



5-Year Strategic Plan

2022

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Message from the Executive Director

MDHS wants to be successful over the next five years, and planning for success is the first step toward achieving success.

This Five-Year Strategic Plan sets out the essential elements of the work MDHS intends to accomplish over the next five years and the means by which we will pursue the eight goals set forth in the plan. Our goals describe the path we will take toward partnering with Mississippians who reach out to MDHS for assistance to help them become more economically secure, better skilled to enter the workforce, and more likely to live in safe and healthy home environments that promote and enhance their well-being.

A core component of our plan is to better support our deeply committed and talented staff and recruit and retain additional capable and compassionate employees. This will be critical to our success and the success of the families we serve. Our staff is the heartbeat of the agency, and we want to continue to build up the next generation of leaders who will carry this work forward for years to come. We also have opportunities to better leverage technology to engage families more effectively and strengthen collaboration across the agency so that we can maximize the impact of every tax dollar.

In all of our work, we are about the business of helping families move from a state of need to a state of self-sufficiency. We want our services to result in real and measurable improvements in the lives of Mississippi families. The tools at our disposal are an entire basket of benefits that we can use to provide needed help to families. We help families with workforce training and education opportunities, food assistance, direct support, child care subsidies, child support paternity and enforcement assistance, parenting training, after-school care, community-based resources like utility assistance and a wide range of supportive services for senior adults.

The implementation of our Strategic Plan will be informed by the lived experience of the families we serve and directed by the agency's core values of integrity, compliance, excellence and empathy. As we embrace this Five-Year Strategic Plan, we will measure our progress at regular intervals – planning to succeed by making the necessary changes along the way. In that respect, this plan will be a dynamic document that is adjusted each year based on our experience in the prior year. This focused and dynamic approach will allow us to continue our mission to provide tangible help today to create a lasting hope for tomorrow.



Executive Director

Executive Summary

Overview

In November of 2021, MDHS selected Consilience Group, LLC to facilitate the development and initial implementation of an outcome-oriented five-year strategic plan for the agency. Consilience Group partnered with MDHS leadership to develop a plan focused on achieving positive client outcomes across multiple service delivery areas. Building on Governor Reeves' Key Initiatives related to Education, Healthcare, Workforce Development, and Economic Growth, this Strategic Plan charts a clear path forward for the agency.

Process

MDHS leadership were deeply involved in the process, providing ongoing input and support. The complete timeline for all phases of the work was approximately 8 months. Throughout the various phases of work, Consilience Group worked with the MDHS Senior Leadership Team to establish a vision and create a framework for the MDHS Strategic Plan which included a North Star statement, Core Values, and Results. Next, the discovery process assessed MDHS's current strengths, challenges, and opportunities, resulting in key findings. Lastly, Consilience Group facilitated a series of in-person and virtual strategic planning sessions with the Senior Leadership Team and Division Directors to develop, review, modify, and finalize the Strategic Plan. The plan details the desired change for MDHS's clients over the next five years and outlines the key activities the agency will need to complete and the measures it will track to ensure it is achieving the desired change.

MDHS Five-Year Strategic Plan

The planning process yielded the following framework (*Figure 1*) that details MDHS's Results. Economically Secure, Skilled & Educated, and Safe & Healthy are conditions of well-being for all Mississippians that the agency's services and programs will contribute to improving. The Connected result—with its underlying measures and activities—outlines how MDHS approaches its work.

