



2009 Governor's Workforce

## Mississippi Reemployment Summit

### 2009 GOVERNOR'S WORKFORCE MISSISSIPPI REEMPLOYMENT SUMMIT: SUMMARY OF SUGGESTED ACTION ITEMS

#### Background

The Reemployment Summit, held May 18 - 19, 2009 in Jackson, brought together workforce development, economic development, community college, employer, and other state and local partners to identify innovative ways to enhance current employment efforts, with a focus on reemploying out-of-work Mississippians. The Summit agenda included six<sup>1</sup> thematic action planning sessions, during which participants identified both short-term and longer-range recommended state and local action steps in targeted areas of focus that would advance economic stimulus implementation, reemployment strategies, and workforce system transformation.

The summary of recommended action steps in each of the six areas is presented below. State leaders may wish to **review these recommendations to prioritize critical areas of focus for executive, state, and local action** in both the short- and long-term. In addition, **formalizing a process and an organizational structure for implementation of priority action items will be critical to ensuring that desired changes and innovations are achieved.** Interim, basic recommendations from the consultants appear at the end of this document.

#### 1. Flexible Training Options

- Catalog all of the flexible (e.g. open-entry, open-exit) training options currently available in the state and disseminate among workforce partners throughout the state.
- Develop, communicate, and increase alternative funding sources for open-entry/open-exit modular training.
  - Expand availability of supportive services for individuals in training.
  - Implement flexible and consistent Individual Training Account policy across Local Workforce Investment Areas.

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<sup>1</sup> Five thematic action planning sessions were planned originally. However, the Enhancing Employer Outreach and Encouraging Entrepreneurship planning group split into two groups.



- Add additional short-term training options to the Eligible Training Provider List.
- Expand career technical center and career technical high school programming.
  - Need for engaging K-12 partners; community colleges may be able to serve as catalysts in this area.
- Increase all stakeholders' involvement in designing and implementing "stackable" lifelong learning options.

## 2. Mississippi's High-Growth and Emerging Industries

- Target training for emerging and high-growth industries by identifying sectoral areas of focus.
  - Strategies must be data-driven (including employer-validated data).
  - Remove/mitigate federal and state policy barriers; work-flex and other waivers could be useful.
  - Identify relevant employers in targeted sector areas, and determine appropriate training for individuals.
  - Form local consortia that meet quarterly/annually with stakeholders.
- Link workforce professionals with local economic development professionals to provide training incentives.
  - Implement flexible funding strategies to support this.
  - Identify skill gaps at the state and local levels to inform training design and delivery.

## 3. Partnership Development and Integration of Programs, Staff, and Service Delivery

- Increase cross-training and collaboration among partner agencies to leverage resources and eliminate duplication.
  - Define funding streams and uses and leverage resources.
  - Empower front-line staff to collaborate with partners at the local level. Conduct front-line staff training to improve staff knowledge of partners' services.
  - Include partners' staff in workforce system staff development activities and staff meetings to facilitate partnership and integration.



- Where appropriate, consolidate processes and services to eliminate duplication.
- Provide high school career counselors with workforce training information and resources.
  - Require that all high school students have a WIN Center orientation/tour.
- Create a mechanism to stimulate communication and collaboration among state agencies to identify programs and resources that support the common goal of serving business and individual customers.
  - Governor/State Workforce Investment Board could convene an annual forum of state agency directors to identify common issues that need to be addressed and discuss available programs and services each agency has to address the issues.
  - Identify resource persons from each state agency to serve on a task force designed to strengthen cross-agency communication and collaboration among programs and resources.
    - Task force would report to Governor/State Workforce Investment Board at regular intervals.
- Increase workforce system presence/accessibility in local Department of Human Services offices.
- Identify all partners and market/re-market partners' services; improve internal and external communication.
  - Utilize technology to market and target partners' services to a broader sector.
  - Develop common networking sites.
  - Leverage resources such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc.
  - Make local partnership meetings more inclusive and interactive.
- Develop and enhance workforce system communication.
  - Create a single point of contact for employers that have workforce-related questions or concerns.
  - Increase public relations and update connectivity at the state level.
  - Ensure that staff/partners throughout the workforce system and at all levels of the system understand and communicate the same message.

