



# **2012 - 2015 State of Mississippi Appalachian Development Plan**

State of Mississippi  
Governor Phil Bryant

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## INTRODUCTION

In 1965 Congress established the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) to address the profound economic and quality of life problems that made the 13 Appalachian states a "region apart" from the rest of the nation. Congress issued a mandate for the Commission to close this socioeconomic gap through advocacy, regional planning, research, and grant-making.

The Commission is comprised of the Governors of the 13 Appalachian states and a Federal Co-Chair appointed by the President. The Federal Co-Chair has one vote and the 13 Governors together have one vote, requiring all matters to be decided by both the Federal Co-Chair and a majority of the Governors. This consensus model ensures close collaboration between the federal and state partners in carrying out the ARC mission. The ARC headquarters in Washington, D.C., houses the Office of the Federal Co-Chairman, the ARC Commission (Executive Director and ARC staff), and the Office of the States' Representative.

The ARC is a unique -- and successful -- partnership of federal, state, and local governments. This Federal-State-Local partnership provides the structure to accomplish the mission, goals, and objectives set forth by the Commission to accomplish its Congressional mandate. Because of its partnership approach, ARC can identify innovative cross-agency initiatives and serve a strategic investment partner. Within this framework of shared decision-making, each state adapts and designs programs to meet the needs at the local level.

Governor Phil Bryant is the State of Mississippi's representative to the ARC. The responsibility for the administration of the ARC program within Appalachian Mississippi lies with the Appalachian Regional Office (ARO) in Tupelo, which operates as a bureau within the Mississippi Development Authority. Governor Bryant has appointed Chris Champion as his Alternate to ARC. He also has appointed Mike Armour as the State Program Director. These

appointees work in a collaborative manner with local planning and development districts (PDDs), economic development organizations, local communities, and other state agencies in the development of eligible projects to address the needs in the 24 Mississippi ARC counties (see chart on next page for list of counties). The PDDs play an active and essential part by preparing applications that are consistent with the ARC Code, guidelines, and plans. Made up of local elected officials, business people, and other local leaders, PDDs represent local interests. Citizen participation is achieved through public meetings, forums, and workshops held by the ARO and PDDs.

### **NATIONAL AND STATE ARC PLANS**

In November 2010, ARC adopted its current strategic plan entitled *Moving Appalachia Forward*. This plan continued ARC's vision to "achieve socioeconomic parity with the nation" and its mission to "be a strategic partner and advocate for sustaining community and economic development in Appalachia." ARC also maintained its major goals: 1) Increase job opportunities and per capita income in Appalachia to reach parity with the nation. 2) Strengthen the capacity of the people of Appalachia to compete in the global economy. 3) Develop and improve Appalachia's infrastructure to make the Region economically competitive. 4) Build the Appalachian Development Highway System to reduce Appalachia's isolation.

For Fiscal Year 2013 Mississippi Appalachian continues to have the third highest number (16) of distressed counties in ARC behind Kentucky (40) and Tennessee (18). Governor Phil Bryant has established priorities that align with the ARC strategic plan. The priorities for Mississippi Appalachia are: 1) Private sector and high wage job creation with emphasis on health care and energy sectors; 2) Develop a globally competitive workforce through improvements in workforce training and educational achievement, enhancement of early childhood education,

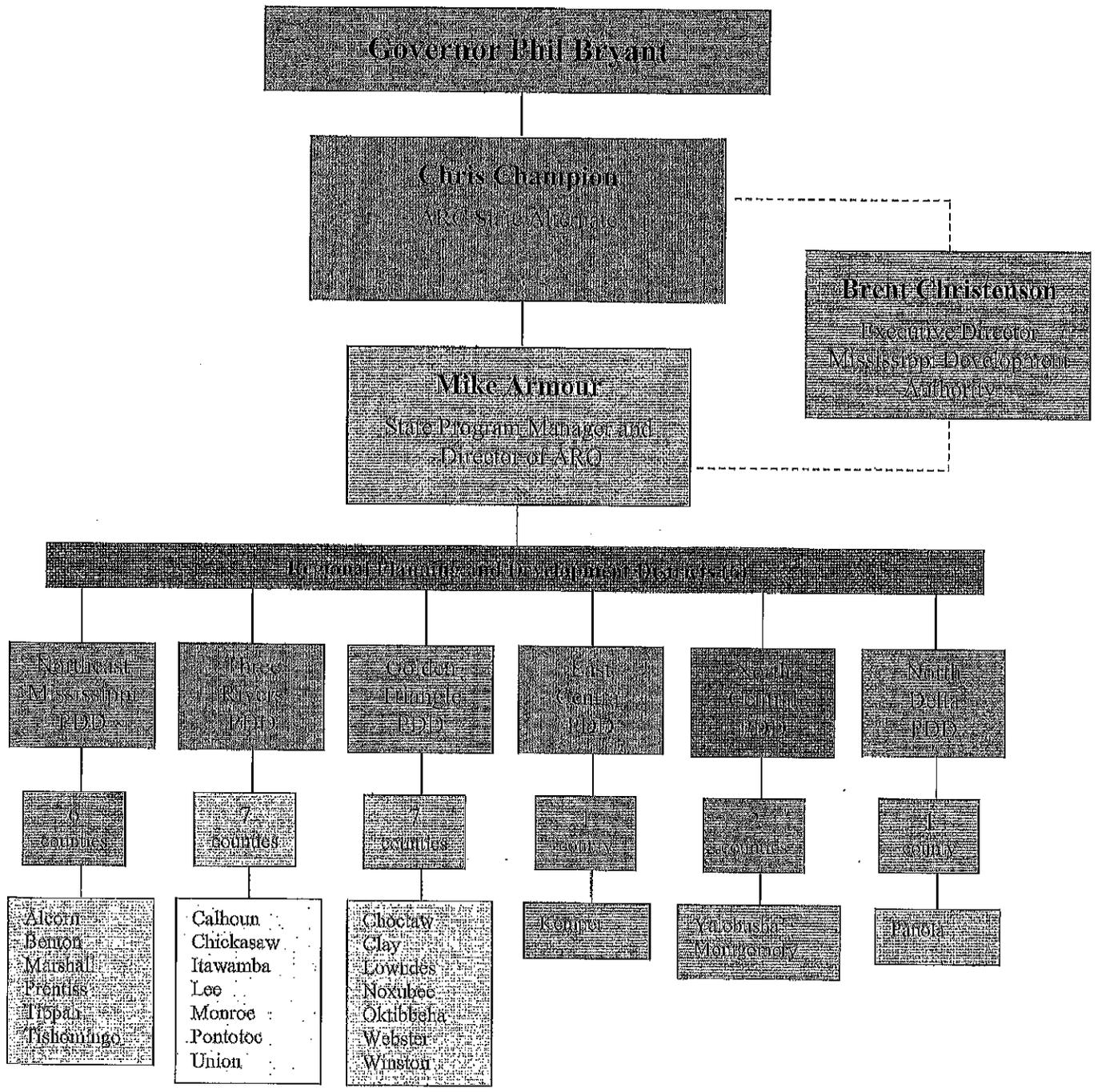
reduction of teen pregnancy, and improvements in community infrastructure and quality of life;

