

Board of Registered Professional Geologists

LBO Number 826-00

**5-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN
FOR THE FISCAL YEARS 2019 - 2023**



July 17, 2017

BOARD OF REGISTERED PROFESSIONAL GEOLOGISTS FIVE YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

1. Comprehensive Mission Statement:

The Mississippi Board of Registered Professional Geologists was created to safeguard life, health, property, and to promote the public welfare. The overall mission of this agency is to ensure that those publicly practicing geology, environmental geology, engineering geology, geophysics, geochemistry and other subdisciplines of geology, are adequately educated, trained, and experienced so that the public's health, safety and welfare are indeed being protected.

Our mission includes the licensure and regulation of the public practice of geology by those that who make geologic determinations and evaluations which may affect the public welfare. The practice of geology and its scope is defined in the Mississippi Registered Professional Geologists Practice Act of 1997 (§73-63-1 *et seq*, Mississippi Code, Amended 1972).

2. Philosophy:

The Mississippi State Board of Registered Professional Geologists is dedicated to the protection of the environment, the public's health, safety and welfare, and to the competent public practice of geology. The philosophy of the Board is to fulfill its responsibilities to its enrollees/registrants and to the public with the highest professional standards, quality of service, and equitable treatment of all individuals. The Board maintains and operates by a Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics contained in its Rules and Regulations. The Board continually promotes a positive working relationship with private sector companies, universities, other State agencies, and geological licensure boards in other states to develop and share information to better serve the public.

3. Relevant Statewide Goals and Benchmarks:

- Statewide Goal #1 – To make available and accessible, quality public higher education at an affordable cost that prepares Mississippians to become productive, financially self-sufficient members of society while meeting the human resource needs of Mississippi and its employers, including the creation of new jobs through the commercialization of university-based research

Relevant Benchmarks for Goal #1

- Licensure exam pass rates for graduates with four-year degrees in a licensed field of study, by field of study
- Percentage of graduates in high-needs disciplines who enter and remain in practice in Mississippi in the high-need discipline five years and ten years following graduation, by discipline
- Licensure exam pass rate for graduate school graduates by discipline

- Percentage of graduates in high-need disciplines practicing in Mississippi, by discipline
- Statewide Goal #2 – To create an efficient government and an informed and engaged citizenry that helps to address social problems through the payment of taxes, the election of capable leaders at all levels of government, and participation in charitable organizations through contributions and volunteerism

Relevant Benchmarks for Goal #2

- Number of government employees per 10,000 population
- Average wait time for state government services
- Regulatory efficiency: average length of time to resolution of documented complaints to professional licensing agencies
- Number and average cost of regulatory actions taken, by regulatory body and type of action
- State dollars saved by providing government services online

4. Overview of the Agency's Five Year Strategic Plan:

- In FY 1998 the Board established policies, procedures and rules necessary to initiate the implementation of Mississippi Annotated Code Sections 73-63-1 through 73-63-57 (Supp. 1997). These activities have continued since that time focusing on the development and dissemination of applications for registration and enrollment and the thorough review of qualifications and registration or enrollment of qualified applicants. As such, these remain as targeted activities of the agency.
- The Board established and continues to promote and expand the use of the two geologic competency exams (the FG (Fundamentals of Geology) and the PG (Practice of Geology)). The FG was adopted as an "Exit/Assessment" examination by the three (3) state universities that offer degrees in geology. The Board approves the candidates for the exam and administers the exams twice a year. These exams are developed by Association of State Boards of Geology (ASBOG®) and are used by all 31 states requiring geological licensure. The Board's Director actively participates in the functions of ASBOG.
- In FY 1999, the Board established a regulatory program to investigate complaints and impose penalties and disciplinary actions. The Board will continue to actively investigate complaints and take appropriate disciplinary actions. The Board will streamline this process and to reduce the time to resolution.
- The Board has further established a procedure for the application and issuance of temporary work permits for those registered/licensed as professional geologists in other states. The Board will work to streamline this process through the Board's website.

- The Board has developed reciprocity/comity agreements with Alabama, Georgia, Arkansas, Louisiana, and the Texas Board of Professional Geoscientists and will develop new agreements with other states.
- Online license renewal has now reached the 50% mark. This does provide a significant savings of time and resources. The Board will continue to improve the process which will ultimately increase the number of online renewals.
- The Board of Registered Professional Geologists has a signed Memorandum of Understanding with the Mississippi Board of Registration for Professional Engineers and Land Surveyors which defined the basis of the relationship between these two boards. Once each year select members of each board and their respective Executive Directors meet to discuss overlapping professional practice and regulatory issues. It is the Board's goal to maintain this avenue of discourse into the future.
- The Board's Director is currently working on databases to provide digital access to all of the Board's current and historical records. A goal of December 2018 has been established for completion of that project. Compilation of all the Board's ASBOG exam records (FG and PG exams) for digital access and analysis is in progress with the ultimate goal of presenting the historical information to the respective universities in the spring of 2018. The Board plans to improve the Board's website to make different services and public information available to its registrants/enrollees and to the general public by December of 2019. The Board anticipates an overall growth in the demand for geologists. The goals and objective outlined above will help the Board deal with that growth and better serve its registrants/enrollees and the public.

