2024 - 2028

MISSISSIPPI WORKFORCE INNOVATION & OPPORTUNITY ACT

STATE PLAN

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. WIOA STATE PLAN TYPE AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

a. WIOA State Plan Type

This is a combined plan.

COMBINED PLAN PARTNER PROGRAMS
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.))

Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act (Perkins V)

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. Executive Summary

Mississippi has elected to submit a Combined State Plan under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) to address the workforce development needs of the State while ensuring full alignment among workforce, education, and economic development strategies. This Combined State Plan reflects Governor Tate Reeves' commitment to strengthening Mississippi's economy by expanding access to quality employment opportunities and ensuring businesses have access to a skilled, competitive workforce. Through strategic alignment of workforce, education, and training investments—including programs authorized under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act (Perkins V)—Mississippi is building a unified talent development system designed to support economic growth, increase labor force participation, and improve employment outcomes.

This Combined State Plan serves as the strategic framework for aligning federal workforce development programs and resources to improve access to employment, education, training, and supportive services while meeting the workforce needs of employers. Mississippi's Combined State Plan includes the six core programs required under WIOA: the Adult Program, Dislocated Worker Program, Youth Program, Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Program, Wagner-Peyser Employment Service Program, and Vocational Rehabilitation Program. In addition, Mississippi has elected to include key Combined State Plan partner programs that support workforce participation and employment outcomes, including Perkins V Career and Technical Education, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Unemployment Insurance (UI), Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA), Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSG), and the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP). Together, these programs form an integrated workforce system designed to expand access to employment and training while supporting employer demand.

Mississippi's initial Combined State Plan focused on strengthening coordination among workforce system partners and expanding access to workforce services. The 2026 update reflects a significant evolution toward a unified, state-directed workforce system that integrates workforce, education, and economic development programs under a single strategic framework. The formal inclusion of Perkins V as a Combined State Plan partner represents a major milestone

in aligning secondary and postsecondary career and technical education programs with workforce development strategies, ensuring seamless career pathways from education to employment.

To fully realize this unified system, Mississippi is advancing structural reforms designed to modernize workforce governance, integrate funding streams, and expand flexible service delivery models. These efforts include pursuing federal waivers to remove administrative barriers that limit system coordination and responsiveness, allowing Mississippi to operate its workforce system as a cohesive, outcome-driven network aligned with employer demand and economic opportunity. These reforms support Mississippi's transition from a fragmented, program-driven model to a unified talent development system focused on measurable employment outcomes, credential attainment, and long-term economic mobility.

In 2020, Governor Reeves and the Mississippi Legislature established the Office of Workforce Development, known as AccelerateMS, to support the development and implementation of a coordinated statewide workforce strategy. AccelerateMS operates under the direction of the State Workforce Investment Board (SWIB), which serves as the State's workforce development board under WIOA and is responsible for assisting the Governor in establishing statewide workforce strategies, priorities, and performance expectations. AccelerateMS works collaboratively with the Mississippi Department of Education, the Mississippi Community College Board, the Mississippi Department of Employment Security, and other partners to align workforce and education programs, including Perkins V career and technical education programs, with Mississippi's economic priorities.

Since its establishment, AccelerateMS has worked to unify a historically fragmented workforce system and strategically invest in the human capital infrastructure necessary to ensure Mississippians can access quality jobs regardless of geographic location. Mississippi, through AccelerateMS, has invested over $125 million in the past 3 years to strengthen workforce training infrastructure across secondary education, postsecondary education, and workforce training providers. These investments are guided by Mississippi's Priority Occupation List, which identifies high-demand, high-wage occupations critical to the State's economic future. This demand-driven framework ensures that workforce and career and technical education programs—including Perkins-funded secondary and postsecondary programs—are aligned with real labor market needs and provide clear pathways to employment.

Mississippi has also strengthened alignment between education and workforce systems through its comprehensive K-12 career coaching program and expanded access to workforce training opportunities for students while they remain enrolled in secondary education. The Mississippi Department of Education and AccelerateMS work collaboratively to ensure students have access to career exploration, workforce training, and career and technical education programs aligned with workforce priorities. These efforts allow students to transition seamlessly into postsecondary training, apprenticeships, or employment, reducing barriers to workforce entry and strengthening career pathways. However, not enough students have transitioned historically so work is currently underway to better navigate students, provide earlier access to age-appropriate career exploration, and provide workforce training classes to high school juniors and seniors who did not access CTE or did not access appropriate programs for their goals.

Mississippi has piloted innovative workforce training programs, funded by state dollars, designed to address workforce shortages and support emerging industries, including the Reconnect program, the Mississippi Apprenticeship Accelerator, and the Mississippi Artificial Intelligence Talent Accelerator Program. These programs provide training aligned with employer demand, financial support for participants, and integrated wraparound services to support successful employment outcomes. These investments complement Perkins V career and technical education programs by providing multiple entry points into career pathways aligned with priority industries.

Mississippi has also developed a statewide credential framework to ensure workforce and education programs focus on credentials aligned with employer demand. This framework previously only addressed secondary education and the SWIB's credential committee is in the process of expanding this to a full credential list accounting for secondary, post-

secondary, and higher education level credentials valuable within the State. The State Workforce Investment Board certifies credentials of value as well as Priority Occupations, which guide workforce and education investments and promote alignment across secondary education, postsecondary education, and workforce programs. This framework strengthens coordination between Perkins-funded career and technical education programs and workforce training programs, ensuring participants can progress through clearly defined career pathways.

Mississippi's workforce system is supported by strong partnerships with national workforce organizations and federal policymakers, ensuring the State remains at the forefront of workforce system modernization. Mississippi is actively implementing Workforce Pell and strengthening coordination among federal, state, and private workforce funding streams to expand access to workforce training aligned with priority occupations. These efforts support Mississippi's broader workforce development strategy and improve employment outcomes for participants.

Mississippi is also strengthening its workforce data infrastructure to improve program coordination, monitor performance outcomes, and support evidence-based decision-making. Mississippi's longitudinal data system and workforce information systems enable the State to track outcomes across workforce and education programs, including Perkins V career and technical education programs, ensuring workforce investments are aligned with labor market demand and economic development priorities.

Through continued collaboration among the Governor, the State Workforce Investment Board, AccelerateMS, the Mississippi Department of Education, and workforce system partners, Mississippi has established—for the first time—a fully aligned workforce system integrating workforce development, career and technical education, and economic development strategies. This Combined State Plan reflects Mississippi's commitment to maintaining a unified, demand-driven workforce system that expands access to employment, supports employer workforce needs, and strengthens the State's economy.

1. Governor's Workforce Vision

Mississippi's economic future depends on the strength, adaptability, and preparedness of its workforce. Governor Tate Reeves established workforce development as a central pillar of the State's economic strategy, recognizing that expanding access to high-quality training and employment opportunities is essential to strengthening Mississippi's economy and improving the quality of life for its citizens.

Mississippi is experiencing historic economic investment across multiple industry sectors, including advanced manufacturing, energy, aerospace, and information infrastructure. These investments create significant opportunity for Mississippi's citizens but also require a workforce system capable of responding quickly and effectively to evolving employer needs.

To meet this demand, Mississippi is advancing a unified workforce strategy that aligns workforce development programs, career and technical education programs authorized under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act (Perkins V), and economic development initiatives under a coordinated framework. This unified approach ensures that education and workforce investments are aligned with industry demand and that Mississippians have access to clear, accessible pathways to employment in high-demand occupations.

Governor Reeves has prioritized strengthening coordination among workforce system partners and ensuring workforce investments produce measurable employment outcomes. This includes aligning secondary and postsecondary career and technical education programs with workforce priorities, expanding access to apprenticeship and work-based learning opportunities, and supporting innovative workforce training programs that respond to employer demand.

This Combined State Plan reflects Governor Reeves' commitment to building a modern, unified workforce system that

expands access to employment, strengthens career pathways, and supports Mississippi's continued economic growth.

2. Overview of Mississippi's Unified Workforce System

Mississippi's workforce system operates as an integrated network of workforce development, education, training, and economic development programs aligned under a unified statewide strategy. This system includes workforce programs authorized under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), career and technical education programs authorized under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act (Perkins V), and additional partner programs that support workforce participation and employment outcomes.

The State Workforce Investment Board serves as the Governor's primary advisory body for workforce development and is responsible for establishing statewide workforce strategies, priorities, and performance expectations. AccelerateMS, the Office of Workforce Development, supports implementation of the Board's strategic direction and coordinates workforce and education programs across state agencies.

Career and technical education programs authorized under Perkins V serve as a foundational component of Mississippi's workforce system. Secondary and postsecondary career and technical education programs provide students and adult learners with access to training aligned with high-demand occupations and priority industries. These programs are now coordinated with workforce development programs to ensure participants can transition seamlessly from education to employment.

The Mississippi Department of Education administers secondary career and technical education programs, while the Mississippi Community College Board supports postsecondary career and technical education and workforce training programs. These programs operate in coordination with workforce training and services authorized under WIOA to ensure alignment with labor market demand and economic development priorities.

Local workforce development boards and workforce service providers deliver workforce services throughout the State, providing access to career services, training opportunities, and employment assistance. These services are supported by integrated workforce information systems and coordinated service delivery strategies designed to improve access and outcomes for participants.

Mississippi continues to strengthen coordination across workforce and education programs by aligning funding streams, integrating service delivery models, and implementing strategies that support seamless career pathways. This unified workforce system ensures Mississippi's workforce programs operate as a coordinated network aligned with employer demand and economic opportunity.

I. STRATEGIC ELEMENTS

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 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 LWDA has a strong overall economic identity, some economic and demographic variability exists within these areas. In recognition of LWDA economic sub-areas, AccelerateMS has 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
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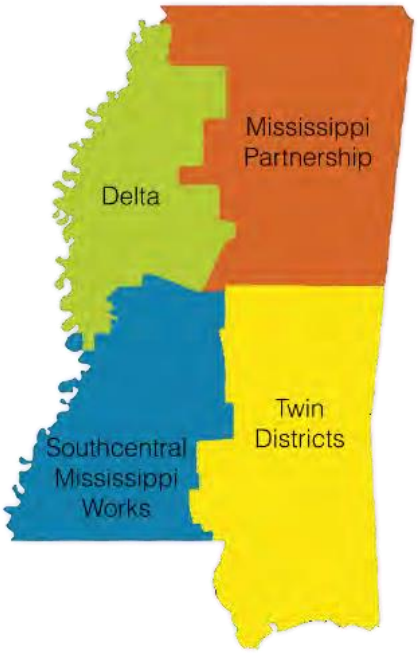
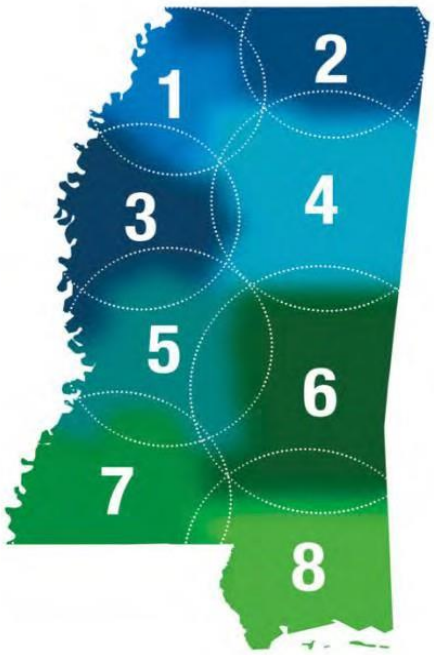


Figure 2: Workforce Ecosystems



. Economic Analysis

The Mississippi economy is currently valued at around $158B. It is predicted to experience slow growth over the next five years, averaging an increase of approximately 1.4 percent per year (a rate that represents approximately half of the overall US economic growth rate during that period). This growth is projected to drive a corresponding increase in employment - approximately .4% per year. The state's top industries are primarily 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. However, the establishment of Hyperscale Data Centers within the state is anticipated to have a significant impact on the GDP for the rural communities they have and will likely continue to locate in. The impacts of these centers will not be felt in direct employment, although they will provide limited jobs, but they will be experienced in local tax collections that if used appropriately, could create generational infrastructure improvements that could enhance many regions' ability to recruit new industry.

According to Lightcast Data. the corresponding labor market supports just over 1.2 million jobs and provides average earnings of $57,226 annually. Of this job portfolio, approximately three-quarters require a 2-year degree or less and pay an average wage between $19.61 and $29.56. The labor market's mix of educational requirements is not predicted to change over the next decade. Jobs are primarily concentrated in the state's Jackson, Gulfport, and Greater Memphis regions.

Existing Demand Industry Sectors and Occupations

Mississippi Works Labor Exchange data show that Mississippi's largest employers represent a mix of community-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 and support many of the highest-paid positions in the job market. Based upon data from April 2024 through September 2025, construction jobs have increased by 3,674 or 6.9% overall. This rise is partially due to an increase across construction companies that are actively involved with data center construction who experienced a growth of 765 or 66.5% in the same period. Construction jobs increased by 5.6% for those companies not involved with data center construction.

Table 1: Labor Market Demand by Industry

Industry	Average Employment	Percent of Total Employment	Average Annual Wage	4th Quarter 2024 Number of Establishments
Health Care and Social Assistance	188,886	16.18	$54,240	8,986
Manufacturing	141,595	12.13	$62,276	2,404
Retail Trade	139,128	11.91	$33,313	12,408
Accommodation and Food Services	127,326	10.90	$22,403	6,914
Educational Services	108,790	9.32	$50,345	1,763
Transportation and Warehousing	67,600	5.79	$54,509	3,949
Administrative and Waste Services	66,826	5.72	$38,281	6,687
Public Administration	66,630	5.71	$53,616	1,520
Construction	53,350	4.57	$66,152	6,942
Professional and Technical Services	43,888	3.76	$74,148	12,103
Wholesale Trade	36,709	3.14	$75,973	5,572
Finance and Insurance	33,513	2.87	$76,191	5,878

Other Services, Except Public Administration	22,565	1.93	$46,475	5,376
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	12,662	1.08	$25,485	937
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	12,188	1.04	$48,982	3,265
Management Of Companies and Enterprises	11,239	0.96	$102,488	831
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	10,984	0.94	$48,815	1,729
Information	10,681	0.91	$61,730	1,664
Utilities	9,952	0.85	$95,309	629
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	3,207	0.27	$90,188	407
Total	**1,167,717**	**100.00**	**$50,973**	**89,964**

Source: MS Department of Employment Security, Labor Market Information, Census of Employment & Wages, 2024 Annual Averages

Mississippi has a strong concentration of traded sectors, particularly traditional manufacturing including furniture manufacturing, shipbuilding, 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 Employment & Demand by Industries in Traded Sectors.

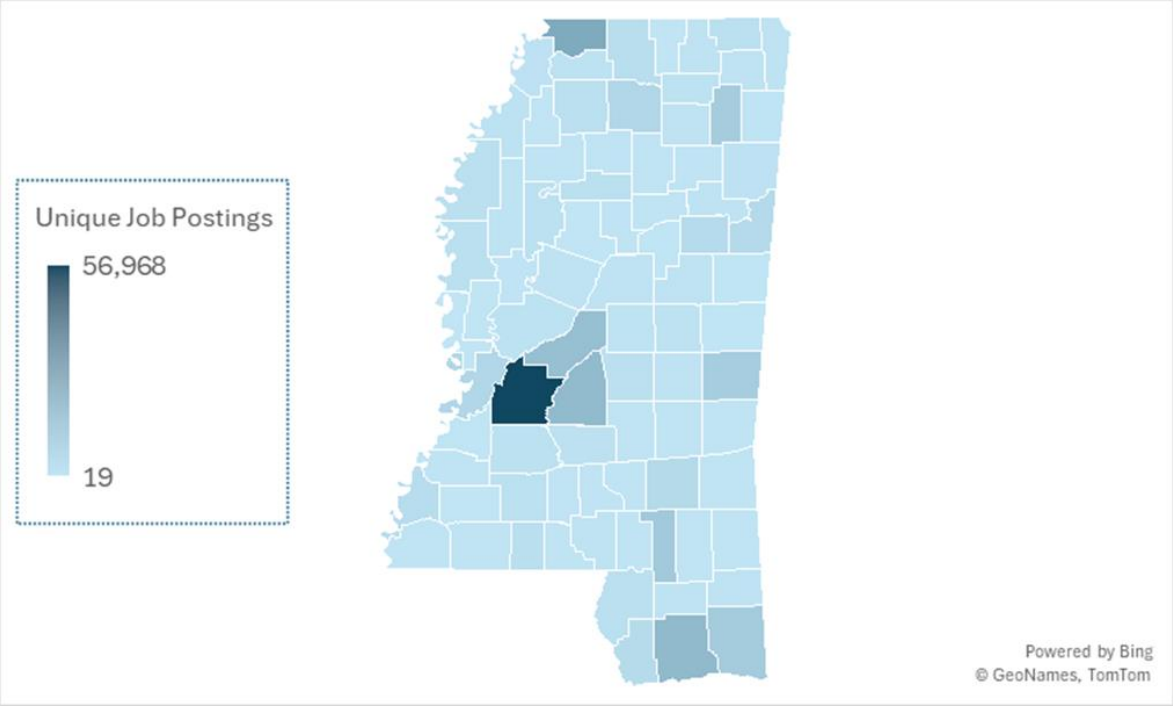
Industry Description	2024 Average Annual Employment	Percent of Total Traded Industries Employment	Projected 2022-2032 Employment Percent Change	2024 Average Annual Wage
Professional and Technical Services	43,888	13.65	9.12	$74,148
Transportation Equipment Manufacturing	27,587	8.58	19.14	$73,507
Warehousing and Storage	25,749	8.01	26.31	$48,019
Food Manufacturing	24,354	7.58	4.75	$44,969
Truck Transportation	19,199	5.97	4.12	$59,797
Credit Intermediation and Related Activities	18,902	5.88	4.18	$68,775
Furniture and Related Product Manufacturing	14,195	4.42	(11.98)	$42,158
Insurance Carriers and Related Activities	13,045	4.06	8.65	$79,934
Machinery Manufacturing	12,180	3.79	0.75	$60,710
Utilities	9,952	3.10	5.25	$95,309
Fabricated Metal Product Manufacturing	9,018	2.81	(3.40)	$60,158
Wood Product Manufacturing	8,615	2.68	(1.11)	$61,465
Plastics and Rubber Products Manufacturing	8,607	2.68	(5.37)	$58,958
Couriers and Messengers	7,896	2.46	10.25	$41,985
Electrical Equipment and Appliance Mfg.	7,204	2.24	54.81	$61,028
Chemical Manufacturing	5,972	1.86	13.48	$82,019
Support Activities for Transportation	5,398	1.68	4.94	$68,256

Telecommunications	4,516	1.41	(2.30)	$71,965
Paper Manufacturing	4,342	1.35	11.03	$82,288
Primary Metal Manufacturing	3,966	1.23	7.31	$87,281
Nonmetallic Mineral Product Manufacturing	3,681	1.15	17.10	$67,078
Crop Production	3,057	0.95	3.13	$37,995
Forestry and Logging	2,775	0.86	(9.84)	$52,392
Petroleum and Coal Products Manufacturing	2,720	0.85	11.17	$142,101
Animal Production and Aquaculture	2,502	0.78	15.42	$50,549
Agriculture and Forestry Support Activities	2,396	0.75	2.01	$53,317
Miscellaneous Manufacturing	2,154	0.67	(0.32)	$52,356
Transit and Ground Passenger Transportation	2,105	0.65	7.56	$29,710
Computer and Electronic Product Manufacturing	1,999	0.62	37.95	$69,768
Publishing Industries	1,969	0.61	55.69	$67,243
Support Activities for Mining	1,873	0.58	14.55	$88,317
Internet Publishing and Broadcasting	1,374	0.43	0.39	$52,723
Securities, Commodity Contracts, Investments	1,323	0.41	4.08	$144,207
Textile Mills	1,140	0.35	(10.21)	$65,908
Printing and Related Support Activities	1,128	0.35	(16.76)	$50,215
Water Transportation	1,120	0.35	11.48	$100,978
Other Information Services	1,109	0.35	11.11	$29,083
Data Processing, Hosting and Related Services	944	0.29	128.67	$79,611
Mining, Except Oil and Gas	922	0.29	(8.66)	$72,136
Apparel Manufacturing	911	0.28	(0.33)	$47,954
Pipeline Transportation	857	0.27	15.11	$109,239
Textile Product Mills	773	0.24	(10.87)	$38,530
Motion Picture and Sound Recording Industries	769	0.24	1.44	$28,741
Oil and Gas Extraction	413	0.13	(4.02)	$138,977
Air Transportation	286	0.09	5.81	$65,998
Fishing, Hunting and Trapping	254	0.08	2.56	$80,340
Funds, Trusts, and Other Financial Vehicles	241	0.07	13.49	$80,271
Scenic and Sightseeing Transportation	28	0.01	6.06	$32,222
Monetary Authorities - Central Bank	3	0.00	5.26	$211,600

Source: MS Department of Employment Security, Labor Market Information, Census of Employment & Wages, 2024 Annual Averages; and Industry Projections, Statewide 2022-2032

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 (July 2024 – June 2025).

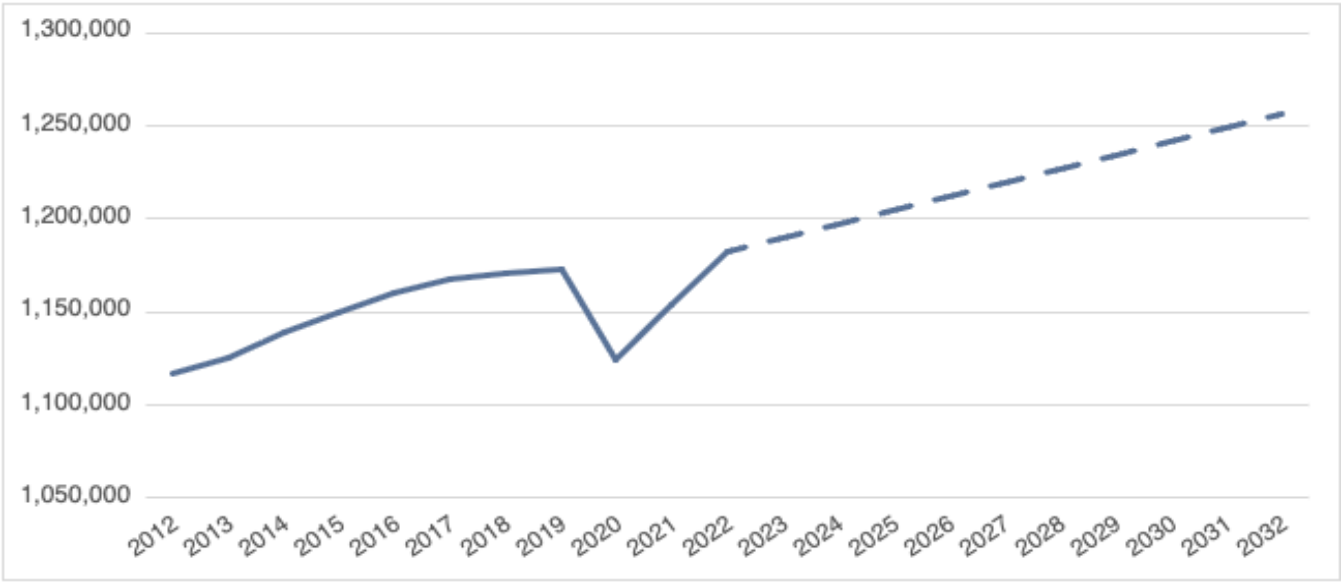
Figure 3: Job Postings by Geography



Source: Lightcast Datarun, January 2026
Note: Unique Job Postings from July 2024 - June 2025

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 ~74,000 jobs.

Figure 4: Forecasted Number of Jobs Added by 2032



Source: MS Department of Employment Security, Labor Market Information, Industry Projections, Statewide 2022-2032

Growth will be distributed unevenly across the state, with the Mississippi Partnership LWDA projected to see the highest percentage of job growth over the next decade.

Table 3: Anticipated Job Growth by LWDA

Area	2022 Employment	2032 Projected Employment	2022-2032 Projected Employment Change	2022-2032 Projected Percent Change	All Occupations Mean Annual Wage 2024
Mississippi	1,182,554	1,256,526	73,972	6.26	$49,740
Delta	87,592	91,221	3,629	4.14	$44,331
MS Partnership	354,456	378,946	24,490	6.91	$47,803
South Central	356,409	380,964	24,555	6.89	$52,867
Twin Districts	384,118	405,522	21,404	5.57	$48,902

Source: MS Department of Employment Security, Labor Market Information, Industry Projections, 2022-2032; and Occupational Wage Estimates, 2024

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	MDA	Delta	MS Partnership	South Central MS Works	Twin Districts
Advanced Manufacturing	X	X	X	X	X
Aerospace, Space & Defense	X	X	X	X	X
Agriculture, Food & Beverage	X	X	X	X	
Automotive & Related Manufacturing	X	X	X	X	
Data Centers & Information Technology	X			X	X
Distribution & Logistics	X	X	X	X	X
Energy & Related	X	X	X	X	X
Forestry, Chemicals, & Related	X		X		X
Healthcare & Support		X	X	X	X
Information Infrastructure		X	X	X	X
Shipbuilding & Related	X			X	X

Source: AccelerateMS, MS Department of Employment Security, Labor Market Information; MS Development Authority; and Workforce Development Areas 2026

Table 5: Targeted Industries

Activity	Average Employment	Average Annual Wage	4th Quarter 2024 Number of Establishments
Advanced Manufacturing	59,196	$74,908	705
Aerospace, Space & Defense	94,891	$67,247	6,635
Agriculture, Food & Beverage	63,426	$42,253	3,790
Automotive & Related Manufacturing	17,463	$72,677	104
Data Centers & Information Technology	16,880	$80,585	4,617
Distribution & Logistics	74,749	$55,211	4,140
Energy & Related	40,150	$87,407	3,041
Forestry, Chemicals & Related	41,381	$59,658	1,410
Healthcare & Support	182,813	$60,063	7,851

Information Infrastructure	46,493	$65,585	5,673
Shipbuilding & Related	34,319	$76,748	1,557

Source: MS Department of Employment Security, Labor Market Information, Census of Employment & Wages, 2024 Annual Averages
Note: One NAICS code could be used in multiple groups

The Mississippi Partnership LWDA is the largest LWDA and is predicted to experience the state's largest increase (7%) in job gains over the next decade. The region's high Labor Force Participation Rate (LFPR) (57.3%) and low unemployment rate (3.1%) 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 approximately 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, transportation equipment, 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 have a footprint in the Mississippi Partnership LWDA. The LWDA's northwest section has 45.7% of all distribution jobs in the state, with distribution facilities for large companies such as Amazon, FedEx, Nike, Wal-Mart, and Volvo.

The South Central 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 South Central Mississippi Works LWDA is a healthcare hub for the entire state. The presence of oil and natural gas deposits in the region gives South Central 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.

Additionally, within the South Central Mississippi Works LWDA, three new hyperscale data centers and two new power plants are being constructed. This will generate approximately 1,300 possible job opportunities for Mississippi residents.

The Twin Districts LWDA, located in the southeastern part of the state, has the largest population and labor force compared to the three other LWDAs. Core economic activities include manufacturing, healthcare, and tourism. Top manufacturing 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 reinforces a strong defense presence in the area and supports the shipbuilding and aerospace industries. Other sectors with concentrations in the region include agribusiness and tourism.

The Delta LWDA trails its three counterparts on several key economic indicators, including labor force participation, average wages, and projected job growth over the next decade. Although the region is a major hub for agricultural production—home to nine of Mississippi's top ten crop-producing counties—its economic and workforce development efforts are focused on diversification. These efforts target high-demand industries facing critical workforce shortages. To address these gaps and prepare for the retirement of older workers, Delta LWDA directly awards WIOA subgrants to training initiatives such as the Electrical Lineman Program, Nurse Externship Program, and the Aerial Applicator Pilot Registered Apprenticeship Program.

Additionally, within the Delta Workforce Area, a new advanced power plant is being constructed to address the power needs of the data centers in the Jackson metropolitan area. This new construction is generating approximately 800 new jobs, with training for many of these jobs provided by the Delta Workforce Area.

i 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 drives 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 of at least $55,000 per year

Table 6: Strongest Economic Growth Opportunities

NAICS	Industry Description	2025 Jobs	2035 Jobs	2025 - 2035 Job Change	2025 - 2035 % Job Change	2025 Employment Concentration	Avg. Earnings Per Job
621399	Offices of All Other Miscellaneous Health Practitioners	4,622	6,475	1,853	40.0%	2.77	$74,967
541511	Custom Computer Programming Services	2,793	3,716	924	33.0%	0.31	$114,898
561110	Office Administrative Services	2,559	3,488	929	36.0%	0.50	$79,142
541611	Administrative Management and General Management Consulting Services	2,389	3,214	825	35.0%	0.30	$85,385
513210	Software Publishers	1,228	1,868	640	52.0%	0.24	$101,664
541715	Research and Development in the Physical, Engineering, and Life Sciences (except Nanotechnology and Biotechnology)	1,166	1,522	356	31.0%	0.27	$121,066
621999	All Other Miscellaneous Ambulatory Health Care Services	704	942	238	34.0%	0.70	$71,406
541612	Human Resources Consulting Services	678	1,029	351	52.0%	0.81	$86,413
541613	Marketing Consulting Services	638	852	213	33.0%	0.20	$70,988
621420	Outpatient Mental Health and Substance Abuse Centers	636	837	201	32.0%	0.24	$63,004
336120	Heavy Duty Truck Manufacturing	564	843	279	49.0%	1.81	$94,821
325998	All Other Miscellaneous Chemical Product and Preparation Manufacturing	548	742	194	35.0%	1.62	$102,583
551112	Offices of Other Holding Companies	526	749	223	43.0%	0.75	$157,880

Source: Lightcast Datarun, January2026

ii Employers' Employment Needs

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. Without strategic intervention to drive economic growth in knowledge—and/or technology-intensive sectors, this mix of employment and associated requirements is not predicted to change over the next decade.

The Mississippi Business Alliance (MSBA), founded in January 2026, now serves as the state's lead business organization resulting from a merger of the Mississippi Economic Council, the Mississippi Manufacturers Association, and the Business & Industry Political Education Committee (BIPEC). Key functions of each organization have been maintained and this organization will continue to conduct an annual tour across Mississippi to gather feedback from local leaders from retail business, education, healthcare, hospitality industry, manufacturing, professional associations, professional services, education, and other sectors, as well as local elected officials and government regarding their concerns and ideas on three critical issues:

1. Mississippi business climate
2. Education, workforce, and skills training
3. Talent retention and attraction

Technical skills, soft skills, and mitigation of barriers to employment were identified as priorities for the organization to invest in to successfully meet the needs of existing and emerging businesses and growing the economy. To that end, the group partnered with AccelerateMS, the MS Department of Education, and the Mississippi Community College board to conduct a deep analysis of industry needs related specifically to talent retention and attraction.

In 2025, Mississippi businesses and industries participated in a series of regional meetings with multiple state agency partners to articulate their workforce needs. These meetings revealed broad consensus among business leaders regarding the need for workers with stronger communication and critical thinking skills. Employers also expressed strong support for expanding apprenticeships, job shadowing, internships, and other forms of work-based learning. Additionally, industry representatives emphasized the importance of adult education initiatives within the workplace, including skills bootcamps and upskilling programs. Business leaders further indicated that increased outreach and engagement related to state workforce initiatives would enhance employer awareness and participation in available workforce development programs.

Table 7: Employer Need by Education Level

Education Level	2025 Jobs	2035 Jobs	2025 - 2035 Job Change	2025 - 2035 % Job Change	US % Job Change	Avg. Hourly Earnings	Median Advertised Salary*
No formal educational credential	331,203	341,596	10,393	4.0%	4.0%	$19.61	
High school diploma or equivalent	538,867	559,385	20,518	16.0%	5.0%	$23.52	$40,600
Some college, no degree	27,533	27,463	-70	2.0%	1.0%	$21.45	
Postsecondary nondegree award	105,631	111,951	6,320	9.0%	7.0%	$26.51	
Associate's degree	26,998	28,193	1,195	4.0%	7.0%	$29.56	$59,300
Bachelor's degree	246,318	266,431	20,113	9.0%	9.0%	$37.41	$85,900
Master's degree	25,376	27,954	2,578	11.0%	12.0%	$40.99	$97,700
Doctoral or professional degree	31,710	33,404	1,694	7.0%	8.0%	$97.10	$114,000

Total - All Occs	**1,333,635**	**1,396,376**	**62,741**	**8.0%**	**7.0%**	**$37.02**	

Source: Lightcast Datarun, January 2026
**From job postings*

Job posting data aligns with 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 8: Employer Demand by Industry & Occupation

Industry	Unique Postings		Occupation	Unique Postings
Employment Placement Agencies	19,982		Registered Nurses	20,800
General Medical and Surgical Hospitals	19,753		Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	9,077
Limited-Service Restaurants	7,957		Retail Salespersons	7,732
Temporary Help Services	7,049		First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers	6,706
Home Health Care Services	5,493		Customer Service Representatives	5,438
Offices of Physicians (except Mental Health Specialists)	4,679		Food Service Managers	4,176
Colleges, Universities, and Professional Schools	4,571		Maintenance and Repair Workers, General	3,681
Warehouse Clubs and Supercenters	4,058		General and Operations Managers	3,555
Full-Service Restaurants	3,679		Home Health and Personal Care Aides	3,314
Commercial Banking	3,412		Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing	3,301
Nursing Care Facilities (Skilled Nursing Facilities)	3,302		Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	3,219
Pharmacies and Drug Retailers	3,243		Medical and Health Services Managers	3,172
General Freight Trucking, Long-Distance, Truckload	3,205		Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	3,100
Elementary and Secondary Schools	3,046		Software Developers	2,963
Automotive Parts and Accessories Retailers	2,709		Merchandise Displayers and Window Trimmers	2,926
Engineering Services	2,658		Health Technologists and Technicians, All Other	2,882
Department Stores	2,282		Physical Therapists	2,714
Hotels (except Casino Hotels) and Motels	2,155		Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	2,700
All Other General Merchandise Retailers	2,121		Project Management Specialists	2,624
Insurance Agencies and Brokerages	2,073		Food Preparation Workers	2,553

Source: Lightcast Datarun, January 2026

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

Table 9: Employer Need by Skill

Common Skills	% of Postings	Specialized Skills	% of Postings	Software Skills	% of Postings
Communication	33%	Lifting Ability	8%	Microsoft Office	6%
Customer Service	26%	Nursing	7%	Microsoft Excel	6%

Management	20%	Merchandising	7%	Microsoft Outlook	3%
Operations	17%	Auditing	5%	Microsoft PowerPoint	3%
Leadership	16%	Project Management	5%	Microsoft Word	2%
Sales	16%	Marketing	5%	R (Programming Lang)	1%
Detail Oriented	12%	Restaurant Operation	4%	SAP Applications	1%
Problem Solving	11%	Workflow Management	4%	SQL (Programming Lang)	1%
Interpersonal Communications	8%	Continuous Improvement Process	4%	Salesforce	1%
Writing	8%	Inventory Management	3%	Python (Programming Lang)	1%

Source: Lightcast Datarun, January 2026

Table 10: Employer Need by Qualification

Qualification	Postings
Valid Driver's License	45,441
Registered Nurse (RN)	19,288
Basic Life Support (BLS) Certification	12,779
Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) Certification	6,399
Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN)	5,615
Advanced Cardiovascular Life Support (ACLS) Certification	5,421
Commercial Driver's License (CDL)	3,976
Pediatric Advanced Life Support (PALS)	3,491
CDL Class A License	2,965
Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA)	2,901

Source: Lightcast Datarun, January 2026

Tables 8, 9, and 10 highlight a continued need to better educate industry on competencies that drive outcomes as many of the 'in-demand' credentials simply satisfy a basic governmental requirement. The Lumina Foundation project seeks to address this while defining what true valuable credentials are in Mississippi.

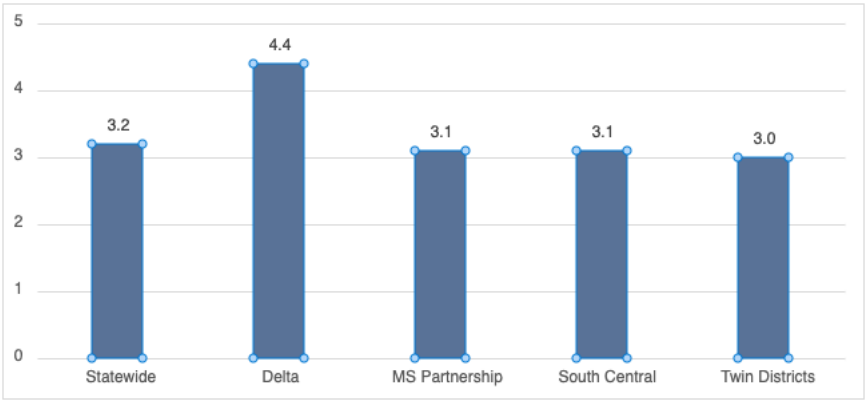
Workforce Analysis

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 the Lumina Foundation indicates that post-secondary credential attainment currently hovers around 48.7% 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.

i. Employment and Unemployment

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.

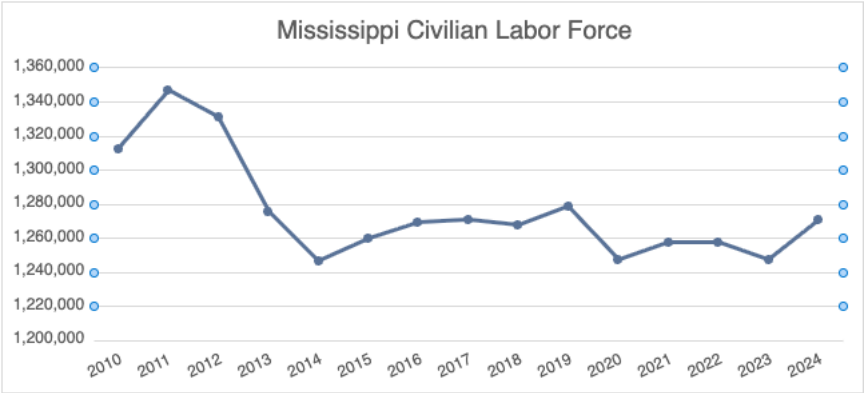
Figure 5: Unemployment Rate



Source: MS Department of Employment Security, Labor Market Information, Local Area Unemployment Statistics, Annual 2024

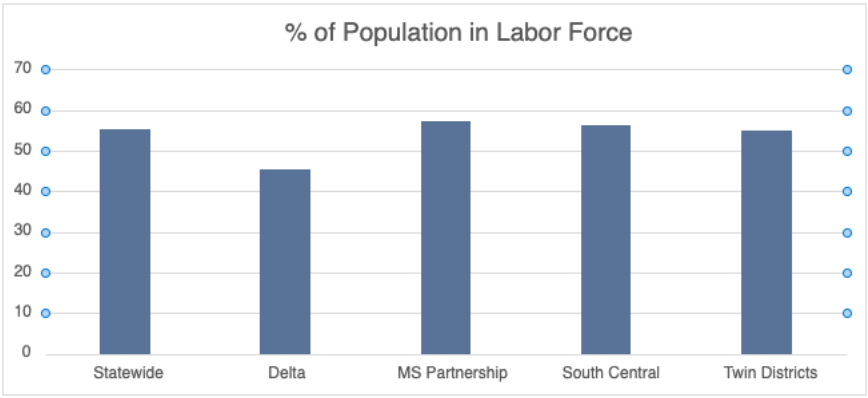
The state's overall Labor Force Participation Rate largely trended downwards from 2019 to early 2024 but has seen a steady increase since. While not higher than pre-pandemic rates, labor force participation has stabilized as shown in Figure 6. Figure 7 details the percentage of workers by LWDA, which is helpful when establishing economic development and workforce training priorities.

Figure 6: Labor Force Trends



Source: MS Department of Employment Security, Labor Market Information, Local Area Unemployment Statistics, Annual 2024

Figure 7: Labor Force Participation Rate

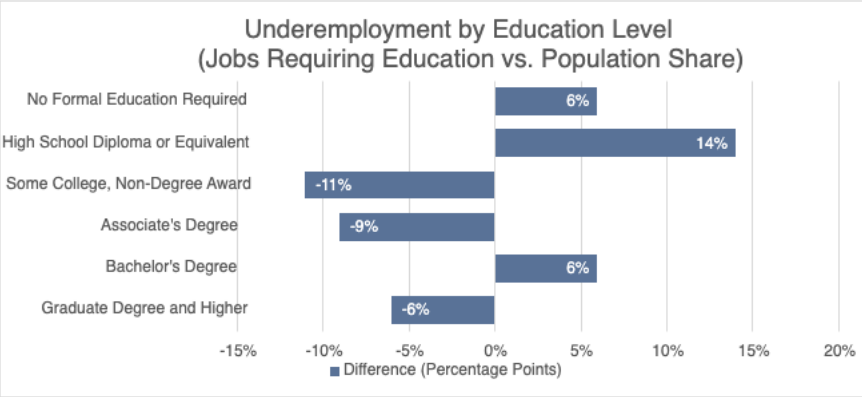


Source: MS Department of Employment Security, Labor Market Information, Annual 2024

Data from the American Community Survey (ACS) in Figure 8 shows that underemployment continues to be extremely high in Mississippi. The bulk of the state's most educated workers are employed in an occupation for which the typical

level of education required is less than that attained by the individual. This aligns with data from the job market, which indicates that only 23% of jobs in the state require a bachelor's degree or higher. High underemployment, while challenging, presents opportunities for workforce interventions that build skills on top of existing education for workers to advance and increase productivity for employers while opening entry level roles to new workers.

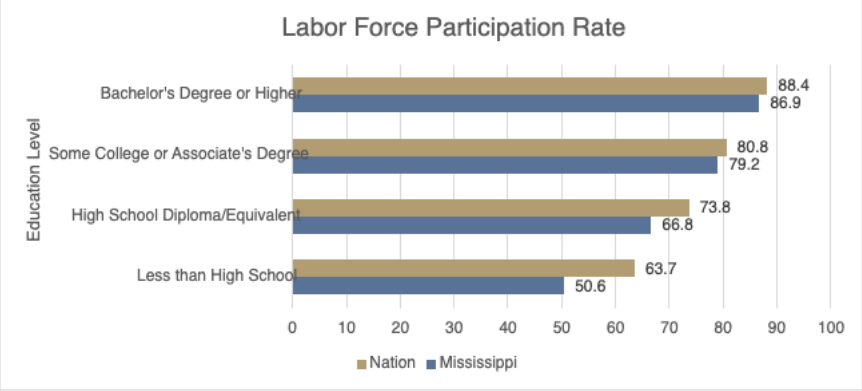
Figure 8: Underemployment by Education Level



Source: Lightcast Datarun, January 2026

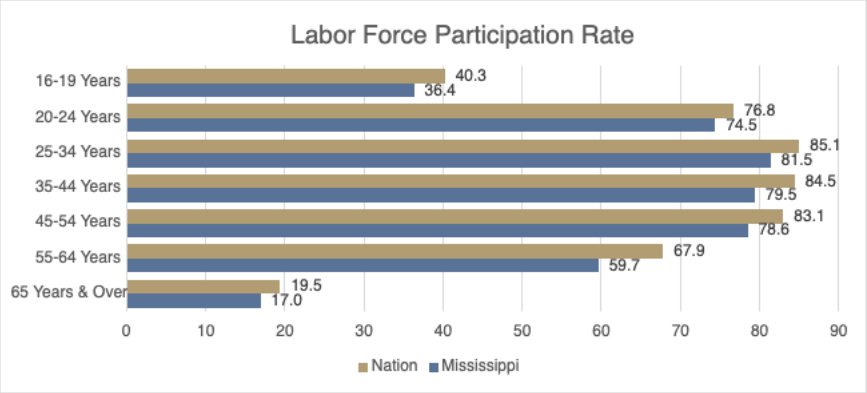
ACS data of the LFPR by education level and age demonstrates that Mississippi lags slightly behind the nation. The participation rate in education increases with overall attainment, as shown in Figure 9, with the highest levels of participation seen in individuals with a bachelor's degree or higher, and the lowest 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), as shown in Figure 10. Mississippi's greatest opportunity for increasing LFPR lies within the 16-19 and 55-64 age groups.

Figure 9: LFPR by Education (Age 25-64)



Source: US Census Bureau, ACS data, 2024 1-Year Estimates

Figure 10: LFPR by Age



Source: US Census Bureau, ACS data, 2024 1-Year Estimates

Individuals with the highest barriers to employment include single parents, older individuals, low-income individuals, and individuals with disabilities as shown in Table 11.

Table 11: Populations with Barriers to Employment

Group*	Number
Low-Income Individuals (18-64)	296,269
American Indians/Alaska Natives/Native Hawaiians	14,592
Individuals with Disabilities (18-64)	263,182
Older Individuals (>=65)	495,115
Older Individuals, Low-Income	68,433
Ex-Offenders (18-64)[1]	6,880
Homeless children and youth[2]	7,694
Children in Foster care[3]	3,825
English Language Learners with Low Level of Literacy[4]	6,697
Migrants or Seasonal Farmworkers[5]	3,530
Individuals within 2 Years of Exhausting TANF Eligibility[6]	395
Single Parent Households	581,387
Single Mother Households	370,811
Single Fathers Households	210,576
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 low income suffer from the lowest LFPR and the highest unemployment rates.

Table 12: Unemployment and LFPR of Vulnerable Populations

Group	Percent
Veterans (Ages 18-64)	
Unemployment Rate	4.0
Labor Force Participation Rate	73.4
Disability	
Unemployment Rate	9.2
Labor Force Participation Rate	43.9
Below Poverty	

Unemployment Rate	18.6
Labor Force Participation Rate	43.7
Age 16-19 (Overall)	
Unemployment Rate	16.1
Labor Force Participation Rate	36.4
Age 16-19 Not Enrolled in School	
Unemployment Rate	25.8
Labor Force Participation Rate	55.4

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS data, 2024 1-Year Estimates

iii Labor Market Trends

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 the industry and incentivize employers to bring quality job opportunities to the state.

Table 13: Largest Growing Industries by Projected Net Job Change 2025-2035

NAICS	Industry Description	2025 Jobs	2035 Jobs	2025 - 2035 Job Change	2025 - 2035 % Job Change	Avg. Earnings Per Job
6241	Individual and Family Services	19,220	23,714	4,495	23.4%	$32,486
7225	Restaurants and Other Eating Places	96,263	100,150	3,887	4.0%	$22,147
4931	Warehousing and Storage	27,156	30,999	3,844	14.2%	$55,294
6213	Offices of Other Health Practitioners	13,258	16,894	3,636	27.4%	$64,267
5614	Business Support Services	10,337	13,864	3,527	34.1%	$47,127
8131	Religious Organizations	18,217	20,559	2,342	12.9%	$21,888
5416	Management, Scientific, and Technical Consulting Services	6,970	9,197	2,227	31.9%	$79,871
5415	Computer Systems Design and Related Services	8,562	10,761	2,199	25.7%	$102,951
5242	Agencies, Brokerages, and Other Insurance Related Activities	12,618	14,293	1,675	13.3%	$89,354
5613	Employment Services	24,856	26,363	1,507	6.1%	$44,321
4552	Warehouse Clubs, Supercenters, and Other General Merchandise Retailers	34,403	35,890	1,487	4.3%	$34,597
4842	Specialized Freight Trucking	8,199	9,516	1,317	16.1%	$75,030
3353	Electrical Equipment Manufacturing	6,818	8,096	1,278	18.8%	$84,069
2382	Building Equipment Contractors	19,321	20,589	1,268	6.6%	$72,396
6211	Offices of Physicians	23,076	24,329	1,253	5.4%	$111,749

Source: Lightcast Datarun, January 2026

Table 14: Occupations by Largest Projected Net Job Change 2022-2032

SOC	Occupation	Typical Entry-Level Education	2022 Jobs	2022-2032 # Job Change	2022-2032 % Job Change	Median Hourly Wage

31-1120	Home Health and Personal Care Aides	High school diploma or equiv.	17,556	5,161	29.4%	$11.36
53-7062	Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	No formal educational cred.	30,515	3,270	10.7%	$17.27
53-7065	Stockers and Order Fillers	High school diploma or equiv.	24,773	3,144	12.7%	$16.68
11-1021	General and Operations Managers	Bachelor's degree	28,201	2,356	8.4%	$42.45
35-2014	Cooks, Restaurant	No formal educational cred.	9,832	2,249	22.9%	$14.19
53-3032	Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	Postsecondary non-degree award	26,349	2,065	7.8%	$24.38
29-1141	Registered Nurses	Bachelor's degree	29,977	1,933	6.4%	$35.80
47-2061	Construction Laborers	No formal educational cred.	10,390	1,769	17.0%	$17.88
29-1171	Nurse Practitioners	Master's degree	4,113	1,747	42.5%	$57.35
51-2028	Electrical, Electronic, & Electromechanical Assemblers, Except Coil Winders, Tapers, & Finishers	High school diploma or equiv.	3,250	1,570	48.3%	$18.19
35-3023	Fast Food and Counter Workers	No formal educational cred.	30,227	1,511	5.0%	$10.71
11-9111	Medical and Health Services Managers	Bachelor's degree	4,862	1,363	28.0%	$43.25
47-2111	Electricians	High school diploma or equiv.	5,527	1,284	23.2%	$27.55
49-9041	Industrial Machinery Mechanics	High school diploma or equiv.	5,294	1,216	23.0%	$27.51
15-1252	Software Developers	Bachelor's degree	2,745	1,188	43.3%	$41.57

Source: MS Department of Employment Security, Labor Market Information, Occupational Projections, 2022-2032, and Occupational Employment & Wage Statistics 2024

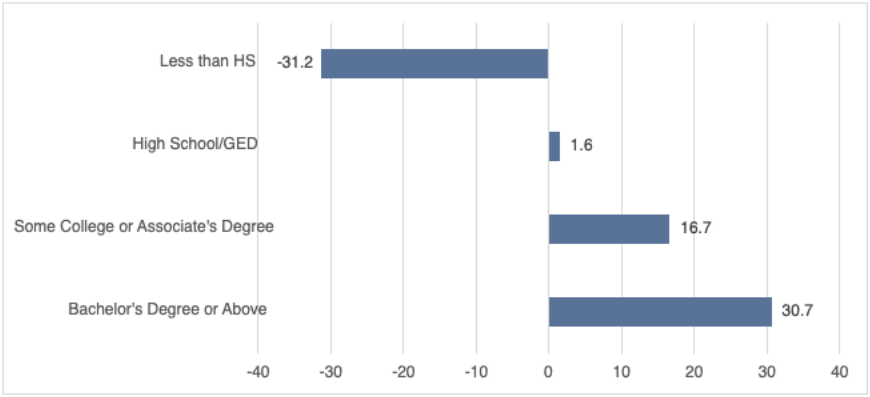
Simultaneously, the workforce is increasing rapidly in educational attainment. The number of people with post-secondary credentials in the state is growing, and underemployment is driving increases. Currently, the state stands at 48.7% post-secondary credential attainment and is poised to increase that number by 2030.

iv Education and Skill Levels of the Workforce

According to Lumina Foundation data, Mississippi currently ranks 44th in the nation as measured by workforce education levels. 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, as shown in Figure 11, this has resulted in a 30.7% increase in workers with a bachelor's degree or more, a 16.7% increase in workers with some college or an associate degree, a 1.6% increase in workers with only a high school diploma/GED, and a 31.2% decrease in workers with less than a high school degree. Significant increases in the graduation rates of high school, community college, and university students are driving this progress. However, a gap exists for those who do not wish to attend degree-based college programs and Mississippi has worked diligently to improve the availability of training infrastructure to support those who wish to go directly to the workforce while providing higher quality pathways to increase the wage outlook. An example of this is Mississippi has invested in programs not requiring a degree like Commercial Drivers' License, Utility Line worker, heavy equipment operator and others.

Figure 11: Mississippi Population – Percent Change by Educational Attainment



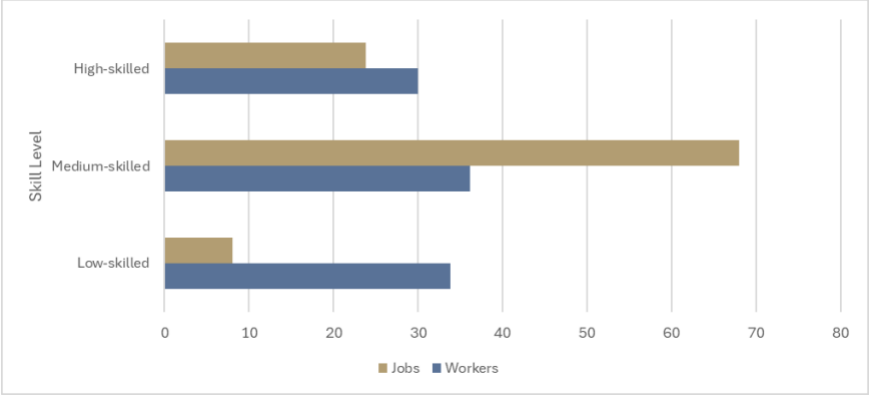
Source: US Census Bureau, ACS data, 2023 5-Year Estimates

v Skill Gaps

Mississippi'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 four-year degree. Currently, the state's workforce exceeds the demand for high-skilled and low-skilled workers.

Current data show that 68% of jobs in Mississippi fall within the definition of middle-skill, but only 36.2% of the state's workforce can fill a middle-skill job (see Figure 12). 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 a middle-skill gap, the availability of such jobs indicates that many Mississippians could attain gainful employment by seeking additional education and training, hence why State leaders continue to focus efforts on non-degree credentials and are exploring supports like Workforce Pell to provide additional pathway opportunities for prospective workers.

Figure 12: Mississippi Jobs and Workers by Skill



Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics, OEWS, 2024; ONET, 2025; US Census Bureau, ACS data, 2023 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, construction, healthcare support, tourism, and other large sectors.

Table 15: Supply and Demand for Middle-Skill Occupations in New and Established Sectors

Sector	Supply	Demand	Gap
Advanced Manufacturing Industry	1,688	3,290	1,602
Healthcare Support Industry	1,038	3,400	2,362

Tourism Industry	885	10,111	9,226
Well-Established Sectors	1,442	18,472	17,030
Total	**5,053**	**35,273**	**30,220**

Source: MS Department of Employment Security, 2025; MS State Longitudinal Data System, 2025; MS Works, 2025; MS Community College Board, 2025

2. Workforce Development, Education, and Training Analysis

I. 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-called Workforce Investment Network Job Centers (WIN Job Centers) in Mississippi, operated by community colleges and MDES. Between July 1, 2024, and June 30, 2025, approximately 15,536 unique individuals received services: 7,471 individuals received basic career services, 6,352 individuals received individualized career services, and 1,713 individuals received a training service. 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 supplying 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. Between July 1, 2024, and June 30, 2025, 27 Governor's Job Fair events were held serving 470 employers/organizations. In addition to the Governor's Job Fair Network events, 358 job fairs were held statewide at the WIN Job Centers benefitting 91 individual employers.

Local community-based organizations (LCBOs) and educational institutions provide WIOA Youth services. 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 designated as the recipient of WIOA 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 partners closely with AccelerateMS

to drive state dollars into training programs where Adult Education participants can benefit and works closely with state leaders to design programs of value. 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. AE providers work closely with community groups and local job centers to ensure that workforce area residents are aware of class availability. Key to meeting the training needs of Mississippi's workforce, AE programs can reach into rural communities and provide training toward high school equivalency prerequisites supportive of further training for middle-skill occupations. In addition, AE classes serve as an effective intake for MI-BEST training that combines equivalency training with community college workforce training.

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

- Strengthen College and Career Readiness for Adult Learners
- Develop Multi-Level Career Pathway Options.
- Increase Postsecondary Transitions and Credential Attainment

During the program year 2024-2025, Title II programs served 6,680 individuals, of whom 2,697 received 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. Job search, job referral, and provision of labor market information are the key supportive services offered to all job seekers by the Mississippi Department of Employment Security through the Mississippi Works Labor Exchange, which connects job seekers to employers through both web and mobile applications. Job seekers can 1) build a profile using a wizard-style intake form; 2) automatically generate a resume; 3) search for and apply online to openings; 4) receive emails or text messages when new openings match the job seeker's criteria; 5) receive real-time feedback through an innovative gap analysis that helps a job seeker determine how well matched he or she is for a particular position; and 6) access easy-to-understand labor market analysis. For job seekers who lack computer skills, One-Stop Center staff can also log into the Mississippi Works Labor Exchange to assist job seekers in applying for positions through a "staff-assisted referral" or other Wagner-Peyser services. From July 1, 2024, through June 30, 2025, MDES received 157,163 job orders with a total of 233,237 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. MDVR helps Mississippians who face barriers to accessing the labor market through specialized training and workforce support. MDRS professional staff provide expertise in assisting those with disabilities to enter in-demand occupations, and MDRS already assists other Combined Plan Partners in assessing the accessibility of their respective service delivery systems. 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, 2024, and June 3, 2025, 376 veterans were served under the JVSG program. Of these, 86.4% of veterans received individualized career services. Veterans in case management face a variety of employment barriers, including homelessness and 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. WIN Job Center staff assist veterans, eligible spouses, and administer assessments to identify Significant Barriers to Employment (SBEs). When an individual meets JVSG eligibility criteria and requests individualized assistance, they are referred to a Veteran Employment Coordinator (VEC) for comprehensive case management services. As part of the agency's ongoing commitment to veterans, MDES is pleased to announce that starting November 1, 2025, the role of Disabled Veteran Outreach Program (DVOP) specialists and Local Veteran Employment Representatives (LVERs) have merged into a single position known as Veteran Employment Coordinators (VEC). Mississippi is the first state in the Southeast to implement this consolidated approach, paving the way for more effective and comprehensive ser ices for veterans across the state. These team members 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.

In addition to delivering individualized career services, the VECs also perform the employer engagement and advocacy functions previously assigned to LVER staff. They participate as key members of the MDES Business team, conducting coordinated employer outreach, supporting business development activities, and developing job opportunities for veterans. This integrated model ensures a unified approach to both participant services and employer engagement, strengthening the overall effectiveness of the WIN Job Center system in connecting veterans to meaningful employment.

Unemployment Compensation Programs: MDES is the state's major tax collection agency, administering the audit and collection of payroll taxes and maintaining employment records for more than 1.5 million workers.

The Benefits Department is charged with determining eligibility of non-monetary investigations, where the main objectives are to make timely and quality decisions in accordance with Department of Labor (DOL) guidelines. For the period of July 1, 2024, through June 30, 2025, the Benefits Department completed 30,340 timely investigations and 26,907 timely adjudications. The Benefits Department is also responsible for processing Federal, Military, and Combined Wage Claims; as well as processing statements of charges for employers and conducting work search audits.

Self-Employment Assistance Program (SEAP): Mississippi has reestablished the SEAP housed within the Benefits Department. This voluntary program is designed for unemployed individuals interested in starting their own businesses. Eligible claimants who meet specific 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 partner with external resources such as governmental organizations and businesses 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 developing a business venture that may lead to a new business in the state, boosting job production.

Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA): The Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) initiative in Mississippi provides intensive, individualized career services designed to help Unemployment Insurance (UI) beneficiaries return to work as quickly as possible. Participants may receive up to three one-on-one assessments and career counseling sessions. Each session supports the claimant by offering labor market

information, job matching assistance, skills gap analysis, and soft skills development. Staff also provide ongoing outreach that includes practical job search tips, targeted work search guidance, and job referrals.

To maintain uninterrupted service delivery, MDES provides RESEA appointments remotely in 13 counties where local offices are closed or have unique operational concerns, such as staffing limitations or facility constraints. These fully virtual RESEA services are facilitated by the Workforce Contact Center to ensure claimants in these areas continue to receive timely and compliant support.

Across the rest of the state, American Job Centers (AJCs) continue to offer in-person RESEA services, with the added flexibility to conduct virtual RESEA appointments at the discretion of local office management. This hybrid approach allows each Workforce Development Area to adapt service delivery based on staffing levels, claimant volume, and operational needs.

Between July 1, 2024, and June 30, 2025, MDES completed 13,161 RESEA counseling sessions, underscoring our mission of "Helping Mississippians Get Jobs" and demonstrating our ongoing commitment to reemployment, accessibility, and program integrity.

Trade Adjustment Assistance Program*:* The Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) Program helps workers who have lost or may lose their jobs due to 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 will be laid off from a business covered under a Trade petition from DOL and still within their deadlines may be eligible for benefits.

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Mississippi will continue to administer Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) services for all workers covered under certified petitions filed on or before June 30, 2022, consistent with the phaseout requirements established in TEGL 13-21. Although no new petitions may be filed during the termination period, MDES remains responsible for delivering the full range of TAA benefits and services to eligible workers whose petitions were certified before July 1, 2022. Under the phaseout:

- Eligible workers retain access to all benefits and services, including training, TRA income support, job search and relocation allowances, and RTAA, based on the version of the TAA Program in effect when their petition was filed.
- Mississippi will continue to coordinate TAA services within the WIOA one-stop delivery system, ensuring co-enrollment, case management integration, and alignment with WIOA Title I Dislocated Worker services.
- The State will request and justify TAA funding allocations from USDOL to support ongoing participant needs, including training, supportive services, and administrative costs, as long as eligible workers remain active.
- No new petitions may be accepted or certified, and no new groups of workers may be added to the program unless Congress reauthorizes TAA.
- Mississippi will maintain compliance with all reporting, fiscal, and performance accountability requirements applicable to TAA participants during the phaseout period.

MDES ensures continuity of service for all eligible workers while maintaining full alignment with WIOA's integrated service delivery framework.

Career and Technical Education Programs (Perkins V)

Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs authorized under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education

Act of 2006, as amended by Perkins V, are administered in Mississippi by the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) for secondary programs and the Mississippi Community College Board (MCCB) for postsecondary programs. These programs provide students and adult learners with access to academic and technical instruction aligned with priority occupations and industries identified through the State Workforce Investment Board (SWIB) and AccelerateMS, the Office of Workforce Development.

Perkins V programs are fully integrated into Mississippi's workforce development system and serve as a critical component of the State's career pathways framework. Secondary and postsecondary CTE programs provide foundational skills, industry-recognized credentials, and work-based learning opportunities that prepare participants for employment in high-wage, high-demand occupations. Additionally, secondary CTE programs providing credentials of value recognized by the SWIB receive a bonus of up to $600 per student through state funds, further encouraging alignment and delivery of related programs. Credentials are aligned with Mississippi's Priority Occupation List and support workforce readiness in key sectors including advanced manufacturing, healthcare, construction, energy, transportation, and information technology.

At the secondary level, CTE programs are delivered through local school districts and career and technical centers and provide students with opportunities to earn industry-recognized credentials, participate in dual credit and dual enrollment programs, and engage in work-based learning experiences. Additionally, AccelerateMS provides funding to support the development and establishment of secondary workforce training programs designed to address students who did not receive the benefits of CTE programs and find themselves in need of training to obtain a quality job. The Mississippi Department of Education works collaboratively with AccelerateMS, local education agencies, workforce partners, and employers to ensure programs reflect current labor market demand and provide students with access to career pathways that lead to postsecondary education, apprenticeships, or employment in quality pathways.

At the postsecondary level, the Mississippi Community College Board administers Perkins V funding to support career and technical education programs delivered through the State's community colleges. These programs provide occupational skills training, credential attainment opportunities, and work-based learning experiences designed to meet employer workforce needs. Community colleges work closely with workforce development partners, including AccelerateMS and local workforce development boards, to ensure alignment between workforce training programs and industry demand.

Perkins V programs are coordinated with workforce development programs authorized under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) to ensure seamless career pathways and access to training and employment opportunities. Participants in secondary CTE programs may transition into post-secondary CTE, WIOA-funded training programs, apprenticeship programs, or employment services delivered through the WIN Job Center network. This coordination strengthens alignment between education and workforce systems and supports Mississippi's goal of preparing individuals for employment in priority occupations.

Mississippi continues to strengthen coordination between Perkins V programs and workforce development programs by aligning credential attainment goals, integrating career pathway strategies, and supporting work-based learning opportunities. This alignment ensures participants have access to education and training programs that lead to employment and career advancement while supporting employer workforce needs.

Senior Community Service Employment Program: Mississippi includes the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) as a Combined State Plan partner program to support employment opportunities for older workers, a demographic ultimately critical to supporting the state's labor force participation rate. 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 79 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) Program and the H-2A Temporary Agricultural Labor Certification Program. Through the H-2A program, MDES supports agricultural employers by referring U.S. farm workers to farmers when hiring within the state and ensuring compliance with federal requirements. From July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2025, MDES successfully certified 728 employers and 775 H-2A housing locations. Mississippi's participating H-2A employers contracted 7,829 guest workers during this period, and 37 new employers were registered. The MSFW program continues to provide outreach services and basic labor exchange assistance, ensuring migrant and seasonal farm workers have access to employment opportunities and essential workforce resources.

TANF: The Mississippi Department of Human Services (MDHS) 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. implements programs to assist individuals and families to become self-sufficient. MDHS administration of TANF cash assistance and the TWP helps meet the financial needs of vulnerable individuals and families while providing funds for workforce training activities and supportive services such as transportation and childcare. TWP activities include vocational education training, jobs skills training directly related to employment, education directly related to employment, and secondary school attendance. These programs are available to each participant. All require supervision by faculty, instructors, or supervisors, and each program has minimum requirements. Each type of training includes monitoring and attendance reporting of participants. Case managers will determine the appropriate amount of face-to-face contact needed. In some cases, if allowable classroom hours are not sufficient to meet the monthly federal participation requirements, actual hours spent in supervised and unsupervised study sessions and assessments will be reported and counted.

Vocational education training offers a sequence of courses directly related to the preparation of individuals for employment in current or emerging occupations that do not require an advanced degree. Allowable programs include vocational associate degree programs, postsecondary educational programs, instructional certificate programs, industry skill certifications, noncredit course work, WIN Job Center training offerings, short-term and employer-needs training from the Mississippi Community College Board (MCCB), Job Corps training offerings, Basic Skills Education and English as a Second Language (ESL), and distance learning programs. Vocational education cannot exceed a 12-month lifetime maximum.

In addition, MDHS administers the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), a program serving about 20 percent of Mississippi's population. SNAP Education and Training funds provide support for community college training and will provide a key source of additional allocated and matching funds to assist the most vulnerable Mississippians in accessing training for in-demand occupations while providing funds to assist with food security and overcome barriers such as childcare and transportation.

Other Supportive Programs: The Mississippi Department of Transportation coordinates a network of public and specialized transportation agencies that help provide access to jobs, education, and training opportunities.
In addition to the core services administered by Combined Plan Partners, Mississippi's workforce system offers a variety of employment services to ensure all job seekers have the resources and tools to secure gainful employment.

In addition to the workforce education and training activities, transitional programs such as internships and apprenticeships are essential components of the workforce education and training system in the state.

Internships have been identified as one of the most important types of non-credit training that Mississippi job seekers can use to attain the skills for gainful employment. Many of the internship opportunities offered by employers require middle skills. The number of middle-skill internships could increase in the future with growing relationships between community colleges and employers in Mississippi. Individuals interested in the internship program must be in one of the following categories:

- Eligible students must be in an approved training program in an allowable pathway.
- Individuals interested in career exploration or individuals who have been out of the workforce for some time.

Staff must complete an initial assessment and have documentation in the participant file to establish internship needs. Case notes are imperative for the internship program and must be in place for monitoring.

The Twin Districts Workforce Development Area provides an Internship Program through partnerships with the five community colleges in the workforce area. The objective of this program is to help Adult and Dislocated Workers gain practical work experience while integrating education, job training, labor market information, and personal development. The Internship is a paid, planned, and structured learning experience that takes place in a work setting for a limited period. The targeted population is individuals receiving education assistance through individual training accounts and short-term training in-demand occupations. The long-term unemployed are also eligible for this program. Priority is given to veterans. The 16-week internship includes between 20 and 40 hours per week of paid work experience. The individuals may earn between $10 and $15 per hour. The Twin Districts Workforce Development Area has partnered with employers in the area who are willing to give interns meaningful training assignments and effective supervision. Additional internship programs exist within South Central Mississippi Works and Mississippi Partnership districts as well. Youth internships have become a core offering for Mississippi as it works to improve the labor force participation rate of 16–19-year-olds.

WIN Job Center operators offer an Industry Recognized Adult Apprenticeship Program in the Mississippi Partnership area, in partnership with AccelerateMS, that provides apprentices with practical work experience and leadership skills while they seek full-time employment. The program provides businesses with an opportunity to try out potential applicants in real work settings. The program responds to the need of individuals to acquire relevant work experience and interpersonal skills. Each community college and business partners will vary on the hours per week and the wage provided. When possible, some community colleges provide interns with an eight-hour shift to experience a full day's work. Participating employers will be reimbursed 50% of an eligible apprentice's wages up to $6,000 per program year for no more than two program years. Employers will pay fair compensation as determined by the competitive market but no less than $12.00 per hour. Participating students will receive on-the-job training that provides real world experience in their chosen field of study while advancing their academic skills simultaneously.

Re-entry Initiatives: SMPDD / Twin Districts LWDA is leading a coordinated regional effort to support individuals returning from incarceration through three major re-entry programs. Each initiative focuses on preparing participants for employment, addressing barriers to stability, and reducing recidivism.

At Hancock County Jail, the RESTORE Act–funded Accelerated Re-Entry Program provides intensive pre- and post-release services, including job readiness training, employer connections, and wraparound support. Seventy women (to date) have completed the twelve-week program, and SMPDD continues to assist them and other participants at Magdalene House. The program also now includes Moral Reconation Therapy (MRT), an evidence-based practice proven to reduce recidivism.

The Pathway Home to South Mississippi project, funded by the U.S. Department of Labor, delivers assessments, life

skills instruction, individual development plans, and occupational training support in four Regional Correctional Facilities located in the TDWDA (24 counties). The program aims to serve 300 participants and follow them for a full year after release to support long-term employment and stability.

SMPDD's newest initiative, funded through the PROWD grant, will operate at the Hattiesburg Residential Re-entry Center for federal inmates nearing release. Services include assessments, MRT groups, resume and interview preparation, and assistance with essentials such as tools, clothing, and transportation.

Across all three programs, SMPDD maintains a shared mission: restoring dignity, strengthening communities, ensuring that local employers have a ready pipeline of workers, and returning citizens have the opportunity and support needed to rebuild their lives.

MPWDA recently became a part of the Partners for Reentry Opportunities in Workforce Development (PROWD) grant recently and will operate a PROWD program serving the Dismas Charities Center, a Residential Reentry Center, in Tupelo, MS. PROWD serves federal inmates who are nearing release and assists them with become a successful part of their community and finding and maintaining good jobs after release. Services include assessment, resume and interview, training opportunities, internship opportunities, and supportive services.

Registered Apprenticeship programs provide individuals with an opportunity to acquire the knowledge and skills that lead to high-paying jobs while also helping businesses grow their skilled workforce.

The Mississippi Department of Employment Security (MDES) houses the Mississippi Apprenticeship Program (MAP) which offers a range of services that help businesses develop, recruit, and retain a highly skilled workforce through highly customizable and effective Registered Apprenticeship (RA) programs. Registered Apprenticeships provide a unique "earn while you learn" opportunity that leads to a nationally recognized credential and competitive career in a variety of industries, including advanced manufacturing, healthcare, IT/cybersecurity, transportation, utilities. Mississippi is seeking to establish a State Apprenticeship Agency while legislatively defining apprenticeships during this legislative session and will seek approval for the office upon bill passage. Governor Reeves has placed the establishment of this office at the forefront of his legislative agenda this year. Establishing the Office of Apprenticeship is another example of Governor Reeves leadership and intense focus on aligning the entire workforce development system.

State Programs

Division of Community Services and the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG): MDHS administers CSBG funds for the State. AccelerateMS participated in the strategic planning process and identified aligned goals to connect individuals to work and access resources that support retention and wage growth. LWDAs will seek opportunities to leverage CSBG resources in the delivery of local workforce services.

Mississippi Works Fund: The Mississippi Works Fund, operated by AccelerateMS, 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, work-ready projects, and community economic developing serving projects. Funds are used to create new programs, support companies as they create new jobs, or support companies where the existing training infrastructure is limited in capacity or leadership. Funds are often leveraged with WIOA and other state funds but not required to do so.

Workforce Enhancement Training Fund: The Mississippi Workforce Enhancement Training Fund (WET), operated by AccelerateMS, serves to provide funds to existing employers specifically to enhance employee productivity in priority occupations or to fund workforce training infrastructure capacity expansions. Eligible projects for priority industries and occupations include 1) training new or existing employees; 2) train-the-trainer activities; and 3) special

projects meant to address training infrastructure or program availability needs.

. The Strengths and Weaknesses of Workforce Development Activities.

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 the 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 needs 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 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%, adversely impacting service delivery.

Ineffective Outreach and Underutilization of Workforce Services: The 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. However, through the state's Reconnect program, two regions are experiencing direct improvements in outreach ability due to companies aligning with the system to take in new employees.

Barriers to Accessing Training: 1) Financial challenges, including the inability to afford tuition or forgo wages during training, hinder participation - most people seeking training opportunities cannot afford to pay tuition or forgo earnings while in training (even if the training is free). Reconnect and two bills before the legislature currently aim to address this gap. To successfully participate in and complete training, participants must earn some income (that does not require them to relinquish public assistance benefits immediately), which is what Reconnect provides. However, uptake from LWDAs has been limited as it takes significant resources to adequately support a program of this complexity that the existing workforce system does not prioritize federal funding. 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. Efforts to increase the training infrastructure, specifically in rural regions have been underway under Governor Reeves' leadership. $125m has been invested in the training infrastructure statewide, with the majority of funds landing in 'rural' areas of the state. Continued efforts to both equip and operate programs by workforce partners must continue.

A. State Workforce Development Capacity

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, and its intentional methods of address known gaps.

Political and Cultural Capacity: In 2020, Governor Reeves and the Mississippi Legislature established the new

Office of Workforce Development (AccelerateMS) to promote additional improvements in workforce training and education initiatives and align the system. 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 workforce development, and serve as the coordinating entity for all workforce development stakeholder agencies in Mississippi.

Technology and Data Capacity: 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 that provides labor exchange services to job seekers and employers and allows 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 all WIOA Title I and Title III programs. The system integrates unemployment insurance, trade adjustment assistance, adult, 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. Additionally, participants utilizing WET or MS Works funds are also captured in this system, whether federally funded or not. This allows the state to analyze data related to all workforce training and services participants, regardless of state or federal funding.

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). These rules are currently under review and experiencing some edits to expand researcher access to the data.

Mississippi's State Longitudinal Data System (LifeTracks) 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. LifeTracks will play an integral role in combined WIOA reporting. Because all Combined Plan Partners currently contribute data to the LifeTracks system, and because LifeTracks was created, in part, to assist state agencies with reporting and strategic planning, Mississippi will be able to meet its reporting requirements efficiently. Further, LifeTracks will play a continuing role in the Mississippi Works System by coordinating with the State Workforce Investment Board 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.

LifeTracks 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. The clearinghouse includes data from early childhood entities (e.g., Head Start); Mississippi Department of Education (MDE); all 15 community colleges and the Mississippi Community College Board; all eight public universities and the Institutions of Higher Learning (IHL); Mississippi Department of Employment Security (MDES); Mississippi Department of Human Services (MDHS); Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services (MDRS); Mississippi Department of Corrections (MDOC); Mississippi Development Authority (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 managed Mississippi's online SLDS reporting system, LifeTracks

(www.lifetracks.ms.gov). All data is stored in a state-of-the-art data center built for managing large databases and hosting mission critical systems.

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. Mississippi has begun to review the overall appropriateness of this system to ensure it can provide timely, accurate support for individuals seeking them.

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 access points provided by WIOA Combined Plan Partners.

WIN Job Centers: American Job Centers in Mississippi operate under the Workforce Investment Network (WIN) brand and are known statewide as WIN Job Centers. With 30 locations across the state, these centers provide comprehensive employment and training services to job seekers, employers, and community partners.

WIN Job Centers offer a wide range of no-cost services, including job search assistance, education and training resources, labor market information, E-Verify processing, job postings, applicant screening, and support for hiring events. These services help Mississippi residents connect to meaningful employment while giving businesses access to qualified talent and reliable workforce data.

To expand access beyond traditional brick-and-mortar offices, MDES has strengthened its commitment to virtual connectivity and remote service delivery. Claimants and employers can now engage with Employment Services through multiple digital pathways, ensuring consistent support regardless of location, transportation challenges, or office capacity.

As part of this modernization effort, MDES launched the Navigator Service Station pilot program, which provides a live video connection to Employment Services call center agents. These stations allow customers to receive real-time assistance with job search support, referrals, UI guidance, and workforce service, even in communities without a nearby WIN Job Center.

Together, WIN Job Centers and Navigator Service Stations form a blended statewide service network that delivers accessible, high-quality workforce support to Mississippi's job seekers and businesses.

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 into nine regions. A regional director is responsible for overseeing the counties within each region. At the state office, staff support 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 Mississippi's low- and medium-income individuals and 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 of assistance in locating available resources to aid in barrier mitigation. My Resources is available for use nationwide and resides on the MDHS web page.

Adult Education Access Points: The MCCB offers AE through a variety of physical locations, including 15 community colleges, three public schools, and multiple correctional education partnerships across the state. Correctional education access includes:

- Northeast Mississippi Community College provides high school equivalency testing (HSE) and instructional resources to the Alcorn County Regional Correctional facility and works to expand services to additional city and county facilities within its service area.
- Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College delivers adult education instruction, assessments, technology, and instructional materials at the George and Stone County regional correctional facilities to support incarcerated individuals pursuing their HSE.
- Hinds Community College provides remediation services at the Women's Correctional Facility in Flowood and maintains a testing site at the Hinds County Detention Center in Raymond, along with transition support upon release.
- East Central Community College offers adult education instruction in Leake and Winston counties, including services as the Walnut Grove correctional facility.

b. State Strategic Vision and Goals

1. Vision

The state's strategic vision is to create a world-class workforce aligned with Mississippi's unique economic portfolio and labor market, which drives increased and sustained individual, community, and statewide prosperity. This vision will be attained by developing 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.

Mississippi's workforce strategy emphasizes rapid alignment between education and labor market demand. The state will leverage federal Workforce Pell Grant authority to expand access to short-term, high-quality training programs aligned with priority occupations and validated employer demand. The Office of Workforce Development (Accelerate Mississippi), as the Governor's designee, will certify eligible Workforce Pell programs to ensure consistency with the state's demand-driven workforce strategy.

From the moment one enters the education and workforce system, one will be presented with the necessary tools to choose and pursue a career pathway relevant to current and future labor markets. Similarly, from the moment current and prospective businesses enter 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, 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

WIOA Combined Plan Partners will realize this vision by achieving seven goals focused on developing an educated and skilled workforce that is aligned with employers' needs.

1. Jointly develop policies to 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 and AI education and literacy to meet the unified technology requirements of the Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and other innovative federal initiatives.
7. Develop and communicate a unified vision and message.

. Goals for Preparing an Educated and Skilled Workforce

Goals 1, 2, and 5 aim to decrease programmatic fragmentation in order to serve all eligible individuals via an efficient and productive way, utilizing 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 to inform 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 before 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. Additionally, the partnership provides non-college credit training opportunities for those who need pathways into the workforce but were not CTE participants. Employer participation on the SWIB and in annual regional convenings, provides WIOA partner agencies with a constant source of feedback on the effectiveness of the state's workforce development tactics.

A. Goals for Meeting the Skilled Workforce Needs of Employers

Goals 4, 5, and 6 ensure that Mississippi's efforts to create a skilled workforce are measurable, which gives the state strong data for what employer needs are being met or not. The 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 recommends comprehensive, results-oriented measures that apply across Mississippi's workforce development system and focus on outcomes for all participants. Mississippi continues to invest in the SLDS to support these measurements, 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 on AccelerateMS' state workforce development strategy. This strategy will ensure that workforce development activities and funds are used efficiently and to maximum effect, streamlining services, enhancing communication and networking between partners, and boosting results for participants. By creating 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. Ultimately, achieving the stated goals requires additional state support. Mississippi has experienced an annual decline of approximately 11% year after year in WIOA fundings while inflation has resulted in a loss of more like 15-17%. Regardless, to maintain the infrastructure required by WIOA and support individuals, significant state funds are utilized to support individuals who want to work. The SWIB required LWDAs to examine and reduce costs 3 years in a row to ensure the system could continue to provide basic supports and each complied. Mississippi's WIOA system operates as efficiently as possible and has incorporated digital services and employed partnerships with entities like AccelerateMS to drive enhanced outreach. The system must continue to find efficiencies and prioritize service to individuals with the most need to honor the intention of the programs(s) which will, eventually, impact performance measures.

3. Performance Goals

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 Employers. The percentage of participants in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit who were employed by the same employer in the second and fourth quarters after exit.

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

AccelerateMS has engaged in several measurement strategies to evaluate program effectiveness and is in the process of establishing a digital scorecard for all workforce programs and funding across Mississippi. This scorecard aims to be public by Fall of 2026. This scorecard will measure programs well beyond WIOA but data elements will inform future WIOA efforts. 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.

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

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 records 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 needs and education/training pathways. Employer needs will be measured through labor market analysis of demand by occupation. These needs will be compared to the labor supply pipeline from secondary, post-secondary, and workforce training providers. Gaps in supply will be identified, and this assessment will inform the efforts of policymakers, educators, and employers to address progress toward 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 individual performance measures, the state calculates the number of referrals passing between partners using WIOA Referral Hub

technology. AccelerateMS plans 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 achieving Goal 5 will be accomplished by introducing a maturity model for WIOA. AccelerateMS is responsible for recommending 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, which is 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 developing a more quantitative approach to measuring the extent to which employers and participants feel they are being served by an approach that presents a unified vision and message.

c. State Strategy

1. Describe the strategies the State will implement

Defined and articulated Pathways across Educational Sectors (K-16+) to Create a Pipeline for the Workforce aligned to in-demand sectors and occupations.
Mississippi will continue identifying and aligning occupational runways, industry credentials, work-based learning, and training delivery modalities and scale the participant stipend structure to increase recruitment, engagement, enrollment, persistence, completion, and career navigation for in-demand industry sectors. The SWIB drives state and federal funding towards programs leading to high-value credentials or jobs but does not prioritize high numbers. This approach re-focuses partners to providing quality, not quantity, to ensure that every participant has the opportunity to secure a quality job. At times, the SWIB, through AccelerateMS will close programs without actual employers hiring at the end. Over the past two years, AccelerateMS has developed and funded a stipend structure for critical occupation programs to complement WIOA such as through the Amazon Web Services Information Infrastructure Pre-apprenticeship (I2PA), The Industrial Company's entry level NCCER Core+ Financial Literacy program, and through various pre-apprenticeship programs in the state. The SWIB's Credential Committee has developed a tiered credential model which essentially highlights occupational and stackable credential runways to quality jobs. AccelerateMS, MCCB, MDE, and local community college partners have partnered with Lumina to develop a credential framework that drives Mississippians toward quality opportunities through career coaching at the K-12 and adult levels. Ultimately, the backbone has been established, so the next steps are to scale and adjust the approach as necessary to drive engagement with quality opportunities.

High-level objectives are:

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

Mississippi will utilize federal waiver authority, where approved, to align program eligibility, funding structures, and training access across youth, adult, and dislocated worker programs. These waivers support expanded access to work-based learning, apprenticeship, and credential attainment opportunities aligned with employer demand and statewide occupational runways.

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 post-secondary 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 program was funded by expanding workforce investments from $8 million to $12 million for fiscal year 2024. The program currently receives $15.6 million and supports over 204 career coaches statewide, ultimately providing one in every school that has requested one. The program places coaches in schools to help students explore high-quality careers in Mississippi. The coaches support students' pursuit of pathways leading to quality careers through job shadowing, internship opportunities, connections, and other activities. The program is seeking digital solutions to provide greater reach down into the 8th grade to continue to drive student engagement with quality pathways.

Registered Apprenticeship Programs (RAPs): RAP is an industry-driven, high-quality, customizable, earn-as-you-learn career pathway training model. The state has received funding for seven Registered Apprenticeship (RA) Grant cycles 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 received funding through the Apprenticeship State Expansion Grant (ASE). MAP has also received three cycles of funding through the State Apprenticeship Expansion Formula funding grants (SAEF) since 2023. 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 Office of Apprenticeship will leverage the Mississippi Apprenticeship Program and, will continue to leverage key stakeholders, including MDES, the Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDAs), AccelerateMS, and Mississippi's community colleges, to build and expand apprenticeship initiatives that align with the state's workforce priorities.

MAP will focus on integrating apprenticeship with broader state workforce initiatives, further strengthening Mississippi's workforce development efforts to reach underrepresented populations. A key innovation in this expansion is the development of the Mississippi Apprenticeship Accelerator (MAA), a new funding model designed to align registered apprenticeship programs with the LWDAs for the first time. The MAA funding model represents a joint effort between MDES and AccelerateMS, providing $2 million in funding to support the growth and expansion of apprenticeship programs throughout the state.

The MAA initiative targets high-demand industries and priority occupations, particularly skilled trades, by encouraging the establishment of pre-apprenticeships in collaboration with secondary and post-secondary education institutions.

This initiative promotes workforce development at the local level, ensuring that businesses have access to a well-trained and skilled labor pool. MAP's role in this process involves guiding businesses through the process of creating or expanding registered apprenticeship programs while helping them to navigate the standards builder process.

Through its work with the LWDAs, MAP has been able to better align statewide resources, creating synergy across the workforce ecosystem and ensuring that Mississippi's apprenticeship programs are continuously growing and evolving to meet the needs of in-demand industries that can create a pipeline of future workers from underrepresented populations.

Mississippi will leverage waiver authority, where approved, to remove eligibility and funding barriers that limit participation in apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship pathways, particularly for in-school youth and dislocated workers. These waivers support expanded access to industry-driven training aligned with high-demand occupations

Leveraging funding opportunities – To expand its capacity and enhance its ability to address sector-specific industry needs and cater to underserved populations, AccelerateMS provides approximately $30 million annually to training providers to support critical training infrastructure necessary to support economic development activities and actively pursues federal funding opportunities that can support critical initiatives. Mississippi is the recipient of an EDA Phase I Recompete award. In partnership with Local Workforce Development Boards, the project 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 program participants' transportation obstacles, 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 Mississippi's defense sector's capacity, capability, and resilience.

The Mississippi – Shipbuilding Industry Preparedness for National Security (MS SHIPs) program is a strategic workforce development initiative funded by the U.S. Department of Defense. Its primary goal is to strengthen and expand Mississippi's capacity to support the national defense shipbuilding industry through a skilled, diverse, and sustainable workforce. The program is designed to bolster national security by modernizing Mississippi's shipbuilding industry and enhancing its capacity, capability, competitiveness, and resiliency. MS SHIPs supports the development of a skilled and diverse talent pipeline, accelerates the adoption of Industry 4.0 (I4.0) manufacturing practices across the shipbuilding supply chain, and promotes advanced solutions to improve worker safety. 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 Mississippi's defense sector's capacity, capability, and resilience.

MDES was also awarded $5.7 million as part of over $86 million in Industry-Driven Skills Training Fund grants from the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) to support workforce development in critical sectors, including shipbuilding. Mississippi intends to use the grant exclusively for shipbuilding, expanding training programs for major employers like Ingalls Shipbuilding, Bollinger Shipyards, and United States Marine, Inc., which collectively employ over 11,000 workers. This investment comes at a critical time, as these companies anticipate need to fill 2,500 new positions annually while also addressing turnover and upskilling current employees.

The Twin Districts Local Workforce Development Area, managed by the Southern Mississippi Planning and Development District, will implement tailored training programs based on feedback from employers. Key initiatives will focus on technical training for entry-level positions, leadership development for supervisors, and upskilling programs.

Mississippi was also awarded an $8,300,667 grant from the U.S. Department of Labor, in partnership with the Department of Justice. The funding enhances the Bureau of Prisons' existing rehabilitation and reentry efforts. The Partners for Reentry Opportunities in Workforce Development (PROWD) grant provides support for people in federal custody to prepare them to succeed once they return to their communities and rejoin the workforce. The grant expands access to mentoring, coaching, employment and training programs, and other support services before and after their release.

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.

2. Describe the strategies the State will use to align the core programs

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.

Mississippi is pursuing federal waiver authority, where approved, to modernize the one-stop delivery system by expanding virtual access points, implementing a statewide infrastructure funding model, and aligning service delivery under an integrated statewide system. These waivers will allow Mississippi to shift resources from physical infrastructure to direct participant services, improving access, efficiency, and workforce outcomes. 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.

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 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.

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 a trained counselor who may assist if necessary but is not required to provide one-on-one support. Affiliate centers may also include computer stations to facilitate self-service access. Self-service access requires internet access and does not include the assistance of trained counselors or staff.

1. **Virtual Access One-Stop Center**—Virtual access is a key mode of service delivery. In line with the concept of a universally accessible workforce system, virtual access provides participants with access to an MDES staff member. If an individual has internet access, he or she can directly access the services provided through One-Stop Centers.

2. **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. Implementing digital offices is expected to yield several benefits, including reduced infrastructure cost, optimized staffing requirements, increased accessibility, and improved coordination of services.

Appointments will be offered to enhance the user experience and 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

1. **Call Center Support** - For participants who lack computer access, MDES operates a call center staffed to assist

with most One-Stop services.

2. **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 and 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 must 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.

II. OPERATIONAL PLANNING ELEMENTS

a. State Strategy Implementation

1. State Board Functions

The Governor appoints Mississippi's SWIB chair, 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 like credentials and Workforce Pell. 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 uses 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 the 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

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

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 regarding WIOA Combined Plan programs through the SWIB.
2. To strengthen interagency partnerships, Core Partners will:
    a. 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

b. 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
c. 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
d. Conduct training to ensure core program partner staff fully understand the Combined Plan programs and Career Pathway Models
e. Implement modifications to the Mississippi Works Labor Exchange that enable participants to access their Individualized Success Plans
f. 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
g. Act upon referrals received by Combined Plan Partners through the Referral Hub
h. Share system infrastructure costs
i. 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 the workforce, Core Partners will:
    a. Modify the Mississippi Works Labor Exchange to generate a Work-Ready Report Card based on workforce profile information, labor market information, and sector analysis data. The Work-Ready Report Card will enable the direction of participants toward training aligned with employer labor market needs
    b. 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:
    a. 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 align the following efforts and activities to the new state strategy and integrate updated messaging throughout each as appropriate.
    a. System-wide efforts to increase awareness of the Mississippi workforce system among employers and job seekers
    b. Activities designed to market the state to prospective businesses
    c. Efforts designed to make students in K-16 aware of occupations and Mississippi career pathways
    d. Efforts to increase employer awareness of One-Stop Center employer services
    e. Efforts to increase awareness of the Mississippi workforce system among employers and job seekers
    f. Digital transformation activities

The Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services (MDRS) administers core programs and provides services to Mississippians with disabilities under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (WIOA Title IV).

MDRS will undertake the following activities to implement the state's strategies: To work together to develop policies

that will coordinate service delivery with WIOA Combined Plan Partners, MDRS will participate in shared governance, about WIOA Combined Plan programs, through the State Workforce Investment Board.

To strengthen interagency partnerships, MDRS will:

- Adopt a Career Pathway Model in its approach to case management.
- Continue to interface the AwareVR case management system with the Mississippi Works Common Intake and Reporting Module to coordinate case management data across WIOA partners.
- Provide a Vocational Rehabilitation Services staff representative is stationed at each of the four Comprehensive One-Stop Centers to ensure alignment of Vocational Rehabilitation services with other Combined Plan programs.
- Assist One-Stop Center providers with accessibility assessments and train One-Stop Center staff in the use of assistive technologies as needed.
- Refer work-ready participants for workforce assessment and pathway determination by One-Stop Center operators or Youth Providers.
- Share system infrastructure costs.

To develop defined, articulated pathways across educational sectors (K-16+) to create a pipeline for the workforce, MDRS will:

- Assist eligible students with disabilities to secure assistive technologies or services needed to enable classroom access, as appropriate.
- Assist graduating secondary students with disabilities to access job transition services.
- Continue employer outreach activities.

To develop cross-program performance metrics, MDRS will:

- Work closely with the Mississippi State Longitudinal Data System Governing Board to provide data necessary for workforce analysis.
- Interface with the WIOA Hub to transmit all assessment outcome scores and service enrollments to enable the calculation of skill gains and cross-program participation periods.
- To continue to invest in integrated technology to meet the unified technology requirements of the Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and other federal initiatives, MDRS will interface AwareVR with the Mississippi Works Common Intake and Reporting Module to share service enrollments, assessment outcomes, modifications to participants' common profiles, and modifications to participants' Individualized Success Plans.
- To 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, MDRS will continue to participate in the Mississippi LifeTracks system, contributing data necessary to address issues related to the production and valuation of human capital.
- To draft and communicate a unified vision/message, MDRS will participate in system-wide efforts to increase awareness of the Mississippi workforce system among employers and job seekers.

The Mississippi Community College Board (MCCB) administers core programs and services listed in the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (WIOA Title II). In addition, MCCB provides advisory oversight to Mississippi's 15 community colleges.

The MCCB will undertake the following activities to implement the state's seven WIOA strategies:

- To work together to develop policies that will coordinate service delivery with WIOA Combined Plan Partners, MCCB will participate in shared governance, concerning WIOA Combined Plan programs, through the State Workforce Investment Board.

To strengthen interagency partnerships, MCCB will:

- Provide a cross-trained Adult Education (Title II) representative in four Comprehensive One-Stop Centers.
- Monitor and support referral processes across workforce, education, and community partners to strengthen coordination and improve participant outcomes.
- Ensure participants establish and maintain MS Works profile to support connection to workforce services and employer opportunities.
- Share system infrastructure costs.
- Include engagement with activities of the Mississippi Works Smart Start Career Pathway Model as an aspect of any Combined Plan program's participation compliance requirements, where applicable.

To develop defined, articulated pathways across educational sectors (K-16+) to create a pipeline for the workforce, MCCB will:

- Align Smart Start Pathway Class curriculum with employer/labor market needs.
- Partner with K-12 providers to enroll dropouts in high school equivalency classes.

To develop cross-program performance metrics, MCCB will:

- Partner with the Mississippi State Longitudinal Data System Governing Board to provide data necessary for workforce analysis.

To continue to invest in integrated technology to meet the unified technology requirements of the Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and other federal initiatives, MCCB will continue to work to enable its case management system to exchange data with the WIOA Hub to share service enrollments, assessment outcomes, modifications to participants' common profiles, and modifications to participants' Student Success Plans in compliance with WIOA requirements.

To 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, MCCB will continue to leverage the Mississippi LifeTracks system to determine priorities for training and align the Smart Start Pathway Class with labor market needs.

To draft and communicate a unified vision/message, MCCB will participate in system-wide efforts to increase awareness of the Mississippi workforce system among employers and job seekers.

A. Alignment with Activities outside the Plan

Mississippi Combined Plan Partners include workforce, education, and human services partners linked by a common data system. Even One-Stop Centers and Youth operators in Mississippi use the Mississippi Works Labor Exchange to align with programs not explicitly included in the Combined Plan. This means that most alignment is achieved 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 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- and post-release occupational skills training programs to transition ex-offenders into the workforce. The MDOC/MDES partnership created the Employment Connections project designed to allow system-connected individuals 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). MAP helps companies create or grow apprenticeship programs and has administered state funds to grow and sustain RAPs since 2016.

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

MDES plays a key role in developing and maintaining this coordinated system. It took the lead in developing the WIOA Referral Hub and training One-Stop Centers 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. MDES provides job search, referral, and placement services through Wagner-Peyser services. MDES funds *adult training* programs administered by local workforce development boards based on the needs of each LWDA. 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, the Veteran Employment Coordinators work directly with businesses to fill job openings and unemployed or underemployed veterans and families to support job training and placement.

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 use assessments and intake information to determine appropriate instructional placement for each 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, a Combined Plan Partner program, benefits 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 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. If those services are not provided at their offices, these offices refer participants to other services in their local area.

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.

C. Coordination, alignment, and provision of services to employers

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 setting 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 indicate 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 that recruits businesses to post job listings through MDES and Mississippi Works.

MCCB AE providers support employer engagement by aligning instruction with employer-informed pathways developed through workforce development and career and technical education (CTE) partnerships. Rather than duplicating employer outreach efforts, MCCB AE leverages labor market information, credential requirements, and skill expectations identified by these partners to inform instructional design. This approach allows programs to embed employability skills, National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC) preparation, and contextualized workplace instruction into adult education classes, while supporting co-enrollment through MIBEST to accelerate participants' progress to an employer. MCCB's AE director takes an active role in SWIB and with AccelerateMS to drive innovation and policy where needed.

MDRS works with employers to determine the need for open positions. MDRS uses this information to combine training and assistive technologies that enable participants to meet job demands. In addition, MDRS coordinates on-the-job training with employers and provides training that allows 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 job openings and the efforts of county directors to form relationships with community employers who can 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 the system captures records of these labor matches and thus available to inform ongoing labor market research.

D. Partner engagement with educational institutions

MDES – MDES supports a job-driven education and training system by aligning its training services 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 and Mississippi anticipants it will be included in most Workforce Pell-funded programs. These educational institutions and the MCCB, will also continue to work with local AE providers 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.

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 to 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.

Partner Engagement with Other Education and Training Providers

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. This currently exists through AccelerateMS and the 'MS Pathfinder' website. Updates to the labor exchange and the Mississippi Works platform are occurring regularly to combine this activity as well as credentialing.

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 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 few eligible providers are not public institutions, private providers that deliver training, such as commercial driving instruction, are valued partners. Coordination between One-Stop staff, participants, and the provider at the local level 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 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 needs 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.

Leveraging Resources to Increase Educational Access

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

AE funding is distributed according to an area's targeted needs and the number of people without a high school diploma. AE programs are funded through a competitive grant award based on the annual appropriation from the Department of Education, Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education as well as state funding to support dropout recovery efforts. Grantees are aligned with system-wide goals and labor market needs of local program areas and can provide Smart Start Pathway Course services throughout the state.

AccelerateMS provides funding for approved training programs through the state's WET and Works funds, each a state funding source derived from employer unemployment insurance taxes and used to drive enhanced productivity across the state's business and industry.

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.

E. Improving Access to Postsecondary Credentials

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

- Identifying credentials and pathways in secondary school that are in-demand and potentially unknown by local industry or do not experience enough enrollment and supporting such programs
- Establishing formal pre-apprenticeships in regions with active apprenticeship programs and additional unmet demand for human capital
- 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 pre-apprenticeship, RAP, an employer-provided On the Job Training (OJT) program, complete- or part-time employment, or additional occupational training
- Provision of a national DOL certificate of completion that follows apprentices anywhere in the United States
- Provision of Registered Apprenticeship certificate of completion.

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 refer the participant for workforce evaluation at a One-Stop Center or Youth Provider to help further develop the participant's Individualized Success Plans 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 help recipients earn high school equivalency, Career Readiness Certificates, or other AE credentials. Supportive services provided under SNAP will 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. Multiple MCCB member community colleges operate Affiliate One-Stop Centers coordinating with MDES through the Mississippi Works Labor Exchange to provide Adult, Youth, and Dislocated Worker training.

Multiple MCCB member community colleges operate Affiliate One-Stop Centers that coordinate with MDES using the Mississippi Works Labor Exchange to provide Adult, Youth, and Dislocated Worker training. Launched in 2017, the 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's degree or are on the cusp of completing a degree. Many postsecondary and adult learners with their sights set on a four-year degree do not realize that they have earned enough credits for a credential. Under the program, more than 28,000 students already qualify to receive an associate's 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, Ascent 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 post-secondary education. Mississippi aims to improve 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.

F. Coordinating with Economic Development Strategies

AccelerateMS: AccelerateMS leads all workforce activity necessary to support economic development by deploying its state-wide strategy, known as ATLAS, based on an annual economic analysis of the state's largest industries and biggest growth opportunities, including those anticipated due to announced economic development wins, compared to a labor market analysis showing existing skills and skills gaps. This analysis currently produces the Priority Occupations list, as well as the targeted occupations for investment. These activities drive the state's education and training system towards producing more of what is needed and less or none of what isn't. This strategy dictates state goals and objectives and defines tactics for meeting them. The WIOA plan is a key part of this strategy and one of several funding streams. Additionally, AccelerateMS directly engages prospective and new companies through its Talent Solutions division to address anticipated human capital needs. This includes partnering directly with the Mississippi Development Authority to provide data, address needs of prospective and expanding companies by providing input on needed funding or funding itself, providing training to ensure a qualified and competent labor pool, recruiting in partnership with MDES, or working with the education system to develop curriculum for novel jobs or processes.

MDES: MDES will coordinate economic development strategies by supporting MDA's 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, in partnership with AccelerateMS, leading

to credentials that meet the needs of targeted sectors. Institutions then coordinate with MDES to ensure applicants receive credit for these credentials within the Mississippi Works Labor Exchange when applying to partner employers.

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

b. State Operating Systems and Policies

1. State Operating Systems that Support Coordinated Implementation of State Strategies

Mississippi's Combined Plan Partners currently uses various 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, which 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; 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: 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 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. LACES is designed to support federal and state reporting requirements and allows the OAE and local providers to enroll participants, track instructional activities, and monitor performance outcomes. The system also supports proactive program management by enabling the OAE to identify low-enrollment or attendance early, allowing for timely adjustments and more efficient use of instructional funds.

AE providers previously utilized the MAE system to support referral activities; however, referral processes have transitioned to MS Works to align with systems supported by the SLDS. MS Works now serves as the primary platform for participant workforce connection and referral coordination. The OAE continues to assess opportunities to enhance referral and intake functionality in alignment with system interoperability and data-sharing capacity.

In addition, Adult Education data are exchanged through the State Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) to support cross-

agency data matching and evaluation of post-exit outcomes, including employment, earnings, and continued education or training.

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.

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.

AccelerateMS: 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. 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.

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

Integrating partner systems within the WIOA Referral Hub will accomplish data collection for all programs and activities. Real-time data sharing from partner systems to the WIOA Referral Hub will automate the sharing of case management data and allow for real-time labor market analysis. Under the leadership of AccelerateMS, agencies will continue to 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 and Local Workforce Development Boards to 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 involving data from multiple state agencies are sent to the entire SLDS governing board through an expedited or standard review process. In the case of WIOA federal reporting, these requests often involve aligning participant data from agency administrative data with outcomes in education 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 governing board approves the methodology for creating federal reports that require data sharing once and then carries 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

Mississippi has developed policies that outline legislative, regulatory, and service quality requirements within Mississippi's workforce system to guide the establishment, implementation, and maintenance of quality workforce development services. 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, which guide the implementation process at the LWDA level. The state will continue to encourage coordination among the 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 the partnership 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) and ensuring 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 Appendix N or at the 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 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 LWDB 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 per 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 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 center.

3. State Program and State Board Overview

State Agency Organization

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 creating and supporting 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 13 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 MDOC, MDA, MDHS, and MDES executive directors.

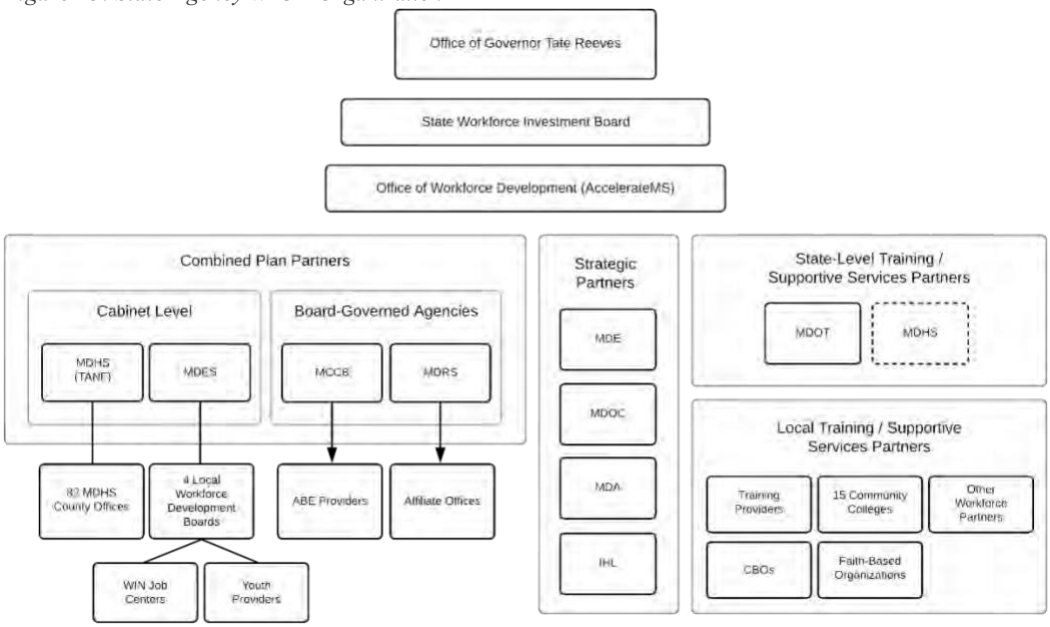
MCCB, MDRS, and MDE are governed by separate boards that appoint each agency's executive director.

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 13: State Agency WIOA Organization



. 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.

Table 16. Membership Roster

Category	Board Member	Organization	*Title*

Governor	Kristen Windham	Office of the Governor	Director of Policy
Business	Patrick Sullivan, Chair	MS Energy Institute	President
Business	Monica Harrigill	Sunray Companies	Managing Member
Business	John McKay	MS Business Alliance	President & CEO
Business	Jim Flanagan	Desoto Co. EDA	President/CEO
Business	Bobby Morgan	Atmos Energy	Vice President
Business	Fontaine McNair	Priority One Bank	President
Business	J. R. Jones	Sanjo Security	President
Business	Frank Howell	Delta Council	President
Business	John Brent Swanson	Empire Trucking	Director, Organizational Devp.
Business	Mitch Stringer	Cooperative Energy	Director of Econ. Dev
Business	Jan Collins	Madison Business League	Executive Director
Youth Services	Jacqueline Beasley	MINACT, Inc.	Senior Vice President
Community Services	Kristy Luse	CREATE Foundation	Vice President
Apprenticeship	Sondia Christian	Ingalls	Director, Business Integration
Labor Rep	Darius Johnson	International Longshoreman	President
Supervisor	Trey Baxter	Madison County	County Supervisor
Mayor	Carolyn McAdams	City of Greenwood	Mayor
MDHS	Bob Anderson	MDHS/TANF	Executive Director
MDES	Bill Ashley	MDES	Executive Director
MDRS	Billy Taylor	MDRS	Executive Director
MDE	Lance Evans	MDE	Executive Director
MDA	Bill Cork	MDA	Executive Director
MCCB	Kell Smith	Title II/AEFLA	Executive Director
MACC	James Haffey	Holmes CC	President
IHL	Al Rankins	Institution of Higher Learning	Commissioner
Business	Pablo Diaz	Vicksburg Warren Economic Development Partnership	President
Business	Nic Parish	Burns Dirt Construction	Vice President
Business	Brad Bounds	Working Solutions	President
Senator	Daniel Sparks	Senate	State Senator
Representative	Donnie Bell	House of Representatives	State Representative

Board Activities

The SWIB holds bi-annual face-to-face meetings and conducts additional business electronically. The SWIB has tasked AccelerateMS to implement and modify Mississippi's Combined Plan and convene 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.

The SWIB serves as an overall workforce policy and advisory board to the Governor specifically charged with a mandate to develop a comprehensive plan for a statewide vision that integrates education, workforce, and economic

development efforts by the WIOA. SWIB's advisory structure includes an executive committee that provides strategic direction and guidance to the board and hires the Executive Director of AccelerateMS to serve as the Board's staff. The executive committee is comprised of five representatives from business and industry. Additionally, ad hoc committees are convened to address specific issues within the workforce landscape. These ad hoc committees focus on key areas, such as performance and metrics, policy, and operations, to ensure that SWIB's initiatives are effectively implemented and aligned with the overarching goals of WIOA. The executive directors of the agencies administering each of the WIOA core programs are represented on the SWIB. Their SWIB participation and contributions are explicitly focused on their respective core programs, ensuring dedicated and specialized attention to each program's unique needs and objectives. This includes aligning WIOA core program to partner programs with stakeholders from business, labor, public education, higher education, and economic development. The MCCB executive director's participation and contribution are solely focused on the Title II program and do not represent the MCCB on any other matters.

