



Request for Applications Mississippi Reconnect

Mississippi has made significant strides in enhancing its workforce development programs and opportunities, investing millions in human capital infrastructure to ensure training and education align with the needs of existing and emerging industries. However, there remains a need to actively engage disconnected, underemployed, and long-term unemployed citizens in these opportunities.

In response, AccelerateMS is launching the Mississippi Reconnect Program, aimed at targeting unemployed and significantly underemployed Mississippians. These individuals will have the ability to enroll in short-term training opportunities lasting up to 8 weeks - with a minimum of 40 hours and a maximum of 320 hours of documented training occurring. These opportunities must be specifically designed to align with priority occupations identified by AccelerateMS, as detailed in the provided list beginning on page 5.

In recognizing that comprehensive training may require more than 8 weeks can provide, the training opportunities offered through the Reconnect Program must provide pathways for participants to pursue further education and upskilling opportunities. For example, an Introduction to Commercial Electricity course will need to identify existing local electrical-related programs that participants can feasibly engage with to continue their education and skill development. Additionally, training must address skill requirements and industry recognized credentials, beyond compliance-type certifications like NCCER Core, OSHA 10/30, and CPR/First Aid.

Synopsis

Unemployed: The primary goal of this program is to provide accelerated training opportunities to long-term unemployed¹ and significantly underemployed Mississippians, thus necessitating that training opportunities targeting the unemployed be less than 8 weeks in length with a minimum of 20 hours per week (preferred 30+ hours) dedicated to formal training. Stipends may be proposed to provide an incentive to the individual but must align with training stipends provided in the region if such is currently available. Stipend-based programs are only available to individuals who remain unemployed as part of the program, otherwise, programs must request wages and provide a company match of at least 50% within 2 weeks of program entry.

¹ Reconnect program grantees may pay training allowances or stipends to participants for their successful participation in and completion of education or training services (except such allowance may not be provided to participants in OJT). Allowances or stipends may not exceed \$10 per hour from grant funds. Participants in a training activity may not be paid when the person fails to participate without good cause. If a participant is involved in an employer-employee relationship, that participant must be paid wages and fringe benefits at the same rates as trainees or employees who have similar training, experience, and skill. Employees of companies are only eligible for wage-related offsets.

Training opportunities must lead to currently available jobs, with interviews guaranteed by local companies for program completers (at a minimum). Participants must successfully complete identified and approved credentials and/or checkpoints during the training opportunities to continue receiving stipends or funding from the grant. Those not successfully completing the defined outcome may remain in the training program, unless removed by the training provider for cause, but shall not continue to receive any stipends or wages from the grant until such time as they successfully meet the requirements.

It is preferred that associated training opportunities partner with established training provider where programs exist or can and should be stood up quickly to meet this need. If such is not available, applicant should work with appropriate training providers to meet priority needs.

Underemployed: The secondary goal of this program is to provide upskilling opportunities for significantly underemployed² Mississippians. Associated training opportunities may provide wage reimbursements not exceeding 50% of wages for a maximum of 8 weeks not to exceed \$20 per hour of reimbursement. Individuals must be receiving documented training above and beyond ‘on-the-job’ training. A training plan² must be provided by the employing company and approved by subrecipient prior to enrolling individuals in this program and receiving any fund benefit. Additionally, individuals must be enrolled in MSWorks through the subrecipient prior to being eligible to receive associated grant benefits.

Applicants must apply for both unemployed and underemployed funds at the same time. Applications only addressing one population will not be considered.

Wage-based programs are only available to Mississippi employers hiring unemployed Mississippians and may include 100% of wages for a maximum of two weeks with an AccelerateMS approved off-production line training program. Otherwise, a minimum of 50% match is required for wages for the duration of the documented training program.

Training Plan Requirements

Each requested program must include a documented training plan, signed by the training provider (company, college, or third-party) detailing, at a minimum:

- Goals of training (including skills gaps identified);
 - Courses participants will take part in by type, subject matter, or credential;
 - Designed learning outcomes and how they will be measured;
 - Timeframe of training (dates of training will occur);
 - Estimated Cost (including number of hours, cost per hour and estimates of any other requested funds; and
 - Projected number of participants to be trained and associated wages.
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Application and Submission Instructions:

1. Review this RFA document in its entirety.
2. Complete the budget template clearly and concisely. This will be a required attachment when completing the application.
3. Complete the AccelerateMS Reconnect Program Application in its entirety.
4. Applications must include copies of associated training plans, programs and letters of intent to hire from eligible industry partners. All submitted companies and training opportunities must be approved by AccelerateMS prior to initiation of training/work to ensure alignment with the goals/objectives of the grant and scope of work.
 - At a minimum, the employer letter must indicate open positions and intent to interview completers from the program.

