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Montgomery, Alabama Quality of Life Grant Proposal



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Situation

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Needs/ Problems

Montgomery County has a struggling industrial economy with over half of its workforce working blue collar jobs. According to the Economic Development Partnership of Alabama, the major industries are distribution, fabricated metals, medical, plastics and state and regional government. Government is a prevalent employer in Montgomery because it is the capital city. Compared to the poverty level of Alabama and the U.S., Montgomery County’s level of poverty is considerably higher, at 13.5%.¹

Montgomery County is also in need of educational reform. The high school drop-out rate is 9.56%, and is projected to reach over 15% in the next four years. Additionally, Alabama ranks 44th for residents with a bachelor’s degree. While the number of residents attaining a bachelor’s degree is up 5%, from 15.4% in 1991 to 20.2 in 2000, this is still not enough to attract higher paying jobs. In a poor state like Alabama, the need is great for nearly every type of school

Employment by Industry

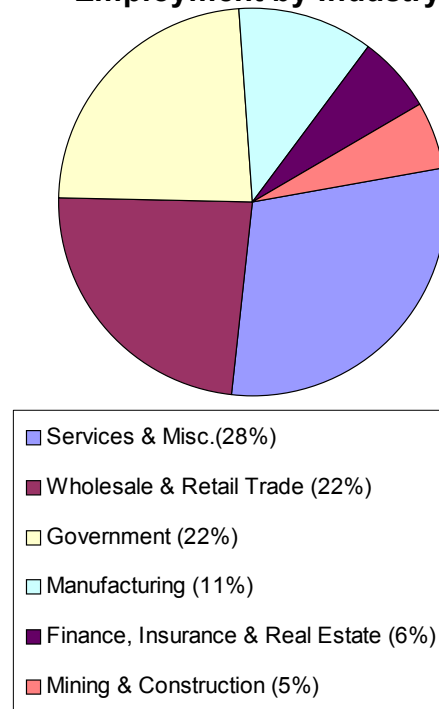


Figure 5: Montgomery Industries

¹ Industries information compiled from Economic Development Partnership of Alabama Website

improvement, including technology. Classrooms are poorly equipped with computers, and much of the equipment is outdated. In recent years, the school systems have pushed for further technology spending, but the legislatures have not complied.²

Reforms in education are essential to improve the local economy. “Skilled communities rise – unskilled communities fall,” according to Harvard economist Edward Glaeser.³

Montgomery County’s small population of educated workers leads to a proliferation of blue collar jobs. In our current “knowledge-based economy,” what matters is the intellectual capacity of the workforce. Local economies succeed when they can utilize their homegrown talent. Unfortunately, Alabama is not positioned well to attract and keep the knowledge workers it needs. Morrison Institute’s recent statewide survey of employers confirmed the importance and challenge of attracting talent. More than half (52%) of the firms who recruit workers out of state rated poor schools as “major barriers” to attracting quality employees.⁴

Additional Needs

The high levels of high school drop-outs in Montgomery County produce additional needs both personal and societal. The loss of taxes, loss of production and the cost of assistance provided to dropouts make the problem of high school non-completion an issue for every taxpayer. According to the National Drop-out Prevention Center (NDPC), each year’s class of dropouts will cost the country over \$200 billion during their lifetimes in lost earnings and unrealized tax revenue. Dropouts comprise nearly half of the heads of households on welfare and an even higher percentage of the prison population.

² Facts compiled from *Alabama Education Quick Facts* pamphlet published by Alabama Department of Education, , and *Education Week*.

