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I. WIOA STATE PLAN TYPE AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

a. WIOA STATE PLAN TYPE

This is a combined plan.

COMBINED PLAN PARTNER PROGRAMS

COMBINED PLAN PARTNER PROGRAM(S)

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program (42 U.S.C. 601 et seq.)

Trade Adjustment Assistance for Workers programs (activities authorized under chapter 2 of title II of the Trade Act of 1974 (19 U.S.C. 2271 et seq.))

Jobs for Veterans State Grants Program (programs authorized under 38, U.S.C. 4100 et. seq.)

Unemployment Insurance programs (programs authorized under State unemployment compensation laws in accordance with applicable Federal law)

Senior Community Service Employment program (programs authorized under title V of the Older Americans Act of 1965 (42 U.S.C. 3056 et seq.))

b. PLAN INTRODUCTION

The state of Mississippi has opted to submit a Combined Plan to meet the requirements of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). This Combined Plan is built around Governor Tate Reeves' commitment to helping the people and businesses of Mississippi flourish. To accomplish this mission, Governor Reeves has implemented a variety of strategies that are attracting new business investment and creating a robust workforce. This momentum is growing the State's economy while also ensuring that the resulting economic development provides Mississippi workers with pathways to family-sustaining employment opportunities.

In 2020, to drive progress on the creation of a skilled and competitive state talent pool, Governor Reeves and the Mississippi Legislature established the Office of Workforce Development, AccelerateMS, to serve as the coordinating entity for all workforce development stakeholder agencies in Mississippi. The charter legislation charged AccelerateMS with the creation of a statewide workforce development strategy aligned to Governor Reeve's vision. That strategic vision, developed and led by AccelerateMS, is to create a state-wide and fully integrated workforce development system that provides every Mississippian with the opportunity to become a competitive candidate within the local talent pool and secure quality employment, as well as providing employers with the range of talent necessary to promote and sustain business growth.

This Combined Plan supports the state's vision and aligns all workforce and WIOA stakeholders around a unified strategy that directly addresses the challenges workers face to gain the credentials and skills to meet industry needs and secure quality employment. Mississippi's Combined Plan includes the six required state programs: the Adult Program, the Dislocated Worker Program, the Youth Program, the Adult Education and Family

Literacy Act Program, the Wagner-Peyser Act Program, and the Vocational Rehabilitation Program—along with Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Unemployment Insurance (UI), Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA), Jobs for Veterans State Grants Program (JVSG), and Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP).

Mississippi's 2020 WIOA plan centered on unifying workforce stakeholders to increase workforce participation across the state, meeting the talent needs of current and prospective businesses, and connecting job seekers with key support, guidance, and resources. A key focus was closing the gap between the supply of and demand for workers with post-secondary specialized skills.

Since the inception of the plan, Mississippi's WIOA Core partners have transformed the state's workforce delivery system to better serve individuals and businesses. Processes associated with training and job placement have been streamlined. Mississippi's Adult Education (AE) providers have embraced and expanded a career pathway model throughout education and training activities integrating key skills and industry recognized credentials into high school equivalency, literacy, and other programs. Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDAs) and vocational rehabilitation partners are connecting adults, including senior citizens, youth, SNAP and TANF recipients, workers with disabilities, and those from other vulnerable populations with training and workforce services directly aligned to high- demand industry sectors.

The four Core partners responsible for WIOA Training programs, workforce services, wraparound services, AE, and vocational rehabilitation are now digitally connected through a referral hub. The referral allows staff from any WIOA partner agency to electronically refer participants, ensuring they have access to the necessary supports to pursue a high-quality career pathway. In addition to electronic communications advances in how partners collaborate to meet participant needs, the state's physical infrastructure for workforce delivery continues to evolve through comprehensive One-Stop centers and providing virtual support options as well as in-person services.

The state's primary strategy is a career pathway model aligned with growth sectors and emerging occupations. The workforce delivery system now includes 1) Comprehensive One-Stop Centers, 2) Affiliate One- Stop Centers, 3) Virtual Access One-Stop Centers, and 4) Call Center Support. Policies and regulations for the WIOA Combined Plan Partners' workforce ecosystem have been established and reaffirmed, incorporating improved technology integration that leverages the state's nation-leading longitudinal data system.

Mississippi's system serves people from various backgrounds, including displaced workers, those entering the workforce for the first time, or pursuing postsecondary education. The system continues to provide wraparound services, addressing needs such as childcare, transportation, nutrition, as well as offering support for basic literacy, numeracy, and English language skills improvement.

The foundation for Mississippi's Combined Plan is rooted in the economic and workforce analysis prescribed by WIOA, with a customized approach based on the state's current workforce and industrial profile. Operationally, the state will continue to undertake the following activities to align the workforce development ecosystem with education, training, and economic development initiatives to meet labor market challenges:

> 1. Align WIOA Combined Plan Partners services around a Career Pathway Model, designed to guide Mississippians from any state of work-readiness into gainful employment.

2. Build on the state's current information technology infrastructure to coordinate and align the case management activities of all WIOA Combined Plan Partners in education, training, workforce, and supportive services to realize greater efficiency in service delivery, reduce duplication of effort, and ensure that every Mississippian receives the highest level of coordinated assistance in connecting to the labor market.

3. Build on the state's current network of WIOA Combined Plan Partners to ensure that every Mississippian has access to an education and training ecosystem that drives participation, retention, and completion of post-secondary credentials and employment.

4. Develop performance measures and other measures of socioeconomic mobility that give the state workforce system the ability to assess program effectiveness and pursue a data-driven approach to strategic planning.

5. Engage in continuous research to understand the workforce needs of Mississippi's employers in the context of local and regional economic sectors, and make the results of this analysis available for economic development and other strategic workforce planning purposes.

6. Provide a common vision for WIOA Combined Plan Partners for state workforce, training, education, and supportive services through coordinating entities such as the State Workforce Investment Board (SWIB) and Mississippi's four local workforce development boards.

Mississippi continues to have a positive economic outlook. The state's labor market is projected to grow approximately 10% over the next decade, driven primarily by growth across a strong concentration of key industries. Additionally, the state has experienced a rapid increase in post-secondary credential attainment, moving swiftly towards aggressive achievement goals. Additional economic and workforce data indicate that the state is in an excellent position to improve its total workforce participation rate by increasing worker skills that are in demand by employers. Analysis reveals that the state's largest skill gap is in opportunity occupations—those requiring more than a high school diploma but less than a four-year college degree, often in combination with some level of technical proficiency, and pay at least $18 per hour within five years of the completion of training.

To address this opportunity, Mississippi's Combined Plan leverages classroom training focused on industry credentials, practical experience, and necessary (soft) skills to ensure Mississippians emerge as qualified talent prepared to meet the needs of the state's industrial base. Focusing workforce resources on the state's skill gap improves job-seeker's ability to secure employment that matches their credentials and career aspirations. Via this approach, participants have access to the requisite tools to identify and pursue a career pathway that is relevant to current and future labor markets. Similarly, current, and prospective businesses are served via streamlined processes that make it easy to partner with the state to train and place new employees.

Leadership from the Office of the Governor and AccelerateMS will continue to drive the state to develop and implement the most comprehensive WIOA workforce system in the country. This approach will ensure the creation of quality opportunities for Mississippians and provide employers with a competitive and capable workforce that possesses the skills and core competencies required for businesses to remain competitive in a global economy.

II. STRATEGIC ELEMENTS (II)

a. ECONOMIC, WORKFORCE, AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES ANALYSIS

1. ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE ANALYSIS

The Economic and Workforce Analysis is organized by the State's four designated Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDAs - see Figure 1), which are aligned to the planning and development district structure in the state as outlined by the Mississippi Comprehensive Workforce Training and Education Consolidation Act of 2004. Planning and development districts serve as the fiscal agents to manage funds and to oversee and support local workforce development boards.

The four LWDAs follow demographic and economic boundaries. Each LWDA contributes to Mississippi's economic sector goals, identified by the Mississippi Development Authority's (MDA) core and horizon industry targets. While each LWDAs has a strong overall economic identity, some economic and demographic variability exists within these areas. In recognition of LWDA economic sub-areas, AccelerateMS has additionally defined eight workforce ecosystems that allow for a finer calibration of workforce and economic development efforts in LWDAs while preserving existing governance structures. Figure 2 illustrates the approximate location of these ecosystems.

Figure 1: Local Workforce Development Areas   Figure 2: Workforce Ecosystems
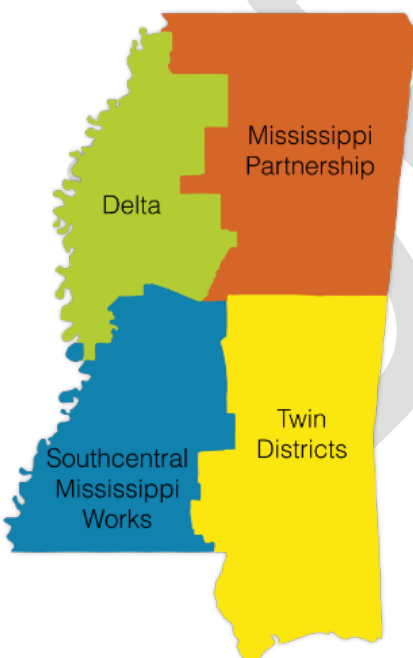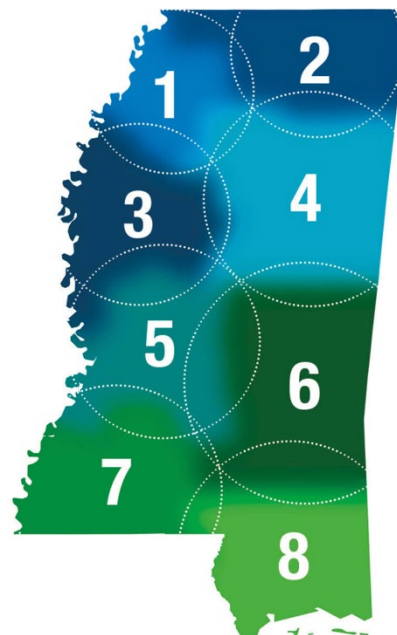
A. Economic Analysis

The Mississippi economy is currently valued at around $136B and is predicted to experience slow growth over the next five years, averaging an increase of approximately 1.1% per year (a rate that represents approximately half of the overall US economic growth rate during that same period). This growth is projected to drive a corresponding increase in employment - approximately .4% per year. The state's top industries are largely related to government and other local-serving sectors, such as healthcare and retail, as well as a portfolio of traded sectors led by activities including manufacturing, tourism, agriculture, and natural resource extraction.

The corresponding labor market supports just over 1.3 million jobs and provides average earnings of $56,400 annually. Of this job portfolio, approximately three-quarters require a 2-year degree or less and pay an average wage between $16.71 and $26.44. The labor market's mix of educational requirements are not predicted to change over the next decade. Jobs are primarily concentrated in the Jackson, Gulfport, and Greater Memphis regions in the state.

i. Existing Demand Industry Sectors and Occupations

Mississippi Works Labor Exchange data show Mississippi's largest employers represent a mix of local-serving sectors such as healthcare, retail trade, and government, and traded sectors such as manufacturing and natural resource extraction. The state's traded sectors generally offer some of the strongest employment opportunities, supporting many of the highest-paid positions in the job market.

Table 1: Labor Market Demand by Industry

Industry	Total	Percent	Earnings	Establishments
Health Care and Social Assistance	177,229.00	15.5	$ 52,210	8,261.00
Wholesale/Retail Trade	174,685.00	15.3	$ 39,816	16,791.00
Manufacturing	148,647.00	13	$ 57,218	2,424.00
Leisure and Hospitality	135,291.00	11.8	$ 21,606	7,251.00
Educational Services	107,581.00	9.4	$ 46,407	1,597.00
Administrative and Waste Services	70,802.00	6.2	$ 34,664	5,272.00
Transportation and Warehousing	65,297.00	5.7	$ 51,792	3,634.00
Public Administration	64,086.00	5.6	$ 47,918	1,520.00
Construction	48,964.00	4.3	$ 58,398	6,238.00
Financial Activities	44,404.00	3.9	$ 63,004	8,640.00
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	40,796.00	3.6	$ 67,390	9,878.00
Other Services (except Public Administration)	21,444.00	1.9	$ 43,130	4,948.00
Natural Resources and Mining	14,392.00	1.3	$ 54,957	2,067.00
Information	11,352.00	1	$ 56,331	1,449.00
Management of Companies and Enterprises	10,962.00	1	$109,621	632.00
Utilities	9,438.00	0.8	$ 86,239	628.00
Totals	**1,145,370.00**	**100**	**$ 47,420**	**81,230.00**

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, QCEW 2022 Annual Averages.

Mississippi has a strong concentration of traded sectors, particularly traditional manufacturing including furniture manufacturing, ship building, and food processing, as well as several high growth subsectors that are well-positioned to drive future economic growth in Mississippi, such as automotive and parts manufacturing and machinery manufacturing. The bulk of these traded sectors are anticipated to grow over the next decade, and several feature extremely high employment concentrations compared to other states, demonstrating a strong competitive edge for Mississippi.

Table 2: Labor Market Demand by Traded Sector

Description	2022 Jobs	2022 Employment	2022-2032 % Job Change	Avg Earnings Per
General Warehousing and Storage	21,568	1.58	18%	$52,557
Poultry Processing	16,858	9.42	-1%	$51,843
Upholstered Household Furniture Manufacturing	13,764	31	-9%	$49,139
Ship Building and Repairing	12,041	15.42	-21%	$93,643
General Freight Trucking, Long-Distance, Truckload	11,455	2.18	3%	$69,184
Corporate, Subsidiary, and Regional Managing Offices	10,679	0.57	-2%	$131,630
Couriers and Express Delivery Services	7,998	1.02	30%	$41,923
Crop Production	7,902	1.18	9%	$35,708
Automobile and Light Duty Motor Vehicle Manufacturing	6,546	3.5	9%	$93,837
Animal Production	6,361	1.74	5%	$49,645
Computer Systems Design Services	4,995	0.53	33%	$92,300
Engineering Services	4,511	0.52	3%	$95,504
Sawmills	4,144	6.23	16%	$70,297
Electric Power Distribution	4,138	2.45	3%	$137,540
Specialized Freight (except Used Goods) Trucking, Long-Distance	3,713	3.45	13%	$74,821

Source: Lightcast Datarun, 2023

Employment is generally concentrated in three urban areas (Jackson, Gulfport, and Tupelo) with Jackson accounting for almost 20% of job postings at the time of the latest data pull (Jun '22 – Jun '23).

Figure 3: Job Postings by Geography
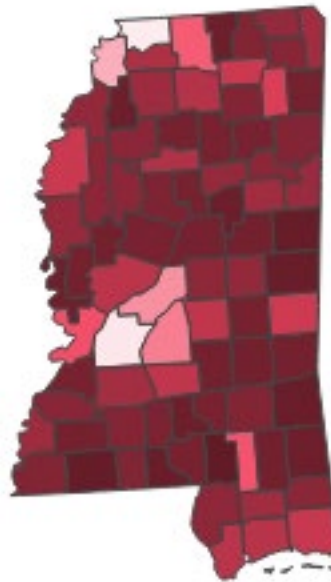
Source: Lightcast Datarun, 2023

Since recovering from the labor market contraction caused by COVID-19, the state's job market has been on an upward trend and is predicted to grow by approximately 9% over the next decade, adding an estimated ~121,000 jobs.

Figure 4: Forecasted Number of Jobs Added by 2032
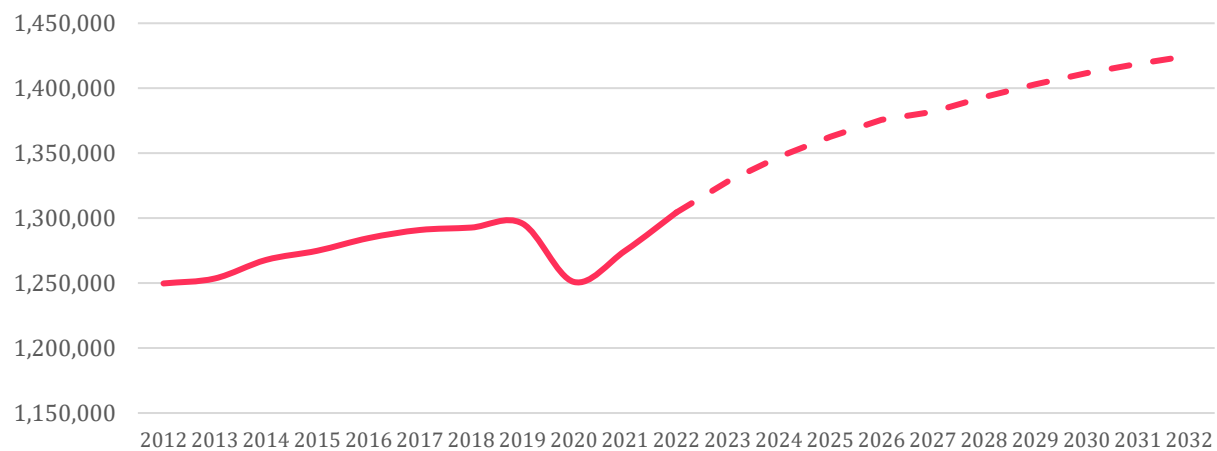
Source: Lightcast Datarun, 2023

Growth will not be distributed equally across the state, with the Mississippi Partnership LWDA projected to see the highest job growth over the next decade.

Table 3: Anticipated Job Growth by LWDA

Region	2022 Jobs	2032 Jobs	2022 – 2032 Job Change	2022 - 2032 % Job Change	Avg. Earnings Per Job
Mississippi	**1,304,299**	**1,424,926**	**120,628**	**9%**	**$56,413**
Mississippi Partnership	375,000	422,600	47,600	13%	$52,758
Delta Region	95,600	98,284	2,684	3%	$47,534
Southcentral Region	365,961	385,963	20,002	5%	$59,368
Twin Districts	415,060	445,117	30,057	7%	$56,573

Source: Lightcast Datarun, 2023

Each LWDA has a unique economic profile, offering a diverse portfolio of employment opportunities aligned to its geography, natural resources, and industrial history.

Table 4: Economic Activity Within Each LWDA

Activity	Delta	MS Partnership	Southcentral MS Works	Twin Districts
Advanced Manufacturing	X	X	X	X
Aerospace and Defense	X	X		X
Agriculture, Food, and Beverage	X	X	X	
Automotive	X	X		
Distribution and Logistics	X		X	X
Forestry, Energy, and Chemicals		X		X
Health Care			X	X
Shipbuilding				X
Data Centers and Information Technology			X	X

Source: Lightcast Datarun, 2023

The Mississippi Partnership LWDA is the largest LWDA and is predicted to experience the state's largest increase (13%) in job gains over the next decade. The region's high Labor Force Participation Rate (LFPR) (60%) and low unemployment rate (5.3%) indicate a tight labor market, although average earnings are slightly below the overall state average. Manufacturing primarily drives economic growth in this region, which contains 40% of the state's manufacturing activities in a production portfolio that includes aerospace, electronics/computer, automotive, furniture, chemical and metal fabrication.

Industries like plastics and rubber manufacturing, transportation equipment manufacturing, and furniture manufacturing are growing and shifting from low-skill manufacturing to middle-skill and advanced. Large manufacturing employers such as Goodyear Tires, Toyota, Stark Aerospace, Airbus Helicopters, Aurora Flight Sciences, Ashley Furniture, and Milwaukee Tools all have a footprint in the Mississippi Partnership LWDA. The LWDA's northwest section has 44.5% of all distribution jobs in the state with distribution facilities for large companies such as Amazon, FedEx, Nike, Wal-Mart, and Volvo.

The **Southcentral Mississippi Works LWDA** includes the state capital and has an industrial profile defined by healthcare, energy, and agribusiness. Four of the top ten counties specializing in these sectors fall within the borders of this LWDA. Because of a strong hospital system and medical education focus, the Southcentral Mississippi Works LWDA serves as a healthcare hub for the entire state. The presence of oil and natural gas deposits in the region give Southcentral Mississippi Works its strength in the energy sector, and it is becoming a key hub for the automotive industry with large manufacturers such as Nissan and Continental Tire.

The **Twin Districts LWDA**, located in the southeastern part of the state, has the largest population and labor force when compared to the three other LWDAs. Core economic activities include manufacturing, healthcare, and tourism. Within manufacturing, top industries include transportation equipment manufacturing, shipbuilding, and electrical equipment, appliance, and component manufacturing. The combination of the Stennis Space Center and military installations such as Keesler Air Force Base, Naval Construction Battalion Center, Meridian Naval Air Station, and Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center reinforce a strong defense presence in the area and support the shipbuilding and aerospace industries. Other sectors with concentrations in the region include agribusiness and tourism.

The **Delta LWDA** lags behind its three counterparts on critical economic indicators, including lowest labor force participation rate, average wages, and predicted job growth over the next decade. This region is known for its agricultural production and contains nine of the top ten crop production counties in Mississippi. Economic and workforce activities in the region are focused on diversification, targeting information technology and healthcare with service providers like Mid-Delta and pharmaceutical manufacturers/preparers such as Baxter and Needle Specialty.

ii. Emerging Demand Industry Sectors and Occupations

The Mississippi Development Authority (MDA) has identified horizon sector opportunities that are likely to be important to Mississippi's economic future. These include advanced manufacturing; blue economy; renewable energy; information, operations, and data; and mobility technology innovation. Along with sector targets, MDA is also pursuing the goal of attracting corporate headquarters, across all sectors, in Mississippi.

