

Walmart Foundation's
"America Works" Initiative
Request for Proposals

Lead Organization Information Sheet

Organization: The Montgomery Institute

Is this Organization a 501(c)(3)? YES NO *(The lead organization must be a 501(c)(3) to receive the grant from the Walmart Foundation)*

Is this Organization a 509(a)(1) or 509(a)(2) public charity? YES NO

Address: P.O. Box 1889

City: Meridian

State: MS

Zip: 39302

Type of Organization: Education Workforce Development
 Economic Development Community Development
 Community-Based Community/Regional Foundation
 Other: _____

Lead Contact Name: Bill Crawford

Lead Contact Title: President

Office Phone: 601-483-2661 Work Cell: 601-934-9876 Fax: 601-483-2641

Email: tmibill@bellsouth.net

Partner Organizations:

- Jones County Junior College
- East Central Community College
- East Mississippi Community College
- Meridian Community College
- Meridian Public School District Career Connection
- National Institute for Rural Community Colleges at Mississippi State University
- WAEM Alliance
- Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians Office of Economic Development
- Mississippi Partnership Workforce Investment Board
- Twin Districts Workforce Investment Board

Useful Training in a Timely Manner:
A Proposal from The Montgomery Institute To the Walmart America Works Initiative

The Montgomery Institute (TMI) is a 501(c)(3), 509(a)(1) publicly supported charitable organization with the mission to “upbuild the people, places, programs, and region of East Mississippi and West Alabama” guided by the tenets of G. V. ‘Sonny’ Montgomery’s leadership legacy.”

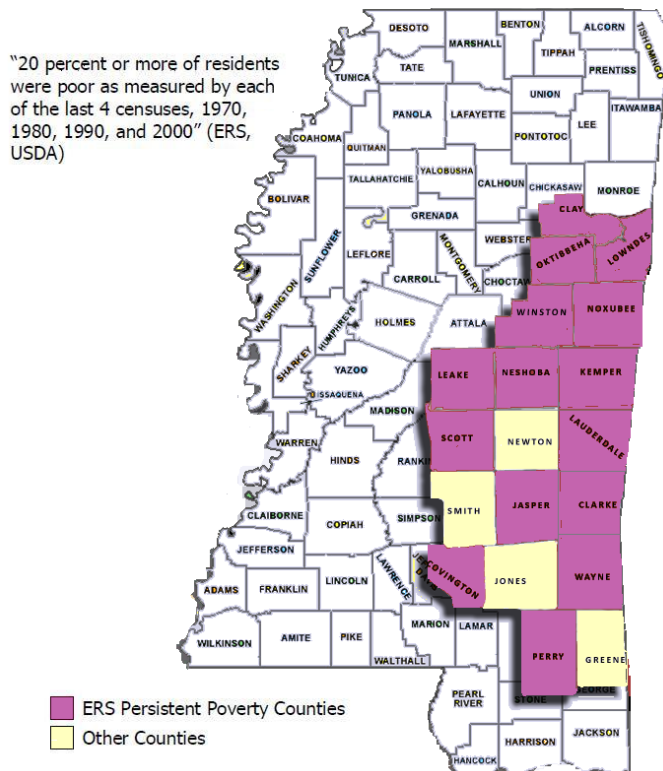
For the past four years, TMI has served as the program manager for the West Alabama – East Mississippi *Workforce Innovation in Regional Economic Development (WAEM WIRED)* Initiative by joint appointment of Governor Bob Riley of Alabama and Governor Haley Barbour of Mississippi. A key approach of this transformation initiative has been to build a common regional framework for the delivery of advanced manufacturing education and training from K-12 through college into industry.

The WAEM Alliance, consisting of eight community and junior colleges plus TMI, serves as the binding glue for this regional approach. One purpose of the Alliance is to demonstrate the benefits of community colleges serving as intermediaries to advance place-based community, economic, and workforce development across a rural region. The Alliance encourages all eight colleges, or subsets thereof, to pursue joint initiatives. This proposal combines the efforts of four Mississippi colleges to address needs in 19 rural east Mississippi counties and the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians. Governor Haley Barbour invited the Alliance to submit this proposal for a competitive award of \$155,000 of WIA discretionary funds. Four community colleges have committed at least \$25,000 each (see letters). The National Institute for Rural Community Colleges at Mississippi State University has committed \$50,000 (see letter). To complete this project, \$400,000 in foundation funding is requested.

