



INTERNATIONAL
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
COUNCIL

Accredited Economic Development Organization
Program Outline & Application



*“Recognizing organizational excellence in economic
development.”*

International Economic Development Council

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INTRODUCTION

Volunteer commitment and peer networking are two hallmarks of the role of the International Economic Development Council (IEDC) in furthering the professional development of its members. These two factors have been combined to form the Accredited Economic Development Organization (AEDO) program, an exciting means of recognizing the professional excellence of economic development entities throughout North America.

The role of a site visit is crucial to the success of this program. Only through objective review and analysis of the applicant economic development organization's operations can meaningful and constructive recommendations for improvement be made. The accreditation visits help to communicate time-tested standards and professional methods to candidate organizations. The leadership and guidance provided through the AEDO program will help candidate organizations forge new directions and sharpen their competitive edge.

The nature of the AEDO program requires that all communications regarding the identity of candidate organizations remain confidential unless, or until, accreditation is achieved. All information divulged as part of the accreditation process is likewise, considered to be confidential and may not be disclosed to sources external to the AEDO program.

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PROGRAM SUMMARY

The primary goals of the Accredited Economic Development Organization program are:

- To assist economic development organizations with independent, authoritative feedback on their operation, structure and procedures as a means of improving programs and enhancing business and community support;
- To recognize excellence in local economic development organizations and to heighten the visibility of the economic development process in the community; and
- To recognize the vital contribution made by the organization's leader/manager to the economic development process.

The Accredited Economic Development Organization evaluation process consists of two stages:

1. Documentation Review; and,
2. Site Team Visit.

Each is designed to elicit specific and verifiable information about the structure, organization, funding, programs and staff of the candidate economic development organization. The documentation review serves as a screening stage for the program, whereby fledgling organizations can be informed that they have not yet reached the threshold for potentially successful completion of the accreditation review.

On completion of the Documentation Review and Site Visit, the results of both stages are considered to determine whether AEDO accreditation has been earned. Candidate organizations do not "pass" or "fail" this process. Every candidate organization that fails to receive accreditation will be advised of the necessary steps to be implemented to attain accreditation. Each organization will receive information and guidance on the areas of the accreditation process that require further development.

Application, accreditation and re-accreditation fees are based on the budget of the candidate organization. All travel and lodging expenses of the site visit team are reimbursed by the candidate organization. The entire application fee must be remitted prior to the site visit.

Given the nature of the information disclosed and the sometimes sensitive workings of applicant economic development organizations, all documentation and proceedings relating to the AEDO accreditation process will remain confidential. Information on candidate organizations, irrespective of whether they obtain AEDO status, will not be disclosed to third parties.

PROGRAM OUTLINE

I. Goals and Objectives:

- a) To assist economic development organizations with independent, authoritative feedback on operations, structure, and procedures as a means of improving programs and enhancing business and community support.
- b) To recognize excellence in economic development organizations;
- c) To heighten the visibility of the economic development process in the community; and,
- d) To recognize the contribution of an organization's leader/manager to the economic development process.

II. Program Components:

Application:

- a) Each applicant organization must have a full-time economic development professional in a leadership or senior staff role;
- b) Each applicant organization must submit information regarding its structure, organization, funding, program and staff to determine eligibility for participation (see Documentation Review Section). All such information will be considered confidential and will be reviewed only by appropriate members of the AEDO Committee and IEDC staff;
- c) Each applicant organization must pay a nonrefundable application fee (see Fee Schedule);
- d) IEDC staff will review applications for completeness and AEDO Committee co-chairs will determine if the applicant is eligible for participation; and,
- e) Applications will be accepted or rejected within sixty days of receipt and a site visit will be scheduled on acceptance of the application documentation.

Determination of Eligibility:

Applicant organizations must be devoted, as stated in their bylaws or articles of incorporation, to economic development.