Additionally, the state's strong core of traded sectors is driving growing demand across the industrial portfolio. The state identified those sectors displaying the strongest growth opportunities as defined by the following criteria:

- Employ over 500 people in the state
- Anticipated to grow by over 30% during the next decade
- Provide average earnings about $55,000 per year

Table 5: Strongest Economic Growth Opportunities

NAICS	Description	2022 Jobs	2032 Jobs	2022-2032 Job Change	2022-2032 % Job Change	2022 Employment Concentration	Avg Earnings Per Job
333991	Power-Driven Handtool Manufacturing	2,845	3,939	1,094	38%	25.96	$58,583
333310	Commercial and Service Industry Machinery Manufacturing	1,365	1,880	515	38%	1.93	$63,989
332321	Metal Window and Door Manufacturing	966	1,274	308	32%	1.76	$72,658
336211	Motor Vehicle Body Manufacturing	944	1,350	406	43%	2.21	$61,305
115310	Support Activities for Forestry	916	1,218	302	33%	5.04	$65,574
524291	Claims Adjusting	904	1,226	321	36%	1.56	$89,158
333111	Farm Machinery and Equipment Manufacturing	862	1,186	324	38%	1.65	$66,423
332993	Ammunition (except Small Arms) Manufacturing	842	1,440	598	71%	6.73	$71,151
335312	Motor and Generator Manufacturing	716	972	255	36%	2.47	$80,429
325991	Custom Compounding of Purchased Resins	630	922	293	47%	4.61	$102,422
213111	Drilling Oil and Gas Wells	572	909	338	59%	1.53	$98,575
486210	Pipeline Transportation of Natural Gas	551	799	248	45%	2.26	$136,700
335314	Relay and Industrial Control Manufacturing	549	919	370	67%	1.68	$63,623
339920	Sporting and Athletic Goods Manufacturing	540	774	234	43%	1.3	$74,274
336212	Truck Trailer Manufacturing	504	729	225	45%	1.56	$72,451
321999	All Other Miscellaneous Wood Product Manufacturing	500	699	199	40%	1.8	$68,066

Source: Lightcast Datarun, 2023

iii. Employers' Employment Needs

With regard to the industry sectors and occupations identified in (A)(i) and (ii), provide an assessment of the employment needs of employers, including a description of the knowledge, skills, and abilities required, including credentials and licenses.

The Mississippi labor market is primarily defined by jobs that require less than a bachelor's degree. Labor market data reveals that 77% of jobs require an associate degree or below. In the absence of strategic intervention designed to drive economic growth in knowledge- and/or technology-intensive sectors, this mix of jobs & associated requirements is not predicted to change over the next decade.

The Mississippi Economic Council, the State Chamber of Commerce, conducts an annual tour across Mississippi to listen to local leaders from retail business, education, healthcare, the hospitality industry, manufacturing, professional associations, professional services, and other sectors, as well as local elected officials and government, regarding their concerns and ideas on three critical issues.

- Mississippi business climate
- Education, workforce, and skills training
- Talent retention and attraction

Technical skills, soft skills, and mitigation of barriers to employment were identified as priorities if Mississippi is to successfully meet the needs of existing and emerging businesses and grow the economy.

Table 6: Employer Need by Education Level

Education Level	2022 Jobs	2032 Jobs	2022 – 2032 Job Change	2022 – 2032 % Job Change	US % Job	Avg Hourly	Average Advertised Salary (from Job Postings)
No formal educational credential	324,885	353,323	28,439	9%	10%	$16.71	
High school diploma or equivalent	522,495	563,366	40,872	8%	9%	$21.21	$39,595
Some college, no degree	26,554	28,154	1,600	6%	7%	$22.87	
Postsecondary nondegree award	95,002	104,512	9,510	10%	12%	$23.58	
Associate's degree	24,888	27,650	2,762	11%	14%	$26.44	$59,603
Bachelor's degree	239,817	269,816	29,999	13%	14%	$33.90	$85,013
Master's degree	23,411	27,439	4,028	17%	20%	$37.61	$89,557
Doctoral or professional degree	30,831	34,453	3,623	12%	14%	$84.17	$110,068
Total Across All Occs	**1,287,882**	**1,408,714**	**120,832**	**9%**	**11%**	**$27.25**	

Source: Lightcast Datarun, 2023

Job posting data aligns to the labor market data presented in previous sections, showing that industry and occupation demand is primarily driven by local-serving sectors such as healthcare, retail trade, and government, and traded sectors such as manufacturing.

Table 7: Employer Demand by Industry & Occupation

Industry	Unique Postings	Occupation	Unique Postings
General Medical and Surgical Hospitals	16,011	Registered Nurse	12,051
Employment Placement Agencies	8,957	Retail Sales Associate	9,617
Limited-Service Restaurants	7,419	Retail Store Manager / Supervisor	8,876
All Other General Merchandise Retailers	7,394	Sales Representative	6,635
Colleges, Universities, and Professional Schools	6,459	Customer Service Representative	5,684
Department Stores	6,419	Tractor-Trailer Truck Driver	5,651
Offices of Physicians (except Mental Health Specialists)	5,441	Laborer / Warehouse Worker	5,238
Commercial Banking	4,345	Software Developer / Engineer	3,824
Direct Health and Medical Insurance Carriers	4,055	Restaurant / Food Service Manager	3,477
Temporary Help Services	3,967	Office / Administrative Assistant	3,298
Engineering Services	3,788	Fast Food / Counter Worker	3,093
Casino Hotels	3,732	Building and General Maintenance Technician	3,020
Full-Service Restaurants	3,616	Merchandiser	3,020
Hotels (except Casino Hotels) and Motels	3,283	Licensed Practical / Vocational Nurse	2,898
		Cashier	2,839

Source: Lightcast Datarun, 2023

Analysis of job posting data by skill and qualification highlights those capabilities aligned with the occupations listed above:

Table 8: Employer Need by Skill

Specialized Skills	% of Postings	Common Skills	% of Postings	Software Skills	% of Postings
Merchandising	9%	Communications	33%	Microsoft Office	7%
Nursing	7%	Customer Service	29%	Microsoft Excel	7%
Marketing	6%	Management	25%	Microsoft PowerPoint	4%
Auditing	5%	Sales	18%	Microsoft Outlook	3%
Cash Register	5%	Operations	17%	Microsoft Word	2%
Project Management	5%	Leadership	16%	SQL (Programming Language)	2%
Warehousing	5%	Writing	12%	Spreadsheets	1%
Restaurant Operation	4%	Detail Oriented	10%	Python (Programming Language)	1%
Cash Handling	4%	Problem Solving	10%	JavaScript (Programming Language)	1%
Accounting	4%	Planning	9%	SAP Applications	1%
Selling Techniques	4%	Interpersonal Communications	8%	Operating Systems	1%
Housekeeping	3%	Lifting Ability	8%	Microsoft Access	1%
Finance	3%	Computer Literacy	7%	Amazon Web Services	1%
Stocking Merchandise	3%	Verbal Communication Skills	7%	Salesforce	1%
General Mathematics	3%	Organizational Skills	7%	Microsoft Azure	1%

Source: Lightcast Datarun, 2023

Table 9: Employer Need by Qualification

Qualifications	Postings
Valid Driver's License	36,443
Registered Nurse (RN)	19,099
Basic Life Support (BLS) Certification	8,511
Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) Certification	5,412
Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN)	5,178
Advanced Cardiovascular Life Support (ACLS) Certification	3,449
Commercial Driver's License (CDL)	2,878
Security Clearance	2,748
Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA)	2,515
CDL Class A License	2,433
Master Of Business Administration (MBA)	1,908
Nurse Practitioner (APRN-CNP)	1,823
Secret Clearance	1,540
Pediatric Advanced Life Support (PALS)	1,455
Board Certified/Board Eligible	1,354

Source: Lightcast Datarun, 2023

B. Workforce Analysis

Overall, Mississippi's labor force is growing and rapidly becoming increasingly educated. According to the Mississippi State University (MSU) projections outlined in the 2023 report "Mississippi Population and Labor Force Profile," the state population is predicted to grow approximately 9% by 2030, driving a 12% increase in the size of the labor force. Educational data from Lumina Foundation indicates that post-secondary credential attainment currently hovers around 48.5% and is increasing across the state - a trend that is anticipated to continue over the next decade. These findings are supported by the MSU report, showing that both in-state and out-of-state community college, undergraduate, and graduate completion rates have been rising over the last decade.

Figure 5: Post-Secondary Credential Attainment in Mississippi
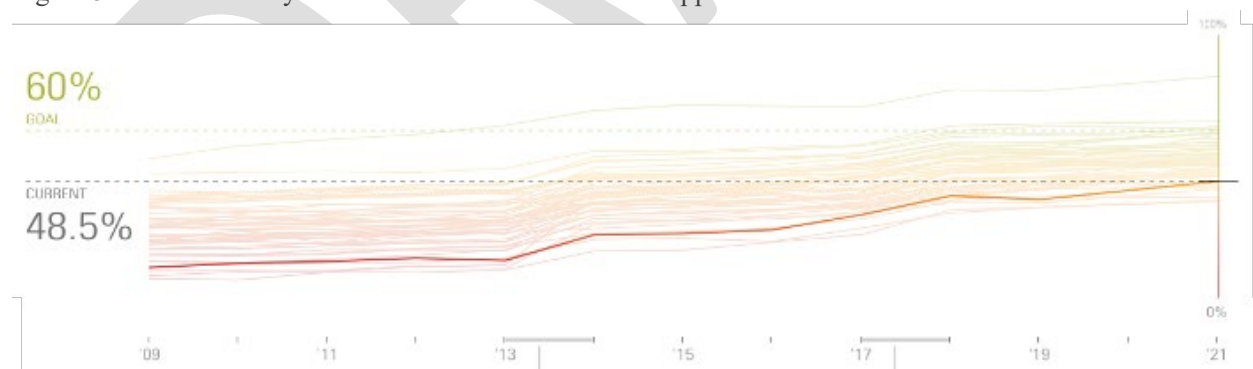
Source: Lumina Foundation, 2021

i. Employment and Unemployment

Provide an analysis of current employment and unemployment data, including labor force participation rates, and trends in the State.

Unemployment rates in Mississippi have been on a downward trend over the past decade, and have more than recovered since the COVID-caused spike in 2020. As with many factors in the labor market, unemployment is not distributed equally throughout the state but impacts certain regions more than others, with the Delta region currently and historically experiencing the state's highest unemployment rate.

Figure 6: Unemployment Rate
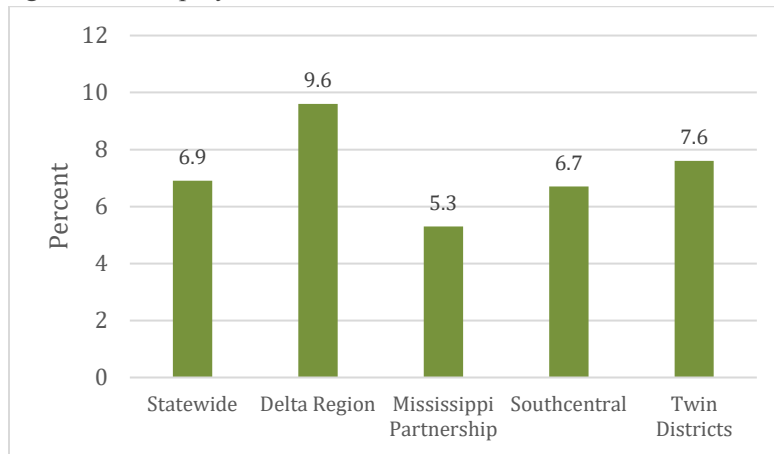
Source: Lightcast Datarun, 2023

The state's overall Labor Force Participation Rate has largely trended downwards since 2019, and is now lower than during the pandemic, indicating that workers/potential workers have been leaving or failing to join the labor pool.

Figure 7: Labor Force Participation Rate Trends
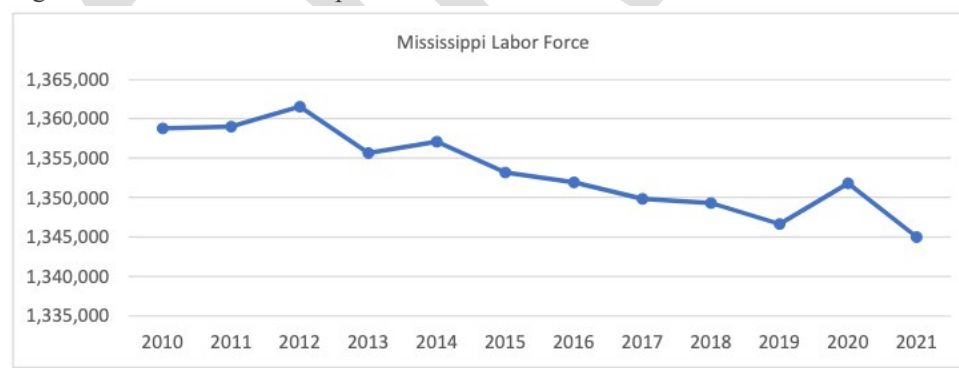
Source: Lightcast Datarun, 2023

Figure 8: Labor Force Participation Rate

% of Population in Labor Force

Statewide: 58.2
Delta Region: 52.2
Mississippi Partnership: 59.9
Southcentral: 58.7
Twin Districts: 58.4
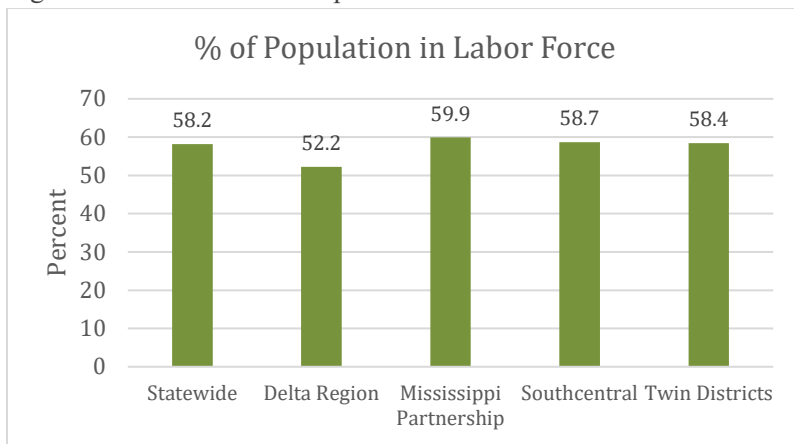
Source: Lightcast Datarun, 2023

Data from the American Community Survey (ACS) shows that underemployment continues to be extremely high in Mississippi, with the bulk of the state's most educated workers employed in an occupation for which the typical level of education required is less than that attained by the individual. This aligns to data from the job market, which indicates that only 23% of jobs in the state require a bachelor's degree or higher.

Figure 9: State Underemployment

Underemployment by Education Level

- Doctoral degree: 67%
- Master's degree: 88%
- Bachelor's degree: 43%
- Associate's degree: 67%
- Professional degree: 41%
- Some college
- High school diploma or equivalent (e.g. GED)
- Less than high school diploma

■ Total Employed   ■ Total Underemployed
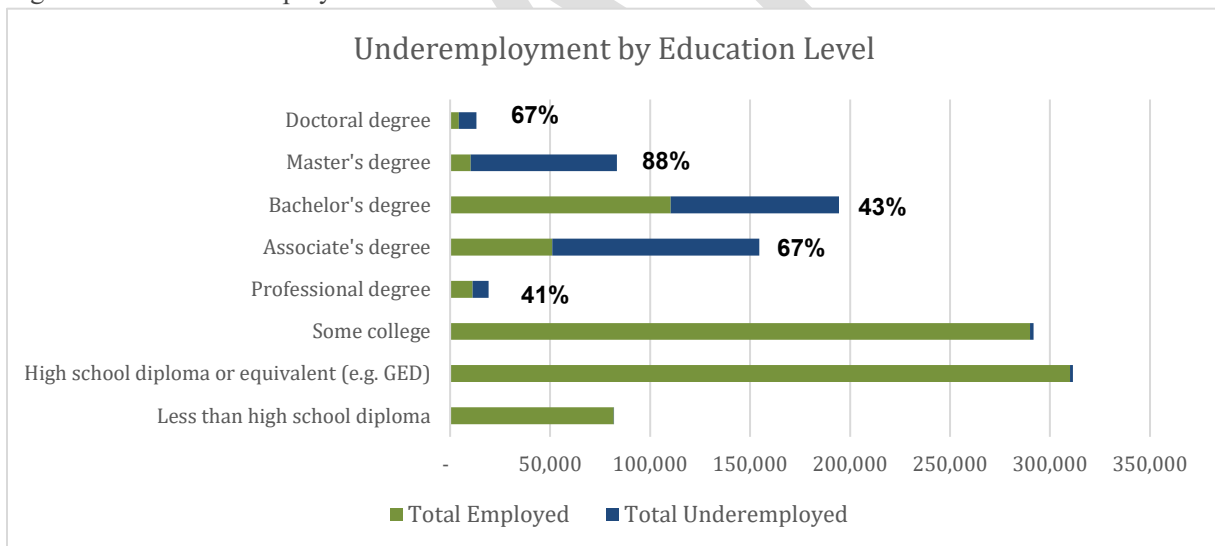
Source: Lightcast analysis of ACS data, 2017-2021 5 Year Estimates

ACS data of the LFPR by education level and age demonstrates that Mississippi lags slightly behind the nation. Participation rate by education increases with overall attainment, with the highest levels of participation seen in individuals with a bachelor's degree or higher, and the lowest levels in those with less than a high school diploma. Workforce participation by age aligns with expected participation patterns, with the highest levels of participation occurring during prime working years (those between 25 and 54).

Figure 10: LFPR by Education
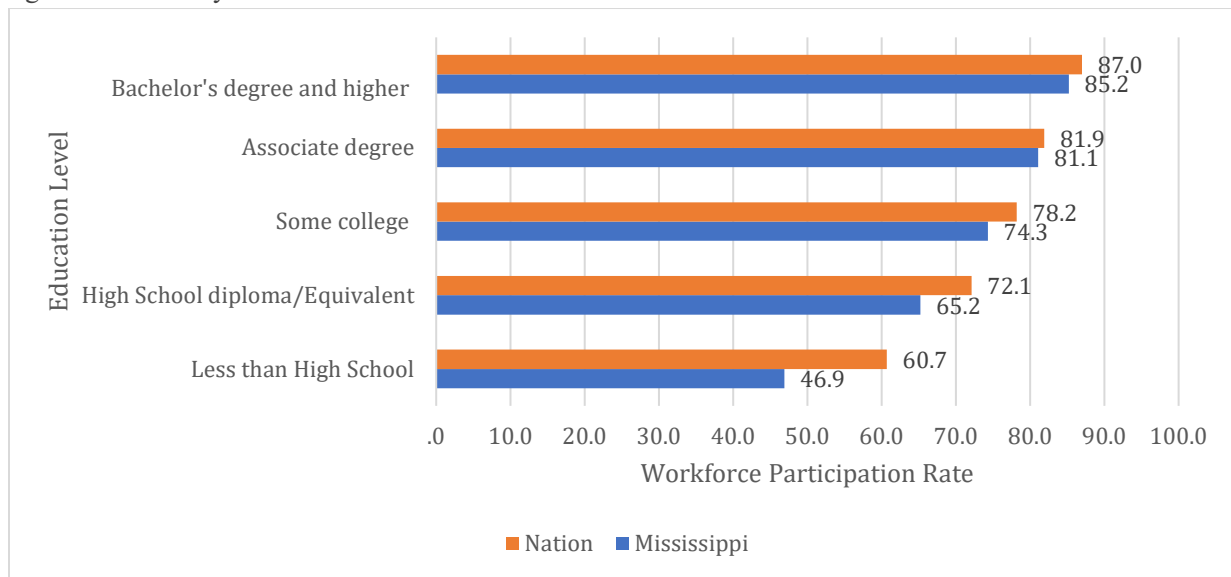
Source: ACS data, 2017-2021 5 Year Estimates

Figure 11: LFPR by Age
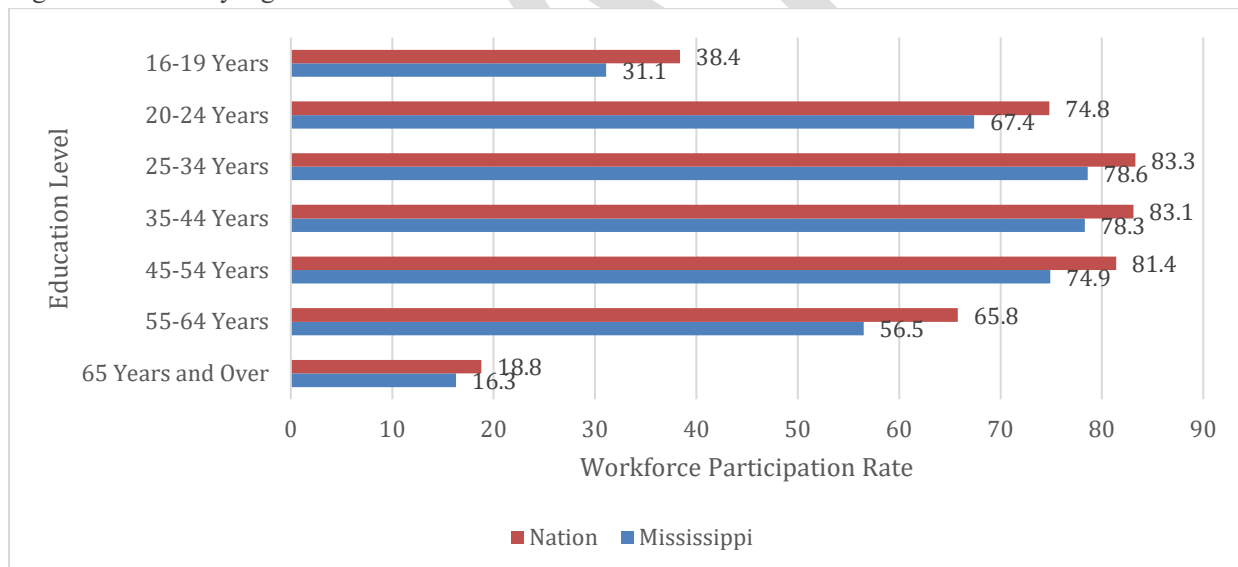
Source: ACS data, 2017-2021 5 Year Estimates

Individuals with the highest barriers to employment include single parents, older individuals, low-income individuals, and individuals with disabilities.

Table 10: Populations with Barriers to Employment

Group*	Number
Low-Income Individuals(18-64)	307,826
American Indians/Alaska Natives/Native Hawaiians	14,486
Individuals with Disabilities(18-64)	262,580
Older Individuals(>=65)	461,472
Older Individuals, Low-Income	60,914
Ex-Offenders (18-64)[1]	5,674
Homeless children and youth[2]	6,920
Children in Foster care[3]	3,540
English Language Learners with Low Level of Literacy[4]	5,457
Migrants or Seasonal Farmworkers[5]	3,530
Individuals within 2 Years of Exhausting TANF Eligibility[6]	497
Single Parent Households	577,849
Single Mother Households	368,058
Single Fathers Households	209,791
Disconnected Youth[7]	18,000

Sources: American Community Survey, 2021 5-Year Estimates;[1]Mississippi Department of Corrections, 2023; [2]Mississippi Department of Education, 2023; [3]U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children & Families, Children's Bureau, 2023; [4]Adult Basic Education, 2023 [5]U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2017; [6]Mississippi Department of Human Services, 2023; [7]National Kids Count Data, 2017. Disconnected youth are teenagers between age 16 and 19 who are not enrolled in school and not employed.

