



Quarterly Report: July - September, 2008

Grant Number: WR-15405-06-60

Date: 10/31/2008

Project Name: West Alabama/East Mississippi (WAEM) WIRED Project

Grantee: Alabama Department of Economic & Community Affairs/Office of Workforce Development (ADECA/OWD)

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For brevity, the following references are used in this report: ADECA – Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs; TMI – The Montgomery Institute; ASCC – Alabama Southern Community College; BSCC – Beville State Community College; JCJC – Jones County Junior College; ECCC – East Central Community College; EMCC – East Central Community College; MCC – Meridian Community College; SSCC – Shelton State Community College; WCCS – Wallace Community College – Selma; MDA – Mississippi Development Authority; DOL – U.S. Dept. of Labor; ETA – DOL Employment Training Administration; USM – University of Southern Mississippi; WAEM – West Alabama and East Mississippi; WIRED – Workforce Innovation in Regional Economic Development.

### **General Grant Activities, Successes, Strategic Partners, and Transformation Indicators:**

WAEM WIRED took major steps toward “sustainability” and long-term transformation during the 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter. On September 19, 2008, the WAEM Alliance met to review sustainability issues. Each of the eight colleges was represented by its president or a presidential designee with authority. TMI was represented by its president. By unanimous vote, the WAEM Alliance agreed to sustain the following key components of the WAEM WIRED Initiative beyond the terms of the grant:

1. The WAEM Alliance itself will be sustained as well as the regional approach to workforce training developed during the grant period.
2. The WAEM Alliance will maintain the M3 Credential.
3. The WAEM Alliance and TMI will pursue strategies to maintain region-wide, unlimited access to Amatrol training. Strategies to cover the \$185,000 annual fees include:
  - a. Obtaining workforce system funds from both Alabama and Mississippi to sustain the system;
  - b. Raising resources from business and industry partners to sustain the system;
  - c. Charging fees per user to raise funds to offset the costs of the system.

In the event a region-wide strategy does not come to fruition, each college will sustain a modified version of the system by charging access per user, per module as needed. The Alliance will seek multi-year funding for the system.

4. The WAEM Alliance will help create a successor to the WAEM WIRED Commission as a governance structure for the region. Initial efforts will focus on forming a Rural Investment Board as set forth in the new Farm Bill to serve in this capacity. In the alternative, the Alliance will form a business-led coalition of leaders to provide regional leadership.
5. Each college committed to sustain its offerings of the M3 Credential and Amatrol based advanced manufacturing training. All eight colleges, including the six that have

purchased equipment with WIRED funds, are building the credential and training systems into their basic training programs, thereby using existing funding sources to sustain the system. They are also beginning to provide access to these programs to juniors and seniors in high schools. (NOTE: Amatrol access for the high schools will be dependent upon region-wide, unlimited funding.)

6. Each college committed to maintain Start-It! Cards in its communities.
7. Each college committed to maintaining connections with its communities to:
  - a. Connect entrepreneurs to the MyBiz system; and
  - b. Sustain community development assistance.
8. The Montgomery Institute will maintain the MyBiz.am website, including finding funds for the Resource Navigator license, for the benefit of the region.
9. The Montgomery Institute will continue to train MyBiz Navigators, especially at WIN Job Centers in Mississippi and Career Link Centers in Alabama, to help entrepreneurs connect to needed resource providers.

During the early part of the next Quarter, these commitments will be substantiated by sustainability plans from each college and TMI and written into an overall plan by ADECA.

**Goal 1** – *Stand-up and embed the capacity to identify key assets and strengths, target opportunities, and recruit champions to build an Enterprise-Ready region.*

“Rampant enthusiasm” best describes the response of the City of Carthage to the WAEM place building initiative kicked off September 17, 2008. Through a WIRED contract with the University of Alabama, Mississippi MainStreet and the University of Auburn Center for Urban Studies supported by East Central Community College brought asset-based planning and design to 70 citizen leaders (<http://www.wired-nation.net/file/show/carthage-receives-vision.pdf>). Through this initiative, towns in both West Alabama and East Mississippi are receiving these services. See individual college reports in Appendix for more information.



Active WAEM Partners now total 605. Building and branding a region takes many partners and active relationships. WAEM, through the work of these partners, is gradually transforming from a collection of communities and counties into a known, competitive region.

