



South Central
WORKFORCE
Investment Board

WIOA Local Plan

2024-2027

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Table of Contents

STRATEGIC ELEMENTS

1. Local Workforce Development Board's Vision
2. Local Workforce Development Board's Goals
3. Local Workforce Development Board's Priorities
4. Local Workforce Development Board's Strategies
5. Economic, Labor Market, and Workforce Analysis Source
6. Economic Analysis
7. Labor Market Analysis
8. Workforce Analysis
9. Workforce Development, Education, and Training Activities Analysis

OPERATIONAL ELEMENTS

Local Structure

10. Local Workforce Development Area (LWDA) Profile
11. Local Facility and Information
12. Local One-Stop Partner/MOU/IFA Information

Integration of One-Stop Service Delivery

13. Local Workforce Development System
14. Accessibility
15. Assessment of One-Stop Program and Partners

Local Administration

16. Chief Elected Official (CEO)
17. CEO Consortium Agreement and Bylaws
18. Local Workforce Development Board (LWDB) Membership
19. LWDB Bylaws

Local Planning & Fiscal Oversight

20. Local Fiscal Agent
21. Competitive Procurement
22. Duplicative Costs and Services
23. Planning Budget Summaries (PBSs)
24. Complaint and Grievance Policy / EEO Policy
25. Planning Process and Partners
26. Performance Negotiations
27. Public Comment
28. Assurances

PROGRAM ELEMENTS

Service Delivery

29. One-Stop Service Delivery

Adult and Dislocated Workers

- 30. Title I - Employment and Training Products and Services
- 31. Unemployment Insurance Claimant Services (UI)
- 32. On-the-Job Training (OJT)
- 33. Credential Attainment / WorkKeys Assessment
- 34. ETT Services / Layoff Aversion

Youth

- 35. Youth Standing Committee Requirements
- 36. YSC Composition / Services / Procurement of Providers / Meeting Schedule & Agenda items
- 37. Youth Activities
- 38. Innovative Service-Delivery Projects for OSY

Agricultural Employment Services (AES)

- 39. Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers / Agricultural Employment Services

Business Services

- 40. Employer Engagement
- 41. Services to Meet the Workforce Needs of Employers
- 42. Economic Development
- 43. Sector Strategy Initiative / Career Pathways
- 44. Business Services Plan

Innovative Service Delivery Strategies

- 45. Missouri Re-entry Process / Ex-offender Initiative
- 46. Work-based Learning / Transitional Jobs
- 47. Trade Adjustment Assistance
- 48. Missouri Community Colleges
- 49. Incumbent Worker Policy

Strategies for Faith-based and Community-based Organizations

- 50. Faith-based Strategies

REGIONAL PLANS

Regional Planning Guidance

- 51. Regional Plans

POLICIES

Local Policies and Requirements

1. Accommodation Policy
2. Confidentiality Policy
3. Customized Training Policy (N/A)
4. Facilities
5. Cost Allocation Policy
6. Cost Accounting Policy
7. Financial Reporting/Cash Draw Request Deadlines
8. Fraud/Waste Abuse, and Criminal Activity Policy
9. Internal Accounting Policy
10. Local Bonding Policy
11. Payments to Employers Policy
12. Follow-Up Policy – Adults & Dislocated Workers
13. Follow-Up Policy – Youth
14. Harassment and Discrimination Policy
15. Nondiscrimination Policy
16. On-the-Job Training Policy (including employer disputes, nepotism, and modifications)
17. Personnel Policies (leave, travel, facilities closing)
18. Records Policy (access, Sunshine, retention, and destruction)
19. Transitional Jobs Policy
20. Work Experience Policy – Adult
21. Work Experience Policy – Youth
22. Apprenticeship Policy
- 23. Selective Service Policy**