*: An individual may belong to several groups.

Data shows that individuals with disabilities suffer from the lowest LFPR, while low-income individuals and veterans experience the highest unemployment rates.

Table 11: Unemployment and LFPR of Vulnerable Populations

Group	Percent
Veterans	
Unemployment Rate	4.2
Workforce Participation Rate	44.5
Disabled	
Unemployment Rate	3.2
Workforce Participation Rate	17.7
Low Income	
Unemployment Rate	13
Workforce Participation Rate	28.5
Native American/Hawaiian	
Unemployment Rate	0
Workforce Participation Rate	43.7
Age 16-19 (Overall)	
Unemployment Rate	2.3
Workforce Participation Rate	28.4
Age 16-19 Not enrolled in School	
Unemployment Rate	2.3
Workforce Participation Rate	79.8
Age 16 and over with a Disability	
Unemployment Rate	0
Workforce Participation Rate	14

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, March 2022.

ii. Labor Market Trends

Provide an analysis of key labor market trends, including across existing industries and occupations.

A key labor market trend is the growth of middle skill jobs (those requiring more than a high school diploma but less than a four-year degree) and the rapidly increasing education levels of the population. This provides an opportunity to align economic and workforce development, ensuring that plans for each work together to create the talent needed by industry, and incentivize employers to bring quality job opportunities to the state.

Table 12: Fasted Growing Industries by Projected Net Job Change 2022-2032

NAICS	Industry	2022 Jobs	2032 Jobs	2022-2032 Job Change	2022-2032 % Job Change	Avg Earnings Per Job
7225	Restaurants and Other Eating Places	92,692	105,297	12,605	14%	$20,934
5614	Business Support Services	10,438	16,442	6,004	58%	$42,353
6241	Individual and Family Services	16,265	22,081	5,816	36%	$30,414
4931	Warehousing and Storage	22,358	26,446	4,088	18%	$52,728
7211	Traveler Accommodation	25,056	29,039	3,983	16%	$37,587
6213	Offices of Other Health Practitioners	10,121	13,628	3,508	35%	$62,804
9036	Education and Hospitals (Local Government)	98,797	102,047	3,250	3%	$58,364
5415	Computer Systems Design and Related Services	7,659	10,367	2,709	35%	$96,867
4552	Warehouse Clubs, Supercenters, and Other General Merchandise Retailers	31,491	34,150	2,659	8%	$32,860
4921	Couriers and Express Delivery Services	7,998	10,404	2,406	30%	$41,923
6243	Vocational Rehabilitation Services	4,209	6,488	2,278	54%	$20,884
5416	Management, Scientific, and Technical Consulting Services	5,245	7,451	2,207	42%	$73,430
8131	Religious Organizations	17,681	19,828	2,147	12%	$20,550
5613	Employment Services	28,529	30,629	2,100	7%	$42,064
6211	Offices of Physicians	21,913	23,735	1,822	8%	$107,968

Source: Lightcast Datarun, 2023

Table 13: Fasted Growing Occupations by Projected Net Job Change 2022-2032

SOC	Occupation	Typical Entry-Level Education	2022 Jobs	2022-2032 Job Change	2022-2032 % Job Change	Median Hourly Earnings
31-1128	Home Health and Personal Care Aides	High school diploma or equiv	19,526	5,990	31%	$10.53
53-7062	Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	No formal education	30,929	4,142	13%	$14.62
35-2014	Cooks, Restaurant	No formal education	10,173	3,997	39%	$13.13
11-1021	General and Operations Managers	Bachelor's degree	26,934	3,340	12%	$32.58
53-3032	Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	Postsecondary nondegree award	27,853	3,291	12%	$22.61
43-4051	Customer Service Representatives	High school diploma or equiv	21,560	2,922	14%	$14.76
35-3031	Waiters and Waitresses	No formal education	17,398	2,859	16%	$8.79
35-3023	Fast Food and Counter Workers	No formal education	30,725	2,688	9%	$10.02
41-2031	Retail Salespersons	No formal education	34,668	2,371	7%	$12.46
25-1099	Postsecondary Teachers	Doctoral or professional degree	12,444	2,146	17%	$30.10
37-2011	Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	No formal education	19,201	2,003	10%	$11.57
53-3033	Light Truck Drivers	High school diploma or equiv	8,511	1,736	20%	$17.84
15-1252	Software Developers	Bachelor's degree	3,116	1,690	54%	$44.10
53-7065	Stockers and Order Fillers	High school diploma or equiv	24,840	1,670	7%	$14.43
35-1012	First-Line Supervisors of Food Preparation and Serving Workers	High school diploma or equiv	11,846	1,583	13%	$13.86

Source: Lightcast Datarun, 2023

It is worth noting that these assumptions are based on the continuation of the status quo and will change in response to economic factors.

Simultaneously, the workforce is increasing rapidly in educational attainment, growing the number of people with post-secondary credentials in the state, and driving increases in underemployment. Currently, the state stands at 48.5% post-secondary credential attainment, and is poised to increase that number to 55% by 2030.

iii. Education and Skill Levels of the Workforce

Mississippi currently ranks 44th in the nation as measured by education levels of the workforce, per Lumina Foundation data. Educational attainment within the general population has been on a strong upward trend in the state for the past decade, thanks to a well-coordinated state-wide effort to increase post-secondary credential attainment. The number of residents with a bachelor's degree or higher has increased by over 25% since 2010, and those with some college or an associate degree by 17%. Simultaneously, the number of workers with less than a high school degree has declined by over 25%.

Translated into the workforce, this has resulted in a 16% increase in workers with a bachelor's degree or more, and 6.2% increase in workers with some college or an associate degree, as well as a 10.5% decrease in workers with only a high school diploma/GED, and a 33% decrease in workers with less than a high school degree. Driving this progress is significant increases in the graduation rates of high school, community college, and university students.

Figure 12: Mississippi Population – Percent Change by Educational Attainment
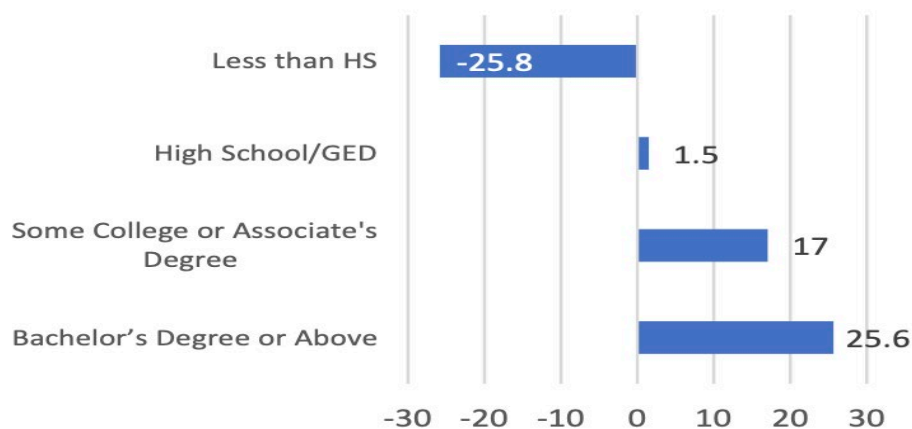
Source: Mississippi Population and Labor Force Profile, 2023 Report, Mississippi State University National Strategic Planning and Analysis Research Center

iv. Skill Gaps

The state's biggest skill gaps occur in jobs that demand medium-skilled workers – generally defined as those with more than a high school diploma, but less than a 4-year degree. Currently the state's workforce exceeds demand for high-skilled and low-skilled workers.

Current data show that 69% of jobs in Mississippi fall within the definition of middle-skill, but only 37% of the state's workforce has the requirements to fill a middle-skill job (see Figure 13). In contrast, Mississippi has more workers than available jobs in the low-skill category. This oversupply of labor also exists for high-skill jobs that require college credentials and beyond. Given that there is a middle-skill gap, the availability of such jobs indicates that many Mississippians could attain gainful employment by seeking additional education and training.

Figure 13: Mississippi Jobs and Workers by Skill
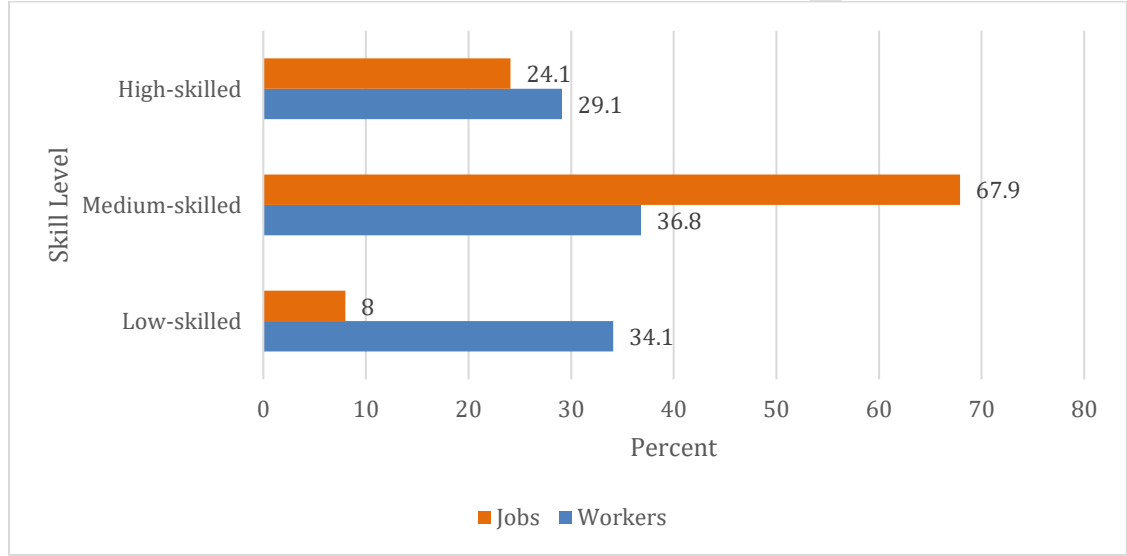
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, OEWS, 2022; ONET, 2023; U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2021 5-Year Estimates.

The Middle Skill gap in the state is largely driven by a shortage of workers in the state's largest industries, including advanced manufacturing, healthcare support, tourism, and other large sectors.

Table 14: Supply and Demand for Middle-Skill Occupations in New and Established Sectors

Sector	Supply	Demand	Gap
Advanced Manufacturing Industry	1,547	2,940	1,393
Healthcare Support Industry	893	3,001	2,108
Tourism Industry	981	10,920	9,939
Well-Established Sectors	1,763	16,239	14,476
Total	5,184	33,100	27,916

Source: Mississippi Department of Employment Security, 2023; Mississippi State Longitudinal Data System, 2023; Mississippi Works, 2023; Mississippi Community College Board, 2023.

2. WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING ANALYSIS

A. The State's Workforce Development Activities

Core Program Activities

Title I – Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Programs: The Mississippi Department Employment Security (MDES) is the recipient of WIOA Title I funds. The funds are allocated by formula to Mississippi's four Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDB) for the administration of Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth services. WIOA staff-assisted services focus on providing the following: (1) comprehensive and specialized assessments of the skill levels and service needs of adults and dislocated workers, (2) individual employment plans to identify the employment goals, appropriate achievement objectives, and appropriate combination of services for the participants to achieve employment goals, (3) job search and career planning, (4) short-term work readiness services including development of learning skills, communication skills, interviewing skills, punctuality, personal maintenance skills, and professional conduct to prepare individuals for unsubsidized employment.

Adult and Dislocated Worker services are delivered through a network of American Job Centers known as Workforce Investment Network Job Centers (WIN Job Centers) operated by community colleges and MDES. Services are provided in three categories: basic career services, individualized career services, and follow-up services. During the period between July 1, 2022 and June 30, 2023 approximately 12,217 unique individuals received services: 2,905 individuals enrolled in occupational and academic training, and 985 individuals enrolled in on the job training. Manufacturing continues to be in the largest demand for on-the-job training, while health-related occupations and truck driving demonstrate the highest demand for academic and occupational training.

Business services are a key component of Title I services. Businesses operating in Mississippi or considering a move to the state are assisted in the search for qualified employees; researching state, local and federal regulations; and exploring the state's economic development services. In support of Mississippi businesses, WIN Job Centers provide a vast array of services, including providing E-Verify, hosting job fairs, posting jobs, screening potential workers, providing meaningful data about Mississippi's labor market, and providing training services at no cost to businesses and workers. 33 Governor's Job Fair events were held between July 1, 2022, and June 30, 2023, serving 763 employers/organizations. In addition to the Governor's Job Fair Network events, 622 job fairs were held statewide at the WIN Job Centers for individual employers.

WIOA Youth services are provided by local community-based organizations, LWDBs, and educational institutions. Service providers offer program activities to eligible youth ages 14 - 24 who face barriers to education, training, or employment. Strategies for serving youth include the 14 WIOA required program elements beginning with career exploration coupled with support for educational attainment, skill training aligned with in-demand occupations and culminating with employment, apprenticeship, or post-secondary education.

Title II – Adult Education and Family Literacy Act: The Mississippi Community College Board (MCCB) Office of Adult Education (OAE) is the recipient of WIOS Title II funds. The OAE manages and distributes federal and state funds, provides leadership and technical assistance related to adult education and literacy instructions, and offers High School Equivalency (HSE) testing throughout the state. The OAE strives to ensure the availability of high-quality education programs in which individuals may earn high school credentials,

improve English language skills, prepare for the workforce, and prepare for post secondary education and training programs.

The OAE established the following four goals for Mississippi's adult education delivery system to ensure the opportunity for academic success of al learners:

- Improve Outcomes by Scaling Effective Models and Strategies Across the State
- Increase Postsecondary Transitions and Credential Attainment
- Strengthen Collage and Career Readiness for Adult Learners
- Develop Multi-Leve; Career Pathway Options.

During program year 2022-2023, Title II programs served 6,403 individuals with 1,585 receiving their high school equivalency diplomas.

Title III – Wagner-Peyser: Wagner-Peyser funds are administered by MDES. The Wagner-Peyser Employment Service program focuses on providing a variety of services, including job search assistance, job referrals and placement assistance for job seekers. For the period of July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022, MDES received 238,598 job orders with a total of 350,762 openings.

Title IV – Vocational Rehabilitation: The Mississippi Department of Vocational Rehabilitation (MDVR) administers Title IV programs.   Office of Vocational Rehabilitation helps eligible individuals with disabilities obtain, retain, or advance in competitive integrated employment (careers) that are consistent with the individual's unique employment factors – strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choices. Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) begins with an assessment to help determine the individual's employment factors. The counselor and the participant work together to develop an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) that outlines the employment objective and VR services required to meet the employment goal. In PY 2021, 2,038 individuals received VR Training Services. In Plan Year (PY) 2021, 2,003 individuals were enrolled in an education or training program; 1,445 individuals achieved a measurable skill gain at a rate of 72.1%; and 31.9% of participants earned a recognized credential.

Combined Plan Partners

Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG) Program: JVSG is fully integrated as an essential part of the WIN Job Center network. Between July 1, 2021, and June 3, 2022, 224 veterans were served under the JVSG program. Of these, 98.2% of veterans received individualized career services. Veterans in case management face a variety of employment barriers, including homelessness, low-income, disability, and justice-involvement.

Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP): Specialists funded through the Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG) are included among the WIN Job Center partner staff. The WIN Job Center staff assist veterans, eligible spouses, and other covered persons. Participants are asked to complete an assessment form to determine if they have significant barriers to employment. The WIN Job Center staff provide initial basic career services and refer veterans/eligible spouses with barriers to the DVOP Specialist for individualized career services. Local Veterans Employment Representatives (LVER) are viable and effective partners in the WIN Job Center delivery system. LVERs are key members of the MDES Business Services Team participating in business development activities, employer outreach efforts, and job development for veterans, helping create a coordinated approach to business outreach and service delivery by including other WIN Job Center staff to better assist businesses in hiring veterans.

Unemployment Compensation Programs: MDES is the state's major tax collection agency, administering the audit and collection of payroll taxes and maintaining the employment records for more than 1.5 million workers. The Benefits Department is charged with determining eligibility of nonmonetary investigations, where the main objectives are making timely and quality decisions in according with Department of Labor (DOL) guidelines. For the period of July 1, 2021, through June 30, 2022, the Benefits Department completed 57,759 timely investigations and 48,124 timely adjudications. The Benefits Department is also responsible for processing Federal, Military, and Combined Wage Claims; as well as processing statement of charges for employers and conducting work search audits.

Self-Employment Assistance Program (SEAP): Mississippi has reestablished the SEAP, which is housed within the Benefits Department. This is a voluntary program designed for unemployed individuals who are interested in starting their own business. Eligible claimants who meet certain criteria and are likely to exhaust regular UI benefits before returning to work may qualify for this program. With SEAP, work-search requirements for weekly certification are waived while working on self-employment activities. When eligible participants earn money from their business, those earnings are not deducted from their weekly benefit payment. MDES will work through partnerships with external resources such as governmental organizations and businesses in order to provide additional resources. Those resources include entrepreneurial training, business counseling, and technical support for approved claimants. The goal is to offer unemployed individuals the opportunity to focus on the development of a business venture that may lead to a new business in the state, which in turn boosts job production.

Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA): The Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) initiative in Mississippi provides intensive career services to reconnect Unemployment Insurance (UI) beneficiaries with work as quickly as possible. RESEA participants receive up to three one-on-one assessments and career counseling sessions. Each session assists the participant by providing labor market information, job matching, skills gap analysis, and soft skills training. RESEA participants are also contacted by staff and given encouragement, practical job search tips, targeted work search assistance, and job referrals. Virtual RESEA appointments were implemented on June 13, 2022, to aid underserved areas of the state. MDES completed 6,999 counseling sessions between July 1, 2021 and June 30, 2022.

Trade Adjustment Assistance Program: The Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) Program helps workers who have lost or may lose their jobs as a result of foreign trade. The program provides workers with opportunities to obtain the skills, credentials, resources, and support necessary to become re-employed. Workers who have been laid off or who will be laid off from a business which is covered under a Trade petition from DOL and are still within their individual deadlines may be eligible for benefits.

Senior Community Service Employment Program: SCSEP supports low-income and unemployed individuals ages 55 and above, and helps them find work via part-time training assignments in non-profit or other public organizations. Participants have access to employment assistance through WIN Job Centers. SCSEP participants gain work experience in a variety of community service activities at nonprofit and public facilities, including schools, hospitals, childcare centers, and senior centers. SCSEP is administered in 80 counties in Mississippi. This training serves as a bridge to unsubsidized employment opportunities for participants. Enrollment priority is given to veterans and qualified spouses, then to individuals who are older than 65, have a disability, have low literacy skills or limited English proficiency, reside in a rural area, are homeless or at risk of homelessness, have low employment prospects, or have failed to find employment after using services through the WIN Job Center system.

National Farmworker Jobs Program: MDES manages the Migrant Seasonal Farm Worker (MSFW) and H-2A Temporary Agricultural Labor Certification Program. MDES supports the H-2A program by referring U.S. farm workers to farmers when hiring in the state. The MSFW program provides outreach and basic labor exchange services to those who are identified as migrant or seasonal farm workers. The H-2A program helps employers recruit temporary visa workers when qualified U.S. workers are not available. H-2A regulations require participating employers to provide proof of available housing and clean water before certifying eligibility. MDES successfully certified 48 employer's housing locations with wells. The H-2A continues to see exponential growth. Forty-eight new employers were registered from July 2021 through June of 2022.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF): Mississippi Department of Human Services administers the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Work Program (TWP) MDHS and MDES partner together to provide needy families with a pathway to self-sufficiency. Employment and training activities are an integral part of TWP. In addition, support services like childcare, transportation, and employment expenses are made available to help participants prepare for self-sustaining employment.

State Programs

Mississippi Works Fund: The Mississippi Works Fund serves to grow the state's dedicated and skilled workforce to meet the demands of the state's new and existing businesses. Eligible projects include job creation projects and work ready projects. Grants are used to maximize existing training resources available through the Workforce Enhancement Training Funds (WET), WIOA, and other sources. Funds should be targeted towards high growth industries as identified by the Mississippi Development Authority.

Workforce Enhancement Training Fund: The Mississippi Workforce Enhancement Training Fund (WET) serves to provide reimbursement for approved costs related to training for employers in order to enhance employee productivity in priority occupations. Eligible projects for priority industries include 1) training new or existing employees by the local community college, contractor, or business; 2) train-the-trainer activities for disciplines not currently available through the local community college or company; and 3) vendor training.

B. The Strengths and Weaknesses of Workforce Development Activities

Provide an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the workforce development activities identified in (A), directly above.

General Strengths:

Created in the 2020 legislative session, AccelerateMS has implemented a strategic approach to workforce development, tailored to the state's economic needs and key workforce partners including employers, workers/potential workers, educational institutions, and others. Through AccelerateMS, the state is taking a unified approach to workforce development that boosts efficiency and productivity of all systems, stakeholders, and partners.

Workforce Data Analysis: Mississippi optimizes the collection and analysis of workforce data to understand key factors including existing need and gaps in workforce development services. The state's data-driven approach to designing, testing, and analyzing workforce activities is a significant strength as it allows partners to direct resources towards the state's areas of highest need.

Coordination Among Partners: The state's integrated communication and data-management prevents duplication of efforts and allows diverse state entities to coordinate efficiently to provide quality services to both individuals and businesses, ensuring resources are used to create maximum impact on participants and the economy.

General Weaknesses:

Labor Shortage and Compensation Disparity: Core partner agencies are experiencing recruitment, retention and labor shortages exceeding 30% which adversely impacts service delivery.

Ineffective Outreach and Underutilization of Workforce Services: Current outreach, awareness, and messaging strategy is not effective in reaching underserved and prime age populations, and participant counts have not returned to pre-pandemic levels.

Broad Lack of Career Awareness: The educational system leaves many students and adults unprepared to make informed decisions about their careers. These gaps include lack of exposure to employment pathways and mobility; lack of knowledge around educational requirements and credential value; and lack of professional preparation.

