

# THE BETTER

BRINGING ECONOMIC TOOLS TO

# ENRICH AND REVITALIZE INITIATIVE

# REPORT



Project funded by the Economic Development Administration EDA CARES ACT

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**BETTER INITIATIVES**



The BETTER Leadership Training program was designed to serve elected officials, key staff, and community leaders in the seven-county region. With a goal of building leadership capacity and providing tools to maximize community and economic development efforts, WARC selected the University of Alabama Center for Economic Development and the Alabama Community Leadership Network to design and deliver the program.

**LEADERSHIP TRAINING**

**BETTER WAL**

**Hotel Indigo Tuscaloosa**  
111 Greensboro Ave, Tuscaloosa, AL 35401  
9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. each day

Friday, July 23, 2021    Friday, Aug. 13, 2021  
Friday, July 30, 2021    Friday, Aug. 20, 2021

West Alabama Regional Commission    www.WARC.info/BETTER-WEST-ALABAMA    UA Center for Economic Development THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA

- Four days of comprehensive training:
  - Session 1: BETTER Leadership & Professionalism
  - Session 2: Managing Projects to BETTER Your Community
  - Session 3: Creating Resilience: Building a BETTER Community
  - Session 4: Community Driven Development: Engaging Your Citizens for a BETTER Community
- 36 participants
- 19 jurisdictions represented

# LEADERSHIP TRAINING

1



# BETTER LEADERSHIP TRAINING – MEET THE TEAM

## University of Alabama Center for Economic Development



Candace Johnson Beers,  
T.M.P.



Erin Hackenmueller, M.A.



Arthur Menefee, Ph.D.

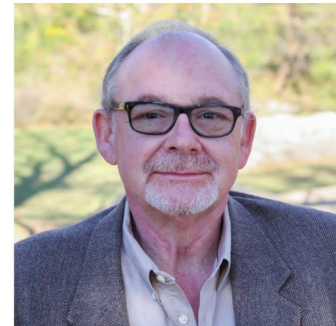


Nisa Miranda, M.B.A

## Keys to the City Community Coaching



Hollie Cost, Ph.D.



Herman F. Lehman, M.B.A., M.S.E.M.

