



# SWIB | State Workforce Investment Board

9/4/2025

Dear Partners,

Mississippi stands at a critical crossroads in preparing our workforce for the future. Between now and 2035, our state will need an additional 19,000 skilled trades workers over and above what the existing system can produce to meet the demands of industry, economic development projects, and infrastructure growth. Meeting this need requires all of us—industry leaders, educators, training providers, and workforce partners—to pull together with urgency and focus.

We cannot afford to maintain the status quo. Companies are competing nationally for talent, and without bold, coordinated action, Mississippi risks falling behind and losing the momentum we've worked so hard to gain. Our plan forward focuses on three priorities:

- Expanding training capacity to meet immediate and long-term employer demand.
- Accelerating production pipelines to deliver more trained workers, faster.
- Improving quality and outcomes so employers receive workers with the right skills at the right time

The recommendations below, adopted during the last State Workforce Investment Board meeting, outline immediate and high-impact actions we can take together—ranging from scaling proven training models to better aligning program outcomes with employer needs, improving instructor pipelines, expanding apprenticeship programs, and investing in cutting-edge training infrastructure. Each represents an opportunity to remove barriers, strengthen partnerships, and deliver measurable results for Mississippi's workforce and economy.

We are asking for your continued leadership and collaboration. Specifically, we need partners to report any activities you are undertaking—or plan to undertake—that relate to these recommendations, including efforts to expand training capacity, increase production, or improve quality. Your insights will help us coordinate strategies, share best practices, and ensure Mississippi meets this moment.

- Establish the Mississippi Workforce Pell Readiness Task Force to create a coordinated framework for approving, monitoring, and expanding short-term training programs. This cross-agency task force should include, at a minimum, representatives from AccelerateMS, IHL, MCCB, MDA, MDES, MDE, and industry leaders. Ultimately, the workforce pell program should be used as an accelerator for industry-aligned talent development. Workforce Pell Launch for initial cohort of programs should be immediate upon funding availability.
  - The task force must recommend to the SWIB by February 2025
    - State-specific Workforce Pell policies aligned with federal requirements, the state's ATLAS strategy and WIOA plan while ensuring that only high-value programs, specifically those leading to priority occupations identified by AccelerateMS are approved for funding.
    - A standardized statewide process for program vetting and approval by the SWIB, ensuring proposed programs meet federal quality thresholds of:
      - 8-15 weeks; 150–599 hours;
      - ≥70% completion rate;
      - ≥70% job placement rate within 180 days
    - Recommend reporting mechanisms to enable the reporting of required performance metrics seamlessly, including the creation of a centralized data dashboard for Workforce Pell performance that is publicly available.
    - Examine how partnering with the Coleridge Initiative / NLx to integrate real-time labor market data into program evaluations can be accomplished.
    - Develop a standardized reporting template for training providers to simplify federal compliance.
    - Review necessity of providing technical assistance to providers to ensure they can meet data reporting, compliance, and program design requirements.
    - Recommend how workforce pell may be utilized to expand registered apprenticeships, how AI and digital skills may be incorporated- potentially through AI apprenticeships or bootcamps.
  - Once task force recommendations are received, the WIOA plan should be updated to explicitly incorporate workforce pell as a tool for expanding short-term credential attainment, ensuring alignment between ITAs and workforce pell programs as well as WET and WORKS funded programs to maximize co-enrollment opportunities.

- SWIB Recommends that AccelerateMS partner with MEC (MSBA) to lead ecosystem table meetings targeting local industry partners to evaluate education-to-workforce gaps by ecosystem. These table meetings should occur each Fall (beginning in 2025) to receive input from employers in a joint meeting of employers, MEC (MSBA), MDE, MCCB, Community Colleges and universities, WIOA CORE partners, and other regional representatives of special populations. Interest should be paid to capturing the following information:
  - Competency gaps identified by employers
  - Communication gaps and weaknesses by the system as a whole
  - Where current programs fall short in preparing participants
  - Where industry falls short in hiring locally
  - Innovative ideas to expand or redesign programs
- Information from the first meeting should be used to inform the State's Workforce Plan, known as ATLAS. ATLAS should inform Perkins and WIOA plan updates.
- The SWIB requests MCCB to report unduplicated student counts for the highest degree obtained by program, ensuring that embedded certificates within the same pathway are not counted as separate graduates. This will provide a more accurate picture of the number of individuals entering the workforce with specific skills and credentials.
  - The SWIB recommends MCCB, MDE, and IHL establishing targeted goals for producing talent through high value pathways identified by AccelerateMS.
- The SWIB recommends adopting formal language to be adopted in state code to identify High-Value Pathways and focus efforts and additional funding on programs and pathways that meet the SWIB definition of High Quality CTE in order to expand capacity in associated programs.
- Establish the State Office of Apprenticeship.
  - Mississippi currently relies on a federally administered U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) Office of Apprenticeship (OA) structure for the registration and oversight of Registered Apprenticeship Programs (RAPs). While this model provides consistency at the national level, it limits the state's ability to design and implement apprenticeship policies and funding strategies that reflect Mississippi's unique workforce needs, industry priorities, and economic development goals.
  - Transitioning to a State Office of Apprenticeship (State Apprenticeship Agency) model would provide Mississippi with:
    - A state-led structure would allow Mississippi to directly oversee apprenticeship registration, approval, and compliance processes rather than relying solely on federal oversight. This flexibility would enable faster responses to industry demands and emerging workforce trends.
    - Establishing an SAA would allow apprenticeship policies to align closely with AccelerateMS, SWIB priorities, and the broader state workforce strategy. Mississippi could better integrate apprenticeship into sector strategies, Talent Solutions Centers, CTE initiatives, and other high-impact workforce programs.

- Local oversight would facilitate stronger, more responsive partnerships with Mississippi employers, industry associations, and community.

Further, as a reminder, MS Code Section 37-153-7 requires the following:

*Each state agency, department and institution shall report any monies received for workforce training activities or career and technical education and a detailed itemization of how those monies were spent to the state board. The board shall compile the data and provide a report of the monies and expenditures to the Chairs of the House and Senate Appropriations Committee, the Chair of the House Workforce Development Committee and the Chair of the Senate Economic and Workforce Development Committee by October 1 of each year. Each such state agency director shall remain responsible for the actions of his agency; however, each state agency and director shall work cooperatively to fulfill the state's goals.*

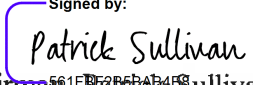
To avoid collecting this information in inconsistent formats, please remit the following basic information:

- Name of Program (segregated by occupational category), Total program cost by category (Personnel, Contract Services, Instructional Materials, Equipment, Office Supplies, Computer/Software, Other), and Program funding source (state funding, tuition/fee revenue, Perkins, grant, etc.)

By aligning strategies, sharing insights, and investing in what works, we can continue to transform Mississippi's workforce system and secure our state's competitive advantage for decades to come.

Sincerely,

Signed by:

Patrick Sullivan

Chairman, Patrick Sullivan