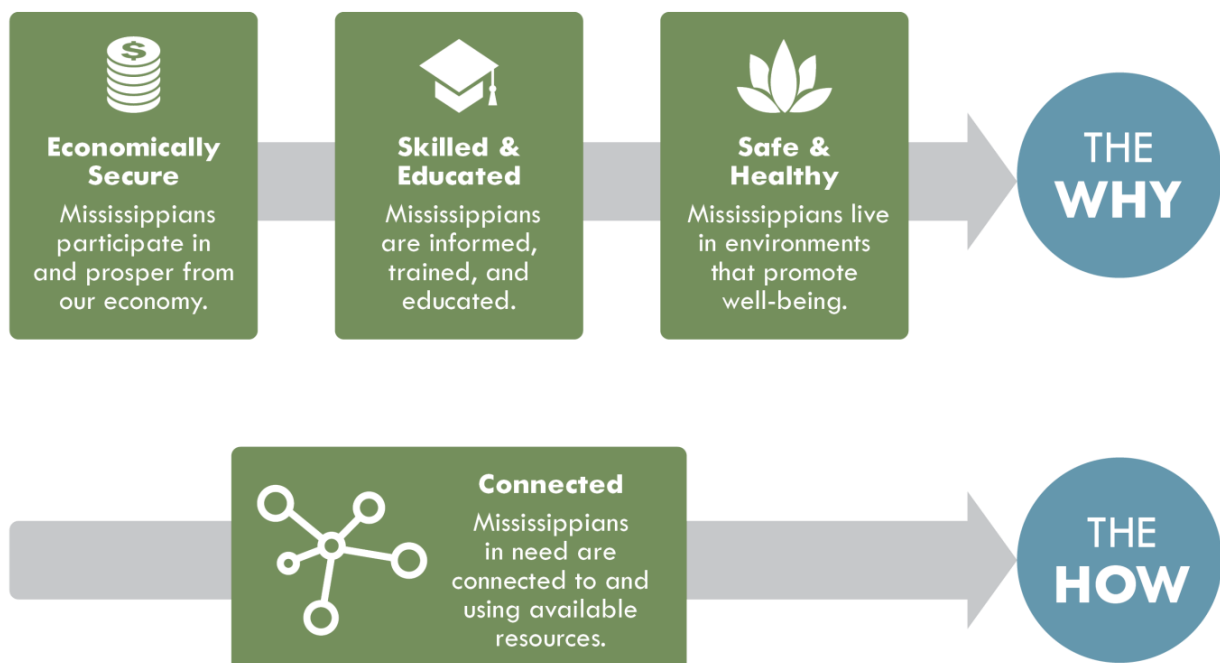


Figure 1

Many agencies, organizations, and partners contribute to the Results in Figure 1 and the overall desired future state for all Mississippians, the North Star. MDHS's contributions to the North Star and Results are outlined under the Aligned Goals in Figure 2. These eight goals define the agency's work over the next five years and set specific targets that impact the conditions of well-being for all Mississippians. Additionally, the agency's Core Values inform how all employees approach their work and interact with one another, as well as with clients and external partners.

