

**STRATEGIC PLAN FOR WORKFORCE
DEVELOPMENT
IN MISSISSIPPI FOR
2007-2009**

**MISSISSIPPI STATE WORKFORCE
INVESTMENT BOARD**

As Adopted June 20, 2007

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CHAPTER I: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Mississippi's economy, under Governor Barbour's leadership, is robust and growing. Over 38,000 new jobs have been added in the last three years, and per capita income has grown more than 15%. Many new companies have decided to locate in Mississippi, producing thousands of new high-paying jobs.

The State Workforce Investment Board has been working to consolidate and strengthen the workforce development system. A new accountability system, the Integrated Workforce Performance System, has been developed and implemented to collect and analyze the results of training and placement efforts across all public agencies. The workforce system has been consolidated to be more efficient and customer friendly. The community and junior college system, which provides most of the public training, can now deliver more demand-driven training as the result of a new funding mechanism. Enabled in 2005 by the Governor and the State Legislature, the fund has provided \$20 million annually for workforce training.

The State Workforce Investment Board now must build on its accomplishments, and the primary challenge will be the shortage of qualified workers. By 2014, Mississippi needs 200,000 more workers, but population projections indicate a growth of only 100,000 more workers. This worker shortage must be addressed first by looking inside Mississippi. Mississippi must reclaim more of its non-participants in the labor force. High school dropout rates must be reduced, and adults without a high school education must be given a chance to earn a GED. Mississippi must assist ex-offenders, welfare recipients, and those with disabilities with special training and placement services so that they can become productive workers. This strategic plan calls for closer alignment of all the public workforce programs to produce more effective results through common goals. In addition, Mississippi must look outside its borders and attract workers from other states to come live and work in Mississippi.

The State Workforce Investment Board also will emphasize workforce system services to businesses, especially small businesses and entrepreneurs. In addition, the Board will emphasize training for the manufacturing sector, and remain committed to rebuilding the Gulf Coast.

CHAPTER II: MISSION, VISION, AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE STATE WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD 2005 - 2007

Accomplishments:

Governor Haley Barbour took office in 2004 and immediately worked with Mississippi's State Legislature to craft new workforce legislation, "The Mississippi Comprehensive Workforce Training and Education Act of 2004." The legislation reformed Mississippi's workforce system by consolidating employment and training programs into one new executive agency, the Mississippi Department of Employment Security. The Act also created the State Workforce Investment Board, merging the State WIA Board with the Community College Workforce Development Board.

The State Workforce Investment Board is designed to be business-led with a majority of its members selected from business. It also includes legislators, local area workforce leaders, and the heads of all the public agencies that deal with workforce and economic development.

Governor Barbour charged the State Workforce Investment Board with this vision:

- Centralize and streamline workforce training functions
- Maximize and leverage all workforce training funds
- Raise the skill level of Mississippi workers
- Create job opportunities

The State Workforce Investment Board has articulated a clear and focused mission statement: Develop and implement a state strategy to maximize the state's training resources in support of economic development.

The State Workforce Investment Board plays a key role with Momentum Mississippi, a group of 100 business leaders who are working to improve Mississippi's economy and business climate. In consultation with this group, the State Workforce Investment Board adopted six broad goals:

1. Install an accountability system to track system-wide results and funding;
2. Consolidate workforce training efforts and reduce redundancy and administration;
3. Involve business in defining training needs;
4. Provide a user-friendly system for all customers;
5. Develop a clearly defined implementation plan; and
6. Fully leverage the community college workforce training system

The State Workforce Investment Board has accomplished many of these goals over the past two years, effectively using its committee system that consists of an Executive Board and several standing committees. Each year the Executive Board reevaluates and restructures the standing committees so that new issues can receive a special focus.

Under the direction of the Accountability Committee, the Social Science Research Unit at Mississippi State University established the Integrated Workforce Performance Management System to collect workforce training data and measure performance results for all public workforce and training programs. The system is considered a national model.

In addition, many state agencies, including Community Colleges, Rehabilitation Services, Corrections, Human Services, and the Mississippi Development Authority are forging better workforce training partnerships. The Governor's Annual Workforce Development Conference brings these workforce partners together to discuss best practices.