3) Implement efficiencies in state and local government including school districts; and 4)

Support *Mississippi Works* goals and objectives relevant to the Mississippi ARC Region. In accordance with Section 5.3 of the ARC Code, this document will serve as the State of

Mississippi's Appalachian Development Plan. *Mississippi Works* is an initiative of Governor Phil Bryant that focuses on capitalizing on economic development opportunities.

## ARC-Mississippi Organizational Structure



## **MISSISSIPPI APPALACHIAN DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

### **STATE PRIORITY I: PRIVATE SECTOR AND HIGH WAGE JOB CREATION WITH EMPHASIS ON HEALTH CARE AND ENERGY SECTORS**

In partnership with other agencies, the Mississippi ARO will help local and state leaders diversify and strengthen local economies, enhance entrepreneurial activity, develop and market strategic assets, and foster the development and use of new technologies to accomplish this priority. The Mississippi ARO will serve as a catalyst and strategic partner to achieve these goals. It will also serve as a facilitator among partners to maximize benefits to the region.

To truly make this a top priority, the Mississippi ARO will fast-track project proposals received that increase private sector and high wage jobs. The better and higher paying the job, in comparison with prevailing local employment characteristics, the more aggressive the Mississippi ARO will be in providing infrastructure and workforce training support for job creation projects.

#### **Selected Strategies:**

##### **State Objective 1.1: Diversify and strengthen the economic base.**

For Mississippi Appalachia to compete in the global economy of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the region must expand efforts to diversify its economic base to provide new employment opportunities. It must also strengthen its existing economic base to maintain and improve existing employment opportunities.

STATE STRATEGY: The Mississippi ARO will particularly support sustainable initiatives in the following areas that show great promise for job creation:

- 1.1.1: Fast-track and help provide infrastructure and workforce incentives to projects that create private sector and high wage jobs, with emphasis on health care and energy projects.
- 1.1.2: Help connect communities and local developers with economic prospects, particularly in distressed counties.

- 1.1.3: Support initiatives to target and develop critical workforce skills, particularly in distressed counties.
- 1.1.4: Support efforts to promote export trading initiatives.
- 1.1.5: Encourage foreign investment in the region.
- 1.1.6: Encourage formation of business networks and trade groups.
- 1.1.7: Support productivity investments and training processes for business.
- 1.1.8: Support local access road projects that create or retain jobs.
- 1.1.9: Support efforts to develop physical infrastructure along the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway for improved employment opportunities and income growth.
- 1.1.10: Support improvements to airports related to job creation.

**State Objective 1.2: Enhance entrepreneurial activity.**

Small businesses create most new jobs in America. Locally owned businesses also play a key role in creating sustainable local economies and high quality of life.

STATE STRATEGY: The Mississippi ARO will particularly support sustainable initiatives in the following areas that will not require new and ongoing state funding:

- 1.2.1: Support initiatives that nurture new and existing business by creating technical assistance networks through business incubators, business associations, and private-sector resources.
- 1.2.2: Support initiatives to reduce unnecessary and duplicative government regulation that hinder the start-up and expansion of small businesses.
- 1.2.3: Support initiatives to develop businesses in the Creative Economy.
- 1.2.4: Support efforts to improve access to investment capital.
- 1.2.5: Support programs that will educate current and future entrepreneurs at K-12 schools, community colleges, universities, and jobs training centers.

