerships, the I-85 Corridor Alliance strives to promote productive cooperative partnership among various stakeholders' interests in the region defined by counties linked by Interstate 85 from Montgomery to the Georgia state line.

The goal of the organization is to provide a forum among stakeholders to help create an overall economic vision for the region. The group also works on creating brand identity for promoting the region to outside interests, conducting joint projects of mutual benefit and interest to the stakeholders and promoting individual development initiatives that will benefit the region as a whole.

The alliance strives to reach across city, county and political lines to promote value-added development and programs within the region. The ultimate goal is to help create a high-quality region with a good workforce, better paying jobs and a better quality of life for the citizens along the corridor.

From the original task force, the alliance has created a network for many area chambers of commerce, economic and industrial development entities, city and county governments, universities and private corporations in Chambers, Lee, Macon, and surrounding counties.

The past year has seen the group develop a strategic plan, highlighting the major areas they wanted to emphasize. Among those were an ambassadors program, traveling meetings and more networking opportunities.

The Ambassadors Program is an opportunity for 18- to 22-year olds from participating counties to become acquainted with the I-85 Corridor group. It is an opportunity for them to participate in all the meetings and events with the hope that they will leave with a better understanding of economic and community development. They will also participate in some specific team building and leadership meetings.

This year also has seen the I-85 Corridor moving their meetings around. One was held in Chambers County and the June meeting will be in Tuskegee. This allows the communities to show themselves off, as well as give their leaders an opportunity to update the region on what exciting projects and opportunities they are working on in their town or county.

This has been an exciting year for the I-85 Corridor Alliance, and we are looking forward to it continuing. During these trying economic times, the group has proved to be an excellent resource for regional collaboration on both large and small scale opportunities.

Allyson Hahn Martin
Economic and Community Development
Training Specialist
Economic and Community Development Institute

What's Happening in Alabama

UWA Division of Outreach Services Programs

The University of West Alabama sets annual goals – one of which is to address the major educational, economic and social challenges throughout the Black Belt Region of Alabama. One way the university achieves this task is through the university's Division of Outreach Services. The division implements and helps administer activities in which university faculty, staff and students engage with regional communities and external organizations in reciprocal learning. These activities serve to increase the university's external partnerships as well as the university's capacity to address the challenges of the region. The UWA Division of Outreach strives to provide services and resources that empower and enhance government and community leadership, business activity, civic engagement and personal endeavors throughout West Alabama.

The five units within the Division of Outreach Services are the Community Impact Grant Program, the Small Business Development Center, the Regional Center for Community and Economic Development, Workforce Development Program and Public School Academy Programs.

The division's Community Impact Program solicits grant proposals from Black Belt cities, towns or communities that seek to achieve genuine economic and community growth through professional service grants rendered by university faculty and staff members. The program provides consultation and professional service on community projects considered to have a positive and long-term effect in one of the following areas: economic research, community planning and program implementation, tourism, industry recruitment, and other community and economic related projects. This assistance is aimed towards generating revenue streams for the community, creating permanent jobs and improving the community's economy and livelihood in a significant and long-lasting manner. This program has allowed UWA the opportunity to establish sound principles and strategies to help foster economic development and improve

conditions in some of Alabama's underserved communities.

The division's Small Business Development Center provides educational programs to entrepreneurs looking to start or grow small business operations. The services rendered through the UWA's SBDC are free, confidential, expert advice in the following areas: business plan development, financial and loan assistance, financial analysis, market planning and capacity building workshops.

The division's Regional Center for Community and Economic Development coordinates and leverages university resources to help deepen regional economic infrastructure, to advance regional economic development and diversification, to create jobs and wealth, and to contribute to a higher quality of life for residents in a 10-county service region. The center serves as an economic agent for towns and communities that do not have the means to employ full-time economic development professionals, provides training and technical assistance to government officials, provides planning assistance to local municipalities and assists in tourism promotion for rural communities.

