

The Development and Implementation of the *Make Mine Mississippi* Marketing and Education Initiative Final Report



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The *Make Mine Mississippi* logo identification program is one that the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce is proud to call their own. It serves as a way of identifying products that have some origin in the State as well as an educational and marketing tool for the companies that are members. However, not all companies are familiar with the program. The intent behind implementing the grant received from the United States Department of Agriculture Federal State Marketing Improvement Program (FSMIP) was to enroll companies in the program as well as providing resources for helping companies improve their businesses.

Make Mine Mississippi is a voluntary marketing program that allows producers, manufacturers, retailers, and, most of all, consumers the opportunity to identify products originating or adding value in Mississippi. The program builds upon the state's reputation for quality products in an effort to increase sales.

The *Make Mine Mississippi* program began in the spring of 1999 and is open to any company that produces, processes or manufactures Mississippi products. Registered companies receive an official Make Mine Mississippi logo for promotional purposes. In November of 1999, the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce expanded *Make Mine Mississippi* to include the Cooperative Promotions Program. This program not only helps educate business entrepreneurs about the value of diversifying and accessing new markets, but also gives business owners assistance with their marketing costs through a 50% matching reimbursement fund. With this program, there is now a grass roots way to assist Mississippi entrepreneurs with new or existing businesses to move to next level in sales and continue to grow their businesses.

To become registered in the ***Make Mine Mississippi*** program, companies must complete an application and return it to the Market Development Division of the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce. There is no cost involved in being a member of the ***Make Mine Mississippi*** program.

Registered companies in various marketing strategies can use the Make Mine Mississippi logo. As companies become registered with the Department, the Market Development Division may assist with any promotional activities and/or public relations. The ***Make Mine Mississippi*** program and the service mark can easily be incorporated into the packaging design of most company's logos.

There are specific guidelines for using the ***Make Mine Mississippi*** logo. Firms using this logo must be registered with the Market Development division of the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce. The service mark may be used for advertising only on products that are at least 51% produced, processed or manufactured in Mississippi. The ***Make Mine Mississippi*** logo must be used in its entirety with no deviation from graphic standards as provided. The service mark may be incorporated into the packaging or labeling of a product, all promotional materials used in advertising, point of purchase displays and in the form of pressure sensitive stickers. The Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce guarantees product origin only. The ***Make Mine Mississippi*** logo may be used in any color. Violation of the above specifications may result in suspension of the right to use the ***Make Mine Mississippi*** logo.

The ***Make Mine Mississippi*** program and the success of this program have the potential to be very beneficial to the Mississippi companies and, in turn, the taxpayers of the State.

In order to begin our plan for implementing *The Development and Implementation of the Make Mine Mississippi Marketing and Education Initiative*, we partnered with the Small Business Center/International Trade Center that is located on the campus of Hinds Community College, a local community college, in order to provide the best information possible. Three seminars were planned and executed for businesses across the state. These seminars were held in at strategic points. Every effort was made to accommodate companies so that we would be providing information that

was best suited for them, for example the companies were polled as to their subject preferences and the subject matter varied from different parts of the state. The seminars lasted all day, and there were a total of four sessions at each location. To encourage participation companies were phoned, mailed notices in addition to being mailed notices from the host offices. At each seminar there was average of 30 to 40 people present. However, for those requesting and unable to attend, speakers' information was mailed to them.

The seminars were held in Tupelo, MS on August 27, 2002; Brandon, MS on August 2002; Biloxi, MS on September 12, 2002. The topics of discussion included: Packaging and Labeling on Products (Representatives from the Food and Fiber Center from Mississippi State University), Marketing Tips (Representative from the Mississippi Development Authority and college Marketing professor), Am I Really Making Money? (Investment Representative), Show Me the Money (Either a banker or Small Business Association Representatives) and Internet Marketing: Should I or Shouldn't I (Representative from Mississippi State University).

Another component in our plan of action was the recruiting of new companies into the *Make Mine Mississippi* program. Through the seminars, companies were recruited, but by obtaining attractive print material, we are continuing to recruit companies, thus continuing to provide them with resources beneficial to their businesses.

After polling some of the companies who participated in the seminars, we received positive comments on our efforts and felt that the time and money put into these events was very beneficial. Businesses were offered information to help them financially as well as the appearance of their products and this was without cost to them.

The *Make Mine Mississippi* program continues to grow and proves to be beneficial for member companies. Through maintaining education such as during the seminars, we are able to offer benefits such as advertising. Exposure of these companies provides only positive reinforcement for the companies. For example, since the implementation of the grant and the seminars being held, one example of this beneficial exposure was when some member companies participated in a trade show at the Mississippi State Fair and through their knowledge gained positive feedback about their products and gained new clientele.

For more information on *Make Mine Mississippi* or other information regarding the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce, you may contact:

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