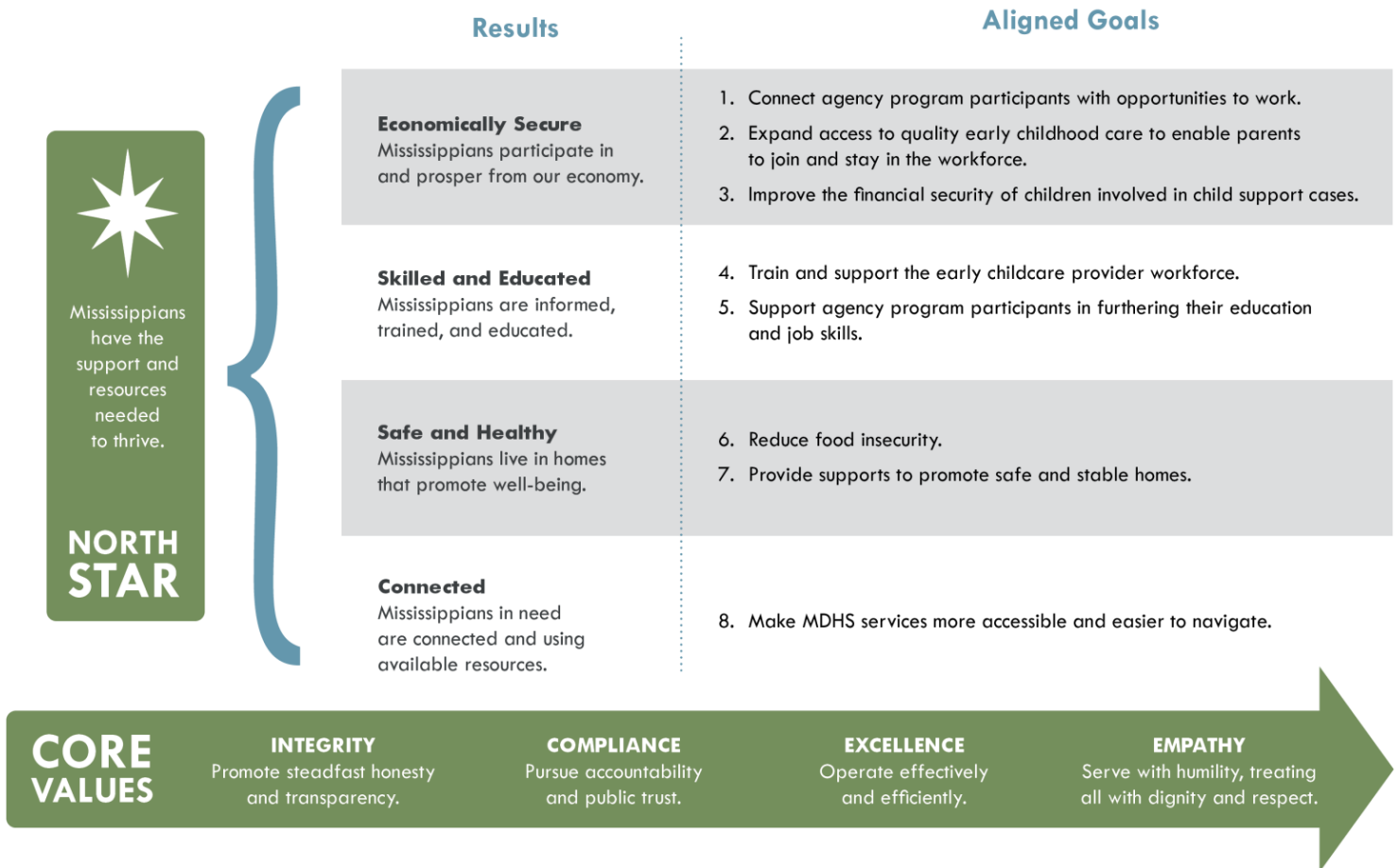


Figure 2

Introduction

Overview

In November of 2021, MDHS selected Consilience Group, LLC to facilitate the development of an outcome-oriented five-year strategic plan for the agency. Consilience Group partnered with MDHS leadership to develop a plan focused on achieving positive client outcomes across multiple service delivery areas that maximizes the impact of public resources and contributes to overall statewide economic opportunity.

Guided and informed by Governor Reeves' priorities related to Education, Healthcare, Workforce Development, and Economic Growth, this Strategic Plan charts a path forward for the agency by establishing clearly defined metrics by which the agency can measure its impact both at the individual and family level as well as at the state-level. This plan will also provide a pathway forward for expanding and building upon the valuable partnerships that support and align with the work of MDHS across the state with a commitment to supporting the critical work that is happening on the ground to address individual and family needs, while also being responsible stewards of public funding.

About the Mississippi Department of Human Services (MDHS)

The Mississippi Department of Human Services (MDHS) has its origins in state legislation passed in the 1930s. The State Department of Public Welfare, the predecessor of the Department of Human Services, was created by the Legislature in April 1936 as part of the passage of the "Mississippi Old Age Security Act." The Mississippi Department of Human Services was renamed and established by the legislature in 1989 as part of the state government's reorganization.

Today, MDHS is one of the largest state agencies in Mississippi with over 2,000 full-time employees and an annual budget of approximately 1.3 billion dollars. MDHS serves Mississippians across the age continuum, from early childhood to older adults, and has offices in each of the state's 82 counties. MDHS is dedicated to serving others while providing a wide range of public assistance programs, social services, and support for children, older adults, people with disabilities, and low-income individuals and families. The agency seeks to empower families so they can become self-sufficient and responsible for their future success.

MDHS plays a vital role in improving family well-being and economic growth in the state of Mississippi. Investing in the well-being of families creates the foundation for a strong and prosperous community. Families that have the support to make informed decisions and manage their basic needs are better equipped to thrive. As MDHS stewards and effectively utilizes its valuable resources to support those in need, more Mississippians are given the opportunity to engage in meaningful employment and relationships that contribute to healthy families and communities in Mississippi's growing economy.

Mission:

The Mississippi Department of Human Services offers Mississippians, young and old, tangible help today to create lasting hope for tomorrow.

Vision:

The Mississippi Department of Human Services will create a prosperous Mississippi by empowering Mississippi families to become self-sufficient through the necessary resources and support, while serving as good stewards of the public funds entrusted to the agency.

Process

Timeline

MDHS Director Mr. Bob Anderson, the Senior Leadership Team, and Division Directors provided strategic input and guidance throughout the eight-month planning process. The chart below outlines the key phases of the planning process and related timeline followed by a brief description of each phase.

Activity	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June
Planning & Visioning								
Discovery & Assessment								
Strategic Plan Development								
Final Documentation Submission								

Planning & Visioning

Consilience Group facilitated an in-person Visioning Session with the MDHS Senior Leadership Team to establish a vision and create a framework for the MDHS Strategic Plan. The key elements of this framework include the North Star statement, Core Values, and Results (*Appendix A, Figure 2*).

Discovery & Assessment

The discovery process assessed MDHS's current strengths, challenges, and opportunities. Key findings from this process outline opportunities to maximize service delivery so that it yields the greatest impact for the recipients of services and maximizes the return on public investment.

