



East Mississippi Walmart Foundation Grant

“Useful Training in a Timely Manner”

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A. Provide a brief description of your grant program and major goals.

This project, managed by The Montgomery Institute (TMI), is funded by a combination of the \$400,000 Walmart Foundation Grant, a \$155,000 Governor's ARRA Discretionary WIA Funds Award, a \$50,000 grant from the National Institute for Rural Community Colleges at Mississippi State University, and \$100,000 in matching commitments from four partner community and junior colleges.

This project targets dislocated workers, out-of-school young people, and eligible members of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians to prepare and place them in advanced manufacturing jobs. It also provides for the development of a regional leadership coalition to oversee efforts to enhance the economic vitality of the West Alabama-East Mississippi region.

East Central Community College (ECCC), East Mississippi Community College (EMCC), Jones County Junior College (JCJC), and Meridian Community College (MCC), the partner colleges, are to work with local WIN Job Centers to recruit a steady stream of participants for the Walmart Foundation Grant training and placement program. The Career Connection at Meridian High Schools will recruit out-of-school youth to be training at MCC. The main objective of this grant is to take dislocated workers (particularly low-to-moderate income individuals) and out of school youth, provide them training that will result in stackable credentials such as the Career Readiness Certification – Silver level and M3 Production Level I, and place them into advanced manufacturing jobs.

Each college has one or more Navigators assisting in this process. Navigators guide participants through and help them access services provided through this grant. Navigators coach participants through training and help place completers in jobs. A successful Navigator cares about the participants and is committed to helping the participants successfully “navigate” the training, education, and placement processes.

Our major goals are as follows:

- *Number of Participants* - At least 1,200 dislocated workers and out-of-school youth in the region will participate in training/assessment.
- *Completion Rate* - Grant training partners will achieve a training completion rate of 83%, resulting in an output of at least 963 completers.
- *Placement Rate* - Grant partners will achieve a placement rate of 60%, resulting in a placement output of at least 720 participants.
- *Credentials* - Credentials provide evidence of participant outcomes. For this project, 55% of participants will achieve a Silver Level Career Readiness Certificate; 70% of participants will achieve an M3 Production Level 1 Credential or higher.

Note: This report covers an eleven-month period of the grant (March, 2011 to February, 2011). Because of normal delays due to start-up planning and grant-related training, this report covers approximately eight to nine months of actual training.



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B.i. What progress have you made in the past year? Please highlight a few success stories, include quotes, if possible.

As proposed, TMI contracted with the four partner community and junior colleges to provide advanced manufacturing training featuring the Modern, Multi-skill Manufacturing (M3) Credential, the Career Readiness Certificate, and other stackable credentials to residents of 19 East Mississippi counties. Each of the community colleges has named at least one Navigator. All Navigators have received training and orientation from TMI. Using Governor's ARRA Discretionary Funds, TMI contracted with Amatrol for a two-year extension of the contract to access to Amatrol training modules online. As a result, all four colleges have access to and use the Amatrol Anytime Anywhere e-Learning System to support and enhance training.

Two of the four colleges (ECCC and EMCC) began grant-related training early in the grant period, while the other two (JCJC and MCC) began their training in early 2011. Below are status reports from each of the community colleges:

East Central Community College – ECCC began recruiting and training participants for this grant in July of 2010. As of February, 2011, ECCC had successfully trained and awarded the M3 credential to 33 of their 42 grant participants. In addition to the M3 credentials, ECCC has also awarded 20 Silver Level Career Readiness Certificates (CRC) and has confirmed that eight of the completers have been placed in jobs. Navigators are working to help find jobs for all participants.

East Mississippi Community College – EMCC has been the most prolific of the four colleges with 111 completers. EMCC began grant-related training in March 2010, focusing on eligible participants in their credit and non-credit career training classes. Because EMCC first sought to serve dislocated workers already enrolled in training, the college has been able to award a high number of credentials to its completers. If the full cadre of M3 Production Level I modules were not covered in a career training class, completers were encouraged to continue with training to successfully attain the M3 Credential. As of February, 2011, EMCC has awarded 53 M3 Credentials, 56 Silver Level CRCs, and 529 other credentials. Most of the other credentials awarded were for OSHA safety classes, HVAC, Industrial Maintenance, Machining, Avionics, and Cabling, and Welding. EMCC confirmed 35 of the completers have been placed in jobs.

