

2009 Annual Report

Athens County Economic Development Council

Business ^{↑ Remixed ↓}

ATHENS COUNTY, OHIO

The Athens County Economic Development Council was created as an independent non-profit entity and began operations in January 2009. We were granted 501(c)(3) status and deemed a public charity by the IRS on March 24, 2009. The ACEDC aspires to be the champion of business in Athens County. We are a public-private partnership committed to increasing economic opportunity in Athens County by encouraging entrepreneurship, recruiting new businesses, and helping existing businesses grow and expand. Advocacy is the cornerstone of all we do. Prosperous businesses make for happy employees and a booming local economy.

Our Vision

To be the most respected and prominent agent for positive change in Athens County

Our Mission

To be a catalyst for quality jobs and progress in Athens County and throughout the region by creating a seamless network of economic development resources through partnerships with government, business, and nonprofit organizations

The Campaign

In order to attract executives of small companies to consider Athens County, we developed the Business Remixed campaign. Using the new brand, website and collateral materials, we were able to increase leads and present a professional and successful image of Athens County.



In 2009, The Athens County Economic Development Council (ACEDC) has worked hard laying the foundation to take economic development in Athens County to the next level. Over the past year we have focused on these areas of economic development which include: sector-based economic development, entrepreneurship, infrastructure, assisting existing businesses in expansion efforts, recruiting new businesses through our marketing campaign, and redevelopment of existing locations.

Sector-Based Economic Development

The ACEDC has identified target industries within Athens County. These industries include: alternative and sustainable energy, life sciences (including healthcare), and specialty foods. We have marketed to c-level executives, worked with local companies in these sectors to help them grow and create jobs, and placed targeted print ads to advertise what Athens County has to offer and why Athens County is great place to live and do business. While these industries are the main focus, other industries will not be ignored in their ability to transform our economic landscape.

Entrepreneurship

Through our Business Remixed marketing campaign and the Entrepreneurship Development Group (EDG), we have put together programs and resources to help educate individuals looking to start a business or expand the business they have. Our biggest success this year are the Lunch and Learn workshops. The EDG partners created this free informational workshop in June to provide businesses an opportunity to obtain information and network with others on best practices. We look forward to continuing these workshops and having speakers continue to share their expertise with businesses on wide variety of topics.

In August, the ACEDC partnered with the Ohio University Innovation Center to hold a social networking workshop for entrepreneurs and small businesses. The workshop was designed to explain the how and why of social networking. Jared Vorkavich and Tobias Roediger of RAVE, a marketing firm, presented attendees with tools and strategies for making the biggest impact for their companies. In addition to the value this provided to the attendees, it also advances our mission to promote Athens County outside of our region by giving Athens County a larger, more positive presence on social networks.

Infrastructure

The ACEDC has worked closely with Buckeye Hills Regional Development District and elected officials at the state, local, and federal level to identify water, sewer, and road projects throughout Athens County. The ACEDC wrote letters of support and submitted projects on behalf of the county for appropriations and stimulus funds. We received stimulus funds for the largest highway project in the state (the Nelsonville bypass). As a result, phase II and III of the project began this fall, and the project is anticipated to be completed by 2013.

The ACEDC has worked with Connect Ohio and the Athens County Broadband Council to coordinate activities to increase availability, affordability and usage of broadband in Athens County. Over the past year we worked with educators and social service agencies to provide service to low income individuals and build educational and workforce development opportunities. We have identified three areas of focus for Athens County: fiber for industrial parks, broadband access for schools, and increasing broadband access to the rural areas of the county.

Assisting existing businesses in expansion efforts

This past year, ACEDC visited 20 local companies with the purpose of identifying solutions to help them continue to grow and create jobs. We assisted these companies in several areas: expansion or relocation efforts within Athens County, providing resources on various state and federal programs, and collecting input and ideas on potential collaboration with attracting new business that may benefit their company and create jobs in the county.

