

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Economic Development Partnership of Alabama awarded EDA grant
to develop economic development strategies for the region
most affected by the Gulf oil spill in Alabama**

Birmingham, Ala., April 18 - The Economic Development Partnership of Alabama (EDPA) was today awarded a \$593,500 grant from the Economic Development Administration (EDA) to assess the economic development challenges and opportunities in south Alabama. EDA grant funds will be leveraged with \$400,000 from the Alabama Industry Competitiveness Foundation and the EDPA Foundation; along with \$78,000 in in-kind services from Aegis Technologies for a total of more than \$1 million.

The project will engage resources from across the state and will result in both short and long-term strategic plans to encourage economic recovery and economic sustainability in the eight-county region of Baldwin, Mobile, Choctaw, Clarke, Conecuh, Escambia, Monroe, and Washington.

“The oil spill affected countless Alabamians and business owners. And although the gulf coast counties were ground zero for the spill, the impact is felt statewide, which is of even more importance during already challenging economic times,” said Alabama Governor Robert Bentley.

“The collaboration of the business community, government and universities represents the best of Alabama and this strategic approach to economic development is why Alabama will emerge from this crisis a stronger, more competitive state.”

The private, non-profit EDPA assembled a partnership with state research universities and the Alabama College System in applying for the EDA grant.

“EDPA recognized an opportunity to leverage federal dollars to further a mission of ours: To identify the intellectual capital in Alabama that can be applied to economic development planning and build a framework for future collaboration,” said EDPA President Bill Taylor.

“We have valuable assets in the state and we believe there is a way to harness them in a more effective manner,” continued Taylor, who has also been tapped by Governor Bentley to develop a strategic plan to align Alabama’s job creation and workforce development resources. “The work done through this grant won’t stop here. It will result in a regional, collaborative process that can be replicated in other areas of the state to address critical areas of need and spur job retention and growth.”

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The project consists of six components, which will be addressed by EDPA and partnering organizations. Entities with responsibilities include:

- **EDPA:** As lead partner, EDPA will administer the grant and oversee initial project orientation and assignment of roles and resources. EDPA will also conduct in-depth target analysis of potential industry and growth sectors on a county-by-county basis to identify industries with the greatest potential to create new jobs and to diversify the coastal region.
- **Alabama Community College System:** Alabama's two-year college system will create a workforce development plan that will define the current situation, identifying shortages, surpluses and competency gaps. A three to five-year workforce development plan will address recruiting, developing, and retaining the work force needed for the future.
- **University of Alabama in Huntsville / Aegis Technologies:** The University of Alabama in Huntsville and Huntsville-based Aegis Technologies will partner to model the current and future transportation infrastructure needs and create a visual representation of the impact of growth on the region through a virtual 3-D terrain model. This tool provides regional decision makers a way to better understand the effects of economic growth on transportation projects as well as identify potential future trouble areas, and justify state and federal investments.
- **University of Alabama at Birmingham:** UAB will assess the current and future economic impact of the oil spill on the health services sector through surveys of providers across the region. Issues are expected to include shortages of qualified personnel, indigent patients and inadequate infrastructure. UAB will Partner with USA to analyze oil spill-related Medicaid claims and make projections of future health care needs. UAB will provide recommendations for mitigating the short and long term economic impact of health care challenges.
- **University of South Alabama:** USA will conduct economic impact analyses on suggested growth target sectors to help the region prioritize economic development projects that will provide the greatest growth opportunity. USA will also partner with UAB on field work and strategies designed to lessen the economic impact of health care issues.
- **Auburn University:** Auburn University will orchestrate work in progress and developmental tools towards consensus-tested strategies and action steps. Auburn is charged with quarterly meetings of project participants as well as consensus building through a summit of regional leadership.

The project connects with and builds upon efforts already underway in the region, including those by the Coastal Recovery Commission of Alabama (www.crclabama.org). The Commission was created by executive order in 2010 to analyze regional vulnerabilities exposed by the oil spill and to recommend strategies to make Coastal Alabama more resilient in the face of future challenges. Among grass roots programs that may serve as models for emulation in the region and state is the Baldwin War Room, which mobilized a coalition of business and non-profit organizations to respond to immediate needs in communities most affected by the spill.