The Workforce Development Program works to build the human capital of the region in an effort to make the Black Belt area more attractive to industry and business. The program works with individuals to help develop job skills through assessment, training and counseling opportunities that enable individuals to obtain educational and vocational credentials. The program also works in partnership with local school systems to help increase graduation rates and provide career technical guidance to the workforce of tomorrow. Local governmental entities also rely on UWA's Workforce Development Program to provide strategic planning that addresses the barriers that impede employment.

The Division of Outreach Services at UWA and the Sumter County Board of Education have developed a Machine Tool Technology Academy scheduled to begin the fall of 2009. The academy will offer dual credit courses in the manufacturing cluster for high school juniors and seniors in the Sumter County School system.

Another effort to increase the human capital of the region has been the program's work in financial literacy education. The program has conducted financial workshops on the importance of good credit, credit report analysis, personal budget and investments.

The University of West Alabama Division of Outreach Services plays a significant role in the growth and economic prosperity of the region. UWA takes genuine interest in playing this vital role in helping to improve the livelihood of Alabamians throughout the Black Belt region. If you would like more information on the Division of Outreach Services, please contact Tynell Fields at (205) 652-3665 or outreachservices@uwa.edu.

Veronica Beasley
Coordinator, Community & Economic Impact
Grants Program
University of West Alabama

Resource Tools

In these difficult economic times, agencies are searching for ways to continue their programs that are valuable services to society. As a result, many individuals are being proactive by seeking out additional grant sources. Below are some grant-making agencies that cover an array of topics such as leadership development, community and economic development, housing, policy research and others. The information on these agencies is as follows:

MacArthur Foundation

MacArthur is one of the nation's largest independent foundations. Through the support it provides, the foundation fosters the development of knowledge, nurtures individual creativity, strengthens institutions, helps improve public policy and provides information to the public, primarily through support for public interest media.

Grant Programs

Affordable Housing: Recognizing the relationship between affordable housing and successful human and community development, MacArthur supports the Window of Opportunity initiative, which seeks to preserve the stock of affordable rental housing, and a comprehensive research program on how housing matters to families and communities.

Community and Economic Development: Helping to increase social and economic opportunities for low-income Chicagoans, MacArthur supports the New Communities Program, a comprehensive community revitalization effort in 16 Chicago neighborhoods, as well as communication of its lessons learned to other cities and the field.

Juvenile Justice: Through the Models for Change initiative, MacArthur supports reform in 16 states and aims to help accelerate a national juvenile justice reform movement to improve the lives of young people in trouble with the law, while enhancing public safety and holding young offenders accountable for their actions.

Policy Research: MacArthur's policy-related grant-making aims to improve and inform decision making at the federal, state and local levels through general operating support to a small portfolio of organizations across an array of issues and special fiscal, demographic and analytical projects with broad implications for domestic policy.

Application Process. If support is available according to the Grant-making Guidelines, the next step is to submit a cover sheet and a letter of inquiry about the work being proposed. Send it either by mail to the Office of Grants Management at the foundation's Chicago address or by e-mail to 4answers@macfound.org. With few exceptions, as noted elsewhere, there are no fixed deadlines.

Contact Information. Headquarters: The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Office of Grants Management, 140 S. Dearborn Street, Chicago, IL 60603-5285, (312) 726-8000, Fax: (312) 920-6258, TDD: (312) 920-6285, 4answers@macfound.org, www.macfound.org

AT&T

AT&T is committed to advancing education, strengthening communities and improving lives. Through its philanthropic initiatives and partnerships, AT&T and the AT&T Foundation support projects that create opportunities, make connections and address community needs.

Grant Programs.

AT&T High School Success Special Grants Program. Under the AT&T Aspire initiative, the AT&T Foundation launched a new grant program focused on high school success for at-risk students. The program directs funds to eligible school districts, school district foundations and nonprofit organizations across the country.

