The University of Alabama Center for Economic Development (UACED) serves as a gateway to the University of Alabama in providing economic development resources. UACED has been in existence since 1987 and provides community-based strategic planning in support of local economic development efforts, primarily in the economically distressed parts of the state. UACED staff provide guidance to communities in leveraging other University resources and partners with the specific focus on community development and capacity building at all levels. Our mission is to assist communities as they prepare to take advantage of economic development opportunities for growth which puts them in a better position to support existing businesses as well as to create and attract new investments and jobs.

Mission:
- Enhance the economic well-being of Alabama communities by providing technical assistance and linkages to resources.

Vision:
- Sustainable communities throughout the state

Goals:
- Gateway to University of Alabama Community and Economic Development Assets and Resources
- Address economic development needs of distressed and rural communities throughout Alabama
- Build resource teams and programs around community development needs (examples: leadership development, economic diversification, planning)
- Partner with external community and economic development resources focused on enhancing Alabama’s economic profile
- Serve communities in practical, applied projects, assisting with planning and implementation
- Provide leadership in charting non-traditional and new mechanisms for economic development

One of UACED’s priorities is to work with rural communities throughout the state. Typically, the Center works with approximately 25
rural communities or counties every year. The Center frequently works in collaboration with the Regional Planning Commissions, assisting in various areas, such as planning, grants and project management, leadership development, organizing topical seminars, and tourism development.

UACED is a founding member of two organizations focused on helping small and rural towns succeed—Your Town Alabama and Alabama Communities of Excellence. Your Town Alabama provides an immersive, participatory workshop that introduces grassroots leaders to the importance of planning and design, as tools for preserving their unique characteristics. The Alabama Communities of Excellence program is a three-phased technical assistance program that provides a team of professional community and economic development specialists to assist the town in developing their organizational structure, bolstering their leadership base, and refining their vision and plans, in order to grow and prosper.

Rural and urban communities have access to a wide range of services available from UACED and The University of Alabama. Many communities and counties need assistance with large-scale projects, like downtown redevelopment, diversification of their business base, or city and county outdoor recreation plans. The UACED/UA team routinely undertakes assessments and feasibility studies, retail/commercial and housing gap analysis, and the identification of financing resources, both public and private.