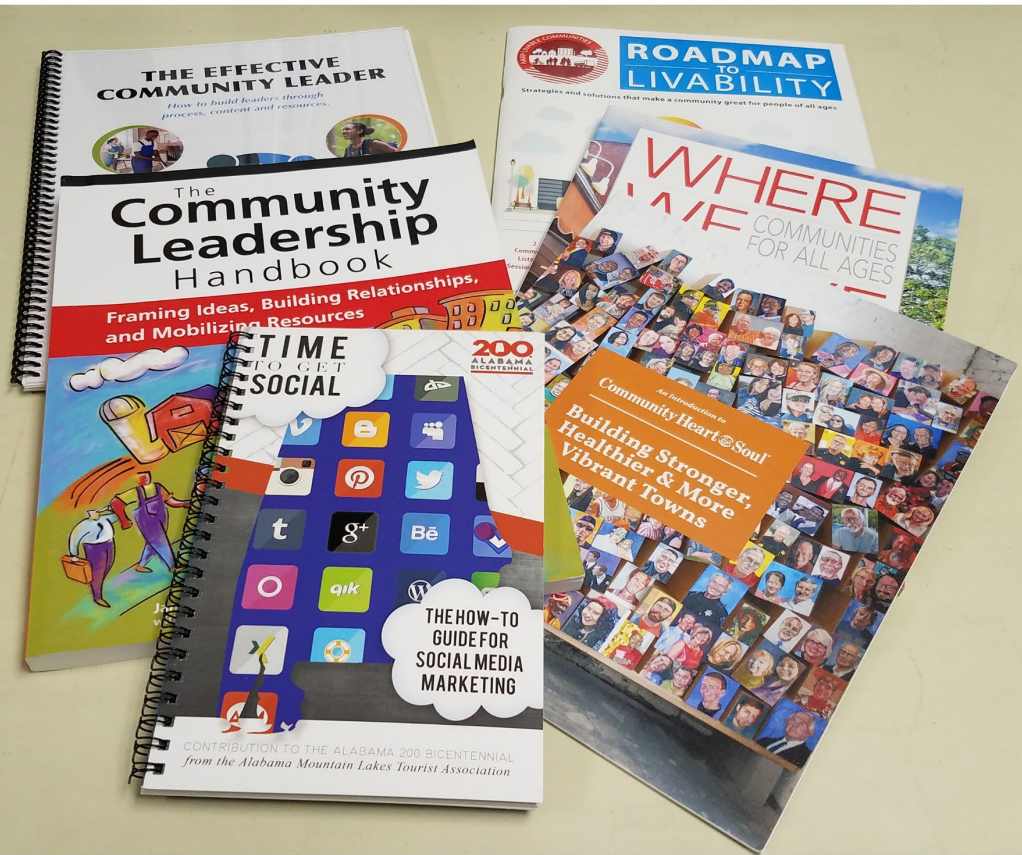


# West Alabama BETTER Leadership sessions



# BETTER LEADERSHIP Resources for Success

Class participants were provided a notebook with all session agendas and presentations. Additional books and resource materials on training topics were provided to increase access to reference materials within home communities.



*The Effective community Leader*, by Arturo S. Menefee, Ph. D

*The Community Leadership Handbook, Framing Ideas, Building Relationships, and Mobilizing Resources*, by James F. Krile with Gordon Curphy and Duane R. Lund

*Time to Get Social, The How-To Guide for Social Media Marketing*, by Alabama Mountain Lakes Tourist Association

*Roadmap to Livability*, by AARP

*Where We Live Communities for All Age*, by Nancy LeaMond, AARP Executive Vice President, Community, State and National Affairs, 2018 Edition

*Building Stronger, Healthier & More Vibrant Towns*, by Community Heart & Soul



# West Alabama BETTER Leadership Class of 2021



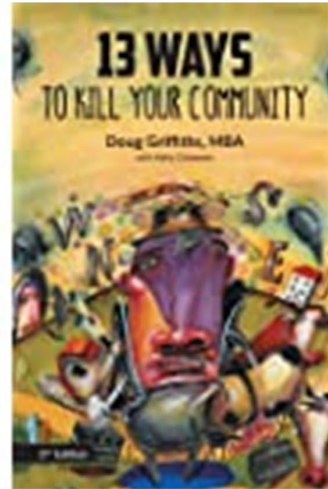
L-R: Front row - Phillis Belcher, Annie Gee, Cory Johnson (WARC), Norman Hunter. Row 2 - Mayor Mike Oakley, Teirdre Owens, Pam Kirsch, Pearl Shepard, Daniel White, Mary Lollar, Johnnie Collins, Mayor Gary Averett. Back row - Mayor Susan Chase, Mayor Melody Davis, John Allen, Mayor Craig Patterson, Mayor Rod Northam, Pamela Trammell (WARC), Mayor Adrain Dudley. Not pictured - Holly Barnett, Sandra Walker, Bridget Ball, Mayor Jonathan Rossell, Christopher Rollins, Michael Easter, Judge Arthur Crawford, Sylvia Williams, Patti Rhodes, Judge Sharon Nethery, David Gunnels, Jeff Long, Mayor Terrence Windham, John Cameron, Danielle Winningham, Max Snyder, Nick Lolley, Brooke Starnes, Scott Murphy, Ginger Turner.



Each year the Alabama Association of Regional Councils (AARC) provides a training conference for staff, elected officials and others that work with programs or services provided by the Councils and their Area Agencies on Aging.

- Alabama Association of Regional Councils Annual Training Conference 2020

Held virtually due to Covid 19, WARC sponsored 9 participants. The featured presenter was Doug Griffiths, author of "13 Ways to Kill Your Community".



- Alabama Association of Regional Councils Annual Training Conference 2021

Held in Montgomery, WARC sponsored 7 participants.



## CONFERENCE SPONSORSHIPS

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West Alabama clerks gain specialized training from the Alabama Association of Municipal Clerks & Administrators program; area participants attended up to 3 sessions in 2021 and 2022. 34 session sponsorships were provided.