To this end, Mississippi created the State Office of Workforce Development, AccelerateMS, in 2020 to serve as the SWIB board staff. The Office is responsible for aligning workforce development efforts in the state as well as ensuring these efforts align with economic development needs. AccelerateMS works with WIOA core partners, public education, non-profits, and economic development to ensure the state's workforce development efforts are leading the state forward by reviewing data to identify gaps and prioritize state and federal funds to create appropriate training programs necessary to close these gaps. These gaps are now identified and labeled 'Priority Occupations', which the SWIB formally approves each year. This allows available dollars to be positioned to close identified gaps in specific areas and streamline workforce development in Mississippi. Additionally, recommendations stemming from AccelerateMS work with and for the SWIB reach beyond basic WIOA dollars to ensure state and other federal dollars are being leveraged appropriately to support Mississippians as opportunities for work and training become available.

As part of the process, AccelerateMS staff distribute priority occupation information, among other vital workforce development information to workforce partners throughout the state annually through eight regional meetings known as Ecosystem Table Meetings. These meetings convene various stakeholder groups, including LWDA, Core Program directors, partner organizations, and leadership staff, to address critical issues, including:

- Analyzing regional talent supply and demand dynamics.
- Evaluating the performance of the overall workforce delivery system.
- Determining optimal strategies to stimulate economic growth in Mississippi.

These meetings allow locals to travel potentially short distances to receive updates on Mississippi's Workforce Development System and provide direct feedback to AccelerateMS and, ultimately, the SWIB. These meetings occur in the Fall each year, and the primary target for attendance is private industry. This year, industry members made up approximately 20% of all attendees. Staff used this opportunity to gather direct feedback on what is needed by local industry partners, especially small to medium-sized employers who aren't easily accessed. AccelerateMS is examining partnerships that may increase the attendance of business representatives as the goal is 50%. Due to the low participation, AccelerateMS Executive Director and Talent Solutions team are embarking on individual meetings around the state targeting an additional 50 companies to ensure their voices are heard.

Also, non-profits attended each meeting around the state to help build an understanding of their efforts and where gaps exist in serving the populations we are attempting to pull into the labor force due to historically low labor force participation rates as a state. A major issue identified is simply the lack of people engaged in the workforce with appropriate durable skills. To address this, the SWIB, through AccelerateMS, will continue to make available state funding to local workforce development areas to complement WIOA funding and provide additional access to training programs in priority sectors and occupations throughout the state where the industry is actively hiring. This funding will also be utilized to further develop associated curriculum to ensure programs go beyond simple technical check

boxes and truly deliver the skills necessary by industry. Also, fully incorporating Career & Technical Education into this system will assist in ensuring education understands there are skills beyond technical that lead to career success. Overall, the funding will allow for student registration fees, training stipends, and on-the-job training, as we continue to see a significant decrease in federal WIOA funds, while attempting to serve challenging populations. The need has increased, especially in our poorest regions and without appropriate federal funds, the State is leading through its own funding. Some of these regions are also considered an opportunity desert, impacting the participants' ability to identify. These state funds will complement WIOA but also allow for any Mississippian willing and able to work to be trained in a quality occupation paying wages that are considered living wage or above without having to choose between work or training.

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 combined plan partners 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, to assist state agencies with reporting and strategic planning, Mississippi will be able to meet its reporting requirements efficiently.

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); Mississippi Division of Medicaid (DOM); and AccelerateMS.

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 currently manages Mississippi's online SLDS reporting system (www.lifetracks.ms.gov). All data are stored in a state-of-the-art data center 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 Program Partners

. Assessment of Core Programs and One-Stop Program Partners

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

Assessment of Core Programs
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, 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 it contributes to overall

state goals.

All Combined Plan Partners provide the 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 multiple WIOA core programs. 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 for 90 days without receiving a service under a relevant program. The SLDS assists all WIOA partners in calculating these indicators.

Assessment of One-Stop Partner Programs

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 assessment will initially be provided through a coordinated schedule of data transfers to the SLDS. Efforts to enhance state-wide technology to be able to operate in real time are underway through a pilot coordinated by MDES. The goal is to operate a restricted pilot to determine effectiveness of the chosen technology solution, which is a complement to the Referral Hub but moves the state towards actively serving participants in real time. Real-time referrals and ultimately serving the individual as they access partner centers is the goal. Efforts will be assessed as the pilot grows.

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

A. Previous Assessment Results

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 16 contains the results for fiscal year 2024, and Table 17 contains results for fiscal year 2025. These two fiscal years are the most recent years available based on wage data and the need to calculate measures for four quarters from participant exit.

Table 17: Assessment Results of Combined Plan Programs, FY 2024 (July 1, 2023-June 30, 2024)

Program	Quarter 2 Employment (%)	Quarter 4 Employment* (%)	Quarter 2 Earning ($)	Credential Attainment Rate (%)	Skill Gain Rate (%)

UI	74.5	71.7	$7,379	31.7	71.6
MDRS	56.0	53.8	$7,456	35.1	80.6
ABE	47.7	48.3	$3,958	13.0	47.3
TANF	52.0	51.2	$3,032	--	--
WIOA Adults	88.7	88.5	$7,863	80.3	72.2
WIOA Dislocated Workers	82.8	81.3	$7,547	78.1	71.1
WIOA Youth	86.7	86.4	$3,398	79.3	74.4
Wagner-Peyser	78.6	78.1	$5,973	--	--

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

Table 18: Assessment Results of Combined Plan Programs, FY 2025 (July 1, 2024-June 30, 2025)

Program	Quarter 2 Employment (%)	Quarter 4 Employment* (%)	Quarter 2 Earning ($)	Credential Attainment Rate (%)	Skill Gain Rate (%)
UI	71.4	68.8	$7,285	31.6	72.9
MDRS	55.9	54.5	$7,965	38.0	76.6
ABE	43.6	43.6	$3,989	32.1	48.9
TANF	48.0	50.7	$3,302	--	--
WIOA Adults	87.2	88.2	$8,358	77.1	78.2
WIOA Dislocated Workers	81.3	80.9	$7,546	80.2	78.5
WIOA Youth	84.9	86.3	$3,744	76.6	67.6
Wagner-Peyser	77.2	77.2	$6,042	--	--

**: 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 the 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.

B. Evaluation

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.

AccelerateMS and the State Workforce Investment Board systematically evaluate core partner programs and service

delivery by assessing effectiveness, efficiency, and alignment with statutory requirements and needs of Mississippi's labor market. Local Boards and state agencies participate in research and evaluation, providing logistical support, access to data, and help shape research methodologies. AccelerateMS staff include a Director of Data & Insights who works closely with MDES LMI staff, the state's longitudinal data system, and other core partners to examine existing data, identify gaps in data availability and recommend solutions to such. This position also works internally with state-funded programs to ensure alignment with WIOA and general state needs. As this has developed, workforce partners are consulted to review reports for accuracy and develop recommendations, allowing the system to function more efficiently and effectively.

Evaluation reports are disseminated to core partner program leadership which includes the TANF program and strategic partners. Additionally, evaluation results are aggregated by Ecosystems, Local Workforce Development Areas, and regionally by sectors.

These evaluations typically include the following key components:

- WIOA Performance Metrics – Evaluations are conducted to determine program effectiveness, service delivery, and compliance.
- Participant Data Collection and Analysis – Evaluations are conducted to identify trends, challenges, and areas for improvement.
- Program Review and Monitoring – On-site visits, desk reviews, and stakeholder interviews are conducted to determine effectiveness and stakeholder satisfaction.
- Stakeholder Feedback – AccelerateMS collaborates with core program partners including TANF to identify innovation, program improvement, and opportunities to leverage resources.
- Research – Used to inform programmatic decisions, resource allocation, and refining service delivery. Evaluation reports are shared on the AccelerateMS website and through presentations at SWIB and stakeholder meetings.
- Workforce partners regularly review DOL and DOE independent evaluations and research. These reports are used to inform state and regional level research, program design, and improve participant outcomes.

5. Distribution of Funds for Core Programs

. 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.

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.

i 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).

A. For Title II Programs

i. Describe the methods and factors the eligible agency will use to distribute Title II funds

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.

The MCCB OAE will fund, at a minimum, one (1) grant per workforce area. Applicants may elect to serve an entire workforce area or selected counties within a workforce area. Applicants must serve the entire county(ies) and ensure all county residents have access. If an applicant elects to serve more than one workforce area, an explanation must be provided.

As required by WIOA, funding is prioritized for the following applicants:

- who have demonstrated effectiveness in improving the literacy of eligible individuals, especially; with respect to eligible individuals, who have low levels of literacy;
- whose services are aligned with local workforce strategies, priorities, and partners; and
- whose services are responsive to the needs of persons with barriers to employment.

The MCCB, OAE reserves the right to allow multiple providers in a geographical workforce region and distribute those funds in that service area at its discretion. Not all geographic areas of service in a region are guaranteed for federal adult education funding. The state also reserves the right to offer award amounts that differ from the applicant's request, or the available funding listed for the RFP.

According to Title II Section 241(a), funds made available for adult education and literacy activities under Title II must supplement and not supplant other state or local public funds expended for adult education and literacy activities. Supplement, not supplant means the federal funds are intended to augment or increase, not replace, monies that would

have been used if the federal funds had not been available.

Applicants must demonstrate a match of 25% of the funds requested. Federal funds may not be used for matching funds. Matching funds may include both in-kind and cash matches. The matching funds can come from state dollars, local dollars, private dollars, or in-kind support. (*State Requirement*)

The OAE anticipates making multiple awards because of the RFP process. Award amounts will depend upon available funding. An applicant must be determined by an eligible provider and receive sufficient points to be awarded. (*State Requirement*)

The OAE reserves the right to award grant funds in amounts different from the applicant's budget request and the suggested award amount. Such adjustment may be based on how the proposed budget and budget narrative will cover program expenses and whether the requested amount is appropriate, proportionate to the participants served, based on previous performance, and reasonable, as determined by the OAE. (*State Requirement*)

The OAE employs a competitive Request for Proposal (RFP) process to identify, assess, and award multi-year grants to eligible providers. The OAE uses the same application process for all eligible providers which includes Adult Education (Section 231), Corrections Education and other Institutionalized Individuals (Section 225), and Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE) (Section 243).

Eligible providers may include:

- Local education agency
- Community-based or faith-based organization
- Volunteer literacy organization
- Institutions of higher education
- Public or private nonprofit agency
- Library
- Public housing authority
- Nonprofit institution with the ability to provide adult education and literacy services
- Consortium or coalition of agencies, organizations, institutions, libraries, or authorities described above
- A partnership between an employer and an entity described above

Eligible individuals include those who have attained 16 years of age; are not enrolled or required to be enrolled in secondary school under the State law; and are basic skills deficient, do not have a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, or are English language learners.

The OAE awarded multi-year grants to eligible providers from the July 1, 2025 - June 30, 2030, award period through a competitive application process. The following process was used to award grants or contracts to eligible providers:

- The OAE awards competitive multiyear grants or contracts to eligible providers within the State to enable the eligible providers to develop, implement, and improve adult education and literacy activities within the State.
- The OAE requires each eligible provider to establish or operate programs that provide adult education and literacy activities, including programs that provide such activities concurrently.
- The OAE ensures that all eligible providers have direct and equitable access to apply and compete for grants or contracts; the same grant or contract announcement and

application processes are used for all eligible providers in the State.

- The OAE ensures each eligible agency awarding a grant or contract under this section shall not use any funds made available under this title for adult education and literacy activities to support and provide programs, services, or activities for individuals who are under the age of 16 and are enrolled or required to be enrolled in secondary school under State law, except that such agency may use funds for such purpose if such programs, services, or activities are related to family literacy activities. In providing family literacy activities under this title, an eligible provider shall attempt to coordinate with programs and services that are not assisted under this title prior to using funds for adult education and literacy activities under this title for activities other than activities for eligible individuals.
- The OAE ensures all eligible providers identify how they will address the thirteen considerations as specified in WIOA, Title II, Sec. 231 (e) are used as the basis to determine funding decisions, as well as to ensure that applicants only use AEFLA grant funds to serve eligible individuals as specified in WIOA section 203(4).

The open competition is consistent with the standards of 34 CFR Part 463 Subpart C. The grant competition is publicized through a variety of print and electronic media throughout the state as well as on the MCCB website. MS will run all of its competitions (225, 231, and 243) in accordance with 34 CFR Part 463 Subpart C. This ensures all applications are evaluated using the same rubric and scoring criteria.

Applicants are evaluated using a scoring rubric that includes:

- The thirteen considerations
- Alignment to the local workforce development board (LWDB) strategies and goals
- Description of strategies and activities that promote concurrent enrollment with Title I services and core partner responsibilities
- Data collection process
- Demonstrated effectiveness
- Program performance and
- The ability to provide services that meet the needs of the target population

As required by WIOA Section 107(d)(11)(B), the RFP process also includes a procedure to ensure the applicable LWDBs review the application and provide comments and/or recommendations regarding the application's alignment to the strategies and goals of the local plan under Section 108 of WIOA.

In preparation for the competition, the OAE reviews the most current U.S. Census and American Community Survey data and regional-specific labor market information, setting new enrollment targets for applicants. The application process strongly emphasizes addressing barriers to equitable access and participation, as outlined in Section 427 of the General Education Provision Act (GEPA), ensuring a fair and inclusive opportunity for all.

The OAE recognizes organizations that demonstrate effectiveness in providing adult education activities as eligible providers. To meet the standard of demonstrated effectiveness and be considered eligible, an applicant must provide evidence of demonstrated effectiveness by providing 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 this application for funds.

To be considered eligible, an applicant must also provide information regarding the outcomes for participants related to

employment, attainment of a secondary school diploma (or its recognized equivalent), and transition to postsecondary education and training. See WIOA Final Rules Subpart C, §463.24.

Applicants applying as a consortium must provide evidence of demonstrated effectiveness and submit performance data for each consortium member entity.

There are two ways an eligible provider may meet the requirements of demonstrated effectiveness:

- Applicants previously funded under WIOA Title II must submit performance data required under Section 116 to demonstrate past effectiveness
- Applicants not previously funded under WIOA Title II, must provide performance data to demonstrate past effectiveness in serving basic skills deficient eligible individuals, including evidence of success in achieving outcomes

Applicants applying as a consortium must submit demonstrated effectiveness data for each consortium member to determine if each member is an eligible provider of demonstrated effectiveness.

Each applicant requesting funds must describe the steps the applicant proposes to take to ensure equitable access to and participation in its federally assisted program for students, teachers, and other program beneficiaries with special needs. Section 427 of the GEPA highlights six barriers that can impede equitable access or participation: gender, race, national origin, color, disability, or age. Based on local circumstances, applicants determine whether these or other barriers may prevent participation in the program or activities and outline in their applications the specific steps they intend to take to overcome any identified barriers.

The funds allocated to local providers are intended to establish and operate programs that provide adult education and literacy activities and services to learners meeting the statutory definition of an eligible individual as defined in Section 203. Adult education and literacy activities and services as defined in Section 203 include adult education, literacy, workplace adult education and literacy activities, family literacy activities, English Language Acquisition (ELA) activities, Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE), workforce preparation activities, and Integrated Education and Training (IET).

Furthermore, providers are required to implement evidence-based and research-based strategies that accelerate learning and promote readiness for postsecondary education and employment. This commitment includes standards-based instruction, technology integration and distance learning, career pathways development, postsecondary bridge programs, alignment of services through concurrent enrollment, and collaborative agreements with the local WIN Job Centers.

Describe how the eligible agency will ensure "direct and equitable access 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, 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 increases 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 uses the following process to distribute funds to approved applicants:

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

B. 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

. Data Alignment and Integration

i. Describe the State's plans to make the management information systems for the 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's 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, leveraging 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. LACES is designed to support federal and state reporting requirements and allows the OAE and local providers to enroll participants, track instructional activities, and monitor performance outcomes. AE providers previously utilized the MAE system to support referral activities; however, referral processes have transitioned to MS Works to align with systems supported by the SLDS. MS Works now serves as the primary platform for participant workforce connection and referral coordination. The OAE continues to assess opportunities to enhance referral and intake functionality in alignment with system interoperability and data-sharing capacity. In addition, AE data are exchanged through the SLDS to support cross-agency data matching and the evaluation of post-exit outcomes, including employment, earnings, and continued education or training.

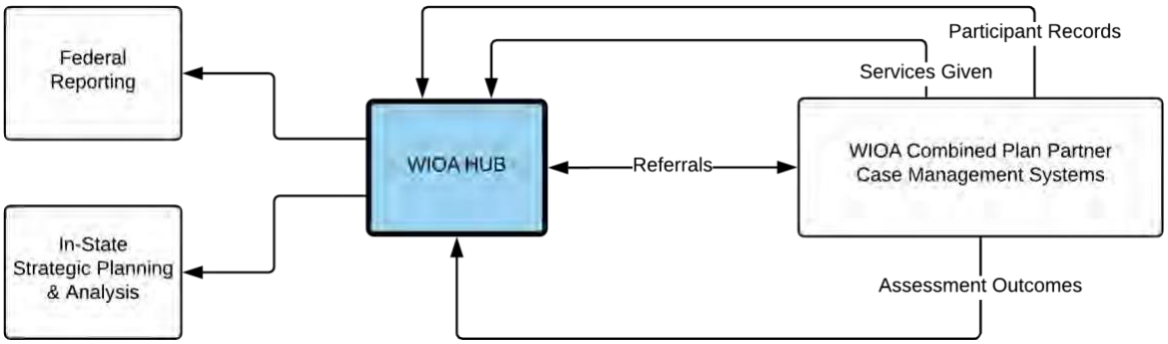
- **MDHS:** MDHS administers the TANF program through several legacy applications, including MAVERICS and JAWS. MAVERICS supports case management data such as intake and eligibility information, and JAWS supports TANF Work Program data. While these systems do not inherently support web services, data 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 14 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 14: Data Exchanged Between Partners



During case management activities, each Combined Plan Partner generates participant data such as participant records (basic information), information on services given to the participant, assessment of outcomes, and referrals to partner programs. These data items are passed from Combined Plan Partner systems to the WIOA Referral Hub. In addition, Combined Plan Partners receive referrals submitted by other Plan Partners. Information is used to compute Combined Plan Partner performance measures for reporting to the DOL and to conduct data-driven, in-state strategic planning.

Each Combined Plan Partner conducts intake and assessment. Participant data such as participant records (basic information), information on services given to the participant, information on assessment outcomes, and referrals to partner programs is collected and maintained in the combined plan partner's case management system. These data items are passed from Combined Plan Partner systems to the WIOA Referral Hub. In addition, Combined Plan Partners receive referrals submitted by other Plan Partners. The Combined Plan Partners record participant services because of a referral in their respective systems. The WIOA Referral Hub provides a machine interface to exchange program data. Agency systems use the machine interface to ensure that data is reported properly and in real-time while enabling their staff to continue to use familiar case management technology. A WIOA customer may access WIOA services from any WIOA partner. The Combined Plan Partners record participant services provided because of a referral in their respective systems.

Caseworkers from partner organizations utilize their internal agency systems to connect to the WIOA Hub, which facilitates seamless communication between partner systems. Acting as a central coordinating system, the WIOA Referral Hub operates independently. Its functions include generating performance metrics for Combined Plan Partners, which are crucial for DOL reporting, and facilitating data-driven strategic planning within the state. While this is current state, efforts to move towards a true 'one-door' type system are underway, starting with the technology pilot to actively support participants in receiving services. While agencies are separate in both physical structure and funding, they are actively examining how to operate better together to reduce the bureaucracy associated with various federal funding requirements each agency handles.

The Technology Data Workgroup has been tasked with conducting an assessment, providing the SWIB, Core Partner

Program Directors, and AccelerateMS with:

- A cost-benefit analysis to understand the potential return on investment (ROI) of integrating agency data systems. This analysis will consider factors such as increased efficiency, improved service delivery, and potential cost savings in the long run.
- Identify the most critical data integration needs that align with the core partner program's goals and objectives. Prioritizing integration efforts can help allocate resources more effectively and focus on areas with the highest impact while also reducing time to serve.
- Researching a modular approach instead of attempting to integrate all systems at once. Integrating smaller, more manageable components or systems that provide immediate benefits will allow for gradual progress while minimizing upfront costs.
- Research existing technologies, platforms, or frameworks that support interoperability and data exchange. Leveraging open-source solutions or standardized protocols can reduce development costs and streamline integration efforts.
- Developing a long-term strategy for sustaining integrated data systems, including budgeting for ongoing maintenance, upgrades, and scalability.
- Exploring funding opportunities from government grants, private sector partnerships, or other sources to offset integration costs. Research grants that improve data interoperability and collaboration between agencies may be available.

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 all state partners, including: 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 enabling agencies 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. The Hub is currently active, but technology pilots are underway to move the state towards a referral system that mimics real time and provides data not currently provided by the Hub.

Each Combined Plan Partner conducts intake and assessment. Participant data such as participant records (basic information), information on services given to the participant, information on assessment outcomes, and referrals to partner programs is collected and maintained in the combined plan partner's case management system. These data items are passed from Combined Plan Partner systems to the WIOA Referral Hub. In addition, Combined Plan Partners will receive referrals submitted by other Plan Partners. The Combined Plan Partners record participant services provided as a result of a referral in their respective systems.

To facilitate the exchange of program data, the WIOA Referral Hub offers a machine interface. This interface enables agency systems to ensure accurate and real-time reporting of data while allowing their staff to continue using familiar case management technology. WIOA customers have the flexibility to access services from any WIOA partner.

Caseworkers from partner organizations connect to the WIOA Hub through their internal agency systems. These partner systems communicate with each other via the WIOA Referral Hub, which serves as a central coordinating system. The hub operates independently, without a user interface.

The Technology Data Workgroup has been tasked with conducting an assessment and providing further data integration recommendations to core program partners, AccelerateMS, and the SWIB. The workgroup has also been

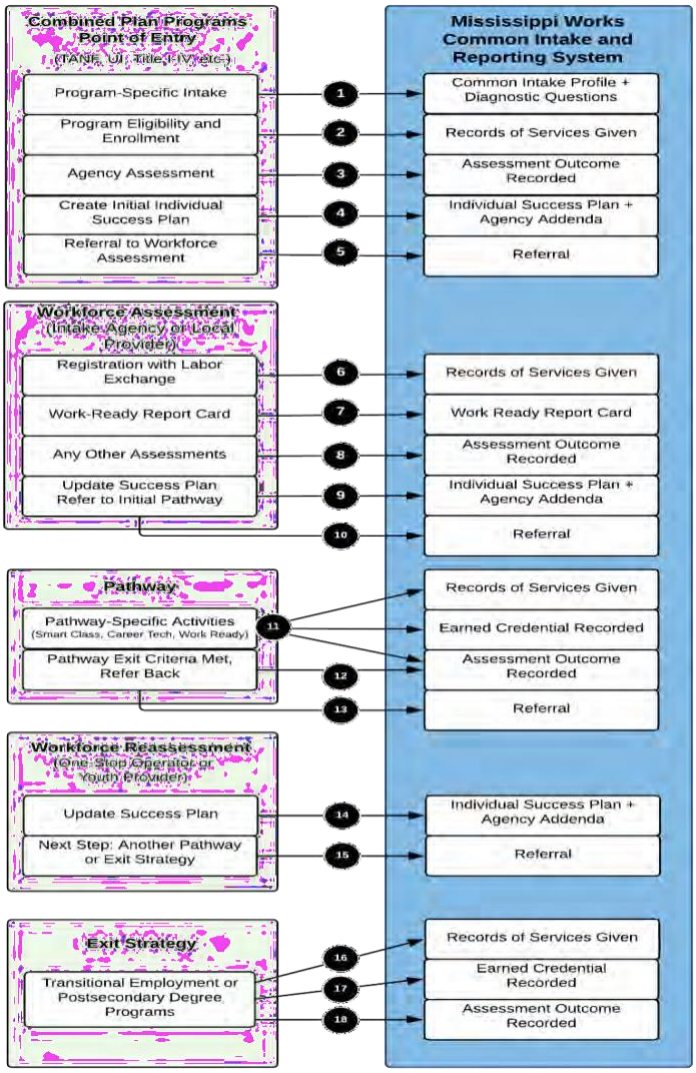
tasked with identifying funding sources to implement the recommended data integration solutions.

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 system's ongoing evolution and support cross-agency coordination of case management.

The co-enrollment workgroup continues to meet on a regular basis and is actively developing shared technical assistance tools to expand strategic linkages across programs.

Agency-to-agency referrals are electronic records created in the WIOA Referral Hub to connect a participant receiving services from one WIOA Combined Plan Partner to another. 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. However, as a system without a user interface, there are challenges to understand the outcomes of referrals, hence why Mississippi is working through technology pilot(s) to identify appropriate solutions to move the system from passive to active. 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 can access a real-time list of referrals for participants in their local area. After a partner system downloads the referral, the referral status 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 16: Data Created and Aligned in in the Smart Start Career Pathway Model



i *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 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 on 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.

ii *Describe the State's data systems and procedures to produce the reports required under section 116, performance accountability system. (WIOA section 116(d)(2)).*

Based on the 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 to 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 are 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 with WIOA partners, who use it to calculate performance measures and produce reports aligned with the PIRL format.

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

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

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.

Based on the 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 to the Mississippi State Data Clearinghouse, where the wage records and program participation data can be securely aligned by the clearinghouse's data science professionals. Appendix A - https://acceleratems.org/wp-content/uploads/Appendix-A_WIOA_2024_Memorandum-of-Understanding.pdf

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 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 can provide on-demand technical assistance in calculating performance measures or generating reports.

A. Assessment of Participant's Post-Program Success

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. 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. Additionally, AccelerateMS routinely requests reports above and beyond federal minimums to ensure programs meet

Mississippi's goals.

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

Mississippi uses quarterly wage record information to measure progress on state and local performance measures. MDES has a data-sharing agreement with NSPARC to provide performance reporting through 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 an 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.

C. Privacy Safeguards

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 the priority of service provisions for covered persons 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.

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.

A. Describe how the State will monitor priority of service provisions for veterans

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

- Refer qualified veterans to new job openings, especially Federal Contractor job orders, before all non-veteran job referral activity
- Refer qualified veterans to new job openings, especially Federal Contractor job orders, before all non-veteran job referral

MDES management monitors the priority of service by reviewing quarterly performance reports, manager reports, and MS Works reports. MDES management will monitor the priority of service in covered programs at two levels. WIN Job Centers will continue to use the established protocol of identifying targeted groups. At the state level, management will continue to analyze performance reports, manager reports, and MS Works reports.

B. Describe the triage and referral process for eligible veterans and other populations determined eligible to

receive services from the Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSG) program's Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) specialist/Consolidated Position.

WIN Job Center services are made available and provided to eligible veterans, VA VR & E Chapter 31 veterans, Native American Veterans, other groups targeted for special consideration as appropriate or if eligible for priority of service, and veterans with significant barriers to employment through outreach activities performed by Veteran Employment Coordinators (VEC). MDES will continue to encourage non-DOL program partners to focus on providing priority of service to targeted groups for special consideration as appropriate or if eligible for priority of service. VECs 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 VECs after other One-Stop Center staff complete initial service intake and assessment of need. VECs are cross trained to understand the full complement of WIOA and Combined Plan Partner programs that may be available. In instances when a VEC 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 66, Priority of Services for Veterans can be accessed using this link. https://acceleratems.org/wp-content/uploads/Appendix-K-WIOA-Priority-of-Services.pdf

8. Addressing the Accessibility of the One-Stop Delivery System for Individuals with Disabilities

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 consider 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 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

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.

Additional English language services are provided through Title II AE providers. WIOA partners may refer and co-enroll individuals into local adult programs to support English language acquisition and workforce readiness.

III. COORDINATION WITH STATE PLAN PROGRAMS

Planning Workgroups

For the 2026 WIOA Combined State Plan update, AccelerateMS convened a series of interagency meetings, beginning in the Spring of 2025, to bring together all WIOA strategic and core partners along with representatives of all local workforce areas. AccelerateMS hosts this working group at a minimum of quarterly but traditionally meets monthly to ensure all partners can share best practices, identify challenges, and work toward better workforce policy. For this purpose, partners reviewed progress towards implementing WIOA plan revisions and noted successes and challenges. Data analysis activities occurred to update the strategic and operational aspects of the state plan and revealed success in meeting the 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, establishment of AccelerateMS, 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.

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 were shared with the SWIB and all members of the other workgroups.

State Workforce Investment Board (SWIB) Website

The SWIB website (https://acceleratems.org/swib/) is used to keep Mississippians informed about the state's WIOA planning and revision process. The 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 into the final plan prior to submission. Each combined plan partner followed program-specific rules for public comments and open meetings.

IV. COMMON ASSURANCES (FOR ALL CORE PROGRAMS)

The State Plan must include	Included
1. The State has established a policy identifying circumstances that may present a conflict of interest (Appendix I) 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 VEC 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

V. PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR CORE PROGRAMS

Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Activities under Title I-B

a. General Requirements

1. Regions and Local Workforce Development Areas

. Identify the regions and the local workforce development areas designated in the State

The State has re-designated four local workforce development areas. Each of the four local workforce development areas has also been identified as a region. Regions are aligned with the four local workforce development areas. The State identified regions using the following data: common labor markets, common economic development areas, community college districts, geography, population density, communing patterns, and sufficiency of Title II providers. The analysis is included in the combined plan. Planning meetings were held with local boards and chief elected officials.

A. Describe the process and policy used for designating local areas, including procedures for determining whether the local area met the criteria for "performed successfully" and "sustained fiscal integrity" in accordance with 106(b)(2) and (3) of WIOA. Describe the process used for identifying regions and planning regions under section 106(a) of WIOA. This must include a description of how the State consulted with the local boards and chief elected officials in identifying the regions.

WIOA Policy #1 (Local Workforce Development Area Designation, Appendix C) outlines the process used for designating local areas. The policy was developed in consultation with the State Workforce Investment Board and posted on websites for public comment. The policy defines performed successfully as meeting or exceeding the adjusted levels of performance for each performance goal for two consecutive years immediately preceding the enactment of the WIOA. See Appendix C for a complete description of the process. Sustained fiscal integrity is defined as the administration of WIOA programs for the two consecutive years immediately preceding the enactment of WIOA with no formal determination of mis-expended funds or gross negligence. Each local workforce area submitted a request for initial designation supported by documentation of successful performance and sustained fiscal integrity.

WIOA creates a two-step process for designating a LWDA. First, WIOA Section 106(b)(2) provides an "initial designation for "the first 2 full program years following the enactment of this Act" to allow for a transition to the new requirements of WIOA. Then, at the end of the initial designation, Section 106(b)(3) calls for a "subsequent designation" based on a review of the performance of the LWDA during the initial designation period.

On May 10, 2017, Governor Bryant extended the initial designation of the four local workforce development areas (LWDAs) until June 30, 2018, in accordance with a U.S. Department of Labor regulation under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Acy (WIOA).Before subsequent designation, MDES began reviewing the local areas to verify that they had performed successfully and sustained fiscal integrity, as required by WIOA Section 106(c)(1). The local areas sent requests for subsequent designation along with their verification that they had performed successfully and sustained fiscal integrity. After reviewing the requests and verification of performance from the LWDA and MDES, on June 29, 2018, the governor approved the subsequent designation of each of the four LWDAs as a local workforce development area.

B. Provide the appeals process and policy referred to in section 106(b)(5) of WIOA relating to designation of

local areas.

If an existing local workforce area under the WIA requests but is not granted designation as a local workforce development area under WIOA Section 106(b)(2) or Section 106(b)(3), the unit (or combination of units) of general local government or grant recipient may submit an appeal to the State Board under an appeal process established in the State Plan. The Local Workforce Development Area Designation Policy in Appendix C provides specific appeals process information.

2. Statewide Activities

. Provide State policies or guidance for the statewide workforce development system and for use of State funds for workforce investment activities.

State entities responsible for administering Adult, Disabled Worker, Youth, TANF, WP, AE, SCSEP, and Rehabilitation Services have agreed to physically co-locate in at least one comprehensive center in each workforce area. An MOU will be developed to describe roles and responsibilities and shared infrastructure costs. The State created a WIOA policy that established a process related to determinations for infrastructure funding.

Policy 20: WIOA Local One-Stop Infrastructure Policy, provided in Appendix I2E states that If the LWDB is unable to reach an agreement on the funding of infrastructure costs with all partners by July 1 of each program year (or after the applicable extension of time deadline, if granted), the LWDB or affected partner must immediately notify OGM that an agreement cannot be reached using the Report of Outcomes from Local Infrastructure Funding Agreement Negotiations (Attachment B). Once notified, the Governor must administer the State funding formula to determine the appropriate share of infrastructure contributions for all partners for the program year impacted. Failure to agree on additional costs amongst partners will not be considered an impasse, nor will it trigger the state's funding mechanism.

Mississippi Senate Bill 2958 of the 2014 Mississippi Regular Legislative Session amended Section 71-5-353, Mississippi Code of 1972, to provide that money in the state workforce investment board bank account shall be used for administering state workforce investment board business, grants related to training, and other projects as determined appropriate by the state workforce investment board.

A. Describe how the State intends to use Governor's set aside funding for mandatory and discretionary activities, including how the State will conduct evaluations of Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth activities.

WIOA provides the Governor's set-aside funding for "statewide employment and training activities" (WIOA Section 134). Statewide activities include required and allowable activities. Funds must be reserved for mandatory activities before optional activities are funded.

Mississippi plans to use the funding primarily for mandatory statewide WIOA activities as follows:

- Administering Mississippi's WIOA system. This activity happens at MDES and is capped at 5% of the total WIOA allocation. Included costs are accounting, staffing, policy and procedure issuance, monitoring and audit, planning, grant management, and liaising with USDOL and the local areas.
- Operating the State's management of information systems. The largest expense within the state's Governor's reserve has been the MIS system. Data elements are collected from every participant, and each is validated and entered into the MIS system. Then, reports are delivered to USDOL and the four local workforce development areas.
- Incentive grants and technical assistance for local areas.
- Eligible Training Provider information (ETPL). WIOA requires that states maintain and disseminate a list of every approved training program, including detailed performance information such as student completion and

employment rates. Customers of all the WIN Job Centers use this list and the performance information to select their training program. Youth programs are also tracked statewide.

ETPL is a statewide, comprehensive, real-time system for the agency's WIOA training programs. Mississippi has automated the processes for eligible training providers' registration, application of training courses, and subsequent eligibility. The system also includes automating the obligations of the Individual Training Account (ITA) and the ITA payment system (expenditures). It allows the local workforce development areas and one-stop operators to track obligations, expenditures, and accruals in real time. Mississippi's ETPL system interfaces with the Mississippi Department of Finance and Administration's statewide accounting system for daily invoice payment and reconciliation.

Evaluation and continuous improvement

All statewide WIOA programs are to be evaluated with a goal for continuous improvement. Evaluation activities are conducted using the MS Works System, and all programs are monitored on-site.

Any expenditures from the Governor's Set Aside Funding will comply with Section 134 of the WIOA.

B. Describe how the State will utilize Rapid Response funds to respond to layoffs and plant closings and coordinate services to quickly aid companies and their affected workers. States also should describe any layoff aversion strategies they have implemented to address at-risk companies and workers.

The Mississippi Department of Employment Security (MDES) is the lead agency for Rapid Response services in Mississippi. The State also allocates a share of available Rapid Response funds to local workforce development areas based on mass layoff or plant closure activity. Each workforce area has designated a staff member as their Rapid Response and dislocated worker program coordinator.

MDES responds to both the Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification Act (WARN) and non-WARN events, that is, events involving fewer than 50 individuals. MDES receives official WARN notices of impending closures or mass layoff events from the affected business. To ensure that assistance and services are provided to as many dislocated workers as possible, MDES responds to non-WARN events, regardless of the number of individuals affected, in the same manner as WARN events. MDES may learn about non-WARN events from the media, partner agencies, local economic development offices, WIN Job Center for local workforce area staff, businesses, affected workers, community college, rapid response coordinators, and other local sources. Within 24 hours of receiving a WARN or non-WARN notice, MDES staff contacts the company to discuss available Rapid Response services and helps the company and the affected workers. As soon as possible, an electronic briefing or an on-site visit with the company representative and, when appropriate, the union or employee representative is scheduled. Working in coordination with local workforce development areas and WIN Job Center staff, Community College staff, and the Unemployment Insurance coordinator, a plan of action is developed to deliver services to the affected dislocated workers. Rapid Response services are delivered on-site before layoff, at the company, and on company time whenever possible. Providing on-site services depends on the company's willingness to allow workers to attend sessions during work hours and meeting space availability at the site.

The State developed an employee survey form to determine the specific assistance needed by the affected workers. The form collects information on the employee's education and skill levels, work history, employment assistance needs, and training interests. The employee completes the survey as part of the on-site session, which is collected and reviewed by the Rapid Response team. The team identifies the worker's specific needs and coordinates with the WIN Job Center and community college to facilitate the delivery of services from the appropriate partner agencies.

MDES has established a policy for providing Layoff Aversion activities. State Policy Number 21: Rapid Response -

Layoff Aversion Policy and Procedures, provided in Appendix I2H, applies to Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDA), and other entities that receive Rapid Response funds by the allocation, pass-through, and subgrant award methods. The Rapid Response unit works with local workforce development boards, chief elected officials, and other stakeholders to determine which strategies and activities are applicable in given situations. The strategies and activities are designed to prevent or minimize the duration of unemployment.

Each LWDA submits an annual Layoff Aversion Plan to MDES's Office of Grant Management that describes its strategies to assist employers and avert layoffs. Each LWDA has designated staff to carry out the plan within the area.

C. Describe the State policies and procedures to provide Rapid Responses in cases of natural disasters including coordination with FEMA and other entities.

Because MDES serves as the state's lead agency for Rapid Response, it is uniquely positioned to provide mandated services in the case of natural disasters. As the MDES Continuity of Operations Plan outlines, the Rapid Response staff are part of the agency's disaster response team. Staff assist in identifying businesses adversely affected and workers who lost jobs due to the disaster. This information is important for developing requests for National Dislocated Worker Grant funds. Rapid Response staff also assist in disseminating information on emergency unemployment insurance and reemployment services available. The agency's disaster response team works with FEMA and other appropriate state and federal agencies to develop strategies for addressing natural disasters to ensure rapid access to a broad range of assistance.

D. Describe how the State provides early intervention (e.g., Rapid Response) and ensures the provision of appropriate career services to worker groups on whose behalf a Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) petition has been filed. (Section 134(a)(2)(A) and TAA Section 221(a)(2)(A).) This description must include how the State disseminates benefit information to provide workers in the groups identified in the TAA petitions with an accurate understanding of the provision of TAA benefits and services in such a way that they are transparent to the dislocated worker applying for them (Trade Act Sec. 221(a)(2)(A) and Sec. 225; Governor-Secretary Agreement). Describe how the State will use funds that have been reserved for Rapid Response to provide services for every worker group that files a TAA petition and how the state will ensure the provision of appropriate career service to workers

MDES developed a process and worked with the mass layoff team to create one Initial Employer Email that met the needs of employers and employees. It allowed employers to file one mass Unemployment Insurance (UI) claim for all its employees simultaneously.

The Mississippi Department of Employment Security administers the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) Act. Providing early intervention to worker groups on whose behalf a TAA petition has been filed:

- The MDES leads Rapid Response efforts across the state. When working with a trade-affected business to provide Rapid Response services, the State Rapid Response Coordinator and the State TAA Coordinator provide Rapid Response services.

Whenever possible, the team conducts on-site presentations at the business location. Every effort is made to provide information sessions before the commencement of the lay-offs and/or plant closure. The presentation consists of an overview of the benefits and services that can be expected from each of the partner groups.

- During these sessions, the Rapid Response team emphasizes how the partner agency staff representatives will work together to offer the customer individualized, comprehensive reemployment benefits and services.
- Once a petition is approved, additional sessions with affected workers are scheduled to provide information about TAA services only. These sessions allow the workers to ask detailed questions or questions directly related

to the workers' individual needs. The sessions may be set up through the employer if the place of business is still open or through TAA staff at the nearest WIN Job Center or another location.

- When an individual enters the WIN Job center and is identified as Trade eligible, a Trade case manager provides them with an orientation to explain available Trade benefits and services.

Funds are used for staff to monitor, identify, and communicate with worker groups that file a TAA petition.
An increasing number of job opportunities and low unemployment rates mean there are not enough people to fill middle-skill jobs in Mississippi. Apprenticeship is one way we are using to fill the middle-skill gap. The Mississippi Registered Apprenticeship Program is changing lives, providing more sustainable wages, and promoting a better quality of life for many Mississippians. Mississippi apprenticeships are gaining new ground as the state has received several new rounds of funding to continue the creation and expansion of apprenticeships from the statewide Apprenticeship State Expansion Grant (ASE) and new guidance provided by DOL regarding Non-Registered Apprenticeships.

b. Adult and Dislocated Worker Program Requirements.

1. Work-Based Training Models

2. Registered Apprenticeship

Since 2016, Mississippi has received seven Apprenticeship USA grants and created new partnerships under the Mississippi Apprenticeship Program's (MAP) leadership. MAP partners include the Governor's Office, the MS Departments of Employment Security (MDES), Human Services (MDHS), Rehabilitation Services (MDRS), Education (MDE), AccelerateMS, the Mississippi Community College Board (MCCB), and the Mississippi Development Authority (MDA). This collaboration has improved communication and accountability for MAP's expansion goals. Mississippi has supported more than 25,000 registered apprentices and partnered with nearly 80 Mississippi companies to create or expand registered apprenticeship programs in the state. Mississippi has expanded into new and emerging industry sectors, such as Finance and Banking and Information Technology, which will train individuals for future jobs.

3. Training Provider Eligibility Procedure

The State will continue to use its current web-based Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) system for the registration, initial eligibility, and continued eligibility of all WIOA training service providers, including Registered Apprenticeship programs. State Policy #9: WIOA Eligible Training Provider Certification describes these processes in detail (Appendix I2A). The Eligible Training Provider Certification (ETP) Policy links to the MDES Eligible Training Provider List System page. The policy may be found by selecting the "Training Provider/System Administrator" option and then selecting the "Resource Menu". The link provided is intended to provide persons interested in the ETPL with all the resources to be successful.

Mississippi's Apprentice Program will identify Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP) sponsors. The Local Workforce Development Areas will contact the Registered Apprenticeship sponsors in their respective areas. The state will ensure that information regarding RAP automatic eligibility is disseminated through various media, including online platforms targeting RAP sponsors statewide.

The state will use the current web-based application processes to register Apprenticeship sponsors and their program(s) of study. Apprenticeship sponsors will not be required to meet the state's minimum performance standards published in state policy, will be granted automatic approval, and will not be required to meet continued eligibility requirements.
In accordance with federal requirements, recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, and individuals with basic skills deficiencies must receive priority for career and training services.

At any of the workforce partners, participants are asked the six questions that route the person in the HUB to the various partners. As staff determine the participants' eligibility, information about two of the three priorities of service barriers is entered into the MSWorks system. NSPARC is working to implement the ability to capture basic skills deficiencies in MSWorks.

At the state level, staff will analyze quarterly performance reports from MSWorks and the PIRL to assess service priority to persons with these barriers. The state will provide reports to the Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDAs) and the WIN Job Center managers.

LWDA staff will monitor the WIN Job Centers to verify compliance with the priority service requirements to ensure that the frontline staff are continuously trained and provided technical assistance.

At the local level, WIN Job Centers' management will train staff on the requirements for prioritizing service to adults with these barriers. Based on reports provided by the state, it will monitor and assess the productivity and quality of the services provided to these individuals.

The Priority of Service for WIOA Adult Program Participants, State Policy #7 (Appendix 12B) also describes how the State will implement and monitor the priority for public assistance recipients, other low-income individuals, or individuals who are basic skills deficient.

The State empowers the local areas to determine their need to transfer funds between the Adult and Dislocated Worker programs based on workforce demands and needs of each local area.

Requests to transfer funds between the Adult and Dislocated Worker programs are initiated at the LWDA level. When LWDA fiscal and programmatic staff determine that funds need to be transferred and determine a projected amount to transfer, they put that request on the agenda of the next Local Workforce Development Board (LWDA) meeting. They also notify the area's liaison at the MDEA Office of Grant Management who always guests at the board meetings. After the board votes on the transfer, the LWDB Chair signs the transfer document. LWDA staff uploads that document and a copy of the minutes into the state's online GranTrak fiscal reporting system, appended to a Request to Transfer Funds. GranTrak automatically notifies MDES staff of the pending request in their workflow.

The OGM staff member, who is the liaison to that area, reviews the request and the attached signed request and board minutes and verifies accuracy before approving. MDES fiscal staff are then notified and review the transfer at two levels for fiscal accuracy before it is sent in the workflow for signature by the Executive Director. After signature, the funds are available for use in the new program.

The State's criteria regarding local area transfer of funds is also provided in the State's WIOA Allocation Policy, Policy #11 (Appendix 12C).

4. State-developed criteria

Identify the State-developed criteria to be used by local boards in awarding grants or contracts for youth workforce investment activities and describe how the local boards will take into consideration the ability of the providers to meet performance accountability measures based on primary indicators of performance for the youth program as described in section 116(b)(2)(A)(ii) of WIOA.6F Further, include a description of how the State assists local areas in determining whether to contract for services or to provide some or all of the program elements directly.

The State continues to meet with the local workforce development area directors to discuss the RFP process for youth providers. During these meetings, requirements are outlined, including performance indicators. Local workforce

development areas develop their own RFP process with assistance from The State. The State reviewed the RFP templates prepared by the local workforce development boards and the rating tools. The rating tools are designed to ensure capacity to meet WIOA performance indicators.

The State continues implementing a WIOA Common Intake and Reporting System to capture common participant information for the four core programs. All participants develop an individualized success plan that coordinates the optimum blend of services and funding to achieve their goals for success. This success plan indicates the pathways in the Smart Start Pathways Model to which the participant will be assigned. A career pathway plan must be included in a youth's individual service strategy or MS Smart Start Success plan. This model is an integrated compilation of programs and services intended to develop basic, technical, and employability skills, provide continuous education and training, and provide work support that leads to high-demand jobs in targeted sectors.

5. State assistance to local workforce boards in achieving results

Explain how the State assists local workforce boards in achieving results for out-of-school and in-school youth. Describe promising practices or partnership models that local areas are implementing and the state's role in supporting and scaling those models within the state for both in-school and out-of-school youth.
Mississippi assists local workforce development boards in achieving improved outcomes for both out-of-school youth (OSY) and in-school youth (ISY) through a coordinated, demand-driven workforce development system that aligns workforce programs, education systems, and economic development strategies around shared statewide priorities. The State supports local areas through policy guidance, technical assistance, cross-agency coordination, and targeted investments that strengthen the education-to-employment pipeline and connect youth to careers aligned with Mississippi's priority occupations and regional labor market demand.

Through the leadership of the Governor and ongoing collaboration across core workforce partners—including the Mississippi Department of Employment Security (MDES), the Mississippi Community College Board (MCCB), the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE), the Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services (MDRS), and the Mississippi Department of Human Services (MDHS)—the State works to ensure youth workforce strategies are aligned with broader efforts to increase labor force participation, strengthen career pathways, and improve economic mobility for Mississippi residents.

The State provides ongoing guidance and technical assistance to local workforce development boards on program design, performance accountability, and partnership development. Local areas are encouraged to braid resources across multiple federal and state funding streams, including WIOA, Perkins Career and Technical Education funding, and Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) programs, in order to provide comprehensive services that support youth in achieving educational attainment, industry-recognized credentials, and successful entry into employment. The State also supports local workforce areas through performance monitoring and data-informed continuous improvement. Using statewide labor market information, priority occupation analysis, and WIOA performance indicators, the State works with local workforce boards to identify opportunities to strengthen youth programming, improve service delivery, and increase successful transitions into education, training, and employment.

A key component of Mississippi's youth workforce strategy is the State's investment in Career Coach programs, which place trained career coaches in high schools across the state to help students explore career pathways aligned with regional workforce demand. Career Coaches work directly with students, educators, and employers to increase awareness of career opportunities, promote credential attainment in high-demand fields, and help students understand the connection between education decisions and employment outcomes. These coaches also serve as a critical bridge between K-12 education, postsecondary training providers, and local workforce development boards, helping ensure that youth are connected to available workforce services and career pathway opportunities.

Youth career exploration and training efforts are intentionally aligned with Mississippi's priority occupations, which reflect the state's most critical workforce needs across key industries. State workforce analysis indicates that Mississippi will need thousands of additional workers in key skilled trades and technical fields over the coming decade in order to meet projected industry demand. By aligning youth workforce investments with these priority occupations, the State helps ensure that youth participants are connected to career pathways that lead to sustainable employment opportunities while supporting the long-term workforce needs of Mississippi's economy.

AccelerateMS also supports local workforce boards in expanding work-based learning opportunities, including internships, job shadowing, summer employment, and other employer-connected experiences. These opportunities provide youth with meaningful exposure to the workplace, help develop durable skills valued by employers, and create early connections between young people and regional industries. The State assists local areas by promoting employer engagement strategies, supporting coordination with industry partners, and aligning work-based learning efforts with sector strategies and priority occupations.

In addition, AccelerateMS is actively supporting the expansion of apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship opportunities as a pathway for youth and young adults to enter high-demand careers. The State works with local workforce boards, community colleges, employers, and industry associations to increase awareness of apprenticeship opportunities and to develop programs that allow youth to transition directly into structured training and employment. These efforts are particularly important for connecting young people to opportunities in skilled trades, advanced manufacturing, healthcare, construction, and other priority sectors.

For out-of-school youth, Mississippi recognizes that successful reengagement often requires intensive support and coordination across systems. Local workforce areas are implementing partnership models that integrate workforce services with adult education, supportive services, career coaching, and occupational skills training. These models help reconnect youth who are not currently in school or employment by addressing barriers to participation while providing clear pathways into education, training, and employment. The State supports these efforts by reinforcing cross-agency coordination, promoting alignment among core partners, and highlighting effective models that demonstrate strong outcomes in reengagement, credential attainment, and employment placement.

For in-school youth, the State encourages local workforce areas to strengthen collaboration with school districts, career and technical education programs, and employers to provide students with earlier exposure to career pathways and workforce opportunities. These partnerships allow students to explore careers, participate in work-based learning, and pursue industry-recognized credentials while still in school. The State supports these efforts by aligning youth workforce strategies with statewide initiatives designed to strengthen career pathways and increase student awareness of priority occupations and in-demand careers.

Mississippi also works to identify and scale promising local practices. Through monitoring, technical assistance, peer learning opportunities, and cross-agency coordination, the State identifies models that are producing strong outcomes and supports the expansion of those approaches in other regions of the state. This includes strategies that increase youth engagement, improve measurable skill gains, expand credential attainment, and support successful transitions into employment or postsecondary education.

These efforts are supported by Mississippi's broader commitment to building a coordinated workforce development system that aligns workforce programs, education partners, and economic development initiatives around shared goals. By strengthening coordination across partners and reinforcing a demand-driven approach, the State helps ensure that youth workforce investments produce measurable outcomes for both participants and employers while contributing to the state's broader goals of increasing labor force participation and improving economic mobility.

6. State assistance in implementing innovative methods

Describe how the State assists local workforce boards in implementing innovative models for delivering youth workforce investment activities, including effective ways local workforce boards can make available the 14 program elements described in WIOA section 129(c)(2); and explain how local areas can ensure work experience, including quality pre-apprenticeship and registered apprenticeship, is prioritized as a key element within a broader career pathways strategy.

Services to eligible youth are delivered through a network of youth providers. The local workforce areas continue to procure independent contractors to deliver youth services competitively. The State and LWDAs require these contractors to ensure that these services include all 14 program elements outlined in WIOA Section 129(c)(2). The state participant tracking system, MS Works, has been modified to capture all 14 program elements. Youth providers' innovative approaches include the Gateway youth programs and Out-of-School Youth Work Experience/Internships. The Office of Apprenticeship can leverage adult education programs to meet a critical need for mid-skilled workers in Mississippi by utilizing MIBEST as a pre-apprenticeship program. MIBEST assists 17 to 24-year-old Out-of-School Youth eligible to earn a GED or HSE while enrolled in skills training. Through partnership with Mississippi's 15 community colleges, which offer adult education programs to increase the number of qualified, skilled, and workforce-ready individuals, Mississippi can ensure that current and potential employees have practical and soft skills to succeed in the workplace.

7. State policy language

Provide the language contained in the State policy for "requiring additional assistance to enter or complete an educational program, or to secure and hold employment" criterion for out-of-school youth specified in WIOA section 129(a)(1)(B)(iii)(VIII) and for "requiring additional assistance to complete an education program, or to secure and hold employment" criterion for in-school youth specified in WIOA section 129(a)(1)(C)(iv)(VII). If the state does not have a policy, describe how the state will ensure that local areas will have a policy for these criteria.

Mississippi includes in Policy Number 13- WIOA Youth Eligibility a definition for youth requiring additional assistance to enter or complete an educational program or to secure and hold employment is defined as an in-school or out-of-school youth who is low-income and meets on of the following criteria:

1. Lacking relevant work experience to secure or hold employment;
2. Lacking credentials related to local or regional targeted sectors; or
3. In need of an ITA to complete the Start Smart or Career Technical Pathway;
4. Criteria defined by the local board an included in the local plan

The WIOA Youth Eligibility Policy, Policy Number 13 is provided in Appendix I2F. Alternative education is defined as a specialized structured curriculum that may:

- Provide academically rigorous preparation for work and post-secondary educations;
- Assist with the transition to work and post-secondary education;
- Address the youth's barriers to work and education. Some examples include:
- Alternative High School
- Juvenile boot camps
- Wilderness treatment

Mississippi is using the basic skills deficient definition as contained in WIOA, as follows:
BASIC SKILLS DEFICIENT. The term ''basic skills deficient'' means, with respect to an individual—

1. who is a youth, that the individual has English reading, writing, or computing skills at or below the 8th-

grade level on a generally accepted standardized test; or

2. who is a youth or adult, that the individual is unable to compute or solve problems, or read, write, or speak English at a level necessary to function on the job, in the individual's family, or in society.

c. Single-area State Requirements

Mississippi is not a single area state.

d. Waiver Request (optional)

Statutory or Regulatory Requirements to be Waived- 75 Percent Out-of-School Youth (OSY) Expenditure Requirements

Title I-B Assurances

The State Plan must include	Included
1. The State has implemented a policy to ensure Adult program funds provide a priority in the delivery of training services and individualized career services to individuals who are low income, public assistance recipients and basic skills deficient;	Yes
2. The State has implemented a policy to ensure local areas have a process in place for referring veterans with significant barriers to employment to career services provided by the JVSG program's Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) specialist;	Yes
3. The State established a written policy and procedure that set forth criteria to be used by chief elected officials for the appointment of local workforce investment board members;	Yes
4. The State established written policy and procedures to ensure local workforce investment boards are certified by the governor every two years in accordance with WIOA section 107(c)(2);	Yes
5. Where an alternative entity takes the place of a State Board, the State has written policy and procedures to ensure the alternative entity meets the definition under WIOA section 101(e) and the legal requirements for membership;	No
6. The State established a written policy and procedure for how the individuals and entities represented on the State Workforce Development Board help to determine the methods and factors of distribution, and how the State consults with chief elected officials in local areas throughout the State in determining the distributions;	Yes
7. The State will not use funds received under WIOA Title I to assist, promote, or deter union organizing in accordance with WIOA section 181(b)(7);	Yes
8. The State distributes adult and youth funds received under WIOA equitably throughout the State, and no local area suffers significant shifts in funding from year-to-year during the period covered by this plan;	Yes
9. If a State Workforce Development Board, department, or agency administers State laws for vocational rehabilitation of persons with disabilities, that board, department, or agency cooperates with the agency that administers Wagner-Peyser services, Adult and Dislocated Worker programs and Youth Programs under Title I;	Yes
10. The State agrees to report on the impact and outcomes of its approved waivers in its WIOA Annual Report.	Yes

11. The State has taken appropriate action to secure compliance with the Uniform Guidance at 2 CFR 200 and 2 CFR 2900, including that the State will annually monitor local areas to ensure compliance and otherwise take appropriate action to secure compliance with the Uniform Guidance under section WIOA 184(a)(3);	Yes

Wagner-Peyser Act Programs (Employment Services)

e. Employment Service Staff

1. State staffing model

Describe the State's staffing model for the provision of labor exchange services using State merit staff.

MDES is currently in compliance with 20 CFR Parts 651, 652, 653, and 658. It plans to utilize merit-based Wagner-Peyser staff.

2. State professional development activities for Employment Service staff

Describe how the State will utilize professional development activities for Employment Service staff to ensure staff is able to provide high quality services to both jobseekers and employers.

MDES utilizes a one-hour weekly staff meeting to share information and train staff. Quarterly managers' meetings are held to provide training to management staff. Each MDES staff member has an Individual Development Plan on file that includes the requirements to complete Professional development activities. MDES operates a twelve-month Leadership Development program that all Wagner Peyser supervisors must attend. The curriculum comprises Self-Awareness, Self-development, Team Development, and Organizational Development courses. In addition, Wagner Peyser staff members attend regional and national workforce training conferences and National Veterans Training Institute courses. Staff attend workforce conferences, including the Southeastern Employment and Training Association (SETA) and the National Association of State Workforce Agencies (NASWA).

All Wagner-Peyser staff are cross-trained to identify Unemployment Insurance eligibility issues and participate in training with WIOA staff. When potential issues are detected, Wagner-Peyser staff members utilize an issue detection worksheet submitted to Unemployment Insurance management. Wagner-Peyser management works closely with unemployment insurance management to train staff continuously on updated policy information.
Wagner-Peyser staff will provide staff-assisted services to help unemployment insurance claimants file online. Resource rooms with internet access are available in all one-stop centers for UI claimants, and resource room attendants are available to assist claimants during the filing process.

Mississippi uses an integrated workforce technology system called ReEmployMS to make a direct linkage by assisting customers with claims filing in the resource rooms of the WIN Job Centers. WIN Job Center management can contact a more knowledgeable Unemployment Insurance staff member remotely to assist customers immediately.

MDES operates the Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) program to assist UI claimants. The Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) program is an initiative in Mississippi to provide individualized career services to help reconnect UI beneficiaries with work as quickly as possible. Services to claimants in the programs include customized labor market information, development of an Individual Employment Plan, orientation of services and programs offered, registration in MDES' workforce technology system, job match, skills gap analysis, and soft skills training. The MDES Workforce Contact Center works remotely to provide job search assistance to UI Claimants throughout the state.

3. Strategies to support training and awareness on UI

Describe strategies developed to support training and awareness across core programs and the Unemployment Insurance (UI) program and the training provided for Employment Service and WIOA staff on identification of

UI eligibility issues and referral to UI staff for adjudication.

Wagner-Peyser staff will provide staff assisted services to help Unemployment Insurance claimants file online. Resource rooms with internet access are available in all one-stop centers to UI claimants, and resource room attendants are available to assist claimants during the filing process.

f. State Assistance in Filing Claim for Unemployment Compensation

Explain how the State will provide information and meaningful assistance to individuals requesting assistance in filing a claim for unemployment compensation through one-stop centers, as required by WIOA as a career service.

Mississippi uses an integrated workforce technology system called ReEmployMS to make a direct linkage by assisting customers with claims filing in the resource rooms of the WIN Job Centers. WIN Job Center management can contact a more knowledgeable Unemployment Insurance staff member remotely to provide immediate assistance for customers. WIOA partner staff are trained in many ways, including a one-hour weekly staff meeting to share information and train staff.

g. State Strategy for Providing Reemployment Assistance

Describe the State's strategy for providing reemployment assistance to UI claimants and other unemployed individuals

Partner staff also shadow Wagner-Peyser staff to learn the functions of ReEmployMS and assist claimants as they navigate the claims processes in the system. WIOA partner staff are positioned within the WIN Job Center to assist claimants with staff-assisted career services as the claimant requests further career and training needs.

h. State Use of Wagner-Peyser Act Funds to Support UI Claimants

Describe how the State will use Wagner-Peyser Act funds to support UI claimants, and the communication between the Employment Service and UI, as appropriate

1. Labor exchange services for UI claimants

2. Registration of UI claimants with the State's employment service

MDES has an integrated workforce registration system that captures common ES and UI data elements and provides real-time triage. Mississippi State Law requires UI claimants to enroll in the Wagner-Peyser program by requiring claimants to perform a weekly work search. The real-time triage creates an initial profile in the job match system and presents claimants with a list of jobs that may match their skills and past work experience.

3. Administration of the work test for the State unemployment compensation system

MDES Wagner-Peyser staff are cross-trained and have a process to administer the work test, including making eligibility assessments for UI claimants. Wagner-Peyser staff provide staff-assisted reemployment services to UI claimants. UI claimants also have access to self-service labor exchange features in the workforce technology system. As potential availability issues are detected by WIN Job Center staff during interviews with individuals receiving Unemployment compensation, they are reported to UI staff for adjudication.

4. Provision of referrals to and application assistance for training and education programs and resources.

MDES Wagner-Peyser staff are cross-trained to provide referrals and application assistance for training and education programs and resources. MDES utilizes a one-hour weekly staff meeting to share information with partners and to train staff. Staff are trained in the use of the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) online system where claimants can search for approved WIOA training and education programs in Mississippi. WIOA staff in the WIN Job Center are physically present to receive a warm hand-off referral and assist the claimant in their training and education needs.

i. Agricultural Outreach Plan

1. Assessment of need

Due to the low number of migrant and seasonal farm workers in Mississippi, it is considered a non-significant state relative to the Migrant and Seasonal Farm Worker (MSFW) program. The estimated number of MSFWs during the peak season in the State is 17,000. This is based on data supplied by the WIOA Title 1 section 167 National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP) grantee, other MSFW organizations, employer organizations, and federal and/or state agency data sources such as the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Employment and Training Administration (ETA).

Literature and other resources of benefit are also provided. For farmers and farmworkers with internet capability, they are introduced to the MDES website, with can help provide a full range of services and training opportunities that may be provided. MDES works with the Mississippi Delta Council to assess the unique needs of farmworkers in the state. Many farmworkers need additional training to reach self-sufficiency. During housing inspections and monitoring visits, a need for proper healthcare resources has been observed. The two most significant reported barriers to care among MSFWs are cost and language. Information on healthcare resources are made available as needed.

2. Assessment of agricultural activity in the State

Due to the low number of migrant and seasonal farm workers in Mississippi, it is considered a non-significant state relative to the Migrant and Seasonal Farm Worker (MSFW) program. The estimated number of MSFWs during the peak season in the state is 17,000. This is based on data supplied by the WIOA Title 1 section 167 National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP) grantee, other MSFW organizations, employer organizations, and federal and/or state agency data sources such as the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Employment and Training Administration (ETA). Spring, summer, and fall represent the planting to harvest seasons in the 58 counties where the majority of crops are grown. The number of seasonal farmworkers remains constant during these months with more migrant workers coming in during the harvest season (fall). The Mississippi Department of Employment Security (MDES) entered into a non-financial cooperative agreement with the Mississippi Delta Council for Farm Workers Opportunities, Inc. (MDC), which is the state's Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) 167 Grantee. MDES and MDC work together to identify major labor-intensive crop activity relative to MSFWs. MDC, in its outreach team efforts, has identified that the Delta and semi-Delta counties in the state are where 90% of MSFWs reside and work. There are small pockets of MSFWs throughout the state involved in agricultural production; however, most of the labor-intensive crops are produced in the Delta. The top five crops include broiler eggs, cotton, soybeans, forestry, corn, and cotton. Other important crops include cattle, catfish, hay, sweet potatoes, and specialty corps. Dairy and poultry farming are located in the hilly section of the state. The coastal and southeastern areas include tree farming (timber) and nursery commodities. Agricultural employers in the state are predominantly focused on hiring local workers. In instances where they are unable to obtain an adequate workforce, employers turn their focus to hiring migrant seasonal farmworkers. However, when there is a scarcity of agricultural workers, they utilize MSFWs and the H-2A and H-2B Foreign Labor

program. Agricultural employers are challenged to meet a constantly evolving market demand for commodities, which affects their economic viability. Agriculture in the state is impacted by market demand; as well as by natural disasters, such as the recent drought throughout the entire state.

3. Assessment of the unique needs of farmworkers

An assessment of migrant, seasonal, and year-round farm worker characteristics indicates that migrant and seasonal workers are predominately Hispanic during the peak season, while year-round workers are predominately African-American. Typically, migrant and seasonal workers speak Spanish and year-round workers speak English. MDC, the state NFJP 167 grantee, has bilingual staff available to assist Hispanic workers.

4. Outreach Activities:

. Contacting farmworkers who are not being reached by the normal intake activities conducted by the employment service offices.

MDES achieves many of the state's outreach goals to ensure that basic ES services are provided for MSFWs when the Office of Foreign Labor Certification (OFLC) and Wagner-Peyser outreach staff are conducting farm visits, and community visits to various local state offices where they have agreed to allow MDES outreach staff to post information, resources of local employment opportunities, and information on accessing the states online job system. The OFLC and Wagner-Peyser outreach staff will also be attending Job Fairs throughout the state where H-2A clearance orders are placed. Though Mississippi is a non-significant state, the SMA provides resource material provided by the DOL to American Job Centers by way of hand delivery or the web. The SMA attends local and state job fairs providing resource information on the MSFW program and attends local community events that have a direct impact on farm related activities.

A. Providing technical assistance to outreach staff.

The MDES Workforce Program Supervisor and the SMA provide training to MSFW outreach staff in person, remotely and electronically. Outreach staff also attends remote training provided by the Regional Monitor Advocate (RMA) and the National Monitor Advocate (NMA). In addition, they attend staff development meetings in American Job Centers to train employees and partners on services. Services provided to MSFWs in the American Job Center's includes the six basic ES services of assistance with: preparation of applications for employment, obtaining referrals to current or future employment opportunities, preparation of either ES or employment-related law complaints, referral of complaints, referral of supportive services and/or career services and assistance with making appointments and arranging transportation. As well as information on unemployment insurance. Currently, Mississippi's SMA attends basic unemployment insurance staff development training, when possible, to stay abreast of changing UI regulations. The SMA, Department Chief and outreach staff attend state, regional and national conferences such as Southeastern Employment and Training Association (SETA), National Association of State Workforce Agencies (NASWA), National SMA Leadership Training Conference, and American Farmworker Opportunity Program (AFOP) Conference. They also attend USDOL training in person and electronically.

B. Increasing outreach worker training and awareness across core program.

Outreach workers are trained on identifying UI eligibility issues. All outreach workers completed Unemployment Insurance (UI) refresher training in 2020. Outreach workers are crossed trained on all core programs. Joint training is held periodically with staff members from UI and Wagner-Peyser. Annual UI training will continue to occur for all outreach workers.

C. Providing State merit staff outreach workers professional development activities.

State merit staff outreach workers attend professional development activities. Activities include USDOL sponsored training, online training from the RAM, agency sponsored training, workforce conferences and National Veterans Training Institute courses. All outreach workers have completed a training conference on all WIOA core programs

D. Increasing outreach worker training and awareness.

MDES will be providing new Wagner-Peyser Outreach workers with full UI training within their first quarter of employment. Staff will shadow seasoned CSRs in the state Contact Center for no less than one week. Outreach workers are crossed trained on all core programs. Joint training is held periodically with staff members from UI and Wagner-Peyser. Annual UI training will continue to occur for all outreach workers.

E. Providing state outreach staff professional development activities.

State merit staff outreach workers attend professional development activities. Activities include USDOL sponsored training, online training from the Regional Monitor Advocate (RMA), agency sponsored training, workforce conferences. All outreach workers have completed a training conference on all WIOA core programs.

F. Coordinating outreach efforts with NFJP grantees.

The SWA staff person collaborates with the SMA, to coordinate with the MDC to ensure that appropriate outreach activities are carried out and conduct outreach together whenever possible. The State SWA staff, as well as staff of the MDC, which conducts the outreach to MSFW, attend appropriate conferences and training, as well as participate in DOL conference calls relative to outreach activities. The SMA conducts a quarterly electronic meeting with MDC to obtain updates on outreach and services provided during each quarter to MSFWs. The SWA staff provides appropriate training to local one-stop staff as appropriate. SWA staff also coordinates with the MDC regarding outreach and other activities.

5. Services Provided to farmworkers and agricultural employers through the one-stop delivery system

. Providing the Full Range of Employment and Training Services to the Agricultural Community,

How career and training services required under WIOA Title I will be provided to MSFWs through the one-stop centers

i How the State serves agricultural employers and how it intends to improve such services.

Staff in each MDES local one-stop and MDC work cooperatively to ensure information on each agency's services is available to MSFWs upon entering local offices. This includes MDES Grievance Procedures, which are available for dissemination the farm workers in the language prevalent among the farm worker population in that area through such means as posters, pamphlets, use of the media, and workshops.

The Mississippi Delta Council for Farm Workers Opportunities, Inc. (MDC/FWOI) was organized in 1971 as a private non-profit corporation chartered to operate programs to assist migrants and seasonal farm workers in the State of Mississippi. Its two primary objectives are to help farm workers seek alternatives to agricultural labor and to improve the agricultural lifestyle of those who wish to remain in agriculture.

As the WIOA Title 1 section 167 grantee, MDC receives a grant from the Department of Labor to address the needs of MSFW related to employment or personal needs. Some of the agencies MDC partners with to meet the personal needs of MSFW are Delta Housing and community action agencies, which offer assistance with paying utility bills, local food banks supplement food needs, health departments/agencies help with free or low-cost health and dental care, the local community college offers training and certification opportunities. MDC also provides pesticide training and farm safety training to MSFWs and makes referrals to agricultural employers for job opportunities. MDC refers MSFWs to the WIN Job Centers as appropriate for other job certifications. MDC will share quarterly MSFW Participant spreadsheet of services provided, that will be added to the LEARS quarterly report.

MDES is able to reach out to agricultural employers for job development, assistance with job orders, and to ensure that the agricultural employers are able to secure a reliable labor force. MDES staff market the services of the WIN Job Centers to agricultural employers. MDES strives to offer technical assistance to agricultural employers in a continued effort to meet their needs and requirements. Upon initial contact with the SWA, the agricultural employer must register their job order with the state's WIN Job Center. The job order includes the agricultural employer's requirement of job specifications, number of required workers, and length of employment. MDES is then able to job match applicants tailored to the specific requirements of the agricultural employer. Appropriate referrals of applicants are made to the employer. MDES will continue to work with MDC and other partnering agencies to ensure agricultural employers are continuing to be educated on MSFWs policies, procedures, and regulations.

A. Marketing the employment service complaint system to farmworkers and other farmworker advocacy groups

Outreach and resource materials are translated into languages other than English so that Limited English Proficient (LEP) clients can understand and access one-stop services. Local WIN Job Centers have access to translators via an 800-telephone number and a listing of local individuals who can provide translation services at no cost to the individual. This same information is also transmitted through the SMA who educates and explains to farmers and farmworkers alike how the complaint system works.

B. Marketing the Agricultural Recruitment System for U.S. Workers (ARS) to agricultural employers.

As a MSFW non-significant state, Mississippi strives to ensure that employment and training services required under WIOA Title I are provided to MSFWs at the WIN Job Center as well through the MDES website. As previously mentioned, services provided to MSFWs in the WIN Job Center include information on unemployment insurance, assessment, counseling, job referrals, job development contacts, training, support services and job placement assistance. Appropriate assessments for each MSFW that registers at the WIN Job Center are conducted to determine the specific employment and training needs of that worker. The MDES self-service system for employment and unemployment opportunities streamlines the process of getting immediate service that can be delivered anywhere at any time. MDES has an agricultural flyer that is posted by outreach staff throughout the state. It promotes the states online job system and how it can be accessed. Employers are handed guidance on how to access their clearance orders in the state online job system to obtain U.S. workers contact information. MDES responds to emails received from employers and agents with their request for U.S. workers contact information as well. MDES sends weekly emails to employers and agents with real time U.S. workers system-initiated staff and/or self-referrals contact information. They are then requested to respond timely with the hiring outcome. This allows MDES to update their clearance order referrals.

6. Other Requirements

. Significant MSFW One-Stop Center Staffing

A. Collaboration

MDES has renewed the MOU with the states NFJP Mississippi Delta Council (MDC), which now includes MDC

responding with a quarterly spreadsheet that provides the date, contact information, and a checklist of services provided to the MSFW. We will also be conducting joint outreach activities. MDES has reached out to one of the states leading Agricultural University to partner with them in sharing information on Education Service Center to MSFWs. MDES will be seeking to strengthen further commitment with the state Department of Agriculture and Commerce. As well as posting agricultural job opportunities in their bi-monthly Mississippi Bulletin. MDES has entered into an MOU with the state Wage and Hour Division.

B. Review and Public Comment

In developing the AOP, the SWA must solicit information and suggestions from NFJP grantees, other appropriate MSFW groups, public agencies, agricultural employer organizations, and other interested organizations. In addition, at least 45 calendar days before submitting its final AOP, the SWA must provide a proposed plan to NFJP grantees, public agencies, agricultural employer organizations, and other organizations expressing an interest and allow at least 30 days for review and comment. The SWA must: 1) Consider any comments received in formulating its final proposed AOP; 2) Inform all commenting parties in writing whether their comments have been incorporated and, if not, the reasons therefore; and 3) Transmit the comments and recommendations received and its responses with the submission of the AOP.

The AOP must include a statement confirming NFJP grantees, other appropriate MSFW groups, public agencies, agricultural employer organizations and other interested employer organizations have been given an opportunity to comment on the AOP. Include the list of organizations from which information and suggestions were solicited, any comments received, and responses to those comments.

The State Monitor Advocate works for MDES; and was afforded the opportunity to review and comment on the Program Year 2024 AOP.

The AOP must include a statement confirming NFJP grantees, other appropriate MSFW groups, public agencies, agricultural employer organizations and other interested employer organizations have been given an opportunity to comment on the AOP. Include the list of organizations from which information and suggestions were solicited, any comments received, and responses to those comments.

The Mississippi AOP for Program Year 2024 was sent for review by the 167 NFJP grantee, and at the discretion of the NFJP, other interested groups affiliated with the NFJP will be given an opportunity to comment on the state AOP. The NFJP approved of the AOP.

The plan will be posted on the MDES public web site available to the public for review and comment.

The AOP must include a statement confirming NFJP grantees, other appropriate MSFW groups, public agencies, agricultural employer organizations and other interested employer organizations have been given an opportunity to comment on the AOP. Include the list of organizations from which information and suggestions were solicited, any comments received, and responses to those comments.

The Mississippi AOP for Program Year 2024 was reviewed by the 167 NFJP grantee, and at the discretion of the NFJP other interested groups affiliated with the NFJP were given an opportunity to comment on the state AOP.
The plan was posted on the MDES public web site available to the public for review and comment. Although solicited, no additional information and no comments were received.

C. Data Assessment

Review the previous four years Wagner-Peyser Act data reports on performance. Note whether the State has been meeting its goals to provide MSFWs quantitatively proportionate services as compared to non-MSFWs. If it has not met these goals, explain why the State believes such goals were not met and how the State intends to improve its

provision of services in order to meet such goals.
E, While Mississippi is a non-significant MSFW state, ongoing training occurs to identify all MSFW's that visit American Job Centers. Mississippi strives to ensure delivery of services both qualitatively and quantitatively to our non-significant MSFW population. Ongoing training will occur to ensure all goals are achieved that MDES has not met of the ERIs, however, MDES was successful in hiring two MSFW Outreach staffers in July of 2024. With the training and placement of the outreach staff coupled with the program supervisor creating a training power point to be shared with all local office managers and staff, this will ensure that AJC staff are providing the required services. MDES will also do an assessment of additional methods of data collection to track quantitatively proportionate services performed. Having the new outreach staff will increase the State's performance. The SMA position was not filled until June of 2023. The SMA position was vacated in March of 2025. Since then, the program supervisor was appointed November 1, 2025, as the new SMA.

D. Assessment of Progress

MDES is completing the 2-year update of the AOP for Program Year 2024 in accordance with DOL guidance. PY 2023 data is the most recent data.

Previous year's history based on Program Year (PY) 2024 data:

- Approximately 1,995 agricultural job orders and openings were received.
- There were no agricultural job orders filled entirely by MSFWs.
- Most job orders were filled with a combination of H2A and MSFW applicants totaling 100%.
- There were 919 intrastate clearance orders received.
- There were 1,076 interstate clearance orders initiated.
- Approximately 7,829 guest agricultural workers were requested by Mississippi Farming employers.
- Most job orders filled will be a combination of H2A and MSFW applicants totaling 100%.
- Approximately 1% of the job orders are expected to be filled by MSFWs.

E. State Monitor Advocate

The plan must contain a statement confirming the State Monitor Advocate has reviewed and approved the AOP.

Wagner-Peyser Assurances

The State Plan must include	Included
1. The Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service is co-located with one-stop centers or a plan and timeline has been developed to comply with this requirement within a reasonable amount of time (sec 121(e)(3));	Yes
2. If the State has significant MSFW one-stop centers, the State agency is complying with the requirements under 20 CFR 653.111, State Workforce Agency staffing requirements;	No
3. If a State Workforce Development Board, department, or agency administers State laws for vocational rehabilitation of persons with disabilities, that board, department, or agency cooperates with the agency that administers Wagner-Peyser Act services, Adult and Dislocated Worker programs and Youth Programs under Title I; and	Yes

4. SWA officials: 1. Initiate the discontinuation of services; 2. Make the determination that services need to be discontinued; 3. Make the determination to reinstate services after the services have been discontinued; 4. Approve corrective action plans; 5. Approve the removal of an employer's clearance orders from interstate or intrastate clearance if the employer was granted conditional access to ARS and did not come into compliance within 5 calendar days; 6. Enter into agreements with State and Federal enforcement agencies for enforcement-agency staff to conduct field checks on the SWAs' behalf (if the SWA so chooses); and 7. Decide whether to consent to the withdrawal of complaints if a party who requested a hearing wishes to withdraw its request for hearing in writing before the hearing.	Yes

Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Programs

j. Aligning of Content Standards

The Office of Adult Education (OAE) adopted the College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS) for Adult Education released by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE), to ensure adult education instruction remains rigorous and aligned with Mississippi's K-12 challenging academic content standards adopted under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). This alignment strengthens instructional consistency across educational systems and supports adult learners as they build the skills needed for postsecondary training, employment, and long-term success.

The OAE provides structured professional learning focused on how to integrate CCRS into curriculum, lesson planning, instructional delivery, and assessment practices to ensure instructors understand the importance of this alignment and can apply the standards effectively. The OAE offers the Standards Foundational Courses housed in Canvas, a cloud-based learning management system that allows educators to access training in an innovative online format. These on-demand courses provide in-depth instruction on CCRS English Language Arts (ELA) and CCRS Mathematics, and completion is required for all new adult education teachers entering Mississippi programs. Additionally, the OAE offers a course titled *Teachers Mentoring Teachers,* designed to strengthen instructional leadership and support teacher retention through peer mentoring. This course introduces the critical role of lead teachers in guiding and supporting instructors, particularly new educators, as they work to comprehend and integrate CCRS into daily instruction. Through structured learning and practical examples, participants develop strategies for coaching, collaborative problem solving, and reinforcing standards-aligned instruction across classrooms.

In addition to foundational training, the OAE provides ongoing support to strengthen implementation by offering professional development on the most current evidence-based instructional practices and emerging tools that support CCRS-aligned curriculum design. Training sessions include demonstrations of artificial intelligence (AI) tools that educators can use to align lessons to CCRS, differentiate instruction, and strengthen curriculum planning. These tools increase efficiency, improve instructional consistency, and promote more intentional, standards-based teaching across programs statewide.

As part of the monitoring process, the state staff evaluates how local programs implement CCRS within instructional plans, program operations, and student learning outcomes through a combination of documentation review and on-site monitoring. Monitoring activities include reviewing instructional materials, lesson plans, and programming evidence of standards alignment, as well as conducting classroom observations to assess how CCRS are integrated into daily instruction. Observers provide detailed feedback to instructors and program directors to support continuous improvement and ensure ongoing fidelity to standards of implementation.

k. Local Activities

Adult Education and Literacy Activities (Section 203 of WIOA), include: Adult education; Literacy; Workplace adult education and literacy activities; Family literacy activities; English language acquisition activities; Integrated English literacy and civics education; Workforce preparation activities; or Integrated education and training.

The OAE is strategically shaping its plan to administer the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014 – Title II Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA). This plan positions the OAE as the pivotal agency responsible for strengthening the state's talent pipeline, improving literacy, and increasing economic mobility for Mississippians. Through statewide partnerships, evidence-based instruction, sector-focused training, and innovative

credentialing pathways, the OAE remains committed to advancing student success and aligning with the goals outlined in the State Plan. The OAE is responsible for overseeing the allocation of funds to eligible providers and ensuring programmatic and performance oversight. The overarching objective is to advance adult education and literacy services statewide across all 82 counties, consistent with the goals outlined in the State Plan.

Adult education provides comprehensive academic and workforce preparation services statewide through face-to-face, online, and hybrid delivery models, ensuring equitable access to education and training opportunities across Mississippi. Services include Adult Basic Education (ABE), Adult Secondary Education (ASE), High School Equivalency (HSE) preparation, and English as Second Language (ESL). Mississippi offers multiple recognized pathways to earning a High School Equivalency Diploma (HSE), enabling adults to transition seamlessly into employment, training, or postsecondary education. Foundational workforce preparation is supported through the Smart Start Pathway Course and preparation for the National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC), while accelerated models such as Mississippi Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (MIBEST) support concurrent instruction and workforce training aligned with in-demand occupations.

To drive this vision forward, the OAE will focus on building, expanding, and scaling comprehensive career pathways systems across every adult education program. The aim is to achieve the expansion of evidence-based models, enhancing the overall effectiveness of adult education initiatives focusing on the following:

- Strengthen College and Career Readiness for Adult Learners: The OAE will provide training and support to eligible providers, preparing adult learners for success in postsecondary education and the workforce. Emphasizing the Smart Start Course, based on the U.S. Department of Education's Employability Skills Framework, will be integral to this goal. The Smart Start Course was developed by the OAE and is an educational initiative aimed at equipping individuals with essential academic foundational knowledge and job readiness skills. Individuals not only gain fundamental education but also benefit from the ACT® WorkKeys Curriculum. This integration empowers individuals with a unique opportunity to earn the National Career Readiness Certificate®.
- Develop Multi-Level Career Pathways Options: The OAE aims to enable the creation of multiple entry points into postsecondary education tailored to various functioning levels of adult education learners. These pathways will align with identified student readiness levels and lead to credentials, certifications, and degrees that open doors to employment in high-growth, family-supporting jobs.
- Increase Postsecondary Transitions and Credential Attainment: By providing support and training to eligible providers, the OAE aims to ensure that students seamlessly transition to postsecondary education or training, earning in-demand credentials for self-sustaining employment. The integration of adult education with occupational education and training will be a key focus, promoting the development of career pathways systems.

The OAE employs a competitive Request for Proposal (RFP) process to identify, assess, and award multi-year grants to eligible providers. The OAE uses the same application process for all eligible providers which includes Adult Education (Section 231), Corrections Education and other Institutionalized Individuals (Section 225), and Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE) (Section 243).

Eligible providers may include:

- Local education agency
- Community-based or faith-based organization
- Volunteer literacy organization
- Institutions of higher education

- Public or private nonprofit agency
- Library
- Public housing authority
- Nonprofit institution with the ability to provide adult education and literacy services
- Consortium or coalition of agencies, organizations, institutions, libraries, or authorities described above
- Partnership between an employer and an entity described above

Eligible individuals include those who have attained 16 years of age; are not enrolled or required to be enrolled in secondary school under the State law; and are basic skills deficient, do not have a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, or are English language learners.

The current multi-year award period is from July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2030, and the OAE follows the following process in awarding grants or contracts to eligible providers:

- The OAE awards competitive multiyear grants or contracts to eligible providers within the State to enable the eligible providers to develop, implement, and improve adult education and literacy activities within the State.
- The OAE requires each eligible provider to establish or operate programs that provide adult education and literacy activities, including programs that provide such activities concurrently.
- The OAE ensures that all eligible providers have direct and equitable access to apply and compete for grants or contracts; the same grant or contract announcement and application processes are used for all eligible providers in the State.
- The OAE ensures each eligible agency awarding a grant or contract under this section shall not use any funds made available under this title for adult education and literacy activities for the purpose of supporting and providing programs, services, or activities for individuals who are under the age of 16 and are enrolled or required to be enrolled in secondary school under State law, except that such agency may use funds for such purpose if such programs, services, or activities are related to family literacy activities. In providing family literacy activities under this title, an eligible provider shall attempt to coordinate with programs and services that are not assisted under this title prior to using funds for adult education and literacy activities under this title for activities other than activities for eligible individuals.
- The OAE ensures all eligible providers identify how they will address the thirteen considerations as specified in WIOA, Title II, Sec. 231 (e) are used as the basis to determine funding decisions, as well as to ensure that applicants only use AEFLA grant funds to serve eligible individuals as specified in WIOA section 203(4).

The open competition is consistent with the standards of 34 CFR Part 463 Subpart C. The grant competition is publicized through a variety of print and electronic media throughout the state as well as on the MCCB website. MS will run all its competitions (225, 231, and 243) in accordance with 34 CFR Part 463 Subpart C. This ensures all applications are evaluated using the same rubric and scoring criteria.

Applicants are evaluated using a scoring rubric that includes:

- The thirteen considerations
- Alignment to the local workforce development board (LWDB) strategies and goals
- Description of strategies and activities that promote concurrent enrollment with title I services and core partner responsibilities
- Data collection process
- Demonstrated effectiveness
- Program performance and
- The ability to provide services that meet the needs of the target population

As required by WIOA Section 107(d)(11)(B), the RFP process also includes a procedure to ensure the applicable LWDBs review the application and provide comments and/or recommendations regarding the application's alignment to the strategies and goals of the local plan under Section 108 of WIOA.

In preparation for the competition, the OAE reviews the most current U.S. Census and American Community Survey data, along with regional-specific labor market information, setting new enrollment targets for applicants. The application process places a strong emphasis on addressing barriers to equitable access and participation, as outlined in Section 427 of the General Education Provision Act (GEPA), ensuring a fair and inclusive opportunity for all.

In terms of eligible providers, the OAE recognizes organizations demonstrating effectiveness in providing adult education activities. To meet the standard of demonstrated effectiveness and be considered eligible, an applicant must provide evidence of demonstrated effectiveness by providing 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 this application for funds.

To be considered eligible, an applicant must also provide information regarding its outcomes for participants related to employment, attainment of secondary school diploma (or its recognized equivalent), and transition to postsecondary education and training. See WIOA Final Rules Subpart C, §463.24.

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

There are two ways an eligible provider may meet the requirements of demonstrated effectiveness:

- Applicants previously funded under WIOA Title II must submit performance data required under Section 116 to demonstrate past effectiveness
- Applicants not previously funded under WIOA Title II, must provide performance data to demonstrate past effectiveness in serving basic skills deficient eligible individuals, including evidence of success in achieving outcomes

Applicants applying as a consortium must submit demonstrated effectiveness data for each member of the consortium to determine if each member is an eligible provider of demonstrated effectiveness. Each applicant requesting funds is required to include a description of the steps the applicant proposes to take to ensure equitable access to and participation in its federally assisted program for students, teachers, and other program beneficiaries with special needs. Section 427 of the GEPA highlights six types of barriers that can impede equitable access or participation: gender, race, national origin, color, disability, or age. Based on local circumstances, applicants determine whether these or other barriers may prevent participation in the program or activities and outline in their applications the specific steps they intend to take to overcome any identified barriers.

All AEFLA-funded programs are mandated to incorporate within their RFP a comprehensive outline detailing the proactive measures intended to ensure equitable access and participation for teachers, students, and other program beneficiaries with special needs, as mandated by Section 427 of the GEPA. This statute discerns six potential barriers—gender, race, national origin, color, disability, or age—that might impede fair access or participation. Local programs are to assess these barriers to determine if they prevent students, teachers, etc. from participating in the project and/or services. In addition, local programs must identify the steps proposed to mitigate these obstacles. The

OAE monitors each local program's compliance with their stated GEPA plan, which is submitted as part of their application.
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In its role as the coordinating body for the Mississippi community colleges, the MCCB strongly advocates for full compliance with federal and state nondiscrimination laws and executive orders. Emphasizing the importance of equal employment opportunities, the MCCB urges each community college under its purview to eliminate any form of exclusion, denial of benefits, or discrimination based on gender, race, national origin, color, disability, age, or any other protected group within their programs or activities. The MCCB is committed to the principles of equal educational and employment opportunity.
The OAE aligns its practices with this guidance and Section 427 of the GEPA when administering federal Title II Adult Education and Family Literacy Act funds, including

State Leadership funds designated for professional development.
The OAE is dedicated to ensuring comprehensive access, participation, and suitable educational opportunities for all recipients of federally funded local adult education programs, encompassing faculty, staff, and students with special needs. The OAE ensures that activities, programs, and services are designed to be accessible to all stakeholders with special needs, facilitating their full participation in projects and/or services. To cater to the diverse needs of students, faculty, community members, and other participants, the OAE provides reasonable and appropriate accommodations. For instance, professional development initiatives are conducted through face-to-face, virtual, and/or online hybrid formats to maximize accessibility for all adult education faculty and staff.
Adult learners in Mississippi often face barriers that may impede equitable access to education and workforce training opportunities. These barriers may include economic disadvantage, transportation challenges, and limited access to reliable broadband or digital devices—particularly in rural areas where geographic distance and infrastructure limitations can affect participation. Mississippi's adult learners may also experience barriers related to limited English proficiency, disabilities requiring accommodations, housing insecurity, or competing responsibilities such as employment, childcare, or caregiving. Recognizing that many of Mississippi's counties are rural and that adult learners often balance multiple responsibilities while pursuing education and training, the OAE works with local providers to design programs that are responsive to the diverse needs of adult learners across the state.
To address these barriers, the OAE supports local adult education providers in implementing strategies that expand access and participation. Adult education staff meet with adult learners periodically throughout their education and training journey to proactively provide strategies to mitigate barriers; therefore, the timeline is ongoing. The first interaction is during orientation and follow up occurs as adult learners meet milestones or earlier if barriers are self-reported or identified by adult education staff. In addition, providers offer flexible instructional delivery models, including face-to-face, hybrid, and distance learning options, to support working adults and those with transportation or scheduling limitations. Programs provide reasonable accommodations and accessible instructional materials to ensure participation by individuals with disabilities and offer English language acquisition services for individuals with limited English proficiency. Additionally, adult education programs work closely with Mississippi's

WIOA core partners to help connect students to workforce training, employment services, and supportive resources. Through referral systems such as the MS Works Hub, adult education providers can make real-time referrals to workforce partners and community organizations to address needs related to employment, childcare, transportation, and other supportive services that may affect a learner's ability to participate in educational programs.
Implementation of these strategies occurs throughout the program year and across the duration of the AEFLA grant cycle. Local providers develop GEPA plans during the competitive grant application process and implement these strategies as part of their program operations. The OAE monitors progress through annual program reviews, data analysis, and monitoring activities to ensure that local programs are effectively identifying and addressing barriers to participation. Ongoing technical assistance and professional development are provided to support equitable

program delivery and to strengthen collaboration with workforce and community partners. Through these coordinated efforts, the MCCB and OAE remain committed to ensuring that adult education services are accessible to all eligible individuals across Mississippi and that barriers to participation are addressed in alignment with the goals of the state's workforce development system.

The funds allocated to local providers are intended to establish and operate programs that provide adult education and literacy activities and services to learners meeting the statutory definition of an eligible individual as defined in Section 203. Adult education and literacy activities and services as defined in Section 203 include adult education, literacy, workplace adult education and literacy activities, family literacy activities, English Language Acquisition (ELA) activities, Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE), workforce preparation activities, and Integrated Education and Training (IET),

Furthermore, providers are required to implement evidence-based and research-based strategies that accelerate learning and promote readiness for postsecondary education and employment. This commitment includes standards-based instruction, technology integration and distance learning, career pathways development, postsecondary bridge programs, alignment of services through concurrent enrollment, and collaborative agreements with the local WIN Job Centers.

The success of this comprehensive plan hinges on effective collaboration, data-driven decision-making, and a commitment to meeting the diverse needs of adult learners. The OAE's forward-looking approach positions it as a catalyst for positive change, ensuring that adult education in Mississippi evolves to meet the demands of the 21st-century workforce and aligns with the broader goals of the State Plan and federal legislation.

l. Corrections Education and other Education of Institutionalized Individuals

The OAE is dedicated to advancing the educational opportunities for incarcerated individuals through the allocation of Section 225 grant funds. To streamline the award process, we employ the same RFP process and timeline outlined for Section 231 funds, adhering to the guidelines outlined in Adult Education and Literacy Activities (Section 203 of WIOA).

Our commitment to fostering excellence in correctional education is underscored by the implementation of multi-year (five-year) grants, awarded through a rigorous and competitive RFP process. Evaluation of applications is conducted systematically, utilizing the 13 considerations outlined in Title II of WIOA. Notably, priority will be accorded to initiatives catering to individuals likely to exit correctional institutions within five years of program participation. The next RFP will be held in 2030.

Services offered include adult education and literacy activities, special education (as determined by the agency), integrated education and training, career pathways, concurrent enrollment, peer tutoring, and transition to re-entry

initiatives, aligning with our overarching goal of reducing recidivism (Section 225(b)).

The OAE will continue collaborating with correctional facilities, aligning curriculum, student performance standards, data accountability systems, and teacher/peer tutor training. A focal point of our efforts involves developing programs that seamlessly integrate basic skills instruction with essential life skills, digital literacy, and employability skills, as found in the Smart Start Course. This holistic approach ensures students acquire the multifaceted abilities necessary for sustained self-sufficiency post-incarceration.

Ongoing collaboration between the OAE and correctional facilities ensures instructional activities align with regional needs. Correctional facilities play an instrumental role in the referral process, guiding individuals toward adult education programs in their release areas and local community colleges. In addition, through collaborative efforts with employers and community leaders, students have the opportunity to participate in job fairs and mock interviews.

Within the correctional facilities, participants meet with counselors who link them to external reentry/rehabilitation services through the various core partners for post-release success. Participants who earn their high school equivalency are encouraged to enroll in college programs, if available, while incarcerated as well as after release.

The OAE remains steadfast in providing comprehensive technical assistance, advising, and on-site guidance to assist in correctional education programs in the development and implementation of IET programs. The primary focus is on the development of new programs tailored to Mississippi's workforce needs, the creation of multi-level career pathways with stackable credential opportunities, and the refinement of processes to incorporate contextualized instruction, a single set of learning objectives, and team-teaching methodologies. This commitment ensures that our correctional education programs remain dynamic, relevant, and aligned with the evolving landscape of education and workforce demands.

m. Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education Program

Funding Eligible Providers: The OAE awards Section 243 grant funds for Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE) programs using the same RFP process and timeline described for Section 231 and 225 funds; see Adult Education and Literacy Activities (Section 203 of WIOA) above. The OAE awards multi-year (five-year) grants to eligible providers through a competitive RFP. The review of applications includes evaluation based on the 13 considerations outlined in Title II of WIOA. All applications are evaluated using the same rubric and scoring criteria. Applicants provide narrative details to demonstrate how they will meet the criteria. Eligible providers showcasing demonstrated effectiveness in providing adult education and literacy activities are eligible to apply for WIOA Section 243 funding. The funds are aimed at preparing adult English Language Learners, including professionals with degrees and credentials in their native countries, for unsubsidized employment in in-demand industries and occupations leading to economic self-sufficiency. The next RFP awards grants for the term from July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2030.

Service to Adult Language Learners: IELCE providers are to ensure English language learners achieve competency in the English language as well as equip them with skills needed to, not only become citizens, but connect them to unsubsidized employment in in-demand industries and occupations that lead to economic self-sufficiency.

Through English language acquisition classes, instruction focuses on speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills needed for basic English competency. Students acquire an understanding of the American system of government, individual freedom, and the responsibilities of citizenship as well as instruction on the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and civic participation. Classes also include digital literacy and workplace preparation to prepare English language learners for occupations that lead to family sustaining employment.

English language learners can enroll in the Smart Start course, MS' job readiness course, that focuses on job search

strategies, financial literacy, and workplace essential skills. Students are introduced to the top job sectors of the state as well as training or education needed to connect to the employers. Once students finish the course, they are eligible to take ACT's WorkKeys assessments leading to the National Career Readiness Certificate which serves as an on ramp for various pathways.

Programs applying for IELCE funds under Section 243 are required to offer an IET program as well as provide extensive data to demonstrate the need and potential success of IELCE activities in conjunction with integrated education and training in the proposed service area.

Through MS' multi-level career pathway, IELCE programs collaborate with workforce development and career-technical departments to develop pathways linking basic skills to specific educational or career interests that eventually lead to enrolling in Mississippi's Integrated Education and Basic Training (MIBEST) initiative.

MIBEST allows students to be concurrently enrolled in adult education and literacy activities while enrolled in workforce or career-technical education, whether at a community college, K-12 system, or community partner. Each IELCE provider employs at least one (1) College and Career Navigator to provide wrap-around support and guidance, as well as coordinate activities connecting students to further educational or training and employment opportunities.

Through partnerships with workforce agencies and employers, participants are co-enrolled in IELCE, and workforce training opportunities aligned with regional labor market needs. The program shares resources and information with one-stop partners to ensure a coordinated approach to serving English Language Learners and utilizes the WIN Job Center to connect participants to employment, training, and supportive services.

Mississippi has four designated LWDBs that are tasked with selecting and identifying target sectors while developing goals and activities to address the workforce needs in their respective economies. Aligning with the identified sector strategies, Mississippi's community colleges provide training and education, through short-term workforce training and/or career-technical education to Mississippians, giving focus to specific industries important to a region.

IELCE providers collaborate with the LWDBs in order to ensure alignment between education and training activities to support the local area strategic plan. LWDB representatives review applications and provide feedback ensuring programs are responsive to regional labor market demands. The IELCE provider is to take the LWDBs' recommendations and modify current activities to align with and support the local workforce plan.

n. State Leadership

Required State Leadership Activities
Utilization of State Leadership Funds
In accordance with the directives outlined in Section 223 of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), Mississippi strategically leverages state leadership funds to reinforce its adult education landscape. These funds support initiatives aimed at enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of workforce development efforts across the state. Through allocation and planning, Mississippi ensures that these resources are maximized to align with both state and local workforce development plans, fostering a collaborative ecosystem that prioritizes data-driven decision-making and evidence-based practices.

Alignment of Activities with Core Programs and One-Stop Partners
In Mississippi, core workforce partners maintain strong working relationships at the state and local levels to support coordination of education, workforce, and supportive services. While a fully unified common intake process across partners is still under development, agencies collaborate through shared training opportunities, information exchange, and coordinated referral practices. The OAE supports this coordination by providing guidance to local providers and

encouraging collaboration with workforce partners and employers at the regional and local levels. Local adult education directors and Community College Navigator (CCNs) are encouraged to participate in district job fairs and employer engagement activities in partnership with LWDBs and WIN Job Centers. In addition, the OAE offers a monthly professional development opportunity titled Workforce Wednesday, which features core partners such as the Mississippi Department of Employment Security (MDES), the Mississippi Department of Human Services (MDHS), and the Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services (MDRS), and other industry leaders who share their roles, services, and how they support education and workforce alignment across the state.

As part of Mississippi's workforce alignment strategy, local adult education programs are required to ensure that participants establish a MS Works account, connecting individuals to the state's labor exchange system and their local WIN Job Center. Access to career services is provided through a combination of adult education staff physically located at WIN Job Centers and direct linkage through technology. Several adult education programs operate in classrooms within WIN Job Centers, facilitating access to outreach, intake, orientation, referrals, and initial assessment services. Beyond physical co-location, adult education programs demonstrate strong coordination and integration with WIN Job Centers through shared staffing, communication, and service alignment.

All Title II funded programs are required to coordinate and align services with the four LWDBs, including participation in local workforce planning and activities that support alignment, concurrent enrollment, and the achievement of state-adjusted performance levels. Additionally, adult education providers outline their strategies for fulfilling one-stop responsibilities in their regions, promoting service integration and accountability.

- Collaborative Partnerships and Integration of Services: State leaderships funds support collaboration with WIOA core programs and one-stop partners to ensure seamless service delivery and efficient use of resources. AE collaborates closely with workforce and CTE partners, leveraging established partnerships with employers to align services to better meet the needs of adult learned and regional workforce demand. AE services are integrated within the one-stop delivery system to enhance access and efficiency, streamline referrals and coordination, and reduce barriers for adult learners, ensuring they receive comprehensive support as they progress through education, training, and eventually employment leading to a family sustaining wage.
- Mutual Agreements: Written agreements are developed with core programs and one-stop partners to define roles, responsibilities, and strategies for effective collaboration, referral processes, and shared accountability for outcomes and, where applicable, address cost-sharing responsibilities consistent with one-stop partner requirements. These agreements establish a framework for coordinated action and collective impact across the workforce system.
- Career Pathways: Mississippi advances career pathways by aligning adult education instruction with workforce training and credential requirements identified through workforce development and career and technical education (CTE) partnerships. These pathways are aligned with priority industry sectors identified by AccelerateMS, ensuring consistency across adult education, workforce, and CTE systems. Adult education utilizes multiple on ramps to support participant entry and acceleration across pathways, including digital literacy, Smart Start, the NCRC, and MIBEST. These strategies allow participants to build foundational skills, employability skills, and workforce readiness concurrently while progressing toward occupational training and stackable, employer-recognized credentials aligned with regional workforce demand.

High-Quality Professional Development Programs

The OAE uses Section 223 leadership funds to carry out allowable statewide activities by designing and delivering professional development that strengthens system alignment, improves instructional quality, and enhances workforce outcomes. These efforts directly align with federal and state visions for a demand-driven, skills-based workforce system by building provider capacity around integrated education and training, career pathways, employer engagement, and cross-agency coordination.

The OAE uses a structured and data-informed approach to determine professional development priorities and ensure all required components are addressed. Professional development planning begins with a comprehensive statewide needs assessment survey distributed annually to all adult education program staff, including instructors, directors, and support personnel. The survey gathers input on instructional challenges, content-specific needs, implementation of College and Career Readiness Standards, assessment practices, digital literacy, integrated education and training, workforce alignment, and emerging priorities impacting adult learners. Results from the survey are analyzed to identify trends, gaps, and targeted areas for improvement, which directly inform the design, sequencing, and delivery of professional development opportunities offered throughout the year.

Professional development covers core subject areas such as reading and math literacy to equip teachers with practical strategies to help adult learners strengthen foundational skills. Reading literacy topics incorporate the most rigorous and scientifically valid research available with a focus on phonics, phonemic awareness, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Math literacy covers numeracy that focuses on applying conceptual learning and other key components such as number and operation, measurement and shape, data, statistics, and probability, and patterns. These trainings are given primarily through a live virtual session to make them accessible for all participants across the state. The OAE seeks qualified instructors and trainers with a demonstrated history of knowledge and success in these areas. Additional training topics focus on adult learners with learning disabilities, along with separate sessions and technical assistance to refer and address the unique needs of individuals with mental health concerns. The goal of these sessions is to offer comprehensive guidance that supports both personal and academic growth.

Digital literacy is a key emphasis, as it is essential for workforce engagement and everyday life. Professional development offerings include training on artificial intelligence (AI) tools and applications to support instruction and service delivery. These sessions focus on the use of AI to assist educators in identifying learning challenges, adapting instructional materials, and developing targeted supports for learners with learning disabilities. Governor Tate Reeves has positioned Mississippi as an early adopter of artificial intelligence, launching major initiatives and executive actions to integrate AI into the state's economy and government. A cornerstone of this strategy is the Mississippi Artificial Intelligence Network (MAIN), designated as the nation's first and only statewide AI network. The OAE partners with the MAIN led by Dr. Kollin Napier, to provide training for adult education staff across the state to ensure high quality alignment to the direct needs of Mississippians and the latest models and practices in AI.

Professional development also strengthens workforce connections by helping staff build knowledge of Mississippi's workforce priorities, regional industries, and high-demand career pathways. Through training sessions and guest speakers, educators learn about workforce resources and opportunities across the state so they can better guide students toward career awareness, continued training, and employment. Strengthening these connections remains an important outcome, ensuring adult education programs not only support academic progress, but also help students move into long-term career pathways that lead to greater stability. The OAE recruits top leaders in different industries along with core partners to share their knowledge and current or new initiatives during a monthly training session called "Workforce Wednesday" that is available for all staff in adult ed around the state.

To ensure continuous improvement and training effectiveness, the OAE monitors and evaluates the quality of professional development through post-training evaluation surveys administered after each training session. These surveys collect participant feedback on relevance, clarity, applicability, and overall quality of the training, as well as the extent to which the content supports instructional practice and program implementation. Feedback is reviewed on an ongoing basis to assess outcomes, refine future training, and adjust content, delivery methods, and technical assistance. This continuous feedback loop allows the OAE to strengthen professional development offerings, respond to evolving program needs, and maintain a high standard of evidence-based training across the statewide adult education system.

All virtual training sessions are recorded and uploaded to a Canvas course, so educators can access webinars on

demand. The OAE grounds professional development in research-based strategies and best practices, helping staff stay current on trends and innovations in adult education. These state-sponsored efforts strengthen instructional techniques, assessment practices, and learner support services, which improve instruction and overall program effectiveness statewide.

Technical Assistance

Mississippi recognizes the importance of providing technical assistance to adult education programs to enhance their capacity and effectiveness. Through targeted technical assistance initiatives, state leadership funds are leveraged to provide guidance and support in areas such as program improvement, data management, and service delivery.

- Program Improvement Support: Technical assistance is provided to support program improvement efforts with a strong focus on data management, analysis, and performance outcomes. Monthly data calls are conducted with local programs to review data quality, ensure accuracy and completeness, and address issues in real time. This assistance helps programs identify areas for improvement and implement strategies to enhance program effectiveness and strengthen outcomes.
- Workforce Alignment Support: Technical assistance is provided to strengthen adult education programs' roles as one-stop partners, including guidance on coordinated service delivery, referrals, and alignment with employment and training services. In anticipation of Title II to the US Department of Labor, the OAE is providing guidance to prepare programs for expanded workforce alignment, increased coordination with Title I and Wagner-Peyser partners, and evolving expectations under WIOA.
- Guidance on Service Delivery: Programs receive guidance on service delivery models, intake procedures, and referral processes to streamline operations and improve the overall learner experience. This includes technical assistance on intake and orientation requirements, such as PRWORA-related eligibility awareness and documentation, to ensure consistent implementation across programs. Technical assistance ensures that adult education programs are equipped with the knowledge and resources necessary to deliver high-quality learner-centered services while maintaining compliance and supporting appropriate funds.
- Resource Allocation: Technical assistance supports programs to allocate resources effectively to meet the needs of adult learners and achieve program goals. This includes guidance on aligning staff, instructional delivery, and support services with enrollment trends, performance data, and local workforce demand. Programs also receive guidance on allowable and strategic use of funds, including investments in professional development and staff training, such as travel to state and national training opportunities, to strengthen instructional quality data capacity, and workforce alignment. In addition, technical assistance supports the effective use and coordination of multiple funding sources to sustain services and maximize the impact of state leadership funds.

Monitoring and Evaluation

To ensure accountability and continuous improvement, Mississippi conducts monitoring and evaluation activities to track the effectiveness of state leadership funds in supporting adult education programs. These activities provide valuable insights into program performance and inform decision-making processes.

- Performance Tracking: State leadership funds support ongoing monitoring and evaluation activities to track performance indicators and outcomes. Mississippi collects and analyzes programmatic and performance data through multiple systems, including LACES for current-year enrollment, MSGs, and credential attainment, and the SLDS to assess post-exit outcomes such as employment median earnings, and continued education and training. In addition, Mississippi utilizes the State Wage Interchange System (STWIS) to identify employment outcomes for participants who are employed outside the state. These data are used to assess the impact of state leadership investments, support continuous improvement, and identify areas to target and provide technical assistance.

