PEER MISSISSIPPI
Joint Legislative Committee on Performance Evaluation and Expenditure Review

A Review of Mississippi State Government's Administration of Selected Human Resource Functions and Information Technology Systems

Report Highlights | #738 November 9, 2026

CONCLUSION: The Mississippi State Personnel Board (MSPB) is the governing authority for Mississippi's human capital system. While agencies generally expressed satisfaction with the timeliness of MSPB's processes for hiring, certain aspects of the process could be inefficient and result in agencies not being able to hire desirable candidates (e.g., using potentially restrictive minimum job requirements for certain positions). Regarding compensation of employees, the Legislature, MSPB, and state agencies have responsibilities that impact the state's ability to attract and retain a qualified workforce. Planning and implementation issues inhibited the state's original vision for MAGIC to serve as an integrated human resource and financial data system. As a result, state agencies have experienced inefficiencies in fulfilling their HR functions.

Background

Public personnel management is one of the most important state government support functions, as it provides principles by which employees are utilized efficiently and effectively. MSPB, governed by a five-member board, serves as the governing authority for the statewide human capital system as established in MISS. CODE ANN. § 25-9-1 (1972) et seq. Agencies are responsible for hiring and managing their own staff, while MSPB oversees the recruitment process, salary awards/amendments, and general compliance with the state personnel system. For FY 2027, the Legislature appropriated MSPB $5.4 million to carry out its functions. MSPB employs 42 full-time staff, including 20 staff in the area of classification, compensation, and recruitment.

Key Findings – Hiring and Minimum Qualifications

- Staff of 12 state agencies PEER interviewed reported satisfaction with the timeliness of MSPB in posting jobs and providing a list of candidates to agencies after the job announcements close.

- Issues Regarding the Substitution Process

  If job applicants do not meet a position's minimum education qualifications, they may request that a MSPB substitution committee review their skills, employment, and education history to determine if they might otherwise qualify. Although these reviews do not significantly delay the hiring process, minimum education criteria may deter otherwise qualified applicants from applying or continuing in the process.

- Issues Regarding Minimum Position Qualifications

  From July 2024 to June 2026, 2,042 applicants requested substitution panel reviews, and 1,764 (86%) were approved. This high approval rate suggests that at least a portion of state jobs that require certain minimum qualifications may not fully align with current state hiring practices and needs.

Efforts By States to Reduce or Eliminate Four-Year Degree Requirements for State Jobs

- At least 19 states no longer require a four-year degree for most state government jobs.
- Reducing education requirements for selected state positions could reduce the reliance on MSPB substitution committees, expand the pool of qualified applicants, simplify the hiring process, and allow MSPB staff to devote more time to other critical functions.
- MSPB is involved in a pilot project regarding the potential for reducing the number of state jobs requiring a degree.

Issues Regarding Compensation

- MSPB is responsible for providing state employee salary adjustment recommendations to the Legislature based on relevant market data, while the Legislature is responsible for weighing these recommendations against available resources.
- State agencies are ultimately responsible for ensuring fair and equitable compensation among their employees, and MSPB has observed that certain agency HR personnel more effectively justify salary increases that account for equity.
- Together, these decisions have an impact on the state's ability to attract and retain a qualified workforce.
- Based on its most recent salary studies, in FY 2025, MSPB recommended to the Legislature an upward salary adjustment for 56 of the state's 641 job classifications. This would have increased the minimum salary level for 2,201 state employee positions at a total annual cost of approximately $12 million.

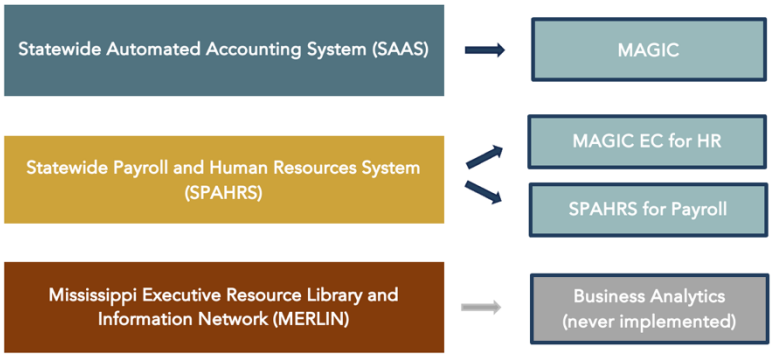
Planning and implementation issues inhibited the state's original vision for MAGIC – an enterprise resource planning (ERP) system – to serve as an integrated human resource and financial data system.

Despite planning efforts for the ERP system as early as 2006, the state has ultimately chosen to abandon MAGIC Employee Central (MAGIC EC) more than 10 years later and is considering restarting the process for a new ERP system.

The State's Original Vision for MAGIC

Beginning in 2006, initial planning began to implement a unified data system that could integrate the functions of the state's three legacy human resources and financial data systems. However, numerous implementation issues and delays resulted in state agencies still utilizing multiple separate systems.

Current Functionality of the 3 Legacy Systems



Implementation Issues Inhibiting Vision for MAGIC

1) Lack of a formal governance structure for the operations of the MMRS Steering Committee:
   - DFA, under its former executive director, often proceeded with implementation decisions without collaboration between MSPB and ITS.
2) Inconsistent collaboration throughout the procurement and implementation process
3) Deficiencies in the IT systems interoperability

Impact on Agencies

Because the system has not worked as intended and has resulted in numerous data issues when trying to replicate data between MAGIC EC and SPAHRS, agencies reported experiencing inefficiencies in fulfilling their HR functions (e.g., use of dual data systems, increased staff time, and procurement of additional systems to be in compliance with reporting requirements).

Summary of Report Recommendations

1. The Legislature should amend MISS. CODE ANN. § 7-7-3 (5) (1972) to replace the Mississippi Management Reporting System Steering Committee with the Mississippi Enterprise Resource Planning Steering Committee, which shall:
   a. be comprised of the directors of DFA, ITS, and MSPB, Committee action shall require two votes (of three);
   b. meet at least twice a year;
   c. record formal minutes;
   d. establish an agency advisory committee;
   e. annually report to the Legislature, including submission of a joint legislative package pertaining to the ERP system; and,
   f. require the ERP system to be subject to an annual cyber threat test.
2. Due to MSPB's high approval rate (86%) for substitution requests, MSPB should:
   a. continue efforts to reevaluate which positions should require a college degree, and which positions should be open to skill-based hiring; and,
   b. consider identifying a method to preclear applicants that apply outside of NEOGOV.
3. MSPB should track the reason for which the substitution committee approves or denies a substitution request.
4. Agencies should take greater effort to ensure their staff are able to justify salary award/amendment requests by comparing the awardee's credentials to others the agency employs in the same job classification.

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