

## Identifying Information

**Project Title: ReImagineJXN: Igniting Our Preferred Economic Futures**

**Application I.D. 127869**

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**Legal Name of Applicant Organization: City of Jackson**

**Project and Problem Statement: How will the City of Jackson with its partners mobilize their abundant assets, creativity, and belief in human dignity to develop their preferred economic futures?** Futurism is most pivotal in times of Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity (VUCA) as well as emerging and underutilized opportunities, especially in building a culture of health founded upon health equity and the structural/social determinants of health. To address VUCA and possibility, the following concept paper introduces **ReImagineJXN: Igniting Our Preferred Futures**, which is a two-year exploration to advance futurism (strategic foresight), innovation, and equity in the Office of Economic Development, City of Jackson (COJ), and its partners. The project will address three futures: 1) Future of Work, the Workplace, and Learning; 2) The Future of Urban Economic Development; and 3) The Infusion of Equity and Dignity. This work expands upon the COJ's commitment to the Dignity Economy and a W.K. Kellogg grant, Economic Pathways to Human Dignity: Creating Jackson's Future-Proof Economy of Growth and Equity, to expand opportunities for the underemployed and undercredentialed workers and job seekers in areas such as the hidden Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics (STEAM) and innovation-driven economy. While no economy can be future-proof, its citizens can be future-ready. More critically, the work seeks to open the imaginations and options for work, learning, economic development, and entrepreneurship by advocating for innovative approaches to existing problems, referred to as *Wicked Opportunities* by the futurist company Kedge, LLC, exploring new frontiers often not introduced to communities of color. The Mississippi Economic Council, the state's chamber of commerce, has published a significant economic forecast report entitled "Securing Mississippi's Future." While the document very briefly notes that the state needs to address the future of work in areas like information technology and the often quoted 65% of future jobs are unknown, it provides no substantive policy or practice recommendations. Recently, the state auditor Shad White commissioned a study that found that 50% of all graduates of Mississippi's public universities leave the state within three years. The number gets progressively worse over the next five to ten years. He notes that this continued effluence of talent could be catastrophic to the state. The study reveals an astonishing statistic regarding Hinds County, in which Jackson is the largest city: Thirty percent (30%) of all of Mississippi's university-educated employees work in Hinds County. While approximately 42% of Hinds County jobs are vulnerable to automation, the team is not aware of any explicit policies to address this matter; alas, other efforts such as the emerging COJ's comprehensive plan could benefit from the infusion of innovation and strategic foresight. Lastly, potential partners such as the Hinds County Economic Development Authority are initially intrigued by ReImagineJXN, but they require further professional learning and relationship cultivation.

**Objectives and Activities:** The Office of Economic Development seeks to become a leader in futurism, innovation, and equity through capacity building, planning, technical assistance, and a small pilot to advance momentum for greater change. COJ estimates that it will need approximately \$617,000 for what it believes is an initiative of local to national consequence beginning with impacting Jackson and Hinds County, Mississippi. To do so, the Department of Economic Development proposes the following program elements:

1. Internal Learning and Pre-Development,
2. Narrative Change,
3. Community of Practice, Policy and Leadership,
4. Futures Technologies Lab,
5. Call to Action, and,
6. Curriculum/Toolkit.

ReImagineJXN will build a three-tier approach of partners beginning with Tier-One partnering municipalities and county entities of Hinds County. The three tiers range from the core COJ staff to immediate municipal/county levels with which the city has relationships to county or regional economic development entities to statewide economic development organizations, all of which play an interconnected role in the economic development ecosystem that impacts Jackson and Hinds County.

To ensure the engagement of the enclosed tiers, the COJ will build upon its existing relationships:

1. **National League of Cities:** Economic Inclusion (minority participation)
2. **National League of Cities Futurism Strategy:** Meeting scheduled in August with Dr. Robert Blaine, senior executive with the National League of Cities and former Chief Administrative Officer City of Jackson
3. **National League of Cities:** Reengaging Opportunity Youth (Resources for displaced students)
4. **Kellogg Foundation:** Small business incubator helping microenterprises to become sustainable and scale
5. **Kellogg Foundation:** Workforce development initiative providing career training for high-demand electromechanical jobs
6. **Kiva:** Microlending: Crowdfunding platform for BIPOC businesses to raise capital.
7. **Kaufman Foundation:** Entrepreneurial Curriculum: educates potential and existing business owners on applying strategies from idea to launch and potential funding source
8. **Hope Credit Union:** Supplier diversity practices for increased BIPOC contracting on municipal contracts
9. **Cities for Financial Empowerment:** Financial Empowerment Center (establish personal & business credit)
10. **Operation Hope:** 1 Million Black Businesses (help potential entrepreneurs start eCommerce businesses)
11. **Mississippi Small Business Development Center / Small Business Administration:** Provides technical assistance to small business enterprises
12. **Jackson State University, Inclusive Competitiveness with Foresight Plan-** Economic development in the innovation economy (Kellogg Foundation-funded initiative)

