

COMMUNITY BENEFITS AGREEMENTS: WHAT GEORGIA COMMUNITIES NEED TO KNOW

WHAT IS A COMMUNITY BENEFITS AGREEMENT?

A Community Benefits Agreement, or CBA, is a legally binding agreement between a developer and a coalition of community stakeholders. It spells out specific commitments, protections, and benefits tied to a proposed project — before construction begins, not after.

A STRONG CBA CLEARLY DEFINES FOUR THINGS:

- **The parties involved**
 - Including who represents the community.
- **Community priorities**
 - The specific concerns and benefits the community wants addressed.
- **Developer commitments**
 - What the company agrees to provide or protect.
- **Timelines, benchmarks, and enforcement**
 - So commitments are verifiable, not just promised.

WHY THIS MATTERS IN GEORGIA

Georgia communities are experiencing rapid growth in data centers, energy infrastructure, and other large-scale development. These projects often promise economic benefits, but without an enforceable agreement, communities can be left absorbing the costs — water use, energy demand, construction impacts, rising utility bills — without a guaranteed share of the benefits.

A CBA gives a community a proactive tool to negotiate protections before a project moves forward, rather than trying to address problems after they've already occurred. This is especially important for frontline, rural, and historically underserved communities, who are often least equipped to negotiate on their own and most likely to bear disproportionate impacts.

WHAT A CBA CAN SECURE

Depending on what a community negotiates, a CBA can include:

- Local hiring and workforce development commitments
- Environmental protections and monitoring
- Infrastructure investments (roads, drainage, broadband)
- Public reporting and transparency requirements
- Public health safeguards
- Affordable housing protections
- Community investment funds
- Long-term accountability mechanisms

FIVE COMPONENTS OF A STRONG CBA

- 1 Community Investment Funds**
Developer contributions toward parks, education, community centers, or public health programs.
- 2 Local Hiring and Workforce Development**
Local hiring targets, apprenticeships, workforce training, and support for minority- and women-owned businesses.
- 3 Environmental Protections**
Air and water monitoring, mitigation measures, public reporting, and emergency response planning.
- 4 Infrastructure Improvements**
Road upgrades, flood and drainage mitigation, pedestrian safety, and public transportation investment.
- 5 Transparency and Accountability**
Regular compliance updates, community oversight committees, and real enforcement provisions, not just good-faith promises.

GETTING STARTED

Georgia WAND, a nonprofit dedicated to environmental and social justice throughout the state, has created a helpful CBA Framework Toolkit that walks through building a community coalition, assessing development impacts, and a sample community priorities worksheet to help a community identify its own goals before entering negotiations. If your community is just starting this process, that's the right place to go deeper.

REQUEST SUPPORT FROM GEORGIA WAND

Georgia WAND offers direct support to communities working on a CBA, including community education, coalition development, environmental justice organizing, and technical assistance.

TO REQUEST SUPPORT AND ACCESS THE FULL COMMUNITY BENEFITS AGREEMENT FRAMEWORK TOOLKIT, VISIT:

*www.gawand.org/community-benefits-framework
or send an email to info@georgiawand.org.*

Drawdown Georgia does not take a position for or against any specific project. The toolkit is designed to support informed, community-centered decision-making.