



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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# New training program designed to strengthen state's tourism workforce

**MONTGOMERY, Ala. (Sept. 15, 2022)** – The Alabama Black Belt Adventures Association has been awarded a grant by the Alabama Tourism Department to coordinate hospitality training sessions designed to stimulate sustainable tourism, economic development, and business and community growth in select locations throughout central, south-central and south Alabama counties.

Gov. Kay Ivey and the Alabama Tourism Department recently approved funding for the program, which allows ALBBAA to partner with The University of Alabama Center for Economic Development, Holistic Performance Group and Experience Consulting to conduct the training sessions. Known as the Flawless Delivery Hospitality Certification, the program was developed for the lodging industry and will provide hospitality workers with experiential training and skills to elevate every visitor's experience and will feature instruction aimed at the specific needs of each business and geographical location. A similar program has already been conducted in the North Alabama region.

“In Alabama, we prioritize developing a highly skilled workforce,” Gov. Ivey said. “The Flawless Delivery Hospitality Certification will lay the groundwork for workers to gain the skills necessary to attract, retain and grow tourism in our state.”

The new training program allows business owners and community members to create an outstanding and hospitable community culture, which helps build and retain their workforce. Frontline employees should leave the program with newfound confidence, professional development, a new network of peers and the potential for career advancement.

“If visitors have exceptional hospitality service in our state, they are likely to return and support more businesses, becoming the catalysts for sustainable tourism development and economic growth in Alabama,” said Pam Swanner, director of the ALBBAA.

[Alabama's tourism industry continues to grow](#), outpacing most of the nation, after experiencing a setback due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. According to the Alabama Tourism Department 2021 Economic Impact Study, over 8.6 million people visited the state last year.

“The counties served by this program have historically had fewer opportunities for tourism, but as COVID-19 forced people to go outside and favor road trips over flights, the dynamic shifted,” said Alabama Tourism Director Lee Sentell. “This program will elevate Alabama’s hospitality industry as more people continue to visit Alabama’s great outdoors and cultural heritage destinations.”

Added Candace Johnson, director of tourism and community development for UACED: “Enhancing the skills of hospitality workers to better serve the growing number of visitors traveling to Alabama will not only ensure guest satisfaction but encourage the workforce to consider our industry as a career opportunity.”

The first Flawless Delivery Hospitality Certification training session is scheduled for Sept. 19-20 in Jasper. Subsequent sessions are planned for other cities throughout the state.

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***The Alabama Black Belt Adventures Association** is committed to promoting and enhancing outdoor recreation and tourism opportunities in the Black Belt in a manner that provides economic and ecological benefits to the region and its citizens. For information, go to [www.alabamablackbeltadventures.org](http://www.alabamablackbeltadventures.org).*