



**5 Year Strategic Plan
Fiscal Year 2025-2029**

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AccelerateMS Mission & Vision

Mission Statement: AccelerateMS serves the people and businesses of Mississippi by developing and deploying workforce strategies to connect individuals with transformative, high-paying careers. By leveraging resources and partnering with organizations that hold complementary missions, AccelerateMS effectuates positive change, creating sustained individual, community, and statewide economic prosperity.

Vision Statement: Mississippi will have a world-class workforce with unlimited, quality career opportunities to create sustained individual, community, and statewide economic prosperity.

Synopsis for AccelerateMS' Five-Year Strategic Plan

Improvement can be difficult, but it is always necessary, and AccelerateMS is proud to work with partners throughout the state to see improvements made with respect to workforce strategy development and deployment. These advancements are designed to meet the workforce needs of today as well as prepare for the needs of tomorrow.

AccelerateMS, in conjunction with our community college and industry partners, has deployed millions of dollars through the Workforce Enhancement Training (WET) Fund. With improvements made to how these funds are accessed and utilized, new workforce programs have been developed in areas such as advanced manufacturing, broadband, construction, and logistics. Existing programs such as nursing, diesel technology, CDL, and utility linework have all been increased to meet the growing and immediate market demand. Funding through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) has also contributed to the immediate workforce needs by not only creating new training opportunities in sectors directly impacted by COVID, but also with regards to “wrap-around” services that increase the likelihood of Mississippians jumping back into the workforce and finding financial independence. These services include childcare options for single parents during non-traditional working hours, transportation to training locations or work sites, as well as more non-traditional educational resources in money management and life skill development. AccelerateMS is working tirelessly to help get Mississippians back on their feet and connected to our businesses with the skills necessary to earn family-sustaining wages.

Meeting the immediate workforce needs of the state is incredibly important. However, if time is not dedicated to focusing on what lies ahead, the state will continue find itself in the position of reaction, losing out on the opportunity to be more proactive in workforce preparation. Along with many partners throughout the state, AccelerateMS has deployed nearly 140 career coaches to serve as mentors to high students across Mississippi. They serve as additional resources to students, parents, teachers, and school administrators as they highlight career paths above and beyond what is normally seen through traditional educational paths. With more coaches deploying in the coming year, almost every school district will have access to at least one career coach in helping students find a future that leads to a meaningful career.

AccelerateMS has also taken the initiative to identify ways the state can improve the Career Technical Educational Programs throughout K12 and into our community college programs to ensure alignment and connection to industry opportunities in our communities.

Our office holds to the tenant that we are never done improving. AccelerateMS will continue searching for ways to make lives better, more fulfilling, and more productive through workforce strategy development and deployment. This strategic plan highlights the key focal areas that AccelerateMS has used, and will continue to use, toward organizing efforts to improve Mississippi's workforce, will delineate amongst the programs that fall within each area, and be broken down into individual fiscal years. Key objectives will be addressed, along with the goals necessary to achieve those objectives.

This plan will be organized using the focal areas:

- **General Office Operation:** personnel and operations associated with maintaining of office structure.
- **Triage Strategy:** defined as strategy targeting more immediate and emergent needs facing workforce health and vitality in Mississippi.
- **Horizons Thinking:** defined as strategy targeting workforce needs of the future marketplace and economic demand.
- **Customizable Training:** defined as strategy targeting workforce needs specific to expanding OR new industry partners in the state of Mississippi.

AccelerateMS Programs that fall within these focal areas are highlighted and strategic planning will be made based upon reasonable, realistic, and appropriate forecasting.

Funding Sources & Fiscal Responsibilities

Annual Funds

AccelerateMS currently has authority over funds derived from multiple sources. There are three (3) distinct funds that accumulate as a result of the state's Unemployment Insurance (UI) tax: The Workforce Enhancement Training Fund (WET), the MS Works Fund, and the State Workforce Investment Board Fund (now called the Office of Workforce Development Bank Account). While these funding amounts fluctuate based on the total taxes collected on a yearly basis, they generally result in approximately \$27 million, combined, each year. Beginning in FY24, AccelerateMS also operates through a state appropriation detailed below serving both office operations and the state's career coach program.