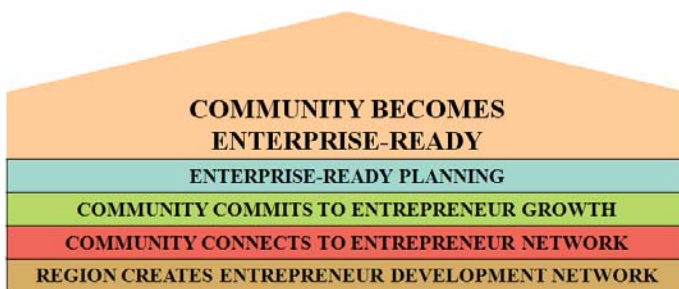
Quarterly highlights include:

- Colleges continue to aggressively engage in community strategic planning – adding WAEM Place Building strategies wherever possible. Another five such engagements were initiated during the quarter, bringing the total to 68. An additional six were completed bringing that total to nine. See details in Appendix.
- Colleges made 818 community-leader contacts during the quarter.
- BSCC in partnership with the Economic Development Association of Alabama (EDAA) offered Community Leadership Training (CLT) via BSCC’s Distance Learning capabilities. This provided the opportunity for interactive participation at any campus throughout the BSCC service area. The first training session occurred in August at the Fayette, Hamilton, Jasper, and Carrollton campuses. The CLT curriculum was presented to civic leaders, public officials, and economic developers by a local area economic developer.

**Best Practice:** WAEM models a growing notion that rural community colleges should become more active stakeholders in the communities they serve. In many ways – student population, faculty housing, resource development, etc. – communities undergird college capacity. Thus, the future vitality of a rural college is directly tied to the vitality of its communities. WAEM’s *Rural Place Building* strategy better connects college to community.

**Goal 2 – Cultivate community and regional entrepreneurship.**

MyBiz was highlighted at the national *Workforce Innovations* conference hosted by the U.S. Department of Labor in New Orleans in July. MyBiz presented its program as well as announced significant upgrades to the MyBiz.am website. Now more streamlined with enhanced features, and upgraded visual presentations, the website features 191 Resource Partners who provide services to entrepreneurs in the WAEM Region. The “Finance Fly-By” provides a quick overview of public loan programs that entrepreneurs may qualify for. In the new Community Connections section, users can click on a county, one of its communities, download the Start-It! Card, and print and carry this card with them through the business start-up process.



“MyBiz” is the name of WAEM’s place building initiative that encourages communities to transform themselves into “enterprise-ready” communities and adopt entrepreneurship as an alternative economic development strategy. MyBiz tools were designed to help communities better connect to entrepreneurs and entrepreneurs to services.

Quarterly highlights include:

- There were 96,767 unique hits this quarter (wow!). Another 307 individuals registered for continued usage of the system, bringing that total to 507.
- 36 individuals began and 35 completed entrepreneurial training. “Common measures” intake and exit were processed for these trainees.
- 145 of 146 targeted communities now have Start It! Cards in place.
- There were 148 Community Connector referrals during the 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter.
- 66 Resource Partners were added to the MyBiz Network, bringing that total to 191.

**Goal 3 – Credential, certify, and transform to a regionally-branded workforce.**

Wallace Community College Selma dedicated its new *Hank Sanders Technology Center* September 18, 2008. Wallace and the other WAEM colleges continue to upbuild their advanced technology teaching and training capacities as targeted by the WAEM Initiative.

The WAEM Workforce Training Framework, developed to transform the region’s workforce, provides for: 1) a permanent WAEM Alliance of the eight WIRED community and junior colleges to offer credentials and advance training initiatives, 2) authentic skills assessment based on national standards provided by the M3 (modern multi-skill manufacturing) Credential, 3) readiness training through Career Readiness Certificates, and 4) innovative access to training provided by over 450 online modules from the Amatrol-based “anytime, anywhere” advanced manufacturing training system and weekend availability of M3 labs at the colleges.