REQUIRED ATTACHMENTS

1. List of Comprehensive, Affiliate, Specialized and Other Centers and One Stop Operators
2. Memorandum of Understanding with IFA and Cost Sharing Budgets with All Partner Signatures
3. Chief Elected Officials Consortium Agreement (optional), membership and bylaws
4. Local Workforce Development Board Membership List, Standing Committees, & Certification Letter
5. Local Workforce Development Board By-Laws and Attestation Form -
6. Local Fiscal Agent
7. Planning Budget Summaries (PBS)
8. Conflict of Interest Policy – Local Workforce Development Board, Staff, and Contracted Staff
9. Financial Procurement Policy/Financial Policy
10. Complaints and Grievance Policy – Nondiscrimination, Programmatic
11. Sub-state Monitoring Plan and Policy
12. Supportive Services Policy – General, Needs Related Payments Policy for ADLT and DW
13. Adult Priority of Service
14. Expenditure Rates and Training Criteria Policy
15. Training Criteria Policy (AD & DW)
16. Youth Barriers Eligibility Policy – OSY ISY additional assistance barrier
17. Youth Incentive Payment Policy
18. Veterans Priority of Service Policy
19. Basic Skills Assessments (Testing) Policy
20. Individual Training Account (ITA) Policy
21. Eligibility Policy (Individual Career Services)
22. Accessibility Policy – Persons with Disabilities
23. Accessibility Policy - Persons with Limited English Proficiency
24. Co-enrollment Policy)
25. Adult Education and Literacy Policy (AEL Policy)
26. VR/RSB Coordination Policy
27. Youth Apprenticeships Policy
28. ETPL Policy
29. Employment Transition Team Policy
30. Business Services Plan and Policy
31. MOU (Cooperative Agreement) between the Community College & LWDB
32. Incumbent Worker Policy
33. Regional Plans (St. Louis / KC)
34. Accommodation Policy
35. Confidentiality Policy
36. Customized Training Policy (N/A)
37. Facilities
38. Cost Allocation Policy
39. Cost Accounting Policy
40. Financial Reporting/Cash Draw Request Deadlines
41. Fraud/Waste Abuse, and Criminal Activity Policy
42. Internal Accounting Policy

43. Local Bonding Policy
44. Payments to Employers Policy
45. Follow-Up Policy – Adults & Dislocated Workers
46. Follow-Up Policy – Youth
47. Harassment and Discrimination Policy
48. Nondiscrimination Policy
49. On-the-Job Training Policy (including employer disputes, nepotism, and modifications)
50. Personnel Policies (leave, travel, facilities closing)
51. Records Policy (access, Sunshine, retention, and destruction)
52. Transitional Jobs Policy
53. Work Experience Policy – Adult
54. Work Experience Policy – Youth
55. Apprenticeship Policy
56. Selective Service Policy
57. Statement of Assurances – Form Provided

Local Workforce Development Board: South Central Workforce Investment Board

STRATEGIC ELEMENTS

1. Local Workforce Development Board's Vision

State the Board's vision for the Local Workforce Development Area (LWDA) and how this vision meets, interprets, and furthers the Governor's vision in the current WIOA Missouri Combined State Plan.

The vision of the South Central Workforce Investment Board is "To improve the quality of life throughout our communities by providing job seekers with marketable skills to enter the workforce and to help businesses find workers with the skills they need to be successful."

The board will support a system that will provide employers with a skilled workforce and will provide job seekers with access to in-demand jobs with increased earnings potential. The Workforce Investment Board will be a leader in community collaboration to promote a dynamic, high skill/high wage economy in South Central Missouri through development of a productive workforce and valued employers.

2. Local Workforce Development Board's Goals

Provide the Board's goals for engaging employers and preparing an educated and skilled workforce (including youth and individuals with barriers to employment). Include goals relating to the performance-accountability measures based on primary indicators of performance to support regional economic growth and economic self-sufficiency.

Goals of the South Central Region include:

- A strong linkage to economic development projects in all twelve counties.
- Open and ongoing communication with businesses to ensure their needs are met.
- Services that effectively and efficiently connect our jobseekers to in demand jobs.
- Engaging more employers in OJT and Apprenticeship programs which lead to higher paying jobs.

