

SURVEY

*Local Economic Development
and the
Role of State Government*

**John C. Stennis Institute of Government
Mississippi State University**

research funded by:
**The Aspen Institute
Washington, D.C.**

**Survey Questionnaire
Please Return By June 7, 1991**

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OBJECTIVES OF THE SURVEY

In addition to finding out how local government officials feel about the proper role of the State in setting State policy agendas to assist local governments in economic development efforts, this survey is designed to obtain answers to the following questions:

1. Do local government officials in small towns define State government economic development policy choices in terms of how well State policies help local governments meet tangible needs such as roads, recruiting more industries, keeping existing businesses, providing more jobs, and paying higher wages?
2. Do local government officials in certain geographic areas of the State tend to define economic development needs at the local level in broad terms, such as the need to invest more in educational improvement, in skills training, and in the quality of the work force in general, which is called human capital investment?
3. Do local government officials in jurisdictions of different population size tend to define the State's economic development policy options in terms of specific initiatives such as State supported tax credits for new industry, more State support for education, and stronger State encouraged partnerships between the private and public sectors?
4. Do local government officials' opinions about the proper role of the State differ according to the jurisdiction's size and location or the official's sex or race?
5. Do certain local government officials, who prefer State government to take on certain responsibilities, possess a dominate style of thinking that influences how they define issues, local needs, and the appropriate role of the state. [This objective will be pursued by administering a "styles of thinking" instrument to a sample of the total population specifically invited to attend a regional meeting on economic development.]

Directions: For the questions below, please check the number beside the answer which most closely reflects your opinion as a city official, if you are a city official, or as a county official if you are a county official.

1. When you think of economic development, the first thing that comes to your mind is:
 1. Job creation.
 2. More industries locating within our town/county.
 3. Increased income.
 4. Increased tourism.
 5. Chamber of Commerce or Economic Development Council activities.
 6. Quality education.
 7. A competent workforce.
 8. Other (Please specify) _____

2. How helpful is "outside" assistance to your city's/county's economic development efforts? [Outside assistance includes help from other local governments, planning and development districts, State and Federal governments, and private consulting firms.]
 1. Very Helpful
 2. Somewhat Helpful
 3. Outside assistance is not desired
 4. Of Very Little Help
 5. Not Helpful At All

3. Please rank order the types of State government assistance listed below from most to least helpful in your city's/county's economic development efforts? [1 is most helpful; 5 is least helpful.]

- ___ 1. Technical Assistance
- ___ 2. Industrial Prospecting
- ___ 3. Community Development Assistance
- ___ 4. Infrastructure Improvements
- ___ 5. Other (Please Specify) _____

4. Within the last two years, has your city's/county's governing body approached a member of the State legislature to voice concerns about State assistance for economic development?

- ___ 1. Yes
- ___ 2. No

5. Within the last two years, have you, personally, approached a member of the State legislature concerning economic development matters?

- ___ 1. Yes
- ___ 2. No

6. Please check the type of State financial assistance that needs to be provided immediately by State government to your city/county.

- ___ 1. Low interest loan subsidies to prospective businesses.
- ___ 2. Local sales tax option
- ___ 3. Authority to provide tax abatements to industries relocating to our city/county.
- ___ 4. State bonding program to assist in the acquisition of speculative industrial property.
- ___ 5. Funds to improve infrastructure, such as water and sewers, water tanks, and waste water treatment.

7. Does your city/county currently have an economic development strategy that includes an active State involvement?
- ___ 1. Yes
 ___ 2. No
 ___ 3. Not sure
8. What type of economic activity is most important in your city/county? (select one)
1. Agriculture
 2. Manufacturing
 3. Retailing
 4. Tourism
 5. Other (Please specify) _____

STATE-LOCAL RELATIONS

Directions: For each of the following statements there are five available responses: (1) Strongly Agree; (2) Agree; (3) Not Sure; (4) Disagree; and (5) Strongly Disagree. Please check the number beside the response which most closely reflects your opinion concerning the statement.

EXAMPLE: Dogs and cats are prone to fight.

1. Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Not Sure 4. Disagree 5. Strongly Disagree

9. State government economic development agencies are responsive when contacted by me or by a representative of my city/county board.
1. Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Not Sure 4. Disagree 5. Strongly Disagree
10. State government economic development agencies in general are helpful in assisting with local business "start ups".
1. Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Not Sure 4. Disagree 5. Strongly Disagree
11. State government does not seem to be concerned with economic development issues of cities the size of mine.
1. Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Not Sure 4. Disagree 5. Strongly Disagree

12. Technical assistance from State agencies concerned with economic development is more important to my city/county than financial assistance provided by these agencies.
1. Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Not Sure 4. Disagree 5. Strongly Disagree
13. My state legislators do a good job representing the economic development interests of this city/county.
1. Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Not Sure 4. Disagree 5. Strongly Disagree
14. There is a great deal that we could do to promote economic development at the local level if we had more financial assistance from the State.
1. Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Not Sure 4. Disagree 5. Strongly Disagree
15. My city's/county's government and the local economic development groups work well together.
1. Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Not Sure 4. Disagree 5. Strongly Disagree
16. State level involvement in economic development is necessary if we are to be successful at the local level.
1. Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Not Sure 4. Disagree 5. Strongly Disagree
17. The legislature understands the economic development needs of local governments.
1. Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Not Sure 4. Disagree 5. Strongly Disagree
18. The needs of local governments are adequately addressed in statewide economic development plans.
1. Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Not Sure 4. Disagree 5. Strongly Disagree

19. Economic development is the most important issue with which this city/county must deal.
1. Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Not Sure 4. Disagree 5. Strongly Disagree
20. If increased economic development were to occur other problems would take care of themselves.
1. Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Not Sure 4. Disagree 5. Strongly Disagree
21. There is little a local government official can do to improve economic development.
1. Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Not Sure 4. Disagree 5. Strongly Disagree
22. Economic development is the job of private agencies and not local government.
1. Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Not Sure 4. Disagree 5. Strongly Disagree
23. State government could help my city/county by recruiting more industries to the State.
1. Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Not Sure 4. Disagree 5. Strongly Disagree
24. If State government provided financial assistance to construct industrial park sites this would help economic development in my city/county.
1. Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Not Sure 4. Disagree 5. Strongly Disagree

25. State government could help increase economic development in my city/county by providing financial assistance to construct speculative buildings to be used by new businesses or industries.
1. Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Not Sure 4. Disagree 5. Strongly Disagree
26. State government could help increase economic development in my city/county by providing financial assistance to construct roads.
1. Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Not Sure 4. Disagree 5. Strongly Disagree
27. State government could best help economic development in my city/county by providing financial assistance to construct industrial park utilities.
1. Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Not Sure 4. Disagree 5. Strongly Disagree
28. State government's provision of technical assistance in industrial site preparation is more important to my city/county than the State's assistance in industrial prospecting.
1. Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Not Sure 4. Disagree 5. Strongly Disagree
29. My city/county should have the authority to raise local sales taxes for economic development purposes.
1. Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Not Sure 4. Disagree 5. Strongly Disagree
30. A referendum should not be required for my city/county to raise local sales taxes for economic development purposes.
1. Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Not Sure 4. Disagree 5. Strongly Disagree
31. State government should provide regular economic development training to local government officials.
1. Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Not Sure 4. Disagree 5. Strongly Disagree

32. State government could help my city/county by providing training for local business owners, economic development officials, and Chamber of Commerce members.

1. Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Not Sure 4. Disagree 5. Strongly Disagree

33. Local economic development should be handled by local government officials without assistance from the State.

1. Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Not Sure 4. Disagree 5. Strongly Disagree

34. If my city/county were larger it would have more influence with the State legislature on economic development issues.

1. Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Not Sure 4. Disagree 5. Strongly Disagree

35. If my city and the county in which it is located would work together, our economic development efforts would be more successful.

1. Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Not Sure 4. Disagree 5. Strongly Disagree

36. If the State legislature would solve the other problems facing the State, economic development would take care of itself.

1. Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Not Sure 4. Disagree 5. Strongly Disagree

37. If you answered "agree" or "strongly agree" to question 36, please list the three most pressing problems you think the State legislature needs to solve which, if solved, will aid economic development.

38. State government could best help economic development in my city/county by conducting industrial prospecting.

1. Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Not Sure 4. Disagree 5. Strongly Disagree

39. Increased intergovernmental cooperation among the county and the other local governments in our area could improve our overall economic development potential.

1. Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Not Sure 4. Disagree 5. Strongly Disagree

40. If my city/county were larger it would have more influence with State agencies.

1. Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Not Sure 4. Disagree 5. Strongly Disagree

41. Has your city/county made use of State-level economic development services over the past two years?

___ 1. Yes

___ 2. No

Would you please list the service(s) you found most beneficial:

42. The most important contribution the State government can make to aid my city's/county's economic development is adequate funding and support for education and training of our young people.

1. Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Not Sure 4. Disagree 5. Strongly Disagree

43. A major contribution the State government can make to aid my city's/county's economic development is adequate funding and support for education and training of adults.

1. Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Not Sure 4. Disagree 5. Strongly Disagree

44. Other problems in my city/county are more important than economic development.

1. Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Not Sure 4. Disagree 5. Strongly Disagree

45. If you answered "agree" or "strongly agree" to question 44, please specify two of those more important problems.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT POLICY PREFERENCES AND INITIATIVES

Directions: For the questions below, please check the number beside the answer which most closely reflects your opinion, or rank order your response if requested to do so.

46. Do you think the Mississippi Municipal Association/Mississippi Association of Supervisors does a good job representing local government to the legislature in economic development matters?

1. Yes
 2. No
 3. Not sure

47. Which of the following do you feel would make the best contribution to your city's/county's economic health?

1. Several locally owned and operated small retail businesses
 2. Several small manufacturing facilities (agricultural and non-agricultural)
 3. A large industrial manufacturing facility
 4. More city/county support services for existing businesses
 5. Other (Please Specify) _____

48. Please rank order the following agencies from most to least helpful in providing economic development information and assistance to your city/county. (1 is most helpful; 5 is least helpful.)
- 1. MS Department of Economic and Community Development
 - 2. Governor's Office
 - 3. Universities and their outreach programs, such as faculty technical assistance
 - 4. Planning and Development Districts
 - 5. University Cooperative Extension Service
 - 6. Other state agency (Specify) _____
49. How often do you receive information, phone calls, visits or other personal contacts from state officials concerning economic development in your city/county?
- 1. Very frequently
 - 2. Fairly often
 - 3. Occasionally
 - 4. Rarely
 - 5. Never
50. How often do you approach an official of a State agency regarding economic development needs of your city/county?
- 1. Very frequently
 - 2. Fairly often
 - 3. Occasionally
 - 4. Rarely
 - 5. Never

51. How often do you approach your legislator(s) to discuss economic development needs in your city/county?

- 1. Very frequently
- 2. Fairly often
- 3. Occasionally
- 4. Rarely
- 5. Never

52. Please rank from the list below the top three economic development programs in terms of their importance in helping economic development in your city/county. [1 is most important; 3 is least important.]

- 1. Leadership development programs
- 2. Training programs for local economic development officials
- 3. Loan or grant application preparation assistance for industrial site improvement
- 4. Programs to assist city or county officials in preparing an industrial site prospectus
- 5. Direct financial matching by the State for capital projects.
- 7. State land banking program to assure the availability of land at below market cost for economic development purposes
- 8. Other (Please specify) _____

53. State government would best help my city/county in its economic development efforts in which one of the following ways? [Select only one.]

- 1. Providing financial assistance to construct industrial park sites
- 2. Providing technical assistance in industrial site preparation
- 3. Providing training for local economic development officials
- 4. Providing general economic development training for a variety of local leaders
- 5. Providing more seed money and start-up capital to encourage minority businesses
- 6. Providing more direct assistance to improve public education and training.

54. The most important factor in guaranteeing successful economic development in my city/county is:

- 1. Strong public education system
- 2. Good transportation system
- 3. Good public services to existing industrial facilities
- 4. Proximity to a large urban area
- 5. Improved infrastructure, e.g., water and sewer facilities, waste water treatment, clean water, good drainage, and adequate housing.
- 6. Other (Please specify) _____

55. If faced with limited resources from the State and from your city's/county's own sources, in which of the following areas would you prefer to use these resources?

- 1. To improve local roads, traffic lights, sewers, and other infrastructure.
- 2. To improve the marketing and advertising of local products and services.
- 3. To improve the education and training opportunities of the local work force.
- 4. To increase staff capability to write grant proposals and to engage in industrial prospecting or recruitment of industries.
- 5. Other (Please specify) _____

56. Which of the following strategies or tools do you think should be given the highest priority for local economic development? [Check only one.]

- 1. Purchasing land for later economic development
- 2. Tax incentives for new industries
- 3. Improved infrastructure, e.g., roads, sewers, fire protection services, etc.
- 4. Improving work force skills
- 5. Improving the quality of public education.
- 6. Other (Please specify) _____

57. Which of the following do you think is the most important role tourism plays in the economic development of your city/county?