#### 4. Enhancing Employer Outreach



- Increase education and awareness around workforce system services and resources for employers as well as other customer/stakeholder groups (parents, students, high school counselors, etc.).
  - Use marketing campaigns, such as a “job applicant of the week” campaign, local television outlets, and other methods.
  - Use a “point of sale” approach to make employers aware of the full range of workforce system services and resources.
  - Better link Internet sites and Internet-based processes to disseminate additional information about the full range of available services.
- Increase the availability of flexible, open-ended, demand-driven training.
  - Increase alternatives to semester-based training.
  - Increase coordination of on-the-job and customized training.
  - Make training available for employed individuals (flexible hours, such as nights and weekends).
- Implement efforts to change perceptions around career/technical training.
  - Use a different term than “vocational training.”
  - Collaborate with the K-12 system to remove the stigma around career training; engage parents, school counselors, and the community in this effort.
  - Replicate the Create Campaign throughout the state.
- Increase enrollment in career and technical training programs.
  - Increase technology-based marketing/outreach.
  - Use E-WIN Access Points in schools to increase awareness of available programs.
  - Replicate existing models for dual enrollment (high school and community/technical colleges or apprenticeship) to career and technical training. Use the Advanced Placement credit-earning model for career and technical training.
- Better prepare individuals to be job-ready.
  - Begin basic life skills training in middle school.
  - Provide GED training to displaced workers.
  - Require all Individual Training Account recipients to go through work readiness/soft skills training prior to receiving their accounts.



- Leverage Recovery Act funding to provide necessary supportive services to enable individuals to become job-ready.

#### 5. Encouraging Entrepreneurship

- Map assets and identify funding resources that could support entrepreneurship.
  - Use the Workforce Enhancement Training Fund to support entrepreneurs' businesses once they are established.
- Identify targeted talent pools that would be good "fits" for entrepreneurship programs.
- Develop local entrepreneurship mentoring programs; engage veterans and/or others to serve as mentors.
- Offer the Self-Employment Assistance Program for low-income entrepreneurs.
- Implement accredited entrepreneurship curriculum statewide.
- Increase the availability of entrepreneurship training on the Eligible Training Provider List.
- Incorporate entrepreneurship into state and local strategic plans.
- Conduct local business plan competitions/award processes.
- Develop and share common messaging and information about entrepreneurship opportunities.
- Encourage entrepreneurship in the K-12 system and in summer career exposure programs for youth.
  - Partner with Junior Achievement to increase entrepreneurship; leverage this organization to bring K-12, Parent/Teacher Associations, and parents to the table.
- Implement proactive business survivorship planning services to support entrepreneurs' existing businesses.
- Develop additional entrepreneurship incubators.
  - Leverage the workforce system's and partners' assets for incubators (WIN Center space, funding, equipment, staff, etc.).
  - Train WIN Center staff on entrepreneurship and business incubator opportunities.

#### 6. The Workforce System's Role in Economic Development



- Increase interaction and alignment among workforce and economic development systems.
  - State-level leadership can encourage/incentivize local-level partnerships.
  - Locally, workforce and economic development partners should meet regularly, host after-hours partnership networking events at WIN Centers, etc.
- Collaborate to identify priorities and craft a common message to deliver to the business community.
  - At the state level, develop a website that communicates the inventory of workforce and economic development services, resources, and incentives.
    - Link this site to local sector information and initiatives as well as job information.
    - Site must be well-marketed, dynamic, and easy to use.
    - Target both new and existing businesses, as well as small businesses.
- Enhance communication processes: workforce development needs to be engaged at the beginning of economic development projects, not at the end.
  - The workforce development system needs a communications “package” that delivers a common message.
  - Workforce development can increase visibility by presenting information at economic development meetings and conferences.
  - Local Workforce Area leadership can meet with WIN Center staff to share expectations regarding engagement with economic development partners.
  - Expand membership in local associations such as human resource organizations, Chambers of Commerce, etc.

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#### ADDITIONAL NOTES FROM MAHER & MAHER

SUBSTANCE: In addition to the substantive items discussed above, Maher and Maher recommends a dedicated approach to expanding the concept and practice of **collaborative, regional economic/workforce development planning and implementation** throughout the State. There are two primary advantages to this approach in terms of achieving the items above:



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- Many of the discrete items above are key elements and/or “natural” outgrowths of a dedicated collaborative regional approach, including and especially the sector-based strategies and partnership expansion; and
- The lessons learned through the experiences of the two Mississippi WIRED regions could be brought directly and impactfully to bear on the remaining areas of the State. In a word, regionalism has been approached successfully in these areas, and has yielded many of the benefits and processes sought by Summit participants, as expressed above.

PROCESS: We recommend that the State (with technical assistance, if available) establish a well-organized, multi-team, cross-agency, and multi-level approach to completing the planning phase and initiating active implementation of the key items discussed above. This approach would ensure that:

- The best ideas are brought forward from all levels and partners in the system;
- Sharing of existing promising practices across the State as they relate to the various initiatives is enabled and maximized;
- Responsibility for change, whether at the State, regional and/or local level, is properly assigned and planned in a context where individuals may be held accountable; and
- Critical early buy-in is achieved from all system levels and partners.

Our final report to the State, due June 30, will include a full explanation of the process and benefits of this approach.