Jones County Junior College – JCJC put together a cross-discipline Walmart Grant organizing team in late August to determine its course of action to attain its specified goals. Representatives from JCJC developed flyers (approved by Walmart) and budgeted grant funds to purchase Walmart gift cards for supportive services to attract participants. Unfortunately, their initial attempt to fill a class before the end of 2010 was met with little success. JCJC contended that efforts to recruit dislocated participants from the WIN Job Center were ineffective. The intake process was amended to allow the colleges to make their own determination whether a



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participant qualifies for this training. As a result, JCJC was able to enroll 38 participants in the Walmart Foundation Training at the end of February, 2011.

Meridian Community College – MCC began its first grant-funded training class in February, 2011, with 34 students participating. MCC is holding the classes one night per week for ten consecutive weeks, and the participants are working on the AMATROL Anytime, Anywhere training modules at their own pace outside of class. 13 of these students have attained the Silver Level CRC, and all students are on track to complete the M3 in early May. MCC anticipates holding a number of classes during 2011 as the economy picks up. MCC classes include out-of-school youth recruited and navigated by the Career Connection at Meridian High School.

Success Stories – Richard Lepicier knows about the heartbreak of being laid off. He also knows about the value of learning additional skills in order to be prepared when another opportunity presents itself. Richard was originally laid off from Sara Lee Corporation in 2007 and took advantage of the training opportunities at EMCC. He completed three different industrial training courses: Manufacturing Skills Basic Course, Avionics and Cabling, and Sheet Metal and Riveting for Aviation. Because of this training, Richard was hired by Griffon Industries assembling armored military vehicles. Unfortunately, Richard was laid off in the Spring of 2010 when the company's contract with the military expired.

Richard knew from past experience that now was the time to learn more skills to make himself more attractive to prospective employers. He enrolled in EMCC's Composite Manufacturing training course and was later co-enrolled in the Walmart Foundation training grant, where he earned the Silver Level CRC and the M3 Production Level I credentials. Richard was successfully placed at Aurora Flight Sciences, Inc. in Columbus, where he was placed on the Orion unmanned aerial system development team. Last November, Aurora unveiled the first Orion flight vehicle, which is designed to collect military intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance at 20,000 feet with the capability of staying aloft for up to five days.





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Another fellow Sara Lee employee was Tony Alonzo. Tony also completed the EMCC Manufacturing Skills Basic and Composite Manufacturing classes and was co-enrolled in the Walmart Foundation training grant where he earned the Silver Level CRC and the M3 Production Level I credentials. Tony was successfully placed at UltraLife Corporation, which makes battery systems for the defense industry. UltraLife values this training so much that they offer a \$.50 per hour raise for any employees who earn a Silver Level CRC and another \$.50 per hour raise for each credential earned (up to a maximum \$2.00 per hour raise).

Perhaps the most impressive story of perseverance belongs to Andrew Hobson. Andrew was the middle of three children growing up in a single-parent household in Starkville, MS. After high school, Andrew enlisted in the Army where he was selected for Special Forces and was being trained as a paratrooper. Unfortunately, Andrew had a severe heat stroke during a training mission and was eventually released from the Army. Unemployed and homeless, Andrew began living in a tent at a state park and enrolled in training courses at EMCC. His instructors immediately realized his potential and he was hired as a student worker to help set up training materials and troubleshooting training equipment and labs. Last Spring, Andrew was enrolled in the Walmart Grant training program where he earned the CRC Gold level and M3 Production Level I credentials. He also completed training in Manufacturing Skills Basic, HVAC, Composite Manufacturing, and Mechatronics. In October, Andrew was successfully placed at Weavex Corporation, a manufacturer of industrial matting for the pulp and paper industry, as an electrical maintenance technician.

B.ii. What are the biggest challenges you have encountered? Please explain how you are addressing those challenges.

Two major challenges are currently affecting the community colleges ability to recruit participants and place them in jobs.

