



SHARED SERVICES CENTERS

Put It Under One Roof in Mississippi

Shared service centers, where companies place finance and other administrative functions under one roof, provide opportunities to eliminate redundancies, standardize processes and create economies of scale. These stand-alone businesses typically treat their companies' individual business units as actual customers, providing them with valuable support in a seamless operation.

An Industry Overview

This rapidly growing portion of the office sector is also booming in Mississippi, where **NASA's Shared Service Center** is located at the Stennis Space Center in the southern part of the state. This center consolidates the administrative functions for 10 NASA centers around the nation and handles financial management, human resources, procurement and information technology activities.

As shared service centers continue to grow, many companies are looking to rural areas like Mississippi to locate these facilities. This allows companies to take advantage of the lower costs of doing business, while also having access to a well-educated and hard-working labor pool.

Fast Fact: Mississippi has more than 340,000 miles of fiber optics in place. The ratio of mileage to population is among the highest in the nation.

An Advanced Infrastructure Network

Mississippi demonstrated its commitment to improving telecommunications infrastructure with the passage of the **Mississippi Broadband Technology Development Act** in 2003. This act provided incentives to telecommunications businesses to upgrade the state's telecom infrastructure. Since its passage, BellSouth has made significant improvements to create a far-reaching and sophisticated network throughout the state.

This telecom incentive program has encouraged development of the state's technology infrastructure in all parts of the state, but particularly in rural areas. For example, BellSouth has deployed DSL in 87 offices that had not previously been scheduled for DSL service.

BellSouth's fiber network in Mississippi has grown to include 203 central office switches with more than 341,000 miles of fiber in fiber optic cables and more than 8,300 route miles of fiber.



DSL technology is provided in 99 percent of BellSouth's central offices and in 500 remote sites throughout the state. The company's self-healing interoffice network now serves in excess of one million lines, with all central offices in the state being 100 percent SNET capable.

A Qualified Workforce

A well-qualified and affordable workforce is an essential element to operating a successful shared service center.

Mississippi's labor force of 1.3 million workers is very reliable, with a low three percent absenteeism rate and only a five percent turnover rate. This reliability and stability help ensure the success of office sector operations located in the state. In addition, labor costs in Mississippi are among the lowest in the nation, which helps hold down the overall cost of doing business in the state.

With eight public universities, 13 private colleges and universities, and 15 community colleges, Mississippi graduates nearly 20,000 students each year. These graduates are well-trained to meet the needs of today's technology-based service centers.

An Accessible Location

A location with access to the corporate headquarters location and other business unit customers is important to many shared service centers. Mississippi's location, which is central to both U.S. coasts, provides easy access to many major metropolitan areas.

In fact, the state is within a day's drive of more than 50 percent of the U.S. business population, including such major markets as Atlanta, Birmingham, Dallas, Houston, Little Rock, Memphis, Mobile, Nashville, New Orleans and St. Louis. Mississippi's highway system ranks among the four best in the country and the best in the southern United States. Interstate 55, which runs north and south, provides access to major markets like Chicago, Memphis, New Orleans and St.



Louis, while Interstates 10 and 20, running east and west, provide access to Atlanta, Birmingham, Dallas and Los Angeles.

Mississippi also is home to 75 airports, including Jackson-Evers International Airport, the state's busiest. Three other major commercial airports can be found in or near the state, including the Gulfport-Biloxi Regional Airport, the Memphis International Airport and the New Orleans International Airport.

In addition, Mississippi offers a number of location options, including an abundance of land available in industrial and technology parks throughout the state, as well as buildings that can be retro-fit to meet the needs of your shared service center.

A Supportive Business Climate

Mississippi offers a strong, supportive business climate, where the cost of doing business is low and many other tools are available to help your shared service center compete in today's economy. Locations within Mississippi can offer companies substantial savings compared with many other parts of the U.S.

Mississippi provides shared service centers with tax credits and other incentives under the **Mississippi Broadband Technology Development Act**. This act offers larger economic incentives to companies that deploy broadband in sparsely populated areas and a smaller, but still significant, incentive for deploying broadband in urban areas in the state. Specifically, the act provides reimbursement of equipment costs for providing broadband services through an income tax credit. There are also income tax credits available for job creation and retraining of employees.

The **Mississippi Advantage Jobs Incentive Program** provides quarterly incentive payments based on a percentage of withholding to qualifying companies for up to 10 years, which provides an important cash benefit to new companies locating in the state. Some local property tax and certain sales and use tax exemptions may also be available under the act.

The **Tort Reform Act of 2004** is another important element of the business climate in Mississippi. This act ensures fairness in the courtroom for Mississippi businesses, with provisions that address joinder and venue; innocent seller protection; and non-economic damages caps.

In addition, the state offers a variety of training programs through the **community/junior college system** to assist companies in preparing workers for new job opportunities within the shared service center industry.

To learn more about putting it under one roof in Mississippi, call the Mississippi Development Authority at 1.800.360.3323 or visit our website at www.mississippi.org.