

COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Get Connected With Mississippi

Mississippi, with its location in proximity to many urban centers, is an excellent choice for the Communications and Information Technology (CIT) industry. With the trend toward continued growth in these kinds of facilities, Mississippi is prepared to provide the workforce and the infrastructure needed to expand this sector of the economy.

Mississippi's Assets

Mississippi's public universities and two-year colleges offer the training and conduct research to prepare students for CIT positions. Mississippi is home to a number of world-class technology and science assets, which are unique to the region. These assets include the Mississippi Polymer Institute at the University of Southern Mississippi, the Engineering Research Center and Life Sciences and High Performance Computing Collaborative at Mississippi State University, the National Center for Physical Acoustics and the National Center for Biodefense Communications for Rural America at Jackson State University, the University Medical Center, the NASA John C. Stennis Space Center, the Army Corps of Engineers Research and Development Center and the U.S. Department of Agriculture Research facility in Stoneville

Cellular South, which is headquartered in the Jackson metro area, is the nation's largest privately held wireless provider. Howard Computers in Jones County is a leading manufacturer and reseller of computer hardware and related equipment with a 100 percent U.S. based workforce and one of the companies on the Interstate 59 Technology Corridor.

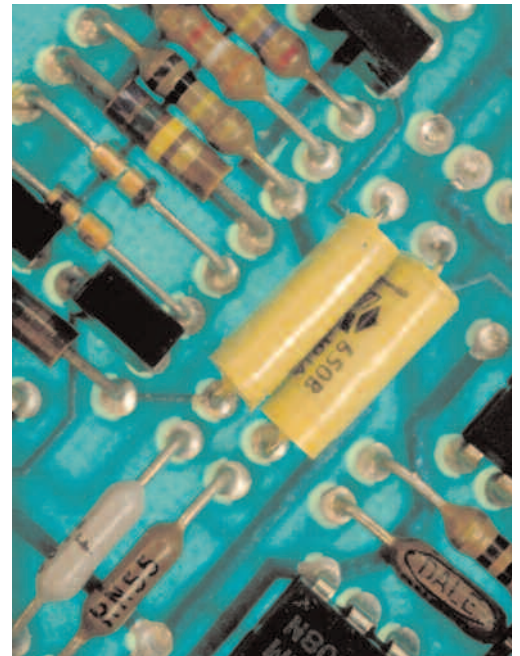
Mississippi State University's new "Raptor" supercomputer is the 18th most powerful computer system among American universities, according to the latest international rankings. Five other computer systems located in Mississippi also made the list. They include one at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Research and Development Center in Vicksburg, ranked 26th in the world; and four operated by the Naval Oceanographic Office at the Stennis Space Center in Hancock County, respectively ranked 35th, 48th, 58th and 277th overall.

Other assets include:

The newly created Mississippi I-59 Technology Corridor (I-59) is gearing up to connect the 400-plus technology companies that dot the interstate from Meridian to the Stennis Space Center on the Gulf Coast to give these companies national exposure and recruit new companies to the state.

The new Howard Technology Park in Jones County is poised to be a hot spot for high tech new ideas that will be developed and commercialized at a rapid pace. Centrally located between Dallas, New Orleans and Atlanta, the new Howard Technology Park is at the heart of the I-59 MS Technology Corridor.

Other companies and industry clusters have developed as a direct result of Mississippi's universities. SemiSouth Laboratories - a silicon carbide (SiC) research and development company - has constructed its new silicon carbide manufacturing facility in Starkville. The Enterprise for Innovative Geospatial Solutions (EIGS) is a statewide industry cluster of 36 private companies, six university research programs, four state agencies, and seven complementary partner programs working together to research, develop, and market new geospatial products from Mississippi.



The Mississippi Technology Alliance, a non-profit, public-private partnership whose Board of Directors is comprised of leadership from the private, academic and public sectors in Mississippi, serves as a leading advocate for technology development in Mississippi. The primary mission of the technology Alliance is to champion science and technology-based economic development efforts throughout the state, with the end goal being wealth creation through higher paying quality jobs. The Technology Alliance continues to focus on creating wealth by leveraging the states research capacity and supporting technology business development for Mississippi companies.

An Accessible Location

Mississippi's location, which is central to both U.S. coasts, also provides easy access to many other 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.

The state'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. The Interstate 69 corridor, which is now under construction, will eventually connect Houston and Indianapolis, with a portion of this interstate running through Mississippi.



A Qualified Workforce

A well-qualified and affordable workforce is an essential element to any business, including fabricated housing and housing component manufacturers. Mississippi's labor force of 1.3 million workers is very reliable, with a low absenteeism rate and only a five percent turnover rate. This reliability and stability help ensure the success of manufacturing 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.

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 business compete in today's economy. Locations within Mississippi can offer companies substantial savings compared with many other parts of the U.S. Mississippi's economic incentive programs provide income tax credits for job creation, investment, retraining of employees and research and development.

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.

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. Cities and counties may also offer a property tax exemption for qualifying projects. 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.

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. As a result of Hurricane Katrina, incentives are available through the Federal Gulf Opportunity Zone Act, including tax incentives to encourage rebuilding of the areas hardest hit by Hurricane Katrina. These include 50 percent bonus first-year depreciation, partial expensing of demolition and cleanup costs, a five-year Net Operating Loss carryback, increased rehabilitation tax credits, and boosted higher-education credits for those attending school in the zone.

To get connected in Mississippi, call the Mississippi Development Authority at 1.800.360.3323 or visit our website at www.mississippi.org.