Barriers to Accessing Training: 1) Financial challenges including inability to afford tuition or forgo wages during training hinder participation - most people seeking training opportunities cannot afford to pay tuition or forego earnings while in training (even if the training is free). To successfully participate in and complete training, participants will need to earn some sort of income (that does not require them to immediately relinquish public assistance benefits). 2) Additionally, access to key workforce training and wraparound services is often constrained by administrative requirements. 3) Job training and employment opportunities are clustered in urban centers, while 54% of the population is distributed across disconnected communities without easy access to those services/jobs. Workforce partners will need to work with employers, non-profits, and other state agencies to ensure rural residents have access to the training and resources that will allow them to successfully maintain employment.

C. State Workforce Development Capacity

Provide an analysis of the capacity of State entities to provide the workforce development activities identified in (A), above.

The state's capacity for effective change rests in the supportive nature of its cultural and political environment, the strength of its technology and data systems, its programmatic capacity to support the success of vulnerable individuals, and the distribution of its physical infrastructure.

Political and Cultural Capacity: In 2020, to promote additional improvements in workforce training and education initiatives, Governor Reeves and the Mississippi Legislature established the new Office of Workforce Development (AccelerateMS). The charter legislation charged AccelerateMS with a mission to review existing programs; provide information, guidance, and significant influence on how funding sources should be utilized for the purposes of workforce development; and serve as the coordinating entity for all workforce development stakeholder agencies in Mississippi.

Technology and Data Capacity: To date, the state has developed and implemented an integrated technology-based workforce system called Mississippi Works. Mississippi Works is a mature, real-time, integrated web and

mobile solution providing labor exchange services to job seekers and employers and allowing MDES One-Stop partner staff to perform case management activities. The system was developed in Mississippi through a partnership between MDES and the National Strategic Planning and Analysis Research Center (NSPARC) at Mississippi State University (MSU). Mississippi Works currently supports the calculation of common participation periods across what have become all WIOA Title I and Title III programs. The system fully integrates Unemployment Insurance, Trade Adjustment Assistance, Adults, Dislocated Workers, Youth, Veterans, and the Work Opportunity Tax Credit Program. Mississippi Works is interoperable with other case management systems run by Rehabilitation Services, AE, and TANF.

The state has also developed and implemented a State Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) to improve performance-based management. The SLDS Governing Board is responsible for the management and oversight of data sharing and data use. Board members include representatives from each workforce and education sector in the state. The SLDS Governing Board has developed a clear set of rules that define the scope of the system along with those ensuring data integrity, security, confidentiality, and privacy (see Appendix B).

Capacity to Support the Success of Vulnerable Populations: Mississippi's capacity to support individuals with barriers to employment has greatly expanded with the development of the WIOA referral hub. All partners collect a basic set of diagnostic information from program participants allowing for an automated assessment of participant needs. As a result, participants are not left to navigate the workforce or social services system alone. No matter which Combined Plan Partner the participant visits first, he or she is fully assessed and connected with supportive services that enables the participant to have the best possible opportunity to succeed in training for or entering in-demand occupations.

Core Partners also depend on the expertise and connections of local community-based organizations to address the specific needs of a community or population. This approach expands outreach to vulnerable and underserved populations.

Physical Infrastructure Capacity: The workforce system also relies on infrastructure with multiple points of access provided by WIOA Combined Plan Partners.

WIN Job Centers: American Job Centers in Mississippi have been branded under the Workforce Investment Network (WIN) and are known as WIN Job Centers. There are 43 centers across the state, and most Mississippi residents are within 30 miles of a center. These centers provide employment services, to include education and training for workers, human resource assistance for businesses, and information for economic developers. In support of Mississippi businesses, WIN Job Centers offer a vast array of services, including providing E-Verify, hosting job fairs, posting jobs, screening potential workers, communicating meaningful data about Mississippi's labor market, and providing training services — all at no cost to businesses and workers.

Rehabilitation Services Local Offices: The Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services (MDRS), Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) and Office of Vocational Rehabilitation for the Blind (OVRB) provide vocational rehabilitation services through a variety of local offices, affiliates, and itinerant teachers. MDRS operates 10 district offices and provides services through numerous physical locations throughout Mississippi. The AbilityWorks division of MDRS is a network of 17 community rehabilitation programs that provide vocational assessment, job training, and work experience for individuals with disabilities. Three MDRS work locations are WIN Job Centers.

Human Services County Offices: The Mississippi Department of Human Services (MDHS) operates through seven programmatic divisions and has offices in all 82 counties of Mississippi. The 82 county offices are divided among nine regions. A regional director is responsible for oversight of the counties within each region. At the state office, staff provide support for policy, procedures, training, and technical assistance needed for program administration.

In addition to county offices, the Division of Economic Assistance (DEA) of MDHS is responsible for programs that ensure nutrition and other basic needs are met for low- and medium-income individuals and families in Mississippi. The DEA has offices in each county of the state under the guidance of a county director. Staff development and training within MDHS county offices are focused on supporting professional growth by providing training programs and workshops based on the specific needs of the agency office.

MDHS has also developed a web-based portal accessible to any agency, organization, business or individual in need to assist in locating available resources to aid in barrier mitigation. My Resources is available for use nationwide and resides on the MDHS web page and located at https://myresources.mdhs.ms.gov.

Adult Education Access Points: The MCCB offers AE through a variety of physical locations, including 15 community colleges, three public schools, and all correctional facilities.

b. STATE STRATEGIC VISION AND GOALS

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include the State's strategic vision and goals for developing its workforce and meeting employer needs in order to support economic growth and economic self-sufficiency. This must include—

1. VISION

Describe the State's strategic vision for its workforce development system.

The state's strategic vision is to create a world-class workforce aligned to Mississippi's unique economic portfolio and labor market, which drives increased and sustained individual, community, and statewide prosperity. This vision will be attained through the development of a unified workforce system that acts as a connected ecosystem where all parts are aligned and work together to achieve common goals. Through this system, every Mississippian will have the opportunity to be work- or career-ready and to secure his or her dream job right here at home.

From the moment one enters the education and workforce system, he or she will be presented with the necessary tools to choose and pursue a career pathway that is relevant to current and future labor markets. Similarly, from the moment current and prospective businesses enter into a partnership with Mississippi's education and workforce system, resources will be aligned to cultivate the sustainable, high-performance workforce critical for maintaining and expanding businesses' long-term economic viability, in turn creating better and more sustainable employment opportunities for Mississippians.

To achieve this vision, WIOA partners will work together to:

- Create a talent pool with the skills, knowledge, & experience required by local employers in both the current & future job markets
- Develop the outreach, education, & training infrastructure that drives participation, retention, & completion of post-secondary credentials
- Leverage workforce development investments & resources to promote state, community, business, & individual prosperity

2. GOALS

Describe the goals for achieving this vision based on the analysis in (a) above of the State's economic conditions, workforce, and workforce development activities. This must include—

(A) Goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce, including preparing youth and individuals with barriers to employment and other populations.

(B) Goals for meeting the skilled workforce needs of employers.

WIOA Combined Plan Partners will realize this vision by achieving seven goals focused on developing an educated and skilled workforce aligned to the needs of employers.

1. Jointly develop policies that will coordinate service delivery among all WIOA Combined Plan Partners to achieve a no-wrong-door approach for WIOA participants and employers.

2. Strengthen interagency partnerships.

3. Develop defined, articulated pathways across educational sectors (K-16+) to create a pipeline for the workforce.

4. Develop cross-program performance metrics. Engage partners to establish a plan to remain abreast of changing industry needs and the metrics to measure outcomes to realize the potential of the state's workforce programs and delivery systems.

5. Develop a service delivery approach that maximizes the use of technology advancements.

6. Invest in integrated technology to meet the unified technology requirements of the Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and other federal initiatives.

7. Develop and communicate a unified vision and message.

Goals 1, 2, and 5 aim to decrease programmatic fragmentation in order to serve all eligible individuals via an efficient and productive way, creating a "no-wrong-door" approach that ensures individuals seeking a connection to the workforce will be routed to the correct partner regardless of where they enter the system. Out-of-school youth, including current or former foster youth, will be routed to youth providers; those with barriers to employment will be routed to partners with services that address their specific barriers to training or work.

Partners have committed to extending a no-wrong-door approach to employer engagement and other programs to include childcare and mental health. Over the next two years, partners will work to coordinate the management of employers using integrated technologies to track and facilitate interactions and results. The goals of this approach are to streamline employer engagement and activities like needs assessments, as well as to predict future workforce needs and boost access to support services.

Goals 3 and 6 aim to produce a workforce that meets the needs of Mississippi's existing and potential employers in partnership with educational institutions. Mississippi's use of longitudinal employer needs data informs the creation of articulated pathways into the workforce. K-12 leverages career clusters and occupational pathways that guide a student's academic work. In partnership with K-12, Mississippi's community and junior colleges have created dual enrollment opportunities so students in high school gain credit toward work-ready credentials prior to graduation and transition to subsequent two-year or four-year programs designed to complete the student's work-readiness in his or her chosen pathway. Employer participation on the SWIB provides WIOA partner agencies with a constant source of feedback on the effectiveness of the state's workforce development tactics.

Goals 4, 5, and 6 ensure that Mississippi's efforts to create a skilled workforce are measurable. Use of technology goes beyond its real-time application in case management and includes ongoing and retrospective analysis of outcomes so that performance can be measured. Outcomes are measured via two standards—federally prescribed performance measures and measurements defined by the state. AccelerateMS is charged with recommending comprehensive, results-oriented measures that will apply across Mississippi's workforce development system. To support these measurements, Mississippi continues to invest in the SLDS, which brings together administrative data from all WIOA partners and educational institutions in a well-governed, secure clearinghouse that enables performance measurement calculations, cohort analysis, and strategic planning.

Goal 7 aims to create a differentiated brand identity based in AccelerateMS' state workforce development strategy. Via this strategy workforce development activities and funds will be used efficiently and to maximum effect, streamlining services, enhancing communication and networking between partners, and boosting results for participants. Through the creation of curated messaging, this vision will be clearly communicated to partners, stakeholders, and participants helping align all interested parties and driving workforce development progress across the state.

3. PERFORMANCE GOALS

Using the tables provided within each Core Program section, include the State's expected levels of performance relating to the performance accountability measures based on primary indicators of performance described in section 116(b)(2)(A) of WIOA. (This Strategic Planning element only applies to core programs.)

In order to assess performance for a full four quarters after program exit, projected baseline figures for WIOA core programs were based on available data from the most recent quarters.

WIOA mandates six performance measures, as identified in Appendix G, for its core programs. Performance number baselines were calculated using the following methodology:

1. *Employment, Quarter 2.* This employment measure is the percentage of participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program in question; the measure for youth also includes the percentage who were in education or training activities during the second quarter after exit.

2. *Employment, Quarter 4.* This employment measure is the percentage of participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the fourth quarter after exit from the program in question; the measure for youth also includes the percentage who were in education or training activities during the fourth quarter after exit.

3. *Median Earnings, Quarter 2.* This measure identifies the median earnings of participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program.

4. *Credential Attainment Rate* (except Wagner-Peyser). The credential attainment rate is expressed as the percentage of participants who obtained a recognized postsecondary credential or a secondary school diploma, or its recognized equivalent, during participation in or within one year of exit from the program. A participant who has obtained a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent is only included in this measure if the participant is also employed or is enrolled in an education or training program leading to a recognized postsecondary credential within one year after program exit.

5. *Measurable Skill Gains* (except Wagner-Peyser). Measurable skill gains are expressed as the percentage of participants who, during a program year, are in an education or training program that leads to a recognized postsecondary credential or employment and who are achieving measurable skill gains, which are defined as documented academic, technical, occupational, or other forms of progress toward such a credential or employment.

6. *Effectiveness in Serving Employer*s. Per current WIOA requirements, Mississippi has chosen two of three options proposed for measuring effectiveness in serving employers for data collection and reporting: employee retention rate and repeat business customer rate.

Other measures for which baseline calculations are not required to be computed in this document are:

- *Measurable Skill Gains* (except Wagner-Peyser). Measurable skill gains are expressed as the percentage of participants who, during a program year, are in an education or training program that leads to a recognized postsecondary credential or employment and who are achieving measurable skill gains, which are defined as documented academic, technical, occupational, or other forms of progress toward such a credential or employment.

- *Effectiveness in Serving Employers*. Per current WIOA requirements, Mississippi has chosen two of three options proposed for measuring effectiveness in serving employers for data collection and reporting: employee retention rate and repeat business customer rate.

Agencies administering the WIOA core programs will be required to provide data for WIOA federal reporting, and AccelerateMS may establish other metrics to be used internally for strategic planning.

4. ASSESSMENT

Describe how the State will assess the overall effectiveness of the workforce development system in the State and how it will use the results of this assessment and other feedback to make continuous or quality improvements.

AccelerateMS has engaged in several measurement strategies to evaluate program effectiveness. The Office conducts data analysis and incorporates project evaluation metrics that measure outcomes, and determine both impact and return on investment. Performance monitoring is embedded in all workforce projects.

To assess progress towards achieving each of its seven goals, Mississippi considers both system and long-term individual outcomes.

Assessing Goal 1, "Work together to develop policies that will coordinate service delivery with all WIOA Combined Plan Partners," and Goal 2, "Strengthen interagency partnerships": Progress towards achieving Goals 1 and 2 are assessed through system-level analysis to determine whether clear policies exist to coordinate service delivery from all partners. At the individual level, measuring the degree of co-enrollment in programs is a key metric by which Mississippi assesses the effectiveness of these policy efforts. This metric is gathered via Mississippi's WIOA Referral Hub, which keeps a record of every partner-to-partner referral and service enrollment.

Assessing Goal 3, "Develop defined, articulated pathways across educational sectors (K-16+) to create a pipeline for the workforce," and Goal 6, "Engage partners to establish the plan to remain abreast of changing industry needs and the metrics to measure outcomes to realize the potential of the state's workforce programs and delivery systems": Measuring progress towards the achievement of Goals 3 and 6 chiefly involves the use of longitudinal data analysis. The closer the workforce development system in Mississippi comes to achieving goals 3 and 6, the more we expect to see a match between employer need and education/training pathways. Employer needs will be measured through labor market analysis of demand by occupation. These needs will be compared to the pipeline of labor supply from secondary, post-secondary, and workforce training providers. Gaps in supply will be identified and this assessment will inform the efforts of policy makers, educators, and employers to address progress towards these goals.

Assessing Goal 4, "Develop cross-program performance metrics": As a starting point, Mississippi uses the WIOA-prescribed individual performance measures described in II.b.3 across all programs. In addition to measures of individual performance, the state calculates the number of referrals passing between each partner using WIOA Referral Hub technology. AccelerateMS is planning to define additional workforce performance metrics to supplement the current evaluation options.

Assessing Goal 5, "Invest in integrated technology to meet the unified technology requirements of the Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and other federal initiatives": Measuring progress towards the achievement of Goal 5 will be accomplished by introduction of a maturity model for WIOA. AccelerateMS charged with the responsibility to recommend comprehensive, results-oriented measures that will apply to all of Mississippi's workforce development system. To support these measurements, Mississippi continues to invest in its longitudinal data system, to bring together administrative data from all WIOA partners and educational institutions in a well-governed, secure clearinghouse that enables performance measure calculations, cohort analysis, and strategic planning.

Assessing Goal 7, "Develop and communicate a unified vision/message": Measuring progress towards communicating a unified vision and message has historically been a qualitative, system-wide measurement based on partner interactions with participants and employers. Progress towards this goal can be seen in the formation of AccelerateMS, charged with creating a state strategy that will unify workforce development efforts across the state. As part of this strategy, AccelerateMS will articulate performance metrics for all aspects of workforce development, including the development of a more quantitative approach to measuring the extent to which employers and participants feel as though they are being served by an approach that presents a unified vision and message.

c. State Strategy

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include the State's strategies to achieve its strategic vision and goals. These strategies must consider the State's economic, workforce, and workforce development, education and training activities and analysis provided in Section (a) above. Include discussion of specific strategies to address the needs of populations provided in Section (a).

- **1. Describe the strategies the State will implement, including industry or sector partnerships related to in-demand industry sectors and occupations and career pathways, as required by WIOA section 101(d)(3)(B), (D). "Career pathway" is defined at WIOA section 3(7) and includes registered apprenticeship. "In-demand industry sector or occupation" is defined at WIOA section 3(23)**

- **2. Describe the strategies the State will use to align the core programs, any Combined State Plan partner programs included in this Plan, required and optional one-stop partner programs, and any other resources available to the State to achieve fully integrated customer services consistent with the strategic vision and goals described above. Also describe strategies to strengthen workforce development activities in regard to weaknesses identified in section II(a)(2)**

Defined, Articulated Pathways across Educational Sectors (K-16+) to Create a Pipeline for the Workforce aligned to in demand sectors.

Mississippi will identify and align occupational runways, industry credentials, work-based learning, training delivery modalities, and develop a participant stipend structure to increase recruitment, engagement, enrollment, persistence, completion, and career navigation for in demand industry sectors.

High level objectives are:

- Develop occupational runways aligned to workforce needs
- Design plan to integrate industry-aligned credentials into runways
- Develop recommendations for work-based learning activities
- Create participant stipend framework

Tactics to achieve these objectives include:

Aligning sector strategies with secondary career technical education initiatives to advance career pathways for high school graduates: Following recommendations from the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) has adopted a framework to enhance its career technical education programs to prepare high school graduates for post-secondary credentialing and, ultimately, for high-skill, high-demand jobs in the state. The focus of this framework is to line up workforce

needs with secondary and postsecondary student preparation. Via this initiative a seamless system of career education and labor market opportunities for high school students can be developed in line with sector strategy goals of the state.

Career Coaches: A statewide career coach program was created during the 2022 legislative session and expanded during the 2023 legislative session. The Career Coach program was funded via the expansion in workforce investments from $8 Million to $12 Million for fiscal year 2024. The program places coaches in schools to help students explore high quality careers in Mississippi. The coaches work to support students' pursuit of pathways leading to quality careers through job shadowing, internship opportunities, connection and other activities.

Registered Apprenticeship Programs (RAPs): RAP is an industry-driven, high-quality, customizable, earn-as-you-learn career pathway training model. The State has received four cycles of Registered Apprenticeship (RA) Grant funding since 2016. The first two cycles included the Accelerator and Expansion Grants. The Mississippi Apprenticeship Program (MAP) received a third cycle of continuation funding for the State Apprenticeship Expansion Grant (SAE) and also received funding through the Apprenticeship State Expansion Grant (ASE). MDES will continue to expand RAPs in Mississippi through the MAP initiative. MAP is positioning RAPs as a viable pathway that aligns Mississippi's workforce and educational systems, strengthens economic competitiveness for our businesses, and makes good-paying jobs more accessible for our citizens. The three major project goals of the initiative are to expand RAP Sponsors, expand state capacity to support RAPs, and target and increase the participation and completion rates of diverse populations. All RAPs are subject to training provider eligibility procedures.

Increasing the participation of underrepresented populations: To accomplish this, the Mississippi Office of Apprenticeship will leverage the community college system by using community college sponsor contacts and College & Career Navigators from the Mississippi Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (MI-BEST) initiative to conduct and coordinate outreach, recruitment, and support of underrepresented populations in RA programs. MI-BEST is an evidence-based, integrated pathways initiative currently implemented by all 15 community colleges.

Students in MI-BEST concurrently enroll in a) High School Equivalency (HSE) preparation classes if they lack a high school credential or academic skills (reading, writing, math), b) workforce preparation activities through the Smart Start Pathway Course, and/or c) occupational training provided by the college's credit-level Career and Technical Education programs or the Workforce Education divisions. MI-BEST programs are implemented in over 60 occupational pathways across the colleges, and 44% of these programs are in the advanced manufacturing and automotive sectors. Colleges hire full-time College and Career Navigators who recruit and work to retain students in MI-BEST. The College and Career Navigator at each college receives training about the navigation role, interfaces regularly with the faculty in the program, and many also engage with employers [3] [4] to help students access apprenticeships or employment opportunities.

Community College Sponsor contacts and MI-BEST Student Navigators can closely follow each participant to monitor their progress and support successful completion. Working collaboratively with the WIN Job Centers' case managers, Community College Sponsor Contacts and MI-BEST Student Navigators is well positioned to serve as the "recruitment and support services hub" to identify potential participants, along with existing, and perhaps underutilized, resources that are currently not well coordinated to maximize their benefit to Registered Apprentices. The Navigators can leverage relationships with other college student support personnel and external workforce system support service partners to address barriers to apprenticeship entry and retention, such as lack

of a high school credential, childcare, transportation, or other obstacles. Working with MI-BEST Student Navigators as a "recruitment point person" provides a more efficient way for RA program sponsors to communicate selection standards to multiple organizations seeking to prepare participants for entry into these programs.

Leveraging funding opportunities – To expand its capacity and enhance its ability to address sector-specific industry needs and cater to underserved populations, AccelerateMS actively pursues federal funding opportunities. Mississippi is the recipient of an EDA Phase I Recompete award. The project in partnership with Local Workforce Development Boards, focuses on supporting Mississippians residing in designated service areas who encounter significant challenges in accessing education and job training opportunities. The proposed initiative aims to overcome these access barriers by strategically citing training facilities in underserved communities and emulating a successful telehealth model to enhance workforce training accessibility. Additionally, measures will be implemented to address transportation obstacles for program participants including rideshare vouchers, vans, or hybrid delivery methods.

Mississippi has also received grant funds from the DoD's Defense Manufacturing Community Support Program. Funds are being used for workforce development initiatives designed to increase the defense sector's capacity, capability, and resilience in Mississippi.

Identification of internship opportunities with employers across the state: The Institutions of Higher Learning board has already developed a central office to coordinate these efforts and has contacted several businesses to identify critical areas for which employers would like to have interns. The state has also modified its technology to allow employers to post internships on the Mississippi Works Labor Exchange. Currently, in the high-growth, high-demand sectors, the typical areas that employers identify as critical for internships include engineering and management.

Development of Data Tools: Three data tools will be developed to fully assess overall performance of the state workforce system: dashboards, pathway evaluators, and supply and demand analysis. Supply and demand analyses will help address questions about skill gaps and provide information to direct resources so that they better meet employer demand. This type of analysis will assess the extent to which education and training systems are aligned with economic strategies and growth of economic opportunities in the state.

Engage Partners to Establish a Plan to Remain Abreast of Changing Industry Needs and the Metrics to Measure Outcomes to Realize the Potential of the State's Workforce Programs and Delivery Systems

This strategy focuses on ensuring that workforce training programs and funds are focused on those skills and occupations in highest demand. Success on this front will ensure that students are competitive hires for in-demand, well-paying jobs and industry has the talent it needs to promote growth and success.