Workforce Enhancement Training Fund

The Workforce Enhancement Training (WET) fund accrues approximately \$20 million each year and is used for training program purposes in collaboration with the community college system at the direction of AccelerateMS. This fund operates through two primary means: 1) an annual allocation to each requesting college based on requests submitted to the office and 2) awards

for 'special projects' serving specified needs supported by industry requests, demands, or needs in the associated region.

Mississippi Works

The MS Works Fund, previously housed within the purview of the Mississippi Development Authority (MDA), generates approximately \$5 million each year. These funds are utilized for training programs associated with new and expanding industries or for the purpose of employee retention or creating a work-ready pool of applicants. Funds are available for the office to use in collaboration with community colleges, IHLs, LWDA areas in Mississippi, and other areas deemed appropriate to support specific industry needs meeting program rules.

State Workforce Investment Board Fund (Office of Workforce Development Bank Account)

In AccelerateMS' initial two years of operation, the fund referred to as the "SWIB" account served as the operational funds for the office due to the accumulation of a surplus of funds, as well as the account to support the State Workforce Investment Board. This fund generates approximately \$1.2 million each year. In FY24, the fund's original purpose of use has been expanded beyond general office operation, to include the development of a K12 Micro-Grant Program to be deployed in the future.

State Appropriation

AccelerateMS, through the fiscal agency of the Mississippi Department of Employment Security (MDES) received \$12 million of state funds for the continuation and expansion of the Career Coach Program that was initiated using one-time, federal funds. These resources will allow for the original program to continue as well as the expansion of the program to allow for additional career coaches to identified, hired, and deployed in areas of the state without prior access to any coach within the previous iteration of the program.

Additionally, during the 2023 legislative session, AccelerateMS received, for the first time, an appropriation of state funds for its office operation. AccelerateMS received an appropriation of \$3.2 million for the expressed purpose of maintaining office operation beginning the transition away from funding generated through the Unemployment Insurance (UI) tax.

One-Time Funds:

One-time funds are funds or awards to the office to serve a specific purpose either from the Mississippi Legislature, a federal source, or other funding entity. To date, AMS has one-time funds from the Mississippi Legislature (ARPA) and MDES (Department of Defense, OLDCC).

American Rescue Plan Act

AccelerateMS was legislatively mandated in the last two (2) legislative sessions to develop workforce training programming or related activities and oversee the disbursement of funds derived from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) for the support of these programs. Initial ARPA authorized funding was allocated during the 2022 legislative session in the amount of \$60 million to be used for specific programming.

- \$32 million of that total amount was set aside for direct training in the areas of: healthcare, logistics and supply chain, emerging technologies, and wrap around services.
- \$20 million was legislatively mandated to be used for the programmatic enhancement of a school of osteopathic medicine in Mississippi.
- An additional \$8 million was designated for the creation and deployment of a career coach program throughout the state.

These initial ARPA funded programs were slated to be completed within the 2022/2023 fiscal year. However, legislative changes resulting from the 2023 legislative session authorized the use of and responsibility over these funds throughout the entirety of the federal ARPA program which culminates December of 2026.

Additional ARPA funds were legislatively assigned during the 2023 legislative session for the creation of workforce training programs associated with the healthcare industry, specifically. \$28 million is directed to support a variety of programs with the intent to increase employment participation within nursing and physician care.

- Establish the Mississippi Nursing/Allied Health grant. These funds will be utilized by training providers to augment current academic/non-academic training programs for professions such as nursing, medical technicians, and other healthcare related employment opportunities.
- Establish the Mississippi Physician Residency and Fellowship Start-Up Grant Program to assist in the retention of medical doctors in geographic locations of great need.
- Establish the Mississippi Allied Health College and Career Navigator Grant Program. This program will deploy healthcare industry “navigators” to assist student participants through to completion of their respective nurse training.

