

MADISON COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Competitive Economic Development Assessment Final Report



April 20, 2017

Prepared by:

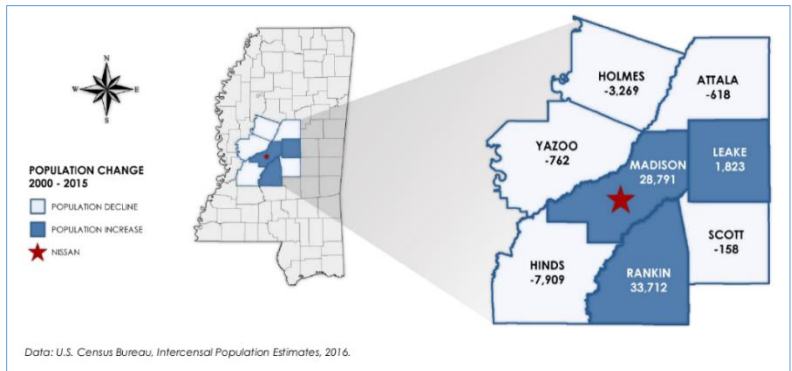


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Preface

Madison County is one of the fastest growing counties in Mississippi and ranks in the top 200 nationally.¹ It is a county known for low crime, strong public schools, international businesses, employment opportunities and a strong workforce. The resources of the county provide a quality of place that competes with any location in not only Mississippi, but globally.



VisionFirst Advisors was challenged with the task of looking at the performance of Madison County Economic Development Authority (MCEDA), the county's lead economic development organization, and its effectiveness to compete in today's highly competitive economic market place. Simply put, does MCEDA effectually function at a level that represents the preeminence of Madison County today?

Unfortunately, the operation of MCEDA is no longer viewed by audiences as highly effective, especially given all the resources afforded by its location. As one person noted, "MCEDA still operates as an old-school industrial board." This is not a criticism of the members of the board who are focused on trying to do the right thing. There are many other contributing causes to the lackluster performance as compared to other high-performing economic development organizations that are mentioned in this report. The key to success is knowing while that structure can be tweaked, changed, or completely reinvented, it will not sustain itself without the right leadership running the organization and the necessary business support embracing it.

As part of our work, VisionFirst interviewed more than 50 stakeholders. The feedback was candid and whether accurate or not, the perceptions are real. But not all is dire, the MCEDA board has been engaged throughout the process, providing great feedback and listening intently to our findings. The board is a dedicated group of diverse county residents with the desire to elevate MCEDA to a high-performing organization reflecting the stature of Madison County. It will take collaboration of business leadership, political support and the desire by all to move forward. I have often heard it said that there is no room in economic development for partisan politics. Yes, parties can influence business climate and set the stage for job creation and investment attraction, but in the end, the nuts and bolts of implementing the plan and programs must be a team effort by all.

Gray Swoope
President & CEO, VisionFirst Advisors

¹ US Census, 2015 Population percent change from 2010 Population. Madison ranks 191st. Image from MSU's NSPARC's Report Nissan Canton: A Catalyst for Advanced Automotive Manufacturing in Mississippi

Overview & Approach

Madison County Economic Development Authority (MCEDA) has reached a critical turning point. During its existence, MCEDA experienced great success in landing competitive projects and was a leader in local economic development. Today, the competition for jobs and private capital is increasingly more difficult. States do not compete against states for projects but rather communities against communities meaning economic development organizations must constantly plan, implement, evaluate and adjust to market conditions to remain competitive. Additionally, communities must consider a broader approach to grow the economy to ensure prosperity for all segments of the population. The following pages contain a strategic economic development assessment of MCEDA, its status as it currently exists and a suite of recommendations that positions the organization to move forward as a high-performing economic development entity. In addition, VisionFirst has provided recommendations on strategic initiatives for MCEDA to aid in the development of a program of work.

It is important to note, plans and assessments are only of value if they are implemented.

Using this assessment as a catalyst, community leaders must unify themselves to take advantage of the community's assets, overcome its challenges and work together to reinvigorate the organization's performance and success. Outlined below is the approach and steps taken.

Overarching goals in conducting the competitive economic development assessment:

- Conduct a comprehensive operational and organizational assessment of MCEDA and its work.
- Conduct a competitive review of Madison County economic development looking at barriers and opportunities.
- Benchmark other similar and aspirational communities as well as successful county-level economic development models.
- Recommend and develop collaborative strategies to benefit the entire county.
- Develop a suite of recommendations to move MCEDA forward as a high-performing economic development organization as well as strategic short term, midterm and long-term initiatives.

The project approach included:

- Review of previous initiatives, plans and assess progress to date.
- Gather input from numerous stakeholders and community members through one-on-one interviews, community survey, meetings with other relevant organizations, etc.
- Conduct research to understand threats, challenges and opportunities.
- Assimilate, review and analyze trends, findings and research.
- Present updated report of initial observations and themes.
- Develop a suite of recommendations identifying:
 - Collaborative opportunities with stakeholders.
 - Initiatives to develop strategy.
 - Best practices of high-performing organizations.
- Present final report at February MCEDA Board of Directors meeting.

A Pathway to Sustained Innovation & Growth

*“A house divided against itself cannot stand.”
President Abraham Lincoln*

Successful Economic Development Organizations (EDOs) exist in many different structures and sizes. Regardless of how big or small the organization is, often there are several similar characteristics. Invariably these organizations will start with solid leadership from both the organizational and community levels. The organization relies on and promotes a host of resources from infrastructure to talent that help attract new projects and development. Finally, the organization is proactive and aggressive in its efforts and outreach to accomplish a well-defined and well-communicated mission. MCEDA throughout its history possessed all these characteristics but has struggled to capitalize on them and reach its full potential as an organization.

Currently, Madison County is experiencing record growth. Its proximity to a capital city, a low crime rate and a solid talent base have all contributed to a noticeable boost in commercial development. However, even though transformative industry such as Nissan² located and grew in the county, many feel the potential to capitalize the company as a top state employer has gone unrealized. With fierce competition from the surrounding counties, other communities in the state and

around the southeast, Madison County is at a crossroads and requires a strategic assessment to review its economic development organization, its processes, execution and program of work.

Still, Madison County's potential is great. Building on the capacity of its vibrant existing industry, strong workforce and motivated partners, MCEDA is uniquely positioned to develop a value proposition and strategy to lead business attraction and retention in central Mississippi. By focusing on utilizing existing resources such as Madison County Public Schools, Holmes Community College, the Center for Advanced Vehicular Systems (CAVS) and an engaged and knowledgeable leadership, MCEDA can foster the development of a regional innovation ecosystem.



² Photos courtesy of Nissan Newsroom and MCEDA Website

The Voice of the Community

The approach to this project has been multi-phased, with the first phase focus on obtaining the voice of the community. VisionFirst, along with the staff of MCEDA, outlined its plan of work to include more than 50 in-person interviews as well as facilitated discussions to gather key stakeholder input from local leaders, community advocates and business executives. (A complete list of interviews can be found in the back of the assessment.)

Beyond key stakeholders in the economic development process, it is important to hear from members of the community. Resident input is essential for not only the development of the competitive economic assessment but to build a base of understanding and support to accomplish MCEDA's program of work.

To that end, a community survey was launched on November 18 and lasted until the beginning of January. The survey gave residents the opportunity to provide feedback on what perceptions around the economic development process exist, what type of growth and industry is wanted and how residents feel about the quality of place they currently enjoy.

Conducting the assessment with an open dialogue with various private and public sector leaders and stakeholders provided context as VisionFirst developed the assessment and recommended strategies. These recommendations are reflective of the priorities of the county, with an awareness of the existing challenges and a focus on measurable as well as achievable goals and objectives. Although the interviews provided important baseline information, the structure and strategies recommended are not merely a compilation of the feedback provided. Instead they are built around the firm's insight, experience and industry best practices.



Key Takeaways from Public Engagement

The stakeholder interviews conducted covered a range of subjects, including the definition of economic development, MCEDA's efforts, the community's strengths and barriers. The findings outlined below are a summary of the viewpoints expressed during the interviews and are not necessarily the expression of a single individual or VisionFirst Advisors.

Underperforming as compared to high-performing EDOs.

- County has more resources and top employers than any other in Mississippi, yet it is not a true contender on competitive projects. MCEDA should be a leader on projects that Mississippi could not otherwise compete for.
- No clear program of work or mission in which the organization can find success.
- Mission creep has led to lack of funding support.

Lack of a shared vision.

- No shared overarching vision for economic development efforts in the county.
- MCEDA tries to be all things to all people rather than maintaining focus on the mission.
- The absence of a shared vision leads to lack of engagement from the organization to the board and the community.

No common definition of economic development.

- In the more than 50 interviews, there were almost as many definitions of economic development.

Must integrate business leadership into the economic development process.

- It is imperative that the organization seeks to utilize the existing intellectual business and industry capital in the community to further initiatives and efforts.
- Lack of a robust business retention and expansion program.

No coordination in developing a strong and sustainable talent pipeline.

- Disparity between schools/education system within the county.
- Little connectivity of workforce development programs.

Need to unite as a county to support economic growth throughout the entire geographic area.

- Economic disparity among cities, towns and communities within the county.
- Few transformational collaborative efforts.

Communities operate in silos leading to a lack of cohesive and meaningful engagement by businesses, elected officials and MDA.

- There is a vacuum of sustained leadership supporting economic development creating systemic problems for the organization.
- There is a limited regional approach.
- Political interests overlapping in the economic development approach.

People want to live in Madison County.

- The county provides a quality of place that families look for in a community.
- Residents believe the county provides a safe environment with high-performing schools.

Comprehensive SWOT Analysis

To clearly outline the community's strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT), VisionFirst Advisors compiled a high-level analysis depicted below and expanded the analysis on the next page.





Strengths

- One of the state's top employers, Nissan, is in Madison County.
- Highly educated workforce.
- High-performing public and private schools.
- Quality of place.
- Located in a state that supports economic development.
- Organization's enabling legislation does not have a sunset provision.

Weaknesses

- Lack of a defined program of work.
- Lack of formalized and defined business retention and expansion program.
- Lack of product - site ready property and buildings.
- Workforce inadequately articulated.
- No cohesive workforce programs that engage relevant partners and businesses.
- Minimal proactive entrepreneurial activities.
- Economic prosperity is not realized for the entire county.
- Lack of engagement at MCEDA.
- Failing grades and lack of community support for Canton Public Schools.
- Lack of brand identity for MCEDA.
- Lack of adequate staff and resources to run a high-performing organization.
- Little collaboration between the business community and MCEDA.
- Organization has not used its structure to capture intellectual capital of the community.

Opportunities

- Madison Mega Site.
- Canton Square Downtown Redevelopment.
- Work with existing industry to develop efforts around education and workforce development.
- Community development activities in less developed areas of the county.
- The Collaboratory.
- Opportunities to diversify the economy in shared services.
- Economic development organization should reflect the type of community Madison County aspires to be.

Threats

- Political interference.
- Perception of self-interest attached to past economic development is off-putting to business.
- Lack of regional approach.
- Relying on business recruitment to build the economy.

SWOT Leverage Points

Far too often SWOT analyses are conducted for discovery purpose only. VisionFirst goes far beyond just the initial step of conducting the analysis. Given the strengths and opportunities MCEDA possesses as well as its weaknesses and threats, VisionFirst looks to develop strategies that help leverage or capitalize on each strength or opportunity and to minimize or mitigate weaknesses and threats. These strategies or “leverage points” help to illustrate the timeliest, most important calls-to-action for the county to execute to strengthen its position, achieve its mission and move the county to a greater competitive stance for jobs and investment.

| STRENGTH | LEVERAGE POINTS |
|--|---|
| Largest Employer: Nissan | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage the suppliers in BR&E efforts. Pursue expansions and be engaged in the needs of the industry. |
| Highly Educated Workforce | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be able to articulate the workforce story of the existing talent. |
| WEAKNESS | LEVERAGE POINTS |
| Lack of Business Engagement with MCEDA | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Align experts and intellectual capital for meaningful engagement in MCEDA’s efforts and strategies. |
| Lack of Workforce Development | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with partners through a coalition on the development of programs that raise the skill levels of residents throughout the county. |
| Lack of Product | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to develop existing product into site ready sites working with partners such as Entergy and others. |
| Minimal Entrepreneurial Programs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify existing best practices and programs to develop a community program that extends beyond MCEDA. |
| OPPORTUNITIES | LEVERAGE POINTS |
| Madison Mega Site | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Realistically re-target markets and clients to actively promote the site for development. |
| Canton Downtown Redevelopment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with city and county leadership to identify innovative strategies and best practices that could result in near-term success. |
| Life Science Niche Industries | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tell the story of the existing programs and successes taking place at the Collaboratory. Identify similar industries or companies who would be interested in partnership and/or expansion. |
| THREATS | LEVERAGE POINTS |
| Perception of County Self-Interest | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development and implementation of a strong program of work that all stakeholders support. Be more transparent of board activities. Recognize the county’s role as a regional pace-setter. |

Community Interest Survey

Beyond key stakeholders in the economic development process, it was important to provide a mechanism for interested members of the community to give input. Resident input is essential for not only the development of the competitive economic development assessment but to build a base of understanding and support to accomplish MCEDA's overall program of work. Community feedback provides what perceptions exist around the economic development process and organization, what type of growth and industry is desired and how residents feel about the quality of place that they currently enjoy.

To that end, VisionFirst Advisors sought public input through an online survey. The survey was open for seven weeks and was promoted via traditional and social media as well as email outreach in partnership with the Madison County Business League and Foundation. The survey garnered 311 total responses. The response while not large enough to be considered a representative sample, provides a broad perspective from the community to be added to the additional feedback gathered.