The State Workforce Investment Board and the State Board for Community and Junior Colleges are working closely together in several ways. Last year, a seamless planning process was established to provide for input in development of the 2007 Community College Workforce Plan. The State Board for Community and Junior Colleges and the State Workforce Investment Board jointly adopted the plan. This planning process is continuing this year. This year the 2008 Community College Plan and the State Workforce Investment Board Strategic Plans will be jointly adopted.

In addition, the Community College system at both the state and local level has participated in developing and testing the new Integrated Workforce Performance Management System. Three local community colleges piloted the system.

A major accomplishment of the Governor, the Legislature, and the State Workforce Investment Board in 2005 was to enact Senate Bill 2480, cutting unemployment insurance taxes by 25%, and establishing the Mississippi Workforce Enhancement Training Fund. This fund provides approximately twenty million dollars annually for community colleges to have a permanent and predictable supply of training funds. This was a funding increase of more than 60% a year. The State Workforce Investment Board provides input and suggestions on the Workforce Enhancement Training Fund through its committee on Building the Workforce of the Future.

These accomplishments were achieved against the backdrop of the impact of Hurricane Katrina, the worst natural disaster to ever happen in America. Shortly after the State Workforce Investment Board adopted its strategic plan in 2005, Hurricane Katrina ravaged the Gulf Coast and destroyed property throughout the state. In addition to the loss of lives and property, the economy was severely disrupted. The State Workforce Investment Board has supported Governor Barbour in the recovery, rebuilding, and the renewal of Mississippi's Gulf Coast. New workforce partnerships were forged, and existing partnerships were strengthened. The State Workforce Investment Board will continue working with Momentum Mississippi to focus on the immediate and short-term training needs and to assist businesses as they face labor shortages as a result of the disaster.

The State Workforce Investment Board has worked closely with Momentum Mississippi, the Mississippi Manufacturers Association, and the Mississippi chapter of the National Federation of Independent Businesses, the Mississippi Economic Council and the Mississippi Development Authority to tailor workforce training programs to meet business demand. As a result, many new companies, including SeverCorr and Toyota have decided to locate businesses in Mississippi, citing as one of their main reasons the quality of workforce training.

The new Mississippi Department of Employment Security (MDES) consolidated many of its workforce programs. The Workforce Investment Network Job Centers (WIN Job Centers) that exist across the state to provide one-stop easy access to jobseekers and employers are now organized under one manager who oversees the entire range of workforce services and unemployment determinations and benefits. This consolidation of services places the focus on employment and faster re-employment for dislocated workers. The MDES also consolidated its management structure to ensure seamless services. The U.S. Department of Labor now cites Mississippi as having the most fully integrated workforce systems of any state.

Using feedback from the State Workforce Investment Board and customer satisfaction surveys, MDES has modernized and revamped many of its local

offices to make them more attractive and user-friendly. It has established a Call Center so that individuals can find out about job opportunities and file unemployment insurance claims by telephone.

The Mississippi Department of Employment Security is now offering Mississippi Online Job Opportunities (MOJO). This state-of-the-art technology enables employers to receive job applications from anywhere in the world. Applications are sorted according to criteria established by the company, saving the employer extensive screening and interviewing time. The company retains control of employment parameters and employment decisions.

In addition, the MDES Mobile WIN Job Center units are often deployed to make computers available to people in a variety of locations and to function as local offices or outreach locations for Rapid Response activities.

The state workforce system understands its primary goal of increasing employment in Mississippi, supporting the creation of new job opportunities through workforce training, and working with existing businesses to provide training to their employees in response to changing technologies or processes.

Building on Success:

The Strategic Plan for 2007 – 2009 will build on the success of the past three years to ensure that Mississippi's robust and growing economy is sustained by the development of a workforce that can meet the demands of the 21st Century global economy.

This plan will provide an economic snapshot of Mississippi, articulate the economic and workforce principles of the State Workforce Investment Board, and specify strategies that will enhance and complement Mississippi's booming economy.

CHAPTER III: CHALLENGES

Over the past three years the Governor has led a public dialogue about the workforce development system. The State Workforce Investment Board has continued that dialogue with the Legislature, Mississippi Manufacturers Association, the Mississippi Economic Council, Momentum Mississippi, the Mississippi chapter of the National Federation of Independent Businesses, and other stakeholders. Emerging from this dialogue are several challenges that serve as the context for strategic planning.

