

MEC Workforce &
Economic Initiative

The logo icon for Endeavor is a blue graphic consisting of a vertical rectangle on the left side, with three horizontal, curved stripes extending from it to the right, resembling a stylized flag or a sail.

Endeavor

A Blueprint to Advance Mississippi

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Opportunity Statement

For Mississippi, the future is now. Today, there are more than 40,000 unfilled jobs that can change Mississippi's landscape for years to come, setting the state for long-term, sustainable economic growth. These are jobs in opportunity occupations with high earning power. Unlike the past, completion of a four-year college degree is not the only route to employment in high earning potential. In fact, only half of opportunity occupations require a four-year college degree, but do require some form of industry credential.

The key in the new labor market is dependent on creating an economic environment that allows individuals to secure a new workforce currency that includes both college credentials and industry credentials, along with life and practical skills. The future of Mississippi relies on ensuring our citizens have the ability to acquire the skills necessary to gain employment with high earning power.

ENDEAVOR

A Blueprint to Advance Mississippi

Executive Summary

To position Mississippi for long-term growth and sustainability, it is vital to identify the key components necessary to advance an economic environment conducive to today's opportunities while preparing for future possibilities.

Endeavor is a blueprint for building an economic environment where people can secure the new workforce currency necessary to advance Mississippi. The goals outlined in Endeavor are designed to:

- Develop workforce opportunities for people to gain academic and industry credentials along with life and practical skills to succeed in the job market
- Increase educational achievement so people can be workforce- and college-ready
- Provide pathways with a clear career in mind
- Compel integration of workforce programs within and between education and workforce sectors
- Retain and attract highly-qualified workers in the state
- Prepare citizens to be future innovators and Mississippi leaders

Endeavor is an inclusive and transformational approach for guiding the state's trajectory and cultivating opportunities for Mississippi citizens and communities to thrive and achieve.

The objective is simple: Address the needs of today, while charting a course for the future.

Today more than 40,000 jobs are available in Mississippi. Filling these positions would bolster Mississippi's economy and create greater opportunities for our citizens. Unlike the past, people filling these jobs must have a combination of academic and industry credentials along with life and practical skills. It is imperative that we provide avenues for Mississippians to acquire the new workforce currency. The education and workforce sectors must engage and actively collaborate to serve the diverse needs of Mississippi stakeholders.



To only focus on what the state needs today would be shortsighted, and could ultimately short-change future generations. The state must consider preparing our citizens for occupations that support new and emerging industry.

Across all business sectors, requirements for continuous professional development will increase as technology advances and job requirements change.

Endeavor promotes the development of a complete workforce with the life and practical skills demanded by the job needs of today. Such skills include critical thinking, decision making, problem solving, communicating, reading comprehension, listening, leadership and teamwork. These skills must also include soft skills related to appropriate workplace behaviors and employer expectations. Providing this foundation will open the door for success in gaining the job-specific knowledge sought by all businesses.



Endeavor also seeks to optimize the capabilities, offerings and integration and alignment of existing education and workforce programs in both the public and private sectors. There is no lack of creative and effective initiatives and programs in the state, but what Endeavor strives to do is bring all that is done in education and workforce under unified leadership so that our efforts are guided by common goals and purpose: equip people with the new workforce currency.

At the high school level, MEC's Mississippi Scholars & Tech Master programs help students position themselves for success after graduation. There are many rewarding careers and not all require a college degree. Districts of innovation are providing new approaches at the K-12 level in a variety of areas – from coding to robotics – in order to broaden horizons and open new doors for students.

Mississippi's Community College system provides education and workforce opportunities for Mississippians from all walks of life. Mi-Best is a program that is designed to help people without high school credentials earn their diploma while at the same time earn college credentials and gain work experience.

Registered Apprenticeship is an essential component of the community college system's workforce development and economic development strategies and has been integrated as part of the state's Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act (WIOA) plan. Today, Mississippi has a Mississippi Apprenticeship Council with membership that includes agency heads, education (k-12 through college) government, business and industry. With the apprenticeship program, the community college system has taken workforce training and career and technical education to the next level by embedding the apprenticeship experience as part of the training curriculum. As a combination of on-the-job training and classroom instruction, students receive credit toward their degree for work experience while also being paid.



