



Quarterly Report: October - December, 2008

---

Grant Number: WR-15405-06-60

Date: 12/31/2008

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

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

Contact Person: Steve Walkley, Division Director, ADECA/OWD

Contact Data: Phone 334-242-5300

Email: [steve.walkley@adeca.alabama.gov](mailto:steve.walkley@adeca.alabama.gov)

Alternate Contact: Ken W. Hollingsworth, Workforce Initiatives Coordinator

Contact Data: Phone 334-242-5882

Email: [ken.hollingsworth@adeca.alabama.gov](mailto:ken.hollingsworth@adeca.alabama.gov)

### **Summary of General Grant Activities and Successes:**

The 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter of 2008 was challenging in many ways with the upheaval in the U.S. economy beginning to impact the WAEM Region through layoffs and business slowdowns. In the midst of this turmoil, WAEM WIRED partners focused on follow-through sustainability. Major follow through activities included:

- In-taking another 248 participants in WAEM training and credentialing programs.
- 1,279 Career Readiness Certificates earned and 27 M3 Credentials earned.
- 96,660 unique hits to the MyBiz.am website.
- From Oct. 22 through Oct. 24, 2008, the first WAEM Town *Designing Our Future* Workshop was held at Lake Tiak O'Khata near Louisville, MS. Thirty-nine participants learned asset-based design and planning techniques for use in the WAEM Region. The workshop was the highlight of WAEM's *place building* activities thus far.
- Final equipment purchases in support of WAEM's talent development strategies in advanced manufacturing were okayed by DOLETA.
- From Dec. 1 through Dec. 4, 2008, Berkeley Policy Associates conducted their second evaluation of WAEM WIRED.

Major sustainability activities included:

- On Sept. 19, 2008, the WAEM Alliance met. The Alliance is composed of the eight community and junior college partners in WAEM plus TMI. It was formed as a sustainability process, itself, for the purpose of maintaining regional workforce training initiatives. All eight colleges and TMI voted unanimously to sustain the primary WAEM strategies.
- On Dec. 4, 2008, the WAEM Commission met and affirmed the components of the sustainability plan.
- On Dec. 11, ADECA submitted the plan to DOLETA and added its own commitments to sustain the bi-state activities. A copy of the plan as submitted can be found at [http://www.waem.us/docs/waem\\_sustainability\\_plan.pdf](http://www.waem.us/docs/waem_sustainability_plan.pdf)

**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.**

The WAEM Town *Designing Our Future* Workshop, as noted above, was held October 22 – 24, 2008 at Lake Tiak O’Khata in Louisville, MS. The thirty-nine civic leaders from the region, led by experts from Alabama and Mississippi, delved into practical planning and problem solving for rural communities. A highlight of the program was the team presentations of drawings, charts, goals, and visions for a hypothetical rural town they sought to improve. The WAEM Town workshop links directly to the *place building* activities being conducted in real WAEM towns by Main Street Mississippi and the University of Alabama/Auburn University Small Town Design Initiative.



- BSCC assisted the Small Town Design Initiative Charette in Carrollton, AL on November 13, 2008. Community information, assets, and opportunities were gathered from community members. On December 4, 2008 the second charette was held presenting preliminary designs and opportunities for gathering community input. The third and final charette will be held in February 2009.
- WCCS staff met with Mayor Lee and the town of Orrville in October and December to discuss the beginning phase of their small town design project.

In other Goal 1 *place building* activities:

- BSCC WIRED staffer, Karla Quesenberry, initiated and facilitated a roundtable meeting with seven communities in two counties to discuss the Tom Beville Reservoir Lake Project in Fayette County. BSCC partnered with the West Alabama Rural Action Commission to bring Bill Taylor, CEO of Mercedes and governor-appointed member of the commission, to lead the discussions on the reservoir project. These discussions resulted in the group agreeing to support the project and form a steering committee that would develop and implement an action plan for gaining additional support and funding. Quesenberry was appointed facilitator for the steering committee meetings. The action plan was completed by Quesenberry on December 5, 2008 and implemented at that time.
- The second workshop for the Economic Development Association of Alabama’s Community Leadership Training using BSCC’s distance learning capabilities was held on October 31, 2008. There were 74 community leaders in attendance.
- BSCC coordinated a meeting on November 24, 2008 with stakeholders and representatives from the Northwest Alabama Council of Local Governments in Guin, AL to discuss developing opportunities for their office in developing a strategic plan and potential grant money. A preliminary work plan was developed on December 2, 2008, serving as the basis for developing a strategic plan.
- JCJC WIRED staffers are working with the Jones County EDA to implement their county wide strategic plan which was completed in October. The plan is called “All Eyes Toward the Future.” The plan focuses on areas like business development and retention, social issues, infrastructure, and education. One result of the strategic plan was an Education Summit hosted by JCJC on November 13, 2008. The summit highlighted the

successes and opportunities in the educational systems in Jones County. Approximately 300 were in attendance.