- 1. Tourism is an attraction for future business visits by travelers.
- 2. Tourism can be helpful in creating the image of Mississippi as a destination for travelers rather than a "pass-through" State.
- 3. Tourism can help create a positive image for my city/county and increase the number of visitors and the duration of their visits.
- 4. Tourism can be the first step toward presenting our community and its beauty as a retirement alternative to those looking for a good quality of life environment to come to for retirement.
- 5. Tourism is for the larger cities in Mississippi. It would not do much to help our local economic development.

58. What types of economic activities do you want to attract to your city/county? [Please check no more than two.]

- 1. Agricultural
- 2. Retailing
- 3. Wholesaling
- 4. Manufacturing
- 5. Tourism
- 6. More fast foods operations
- 7. Other (Please specify) _____

59. In your opinion, the primary responsibility for developing an economic development strategy at the local level rests primarily with: (select one)

- 1. The Chairman of the Board of Aldermen/Board of Supervisors
- 2. The Chamber of Commerce
- 3. The city administrative officer or manager/county administrator
- 4. The mayor
- 5. Local government officials in cooperation with local businessmen, the Chamber, and the local Economic Development Council.

60. Rank order from highest to lowest the priority you think the State ought to give to each of the items below to improve overall economic development in the State. [1 is the highest priority; 5 is the lowest priority.]

- ___ 1. More funding for higher education
- ___ 2. More funding for elementary and secondary education
- ___ 3. Accelerated four laning of State highways and improved bridges
- ___ 4. Research and advertisement to increase tourism
- ___ 5. More adequate and affordable housing

DEMOGRAPHIC AND GENERAL DATA

Directions: Please check or complete the item or category of items that most accurately describes you or your city.

Name of City _____ Name of County _____
(Optional) (Optional)

1. What is your current position:

City

1. Mayor
2. Alderman/Councilman
3. Other (Please specify) _____

County

1. County Supervisor
2. Chancery Clerk
3. Other (Please specify) _____

2. Your total years in public service as a government official:

1. Less than 1 year
2. 1 to 4 years
3. 5 or more but less than 10
4. 10 years or more

3. What was your previous government or private-sector service prior to being elected or appointed to your current position?
1. An elected county official
 2. An appointed county official
 3. An elected city official
 4. An appointed city official
 5. An appointed state official
 6. An elected state official
 7. I worked in the private sector
 8. I did not work outside the home (housewife or husband, was student, or in military service)
 9. Other (Please specify): _____
4. If you worked outside of the home prior to your current job, what was the title of your position?

5. What is your sex?
1. Male
 2. Female
6. Please check the age range in which your age falls.
1. less than 25
 2. 26-30
 3. 31-35
 4. 36-40
 5. 41-45
 6. 46-54
 7. 55-64
 8. 65 or older
7. What is the approximate size of your county using 1990 census estimates? (Answer only if you are a county official.)
1. Less than 500
 2. 500-999
 3. 1,000-4,999
 4. 5,000-9,999
 5. 10,000-40,000
 6. 41,000-50,000
 7. Greater than 50,000

8. What is the approximate size of your city using 1990 census estimates? (Answer only if you are a city official.)
1. Less than 500
 2. 500-999
 3. 1,000-4,999
 4. 5,000-9,999
 5. 10,000-40,000
 6. 41,000-50,000
 7. Greater than 50,000
9. What ethnic group would you identify yourself as being a member?
1. Asian American
 2. White American
 3. Black or African-American
 4. Hispanic American
 5. Native American
 6. Other
10. How would you characterize your current position in city/county government?
1. Part-time
 2. Full-time
 3. Three-fourths time
 4. Other; please explain: _____
11. If your current position is not full-time, what is your normal occupation or profession? (Please specify):
- _____
- _____
12. Please check the name of your congressional district representative.
- ___ Congressman Jamie Whitten
- ___ Congressman Mike Espy
- ___ Congressman Gene Taylor
- ___ Congressman Mike Parker
- ___ Congressman Sonny Montgomery
13. What is your county's/city's current assessed valuation? _____

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Please provide any additional comments you wish to make about the State's role in encouraging economic development in your community.

Thank you for completing the survey and assisting in this important research. Your time and efforts are greatly appreciated. Please return the completed survey in the postage-paid pre-addressed envelope provided.

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