

West Alabama & East Mississippi



The Economic Transformation of Rural West Alabama – East Mississippi Alliance is a partnership for prosperity in thirty-six counties in the states of Alabama and Mississippi. The Alliance’s vision is to pull together the region’s stakeholders, rising above the past and increasing opportunities for prosperity, by creating a world-renowned, regional identity reflecting its enterprise-centric workforce.

Partners include the following: eight community colleges (four in each state); State Workforce Investment Boards; Demopolis University Coalition; Mid-South Partnership for Rural Community Colleges; public school districts and state systems; state, regional, and local economic development entities; U.S. Department of Agriculture – Rural Development; Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians; industry; philanthropic organizations; Alabama Governor’s Black Belt Action Commission; Commission on the Future of East Mississippi – West Alabama; Planning and Development Districts; and county and local governments.

The Alliance’s goals for the region are:

1. Build regional identity around a globally recognized, enterprise-centric workforce. Strategies to meet this goal include:
 - Map current assets in workforce, economic, and enterprise development to better assess workforce and economic development needs;
 - Identify and promote regional niche economic and market development opportunities;
 - Pull together and link business, research, and educational system leadership to the Alliance vision;
 - Foster and grow regional civic leadership, building regional identity and collaboration by expanding local leadership training.

2. Build a globally recognized, regionally branded workforce by networking and enhancing existing delivery systems and program elements. Strategies include:
 - Strengthen existing community/junior college and other workforce development programs and services;
 - Build a shared network of community/junior colleges specialized programs, areas of expertise, skills, services, and assets that are not common throughout the system;
 - Collaboratively create a Regional Workforce Certification and Credentialing Agreement that builds common language and credentials across jurisdictions, standardizes skills certification and provides a regional marketing tool for business attraction and retention;



- Plan for and implement physical infrastructure by facilitating a coalition of universities, community/junior colleges, school systems, industry, small business, and entrepreneurs to build a critical mass of market demand for telecommunications infrastructure development focusing on universal broadband access through the region;
 - Collaboratively develop and execute internal and external marketing strategies for the regionally-branded workforce identity.
3. Integrate workforce, enterprise, industrial development, research, community, and educational development into an innovative regional system. Strategies include:
- Align regional leadership through common cross-sector, multi-disciplinary training and on-going networking of research, economic, and workforce development entities that build common goals, communication and trust;
 - Encourage innovation and entrepreneurial activity through implementation of an Entrepreneurial Development System delivered through a community/junior college network;
 - Formalize a self-sustaining platform to support this regional development system in the form of a replicable model.

It is within the region's control to build a workforce that will help make the dream of the future a reality – a region of promise and opportunity throughout West Alabama and East Mississippi.