**State Objective 1.3: Develop and market strategic assets for local economies.**

A way to strengthen communities and their economies is through identification and development of local assets. These assets may be land-based (energy resources; forests, crops, and livestock; scenic and recreation sites for tourism; natural resource and water assets), transportation and utility based (highways and roads, air, rail, and waterways and ports; gas pipelines; transmission lines; water and wastewater services), workforce based (skill sets, training capacities, work attitudes), cultural and heritage based (arts, crafts, music; historic assets; ethnic and cultural festivities and mores, and

tourist attractions), or any other assets seen as local strengths. Creating homegrown economic opportunity is central to this asset-based approach.

STATE STRATEGY: The Mississippi ARO will particularly support sustainable initiatives in the following areas that will not require new and ongoing state funding:

- 1.3.1: Support efforts to institutionalize the capacity to assist communities in identifying local and regional assets for development, including assets in the arts, music, history and other Creative Economy sectors.
- 1.3.2: Support development of strategies to help new and existing businesses capitalize on local assets.
- 1.3.3: Support efforts to maximize the economic benefits of Mississippi Appalachian tourism and crafts industries through regional and cooperative marketing opportunities.

**State Objective 1.4: Foster the development and use of innovative technologies.**

Information technology, medical technology, nanotechnology, and other emerging technologies hold great promise for high wage job creation. The challenge is for rural Mississippi Appalachia to participate in this movement. Local communities should partner with research universities, technology organizations, and federal agencies to help identify, attract, and retain innovative technology industries.

STATE STRATEGY: The Mississippi ARO will particularly support sustainable initiatives in the following areas that will not require new and ongoing state funding:

- 1.4.1: Assist in the creation and expansion of telecommunications and computing enterprises.
- 1.4.2: Support efforts to expand and create technology research initiatives at research universities that will lead to job creation in the region.
- 1.4.3: Leverage support for science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) programs from middle school through university.
- 1.4.4: Leverage support for commercialization of new technologies developed by research universities, federal labs, and other sources that will lead to job creation in the region.

**STATE PRIORITY II: DEVELOP A GLOBALLY COMPETITIVE WORKFORCE THROUGH IMPROVEMENTS IN WORKFORCE TRAINING AND EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT, ENHANCEMENT OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION, REDUCTION OF TEEN**

## **PREGNANCY, AND IMPROVEMENTS IN COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE AND QUALIFY OF LIFE**

In order to compete in the global economy of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the people of Mississippi Appalachia must have the knowledge, training, and skills required to operate and manage globally competitive businesses and industries. They must also have the opportunity and desire to live and work in the region. Communities and their leaders, therefore, must sustain a quality of life that values and provides education and training, attracts and retains people with the skills and leadership to succeed in this economy, and provides access to important and quality services from early childhood education to dropout prevention and teen pregnancy reduction to health care and elderly care. Underlying this must be a quality and affordable basic infrastructure.

The Mississippi ARO will serve as a catalyst and strategic partner to help communities achieve these goals. It will also serve as a coordinator and facilitator among participating partners to maximize benefits to the region.

### **Selected Strategies:**

#### **2.1: Enhance workforce training.**

To respond to the challenges and opportunities of the global economy, workers must continually build skills, knowledge, and experience. The K-12, community college, and university systems along with WIN Centers and other publicly supported training programs are critical to the success of this goal.

STATE STRATEGY: The Mississippi ARO will particularly support sustainable initiatives in the following areas:

- 2.1.1: Provide support and incentives to community and junior colleges that provide programs to develop critical workforce skills, both for existing business and industry and targeted new business and industry.
- 2.1.2: Support the integration of skills training and knowledge of workplace requirements across and into K-12 educational and training curricula.

- 2.1.3: Support innovative ways to re-tool the skills of the region's workforce.
- 2.1.4: Support the modernization and expansion of workforce training and occupational education programs.

**2.2: Foster civic entrepreneurship.**

Mississippi Appalachia must develop strong and wise leaders, organizations, communities, and regions to compete in the global economy of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. This challenge is particularly critical to our distressed counties. Capacity-building, leadership development, continuously improving the effectiveness of organizations, persistent strategic planning, and development of regional approaches to problem solving are all components of civic entrepreneurship. But civic entrepreneurship is also much more than such development programs, it is community spirit, an attitude of success, and a willingness to work together.

STATE STRATEGY: The Mississippi ARO will particularly support sustainable initiatives in the following areas that will not require new and ongoing state funding:

- 2.2.1: Support development of broad-based leadership structures and transformative institutions.
- 2.2.2: Support initiatives that help local governments and other community development organizations become more productive and effective.
- 2.2.3: Support regional approaches to problem solving.
- 2.2.4: Support self-help and other initiatives that engage citizens in assessing, improving, beautifying, and motivating their communities.

**2.3: Increase access to quality child care and early childhood education.**

Access to quality child care and early childhood education fosters the development of children and enables their parents and guardians to take advantage of job opportunities. Studies show that disadvantaged children particularly benefit from early childhood education and pre-school programs. Many families in Mississippi Appalachia do not have the resources to use or access to such high quality programs.

STATE STRATEGY: The Mississippi ARO will particularly support sustainable initiatives in the following areas that will not require new and ongoing state funding:

- 2.3.1: Support efforts to increase access to quality child care.
  - 2.3.2: Support efforts to improve and expand early childhood education programs offered by the private, public, and faith-based sectors.
  - 2.3.3: Support programs that better train child care and early childhood education staff.
- 2.4: Increase educational attainment and achievement.**

The region has made great strides in improving its high school graduation rates. However, most jobs in the new economy require education and training beyond high school. Research shows that higher education levels are also associated with better health, longer life expectancies, and higher salaries. Mississippi Appalachia still has significant educational attainment and achievement gaps to close – both with the rest of the nation and with the ever more competitive world.