- Accountability Measures: Monitoring ensures accountability in the use of funds and compliance with program requirements. Title II programs are required to submit monthly reimbursement requests supported by detailed expenditure documentation. The OAE, in coordination with MCCB/s Office of Finance & Administration, reviews these submissions to ensure costs are allowable, reasonable, and allocable in accordance with grant requirements. Fiscal monitoring is integrated with programmatic oversight to ensure expenditures align with approved activities and support adult education goals.
- Data-Informed Decision Making: Evaluation and monitoring activities inform decision-making by identifying trends, risks, and opportunities for improvement. Mississippi uses multiple data sources, including performance outcomes, fiscal reports, and the Quarterly Desktop Monitoring Tool (DMT), to assess program implementation and compliance. The DMT captures key indicators such as enrollment, retention, financial assistance types, IET participation, and MSGs. Findings from these reviews guide target technical assistance, inform monitoring priorities, and support continuous program improvement.

Permissible State Leadership Activities
Utilization of State Leadership Funds
The OAE has selected three (3) permissible activities to focus on to support the goals of the state plan.

1. Permissible Activity, Section 223 (A) (2)(E) The provision of assistance to eligible providers in developing and implementing programs that achieve the objectives of this title and in measuring the progress of those programs in achieving such objectives, including meeting the State adjusted levels of performance described in section 116(b)(3).

The OAE provides ongoing, state-ed technical assistance and instructional impact training to support eligible providers in implementing effective adult education programs and in accurately measuring progress toward the State-adjusted levels of performance describe in Section 116(b)(3). This assistance includes monthly data calls for local data specialist that address a range of data quality, assessment, and performance topics, such as National Reporting System (NRS) requirements, updates to NRS tables, assessment practices, and accurate data entry and validation, including the recording of high school equivalency (HSE) credentials and career and training outcomes.

The OAE also conducts monthly director shop talks and annual LACES training to strengthen program leadership and data literacy, with emphasis on reviewing assessment search reports to ensure appropriate assessments are administered, educational functioning level progression, capturing average daily attendance, and analyzing enrollment trends and performance across age groups. A portion of state leadership funds is used for procurement of the LACES data management and student information system.

In addition, the state provides guidance on the development and documentation of Integrated Education and Training (IET) programs that incorporate team teaching and contextualized instruction. IET participants are appropriately identified and tracked within the state's data management system to support instructional planning, student progression, and end-of-year reporting, as needed. In alignmnet with AccelerateMS' guidance, the State workforce agency aimed at enhancing workforce development and economic growth in Mississippi, providers are also trained to understand their local workforce ecosystem, priority occupations and sectors, as career pathways are developed. Collectively, these efforts support informed instruction, goal-setting, and continuous program involvement.

2. Permissible Activity, Section 223 (A)(2)(F) The development and implementation of a system to assist in the transition from adult education to postsecondary education, including linkages with postsecondary educational institutions or institutions of higher education.

The Office of Adult Education establishes clear expectations for eligible providers to implement and maintain a coordinated transition system that supports adult learners in moving from adult education to postsecondary education and workforce pathways. Providers are expected to define staff roles, map the student journey, maintain local resource

lists and implement data-driven processes that support intentional transition planning throughout a participant's enrollment.

Because most adult education providers operate within community colleges and are aligned with career and technical education (CTE) and workforce divisions, providers are expected to participate in institutional advisory committees and local planning and development district meetings to strengthen alignment with postsecondary programs and regional workforce priorities.

The OAE provides guidance and training on required transition processes, including establishing linkages with postsecondary institutions and workforce partners, understanding available Title I services such as individual training accounts (ITAs), on-the-job training (OJT), internships, and other work-based learning opportunities, and confirming that participants have an active MS Works account at intake or orientation to support referrals and service coordination. Providers utilize the state's data management system, LACES, to document and support transitions, and implementation of these transition processes is monitored by the state to ensure consistency, effectiveness, and alignment with performance expectations.

In practice, providers implement this transition system beginning at enrollment and continuing through postsecondary completion or workforce entry. Participants complete approved assessments, enroll in instruction, and are supported through ongoing attendance monitoring and engagement strategies.

As students complete one or more subject areas, they meet with a College and Career Navigator (CCN) to revisit goals and update individualized education and career plans. CCNs coordinate transition activities, including applications to postsecondary programs, connections to financial assistance and supportive services, and enrollment into education or training programs.

Transition activities, follow-up, and supporting documentation are recorded in LACES for verification and monitoring purposes. While participants are enrolled in postsecondary education or training, CCNs conduct follow-up to support retention and completion, and credentials earned are documented upon completion. To strengthen outcome measurement, the state utilizes data matching through NSPARC to verify postsecondary enrollment and employment outcomes and is exploring, in collaboration with the Mississippi Community College Board's Research and Effectiveness division, the use of the National Student Clearinghouse to enhance postsecondary transition reporting.

The implementation of these transition and data-flow processes is monitored and periodically reviewed by the OAE to ensure consistency, data quality, and effectiveness in supporting postsecondary and workforce outcomes.

3. Permissible Activity, Section 223 (A)(2)(J) Developing and Piloting of Strategies for Improving Teacher Quality and Retention

Improving teacher quality and increasing teacher retention remain long-term priorities for the Office of Adult Education (OAE). The OAE prioritizes teacher quality by delivering consistent, research-based professional development that strengthens instructional practice across the state and ensures adult learners receive high-quality instruction in reading, writing, math computation, speaking and listening, and digital literacy. The OAE develops strategies that support instructional consistency by providing training focused on classroom management, standards-based instruction, effective lesson design, and practical tools teachers can implement immediately. These efforts strengthen teacher effectiveness statewide and ensure adult education instructors are equipped to meet the diverse academic and life needs of adult learners.

The OAE also prioritizes teacher retention by providing early support, continuous coaching opportunities, and accessible training options that reduce barriers often experienced by new instructors. The annual New Teacher Academy serves as a key strategy to strengthen both teacher readiness and long-term retention by providing an

immersive experience for incoming adult education teachers. This training equips new instructors with foundational skills, practical guidance, and clear expectations that promote confidence and reduce early attrition. Lead teachers in each program are available in most programs to serve as mentors to new hires, which supports retention by providing job-embedded guidance, a consistent point of contact for questions, instructional modeling, and ongoing encouragement as new instructors build confidence and refine their practice. The New Teacher Academy is delivered in person, with hybrid and on-demand options being developed for implementation.

In addition, College and Career Navigators and Smart Start instructors receive targeted, region-specific professional development focused on high-demand industries and in-demand occupations within their local labor markets. This training equips staff to more effectively guide students by connecting adult education instruction to workforce training and employment opportunities that meet community needs. As a result, these staff develop a clear understanding of the full workforce system and the role adult education plays within it, leading to stronger program unity, improved student support, and high staff retention.

o. Assessing Quality

Assess Quality of Educators
The OAE uses a comprehensive system of data analysis, monitoring, and technical assistance to assess the quality of adult education and literacy providers under Title II and to support continuous improvement, consistent with Section 223(a)(1)(B) of WIOA. These efforts ensure programs are effective, compliant, and aligned with state and federal performance expectations.

Quality Improvement through Evaluation, Data Analysis, and Program Review
Data Reviews:
The OAE conducts ongoing data reviews to assess program performance and identify areas requiring technical assistance or improvement. These reviews include analysis of multiple data points including:

- **Year-to-year enrollment trends** to identify increase or declines in participation and inform targeted technical assistance and resource allocation decisions
- **National Reporting System (NRS) Table 2A and 4** to identify retention concerns and support the development of targeted retention strategies
- **Average Daily Attendance (ADA)** reviewed biannually to ensure appropriate stewardship of funds and alignment between enrollment, attendance, and expenditures
- **Student Diagnostic Searches** to identify data quality or instructional issues requiring correction or additional staff training

Findings from data reviews are used to guide individualized technical assistance and inform program improvement strategies.

Desktop Monitoring Tool:
The OAE utilizes then *Desktop Monitoring Tool* to track program effectiveness in the following areas:

- Educational Functioning Level (EFL) Performance
- High School Equivalency attainment
- Postsecondary education and training enrollment
- Posttest-rate goals
- Smart Start Credential attainment
- National Career Readiness Certificate® attainment
- Career Pathway enrollment
- WIOA Co-enrollment

Programs submit the Desktop Monitoring Tool quarterly. Programs that do not meet year-end performance targets are placed on a Program Improvement Plan (PIP) and are required to submit the tool monthly until performance stabilizers. Following review, the OAE contacts programs through phone consultations, written feedback, or scheduled visits to discuss findings, provide recommendations, and deliver targeted technical assistance.

On-site Monitoring:

The Office of Adult Education (OAE) employs a structured and collaborative monitoring process to assess program quality and compliance. On-site monitoring reviews are conducted in alignment with the five-year grant award cycle, with adult education providers monitored on a five-year rotation to ensure each program receives a full review during the grant period. Prior to on-site monitoring, programs submit required documentation for review and participate in preparatory discussions with OAE staff to ensure shared understanding of expectations.

On-site visits include programmatic and instructional reviews, classroom observations, and meetings with local staff. Following each review, programs are formally notified of recommendations and any findings, as applicable, and are provided the opportunity to respond and implement corrective actions within established timelines. This process supports transparency, continuous improvement, and consistent application of monitoring standards across providers.

On-site monitoring includes a full review of programmatic and fiscal operations to assess overall program quality, compliance, and alignment with WIOA requirements. The OAE utilizes a standardized monitoring rubric to evaluate provider performance across all required areas, including the thirteen considerations outlined in WIOA Title II, Section 231(e), as well as applicable state priorities and initiatives. This integrated review allows the OAE to assess instructional quality, data integrity, service delivery, fiscal management, workforce alignment, and participant transitions within a single monitoring process.

Findings from on-site monitoring are used to identify program strengths, areas for improvement, and opportunities for targeted technical assistance. Programs identified as noncompliant with state or federal requirements related to data management, fiscal oversight, or program services are required to develop and submit a Corrective Action Plan (CAP) within 45 days, outlining specific steps and timelines for resolution. The OAE provides follow-up support and monitoring to ensure corrective actions are implemented effectively.

Programmatic Resources:

To support high-quality instruction across adult education programs, the OAE utilizes the Mississippi Adult Education Educator Evaluation Tool, which serves as a standardized rubric for classroom observations. The rubric may be used by OAE staff, program directors, and lead instructors to assess instructional planning, delivery, learning environment, and professional practices.

Program directors conduct annual instructor evaluations, including a minimum of two classroom observations per instructor. To support instructional consistency and quality, instructors are required to maintain instructional documentation, including lesson plans, syllabi, and course outlines. These materials are reviewed by program leadership and the OAE, as appropriate, to ensure alignment with instructional standards, curriculum expectations, and program goals. The OAE reviews instructor evaluation practices and instructional documentation during on-site monitoring visits.

Each local program designates a lead instructor who supports the Program Director in developing and implementing targeted professional development aligned with instructional needs, program priorities, and student outcomes. Additionally, these lead teachers serve in a mentor role to new teachers and provide support to all instructors in curriculum planning and best practices in the classroom. This structure supports continuous improvement in instructional practice and staff capacity.

Local programs also utilize student surveys, administered periodically and at program exit, to gather feedback on instructional effectiveness and the learner experience. Survey results are used to inform instructional improvement efforts and professional development planning.

Through these programmatic resources, instructional oversight, and feedback mechanisms, the OAE supports a systematic approach to continuous improvement, ensuring adult education programs remain responsive to learner needs and focused on improving instructional quality and student learning outcomes.

Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Program Certifications

States must provide written and signed certifications that:

The State Plan must include	Included
1. The plan is submitted by the State agency that is eligible to submit the plan;	Yes
2. The State agency has authority under State law to perform the functions of the State under the program;	Yes
3. The State legally may carry out each provision of the plan;	Yes
4. All provisions of the plan are consistent with State law;	Yes
5. A State officer, specified by title in the certification, has authority under State law to receive, hold, and disburse Federal funds made available under the plan;	Yes
6. The State officer who is submitting the plan, specified by the title in the certification, has authority to submit the plan;	Yes
7. The agency that is submitting the plan has adopted or otherwise formally approved the plan; and	Yes
8. The plan is the basis for State operation and administration of the program.	Yes

Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Program Assurances

The State Plan must include assurances that:

The State Plan must include	Included
1. The eligible agency will expend funds appropriated to carry out title II of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) only in a manner consistent with fiscal requirements under section 241(a) of WIOA (regarding the supplement-not-supplant requirement);	Yes
2. The eligible agency will ensure that there is at least one eligible provider serving each local area, as defined in section 3(32) of WIOA;	Yes
3. The eligible agency will not use any funds made available under title II of WIOA for the purpose of supporting or providing programs, services, or activities for individuals who are not "eligible individuals" within the meaning of section 203(4) of WIOA, unless it is providing programs, services or activities related to family literacy activities, as defined in section 203(9) of WIOA;	Yes
4. Using funds made available under title II of WIOA to carry out a program for criminal offenders within a correctional institution, the eligible agency will give priority to serving individuals who are likely to leave the correctional institution within five years of participation in the program.	Yes
5. The eligible agency agrees that in expending funds made available under Title II of WIOA, the eligible agency will comply	Yes

Certification regarding Lobbying

CERTIFICATION REGARDING LOBBYING

Certification for Contracts, Grants, Loans, and Cooperative Agreements

The undersigned certifies, to the best of his or her knowledge and belief, that:

(1) No Federal appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid, by or on behalf of the undersigned, to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of an agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with the awarding of any Federal contract, the making of any Federal grant, the making of any Federal loan, the entering into of any cooperative agreement, and the extension, continuation, renewal, amendment, or modification of any Federal contract, grant, loan, or cooperative agreement.

(2) If any funds other than Federal appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with this Federal contract, grant, loan, or cooperative agreement, the undersigned shall complete and submit Standard Form-LLL, ''Disclosure of Lobbying Activities,'' in accordance with its instructions.

(3) The undersigned shall require that the language of this certification be included in the award documents for all subawards at all tiers (including subcontracts, subgrants, and contracts under grants, loans, and cooperative agreements) and that all subrecipients shall certify and disclose accordingly. This certification is a material representation of fact upon which reliance was placed when this transaction was made or entered into. Submission of this certification is a prerequisite for making or entering into this transaction imposed by section 1352, title 31, U.S. Code. Any person who fails to file the required certification shall be subject to a civil penalty of not less than $10,000 and not more than $100,000 for each such failure.

Statement for Loan Guarantees and Loan Insurance

The undersigned states, to the best of his or her knowledge and belief, that:

If any funds have been paid or will be paid to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with this commitment providing for the United States to insure or guarantee a loan, the undersigned shall complete and submit Standard Form-LLL, ''Disclosure of Lobbying Activities,'' in accordance with its instructions. Submission of this statement is a prerequisite for making or entering into this transaction imposed by section 1352, title 31, U.S. Code. Any person who fails to file the required statement shall be subject to a civil penalty of not less than $10,000 and not more than $100,000 for each such failure.

Please download and sign the forms below. Please scan and return the forms to wioa@ed.gov at the same time you submit your State Plan via the portal.

1. *SF424B - Assurances – Non-Construction Programs (http://www2.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/appforms.html)*
2. *Grants.gov - Certification Regarding Lobbying (http://www2.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/appforms.html)*
3. *SF LLL Form – Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (required, only if applicable) (http://www2.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/appforms.html)*

Section 427 of General Education Provisions Act

Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to applicants for grant awards under this program. All applicants for new grant awards must include the following information in their applications to address this provision in order to receive funding under this program. (OMB Control Number 1894-0005)

I assure that the proposed project complies with the requirements in secttion 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (20 U.S.C. 1228a.

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The responses to Section 427 of the General Provisions Act (GEPA) are addressed under b. Local Activities in section

(1).

Adult Education and Literacy Program Performance Indicators

Performance Goals for the Core Programs

Each state submitting a Unified or Combined State Plan is required to identify expected levels of performance for each of the primary indicators of performance for the two years covered by the plan modification. The state is required to reach agreement with the Secretary of Labor, in conjunction with the Secretary of Education, on state-negotiated levels of performance for the indicators for each of the two years of the plan modification.

While states are not required to submit expected levels of performance for Effectiveness in Serving Employers for PY 2026 and PY 2027 all of core programs are expected to collect data and report as a shared indicator (as directed in guidance) for these years.

View corresponding narrative from PYs 2024-2027

Current Narrative:

Performance indicators table

Performance Indicators	PY 2026 Expected Level	PY 2026 Negotiated Level	PY 2027 Expected Level	PY 2027 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	58.5%	TBD	58.5%	TBD
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	60.0%	TBD	60.0%	TBD
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	$4,200	TBD	$4,250	TBD
Credential Attainment Rate	42.0%	TBD	42.0%	TBD
Measurable Skill Gains	57.0%	TBD	58.0%	TBD
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable [1]	Not Applicable [1]	Not Applicable [1]	Not Applicable [1]

[1] The Departments have not issued the final rule defining Effectiveness in Serving Employers. As a result, states will not submit expected levels of performance for this indicator and the Departments will not establish negotiated levels of performance for PYs 2026 and 2027.

Vocational Rehabilitation

p. State Rehabilitation

The State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) provides ongoing input into the services and operations of the Offices of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) and Vocational Rehabilitation for the Blind (OVRB) and plays an active, structured role in the development, review, and modification of the Vocational Rehabilitation portion of the WIOA Unified State Plan. The SRC's overarching goal and input for the state plan is to increase employment outcomes and independence for our fellow Mississippians who are living with disabilities in the communities of their choice.

Council Representative	Current Term Number/Vacant	Beginning Date of Term Mo./Yr.
Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC)	1st	11/21/2024
Parent Training and Information Center	1st	7/1/2021
Client Assistance Program	Never rolls off due to position.	Never rolls off due to position.
Qualified Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)	2nd	7/1/2021
Qualified Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Counselor	2nd	7/1/2021
Counselor (Ex Officio if Employed by the VR Agency)		
Community Rehabilitation Program Service Provider	1st	9/9/2024
Business, Industry, and Labor	1st	7/1/2021
Business, Industry, and Labor	1st	7/1/2021
Business, Industry, and Labor	2nd	7/1/2021
Business, Industry, and Labor	1st	6/8/2023
Business, Industry, and Labor	1st	6/8/2023
Disability Advocacy Groups	3rd	7/1/18
Disability Advocacy Groups	3rd	6/1/18
Disability Advocacy Groups	1st	7/1/2025
Current or Former Applicants for, or Recipients of, VR services	2nd	7/1/2021
Current or Former Applicants for, or Recipients of, VR services	1st	7/1/2021
Current or Former Applicants for, or Recipients of, VR services	1st	6/8/2023
Section 121 Project Directors in the State (as applicable)	Never rolls off due to position.	Never rolls off due to position.
State Educational Agency Responsible for Students with Disabilities Eligible to Receive Services under Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)	3rd	7/1/2021
State Workforce Development Boar	2nd	7/1/2021
VR Agency Director (Ex Officio)	Never rolls off due to position.	Never rolls off due to position.

The SRC is currently meeting the composition requirements in Section 105(B) of the Rehabilitation Act and is meeting quarterly as required in Section 105(f) of the Rehabilitation Act. The State Rehabilitation Council has made recommendations to the Governor's office for current vacancies. The appointment process for members and any vacancy occurring of the council shall be appointed by the Governor. The Governor shall select members after soliciting recommendations from representatives of organizations representing a broad range of individuals in disabilities and organizations interested in individuals with disabilities. In selecting members, the appointing authority shall consider to the greatest extent practicable, the extent to which minority populations are represented on the

Council.

There are currently no vacancies on the MS SRC.

MS SRC meets quarterly and convenes additional special-called meetings as needed.

All in-person meetings were held at the MDRS State Office in Madison, MS, with virtual participation available as well.

In 2025, meeting dates for the SRC were:
• March 14, 2025
• June 13, 2025
• October 3, 2025
• December 12, 2025
• **April 30, 2025 – Special-Called Meeting:** Members actively reviewed and discussed proposed policy and program updates, offering guidance and recommendations.
• **July 30, 2025 – Hearing Officer Résumé Review:** Members evaluated the submitted résumé, provided input, and made recommendations regarding the selection process.

In PY2026 – PY2027, the MS SRC and the VR/VRB programs will continue their strong collaborative partnership through a series of public meetings that are already scheduled on the calendar. These planned meeting dates reflect the ongoing commitment of both the Council and the DSU to maintain active engagement, transparency, and shared decision-making throughout the year.

• March 13, 2026
• June 12, 2026
• September 11, 2026
• December 11, 2026

The State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) provides ongoing input into the services and operations of the Offices of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) and Vocational Rehabilitation for the Blind (OVRB) and plays an active, structured role in the development, review, and modification of the Vocational Rehabilitation portion of the WIOA Unified State Plan. The SRC's overarching goal and input for the state plan is to increase employment outcomes and independence for our fellow Mississippians who are living with disabilities in the communities of their choice.

Input on the services and operations of the Offices of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) and Vocational Rehabilitation for the Blind (OVRB), as well as development and implementation of the Vocational Rehabilitation portion of the Unified State Plan, is systematically collected and reviewed by the Mississippi State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) through a structured, ongoing active participation process. During Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2025, the SRC convened four (4) quarterly meetings spanning October 1, 2024, through September 30, 2025. Meetings were held using a combination of in-person sessions, Microsoft Teams, and teleconferencing to ensure full member participation and, more importantly, to give consumers across the state the opportunity to be involved or informed about—the vocational rehabilitation services that affect their employment and independence. This approach also helps ensure that consumers have both awareness of and access to the services that support their employment goals and overall independence

SRC meetings are organized to ensure meaningful engagement, informed discussion, and actionable feedback. Each meeting includes formal welcoming, introductions, recognition of guests, and a structured agenda centered on the statutory functions of the SRC. Agenda topics are presented by OVR and OVRB leadership and program staff and include consumer satisfaction survey results, strategic planning updates, performance outcomes, fiscal and

programmatic data, and progress toward State Plan goals. The Council also receives a consumer satisfaction report detailing survey results from both open and closed OVR and OVRB cases. This standing agenda item keeps members informed of consumer feedback—positive and negative—and supports thoughtful recommendations for service improvement. SRC members are actively encouraged to ask questions, provide feedback, and engage in substantive discussion throughout each presentation. Additional time is reserved following each topic to allow for expanded dialogue, recommendations, and formal motions when appropriate.

Consistent with its federally mandated responsibilities, the Mississippi SRC reviews, analyzes, and advises OVR and OVRB on matters related to eligibility determination and Order of Selection; the scope, quality, and effectiveness of vocational rehabilitation services; and policies, procedures, and practices that impact employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities. The SRC partners closely with OVR and OVRB in the development of agency goals and priorities and in evaluating progress toward achieving those goals.

The SRC provided comprehensive guidance to OVR and OVRB throughout the State Plan modification process, offering recommendations on CSNA findings, labor market priorities, work-based learning strategies, Transition and Pre-ETS improvements, performance accountability, and policy and procedural changes affecting program effectiveness and employment outcomes for Mississippians with disabilities. The Council also reviewed consumer satisfaction data, Client Assistance Reports(CAP) reports, and Due Process updates, and maintained input from statewide partners, community advocates, business and industry representatives, and Statewide Living Council (SILC) that directly affect the individuals served by the vocational rehabilitation programs.

Beyond formal meetings, SRC members maintain active engagement through participation in national training opportunities offered by the National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils (NCSRC), formal responses to questionnaires, committee work, and ongoing consultation with OVR and OVRB leadership. This continuous feedback loop ensures that SRC input remains timely, relevant, and reflective of the diverse stakeholder groups represented. Through these efforts, the Mississippi SRC plays a central role in promoting accountability, continuous improvement, and high-quality vocational rehabilitation services across the state.

Based on the full set of SRC Recommendations listed below, the Council's concerns and recommendations centered around three primary areas:

State Rehabilitation Council Recommendations:

Recommendation 1: Staff Retention and Salary

The SRC recognizes and commends the VR current staff in providing quality services to individuals with disabilities. The SRC recommends the Designated State Unit (DSU) to continue with the pay increases, as reported to the SRC from prior meetings. The SRC recommends and will support the DSU in working with policy makers, legislators, and the hiring agency for all state employees regarding an additional salary increase to meet or exceed the Southeast average for Certified Rehabilitation Counselors and other specialized professionals such as braille teachers, orientation and mobility instructors, and vocational and evaluators that provide services in the specialized population.

Recommendation 2: Strengthening Transition and Postsecondary-to-Employment Pathways

The SRC recommends that the DSU continue and strengthen Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) beginning in middle school, with sustained emphasis on Transition Services through postsecondary education and entry into the workforce. The SRC further recommends incorporating targeted objectives within the State Plan to address the needs of individuals in the "gap age" population—those who have completed school but remain unemployed or underemployed—to improve service continuity and long-term employment outcomes.

To support this effort, the SRC recommends strengthening structured collaboration among OVR counselors, secondary

schools, community colleges, universities, workforce partners, and community providers to bridge service gaps and create a seamless continuum of support from adolescence through adulthood. Additionally, the SRC recommends tracking employment and retention outcomes for this population and collecting targeted feedback from individuals aging out of Pre-ETS or exiting eligibility to inform service alignment, enhance transition planning, and guide continuous program improvement.

Recommendation 3: Public Awareness of VR/VRB Services

The SRC recommends more outreach to inform Mississippians that the EMERGE Center is open and to inform all partners to promote the superb services the Center provides to schools and in the community for visually impaired citizens. In addition, the SRC recommends that the VR and VRB programs continue growing connections and take further steps with provider partnerships when communicating with families.

Recommendation 4: Staff Development

The State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) recommends that the DSU implement comprehensive, ongoing training for VR and VRB staff, with particular emphasis on postsecondary education (PSED) services and eligibility determination. Due to policy and procedural changes, many counselors remain uncertain in these areas, resulting in inconsistent application and customer confusion. Continued and targeted PSED and eligibility training is essential to ensure consistent service delivery, regulatory compliance, and positive consumer outcomes.

Additionally, based on customer complaints, the SRC recommends mandatory Customer Service and Disability Etiquette Training for all VR and VRB staff—not solely managers. These trainings should be conducted on a quarterly or semi-annual basis to reinforce professional communication, service excellence, and respectful engagement with individuals with disabilities and their families.

The SRC further recommends that the DSU maintain a strong focus on continuous staff development and advocate for competitive salary increases to support recruitment, retention, and workforce stability.

VR and VRB agree with this recommendation and will coordinate with Human Resources Development (HRD) to implement ongoing Customer Service and Disability Etiquette Training and expand professional development opportunities statewide.

Recommendation 5: Improve Outreach, Public Awareness, and Consumer Engagement

The SRC recommends that OVR and OVRB enhance statewide outreach and public awareness efforts to ensure individuals with disabilities, families, educators, and employers fully understand the scope of vocational rehabilitation services available. Strategies should include community forums, town halls, digital outreach, informational videos, newsletters, and expanded use of social media platforms. Improved communication and outreach will strengthen early engagement, promote informed participation, increase service utilization, and enhance overall consumer satisfaction.

Recommendation 6: Continue Expansion and Enhancement of Transition Services and Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS)

The SRC strongly supports continued expansion of transition services and Pre-ETS, including earlier engagement beginning in middle school, increased work-based learning opportunities, stronger coordination with local education agencies, and expanded provider networks. Maintaining a strong focus on transition outcomes will ensure students develop the skills, confidence, and real-world experiences necessary to achieve successful competitive integrated employment.

The VR and VRB Directors attended all meetings of the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) and responded to questions from the SRC. The VR/VRB Directors have reviewed the recommendations, comments, and input of the Council and

agree to provide the SRC with updates regarding the numbers served, overall performance data, and recommendations made by the Council to be implemented. The Designated State Unit (DSU) will keep the recommendations on the forefront of decisions in the categories identified in this report.

Based on the full set of SRC Recommendations listed below, the Council's concerns and recommendations centered around three primary areas:

1. Staff Retention, Compensation, and Workforce Stability
The Council expressed concern about staff vacancies, counselor turnover, and salary competitiveness. They recommended strategies to retain qualified staff, ensure adequate staffing levels, and align wages with regional standards to protect service quality.

2. Transition Services and Postsecondary-to-Employment Pathways
The Council focused on improving consistency, outreach, and coordination in Transition and Pre-ETS services. They recommended stronger interagency collaboration, expanded school-based engagement, and additional training to support students moving toward employment and post-secondary goals.

3. Outreach, Public Awareness, and Consumer Engagement
The Council highlighted the need for more robust, consistent outreach to ensure individuals with disabilities, families, educators, and employers understand VR/VRB services. They recommended expanded community engagement, improved marketing materials, and dedicated staff to lead statewide outreach efforts.

DSU Responses to Specific Questions, Recommendations, and Input:

1. Staff Retention, Compensation, and Workforce Stability

DSU Response: Staff vacancies have impacted VR and VRB. We have had an overall sufficient staff to work the individuals we serve. New positions have been requested and the need for new positions have been identified. A vacant Counselor position does have a direct impact of service delivery. MDRS has provided staff in-range adjustments of up to 10% to assist in the retention of Counselors and Counselor Assistants. VR/VRB appreciates the support of the SRC in recognizing the value of the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors and other program staff that are essential in fulfilling the WIOA Requirements. VR/VRB agrees with the recommendations of further exploring the staff salary increases for current staff and will work with the SRC, as a partner, to ensure qualified staff are compensated at a living wage that meets or exceeds the Southeast average.

2. Transition Services and Postsecondary-to-Employment Pathways

DSU Response: VR and VRB agree with the SRC's recommendations and will continue to strengthen staff training, customer service, and transition outreach efforts to improve service quality, consistency, and employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities.

To address identified training needs, VR and VRB have a Program Coordinator dedicated to transition outreach who conducts quarterly trainings to ensure staff have the tools and resources necessary to conduct effective school-based outreach. Monthly coordination meetings are also held with the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) Transition Coordinator to strengthen interagency collaboration and align outreach and service strategies. In addition, VR and VRB are collaborating with the Mississippi Parent Training and Information Center (MSPTI) to develop educational videos and outreach materials for social media to expand awareness of VR services among students and families.

VR and VRB will implement structured outreach meetings and coordinated service activities within local schools

statewide. These outreach sessions will be scheduled during school staff development periods to support participation and compliance with attendance requirements, particularly in response to changes in MDE diploma options that require additional classroom hours. To further strengthen these efforts, VR and VRB plan to implement dedicated outreach staff to assist in coordinating and supporting statewide school engagement activities. VR and VRB will also collaborate with MSPTI to participate in school-based parent meetings and to support dissemination of VR service information to families.

Additionally, VR and VRB have launched several pilot projects and initiatives led by dedicated staff to engage middle school students within their communities. These initiatives are designed to increase early awareness of VR services and to strengthen counselor-student relationships through direct, community-based outreach.

VR and VRB will continue coordinating with Human Resources Development (HRD) to provide ongoing Customer Service and Disability Etiquette Training for all staff and will maintain a strong focus on continuous professional development and workforce support to ensure high-quality service delivery statewide.

3. Outreach, Public Awareness, and Consumer Engagement

DSU Response: VR and VRB agree with the SRC recommendation of more outreach to bring awareness of and access to VR services. We are proposing a pilot outreach program to schools and in the community to be performed by a third-party staff. The goal of the third-party providing outreach is to have a more present, consistent, and flexible outreach program that will aim at providing outreach services after the normal state core hours. VR and VRB are also working on more suitable marketing material and to be consistent for our youth and adult audiences. This includes brochures, social media, and informational packets.

Improve Outreach, Public Awareness, and Consumer Engagement

DSU Response: The Designated State Unit (DSU) fully supports the SRC's recommendation to enhance outreach, public awareness, and consumer engagement efforts statewide. OVR and OVRB recognize that consistent, strategic outreach is essential to ensuring individuals with disabilities, families, educators, and employers clearly understand available vocational rehabilitation services and how to access them.
To strengthen these efforts, the DSU has added a dedicated program coordinator to lead and support statewide outreach initiatives. This position is responsible for coordinating outreach strategies, developing standardized informational materials, strengthening partnerships with schools, postsecondary institutions, workforce agencies, and community organizations, and providing targeted training to staff on effective outreach practices. The coordinator also supports consistent messaging, improves internal communication, and assists districts in expanding community-based engagement activities.
The DSU will continue to expand the use of digital platforms, newsletters, stakeholder meetings, school-based outreach, and employer engagement forums to promote awareness of VR services. These coordinated efforts are designed to increase early referral, improve service utilization, strengthen consumer satisfaction, and ensure equitable access to VR services across all regions of Mississippi.

Continue Expansion and Enhancement of Transition Services and Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS)

DSU Response: The Designated State Unit (DSU) strongly supports the SRC's recommendation to continue expanding and enhancing transition services and Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS). The DSU remains firmly committed to early intervention strategies that prepare students with disabilities for successful transitions from secondary education to postsecondary education and competitive integrated employment.
To strengthen statewide implementation, the DSU has added additional state-level staff dedicated to Pre-ETS and

transition services to enhance training, technical assistance, and program oversight. These positions are responsible for delivering consistent statewide training to counselors and transition staff, improving service fidelity, supporting policy implementation, and expanding partnerships with local education agencies, postsecondary institutions, workforce partners, and community-based providers. This enhanced staffing structure ensures improved coordination, consistency, and quality across all districts.

The DSU has implemented enhanced referral, tracking, and reporting systems to strengthen collaboration with schools and improve early identification of students in need of Pre-ETS. These efforts have resulted in significant increases in student participation statewide. The DSU continues to prioritize work-based learning experiences, career exploration, workplace readiness training, self-advocacy instruction, and postsecondary counseling as central components of its transition strategy.

Moving forward, the DSU will continue to expand partnerships, refine service delivery models, and implement continuous training and performance monitoring to ensure high-quality, compliant, and outcome-driven Pre-ETS services. Through these efforts, the DSU aims to strengthen transition outcomes, reduce service gaps, and promote successful employment trajectories for students with disabilities across Mississippi.

q. Comprehensive State Needs Assessment

1. VR Service Needs of Individuals with Disabilities in the State

. Individuals with the most significant disabilities and their need for Supported Employment

Section 101(a)(15), (17), and (23) of the Rehabilitation Act require VR agencies to provide an assessment of:

The Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services (MDRS), Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR), Office of Vocational Rehabilitation for the Blind (OVRB), and the Mississippi State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) contracted with BerryDunn State Government Practice Group to conduct a Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA), which was completed in December 2024 in accordance with federal requirements. The CSNA utilized a rigorous multi-method approach that included statewide consumer, staff, and vendor surveys (n = 1,460 respondents), 23 focus group sessions, discovery sessions with OVR, OVRB, and SRC leadership, and extensive quantitative and qualitative data analysis. The assessment examined service accessibility, equity of service delivery, staff capacity, vendor collaboration, transportation barriers, transition services, workforce engagement, and emerging service needs across diverse populations, with particular emphasis on individuals with significant and most significant disabilities, individuals residing in rural and underserved communities, minority populations, individuals with sensory impairments, and individuals with complex support needs. The CSNA findings directly inform MDRS's strategic planning, service design, workforce alignment priorities, and investments in service capacity expansion.

In addition to the CSNA, MDRS conducted a targeted labor market review to ensure vocational rehabilitation service strategies reflect current and emerging workforce demands across Mississippi. Mississippi's economy continues to experience significant transformation driven by infrastructure investment, industrial expansion, healthcare workforce shortages, logistics growth, skilled trade demand, and technology advancement. Priority industry sectors include advanced manufacturing; healthcare and allied health; construction and skilled trades; logistics, distribution, and transportation; information technology and cybersecurity; and energy and infrastructure. High-demand occupations include industrial maintenance technicians, electricians, welders, HVAC technicians, nursing assistants, licensed practical nurses, medical coding specialists, commercial drivers, cybersecurity technicians, and IT support specialists. These occupations provide sustainable wages, career mobility, credential portability, and long-term economic stability. OVR and OVRB align training investments, credential funding, work-based learning placements, and postsecondary sponsorships with these labor market priorities, in continuous collaboration with the Mississippi Department of Employment Security, workforce development boards, community colleges, training providers, and industry partners to ensure services remain data-driven, employer-informed, and workforce responsive.

Mississippi's vocational rehabilitation strategies are also intentionally aligned with the U.S. Departments of Labor and Education's national workforce development framework, America's Talent Strategy: Building the Workforce for the Golden Age, including its pillars of industry-driven strategies, worker mobility, integrated systems, accountability, and flexibility and innovation. These principles guide statewide service design, workforce partnerships, investment priorities, and continuous improvement efforts to ensure individuals with disabilities achieve competitive integrated employment in high-demand, high-growth sectors.

In direct response to longstanding CSNA findings and stakeholder feedback identifying the need to expand specialized Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP) capacity for individuals who are blind or visually impaired, OVRB completed the establishment of a Structured Discovery Center in the Southern Region of the state. This center includes fully equipped residential apartments designed to deliver comprehensive personal adjustment training, independent living skill development, and vocational readiness services for VR-eligible consumers. The Structured Discovery Center supports individualized career exploration and functional skill development leading to competitive integrated employment and directly addresses one of the most persistent service gaps identified in prior statewide needs assessments. To date, more than fourteen individuals have successfully completed training through this newly established CRP, significantly expanding statewide service capacity for individuals who are blind or visually impaired.

The 2023 Disability Status Report for Mississippi, based on the American Community Survey, indicates that 12.6 percent of Mississippi's working-age population, representing approximately 275,000 individuals ages 21 to 64, reported one or more disabilities. Among functional disability categories, ambulatory disability has the highest prevalence at 7.9 percent, while self-care disability has the lowest at 2.7 percent. Mississippi continues to rank among the top three states nationally for working-age disability prevalence, reinforcing the need for a robust, accessible, and workforce-aligned vocational rehabilitation system. The American Community Survey further indicates that the Northern District population with a visual disability is 52,606, while the Southern District population is 59,824, with approximately 60 percent of individuals with vision disabilities age 55 or older and 5.6 percent age 13 or younger, underscoring the need for coordinated independent living, transition, and employment-focused services across the lifespan.

The 2024 CSNA and consumer satisfaction findings consistently identify a sustained and growing demand among individuals with significant and most significant disabilities for supported employment, customized employment, structured discovery services, vocational training, long-term employment supports, transportation assistance, benefits counseling, and work-based learning opportunities. These service needs directly inform MDRS's strategic investments in provider development, staff training, service capacity expansion, and innovative delivery models to ensure equitable access to high-quality vocational rehabilitation services statewide.

Specific service priorities identified through the CSNA include expanded multicultural awareness training and increased staff understanding of socioeconomic barriers that impact engagement and service retention; enhanced vocational rehabilitation counseling and guidance; expanded access to college and vocational training; increased work-based learning, on-the-job training, and social skills development, particularly for individuals with autism and intellectual and developmental disabilities; strengthened job development, placement, and long-term retention services; expanded vocational and functional assessment capacity; improved transportation access, especially in rural communities; development of Spanish-language resources and communication tools; targeted outreach in areas with high concentrations of African American, Native American, and Hispanic populations; collaboration with minority-owned businesses and community providers to expand employment opportunities; enhanced staff and provider training to address increasing mental health service needs; expanded supported and customized employment capacity as subminimum wage employment declines; expanded structured discovery training for individuals who are blind or visually impaired; increased benefits counseling and financial literacy education; strengthened collaboration with the Choctaw Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Program; and continued expansion of Pre-Employment Transition Services to increase competitive integrated employment and supported employment outcomes for students with intellectual and

developmental disabilities. These priorities ensure vocational rehabilitation services remain responsive to workforce demand, individual support needs, and equitable service access statewide.

A. Individuals with Disabilities who are Minorities and/or are Underserved

According to the 2023 Disability Status Report for Mississippi, the prevalence of disability among minority populations is 11.5 percent (5,500) among individuals of Hispanic/Latino origin, 18.3 percent (105,700) among Black/African Americans, 7.5 percent (1,500) among Asian Americans, and 17.0 percent (1,700) among Native Americans. These data indicate that Black/African American and Native American populations experience disability at disproportionately higher rates, underscoring the need for targeted outreach, equitable access to vocational rehabilitation services, and culturally responsive service delivery models. These disparities further highlight the importance of ensuring minority populations have equitable access to training and employment opportunities aligned with Mississippi's high-demand and high-growth industries, including advanced manufacturing, healthcare, construction, logistics, information technology, and energy and infrastructure.

The 2024 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) confirms these disparities and identifies equitable service accessibility, culturally responsive outreach, and targeted engagement of underserved populations as critical statewide priorities. CSNA findings emphasized persistent gaps in service awareness, referral access, transportation, and workforce engagement for racial and ethnic minorities, rural communities, individuals with significant disabilities, and individuals facing multiple barriers to employment. The CSNA further identified the need for intentional, community-based outreach strategies and strengthened interagency partnerships to improve engagement, reduce service disparities, and increase participation in competitive integrated employment pathways.

Ex-offenders and youth offenders also constitute a growing population in Mississippi with significant barriers to employment. According to statistical reports obtained from the Mississippi Workforce Development System, 6,920 ex-offenders ages 18–64 face documented employment barriers. This population experiences compounded challenges related to criminal history, limited education, unstable housing, transportation deficits, and restricted access to credentialed training. The CSNA identified justice-involved individuals as a high-priority population requiring enhanced outreach, specialized service coordination, and workforce-aligned career pathways to reduce long-term unemployment and recidivism.

In response, OVR and OVRB prioritize career pathway models aligned with labor market demand, emphasizing industry-recognized credentials, paid work-based learning, and employer-driven training partnerships in high-demand sectors that offer sustainable wages, career advancement, and long-term economic stability. These strategies are designed to reduce recidivism, improve economic self-sufficiency, and expand employer engagement across justice-involved populations, directly aligning with CSNA findings related to workforce alignment, employer collaboration, and equitable service delivery.

In Program Year (PY) 2025, OVR and OVRB have served 103 individuals identifying as American Indian/Alaska Native (1.6%), 62 identifying as Asian (1.0%), 3,553 identifying as Black/African American (54.6%), and 2,901 identifying as White (44.6%). An additional 53 individuals identified as Multiple Races (0.8%) and 6 identified as Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander (0.1%). Separately, 36 individuals identified as Hispanic/Latino ethnicity (0.6%).

These participation patterns continue to reflect Mississippi's broader demographics while reinforcing the need for intentional outreach, targeted referral strategies, and culturally responsive service alignment so that minority populations are consistently connected to timely, high-quality vocational rehabilitation services that lead to competitive, integrated employment in high-demand sectors.

To strengthen statewide outreach, access, and engagement, the Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services (MDRS), Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR), and Office of Vocational Rehabilitation for the Blind (OVRB) have established a new Outreach Program Coordinator position. This role provides centralized leadership, strategic direction, and operational coordination of outreach initiatives statewide, directly responding to CSNA findings identifying the need for improved communication, community engagement, and consistent statewide outreach infrastructure.

The initial focus of this position has been on transition-age youth and students with disabilities; however, outreach efforts are intentionally expanding to include adults with disabilities, underserved populations, rural communities, minority populations, individuals in foster care, and individuals facing multiple barriers to employment, including justice-involved youth and adults. As part of this targeted expansion, OVR and OVRB are actively meeting with leadership and frontline staff from Mississippi Child Protective Services (CPS) to ensure youth in foster care are fully informed of available vocational rehabilitation services and are receiving timely, coordinated supports aligned with their education, training, and employment goals. These efforts are designed to strengthen early identification, referral pathways, and service continuity for a population that often experiences educational disruption, housing instability, and limited access to workforce preparation services.

In addition, OVR and OVRB are actively working to establish formal partnerships with Mississippi's youth detention centers and juvenile justice programs to ensure that justice-involved youth with disabilities are systematically identified, referred, and engaged in vocational rehabilitation services. These partnerships are designed to expand access to Pre-ETS, career exploration, work-based learning, counseling and guidance, and reentry-focused employment planning, supporting successful community reintegration, workforce participation, and long-term economic stability while reducing recidivism.

The Outreach Program Coordinator is responsible for developing and implementing a comprehensive, data-informed outreach strategy designed to increase public awareness, improve access to vocational rehabilitation services, and strengthen partnerships across education, child welfare, juvenile justice, healthcare, workforce development, economic development, and community-based systems. In collaboration with OVR and OVRB leadership, outreach initiatives are directly aligned with CSNA findings and statewide labor market priorities, ensuring individuals with disabilities are systematically connected to education, training, and employment pathways that support economic mobility, workforce participation, and long-term career advancement.

OVR and OVRB also partner closely with the MDRS Office of Communications to support the development and dissemination of accessible outreach materials, public awareness campaigns, and targeted messaging strategies. This partnership enhances statewide consistency, cultural responsiveness, linguistic accessibility, and multi-platform communication, addressing CSNA-identified gaps related to service awareness, misinformation, and limited public understanding of vocational rehabilitation services.

In alignment with CSNA findings and workforce development priorities, OVR and OVRB continue to expand targeted outreach to minority populations and individuals residing in Mississippi's fourteen (14) designated poverty areas, as well as to youth in foster care and juvenile justice systems. These strategies are designed to increase awareness, strengthen referral pipelines, reduce systemic and economic barriers, and improve access to education, training, and employment pathways aligned with high-growth, high-demand labor market sectors.

Expanded outreach efforts prioritize engagement with community health clinics, local health departments, community health advisors, child welfare agencies, juvenile justice partners, adult education providers, community colleges, workforce training centers, correctional reentry programs, and employer networks that serve as trusted access points within urban, rural, and underserved communities. Outreach activities include individualized engagement, group

presentations, employer-based recruitment events, and distribution of localized, culturally responsive materials designed to strengthen workforce connections in healthcare, skilled trades, manufacturing, logistics, and information technology.

As individuals with disabilities are identified through outreach initiatives, VR core program staff conduct timely follow-up through personalized phone contact, in-person meetings, coordinated service planning, and interagency collaboration to ensure individuals understand available VR services and can effectively access education, training, and employment supports. This integrated outreach, workforce alignment, and service delivery model directly addresses CSNA-identified barriers related to transportation, economic instability, justice involvement, child welfare system involvement, healthcare access, rural isolation, and cultural and linguistic differences, while promoting equitable access, sustained engagement, and competitive integrated employment outcomes statewide.

B. Individuals with disabilities served through other components of the workforce development system

Consistent with the national workforce strategy's emphasis on flexibility and innovation, OVR and OVRB will continue leveraging flexible service delivery models, pilot initiatives, employer-driven training partnerships, and technology-enabled service strategies to The Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) identified several critical service needs for individuals with disabilities who are served through other components of Mississippi's workforce development system, including community colleges, adult education programs, workforce training providers, one-stop centers, and community rehabilitation programs. Individuals with disabilities in Mississippi are served in all components of the workforce development system, both as universal customers and through eligibility-based programs, requiring strong interagency coordination to ensure seamless, efficient, and effective service delivery.

Mississippi has developed an integrated workforce system that assigns each participant a unique Workforce Identification (Workforce ID) upon application for services. This identifier is used consistently across all workforce programs, allowing agencies to track services, coordinate supports, share information, and braid resources. In conjunction with the Workforce ID, the State operates a centralized Workforce HUB, which serves as the platform for cross-agency communication, service coordination, and integrated case management. The Workforce ID and HUB infrastructure are designed to improve service efficiency, reduce duplication, and provide more comprehensive, individualized supports for individuals with disabilities across workforce partner programs.

support rapid workforce adaptation, individualized career pathways, and continuous system improvement. These efforts ensure the vocational rehabilitation system remains responsive to evolving labor market demands, emerging industries, and the individualized needs of participants statewide.

Despite this infrastructure, the CSNA found that enhanced operational coordination, standardized referral processes, and improved communication protocols remain necessary to maximize the effectiveness of cross-program collaboration. Stakeholders reported that inconsistent referral pathways, limited staff cross-training, and variations in service delivery models across partner agencies can contribute to delays, duplication of services, and gaps in support. Strengthening these operational linkages is critical to ensuring individuals with disabilities experience smooth transitions between workforce programs and receive timely, coordinated services aligned with their employment goals.

The CSNA further identified transportation barriers, service accessibility challenges, and limited public awareness of available workforce services as significant obstacles, particularly in rural and underserved communities. Limited access to reliable transportation restricts participation in education, training, and employment activities. Additionally, individuals with disabilities, families, and workforce personnel often demonstrate limited awareness of how vocational rehabilitation services can be effectively integrated within the broader workforce development system. Expanded outreach, targeted training, and coordinated community engagement efforts are necessary to improve awareness, early referral, and service utilization.

Collaboration challenges were also identified among vocational rehabilitation programs, workforce partners, community rehabilitation providers, and postsecondary institutions. The CSNA emphasized the need to strengthen partnerships with community colleges and universities to improve coordination for students and adult learners with disabilities pursuing academic and workforce training pathways. Enhanced alignment among vocational rehabilitation, education, and workforce partners is essential to support coordinated career planning, academic accommodations, work-based learning opportunities, and employment placement services.

To address these needs, the Designated State Unit (DSU) will continue to strengthen cross-agency collaboration, expand staff cross-training initiatives, enhance referral and service coordination protocols, and fully leverage the Workforce ID and Workforce HUB infrastructure to support integrated service delivery. These strategies will promote improved information sharing, braided funding approaches, and comprehensive, person-centered service planning. Through these efforts, Mississippi's workforce system aims to reduce service fragmentation, increase efficiency, expand access, and improve competitive integrated employment outcomes for indiviuals with disabilities statewide.

C. Youth with disabilities, including students with disabilities and their need for pre-employment transition services or other transition services.

OVR and OVRB prioritize early engagement, coordinated transition planning, and statewide delivery of Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS), consistent with the findings, data analysis, and strategic recommendations of the 2024 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) and the 2023 Disability Status Report for Mississippi. These priorities directly reflect documented statewide needs related to transition service gaps, workforce readiness barriers, transportation limitations, rural service access, and the growing demand for individualized, community-based employment pathways for youth and students with disabilities.

The 2023 Disability Status Report indicates that 10.1 percent of Mississippi youth ages 16–20 (approximately 22,400 individuals) have a disability. Cognitive disability is the most prevalent (7.4 percent), followed by independent living difficulty (3.9 percent), visual disability (1.9 percent), ambulatory disability (1.2 percent), self-care disability (1.1 percent), and hearing disability (0.7 percent). These data underscore the necessity of early, comprehensive, and individualized transition planning to support students in developing vocational identity, career readiness, independent living skills, and successful postsecondary education and employment outcomes.

According to MDE data, Mississippi currently serves more than 21,000 students with disabilities ages 14–21 in public education programs, representing a significant statewide population requiring early transition engagement, coordinated service delivery, and individualized career development planning. The CSNA identified critical statewide service needs, particularly for youth and students with disabilities, including:

- Expanded work-based learning and paid work experiences,
- Enhanced vocational counseling and guidance,
- Increased job placement and job coaching services,
- Improved transportation access,
- Expanded postsecondary education and training pathways,
- Targeted social skills and soft-skills development,
- Enhanced vocational and functional assessments,
- Expanded peer mentoring opportunities, and
- Increased availability of structured discovery services, particularly for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, autism, blindness or visual impairments, deafness or hearing impairments, and youth residing in rural and underserved communities.

The CSNA further emphasized the need to strengthen and expand statewide transition systems by prioritizing the following strategic actions:

- Expansion of work-based learning and paid employment experiences,
- Strengthening transition coordination, referral processes, and school engagement,
- Increasing social skills, workplace readiness, and self-advocacy instruction,
- Enhancing services for individuals with autism, sensory disabilities, and complex support needs,
- Improving alignment between postsecondary education, training programs, and labor market demand, and
- Strengthening formal interagency collaboration with the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) and Local Education Agencies (LEAs) to ensure consistent, coordinated statewide transition services.

Following significant service disruptions during the COVID-19 Pandemic, OVR and OVRB implemented targeted statewide recovery strategies to restore school access, rebuild community-based work experiences, and expand Pre-ETS service delivery. These strategies included renewed school outreach, strengthened interagency coordination, enhanced vendor engagement, expansion of work-based learning opportunities, and increased focus on community-based employment models. As documented in the CSNA, these efforts have resulted in steady statewide improvements in Pre-ETS access, transition service coordination, stakeholder engagement, and youth employment outcomes.

OVR and OVRB maintain formal interagency agreements with the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) and local education agencies (LEAs) to ensure early identification of students with disabilities, coordinated referrals, joint transition planning, and delivery of Pre-ETS in alignment with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) transition requirements. These agreements support seamless movement from secondary education to vocational rehabilitation services, postsecondary education and training, and competitive integrated employment, reinforcing a statewide system of coordinated, data-driven transition services.

D. Identify the need to establish, develop, or improve community rehabilitation programs within the State.

Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs) in Mississippi provide a comprehensive array of individualized services to adults, students, and youth with disabilities to support their preparation for, entry into, and retention in Competitive Integrated Employment. These services are strategically aligned with the U.S. Departments of Labor and Education's national workforce development framework, America's Talent Strategy: Building the Workforce for the Golden Age, and its five strategic pillars: industry-driven strategies, worker mobility, integrated systems, accountability, and flexibility and innovation. Through employer-informed service design, integrated service coordination, data-driven performance accountability, and flexible service delivery models, CRPs play a critical role in strengthening Mississippi's workforce system and advancing equitable employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities.

Community Rehabilitation Programs to Provide Pre-Employment Transition Services
According to the 2024 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA), when considering the number, capacity, and effectiveness of Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) providers, it is important to recognize that third-party providers represent one critical component of a comprehensive statewide Pre-ETS delivery system. While provider capacity is essential, effective Pre-ETS delivery also depends on strong counselor engagement, school partnerships, workforce collaboration, and coordinated service models that expand access and improve outcomes for students with disabilities.

During Program Year (PY) 2025, OVR and OVRB have served 3,993 students with disabilities (SWD), and 1,808 of those students received Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS), representing 45 percent of SWD served. These data show meaningful statewide reach; however, they also make clear that service penetration must continue to grow. OVR and OVRB will intensify efforts to expand Pre-ETS access by strengthening school-based referral pathways,

increasing service capacity, and implementing earlier, more consistent engagement strategies, with particular focus on rural and underserved communities. Consistent with CSNA-identified needs, sustained outreach and expanded partnerships remain essential to ensure a greater proportion of eligible students receive timely, high-quality Pre-ETS that supports successful transitions to competitive, integrated employment.

The CSNA identified work-based learning, early career exploration, and self-advocacy instruction as high-impact service areas requiring increased emphasis. Students, families, and stakeholders consistently reported that hands-on employment experiences, exposure to real-world work environments, and structured opportunities to develop self-advocacy skills are critical to preparing students for successful transitions from school to postsecondary education and competitive integrated employment. The assessment also highlighted that limited access to work-based learning opportunities, particularly in rural communities, remains a significant service gap.

The Designated State Unit (DSU) acknowledges that third-party Pre-ETS providers remain a vital component of the statewide service delivery strategy and will continue to leverage these partnerships to expand capacity, enhance geographic access, and diversify service offerings. The DSU will prioritize partnerships that increase opportunities for paid and unpaid work-based learning, internships, job shadowing, career exploration activities, and structured self-advocacy instruction, particularly for students with significant disabilities and those residing in underserved areas. Consistent with national research, participation in work-based learning experiences prior to exiting high school significantly improves post-school employment outcomes, with students who engage in meaningful work experiences being 4.5 times more likely to obtain employment after high school. In response, the DSU will continue to invest in Pre-ETS expansion, provider training, technical assistance, and cross-agency collaboration to strengthen transition outcomes and ensure that Mississippi students with disabilities are equipped with the skills, experiences, and confidence needed to achieve competitive integrated employment.

As of December 10, 2025, the Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services (MDRS), Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) and Office of Vocational Rehabilitation for the Blind (OVRB), maintains active provider agreements with thirteen (13) approved Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) providers to ensure statewide access to high-quality Pre-ETS for potentially eligible and eligible students with disabilities. These providers deliver a comprehensive range of required Pre-ETS activities, including job exploration counseling, work-based learning experiences, counseling on postsecondary education and training opportunities, workplace readiness training, and instruction in self-advocacy.

The approved Pre-ETS providers include: University of Southern Mississippi – Institute for Disability Studies (ToTal Program), The ARC of Northwest Mississippi, Public Consulting Group, Inc., Wesson-Monroe, LLC, Career Development & Training Institute, Goodwill Industries of Mississippi, Goodwill Industries of South Mississippi, Learning Zone, Inc., Mississippi State University – Mississippi Institute on Disabilities, Mulvihill Enterprises, CPI Enterprise, LLC, Advance Employment Group, Inc., and the National Federation of the Blind.

Office of Vocational Rehabilitation - Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP) AbilityWorks, Inc.
A vital component of Mississippi's vocational rehabilitation (VR) service delivery system is the statewide network of Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs) and community vendors, including the AbilityWorks model, which expands access to vocational assessment, training, work experiences, and employment supports across the state. AbilityWorks currently operates fifteen (15) strategically located facilities and provides a continuum of individualized services such as vocational assessment, community-based work experiences, work adjustment training, job readiness instruction, counseling and guidance, and employment preparation activities. These services are designed to support participants in achieving Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE) through structured, person-centered approaches that are responsive to employer expectations and local labor market demand.

In alignment with the U.S. Departments of Labor and Education's national workforce development framework,

America's Talent Strategy: Building the Workforce for the Golden Age, AbilityWorks functions as a workforce intermediary by connecting individuals with disabilities to career pathways and industry-aligned opportunities. This includes strengthening employer partnerships, expanding work-based learning, and supporting skill development that leads to credentials and sustainable employment.

Based on the results of the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA), the AbilityWorks Board commissioned and completed a detailed evaluation of AbilityWorks to assess how effectively current service models, capacity, referral processes, accessibility, and outcomes align with the needs of Mississippians with disabilities. Informed by both the CSNA findings and the evaluation, MDRS and AbilityWorks are actively working to restructure AbilityWorks to better meet statewide needs. This restructuring is focused on strengthening the consistency and responsiveness of services, expanding the ability to serve individuals with a broader range of disabilities, improving referral flow and operational efficiency, deepening employer engagement, enhancing performance accountability, modernizing training approaches, and reducing barriers that delay participation and progress toward employment.

Collectively, this renewed focus on evidence-informed rehabilitation services, employer-driven partnerships, and continuous quality improvement positions AbilityWorks as a cornerstone of Mississippi's VR infrastructure and a central driver of equitable, competitive integrated employment outcomes statewide.

AbilityWorks locations throughout the state and service area are:

- **Harrison County Service Areas:** Hancock, Harrison, Jackson, Pearl River, Stone, George;
- **Olive Branch Service Areas:** Desoto, Marshall, Tate, Tunica;
- **Tupelo Service Areas:** Lee, Pontotoc, Itawamba, Union;
- **Laurel Service Areas:** Covington, Jasper, Jones, Smith, Wayne;
- **Meridian Service Areas:** Clark, Kemper, Lauderdale, Neshoba, Newton, Winston;
- **Jackson Service Areas:** Hinds, Madison, Rankin, Scott, Simpson, Warren;
- **Corinth Service Areas:** Alcorn, Benton, Prentiss, Tippah, Tishomingo;
- **Starkville Service Areas:** Clay, Oktibbeha, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Webster, Montgomery;
- **Kosciusko Service Areas:** Attala, Leake, Neshoba, Rankin;
- **Columbus Service Areas:** Lowndes, Clay, Monroe;
- **Brookhaven Service Areas:** Adams, Amite, Copiah, Claiborne, Franklin, Jefferson, Jefferson Davis, Lawrence, Lincoln, Marion, Pike, Walthall, Wilkerson;
- **Greenwood Service Areas:** Leflore, Carroll, Holmes, Grenada, Bolivar, Sunflower, Humphreys, Tallahatchie, Yazoo;
- **Washington County Service Areas:** Washington, Sunflower, Bolivar, Issaquena, Sharkey;
- **Hattiesburg Service Areas**: Forrest, Greene, Lamar, Perry; and
- **Oxford Service Areas:** Calhoun, Coahoma, Panola, Lafayette, Quitman, Yalobusha.

Mobile Evaluation and Assessments

AbilityWorks has implemented a mobile vocational assessment service model to expand access to individualized evaluation services for students with disabilities who are potentially eligible or eligible for vocational rehabilitation services. This approach is aligned with the CSNA's clear finding that transportation is a persistent barrier statewide, particularly in rural communities where public transportation is limited or unavailable and costs can be prohibitive. By bringing assessment services directly to school-based and community settings, AbilityWorks reduces transportation-related access barriers, supports timely scheduling, and limits disruption to the school day.

The CSNA also highlights opportunities to strengthen coordination around transportation solutions, including interest

from the Mississippi Department of Transportation in collaborating with OVR, including AbilityWorks, to improve distribution of information about available transportation options. The mobile assessment model complements that direction by reducing reliance on transportation in the first place while the broader transportation system is strengthened through interagency collaboration and community partner engagement.

In addition, the CSNA reflects that vocational assessment is viewed by staff as a service area where quality is consistently adequate, while also identifying service-delivery barriers that can reduce engagement and continuity when access is difficult and when in-person options are limited. The mobile model directly supports equitable access and consistent participation by meeting students where they are and conducting assessments in real-world environments that better reflect the contexts where employment and training will occur.

Consistent with the national workforce development framework described in America's Talent Strategy: Building the Workforce for the Golden Age, mobile vocational assessment strengthens early career exploration and accelerates informed planning by identifying vocational interests, aptitudes, support needs, and training implications earlier in the pathway. The intent is to reduce delays, improve service efficiency, and support stronger coordination with local education agencies and workforce partners.

Looking ahead, AbilityWorks will expand mobile vocational assessment capacity in a way that is responsive to CSNA-identified needs, particularly in rural and underserved areas. This expansion will be paired with operational improvements that the CSNA flags as necessary for AbilityWorks to meet statewide needs more consistently, including clearer and more reliable referral processes and service accessibility that supports individuals with a broader range of disabilities. As demand increases, AbilityWorks will continue to monitor staffing capacity, scheduling workflows, and field-based resources to ensure services remain timely, high-quality, and accountable.

Pre-Employment Transition Work Readiness Training – Project GROW (Getting Ready for Opportunities at Work)

The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) and Office of Vocational Rehabilitation for the Blind (OVRB) are expanding non-school-based Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) Job Readiness Training for students with disabilities in direct response to the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA), which underscores that access barriers and inconsistent engagement can limit participation in services and delay progress toward employment. Delivering Job Readiness Training during summer break, intersession periods, and scheduled school holidays is a practical strategy to reduce scheduling conflicts, maintain continuity of skill-building, and keep students connected to career preparation activities when school-based services are not available.

This expanded model is designed to address the realities highlighted in the CSNA, particularly transportation and geographic barriers that disproportionately affect students in rural and underserved communities. By offering training in community-based settings and through flexible scheduling, OVR and OVRB can reduce missed appointments, improve follow-through, and provide earlier, more consistent exposure to employment expectations and work behaviors. Job Readiness Training will focus on the core competencies most tied to successful work-based learning and Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE), including communication, teamwork, problem-solving, time management, professional conduct, and self-advocacy, with instruction grounded in real-world application.

The CSNA also reinforces that strong, structured coordination with schools and partners is essential for consistent service delivery. OVR and OVRB will implement this expansion in collaboration with local education agencies to ensure alignment with transition planning and to strengthen referral flow, communication, and expectations for participation. This approach will be paired with clear performance monitoring and continuous improvement so that service delivery is consistent across regions, barriers are identified quickly, and the model remains responsive to student needs and local labor market demands.

Community Rehabilitation Programs to better serve individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder and other individuals with Social Skills Disorders

Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) continue to experience some of the highest unemployment and underemployment rates among all disability populations, reflecting persistent barriers to workforce participation, career advancement, and economic mobility. According to the 2025 Autism Speaks Annual Report, 70.0 percent of Mississippi autistic vocational rehabilitation (VR) applicants ages 14–64 received VR services.

Mississippi VR has demonstrated significant progress through sustained, multi-year system improvements. From Program Year (PY) 2022 to PY 2024, the number of individuals with autism served increased by more than 37 percent. Concurrently, VR experienced a 50 percent increase in case closures and a nearly 80 percent increase in successful employment outcomes for individuals with ASD. These gains reflect the impact of strengthened transition pipelines, expanded Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) delivery, enhanced employer partnerships, improved workforce alignment, and targeted service strategies designed to increase competitive integrated employment outcomes.

Despite this progress, the 2024 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) and stakeholder feedback continue to identify gaps in specialized Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP) capacity to address the extended support needs of individuals with ASD, particularly in the areas of job readiness development, executive functioning, social communication skill-building, work adjustment training, and long-term employment supports. Currently, there is no CRP in Mississippi solely dedicated to providing comprehensive, autism-specific service models. In response, the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) has established dedicated statewide leadership through a Program Specialist for Autism Services to coordinate service design, provider development, technical assistance, and continuous quality improvement.

To strengthen workforce alignment and service effectiveness, OVR has implemented a comprehensive statewide training strategy for VR staff, AbilityWorks personnel, and Vocational Training Instructors (VTIs). Structured training on evidence-based practices for supporting individuals with ASD is delivered at least twice annually, with a focus on individualized service planning, workplace accommodation strategies, employer engagement, job coaching methodologies, and behavioral support interventions. The Supported Employment (SE) Program Specialist and Autism Program Specialist collaborate to ensure consistent onboarding, professional development, and technical assistance for newly hired VTIs, promoting service quality, instructional fidelity, and statewide consistency.

To further strengthen system capacity and improve employment outcomes for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, including Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) is actively working to recruit and hire a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA). This specialized position will provide statewide expertise in behavioral assessment, intervention design, staff training, and service model development to support individuals with complex support needs.

The BCBA will deliver targeted technical assistance to VR counselors, AbilityWorks personnel, Vocational Training Instructors (VTIs), and supported employment providers, focusing on evidence-based behavioral interventions, job readiness development, social communication skill-building, executive functioning supports, and workplace accommodation strategies. This role will also support the development and implementation of structured service protocols and individualized intervention plans designed to improve engagement, skill acquisition, job retention, and long-term employment stability.

In alignment with the U.S. Departments of Labor and Education's national workforce development framework, America's Talent Strategy: Building the Workforce for the Golden Age, this strategic staffing investment enhances workforce responsiveness, strengthens clinical capacity, supports integrated service delivery, and advances data-driven

quality improvement. Through this enhanced clinical infrastructure, OVR will expand access to specialized supports, improve service quality, and strengthen competitive integrated employment outcomes for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities statewide.

Collectively, these strategies are designed to expand service access, strengthen workforce engagement, enhance service quality, and further increase competitive integrated employment outcomes for individuals with ASD, ensuring Mississippi's VR system delivers equitable, responsive, and high-impact services aligned with both state workforce priorities and national best practices.

Office of Vocational Rehabilitation for the Blind

The Addie McBryde Center – Community Residential Rehabilitation Center

The Addie McBryde Memorial Rehabilitation Center for the Blind is Mississippi's longstanding personal adjustment training center for adults who are blind, visually impaired, or deaf-blind. Located on the campus of the University of Mississippi Medical Center in Jackson and established in 1972, the Center provides both day and residential programming that builds the practical and vocational skills individuals need to live and work as independently as possible. Residential consumers stay on-site in the dormitory (capacity of 28), and all consumers participate in structured training delivered by certified instructors during the instructional day, with additional activities that reinforce adjustment to vision loss and employment readiness.

Training is individualized and includes core blindness skills such as orientation and mobility, techniques of daily living and home management, personal management, technology, and Braille reading and writing. The Center also incorporates employment-focused preparation through activities that strengthen confidence, self-advocacy, resume development, interviewing, and use of community resources. In addition to personal adjustment training, services may include vocational evaluation, work adjustment training, community-based work experiences, counseling and guidance, and other supports that contribute to the individual's pathway toward Competitive Integrated Employment.

This work aligns with the CSNA's emphasis on strengthening service capacity and access for individuals with the most significant disabilities, including the continued need for strong Community Rehabilitation Program options and training models that improve independence and employment readiness. The CSNA also reinforces the practical barriers that can affect participation—particularly transportation and access challenges—which further underscores the importance of having structured, high-quality training options available within the state.

In SFY 2025, the Addie McBryde Center delivered 100+ services to 82 consumers from across Mississippi, reflecting ongoing demand for intensive evaluation, training, and personal adjustment services.

Looking ahead to PY 2026–PY 2027, OVRB will continue strengthening referral pathways and coordination to ensure timely access to Addie McBryde services, while evaluating opportunities to improve capacity, service responsiveness, and statewide reach. This includes continued focus on reducing access barriers, strengthening employment-focused training components, and ensuring staffing and resources remain aligned with the needs identified in the CSNA and the growing demand for blindness skills training statewide.

Mississippi EMERGE Center

OVRB has expanded Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP) capacity for individuals who are blind or have low vision by establishing Structured Discovery training services in Mississippi, directly responding to the CSNA-identified need to increase access to non-traditional training models and strengthen statewide CRP capacity for the blind. In the Southern Region, OVRB completed development of a Structured Discovery Center, including on-site apartment accommodations, to provide personal adjustment training that builds blindness skills and supports progress toward Competitive Integrated Employment. To date, more than fourteen individuals have received training through this newly established CRP.

To further expand statewide access, MDRS established the Mississippi EMERGE Center on the Mississippi Gulf Coast as a companion to the Addie McBryde Center. MDRS requested and received RSA prior approval in 2023 to establish an additional CRP using the Structured Discovery methodology, and the EMERGE Center was developed to serve as the state's second personal adjustment training center. Located in Long Beach, Mississippi, the EMERGE Center provides comprehensive Structured Discovery training under sleep shades, emphasizing non-visual techniques, experiential learning, confidence-building, and problem-solving. Instruction includes Braille, technology, apartment management and home skills, orientation and mobility, and job-readiness skills. Training is available to both day and residential participants, with residential consumers living in apartments rather than dormitories to support real-world skill development and independence.

In SFY 2025, the Mississippi EMERGE Center trained 10 consumers and successfully launched Structured Discovery Training for participants in the Older Blind Program, representing a significant advancement in the state's Older Blind Outreach efforts and expanding access to personal adjustment training for older individuals experiencing vision loss. During PY 2026–PY 2027, OVRB will build on this progress by strengthening referral pathways, increasing participation in Structured Discovery services statewide, and continuing to evaluate capacity needs to support timely access and consistent service delivery. As Structured Discovery CRP capacity expands, OVRB will also assess staffing and operational needs to ensure centers are adequately resourced to sustain high-quality training, support successful transitions to Competitive Integrated Employment, and meet the growing demand for blindness skills training, including for older individuals adjusting to vision loss.

r. Goals, Priorities, and Strategies

Section 101(a)(15) and (23) of the Rehabilitation Act require VR agencies to describe the goals and priorities of the State in carrying out the VR and Supported Employment programs. The goals and priorities are based on (1) the most recent CSNA, including any updates; (2) the State's performance under the performance accountability measures of Section 116 of WIOA; and (3) other available information on the operation and effectiveness of the VR program, including any reports received from the SRC and findings and recommendations from monitoring activities conducted under Section 107 of the Rehabilitation Act. VR agencies must—

1. Describe how the SRC and the VR agency jointly developed and agreed to the goals and priorities

The SRC and VR agencies jointly developed and approved the goals, priorities, and revisions through a structured, collaborative planning process. SRC recommendations derived from quarterly meetings, annual reports, CSNA review, consumer satisfaction data, and stakeholder input were formally incorporated into the development of the goals and strategies. Draft priorities were reviewed and refined through multiple SRC work sessions, with final approval provided at the March 2026 SRC meeting.

2. Identify measurable goals and priorities in carrying out the VR and Supported Employment programs

. Support innovation and expansion activities

A. Overcome barriers to accessing VR and Supported Employment

B. Improve and expand VR services for students with disabilities

C. Improve the performance of the VR and Support Employment programs

In the Program Year (PY) 2026–2027 goals and priorities for the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) and the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation for the Blind (OVRB) are grounded in a comprehensive, data-driven planning

framework informed by the 2024 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA), RSA performance accountability data, internal case reviews, consumer satisfaction findings, and formal recommendations from the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC). This integrated approach ensures that strategic priorities directly respond to identified consumer needs, workforce demands, and system performance trends.

GOAL 1: Improve the employment, economic stability, and self-sufficiency of eligible individuals with disabilities.

Strategies and Performance Measures:

1. Enhancing Employment Outcomes
Strategy: Establish and sustain a statewide job placement culture through structured training and technical assistance focused on employer engagement, labor market alignment, and placement strategies.
Performance Measures:

- Provide at least one statewide skills development and placement training annually for VR and VRB counselors and business relations staff.
- Achieve an annual increase in competitive integrated employment (CIE) placements statewide.

2. Integrate Labor Market Information (LMI) into Career Planning
Strategy: Ensure consistent use of in-demand labor market data during application, eligibility determination, IPE development, and ongoing case management.
Performance Measures:

- Integrate LMI review into 100% of new IPEs beginning PY 2026.
- Document LMI-informed career planning discussions in at least 80% of sampled case reviews annually.

3. Strengthen Workforce System Integration
Strategy: Increase VR and VRB leadership engagement in state and local workforce governance to strengthen system coordination and service integration.
Performance Measures:

- Ensure assigned OVR/OVRB staff attend a minimum of four (4) Local Workforce Development Area board meetings annually.

4. Expand postsecondary training aligned to workforce ROI
Strategy: Target postsecondary training toward credentials with strong employment and wage outcomes.
Performance Measures:

- Execute or update formal agreements with postsecondary institutions annually

Strategy: Strengthen interagency coordination with SEA and LEAs to improve referral pipelines, service alignment, and transition planning.
Performance Measures:

- Review and update all education MOUs at least once every three (3) years.
- Increase student referrals to VR statewide by PY 2027.

5. Expand Benefits Planning and Financial Literacy Services
Strategy: Increase referrals for benefits counseling to support informed decision-making and reduce benefits-related employment barriers.
Performance Measures:

- Increase referrals of SSI/SSDI recipients expressing employment interest for Benefits Analysis and Counseling.

- Achieve an annual increase in completed benefits counseling referrals.

6. Expand Internship and Work-Based Learning Opportunities
Strategy: Increase paid and unpaid internship and work-based learning opportunities for youth, postsecondary students, and adults.
Performance Measures:

- Increase the number of VR-supported internships.
- Develop at least five (5) new employer internship partnerships annually.

7. Strengthen supported employment referral pipelines
Strategy: Improve coordination between VR, DMH, and internal transition pathways.
Performance Measures:

- Conduct biannual DMH referral reviews

GOAL 2: Expand and strengthen Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) to improve early career preparation, equitable access, and competitive integrated employment outcomes for students with disabilities statewide.

Strategies and Performance Measures

1. Expand early outreach, identification, and referral of students with disabilities.
Strategy: Strengthen collaboration with MDE, LEAs, community partners, and families to increase early identification and referral of students beginning at age 14, with targeted outreach to rural, underserved, foster youth, and justice-involved youth populations.
Performance Measures:

- Increase Pre-ETS referrals for students ages 14–16 by 10% by PY 2027.
- Conduct monthly coordination meetings with MDE and targeted outreach sessions in all regions annually.

2. Increase access to high-quality work-based learning experiences.
Strategy: Expand paid and unpaid work-based learning, internships, and on-campus work experiences through employer partnerships, CRP expansion, and AbilityWorks programming.
Performance Measures:

- Increase student participation in work-based learning activities.
- Establish at least five (5) new employer or training partnerships annually to support Pre-ETS work experiences.

3. Strengthen statewide consistency, quality, and accountability in Pre-ETS service delivery.
Strategy: Implement standardized referral tools, service tracking systems, case monitoring protocols, and counselor-driven service planning to ensure consistent, outcome-focused service delivery statewide.
Performance Measures:

- Ensure 100% of districts utilize standardized Pre-ETS referral and tracking tools annually.
- Conduct quarterly monitoring reviews of Pre-ETS service quality, timeliness, and outcomes.

4. Strengthen student, family, and school engagement.

Strategy: Expand training, outreach, and resource dissemination to students, families, and school personnel to improve awareness, participation, and service coordination.
Performance Measures:

- Conduct a minimum of five (5) statewide outreach and training events annually for schools and families.
- Increase student and family participation in Pre-ETS planning activities.

5. Improve post-school employment and postsecondary outcomes for Pre-ETS participants.
Strategy: Strengthen alignment between Pre-ETS, VR services, postsecondary training, and workforce systems to improve competitive integrated employment and education outcomes.
Performance Measures:

- Increase post-school employment or postsecondary enrollment among Pre-ETS participants.
- Increase VR application rates among Pre-ETS participants.

GOAL 3: Strengthen statewide staff capacity through continuous, multimodal professional development designed to enhance adult learning, improve policy and practice integration, and promote consistent, high-quality service delivery.

Strategies and Performance Measures:

1. Establish a Centralized, Multimodal Training Infrastructure
Strategy: Develop and maintain an integrated training system that includes a centralized training library, the YesLMS learning management system, and on-demand instructional videos to provide accessible, flexible, and consistent professional development statewide.
Performance Measures:

- Maintain a centralized training library and YesLMS platform with continuously updated policy and procedure training content.
- Develop and upload a minimum of five (5) training modules or videos annually.
- Achieve at least 85% staff completion of required training modules annually.

2. Develop and Disseminate Practical Desk References and Job Aids
Strategy: Create standardized desk references, workflow guides, and job aids to support consistent policy application, documentation quality, and service delivery.
Performance Measures:

- Develop and distribute desk references or job aids annually.

3. Strengthen Continuous Learning and Technical Assistance
Strategy: Provide structured technical assistance and coaching through monthly coordinator office hours, district training meetings, and quarterly statewide technical assistance sessions.
Performance Measures:

- Conduct monthly virtual office hours by each Program Coordinator.
- Deliver quarterly statewide or regional technical assistance sessions.

GOAL 4: Implement identified improvements to increase statewide consistency and quality of services to individuals with disabilities.
Strategies and Performance Measures:

1. Strengthen Case Quality and Compliance Through Targeted Training
Strategy: Utilize findings from annual case reviews and Program Evaluation accuracy reports to identify training needs, strengthen service consistency, and improve compliance and documentation quality statewide.
Performance Measures:

- Conduct annual statewide case reviews using standardized evaluation criteria.

- Require all counselors to maintain a minimum 90% casework accuracy rate as part of their annual performance evaluation.
- Provide targeted corrective training to 100% of counselors scoring below 90% accuracy, with documented improvement plans and follow-up reviews within six (6) months.

2. Implement Annual Staff Training Needs Assessments
Strategy: Conduct annual surveys of VR and VRB staff to identify self-reported training needs, service delivery challenges, and opportunities for professional development.
Performance Measures:

- Develop and implement an annual training plan based on survey findings, with documented completion of priority training initiatives.

3. Expand Best Practice Knowledge Through Professional Development and Knowledge Transfer
Strategy: Ensure continuous system improvement by strengthening leadership engagement in national and regional professional development activities and disseminating best practices statewide.
Performance Measures:

- Require each Program Coordinator to attend at least one (1) national, regional, or state-level professional conference or training annually.
- Conduct a minimum of two (2) statewide best-practice knowledge-sharing sessions annually, facilitated by Program Coordinators, to disseminate lessons learned and emerging evidence-based strategies.

4. Formalize Provider Roles for Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD)
Strategy: Establish and maintain formal provider agreements that clearly define service expectations, performance standards, and long-term employment support responsibilities for individuals with IDD.
Performance Measures:

- Conduct annual provider performance and capacity reviews to assess service quality, outcomes, and long-term support capabilities.

5. Strengthen Workforce System Coordination and Service Integration
Strategy: Enhance coordination with core workforce partners to reduce duplication, improve service integration, and optimize resource utilization across the statewide workforce development system.
Performance Measures:

- Ensure VR and VRB leadership participation in State Workforce Investment Board (SWIB) collaboration sessions annually.
- Document at least four (4) cross-agency coordination initiatives annually aimed at improving referral processes, service integration, and workforce alignment.

GOAL 5: Expand targeted outreach to underserved populations and individuals with the most significant disabilities.

Strategies and Performance Measures:

1. Expand Targeted Outreach and Engagement to Underserved Populations
Strategy: Implement a statewide outreach strategy to broaden access to VR and Supported Employment services, with targeted engagement of minority populations, individuals in rural and high-poverty areas, and individuals identified as unserved or underserved in the CSNA.
Performance Measures:

- Integrate outreach performance indicators relevant staff performance appraisals.

- Conduct biannual outreach performance reviews at the district and regional levels.
- Achieve an increase in applications from targeted populations.

2. Strengthen Referral Pipelines for Youth and Individuals with Mental Illness
Strategy: Maintain and enhance coordinated referral processes between MDRS and the Department of Mental Health (DMH) to improve early identification and service engagement of youth and individuals with mental illness and other psychological conditions.
Performance Measures:

- Conduct biannual reviews of referral protocols with DMH.
- Increase the number of youth referrals from DMH.
- Monitor referral-to-service initiation timelines quarterly, targeting service initiation within 30 days of referral.

3. Expand Supported Employment Outcomes for Individuals with Most Significant Disabilities
Strategy: Strengthen supported employment pathways through enhanced provider capacity, workforce system collaboration, and targeted service strategies.
Performance Measures:

- Increase the number of individuals achieving supported employment closures.
- Expand supported employment provider capacity by increasing providers annually.
- Increase participation in evidence-based supported employment models.

4. Modernize and Standardize Outreach and Referral Materials
Strategy: Maintain up-to-date, accessible, and culturally responsive outreach and referral materials to improve public awareness and referral quality.
Performance Measures:

- Conduct annual reviews of all printed and digital outreach materials in collaboration with the MDRS Office of Communications.
- Update materials annually to ensure accuracy, accessibility, and compliance with federal communication standards.
- Distribute revised materials to all local education agencies, workforce partners, healthcare providers, and community organizations annually.

5. Expand On-Campus Work Experience in Rural Communities
Strategy:
Develop and implement on-campus work experience programs for rural students lacking access to community-based employment sites.
Performance Measures:

- Implement on-campus work experience programming in at least five (5) rural school districts or postsecondary campuses annually.
- Increase rural student participation in work-based learning.

6. Strengthen Tribal Partnerships and Service Access
Strategy: Establish and maintain formal collaboration with the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians to expand culturally responsive outreach, strengthen referral pathways, and improve access to vocational rehabilitation and supported employment services for tribal members with disabilities.
Performance Measures:

- Execute or update a formal interagency agreement or memorandum of collaboration with the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians.
- Conduct at least two (2) joint outreach, training, or service coordination activities annually with tribal

education, workforce, and employment programs.
- Increase VR applications and referrals from tribal members.
- Establish routine case coordination protocols to ensure timely access to services and employment supports.

GOAL 6: Implement a statewide model for more effectively serving high school youth and students with disabilities including individuals with visual and/or hearing impairments.

Strategies and Performance Measures:

1. Establish a Coordinated Interagency Transition Service Framework
Strategy: Engage key partners, including the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE), the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC), local education agencies (LEAs), community colleges, workforce training providers, the Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services (MDCPS), and youth justice system partners to design and implement a coordinated statewide transition service framework that expands access for students in foster care and youth involved in the justice system.
Performance Measures:
- Conduct at least two (2) statewide interagency transition planning sessions annually.
- Develop and implement a standardized transition service delivery.
- Increase transition-age student VR applications.
- Establish formal referral pathways with MDCPS and youth justice agencies.

2. Expand Cross-Training and Professional Development
Strategy: Strengthen cross-agency collaboration through structured training and workgroup activities that improve shared understanding of VR and VRB services and transition processes.
Performance Measures:
- Conduct at least one (1) statewide training annually and two (2) regional workgroups annually in collaboration with MDE and LEAs.

3. Establish and Maintain Statewide School Contact Infrastructure
Strategy: Establish a statewide directory of Section 504 Coordinators, special education staff, and transition leads to strengthen referral pathways and communication.
Performance Measures:
- Maintain an annually updated directory of 504 Coordinators and special education contacts for school districts.
- Update contact information annually prior to each academic year.

4. Expand Secondary School Outreach and Referral Networks
Strategy: Identify and engage additional school-based personnel and transition partners to increase awareness of VR services, including Pre-ETS, and improve early referral of students with disabilities, including students in foster care and youth involved in the justice system.
Performance Measures:
- Identify additional referral points in each school district annually.
- Increase Pre-ETS referrals.

5. Strengthen Family and Advocacy Organization Engagement
Strategy: Expand partnerships with parent training and information centers, advocacy organizations, and community service providers to strengthen family engagement and early referral.
Performance Measures:
- Execute at least five (5) formal outreach collaborations annually.

- Conduct a minimum of five (5) joint outreach or training events annually statewide.

6. Strengthen Transition to Supported Employment Pathways
Strategy: Enhance coordination between Transition Counselors, Youth Counselors, and Supported Employment (SE) Counselors for students ages 14–21 requiring long-term supports.
Performance Measures:

- Conduct quarterly cross-team case reviews for supported employment referrals.
- Reduce referral-to-service initiation timelines.

GOAL 7: Strengthen the effectiveness, capacity, and consistency of the Supported Employment (SE) program to improve competitive integrated employment outcomes, job retention, and long-term stability for individuals with the most significant disabilities.

Strategies and Performance Measures

1. Expand Supported Employment Service Capacity
Strategy: Increase provider capacity, geographic coverage, and service availability for supported and customized employment statewide.
Performance Measures:

- Increase supported or customized employment providers annually.
- Increase supported employment service availability in rural and underserved regions.

GOAL 8: Expand innovative service models to strengthen social skills, job readiness, and employment outcomes for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, including autism.

Strategies and Performance Measures

1. Expand Social Skills and Workplace Readiness Training
Strategy: Develop and implement evidence-based social skills, communication, and workplace readiness training models for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, including autism, delivered through AbilityWorks, Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs), and VR-supported providers.
Performance Measures:

- Develop and implement standardized social skills and workplace readiness curricula.
- Establish at least one (1) pilot program site annually delivering structured social skills and job readiness services.
- Increase participation of individuals with IDD in social skills and work readiness training.

2. Strengthen Clinical and Behavioral Support Capacity
Strategy: Enhance clinical capacity through staff training, technical assistance, and partnerships with behavioral specialists to support individuals with complex support needs.
Performance Measures:

- Provide annual autism and IDD-focused training to 100% of VR/VRB counselors, VR/VRB Managers and AbilityWorks staff.
- Deliver quarterly technical assistance sessions focused on evidence-based interventions, employment supports, and behavioral strategies.
- Increase counselor confidence and service effectiveness, as measured through annual staff training evaluations.

3. Improve Employment Retention and Long-Term Outcomes

Strategy: Integrate social skills and work readiness training into supported employment and transition service pathways to improve job retention and long-term employment stability.

Performance Measures:

- Increase job retention at 90 days for individuals with autism and IDD.
- Increase supported employment closures for individuals with IDD.

s. Evaluation and Report of Progress

1. Progress in achieving goals and priorities

GOAL I: Improve the employment, economic stability, and self-sufficiency of eligible individuals with disabilities.

Report of Progress:

- 28.2% increase in VR consumers that obtained and employment outcome from 2018 to 2019. Due to the impact of COVID-19 OVR saw a 12% decrease in the number of individuals that obtained employment, however 2710 individuals achieved competitive integrated employment in 2020 and 2375 achieved competitive integrated employment in 2021. 50% increase in VRB consumers that obtained an employment outcome from 2018 to 2019. Due to the impact of COVID-19 OVRB saw a 32% decrease in the number of individuals that obtained employment in 2020, however 352 individuals obtained competitive integrated employment and in in 2021 239 obtained competitive integrated employment.
- In 2019, the Measurable Skill Gain (MSG) rate was 59.8% and in 2020 MSG for consumers served was 72.4%
- The median hourly wage for individuals exiting the VR/VRB program with an employment outcome has increased. In 2018 median wage was $11.54 and the median hours worked per week was 40 hours. In 2019 the median wage increased to $12.00 per hour and in 2020 the median wage increased to $13.00.
- In 2018-2019, 5, 182 new IPE were signed, in 2019 -2020, 4,960 IPEs were signed, 2020 – 2021, 4, 564 IPEs were signed.
- Three Youth Pre-Employment Transition Conferences were held in Vicksburg on April 26, 2018, Greenwood on May 22, 2018, and Biloxi on April 28, 2018. Due to COVID-19, Transition Conferences were postponed in 2019 – 2021.
- VR Career Counselors in 2019, assisted 267 clients received Job Prep and Job Ready Services. VR Career Counselors continue to assist clients become 'Job Ready". In 2020, 729 consumers received job prep services, 442 received job search and 225 clients received job placement. In 2021, 363 received job prep and 284 received job search services and 130 received job placement.
- The 7th Annual Summer Internship for Students with Blindness was completed in 2019. Fourteen (14) students participated.
- In 2021, 8th Annual Summer Internship for Students with Blindness was completed and eight (8) students participated. The 2020 Annual Summer Internship was postponed due to COVID-19. Four (4) consumers were hired into competitive integrated employment after completing their internship.
- 626 clients received Benefits Counseling from our Community Work Incentive Partners in 2019 490 VR consumers received Benefits Counseling and 487 VR consumers in 2021. The number that received Benefits Counseling were impacted by COVID-19
- 10,346 individual contacts to business in the state of Mississippi were made by Business Development staff in 201811,245 individual contacts to business in the state of Mississippi was made in 2019.
- 6276 individual contacts to business in the state of Mississippi were made in 2020. COVID 19 had an impact on the number of businesses contacted.
- 9857 individual contacts to business in the state of Mississippi were made in 2021
- Five job fairs (three major, two minor in size) were held in Tupelo, Jackson, Gulfport, Greenwood, and Cleveland in 2018.
- Three job fairs were held in Southaven, Jackson, and Gulfport in 2019. 130 businesses attended. Due to

COVID-19, Job Fairs in 2020 were cancelled.

- In October 2021, Job Fair held in conjunction with the University of Mississippi that targeted college students with disabilities. Twenty-eight businesses attended
- Seventy students (72) with disabilities participated in the Student Summer Internship Program (SIP) in 2019. Fifty-four (54) students participated in 2020 and seventy-three (73) participated in 2021.
- Eleven students with disabilities participated in Project SEARCH in 2018 - 2019. This partnership was created with the University Medical Center, the Rankin County School District, the Mississippi Council for Developmental Disability and MDRS/VR. Nine graduated the program with a 100% placement percentage.
- Project SEARCH was expanded by 4 more locations: North Mississippi Medical Center (Tupelo), Forest General Hospital (Hattiesburg), Baptist Medical Center (Jackson), and Southcentral Regional Medical Center (Laurel in 2019).
- In 2020 -2021, Forty-two (42) individuals with disabilities participated in Project SEARCH and existing and new partnerships were created with the University MS Medical Center, Baptist Jackson, Baptist Attala, MeritHealth-Vicksburg, South Central Regional Medical Center, North MS Medical Center and Forrest General Hospital.
- 104 individuals with disabilities have been placed into employment at Sephora Distribution facility in Olive Branch, MS as of October 2019, Sephora has committed to hiring another 50-75 more individuals through 2020. In July of 2019, Sephora had an attrition rate of 2-3% compared to 20-30% of the able-bodied population. Employees with disabilities had less than 1% absenteeism in the program. This partnership started in October 2017.
- In 2020, thirty-one (31) individuals with disabilities received Distribution Center Training and fifteen (15) were hired. In 2021, twenty-five (25) received training and ten (10) were hired.
- In 2018, the Business Enterprise Program (Randolph Sheppard) five (5) new vendors opened their businesses
- In Summer 2021, the first Summer Pre –ETS Work-Based Learning Program was implemented. One Hundred-three (103) participated in the program. These students were placed with employers throughout the state in their local communities.

GOAL II: Improve the VR Service Delivery System to Individuals with Disabilities

Report of Progress:

- MDRS contracted with RL Brown Group Inc. to translate client service forms and documents from English into Spanish.
- In 2021, RL Brown Group began translating brochures in Spanish beginning with our Transition and Youth Services Brochure
- VR has sixty seven (67) individuals whose primary language is Spanish as a result of the outreach and translation of forms and brochures
- 189 individuals signed and developed a Career Pathway IPE in 2019, 152 in 2020 and 2021 in 136. This process was designed to provide expedited VR services to clients with *Significant Disabilities* by allowing the counselor to establish an employment goal with a consumer within a specific Career Pathway and provide Vocational/Career Counseling and other designated VR services more quickly after a determination of eligibility has been made. For students with disabilities, a Career Pathway (Fast Track) IPE supports the provision of Pre-Employment Transition Services needed to ensure that the student's specific employment goal is consistent with their strengths, abilities, capabilities, concerns, priorities, interest and informed choice.
- VR updated its Supported Employment Policy and Procedures to increase the focus on clients that need SE services. This process helped increase the number of individuals served in the SE program. In 2020, 548 individuals received SE services
- VR staff work in partnership with other agencies such as the Department of Mental Health, Bureau of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. The Memorandum of Understanding with the Department of Mental Health was renewed for May 1, 2021 through April 30, 2024.

- Autism Spectrum Disorders - Two new providers entered into contracts to provide evaluation and assessment services to individuals with Autism and other significant disabilities. These provider contracts have been renewed.
- In 2018, 311 individuals with autism were provided VR Services. In 2019, the number of individuals with autism increased to 449, 2020 the number served increased to 604 and in 2020 the number served increased to 628.
- In 2021 and new Interagency Agreement was established with TEAAM that provides services to individuals with autism spectrum disorders, attention deficit disorder, specific learning disability and other intellectual and development disorders.
- The 3rd Annual VR Deaf Pre-ETS Summer Program was held by the Deaf Services Program at Eagle Ridge in July 2019. The DEAF Pre-ETS Summer Program was postponed in 2020 and 2021 due to COVID-19.
- In July 2019, the 4th Annual Pre-Employment Transition Camp for Students with Deafness was held. 2020 and2021 Pre-ETS Transition Camp was cancelled due to COVID-19.
- VR developed the Outreach and Orientation Program to be utilized by district staff to conduct outreach with other organizations and service providers. Continuing in 2018 and 2019, progress on this has been slow due to other major responsibilities. VR will continue to move toward implementing the Outreach and Orientation Program. Progress on implementing has been delayed in 2020 and 2021 due to COVID-19 and staff shortages.
- Supported Employment Job Skills Manual and training provided in three locations throughout the state to VR and VRB staff, IDD Waiver providers and other agencies and organizations that provide Employment Services.
- The Interagency Cooperative Agreement with the Department of Education has been renewed for January 1, 2020 through June 30, 2022. In 2020 -2021, all Memorandum of Agreements with local education agencies were updated.
- In 2019, OVR/OVRB launched the first Peer Mentoring Pilot Program at the University of Southern Mississippi and Mississippi State University. The guidance and support of the WINTAC Pre-ETS team played a vital role with the implementation of these projects in Mississippi. Given the support of WINTAC and the Pre-ETS team, Mississippi is proud to be one of the first states in the nation to implement a Peer Mentoring project.
- In 2020 through 2021, Interagency Agreements for Peer Mentoring have been executed with East Mississippi Community College/Student Support Services, August 1, 2020 – July 31, 2023; Northwest Mississippi Community College/Success Center – September 1, 2020 – July 31, 2023; Mississippi State University/Disability Resource Center – June 1, 2021 – June 30, 2023 and the University of Southern Mississippi – June 1, 2021 – June 30, 2023.
- VR and VRB staff participated in the process with the assistance of WINTAC to work with pilot areas in the Belden/Tupelo and Greenville areas to improve service alignment among VR Core Partners, required partners and other stake holders in these areas. WINTAC facilitated the Integration Continuum Self-Assessment. In both locations the partners selected priority areas to make strategic improvements. Each area established Action Teams to oversee the implementation with WINTAC of the strategic plans that includes a cross-section of partners with VR staff in leadership roles. Due to COVID -19 further work on the Integration Continuum was halted.

GOAL III: Implement a statewide model for more effectively serving high school youth and students with disabilities including individuals with visual and/or hearing impairments.

Report of Progress:

- The 3rd Annual VR Deaf Pre-ETS Summer Program was held by the Deaf Services Program at Eagle Ridge in July 2019. In July 2019, the 4th Annual Pre-Employment Transition Camp for Students with Deafness was held.
- 14 Students with Blindness participated in the OVRB 6th Summer Internship Program.
- VR served 3,609 students with disabilities and VRB served 676 students with disabilities for a total of4,285.

This in an increase of 486 students from 2018.

- In 2020, OVR served 3595 eligible and potentially eligible students with disabilities. This is a decrease from 2019 due to COVID-19 and the limited access to students.
- In 2020, OVRB served 301 eligible students with disabilities. This is a decrease from 2019 due to COVID-19and the limited access to students.
- In 2021, OVR/OVRB served 2605 eligible students with disabilities and 1,292 potentially eligible students with disabilities.
- OVR/OVRB successfully completed the first pilot year of Peer Mentoring with two of universities in the state: Mississippi State University and the University of Southern Mississippi. In 2020 through 2021, Peer Mentoring will be provided at East Mississippi Community College and Northwest Mississippi Community College/Success Center –Pre-Employment Transition Services were provided through OVR's partnership with the Mississippi State University - T.K. Martin Center through on-campus internships. COVID-19 impacted this partnership in 2019 – 2020. The contracts were renewed and as steps are being made to prevent the spread of COVID-19 we look forward to this partnership.
- Pre-Employment Transition Services were provided through OVR's partnership with the ARC of Mississippi through after school Pre-ETS classes in a rural part of the state. This contract will continue from 2021 – 2022.
- Pre-Employment Transition Services were provided through VRB's partnership with the National Federation of the Blind through two Transition conferences. This contract will continue from 2020 – 2022.
- Pre-Employment Transition Services were provided through OVR's partnership with Life of MS through two different one-day transition conferences across the state. This contract will continue in 2020 – 202
  Pre-Employment Transition Services were provided through OVR's partnership with Vocational & Rehabilitation Consultants, LLC through one three-day conference. This contract was impacted by COVID – 19.
  Pre-Employment Transition Services were provided through OVR's partnership with the University of Southern Mississippi through on-campus weeklong Transition Boot Camps and in-school Pre-ETS activities. This contract will continue in 2020 – 2022 and many of the activities they provide are virtual.

GOAL IV: Implement identified improvements to increase statewide consistency and quality of consumer services.

Report of Progress:

- The Consumer Satisfaction Survey was implemented in 2018 for open OVR/OVRB cases by the Program Evaluation Unit.

Factors that impeded the achievement of the goals and priorities

Due to the ongoing changes with federal reporting, MDRS continues to work with staff to understand and incorporate new rules and processes. VR and VRB is still working to achieve the goals and implement the strategies outlined in this state plan.

VR and VRB is still working to achieve the goals and implement the strategies outlined in this state plan. Although all of the strategies were not achieved to meet the goal, significant progress was made to increase the goals. Some of the factors that impeded the achievement of the goals and priorities were:

- High staff turnover experiences over the last few years affected the VRs ability to provide consistent, high-quality services to consumers as referenced in the CSNA
- The effects of COVIS-19 affected our ability to provide access to needed services due to the nation and statewide shutdown of schools and businesses
- Increasing number of referrals for Pre-Employment Transition Services and Transition Services
- Extensive training on new policy and procedures due to the changes in WIOA and the RSA 911.

2. Performance on the performance accountability measures

The Primary Indicators of Performance are:

- Unsubsidized Employment During the 2nd Quarter After Exit
- Unsubsidized Employment During the 4th Quarter After Exit
- Median Earnings
- Credential Attainment Rate
- Measurable Skill Gain
- Indicator(s) of Effectiveness in Serving Employers

For PY 2024 the performance is as follows:

Percentage of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program.

- The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation and Vocational Rehabilitation for the Blind has in place a data sharing agreement with the Mississippi Department of Employment Security UI wage, to allow us to capture data for quarterly reporting of earnings and employment. VR/VRB will need to establish additional data sharing agreements to allow us to capture out of state data to ensure the full measuring of earnings for VR/VRB participants who exit the program. VR/VRB has also added a process to allow staff to collect self-employment earnings and employment success.
    - Negotiated Level 63.0
    - Achieved PY 64.7

The percentage of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the fourth quarter after exit from the program.

- The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation and Vocational Rehabilitation for the Blind has in place a data sharing agreement with the Mississippi Department of Employment Security UI wage, to allow us to capture data for quarterly reporting of earnings and employment. VR/VRB will need to establish additional data sharing agreements to allow us to capture out of state data to ensure the full measuring of earnings for VR/VRB participants who exit the program. VR/VRB has also added a process to allow staff to collect self-employment earnings and employment success.
    - Negotiated Level 58.8
    - Achieved 60.7

The median earnings of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program.

- The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation and Vocational Rehabilitation for the Blind has in place a data sharing agreement with the Mississippi Department of Employment Security UI wage, to allow us to capture data for quarterly reporting of earnings and employment. VR/VRB will need to establish additional data sharing agreements to allow us to capture out of state data to ensure the full measuring of earnings for VR/VRB participants who exit the program. VR/VRB has also added a process to allow staff to collect self-employment earnings and employment success.
    - Negotiated Level 7230.00
    - Achieved Median Earnings 8808.00

The percentage of program participants who obtain a recognized postsecondary credential or a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent one year after exit from the program.

- VR/VRB AWARE case management system records and captures Educational/Training goal information that records program participants who have received a recognized postsecondary credential or a secondary school

diploma. Staff have been training and provided procedures on how to document the Educational Goal page and the documentation that is required. VR/VRB is also registered with and obtains information from the National Student Clearinghouse that provides data and helps confirm academic credentials.

- Negotiated Level 45.0
- Achieved Credential rate 51.5

The percentage of program 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 toward such a credential or employment.

- VR/VRB AWARE case management system allows staff to record Measurable Skill Gain for each participant that is identified in a secondary or postsecondary education or training program.
- Staff have been training and provided procedures on how to document the individual's Educational Goal record and update this page when Measurable Skill Gains are achieved.
  - Negotiated 78.0
  - Achieved MSG Rate 80.1

Indicator(s) of Effectiveness in Serving Employers
Not Applicable

3. Use of funds reserved for innovation and expansion activities

MDRS continues to use Innovation and Expansion funds to assist in carrying out the duties of the State Rehabilitation Council. The I&E funds specifically provide for the following:

- Support staff to assist the SRC in carrying out its duties
- Operational costs which include travel and office supplies
- Any cost involved in having members attend meetings and trainings
- The cost associated with the quarterly Annual Consumer Satisfaction Survey

Pre-Employment Transition Services Providers and Services
Funds will be used to expand pre-employment and transition providers and services to students with disabilities by creating contract Transition Navigators. Additional contract transition staff will help expand services and assist OVR/OVRB provide access to these needed services. Based on information from the Mississippi Department of Education, there are over 22,000 students in the state with disabilities.

Social Skills Classes for Individuals with Autism and other related disabilities with social challenges.
Consumers with Autism Spectrum Disorder are having difficulty getting and keeping employment due the deficits in social skills and communication skills. Some can perform job tasks, but they do not have appropriate social and soft skills necessary to be successfully employed. Once they have completed high school, many feel isolated due their lack of structured social interactions like they had in school. Plans are to create a group-based social skills class for students /youth who have autism spectrum disorder (ASD) or related disabilities with social challenges. These classes will assist these individuals in making a smoother transition from adolescents to adulthood, increase peer relations and increase the likelihood of gaining and maintaining employment.

Project SEARCH
Efforts will continue to be made and funds will be expended to support Project SEARCH sites. Project SEARCH is expanding and has been proven nationally to be a vital program to train and assist individuals with significant disabilities prepare for and obtain employment.

Customized Training Programs
Funds will be used to expand working with employers on Customized Training Programs. The first Customized Training program with Sephora was very successful and to date over 100 individuals with disabilities obtained full-time

employment with benefits. Collaboration will continue with other employers/industries to train and hire individuals with disabilities. Toyota and Fastenal have started initial conversation and collaboration.

t. Supported Employment Services, Distribution of Title VI Funds, and Arrangements and Cooperative Agreements for the Provision of Supported Employment Services

1. Acceptance of the title VI funds

The State will accept title VI funds

2. Use of title VI funds

For PY 2026–2027, MDRS will continue to invest Title VI, Part B funds to support individuals with the most significant disabilities in achieving Competitive Integrated Employment by purchasing time-limited Supported Employment services following job placement and coordinating the transition to extended services through community partners and cooperative agreements.

The CSNA reinforced that community providers and vendors are essential to service delivery and employment outcomes, but it also identified system barriers that can reduce provider participation and limit service continuity. Specifically, vendors reported that the reimbursement process can take two to three months due to inefficient practices such as paper-based invoicing, creating financial strain that can reduce the desirability of continuing to partner with VR. Vendors also reported that consumer non-participation can delay invoicing, because providers cannot bill until required engagements occur. In addition, the CSNA identified that the vendor registration process is confusing and difficult to navigate, and transportation barriers remain a major obstacle to participation, especially in rural areas. These findings directly impact Supported Employment capacity, because Supported Employment depends on timely service delivery, consistent consumer engagement, and a stable provider network.

In response to these CSNA findings, MDRS will use Title VI funds in coordination with Title I funds and other allowable resources to maintain continuity of services from placement through stabilization while strengthening the provider system that delivers Supported Employment. MDRS will continue to supplement Title VI funds when possible with Title I resources and may use Social Security Reimbursement funds when necessary to support allowable program expenditures if Title I funds are not available.

MDRS assures that at least 50 percent of Title VI, Part B funds will be reserved annually for youth with the most significant disabilities, in accordance with federal requirements. Remaining funds will support eligible adults with the most significant disabilities. MDRS will continue to provide the required state match to draw the full federal Supported Employment award and will ensure that no more than 2.5 percent of the award is used for administrative costs.

Title VI, Part B funds are distributed to support post-placement Supported Employment services that promote stabilization and long-term retention in Competitive Integrated Employment. In addition, MDRS will prioritize the following improvements aligned with CSNA findings to strengthen Supported Employment capacity and access statewide:

- Streamlining and modernizing provider reimbursement processes to reduce delays and stabilize provider participation.
- Improving vendor onboarding and access to clear guidance to reduce confusion and administrative burden.
- Addressing transportation and geographic barriers through coordinated planning and partnership strategies, including collaboration opportunities identified in the CSNA.

- Strengthening consistent engagement strategies with consumers to reduce missed appointments that disrupt services and delay provider invoicing.

VR goals and priorities regarding the distribution of Title VI, Part B funds are to:

- Allocate at least 50 percent of the federal Supported Employment allotment to eligible youth with the most significant disabilities.
- Increase access to Supported Employment services statewide, with emphasis on youth and adults with the most significant disabilities, including those in rural and underserved communities.
- Expand and strengthen the network of Supported Employment providers through targeted provider development and collaboration, while removing system barriers that disincentivize provider participation.
- Maximize Competitive Integrated Employment outcomes by coordinating Title VI funds with Title I and other allowable resources to ensure continuity of services from placement through stabilization.
- Support job skills training and individualized supports that promote long-term employment retention, while ensuring transition to extended services is planned early and implemented consistently.

3. Quality, scope, and extent of supported employment services to be provided to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including youth, and the timing of transition to extended services

MDRS, Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR), provides Supported Employment services, including Customized Employment, to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including youth with the most significant disabilities, to support achievement of Competitive Integrated Employment. Supported Employment services are available statewide and integrated into the general VR service delivery system across all districts.

Supported Employment services may be funded with Title I or Title VI, Part B funds following job placement and include assessment, job matching, job development, job placement, job skills training, facilitation of natural supports, and coordination of extended services. Individuals may also receive additional VR services funded under Title I based on individualized needs.

The CSNA identified barriers that can affect service continuity and participation, including transportation challenges, inconsistent engagement, and reimbursement delays that can reduce vendor participation. In response, MDRS will continue to strengthen service coordination, communication expectations, and monitoring practices to support timely service delivery and reduce avoidable interruptions. MDRS will also continue to expand benefits planning access, recognizing that misconceptions about the impact of employment on SSI and SSDI can limit participation and follow-through for some individuals.