- Global competition, the increasing pace of communications and technology create a crisis for Mississippi's economy. Workforce development must be flexible, fast, and focused.
- Regional development must replace localized strategies to compete for jobs in a worldwide labor market, leveraging regional assets, planning, venture capital, and focused training to drive the talent development that is necessary to succeed. The United States Department of Labor has launched a new initiative, Workforce Innovations in Regional Economic Development (WIRED). WIRED is providing competitive grants to pursue this regional approach. West Alabama and East Mississippi have received a three-year \$15 million collaboration grant focused on advanced manufacturing, entrepreneurial development, and skills certifications. Mississippi has applied for a \$5 million three-year grant for the Gulf Coast region to focus on training in advanced manufacturing, metal trades, and construction.
- Jobseekers and workers need assistance at every skill level. The public workforce system must address all four tiers. Entry-level workers need assistance in finding a first job. Existing workers need continual training to keep up with changing technology and processes. Workers who are displaced need assistance in transferring their skills and work experience to a new industry or occupation. Mississippi's workforce should be engaged in life-long learning in order to increase productivity and to be prepared for dynamic and rapid changes in the job market. The workforce system also must train for the jobs of tomorrow or those jobs will not materialize.
- Nationally, there is a growing shortage of qualified workers. A 2005 study from the US Department of Labor determined that 20% of all jobs require a college diploma or advanced degree. Of the remaining 80% of jobs, 60% require some skills training beyond high school. Only 20% of the jobs in America are available to those with a high school degree or less. This worker shortage must be addressed immediately. We must improve the high school graduation rates, assist adults in getting a high school equivalency, draw more Mississippians into the workforce, shorten the duration of unemployment, and attract residents of other states to come work in Mississippi.

- The State's manufacturing sector is very important. Its average wages of nearly \$35,000 overall exceed the average wages of 75% of Mississippi's workers. Manufacturing accounts for 16% of employment and over 17% of the wages in Mississippi. Manufacturing has a high economic importance to local communities. Having a high-performance workforce and a low-cost producer status are the sector's two top economic factors according to their February 2007 Workforce Training survey. Mississippi Gulf Coast manufacturers report an average worker shortage of 10%.
- The United States Department of Labor reported May 21, 2007, that Mississippi has received 1.193 billion dollars in funds from the Employment Training Administration since 2001. Mississippi has substantial financial resources invested in workforce development, but the allocation and use of these financial resources must undergo continual reevaluation. Programs in the workforce system that receive federal and/or state funding must be measured, held accountable, and analyzed for possible improvements.
- More attention and assistance should be given to starting and nurturing small businesses, which account for 80% of new job growth and much of the innovation in Mississippi.
- Mississippi needs to refine its team approach to business recruitment, and assist current businesses to thrive and expand.
- Mississippi must undergo a cultural learning transformation. High school graduation must be valued more. There must be a new respect and awareness of technical education and education in the skilled crafts. Life-long learning must be embraced and supported. We must move from a culture that is comfortable with poverty to a culture that is not afraid to learn and change to be a part of the world of work.
- The high school graduation rate must be increased, and high school dropouts must gain a GED or work-ready credential.
- Career pathways must be established in middle and high school and extended to the community colleges. The Department of Education has a new plan that will provide exposure and training in twenty specific occupations in seven clusters. These new pathways will be instrumental in helping students prepare for good jobs that don't necessarily require a four-year college degree.

- Training of ex-offenders will reduce recidivism. The prison population is growing by 8% a year, and recidivism rates of 28% within three years exacerbate the growth. Training for prison inmates and more comprehensive job placement assistance can reduce those numbers.
- There must be a continued focus on the Gulf Coast Recovery. Two weeks after Hurricane Katrina, half of all workers in the six southernmost counties in Mississippi had not returned to work. This amounted to 101,000 workers. The jobs recovery is well under way. Two months ago, the unemployment percentages fell to single digits. For the first time since Hurricane Katrina. However, the shortage of unskilled and skilled workers must be addressed in innovative ways in order to maximize the current economic boom.

