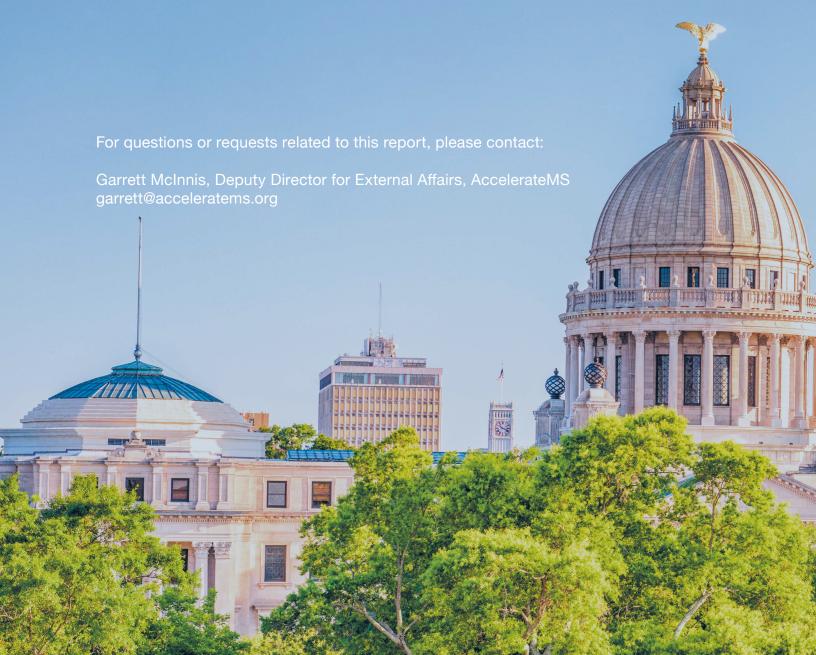




The Talent Development Assessment examines the current condition of Mississippi's human capital in the context of labor force capacity and job opportunities providing a "supply and demand" review of talent in Mississippi and strategies for strengthening pathways to increase capabilities, economic opportunity and income.

In accordance with MS Code 37-153-7, this Mississippi Talent Development Assessment was prepared by Accelerate Mississippi in partnership with the State Workforce Investment Board (SWIB), the Mississippi Department of Employment Security (MDES), the Mississippi Community College Board (MCCB), the Mississippi Development Authority (MDA), and the State Longitudinal Data System (SLDS).



Message from Governor Tate Reeves

- I. AccelerateMS: Mission & Historical Context
- II. What is Current Condition of MS Workforce?
 - a. Compare/Contrast with National Trends
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- III. The Ecosystem Structure
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Message from Governor Tate Reeves



As I have said throughout my entire career in public service, my mission is to make Mississippi the best state in the nation to live, work, and raise a family. To accomplish this goal, Mississippi needs to attract new businesses, grow our economy, and have a robust workforce development strategy that prepares our workers for the high-paying, in-demand jobs of the future.

The state's new Office of Workforce Development, commonly known as AccelerateMS, gives Mississippi a unique opportunity to significantly enhance our workforce capabilities. AccelerateMS' inaugural report encompasses their mission to highlight and replicate areas of success and identify opportunities for improvement.

This report gives an honest assessment of Mississippi's current workforce capabilities. It highlights the good things our state has done to develop a more skilled workforce and provides a clear picture of what our state must capitalize on to remain competitive in tomorrow's economy.

I am confident that Ryan Miller and his team are up to the task of helping reshape and enhance the way Mississippi produces talent. For the first time, Mississippi has a clear lead on workforce development strategy that the private sector can look to for guidance, resources, and solutions as they work to grow their businesses and contribute to our state's economy.

I am excited about AccelerateMS and their new team. Together, we will better position Mississippi to increase our labor force, raise median wages, and ensure economic prosperity.

Tate Reeves Governor



AccelerateMS: Mission & Historical Context

Mississippi, like many other states, faces 21st century challenges to meet current workforce demands and prepare for future job opportunities associated with emerging technologies. Concerns include assuring a sustainable pool of qualified workers, ready and well prepared to enter and thrive in an increasingly dynamic and technology-driven workforce.