Transition to extended services occurs after stabilization is achieved. Stabilization is determined collaboratively by the individual, VR Counselor, employer, job coach, and extended service provider, based on the individual's ability to perform job duties to employer expectations with appropriate ongoing supports. Time-limited Supported Employment services are typically provided for up to 24 months following placement. In exceptional circumstances, services may exceed 24 months when justified and documented. For youth with the most significant disabilities, VR-funded extended services may be provided for up to four years or until age 25, whichever occurs first, in accordance with WIOA.

4. Efforts to identify and arrange, including entering into cooperative agreements, with other State agencies and other appropriate entities in order to provide supported employment services.

MDRS administers the Supported Employment Program in accordance with Title VI of the Rehabilitation Act, as amended by WIOA, and works collaboratively with state agencies, community partners, employers, families, and advocacy organizations to ensure coordinated delivery of Supported Employment services and extended services statewide.

OVR maintains cooperative arrangements with the Mississippi Department of Mental Health and other partners to coordinate Supported Employment and extended services, including long-term supports for jointly served individuals. MDRS also collaborates with the Mississippi Division of Medicaid and other entities to coordinate employment supports for individuals eligible for Home and Community-Based Services.

The CSNA emphasized the importance of vendors and community partners in delivering core VR services and highlighted that reimbursement delays and administrative burden can reduce provider participation and limit service availability. MDRS will continue to expand Supported Employment capacity through cooperative agreements with community rehabilitation providers and will use CSNA findings to guide improvements that strengthen provider stability, reduce barriers to participation, and improve the consistency of services across communities, particularly in rural and underserved areas.

Upon completion of time-limited Supported Employment services, MDRS transitions individuals to extended services through cooperative agreements, Extended Services Support Plan Agreements, or other identified long-term funding sources. MDRS ensures that extended service arrangements are identified early and are in place prior to closure to promote long-term retention and stability in Competitive Integrated Employment.

u. Annual Estimates

1. Estimates for the next Federal fiscal year

. VR Program

The number of individuals in the State who are eligible for services

Priority Category (if applicable)	No. of Individuals Eligible for Services	No. of Eligible Individuals Expected to Receive Services under VR Program	Costs of Services using Title I Funds	No. of Eligible Individuals Not Receiving Services (if applicable)
1	5,221	5,221	$12,673,594.87	N/A
2	5,911	5,911	$10,656,667.46	N/A
3	2,557	2,557	$3,210,524.73	N/A

A. Supported Employment Program

The number of individuals in the State who are eligible for services

Priority Category (if applicable)	No. of Individuals Eligible for Services	No. of Eligible Individuals Expected to Receive Services under Supported Employment Program	Costs of Services using Title I and Title VI Funds	No. of Eligible Individuals Not Receiving Services (if applicable)
1	701	701	$1,977,626.35	N/A

v. Order of Selection

The VR Agency is not implementing an order of selection.

1. Defined Priority Categories

. Justification for the order – N/A

A. The order to be followed – N/A

B. Goals for serving individuals in each priority category – N/A

2. The VR Agency HAS/HAS NOT elected to serve eligible individuals outside of the order of selection – N/A

w. Waiver of Statewideness

The State requests waivers of statewideness for the following services:

PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICE: PEER MENTORING

MDRS, Office of Vocational Rehabilitation and Office of Vocational Rehabilitation for the Blind currently has a cooperative agreement for Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS): Peer Mentoring Program at Mississippi State University (MSU), University of Southern Mississippi (USM), Northeast Mississippi Community College (NMCC) and East Mississippi Community College (EMCC), through their disability support services offices. OVR/OVRB. Other postsecondary students across the state are eligible to receive support services through their OVR/OVRB Counselor and/or through their college disability support offices.

VR may enter into new agreements with additional colleges and universities during Federal Fiscal Year 2022-2023.

- Using federal allocated Pre-ETS funds, MDRS reimburses MSU, USM, NMCC, EMCC and Hinds Community College for Peer Mentor Certification, Peer Mentoring Plan, Assignment, and Management, and Peer Mentoring Evaluations and Final reports.
- MDRS also reimburses the Mentor for hourly Peer Mentoring services. All services provided by the universities using federal monies and are certified by the district when MDRS is invoiced for reimbursement by the universities.

PROJECT SEARCH

Mississippi Vocational Rehabilitation Agency is requesting a waiver of state wideness for Project SEARCH. Project SEARCH is only offered in a subset of communities across Mississippi. The Project SEARCH Program is a unique, nine-month, school-to-work program for young adults with developmental disabilities that occurs entirely at the workplace. This innovative, business-led model of school-to-work transition features total workplace immersion, which facilitates a seamless combination of classroom instruction; career exploration; and hands-on, worksite-based

training and support. The goal for each student is Competitive Integrated Employment. Project SEARCH was developed at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center and has been implemented as several sites in Mississippi throughout statewide initiatives involving the collaborative effort of MDRS, area school districts, and several of Mississippi's leading employers. The LEA provides a classroom teacher to provide some academic instruction in the morning and

The students go to workstations the remainder of the day. Workstations may include patient escort, food service, instrument sterilization, and other settings in the hospital. MDRS approval will be obtained before services are initiated. All services will be provided in accordance with the agency's approved State Plan. The agency will approve services before they begin.

MDRS is working to add Project SEARCH partners across the state to create more opportunities for youth with significant disabilities in obtaining real-life work experience that leads to Competitive Integrated Employment. The services provided are for VR eligible students with significant disabilities that are seeking Competitive Integrated Employment.

- Local educational agency funds used as match are certified as non-federal monies. All expenditures are made by the school district with 100% non-federal monies and are certified by the district when MDRS is invoiced for reimbursement by the school district.
- This position is provided under an Interagency Agreement which provides for 50% funding from each agency for the Project SEARCH Transition Contract Specialist position.
- MDRS reimburses the school for one-half the cost of salary, fringe benefits, travel, staff development and other possible items that are necessary to achieve the goals of this agreement.
- MDRS covers the cost of the licensing agreement for the current Project SEARCH sites.
- The services provided are for VR eligible students with significant disabilities that are seeking Competitive Integrated Employment.

The following school districts currently have Interagency Agreements with MDRS for Project SEARCH. New Summit School, Rankin County School District, Petal School District, Jones County School District, Tupelo School District, Brookhaven School District, Neshoba Central School District, Vicksburg School District, DeSoto County School District Ocean Springs School District and Lafayette County School District.

x. Comprehensive System of Personnel Development

1. Analysis of Current Personnel

. The number and type of personnel that are employed by the VR agency in the provision of vocational rehabilitation services

OVR Personnel Category	No. of Personnel Employed	Current + Vacancy	No. Personnel Needed in 5 Years
VR Interpreters	2	6	14
VR Psychometrist	4	4	10
VR Administrative Support – Administrative Assistant: District and State Office	17	18	48
VR Administrative Support – Ability Works	15	18	39
VR Rehabilitation Specialist – VR Vocational Evaluator	21	24	26

VR Rehabilitation Specialist – VR Counselor	112	153	203
VR Rehabilitation Associate – VR Counselor Assistant	67	75	101
Rehabilitation Specialist Team Lead – VR Deputy District Manager	10	10	24
Rehabilitation Specialist Team Lead - VR District Manager	10	10	24
Rehabilitation Specialist Team Lead – VR Regional Manager – Client Services	2	2	6
Rehabilitation Specialist Supervisor – VR Regional Manager – Ability Works Services	3	3	4
VR Facility Manager CRP (AbilityWorks)	14	15	29
Rehabilitation Specialist Team Lead - VR Program Specialist – Pre-ETS and Transition Services	1	1	2
Rehabilitation Specialist Team Lead – VR Program Specialist – Post Secondary Education and Training	1	1	3
Rehabilitation Specialist Team Lead - VR Program Specialist – Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services	1	1	2
Rehabilitation Specialist Team Lead - VR Program Specialist – Interpreting Services	1	1	2
Rehabilitation Specialist Team Lead - VR Program Specialist – Autism Services	1	1	2
Rehabilitation Specialist Team Lead - VR Program Specialist – Supported Employment	1	1	3
Rehabilitation Specialist Team Lead - VR Program Specialist – Substance Abuse Services	0	1	2
Rehabilitation Specialist Team Lead - VR Program Specialist – AACE Training and Rehabilitation Counseling Internship Coordinator	1	1	2
Rehabilitation Specialist Team Lead - VR Program Specialist – Vocational Assessment Services	1	1	2
Rehabilitation Training Coordinator – AACE and Rehabilitation Practicum and Internship	1	1	2
VR/SE Vocational Training Instructors	5	8	10
VR Project Manager	1	1	2
VR Work Adjustment Instructor – AbilityWorks	35	40	75
VR Account Auditor and Technicians AbilityWorks	7	7	14
VR Industrial Engineer – AbilityWorks	1	2	2
Pre-ETS and Transition Referral Coordinator	0	0	8
Pre-ETS and Transition Project Manager	0	0	3
Pre-ETS and Transition Services Account Manager	0	0	2
Rehabilitation Specialist Team Lead – VR Program Specialist Vendor and CRP Provider Registration and Monitoring	0	0	5
Program Specialist Supervisor—VR Policy and Procedure Director	1	1	2
Training Specialist II- OVR/OVRB Counselor Assistant Teacher	3	3	4

Training Specialist III- OVR/OVRB Counselor Trainer	3	3	4
Project Manager Team Leader- Project SEARH Director	1	1	1
Project Manager I- Project SEARCH Coordinator & Outreach Coordinator	2	2	2
VRB Admin Support- Administrative Assistant	7	8	16
VRB Admin Support- Teacher Assistant	2	2	4
BEP- Consultant	2	2	4
BEP- Program Director	2	3	5
BEP- Trainer	1	1	2
BEP- Warehouse	1	1	2
Compliance Officer- BEP Consultants	2	2	5
Ground & Maintenance Technician- BEP	2	2	4
Ground & Maintenance Technician Manager- Family Support Manager	1	1	2
VRB Program Specialist- Program Coordinator	1	1	2
VRB Program Specialist- BEP Training Director	1	1	2
VRB Rehab. Associate- VRB Counselor Assistant	13	18	36
Rehab. Specialist- VRB Case Worker	2	2	4
Rehab. Specialist- VRB Counselor	15	19	43
Rehab. Specialist- VRB Evaluator	1	1	2
Rehab. Specialist Supervisor- VRB Manager	3	3	6
Rehab Specialist Team Lead- VRB Deputy Regional Manager	2	2	5
Rehabilitation Specialist Team Lead- VRB Regional Manager	3	3	7
Support Care- Dorm Supervisor	4	6	12
Vocational Training Instructor (VTI)- Braille	2	3	6
Vocational Training Instructor (VTI)- Communication	2	4	8
Vocational Training Instructor (VTI)- Daily Living	1	1	2
Vocational Training Instructor (VTI)- Leisure Education	1	1	2
Vocational Training Instructor (VTI)- Orientation and Mobility	3	5	10
Vocational Training Instructor (VTI)- Personal Management	1	1	2
Vocational Training Instructor (VTI)- Technology	1	1	2
Vocational Training Instructor (VTI) Typing	1	1	2
Rehabilitation Associate- VRB Counselor Assistant	13	14	30

A. The number and type of personnel needed by the VR agency to provide VR services

Please reference above 1.A

B. Projections of the number of personnel, broken down by personnel category, who will be needed by the VR agency to provide VR services in 5 years based on projections of the number of individuals to be served, including individuals with significant disabilities, the number of personnel expected to retire or leave the field, and other relevant factors.

Please reference above 1.A

C. Ratio of qualified VR counselors to clients:

Although caseload sizes vary depending on the type of caseload and services that are provided, the ideal client to counselor ratio is 1:75 – 80 clients per counselor.

D. PROJECTED NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS TO BE SERVED IN 5 YEARS:

In 5 years, PY 2028 – 2029, VR is projected to serve 18,970 individuals with disabilities and VRB is projected to serve 2, 125 individuals who are blind and/or visual impairments. The total that VR and VRB is projected to serve is 19, 323 individuals with disabilities.

2. Data and Information on Personnel Preparation and Development, Recruitment, and Retention, and Staff Development

. List of institutions of higher education preparing VR professionals

Mississippi has two (2) graduate programs that award master's degrees that prepare individuals to work as Vocational Rehabilitation counselors:

1. Jackson State University
2. Mississippi State University

The number of students enrolled at each of those institutions, broken down by type of program.

Jackson State University – Rehabilitation Counseling

- Students enrolled: 14
- VR staff sponsored agency and/or RSA: 5
- Graduated sponsored by agency or RSA: 4
- Number of Graduates from Previous Year: 4

Mississippi State University – Rehabilitation Counseling

- Students enrolled: 4
- VR staff sponsored agency and/or RSA: 2
- Graduated sponsored by agency or RSA: 0
- Number of Graduates from Previous Year: 4

Institute of Higher Education	Type of Program	No. of Students Enrolled	No. of Prior Year Graduates
Jackson State University	Rehabilitation Counseling	14	4
Mississippi State University	Rehabilitation Counseling	4	4

A. VR Agency's plan for recruitment, preparation, and retention of qualified personnel

The Office of Human Resources Development (OHRD), Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR), and Vocational Rehabilitation for the Blind (OVRB) recruit and hire staff in accordance with the requirements of the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD). When a qualified applicant with a degree in vocational rehabilitation is not available, vacancies may be filled by individuals from related fields who meet the national certification standards for vocational rehabilitation counselors and are eligible to sit for the Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) examination.

VR and VRB maintain close relationships with universities including minority institutions such as historically black colleges and universities, and disability specific organizations. Designated staff collaborate with universities in securing grant funding; invite university employees to help with training and education activities; and provide practicum and internship slots for students. OHRD acknowledges that it is not able to easily recruit an adequate number of qualified VR Counselors to replace those retiring and departing for other reasons. OHRD, VR, and VRB are currently engaged in the activities indicated below to address recruitment, preparation, and retention of counselors. OHRD, VR and VRB staff work with the graduate programs in Rehabilitation Counseling at both Mississippi State University and Jackson State University by establishing placement opportunities for intern and practicum students, and actively participating in university career development activities, including participation in Career Days and Job Fairs. Representatives from OHRD, VR and VRB meet with the graduate students from each program annually to explain career opportunities and the state employment application process.

The VR and VRB staff are requested by the university to serve on each program's Advisory Council. The VR Director has also been invited to speak to graduate students during class. VR designates a staff person to serve on each program's Advisory Council. Working with Jackson State University provides significant opportunities for recruitment of minorities, and VR and VRB work closely with disability support services on both campuses to recruit graduates with disabilities.

In January 2022, the Mississippi State Personnel Board implemented the State Employee Classification and Compensation System (SEC2). Under SEC2, every state employee was assigned a new classification and placed within a pay plan and pay grade, and each pay grade includes a minimum, market, and maximum salary. With SEC2, the agency's Executive Director has authority to approve in-range salary increases of up to 10 percent per fiscal year when funding is available and when increases align with MSPB requirements and pay-grade parameters.

Following implementation of SEC2, MDRS provided in-range increases for key direct-service positions, including counselors, counselor assistants, interpreters, psychometrists, evaluators, work adjustment instructors, and instructors at the Center for the Blind. For FY 2023 and FY 2024, eligible staff received increases up to 10 percent, provided the employee's salary remained within the allowable range based on the market rate for the assigned classification. During PY 2026 and PY 2027, OVR and OVRB will continue working to provide additional salary increases for OVR and OVRB staff in accordance with Mississippi State Personnel Board guidelines, subject to available funding and pay-grade limits. These efforts are intended to support recruitment and retention in critical service-delivery roles and to stabilize the workforce needed to provide timely, consistent vocational rehabilitation services statewide.

In addition to compensation strategies, MDRS has established educational requirements for counselors that include a master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling, along with continuing education expectations. This approach strengthens professional competency, supports consistent statewide practice, and helps ensure staff maintain the knowledge and skills necessary to deliver high-quality services in alignment with federal and state requirements.

Although staff listed received these in-range adjustment, the current salary for VR Counselors in Mississippi remains below that of other southeastern states.

VR and VRB Student Practicum/Internship Programs

VR and VRB have an ongoing working relationship with Jackson State University and Mississippi State University to provide practicum and internship training to college students. Practicum and internship trainings are coordinated through the VR Program Coordinator and the VR and VRB District or Regional Manager. A list of all practicum and internship students is provided to the MDRS Office of Human Resources Department (HRD) by the VR Program Coordinator.

In PY 2025, VR and VRB had five (6) interns from Jackson State University and (2) interns from Mississippi State University who were receiving Master of Science degree in Rehabilitation Counseling.

The following procedures are used when arranging student practicum or internship training:

- Students requesting to participate in a practicum or internship placement with VR and VRB must be referred to VR and VRB by their college or university's department advisor.
- The department advisor must contact the designated Program Coordinator to request student placement at an VR/VRB site.
- The VR Program Coordinator will provide the department advisor with a Practicum/Intern Application form for the student to complete. The application will be emailed to the department advisor within 1-3 business days of initial contact.
- Once the application is reviewed by the Program Coordinator, the District or Regional Manager at the appropriate site will be notified by the Program Coordinator.
- Students who are seeking a practicum/internship in rehabilitation counseling or a related field must be assigned to work with a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor senior or a certified Rehabilitation Counselor.
- The District or Regional Manager will determine the appropriate MDRS student supervisor for their office.
- The Program Coordinator and designated MDRS student supervisor will schedule a date and time for an initial interview with student.
- Upon a contingent internship offer, a background report will be conducted for all potential interns. Intern Students must comply with the agency's policies pertaining to these issues outlined in Section 8.7 Background Reports on New Employees, of the MDRS Policy and Procedures Manual.
- Once approval has been given, the department advisor and student will be informed of the start date by the Program Coordinator.
- The student will be required to complete the MDRS Confidentiality Certification Statement form and the Computer Rules and Policy Agreement on the first day they report for training. This form will be returned to the Program Coordinator, and a copy of the MDRS Confidentiality document will be given to the student.
- Upon completion of the practicum/internship training, the MDRS student supervisor will complete the Exit Evaluation for Practicum and Intern Student form. The form shall be submitted to the designated program coordinator. The Program Coordinator will forward the Exit Evaluation form to the HR Training Department.

B. Staff development policies, procedures, and activities

Particularly with respect to assessment, vocational counseling, job placement, and rehabilitation technology, including training implemented in coordination with entities carrying out State programs under section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998; and VR and VRB Counselors/Evaluators Graduate Training in Rehabilitation Counseling

VR and VRB Counselors/Evaluators Graduate Training in Rehabilitation Counseling

Since there are no VR funds solely allocated to support CSPD activities as in the past, MDRS, VR and VRB has encouraged Counselors that do not have a master's degree in VR counseling to apply for RSA stipend/program either Jackson State University or Mississippi State University, or any Rehabilitation Counseling program they choose. The elimination of the in-service training grant to states has severely reduced the ability to continue to support these activities. It is not currently clear how much of the Basic VR grant will be available to support this activity. VR and VRB Counselors or Evaluators are encouraged to apply for RSA stipends at a university with a graduate program in Rehabilitation counseling.

For those that are not sponsored by RSA, MDRS on a case-by-case basis determines if funds are available to sponsor the Counselor or Evaluator in a graduate program. Counselors that are approved for sponsorship in graduate training are eligible for reimbursement of tuition, book costs and approved educational leave. The employee is required to enter into a contractual agreement with MDRS for service repayment. MDRS requires three years of continued employment in return for expenses reimbursement and education leave.

VR and VRB Counselor/Evaluator CRC Certification Expenses

To encourage VR staff that are eligible to sit for the Certified Rehabilitation Counselor examination, MDRS will provide financial assistance for CRC certification and renewals through reimbursement. Prior to taking the CRC examination, Counselors will be required to take the CRC Examination Preparation Workshop which is coordinated and paid for through the Office of Human Resource Development- Training Director. The CRC examination is administered three times a year. The certification application fee and the Pre-review service fee are submitted at the time of application. The Counselor must provide documentation of a "pass or fail" grade report to the OHD-Training Director for reimbursement of the certification application and prereview service fee. If the Counselor fails the certification examination, MDRS will pay a onetime re-examination (retake) fee through reimbursement with documentation of the certification examination grade report.

MDRS will also encourage VR staff to maintain their credentials as a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) by providing financial assistance with certification renewal fee. The Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRCC) requires all CRCs to renew their certification at five (5) year intervals. The Counselor must provide a copy of their receipt of payment for renewal fee to the OHD-Training Director for reimbursement.

VR and VRB Counselor Assistant Graduate Training in Rehabilitation Counseling

Some Counselor Assistants may have obtained a bachelor's degree from an accredited institution that is above the minimum education requirements for the Counselor Assistant position. After working as a Counselor Assistant for one year or more, a Counselor Assistant is encouraged to apply for entrance into a master level Rehabilitation Counseling program and apply for the RSA Scholarship should they aspire to become a vocational rehabilitation counselor. For those that are not sponsored by RSA, MDRS on a case-by-case basis determines if funds are available to sponsor the Counselor Assistant in a graduate program. Counselor Assistants that are approved for sponsorship in graduate training are eligible for reimbursement of tuition, book costs and approved educational leave. The employee is required to enter into a contractual agreement with MDRS for service repayment. MDRS requires three years of continued employment in return for expenses reimbursement and education leave.

VR Interpreters

As per Mississippi State Law, the Office on Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ODHH) is the registering authority for all interpreters within Mississippi who interpret for pay to be registered with ODHH. As such, they are the authority who determines what certifications or credentials which they will recognize to grant the registration to each interpreter. At this time, the in-state credentialing test which has been used in Mississippi for credentialing interpreters has been determined by ODHH to no longer be recognized for the purposes of registration. There is currently no in-state replacement for the previous test. As such, the closest testing system that would not require a bachelor's degree in order to sit for the evaluation would be the Board of Interpreters Evaluation (BEI) which is in Texas or the Arkansas state Quality Assurance Test. MDRS will provide financial assistance for Staff Interpreter certification and renewals through reimbursement. The Staff Interpreter must initially submit documentation through their immediate supervisor for approval to take the test at the agency's expense. Documentation of a pass or fail must be submitted after the test is taken. This information will be maintained in the employee OHD staff training file. MDRS will pay a onetime re-examination (retake) fee with documentation of the certification examination grade report.

Core Curriculum Training

The Division of Training within the Office of Human Resource Development (OHRD) serves as a centralized unit to plan, implement, and coordinate training activities for all VR and VRB staff. VR Program staff have also been designated to work together with OHRD designated staff, to facilitate and coordinate on-going staff development training for new VR and VRB Counselors and Counselor Assistants.

The core curriculum training contains a variety of training opportunities which include, but are not limited to, staff attending training conferences, educational assistance, ongoing staff development provided by agency staff and the core curriculum class. The core curriculum is designed as a set of training courses that are designed to assist in ensuring that VR Counselors and staff receive on-going staff development in order to maintain and enhance their skills to be equipped with a 21st century knowledge of the current labor market. Training is provided annually to Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors, Counselor Assistants and Vocational Evaluators. These trainings are coordinated with OHRD, VR Program Specialist. This training is provided in-person training, via TEAMS and/or district offices. These training sessions can include a variety of topics but generally include the following: Medical Aspects of Disability to help understanding the functional limitations of various disabilities and the vocational implications of functional limitations on employment, especially with regard to individuals whose disabilities may require specialized services or groups of individuals with disabilities who comprise an increasing proportion of the VR or VRB caseloads, such as individuals with Autism, cognitive impairments, mental illnesses, blindness or deafness; Vocational assessment tools and analysis of transferrable work skills; Counseling and guidance skills, including individual and group counseling and career guidance; Effective use of practices leading to competitive integrated employment, such as supported employment, customized employment, internships, apprenticeships, paid work experiences, etc.; Case management and employment services planning, including Social Security work incentives, and the Social Security Administration`s Ticket-to-Work program; knowledge of labor market trends, occupational requirements, and other labor market information that provides information about employers, business practices, and employer personnel needs; the use of labor market information to support building and maintaining relationships with employers and to inform delivery of job development and job placement activities that respond to today's labor market; understanding the effective utilization of rehabilitation technology and job accommodations; skills to address cultural diversity among consumers, particularly affecting workplace settings, including racial and ethnic diversity and generational differences; and understanding confidentiality and ethical standards and practices; Pre-Employment Transition Services, Deafness, Supported Employment, Post-Secondary Education Training opportunities, etc. The YesLMS training platform is also used to provide training in the following areas: Ethics, Assessment, Job Development and Employment Acquisition, Communication, History of Vocational Rehabilitation, WIOA Vision, VR Funding, VR Processes, Organizational

Skills, Empathy, Values and Motivation, Privacy Rules, VR and HIPAA, VR Counseling and Guidance, and Assistive Technology. A curriculum has been developed for these staff members that is applicable to each position. This training is coordinated by designated staff.

In addition to core curriculum training that provides on-going staff development, VR Program Specialist provide training meetings throughout the year to help ensure that counselors with specialized caseloads receive the training and guidance they need to provide services in the specialty area of the caseload. This training is generally provided on a quarterly basis. VR Program Specialist also helps and participates in District Training Meetings to assist the District Manager and Deputy District Manager provide training and support to staff.

New Counselor Training

New OVR and OVRB counselors are required to participate in a structured 10–12 week synchronous training program designed to build competency-based skills that support consistent, high-quality service delivery statewide. This training requirement reflects the CSNA's broader emphasis on strengthening service consistency and reducing avoidable barriers that occur when practice varies by location or when staff do not receive timely, practical instruction on required processes and expectations. To ensure training is delivered consistently and on schedule as hiring increases, the agency expanded its training team in 2025 to improve capacity for onboarding, provide timely technical assistance, and increase the availability of in-person training opportunities.

Training sessions are conducted twice weekly for two to three hours per session and include structured assignments and applied activities completed between sessions. While instruction is primarily virtual to support statewide access, OVR and OVRB are intentionally increasing in-person components to strengthen engagement, improve hands-on skill development, and support better transfer of learning into daily practice. This direction aligns with CSNA-identified needs related to system performance and reliability, including the importance of clear communication, consistent implementation of procedures, and the practical ability of staff to carry out services in a way that supports participant follow-through and timely service delivery.

The curriculum focuses on core VR competencies, including vocational counseling and guidance, facilitation of informed choice, development of the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE), and instruction on disability and its vocational implications. It also reinforces the operational skills needed to deliver services effectively within a statewide system that relies on coordinated partnerships and vendors. Consistent with CSNA findings that engagement barriers and system delays can disrupt service continuity, the training program emphasizes documentation quality, timely action steps, and effective coordination with providers and partners to reduce avoidable delays for participants.
To strengthen continuity and reinforcement, OVR and OVRB are recording selected training sessions so staff can revisit key content, support skill mastery over time, and maintain training momentum when live attendance is not possible. This combination of synchronous instruction, structured practice, expanded in-person learning, and on-demand review is intended to produce a more prepared workforce, improve consistency across districts, and strengthen overall service quality for Mississippians with disabilities.

Automated Accessible Case Environment (AACE) Training

The Aware Case Management System, AACE, is utilized by VR and VRB staff as a Case Management System and as a data collection tool for case management, internal and Federal reporting. Training for specialized AACE functions, features, and Federal requirements.

Newly hired VR and VRB counselors, counselor assistants and evaluators are provided with a comprehensive hands-on introduction to the functionality of the AACE, provide staff with effective caseload management skills, and equip staff with the knowledge of the VR process workflow. Follow-up AACE training is also provided when the need has been

identified.

New Counselor Mentorship Process

The Counselor Mentorship process pairs experienced counselors with newly hired counselors to support a smooth, practical transition into the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (VRC) role and to strengthen readiness for Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) credentialing. This mentorship approach aligns with the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA), which emphasized the importance of equipping new and existing staff with the tools, training, and ongoing support needed to improve consistency in service delivery statewide, strengthen onboarding, promote professional development, and build a stronger job placement culture through continued skill-building in job development and placement practices.

Mentorship is designed to help new counselors build the knowledge, skills, and confidence required to deliver high-quality services, including vocational counseling and guidance, informed choice, IPE development, effective case management, and coordination with providers and community partners. It also supports workplace satisfaction and retention by ensuring new staff have a reliable point of contact for guidance, problem-solving, and professional growth during their first year.

The foundation of the mentorship program is grounded in the six ethical principles that guide rehabilitation counseling practice: autonomy, beneficence, fidelity, justice, nonmaleficence, and veracity. The mentorship process lasts one year and begins after the counselor has completed an initial onboarding period, allowing the new counselor time to gain basic familiarity with core processes before moving into a deeper, competency-based development phase.
The VR Program Coordinator who oversees the VR internship program also coordinates the mentorship process. This coordinator is responsible for pairing mentors and mentees, setting expectations for participation, monitoring progress, and maintaining documentation. Mentors schedule regular meetings with mentees to provide coaching, reinforce effective practice, answer case-related process questions, and support skill development tied to real service-delivery expectations. Mentees are responsible for actively participating in scheduled meetings, bringing forward questions and challenges early, and applying feedback in day-to-day work.

Progress is monitored through structured check-ins and monthly updates to the District Manager. The VR Program Coordinator and the mentor review the mentee's development, identify strengths and any gaps that need targeted support, and adjust strategies when needed to address problem areas quickly. The mentorship process also includes forward planning for continued career development, such as pursuing a master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling when appropriate and preparing for the CRC examination to strengthen professional credentials.

During PY 2026–PY 2027, OVR and OVRB will continue implementing the Counselor Mentorship process and will evaluate the program for improvements to ensure it remains timely, effective, and responsive as staffing grows. This evaluation will include review of participation and completion rates, feedback from mentors and mentees, trends identified through case reviews and quality monitoring, and outcome indicators tied to counselor readiness and retention. Documentation of participation and successful completion will be maintained by the VR Program Coordinator and the Office of Human Development.

Additional Training Based on Need

During PY 2026–PY 2027, MDRS, through OVR and OVRB, will continue investing in staff development and will evaluate the effectiveness of these efforts for continuous improvement, based on workforce needs, case review findings, and feedback from staff and stakeholders. The Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) reinforced that workforce capacity, turnover, and inconsistent internal communication can negatively affect timeliness and consistency of services, and it specifically highlighted the need for stronger, standardized onboarding and

continued professional development for both new and experienced staff. In response, OVR and OVRB are strengthening and formalizing training supports to build a more stable, prepared workforce and to promote consistent service delivery statewide.

OVR and OVRB provide individual training allocations for staff to support job-related professional development, including conferences, continuing education, professional materials (books and other resources), online short courses, and other approved development activities. Supervisory approval is required to ensure training is directly tied to the employee's role, current job responsibilities, and documented development needs. Human Resources Development (HRD) provides consultation and technical assistance to VR staff as needed, and training is delivered through a combination of district-level sessions and formal statewide training.

To address succession planning needs, the increasing number of retirement-eligible staff, and the need to build knowledgeable supervisors and managers, MDRS continues its formal leadership development program, Leadership, Education, and Development for Rehabilitation Services (LEADRS). LEADRS is designed to strengthen leadership skills and preserve institutional knowledge through deliberate leadership preparation and skill-building aligned to MDRS's mission. MDRS also promotes leadership development through supervisory staff participation in the Basic Supervisory Course and the Certified Public Manager Program available through the Mississippi State Personnel Board, along with MDRS in-service supervisory training. As appropriate, MDRS will continue to support participation in national leadership development opportunities, including the National Rehabilitation Leadership Institute.
The Mississippi State Personnel Board's Performance Development System (PDS) applies to all state service employees and is used to evaluate employee performance. The employee evaluation process includes an Individual Development Plan (IDP), which functions as a structured training needs assessment. IDPs are developed by the employee and reviewed by the supervisor to ensure training activities support job performance, service quality, and professional growth. This system supports, rather than interferes with, the mandates of the Rehabilitation Act by incorporating performance expectations related to compliance, service delivery quality, and outcomes.

OVR and OVRB also use quality assurance data to drive training priorities. Information from annual case reviews conducted by the MDRS Program Evaluation Unit is analyzed to identify knowledge and skill gaps and to determine where additional guidance and training are needed, including areas tied to serving individuals with the most significant disabilities and ensuring consistent adherence to federal and state requirements. Feedback from annual client surveys is also used to identify training priorities and is incorporated into the VR training plan.

During PY 2026–PY 2027, OVR and OVRB will continue these staff development strategies and will evaluate for improvements, with particular attention to the CSNA-identified needs to strengthen onboarding, expand ongoing training beyond initial orientation, improve internal communication when policies and procedures change, and ensure staff have practical tools to deliver timely, consistent services statewide.

i *Procedures for the acquisition and dissemination of significant knowledge from research and other sources to designated State unit professionals and paraprofessionals.*

MDRS maintains procedures to acquire, share, and apply significant knowledge from research, rehabilitation trends, federal guidance, and other credible sources to ensure VR professionals and paraprofessionals have timely information to support high-quality services. This includes ongoing training and technical assistance related to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) amendments to the Rehabilitation Act, as well as updates to VR policy, service delivery expectations, and documentation requirements.

MDRS routinely identifies and reviews current information from research and professional resources and disseminates relevant updates through structured training at the statewide, regional, and district levels. Recent training has

emphasized priority areas that strengthen service quality and outcomes, including Autism, Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS), person-centered planning, customized employment, and Mental Health First Aid. Training content is reinforced with practical tools and reference materials that staff can apply directly in service planning and case management.

To ensure staff can access information consistently across locations, training materials, reference guides, and program resources are posted on MDRS Connect, including the OVR and OVRB folders within the agency intranet. These centralized resources are used to share current trends, disability-specific guidance, tools, and job aids that support consistent practice and improve service delivery. In addition, program leads and coordinators are responsible for posting current information and updates related to their program areas, ensuring staff have easy access to the most recent guidance and expectations for implementation.

3. Description of VR agency policies and procedures for the establishment and maintenance of professional standards

. Standards that are consistent with any national or State-approved or -recognized certification, licensing, registration, or other comparable requirements that apply to the profession or discipline in which such personnel are providing VR services

VR and VRB Counselor Qualifications

A master's degree or doctoral degree from an accredited university in rehabilitation counseling or a degree closely related field such law, social work, psychology, disability studies, business administration, human resources, special education, management, public administration, or another field that reasonably provides competence in the employment sector with evidence of completion of a graduate level coursework in counseling theory/techniques or experience in providing counseling and guidance to individuals with disabilities and a 21st century understanding of the evolving labor market.

When OHRD is unsuccessful in finding enough applicants who meet the highest standards, VR and VRB will accept and consider qualified those who meet the minimum initial standard of having:

A bachelor's degree from an accredited university in rehabilitation counseling or a closely related field such as law, social work, psychology, disability studies, business administration, human resources, special education, management, public administration or another field and one (1) year of experience in providing counseling and guidance to individuals who are injured or disabled with an understanding of the needs of individuals with disabilities and a 21st century understanding of the evolving labor market.

VR and VRB Counselor Assistant Qualifications

A high school diploma or GED and at least one(1) year of experience directly related to the duties and responsibilities in an organization whose mission includes the provision of services to persons who are injured or disabled so that an understanding and sensitivity toward people with disabilities has been obtained; or completed degree(s) from an accredited institution that are above the minimum education requirement may be substituted for experience on a year for year basis; customer service skills sufficient to perform initial interviews, assist with forms, and to develop positive relationships with the individuals receiving services and providers; data entry and keyboarding skills sufficient to create documents and complete data entry; and English sufficient to interview clients, communicate effectively with providers; and to draft correspondences or complete forms; assist in planning, coordinating and preparing daily activities and counseling efforts of the counselor; Create, issue and pay authorizations for purchase under the direction of the Counselor utilizing correct coding and ensuring fees are paid and processed in a timely manner.

OVRB current service delivery also includes 17 master level counselors that focus on transition and adults to assist with facilitating clients through the vocational process. VRB has four (4) Orientation and Mobility Specialists throughout the state that work with VRB clients. Three (3) are currently ACVREP certified, and one is receiving training in Orientation and Mobility. All VRB Counselors are eligible to take the CRC exam and retain their CRC. OVR currently has 33 VR staff with certification as a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor. VR Managers represent the largest group of VR staff who hold a CRC certification.

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Educational Assistance - MDRS, within the limits of available funds, is authorized, pursuant to Section 37-101-293 of the Mississippi Code of 1972 Annotated, to grant educational assistance to its employees. Educational assistance may consist of any combination of paid educational leave (full-time or part-time) at a maximum salary to be established by the Mississippi State Personnel Board and/or reimbursement for tuition, books, and related fees for undergraduate or graduate level courses. The purpose of the educational assistance program is to encourage employees to develop job-related skills and to develop employees for higher level professional and management positions. Priorities for awarding educational assistance will be based on the established need within MDRS for staff with the educational credentials being sought and the availability of individuals with those credentials in the relevant applicant pool.

A systematic program of skills-based training provides all programmatic and support personnel with the abilities and tools necessary to deliver quality services. Training activities range from providing staff with information about correct and/or better methods of carrying out assigned jobs to providing staff with new and challenging ideas pertinent to the programs in MDRS.

A. The establishment and maintenance of education and experience requirements, in accordance with section 101(a)(7)(B)(ii) of the Rehabilitation Act, to ensure that the personnel have a 21st century understanding of the evolving labor force and the needs of individuals with disabilities.

OVR and OVRB performance development is an on-going, day-to-day process of communication and feedback between the supervisor and employee. Job duties and associated competencies and behavioral anchors are provided during the annual Planning Phase. The supervisor shall provide information to the employee on his/her progress throughout the performance development period (Review and Feedback Phase). The employee is assigned a formal PDS Rating at the end of the appraisal period.

Ensuring that personnel have a 21st-century understanding of the evolving labor force and the needs of individuals with disabilities means that personnel have specialized training and experience that enables them to work effectively with individuals with disabilities to assist them to achieve Competitive Integrated Employment and with employers who hire such individuals. Relevant personnel skills include, but are not limited to:

- Understanding the functional limitations of various disabilities and the vocational implications of functional limitations on employment, especially with regard to individuals whose disabilities may require specialized services or groups of individuals with disabilities who comprise an increasing proportion of the State VR caseloads, such as individuals with traumatic brain injury, post-traumatic stress syndrome, mental illnesses, autism, blindness or deaf blindness.
- Vocational assessment tools and strategies and the interpretation of vocational assessment results, including, when appropriate, situational and work-based assessments and analysis of transferable work skills.
- Counseling and guidance skills, including individual and group counseling and career guidance.

- Effective use of practices leading to Competitive Integrated Employment, such as supported employment, customized employment, internships, apprenticeships, paid work experiences, etc.
- Case management and employment services planning, including familiarity and use of the broad range of disability, employment, and social services programs in the state and local area, such as independent living programs, Social Security work incentives, and the Social Security Administration`s Ticket-to-Work program.
- Caseload management, including familiarity with effective caseload management practices and the use of any available automated or information technology resources.
- In-depth knowledge of labor market trends, occupational requirements, and other labor market information that provides information about employers, business practices, and employer personnel needs, such as data provided by the Bureau of Labor Statistics and the Department of Labor's O*NET occupational system.
- The use of labor market information for vocational rehabilitation counseling, vocational planning, and the provision of information to consumers for the purposes of making informed choices, business engagement and business relationships, and job development and job placement.
- The use of labor market information to support building and maintaining relationships with employers and to inform delivery of job development and job placement activities that respond to today's labor market.
- Understanding the effective utilization of rehabilitation technology and job accommodations.
- Training in understanding the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act and other employment discrimination and employment-related laws.
- Advocacy skills to modify attitudinal and environmental barriers to employment for individuals with disabilities, including those with the most significant disabilities.
- Skills to address cultural diversity among consumers, particularly affecting workplace settings, including racial and ethnic diversity and generational differences; and
- Understanding confidentiality and ethical standards and practices, especially related to new challenges in use of social media, new partnerships, and data sharing.

4. Methods the VR agency uses to ensure communication with individuals with limited English proficiency

OVR and OVRB staff work with Mississippi’s diverse populations. One way OVR and OVRB does this is to actively recruit and support employees who have diverse backgrounds. When a counselor is unable to communicate directly with a customer in his/her preferred language, VR has qualified interpreters or program staff to assist in identifying a translator in the individual’s preferred language.

Due to the increasing Hispanic population, qualified interpreters are contracted on an as needed basis for individuals who are Spanish speakers. VR also seeks to hire qualified rehabilitation counselors who are Spanish and English speakers.

VR has established fees for foreign language interpreters which may be authorized and paid by counselors when the need for their services occurs to provide rehabilitation services to non-English speaking individuals. A contract is maintained with a Spanish Translator that translates forms, documents, brochures and any written documents into Spanish.

American Sign Language interpretation needs, for those who are Deaf or Deaf-Blind, are met using a combination of employee positions and arrangements with qualified local interpreter service providers. MDRS employs eight qualified sign language interpreters for the ten districts that comprise the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation. The Office on Deaf and Hard of Hearing also employs one qualified sign language interpreter who is available to provide interpreter

services. The Office of Deaf and Hard of Hearing assist individuals in the state obtain interpreter services when needed.

VR has assisted listening devices in most offices for employees to communicate with individuals who are hard of hearing or late deafened and do not know sign language. OVRB provides materials in braille or large print as needed. OVR arranges for Foreign Language Translators when needed.

OVRB Counselors participate in specialized in-service quarterly training and in-service training provided through the MDRS Assistive Technology Division which includes training on communication skills for individuals who are Blind or Deaf-Blind. Materials are available in braille and other accessible formats, as requested by consumers.

OVR requires that all VR Counselors for the Deaf achieve and maintain basic proficiency in American Sign Language. Specialized training in deafness-related areas is provided for new counselors in the Deaf Program as well as quarterly training for all VR Counselors for the Deaf and Sign Language Interpreters.

5. Coordination of Personnel Development Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

OVR and OVRB coordinate their Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) with personnel development activities under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) through an established partnership with the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE), Office of Special Education, supported by an executed Interagency Agreement. This coordination is intended to strengthen consistent transition practice statewide and to ensure VR and special education personnel share a common understanding of roles, timelines, and documentation expectations for students with disabilities.

During PY 2026–PY 2027, OVR and OVRB will continue implementing joint personnel development activities with MDE that reflect needs identified in the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA), including the importance of improving consistency of services across regions, strengthening coordination with schools, and addressing access barriers that can limit student participation. Training and technical assistance will continue to emphasize the practical skills staff need to support coordinated transition planning, including understanding IDEA requirements, reading and interpreting Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), aligning school-based transition services with VR services, and applying clear referral and service coordination procedures to reduce delays and confusion for students and families.

To support early engagement and coordinated transition planning, OVR and OVRB have operationalized Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) and Transition Services and will continue targeted training and technical assistance to strengthen quality and consistency of delivery across districts. Counselors are assigned to all 138 local education agencies statewide to support timely collaboration with school personnel, improve continuity of transition planning, and strengthen the connection between Pre-ETS participation, VR enrollment when appropriate, and post-school employment and training outcomes.

OVR and OVRB will also continue collaboration with NTACT:C to strengthen staff knowledge and implementation of evidence-based transition practices. Following virtual training provided in 2025, OVR and OVRB are planning additional in-person training opportunities in 2026 to deepen applied learning, improve cross-system coordination, and strengthen implementation at the local level.

As transition services continue to expand in PY 2026–PY 2027, OVR and OVRB will evaluate CSPD coordination activities with MDE for improvements, with a focus on practical implementation supports for staff, consistent communication across districts and schools, and strategies that reduce barriers to participation for students in rural and

underserved communities.

y. Cooperation, Collaboration, and Coordination with Education Officials

1. Plans, Policies, and Procedures for Coordination between State Agency and Educational Officials for Students with Disabilities Transition from Educational Services to Vocational Rehabilitation Services

The Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services (MDRS), Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR), Office of Vocational Rehabilitation for the Blind (OVRB), Mississippi Department of Education (MDE), and local education agencies (LEAs) operate under a statewide Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to support coordinated transition planning and service delivery for students with disabilities. This agreement establishes referral and service coordination procedures and shared accountability for vocational rehabilitation transition services, including Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS). OVR also maintains representation on the MDE Special Education Advisory Panel, which strengthens state-level collaboration and supports alignment between special education and vocational rehabilitation transition efforts.

During PY 2026–PY 2027, MDRS will continue using the MOU framework to strengthen implementation in areas highlighted by the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA). The CSNA identified barriers that can delay referrals and reduce participation, including time-consuming school paperwork, difficulty securing parent involvement needed for intake and referral steps, limitations of virtual service delivery for some families due to technology access and technical literacy, and confusion when information about services, eligibility, and referral procedures is not communicated consistently across staff and partners. In response, MDRS, OVR/OVRB, and MDE will continue prioritizing clearer guidance, consistent communication, and practical technical assistance to LEAs to reduce avoidable delays and improve statewide consistency.

Mississippi includes 138 local school districts, and each district is assigned designated VR and VRB counselors who collaborate with school personnel to support transition planning, participate in IEP meetings when invited, and facilitate timely referrals. To promote consistent statewide access and reduce administrative burden, OVR and OVRB utilize standardized referral processes, including a Transition Services Portal and a formal Pre-ETS referral pathway. During PY 2026–PY 2027, these processes will continue to be refined to strengthen clarity for LEAs and families and to improve timeliness from referral to service initiation.

Pre-ETS services are delivered through VR staff and contracted providers and include job exploration counseling, work-based learning experiences, workplace readiness training, instruction in self-advocacy, and counseling on postsecondary education options. Monthly coordination meetings with MDE staff, ongoing school-based outreach, and collaborative transition planning activities support alignment with IDEA and Section 504 requirements and strengthen the pathway from school-based planning to VR services, postsecondary education and training, and competitive integrated employment.

2. Describe the current status and scope of the formal interagency agreement between the VR Agency and the State Educational Agency

. Consultation and technical assistance, which may be provided using alternative means for meeting participation (such as video conferences and conference calls), to assist educational agencies in planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school activities, including pre-employment transition services and other vocational rehabilitation services;

During PY 2026–PY 2027, OVR and OVRB, in collaboration with the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE),

will continue providing consultation and technical assistance to local education agencies (LEAs) to strengthen transition planning and improve consistent access to Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) and VR services statewide. Technical assistance will be delivered through in-person engagement and, when needed, alternative methods such as virtual meetings, video conferencing, and conference calls to ensure timely support across all regions.

The CSNA identified several barriers that make school-based coordination more difficult and can reduce engagement if not addressed directly. These include that virtual delivery of Pre-ETS is not well received by some families with limited technical literacy or reduced service coverage, which can reduce participation; the required school paperwork can be time-consuming for educators and can delay services; and schools often face challenges securing parent involvement needed to complete intake and referral steps.

In response, OVR and OVRB will prioritize practical technical assistance that helps LEAs streamline referral steps, reduce avoidable delays, and strengthen family engagement strategies so eligible students can access services earlier and more consistently. VR staff will continue participating in MDE-sponsored transition conferences as presenters and partners, sharing updated guidance on Pre-ETS, referral processes, interagency coordination, and best practices for transition planning. OVR and OVRB will also maintain routine coordination meetings with MDE to align outreach efforts, improve referral pipelines, and address emerging implementation issues in districts.

These activities are intended to improve statewide consistency and reduce the confusion the CSNA noted can occur when information about services, eligibility, and referral processes is not communicated consistently across staff and partners.

Collectively, this coordination and technical assistance framework supports smoother transitions from secondary education to postsecondary education, training, and competitive integrated employment for students with disabilities across Mississippi.

A. Transition planning by personnel of the designated State agency and educational agency personnel for students with disabilities that facilitates the development and implementation of their individualized education programs (IEPs) under Section 614(d) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act;

Consistent with 34 C.F.R. § 361.22(b), OVR, OVRB, MDE, and LEA personnel collaborate in transition planning activities that support the development and implementation of students' Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) under Section 614(d) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). VR and VRB counselors coordinate with school staff to participate in transition planning and IEP meetings when invited, provide vocational counseling and labor market information, and facilitate timely referrals to Pre-ETS and VR services.

These coordinated efforts establish clear referral pathways, service coordination protocols, and technical assistance mechanisms to ensure seamless transitions from secondary education to postsecondary education, training, and competitive integrated employment.

B. The roles and responsibilities, including financial responsibilities, of each agency, including provisions for determining State lead agencies and qualified personnel responsible for transition services and pre-employment transition services;

The Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services (MDRS), Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR), Office of Vocational Rehabilitation for the Blind (OVRB), Mississippi Department of Education (MDE), and local education agencies (LEAs) operate under formal statewide and local interagency agreements that define roles, responsibilities,

and financial obligations related to transition services and Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS). During PY 2026–PY 2027, these agreements will continue to serve as the primary structure for coordinated planning, consistent implementation, and compliance across systems, while also supporting continuous improvement informed by the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA).

Under these agreements, MDRS serves as the lead agency responsible for coordination, oversight, and funding of vocational rehabilitation transition services and Pre-ETS, including service delivery oversight, VR case management functions, provider contracting, and compliance monitoring. OVR and OVRB employ qualified rehabilitation counselors and transition staff who coordinate referrals, support service planning, participate in IEP meetings when invited, oversee or deliver Pre-ETS, develop the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) when appropriate, and coordinate post-school transition services.

MDE and LEAs retain responsibility for providing and funding special education and related services required under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), including transition planning and educational supports documented in the Individualized Education Program (IEP). Financial responsibility is allocated according to statutory authority so that VR funds are used only for allowable VR and Pre-ETS activities while education agencies fund services that fall within the educational mandate.

The CSNA underscores why these agreements must remain active, specific, and operationally practical. It identifies barriers that can disrupt timely access to services if coordination is not strong, including time-consuming school paperwork that can delay services, difficulties securing parent involvement needed to complete referral steps, and limitations of virtual service delivery for some families due to technology access and technical literacy challenges. The CSNA also notes the risk of confusion when information about services, eligibility, and referral processes is not communicated consistently across staff and partners.

In PY 2026–PY 2027, MDRS, OVR/OVRB, and MDE will use the interagency agreement framework to strengthen implementation in the areas highlighted by the CSNA, including clearer referral and documentation procedures, more consistent communication and guidance to LEAs, and practical strategies to support parent engagement and reduce avoidable delays in service initiation.

These agreements establish shared accountability, staffing expectations, coordinated planning procedures, and financial safeguards to support seamless service delivery, regulatory compliance, and stronger transition outcomes for students with disabilities statewide.
disabilities.

C. Procedures for outreach to and identification of students with disabilities who need transition services and pre-employment transition services. Outreach to these students should occur as early as possible during the transition planning process and must include, at a minimum, a description of the purpose of the vocational rehabilitation program, eligibility requirements, application procedures, and scope of services that may be provided to eligible individuals

Outreach Meetings
The Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services (MDRS), Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR), Office of Vocational Rehabilitation for the Blind (OVRB), Mississippi Department of Education (MDE), and local education agencies (LEAs) use coordinated outreach and referral procedures to identify students with disabilities who may benefit from transition services and Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) as early as possible in the transition planning process. During PY 2026–PY 2027, these procedures will continue to be strengthened in response to the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA), which identified barriers that can delay service initiation and reduce participation, including time-intensive school paperwork, challenges securing parent involvement needed for intake and referrals, limitations of virtual service delivery for some families due to technology access and technical

literacy, and confusion when service and eligibility information is not communicated consistently.

OVR and OVRB maintain a dedicated Transition Outreach Coordinator who supports statewide transition outreach. This coordinator provides training and technical assistance to VR staff on effective outreach and engagement practices, supports implementation consistency across districts, and assists with outreach activities to increase awareness and improve referral flow. A key emphasis in PY 2026–PY 2027 will be strengthening practical strategies that address CSNA-identified barriers, including improving family engagement supports, simplifying and standardizing referral steps, and ensuring schools have clear guidance on required documentation and timelines.

Outreach begins no later than age 14 and includes direct engagement with students, families, and school personnel through school-based presentations, transition meetings, participation in IEP meetings when invited, parent and student trainings, job extravaganzas, career exploration events, and statewide outreach initiatives. VR and VRB counselors are assigned to each school district and work collaboratively with special education staff, Section 504 Coordinators, guidance counselors, and transition personnel to support early identification and timely referral.

To promote consistency and reduce administrative burden, a centralized Transition Services Portal provides a standardized mechanism for LEAs to submit referrals, request technical assistance, and access current information regarding Pre-ETS and VR services. During PY 2026–PY 2027, MDRS will continue refining this portal and related guidance to reduce avoidable delays associated with paperwork and to improve clarity for school staff, families, and students.

As part of outreach and early engagement, students and families receive clear information about the purpose of VR, eligibility and application procedures, informed choice, and the scope of available services, including Pre-ETS, transition services, supported employment, postsecondary education and training supports, and workforce preparation services. Outreach materials and events are designed to be accessible and to support statewide availability. Consistent with CSNA findings related to barriers in virtual participation, OVR and OVRB will continue prioritizing in-person engagement when feasible and will use virtual formats strategically with added supports to ensure families can participate meaningfully.

Monthly coordination meetings with MDE staff, annual transition trainings, participation in MDE-sponsored transition conferences, and collaborative school-based outreach efforts will continue in PY 2026–PY 2027 to strengthen early identification, improve consistency of communication about services and referral procedures, and support timely access to services that promote successful transitions from secondary education to postsecondary education, training, and competitive integrated employment.
employment.

School Survey
During PY 2026–PY 2027, OVR and OVRB will continue administering an annual school-based survey to designated school contacts to support early identification of students who may benefit from vocational rehabilitation services and to assess transition and Pre-ETS service needs. Survey results provide actionable information on school engagement with VR and VRB, estimated numbers of students with disabilities served by each LEA, referral patterns, service gaps, and alignment with Mississippi Department of Education data.

This activity aligns with CSNA findings emphasizing the importance of strengthening school partnerships, improving consistency in communication about services and eligibility, and reducing barriers that can delay referrals and service initiation. The CSNA identified challenges that can affect timely access, including time-consuming school paperwork, difficulties obtaining parent involvement needed for intake and referral steps, limitations of virtual engagement for some families, and confusion when information about services and referral procedures is not communicated consistently. The annual survey helps OVR and OVRB identify where these barriers are occurring at the local level so

technical assistance and outreach can be targeted to the schools and regions with the greatest need.

Survey findings are used to refine outreach strategies, improve and standardize referral processes, strengthen training and technical assistance for school personnel, and support continuous improvement in coordination between VR, VRB, MDE, and LEAs.

VR and VRB Pre-ETS Handouts and Flyers
Standardized Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) outreach materials, including handouts and flyers, are distributed to local education agencies to increase student awareness of VR and Pre-ETS services. These materials support student self-identification, encourage direct engagement with VR transition staff, and provide clear referral pathways through designated school personnel. This outreach strategy strengthens early identification, expands access to services, and ensures consistent statewide awareness of available transition and vocational rehabilitation services for students with disabilities.

D. Coordination necessary to satisfy documentation requirements set forth in 34 C.F.R. part 397 regarding students and youth with disabilities who are seeking subminimum wage employment; and

VR, VRB and the local education agency are responsible for the coordination necessary to satisfy documentation requirements set forth in WIOA and 34 CFR 397.10 (b)(i) and (ii) about students and youth with disabilities who are seeking subminimum wage employment. VR, VRB and LEA's will work together to ensure that outreach and students with disabilities who are seeking subminimum wage employment will receive Pre-ETS Career Counseling Information and Referral Services (CCIR) related to competitive integrated employment, including Supported employment.

VR and VRB will ensure that students seeking subminimum wage can apply for services and be determined eligible or ineligible for VR services, and if determined eligible will develop an IPE and receive Pre-employment transition services. VR and VRB will provide the local education agency with the required documentation specified in WIOA for all students who are seeking subminimum wage employment. If the student and his/her legal guardian refuse pre-ETS CCIR, the student will receive documentation stating their refusal of services.

E. Assurance that, in accordance with 34 C.F.R. § 397.31, neither the SEA nor the local educational agency will enter into a contract or other arrangement with an entity, as defined in 34 C.F.R. § 397.5(d), for the purpose of operating a program under which youth with a disability is engaged in work compensated at a subminimum wage.

VR and VRB in accordance with 34 CFR 397.31, will assist the local education agency in identifying programs that pay subminimum wage to help the local education agency avoid contracting with an entity, as defined in WIOA 34 CFR 397.5 (d) for the purpose of operating a program under which a student with a disability is engaged in work that is compensated at subminimum wage.

A Memorandum of Agreement for Transition Planning for Secondary Students with Disabilities is made and entered into by and between the Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services, hereafter referred to as 'MDRS', for and on behalf of its Offices of Vocational Rehabilitation and Vocational Rehabilitation for the Blind, hereafter referred to as 'VR/VRB', and the Mississippi Department of Education, for and on behalf of its Office of Special Education, hereafter referred to as 'MDE OSE'.

A Memorandum of Understanding for Transition Planning for Secondary Students with Disabilities is made and entered into by and between the Offices of Vocational Rehabilitation and Vocational Rehabilitation for the Blind with local education agencies. Mississippi has 138 local education agencies. There are currently 138 signed Memorandum of Understanding.

The scope of services between VR and VRB and the local education agency are intended to serve as a mechanism for VR and VRB and the local school districts to specify the plans, policies, and procedures for coordinating services to facilitate the transition of students with disabilities, including:

- Responsibilities of VR and VRB
- Responsibilities of Local Education Agency
- Referral Process
- Coordination necessary and documentation requirements set forth in section 511 of the Rehabilitation Act, as added by WIOA, about students with disabilities who are seeking subminimum wage employment.
- Consultation and technical assistance in the planning for the transition of students with disabilities.
- Transition planning by VR/VRB and educational personnel that facilitates the development and implementation of a student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and IPE.
- Roles and responsibilities, including financial and programmatic responsibilities of each agency.
- Procedures for outreach to and identification of students with disabilities.
- Assessment of students' potential need for transition services and Pre-Employment Transition Services
- Coordination of necessary and documentation requirements set forth in section 511 of the Rehabilitation Act, as added by WIOA, with regard to students with disabilities who are seeking subminimum wage employment.
- Assurance that the MDE OSE will not enter an arrangement with an entity holding a special wage certificate under section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act for the purpose of operating a program under which a youth with a disability is engaged in work at a subminimum wage; and
- Additional considerations include grievance procedure to resolve disputes between VR/VRB and the MDE OSE, as appropriate, as well as procedures to resolve disputes between an individual with a disability and the entities specified above, and information about the Client Assistance Program.

The Cooperative Agreement between the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation/Office of Vocational Rehabilitation for Blind and the Mississippi School for the Deaf and Mississippi School for the Blind was implemented to ensure that students who are Blind and Deaf receive effective seamless services as they make the transition from high school to post-high school education and/or training. This agreement includes Pre-ETS and other VR services. This agreement follows the same guidelines for all cooperative agreements with the Mississippi Department of Education and the local education agency in terms coordination, consultation, and technical assistance.

z. Coordination with Employers

In accordance with section 101(a)(11)(E) of the Rehabilitation Act, OVR and OVRB work with employers statewide to expand Competitive Integrated Employment opportunities and strengthen career exploration and work-based learning for individuals with disabilities, including youth and students participating in Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS). The Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) reinforces that employers and community partners are essential to successful outcomes and specifically notes that the Business Services Program supports businesses through job analysis, job accommodations, and information on tax incentives for hiring individuals with disabilities.

To strengthen coordination, accountability, and outcome tracking, the services of the Office of Business Development were placed back under OVR in PY 2024. This alignment supports more integrated service delivery between counselors, business relations staff, and transition services, and it strengthens the agency's ability to build a statewide job placement culture—an approach reflected in the PY 2026–2027 goals and strategies focused on employer engagement, labor market alignment, and placement practices.

OVR's Business Services Program partners with Mississippi businesses and industries to meet workforce needs by

connecting employers with qualified candidates with disabilities. Business Relations Specialists work directly with employers to identify job openings, understand workforce needs, and facilitate referrals of VR candidates whose skills and interests align with employer requirements. Services include candidate recruitment support, coordination of onboarding and training needs, and facilitation of work-based learning and on-the-job training opportunities.

OVR also provides employers with practical technical assistance related to workplace accessibility and reasonable accommodations, including worksite support, assistive technology guidance, and disability-related training. This emphasis is consistent with CSNA findings that highlight the value of employer-facing supports and tools that strengthen hiring and retention of individuals with disabilities.

For youth and students with disabilities, OVR and OVRB collaborate with employers to expand career exploration and work-based learning activities aligned with Pre-ETS, including internships, job shadowing, community-based work experiences, customized training partnerships, and participation in job extravaganzas and career events. In PY 2024, VR and VRB delivered 1,267 work-based learning and paid work experience services statewide, reflecting continued growth in early workforce exposure and employer engagement.

Employer outreach activity also expanded. In PY 2024, Business Relations staff made 6,834 employer outreach calls to 2,950 business locations statewide. Three job fairs were held in Hernando, Jackson, and Hattiesburg, and nineteen job extravaganzas were conducted statewide. Since July 1, 2025, an additional ten job extravaganzas have been conducted, further strengthening direct employer connections and hiring opportunities.

During PY 2026–PY 2027, employer engagement will continue to be strengthened through strategies outlined in the State Plan modifications, including expanding internships and work-based learning opportunities and developing new employer partnerships each year to increase access to Competitive Integrated Employment for both youth and adults with disabilities.

OVR will continue to provide employers with information on federal incentives that support the hiring and retention of individuals with disabilities, including the Work Opportunity Tax Credit, Disabled Access Tax Credit, and Barrier Removal Tax Deduction, as part of an overall strategy to reduce employer barriers and increase inclusive hiring statewide.

aa. Interagency Cooperation with other Agencies

In accordance with the requirements in Section 101(a)(11)(C) and (K), describe interagency cooperation with and utilization of the services and facilities of agencies and programs that are not carrying out activities through the statewide workforce development system to develop opportunities for community-based employment in integrated settings, to the greatest extent practicable for the following:

1. State programs carried out under Section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998

In accordance with Sections 101(a)(11)(C) and (K) of the Rehabilitation Act, the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) and Vocational Rehabilitation for the Blind (OVRB) coordinate with state and community programs outside the statewide workforce development system to expand access to community-based employment in integrated settings to the greatest extent practicable.

- Mississippi Project START (Success Through Assistive Rehabilitative Technology) is the state Assistive Technology (AT) program under Section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998. OVR and OVRB refer individuals to Project START for AT education, awareness, and access, including:
- Device demonstrations

- Short-term device loans
- AT training
- Participation in the reuse program

These services help individuals identify and use appropriate AT to support employment, training, and independent functioning. Project START operates from a central office in Madison and partners with regional demonstration centers in:

- North Mississippi Regional Center (Oxford)
- T.K. Martin Center (Starkville)
- Institute for Disability Studies (Long Beach)

Regional centers provide hands-on AT demonstrations and education supporting hearing, mobility, communication, vision, and activities of daily living, and share information on vendors and service providers.

- The MDRS Assistive Technology and Rehabilitation Engineering Program provides rehabilitation engineering services when technology-based solutions can address functional limitations. OVR and OVRB refer individuals for evaluation and rehabilitation engineering assistance (including device modification/adaptation) to reduce barriers to employment; AT Specialists located statewide support timely access.
- OVR and OVRB collaborate with the T.K. Martin Center for Technology and Disability for specialized evaluations and services that support preparation for and maintenance of competitive integrated employment, including:
- Assistive technology
- Seating and positioning
- Mobility supports
- Adaptive and bioptic driving
- Vehicle modifications
- Augmentative and alternative communication (AAC)
- Behavioral and psychological assessment services

2. PROGRAMS CARRIED OUT BY THE UNDER SECRETARY FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE;

The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) and Vocational Rehabilitation for the Blind (OVR and OVRB coordinate with local U.S. Department of Agriculture offices, including USDA Rural Development programs, to improve access to information and resources for individuals with disabilities in rural Mississippi. This coordination supports relationship-building and identification of opportunities that may strengthen employment, training, transportation, housing stability, and community access. While no formal cooperative agreements are currently in place, OVR and OVRB will continue strengthening collaboration through targeted outreach to the Mississippi USDA Rural Development office and by inviting USDA representatives to VR district meetings to brief counselors on relevant programs and resources.

3. NON-EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES SERVING OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH;

The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) and Vocational Rehabilitation for the Blind (OVRB) coordinate with multiple non-educational state agencies and community partners to support out-of-school youth with disabilities in achieving competitive integrated employment through coordinated, non-duplicative service delivery.

- **Mississippi Department of Mental Health (Bureau of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities) MOU:** Coordinates employment services for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities pursuing competitive integrated employment; supports joint planning, coordinated strategies, best-practice sharing, and alignment of policy, funding, and service delivery.
- Mississippi Department of Human Services (Division of Family and Children Services) MOU:Identifies and refers youth in foster care with physical or mental disabilities for VR services, including Pre-ETS, to support employment outcomes.
- **Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians collaboration:** Facilitates interagency referrals and coordinated transition planning for tribal members with disabilities seeking VR services; MDRS OVR psychometrists also provide testing services for the Tribal VR program.
- **Mississippi Department of Human Services (Division of Field Operations) MOU:** Coordinates services for TANF recipients with physical or mental disabilities to support progress toward competitive integrated employment.
- **Autism and Developmental Disabilities Clinic services:** Provides behavioral assessment and intervention (including social skills development and behavior supports) to help individuals with autism and related disabilities prepare for and maintain employment.
- **Mississippi Department of Transportation coordination:** Supports access to transportation resources and coordination of transportation-related services at state and local levels, where feasible
- **Mississippi Department of Mental Health (Substance Abuse Programs) collaboration:** Works with contracted residential and outpatient providers to connect individuals with co-occurring disabilities to VR services and employment supports.

4. STATE USE CONTRACTING PROGRAMS;

Mississippi has no state use contracting programs.

5. STATE AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR ADMINISTERING THE STATE MEDICAID PLAN UNDER TITLE XIX OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY ACT (42 U.S.C. 1396 ET SEQ.);

Division of Medicaid MOU provides seamless, non-duplicated services to individuals who are eligible for both Medicaid and VR services and for maximum utilization of resources between the two agencies that serve out of school youth.

6. STATE AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING SERVICES FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES;

Department of Mental Health – Bureau of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities - MOU is developed to continue enhancing, explained and developing methods to support eligible persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities who express a desire for competitive integrated employment; establish a state-level work group to address system, policy and funding issues that impeded the continuous provision of employment services by VR/VRB and DMH; engage VR/VRB staff and DMH providers and stakeholders at the local level in collaboration and cooperation in the accomplishment of the vision and desired outcomes; identify and disseminate best practices including training and functioning strategies; and, provide individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities with quality employment services that lead to competitive integrated employment in a non-duplicated and seamless manner.

7. STATE AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Thirteen (13) Memorandum of Understanding with the thirteen (13) Community Mental Health Centers: RegionOne, Communicare, Timber Hills, Life Help, LifeCore, Community Counseling, Hinds Behavioral Health Resources, Region 8, Weems, Pine Belt Mental Health, Warren-Yazoo Behavioral Health, Singing River and Southwest Mississippi. This MOU is purpose of this program is to enhance employment opportunities for individuals with severe and persistent mental illness or persons in recovery. This program will result in increased integrated employment opportunities for these individuals.

Department of Mental Health, Bureau of Mental Health An MOU has been implemented to provide a statewide provision of services for individuals with severe mental illness. Beginning in 2018 to present, a formalized agreement between OVR and OVRB MOU is developed to serve individuals with severe mental illness, including out of school youth. The purpose of this MOU is to enhance the service delivery and employment opportunities for individuals with severe and persistent mental illness or persons in recovery. Twenty (25) Memorandum of Understanding with Mental Health Residential Facilities and IOP Programs.

Warren-Yazoo Mental Health Service Program of Assertive Community Treatment (PACT) developed to facilitate the most effective and efficient process to assist PACT recipients gain access to vocational rehabilitation services.
Twenty (25) Memorandum of Understanding with Mental Health Residential Facilities and IOP Programs.

8. OTHER FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL AGENCIES AND PROGRAMS OUTSIDE THE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM.

The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) and Vocational Rehabilitation for the Blind (OVRB) maintain coordinated partnerships with federal, state, local, and tribal agencies outside the statewide workforce development system to expand access to services, reduce duplication, and support competitive integrated employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities.

OVR and OVRB collaborate with the Social Security Administration to support employment incentives and benefits planning and to maximize SSA/VR reimbursement through the Ticket to Work Program. At the state level, OVR and OVRB work closely with the Mississippi Department of Education and local education agencies through formal agreements that support transition planning, referrals, and alignment of Pre-Employment Transition Services with vocational rehabilitation services.

Coordination with the Mississippi Department of Mental Health supports individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, serious mental illness, and substance use disorders through shared referral processes, service planning, and collaboration with community providers.

In addition, OVR and OVRB are developing a partnership with the Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services to increase opportunities for older youth in foster care to build skills needed for long-term economic stability. This effort is focused on ensuring that foster youth who are eligible for Pre-Employment Transition Services have the opportunity to participate and are informed of their option to apply for VR services.

OVR and OVRB coordinate with the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians to provide vocational rehabilitation services to eligible tribal members, including outreach, referrals, and transition planning. MDRS is also a member of the Consortia of Administrators for Native American Rehabilitation (CANAR) and had agency staff participate in the Fall 2024 CANAR Conference, supporting collaboration, information sharing, and coordinated service delivery for American Indian individuals with disabilities.

9. OTHER PRIVATE NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS.

The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) and the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation for the Blind (OVRB) partner with key nonprofit organizations to strengthen transition planning, employment preparation, and professional practice across Mississippi.

OVR and OVRB collaborate with the Mississippi Coalition for Citizens with Disabilities (MCCD), which operates the Mississippi Parent Training and Information Center, to support transition services and employment preparation for individuals with disabilities. Through this partnership, the agencies jointly plan and coordinate the annual autism transition conference, Creating Your Own Path: Successful Transitions for Persons with Autism. The conference addresses transitions across the lifespan, with sessions focused on transition services for students and youth, pathways to employment, and supports that facilitate successful movement from school to postsecondary education, training, and work. In Program Years 2024 and 2025, the MDRS state office served as the host site for the conference, supporting statewide access, coordination, and participation.

OVR and OVRB also maintain an active partnership with the Rehabilitation Association of Mississippi (RAM) to support staff development and high-quality rehabilitation practice. Many VR and VRB staff are members of RAM and participate in its annual conference. The agencies partner with RAM to assist with conference sessions that promote ethical, evidence-informed rehabilitation practices and professional collaboration. RAM's multidisciplinary membership includes rehabilitation counselors, therapists, job trainers, independent living instructors, students, and other professionals engaged in advancing personal and economic independence for individuals with disabilities.

Vocational Rehabilitation Certifications

Vocational Rehabilitation Assurances

Performance Goals for the Core Programs

Table VI-1: Wagner-Peyser Program Performance Indicators

Performance Indicators	PY 2026 Expected Level	PY 2026 Negotiated Level	PY 2027 Expected Level	PY 2027 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	79.5%	79.5%	79.5%	79.5%
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	79.0%	79.0%	79.0%	79.0%
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	$6,000	$6,000	$6,000	$6,000
Credential Attainment Rate	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Measurable Skill Gain	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable

Table VI-2: Adult Program Performance Indicators

Performance Indicators	PY 2026 Expected Level	PY 2026 Negotiated Level	PY 2027 Expected Level	PY 2027 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	90.0%	90.0%	90.0%	90.0%
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	90.0%	90.0%	90.0%	90.0%
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	$7,750	$7,750	$7,750	$7,750
Credential Attainment Rate	67.1%	67.1%	67.1%	67.1%
Measurable Skill Gain	Not Applicable	67.0%	Not Applicable	67.0%

Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable

Table VI-3: Dislocated Worker Program Performance Indicators

Performance Indicators	PY 2026 Expected Level	PY 2026 Negotiated Level	PY 2027 Expected Level	PY 2027 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	79.0%	79.0%	79.0%	79.0%
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	79.9%	79.9%	79.9%	79.9%
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	$7,000	$7,000	$7,000	$7,000
Credential Attainment Rate	70.0%	70.0%	70.0%	70.0%
Measurable Skill Gain	Baseline	66.8%	Baseline	66.8%
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable

Table VI-4: Youth Program Performance Indicators

Performance Indicators	PY 2026 Expected Level	PY 2026 Negotiated Level	PY 2027 Expected Level	PY 2027 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	86.8%	86.8%	86.8%	86.8%
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	86.0%	86.0%	86.0%	86.0%
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	$3,500	$3,500	$3,500	$3,500
Credential Attainment Rate	71.6%	71.6%	71.6%	71.6%
Measurable Skill Gain	Baseline	75.0%	Baseline	75.0%

Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable

Table VI-5: Adult Education Performance Indicators

Performance Indicators	PY 2026 Expected Level	PY 2026 Negotiated Level	PY 2027 Expected Level	PY 2027 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	58.5%		58.5%	
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	60.0%		60.0%	
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	$4,200		$4,250	
Credential Attainment Rate	42.0%		42.0%	
Measurable Skill Gain	57.0%		58.0%	
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable[1]	Not Applicable[1]	Not Applicable[1]	Not Applicable[1]

1. Effectiveness in Serving Employers is a shared measure, as defined in OCTAE PM 17-2 Performance Accountability Guidance for Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Core Programs, available at https://www.ed.gov/sites/ed/files/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/AdultEd/octae-program-memo-17-2.pdf

Table VI-12: In-School and Out-of-School Expenditures, PY 19 - PY 22

Program Year	"In-School Expenditures"	"IS % of Total"	"Out-of-School Expenditures"	"OOS % of Total"
PY 19	$1,394,292.24	15.75%	$7,459,894.80	84.25%
PY 20	$2,349,954.80	21.60%	$8,527,387.62	78.40%
PY 21	$1,911,707.00	20.93%	$7,221,019.23	79.07%
PY 22	$2,296,599.14	26.66%	$6,319,292.90	73.34%

PY 23	$1,743,101.60	21.96%	$6,194,594.76	78.04%
PY 24	$1,254,089.53	19.85%	$5,064,244.96	80.15%
"PY 24 through Nov. 2025"	$155,282.58	26.99%	$420,025.54	73.01%

VI. Program-Specific Requirements for Combined State Plan Partner Programs

Career and Technical Education Programs Authorized under Perkins V

a. Plan Development and Consultation

1. Describe how the State plan was developed in consultation with the stakeholders and in accordance with the procedures in section 122(c)(2) of Perkins V.

The Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) facilitated three public meetings to gather input for Mississippi's plan to meet the requirements of Perkins V. The series of meetings were called the "Perkins Comprehensive Needs Assessment Meetings." To ensure broad stakeholder input, collaborative sessions were held on community college campus locations throughout the state: Belden, Hattiesburg, and Raymond. The MDE has an online presence to house Perkins V information located at mdek12.org/superintendent/perkinsv/.

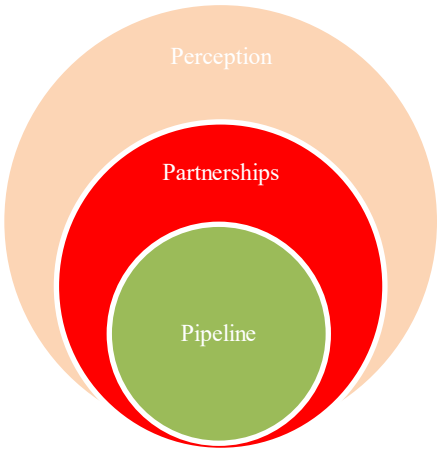
The sessions consisted of an overview of Mississippi's goals, priorities and achievements in public education, and small group discussions on topics related to stakeholder collaboration, career preparedness, and workforce development. Participants included parents, teachers, school district staff and administrators, college and university faculty and staff, members of educational associations and advocacy groups, business leaders, school board members, and public officials. Attendees had the opportunity to voice their ideas about how state and local school districts, business and industry, and community colleges can work to ensure student success, a prepared and skilled workforce, and strong community relationships across all partners.

The goals of the public meetings were to:

- gain an understanding of the current landscape of CTE in our state;
- gain an understanding of the requirements of the Perkins V legislation;
- engage with peers across our state to share practices and brainstorm strategies around data and accountability, programs of study, and advancing equity in CTE;
- ensure alignment of Perkins V with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA);
- review regional and statewide workforce data highlighting areas of anticipated growth in priority industry sectors;
- leave with the knowledge necessary to begin considering data driven strategies; and
- create awareness of the timeline and process for developing a new Perkins V State Plan that advances our statewide vision for CTE.

In addition to the topics above, the public meetings addressed the continued negative perception that CTE has faced over the years. The goal was to identify ways to remove negative stigmas and redirect impressions and attitudes toward the vital role CTE plays in today's workforce. Figure 17 highlights this aim, as well as the areas discussed.

Figure VII-1: Perception, Partnerships, and Pipeline



Perception: Change the current perception related to CTE
Partnerships: Build upon existing collaboration and create new partnerships to ensure educational offerings and curriculum are industry driven
Pipeline: Create a viable pipeline of qualified workers

2. Copy of objections and response from consulting state agencies

Not applicable

3. Opportunities for Public Comment

This has been posted for the required 30 day public review period.

b. Program Administration and Implementation

1. State's vision for education and workforce development

. Summary of State-supported workforce development activities

As required by Section 122(d)(1) and Section 122(d)(2) of Perkins V, the State of Mississippi's vision for education and workforce development is to ensure students graduate high school prepared for postsecondary studies and success in the workforce. The Mississippi State Board of Education (SBE) established a vision, mission, and goals as a part of the SBE Strategic Plan.

In 2024, the MDE Office of Career and Technical Education was restructured to include an emphasis on workforce development. It is now referred to as the Office of Career, Technical, and Workforce Development Education. The creation of a workforce development division within the career and technical education office signifies MDE's commitment to enhancing workforce opportunities and training for students.

A. Strategic vision and set of goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce

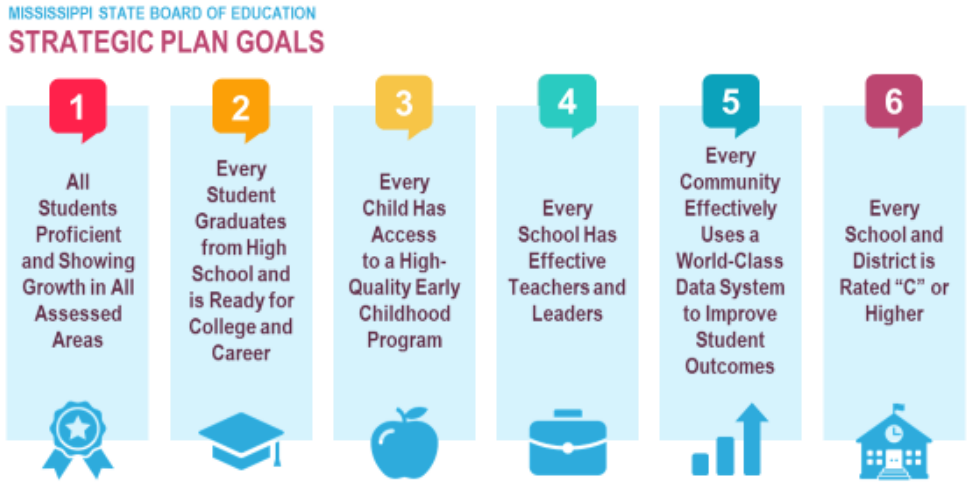
Vision: To create a world-class educational system that gives students the knowledge and skills to be successful in college and the workforce, and to flourish as parents and citizens

Mission: To provide leadership through the development of policy and accountability systems so that all students are

prepared to compete in the global community

Goals:

Figure VII-2: Strategic Plan Goals



The vision, mission, and goals of the SBE were developed to impact all students in all grades. This also applies to our CTE students in grades 7-12. Strategic plan goal two (Figure 18) specifically addresses this impact area.

MCCB Vision, Mission, and Core Values

Vision: The MCCB shall foster an environment of excellence to promote world-class education and job training for a more prosperous Mississippi.

Mission: The mission of the MCCB is to advance the community college system through coordination, support, leadership, and advocacy.

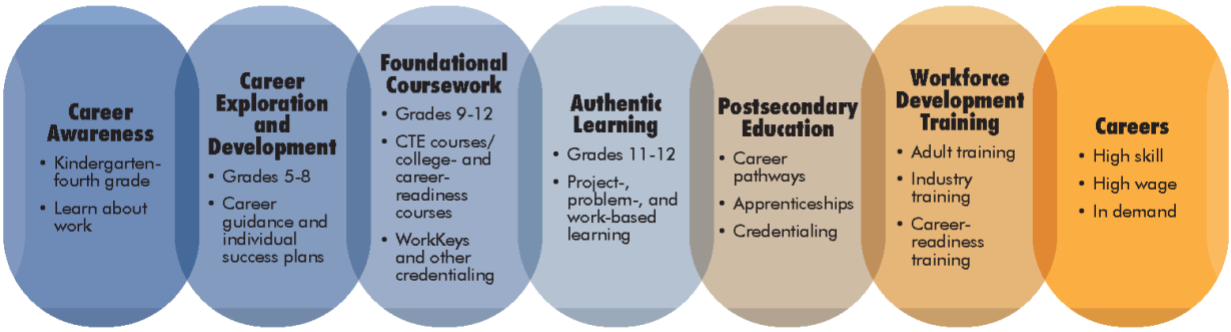
Postsecondary Career Technical Objective: To develop and implement a comprehensive strategy that will maximize career-technical education and training to drive student success, credentialing, and economic development.

Core Values

- **Professionalism** is a pledge of honesty, courtesy, and responsibility in interactions with customers and associates. This reflects an attitude of individual and collective excellence.
- **Integrity** entails an organizational commitment to moral and ethical principles that demand honesty, respect, compassion, and transparency. This is evident when open communication, ethical decision making, and humility are encouraged, expected, and demonstrated consistently.
- **Partnerships** amplify the value of teamwork and collective networking for the mutual benefit of all constituents.
- **Innovation** represents transformative and creative thinking that leads to continuous growth and improvement.
- **Diversity** embraces acceptance, inclusion, and respect. This is about understanding each other and ourselves and moving beyond simple intolerance to embracing and celebrating the richness each individual contributes to the organization's culture.

The following graphic shows the pipeline that the MDE and the MCCB established to effectively meet **Section 122(d)(3) of Perkins V** to bolster students along a path toward careers.

Figure VII-3: Career Pathway Pipeline



Efforts established in this plan will encourage and improve collaboration and maximize funding sources from Perkins V, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (29 U.S.C. 3102), and other federal, state, and local sources.

B. Strategy for joint planning, alignment, coordination, and leveraging of funds between the State's career and technical education programs and programs of study with the State's workforce development system

AccelerateMS works with the State Workforce Investment Board (SWIB) and partners to align the Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs and programs of study to Mississippi's workforce development system . This coordination ensures workforce, education, and training investments are aligned with employer demand and the state's priority occupations. AccelerateMS collaborates closely with the Mississippi Community College Board (MCCB), which administers Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) programs, and the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE), which administers secondary CTE programs. Together with other core partners—including the Mississippi Department of Employment Security (MDES), the Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services (MDRS), and the Mississippi Department of Human Services (MDHS)—these agencies coordinate planning, share labor market information, and align education and workforce strategies to strengthen career pathways across the state.

The SWIB establishes statewide workforce priorities through the identification of priority occupations based on labor market data, employer input, and economic development strategies. These priority occupations guide workforce investments and help align education and training programs with the skills needed by Mississippi employers. Recent workforce analysis indicates that Mississippi will need approximately 19,000 additional workers in priority occupations over the coming decade, highlighting the importance of strong alignment between education systems and the workforce development system.

Community colleges play a central role in this alignment as the state's primary providers of workforce training and credential programs connected to industry demand. Through ongoing collaboration with employers, local workforce development boards, and industry partners, community colleges design training programs that support career pathways from secondary education into postsecondary training and employment.

Mississippi also makes targeted state investments to strengthen alignment between the education system and workforce priorities. Through the EquipMS initiative, the state invests in modernizing career and technical education equipment and instructional capacity in K–12 programs so that students are learning on industry-relevant technology aligned with high-demand career pathways. These investments support school districts in expanding access to high-quality CTE programs that connect students to careers in priority sectors.

At the postsecondary level, Mississippi leverages state workforce training funds and other targeted investments to support community college programs that expand training capacity in high-demand fields. These investments help ensure that community colleges can rapidly respond to industry workforce needs while providing accessible pathways for individuals seeking industry-recognized credentials and employment in priority occupations. In addition to state investments, federal funding streams are leveraged to support coordinated workforce and education strategies. WIOA funds, Perkins CTE funds, and AEFLA resources are used to support complementary services that strengthen career pathways and increase access to training opportunities. This braided funding approach allows participants to access education, skills training, supportive services, and employment opportunities through an integrated system rather than through isolated programs.

Several statewide initiatives further strengthen alignment between CTE and the workforce development system. AccelerateMS supports career coaching programs in high schools to connect students to career exploration and education pathways aligned with priority occupations. The system also promotes work-based learning opportunities, including internships, job shadowing, and employer-connected learning experiences, allowing students to gain early exposure to careers and develop durable skills valued by employers.

AccelerateMS and its partners are also supporting the expansion of apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs that connect secondary CTE programs, community colleges, and employers. These programs allow individuals to transition directly from education into structured training and employment while earning wages and industry-recognized credentials. Local workforce development boards support these efforts at the regional level by working with employers, community colleges, school districts, and community-based organizations to identify workforce needs and coordinate training opportunities aligned with both CTE programs of study and workforce priorities.

Through these coordinated planning efforts, shared workforce priorities, and strategic investments in both secondary and postsecondary education, AccelerateMS, the SWIB, and core partners are strengthening alignment between Mississippi's education and workforce systems and supporting career pathways that prepare individuals for high-demand careers across the state.

C. Use of state leadership funds

Mississippi has elected to award reserve funds to eligible recipients. A grant process is used to award the funds to recipients that meet at least one of the following criteria:

- Located in rural areas;
- Located in areas with high numbers of CTE participants;
- Located in areas with disparities or gaps in performance in their CTE Programs.

2. Implementing career and technical education programs and programs of study

. Career and technical education programs or programs of study that will be supported, developed, or improved at the State level

As required by **Section 122(d)(4)(A) of Perkins V,** CTE programs of study may be adopted by local educational agencies and postsecondary institutions to be offered as an option to students (and their parents as appropriate) when planning for and completing future coursework for career and technical content areas that do the following:

- Incorporate secondary and postsecondary education elements. Effective linkages between secondary and postsecondary education will be accomplished by:
  - establishing baseline occupational competencies in secondary statewide curriculum frameworks that directly relate to postsecondary occupational program areas to assist all students in making a smooth transition from one level to another without experiencing delays, duplication of coursework, or loss of credit;
  - providing statewide curricula that is streamlined for career pathways under the national

career clusters model that includes nationally recognized occupational standards and certification requirements where available (nationally recognized industry certifications or work-based learning could be considered as endpoints);
    - enhancing articulation agreements with community colleges and/or universities for the seamless transfer of technical credit for postsecondary students into baccalaureate programs;
    - support LEA development of articulation agreements with community colleges and/or universities for the seamless transfer of technical credit for postsecondary students into baccalaureate programs;
    - establishing committees of secondary and postsecondary educators to develop articulation agreements between secondary and postsecondary career and technical education programs;
    - enhancing the postsecondary curriculum process to allow for the alignment of articulated credit for national certifications where applicable;
    - having a program of study that leads to industry, community college, and university stackable credentials;
    - planning to revise and strengthen articulating secondary and postsecondary curricula to promote a smooth transition for students to become prepared for jobs in high-skill, high-wage, or in-demand occupations (these articulations are based on agreements between the local district and community college where applicable);
    - providing opportunities for secondary students to engage in career exploration at the local postsecondary facilities that encourage and support college-level academic expectations, articulation, and program recruitment;
    - providing flexibility in substituting required courses, options for credit recovery, dual credit options, and reducing the hours required for career program coursework at the secondary level;
    - supporting dual credit opportunities in compliance with memorandums of understanding (MOUs) at the local school districts;
    - providing opportunities for dual credit and dual enrollment for postsecondary career pathways (these opportunities are based on agreements between the local district and community college where applicable);
    - linking statewide career clusters and pathways with plans of study linking Grades 7 through 16;
- increasing academic rigor in CTE curricula through the utilization of mathematics, reading, writing, science, and oral communication;
    - utilizing the most program-specific technology (equipment and software) in all CTE classes and providing training for teachers; and
    - developing and partnering with various state, county, and local organizations to provide successful, ongoing college and career events that include opportunities for students to develop strong relationships with college students, instructor/professors, and individuals from business and industry.
- Financial resources will be used to:
    - fund teams of teachers and industry specialists to develop and update curriculum frameworks, including the identification of baseline competencies in secondary programs that directly relate to industry and postsecondary programs;
    - develop plans to include coherent and rigorous content aligned with challenging academic standards and relevant career and technical content in a coordinated, non-duplicative progression of courses that align secondary and postsecondary education to prepare students adequately to succeed in postsecondary education or career opportunities;
    - coordinate efforts between the MDE and the MCCB to have a continuous alignment of

curriculum, where applicable, for streamlining a student's career pathway; and

- offer career pathways and programs of study at the secondary level that allow districts to choose from career pathways organized into career clusters based upon the comprehensive regional needs assessment for their workforce development area. At the postsecondary level, students may also choose from multiple programs of study. At both levels, students participate in real-world, relevant, hands-on learning that leads to industry certification when applicable. **See Appendix A** for a complete listing of secondary and postsecondary programs
- Postsecondary institutions may use funds to support the following CTE areas:
    - National certifications/assessments
        - Recruit business and industry to Mississippi
        - Adds structure to programs to validate skilled training
    - Special populations
        - Increases the number of groups included for services
        - Strengthens the services provided to special population students (i.e., outreach to identify students in need, recruitment, tutoring, career planning and preparation, removing barriers for students' enrollment and persistence, necessary skills, LEP staff providing services to a more diverse student body)
    - Professional development
        - Provides training for new administrators at the postsecondary level
        - Provides sustained training that will increase instructor knowledge and allow them to maintain relevant technical skills and expertise
        - Provides training for postsecondary CTE employees on best practices
    - Work-based learning, internships, and apprenticeships
        - Creates a simulated work experience environment when necessary
        - Helps support internship/apprenticeship opportunities for students
        - Enhances the technology used to provide virtual training
        - Provides opportunities for partnering with Grades K-12 institutions for simulated work experience
        - Awards paid internship opportunities
        - Supplements industry internship opportunities
        - Promotes business/industry relationships to gain internship and apprenticeship opportunities
    - Implementation of new programs
        - In-demand, high skill, high wage programs that meet industry needs
        - STEM-focused programs
        - Program completion
        - CTE counseling
        - Advising toward graduation
        - Dual or concurrent enrollment opportunities
    - Non-traditional students
        - Recruitment of non-traditional students
        - Retention and completion efforts for non-traditional students
        - Incentives/grants/scholarships for completion/attainment of certifications
    - Career guidance and counseling improvement
        - Recruitment for CTE programs (program offerings and career awareness)
        - Materials for the promotion of programs

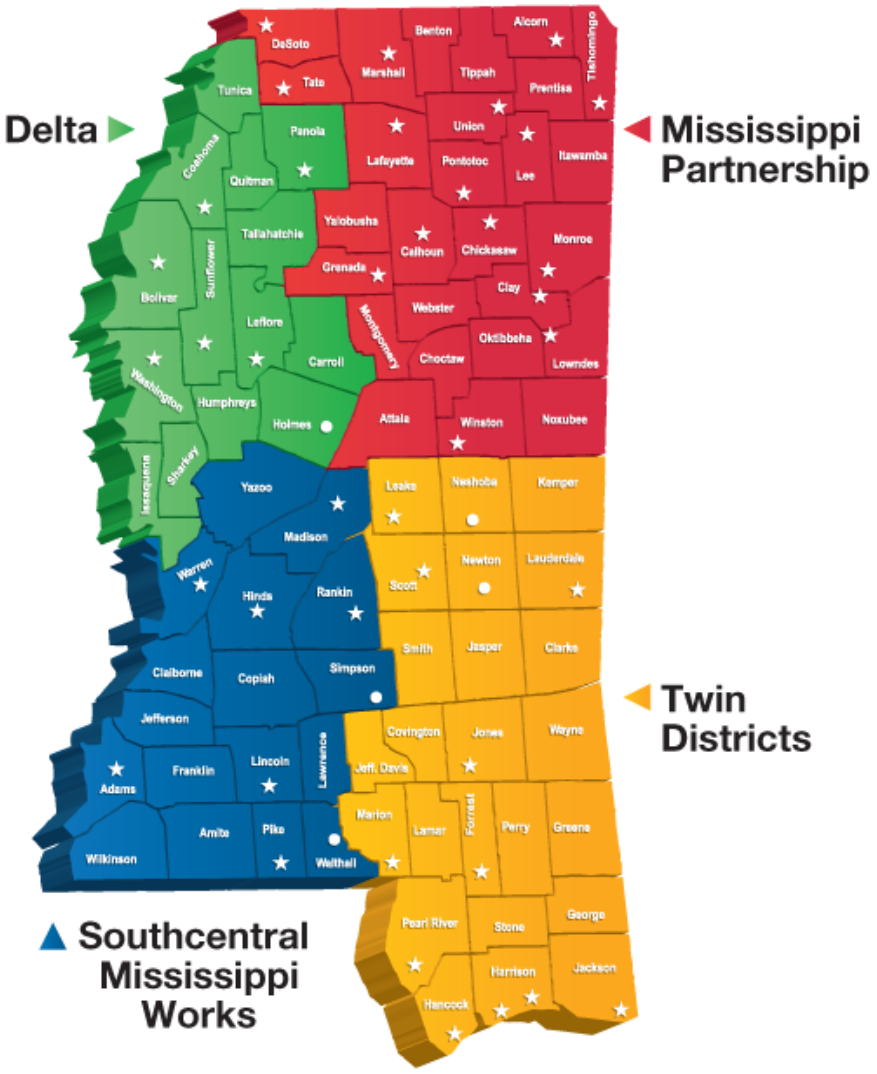
- Technology/software for counseling and career planning
- Retention initiatives and services

- Industry partnerships
  - Strengthen industry sector relationships
  - Increase opportunities for internships/apprenticeships

A. Process and criteria to be used for approving locally developed programs of study or career pathways

Local school districts, along with community colleges and business and industry representatives, will convene regional needs assessments aligned with the workforce development districts in Mississippi (Figure 20). Local school districts and community colleges will attend one of these meetings that aligns with their geographic workforce development district. CTE administrators will conduct the biannual needs assessment to determine program needs for the workforce development districts. The needs assessment will utilize data from workforce projects, student interest surveys, and local business and industry needs, as well as parental and district input.

Figure VII-4: Map of Workforce Development Districts



The districts will evaluate local offerings based on the regional needs assessment meetings. Data and findings will be uploaded into the Local Plan Application (LPA), justifying why programs are selected, retained, or discontinued within the district. Districts may select from available approved SBE curricula to meet the needs identified in the regional

needs assessment.

However, should the district demonstrate adequately the need for a new program, a application to create an emerging CTE program for the undeveloped area shall be submitted to the MDE Office of Career, Technical, and Workforce Development Education. If the application is deemed worthwhile in providing for local needs, the district will work with the MDE to begin program development, curriculum creation, equipment lists, and instructional practices necessary to implement the program.

The district is responsible for providing a plan of implementation to the MDE describing the following:

1. Name of the course
2. How the course will be offered
3. When the course will be offered
4. Where the course will be offered
5. How the course will be sustained long term
6. Assessment of local and regional workforce needs
7. Letters of support from both local and regional workforces
8. The instructor to be used and credentials
9. How local funds will support the initial startup of the program (i.e., equipment and teacher budget)
10. Any other information the MDE deems necessary before approving the new program

Should districts find that an existing program requires updating or adjusting due to new industry or current industry changes, districts will petition the MDE to make changes to the curriculum. These changes must align with MDE and SBE policy and the established revision process, and the changes must maintain the integrity of the original curriculum's intent. Industry support, student data, and adequate labor market data will determine MDE approval.

Community colleges seeking to add new programs submit a New Program Application to the director of career and technical education at the MCCB. The process to receive application approval is as follows:

- Colleges collect, compile, and document employment needs data, including state and district employment and wage projections (i.e., average annual salary projections and 10-year employment projections).
- Collect, compile, and document Student Interest Data.
- Obtain advisory committee recommendations.
- Obtain a professional association endorsement (if needed).
- Develop an estimated budget for revenue and expenses.
- Develop the curriculum following the 30/45/60-hour course sequencing format (where applicable).

Districts will be encouraged to promote continuous improvement in academic achievement and technical skill attainment. Performance indicators are used to evaluate secondary, postsecondary, and programs in correctional institutions. Career programs must meet or exceed each state performance indicator.

The core indicators of performance at the *secondary level* include the following:

1. The percentage of CTE concentrators who graduate high school, as measured by the four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate (defined in 20 U.S.C. § 7801(25)).
2. CTE concentrator proficiency in the challenging state academic standards adopted by the state under 20 U.S.C. § 6311 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as measured by the academic assessments (English II, Biology I, and Algebra I) described in such act.
3. The percentage of CTE concentrators who, in the second quarter after exiting from secondary education, are in postsecondary education or advanced training, military service, or a service program that receives assistance under Title I of the National and Community Service Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. § 12501, et. seq.); are volunteers as

described in the Peace Corps Act (22 U.S.C. § 2504(a)); or are employed.
4. The percentage of CTE concentrators in career and technical education programs and programs ofstudy that lead to nontraditional fields.
5. The percentage of CTE concentrators earning a recognized postsecondary credential upon graduation.
6. The percentage of CTE concentrators having graduated from high school having participated in work-based learning.

The core indicators of performance at the *postsecondary* level include the following:

1. The percentage of CTE concentrators who, in the second quarter after program completion, remain enrolled in postsecondary education; are in advanced training, military service, or a service program that receives assistance under title I of the National and Community Service Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. § 12501, et. seq.); are volunteers as described in section of the Peace Corps Act (22 U.S.C. § 2504(a)); or are placed or retained in employment.
2. The percentage of CTE concentrators in career and technical education programs and programs of study that lead to nontraditional fields.
3. The percentage of CTE concentrators who receive a recognized postsecondary credential during participation in or within one year of program completion.

The academic and technical skills of students participating in career and technical programs will be continuously improved by:

1. the development and continued revision of statewide curriculum frameworks that incorporate related academic topics in mathematics, science, communication, language arts, and essential skills;
2. the provision of professional development opportunities to instructors related to the integration of academic and occupational skills;
3. the development and dissemination of recommended sequential courses of study that identify academic and CTE courses and programs that contribute to the development of academic and occupational skills in an occupational area or cluster; and
4. the integration of academic and occupational skills in educational institutions using applied learning strategies, project-based learning, and cooperative teaching activities between academic and career and technical instructors.

Student service coordinators in Mississippi expand access to CTE for special populations and are equipped to help provide accountability, assessment strategies, transition services, coordination with other service providers, monitoring access, progress, and success, as well as outreach and recruitment for the students of Mississippi. Mississippi is committed to requiring and providing professional development to student service coordinators.

At the *secondary level*, student service coordinators support students who may require extra support to be successful in school and beyond. These students include English learners, migrants, immigrant students, students with disabilities, students who are homeless, and students housed in neglected or delinquent facilities. Support is provided to the districts in the areas of monitoring and compliance. Student service coordinators assist districts to ensure that the populations are proficient and showing growth in all assessed areas, graduating high school, and ready for college and career. More information can be located at mdek12.org/OFP/SP.

After self-identifying, students with disabilities attending Mississippi's *postsecondary* institutions receive reasonable accommodations. Institutions verify eligibility for accommodations and work with eligible students to develop and coordinate plans to provide those accommodations. Postsecondary institutions are committed to ensuring equal access to quality education for qualified students with disabilities through the provision of reasonable academic accommodations and auxiliary aids which support postsecondary standards and academic integrity. Postsecondary institutions are committed to creating a positive campus environment where students with disabilities are encouraged to pursue careers based on personal interest and ability. Reasonable accommodations are offered in accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Annual training is

offered to equip staff in providing the latest strategies and techniques for supporting special populations.

In accordance with **Section 122(d)(4)(B) of Perkins V,** during the secondary and postsecondary curriculum writing and revision process, employability skills, as identified by local business and industry, will be addressed and will continue to be emphasized and placed within each curriculum document. This will also become a part of the professional learning opportunities offered by the state. The SBE Strategic Plan Goal 2 aims to equip graduates to be college and career ready. MDE has also increased their commitment to workforce development through the creation of the Office of Workforce Development within the division of Career and Technical Education. Additionally, secondary students learn these skills in the College and Career Readiness course required for graduation (mdek12.org/ese/College-and-Career-Readiness). Students will discover their interests, talents, and skills to determine their ideal plan for college and career. They will develop the necessary foundational and technical skills, practice good work habits, and demonstrate communication skills required for successful employment. Students will pursue a certificate of career readiness, which allows employers to quantify the foundational skills needed to perform job tasks successfully and enables workers to demonstrate they have these skills.

Employers have consistently lamented the poor essential skills with which students/employees enter the job market. The MCCB, as part of the WIOA state plan, sought to address the issue by developing an essential skill course—Smart Start. Students discover their interests, talents, and skills to determine their plan for college and career, and they develop the necessary foundational and technical skills, practice good work habits, and demonstrate the communication required for successful employment. The Smart Start course is offered as a stand-alone course, and student learning outcomes are embedded in a work-based learning course. As a result, students will learn career goals, personal finance, effective communication, problem-solving techniques, and team building approaches. Completion of the course will earn students a Mississippi Smart Start Credential.

B. Describe how the eligible agency will:

make information on approved programs of study and career pathways (including career exploration, work-based learning opportunities, early college high schools, and dual or concurrent enrollment program opportunities) and guidance and advisement resources, available to students (and parents, as appropriate), representatives of secondary and postsecondary education, and special populations, and to the extent practicable, provide that information and those resources in a language students, parents, and educators can understand

The MDE, the MCCB, and community colleges establish education service partnerships to provide communication services to CTE teachers, administrators, and counselors via listservs, website, email, social media, and print publications. Utilizing this partnership, the MDE will develop a statewide marketing and communication plan for CTE to include career exploration, work-based learning opportunities, early college high schools, and dual or concurrent enrollment program opportunities. This plan will include communication with previously listed targets as well as parents, industry partners, government agencies, and the general public. The plan will focus on reducing negative perceptions around CTE careers, providing CTE job growth data, and communicating the success stories of former CTE students. The MCCB and community colleges will develop a statewide marketing and communication plan for CTE to include billboards and print publications. Examples of information available can be located at mdek12.org/CTE/OCCSS.

The MDE has provided additional guidance for work-based learning through the publication of the Mississippi Work-Based Learning Manual, located at https://www.rcu.msstate.edu/curriculum. Additionally, the MDE formed a task force to research, design, and develop a K-12 Workforce Development Guide that includes strategies for workforce development lessons in elementary grades.

i *Facilitate collaboration among eligible recipients in the development and coordination of career and technical education programs and programs of study and career pathways that include multiple entry and exit points*

According to Miss. Code Ann. § **37-163-1**, the Education Achievement Council was created to help facilitate collaboration among eligible recipients in the development and coordination of career and technical education programs and programs of study and career pathways.

In addition to utilizing the Education Achievement Council, the MCCB and postsecondary institutions align their career pathway options and programs of study with State Workforce Investment Board (SWIB) and WIOA career cluster recommendations for the State of Mississippi. Combining these efforts, the MCCB and the MDE host collaboration meetings twice a year (fall and spring) to encourage secondary, postsecondary, and industry collaboration.

The MDE and its supporting partners will lead curriculum writing team meetings to address changes to existing curricular offerings. The meetings will include industry representatives, secondary CTE educators, secondary administrators (when applicable), postsecondary and Institutions of Higher Learning (IHL) representatives (when applicable), and MDE and partner staff. The meetings will ensure that secondary curricula are aligned to both current industry standards and the proper current technology and equipment. When programs are reviewed, labor market data from the Mississippi Department of Employment Security (MDES) is used to determine the need and viability of program offerings. Secondary program offerings will range from middle school exploratory programs to four credit programs of study available to Grades 9-12. Programs of study can be offered as four (4) one credit courses OR as two (2) two credit courses. Upon completion of their four-credit course sequence, CTE concentrators will leave secondary education with the skills, knowledge, training, and credentials needed to pursue career opportunities, workforce training, or continued education at a postsecondary institution.

The MDE and its supporting partners will also lead curriculum taskforce meetings to address potential new curricular offerings. The meetings will include industry representatives, secondary CTE educators, secondary administrators (when applicable), postsecondary and IHL representatives (when applicable), and MDE and partner staff. The meetings will ensure that the proposed secondary curricula are aligned to both current industry standards and the proper current technology and equipment, as well as meeting the regional workforce needs. When new program applications are reviewed, labor market data from the MDES is used to determine the need and viability of program offerings.

At the postsecondary level, the MCCB reviews and revises curricula on a four-year cycle. If industry standards change, community colleges can petition the MCCB to review curricula at an earlier date. Additional courses can also be added during the four-year period. Curriculum changes approved outside of the revision cycle will be incorporated during the next revision. When new program applications are reviewed, labor market data from the MDES is used to determine the need and viability of program offerings.

ii *Use State, regional, or local labor market data to determine alignment of eligible recipients' programs of study to the needs of the State, regional, or local economy, including in demand industry sectors and occupations identified by the State board, and to align career and technical education with such needs, as appropriate*

At the secondary level, the MDE reviews and revises curricula on a four-year cycle or earlier if needed. Curriculum changes approved outside of the revision cycle will be incorporated during the next revision. When new program applications are reviewed, labor market data from the MDES is used to determine the need and viability of program offerings.

Secondary districts must provide a program justification for existing programs in the Local Plan Application to the MDE Associate State Superintendent of the Office of Career, Technical, and Workforce Development Education. The process to receive application approval is outlined below:

- Districts collect, compile, and document employment needs data, including state and district employment and wage projections (i.e., average annual salary projections and 10-year employment projections).
- Districts collect, compile, and document student interest data.
- Districts obtain advisory committee recommendations.
- Additionally, districts must identify which local businesses, industries, and economic/workforce development groups they are working with, which postsecondary institutions can students attend once they leave the secondary program and provide detailed information as to where students are employed when they leave the secondary program.

Secondary districts seeking to add new programs must submit a New Program Application to the MDE Associate State Superintendent of the Office of Career, Technical, and Workforce Development Education. The application process to receive approval is outlined below:

- Districts collect, compile, and document employment needs data as determined by the local needs assessment, including state and district employment and wage projections (i.e., average annual salary projections and 10-year employment projections).
- Districts collect, compile, and document student interest data.
- Districts obtain advisory committee recommendations and letters of support.

At the postsecondary level, the MCCB reviews and revises curricula on a four-year cycle. If industry standards change, community colleges can petition the MCCB to review curricula at an earlier date. Additional courses can also be added during the four-year period. Curriculum changes approved outside of the revision cycle will be incorporated during the next revision. When new program applications are reviewed, labor market data from the MDES is used to determine the need and viability of program offerings.

Community colleges seeking to add new programs submit a New Program Application to the director of career and technical education at the MCCB. The process to receive application approval is outlined below:

- Colleges collect, compile, and document employment needs data, including state and district employment and wage projections (i.e., average annual salary projections and 10-year employment projections).
- Colleges collect, compile, and document student interest data.
- Colleges obtain Advisory Committee recommendations.
- Colleges obtain professional association endorsement (if needed).
- Colleges develop the curriculum following the 15/30/45/60 course sequencing format (where applicable).

iii Ensure equal access to approved career and technical education programs of study and activities assisted under this Act for special populations

The MDE/secondary districts:

- Describe in the LPA the strategies the Local Education Agency (LEA) has adopted and implemented to ensure "that no individual shall, on the basis of sex, race, color, national origin, handicap, or age be excluded from admission to, participation in, denied the benefits of, or be subjected to unlawful discrimination in any CTE programs, services, or activities operated by the LEA, or supported directly through contractual or other arrangements by the LEA."
- Modify academic requirements as necessary to ensure that the requirements do not discriminate against students on the basis of their status as members of special populations and other groups. Modifications may include substitution of specific courses required for the completion of graduation or degree requirements and adaptation of the manner in which specific courses are conducted.
- Provide for the least restrictive environment as outlined in Section
- 504 of the Education Amendments of 1973, ADA, and Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA).
- Assure that all facilities, services, programs, and activities provided to special populations students shall be comparable to those that the LEA provides to non-special populations students.

