

West Alabama/East Mississippi WIRED  
Quarterly Report  
July - September, 2007

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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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Summary of General Grant Activities and Successes:

Goal 3: Substantial progress was made during this quarter toward accomplishing the WAEM Workforce Training Framework (copy included in last quarter's report):

1. **Regional partnership:** The eight participating community and junior colleges and The Montgomery Institute executed MOAs establishing the "WAEM Alliance." This partnership will provide the regional platform to address and attend to community, workforce, and economic development activities set forth in the WIRED grant, initiated during WIRED implementation, and intended to be sustained beyond the WIRED grant timeframe. Among the matters to be addressed by the partnership are regional credentialing; alignment and integration of credit and non-credit career and technical training programs pertaining to regional initiatives; financing the partnership and regional activities; WIRED Goals 1 through 4; coordination and integration with Alabama and Mississippi workforce investment plans, workforce systems, and state agencies; and other functions to be determined. A copy of the WAEM Alliance Statement of Purposed and sample MOA is included in the appendix.  
NOTE: Gov. Barbour formally announced the alliance on Oct. 15.
2. **Regional credentials:** Community and junior college Career and Technical Deans and Workforce Directors collectively determined and agreed to the components of the proposed regional Modern Multi-skill Manufacturing (M3) Credential. Offered at the bronze, silver, and gold levels to reflect demonstration of basic-intermediate-advanced technical skills, the M3 Credential requires "authentic skills assessment" to established national skills standards. This is the transformational aspect of this credential. A copy of the credential matrix is included in appendix.
3. **Innovative training and access:** The design for a readily accessible "anytime anywhere" on-line advanced manufacturing training system was developed by Career and Technical deans and Workforce Directors from each college. An RFP based on this design was used to procure an Amatrol system with unlimited access to over 450 on-line training modules. Instructors, deans and workforce

directors from all eight colleges reviewed proposals and heard presentations from two vendor finalists. The Amatrol system was the overwhelming choice of the participants. The WAEM Commission affirmed this selection on September 6. Relevant excerpts from the resulting purchase order are included in the appendix. This anytime-anywhere Internet based, on-line system, will support:

- technical training at colleges and allied high schools;
- on-site training for business and industry; and
- individual skills training at home, at work, or anywhere there is broadband Internet access.

NOTE: Gov. Barbour formally announced the WAEM Alliance on Oct. 15.

Goal 1 activities across the region included: Teams from each community college continue to actively promote the WAEM Initiative in their county service areas. Teams are developing contacts to further develop and foster relationships in the region. Teams are conducting assessments and engaging in networking opportunities. Each team also continues to enhance the positive community image of the WAEM Initiative.

- BSCC has developed a key relationship with the Mayor of Guin, AL to pull together resources on a construction project in hopes of bringing a major employer to the area.
- EMCC has reached out to all of the mayors and councils in Clay and Noxubee Counties.
- SSCC is working with local leadership to determine important community initiatives and how WEAM can aid in these hot button topics.
- MCC spoke at the Empowerment Gathering and networked with the 40 event attendees.

Goal 1 activities also included development and soft launch for the region's new website: WAEM.US. The website is intended to inform people about the region as well as accomplishments of the WAEM WIRED Initiative. Substantive progress was made in developing the Goal 2 entrepreneur website. This site is under beta development at MyBiz.am and is expected to be launched during the WAEM Entrepreneurship Conference, Nov. 29 and 30.

Goal 2 activities across the region included: Teams have been identifying and partnering with local community champions to identify "resource navigators" and "community connectors." In addition, teams are identifying resource partners for the MyBiz Network. Teams continue to build relationships with entrepreneurship targeted communities for the further development ERDS implementation.