**13. Clark Atlanta University, Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurial Development-**Technical assistance and development of relationships with federal governmental agencies such as the Economic Development Agency

Each of these partners has Jackson and Mississippi-based initiatives and grantees with similar economic equity and inclusion missions that can be mobilized. Additionally, the COJ has identified over 20 community-based organizations and initiatives and is working with its local and state legislative officials. (COJ can provide a list of community-based organizations upon request.) Notably, the COJ will start with the above strategic partners and Tier-one Partners and cultivate potential partners identified in Tiers 2 and 3. It is important to signal that the COJ and the State of Mississippi's executive and legislative branches do not have an amicable relationship, which requires further diplomatic efforts. The COJ now has a federally and judicially appointed overseer of its water and sewer systems to meet the Department of Justice and Environmental Development Agency consent decrees and mandates. Thus, ReImagineJXN has become more critical to inspire a new conversation and direct another pathway, which stakeholders are now pleading to pursue.

**Tier-one partners:** the City of Clinton Department of Economic Development, the City of Pochontas, the Bolton Development Corporation, the City of Edwards, the Town of Terry, the City of Byram, the Town of Learned, the Utica Economic Opportunity Office, and the Hinds County Economic Development Authority.

**Tier-two partners:** Madison County Economic Development Authority, Rankin First Economic Development, Warren County Port Commission, the City of Ridgeland Community Development Department, the City of Pearl Community Development Office, the City of Brandon Economic Development Department, the Vicksburg-Warren partnership, the City of Flowood Office of Economic Development, and the Greater Jackson Chamber.

**Tier-three partners:** Mississippi Economic Development Council, Mississippi Economic Council, Innovate Mississippi, Accelerate Mississippi, the Mississippi Development Authority, and the Central Mississippi Planning & Development District.

**Climate Change:** ReImagineJXN is seeking initial funding to engage potential partners such as Waggoner Engineering, C2 Mississippi, Jackson State University Environmental Studies, the National League of Cities and others to articulate the first steps of a climate change, resiliency and the United Nation's sustainability goals plan. This funding will allow for a convening resulting in drafting the next steps for the integration of sustainable goals and the pursuit of funding for a climate change infused futurism plan, which takes several hundreds of thousands of dollars to articulate. The COJ much publicized water, sewer, sanitation, and infrastructure fragilities suggest that its citizens are particularly vulnerable to climate and seasonal catastrophes. The initial funding would allow for ReImagineJXN to cohere existing efforts and plans and seek additional partners such as engaging community-based organizations in a city-based and regional approach.

**Community/Street Futurism:** This effort mobilizes, engages and educates the most grassroots levels of community organizing and residential power around the futures of work, entrepreneurship, economic mobility, learning, equity and climate. Particularly important is asking residents to define their and the COJ's futures using culturally resonant futurism practices such as Prophetic Innovation, womanist futurism and their own schemata. As we

speak, approximately 600,000 jobs in Mississippi and over 40% of jobs in Hinds County, which Jackson is the major city and state capital, are vulnerable to automation replacing jobs of Jackson's vulnerable populations. Community/Street Futurism will explore what other cities and initiatives are doing across the nation and world, and collaborate with participatory organizations such as the People's Assembly, which is a participatory community based advisory group to the COJ and other entities, the Beloved Community, Neighborhood Associations and so on.

**Criminal Justice, Law Enforcement and Crime:** To address a flourishing future, the COJ and its residents must address violent crime in particular such as being one of the leading cities for homicide and the state's leading the nation in incarceration. Thus, this project will develop an interdepartmental team notably building on the real time data provided by COJ Police Department's digital center, to look at the futures of criminal justice, law enforcement and crime prevention and intervention. Community based organizations, advocacy, reentering citizens and others will be engaged. Additionally, the team will invite the University of Hawaii futures program, which specializes in criminal justice reform to be an advisor.

**More Detailed Deliverables, Outcomes and Timeline:** Conducted in consecutive order, the following six components begin ever expanding circles of knowledge transfer by first educating the COJ core team/Tier 1 partners who would then assist in evangelizing the project further in their organizations and other tiers. These partners, consultants and staff will then educate the other tiers and potential partners through a comprehensive narrative change process, leading to the selection of a concrete Community of Practice, Policy and Leadership for more intensive hands-on engagement. During the narrative change and community of practice process, the project will recruit participating organizations and leadership. A "futures" lab, which engages cohort members, will emerge to demonstrate and test technologies such as foresight scanning and management during the education process. Ending the initiative, the Call to Action will identify next steps to perpetuate activities, including a culminating project for the Community of Practice, Policy and Learning and a publication shared with the tier members and general public. Finally, a toolkit/curriculum will reflect all the elements of knowledge transfer and action of the project and provide a hands-on approach to scale this potential model from the local to national levels.