- Assure that special populations students shall not be discriminated against in the selection or administration of tests or evaluations to assess student performance in a course or program.
- Provide equal access to membership in CTE student organizations, work-based learning, work study, apprenticeship training, and employment placement where applicable.
- Describe how an eligible recipient will review CTE programs and identify and adopt strategies to overcome barriers that result in lowering rates of access and success in the programs for special populations.
- Describe how an eligible recipient will provide activities to prepare special populations, including single parents and displaced homemakers, for high skill, high wage, and in demand occupations that will lead to self-sufficiency.
- Describe how individuals who are members of special populations will not be discriminated against on the basis of their status as members of special populations.
- Describe how funds will be used to recruit students into CTE programs that lead to nontraditional fields.
- Use the district summary report of disaggregated performance data by race, ethnicity, gender, migrant students, and special populations to identify disparities or gaps in performance.
- Describe how the recipient will use the disaggregated student performance data to evaluate and continuously improve student and program performance.
- Describe how an eligible recipient will provide programs that are designed to enable the special populations to meet the local adjusted levels of performance.

Postsecondary institutions:
In order to provide opportunities in postsecondary education or entry into high skill, high wage, or in demand occupations in current and emerging occupations, the State of Mississippi will do the following:
- Provide statewide curriculum frameworks for all CTE programs, which incorporate:

opportunities to learn nationally recognized occupational standards and obtain nationally recognized certifications (where available);
related secondary academic topics in math, science, language arts, and communication;
workplace and soft skills related to all aspects of an industry including resource allocation, information retrieval and analysis; and
soft skills, employability skills, application of the systems concept, use of technology, development of critical thinking skills, and development of workplace ethics.

- Provide professional development opportunities to CTE instructors and administrators on adapting the statewide curriculum frameworks to meet the needs of local CTE programs.
- Provide professional development opportunities to CTE instructors and administrators on occupational and related area content, including the use of new and emerging technologies and practices in the occupational area.
- Develop and implement new programs of CTE in areas related to new and emerging occupations.
- Research and identify potential work-based learning opportunities, including the ability to use a simulated work experience environment and virtual training when necessary.
- Use work-based learning opportunities to help support internship/apprenticeship opportunities for students.
- Partner with secondary CTE programs to provide simulated work experience.
- Promote business/industry relationships to increase work-based learning opportunities to include apprenticeships and internships.
- Provide opportunities for additional recruiting of nontraditional students, the marketing of programs, and professional development opportunities through the grant application process with the MCCB.
- Provide guidance to administrators, faculty, staff, and community members on civil rights compliance.
- Provide services ensuring diversity in program offerings and marketing, accessibility to programs, and compliance with ADA and Title IX regulations.

iv *Coordinate with the State board to support the local development of career pathways and articulate processes by which career pathways will be developed by local workforce development boards, as appropriate*

v AccelerateMS coordinates with the State Workforce Investment Board (SWIB) and core workforce partners to support the development of career pathways that align workforce programs, education systems, and industry partners around Mississippi's priority occupations. The SWIB provides strategic oversight and guidance to ensure that workforce investments across the system support the state's economic development priorities and address the workforce needs of employers across key industries.

vi In collaboration with the SWIB and core partners—including the Mississippi Department of Employment Security (MDES), the Mississippi Community College Board (MCCB), the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE), the Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services (MDRS), and the Mississippi Department of Human Services (MDHS)—AccelerateMS leads the identification and periodic update of Mississippi's priority occupations. These occupations reflect the most critical workforce needs across the state and are informed by labor market analysis, employer engagement, and sector-based workforce strategies. Priority occupations serve as the foundation for career pathway development across workforce, education, and training programs.

vii Recent workforce analysis conducted in partnership with state agencies and industry stakeholders indicates that Mississippi will need approximately 19,000 additional workers in priority occupations over the coming decade to meet projected workforce demand in key sectors such as advanced manufacturing, construction, healthcare, and other skilled trades. Aligning career pathway development with these priority occupations helps ensure that workforce and education programs are preparing individuals for careers that support long-term economic mobility while addressing the state's most significant workforce shortages.

viii Local workforce development boards use these priority occupations as the starting point for developing regional career pathways that connect individuals to education, training, and employment opportunities aligned with industry demand. In partnership with employers, community colleges, school districts, adult education providers, and workforce service organizations, local areas develop pathways that allow participants to move from foundational skill development to industry-recognized credentials and employment in high-demand occupations.

ix AccelerateMS supports local workforce development boards in this work by providing labor market information, workforce supply and demand analysis, and guidance on aligning training investments with priority occupations. This includes sharing statewide workforce analysis, facilitating industry engagement, and supporting sector-based strategies that help ensure training programs reflect the skills employers need. Community colleges play a critical role in these career pathways by serving as the primary providers of workforce training and credential programs aligned with regional industry demand.

x Career pathways developed through this process are designed to support multiple entry and exit points, allowing participants to build skills over time while remaining connected to employment opportunities. Pathways may include integrated education and training models, work-based learning opportunities, stackable credentials, and apprenticeship or pre-apprenticeship programs that allow individuals to advance within a career field as they gain additional skills and experience.

xi Core partners also work together to align workforce and education programs that support career pathway development. This includes coordination between WIOA-funded services, Perkins-funded career and technical education programs, and Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) services to ensure that individuals at different skill levels—including youth, adult learners, and individuals seeking to upskill—can access training aligned with Mississippi's workforce needs.

xii AccelerateMS and the SWIB also support local workforce areas by identifying promising practices and encouraging the expansion of successful career pathway models across the state. Through technical assistance, peer learning opportunities, and coordination among core partners, the system works to strengthen local implementation and ensure workforce investments are aligned with occupations that are critical to Mississippi's economic growth.

xiii By grounding career pathway development in priority occupations and strengthening partnerships among workforce, education, and industry partners, AccelerateMS, the SWIB, and core partners support local workforce development boards in building career pathways that connect individuals to sustainable employment opportunities while meeting the workforce needs of Mississippi employers.

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xviii *Support effective and meaningful collaboration between secondary schools, postsecondary institutions, and employers to provide students with experience in, and understanding of all aspects of an industry, which may include work-based learning such as internships, mentorships, simulated work environments, and other hands-on or inquiry-based learning activities*

Industries are challenged with finding qualified employees, while students are finding it equally challenging to gain valuable work experience to demonstrate technical skills to employers. Mississippi believes that student access to work-based learning opportunities allows LEAs to combine education with work experience. Pursuant to ESSA and WIOA requirements, the MDE and the MCCB will encourage participation in work-based programs like apprenticeships, paid work experiences, and internships. This work will require partnerships to:

- elevate the state's vision for authentic work-based learning;
- expand the infrastructure and provide incentives for industry to engage educational institutions;
- provide work-based learning opportunities, including the ability to use a simulated work experience environment and virtual training when necessary;
- promote work-based learning opportunities for students;
- partner with secondary CTE programs to provide simulated work experience for students when age restrictions prohibit participation at industry locations;
- promote business/industry relationships to increase work-based learning opportunities to include apprenticeships and internships; and
- align with the Department of Labor's guidelines to promote and create apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeships.

Strong collaboration between all agencies and industry partners (local, regional, and state) will be used to ensure opportunities for students to pursue various career pathways and work-based learning opportunities.

xix *Improve outcomes and reduce performance gaps for CTE concentrators, including those who are members of special populations*

The MDE and MCCB will provide opportunities; eligibility requirements for enrollment; specific program offerings; special services; employment opportunities; and placement opportunities in a prepared packaged format to "all students" upon enrollment in a CTE program. Special populations personnel must (1) certify and document that special populations are provided with equal access to recruitment, enrollment, retention, completion, and placement and (2) maintain documentation of services and activities provided to each special populations participant.

Additionally, the district summary reports require districts and colleges to report information based on student population demographics. If state-adjusted levels of performance are not met, those areas must be addressed through the state-approved gap analysis form. CTE programs that do not achieve the state-adjusted level of performance in year one are placed in local improvement. Inability in subsequent years to improve will result in a status of state improvement. Consistently underperforming programs (three consecutive years) can be recommended for closure.

C. Opportunity for secondary school students to participate in dual or concurrent enrollment programs, early college high school, or competency-based education

There are 15 community and junior colleges in Mississippi. Articulation agreements are now in place within each community/junior college district that extend to the school districts within the individual community college area. There are dual credit opportunities in place for students to earn college credit in core courses, such as English composition, math, etc. Dual credit courses taught in a secondary setting must be aligned to postsecondary student learning outcomes to facilitate dual credit opportunities in compliance with memorandums of understanding (MOUs).

Students interested in dual credit opportunities must:

- possess a minimum overall high school GPA of 2.0 on a 4.0 scale;
- be classified as a sophomore, junior, or senior; and
- obtain an unconditional recommendation from a school administrator/counselor or CTE instructor.

D. Involvement of parents, academic and career and technical education teachers, administrators, faculty, career guidance and academic counselors, local business (including small businesses), labor organizations, and representatives of Indian Tribes and Tribal organizations, as appropriate, in the planning, development, implementation, and evaluation of its career and technical education programs.

The MDE will engage stakeholders on a yearly basis in an advisory role to ensure CTE is aligned with all facets of planning within our state, to include ESSA and WIOA. This will ensure all systems are moving forward together and seamless for students. This step will also create a better opportunity for communication of CTE to all stakeholders. Local districts are required to assemble advisory committees for programs offered twice a year to garner feedback utilizing local business and industry and community leaders. The MDE monitors these advisory committees through state-level consolidated monitoring visits.

In postsecondary education, each career and technical program has an advisory committee composed of business and industry professionals in their respective communities and districts. The goal of these groups is to provide involvement opportunities for a vast group of stakeholders to assist with:

- providing programmatic review;
- providing input to curriculum and instruction;
- providing guidance for new industry requirements;
- assisting with recruitment and job placement;
- assisting with student organizations; and
- providing help with community/public relations.

In addition to these activities, the MCCB develops innovative curricula aligned to industry certifications/national standards, and professional training facilitating seamless educational delivery by community college instructors, business and industry partners, and college administrators focused on preparing skilled workers in the 21st century economy.

E. Local application template

For a copy of the local application, refer to Appendix B of this document.

F. Comprehensive local needs assessment template and/or guidelines

For a copy of the regional needs assessment, refer to Appendix C of this document.

G. Definition for "size, scope, and quality" that will be used to make funds available to eligible recipients

For a copy of the size, scope, and quality, refer to Appendix D of this document.

H. Meeting the needs of special populations

Describe the eligible agency's program strategies for special populations, including a description of how

individuals who are members of special populations—

a Will be provided with equal access to activities assisted under this Act

Identified special populations students will receive early intervention strategies to provide members of special populations, parents of special populations students, and other groups with the following information on CTE programs: available opportunities, eligibility requirements for enrollment, specific program offerings, special services, employment opportunities, and placement opportunities.

Additionally, the MDE will provide guidance, professional development, and monitor local districts to ensure adequate documentation is maintained concerning special populations and other groups' equal access to recruitment, enrollment, retention, completion, and placement and strategies for documenting services provided to each member of special populations and other groups.

Student service coordinators provide instructional, career, collaborative, and supportive assistance to career and technical education students. While they are required to assist all career and technical students, their primary charge is to identify and assess students to determine their qualifications as special populations and any appropriate additional services needed. Student service coordinators will ensure that special populations students are provided equal access to recruitment, enrollment, retention, completion, placement activities, and preparatory and support services for career and technical education programs and nontraditional education and training programs.

b Will not be discriminated against on the basis of status as a member of a special population

Career and technical education programs receiving Perkins funding must comply with nondiscrimination policies as outlined by the U.S. Office for Civil Rights (OCR) division of the Department of Education. The OCR ensures that educational entities provide equal opportunities for all students to receive an education in the desired program area. The MDE monitors compliance of federal statutes through the Methods of Administration audit. The following federal compliance requirements govern discrimination policy for CTE programs:

U.S. Department of Education regulations implementing:
Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VI), 34 CFR Part 100
Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (Title IX), 34 CFR Part 106
Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504), 34 CFR Part 104
Vocational Education Programs Guidelines for Eliminating Discrimination and Denial of Services on the Basis of Race, Color, National Origin, Sex, and Handicap (Guidelines), 34 CFR Part 100

U.S. Department of Justice regulations implementing:
Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), 28 CFR Part 35

c Will be provided with programs designed to enable individuals who are members of special populations to meet or exceed State determined levels of performance described in section 113, and prepare special populations for further learning and for high-skill, high-wage, or in-demand industry sectors or occupations

Special populations students receive the preparatory, supportive, tutorial, and mentoring services required to ensure their success while enrolled in or preparing to enroll in career and technical education and/or nontraditional education and training programs. The services prepare special populations students for nontraditional education, training, and employment in high skill, high wage, in demand occupations.

d Will be provided with appropriate accommodations

Student services coordinators provide available opportunities, eligibility requirements for enrollment, specific program offerings, special services, employment opportunities, and placement opportunities in a prepared packaged format to "all students" upon enrollment in a CTE program. Special populations students are provided with supplementary

services required by law, such as: (a) accommodations and modifications for students with disabilities, (b) supportive and related services, (c) instructional aids and devices, (d) academic assistance, and (e) equal access to nontraditional education and training programs and related services.

The MDE Office of Special Education (OSE) has Procedures (Volumes I, II, III, IV, and V) for State Board Policy Chapter 74, Rule 74.19, *State Policies Regarding Children with Disabilities under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 2004 (IDEA 2004)*. The procedures do not replace the state policies. They represent a collection of resources that can be used by public agencies to implement the requirements of the state policies and IDEA. This information can be accessed at https://mdek12.org/specialeducation/pp/.

e *Will be provided instruction and work-based learning opportunities in integrated settings that support competitive, integrated employment.*

Utilizing current strategies such as work-based learning, internships, and apprenticeships, local education agencies and industries are afforded the opportunity to offer employment/training experiences for all students. These could be integrated within the school day based upon the needs of various students. Local districts can offer clinicals/worksite field experiences, entrepreneurship, internships, pre-apprenticeships, school-based enterprises, job placements, and simulated worksites.

I. Preparing Teachers and Faculty

Describe how the eligible agency will support the recruitment and preparation of teachers, including special education teachers, faculty, school principals, administrators, specialized instructional support personnel, and paraprofessionals to provide career and technical education instruction, leadership, and support, including professional development that provides the knowledge and skills needed to work with and improve instruction for special populations.

Secondary

New Teacher Induction (NTI)

The NTI program was planned and developed by personnel from the MDE's Office of Career and Technical Education and the Research and Curriculum Unit (RCU) at Mississippi State University (MSU) with leadership and direction from a steering committee and national research. NTI is an alternate route licensure program for CTE teachers who have recently left the industry sector to become educators in secondary schools. NTI's goal is to induct these new teachers into the profession and guide their development during a special licensing period. Most teachers in this category are given up to three years to accomplish matriculation to a "standard" license. NTI offers a sequence of professional development activities that begin with employment and progress from "most important to know immediately" to activities that meet long-term needs of teachers. The program consists of sequential steps in the process of developing newly hired CTE teachers into fully licensed teachers.

Methods Training

Mississippi provides pathway-specific professional development to all new CTE teachers, counselors, and student service coordinators. This program, known as Methods Training, provides specialized instruction tailored to each teacher's pathway or program area and includes:

- Face-to-face sessions during the summer with experienced teachers who have demonstrated innovative teaching styles and high certification pass rates
- Coaching from mentor teachers for up to two years, offering support through email, phone, video, and in-person meetings
- Additional coaching support, classroom visits, and formative evaluations from MSU RCU staff
- Detailed instruction in curriculum, classroom management, lesson planning, syllabus creation, teacher modeling, student organization information, and pathway-specific resources

Methods Training is also available to those who may be working towards a different license endorsement.

Online Teacher Resource Guides
The MDE and RCU offer online teacher resource guides through a learning management system. Content is contributed by CTE teachers and is aligned to the units in the state curriculum. The RCU curriculum staff maintain the sites which are revised each time the curriculum completes a revision cycle.

CTE Administrators Academy
The MDE offers the CTE Administrator endorsement for those who are newly hired CTE administrators. These administrators, who must already hold a valid administrator license, will be given a nonrenewable, provisional three-year license while they complete the requirements for the CTE Administrator add-on endorsement. During the three-year provisional period, the applicant must successfully complete all requirements of the CTE Administrator Academy. The CTE Administrator Academy covers topics such as certification, instructional management, assessment, student organizations, and other relevant items for the administrator as well as pairing the administrator with a mentor. The academy consists of four face-to-face modules held over two-day periods. These sessions include introductory resources and expectations, leading curriculum, instruction and assessment in CTE, using assessment and data to support college and career readiness, and building a culture of accountability.

COOL for Teachers and Administrators
The Certification of Online Learning (COOL) was created to assist educators in meeting the requirements for licensure. This web-based course is designed to introduce participants to the methodology of online teaching. Categories and topics include a review of the literature, instructional design techniques, online teaching strategies, classroom management procedures, analysis of technology integration in the classroom, contemplative processing, and legal issues in the digital environment. This course's capstone is a final project. The course participant will create a minimum of 10 hours of instruction. This instruction will utilize the different features used in the MDE's Learning Management System (LMS). Activities the participant creates will be on the curriculum the participant currently teaches or will teach or will be related to the capacity the participant works in a school district. A checklist of minimum expectations to be met is provided.
With the expansion of online learning for students, the use of the Canvas software by students, instructors, and directors and the fact that students going into higher education after completing high school will be utilizing Canvas for class assignments and other purposes, we feel it is essential that a new director have a thorough understanding of online learning in general and Canvas specifically. Both the community college system and the IHL use Canvas.
Special Populations Training and Online Coursework The MDE, through a partnership with the RCU at MSU, offers multiple face-to-face and online courses that address unique issues for educators and administrators who serve special populations. Additionally, these courses serve as resources for all teachers as they seek to improve relationships with students and impact their achievement.

Postsecondary
Recruitment strategies include utilizing notifications in local and regional newspapers, the college's website, social media networks (i.e., Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc.), talk radio advertisements and segments, graduates of the program, and job postings. The MCCB listserv is also used as a recruitment tool for potential instructors. Community colleges also make use of their local advisory committees to make recommendations for potential instructors. Communication with the MDE will be achieved through Lotus Notes. Communication with universities and colleges will occur through teacher preparation programs in order to find potential teacher candidates. Leveraging the SWIB network alliance and workforce publications will further aid the promotion of potential instructors.

The MCCB and local community colleges will address retention efforts for CTE teachers, faculty, and career guidance and academic counselors that center around compensation and fringe benefit packages that are competitive with the private and secondary education sectors.

Professional development is provided through on- and off-campus workshops and seminars. CTE faculty and student support services coordinators complete a "Competency Plan" which requires specific, prescribed professional development activities. The MCCB's Teaching and Learning Institute (new teacher training), Administrator's Leadership Academy, postsecondary/secondary CTE collaboration meetings, and summer conference provide professional development for CTE administrators and instructors at no cost.

c. Fiscal Responsibility

1. Describe the criteria and process for how the eligible agency will approve eligible recipients for funds under this Act, including how—

. Each eligible recipient will promote academic achievement

Mississippi educational agencies will promote academic achievement by adhering to SBE policies and the SBE Strategic Plan goals and initiatives, as well as by aligning all curricula and resources to industry and national standards when appropriate. This will include licensure and training for secondary teachers and credentialing and professional development for postsecondary instructors that ensures quality instructional practices are followed.

A. Each eligible recipient will promote skill attainment, including skill attainment that leads to a recognized postsecondary credential

Mississippi educational agencies will ensure that all curricular offerings and programs are aligned to industry credentialing where appropriate to facilitate a smooth transition to postsecondary education or the workforce. Additionally, funds may be used to supplement the costs of credentialing of students and dual enrollment/dual credit fees.

According to Miss. Code § 37-153-15, (House Bill 1388) MDE and SWIB work collaboratively to maintain an up-to-date national credential list for the state of Mississippi. All national credentials included in this list can be recommended by workforce stakeholders through an application process that is vetted by the credential sub-committee of SWIB. This sub-committee makes recommendations for credentials for the final approval of SWIB. Only SWIB-approved credentials are included in this list and recognized by MDE and LEAs.

B. Each eligible recipient will ensure the local needs assessment under section 134 takes into consideration local economic and education needs, including, where appropriate, in- demand industry sectors and occupations

For a copy of the local needs assessment, refer to Appendix C of this document.

2. Describe how funds received by the eligible agency through the allotment made under section 111 of the Act will be distributed—

. Among career and technical education at the secondary level, or career and technical education at the postsecondary and adult level, or both, including how such distribution will most effectively provide students with the skills needed to succeed in the workplace

The following is the distribution formula for Mississippi. Under Perkins V, the MDE is to distribute funds received through the allotment made under 20 U.S.C. § 2322 Section 112 of the act among career and technical education at the secondary level, or career and technical education at the postsecondary and adult level, as follows:

Secondary Distribution Formula

Thirty percent of the allocation will be based on the number of individuals aged 5 through 17, inclusive, who reside in the school district served by the LEAs for the preceding fiscal year compared to the total number of individuals aged 5 through 17 who reside in the school districts served by all LEAs in the state for the preceding fiscal year. The formula below shows how the 30% allocation is calculated:

$$\frac{\text{\# OF INDIVIDUALS AGED 5 THROUGH 17 INCLUSIVE WHO RESIDE IN THE SCHOOL DISTRICT (LEA DISTRICT)}}{\text{\# OF INDIVIDUALS AGED 5 THROUGH 17 INCLUSIVE WHO RESIDE IN THE SCHOOL DISTRICTS SERVED BY ALL LEAs IN THE STATE}}$$

Seventy percent of the allocation is based on the number of individuals aged 5 through 17, inclusive, who reside in the school district served by the LEA from families below the poverty level for the preceding year, (as determined on the basis of the most recent satisfactory data used under section 1124(c)(1)(A) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, compared to the total number of individuals aged 5 through 17 who reside in the school districts served by all LEAs in the state for the preceding fiscal year. The formula below shows how the 70% allocation is calculated:

$$\frac{\text{\# OF INDIVIDUALS AGED 5 THROUGH 17 INCLUSIVE WHO RESIDE IN THE SCHOOL DISTRICT FROM FAMILIES BELOW THE POVERTY LEVEL (LEA DISTRICT)}}{\text{\# OF INDIVIDUALS AGED 5 THROUGH 17 FROM FAMILIES BELOW THE POVERTY LEVEL WHO RESIDE IN THE SCHOOL DISTRICTS SERVED BY ALL LEAs IN THE STATE}}$$

Postsecondary Distribution Formula

The postsecondary formula is the sum of the number of individuals who are Federal Pell Grant recipients and recipients of assistance from the Bureau of Indian Affairs enrolled in programs meeting the requirements of Section 135 offered by such institution or consortium in the preceding fiscal year compared to the sum of the number of such recipients enrolled in such programs within the state for such year.

$$\frac{\text{\# OF PELL GRANT AND BIA PROGRAM RECIPIENTS ENROLLED IN CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS AT THE INSTITUTION}}{\text{\# OF PELL GRANT AND BIA PROGRAM RECIPIENTS ENROLLED IN CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN THE STATE}}$$

The MDE believes that the funding distribution formulas outlined in this section provide appropriate funding levels among our career and technical education programs. This funding mechanism will: 1) provide our career and technical education programs with resources to assist students with academics and with preparation for high skill, high wage, or in demand occupations in current or emerging professions; and 2) increase employment opportunities for populations who are chronically unemployed or underemployed.

A. Among any consortia that may be formed among secondary schools and eligible institutions, and how funds will be distributed among the members of the consortia, including the rationale for such distribution and how it will most effectively provide students with the skills needed to succeed in the workplace.

Any LEA receiving an allocation that is not sufficient to conduct a program that meets the requirements of Section 135 is encouraged to:

- form a consortium or enter into a cooperative agreement with other LEAs offering programs that meet the requirements of Section 135;
- transfer such allocation to the lead LEA; and
- operate programs that are of sufficient size, scope, and quality to be effective.

Funds allocated to a consortium formed to meet the requirements of Sections 131 and 132 shall be used only for purposes and programs that are mutually beneficial to all members of the consortium and can be used only for programs authorized under Title I of Perkins V. Such funds cannot be reallocated to individual members of the consortium for purposes or programs benefiting only one member of the consortium.

3. For the upcoming program year, provide the specific dollar allocations for each eligible recipient and describe how allocations are distributed to local educational agencies, areas career and technical education schools and educational service agencies within the State

4. For the upcoming program year, provide the specific dollar allocations for each eligible recipient and describe how allocations are distributed to eligible institutions and consortia of eligible institutions within the State

5. Describe how the eligible agency will adjust the data used to make the allocations to reflect any changes in school district boundaries that may have occurred since the population and/or enrollment data was collected, and include local education agencies without geographical boundaries, such as charter schools and secondary schools funded by the Bureau of Indian Education

Forest Agricultural High School (Forest AHS). Forest AHS is a high school (9^{th} -12^{th} grade) that does not have attendance boundaries; therefore, census data is not provided by USDE. The MDE follows the guidance provided in the, "STATE EDUCATIONAL AGENCY PROCEDURES FOR ADJUSTING BASIC, CONCENTRATION, TARGETED, AND EDUCATION FINANCE INCENTIVE GRANT ALLOCATIONSDETERMINED BY THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION", released May 23, 2003 to determine the allocation for Forest AHS.

6. If the eligible agency will submit an application for a waiver to the secondary allocation formula described in section 131(a)—

. Include a proposal for such an alternative formula; and

A. Describe how the waiver demonstrates that a proposed alternative formula more effectively targets funds on the basis of poverty (as defined by the Office of Management and Budget and revised annually in accordance with section 673(2) of the Community Services Block Grant Act (42 U.S.C. 9902(2)) to local educational agencies with the State. (Section 131(b) of Perkins V)

This section is not applicable because Mississippi has no proposed alternative allocation formulas.

Also indicate if this is a waiver request for which you received approval under the prior Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (Perkins IV).

This section is not applicable because Mississippi has no proposed alternative allocation formulas.

B. Also indicate if this is a waiver request for which you received approval under the prior Carl D. Perkins Career

and Technical Education Act of 2006 (Perkins IV).

7. If the eligible agency will submit an application for a waiver to the postsecondary allocation formula described in section 132(a)—

. Include a proposal for such an alternative formula; and

A. Describe how the formula does not result in a distribution of funds to the eligible institutions or consortia with the State that have the highest numbers of economically disadvantaged individuals and that an alternative formula will result in such a distribution. (Section 132(b) of Perkins V) Also indicate if this is a waiver request for which you received approval under the prior Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006

This section is not applicable because Mississippi has no proposed alternative allocation formulas.

8. If the eligible agency will award reserve funds to eligible recipients under section 112(c) of Perkins V, describe the process and criteria for awarding those funds

Mississippi has elected to award reserve funds to eligible recipients. A grant process is used to award the funds to recipients that meet at least one of the following criteria:

8. Located in rural areas;
9. Located in areas with high numbers of CTE participants;
10. Located in areas with disparities or gaps in performance in their CTE Programs.

9. Provide the State's fiscal effort per student, or aggregate expenditures for the State, that will establish the baseline for the Secretary's annual determination on whether the State has maintained its fiscal effort and indicate whether the baseline is a continuing level or new level. If the baseline is new, please provide the fiscal effort per student, or aggregate expenditures for the State, for the preceding fiscal year.

The state's fiscal effort per aggregate expenditures to establish the baseline is $5,988,292.25.
This baseline is a continuing level.

d. Accountability for Results

1. Identify and include at least one (1) of the following indicators of career and technical education program quality—

. The percentage of CTE concentrators (see Text Box 6 for the statutory definition CTE concentrator under section 3(12) of Perkins V) graduating from high school having attained a recognized postsecondary credential

A. The percentage of CTE concentrators graduating high school having attained postsecondary credits in relevant career and technical education programs and programs of study earned through a dual or concurrent enrollment program or another credit transfer agreement; and/or

B. The percentage of CTE concentrators graduating from high school having participated in work- based learning.

2. Include any other measure(s) of student success in career and technical education that are statewide, valid, and reliable, and comparable across the State. (Section 113(b)(2)(A)(iv)(II) of Perkins V) Please note that inclusion of "other" program quality measure(s) is optional for States.

3. Provide the eligible agency's measurement definition with a numerator and denominator for each of the quality indicator(s) the eligible agency selects to use.

Secondary

MISSISSIPPI SECONDARY CORE INDICATOR DEFINITIONS			
Statute Language	Indicator	Numerator	Denominator
The percentage of CTE concentrators who graduate high school, as measured by the four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate (defined in section 8101 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965).	**1S1** Four-Year Graduation Rate	CTE concentrators (from current or prior years) who are counted as graduates in the 4-year cohort	CTE concentrators (from current or prior years) in the 4-year cohort (excluding those who were removed due to transfer).
CTE concentrator proficiency in the challenging state academic standards adopted by the state under section1111(b)(1) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as measured by the academic assessments in reading/language arts as described in section 1111(b)(2) of such act.	**2S1** Academic Proficiency in Reading/Language Arts	CTE concentrators who scored proficient or above on the English II assessment	CTE concentrators who participated in the English II assessment. If the student took the assessment more than one time, the most recent score is used.
CTE concentrator proficiency in the challenging state academic standards adopted by the state under section1111(b)(1) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as measured by the academic assessments in mathematics as described in section 1111(b)(2) of such act.	**2S2** Academic Proficiency in Mathematics	CTE concentrators who scored proficient or above on the Algebra I assessment	CTE concentrators who participated in the Algebra I assessment. If the student took the assessment more than one time, the most recent score is used.
CTE concentrator proficiency in the challenging state academic standards adopted by the state under section1111(b)(1) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as measured by the academic assessments in science as described in section 1111(b)(2) of such act.	**2S3** Academic Proficiency in Science	CTE concentrators who scored proficient or above on the Biology I assessment	CTE concentrators who participated in the Biology I assessment. If the student took the assessment more than one time, the most recent score is used.
The percentage of CTE concentrators who, in the	**3S1**	CTE concentrators (from current or prior years) who	CTE concentrators (from current or

second quarter after exiting from secondary education, are in postsecondary education or advanced training, military service or a service program that receives assistance under Title I of the National and Community Service Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12511 et seq.); are volunteers as described in section 5(a) of the Peace Corps Act (22 U.S.C. 2504(a)); or are employed.	Postsecondary Placement	graduated in the reporting year and who have reported placement codes 3 (Employed – Field Trained), 4 (Employed – Field Related to Training), 5 (Employed – Field Not Related to Training), 6 (Military), 10 (Post-Secondary Education), 11 (Advanced Training), or 12 (Peace Corps)	prior years) who graduated in the reporting year.
The percentage of CTE concentrators in career and technical education programs and programs of study that lead to nontraditional fields.	**4S1** Nontraditional Program Enrollment	CTE concentrators enrolled in one or more non-traditional programs for their gender in the reporting year.	CTE concentrators enrolled in programs with nontraditional indicators.
The percentage of CTE concentrators graduating from high school having attained a recognized postsecondary credential.	**5S1** Program Quality – Attained Recognized Postsecondary Credential	CTE concentrators (from current or prior years) that graduated in the reporting year and earned an Industry Certification in any year.	CTE concentrators (from current or prior years) that graduated in the reporting year.
The percentage of CTE concentrators graduating from high school having participated in work-based learning.	**5S3** Program Quality – Participated in Work-Based Learning.	CTE concentrators (from current or prior years) that graduated in the reporting year and participated in work-based learning.	CTE concentrators (from current or prior years) that graduated in the reporting year.

Postsecondary

MISSISSIPPI POSTSECONDARY CORE INDICATOR DEFINITIONS			
Statute Language	**Indicator**	**Numerator**	**Denominator**
The percentage of CTE concentrators who, during the second quarter after program completion, remain enrolled in postsecondary education; are in advanced training, military service, or a service program that receives assistance under title I of the National and Community Service Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12511 et seq.); are volunteers as described in	**1P1** Postsecondary Placement and Retention	CTE concentrators who, during the second quarter after exit, remain enrolled in postsecondary education; are in advanced training, military service, or a service program; or a service program; or are placed or retained in employment.	Completed program of study (reached an exit point).

section 5(a) of the Peace Corps Act (22 U.S.C. 2504(a)); or are placed or retained in employment.			
The percentage of CTE concentrators who receive a recognized postsecondary credential during participation in or within one year of program completion.	**2P1** Earned Recognized Postsecondary Credential	Concentrators who received a postsecondary credential during the recent program year or within one year of completing an exit point.	Concentrators enrolled in the most recent academic year or concentrators who completed an exit point in the previous academic year.
The percentage of CTE concentrators in career and technical education programs and programs of study that lead to nontraditional fields.	**3P1** Non-traditional Program Concentration	Concentrators who are a nontraditional gender in a Perkins-approved program.	Concentrators enrolled in Perkins-approved programs.
Postsecondary Concentrator Definition: A student who has earned at least 12 credits within a career and technical education program or completed such a program if it encompasses less than 12 credit hours.			

4. Provide on the form in Section V.B, for each year covered by the State plan beginning in FY 2020, State determined performance levels or each of the secondary and postsecondary core indicators, with the levels of performance being the same for all CTE concentrators in the State.

See State Determined Performance Levels (SDPL) Form (Section V)

5. Describe the procedure the eligible agency adopted for determining State determined levels of performance described in section 113 of Perkins V, which at a minimum shall include—

. A description of the process for public comment under section 113(b)(3)(B) of Perkins V as part of the development of the State determined levels of performance (see Text Box 7 for the statutory requirements for consultation on State determined performance levels under section 113(b)(3)(B) of Perkins V)

Secondary

In the fall of 2024, the MDE engaged stakeholders throughout the state utilizing public townhalls and the Perkins V taskforce meetings to select the state-determined levels of performance. Feedback from these meetings, ESSA definitions, and student performance data was analyzed to identify trends for work-based learning, recognized postsecondary credentials, and dual credit options. After considering the data, the decision to align the state-determined levels of performance with the percentage of CTE concentrators graduating from high school having attained a recognized postsecondary credential and those earning meaningful learning experiences though embedded work-based learning opportunities related to their program of study.

Postsecondary
The MCCB engaged stakeholders throughout the state utilizing public townhalls, Perkins V taskforce meetings, and Career-Technical Officers Association (CTOA) feedback utilized needs assessment data, instructor needs, and business and industry needs to select the state-determined levels of performance. Feedback from these meetings, WIOA definitions, and student performance data was analyzed to identify trends.

A. An explanation for the State determined levels of performance that meet each of the statutory requirements in Text Box 8

Secondary
In the fall of 2024, the MDE engaged stakeholders throughout the state utilizing public townhalls and the Perkins V taskforce meetings to select the state-determined levels of performance. Feedback from these meetings, ESSA definitions, and student performance data was analyzed to identify trends for work-based learning, recognized postsecondary credentials, and dual credit options. After considering the data, the decision to align the state-determined levels of performance with the percentage of CTE concentrators graduating from high school having attained a recognized postsecondary credential and those earning meaningful learning experiences though embedded work-based learning opportunities related to their program of study.

Postsecondary
The MCCB engaged stakeholders throughout the state utilizing public townhalls, Perkins V taskforce meetings, and Career-Technical Officers Association (CTOA) feedback utilized needs assessment data, instructor needs, and business and industry needs to select the state-determined levels of performance. Feedback from these meetings, WIOA definitions, and student performance data was analyzed to identify trends.

B. A description of how the State determined levels of performance set by the eligible agency align with the levels, goals and objectives other Federal and State laws

Secondary
Following feedback meetings and analysis of data trends, the MDE selected levels, goals, and objectives that align with the current ESSA state plan and workforce sector data to identify the state-determined levels of performance.

Postsecondary
Following feedback meetings and analysis of data trends, the MCCB selected levels, goals, and objectives that align with the current WIOA state plan and sector data to identify high skill, high wage, and in demand jobs.

6. As part of the procedures for determining State determined levels of performance, describe the process that will be used to establish a baseline for those levels.

Secondary
Baseline levels all SDPLs (1S1, 2S1, 2S2, 2S3, 3S1, 4S1, and 5S1) were determined using averages from the previous levels of performance from the most recent two years of available data.

Postsecondary
State-determined levels of performance were determined using averages from the previous levels of performance from the most recent two years of available data.

7. Provide a written response to the comments regarding State determined performance levels received during the public comment period pursuant to section 113(b)(3)(B) of Perkins V. As part of the written response, include a description of any the changes made to the State determined performance levels as a result of stakeholder feedback

Upon initial approval by the SBE, the MDE will make the Perkins plan and proposed SDPL targets available for public comment via online platforms for a 30-day period. Comments gathered through these surveys will be addressed in the plan revision prior to submission to the governor's office and subsequent final submission to the SBE.

Comments and responses can be found in Appendix F.

8. Describe how the eligible agency will address disparities or gaps in performance as described in section 113(b)(3)(C)(ii)(II) of Perkins V in each of the plan years, and if no meaningful progress has been achieved prior to the third program year, a description of the additional actions the eligible agency will take to eliminate these disparities or gaps. (Section 122(d)(11) of Perkins V). As part of the written response, and pursuant to the Report of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP), the eligible agency could indicate that it will analyze data on the core indicators of performance to identify gaps in performance, explain how they will use evidence-based research to develop a plan to provide support and technical assistance to eligible recipients to address and close such gaps, and how they will implement this plan. The eligible agency is not required to submit a new State plan prior to the third program year in order to address this requirement.

Secondary

Annually, LEAs will complete the district summary reports outlining program performance on the key Perkins V indicators. The LEAs will analyze the data from this report to identify gaps in coverage, performance, equipment, student enrollment, nontraditional participation, and other key data points. The LEAs will submit the report findings, including a plan to close identified gaps and performance issues. The plan is reviewed by the MDE, and progress will be monitored to ensure compliance. LEAs will enter program improvement should they fail to meet plan goals and fall behind performance levels. The levels of program improvement are Local, State, and Closure. Local program improvement is entered following the first year below the desired levels. The local district creates a plan for improvement. If the district does not meet desired levels for a second year, the program enters State improvement, with the MDE determining program improvement goals. Should a LEA fail to meet Local and State levels in the third year, the MDE may enter the program into Closure.

Postsecondary

For postsecondary institutions, the district summary reports ~~now~~ require community colleges to report information based on student population demographics. If state-adjusted levels of performance are not met, those areas must be addressed through the state-approved gap analysis form. Colleges that fail to achieve the state-adjusted level of performance for programs in year one are placed in local improvement. Failure in subsequent years results in a status of state improvement for the program. Consistently underperforming college programs (three consecutive years) can be recommended for closure.

Jobs for Veterans State Grants

e. Employment, Training and Job Placement Services for Veterans

The Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSG) program provides federal funding, through a formula grant, to the state's workforce agencies to hire dedicated staff to provide individualized career and training-related services to veterans and eligible persons with barriers to employment, and to help employers fill their workforce needs with job-seeking veterans.

The JVSG program is a mandatory, formula-based staffing grant funded annually in accordance with a statutory formula (38 U.S.C. § 4102A(c)(2)(B)) and federal regulation. It operates on a fiscal year basis, while performance metrics are collected and reported quarterly using four rolling quarters aligned to the program year. The program follows a multi-year grant approval cycle, modified and funded annually, and is subject to ongoing review to ensure alignment with federal guidance and veteran service needs.

In accordance with 38 U.S.C. §§ 4102A(b)(5) and 4102A(c), the Assistant Secretary for Veterans' Employment and Training makes grant funds available for use in each State to support staff who provide services to veterans and eligible persons. In Mississippi, these roles have been consolidated into Veteran Employment Coordinators (VECs), who perform the duties previously assigned to Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) Specialists and Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVERs).

As a condition to receive funding, 38 U.S.C. § 4102A(c)(2) requires States to submit a State Plan narrative that includes how the State intends to provide employment, training, and job placement services to veterans and eligible persons under the JVSG.

The Mississippi Department of Employment Security (MDES) will assign and utilize VECs and other agency employees trained in case management to WIN Job Centers (WJCs) throughout the state, prioritizing locations where the need for individualized career services is greatest. Services will be provided both in person and remotely, using virtual platforms such as MSWorks and secure video conferencing. VECs will also travel to other WJCs and community locations to serve veterans as needed.

VECs will conduct relationship-building, outreach, and recruitment activities with other service providers in their assigned areas to identify and enroll eligible veterans in the JVSG program. These activities include coordination with VA facilities, homeless shelters, community-based organizations, and educational institutions. VECs will provide individualized career services through a case management framework, including comprehensive assessments, employment planning, career counseling, and referrals to training and supportive services.

In their employer engagement capacity, VECs will promote the advantages of hiring veterans to employers, employer associations, and business groups. They will advocate for all veterans served by the WJCs with business, industry, and other community-based organizations. VECs will be assigned to multi-county areas and housed in WJCs throughout those areas. They will participate in business service teams and collaborate with WIOA Title I and III staff to ensure coordinated outreach and avoid duplicative employer contacts.

MDES will fill grant-funded vacancies expeditiously despite potential state budget constraints, hiring freezes, or furloughs. The agency will proactively identify projected losses and retirements and initiate recruitment early when possible. Applicants will be given the following order of priority in accordance with 38 U.S.C. §§ 4103A(b) and 4104(c): qualified service-connected disabled veterans, qualified eligible veterans, and qualified eligible persons. To ensure vacancies are filled in a timely manner, veteran (non-JVSG) staff within MDES may be considered for

assignment to the program if no eligible veteran is available to fill the position. All staff assigned to JVSG-funded roles will meet the training requirements outlined in 38 U.S.C. § 4102A(c)(8), including completion of mandatory courses through the National Veterans' Training Institute (NVTI) within 18 months of assignment.

MDES is committed to delivering high-quality employment, training, and placement services to veterans and eligible persons through the JVSG program, in full compliance with federal guidance and statutory requirements.

f. Populations Served by Veteran Employment Coordinators (VECs)

The MDES provides individualized career services to veterans and eligible persons through the JVSG program. These services are delivered by VECs, consolidated staff who perform the statutory duties previously assigned to Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) Specialists and Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVERs), in accordance with 38 U.S.C. §§ 4103A and 4104, and the most current guidance outlined in Veterans' Program Letter (VPL) 05-24.

Targeting Services to Veterans with Barriers to Employment

In accordance with VPL 05-24, VECs provide individualized career services through a case management framework to eligible veterans and eligible persons who self-attest to experiencing one or more qualifying employment barriers. These barriers include:

1. A disability, which may include any of the following:
    a. Special disabled veteran, defined in 38 U.S.C. § 4211(1) as a veteran who is entitled to compensation (or who but for the receipt of military retired pay would be entitled to compensation) under laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs for a disability rated at 30 percent or more, or rated at 10 or 20 percent in the case of a veteran who has been determined to have a serious employment handicap; or person who was discharged or released from active duty because of a service-connected disability.
    b. Disabled veteran, defined in 38 U.S.C. § 4211(3) as a veteran who is entitled to compensation (or who but for the receipt of military retired pay would be entitled to compensation) under laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs; or a person who was discharged or released from active duty because of a service-connected disability.
    c. Other disability. Eligible veterans and eligible persons who self-identify as having a disability, as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act, 42 U.S.C. § 12102.

2. Is a Vietnam-era veteran, as defined by 38 U.S.C. § 4211(2) as an eligible veteran any part of whose active military, naval, or air service was during the Vietnam era, as defined by 38 U.S.C. § 101(29).

3. Is a recently separated veteran, defined in 38 U.S.C. § 4211(6) as a veteran who was discharged or released from active duty within the last three years.

4. Has been referred for employment services by a representative of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

5. Is experiencing homelessness, as defined in Sections 103(a) and (b) of the McKinney Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. § 11302(a) and (b)).

6. Is justice-involved, as defined in WIOA Section 3(38), 29 U.S.C. § 3102(38) (definition of "offender").

7. Is between the ages of 18–24 years of age at the time of enrollment.

8. Is educationally disadvantaged, meaning that the individual lacks a high school diploma or equivalent certificate.

9. Is economically disadvantaged, which means any of the following:
    a. Meets the definition of a low-income individual in WIOA Section 3(36), 29 U.S.C. § 3102(36).
    b. Unemployed.
    c. Heads of single-parent households containing at least one dependent child.

In addition to these eligible veterans and eligible persons who are experiencing employment barriers, VEC specialists may also serve members of additional populations defined as:

1. Transitioning Service Members (TSM) who, at the time of enrollment have participated in any part of the Transition Assistance Program, including self-paced online modules and Individualized Initial Counseling.

2. Wounded, ill, or injured members of the Armed Forces who are receiving treatment in military treatment facilities or warrior transition units.

3. Spouses or other family caregivers of those wounded, ill, or injured service members.

Eligibility and Referral Process

Eligibility for JVSG services is determined through verbal, written, or electronic attestation, as permitted by VPL 05-24. Intake staff at WJCs screen veterans and eligible persons for service eligibility and interest in individualized career services. Privacy and confidentiality are maintained throughout the process, and participation is voluntary.
If a VEC is unavailable due to caseload limits or scheduling, eligible individuals are offered appointments or referred to other workforce programs with priority of service maintained.

Oversight and Performance Monitoring

Oversight of JVSG service delivery and performance is managed centrally by the Director of Veteran Workforce Programs, in coordination with the State Veterans Coordinator (SVC). VECs are no longer supervised by WJC managers.

Each quarter, the Director and SVC conduct Quarterly Performance Assessments at each VEC duty location. These assessments include:

- Review of the VEC's MDES JVSG Quarterly Report on Services to Veterans
- Review of the VEC's Outreach Logs and MSWorks Entries
- Review of the VEC's Case Management Log and MSWorks Documentation
- One-on-one performance feedback and technical assistance

All reporting is routed through the SVC to the Director, who submits quarterly and annual performance data to the U.S. Department of Labor in accordance with JVSG reporting requirements. This centralized oversight model ensures consistency, accountability, and alignment with federal guidance.

Strategic Staffing Considerations

MDES has transitioned to a fully consolidated staffing model statewide. All JVSG-funded staff are cross-trained and authorized to perform both individualized career services and employer outreach duties. VECs are assigned to duty locations throughout Mississippi based on veteran population density, service demand, and regional workforce needs.

MDES is currently evaluating the efficacy of the consolidated VEC model. This evaluation includes analysis of service outcomes, employer engagement metrics, staff feedback, and veteran satisfaction. Findings from this assessment will

inform future staffing decisions and potential refinements to the service delivery structure.

The agency remains committed to ensuring that all veterans, regardless of location, have access to the full spectrum of employment, training, and placement services available through the JVSG program.

g. Roles and Responsibilities of DVOP Specialists and LVER Staff

The MDES has implemented a statewide consolidation of JVSG-funded staff into VECs. These staff members perform the statutory duties previously assigned to Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) Specialists and Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVERs), in accordance with 38 U.S.C. § 4103A and § 4104, and the most current guidance outlined in VPL 05-24.

Individualized Career Services
VECs provide individualized career services to eligible veterans and eligible persons who experience barriers to employment. These services are delivered through a structured case management framework, which includes:

- Comprehensive and specialized assessments of skill levels, employment barriers, and service needs.
- Development of Individual Employment Plans (IEPs) that outline career goals, training needs, and employment strategies.
- Career counseling and planning.
- Short-term prevocational services, including resume development, interview preparation, and job readiness training.

These services are designed to help participants overcome barriers and achieve meaningful employment outcomes. VECs may also refer participants to other workforce development programs, training providers, and supportive services as appropriate.

Outreach and Engagement
VECs conduct targeted outreach to identify and enroll eligible veterans and eligible persons in JVSG services. Outreach activities include coordination with:

- Veterans' Service Organizations: Organizations established to foster camaraderie among veterans and to address the needs of veterans while supporting the broader community.
- Veteran Service Officers: State or county employees responsible for helping veterans access the benefits and services they are entitled to within their jurisdiction.
- VA Medical Centers, Vet Centers, and Outpatient Clinics: Facilities operated by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs that provide healthcare and counseling services to veterans. These include full-service hospitals (Medical Centers), community-based counseling locations (Vet Centers), and clinics offering primary and specialty care on an outpatient basis.
- Veterans Readiness & Employment Centers: Specialized VA programs that help veterans with service-connected disabilities prepare for, find, and maintain suitable employment. These centers provide counseling, training, and support services to promote career readiness and long-term success.
- Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP) grantees and shelters: Organizations and facilities that receive federal funding to help homeless veterans reintegrate into the workforce. They provide employment services, housing assistance, and supportive resources to promote stability and self-sufficiency.
- Community-based and civic organizations: Local groups and nonprofits that work to improve community well-being through services, advocacy, and volunteer efforts. They often collaborate with workforce programs to support veterans and other populations in need.

- Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services: A state agency that provides programs and services to help individuals with disabilities achieve independence through employment, education, and community support. It partners with workforce initiatives to assist veterans with rehabilitation and job placement needs.

- Workforce partners and service providers: Organizations and agencies that collaborate to deliver employment, training, and support services. They work together to connect job seekers, including veterans, with career opportunities, education, and resources for successful workforce participation
- Veterans Affairs Coordinators at colleges and universities: Staff members who assist student veterans and eligible dependents with accessing education benefits, navigating VA programs, and connecting to campus and community resources to support academic success.
- Faith-based organizations: Religious or spiritually affiliated groups that provide community support, counseling, and assistance programs. They often partner with workforce and veteran services to offer resources such as housing, food, and employment guidance.
- Reserve and National Guard units: Military components that consist of part-time service members who support active-duty forces during emergencies, deployments, and domestic missions. They maintain readiness while balancing civilian careers and often connect veterans to transition and employment resources.
- Military Base Family Support Centers: On-base facilities that provide programs and resources to support service members and their families. Services often include counseling, financial assistance, relocation help, and connections to employment and community programs.
- Military Treatment Facilities and Warrior Transition Units: Medical centers and specialized units that provide healthcare and rehabilitation for service members. Warrior Transition Units focus on supporting wounded, ill, or injured soldiers during recovery and assist with transitioning to civilian life or continued military service.
- Other venues where veterans congregate: Locations and events where veterans commonly gather, such as community centers, job fairs, and recreational activities. These settings provide opportunities for outreach and engagement to connect veterans with available services.

Employer Engagement and Advocacy

VECs conduct outreach to employers, employer associations, and business groups to promote the hiring of veterans. These activities include:

- Planning and participating in job and career fairs
- Conducting employer outreach through email, phone, mail, and in-person visits
- Educating employers on veteran hiring incentives, federal contractor requirements, and priority of service
- Promoting credentialing and licensing opportunities for veterans
- Coordinating with unions, apprenticeship programs, and business organizations to secure employment and training opportunities
- Facilitating job search workshops and job development activities in conjunction with employers
- Promoting the HIRE Vets Medallion Program and assisting employers with applications

VECs are active members of regional business services teams and collaborate with WIOA Title I and III staff, TANF, Reemployment Services, and other workforce programs to ensure coordinated outreach and avoid duplicative employer contacts.

Integration and Coordination

VECs work closely with WJC staff and workforce partners to ensure veterans are connected to the full range of services available through Mississippi's workforce system. This includes training, supportive services, and employment opportunities. VECs participate in cross-program collaboration, case conferencing, and shared resource planning to

support holistic service delivery.

h. Integration of DVOP Specialists and LVER Staff into Employment Service Delivery System or American Job Center

Veteran Employment Coordinators, who serve in consolidated DVOP/LVER roles, are fully integrated into Mississippi's employment service delivery system through the statewide network of WJC partners. This integration ensures that veterans and eligible persons receive seamless access to employment, training, and placement services, and that employers are effectively engaged in veteran hiring initiatives.

Program Integration and Leveraging Resources
VECs are embedded within the WJC network and operate alongside staff from WIOA Title I and III programs, Wagner-Peyser, TANF, Reemployment Services, and other workforce development partners. While VECs are no longer supervised by WJC managers, they maintain daily operational alignment with WJC staff through shared service delivery strategies, cross-training, and coordinated outreach.

VECs participate in regular staff meetings, integrated case management discussions, and joint planning sessions with WJC personnel. These engagements ensure that veterans are connected to the full spectrum of services available through the workforce system, including occupational training, supportive services, and job placement assistance.

Employer Integration and Business Services Collaboration
VECs are active members of regional business service teams. They collaborate with WIOA business representatives to conduct coordinated outreach to employers, employer associations, and industry groups. This joint approach ensures that employers receive comprehensive information about all available workforce programs and prevents duplicative contacts.

VECs work with WIOA case managers to identify job opportunities for veterans who are actively participating in training or receiving individualized career services. They also assist in developing customized employment plans that align with labor market demand and employer needs.

VECs regularly participate in:

- Job and career fairs
- Employer forums and hiring events
- Industry roundtables and chamber of commerce meetings
- Apprenticeship and credentialing promotion efforts
- Outreach to federal contractors and veteran-friendly employers

Resource Sharing and Partner Coordination
VECs share information with WJC partner staff regarding community resources, veteran-specific programs, and eligibility pathways. This includes referrals to:

- VA services and benefits
- Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP) grantees
- Veteran Readiness and Employment (VR&E) services
- Educational institutions and training providers

- Faith-based and civic organizations

This coordination ensures that veterans who may not be eligible for JVSG services still receive priority of service and are connected to appropriate support systems.

Marketing and Outreach Strategy
MDES continues to use a coordinated marketing approach to promote veteran services across the state. This includes:

11. Distribution of service brochures and digital materials through WJCs
12. Use of the MDES website and MSWorks portal to highlight veteran programs
13. Outreach campaigns targeting employers, veterans' organizations, and community colleges
14. Collaboration with chambers of commerce and economic development units to promote veteran hiring

These efforts are designed to increase awareness of veteran services, enhance employer engagement, and improve employment outcomes for veterans.

i. Performance Incentive Award Program

The MDES has established a performance incentive award program to recognize excellence in the provision of employment, training, and placement services to veterans under the JVSG. This program is designed to encourage innovation, improve service delivery, and highlight outstanding contributions by JVSG-funded staff.

In accordance with 38 U.S.C. § 4102A(c)(7) and the guidance provided in VPL 01-24 Attachment 5, MDES sets aside one percent of its annual JVSG allocation for performance incentive awards. However, due to restrictions in the Mississippi State Constitution, MDES is prohibited from issuing monetary awards to individuals. As such, the one percent allocation is returned to the U.S. Treasury annually, and all recognition activities are funded through the JVSG base allocation.

1. The nomination and selection process for all performance incentive awards to individuals and/or offices

The nomination and selection process is managed by the Director of Veteran Workforce Programs, in coordination with the State Veterans Coordinator (SVC). Each year, a board is convened to evaluate eligible candidates. The board includes:

- Director of Veteran Workforce Programs
- State Veterans Coordinator
- Workforce Programs Director
- Workforce Programs Supervisor

Nominees are evaluated using a standardized five-part scoring rubric, which includes:

- Quality of case management and individualized career services
- Outreach and recruitment effectiveness
- Employer engagement and job development
- Innovation in service delivery
- Impact on hard-to-place veteran populations

Candidates must demonstrate performance that exceeds their ordinary job duties and reflects extraordinary efforts on

behalf of veterans and eligible persons. Nominations are accepted annually, and selections are finalized by the end of the fourth quarter.

Beginning in PY2025, the award program will be tailored to recognize VECs, reflecting the statewide consolidation of DVOP and LVER roles.

2. The approximate number and value of cash awards using the one-percent incentive award allocation.

MDES does not issue cash awards to individuals or offices due to state constitutional prohibitions. The one-percent incentive award allocation is returned to the U.S. Treasury and is not used to support day-to-day JVSG operations.

MDES has consulted with the Mississippi State Personnel Board and the U.S. Department of Labor to confirm this restriction and ensure compliance with federal grant requirements.

3. The general nature and approximate value of non-cash performance incentive awards to be charged to the base allocation.

To recognize outstanding performance, MDES uses its JVSG base allocation to fund non-financial awards, which may include:

- Commemorative plaques for top-performing VECs
- Recognition meals with agency leadership
- Sponsored travel to statewide ceremonies (e.g., MDES Veterans Day event)
- Certificates of excellence
- Public recognition in newsletters and workforce bulletins

For PY2024, MDES recognized top-performing DVOP and LVER staff with:

- Plaques valued at approximately $75 each
- Dinner with the Executive Director, Deputy Executive Director, and the Director of Veteran Workforce Programs
- Travel to the MDES Veterans Day ceremony, including mileage, lodging, and per diem

All costs were charged to the JVSG base allocation and documented in the Incentive Award Report submitted with the fourth quarter JVSG report.

4. Any challenges the state may anticipate in carrying out a performance incentive award program as mandated by 38 U.S.C. 4102A(c)

The primary challenge in executing the incentive award program is the state-level prohibition on monetary awards, which limits MDES's ability to utilize the federally mandated one-percent allocation. MDES has addressed this challenge by:

- Consulting with the Mississippi State Personnel Board and legal counsel
- Coordinating with the assigned Grant Officer Technical Representative (GOTR)
- Developing a compliant non-cash recognition model
- Documenting all awards and expenditures in quarterly reports

MDES remains committed to recognizing excellence in veteran service delivery and will continue to refine its incentive award program to align with evolving federal guidance and state policy

List the Performance Targets for Direct Services to Veterans Provided by JVSG Staff

In accordance with 38 U.S.C. § 4102A(c) and the guidance outlined in VPL 01-24 Attachment 4, the MDES has established performance targets for direct services provided to veterans by JVSG-funded staff. These targets are specific to participants served by VECs and are measured using the following three federally mandated indicators:

1. Employment Rate – 2nd Quarter After Exit
This metric reflects the percentage of veterans who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter following their exit from JVSG services. It is a key indicator of short-term employment success and the effectiveness of individualized career services provided by VECs.

2. Employment Rate – 4th Quarter After Exit
This metric measures the percentage of veterans who remain employed in unsubsidized positions during the fourth quarter after exiting JVSG services. It is a critical measure of employment retention and long-term job stability.

3. Median Earnings – 2nd Quarter After Exit
This indicator captures the median earnings of veterans who are employed in the second quarter after exit. It reflects the quality of employment outcomes and the alignment of job placements with veterans' skills and career goals.

Target Development and Review Process

MDES follows the performance target development process outlined in VPL 01-24 Attachment 4: JVSG Performance Targets Technical Assistance Guide (TAG). This includes:

- Reviewing historical performance data for JVSG-funded staff
- Analyzing labor market trends and regional employment conditions
- Consulting with the assigned GOTR and DOL VETS regional staff
- Aligning targets with WIOA performance expectations and state workforce priorities

Performance targets are reviewed annually and may be adjusted based on actual outcomes, program changes, or shifts in veteran demographics.

Monitoring and Reporting

Performance data is collected through the MSWorks management information system and validated using the protocols outlined in VPL 03-22. MDES submits quarterly performance reports to DOL VETS, including:

- JVSG Quarterly Narrative Report
- JVSG Quarterly Performance Report
- Incentive Award Report (Q4 only)

The Director of Veteran Workforce Programs and State Veterans Coordinator (SVC) conduct quarterly performance assessments at each VEC duty station to ensure data accuracy, service quality, and alignment with performance goals.

MDES uses performance data to:

- Identify training needs for VECs
- Inform program improvements
- Support strategic planning and resource allocation

- Recognize high-performing staff through the incentive award program

Unemployment Insurance (UI)

j. Contents of a Complete UI SQSP Package

0. Transmittal Letter

Mississippi's complete SCSP package is provided in Appendix K7. The requisite transmittal letter for the SQSP is presented in Appendix K1.

1. Budget Worksheets/Forms

Worksheet SF 424 is provided in Appendix K3.

2. The State Plan Narrative

Per Unemployment Insurance Program Letter No. 14-25, document is not to be included in the WIOA Combined State Plan due to its sensitive nature.

3. Corrective Action Plans (CAPs)

The State's SQSP CAPS and Quarterly Report are provided in Appendix K-2

4. UI Program Integrity Action Plan (UI IAP)

Per Unemployment Insurance Program Letter No. 14-25, this document is not to be included in the WIOA Combined State Plan due to its sensitive nature.

5. Organizational Chart

The organizational chart indicating the State's configuration form the Governor of the State down to the point of Employment Service and UI customer service delivery, including details on each organizational unit is presented in Appendix K-4

6. SQSP Signature Page

The SQSP Signature Page is provided in Appendix K-5

k. Requirements for States Electing to Include UI in the Combined State Plan

1. Submit an SQSP in the following manner depending on their timing in the SQSP cycle:

. If a State is in the first year of their 2-year cycle, the State is required to submit the most recently approved complete SQSP package. A complete SQSP package will include the Transmittal Letter, Budget Worksheets/Forms, State Plan Narrative, CAPs (including the milestones and the completion date for each milestone), the UI IAP, Organizational Chart, and the SQSP Signature Page. One of the key goals for the UI program is to ensure that claimants are able to successfully return to work. As such, the SQSP State Plan Narrative must provide a discussion of the plan coordination with other WIOA Combined Plan programs to ensure a coordinated effort and integrated service delivery.

Not applicable

A. If a State is in the second year of the 2-year cycle, the State is required to submit the most recently approved complete SQSP package with a modification that must include the Transmittal Letter, Budget Worksheets/Forms, Organizational Chart, and the SQSP Signature page. The modification may also include CAPs for new identified performance deficiencies, and any required modifications to existing CAPs. The CAP must list both specific milestones for key corrective actions or improvement activities, and the completion date for each milestone.

The five sections of the SQSP Package associated with the 2nd year of the 2-year cycle have been submitted.

2. Submit the required off-year SQSP components as a modification to the Combined State Plan on the same cycle as the regular SQSP process which must be approved by September 30th each year

The required off-year components will be submitted as a modification to the Combined State Plan by October 31 each year.

Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP)

I. Economic Projections and Impact

1. Discuss long-term projections for jobs in industries and occupations in the State that may provide employment opportunities for older workers. (20 CFR 641.302(d)) (May alternatively be discussed in the economic analysis section of strategic plan.)

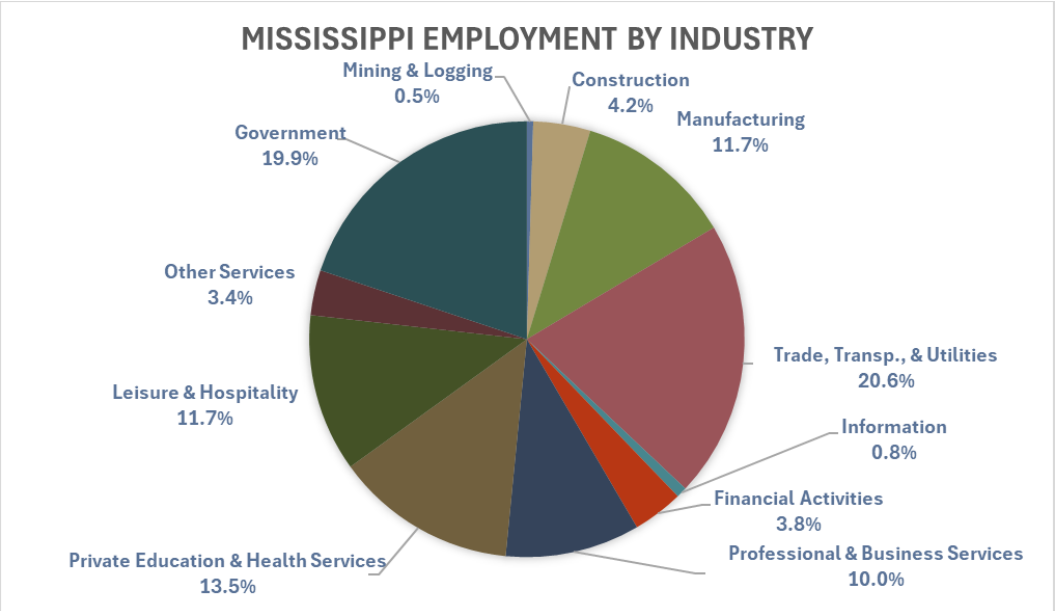
Due to the similar projections and information, we will discuss this question in the economic analysis section of the strategic plan.

2. Discuss how the long-term job projections discussed in the economic analysis section of strategic plan relate to the types of unsubsidized jobs for which SCSEP participants will be trained and the types of skill training to be provided. (20 CFR 641.302(d))

Mississippi is a predominantly rural state with only three metropolitan areas and a population of 2,946,779. From 2020 to 2024, Mississippi's overall population fell by 15,491. The state has a large potential workforce, as Mississippi's population over 18 years old is 2,259,974 or 76.7% of the total state population. According to the Census American Community Survey 5-year estimates, the 2024 population over 55 years of age was 877,804 or 29.8% of the total state population.

Mississippi's unemployment rate dropped from 5.5 percent in December 2019 to 3.7 percent in December 2025. Mississippi employers have added 104,160 jobs (an increase of 9.8%) since 2020. The largest job gains have been seen in Health Care and Social Assistance (17,593 jobs or 10.3%); Accommodation & Food Services (15,428 or 13.8%; and Transportation & Warehousing (14,441 jobs or 27.2%). The robust growth in professional and business services creates employment potential for senior workers.

Figure 21: Mississippi Nonfarm Employment, December 2025



Source: MS Department of Employment Security, Labor Market Information, Current Employment Statistics, December 2025 Seasonally Adjusted

As the previous figure indicates, Mississippi's economy is dominated by six sectors. The largest sector as of December

2025 was Trade, Transportation, & Utilities; followed by Government; Private Education & Health Services; Manufacturing; and Leisure & Hospitality.

The data below compare Mississippi's employment by industry sector as of annual 2020, to employment as of annual 2024. Professional and Business Services show robust growth and is an area that has significant employment potential for senior workers.

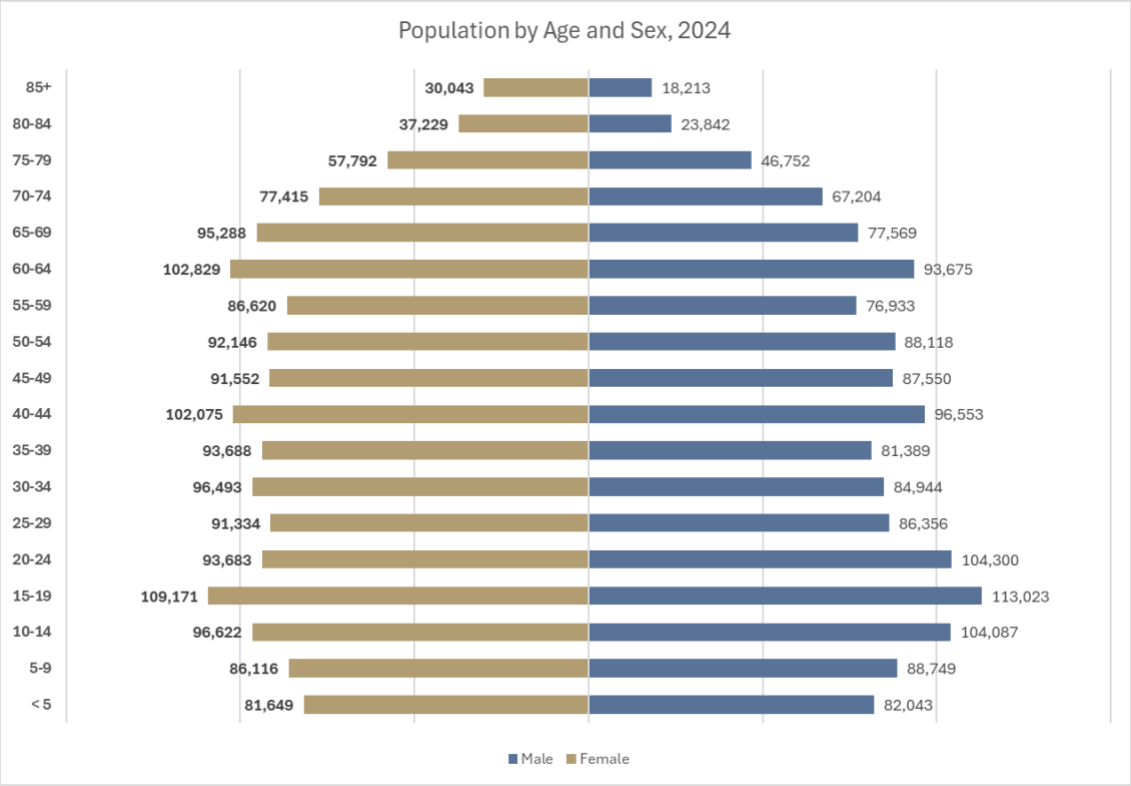
Table VII-1: Employment By Industry

Industry	2020	2024	Difference	Percent Change
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting	11,465	10,984	(481)	(4.2%)
Mining, Quarrying, And Oil & Gas Extraction	3,098	3,207	109	3.5%
Utilities	9,053	9,952	899	9.9%
Construction	46,998	53,350	6,352	13.5%
Manufacturing	139,593	141,595	2,002	1.4%
Wholesale Trade	33,423	36,709	3,286	9.8%
Retail Trade	133,243	139,128	5,885	4.4%
Transportation And Warehousing	53,159	67,600	14,441	27.2%
Information	10,818	10,681	(137)	(1.3%)
Finance And Insurance	30,865	33,513	2,648	8.6%
Real Estate, Rental, and Leasing	11,736	12,188	452	3.9%
Professional and Technical Services	32,582	43,888	11,306	34.7%
Management of Companies & Enterprises	11,061	11,239	178	1.6%
Administrative and Waste Services	65,061	66,826	1,765	2.7%
Educational Services	105,963	108,790	2,827	2.7%
Health Care and Social Assistance	171,293	188,886	17,593	10.3%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	8,664	12,662	3,998	46.1%
Accommodation and Food Services	111,898	127,326	15,428	13.8%
Other Services, Except Public Administration	20,149	22,565	2,416	12.0%
Public Administration	53,437	66,630	13,193	24.7%
Total	**1,063,557**	**1,167,717**	**104,160**	**9.8%**

Source: MS Department of Employment Security, Labor Market Information, Census of Employment & Wages, 2020 & 2024 Annual Averages

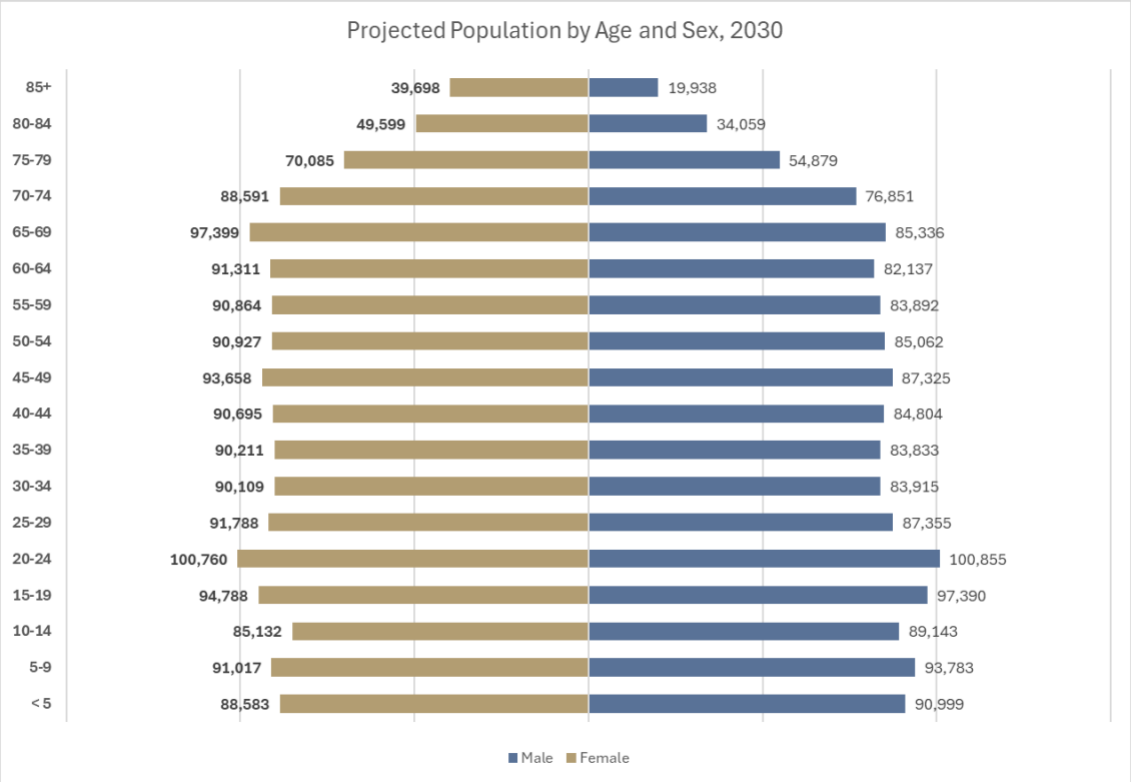
The figures below indicate that Mississippi is losing certain population groups while the population of those over 55 years of age is growing. The total population over 55 from the 2024 American Community Survey 1-year estimates was 891,404 and will increase to 964,639 by 2030.

Figure 22: Population by Age and Sex, 2024



Source: US Census Bureau, ACS data, 2024 1-Year Estimates

Figure 23: Projected Population by Age and Sex, 2030



Source: University of Virginia Weldon Cooper Center, Demographics Research Group, (2024), National Populations Projections. Retrieved from https://www.coopercenter.org/national-population-projections

Individuals with Disabilities make up the following percentages in Mississippi:

Table VII-2: Disability Status of The Civilian Noninstitutionalized Population

Age Level	Total	With a disability	Percentage with a disability
Civilian Noninstitutionalized Population	2,883,778	527,731	18.3%
Under 18 years	671,054	46,974	7.0%
18 to 64 years	1,697,905	271,665	16.0%
65 years and over	514,819	208,502	40.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS data, 2024 1-Year Estimates

Data from the 2022 5-Year American Community Survey also indicate the following:

- Among Mississippians aged 55 and older, 11.9 percent are veterans.
- 52.5 percent of the overall population of Mississippi live in non-metropolitan counties.
- 1.6 percent of Mississippians speak English less than "very well."
- Of the total population in Mississippi
  - White: 57.1 percent
  - Black or African American number: 37.1 percent
  - American Indian and Alaska Native number: 0.4 percent
  - Asian number: 1.0 percent
  - Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander number: less than 0.1 percent
  - Some other race number: 1.4 percent
  - Two or more races number: 2.9 percent

2022 educational attainment statistics from Census are only available for the total population over 25, not specifically for those over 55, but show the following:

Table VII-3: Educational Attainment Statistics

	Total	Percent
Population 25 years and over	1,983,602	
Less than 9th grade	80,624	4.1%
9th to 12th grade, no diploma	157,373	7.9%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	582,355	29.4%
Some college, no degree	392,487	19.8%
Associate's degree	234,844	11.8%
Bachelor's degree	323,161	16.3%
Graduate or professional degree	212,758	10.7%
High school graduate or higher	1,745,605	88.0%
Bachelor's degree or higher	535,919	27.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS data, 2024 1-Year Estimates

3. Discuss current and projected employment opportunities in the State (such as by providing information available under §15 of the Wagner-Peyser Act (29 U.S.C. 491-2) by occupation), and the types of skills possessed by eligible individuals. (20 CFR 641.325(c)).

Mississippi is a predominantly rural state with only three metropolitan areas and a population of 2,946,779. From 2020 to 2024, Mississippi's overall population fell by 15,491. The state has a large potential workforce, as Mississippi's population over 18 years old is 2,259,974 or 76.7% of the total state population. According to the Census American Community Survey 5-year estimates, the 2024 population over 55 years of age was 877,804 or 29.8% of the total state population.

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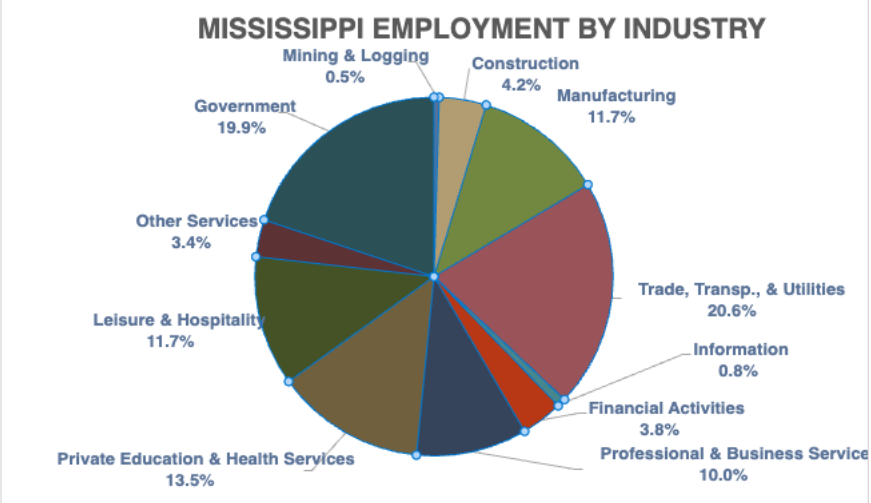
Figure 24: Mississippi Nonfarm Employment, December 2025



Source: MS Department of Employment Security, Labor Market Information, Current Employment Statistics, December 2025 Seasonally Adjusted

As the previous figure indicates, Mississippi's economy is dominated by six sectors. The largest sector as of December 2025 was Trade, Transportation, & Utilities; followed by Government; Private Education & Health Services; Manufacturing; and Leisure & Hospitality.

The data below compare Mississippi's employment by industry sector as of annual 2020, to employment as of annual 2024. Professional and Business Services show robust growth and is an area that has significant employment potential for senior workers.

Table VII-4: Employment By Industry

Industry	2020	2024	Difference	Percent Change
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting	11,465	10,984	(481)	(4.2%)
Mining, Quarrying, And Oil & Gas Extraction	3,098	3,207	109	3.5%
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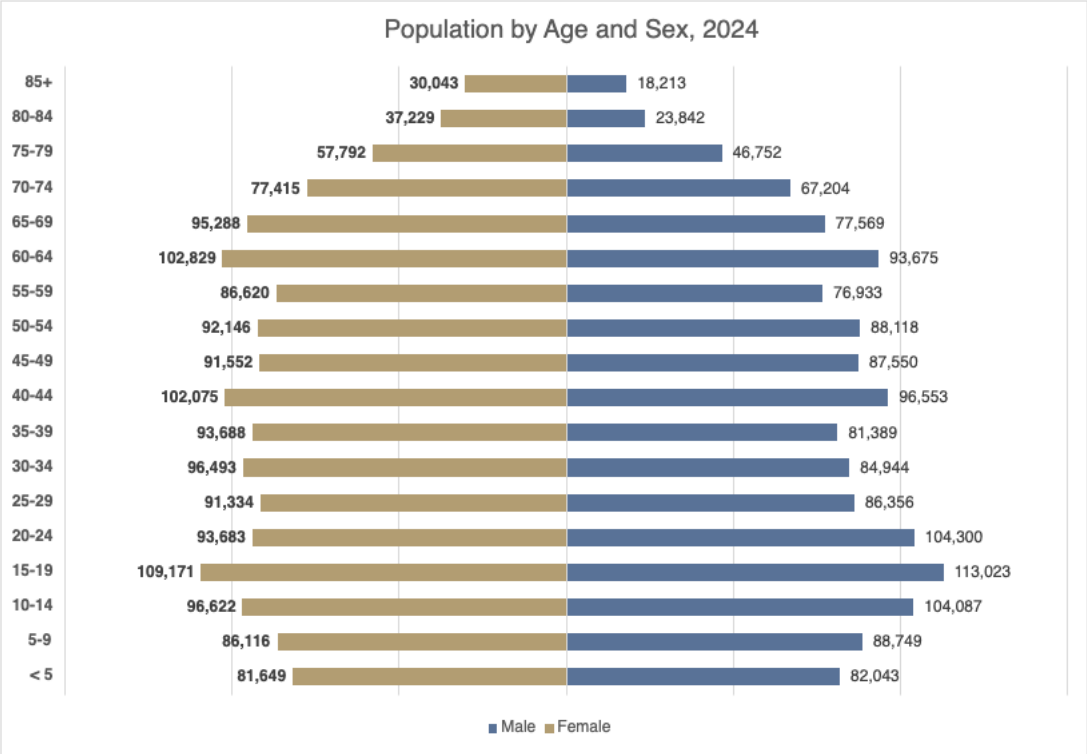
Public Administration	53,437	66,630	13,193	24.7%
Total	**1,063,557**	**1,167,717**	**104,160**	**9.8%**

Source: MS Department of Employment Security, Labor Market Information, Census of Employment & Wages, 2020 & 2024 Annual Averages

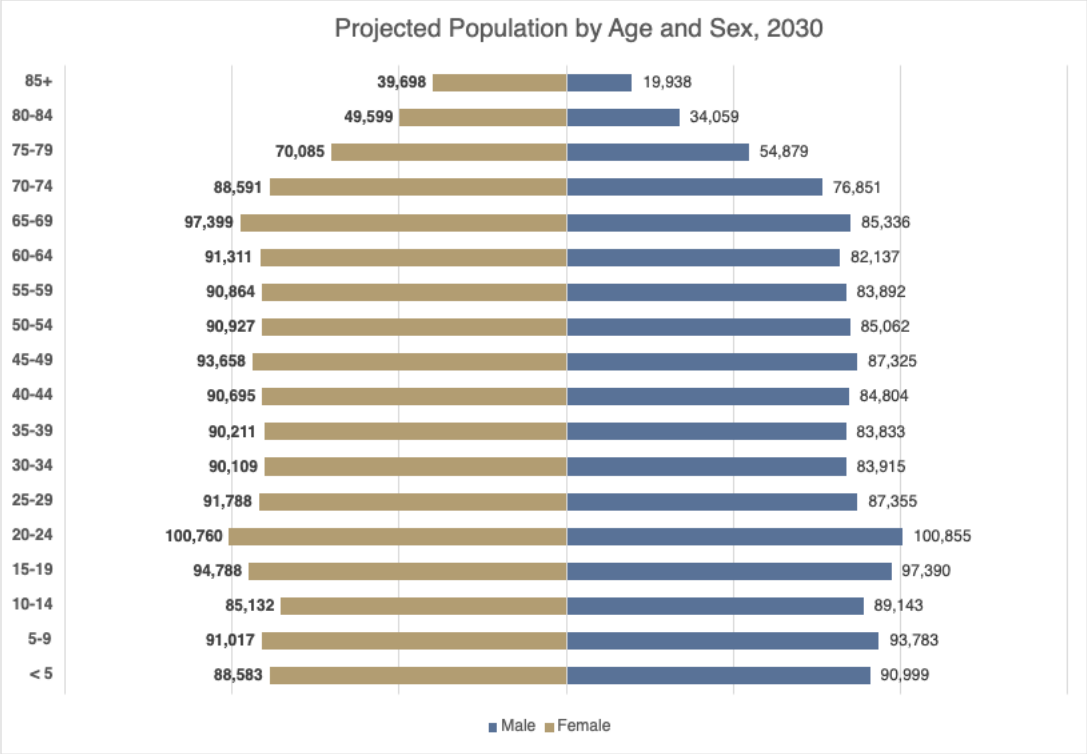
The figures below indicate that Mississippi is losing certain population groups while the population of those over 55 years of age is growing. The total population over 55 from the 2024 American Community Survey 1-year estimates was 891,404 and will increase to 964,639 by 2030.

Figure 25: Population by Age and Sex, 2024



Source: US Census Bureau, ACS data, 2024 1-Year Estimates

Figure 26: Projected Population by Age and Sex, 2030



Source: University of Virginia Weldon Cooper Center, Demographics Research Group, (2024), National Populations Projections. Retrieved from https://www.coopercenter.org/national-population-projections.

Individuals with Disabilities make up the following percentages in Mississippi:

Table VII-5: Disability Status of The Civilian Noninstitutionalized Population

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Under 18 years	671,054	46,974	7.0%
18 to 64 years	1,697,905	271,665	16.0%
65 years and over	514,819	208,502	40.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS data, 2024 1-Year Estimates

Data from the 2024 1-Year American Community Survey also indicate the following:

- Among Mississippians aged 55 and older, 10.3 percent are veterans.
- 50.2 percent of the overall population of Mississippi live in non-metropolitan counties.
- 1.7 percent of Mississippians speak English less than "very well."
- Of the total population in Mississippi
  - White: 55.6 percent
  - Black or African American number: 35.9 percent
  - American Indian and Alaska Native number: 0.5 percent
  - Asian number: 1.2 percent
  - Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander number: less than 0.1 percent
  - Some other race number: 2.0 percent
  - Two or more races number: 4.8 percent

2024 educational attainment statistics from Census are only available for the total population over 25, not specifically for those over 55, but show the following:

Table VII-6: Educational Attainment Statistics

	Total	*Percent*
Population 25 years and over	1,983,602	
Less than 9th grade	80,624	4.1%
9th to 12th grade, no diploma	157,373	7.9%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	582,355	29.4%
Some college, no degree	392,487	19.8%
Associate's degree	234,844	11.8%
Bachelor's degree	323,161	16.3%
Graduate or professional degree	212,758	10.7%
High school graduate or higher	1,745,605	88.0%
Bachelor's degree or higher	535,919	27.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS data, 2024 1-Year Estimates

m. Service Delivery and Coordination

1. A description of actions to coordinate SCSEP with other programs. This may alternatively be discussed in the State strategies section of the strategic plan, but regardless of placement in document, must include:

. Planned actions to coordinate activities of SCSEP grantees with WIOA title I programs, including plans for using the WIOA one-stop delivery system and its partners to serve individuals aged 55 and older. (20 CFR 641.302(g), 641.325(e)).

On July 1, 2012, the Mississippi Department of Employment Security (MDES) was designated as the SCSEP State Grantee. Since MDES is the state agency that operates the state workforce system, coordination of SCSEP with other workforce programs in the state should increase greatly.

Coordination with State's Title I Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Activities.

MDES is the agency that oversees WIOA in Mississippi. MDES staff members are liaisons to the Local Workforce Development Areas and track the use of WIOA funding. WIOA in Mississippi and the LWDAs are important partners to SCSEP. The SCSEP Managers rely on MDES and the LWDAs for labor market information, training, and job search assistance.

SCSEP participants register with the WIN Job Centers (American Job Centers) to research the available jobs in their area and jobs of interest to them. Participant training plans are based on the employment opportunities for which they are interested. Employment specific training is usually coordinated through the WIOA course offerings.

Coordination with Title I WIOA is further enhanced through the WIN Job Centers' option to participate as host agencies. Placing participants in the WIN Job Centers serves many purposes such as:

- having a senior on site provides a more comfortable setting, thereby attracting other seniors;
- provides an opportunity for the older worker to network with potential businesses and locate unsubsidized employment;
- provides an opportunity for the older work to recruit eligible individuals into the SCSEP program; and,

- provides an opportunity to research jobs regularly.

A. Planned actions to coordinate activities of SCSEP grantees with the activities being carried out in the State under the other titles of the Older Americans Act (OAA). (20 CFR 641.302(h))

The U.S. Department of Labor provides funds to operate SCSEP to States and other national sponsor organizations. Governor Reeves has designated the Mississippi Department of Employment Security as the State SCSEP Grantee. Currently, MDES subgrants funds to the nine Planning and Development Areas for the administration of the SCSEP. In Mississippi, the Area Agencies on Aging are subordinate agencies within the nonprofit economic development organizations known as Planning and Development Districts. The Area Agencies on Aging are experienced providers of services for the senior population. Currently, the AAAs operate SCSEP in 8 of the 9 PDDs and the Workforce Division operates SCSEP in Southern MS PDD.

Activities Carried out Under Other Titles of the Older Americans Act:

- Transportation.
  - Transportation is offered to older adults as an option to assist in continuing their independence. SCSEP participants that cannot drive may take advantage of the local Area Agency on Aging transportation services. The state and National Grantees target transportation providers with a goal of benefiting SCSEP participants interested in training with the transportation providers acting in a host agency capacity.
- Nutrition.
  - The Nutrition Program serves a dual purpose; it provides a well-balanced meal for SCSEP Participants, and it provides host agencies that train participants at their congregate meal sites. Training at the Nutrition Program congregate meal sites offers skills training in food handling and preparation management skills, and recreation development. SCSEP Managers' goals are to continue partnering with the Nutrition Program congregate meal sites as hot agency sites.
- Aging and Disability Resource Center.
  - The state and National Grantees plan to partner with the Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC), an online database of resources. The Aging and Disability Resource Center Program (ADRC), a collaborative effort of AoA and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), is designed to streamline access to long-term care. The ADRC program provides states with an opportunity to effectively integrate the full range of long-term support and services into a single, coordinated system. The ADRC provides a single entry-point for resources that can assist SCSEP participants to meet their personal and family needs. Additionally, the ADRC will identify eligible participants for SCSEP.
- Adult Day Care.
  - The Adult Day Care program is beneficial for the SCSEP Participants that are also caregivers. The Adult Day Care program allows participants to continue training at host agencies with the reassurance their family member is taken care of. The state and National Grantees also benefit from the Adult Day Care Program in a host agency capacity. Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs) are needed in Adult Day Care centers; CNA Training is an opportunity for participants interested in furthering their careers or entering the medical field.
- Family Caregiver Support Program.
  - The Family Caregiver Support Program provides information about services, assistance in gaining access to services, counseling, respite care, and supplemental services to complement the care provided by the caregivers. The program can support the needs of SCSEP Participants that are caregivers needing to be trained for unsubsidized employment.

B. Planned actions to coordinate SCSEP with other private and public entities and programs that provide services to older Americans, such as community and faith- based organizations, transportation programs, and programs for those with special needs or disabilities. (20 CFR 641.302(i)).

National Sponsors
Mississippi has three (3) national sponsor organizations operating SCSEP. The following is a list of the national sponsors and the contact person for each of those agencies.

National Caucus and Council on Black Aged, Inc.
Chester A. Johnson, Program Manager
Post Office Box 545
Cleveland, MS 38732
(662) 846-6992, Email: cjohnson@myncba.com

Center for Workforce Inclusion
Joshua Wadsworth, National SCSEP Director
8403 Colesville Road, Suite 200
Silver Spring, MD 20910 jwadsworth@workforceinclusion.org www.centerforworkforceinclusion.org

Institute for Indian Development, Inc.
Garilyn Ward, SCSEP National Program Director
991 Grand Caillou Road
Houma, Louisiana 70363-5705
(985) 851-5408 Phone/Fax, gward@itcla.com

Service Organizations and Community Based Organizations
The state's subgrantees, the PDDs, through the AAAs, utilize the services of or directly contract with the service organizations that serve the aging population, such as elder abuse prevention services, legal services, and transportation services. Many of these services are provided by community-based organizations. Due to these relationships, AAA and PDD staff members remain in constant contact with the service provider staff from which participant and host agency referrals are made. SCSEP managers, through the AAAs, work with homemakers, transportation, nutrition providers, and community action organizations. Service providers and community action agencies are invited to the public hearings held annually to discuss aging programs, including SCSEP.
Collaboration with Other Public and Private Entities and Programs that Provide Services to Older Americans

Community Based Organizations.
The state subgrants SCSEP to the 9 PDDs in the state; the PDDs/AAAs have a direct contractual relationship with community-based organizations as service providers. Local community action agencies work closely with the state grantee to collaborate on SCSEP.

Transportation Programs.
Transportation providers are generally non-profit organizations that partner with AAAs. The rural nature of the state is compounded by the lack of an entity with mandated responsibility for providing transportation assistance to citizens in need.
To combat transportation problems:

- the Mississippi Department of Transportation is actively involved in leading the United We Ride campaign in the state
- the Planning and Development Districts either sponsor or closely partner with the Regional Transportation Councils.

C. Planned actions to coordinate SCSEP with other labor markets and job training initiatives. (20 CFR 641.302(j))

Labor Market Effects on Employment Opportunities and Host Agencies.
Employment opportunities for SCSEP participants vary greatly based on the jobs available in the local labor market.

Data on the local jobs, such as type, availability, and potential growth should determine the types of host agencies and how many are needed to support SCSEP participant training. Also, each SCSEP participant's Individual Employment Plan is developed based on the skills needed for the available jobs in the region and should guide the training he or she receives. The labor market data needed to drive these decisions comes from the MDES Labor Market Information unit and is provided in partnership with the LWDBs through board meetings, conferences, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act State Plan, and local WIN Job Centers.

Collaboration with Other Labor Market and Job Training Initiatives.
MDES is the State Grantee for SCSEP and developed the 5-Year SCSEP State Plan. MDES is also the designated state workforce agency, and as such, provided Governor Tate Reeves' WIOA Combined State Plan to the US Department of Labor for WIOA, Wagner-Peyser, and other DOL-funded workforce programs. The combined plan is centered on an effective and efficient state workforce development system that meets the demands of Mississippi's businesses and job seekers by creating a Work-Ready Mississippi. This system will integrate state and local resources to create a seamless system to serve the business community and the individuals who use the system. The SCSEP plan will coordinate with, support, and benefit from the WIOA Combined State Plan and the Governor's workforce initiatives.

The Combined State Plan will guide the strategic and operational workforce planning for state agencies. The priorities include providing an attractive economic climate for current and emerging industries that foster economic opportunity, job creation, capital investment and infrastructure development by developing a well-trained, educated, and productive workforce. The initial emphasis will be placed on growth sectors, Healthcare, Advanced Manufacturing and Energy, which were the focus of important pieces of legislation passed in the 2012 legislative session. Mississippi passed the Mississippi Health Care Industry Zone Act that expands the healthcare industry. This law advocates centralizing health care and encouraging healthcare-related businesses to create high-paying jobs and to locate within qualified Health Care Zones. Businesses that create jobs in the research, development, manufacturing or processing of pharmaceuticals, biologics, biotechnology, medical supplies and medical equipment, diagnostic imaging and other shared services would be eligible for incentives.

As Mississippi’s population ages, the need for quality, accessible medical care will increase. This increase in need for medical care will require an increase in the number of healthcare jobs, as evidenced by the national growth in this sector. Mississippi jobs in healthcare pay 40 percent more than the statewide average. This is an area in which older Mississippians can be placed in unsubsidized employment after SCSEP job training.

At the heart of Mississippi’s economy are our existing businesses and industries. Developing a workforce for the growth and sustainability of Mississippi businesses large and small - from tourism on the Mississippi Blues Trail to the high tech and advanced manufacturing of military drones - must remain a priority. The vision is simple: to help our state attract, keep, and grow businesses that create good jobs.
Mississippi understands that our economic growth is dependent on a comprehensive statewide workforce system that integrates education, industry, employment, and economic development into a unified enterprise with a shared vision and common goal. This system is employer-focused and demand-driven. The growth of high wage employment is dependent upon Mississippi having a trained workforce, a continued supply of skilled Mississippians who are ready, willing, and able to fill jobs, regardless of their age.

Mississippi has identified five keys to meet the shortage a high-quality workforce:

- A high-quality education for all citizens is a key tenet of competitiveness that makes Mississippi an attractive place to create, locate and grow a business;
- High wage jobs must be filled by highly skilled workers possessing the appropriate skills to do the job and further business growth. Unfilled job positions are wasted opportunities in the short- and long-term causing employers to look outside Mississippi for talent;
- An information system that supports data-driven planning and decision making for state and local Workforce

stakeholders;

- An increase in post-secondary credentials and certifications that help jobseekers access the high skill, high-growth jobs of the future; and
- A pipeline for workforce development must be advanced through strategic partnerships with a common vision among K-12, community colleges, universities, state agencies and other stakeholders devoted to workforce training and retraining.

Each of these five keys is as critical in helping seniors fill a part of the shortage in skilled workforce as they are for other workers.

Leveraging Resources from Key Partners to Support SCSEP.
PDDs work with community colleges to provide training to SCSEP participants at a reduced cost; many provide tuition waivers for SCSEP participants. Community colleges are an integral component of the WIOA programs offered through the WIN Job Centers. SCSEP participants are encouraged to dual enroll in WIOA with the WIN Job Centers for job search assistance and training classes.

D. Actions to ensure that SCSEP is an active partner in the one-stop delivery system and the steps the State will take to encourage and improve coordination with the one-stop delivery system. (20 CFR 641.335).

Infrastructure Funding Agreements.
Each PDD is required in their subgrant with the state to negotiate with a local WIN Job Center (WJC) to ensure SCSEP's required partner presence in the center. Each PDD entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the WJC and negotiated payment for space used and provided a copy of the MOU and the basis for the cost to MDES. Funds in the amount of that cost basis are included in the PY23 SCSEP allocations for estimated cost for the space, and the PDDs include these costs in their budget narratives submitted to MDES.

Collaboration with State Vocational Rehabilitation.
The Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services, like SCSEP, is a required partner in the WIOA programs. SCSEP and Vocational Rehabilitation will collaborate with the WIN Job Centers for employment assistance for older individuals with disabilities.

Collaboration with Adult Education and Literacy Providers.
SCSEP participants complete an initial assessment upon entrance into the program to determine their employment plan. For participants that are interested in completing their High School Equivalency Diploma (HSE), SCSEP partners with the Adult Education program administered by the Mississippi Community College Board. The Adult Education program is designed to offer opportunities to enhance the skills and abilities of individuals preparing for the workforce. SCSEP participants are encouraged to prepare themselves in the areas of math, reading, writing, communication, and computer skills to become employment ready. The Adult Education program aids in developing these skills based on the individual's skill level and learning capacity.
The Adult Education program is available statewide through community colleges, public schools, and other resources. SCSEP participants can test at any of the available high school equivalency sites across the state.

Collaboration with Education and Training Providers.
The SCSEP program collaborates with the WIN System to offer SCSEP participants access to training using Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) through the state's Eligible Training Provider System. Available courses include, but are not limited to:

- Accounting;
- Administrative Services;
- Animal Husbandry;
- Auto Mechanics;
- Banking and Finance;

- Building Maintenance;
- Clerical;
- Computer;
- Data Word Processing;
- Forestry;
- Health Services;
- Industrial;
- Landscaping;
- Manicuring;
- Medical Coding;
- Pharmacy Tech;
- Retail Sales;
- Teacher Assistant; and,
- Welding.

E. Efforts to work with local economic development offices in rural locations.

Local Governments.
PDDs are also directly linked to the economic development of the region and receive funds from local cities, counties, and local governments. PDDs have direct relationships with cities, counties, and local governments; many are host agencies for SCSEP participants. The following are government agencies that SCSEP works with on an ongoing basis:

- Board of Supervisors;
- Cities;
- Towns;
- Libraries;
- Local Chambers of Commerce; and,
- State Chamber of Commerce.

SCSEP staff from all grantees and subgrantees will continue to foster these relationships to increase their participation as host agencies. These entities may potentially hire participants into unsubsidized employment.

Business Organizations.
State subgrantees and their SCSEP managers work with business organizations such as the Mississippi Manufacturers Association and local chambers of commerce to develop job opportunities. They collaborate with Medicaid and regional transportation and economic assistance providers to access services to SCSEP participants in need. They also solicit advice and recommendations from support service organizations through public hearings and joint conferences.

Mississippi Chambers of Commerce.
The mission of a Chamber of Commerce is to provide leadership in economic development activities, support existing businesses, attract new businesses, and promote civic, cultural, and recreational activities that improve the quality of life for businesses and residents. There are about one hundred (100) Chambers of Commerce in Mississippi.

Strategy for Collaborating with Chambers of Commerce.
SCSEP Managers will contact the chambers to educate them on the benefits of hiring older workers. The mission of the chambers supports the goals of SCSEP; working together will strengthen the case for targeting older workers when meeting new and existing businesses. Additionally, the chambers will be avenues that SCSEP Managers can use to identify industry appropriate training opportunities for SCSEP participants interested in the local labor market opportunities.

Strategy for Seeking Advice and Recommendations.

The state and national grantees will meet with the Chambers of Commerce at Workforce Development Board meetings, conferences, and individually to seek their advice and recommendation on improving SCSEP. The chambers can provide important information on the local economy and ensure that SCSEP Managers meet with and partner with existing and new businesses interested in hiring and/or training older workers. Partnering with chambers as host agencies and providing a SCSEP participant to train onsite brings recognition to SCSEP while providing valuable training to participants. Chambers of Commerce that are host agency sites provide skills training in clerical, phone skills, record keeping, etc.

Economic Development Agencies.
Economic development is a focus on the state level as well as at the local community level. SCSEP grantees and subgrantees in the state will target economic development agencies for partnership opportunities.

Strategy for Collaborating with Economic Development Agencies.
The state and national grantees will work with economic development agencies at the state and local level to network and educate on employment training opportunities for older workers that new and existing businesses can utilize to hire skilled older workers. Collaboration with the economic development agencies through the Mississippi Economic Development Council allows SCSEP a single point of entry to providing education on older workers to the more than 3,100 manufacturing entities that drive the state's economy. The Mississippi Economic Development Council organizes two conferences a year. SCSEP Managers will attend the conferences to network with businesses.

Strategy for Seeking Advice and Recommendations.
The state and national grantees will network with the economic development agencies and attend their meetings and conferences. SCSEP Managers will present the benefits of hiring older workers at Local Workforce Development Board meetings and conferences, such as the Governor's Conference on Workforce Development, to increase the entered employment rate for SCSEP participants. The state and national grantees will glean information from the economic development agencies on ways to improve participant's individual employment plans to ensure that participants are receiving the training needed to be job ready in the industries that support our economy.

Labor Organizations.
Labor unions for business organizations in Mississippi can assist SCSEP Managers by providing information for the design of individual employment plans for participants, as they best know the skills needed for worker safety and career advancement.

2. The State's long-term strategy for engaging employers to develop and promote opportunities for the placement of SCSEP participants in unsubsidized employment. (20 CFR 641.302(e)) (May alternatively be discussed in the State strategies section of strategic plan.)

Strategy for Collaborating with Major Employers.
The state and national grantees will target the major employers with an educational campaign to raise awareness of the benefits of hiring older workers. The goals are to increase the rate of entered employment of exited SCSEP participants and increase the number of higher paying jobs (with benefits) for SCSEP participants.

Strategy for Seeking Advice and Recommendations
Seeking advice and recommendations from local businesses is beneficial to SCSEP. Businesses can provide information on the skills needed for employment to assist in the development of the SCSEP participant's individual employment plan. Another possibility is to increase the number of On-the-Job Training contracts that SCSEP managers can enter into with businesses to ensure that SCSEP participants receive the training needed for hiring by the business. SCSEP managers will attend job fairs and will require all participants to attend as part of their training.

Engaging and Developing Partnerships with Businesses.
The state and national grantee SCSEP managers will coordinate with the LWDBs to show businesses the benefits of hiring older workers. Older workers in general have low turnover rates, are flexible and open to change, are interested in

learning new skills, have low absentee rates, have experience and knowledge, and are willing to work. Therefore, hiring older workers is a solution to the shortage of workers in the state.

SCSEP managers will work with the LWDAs to develop partnerships with businesses by utilizing recruitment efforts such as sending brochures and fact sheets on the older workers, sending letters to businesses outlining the benefits of older workers and following up with a presentation to the Human Resources Director and/or President, and where applicable recruit them to become a host agency. Developing partnerships with businesses creates the opportunity to share success stories from other businesses that hire older workers.

To increase partnerships with businesses, SCSEP managers are encouraged to:

- increase contacts with local businesses;
- promote On-the-Job Training contracts with businesses;
- make presentations to businesses; and,
- assist local businesses with training needs.

Retention Activities for Participants in Unsubsidized Employment.
Once a SCSEP participant is trained and placed in unsubsidized employment, the SCSEP manager continues to follow the participant for one year to ensure he/she has the support needed to remain employed. SCSEP participants in unsubsidized employment may need additional training and support to keep up with the demands of the changing workforce. Support will be provided in the form of tracking, counseling, and job development.
SCSEP managers will work with the LWDAs to educate businesses on how to retain older workers. Once businesses see the value older workers bring to their businesses, they will be looking for ideas to retain their older workers. SCSEP assists in restructuring jobs that help employees to maintain or advance their careers.

Managers can educate businesses on the following strategies for creating a positive environment for older workers:

- Flextime: employees can begin and end their workday at varying times;
- Job Sharing: use two employees for one job position;
- Part-time Position: older workers may be looking for 20-30 hours a week;
- Consulting: older workers may prefer to work in a consultant role;
- Compressed Work Week: work longer hours, but fewer days; and,
- Telecommuting: working from home.

3. The State's long-term strategy for serving minority older individuals under SCSEP. (20 CFR 641.302 (c)).

The State subgrants to the Planning and Development Districts since their AAAs are the primary provider of other services to the aging community and have established contacts and rapport in the community. The PDDs should collaborate with the WIN Job Centers and other workforce system partners to provide outreach services to minority populations.

MDES provides the required Equitable Distribution (ED) report and Minority Report to USDOL annually. MDES will continue to use both the ED and the Minority Report to guide the PDDs as they provide SCSEP services and to advise the national grantees that operate the program in the state.

4. A list of community services that are needed and the places where these services are most needed. Specifically, the plan must address the needs and location of those individuals most in need of community services and the groups working to meet their needs. (20 CFR 641.330)

Process Implemented to Identify Community Service Needs.

MDES will work with the national grantees and the 9 PDDs to collect information on the participants, services, and skills needs of the businesses in the area that each serve. Identifying gaps between the participants, the skill requirements, and the services provided will guide decisions on targeted recruitment, training, host agency assignments, and recruitment of businesses willing to hire seniors into unsubsidized training.

The industry makeup of the state varies by region. The Delta region of the state is predominately agricultural with a secondary gaming and tourism emphasis; the northeastern region is industrial; the west-central region is mixed with agriculture, manufacturing, and professional, with a recent growth in oil production; and the southern region is agricultural, gaming and tourism, and industrial. Due to the variety of industries in the state, SCSEP managers will continue to work with the local WIN Job Centers and other stakeholders to identify local community service needs and obtain recommendations on how SCSEP participants can bridge those gaps. Individual Employment Plans will be tailored to meet the needs of the participants and the community service assignments.

Timeline for Identifying and Recruiting Host Agencies to Meet Community Service Needs.
State and national grantees, with the assistance of the LWDAs, will identify non-profits and government organizations as potential host agencies for a resource list. The resource list will guide the SCSEP managers in their attempts to recruit host agencies to train SCSEP participants. The USDOL data collection system will assist SCSEP managers to track the types of host agencies using the host agency management reports. The state and national grantees will increase the number of host agencies every program year to meet the needs of participants.

5. The State's long-term strategy to improve SCSEP services, including planned long-term changes to the design of the program within the State, and planned changes in the use of SCSEP grantees and program operators to better achieve the goals of the program. This may include recommendations to the Department as appropriate. (20 CFR641.302(k)).

Since the Mississippi Department of Employment Security (MDES) was designated as the State Grantee as of July 1, 2012, coordination with other workforce programs in the state has greatly increased. The division of MDES that has direct oversight of the SCSEP also provides direct fiscal and programmatic support for WIOA to the state's four Local Workforce Development Areas.

Long-Term Strategy to Improve SCSEP Services.
The State has implemented a WIOA Common Intake and Reporting System, known as the Hub", that captures common participant information for the four core programs. The system aligns resources and generates automatic referrals among the core programs and partner programs such as SCSEP.

Using a no wrong door policy, all participants will develop an individualized success plan that coordinates the optimum blend of services and funding to achieve their goals for success. This success plan also indicates which of the pathways in the Smart Start Pathways Model to which the participant will be assigned. A connection to a career pathway must be included as part of an older worker's individual service strategy or MS Smart Start Success plan. This model is an integrated compilation of programs and services intended to develop basic, technical and employability skills; provide continuous education and training; and work support that leads to high-demand jobs in targeted sectors.

Planned Changes in the Utilization of SCSEP Grantees and Program Operators.

In PY2015, the State Grantee's largest subgrantee, Southern Mississippi Planning and Development District, moved its SCSEP staff from the Area Agency on Aging division to the Workforce Division. This puts SCSEP in this district under the direction of the Twin Districts Workforce Development Area. SMPDD is the SCSEP subgrantee of both the State subgrant and The Center for Workforce Inclusion (CWI), operating a total of 125 slots. SMPDD will use the Smart Start Pathways Model throughout its service area. CWI intends for all of its subgrantees to follow the lead of SMPDD and use Smart Start as the service model.