CHAPTER IV: ECONOMIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC SNAPSHOT

Economy:

Mississippi has a vibrant and growing economy. When Governor Barbour took office, Mississippi had a declining economy with a net job loss of 38,300 jobs from 1999 to 2003 and a 22% decline in manufacturing employment. Governor Barbour turned this around with tort reform, reorganizing the job training system, and balancing the budget. Now, despite Hurricane Katrina, Mississippi has seen a net increase of more than 38,000 jobs and personal income is up by 15%. Manufacturing has remained steady, with higher paying, higher skill levels jobs replacing the low-paying, low skilled jobs in the textile and apparel industry. Personal income grew by more than 4% in 2004 and 2005.

In 2007, job growth is constantly accelerating. As many as 100,000 new workers are needed in construction, metal working, advanced manufacturing, and the energy field. Recent announcements include:

- \$1 billion Strategic Petroleum Reserve near Richton
- \$1.3 billion coal gasification plant in Kemper County
- Over 500 jobs at SeverCorr, the finished steel plant in Columbus
- 275 jobs at PSL-North America Pipe Manufacturing facility in Hancock County

- 2,000 jobs at Toyota Plant in Blue Springs, Mississippi and many more jobs from related suppliers
- Initial 100 jobs GE jet engine component plant near Batesville
- 600 jobs COMCAST Advanced Solutions Center in Madison County
- 500 jobs PACCAR new engine manufacturing plant in Lowndes County.

Governor Barbour pointed out in his State of the State speech in January 2007 that the Gulf Coast, Northwest Mississippi and the Memphis suburbs, Northeast Mississippi, the Meridian area, and the Jackson-Vicksburg area are booming. Only the Delta and Southwest Mississippi are still challenged with job creation.

The Workforce:

- Mississippi's population is 2.9 million.
- The population increases about 20,000 annually, 0.7 %.
- The workforce is 1.3 million.
- On average, 80,000 people are unemployed, about 6.2%.
- There is estimated to be nearly 70,000 people of working age who are not participating in the workforce. This percentage is one of the highest in the nation.
- 73% of working age Mississippians have a high school education or higher.
- 17% of working age Mississippians have bachelors degrees or higher.
- 5.8% of working age Mississippians have graduate or professional degrees
- 20.9% of working age Mississippians have some college but no degree.
- 5.7% of working age Mississippians have an associate degree.
- Mississippi has the lowest national wage – 400,000 full time workers make between \$5.15 and \$9.50 per hour
- 180,000 workers are employed in manufacturing.

- There is strong growth in high-end manufacturing, automotive, metals, skilled construction workers such as carpenters, roofers, plumbers, electricians, energy, communications, information technology, polymers, warehousing and distribution, and the healthcare sectors.

CHAPTER V: THE MISSISSIPPI INTEGRATED WORKFORCE PERFORMANCE SYSTEM

The State Workforce Investment Board adopted as its first goal the development of a results-oriented accountability system that could be applied to all workforce programs in Mississippi. They asked the following questions:

- Do people get jobs?
- Do people retain jobs?
- Do people get better jobs (better pay)?
- Are we meeting the demands of business?

The Accountability Committee developed a plan to collect the data from the various workforce programs and provide performance reports in a user-friendly format. The Workforce, Economic and Community Development Research Unit at Mississippi State University built on existing systems to develop this system. The data sources are the wage records and business tax records.

The following agencies participate:

- Mississippi Department of Employment Security
- State Board for Community and Junior Colleges
- Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services
- Mississippi Department of Human Services
- Mississippi Department of Education
- Mississippi Department of Corrections

The initial challenge was to gather data on all training provided by the Community Colleges, who train nearly 200,000 individuals per year. Last year three community colleges piloted this effort. Many of the barriers were overcome and procedures were established so that the effort could expand this year. This effort will also include setting baselines and benchmarks.

The Mississippi Integrated Workforce Performance System will:

- Assist in identifying outstanding practices
- Promote data sharing to reduce duplication of services, measure performance, and assist in decisions on resource allocation

RECOMMENDATION: The Mississippi Integrated Workforce Performance System project should be expanded to all fifteen Community/Junior Colleges and other agency data collections should be completed this year. The Board will assist in identifying resources to support the data gathering, compilation, and analysis.

CHAPTER VI: ALIGNING AND MAXIMIZING RESOURCES

From the U.S. Department of Labor website, May 21, 2007:

“Since 2001, Mississippi has received \$1.193 billion in funds from the Department of Labor’s Employment and Training Administration to provide skill training and career development assistance to dislocated workers and other participants.”