Economic growth and self-sufficiency are supported by connecting job seekers to in-demand occupations that provide a sustainable wage. By engaging more employees in OJT and Apprenticeship programs, they can expect to receive a higher wage which leads them one step closer to self-sufficiency.

3. Local Workforce Development Board's Priorities

Identify the workforce development needs of businesses, jobseekers, and workers in the LWDA, and how those needs are determined.

Businesses in the South Central Region are still in need of dependable, skilled labor to fill the gaps of our aging workforce. Paid work experience is offered to help employers and creates an opportunity for less skilled/entry level individuals to enter the workforce. On-Job-Training (OJT) is an excellent opportunity to hire new employees, and our Employment Specialists work closely with each local employer.

The working relationships that exist in our region continue to grow and strengthen our ability to serve the

needs of employers and workers. Our region will continue to have honest and timely conversations with our partners in an effort to streamline services, braid funding and eliminate barriers. A seamless delivery of services will allow for continual improvement to the current system.

Business needs are determined through:

- Building strong, lasting relationships with employers using open communication (including private sector board members)
- Attending local Chamber of Commerce meetings and events
- Labor market information and surveys
- Attending business partner meetings through NEXUS

Job seekers and workers in the South Central Region continue to desire employment opportunities that lead to self-sufficiency and a better quality of life. All customers are offered a basic assessment to determine their existing skill level and how to define steps to reach their educational/career goals. Services are provided in a hybrid approach of both virtual and in-person options to maximize the number of individuals served.

4. Local Workforce Development Board's Strategies

Describe the Board's strategies and goals for operation, innovation and continual improvement based on meeting requirements for the needs of businesses, job seekers and workers.

a. Career Pathways

A Career Pathway allows those participants that we serve in the South Central Region to build an intentional and strategic plan to obtain employment and careers that will lead to self-sufficiency through education and training services provided by our programs. The career path and services are specific to each individual based on their career pathway, assessment, needs, and identified barriers. Whether the participant has a plan for further education or training, it is crucial for every enrolled participant to develop a career pathway. The completed plan defines a timeline to achieve the opportunities provided by the program including attaining credentials, finding employment, increasing wages, and advancing in career opportunities.

Labor market information is an essential tool for all job seekers and workers. Using this information will help steer the career pathways initiative to ensure that participants are aware of all job opportunities in the South Central Region. The sector strategies development in the South Central Region is also important in that it will assist employers by providing qualified job seekers to those careers. Along with occupations that fall into the South Central Regions Sector Strategies, participants should also be informed of high-wage, high-growth, and in-demand job opportunities that are available in other regions and areas. LMI provides a pathway to employment that leads to self-sufficiency which is the key to success for the program, job seeker, and the employer.

b. Employer Engagement

A crucial element in our region's Workforce Development efforts is realizing the diversity of our employers. Our private sector board members bring a wealth of knowledge and valuable input in the fields of advanced manufacturing, transportation, health care, clean energy and restaurant management to name a few. While individual barriers to employment must be addressed, the needs of local employers are just as important. The South Central Region focuses on getting the participants prepared and qualified for the jobs that are available in our area, which ensures we are addressing the needs of the local employers. Both employer and job seeker desires are met by

spending the necessary time up front to make the best possible placements. Reviewing employer applications and conducting a tour of the business are insightful steps and lead to a better understanding of what the employer expects from their employees.

Employer engagement is vital to the success of the WIOA programs. We work with the Office of Workforce Rapid Response Team, Economic Development, attend employer town hall meetings, area Chamber of Commerce meetings, and various community and service organizations. These are just a few of the ways that we can reach out to employers and explain the employer services that South Central Region is able to provide in bridging the gap between the needs of the job seekers and the needs of the employers.

c. Business Needs Assessment

The South Central Region believes the needs of local employers are the driving force for the workforce system. Business needs are determined by seeking input from local employers through a variety of avenues. The goal is to work together with employers to find easily attainable employment solutions that last for both the job seeker and the employer. We must keep an eye on the challenges that our employers are currently facing. To be able to understand the needs of an employer we utilize employer surveys, work with area Chambers of Commerce, regional planning organizations, Economic Development, and other community agencies.