Quarterly highlights include:

- JCJC set up its assessment and training lab in the Advanced Technology Center in Ellisville. The lab is open to M3 participants. Currently 93 students are using the lab in pursuit of an M3 Basic Production Level Certification.
- ECCC team conducted M3 and Amatrol Training for all the colleges in the WAEM Region on September 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>.
- Fourteen participants were among the first in Choctaw, Mississippi to earn their M3 Credential in Basic Production from ECCC’s Integrated Technologies Training Center. The participants received their certifications in late July after completing the five week summer program. Another 97 people have taken advantage of the innovative, web based access to advanced manufacturing training systems offered at ECCC. This ‘anytime, anywhere’ resource continues to be successful.
- MCC was recognized as being a leader in Mississippi for the number of CRC’s awarded. The colleges also held a ribbon cutting ceremony for the Career Development Center. This is where individuals can test for their CRC. And, MCC’s Workforce Training Department partnered with Lockheed Martin to establish a local pool of prospective employees by offering a basic aircraft assembly skills course. The course consists of a two-week 80 hour program. Participants must achieve a bronze level CRC as a prerequisite.



**Best Practice:** The State Board for Community and Junior Colleges in Mississippi is reviewing how Mississippi WAEM colleges are integrating CRC and M3 certification and online Amatrol training into a continuum of training from the high school level, through college, to the industry level. The concept of one, consistent training and certification platform has attracted this attention. (More in future reports as this progresses.)

**Goal 4 – Engage high schools and youth in regional branding and Enterprise-Ready activities.**

Dual enrollment programs are taking off in the WAEM Region as partner colleges push training and entrepreneurship to juniors and seniors. Twenty-seven students from Meridian area high schools have enrolled in machine tool trades, graphic arts, automotive, drafting, and design

classes at MCC. Student at Columbus High School's McKellar Vocational Center are enrolled in classes at EMCC's Golden Triangle Campus and receive instruction in Metals Cluster and Industrial Maintenance Technology.

The WAEM Region targets high school juniors and seniors for dual enrollment, access to M3 and Amatrol training and assessment, and entrepreneurship training.

Quarterly highlights include:

- EMCC conducted the third GED Option/Basic Manufacturing Skills training class this quarter at their West Point Center. EMCC has also partnered this year with Columbus High School in a unique entrepreneurship class designed to help students learn ways to start their own business.
- Teachers and administrative staff from the JCJC and EMCC service participated in a NFTE training session at Jones County Junior College in July. Participants were instructed on the National Foundation for Teaching Entrepreneurs (NFTE) curriculum which will be implemented at Columbus High School (EMCC service area), Bay Springs High School, Laurel High School, and Stringer High School (all JCJC service area) during the 2008-2009 academic year.
- EMCC and JCJC WAEM teams collaborated with the Southern Youth Entrepreneurship Program to conduct the first of three youth entrepreneurship programs. The symposium was held on September 30<sup>th</sup> at Jones County Junior College. Over 100 area students interacted with current entrepreneurs to discuss the keys to business success and roadblocks.
- Twenty-seven students have been processed into the M3 Program at ASCC. These students are working on their M3 Basic Production Certification. The ASCC team is also working on innovative ways to promote and market the M3 Credential including social networking sites.
- Through their work with the Meridian Public School District, MCC is pleased to announce that all senior vocational students in the district must take the CRC assessment.
- The BSCC team hosted a meeting with Fayette city and school officials in September to discuss implementing the REAL program in the Fayette Schools System. The meeting concluded with a commitment from the mayor to secure \$1000 in funding from the Fayette Community Foundation for a one day REAL workshop for 15-20 educators. In the interest of fulfilling the city's Education Goal 1 Objective to implement an entrepreneurial program in the Fayette School System, the goal's committee chair and the city's education committee have taken ownership over this effort.
- Fourteen students from Leake County Vo-Tech Center tested their skills in September in Basic Electrical Circuits and Introduction to Hand and Power Tools as part of the M3 Credential.

**Best Practice:** WAEM colleges are coupling CRC/M3 certification and Amatrol training to drop-out recovery programs. For example, a pilot project at EMCC resulted in a 100% graduation rate for targeted students.

#### **Update on Leveraged Resources in Support of WIRED Activities:**

The WAEM Region reports leveraged funds in three categories. First, there were \$13,509 in expenditures of non-federal funds by MCC to support training for WIRED participants (Metrics line 7c). Second, MCC expended \$58,000 to build and furnish classrooms in its new Advanced Training Facility (where WIRED training activities occur – Metrics line 8). Finally, MCC

reported a total commitment of \$250,000 from the Lauderdale County Board of Supervisors for improvements to the training facility – the \$58,000 was part of this commitment (only expended leveraged funds are reported in the metrics).

**Challenges to Project Process:**

DOLETA’s periodic refocusing of WIRED Gen 1 guidelines has provided challenges.