Eligible applicants for this program include:

Mississippi local workforce development areas, public community colleges, and institutions of higher learning. It is recommended that all parties work together in each ecosystem to submit a single application as competing applications will not be funded. Only one application per applicant will be accepted. Multiple programs may be proposed on a single application.

Priority will be given to applicants based on the following criteria:

1. Applications specifically detailing how the proposed funding will be utilized to increase labor force participation of Mississippians who currently receive or have exhausted unemployment benefits, decrease time to productivity for new hires previously unemployed, and increase individual's engagement with priority sector occupations.
2. Applications for programs leading to certificates of value.
3. Applications must detail how a minimum of 20% of the funding will be utilized to impact priority sector companies not served by existing state and federal funds in the past year (WIOA, WET, Works, etc.).
4. Applications must clearly communicate anticipated outcomes by the individual participant and how eligible participants will be identified, contacted, and managed through the program. All applicants must use the MSWORKS platform for participant tracking and reporting.
5. Applications detailing how and what existing funding will be leveraged (or braided) to support proposed initiatives.

Eligible Expenses:

Expenses eligible under this program include but are not limited to:

Unemployed:

1. Stipends for unemployed Mississippians while in AccelerateMS Priority Occupation eligible accelerated training programs with documented regional need. Training programs must have documented employer partners committed to interviewing trainees for current, available jobs. Stipends may not exceed \$10 per hour.
2. Instructor and/or consumable costs may be eligible when directly associated with approved programs-costs must not duplicate the benefits provided by other sources and recipient must document all funding associated with the program as required by state

and federal law. Course schedules and session attendance/login records must be maintained for all course sessions.

3. Registration for associated short-term programs. Recipient cannot duplicate the benefits provided by other sources (WET, WIOA, participant fees, etc.).
4. A 5% Administrative Fee may be requested by the applicant.

Underemployed:

1. Wages for new-hire trainees at an eligible sector company in priority occupation, non-production line training programs (i.e. not producing a product but are in a separate, non-productive environment like a classroom, lab, or unattached machinery). May request up to 100% of wages for a maximum of two weeks not to exceed \$40 per hour of the reimbursement.
2. Wages for trainees in work-based learning programs where work is being done at a priority sector³ company in a priority occupation with documented, formal training occurring. The employer must pay a minimum of 50% of the wages for a maximum of 8 weeks not to exceed \$20 per hour of the reimbursement.
3. Instructor and/or consumable costs may be eligible when directly associated with approved programs-costs must not duplicate the benefits provided by other sources and recipient must document all funding associated with the program as required by state and federal law. Course schedules and session attendance/login records must be maintained for all course sessions.
4. Registration for associated short-term programs. Recipient cannot duplicate the benefits provided by other sources (WET, WIOA, participant fees, etc.).
5. A 5% Administrative Fee may be requested.

Key Terms and Definitions:

¹Long-term Unemployed:

A long-term unemployed individual is a person who has made specific efforts to find full-time employment and is:

- a) An unemployed individual who has been unemployed for 12 consecutive weeks or more, including students aged 16 and above;
- b) An unemployed adult, 18 or older, who has been unemployed for 14 out of the last 27 weeks;
- c) An unemployed adult, 18 or older, with a sporadic work history, including a history of temporary/seasonal employment, multiple terminations, or multiple quits;
- d) An unemployed individual who has never had a job and is seeking employment; or
- e) An unemployed individual who has a significant barrier to employment.

²Significantly Underemployed

An underemployed individual must meet one of the below categories to be determined significantly underemployed:

- a) Individual employed full-time or less than full-time in a position paying less than 85% of the state's average wage with the opportunity to advance into a position paying 85% or more of the state's average wage.
- b) Individual self-employed and is seeking full-time employment in a non-contractual role.
- c) Individual employed less than full-time for 12 consecutive weeks or more and is seeking full-time employment;
- d) Individual who is employed in a position that is inadequate with respect to their skills and training;

³Priority Sector:

Priority Sector companies are those formally documented in the Local Workforce Development Area Plan, the Mississippi WIOA Plan, or deemed acceptable by AccelerateMS. Typically, these consist of Advanced Manufacturing, Agribusiness, Information Technology, Healthcare, Construction, Forestry, and Energy. Targeted occupations must pay above \$16/hour and have established pathways into associated degree programs.

New-Hire

By submitting an application, the potential Awardee understands, as a condition of approval and continued funding, it must ensure the funded program is aligned with AccelerateMS goals and agrees to share data with AccelerateMS, as needed, to meet reporting requirements and to measure the success of desired outcomes. These requirements will be outlined in the Subgrant Agreement between Subgrantee and AccelerateMS.

Important Dates and Deadlines: Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis until funds are exhausted.

Event	Date/Deadline
Publication of Request for Applications	May 24, 2024
Application Review Begins	June 7, 2024

AccelerateMS reserves the right to fund applications as they are received if it determines the timeline for the work is a priority, funds will be awarded until exhausted.

