



Alabama Chambers

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
ASSOCIATION OF ALABAMA

ALABAMA ACCREDITED CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Purpose:

The Alabama Chambers Accredited Chamber Program is designed to promote public awareness of the intent of the chamber of commerce brand as a not-for-profit community development- based business membership organization by providing a peer review process of generally accepted chamber of commerce organizational benchmarks.

Implementation:

- The program is 100% voluntary. There is no requirement to participate.
- Any Chamber that is currently accredited through the U.S. Chamber of Commerce at the date of this application is exempt from the full application requirements with proof of accreditation and basic supplemental documentation.
- Any current Alabama Chambers members may apply.
- The deadline for applications will be **March 7, 2025**.

Applications will be reviewed by a committee of chamber executives and will be approved, denied, or sent a list of suggested improvements that if implemented may result in an approved designation.

Each year, Alabama Chambers will publicly acknowledge those chambers that receive the Alabama Accredited Chamber designation at the Executive Leadership Conference.

Chambers should submit the following application and required documentation via Dropbox link sent to Paige@alabamachambers.com. Each item should be included as a separate file upload.

ALABAMA ACCREDITED CHAMBER PROGRAM

One of the most prestigious programs of the Chamber of Commerce Association of Alabama (Alabama Chambers) is the Alabama Accredited Chamber Program. The Alabama Accredited Chamber Program sets standards of excellence for chambers in the State of Alabama. It recognizes chambers that have achieved those standards while offering guidelines for those to improve their effectiveness.

Once achieved, the Alabama Accredited Chamber Program is valid for a period of five years. Reapplication will be required after the five-year period. Being an Accredited Chamber of Commerce places you in a higher plateau of achievement. It shows you have gone through a detailed analysis of who and where you are as an organization.

Why should your Chamber become an Alabama Accredited Chamber?

The benefits are numerous. Accreditation demonstrates your commitment to improvements in your operations that makes you a more valuable and competent organization.

Accreditation will benefit your Chamber by:

- Committing the chamber to meet important standards established collectively by Alabama Chambers members.
- Establishing that the Accredited Chamber meets those important standards by Alabama Chambers.
- Validating the Accredited Chamber as existing for the purpose inherent in the time-honored tradition of a "Chamber of Commerce."
- Increasing your credibility with your Boards of Directors and your membership.
- Helping with membership recruitment and retention.
- Helping differentiate your chamber from other chambers and business associations.

What does the Alabama Accredited Chamber designation mean to the community or area where the chamber is located?

Accreditation benefits the community by:

- Setting high standards, which their chamber of commerce voluntarily ascribes to and meets.
- Providing the assurance that their local chamber of commerce aspires to excellence in a manner consistent with chambers of commerce across the State of Alabama.
- Strengthening free enterprise by protecting the business environment.
- Providing assurances to the businesses joining the chamber that they are investing in a not-for-profit corporation whose revenues are utilized for business and public good and not personal gain.

ALABAMA ACCREDITED CHAMBER PROGRAM

A Chamber must meet the following standards to achieve the Alabama Accredited Chamber designation:

Organization

- Chamber has received 501 (c) (6) designation from the IRS.
- Chamber has Articles of Incorporation filed with the State of Alabama.
- Chamber maintains legal documents and documents all instituted policies, bylaws, etc.
- Chamber has an established and sound governing structure.
- Chamber's board of directors and volunteer leaders are an accurate representation of the chamber's membership and service area.

Service Intent and Capacity

- Chamber promotes inclusiveness vs. exclusiveness, ensuring that the membership is an accurate representation of the community.
- Chamber has a mission statement that is consistent with the goals and objectives of a chamber of commerce; i.e. to advance the commercial, financial, industrial and civic interests of a community.
- Chamber has a program of work that reflects its mission and guides its daily activities.
- Chamber implements programs and services that meet the current needs of its members and the community.

Professional Administration

- Chamber employs sufficient staff to achieve its program of work.
- Chamber has developed and implemented a personnel and policies/procedures manual.
- Chamber promotes quality work performance and encourages professional excellence through job descriptions.
- Chamber has established criteria for and conducts regular/timely performance evaluations.
- Chamber provides for the ongoing professional development of staff.