Mississippi's Community College system has transformed to offer credit for experience in the workplace. A "reverse apprenticeship" program allows a person with experience in the "field" to receive college credits toward a degree in a given field. By receiving credit for work experience, the individual has the opportunity to earn a degree which expands career and earning potential.

The state's Institutions of Higher Learning provide programs, resources and educational options for students to attain bachelors' degrees and other advanced degrees. The Institutions of Higher Learning and Community Colleges have partnered to develop Complete 2 Compete—a statewide program focused on encouraging Mississippi adults who have completed some college, but no degree, to return to college and complete the requirements necessary to earn their degrees. More than 10,000 former students age 25 or over have enough credits to earn a bachelor's degree with no additional coursework and almost 60,000 have enough credits to earn an associate's degree with no additional coursework.

Under the guidance of the State Workforce Investment Board (SWIB), the state has developed the Smart Start program, an integrated partnership across workforce sectors. This program is designed to help continue professional development across all educational levels. It is also designed to help improve life and practical skills in the workplace for those with little or no workforce experience.

In the private sector, the state has many innovative programs designed to help people gain the necessary academic and industry credentials in various sectors such as energy, transportation, and advanced manufacturing. Get On The Grid is a program specifically designed to reach out to those interested in the energy sector and advanced manufacturing. Pathways2Possibilities (P2P) is an interactive, hands-on career expo for 8th graders in public, private and home schools, as well as at-risk youth, ages 16-24. Each student experiences a variety of career pathways, aligned with current and emerging economic opportunities in the state.

Endeavor will develop a strategy to bring all education and workforce initiatives under statewide leadership guided by economic goals and aspirations. It will also develop a communication and marketing plan for individuals to know how to pursue academic and industry credentials with high market value. Endeavor will also develop the strategy to connect the right workforce pool with the right business at the right time as part of the state's economic strategy for new and existing industry.

True success will only be achieved when there is strong coordination among all entities involved.

Awareness of what options and pathways are available is vitally important. Participation is critical to personal and economic success.

Endeavor will bring public and private entities together to determine the best ways to work together. This will include setting benchmarks and measuring the effectiveness of the programs, including outcomes directly related to collaborations and integration.

Going forward, Mississippi must place equal emphasis on pursuing both a good education and choosing a career path that leverages people's interests while keeping existing and new economic opportunities in mind.

A strong emphasis should be placed on adult learning, which is an important part of this process. We need to aggressively reach into Mississippi's adult population to provide job training and re-training as we work to grow the state's workforce.



Next Steps

Creating a strong workforce and growing Mississippi's economy will require a strategic effort with short- and long-term actionable items. Endeavor will undertake a five-year plan to promote public and private sector solutions focused on providing Mississippians the right academic and industry credentials along with the life and practical skills necessary for a rewarding career.

Education and workforce must be viewed as "one issue" if we are to improve outcomes that lead to a workforce prepared for today and the future. This is especially true in the technical arena and for professions requiring higher and more diverse skills.



There must be strong and action-oriented coordination between state leadership – Governor, Lieutenant Governor and Speaker of the House – our Legislature, MEC, education and workforce leaders and workforce advocacy groups from across Mississippi and elsewhere. Working together, we can magnify the importance of this issue and build awareness of positive pathways forward for our citizens across all walks of life.

One of the first steps will be to acknowledge actions already taken which have led to measurable improvements. Among these are better reading scores and graduation rates, innovation in Mississippi high schools and increased funding for workforce training. It is important these accomplishments are used as a foundation to inspire and produce even greater outcomes.

Going forward, the Endeavor process will continue to evolve. Endeavor will include the development of model legislation, policy recommendations, private and public sector actions focused on increasing workforce capabilities and spurring job growth throughout Mississippi.