Accreditation Review:

- a) The Chair of the AEDO Committee will establish the site visit team. One of the two selected team members will be appointed as the site team leader. The site team leader will review potential conflicts of interest and ensure transparency and probity with the selection of the team and the site visit. Applicant organizations should communicate any perceived conflict of interest;
- b) Documentation submitted in support of an organization's application will be examined and a critical evaluation will be undertaken;
- c) A site visit team will perform a review of the applicant organization and issue a critical evaluation, using the list of criteria (see Site Visit Criteria section). Visits will be scheduled within sixty days of completion of the Documentation Review. A written draft report of the team's findings should be completed while onsite on the second day of the visit;
- d) The evaluation teams will submit its findings, and make a recommendation to, the AEDO Committee;
- e) The AEDO Committee will inform the applicant organization of its decision and will provide a detailed critique;
- f) The AEDO Committee will forward its recommendation to the IEDC Communications Committee. The Communications Committee will then vote to accept or decline the recommendation of the AEDO Committee. In the event that an applicant organization disagrees with the decision of the AEDO Committee, the Chair of the Communications Committee will make the final decision; and,
- g) On site team members will not be permitted to seek, or take up employment, either on a consultant, part-time, or full-time basis, with an applicant organization for a period of one-year following the accreditation visit.

Accreditation and Re-accreditation:

- a) The initial accreditation period will be for 3 years, after which the accredited organization may seek re-accreditation. Re-accreditation will be for a period of 3 years, as will successive periods of re-accreditation;
- b) Re-accreditation will be granted on the basis of a documentation review, unless evidence exists such as a significant change in staff leadership, budget cut or organizational restructuring, that a new site visit is required; however, during the organization's second reaccreditation application (the organization's 6th year as an AEDO organization) a site visit will automatically be required; and
- c) IEDC will recognize accredited and re-accredited organizations by issuing a plaque and press release, conducting a presentation ceremony when able, and by any other means as agreed to by IEDC and the accredited organization.

III. Structure:

Subcommittee of Communications Committee:

- a) The IEDC Communications Committee will appoint the Chair or Co-Chairs of the AEDO Committee. The Chair or Co-Chairs of the AEDO Committee will nominate individuals for the Committee to the Communications Committee. The AEDO Committee will consist of the Chair or Co-Chairs, the Vice Chair and the members as appointed, and,
- b) The Chair or Co-Chairs, Vice Chair and members of the AEDO Committee will be members of IEDC, and must be Certified Economic Developers (CEcD's) or have at least 10 years of professional experience as economic development practitioner; and,
- c) The Chair or Co-chair, Vice Chair and members of the AEDO Committee will serve for terms of two years.

IV. Program Costs:

Fees:

- a) Fees will reflect a sliding scale based on the size of applicant organizations (see Fee Schedule

section);

- b) Invoicing and other fiscal procedures will conform to IEDC accounting practices; and,
- c) The accreditation visit team's hotel, meal and transportation expenses will be paid by the applicant organization.

DOCUMENTATION REVIEW

As part of the accreditation process, documentation relevant to the mission, goals and activities of the applicant organization will be reviewed. Three (3) binders should be assembled and forwarded to IEDC in the order outlined below. Please do not leave any sections blank. If certain information is not applicable, please be sure to provide an explanation.

- 1) Mission and goals statement;
- 2) Articles of incorporation and bylaws;
- 3) Last audited financial statement, compilation, review or equivalent financial disclosure;
- 4) Last annual report;
- 5) Minutes of last four Board of Directors meetings;
- 6) Roster and position descriptions of officers;
- 7) Organizational chart and job descriptions of employees;
- 8) Marketing plan (see specific Marketing Plan Criteria on p.11);
- 9) Strategic plan (see specific Strategic Plan Criteria on p.11);
- 10) Copies of all marketing materials currently in use;
- 11) Annual budget;
- 12) IRS Letter of Exemption;
- 13) Most recent IRS Form 990;
- 14) Staff Policy and Procedures Manual;
- 15) Commitment of support to CEO or other evidence of multi-year commitment to the economic development organization from funders, co-sponsors and partner agencies;
- 16) Copies of organizational newsletters for the preceding year;
- 17) Copies of press releases issued within the past year; and,
- 18) One page review of between three and five of your most successful development projects over the past two years.

IEDC staff will review all information when submitted, will request clarification or expansion if needed, and will forward information to the AEDO Committee in both summary and original form.

Critical Issues for Accreditation

The following four “critical issues” must be addressed in both the documentation and site team reviews.