Increased Frequency of Formal Collaboration Activities Among SCSEP Grantees.

The state grantee will conduct training annually and provide ongoing Technical Assistance. The state is dedicated to increasing the number of collaborative activities and efforts in the state regarding the benefit of older workers. MDES will work collaboratively with its national grantees, 9 PDDs, and other partners to connect older workers with various programs.

Development of Criteria for Selection of Subrecipients.
The state grantee, in collaboration with USDOL, will develop more stringent criteria for the selection of sub-recipients. Subgrantees will be selected based on their ability to run SCSEP effectively, measured by performance measure results. The program is designed to develop economic self-sufficiency and promote useful opportunities in community service activities to increase the number of persons who may enjoy the benefits of unsubsidized employment in both the public and private sectors. A performance-driven selection process for subgranting SCSEP will ensure the program meets its performance measures.

Opportunities to Share Best Practices Statewide.
The state grantee will work with National Grantees to share best practices through regular contact including the annual Equitable Distribution Meeting. Working together statewide will ensure that SCSEP is serving the eligible and the target population effectively.

MDES will also coordinate with the National Council on Black Aging (NCBA) to assist and provide the following:

- Work together in collecting and sharing labor market information in any specific area to identify the skills area businesses require so that we can develop targeted recruitment of both the participants and host agencies.
- Remain in compliance with DOL equitable distribution of positions in the state. NCBA will work closely with the state to ensure that the distribution always remains equitable.
- As a national administrator of the SCSEP program in Mississippi, NCBA has recognized and experienced the many challenges presented by the rural nature of the state. NCBA will continue to work with the state to develop and implement plans to meet these challenges and help the participants gain unsubsidized employment.

6. The State's strategy for continuous improvement in the level of performance for SCSEP participants' entry into unsubsidized employment, and to achieve, at a minimum, the levels specified in OAA Section 513(a)(2)(E)(ii). (20 CFR641.302(f)).

State's Plan for Ensuring Goals are Achieved.
SCSEP managers receive performance measures from the USDOL prior to the start of the Program Year. The 2006 amendments to the Older Americans Act section 513(a) mandates that SCSEP managers are given the opportunity to negotiate their performance measures based on state-specific data. Acceptable sources of data include but are not limited to: TANF; state unemployment rate; labor market information, and past performance.

The USDOL provides the SCSEP managers with management reports via the data collection system known as GPMS (Grantee Performance Management System). Management reports are produced quarterly to gauge progress towards performance measures. The following management reports will be used by the state, national grantees, and SCSEP managers:

Applicant

- Pending
- Ineligible
- Eligible, Not Assigned or on Waiting List
- Waiting List Participants
- **Current/Exited**
  - Started Employment but Not Yet Achieved Entered Employment

- Achieved Entered Employment but Not Yet Achieved Retention
- Waiver of Durational Limit
- Participants Who Have Reached Durational Limit
- Participants With Approved Break(s)

- **Follow-Ups**
  - Pending
  - Pending, Displayed by Month
- **Actions**
  - Most In Need/Waiver Factor Actions
- **Host Agencies**
  - Host Agencies
  - Assignments by Host Agency
- **Employers**
  - ments by Employer

Meetings, training, and conference calls.
Meetings among the state, national grantees, and subgrantees will be held on a regular basis, either in person or using electronic means such as conference calls and webinars. As issues warrant, MDES will meet with subgrantees on an individual basis by phone or during site visits, monitoring visits, or data validation visits.

Topics may include:

- Data entry review prior to close date for reports
- Quarterly reports
- Reports reviewed
- Reports discussed by SCSEP Managers.

n. Location and Population Served, including Equitable Distribution

1. A description of the localities and populations for which projects of the type authorized by title V are most needed. (20 CFR 641.325 (d)).

Current and Projected Employment Opportunities in the State.
There has been a shift in the last two decades in the nation as a whole from an industrial to a service and knowledge - based economy. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Mississippi has followed the national industrial trend with 80.3 percent of the workforce employed in service-oriented jobs. In the service industry, the largest sub-sectors include healthcare and social assistance followed by administrative and support services.

The economic priorities for Mississippi over the next four years and guidance from the SWIB will guide the strategic and operational workforce planning for state agencies. The priorities include providing an attractive economic climate for current and emerging industries that foster economic opportunity, job creation, capital investment and infrastructure development by developing a well-trained, educated, and productive workforce.

The initial emphasis will be placed on the three sectors in the Combined State Plan; Advanced Manufacturing, Healthcare and Energy, which were the focus of important pieces of legislation passed in the 2012 legislative session. Of equal importance is the retention and expansion of existing industries such as transportation and logistics, agribusiness, tourism; and defense and homeland security.

Employment Projections for High Growth Industries and Occupations.
The state relies on labor market information disseminated by the MDES Labor Market Information division to ensure that SCSEP meets the local labor market demands. Labor market information shows that all industry sectors need

skilled workers, especially those that require the application of technology and knowledge such as automotive and health care professionals.

The SCSEP managers must emphasize the need to obtain skills through training at host agencies in order to generate quality job placements in high growth industries. Mississippi projects that over 148,000 jobs are expected to be available annually from 2020 to 2030. Increasing SCSEP job placements in the high growth areas will move Mississippi ahead.

Industries and Occupations with Employment Opportunities for SCSEP participants.
Participants are encouraged to design their employment plan around the following industries most in need of skilled workers:

- service sector;
- healthcare;
- retail;
- food service;
- social assistance; and,
- education.

Employment Histories and Skills Possessed by Eligible Individuals in the State.
Generally, SCSEP participants in Mississippi have very limited skills and work history; many are displaced homemakers or widows with limited work experience. Therefore, the state and national grantees must ensure that the SCSEP participant's Individual Employment Plan includes the skills training needed to locate unsubsidized employment upon exiting the program. Training may be attained at the host agency, the WIN Job Centers, community colleges, and at participant educational meetings.

Mississippi ranks last in educational attainment in the adult population, particularly older females. In the state, 12.33 percent of SCSEP participants have no high school degree, 47.85 percent have a high school degree or equivalent, and only 11.39 percent have a bachelor's degree or higher.

2. List the cities and counties where the project will be conducted. Include the number of SCSEP authorized positions and indicate where the positions changed from the prior year.

This data is listed in the Program Year 2023 Equitable Distribution List by National and State Grantee with Counties (Provided in Appendix N).

3. Describe current slot imbalances and proposed steps to correct inequities to achieve equitable distribution.

The US Department of Labor has redistributed positions among The Center for Workforce Inclusion, National Caucus on Black Aged, the Institute for Indian Development, and the Department of Employment Security in order to serve the eligible population more equitably as indicated by the 2020 Census through the USDOL distribution process. In Mississippi, the state and national grantees agree that the distribution is currently equitable.

4. The State's long-term strategy for achieving an equitable distribution of SCSEP positions within the State that:

. Moves positions from over-served to underserved locations within the State in compliance with 20 CFR 641.365.

The U.S. Department of Labor implemented revisions to the required Equitable Distribution Report. The four grantees provided their Grantee Reports to the USDOL and MDES compiled the information from the four into a Statewide Grant Report, which was also submitted to DOL on March 22, 2022. The state grantee will monitor distribution and service of the slots to ensure that all grantees are working to implement the action plans stated in the reports. We will also continue to monitor distribution of slots relative to demographic changes and will address any potential issues as

they arise through communication with DOL.

A. Equitably serves rural and urban areas.

See answer above at c.4.A.

B. Serves individuals afforded priority for service under 20 CFR 641.520. (20 CFR 641.302(a), 641.365, 641.520)

See answer above at c.4.A.

5. The ratio of eligible individuals in each service area to the total eligible population in the State. (20 CFR 641.325(a))

See answer above at c.4.A.

6. The relative distribution of eligible individuals who:

. Reside in urban and rural areas within the State.

The State of Mississippi is a predominately rural state, with a large percentage of Mississippians living in rural counties. Access to transportation and limited numbers of host agencies in the most rural counties will continue to be a challenge that all SCSEP grantees must work together to overcome.

Inadequate Resources.
The state and national grantees strive to serve both rural and urban areas of Mississippi equitably. In order to accomplish this, state and National Grantees must work together to overcome inadequate resources (limited employment prospects, few host agencies, lack of transportation, etc.).

Employment.
The rural nature of the state combined with an agrarian-based economy makes it difficult to provide adequate unsubsidized placement opportunities. The number of jobs available is few and because public and mass transportation are not available, access to many of the existing jobs or employment opportunities can be problematic. In some instances, the cost of transportation and other job maintenance factors exceed the benefits of employment.

Host Agencies.
The rural nature of the state also creates a shortage of host agencies. The state and national grantees operating in the state know the challenge of developing enough host agencies to rotate participants appropriately according to their individual employment plan. SCSEP managers will continue to partner with the LWDBs to assist in developing new business opportunities and to partner with new and existing non-profit organizations located in the state.

Transportation.
Access to transportation continues to be a problem in areas outside of the metropolitan area of Jackson. To alleviate transportation concerns, the state grantees may reimburse participants for transportation costs only when travel is necessary for training, physical exams, or enrollee meetings. If there is no public transformation available, and there are no other options, and if the participant could not otherwise participate in the program, transportation to and from host agency assignment may be reimbursed until another option is identified.

The state grantee will attempt to collaborate with other local agencies and resources to provide participant transportation at no cost or reduced cost whenever possible.

Additionally, flexible scheduling is encouraged to help participants reduce travel costs by training more hours on fewer days, providing the same community service assignment hours.

Specific Populations Groups.
The state and national grantees offer various recruitment and selection techniques used to address Older Americans Act Section 518(b) as detailed below. OAA Section 518(b) defines priority individuals as those who qualify based on one or more of the following criteria:

- Are aged 65 years or older;
- Have a disability;
- Have limited English proficiency or low literacy skills;
- Reside in a rural area;
- Are veterans or their spouses who meet the requirements of the Jobs for Veterans Act, 38 U.S.C.sec.4215(a)(1);
- Have low employment prospects;
- Have failed to find employment after utilizing services provided under Title 1 of WIOA; or,
- Are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Other populations identified in the statute are defined in OAA Section 503(a)(4)(C)(i)-(iv) as:

- Eligible individuals with the "greatest economic need" (as defined in 20 CFR 641.140);
- Eligible individuals who are minority individuals; and,
- Eligible individuals who are individuals with "greatest social need" (as defined in 20 CFR 641.140).

The LWDBs that oversee the workforce system in the state are key partners for both the state and national grantees in the state as they provide labor market information and economic data to assist grantees in developing new host agencies, educating employers on the benefits of hiring older workers, and providing job search assistance for SCSEP participants.

The workforce system provides an additional avenue to recruit eligible individuals to participate in the SCSEP. Additional recruitment activities include, but are not limited to, the following:

- attending job fairs
- advertising in local newspapers and newsletters
- referrals from exited participants, host agencies, faith-based organizations, and local officials
- running public service announcements
- visiting local senior centers
- partnering with organizations that serve aging and/or disabled adults
- distributing brochures, flyers, posters, and fact sheets throughout the state
- partnering with the local WIN Job Centers.

A. Have the greatest economic need.

See response included at c.6.A.

B. Are minorities.

See response included at c.6.A.

C. Are Limited English Proficient.

See response included at c.6.A.

D. Have the greatest social need. (20 CFR 641.325(b))

See response included at c.6.A.

7. A description of the steps taken to avoid disruptions to the greatest extent possible, when positions are redistributed, as provided in 20 CFR 641.365; when new Census or other reliable data become available; or when there is over-enrollment for any other reason. (20 CFR 641.325(i), 641.302(b)).

The state and national grantees are dedicated to the avoidance of disruptions in the service to SCSEP participants. Mississippi's state and national SCSEP grantees will follow the recommendation of the USDOL that when there is over-enrollment, for any reason, there will be a gradual shift that encourages current participants to move into

unsubsidized employment to make positions available for eligible individuals in the areas that are underserved. Grantees understand that participants are not entitled to remain in a subsidized community service assignment indefinitely and will adhere to the time limits on a SCSEP community service assignment as detailed in the Older Americans Act.

SCSEP standards define the program requirements that state subgrantees must adhere to. Issued in March 2006, the standards address Designation of Service, slot movement, and time in training assignment.

Table VII-7: Employment By Industry

Industry	2020	2024	Difference	Percent Change
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting	11,465	10,984	(481)	(4.2%)
Mining, Quarrying, And Oil & Gas Extraction	3,098	3,207	109	3.5%
Utilities	9,053	9,952	899	9.9%
Construction	46,998	53,350	6,352	13.5%
Manufacturing	139,593	141,595	2,002	1.4%
Wholesale Trade	33,423	36,709	3,286	9.8%
Retail Trade	133,243	139,128	5,885	4.4%
Transportation And Warehousing	53,159	67,600	14,441	27.2%
Information	10,818	10,681	(137)	(1.3%)
Finance And Insurance	30,865	33,513	2,648	8.6%
Real Estate, Rental, and Leasing	11,736	12,188	452	3.9%
Professional and Technical Services	32,582	43,888	11,306	34.7%
Management of Companies & Enterprises	11,061	11,239	178	1.6%
Administrative and Waste Services	65,061	66,826	1,765	2.7%
Educational Services	105,963	108,790	2,827	2.7%
Health Care and Social Assistance	171,293	188,886	17,593	10.3%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	8,664	12,662	3,998	46.1%
Accommodation and Food Services	111,898	127,326	15,428	13.8%
Other Services, Except Public Administration	20,149	22,565	2,416	12.0%
Public Administration	53,437	66,630	13,193	24.7%
Total	*1,063,557*	*1,167,717*	*104,160*	*9.8%*

Source: MS Department of Employment Security, Labor Market Information, Census of Employment & Wages, 2020 & 2024 Annual Averages

Individuals with Disabilities make up the following percentages in Mississippi:

Table VII-8: Disability Status of The Civilian Noninstitutionalized Population

Age Level	Total	With a disability	Percentage with a disability
Civilian Noninstitutionalized Population	2,883,778	527,731	18.3%
Under 18 years	671,054	46,974	7.0%
18 to 64 years	1,697,905	271,665	16.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS data, 2024 1-Year Estimates

Table VII-9: Educational Attainment Statistics

	Total	Percent
Population 25 years and over	1,983,602	

Less than 9th grade	80,624	4.1%
9th to 12th grade, no diploma	157,373	7.9%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	582,355	29.4%
Some college, no degree	392,487	19.8%
Associate's degree	234,844	11.8%
Bachelor's degree	323,161	16.3%
Graduate or professional degree	212,758	10.7%
High school graduate or higher	1,745,605	88.0%
Bachelor's degree or higher	535,919	27.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS data, 2024 1-Year Estimates

Appendix A: Workforce and Innovation Opportunity Act Memorandum of Understanding

STATE OF MISSISSIPPI
WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT

Memorandum *of* Understanding

This Memorandum of Understanding ("MOU") is between the following parties as it pertains to the Mississippi Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Combined Plan ("State Workforce Plan" or "WIOA plan"): Mississippi Office of Workforce Development, Mississippi Community College Board, Mississippi Department of Employment Security, Mississippi Department of Human Services, Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services, Mississippi Department of Corrections, Mississippi Department of Education, Mississippi Development Authority, and the Local Workforce Development Areas, collectively referred to as the "Partners."

BACKGROUND

In 2020, Governor Tate Reeves and the Mississippi Legislature established the Office of Workforce Development, branded as 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. In 2021, Governor Reeves designated AccelerateMS as the coordinating entity for the WIOA plan. This WIOA combined plan represents the efforts of AccelerateMS to convene all state workforce and WIOA stakeholders around a unified vision that addresses the challenges workers face to gain credentials and skills to meet business and industry needs.

PURPOSE

This MOU serves as a functional tool for how the partners will work together to achieve the unified vision. The Partners agree to establish and maintain a framework of cooperation, collaboration, and communication in assisting the Governor to carry out the State Workforce Plan.

ROLES, RESPONSIBILITY AND GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

AccelerateMS will serve as the coordinating entity for all workforce development partners and stakeholders to ensure alignment and effectiveness.

The Partners agree to work cooperatively to prevent duplication of services, and to streamline and coordinate services delivered throughout the workforce system.

The Partners shall continue to have statutory responsibilities relating to the administration of their respective programs outside of, and not contained in, WIOA, and certify that federal funds received to carry out core programs will not be expended for any purpose other than for activities authorized with respect to such funds.

The Partners agree to provide data necessary to the performance of a comprehensive review of Mississippi's workforce development efforts, including the amount spent and effectiveness of programs supported by state or federal funds. Data provided should be in accordance with data sharing agreements in place amongst partners and the State Longitudinal Data System.

The Partners commit to cross-training of staff, as appropriate, and to providing other professional learning opportunities that promote continuous quality improvement.

IMPASSE-DISPUTE RESOLUTION

For the purposes of this MOU, in the event that a conflict should arise, each Partner expressly agrees to participate in good faith negotiations to reach a consensus. However, should a dispute arise among any Partners to this MOU in negotiations to amend or renew this MOU or in matters pertinent to WIOA operations or activities not addressed in this MOU, all Partners agree to utilize the process cited below. The Executive Directors or Agency Heads of applicable State agencies will designate an individual to negotiate and resolve any impasses involving state-level Partners. All Partners agree to enlist the following process for the resolution of disputes:

1. The Partners shall first attempt to resolve all disputes informally. Any Partner may call a meeting of all Partners to this MOU to discuss and resolve disputes.

2. Should information resolution efforts fail, the dispute shall be referred to Chairman of the State Workforce Investment Board ("SWIB"), who shall place the dispute on the agenda of a regular or special called meeting of the SWIB. The SWIB shall attempt to mediate and resolve the dispute. The SWIB will mediate and issue a written recommendation.

In the event that all reasonable attempts to resolve the impasse are unsuccessful, the SWIB will report the impasse to the Governor, who will intervene with the parties to resolve the disputed issue(s).

MODIFICATION OR AMENDMENT

This agreement shall not be modified, altered, or changed except by mutual consent of the Partners hereto. The Partners agree to renegotiate the agreement if federal and/or state revisions of any applicable laws or regulations make changes in this agreement necessary. Any modification or amendment shall be made in writing, clearly stating the changes being affected and shall be duly executed by an authorized representative of each Partner.

ASSIGNMENTS

It is expressly understood that commitments to be performed under this MOU shall not be subcontracted, assigned, transferred, or sublet without prior written approval of all Partners.

AUTHORITY

All activities under this MOU shall be subject to all applicable federal and/or state laws, rules, and regulations and construed in accordance with the laws of the State of Mississippi. All Partners shall comply with applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations.

LIABILITY

Each Partner shall be responsible for any liability resulting from the actions/inactions of its

officers, agents, and employees, acting within the course and scope of their official duties, to the degree and within the parameters permitted under Mississippi law.

DURATION

This MOU is entered into on September 8, 2022. This MOU will become effective as of the date of signing by the final signatory below and remain in effect for five years or until all Partners agree in writing to cancel the terms of the MOU, whichever is sooner.

PARTNER REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURES

Each of the undersigned individuals represents and warrants that he or she is expressly and duly authorized to execute this MOU and to legally bind each agency into this MOU. In witness whereof, the parties of this MOU certify that they have read, understood, and agreed to the terms and conditions of this MOU.

Tate Reeves
Governor

SEPTEMBER 8, 2022
Date

Patrick Sullivan
Chair, State Workforce Investment Board

9/9/22
Date

Ryan Miller
Executive Director, Accelerate MS

9/8/22
Date

Kell Smith
Interim Executive Director, Mississippi Community College Board

9/8/22
Date

Robin Stewart
Deputy Executive Director, Mississippi Department of Employment Security

9-8-22
Date

Bob Anderson
Executive Director, Mississippi Department of Human Services

9/8/22
Date

PARTNER REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURES (Continued)

Chris Howard
Executive Director, Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services

9/6/22
Date

Kim Benton
Interim State Superintendent, Mississippi Department of Education

9/8/2022
Date

Laura Hipp
Deputy Executive Director, Mississippi Development Authority

9-8-22
Date

Mitzi Woods
Delta Local Workforce Development Area

9.8.22
Date

Terry Treadaway
Mississippi Partnership Local Workforce Development Area

9-8-22
Date

Robin Parker
Southcentral Mississippi Works Local Workforce Development Area

9/8/22
Date

Allison Hawkins
Twin Districts Local Workforce Development Area

09/08/22
Date

Appendix B: SLDS Governing Board Rules & Regulations

Title 10: Education Institutions and Agencies

Part 501: Statewide Longitudinal Data System Governing Board Rules & Regulations

Part 501 Chapter 1: STATUTORY AUTHORITY

Rule 1.1: Statutory Authority. The SLDS Governing Board was established effective July 1, 2013 through Mississippi Code Annotated § 37-154-1 and 37-154-3.

Source: Miss. Code Ann. §37-154-3

Rule 1.2: Organization and policy and procedure. Miss. Code Ann. §37-154-3 provides for the SLDS Governing Board to be composed of a representative designated from each agency or entity providing data to the system, and others as determined by the Board, in accordance with Board Rules and Regulations. The Chair of the SLDS Governing Board will serve a two-year term. The Chair will appoint a vice-chair. Half of all board members shall be a quorum. The chairman shall be responsible for ensuring official minutes of each meeting are kept.

Source: Miss. Code Ann. §37-154-3

Part 501 Chapter 2: SYSTEM MANAGEMENT

Introduction: The SLDS Governing Board is authorized to contract with a third party to manage and maintain the system and to ensure the policies and procedures developed by the board are enforced. The system shall be referred to as LifeTracks. LifeTracks includes activities within three categories:

A. Securing and managing data;

B. Supporting, maintaining, and expanding the online reporting portal (www.lifetracks.ms.gov); and

C. Developing research design and methodology for the purpose of conducting scientific research that addresses policy and research questions.

Rule 2.1: STATE DATA CLEARINGHOUSE. The SLDS Governing Board shall enter into a five-year memorandum of agreement with a third party to serve as the state data clearinghouse. The third-party contractor shall be a center of excellence and a research organization with a demonstrated track record of combining and extracting information from disparate large administrative data sets; creating, preserving, analyzing, and reporting on those data in a safe and secure manner; and building and sustaining partnerships with data contributors. The third party shall also be an organization with the knowledge and

experience necessary to provide flexible, streamlined services and to design and implement best practices for data integration and data security. The organization must have experience with SLDS-type architecture and data modeling, and be qualified to provide all necessary technical resources aligned with the scope and objectives of the SLDS.

Source: Miss. Code Ann. §37-154-3

Rule 2.2: APPLICATION HOST. The SLDS Governing Board shall select an entity to provide application hosting services for www.lifetracks.ms.gov. Any data residing on the application server shall have been de-identified so that the identities of subjects cannot be readily ascertained or otherwise associated with the data by any users. The SLDS Governing Board shall make provisions for this as part of the contract with the third-party contractor acting as the state data clearinghouse.

Source: Miss. Code Ann. §37-154-3

Part 501 Chapter 3: DATA SCOPE

Rule 3.1: DATA SCOPE. All data transferred for LifeTracks shall flow to the third-party contractor in accordance with applicable SLDS Governing Board rules, regulations, policies and procedures and in accordance with applicable state and federal laws.

A. Individual governmental entities shall transfer data to the third-party contractor for inclusion in LifeTracks that includes:

1. All data transferred as part of the development of LifeTracks as specified in individual data dictionaries for each data stakeholder;
2. All data required to meet the 12 elements of the America COMPETES Act (Public Law 110–69);
3. Data necessary to provide decision makers a tool to develop policies to support objectives.
4. All data necessary for the successful continuation, management, and development of the online reporting portal (www.lifetracks.ms.gov); and
5. All data required to fulfill authorized ad hoc research and reporting requests.

B. In an effort to maintain the highest degree of accuracy, LifeTracks shall adopt the business rules, logic, and calculation methodology of the contributing data provider. The third-party contractor shall maintain agency/entity specific LifeTracks data dictionaries defining data elements:

1. Included in the development and initial deployment of LifeTracks;

2. Necessary for maintaining the system as deployed; and

3. Necessary for future development.

Copies of all agency/entity specific data dictionaries will be available to the public on the LifeTracks website.

Source: Miss. Code Ann. §37-154-3

Rule 3.2: SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBERS. The SLDS Governing Board is cognizant of the fact that it is necessary to transmit and process personal information in the form of Social Security Numbers (SSNs) in order to conduct the business of the board. The SLDS Governing Board takes its responsibilities with respect to the use of SSNs seriously and seeks to provide functional secure systems for the appropriate handling of this information through the use of administrative, technical, and physical safeguards. To comply with Miss. Code Ann. §25-1-111, the following have been established:

A. Individual governmental entities shall transfer the SSN to the third-party contractor for the purpose of creating a global unique identification number (GUID) that replaces the SSN and becomes the common link allowing all data in LifeTracks to be connected across different points in time. In regards to the Mississippi Department of Education, the specific method of transfer of data containing social security numbers or other unique identifiers is subject to written agreement by the SLDS Governing Board and the MDE.

B. Destruction of SSN information that is no longer needed shall be handled in an approved manner and completed using accepted methods that will not enable inappropriate recovery of data.

C. Individuals and entities are expected to comply with laws and policies pertaining to the collection and use of SSNs and are expected to take the steps necessary to protect this information.

D. SSN information is exempt from inclusion as public record information and is never to be provided in response to such requests.

Source: Miss. Code Ann. §37-154-3

Rule 3.3: IDENTIFICATION NUMBERS. Agency/entity and/or program specific identification numbers shall also be transferred to the third-party contractor for the purpose of conducting data validation and quality control activities and to allow individual governmental entities contributing data to LifeTracks to use information from LifeTracks for internal

agency use.

Source: Miss. Code Ann. §37-154-3

Part 501 Chapter 4: STANDARDS FOR PRIVACY, CONFIDENTIALITY & SECURITY OF DATA

Rule 4.1: SECURITY OF DATA. The third-party contractor will establish a framework to initiate and control the implementation of security policies and standards for the SLDS Governing Board. The Governing Board will ensure that the State Data Clearinghouse's security posture is adequate and compliant with the Department of Information Technology Services' Enterprise Information Security Plan and that an organizational structure is in place that focuses on information security.

In addition, the third-party contractor shall establish processes and procedures for incident reporting objectives, goals and deliverables identified in the ITS Enterprise Security Policy and ITS Enterprise Information Security Plan.

All data transferred from individual governmental entities contributing data to LifeTracks to the third-party contractor shall be held in a secure file location that is accessible only by authorized third party contractor personnel. This access limitation shall be enforced by third party contractor and board approved industry standard file access locks and an independent security system. The permissions structure shall be designed to only allow authorized users to access files. The independent security system shall be implemented to guard access to sensitive file storage areas and provide robust augmentation of security provided through file access locks and credentialing.

The third-party contractor shall perform appropriate background checks and screening of all employees that have any access to the clearinghouse data.

The third-party contractor shall employ technical safeguards to ensure personal information transmitted over an electronic communications network is not accessed by unauthorized persons or groups. Encryption shall be used when PII are in transmit or at rest. Unencrypted PII shall not be transmitted over public networks to third parties.

The third-party contractor shall employ data integrity procedures that protect PII including mechanisms to authenticate records and corroborate that they have not been altered or destroyed in an unauthorized manner.

The third-party contractor shall implement a risk assessment strategy plan that is updated annually which includes access and control processes, security risks, threats and vulnerabilities assessments, and methods for managing risks and incidents.

The third-party contractor shall maintain and update the incident response plan that establishes procedures to follow in case a breach occurs and processes for notifying organizations in the event of unauthorized acquisition of files or documents. The third-party contractor shall be subject to an annual external data security audit conducted by the Mississippi Office of the State Auditor.

Source: Miss. Code Ann. §37-154-3

Rule 4.2: DE-IDENTIFICATION OF DATA. All de-identification procedures shall be implemented with appropriate physical, technical, and administrative protections in place to maximize security, minimize risk, and ensure regulatory compliance. Data shall be de-identified through a process wherein a GUID is created that becomes the common link across all data in LifeTracks that ensures data can be reliably aligned over time and across governmental entities contributing data to LifeTracks. The SSN shall only be used for assigning the GUID.

Other internal identification numbers shall remain part of the transferred data to facilitate data validation and matching and to allow governmental entities contributing data to LifeTracks to use information from LifeTracks for internal agency use.

Source: Miss. Code Ann. §37-154-3

Rule 4.3: GUID PROCESS. A software generated global unique identification number (GUID) will be created for each record. For all data transferred from governmental entities contributing data to LifeTracks to the third-party contractor, the SSN shall be replaced with the GUID that becomes the common link allowing all data in LifeTracks to be connected across different points in time.

Source: Miss. Code Ann. §37-154-3

Rule 4.4: ADDITIONAL STANDARDS FOR PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY. Additional privacy and confidentiality safeguards shall include only releasing information generated from the data transferred from individual state agencies and state entities to the third-party contractor in tabular form via the online reporting portal (www.lifetracks.ms.gov) and applying appropriate data suppression techniques when cell sizes fail to meet minimum SLDS Governing Board defined reporting requirements.

The minimum allowable cell size or subgroup contained in any reports shall be not less than ten (10); any cell size or subgroup with a number smaller than ten (10) shall be suppressed.

Source: Miss. Code Ann. §37-154-3

Part 501 Chapter 5: PROVIDING DATA

Introduction: All data provided to the SLDS shall be provided in accordance with local, state and federal laws governing the protection and sharing of such data.

Rule 5.1: DATA MANAGER. All governmental entities contributing data to LifeTracks shall designate a data manager to serve as the primary point of contact for all LifeTracks activities at the beginning of each state fiscal year and communicate this in writing to the SLDS Governing Board Chair and the designated third-party contractor.

The third-party contractor shall be subject to an annual external audit conducted by the Mississippi Office of the State Auditor for compliance with SLDS Governing Board rules and regulations.

Source: Miss. Code Ann. §37-154-3

Rule 5.2: MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (MOU). Memorandums of understanding (MOUs) shall be executed between the governmental entity providing data and the third-party contractor to ensure the safety, quality, and integrity of data in accordance with state and federal law. At any such time as the third-party contractor shall change, new MOUs shall be executed between individual governmental entities contributing data to LifeTracks and the third-party contractor.

Source: Miss. Code Ann. §37-154-3

Rule 5.3: DATA TRANSFER. Data shall be transferred from individual governmental entities contributing data to LifeTracks as necessary to meet the requirements of Chapter 3 and in accordance with applicable MOUs but not less than annually and no later than October 15 of each calendar year.

All data shall be transferred from individual governmental entities contributing data to LifeTracks via an SLDS Governing Board approved secure file transfer solution chosen by the third-party contractor. The selected managed file transfer solution shall employ industry standard file transfer encryption and include the ability to assign private destination folders to each data exchange partner that shall be locked down with and credentialed to individual source users such that only they can see their own folder. All data received by LifeTracks shall be transferred to a secure work area that is only accessible to authorized staff.

Source: Miss. Code Ann. §37-154-3

Part 501 Chapter 6: DATA VALIDATION

Rule 6.1: DATA INVENTORY. Governmental entities shall submit data in accordance with state and federal law. Upon receipt of data, the third-party contractor shall verify the list of

data elements received from data contributors within ten (10) working days of receipt.

Upon verification of the list of fields, tables, and relationships between tables by the data contributor, the data shall undergo the complete LifeTracks data inventory process. The complete data inventory process shall include updating or creating data dictionaries and program data mapping documents. Data dictionaries shall include metadata such as meaning, relationship to other data, origin, usage, and format. Program data mapping documents shall provide information on how data fields relate to other data fields across multiple data sets. The program data mapping document shall be used to compare and contrast data elements collected across multiple governmental entities and over time.

Source: Miss. Code Ann. §37-154-3

Rule 6.2: DATA VALIDATION. Data validation shall be the primary responsibility of the third-party contractor and undertaken in accordance with SLDS Governing Board rules and regulations and the terms of applicable MOUs. The business rules, logic, and calculation methodology provided by the governmental entity contributing the data shall be used for data validation. The objective of the data validation process shall be to verify that data transferred by governmental entities contributing data to LifeTracks mirrors data contributor internal data so that accurate reports can be produced across systems.

The data validation process shall entail individual data contributors working closely with the third-party contractor staff as part of a process designed to detect and correct inaccurate or incomplete records so that LifeTracks data will be consistent and reliable. Data validation diagnostics run to ensure high-quality, accurate, and complete data are available for LifeTracks shall include, but not be limited to:

A. Checking that all tables, records, and fields, and the full contents of each field have been successfully transmitted and read;

B. Comparing record counts between the source data and the data transmitted to the third-party contractor; and

C. Producing a report with basic summary statistics for validation by the data contributor.

Source: Miss. Code Ann. §37-154-3

Part 501 Chapter 7: REPORTS

Rule 7.2: AD HOC REQUESTS AND REPORTS. Data from LifeTracks shall be used to address requests that require data from multiple data contributors, and requests that are longitudinal in nature requiring data at different points in time.

Requests for reports involving data within a single state agency/entity shall be referred to the relevant state agency/entity.

Requests from the following entities will be provided as a result of state money appropriated to fund the maintenance and operation of the SLDS:

A. Office of Workforce Development;

B. Governor's Office;

C. Lt. Governor and Senate Committee Chairs;

D. Speaker of the House and House Committee Chairs;

E. Mississippi Development Authority.

Third party contractor shall notice SLDS Governing Board members of all requests upon receipt of requests.

Notices to the SLDS Governing Board shall be made via email to Board members. The notifications shall include the feasibility of satisfying the request and, if feasible, a brief description of data sources required to meet the requests. The purpose of the notices to inform Board members of data requests on a timely basis and provide Board members an opportunity to inquire about or provide input to the third-party contractor concurrent with the production of the report.

Public agencies contributing data to the SLDS may request up to 5 reports per state fiscal year with additional reports provided upon approval from the Governing Board. Federally mandated reports required of the public agencies contributing data to the SLDS shall have priority over other requested reports.

Statewide elected officials may request reports from the third-party contractor. Upon request, third-party contractor shall provide the feasibility of completing the report, provide an estimate of time and cost to meet the request, and notify the Governing Board.

Requests may also be made by any other person or entity to the SLDS at public and private rates published on the official SLDS website, as approved by the SLDS. Upon request, third party contractor shall provide the feasibility of completing the report and an estimate of time and cost to meet the request. If work is completed under the estimated timeframe, cost shall decrease accordingly. If third party contractor is to exceed the estimated timeframe to perform the work, notice shall be provided to the requestor to determine if work shall proceed. The Governing Board shall be notified by the third-party contractor of all requests.

Source: *Miss. Code Ann. §37-154-3*

Chapter 8: ONLINE REPORTS. REPEALED. Effective 5/13/2023.

Part 501 Chapter 9: REPEALED. Effective 09/03/2021

Part 501 Chapter 10: PUBLIC RECORDS

Rule 10.1 Statutory authority and purpose. These public records rules are promulgated by the SLDS Governing Board in compliance with the Mississippi Public Records Act of 1983, Miss. Code Ann. §25-61-1, et seq., except as noted in 3-3.2-D of these regulations. “It is the policy of the Legislature that public records must be available for inspection by any person unless otherwise provided by this act. Furthermore, providing access to public records is a duty of each public body and automation of public records must not erode the right of access to those records.” Section 25-61-1, Miss. Code of 1972.

“[A]ll public records are hereby declared to be public property, and any person shall have the right to inspect, copy or mechanically reproduce or obtain a reproduction of any public record of a public body in accordance with reasonable written procedures adopted by the public body concerning the cost, time, place and method of access, and public notice of the procedures shall be given by the public body.” Section 25-61-5, Miss. Code of 1972.

The act defines "public record" to include any "all books, records, papers, accounts, letters, maps, photographs, films, cards, tapes, recordings or reproductions thereof, and any other documentary materials, regardless of physical form or characteristics, having been used, being in use, or prepared, possessed or retained for use in the conduct, transaction or performance of any business, transaction, work, duty or function of any public body, or required to be maintained by any public body.” Section 25-61-3(b).

The purpose of these rules is to establish the procedures the SLDS Governing Board will follow in order to provide full access to public records. These rules provide information to persons wishing to request access to public records of the SLDS Governing Board and establish processes for both requestors and SLDS Governing Board staff that are designed to best assist members of the public in obtaining such access.

The purpose of the act is to provide the public full access to public records concerning the conduct of government. The act and these rules will be interpreted in favor of disclosure. In carrying out its responsibilities under the act, the SLDS Governing Board will be guided by the provisions of the act describing its purposes and interpretation.

If the Contractor receives a public records request for information pertaining to SLDS or any data contributors, the third-party contractor shall immediately inform all SLDS Governing Board members.

Source: Miss. Code Ann. §37-154-3

Rule 10.2 Contact information. Any person wishing to request access to public records of the SLDS Governing Board, or seeking assistance in making such a request should make the request in writing to the third-party contractor. Information is also available on the LifeTracks website at www.lifetracks.ms.gov.

Source: Miss. Code Ann. §37-154-3

Rule 10.3 Availability of public records. Any person wishing to request access to public records of the SLDS Governing Board is encouraged to view the documents available on the LifeTracks website prior to submitting a records request. Meeting minutes shall be posted on Lifetracks.

A. Any person wishing to inspect or copy public records of the SLDS Governing Board should make the request in writing to the third-party contractor and including the following information:

1. Name of requestor;

2. Address of requestor;

3. Other contact information, including telephone number and any e-mail address;

4. Identification of the public records adequate so that the record may be located; and

5. The date and time of day of the request.

B. If the requestor wishes to have copies of the records made instead of simply inspecting them, he or she should so indicate and make arrangements to pay for copies of the records or a deposit. The SLDS Governing Board shall determine the cost of providing access to and/or copies of the records being requested. Upon receipt of the payment (cash, check, or money order) of the estimated costs in advance, the SLDS Governing Board will provide copies of the records.

Source: Miss. Code Ann. §37-154-3

Rule 10.4 Processing of public records requests. The SLDS Governing Board acknowledges that "providing access to public records is a duty" and that "any person shall have the right to inspect, copy or mechanically reproduce or obtain a reproduction of any public record" in accordance with these rules (Miss. Code Ann. §25-61-1 and §25-61-5). The SLDS Governing Board will process requests in the order allowing the most requests to be processed in the most efficient manner.

A. Acknowledging receipt of request. Within seven (7) business days of receipt of the request, the SLDS Governing Board designee shall provide an estimate of time required and associated cost to the requestor.

1. Make the records available for inspection or copying;

2. If copies are requested and payment of a deposit for the copies, if any, is made or terms of payment are agreed upon, send the copies to the requestor;

3. Provide a reasonable estimate of when records will be available; for records that do not fall within the provisions of Mississippi Code Annotated §25-61-9 regarding third party notification requirements, the SLDS Governing Board designee will provide a written explanation if the records cannot be produced within the seven (7) business day period;

4. If the request is unclear or does not sufficiently identify the requested records, request clarification from the requestor. Such clarification may be requested and provided by telephone. The SLDS Governing Board designee may revise the estimate of when records will be available;

5. Deny the request, with documentation to the requestor as to the reason for denial.

B. Consequences of failure to respond. If the SLDS Governing Board designee does not respond in writing within seven (7) business days of receipt of the request for disclosure, the requestor should consider contacting the SLDS Governing Board designee to determine the reason for the failure to respond.

C. Protecting rights of others. In the event that the requested records contain information that may affect rights of others and may be exempt from disclosure, the SLDS Governing Board designee may, prior to providing the records, give notice to such others whose rights may be affected by the disclosure. Such notice should be given so as to make it possible for those other persons to contact the requestor and ask him or her to revise the request, or, if necessary, seek an order from a court to prevent or limit the disclosure. The notice to the affected persons will include a copy of the request.

D. Denial of request.

1. Records exempt from disclosure. Some records are exempt from disclosure, in whole or in part. If the SLDS Governing Board designee believes that a record is exempt from disclosure and should be withheld, the SLDS Governing Board designee will state the specific exemption and provide a brief explanation of why the record or a portion of the record is being withheld. If only a portion of a record is exempt from disclosure, but the remainder is not exempt, the SLDS Governing Board designee will redact

the exempt portions, provide the nonexempt portions, and indicate to the requestor why portions of the record are being redacted.

2. Record does not exist or SLDS Governing Board does not have the record. The SLDS Governing Board must only provide access to public records in existence at the time of the request. If a public record is created or comes into the possession of the SLDS Governing Board after the request is received by the SLDS Governing Board, that record will not be provided. The requestor must make a new request to obtain subsequently-created public records.

E. Inspection of records. Consistent with other demands and with prior written notice by the requestor to the SLDS Governing Board, it shall promptly provide space to inspect nonexempt public records. No member of the public may remove a document from the viewing area or disassemble or alter any document. The requestor shall indicate which documents he or she wishes the public body to copy.

The requestor must claim or review the assembled records within ten (10) business days of the SLDS Governing Board notification to him or her that the records are available for inspection or copying. The SLDS Governing Board will notify the requestor in writing of this requirement and inform the requestor that he or she should contact the SLDS Governing Board to make arrangements to claim or review the records. If the requestor or a representative of the requestor fails to claim or review the records within the ten-day period or make other arrangements, the SLDS Governing Board may close the request and refile the assembled records. Other public records requests can be processed ahead of a subsequent request by the same person for the same or almost identical records, which can be processed as a new request.

F. Providing copies of records. After inspection is complete, the SLDS Governing Board shall make the requested copies or arrange for copying. The requestor must provide payment for copies at the time copies are made. Alternatively, the requestor may ask that the SLDS Governing Board provide the requested information directly to the requestor, in printed or electronic form, without prior inspection of the information by the requestor.

G. Providing records in installments. When the request is for a large number of records, the SLDS Governing Board will provide access for inspection and copying in installments, if he or she reasonably determines that it would be practical to provide the records in that way. If, within ten (10) business days, the requestor fails to inspect the entire set of records or one or more of the installments, the SLDS Governing Board or designee may stop searching for the remaining records and close the request.

H. Completion of inspection. When the inspection of the requested records is

complete and all requested copies are provided, SLDS Governing Board will indicate that it has completed a diligent search for the requested records and made any located nonexempt records available for inspection.

I. Closing withdrawn or abandoned request. When the requestor either withdraws the request or fails to fulfill his or her obligations to inspect the records or pay required fees, the SLDS Governing Board will close the request and indicate to the requestor that the SLDS Governing Board has closed the request.

J. Later discovered documents. If, after the SLDS Governing Board has informed the requestor that it has provided all available records, the SLDS Governing Board becomes aware of additional responsive documents existing at the time of the request, it will promptly inform the requestor and data contributors of the additional documents and provide them on an expedited basis

Source: Miss. Code Ann. §37-154-3

Rule 10.5 Processing of public records requests for electronic records.

With the consent of the requestor, the SLDS Governing Board may provide customized access if the record is not reasonably locatable or not reasonably translatable into the format requested. The SLDS Governing Board may charge the actual cost for such customized access.

Source: Miss. Code Ann. §37-154-3

Rule 10.6 Exemptions. The Public Records Act, as well as other statues and court decisions, provide that a number of types of documents are exempt from public inspection and copying. In addition, other statutes or rules of law, such as various privacy restrictions, may prohibit disclosure. Requestors should be aware of the following exemptions, outside the Public Records Act, that restrict the availability of some documents held by the SLDS Governing Board for inspection and copying. This list is provided for informational purposes only and may not be all- inclusive:

- Academic records exempt from public access, see § 37-11-51.
- Appraisal records exempt from access, see § 31-1-27.
- Archaeological records exempt from public access, see § 39-7-41.
- Attorney work product, examination, exemption, see § 25-1-102.
- Birth Defects Registry, see § 41-21-205.
- Bureau of vital statistics, access to records, see § 41-57-2.

- Charitable organizations, registration information, exemption from public access, see § 79-11-527.
- Concealed pistols or revolvers, licenses to carry, records, exemption, see § 45-9-101.
- Confidentiality, ambulatory surgical facilities, see § 41-75-19.
- Defendants likely to flee or physically harm themselves or others, see § 41- 32-7.
- Environmental self-evaluation reports, public records act, exemption, see § 49-2-71.
- Hospital records, Mississippi Public Records Act exemption, see § 41-9-68.
- Individual tax records in possession of public body, exemption from public access requirements, see § 27-3-77.
- Insurance and insurance companies, risk based capital level requirements, reports, see § 83-5-415.
- Judicial records, public access, exemption, see § 9-1-38.
- Jury records exempt from public records provisions, see § 13-5-97.
- Licensure application and examination records exemption from Public Records Act, see § 73-52-1.
- Medical examiner, records and reports, see § 41-61-63.
- Personnel files exempt from examination, see § 25-1-100.
- Public records and trade secrets, proprietary commercial and financial information, exemption from public access, see § 79-23-1.
- Workers' compensation, access to records, see § 71-3-66.
- Records subject to privilege, such as Attorney/Client, Physician/Patient, etc.

SLDS Governing Board will describe why each withheld record or redacted portion of a record is exempt from disclosure.

Source: Miss. Code Ann. §37-154-3

Rule 10.7 Third-party information. Upon request to inspect or copy any third-party document, the SLDS Governing Board shall notify the third party who filed the document. Seven (7) working days after such notice, the document will be made available for public inspection and/or copying unless the third party shall have either (i) obtained a court order protecting such records as confidential pursuant to Section 25-61-9, Miss. Code of 1972 or (ii) furnished the SLDS Governing Board a copy of the filed petition for a protective court order, providing the petition was timely filed upon the third party's receipt of notification from the SLDS Governing Board regarding the request for information.

The third party must prove to the court's satisfaction that the record or portion of the records is exempt from disclosure and must deliver the court order preventing the release of all or part of the information to the SLDS Governing Board prior to the deadline to prevent

disclosure of the information. The third party must name the requestor as a party to any action to enjoin disclosure.

The SLDS Governing Board will not make a determination as to whether a requested record provided by a third party contains trade secrets or confidential commercial or financial information. The SLDS Governing Board will provide the third-party notice as outlined above and allow the court to determine if a protective order should be issued.

Documents are frequently produced by the SLDS Governing Board that contain specific information directly obtained from a third party and, as such, may be subject to third party notice as described above.

Source: Miss. Code Ann. §37-154-3

Rule 10.8 Costs for fulfilling a request. Costs of providing public records shall be determined in accordance with Miss. Code Ann. §25-61-7(1) that reads as follows: "Except as provided in subsection (2) of this section, each public body may establish and collect fees reasonably calculated to reimburse it for, and in no case to exceed, the actual cost of searching, reviewing and/or duplicating and, if applicable, mailing copies of public records."

A. A requestor may obtain standard black and white photocopies for 15 cents per page and color copies for 15 cents per page. Copy charges for some specific types of records are set by statute and may exceed the amount stated above. Before copies can be made and/or provided to the requestor, the requestor must pre-pay all reasonably estimated costs of copying all the records selected by the requestor. The SLDS Governing Board may also require the payment of the remainder of the copying costs before providing all the records in an installment before providing that installment. The SLDS Governing Board will not charge sales tax when it makes copies of public records.

B. Costs for electronic records. The cost of electronic copies of records shall be specified as the media cost for a CD. The cost of scanning existing SLDS Governing Board paper or other non-electronic records will be calculated at the hourly service rate. There will be no charge for e-mailing electronic records to a requestor, unless another cost applies such as a scanning fee or system costs.

C. Costs of mailing. The SLDS Governing Board may also charge actual costs of mailing, including the cost of the shipping container.

D. Payment. Payment may be made by cash, check, or money order to the SLDS Governing Board for the amount specified.

E. Charges for searching, reviewing and redacting. The actual cost of searching for and reviewing and, if necessary, redacting exempt information from public

records shall be based upon the hourly service rate multiplied by the actual time to complete the task.

Source: Miss. Code Ann. §37-154-3

Rule 10.9 Review by Ethics Commission. Pursuant to Section 25-61-13, if the SLDS Governing Board denies a requestor access to public records, the requestor may ask the Ethics Commission to review the matter. The Ethics Commission has adopted rules on such requests. They may be found at www.ethics.state.ms.us.

Any person whose request for public records was denied may institute a suit in the chancery court of Hinds County, seeking to reverse the denial, as set forth in Section 25-61-13.

Source: Miss. Code Ann. §37-154-3

Part 501 Chapter 11: RULEMAKING ORAL PROCEEDINGS

Rule 11.1 Rulemaking oral proceedings. These rules apply to all oral proceedings held for the purpose of providing the public with an opportunity to make oral presentations or written input on proposed new rules, amendments to rules, and proposed repeal of existing rules for the SLDS Governing Board.

When a political subdivision, an agency, or ten (10) persons request an oral proceeding in regards to a proposed rule adoption, the requestor must submit a printed, typewritten, or legibly handwritten request.

A. Each request must be submitted on 8-1/2" x 11" white paper.

B. The request may be in the form of a letter addressed to the Chair of the SLDS Governing Board or in the form of a pleading as if filed with a court.

C. Each request must include the full name, telephone numbers, and mailing address of the requestor(s).

D. All requests shall be signed by the person filing the request, unless represented by an attorney, in which case the attorney may sign the request.

Notice of the date, time, and place of all oral proceedings shall be filed with the Secretary of State's Office for publication in the Administrative Bulletin. The SLDS Governing Board shall provide notice of oral proceedings to all persons requesting notification of proposed rule adoptions. The oral proceedings will be scheduled no earlier than twenty (20) days from the filing of the notice with the Secretary of State. The Chair of the SLDS Governing Board

or designee who is familiar with the substance of the proposed rule shall preside at the oral proceeding on a proposed rule.

Public participation shall be permitted at oral proceedings, as follows:

A. At an oral proceeding on a proposed rule, persons may make statements and present documentary and physical submissions concerning the proposed rule.

B. Persons wishing to make oral presentations at such a proceeding shall notify the Chair of the SLDS Governing Board at least three (3) business days prior to the proceeding and indicate the general subject of their presentations. The presiding officer in his or her discretion may allow individuals to participate that have not contacted the SLDS Governing Board prior to the proceeding.

C. At the proceeding, those who participate shall indicate their names and addresses, identify any persons or organizations they may represent, and provide any other information relating to their participation deemed appropriate by the presiding officer.

D. The presiding officer may place time limitations on individual presentations when necessary to assure the orderly and expeditious conduct of the oral proceeding. To encourage joint presentations and to avoid repetition, additional time may be provided for persons whose presentations represent the views of other individuals as well as their own views.

E. Persons making presentations are encouraged to avoid restating matters that have already been submitted in writing. Written materials may be submitted at the oral proceeding.

F. Where time permits and to facilitate the exchange of information, the presiding officer may open the floor to questions or general discussion. The presiding officer may question participants and permit the questioning of participants by other participants about any matter relating to that rule-making proceeding, including any prior written submissions made by those participants in that proceeding. No participant shall be required to answer any question.

Physical and documentary submissions presented by participants in an oral proceeding shall be submitted to the presiding officer. Such submissions become the property of the SLDS Governing Board, part of the rulemaking record, and are subject to the SLDS Governing Board public records request procedure. The SLDS Governing Board may record oral proceedings by stenographic or electronic means.

Source: Miss. Code Ann. §37-154-3

Part 501 Chapter 12: DECLARATORY OPINIONS

Introduction. These rules and regulations govern the form, content, and filing of requests for declaratory opinion, the procedural rights of persons in relation to the written requests, and the SLDS Governing Board's procedures regarding the disposition of requests as required by Miss. Code Ann. §25-43-2.103.

Rule 12.1 Declaratory Opinions. The SLDS Governing Board will issue declaratory opinions regarding the applicability to specified facts of:

A. A statute administered or enforceable by the SLDS Governing Board;

B. A rule or regulation promulgated by the SLDS Governing Board; or,

C. An order issued by the SLDS Governing Board.

A request must be limited to a single transaction or occurrence.

When a person with substantial interest, as required by Miss. Code Annotated §25-43-2.103, requests a declaratory opinion, the requestor must submit a printed, typewritten, or legibly handwritten request.

A. Each request must be submitted on 8-1/2" x 11" white paper.

B. The request may be in the form of a letter addressed to the Chair of the SLDS Governing Board or in the form of a pleading as if filed with a court.

C. Each request must include the full name, telephone numbers, and mailing address of the requestor(s).

D. All requests shall be signed by the person filing the request, unless represented by an attorney, in which case the attorney may sign the request.

E. Each request must clearly state that it is a request for a declaratory opinion.

Any party who signs the request shall attest that the request complies with the requirements set forth in these rules, including but not limited to a full, complete, and accurate statement of relevant facts and that there are no related proceedings pending before any agency, administrative, or judicial tribunal.

Each request must contain the following:

A. A clear identification of the statute, rule, regulation, or order at issue;

B. The question for the declaratory opinion;

C. A clear and concise statement of all facts relevant to the question presented;

D. The identity of all other known persons involved in or impacted by the facts giving rise to the request including their relationship to the facts, and their name, mailing address, and telephone number; and,

E. A statement sufficient to show that the requestor has a substantial interest in the subject matter of the request.

The SLDS Governing Board may, for good cause, refuse to issue a declaratory opinion. The circumstances in which declaratory opinions will not be issued include, but are not necessarily limited to the following:

A. The matter is outside the primary jurisdiction of the SLDS Governing Board;

B. There is a lack of clarity concerning the question presented;

C. There is pending or anticipated litigation, administrative action or anticipated administrative action, or other adjudication which may either answer the question presented by the request or otherwise make an answer unnecessary;

D. The statute, rule, or order on which a declaratory opinion is sought is clear and not in need of interpretation to answer the question presented by the request;

E. The facts presented in the request are not sufficient to answer the question presented;

F. The request fails to contain information required by these rules or the requestor failed to follow the procedure set forth in these rules;

G. The request seeks to resolve issues which have become moot or are abstract or hypothetical such that the requestor is not substantially affected by the rule, statute, or order on which a declaratory opinion is sought;

H. No controversy exists or is certain to arise which raises a question concerning the application of the statute, rule, or order;

I. The question presented by the request concerns the legal validity of a statute, rule, or order;

J. The request is not based upon facts calculated to aid in the planning of future conduct, but is, instead, based on past conduct in an effort to establish the effect of that conduct;

K. No clear answer is determinable;

L. The question presented by the request involves the application of a criminal statute or sets forth facts which may constitute a crime;

M. The answer to the question presented would require the disclosure of information which is privileged or otherwise protected by law from disclosure;

N. The question is currently the subject of an Attorney General's opinion request;

O. The question has been answered by an Attorney General's opinion;

P. One or more requestors have standing to seek an Attorney General's opinion on the proffered question;

Q. A similar request is pending before this agency, or any other agency, or a proceeding is pending on the same subject matter before any agency, administrative or judicial tribunal, or where such an opinion would constitute the unauthorized practice of law; or,

R. The question involves eligibility for a license, permit, certificate, or other approval by the SLDS Governing Board or some other agency and there is a statutory or regulatory application process by which eligibility for said license, permit, or certificate or other approval may be determined.

Within forty-five (45) days after the receipt of a request for a declaratory opinion which complies with the requirements of these rules, the SLDS Governing Board shall, in writing:

A. Issue an opinion declaring the applicability of the statute, rule, or order to the specified circumstances;

B. Agree to issue a declaratory opinion by a specified time but no later than ninety (90) days after receipt of the written request; or,

C. Decline to issue a declaratory opinion, stating the reasons for its action.

The forty-five (45) day period shall begin on the first business day after which the request is received by the SLDS Governing Board.

Declaratory opinions and requests for declaratory opinions shall be available for public inspection and copying at the expense of the viewer during normal business hours. All declaratory opinion and requests shall be indexed by name, subject, and date of issue. Declaratory opinions and requests which contain information which is confidential or exempt from disclosure under the Mississippi Public Records Act or other laws shall be exempt from this requirement and shall remain confidential.

Source: Miss. Code Ann. §37-154-3

Part 501 Chapter 13: REVIEW AND AUDIT

Rule 13.1 Review and Audit. These rules and regulations shall be subject to review by an SLDS Governing Board committee on annual basis as set forth by the SLDS Governing Board Chair. The SLDS Governing Board committee shall prepare a report including recommendations for any actions to be considered by the convened governing board.

Source: Miss. Code Ann. §37-154-3

Appendix C: Local Workforce Development Area Designation Policy. WIOA Policy #1

MISSISSIPPI
Policy Number 1
LOCAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AREA DESIGNATION POLICY
Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act
Office of Grant Management

I. SCOPE AND PURPOSE

Section 106 of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) requires the Governor to designate Local Workforce Development Areas within the state through consultation with the State Workforce Development Board and after consultation with the chief elected officials and comments from the general public as described in Section 102(b)(2)(E)(ii)(II). For the purposes of this policy, the term "Governor" shall mean the Governor or his designee.

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance regarding the initial and subsequent designation of Local Workforce Development Areas in Mississippi.

II. REQUIREMENTS

WIOA provides for three types of local workforce development area designation: Initial Designation, Subsequent Designation, and Designation on Recommendation of the State Board. The Governor ***shall*** approve requests for initial and subsequent designation submitted by chief elected officials, provided the area under consideration meets the applicable eligibility criteria. Under the third designation type, the Governor ***may*** approve such requests from any unit of general local government on recommendation from the State Workforce Development Board.

A. Initial Designation [Section 106(b)(2)]:

During the first two (2) full program years following the date of enactment of the Act, July 22, 2014, the Governor ***shall*** approve a request for initial designation as a local area from any area that **(a)** was designated as a local area for purposes of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 for the two-year period preceding the date of enactment of this Act, **(b)** has performed successfully, and **(c)** sustained fiscal integrity.

1. "The term ''performed successfully,'' used with respect to a local area, means the local area met or exceeded the adjusted levels of performance for primary indicators of performance described in section 116(b)(2)(A) (or, if applicable, core indicators of performance described in section 136(b)(2)(A) of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, as in effect the day before the date of enactment of this Act) for each of the last 2 consecutive years for which data are available preceding the determination of performance under this paragraph." *(The local area has achieved at least 80 percent of their local performance goal on each performance*

VII.

Appendix D: State and Regional Economic Analysis

Current Industry Structure, 2024

Table D-1: Current Natural Resources & Mining Industry Structure

Industry	Average Employment	Percent of Total Natural Resources & Mining Employment	Average Annual Wage	4th Quarter 2024 Number of Establishments
Crop Production	3,057	21.54	$37,995	670
Animal Production and Aquaculture	2,502	17.63	$50,549	197
Forestry And Logging	2,775	19.55	$52,392	455
Fishing, Hunting and Trapping	254	1.79	$80,340	28
Agriculture And Forestry Support Activities	2,396	16.88	$53,317	379
Oil And Gas Extraction	413	2.91	$138,977	65
Mining, Except Oil And Gas	922	6.50	$72,136	52
Support Activities for Mining	1,873	13.20	$88,317	290
Total Natural Resources & Mining	**14,191**	**100.00**	**$58,165**	**2,136**

Source: MS Department of Employment Security, Labor Market Information, Census of Employment & Wages, 2024 Annual Averages
Note: Totals may not add due to rounding and confidentiality suppressions.

Table D-2: Top 10 Occupations in the Natural Resources & Mining Industry

			Hourly Wage for All Industries		
Occupation	Employment	Percent*	PCT10**	Median	PCT90***
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	1,060	13.93	$16.19	$24.38	$39.21
Logging Equipment Operators	770	10.12	$14.00	$23.03	$29.35
First-Line Supervisors of Farming, Fishing, and Forestry Workers	400	5.26	$18.69	$31.73	$48.73
Agricultural Equipment Operators	400	5.26	$9.91	$14.70	$22.00
Roustabouts, Oil and Gas	340	4.47	$16.45	$21.60	$28.32
First-Line Supervisors of Construction Trades and Extraction Workers	320	4.20	$21.13	$31.13	$49.38
Fallers	240	3.15	$14.93	$24.90	$40.63
Office Clerks, General	230	3.02	$10.00	$15.62	$23.73
Service Unit Operators, Oil and Gas	220	2.89	$18.81	$26.14	$38.84

Secretaries and Administrative Assistants, Except Legal, Medical, and Executive	190	2.50	$11.44	$17.31	$25.53
Total within Natural Resources & Mining	**7,610**		**$10.63**	**$18.78**	**$40.10**

Source: MS Department of Employment Security, Labor Market Information, Occupational Employment & Wage Statistics, 2024
Percent of all Natural Resources & Mining Industry jobs. ** Hourly 10th percentile wage. * Hourly 90th percentile wage.*

Table D-3: Current Construction Industry Structure

Industry	Average Employment	Percent of Total Construction Employment	Average Annual Wage	4th Quarter 2024 Number of Establishments
Construction Of Buildings	10,101	18.93	$71,684	1,775
Heavy And Civil Engineering Construction	14,730	27.61	$70,128	976
Specialty Trade Contractors	28,519	53.46	$62,139	4,191
Total Construction	**53,350**	**100.00**	**$66,152**	**6,942**

Source: MS Department of Employment Security, Labor Market Information, Census of Employment & Wages, 2024 Annual Averages
Note: Totals may not add due to rounding and confidentiality suppressions.

Table D-4: Top 10 Occupations in the Construction Industry

			Hourly Wage for All Industries		
Occupation	Employment	Percent*	PCT10**	Median	PCT90***
Construction Laborers	7,030	14.06	$13.95	$17.88	$24.43
First-Line Supervisors of Construction Trades and Extraction Workers	5,370	10.74	$21.13	$31.13	$49.38
Electricians	2,980	5.96	$17.72	$27.55	$34.87
Operating Engineers and Other Construction Equipment Operators	2,580	5.16	$16.28	$22.13	$31.45
Heating, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers	2,020	4.04	$17.31	$22.73	$33.83
Carpenters	1,780	3.56	$15.41	$22.19	$32.12
Office Clerks, General	1,630	3.26	$10.00	$15.62	$23.73
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	1,600	3.20	$16.19	$24.38	$39.21
Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters	1,540	3.08	$17.65	$27.87	$37.15
Construction Managers	1,330	2.66	$27.59	$45.11	$77.06
Total within Construction (Info. Infrastructure)	**50,010**		**$10.63**	**$18.78**	**$40.10**

Source: MS Department of Employment Security, Labor Market Information, Occupational Employment & Wage Statistics, 2024
Percent of all Construction Industry jobs.. ** Hourly 10th percentile wage. * Hourly 90th percentile wage.*

Table D-5: Current Manufacturing Industry Structure

Industry	Average Employment	Percent of Total Manufacturing Employment	Average Annual Wage	4th Quarter 2024 Number of Establishments
Transportation Equipment Manufacturing	27,587	19.48	$73,507	145
Food Manufacturing	24,354	17.20	$44,969	228
Furniture and Related Product Manufacturing	14,195	10.03	$42,158	189
Machinery Manufacturing	12,180	8.60	$60,710	155
Fabricated Metal Product Manufacturing	9,018	6.37	$60,158	344
Wood Product Manufacturing	8,615	6.08	$61,465	253
Plastics and Rubber Products Manufacturing	8,607	6.08	$58,958	112
Electrical Equipment and Appliance Mfg.	7,204	5.09	$61,028	43
Chemical Manufacturing	5,972	4.22	$82,019	143
Paper Manufacturing	4,342	3.07	$82,288	57
Primary Metal Manufacturing	3,966	2.80	$87,281	38
Nonmetallic Mineral Product Manufacturing	3,681	2.60	$67,078	166
Petroleum and Coal Products Manufacturing	2,720	1.92	$142,101	39
Miscellaneous Manufacturing	2,154	1.52	$52,356	165
Computer & Electronic Product Manufacturing	1,999	1.41	$69,768	29
Textile Mills	1,140	0.81	$65,908	19
Printing and Related Support Activities	1,128	0.80	$50,215	171
Apparel Manufacturing	911	0.64	$47,954	27
Textile Product Mills	773	0.55	$38,530	42
Total Manufacturing	**141,595**	**100.00**	**$62,276**	**2,404**

Source: MS Department of Employment Security, Labor Market Information, Census of Employment & Wages, 2024 Annual Averages Note: Totals may not add due to rounding and confidentiality suppressions.

Table D-6: Top 10 Occupations in the Manufacturing Industry

			Hourly Wage for All Industries		
Occupation	Employment	Percent*	PCT10**	Median	PCT90***
Miscellaneous Assemblers and Fabricators	12,980	9.08	$13.66	$19.35	$30.99
First-Line Supervisors of Production and Operating Workers	7,680	5.37	$18.61	$31.01	$51.91

Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	6,750	4.72	$13.24	$17.27	$22.53
Meat, Poultry, and Fish Cutters and Trimmers	5,110	3.57	$13.23	$16.64	$19.98
Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Brazers	5,040	3.53	$17.23	$23.80	$30.29
Inspectors, Testers, Sorters, Samplers, and Weighers	4,730	3.31	$13.59	$19.03	$30.96
Industrial Machinery Mechanics	3,470	2.43	$18.36	$27.51	$40.73
Packaging and Filling Machine Operators and Tenders	3,150	2.20	$12.56	$17.82	$22.20
Helpers--Production Workers	3,130	2.19	$12.31	$15.34	$22.03
Shipping, Receiving, and Inventory Clerks	3,040	2.13	$13.89	$18.19	$25.00
Total within Manufacturing	**142,960**		**$10.63**	**$18.78**	**$40.10**

Source: MS Department of Employment Security, Labor Market Information, Occupational Employment & Wage Statistics, 2024
** Percent of all Manufacturing Industry jobs. ** Hourly 10th percentile wage. *** Hourly 90th percentile wage.*

Table D-7: Current Wholesale/Retail Trade Industry Structure

Industry	Average Employment	Percent of Total Whsl/Retail Trade Employment	Average Annual Wage	4th Quarter 2024 Number of Establishments
General Merchandise Retailers	38,725	22.02	$27,750	1,345
Merchant Wholesalers, Durable Goods	20,817	11.84	$79,155	3,300
Motor Vehicle and Parts Dealers	18,937	10.77	$54,073	1,577
Food And Beverage Stores	18,121	10.31	$25,558	1,231
Gasoline Stations and Fuel Dealers	14,956	8.51	$26,034	2,458
Merchant Wholesalers, Nondurable Goods	14,374	8.17	$69,302	1,633
Building Material and Garden Supply Stores	13,996	7.96	$38,830	903
Sporting Goods, Hobby, Musical Instrument, Book, and Miscellaneous Retailers	11,060	6.29	$29,999	1,644
Health and Personal Care Retailers	10,031	5.70	$41,800	1,141
Clothing, Clothing Accessories, Shoe, and Jewelry Retailers	8,408	4.78	$22,035	1,317
Furniture, Home Furnishings, Electronics, and Appliance Retailers	4,896	2.78	$41,646	792
Electronic Markets And Agents and Brokers	1,518	0.86	$95,494	639
Total Wholesale/Retail Trade	**175,837**	**100.00**	**$42,219**	**17,980**

Source: MS Department of Employment Security, Labor Market Information, Census of Employment & Wages, 2024 Annual Averages
Note: Totals may not add due to rounding and confidentiality suppressions.

Table D-8: Top 10 Occupations in the Wholesale/Retail Trade Industry

			Hourly Wage for All Industries		
Occupation	**Employment**	**Percent***	**PCT10****	**Median**	**PCT90*****
Retail Salespersons	34,120	19.22	$9.98	$13.37	$19.17
Cashiers	25,750	14.51	$8.65	$10.77	$14.58
Stockers and Order Fillers	17,600	9.91	$11.95	$16.68	$23.04
First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers	12,480	7.03	$13.19	$20.72	$33.81
Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	6,780	3.82	$13.24	$17.27	$22.53
Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Except Technical and Scientific Products	5,250	2.96	$13.23	$27.63	$53.51
Customer Service Representatives	4,180	2.35	$13.43	$17.11	$23.18
Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics	4,070	2.29	$13.64	$18.30	$36.50
General and Operations Managers	3,750	2.11	$20.13	$42.45	$101.22
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	3,650	2.06	$16.19	$24.38	$39.21
Total within Wholesale/Retail Trade	**177,510**		**$10.63**	**$18.78**	**$40.10**

Source: MS Department of Employment Security, Labor Market Information, Occupational Employment & Wage Statistics, 2024
Percent of all Wholesale/Retail Trade Industry jobs. ** Hourly 10th percentile wage. * Hourly 90th percentile wage.*

Table D-9: Current Leisure and Hospitality Industry Structure

Industry	Average Employment	Percent of Total Leisure & Hospitality Employment	Average Annual Wage	4th Quarter 2024 Number of Establishments
Food Services and Drinking Places	101,258	72.33	$19,931	383
Accommodation	26,068	18.62	$32,006	615
Amusement, Gambling, and Recreation Industries	10,405	7.43	$23,254	447
Performing Arts, Spectator Sports, and Related Industries	1,347	0.96	$33,661	647
Museums, Historical Sites, and Similar Institutions	910	0.65	$38,893	748
Total Leisure & Hospitality	**139,998**	**100.00**	**$22,680**	**7,851**

Source: MS Department of Employment Security, Labor Market Information, Census of Employment & Wages, 2024 Annual Averages Note: Totals may not add due to rounding and confidentiality suppressions.

Appendix E: Characteristics of Individuals with Employment Barriers

Table E-1: Demographic and Economic Characteristics of People with Disabilities

Group	Number	Percent*
Total Disabled Population	527,167	-
Total Ages 18-64	271,953	-
RACE (All Ages)		
Black	186,458	35.4
White	302,375	57.4
American Indian	2,579	0.5
Others	10,015	1.9
GENDER (All Ages)		
Female	279,750	53.1
Male	247,417	46.9
AGE (Ages 18-64)		
18 - 34	69,771	25.7
35 - 64	202,182	74.3
EDUCATION (Ages 25+)		
Less than High School Graduate	83,118	18.6
High School Diploma/GED	151,489	33.9
Some College/Associate Degree	138,083	30.9
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	73,734	16.5
ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS (Age 16+)		
Employed Rate	128,664	26.3
Median Earnings	$31,496	-
TYPE OF DISABILITY (Ages 18-64)**		
Hearing Difficulty	41,785	15.4
Vision Difficulty	67,921	25.0
Cognitive Difficulty	120,046	44.1
Ambulatory Difficulty	120,448	44.3
Self-care Difficulty	41,267	15.2
Independent Living Difficulty	91,693	33.7

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS data, 2024 1-Year estimates.
Note: May not total to 100 percent due to rounding.
** Percent of disability population*
***Individuals may have more than one type of disability, so these numbers and percentages, when added, may be greater than the total number of individuals and 100 percent, respectively.*

Table E-2: Characteristics of Temporary Assistance for Needy Family (TANF) Program Work-Eligible Recipients

Group	Number	Percent
Total TANF Recipients	4805	-
Total Ages 18-64	576	-
RACE (Ages 18-64)		
Black	512	88.9
White	57	9.9
American Indian	<10	-
Others	<10	-
GENDER (Ages 18-64)		
Female	554	96.2
Male	22	3.8
AGE (Ages 18-64)		
18 – 25	182	31.6
26 – 35	290	50.3
36 – 45	92	16.0
46 – 64	12	2.1
EDUCATION (Ages 18-64)		
Less than High School Graduate	152	26.4
High School Diploma/GED	56	9.7
Some College	287	49.8
Not Available	81	14.1
ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS (Ages 18-64)		
Employment Rate for the cohort 2025*		73.8
Median Earnings for the cohort 2025*	$9,953	
Employment Rate One Year After Exit for the cohort 2024*		75.6
Average Earnings One Year After Exit for the cohort 2024*	$14,590	

Source: Mississippi Department of Human Services, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, 2025; Mississippi Department of Employment Security, 2025.

Note: May not total to 100 percent due to rounding.

**: This data is preliminary, which may be revised.*

Table E-3: Characteristics of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Recipients

Group	Number	Percent
Total SNAP Recipients	503,841	-
Total Ages 18-64	180,501	-
RACE (Ages 18-64)		

Black	108,779	60.3
White	66,238	36.7
American Indian	968	0.5
Others	4,516	2.5
GENDER (Ages 18-64)		
Female	114,846	63.6
Male	65,655	36.4
AGE (Ages 18-64)		
18 - 25	28,857	16.0
26 - 35	36,981	20.5
36 - 45	41,066	22.8
46 - 64	73,597	40.8
EDUCATION (Ages 18-64)		
Less than High School Graduate	33,503	18.6
High School Diploma/GED	14,487	8.0
Some College	47,852	26.5
Not Available	84,659	46.9
ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS (Ages 18-64)		
Employment Rate for the cohort 2025*		43.9
Median Earnings for the cohort 2025*	$17,762	
Employment Rate One Year After Exit for the cohort 2024*		56.6
Average Earnings One Year After Exit for the cohort 2024*	$21,385	

Source: Mississippi Department of Human Services, 2025; Mississippi Department of Employment Security, 2025. Note: May not total to 100 percent due to rounding
**: This data is preliminary, which may be revised.*

Table E-4: Characteristics of Ex-Offenders

Group	Number	Percent
Total Ex-Offenders	7,045	-
Total Ages 18-64	6,880	-
RACE (Ages 18-64)		
Black	3,739	54.3
White	3,045	44.3
American Indian	21	0.3
Others	75	1.1
GENDER (Ages 18-64)		
Female	855	12.4
Male	6,025	87.6

AGE (Ages 18-64)		
18 - 25	569	8.3
26 - 35	2,155	31.3
36 - 45	2,388	34.7
46 - 64	1,768	25.7
EDUCATION (Ages 18-64)		
Less than High School Graduate	2,726	39.6
High School Diploma/GED	666	9.7
Some College	1,031	15.0
Not Available	2,457	35.7
ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS (Ages 18-64)		
Employment Rate for the cohort 2025*		33.0
Median Earnings for the cohort 2025*	$12,761	

Source: Mississippi Department of Corrections, 2025; Mississippi Department of Employment Security, 2025. Note: May not total to 100 percent due to rounding.
**: This data is preliminary, which may be revised.*

Appendix F: Projected Labor Market Trends

Table F-1: Top 20 Occupations in Advanced Manufacturing Industry with the Highest Projected Job Growth

Occupation	10-Year Projected Growth	Job Openings in FY2025
Electrical, Electronic, and Electromechanical Assemblers, Except Coil Winders, Tapers, and Finishers	1,543	51
Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Brazers	464	729
Electricians	389	116
Industrial Engineers	329	315
Industrial Machinery Mechanics	303	44
First-Line Supervisors of Production and Operating Workers	283	419
Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	255	60
Miscellaneous Assemblers and Fabricators	250	<10
Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters	213	232
Coating, Painting, and Spraying Machine Setters, Operators, and Tenders	169	76
Machinists	155	181
Logisticians	117	39
General and Operations Managers	102	69
Mechanical Engineers	95	84
Software Developers	85	<10
Commercial and Industrial Designers	84	37
Production, Planning, and Expediting Clerks	73	150
Computer Numerically Controlled Tool Operators	71	<10
Petroleum Pump System Operators, Refinery Operators, and Gaugers	68	21
Industrial Production Managers	65	48

Source: MS Department of Employment Security, Labor Market Information, Occupational Projections, 2022-2032, and MS Works, Job Openings, FY2025

Table F-2: Top 20 Occupations in Aerospace, Space & Defense Industry with the Highest Projected Job Growth

Occupation	10-Year Projected Growth	Job Openings in FY2025
Electrical, Electronic, and Electromechanical Assemblers, Except Coil Winders, Tapers, and Finishers	1,008	125
Software Developers	839	42
Stockers and Order Fillers	723	79
Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	705	86
Industrial Truck and Tractor Operators	488	250

Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Brazers	426	622
Electricians	375	145
Industrial Machinery Mechanics	318	63
Industrial Engineers	230	425
First-Line Supervisors of Production and Operating Workers	226	428
Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters	218	92
Machinists	212	119
General and Operations Managers	182	165
Logisticians	143	113
Coating, Painting, and Spraying Machine Setters, Operators, and Tenders	140	61
First-Line Supervisors of Transportation and Material-Moving Workers, Except Aircraft Cargo Handling Supervisors	132	<10
Information Security Analysts	124	26
Computer and Information Systems Managers	119	169
Computer User Support Specialists	116	87
Production, Planning, and Expediting Clerks	108	177

Source: MS Department of Employment Security, Labor Market Information, Occupational Projections, 2022-2032, and MS Works, Job Openings, FY2025

Table F-3: Top 20 Occupations in Agriculture, Food & Beverage Industry with the Highest Projected Job Growth

Occupation	10-Year Projected Growth	Job Openings in FY2025
Stockers and Order Fillers	487	110
Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	337	33
Meat, Poultry, and Fish Cutters and Trimmers	264	3,020
Farmworkers, Farm, Ranch, and Aquacultural Animals	196	492
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	176	166
Agricultural Equipment Operators	137	1,365
First-Line Supervisors of Production and Operating Workers	112	52
Driver/Sales Workers	112	113
Packers and Packagers, Hand	106	325
Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Except Technical and Scientific Products	96	52
Industrial Machinery Mechanics	87	<10
General and Operations Managers	84	23
Industrial Truck and Tractor Operators	74	42

Maintenance and Repair Workers, General	70	91
First-Line Supervisors of Transportation and Material-Moving Workers, Except Aircraft Cargo Handling Supervisors	63	<10
Packaging and Filling Machine Operators and Tenders	50	12
Light Truck Drivers	50	63
Bakers	39	31
Butchers and Meat Cutters	35	92
Inspectors, Testers, Sorters, Samplers, and Weighers	34	27

Source: MS Department of Employment Security, Labor Market Information, Occupational Projections, 2022-2032, and MS Works, Job Openings, FY2025

Table F-4: Top 20 Occupations in Automotive & Related Manufacturing Industry with the Highest Projected Job Growth

Occupation	10-Year Projected Growth	Job Openings in FY2025
Electrical, Electronic, and Electromechanical Assemblers, Except Coil Winders, Tapers, and Finishers	332	<10
Miscellaneous Assemblers and Fabricators	144	<10
Industrial Machinery Mechanics	136	<10
First-Line Supervisors of Production and Operating Workers	122	19
Industrial Engineers	106	26
Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Brazers	72	24
Stockers and Order Fillers	62	<10
Coating, Painting, and Spraying Machine Setters, Operators, and Tenders	46	<10
Industrial Truck and Tractor Operators	39	<10
Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	36	<10
Machinists	28	19
Production, Planning, and Expediting Clerks	25	<10
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	23	12
Inspectors, Testers, Sorters, Samplers, and Weighers	22	<10
Mixing and Blending Machine Setters, Operators, and Tenders	18	<10
Industrial Production Managers	17	<10
Mechanical Engineers	17	<10
Logisticians	17	<10
Maintenance and Repair Workers, General	17	<10
Architectural and Engineering Managers	12	<10
Production Workers, All Other	12	42

Source: MS Department of Employment Security, Labor Market Information, Occupational Projections, 2022-2032, and MS Works, Job Openings, FY2025

Table F-5: Top 20 Occupations in Data Centers & Information Technology Industry with the Highest Projected Job Growth

Occupation	10-Year Projected Growth	Job Openings in FY2025
Software Developers	713	31
Telecommunications Equipment Installers and Repairers, Except Line Installers	134	24
Computer User Support Specialists	109	22
Computer and Information Systems Managers	104	121
Information Security Analysts	91	12
Computer Systems Analysts	55	16
Computer Network Support Specialists	50	<10
Telecommunications Line Installers and Repairers	50	<10
Software Quality Assurance Analysts and Testers	46	12
General and Operations Managers	42	76
Computer Occupations, All Other	38	<10
Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	31	12
Network and Computer Systems Administrators	29	28
Management Analysts	27	166
Sales Representatives of Services, Except Advertising, Insurance, Financial Services, and Travel	26	21
Web Developers	26	<10
Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Brazers	26	19
Market Research Analysts and Marketing Specialists	25	97
Electricians	20	<10
Project Management Specialists	18	<10

Source: MS Department of Employment Security, Labor Market Information, Occupational Projections, 2022-2032, and MS Works, Job Openings, FY2025

Table F-6: Top 20 Occupations in Distribution & Logistics Industry with the Highest Projected Job Growth

Occupation	10-Year Projected Growth	Job Openings in FY2025
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	1,249	568
Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	1,057	116
Stockers and Order Fillers	705	33
Industrial Truck and Tractor Operators	513	71
Light Truck Drivers	332	106

First-Line Supervisors of Transportation and Material-Moving Workers, Except Aircraft Cargo Handling Supervisors	251	<10
Construction Laborers	203	39
Postal Service Mail Carriers	201	<10
Production, Planning, and Expediting Clerks	97	20
General and Operations Managers	96	42
Transportation, Storage, and Distribution Managers	89	26
First-Line Supervisors of Construction Trades and Extraction Workers	85	19
Logisticians	80	313
Operating Engineers and Other Construction Equipment Operators	79	11
Shuttle Drivers and Chauffeurs	74	24
Training and Development Specialists	68	34
Aircraft Mechanics and Service Technicians	62	132
Packers and Packagers, Hand	52	19
Postal Service Clerks	50	<10
Railroad Conductors and Yardmasters	48	39

Source: MS Department of Employment Security, Labor Market Information, Occupational Projections, 2022-2032, and MS Works, Job Openings, FY2025

Table F-7: Top 20 Occupations in Energy & Related Industry with the Highest Projected Job Growth

Occupation	10-Year Projected Growth	Job Openings in FY2025
Electrical, Electronic, and Electromechanical Assemblers, Except Coil Winders, Tapers, and Finishers	643	35
Construction Laborers	266	80
Electrical Power-Line Installers and Repairers	243	33
Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	154	31
First-Line Supervisors of Construction Trades and Extraction Workers	136	33
Electrical Engineers	102	199
General and Operations Managers	99	68
Industrial Machinery Mechanics	95	<10
Civil Engineers	83	141
Operating Engineers and Other Construction Equipment Operators	83	25
Industrial Engineers	70	102
Telecommunications Line Installers and Repairers	66	<10
Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Except Technical and Scientific Products	61	15
First-Line Supervisors of Production and Operating Workers	58	98

Roustabouts, Oil and Gas	58	<10
Mechanical Engineers	56	69
Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Brazers	55	53
First-Line Supervisors of Mechanics, Installers, and Repairers	52	48
Construction Managers	47	55
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	45	66
Electricians	45	49

Source: MS Department of Employment Security, Labor Market Information, Occupational Projections, 2022-2032, and MS Works, Job Openings, FY2025

Table F-8: Top 20 Occupations in Forestry, Chemicals & Related Industry with the Highest Projected Job Growth

Occupation	10-Year Projected Growth	Job Openings in FY2025
Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	265	104
Industrial Machinery Mechanics	260	66
First-Line Supervisors of Production and Operating Workers	167	195
Industrial Truck and Tractor Operators	123	75
Paper Goods Machine Setters, Operators, and Tenders	115	12
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	112	160
Stockers and Order Fillers	79	19
Packaging and Filling Machine Operators and Tenders	67	32
Electricians	64	72
Industrial Engineers	63	137
General and Operations Managers	57	55
Miscellaneous Assemblers and Fabricators	55	<10
Chemical Equipment Operators and Tenders	52	<10
Agricultural Equipment Operators	48	<10
Farmworkers, Farm, Ranch, and Aquacultural Animals	47	<10
Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Except Technical and Scientific Products	45	11
Production, Planning, and Expediting Clerks	41	35
Mixing and Blending Machine Setters, Operators, and Tenders	39	<10
Inspectors, Testers, Sorters, Samplers, and Weighers	35	60
Millwrights	35	34

Source: MS Department of Employment Security, Labor Market Information, Occupational Projections, 2022-2032, and MS Works, Job Openings, FY2025

Table F-9: Top 20 Occupations in Healthcare & Support Industry with the Highest Projected Job Growth

Occupation	10-Year Projected Growth	Job Openings in FY2025
Registered Nurses	1,658	3,941
Home Health and Personal Care Aides	1,604	<10
Nurse Practitioners	1,592	73
Medical and Health Services Managers	1,166	407
Nursing Assistants	852	525
Stockers and Order Fillers	705	49
Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	493	68
Industrial Truck and Tractor Operators	449	60
Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	425	1,185
Medical Assistants	387	438
Physical Therapist Assistants	281	116
Physical Therapists	258	275
Respiratory Therapists	212	179
Medical Secretaries and Administrative Assistants	182	342
Speech-Language Pathologists	182	84
Clinical Laboratory Technologists and Technicians	168	<10
General and Operations Managers	165	46
Occupational Therapists	155	99
First-Line Supervisors of Transportation and Material-Moving Workers, Except Aircraft Cargo Handling Supervisors	124	<10
Substance Abuse, Behavioral Disorder, and Mental Health Counselors	123	<10

Source: MS Department of Employment Security, Labor Market Information, Occupational Projections, 2022-2032, and MS Works, Job Openings, FY2025

Table F-10: Top 10 Occupations in Information Infrastructure Industry with the Highest Projected Job Growth

Occupation	10-Year Projected Growth	Job Openings in FY2025
Construction Laborers	1,189	406
Electricians	668	71
First-Line Supervisors of Construction Trades and Extraction Workers	635	54
Heating, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers	386	32
Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters	320	37
Operating Engineers and Other Construction Equipment Operators	315	52
Construction Managers	188	50
Carpenters	177	26
General and Operations Managers	136	24

Roofers	120	<10
Helpers--Electricians	114	18
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	112	167
Telecommunications Line Installers and Repairers	112	19
Helpers--Pipelayers, Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters	108	<10
Painters, Construction and Maintenance	101	17
Cement Masons and Concrete Finishers	86	34
Sheet Metal Workers	85	<10
Electrical Power-Line Installers and Repairers	84	45
Project Management Specialists	72	10
Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Brazers	67	43

Source: MS Department of Employment Security, Labor Market Information, Occupational Projections, 2022-2032, and MS Works, Job Openings, FY2025

Table F-11: Top 20 Occupations in Shipbuilding & Related Industry with the Highest Projected Job Growth

Occupation	10-Year Projected Growth	Job Openings in FY2025
Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Brazers	375	482
Electricians	352	78
Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters	213	103
Industrial Machinery Mechanics	163	11
Machinists	147	81
Electrical, Electronic, and Electromechanical Assemblers, Except Coil Winders, Tapers, and Finishers	135	<10
Coating, Painting, and Spraying Machine Setters, Operators, and Tenders	113	56
First-Line Supervisors of Production and Operating Workers	106	157
Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	99	27
Software Developers	97	10
Industrial Engineers	85	176
Civil Engineers	84	135
Commercial and Industrial Designers	84	<10
Sheet Metal Workers	82	31
First-Line Supervisors of Construction Trades and Extraction Workers	80	31
Construction Laborers	79	83
Mechanical Engineers	71	82

General and Operations Managers	70	51
Logisticians	47	37
Architectural and Engineering Managers	40	38
Electrical Engineers	40	188

Source: MS Department of Employment Security, Labor Market Information, Occupational Projections, 2022-2032, and MS Works, Job Openings, FY2025

Appendix G: Performance Goals for Core Programs

Table G-1: Performance Goals for Adult Program

Performance Indicators	PY 2026 Expected Level	PY 2026 Negotiated Level	PY 2027 Expected Level	PY 2027 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	90.0		90.0	
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	90.0		90.0	
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	$7,750		$7,750	
Credential Attainment Rate	67.1		67.1	
Measurable Skill Gain	67		67	

Table G-2: Performance Goals for Dislocated Worker Program

Performance Indicators	PY 2026 Expected Level	PY 2026 Negotiated Level	PY 2027 Expected Level	PY 2027 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	78.8		78.8	
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	79.3		79.3	
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	$6,868		$6,868	
Credential Attainment Rate	70.0		70.0	
Measurable Skill Gain	66.8		66.8	

Table G-3: Performance Goals for Youth Program

Performance Indicators	PY 2026 Expected Level	PY 2026 Negotiated Level	PY 2027 Expected Level	PY 2027 Negotiated Level

Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	86.8		86.8	
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	85.7		85.7	
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	$3,390		$3,390	
Credential Attainment Rate	71.6		71.6	
Measurable Skill Gain	74.7		74.7	

Table G-4: Performance Goals for Wagner-Peyser Program

Performance Indicators	PY 2026 Expected Level	PY 2026 Negotiated Level	PY 2027 Expected Level	PY 2027 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	79.5		79.5	
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	78.8		78.8	
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	$5,981		$5,981	
Credential Attainment Rate	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Measurable Skill Gain	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable

Table G-5: Adult Education Program Performance Indicators

Performance Indicators	PY 2026 Expected Level	PY 2026 Negotiated Level	PY 2027 Expected Level	PY 2027 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	58.5		58.5	

Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	60.0		60.0	
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	$4,200		$4,250	
Credential Attainment Rate	42.0		42.0	
Measurable Skill Gain	57.0		58.0	

1 Effectiveness in Serving Employers is a shared measure, as defined in OCTAE PM 17-2 Performance Accountability Guidance for Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Core Programs, available at https://www.ed.gov/sites/ed/files/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/AdultEd/octae-program-memo-17-2.pdf

Mississippi Department of Employment Security

Tate Reeves
Governor

Robin Stewart
Interim Executive Director

WIOA COMMUNICATION NUMBER: 22-004

DATE: May 8, 2023

SUBJECT: Program Year 2023 WIOA Local Area Allocations

I. BACKGROUND:

A. State Allocations

The U.S. Department of Labor has published TEGL 15-22 which announces the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) state allocation for Program Year (PY) 2023. States are required to distribute the PY 2023 allotment for WIOA Youth, Adult, and Dislocated to local workforce development areas. The amount available for the Governor's reserve has been appropriated at 15 percent. Local Workforce Development Boards should refer to TEGL 15-22 for additional guidance and explanation.

SOURCE	TOTAL STATE	STATE ACTIVITIES	LOCAL ACTIVITIES
Adult	$ 9,171,420	$ 1,375,713	$ 7,795,707
Youth	$ 9,566,263	$ 1,434,939	$ 8,131,324
Dislocated Worker	$ 12,778,348	$ 5,111,339	$ 7,667,009
TOTAL	$ 31,516,031	$ 7,921,991	$ 23,594,040

The allocations to the local areas are calculated based on the formulas described below. The allocation worksheets will be provided via e-mail upon request.

Appendix H: Sample WIOA Allocation Communication

Mississippi Department of Employment Security

Tate Reeves
Governor

Bill Ashley
Executive Director

WIOA COMMUNICATION NUMBER: 24-004

DATE: May 27, 2025

SUBJECT: Program Year 2025 WIOA Local Area Allocations

I. BACKGROUND:

A. State Allocations

The U.S. Department of Labor has published TEGL 11-24 which announces the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) state allocation for Program Year (PY) 2025. States are required to distribute the PY 2025 allotment for WIOA Youth, Adult, and Dislocated to local workforce development areas. The amount available for the Governor's reserve has been appropriated at 15 percent. Local Workforce Development Boards should refer to TEGL 11-24 for additional guidance and explanation.

SOURCE	TOTAL STATE	STATE ACTIVITIES	LOCAL ACTIVITIES
Adult	$ 7,432,434	$ 1,114,865	$ 6,317,569
Youth	$ 7,694,466	$ 1,154,170	$ 6,540,296
Dislocated Worker	$ 10,724,038	$ 4,289,615	$ 6,434,423
TOTAL	$ 25,850,938	$ 6,558,650	$ 19,292,288

The allocations to the local areas are calculated based on the formulas described below. The allocation worksheets will be provided via e-mail upon request.

B. Adult

The WIOA allows the following allocation process:

1. Standard Allocation Formula

   a. 33 1/3 percent shall be allotted on the basis of the relative number of unemployed individuals in areas of substantial unemployment in each area, compared to the total number of unemployed individuals in areas of substantial unemployment in all areas. The term "area of substantial unemployment" means any area that is of sufficient size and scope to sustain a program of workforce investment activities carried out under this subtitle and that has an average rate of unemployment of at least 6.5 percent for the most recent 12 months.

   b. 33 1/3 percent shall be allotted on the basis of the relative excess number of unemployed individuals in each area, compared to the total excess number of unemployed individuals in all areas. The term "excess number" means, used with respect to the excess number of unemployed individuals within a State, a higher of (1) the number that represents the number of unemployed individuals in excess of 4.5 percent of the civilian labor force; or (2) the number that represents the number of unemployed individuals in excess of 4.5 percent of the civilian labor force in areas of substantial unemployment.

   c. 33 1/3 percent shall be allotted on the basis of the relative number of disadvantaged adults in each area, compared to the total number of disadvantaged adults in all areas. The term "disadvantaged adult" means an adult who received income, or is a member of a family that received a total family income that, in relation to family size, does not exceed that higher of: (1) the poverty line; or (2) 70 percent of the lower living standard income level.

2. Transfer Authority

   Under WIOA, DOL allows transfer of up to 100% of funds between Dislocated Worker and Adult funding streams.

3. Availability

   Approximately 19 percent of funds described below will be available for expenditure no earlier than July 1, 2025. The remaining 81 percent will be available for expenditure no earlier than October 1, 2025.

4. Allocation

   The following allocation was calculated based on the formula described above. The allocation worksheets will be provided via e-mail upon request.

WIOA ADULT			
Local Workforce Development Area	**Local Allocation**	**Available July 1, 2025**	**Available October 1, 2025**
Delta	$ 1,430,135	$ 271,726	$ 1,158,409
MS Partnership	$ 1,684,575	$ 320,069	$ 1,364,506
Southcentral MS	$ 1,398,386	$ 265,693	$ 1,132,693
Twin Districts	$ 1,804,473	$ 342,850	$ 1,461,623
TOTAL	$ 6,317,569	$ 1,200,338	$ 5,117,231

C. Youth

The WIOA allows for the following allocation process:

1. Standard Allocation Formula

   a. 33 1/3 percent shall be allotted on the basis of the relative number of unemployed individuals in areas of substantial unemployment in each area, compared to the total number of unemployed individuals in areas of substantial unemployment in all areas;
   b. 33 1/3 percent shall be allotted on the basis of the relative excess number of unemployed individuals in each area, compared to the total excess number of unemployed individuals in all areas; and
   c. 33 1/3 percent shall be allotted on the basis of the relative number of disadvantaged youth in each area, compared to the total number of disadvantaged youth in all areas.

2. Availability

   One hundred percent of the funds described below will be available for expenditure no earlier than April 1, 2025.

3. Allocation

   The following allocation was calculated based on that formula described above. The allocation worksheets will be provided via e-mail upon request.

WIOA YOUTH		
Local Workforce Development Area	**Local Allocation**	**Available April 1, 2025**
Delta	$ 1,496,833	$ 1,496,833
MS Partnership	$ 1,757,312	$ 1,757,312
Southcentral MS	$ 1,396,796	$ 1,396,796
Twin Districts	$ 1,889,355	$ 1,889,355
TOTAL	$ 6,540,296	$ 6,540,296

D. Dislocated Workers

1. Allocation Formula

The State shall allocate not less than 60 percent based on an allocation formula prescribed by the Governor. The formula shall use the most recent available information and shall include:

a. Insured unemployment data,
b. Unemployment concentrations,
c. Plant closing and mass layoff data,
d. Declining industries,
e. Farmer-rancher economic hardship data,
f. Long term unemployment data.

The formula used by the state is as follows:

ALLOCATION FACTOR	WEIGHT ASSIGNED IN FORMULA
Insured Unemployment Data	10%
Unemployment Concentrations Data	25%
Plant Closing and Mass Layoff Data	10%
Declining Industries Data	20%
Farmer-Rancher Economic Hardship Data	5%
Long-Term Unemployment Data	30%

2. Under WIOA, DOL allows transfer of up to 100% of funds between Dislocated Worker and Adult funding streams

3. Availability

Approximately 21 percent of the funds described below will be available for expenditure no earlier than July 1, 2025. The remaining 79 percent will be available for expenditure no earlier than October 1, 2025.

4. Rapid Response

   The allocation does not include funds set aside for Rapid Response personnel at the local area. Requests for Rapid Response funds should be directed to the Office of Job Connections.

5. Allocation

WIOA DISLOCATED WORKER			
Local Workforce Investment Area	**Local Allocation**	**Available July 1, 2025**	**Available October 1, 2025**
Delta	$ 1,299,016	$ 272,793	$ 1,026,223
MS Partnership	$ 1,575,273	$ 330,807	$ 1,244,466
Southcentral MS	$ 1,682,568	$ 353,339	$ 1,329,229
Twin Districts	$ 1,877,566	$ 394,290	$ 1,483,276
TOTAL	$ 6,434,423	$ 1,351,229	$ 5,083,194

E. Funds Availability

The funds described above will be available to the Local Workforce Development Board for expenditure upon receipt of a Notice of Funds Availability (NFA) from the Office of Grant Management.

II. **REQUIRED ACTION AND DUE DATE:** Comments and questions on the allocation process should be provided to the Office of Grant Management (OGM) in writing by June 15, 2025.

III. **CONTACT:** Questions concerning this instruction should be addressed to Robert DeYoung at 601-321-6477 or rdeyoung@mdes.ms.gov or Katye Reece at 601-321-5473 or krece@mdes.ms.gov.

Robert DeYoung, Director
Office of Grant Management

Appendix I: Waiver Requests

Mississippi is requesting the following waivers to support implementation of its unified workforce development strategy. These waivers improve system coordination, enhance service delivery flexibility, strengthen governance, and ensure workforce programs operate efficiently while maintaining full accountability and participant protections.

Table I-1. Summary of Requested Waivers

Waiver #	Waiver Title	Statutory/Regulatory Citation	Type	Purpose	Programs Affected
1	State Workforce Development Board Membership	WIOA Sec. 101(b)(1), 101(b)(3), 101(c); 20 CFR 679.110	Governance	Provide flexibility to streamline SWDB membership and improve strategic representation aligned with economic priorities	All Core Programs
2	Maintaining a Comprehensive One-Stop Center	WIOA Sec. 121(e)(1), 121(e)(2)(A); 20 CFR 678.300, 678.305	Governance / Service Delivery	Allow virtual, mobile, and technology-enabled access points rather than requiring one physical comprehensive center per local area	All Core Programs
3	Consolidating WIOA Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Funding	WIOA Sec. 128, 133; 20 CFR 681, 683	Funding Flexibility	Allow unified funding pool to improve coordination, reduce administrative burden, and align investments with workforce priorities	Title I-B Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth
4	State Infrastructure Funding Model	WIOA Sec. 121(h)(2); 20 CFR 678.715-678.735	Funding Flexibility	Allow immediate implementation of a statewide infrastructure funding model without requiring local impasse	All One-Stop Partner Programs
5	Flexible Use of Governor-Reserved Funds for Employment and Training Activities	WIOA Sec. 133(a)(2), 134(a)(2)(A)	Funding Flexibility	Allow Governor-reserved funds to support employment and training activities in addition to rapid response	Title I-B Dislocated Worker
6	Flexible Use of Governor-Reserved Funds for Statewide Employment and Training Activities Including Disaster Relief	WIOA Sec. 134(a)(2)(A), 134(a)(3)	Funding Flexibility	Allow statewide employment and disaster relief activities funded through Governor reserve funds	Title I-B Adult and Dislocated Worker
7	Waiver of Out-of-School Youth (OSY) Expenditure Requirement	WIOA Sec. 129(a)(4)(A); 20 CFR 681.410	Youth Program	Allow flexibility in youth expenditures to support both ISY and OSY aligned with career pathways	Title I-B Youth
8	State-Level Calculation of ISY/OSY Expenditure Rates	WIOA Sec. 129(a)(4); 20 CFR 681.410	Youth Program	Allow expenditure rates to be calculated statewide rather than at each local area	Title I-B Youth
9	Waiver of Low-Income Eligibility Requirement for In-	WIOA Sec. 129(a)(1)(B)	Youth Program	Expand access to pre-apprenticeship programs	Title I-B Youth

	School Youth in Pre-Apprenticeship			aligned with employer demand	
10	Providing Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) to In-School Youth	WIOA Sec. 129(c)(2)(D); 20 CFR 681.550	Youth Program	Allow ITAs for In-School Youth to support occupational skills training aligned with career pathways	Title I-B Youth
11	Modifying Training Requirement for Needs-Related Payments	WIOA Sec. 134(d)(3)(B); 20 CFR 680.950	Adult / Dislocated Worker	Allow needs-related payments without requiring enrollment in training	Title I-B Dislocated Worker
12	Extending Post-Exit Supportive Services Beyond 12 Months	WIOA Sec. 134(d)(2); 20 CFR 680.900-680.910	Adult / Dislocated Worker / Youth	Allow extended supportive services to improve employment retention and long-term outcomes	Title I-B Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth
13	Modifying State Performance Measures Sanction Threshold	WIOA Sec. 116(f); 20 CFR 677.190	Accountability	Allow state to meet 85% of negotiated performance goals without sanctions	All Core Programs

Governance Waiver Requests

Waiver 1. State Workforce Development Board Membership

Statutory and Regulatory Citation:
WIOA Section 101(b)(1), Section 101(b)(3) and (c); 20 CFR 679.110(b)-(c)

Purpose: Provide flexibility in State Workforce Development Board (SWDB) membership to streamline recruitment, improve engagement, and ensure representation aligned with Mississippi's economic priorities and workforce needs.

Waiver 2. Maintaining a Comprehensive One-Stop Center

Statutory and Regulatory Citation:
WIOA Section 121(e)(1); Section 121(e)(2)(A); 20 CFR 678.300(c) and 678.305

Purpose: Allow Mississippi to modernize service delivery by transitioning from a facility-based model to a flexible system of virtual access points, mobile service units, and technology-enabled workforce delivery.

Funding Flexibility Waivers

Waiver 3. Consolidating WIOA Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Funding

Statutory and Regulatory Citation:
WIOA Sections 128 and 133; 20 CFR 681 and 683

Purpose: Allow Mississippi to combine Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth funding streams into a unified funding pool administered under a coordinated statewide strategy.

Waiver 4. State Infrastructure Funding Model

Statutory and Regulatory Citation:
WIOA Section 121(h)(2); 20 CFR 678.715, 678.725, 678.730, and 678.735

Purpose: Allow Mississippi to implement a statewide infrastructure funding model without requiring a prior local impasse.

Waiver 5. Flexible Use of Governor-Reserved Funds for Employment and Training Activities

Statutory and Regulatory Citation:
WIOA Sections 133(a)(2) and 134(a)(2)(A)

Purpose: Allow Mississippi to use up to 50 percent of Governor-reserved rapid response funds to support statewide employment and training activities.

Waiver 6. Flexible Use of Governor-Reserved Funds for Statewide Employment and Training Activities, Including Disaster Relief Employment

Statutory and Regulatory Citation:
WIOA Section 134(a)(2)(A) and (B); Section 134(a)(3)

Purpose: Allow Governor-reserved funds to support statewide employment and training activities, including disaster relief employment.

Youth Program Waivers

Waiver 7. Waiver of Out-of-School Youth (OSY) Expenditure Requirement

Statutory and Regulatory Citation:
WIOA Section 129(a)(4)(A); 20 CFR 681.410

Purpose: Allow Mississippi to reduce the requirement that not less than 75 percent of youth funds be spent on Out-of-School Youth, providing flexibility to invest in both In-School Youth (ISY) and OSY populations aligned with workforce priorities and career pathway strategies.

Waiver 8. Waiver to Allow Calculation of ISY/OSY Expenditure Rate at the State Level

Statutory and Regulatory Citation:
WIOA Section 129(a)(4); 20 CFR 681.410

Purpose: Allow Mississippi to calculate In-School Youth and Out-of-School Youth expenditure rates at the state level rather than requiring compliance at each individual local workforce development area.

Waiver 9. Waiver of Low-Income Eligibility Requirement for In-School Youth Participating in Pre-Apprenticeship Programs

Statutory and Regulatory Citation:
WIOA Section 129(a)(1)(B)

Purpose: Allow In-School Youth participating in qualifying pre-apprenticeship programs aligned with career pathways and employer partnerships to participate regardless of income status.

Waiver 10. Providing Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) to In-School Youth

Statutory and Regulatory Citation:
WIOA Section 129(c)(2)(D); 20 CFR 681.550

Purpose: Allow Mississippi to provide ITAs to In-School Youth to support occupational skills training aligned with workforce needs and career pathways.

Adult and Dislocated Worker Program Waivers

Waiver 11. Modifying Training Requirements for Dislocated Worker Needs-Related Payments

Statutory and Regulatory Citation:
WIOA Section 134(d)(3)(B); 20 CFR 680.950(a)(2)

Purpose: Allow needs-related payments to dislocated workers who are not currently enrolled in training services.

Waiver 12. Extending Post-Exit Supportive Services Beyond 12 Months

Statutory and Regulatory Citation:
WIOA Section 134(d)(2); 20 CFR 680.900–680.910

Purpose: Allow Mississippi to provide supportive services beyond 12 months after exit to support employment retention and career advancement.

Accountability Waiver

Waiver 13. Modifying State Performance Measures Requirements

Statutory and Regulatory Citation:
WIOA Section 116(f); 20 CFR 677.190(d)

Purpose: Allow Mississippi to meet 85 percent of negotiated performance goals without triggering sanctions.

Mississippi assures that implementation of these waivers will not adversely affect priority populations, will comply with nondiscrimination requirements under WIOA Section 188, and will maintain full accountability for federal reporting, fiscal integrity, and performance monitoring. Mississippi will evaluate waiver implementation and report outcomes as required by USDOL.

Appendix J: Assurances/Compliances

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Attachment IV

Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) Programmatic Assurances Program Year 2025

You must certify that you will conform to these assurances throughout the period of the grant by checking each of the assurances below. These assurances apply fully to any sub-recipient, local project, or grantee staff involved in the delivery of services.

You agree to:

Recruitment and Selection of Participants

- Develop and implement methods to recruit and select eligible participants to assure maximum participation in the program.
- Use income definitions and income inclusions and exclusions for SCSEP eligibility as described in TEGL No. 12-06 to determine and document participant eligibility.
- Develop and implement methods to recruit minority populations to ensure at least proportional representation in your assigned service area as listed in the latest Minority Report, as required at 20 CFR 641.515(a). "The Secretary shall annually prepare a report on the levels of participation and performance outcomes of minority individuals served by the program carried out under this title."
- Develop and implement strategies to recruit applicants who have priority of service as defined in Older Americans Act section 518(b)(1)-(2) and by the VOW (Veterans Opportunity to Work) to Hire Heroes Act of 2011. Individuals with priority are those who:
    - Are covered persons in accordance with the VOW (covered persons who are SCSEP-eligible must receive services instead of or before all non-covered persons);
    - Are 65 years or older;
    - Have a disability;
    - Have limited English proficiency;
    - Have low literacy skills;
    - Reside in a rural area;
    - Have low employment prospects;
    - Have failed to find employment after utilizing services provided under Title I of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA);
    - Are homeless or are at risk for homelessness; or
    - Are formerly incarcerated or on supervision from release from prison or jail within five years of the date of initial eligibility determination.

Assessment

- Assess participants at least twice per 12-month period, or more frequently if appropriate.
- Use assessment information to determine the most appropriate community service assignments for participants.

Individual Employment Plan (IEP)

- Establish an initial goal of unsubsidized employment for all participants.

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- Update the IEP at least as frequently as assessments occur (at least twice per 12-month period).
- Modify the IEP as necessary to reflect other approaches to self-sufficiency, if it becomes clear that unsubsidized employment is not feasible.
- For participants who will reach the individual durational limit or would not otherwise achieve unsubsidized employment, include a provision in the IEP to reflect other approaches to self-sufficiency, transition to other services or programs.
- Rotate participants to a new host agency (or a different assignment within the host agency) based on a rotation policy approved by the Employment and Training Administration (ETA) in the grant agreement and only after making an individualized determination that the rotation is in the best interest of the participant. Such rotation must further the acquisition of skills listed in the IEP.

Community Service Assignment

- Base the initial community service assignment on the assessment made at enrollment.
- Select only designated 501(c)(3) organizations or public agencies as host agencies.
- Put in place procedures to ensure adequate supervision of participants at host agencies.
- Ensure safe and healthy working conditions at the community service assignment through annual monitoring of the host agency site and annual safety consultation with the participant at the host agency site.

Recertification of Participants

- Recertify the income eligibility of each participant at least once every 12 months, or more frequently if circumstances warrant.

Physical Examinations

- Offer physical examinations to participants upon program entry, and each year thereafter, as a benefit of enrollment.
- Obtain a written waiver from each participant who declines a physical examination.
- Not obtain a copy or use the results of the physical examination to establish eligibility or for any other purpose.