1. From an economic development standpoint, where do you see Madison County in five years? *(Check all that apply)*

| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
|---|------------------|----------------|
| A county with vibrant downtowns and neighborhoods that appeal to young business leaders and families. | 59.5% | 185 |
| Supportive of entrepreneurialism and entrepreneurs. | 56.3% | 175 |
| A county that can build, spin off and sustain businesses in all parts of the county. | 46.6% | 145 |
| A healthcare destination. | 27.7% | 86 |
| Other (please specify) | 8.7% | 27 |

2. What do you see as the county's greatest strengths in attracting new businesses?

| Answer Options | 1-Not a strength | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5-Substantial strength | Response Count |
|---|------------------|----|-----|-----|------------------------|----------------|
| Quality-of-Life | 1 | 3 | 23 | 108 | 174 | 309 |
| Education (public & private) | 6 | 9 | 31 | 91 | 171 | 308 |
| Connectivity – location, traffic and roadways | 27 | 35 | 83 | 106 | 60 | 311 |
| Opportunities for higher education | 18 | 34 | 99 | 98 | 58 | 307 |
| Workforce talents | 6 | 26 | 91 | 125 | 57 | 305 |
| Ease of doing business | 8 | 34 | 102 | 115 | 44 | 303 |
| Support of entrepreneurs and small business | 7 | 35 | 109 | 111 | 44 | 306 |
| Existing industry | 10 | 24 | 124 | 110 | 36 | 304 |
| Tax Environment | 7 | 30 | 135 | 99 | 32 | 303 |
| Affordability | 17 | 51 | 127 | 84 | 30 | 309 |
| Other (please specify) | | | | | | 13 |

3. **How comfortable are you with the recruitment and growth of new industry and businesses to the county? Industries and businesses such as financial and professional services, logistics and distribution and advanced manufacturing.**

| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
|---------------------------------------|------------------|----------------|
| Comfortable | 40.2% | 125 |
| Neither comfortable nor uncomfortable | 30.9% | 96 |
| Extremely comfortable | 20.3% | 63 |
| Uncomfortable | 6.8% | 21 |
| Extremely uncomfortable | 1.9% | 6 |

4. **What type of businesses and industry do you want to see in Madison County?**

| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
|--|------------------|----------------|
| Home-grown/local entrepreneurial businesses | 75.6% | 235 |
| Service providers (medical, financial, higher education, etc.) | 70.1% | 218 |
| Healthcare | 61.7% | 192 |
| Retail | 55.3% | 172 |
| Advanced Manufacturing/Light industry (distribution/warehousing operations, advance manufacturing, research & development, etc.) | 53.1% | 165 |
| Biomedical | 40.5% | 126 |
| Back-office type operations (call centers, accounting, financial services, etc.) | 30.5% | 95 |
| Other (please specify) | 5.5% | 17 |

5. **What barriers do you see that currently impede growth for the county?**

| Answer Options | 1-Not a barrier | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5-Substantial barrier | Response Count |
|---|-----------------|-----|-----|----|-----------------------|----------------|
| Lack of shared vision | 31 | 52 | 91 | 66 | 51 | 291 |
| Infrastructure | 34 | 64 | 102 | 52 | 36 | 288 |
| Concerns about progress impacting the current quality of life | 55 | 62 | 93 | 50 | 30 | 290 |
| Restrictive regulatory environment | 36 | 83 | 108 | 40 | 18 | 285 |
| Lack of access to capital for small businesses and start-ups | 33 | 56 | 124 | 54 | 17 | 284 |
| Lack of workforce and/or lack of workforce training opportunities | 43 | 68 | 107 | 60 | 12 | 290 |
| Access to higher education | 72 | 79 | 88 | 40 | 12 | 291 |
| Education/Quality of Schools | 134 | 84 | 44 | 17 | 10 | 289 |
| Crime and personal safety | 120 | 102 | 40 | 21 | 8 | 291 |
| Other (please specify) | | | | | | 9 |

6. What should be Madison County's top measurable goals or strategies for economic development? (What would the county like to achieve?) Please select up to five strategies.

| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
|--|------------------|----------------|
| Create new jobs. | 60.1% | 176 |
| Encourage the growth of existing businesses and industries. | 59.7% | 175 |
| Create a strong entrepreneurial climate. | 53.9% | 158 |
| Assure access to technology resources and infrastructure. | 48.5% | 142 |
| Encourage Main Street, downtown or town center revitalization. | 46.8% | 137 |
| Increase job skills of local labor force. | 46.1% | 135 |
| Improve the quality of life and county amenities. | 41.3% | 121 |
| Diversify the economic base. | 37.9% | 111 |
| Create a more business-friendly climate. | 32.4% | 95 |
| Increase access to capital for new and existing businesses. | 32.1% | 94 |
| Improve the local/regional school system. | 29.7% | 87 |

7. In addition to the Madison County Economic Development Authority, what key community organizations should be involved in the creation and implementation of the economic development plan? *Check all that apply.*

| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
|---|------------------|----------------|
| Local government | 81.9% | 240 |
| Chambers of Commerce | 77.8% | 228 |
| County government | 76.5% | 224 |
| Small Business Development Centers | 60.4% | 177 |
| Elected officials | 59.0% | 173 |
| Main Street or downtown marketing organization | 55.3% | 162 |
| Utilities | 47.4% | 139 |
| Civic/Service organizations, i.e. Rotary, Kiwanis | 41.0% | 120 |

8. What is the highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have received?

| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
|--|------------------|----------------|
| Bachelor degree | 47.2% | 134 |
| Graduate degree or higher | 38.7% | 110 |
| Some college but no degree | 5.6% | 16 |
| Associate degree | 5.3% | 15 |
| High school degree or equivalent (e.g., GED) | 1.8% | 5 |
| Less than high school degree | 1.4% | 4 |

9. What is your age?

| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
|----------------|------------------|----------------|
| 45 – 59 | 44.8% | 126 |
| 30 – 44 | 26.7% | 75 |
| 60+ | 24.9% | 70 |
| 18 – 29 | 3.6% | 10 |

10. Which race/ethnicity best describes you?

| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
|---------------------------|------------------|----------------|
| White / Caucasian | 87.6% | 247 |
| Black or African American | 5.7% | 16 |
| Prefer not to answer | 5.3% | 15 |
| Hispanic | 0.7% | 2 |
| Asian | 0.7% | 2 |

How Does the County Compare?

In seeking to develop a comprehensive assessment of MCEDA and outline an achievable program of work, VisionFirst Advisors conducted high-level research comparing Madison County to four other counties with certain similarities, each with a strong foundation in large manufacturing facilities:

- Greenville County, South Carolina (Greenville)
 - Home to a BMW manufacturing location and has undergone a significant transformation and sizable growth due to its economic development efforts.
- Lee County, Mississippi (Tupelo)
 - Mississippi county with significant automotive manufacturing and of similar size.
 - The county also has a strong economic development organization embracing business support and a regional vision.
- Rutherford County, Tennessee (Smyrna)
 - Home to the only other Nissan OEM in the United States.
- Elmore County, Alabama (Prattville)
 - Benefits from a nearby automotive OEM as the primary employer.
 - Adjacent county to a capital city.
 - Leverages a successful conference center.

In addition to basic demographic and geographic information, data on the number of residential permits, migration, inflow/outflow as well as quality of life indicators such as crime, parks and retail establishments were included for comparison purposes.

The following infographics represent a compilation of data drawn centered on four specific groupings:

1. Population: By the Numbers

- Although the county's poverty rate is lower than the U.S. average, there are sizable differences in the poverty rates amongst the county's four communities with Flora having a poverty rate nearly three times that of the county's average at 38.1 percent.
- The same sizable differences can be seen in median household income.

2. The Talent Pipeline: Education

- Madison County enjoys high educational attainment with 45 percent having a bachelor's degree and/or a graduate or professional degree.
- Madison County has 21.1 percent of the population with some college presenting an opportunity for additional education or schooling to close any workforce gaps.

3. Employment & Industry

- Although the abundance of retail establishments does not exist in all areas of the county, retail trade is the second largest employment sector.
- Madison County enjoys a diverse industry base of large employers.

4. Quality of Life Indicators

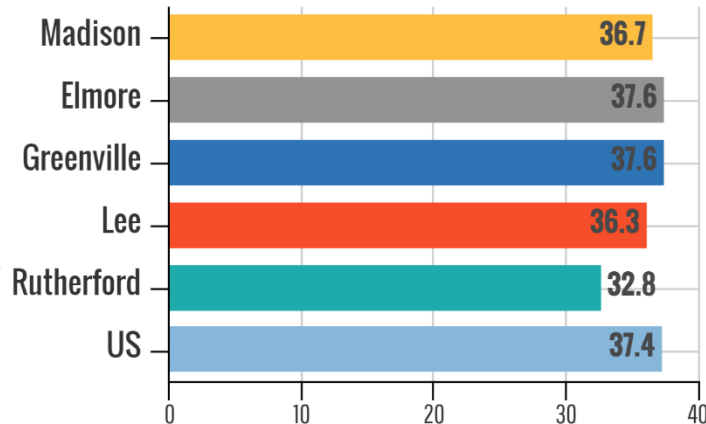
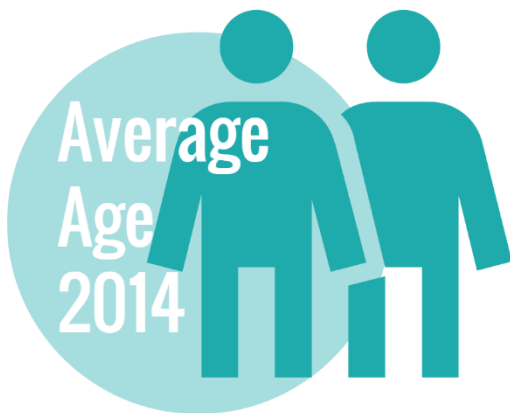
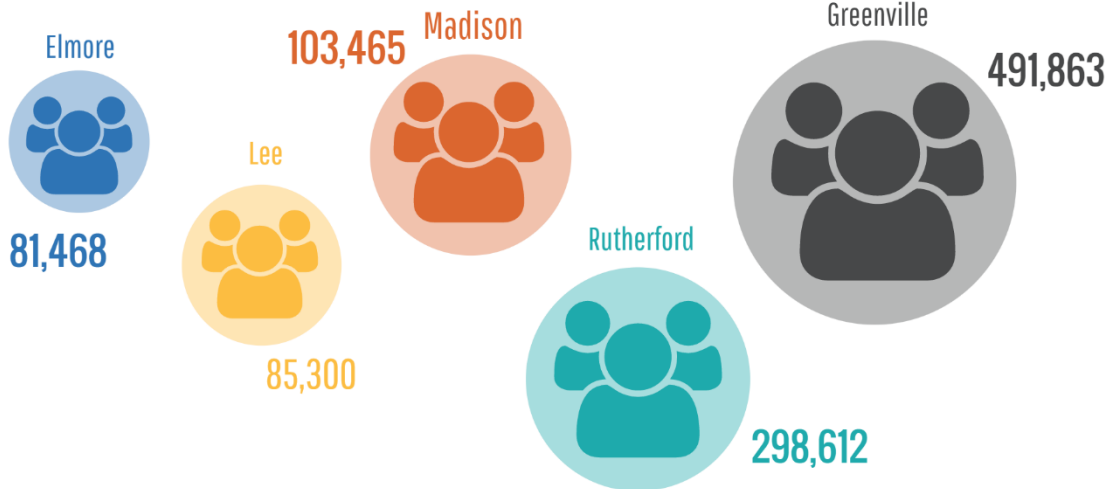
- Madison County has the lowest violent crime rate of any of the comparing counties.

Population: By the Numbers

Comparing the Counties: Madison, Elmore - AL, Greenville - SC, Lee - MS & Rutherford - TN



2015 TOTAL POPULATION

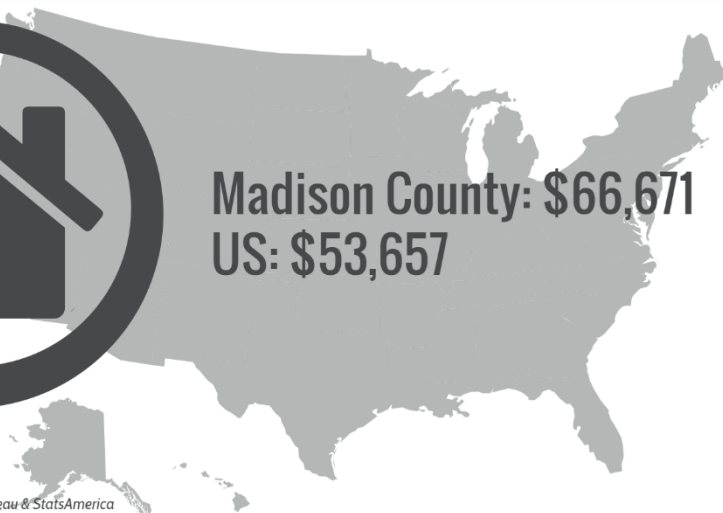


2014 MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME: MADISON COUNTY CITIES & TOWNS

Flora: \$32,411
Canton: \$37,591
Ridgeland: \$55,012
Madison: \$99,109



Madison County: \$66,671
US: \$53,657



Madison County
City & Town

**POVERTY
RATES**
2014

38.1%
Flora

28.6%
Canton

14.8%
US

13.1%
Madison
County

9.8%
Ridgeland

4.1%
Madison
(The City)



The Talent Pipeline:

Comparing the Counties: Madison, Elmore - AL, Greenville - SC, Lee - MS & Rutherford - TN



..... Total Population 25 & Older

Elmore County: 53,964
Greenville County: 311,759
Lee County: 55,146
Rutherford County: 169,510



Madison County: 64,344

..... Some College, No Degree

Elmore County: 21.9%
Greenville County: 20%
Lee County: 25.1%
Rutherford County: 23.5%



US: 21.2%

Madison County: 21.1%

..... Bachelor's Degree

Elmore County: 13.4%
Greenville County: 20.4%
Lee County: 14.2%
Rutherford County: 20.6%



US: 18.3%

Madison County: 25.3%

..... High School Graduate (only)



Elmore County: 35.2%
Greenville County: 26.2%
Lee County: 27.5%
Rutherford County: 30%

Madison County: 16.2%

US: 28%

No additional education beyond high school.

..... Associate Degree



Elmore County: 8.7%
Greenville County: 8.5%
Lee County: 9.2%
Rutherford County: 7.7%

Madison County: 8.8%

US: 7.9%

..... Graduate, Professional or Doctorate



Elmore County: 8.0%
Greenville County: 11.1%
Lee County: 7.6%
Rutherford County: 8.3%

Madison County: 19.7%

US: 11%

Based on 2014 Data

Sources: US Census American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates & StatsAmerica

Employment & Industry

Comparing the Counties: Madison, Elmore - AL, Greenville - SC, Lee - MS & Rutherford - TN



2015 Average Annual Wage for Top Industries in Madison County



Manufacturing - 16.5%
Madison County: \$56,587

Elmore County: \$53,568
Greenville County: \$60,728
Lee County: \$43,506
Rutherford County: \$68,383



Retail Trade - 12.8%
Madison County: \$25,469

Elmore County: \$24,305
Greenville County: \$28,267
Lee County: \$24,588
Rutherford County: \$28,042



Accommodation & Food Services - 10.9%
Madison County: \$15,768

Elmore County: \$14,462
Greenville County: \$15,949
Lee County: \$13,325
Rutherford County: \$15,411



Health Care & Social Services - 8.2%
Madison County: \$34,347

Elmore County: \$32,184
Greenville County: \$53,710
Lee County: \$48,405
Rutherford County: \$49,822

Leading Employers



Madison County

Nissan North America: 6,300
(Automotive Manufacturing)
Madison County School District: 1,500
(Public Education)
Peco Foods of MS, Inc.: 1,300
(Food Manufacturing)
Xerox: 1,250
(Technical Services and Document Control)
Kasai (M-Tek): 1,000
(Interior Trim Components)

Elmore County

County Board of Education: 1,300 (Ed)
GKN Aerospace: 955 (Manufacturing)
Wind Creek Casino: 945 (Tourism)
Wal-Mart Stores: 733 (Retail)
Neptune Technology Group: 540 (Manufacturing)



Lee County

North Mississippi Health Services (Health Care): 4,286
Ashley Furniture (Manufacturing): 3,000
Toyota Motor Manufacturing: 2,200
Cooper Tire and Rubber Company: 1,714
MTD Products: 1,150



Greenville County

Greenville Health System (Health Care): 12,770
School District of Greenville County (Education): 9,580
Bon Secours St. Francis Health System (Health Care): 5,047
Michelin North America Inc. (HQ, R&D, Mfg.): 4,000
GE Power & Water (Mfg.): 3,400



Rutherford County

Nissan North America, Inc.: 8,000 (Manufacturing)
Rutherford County Government: 6,073 (Government/Ed)
Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU): 2,205 (Ed)
National Healthcare Corporation: 2,071 (Health Care)
Ingram Content Group: 2,000 (Publishing)



Quality of Place Indicators

Comparing the Counties: Madison, Elmore - AL, Greenville - SC, Lee - MS & Rutherford - TN



Having access to places for physical activity, like parks, encourages people to get active and do so more often.