5. Agency's External/Internal Assessment and Management Systems:

- There has been a significant (8%) decline in the number of registrants and enrollees (i.e. RPG's and GIT) during the last 24 months. About 25% of these have dropped their registration/enrollment due to the lack of work or no longer doing work in the State. Another 25% dropped because they were retiring. The remaining half dropped for unknown reasons. The latest trend is an upswing in registration and enrollment – presumably because of the upswing in the economy. This drop in registration/enrollment affects the Board's revenue; however, the reduction is not having and adverse affect on the Board at this time.
- The Board is striving to optimize its services and functions, and reducing costs through improvements in its online services, digitizing records, database and website improvements. Planned upgrades (in FY 2018) to the Boards computer will help significantly with these matters. In order for the website improvements to take place, it may be necessary to make changes to the Board's website provider.

- The Fundamentals of Geology Exam (the FG) is provided by the National Association of Boards of Geologists (ASBOG®) and the exam is taken as an assessment exam by graduating seniors majoring in geology at MSU, USM, and UM. During the last 24 months the pass rate has dropped well below the national average for all who have taken the exam (i.e., those who are graduating and those who have graduated and are retaking the exam). The Board and ASBOG are currently working with the universities to correct this problem.
- During the last few years, the economy in the State has been weak and it has increased the number of professionals in high-needs disciplines looking for jobs outside of the State. This not only negatively affects this Board, but it negatively affects the economic health of the State.

6. Agency Goals and Objectives, Strategies and Measures by Program of Licensure & Regulation for FY 2019 through FY 2023:

GOAL A: MAINTAIN TRANSPARENCY OF AGENCY TO THE PUBLIC, OTHER AGENCIES, AND REGISTRANTS/ENROLLEES (Source: §73-63-1 *et seq*, Mississippi Code, Amended 1972)

Objective A.1. Maintain Access by Enrollees-Registrants and the Public to Information including Public Records - Information Outreach

A.1.1. STRATEGY (*output, efficiency, and explanatory*): The Board maintains its continuing policy of open access to all public records. It does so primarily through its web site (www.msbrpg.ms.gov) which contains online application materials, order forms, complaint forms, MOU's, comity/reciprocity agreements with other states, official Board opinions, official Attorney General opinions, the full text of the Registered Professional Geologists Practice Act of 1997, examination information and forms, rules and regulations of procedures of the Board, news items, financial reports, annual reports, continuing education offerings including dates and times, and other Board activities including meeting times, dates, and agendas, as well as a complete online listing of enrollees and registrants of the Board.

A.1.2. STRATEGY (*output, efficiency, and explanatory*): The Board will continue its maintenance of this web site with relevant information as needed and/or required. Enrollees and registrants of the Board are also sent notice of newsletters made available on the web site that are intended to inform and update them, as well as the public, on the activities of the agency, as well as other matters of importance related to the public practice of geology in the State of Mississippi, the U.S., and globally when applicable.

A.1.3. STRATEGY (*output, efficiency, and explanatory*): Beginning in FY 2014, the Board's Director was invited to submit a monthly column regarding the activities of the Board that were published in the Mississippi Geological Society's Newsletter (the Mississippi Geological Society is the state's sole, voluntary professional organization for geologists). This added venue of informational outreach has aided in communicating to the public and other geologic professionals the functions, activities, and issues before the Board and how the Board has addressed the preceding topical areas.

A.1.4. STRATEGY (*output, efficiency, and explanatory*): At the beginning of FY 2001, the agency hired its first full-time employee as Executive Director to assume the day to day administrative activities and functions of the Board. The director has been responsible for all of the aforementioned activities, as well as giving presentations at the state's institutions of higher learning to inform those in academic programs leading to degrees in geology about the Board, its functions, the profession, etc. Additionally, the director has been responsible, at the direction of the Board, to meet with those agencies and private industries that deal directly or indirectly with geologic matters of the existence of the Board of Registered Professional Geologists and the ways in which the Board and its law may be of benefit in their overall goals, all of which ultimately may affect the public's health, safety and welfare. The director continues to serve on the Remote Sensing - Geographic Information Systems Council and on the State Mapping Advisory Council, and the Board's current President, Pat Phillips, now serves on the Board of Health's Waste Water Advisory Council.