Outcome

Increasing the number of people ready to gain employment in opportunity occupations with high earning power will grow Mississippi's economy. Focused collaboration and integration will create a clear path forward for workforce development and create greater opportunities for future innovators to lead Mississippi. Positioning our state as a great place to live and work with a prepared, nimble and ready workforce will help grow the state's population and economic output for years to come.

The Opportunity: MS Workforce & Economic Climate

The Opportunity

- Develop a workforce with the **academic and industry credentials along with the life and practical skills** for the job market
 - To address the need we have today with more than 40,000 unfilled jobs in Mississippi
- Qualified, prepared, and ready workforce will lead to **growth and prosperity in Mississippi's population**

“Mississippi needs to be a state emphasizing education and practical, doable things.”

- Mississippi Education Innovator/Supporter

Mississippi has over 40,000 available jobs today, yet the positions remain unfilled. Education and workforce training are the key drivers to help the state meet its economic potential, and recent improved education trends and increased investment in workforce development are leading to measurable advancements. The fact remains that more progress and coordination are needed to help prepare our children and adults for the current and future workforce demands and expectations.

“It is time to take pride in what these jobs offer. These positions in my company produce a career.”

- Leading Mississippi Employer

Leaders in all economic sectors say that securing a skilled and available workforce will be their biggest challenge over the next decade. A variety of reports show the need for a labor force with both practical skills and job-specific skills.

Nationally, two million manufacturing jobs could go unfilled over the next decade (according to a Deloitte/Manufacturing Institute study). Additional studies show hundreds of thousands of jobs will be available in healthcare, automotive manufacturing, trucking, finance, food and agriculture, and energy. These jobs include physicians, nurses, engineers, software developers, technicians, machinists, welders and other high-skilled positions.



Developing a workforce with the life and practical skills for the job market will not only address the job needs of today, but also build a foundation for long-term economic growth and sustainability for Mississippi.

“We have a tremendous challenge and opportunity with 40,000 unfilled jobs in Mississippi and not enough prepared people to fill them.”

- Leading Mississippi Employer

A qualified, prepared, and ready workforce leads to growth in Mississippi’s population through additional job opportunities that will attract and retain talented individuals who will call Mississippi home.

Job needs by industry sectors...



Healthcare - By 2025, the physician **shortage** will be from 46,000 to 90,000, according to the Association of American Medical Colleges.



Manufacturing - An estimated two million manufacturing jobs nationally could go unfilled in the next decade, according to a Deloitte/Manufacturing Institute study.



Trucking - The American Trucking Association estimates a **shortage** of 48,000 truck drivers and is on pace to be 175,000 short by 2024.



Finance - The financial advisory workforce has been in an **ongoing decline**, with the number of advisors in the U.S. dropping for the fifth consecutive year, according to Fox Business.



Food and Agriculture - The United States faces a predicted agricultural workforce **shortfall** of as many as 100,000 jobs in food and agriculture lacking appropriately trained professionals to fill them over the next five years.



Energy - Nationwide, the energy industry is expected to add 198,000 energy efficiency jobs, 78,000 transmission jobs, 76,000 solar and wind jobs, and 81,000 jobs in the motor vehicles sector in 2017. But, 75 percent of energy companies report **challenges in hiring** qualified candidates.



Mississippi must be prepared for change that will come from technological advances and the impact those changes will have on jobs. Mississippi’s Institutions of Higher Learning and Community Colleges must be aligned and charged with helping to ensure that our state’s workforce needs are met.

The Facts

National Education & Jobs Need

By 2020...

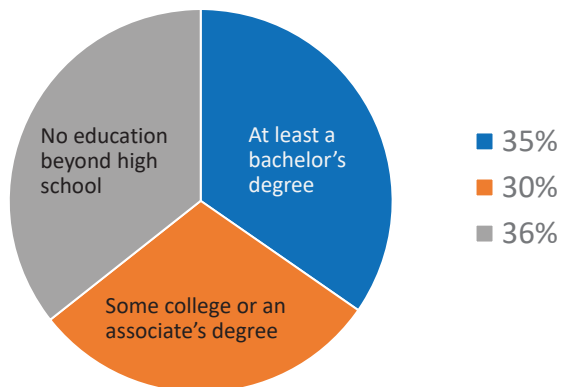
65%

of job openings in the U.S. will require some **post-secondary** education and training beyond high school.

