

Getting Started with America in Bloom



America in Bloom helps towns and cities of all sizes strengthen civic pride, beautify public spaces, and build lasting community connections. This document provides everything you need to learn about the program, how it works, and how your community can get involved.

Helping Communities Flourish

Communities that are more welcoming and vibrant have a competitive advantage in stimulating economic development, creating a thriving place for people to work and live, and attracting tourists. Success starts with colorful plants and trees, clean and healthy environments, community vitality, and help from America in Bloom.

America in Bloom (AIB) has been helping to transform communities into beautiful and vibrant places for more than 25 years. Our mission is to assist towns and cities of all sizes to enjoy the economic, environmental, and quality of life benefits that come from community beautification efforts, heritage preservation, environmental initiatives, and civic pride. The AIB program inspires people to work together to enhance their community by focusing on key areas that improve the quality of life.

Nearly 400 communities from across the country have been involved in America in Bloom.

Action and Recognition

The Advisors' written report is an action plan that includes observations and suggestions in the seven AIB areas of impact (see right). This action plan is a valuable roadmap and planning tool for projects and improvements you can implement right away. AIB provides a roadmap for success by acknowledging and celebrating the big and small things you are doing to transform your community.

Benefits

There are immediate and long-term benefits of participating in the AIB program because residents, businesses, organizations, and the municipality come together to collaborate on common goals that benefit the whole community:

- **Greater economic development**
- **Improved quality of life**
- **Strengthened civic pride**
- **Beautified public spaces**
- **Increased tourism**
- **Enhanced community vitality**

Key Elements of the Program

Participating communities are visited by trained Advisors who provide constructive feedback and evaluate the community in:

- **Community vitality**
- **Flowers and landscaping**
- **Urban forestry**
- **Environmental initiatives**
- **Heritage preservation**
- **Overall impression**
- **Community involvement**

The Advisors Report: Your Roadmap to Success

The team of Advisors that visits your community will provide a written evaluation report that will serve as a catalyst for community transformation. We've been told you could hire consultants for \$50,000 and not get the type of report you get from the AIB Advisors. You can expect from the report:

- 1 Customized, Actionable Feedback:** The report offers tailored recommendations specific to the community's strengths, opportunities, and challenges. These practical suggestions span AIB's core criteria (like floral and landscapes, environmental efforts, heritage preservation, community vitality, and more) and are designed to guide future improvement efforts through the eyes of visitors and potential investors.
- 2 An Outside Perspective from Experts:** Advisors bring a fresh, experienced viewpoint. Their insights often reveal potential or issues local leaders may overlook, helping the community see itself through the eyes of visitors, potential investors, and residents.
- 3 Recognition of Strengths and Successes:** The report highlights what the community is doing well, celebrating achievements and encouraging continued progress. This affirmation can boost morale and provide a foundation for marketing and grant applications.
- 4 Strategic Planning Resource:** Many communities use the report as a planning tool. It can inform long-term goals, support comprehensive planning efforts, and help prioritize projects across departments and partners.
- 5 Stronger Community Engagement:** By sharing the findings with residents, civic groups, and local leaders, communities can foster dialogue, build momentum, and rally volunteers and stakeholders around common goals for improvement and pride of place.

Recipe for Success: Six Easy Steps to Being Involved with America in Bloom

Participants in the America in Bloom Program include communities of all sizes, business districts, college and university campuses, and military installations. There's a category just right for your community.

Step 1: Register for the program by February 28.

Step 2: Form a local "In Bloom" committee:

Committees may include a member of the municipal council, members of service groups, businesses, garden clubs, historical societies, youth groups, faith communities, or others interested in horticulture, heritage, and improving community life, volunteers of all types, and media. Engage municipal departments, such as parks and recreation, public works, economic development, and tourism, as well.

Step 3: Survey, plan, implement:

Inventory your community's assets, interests, and abilities in each of the areas America in Bloom Advisors will evaluate: Community Vitality, Flowers and Landscapes, Urban Forestry, Environmental Initiatives, Heritage Preservation, and Overall Impression.

- Encourage volunteers of every demographic to participate.
- Inform and engage the media.
- Prepare a community profile that summarizes your achievements in the evaluated area (a template will be provided).
- Develop an itinerary for the Advisors' tour.

Step 4: Host the Advisors for two days:

Two specially trained, experienced advisors will visit your community for two full days. They offer suggestions based on successes they've seen in other cities that can be adapted to your community. Provide lodging for up to three nights and provide a comprehensive tour for them.

Step 5: Attend the Symposium & Awards Program.

At the Symposium & Awards Program, you will get ideas by networking with other participants. Learn from outstanding speakers and tours. Celebrate your achievements. Be recognized for the efforts of everyone who helped to make a difference.

Step 6: After the Symposium & Awards Program

Review the Advisors' evaluation report. It provides useful, practical, and personalized ideas for improvements. Use it as an action plan and springboard for new projects and programs.

Want more information?

✉ aib@americainbloom.org

☎ 614-453-0744

🌸 AmericainBloom.org