- Centreville Megan Batte
- Woodstock Tiffney McCulley
- Belk Kayla Ellis
- Fayette Dawn Clapp
- Glen Allen Tabatha Tucker
- Boligee Sharon Washington
- Eutaw Shakelvia Spencer
- Eutaw Joe Powell
- Forkland Kinya Isaac Turner
- Akron Bridget Ball
- Greensboro Lorrie Cook
- Kennedy Beck Akins
- Millport Linda Ferguson
- Sulligent Bradley Long
- Aliceville Dineki McCaa
- Carrollton Jessica Perrigin
- Reform Annette Maughn
- Coaling Silvia Rouse
- Lake View Lisa Bates
- Lake View Cortez Rice



L-R Front row: Becky Akins, Linda Ferguson, Dawn Clap, Kinya Isaac Turner, Shakelvia Spencer, Joe Powell. Back row: Cortez Rice, Annette Maughn, Megan Batte, Sharon Washington.



Tiffney McCulley



Tabitha Tucker



Lorrie Cook



Bridget Ball



Dineki McCaa

# MUNICIPAL CLERKS INSTITUTE SPONSORSHIPS



Held each year in Nauvoo, AL at Camp McDowel, YOUR TOWN is an intensive 2 ½ day community and economic development workshop designed to grow local capacity through hands-on experience led by a team of dedicated professionals.

**BETTER** sponsored 14 attendees to the 2022 class:

- **Bridget Ball**  
Town of Akron, Clerk
- **Carrie Jones**  
Town of Forkland
- **Lisa Bright**  
Will Bright Foundation
- **Jamie Lake**  
WARC
- **John Cameron**  
Tuscaloosa County Extension
- **Rod Northam**  
City of Fayette, Mayor
- **Susan Chase**  
Town of Beaverton, Mayor
- **Mike Oakley**  
City of Centreville, Mayor
- **Melody Davis**  
City of Reform, Mayor
- **Pamela Trammell**  
WARC
- **Lakisha Duke-Bryant**  
Town of Akron, Councilperson
- **Sandra Walker**  
REACH, Inc. - Eutaw
- **Lynn Hamric**  
Centreville
- **Barry Walker, Sr.**  
REACH, Inc. - Eutaw

**YOUR**  
**TOWN**  
**ALABAMA**



# YOUR TOWN, AL SPONSORSHIPS

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# The BETTER West Alabama crew at YOUR TOWN 2022



L-R: Front row - Lakeshia Duke-Bryant, Bridgett Ball, Lisa Bright, Mayor Mike Oakley, Lynn Hamric and Sandra Walker. Back row - Pamela Trammell, Jamie Lake, Mayor Rod Northam, Mayor Susan Chase, Mayor Melody Davis, John Cameron and Barry Walker, Sr. Not pictured - Carrie Jones.



**YOUR TOWN  
at work**



# YOUR TOWN - THE RED TEAM STORY

What is it like to go through the YOUR TOWN experience? WARC's Senior Planner Pamela Trammell gives a look at one team's journey.

"All 75+ attendees were assigned to teams. I was a member of the RED Team. We were from all backgrounds and different personalities (just like a town council). We were given the Town's history, demographics, town map, and a thorough overall summary. Team RED began by naming our town: 'Riverbend.' Our goal: to overcome barriers that prevented 'Riverbend' from growing community and economic development.

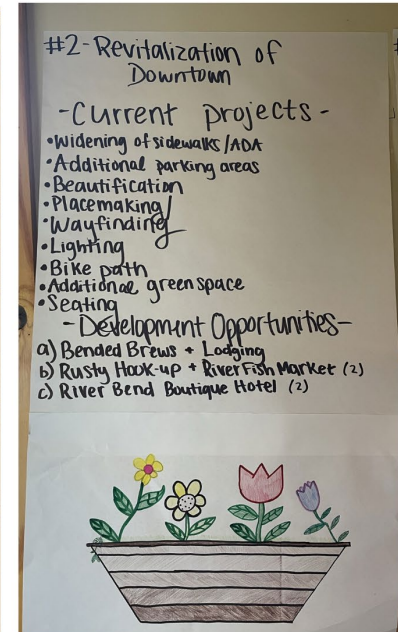
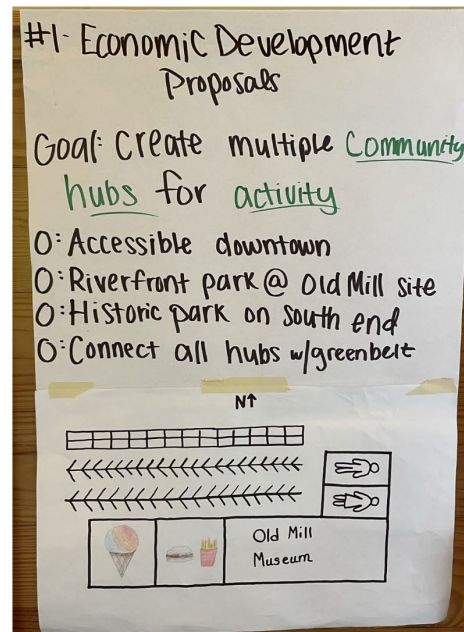
Many hours were spent, working past 10 PM both nights, to develop Riverbend. There was not always consensus. Discussions were had; compromises were found. Teamwork was crucial. It was hard work.