Source: Georgetown University, Center on Education and the Workforce, Recovery 2020

National Education & Jobs Need

By educational attainment ...



Source: Georgetown University, Center on Education and the Workforce, Recovery 2020

The Facts

National Education & Jobs Need

By industry...

Three of the fastest-growing occupations:



STEM

Accountants, Financial Analysts, Engineers, Computer Programmers, Software Developers, Medical Services Manager, Web Developers, Psychologist, etc.



Healthcare Professional



Community Services

also have the highest demand for postsecondary education and training.



Source: Georgetown University, Center on Education and the Workforce, Recovery 2020

National Education & Jobs Need

By skill set...



Judgement/decision-making



Communications



Analysis



Administration

will be the four most in-demand competencies in the labor market.



Source: Georgetown University, Center on Education and the Workforce, Recovery 2020

The Facts

National Education & Jobs Need

Particular sought after skills include...

- Active Listening
- Speaking
- Reading Comprehension
- Critical Thinking
- Monitoring
- Coordination
- Social Perceptiveness
- Judgement/Decision Making



Source: Georgetown University, Center on Education and the Workforce, Recovery 2020

46%

of U.S. employers report difficulty in filling open positions, with skilled trades the hardest jobs to fill.

Source: Manpower Group, 2016 U.S. Talent Shortage Survey

“We need to help our kids by helping them prepare for life – whether that means a college education or internships that give practical skills.”

- Leading Mississippi Employer

The Facts

National Education & Jobs Trends

How recent 4 yr. college graduates felt entering the workforce:

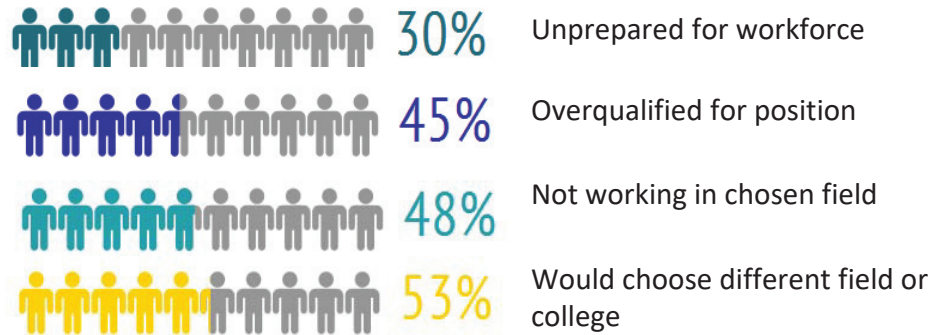
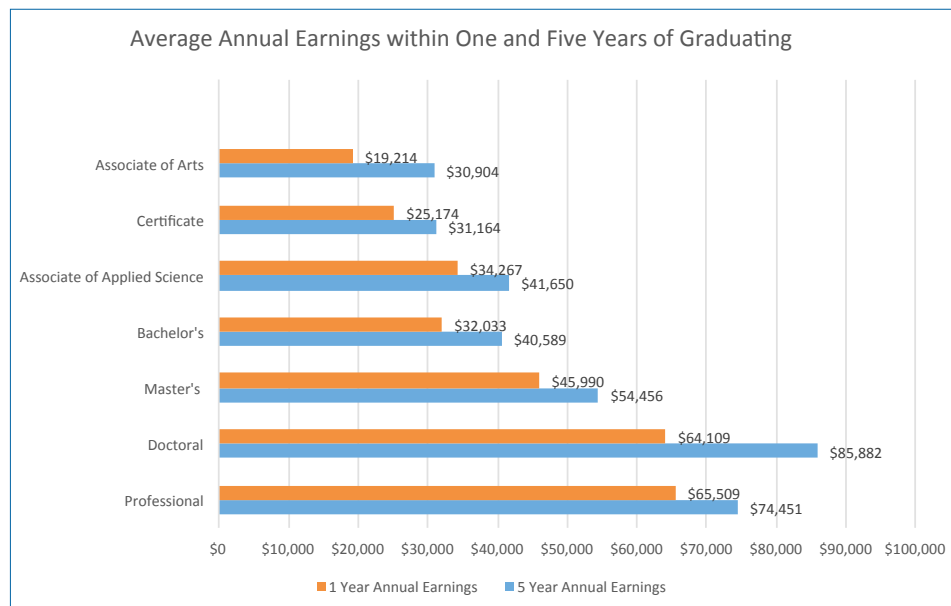