³ *Five Shoes Waiting to Drop*

Additionally, the costs for the drop-outs themselves are high. They are three times as likely to slip into poverty as their peers who graduate. The average hourly wage of drop-outs has steadily declined 10% per decade for the last thirty years. Additionally, high school drop-outs earn over \$6,000 less in annual income than graduates, and \$20,000 less than college graduates.⁵

Target Audience

High school drop-outs share similar characteristics. According to the NDPC, these at-risk students can be defined through similar school (low expectations, lack of relevant curriculum), community (lack of community support services), student (low ability level, poor school attitude), and family (low social economic status) related situations. The federally funded National Free Lunch Program is used as an indicator of need in schools, since participating students meet one or more of these at-risk characteristics. Sixty-two percent of Montgomery County students are registered for this program. This illustrates the great need in this area, especially when only 40% of students statewide are enrolled in this program.⁶

Using the National Free Lunch Program enrollment and local high school dropout rates, we have determined our target audience. The total number of high school students enrolled in Montgomery County is 6,000. Out of this number, 62% or 4,000 students are considered in need. By concentrating on the percent likely to drop-out, currently 9.8%, we have a target audience of just over 400 students.

⁵ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Anne E. Casey Foundation, U.S. Bureau of the Census

⁶ Alabama Department of Education

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Solution

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Organization/ Service description

The M.O.R.E Program works with local schools to target at-risk students for the program. At-risk students are identified through standardized test scores, participation in school-lunch program, and teacher recommendations. Upon enrollment in the program, the student meets with the program counselor to identify problem areas and plan their course of study. The center provides classes and tutoring on subjects required by Alabama graduation requirements, in areas of English, Math, Geometry, Algebra, Social Science, World History and Geography, US History and Geography, Economics, and Government. Classes are held in several arrangements, depending on the individual student's needs, from group class sessions to one-on-one tutoring.

The program fosters and enhances student success through computer assisted instruction support services. Tangible rewards, such as laptop give-a-ways, motivate the students to remain in school and attending the center. Other smaller incentives, for school attendance and increased grades, further motivate students. The center also offers additional services like counseling, college guidance and career assistance. The curriculum allows students to receive high school credit upon completion of the course.

Justification for organization

The M.O.R.E. Program utilizes several strategies to promote graduation. The National Dropout Prevention Center has identified several key approaches for lowering the drop-out rate.

Additionally, these strategies have been successfully implemented at all education levels and environments throughout the nation. One strategy shows that integrating technology into the class setting improves at-risk student’s chances. Technology offers some of the best opportunities for delivering instruction which engages students in a variety of learning style and addresses multiple intelligences. Untraditional instruction time also increases student achievement. After-school and summer enhancement programs, like the M.O.R.E. Program, inspire interest in a variety of areas and expand student’s knowledge base. Finally, individualized instruction treats at-risk students as individuals and allows for flexibility within the curriculum.

Mission statement

The mission of the M.O.R.E Program is two-fold. First, the program will diagnose and remediate student deficiencies preparing them to graduate high school and excel in college studies. Second, our center will integrate technology into the teaching and learning process in order to address all learning styles.