Greenville
16%

Lee
11%

Rutherford
8%

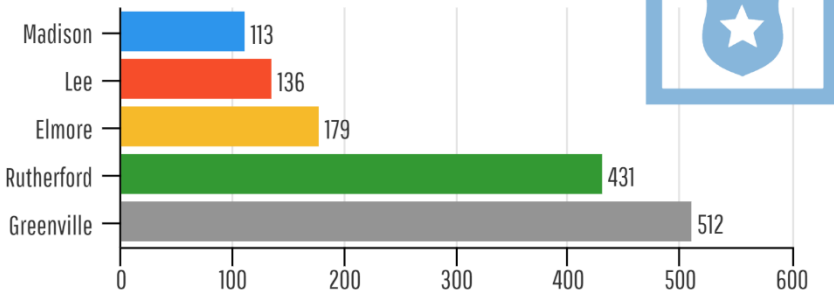
Elmore
3%



13% Live within one half mile of a park in Madison County.

FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting: Violent Crime

2010-2012 - Per 100,000 Residents



Retail Establishments

Madison
485

Elmore
226

Lee
488

Rutherford
792

Greenville
1,774



Net Domestic Migration (1-Year Change Ending in 2015)

Lee: -195

Elmore: 168

Madison: 1,557

Greenville: 5,440

Rutherford: 6,449

Residential Building Permits in 2015



Elmore: 165

Greenville: 4,338

Lee: 111

Rutherford: 3,557

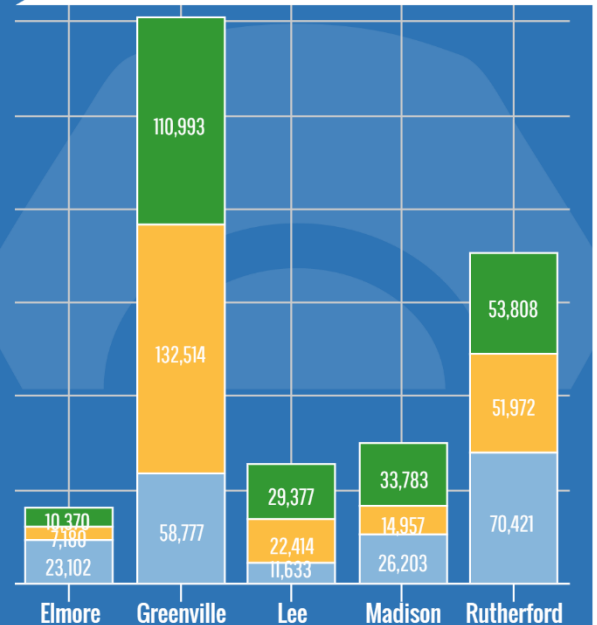
Madison: 695

Inflow/Outflow of Primary Jobs

(All Workers - 2014)

Inflow Remain Outflow

Nearly 70% of those working inside Madison County are not residents



The Current Organization & Structure

Typically, VisionFirst Advisors begins an assessment on the effectiveness of an economic development organization (EDO) with a discussion regarding the entity's core mission and the definition of economic development. For MCEDA, conversations focused on the organization's structure; therefore, this assessment begins with the immediate steps needed to improve performance followed by examples of other Mississippi economic development

organizations with alternative structures presented as examples of best practices. Also included are staffing suggestions, discussion concerning mission and collaboration, concluding with a suite of recommended strategic initiatives that can be used as the basis of a program of work which will propel the organization in a positive direction for long-term success.

In VisionFirst's collective 90 years of experience in economic development we have been fortunate enough to work with many different types of economic development organizations (EDOs). **In observing the difference between highly effective EDOs and those that underperform, we can state unequivocally that the driving difference is NOT structure. Yet, it is most often blamed when an EDO is underperforming.**

Several factors must be in place for a community to perform at a high level in economic development. First and maybe most importantly, is community leadership that has a temperament and commitment to working together, setting political agendas aside and focusing on the greater good of its citizens. Business leadership often takes the lead in economic development efforts and partners with elected officials to drive a common agenda for jobs, new investment and economic prosperity.

Tupelo Mississippi is a great example where the region benefits from more than a half century of business leadership driving economic development. Tupelo's Community Development Foundation (CDF) has stood the test of time as a proven, successful structure of economic development due in great part to the involvement, vision and support of selfless, motivated private-sector leadership.

Conversely, we have observed communities that have restructured economic development for decades but never find a successful model that lasts. Differing agendas and misplaced motivation are too often roots of the flawed efforts. If any EDO is restructured with the goal of improving results, the overall community leadership challenges and support must be addressed simultaneously. If not, there is little opportunity for the new structure to prove successful.

Before delving into proposed scenarios, it is important to understand the current organization, its bylaws, appointment of leadership, budget, statutory responsibilities and mission.

"Getting the economics of economic development right is crucial, but it is also insufficient. The civics must be right, too. For economic development is fundamentally a civic enterprise and a civic process: the work to organize and implement initiatives that engage stakeholders and partners to achieve long-term goals."

-Remaking Economic Development

About the Madison County Economic Development Authority

Current Mission: The mission of MCEDA is to assist our existing businesses and to attract new investments and higher-paying jobs to Madison County in an effort to increase our tax base and improve the quality of life and economic wealth of our citizens.



*Organizational Facts:*³

- **ESTABLISHMENT:** The Madison County Economic Development Authority was established legislation in 1979.
- **BOARD STRUCTURE:** The Authority shall be composed of seven resident citizens of such county, one from each supervisor's district, who shall be qualified electors therein, and two appointed from the county at large by the board of supervisors of such county for a term of five years.
- **FUNDING:** The Board of Supervisors of Madison County, at the request of the Authority, is authorized and empowered, in its discretion, to levy an ad valorem tax, not to exceed two mills on the dollar of assessed valuation of the taxable property of such county, to provide an operating fund for the Authority.
- **BONDING AUTHORITY:** MCEDA is authorized for up to \$12 million as the amount of notes or bonds that may be outstanding under the under MCEDA's enabling legislation.
- **PROPERTY OWNERSHIP:** The Authority is authorized and empowered to sell, lease, trade, exchange or otherwise dispose of sites situated within projects to individuals, firms or corporations, public or private, for all types of industrial, commercial, agricultural or other economic development uses upon such terms and conditions, for such consideration, and with such safeguards as will best promote and protect the public interest, convenience and necessity, and to execute options, deeds, leases, contracts, easements and other legal instruments necessary or convenient therefor.
- **BUDGET:** \$1.01 million
- **STAFF:** 4 – Executive Director, Business Development Manager, Finance/Office Manager, Receptionist (contract employee)
- **BUSINESS LEAGUE INVOLVEMENT:** Paid executive regular and two MCEDA board members regularly attend business League Board of Directors meetings.

³ MCEDA Bylaws and Enabling Legislation

About the Madison County Business League & Foundation

Mission: The mission of the Madison County Business League & Foundation is to bring together, under one organization, the voice of numerous entities in order to establish a clear and concise message for the future. This organization, which is comprised of elected, appointed, business and individual leaders of Madison County, will enable all partners in business and economic development to participate collectively in bringing together the overall vision for Madison County.



Organizational Facts:

- **ESTABLISHMENT:** Through partnership with MCEDA, the Madison County Board of Supervisors adopted a resolution creating the Business League in March 2008. The Madison County Business League merged with the Madison County Foundation in 2014.
- **LOCATION:** Housed in MCEDA office.
- **BOARD STRUCTURE:** There are 21 directors, and included in this number are the Designated Directors, the Elected Directors and the Ex-Officio Directors. The Designated Directors shall be four persons serving on the MCEDA Board of Directors selected and appointed by them. The Elected Directors shall be 12 individuals elected by the membership. The Elected Directors must be members of the Corporation, and shall serve staggered terms of four years. The Ex-Officio Directors shall be the five individuals serving as Mayors of the cities/towns of Ridgeland, Madison, Canton, and Flora, and the President of the Madison County Board of Supervisors. The Ex-Officio Directors shall not have the right to vote on any matters coming before the Board of Directors. It is the policy of the Corporation that no elected public official be an officer or a voting member of the Board.
- **COMMITTEES:** Education, Government Relations, Entrepreneurship, Healthcare and Wellness, Transportation, Young Professionals.
- **BUDGET:** Not Provided
- **STAFF:** 2 (Executive Director, Member Support)
- **MCEDA BOARD INVOLVEMENT:** Paid executive regularly attends MCEDA Board of Directors' and Chair of the board of directors.

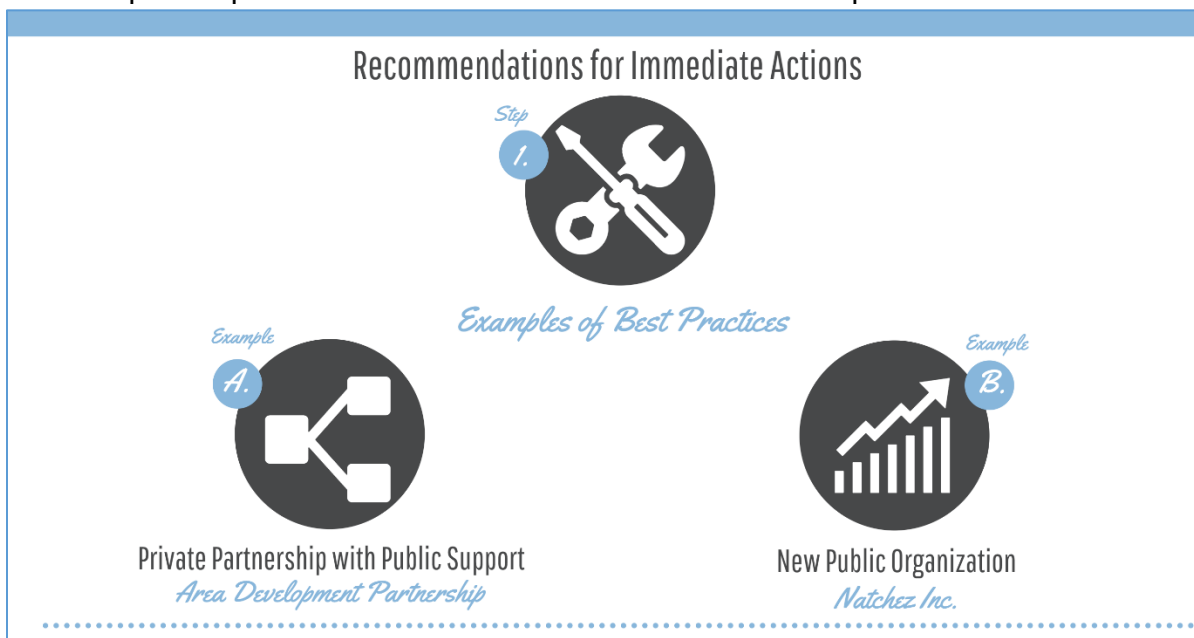
A Plan to Move Forward

Prior to considering any changes, it is important to recognize that Madison County as a business destination will grow for the foreseeable future without recruitment of competitive projects. The community's economy will create jobs given its more than eight percent growth since 2010. However, a strategy focused solely on continued market growth does little to impact the diversification of the economy or improve prosperity for its residents. MCEDA must be seen as the county's economic development leader to create transformational change; and the organization has that very potential.

But to propel itself into that type of organization, the board and stakeholders must make some changes to improve operations, responsiveness and engagement. Many of those interviewed suggested the desire for a new structure that would result in a more effective approach to economic development, sustained metrics and increased fiduciary accountability and transparency. Given its current position and a lack of support from the community, it is clear that the status quo is not an option.

While many interviewees spoke of establishing a public/private partnership, the fact is one already exists; but it has not been formally recognized, developed and utilized to its potential. VisionFirst's recommendation will focus on a more comprehensive implementation of the model in place. In addition, on the following pages are two examples of how communities have employed public/private partnerships to achieve long-term success. These models cannot simply be replicated; there is no cookie-cutter approach to successful economic development. Rather, MCEDA's leadership should examine the models closely and take lessons from both to create what will work for Madison County.

Irrespective of any considered structural changes, there are several steps the organization must undertake to ensure success moving forward. While examples of other models are included, without complete implementation of the recommended tactics other options will be unsuccessful.

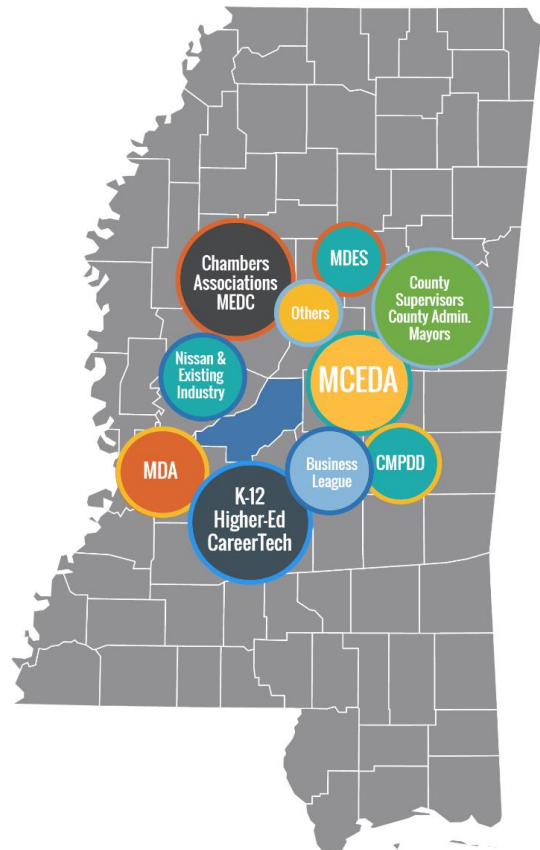


Step 1: Recommendations for a More Effective Organization

Aligning Existing Components

The most successful economic development organizations are those that utilize both an engaged public and private sector. Regardless of an organization's structure, be it a public or private, it is very difficult to operate independently without the other. Mississippi is fortunate to have a supportive ecosystem of economic development partners and the same holds true on the local level. As part of aligning its existing resources, there are certain activities that MCEDA must begin to do to increase its outreach and engagement with those in the economic development realm surrounding the organization (as depicted in the graphic) in three broad categories:

- Collaboration;
- Capacity; and
- Proactive approach.



Collaboration

STRATEGIC COLLABORATION WITH THE BUSINESS LEAGUE

| Madison County's existing structure consists of both public and private-sector organizations focused on business growth. That is the good news. The challenge is to ensure that MCEDA and the Business League work in partnership toward common economic development goals. While the Business League and MCEDA are housed together and share an amicable relationship with some outreach, there is little collaboration focused on achieving common goals. | PROS | CONS |
|--|--|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Utilizes Existing Organizations• Business input interjected into the process• Requires little to no legal approvals outside of the organizations• Gives new director actionable steps | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Built on faith and trust• Bad players can disrupt the process• Requires a new CEO of MCEDA to help refine the process• Battle of "brands" between the two entities• Tendency is to stay the same• Could lead to perceptions that the current economic development model has failed |


MCEDA's current enabling legislation provides for a partnership. It allows MCEDA and the Business League to further align their efforts to accomplish complementary objectives while strengthening the effectiveness of both organizations. This can only be done by the leadership of both organizations agreeing to commit the focus, time and energy to develop a collaborative agenda and complementary program of work laying out a strategic pathway for governance, programs, management and staffing.

