



Grant Opportunity for Community-Based Teams

The Mississippi Higher Education Initiative (MSHEI) is a partnership between Mississippi State University and the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) working to raise the educational attainment of the Mississippi Appalachian region. In 2008, MSHEI grants were awarded to teams from the Appalachian counties deemed "Distressed" by the ARC.

MSHEI is soliciting written proposals from Community-based teams within the ARC At-Risk counties of Alcorn, Calhoun, Lowndes, Monroe, Oktibbeha, Prentiss, Tippah, and Tishomingo. Community-based teams are required to partner with area schools to promote educational opportunities beyond high school.

Teams are encouraged to register for the pre-proposal technical assistance meeting October 7, 2009 at the Hilton Garden Inn in Starkville. Travel reimbursement will be provided to participating teams that attend and subsequently submit proposals to fund activities that encourage students to graduate from high school and enroll in post-secondary education. Focusing on access to a variety of post-secondary educational opportunities is encouraged, including community college certificate and associate degree programs, four-year college degree programs, and university degree programs.

Grant funds may be used to provide career planning and financial aid resources, field trips to college campuses and worksites, guest speakers, and other resources to help students and parents make informed decisions. There are two keys to the success of a MSHEI project. No. 1 is the enthusiastic commitment of the community based team, which may include the local economic developer, chamber director, school officials, parents, city officials, business leaders, media representatives, ministers, grandparents, and students. The second key is total buy-in and support from the school principal, counselors, teachers, and staff — essentially everyone working with the students at the local school.

Eligibility: Any community project or county-wide project in the eight at-risk ARC counties of Alcorn, Calhoun, Lowndes, Monroe, Oktibbeha, Prentiss, Tippah, and Tishomingo are eligible to apply.

Awards: Four to six sub-grants will be awarded on a competitive basis to winning teams. In most cases, the lead community-based agency will receive the funds, not the school. Half-year grants ranging \$3,000 to \$5,000 will be awarded for the period, January to June

of 2010. Upon successful completion of an initial project, second year funding is available with awards ranging from \$5,000 to \$10,000.

Timeline: The Request for Proposals is available on the MSHEI website at http://www.msgovt.org/mshei/RFP_info.html. A pre-proposal conference will held in Starkville October 7. Final proposals are due October 30. Award notifications will be made in late November with project funds available in January 2010.

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