d. Alignment and Coordination of Core Program Services

The South Central Region has two Comprehensive (full service) Missouri Job Centers (CJC) also known as One-Stop centers. Comprehensive Job Centers are located in West Plains and Poplar Bluff. Both Missouri Job Centers have been certified by the Office of Workforce Development. Centers are tasked with aligning services by developing outreach for jobseekers and businesses, customer service, assessment, and supportive services. The South Central Region continues to work at developing and maintaining meaningful inter-agency relationships to continue working as the hub for all services and making referrals and being the connection between job seekers and employers. Interagency alignment and coordination will be an on-going process. Through weekly staff meetings/training, the One-Stop staff continue to become more knowledgeable of the services available through core and mandated partners. This will enable all staff to give customers the information they need to improve their choices.

Workers are included in the section regarding job seekers and businesses. Partners ensure that services are aligned by making every effort to eliminate duplication of services and provide seamless delivery since customers are often touched by more than one program. Through open communication, participating in negotiations of IFAs and review of Memorandums of Understandings (MOUs), we realize the value of bringing all partners to the table for their valuable input.

The following partners used to align and coordinate with their core programs include:

- WIOA Title I Adult & Dislocated Worker
- WIOA Title I Youth
- WIOA Title I Job Corps
- WIOA Migrant/Seasonal Farm Workers
- Wagner-Peyser Act
- Adult Education & Literacy
- Vocational Rehabilitation
- Rehabilitation Services for the Blind
- Housing and Urban Development

- Senior Community Service Employment Program
- Carl Perkins Career/Technical
- Veterans Services
- Community Service Block Grant
- Division Employment Security – UI
- Temporary Assistance/Missouri Work Assistance
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
- Housing and Urban Development
- Trade

Memorandums Of Understandings (MOUs) have been reviewed to ensure requirements of core partner based activities and needs are being met.

e. Coordination with Economic Development

The South Central Region has a board member from South Central Ozarks Council of Governments who fills the Economic Development board seat. This involvement allows us to be kept up-to-date on economic development within our region with Economic Developers at the table. We are also apprised of anything that might influence the workforce development in the South Central Region. The Real-Time Labor Market Analysis provides a snapshot of current labor demand that can be helpful to current job seekers interested in who is hiring and for what occupations. MERIC has developed products, like the Real Time Labor Market Summary. The Labor Market Summary provides both a regional and statewide snapshot of data found in job ads and is published every other month. MERIC and the Office of Workforce Development (OWD) will continue to explore how this data can inform workforce and economic development efforts to meet the needs of businesses around the state.

Connections with economic development are strengthened by attending the Foothills Regional Planning Commission and South Central Council of Government meetings. Board staff have a good working relationship with the local Project Manager and Senior Economic Development Specialist from the Department of Economic Development. Information is gathered and shared with the full WIB board. Board staff also participate in Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDs). This planning aids in defining the long term needs of the region.

f. Outreach to Job seekers and Businesses (The LWDB should explain its outreach plan to attract WIOA eligible individuals. Please highlight any efforts to reach veterans, spouses of veterans, and displaced homemakers.)

Who we are? What we do? Why it matters? Helping Jobseekers and Businesses understand these three basis questions will enable us to be more effective in our outreach. As a WDB we should be able to answer these three questions for both job seekers and businesses in a way that attracts, entices, and excites them to want to learn more about the services that are available to them. Major factors in meeting the needs of both job seekers and employers are accomplished by using education and agency partnerships. They are a significant part of helping to answer Who we are? What we do? Why it matters?