While reviewing the existing efforts of both organizations, it appears that eight broad categories of focus emerge:

- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| 1. Advocacy | 2. Business Formation and Entrepreneurship |
| 3. Education | 4. Business, Retention and Expansion (BR&E) |
| 5. Quality of Place | 6. Business Recruitment |
| 7. Workforce | 8. Property Management |

Some focus areas fall solely on the Business League and the same is true for MCEDA. To increase effectiveness and achieve better outcomes for the county the two organizations must develop a collaborative program of work. To accomplish this level of collaboration, it is recommended that a Steering Committee be established consisting of members from the two existing boards (see diagram). This committee would include three MCEDA board members and three members of the Business League board.





While the Steering Committee has no legal authority, it can act as a catalyst for long-term alignment of efforts, initiatives and programs of work. The committee should convene with the help of an outside facilitator, to discuss the recommendations that may be collaboratively addressed. It is suggested that both the MCEDA Director and the Business League Foundation Executive Director attend the one-day session to provide background and status of existing programs, goals and metrics for the discussion.

Once the steering committee has developed a suggested common program of work for the two entities to work together, it is also recommended that the same group become the search committee for MCEDA's executive search.

While it may take time to facilitate a collaborative approach to a program of work, the steering committee should not lose sight that it is imperative for the new Director of MCEDA to understand, support and espouse this new approach. In the perfect world, the structure would be defined and in place before moving forward. In this case, new leadership will complete, expound upon and implement the final program of work. Like the basic axiom of good design, whether architectural or organizational, is "form follows function." Frank Lloyd Wright said that this adage was misunderstood but rather, *"Form and function should be one, joined in a spiritual union."*

Capacity

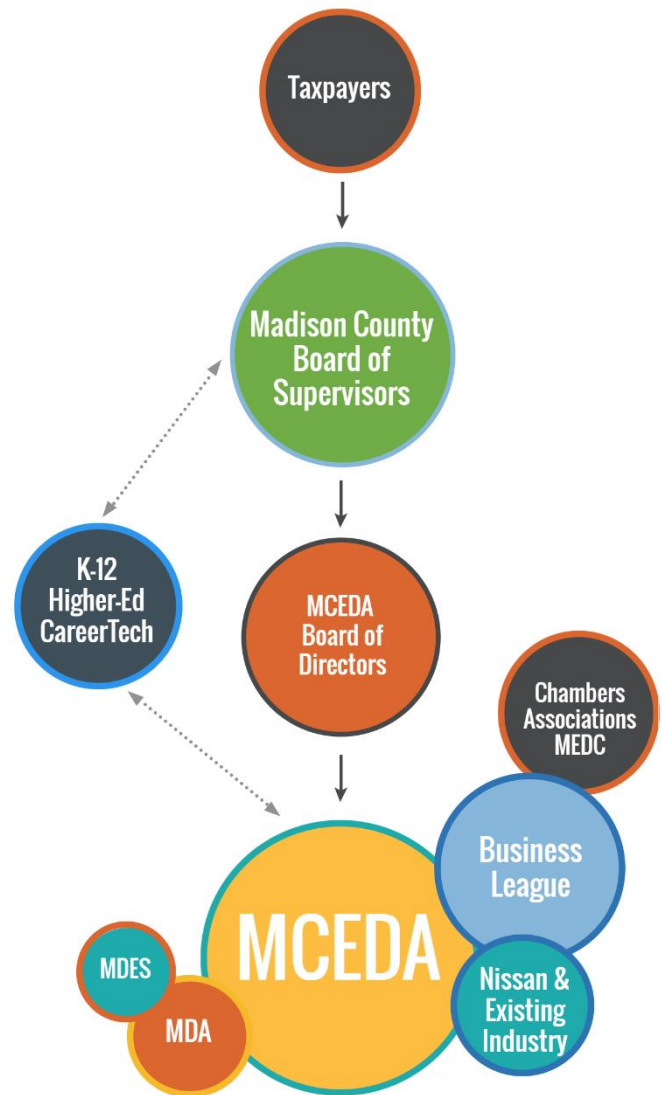
BUILDING THE RIGHT TEAM

As a county-wide economic development organization MCEDA is charged with myriad of duties from the recruitment of new industry to the expansion and growth of current industry as well as property management. While these activities are the lifeblood of the organization there are other equally as important activities such as board and stakeholder maintenance and engagement as well as marketing and communications. Without ample resources devoted to these functions the ability to grow industry in Madison County will suffer.

While our research has identified several common themes concerning the MCEDA's ability to accomplish the mission, lack of capacity is among the most concerning. The general perception in interviews is MCEDA struggles in its attempts to be all things to all people. This is exacerbated by the fact that capacity with current limited staffing is an issue. The team can satisfy its responsibilities but is generally stretched too thin to excel at any one component.

An organization with an annual budget of more than \$1 million responsible for representing more than 100,000 people must be staffed appropriately. When compared to competing organizations across the southeast MCEDA is smaller on average than just about every other similar sized organization. This must be corrected if the organization is to become a leader in its field.

Therefore, to be able to adequately represent a territory the size of the current region the following staff structure and responsibilities is proposed.



Director (CEO)

In successful communities, the role of the elected officials and their understanding of their relationship with the head of their economic development organization is essential. Given MCEDA's stated mission, it is imperative that an experienced economic development professional leads the organization.

Ideally this individual has experience as a CEO and is comfortable embracing a regional approach. The head of the organization must be a dynamic leader with the ability to inspire team members to execute efficiently in a lean organization. He or she must be a strategic thinker with a long-term vision of what defines success. A key attribute is the ability to form appropriate narratives and excel in the internal and external communication of that message. Experience with board management and investment is also crucial.

SVP Strategic Outreach

Many of the responsibilities of the President and CEO are outward facing. The need to be out in the community and in front of decision makers around the country necessitate the need for a competent lieutenant that can manage day to day operations and staff activities. The success of this position will allow the CEO to focus on lead development as well as investment. Ideally this individual would have experience in investor maintenance and business development and an effective people manager. In addition, given the lack of a marketing and communications position within the organization, this candidate must also be able to effectively interact with a marketing and communications firm to handle MCEDA's needs. These activities cannot be conducted in-house without a marketing and communications professional. The appropriate firm must understand economic development and can professionally develop and implement print, digital and earned media and must be able to conduct strategic communications initiatives geared toward internal and external audiences. In the long-term it is recommended that MCEDA hire a director of marketing and communications.

VP of Business Development

Project management is the key responsibility of this position. The ability to handle active leads and serve as a one stop shop for client needs will define the position's success. Building coalitions amongst partner's and resources when completing RFPs, handling site visits and maintaining relationships with existing industry are all critical responsibilities of this individual.

VP of Workforce Development

The ability of existing industry and new business to identify and retain quality workforce is the single biggest location decision factor that companies face. Competitive organizations must devote significant resources to working with institutions of higher learning as well as kindergarten through high school to ensure not only a stable talent pipeline but that existing skill sets line up with targeted markets. This individual will coordinate existing training programs from the state and local level as well as proposing and developing creative programs designed to provide real time talent solutions for existing industries.

Office Manager/Receptionist

The office manager should provide administrative support to MCEDA staff such as receive and screen phone calls and emails, aid callers and visitors, direct public and clients to appropriate organization or person for additional assistance or information. Maintain appropriate files, schedule meetings and events, prioritize, coordinate, and facilitate communications. Prepare reports and transcribe minutes for various meetings. Should also coordinate and maintain corporate and office records and administer general business and administrative activities of the organization.

Proactive Approach

LEADING THE STATE IN ITS COMMITMENT TO ACCOUNTABILITY & TRANSPARENCY

In economic development, one must never lose sight of the fact that the taxpayers are the ultimate beneficiaries of the work. And while currently MCEDA operates in compliance with all public records laws and practices as most organizations do, to further build trust with its customers, stakeholders and taxpayers and support for its initiatives, MCEDA must become a leader in demonstrating a steadfast and ongoing commitment to accountability and transparency in all its activities. To do so, VisionFirst recommends a suite of actions be undertaken to ensure that these practices are fundamental in MCEDA's day-to-day operations. MCEDA should communicate with elected officials, business leadership, stakeholders and the public at-large about its efforts, progress and fiscal accountability.

One of the challenges the organization experiences is a lack of recognition of its brand, i.e., who it is, its function, and how it benefits the county. To assist others in learning about the organization, we suggest that MCEDA on its website, develop a page entitled "Commitment to Transparency & Accountability" that would contain the following information about the organization:

- Enabling legislation;
- Complete bylaws and any amendments;
- Complete listing of all board members including their names, titles and company as well as the County Supervisor they were appointed by;
- All Board of Directors materials not protected by confidentiality statutes including agendas, minutes, reports and contracts;
- All non-confidential publications and reports including studies, this assessment, annual reports and studies;
- Important County publications such as the annual comprehensive financial annual report;
- Listing of property owned by MCEDA;
- Budget documents;
- Key messages, frequently asked questions and fact sheets;
- MCEDA's program of work, goals and metrics.

By providing this information publicly, MCEDA can reenergize the community to support the organization's efforts and its path forward as there will be an intrinsic understanding of its work.

Building on this information, MCEDA should consider developing a newsroom on its site that would contain the information referenced above and stories, announcements and notices geared to reporters.

As part of these efforts, MCEDA must also demonstrate accountability tied to a defined program of work. Later in this document is a suite of strategic initiatives that should be utilized as an initial program of work that should be combined with a suite of metrics focused on short, mid and long-term strategies. The program of work and subsequent metrics should be submitted to Madison County Board of Supervisors and progress should be reviewed annually.

BUSINESS LEADERSHIP & OPERATING STRUCTURE

Successful economic development organizations invariably find ways to meaningfully include business leadership in the organizational structure and in setting strategy. Simply put, MCEDA's board should function like a business board that has the ability to set policy and direction for the organization and ultimately approves its program of work. This board should integrate the best of both the private sector and the public sector strategy without succumbing to the political ideologies or bureaucratic objectives that may obstruct the organization from performing its mission.

MCEDA's Board of Directors is a direct line to the Board of Supervisors and the governing entity for the organization overall. As such, the Board's orientation, roles and responsibilities must be clearly outlined and communicated. Currently, there is no board member orientation. MCEDA should develop a robust training and introduction document for all board members.

In looking at best practices, a key component of the orientation should include providing a first-hand-look at MCEDA in action. Staff should take board members on a tour of facilities and properties, introduce them to key businesses and clients as appropriate, and demonstrate what MCEDA's mission really looks like.⁴ This provides an opportunity for the new members to ask questions and understand how they support and strengthen the organization through their work on the board. This orientation should also be offered to Supervisors as well.

In familiarizing the Board with their roles and responsibilities, MCEDA should provide and discuss the following documents⁵ with all Board members and Supervisors:

- MCEDA's mission and history, and its statement of values;
- Strategic plans and program of work including applicable metrics;
- Biographies of current board members and staff;
- Board member job description and expectations;
- Board member agreement;
- Conflict of interest policy and questionnaire;
- Recent county and MCEDA financial reports and audited financials;
- Enabling legislation, complete bylaws including amendments and certificate of incorporation;
- Determination letter from the IRS and certificate of tax exemption;

⁴ The Nonprofit Collaboration Network

⁵ The National Council of Nonprofits

- Summary of Directors' and Officers' insurance coverage;
- Personnel policies relating to the director, such as those governing board review of the executive's compensation;
- Board travel reimbursement policy and form to use to request reimbursement;
- Whistleblower policy;
- Annual reports;
- List of committees, their charters, and who serves on them;
- Description and mission of Business League and how MCEDA collaborates with that entity; and
- Calendar of meetings for the year ahead.

All information should also be publicly available online.

Board meetings should be focused on strategy and purpose. While the operations of the organization should be a priority it must not monopolize the majority of the meeting.

VOICE OF BUSINESS & STAKEHOLDERS IS CRITICAL

Economic development is a team sport. For any community to be successful in economic development it must view its businesses, residents and stakeholders as partners in the process. Currently there is business involvement through MCEDA's board as well as the Business League. However, to operate effectively, MCEDA leadership must actively stay involved making sure the collective voices from all parts of the county are engaged, understood and their issues addressed.

DEVELOPING REGIONAL EFFORTS

The Greater Jackson Alliance is a four-county regional organization focusing on marketing, coordination and cooperation of Central Mississippi economic development efforts. MCEDA should be an active leader in this effort. Given its proximity to the state capital and its surrounding counties as well as its existing premier industry base combined with the fact that 70 percent of those working inside the county live elsewhere, Madison County is perfectly positioned to engage in meaningful regional economic development efforts. This is not a recommendation to create and staff new divisions, rather to consider that regional wins will also benefit Madison County.

Best Practices - Examples of Successful Mississippi EDOs

As mentioned previously, the organizational challenges facing MCEDA will continue to exist regardless of its model unless steps are undertaken to refocus efforts on a clear mission, expand and align staff, integrate the voice of business leadership, collaborate with others on common objectives, and work under the direction of strong, visionary leadership. Once these activities are in process, MCEDA should look to the best practices of similar EDOs to see if there are other strategies and models to accomplish its goals. Two examples are provided on the following pages.

Example A: Private Partnership with Public Support

This is a model like Hattiesburg's Area Development Partnership (ADP).

In this model, the private corporation is a 501(c)(3) or 501(c)(6) not-for-profit corporation and serves as the leader in economic development. In certain instances, the funding comes directly from the county to the corporation and in others there is a contract for services.


Example: Area Development Partnership

The Area Development Partnership (ADP), based in Hattiesburg, Mississippi is recognized as the lead economic development organization for the greater Hattiesburg area serving Forrest, Lamar and Perry counties. All the staff are employees of the ADP and report to one board that is private sector driven with multiple public sector partners.

In 1992, the Hattiesburg Chamber of Commerce and the Forrest County Industrial Foundation were merged in to the new 501(c)(6) corporation named the Area Development Partnership. All the assets of those two organizations and staff become part of the ADP. While the new private sector organization was created, several public sector economic

development partners remained in existence. Those public partners include the Forrest County Industrial Park Commission (FCIPC), Lamar County Economic Development Authority (LCEDA) and the Perry County Economic Development District (PCEDD).

| PROS | CONS |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Utilizes existing organizations.• A business focused board drives the decision making with limited direct public involvement.• Brings direct private funds into operations.• Staff all private employees.• Public board focuses on managing its assets, i.e. industrial park, buildings, etc.• Private organization leads process.• Disruptions in public funding can be offset by private sector.• No local or state legislation required. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Model relies on contractual relationships between private and public entities.• Public board focuses on managing its assets, i.e. industrial park, buildings, etc.• Contracts can become cumbersome.• Short-sighted agendas can disrupt the process.• Possible disruptions in funding. |



While all three of these entities have a board, each has a multi-year contract with the ADP to provide specific economic development functions and services. These public entities are support organizations to the ADP providing critical tools for successful economic development. The FCIPC owns the industrial park and has built and leased spec buildings and purchased property with the intent of recruiting job creating businesses to the region. The same is true for both the LCEDA and PCEDD. The ADP staff manages the day-to-day operations and financials of these support organizations.

In addition to the contract fees received, the ADP adds private sector dollars to the overall budget through membership dues, nontraditional income and the implantation of a five-year capital campaign, currently called Pinnacle.