Organization Structure

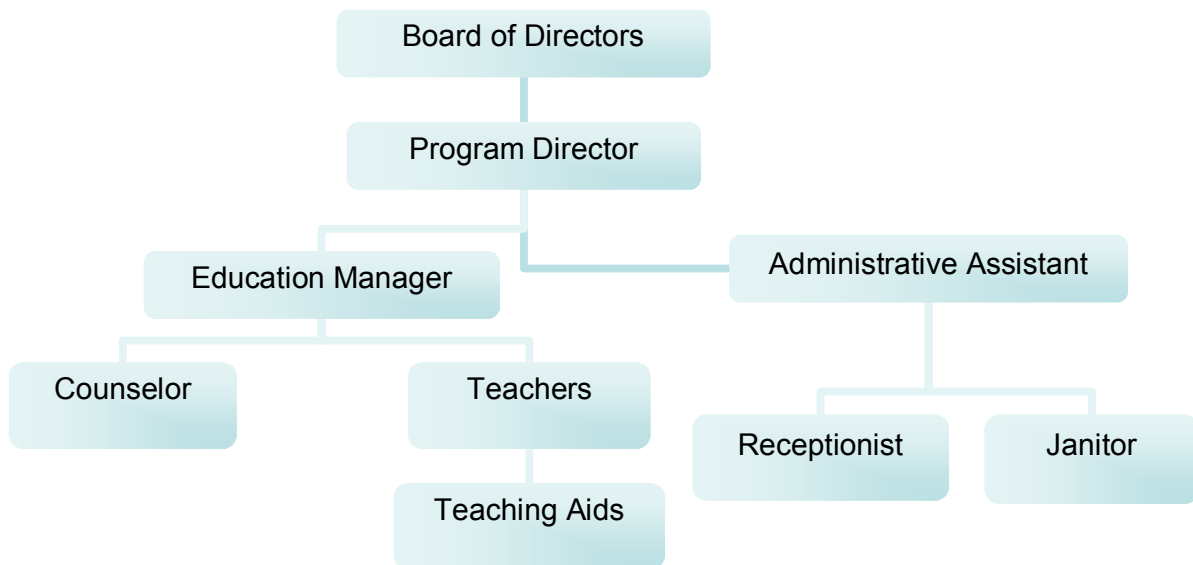


Figure 6: M.O.R.E Program Organization

The M.O.R.E. Program is staffed by three key groups, Board of Directors, Teaching Staff, and Office Staff, linked together by the Program Director.

The Board of Directors consists of five to seven volunteer positions. These seats will be held by members of the Montgomery Board of Education, teachers and administrators in the local school district, and parents or other representatives from the Montgomery Community. The Board will meet monthly with the Program Director and Education Manager to develop programs goals and curriculum. The Board will also be responsible for approves guidelines for educational programs and will works with schools, government agencies, and other community organization to increase program effectiveness.

The Program Director is a full time, paid position. This position is a key link in program communication. He or she will work with the Board of Directors and Education Manager to set programs goals and develop teaching curriculum. They will also be responsible for arranging co-operative agreements with local agencies. The Program Director will report to the Board of Directors and provide direction and supervision to all program staff. He or she will oversee program expenditures and pay-roll, as well as apply for grants and other program funding. The Program Director will be responsible for hiring teaching staff, subject to board approval, and hiring administrative and technical staff.

The teaching staff will be comprised of an Education Manager, a counselor, teachers, and teaching aides. The Education Manager is a full time, paid position. This position helps to develop curricula with Board of Directors and Program Director and is the head of the teaching staff. The Education Manager is responsible for running the day-to-day classroom operation of program, developing in-service education of teaching personnel, and managing computers and software for program. He or she will also be responsible for recruiting local university students

to intern as teaching aides. The Counselor is a full time, paid position. He or she will provide students with counseling advice regarding career, educational, mental health, and physical disabilities. The counselor is responsible for providing the Education Manager with input on program goals and curriculum. Additionally, they will work with teachers to track students' progress and create and maintain students' files.

The M.O.R.E. Program will be staffed with five to ten paid teaching positions, each specializing in a specific subject. Teachers will be responsible for preparing lesson plans, instructing groups of students, and overseeing teaching aides during one-on-one tutoring. Also, teachers will work with the counselor to track student's progress and provide input to the Education Manager on program goals and curriculum. Teaching Aide positions will be staffed by Montgomery college students, interning for university credit. They will work directly with students in small groups and one-on-one tutoring. Teaching Aides will provide teachers with input on program goals and curriculum and help teaching staff to evaluate and monitor students' performance.

The office staff will include an Administrative Assistant, a Receptionist, and Janitor. The Administrative Assistant will be responsible for assisting the Program Director with grant applications, scheduling appointments, and producing correspondence. Other duties include maintaining program files, keeping detailed records of program expenditures, distributing payroll, and scheduling maintenance and cleaning crew. He or she will report to Program Director and oversees Receptionist position. The Receptionist will be responsible for greeting students, parents, job applicants and other visitors, arranging for public transportation services for students. The position will also receive incoming calls and take messages, schedule appointments and collect and distribute program mail.