Recruiting new businesses

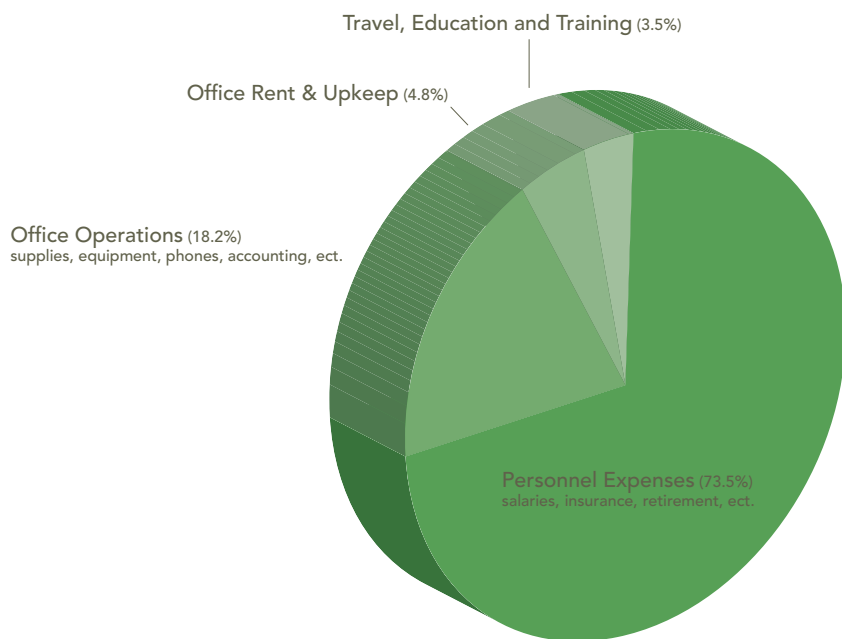
In 2009, the ACEDC has marketed Athens County to reach entrepreneurs and companies in our target industries. Under our website and slogan "Business Remixed," we were able to increase leads to the county by leveraging our new brand, website and collateral materials to effectively show leads why it is great to live and work in Athens County. We also developed a print ad placement strategy that will allow us to better market to our target industries.

Redevelopment of existing locations

With the addition of our new website, the ACEDC was also excited to launch the Buildings & Sites section. This allows us to add and update pertinent information and high quality pictures and panoramic photos that companies looking to relocate specifically look for when searching for buildings and sites. This feature provides one-stop shopping for companies looking to relocate to Athens County. We also updated these buildings and sites on the Ohio Department of Development's new procure site called Ohio-In-Site. This partnership work with the State of Ohio is valuable in producing prospects for our existing locations.

The ACEDC, in partnership with the Athens County Port Authority, is working on applying for a State of Ohio grant for a phase II environmental study at the Bill Theisen Industrial Park. The result of this study will allow us to move forward with the marketing and redevelopment of this land for economic development.

2009 Operating Budget



2009 Operating Expenditures to Date
October 31, 2009

The Athens County Economic Development Council is a private-public partnership, and as such the operating budget comes from partner contributions. These contributions allow the ACEDC to run the daily operations of their important work. Personnel expenses refer to items such as: staff salaries, healthcare benefits, retirement contributions, and taxes associated with staffing to name a few. Travel, education and training include the costs of continued education and professional development of ACEDC staff. Office operations accounts for the second largest expenditure of our operating budget. Office supplies and equipment, telephone bills, and accounting fees are all included in this category. Rent and upkeep refer to the monthly rent for our professional offices at the Innovation Center and any upkeep obligations we may have as tenants. ■

Our Staff



Todd Shelton, Director

I build partnerships with local business, stakeholders, and local, state, and federal governments. I serve on committees at the local and state level which enable me to coordinate economic development activities with other agencies. I collaborate with the Athens County Port Authority and Community Improvement Corporation to further economic development goals in Athens County.



Sara Marrs, Administrative Assistant

I manage day-to-day operations including scheduling, book-keeping and grant writing. I'm also heavily involved in our Business Remixed marketing efforts, where I manage bloggers for businessremixed.com and handle our social media marketing efforts.