- *YEAR FORMED:* 1992
- *MODEL:* Public/Private Economic Development Partnership
- *ABOUT:* In 1992, the Hattiesburg Chamber of Commerce and the Forrest County Industrial Foundation were merged in to the new 501(c)(6) corporation named the Area Development Partnership
- *STAFF SIZE:* 13: President, Executive Vice President, VP Finance, Finance Director, VP Economic Development, Project Manager, Community Development Director, Research Manager, Membership Director, Communications Director, Investor Relations Coordinator, Events Coordinator, and Office Assistant
- *BOARD MEMBERS & STRUCTURE:* 20 representatives from the corporate sector and the president of the ADP serve as members on the board. 8 ex-officio members (non-voting) serve on the board including the Chair of Hattiesburg Tourism Commission, Forrest County Industrial Park Commission, Hattiesburg Convention Commission, Lamar County Board of Supervisors, Mayor of the City of Hattiesburg, Forrest County Board of Supervisors, Mayor City of Petal, Perry County Board of Supervisors.
- *FUNDING:* Public and private

Example B: A Public Organization with Private Support

This example outlines the path that Natchez Inc. took to create a public/private organization. Building an organization that could address the challenges they were experiencing locally, necessitated the passage of local/private legislation by the Mississippi legislature to create a new public entity.

Example: Natchez, Inc.

Natchez, Inc. was created in 2010, replacing the Natchez-Adams County Economic Development Authority (NACEDA). The previous organization struggled with functioning, often not able to do business due to the lack of a quorum. While the organization struggled, the region faced major plant closings, job loss and lack of new capital

| PROS | CONS |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Remains a public entity with private sector benefit.• Assets of existing public entities easily transfers to new public entity.• Private sector funding participation through a support organization.• New enabling legislation can be used to strengthen the organization. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Built on faith and trust. Short-sighted agendas can disrupt the process.• Requires local/private legislation.• Creation by legislation would add sunset provisions.• Business input lessened. |

investment. In 2010, elected and business leadership through a series of meetings pushed forward with the creation of Natchez, Inc., replacing the NACEDA. In addition, the leadership started a private capital campaign called Natchez Now to supplement the efforts of the new organization. The board of Natchez, Inc. is representative of the community comprised of representatives appointed from the Adams County Board of Supervisors, City of Natchez, Business & Civic League, Chamber of Commerce and four representatives from Natchez Now. Additionally, Natchez, Inc. works closely with the Chamber of Commerce on a number of initiatives.

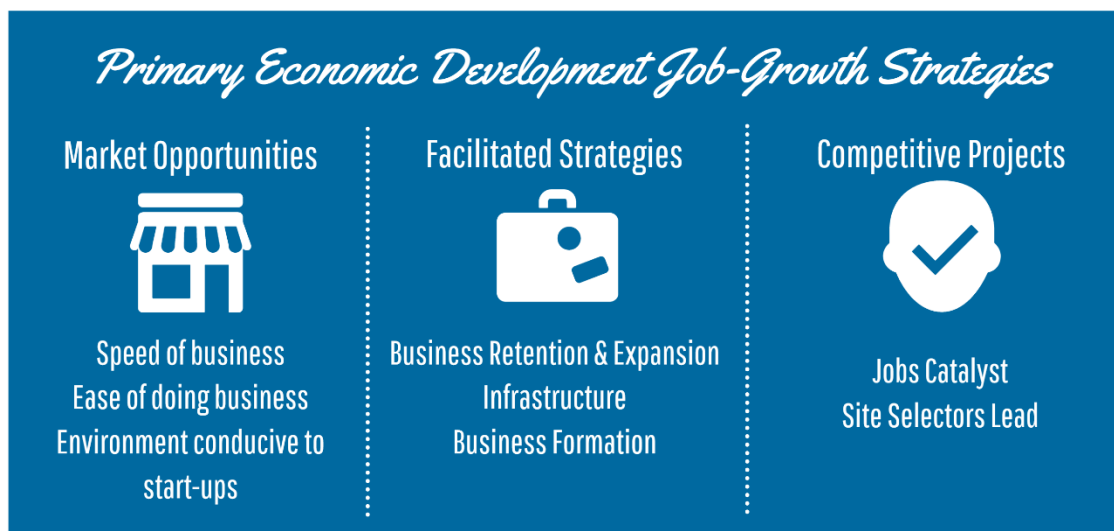
- **YEAR FORMED:** 2010
- **MODEL:** 501(c)(3) with legislative authority to receive public funding in the form of dues. This allows the organization to be a private institution with private employees and not subject to public bid laws and procedures. Must renew authority every five years before the legislature.
- **ABOUT:** Aids with Demographic Information; Workforce Training and Education; Available Sites and Buildings; Small Business and Entrepreneurial Development and Incentives.
- **Staff Size:** 2: Executive Director, Communications Manager
- **BOARD MEMBERS & STRUCTURE:** 8: Comprised of representatives appointed from the Adams County Board of Supervisors, City of Natchez, Business & Civic League, Chamber of Commerce and 4 representatives from Natchez Now (one must be from the City of Vidalia).
- **FUNDING:** Private funding comes through Natchez Now. Natchez Now contributes a minimum of \$150,000 to Natchez, Inc. but raises funds above that amount. The City and County contribute \$175,000. The City of Vidalia contributes \$100,000. Through the creation of Natchez Now, there is a set of checks and balances between the public and private sectors.
- **PROGRAM OF WORK:** Primary responsibilities are the recruitment, retention and expansion of business in the Natchez - Adams County area.

Economic Environment & Mission

Ways to Build an Economy – Economic Growth

Given the array of definitions of economic development in the community it is important to establish a common understanding of what economic development means in Madison County. Only by uniting all the stakeholders under one common understanding can the community marshal the strength of the area's assets focused toward a single set of objectives. To better understand how a state, region or community can build its economy, it is important to examine primary economic development job-growth strategies. For the sake of this assessment, the focus will be on the three categories that embody job growth as a holistic system.

VisionFirst prefers to illustrate and explain it this way:




The first set of strategies to create economic growth is centered on market-driven growth.

Often referred to as “organic growth,” these are jobs created by businesses who seek to serve an existing market or a created market, i.e., people or businesses to which they can sell products or services. In Madison County this may include retail outlets, certain healthcare facilities/professionals as well as hospitality and service providers that serve the community’s population.

The second set of strategies examines all ways a state or community can facilitate job growth through specific, targeted investment in programs that encourage and support job growth.

Examples of facilitated growth in the community include the investments made into growing certain innovative business sectors such as with the Biomedical Collaboratory, or investments made to targeted assets to build product.

Finally, while the smallest subset of the holistic economic development approach, competitive projects ultimately prove to be the most impactful in creating high-wage jobs and becoming cornerstones to continued job growth through targeted industry clusters. Area Development Magazine, an industry standard, noted that domestically only approximately 6,000



such projects are in process of looking to locate or expand annually, making the universe of such projects limited and highly competitive. Understandably, these projects are extremely desirable by states and communities and are competed for aggressively. Traditionally, the projects are influenced by favorable business and tax environments; environmentally-conscious but business-friendly regulatory environments; and both financial and non-financial economic development incentives.

All three strategies, along with other non-traditional economic development strategies such as creative economy programs, innovative partnerships with universities for specific job growth and other initiatives are necessary to build and create an ever-expanding, balanced, diversified economy. In Madison County, the balance of such programs has been weighted towards business recruitment, with some success. However, a strategic approach that depends on one strategy only doesn't yield a balanced, diversified local economy.

Refocusing MCEDA's Mission for More Effective Outcomes and Collaboration

In Madison County, the lack of a consistent definition of economic development has led local organizations to define the county's efforts in a way intended to advance each organization's mission. Without an agreed-upon strategic direction and leadership from one organization, efforts are diffused and fragmented, and the county has become ineffective in delivering an economic development program with desired outcomes.

Almost all those VisionFirst interviewed were unable to articulate MCEDA's mission, who it serves, or to form a consensus about what the mission should be. MCEDA's mission reads as follows:

The mission of MCEDA is to assist our existing businesses and to attract new investments and higher-paying jobs to Madison County in an effort to increase our tax base and improve the quality of life and economic wealth of our citizens.

MCEDA's current mission statement, while serviceable, is very linear in its scope focusing on servicing existing industry and business recruitment as the only two identified strategies that the organization will pursue to accomplish the objectives of an increased tax base, improved quality of life and economic wealth. Vision First takes a broader, more pragmatic view regarding organizations' missions. Foremost, if the mission statement doesn't specifically provide a guiding light for the organization's efforts, then developing one is an empty exercise.

While much of the existing industry growth over past years, particularly along the I-55 corridor, is evidence of MCEDA's business recruitment activity, those outside of the organization do not connect this growth to the MCEDA in any way. MCEDA is not recognized as the entity that is "attracting new investment." MCEDA's success in recruiting Nissan and other significant employers has provided great strategic investments in infrastructure that can lead to new growth opportunities. But market growth alone and the competitive assets developed in the community will not generate jobs and investments without focus, a clear strategy and implementation.

The lack of an articulated, cohesive business retention and expansion program also belies the organization's mission commitment to assist existing businesses. MCEDA, despite its past success, is still largely anonymous, its significance and mission in leading the county's economic development efforts unknown or buried in the plethora of other organizations involved in the process.

In its execution of its mission, MCEDA is operating and is viewed as a property manager disconnected from any strategic approach to grow Madison County's economy. It is suggested that MCEDA broaden slightly the scope of its current mission to better encompass and explain its role in leading the economic development efforts for Madison county. To refocus MCEDA's mission leading to a clearer understanding of who the organization is, what it does, why it does it, it is important to look first to who it serves. Ultimately, MCEDA serves/benefits the citizens of Madison

county, **but it is through its efforts in working with its business clients that it accomplishes this.** While each might view the role of MCEDA a little differently, the end goal is to ***diversify the economy, increase the number of high wage jobs and have a strong vibrant economy.***

MCEDA's mission should focus on its core purpose for existence and must resonate with MCEDA staff, the cities, county and state leadership, stakeholders and strategic partners who have a role in the economic picture of Madison County. All should be clear as to the core purpose for economic development in Madison County and see MCEDA, through its mission, as a compass to remain on course in efforts to grow the economy.

Based on that understanding MCEDA might consider a mission statement with these elements:

As the leader of economic development for Madison County, MCEDA's mission is to encourage the growth of the county's existing business and industry, attract new investment and higher-paying jobs, and to increase Madison County's competitiveness leading to a diverse, vibrant economy benefitting all the county's citizens.

Identification of the key customers and the core mission not only defines the organization; it also identifies what it is not. MCEDA, with its limited staff is already pulled in so many directions that it struggles to meet all its obligations. Some expectations on the organization include work that might be better suited for stakeholders to accomplish. An example might be the work in community development in rural communities. MCEDA can be supportive of these efforts, but with its limited reach and focused mission, would find it difficult to be effective in delivering such services.

In pursuit of the mission, the organization should seek to achieve the following:

- Be the voice of economic development in the county across all relevant audiences.
- Lead the process to build the partnerships to make the region competitive for all economic development projects.
- Create a vision and help communities, business leaders and key stakeholders work together to compete for game-changing projects.
- Strategically use and present the assets of all cities as one.
- Better understand, quantify and qualify its workforce as an asset.
- Promote the area as a viable location and expansion choice for existing industry.
- Explore ways to work with others to foster innovative home-grown business
- Become a catalyst for positive change.
- Become a known and trusted leader in economic development across the Southeast.



Collaboration

It is not simply MCEDA's mission that expresses the overarching imperative that will inspire others to collaborate with the organization for the community's success and economic growth. MCEDA must outline and adopt a plan of work along with any overarching strategic initiatives that will, over time, along with the involvement of others, incrementally move the county to a better point of overall competitiveness in all means of building the economy. Given MCEDA's small staff, the ability to implement an aggressive plan of work and to sustain the recommended initiatives in this plan is impossible. The organization **must** collaborate with other organizations to leverage the strengths and assets others bring to the table.

This form of collaboration can be described as a process in which all the parties with a stake in an outcome constructively:

- Assess the value of their individual programs and efforts;
- Identify gaps that impact the community's ability to be competitive; and
- Explore differences in approach and commit to a joint strategy for action.

Simply put, MCEDA must build mechanisms that will encourage collaboration to better leverage all of the county's organizations along with its assets and resources to work with one another to arrive at a common destination.

Program of Work: Leveraging Assets for Economic Vitality

To achieve its objectives, MCEDA must have a defined program of work that is inclusive of the entire county, integrates business leadership into the efforts and is accountable and transparent in all its activities.

VisionFirst was provided and reviewed the 2012 Economic Development Strategic Plan prepared for the county. While some progress has been made, the plan has not unified the county under one common mission with all stakeholders working collaboratively to achieve the outlined strategies. The efforts listed in annual reports show a disjointed implementation effort with few discernable results. That is not to say the plan is without merit. The plan has a number of aspirational goals for the community to undertake, outlining many of the same problems that still exist today, such as equal educational quality, improved job training, increased in quality housing for young professionals and aggressive promotion of economic development in declining areas. However, given the current state of the organization, MCEDA must begin with a set of fundamental strategies that focus on increased collaboration, implementable targets and measurable results. Only then after some amount of measurable and joint success is achieved, can and should the county look to more aspirational targets.

Although not part of VisionFirst Advisors' scope of work, based on Madison County's strengths and challenges, demographics and industry profile, six strategic initiatives are recommended on the following pages, that if implemented properly and without interference could result in increased economic vitality for the county and all its constituents.



Strategic Initiatives

COMPETITIVENESS: HARNESS INNOVATION AS A KEY DRIVER OF SUCCESS

- Commission a competitiveness assessment with the emphasis on Madison County's ability to attract, foster, grow and sustain innovative businesses, clusters and concepts.
- Work with the Board of Supervisors to assess where changes to current tax and regulatory policies may be needed to encourage innovation and growth.
- Engage the local business community in MCEDA's commitment to competitiveness through innovation.
- Look to capitalize where the greatest opportunities exist in Madison County today, for example, automotive and robotics.

BUSINESS FORMATION: SUPPORT YOUNG FIRMS TO INCREASE COUNTY-WIDE PROSPERITY

- Form a coalition to conduct an asset review of entrepreneurial activities in the county, where opportunities and challenges exist.
- Work with County Supervisors and businesses to support the elimination of burdensome regulations that could restrain start-up growth.
- Create a mentor program with experienced entrepreneurs with start-ups.
- Long-term look to encourage start-up firm growth throughout the county, specifically downtown Canton.

BUSINESS RETENTION & EXPANSION: EXPAND THE ENGAGEMENT WITH MADISON COUNTY'S EXISTING INDUSTRY

- Develop a comprehensive Business Retention and Expansion Program.
- Host an Automotive Supplier Roundtable.
- Develop and implement a Nissan Growth Strategy.
- Conduct outreach and marketing surrounding the Mississippi Biomedical Science Business Collaboratory.

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT:

- Develop a comprehensive product inventory and assessment.
- Conduct robust decision-maker outreach.
- Redefine MCEDA's business development team.

EDUCATION & WORKFORCE: ALIGN TALENT & TRAINING FOR TOMORROW

- Asset map the existing workforce programs to strengths and gaps in programs and trainings to determine next steps.
- As part of its business retention and expansion efforts, MCEDA should work with existing industry to identify existing skill gaps employers are facing.
- Look to develop materials and messaging that articulates the existing highly educated and highly trained workforce.



AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY (A CROSS-CUTTING STRATEGY)

- MCEDA should leverage marketing, communications and advocacy resources to ensure the Nissan story is told – highlight the benefits of having the company housed in Madison.
- Form a joint task force of the Business League, MCEDA and other stakeholders to research the market potential of Nissan and its suppliers to advance the concepts of automotive incubator programs.
- MCEDA's BR&E program must have a strong focus on Nissan and its suppliers.
- MCEDA should develop product, workforce training and other proactive delivery systems attractive to suppliers of Nissan.