STATE STRATEGY: The Mississippi ARO will particularly support sustainable initiatives in the following areas that will not require new and ongoing state funding:

- 2.4.1: Support local and regional efforts to better prepare students, out-of-school youth, and adults for post-secondary level training and education.
- 2.4.2: Support programs that improve teacher quality, such as Teach for America and the Mississippi Teachers Corps.
- 2.4.3: Support efforts to design and initiate innovative programs aimed at improving classroom teaching, using technology better as a teaching tool, and improving student achievement in science, math, engineering, and technology (STEM).
- 2.4.4: Support initiatives for pay-for-performance for teachers and establishment of charter schools.
- 2.4.5: Maintain support for and seek expansion of the Appalachian Higher Education Network and other programs that increase college-going rates.
- 2.4.6: Support dropout prevention programs.

**State Objective 2.5: Increase healthy living programs and access to healthcare and healthcare professionals.**

Healthy living programs, such as the “Governor’s Run for Health” program improve quality of life; reduce obesity and other illnesses, and directly impact worker

productivity. Community programs that emphasize and encourage healthy living should be promoted. Activities and policies that improve the supply and distribution of Appalachia's professional healthcare workforce (physicians, nurse practitioners, psychologists, dentists, medical technicians, etc.) can help ensure that health care is accessible, comprehensive, affordable, and tailored to meet the specific needs of communities and regions. Many rural communities, particularly in distressed counties, find it difficult to retain healthcare professionals and provide access to citizens.

**STATE STRATEGY:** The Mississippi ARO will particularly support sustainable initiatives in the following areas that will not require new and ongoing state funding:

- 2.5.1: Provide limited start-up incentives to communities establishing sustainable healthy living programs.
- 2.5.2: Promote nutrition education, healthy lifestyles, physical activity, and early screening as means of reducing or eliminating the incidence of health problems, such as obesity, diabetes, cancer, and heart disease.
- 2.5.3: Support local efforts to expand access to healthcare programs and recruit healthcare professionals through the J-1 Visa Waiver Program and other programs.
- 2.5.4: Support educational institutions that identify healthcare needs and train professionals to help meet those needs.
- 2.5.5: Provide gap support to viable primary care systems.
- 2.5.6: Support programs that effectively reduce and eliminate drug and/or alcohol abuse.
- 2.5.7: Support research and development of programs designed to reduce teen pregnancy.

**State Objective 2.6: Build and improve basic infrastructure and transportation systems.**

Communities must have viable water, wastewater treatment, and basic utility systems, adequate transportation systems, and decent and affordable housing to retain skilled workers. Many communities in Mississippi Appalachia, particularly in distressed counties, struggle to maintain this basic infrastructure. Mississippi Appalachia also contains limited highway miles in the Appalachian Development Highway System.

Increasing miles, particularly in distressed and at-risk counties, will significantly aid development.

STATE STRATEGY: The Mississippi ARO will particularly support sustainable initiatives in the following areas for communities able to show an ability to sustain basic infrastructure over time:

- 2.6.1: Make strategic investments that leverage federal, state, local, and private capital for the development and improvement of water, wastewater, and basic utility systems.
- 2.6.2: Support continued efforts to expand and upgrade the region's stock of safe, affordable housing.
- 2.6.3: Support programs that help increase home ownership, particularly first-time homeowners.

STATE STRATEGY: The Mississippi ARO will particularly support sustainable initiatives in the following areas at the local and regional levels to accomplish the following:

- 2.6.4: Support planning and construction of intermodal transportation networks.

STATE STRATEGY: The State of Mississippi, through the Governor and his ARC Alternate, will particularly support efforts at the federal level to accomplish the following:

- 2.6.5: Add miles to the Appalachian Development Highway System in Mississippi Appalachia to support development, particularly in distressed and at-risk counties.

**State Objective 2.7: Increase access to new technologies and telecommunications infrastructure.**

Communities in Mississippi Appalachia, particularly in distressed counties, face serious challenges in taking advantage of new information technology, medical technology, nanotechnology, and other emerging technologies. Changing regulations have also resulted in access issues for rural communities.

STATE STRATEGY: The Mississippi ARO will particularly support sustainable initiatives in the following areas that do not require new and ongoing public funding:

- 2.7.1: Make strategic investments in new technologies infrastructure to increase local and regional access.
- 2.7.2: Support telemedicine applications for communities.

**STATE PRIORITY III: IMPLEMENT EFFICIENCIES IN STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT INCLUDING SCHOOL DISTRICTS**

In order for communities, school districts, and state agencies to remain viable and function in challenging economic times, efficiencies must be found and implemented to reduce costs. The challenge is to maintain services while reducing overhead. Communities, regional, and state leaders must tackle this challenge head on and be willing to consider technology, program re-engineering, consolidation, and other alternatives to reduce costs.

The Mississippi ARO will serve as a catalyst and strategic partner to help communities and local agencies achieve this goal. It will also serve as a coordinator and facilitator among participating partners to maximize benefits to the region.

**Selected Strategies:**

**State Objective 3.1: Adopt energy efficiency strategies to reduce overhead costs.**

STATE STRATEGY: The Mississippi ARO will particularly support sustainable initiatives in the following areas at the local and regional levels to accomplish the following:

- 3.1.1: Enhance energy efficiency in public fleets and transportation systems.

