



MS HORIZONS
***Building Mississippi's Future:
A Workforce Roadmap***

Innovation and Strategy Symposium
August 20–22, 2024

Sheraton Flowood - Refuge Hotel and Conference Center



Welcome to our third annual MSHorizons Workforce, Innovation & Strategy Symposium. We are grateful for your presence and participation in this vital gathering of Mississippi’s workforce development movers and shakers. Each year, we’ve engaged in meaningful conversations about our human capital infrastructure, debated about how best to incorporate solutions across the state, and celebrated our wins. This year will be no different.

We will continue to spur meaningful and critical conversations between thought leaders, educators, industry innovators, economic developers, and public servants as we continue to put the wheels in motion necessary to drive progress and development for Mississippi’s human capital.

I hope you will allow yourself to be fully immersed in the program we have built for you, that you’ll take time to visit the expo—both inside and out, and that you’ll meet people you don’t normally engage directly with. This symposium provides an opportunity to benchmark, dream, and simply to get hands on with our state’s strategies and realities currently operational and designed to build Mississippi’s future for our friends and neighbors.

Thank you for your time, brain power, and hearts this week and every other week of the year.

Sincerely,

Courtney Taylor, Ph.D.
Executive Director
AccelerateMS

2024 MS HORIZONS SYMPOSIUM

Tuesday, August 20, 2024

10:00am – 11:30am	Workforce Directors Meeting <i>Meeting A</i>
10:00am – 11:30am	Career Coach Manager Meeting <i>Meeting B</i>
11:00am	Registration Opens
11:00am	Expo Opens <i>Jr. Ballroom/Outside</i>
1:00pm – 1:30pm	Welcome Courtney Taylor, Ph.D., Executive Director, AccelerateMS <i>Grand ABC</i>
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1:30pm – 2:30pm	Panel Discussion <i>The Infrastructure of the Information Economy</i> Moderated by Courtney Taylor, Ph.D. – Executive Director, AccelerateMS Nick Lee-Romagnolo – Program Manager, Workforce and Economic Development, Amazon Web Services Panel Dr. Nashlie Sephus – Principal AI/ML Tech Evangelist, Amazon Web Services Duane Matthews – Data Center Operations Senior Manager, Amazon Web Services Joe Lackey – Manager of Construction, Amazon Web Services
2:30pm – 3:30pm	Panel Discussion <i>Credentials to Careers: Aligning Credentials With High-Value Career Pathways</i> Moderated by Cliff Thames, Ph.D. – Data and Insights Manager, AccelerateMS Panel Danielle Mezera, Ph.D. – Senior Policy Fellow, ExcelinEd Patrick Sullivan – President, SWIB Chairman
3:30pm – 4:30pm	Panel Discussion <i>From Investment to Impact: Revealing Outcomes From Workforce Training Investments</i> Moderated by Shelika Hooker – Director of Grants Management, AccelerateMS Panel Ike Brunetti, Owner/Operator, Shelby Air and Advance Turbine Training, Chairman of the DSU Ag Pilot Program Advisory Committee Jonathan Townes – Vice President of Career and Technical Education, Hinds Community College Dr. Chris Bounds – Director, Advanced Composites Institute, Mississippi State University Greg James – Workforce Systems Director, Northeast Mississippi Community College Justin Cook – Plant Manager, Blauer
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4:30pm – 4:45pm	Closing Remarks
4:45pm – 6:00pm	Networking Reception (Cash Bar) <i>Prefunction Area</i>

2024 MS HORIZONS SYMPOSIUM

Wednesday, August 21, 2024

7:30am	Registration Opens
7:30am	Expo Opens <i>Jr. Ballroom/Outside</i>
7:30am – 8:30am	Breakfast Buffet <i>Prefunction Area</i>
8:00am – 8:30am	Rep. Jason White, Speaker of the House <i>Grand Ballroom ABC</i>
8:30am – 9:45am	Panel Discussion <i>Shaping Mississippi's Talent Pipeline</i> Moderated by Trey Smith – Director of Talent Solutions, AccelerateMS Panel Elden Padgett – AdvanTech Technology Manager, Huber Engineered Woods Skip Skaggs – Executive Director, North Mississippi Industrial Development Association Dr. Reuben Burch – Associate Vice President for Research, Mississippi State University Ray Hollis – Workforce Business Outreach & Training Manager, East Mississippi Community College Gwendolyn Hughes – Career Coach, Noxubee County High School
9:45am – 10:00 am	Networking Break <i>Prefunction Area</i>
10:00am – 11:00am	Panel Discussion <i>The Power of Work-Based Learning Programs</i> Moderated by Brent Bean – President, Build Mississippi Panel Dan Keown – Vice President of Steel Dynamics & General Manager Columbus Flat Roll Steel Division, Steel Dynamics Stephanie Utesch – MS-HCD, Human Resources Director, Singing River Health System Brian Robinson – President & CEO, Robinson Electric Gino Perkins – Workforce Development Manager, Nissan North America
11:00am – 12:00pm	Panel Discussion <i>Navigating Tomorrow: Building Mississippi's Future</i> Moderated by Nic Parish – VP of Operations & Contracting, Burns Dirt Construction, Inc. Panel Justin McDonald – Vice President, Yates Construction Michael Blanton – Business Unit Leader, Data Centers, Grey Construction Zach Lemley – Director, Advanced Manufacturing & Mission Critical, The Haskell Company Chad MacDonald – Network Director, Uniti Fiber
12:00pm – 12:45pm	Lunch <i>Prefunction Area</i>
12:15pm – 1:00pm	The Cognitive Workforce Joe Stradinger – CEO & Founder of EdgeTheory