Tactics in support of this strategy include effective partner engagement, including streamlined outreach, communication, and management of employer relationships as described above. Another key tool is the SLDS where research questions and policy can be developed. The state has already created the scientific capacity that creates basic knowledge to inform continuous system improvement. This capacity expands as state leaders, AccelerateMS, agency partners, training and education partners, employers, and other stakeholders identify critical research areas important to the economic development of the state.

Joint Development of Strategies That Will Coordinate Service Delivery with WIOA Combined Plan Partners

This strategy focuses on leveraging WIOA One-Stop Centers. Local workforce development boards are responsible for certification, operation, and oversight of the One-Stop Centers. Memorandums of understanding (MOUs) detail each partner's role, the resources provided, and expectations for the One-Stop Center.

Under Mississippi's WIOA implementation, the One-Stop Center system includes five models of service delivery: 1) Comprehensive One-Stop Centers, 2) Affiliate One-Stop Centers, 3) Virtual Access One-Stop Centers, 4) Call Center Support, and 5) Sector Training Plus Comprehensive One-Stop Centers. The virtual Access One- Stop Centers will be expanded for better coordinated services, increased access and decreased cost.

1. **Comprehensive One-Stop Centers** - Comprehensive One-Stop Centers physically house the consortium of Combined Plan Partners designated by the SWIB and LWDBs. One staff member from each of the Combined Plan Partners is co-located in each of the comprehensive centers. Each of the four LWDAs will house at least one Comprehensive One-Stop Center that provides access to the services of the Combined Plan programs and other partners. Decisions to create additional Comprehensive One-Stop Centers beyond the required four centers will be made by all Combined Plan Partners. Each Comprehensive One-Stop Center is strategically designed to meet the workforce needs of the job seekers and employers based on the geography, population, and industry requirements of the area. Comprehensive One-Stop Center staff are expected to have a working knowledge of all programs and services offered through the One-Stop Center and to be able to provide participants with the information necessary to make informed decisions.

2. **Affiliate One-Stop Centers** - Unlike the Comprehensive One-Stop Centers, Affiliate One-Stop Centers do not require a staff representative from all of the WIOA Combined Plan Partners. However, each Affiliate One-Stop Center must include staff from at least two Combined Plan Partner programs. The primary purpose of Affiliate One-Stop Centers is to provide the core services that meet the needs of local areas while maintaining a direct line to the larger comprehensive centers.

   a. The flexibility of the Affiliate One-Stop Center structure allows for the unique, customized inclusion of multiple access points. Access to services within affiliate centers may include fully assisted service, partially assisted service, self-service, or a combination of all three. Fully assisted service describes one-on-one assistance with a qualified, cross-trained counselor. Partially assisted service involves the presence of a trained counselor who may provide assistance if necessary but who is not required to provide one-on-one support. Affiliate centers may also include computer stations to facilitate self-service access. Self-service access simply requires internet access and does not include the assistance of trained counselors or staff.

3. **Virtual Access One-Stop Center** – A key mode of service delivery is virtual access. In line with the concept of a universally accessible workforce system, virtual access provides participants access to a MDES staff person. As long as an individual has internet access, he or she can directly connect to the services provided through One-Stop Centers.

4. **Digital One-Stop Centers** - In the WIOA planning process, Core Program partners reached a consensus to establish state-of-the-art Digital One Stop Centers. These centers are equipped with cutting-edge communication technologies and offer participants convenient access to workforce services with efficiency in mind. The implementation of digital offices is expected to yield several benefits, including reduced infrastructure cost, optimized staffing requirements, increased accessibility, and improved coordination of services.

   To enhance user experience, appointments will be offered to minimize wait times. Digital workforce specialists will be present in these offices to assist participants in various ways, such as:

   • Engaging in real time conversations with workforce partners through phone or video chat.

- Sending and receiving messages securely through methods like secure messaging email and secure file exchange
- Utilizing resources kiosk for efficient job searches
- Harnessing AI for optimizing job searches and skill matching

This innovative approach ensures that participants can seamlessly navigate and leverage digital tools to access workforce services, ultimately enhancing the overall effectiveness and increasing program reach.

5. **Call Center Support** - For participants who lack computer access, MDES operates a call center staffed to assist with most One-Stop services.

6. **Sector Training Plus Comprehensive One-Stop Centers** –Sector Training Plus Comprehensive One-Stop Centers will provide access to all of the services represented in the comprehensive centers as well as sector-focused workforce training. These centers will be strategically placed according to sector needs across the state, with placement informed by industry sector labor sheds and LWDAs.

One-Stop Center employees and staff are required to know the essential characteristics of the services offered by all Combined Plan Partner and Strategic Partner programs. Cross-program professional development provides working knowledge about individual programs, specific contact information for area experts (communication plan), and the relationships among programs. To accomplish this task, all Combined Plan Partners developed easy-to-reference fact sheets to be compiled into a resource page accessible in the Mississippi Works Labor Exchange system. A strategic plan to distribute resources and provide training to One-Stop Center staff was developed and implemented by curriculum experts. Training resources are made available through the Mississippi Works Labor Exchange system to facilitate training at local offices.

III. OPERATIONAL PLANNING ELEMENTS

1. STATE BOARD FUNCTIONS

Describe how the State board will implement its functions under section 101(d) of WIOA (i.e., provide a description of Board operational structures and decision-making processes to ensure such functions are carried out).

Mississippi's SWIB chair is appointed by the Governor, and the board works through a committee structure under the guidance of the Office of Workforce Development, AccelerateMS. Committees include an executive committee, several standing committees, and ad hoc committees created to address specific needs. Each member is involved in planning and implementing the State's workforce development strategy as required under both Federal laws. The board conducts face-to-face meetings and makes use of electronic communication between meetings. Meetings are posted on the SWIB website (swib.ms.gov).

The SWIB and AccelerateMS perform the following services for the Governor:

- Providing oversight and policy direction to ensure State workforce development activities are aligned and serving the needs of the State's employers, incumbent workers, and jobseekers
- Developing, implementing, and modifying the State workforce development plan
- Reviewing statewide workforce policies, programs, and recommendations on actions to be taken by the State to align workforce development programs and funding to support a comprehensive and streamlined workforce development system
- Recommending measures for development and continuous improvement of the workforce development system in the State, including updating comprehensive State performance accountability measures (workforce success measures)
- Continuing to identify and disseminate information on promising practices in the area of workforce development
- Performing other related work that is required of the board by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) or requested by the governor

2. IMPLEMENTATION OF STATE STRATEGY

A. Core Program Activities to Implement the State's Strategy

Describe the activities the entities carrying out the respective core programs will fund to implement the State's strategies. Also, describe how such activities will be aligned across the core programs and Combined State Plan partner programs included in this plan and among the entities administering the programs, including using co-enrollment and other strategies, as appropriate.

Mississippi Department of Employment Security – Title I, Title III, UI, TAA, Veterans, SCSEP

MDES administers core programs and services for adults, dislocated workers, and youth (WIOA Title I) and core programs and services covered in the Wagner-Peyser Act (WIOA Title III). MDES also administers four additional Mississippi Combined Plan programs: Trade Adjustment Assistance (Title II-Chapter 2 of the Trade Act of 1974), services for veterans (Chapter 41 of Title 38 United States Code), programs authorized under state unemployment compensation law (Title 71 of the Mississippi Code of 1972), and Senior Community Service Employment Programs (Title V of the Older Americans Act of 1956).

Core Program Activities to Implement the State's Strategy

WIOA Core Partners will continue the following activities to implement the state's seven goals:

1. WIOA Combined Plan Partners will jointly develop policies to coordinate service delivery with regard to WIOA Combined Plan programs through the SWIB.

2. To strengthen interagency partnerships, Core Partners will:

   - Support the co-enrollment of any Combined Plan Partner participant into Wagner-Peyser once the participant has received partner services and is referred for work or training-related services

- Continue support for, and further development of the Mississippi Works Common Intake and Reporting System to coordinate case management data across WIOA partners in consultation with the SWIB
- Set policies to govern the 1) structure and service delivery model of One-Stop Center operations, and 2) the creation and operation of Comprehensive, Sector Training Plus, Digital Centers and Affiliate One-Stop Centers
- Conduct training to ensure core program partner staff fully understand the Combined Plan programs and Career Pathway Models
- Implement modifications to the Mississippi Works Labor Exchange that enable participants to access their Individualized Success Plans
- Support integration efforts to interface with the Referral Hub to share data related to the intake of WIOA participants, delivery of services to WIOA participants, WIOA participant Individualized Success Plans, and electronic referrals to Combined Plan Partners
- Act upon referrals received by Combined Plan Partners through the Referral Hub
- Share system infrastructure costs
- Continue outreach efforts to assist long-term unemployed and newly unemployed individuals

3. To develop defined, articulated pathways across educational sectors (K-16+) to create a pipeline for workforce, Core Partners will:

- Modify the Mississippi Works Labor Exchange to generate a Work-Ready Report Card on the basis of workforce profile information, labor market information, and sector analysis data. The Work-Ready Report Card will enable direction of participants toward training aligned with employer labor market needs
- Continue to support, develop, and promote MSGradJobs.com and MSTechJobs.com to connect four-year college and community college students with work opportunities

4. To develop cross-program performance metrics, Core Partners will:

- Work closely with the SLDS Governing Board to provide the data necessary for workforce analysis
- Ensure that all participants receiving services create a profile in the Mississippi Works Labor Exchange

5. Support integrated technology to meet the unified technology requirements of WIOA and other federal initiatives.

6. Establish a plan to remain abreast of changing industry needs and the metrics to measure outcomes to realize the potential of the state's workforce programs and delivery systems, Core Partners will continue to participate in the SLDS, contributing workforce data and UI wage data necessary to address issues related to the production and valuation of human capital.

7. To develop and communicate a unified vision and message, Core Partners will work together to align the following efforts and activities to the new state strategy, and integrate updated messaging throughout each as appropriate.

- System-wide efforts to increase awareness of the Mississippi workforce system among employers and job seekers
- Activities designed to market the state to prospective businesses
- Efforts designed to make students in K-16 aware of occupations and Mississippi career pathways
- Efforts to increase employer awareness of One-Stop Center employer services
- Efforts to increase awareness of the Mississippi workforce system among employers and job seekers
- Digital transformation activities

B. Alignment with Activities Outside the Plan

Describe how the activities identified in (A) will be aligned with programs and activities provided by required one-stop partners and other optional one-stop partners and activities provided under employment, training (including Registered Apprenticeships), education (including career and technical education), human services and other programs not covered by the plan, as appropriate, assuring coordination of, and avoiding duplication among these activities.

Mississippi Combined Plan Partners include workforce, education, and human services partners linked by a common data system. Even One-Stop Center and Youth operators in Mississippi make use of the Mississippi Works Labor Exchange to align with programs not explicitly included in the Combined Plan. This means that most alignment is achieved both programmatically, as partners outside the plan operate under required operational plans, and technologically, as all partners use the same case management system.

The few state partners that operate outside of Combined Plan Partners (e.g., career and technical education) align with partners at the local level through participation in LWDBs and at the state level through participation in the SWIB and the SLDS Governing Board. The SLDS Governing Board brings together all data-contributing workforce, human services, and education and training entities throughout the state to enable data-driven strategic planning.

In addition to coordinated alignment through boards, state agencies will continue fruitful point-to-point alliances. For example, MDES has partnered with the Mississippi Department of Corrections (MDOC) to address prisoner recidivism. MDOC operates pre-release and post-release occupational skills training programs to transition ex-offenders to the workforce. The MDOC/MDES partnership created the Employment Connections project designed to allow system-connected individuals who are nearing release to create a workforce profile in the Mississippi Works Labor Exchange that "goes live" upon release. As part of reentry activities, system-connected individuals are given a print-out with information for logging into the Mississippi Works Labor Exchange and finding the nearest One-Stop Center.

MDES has also formed relationships with individual educational institutions, including community colleges and public universities, to connect campus career centers with the Mississippi Works Labor Exchange through MSGradJobs.com and MSTechJobs.com. These systems keep Mississippi students informed about opportunities in in-demand occupations.

Alignment with Registered Apprenticeship Programs (RAP) takes place through the Mississippi Apprenticeship Program (MAP), which is operated by MDES' Office of Apprenticeship. MAP helps companies create or grow apprenticeship programs and, since 2016, has administered state funds to grow and sustain RAPs.

C. Coordination, Alignment, and Provision of Services to Individuals

Describe how the entities carrying out the respective core programs, Combined State Plan partner programs included in this plan, and required and optional one-stop partner programs will coordinate activities and resources to provide comprehensive, high-quality, customer-centered services, including supportive services (e.g. transportation), to individuals, including those populations identified in section II(a)(1)(B), and individuals in remote areas. The activities described shall conform to the statutory requirements of each program.

MDES plays a key role in the development and maintenance of this coordinated system, having taken the lead in developing the WIOA Referral Hub and in training One-Stop Center and Youth Providers to use the Mississippi Works Labor Exchange.

MDES-affiliated One-Stop Centers and Youth Providers are the key coordinating entities that conduct outreach and receive referrals for workforce assessment. These coordinating entities contact each participant and set appointments to assist individuals in registering in the Mississippi Works Labor Exchange. Through Wagner-Peyser services, MDES provides job search, referral, and placement services. MDES funds *adult training* programs administered by local workforce development boards based on the needs of each LWDAs. To serve *dislocated workers*, MDES coordinates Rapid Response services that assist employers and employees affected by layoffs or plant closures. MDES serves *youth* through specially trained Youth Providers who connect youth to targeted youth programs, other eligible core programs, and education and training opportunities based on the specific needs of the individual. In addition, there are two employment outreach groups: Local Veterans Employment Representatives (LVER) and Disabled Veteran Outreach Specialists (DVOP). To fill job openings, LVER staff work directly with businesses, and DVOP staff work directly with unemployed or underemployed veterans.

As the administrative/fiscal agent for Title II Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) services, MCCB funds local programs to provide services to eligible individuals who are 16 years old, are not enrolled or required to be enrolled in secondary school under the MS Compulsory School Attendance Law, are basic skills deficient, do not have a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, or are English language learners. AE serves as the Combined Plan Partner entry point for individuals who are basic skills deficient or lack a high school diploma. AE remediation is offered at 15 community college campuses, three public schools, and numerous correctional facilities. AE providers identify the most appropriate starting point for the participant.

MDRS works with MDHS and JVSG to serve participants with disabilities and leverage resources to serve more participants. MDRS does not operate a specific career pathway, but its local offices are often the entry point for Mississippi workers who require vocational rehabilitation services to access the labor market. As appropriate in the rehabilitation process, MDRS will refer the participant to a One-Stop Center or Youth Provider to perform a workforce assessment and direct the participant to an appropriate career pathway.

MDRS provides supportive services that will be included explicitly in Individualized Success Plans and coordinated with supportive services offered by other partners to avoid duplication. MDHS serves individuals and families through several economic assistance programs that address barriers to work such as food security, transportation, and childcare.

The TANF program, a Combined Plan Partner program, provides benefits for families with needy children under age 18. The TANF program is designed to help needy families achieve self-sufficiency through employment and training activities provided by the TANF Work Program (TWP). TANF supportive services, such as assistance with childcare and transportation expenses, are available to help adults in the family prepare for employment and to promote self-sufficiency. These supportive service enrollments will be transmitted to the WIOA Referral Hub to ensure that no other Combined Plan Partners provide overlapping services.

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training (SNAP E&T) program provides access to the necessary skills, training, or experience to increase an eligible recipient's ability to obtain gainful employment. The services provided by the SNAP E&T program include case management services, a career assessment by a career and technical advisor, assistance with grant and scholarship applications, enrollment in career education and training programs, assistance with eligible tuition expenses not covered by federal or state grants or scholarships, participants support and barrier mitigation, and other education, training, work, and employment services.

MDHS provides Community Services Block Grant funding to Community Action Agencies across the state. These agencies have been encouraged to join their local WIOA offices to coordinate services in education, employment, and housing. These offices refer participants to other services in their local area if those services are not provided at their offices.

To support Mississippi's workforce, the MDHS Child Care Payment Program (CCPP), funded through the federal Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF), provides childcare subsidies to low income working parents and families. CCPP provides parents with incomes below 85% of the state median income vouchers to offset the high cost of childcare and after school services for children from birth to age 12. Parents must work and/or participate in workforce education/development programs in universities, colleges, community colleges, adult education programs, and other accredited trade schools. Parents choose the childcare provider that meets the needs of the family and has been approved by MDHS to provide childcare services. Core partner programs collaborate with local CBOs to strengthen outreach and awareness initiatives, overcome participation barriers, and customize support services for targeted populations. AccelerateMS has implemented this place-based strategy by providing funding to CBOs for the delivery of ARPA workforce services. This approach ensures a localized and effective implementation of programs to address the specific needs of their respective communities.

D. Coordination, Alignment, and Provision of Services to Employers

Describe how the entities carrying out the respective core programs, any Combined State Plan partner program included in this plan, required and optional one-stop partner programs will coordinate activities and resources to provide comprehensive, high-quality services to employers to meet their current and projected workforce needs and to achieve the goals of industry or sector partners in the state. The activities described shall conform to the statutory requirements of each program.

MDES coordinates and aligns its services to employers through outreach efforts by their Business Service Team (consisting of MDES Business Relations staff members, WIN Job Center Managers, MDES Area Directors, WIOA staff, LVERs, staff from the Governor's Job Fair Network, and other partner staff as needed) and through the Mississippi Works Labor Exchange. The Mississippi Works Labor Exchange empowers employers to explore labor matches through the candidate search function. Employers can find candidates who seem promising and target passive job seekers who may be interested in a career change. The interactive search allows employers to search for candidates by keyword, highest level of education, occupational experience, and proximity.

The Mississippi Works Labor Exchange also provides convenient tools for employers to manage the application process, including the ability to set interview times and the status of applications. Providing good tools to employers is a way to attract them to enter job orders into the system. Employers who list jobs provide an indication of what skills are in demand; this information, in turn, informs data-driven prioritization of training and workforce development activities. Workforce data of this type provide the hub around which the state's economic success rotates because it becomes a primary source of actionable data. To encourage the entry of job orders into the Mississippi Works Labor Exchange, MDES has developed a business relations team charged with recruiting businesses to post job listings through MDES and Mississippi Works.

MCCB coordinates AE courses through a variety of local providers. Some courses are sponsored by employers and conducted at employer worksites. Local employers also often serve as a source of initial referral of an employee to AE classes.

MDRS works with employers to determine needs for open positions. MDRS uses this information to put together a mix of training and assistive technologies that enable participants to meet job demands. In addition, MDRS coordinates on-the-job training with employers and provides the training that enables an existing worker or trainee to use assistive technologies or other accommodations to fulfill job requirements.

MDHS staff engage employers directly. This engagement takes the form of direct contact with employers to check on job openings and the efforts of county directors to form relationships with community employers who are able to hire TANF or SNAP recipients with work requirements. MDHS works with MDES to enter local job openings into the Mississippi Works Labor Exchange and refer work-eligible SNAP or TANF recipients to these openings via the system to ensure that records of these labor matches are captured by the system and thus available to inform ongoing labor market research.

E. Partner Engagement with Educational Institutions

Describe how the State's Strategies will engage the State's community colleges and area career and technical education schools, as partners in the workforce development system to create a job-driven education and training system. WIOA section 102(b)(2)(B)(iv).

MDES - MDES has begun creating a job-driven education and training system by aligning the training services it provides to youth and adults under WIOA Title I with the skills-based training provided by community colleges. Often this alignment occurs through Affiliate One-Stop Centers, which are organized and administered by community colleges. These Affiliate One-Stop Centers use the Mississippi Works Labor Exchange to administer individual training accounts and record WIOA services into which trainees are enrolled.

Mississippi's career and technical education schools, largely consisting of public community colleges, also contribute to the state's job-driven education and training system by implementing the Smart Start Pathway Course, an intensive course that combines foundational skills necessary to meet employer needs, such as work environment expectations, with training necessary to attain work-readiness credentials. Although the Smart Start course was originally designed to support acquisition only of foundational or basic skills, it has grown to be one component of a more full-orbed work-readiness certificate recognized as a credential. These educational institutions and the MCCB as a whole, will also continue to work with local AE providers in order to align the AE services, such as high school equivalency programs, with the career training provided by its 15-member community colleges. Through these partnerships, Mississippi will offer a robust system of easily accessible AE programs, career and technical education programs, and workforce programs.

MDRS – MDRS supports the state's job-driven education and training system by providing eligible students with transition counselors and special education teachers. This outreach helps create pathways from education to work by arranging internships and other transitional employment for students with special needs prior to graduation.

MDHS – MDHS works directly with community colleges to support the state's job-driven education and training system by reconnecting SNAP recipients with the labor market. MDHS coordinates the use of SNAP E&T funds to support approved training activities designed to connect participants with work. MDHS refers work-eligible TANF and SNAP recipients to One-Stop Centers or Youth Providers for assessment and then connects them with pathways that lead to training through AE partners, community colleges, public universities, or other training providers.

F. Partner Engagement with Other Education and Training Providers

Describe how the State's Strategies will engage the State's other education and training providers, including providers on the state's eligible training provider list, as partners in the workforce development system to create a job-driven education and training system.

MDES - MDES supports the work of LWDAs by maintaining an electronic Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) that establishes an approved list of service providers that may receive Title I (Youth, Adult, and Dislocated), TAA, SCSEP, and other training funds to serve customers enrolled in MDES programs. All local One-Stop centers use the Mississippi Works Labor Exchange to administer training accounts and record training services provided to participants by eligible training providers. In addition, the MDES Mississippi Works Labor Exchange will be modified to provide self-service training discovery to customers, with links to training information for all occupations allowing a participant to see, in the context of viewing a job order, what kind of training courses will be appropriate for the given job.

The database supporting this self-service feature will contain all relevant providers, including community colleges, private training institutions (e.g., commercial truck driving training programs), and institutions of higher learning. MDES engages with training providers on the ETPL lists as partners in the state's workforce development ecosystem. Many of the training providers are community colleges and MDES has established affiliate One-Stop centers that enable the provider to deliver workforce services on campus. For private providers on the ETPL list, MDES partners with these training entities to receive quarterly data required to calculate performance metrics. While there are few eligible providers that are not public institutions, private providers that

deliver training such as commercial driving instruction are valued partners. At the local level coordination between One-Stop staff, participants, and the provider ensures that training needs, driven by the LWDA's sector strategy, are met.