1. Context:

a. Fifteen of the 19 counties rank as Persistent Poverty Counties as measured by USDA’s Economic Research Service (ERS). ERS shows 18 of the counties as rural – Perry County is similarly rural but is reported as part of the Hattiesburg metropolitan area (just outside the region). The population over age 25 without a high school diploma (29.1%) far exceeds the national averages (19.6%). In July 2008, the region already suffered higher than average unemployment – 8.4%. By July 2009

Persistent Poverty Counties



an additional 8,240 jobs were lost pushing the unemployment rate to 11%, higher than both the state and national averages. The additional 5,680 added to unemployment rolls pushed the total number to 25,360, a number projected to increase through 2010 as schools, colleges, and communities run through ARRA funds and enact budget cuts. During the week of Sept. 5, 2009, a total of 3,705 individuals were drawing extended unemployment benefits. In 2007, the RUPRI Center for Regional Competitiveness performed a comparative analysis of the region's economy. The study concluded that the region "is characterized by low educational attainment, low employment growth, and low per-capita income."

It was in the context set forth above that the WAEM WIRED Initiative decided to focus on improving workers' technical skills and to begin building a competitive advanced manufacturing workforce. An array of advanced manufacturers existed and were moving into the region. Severstal (steel), American Eurocopter (aerospace), PACCAR (automotive), Aurora Flight Systems(aerospace), Stark Aerospace, Taylor Machine Works (heavy equipment), La-Z-Boy (furniture), Weyerhaeuser Company (wood products), Tyson (poultry processing), Lockheed Martin (aerospace), Tower Automotive (motor vehicle), and Hol-Mac Industries (metal fabrication) are major employers who bought into the new advanced manufacturing training and credentialing programs. (See support letters from example companies.)

Since the downturn, all have slowed operations, laid off workers, and reduced training activities. Workforce directors at the four partner community colleges say they are seeing mixed signs that these and other advanced manufacturers are ready to begin rehiring. State economists project the economy will start to grow again during 2010 with significant long-term growth in advanced manufacturing categories.

b. Four Mississippi community and junior colleges – East Mississippi Community College, East Central Community College, Meridian Community College, and Jones County Junior College – plus Meridian School District's "Career Connection" will be the main providers of training, education, and counseling for this initiative.

Preliminary July 2009				
	Labor		Unemployment	
	Force	Employed	Number	Rate
Clarke	7,440	6,570	870	11.7
Clay	7,970	6,370	1,600	20.1
Covington	8,960	8,150	810	9.0
Greene	5,050	4,420	630	12.4
Jasper	7,540	6,600	940	12.4
Jones	30,300	27,780	2,520	8.3
Kemper	4,310	3,790	520	12.1
Lauderdale	34,580	31,200	3,380	9.8
Leake	8,510	7,520	990	11.7
Lowndes	26,340	23,250	3,090	11.7
Neshoba	13,600	12,330	1,270	9.4
Newton	9,550	8,610	940	9.8
Noxubee	4,060	3,270	790	19.5
Oktibbeha	19,670	17,510	2,160	11.0
Perry	5,070	4,440	630	12.5
Scott	14,250	13,140	1,110	7.8
Smith	6,570	5,940	630	9.6
Wayne	8,680	7,680	1,000	11.6
Winston	8,770	7,290	1,480	16.9
Region	231,220	205,860	25,360	11.0
Mississippi				10.5
U.S.				9.7

Projected Mississippi Employment Growth		
Manufacturing Occupation	Growth Rate through 2016	Additional Workers Needed
Assemblers & Fabricators	17.8%	4,550
Metal/Plastic Workers	11.0%	2,550
Plant & System Operators	8.3%	350
Other Production Workers	12.3%	3,900
Total Additional Workers Needed		11,350

Source: MS Dept. of Employment Security

They have strong connections to the following workforce system partners who will provide recruitment, placement, and tracking services: WIN Job Centers, local Workforce Investment Boards, and the Mississippi Department of Employment Security. The online and multiple training sites are provided to reduce the need for supportive services. However, child care and other supportive services as needed will be provided through programs operated by area Planning and Development Districts and county and state Department of Human Services offices.

c. The colleges, workforce system partners, planning and development districts, economic developers, and advanced manufacturing industries currently participate in the WAEM WIRED Initiative. All stand ready to fully support this new initiative. East Mississippi Community College and Jones County Junior College in collaboration with The Montgomery Institute and other partners have operated National Emergency Grants from the U.S. Department of Labor resulting from major plant shutdowns since 2001. All colleges have experience working with dislocated and disadvantaged workers through TANF, Adult Education, Basic Skills Training, and other such programs.