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"This opportunity couldn't come at a better time," said Ricky Mathews, publisher of the Mobile Press-Register and chairman of the Coastal Recovery Commission of Alabama. "We are creating a Coastal Alabama Leadership Council to convene a broad range of business, non-profit and government entities to convert the best ideas from our post-oil-spill efforts into reality. This project will build on our momentum and accelerate our time tables. So supporting the EDPA and the grant's goals will be a top priority for our new Council."

The work of the grant is slated to span a one-year timeframe. At the completion of the grant, EDPA will present its findings to EDA, which will use the report to aid in prioritizing future federal funds to the region.

About EDPA: For 20 years, the Economic Development Partnership of Alabama has been a catalyst for economic growth in the state. During that time, the Partnership has contributed to Alabama's greatest economic development successes. A totally private, non-profit organization, EDPA is uniquely positioned to partner with state, local and private entities involved in Alabama's economic development efforts. EDPA provides services to companies looking to locate in the state, encourages emerging business development, and assists companies and communities that want to improve their competitive edge.

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(Additional quotes attached)

Official EDA Release here:

<http://www.eda.gov/NewsEvents/PressReleases/20110414FloridaAlabamaLouisiana>

Quotes related to EDA Grant page 1 of 2

"The Alabama Community College System (ACCS) is experienced in working with local and regional workforce areas and industry leaders through our Workforce Development Council structure. This regional approach bridges industry, elected officials, economic developers, and education partners to develop targeted growth strategies. The ACCS will be the primary planner in assessing current and future skills of the gulf coast workforce in order to develop the long term strategic approach for growth and economic diversification as part of the Economic Development Administration grant. This plan will likely be used in other regional workforce councils across Alabama for future workforce planning and assessment."

Chancellor Dr. Freida Hill
Alabama Community College System

"We couldn't be happier to be joining the EDPA and colleagues from around the state in this opportunity," said Russ Lea, vice president for research at the University of South Alabama. "More than 23 USA researchers have been working on some \$2.6 million in oil-spill-related research since the spill began. Thanks to this grant, they'll be able to integrate what they've learned into strategies to help the affected counties and the state strengthen our region's capacities for bouncing back from such events in the future."

Russ Lea, Ph.D.
Vice President for Research, University of South Alabama

The well-being of the Alabama Gulf Coast region is of vital importance to Alabama. UAB is pleased to partner with the University of South Alabama to look at the implications of the oil spill on the health care delivery system. By drawing on the expertise from both campuses, and learning from practitioners in the affected counties, we can help the communities understand the challenges and develop plans to mitigate the health and economic impact.

Richard B. (Dick) Marchase, Ph.D.
University of Alabama at Birmingham

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Quotes related to EDA Grant page 2 of 2

"Alabama has many exceptional tools at its disposal to solve some of its greatest challenges, and to solve them in a sustainable way for the long-term. The key is to integrate these assets - high-technology companies, economic development partners, and research universities - into collaborative teams dedicated to building strategic solutions for the economic development and well-being of our state. This project is just one example of how we are working to achieve this integration. When done, we believe it will be a 'best-practice' mechanism by which we can productively engage many of the other challenges that face our state."

John M. Horack, Ph.D.

Vice President for Research, University of Alabama in Huntsville

AEgis Technologies is very pleased to partner with the Economic Development Partnership of Alabama, universities and local economic development leaders to apply modeling and simulation capabilities to economic development planning. The modeling and simulation industry in Alabama has worked globally to help the nation study, visualize and predict outcomes for military, security and space exploration challenges. We are thrilled to have this opportunity to bring our capabilities to the Alabama Gulf Coast Region and help community leaders visualize their opportunities to diversify their economy and build a sustainable future.

William F. (Bill) Waite

Chairman and Chief Technical Officer, AEgis Technologies

"Since the beginning of the Gulf oil spill crisis, Auburn University has been actively involved with local communities in the Mobile/Baldwin county areas at a number of levels. We recognize the economic importance of this region to our state and our efforts have ranged from research projects to examine the oil spill's impact on our deep water and near shore fishing habitats to the impact to local businesses and individuals that live and work in these coastal communities. Auburn University is committed to immediate and long-term assessments and support to the region's recovery programs."

Dr. John M. Mason, Jr., P.E.

Associate Provost and Vice President for Research, Auburn University

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