The discovery process consisted of:

- Extensive internal document review
- Review of peer agency documents
- 12 Individual interviews with MDHS Senior Leadership Team
- Small group discussions with Division Directors
- Analysis of baseline demographic and service data
- Survey of MDHS Data Collection and Reporting practices

The findings and opportunities generated through the discovery process directly informed the development of the Strategic Plan.

Strategic Plan Development

Consilience Group facilitated a series of in-person and virtual strategic planning sessions with the Senior Leadership Team and Division Directors to develop, review, modify, and finalize the Strategic Plan. Informed by the Results developed in the Visioning Sessions, the Strategic Plan details the desired change for MDHS's clients over the next five years represented by the Aligned Goals. Building on the Results and Aligned Goals, the strategic planning sessions also informed the Measures that MDHS will use and the Key Activities it will need to complete to ensure the agency is achieving the desired change for clients.

The planning process yielded the following framework (*Figure 1*) that details MDHS's Results. Economically Secure, Skilled & Educated, and Safe & Healthy are conditions of well-being for all Mississippians that the agency's services and programs will contribute to improving. The Connected result—with its underlying measures and activities—outlines how MDHS approaches its work.

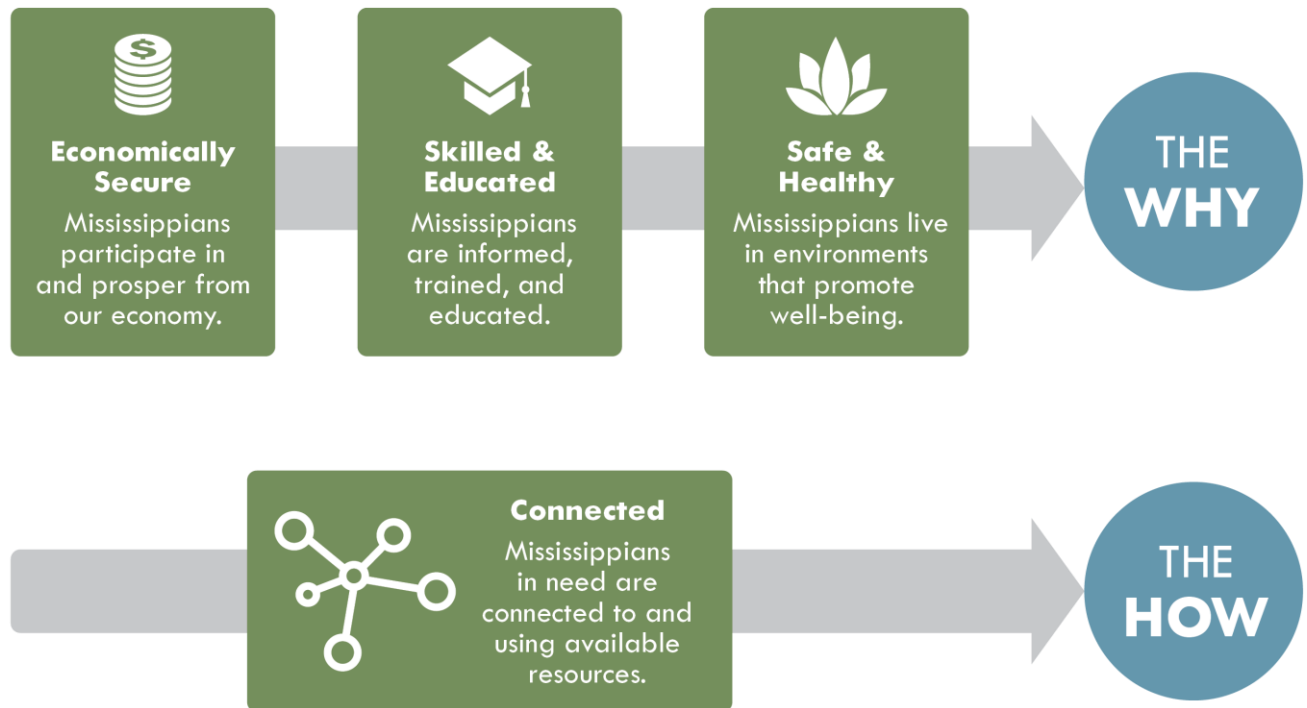


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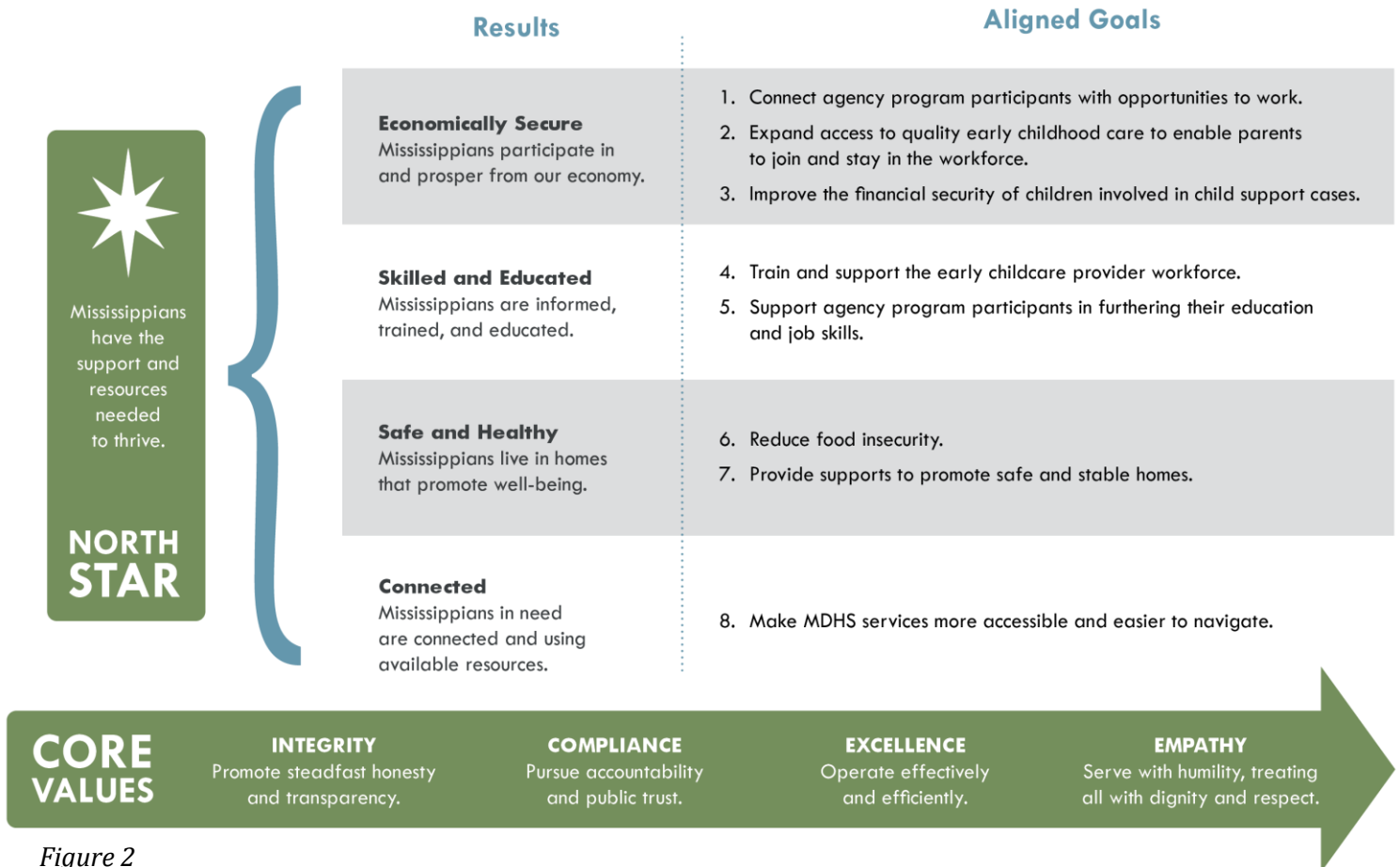


Figure 2

The subsequent sections provide detailed information about each Result, MDHS's Aligned Goal(s) for each Result, the Key Activities the agency will need to complete, and the Measures it will track to ensure it is achieving its Aligned Goal(s).

Economically Secure

Mississippians participate in and prosper in our economy

Economic security plays a significant role in the health and well-being of individuals and communities. The ability to participate in meaningful work opportunities provides individuals with dignity and creates opportunities to achieve self-sufficiency and the ability to support families and communities.

Mississippi struggles with high rates of poverty and unemployment. Families with children in Mississippi are particularly vulnerable to economic insecurity, as 28% of children under eighteen live below the poverty level. Many Mississippians face significant barriers to achieving economic security. For those who are not in the labor force, such as children, older adults, and people with disabilities, economic security is closely tied to their caregivers and the resources that they can access and utilize.

When more people enter and stay in the workforce, all of Mississippi does better. MDHS and its partners across the state work to connect individuals with opportunities to work and to access resources and supports that promote job retention and wage growth. This requires not only supporting people in obtaining employment or advancing in their careers but addressing a range of needs such as access to quality childcare and child support to promote household stability and the overall financial security of children.