2024 MS HORIZONS SYMPOSIUM

Wednesday, August 21, 2024 (cont'd)

1:00pm – 1:45pm	Panel Discussion <i>Future-Ready: Connecting K-12 to Careers Through Strategic Workforce Pathways</i> Moderated by Jamie Holder – President & COO, Hol-Mac, Corp. Panel Dana McLain – Workforce Development Coordinator, Neshoba County School District Derek Read – CTE Director & Dean of Workforce Education, Pascagoula Gautier School District Beth Turner – Director of Workforce Development, Desoto County Schools Dr. Terrance James – Director of Workforce Development, Vicksburg Warren School District
1:45pm – 2:30pm	Panel Discussion <i>Examining Employment Challenges and Workforce Gaps in Mississippi</i> Moderated by Sen. Nicole Boyd Panel Caitlin Brooking – Executive Director, Refill Jackson Initiative Kathryn Taylor, MD – State Epidemiologist, Mississippi State Department of Health Corey Miller – State Economist, University Research Center, Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning Matt Williams – Director of Research, Mississippi Low-Income Childcare Initiative
2:30pm – 2:45pm	Networking Break <i>Prefunction Area</i>
2:45pm – 3:30pm	Panel Discussion <i>Bridging the Skills Gap: Enhancing Workforce Readiness Through CTE</i> Moderated by Heather Morrison – Director P20 Partnerships, Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning Panel Patrick Sullivan – President, SWIB Chairman Dr. Lance Evans – Superintendent of Education, Mississippi Department of Education Kell Smith – Executive Director, Mississippi Community College Board
3:30pm – 4:30pm	Panel Discussion <i>Empowering the Workforce: Leveraging Federal Grants for Priority Occupations</i> Moderated by Andrea Rose – Director, Appalachian Regional Commission, State of Mississippi Panel Dr. John Higginbotham – Vice Chancellor of Research and Economic Development, University of Mississippi Dr. Julie Jordan – Vice President for Research and Economic Development, Mississippi State University Yolonda Boone – Senior Advisor, AccelerateMS Jack Norris – Director, State and Local Government Affairs, Ingalls Shipbuilding
4:30pm	Adjourn (dinner on your own)

2024 MS HORIZONS SYMPOSIUM

Thursday, August 22, 2024

7:30am	Registration Opens
7:30am	Expo Opens <i>Jr. Ballroom/Outside</i>
8:00am – 9:00am	Breakfast Buffet
9:00am – 10:00am	Panel Discussion <i>Demand-Driven Workforce Development</i> Moderated by Rebekah Staples – President and Founder, Free State Strategies, LLC Panel Bill Cork – Executive Director, Mississippi Development Authority Courtney Taylor, Ph.D. – Executive Director, AccelerateMS Bill Ashley – Executive Director, Mississippi Department of Employment Services
10:00am – 11:00am	Gov. Tate Reeves
11:00am – 11:30am	Awards
11:30am	Conference Adjourn
12:00pm – 1:30pm	SWIB Meeting

Save the Date

August 18-21, 2025



Disclaimer: Agenda Subject to Change.

2024 MS HORIZONS SYMPOSIUM

AccelerateMS Team

Courtney Taylor, Ph.D.
Executive Director

Ben Alexander
Research Analyst

Yolonda Boone
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Forrest Bryan
Coordinator, Ecosystem 2

Krystle Culver
Coordinator, Ecosystem 5 & 7

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Ed Hargrove
Federal Projects Manager

Daniel Hawthorne
Communications Manager

Shelika Hooker
Director of Grants Management

Jennifer Levingston
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Garrett McInnis
Deputy Director for External Affairs

Mary Ann Myers
Chief Operations Officer

Lori Nail
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Meghan Kaminsky-Rogers
Recruiting Manager

Trey Smith
Director of Talent Solutions

Cliff Thames, Ph.D.
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Coordinator, Ecosystem 8



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