2. Improved Services: The common regional training framework was developed by WAEM WIRED in collaboration with industries, economic developers, business groups, training providers, and workforce system partners. Its goal is to provide readily accessible and timely training, based on national skills standards, to transform from a low-skill/low-wage workforce to a credentialed and higher paid advanced manufacturing workforce. The framework called for a regional credential supported by an on-line training system, additional training sites, and non-traditional scheduling to accomplish these goals. The intent was to build a readily accessible delivery system able to serve hard to reach, rural populations with minimal dependence upon scarce resources for direct supportive services.

The Modern Multi-skill Manufacturing (M3) Credential uses authentic assessment whereby trainees physically demonstrate mastery of selected skills. The Amatrol Anytime Anywhere e-Learning System not only provides on-line training support for the M3 Credentials, but also access to more than 400 advanced manufacturing training modules developed in accordance with national skills standards. Users can access the program from home, school, libraries, WIN Job Centers, industry sites...anywhere on-line access is provided. Today, the four college partners in Mississippi are able to expand training offerings from the main campuses in Mayhew, Decatur, Meridian, and Ellisville to additional sites in West Point, Macon, Scooba, Choctaw, Newton, Louisville, Philadelphia, and Bay Springs.

Coupled with additional training sites and non-traditional training schedules, this system led Governor Barbour to proclaim it, “one of the most innovative, accessible, advanced manufacturing training systems in the United States.”

Much progress was made through WIRED in transforming the interaction among workforce development agencies, workforce training organizations, and employers as well as the delivery of services to incumbent workers and students. Today, the e-Learning System is being used in high schools, colleges, and industry as a common training platform.

This proposal seeks to build on the systemic accomplishments of WIRED to extend the benefits of useful training in a timely manner to dislocated workers, out-of-school young people, and eligible members of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians, and to place them into advanced manufacturing jobs. The specific method was developed by a partner college, East Mississippi Community College.

In early 2007 the Sara Lee Corp. announced it would close the long-time meat processing facility in West Point, MS, eliminating approximately 1,700 jobs. Many of the plant's employees had less than a high school education and minimal technical skills. East Mississippi Community College (EMCC) received a National Emergency Grant to work directly with laid off workers, improve their educational level and technical skills, and find them employment.

Working with state's Rapid Response unit and the local WIN Job Center to meet this challenge, EMCC developed a model program with three key elements: 1) incorporating Adult Education and Basic Skills training into training and assessments for Career Readiness Certificates (CRC); 2) at the same time, moving trainees into the basic components of the Modern Multi-skill Manufacturing (M3) Credential; and 3) using "navigators" to assist participants to move from entry, through training and education, and into jobs. The challenge was to deliver training and get people into jobs in a realistic timeframe. Intense counseling, open-door access to training in West Point, on-line access to the Amatrol Anytime Anywhere e-Learning System, the combined approach to education and technical skills training, and one-on-one "navigation" paid off. Soon EMCC was placing dislocated workers into technical production jobs at American Eurocopter, Severstal, and PACCAR.

Based on EMCC's results, WAEM WIRED decided in 2009 to initiate a plan to duplicate this approach at the other partner community and junior colleges. On June 13, 2009, the M3 Production Level Credential was revamped to provide stackable Production Level I and Production Level II Credentials. The Production Level I Credential responds to general entry-level employment requirements as identified by advanced manufacturers. **It provides a realistic time track to participants who also need Adult Education/Basic Skills instruction and CRC training.** Also during 2009, WIRED funds were utilized to purchase additional advanced manufacturing training equipment to enhance training at off-site locations. Missing have been the opportunity and the resources to train "navigators" at each of the colleges.