#### **ERDS Development Process**

- West Point, MS partnered with the Growth Alliance has adopted the ERDS strategic plan and has made a commitment to include WIRED in their community goals. West Point is in the advanced stages of the ERDS process, thanks in no small part to the team at East Mississippi Community College.
- Jasper, AL participated in a kickoff meeting and opportunity retreat. BSCC is working with the community to further develop specifics of

- Ellisville, MS is in the process of developing a strategic community plan to guide them in becoming an ERDS community. Jones County Junior College is aiding them in this effort.
- Lowndes County, AL communities have bought into the idea of setting up an ERDS community. They would like to set up the ERDS at a satellite office on the Wallace Community College Campus. Both the college and the county are looking for resources to do this.

A key event occurred Aug. 27 and 28 in Meridian. WAEM WIRED staff participated in a two-day retreat to re-focus Goal 1 and Goal 2 activities at the community level. A draft “Rural Place Building Guide” developed by The Montgomery Institute was provided to the participants. This guide simplifies Goal 2 entrepreneurship activities, ties community asset mapping and entrepreneur development together into “rural place building,” and bring “region building” into the community development progress. The “Community Involvement Matrix” resulted from this two-day session. It captures graphically the progress college partners are making with their communities. These matrices are included in the appendix below. The Rural Place Building Guide will be provided in a future report after it is further revised based on experiences in the field.

Goal 4 activities became more focused during the quarter. A Goal 4 Task Force was formed and met August 30, 2007. The group scheduled quarterly meetings to further discuss and implement 3 specific tasks:

- 1) Integrating enterprise-ready activities in the existing school curricula.
- 2) Including enterprise opportunities in articulation and dual enrollment courses.
- 3) Increasing the interest and improving the image of career technical opportunities including entrepreneurship.

The Taskforce Committee will make recommendations to the Goal 4 Committee.

Accomplishments by the Goal 4 Taskforce thus far include three FIRST LEGO League teams in Alabama for the 2007 Challenge.

- West Jasper Elementary School, Jasper AL
- Thomasville Middle School, Thomasville AL
- Tuscaloosa Middle School, Tuscaloosa AL

EMCC has reached out to school district leadership in hopes of collaborating on a high school entrepreneurship program. School and regional officials in EMCC’s service area are uniting to address the dropout rates.

In addition to the above, substantial progress was made on developing metrics for the WAEM WIRED Initiative, with leadership toward this provided by ADECA and MDES.

The following is a chronology of events during the quarter.

- 7.2.07 Enterprise Ready Development System Kick Off, Lowndes County AL (This is the first major event in the ERDS process for this community.)  
Attendees: 27
- 7.11.07 WAEM Opportunity Retreat, West Point MS (This is the second major event in the ERDS process for this community.)  
Attendees:80
- 7.12.07 WAEM Opportunity Retreat, Jasper AL (This is the second major event in the ERDS process for this community.)  
Attendees: 37
- 7.12.07 Enterprise Ready Development System Community Kick-Off Meeting, Gilbertown AL (This is the first major event in the ERDS process for this community.)  
Attendees: 14
- 7.13.07 WAEM Goal 3 Taskforce Meeting, Meridian MS (Update on M3 Project)  
Attendees: 22
- 7.16.07-7.20.07 Mississippi Community College Fellowship Program, Louisville MS (Training meeting for Mississippi and Alabama community college staff on how to engage and build rural community entrepreneurial economic development.)  
Attendees: 30
- 7.17.07-7.19.07 WIRED Academy, Kansas City MO
- 7.23.07 WAEM Goal 4 Implementation of Skills Committee for K-12 system for ERDS communities.
- 8.2.07 WAEM Town Hall meeting, West Point MS (This is the third major event in the ERDS process for this community.)
- 8.3.07 WAEM Goal 3 Staff Meeting, Meridian MS (Training, working and planning meeting for Goal 1 activities.)
- 8.10.07 WAEM Staff Meeting, Meridian MS  
Teleconference
- 8.17.07 WAEM Goal 1 Staff Meeting, Meridian MS (Training, working and planning meeting for Goal 1 activities.)
- 8.23.07 WAEM Opportunity Retreat, Ellisville AL (This is the second major event in the ERDS process for this community.)  
Attendees:35
- 8.27.07 – 8.28.07 WAEM Staff Retreat, Meridian MS (Working and planning meeting for Goal 1-4 activities.)  
Attendees: 32
- 8.30.07 Goal 1 Skills Committee Taskforce Meeting, Meridian MS  
Attendees: 17
- 8.30.07 WAEM Goal 3 Taskforce Meeting, Meridian MS (Selecting Vendors)  
Attendees: 30
- 9.6.07 WAEM Commission Meeting (telephonic).