Mississippi must honestly assess its current workforce strategies, identify strengths and weaknesses therein and develop new strategies to grow those successes. We must mitigate inefficiencies and any deficiencies uncovered. At the same time, it is important to build upon, expand, track and utilize identified best practices. Mississippi needs focused and increased collaboration to improve offerings and optimize the use of workforce training funds.

Mississippi also faces a unique challenge. While in good company with other states also seeking to navigate the labor force needs of today and tomorrow, Mississippi is one of few states experiencing a decline in overall population – we need to foster increased labor force participation, address out-migration and recruit people to come (or return) to Mississippi for career, entrepreneurial and economic and quality of life opportunities.

Policy Intervention

The State of Mississippi took positive steps toward adequately addressing pressing workforce concerns when Senate Bill No. 2564 was presented during the regular legislation session of 2020. This act created the Office of Workforce Development, now commonly known as "AccelerateMS" and set forth specific authority, responsibilities and capability to work and foster collaboration across public organization boundaries. The Act provides AccelerateMS direct spending control over specific funding sources and tasks the Office with a mission to review existing programs, providing information, guidance and significant influence on how funding sources are utilized for the purposes of workforce development.

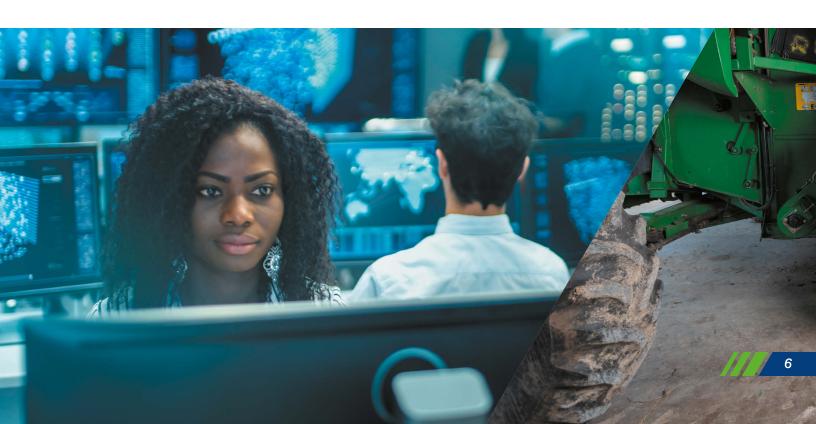


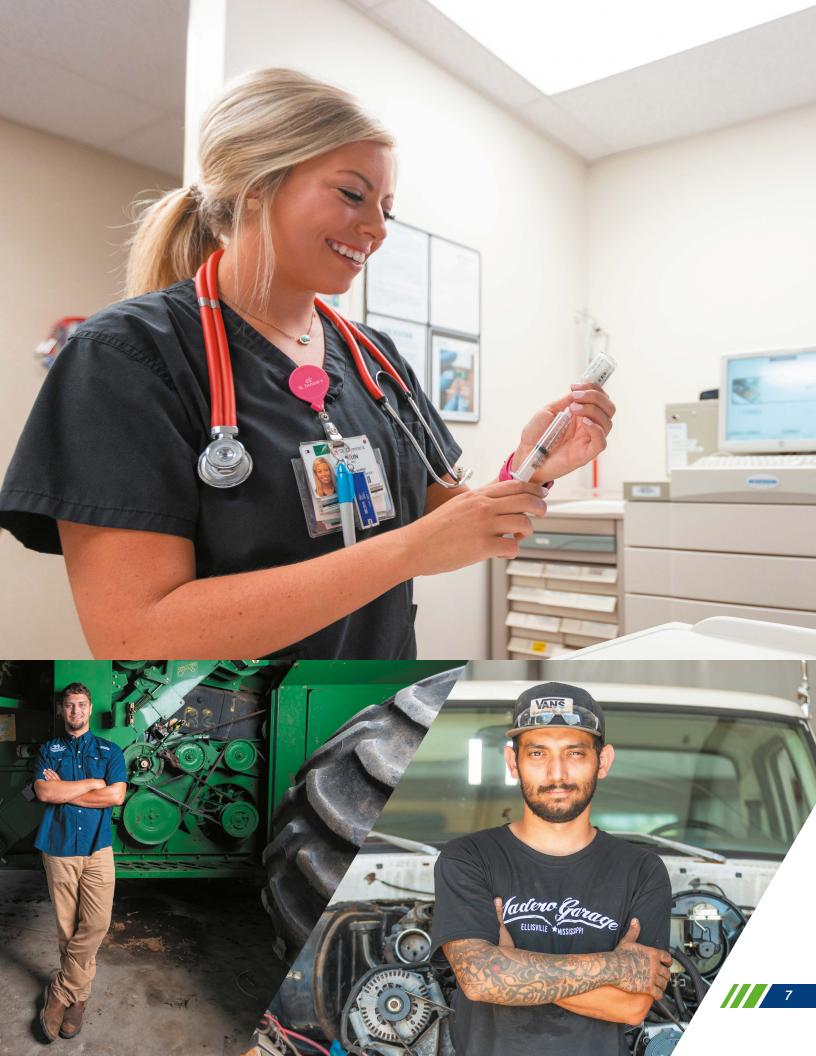
With this newly established mission and authority, and with the support and encouragement of leadership at the highest levels of Mississippi government, AccelerateMS began to address the following questions beginning in April 2021:

1. What is the current condition of workforce strategy development and deployment as it relates to a unified and focused approach?

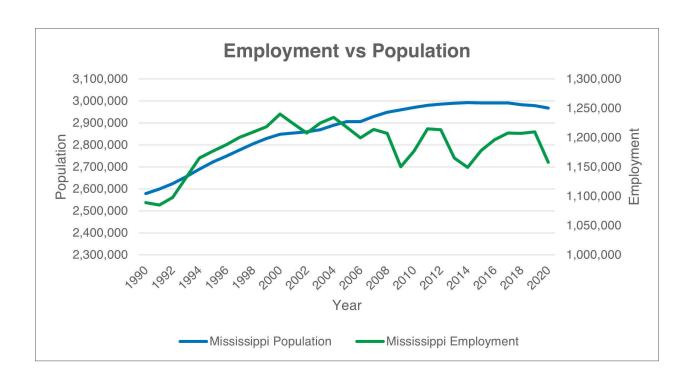
- A. What are key employment sectors with high human capital demand as well as potential earnings for employees? Specifically, where are the higher than average paying jobs available?
- B. What are the current funding sources and how, if at all, are these sources aligned and coordinated to maximize the benefit and effectiveness as it relates to these targeted employment sectors?
- C. How, if at all, have the state's educational institutions aligned and/or coordinated their efforts toward meeting a diverse continuum of workforce demands?

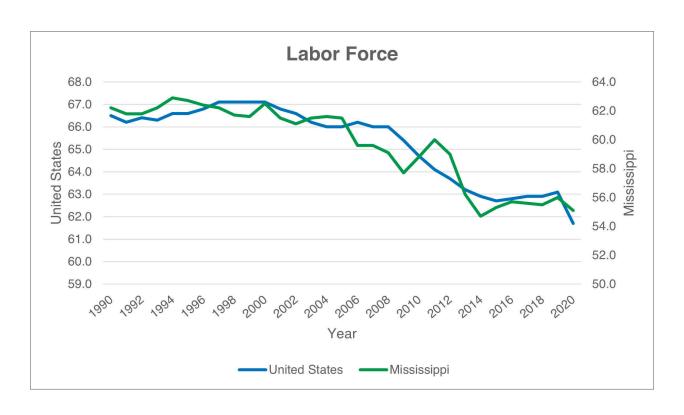
2. What is AccelerateMS's plan for moving the state closer to that ideal condition and how will that progress be measured?