Riverbend's assets, opportunities, and challenges were analyzed. A vision established. Issues were addressed: economic development, Downtown revitalization; locating a new school; impacts of a proposed bypass; development propositions, etc.

Strategies and priorities were the outcomes. This was real work. The RED Team presented to the full Your Town Alabama group on the last day. We were proud of our accomplishments. I was proud! It was a phenomenal experience. Do not hesitate to attend if given the opportunity!!"



The RED Team: L-R Front Row – Erin Hackenmueller, Paige Thomas, Susan Chase, Christy Ellard. Back Row: Brian King, Ben Wegleitner, Leroy Davis, Jr., Kristie Piper Renee Sides, Barry Walker, Pamela Trammell. Not shown: Mary Jackson.



# BETTER ACTION PLANNING

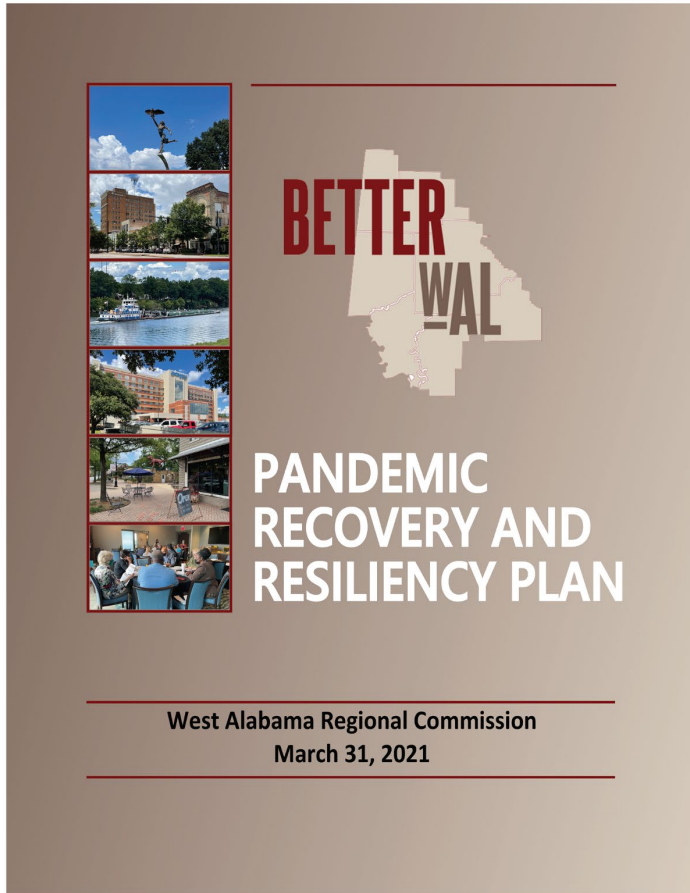


Participating jurisdictions met over multiple planning sessions led by the University of Alabama Center for Economic Development (UACED) to craft county and local-level Action Plans.

Completed in June 2022, the plans will serve to advance needed projects in these communities:

- Bibb County
- City of Centreville
- Town of West Blocton
- Greene County
- City of Eutaw
- Town of Forkland
- Hale County
- Town of Akron
- City of Greensboro
- Pickens County
- City of Aliceville
- Town of Carrollton
- Town of Gordo
- Town of Pickensville
- City of Reform
- City of Coaling
- City of Lake View
- City of Vance

# BETTER PANDEMIC RECOVERY AND RESILIENCY PLAN



An important look at the regional impacts of the Coronavirus pandemic was performed over a two-year period. The resulting plan identified regional assets, implications for business and employment, and a summary of opportunities to achieve recovery and resiliency. Alignment with the region's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) goals and objectives was integral to the plan's implementation approach.