Economically Secure	
Goal 1	Connect agency program participants with opportunities to work
Measure 1.1	Percent of unemployed SNAP E&T and TANF participants who are placed in a job
Measure 1.2	Percent of SNAP E&T and TANF participants who retain a job
Measure 1.3	Percent increase in earned income among SNAP E&T and TANF participants
Key Activities	Identify gaps in employment partner coverage throughout the state
	Recruit new employment partners, specifically in areas of the state with the lowest job placement rates
	Revise subgrant agreements to include employment and training outcome requirements
	Collaborate with partners and subgrantees to define outcome metrics and reporting schedules
	Explore leveraging SNAP data as a data source for employment status
	Identify how earned income among SNAP E&T and TANF participants can be tracked and measured

Economically Secure	
Goal 2	Expand access to quality early childhood care to enable parents to join and stay in the workforce
Measure 2.1	Number of licensed and registered childcare seats available in areas of identified need
Measure 2.2	Number of licensed and registered early childhood care and education programs that meet high quality standards
Key Activities	Identify early childhood care and education deserts (limited availability of childcare)
	Identify unlicensed/unregistered childcare providers in areas with limited availability
	Assist providers with registering and gaining licensure
	Identify early childhood care and education service gaps (developmental screenings, services for special populations, etc.)
	Create strategies to increase the number of providers
	Research quality standard best practices
	Develop and implement quality standards
	Enhance early childhood care and education quality supports and processes
	Identify and pursue additional funding sources (grant, etc.)

Economically Secure	
Goal 3	Improve the financial security of children involved in child support cases
Measure 3.1	Percent of open Title IV-D cases with child support orders established
Measure 3.2	Percent of accrued child support owed that is collected and distributed to custodial parents
Key Activities	Identify opportunities and implement improvements to the application and referral process for child support services
	Improve the monitoring and reporting capabilities by transitioning from Cognos to PowerBI
	Identify opportunities and implement internal division level policy changes to improve the collections process
	Continue the vendor oversight and accountability process
	Identify and implement opportunities to improve consistency in the child support enforcement process



Skilled and Educated

Mississippians are informed, trained, and educated.

A skilled and educated population is the backbone of a healthy economy and a thriving future for younger generations. Mississippians who are informed, trained, and educated are empowered to connect with the community and engage in meaningful work opportunities.

Approximately two out of three adults in Mississippi do not possess a bachelor's degree, and many need technical training to advance in the workforce. As Mississippi's economy continues to grow, laying a strong educational foundation that leads to opportunities to pursue post-secondary degrees and workforce skills is vital to the state's future.

Building a competitive workforce requires considering both the short and long term needs of the labor market. MDHS is uniquely positioned as a state agency to promote learning at critical points along the educational continuum. As neurological studies demonstrate, positive experiences in a child's earliest years set the trajectory for their lifelong success. Investing in and promoting high quality early childhood services and supports is critical to promoting positive outcomes for our state's youngest citizens while establishing a strong future workforce. On the other end of the time horizon, to continue to be competitive in today's rapidly evolving workforce landscape our labor force needs the technical skills and training that are responsive to employer needs today and the near future. MDHS oversees an array of resources that support job skills development and educational advancement that can position people for employment opportunities that qualify them for jobs in high demand industries that offer long term economic advancement opportunity.

Skilled and Educated	
Goal 4	Train and support the Early Child Care provider workforce
Measure 4.1	Percent of Early Child Care workforce holding a professional credential
Key Activities	Create Early Childhood credentialing process using college pathways as an example
	Procure a system for data collection and data transformation
	Offer scholarships for a Child Development Associate credential, or similar credentialing opportunity (ARPA discretionary monies)
	Increase communication and awareness for opportunities to gain credentials
	Partner with local education institutions

Skilled and Educated	
Goal 5	Support agency program participants in furthering their education and job skills
Measure 5.1	Job training program completion rate among SNAP E&T and TANF participants
Measure 5.2	Education credential completion rate among SNAP E&T and TANF participants
Key Activities	Revise partner contracts to include employment and training outcome requirements
	Collaborate with partners to define outcome metrics and reporting schedules
	Identify pathways to client success
	Create actionable plans to address client barriers by maximizing and layering existing internal programs, and continue to build out the referral process for external resources
	Recruit new Employment and Training partners, particularly in areas of the state with the lowest job placement rates
	Identify partnership recruitment opportunities
	Create strategies to pursue partnership recruitment opportunities.



Safe and Healthy

Mississippians live in homes that promote well-being.