Board of Directors

Our Board of Directors provides guidance and accountability, helping us achieve our mission. They are:

Jack Bortle

Laurie Deal

William Decatur

Lenny Eliason

Alan Geiger

Paul Wiehl

Our Partners

The foundation of the Athens County Economic Development Council is its commitment to build local, regional, and global partnerships. We use these partnerships to develop working relationships that will enable us to move forward our mission to create high quality jobs in Athens County. Our valued partners for 2009 include:

The Athens County Commissioners

The City of Athens

Ohio University

The Athens Area Chamber of Commerce

The Athens County Port Authority

The Athens Community Improvement Corporation

The ACEDC maintains a physical office for two of our partners: the Port Authority and the Community Improvement Corporation. In addition, we conduct business on behalf of these entities and maintain records in accordance with the Ohio Revised Code.

We would like to thank all of our partners for their support in 2009, and look forward to future contributions of these partners as they help us reach our goals for economic development in Athens County.

Where to find us

(740) 597-1420

340 West State Street, Unit 26
Athens, OH 45701

www.businessremixed.com



Marketing

In 2009, The Athens County Economic Development Council implemented a marketing plan that had been developed by the director and other stakeholders in the organization. The marketing plan was funded entirely by a grant from the Ohio Business Development Coalition (\$15,000) and funds raised by ACEDC staff (\$30,000). The plan uses a branding campaign as a foundation to reach the target audience of adventurous entrepreneurs, and executives/owners of small to medium companies. The cornerstone of this plan was implemented with the creation of the award-winning website, BusinessRemixed.com.

BusinessRemixed.com includes a site-finder to help visitors target specific locations for their businesses available in our area. There are profiles of successful companies that are currently located here, as well as information on lifestyle in Athens County. Our facts and figures pages include downloadable PDFs with important population, transportation, workforce mix and other information aimed at providing companies and individuals the preliminary data necessary when considering our community as a place to grow their business. The site also uses important social networking tools such as Facebook and guest blogging to attract additional traffic to BusinessRemixed.com.

We are very pleased that BusinessRemixed.com received two awards in 2009. In May, The Information Technology Alliance of Appalachian Ohio awarded BusinessRemixed.com Best website in the non-profit category. We also received the prestigious "Best General Purpose Web-Site" award from the International Economic Development Council. We are very proud that our site was recognized by this international organization as an example of best practices in the economic development industry.

In addition, ACEDC launched a small print ad campaign. Ads were placed in specific publications relevant to our targeted industries of alternative and sustainable energy, life sciences (including healthcare), and specialty foods. The ACEDC hosted a highly successful social networking workshop aimed at educating small business owners/operators how to harness the power social media to best benefit their business. This event provided the ACEDC the opportunity to create positive local buzz about the newly formed economic development entity.

We also sponsored a table at the highly visible Steak Fry and Auction to show support for local businesses through the Athens Area Chamber of Commerce. In addition, we partnered with The Innovation Center, The Small Business Development Center at the Voinovich School, and TechGrowth Ohio to present free monthly sessions designed to provide answers and solutions to common concerns of business owners. The monthly Lunch and Learn Series presented expert guest speakers on topics such as; navigating new tax structures, human resource management, and workforce training and programs, just to name a few. The attendance of the Lunch and Learn sessions has steadily increased throughout the year.

ACEDC partnered with Buckeye Hills and other surrounding counties to host officials of the Ohio Department of Development for a brief familiarization tour of Southeastern Ohio. The goal of this tour was to showcase Athens County as an excellent place to do business. ACEDC staff, local elected officials, and business owners guided the ODOD representatives through a tour of Diagnostic Hybrids to highlight a thriving business in Athens County.

ACEDC is currently working on a revised marketing plan for 2010. We will be applying for the marketing grant from The Ohio Business Development Coalition again for 2010, and will continue to push forward with the branding of Athens County. In addition, we are working to add more community components to increase local awareness of Business Remixed and what the ACEDC provides for Athens County. This plan will be complete in the first quarter of the new year. ■