Bridging Mississippi's Human Capital Gap: A Scalable Micro-Credentials Framework for Economic Growth

Marian Montgomery Chancellor, EdD

Mississippi's Workforce Crisis

- Labor force participation rate: 55.9% (July 2025) – among the lowest in the U.S.
- Job openings (June 2025): 64,000 – outpacing available skilled workers
- Only 22% of Mississippi adults hold a bachelor's degree
- MS ranks 49th in educational attainment and 50th in workforce participation

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2025, August 16)
EmpowerMS (2025)

Why Micro-Credentials?

- Provide fast, flexible, skill-focused education
- Address immediate workforce needs
- Offer stackable credentials aligned to career pathways
- Serve adult learners with “some college, no degree”

A badge is to a micro-credential what a diploma is to a degree.

Voices from the Field

“We need training that gives you something you can actually do—not just theory.” – Construction Industry

“You’d be amazed at how many employees come in with zero soft skills.”– Manufacturing Executive

“Micro-credentials helped us hire a VR specialist we never could’ve sourced through traditional routes.” – EdTech Partner

MSU's Micro-Credential Framework

Developed as a research project through MSU's College of Professional & Continuing Studies (CPCS)

Six-Stage Lifecycle: From needs assessment to credential awarding

Guided by 5 Pillars: Relevance, Quality, Equity, Transparency, and Flexibility

Sample Micro-Credentials in Development

Engage Virtual Reality Creator – stackable digital media credential

Soft Skills for Professional Dispositions – workplace readiness

- Industry partners involved in co-design and validation

PILLAR Institute – leadership development program designed to support emerging female leaders across MS

Food Truck Launchpad Concept– short-term business credential

Policy Recommendations

1. State-funded incentives for adult learners' completing micro-credentials
2. Tax incentives for employers who partner on credential development
3. Expand use of WIOA funds to cover micro-credential enrollment

Projected Impact

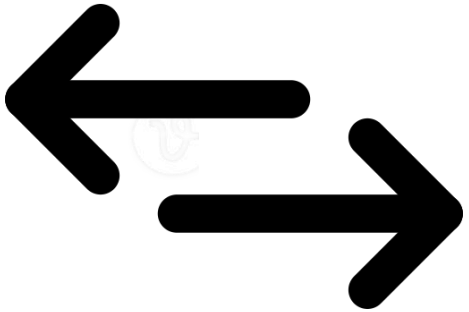
- 25% increase in adult learner enrollment
- 40% improvement in job placement in targeted sectors
- Bridges the gap for 427,986 Mississippians with some college, no degree

We Can’t Do This Alone

- Industry and community collaboration is essential
- MSU is not designing micro-credentials in isolation
- We need employer input to ensure relevance and quality
- You can help identify skill gaps and co-create learning experience

Micro-credentials transform barriers into bridges—connecting Mississippians to opportunity and employers to talent.

Built with you and for you.



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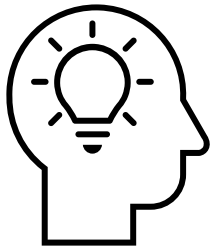

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