The ability for Mississippians to live safe and healthy lives is impacted by many factors that expand beyond the doctor's office. Individuals must have their basic needs met, such as food and a safe living environment before they can be expected to achieve self-sufficiency and thrive.

Across the state, fifteen percent of individuals do not have access to a reliable food source. Older adults throughout the state face even higher rates of food insecurity and often face greater difficulties maintaining and improving their homes.

Individuals who have low-incomes are often forced to make trade-offs between important basic needs such as safe housing and healthy and adequate food. The uncertainty or lack of these basic needs has serious impacts on the health and well-being of individuals and families. Food insecurity and unstable home environments contribute to long-term physical and mental health problems that negatively impact education, employment, and independence. Children and older adults are particularly vulnerable to these issues and face greater risks of experiencing these compounding effects. MDHS advocates for, protects, and provides resources for residents to help Mississippians achieve healthy, safe, and independent lifestyles.



Safe and Healthy	
Goal 6	Reduce food insecurity
Measure 6.1	Percent of children who are food insecure
Measure 6.2	Percent of adults who are 60 years and older who are food insecure
Key Activities	Complete a statewide assessment to identify and define underserved communities
	Implement an ongoing assessment of food insecurity
	Share results from assessments with partners
	Work with partners to communicate needs
	Explore establishing shared goals with partners and building requirements into agreements
	Collaborate with food banks to identify opportunities to address potential food insecurity for Mississippians who are underutilizing SNAP
	Monitor the impact providing TEFAP R&R grant funding to food banks has on addressing food insecurity
	Identify the barriers eligible families experience when applying for SNAP and implement strategies to address those barriers
	Identify opportunities to integrate the SNAP application process into existing external partner processes
	Strengthen the Elderly Simplified Application Project (ESAP) process
	Evaluate expansion opportunities for Aging & Adult Services' "Be Well Kitchen" program
	Identify ways to leverage the "Double Up Bucks" program to support healthy food choices
	Evaluate cross-referral opportunities across agency programs

Safe and Healthy	
Goal 7	Provide supports to promote safe and stable homes
Measure 7.1	Number of low-income, high energy burden households that receive LIHEAP assistance
Measure 7.2	Number of clients served by Adult Protective Services' preventative and direct service programs
Measure 7.3	Number of families participating in TANF parenting, after-school, or employment-related education or training programs
Key Activities	Identify older adults in the 10 Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) service areas who are in need of Aging resources
	Identify households served with the highest energy burden to determine if additional resources can be provided
	Explore opportunities to strengthen referral process between Aging Services and Community Services partners
	Identify collaborative opportunities with community-based organizations, state agencies and other MDHS programs to increase awareness of programs
	Increase service providers of TANF education and training programs



Connected

Mississippians in need are connected to and using available resources.

MDHS and other key partners across the state offer many types of resources to help Mississippians in need become Economically Secure, Skilled and Educated, and Safe and Healthy. At times, these resources can be difficult to access and utilize effectively, creating additional barriers for those most in need of support.

Mississippi's rural geography, limited access to technology and internet, and stigmas and misunderstandings associated with some resources can prevent individuals from getting the short term help they need to address their crisis and position them for longer term independence. Ensuring that all Mississippians who need help can easily access and navigate the complex landscape of support is a vital part of the work necessary to accomplish the goals of this Strategic Plan.

MDHS seeks to ensure that its services and funds are maximized and provided in efficient and effective ways to reach all Mississippians in need. The Goals, Measures, and Key Activities below are cross-cutting throughout the agency and reach beyond specific programs. They help to inform the foundational work that supports the effective delivery of MDHS services and resources.

Connected	
Goal 8	Make MDHS services more accessible and easier to navigate
Measure 8.1	% of Mississippians in need who access MDHS services
Measure 8.2	% of applications for MDHS services that are processed on a timely basis
Measure 8.3	Cross-program referral rate
Key Activities	Access: Identify and address barriers to service offerings to underserved communities
	Awareness: Increase public awareness and understanding of MDHS programs and services
	Partnerships: Cultivate new and strengthen existing external partnerships that strategically extend or complement MDHS capacity and services
	Connectivity: Amplify agency impact through programmatic coordination and alignment of MDHS services to shared clients
	Leadership: Support current leadership and cultivate the next generation of MDHS state and county leaders

Connected: Supporting Activities

Key Activities under Connected are cross-cutting throughout the agency and support the effective delivery of services and resources, therefore each Key Activity above has its own defined Measures and Supporting Activities that clearly outline how the agency will implement the work and measure its progress.

Access

Identify and address barriers to access and expand service offerings to underserved communities.

