

2022-2023 CREATE Program Overview

Cultivating Rural Entrepreneurs And Transforming Economies

*Entrepreneurship & Small Business Cohort Program
Powered by Georgia Power Community & Economic Development*

As our rural communities prepare to embrace the future – globalization, automation, and innovation – we must consider a comprehensive and inclusive growth approach that extends beyond industrial recruitment. That's why we are launching the CREATE program, a two-year cohort program focused on "Cultivating Rural Entrepreneurs And Transforming Economies."

Entrepreneurs and small businesses are integral to our local communities' social and economic fabric. This is especially true in our rural communities, where small businesses provide most employment opportunities – and a higher proportion than their urban counterparts.

- Here in Georgia, small businesses represent 99% of all businesses, employing more than 1.7 million Georgians. In 2019, Georgia small businesses (firms with 1-20 employees) created more than 38,000 net new jobs.
- Firms employing 50 people or less account for 42% of overall employment in rural communities nationally.

Program Objectives

This program is intended to provide your community with the technical assistance, seed capital, and guidance to accomplish the following:

- Identify the assets and gaps of your community's entrepreneurial/small business support system, including potential areas for investment.
- Understand the importance of a healthy entrepreneurial/small business support system to your local and regional economy and how these types of businesses can support long-term community and economic development goals (e.g., vibrant downtown, talent retention/attraction).
- Identify potential partners, resources, and funding sources to support project implementation.
- Learn about best practices related to entrepreneurial/small business support systems in other rural communities.
- Elevate the voices of existing entrepreneurs and small business owners.

These efforts will culminate in the creation and implementation of a targeted growth strategy and plan for your local and regional economy, providing definitive next steps for supporting and attracting entrepreneurs and small businesses to your community.

Program Duration

The Program will span 2-years and requires your team's full participation at four in-person sessions to be held over the course of 1.5-days twice annually. Dates to be confirmed.

- **May 10-11, 2022:** Athens, GA
- **October 12-13, 2022:** Athens, GA
- **March & October 2023:** Location TBD

Program Cost

Participants are expected to cover the cost of transportation and accommodations for the four in-person sessions. Most meals will be provided.

Seed Capital

Selected communities will receive a \$5,000 seed grant to kick-start implementation of ideas identified as part of the strategic planning process.

Community Eligibility

Only applications from rural communities will be considered. A rural community is defined as a county with 50,000 residents or fewer.

Participation & Team Composition

Participating communities are expected to identify 5 to 6 champions to participate in the program alongside the team leader(s). These champions must be noted on your community's application to be considered. In-person participation of all team members at program sessions is expected.

Champions may include local government leaders, regional partners, and community and economic development leaders (e.g., representatives from chambers of commerce, development authorities, and main street organizations). Additionally, selected champions should have knowledge of diverse areas relevant to entrepreneurs and small businesses, such as finance, real estate, legal/regulatory affairs, marketing, expansion/market entry, and product licensing.

At least one participant must be an entrepreneur or small-business owner, acknowledging that this individual may not be available to attend all in-person sessions.

Commitment

Your team's participation in all in-person events is expected.

Application Instructions

Please submit your completed application no later than April 8, 2022, at 5:00pm EST. Applications should be submitted to Sarah Carnes (sccarnes@southernco.com) and Scott Purvis (mspurvis@southernco.com).

Selection Process

Partner organizations will evaluate all complete applications upon receipt. A total of 5 to 7 communities will be selected to participate in the program. Applicants will be notified of their selection status no later than Friday, April 15, 2022.

Selection Criteria

Applications will be evaluated on several key criteria deemed imperative to spurring positive impact, specifically the successful implementation of the foundational pillars associated with entrepreneurial ecosystems. Proposed projects that prioritize the following will be ranked more favorably:

- **Community Readiness:** Demonstration of community motivation to fully participate in the program sessions, regularly convene with community champions and subject matter experts, and affect positive change through strategy implementation.
- **Community Champions:** Participation commitment of 5 to 6 community champions knowledgeable of local entrepreneurial and small-business resources and needs.
- **Sustainability:** Ability for the local community to implement identified strategies and sustain investment in impactful programming opportunities beneficial to entrepreneurs and small businesses.

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Thank you for expressing interest in the CREATE Program. Please submit your completed application no later than April 8, 2022, at 5:00pm EST.

Applications should be submitted to Sarah Carnes (sccarnes@southernco.com) and Scott Purvis (mspurvis@southernco.com).

APPLICANT INFORMATION

Community _____

County Population

Less than 10,000 10,000 to 25,000 25,000 to 50,000

Applying Organization/Agency _____

Primary Contact Person (Team Leader) _____

Primary Address _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Primary Email _____ Primary Telephone _____

Signature of Primary Contact *Your signature indicates your commitment to lead and fully participate in the multi-year cohort program. Should you be unable to participate in an in-person session, you will appoint the secondary contact (or another individual) to represent your organization.*

_____ Date ____ / ____ / 2022

Secondary Contact Person _____

Secondary Address _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Secondary Email _____ Secondary Telephone _____

Signature of Secondary Contact *Your signature indicates your commitment to fully participate in the multi-year cohort program and to support the primary applicant.*

_____ Date ____ / ____ / 2022

COMMUNITY CHAMPIONS

Participating communities are expected to identify 5 to 6 champions to participate in the program alongside the team leader(s). These champions must be noted on your community’s application to be considered. In-person participation of all team members at program sessions is expected.

Champions may include local government leaders, regional partners, and community and economic development leaders (e.g., representatives from chambers of commerce and development authorities). Additionally, selected champions should have knowledge of diverse areas relevant to entrepreneurs and small businesses, such as finance, real estate, legal, marketing, expansion/market entry, etc.

At least one participant must be an entrepreneur or small-business owner, acknowledging that this individual may not be available to attend all in-person sessions.

Champion Name (#1) _____
Organization/Company Affiliation _____
Area of Expertise _____
Primary Email _____ **Primary Telephone** _____
Signature Indicating Agreement to Participate _____

Champion Name (#2) _____
Organization/Company Affiliation _____
Area of Expertise _____
Primary Email _____ **Primary Telephone** _____
Signature Indicating Agreement to Participate _____

Champion Name (#3) _____
Organization/Company Affiliation _____
Area of Expertise _____
Primary Email _____ **Primary Telephone** _____
Signature Indicating Agreement to Participate _____

Champion Name (#4) _____
Organization/Company Affiliation _____
Area of Expertise _____
Primary Email _____ **Primary Telephone** _____
Signature Indicating Agreement to Participate _____

Champion Name (#5) _____

Organization/Company Affiliation _____

Area of Expertise _____

Primary Email _____ Primary Telephone _____

Signature Indicating Agreement to Participate _____

Champion Name (#6) _____

Organization/Company Affiliation _____

Area of Expertise _____

Primary Email _____ Primary Telephone _____

Signature Indicating Agreement to Participate _____

SHORT RESPONSE QUESTIONS

Please respond to the following short-response questions in 200 words or less.

1. Describe entrepreneurship and small business resources currently available or under development in your community and region.

2. Describe the challenges related to entrepreneurship and small business development in your community and region.

3. Explain the importance of entrepreneurship and small business development in your community/region and why your community should be selected to participate.

4. In addition to the \$5,000 seed grant for your community, explain how your community will implement and sustain ideas identified as part of your entrepreneurship growth strategy/plan.