1. Does the organization have professional leadership and staffing adequate to its mission? This means that people qualified to do the work are in place and have defined roles that they understand, and that these people work together as a team. Individual certifications may be in place but they are not the issue with regard to this question.
2. Does the organization have the budget and resources adequate to its job? Most professionals will detect when an organization is “over its head” with too much to do and without adequate budget or staff. Offices and equipment need not be fancy or highly technical, but they must be adequate to the job.
3. Does the organization have the respect and support of a community base with active commitment and participation appropriate to its mission? This means that there is stakeholder support from business community, political leadership, neighborhood or other groups that are essential to the mission.
4. Does the organization have a strategic plan that it follows, allocating resources based on its mission and the opportunities that it has identified? The plan must be adequate and fit the organization and its mission.

AEDO Economic Development Organization Strategic Plan Criteria¹

An economic development organization strategic plan includes the following:

- Mission Statement
- Achievable goals and objectives
- A realistic appraisal of available resources, constraints, and opportunities
- Project action plans to reach goals, including the identification of responsibility, timelines, and project or program prioritization.

AEDO Marketing Plan Criteria²

- Goals should be specific enough to lead to logical objectives
- Objectives are the specific targets to be achieved in realizing the goal.
- Marketing strategies should describe how to achieve the goals and objectives identified. The strategy asks the questions what programs, procedures, and activities will enable us to reach our marketing goals. Both short-term and long-term strategies should be developed.

¹ Based on the IEDC Professional Development Manual, *Economic Development Strategic Planning*. January, 2006

² Based on the IEDC Professional Development Manual, *Introduction to Economic Development*. January, 2006

- Monitoring of established goals, objectives, and strategies should be an on-going process.

SITE VISIT CRITERIA

The site visit team will review and evaluate conditions at the offices of the applicant organization with respect to the following matters:

I. Internal Environment

A. Office:

1. Professional appearance
2. Privacy for conferences
3. Computer, network and phone resources
4. Security
 - a. Personnel
 - b. Records

B. Chief Executive Officer / Manager:

1. Professional experience
2. Professional credentials
3. Commitment and compensation
4. Continuing professional development

C. Staff:

1. Professional experience
2. Professional credentials
3. Compensation
4. Division of duties and responsibilities
5. Current job descriptions
6. Continuing professional development
7. Turnover

II. Leadership:

A. Volunteers:

1. Orientation
2. Regular meetings
3. Structure of volunteer leadership

B. Direction and Vision:

1. Goal-setting process (e.g., strategic plan)
2. Budgeting process
3. Commitment over time to strategic plan
4. Linkage between strategic plan and ongoing operations

III. External Environment:

- A. Liaison with public officials
- B. Marketing to outside agencies
- C. Relations with news media, community, other organizations

IV. Financial Resources:

- A. Budget
- B. Sources of Income

AEDO FEE SCHEDULE

Organizational Budget	Application Fee	Accreditation Fee* Member (Non-member)	Re-accreditation Fee* Member (Non-member)
Under \$150,000	\$275	\$1100 (\$1440)	\$700 (\$1080)
\$150,000 – \$299,999	\$275	\$1210 (\$1560)	\$800 (\$1200)
\$300,000 – \$499,999	\$275	\$1430 (\$1920)	\$900 (\$1440)
\$500,000 – \$749,000	\$275	\$1725 (\$2600)	\$1100 (\$1680)
\$750,000 – \$999,999	\$275	\$2070 (\$3100)	\$1200 (\$1800)
\$1 mil – \$1, 999,999 mil	\$275	\$2415 (\$3630)	\$1400 (\$2160)
\$2 mil – \$2, 999,999 mil	\$275	\$4600 (\$6900)	\$3000 (\$4200)
\$3 mil – \$3, 999,999 mil	\$275	\$5750 (\$8630)	\$3500 (\$4800)
\$4 mil – \$4,999,999 mil	\$275	\$6325 (\$9500)	\$4000 (\$5400)
Above \$5 million	\$275	\$6900 (\$10,350)	\$4500 (\$6000)

State Agency			
Small (Population: up to 3,000,000)	\$300	\$7,000 (10,500)	\$4550 (\$6050)
Medium (Population: 3, 000,001 to 10,000,000)	\$300	\$9,000 (13,500)	\$5850 (\$7800)
Large (Population: 10, 000,001 and over)	\$300	\$11,000 (16,500)	\$7,300 (\$9500)

***Fee based on 3-Year Period**

BASIC CRITERIA FOR PROCESSING APPLICATION

IEDC staff will use the following criteria to process the initial application for accreditation status:

- a) Does the applicant organization employ a full-time economic development professional?
- b) Does the applicant organization devote at least 50% of its time to economic development activities?
- c) Is the applicant organization a local or regional economic development organization (v. state, federal, railroad, utility, consultant practice, etc.)?
- d) Does the applicant organization have an IEDC member on staff (for purposes of computing the appropriate fee)?
- e) What is the organization's annual operating budget and/or departmental budget for economic development?