The first challenge is using the WIN Job Centers as the primary means to recruit participants. When TMI wrote the grant proposal, we wanted to follow a model we had created for a Department of Labor grant using the WIN Job Center to verify information required by DOL. We wrote the following paragraph to describe the recruiting methodology for this grant:

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.

WIN Job Centers are located sporadically throughout the state. Because the state now uses two call centers to perform Unemployment Benefit duties, the WIN Job Centers now focus almost exclusively on Employment Services. Three of our partner community colleges have reported



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that they are receiving very few referrals from these centers, even though they have placed brochures in the centers and are referring possible participants to the centers for determination of whether the participant is a dislocated worker.

Addressing Challenge 1: The WIN Jobs Centers primarily determine whether a person is a dislocated worker through self-attestation. This means the applicant is asked whether they have ever been laid off or terminated from a job through no fault of their own or, if they were self-employed, if they closed their business due to economic reasons. As a solution, our Navigators were trained in February 2011 to make the determination whether a participant qualifies for this training. We can include a statement of self-attestation to be signed by the participant. Because our Navigators will be collecting and reporting all necessary data on these participants for reporting to the community college data system developed by Mississippi State University for the Mississippi Department of Employment Security, the need to have the WIN Job Centers involved is greatly reduced. However, we will continue to work with WIN Job Centers and recruit as we can through them.

The second challenge is the slower than anticipated rate of economic recovery for the region, particularly in manufacturing. State economic forecasters misjudged the length and depth of this recession, and it appears our region is recovering at a slower rate than the rest of the state. Industry in the northern part of our region has just begun hiring again. Although the numbers hired remain small, this is a signal our regional economy is on the verge of recovery.

This slow rate of recovery is greatly affecting our placement rates for training completers. This situation also affects recruiting, as participants do not see the direct and immediate link between attaining industry credentials and getting a job.

Addressing Challenge 2: There are few if any answers to speeding up the recovery of the region. However, there are a few silver linings to the current economic situation. As we have seen at EMCC, many participants are continuing their training and adding more credentials to their resumés while waiting to find employment in the region. Also, our two community college partners who have yet to engage in their actual training activities have begun to see employment opportunities improve.

B.iii. If your program is being implemented in collaboration with other organizations, please describe how your grant-funded activities are adding value to the work of those other organizations, and vice versa.

The Montgomery Institute strives to involve multiple partners in every grant opportunity we seek. Our role is to manage each grant fiscally and/or programmatically. The Walmart Foundation Grant is no exception.

We have collaborated with the aforementioned four community and junior colleges (ECCC, EMCC, JCJC, and MCC) to provide the training opportunities for the people in their districts and



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provide employers with a hiring pool of people with improved and upgraded skill sets. Because of the impact of state and federal budget decisions, these colleges must rely more and more on grant-funded programs to supplement their contracting training budgets. This Walmart Foundation Grant and matching grants have allowed the partner community colleges to continue utilizing the Amatrol Anytime Anywhere e-Learning System, offering the related regional Modern Multi-skill Manufacturing (M3) training program that was started through the WIRED grant, and growing the technical skill bases of workers in our region. It is our mutual desire for the M3 Credential and our partner community colleges to continue gaining credibility with our industry partners both within and outside of our East Mississippi - West Alabama region.

In addition to our community college partners, we have also set aside a small amount of funding to the Meridian High School District's Career Connection for supplemental services for training for out-of-school youth. The value created for Career Connection is the ability to provide transportation assistance for out of school youth to receive M3 training at the local community colleges. There is added value in the new partnership formed between the school district and the community college, as there are several of Career Connection's clients who can benefit from the training offered by community colleges in several other areas in addition to M3 training. The colleges benefit by learning advanced Navigator skills from the counselors at Career Connection as well as an increased number of training participants referred to the colleges.

TMI derives value from our continued association with the partner colleges through the trust and reliability built as we successfully collaborate. TMI also derives value from relationships with our region's industry, political, and community leaders as we continue to evolve a regional leadership commission to shape the future of the East Mississippi - West Alabama region.

B.iv. Overall, how is your program expanding economic opportunities for people in your region? Please include information on job creation and employment statistics.

