

# COMPREHENSIVE REGIONAL WORKFORCE ASSESSMENT

Summary: November 2017

Tishomingo, Alcorn, and Prentiss Counties commissioned an in-depth study of the northeastern Mississippi regional workforce in 2017. Dallas-based Site Selection Group completed the study and the key findings are outlined below.



**Underemployment:** An estimated 15.3% of the regional workforce (approximately 4,600 workers) is “underemployed” meaning that they are overqualified for their current positions or are working in part-time or non-permanent positions and desire full-time, permanent work. Further, 11.5% of manufacturing workers (or approximately 750 individuals) are underemployed. These figures show the realistic hiring pool from which a new or expanding regional employer is likely to hire from.



**Workforce Opinions & Viewpoint:** The regional workforce reported positive attitudes about their overall job satisfaction, but noted less positive opinions about career advancement. As a result, prospective and existing companies that can demonstrate advancement opportunities are likely to experience less turnover and more productivity. In addition, manufacturing workers reported positive opinions regarding the quality of career opportunities in that sector, signaling that those workers value manufacturing jobs.



**Manufacturing & Occupational Presence:** The three-county region boasts an impressive number and concentration of occupations critical for manufacturing operations including general and skilled production workers, logistics and maintenance workers, and engineering technicians. While labor markets are tight across the country, this existing presence of workers can provide the necessary start-up workforce for new operations.



**Commuting & Labor Shed:** Workers in the region typically enjoy short and easy commutes, roughly averaging around 20 minutes. However, for highly skilled labor, professional positions, and “employers-of-choice”, companies paying competitive wages can expect to recruit workers from a much wider labor shed of 50 minutes or more.



**Wage & Salary:** Like other strong production markets across the country, competitive wages for workers continues to rise as labor markets tighten. However, wages in the three-county TAP Mississippi region are generally below that of both similarly-sized regional competitors, and much lower than salaries in larger regional markets. The region also offers companies and their workers a very low cost of living level compared to both regional and national comparison markets.



**Workforce Development & Education:** Filling the workforce pipeline is one of the most important considerations for employers and communities alike. In the TAP region, employers reported high satisfaction with technical training from local institutions like Northeast Mississippi Community College. In addition, employers noted the quality of engineering and related graduates from state institutions like Mississippi State University and the University of Mississippi.

**Manufacturing Workforce Value Proposition:** Given the strong presence of existing and diverse manufacturers and related skill sets, along with an underemployed population that could play a significant role in staffing a new operation, and quality workforce development institutions, the TAP region is very well positioned to meet the workforce needs of any number of mid-size manufacturing requirements.