If these basic criteria are met, the economic development organization will be invited to apply for accreditation. If doubt exists as to the eligibility of the organization for participation in the AEDO Program, the Chair of the AEDO Committee will be asked to review the information supplied and to make a determination.

GUIDELINES FOR SITE VISIT

Site visits are a key element in the success of the AEDO Program and provide important feedback as to whether the organization merits AEDO status.

The goals of the site visit are to:

- a) Examine the candidate economic development organization's operations;
- b) Evaluate the operations by means of the site visit criteria; and
- c) File a written report on the findings of the site team visit.

The site visit team comprises two or three volunteers. Team members must be Certified Economic Developers and/or have at least ten years experience in the economic development profession. At the time of the site visit, they must be practicing economic development in a senior role or position. Site visit team members will be drawn from a pool of volunteers that represent regional diversity as well as a mix of experience in small, medium, and large economic development organizations. The President and CEO of IEDC, along with staff involved with the AEDO Program, are encouraged to undertake a site visit in order to understand and familiarize themselves with the process.

Site visit team members will be asked to commit to no more than two visits per twelve month period, totaling six days (including travel time). All travel, meals and accommodation costs will be reimbursed by the applicant organization.

Prior to being assigned an applicant AEDO organization, all site visit team members will receive an orientation on the rules and requirements of the AEDO Program.

SITE VISIT EXAMPLE FORMAT

Site team members should arrive in the applicant community on the night prior to start of the site team visit. For those site team members coming from closer areas, they can arrive the day of the site team visit but should abide by the following sample site visit agenda/schedule.

Day One

- 9:00 am Team Welcome Breakfast Meeting with Host Organization
- 10:00 am Review Itinerary (at host organization's office)
- 10: 30 am Evaluations of Host Organization
 - 1. Office, equipment, facilities, etc.
 - 2. Interview staff
 - 3. Review internal operations;
 - 4. Community tour
- 12:00 noon Lunch with Community Stakeholder (to be determined by host organization)
- 1:30 pm More Community Stakeholder Interviews (public/private)
- 5:00 pm Break (team meeting if necessary)
- 6:00 p.m. Dinner Meeting (informal with host organization's leadership)

Day Two

- 8:00 a.m. Breakfast Meeting with Community Leaders
- 10:00 a.m. More Community Stakeholder Interviews
- 12:00 noon Team Debriefing Luncheon with Host Organization Leadership
- 1:30 p.m. Draft Preliminary Report
- 3:00 p.m. Departure

COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

An important facet of the site visit is for the visiting team to meet with prominent community leaders who are stakeholders in the local economic development process. To achieve this, nine categories of community leaders have been identified. Each candidate organization is asked to select four categories for the visiting team to meet with, each for no more than one hour.

Categories include:

1. Chief operating officer of a recently-located or recently assisted business;
2. Typical development ally;
3. Industrial/commercial real estate professional;
4. Representative of local/regional financial institution;
5. Key elected official;
6. Head of local planning agency;
7. Representative of state agency;
8. Representative of local/regional utility; and,
9. Open category (any individual not included in any of the above).

SITE VISIT EVALUATION FORM

I. INTERNAL ENVIRONMENT:

A. Office Resources

- a) Appropriate offices for economic development organization;
- b) Functional, well maintained, orderly and accessible;
- c) Privacy for conferences.