Host Agencies

- Develop and implement methods for recruiting new host agencies to provide a variety of training options that enable participants to increase their skill level and transition to unsubsidized employment.
- Comply with maintenance of effort: Ensure that community service assignments do not reduce the number of employment opportunities or vacancies that would otherwise be available to individuals who are not SCSEP participants. You must specifically ensure that community service assignments do not:
  a. Displace currently employed workers (including partial displacement, such as a reduction in non-overtime work, wages, or employment benefits).
  b. Impair existing contracts or result in the substitution of Federal funds for other funds in connection with work that would otherwise be performed.
  c. Assign or continue to assign a participant to perform the same work, or substantially the same work, as that performed by an individual who is on layoff.

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Orientation

- Provide orientations for participants and host agencies, including information on:
  a. Project goals and objectives;
  b. Participant rights and responsibilities;
  c. Community service assignments;
  d. Opportunities for paid training outside the community service assignment;
  e. Available supportive services; and
  f. Availability of free physical examinations.
- Local staff must address the topics listed above and provide additional orientation to participants on:
  a. SCSEP goals and objectives;
  b. Grantee and local project roles, policies, and procedures;
  c. Holiday and sick leave;
  d. Assessment process;
  e. Development and implementation of IEPs;
  f. Evaluation of participant progress;
  g. Health and safety issues related to each participant's assignment;
  h. Role of supervisors and host agencies;
  i. Maximum individual duration policy, including the possibility of an extension, if applicable, and the documentation required to support an extension;
  j. Termination policy; and
  k. Grievance procedure.

Wages

- Provide participants with the highest applicable required wage (highest of Federal, state, or local minimum wage for the most nearly comparable covered employment or minimum wage under the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, or the prevailing rate of pay for persons employed in similar public occupations by the same employer) for time spent in orientation, training, and community service assignments.

Participant Benefits

- Provide workers' compensation, other benefits required by state or Federal law (such as unemployment insurance), and the costs of physical examinations.
- Provide compensation for scheduled work hours during which the participant’s host agency is closed for Federal holidays, which may be paid or in the form of rescheduled work time, and establish written policies related to this compensation.
- Establish written policies relating to approved breaks in participation and any necessary sick leave that is not part of an accumulated sick leave program.
- Not use grant funds to pay the cost of pension benefits, annual leave, accumulated sick leave, or bonuses.

Procedures for Payroll and Workers' Compensation

- Make all required payments for participant payroll and pay workers' compensation premiums on a timely basis.

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- Ensure that host agencies do not pay workers' compensation costs for participants.

Durational Limits

Maximum Average Project Duration - 27 Months

- Maintain average project duration of 27 months or less, unless ETA approves an extension to 36 months.

Maximum Individual Participant Duration - 48 Months

- Allow participants to participate in the program no longer than 48 months (whether or not consecutively), unless your approved policy allows for an extension and the participant meets the extension criteria.
- Notify participants of your policy pertaining to the maximum duration requirement, including the possibility of an extension if applicable, at the time of enrollment and each year thereafter, and whenever ETA has approved a change of policy.
- Provide 30-day written notice to participants prior to durational limit exit from the program.

Transition Services

- Develop a system to transition participants to unsubsidized employment or other assistance before each participant's maximum enrollment duration has expired.
- Begin transition planning for participants who will exit for durational limit at least 3-6 months prior to their exit date.

Termination Policies

- Provide a 30-day written notice for all involuntary terminations that states the reason for termination and informs the participants of grievance procedures and right to appeal.
- Maintain written termination policies in effect and provide to participants at enrollment:
  a. Provision of false eligibility information by the participant;
  b. Incorrect initial eligibility determination at enrollment;
  c. Income ineligibility determined at recertification;
  d. Participant has reached individual durational limit;
  e. Participant has become employed while enrolled;
  f. IEP-related termination; and
  g. Cause (must be approved by ETA prior to implementation).

Equitable Distribution

- Comply with the equitable distribution plan for each state in which the grantee operates and only make changes in the location of authorized positions within a state in accordance with the state equitable distribution plan and with prior ETA approval.
- Comply with the authorized position allocations/equitable distribution listed at https://scsepapply.org/.
- Collaborate with all grantees authorized to serve in a state in which you operate to achieve compliance with authorized positions while minimizing disruption to the

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participants.

Over-Enrollment

- Manage over-enrollment to minimize impact on participants and avoid layoffs.

Administrative Systems

- Communicate grant policy, data collection, and performance developments and directives to staff, sub-recipients, and local project operators on a regular basis.
- Develop a written monitoring tool that lists items you will review during monitoring visits and provide this tool to sub-recipients and local project operators.
- Develop an annual monitoring schedule, unless the federal project officer approves a different standard; notify sub-recipients and local project operators of monitoring plans; and monitor sub-recipients and local project operators on a regular basis.
- Develop and provide training to increase sub-recipients' and local project operators' skills, knowledge, and abilities.
- When appropriate, prescribe corrective action and follow-up procedures for sub-recipients and local project operators to ensure that identified problems are remedied.
- Monitor the financial systems and expenditures, including sub-recipients and local project operators on a regular basis to ensure compliance with cost allocations as specified in the regulations.
- Ensure that sub-recipient and local project operators receive adequate resources to effectively operate local projects.
- Train sub-recipients and local project operators on SCSEP financial requirements to help them effectively manage their own expenditures, and provide general financial training as needed.
- Ensure that all financial reports are accurate and submit them in a timely manner, as required.
- Ensure full implementation and monitoring of requirements for customer satisfaction surveys, including participant, host agency and employer surveys.
- Develop a written plan for both disaster response and recovery so that the project may continue to operate and provide services under emergency circumstances.

Collaboration and Leveraged Resources

- Collaborate with other organizations to maximize opportunities for participants to obtain workforce development, education, and supportive services to help them move into unsubsidized employment. These organizations may include but are not limited to: workforce development boards, American Job Centers, vocational rehabilitation providers, disability networks, basic education and literacy providers, and community colleges.

Supportive Services

- Provide supportive services, as needed, to help participants participate in their community service assignment and to obtain and retain unsubsidized employment.
- Establish criteria to assess the need for supportive services and to determine when participants will receive supportive services, including after obtaining unsubsidized employment.

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Complaint Resolution

- Establish and use written grievance procedures for complaint resolution for applicants, employees, sub-recipients, and participants.
- Provide applicants, employees, sub-recipients, and participants with a copy of the grievance policy and procedures.

Maintenance of Files and Privacy Information

- Maintain participant files for three program years after the program year in which the participant received his/her final follow-up activity.
- Ensure that all participant records are securely stored by the grantee or sub- recipient and access is limited to appropriate staff in order to safeguard personal identifying information.
- Ensure that all participant medical records are securely stored by the grantee or sub-recipient separately from all other participant records and access is limited to authorized staff for authorized purposes.
- Establish safeguards to preclude tampering with electronic media (e.g., personal identification numbers and GPMS or other data system logins).
- Ensure that ETA is immediately notified in the event of any potential security breach of personal identifying information, whether electronic files, paper files, or equipment are involved.
- Comply with and ensure that authorized users under the grant comply with all GPMS and other data system access and security rules.

Documentation

- Maintain all documentation required for compliance with record retention rule set forth in the first bullet of the prior section, Maintenance of Files and Privacy Information.
- Maintain documentation of waivers of physical examinations by participant.
- Maintain documentation of the provision of complaint procedures to participants.
- Maintain documentation of eligibility determinations and re-certifications.
- Maintain documentations of terminations and reasons for termination.
- Maintain records of grievances and outcomes.
- Maintain records required for data validation.
- Maintain documentation of monitoring reports for sub-recipients and host agencies.

Data Collection and Reporting

- Ensure the collection and reporting of all SCSEP required data according to specified time schedules.
- Ensure the use of the Office of Management and Budget-approved SCSEP data collection forms and the SCSEP Internet data collection and evaluation system, GPMS, or the successor data system as designated by ETA.
- Ensure at the grantee or sub-recipient level that those capturing and recording data are familiar with the latest instructions for data collection, including ETA administrative issuances (e.g., Training and Employment Guidance Letters, Data Collection and Data Validation Handbooks, and the Older Worker Community of Practice).

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- Ensure data are entered directly into the GPMS, or the successor data system as designated by ETA.
- Legally obligate sub-recipients to turn over complete data files in the specified electronic format, as well as hard copy case files, to the grantee when sub- recipients cease to administer SCSEP.
- Legally obligate new sub-recipients to collect and enter complete data related to any participants whom they acquire upon becoming sub-recipients, including any participants who are still in the follow-up period.

If the grantee is not in compliance with any of the assurances above, provide information on a separate attachment indicating what specific steps the grantee is taking to conform to these standard grant requirement(s).

The signature of the Authorized Representative on the SF-424 of this grant application also certifies that the organization agrees to adhere to the programmatic assurances listed above in this Attachment IV.

Signed by:
William J. Ashley, Ph.D.
9D4C37257936449...

Signature of Authorized Representative

7/29/2025

Date

Mississippi Department of Employment Security

Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP)

Emergency Paid Sick Leave Policy

I. SCOPE AND PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance to SCSEP subgrantees and participants concerning Emergency Paid Sick Leave.

II. BACKGROUND

In the event of a declared emergency or disease outbreak which impacts a significant number of SCSEP host agencies' operations or paid training activities, or where in-person attendance may place SCSEP participants' health and/or safety at risk (for example, the Coronavirus/COVID-19 Global Pandemic of 2020), the Mississippi Department of Employment Security (MDES) may authorize the use of Emergency Paid Sick Leave. We intend to use Emergency Paid Sick Leave, when necessary, as a means of limiting risks to SCSEP participants' health and safety while minimizing disruption in the payment of participant wages and benefits.

III. IMPLEMENTATION INSTRUCTIONS

Participants not on a break in service will be paid the appropriate wage for their hours worked per week. The participant's weekly hours during emergency paid sick leave shall be equal to their weekly hours at the time the emergency paid sick leave policy was authorized by MDES. Use of Emergency Paid Sick Leave will count towards participants' Individual Durational Limit. Participants receiving wages for SCSEP Emergency Paid Sick Leave will not be placed on an approved break in service. Participants may elect to be placed on approved break in service to stop their four-year clock, in lieu of receiving Emergency Paid Sick Leave.

Subgrantees need to seek prior authorization from MDES before instituting Emergency Paid Sick Leave in the absence of a network-wide notice from MDES. When MDES issues a network-wide notice of Emergency Paid Sick Leave, subgrantees need to notify their participants and host agencies immediately, provide information on how timecards will be handled, and document whether the participant accepted the Emergency Paid Sick leave or opted to be placed on an Approved Break in Service with no pay.

During a period of Emergency Paid Sick Leave, timesheets will not be completed or submitted for participants according to this policy; no participant or supervisor signatures will be required for that group. Instead, MDES SCSEP subgrantee staff will maintain a live "List of Participants on Emergency Paid Sick Leave", to be completed for each subgrantee payroll period, which will include the participant's name and number of hours to be paid each pay period as well as the date the participant was contacted and the participant's response. The hours and continued emergency paid sick

leave status will be confirmed by phone call at the end of each payroll period. The SCSEP Project Director will verify the accuracy of the information. By submitting the list to their payroll office, the subgrantee Project Director verifies that they made the contact. Then the subgrantee fiscal officer, or designee that is not the SCSEP project staff, certifies that the information is true and accurate. If a participant does not answer or return the phone call, they will not be paid and will be put on an approved break in service. This information will be recorded, as applicable, on **both** the subgrantee's "List of Participants on Emergency Paid Sick Leave" and in SPARQ. As noted above, subgrantees must complete and submit a unique "List of Participants on Emergency Paid Sick Leave" each pay period. Each payroll during an Emergency Paid Sick Leave period must be treated as a separate payroll event just as one would do with time sheets. Subgrantees must adhere to the record retention policies for SCSEP for each "List of Participants on Emergency Paid Sick Leave" completed and is documentation to be provided to auditors upon request.

IV. EFFECTIVE DATE

This policy is effective March 16, 2020, until modified or rescinded.

Jacqueline A. Turner
Executive Director

Mississippi Department of Employment Security
Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP)
Individual Durational Limit Policy

I. SCOPE AND PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance to SCSEP subgrantees and participants concerning the duration of participation in SCSEP.

II. BACKGROUND

Section 641.570 (a)(1) of the SCSEP final rules states that SCSEP eligible individuals may participant in the program for a maximum duration (Participant's Individual Durational Limit) of 48 months in the aggregate (whether or not consecutive) from the date of the individual's enrollment in the program.

Mississippi Individual Durational Limit Policy:

The state of Mississippi Department of Employment Security implemented a policy in 2012 which states that the individual participant durational limit shall be 48 months without the possibility of extensions. This means that no participant will be offered an extension beyond the 48-month time limit for participation in SCSEP.

III. IMPLEMENTATION INSTRUCTIONS

July 1, 2007, changes were implemented which reduce the time a participant may be enrolled in SCSEP. *Individual enrollments must average no more than 27 months* in duration. In addition, participants have *48 months life-time* to utilize the services of this program. This means that it is imperative that participants find unsubsidized employment as quickly as possible – hopefully within 3 to 9 months of enrollment – allowing for time remaining for additional assistance, should it be needed in the future. This time allowance will be monitored by the DOL SCSEP database, known as SPARQ, and will take into account all work-training time accumulated from all SCSEP providers in the country for each participant. *It is vital to the success of each participant in the attainment of their employment goals that they understand these restrictions, and that they work to achieve unsubsidized employment as quickly as possible.*

Subgrantees must inform SCSEP participants of the maximum 48-month time limit for participating in the program at the time of their enrollment in the program. It is imperative that participants receive this information, as they must plan for their lives and incomes after their SCSEP eligibility ends. *To the extent possible, subgrantees must*

operate the program so that employment in an unsubsidized job within the 27-month average enrollment is the ultimate goal for each enrollee.

Participants also need to be made aware that there will not be any extension beyond the maximum 48 months. Subgrantees must develop a form that the participant will sign that states that he/she is aware of this durational limit that is mentioned in the SCSEP Participant Handbook. This signed form must be kept in the participant's file.

Transition Planning:

Appropriate transition plans must be in place for each participant affected by a durational limit, and will be implemented in a timely manner to ensure the best possible outcome for each participant. Sub-grantees should identify other relevant community partners and should collaborate with SCSEP partners, including WIN Job Centers, to ensure that participants have opportunities during the transition process to use SCSEP partner services. The WIN Job Centers provide employment services, resume writing, interviewing workshops, Career Readiness Certificate testing, and education training opportunities.

Sub-grantees should invite community partners and WIN Job Center partners to meetings to discuss services provided and eligibility requirements and to also introduce participants to the partners prior to exiting the program.

Participant Notification Requirement:

Sub-grantees are required to send a 90 day **and** 30 day notice to participants who are about to reach their durational limit.

IV. EFFECTIVE DATE:

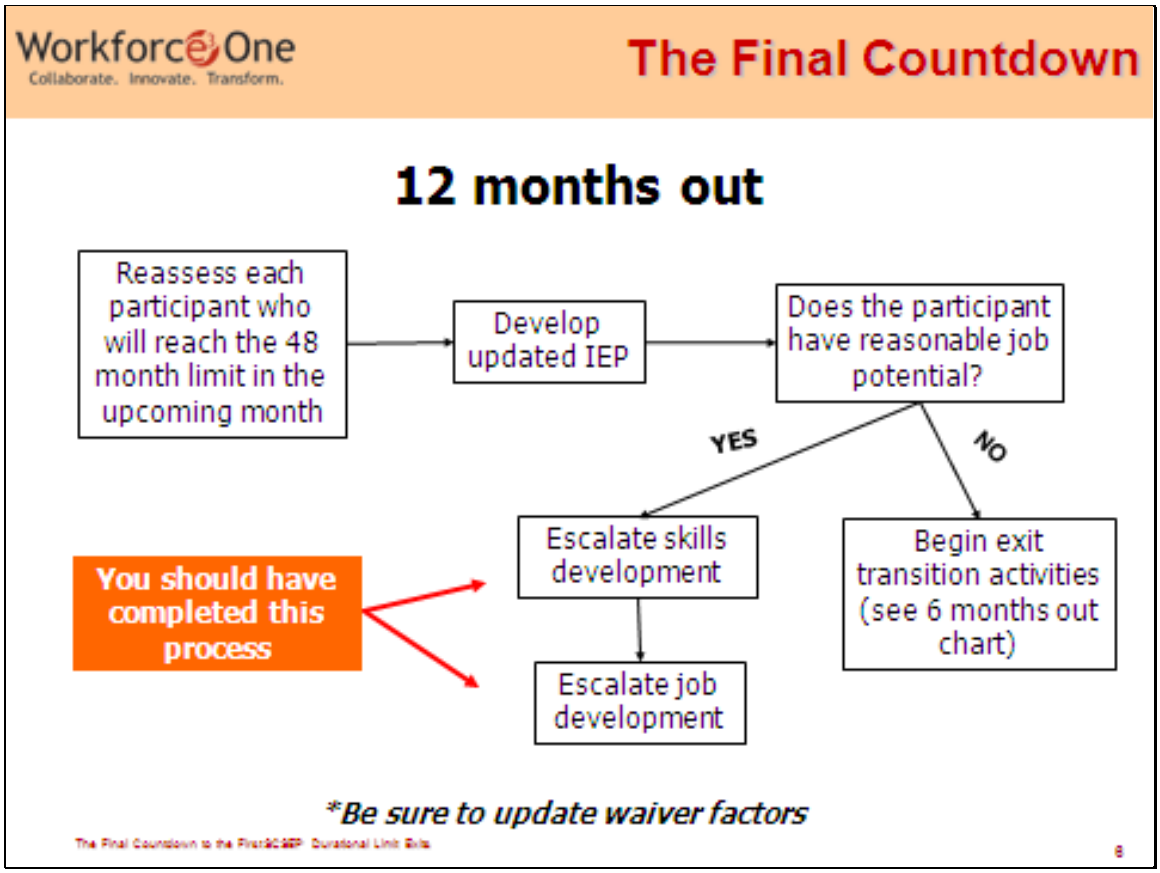
This policy is effective April 2017 until modified or rescinded.

V. ATTACHMENT:

Process Chart for Participant Final Year in SCSEP

For participants approaching durational limit in 1 Year:

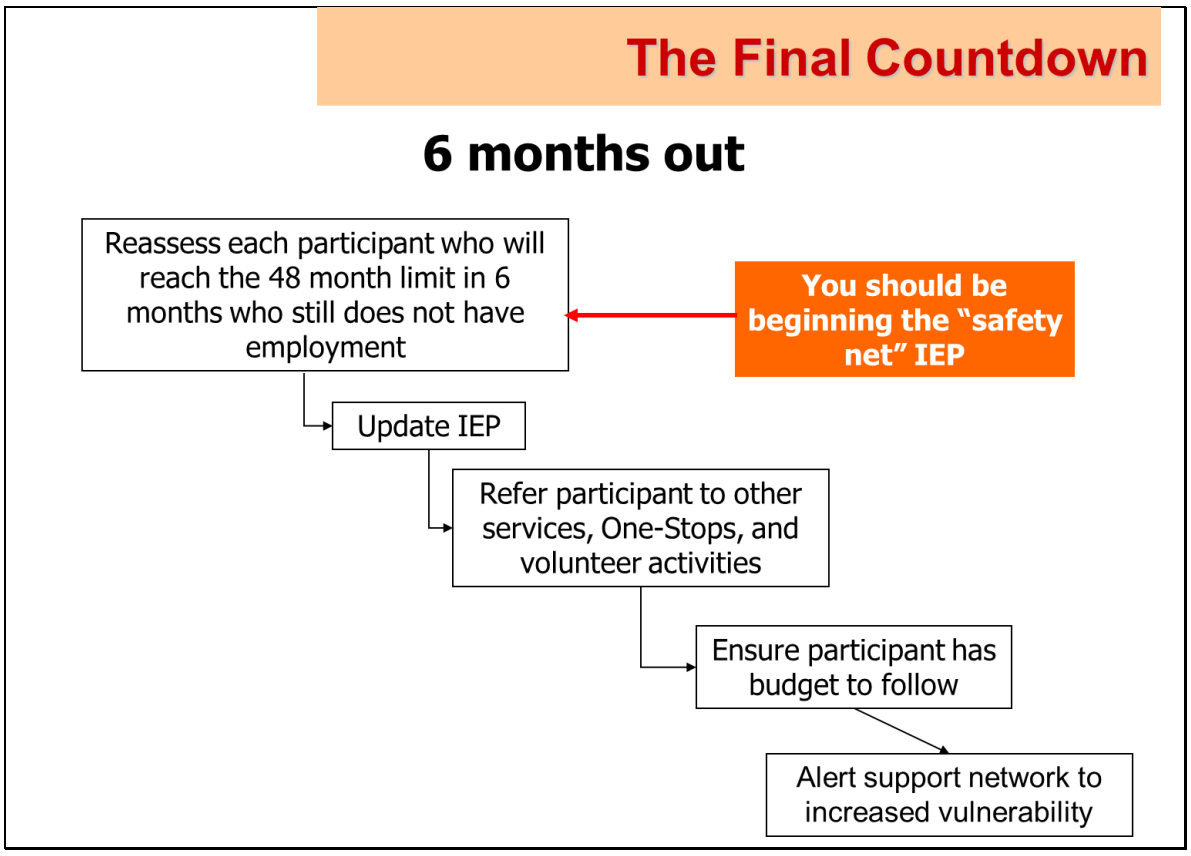
You should send a 1 year letter to each participant at the beginning of their 4th year. **<u>All participants on current WDL list should have gotten a letter by now.</u>**



For participants approaching durational limit in 6 Months:

1) Develop transition plans and include those plans in the participants' IEPs.

2) Send a letter to the participants to remind them they will be leaving the program in six months. **Call in those participants to discuss their transition plans.**



For participants approaching durational limit <u>within 30 Days</u>:

Participants **<u>must</u>** be given 30 days' written notice of their termination and **<u>must</u>** be informed that the termination is subject to appeal under the grantee's grievance policy.

- A copy of the grievance policy should be attached to the written termination notice.
- On the Exit Form, "Durational Limit" should be checked as the reason for exit.

MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT of EMPLOYMENT SECURITY
Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP)
Policy Number 4 - Programmatic Grievances

I. SCOPE AND PURPOSE:

This policy sets forth the State's procedures for grievances, other than those describing discrimination, alleging violations of the requirements of the Older Americans Act of 1965 (OAA) from participants and other interested or affected parties based on the guidance set forth at OAA sections 306(a)(10) and 307(a)(5)(B) and at 20 CFR, 641.910.

II. PARTICIPANT'S RIGHT TO FILE A GRIEVANCE:

Participants in Older Americans Act programs, including SCSEP, have the right to file grievances regarding specific actions or activities affecting their personal participation in the program or the conduct of the program as it relates to all participants at a given site or location without fear of reprisal.

A. Participants may file grievances orally or in writing.

B. Presentation of the grievance: An authorized representative, including a caregiver, may present a grievance on behalf of a participant. If the client chooses this option, he/she shall accompany the representative to every meeting at which the complaint is discussed.

C. Resolution: Every effort shall be made to resolve grievances at the lowest level of authority to avoid the creation of burdensome documentation and ineffective use of staff time. Complaints shall be directed as appropriate to the situation to the following authorities in the order indicated:
   - Host Agency: site manager or director or case manager;
   - Subgrantee/Planning and Development District: Program Director;
   - State SCSEP Director or her/his designee.

D. Grievances relating to alleged violations of a client's rights provided by law may be directed to the Office of Grant Management of MDES, but only after efforts to resolve the matter locally have failed. This does not remove the right of the individual to pursue other avenues of redress, such as filing with the Office of Civil Rights of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

E. Timeframes for filing: Grievances may be filed at any time. If the issue is related to an event which occurred at a specific time and place, the participant(s) shall notify the site

manager or other appropriate authority within ten (10) days of the event having occurred of the intent to file the grievance.

F. A participant may withdraw a grievance at any time.

III. REQUIREMENTS:

A. General Requirements

Each Planning and Development District (PDD), State, and direct recipient of funds under Title V of OAA must establish and maintain a procedure for grievances.

Each Host Agency, PDD, and State recipient must:

1) Provide information about the content of the grievance procedures to participants and other interested parties affected by the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP), including WIN Job Center partners and service providers;

2) Require that every entity to which it awards Title V funds must provide information about the content of the grievance procedures to participants receiving Title V-funded services from such entities; and

3) Make reasonable efforts to assure that the information about the content of the grievance and complaint procedures will be understood by affected participants and other individuals, including youth and those who are limited-English speaking individuals. (OAA Section 306(a)).

B. Host Agency Requirements

Host Agency procedures must provide:

1) A process for addressing grievances from participants and other interested parties affected by SCSEP;

2) An opportunity for an informal resolution and a hearing to be completed within sixty (60) calendar days of the filing of the grievance.

3) An opportunity for a participant to appeal to a PDD when:

- No decision is reached within sixty (60) days; or
- Either party is dissatisfied with the PDD decision.

C. Planning and Development District (PDD) Requirements

Each PDD must:

1) Maintain an office complaint log;

2) Have a process for addressing grievances from participants and other interested parties affected by SCSEP, including service providers;

3) Have a process for resolving appeals from the Host Agency level;

4) Provide an opportunity for an informal resolution and a hearing to be completed within sixty (60) days of the filing of the grievance;

5) Have a process which allows an individual alleging a labor standards violation to submit the grievance to a binding arbitration procedure, if a collective bargaining agreement covering the parties to the grievance so provides; and

6) Provide an opportunity for a participant to appeal to a State entity when:

- No decision is reached within sixty (60) days; or
- Either party is dissatisfied with the local hearing decision.

D. State Requirements

State procedures must provide:

1) A process for addressing grievances from participants and other interested parties affected by SCSEP;

2) A process for resolving appeals from the PDD level;

3) A process for remanding grievances related to the local SCSEP programs to the PDD grievance process; and

4) An opportunity for an informal resolution and a hearing to be completed within sixty (60) days of the filing of the grievance.

IV. POLICY AND PROCEDURES:

A. Host Agency/PDD Level Grievances and Complaints

The State requires PDDs to establish and maintain a policy and procedure for grievances. The PDD process must allow participants and other interested parties

affected by SCSEP an opportunity for an informal resolution and the option to have a hearing to be completed within sixty (60) calendar days of the filing of the grievance or complaint. The PDDs shall notify MDES of any grievance filed at the PDD/Host Agency level within ten (10) calendar days and provide a copy of the final decision regarding the grievance or complaint to MDES within five (5) calendar days. The decision made at the PDD level may be appealed to the State as described below (C. PDD Level Appeals to the State).

B. State Level Grievances

1) Grievances from participants and other interested parties affected by SCSEP must be made in writing and filed with MDES within ten (10) days of the alleged incident. Grievances should be addressed to:

   Mississippi Department of Employment Security
   Office of Grant Management
   WIOA Grievances and Complaints
   P.O. Box 1699
   Jackson, MS 39215-1699

2) Grievances should include the following information:

   a. The name, address, and telephone number of the participant or other affected party filing the grievance or complaint;

   b. The name and address of the designated State agency to which the grievance or complaint is being submitted;

   c. A statement documenting the nature of the grievance or complaint and noting all relevant parties; and

   d. The signature of the complainant and the date on which the document was signed.

3) MDES will review the grievance and notify the involved parties within fifteen (15) calendar days of the receipt of the grievance or complaint. MDES will provide the involved parties an opportunity for an informal resolution. If the grievance or complaint cannot be resolved informally, MDES, within thirty (30) calendar days of receipt of the grievance or complaint, will schedule a hearing before a designated Administrative Law Judge (ALJ). MDES will notify the involved parties at least ten (10) calendar days prior to a scheduled hearing.

a. The hearing notice will include:
   1) The date of the notice;
   2) The name and address of the participant or other affected party filing the grievance or complaint and all other involved parties;
   3) A statement documenting the nature of the grievance or complaint and noting all relevant parties;
   4) The date, time, and place of the hearing; and
   5) The name, address, and telephone number of the contact person issuing the notice.

b. The hearing shall be conducted in an informal manner with strict rules of evidence not being applicable.

c. Parties shall have the right to:
   1) Present written and/or oral testimony and arguments;
   2) Call and question witnesses;
   3) Request and examine records and documents relevant to the issues; and
   4) Be represented by a friend, advocate, or attorney at his/her own expense.

d. The hearing will be recorded electronically. The ALJ shall follow the applicable procedures set forth at Benefit Appeal Regulations, Section 200 of the MDES Regulations.

e. Following the completion of the hearing, the ALJ will present the findings of fact to the State Review Panel. The State Review Panel shall be made of members designated by the Executive Director or his designee. The State Review Panel will listen to the recording of the hearing and review the findings of fact presented by the ALJ. The State Review Panel may accept, reject, or modify the ALJ's recommendation and shall issue a written decision to the involved parties within sixty (60) days of receipt of the grievance.

f. Statewide procedures provide for an appeal to the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) when:
   - No decision is reached within sixty (60) calendar days; or
   - Either party is dissatisfied with the State hearing process.

g. Grievances filed at the State level may be remanded to the PDD level if it is determined that the alleged incident is related to the local SCSEP. Once the PDD grievance process has been completed, an appeal of the PDD's decision may be made to the State.

C. Planning and Development District Level Appeals to the State

1) Appeals must be made in writing and filed with MDES within fifteen (15) calendar days of the receipt of the PDD level decision or fifteen (15) calendar days from the date on which the decision should have been received (sixty (60) calendar days after filing the original grievance or complaint with the PDD). Appeals should be addressed to:

   Mississippi Department of Employment Security
   Office of Grant Management
   OAA/SCSEP Grievances and Complaints
   P.O. Box 1699
   Jackson, MS 39215-1699

2) Appeals should include the following information:

   a. The name, address, and telephone number of the participant or other affected party filing the appeal;

   b. A copy of the original grievance filed at the PDD level, documenting the nature of the alleged incident and noting all relevant parties;

   c. A copy of the original decision reached at the PDD level, including documentation of the date on which the decision was received;

   d. The grounds on which the appeal is sought; and

   e. The signature of the complainant and the date on which the appeal was signed.

3) MDES will review the appeal and notify the involved parties within fifteen (15) calendar days of the receipt of the appeal. MDES may affirm, modify, set aside, or remand any decision made at the PDD level or, at its sole discretion, direct that additional evidence be taken.

4) If a hearing was held at the PDD level, MDES shall request a record of the hearing. An ALJ will review the record of the PDD level hearing. If the PDD level hearing is determined to be sufficient, a State level hearing will not be held. The ALJ will present the findings of fact to the State Review Panel. The State Review Panel will review the findings of fact presented by the ALJ. The State Review Panel may accept, reject, or modify the PDD's decision and will issue a written decision to the involved parties within sixty (60) calendar days of receipt of the appeal.

5) If a hearing was not held at the PDD level, MDES shall instruct the PDD to hold a hearing within thirty (30) calendar days of receipt of the appeal. If the PDD fails to hold a hearing within the required timeframe, MDES will schedule a State level hearing before a, ALJ. MDES will notify the involved parties at least ten (10) calendar days prior to a scheduled hearing.

D. Fair Hearing

1) The hearing notice will include:

   a. The date of the notice;

   b. The name and address of the participant or other affected party filing the appeal and all other involved parties;

   c. A statement documenting the nature of the appeal, including: information about the original grievance or complaint filed, the original decision reached at the PDD level, and the grounds on which the appeal is being sought;

   d. The notice. The date, time, and place of the hearing; and

   e. The name, address, and telephone number of the contact person issuing

2) The hearing shall be conducted in an informal manner with strict rules of evidence not being applicable. Parties shall have the right to present written and/or oral testimony and arguments; the right to call and question witnesses; the

right to request and examine records and documents relevant to the issues; and the right to be represented. The hearing will be recorded electronically. The ALJ shall follow the applicable procedures set forth at Benefit Appeal Regulations, Section 200 of the MDES Regulations.

3) Following completion of the hearing, the ALJ will present the findings of fact to the State Review Panel. The State Review Panel will listen to the recording of the hearing and review the findings of fact presented by the ALJ. The State Review Panel may accept, reject, or modify the ALJ's recommendation and shall issue a written decision to the involved parties within sixty (60) days of receipt of the appeal.

4) Statewide procedures provide for an appeal to USDOL when:

- No decision is reached within sixty (60) calendar days; or
- Either party is dissatisfied with the State hearing process.

E. State Level Appeals to the U.S. Department of Labor

Allegations of violations which are not resolved within sixty (60) days under the grantee's procedures may be filed with USDOL at the following address:

Chief Division of Adult Services
ETA/U.S. Department of Labor
200 Constitution Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20210

F. Disposition of Grievances

1) If the facts support the grievance, the responsible authority shall, within thirty (30) working days of the receipt of the written grievance, make the changes necessary to resolve the issue.

2) If the Host Agency Director's/PDD's response is not satisfactory to the participant, the participant may, within ten (10) working days, take the matter for further consideration to the next higher authority as specified in II.3., relating to resolving issues at the lowest possible level of authority.

3) The site manager, host agency, or PDD, and each level of authority at which the grievance remains unresolved, shall within ten (10) working days following receipt of a request (oral or written) for continuing grievance action, develop a memorandum detailing the circumstances of the grievance, attach all pertinent

documentation regarding the findings and actions taken at that level of authority and forward it to the next level with a request for a meeting of the parties concerned with the issue.

V. EFFECTIVE DATE:

This policy is effective July 1, 2019.

Jacquehne A. Turner
Executive Director

VI. REVIEW DATE:

This policy was reviewed January 30, 2024.

Mississippi Department of Employment Security
Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP)
State Termination Policy

I. SCOPE AND PURPOSE

This policy sets forth the State's procedures for termination of participants in the SCSEP based on the guidance set forth in the Older Americans Act Amendments of 2006 and the SCSEP Final Rule.

II. PARTICIPANT INVOLUNTARY TERMINATION POLICY

There are six (6) reasons a participant may be involuntarily terminated from the SCSEP. The reasons are listed below along with an explanation. This Termination Policy will be followed fairly and equitably when involuntarily terminating participants. Participants will not be terminated based on age; there is no upper age limit for participation in the SCSEP. Except as noted below in the case of serious violations, participants will receive progressive discipline and an opportunity for corrective action before a formal termination notice is issued. In all cases, participants will receive a 30-day termination letter notifying them of the date of exit, the reason for the termination, and the right to appeal under the Mississippi Department of Employment Security grievance procedure. A copy of the grievance procedure will be attached to the termination letter. Participants will receive both a copy and a verbal explanation of the Involuntary Termination Policy during orientation. This policy is based on the Older Americans Act Amendments of 2006 and the SCSEP Final Rule.

Types of Involuntary Terminations

A participant can be involuntarily terminated from the SCSEP for six (6) reasons. The reasons are:

1. Knowingly providing false information in the eligibility process
2. Being incorrectly determined eligible at enrollment or the annual recertification
3. Being determined no longer eligible at recertification
4. Reaching the maximum 48 months enrollment limit
5. Becoming employed during enrollment
6. For cause, including refusing to accept a reasonable number of job offers or referrals to unsubsidized employment based on the Individual Employment Plan (IEP) (with no extenuating circumstances hindering the participant from moving to unsubsidized employment)

1. Termination Due to Knowingly Providing False Information in the Eligibility Process

A participant may be terminated for fraudulent actions, such as intentionally providing inaccurate information to qualify for the SCSEP. If this occurs, the participant will be placed on Leave without Pay immediately, and a 30-day notification of termination will be sent to the participant.

2. Termination Due to Being Incorrectly Determined Eligible

A participant will be terminated if found ineligible for participation in the SCSEP either after enrollment or after the annual recertification through no fault of the participant. A participant may be enrolled or deemed eligible for continued enrollment based on an error in determining program eligibility, e.g. income may be recorded or calculated inaccurately. When this occurs, the participant will be notified regarding the error and immediately sent a 30-day notification of termination letter. The participant will be able to continue participating in the program until the date of exit as noted in the letter.

3. Termination Due to No Longer Being Eligible

Annually, or more frequently if there is a substantial change in circumstances, each participant is recertified to determine if he or she continues to be eligible for participation. During the recertification, a participant may be determined no longer eligible due to a change in eligibility criteria such as income, family of one due to a change in disability status, employment status, and number of household members. The participant will be notified and immediately sent a 30-day notification of termination letter. The participant will be able to continue participating in the program until the date of exit as noted in the letter.

4. Termination Due to 48 Month Participation Limitation

A participant will be terminated when he or she meets the 48-month maximum participation date. The Mississippi Department of Employment Security's Individual Durational Limit Policy does NOT provide for the issuance of waivers. A waiver factor qualifies the participant for a temporary 12-month extension. When a participant approaches the 48-month maximum participation limit, he or she will be sent a 30 day notification of termination letter 30 days before the 48 month maximum participation date. The participant will be able to continue participating in the program until the date of exit as noted in the letter.

5. Termination Due to Becoming Employed During Enrollment

To qualify for enrollment in the SCSEP, a participant must be unemployed; all participants are informed that they may not be employed while participating in the program and that they must notify the program representative immediately upon becoming employed. A participant who is discovered to be employed while enrolled without having notified the program of the employment will be terminated from the program. If this occurs, the

participant will be placed on Leave without Pay immediately, and a 30-day notification of termination will be sent to the participant.

6. Termination for Cause

There are several reasons to terminate a participant "for-cause." When warranted, a participant may be terminated for certain behaviors and/or conduct. The following are specific reasons; however, other similar reasons that demonstrate willful misconduct or an intentional disregard of program rules may cause involuntary termination:

- IEP related reasons: Refusing to accept a reasonable number of job offers or referrals to unsubsidized employment or for not complying with the Individual Employment Plan (IEP). A participant may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination when he or she refuses a total of three job offers and/or referrals to job openings and/or to follow through with objectives to achieve goals that are based on the IEP. If the participant fails, without good cause, to cooperate fully with the Mississippi Department of Employment Security's subgrantee staff to accomplish the goals of his or her service strategy, an IEP-related termination "for-cause" may be in order. Examples of lack of cooperation with staff to accomplish IEP service strategies may include but are not limited to the following when provided for in the participant's IEP:
    - Refusing to search for a job
    - Sabotaging a job interview, for example, a participant tells the interviewer that he or she is not interested in the job or tells the interviewer that he or she is not qualified.
    - Refusing or not participating fully in training opportunities
    - Refusing to transfer to a new community service training assignment
    - Refusing to register at the One-Stop/Job Service
    - Refusing to take advantage of WIA opportunities
    - Refusing to accept or lack of follow-through in obtaining supportive services that will enhance the participant's ability to participate in a community service assignment consistent with the IEP
    - Refusing to cooperate with other IEP-related referrals
    - Refusal to cooperate with the assessment or IEP process, e.g., refusing to participate in completing the assessment and training development plan
- Non-IEP related reasons:
    - Refusal to cooperate in recertifying eligibility, for example, refusing to provide required document to determine continued eligibility or refusing to attend or be available for the recertification appointment.
    - Failure or refusal to perform assigned duties, e.g., refusing without good cause to do assignments that are part of the training description and required to increase skills and knowledge.

- Falsification of official records, such as timesheets, for example, intentionally signing the signature of the host agency supervisor on a timesheet or other official document or including hours on a time sheet that are not accurate.
- Intentional disclosure of confidential or private information obtained from the host agency, grantee, or local project, for example, informing others of information that is supposed to be kept private or confidential.
- Frequent tardiness or unauthorized absences, including reporting to the assignment late or not reporting to the assignment and not informing the supervisor. Generally, three instances of absence without good cause or without proper notice may warrant termination.
- Insubordination, defined as intentionally refusing to carry out the direction or instructions of a host agency supervisor or MDES subgrant staff member, provided there were no extenuating circumstances, and the directions or instructions were reasonable.
- Workplace harassment or discrimination on the basis of sex, race, color, religion, national origin, age, marital status, or disability.
- Obscene, abusive, harassing, or threatening language or behavior.
- Physical violence or intentional destruction of property, for example, being violent and threatening to or carrying out threats that physically harm individuals or property.
- Theft, meaning illegal taking or withholding the property of another without permission.
- Causing an imminent threat to health or safety of self or others.
- Non-compliance with the drug and alcohol-free policy of the Host Agency, which prohibits participants from consuming, selling, purchasing, manufacturing, distributing, possessing or using any illegal or non-prescribed drug or from being under the influence of alcohol and or drugs while performing their host agency assignment or while carrying out objectives required by the IEP. Legally prescribed medications are excluded if they do not affect the participant's ability to perform his or her duties or protect the safety of the participant or others.
- Exceeding approved Leave without Pay by failing to return from an approved break by the required date without due notice or good cause.

III. Participant Corrective Action and Warning

A participant will be given an opportunity to correct his or her behavior or conduct, or his or her failure to comply with the IEP requirements, except in cases involving serious harm or imminent threat to health, safety, property, etc. At any point, if a participant makes positive efforts or the participant's lack of action is justified, corrective action will be discontinued. The following steps for corrective action will be taken:

- Step 1: First Formal Warning

If a participant displays behavior or conduct outlined in the reasons for "for-cause" terminations or refuses to comply with the IEP requirements, the participant will be given a verbal warning and counseled to correct his or her actions. Absent extenuating circumstances, the participant will be informed in writing by the State Manager or State Director of the requirement to correct his or her behavior or conduct.

- Step 2: Second Formal Warning

  When a participant for a second time displays behaviors or conduct outlined in the reasons for "for-cause" terminations or refuses to comply with the IEP requirements, the participant will be verbally warned and counseled to correct his or her actions. Absent extenuating circumstances, the State Director will send the participant a written warning that he or she has 30 days from the date of the letter to correct his or her behavior or conduct. In the case of an IEP violation, the participant may be directed to complete specific IEP-related task. The written warning will include a statement that failure to make improvement or complete the IEP-related tasks will result in termination.

- Step 3: When a participant does not make improvement in his or her actions or for a third time displays behavior or conduct outlined in the reasons for "for-cause" terminations, a letter will be sent notifying the participant that he or she will be exited 30 days from the date of the letter.

  For example, a participant's training goal is to become computer literate in preparation for a clerical position. First the Employment and Training Coordinator (ETC) identified a community service assignment at the library, but the participant refused it because she wouldn't have her own cubicle (she would be in an open area) so she turned down that opportunity. Next, the ETC identified a training site in a school, but the participant turned down that opportunity. Finally, the ETC tried the local museum, and the participant refused the training assignment at the museum, too. The ETC spoke with the participant, and she had no legitimate reason for refusing the training offered at various assignments. After the first refusal, the ETC asked the State Director to send the participant the first written warning letter. The State Director sent her the second warning letter stating that she risked being terminated if she continued to fail to follow her IEP or to take corrective action. When Ms. Short turned down a third assignment and there was no extenuating circumstance, the State Director sent a 30-day notification of termination letter.

IV. For-Cause Terminations that Require Immediate Removal from Host Agency and Leave without Pay Pending Termination

When a participant's violation of the SCSEP Termination Policy is of a serious nature, immediate action to remove the participant from the host agency may be required. In this case, the participant will be placed on leave without pay and a written 30-day notice of termination sent. Examples of circumstances warranting immediate removal from the host agency and leave without pay include, but are not limited to:

- Gross misconduct such as violating the Host Agency's Drug and Alcohol Policy or intentionally endangering the lives of themselves or others, or
- Violence, including but not limited to physical or extreme verbal violence at the training site.

V. EFFECTIVE DATE:

This policy is effective April 1, 2013.

VI. Review Date:

This policy was reviewed January 30, 2024.

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FOR SIGNATURE

ROUTE/REVIEW

SUBJECT: SCSEP Communication 23-002 Holiday + Leave Policy

PREPARED BY:			INITIAL & DATE
		Glenda Wood	gw 10/19/23
Draft	**Final**	**REVIEWED BY:**	
	✓	Robert DeYoung TSD	10/24/23
✓		Donna Hollis approved via email	10/19/23
		Cherish Johnson	
		Pam Hosey	
		Glenda Wood	
✓		Trace /Ginny per conversation	10-19-23
		Tyler Berch	
		Jay Atkinson	
		Jeff Crump	
		Eryca Edwards	
		John Garrett	
✓		Anna Clemmer	10/25/23 AC
			DS RS 10/29/2023
	✓	Robin Stewart	
	✓	Laura Ring	LR 10/26/23
		Guy Martin	
		Original Mailed	

ORIGINALS TO:	INITIAL & DATE
Original to Legal	
Original Mailed to Subgrantee	

COPIES TO:	INITIAL & DATE
Copy to Business Mgmt.	
Scan to Liasion (for Q-drive)	

COMMENTS / SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS:

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MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT *of* EMPLOYMENT SECURITY
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
ROBIN STEWART
DEPUTY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

SCSEP COMMUNICATION NUMBER: 23-002

DATE: October 26, 2023

I. SUBJECT: Policy Number 23-002 – Holiday and Leave Policy

II. BACKGROUND: This communication provides information on SCSEP holiday and other approved leave. Per CFR 641.565(B)(1)(v), "grantees and subrecipients must provide compensation for scheduled work hours during which a host agency's business is closed for a federal holiday, which may be paid or in the form of rescheduled work time." Therefore, MDES is updating its policy to reflect the Department of Labor's requirement rather than enforcing a more stringent rule upon subgrantees.

III. REQUIRED ACTION AND DUE DATE: Please ensure this communication is shared with administrative and fiscal staff, Host Agencies, Planning and Development Districts (PDDs), other affected staff, subgrantees, and partners. PDDs should align local policies and/or processes with the state policies.

IV. CONTACT: Questions concerning this instruction should be addressed to Glenda Wood at 601-321-6595 or gwood@mdes.ms.gov.

V. ATTACHMENT: Policy Number 23-002 – Holiday and Leave Policy

DocuSigned by:
Robert DeYoung
8ECF30D988264EC...

Robert DeYoung
Director
Office of Grant Management

DocuSign Envelope ID: D6F378C9-6283-4FAE-A43F-61BB0A8D6404

Mississippi Department of Employment Security

POLICY

STATE OF MISSISSIPPI
SENIOR COMMUNITY SERVICE EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM
OFFICE OF GRANT MANAGEMENT

POLICY NAME:	Holiday and Leave Policy
POLICY NUMBER:	#23-002
DATE OF ISSUE:	October 20, 2023
EFFECTIVE DATE:	April 1, 2013
DURATION:	Until rescinded or revised
REVISION DATE:	**REPLACED BY:**
POINT OF CONTACT:	gwood@mdes.ms.sgov

I. Scope and Purpose

This policy sets forth the State's procedures for holiday and leave time in the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) based on the guidance set forth in the Older Americans Act Amendments of 2006 and the SCSEP Final Rule. This policy is applicable to area agencies on aging (AAAs) and any other organizations (Title V contractors) which contract with the Mississippi Department of Employment Security (MDES) or any AAA to deliver SCSEP services.

II. Leave time

Participants must not be placed on leaves of absence and left in suspension indefinitely. Provisions must be made for other applicants who need and can take advantage of SCSEP services. Participant leave data should be entered by AAAs into the DOL's SCSEP Grantee database system as an "**approved break in participation.**" Time spent on **approved** leave is excluded when calculating durational time limits for projects or participants.

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Approved absences may be made up providing the time can be made up in the same or subsequent pay period, does not exceed the maximum hours for the pay period in question, and is approved in advance by the AAA. Participants are required to notify the Project Director and host agency supervisor in all instances when they will not be reporting to their community service training assignment as scheduled. The following information outlines designated holidays and leave of absences for SCSEP participants:

A. **Federal Holidays** - SCSEP participants must be paid or hours rescheduled for approved Federal holidays if the holiday falls during their regularly scheduled work hours and if the host agency is closed for said holiday. The approved Federal Holidays per the U.S. Office of Personnel Management are: New Year's Day; Birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.; Washington's Birthday; Memorial Day; Juneteenth National Independence Day; Independence Day; Labor Day; Columbus Day; Veterans Day; Thanksgiving Day; and Christmas Day.

B. **Sick leave** – Grantees and sub-recipients must provide necessary sick leave that is not part of an accumulated sick leave program, which may be paid or in the form of rescheduled work time (20 CFR 641.565(b)(i)(vi)).

C. **Required Physician Excuse/Release** – Senior Trainees absent from their assignment for periods exceeding three (3) days due to medical treatment by a physician must obtain and submit to the project office a signed excuse or release by the physician.

   The excuse or release must give the date the Senior Trainee may safely return to his or her assignment. A copy of the release must be provided to the host agency supervisor and the project office upon return to the assignment to verify the Senior Trainee is able to return to work at his/her assignment. Repeated failure to notify supervisors and/or project staff and provide documentation regarding absences will result in disciplinary action including termination.

D. **Inclement Weather and Disaster closings** – If the Host Agency is closed due to inclement weather (i.e. tornados, flood, hurricanes, hail/windstorm, etc.) or other factors, these are not paid days. With prior approval of the project director and if the Host Agency can accommodate, a participant can make up the time in the same period or subsequent pay period.

E. **Leave Without Pay** - Senior Trainees may submit a leave of absence request to take up to thirty (30) calendar days leave without pay from work for medical, family health, or personal reasons. Any Senior Trainee on leave without pay for more than 30 days will be subject to termination from the Title V SCSEP Program but may apply for re-enrollment at a later date (20 CFR 641.570(d)).

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Participants may apply to the Project Director for leave without pay for leave exceeding three (3) consecutive days. The participant must mutually agree on the extent or time frame of leave with the Project Director and host agency supervisor. Participants absent for more than three (3) days must notify the project office and submit a request for authorized absence request form. Submission of requests for approved break will prevent requested days from being deducted from the maximum durational limit for the SCSEP program.

F. **Jury duty** – Participants will not be paid while serving on jury duty but may make up hours in the same or subsequent pay period subject to approval by the project director.

G. **Alternative Assignment** – Participants may request an alternate community service assignment if the Host Agency is to be closed for an extended period of time.

H. **Military Leave** - Eligible Senior Trainees with a spouse, son, daughter, or parent on active duty status in the National Guard or Reserves in support of a contingency operation may use their 12-week leave entitlement to address certain qualifying exigencies. Qualifying exigencies may include attending certain military events, arranging for alternative childcare, addressing certain financial and legal arrangements, attending certain counseling sessions, and attending post-deployment reintegration briefings. Senior Trainees may contact the project director for more information.

III. Signature

DocuSigned by:
Robin Stewart
DEA1EE399E8B4F8...

Robin Stewart
Deputy Executive Director

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FOR SIGNATURE

ROUTE/REVIEW

SUBJECT: SCSEP Participant Rotation Policy 25-005

PREPARED BY:	INITIAL & DATE
Glenda Wood	7/14/25

Draft	Final	REVIEWED BY:	
✓		Robert DeYoung BD	7/18/25
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✓		Laura Ring DS Initial	7/28/2025
	✓	Bill Ashley WJA	7/28/2025

ORIGINALS TO:	INITIAL & DATE
Original to Legal	
Original Mailed to Subgrantee	

COPIES TO:	INITIAL & DATE
Copy to Business Mgmt.	
Scan to Liasion (for Q-drive)	

COMMENTS / SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS:

Policy will be sent to ETA for approval once signed.

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POLICY

STATE OF MISSISSIPPI
SENIOR COMMUNITY SERVICE EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM (SCSEP)
OFFICE OF GRANT MANAGEMENT

POLICY NAME: SCSEP Participant Rotation Policy

POLICY NUMBER: 25-005
DATE OF ISSUE: July 30, 2025
EFFECTIVE DATE: July 30, 2025
DURATION: Until rescinded or revised
REVISION DATE: **REPLACED BY:** N/A

POINT OF CONTACT: rdeyoung@mdes.ms.sgov

Purpose

To ensure SCSEP participants receive varied, transferable training experiences that enhance employability, while maintaining compliance with 20 CFR 641.570(c)(1) and promoting movement toward unsubsidized employment.

Background

In Mississippi, it is the expectation of the State SCSEP Office that SCSEP participants rotate host agencies approximately every six (6) months, unless a clearly documented justification exists for continued placement. This practice supports robust skill development, minimizes dependency on subsidized assignments, and aligns with the program's primary goal—preparing participants for unsubsidized employment. Any deviation from this six-month rotation norm must be formally justified and approved by the subgrantee program coordinator, with documentation retained in the participant file.

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Policy Statement

SCSEP participants shall be rotated to new host agency assignments on a regular and deliberate schedule, typically every six months. Rotation may occur sooner or be extended, but any extension beyond 12 months must be justified in writing. Rotations are mandatory under the following conditions:

- The participant is not progressing toward unsubsidized employment.
- The current assignment no longer aligns with the Individual Employment Plan (IEP).
- There is evidence that skills development has plateaued or stagnated.
- The placement exceeds a reasonable period (generally not more than 6 months) without strong justification or 24 months, regardless of justification.

Failure to implement timely rotations may result in corrective action and jeopardize continued host agency participation.

Procedures

1. Initial Assignment:

- Participants are placed based on IEPs and matched to host agencies offering training aligned with employment goals.

2. Quarterly Review:

- Each participant shall be evaluated quarterly by their assigned case manager.
- Reviews include IEP updates, performance metrics, and documented host agency feedback.
- Stagnant progress or mismatch with training goals will result in a formal rotation assessment.

3. Rotation Triggers:

Rotations must be considered under the following circumstances:

- Placement exceeds six months without documented skill development progress.
- Host agency has exhausted its capacity to provide new, marketable training.

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- Participant expresses interest in learning new skills or environments.
- Supervisor evaluations indicate that the participant is underutilized or mismatched.

4. IEP Update & Notification:

- IEPs must be updated to reflect new goals prior to initiating rotation.
- Provide 2 weeks' notice to current and future host agencies when possible.
- The case manager must facilitate a smooth transition, including an orientation at the new host agency.

Exceptions

Continued placement beyond 12 months is strongly discouraged and must meet the following conditions:

- Documented evidence of ongoing skill acquisition,
- The IEP supports continued training, and
- Justification is documented in the participant file and reviewed by supervisory staff,
- Approval is obtained from the SCSEP Liaison.

Documentation

All decisions regarding rotation must be documented, including:

- IEP updates
- Supervisor feedback and evaluations
- Case notes or assessment outcomes
- Participant interviews
- Rotation Readiness Assessment Form

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ACTION: All PDDs must adopt a SCSEP Participant Rotation policy that conforms with the requirements of this policy.

Signed by:
William J. Ashley, Ph.D.
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William J. Ashley, PhD
Executive Director

REFERENCES: Older Americans Act Amendments of 2006; 20 CFR 641; Attachment IV of TEGL 18-22.

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SCSEP Rotation Readiness Assessment Template

Participant Name: _____
Date of Review: _____
Host Agency: _____
Case Manager: _____

Assessment Criteria	Yes	No	Comments
Placement exceeds 12 months			
Host agency lacks further training opportunities			
Participant is not progressing toward IEP goals			
Supervisor feedback supports need for rotation			
Participant expressed desire for new experience			
New assignment aligns with updated IEP			

Recommendation:

☐ Continue current placement
☐ Rotate to new host agency
☐ Reassess at next quarterly review

Next Steps/Notes:

_____

_____

_____

1.13.1 WIN JOB CENTER INTAKE STAFF INITIAL ASSESSMENT

1 The first point of contact with a veteran is crucial for gathering information about their employment history, military experience, disabilities, and specific needs. The initial assessment should be accomplished by the Intake Staff of the Win Job Center (not the DVOP or JVSG staff). This process gathers the veteran's military background, skills, and disabilities to understand the unique challenges they face. Identifying employment barriers like physical disabilities, lack of civilian work experience, and mental health issues (e.g., PTSD) is a key part of this step.

2 The Intake Staff's initial assessment will ensure that all the veteran's profile information has been correctly entered into MS Works. The Intake Staff will also ensure the DVOP Eligibility Screening Tool has been accomplished. Once an evaluation has been made and a determination that the veteran qualifies for DVOP services, the Intake Staff will input one of the following statements into the NOTES section of the veteran's MS Works profile:

IF VETERAN IS ELIGIBLE FOR DVOP SERVICES AND IS REFERRED TO A DVOP:

"Veteran (Full Name), through the intake process and by way of the DVOP Eligibility Screening Tool, has been determined to meet the requirements of an eligible veteran for DVOP services. Veteran (Full Name) is hereby referred to DVOP (Full Name), on date (format, day-month-year), by (Intake Staff Full Name, Title)."

EXAMPLE STATEMENT BY INTAKE STAFF WHEN VETERAN IS REFERRED TO A DVOP:

"Veteran John Smith, through the intake process and by way of the DVOP Eligibility Screening Tool, has been determined to meet the requirements of an eligible veteran for DVOP services. Veteran John Smith is hereby referred to DVOP Mr John Brown, on 15 April 2025, by Ms Cybil Martin, Intake Staff Supervisor."

IF VETERAN <u>IS NOT</u> ELIGIBLE FOR DVOP SERVICES AND IS NOT REFERRED TO A DVOP:

“Veteran (Full Name), through the intake process and by way of the DVOP Eligibility Screening Tool, has been determined to NOT meet the requirements of an eligible veteran for DVOP services and is not referred. Determination was confirmed on date (format, day-month-year), by (Intake Staff Full Name, Title).”

EXAMPLE STATEMENT BY INTAKE STAFF WHEN VETERAN <u>IS NOT</u> REFERRED TO A DVOP:

“Veteran John Smith, through the intake process and by way of the DVOP Eligibility Screening Tool, has been determined to NOT meet the requirements of an eligible veteran for DVOP services and is not referred. Determination was confirmed on 15 April 2025, by Ms Cybil Martin, Intake Staff Supervisor.”

NOTE: *DVOP personnel are responsible for training the Win Job Center Intake Staff,*
Office Managers, and other appropriate Win Job Center personnel on this procedure.

V. COMMON ASSURANCES (for all core programs)

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include assurances that:	
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;
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;
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;
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;
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;
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);
7.	The State has taken the appropriate action to be in compliance with WIOA section 188, Nondiscrimination, as applicable;

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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;
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;
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);
11.	Service providers have a referral process in place for directing eligible populations to DVOP services, when appropriate.
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.

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MS JVSG SOP Sec. 1.8.1 Sec. 1.13.1

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VI. PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR CORE PROGRAMS

The State must address all program-specific requirements in this section for the WIOA core programs regardless of whether the State submits either a Unified or Combined State Plan.

Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Activities under Title I-B.

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include the following with respect to activities carried out under subtitle B—

(a) **General Requirements.**

(1) Regions and Local Workforce Development Areas.

(A) Identify the regions and the local workforce development areas designated in the State.

(B) Describe the process and policy used for designating local areas, including procedures for determining whether the local area met the criteria for "performed successfully" and "sustained fiscal integrity" in accordance with 106(b)(2) and (3) of WIOA. Describe the process used for identifying regions and planning regions under section 106(a) of WIOA. This must include a description of how the State consulted with the local boards and chief elected officials in identifying the regions.

(C) Provide the appeals process and policy referred to in section 106(b)(5) of WIOA relating to designation of local areas.

(D) Provide the appeals process and policy referred to in section 121(h)(2)(E) of WIOA relating to determinations for infrastructure funding.

Plan

1.8.1 INTAKE REFERRALS FOR DVOP SERVICES

Once the Win Job Center intake staff has completed their initial assessments and identified an individual as eligible to receive DVOP services:

- Intake staff will enter a case note under NOTES in the veteran's MS Works profile that veteran is referred to the DVOP, along with the name of the receiving staff member (DVOP). See Section 1.13.1 for instructions on how to document initial assessments.

- Once referred, the DVOP will enter an enrollment case note under NOTES in the veteran's MS Works profile utilizing the DVOP Case Note Template for Objective Assessment (section 1.13.2) and the DVOP Eligibility Screening Tool (section 1.11).

MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT of EMPLOYMENT SECURITY
State Policy Number 4
SUNSHINE PROVISION POLICY
Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)

I. SCOPE AND PURPOSE

This policy sets forth the requirements to conduct business in an open manner as mandated by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). Conducting business in an open manner involves making the activities of the State Workforce Development Board (SWDB) and the Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDB) available to the public (including individuals with disabilities) on a regular basis via electronic means and open meetings.

II. STATUTES GOVERNING SUNSHINE PROVISIONS AND APPLICABLE ACTS

A. Federal Requirements

The legislation outlining the Sunshine Provision under WIOA, as prescribed for the SWDB, is found in ***Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, 113 P.L. 128, Section 101(g).***

> "Sunshine Provision. – The State board shall make available to the public, on a regular basis through electronic means and open meetings, information regarding the activities of the State board, including information regarding the State plan, or a modification to the State plan, prior to submission of the plan or modification of the plan, respectively, information regarding membership, and, on request, minutes of formal meetings of the State board."

The legislation outlining the Sunshine Provision under WIOA, as prescribed for the LWDBs, is found in ***Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, 113 P.L. 128, , Section 107(e).***

> "Sunshine Provision. – The local board shall make available to the public, on a regular basis through electronic means and open meetings, information regarding the activities of the local board, including information regarding the local plan prior to submission of the plan, and regarding membership, the designation and certification of one-stop operators, and the award of grants or contracts to eligible providers of

youth workforce investment activities, and on request, minutes of formal meetings of the local board."

The laws governing open meeting accessibility for the disabled are found at *Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), 42 USC § 12181 et seq.* More specifically, the relevant sections, ***28 CFR § 36.201(a) (2010), 28 CFR § 36.104 (2010), 28 CFR § 36.303(a) (2010), 28 C.F.R. § 36.104 (2010)[****U.S. Department of Justice Regulation to Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act, 56 Fed. Reg. 35544 (July 26, 1991)]*** are as follows:

> "No individual shall be discriminated against on the basis of disability in the full and equal enjoyment of the goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages, or accommodations of any place of public accommodation by any private entity who owns, leases (or leases to), or operates a place of public accommodation." ***28 CFR § 36.201(a) (2010)***
>
> "Public accommodation means a private entity that owns, leases [or leases to], or operates a place of public accommodation." ***28 CFR § 36.104 (2010)***
>
> "A public accommodation shall take those steps that may be necessary to ensure that no individual with a disability is excluded, denied services, segregated or otherwise treated differently than other individuals because of the absence of auxiliary aids and services, unless the public accommodation can demonstrate that taking those steps would fundamentally alter the nature of the goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages, or accommodations being offered or would result in an undue burden, i.e., significant difficulty or expense." ***28 CFR § 36.303(a) (2010)***
>
> "Qualified interpreter means an interpreter who is able to interpret effectively, accurately and impartially both receptively and expressively, using any necessary specialized vocabulary." ***28 C.F.R. § 36.104 (2010)***

B. State Requirements

The policies of the SWDB and individual LWDBs must also include State requirements as prescribed in Mississippi's Open Meetings Acts, ***Title 25, Chapter 41, Mississippi Code of 1972*** and in Mississippi's Public Records Act, ***Title 25, Chapter 61, Mississippi Code of 1972***. These acts collectively govern public bodies, state and local, that hold meetings on public matters, and ensure the public's right to access public records. The Mississippi Ethics Commission is given authority to hold hearings, take complaints, issue subpoenas, hold hearings and issue orders subsequent to alleged violations of the Open Meetings Act and the Public Records Act.

1. **State Law- The Open Meetings Act**

Miss. Code Ann. § 25-41-3(a), defines a "public body" as any executive or administrative board, commission, authority, council, department, agency, bureau or any other policy making entity, or committee thereof, of the State of Mississippi, or any political subdivision or municipal corporation of the state, whether such entity be created by statute or executive order, which is supported wholly or in part by public funds or expends public funds, and any standing, interim or special committee of the Mississippi Legislature.

Miss. Code Ann. § 25-41-5, outlines official meetings of public bodies specifically as follows:

"(1) All official meetings of any public body, unless otherwise provided in this chapter or in the Constitutions of the United States of America or the State of Mississippi, are declared to be public meetings and shall be open to the public at all times unless declared an executive session as provided in Section 25-41-7.

(2) A public body may conduct any meeting through teleconference or video means. A quorum of a public body as prescribed by law may be at different locations for the purpose of conducting a meeting through teleconference or video means provided participation is available to the general public at one or more public locations specified in the public meeting notice.

(3)(a) Notice of any meetings held pursuant to subsection (2) of this section shall be provided at least five (5) days in advance of the date scheduled for the meeting. The notice shall include the date, time, place and purpose for the meeting and shall identify all locations for the meeting available to the general public. All persons attending the meeting at any of the public meeting locations shall be afforded the same opportunity to address the public body as persons attending the primary or central location. Any interruption in the teleconference or video broadcast of the meeting shall result in the suspension of action at the meeting until repairs are made and public access restored.

(b) Five-day notice shall not be required for teleconference or video meetings continued to address an emergency as provided in subsection (5) of this section or to conclude the agenda of a teleconference or video meeting of the public body for which the proper notice has been

given, when the date, time, place and purpose of the continued meeting are set during the meeting prior to adjournment.

(4) An agenda and materials that will be distributed to members of the public body and that have been made available to the staff of the public body in sufficient time for duplication and forwarding to all locations where public access will be provided shall be made available to the public at the time of the meeting. Minutes of all meetings held by teleconference or video means shall be recorded as required by Section 25-41-11. Votes taken during any meeting conducted through teleconference or video means shall be recorded by name in roll-call fashion and included in the minutes. In addition, the public body shall make an audio recording of the meeting, if a teleconference medium is used, or an audio/visual recording, if the meeting is held by video means. The recording shall be preserved by the public body for a period of three (3) years following the date of the meeting and shall be available to the public.

(5) A public body may meet by teleconference or video means as often as needed if an emergency exists and the public body is unable to meet in regular session. Public bodies conducting emergency meetings through teleconference or video means shall comply with the provisions of subsection (4) of this section requiring minutes, recordation and preservation of the audio or audio/visual recording of the meeting. The nature of the emergency shall be stated in the minutes."

Miss. Code Ann. § 25-41-9, states that the public body convening the meeting may make and enforce rules and regulations pertaining to the conduct of attendees.

Miss. Code Ann. § 25-41-11, sets parameters defining minutes and their recording as follows:

"(1) Minutes shall be kept of all meetings of a public body, whether in open or executive session, showing the members present and absent; the date, time and place of the meeting; an accurate recording of any final actions taken at such meeting; and a record, by individual member, of any votes taken; and any other information that the public body requests be included or reflected in the minutes. The minutes shall be recorded within a reasonable time not to exceed thirty (30) days after recess or adjournment and shall be open to public inspection during regular business hours.

(2) Minutes of a meeting conducted by teleconference or video means shall comply with the requirements of Section 25-41-5.

(3) Minutes of legislative committee meetings shall consist of a written record of attendance and final actions taken at such meetings."

Miss. Code Ann. § 25-41-13, states that notice of public meetings will contain the place, date, hour and subject matter, but if a public body has regularly scheduled meetings at certain times and places mandated by statute, then no additional notice is required unless a meeting is recessed, or adjourned. In the case that there is an interim meeting or special meeting called, notice must be posted, in a publicly accessibly place, preferably in the building in which the meeting will be held, within one (1) hour of the start of the meeting. This notice must be included in the minutes or other records of the public body. This section also prescribes that public bodies without statutory provisions in place detailing times and places of meetings must detail in the minutes the upcoming times, places and procedure by which its meetings will be held.

2. State Law- The Public Records Act

Miss. Code Ann. § 25-61-2, defines the public records policy of the State of Mississippi as allowing the public, unless otherwise specified, access to all non-classified public records. The responsibility of providing access to these records is a duty of each public body. No person, due to automation, shall be denied access to public records. With an increase in technological use and advances, public bodies must provide reasonable access to electronically maintained records, subject to retention policies.

III. PROPOSED POLICY REQUIREMENTS

In order to comply with WIOA's transparency mandates to conduct business in an open manner and make activities of the board available to the public and to garner public trust, the SWDB and each LWDB shall have a sunshine provision policy which, at a minimum, meets the requirements shown below:

1. A written code of standards or conduct governing the procedural direction of all meetings held by or relating to SWDB and LWDBs as prescribed by WIOA.

    a. Specifically that these meetings shall be conducted on a regular basis and as open meetings.

b. Direction of meetings will specifically address the activities of the SWDB and LWDBs in relation to State and local plan activities and modifications. These activities must be addressed, in open meetings, prior to the submission of the plan or modification of the plan, respectively.

2. The SWDB and each LWDB shall establish written protocols defining the collection of meeting minutes, whether held in person, via teleconference or video, or any combination of the aforementioned.

    a. Parameters for storage of these minutes, must also be cited, identified and maintained in a publicly accessible place, preferably in an online format.

    b. Notation of and information regarding all members of SWDB and each LWDB must be identified and made available and easily accessed by the public.

    c. Priority must be given to public accessibility.

    d. All information must also be ADA compliant.

3. Each LWDB shall publicly identify the designation and certification of one-stop operators for the public, accessible at all times.

4. Each LWDB shall publicly provide all information regarding the award of grants or contracts to eligible providers of youth workforce investment activities.

5. The SWDB and each LWDB shall have the ability to provide minutes of formal meetings upon request. All requests for information in braille must be made two weeks in advance to meet the production requirements of the information.

6. No meeting shall be held by either the SWDB or any LWDB in a closed capacity, or in any way deny access to the public. This includes making reasonable accommodations for the disabled as outlined in the ADA requirements outlined in this document.

7. The officers, employees, agents, and members of the SWDB and LWDBs will make every effort to comply with the transparency requirements as defined by WIOA with the intent of establishing trust among all individuals, agencies and entities involved in the State of Mississippi's workforce development system.

8. The code of conduct shall contain penalties, sanctions, or other disciplinary actions in accordance with state and local law for violations of the provisions against open meetings and the public information.

IV. REQUIRED ACTION

A. The SWDB or LWDB must develop a sunshine provision policy that incorporates this State Policy Number 4. The SWDB or LWDB policy may be more proscriptive, at the discretion of the board. In either case, the policy and the background information should be reviewed regularly with state and local boards, and all boards should include this guidance in orientations for new board members.

B. The State shall include in its monitoring of local areas a review of local adherence to the requirements described in this guidance.

C. The State shall verify and ensure SWDB adherence to the requirements described in this guidance.

V. EFFECTIVE DATE

This policy shall be effective as of July 1, 2015.

Jacqueline A. Turner
Deputy Executive Director, CFO

MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT of EMPLOYMENT SECURITY
State Policy Number 5
CONFLICT of INTEREST
Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)

I. SCOPE AND PURPOSE

This policy sets forth the requirements to ensure that individuals or representatives of organizations entrusted with public funds do not personally or professionally benefit from the award or expenditure of such funds. Individuals or representatives of organizations entrusted with public funds, as referenced above, shall hereinafter be understood to include a State Workforce Development Board (SWDB) member, SWDB staff, a Local Workforce Development Board (LWDB) member, and local workforce area staff.

The SWDB and each LWDB must develop a conflict of interest policy that incorporates MDES State Policy Number 5 and meets the minimum federal and state requirements described in Section III, herein.

II. LAWS GOVERNING CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

A. Federal Requirements

The laws governing conflicts of interest under WIOA are found at ***Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, 113 P.L. 128, Section 101(f) and 101(h).*** These sections state as follows:

A member of a State board may not:

(1) vote on a matter under consideration by the State Board (A) regarding the provision of services by such member (or by an entity that such member represents); or (B) that would provide direct financial benefit to such member or the immediate family of such member; or (2) engage in any other activity determined by the Governor to constitute a conflict of interest as specified in the State plan.

A member of a local board may not:

(1) vote on a matter under consideration by the local board (A) regarding the provision of services by such member (or by an entity that such member represents); or (B) that would provide direct financial benefit to such member or the immediate family of such member; or (2) engage in any other activity determined by the Governor to constitute a conflict of interest as specified in the State plan.

B. State Requirements

State law is more proscriptive than federal law; therefore, the policies of the SWDB or individual LWDBs should include additional State requirements, as outlined below. References to the Ethics Commission Opinions are provided for further clarification.

1. State Law

Mississippi Code Annotated §25-4-105(1) (1972), prohibits a public servant from using his position in government to obtain pecuniary benefit for himself, certain relatives or a "business with which he is associated." A public servant may avoid using his position, and therefore avoid a violation of ***Section 25-4-105(1***), by recusing himself from the matter giving rise to the conflict of interest. An abstention is considered a vote with the majority and is *not* a recusal.

Section 109 of the Mississippi Constitution of 1890, and its statutory parallel, ***Mississippi Code Annotated §25-4-105(2)***, prohibit a member of a public board from having any direct or indirect interest in a contract with the government funded or otherwise authorized by that board during his or her term or for one year thereafter.

A recusal will *not* prevent or ameliorate a violation of ***Section 109*** and ***Section 25-4-105(2)***, as these sections do not require any affirmative act by an individual member to give rise to a conflict, but merely action by the board. Accordingly, recusal by the affected SWDB or LWDB member will not prevent a violation of these sections.

2. Mississippi Ethics Commission Opinion 13-014-E

In Advisory Opinion 13-014-E, the Mississippi Ethics Commission interpreted the application of Section 109 and Section 25-4-105(2) as follows:

The LWDB is a public board subject to statutory sections. If the LWDB funds a contract in which a member of that board has a prohibited interest, that member will be in violation of these sections. Any contract, which violates either section, is null and void.

The owner and CEO of a business will have an interest in all contracts entered by the business. Employees of these businesses also presumably have an interest in all contracts entered by their employer. Accordingly, a business whose owner, CEO, or employee

serves on an LWDB is prohibited by ***Section 109*** and ***Section 25-4-105(2)*** from receiving any contract that is funded by the LWDB. This prohibition applies to all contracts funded during the LWDB member's term and for one year after the LWDB member's term.

A recusal will not prevent or ameliorate a violation of Section 109 and Section 25-4-105(2), as these sections do not require any affirmative act by an individual member to give rise to a conflict, but merely action by the board. Accordingly, recusal by the affected SWDB or LWDB member will not prevent a violation of these sections. *See also* Ethics Commission Opinion 06-099-E & 04-076-E.

MDES notes that advisory opinions from the Mississippi Ethics Commission, including No. 13-014-E, are merely advisory and they are merely opinions. They do not have the force of law possessed by a statute or a court decision.

3. **Recusal**

A total and complete recusal requires that the public servant not only avoid debating, discussing or taking action on the subject matter during official meetings or deliberations, but also avoid discussing the subject matter with staff or any other person. This includes casual comments, as well as detailed discussions, made in person, by telephone or by any other means.

Furthermore, the minutes or other record of the meeting should state the recusing member left the room before the matter came before the public body and did not return until after the vote.

III. POLICY REQUIREMENTS

The SWDB and each LWDB shall have a conflict of interest policy, which at a minimum meets the requirements shown below:

1. A written code of standards or conduct governing the performance of persons engaged in the award and administration of WIOA contracts and subgrants.

2. No individual in a decision-making capacity shall engage in any activity, including participation in the selection, award, or administration of a subgrant or contract supported by WIOA funds, if a conflict of interest (real, implied, or apparent) would be involved.

3. No member of the SWDB or LWDB shall cast a vote, or participate in any decision- making capacity, on the provision of services by such member (or any organization which that member directly represents), or on any matter which would provide any direct financial benefit to the member, the immediate family of such member, or to the member's organization.

A conflict of interest under paragraphs 2 or 3 would arise when one of the following persons or groups has a financial or other interest, either through ownership or employment, and participates in the selection or award of funding for themselves, their family, or that organization or firm.

- An individual; i.e., employee, officer, or agent,
- Any member of the individual's immediate family (parent, spouse, children, or siblings),
- The individual's business partner, or
- An organization which employs, or is about to employ any of the above individuals (individual has received a job offer from the organization),

4. The officers, employees, agents, or members of the SWDB or LWDB making the awards will neither solicit nor accept gratuities, favors, or anything of monetary value from awardees, potential awardees, or other parties to agreements.

5. Reference the Mississippi Ethics in Government Laws and their applicability to members of the SWDB and LWDB, including a statement that advises members of all relevant opinions from the Mississippi Ethics Commission and the proper procedure for recusal.

6. The code of conduct shall contain penalties, sanctions, or other disciplinary actions in accordance with state and local law for violations of the provisions against conflict of interest.

IV. REQUIRED ACTION

A. In accordance with Training and Employment Guidance Letter 35-10, issued by the United States Department of Labor, SWDB and LWDB members are encouraged to regularly review and be aware of the relevant Federal, state, and board rules guiding procurement decisions and other board responsibilities.

B. The SWDB and LWDB must develop a conflict of interest policy that incorporates State Policy Number 5. The SWDB or LWDB policy may be more proscriptive, at the discretion of the board. In either case, the policy and the background information should be reviewed regularly with state and local

boards, and all boards should include this guidance in orientations for new board members.

C. The SWDB and LWDB must develop a Conflict of Interest Acknowledgement form that must be signed by each member of the SWDB and LWDB and local workforce area staff stating that they have been made aware of the federal and state conflict of interest requirements, and will abide by those requirements in the service of these boards.

V. REFERENCES

29 U.S.C. 2821(f) (1998)
29 U.S.C. 2832 (g) (1998)

U.S. Department of Labor TEGL 35-10

Section 109, Mississippi Constitution of 1890

Section 25-4-103, Mississippi Code of 1972

Mississippi Ethics Commission Opinion 13-014-E

Mississippi Ethics Commission Opinion 06-099-E

Mississippi Ethics Commission Opinion 04-076-E

VI. EFFECTIVE DATE

This policy shall be effective as of July 1, 2015.

Jacqueline A. Turner
Deputy Executive Director, CFO

MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT of EMPLOYMENT SECURITY
State Policy Number 6
PRIORITY OF SERVICE
For VETERANS and ELIGIBLE SPOUSES
Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)

I. SCOPE AND PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to articulate the procedures for providing priority of service to veterans and the eligible spouses of veterans with respect to qualified job training programs.

II. REQUIREMENTS

The requirement to provide priority of service applies to all Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and Wagner-Peyser funded activities, including technology-assisted activities; the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP); Indian and Native American Programs (INAP); National Farmworker Jobs Training Programs (NFJP); Trade Adjustment Assistance Programs (TAA); job training programs funded through the Women's Bureau, and any other current or future qualified job training program.

Additionally, all program operators are required to ensure that priority of service is applied by all sub-recipients of DOL funds. All program activities issued or executed by program operators, regardless of how they are procured, must be administered in compliance with priority of service requirements.

A. Background

The Jobs for Veterans Act (JVA), Public Law (P.L.) 107-288 was signed into law in November 2002, establishing a priority of service requirement for covered persons, as defined by this statute, in qualified job training programs.

The Department of Labor, in December 2008, published 20 CFR Part 1010 to reflect the statutory requirement of section 605 of the Veteran's Benefits, Health Care, and Information Technology Act of 2006, (P.L. 109-461), implementing priority of service via regulation.

The Final Rule took effect in January 2009, stating that recipients of funds subject to these regulations should review and, if necessary, enhance their current policies to ensure adequate protocols are in place.

B. Definitions

1. Priority of Service

   With respect to any qualified job training program, a covered person shall be given priority over a non-covered person for the receipt of employment training and placement services provided under that program.

2. Covered Person

   As defined in Federal Rule (20 CFR Part 1010), a covered person means a veteran or eligible spouse of a veteran.

3. Veteran

   A veteran is defined as a person who served in the active military, naval, or air service, who was discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable.

4. Eligible Spouse

   a. The spouse of any persons who died of a service-connected disability
   b. The spouse of any member of the Armed Forces serving on active duty who, at the time of application for the priority, is listed in one or more of the following categories and has been so listed for a total of more than 90 days:

      - missing in action
      - captured in the line of duty by hostile force; or
      - forcibly detained or interned in the line of duty by a foreign government or power

   c. The spouse of any persons who have a total disability permanent in nature resulting from a service-connected disability; or
   d. The spouse of a veteran who died while a disability so evaluated was in existence.

   The United States Department of Labor (USDOL) has indicated for clarification concerning (a) and (d) above that the re-marriage of the spouse would not terminate their eligibility. However, if a spouse

becomes divorced from a veteran under (b) and (c) above, eligibility for priority of service is terminated.

It is further understood that this policy does not exclude from eligibility spouses who were not citizens at the time that the veteran was discharged or retired, nor does it stipulate that a spouse had to be married to a veteran at the time of his or her discharge or retirement.

5. Qualified Job Training Program

   Any program or service for workforce preparation, development or delivery that is directly funded, in whole or in part, by the USDOL.

C. Implementing Priority of Service

The regulations provide that priority of service means the right of eligible covered persons to take precedence over eligible non-covered persons in obtaining services. They further specify that taking precedence may mean:

- The covered person receives access to the service or resource earlier in time than the non-covered person; or
- If the service or resource is limited, the covered person receives access to the service or resource instead of or before the non-covered person.

The regulations specify how priority of service is to be applied across three different types of qualified job training programs:

- Universal access programs that do not target specific groups;
- Discretionary targeting programs that focus on certain groups but are not mandated to serve target group members before other eligible individuals; and,
- Statutory targeting programs that are mandated by federal law to provide priority or preference to certain groups.

D. Identifying and Informing Covered Persons

All recipients of funds for qualified job training programs are required to identify covered persons at the point of entry to programs to enable them to take full advantage of priority of service. The USDOL will not prescribe how this is to be done. Program operators are reminded, however, that self-registration systems are not, at this stage, to require documents to be produced that verify status, unless the point of entry is also the point at which program eligibility determination and registration or enrollment takes place. Even then, the

applicant should be permitted to enroll and follow-up subsequently with the verification of his or her status. Point of entry will include physical locations as well as websites and other virtual service delivery resources.

Protocol should require that the receptionist or office manager ask each applicant if he or she is a veteran or eligible spouse. Staff should also explain to each applicant that veterans and eligible spouses get priority of service, and describe any eligibility requirements for those services or programs.

E. Local Board Requirements

Local Workforce Development Boards are required to develop and include in their local plan, policies which implement priority of service for the one Stop Centers and a service delivery plan for the local training providers.

III. EFFECTIVE DATE

This policy shall be effective as of July 1, 2015.

IV. APPROVAL

Jacqueline A. Turner
Deputy Executive Director, CFO

MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT SECURITY
State Policy Number 8, Revised February 2018
WIOA PROGRAMMATIC and FISCAL MONITORING
Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)

I. SCOPE AND PURPOSE

This policy sets forth requirements for the monitoring of all entities receiving Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funds in accordance with Sections 183(a-c) of the Act and Federal regulations 2 CFR Part 200.330 – 200.332, and Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) 31.2 of the Final Rule.

Audit Regulations, 2 CFR 200.501-512, shall be applicable for non-profit and for-profit entities who expend $750,000 a year in federal awards from all sources.

Each Local Workforce Development Area and State sub-recipient shall develop a policy to govern its monitoring activities. This document provides guidelines for developing the policy and describes the minimum elements to be included in the policy.

II. STATE REQUIREMENTS

A. State Monitoring Policy

The Office of Grant Management (OGM) is responsible for monitoring all Local Workforce Development Areas and State sub-recipients. On-site and/or desk reviews will be conducted pursuant to established standard operating procedures to ensure compliance with the WIOA, Federal regulations, State laws, contractual agreements, State policies, OMB circulars, cost principles, and, when applicable, Federal Acquisition Regulations (FAR).

1. Monitoring Review Process

- An on-site and/or desk review is conducted consisting of:
- An entry conference or written notification of desk review, as appropriate, to brief agency officials on the scope of the review and to make appropriate arrangements;
- A review of administrative, fiscal, equal opportunity, and programmatic systems and transactions;
- Performance of test work, based on a review and examination of WIOA records and interviews; and
- An exit conference for on-site reviews to inform agency officials of monitoring results.

2. Monitor the following, as applicable:

- program goals and objectives

- program quality
- procurement
- fiscal accountability
- labor standards
- audit/audit resolution
- actual expenditures against cost categories and limitations
- grievance procedures
- equal opportunity
- provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act
- eligibility verification as applicable
- property management
- internal monitoring of entity's sub-recipients
- administrative procedures
- program performance
- other programmatic areas
- programmatic accountability

3. Monitoring Report

After each review, a monitoring report will be prepared by OGM detailing the results of the monitoring visit. The report will be completed within three weeks of completion of the review. Indexed working papers will also be prepared to provide supporting documentation for test work performed and for any findings. The monitoring report will be transmitted to the entity for review, and appropriate corrective action will be requested, if necessary.

4. Corrective Action Response

If any findings were noted during the review, a corrective action response will be required within 45 days from date of the monitoring report. Upon receipt of the entity's corrective action plan, the monitors will review the response and comment on the acceptability of the proposed corrective action. If the corrective action plan is deemed acceptable, the file will be closed. If the corrective action plan or any part thereof is unacceptable, additional corrective action shall be requested. The file will remain open until all corrective action has been accepted.

5. Acceptance/Non-acceptance of Corrective Action

Notice of acceptance or non-acceptance of the sub-recipient's proposed corrective action plan will be forwarded by OGM to the sub-recipient within 30 working days of receipt of the plan. If the proposed plan is not accepted, OGM may require submission of a subsequent

plan to be received within 30 days from the date of the notice.

If the subsequent plan is deemed unacceptable, OGM may again request submission of a new plan within a specified timeframe or take other action as deemed appropriate relevant to the circumstances.

6. Monitoring Files

A monitoring file will be maintained by OGM for each monitoring visit or desk review.

7. Follow-up Visits and Verification of Corrective Action

Follow-up visits will be conducted by OGM, if deemed necessary.

8. Unannounced Visits

Unannounced visits may be conducted by OGM, if deemed necessary.

III. LOCAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AREA/ STATE SUB-RECIPIENT REQUIREMENTS

A. Local Workforce Development Area/State Sub-recipient Monitoring Policy

WIOA Section 107(d)(8) requires the local board, in partnership with the chief elected official, to conduct monitoring with respect to local programs of youth activities authorized under section 129(c), adult and dislocated worker local employment and training activities authorized under section 134(b), (c), and (d), and the one-stop delivery system in the local area.

WIOA Section 184(a) (3&4) and 2 CFR 200 parts 330-332 of the Federal regulations require each recipient and sub-recipient of WIOA Title I funds to conduct monitoring of the WIOA activities of its sub-recipients in order to:

- Determine whether expenditures have been made against the cost categories and within the cost limitations specified in WIOA and Federal regulations;
- Determine whether there is compliance with all applicable requirements; and
- Provide technical assistance as necessary and appropriate.

1. Scope

The Local Workforce Development Area (LWDA) or State sub-recipient shall develop a monitoring policy describing the procedures that will be implemented to ensure compliance with WIOA, Federal regulations, State laws, contractual agreements, State policies, OMB circulars, cost principles, and Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR).

Local fiscal monitoring of sub-recipients may consist of one of the following: 1) on-site; 2) desk review; 3) both on-site and desk review for the same period. The method used to conduct the monitoring and the frequency required for each shall be based on the LWDA or State sub-recipient's determination of "risk" and other factors which should consider whether the sub-recipient is subject to the Single Audit Act; when the most recent previous on-site review was conducted; previous findings or corrective actions required; etc.

LWDA or State sub-recipient programmatic compliance and equal opportunity monitoring of sub-recipients may consist of one of the following: 1) on-site; 2) desk review; 3) both on-site and desk review for the same period. The method used to conduct the monitoring and the frequency required for each shall be based on the LWDA's determination of "risk" and other factors which should consider the type of WIOA activity performed by the sub-recipients; when the most recent previous on-site review was conducted; previous findings or corrective actions required; the existence of current reviews conducted by the state or its authorized representative that adequately address all criteria in the LWDA or State sub-recipient monitoring instrument, etc.

Monitor the following, as applicable:

- program goals and objectives
- program quality
- procurement
- fiscal accountability
- labor standards
- audit/audit resolution
- actual expenditures against cost categories and limitations
- grievance procedures
- equal opportunity
- provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act
- eligibility verification as applicable
- property management
- internal monitoring of entity's sub-recipients
- administrative procedures
- program performance
- other programmatic areas
- programmatic accountability

2. Frequency

The policy shall include procedures to ensure monitoring is completed in a

timely manner. Each sub-recipient or State sub-recipient shall be monitored at least once per year during the program year or during the sub-award period.

B. Local Workforce Development Area/State Sub-recipient Monitoring Procedures

1. Annual Monitoring Schedule

The policy shall include procedures to ensure an annual monitoring schedule is prepared. The schedule should include sub-recipient names and addresses, contact numbers, planned dates of reviews, and names of individuals to perform the reviews. Annual monitoring schedules shall be submitted to OGM.

2. Review Notification

The policy shall include procedures to ensure that written notification of the scheduled review is provided to the entity in advance of the actual review, except when unannounced monitoring visits are deemed necessary.

3. Desk Review Instrument

A written desk review monitoring instrument must be prepared and should precede an on-site monitoring visit. This process will ensure that all pertinent records are reviewed prior to each visit. The policy shall describe the procedures for completing a desk review instrument before the on-site visit.

4. Monitoring Instrument

The policy shall include procedures for the development of an objective monitoring instrument for use in monitoring reviews to ensure that pertinent data can be collected and analyzed for all program activities.

5. Documentation of Findings

The policy shall include procedures to ensure findings are adequately documented and include a written description of the deficiency or violation.

6. Monitoring Report

The policy shall include procedures to ensure a monitoring report is prepared following each on-site or desk review. The report should be completed within three weeks of the review and should include the following elements:

- A face page signed by the monitor(s) and the signature of supervisory level staff or the executive director (applicable to on-site visits only);
- The dates of the review and areas covered during the review.
- A listing of findings, if applicable that consists of a narrative description of the deficiency or violation noted; and
- For each finding, a recommendation which sets forth the most appropriate action to correct the deficiency or violation noted.

7. Corrective Action

The policy shall include procedures to ensure monitoring reports are forwarded to the sub-recipient with a transmittal letter. If findings were noted in the report, the transmittal letter shall require a written corrective action plan from the sub-recipient within 45 days from the date of the report.

8. Acceptance/Non-acceptance of Corrective Action

The policy shall describe the procedures that will be used to determine the acceptance or non-acceptance of the sub-recipient corrective action plan. Notification of the determination shall be provided to the sub-recipient within 30 working days of receipt of the proposed corrective action plan.

9. Follow-up Monitoring and Verification of Corrective Action

The policy shall include procedures for follow-up monitoring reviews determined by the risk of the finding and the sub-recipient response to the finding. The policy shall include procedures to determine if corrective action measures taken were adequate to resolve the noted deficiencies.

9. Unannounced Visits

The policy shall describe the procedures for conducting unannounced visits of sub-recipients when such visits are deemed necessary.

10. Monitoring Files

The policy shall include procedures establishing and maintaining the monitoring files. A separate file shall be maintained for each monitoring review. At a minimum, the files shall contain the following records:

- notification of monitoring dates;
- completed desk review instrument;

- signed monitoringreport;
- completed monitoring instrument;
- transmittal letter, and if applicable, request for a corrective action plan;
- response from sub-recipient, when appropriate;
- letter to sub-recipient accepting/rejecting corrective action; and
- working paper file to include supporting documentation.

IV. EFFECTIVE DATE

This policy shall be effective as of February 1, 2018.

Jacqueline A. Turner
Deputy Executive Director, CFO

FOR SIGNATURE

ROUTE/REVIEW

SUBJECT: Policy # 12

PREPARED BY:		INITIAL/ DATE
Donna Hollis		dh
REVIEWED BY:		
	Mark Henry	
✓	Jackie Turner	2-10-16
✓	Patti Mosley	pm 2/10/16
	Maxine Hardiman	
	Michael Herndon	
	Robert DeYoung	
	Cherish Johnson	
	Kymberly Batton	
	Donna Hollis	
	Celeste Brookshire	
	Matthew Mabry	
	John Garrett	
	Abigail Marbury	
	Guy Martin	

COPIES TO:	
	Local Fiscal Agent
	Local Board Chair
	Local Chief Elected Official
	MDES Administration
	MDES Business Mgmt.
	MDES Legal

COMMENTS / SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS:

DATE MAILED:

MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT of EMPLOYMENT SECURITY
State Policy Number 12
PROGRAMMATIC NON-DISCRIMINATION GRIEVANCES AND COMPLAINTS
Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act

I. SCOPE AND PURPOSE:

This policy sets forth the State's procedures for grievances or complaints alleging violations of the requirements of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) from participants and other interested or affected parties based on the guidance set forth at WIOA section 181 (c) and 20 CFR 683.600-650 *(All references to 20 CFR hereafter are from the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking published in the Federal Register on 04/16/2015).*

II. REQUIREMENTS:

A. General Requirements *[WIOA Section 181 (c) and 20 CFR 683.600 (a - b)]*

Each local area, State, and direct recipient of funds under Title I of WIOA must establish and maintain a procedure for grievances and complaints.

Each local area, State, and direct recipient must:

1) Provide information about the content of the grievance and complaint procedures to participants and other interested parties affected by the local Workforce Investment System, including One-Stop partners and service providers;
2) Require that every entity to which it awards Title I funds must provide information about the content of the grievance and complaint procedures to participants receiving Title I-funded services from such entities; and
3) Make reasonable efforts to assure that the information about the content of the grievance and complaint procedures will be understood by affected participants and other individuals, including youth and those who are limited-English speaking individuals.

B. Local Area Requirements *[20 CFR 683.600 (c)]*

Local area procedures must provide:

1) A process for dealing with grievances and complaints from participants and other interested parties affected by the local Workforce Investment System, including One-Stop partners and service providers;
2) An opportunity for an informal resolution and a hearing to be completed within 60 days of the filing of the grievance or complaint;

3) A process which allows an individual alleging a labor standards violation to submit the grievance to a binding arbitration procedure, if a collective bargaining agreement covering the parties to the grievance so provides; and
4) An opportunity for a local level appeal to a State entity when:
   - No decision is reached within 60 days; or
   - Either party is dissatisfied with the local hearing decision.

C. State Requirements *[20 CFR 683.600 (d)]*

State procedures must provide:

1) A process for dealing with grievances and complaints from participants and other interested parties affected by the Statewide Workforce Investment programs;
2) A process for resolving appeals from the local area level;
3) A process for remanding grievances and complaints related to the local WIOA programs to the local area grievance process;
4) An opportunity for an informal resolution and a hearing to be completed within 60 days of the filing of the grievance or complaint; and
5) An opportunity for appeal to the Secretary under the circumstances described in Section 683.610 (a).

D. Direct Recipients *[20 CFR 683.600 (e)]*

Procedures of direct recipients must provide:

1) A process for dealing with grievances and complaints from participants and other interested parties affected by the Statewide Workforce Investment programs;
2) An opportunity for an informal resolution and a hearing to be completed within 60 days of the filing of the grievance or complaint.

E. Denial or Termination of Eligibility as a Training Provider *[20 CFR 683.630 (b)]*

1) State procedures must allow providers of training services the opportunity to appeal:
   - Denial of eligibility by a Local Board or the designated State agency under WIOA section 122 (b), (c), or (d);
   - Termination of eligibility or other action by a Local Board or State agency under WIOA section 122 (f); or
   - Denial of eligibility as a provider of on-the-job training (OJT) or customized training by a One-Stop operator under WIOA section 122 (h).
2) Such procedures must provide an opportunity for a hearing and prescribe appropriate time limits to ensure resolution of the appeal.
3) A decision under this state appeal process may not be appealed to the Secretary.

F. Remedies *[WIOA section 181 (c) (3)]*

Remedies that may be imposed under this section for a violation of any requirement of this title shall be limited:

1) to suspension or termination of payments under this title;
2) to prohibition of placement of a participant with an employer that has violated any requirement under this title;
3) where appropriate, the reinstatement of an employee, payment of lost wages and benefits, and reestablishment of other relevant terms, conditions, and privileges of employment; and
4) where appropriate, to other equitable relief.

III. POLICY AND PROCEDURES:

A. Local Area Level Grievances and Complaints

The State requires local areas to establish and maintain a policy and procedures for grievances and complaints. The local area process must allow participants and other interested parties affected by the local Workforce Investment System an opportunity for an informal resolution and the option to have a hearing to be completed within 60 calendar days of the filing of the grievance or complaint. The Local Boards shall notify the Mississippi Department of Employment Security (MDES) of any grievance or complaint filed at the local area level within 10 calendar days and provide a copy of the final decision regarding the grievance or complaint to MDES within 5 calendar days of the decision. The decision made at the local area level may be appealed to the State as described below (C. Local Area Level Appeals to the State).

B. State Level Grievances and Complaints

Grievances and complaints from participants and other interested parties affected by the Statewide Workforce Investment programs must be made in writing and filed with MDES within one year of the alleged incident. Grievances and complaints should be addressed to:

Mississippi Department of Employment Security
Office of Grant Management
WIOA Grievances and Complaints
P.O. Box 1699
Jackson, MS 39215-1699

Grievances and complaints should include the following information:

- The name, address, and telephone number of the participant or other affected party filing the grievance or complaint;
- The name and address of the designated State agency to which the grievance or complaint is being submitted;
- A statement documenting the nature of the grievance or complaint and noting all relevant parties; and
- A signature and date signed.

MDES will review the grievance or complaint and notify the involved parties within 15 calendar days of the receipt of the grievance or complaint. MDES will provide the involved parties an opportunity for an informal resolution. If the grievance or complaint cannot be resolved informally, MDES, within 30 calendar days of receipt of the grievance or complaint, will schedule a hearing before a designated hearing officer. MDES will notify the involved parties at least 10 calendar days prior to a scheduled hearing.

The hearing notice will include:

- The date of the notice;
- The name and address of the participant or other affected party filing the grievance or complaint and all other involved parties;
- A statement documenting the nature of the grievance or complaint and noting all relevant parties;
- The date, time, and place of the hearing; and
- The name, address, and telephone number of the contact person issuing the notice.

The hearing shall be conducted in an informal manner with strict rules of evidence not being applicable. Parties shall have the right to present written and/or oral testimony and arguments; the right to call and question witnesses; the right to request and examine records and documents relevant to the issues; and the right to be represented.

Following completion of the hearing, the hearing officer will present the findings of fact to the State Review Panel. The State Review Panel shall be made of members designated by the Executive Director or his designee. The State Review Panel will review the findings of fact presented by the hearing officer. The State Review Panel may accept, reject, or modify the hearing officer's recommendation and shall issue a written decision to the involved parties within 60 calendar days of receipt of the grievance or complaint.

Statewide procedures provide for an appeal to the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) when:

- No decision is reached within 60 calendar days; or
- Either party is dissatisfied with the State hearing process.

Grievances or complaints filed at the State level may be remanded to the local area level if it is determined that the alleged incident is related to the local WIOA programs. Once the local area grievance or complaint process has been completed, an appeal of the local area's decision may be made to the State.

C. Local Area Level Appeals to the State

Appeals must be made in writing and filed with MDES within 15 calendar days of the receipt of the local area level decision or 15 calendar days from the date on which the decision should have been received (60 calendar days after filing the original grievance or complaint with the local area). Appeals should be addressed to:

Mississippi Department of Employment Security
Office of Grant Management
WIOA Grievances and Complaints
P.O. Box 1699
Jackson, MS 39215-1699

Appeals should include the following information:

- The name, address, and telephone number of the participant or other affected party filing the appeal;
- A copy of the original grievance or complaint filed at the local area level, documenting the nature of the alleged incident and noting all relevant parties;
- A copy of the original decision reached at the local area level, including documentation of the date on which the decision was received;
- The grounds on which the appeal is sought; and
- A signature and date signed.

The involved parties will be notified within 15 calendar days to verify the receipt of an appeal and the course of action that will be followed. MDES may affirm, modify, set aside, or remand any decision made at the local area level or, at its sole discretion, direct that additional evidence be taken.

If a hearing was held at the local area level, MDES shall request a record of the hearing. A hearing officer will review the record of the local area level hearing. If the local area level hearing is determined to be sufficient, a State level hearing will not be held. The hearing officer will present the findings of fact to the State Review Panel. The State Review Panel will review the findings of fact presented by the hearing officer. The State

Review Panel may accept, reject, or modify the local area's decision and will issue a written decision to the involved parties within 60 calendar days of receipt of the appeal.

If a hearing was not held at the local area level, MDES shall instruct the local area to hold a hearing within 30 calendar days of receipt of the appeal. If the local area fails to hold a hearing within the required timeframe, MDES will schedule a State level hearing before a hearing officer. MDES will notify the involved parties at least 10 calendar days prior to a scheduled hearing.

The hearing notice will include:

- The date of the notice;
- The name and address of the participant or other affected party filing the appeal and all other involved parties;
- A statement documenting the nature of the appeal, including: information about the original grievance or complaint filed, the original decision reached at the local area level, and the grounds on which the appeal is being sought;
- The date, time, and place of the hearing; and
- The name, address, and telephone number of the contact person issuing the notice.

The hearing shall be conducted in an informal manner with strict rules of evidence not being applicable. Parties shall have the right to present written and/or oral testimony and arguments; the right to call and question witnesses; the right to request and examine records and documents relevant to the issues; and the right to be represented.

Following completion of the hearing, the hearing officer will present the findings of fact to the State Review Panel. The State Review Panel will review the findings of fact presented by the hearing officer. The State Review Panel may accept, reject, or modify the hearing officer's recommendation and shall issue a written decision to the involved parties within 60 calendar days of receipt of the appeal.

Statewide procedures provide for an appeal to DOL when:

- No decision is reached within 60 calendar days; or
- Either party is dissatisfied with the State hearing process.

D. Appeals of the Denial or Termination of Eligibility as a Training Provider

The State requires local areas to establish and maintain a policy and procedures for appeals by training providers that have had their eligibility denied or terminated by the Local Board. The local area process must allow training providers an opportunity for an informal resolution and the option to have a hearing to be completed within 60 calendar

days of the filing of the appeal. The Local Boards shall notify MDES of any appeal filed at the local area level within 10 calendar days and provide a copy of the final decision regarding the appeal to MDES within 5 calendar days. Training providers may appeal the local area's decision to MDES by following the procedures described above (C. Local Area Level Appeals to the State).

Training providers that have had their eligibility denied or terminated at the State level may file an appeal by following the procedures described above (B. State Level Grievances and Complaints).

The Reporting and Performance Unit in the Office of Grant Management (OGM) at MDES is responsible for making initial and subsequent eligibility determinations for training providers at the State level. The review of an appeal and the final decision made at the State level regarding an appeal is the responsibility of the State Review Panel, which is independent of the Reporting and Performance Unit.

Decisions made at the State level regarding the denial or termination of an entity's eligibility as a training provider may not be appealed to DOL (CFR 667.640 (b) (3)).

E. State Level Appeals to the U.S. Department of Labor

Appeals must be made in writing and filed with DOL within 60 calendar days of the State level decision or the date on which the decision should have been received (60 calendar days after the original grievance, complaint, or appeal was received by MDES). DOL will make a final decision no later than 120 calendar days after receiving a formal appeal. DOL will only investigate grievances, complaints, or appeals arising through the established procedures. Appeals should be addressed to:

Regional Administrator
U.S. Department of Labor/ETA
Atlanta Federal Center 61 Forsyth St. Rm. 6M12
Atlanta, GA 30303

IV. EFFECTIVE DATE:

This policy is effective July 1, 2015.

Jacqueline A. Turner
Deputy Executive Director, CFO

MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT of EMPLOYMENT SECURITY
State Policy Number 16
ONE-STOP CERTIFICATION
Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)

I. SCOPE AND PURPOSE

To provide guidance, process, and deadlines for the certification of one-stop centers and the one-stop delivery system that is to be conducted by local workforce development boards, and to set criteria for the development of a local policy for one-stop certification.

II. BACKGROUND

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) specifies in section 101(d)(6) and 121 (g)(1) that the State Workforce Development Board (SWDB) shall establish the minimum criteria for certification of one-stop centers and the one-stop delivery system. Certification is required to be done by Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) at least once every three years in order for one-stop centers and the one-stop delivery system to receive infrastructure funding.

LWDBs must assess the effectiveness, physical and programmatic accessibility, and continuous improvement of one-stop centers and the one-stop delivery systems using the criteria in these guidelines. The LWDB may establish additional criteria, or set higher standards for service coordination, than those set by the State criteria. Both State and local WDBs must review and update the criteria every two years as part of the review and modification of the State and local planning process as described in 20 CFR 676.580.

When the local area is the one-stop operator as described in 20 CFR 679.410, the State Workforce Investment Board must certify the one-stop center (20 CFR 678.800).

III. CERTIFICATION CRITERIA

In order to be certified, one-stop centers and the one-stop delivery system must meet or exceed the standards established for each of the following areas:

A. Effectiveness

Evaluations of effectiveness must include how well the one-stop center integrates available services for participants and businesses, meets the workforce development needs of participants and the employment needs of local employers, operates in a cost-efficient manner, coordinates services among the one-stop partner programs, and provides access to partner program services to the maximum extent practicable, including providing services outside of regular business hours where there is a workforce need, as identified by the LWDB.

B. Programmatic and Physical Accessibility

These evaluations must take into account feedback from one-stop customers. They must also include evaluations of 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.

All one-stop centers must comply with applicable physical and programmatic accessibility requirements, as set forth in 29 CFR part 38, the implementing regulations of WIOA sec. 188.

C. Continuous Improvement

Evaluations of continuous improvement must include how well the one-stop center supports the achievement of the negotiated local levels of performance for the indicators of performance for the local area that it serves. Other continuous improvement factors may include a regular process for identifying and responding to technical assistance needs, a regular system of continuing professional staff development, and having systems in place to capture and respond to specific customer feedback.

LWDBs are responsible for assessing the one-stop centers and the one-stop delivery system using the criteria outlined in Attachment A and submitting a record of the assessment and certification determination via email to the Director of the Office of Grant Management within 10 days of completing the certification determination.

Local boards are required to have policies and procedures in place for assessing the one-stop centers and the one-stop delivery system. This State policy requires local workforce boards to develop policies and procedures by June 30, 2017. The policies and procedures:

- Must include the criteria outlined in these guidelines;

- May include additional criteria beyond the items outlined in this policy; and
- Must be incorporated into the Local Area Plans.

Certification should be completed by the local board prior to the end of program year 2016 and at least every three years thereafter. One-stop centers that are certified by the local board within the prescribed timeframes shall be eligible to receive required infrastructure funding.

IV. INQUIRIES

Inquiries regarding this policy may be directed to Laura Ring, lring@mdes.ms.gov or 601-321-6017.

V. REFERENCES

- Title I of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014, WIOA Section 101(d)(6), 121(e), and 121(g).
- 20 CFR 678 Subpart F
- TEGL 16-16

VI. EFFECTIVE DATE

This policy shall be effective as of April 1, 2017.

Jacqueline A. Turner
Deputy Executive Director, CFO

APPLICATION FOR WIN JOB CENTER CERTIFICATION

Organization Name: **Date:**

Contact Person/Title:

Phone: **Email:**

Site to be certified: **Address:**

Website

Hours of Operation

Current Certification:

☐ Comprehensive ☐ Affiliate ☐ Sector Training Plus Comprehensive ☐ None

If requesting a different certification level, check level requested:

☐ Comprehensive ☐ Affiliate ☐ Sector Training Plus Comprehensive

I. Introduction

One-stop sites are the portals to our state's workforce system and its broad array of career services and resources designed to help individuals acquire the skills necessary to gain meaningful employment and our businesses to access the talent pipeline that meets their human capital needs and fuels economic growth. Workforce system partners are required to collaborate to support a seamless customer-focused service delivery network. Every region across our state is unique in terms of its economy and geography, but each is actively working to create a system that provides effective services for our job seeker and business customers.

Under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), state and local partners share common performance goals and are mandated to collaborate in developing and implementing a one-stop delivery system where services are designed with the customer in the center, resources are leveraged for maximum efficiency, and continuous improvement is the hallmark.

II. WIOA Section 121 (e)(2)

ONE-STOP DELIVERY.—The one-stop delivery system—

(A) at a minimum, shall make each of the programs, services, and activities described in paragraph (1) accessible at not less than 1 physical center in each local area of the State; and

(B) may also make programs, services, and activities described in paragraph (1) available—
  (i) through a network of affiliated sites that can provide 1 or more of the programs, services, and activities to individuals; and
  (ii) through a network of eligible one-stop partners—
    (I) in which each partner provides 1 or more of the programs, services, and activities to such individuals and is accessible at an affiliated site that consists of a physical location or an electronically or technologically linked access point; and
    (II) that assures individuals that information on the availability of the career services will be available regardless of where the individuals initially enter the statewide workforce development system, including information made available through an access point described in subclause (I);

(C) may have specialized centers to address special needs, such as the needs of dislocated workers, youth, or key industry sectors or clusters; and

(D) as applicable and practicable, shall make programs, services, and activities accessible to individuals through electronic means in a manner that improves efficiency, coordination, and quality in the delivery of one-stop partner services.