In addition, the State Board for Community/Junior Colleges receives over \$5 million from the U.S. Department of Education for Adult Basic Education. For the past two years the Workforce Enhancement Training Fund has provided approximately \$20 million annually to provide training in response to business needs.

Other programs funded from the federal level or state level include workplace assistance, placement, and supported employment by the Department of Rehabilitation Services, education and training for inmates by the Department of Corrections, high school vocational training by the Department of Education, and funding to train and place welfare recipients, employ older workers, and provide training to Food Stamp recipients by the Department of Human Services.

The Mississippi workforce system has substantial financial resources – but the alignment, focus, and working partnerships must be further improved.

Each of these programs must meet certain federal and/or state regulations; each agency has its own supervisory structure; and each program has a different mission.

The executive directors of each of these agencies have indicated a spirit of willingness to work more closely, and meet with each other frequently. It is now time to take the next steps to create efficiencies and synergies within the programs themselves. As an example: The MDES and local workforce area WIN Job

Centers are designed as one-stop shops to provide assistance to employers and job seekers. Each Community and Junior College has a Workforce Development Center that provides training in cooperation with businesses. How to best maximize the capacities of these centers and to rid the system of redundancies is the question.

RECOMMENDATION: An Interagency Task Force on Workforce Development composed of Program Directors below the level of the Executive Directors should be created. This task force will be charged to develop a set of recommendations on closer program coordination across agencies so that training and placement assistance will be jointly provided to job seekers.

This Interagency Task Force will share information on all funding sources and program mission and structure and report back to the State Workforce Investment Board Executive Committee in October, 2007. The Task Force Chair will not come from any of the agencies, but will come from the State Workforce Investment Board or the Governor's Office.

CHAPTER VII: THE WORKFORCE

Employers around the state complain that there is a shortage of workers. This shortage is not only for skilled or specialized workers, but also for entry-level workers. There are several factors impacting this issue:

- 1) Lack of skills - Mississippi must engage in a public information campaign to convince parents and students that vocational training or training in the construction trades can result in a lucrative paycheck and dependable employment. Of those who attend four-year universities, only half graduate. Many of those who do not graduate spend years in low-paying, low-skills jobs. Accommodating employed learners with short-term courses and flexible hours will increase learning opportunities and skills advancement. Incentives to encourage training participation are another means of raising workforce skills.
- 2) Lack of skills certifications - Many employers are skeptical about hiring high school dropouts, and are equally skeptical about high school graduates. A solution for this problem has evolved over the past five years and is now in place in 38 states. The Career Readiness Credential certifies to employers that individuals have the basic skills to perform well on the job. This credentialing is based on the result of the WORKKEYS Assessments,

developed by ACT. There are three assessment areas: Reading for Information; Locating Information; and Applied Mathematics. An individual who scores *three* is certified to be able to perform 30% of the jobs in America. An individual who scores *four* on all three tests is certified to be able to perform 65% of the jobs in the American workplace. An individual who scores *five* on all three tests is certified to have the ability to perform 90% of the jobs in the workplace. Northrop-Grumman Shipbuilding uses the WORKKEYS Assessment in its hiring and promotion decisions. Thirteen states have adopted the Career Readiness Certificate, including the neighboring states of Alabama, Louisiana, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina and Kentucky. The State Board for Community College intends to develop this system for Mississippi and has allocated resources for this purpose in its FY '08 budget.

RECOMMENDATION: Endorse the Community College Career Readiness Credentialing Approach and support some amount of additional initial funding from the Workforce Investment Act so the plan can be implemented at the WIN Job Centers as well as the Community College Workforce Development Centers. Explore the use of incentives or stipends to increase training participation.

- 3) High school dropouts - The Mississippi Department of Education reports that as of April 27, 2007, that the Dropout Rate in Mississippi is 26.6%, and another 6% in special education programs receive an occupational diploma instead of a high school diploma. These statistics have a direct impact on the quality and quantity of the skilled workforce.

Under the leadership of the State Superintendent of Education, Mississippi's Department of Education has redesigned its curriculum to make courses more relevant to students. One goal is to reduce the dropout rate by 50% in 10 years. The redesigned curriculum begins in the 7th grade with Career Discovery, 8th grade with Computer Discovery, and 9th grade with an emphasis on Science Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM).