Image: ExceInEd.org
Source: McKinsey & Company, Voice of the Graduate, 2013

- According to the most recent SLDS LifeTracks report, four-year college graduates earn on average \$32,033 within the first year after graduating and \$40,589 after five years. Those with an Associates of Applied Science degree earn an average of \$34,267 within the first year after graduating and \$41,650 after five years.



The Facts

MIDDLE-SKILL JOBS | UNITED STATES

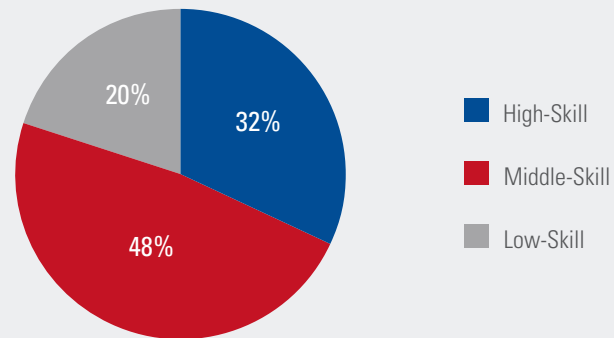
United States' Forgotten Middle

Middle-skill jobs, which require education beyond high school but not a four-year degree, make up the largest part of America's labor market. Key industries in United States are unable to find enough sufficiently trained workers to fill these jobs.

Job Openings by Skill Level, United States, 2014-2024

Demand for Middle-Skill Jobs Will Remain Strong

Between 2014-2024, 48 percent of job openings will be middle-skill.



Source: NSC analysis of long-term occupational projections from state labor/employment agency.

- According to the National Skills Coalition, the biggest skill gaps are in occupations that require less than a four-year college degree. These are occupations with high earning power (around \$35,000 to \$40,000 per year for entry level) and the potential to earn more than \$60,000 to \$70,000.



"We have to invest in ourselves and build a quality workforce."

- Leading Mississippi Employer

The Facts

National Education & Jobs Trends

We must change the post-secondary education **perception** and **expectations**. We've created a culture that thinks you are not successful if you don't go the academic route post-high school.

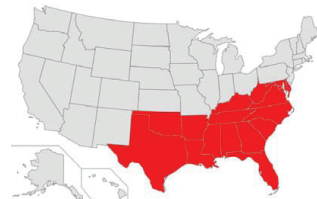
71% of parents have the expectation of their students attending a 4-year college, and as a result...

69% of students have the expectation of going to a 4-year college.

Source: Allstate/National Journal Heartland Monitor Poll XVIII (2013)

Regional Education & Jobs Trends

- The highest proportion of **bachelor's degree** jobs and graduate degree jobs will be concentrated in the **northeastern states**.
- Jobs for workers with **some college, an associate's degree, or a workforce certification** will be **dispersed** throughout the country.
- Jobs for **workers with no post-secondary education** will be concentrated in the **southern states**.



Source: Georgetown University, Center on Education and the Workforce, Recovery 2020

Workforce development is not just a need for young people and recent graduates. As we assess the education and job trends for our state, it is critical that we also evaluate where the adult population currently lies within the workforce. We must find ways to train (or re-train) adults for jobs that exist today to help them achieve greater economic and workplace opportunities.

“Adult skill levels must be elevated. Meeting this demand will require every Mississippian to be successful, regardless of socio-economic background.”