Department of Defense

MDES, in partnership with AccelerateMS, was awarded funding in the amount of \$4,999,634 from the Department of Defense, Defense Manufacturing Community Support Program in 2022. Known as MS-SHIPS, the Mississippi-Shipbuilding Industry Preparedness for National Security Consortium works to undertake a \$6,694,579 project to bolster national security by modernizing Mississippi’s shipbuilding industry by enhancing sector capacity, capability, competitiveness, and resiliency. The project will create a skilled and diverse talent pipeline for the region's shipbuilding industry, accelerate adoption of Industry 4.0 manufacturing practices in the shipbuilding supply chain, and develop advanced solutions designed to enhance worker safety. Consortium members will implement regionally tailored strategies in support of each goal, ensuring partners have a broad reach and a lasting impact. Formally, MDES serves as AMS’ fiscal agent so is considered the grant recipient.

Goals & Objectives for AccelerateMS

General Office Operations

AccelerateMS has been an entity for two full fiscal years as FY24 is approached. The office, moving into FY24 received its first legislative appropriation and is working through the stabilization phase where efforts to solidify the organization's structure and responsibilities are underway and expected to be finalized this year. While structure is addressed, the challenging labor market requires a direct focus and to consider solutions differently as there are many nuances today that simply didn't exist even a few years ago. As such, strategic planning requires more short-term (less than 2 years) focus than long-term in the moment. However, all annual goals derive from the overarching goals of AccelerateMS:

- Goal 1: All Mississippians will have increased earning potential.
- Goal 2: All Mississippians will have the opportunity to work in a meaningful career.
- Goal 3: All Mississippians will have the opportunity to complete education and training programs that align with meaningful careers.
- Goal 4: All Mississippians will have access to high quality workforce services through a network of service providers.

Fiscal Year 2025

General Office Operations: AccelerateMS plans to request a minimum of \$5.5 million to fund the customizable training program and reach the funding originally requested in FY24 budget. It is anticipated we will expend approximately \$3.5 million for personnel, \$200,000 for office business travel, \$775,000 for Supplies and equipment, and \$962,529 for contractual services. Lastly, \$100,000 will be utilized by MDES for services rendered as the fiscal agent for the office. These funds are necessary to support critical operations as the office moves forward with better coordinating and deploying workforce strategy in Mississippi and administering the funds outlined above. Creating new programs to address identified needs requires human capital to support the work to be done.

Triage: Defined as strategy and goals targeting more immediate and emergent needs facing workforce health and vitality in Mississippi.

- Goal 1 – Execute the first year of Mississippi's unified state workforce plan to guide future workforce development and training efforts.
 - Objective – Create and adjust funding programs (as legislatively allowed through AccelerateMS operated funding sources) to support identified gaps and needs.
 - Objective – Align state partner agency efforts and provide guidance to each to support existing efforts.
 - Objective – Create and institute an evaluation plan for the unified workforce plan.

Basis of Measurement – Unified State Plan document created and communicated to state and local partners, including annual evaluation plan.

- Goal 2 – Improve processes and procedures regarding the direction and use of Workforce Enhancement Training (WET) Funds, MS Works Funds, and K-12 micro-grant funds.
 - Objective – Develop a consistent and unified computer-based program to input and house all related data.
 - Objective – Identify areas of excess administrative burden and streamline processes and procedures.
 - Objective – Create guidelines, timeline, and procedures for the K-12 micro-grant program.

Basis of Measurement – Computer based program created and piloted with associated partners and K-12 micro-grant program available for application.

Basis of Measurement – Minimum of two (2) partner meetings to determine efficacy of computer-based program with list of needs created.

- Goal 3 – Pursue additional funding to support efforts related to increasing the labor force participation rate.
 - Objective – Seek sources of funding that align with state goals and supplement available funding.
 - Objective – Align available state dollars with any pursuant efforts to ensure alignment of the system.
- Basis of Measurement – Apply for a minimum of one (1) additional non-state funding source.

Horizon Thinking: Defined as strategy and goals targeting the improvement of the long-term health and vitality of Mississippi’s workforce.