Competitiveness

Today, the ability to innovate and to commercialize is a crucial determinant of competitiveness and will be in coming decades. Economic developers and policymakers now know that innovation is a primary driver of economic progress and community long-term well-being. Despite the importance of innovation to an area's competitiveness, many counties and states face difficulties in strengthening performance in this area.

Few communities have been able to successfully marshal their resources and focus their efforts to capitalize on opportunities offered by new technologies, especially in life sciences, advanced manufacturing and information/communication technologies. Those who have are realizing a surplus of growth opportunities arising from the vision, commitment and investments made by such communities.

*"From a local economic development perspective, North Carolina's Research Triangle Park (RTP) stands as something of a counterpoise to Silicon Valley as well as to conventional wisdom about how to foster innovation. Unlike Silicon Valley, RTP did not spontaneously evolve out of the interaction between local universities and the surrounding region, nor has its success at any point been primarily associated with start-up firms, although many start-ups are attributable to RTP. While local universities were essential to RTP's ultimate success, they were to some extent recruited for the effort by local civic boosters as part of a broader out-of-state recruitment strategy of the sort that is sometimes disparaged by analysts of technology-driven economic development." **Research Triangle Park "is the only one of the three celebrated high-tech clusters [the others being Silicon Valley and Route 128] that was conceived of before it existed, and the only one where government and academia were equal partners with private industry during the initial development phase. [I]n RTP, we see a centrally planned rather than organic process driven by established firms rather than start-ups."**⁶*

Innovation doesn't exist just within the realm of academia and industry. Those who look to improve their ability to compete take a holistic view seeking to apply innovation and innovativeness across business and industry, entrepreneurialism, education, government policy and the way they conduct their organizations.

Governments can play a more direct role in fostering innovation. Local public policies can support innovation by continually reforming and updating the regulatory framework within which innovative activity takes place. Reforms may be needed in the general business environment, policies impacting workforce and education, and in the regulatory climate to make an area more conducive to innovation. And while this type of regulatory activity does not fall within MCEDA's purview, MCEDA can and should make recommendations, as appropriate that will assist the county in improving its competitiveness.

⁶ Best Practices in State and Regional Innovation Initiatives: Competing in the 21st Century.

Strategy: Harness Innovation as a Key Driver of Success

TACTIC: Either through a committee taskforce or with the assistance of an outside entity, commission a competitiveness assessment with the emphasis on Madison County's ability to attract, foster, grow and sustain innovative businesses, clusters and concepts. Develop forward-leaning strategy based on the findings of the study either to improve the county's competitiveness and/or to leverage opportunities where strengths are identified.

TACTIC: Work with the Board of Supervisors to assess where changes to current tax and regulatory policies may be needed to encourage innovation and growth. An appropriate mix of direct and indirect instruments such as tax credits, direct support and support for innovative clusters or entrepreneurialism should be considered.

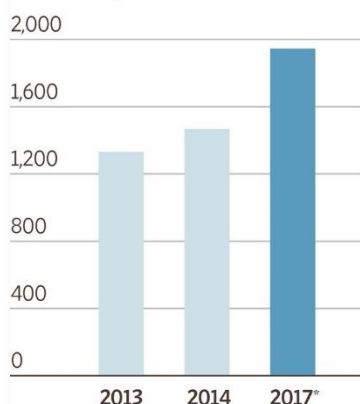
TACTIC: Engage the local business community in MCEDA's commitment to competitiveness through innovation. The private-sector will not only support such efforts, but are in a better position to help drive this initiative with MCEDA's leadership. The Business League and other business membership-based

organizations can integrate such thinking into their own programs seeking to encourage innovation and innovative thinking as a competitive advantage of Madison County.

TACTIC: Look to capitalize where the greatest opportunities exist in Madison County today, for example, automotive and robotics. Narrow the focus to a sector where the county can truly pursue/demonstrate innovativeness and commit to working together across organizations, higher education and business partners to advance the initiative.

Taking Over

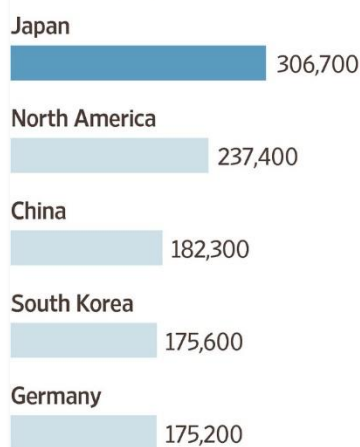
Industrial robots in operation world-wide, in thousands



*Projected

Where They Are

Industrial robots operating by country/region, 2014

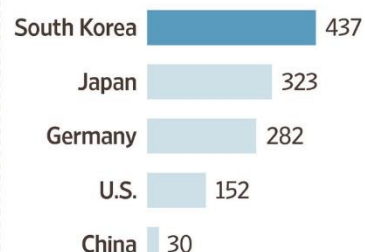


Sources: International Federation of Robotics; Robotic Industries Association (U.S. robot orders)

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

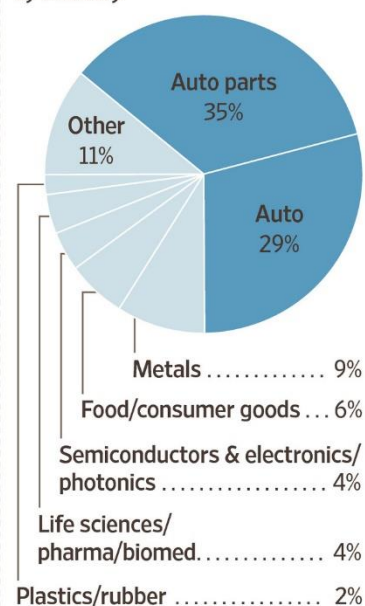
Robot Density

Industrial robots per 10,000 manufacturing employees



At Work in America

Robot orders in the U.S. in 2014 by industry



Business Formation

In analyzing the three buckets of growth, most often local economic development organizations focus on competitive projects. Often, that is the primary emphasis of an organization in order to bring transformational change to a community over a defined period of time. However, that does not mean the impact of an energized and committed entrepreneurial pipeline should be overlooked. The challenge is not usually a lack of community support but rather a lack of understanding of where and how local leaders can nurture the ecosystem.

With a desire by local governments, states, colleges and universities to engage and foster an environment conducive to entrepreneurs, activities have tended to focus on incubators, accelerators and ultimately no-cost or low cost space. Yet, research suggests that the programs or efforts that have demonstrated the most success are those that foster relationships and cooperative learning among entrepreneurs.

According to a Kauffman Foundation report from 2015, “Strategies anchored in investments and incubators have failed to foster entrepreneurship because the tactics are not suited to the experiential and collaborative process that characterizes entrepreneurship. Instead, there must be a long-term focus on entrepreneurs as individuals distinct from small businesses, who learn by doing and interacting with others.”⁷

Beyond typical competitive project recruitment projects, Madison County residents and leaders are extremely supportive of entrepreneurial efforts. More than 75 percent of the respondents who completed the online survey, stated that they would like to see more home-grown and local entrepreneurial businesses in the county. Moreover, when looking at measurable goals or strategies for economic development nearly 54 percent of those surveyed indicated a strong entrepreneurial climate as a top five goal/strategy.

With nearly 30 percent of all jobs in county in businesses with less than 10 people⁸, MCEDA in partnership with the Business League should look to leverage and support the existing entrepreneurial activity in the county. On the following page is a suite of high-level recommendations that could be accomplished through a collaborative effort of utilizing the resources and intellectual capital of MCEDA, the Business League, Mississippi Development Authority industry leaders, elected officials, city and county staff as well as existing entrepreneurs.

| BUSINESSES BY TYPE | 2010 | 2015 |
|--------------------|--------|--------|
| ALL | 4.9K | 6.7K |
| RESIDENT | 77.1% | 81.5% |
| NONRESIDENT | 14.8% | 11.8% |
| NONCOMMERCIAL | 8.1% | 6.7% |
| JOBS BY STAGES | | |
| ALL | 55.3K | 62.2K |
| SELF EMPLOYED (1) | 1.0% | 0.9% |
| ONE (2 TO 9) | 22.6% | 28.7% |
| TWO (10 TO 99) | 41.0% | 39.1% |
| THREE (100 TO 499) | 16.9% | 17.2% |
| FOUR (500+) | 18.6% | 14.2% |
| JOBS CHANGE | | |
| GAINED | 6.0K | 7.4K |
| LOST | 4.8K | 5.6K |
| NET CHANGE | 1.2K | 1.8K |
| SALES/REVENUE | | |
| ALL | \$20B | \$15B |
| SALES PER EMPLOYEE | \$365K | \$236K |
| SALES PER BUSINESS | \$4.1M | \$2.2M |

⁷ Kauffman Foundation, Guidelines for Local and State Governments to Promote Entrepreneurship

⁸ Data and chart from YourEconomy.org.

Strategy: Support Young Firms to Increase County-Wide Prosperity

TACTIC: Form a coalition to conduct an asset review of entrepreneurial activities in the county, where opportunities and challenges exist.

Using intellectual capital of those listed on the previous page, create a coalition of leaders to examine Madison County's existing entrepreneurial ecosystem. Consider undertaking the following action items, which provide a starting point and by no means finite:

More than 75 percent of the respondents who completed the online survey, stated that they would like to see more home-grown and local entrepreneurial businesses in the county.


- Host facilitated workshops around the county to hear the comments and concerns of entrepreneurs. Discuss what resources they have found work best and what obstacles they are facing. Do not segment on industry type. Open the process to any and all start-ups.
- Asset map existing programs and resources to assist entrepreneurs and identify any gaps as a result of the workshops.
- Identify the assets and resources that matter most to entrepreneurs. Research suggests that while business climate plays a role, access to customers and quality of life factors are considered of high importance.
- Utilize the experience and knowledge of MDA's Entrepreneur Center to gain understanding of best practices. Promote MDA's services and resources such as the Entrepreneur's Tool Kit and events to local start-ups.

TACTIC: Work with County Supervisors and businesses to support the elimination of burdensome regulations that could restrain start-up growth, specifically: challenges in accessing accurate and updated information on types of permits and licenses needed, detailed timelines on the permitting and licensing processes and contact information for staff. Used the information from the workshops to drive this discussion. Consider process improvement techniques that could alleviate unnecessary steps for start-up businesses.

"A major barrier facing new and small businesses isn't insurmountable regulations, but a regulatory process that makes it difficult for them to engage with the system. Local governments can look to improve how it communicates about its regulatory and permitting process. For example, a city could have a central location, or a "one-stop" that houses all important information, handles forms and fees, and has knowledgeable staff. In a digital world, having an easy to navigate online presence with necessary information is become increasingly important."⁹

TACTIC: Create a mentor program with experienced entrepreneurs with start-ups. In looking at best practices across communities and entrepreneurial programs, entrepreneurs benefit from interactions and mentorships from other entrepreneurs. Experienced entrepreneurs understand the excitement, complexities and the frustration that goes along with starting a new firm and are willing to give back to others beginning the process. Establishing a mentor program or expanding

⁹ National League of Cities, Supporting Entrepreneurs and Small Business



the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation's 1 Million Cups initiative beyond Jackson and into Madison County could provide more opportunities to share experiences and ideas.

TACTIC: Long-term look to encourage start-up firm growth throughout the county, specifically downtown Canton. Given the existing available real estate in downtown Canton, coupled with the thriving Canton Flea Market Arts and Craft Show, there is an opportunity to harness the creative economy in the north end of the county potentially allowing artisans to locate in the empty storefronts and other places to build a flourishing downtown and to create foot traffic. This would extend much of the tourism impact from festivals and events that currently exist. Benchmark the opportunities in Canton against similar communities throughout the southeast for best practices and pitfalls to avoid.

Business Retention & Expansion

There are many facets of a successful economic development strategy but none more critical than a strong business retention and expansion program (BR&E). While there is little denying that the recruitment and diversification of new business is essential, without an emphasis on engaging the current existing industries in a community, even the most aggressive recruitment efforts are likely to struggle.

Madison County has a vibrant economy growing at a record pace. But to maintain this upward path and maybe more importantly to continue to diversify the current business base a higher priority must be placed on engagement of current county industry.

Few local communities are blessed with the type of capacity that comes with an active industry cluster. Madison County has this in the automotive industry. With Nissan North America and its surrounding nearly 20 suppliers there is existing intellectual capacity that only select communities possess. To take advantage of that intellectual capacity, MCEDA must develop a program that not only continues to build on that sector but encourages growth in other sectors as well.

Strategy: Expand the Engagement with Madison County's Existing Industry

TACTIC: Develop, implement and sustain a comprehensive Business Retention and Expansion Program. MCEDA must develop a solid outreach approach that seeks to understand both the successes and challenges of doing business in the area. Having ongoing and positive engagement with local employers will affect every facet of the economic development strategy. There is one tenant crucial to any existing industry program, personal engagement. MCEDA must not only be personally engaged in a business' success they must be personally engaged with the local business representatives that are responsible for that success. Any quality BR&E program must align its objectives to mirror the objectives of the company. This will only be possible with a high level of personal engagement from MCEDA staff to the company. This engagement along with a customer relationship management (CRM) system will allow staff to not only mine critical data concerning the company's relative health but also track, maintain and utilize comparative data from all of the existing businesses in the area.

In VisionFirst's experience regardless of what program is utilized there are four main components that must be included:

1. Select company candidates based on diversity of industry and diversity of impact. The largest private sector employers must be part of the program due to their impact but small businesses must be a factor here as well. A good cross-section to represent the community is imperative.
2. Conduct one-on-one visits with each business utilizing a survey tool to focus on the needs of the company and its employees. Identify and address companies at risk and potential expansion opportunities. It must be designed to elicit honest feedback that can be used to help both the company and the community. The results of the survey will be confidential and analyzed only by the MCEDA. All results should be recorded in the CRM system leading to a database of business intelligence.
3. Analyze all data and develop action plans to define the priorities for the community as it relates to existing business. Allocate resources to address concerns.

4. Follow up. Each meeting must be of consequence. Companies need to trust that the information they are sharing has a chance to make a lasting impact or they will stop sharing it.

A successful BR&E program is designed to not only develop mutually beneficial relationships with local business but to provide a better understand the health of the local economy and what challenges and opportunities exist.

When company representatives feel a growing engagement with the local community there is no limit to what can be accomplished. They not only understand who to reach out to for support but more importantly are comfortable doing so. This leads to a better understanding of potential challenges and opportunities in real time allowing the EDO to react accordingly.


TACTIC: Host an Automotive Supplier Roundtable. As fortunate as Madison County is to have an automotive cluster in its backyard, without connectivity between the individual companies the full benefit will not be realized. This engagement is crucial to the continuing development of the cluster. Regardless of the perceived competition in the automotive supplier field, most companies in the Madison County area are providing specific products to the Nissan and not competing with other suppliers in the area. Much of the competition between suppliers concerns talent. While employee transition can be an issue, one way to overcome this is engagement between employers on the front end. There is a real opportunity to exchange best practices and develop a support network to increase efficiency and effectiveness. A bi-annual conference bringing all area suppliers together with a robust agenda focusing on hot button issues facing the industry. Not only does an annual event benefit the employer and employees of the supplier companies it becomes a premium opportunity for MCEDA to continue to develop relationships with those employers and ascertain key information as to the health of those organizations. This information allows MCEDA to act quickly to develop strategy concerning possible expansions and growth as well as provide assistance to those that are struggling in the market.