**Other Promising Innovation Processes and Success Stories:**

None to report this quarter.

**APPENDIX** – An Appendix showing detailed reports from each community and junior college partner for the region is provided as a separate document and can be accessed at <http://waem.us/qreports.html>.

**METRICS** – See Metrics beginning on next page.

**WORKFORCE INNOVATION FOR REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (WIRED)  
WAEM METRICS PROGRESS REPORT ADDENDUM TEMPLATE**

<b>GRANTEE IDENTIFYING INFORMATION</b>				
1. Grantee Name: Alabama Dept. of Economic & Community Affairs/Office of Workforce Development (ADECA/OWD)			2. Grant Number: WR-15405-06-60	
3. Program/Project Name: West Alabama/East Mississippi (WAEM) WIRED Project				
4. Grantee Address: P O Box 5690			5. Report Quarter End Date: 9/30/2008	
City <u>Montgomery</u> State <u>AL 36103-5690</u>			6. Report Due Date: 11/14/2008	
<b>GRANTEE RESULTS</b>				
Progress Report Performance Categories and Measures	1/31/2010 Target	Previous Quarters	Current Quarter	Cumulative Grant-to-Date
<b>Category 1: Education/Training/Assessment</b>				
WAEM WIRED targeted advanced manufacturing (education, training, credentialing) and entrepreneurship (networking, training, support) as its top priorities.				
1 Total Number of Intakes into Advanced Manufacturing or Entrepreneurship Workforce Education/Training Programs and M3 Assessments Using WIRED Funds.	5315	460	357	817
2 Total Number Beginning Training in Advanced Manufacturing or Entrepreneurship Workforce Education/Training Programs Using WIRED Funds. (Sum of 2a and 2b)	4855	445	276	721
a. Number beginning Advanced Manufacturing education/training	4500	409	272	681
b. Number beginning Entrepreneur education/training	355	36	4	40
3 Total Number Completing Training in Advanced Manufacturing or Entrepreneurship Workforce Education/Training Using WIRED Funds. (Sum of 3a and 3b)	2627	97	17	114
a. Number completing Advanced Manufacturing education/training	2451	62	13	75
b. Number completing Entrepreneur education/training	176	35	4	39
4 Number of Entrepreneurs Completing Education/Training Who Create Their Own Businesses, as Identified by Survey.	80	0	0	0
5 Total Number Beginning Assessment toward an M3 Credential Using WIRED Funds (M3 is a national standards based, modern multi-skill manufacturing credential based on assessed competency).	3065	433	489	922
a. Number beginning M3 Production Level assessment	3065	424	349	773
b. Number beginning M3 Advanced Production Level assessment (subset of 5a)	832	9	140	149
6 Total Number Attaining an M3 Credential Using WIRED Funds.	2160	23	26	49
a. Number attaining Production Level M3 Credential	1620	14	18	32
b. Number attaining Advanced Production Level M3 Credential (subset of 6a)	540	9	8	17
7 Investment in WAEM WIRED Education/Training/Assessment. (Sum of 7a and 7b)	\$4,430,000	\$4,002,718	\$13,509	\$4,016,227
a. Investment of WIRED Funds in education/training/assessment	\$4,430,000	\$3,230,000		\$3,230,000
b. Federal Funds Leveraged by Partners for education/training/assessment		\$0	\$0	\$0
c. Non-Federal Funds Leveraged by Partners for education/training/assessment		\$772,718	\$13,509	\$786,227
<b>Category 2: Capacity Building</b>				
8 Other Funds Leveraged by WIRED Partners (excluding 7b), see quarterly reports for details.		\$3,129,933	\$58,000	\$3,187,933
9 Region Building Activities -- WAEM WIRED was challenged to build the capacity of its partners while at the same time building a sense of region in 37 mostly rural counties in West Alabama and East Mississippi.				
a. Number of WAEM WIRED staff training events	48	39	3	42
b. Number of outreach/networking events (regional roundtables, WAEM Town retreats, summits, conferences, community roll-outs, teacher/business leader sessions, etc.)	42	25	22	47