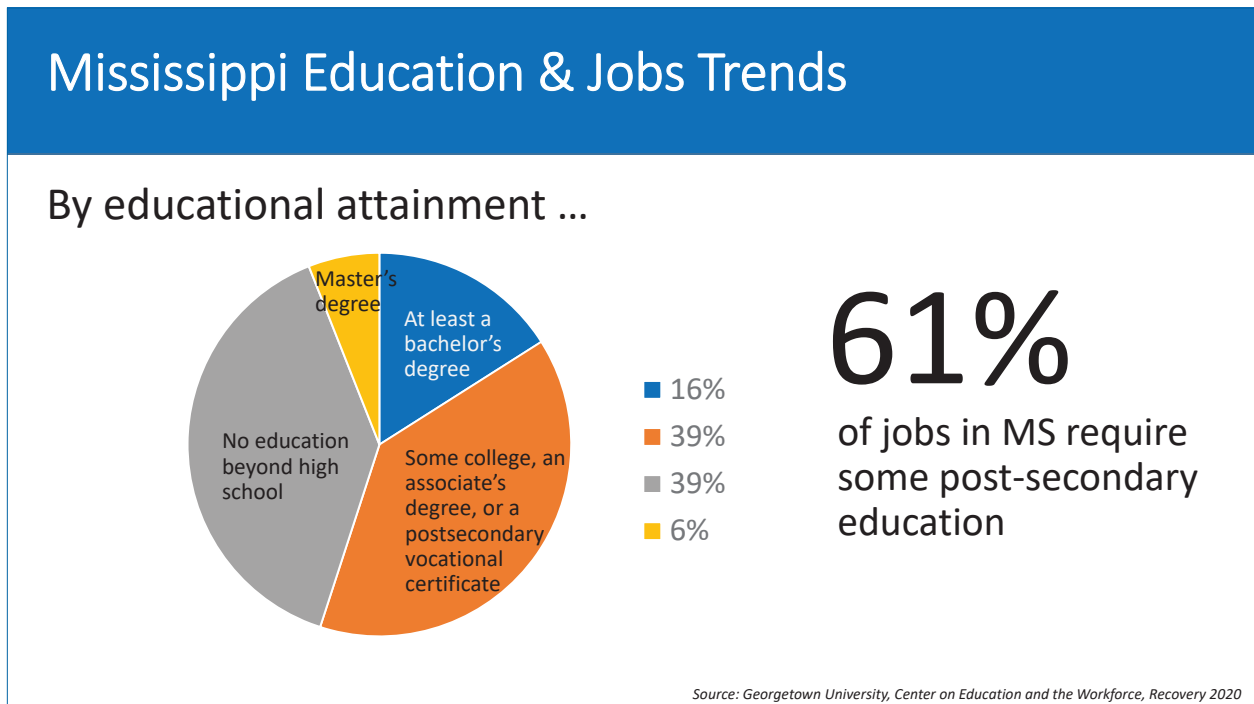
- Education leader

Job training is the foundational aspect that must be addressed. Other dynamics – including access to affordable childcare and transportation – must not be overlooked. For example, one recent study found single working mothers

in Mississippi make far less than other types of workers, and single working mothers are further burdened as they struggle to find and pay for quality childcare.

The Moore Community House in Biloxi is helping mothers land careers in higher-paying, nontraditional industries such as construction and advanced manufacturing. The program not only provides workforce but helps cover the costs of child care, and helps those receiving the training transition apprenticeships or jobs.

Programs like WIN Job Centers are vital in helping our adult population find and fill the current open jobs in the state. WIN also offers training when necessary. Additionally, the MS Department of Education offers short-term Adult Career and Technical programs/classes.



“I’m encouraged by MDE’s work to get more students across the finish line to high school graduation and to expose K-12 students to all employment options.”

- Education leader

Plan for the Future

Having identified the challenges, needs and opportunities, what does this look like moving forward?

There is no one-size-fits-all solution to Mississippi's workforce dilemma.

Different regions of the state have different needs. What works for the Delta will differ from the Coast or Northeast Mississippi. What works for the Coast or Northeast Mississippi will differ from Southwest Mississippi or other regions of the state.