Application Process. School districts and school district foundations. (Note: Foundations must have 501(c)(3) public charity status. Private foundations are not eligible.)

Charter school foundations and private school foundations. (Note: Foundations must have 501(c)(3) public charity status. Private foundations are not eligible.)

Nonprofit organizations that work on-site with public and private education institutions or that work with public and private education institutions on a project basis and have 501(c)(3) public charity status.

Contact Information. For questions about the AT&T High School Success grant program, please call toll-free (800) 591-9663.

Comcast Foundation

The Comcast Foundation provides financial support to organizations that focus on literacy, volunteerism and youth leadership programs. The foundation established the Comcast Leaders and Achievers® Scholarship Program for outstanding youth in communities, recognizing them for their achievements helping them pay for a college education, thereby enabling them to reach their full potential.

Grant Programs/Application Process. Please submit any requests to the address below to ensure your organization's information is routed to the correct location.

Contact Information. Southern Division, The Comcast Foundation, 600 Galleria Parkway, Suite 1100, Atlanta, GA 30339.

The Prudential Foundation

The Prudential Foundation invests more than \$25 million in grants to support the revitalization of communities each year. The foundation supports community engagement efforts through Matching Gifts and special programs that recognize their volunteer efforts.

Grant Programs.

Education: Education leadership to support reform in public education. Within this framework, the foundation works to improve student achievement by increasing the leadership capacity of educators, parents and community residents to implement public school reform. It also funds organizations whose efforts influence policy that adapts best practices and research-based approaches to support instruction and learning in schools.

Youth development to build skills and competencies needed for young people to be productive citizens. It includes expanding arts education opportunities and supporting

effective before- and afterschool programs for young people.

Economic Development: Workforce development programs that train and place individuals in demand occupations. Business development opportunities to create and grow businesses. Community development with a focus on strengthening community development corporations.

Civic Infrastructure: Arts as an economic engine and as a quality-of-life issue to ensure that residents have access to quality arts programs.

Capacity-building activities for nonprofit organizations to ensure their sustainability and growth. Open spaces by preserving and creating public parks and playgrounds.

Application Process. The Prudential Foundation has a two-step application process. To apply for funding, applicants meeting the specific criteria described in the Prudential Foundation strategy need to submit a Letter of Intent with the following information:

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Communities
in Transition

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Action is published once each quarter by the Alabama Cooperative Extension System. We would like you to share success stories in your community for inclusion in future issues of *Action*. Send to: J. Thomas Chesnutt, 218 Extension Hall, Auburn University, Alabama 36849.

Visit the ECDI home page at
<http://www.auburn.edu/outreach/ecdi/>.

- a brief description of the organization, its mission and most recent accomplishments
- a description of the program or effort to be funded, including geographic area to be served, target population and services to be provided
- a description of the evaluation process and the expected outcomes
- a brief estimate of the budget and other sources of funding secured or previous funding sources with the amounts listed
- contact information of the appropriate individual

A foundation program officer will review the Letter of Intent and will contact the organization.

Contact Information. The Prudential Foundation, 751 Broad Street, 15th Floor, Newark, NJ 07102-3777, (973) 802-4791, community.resources@prudential.com.

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Important Upcoming Events

- **Intensive Economic Development Training Course**, Auburn University, July 13 to 17 and Sept. 14 to 18
- **Alabama Community Leadership Network Conference**, Auburn University, October 6 to 7
- **Alabama-Mississippi Rural Tourism Conference**, Sheffield, October 26 to 28

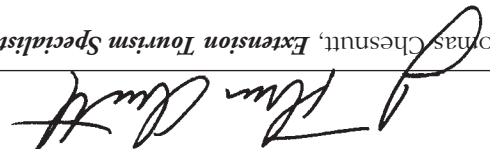
Visit the ECDI home page at www.auburn.edu/outreach/ecdi/

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