III. Certification Process

WIOA requires that there must be at least one physical one-stop career center in each local area. Additional locations may also provide access to workforce system services and may include specialized centers serving targeted populations, such as youth or dislocated workers, or industry-

specific centers. To achieve the goal of increased access, the State of Mississippi recognizes three levels of sites that can be certified within the one-stop service delivery system.

Comprehensive One-Stop Center

- Accessible to the general public during regular business days, as well as physically and programmatically accessible to individuals with disabilities
- Portal site for electronic access
- Provider of **basic and individualized career services, and training services**
- **Provider of business services**
- Representation of **five** mandated core partner programs (WIOA Titles I-IV, TANF)
- Additional related employment and training resources

Affiliate One-Stop Center

- Accessible to the general public and physically and programmatically accessible to individuals with disabilities
- Portal site for electronic access
- Provider of **basic career services**
- Representation of **one** or more mandated partners
- Additional related employment and training resources
- Established working relationship as part of an integrated system of WIN Job Center sites

Sector Training Plus Comprehensive One-Stop Center

- Provides access to all of the services in the Comprehensive Services
- Provider of **basic and individualized career services, and sector-related training services**
- Additional related employment and training resources
- Established working relationship as part of an integrated system of WIN Job Center sites

Sites seeking certification as a Comprehensive Center, Affiliated, or Sector Training Plus Comprehensive One-Stop Center are required to submit an application and receive a site visit from the Local Workforce Development Board (LWDB) One-Stop Certification Committee. Staff will answer questions about their site and how it functions to add value and provide customers with quality services as a part of the WIN Job Center system. This Committee is comprised of LWDB members and staff as well as other community partners who have specific expertise in serving populations with barriers. Note: In areas where the LWDB functions as the Site Operator, LWDB staff will only serve in an administrative support role to the Certification Committee and will ensure that the process is conducted objectively. Following the site visit, interviews, and final responses to any follow up questions, the Certification Committee will provide a written response within 30 days indicating one of three outcomes:

1. Certification granted
2. Provisional Certification with plan and timeline for meeting standards
3. Not Certified

In support of the goals of continuous improvement of the one-stop delivery system, on at least an annual basis each certified site will provide a report detailing the progress toward reaching higher standards set out in the certification criteria and this information will be provided to the Local Workforce Development Board.

IV. Checklist – System Requirements

	Yes	No – (please provide plan for complying with this requirement)
Compliance with WIN System Policies		
ADA Accessibility for facility		
Use of Mississippi Works for customer tracking		
Memorandum of Understanding for partners		
WIN Job Center Brand used appropriately		
American Job Center Brand used appropriately		
Wagner-Peyser services are co-located		

REQUIRED PROGRAM/PARTNER CHECKLIST

A. In the column named "On-Site", indicate programs/partners that are currently located on-site in your facility by entering the average number of hours per week they are on-site.

B. In the column named "Off-Site Electronic Connection", make a check mark for the programs/partners that are off-site but their basic career services are made available to customers through an electronic connection. Note: Not all customers will be able to use the electronic connection(s) without help from WIN Job Center staff.

C. For programs/partners that are off-site but an agreement is in place to provide their basic career services in another manner, check the last column and attach a narrative explaining how this is accomplished *(use a separate shee*t).

REQUIRED PROGRAMS/PARTNERS	ON-SITE (AVERAGE HOURS/WEEK)	OFF-SITE ELECTRONIC CONNECTION	OFF-SITE BASIC CAREER SERVICES MADE AVAILABLE IN ANOTHER MANNER
WIOA Title 1-B Adult Services			
WIOA Title 1-B Dislocated Worker Services			
WIOA Title 1-B Youth Services			
Wagner-Peyser Title III – Mississippi Department of Employment Security (MDES)			
Adult Education and Family Literacy Title II (ABE)			
Rehabilitation Act Title IV – Mississippi Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)			
Rehabilitation Act Title IV – Mississippi Department of Services for the Blind			
Title V – Older Americans Act/ Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP)			
TANF – Mississippi Department of Human Services (MDHS)			
Trade Adjustment Assistance – Mississippi Department of Employment Security			
Veterans Employment Services – Mississippi Department of Employment Security			
Unemployment Compensation			

ADDITIONAL PROGRAMS/PARTNERS	ON-SITE (AVERAGE HOURS/WEEK)	OFF-SITE ELECTRONIC CONNECTION	OFF-SITE BASIC CAREER SERVICES MADE AVAILABLE IN ANOTHER MANNER
Ticket to Work and Self Sufficiency			
SNAP Employment and Training (SNAP E&T)			
Food and Nutrition (7 USC 2015 (o))			
Small Business Administration			
Job Corps			
Career & Technical Education Programs (postsecondary) Carl D. Perkins Act			
Community Services Block Grant			
Housing & Urban Development Employment & Training			
Second Chance Act - Reintegration of Ex-Offenders -MDOC			

CAREER SERVICES CHECKLISTS

In the column named "On-Site", check the basic career, individualized career, and training services that are currently available on-site for all job seeking customers who come into the WIN Job Center Comprehensive Site, Affiliate Site, or Sector Training Plus Comprehensive Site.

BASIC CAREER SERVICES	ON-SITE	BASIC CAREER SERVICES	ON-SITE	BASIC CAREER SERVICES	ON-SITE
Initial assessment of skill levels (including literacy, numeracy, and English language proficiency), aptitudes, abilities (including skills gaps), and supportive service needs;		Outreach, intake and orientation to the information and other services available through the one-stop delivery system		Eligibility determination	
Labor exchange services, including job search and placement assistance, career counseling, provision of information on in-demand industry sectors and occupations, provision of information on nontraditional employment		Appropriate recruitment and other business services on behalf of employers, including small employers, which may include providing information and referral to specialized business services not traditionally offered through the one-stop delivery system		Referrals to and coordination of activities with other programs and services, including programs and services within the one-stop delivery system and other workforce development programs	

BASIC CAREER SERVICES	ON-SITE	BASIC CAREER SERVICES	ON-SITE	BASIC CAREER SERVICES	ON-SITE
Workforce and labor market employment statistics information, including accurate information relating to local, regional, and national labor market areas, including job vacancy listings in labor market areas; information on job skills necessary to obtain the jobs; and information relating to local occupations in demand and the earnings, skill requirements, and opportunities for advancement for such occupations		Performance information and program cost information on eligible providers of training services and eligible providers of youth workforce investment activities, providers of adult education, providers of career and technical education activities at the postsecondary level, and career and technical education activities available to school dropouts, and providers of vocational rehabilitation		Information, in formats that are usable by and understandable to one-stop center customers, regarding how the local area is performing on the local performance accountability measures and any additional performance information with respect to the one-stop delivery system in the local area	
Information, in formats that are usable by & understandable to one-stop center customers, relating to the availability of supportive services or assistance, including child care, child support, medical or child health assistance benefits under the supplemental nutrition assistance program, assistance through the earned income tax credit, assistance under State program for temporary assistance for needy families, and other supportive services and transportation provided through funds made available in the local area		Provision of information and assistance regarding filing claims for unemployment compensation		Assistance in establishing eligibility for programs of financial aid assistance for training and education programs	
Translation Services		*(Insert other Basic Services as needed)*		*(Insert other Basic Services as needed)*	

INDIVIDUALIZED CAREER SERVICES	ON-SITE	INDIVIDUALIZED CAREER SERVICES	ON-SITE	INDIVIDUALIZED CAREER SERVICES	ON-SITE
Comprehensive and specialized evaluation to identify barriers to employment and employment goals		Development of Individual Employment Plan (IEP)		Group Counseling	
Individual Counseling		Career / Vocational Planning		Short-Term Pre-Employment/ Vocational Services	
Internships and Work Experiences		Workforce preparation activities		Financial Literacy Services	
Out-of-Area Job Search		English Language acquisition and integrated education and training programs		Follow Up Services	
(Insert other Individualized Services as needed)		*(Insert other Individualized Services as needed)*		*(Insert other Individualized Services as needed)*	

BUSINESS SERVICES	On-Site
Establish and develop relationships and networks with large and small employers and their intermediaries	
Develop, convene, or implement industry or sector partnerships	
Customized screening and referral of qualified participants in training services to employers	
Customized services to employers, employer associations, or other such organizations, on employment-related issues	
Customized recruitment events and related services for employers including targeted job fairs	
Human resource consultation services, e.g., writing/reviewing job descriptions and employee handbooks; Developing performance evaluation and personnel policies; Creating orientation sessions for new workers; Honing job interview techniques for efficiency and compliance; Analyzing employee turnover; or Explaining labor laws to help employers comply with wage/hour and safety/health regulations;	
Customized labor market information for specific employers, sectors, industries or clusters	
Customized assistance or referral for assistance in the development of a registered apprenticeship program	

BUSINESS SERVICES (continued)	On-Site
Listing of Job Orders	
Applicant Referral	
Employer Needs Assessment	
Unemployment Insurance Access	
Access to Facilities	
Translation Services	
Developing and delivering innovative workforce investment services and strategies for area employers, e.g., career pathways, skills upgrading, skill standard development and certification for recognized postsecondary credential or other employer use, apprenticeship, and other effective initiatives for meeting the workforce investment needs of area employers and workers	
Assistance in managing reductions in force in coordination with rapid response activities and with strategies for the aversion of layoffs, and the delivery of employment and training activities to address risk factors	
Marketing of business services offered to appropriate area employers, including small and mid-sized employers	
Assisting employers with accessing local, State, and Federal tax credits	

V. Certification Criteria

The Certification application is one step in the ongoing pursuit of growth, quality improvement, and performance excellence. Attainment of certification provides assurance to the public that the WIN Job Center has achieved a high standard and consistently maintains and improves upon that standard. The following quality standards are the criteria by which Mississippi's Local Workforce Development Boards assess and certify One-Stop Centers, Affiliates, and Sector Training Plus Comprehensive Sites.

Each site is asked to work together with leadership and staff to develop responses to the following:

I. Rank on a scale of 1 to 5, where the site believes it is in its path toward meeting, or exceeding, the stated standard.

5 = achieved the standard and excelling

4 = significantly meeting standard with some work yet to do

3 = have some of the elements in place, some of the time

2 = making progress but long way to go

1 = no progress yet

II. Provide **clear evidence** and **examples** of current status and future plans with strategies and timelines to reach these standards.

- ***Functional and Programmatic Integration*** - It is critical for WIOA in Mississippi that its partners think and act as an integrated system. Workforce partners ensure that client services are aligned to common goals and the customer experience is seamless – regardless of funding streams. Each customer is mutually regarded as a shared customer, with all staff and programs operating at the site having a vested stake in that customer's success. Integration of programs is incorporated into planning, intake, assessment, registration, and service processes, information sharing, resource decisions, actions, results, and analyses.

  Check the box where you think the site is with regard to Functional and Programmatic Integration.

  ☐ **5** ☐ **4** ☐ **3** ☐ **2** ☐ **1**

  Describe your site's approach to integrated service delivery and the use of functional teams to deliver career services to all customers.

  Include a detailed diagram of customer flow, services available, assessment and referrals, and describe how the MS Works and the WIOA Hub System are used to facilitate shared customer management across partner programs.

  Describe the procedure used to ensure timely follow-up on partner referrals.

  Please list any best practices to highlight and share for continuous improvement.

- ***Performance and Accountability*** - Results and outcomes for the public investment in the Mississippi workforce system are essential to the system's relevance. The effectiveness of the workforce system for employers and job seekers is evident in system performance and service delivery decisions are based on data. On an ongoing basis, customer data from one-stop partners and regional economic data is collected, analyzed, and shared with all workforce system staff and community stakeholders. Plans for improvement, enhancement, or adjustment are established and acted upon.

  Check the box where you think the site is with regard to Performance and Accountability.

  ☐ **5** ☐ **4** ☐ **3** ☐ **2** ☐ **1**

  Describe how you measure, analyze, review, and improve workforce system performance through the use of data and information.

Describe how this data is shared with staff and stakeholders and what changes have resulted from use of data. How has data been used (example) to improve services?

What methods are in place for staff to provide feedback? How do you incorporate staff feedback as part of continuous quality improvement? How are staff informed how their feedback was reviewed and any action taken from their feedback? What metrics are used to show improvement and success?

Please list any best practices to highlight and share for continuous improvement.

- ***Service Provision, including Services, Universal Access, and Outreach to populations with barriers*** – Improved availability, a welcoming atmosphere, inclusive settings, and high quality customer service benefit all customers. WIOA extends services and outreach not just to individuals who walk in the door, but also to those who have become disengaged in the labor force. Integrated, quality services are provided to all customers within the center and via technology through online or phone access. Principles of universal design are considered which designs inclusive space and materials to be available to individuals regardless of their range of abilities, mobility, age, language, learning style, intelligence, or educational level.

  Check the box where you think the site is with regard to Service Provision to all customers, including Services, Access, and Outreach to populations with barriers.

  ☐ **5** ☐ **4** ☐ **3** ☐ **2** ☐ **1**

  Describe how the site works cooperatively with WIOA core partners to provide quality services to all customers. Describe your outreach to populations with barriers in the community and relationship with core program and community partners to effectively serve them.

  Provide evidence that basic ADA requirements have been met.

  Describe initiatives or strategies in developing universal access and provide tangible evidence of implementation or solution driven plan development. Address the following four specific areas of access:

  1. Physical: Architectural or building
  2. Information: all paper, printed or posted materials
  3. Digital: software, web-based programs and alternatives to print
  4. Communication: verbal, non-verbal access for services, phone and other

Describe your wireless internet infrastructure.

How are the needs of populations with barriers met through staff-assisted and other means?

Please list any best practices to highlight and share for continuous improvement.

- ***Customer Satisfaction*** - Performance and value are ultimately judged by customers – businesses and job seekers. Customer-centered design relies upon satisfying customer needs, identifying shortcomings and responding accordingly on a timely and ongoing basis. Tools to obtain feedback are appropriate for each customer's use take into consideration factors including literacy levels, use of technology, disability, and language.

  Check the box where you think the site is with regard to Customer Satisfaction.

  ☐ **5** ☐ **4** ☐ **3** ☐ **2** ☐ **1**

  Describe how the voice of the customer is listened to and how your site incorporates both job seeker and business customer feedback as part of continuous quality improvement? How are the voices of populations with barriers heard and brought to the table when designing services and facilities? How do you inform customers of how their feedback was reviewed and any action taken from their feedback? What metrics are used to show improvement and success?

  Please list any best practices to highlight and share for continuous improvement.

- ***Staff Competence and Staff Training Participation*** - Professional development is a key feature in order to ensure that staff are aware of the implications of recent evidence-based research and can implement the latest policies and procedures established at the local, State and Federal levels. Also of vital importance is the use of labor market information by staff to better inform customers' career and training decision-making. The investment in staff development is substantial, ongoing, and focused on cross-training with partner programs, overall skill development, and use of labor market information. Every member of the one-stop staff has the ability and authority to meet customer needs, either directly or, where appropriate, by helping the customer make the right connections to the expertise he or she seeks. Participation in one-stop-sponsored training is required.

  Check the box where you think the site is with regard to Staff Proficiency and Staff Training Participation.

  ☐ **5** ☐ **4** ☐ **3** ☐ **2** ☐ **1**

How are staff and leadership trained and cross-trained on an ongoing basis to stay current on programs and services? How is this tracked to ensure all staff participate?

How do you actively engage staff of all programs – Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, Wagner-Peyser, TANF, ABE, DVR, Perkins, etc. – in design of services, action planning and analysis of indicators and trends? How are all staff informed of progress towards site performance and goals?

Please list any best practices to highlight and share for continuous improvement.

- ***Partnership*** – The one-stop system is built upon a foundation of partners linked together to deliver a comprehensive array of services and reach the shared outcomes of employment, education, skills gains, and earnings. All core and required one-stop partners are present at the site and invested in the development and implementation of service delivery to connect customers to resources.

Check the box where you think the site is with regard to Partnership.

☐ **5** ☐ **4** ☐ **3** ☐ **2** ☐ **1**

Describe how the partnerships function at the site and the roles of each core partner from Title I – Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth, Title II - Adult Basic Education, Title III - Wagner-Peyser, Title IV - Vocational Rehabilitation, and TANF.

Describe how the partnerships function at the site with other required partners from postsecondary Career and Technical Education (Perkins Act), CSBG, HUD, Job Corps, National Farmworker Jobs Program, Re-entry programs, SCSEP, TAA, UI, VETS, and YouthBuild.

Describe how the site is linked to other partners beyond the site to ensure alignment with community and regional strategies. Please give examples of how this functions and the results for customers.

Describe how leadership works together to set the vision and goals for the site and then implements service strategies to achieve shared objectives.

Please list any best practices to highlight and share for continuous improvement.

- ***Employer Engagement*** – Business is one of our primary customers and one-stop partners work collaboratively to deliver value-added services and eliminate duplication. Business services staff from all one-stop partners have a comprehensive understanding of labor market conditions, economic development activities, skill needs of the workforce and are connected to regional and local business partnership activities and sector strategies. Employers' human capital needs are communicated to and acted upon by the workforce system. Business services are coordinated to the maximum extent possible to limit duplication and streamline the employer experience.

  Check the box where you think the site is with regard to Employer Engagement.

  ☐ **5** ☐ **4** ☐ **3** ☐ **2** ☐ **1**

  Describe how partners work to deliver seamless business services. How do business services staff use and share labor market information? What strategies are used to involve employers in identifying skill gaps and developing solutions to meet their workforce needs?

  Describe how regional and local sector strategies are used to target services and resources to focus workforce efforts on investments and improve outcomes.

  How are career pathways and training modalities such as industry-recognized credentials, apprenticeship, on-the-job training, and other work-based learning opportunities aligned with employers' needs and marketed to support talent development?

  Please list any best practices to highlight and share for continuous improvement.

FOR SIGNATURE

ROUTE/REVIEW

SUBJECT: Policy 17: Cash Requests/Reporting Worksheets Edits

PREPARED BY: ~~Henry Goss~~ ~~Donna Hollis~~			INITIAL & DATE
			8/19/20 / 8/24/20
Draft	**Final**	**REVIEWED BY:**	
✓		Robert DeYoung	RD 9/16/2020
✓		Carlee McDonald	CM 8/25
✓✓		Donna Hollis	dh 8/20, 8/25, 9/15
✓		Cherish Johnson	cj 8/19/20
		Pam Hosey	
		Yvette DeLeeuw	
		Sondra Lee Bell	
		Henry Goss	
		Robert Bock	
		Kymberly Batton	
		Dave Coleman	
		Tracy Oscar	
		Chris Harrell	
		Jackie Johnson	
		Carolyn Green	
	✓	Jackie Turner	JT
		Guy Martin	
✓		Laura Ring	LR 9/16/2020
✓		Jeff Crump	JC 8/25
✓		Tyler Berch	tmb 8/26
		John Garrett	
✓		Anna Clemmer	ACC 9/14/20
		Original Mailed	

ORIGINALS TO:	INITIAL & DATE
Original to Legal	
Original Mailed to Subgrantee	

COPIES TO:	INITIAL & DATE
Copy to Business Mgmt.	
Scan to Liasion (for Q-drive)	

COMMENTS / SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS:

The first two originals w/ edits are attached at the end

MISSISSIPPI
Policy Number 17, Revision 1
PROCESSING CASH REQUESTS AND REPORTING WORKSHEETS
Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act
Office of Grant Management

I. SCOPE AND PURPOSE

This policy provides guidance for the completion, submission, and processing of cash requests and reporting worksheets submitted to the Office of Grant Management (OGM) of the Mississippi Department of Employment Security (MDES) for expenditure of funds for costs associated with Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP), Apprenticeship, National Dislocated Worker Grants (NDWG), and other specialty grants.

This policy promotes uniformity and consistency in completion of forms and timely submissions of documents to OGM. Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDAs) and subrecipients are encouraged to follow the guidance of this policy in order to prevent delays in processing requests for cash and to ensure accurate reporting and recording of fund expenditures.

This policy sets forth the manual procedures for submitting cash requests and reporting worksheets. This manual process applies to all grants or subgrants until the cash request and reporting worksheet process is part of the GrantTrak System. This policy applies to Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDAs), state subgrantees, and other entities that receive federal funds by the allocation, pass-through, and subgrant award methods unless otherwise instructed by the Office of Grant Management (OGM).

II. REQUIREMENTS

A. Subrecipient Responsibilities

1. Cash Requests

The Request for Cash form is used by subrecipients using the current needs or the fixed-unit price method of payment. See attached example "Subrecipient Request for Cash." This form may be submitted twice each month, with a one-week in-house (or 3-5 working days) turnaround time for the draw-down of funds from the time the request is initiated until funds are credited to the subrecipient's account. Supplemental requests may be submitted as the need arises. Note: The one-week period does not allow for holidays, weekends, or computer downtime. Subrecipients are encouraged to allow sufficient time for the processing of requests in order to receive their funds when needed.

The form should be completed as follows:

a. Name, address, and telephone number of grant recipient (#1 on form).

b. Current Cash on Hand- the amount of federal cash on hand at the time of the request (#2). This amount may be positive to reflect actual cash balance or negative to request reimbursement for funds already spent. Note: Funds should be drawn for immediate cash needs only. Subrecipients are discouraged from holding unobligated funds in their accounts for longer than three days. Should circumstances dictate that excess cash be drawn down beyond obligated expenditures, the subrecipient may attach written justification to the cash request. In the event that a subrecipient submits a request while having cash on hand in excess of $5,000, OGM may either ask for written justification or ask that the subrecipient reduce the amount of the new request.

c. Special mailing/deposit information (#3).

d. Cumulative Cost reported (#4).

e. Grant Number and Subaward Number (#5).

f. Request Number (#6).

g. Date Cash Needed (#7).

h. Total Subaward (#8).

I. Cash Requested to Date- the prior cumulative WIOA cash applied for to date at the time of the payment request (#9A).

J. This Request - the amount of money asked for on this request (#9B).

k. Total (A and B)-total amount of funds requested to date.

l. Subaward Balance- (8) minus the sum of (9A) and (9B) (#10).

m. Signature of Authorized Official- the person who signed as the primary signatory official of the grant recipient- and date signed (#11). In case of alternate signatory designation, an authorization letter is required.

n. Typed name and title of the authorized official date of preparation, and the preparer's name and telephone number (#12).

o. The original signed request should be scanned and emailed to your grant liaison and their supervisor or be mailed to:

Mississippi Department of Employment Security
Post Office Box 1699
Jackson, Mississippi 39215-1699
Attn.: Office of Grant Management

p. The email or envelope should be clearly marked "Request for Cash."

2. Reporting Worksheets

The Reporting Worksheet is a concise report of accruals and actual disbursements for the report month plus cumulative expenditures to date for the subgrant period. See attached example "Subrecipient Reporting Worksheet."

If the subrecipient uses the fixed-unit/performance based payment method, the worksheet shows the amounts earned based on the negotiated payment schedule. A printed worksheet form showing each activity listed on the Budget Summary will be mailed to the subrecipient. By **the fifteenth calendar day** of each month, the subrecipients must submit the worksheet to OGM showing the expenditures through the end of the previous month, which is the reporting month. The form should be completed as follows:

a. Subgrant recipient name and address.

b. Grant Number.

c. Subaward Number.

d. Effective Dates.

e. Cost Category and project description from budget.

f. Amount Budgeted- the total amount available.

g. Prior cumulative cost reported to date- the prior cumulative WIOA expenditures as of the ending period of the last reporting worksheet submitted to OGM.

h. Current period cost- the costs accumulated during the reporting period.

i. Cumulative cost reported to date- equals G plus H.

j. Grand Total Activity.

k. Grand Total Reported.

l. Signature of Authorized Official and date signed.

m. MDES Review line for initials of the OGM staff member processing the worksheet and the date processed.

n. Worksheets should be sent by email to your liaison and their supervisor or be mailed to MDES-Office of Grant Management at the aforementioned address.

o. The email or envelope should be clearly marked "Reporting Worksheet(s)".

B. State Responsibilities

1. When possible, OGM staff shall process cash requests and reporting worksheets and forward the documents to the MDES Business Management Department no later than 3-5 working days after receipt of the documents.

   Extreme circumstances may warrant additional time to process the documents.

   In the event of questions, errors, or discrepancies regarding submitted document(s), OGM staff shall seek to resolve these issues by contacting the designated financial officer of the appropriate local area or subawardee by telephone. If a resolution can be reached by phone, OGM will make the necessary changes to the document, noting the date of the conversation, the name of the local area or subgrantee representative authorizing the change, and the initials of the OGM staff making the correction. Any additional documentation regarding the change (i.e. emails, notes, etc.) shall be attached to the OGM copy of the document.

2. OGM shall maintain copies of all cash requests and reporting worksheets submitted by the local areas and subrecipient. OGM will maintain grant files for each local area and subrecipient.

III. EFFECTIVE DATE

This policy shall be effective immediately.

Jacqueline A. Turner 9-16-2020

Jacqueline A. Turner Date
Executive Director

Attachments: Subrecipient Request for Cash
~~Subrecipient Reporting Worksheet~~

MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT SECURITY
SUBRECIPIENT REQUEST FOR CASH

(1) Sub Awardee's Name / Address	(3) Special Mailing/Deposit Info	(5) Grant Number (FAIN)	Sub Award Identifier
(a)	(c)	(e)	(e)
		(6) Request Number	(7) Date Cash Needed
(2) Current Cash Balance (b)	(4) Cumulative Cost Reported (d)	(f)	(g)

FOR STATE USE ONLY:
Vendor Number:

Total Sub Award		
(8) Total Contract Award	(h) →	$0.00
(9) Less Cash Requested to Date		
(A) Received/In-Transit	$0.00 ← (i)	
(B) "This Request"	$0.00 ← (j)	
Total (A & B)	(k) →	$0.00
(10) Sub Award Balance	(l) →	$0.00

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT (a) The services covered by this request have not been received from the Federal Government or expended for such services under any other contract agreement or grant; (b) the amount(s) requested will be expended for allowable cost / expenditures under the terms of the subaward agreement or grant; (c) amounts requested herein do not exceed the total funds obligated by sub award; and (d) funds are requested for only immediate disbursement needs.

(m) (11)	(m)	(n) (12)
Signature of Authorized Official	Date Signed	Prepared By
(n) (12)		(n) (12)
Typed Name and Title of Authorized Official		Date Prepared

MDES Approval _____ Date _____

MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT SECURITY
SUBRECIPIENT REPORTING WORKSHEET

Name of Subgrantee
Address 1
Address 2
City, MS 39000
Reporting Period:

Division: **OFFICE OF GRANT MGMT**
Grant#:
Sub Award#:
Begin/End Dates: to:

	Amount Budgeted	Prior Cumulative	Period Costs	Cumulative Cost to Date
Project 1 name				
FEDERAL	0.00	0.00		0.00
STATE				
PROGRAM INCOME				
MATCH				
STAND IN				
TOTAL	0.00	0.00	0	0.00
ACTIVITY TOTAL	0.00	0.00	0	0.00
Project 2 name				
FEDERAL	0.00	0.00		0.00
STATE				
PROGRAM INCOME				
MATCH				
STAND IN				
TOTAL	0.00	0.00	0	0
ACTIVITY TOTAL	0.00	0.00	0	0
TOTALS by line item				
TOTAL FEDERAL	0.00	0.00	0	0
TOTAL STATE				
TOTAL PROGRAM INCOME				
TOTAL MATCH				
TOTAL STAND IN				
GRAND TOTAL	0.00	0.00	0	0

THE SIGNER OF THIS DOCUMENT CERTIFIES THAT REPORTED COST IS CALCULATED ON AN ACCRUAL BASIS IN ACCORDANCE WITH GENERALLY ACCEPTED ACCOUNTING PRINCIPLES. FINAL AUDIT OF THIS PROJECT WILL INCLUDE VERIFICATION OF ABOVE CLAIMED COST FROM PROJECT DIRECTOR'S SOURCE RECORDS.

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL DATE REVIEWED BY

NOTE: CHECK THIS BLOCK IF FINAL REPORTING WORKSHEET ☐

MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT *of* EMPLOYMENT SECURITY
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
JACQUELINE A TURNER
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

WIOA COMMUNICATION NUMBER: 20-002

DATE: October 15, 2020

I. **SUBJECT:** Transitional Policy Number 17, Revision 1 - Processing Cash Requests and Reporting Worksheets

II. **BACKGROUND:** This communication provides Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDAs) and subgrantees with information on WIOA Transitional Policy Number 17, Revision 1: Processing Cash Requests and Reporting Worksheets. Policy 17 has been revised to reflect new guidance and establishes procedures regarding the processing of cash requests and reporting worksheets.

III. **REQUIRED ACTION AND DUE DATE:** Please ensure this communication is shared with administrative and fiscal staff, LDWB members, and other affected staff, subgrantees, and partners. LWDAs and subgrantees should align local policies and/or processes with the state policies.

IV. **CONTACT:** Questions concerning this instruction should be addressed to Henry Goss at 601-321-6273 or hgoss@mdes.ms.gov.

V. **ATTACHMENTS:** Transitional Policy Number 17, Revision 1 - Processing Cash Requests and Reporting Worksheets

Robert DeYoung
Deputy Director
Office of Grant Management

Mississippi Department of Employment Security (MDES)
Policy Number 29: WIOA Transfer of Funds Policy
Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act
Office of Grant Management

I. SCOPE AND PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance to Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDAs) regarding the transfer of funds submission, evaluation, and approval process that is required under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) section 133(b)(4) and TEGL 19-16. In accordance with WIOA, TEGL 19-16, and the WIOA Combined State Plan, this policy establishes the standards for the transfer of funds.

II. PROCEDURES

- The LWDA staff determine when there is a need for a transfer of funds.
- The LWDA will initiate the transfer of funds process in GrantTrak (GT), print the Transfer Authorization document from the system, and present to the Local Workforce Development Board (LWDB) for approval and signature from the Board Chair.
- After the LWDB approves the transfer of funds request, the LWDA fiscal staff will upload in GT the signed Transfer Authorization and Board minutes as supporting documentation, and submit the Transfer Request to workflow in GT.
- Once submitted to GT workflow, the transfer request is reviewed and approved by multiple levels of authority including Planning and Development District Director/authorized signatory, OGM's LWDA liaison, Business Management Accountant, OGM Director, Comptroller, and Executive Director for final approval.

III. REQUIRED ACTION

Local Workforce Development Boards must adopt a policy that aligns with the state policy. LWDAs will ensure that procedures align with state and local policy.

IV. EFFECTIVE DATE

This policy shall be effective immediately. This policy will be revised and reissued as additional DOL/ETA guidance is received.

Jacqueline A. Turner
Executive Director

10-29-20
Date

Appendix K: Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Program Requirements and Assurances

J-1. ETPL Certification – State Policy Number 9

MISSISSIPPI
Policy Number 09, Revision 2
WIOA ELIGIBLE TRAINING PROVIDER CERTIFICATION
Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act

I. SCOPE AND PURPOSE:

This Policy sets forth the State of Mississippi's requirements for Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I Training Provider Eligibility, the State's List of Eligible Training Providers, and programs. WIOA and its regulations established the allowable types of training, including both work-based and classroom instruction, with the goal of ensuring provider performance, job-driven training, informed consumer choice, continuous improvement, and cost-effective investment of public funds. This policy guidance focuses on the requirements for providing certain training with contracts, establishing initial provider and program eligibility and continued eligibility for use of ITAs, establishing roles and responsibilities of the State of Mississippi and Local Workforce Development Areas for maintaining the ETP list, disseminating the ETP list, and addressing unique requirements for Registered Apprenticeship Programs (RAPs).

II. Types of Training Allowed by this policy under WIOA Title I:

WIOA authorizes various funding mechanisms for allowable participant training. Allowable types of training include:

1. Occupational skills training, including training for nontraditional employment;
2. On-the-Job Training (OJT);
3. Incumbent Worker Training (IWT);
4. Programs that combine workplace training with related instruction, which may include cooperative education programs.
5. Training programs operated by the private sector;
6. Skill upgrading and retraining;
7. Entrepreneurial training;
8. Job readiness training provided in combination with the training services described in (a) through (g) of this chart or transitional jobs.
9. Adult education and literacy activities, including activities of English language acquisition and integrated education and training programs, provided concurrently or in combination with services provided in any of clauses (a) through (g); and
10. Customized training conducted with a commitment by an employer or group

of employers to employ an individual upon successful completion of the training.

These mechanisms include direct contracts for services and individual training accounts (ITAs). An ITA may be used to pay for any allowable type of training, as long as the program of training service (also referred to as "program of study") is on the state list of eligible training providers (ETP list). Direct contracts for training services with employers and the state or Local Workforce Development Area (Local Area) may be for OJT, IWT, and customized training. A state or Local Area, when it is determined most appropriate, may also establish a contract with an institution of higher education or other provider of training services for a group of WIOA participants concurrently training in in-demand industry sectors or occupations, provided that the contract does not limit customer choice. As long as training services are chosen in a manner that achieves the goals outlined in the purpose section of this policy, select training services may also be provided using a contract between the provider and the Local Workforce Development Board (Local Board). For these select training services, participants can receive the training from a program that is not on the ETP list.

III. Exempt Training Services:

Training services that are exempt from the Section 122(a) through (f) eligibility requirements include:

1. On-the-job training; customized training; incumbent worker training, transitional employment; or
2. Training provided under the circumstances described in WIOA Section 134(c)(3)(G)(ii) and 20 CFR 680.320, where the Local Board determines that:
   - There is an insufficient number of ETPs in the Local Area to accomplish the purposes of a system of ITAs;
   - There is a training services program with demonstrated effectiveness offered in the Local Area by a community-based organization or other private organization to serve individuals with barriers to employment;
   - It would be most appropriate to award a contract to an institution of higher education or other provider of training services to facilitate the training of multiple individuals in one or more in-demand industry sectors or occupations, and such contract does not limit customer choice; or
   - When the Local Board provides training services through a pay-for-performance contract.

For training programs that are exempt from the Section 122(a) through (f) eligibility requirements, the Governor may establish performance criteria these providers must meet to receive funds under the adult or dislocated worker programs. Local Boards must collect this information, if required, and determine whether the providers meet the Governor's performance criteria before entering into contracts with training providers that meet these criteria.

IV. Types of Entities Eligible to Apply to be Eligible Training Providers:

Only the entities listed below may apply for inclusion on the ETP list, and these are the only entities eligible to provide training for participants who enroll in a WIOA Title I-funded program of training services, except as discussed above in section II of this policy. Training provider entities eligible to apply for inclusion on the ETP list include:

1. Institutions of higher education that provide a program that leads to a recognized postsecondary credential;
2. Apprenticeship programs, including Registered Apprenticeship Programs (RAP) in accordance with the language below and in forthcoming guidance on RAPs and WIOA;
3. Other public or private providers that provide training, which may include community-based organizations (CBOs) and joint labor-management organizations;
4. Eligible providers of adult education and literacy activities under WIOA Title II if such activities are provided in combination with training services described in
5. 20 CFR § 680.350; and
6. Local Board, if they meet the conditions of WIOA Section 107(g)(1).

ETPs are subject to the equal opportunity and nondiscrimination requirements contained in Section 188 of WIOA and implementing regulations at 29 CFR part 38.

V. Eligible Programs of Training Services (programs of study):

A program of study is defined as one or more courses or classes, or a structured regimen that provides job-driven training services and leads to a recognized post-secondary credential, as defined in WIOA Section 3(52), which includes an industry-recognized certificate or certification, a certificate of completion of a registered apprenticeship, a license recognized by the state involved or Federal Government, a postsecondary credential, secondary school diploma or its equivalent, employment, or measurable skill gains toward a recognized postsecondary or secondary school diploma or its equivalent credential or employment. These training services could be

delivered in person, online, or in a blended approach.

VI. Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP) Sponsors

Registered Apprenticeship Programs are automatically eligible to be included on the ETP list and are exempt from state and local ETP eligibility requirements. This policy requires the state to have a process for adding RAPs that imposes minimal burden on the RAP. This process may require that the RAP provide the following basic information:

- Occupations included within the RAP;
- The name and address of the RAP sponsor;
- The name and address(es) of the Related Technical Instruction provider(s) and the location(s) of instruction if different from the program sponsor's address;
- The method and length of instruction; and
- The number of active apprentices.

For RAPs that opt for inclusion on the ETP list, states and Local Area must add them without applying any additional eligibility requirements that they might otherwise apply to other types of training providers. Furthermore, states must maintain RAPs on the list until:

- The RAP program notifies the state agency it no longer wants to be included on the list;
- The program becomes deregistered under the National Apprenticeship Act;
- The program is determined to have intentionally supplied inaccurate information; or,
- A determination is made that the RAP substantially violated any provision of Title I of WIOA or the WIOA regulations, including 29 CFR part 38.

Similar to the RAP exemption from the eligibility requirements, RAPs also are exempt from ETP performance reporting requirements in WIOA Sections 116(d)(4) and 122, including any additional ETP reporting requirements that have been added by the state or Local Area. This also means that the states and Local Areas must not establish any RAP specific performance reporting requirements; however, RAPs may voluntarily report performance outcomes. States may require only the information necessary to verify the registration status for the RAP, in accordance with procedures established by the state in consultation with the state office of apprenticeship.

VII. Eligible Training Provider (ETP) List Requirements and Responsibilities:

Required State Responsibilities:

A. **The Mississippi Department of Employment Security (MDES) must develop and maintain the ETP list (providers and their programs of study):**

1. The state eligible training provider list must be accompanied by appropriate information to assist participants in choosing employment and training activities. Such information must include the following, disaggregated by Local Areas served, as applicable:
   a. Recognized post-secondary credential(s) offered;
   b. Provider information supplied to meet the state's eligibility procedure;
   c. Performance and cost information; and,
   d. Additional information as the state determines appropriate, such as the number of units (for example, credits, hours or semesters) needed to earn the credentials offered.
2. The state eligible training provider list must be accompanied by relevant performance andcost information.
3. The state eligible training provider list must be widely available to the public (including all Local Board) through electronic means, including websites and searchable databases, as well as any other means states use to disseminate information to consumers, and easily understood.
   a. MDES must disseminate the list to the Local Boards, the one-stop system, its partner programs, the public, and the state's secondary and postsecondary education system.
   b. The state eligible training provider list must be accessible to individuals with disabilities, individuals seeking information on training outcomes, and individuals participating in employment and training programs funded under WIOA.
   c. The State eligible training provider list must not reveal personally identifiable information about individual participants.

B. **The state must establish a minimally burdensome mechanism for adding Registered Apprenticeship programs (RAPs) to the list and verifying registration status at least every two years.**

C. **The Governor must work with the State Workforce Development Board to develop procedures, information requirements, and criteria for determining eligibility (including clarifying state and Local Board responsibilities).**

1. Initial eligibility requirements must

a b

Include required initial eligibility components listed on Eligibilit Policy Checklist as described in Training and Employment Guidance Letter 8-19 Attachment III;.

Require providers seeking initial eligibility to provide verifiable program specific performance information;

Require providers to submit required information for the programs b be considered for initial eligibility in accordance with the state's procedure; and,

Only permit initial eligibility to last for one year for each program of study.

Exempt from eligibility determinations: RAPs.

If a RAP expresses interest in being on the state eligible training provider list, the state must request the RAPs provide the following information to the state:

- Occupations included within the RAP;
- The name and address of the RAP sponsor;
- The name and address of the Related Technical Instruction provider, and the location of instruction if different from the program sponsor's address;
- The method and length of inst r;15'.1'11|•nl
- The number of active appi□□li''' □,

Establish an application procedure for training providers to maintain their eligibility and the eligibility of their programs;

Establish a procedure that ensures that all providers are subject to review and renewal of their eligibility within a year of their initial eligibility determination and at least every two years thereafter, which can establish minimum standards;

Describe the application procedure for continued eligibility in the State Plan , and outline the roles of the state and Local Areas in receiving and reviewing provider applications, and in making eligibility determinations;

Include the continued eligibility components listed on Eligibility Policy Checklist as described in Training and Employment Guidance Letter 8-19 Attachment III; and

Take into account whether the provider accurately and timely submitted all of the information required for completion of eligible training provider performance reports (WIOA section 116(d)(4)) and all of the information required for initial and continued eligibility.

Information requirements for continued eligibility established by the Governor must require eligible training providers to submit appropriate, accurate, and timely information for participants receiving training under WIOA title I. That information must include:

- The percentage of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program;
- The percentage of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the fourth quarter after exit from the program;
- The median earnings of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program;
- The percentage of program participants who obtain a recognized postsecondary credential, or secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent during participation in or within 1 year after exit from the program;
- Information on recognized postsecondary credentials received by program participants;
- Information on cost of attendance, including costs of tuition and fees, for program participants; and
- Information on the program completion rate for such participants.

The policies and procedures must include RAP sponsors requesting ETP list inclusion as long as the program is registered or until the program sponsor notifies the state that it no longer wants to be included on the list, until the program is deregistered, or until they are determined to have intentionally supplied inaccurate information or have substantially violated a provision of Title I of WIOA or its regulations.

The policies and procedures must not subject RAPs to the same application and performance information requirements or to a period of initial eligibility or continued eligibility procedures.

The Governor and State Workforce Development Board must work with the federal Office of Apprenticeship (OA) state director, or if the state oversees the apprenticeship system, with the SAA to develop a mechanism to contact all RAPs within the state in order to allow them to indicate interest.

D. **For initial and continue eligibility procedures, the Governor must**

["},udns 31 cl◐d time period, solicit and consider recommendations from Local Board ,1lri ing providers regarding the procedures.

Provide an opportunity for publi . i! wnw.□ ding the initial and continued eligibility procedures.

E. **The designated state entity must determine whether the provider submitted accurate information for the eligibility criteria and performance levels, and take enforcement actions as needed if the provider intentionally submitted inaccurate information or substantially violated the requirements of WIOA or initial and continue eligibility procedures, the Governor must:**

1. The Governor's procedures must include what the Governor considers to be a substantial violation of the requirement to timely and accurately submit all of the information required for completion of the eligible training provider performance reports required under WIOA Section 116(d)(4) and all of the information required for initial and continued eligibility.

   a. These procedures must take into account exceptional circumstances beyond the provider's control such as natural disasters, unexpected personnel transitions, and unexpected technology-related issues.
   b. Providers who substantially violate the requirement to timely and accurately submit all required information must be removed from the ETP list.

F. **The designated state entity must ensure that state-established minimum performance levels for initial and/or continued eligibility are met (if applicable) including verifying the accuracy of the information.**

G. **The Governor must establish procedures for removing a provider from the list. Such procedures must:**

1. Remove programs that do not meet established eligibility criteria or state established minimum performance levels (if applicable).
2. Identify which entity is responsible for revoking a provider's eligibility (Local Board or state agency).
3. Ensure that revocation is for a period not less than two years for providers that intentionally supply inaccurate information or substantially violate any provision of WIOA or its regulations and that the training provider is liable to repay all adult and dislocated worker training funds received during the period of noncompliance.
4. Providers removed from the statewide ETP list, or from a particular Local Area list of eligible training providers, must be afforded the opportunity to appeal the removal.
5. Establish an appeals procedure for providers of training to appeal a denial of eligibility. The procedure must include an opportunity for a hearing

and must explain the appeals process for denial or termination of eligibility of a provider of training services.

H. **The Governor must establish a procedure by which a provider can demonstrate that providing state-required additional performance and cost information would be unduly burdensome or costly. If the state determines that providers have demonstrated such extraordinary costs or undue burden:**

1. The state must provide access to cost-effective methods for the collection of the information;
2. The state may provide additional resources to assist providers in the collection of the information from funds for statewide workforce investment activities reserved under WIOA secs. 128(a) and 133(a)(1); or
3. The state may take other steps to assist eligible training providers in collecting and supplying required information such as offering technical assistance.

I. **The Labor Market Information Division (LMI) of the Mississippi Department of Employment Security (MDES) will establish a list of demand occupations for the State. LMI data can be found at http://www.mdes.ms.gov/information-center/labor-market-information/. Each Local Board will establish and maintain a list of local demand occupations in response to local labor market needs.**

Allowable State Responsibilities:

A. Governors may require any additional performance information (such as the information described at WIOA Section 122(b)(1)) that the Governor determines to be appropriate for eligibility or to better inform consumers.

B. Governors may establish minimum performance standards for initial and continued eligibility, based on the performance information required for each.

C. The Governor may establish procedures and timeframes for providing technical assistance to eligible training providers who are not intentionally supplying inaccurate information or who have not substantially violated any of the requirements under this section but are failing to meet the criteria and information requirements due to undue cost or burden.

D. State policies and procedures may provide for reciprocal or other agreements established with another state to permit eligible training providers in a state to accept ITAs provided by the other state.

Required Local Board Responsibilities:

E. Local Boards must ensure that there are sufficient numbers and types of providers of training services (including eligible providers with expertise in assisting individuals with disabilities and eligible providers with expertise in assisting adults in need of adult education and literacy activities) serving the Local Area and providing the services involved in a manner that maximizes consumer choice and leads to competitive integrated employment for individuals with disabilities.

F. Local Boards must complete other responsibilities delegated to the Local Boards by the state (state may not delegate responsibilities specifically designated as a state responsibility unless explicitly stated in this guidance, the WIOA Final Rule, or WIOA statute). For example, Local Boards must collect such performance information as the state may require and determine whether the providers meet the state's performance criteria.

G. Local Boards must remove ETPs that fail to meet local performance standards (if applicable) from the local ETP list, in accordance with state and local policies and procedures. This process must allow for appeals in accordance with the state's appeals procedure for providers of training to appeal a denial of eligibility from the local list of eligible training providers.

H. Local Boards must ensure that the state's ETP list is disseminated publicly through the local one-stop system, including in formats accessible to individuals with disabilities, and its partner programs.

I. The policies and procedures established by each Local Board must meet the minimum requirements of the guidelines set by the State. Local Boards may adopt more restrictive policies.

Allowable Local Board Responsibilities:

A. The Local Board may, except with respect to registered apprenticeship programs:

   1. Require additional criteria and information from local providers as criteria to become or remain eligible in that Local Area; and

   2. Set higher levels of performance than those required by the state as criteria for local programs to become or remain eligible to provide services in that Local Area.

B. Local Boards may supplement the criteria and information requirements established by the Governor in order to support informed consumer choice and the achievement of local performance indicators. However, the Local Board may not do so for registered apprenticeship programs.

   This additional information may include:

3. Information on programs of training services that are linked to occupations in demand in the Local Area;
4. Performance and cost information, including program- specific performance and cost information, for the local outlet(s) of multi-site eligible training providers;
5. Information that shows how programs are responsive to local requirements; and
6. Other appropriate information related to the objectives of WIOA.

C. Local Boards may make recommendations to the Governor on the procedure used to determine eligibility of providers and programs.

Training Provider Responsibilities:

A. Training providers must submit accurate and timely performance data and cost information for both initial eligibility and continued eligibility at least every two years, according to procedures established by the Governor.

B. Training providers must deliver results and provide accurate information in order to retain status as an ETP.

C. RAPs must submit the information necessary to indicate interest in being on the ETP list according to procedures established by the state, after being contacted by the state. These items should include the items in the checklist in as described in Training and Employment Guidance Letter 8-19 Attachment III.

D. Intermediaries serving as RAPs who are employers using an outside instructional provider must identify their instructional provider in accordance with requirements established by their Local Board.

E. The training provider will be bonded, registered by the applicable state agency, and licensed to do business in Mississippi.

F. Eligible training providers who choose to seek continued eligibility of existing training course(s) during the annual open enrollment and recertification period beginning April 1 of each year and ending at midnight April 15 of each year will be monitored annually.

Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP) Required Information for ETP List

A. **RAPs approved under National Program Standards must submit to ETA the following information to be added to ETP list(s):**

1. Occupations included within the RAPs;
2. The name and address of the Registered Apprenticeship program sponsor;

3. The name and address(es) of the Related Technical Instruction provider(s), and the location(s) of instruction if different from the program sponsor's address; (Note: If the provider of Related Technical Instruction is different from the program sponsor, cost of the instruction may be requested);
4. The method and length of instruction; and
5. The number of active apprentices.

VIII. INITIAL ELIGIBILITY DETERMINATION POLICY

A. Initial Eligibility Application Process

1. The Initial Application Process for Eligible Training Providers is automated in the State's ETPL system and is a two-part process. The first application, also known as the registration process, is to provide to the LWDBs and the State a training provider profile, contact and user information, location(s) of training, and all necessary documentation required to show proof of registration, bonding, and etcetera.
2. The State has developed the following registration procedure for use by the State ETPL Administrators and LWDBs in determining the eligibility for all Training Providers of training as described in WIOA section 134(a). The registration application is an automated, on-line form and is located in the State's ETPL system at https://etpl.ndes.ms.gov/MaintNewProviderRequest.aspx?useAction=Add
   - Registration applications that are completed and submitted as prescribed in the initial on-line application are assigned by the ETPL system to the appropriate Local Board(s) and its designee(s) based on the information the eligible training provider selects at the time the application is made. Each LWDB selected on the registration template will receive a copy of the application for review. The applicant must ensure that the required documents are sent to each of the LWDAs selected on the registration application. The ETPL system will assign a temporary three-digit code to the eligible training provider's registration application.
   - The LWDBs will look for: Factors concerning whether the provider is in a partnership with business; Factors that indicate high-quality training, including factors related to the quality of a training program, including programs of training that lead to a recognized postsecondary credential; and Factors concerning alignment of the training with in-demand industry sectors and occupations, to the extent practicable.
   - The LWDBs will review all registration applications forwarded to them by the ETPL system, assure that the providers meet the requirements of WIOA law and local policies, including required performance data (where applicable), and will approve eligible training provider's initial registration application and all training program(s) of study associated with the ETPL system.

- If the LWDB denies the initial registration application, the LWDB will send a letter to the eligible training provider explaining why the initial application was denied. (For appeal instructions, please see additional information in the Appeal section of this policy.) If the LWDB grants an approval on the application, the ETPL system will notify the ETPL Administrator via a system generated email and the ETPL Administrator at the State Office will assign a permanent provider code to the eligible training provider, activate the user ID(s), and send an email notice to the eligible training provider that their registration application was approved and access has been granted to the ETPL system. At this time, the eligible training provider can make initial application for their program(s) of study.
- A State review to verify performance data may be required.

3. Once the eligible training provider has received notice from the State's ETPL Administrator via email that the registration application has been approved, that a permanent provider coded has been granted, and the user(s) identified in the aforementioned application template have been given access to the ETPL System, the eligible training provider can then log into the ETPL system at https://etpl.mdes.ms.gov/Login.aspx and enter the initial training course application(s). The eligible training provider will use the automated, on-line application form at https://etpl.mdes.ms.gov/NewEPLAppEntry.aspx?usrAction=Add.
   a. All eligible training providers will provide the following institution and program information:
      i. Name, mailing address, and physical address of the training facility;
      ii. Name and description of the program(s) of study;
      iii. Total hours of instruction associated with the program of study;
      iv. Cost of the training program, including tuition, fees, books, and any required tools, uniforms, equipment or supplies, as well as all unmet needs costs;
      v. Detailed description of the training program;
      vi. Information on whether students in the program are eligible for Title IV of the Higher Education Act funding (e.g., Pell Grant);
      vii. Signed assurance that **no more than** 75% of your class/course enrollment are WIOA funded on an annualized basis;
         - Providers with greater than 75% of their class/course annual enrollment being funded by WIOA must show justification and an action plan to correct the imbalance to the LWDB.
         - The LWDB may issue an exception to the provider, if it feels the imbalance is justified.

- The LWDB may choose to locally increase the ratio of non-WIOA to WIOA-funded participants.

viii. Documentation of licensure to provide training or instruction and to do business in the state in which the training will be provided, and from the appropriate oversight agency or department, if required;

- This includes, but is not limited to, the Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, the Mississippi Commission on Proprietary School and College Registration, the Mississippi Department of Education, the Mississippi State Boards of Nursing, Cosmetology, Massage Therapy, or Barber Examiners, and/or other generally recognized national, regional, state, or local certifying bodies.
- Non-Profit training providers, Community-Based Organizations (CBOs), Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs), or any other provider not otherwise licensed or certified as required above in paragraph b) i., must be registered with the Mississippi Commission on Proprietary School and College Registration (CPSCR), a division of the Mississippi Community College Board. The minimum requirements for registration shall include:
  - Submitting Federal Tax Identification Number,
  - Posting of minimum bond amount of $50,000 as prescribed by Mississippi Community College Board (MCCB),
  - Having a refund policy in place that conforms to the minimum standards set forth by law (75-60-18, MS Code of 1972), or adopting the refund policy developed by the State (Attachment C), and
  - Other requirements as prescribed by MCCB http://www.mccb.edu/program/psDefault.aspx.
- Registration with the Secretary of the State of Mississippi.

ix. Documentation of Certification to teach the subject matter for the program of training, if required, i.e. Microsoft, ISO9000, or similar certification generally recognized by employers; and

x. Any additional information required by the LWDB.

b. Performance Data for eligible training providers' programs of study applications must include (with the exception of Registered Apprenticeship sponsors) the following:

i. Standard Performance Data (**Section J** – All Participants)

The number of ALL participants who entered training and were scheduled to complete during the 12-month program year date range is to be provided for each training program by the eligible training provider and annotated in

Section J of the on-line training course application in the State's ETPL system @ www.etpl.rides.ms.gov, both in the initial application and annually during each open enrollment and recertification period held beginning April 1 and ending April 15 of each year. The ETPL administrator will send an ETPL system generated email to all active users prior to the open enrollment and recertification period to remind the eligible training providers that the open enrollment and recertification period is approaching and to inform eligible training providers of the 12-month data range. Additionally, the following information should be kept for each training course or program for review by the LWDB:

- The program completion rates for individuals participating in the program(s);
- The percentage of individuals participating in the program(s) who obtained unsubsidized employment; and
- Wages at placement in employment of individuals participating in the program(s).

ii. Provided Performance Data (**Section K – WIOA Participants**)

Prior to the open enrollment and recertification period, the ETPL Administrator will determine the 12-month program year date range and request a data extract from the State's ETPL financial tracking system to identify the participants who received WIOA training funds with a training completion that falls within the identified 12-month program year date rage. The data file extract will include, at minimum, the participant's first and last name, social security number, the name of the eligible training provider, and name of the training course. This data file will be used to match all trained participants in the state and national wage data bases using the State's Unemployment Insurance Wage Records and the State Wage Interchange System (SWIS), respectively. Once the wage data has been compiled, the State will determine the following information for each training course in the State's ETPL system and The ETPL Administrator will key the following data on each training course application where WIOA activity occurs:

- The number of participants who entered training;
- The number of participants who completed training;
- The number of participants who entered employment;
- The percentage of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the **second quarter after exit** from the program;
- The percentage of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the **fourth quarter after exit** from the program;
- The median earnings of program participants who are in unsubsidized

employment during the second quarter after exit from the program;

- The percentage of program participants who obtain a recognized postsecondary credential, or a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent (subject to clause (vi)), during participation in or within 1 year after exit from the program;
- The percentage of program 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 toward such a credential or employment.

On July 22, 2014, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) was signed into law and provides comprehensive legislation that reforms and modernizes the public workforce system. As a result, the State is mandated by WIOA law to provide an annual report to the U.S. Department of Labor's (DOL) Employment and Training Administration (ETA) a 3-year report card on all WIOA approved eligible training providers and their approved programs of study for all participants who participated in the program of study. This instruction can be found in Training and Employment Guidance Letter (TEGL) 10-16 and report template ETA 9171. The first report is due to DOL October 1, 2017 and annually on this date each year that follows. For purposes of meeting the DOL's reporting requirements, the State will provide additional information and instructions to WIOA approved eligible training providers regarding the data that is required of the participants served through their institution.

E. Assurances

No Training Provider will be placed on the Eligible Training Provider List until a signed Certificate of Assurances is received by either the LWDA, the State office or both confirming that they will comply fully with all nondiscrimination, equal opportunity, all performance indicators, and all provisions of the laws listed below. This document is found at https://etpl.mdes.ms.gov/Assurances.pdf.

i. WIOA section 188, which prohibits discrimination against all individuals in the United States on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, political affiliation or belief, and against beneficiaries on the basis of either citizenship/status as a lawfully admitted immigrant authorized to work in the United States or participation in any WIOA Title I-financially assisted program or activity;

ii. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color and national origin;

iii. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, which prohibits discrimination against qualified individuals with disabilities;

iv. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 which prohibits discrimination against qualified people with disabilities based on disability;

v. The Age Discrimination Act of 1975, as amended, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of age;

vi. Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, as amended, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in educational programs;

vii. 29 CFR part 37 and all other regulations implementing the laws listed above. This assurance applies to the grant applicant's operation of the WIOA Title I-financially assisted program or activity, and to all agreements the grant applicant makes to carry out the WIOA Title I financially assisted program or activity. The grant applicant understands that the United States has the right to seek judicial enforcement of this assurance;

viii. WIOA trainees shall make up no more than 75% of each class;

ix. As an eligible training provider to WIOA participants you will provide industry-recognized certificates and certifications, offer quality programs of training that lead to recognized postsecondary credentials, and provide indicators that you provide training to individuals who are employed and individuals with barriers to employment;

x. As an approved WIOA eligible training provider you will provide indicators of effectiveness in serving employers, factors that indicate high-quality training, factors concerning alignment of the training with in-demand industry sectors and occupations, and you are in partnership with businesses.

B. Initial Application Timeline and Requirements

1. Advertisement: Local Areas shall provide adequate notice through public advertisement of the upcoming enrollment and subsequent eligibility period held annually during April 1 -15.

2. State of Mississippi Community Colleges, Higher Education Act and/or National Apprenticeship Act Providers, Other Public and Private Training Providers:

   a. Applications will only be accepted during the open enrollment and recertification period of April 1—15 each year. The ETPL system will open for eligible training providers to make application and modify existing training courses during this period. This enrollment allows for initial and continued eligibility processes to take concerning eligible training providers' programs of study. No additional applications or modifications will be accepted after midnight April 15th of each year.

   b. Beginning on April 16th of each year following the open enrollment and continued eligibility, the ETPL Administrator will begin the automated processes which will update required information and assign the applications to the respective LWDB for review.

c. The LWDB will review the application(s) in the ETPL system and annotate on the application either an approval or denial. If the LWDB annotates a denial in the ETPL system, the ETPL system will automatically generate an email notification to the eligible training provider stating the reason or reasons for denial (only one reason is needed for denial), provide the timeline in which the appeal is required, and to whom the appeal is to be directed.

d. During the review period, the LWDB, the State or its designated representative(s) may make an on-site visit to the eligible training provider's program sites.

e. All approved course applications will be included as part of the system data upload by July 15th of the current year and becomes the new eligible training provider and course list made available to the public via the State's online ETPL system @ http://mdes.ms.gov/i-need-a-job/job-searching-resources/training-education/eligible-training-provider-list-(etpl)-system/ .

f. Any courses not recertified through the previously described process or approved by the LWDB will be removed from the ETPL list.

3. State Acceptance:

a. For applications from Community Colleges, Higher Education Act and/or National Apprenticeship Act, the LWDB's approval is the final decision. The State's ETPL Administrator will place the eligible training provider program(s) on the Statewide Eligible Training Provider List online system prior to July 15th of the current year after the April 1- 15 open enrollment and continued eligibility period.

b. For applications from all other public and private providers of a training program, the LWDB's approval is the final decision. The State's ETPL Administrator will place the eligible training provider program(s) on the Statewide Eligible Training Provides List online system prior to July 15th of the current year after the April 1 15 open enrollment and continued eligibility period.

c. Registered Apprenticeships do not require LWDB approval to be placed on the ETPL list.

IX. CONTINUED ELIGIBILITY DETERMINATION POLICY

A. Continued Eligibility Determination Process

Program of study applications must be submitted via the State's online system at www.etpl.mdes.ms.gov during the open enrollment and continued eligibility period held between April 1 – 15 each year, at such time, in such a manner, and containing such information as necessary to adequately fulfill the LWDB's and State's performance information requirements for each training program of study. The continued eligibility process is required of each eligible training provider. The Registered Apprenticeship program sponsors are exempt from the performance indicators and outcome measures. On April 16, the ETPL Administrator will administer the online processes to assign the training course applications to the respective LWDBs for review.

1. Training providers, regardless of their previous eligibility status, who wish to apply for continued eligibility, must meet the initial eligibility criteria as previously stated in this policy. Failure to meet the revised criteria for initial eligibility will result in that provider's removal from the Eligible Training Provider List web based system.
2. To remain eligible, all training providers must undergo an annual eligibility determination by the LWDBs. This determination will include a review of program-specific performance and cost information as well as a review of actual performance compared to performance levels established by the Governor (See Attachment A). An onsite review may be part of the process.
3. The eligible training provider should keep verifiable, program-specific performance information for each program of study. This information must be available for each program to be considered for continued eligibility and may be reviewed by the LWDB or State:
    a. Outcomes for all individuals participating in the program:
        i. Program completion rates;
        ii. Percentage who obtained unsubsidized employment; and
        iii. Average wage at placement in employment.
        iv. Signed assurance that **no more than** 75% of your class/course participants are WIOA-funded, on an annualized basis.
            - Providers with greater than 75% of their course's annual participants being funded by WIOA must show justification and an action plan to correct the imbalance to the LWDB;
            - The LWDB may issue an exception to the provider, if they feel the imbalance is justified; and will forward the exception to the State for final approval.
            - The LWDB may choose to locally increase the ratio of non-WIOA to WIOA-funded participants.

Appendix L: Perkins: Listing of Secondary and Postsecondary Programs

The following are the career clusters and programs currently offered at the secondary level:

Advanced Manufacturing

- Advanced Manufacturing
- Engineering
- Furniture Design and Manufacturing
- Industrial Maintenance
- Instrumentation Technology
- Metal Fabrication
- Polymer Science
- Precision Machining
- Shipbuilding Academy
- Welding

Agriculture

- Agriculture and Natural Resources (ANR)
- Agriculture Power and Machinery
- Aquaculture
- Diversified Agriculture
- Forestry
- Horticulture
- Meat Science and Muscle Biology

Arts, Entertainment, and Design

- Multimedia
- Interactive Media Technology

Construction

- Architecture and Drafting
- Carpentry
- Electrical
- Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration (HVACR)

Business, Marketing, and Finance

- Business, Marketing, and Finance

Digital Technology

- Information Technology
- Software Development
- Unmanned Aircraft Systems

Education

- Early Childhood Education
- Educator Preparation

Energy and Natural Resources
- Energy Technology

Health and Human Services
- Health Care and Clinical Services
- Sports Medicine and Therapeutic Services
- Cosmetology
- Barbering
- Natural Hair Care and Braiding

Hospitality and Events
- Culinary Arts
- Lodging, Hospitality, and Tourism

Public Service and Safety
- Law and Public Safety
- Law Enforcement
- Fire Science

Supply Chain and Transportation
- Automotive Service Technician
- Collision Repair Technician— Paint
- Collision Repair Technician—Non-structural
- Diesel Service Technician
- Logistics and Supply Chain

The following are middle school level CTE programs offered at the secondary level:

- Computer Science and Engineering
- Cyber Foundations I
- Cyber Foundations II
- Exploring Computer Science

The following are CTE enhancement courses (non-occupational) offered at the secondary level:

- Contemporary Health
- Entrepreneurship
- E-Commerce
- Exploration of Agriscience
- Exploring Careers
- Family and Consumer Science
- Principles of Agriscience
- Emergency Medical Services
- Introduction to Drone Technology

The following are pilot courses in development as either CTE pathways or enhancement courses (non-occupational) at the secondary level:

The following are the career clusters and programs currently offered at the postsecondary level:

Mississippi Community College Board	
Cluster/Sector	**Curriculum Title**
Advanced Manufacturing	• Automation and Control Technology • Biomedical Equipment Repair Technology • Clothing and Textile Services • Electrical Technology • Electro-Mechanical T • Electronics and Related Engineering Technology • Industrial Engineering Management • Industrial Maintenance, Instrumentation and Control Technology • Industrial Production Technologies/Technicians, Other • Instrumentation Technology/Technician • Manufacturing Engineering Technology/Technician • Mechanical Engineering • Mechatronics, Robotics, and Automation Engineering • Millwright Technology • Occupational Safety and Health Technology/Technician • Petroleum Technology/Technician • Pipefitting/Pipefitter and Sprinkler Fitter • Precision Manufacturing and Machining Technology • Process Operations • Process Operations - Oil and Gas Production Technology • Systems Based Electronics – Automation • Tool and Die Technology • Welding and Cutting Technology
Agriculture	• Agribusiness Management Technology • Agribusiness/Agricultural Business Operations • Agricultural Technician Technology • Animal Science Technology—Beef Option • Animal Science Technology—Poultry Option • Applied Horticulture/Horticulture Operations, General

	• Crop Production • Forestry Technology • Horticulture Technology • Landscaping and Groundskeeping • Meat Cutting/Meat Cutter/ Meat Merchandising Technology • Precision Agriculture Technology • Small Engine and Equipment Repair • Technology Turf and Turfgrass Management • Veterinary/Animal Health Technology/Veterinary Assistant
Arts, Entertainment and Design	• Digital Arts and Design • Entertainment Media • Fashion Merchandising • Film and Video Technology • Graphic Design • Interior Design/Interior Designers • Live Entertainment • Media Technology • Radio and Television Broadcasting Technology/Technician
Construction	• Architectural Engineering Technology • Brick, Block, and Stone Masonry • Carpentry Technology • Civil Engineering Technology • Commercial/Residential Construction Technology • Commercial/Residential Maintenance • Construction Engineering Technology • Construction Equipment Operations • Drafting and Design • Drafting and Design Technology • Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Technology • Industrial Maintenance • Maritime Pipefitting Technology • Modeling, Virtual Environments and Simulation • Pipefitter/Steamfitter • Plumbing Technology • Well Construction Technology
Digital Technology	• Business Statistics

	• Business/Office Automation/Technology/Data Entry • Coding Technology • Computer and Information Systems Security/Information Assurance • Computer Installation and Repair Technology/Technician • Computer Programming, Specific Applications • Computer Programming/Programmer, General • Computer Systems Networking and Telecommunications • Data Modeling/Warehousing and Database Administration • Simulation and Animation Design • Web Page, Digital/Multimedia and Information Resources Design
Education	• Early Childhood Education Technology
Energy	• Geographic Information Science and Cartography • Utility Line Worker • Utility Lineman
Financial Services	• Accounting Technology • Banking and Financial Support Services • Real Estate Technology
Healthcare and Human Services	• Cardiovascular Technology • Dental Assisting Technology • Dental Hygiene Technology • Diagnostic Medical Sonography • Emergency Medical Technology/Technician • Health and Medical administrative Services • Health Care Assistant • Health Information/Medical Records Technology/Technician • Interpreter Training Technology • Licensed Practical/Vocational Nurse Training • Massage Therapy • Medical Administrative Services • Medical Assisting Technology • Medical Laboratory Technology • Medical Office Technology

	• Nuclear Medicine Technology • Occupational Therapy Assistant • Ophthalmic Technology • Opticianry/Ophthalmic Dispensing Optician • Pharmacy Technology • Phlebotomy Tech • Physical Therapist Assistant • Polysomnography • Radiologic Technology/Science – Radiographer • Respiratory Care Therapy/Therapist • Surgical Tech • Barber/Stylist • Cosmetology Science Cluster/Nail Tech/Instructor/Esthetics • Cosmetology/Cosmetologist • Funeral Service Technology
Hospitality, Events and Tourism	• Baking and Pastry Arts • Culinary Arts Technology • Food Production and Management Technology • Hospitality and Tourism Management Technology • Hotel and Restaurant Management • Travel and Tourism
Management and Entrepreneurship	• Administrative Office Technology • Business and Office Related Technology • Business Management Technology • Computer Technology • Entrepreneurship Program • Information Systems Technology • Sign Language Interpretation and Translation
Marketing and Sales	• E-Commerce/Electronic Commerce • Marketing Management
Public Service and Safety	• Conservation Law Enforcement Technology • Court Reporting/Court Reporter • Crime Scene Technician • Criminal Justice • Emergency Management Communications Technology • Emergency Medical Technician and Paramedic • Fire Protection Technology

	• Homeland Security, Law Enforcement, Firefighting and Related • Occupational Safety and Health Technology • Paralegal Technology • Realtime Reporting Technology
Supply Chain and Transportation	• Aeronautics/Aviation/Aerospace Science and Technology • Air Traffic Controller • Automotive Machinist • Automotive Technology • Aviation Maintenance Technology • Aviation Technology • Aviation/Airway Management and Operations • Collision Repair Technology • Commercial Truck Driving • Diesel Mechanics Technology—Transportation • Heavy Equipment Technology • Logistics Technology • Parts Marketing and Management

Appendix M: Perkins: Local Application Template

[DOCUMENT TITLE]

Carl D. Perkins V – Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act

Due Date: spring of each year

Regional Team Coordinators:

	Name	Institution/School	Phone	Email
Secondary-MDE Representative				
Postsecondary-MCCB Representative				

Date_____Regional Team_____

Secondary and postsecondary institutions shall not contract out the process of conducting the needs assessment.

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide a template to prepare the content of the LPA by:

- explaining the purpose of the regional needs assessment;
- outlining the required components of the assessment; and
- providing tools for identifying regional needs.

By conducting the LPA, the regional team will:

- use evidence-based strategies to recognize needs of the regional industry;
- identify strengths and weaknesses of secondary and postsecondary CTE programs in the region;
- perform a root-cause analysis of gaps; and
- make progress toward student success and employment.

What is a comprehensive regional needs assessment?

A **needs assessment** is a systematic set of procedures used to determine needs and examine their nature and causes. A needs assessment is conducted to determine the needs of people (i.e., recipients of the services provided by an organization). In education, the recipients are students, parents, and future employers. A comprehensive regional needs assessment consists of the following steps:

1. Identify participants on the regional needs assessment team (stakeholders).
2. Identify data sources to be analyzed. A list of required and allowable data sources is provided by the state.
3. Engage stakeholders in a review of focused data and analyze the data.
4. Identify areas of growth and strengths (i.e., what is working).
5. Identify areas of opportunity (i.e., what is not working).

Why complete a comprehensive regional needs assessment?

The reauthorization of the Perkins Act through Perkins V requires that eligible recipients complete a regional needs assessment that must be included in the Perkins application. There are six components of the comprehensive regional needs assessment:

1. Evaluation of regional labor market data
2. Evaluation of student performance
3. Description of the CTE programs offered (i.e., size, scope, quality, and aligned to in-demand industry sectors)
4. Evaluation of the progress toward implementing CTE programs and programs of study
5. Description of recruitment, retention, and training for CTE educators
6. Description of progress toward implementing equal access to CTE for all students, including special populations

How often is a comprehensive regional needs assessment needed?

The needs assessment must be completed **every two years**, with a review of progress in the interim. The assessment must be **completed prior** to the completion of the grant application and submitted with the application. The regional needs assessment should be part of an on-going performance management cycle.

Who should participate in the Local Plan Application process?

Local recipients are required to engage a diverse body of participants who will plan and implement the regional needs assessment. The LPA team is comprised of local stakeholders who will develop, review, and analyze assessment results to support cross-sector coordination. Perkins V requires, at a minimum, the following participants to engage in the initial needs assessment, local application development, and on-going consultation [Sec.134 (d) and (e)]:

1. CTE program representatives at the secondary and postsecondary levels
   - Teachers
   - Faculty
   - Administrators
   - Career guidance counselors and advocates
   - Advisement professionals
   - Specialized instructional support specialists and paraprofessionals
2. State or local workforce development board representatives
3. Representatives from a range of local businesses and industries
4. Parents and students
5. Representatives of special populations
6. Representatives from agencies serving at-risk, homeless and out-of-school youth
7. Local business and industry representatives

Process:

Once the regional needs assessment has been completed:

1. Establish an LPA team
2. The LPA teams should include individuals from the list above (1-7 under who should participate?).
3. Gather, review, and analyze data (which has been created from the regional needs assessment work/template).
4. Convene the LPA team to write the application.
5. Complete the LPA template.
   i. All steps and all parts are required.
   ii. Incomplete assessments will not be approved.
   iii. Add rows to tables as needed.
   iv. Include the data analysis documents (required).

Template:

The needs assessment template outlines all the required steps:

STEP 1: Analysis of Labor Market Information

- **Part 1**: Utilize the Labor Market Analysis Tool (Excel).
- **Part 2**: Use additional approved sources of data and compare the data to Part 1 findings.
- **Part 3**: Bring the regional team together to discuss the findings from Parts 1 and 2.
- **Part 4**: Based on the input from local stakeholders, use this template to provide answers to the regional needs assessment questions.

STEP 2: Analysis of Student Performance

STEP 3: Analysis of Programs (This is part of the **LOCAL PLAN APPLICATION**, to be completed by the local district/community college.)

- **Part 1**: Size, scope, and quality
- **Part 2**: Progress toward implementing programs of study
- **Part 3**: Recruitment, retention, and training of CTE educators
- **Part 4**: Progress toward improving access and equity

Career and Technical Education (CTE) Local Plan Application Tool

Use of Perkins V funding is based on the results of the comprehensive regional needs assessment. **Activities and expenditures** should not be included in a grant application if the eligible recipient **cannot** demonstrate a need based on the assessment.
The needs assessment must be completed <u>every two years</u> with a review of progress in the interim. The assessment must be completed <u>prior</u> to completion of the grant application. Local plan applications (LPAs) will not be accepted without the corresponding regional needs assessment.

Regional Team Name: _____ **Date:** _____	
Local Plan Application Coordinator:	**Contact Information:**
Secondary:	
Postsecondary:	

Local Team Members			
Representative	**Name**	**Institution and Position**	**Responsibility**
Teacher(s) - Secondary			
Faculty - Postsecondary			
Secondary Administration			
Postsecondary Administration			
Specialized Instructional Support and Paraprofessional(s)			

Representative(s) of Special Populations			
Career Guidance and Academic Counselor(s)			
Student(s)			
Community			
Business and Industry			
Workforce Development			
Parent(s)			
Other (Data Support, Admin Assistant, HR, Business Office, etc.)			

STEP 3: Analysis of Programs

Part 1: Size, Scope, and Quality

Perkins V Section 134(c)(2)(B)(i)

The local needs assessment shall include…

(B) A description of how career and technical education programs offered by the eligible recipient are:

(i) sufficient in size, scope, and quality to meet the needs of all students served by the eligible recipient; and…

What Information Should Locals Collect: Size, Scope, and Quality	
What does the law say? The needs assessment will include a description of how CTE programs offered by the local eligible recipient are sufficient in size, scope, and quality to meet the needs of all students served by the eligible recipient.	**What does the law mean?** The provision maintains the size, scope, and quality requirements in Perkins IV, but instead requires that this description be addressed through the needs assessment (which is part of the local application in Perkins V) instead of in the local plan in Perkins IV. The state has the responsibility to establish the definition of these three requirements.

State Definitions:

Size:

Secondary

Program size reflects an appropriate number of students in order to be effective and meet local business and industry demand as determined by the regional needs assessment. The program size will account for physical parameters and limitations of the program. Additionally, districts must adhere to the following characteristics/requirements:

- At least one career cluster and state-recognized pathway is offered in each program/content area that is currently provided in the area district.
- Students in the district have access to a minimum of five state-approved pathways.
- A minimum program size of 10 students or continuous progress towards increased program size.

Postsecondary

- A minimum program size of 10 students or continuous progress towards increased program size apart from programs with national, state, or programmatic accreditation requirements (i.e., health occupations, cosmetology, barbering, etc.).

Scope:

Secondary

CTE state-approved programs of study/pathways relate to high skill, high wage, or in demand careers aligned with the comprehensive local needs assessment, economic, and workforce development needs in the state or region in the following ways:

- Linking programs across learning levels through articulation agreements, dual credit opportunities, aligned curriculum, etc.
- Aligning programs with business and industry needs and local economic indicators.
- Providing multiple entry and exit points to programs of study.
- Aligning programs with a nationally, regionally, or state-recognized credential/certification.
- Emphasizing development of essential work-based learning through applied academics.
- Providing workplace learning opportunities to all students, including special populations.
- Secondary/postsecondary collaboration meetings must meet a minimum of once a year and maintain meeting documentation (This could be satisfied by the local needs assessment meetings, or you could require one additional beyond that).
- Links or pathways must exist between the secondary and postsecondary CTE programs of study.
- A graduation plan/pathway plan (Individual Success Plan—ISP) is in place for each student in the career pathway that identifies recommended academic and technical courses, which connect to postsecondary education.

Postsecondary

- Aligning programs with business and industry needs and local economic indicators.
- Providing multiple entry and exit points to programs of study.
- Aligning programs with a nationally, regionally, or state-recognized credential/certification.
- Providing workplace learning opportunities to all students, including special populations.
- Secondary/postsecondary collaboration meetings must meet a minimum of once a year and maintain meeting documentation (This could be satisfied by the local needs assessment meetings, or you could require one additional beyond that.).

Quality:

Secondary

Program quality is the measure of how successfully each program addresses academic performance, workplace standards, competencies, and skills necessary for success within its program of study.

The MDE has established the following secondary quality measures for CTE programs:

- Eligible recipients reach local targets based on state and federal Core Indicators of Performance.
- Local recipients use the comprehensive local needs assessment and local labor market data to identify CTE pathways' alignment to projected employment demand.
- Professional development is provided to faculty and staff to enhance student learning and ensure the implementation of high-quality instruction related to CTE pathways.

- CTE pathways are reviewed based on advisory council input and local business and industry projections.
- CTE pathways include at least one articulation agreement, work-based learning, and/or industry credentialing, where appropriate.
- All students are provided with equitable access to CTE programs of study via the implementation of Individual Success Plans (ISPs).
- Equipment and technology encourage student attainment of relevant, rigorous technical skills.
- Implement a continuous program improvement process approved by the state.
- Demonstrate excellent student safety in CTE labs (100% safety test on record).
- Documented use/completion of student competency profiles for each student in each program area.
- Each program/content area must have an advisory committee that meets a minimum of twice a year.
- Provide evidence of appropriate teacher licensing, professional development, and dual credit agreements.
- School has adopted SBE-approved curricula and is meeting state standards in course instruction.

Postsecondary

The MCCB has established the following postsecondary quality measures for CTE programs:

- A program must meet two out of the following three criteria:
    1. High skilled programs
    2. Competitive, high wage programs
    3. Programs that train individuals for in demand occupations

Complete the table on the following pages. Add rows as needed.

How do schools or colleges in the region determine that programs…

Question	Answer	Areas for Improvement
Are of sufficient size		
Relate to real-world work environment (Scope)		
Help students advance to future education (Scope)		
Are of high quality		
Should be offered in the region		

Community colleges seeking to add new programs submit a New Program Application to the director of career and technical education at the MCCB. The process to receive application approval is outlined below:

- Colleges collect, compile, and document employment needs data, including state and district employment and wage projections (i.e., average annual salary projections and 10-year employment projections).
- Colleges collect, compile, and document student interest data.

- Colleges obtain advisory committee recommendations.
- Colleges obtain professional association endorsement (if needed).
- Colleges develop the curriculum following the 15/30/45/60 course sequencing format (where applicable).

STEP 3: Analysis of Programs

Part 2: Progress Toward Implementing Programs of Study

Perkins V Section 134(c)(2)(C)

The local needs assessment shall include…

(C) An evaluation of progress toward the implementation of career and technical education programs and programs of study.

What Information Should Locals Collect: Progress towards Implementing CTE Programs/Programs of Study	
What does the law say? The needs assessment will include an evaluation of progress towards the implementation of CTE programs and programs of study.	**What does the law mean?** This evaluation should be both a backward and forward-looking review of the programs and programs of study offered. In addition to meeting the size, scope and quality, this requirement addresses current and future plans to support the implementation of programs and programs of study.

Federal Definition:

Perkins V Sec. 2(41)

Program of Study:

The term "program of study" means a coordinated, nonduplicative sequence of academic and technical content at the secondary and postsecondary level that—

(A) incorporates challenging state academic standards, including those adopted by a state under section 1111(b)(1) of the Elementary and Secondary
Education Act of 1965;

(B) addresses both academic and technical knowledge and skills, including employability skills;

(C) is aligned with the needs of industries in the economy of the state, region, Tribal community, or local area;

(D) progresses in specificity (beginning with all aspects of an industry or career cluster and leading to more occupation-specific instruction);

(E) has multiple entry and exit points that incorporate credentialing; and

(F) culminates in the attainment of a recognized postsecondary credential.

Complete the program approval processes defined by the MDE for Secondary programs or the MCCB for Postsecondary programs. See Appendix A.

STEP 3: Analysis of Programs

Part 3: Recruitment, Retention, and Training of CTE Educators

Perkins V Section 134(c)(2)(D)

The local needs assessment shall include…

(D) A description of how the eligible recipient will improve recruitment, retention, and training of career and technical education teachers, faculty, specialized instructional support personnel, paraprofessionals, and career guidance and academic counselors, including individuals in groups underrepresented in such professions.

What Information Should Locals Collect: Recruitment, Retention, and Training of Faculty and Staff	
What does the law say? The needs assessment will include a description of how the eligible recipient will improve recruitment, retention, and training of CTE teachers, faculty, specialized instructional support personnel, paraprofessionals, and career guidance and academic counselors, including individuals in groups underrepresented in such professions.	**What does the law mean?** Eligible recipients must evaluate their current and future recruitment, retention, and professional development needs. This may require analysis of teacher or other professional shortage.

Secondary

NTI

The New Teacher Induction (NTI) program was planned and developed by personnel from the MDE's Office of Career and Technical Education and the RCU at MSU with leadership and direction from a steering committee and national research. NTI is an alternate route licensure program for career and technical teachers who have recently left the industry sector to become educators in secondary schools. NTI's goal is to induct these new teachers into the profession and guide their development during a special licensing period. Most teachers in this category are given up to three years to accomplish matriculation to a "standard" license. NTI offers a sequence of professional development activities that begin with employment and progress from "most important to know immediately" to activities that meet long-term needs of teachers. The program consists of sequential steps in the process of developing the newly hired CTE teachers into fully licensed teachers.

Methods Training

Mississippi provides pathway-specific professional development to all new CTE teachers, counselors, and student service coordinators. This program, known as Methods Training, provides specialized instruction tailored to each teacher's pathway or program area and includes:

- Face-to-face sessions during the summer with experienced teachers who have demonstrated innovative teaching styles and high certification pass rates
- Coaching from mentor teachers for up to two years, offering support through email, phone, video, and in-person meetings
- Additional coaching support, classroom visits, and formative evaluations from MSU RCU staff
- Detailed instruction in curriculum, classroom management, lesson planning, syllabus creation, teacher modeling, student organization information, and pathway-specific resources

Methods Training is also available to those who may be working towards a different license endorsement.

Online Teacher Resource Guides

The MDE and RCU offer online teacher resource guides through a learning management system. Content is contributed by CTE teachers and is aligned to the units in the state curriculum. The RCU curriculum staff maintain the sites which are revised each time the curriculum completes a revision cycle.

CTE Administrators Academy

The MDE offers the CTE Administrator endorsement for those who are newly hired CTE administrators. These administrators, who must already hold a valid administrator license, will be given a nonrenewable, provisional three-year license while they complete the requirements for the CTE Administrator add-on endorsement. During the three-year provisional period, the applicant must successfully complete all requirements of the CTE Administrator Academy. The CTE Administrator Academy covers topics such as certification, instructional management, assessment, student organizations, and other relevant items for the administrator as well as pairing the administrator with a mentor. The academy consists of four face-to-face modules held over two-day periods. These sessions include introductory resources and expectations, leading curriculum, instruction and assessment in CTE, using assessment and data to support college and career readiness, and building a culture of accountability.

COOL for Teachers and Administrators

The Certification of Online Learning (COOL) was created to assist educators in meeting the requirements for licensure. This web-based course is designed to introduce participants to the methodology of online teaching. Categories and topics include a review of the literature, instructional design techniques, online teaching strategies, classroom management procedures, analysis of technology integration in the classroom, contemplative processing, and legal issues in the digital environment. This course's capstone is a final project. The course participant will create a minimum of 10 hours of instruction. This instruction will utilize the different features used in the MDE's Learning Management System (LMS). Activities the participant creates will be on the curriculum the participant currently teaches or will teach or will be related to the capacity the participant works in a school district. A checklist of minimum expectations to be met is provided.

With the expansion of online learning for students, the use of the Canvas software by students, instructors, and directors and the fact that students going into higher education after completing high school will be utilizing Canvas for class assignments and other purposes, we feel it is essential that a new director have a thorough understanding of online learning in general and Canvas specifically. Both the community college system and the IHL use Canvas. Additionally, students in secondary school level Auto Mechanics, Health Sciences, and Agricultural programs have access to online software programs provided by CTE to expand their learning opportunities.

Special Populations Training and Online Coursework
The MDE, through a partnership with the RCU at MSU, offers multiple face-to-face and online courses that address unique issues for educators and administrators who serve special populations. Additionally, these courses serve as resources for all teachers as they seek to improve relationships with students and impact their achievement.

Postsecondary

1. Recruitment
Recruitment strategies include local and regional newspapers, the college's website, social media networks, graduates of the program, and job postings. Utilize the MCCB listservs as a recruitment tool for potential instructors and advisory committees to make recommendations for potential instructors. Communicate with MDE through Lotus Notes. Communicate with Universities and colleges through teacher preparation programs in order to find potential teacher candidates. Engage constituents through MCCB social media (i.e., Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc.), talk radio advertisements and segments, the SWIB network alliance, and workforce publications.

2. Retention
Retention efforts of CTE teachers, faculty, and career guidance and academic counselors center around a compensation and fringe benefit package that is competitive with the private and secondary education sectors.
National certifications at no cost to instructors will also be provided in order to retain highly qualified staff.

3. Train CTE Educators
Professional development is provided through on- and off-campus workshops and seminars. CTE faculty and student support services coordinators complete a "competency plan" which requires specific, prescribed professional development activities.
The MCCB's Teaching and Learning Institute (new teacher training), Administrator's Leadership Academy, postsecondary/secondary CTE collaboration meetings, and summer conference provide professional development for CTE administrators and instructors at no cost.

Complete the table on the next page. Add rows as needed.

How do schools or colleges in the region recruit, retain and train CTE educators?

Process	Strengths	Needs/Gaps

STEP 3: Analysis of Programs

Part 4: Progress Toward Improving Access and Equity

Perkins Section 134(c)(2)(E)

The local needs assessment shall include…

(E) A description of progress toward implementation of equal access to high quality career and technical education courses and programs of study for all students, including:

(i) strategies to overcome barriers that result in lower rates of access to, or performance gaps in, the courses and programs for special populations;

(ii) providing programs that are designed to enable special populations to meet the local levels of performance; and

(iii) providing activities to prepare special populations for high skill, high wage, or in demand industry sectors or occupations in competitive, integrated settings that will lead to self-sufficiency.

What Information Should Locals Collect: Progress Towards Improving Access and Equity	
What does the law say? The needs assessment shall include a description of: • progress toward implementation of equal access to high quality CTE courses and programs of study for all students, including strategies to overcome barriers that result in lower rates of access to, or performance gaps in, the courses and programs for special populations; • how they are providing programs that are designed to enable special populations to meet the local levels of performance; and • how they are providing activities to prepare special populations for high skill, high wage, or in demand industry sectors or occupations in competitive, integrated settings that will lead to self-sufficiency.	**What does the law mean?** This requirement is focused on supports for special populations. States assist locals in directing resources or supports to close performance gaps and remove barriers and to provide supports necessary to address different barriers and different populations.

Perkins V Sec. 2(48)

SPECIAL POPULATIONS. — The term "special populations" means:

(A) individuals with disabilities;

(B) individuals from economically disadvantaged families, including low-income youth and adults;

(C) individuals preparing for nontraditional fields;

(D) single parents, including single pregnant women;

(E) out-of-workforce individuals;

(F) English learners;

(G) homeless individuals described in section 725 of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11434a);

(H) youth who are in, or have aged out of, the foster care system; and
(I) youth with a parent who:
(i) is a member of the armed forces (as such term is defined in section 101(a)(4) of title 10, United States Code); and
(ii) is on active duty (as such term is defined in section 101(d)(1) of such title.

Complete the table on the following page. Add rows as needed.

How do schools or colleges ensure access and equity for all students, especially special populations?

Strengths	Gaps	Strategies for Improvement

FEDERAL PROGRAM ACTIVITIES FOR FY_____ (Estimated Funds)

LPA Status: District Number: In Consortium? ☐ Yes ☐ No		
District Number:	District Type:	District Name:
Contact Person:	Contact Phone:	Contact Email:

Performance Period:_____

Question #1: Describe the results of the comprehensive local needs assessment conducted in conjunction with business and industry partners and local/regional workforce development agencies.

Question #2: Describe how the eligible recipient utilized the results of the local comprehensive needs assessment to select the specific career and technical education program and activities to be funded.

Question #3: Describe any new programs of the study the eligible recipient will submit to the State for approval.

Question #4: Describe how students, including students who are members of special populations, will learn about their school's career and technical education course offerings and whether each course is part of a career and technical education program of study.

Question #5: Describe how the eligible recipient, in collaboration with local workforce development boards and other local workforce agencies, one-stop delivery systems, and other partners, will provide a series of career exploration and career guidance activities.

a. Describe career exploration and career development coursework, activities, or services.
b. Describe career information and employment opportunities that incorporate the most up-to-date information on high-skill, high-wage, or in-demand industry sectors or occupation as determined by the comprehensive local needs assessment.
c. Describe an organized system of career guidance and academic counseling to students before enrolling and while participating in a career and technical education program.

Question #6: Describe how the eligible recipient will improve the academic and technical skills of students participating in career and technical education programs by strengthening the academic and career and technical education components of such programs through the integration of coherent and rigorous content aligned with challenging academic standards and relevant carer and technical

education programs to ensure learning in the subjects that constitute a well-rounded education (as defined in section 8101 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965).

Question #7: Describe how the eligible recipient will provide activities to prepare special populations, including single parents and out-of-workforce individuals, for high-skill, high-wage, or high-demand occupations that will lead to self-sufficiency.

Question #8: Describe how the eligible recipient will prepare CTE participants for non-traditional fields.

Question #9: Describe how the eligible recipient will provide equal access for members of special populations to CTE courses, programs, and programs of study.

Question #10: Describe how the eligible recipient will ensure that members of special populations will not be discriminated against on the basis of their status as members of special populations.

Question #11: Describe the work-based learning opportunities that will be provided to CTE students and explain how the e3ligible recipient will work with business and industry partners to ensure the work-based learning program provides students with a strong experience in and understanding of all aspects of an industry.

Question #12: Describe how the eligible recipient will, to the extent practicable, provide students with opportunities to gain postsecondary credit while in high school, such as through dual or concurrent enrollment programs or early college high school

Question #13: Describe how the eligible recipient will coordinate with MDE and institutions of higher education (IHEs) to support efforts to improve the recruitment and retention of career and technical education teachers, faculty, and career guidance and academic counselors, including individuals in groups that are underrepresented in the teaching profession.

Question #14: Describe how the eligible recipient will coordinate with the MDE to support efforts to improve the recruitment and retention of CTE educators who meet applicable State certification and licensure requirements (including any requirements met through alternate routes to certification that are designed to support individuals transitioning to teaching from business and industry).

Question #15: Describe how a comprehensive professional development plan (including initial teacher preparation) for career and technical education, academic, guidance, and administrative personnel will be provided which promotes the integration of coherent and rigorous content. The development plan must include academic standards that are relevant to career and technical education (including curriculum development).

Question #16: Describe how the eligible recipient will address disparities or gaps in performance between groups of students in each of the plan years. If no meaningful progress has been achieved prior to the third program year, include a description of the additional actions that will be taken to eliminate these disparities or gaps.

PROGRAM JUSTIFICATION SUMMARY FOR FY (Estimated Funds)

Performance Period: _____

LPA Status: District Number: In Consortium? ☐ Yes ☐ No		
District Number:	District Type:	District Name:
Contact Person:	Contact Phone:	Contact Email:

Please provide justification for the programs listed below:

Program	Which local businesses, industries, and economic/workforce development groups do you work with?	Which postsecondary institutions can students attend once they leave the program?	Provide detailed information as to where students are employed when they leave the program.

Gap Analysis for District Summary Report
FY _____

Please complete the Gap Analysis form below for your District Summary Report, sign in blue ink, and upload into SharePoint this form along with your signed District Summary Report by _____.

District Number: **District Name:**

STEP 1: Performance Results

A. Please list the Performance Indicators (e.g., 1S1, 1S2, etc.) that did not meet the target performance: _____

_____

B. Please list all student categories where performance gaps exist (student categories include special populations, certain demographics, etc.):

_____

_____

_____

	STEP 2: Specific Strategies to Improve Performance	STEP 3: Implement Solutions
	Describe the specific strategies you will employ to address these performance gaps and improve the performance of this metric (Be Specific)	**Month/Year for complete implementation, and to be completed by whom**
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		

_____Signature of CTE Director and Date

Appendix N: Perkins: Regional Needs Assessment Template

Regional Needs Assessment Template

Carl D. Perkins V – Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act

Due Date: spring of each year

Regional Team Coordinators:

	Name	Institution/School	Phone	Email
Secondary-MDE Representative				
Postsecondary-MCCB Representative				

Date_____ Regional Team_____

****Secondary and postsecondary institutions shall not contract out the process of conducting the needs assessment.**

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide a template to prepare the content of the regional needs assessment by:

- explaining the purpose of the regional needs assessment;
- outlining the required components of the assessment; and
- providing tools for identifying regional needs.

By conducting a regional needs assessment, the regional team will:

- use evidence-based strategies to recognize needs of regional industry;
- identify strengths and weaknesses of secondary and postsecondary CTE programs in the region;
- perform a root-cause analysis of gaps; and
- make progress toward student success and employment.

What is a comprehensive regional needs assessment?

A **needs assessment** is a systematic set of procedures used to determine needs and examine their nature and causes. A needs assessment is conducted to determine the needs of people (i.e., recipients of the services provided by an organization). In education, the recipients are students, parents, and future employers. A comprehensive regional needs assessment consists of the following steps:

1. Identify participants on the regional needs assessment team (stakeholders).
2. Identify data sources to be analyzed. A list of required and allowable data sources is provided by the state.
3. Engage stakeholders in a review of focused data and analyze the data.
4. Identify areas of growth and strengths (i.e., what is working).
5. Identify areas of opportunity (i.e., what is not working).

Why complete a comprehensive regional needs assessment?

The reauthorization of the Perkins Act through Perkins V requires that eligible recipients complete a regional needs assessment that must be included in the Perkins application. There are six components of the comprehensive regional needs assessment:

1. Evaluation of regional labor market data
2. Evaluation of student performance
3. Description of the CTE programs offered (i.e., size, scope, quality, and aligned to in-demand industry sectors)
4. Evaluation of the progress toward implementing CTE programs and programs of study
5. Description of recruitment, retention, and training for CTE educators
6. Description of progress toward implementing equal access to CTE for all students, including special populations

How often is a comprehensive regional needs assessment needed?

The needs assessment must be completed **every two years**, with a review of progress in the interim. The assessment must be **completed prior** to the completion of the grant application and submitted with the application. The regional needs assessment should be part of an on-going performance management cycle.

Who should participate in the comprehensive regional needs assessment process?

Local recipients are required to engage a diverse body of participants who will plan and implement the regional needs assessment. The regional needs assessment team is comprised of local stakeholders who will develop, review, and analyze assessment results to support cross-sector coordination. Perkins V requires, at a minimum, the following participants to engage in the initial needs assessment, local application development, and on-going consultation [Sec.134 (d) and (e)]:

1. Secondary and Postsecondary Administrators
2. Local WIOA directors
3. Local business and industry representatives

Process:

1. Establish a regional needs assessment team.
   - Regional needs assessment teams should include the following: secondary and postsecondary administrators, local WIOA directors, and local business and industry representatives.
2. Two co-coordinators for the regional team—one from secondary education and one from a postsecondary institution (or appropriate staff should personnel change)
3. Gather, review, and analyze data (State staff will provide required data sources and a list of optional resources.).
4. Convene the regional team to write the needs assessment (Each team must **meet at least once** throughout this process.).
5. Complete the needs assessment template.
   i. All steps and all parts are required.
   ii. Incomplete assessments will not be approved.
   iii. Add rows to the tables as needed.
   iv. Include the data analysis documents (required).

Template:

The needs assessment template outlines all of the required steps:

STEP 1: Analysis of Labor Market Information

Part 1: Utilize the Labor Market Analysis Tool (Excel).
Part 2: Use additional approved sources of data and compare the data to Part 1 findings.
Part 3: Bring the regional team together to discuss the findings from Parts 1 and 2.
Part 4: Based on the input from local stakeholders, use this template to provide answers to the regional needs assessment questions.

STEP 2: Analysis of Student Performance

STEP 3: Analysis of Programs (This is part of the **LOCAL PLAN APPLICATION**, to be completed by the local district/community college.)

Part 1: Size, scope, and quality
Part 2: Progress toward implementing programs of study
Part 3: Recruitment, retention, and training of CTE educators
Part 4: Progress toward improving access and equity

Career and Technical Education (CTE) Program Comprehensive Regional Needs Assessment Tool

Use of Perkins V funding is based on the results of the comprehensive regional needs assessment. Activities and expenditures should not be included in a grant application if the eligible recipient cannot demonstrate a need based on the assessment.

The needs assessment must be completed every two years with a review of progress in the interim. The assessment must be completed prior to completion of the grant application. Local plan applications (LPAs) will not be accepted without the corresponding regional needs assessment.

Regional Team Name: **Date:**	
Needs Assessment Lead Co-Coordinators:	**Contact Information:**
Secondary: Brett Robinson	
Postsecondary: Dr. Valeria Williams	
Regional Team Members:	

STEP 1: Analysis of Labor Market Information

Perkins V Section 134(c)(2)(B)(ii)

The local needs assessment shall include…

(B) A description of how career and technical education programs offered by the eligible recipient are:

(ii) (I) aligned to state, regional, Tribal, or local in demand industry sectors or occupations identified by the state workforce development board described in section 101 of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (29 U.S.C.3111) (referred to in this section as the "state board") or local workforce development board, including career pathways, where appropriate; or (II) designed to meet local education or economic needs not identified by state boards or local workforce development boards.

What Information Should Locals Collect: Labor Market Alignment	
What does the law say? The needs assessment will include a description of how CTE programs offered by the eligible recipient align to state, regional, Tribal, or local in demand industry sectors or occupations identified by the state workforce development board or local workforce development board, including career pathways, where appropriate. The needs assessment may also identify programs designed to meet local education or economic needs not identified by state boards or local workforce development boards.	**What does the law mean?** The law requires an analysis of how CTE programs are meeting workforce needs and provides eligible recipients with multiple ways to demonstrate labor market demand from a combination of state and local sources.

Part 1: Utilize the Labor Market Analysis Tool (Excel) provided by the state to assess the labor market in the region. The Excel spreadsheet contains data for:

- secondary pathways;
- postsecondary programs; and
- additional optional data resources.

1. Mississippi Department of Employment Security (MDES) data and program data provided by the state longitudinal data system must be used in the assessment.
2. Regional teams can use additional sources if they wish to supplement the labor data or provide additional evidence of regional needs.

Part 2: Use additional approved sources of data.

Part 3: Bring the regional team together to discuss the findings from Parts 1 and 2.

Part 4: Based on the input from local stakeholders, use this template to provide answers to the regional needs assessment questions.

****Based on the information determined in the above-mentioned process, describe the strengths and needs for the region in the following pages. Add rows as needed.**

What programs and pathways in the region align with the labor market needs?

Strengths		Gaps	
Secondary:	Postsecondary:	Secondary:	Postsecondary:

According to the data analysis, what programs/pathways (if any) are not offered but are needed in the region?

Program		Evidence from Mississippi Labor Market Data		Evidence from Regional Sources	
Secondary:	Postsecondary:	Secondary:	Postsecondary:	Secondary:	Postsecondary:

What programs/pathways are offered in the region, but are not supported with the local labor data?

Program/Pathway		Reason for offering these Programs/Pathways		Mississippi Labor Market Data or Local Labor Data Source	
Secondary:	Postsecondary:	Secondary:	Postsecondary:	Secondary:	Postsecondary:

STEP 2: Analysis of Student Performance

Perkins V Section 134(c)(2)(A)

The local needs assessment shall include…

> *(A) An evaluation of the performance of the students served by the eligible recipient with respect to state-determined and local levels of performance established pursuant to section 113, including an evaluation of performance for special populations** and each subgroup described in section 1111(h)(1)(C)(ii) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965.*

What Information Should Locals Collect: Student Performance Data	
What does the law say? The needs assessment will include an evaluation of the performance of the students served by the local eligible recipient with respect to state-determined and local performance levels, including an evaluation of performance for special populations. **	**What does the law mean?** The needs assessment must contain an evaluation of CTE concentrators' performance on the core performance indicators. While eligible recipients already are required to do this as part of their local plans under Perkins IV, the evaluation now includes special populations. **

** Because the disaggregated data on special populations subgroups is not available at this time, the needs assessment's student performance analysis will be based on the overall performance of secondary students and program-level performance of postsecondary students. Each subsequent assessment (every two years) will include an evaluation of performance for each subgroup and each special population for both secondary and postsecondary institutions.

Each secondary and postsecondary institution will receive its student performance data based on the data submitted to the state. The regional needs assessment team must meet and evaluate the student performance strengths, gaps, and goals for improvement based on the data **for the entire region.**

Postsecondary Performance

1P1 – Postsecondary Retention and Placement

The percentage of CTE concentrators who, during the second quarter after program completion, remain enrolled in postsecondary education; are in advanced training, military service, or a service program that receives assistance under title I of the National and Community Service Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12511 et seq.); are volunteers as described in section 5(a) of the Peace Corps Act (22 U.S.C. 2504(a)); or are placed or retained in employment.

2P1 – Earned Recognized Postsecondary Credential

The percentage of CTE concentrators who receive a recognized postsecondary credential during participation in or within one year of program completion.

3P1 – Nontraditional Participation

The percentage of CTE concentrators in career and technical education programs and programs of study that lead to nontraditional fields.

Secondary Performance

1S1 – Four-year Graduation Cohort Rate

The percentage of CTE concentrators who graduate high school, as measured by the four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate (defined in section 8101 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965).

2S1 – Academic Proficiency in Reading/Language Arts

CTE concentrator proficiency in the challenging state academic standards adopted by the state under section1111(b)(1) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as measured by the academic assessments in reading/language arts as described in section 1111(b)(2) of such act.

2S2 – Academic Proficiency in Mathematics

CTE concentrator proficiency in the challenging state academic standards adopted by the state under section1111(b)(1) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as measured by the academic assessments in mathematics as described in section 1111(b)(2) of such act.

2S3 – Academic Proficiency in Science

CTE concentrator proficiency in the challenging state academic standards adopted by the state under section1111(b)(1) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as measured by the academic assessments in science as described in section 1111(b)(2) of such act.

3S1 – Post-Program Placement

The percentage of CTE concentrators who, in the second quarter after exiting from secondary education, are in postsecondary education or advanced training, military service, or a service program that receives assistance under title I of the National and Community Service Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12511 et seq.); are volunteers as described in section 5(a) of the Peace Corps Act (22 U.S.C. 2504(a)); or are employed.

4S2 – Program Quality – Attained Postsecondary Credits

The percentage of CTE concentrators graduating from high school having attained an industry-recognized postsecondary credential or certification in the relevant career and technical education program or program of study.

5S1 – Nontraditional Program Concentration

The percentage of CTE concentrators in career and technical education programs and programs of study that lead to nontraditional fields.

Complete the tables on the following pages. Add rows as needed.

Based on the secondary and postsecondary performance data, what are the region's strengths in student performance?

Strengths		How are These Strengths Being Sustained in the Region?		Local Example	
Secondary:	Postsecondary:	Secondary:	Postsecondary:	Secondary:	Postsecondary:

Optional Questions for Discussion:

- How are students performing in your CTE programs?
- What is the variation in performance among students in different programs?
- How are your schools and colleges performing compared to the state overall performance?

Based on available data, what are the student performance gaps in the region?

Gap		Root Cause	
Secondary:	Postsecondary:	Secondary:	Postsecondary:

Optional Questions for Discussion:

- How are students performing in your CTE programs?
- What is the variation in performance among students in different programs?
- How are your schools and colleges performing compared to the state overall performance?

Appendix O: Perkins: Size, Scope, and Quality Definitions

Recipients will be eligible for funding based on the definitions provided below:

Size:

Secondary

Program size reflects an appropriate number of students in order to be effective and meet local business and industry demand as determined by the regional needs assessment. The program size will account for physical parameters and limitations of the program. Additionally, districts must adhere to the following characteristics/requirements:

- At least one state-recognized pathway (4 credits) is offered in each program that is currently provided in the local district.
- Students in the district have access to a minimum of five state-approved pathways.
- A minimum program size of 10 students or continuous progress towards increased program size.

Postsecondary

- A minimum program size of 10 students or continuous progress towards increased program size apart from programs with national, state, or programmatic accreditation requirements (i.e., health occupations, cosmetology, barbering, etc.).

Scope:

Secondary

CTE state-approved programs of study/pathways relate to high skill, high wage, or in demand careers aligned with the comprehensive local needs assessment, economic, and workforce development needs in the state or region in the following ways:

1. Linking programs across learning levels through articulation agreements, dual credit opportunities, aligned curriculum, etc.
2. Aligning programs with business and industry needs and local economic indicators.
3. Providing multiple entry and exit points to programs of study.
4. Aligning programs with a nationally, regionally, or state-recognized credential/certification.
5. Emphasizing development of essential work-based learning through project-based experiences.
6. Providing workplace learning opportunities to all students, including special populations.
7. Secondary/postsecondary collaboration meetings must meet a minimum of once a year and maintain meeting documentation.
8. Opportunities for student transition must exist between the secondary and postsecondary CTE programs of study.
9. A graduation plan/pathway plan (Individual Success Plan—ISP) is in place for each student in the career pathway that identifies recommended academic and technical courses, which connect to postsecondary education.

Postsecondary

- Aligning programs with business and industry needs and local economic indicators.
- Providing multiple entry and exit points to programs of study.
- Aligning programs with a nationally, regionally, or state-recognized credential/certification.
- Providing workplace learning opportunities to all students, including special populations.
- Secondary/postsecondary collaboration meetings (i.e., regional needs assessment meetings) must meet a minimum of once a year and maintain meeting documentation.

Quality:

Secondary

Program quality is the measure of how successfully each program addresses academic performance, workplace standards, competencies, and skills necessary for success within that program of study.

The MDE has established the following secondary quality measures for CTE programs:

1. Eligible recipients reach local targets based on state and federal Core Indicators of Performance.
2. Local recipients use the comprehensive local needs assessment and local labor market data to identify CTE pathways' alignment to projected employment demand in high wage, high skill, and in demand occupations.
3. Professional development is provided to faculty and staff to enhance student learning and ensure the implementation of high-quality quality instruction related to CTE pathways.
4. CTE pathways are reviewed based on advisory council input and local business and industry projections for high wage, high skill, and in demand occupations.
5. CTE pathways include at least one articulation agreement, work-based learning, and/or industry credentialing, where appropriate.
6. All students are provided with equitable access to CTE programs of study via the implementation of Individual Success Plans (ISPs).
7. Equipment and technology encourage student attainment of relevant, rigorous technical skills.
8. Implement a continuous program improvement process approved by the state.
9. Demonstrate excellent student safety in CTE labs (100% safety test on record).
10. Documented use/completion of student competency profiles for each student in each program area.
11. Each program/content area must have an advisory committee that meets a minimum of twice a year.
12. Provide evidence of appropriate teacher licensing, professional development, and dual credit agreements.
13. School has adopted the MBE-approved curricula and is meeting state standards in course instruction.

Postsecondary

The MCCB has established the following postsecondary quality measures for CTE programs. A program must meet two (2) out of the following three (3) criteria:

1. High skilled programs

2. Competitive, high wage programs
3. Programs that train individuals for in demand occupations.