**State Objective 3.2: Consolidate non-educational duties of school districts.**

STATE STRATEGY: The Mississippi ARO will particularly support sustainable initiatives in the following areas at the local and regional levels to accomplish the following:

3.2.1: Support community led planning initiatives to consolidate centralized human resources, centralized purchasing, centralized transportation and other non-educational duties into central county or regional offices to allow more funds to go toward instruction.

**STATE PRIORITY IV: SUPPORT *Mississippi Works* GOALS AND OBJECTIVES  
RELEVANT TO THE MISSISSIPPI ARC REGION**

Thousands of individuals from public and private organizations joined university researchers in developing Blueprint Mississippi goals. Gov. Phil Bryant's *Mississippi Works* initiative brought together key business and civic leaders to prioritize the Blue Print Mississippi goals. In addition to the state priorities and strategy statements detailed above, the Mississippi ARO will support initiatives targeted by *Mississippi Works* that align with one or more strategies set forth in the ARC Strategic Plan.

## **A BRIEF LOOK AT THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE MISSISSIPPI APPALACHIAN REGION**

In 1965, the year the federal Appalachian Regional Development Act became law, the economic conditions and quality of life for Mississippians in the northeast portion of the state were not as good as the nation or even that of the southeastern states. Additionally, a significant number of citizens in the region were not part of any effort to improve quality of life. Since that time, Appalachian Regional Commission has spurred noteworthy improvements in its 13-state area, including the 24-county Mississippi ARC region. However, the Mississippi ARC region remains significantly behind.

Since 1965, the 13-state Appalachian region as a whole saw:

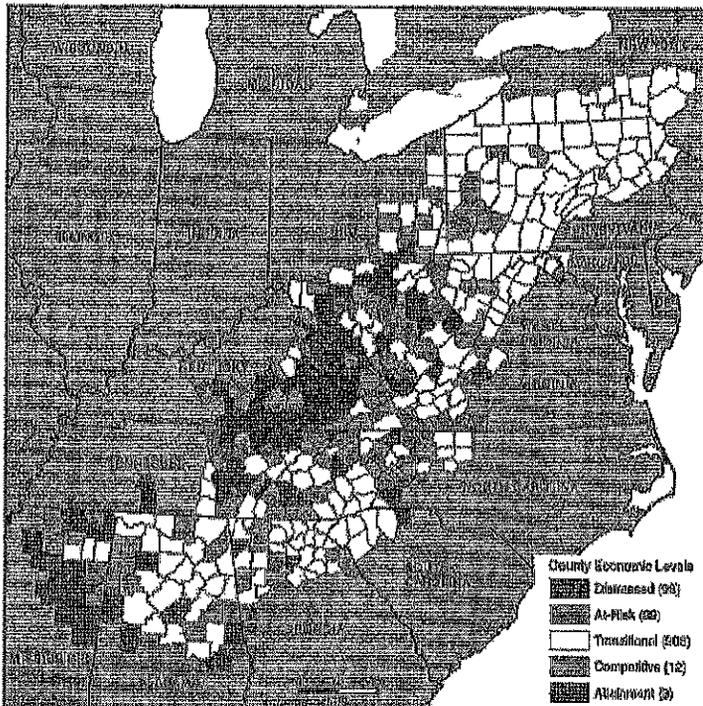
- The number of economically distressed counties fall from 223 in 1965 to 98 in FY 2013 a 56% improvement;
- The regional poverty rate cut in half from 31% to 15.4%;
- The per capita income gap improve from 78% of the national average to 82%;
- The number of adults with a high school diploma increase to nearly the national average (84.6%) at 82.3%.

During this same period, the 24-county Mississippi Appalachian region saw:

- The number of economically distressed counties fall from 20 to 16 in FY 2013, a 20% improvement;
- The regional poverty rate cut to 22.5%;
- The per capita income gap improve from 62% of the national average to 68%;
- The number of adults with a high school diploma increase to 75%.

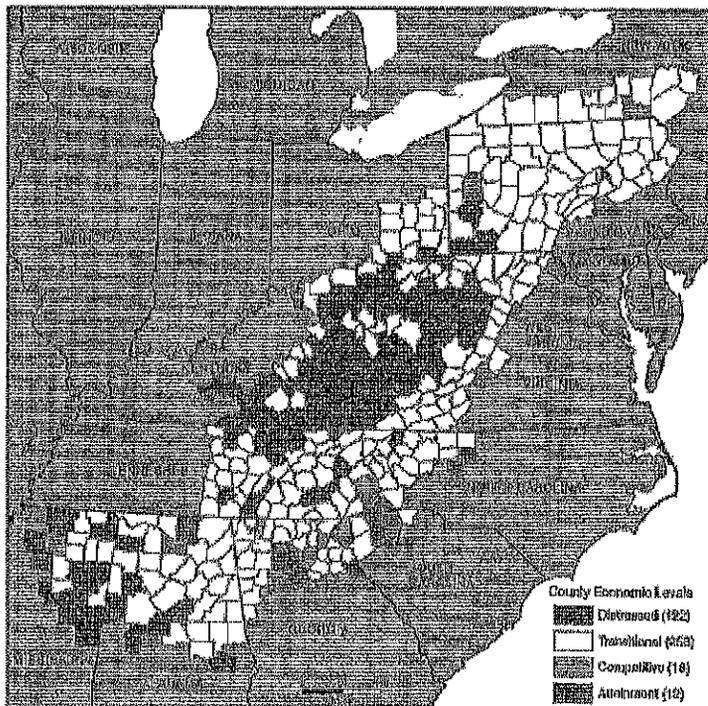
The charts on the following page show the economic status of the counties in the 13 ARC region for 2012 and in 2002. As can be seen, the Mississippi ARC region now has the second greatest concentration of distressed counties (67%) next to eastern Kentucky (74%). “Distressed counties” according to ARC “are the most economically depressed counties,” ranking “in the worst 10 percent of the nation's counties.”