Job seekers – The South Central Region’s Job Centers uses the social media platform Facebook to reach

out to job seekers. They offer an array of services aimed at making every job seeker a better job candidate. Through the website www.jobs.mo.gov, job seekers can have access to regional, state, and national job openings. Through labor market information, career exploration activities, job seeking assistance, resume preparation assistance, assessments, skills certifications such as the National Career Readiness Certificate, and workshops, we can assist job seekers in the preparation of applying for jobs that match with their knowledge, skills, and abilities. We offer access to short and long term skill-building training and employment services, supportive services information, job specific training and certifications, placement assistance, opportunities for on-the-job training, and tuition assistance to build on the knowledge, skills, and abilities that a job seeker will need for their chosen career path. Methods of referral and opportunities for co-enrollment with other workforce partners will continue to be refined. Collaborating with partner agencies to develop a triage approach to serving customers will increase awareness of area resources and avoid duplication of services.

Businesses – Outreach through the WDB and Job Center involvement with various business organizations and employer organizations enable us to tell the Who we are? What we do? Why it matters? The board continues to build strong partnerships with our two community colleges and with our many vocational technical schools. Their expertise is needed to develop curriculum to educate our workforce. Working together with both education and agency partners is not only the best use of the funding, but also our best option for meeting the needs of both job seekers and employers.

The South Central Region works closely with Veteran Services and Veteran Support Organizations to assist in the outreach and recruitment of qualified and eligible veterans and their spouses. We also have Missouri Heroes Connect funding available to eligible veterans.

g. Access—Improvements to Physical and Programmatic Accessibility

The South Central Region has two Comprehensive Missouri Job Centers (CJC) located in West Plains (Howell County) and Poplar Bluff (Butler County). Both locations include WIOA Adult, WIOA DW, SkillUp, Re-Employment Services, Wagner/Peyser, Trade, WIOA and Youth. In addition to the two counties with the Comprehensive Job Centers, WIOA services are available virtually in ten other counties throughout the South Central Region (Carter, Douglas, Oregon, Ozark, Reynolds, Ripley, Shannon, Texas, Wayne and Wright Counties). Satellite locations are located in Carter, Ripley and Wright counties.

The comprehensive centers offer customer services including computer access, program information, program referrals, assessment services, and testing services. Local community partnership coordination exists in each rural area. We continue outreach efforts to provide additional access points when possible. We must also keep a focus on the budget and participant cost expenditure percentage rates so that we meet the targeted percentages. Information for job seekers is also distributed to partner agencies, food pantries, civic organizations, libraries, and other public facilities.

Improvements to Physical and Programmatic Access:

- Facilities are checked for ADA compliance as part of periodic Local Equal Opportunity monitoring, using the ADA Self-Assessment Tool, provided by OWD in the local monitoring tool.
- Customers are provided reasonable accommodations upon request at the Job Centers. Job Center Staff members have been instructed to provide accommodations immediately for anything not resulting in a cost and that customers do not have to use specific phrases like “reasonable accommodation” or provide medical documentation to be granted an accommodation.

- Training is provided to all staff members beginning on their first day of employment and continuing throughout employment.
- Assistive technology is available at both full service job centers in the region. All staff complete OWD EO and assistive technology training. Staff are also encouraged to refer customers to the Missouri Assistive Technology free Loan Program.
- Sign language interpretation service is available for persons with hearing loss.
- Telephone language interpretation service is available to customers with limited English proficiency.
- Written translations for vital information are provided for customers with limited English proficiency when appropriate.

h. Customer Service Training

Staff receive customer service training from the Office of Workforce Development Retention Specialist in addition to:

- Upon being hired, all staff are trained using the required OWD Mandatory Trainings, Complaint Training, Equal Opportunity Orientation, Nondiscrimination and Equal Opportunity Policy, Complaint and Grievance Policy, Equal Opportunity Notice and Complaint Procedure, Accommodation Policy and Request Form, and any other newly implemented new hire training resources. As part of the new hire training, staff are also trained in serving customers with accommodations and assistive technology. Employees receive training from the OWD Regional Retention Specialist.
- Program training begins on the first day of employment and continues throughout employment via meetings, ongoing trainings, and updates.
- Staff are provided access to all OWD Issuances and Local Policy Issuances through the website links and New Hire Orientation materials.
- Staff are provided with an Equal Opportunity Desk Aid for quick reference on accommodations, assistive technology and serving customers with limited English proficiency.
- Staff have been provided the jobs.mo.gov/dwdeo link for all other Equal Opportunity Related needs and resources.
- Staff have been provided the link for www.scwib.org which ~~has all our~~ includes all Equal Opportunity related policies and notices for easy and unlimited access to this information.

