

**Joint Committee on Performance Evaluation and  
Expenditure Review (PEER)**  
The Mississippi Legislature



**Action Brief:**

**An Evaluation of the Effectiveness of the Mississippi Film Office**  
December 15, 2015 (Report #602)

*Background:*

Rapidly changing technology, diminished dependence on traditional locales for production, and multi-national efforts to attract film production are critical factors in the present filmmaking environment.

The Mississippi Film Office (MFO) was created in 1973 by executive order for the purpose of attracting, supporting, and developing the film industry in Mississippi. The Legislature created the Mississippi Motion Picture Incentive Program in 2004 to raise Mississippi's profile as a film location and to allow Mississippi to compete with other film programs.

PEER sought to determine the differences in the MFO's approach to promoting movie production in the state compared to the approaches of other states' film offices. The analysis took into consideration the current state of the film industry, the economic impact and return on investment of the incentive program, and the MFO's goals regarding film production in Mississippi.

**Report Conclusions**

**In addition to its incentive program, the Mississippi Film Office has created or supports several other resources that help achieve its goals. These resources help Mississippi attract the MFO's specific market: small and independent films.**

The Mississippi Film Office's goals are to create economic benefit, present the state's beauty, provide greater economic opportunity, increase tourism, support community pride and development, and cultivate public relations opportunities that help strengthen local industry.

Resources for the film industry that the MFO has created or supports include the following.

- The MFO's involvement in Mississippi's film organizations, societies, and festivals allows independent filmmakers an opportunity to showcase their work and expand their knowledge as filmmakers.
- The MFO's crew and service directory provides quick identification of Mississippi's available film production labor force.
- Hinds Community College's recently implemented two-year program in film production creates a means for preparing Mississippians to participate in a growing domestic film production industry.
- Mississippi's independent studios provide resources for interested producers to film in the state.

State film incentive programs are controversial, as they may often yield relatively low returns on investment. While the return on investment of Mississippi's film incentive program is only forty-nine cents on the dollar, the program has succeeded in producing a higher return on investment than that produced by many other states' incentive programs (e. g., Louisiana's program had a return of twenty-three cents on the dollar). It has also succeeded in achieving the film office's strategy of creating jobs and increasing local film production.

Mississippi, like any other state with a film industry incentive program, forgoes general fund revenue for its incentive program. The controversy arises based on the fact that many believe the loss of revenue from such programs outweighs the economic gains.

Incentive programs must be balanced by every state in terms of revenue lost and economic gains. Economic gain is not always expressed in positive revenue return but may also be shown through other economic growth, including job creation. Based on calculations made by the State Economist through use of the REMI-PI economic impact model, the MFO's incentive program created 1,094 direct and secondary jobs in FY 2015.

Although Mississippi's film production industry appears to be growing, the limited size of its experienced domestic workforce, few film production educational opportunities, and scarcity of film industry-related infrastructure limit Mississippi in the size and number of film productions that it can support. The MFO believes that through the state's development of short-term film production training programs, the MFO's promotion and development of infrastructure, and continual monitoring of certain aspects of the industry, it can cultivate a competitive edge outside its specific market.

Despite having less film industry-related infrastructure than other states, Mississippi saw the number of films annually produced in this state increase dramatically between 2006 and 2014. If the number of films produced in Mississippi each year continues to increase, as expected, the supply of available local crew to service these films must meet the growing demand if Mississippi hopes to establish long-term film industry growth.

Mississippi's limited number of film industry-related higher education options and lack of workforce training options prevent this state from establishing and maintaining the trained workforce necessary to support film production. The Mississippi Film Office believes the state should create short-term, non-academic film production workforce training and certification programs in order to maintain the type of labor force needed to work on film productions.

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