



2016

PROGRAM OF WORK

The Aiken Chamber's 2016 program of work continues its third year of a multiyear process that creates viable, proactive mechanisms that become a driving force for Aiken's prosperity in the 21st century through **Economic Vitality** initiatives. The purpose of this long-term course of work is to:

- ▶ Reawaken and re-engage the general public and business community about the components necessary for business growth and job creation.
- ▶ Raise awareness that business climate is the #1 factor of a successful community.
- ▶ Begin a five-year evolving plan that leads to the community's long-term prosperity through taking risk, rewarding success and growing families.

The Chamber believes it is essential for business and the public sector to seek out common ground and to find ways to bolster each other. Policies and practices that help strengthen a free enterprise system are those that do the following:

- ▶ Allow businesses to grow and thrive.
- ▶ Free businesses from excessive taxes, unnecessary regulations and onerous local government processes.
- ▶ Focus government on the critical tasks that are the foundation of economic opportunity, such as infrastructure and protective services.
- ▶ Help educate, cultivate, and equip the next generation of young entrepreneurs and the workforce of the future.



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Business and Community Development

Evaluate the second year of the Young Entrepreneurs Academy (YEA!), further refine a strategy for future recruitment, and recruit students for the 2017 class. YEA! is a nationally recognized program that transforms middle and high school students into real, confident entrepreneurs during the academic school year.

Add year three to the annual community benchmarking process to aid in community decision making. The purpose of the benchmarking is to measure the Aiken community's programs, processes, performance, efficiencies, and effectiveness in meeting the current and future needs of the community. The 2016 process will evaluate the community's progress in addressing shortcomings (red flags) defined in the 2015 benchmarking report, and in setting short- and long-term goals and expectations for Aiken's prosperity in the 21st century. The process will include the community's public and private sectors.

Identify aspirational cities that Aiken community and business leaders can visit to learn about successful best practices. Begin preparation for a 2017 Aspirational Cities Tour with an agenda that defines goals of the visit and inspires new ideas for the group to possibly implement in the Aiken community.

Collaborate with the City of Aiken to develop a vision plan that will serve as the foundation for a roadmap to a successful economic future. This was the top priority from the 2015 Aspirational Cities Tour.

Public Affairs

Encourage and recruit Aiken Chamber members who live within the Aiken City limits to seek appointment to important City of Aiken Boards and Commissions. This will ensure that the issues necessary for business growth and job creation are part of any discussion that advances as a recommendation or a policy statement.

Membership Services

Seek reaccreditation from the United States Chamber of Commerce.

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