1. **(Up to 6 months) Internal Learning and Predevelopment:** This core team will undertake a six-month intensive immersion in the futures of economic development, work/workplace/learning, and the dignity economy. Most of the futures and innovation training has shifted to online courses and the project facilitators will have to confer with the team to determine in-person and virtual experiences and delivery of services. The following modules will be a combination of new and existing learning curated by David Patrick Bickham, the architect of Prophetic Innovation and catalyst for futurism in Mississippi, and the Bemae Group led by distinguished life-long Jacksonian Dr. Creston Burse, who has a Doctor of Philosophy in Strategic Leadership and Strategic Foresight. Culled from research sample modules/online courses in the future of work include: 1) EdX: The Future of Work: Preparing for Disruption; 2) MIT: Leading the Future of Work; and 3) McKinsey's "Getting Practical about the Future of Work." The discovery and planning of community futures/street futures, criminal justice and climate change will begin during this period as well. (The team can provide further examples of the future of economic development upon request and in the full proposal.)

2. **(Up to 9 months) Narrative Change:** Of all components, this is where the heavy lifting occurs because it seeks to disrupt and encourage long-held, often false beliefs. **More critically,**

**it simply does not replace a false narrative but asserts a new, preferred narrative that might have never existed.** Narrative Change denotes the Office of Economic Development's commitment to influencing the receptivity to and identification of Jackson's economic and workforce development as being modern, futuristic, and capable of both incremental and radical change related to its preferred economic future. Currently, Jackson may be enduring an identity crisis as crime, and socioeconomic indicators like poverty proliferate. Yet, Jackson is more than the sum of its deficits and has many assets that could propel and define its animated future. Plus, the COJ faces the *realpolitik* of being the largest African American politically Democratic city in a majority White and deeply conservative Republican state. Still, this initiative seeks to cooperate with all factions and not be suppressed by any sectarian or racial factions. Indeed, narrative change is about movement-building, beginning with changes in self-perception and influencer attitudes. Several activities include:

- a. Developing industry-specific modules and boot camps at the 2022 Technology, Education, Construction and Healthcare Summit (TECHJXN).
- a. Developing a social media campaign.
- b. Conducting internal COJ and Division of Economic Development engagement sessions.
- c. Identifying and integrating influencer organizations such as the Mississippi Economic Development Council, Accelerate Mississippi, and others.
- d. Collaborating with local school districts, community colleges, and institutions of higher learning.
- e. Conducting at least four community listening sessions.
- f. Exploring the strategies of peer and/or illustrative cities, regionally to globally
- g. Solidifying an initial Coalition of the Willing partners, influencers, and institutions; and
- h. Others to be determined.

Activities a-i will be conducted through the assistance of consultants and a hired project manager. As an indicator of narrative change, the Community of Practice, Policy and Leadership will build a culminating project to indicate how new practices, policies and leadership have been adopted or are being proposed in the participating institutions and the COJ. In addition, the project can conduct pre and post surveys around participant attitudes related to narrative change.

**3. (Up to 12 months) Community of Practice, Policy, and Leadership:** In addition to the core Department of Economic Development team members, the RelImagineJXN will convene a learning community of 10-15 influencers from institutions, partnerships, systems, and intermediary organizations to engage in a customized course of study that identifies opportunities for practice, policy, and leadership implementation. (The cohort may expand or there may be multiple contiguous cohorts based on interest.) RelImagineJXN seeks to make this a participatory process and identify faith-based, grassroots intermediaries and other groups who may not be at the futurism decision-making and learning table but represent major systems and institutions. The RelImagineJXN futures cohort (s) will extend the option of additional strategic foresight certification and/or a financial stipend if they choose not to participate in the certification, which incentivizes participation. The Community of Practice, Policy and Leadership will engage in a culminating project, which identifies how the goals of the initiative are institutionalized in their respective organizations and the COJ. During the initiative, the Community of Practice, Policy and Leadership will determine if the partners continue as a formal coalition.