- MCC met with the Marion Board of Aldermen during their work session in December. The MCC team provided a copy of Fayette, Alabama’s strategic plan and discussed the benefits of Marion developing their own strategic plan. The MCC team has offered to work with the board in designing such a plan.
- ASCC partnered with the Rural Heritage Center to host the Founder’s Reception on November 6, 2008. The purpose of the event was to honor past supporters and to provide networking opportunities for others in the Thomaston, AL region.
- EMCC staff attended the Regional Alabama-Mississippi Rural Tourism Conference in Columbus, Mississippi on October 28-29, 2008.
- WCCS staff met Mayor Jamal Hunter, of Uniontown, Alabama, in November to discuss reviving their current strategic plan. There are many challenges before the newly appointed mayor. Most of them center on finding funding. However, the city is moving forward with a city wide cleanup and beautification efforts.

**Best Practice:** The WAEM *Rural Place Building Guide* describes the “coaching” role college staff can place with their communities. Getting places to develop plans is not the principal outcome sought; helping them implement plans successfully is outcome desired. Karla Quesenberry, a WAEM WIRED staffer at Beville State Community College recently provided a perfect example of this coaching role. Key players from Fayette, AL, tell the story best:

“Karla came to my office and asked what we were doing with our strategic plan,” explained Mayor Ray Nelson. “I said it was sitting on a shelf. Karla said let’s give it new life.

“It is amazing what rolling up your sleeves with a volunteer force can do for a community,” said Ron Davis, Plant Manager at ZF Lemforder and chairman of the beautification committee.

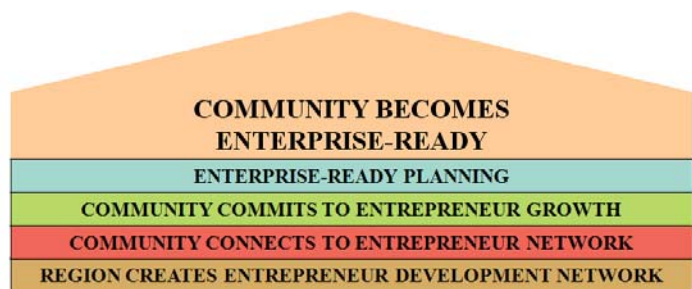
“Both the Mayor and the WAEM staff (Karla) have been very active and engaged in this process. People are having fun and buying in. The results have exceeded my expectations.”

“WAEM and BSCC are helping us make small steps toward a better life,” Mayor Nelson said.

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

Follow-through was the name of the game for Goal 2:

- SSCC distributed 125 Start-It Cards have been to potential entrepreneurs and 10 were referred by Community Connectors.
- ASCC added two new Resource Partners: Covington County EDC and Coastal Gateway Economic Development Authority and conducted a Network



Navigator training session on November 7, 2008 in Thomasville, AL. Two Navigators, from Southwest Alabama Chamber of Commerce and Thomasville Library, were trained as a result.

- ASCC partnered with the Women’s Business Center and the Southwest Alabama Chamber of commerce to host two Small Business Luncheons in October and November in the Thomasville, AL. The ASCC team presented information to approximately 70 attendees about the MyBiz Entrepreneurial Network.
- ASCC partnered with the Women’s Business Center to host “Coffee with Sylvia”. This once a month event was held in Thomasville, Grove Hill, Monroeville, and Evergreen, AL, beginning in October. It is an opportunity for women who are in business or are looking to start a business to listen to specific topics and network with other attendees. The MyBiz Entrepreneurial Network is also promoted at the events.
- Forest, MS, and ECCC have started the ERDS process to formulate strategies to make the community more entrepreneur friendly.
- MCC team met with two potential entrepreneurs to help them navigate through MyBiz.am for resources.
- BSCC coordinated with partner agencies to host Network Navigator Training in Walker County, AL on December 5, 2008. Six Navigators were trained. Strong support was received from Career Center partners, the Walker Area Community Foundations, and Alabama Technology Network. The MyBiz website received highly favorable reviews with those in attendance appreciating the need for entrepreneurial support and the potential MyBiz offers.
- EMCC staff continues to assist West Point Growth Alliance in implementing its entrepreneurship training for small businesses in the community. The alliance has hired a new executive director and EMCC is beginning to work with the new leadership.
- EMCC staff met with a potential entrepreneur in DeKalb, Mississippi to assist him in starting his business plan efforts.
- WCCS assisted two individuals in starting businesses in Dallas County, Alabama.
- MyBiz was featured in a break-out session at the annual Mississippi Governors Workforce Conference in November.

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

Phifer Wire in Tuscaloosa, AL, has exclusively committed to SSCC’s pre-employment training program, Ready to Work. The Anytime Anywhere Amatrol e-Learning System and the M3 Credential are key components of the Ready to Work curriculum. As a result of this training program with Phifer Wire, attrition among entry level employees has dropped to the lowest it has been in 17 years. Implementation of the M3 Credential through the Ready to Work program at



SSCC has resulted in 80 new students conducting hands on assessments for skills capture toward the credential.