Measures	
Percent increase in programmatic applications submitted	
Percent increase in programmatic utilization rates	
Supporting Activities	
A	Analyze existing data to identify service gaps and disparity
B	Better understand TANF funding and corresponding impact
C	Use technology to expand client points of access (e.g., website improvements, apps for phones, reminder notifications, etc.)

Awareness

Increase public awareness and understanding of MDHS services and supports.

Measures	
Change in awareness of and perception of agency (as measured through survey administered to partners, broader stakeholders, and clients)	
Percent increase in engagement of hard-to-reach sub-populations (as measured by applications submitted, service utilization, etc.)	
Supporting Activities	
A	Proactively engage local and state leaders to raise awareness, understanding, and opportunities to align and support MDHS services
B	Launch tailored outreach and engagement strategies that reach hard to serve eligible Mississippians who can benefit from MDHS resources and support
C	Develop and implement tailored strategies for regularly engaging key stakeholder groups such as: funded partners, broader strategic partners, community leaders, schools, and youth and families
D	Increase awareness about services and help the public understand the important work of MDHS by promoting successes

Partnerships

Cultivate new and strengthen existing external partnerships that strategically extend or complement MDHS capacity and services.

Measures	
Percent increase of partners/subcontracted agencies	
Number of individuals served through partners/subcontracted agencies	
Dollars leveraged/aligned for a shared population	
Supporting Activities	
A	Identify key areas of partnership need/opportunity and develop corresponding engagement plan
B	Provide capacity building support for subgrantees and potential subgrantees, particularly around compliance standards, accounting practices, and outcomes tracking
C	Develop bi-directional referral processes and protocols with strategic partners to serve more Mississippians



Connectivity

Amplify agency impact through programmatic coordination and alignment of MDHS services to shared clients.

Measures	
Percent of unique individuals served by more than one MDHS program/service	Staff awareness of MDHS programs and services (internal survey)
Percent of applications processed through the Common Portal	Dollars secured for improved information systems
Supporting Activities	
A	Enhance the Common Portal application and program eligibility pre-assessment on MDHS's website by adding more programs and increasing public awareness of the application
B	Establish framework, tools, and processes to track client outcomes and performance metrics related to service delivery
C	Secure funding to create more integrated and efficient data systems
D	Develop bi-directional referral and tracking processes and protocols across all MDHS programs
E	Create a policy committee to promote internal agency alignment and provide communication about policy changes happening throughout the agency
F	Create workgroups for program staff that serve similar shared populations to collaborate and create more efficient solutions and services
G	Deliver training for all staff about the various programs that MDHS offers

Leadership

Support current leadership and cultivate the next generation of MDHS state and county leaders.

Measures	
Employee retention rates	Employee advancement
New hire rates	
Supporting Activities	
A	Implement succession planning to prepare for leadership transitions and memorialize institutional knowledge
B	Develop leadership training plan for all MDHS managers and supervisors, initially focusing on county-level managers
C	Improve recruitment and retention for staff at all levels of the agency by exploring a mix of traditional methods and tactics (e.g., continue with SEC2 process, professional development opportunities, flexible work schedules, remote work opportunities, tuition reimbursement, etc.)

Charting Our Path Forward

MDHS's Strategic Plan provides a roadmap to guide the work of the agency, but it is also intended to be a living document that can and should be adjusted to reflect evolving conditions and needs. Over the next five years, the agency will implement the activities supporting the Strategic Plan's eight key goals. Data related to each of the goal measures will be collected and reviewed regularly, with a commitment to identifying opportunities for ongoing improvement.

The last few years have demonstrated that the future is never certain; however, what endures is MDHS's commitment to delivering the foundational supports and resources that contribute to Mississippians' economic security and well-being. MDHS cannot do this alone. As such MDHS will continue to cultivate new strategic partnerships while also nurturing and growing our existing partnerships. It will take a collective effort of public agency leaders and their staff, nonprofits, educational leaders, business and private industry, elected officials, as well as the people served by MDHS - working collaboratively towards aligned and shared goals. Ultimately, Mississippi is better together.

Appendix A: Glossary of Terms

North Star: The desired future state that informs the “why” behind all the work

Results: Conditions of well-being for entire populations—children, adults, families, or communities that are stated in plain language

Core Values: Inform how the agency does its work and how the members of the organization interact with one another as well as external stakeholders. They are the core elements of how people approach their work.

Aligned Goals: Specific targets that align with and contribute to the Results

Measures: Measures of how well agency strategies are working to achieve goals

Key Activities: Coherent collections of actions which have a reasoned chance of improving Measures and achieving Goals.