

Final Report

Contract Number: 9-S90-040-6528-1
CFDA Number W6528 PY09 ARRA
February 1, 2010 to June 30, 2011

PROJECT OUTCOMES

Programmatic Data

Mississippi WIN Job Centers visited by TMI staff for additional training, follow up and programmatic feedback: 35
METP Website participant sign up: 454
Participants who enrolled at community colleges: 260
Participants who completed METP training: 235
METP completion rate: 90%
Community college trainers trained to deliver SEP: 19

METP Participant Survey Data

9 Survey's were sent to the SBDC office as of 7.22.11. The following summarizes the survey information.

- Started a business: 3
- Will start a business: 3
- Took a job: 1
- Still unemployed: 1
- (Already in business: 1)

PROJECT REVIEW



The objective of the Mississippi Entrepreneur Training Program (METP) was to assist entrepreneurs statewide to seed and grow businesses. It provided scholarship funding for up to 1000 participants who qualified as dislocated workers and adult workers (including pre-release incarcerated individuals) to enroll in entrepreneurship training provided through the fifteen Mississippi community and junior colleges.

WIN Job Centers determined eligibility for potential participants. Individuals then signed up and registered on the METP website. After completing the sign up process, individuals registered for an orientation and assessment workshop called "First Steps for Entrepreneurs" Workshops were conducted by Small Business

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Development Center (SBDC) partners. Coordination for these additional workshops was conducted among The Montgomery Institute, WIN Job Centers and SBDC centers.

Individuals completing the orientation and assessment sessions were then referred to the community and junior colleges. Community/junior colleges enrolled participants in the 33-contact hour Southern Entrepreneur Program (SEP) developed by Dr. Brent Hales at the University of Southern Mississippi University. Each participant was required to purchase training materials (workbook and a flash drive costing about \$25). Colleges received a \$200 reimbursement for each participant who attended the first class session.

Upon completion of the training program, each participant received a certificate and was referred back to the SBDC for follow-up counseling. Additionally, the SBDC state office tracked the completers' performance through the METP Survey.

CHALLENGES/LESSONS LEARNED

WIN Job Center Training

Briefing and training all of the WIN Job Centers about the program was challenging. Initially, TMI held several conference calls where to walk staff through the program, process, procedures and answer questions. Most WIN Job Center managers then designated a single point of contact, usually an interviewer, who became the resident expert on the program. This strategy worked well for the most part. However, during follow up visits by TMI staff to WIN Job Centers, it did seem that in some centers not all of the interviewers or staff knew about the program or about who in the center was the expert to turn to. Good WIN Job Center leadership and commitment to the program definitely made a difference in terms of successful local outreach and implementation. For example, the Columbia WIN Job Center recruited and signed up more participants than any other center state by a ratio of 3-1.

Mississippi Correctional Facilities

Offering the METP at the Yazoo Federal Corrections Facilities through Holmes Community College (HCC) was a huge success. Facility managers were very accommodating and highly motivated for this training opportunity to be afforded to the prison population. This training was part of the inmate exit program for those prisoners who were within 90 days of their release date. Facility training managers reported that demand for the training was high and participants found the training quite valuable. The HCC trainer reported high motivation and participation of all the participants. Logistically, however, execution of the training within

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the facilities proved problematic. SBDC personnel and HCC trainers had to gain security clearances which took a week to 10 days to acquire and these had to be renewed every 60-90 days. Timely access to computers and necessary software was limited and therefore the ability of the participants to write business plans and create presentations was severely limited.

Community College Training Capacity

Building and maintaining community college SEP trainer capacity proved to be a challenge. One of the main points that we learned was that each college needed to recruit a “pool” of potential trainers for their district. The SEP is 33 hours delivered over 8-11 weeks and, therefore, requires a commitment from trainers. Reliance on one trainer at some institutions caused burnout and missed class times (when the trainer was unavailable).

Community College Implementation

Of the 15 community/junior colleges in the state, all but four held at least one SEP class.

CCJC Location	Number of Classes	Quantity Participants Enrolled	Quantity Participants Complete
Coahoma	1	11	5
CoLin	1	6	6
ECCC	0	0	0
EMCC	2	25	21
Hinds	2	12	10
Holmes	4	75	74
ICC	0	0	0
JCJC	1	9	8
MCC	3	34	33
MGCCC	1	15	14
MS Delta	0	0	0
NEMCC	0	0	0
NWMCC	1	10	10
PRCC	3	26	24
SWCC	3	37	30



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Program Outreach

Relying on WIN Job Centers to conduct participant outreach was not sufficient to reach the goal of training 1000 participants. While the project minimized the costs associated with outreach activities, outreach funding for each community college could have increased participation rates.

Mississippi STEPS Program

The introduction and implementation of the Mississippi STEPS program mid-way through 2010 increased demand for the METP program. Coordination and communication between the WIN Job Centers and the community colleges regarding the two programs could have been better. At several community colleges, some STEPS applicants thought that by simply enrolling and completing the METP training they would receive the STEPS grant. College administrators and trainers bore the brunt of client frustration but had not been informed sufficiently about STEPS to handle participant questions.