In 10th to 12th grades a new program entitled Career Pathways will be implemented. This program will emphasize twenty Career Pathways within seven Career Clusters, and will involve industry representatives and the parents in the exploration of these Pathways. It will also involve much closer articulation with Community Colleges. The seven Career Clusters are:

- Agriculture and Natural Resources
- Business, Management, Marketing, and Technology
- Construction and Manufacturing
- Education, Hospitality, Fine Arts and Social Services

- Health and Human Sciences
- Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
- Automotive Body Services and Diesel Services

RECOMMENDATION: Endorse the Department of Education’s redesign plan and support the implementation of Career Pathways.

- 4) Recovery of adult high school dropouts - The U.S. Census reports that as of 2000, there were 477,000 adults 25 years of age or older who did not possess a high school diploma in Mississippi. That number is more than 27% of the population. These dropouts are likely to be in low-skills, low wage jobs, and will not be an asset to Mississippi’s growing economy. The State Board for Community and Junior Colleges has proposed to the state legislature a program to “recover” these dropouts. Targeting those who are not in high school but who are under 24, the community colleges would use the Adult Basic Education (ABE) program to enable these individuals to obtain a GED or one of two Alternative Adult High School Diplomas. The Regular Alternative Adult High School diploma would require a student to take and pass the GED and the four subject area exams required by the Mississippi Department of Education. The Occupational Alternative High School Diploma would require a student to take the ABE program, score at the eighth grade level on the TABE or an equivalent evaluation, and complete a career program at a community or junior college.

RECOMMENDATION: Partner with the Community Colleges and other organizations to explore this proposal and other possibilities for “recovering” high school dropouts.

- 5) The unemployed - An average of 80,000 unemployed persons in Mississippi are available for work and are actively seeking a job. The average number of Mississippians receiving unemployment insurance (UI) benefits from October 2006 to March 2007 was 58,470. Even in the ideal economy there will always be “frictional” unemployment with people changing jobs. The average Mississippian stays unemployed about 14 weeks. Thirty percent of unemployment recipients exhaust their benefits. The duration of unemployment must be shortened. This challenge can be addressed by more frequent interaction with case managers in the WIN Job Centers.

RECOMMENDATION: Support the MDES in designing new early intervention strategies to shorten the average duration of receiving benefits, and to reduce percentage of individuals who “exhaust” their benefits.

- 6) Labor force participation - The labor force participation rate is 62.63%, five percent lower than the national average. That five percent represents over 65,000 individuals who could be working but are not. Theories abound over why this problem exists. There is a correlation with lack of high school education, and a larger percentage of females are in this group. The lack of affordable child care, medical care, and transportation keep many willing workers out of the labor force. Also, an assumption could be made that drug and alcohol issues are an additional barrier to employment. No comprehensive study has analyzed this group. In a recent private study looking at the workforce in a geographic sector of the state for a specific industry, the study group identified over 4300 workers who meet the definition of non-labor force participation. The study determined that many would reenter the labor market in response to an attractive job.

RECOMMENDATION: Explore methods to determine the reasons for non-labor force participation and what factors would draw these individuals back into the workforce.

- 7) Ex-offenders and employment - Currently Mississippi has 22,000 inmates in prison. 166 are released each week. More than 60% are released without a job or a skill. Upon release, an ex-offender receives \$15.00 and a bus ticket back home. The recidivism rate is more than 15% the first year, 8% the second year, and 5% the third year. The prison population is growing at 1,000 per year. The Department of Corrections budget is \$306 million this year, and it will be \$327 million next year, and \$345 million the year after that, due to the projected increases in prisoners. Only about 1,000 inmates per year are enrolled in Adult Basic Education Classes, and fewer than that in training.

RECOMMENDATION: The State should implement an aggressive training, education, and placement program to reduce the recidivism rates and increase workforce participation.

- 8) The disabled - The Department of Rehabilitation Services assists disabled individuals with an array of assistive technologies, training, counseling, and job search assistance. The Department of Rehabilitation Services is a full partner in the WIN Job Centers, with staff located full time in many of them. In addition, the grant – funded Career Navigator Program provides services to help the job centers more fully serve the disabled.