Co-operative Agreements

The M.O.R.E Program will be partnering with several agencies to best tackle the problem of high school drop-outs. Our agreements fall into two categories: educational agreements and material agreements.

Our educational agreements will provide us with proven methods to increase graduation rates. We are working with the Alabama Department of Education and Montgomery School System to receive accreditation and reward students with high school credit upon completion of the course. The A+ Education Foundation is an Alabama network of education program and grass-roots. Together with the National Drop-out Prevention Center at Clemson University, these centers will provide the M.O.R.E. Program with research and strategies for reaching at-risk students and lowering high school attrition rates. Last, our program will work with local colleges and universities to arrange for student internship opportunities with us as teaching assistants.

Our material agreements will provide the M.O.R.E. Program with computers, office equipment, and teacher salaries, increasing the program's benefit to students. These organizations have a proven record of funding educational programs and have a particular interest in the Montgomery area. Philanthropy clearinghouse, Gifts in Kind will provide discounted computer technical support through IT Specialists and office furnishings and supplies through Office Max. Hewlett-Packard's Southeast Contributions Program, dedicated to improving education in southern states, will provide computers, wiring, and networking equipment. The US Department of Education's No Child Left Behind will be providing us with additional funding for teacher's salaries. Finally, Bell South Education Gateway, a philanthropy branch of the local phone company, will provide the center with discounted phone, internet and data services.

We plan to hire other employees to keeping the organization running, such as a counselor, an administrative assistant, a receptionist, and a janitor. We will also offer credit for college students in the area to be teaching assistants. The yearly wage for a counselor is \$25,226. This will total \$75,678. The wage for an administrative assistant is \$31,760 which totals \$95,280 for the first three years. The yearly salary for a receptionist is \$16,680. This will total \$50,040. Finally the yearly wage for a janitor is \$19,409, which totals \$58,227. As you can see, our employee wages are obviously where the bulk of our grant money will go.

Fundraising

Finally we expect to raise at least ten thousand a year through fundraising. We will have silent auctions of donated equipment. We will also sponsor SAT and ACT prep courses run by the local Kaplan center. We will also open up our facility to host community events such as conferences, banquets, and business meetings.

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Timeline

Action Plan

- **Project Objectives-** Our objective is to increase the High School graduation rate and college admissions of at-risk youth in Montgomery, Alabama.
- **Resources-** This committee will be using the 15,000 square foot building and a \$1 million budget. Additionally, we will be collecting donations from various local agencies.
- **Constraints-** Money is always a constraint; as are the co-operative agreements if they fail to come through. If this committee is unable to collect the donations they are counting on, they will not be able to operate sufficiently. The center equipment is dependant on donations by Hewlett Packard and Office Depot. The program accreditation is dependant on State agencies.
- **Activities-** First the building will need to be renovated and wired. Next, Team Crimson Tide will need to interview and higher Board of Directors, Program Director, and Education Manager. Then they will need to hire teaching and office staffs, begin marketing and promotional efforts, and create program curriculum. Finally, high school students need to be recruited and enrolled.
- **Assigned Activities-** All construction work will be contracted out. Interviewing will be done by Team Crimson Tide and the Program Director. Curriculum will be developed by the teaching staff and marketing will be put on by Team Crimson Tide marketing director and the Program Director.
- **Estimated Time Needed-** Initial set-up will be completed in nine months (Dec 02-Aug 03). The center will open in conjunction with the beginning of the fall school semester.
- **Risk Forecasting-** Our center depends on the co-operation of several agencies, as stated above. Also our center is dependant grant approval for technology, office equipment, and teacher salaries.
- **Risk Reduction-** We our reducing our risks of not receiving grants by applying to companies that have a past history of funding education programs and have a particular interest in the Montgomery area.



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