- 9.17.07 WAEM Kick Off Meeting, Richton MS (This is the first major event in the ERDS process for this community)  
Attendees: 10
- 9.24.07 WAEM Kick Off Meeting, Bay Springs MS (This is the first major event in the ERDS process for this community)  
Attendees: 40
- 9.25.07 WAEM Opportunity Retreat, Gilbertown AL (This is the second major event in the ERDS process for this community.)  
Attendees: 14

Update on Strategic Partnership Activities:

Previous partnership efforts continue.

Update on Leveraged Resources in Support of WIRED Activities:

Mississippi officially adopted the Career Readiness Certificate proposed by WAEM WIRED and will be providing resources for CRCs statewide.

List of Any Metrics Developed and Being Utilized in the WAEM WIRED Region:

As noted above, substantial progress was made to finalizing metrics for the region. We expect DOL approved metrics to be available for the next report.

A total of 1,157 Career Readiness Certificates (CRCs) have been awarded by WIRED colleges through September 30, 2007. This is one metric that has been established. Of these, 610 were awarded in Alabama, 547 in Mississippi.

Copies of each college's "Community Involvement Matrix" are included in the appendix. We expect information from these to support several measures in the final metrics.

Challenges to Project Process:

Nothing new to report.

Promising Innovation Processes and Success Stories:

- The ASCC Team participated in professional Development opportunities gained through attending the Community Development institute in Jacksonville, AL and the Community Intensive Course in Auburn, AL. These events increased their knowledge concerning economic and community development issues.
- ASCC developed a key partnership with the Women's Business Center and has begun offering entrepreneurship seminars and classes.
- BSCC secured their Resource Navigators for their five county service region.
- The University of Alabama, in collaboration with Beville State Community College, is assisting in setting up an AERN Center in Jasper, AL.

- EMCC graduated the first 16 CRC's in the state of Mississippi during the third quarter.
- EMCC also began to offer Basic Manufacturing and Advanced Manufacturing Skills classes at their Golden Triangle Campus.
- With the assistance of Jones County Junior College, a pilot entrepreneurship class is being taught at Laurel High School. The class is composed of fifteen 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders who will be instructed on starting and running a business.
- Wallace Community College Selma participated in the State of Alabama Dropout Prevention Retreat. The team was able to network with elected officials and school board members on the importance of K-12 being involved in entrepreneurial efforts.

Other Information:

Shelton State Community College promoted Lewis Drummond to the position of Workforce Director. Mr. Drummond was previously assigned as the Executive Assistant to the President for Business and Industry Relations. He takes the place of Susan Miller who joined the workforce development staff of the Alabama Department of Postsecondary Education.

The Montgomery Institute WAEM Management team welcomed two new employees; Hank Garner, IT Administrator and Jolie Woods, Communications Director.

Upcoming events:

- October 12 – WAEM Mayors Conference, University of West Alabama, Livingston, AL.
- November 29-30 – WAEM Entrepreneurship Conference, Riley Education and Performing Arts Center, Meridian, MS. The theme of the event will be “Connecting Entrepreneurs, Communities and Service Providers.” Featured speakers include:
  - Leslie Scott – North Carolina Rural Entrepreneurship Institute
  - Eric Pederson – Program Manager for Network Kansas
  - Janita Stewart – Mississippi State SBA Director
  - Michael Ricks – Alabama State SBA Director
  - Don Macke – RUPRI Center for Rural Entrepreneurship
  - Chris Gibbons – Director, Littleton CO Chamber of Commerce – Economic Gardening
  - Dr. Randy Goldsmith – CEO Mississippi Technology Alliance

Please also see appendix in separate document for other information.