RECOMMENDATION: Commend the Department of Rehabilitation Services for its example of workforce partnering, and urge the Interagency Task Force to use it as one model for better integration of services.

- 9) Worker shortages - Mississippi's population is not growing fast enough to meet the labor force needs of new and expanding businesses. Mississippi needs to attract workers from other states.

RECOMMENDATION: Request that Momentum Mississippi expand its goal of creating a positive business image to include creating an image for Mississippi that is inviting to workers who will relocate for good jobs and quality of life.

CHAPTER VIII: EMPLOYER SERVICES

The State Workforce Investment Board recognizes that services to employers are of equal importance to services to jobseekers. The Business Outreach Services Committee believes that one way to focus on training that is demand-driven is to adopt as its highest priority the current industry targets that have been developed by the Mississippi Development Authority. These are:

- Automotive Assembly
- Automotive Suppliers
- Contact Centers
- Data Centers
- Defense/Homeland Security
- Fabricated Housing and Housing Components
- Food Processing
- Metal Fabricating and Steel
- Plastics/Polymers/Chemicals
- Shared Service Centers
- Shipbuilding
- Timber/Wood Products
- Warehouse and Distribution
- Energy Industries

The WIN Job Centers and the Community College Workforce Development Centers work closely with business. The Workforce Development Centers provide customized training to hundreds of businesses. The WIN Job Centers offer an array of services to businesses. These services include recruiting, screening, and pre-assessments to assist the human resource needs of business, and business navigators and free conference space for recruiting and job fairs.

There are two additional issues that the State Workforce Investment Board must focus on in serving business needs. The first is the fragmentation that sometimes exists when the Mississippi Development Authority or a local economic developer is recruiting a new company or assisting an existing business in expansion. A more cohesive “team” approach is needed.

The second issue focuses on the development and support of small businesses and entrepreneurs. Small businesses account for nearly 80% of job growth. Entrepreneurs supply the energy and innovative approaches that are essential to an expanding economy. However, support for entrepreneurs is not focused enough. Secondly, many small businesses are not aware of the services available to them. While there are examples of excellent small business development centers, the network is disorganized and unwieldy. The University of Mississippi directs the current network. The Mississippi Development Authority, the Planning and Development Districts, the WIN Job Centers, and the Community Colleges all provide some of the needed services, including small business loans, tax incentives, the development of a business plan, and the identification of the market. These services must be better coordinated.

RECOMMENDATION: Task the Business Outreach Committee with developing a model for Business Outreach Services. In addition, task the Committee to study the current system for entrepreneurial support and the provision of services to small businesses, and develop recommendations to the Executive Board by October. Some of these recommendations may involve legislative changes.

CHAPTER IX: FOCUS ON MANUFACTURING

Under Governor Barbour’s leadership the manufacturing sector has stabilized. This sector is important because it accounts for 16% of Mississippi’s workforce and 17% of its wages. The recent successes in recruiting of new businesses have been primarily in the manufacturing sector.

A recent study overseen by the State Workforce Investment Board in partnership with the Mississippi Manufacturers Association and the Workforce, Economic and Community Development Research Unit at Mississippi State University makes several recommendations:

1. Continue effective, appropriately funded workforce training efforts.

2. Improvements in the state-sponsored workforce training must be made in order for the manufacturers to compete in the global marketplace.
3. Community colleges must examine their current workforce training programs to ensure they support today's increasingly technology intensive manufacturing operations.
4. The workforce training capabilities of the Institutions of Higher Learning and the Manufacturing Extension Partnership should be strengthened.
5. Manufacturers will need to work more closely with Mississippi educators to promote manufacturing careers, and to provide the appropriate skills.
6. Additional attention must be given to the Gulf Coast in order to curtail the loss of manufacturing.

RECOMMENDATION: Form a task force headed by the CEO of the Mississippi Manufacturers Association to support implementation of these recommendations, to make further recommendations, and to recommend strategies for establishing Advanced Manufacturing Centers of Excellence in the Community/Junior College System.