MCCB – The MCCB member colleges are listed in the MDES ETPL demonstrating job-driven services through structured training courses leading to a post-secondary credential. Each community college works directly with WIOA partners and LWDAs to determine eligibility and approval to allow direct contracts for services and individual training accounts (ITA) through Title I, TANF recipients, SNAP E&T participants, and participants receiving rehabilitation services. By attending LWDAs' regular meetings, the MCCB member colleges have the opportunity to develop relationships with representatives from the LWDAs' employers, elected representatives, and other WIOA agency community partners ensuring the area's sector strategy, and the occupational demand drives prioritization of training and investment.

MDRS - MDRS works directly with community colleges and other specialized training providers to provide occupational training for participants enrolled in rehabilitative services. MDRS participants enrolled in WIOA Title I training will receive training through courses listed in the MDES ETPL based on labor market needs in each local area. Training funded by PELL, TANF, or other partner funds may come from any provider meeting MDRS policies. MDRS works closely with local community rehabilitation programs that provide vocational assessment, job training, and actual work experience for MDRS customers. These programs build relationships with local employers and then drive training and education activities based on employer need to ensure that trainees gain appropriate skills for employment.

MDHS - MDHS works directly with community colleges and other training providers, including the MCCB/AE, to provide occupational training for participants enrolled in TANF. TANF participants enrolled in WIOA Title I training will receive training through courses listed in the MDES ETPL based on labor market needs in each local area. Through the SNAP E&T program, some SNAP recipients will receive training through participating community colleges that combine necessary (soft skills) training with occupational training. Training funded by PELL, TANF, or other partner funds may come from any provider meeting MDHS's policies.

G. Leveraging Resources to Increase Educational Access

Describe how the State's strategies will enable the State to leverage other Federal, State, and local investments that have enhanced access to workforce development programs at the above institutions, described in section (E).

MDES's community college Affiliate One-Stop Centers will leverage WIOA training funds, Pell Grants, and other supportive services provided by Combined Plan Partners as indicated on the participant's Individualized Success Plan.

AE funding is distributed according to the targeted needs of an area and the number of people without a high school diploma. Funding for AE programs is provided through a competitive grant award and is based on the annual appropriation from the Department of Education, Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education. Grantees are aligned with system-wide goals and labor market needs of local program areas and have the capability to provide Smart Start Pathway Course services throughout the state.

AccelerateMS provides funding for approved training programs through the state's WET fund, a state funding source derived from employer unemployment insurance taxes.

MDRS leverages a variety of funds to better serve the training and education needs of participants. Sources of leveraged funds include participant health insurance, Medicaid waiver programs, Pell Grants, WIOA Title I individual training accounts (ITA), Social Security insurance, Social Security disability insurance, and WIOA partner funds through Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).

MDHS will assist work-eligible SNAP or TANF recipients who enroll in approved training programs to leverage WIOA Title I, Pell, E&T Matching Funds, and other training resources to support training.

H. Improving Access to Postsecondary Credentials

Describe how the State's strategies will improve access to activities leading to recognized postsecondary credentials, including Registered Apprenticeship certificates. This includes credentials that are industry-recognized certificates, licenses or certifications, and that are portable and stackable.

The number of jobs requiring at least some postsecondary education or training is growing. Strategies to improve access to postsecondary credentials are described below, organized by agency partner. LWDBs will identify strategies for credential attainment based upon area employer requirements. Once the needs of the employers are identified, pathways to meet those needs are established to include:

- Leveraging the DOL Quick-Start Tool Kit and pre-apprenticeship guide to establish a RAP with the employer and foster community support
- Identifying one-stop customers meeting the minimum criteria to immediately be enrolled into a RAP
- Facilitating the transition of the one-stop customer from the soft skills and pre-vocational training into a RAP, an employer provided On the Job Training (OJT) program, full- or part-time employment, or additional occupational training
- Provision of a national DOL certificate of completion that follows apprentices anywhere in the United States

For participants who require a postsecondary credential to attain a career goal, MDRS will develop an Individualized Success Plan that captures the supportive services, partner referrals, and any MDRS-specific addenda required to achieve the goal. In line with informed participant choice, MDRS will then refer the participant for workforce evaluation at a One-Stop Center or Youth Provider to help develop the participant's Individualized Success Plans further and create a pathway referral moving the participant closer to attaining the credential.

Supportive services provided under TANF will enable work eligible TANF recipients to overcome barriers to training, and will help recipients earn high school equivalency, Career Readiness Certificates, or other AE credentials. Supportive services provided under SNAP will likewise enable work-eligible SNAP recipients to overcome barriers to training and help recipients earn high school equivalency, Career Readiness Certificates, or other AE credentials, as well as career-technical education or workforce skills. Two MCCB member community colleges operate Affiliate One-Stop Centers that coordinate with MDES through the use of the Mississippi Works Labor Exchange to provide Adult, Youth, and Dislocated Worker training.

Launched in 2017, educational program Complete 2 Compete aims to increase the number of Mississippians with postsecondary credentials by identifying students who either have completed enough credits to qualify for an associate degree or are on the cusp of completing a degree. Many postsecondary and adult learners with their sights set on a four-year degree don't realize that they've already earned enough credits for a credential. Under the program, more than 28,000 students already qualify to receive an associate degree without any further education or training.

In October 2020, the Mississippi Education Achievement Council adopted a post-secondary attainment goal for the state. This initiative, Accent to 55 aims to create a college-going culture, remove barriers to access for underrepresented populations, increase college preparedness, and ensure high school students enroll in and succeed in postsecondary education. Mississippi aims to increase the postsecondary attainment of its workforce to 55% by 2030 and 60% by 2035.

The Ascent to 55% initiative provides Mississippians with resources to prepare themselves for better jobs. The goal is simple: to help Mississippi workers get the training and education needed to earn an industry-recognized credential or college degree from a community college or university.

I. Coordinating with Economic Development Strategies

Describe how the activities identified in (A) will be coordinated with economic development entities, strategies, and activities in the State.

AccelerateMS: AccelerateMS will lead all activity via the development of a state-wide strategy based on an economic analysis of the state's largest industries and biggest growth opportunities compared to a labor market analysis showing existing skills and skills gaps. This strategy will also dictate state goals and objectives and define tactics for meeting them. The WIOA plan is a key part of this strategy.

MDES: MDES will coordinate with economic development strategies by supporting the Mississippi Development Authority's (MDA) efforts to market the state workforce system to prospective businesses. This support may take the form of live demonstrations of the Mississippi Works Labor Exchange or of responding to ad hoc data analysis requests designed to demonstrate the regional availability of workers with specialized skills.

MDES will also continue to provide workforce and unemployment insurance data to the State Data Clearing House to enable sector and pathway analysis that will guide the activities of local workforce development boards to align training goals with regional needs.

MCCB: - The MCCB and its member community colleges participate directly in efforts by MDA to recruit prospective businesses to Mississippi by developing specialized work training programs leading to credentials that meet the needs of targeted sectors. Institutions then coordinate with MDES to ensure that applicants receive credit for these credentials within the Mississippi Works Labor Exchange when applying to partner employers.

MDRS: MDRS will coordinate with economic development strategies by assisting MDA projects and providing technical assistance in accessibility assessments to prospective employers of workers with disabilities.

MDHS: MDHS will coordinate with economic development strategies by supporting training and education pathways for TANF and SNAP recipients that meet SWIB sector priorities.

b. STATE OPERATING SYSTEMS AND POLICIES

A. State Operating Systems that Support Coordinated Implementation of State Strategies (e.g. labor market information systems, data systems, communication systems, case-management systems, job banks, etc).

Describe the state operating systems used to support coordinated implementation.

Mississippi's Combined Plan Partners currently use a variety of agency-specific data systems to manage service delivery and case management data. Every Combined Partner data system shares data regularly with SLDS for retrospective analysis and with the WIOA Referral Hub that enables real-time partner data integration.

Combined Plan Partner data systems that are integrated include, by agency:

MDES: The Mississippi Works Labor Exchange is the current workforce management software system used by MDES to administer, track, and report case management activities for Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth services; Title III Wagner-Peyser services; Senior Community Service Employment Program services (SCSEP); Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) services; Jobs for Veterans State Grants Program services; and other workforce services.

In addition, MDES administers the state Unemployment Insurance system using ReemployMS, a web application. Currently, Mississippi Works and ReemployMS integrate to 1) ensure that participant contact information remains updated in both systems, 2) allow ReemployMS to fetch job matches for unemployment insurance benefits recipients, 3) allow workforce staff using the Mississippi Works Labor Exchange to access the UI status of a participant, and 4) allow workforce staff to log into both applications with one set of credentials (single sign-on).

MDRS: MRDS, OVR, and OVRB administers vocational rehabilitation services using a commercial software package, AwareVR, created by Alliance Enterprises. This modern web application allows for complete program-specific case management of OVR/OVRB participants. AwareVR supports web services and connects in real time to the WIOA Referral Hub.

MCCB: The MCCB, OAE currently administers AE services via the Literacy, Adult and Community Education System (LACES), a web-based software system created by Literacy PRO Systems, specifically for Title II, Adult Education programs. The system allows the OAE and its local providers to enroll students and track performance outcomes. In addition, the system allows the OAE to spot poorly attended classes before funds are spent inefficiently on instruction for classes with few students. The OAE uses a state-developed system, Mississippi Adult Education (MAE), to connect to the WIOA Referral Hub.

MDHS: MDHS administers the TANF program through several legacy applications, including MAVERICS and JAWS. MAVERICS supports case management data such as intake and eligibility information, and JAWS supports TANF Work Program data. While these systems do not support web services, the new MDHS WIOA Hub Module allows for data exchanges with the WIOA Referral Hub.

Mississippi Works technology consists of several systems with complementary roles.

Mississippi Works Labor Exchange: The Mississippi Works Labor Exchange is a web system used by MDES agency staff, job seekers, and employers to coordinate all DOL programs such as Wagner-Peyser, Youth Services, Adult and Dislocated Worker Services, Trade Adjustment Assistance, and others. The Mississippi Works Labor Exchange already supports the calculation of common participation periods across what have become WIOA Title I, WIOA Title III, and Trade-related programs. The system also disseminates labor market information.

MDES/MDOC Employment Connections: The Employment Connections system allows system connected individuals nearing release from MDOC facilities to create a pending workforce profile in the Mississippi Works Labor Exchange that "goes live" when the individual is released. As part of exit activities, the profile is entered into the Mississippi Works Labor Exchange, and the individual is given a reentry packet detailing his or her Mississippi Works Labor Exchange username and password along with the address of the nearest One-Stop Center.

B. Data-Collection and Reporting Processes Used for All Programs and Activities, Including Those Present in One-Stop Centers

Data-collection and reporting processes used for all programs and activities, including those present in one-stop centers.

Data collection for all programs and activities will be accomplished through the integration of partner systems within the WIOA Referral Hub. Real-time data sharing from partner systems to the WIOA Referral Hub automates the sharing of case management data and will allow for real-time labor market analysis.

Under the leadership of AccelerateMS agencies will continue to further integrate their systems with the WIOA Referral Hub until all workforce data is shared in real time. Data sharing for reporting purposes will be conducted according to the clear set of rules developed by the SLDS Governing Board that ensure data integrity, security, confidentiality, and privacy.

Appendix B contains complete rules for data sharing under the SLDS. A summary of the procedures relevant to data sharing for reporting purposes is that novel requests for reports that involve data from multiple state agencies are sent to the entire SLDS governing board either through an expedited or standard review process. In the case of WIOA federal reporting, often these requests involve aligning participant data from agency administrative data with outcomes in education data and wage data. A single report may result in the need to align data from three or even four WIOA strategic and core partners. Ongoing reports of this type become "standing reports" that do not require subsequent review. The methodology for creating federal reports that require data sharing is approved by the governing board once and then carried out as needed when partners engage in quarterly or annual reporting.

2. THE STATE POLICIES THAT WILL SUPPORT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STATE'S STRATEGIES (E.G. CO-ENROLLMENT POLICIES AND UNIVERSAL INTAKE PROCESSES WHERE APPROPRIATE). IN ADDITION, PROVIDE THE STATE'S GUIDELINES FOR STATE-ADMINISTERED ONE-STOP PARTNER PROGRAM'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO A ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM.

To guide the establishment, implementation, and maintenance of quality workforce development services, the state has developed policies that outline legislative, regulatory, and service quality requirements within Mississippi's workforce system. Core agency policies and systems will comply with data collection, reporting processes, information management, integrated service delivery, and performance management requirements outlined by WIOA and respective federal and state legislation. As the primary developer of WIOA-related state policies, MDES develops state policies and related communication plans. MDES disseminates these documents to local workforce development boards where they guide the implementation process at the LWDA level. The state will continue to encourage coordination among WIOA Combined Plan and Strategic Partner agencies to strengthen the alignment between the Governor's vision and the strategies needed to meet that vision.

The One-Stop Certification Policy includes a checklist that all centers must adhere to including partnerships function at the site and the roles of each core partner. This checklist includes requirements for providing services including enrollments for all available services for which the customer is eligible (i.e., co-enrollment) as well as making certain that regardless of the services requested, the customer can obtain all eligible services through a single application (i.e., universal intake). The One Stop Certification Policy can be reviewed in its entirety in Appendix N or at the following link: WIOA-2022-Appendix-N-Policy-16-One-Stop-Certification.pdf (acceleratems.org) .

To establish funding guidelines for partner contributions to the One-Stop delivery system, partners develop a unified business plan, in coordination with LWDBs, that specifies formula or procedures for funding coordinated delivery of services to participants. These documents specify how an individualized business plan will be developed to accompany each participant's individual WIOA Success Plan when such a plan involves services from more than one Combined Plan Partner. Appendix J contains the Office of the Governor's guidelines for the creation of LWBD WIOA plans. Each local board is required to describe how service delivery will be coordinated across all Combined Plan Partner programs at the local level in accordance with labor market realities and development goals. In addition, local boards describe how funds will be allocated in accordance with the business plan and how funds are allocated to support shared infrastructure costs.

Infrastructure Funding Agreement (IFA): WIOA requires the agreed upon contributions towards infrastructure costs by each one stop-partner to be memorialized in an IFA between the LWDB or its designee and all WIOA-required one-stop partners and any additional partners. For the purpose of affiliate and specialized centers, only the LWDB or its designee and those partners participating in the operation of that center are required to enter into the IFA for that particular center.

3. STATE PROGRAM AND STATE BOARD OVERVIEW

A. State Agency Organization

Describe the organization and delivery systems at the State and local levels for the programs covered in the plan, including the organizational structure. Include an organizational chart.

Workforce development activities in Mississippi have been on a decades-long trajectory toward cooperation and partnership. State leadership has successfully encouraged a unified, jobs-focused approach to workforce and reemployment services by its creation of and support for the Mississippi Works network of partners, technologies, and services and now, through the creation of AccelerateMS, to further focus efforts on enhancing the skills of Mississippi's workforce. The current agency structure has produced notable agency-to-agency partnerships such as the MDES/MDOC Corrections Connection job search program for system connected individuals. WIOA implementation has provided an opportunity to enrich those connections.

Figure 14 depicts the state agency structure under which workforce-related services are administered by the agencies that will be Combined Plan and Strategic Partners under WIOA.

The Governor appoints the chair of the SWIB.

The SWIB appoints the executive director of the Office of Workforce Development, AccelerateMS.

The Governor appoints the executive directors of MDOC, MDA, MDHS, and MDES.

MCCB, MDRS, and MDE are governed by separate boards that appoint each agency's executive director.

The MCCB OAE offers AE services through its 15 member colleges and local programs approved through a formal request-for-application process.

MDRS provides services to the community via a combination of its own offices and through contracting organizations.

MDHS provides services to individuals and families through a network of 82 county offices.

MDOC manages a network of state and private correctional facilities.

Figure 14: State Agency WIOA Organization
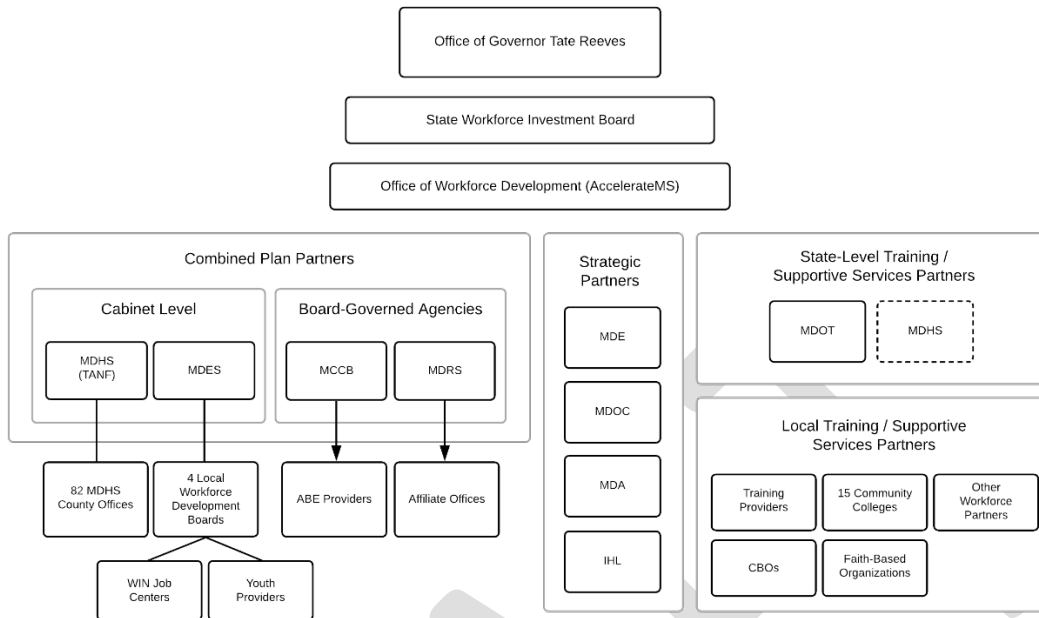
B. State Board

Mississippi's SWIB consults with the Governor's Office to establish and promote state workforce priorities in consultation with Combined Plan Partners. The SWIB is also responsible for ensuring that Mississippi's Combined Plan is executed as well as reviewing and approving any agency-specific regulations created by partners that may impact WIOA Combined Plan programs.

i. Membership Roster

Provide a membership roster for the State Board, including members' organizational affiliations.

State Workforce Investment Board Roster						
	Last Name	**First**	**Representing**	**Required**		**May Include**
Governor						
1	Windham	Kristen Powe	Governor or Designee	X	(1)(A)	_
Member of each chamber of State Legislature (non-voting)						

2	Bell	Donnie	State Representative	X	(1)(B)	_
3	Parker	David	State Senate	X	(1)(B)	_
Business - Must have policy making or hiring authority						
4	McNair	Fontaine	Business and Industry	X	(C)(i)(II)	_
5	Waller	Scott	Business and Industry	X	(C)(i)(III)	_
6	Parish	Nic	Business and Industry	X	(C)(i)(II)	_
7	Diaz	Pablo	Business and Industry	X	(C)(i)(III)	_
8	Howell	Frank	Business and Industry	X	(C)(i)(III)	_
9	Harrigill	Monica	Business and Industry	X	(C)(i)(I)	_
10	Jones	JR	Business and Industry	X	(C)(i)(I)	_
11	Bonds	Brad	Business and Industry	X	(C)(i)(II)	_
12	Luse	Christi	Business and Industry	X	(C)(i)(III)	_
13	McKay	John	Business and Industry	X	(C)(i)(III)	_
14	Morgan	Bobby	Business and Industry	X	(C)(i)(I)	_
15	Sullivan	Patrick	Business and Industry	X	(C)(i)(III)	_
16	Swanson	John Brent	Business and Industry	X	(C)(i)(I)	_
17	Hipp	Laura	Business and Industry	X	(C)(i)(III)	_
18	Flanagan	Jim	Economic Development	X	(C)(i)(III)	_
Labor and Apprenticeship - 20% required. May include CBO and Youth						
19	Johnson	Darius	Joint Apprenticeship	X	(C)(ii)(I)	_
20	Christian	Sondia	Apprenticeship	X	(C)(ii)(II)	_

21	Morgigno	Ray	Youth	_	(C)(ii)(IV)	X
22	Towner	Valmadge	Youth	_	(C)(ii)(IV)	X
23	Rankins	Al	Youth	_	(C)(ii)(IV)	X
20	Beasley	Jackie	Community Based Organization	_	(C)(ii)(III)	X
Core Programs						
21	Howard	Chris	Dept. of Rehab,	X	(C)(iii)(aa)	_
22	Stewart	Robin	MDES, WP/WIA/Trade/UI/SCSEP/VET	X	(C)(iii)(aa)	_
23	Anderson	Bob	MDHS- TANF	X	(C)(iii)(aa)	_
24	Smith	Kell	MCCB -Adult Basic Ed.	X	(C)(iii)(aa)	_
Chief elected officials City and County 1 from each						
25	Baxter	Trey	MS Association of Supervisors	X	(C)(iii)(bb)	_
26	McAdams	Carolyn	Mayor	X	(C)(iii)(bb)	_

ii. Board Activities

Provide a description of the activities that will assist State Board members and staff in carrying out State Board functions effectively.

The SWIB hold yearly face-to-face meetings and conducts additional business electronically. AccelerateMS has been tasked by the SWIB to implement and modify Mississippi's Combined Plan and convening of meetings with all required partners and stakeholders. The SWIB consults with the Governor to ensure the transparent execution of Mississippi's Combined Plan seeking input from representatives of local boards, chief elected officials, businesses, representatives of labor organizations, CBOs, adult and youth education and workforce development providers, institutions of higher education, disability service entities, youth-service programs, and other stakeholders including the public.

Other SWIB activities include coordinating economic and workforce data analysis activities with the SLDS Governing Board to ensure that local economic developers have access to detailed information to formulate sector strategies in local areas. SLDS was created to help meet data needs for reporting requirements and to answer critical policy questions relevant to education, workforce, and economic development. The Governing

Board for the system consists of the executive directors of all data-contributing agencies in Mississippi, all of which are either Combined Plan Partner agencies or Strategic Partner agencies under WIOA.

