

Mississippi Development Authority
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MEETING AND CONVENTION INCENTIVE PROGRAM UNVEILED

Jackson, Miss. - The Meeting and Convention Incentive Program, a pilot program by the Mississippi Development Authority's (MDA) Tourism Development Division, will offer funding assistance in the bid stage for meetings and conventions throughout the state. The program has been initiated to attract new meetings to Mississippi and will also entice groups that have not met in Mississippi in ten years to return to the state. Mississippi is one of the first states to offer this type of incentive program.

According to Darienne Wilson, Director of the MDA's Tourism Development Division, meeting and convention contributions exceed \$200 million annually for Mississippi's economy.

"The Mississippi Development Authority continues its efforts to promote tourism as economic development. With the inauguration of this Incentive Program, we are leading the nation in innovative techniques to attract leisure and business travelers," said Robert J. Rohrlack, Executive Director of MDA. "Increasing the number of meetings and conventions visiting the state equals new jobs and economic growth for our citizens."

The program's plan was unveiled in June 2002 at a coffee reception held at the Fairview Inn in Jackson for a group of participating association and state agency meeting planners as well as industry partners. Task force member Mike Davis of the Beau Rivage Resort stated, "This program will be a crucial step as we further develop our convention market throughout the state. Our state associations will now be empowered and encouraged to bring their regional and national counter parts to Mississippi."

For information regarding Incentive Program guidelines, meeting planners may contact Chris R. Bounds with MDA's Tourism Development Division at (601) 359-3297.

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