TACTIC: Develop and implement a Nissan Growth Strategy. As home to one of the state's largest employers, Nissan, much of what drives manufacturing in the county will be led by the long-term strategy of the company. Due to its collective impact it is imperative that MCEDA remain engaged in Nissan's planning process and be seen as a committed and supportive partner. As the company considers future growth, the ability to show and provide Nissan low-cost and shovel ready options convenient to the facility in Canton is critical. Any product considered for development surrounding the OEM should be positioned as a catalyst for future growth of the cluster.

TACTIC: Conduct outreach and marketing surrounding the Mississippi Biomedical Science Business Collaboratory. Madison County is fortunate to have impressive real estate space dedicated to biomedical start-up with the Collaboratory. There is an entrepreneurial spirit and mindset amongst the current occupants of the facility but few

know what level of success is being achieved and what if any additional space is available for





other start-up ventures. This combined with the Bioscience efforts from the Madison County Healthcare Zone designation create opportunity for the community to market a fully integrated Bioscience incubator at the Collaboratory that is unique to Central Mississippi much less Madison County. To take advantage of this growing market, MCEDA, must create a proactive marketing and outreach campaign designed to create awareness about this unique opportunity. As part of its business development efforts, MCEDA should take an active role and attend conferences dedicated to the bioscience industry including Southeast Bio and the Bio International Convention to promote the county and Collaboratory's story, the county should also look to entrepreneurial conferences that focus on the life science industry.

In addition, while there is real opportunity for entrepreneurial growth the success of the overall approach is dependent on the ability to keep successful companies in the area. MCEDA as an engaged partner must develop product in order for the companies to be able to successfully transition from the incubator to sites in the county.

Finally, within the county MCEDA should actively promote the accomplishments and long-term potential of the Collaboratory within the state and county. Additional marketing information both electronically and printed including an expanded webpage are needed to full promote the facility and businesses.

Business Development

Madison County has a long record of accomplishment of successfully recruiting business to the area. While Nissan is the highest profile win, that doesn't take away from market growth success. The biggest issue is MCEDA has not experienced any competitive project victories recently. There appear to be several reasons for this but the main culprits are focus and capacity.

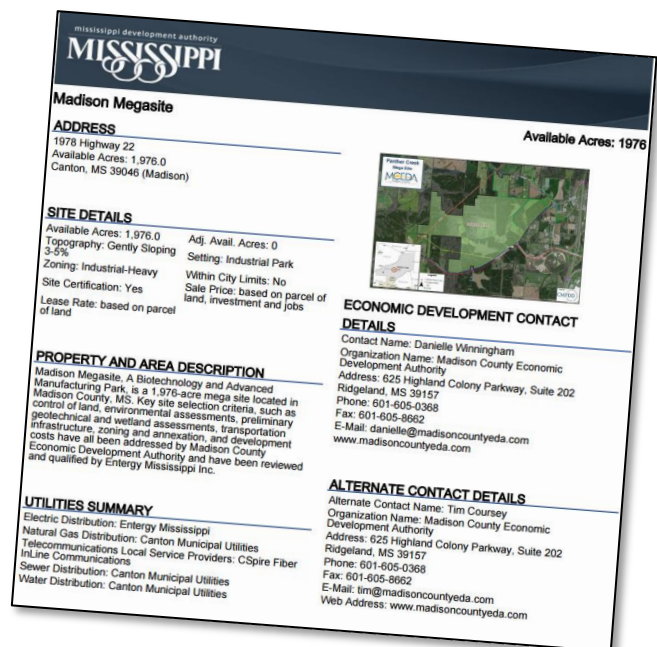
As with most communities that experience this level of success, the focus tends to shift to maintenance of those wins rather than continually striving to diversify the economy. Business development and proactive outreach tends to take a back seat to the litany of responsibilities that come with a large existing industry base. The focus must be to ensure those existing corporate citizens have the support they need to continue to grow and flourish in the area. This is certainly not misplaced effort but there must be a balance to ensure the continued diversification of the economy as a whole. To accomplish this the organization must be aggressive and proactive in developing strong product and marketing the story of Madison County to decision makers throughout the globe.


Even with a reinforced focus on this business development effort the challenge remains one of capacity. In the previous sections capacity was identified as a barrier, as the current responsibilities of the organization call for increased staffing to accomplish these duties. In addition, a revised MCEDA mission was also outlined and subsequently what defines success and what is required to accomplish these goals. If the organization can streamline the mission and grow capacity, then MCEDA can be a true leader in proactive business recruitment. To do this there are several key tactics that must be explored.

Strategy: A Sales-Focused, Customer-Centric Approach

TACTIC: Develop a comprehensive product inventory and assessment. Madison County is very fortunate to have available economic development product and multiple partners marketing these sites to decision makers. Along with MCEDA's sites and buildings database, both the Mississippi Development Authority and Entergy Mississippi maintain databases with the community's product prominently featured. This serves to further market the suite of defined options available to a potential company on a massive scale. This exposure is generally never a bad thing but it can be optimized when directed to specific targets.

MCEDA has done a good job of maintaining realistic, well defined targets. The challenge is to ensure the product they are marketing appeals to the industry that is targeted. For example, the Madison Mega Site is advertised as a more than 1,000-acre mega site suitable for





large scale industrial projects. There are two challenges to this however. The first is that the actual developable portion of the site is approximately 600 acres with the remainder that must be mitigated. Any large scale project in search of a “mega-site” will eliminate the site from consideration. The second challenge and conversely a real opportunity is that the site is its proximity to one of the largest employers in the state. This will be a challenge to many prospective companies not only in terms of competition for labor but its ability to be recognized as a major community asset. However, this can also be an opportunity precisely because of its proximity to its neighbor.

Large scale OEMs are continually looking to define future growth possibilities both for themselves as well as future component suppliers. OEMs around the country have very few options when it comes to large scale, prime real estate near their location. Madison County is one of the few locations that offers this type of prospect.


This is not to say that there isn’t opportunity for companies in other industries to locate on this site, but it will take a near perfect situation to make it happen. Marketing a property as a mega site will limit its impressions to those interested in looking for large scale industrial properties. This is certainly causing MCEDA to miss opportunities with small and midsize companies that will bypass anything classified as a mega-site. Conversely, those exploring available mega-sites will eliminate this site due to the limitations of the total acreage. Ultimately, due to its poor marketing, Madison County is effectively losing opportunities of all sizes.

Using this as a prime example of the need to align existing product with realistic targeted markets, VisionFirst’s recommendation is create a task force consisting of MDA, Entergy and MCEDA to further assess existing product and the path to market it successfully.

TACTIC: Conduct robust decision-maker outreach. One thing that is clear is the desire to be more aggressive when it concerns outreach to decision makers. While there has been some effort in combination with MDA and other partners to participate in many of the activities focused on lead generation, to this point there has been little activity on an individual basis with the community. The importance of participating with the state and other allies cannot be understated, however, Madison County is in the enviable position of being a recognized destination with the ability to do significant individual outreach as well. This strategy will accomplish several important outcomes. First it will reinforce with those decision makers in targeted industries the narrative that has been developed by the state and other partners. Secondly, and maybe more importantly the community will begin to cultivate many of those important relationships on their own and regardless if the level of outreach from partners changes, MCEDA can maintain relationships for the long-term.

Utilizing the existing target markets MCEDA should develop a multi-pronged approach to lead generation:

- One relatively inexpensive outreach method is to participate in industry specific trade shows and conferences. The combined collection of intellectual capital in a targeted industry allows for maximum return on investment. Being not only visible but interacting with these professionals is an ideal way to tell the MCEDA story. A perfect example is the Southern Automotive Conference; with such a strong existing automotive cluster, MCEDA should be front



and center at any collection of professionals of this size. Regardless of the location, it is a prime opportunity to develop relationships with those individuals that affect future project decisions.

- At the same time, the trip can be used to call on other industry professionals and site location consultants that happen to be located in the conference host city. Business travel is never inexpensive but when combined with multiple objectives can offer a significant return on MCEDA's investment.


Regardless of the level of outreach without persistent follow up there will little to show from the effort. Many economic development organization spend significant time and resources on business travel and relationship development only to have the opportunities generated erased by lack of responsiveness and continued engagement.

TACTIC: Redefine MCEDA's business development team. One core tenant of business development that VisionFirst will always highlight is the importance of a solid team approach. Even if MCEDA could significantly increase its capacity through increased staffing it is important to continually think of the team concept in a holistic manner beyond the office walls. Even the most talented staff expands their concept of the team approach.

Never has the economic development field been more competitive. Years ago companies limited their search to certain regions with known desirable attributes. With the explosion of available information, companies now have a volumes of information at their fingertips on thousands of sites and buildings in every state and multiple companies. This allows communities that have struggled to compete to not only contend but win competitive projects. Because of this, communities must ensure that every resource is utilized, and every ally is aligned if they want to have a chance to compete and win. Communities are no longer competing with the community up the road, they are competing globally.

EDOs must stop thinking of their team as just who is on their payroll. The team should extend to those individuals and groups in the community that can provide value to the competitiveness of Madison County. When recruiting healthcare opportunities or advanced manufacturing, who are the individuals in the community that have that industry specific expertise. How are they included to show the prospect Madison County understands their industry? MDA and Entergy have individuals tasked with working these projects with targets aligned to MCEDA. Are they held at arm's length or do they serve as an extension of the team? Elected officials can play pivotal roles in helping the prospect see that the county can move any hurdle standing in the way of their location. How are they involved and to what level? Are there other business leaders in the community that understand the challenges a new company will face? They should all be a part of MCEDA's team.

Successful EDOs almost always have a well-defined "go-to" team ready to be mobilized for any opportunity. They understand that opportunities are limited and they must put their best foot forward when working with a prospect. They want the prospect to see a united community ready to overcome any challenge to that company's location. They understand that the company is not just looking at the potential location as a three to five-year proposition but rather the long-term future of the company. They need to understand the community will be with them well beyond the



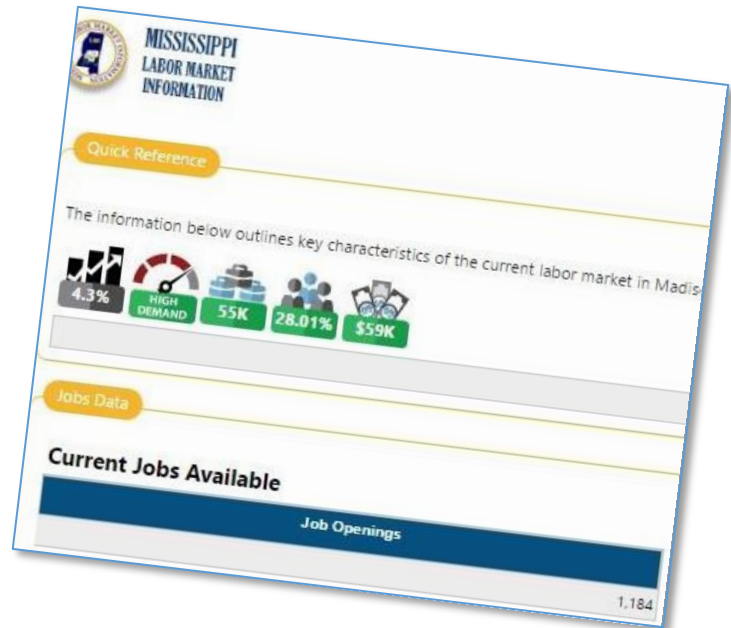
location announcement. Nothing demonstrates this more effectively to a prospect than engaged business and elected leadership. VisionFirst refers to this as the “delta-team.”

This delta-team consists of all those previously mentioned individuals and other resources throughout the community. To be successful in this approach the effort must be well choreographed. It's not enough to just be a part of the team, every player must fully understand his or her role. Not everyone needs to be in front of the prospect, but every team player can provide value to the effort whether that is behind the scenes or on the front line. That means significant time and effort must be placed on working with the delta-team to understand the confidentiality of working with prospects, their role and expected outcomes. If all of the above is well defined and accepted by the participants, then recruitment efforts will be significantly bolstered. VisionFirst's recommendation is to begin the process of defining this extended team immediately.

Education & Workforce

As the competition for business growth tightens, a well-educated, highly-skilled workforce can prove to not only be a key driver in a location decision but also one of the most important aspects to long-term economic prosperity.

Madison County is an enviable position with highly educated workforce, a growing labor force and poverty rate lower than the national average. However, 21 percent of Madison County's population has some college but no degree. In addition, Canton Public Schools are struggling. Although the school district has hired a new and highly regarded superintendent it will take the efforts of a number of engaged partners to make improvements. These two aspects of Madison County's current and future workforce represent an opportunity for additional enhancement of the county's education and workforce initiatives.




Although it is not and cannot be the primary responsibility of MCEDA to influence the county's education and workforce system, it must be an engaged partner as employers need to have confidence in the workforce the county has to offer. According to Mississippi's Labor Market Information, there are nearly 1,200 jobs available in the county. A lack of coordination between employers, MCEDA and the current workforce system will leave the population frustrated while employers' needs go unmet.

According to Business Facilities Magazine, "One of the biggest challenges facing the workforce right now isn't lack of jobs; it's the lack of necessary skills to fill the jobs now available in this new knowledge-based economy. A primary focus for those in workforce development is to bridge the gap between employers and potential employees, addressing the issues of skills training and talent building. Across the country, workforce development has risen to the top of many state economic development agendas. This is because worker training programs can make huge social and economic impacts. If workers are trained with 21st century skills it can make individuals competitive in the global economy and this helps drive economic growth."

Strategy: Aligning Talent & Training for Tomorrow

TACTIC: In coordination with local and state partners, MCEDA should lead an effort to asset map the existing workforce programs to strengths and gaps in programs and trainings to determine next steps. The coalition of partners should engage Mississippi State University's NSPARC to identify opportunities for comprehensive data needed to understand the labor shed. The analysis



should seek to align the workforce and talent pipeline strategies with employers' needs to ensure jobs are filled faster and with the right employees.

TACTIC: As part of its business retention and expansion efforts, MCEDA should work with existing industry to identify existing skill gaps employers are facing. With poverty levels in some Madison communities well above the county's average, it is critical to find career pathways for those residents to find appropriate training and employment opportunities.

According to data on provided on the Central Mississippi Planning and Development District website for Madison and the three surrounding counties, of the nearly 22 percent who said they were unemployed 25.4 percent said it was due to being laid off/company closure and 15.6 percent stated it was due to a lack of jobs in their field.¹⁰

MCEDA must seek to work with education leaders to benchmark other county and/or regional initiatives that seek to take low-skilled and/or unemployed workers into the middle-skill jobs available in the community.

A successful example of a community working to provide career pathways for all of its citizens is the Greater Memphis Alliance for a Competitive Workforce (GMACW). GMACW's work focuses on equipping individuals with skills needed to land good paying jobs. The organization seeks to identify company needs and work with local technical schools in preparation to succeed in the workplace. They facilitate access to agencies that address barriers so employees can focus on work and become more productive. In addition, they assist employers with customized training programs so that incumbent and new hires possess the skills needed for near term success.¹¹

Ultimately, the partnership is working to effectively link low- and middle-skill workers to solid opportunities by reaching across traditional boundaries to build a streamlined system aligned with employer demand.¹²

TACTIC: Look to develop materials and messaging that articulates the existing highly educated and highly trained workforce. Madison County has a strong workforce and talent pipeline story to tell but it is going largely unnoticed in MCEDA's marketing. While the MCEDA website directs visitors to the Central Mississippi Planning and Development District for labor data, that takes visitors off the MCEDA site and information can only be provided in a four-county aggregate. Beyond top-line census level information, MCEDA must seek to tell Madison County's talent pipeline story from kindergarten to higher education and beyond. The information should highlight not only educational attainment and top employers but the programs and partnerships that seek to further the talent pipeline while matching employer needs.