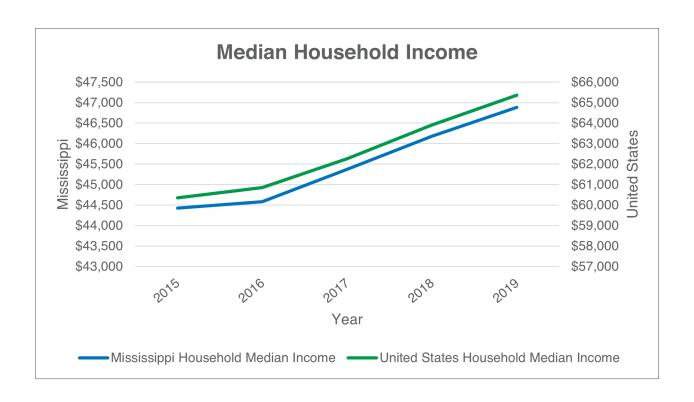




What is Current Condition of MS Workforce?







Taking a forward-thinking view,

Mississippi leaders created AccelerateMS to address these questions and other workforcerelated concerns as identified in third-party studies of Mississippi's workforce development initiatives.

A 2017 report created by Boyette Strategic
Advisors and a similar report by the Mississippi
Economic Council (MEC) created by
Deloitte, painted a troubling overall picture of
Mississippi's workforce strategy as a patchwork
of disorganization missed opportunities and
lacking communication and collaboration
among agencies working in silos. Both reports
noted success on a "micro" level, but describe
an overall workforce development environment
in which employers are unaware of resources

available to meet their needs, disjointed career educational programs that are not aligned with one another, and general confusion derived from the existence of multiple governmental organizations with workforce listed as a primary focus. Beyond the lack of coordination, both reports describe inconsistent delivery of workforce services and a low level of awareness amongst employers as it relates to these services.

Another concern, expressed by MEC, employers, economic development officials and state leaders is how to effectively inform Mississippians of the continuum of in-demand careers and the diversity of available education, credentialing, On-The-Job-Training (OJT) and re-skilling pathways to help citizens secure well-paying jobs now, and in the future.

A. What are key employment sectors with high human capital demand as well as potential earnings for employees? Specifically, where are the higher than average paying jobs available?

From inception, AccelerateMS has worked to identify key employment sectors whose average annual pay is higher than the state average and determine where there are sizable gaps between positions available and positions filled. Based upon this premise and with statistical information provided by SLDS, AccelerateMS identified and targeted the following employment sectors:

Degree Length (YRS)	Occupation	Average Annual Job Openings	Average Annual College Graduates	2022 Enrollment Growth
2	Nursing (RN, LPN, LVN)	6,724	2,275	25%
2	Vehicle and Mobile Equipment Mechanics, Installers, and Repairers	1,860	234	25%
2	Health Technologists and Technicians	1,764	976	25%
2	Industrial Maintenance Professionals	1,264	202	25%
2	Specialty Metal Workers (CNC, Tool and Die, Machinists)	876	155	25%
2	Electricians	789	359	25%
2	Electrical and Electronic Equipment Mechanics, Installers, and Repairers	609	248	25%
2	Lineworkers	374	61	25%
2	Respiratory, Radiation, and Other Therapists	325	110	25%
2	Heating, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers	253	203	25%
2	Electrical Engineering Drafting Technician	248	139	25%
4	Engineers (Excluding Aerospace, Electrical, Industrial, and Mechanical)	996	598	25%
4	Industrial Engineers	726	50	25%
4	Computer Developers and Programmers	702	89	25%
4	Electrical Engineers	358	95	25%

SLDS was able to determine that amongst all the above categories, approximately 25,000 positions were available in Mississippi between the years of 2016 and 2020. Of those available positions only about 5,000 were filled. These categories represent career options in which wages are significantly higher than the state's annual mean wage, which currently sits at roughly \$41,000. A clear example of opportunity lost.

B. What are the current funding sources and how, if at all, are these sources being coordinated to maximize the benefit and effectiveness as it relates to these targeted employment sectors?

In keeping with its Legislative mandate and fiscal authority, AccelerateMS, working along with its organizational partners at the Mississippi Community College Board (MCCB), Mississippi Department of Employment Securities (MDES), and the Mississippi Development Authority (MDA), endeavored to better understand how Workforce Enhancement Training (WET) and MS Works Funds had been allocated and used in previous years. Assessing inputs and outcomes of efforts intended to prepare Mississippians to be workforce ready and connect with employers.