As previously mentioned, our placement rate for our completers has fallen short of our expectations at this time. We have confirmed that 43 of our 148 completers have been placed in employment, which is a 29.1 percent placement rate. This falls short of our goal of a 60 percent placement rate. There are just not enough manufacturing jobs coming available at this stage of our region's economic recovery.

However, our program is only now getting ramped up to capacity and our regional economy is just showing signs of recovery. Therefore, we are convinced our success in this area will be in line with our stated goal of a 60 percent placement rate. Our numerical goal is 720 participants placed. Our current focus is now heavily on recruiting to fill classes. We will, then, continuously promote our success stories to increase the positive perception of the Walmart Foundation Grant training in our region.

B.v. How is your program contributing to the economic vitality of your region?



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Our program is helping to increase the skills sets and the value of the manufacturing workforce in our region. The East Mississippi - West Alabama region has long been touted as having plentiful resources and cheap labor. Now that the “cheap labor” manufacturing jobs have been lost to other countries with cheaper labor, we are focusing on changing the label on our workforce to “skilled labor” and “trained labor” through our skills-authenticated credential program, the M3 Production credential and related Amatrol Anytime Anywhere e-Learning System.

C.i. Please provide a brief description of the metrics you are using to evaluate this program.

- 1) *Number of Participants Beginning Training* – This is the number of eligible grant participants who have completed the Participant Application and Education Form and have begun a grant-funded training program.
- 2) *Number of Participants Completing Training* – Of the Participants Beginning Training (those who qualify under Metric 1 above), these are the participants who have completed at least one grant-funded training program. Note: Completion of the M3 training program does not automatically result in the awarding of an M3 credential. The completer must also successfully pass the skills authentication test in order to earn the M3 credential.
- 3) *Number of Silver Level CRCs Awarded* -- Of the Participants Beginning Training (those who qualify under Metric 1 above), these are the participants who have met or exceeded Skill Level Four (4) or higher on the WorkKeys® Career Readiness Certificate examination.
- 4) *Number of M3 Production Level 1 Credentials Awarded* – This is the total number of M3 Production Level 1 Credentials awarded to the Participants Completing Training (Metric 2 above). In order to receive this credential, a participant must successfully complete all eight Amatrol modules that make up the M3 Production Level 1 Credential listed below:
 - (1) Basic Safety
 - (2) Basic Computer Skills
 - (3) Introduction to Hand and Power Tools
 - (4) Blueprint Reading I
 - (5) Basic Measurement
 - (6) Precision Measurement Tools
 - (7) Introduction to Statistical Process Control
 - (8) Control Chart Operation
- 5) *Number of Other Credentials Awarded* – In addition to the M3 and the Silver Level CRC, this is the total number of recognized credentials awarded to all grant participants. Participants are encouraged to continue training and “stacking” credentials related to advanced manufacturing. Other credentials awarded may include OSHA safety certificates, CPR certificates, skills-specific training certificate (electrical circuits, welding, avionics and cabling, HVAC, etc).
- 6) *Number of Participants Placed in a Job* – This is the total number of grant participants who are successfully placed in a job. In order to count under this metric, the job placement must be verified by the Navigator.



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In addition to these metrics, each community college training partner must submit to TMI a quarterly narrative report describing their feedback and progress for the quarter, lessons learned, and any donor recognition made during the quarter. A sample of the Quarterly Metrics Report required from each community college training partner is shown below. The target column lists the overall goals of each college.

On the page following the sample is the actual cumulative quarterly metrics chart for this project.