i. Assessment

All customers who visit a Missouri Job Center in the South Central region are given an assessment to immediately engage the customer into job center activities. This assessment will identify skill levels, aptitudes, abilities, skill gaps, barriers to employment and supportive service needs. Assessments allow assistance with defining goals and developing next steps. Specialized assessments are offered as well to evaluate interests, personality traits, and diagnostic testing.

Specialized assessment tools include but are not limited to: O*Net, Missouri Connections, Coursera, Talify, TABE, Kahn, and WorkKeys. Assessments allow the customer to self-assess basic academic skills, identify high demand occupations and determine if their interest and qualifications match job requirements or if additional training is needed. Results obtained from these assessments are utilized by the customer to make informed choices in their attempts to connect to employment offering the best wages available at their current skill capacity. The information gained through assessments will be used with sector strategy data and/or Labor Market Information to help customers make informed choices regarding their training and careers and to develop their strategic employment plan.

j. Supportive Services

WIOA defines Supportive Services as those services necessary to enable an individual to participate in activities authorized under WIOA. Local Supportive Service policies have been developed and are included within the local plan. The region's Supportive Service policy provides assistance to WIOA eligible adults, dislocated workers, and youth so they may participate in Title I activities or employment/training activities through other programs when we are braiding funds. Funds may be provided to assist with a wide range of needs, including transportation, housing, childcare, tools, uniforms, and daily living expenses. All other sources of funding must be sought before using WIOA supportive services funds. Referrals are made to partner agencies, such as the Salvation Army, food pantries, faith-based partners, MERS Goodwill, and other area agencies.

k. Outcome measures assessment, monitoring and management

The WIB has charged the Compliance Manager and Fiscal Officer to conduct monitoring as these staff members are not authorized to operate programs. This ensures an adequate firewall between providing services and overseeing the provision of those services from a monitoring standpoint. Compliance and Fiscal Staff with the WIB do not have input on program processes, daily program decisions, or program approvals. They are not involved in the daily interactions of program staff and program operations. Compliance and Fiscal Monitoring includes but is not limited to fiscal expenditures, WIOA program eligibility and compliance, Federal/State/ Local policy adherence, and data system compliance. The OWD requires annual monitoring on a statistically valid sample size dependent on the number of enrollments or exits WDB. Compliance staff will monitor a percentage of new enrollments per program for each contract year. If 100% of the files are not monitored, a random sampling technique will be used to identify the selection of files to be monitored. South Central Region has a goal to monitor 100% of all enrollments in every program we operate. This ensures all files are monitored for eligibility documentation and access to services.

OWD requires an annual monitoring report presented to the CLEO and board members regarding compliance and performance reviews. To fulfill this annual requirement, the WDB Compliance staff present a Sub-State Monitoring Report to the full board during the quarterly board meeting following the completion of the Sub-State Monitoring. This annual report includes Sub-State Monitoring results, compliance concerns, performance reviews, adequacy of assessments, planning of activities and services, coordination with One-Stop Delivery System partners, and customer outcomes. If a problem is discovered during Sub-State or any other on-going monitoring, the WDB adheres to the WIOA regulations and requires that these problems be resolved by prompt and appropriate corrective action.

WDB fiscal staff monitors and tracks youth expenditures to ensure they are in line with WIOA regulations.

Data Validation Monitoring is conducted every quarter. This mandated monitoring will allow the South Central Region to keep a focus on staff input in the Case Management System and promptly correct any staff errors resulting in a negative outcome performance measure. Through the use of the MoPerforms Rosters, the South Central Region is able to look at upcoming performance outcomes and evaluate participant accounts for a participant being negative or positive in any performance measure. Using the tools of MoJobs reports and MoPerforms, we are able to monitor and track performance to work at reaching our region's negotiated performance levels.