WARC engaged Jeffrey A. Pruitt of Cedar Mountain Consultants in Huntsville, AL to work with area stakeholders to prepare the plan.

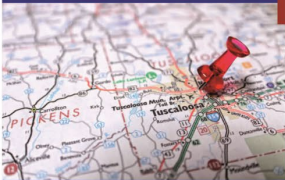


## HOW WE SERVE

The West Alabama Regional Commission is one of the 12 regional councils in the State of Alabama. The councils serve local governments and citizens by coordinating region-wide projects and services, promoting cooperation among the local governments, and carrying out state and federal programs on a regional basis. WARC serves Bibb, Fayette, Greene, Hale, Lamar, Pickens and Tuscaloosa counties.

The WARC receives its funding from federal matching grants, member government dues, an annual appropriation from the State of Alabama, and contract fees.

The scope of the Commission's work includes community and economic development, transportation planning, nutrition and assistance programs for the elderly, a part-time employment program for low income senior citizens, technical assistance, tourism promotion, and public information.



## LEARN MORE

Our website, [www.warc.info](http://www.warc.info) offers up to date information about WARC and our work in the region including the Regional Directory, upcoming meeting dates, useful resources, and more. For additional details about the Area Agency on Aging and access to the Senior Directory and essential aging resources, visit [www.westalabamaaging.org](http://www.westalabamaaging.org).



## AREA AGENCY ON AGING

Staff of the Area Agency on Aging are able to assist the elderly, disabled and their families in coordinating resources and services that will enable these individuals to maintain their independence as long as possible. Programs offered through the Area Agency on Aging are broad and inclusive.

Visit [www.westalabamaaging.org](http://www.westalabamaaging.org) for additional information.

### Community Based Services

- Aging & Disabilities Resource Center (ADRC)
- Senior Activity Centers
- Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP)
- SenioRx Prescription Drug Program
- Veteran-Directed Home and Community Based Services Program (VD-HCBS)

### Elderly Rights, Advocacy & Assistance

- Legal Services Program
- Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program
- State Health Insurance Program (SHIP)

### In-Home Services

- Alabama Cares Program
- Home & Community Based Waiver Programs
- Personal Choices Program

## BUSINESS LOANS

### Revolving Loan Fund (RLF):

- Available to businesses and industries in our seven county region
- Job creation or retention required
- Loans available from \$10,000 up to \$250,000
- Fixed interest rates

### RLF funds can be used to:

- Purchase land and buildings
- Purchase equipment
- Provide working capital
- Construct or renovate buildings

### Targeted Businesses:

- Small manufacturing companies
- Retail businesses
- Service businesses



## CONTACT US

### West Alabama Regional Commission

P.O. Box 509, 4200 Hwy 69N, Northport, AL 35476

Phone: (205) 333-2990

Fax: (205) 333-2713

[warc@westal.org](mailto:warc@westal.org)

[www.warc.info](http://www.warc.info)

[www.facebook.com/WARCregion2](https://www.facebook.com/WARCregion2)

[@westalregionalcommission](https://www.instagram.com/westalregionalcommission)

[@WestAlaRegion](https://www.twitter.com/WestAlaRegion)

Publication of this brochure was made possible with funding through the United States Economic Development Administration.



IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN WEST ALABAMA

WARC developed a new agency-wide brochure to provide a comprehensive overview of the many services offered by our departments and their staff to support our mission:

# IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN WEST ALABAMA

The agency website [www.warc.info](http://www.warc.info) provides additional details about programs and available assistance to local governments, including all things BETTER WEST ALABAMA!

## COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

WARC serves as the Economic Development District (EDD) as designated by the Economic Development Administration as well as the Local Development District (LDD) for both the Appalachian Regional Commission and the Delta Regional Authority. In this capacity, WARC assists communities to attract investments, ensure the delivery of essential services, and support job growth.