¹⁰ Southcentral Mississippi Labor Supply Survey for Hinds, Madison, Rankin, Yazoo

¹¹ Greater Memphis Alliance for a Competitive Workforce

¹² Brookings Metropolitan Policy Program, Remaking Economic Development

The Automotive Industry – A Cross-Cutting Strategy

In 2003, Madison County and the State of Mississippi were the focal point of international business news when Nissan opened the state's first automotive assembly plant. MCEDA played an active role on the state team in securing the project. Since then, "Nissan's impact led to Madison County experiencing a jump in housing starts and household income while the number of those living in poverty has reached an all-time low, and contributed to one of the state's lowest unemployment figures."¹³ The question today is, how to continue to leverage this phenomenal asset generating millions in payroll, disposable income and investment in Madison County?

According to a recent Brookings Institution article, manufacturing jobs have declined from 17 million in 2000 to 11 million in 2010, with a small increase since then. The job loss is attributable primarily to technological change. Manufacturing's share of U.S. production is relatively stable; however, employment has declined because productivity growth in the actual manufacturing process is higher than in services.¹⁴

These changes require the lead economic development organization of Madison County to be aligned with the market and its ever-changing conditions. VisionFirst has recommended five strategic initiatives in this report; however, a focus on automotive must be a strategy crosscutting all of them.

Competitiveness

Nissan and its suppliers operate in one of the most hypercompetitive industries in the world. Assumptions that their long-term presence is a given is false. Rapid changes in technology, materials, consumer demand and macroeconomics all impact the future of the automotive industry.

MCEDA's Director must maintain a relationship with the Vice President, Manufacturing, Canton Vehicle Assembly Plant, Nissan North America, Inc. The relationship should be built on trust and the ability to communicate confidentially on on-going needs impacting the company's operations in Mississippi. It is understood that other officials such as the Governor, CEOs of utilities and local

NISSAN CANTON VEHICLE ASSEMBLY PLANT



The opening of the Nissan Canton Vehicle Assembly Plant in 2003 brought automotive production to Mississippi for the first time. Since then, the plant has become a force for economic development, creating thousands of well-paying jobs. For more than a decade, the Canton team has been assembling quality, award-winning cars, trucks, crossovers and SUVs. The plant has grown significantly over that time and transformed from a domestic manufacturer to a global one.

ECONOMIC IMPACT IN MISSISSIPPI



\$2.6 billion
Contributed annually in disposable income

\$300 million
Generated annually in local and state tax revenue

\$3.3 billion
Investment in the plant

25,000
Jobs created statewide



COMMUNITY IMPACT

Annual payroll of **\$400+ million**

More than **\$13.6 million**
in local charitable contributions since operations began**

8,000 volunteer hours
supporting more than 200 organizations in the Greater Jackson area

MODELS PRODUCED

NISSAN ALTIMA
NISSAN FRONTIER
NISSAN MURANO
NISSAN NV CARGO
NISSAN NV PASSENGER
NISSAN TITAN
NISSAN TITAN XD



CANTON PLANT

More Than **3.2 Million**
Vehicles assembled since 2003*



4.7 million
square-foot facility

1,038-acre
property

450,000
ANNUAL CAPACITY

DIVERSITYINC'S
TOP 25



46% Minority Managers

In recognition of Nissan's diverse workforce, Nissan was named one of DiversityInc's Top 25 Noteworthy Companies for 2016.

62% Diverse Workforce

* Since start of production
** Includes employee contributions (e.g. United Way)
Nissan vehicles are assembled using domestic and globally sourced parts brought to you by Nissan
December 2016

NISSAN GROUP
OF NORTH AMERICA

¹³ Nissan Canton: A Catalyst for Advanced Automotive Manufacturing in Mississippi June 2016

¹⁴ [Global economic forces conspire to stymie U.S. manufacturing](#)

leaders will have personal relationships; however, MCEDA must be in the loop to drive change and be the voice of competitive needs for Nissan in the county and state.

To maintain competitiveness, the company must continue its efforts of telling its economic story. MCEDA should be front and center with not only delivering the message, but help shaping it to show the positive impacts to families and citizens. It was disheartening to hear some of the stakeholders interviewed in our process say, “Nissan has not done anything to help our county.” That is far from the truth. MCEDA should deploy a public relations and communications strategy to tell the local citizens the Nissan story and drive positive conversation about the advantages of having a globally recognized automotive company investing in the county.

COMPETITIVENESS TACTICS

- MECDEA Director to actively build strong working relationships with Nissan executive leadership in Canton and in Franklin, Tennessee.
- Use advocacy role of Business League to explore issues around Workers Compensation and negative impact on Nissan and suppliers.
- Proactively develop a public relations campaign to tell Nissan’s positive economic story to internal and external audiences.

Business Formation

The very presence of Nissan and its nearly \$1.8 billion investment in Madison County leads to countless business opportunities. One of the strategic initiatives mentioned in this report is the minimal amount of proactive entrepreneurial or business formation activities. While Nissan is proactive in procurement conversations, there is not active strategy to help local entrepreneurs to evaluate the market opportunities and assist in new business formation. As a start, a joint task force of the Business League, MCEDA and other stakeholders should be appointed to research the market potential of Nissan and its suppliers and make recommendations to advance the concepts of incubator programs aimed at supporting Nissan.

BUSINESS FORMATION TACTICS

- Organize task force to research Nissan market and procurement opportunities for start-up businesses.

Business Retention & Expansion (BR&E)

Earlier it is noted that MCEDA should develop a robust BR&E program. A specific focus of this program must be on Nissan and its suppliers. The relationships with these companies not only provides expansion opportunities but excellent market intelligence to further other strategic initiatives in business formation, business development and talent development.

BUSINESS RETENTION & EXPANSION TACTICS

- Work with Nissan and suppliers to coordinate a regular forum to address issues relative to the supply chain and overall operation.

- Make sure companies are aware of MDA, community college and university resources to assist in workforce training and expansion opportunities.
- Identify and monitor automotive research sources for industry trends, innovation and global impacts.
- Extensively study and understand the supply chain associated with Nissan.

Business Development

The market intelligence and supplier feedback are crucial components of a Nissan centered business development strategy. Besides proximity to the assembly operation, MCEDA should develop product, workforce training and other proactive delivery systems attractive to suppliers of Nissan.

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT TACTICS

- Identify shovel ready sites for potential suppliers and conduct necessary due diligence to enable quick decisions on viability.
- Consider doing an in-house Certified Supplier Site program. Requirements should be similar to other site readiness programs but focused solely on the supplier network.
- Develop thorough understanding of the supply network of Nissan. This would include all suppliers that support Canton. This information offers opportunity to develop target industry sectors for recruitment.

Education & Workforce

Often the catalyst to business formation is research and innovation driven by universities, colleges and state leaders. With the presence of Mississippi State University's CAVS Center on site, there are numerous opportunities to develop entrepreneur initiatives around this presence. To start, the MCEDA staff and board should actively explore what innovation and research is being conducted around robotics, autonomous systems, advanced material making and logistics; all of which are critical to the automotive industry. If gaps exist, MCEDA and the Business League should advocate for the state to consider strategic investments in CAVS or other centers focused on these areas. Alabama in the last few years has funded and implemented three centers of excellence around marine technology and manufacturing, aerospace and robotics. Madison County is poised to be a location for a new state initiative focused on robotics and the supply chain to automotive. It also has long term implications on other businesses such as medical devices, advanced manufacturing and distribution/logistics.

With the advance of robotics in the manufacturing industry, MCEDA through its BR&E outreach efforts should seek to understand what training programs exist around the use of new machinery. Once identified, a comprehensive certification program beginning at the high-school level and continuing to higher education should be developed to establish a firm, local talent pipeline. A best practice that can be seen in the Southeast is in Georgetown, Kentucky which developed a comprehensive advanced manufacturing technician program.¹⁵

¹⁵ Bluegrass Advanced Manufacturing Center



EDUCATION & WORKFORCE TACTICS


- Work with Madison County Public Schools, Canton Public Schools, Holmes County College and Universities to advance entrepreneurial activities centered on Nissan market opportunities.
- In conjunction with existing manufacturers and education partners seek to develop relevant certifications starting at the high-school level and extending to a master's program around the use of robotics.

How is Success Measured?

The true measure of a high-performing county organization must go beyond a jobs and capital investment quota. While this will be the most common metric used to define any economic development organization, with a body such as MCEDA looking to refocus and re-energize its efforts it cannot be the sole factor that points to the health of the organization especially if it doesn't measure the county's ability to compete. There are too many factors outside the control of the individuals leading the organization that will determine the location of jobs and investment. It is important for jobs and capital investment to be one of MCEDA's measures but it shouldn't be the only factor determining MCEDA's success.

The challenge is to identify other measures that point to the effectiveness of the organization. Many factors will be essential to the success of the organization but the following factors will determine the long term value to the region:

- **Awareness & Outreach:**
 - Conduct an annual customer/stakeholder satisfaction survey that goes beyond existing industry to at a minimum include MCEDA's Board of Directors, Madison County Board of Supervisors, Mayors and Elected Officials of Madison County's Cities and stakeholders such as the Business League. MCEDA should establish an achievable baseline participation rate. As interest grows, the baseline should be increased.
 - Host quarterly workshops with stakeholders to provide updates on MCEDA's efforts and progress in its stated program of work. Metric should be based on level of attendance and participation in MCEDA identified initiatives.
- **Advocacy:**
 - Measure outreach to legislature, state leaders such as Mississippi Development Authority, local elected officials, etc. Total consultations would be the metric.
- **Business Development Impressions:**
 - This measure is based on unique opportunities for leads. While MCEDA staff should not be judged solely on jobs and investment, staff should be measured by how many opportunities staff can generate, follow upon and close. This metric should encompass leads from MDA, the Greater Jackson Alliance and Entergy. These leads based on MCEDA developing relationships with the staff of those entities and their comfort with MCEDA's level of professionalism and ability to deliver. This metric can include RFPs and site visits.
- **Original Lead Generation:**
 - If MCEDA increases its proactive outreach through event attendance and implements a strong business retention and expansion program, MCEDA should see an increase in its lead generation funnel. While this number may never be extremely high, it should be still be measured as it is a reflection of outreach efforts. The metric should be a stretch goal.
- **Marketing and Communications Effectiveness:**
 - Externally, MCEDA should begin a monthly email campaign to internal and external stakeholders of their efforts and assets and the effectiveness of those emails should be measured on open rates and click-through rates.

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- Internally, MCEDA must measure its efforts as it relates to its communication of its transparency and accountability efforts based on the tactics listed earlier in the document. Those measures should include website metrics as well as email open rates from emails promoting the web updates.
 - All marketing efforts should be measured by lead generation and marketing best practices such as web metrics and email metrics. Once MCEDA hires an experienced marketing and communications firm staff and the firm should develop joint metrics that include stretch goals for success.
 - **Competitiveness**
 - Based on its plan, MCEDA should track progress towards competitiveness goals. Year one baseline is to conduct a competitive assessment, outline a corresponding action plan and collaborate with others with a focus on innovation.

Measuring these elements along with the creation of jobs and investment will paint a clearer picture of how well MCEDA is representing the community it serves as well as providing internal measurement for continuous improvement.



In Conclusion

There are many attributes that have propelled Madison County to become one of the fastest growing counties in the southeast. Strong workforce, a solid quality of life with an outstanding school system and ample public infrastructure ensure sustained growth long into the future. The question for Madison County residents is do they want to determine the type and volume of such growth or continue to let that growth be defined organically, subject to the downturns and uncertainty of the global economy. If the ultimate goal of this organization to be a leader in its field and be the community used to benchmark other EDOs success, then the steps we have outlined in this document must be implemented.

The good news remains that there is little keeping MCEDA or Madison County from becoming that leader befitting of the county. To do so, there must be a shared vision, comprehensive program of work and a staff with the capacity to execute. As progress is made on these recommendations, the County will begin to compete for projects globally that have previously eluded them and discover new ways to build an economy that benefits all its citizens. In the hyper-competitive world of economic development, the time for action is now.

The team at VisionFirst would like to thank the people of Madison County for allowing us to serve as an extension of your team for this organizational assessment. It has been our pleasure to work with a community so blessed with resources that the possibilities for growth are literally endless. We look forward to seeing you grow into an organization that is continually held as the standard bearer for all other economic development organizations.

Key Stakeholders

Madison County Economic Development Authority Board of Directors

- Ed Gardner, Director of Business & Economic Development, Entergy Mississippi
- Calvin Harris, Project Manager, Warnock & Associates, LLC
- Doug Jones, Business Manager, Lake Caroline Owners Association
- Dr. Dwight Lockett, former Superintendent of Canton Public Schools
- Sells J. Newman, Jr., Senior Vice President, First South Farm Credit
- Lanny Slaughter, Retired Business Professional
- Jim Smith, Wealth Management Advisor & First Vice President for Wealth Management, Merrill Lynch

Madison County Board of Supervisors

- Supervisor Sheila Jones, District 1
- Supervisor Trey Baxter, District 2, President of Board of Supervisors
- Supervisor Gerald Steen, District 3
- Supervisor David E. Bishop, District 4
- Supervisor Paul Griffin, District 5

City Officials

- Mayor Arnel Bolden, Canton
- Mayor Les Childress, Flora
- Alan Hart, Director of Community Development, City of Ridgeland
- Mayor Mary Hawkins, Madison
- Mayor Gene F. McGee, Ridgeland

Education Partners

- Glenn F. Boyce, Ed.D., Commissioner of Higher Education, Mississippi Public Universities
- James D. (Don) Burnham, Ph.D., Vice President, Ridgeland Campus for Holmes Community College
- Sherry Chance, Assistant Dean, Madison, Tulane University School of Continuing Studies
- Angela Crain, Workforce Development Coordinator, Holmes Community College (Ridgeland)
- Ronnie McGehee, Superintendent, Madison County Public Schools
- Dr. Clay Walden, Director, CAVS Extension
- Cassandra Williams, Superintendent, Canton Public Schools

Business Leaders

- Madison County Business League and Foundation's Board of Directors
- North Madison County Economic Council
- Deborah Anderson, Former Canton Chamber
- H.C. (Buster) Bailey, Jr., President, H.C. Bailey Companies
- Dianne Dyar, Former Madison County Chamber Director
- Wesley Goings, President, Telapex

- Cecil W. Harper, Harper, Raines, Knight & Company
- Mark Jordan, Mark S. Jordan Companies
- Sam Kelly, Member, Brunini Attorneys at Law; Chair, Madison County Business League
- Bob Kerley, Vice President of Marketing for the Mississippi Division, Atmos Energy
- Tina Lakey, District Director, CenterPoint Energy (Immediate Past Chairman of the Madison County Business League & Foundation)
- Dr. Christopher Powe, President & Principal, Global Training Institute
- William J. Senter, Vice President, Rates & Regulatory Affairs/Mississippi Division, Atmos Energy
- Donna Sims, President of the Madison County offices, BankPlus
- Andy Taggart, Member, Taggart, Rimes & Graham
- Joe Waggoner, CEO, Waggoner Engineering

Mississippi Development Authority

- Billy Klauser, Chief Economic Development Officer, Mississippi Development Authority
- Becky Thompson, Investment Manager, Global Business, Mississippi Development Authority
- Regina Todd, Project Manager, Global Business Division, Mississippi Development Authority
- Mickey Milligan, Existing Industry & Business Division Director, Mississippi Development Authority
- Joey Roberts, Heavy Manufacturing, European Automotive, Mississippi Development Authority



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