Two-thirds of the counties in the Mississippi ARC region, 16 of 24, are classified as distressed. In addition 20 Census tracts in the eight other counties are classified as distressed.



Created by the Appalachian Regional Commission, March 2012  
 Data Sources:  
 Unemployment: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, L.A.U.S. 2009-2010  
 Income data: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, PERS, 2009  
 Poverty data: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2004-2010

Effective October 1, 2012  
 through September 30, 2013

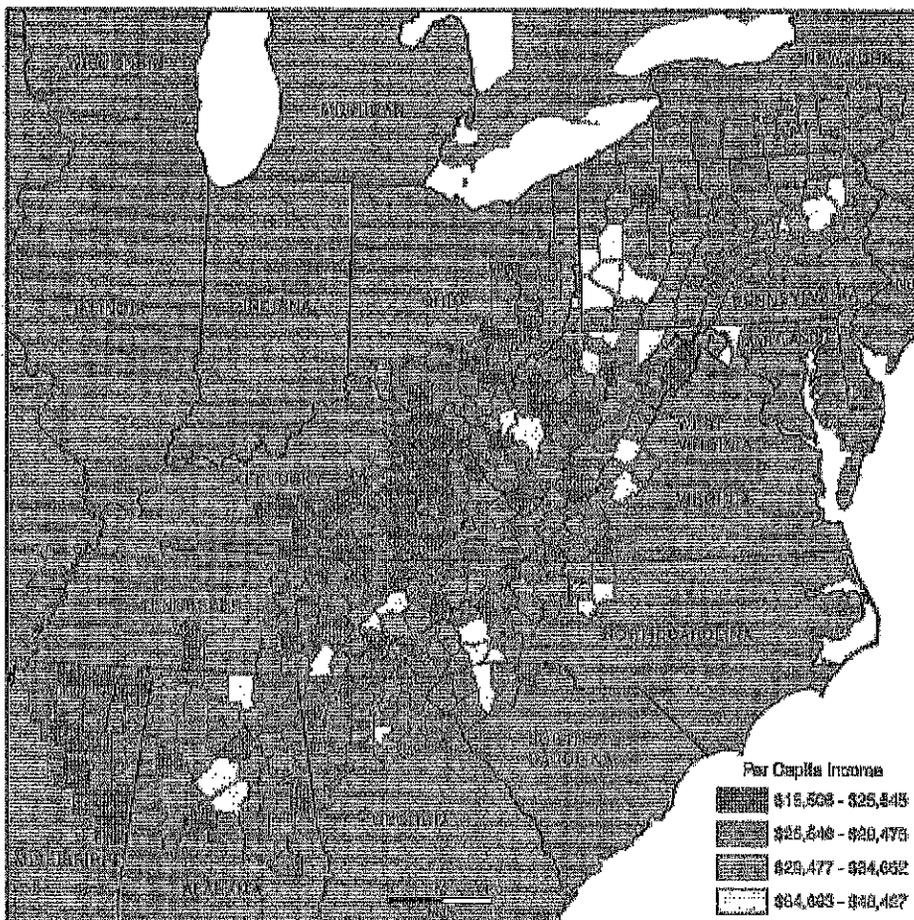


Map by: Appalachian Regional Commission, June 2007  
 Data Sources: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, L.A.U.S. 1997-1999;  
 U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, PERS, 1999;  
 U.S. Census Bureau, STF36, 1990.

Effective October 1, 2007  
 through September 30, 2008

Distressed counties are characterized by low per capita income, high unemployment, and high poverty rates. ARC data used in its latest rankings show the Mississippi ARC regional average for:

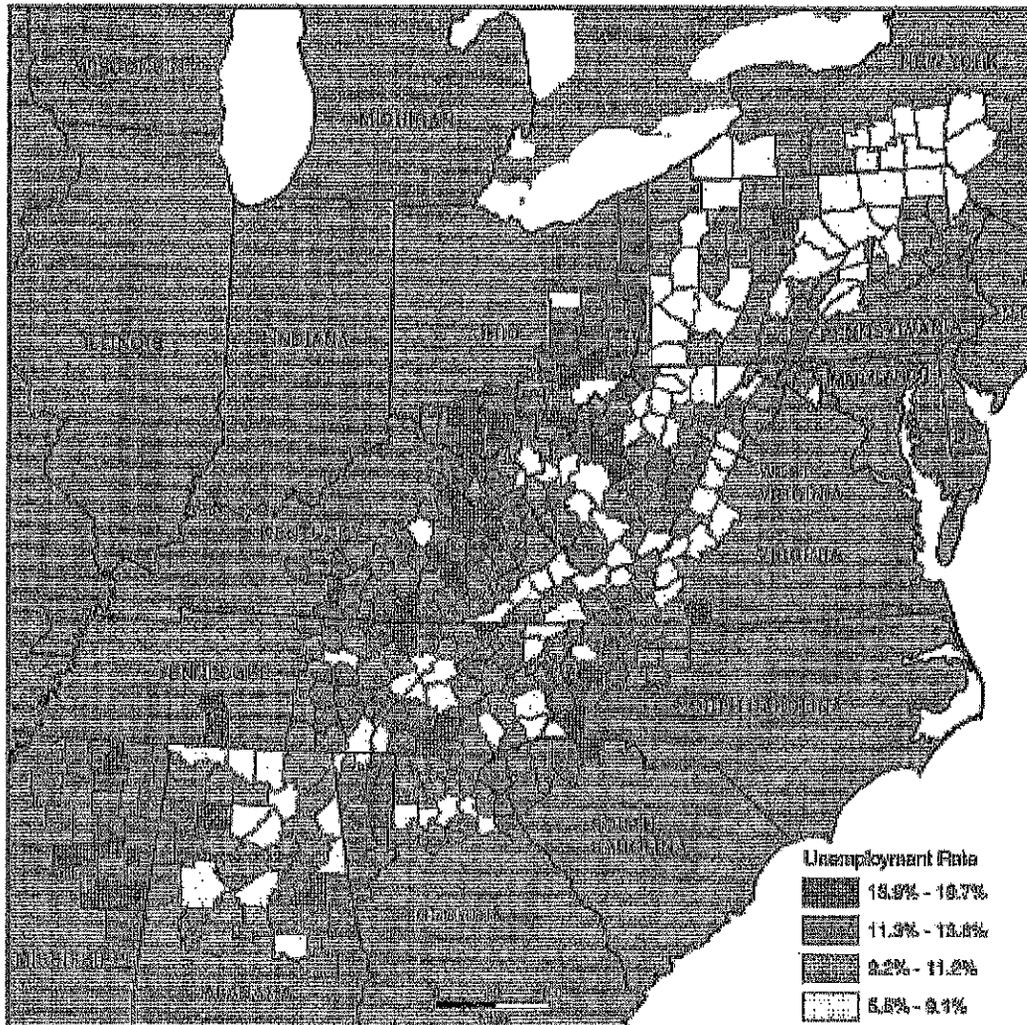
- Per capita income was \$27,280, far below the national average of \$39,635, well below the 13-state ARC regional average of \$32,426, and below the Mississippi average of \$30,401;



Created by the Appalachian Regional Commission, March 2012  
Data Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, BEIS, 2009  
Data Classification Scheme: Natural Breaks

U.S. average = \$39,635  
Appalachian average = \$32,426

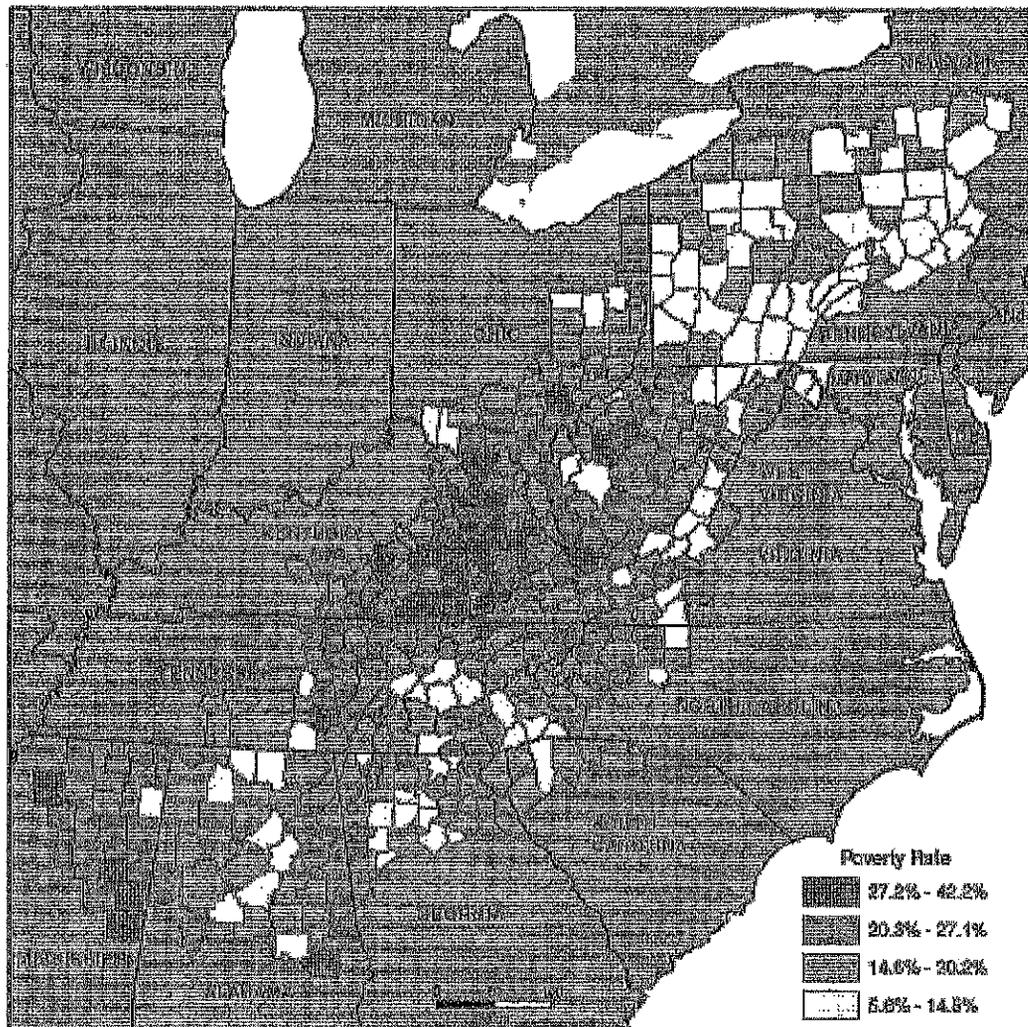
- Unemployment was 12.5%, far above the national average of 9.6% and the 13-state ARC regional average of 9.7%, and well above the state average of 10.4%.



