The Mississippi-Appalachian Higher Education Initiative (MS-AHEI) was created to help achieve two interconnected goals: increase the educational attainment in Appalachian Mississippi and promote more sustainable economic growth. To achieve these goals, the program funded county/local economic development agencies that were tasked with developing partnerships with high schools and communities. One of the first partnerships participating in the program – Winston County Economic Development District and Louisville – was awarded the 2012 Governor’s Award from MS Partners in Education, but a dearth of economic partners in many targeted communities presented major impediments that were difficult to overcome.

Services & Resources Provided

- School/Community Displays
- School-wide Activities and Celebrations
- Community College and University Visits
- AP/Accelerated Night
- Career Exploration Activities
- Workplace Visits
- College Test Prep
- FAFSA Workshops

Economic Development Partners


Source:
INVESTMENTS IN MISSISSIPPI
October 2015–January 2017

The Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) is a federal-state partnership. Its mission is to innovate, partner, and invest to build community capacity and strengthen economic growth in 420 counties across the 13 Appalachian states. ARC’s strategic plan identifies five investment goals to advance this mission: creating economic opportunity; preparing a ready workforce; building critical infrastructure; leveraging natural and cultural assets; and cultivating leadership and community capacity.

In partnership with the Mississippi Development Authority (MDA), ARC has supported 60 projects in Mississippi totaling $16.6 million. These investments have been matched by more than $7.2 million and will attract an additional $73.0 million in leveraged private investments in Mississippi. They will also create or retain over 1,000 jobs, train and educate more than 4,500 students and workers, and benefit the nearly 629,000 residents in Mississippi’s 24 Appalachian counties.

INVESTMENT PRIORITIES IN MISSISSIPPI
MDA has prioritized these three ARC investment goals:

**ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES**
ARC has invested over $1.2 million in entrepreneurial and business strategies to strengthen the economy in Appalachian Mississippi.

**READY WORKFORCE**
ARC has invested over $11.2 million to increase the education, knowledge, skills, and health of Mississippi’s Appalachian residents to work and succeed.

**CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE**
ARC has invested over $2.8 million in Mississippi’s critical infrastructure development, including broadband, transportation, and water/wastewater systems.

**ADDITIONAL PRIORITIES**
ARC has invested an additional $1.3 million to leverage cultural and natural assets and cultivate leadership and community capacity in Appalachian Mississippi.

IMPACT ON DISTRESSED COUNTIES
In Appalachian Mississippi, 14 counties were considered economically distressed in fiscal year 2016. 54 projects totaling almost 93% of ARC investment dollars will have a direct impact on these counties.

INVESTMENTS IN ACTION
ARC invested $8.9 million into East Mississippi Community College, Northwest Mississippi Community College, and Itawamba Community College in Mississippi to prepare workers for the region’s growing automotive, aerospace, and advanced manufacturing sector. For example, Itawamba Community College will renovate and furnish a 21,200 square foot area at the Belden Center to relocate and expand the programs in order to better meet the skilled workforce needs of advanced manufacturing industry. The project is part of ARC’s Automotive Manufacturing Training Opportunities, part of the Commission’s effort to support workforce training programs in southern and south-central Appalachia.