Endeavor seeks to connect the dots and utilize post-secondary education and training opportunities to help create a qualified, prepared, and ready workforce to fuel Mississippi's economy. Collaboration and outcome-focused, Endeavor seeks to:

- Increase the number of qualified, prepared, and ready workers in Mississippi.
- Ensure unskilled workers have both the life and practical skills needed for the job market.
- Encourage and champion awareness of people to celebrate, take ownership and pride in joining the workforce and helping their families and Mississippi advance their economic position.
- Advocate for greater education innovation and workforce awareness promotions at the pre-k, K12 and post-high school levels through legislation and by empowering school principals, superintendents and boards.
- Position Mississippi as a place to stay, live, work and thrive by preparing a skill-based and entrepreneurial workforce that will help grow the state for years to come.



“One of the issues today is students not knowing what careers they can pursue and how to get there. Students should not have to choose between lifelong learners and lifelong earners.”

- National labor official

How will Endeavor help accomplish this?

Through Endeavor, MEC will undertake a five-year approach to promote public and private sector solutions focused on providing Mississippians with the opportunity to gain academic and industry credentials along with the life and practical skills necessary for the job market. It is critical that education and workforce are viewed as “one issue” in order to improve outcomes that lead to a quality workforce, especially in career and technical development.



This approach will encompass short and long-term objectives, including brainstorming creative solutions with Mississippi’s executive leadership, as well as MEC members and leaders; model legislation and potential legislative action; policy enhancements and programmatic implementation and promotion.

Endeavor will identify short- and long-term policy and program initiatives with the goal of accomplishing the following:

- I. Educate MEC members, legislators, policymakers, industry groups, other stakeholders, and the general public about the current state of our workforce and the opportunity Mississippi has to create jobs for now and the future.
 - Provide vision and overall objectives for the effort.
 - Encourage the Legislature to host committee hearings featuring organizations already succeeding through innovative and effective programs that demonstrate how different approaches work well in different communities.
 - Invite elected officials and education innovators to join MEC in roadshows and other events throughout Mississippi promoting the effort.
 - Incorporate workforce preparedness in existing MEC efforts and communication, which also include social media, electronic newsletters, MEC events and the MEC Tour.
- II. Compel coordination of workforce training programs, funding mechanisms and private sector efforts to better manage expectations and outcomes.
 - Advocate for the appointment of a single official/office or agency to coordinate the various programs impacting our workforce in Mississippi.
 - Ensure private sector programs are working hand-in-hand with public community colleges, institutions of higher learning and workforce certification programs.
 - Determine pathways to better utilize existing policies and programs, promote the work of agencies overseeing the programs and look for ways to expand those policies.

“When it comes to college and career, there is much more emphasis put on college.”

- Education leader

III. Promote innovation, competition and improved results in education.

- Advocate for a Student Focused Funding Formula to empower students to best pursue their aspirations.
- Take the demands off principals that keep them focused on meeting mandates rather than focusing on students' preparation to join the workforce and make a good living.
- Encourage schools to offer practical skills in addition to basic academics – computer coding, critical thinking, welding, electrical, manufacturing, agricultural, STEM, technical writing, etc.
- Provide additional opportunities for citizens to become workforce certified through ACT Work Keys, the major component in developing “Work Ready” communities across the state.
- Explore options for students to be exposed to career opportunities based on skills and interests, and provide stronger career guidance at all levels of education.

IV. Celebrate statewide and local successes - i.e. Districts of Innovation, apprentice, mentoring and internship programs, improved reading scores and graduation rates, training impact on filling job vacancies and economic development wins.

- Encourage state and private funding and incentives for companies to increase apprentice, mentoring and internship programs.
- Look for ways to promote successful privately funded programs to create opportunities for programs to be expanded into other parts of the state.
- Advance educational opportunities and foster career growth in technology, computer science and engineering.



V. Identify and explore successful programs from across the country. Adapt, implement and promote where appropriate.

- CHOICE High School and Technical Center in Okaloosa County School District, Florida is helping develop students' trade and technical skills to prepare them for the job market.
- A drop-out prevention academic program that offers the option for career/technical courses such as automotive technology, construction technology, cosmetology salon & spa, culinary arts, digital cinema and welding technology.
- Use extracurricular activities/programs beyond the classroom as a method for practical skills training and provide a method to measure student involvement.