As EMCC recognized and overcame, the WAEM initiative appropriately pulled together workforce system partners, training providers, service providers, and employers at the macro level to design training systems, services, and credentials. However, pulling these components together for the benefit of each individual participant proved to be erratic. Here is an on-the-ground example of how a rural community college can serve as an intermediary among multiple agencies. EMCC, acting at the intermediary, developed the role of the "navigator" to guide participants through and access services provided by the system; coach and counsel participants toward successful outcomes; and help place participants in real jobs. The navigator role was developed as a research project through the NIRCC at MSU.

As EMCC documented in the chart below, navigators are essential to improve participant completion rates. A major goal of this proposal is to achieve similar completion rates at all four colleges.

EMCC Completion Rates – Navigators added in Spring 2007.

Year July-June	Number of Participants In Non-Credit Training.	Percent Completing Training	Percent Attrition Non- completers	CRC's Awarded SILVER or better
2002-03	2083	62%	38%	
2003-04	4615	65%	35%	
2004-05	4388	58%	42%	
2005-06	4044	69%	31%	
2006-07**	6285	78%	22%	56%
2007-08	5839	89%	11%	67%
2008-09	4615	92%	8%	73%

This approach matches that provided by another partner in this proposal. The Meridian Public School District’s “Career Connection” provides training and placement services to out of school and in school youth. One of the few school-based programs in the state, this program has a high success rate in placing completers. This is accomplished by program managers interacting with employers, workforce system partners, supportive service partners, and training partners to provide participants what they need to succeed. The successful experience at the Career Connection will guide this proposal’s approach to serving out-of-school youth.

Career Connection is funded through the Twin Districts Workforce Investment Board and the school district. In addition to funding training opportunities, the program provides supportive services and on-the-job training supplements for participants. During the term of this grant, the four colleges will seek to establish this funding model to provide permanent support for navigator and supportive services for out-of-school youth.

This proposal will provide the resources to fully implement WAEM’s aggressive, easily accessible, time-sensitive approach to upgrading skills for dislocated workers and out-of-school youth; to develop and embed navigators at each of the colleges; and to move participants rapidly into advanced manufacturing jobs. Through this approach dislocated workers and out of school youth can acquire two recognized and stackable credentials and be ready for placement in as few as five weeks. It will allow this challenged rural region to bring the transformative alignment of agencies, strategies, and programs developed through the WAEM initiative down to transformative alignment of services to individuals.

3. Activities: Each college will assign navigator duties to an existing permanent position at the college. TMI will assign a project manager who will be responsible for training and overseeing the college navigators and for tracking and reporting related to the grant. The project manager will be responsible for coordinating the following activities:

Recruiting Activities: WIN Job Centers will identify and recruit dislocated workers, including low to moderate-income individuals. Navigators from the colleges will work with the WIN Job

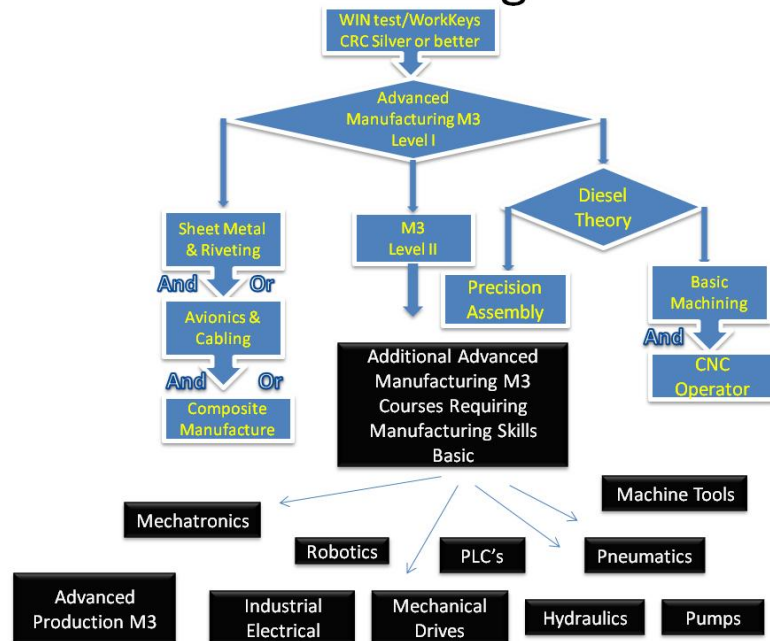
Centers and local school districts to identify and recruit out-of-school youth. The navigators will meet with these potential participants, provide them a brief orientation, opportunities for career counseling, and refer them to assessment.