Submit proposals to grants@acceleratems.org . Questions should be directed to eringordon@acceleratems.org.

Priority Occupations Eligible*

*Additional occupations considered IF adequate data and justification provided for consideration as the list below is under development. *

Ecosystem	Jobs	New Trainees/ Year
1	EMT	20
1	Commercial Electricians	20
1	Waterworks Operators (Certified)	10
1	Machine Operators	500
1	Industrial Maintenance Technicians	30
1	Commercial Truck Operators	10
1	Machinists	10
1	Logisticians	20
1	Aerospace Technologists and Technicians	40
2	EMT	20
2	Waterworks Operators (Certified)	20

2	Machine Operators	500
2	Industrial Maintenance Technicians	40
2	Machinists	30
2	Commercial Electricians	30
2	Logisticians	20
2	Electrical Engineers	40
2	Mechanical Engineers	20
2	Aerospace Technologists and Technicians	100
2	Industrial Engineers	40

3	Aerial Applicator Pilots*	10
3	Data Center Controls Technician	20
3	Network Technicians	20
3	Electricians	20
3	EMT	20
3	Aerospace Technologists and Technicians	20
3	Fiber Fusion Splicing	50
3	Waterworks Operators (Certified)	10
3	Solar Photovoltaic Installers	10
3	Line Workers	10
3	Engineers	10
3	Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks	20
3	Renewable Energy Engineer	10
3	Electrical Engineer	10

4	Industrial Maintenance Technicians	40
4	Data Center Controls Technician	20
4	Machinists	30
4	Heavy Equipment Operators	30
4	Industrial Engineers	10
4	Electrical Engineers	10
4	Aerospace Technologists and Technicians	40
4	EMT	20
4	Mechanical Engineers	40
4	Waterworks Operators (Certified)	10
4	HVAC Technicians*	20

5	Construction Engineers	25
5	Electrical Engineers	20
5	EMT	40
5	Computer Science Engineers	20

5	Renewable Energy Engineers	10
5	Waterworks Operators (Certified)	10
5	Machinist	15
5	Commercial Electricians	200
5	Engineering Technicians	20
5	Fiber Fusion Splicing	150
5	Fiber Fusion Splicing Instructors	10
5	Plumber/Pipe-fitters	40
5	HVAC Technicians	40
5	Lineworkers	40
5	Industrial Maintenance Technician	40
5	Data Center Controls Technician	100
5	Heavy Equipment Operators	40

6	Registered and Licensed Vocational Nurses*	20
6	Heavy Equipment Operators	20
6	Commercial Electricians	20
6	Fusion Fiber Splicer	40
6	Data Center Controls Technician	20
6	EMT	20
6	Machinist	20
6	Welders	20
6	Industrial Maintenance Technicians	20

7	Industrial Maintenance Technicians	20
7	Engineering Technicians	20
7	Logging Equipment Operators	20
7	Electrical Engineers	10
7	EMT	20
7	Pipefitters	20
7	Plumbers	10
7	Waterworks Operators (Certified)	10
7	Data Center Controls Technician	20
7	Commercial Electricians	20
7	Fiber Fusion Splicing	40
7	HVAC Technician	10

8	Aerospace Engineers	20
8	Mechanical Engineers	20
8	Industrial Engineers	20

8	Aerospace Technologists and Technicians	50
8	Surveyors	20
8	Pipefitters & Shipfitters	500
8	Electricians	40
8	Plumbers	40
8	Machinists/Millwright	30
8	EMT	30
8	Shipbuilding Carpenters	20
8	Lineworker/Telecommunications Tower Tech*	30
8	Network Technicians	20
8	Mechanical Maintenance Technicians	50
8	Waterworks Operators (Certified)	20
8	Welders	500
8	Registered Nurses*	40

*Funded projects not eligible for additional funds currently



Mississippi Reconnect Program Application

1. Provide a non-technical description of the need and how the proposed program will address the need of increasing Mississippi's Labor Force Participation Rate, specifically detailing how unemployed Mississippians will be targeted for participation and underemployed Mississippians will be identified.
2. Clearly indicate the specific activities and how they are linked to the project's purpose, key milestones, and deliverables. The proposed intervention must address the need identified clearly and concisely using relevant, local data.
3. Describe the outcome-based performance measures that will be tracked, how the applicant will do that and report them to AccelerateMS. At a minimum, include the number of new trainees expected through the program, the estimated cost per participant (stipends/wages, training, etc.), and the targeted occupations and sectors for training completers, including geographically limited wages. Applicants must collect participant information, identified by AccelerateMS, and submit it through the MSWorks website.
4. Please describe the potential for sustainability of the proposed program, beyond the initial grant funding. Important Note: This is one-time money that cannot be guaranteed or assumed to be available beyond the grant timeline. Sustainability must be addressed by the community from which the application is sent.
5. Detail the key deliverables and program schedule, by date, for your program(s).