Created by the Appalachian Regional Commission, March 2012  
 Data Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, LAUS, 2010  
 Data Classification Scheme: Natural Breaks

U.S. average = 8.6%  
 Appalachian average = 9.7%

- Poverty was 22.7%, far above the national average of 13.8%, well above the 13-state ARC regional average of 15.6%, and above the Mississippi average of 21.2%.



Created by the Appalachian Regional Commission, March 2012  
 Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2006-2010  
 Data Classification Schema: Natural Breaks

U.S. average = 13.8%  
 Appalachian average = 15.8%

Undermining progress for the Mississippi ARC region was a decline in total employment. In 2001 Bureau of Economic Analysis data show total employment for the region was 300,476. By 2010 the total had fallen to 292,361.

Driving this decline was the steep decline in manufacturing jobs. In 2001, manufacturing jobs totaled 73,935 and accounted for 26% of all nonfarm jobs. By 2010, manufacturing jobs had fallen to 45,606 and 16% of all nonfarm jobs.

The good news – for the region as a whole – is that these trends have turned around since

2010. Through July 2012 overall employment is up 3% and manufacturing employment is up 8% according to Mississippi Department of Employment Security data.

However, a number of counties... mostly distressed... have not enjoyed this improvement. Seven counties, Choctaw, Clay, Marshall, Montgomery, Noxubee, Prentiss, and Webster, had declines in employment. Seven counties, Alcorn, Benton, Choctaw, Kemper, Montgomery, Noxubee, and Prentiss, had declines in manufacturing jobs. Of the counties listed above, all are classified as distressed but Alcorn and Marshall which are classified as at-risk.

Generally, population growth and economic development coincide. In the economic sense, increasing populations lead to larger domestic markets, more complex divisions of labor, and a greater volume of diffused information, technology and skills. Population densities tend to lower the per capita costs of public infrastructure thus allowing multiple industries to lower transportation costs through closer location.

Relative to Mississippi and to the nation, the Mississippi Appalachian Region has experienced a steady decline in population as a percent of Mississippi's population and the nation's population. Based on U.S. Census Bureau decennial data from 1900 to 2010, the region declined from 29.4% of Mississippi's population to 21.2% while Mississippi declined from 2.0% of the U.S. population in 1900 to 1.0% in 2010.

**POPULATION 1990- 2010**

	<b>1990</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>% change 2000 - 2010</b>
United States	248,709,873	281,421,906	308,745,538	9.70%
Mississippi	2,578,897	2,848,440	2,967,297	4.30%
Alcorn	31,791	34,607	37,057	7.20%
Benton	8,028	8,024	8,729	8.80%
Calhoun	14,930	15,049	14,962	-0.70%
Chickasaw	18,157	19,392	17,392	-10.50%
Choctaw	9,096	9,754	8,547	-12.40%
Clay	21,151	21,969	20,634	-6.10%

Itawamba	20,087	22,855	23,401	2.80%
Kemper	10,334	10,423	10,456	0.00%
Lee	65,836	75,968	82,910	9.40%
Lowndes	59,561	61,515	59,779	-2.90%
Marshall	30,471	35,070	37,144	6.10%
Monroe	36,608	38,004	36,989	-2.70%
Montgomery	12,402	12,142	10,925	-10.40%
Noxubee	12,616	12,542	11,545	-8.00%
Oktibbeha	38,484	42,994	47,671	11.10%
Panola	30,114	34,390	29,957	1.30%
Pontotoc	22,348	26,769	27,106	12.10%
Prentiss	23,300	25,595	25,276	-1.10%
Tippah	19,552	20,864	22,232	2.20%
Tishomingo	17,728	19,160	19,593	7.61%
Union	22,091	25,594	27,134	7.00%
Webster	10,203	10,296	10,253	-0.40%
Winston	19,447	20,157	19,198	-4.80%
Yalobusha	12,075	13,133	12,678	-2.90%
MS ARC Region	566,410	616,266	629,169	2.20%

From 2000 to 2010, the Mississippi ARC region increased in population by 2.2%, far below the national increase of 9.7%, well below the 13-state ARC region increase of 6.8%, and below the state increase of 4.3%. Impacting regional growth, as the chart above highlights in yellow, were the 12 Mississippi ARC counties that suffered population declines over the decade.

While there has been other good news in the region – the opening of the Toyota plant in Union County, increased numbers of advanced manufacturing facilities in Lowndes County, and new plant siting’s along the I-55 corridor – much remains to be done to make the region competitive. The challenge is particularly difficult for the 16 distressed counties, nine of which have been classified as distressed every year since 2001.