Assessments: Each potential participant will be given the WorkKeys assessment aligned with the Mississippi Career Readiness Certificate (CRC) program. The CRC is a national, industry-recognized credential from ACT Testing Services. Individuals achieving a Silver Level (which indicates the participant has the basic capacity to perform 65% of today’s jobs) will be awarded the Mississippi Career Readiness Certificate and advance to advanced manufacturing training and M3 skills assessments. Participants who fail to reach the Silver Level certification will advance to parallel basic skills training and advanced manufacturing skills training. Basic skills training (provided with the WIN Training System) will provide remedial education to enhance the participants’ reading, applied mathematics, and information locating skills until they can attain the Silver Level. Due to the high rate of workers in the region that do not have a high school degree or equivalent, the basic skills remediation portion of this grant request is of utmost importance. Navigators will meet with participants to determine barriers to training and will coordinate with other agencies to overcome these barriers.

Training: Participants will be introduced to and enrolled in the Amatrol Anytime Anywhere e-Learning System. Additionally, colleges will provide advanced manufacturing training leading to the M3 Production Level I Credential at multiple locations, on non-traditional schedules. Generally, day classes will run five days a week for four hours a day for a total of five weeks and night classes will run four nights a week for three hours a night for a total of nine weeks. Basic skills training will be incorporated into this training as needed. Participants may rapidly advance through training

through on-line self-education and in-person skill demonstration leading to the M3 Credential. Participants completing training and passing the M3 skills assessment will be awarded the M3 Production Level I Credential. Participants may also receive CPR and OSHA 10 hour Certificates. Upon completion of this training, participants will be referred to placement. Participants will also

Manufacturing Certification Course Offerings



be encouraged to continue skills training from a number of tracks related to specific industries – see the example from EMCC in the adjacent chart.

Placement: College navigators, working closely with WIN Job Centers and industries, will maintain lists of job openings at advanced manufacturing industries. Navigators will also work with industries to qualify them to receive OJT funding to support on-the-job training for completers hired. Completers will be referred to industries for placement. Completers interviewed but not hired will be provided additional counseling by the navigators.

Tracking: There will be dual tracking for this project. Participants coming through WIN Job Centers will be tracked using the system operated by the Mississippi Department of Employment Security. All participants receiving college training will be tracked using the innovative tracking service developed by Mississippi State University under contract with the Mississippi Department of Employment Security. The project manager will survey employers annual on participant performance after hiring.

Timeline: Activities in this initiative will take place over a 28-month period, beginning February 1, 2010, and continuing through May 31, 2012. Upon award, the colleges and TMI will contact WIN Job Centers and initiate the recruiting process and seek training funds from local sources. Within 30 days of the grant announcement the colleges and TMI will have designated and trained navigators who will immediately begin working with potential participants identified by the WIN Job Centers. During the second month of the grant CRC assessments and training assignments will occur and continue thereafter. By the end of the second month, the first training activities should begin and continue thereafter. The training activities will be driven by the number of eligible participants. Placement opportunities, however, may not increase until the second half of 2010 or later.

The colleges will obtain training funds for dislocated workers and out-of-school youth from projects written to the State Board for Community and Junior Colleges, grants provided by the Mississippi Partnership and Twin Districts Workforce Investment Boards, and other sources that may become available. Each college has guaranteed to provide at least \$25,000 in funds for a total of \$100,000 to be used for matching funds. Significantly more training funds will likely be obtained by the colleges.

These funds plus \$236,000 in Walmart Foundation funds will be used to provide advanced manufacturing and basic skills training for participants, to support navigator activities, and to provide limited resources for supportive services. This includes \$8,000 that will be provided to the Meridian Public School District Career Connection to expand its out-of-school youth program and for coaching navigators in the guide, coach, and place support process.

The \$155,000 in funds to be provided through the Office of the Governor plus the \$50,000 from the National Institute for Rural Community Colleges at Mississippi State University will be coupled with \$81,000 in Walmart Foundation funds to provide access to the Ametrol Anytime Anywhere e-Learning System for a 28 month period, to provide support for the project manager for a two-year period, to maintain interaction among the four rural community colleges and the WAEM Alliance, and for grant administration.