College Quarterly Metrics Report				
Name and Address of Sub-grantee: _____ _____			Reporting Period: _____ to _____	
Performance Requirements	Target	Previous Quarters	Current Quarter	Cumulative
Number of Participants Beginning Training	300			
Number of Participants Completing Training	241			
Number of Silver Level CRCs Awarded	165			
Number of M3 Production Level I Credentials Awarded	210			
Number of Other Credentials Awarded (specify type and number in narrative)				
Number of Participants Placed in a Job	180			
Submitted by:			Date:	



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Goals	Outputs			Outcomes		
	Target & Actual Performance	Unexpected Performance	Comments	Actual Performance	Unexpected Performance	Comments
Number of Participants – At least 1,200 dislocated workers and out-of-school youth in the region will participate in training/assessment.	Target: 1,200 Actual : 285	Two of our four training partners were unable to ramp up training until January, 2011.	All four partners are now ramped up to train. Need to increase recruiting efforts.			
Completion Rate – Grant training partners will achieve a training completion rate of 83%, resulting in an output of at least 963 completers.	Target: 963 Actual: 148 Rate: 82.2%		Completion rate does not include the 105 participants currently in training.			
Placement Rate – Grant partners will achieve a placement rate of 60%, resulting in a placement output of at least 720.	Target: 720 Actual: 43 Rate: 29.1%		Lack of jobs due to slow recovery. Will push Navigators to follow up more closely.			
Credentials –For this project, 55% of participants will achieve a Silver Level Career Readiness Certificate; 70% of participants will achieve an M3 Production Level 1 Credential or higher.				CRC Target: 660 CRC Actual: 99 Rate: 34.7% M3 Target: 840 M3 Actual: 103 Rate: 57.2%	CRC rates are much lower than expected. M3 Rate does not include the 105 participants currently in training.	TMI will investigate why CRC rates are lower than expected.

Report Period (03/01/2010) – (2/28/2011)

Grant Period (03/2010) – (03/2012)



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E.i. What key lessons are you learning as a result of this grant program?

One of our community college training partners has noted an increase demand for OSHA safety training from the industries in their district. As a result, the community college has increased the number of OSHA general safety and forklift safety classes. Grant participants are encouraged to include at least the OSHA general safety credential as one of their stacked credentials.

This is not as much a lesson as an unanticipated challenge, but our community college training partners have had difficulty finding participants through the WIN Job Centers (Mississippi's local one-stop centers). The community colleges have a long history of partnering with the WIN Job Centers and are currently partnering with them on a \$4.5 million DOL grant without difficulty. However, three of the four colleges have noted in their third quarterly report that recruiting through the WIN Job Centers has been minimally effective.

E.ii. What modifications, if any, do you anticipate making to your program as a result of what you are learning?

We have examined our recruiting effort and have decided our Navigators can use the same determination methodology (self-attestation) to establish a participant's eligibility to participate in the grant-funded training. Our grant proposal specifies that we will use the WIN Job Center for recruiting, but the proposal does not specify that this will be the only method of recruiting for the training programs. This change has already resulted in improved recruiting.

E.iii. What are your recommendations to others engaged in this work based upon your experience working on these issues?

We recommend planning a training program that results in multiple stackable credentials, such as the CRC, M3, OSHA, and other industry-recognized credentials. By doing so, a participant can continue to better themselves by continuing their training while they are searching for job opportunities. Also, we recommend opening up recruitment so that eligible participants are unintentionally excluded.

F.i. Please describe how the Walmart Foundation is being recognized for our support, including any communication, signage, media, letters of support, etc.

The Walmart Foundation is being recognized in a number of different ways. The Montgomery Institute website lists the "Walmart Foundation America Works Initiative" on our new front page (<http://tmi.ms>) and includes a link to a page describing the Walmart Foundation grant and a further link to our full grant proposal. We have sought and gained permission to use the Walmart logo (in accordance with the published rules of use) on several brochures and flyers. Also, the Walmart logo is prominently displayed atop each of our internal forms, including the participant intake form.



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F.ii. Which aspect of your donor recognition plan do you feel has been the most and least successful, and why? What changes would you recommend?

Each college's brochures and flyers are used primarily for recruiting through the WIN Job Centers, so the exposure is minimized. While we will continue to use the brochures in this manner, we want to expand our recruiting effort to place these flyers and brochures in public places and request PSAs recognizing grant funding from the Walmart Foundation.

Because we are still ramping up our training and placement functions, we have just begun collecting success stories. We will release these success stories through our e-mail blasts and to the local media outlets, increasing the exposure and recognition of the Walmart Foundation in our region. As these and other success stories become more widely known, we are certain this will lead to more successes and more exposure for the program and for the Walmart Foundation.