GOAL B: THOROUGH REVIEW OF QUALIFICATIONS OF APPLICANTS FOR REGISTERED PROFESSIONAL GEOLOGIST AND GEOLOGIST IN TRAINING
(Source: §73-63-1 *et seq*, Mississippi Code, Amended 1972)

Objective B.1. Maintain Uniform Standards and Practice for Qualifying Applicants

B.1.1. STRATEGY (*output, efficiency, and explanatory*): The agency has developed a comprehensive methodology related to the review process pursuant to the requirements of candidates as set forth in §73-63-1 *et seq* (Mississippi Code, Amended 1972) and the Rules and Regulations of the Board. The Board continues to receive new applications for enrollment and registration which it processes, validates, and then issues or declines the issuance of enrollment or registration based on its review process. This process has been and will continue to be a significant component of the agency's activities.

GOAL C: ADMINISTRATION OF QUALIFYING EXAMINATIONS AND BOARD

PARTICIPATION (Source: §73-63-1 *et seq*, Mississippi Code, Amended 1972)

Objective C.1. Qualify Applicants and Administer Exams

C.1.1. STRATEGY (*output, efficiency, and explanatory*): As part of the continuation of its mandated activities, the Board will continue its examination of potential applicants for registration/licensing. The Board continues to work with the state's institutions of higher learning in implementing and examining those who may become registrants of the Mississippi State Board of Registered Professional Geologists. With each year more and more states are adopting laws which require the professional registration-licensure of geologists who publicly practice. Currently 31 states and one (1) US territory (Puerto Rico) require registration-licensure for geologists who publicly practice and/or impact the public's health, safety, or welfare.

C.1.2. STRATEGY (*output, efficiency, and explanatory*): Also related to the ASBOG[®] examinations, the Mississippi State Board of Registered Professional Geologists adopted the ASBOG[®] examinations as its qualifying examinations and became a full member of that organization in 1999. The previous Board's Director, Rick Ericksen, has maintained the agency's involvement by serving on ASBOG[®]'s Council of Examiners, by chairing its Uniform Procedures Committee and Public Relations Committee, as well as serving as a member of its Finance Committee. The new Board's Director, Michael Wright, will continue to work with ASBOG[®] in a similar capacity. The Board, as a whole, has made a determined effort to maintain and enhance its presence in the ASBOG[®] organization as it feels that it is a critical component of its overall examination process under the terms and conditions as set forth under §73-63-1 *et seq* (Mississippi Code, Amended 1972).

GOAL D: INVESTIGATIONS OF COMPLAINTS, ADMINISTRATION OF DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS, AND ENFORCEMENT OF THE REGISTERED PROFESSIONAL GEOLOGISTS PRACTICE ACT OF 1997 (Source: §73-63-1 *et seq*, Mississippi Code, Amended 1972)

Objective D.1. Investigate and Process Complaints and Complete Disciplinary Actions in a Timely Manner

D.1.1. STRATEGY (*output, efficiency, and explanatory*): The Board anticipates that over the time frame of FY 2018 - FY 2022, a continued and significant amount of its efforts and resources will be devoted to its regulatory/disciplinary functions. Since FY 2001 the Board has been receiving an increasing number of informal and formal complaints. The Board anticipated that the number of complaints would increase over time and also that activities related to the investigation and ultimate disposition

of complaints would become more significant, time-consuming, and costly. As required by its enabling legislation, this function has continued to be an important and necessary activity of the Board. Since FY 2000, the Board has investigated and processed in excess of 50 complaints. It is hoped that the number of complaints will diminish, but no matter what levels are encountered, the Board remains committed to its legislative mandates concerning the public practice of geology in this state and continue to fulfill the overall components of Goal D.

GOAL E: ADMINISTRATION OF CONTINUING EDUCATION PROGRAM
(Source: §73-63-1 *et seq*, Mississippi Code, Amended 1972)

Objective E.1. Investigate and Process Complaints and Complete Disciplinary Actions in a Timely Manner

E.1.1. STRATEGY (*output, efficiency, and explanatory*): The Board continues to promote educational opportunities, when and where available, for its registrants and enrollees by posting notices of such opportunities on its web site. This program objective was implemented in calendar year 2000 along with the formal adoption by the Board of its “Voluntary Continuing Education and Professional Development Program” in FY 2003. This strategy was implemented to help ensure that those practitioners offering his/her services are up-to-date on all of the latest techniques, practices, and interpretative protocols, etc.

E.1.2. STRATEGY (*output, efficiency, and explanatory*): Educational offerings and the dissemination of those opportunities help ensure that the public, governmental entities, and businesses that rely on environmental geology and/or environmental compliance and concerns that Mississippi registrants are maintaining and expanding their professional competencies in existing and new technologies and attendant technological advances in the geological sciences, as well as keeping informed and cognizant of existing, modified, and/or new governmental rules, regulations, and procedures. As noted, to attain these objectives the Board, through its offices and affiliations with several geological societies and organizations, formally adopted and implemented its program of voluntary continuing education for its registrants and enrollees at no additional cost other than that which is charged to cover expenses of the actual educational offerings. Again, by promoting this strategy, the educational program component further ensures that the Board's registrants and enrollees are qualified, competitive, and competent as related to the professional services which they offer to the public.