VI. Capitalize on available, yet unfilled jobs in Mississippi to recruit newcomers to our state, while persuading more students to stay in Mississippi.

- Determine ways to attract younger workers, as the nation's largest living generation is now the Millennials (born 1981-1997) and many are now looking to put down roots.
- This age group offers an opportunity for Mississippi's economy if the right amenities, housing options and job potential can be communicated.
- Promote Mississippi's positive factors for our younger population, as the state has the overall lowest cost of living and housing costs are 31.6 percent lower than the national average.

“The new workforce currency includes both academic credentials and industry credentials.”

- Leading workforce researcher

The Process

Through Endeavor, MEC leadership is setting forth a scope of work and five-year strategic plan to work with the Governor, Lieutenant Governor and Speaker of the House and other legislative and public policy leaders to bring educational and public and private sector entities together in a concerted effort to advance Mississippi's economy and economic opportunities for our citizens.

We've shared plans for Endeavor with state elected leaders and are pleased our elected officials have expressed a strong interest in working together to champion such an important issue for our state.

We have also met with business, education and workforce leaders in Mississippi (and elsewhere) to discuss short- and long-term objectives. We continue to stay true to our mission, working with MEC members to make sure we are a strong advocate for the business community.



As we make progress and continue to learn how best to proceed, MEC will offer an “innovation agenda” each Fall with legislation and policy recommendations that provide the blueprint for economic competitiveness in Mississippi.

We will also take an annual look at our progress knowing, “You cannot manage that which you cannot measure.” We will identify key objectives we can measure to help us know we are “keeping the main thing the main thing” – which is making sure Mississippi develops a stable, prepared and ready workforce.

While conceived as a five-year plan, our hope is Endeavor will become a way of life for Mississippians as we work to advance our state and economic opportunities for our citizens.

“The best incubator of innovation is competition.”
- Policy expert

Groups, organizations and programs that should be part of the process:

Potential Partners

CREATE Foundation
Delta Council
Delta Regional Authority
Innovate Mississippi
Institutions of Higher Learning and all state universities
 Center for Advanced Vehicular Systems
 Center for Manufacturing Excellence (CME)
 Polymer Institute
 Mississippi State University Extension Service
 National Strategic Planning and Analysis Research Center
Mississippi State Community College Board and all community colleges
Mississippi Association of Educators
Mississippi Association of School Superintendents
Mississippi Center for Quality and Workforce
Mississippi Construction Education Foundation
Mississippi Department of Education
Mississippi Department of Employment Security
 Workforce Investment Network (WIN) / WIN Job Centers
Mississippi Department of Human Services
Mississippi Development Authority
Mississippi Economic Development Council
Mississippi Energy Institute
Mississippi Manufacturing Association
Mississippi Professional Educators
Mississippi Public Service Commission
Mississippi Works
MINACT, Inc.
North Mississippi Industrial Development Association
Planning & Development Districts
State Workforce Investment Board

Also

Local chambers of commerce
Local economic development agencies
Local civic clubs
Faith-based Organizations & NGOs (TBD)
 Boys and Girls Clubs

Programs

Complete 2 Compete	Imagine the Possibilities
Get on the Grid	Mississippi Scholars & Tech Master programs
Districts of Innovation	Mississippi Works Fund
Families First for Mississippi	Pathways to Possibilities
Imagine Academy	Skills Foundation

Conclusion

MEC leadership has heard repeatedly from its members that workforce is the number one issue we are currently facing. As the voice of Mississippi's business community, we are committed to an effort to provide Mississippians with the educational experience and practical skills necessary for the job market – beginning with pre-K and K12, and extending through secondary and post-secondary college to workforce training programs and lifelong learning. We are confident that these efforts to prepare, strengthen and grow our workforce will help fuel Mississippi's economy.

The needs are many. The opportunity is apparent. Our plan is realistic and actionable. Endeavor will advance a planned program to build a bright future for Mississippi.