CHAPTER X: LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

- I. *The Mississippi Integrated Workforce Performance System project should be expanded to all fifteen Community/Junior Colleges and other agency data collections should be completed this year. The Board will assist in identifying resources to support the data gathering, compilation, and analysis.*
- II. *An Interagency Task Force on Workforce Development composed of Program Directors below the level of the Executive Director should be created. This Task Force will be charged to develop a set of recommendations on closer program coordination across agencies so that training and placement assistance will be seamlessly provided to job seekers. This Interagency Task Force will share information on all funding sources and program mission and structure and report back to the State Workforce Investment Board Executive Committee in October, 2007. The Task Force Chair will not come from any of the agencies, but will come from the State Workforce Investment Board or the Governor's Office.*

- III. *Endorse the Community College Career Readiness Credentialing Approach and support some amount of additional initial funding from the Workforce Investment Act so the plan can be implemented at the WIN Job Centers as well as the Community College Workforce Development Centers. Explore the use of incentives or stipends to increase training participation.*
- IV. *Endorse the Department of Education's redesign plan and support its implementation of Career Pathways.*
- V. *Partner with the Community Colleges and other organizations to explore a proposal for "recovering" high school dropouts.*
- VI. *Support the MDES in designing new early intervention strategies to shorten the average duration of receiving benefits, and to reduce down from 30% those who exhaust their benefits.*
- VII. *Explore methods to determine the reasons for non-labor force participation, and what factors would draw these individuals back into the workforce.*
- VIII. *The State should implement an aggressive training, education, and placement program to reduce prison recidivism rates and increase workforce participation.*
- IX. *Commend the Department of Rehabilitation Services for its example of workforce partnering, and urge the Interagency Task Force to use it as one model for better integration of services.*
- X. *Request that Momentum Mississippi expand its goal of creating a positive business image to include creating an image for Mississippi that is inviting to workers who will relocate for good jobs and quality of life.*
- XI. *Task the Business Outreach Committee with developing a model for Business Outreach Services. Further tasks the Committee to study the current system for entrepreneurial support and the provision of services to small businesses, and develop recommendations to the Executive Board by October. Some of these recommendations may involve legislative changes.*

- XII. Form a task force headed by the CEO of the Mississippi Manufacturers Association to support implementation of the recommendations contained in the recent MMA study of the Workforce Training Needs of the Manufacturing Sector in Mississippi, to make further recommendations, and to recommend strategies for establishing Advanced Manufacturing Centers of Excellence in the Community/Junior College System.*

CHAPTER XI: SUSTAINING MISSISSIPPI'S VIBRANT ECONOMY

Under Governor Barbour's leadership Mississippi has seen a net increase of 38,000 new jobs. New businesses continue to announce plans to locate in Mississippi and many existing businesses are expanding. In contradiction to the devastation of 2005's Hurricane Katrina, the Gulf Coast is experiencing an economic boom.

The critical factor which will determine the sustainability of Mississippi's economic growth is the availability of workers, especially workers with technical skills and expertise in the craft trades. Following the guidance of the 2007 – 2009 State Workforce Board Strategic Plan will ensure that the workforce development system will support Mississippi's economic growth and enhance the quality of life of Mississippi's citizens.

ATTACHMENT A

BIBLIOGRAPHY OF INTERVIEWS AND SOURCE MATERIALS

INTERVIEWS

Clark Holmes, Director,
Central Mississippi Planning and Development District

Pete Walley, Strategic Planner,
Institutes for Higher Learning

Jay Moon, Chief Executive Officer,
Mississippi Manufacturers Association

Tommye Dale Favre, Executive Director,
Mississippi Department of Employment Security

Chris Epps, Commissioner,
Mississippi Department of Corrections

Don Taylor, Executive Director,
Mississippi Department of Human Services

Hank Bounds, State Superintendent,
Mississippi Department of Education

Joy Milam, Special Assistant to the Superintendent,
Mississippi Department of Education

Wayne Stonecypher, Executive Director,
Mississippi State Board for Community and Junior Colleges

Jason Pugh, Deputy Director,
Mississippi State Board for Community and Junior Colleges

Gray Swoope, Executive Director,
Mississippi Development Authority

Domenico Parisi, Director,
Workforce, Economic, and Community Development Research Unit,
Mississippi State University

William Crawford, Deputy Director,
Mississippi Development Authority, and
Director, West Alabama – East Mississippi WIRED Grant

Wayne Gasson, Labor Market Information Director,
Mississippi Department of Employment Security

Dale Smith, Director, Customer Operations Support,
Mississippi Department of Employment Security

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