### Grant Writing and Administration

- Programs include:
- Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC)
  - Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)
  - Delta Regional Authority (DRA)
  - Economic Development Administration (EDA)
  - Industrial Access Road Fund
  - Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)
  - Recreational Trails Program (RTP)
  - Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)

### Plans and Reports

- Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy
- Grant and Loan Guide for Local Governments
- Mining and Manufacturing Directory

### Technical Assistance

- Census and Socio-economic data
- Historic preservation
- Land use and zoning regulations
- State and federal program guidance
- Tourism promotion
- Other services as requested



## TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

The Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), covering Tuscaloosa County, and the Rural Planning Organization (RPO), covering Bibb, Fayette, Greene, Hale, Lamar and Pickens Counties

- Determine projects eligible for funding (MPO)
- Joint effort among local governments, the Alabama Dept. of Transportation (ALDOT) and WARC Products include an annual Work Program and Long Range Plan

- WARC coordinates committee meetings, develops documents and provides information to enable committees to make informed decisions

### Geographic Information Systems (GIS)

WARC uses GPS equipment to provide quality geospatial mapping products in a variety of topic areas. Specialized services are available upon request.

- FEMA Flood Zones
- Municipal limits
- Police jurisdictions
- Schools, Churches, Historic sites, Cemeteries
- Streets
- Tourism attractions
- Traffic patterns
- Utility Systems (water, sewer, gas, etc.)
- Voting and Zoning districts

WARC is an affiliate member of the Alabama State Data Center Network. Census products and custom data is available for member governments.

# WEST ALABAMA REGIONAL COMMISSION BROCHURE



## Economic Development Services Provided by WARC

- Information on business assistance programs
- Grant and loan preparation and administration including funds from the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs, Appalachian Regional Commission, Delta Regional Authority, Economic Development Administration and others
- Site improvement grant applications
- Industrial access road fund applications
- Water and sewer infrastructure grant and loan applications
- Mapping and socioeconomic data
- Zoning regulations

Funding for the RLF comes from the State of Alabama

## About Us

The West Alabama Regional Commission is one of the 12 regional councils in the State of Alabama. The councils serve local governments and citizens by coordinating region-wide projects and services, promoting cooperation among the local governments, and carrying out state and federal programs on a regional basis. WARC serves Bibb, Fayette, Greene, Hale, Lamar, Pickens and Tuscaloosa counties.



## Contact Us

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warc@westal.org  
www.warc.info

- www.facebook.com/WARCregion2
- @westalregionalcommission
- @WestAlaRegional

Publication of this brochure was made possible with funding through the United States Economic Development Administration's CARES Act Recovery Assistance Grant.

# RLF

West Alabama  
Regional Commission  
Revolving Loan Fund

## NEW LOOK for RLF Brochure; Covid relief loans assist small businesses

- To aid local business during the pandemic WARC developed a special C-19 Covid Relief Loan Program.
- A total of 13 loans were approved totaling \$215,000 to support 8 new jobs and retain 69 jobs.
- A total of 5 minority, and 5 women-owned businesses were assisted by the loan program.

## Revolving Loan Fund (RLF)

The West Alabama Regional Commission's RLF is a locally controlled loan program used to assist small local businesses and industries in their start-up and expansion activities. The goal of the program is to create new, permanent jobs for citizens of West Alabama while leveraging private sector investments. The RLF provides gap financing that is not available from commercial lenders. As the loans are repaid, the principal and interest are returned to the fund for lending to other businesses to create still more jobs and investment opportunities.

## Who is Eligible?

Businesses and industries located in Bibb, Fayette, Greene, Hale, Lamar, Pickens and Tuscaloosa counties are eligible.

### Targeted businesses are:

- Small manufacturing companies
- Retail Businesses
- Service Businesses

## What Can Funds be Used for?

- Purchase land and buildings
- Construct buildings
- Renovate buildings
- Purchase equipment
- Provide working capital

## General RLF Guidelines

- Businesses must be located in Bibb, Fayette, Greene, Hale, Lamar, Pickens, or Tuscaloosa counties. Projects relocating from within the region are prohibited.
- Borrower must create (or retain) jobs: Goal of one job per each \$10,000 borrowed.
- The RLF can fund up to 35% of the total project.
- Businesses must provide at least 10% of the project cost.
- Loans available from \$10,000 to \$250,000.
- Fixed interest rate.
- Flexible terms: fixed assets up to 10 years, working capital up to five years. No penalty for early repayment.
- Principals and businesses must be credit-worthy and generate sufficient cash flow to repay the debt.
- Principals of the business must provide personal guarantees.
- Borrower is responsible for customary closing costs and all legal fees as required.
- Borrower must pay a one-time non-refundable application fee.