JCJC had 33 new enrollees enter into the Anytime, Anywhere Amatrol e-Learning System. These students are working toward the M3 Basic Production Level Certification.

MCC's Industrial Maintenance Trainer conducted customized onsite Lock Out/Tag Out Safety Training for Van Zyverden Farms, a local company in Meridian, MS.



MCC's Welding Instructor is currently in communications with MS Rail Car to provide training during the first quarter of 2009.

MCC conducted post employment training 120 employees from NEW Corporation. The training included portions of the computer skills as part of the M3 Credential. NEW Corporation is a call center supporting the southeastern United States.

MCC awarded the construction contract for Build out Phase 1 to Construction Service Inc., of Meridian, in November. The construction will begin during the first quarter of 2009. The space will provide for 304 programs to begin operations in support of advanced manufacturing as prescribed by the WAEM Initiative.

MCC completed construction of three classrooms in October in their new training facility. The classrooms will be used to produce new employee training.

WCCS enrolled 27 students in the first Industrial Maintenance Class. The Industrial Maintenance is a degree program at WCCS that offers comprehensive training for those individuals interested in a career in repair and maintenance of heavy equipment.

WCCS conducted four job fairs during the quarter. Over 900 people attended the fairs and job fair training.

ECCC Workforce Dean, Roger Whitlock, presented information on the importance of the M3 Credential and the Anytime, Anywhere Amatrol e-Learning System to Mississippi Career Tech Deans and Workforce Directors on November, 5, 2008 at ECCC's Integrated Technologies Training Center.

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

More high schools in the WAEM Region engaged in advanced manufacturing activities promoted by WAEM WIRED:

- Thomasville High School in Thomasville, Alabama signed a Memorandum of Understanding in December with the ASCC WAEM Initiative to incorporate the Amatrol “anytime, anywhere” learning system into the Agri-Science curriculum beginning in the Spring of 2009.

- 12 high school students from Leake County completed the Production Level requirements for the M3 Credential at ECCC.
- The Industrial Maintenance Trainer from MCC taught pneumatics, hydraulics, and other basics of industrial maintenance for two weeks at Clarkdale High School, MS, during the first two weeks of December as part of the M3 Credential and as a recruiting tool for the new industrial maintenance technician program being developed at MCC.

BSCC worked to implement the REAL Program in its district:

- BSCC staff laid the foundation to introduce an entrepreneurship curriculum through the REAL Program at the Walker County Center of Technology. One of the obstacles is funding for teacher training on the REAL curriculum. BSCC presented the information to the Executive Director of the Walker Area community Foundation in order to seek potential grant opportunities for the teacher training.
- BSCC conducted a REAL Workshop on November 20, 2008 at the Fayette County Career Technical Center to train instructors from 3 Fayette County High Schools: Fayette County, Berry, and Hubbertville. The Fayette County School System agreed to include the REAL program in its curriculum beginning in the fall of 2008. Tommie Syx, University of Alabama Center for Community-Based Partnerships, donated her time and \$500 in training funds.

WCCS assisted with securing funds for students at Francis Marion High School in Alabama to take dual enrollment classes.

EMCC team met with Leadership West Point, a group of 20 leadership members from the area, in December and presented information about the drop-out prevention issues and dual enrollment opportunities in the school district and how EMCC can lend assistance.

**Best Practice:** The Dream Train. MCC developed a unique way to introduce youth to the concepts of entrepreneurship. At its Youth Entrepreneur Business Camp on Nov. 21, 2008, MCC invited students to be the Dream Train. The Dream Train made stops “along the way to success.” At each stop business leaders provided key directions to assist students in navigating the entrepreneurship path. Stops included financing, regulations, laws, taxes, developing a business plan, and knowing the market. Ninety-four students from four high schools in Mississippi and Alabama were in attendance. MCC joined with local entrepreneurs and resource partners to produce the camp. Follow-up surveys indicated the camp was very worthwhile to participants. They expressed an interest in even more in-depth information on becoming an entrepreneur.

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

The WAEM Region reports leveraged funds in three categories. In line 7c, MCC reported expending \$72,963 for equipment and set-up at their new training center. The sources of these funds were State Board for Community and Junior College and Lauderdale County Board of Supervisors funds. In line 8, Tommie Syx, University of Alabama Center for Community-Based Partnerships, provided \$500 in training funds to support training instructors from three Fayette County high schools in the REAL Program: Fayette County, Berry, and Hubbertville High

Schools. And, ADECA reported receiving a \$1,000,000 Project GATE award from DOLETA. These funds will allow WAEM's MyBiz.am website to go statewide in Alabama.

**Challenges to Project Process:**

Gathering statistical data for the quarterly metrics report is proving more difficult than expected.

**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.