- Goal 1 – Identify and partner with entities engaged in technology development to ensure alignment of workforce development efforts.
 - Objective – Determine workforce training and development related gaps and provide guidance for potential ways to mitigate existing challenges.
 - Objective – Align available funding, where feasible, to support efforts.

Basis of Measurement – Participate in a minimum of two (2) external programs with related partners, providing workforce development guidance on associated efforts.

- Goal 2 – Analyze and create opportunities and pathways to benchmark in K12 Career and Technical Education.
 - Objective – Connect more CTE K12 programs to industry for each respective ecosystem, identify respective credentials of value.

- Objective – Report progress at the MS Horizons Symposium with industry sector and educational partners.

Basis of Measurement – Evaluate inventory of courses in each ecosystem to ensure continued connection between CTE courses and available high-quality career paths.

- Goal 3 – Identify opportunities for Teacher Experiences within industry sectors along with area career coaches (hands-on learning and in an experiential format).
 - Objective – Increase connection and cooperation between teachers and career coaches.
 - Objective – Increase teacher awareness of high-quality career opportunities.

Basis of Measurement – Highlight conducted experiences and acknowledgement of report at MS Horizons Symposium.

Customizable Training: Defined as a program available to new or expanding businesses with the specific goal of providing resources to quickly scale up recruiting, screening, and training capabilities.

- Goal 1 – Secure appropriate resources and reassess needs for customized training based on previous year’s feedback and anticipated project work.

Basis of Measurement – Associated budgets created and communicated to leadership using specific economic development projects as model(s).

- Goal 2 – Associated team members and program ready for deployment.

Basis of Measurement – Associated budgets created and communicated to leadership using specific economic development projects as model(s).

General Review of Overall Yearly Strategy Expectations: Internal review of all strategy and outcomes to be performed on an annual basis.

Fiscal Year 2026 – 2028

General Office Operations: AccelerateMS remains a new state entity working to understand and address needs as identified by partners and Mississippi’s leadership. As such, plans beyond 2 years serve as a general beacon, and are not intended to define exactly what will happen. AccelerateMS plans to request a minimum of \$5.5 million to address general staffing, customizable training staffing, and cost of living adjustments. It is anticipated we will expend approximately \$4 million for personnel, \$200,000 for office business travel, \$775,000 for Supplies and equipment, and \$962,529 for contractual services. Lastly, \$100,000 will be utilized by MDES for services rendered as the fiscal agent for the office. These funds are necessary to support critical operations as the office moves forward with better coordinating and deploying workforce strategy in Mississippi and administering the funds outlined above. Creating new programs to address identified needs requires human capital to support the work to be done.

Triage: Defined as strategy and goals targeting more immediate and emergent needs facing workforce health and vitality in Mississippi.

- Goal 1 – Review current outcomes from state workforce plan, adjust plan as necessary to ensure efforts lead to increased wages and employment rates for Mississippians.
- Goal 2 – Seek continuous improvement in all processes and procedures regarding the direction and use of Workforce Enhancement Training (WET) Funds, MS Works Funds, K-12 micro-grant funds, and any other funds designated to the office.
- Goal 3 – Continue to pursue additional funding to support efforts related to increasing the labor force participation rate.

Horizon Thinking: Defined as strategy and goals targeting the improvement of the long-term health and vitality of Mississippi’s workforce.

- Goal 1 – Identify and partner with entities engaged in technology development to ensure alignment of workforce development efforts.
- Goal 2 – Examine and review existing career coach program to determine appropriate age level of intervention.

Customizable Training: Defined as a program available to new or expanding businesses with the specific goal of providing resources to quickly scale up recruiting, screening, and training capabilities.

- Goal 1 – Monitor overall structure and budget for program based on existing and anticipated needs.

Conclusory Statement regarding Strategic Plan: AccelerateMS is determined to effectuate much needed improvement toward workforce strategy development and deployment. The plan identifies known challenges and opportunities. It is anticipated that societal changes may force additions to this plan as the workforce continues to recover from COVID and associated impacts. As with all strategy development within AccelerateMS, this plan is subject to change, adjustment, and/enhancement as new information/opportunities become apparent.