## Commercial Lender Participation

The RLF was not established to compete with the private lending community or to be a lender of last resort. The fund was set up to provide gap financing between a borrower's equity and a loan from a commercial lender.

## Interest Rates

Rates on WARC's loan fund will generally be below the prime rate. By combining WARC and bank financing, the borrower can usually have an effective rate below the market rate.

## Local Controls

WARC's RLF is controlled by a local Loan Review Committee. The committee is made up of representatives in all seven counties in the West Alabama Region. All funding decisions are made by the committee. This provides for a faster response time to loan requests. Normally, loans will be processed within one month of the submission of a completed application.

## Committee Meetings

The Loan Review Committee will meet as needed to consider loan applications.



Loan funds assisted two business vendors at the World Games in Birmingham, AL.

# REVOLVING LOAN FUND AND BROCHURE

# 8

BETTER  
WAL



The **BE WELL Healthcare Locator** was developed as a recommendation from the Pandemic Recovery and Resiliency plan



The **BE WELL West AL Healthcare Locator** map allows residents in West Alabama to search a variety of local healthcare services using an interactive online mapping application developed with ESRI ArcGIS software. The categories include Hospitals; Health Clinics; Covid Test Sites; Covid Vaccination Sites; Senior Centers; Dialysis Clinics; Substance Use Treatment; Mental Health Care; and Dental, Hearing and Vision. Symbology for each category appears at site locations on the map and can be opened to show the site address, phone number, website address and other important notes.

## BE WELL HEALTHCARE LOCATOR

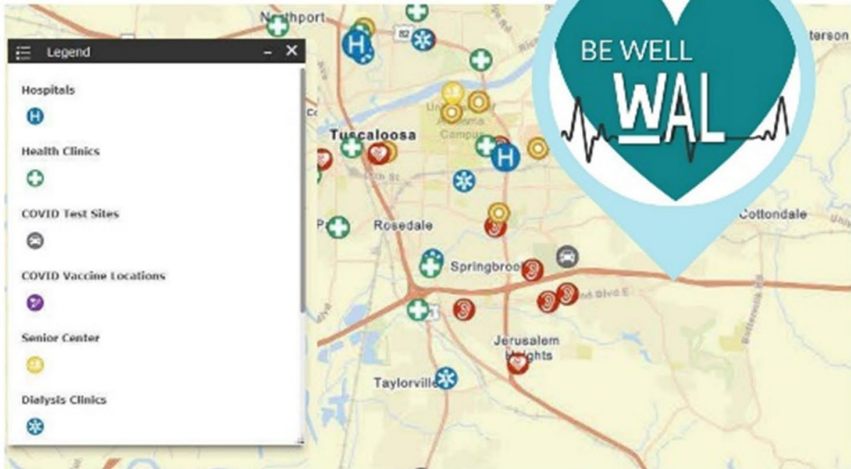


# It's a WINNER!

**FIND IT** with the

📍 123 Anywhere St.,  
Any City, ST 12345

WEST ALABAMA HEALTHCARE LOCATOR 🔍



Visit [www.warc.info](http://www.warc.info) to  
access the West Alabama  
Healthcare Locator **OR**  
scan the QR code!



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West Alabama Regional Commission  
4200 Hwy 69 N, Northport, AL 35473  
205-333-2990

# BE WELL HEALTHCARE LOCATOR



*BE WELL was a collaborative effort of staff from the WARC Transportation/GIS Department; Community and Economic Development Department; and the Area Agency on Aging. The project was recognized by the National Association of Development Organizations.*



# ADMINISTRATIVE/GIS – MEET THE TEAM

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**Cory Johnson, Director of Community and Economic Development**



**Pamela Trammell, Senior Planner**



**Molly Dodson, GIS Specialist**

**Not Pictured: Former Senior Planner, Lisa Baker**