SLDS plays an integral role in combined WIOA reporting. Because all Combined Plan Partners currently contribute data to SLDS, and because SLDS was created, in part, for the purpose of assisting state agencies with reporting and strategic planning, Mississippi will be able to meet its reporting requirements efficiently. Further, SLDS will play a continuing role in the Mississippi Works Smart Start Career Pathway model by coordinating with the SWIB to produce a state WIOA system reporting page on the Lifetracks.ms.gov website that contains dashboard statistics, pathway analysis, and supply/demand analysis numbers that will enable state and local economic development professionals to organize all career pathway training around data-driven sector strategies in labor sheds that often cross LWDA boundaries.

SLDS is built upon the clearinghouse model that relies on strong partnerships and coordination between strategic partners. Mississippi's data clearinghouse is the National Strategic Planning and Analysis Research Center at Mississippi State University, NSPARC. The clearinghouse includes data from early childhood entities (e.g., Head Start); MDE; all 15 community colleges and the MCCB; all eight public universities and the IHL; MDES; MDHS; MDRS; MDOC; MDA; Mississippi State Department of Health (MSDH); and Mississippi Division of Medicaid (DOM).

The clearinghouse includes data from 2000 to the present. Partners regularly transmit data through a secure transfer according to SLDS Governing Board rules and regulations and via memoranda of understanding (MOUs). The state data clearinghouse developed and manages Mississippi's online SLDS reporting system, (www.lifetracks.ms.gov). All data are stored in a state-of-the-art data center built for managing large databases and hosting mission critical systems. The Mississippi SLDS also has access to one of the most powerful computing systems in the country for high-performance computations and complex modeling.

4. ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION OF PROGRAMS AND ONE-STOP PARTNERS

A. Assessment of Core Programs

Describe how the core programs will be assessed each year based on State performance accountability measures described in section 116(b) of WIOA. This State assessment must include the quality, effectiveness, and improvement of programs broken down by local area or provider. Such state assessments should take into account local and regional planning goals.

Mississippi's climate of data cooperation enables a smooth implementation of WIOA program assessment and reporting requirements.

The agency administering each Combined Plan Partner program is expected to negotiate performance targets with its federal office. AccelerateMS will review performance targets to ensure partners are effectively moving the state toward workforce development goals established by the SWIB. Data will be collected from Combined Plan Partners and compiled into an annual report and used by AccelerateMS to evaluate the workforce system. This report will include demographics, the state's workforce participation rate, and training outcomes by target industry sectors.

LWDBs negotiate performance targets with the state. Negotiations take into account local and regional ecosystem labor market information and planning goals. LWDB performance is monitored regularly to ensure they are contributing to overall state goals.

All Combined Plan Partners provide data required for WIOA federal reporting and local workforce development boards. Additionally, the SWIB may establish other metrics to be used internally for strategic planning. A common participation period occurs when an individual is co-enrolled in more than one WIOA core program. Under these conditions, the individual's performance will be reflected in reporting for all appropriate programs two and four quarters after exit.

Based on legislation and rules, WIOA reporting involves tracking data needed to compute eight primary indicators:

- Percent employed 2nd quarter after exit (Adult)
- Placement in employment or education 2nd quarter after exit (Youth)
- Percent employed 4th quarter after exit (Adult)
- Placement in employment or education 4th quarter after exit (Youth)
- Median earnings 2nd quarter after exit (all programs)
- Credential attainment up to one year after exit (all programs except Wagner-Peyser)
- Measurable skill gains (all programs except Wagner-Peyser)
- Effectiveness in serving employers (all programs)

Several indicators rely on the concept of the "exit" that, under current DOL regulations, occurs when an enrolled participant goes 90 days without receiving a service under a relevant program. The SLDS will assist all WIOA partners in calculating these indicators.

B. Assessment of One-Stop Partner Programs

Describe how other one-stop delivery system partner program services and Combined State Plan partner programs included in the plan will be assessed each year. Such state assessments should take into account local and regional planning goals.

Assessment of One-Stop Partner programs will take place according to 1) WIOA performance measures and 2) specific longitudinal measures of socioeconomic mobility and program effectiveness set by the SWIB. Data for assessment will initially be provided through a coordinated schedule of data transfers to the SLDS. Once all coordinated technologies are able to submit real-time data to the WIOA Referral Hub an assessment of all partner programs will occur in near real-time.

Assessment of One-Stop Partner programs is also conducted in accordance with the One-Stop Certification policy and the Memorandum of Understanding established among partner programs. The policy can be accessed with this link https://acceleratems.org/wp-content/uploads/WIOA-2022-Appendix-N-Policy-16-One-Stop-Certification.pdf

C. Previous Assessment Results

Beginning with the state plan modification in 2018 and for subsequent state plans and state plan modifications, provide the results of assessments of the effectiveness of the core programs and other one-stop partner programs and Combined State Plan partner programs included in the Unified or Combined State plan during the preceding 2-year period (i.e. the 2-year period of the plan modification cycle). Describe how the State is adapting its strategies based on these assessments.

Assessment results, based on WIOA performance measures, were computed for 1) all WIOA core programs, 2) Unemployment Insurance, and 3) Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). Employer retention was computed as a percentage of those employed in Q2 who had the same employer in Q4. Table 15 contains the results for fiscal year 2022, and Table 16 contains results for fiscal year 2023. These two fiscal years are the most recent years available based on wage data and the need to calculate measures four quarters from participant exit.

Table 15: Assessment Results of Combined Plan Programs, FY 2022 (July 1, 2021-June 30, 2022)

	Quarter 2 Employment	Quarter 4 Employment	Quarter 2 Earning	Credential Attainment Rate	Skill Gain Rate
	(%)	(%)	($)	(%)	(%)
UI	67.8	70.1	$5,195	28.3	77.7
MDRS	49.6	49.6	$6,113	18.8	76.9
ABE	50.8	51.2	$3,241	13.4	48.4
TANF	57.8	57.8	$2,517	---	---
WIOA Adults	87.8	86.3	$7,362	63.1	59.9
WIOA Dislocated Workers	74.8	75.1	$6,315	61.6	58.1
WIOA Youth	82.9	80.2	$3,242	82.8	76.6
Wagner-Peyser	75.5	73.2	$5,537	-	-

: This data is preliminary, which may be revised.
---: Value is suppressed due to small sample size.

Table 16: Assessment Results of Combined Plan Programs, FY 2023 (July 1, 2022-June 30, 2023)

	Quarter 2 Employment	Quarter 4 Employment*	Quarter 2 Earning	Credential Attainment Rate	Skill Gain Rate
	(%)	(%)	($)	(%)	(%)
UI	71.1	69.9	$6,174	32.0	76.1
MDRS	51.0	49.4	$6,152	25.9	69.5
ABE	49.1	47.5	$3,534	13.0	40.4
TANF	60.9	60.9	$2,350	---	---
WIOA Adults	90.0	89.4	$7,699	73.4	71.6
WIOA Dislocated Workers	79.5	79.3	$6,868	76.6	69.3
WIOA Youth	88.3	85.7	$3,390	71.6	74.7
Wagner-Peyser	80.4	78.8	$5,981	-	-

: This data is preliminary, which may be revised.
---: Value is suppressed due to small sample size.

During the period covered by this performance analysis, MDES had already completed a transition to viewing all of its programs in the context of employment services. All participants registering for Unemployment Insurance benefits, Adult services, Dislocated Worker services, and Youth services joined Wagner-Peyser participants in completing a workforce profile in the Mississippi Works Labor Exchange as a part of overall agency intake. Employment performance measures for Q2 and Q4 demonstrate the benefits of the reemployment mindset in producing consistently good employment outcomes for participants in programs that partner with employment services.

These performance results emphasize the positive impact on employment that may be realized through partnership strategies that involve participants in any state workforce or supportive program with concurrent reemployment activities.

D. Evaluation

Describe how the State will conduct evaluations and research projects on activities under WIOA core programs; how such projects will be coordinated with, and designed in conjunction with, State and local boards and with State agencies responsible for the administration of all respective core programs; and, further, how the projects will be coordinated with the evaluations provided for by the Secretary of Labor and the Secretary of Education under WIOA.

Evaluations and research projects conducted within or across WIOA core programs will be coordinated by AccelerateMS, local boards and state agencies through the SLDS Governing Board. See Appendix B for rules governing the work of the Mississippi SLDS board. Appendix B can be accessed at the following link: https://acceleratems.org/wp-content/uploads/WIOA_2022_Appendix_B.pdf.

5. DISTRIBUTION OF FUNDS FOR CORE PROGRAMS

A. For Title I Programs

i. Youth Activities in Accordance with WIOA Section 128(b)(2) or (b)(3)

Funds will be distributed according to WIOA requirements along with factors developed by the SWIB. These additional factors will be developed to ensure that funds are allocated in accordance with the Mississippi Works Smart Start Career Pathway Model and the implementation of the One-Stop Center system. LWDAs will also be required to develop a business plan that clearly outlines how funding streams from multiple programs will be aligned with the activities of the Mississippi Works Smart Start Career Pathway Model. As a result, Mississippi job seekers from every part of the state will have the opportunity to take advantage of an efficient, coordinated, and tailored workforce system.

The MDES Office of Grant Management writes a WIOA Communication each year to inform the LWDAs of the distribution of funds for Title I programs serving youth, adult, and dislocated workers. Funds are distributed through the Notice of Funds Availability process in the Mississippi Works GranTrak financial tracking module.

Appendix H provides a sample WIOA Allocation Communication, https://acceleratems.org/wp-content/uploads/WIOA_2022_Appendix_H.pdf.

ii. Adult and Training Activities in Accordance with WIOA Section 133(b)(2) or (b)(3)

MDES Office of Grant Management writes a WIOA Communication each year to inform the LWDAs of distribution of funds for Title I programs serving youth, adult, and dislocated workers. Funds are distributed through the Notice of Funds Availability process in the MS Works GranTrak financial tracking module. Appendix H provides a sample WIOA Allocation Communication, https://acceleratems.org/wp-content/uploads/WIOA_2022_Appendix_H.pdf.

iii. Dislocated Worker Employment and Training Activities In Accordance with WIOA Section 133(b)(2) and Based on Data and Weights Assigned

The MDES Office of Grant Management writes a WIOA Communication each year to inform the LWDAs of distribution of funds for Title I programs serving youth, adult, and dislocated workers. Funds are distributed through the Notice of Funds Availability process in the MS Works GranTrak financial tracking module. Appendix H provides a sample WIOA Allocation Communication. Appendix H can be accessed at the following link: WIOA_2022_Appendix_H.pdf (acceleratems.org).

B. For Title II Programs

i. Describe How The Eligible Agency Will Award Multi-Year Grants or Contracts on a Competitive Basis to Eligible Providers in the State, Including How Eligible Agencies Will Establish That Eligible Providers Are Organizations of Demonstrated Effectiveness

The MCCB OAE is the state's eligible agency for adult education and family literacy services.. The OAE is responsible for administering funds to eligible providers and providing program/performance oversight to grantees. The OAE will provide funding to eligible local entities for the provision of AE services through a competitive Request for Proposals (RFP) process. The RFP is the mechanism through which the OAE will identify, assess, and award multi-year grants to eligible providers throughout the state.

To meet the standard of demonstrated effectiveness an applicant must provide evidence of two program years of performance data on its record in improving the literacy skills of eligible individuals, in particular individuals who are basic skills deficient in the content domains of reading, writing, mathematics, English language acquisition, and other subject areas relevant to the services contained in the application for funds.

To be considered eligible, an applicant must also provide information regarding its outcomes for participants related to employment, attainment of a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, and transition to post-secondary education and training.

Applicants applying as a consortium are required to provide evidence of demonstrated effectiveness and submit performance data for each entity that is a member of the consortium.

An eligible provider is an organization that has demonstrated effectiveness in providing AE activities to eligible individuals and may include:

- A local education agency
- A community-based or faith-based organization
- A volunteer literacy organization
- An institution of higher education
- A public or private nonprofit agency
- A library
- A public housing authority
- A nonprofit institution with the ability to provide AE and literacy services
- A consortium or coalition of agencies, organizations, institutions, libraries, or authorities described above
- A partnership between an employer and an entity described above

WIOA defines the term "eligible individual" as an individual who:

- Has attained 16 years of age
- Is not enrolled or required to be enrolled in secondary school under state law
- Is basic skills deficient:
    o Does not have a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, and has not achieved an equivalent level of education or
    o Is an English language learner

ii. Describe How the Eligible Agency Will Ensure Direct and Equitable Access to All Eligible Providers to Apply and Compete for Funds and How the Eligible Agency Will Ensure That It Is Using the Same Grant or Contract Announcement and Application Procedure for All Eligible Providers

The MCCB OAE ensures all eligible providers have direct and equitable access to apply and compete for grants. The grant competition is publicized through a variety of print and electronic media throughout the state. Information is shared via the MCCB Office of Communications and Public Relations in the form of a formal press release, a posting on the MCCB website, social media outlets, and other means of available communication.

The MCCB OAE awards funds to eligible providers for the delivery of AE services. These services provide academic instruction below the postsecondary level that increase an individual's ability to:

- Read, write and speak English and perform mathematics or other activities necessary for the attainment of a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent
- Transition to postsecondary education and training

- Obtain employment

In accordance with federal regulation, eligible providers may receive AE funding for the delivery of any of the following AE and literacy activities:

- Adult education
- Literacy
- Workplace adult education and literacy activities
- Family literacy activities
- English language and acquisition activities
- Integrated English literacy and civics education
- Workforce preparation activities
- Integrated education and training

The MCCB OAE will use the following process to distribute funds to approved applicants:

1. Not less than 82.5 percent of the grant funds to award grants and contacts under section 231 and to carry out section 225, Programs for Corrections Education and Other Institutionalized Individuals, of which not more than 20 percent of such amount shall be available to carry out section 225;

2. Shall not use more than 12.5 percent of the grant funds to carry out state leadership activities under section 223; and

3. Shall use not more than 5 percent of the grant funds, or $85,000, whichever is greater, for administrative expenses of the eligible agency.

Federal funds may be used to increase the level of nonfederal funds that would be available in the absence of federal funds, and, in no case, replace those nonfederal funds. Federal funds must not be used for the purpose of supplanting, only for supplementing.

See Program Specific Requirements for Core Programs, Title II, Adult Education and Literacy Programs for additional details regarding the processes for distribution of funds and the request for application process.

C. Vocational Rehabilitation Program

In the case of a State that, under section 101(a)(2)(A)(i) of the Rehabilitation Act designates a State agency to administer the part of the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan under which VR services are provided for individuals who are blind, describe the process and the factors used by the State to determine the distribution of funds among the two VR agencies in the State.

Vocational Rehabilitation General and Vocational Rehabilitation for the Blind operate under the same administrative structure within the MDRS as a Combined State Vocational Rehabilitation Agency. These programs report to a common administrative director. They share programmatic staff as well as agency resources to eliminate overlap and unnecessary duplication. Funds are allocated for both programs based on average cost

per participant served in each program and with consideration of additional costs for facility accessibility and training cost requirements for blind individuals.

6. PROGRAM DATA

A. Data Alignment and Integration

i. Describe the State's Plans to Make the Management Information Systems for Core Programs Interoperable to Maximize the Efficient Exchange of Common Data Elements to Support Assessment and Evaluation.

Combined Plan Partners currently use a variety of agency-specific data systems to manage service delivery and case management data. Every Combined Partner data system shares data regularly with the SLDS for retrospective analysis and with the WIOA Referral Hub to enable real-time partner data integration.

Combined Plan Partner data systems that are integrated include, by agency:

- **MDES:** The Mississippi Works Labor Exchange is the workforce management system used by MDES to manage participant activity for Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth services; Title III Wagner-Peyser services; Senior Community Service Employment Program services (SCSEP); Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) services; Jobs for Veterans State Grants Program services; and other workforce services. Mississippi Works supports the calculation of common participation periods across all WIOA Title I and Title III programs, leverages web services to integrate with external systems.

  Additionally, MDES administers the state UI system using ReemployMS, a web application. Mississippi Works and ReemployMS integrate to 1) ensure participant contact information is available in both systems, 2) allow ReemployMS to locate job matches for UI benefits recipients, 3) allow workforce staff using the Mississippi Works Labor Exchange to access the UI status of a participant, and 4) allow workforce staff to leverage a single sign-on approach.

- **MDRS:** MDRS, OVR, and OVRB administer vocational rehabilitation services using a commercial software package, AwareVR, created by Alliance Enterprises. This modern web application allows for complete program-specific case management of OVR/OVRB participants. AwareVR supports web services and connects to the WIOA Referral Hub.

- **MCCB:** The MCCB currently administers Adult Education services via the Literacy, Adult and Community Education System (LACES), a web-based software system created by Literacy PRO Systems, specifically for Title II, AE programs. The system allows the OAE and its local providers to enroll students and track outcomes.

- **MDHS:** MDHS administers the TANF program through several legacy applications, including MAVERICS and JAWS. MAVERICS supports case management data such as intake and eligibility information, and JAWS supports TANF Work Program data. While these systems do not inherently support web services, data exchanges with the MDHS WIOA Hub Module allow for data exchanges with the WIOA Referral Hub.

All current Combined Plan Partner data systems have either 1) been modified from their current state of interoperability to support real-time, cross-program data exchanges with the WIOA Referral Hub through the

use of web services, or 2) were augmented by intermediate systems able to mediate between the agency's case management system and the WIOA Referral Hub.

Figure 15 illustrates how all WIOA Combined Plan Partners will interface with the WIOA Referral Hub in order to ensure that agencies are coordinated not only for the purposes of reporting and performance measurement but also in their approaches to individual case management.
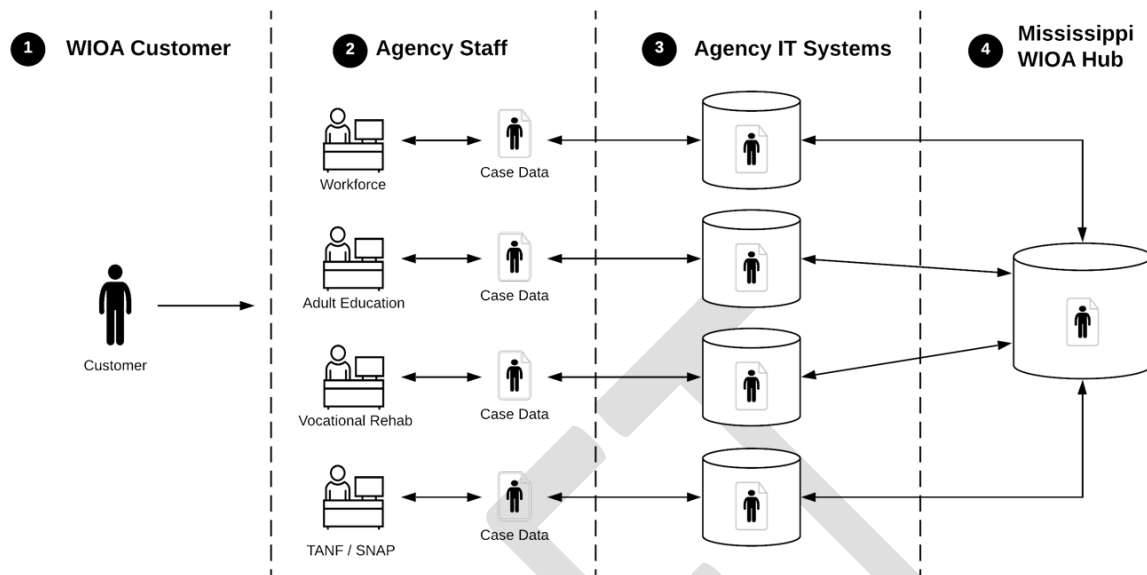
FIGURE 15: Data Exchanged Between Partners
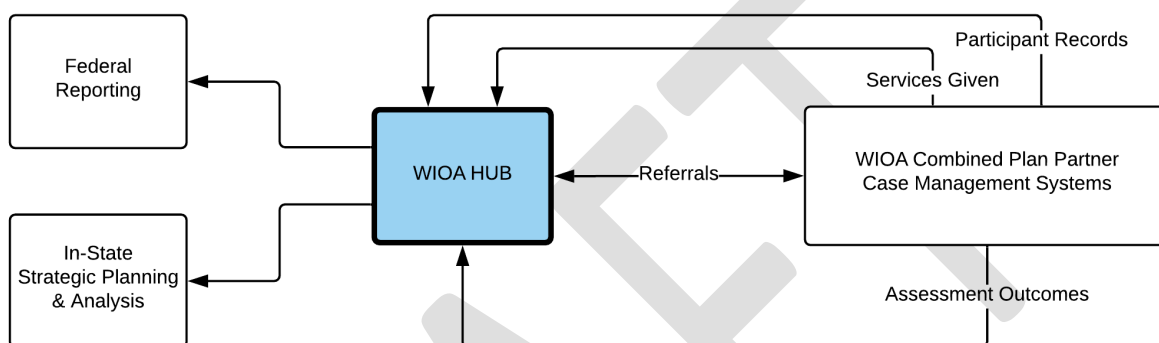
During the course of case management activities, each Combined Plan Partner will generate participant data such as participant records (basic information), information on services given to the participant, information on assessment outcomes, and referrals to partner programs. These data items will be passed from Combined Plan Partner systems to the WIOA Referral Hub. In addition, Combined Plan Partners will receive referrals submitted by other Plan Partners. Information will be used to compute Combined Plan Partner performance measures for reporting to the DOL and to conduct data-driven, in-state strategic planning.

In order to exchange program data, the WIOA Referral Hub provides a machine interface. Agency systems use the machine interface to ensure that data are reported properly and in real time while enabling their staff to continue to use familiar case management technology. Figure 16 illustrates that 1) a WIOA customer may access WIOA services from any WIOA partner, 2) the partner's caseworkers access the WIOA Hub through their own internal agency systems, and 3) the partner systems communicate with each other through the WIOA Referral Hub, and 4) the WIOA Referral Hub itself is a headless, coordinating system.

FIGURE 16: Conceptual Model of Agency Integration

Diagram showing four columns: 1 WIOA Customer, 2 Agency Staff, 3 Agency IT Systems, 4 Mississippi WIOA Hub. Agency Staff include Workforce, Adult Education, Vocational Rehab, and TANF / SNAP, each with Case Data connecting to Agency IT Systems and the Mississippi WIOA Hub.

ii. Describe the State's Plans to Integrate Data Systems to Facilitate Streamlined Intake and Service Delivery to Track Participation Across All Programs Included in this Plan

AccelerateMS will ensure the alignment of technology and data systems through collaboration with three state entities: MDES, the SLDS Governing Board, and NSPARC at Mississippi State, the state data clearinghouse.