In establishing the Office of Workforce Development, the legislation redrafted WET funds guidelines to ensure alignment with legislative intent to increase efficiencies and coordination to enhance Mississippi's workforce development program. WET funding is a significant source of public monies managed by the MCCB, utilized by the individual community colleges, now falls under the direction of AccelerateMS. The language expressly requires funds to be spent in a manner that results in "enhanced employee productivity." Therefore, the Office has taken the position that this language should be defined by the question: For this training, is it more likely an employee will have the opportunity to grow in their job responsibility with potentially higher pay?

Further, the legislation specified that projects funded by WET funds be directed toward indemand, in-need employment opportunities.

Upon review of the spending history (prior to the creation of AccelerateMS), it was determined that many projects were often effective in providing growth opportunities for employees and, some markets, were focused and well aligned with in-demand, in-need employment opportunities. However, there were other programs that, while important to individual communities, do not meet the new, specific legislative language and intent and are not focused upon these critical need areas. Evaluation, review and development of new guidelines to better focus this funding source is currently underway. It should be noted that these guidelines should be expected to be continually updated to meet emerging needs and opportunity over time.

AccelerateMS, working with MDA, has begun the review of MS Works funds which are largely used for workforce training efforts such as On The Job Training (OTJ) in newly created jobs and is prioritized for the training of unemployed Mississippians. Using the same concept of continuous improvement, AccelerateMS has begun to review ways in which MS Works funds can be more effectively spent to assist existing businesses in their plans to grow and to help in the recruitment of new business to Mississippi. MS Works funds are similar to WET Funds in that they can only be used for specific purposes. However, it is important to view these funds, not in a vacuum as a sole resource, but in conjunction with other funding sources. AccelerateMS will determine how,

if at all, these funds can be utilized in a more concerted fashion. Together, the effectiveness of WET Funds, MS Works, and other funding sources could be enhanced, potentially increasing the likelihood of growing training opportunities for Mississippians and Mississippi employers. In recent years, WET Funds annual revenue has been about \$20M and MS Works Funds revenue has been about \$5M.

C. How, if at all, have the state's educational institutions aligned and/ or coordinated their efforts toward meeting workforce demands in these areas?

This question is crucial in setting the stage for long-term success in creating increased workforce capabilities, capacity and opportunity for all Mississippians.

While examples exist of innovative and effective programs can be found at multiple educational institutions throughout the state, it is no

surprise that there is not enough connectivity to set forth clear, consistent and well-articulated pathways that open doors to a diversity of career paths available now, and on the horizon.

In its first six-months, AccelerateMS has toured multiple K-12 programs, visited nearly every community college campus with significant WET funding and robust workforce development programs, and toured the campuses of three research institutions amongst our four-year universities.

In past years, there have been examples of partnerships amongst these entities. However, it has also been evident that these instances of collaboration have not always been focused upon developing career paths or workforce strategies. While much attention is focused on community colleges and our state's four-year institutions of higher learning, there are at least four showcase K-12 programs prioritizing workforce development and pathways to employment.



Overall, however, there is a lack of clarity, collaboration and prioritization across the educational continuum as it relates to providing awareness and robust educational experiences to champion and elevate diverse workforce opportunities.

Education and private sector partnerships have not been as extensive nor consistent as would be necessary to assure healthy, advancing and sustainable workforce development. It is clear there is great energy and interest across the private, non-governmental organization and public sectors to increase alignment and relevancy. Certainly there is great opportunity to share more best practices more uniformly throughout the state.

AccelerateMS was created to address these issues. Our work focuses on three pillars:

 Rapid response or "stat" triage and coordination to respond to immediate workforce training needs.

- Customizable Training for new or expanding businesses.
- Horizon Thinking or helping Mississippians prepare for careers in the future.

What is AccelerateMS's plan for moving the state closer to that ideal condition and how will that progress be measured?

There is no doubt that there are many opportunities for continuous improvement to the Mississippi workforce strategy and its deployment. However, to maximize the effectiveness of those opportunities, the state must organize itself in a way that can provide for the level of connectivity, communication, and consistency required to truly improve.