4. **(Up to 16 months) Futures Technology and Lab:** While the totality of RelImagineJXN is about movement and competency building, which constitute a “Learnings Lab,” this initiative will acquire and learn how to use technologies in a lab of futures management and futures scanning, that is, early signal, trend, megatrend, and data collection across Spiritual, Social, Technological, Political, Environmental and Political (SSTEPP) data. The Community of Practice, Policy and Learning cohort will learn how to use the scanning and management technologies, which will be maintained and used by COJ staff on a regular basis and subsequent to the end of this grant. The COJ has a potential facility at no rental cost that could be converted into a physical hub/lab, but it requires buildout, equipment and other some renovations. Perhaps not covered in conventional scanning platforms, RelImagineJXN will identify the values necessary for a just, equitable, and empathetic future by collecting data through culturally responsive practices such as storytelling, spirituality, arts, and culture. Kedge, LLC’s the Futures School, and others have provided some guidance on the life cycles of futures intelligence and data. Additionally, the Futures School has vetted “the best” four foresight scanning platforms/technologies for consideration: 1) Zotero; 2) Hypothes.is; 3) Raindrop.io; and 4) Diigo.

5. **(18-24 months) Call to Action: *What is the meaning of all of this innovative capacity building and movement-making?*** RelImagineJXN will herald a Call to Action to identify new steps and survey opportunities for the institutionalization of futurism, innovation, and equity/dignity within the Office of Economic Development and partnerships. A formal sustainable coalition may evolve from this initiative. Minimally, the Call to Action will involve a convening of partners and interested parties and a written publication shared with the COJ, tiers and the public. The participants will decide on a pilot project to acquire, evaluate, and implement a foresight scanning platform. We believe that RelImagineJXN could be scalable/spreadable and have local-to-state-to-national consequences for urban economic development policy, practice, thought leadership, and public/private investment. During this process, the team will submit project and sustainability proposals to public and philanthropic entities such as the National League of Cities and the Kresge Foundation, with which the team has to renew its relationship. It will engage additional influencers who may not be involved in the multi-tier process of capacity building and narrative change.

6. **(18-24 months) Hybrid Toolkit/Curriculum Development:** With the assistance of company that specializes in publications, the program will coordinate activities, modules, lessons learned, the call to action and phases of project development, including the predevelopment and advocacy, into a toolkit/curriculum, which can be used to scale or spread the framework on the local, state, regional, and national levels. The Community of Practice, Policy and Learning, Tier Partners and others will test the toolkit, which will be embedded in the Futures Lab as well.

**RESEARCH METHOD: N/A**

**COMMUNICATIONS:** RelImagineJXN will engage Angela Zusman, founder of Story For All, a nationally award-winning developer of strategic communications and story-sharing and Hugh Davis will act as the Creative Director and has extensive experience in engaging communities and building leadership through culture and arts as well as his being a former Physics and science teacher. Major communications and marketing strategies include in part the following elements: 1) Training the team members and partners in strategic communications to integrate the core messages, relevant strategies and project outcomes into their existing communications assets; 2) Arts driven community engagement events; 3) Development of new media tools such

as a website links, podcasts and other activities; 4) Virtual and in person meetings; 5) Technology, Education, Creativity and Healthcare Summit, including vendor, youth and adult tracks 6) Stakeholder virtual and in person focus groups; 7) Hackathons, pitches, futures scenario development and innovation competitions in collaboration with partners; and, 8) Traditional media such as newspapers, radio and other articles and advertisements.

**RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES:** The City of Jackson faces daunting challenges such as being the leader as a midsize city with the highest level of population loss and murder in the nation. Deeper still, many corners of the city face current and historic compounded disinvestment such as the loss of grocery stores, which constitute food deserts. Affordable housing, economic investment and infrastructure challenges present issues of constant crisis management in which futuristic economic development and the broader questions of innovation and anticipatory planning seem irrelevant and not germane to crisis management, including often sited issues of leadership. As a result, the opportunity arises to present a new and concomitant narrative that builds on the COJ's assets, notably human talent and will, and its civic structure to develop ReImagineJXN. In particular, there are practice, policy and people-building implications of the work; however, the main contribution may be creation of a space for profound narrative change around preferred economic preferred futures that can be institutionalized over time. A space to have hope and to dream and play and to imagine rather than rehearse catastrophe and deficits...

**STAFFING:** Key staff members include Tangayika “Yika” Hoover, Deputy Director of the Office of Economic Development, who will be the Project Director to provide overall initiative guidance and oversight and approve all contracts required for the implementation of the project. Additional staff will be assigned and covered under a 10% administrative cost. Consultants will include thought leaders and practitioners in municipal economic development, futurism, inclusive economic development and the innovation economy, community organizing, innovation lab development, climate change/sustainable development, fund development, economic structural/social determinants of health and other areas as required. David Patrick Bickham will be the Senior Strategist. Monica Cannon-Butler, a recognized community organizer, non-profit leader and consultant, will lead the Community Futures/Street Futures effort.