Comments:

B. Computer Resources (Describe: CPU, Hard-Disk, Monitor, Number and Type)

- a) Adequate hardware (terminal, printers, scanner, handheld smart phones when appropriate)
- b) Adequate software (database, membership, word processing, virus protection, communication, spreadsheet, contact management, graphics, real estate availability)
- c) 24/7 secure remote internet and phone access whenever, wherever needed
- d) Local area network (LAN), Sufficient broadband capacity
- e) Reliable Email and Internet access
- f) Web site, Web support, Social networks
- g) E-mail, color copiers, LED projector

Comments:

D. Chief Executive Officer

a) Professional experience

i. Prior economic development experience

Comments:

b) Professional credentials

i. CEcD

ii. Other

Comments

c) Commitment and range of compensation

i. Contract/letter of agreement

ii. Comparability of salary/perks

Comments:

d) Continuing professional development

- i. IEDC membership*
- ii. Regional/state economic development organization membership*
- iii. Resources to attend seminars, courses*
- iv. EDC graduate*
- v. EDI graduate*
- vi. Other*

Comments:

E. Management and Support Staff

a) Professional experience

- i. Prior economic development experience*

Comments:

b) Professional credentials

- i. CEcD*
- ii. Other*

Comments:

c) Compensation

- i. *Comparability*
- ii. *Personnel policies*

Comments:

d) Division of duties and responsibilities

- i. *Current job descriptions*
- ii. *Clear reporting relationships*

Comments:

e) Continuing professional development

- i. *IEDC membership*
- ii. *Regional/state economic development organization membership*
- iii. *Resources to attend seminars, courses*
- iv. *EDC graduates*
- v. *EDI graduate*
- vi. *Other*

Comments:

f) Turnover history

i. For past three years

ii. Has staff focus or emphasis changed as a result of staffing changes? Please describe.

Comments:

II. LEADERSHIP:

A. Volunteers

a) Orientation

i. Formal session

ii. Orientation materials

iii. Word of mouth

Comments:

b) Regular meetings

i. Agenda and minute

ii. Ongoing schedule

Comments:

c) Structure of volunteer leadership

- i. Continuity*
- ii. Clear delegation of duties*
- iii. Appointed/elected board*
- iv. Appointed/elected officers*
- v. Term limits*
- vi. Leadership development*
- vii. Community representation (gender, age, race, orientation, etc.)*

Comments:

B. Direction and Vision:

a) Goal-setting process

- i. Existence of strategic plan*
- ii. Date of last update*
- iii. How implemented*
- iv. Involvement of leadership/volunteers in process*
- v. Evaluation of outcomes (measurement metrics, tracking system, review schedule)*

Comments:

b) Budget process

- i. One year or multi-year*
- ii. Reflects strategic plan/goals and objectives*
- iii. Reflects leadership input*
- iv. Presentation of budget*

Comments:

c) Commitment to strategic plan

- i. Year-to-year continuity*
- ii. Periodic updates*
- iii. Evaluation of results/method of measurement*

Comments:

d) Linkage between strategic plan and program of work

- i. Periodic review*
- ii. Review versus budget*
- iii. Comparison with staff distribution and priorities*

Comments:

III. EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT:

A. Liaison with Public Officials

- i. Methods of communication with public officials*
- ii. Representation by public officials on board of directors*
- iii. Utilization of public officials, key leaders, and resource providers in prospect tours, etc.*

Comments:

B. Marketing

- i. Timely marketing plan*
- ii. Identify target audiences*
- iii. Adequate resources committed*
- iv. Marketing mix*
- v. Marketing goals tied into overall strategic plan*
- vi. Measures of success*
- vii. Examples*

Comments:

C. Relations with Community Opinion Leaders

- i. Means of communication*
- ii. Liaison/access when appropriate*
- iii. Participation in decision-making*

Comments:

D. Prospect Handling

- i. Identification of prospects*
- ii. Qualification of prospects*
- iii. Identification of customer communities*
- iv. Confidentiality issues*
- v. Follow-up procedures and custom tracking process*
- vi. "Closing" process*

Comments:

IV. FINANCIAL RESOURCES

A. Budget

- i. Linkage with strategic plan*
- ii. Involves volunteer leaders*

- iii. *Re-evaluated as fiscal year progresses*
- iv. *Includes appropriate fiscal controls*

Comments:

B. Organizational Budget

- i. *Keep pace with growth of organization*
- ii. *Numbers and type of sources*
- iii. *Annual or other commitments*
- iv. *Fund-raising programs*

Comments:

V. SPECIAL ISSUES
