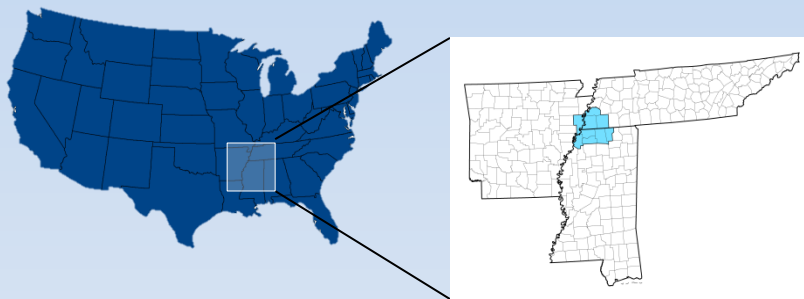


# Investing in Manufacturing Communities Partnership



## Made in the Mid-South Manufacturing Alliance

### The Community

Made in the Mid-South Manufacturing Alliance (MMMA) supports expansion of manufacturing in the Memphis Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), with a special focus on a strong and growing medical device cluster in three states – Tennessee, Mississippi, and Arkansas. Home to 56 medical equipment and supply manufacturing companies and 1.3 million citizens, Memphis MSA provides a strong foundation for manufacturing facilities. However, there are currently more than 45,000 unemployed workers who could be added to the workforce if they had the training to meet employer needs. Led by post-secondary institutions with the help of federal grants, Memphis MSA is in the process of providing short-term training in basic skills to close the dramatic skills gap and grow the manufacturing sector of medical equipment and supplies in the region.

### The Vision

To build on its strong advantages in manufacturing, the Memphis MSA region has crafted a strategy to establish an effective workforce development system to close the skills gap, provide awareness and services to business owners and service providers, and utilize technology to connect businesses with mentors and entrepreneurial opportunities. By upgrading the physical infrastructure and capitalizing on technical resources, Memphis MSA will achieve its manufacturing capacity.

### The Strategy

**Workforce and Training:** There is a serious skills gap in Memphis MSA, where manufacturing employers in the region are struggling to find qualified workers at all skill levels, despite a large local labor pool and training infrastructure with many assets and resources. The Memphis MSA has a number of community colleges and technical colleges, as well as several four-year institutions, to support the manufacturing industrial sector.

**Supplier Networks:** Memphis MSA KTS firms engage in knowledge transfer through an experienced workforce trained in precision manufacturing, engineering, industrial machinery maintenance, management, and operational positions. However, long-term challenges for the primary industry are economic fluctuations that impact the costs of raw material purchases from foreign markets and the costs associated with the delays of goods shipped via container vessel to busy coastal ports. Other long-term challenges include finding suppliers that can support emerging products and technologies and maintaining the supply chain through unexpected events. The more pressing challenge,

however, is a shortage of workers in manufacturing. To address these challenges, the region will seek to attract investment from China and seek grant funding to provide training to address the gaps in the local economy.

**Research and Innovation:** The region is home to nationally recognized research institutions as well as an innovative and evolving entrepreneurship support ecosystem. However, this region needs a strategy to provide greater awareness of existing services among both small business owners and other service providers. The Memphis MSA region proposes an integrated ecosystem of services in addition to expanded services in rural areas by ensuring closer coordination among existing research entities and entrepreneurship support organizations. This implementation plan will focus on strategies to create, develop, fund, and grow new startup companies.

**Infrastructure and Site Development:** Memphis' geographic location benefits the region's companies that rely on the strategic location and physical infrastructure to ensure their products will be manufactured, shipped, and received on time at extremely low costs. The current physical infrastructure needs to be updated to avoid major damages from earthquakes, and to foster quicker and more efficient manufacturing operations. These plans will help ensure competitiveness in the region.

**Trade and Investment:** In order to capitalize on opportunities for increased foreign exports from the region's businesses, the Memphis MSA needs to secure funding for additional resources to further attract additional foreign investment and expand the manufacturing ecosystem within the region.

**Operational Improvement and Capital Access:** To help connect startups and small businesses with the necessary funding and experienced mentors, the region's Memphis Entrepreneurship Powered Innovation Center (EPICenter) will provide financing, physical space for product development, and mentorship programs by combining the services of all local entrepreneurial organizations. Other consortium members propose similar changes to increase and encourage opportunities for growing businesses in the region.

### **The Partnership**

**Nonprofits:** Memphis Chamber Foundation; Memphis Bioworks Foundation. **Private Sector:** Greater Memphis Chamber; Bartlett Area Chamber of Commerce. **Nonprofit Workforce Development:** Greater Memphis Alliance for a Competitive Workforce. **Nonprofit Private Sector:** Greater Memphis Medical Device Council. **Public University:** University of Memphis. **Government:** Economic Development Growth Engine for Memphis and Shelby County; City of Bartlett; City of Memphis; Desoto County Government; Mississippi Development Authority; Shelby County Government; State of Arkansas Economic Development; State of Tennessee and Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development. **Economic Development Agencies:** Desoto County Economic Development; Memphis Tomorrow; Tate County Economic Development. **Research Coalition:** Memphis Research Consortium. **Vocational/Tech Institutions:** Moore College of Technology.