

Targeting New & Better Jobs for Our Men and Women Across the State of Mississippi is One of Our Top Priorities

The impact of the Advantage Mississippi Initiative (AMI) has already been measured by the success of attracting Nissan, but there is more. Nissan is proof that our efforts to bring good jobs to our people are working. We have a bold, new plan for economic growth in all 82 counties: rural and urban, agricultural and industrial. More companies, more business and more opportunities are what we are wanting. We are not content; Mississippians want more economic growth.

The AMI is made up of both legislative and administrative components. It addresses all communities, small and large. Small businesses and entrepreneurs remain an integral part of economic growth in Mississippi. But some of those people who could prosper from knowing about economic development projects don't get the information they need. The AMI established a rural development office responsible for targeting smaller communities and manufacturers. The Mississippi Development Authority is organizing that division now. Small businesses are the heart and soul of our economy. We are helping people, and their communities across the state maximize their opportunities.

With the new Capital Access Program, more Mississippi entrepreneurs than ever will have access to the resources they need to start small businesses across our state. This program will encourage and support entrepreneurship among small business and minority-owned businesses.

A new director and a new direction are to be announced for the Minority Business Division of the Mississippi Development Authority. This division will support and foster new business opportunities in our state.

By maximizing specific capabilities and assets, the On-TARGET Community Certification Program can assist local communities recruit, retain and grow businesses tailored to their communities. We help them help themselves by looking at the needs of the people of the community and matching them with businesses that fit those needs. We expect to see this program reaching out to communities as early as April 1st.

Look at the difference innovative, creative leadership can make working together. This March, the Governor's Office, MDA and MEC will come together to hold the Governor's Conference on International Trade at the close of the trade conference; we will open Mississippi Trade Center. Bringing World Trade Center status to Mississippi gives us the opportunity to promote the awareness of international trade, enhance existing trade programs and send a strong signal to national and international prospects that Mississippi has the capabilities to meet their global market needs. We are opening our doors to international opportunities.

Don't forget, we have a commitment to businesses that are already here in Mississippi, and we are just as committed to helping them thrive and prosper.

Ask the Mississippi Development Authority to do more with less? Sure. But cutting one-third of the MDA budget as recommended by the Joint Legislative Budget Committee will cripple our ability to expand economic opportunities, to work with local communities building infrastructure, and to assist new and existing businesses alike. Such a drastic cut puts our economic potential in a stranglehold.

We have an agenda for opportunity. We have the opportunity to succeed. Opportunity is the state of the state in Mississippi, America's State of Promise.