The additional \$80,000 provided by the Walmart Foundation to support formation of a business led, regional council will be used to fund staff, travel, and meeting expenses related thereto.

4. Partners: The Montgomery Institute will be the lead organization, program manager, and administrative/fiscal agent. For the past four years, TMI has served as the program manager for WAEM WIRED as well as managed workforce and community development grants from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Mississippi Development Authority (CDBG grants), the Mississippi Department of Employment Security, and the Riley Foundation. TMI's vice president, who will oversee the program, has managed a National Emergency Grant, served as a college workforce director, and was recently cited, positively, by the Department of Labor in a Monitoring Review for his coordination of WAEM WIRED activities.

East Mississippi Community College, East Central Community College, Meridian Community College, and Jones County Junior College will provide navigator services, Basic Skills Training, Career Readiness Certificate (CRC) training, and M3 Production Level I training to participants. They will also award the CRC and M3 Credential to successful completers. Local WIN Job Centers operated by the Mississippi Department of Employment Security will provide recruitment, placement and tracking services. The Mississippi Partnership and Twin Districts Workforce Investment Boards will provide Individual Training Accounts and On-the-Training support for eligible individuals. South Mississippi Planning and Development District, East Central Planning and Development District, Central Mississippi Planning and Development District, Golden Triangle Planning and Development District and county offices of the Mississippi Department of Human Services will provide supportive services to eligible participants.

Meridian Public School District's "Career Connection" will expand its out-of-school youth training program and provide coaching to college navigators. The National Institute for Rural Community Colleges at Mississippi State University will provide funding and assign doctoral students to conduct studies of the project.

The transformative aspect of the approach offered by this partnership is to move dislocated workers and out-of-school youth, particularly low-skill and moderate-income individuals, into high-skill positions in a reasonable timeframe. This takes close coordination of partner activities, as provided by TMI, as well as innovative, integrated delivery of Basic Skills, and advanced manufacturing skills training by the college and one-one-one and placement services as provided by college navigators.

Mississippi community colleges, the State Workforce Investment Board, and elected leadership are closely monitoring this initiative to validate its benefits to the entire state. That is why the Governor has invited the Alliance to seek \$167,000 of highly sought after discretionary funds for this project. When the results are in, we are optimistic this approach will move statewide and be supported as a state program.

As noted previously, employers have been engaged in developing the training approach for WAEM WIRED, for revamping the M3 Credential, and in hiring (before the downturn) training

completers. Those listed in this document and others have shown growing enthusiasm for the regional training framework and the training offered as they have become more engaged. A new and transformative aspect of this proposal is the introduction of the “navigator.” College navigators will guide and coach participants along career paths, coordinate services with multiple agencies, aggressively seek out job openings among advanced manufacturers, and place program completers in these jobs. The success of the Career Connection shows this approach works extremely well for out-of-school youth.

5. Performance Measures – Outcomes: Based on dollars invested, Mississippi’s workforce system has had a primary focus on upgrading skills of incumbent workers, with a secondary focus on training workers for major new companies locating in the state. A large proportion of WIA investments have gone for ITAs paying for individuals to enter into traditional, semester-based training programs. This project has the opportunity leverage a new state emphasis on programs that quickly train and retrain dislocated workers and out-of-school youth and place them into higher skill, higher paying jobs. This would make training dollars more available to colleges to provide such training throughout the state. This is a systemic outcome we will pursue.

Several of the key outcomes of this proposal are difficult to measure: better alignment of services within the community college and among workforce system partners; greater recruitment of low and moderate dislocated workers and out of school youth; more skill training accomplished prior to employment. The cost to benchmark and measure these outcomes would not be cost beneficial. These outcomes will be observed and described in the periodic reports.

The effectiveness of the new “navigator” approach will be measured by improvements in participant completion rates. Each college will develop baseline rates from prior years similar to EMCC’s chart above. Annual completion rates during the course of this project will be reported in comparison to these baselines.

Most of the dislocated workers and out-of-school youth in our region qualify as low and moderate income individuals. Over the two-year timeframe of this grant, we expect to serve approximately 1,200 of these individuals.

The measureable outcomes (shown in the attached outcomes worksheet) will show participation, successful completion and placement, increased access and service, and employer satisfaction. They will also indicate increased focus by the colleges on out-of-school youth.