Financial Management

- Chamber develops and implements an annual budget that demonstrates sound fiscal management.
- Chamber generates and maintains financial reports on at least a quarterly basis.
- Chamber submits annual filings to the IRS (as required).
- Chamber protects the fiduciary interest of the Chamber, members and staff through an insurance program.

Marketing/Public Relations

- Chamber has a media relations/communications program.
- Chamber markets its products and services and benefits to its members.
- Chamber has an information gathering and management system that establishes the chamber as an information resource center.
- Chamber utilizes communication technology to enhance its effectiveness.

DOCUMENTATION: ALABAMA ACCREDITED CHAMBER PROGRAM

Please submit one (1) copy via shared Dropbox of the following documentation.

Each item should be uploaded as a separate file.

Chamber must have each of the following to qualify for accreditation:

Enclosed

ORGANIZATION

1. Articles of Incorporation _____
2. Certification letter as an IRS 501(c)6 _____
3. Bylaws and description of review process _____
4. Board of Directors roster _____
5. Organizational chart/s _____
6. Board of Directors orientation process _____
7. Describe the process used to evaluate Board Member performance (attendance, participation, etc.) _____
8. Describe ways Board expectations are communicated to Nominees for the board and board members _____
9. Sample minutes of 2 Board meetings within the last 6 months _____

MISSION FOCUS

10. Most Recent Annual Report _____
11. Description of service area _____
12. Mission Statement _____
13. A Board approved Program of Work/Business Plan _____
14. Description of chamber's retention plan _____
15. Description of all services available to members, including programs, products, and services _____
16. Describe the process used to determine member needs _____

PROFESSIONAL ADMINISTRATION

17. List of all staff members/titles and status _____
18. Written personnel policies _____
19. Job descriptions for all staff members _____
20. Staff evaluation policy or performance evaluation _____
21. Staff development policy and budget _____
22. List of any certifications received by staff _____

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

23. Copy of current annual budget approved by board _____
24. Two recent profit/loss statements _____
25. Copy of most recent IRS 990 filing _____
26. Describe the financial policies of the Chamber which ensure the organization's financial integrity (may include annual reviews and/or audits) _____
27. Proof of workers' compensation (if applicable) and general liability insurance coverage and D&O insurance _____

COMMUNICATIONS

- 28. Sample of recent news release promoting activity _____
- 29. Two different samples of recent member mailings _____
(hard copy or electronic format)
- 30. Copy of latest membership directory _____
- 31. Describe the use of database software program(s) to _____
maintain member information
- 32. Include a copy of communications plan which _____
demonstrates regular communication with members
- 33. Describe the strategic use of the Chamber web site and social media to _____
communicate with members

ADVOCACY

- 34. Describe the process used to advocate for local, state, _____
& national issues that affect members

BRANDING

- 35. Provide hi-res version of chamber logo (jpg or png format only) _____

Supporting Information

Paid Full-time Executive: ___ Yes ___ No
Number of Employees on Staff: ___ Full Time ___ Part Time
Office Space: ___ Own ___ Rent ___ Approx. Sq. Footage
Population of area served: _____
Geographic description of area served: _____

Total Annual Operating Budget: \$ _____

Dues Structure: Attach copy of dues structure
Number of paying members Companies _____ Individuals/Honorary _____
Number of board members Voting _____ Ex Officio _____

Revenue Source (by percentage)

Membership Dues _____
Non-Dues Revenue (trips, sponsorship, events, etc) _____
Public Funds _____

Chief Board Officer Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Chief Staff Executive Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

APPLICATION: ALABAMA ACCREDITED CHAMBER PROGRAM

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

ADDRESS

CITY

STATE

ZIP CODE

TELEPHONE

FAX

E-MAIL

WEB SITE

CONTACT

TITLE

Payment

All fees must accompany the application. The application fee is **\$250 for Alabama Chambers members** in good standing. Application deadline is **March 7, 2025**.

____ Check enclosed for \$250. Please make payable to Chamber of Commerce Association of Alabama.

Mail to: Alabama Chambers
Paige Hutto
PO Box 1404
Wetumpka, AL 36092