c	Number attending outreach/networking events	2760	1630	551	2181
d	Number of communities initiating Place-Building planning (including strategic planning, entrepreneur support planning, and Small Town Design Initiative and related MainStreet planning)	53	63	5	68
e	Number of Place-Building plans completed	25	3	6	9
f	Number of community leader contacts by Community College/Junior College (CCJC) staff (duplicated)	3135	2044	818	2862
g	Number of newsletters published	15	9	2	11
h	Number of presentations on WAEM initiatives and innovations at conferences	12	8	2	10
10	<b>Total Number of WAEM Partners</b> -- WAEM WIRED is heavily dependent upon Partners to accomplish its mission...indeed, building the bi-state partner network for this rural region is one of the main transformation goals. (Sum of 10a - 10k)	571	429	176	605
a.	Number of college, university, state, and federal agency partners	18	20	0	20
b.	Number of WAEM region Mayors participating in the WAEM Mayors' Network	80	26	0	26
c	Number of Place Building partners (MainStreet, Urban Center, tourism, etc. excluding university and agency depts. included in 10a)	21	25	0	25
d	Number of MyBiz Entrepreneur Network partners	3	6	0	6
e	Number of MyBiz Resource Partners added to network	100	125	66	191
f	Number of MyBiz Community Connectors recruited and trained	163	165	4	169
g	Number of MyBiz Network Navigators identified and trained	48	13	1	14
h	Number of Workforce partners (SWIBs, Local WIBs, one-stops, etc.)	21	17	8	25
i	Number of business and industry training partners	40	13	92	105
j	Number of high schools and youth program partners that have agreed to offer WAEM skills in their programs	61	19	5	24
k	Number of business partners receiving Governors' Seal awards	16	0	0	0
11	<b>Entrepreneur Development Activities</b> -- WAEM WIRED connects communities to entrepreneurs to local, regional, state and national resources and training opportunities.				
a.	Total unique hits to MyBiz.am entrepreneur referral website	50000	50354	96767	147121
b.	Total registered users of MyBiz.am	27800	236	307	543
c	Total times MyBiz.am Resource Navigator accessed	25000	24384	33876	58260
d	Total MyBiz Users self-reporting they started their own business within the WAEM Region	90	0	0	0
e	Total number of communities for which MyBiz Community Start It Cards have been developed and distributed	146	130	15	145
f	Total Community Connector referrals	660	219	148	367
12	<b>Other Workforce Education/Training, Assessment Outcomes</b> -- Including activities emphasized and encouraged by WIRED but for which WIRED dollars were not expended.				
a.	Total number of Career Readiness Certificates (CRCs) Awarded in the WAEM Region by state workforce agencies	3335	1850	780	2630
b.	Total number of individuals registered in the Amatrol "anytime, anywhere" on-line advanced manufacturing training system	4275	951	615	1566
c	Total number of M3 Assessment labs opened at WAEM colleges	8	8	0	8
13	<b>Youth (16+) Enterprise Ready Activities</b> -- A goal of WAEM WIRED is to engage youth in WAEM Skills programs while still in high school.				
a.	Total number of students reached by schools implementing WAEM Skills programs	350	158	157	315
b.	Total number of high school students dual-enrolled in WAEM Skills programs in community and junior colleges.	79	10	19	29
<b>Category 3: Economic Indicators - Annual Figures</b>		<b>2007 Baseline</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>
14	<b>Employment by Targeted Industry Cluster</b>				
a.	Advanced Manufacturing Clusters (including non-manufacturing employment related to clusters)	2007 Baseline data not available			
b.	Entrepreneurship	2007 Baseline data not available			
15	<b>Average Wage by Industry Cluster</b>				
a.	Advanced Manufacturing Clusters	2007 Baseline data not available			
b.	Entrepreneurship	2007 Baseline data not available			
16	<b>Unemployment Rate</b>	5.49%			

17	<b>Performance Improvement on Common Measures by WIRED Participants Region Wide as Reported by the Workforce Investment System</b>				
a.	Entered Employment Rate (adult common measure)	<i>2007 Baseline data not available</i>			
b.	Employment Retention Rate (adult common measure)	<i>2007 Baseline data not available</i>			
c.	Average Earnings (adult common measure)	<i>2007 Baseline data not available</i>			
18	<b>Number Receiving a Degree or Certificate from a WAEM Community or Junior College in one of the WAEM Target Areas</b>				
a.	Advanced Manufacturing	<i>available later in 2008</i>			
b.	Entrepreneurship	<i>available later in 2008</i>			
19	<b>Number of New Business Startups or Expansions</b>	<i>available later in 2008</i>			