6. Sustainability: Much of the training capacity needed for this proposal has already been institutionalized through the WAEM WIRED initiative. Building the navigator duties around an existing full-time position at each college will make this new activity readily sustainable. The transformative aspects of this proposal come from the coordination, interaction, and timeliness of services and agencies rather than from new programs. The very best way to institutionalize an approach or a process is for it to succeed. That is the goal of this proposal – to so well serve the target populations in the manner described that not only will these institutions sustain these activities, but others in the state and region will seek to adopt them.

Resources for these services exist...if priorities can be transformed. The key is that services to dislocated workers and out-of-school youth, particularly low and moderate income individuals, become more competitive for resources with incumbent worker training and new company training.

The WAEM Alliance is a long-term commitment of the participating colleges and TMI made during the WAEM WIRED project. It will be sustained.

7. Budget: The total proposal is for \$400,000 in Walmart Foundation funds to be matched as follows: 1) the Office of the Governor through discretionary WIA funds in the amount of \$155,000; 2) Jones County Junior College, East Central Community College, East Mississippi Community College, and Meridian Community College in the amount of \$100,000 (\$25,000 each); and 3) the National Institute for Rural Community Colleges at Mississippi State University in the amount of \$50,000

NOTE: The award of discretionary WIA funds is part of a competitive process. It began with a "request for ideas." Requests for proposals followed the idea request. The Montgomery Institute submitted the idea for this proposal and was invited by the Governor to submit a formal proposal. Final commitment of funds through this process will occur by February 28, 2010. (See support letter from the Governor.)

Not included in the above figures are numerous and significant costs associated with this program that cannot be specifically committed for match purposes. Among these are: 1) the cost of the CRC assessments that are covered by the state; 2) the cost of basic skills training that are covered by the state; 3) the cost of training facilities and equipment as provided by the colleges; 4) on-the-job training funds that will be provided by the local workforce boards; 5) the cost of services provided by WIN Job Centers; 6) the cost of supportive services provided by Planning and Development Districts and the Department of Human Services. It is also expected that the colleges will attract substantially more than the \$100,000 committed by the local workforce investment boards to support training for this project.

The attached spreadsheet shows the detailed budget. An overview of funds allocations was described above in the Activities section. What follows is additional information related to that overview.

The budget provides for \$236,000 of the Walmart Foundation funds to be used for training, navigator, and supportive services. It is the expectation of this project that the colleges will attract from traditional state training funds and WIA funds much more than the \$100,000 pledged to cover costs of training classes. However, current and project budget cuts may diminish access to such funds. The second priority use of these Walmart funds will be to support navigator activities. This will include paying part of salary and benefits, travel to employers and WIN Job Centers, and related supplies. The third priority will be to use these funds for supportive services. The on-line training system, the multiple training locations, and the non-traditional training schedules are intended to minimize the need for supportive services. The front line of support for supportive services will be through normal channels provided by Planning and Development Districts and the Department of Human Services. However, there

may be instances where additional funds are needed to overcome barriers and Walmart funds may be used for this purpose.

The Foundation voluntarily increased its amount by \$80,000 to fund activities supporting formation of a business led, regional council.

The Meridian Public School District Career Connection projects it can greatly expand its out-of-school youth program with limited additional funds. Walmart funds totaling \$8,000 (\$4,000 per year) will be provided to accomplish this expansion. Training for Career Connection participants will be covered by funds allocated to Meridian Community College. The Career Connection will use these funds primarily for supportive services.

The Montgomery Institute does not have an indirect cost rate, so uses the direct allocation method to distribute its costs among programs. Funds remaining at the Institute will pay for Amatrol access (\$155,000), project manager costs over two years (\$91,000), and administrative costs in terms of bookkeeping, administration, and allocated facilities, insurance, audit, and telcom costs over two years (\$40,000).

8. Conclusion: This proposal will provide an easily accessible, time-sensitive approach to upgrading skills for dislocated workers and out-of-school youth; will develop and embed “individual focused” navigators at each of the colleges; will significantly improve participant completion rates at the colleges; will provide participants with recognized and stackable credentials; and will move completers rapidly into advanced manufacturing jobs. It has the opportunity to re-focus training priorities in Mississippi for the benefit of dislocated workers and out-of-school youth.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this proposal.