Introducing the AccelerateMS Ecosystem

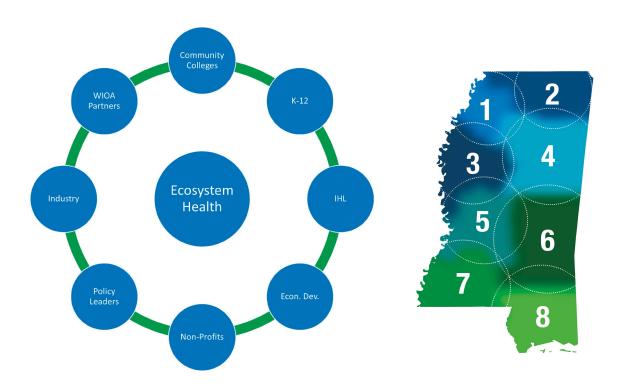
The AccelerateMS Ecosystem

Program is designed to improve in those areas addressed by both the Boyette and Deloitte Reports. We will seek to maximize demonstrated successes delivered at local "micro" levels, while addressing "macro" concerns quickly and over time by improving overall communication, focus, and cooperation in the delivery and promotion of workforce education and development programs.

Continuous improvement and adjustment is inherent to meet 21st century workforce demands. A key priority is to build upon best practices, improve communication and provide clarity and consistency through enhanced collaboration using an ecosystem model

that transcends traditional geographic and organizational boundaries.

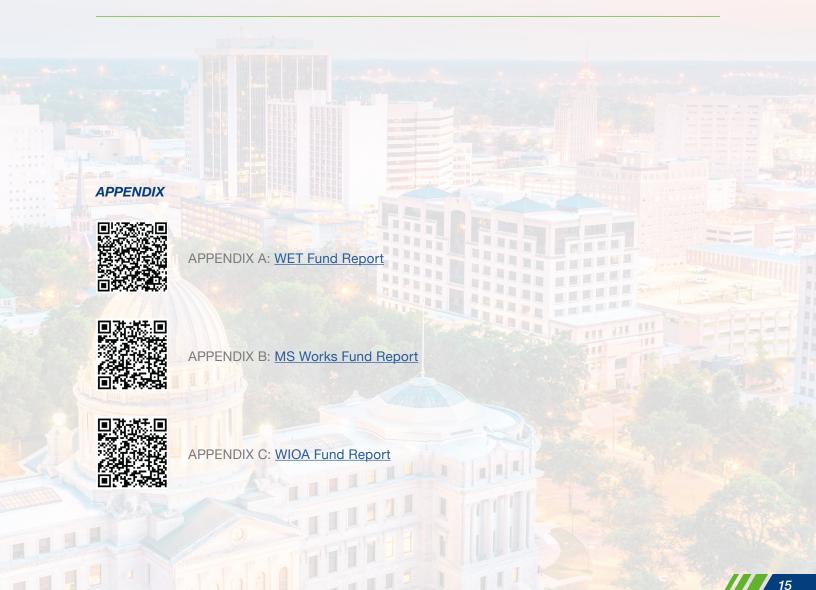
Each ecosystem will eventually have an AccelerateMS team member to be the single point of contact within their sphere of influence. Regular meetings facilitated by AccelerateMS will allow ecosystem stakeholders to share best practices, voice concerns, provide feedback, and participate in the development of workforce strategies appropriately focused upon the needs of that particular ecosystem. Each ecosystem will routinely review labor market data, supply chain needs, available educational resources, and regional/community assets in an effort to more accurately meet needs in real time.



Conclusory Thoughts

Mississippi has great potential to grow in its overall workforce development health. Thousands of good employment opportunities await Mississippians. AccelerateMS is poised to lead in the realization of this potential by working with its partners to identify these high-paying, in-demand career paths and

align resources to shepherd Mississippians toward them. Through the lens of continuous improvement, AccelerateMS will dutifully serve the state as its official office of workforce strategy development and deployment. Much has been done in these initial six months. However, there is still much to be done. It is time for Mississippi to accelerate, moving faster to a brighter future.





2021 TALENT DEVELOPMENT ASSESSMENT

Produced by AccelerateMS AccelerateMS.org / @AccelerateMS