Mississippi designed and developed a data system called the "WIOA Referral Hub" to assist individuals across the WIOA partner agencies. The Hub allows agencies to work together to ensure that customers get connected to the mixture of services they need to succeed. The Hub plays a key role in allowing agencies to refer customers electronically, with the goal that no one falls through procedural cracks. The Hub is like a post office and every participating WIOA partner agency can use their own systems (mailboxes) to send and receive referrals to each other.

MDES will continue to develop and maintain the WIOA Referral Hub according to AccelerateMS priorities, and AccelerateMS will convene committees of all Combined Plan Partners as needed to inform the ongoing evolution of the system to support cross-agency coordination of case management.

Agency-to-agency referrals are electronic records created in the WIOA Referral Hub to connect a participant who receives services from one WIOA Combined Plan Partner to another partner. The benefit of a formalized referral process is that it facilitates follow-ups, assessments of partner cooperation, and greater accountability for participants who have work search requirements associated with Combined Plan Program enrollments. Referrals have several attributes, including the referring partner, the recipient partner, the recommended partner service, status, and staff notes.

All new referrals receive the status "pending." Combined Plan Partner staff in local partner offices and Comprehensive One-Stop Centers are able to access a real-time list of referrals for participants in their local area. After a partner system downloads the referral, the status of a referral changes from "pending" to "received". This allows the receiving agency partner staff to view the participant's Individualized Success Plan, view the referring agency's referral note, and access contact information so that the partner can contact the individual for a phone or in-person interview. Once a participant receives a service through the agency that received the referral, the referral will change to "resolved." If the participant is ineligible or does not need the services offered by the partner, the partner can mark the referral "closed " and choose a reason from a drop-down list to indicate why the participant received no services as a result of the referral.

FIGURE 17: Data Created and Aligned in the Mississippi Smart Start Career Pathway Model
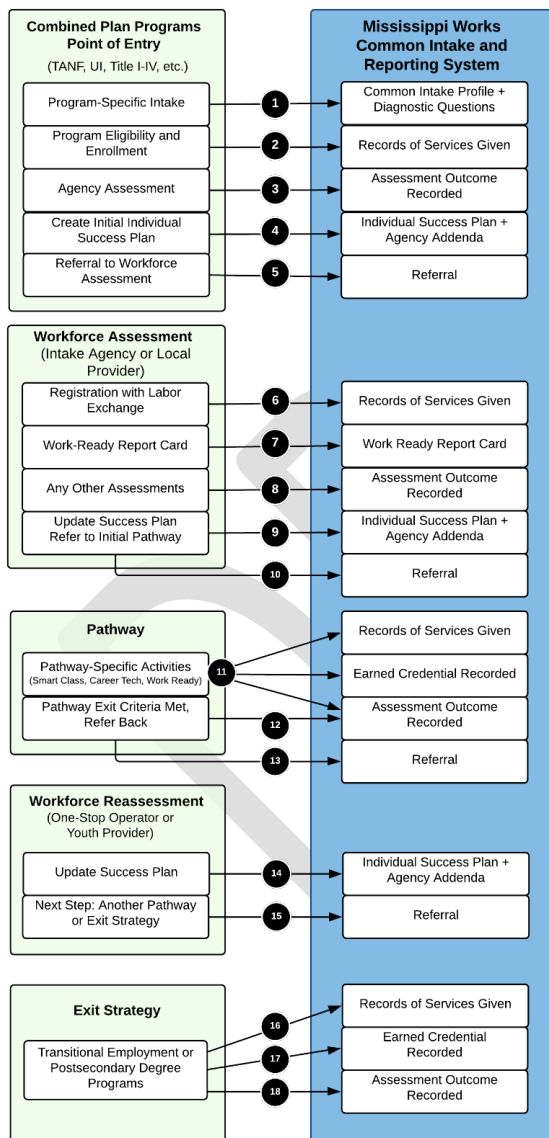
The SLDS Governing Board, consisting of representatives from all state data-contributing agencies, will continue to work with the SWIB to conduct data analysis and performance assessments and assist with federal reporting.

NSPARC serves the SLDS Governing Board by operating the State Data Clearinghouse. NSPARC will assist MDES in the ongoing development and maintenance of the WIOA Referral Hub and in the integration activities necessary to make Combined Plan Partner systems interoperable with the common system.

Based on Memoranda of Understanding (MOU), WIOA partners will continue to work with the SLDS and the State Data Clearinghouse to develop and produce the reports required under WIOA. These MOUs allow WIOA partners to submit their administrative records into the Mississippi State Data Clearinghouse, where the wage records and program participation data can be securely aligned by the clearinghouse's data science professionals.

After wage records and participation data are aligned, additional education and demographic information is integrated from the SLDS. This process creates a comprehensive dataset containing the participant, employment, education, and demographic data that are necessary to complete the reports that are required under WIOA section 116(d)(2). This data is then shared out with WIOA partners, who use it to calculate performance measures and produce reports that are aligned with the PIRL format.

Furthermore, the data science professionals at the State Data Clearinghouse are continuously available to WIOA partners, and are able to provide on-demand technical assistance in calculating the performance measures or generating the reports.

iii. Explain How the State Board Will Assist the Governor In Aligning Technology and Data Systems Across Required One-Stop Partner Programs (Including Design and Implementation of Common Intake, Data Collection, etc.) and How Such Alignment Will Improve Service Delivery to Individuals, Including Unemployed Individuals

The State Board and AccelerateMS will ensure the alignment of technology and data systems through collaboration with three state entities: MDES, the SLDS Governing Board, and the NSPARC.

MDES will continue to develop and maintain the WIOA Referral Hub according to AccelerateMS priorities, and AccelerateMS will convene committees of all Combined Plan Partners as needed to inform the ongoing evolution of the system to support cross-agency coordination of case management.

The SLDS Governing Board will continue to work with SWIB to conduct data analysis and performance assessments and assist with federal reporting.

NSPARC serves the SLDS Governing Board by operating the state data clearinghouse. NSPARC will assist MDES in the ongoing development and maintenance of the WIOA Referral Hub and in the integration activities necessary to make Combined Plan Partner systems interoperable with the common system.

iv. Describe the State's Plans to Develop and Produce the Reports Required Under Section 116, Performance Accountability Section (WIOA section 116(d)(2)0

WIOA partners have entered into an MOU and will continue to work with the SLDS and the State Data Clearinghouse to develop and produce the reports required under WIOA. These MOUs allow WIOA partners to submit their administrative records into the State Data Clearinghouse, where the wage records and program participation data can be securely aligned by the clearinghouse's data science professionals. After wage records and participation data are aligned, additional education and demographic information is integrated from SLDS. This process creates a comprehensive dataset containing the participant, employment, education, and demographic data that are necessary to complete the reports that are required under WIOA section 116(d)(2). This data is then shared out with WIOA partners, who use it to calculate performance measures and produce reports that are aligned with the PIRL format. Furthermore, the data science professionals at the State Data Clearinghouse are continuously available to WIOA partners and are able to provide on-demand technical assistance in calculating the performance measures or generating the reports.

MDES has created and continues to develop the GranTrak application that facilitates the tracking of awarded grant funds. This application allows MDES to track grants received from DOL and to allocate the funds to local workforce development boards or to Planning and Development Districts that further track funds spent to serve WIOA participants. At the end of the life cycle of a given grant, GranTrak generates ETA 9130 reports from the initiation to the close-out of the funds for DOL reporting. GranTrak features automatic notifications of funds availability, reminders for deadlines, data validation, report generation, personnel approvals, and attachment/uploading of supporting documents that capture, for instance, approval signatures from local elected officials.

B. Assessment of Participant's Post-Program Success

Describe how lead State agencies will use the workforce development system to assess the progress of participants who are exiting from core programs in entering, persisting in, and completing postsecondary education, or entering or remaining in employment. States may choose to set additional indicators of performance.

Through the SLDS, education, workforce, and other measures of well-being will be tracked not only in the second and fourth quarters after exit from WIOA-related services but also in the five to 10 years after exit to reveal economic and workforce trends, which will enable the state to compare actual outcomes more effectively with desired outcomes. Results for relevant measures will be available, in the aggregate, to all Mississippians via the SLDS online reporting website (LifeTracks.ms.gov) and will be used by the SWIB to further improve and coordinate Combined Plan Partner activities. In particular, this analysis will be used to ensure that combined activities support outcome improvements for all sub-populations, including veterans, persons with disabilities, at-risk youth, and other vulnerable Mississippians.

C. Use of Unemployment Insurance (UI) Wage Record Data

Explain how the State will meet the requirements to utilize quarterly UI wage records for performance accountability, evaluations, and as a source for workforce and labor market information, consistent with Federal and State law. (This Operational Planning element applies to core programs.)

Mississippi uses quarterly wage record information to measure progress on state and local performance measures. Currently, MDES has a data sharing agreement with NSPARC to provide performance reporting through the ETA 9173 and the Title I and Title III Standardized Reporting Data (PIRL) reports. State UI wage records and State Wage Interchange System (SWIS) data are transferred to the National Strategic Planning and Analysis Research Center via a MDES secure web file server. Safeguards are in place to ensure that NSPARC deletes all SWIS quarterly wage data after the ETA 9173 and the PIRL reports are generated and delivered to MDES. State UI wage records, however, are stored by the National Strategic Planning and Analysis Research Center on behalf of and for the use of SLDS for which NSPARC is the state data clearinghouse.

D. Privacy Safeguards

Describe the privacy safeguards incorporated in the State's workforce development system, including safeguards required by section 444 of the General Education Provisions Act (20 U.S.C. 1232g) and other applicable Federal laws.

Integrity of data and privacy protection are incorporated into the state's workforce development systems. To protect the privacy of Mississippians, all partners that provide and share data in collaboration efforts, through Mississippi Works and other aligned technologies, have agreed on a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to ensure security of sensitive information. All partners expressly agree to abide by all applicable federal, state, and local laws regarding confidential information and to adhere to the same standards of confidentiality as state employees, including but not limited to:

- 29 U.S.C. 2935; as amended by WIOA - reports, recordkeeping, and investigations
- 29 U.S.C. 2871(f)(3); as amended by WIOA - regarding confidentiality
- 20 CFR Part 603 - safeguards and security requirements regarding disclosed information under Unemployment Compensation
- 42 U.S.C. 503 - regarding state laws governing Unemployed Insurance operations
- 20 CFR 617.57(b) - regarding disclosure of information under the Trade Act
- 29 U.S.C. 49I-2(a)(2); as amended under WIOA - regarding information to be confidential under the Wagner-Peyser Act
- The Privacy Act (5 U.S.C. 552)
- The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (20 U.S.C. 1232g)
- 34 CFR 361.38 - protection, use, and release of personal information of Vocational Rehabilitation Services participants
- HIPAA: 45 CFR 164.500 - 164.534
- 2 CFR 200.303 - regarding reasonable measures to safeguard protected personally identifiable information

Each partner ensures that the collection and use of any information, systems, or records that contain personally identifiable information will be limited to purposes that support the programs and activities described by relevant memorandums of understanding (MOUs) as part of the Mississippi workforce development system and SLDS Rules and Regulations (see Appendix B) as provided for in Miss. Code Ann. §37-154-1 and §37-154-3.

Each partner ensures that access to software systems and files under its control that contain personally identifiable information will be limited to authorized staff members who are assigned responsibilities in support of the services and activities provided as part of the Mississippi workforce development system and who must access the information to perform those responsibilities. Each partner expressly agrees to take measures to ensure that no personally identifiable information is accessible by unauthorized individuals.

7. PRIORITY OF SERVICE FOR VETERANS

Describe how the State will implement and monitor the priority of service provisions for veterans in accordance with the requirements of the Jobs for Veterans Act, codified at section 4215 of 38 U.S.C., which applies to all employment and training programs funded in whole or in part by the Department of Labor. States should also describe the referral process for veterans determined to have a significant barrier to employment to receive services from the Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSG) program's Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) specialist.

To ensure veterans receive consideration for all opportunities for which they qualify, MDES will ensure 1) covered persons are aware of their entitlement to priority of service, 2) covered persons are aware of the full array of employment, training, and placement services available through One-Stop Centers and all service points, and 3) that all applicable eligibility requirements for these programs are understood and applied.

MDES will also utilize the following to provide priority of service:

- Under normal funding circumstances, refer qualified veterans to new job openings, especially Federal Contractor job orders, prior to all non-veteran job referral activity
- Veteran normal funding circumstances, refer qualified veterans to new job openings, especially Federal Contractor job orders, prior to all non-veteran job referral

MDES management monitors priority of service by reviewing quarterly performance reports, manager reports, and MS Works reports. MDES management will monitor priority of service in covered programs at two levels. WIN Job Centers will continue to use established protocol of identifying targeted groups. At the state level, management will continue to analyze performance reports, manager reports, and MS Works reports. WIN Job Center services are made available and provided to eligible veterans, transitioning service members, VA VR & E Chapter 31 veterans, Native American Veterans, other groups targeted for special consideration, and veterans with significant barriers to employment through outreach activities performed by Disabled Veteran Outreach Specialists (DVOPs). MDES will continue to encourage non-DOL program partners to focus on providing priority of service to targeted groups for special consideration.

DVOPs are integrated into the WIN Job Center service delivery system at the local job center level. Eligible veterans and eligible persons with significant barriers to employment are identified by intake forms or by electronic registration and referred to or assigned to DVOPs after other One-Stop Center staff complete initial service intake. DVOPs are cross-trained to understand the full complement of WIOA and Combined Plan Partner

programs that may be available. In instances when a DVOP is not available or has reached the predetermined caseload, another One-Stop Center staff will provide services to veterans and eligible persons as appropriate.

State Policy Number 6, Priority of Services for Veterans can be accessed using this link. https://acceleratems.org/wp-content/uploads/WIOA-2022-Appendix-K-Priority-of-Service-for-Veterans-and-Eligible-Spouses.pdf

8. ADDRESSING THE ACCESSIBILITY OF THE ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

Describe how the one-stop delivery system (including one-stop center operators and the one-stop delivery system partners), will comply with section 188 of WIOA (if applicable) and applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.) with regard to the physical and programmatic accessibility of facilities, programs, services, technology, and materials for individuals with disabilities. This also must include a description of compliance through providing staff training and support for addressing the needs of individuals with disabilities. Describe the State's one-stop center certification policy, particularly the accessibility criteria.

In order to be certified, One-Stop Centers and the One-Stop delivery system are evaluated and must meet or exceed the standards established for programmatic and physical accessibility. Evaluations of accessibility take into consideration the feedback from one-stop customers, and how well the one-stop center ensures equal opportunity for individuals, regardless of disability or cultural background, to participate in or benefit from one-stop center services. These evaluations must include criteria evaluating how well the centers and delivery systems take actions to comply with the disability-related regulations implementing WIOA sec. 188 and 29 CFR Part 38. Such actions include, but are not limited to:

1. Providing reasonable accommodations for individuals with disabilities;

2. Making reasonable modifications to policies, practices, and procedures where necessary to avoid discrimination against persons with disabilities;

3. Administering programs in the most integrated setting appropriate;

4. Communicating with persons with disabilities as effectively as with others;

5. Providing appropriate auxiliary aids and services, including assistive technology devices and services, where necessary to afford individuals with disabilities an equal opportunity to participate in, and enjoy the benefits of, the program or activity; and

6. Providing for the physical accessibility of the one-stop center to individuals with disabilities.

To better serve individuals with disabilities, WIN Job Centers have accessibility workstations with ergonomics, braille keyboards, and enlarging document capabilities (Ultra Magnifier) for the visually impaired. WIN Job

Centers also have capabilities with Microsoft Accessibility software for speech, hearing and vision on computers, including read screens with text- to-speech or braille displays. Additionally, the MDES EOO conducts quarterly meetings with Local EO officers providing training, technical support, and best practices. Cross-training sessions also occur in partnership with MDRS covering topics such as disability etiquette and service coordination.

The One-Stop Certification policy, https://acceleratems.org/wp-content/uploads/WIOA-2022-Appendix-N-Policy-16-One-Stop-Certification.pdf describes the State's accessibility criteria.

9. ADDRESSING THE ACCESSIBILITY OF THE ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM FOR INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Describe how the one-stop delivery system (including one-stop center operators and the one-stop delivery system partners) will ensure that each one-stop center is able to meet the needs of English language learners, such as through established procedures, staff training, resources, and other materials.

MDES specifies its policies for assisting Limited English Proficiency individuals in its "Limited English Proficient (LEP) Individuals Policy Statement and Procedures." This document establishes policies designed to ensure the accessibility of all services to individuals with limited English proficiency in One-Stop Centers, Youth Providers, and any recipients of federal financial assistance. Staff will first determine an individual's primary language using "I Speak" language posters. Using printed "I Speak" resources, staff will then inform the LEP individual that interpreter services are available at no cost. If the LEP individual cannot understand written or verbal English, staff can access several options for interpretation: local partner interpreter services; Language Line Interpreter Services; and the individual's own interpreter, if requested. Policies also specify that vital documents will be translated into appropriate languages.

Other opportunities for EL services include classes offered through Title II AE providers. One-stop partners are able to refer to and co-enroll these constituents in the local AE program for assistance.

IV. COORDINATION WITH STATE PLAN PROGRAMS

Describe the methods used for joint planning and coordination among the core programs, and with the required one-stop partner programs and other programs and activities included in the Unified or Combined State Plan.

Planning Workgroups

For the 2024 WIOA Combined State Plan revision, AccelerateMS convened a series of five interagency meetings, beginning in Fall of 2023, to bring together all WIOA strategic and core partners along with representatives of all local workforce areas. Partners reviewed progress towards implementation of WIOA plan revisions and noted successes and challenges. Data analysis activities undertaken to completely update the strategic and operational aspects of the state plan revealed success in meeting the original plan's goal of helping Mississippians find work through in-demand opportunity occupations. The consensus was that the state is now realizing positive outcomes from the implementation of the original WIOA strategy and that continuing to

improve our ability to operate as a workforce ecosystem would help to fulfill the goal of ensuring that Mississippians have high-quality, in-state career pathways that will enable their children and grandchildren to live here, raise families, and grow the state.

To kick off the development of the workforce plan, AccelerateMS met with education and workforce stakeholders. Working groups were established to seek input for the development of the strategic and operational aspects of the workforce plan. A focus group was conducted to gather input from the business community.

Throughout the process, LWDAs were represented in each workgroup and provided comments on the draft of the Combined Plan.

In efforts to support the Governor's vision of an integrated workforce ecosystem and collaboration across stakeholders statewide, seven planning workgroups reflecting the two major planning elements (i.e., strategic planning and operational planning) of the WIOA were established. Each of these workgroups was tasked with specific roles and responsibilities to help focus efforts on critical components of the WIOA. A chair and a vice chair were selected from each group to help align internal workgroup activities. The seven planning workgroups were organized as follows:

Strategic Planning Workgroups	Operational Planning Workgroups
● Planning and Communication Workgroup	● One-Stop Operations Workgroup
● Aligned and Integrated Technology Workgroup	● Career Pathways and Assessment Workgroup
● Sector Strategies Workgroup	● Performance and Accountability Workgroup

The workforce groups organized under the Strategic Planning Element worked collaboratively on identifying strategies and goals for bringing the Governor's vision of a unified workforce ecosystem to fruition. These workgroups included the Planning and Communication Workgroup, the Aligned and Integrated Technology Workgroup, and the Sector Strategies Workgroup.

Operational Planning Workgroups was shared with the SWIB and all members of the other workgroups.

State Workforce Investment Board (SWIB) Website

The SWIB website (swib.ms.gov) is used to keep Mississippians informed about the state's WIOA planning and revision process. The 2024 plan revision was reviewed internally by Core Partners and posted to the SWIB website for a public comment period. Comments from the public were incorporated in the final plan prior to submission. Each combined plan partner also followed program-specific rules for public comments and open meetings.

V. COMMON ASSURANCES (FOR ALL CORE PROGRAMS)

The State Plan must include	Include
1. The State has established a policy identifying circumstances that may present a conflict of interest for a State Board or local board member, or the entity or class of officials that the member represents, and procedures to resolve such conflicts;	Yes
2. The State has established a policy to provide to the public (including individuals with disabilities) access to meetings of State Boards and local boards, and information regarding activities of State Boards and local boards, such as data on board membership and minutes;	Yes
3. The lead State agencies with optimal policy-making authority and responsibility for the administration of core programs reviewed and commented on the appropriate operational planning elements of the Unified or Combined State Plan, and approved the elements as serving the needs of the populations served by such programs;	Yes
4. (a) The State obtained input into the development of the Unified or Combined State Plan and provided an opportunity for comment on the plan by representatives of local boards and chief elected officials, businesses, labor organizations, institutions of higher education, the entities responsible for planning or administrating the core programs, required one-stop partners and the other Combined Plan programs (if included in the State Plan), other primary stakeholders, including other organizations that provide services to individuals with barriers to employment, and the general public, and that the Unified or Combined State Plan is available and accessible to the general public; (b) The State provided an opportunity for review and comment on the plan by the State Board, including State agency official(s) for the Unemployment Insurance Agency if such official(s) is a member of the State Board;	Yes
5. The State has established, in accordance with WIOA section 116(i), fiscal control and fund accounting procedures that may be necessary to ensure the proper disbursement of, and accounting for, funds paid to the State through allotments made for the core programs to carry out workforce development activities;	Yes
6. The State has taken appropriate action to secure compliance with uniform administrative requirements in this Act, including that the State will annually monitor local areas to ensure compliance and otherwise take appropriate action to secure compliance with the uniform administrative requirements under WIOA section 184(a)(3);	Yes
7. The State has taken the appropriate action to be in compliance with WIOA section 188, Nondiscrimination, as applicable;	Yes
8. The Federal funds received to carry out a core program will not be expended for any purpose other than for activities authorized with respect to such funds under that core program;	Yes
9. The State will pay an appropriate share (as defined by the State board) of the costs of carrying out section 116, from funds made available through each of the core programs;	Yes

10. The State has a one-stop certification policy that ensures the physical and programmatic accessibility of all one-stop centers with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA);	Yes
11. Service providers have a referral process in place for directing Veterans with Significant Barriers to Employment (SBE) to DVOP services, when appropriate; and	Yes
12. Priority of service for veterans and eligible spouses is provided in accordance with 38 USC 4215 in all workforce preparation, development or delivery of programs or services funded directly, in whole or in part, by the Department of Labor.	Yes

VI. PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR CORE PROGRAMS

VII. PROGRAM SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR COMBINED STATE PLAN PARTNER PROGRAMS