5. Economic, Labor Market, and Workforce Analysis Source

Please indicate the source of the information. If using Missouri Economic Research and Information Center (MERIC) data, please indicate the source is MERIC. If using another resource, please reference the source. MERIC regional representatives can be found online at: <https://meric.mo.gov/about-us>

6. Economic Analysis

Describe the LWDA’s current economic condition, including the following information by county (if your LWDA includes more than one county) and the overall region:

- a. Average personal income level
- b. Number and percent of working-age population living at or below poverty level:

Personal Income

In 2023, per capita income in all counties of the South Central Region was below the statewide average of \$64,920. The county with the highest per capita income in the region was Carter County (\$50,444) and the county with the lowest per capita income was Texas County (\$39,031).

In 2024, personal income for the US and Missouri increased 4.6 percent and 5.6 percent respectively when compared to 2023.

In 2023, statewide poverty rate of working age persons, or those 18-64 years, was 12.1 percent. The poverty rate in each county in the South Central Region was above the state average. Counties with the highest poverty rate in the region were Wayne (23.9%) and Ripley (22.0%). Counties with the lowest poverty rate in the region were Carter (15.5%) and Douglas (15.7%).

Name	2023 Per Capita Personal Income	Working Age (18-64) Population living below poverty level	
		Number	Percentage
Missouri	\$64,920	435,313	12.1%
Butler	\$46,048	4,762	19.9%
Carter	\$50,444	454	15.5%
Douglas	\$39,205	965	15.7%
Howell	\$44,649	4,751	21.4%
Oregon	\$47,150	821	17.7%
Ozark	\$43,767	1,003	21.9%
Reynolds	\$43,956	594	17.2%
Ripley	\$48,138	1,327	22.0%
Shannon	\$43,901	616	15.8%
Texas	\$39,031	2,392	18.0%
Wayne	\$46,365	1,424	23.9%
Wright	\$40,817	1,598	15.9%

Sources:

Per Capita Personal Income - U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2023
Poverty Level - American Community Survey-5 Year data (2019-2023)

Number and percent of working age population determined to have a barrier to employment;

Barriers to employment can include homelessness, disability status, lower education levels, and limited proficiency with the English language. In 2023, in all counties in this region, the percentage of the working age population (18-64 years old) with disabilities was above the state average of 12.6 percent. However, the percentage of the working age population that speak a language other than English language was lower than the state average (7.4%) in all counties.

In Missouri, 8.5 percent of the population 25 years or up did not have a high school diploma in 2023. All counties in the region had higher percentage of this population group without a high school diploma than the state average. Reynolds County had the highest percentage of the population 25 years and up without a high school diploma at 19.4 percent whereas Oregon County had the lowest percentage of this population without a high school diploma at 13.1 percent.

Barriers To Employment									
Area	Total Population	Total Population 18-64	% of 18-64 in Population	25 years or up with less than high school diploma	% of 25 years or up without high school diploma	Total Population 18-64 with a disability	% of Population 18-64 with a disability	Total Population 18-64 who speak language other than English	% of Population 18-64 who speak language other than English
Missouri	6,168,181	3,702,481	60.0%	354,732	8.5%	457,446	12.6%	274,910	7.4%
Butler	42,166	24,236	57.5%	4,500	15.5%	5,391	22.5%	658	2.7%
Carter	5,269	2,932	55.6%	528	14.8%	617	21.0%	55	1.9%
Douglas	11,850	6,194	52.3%	1,387	16.4%	1,134	18.4%	57	0.9%
Howell	40,168	22,417	55.8%	3,846	14.1%	4,400	19.7%	849	3.8%
Oregon	8,704	4,705	54.1%	801	13.1%	759	16.3%	50	1.1%
Ozark	8,773	4,589	52.3%	1,108	16.7%	992	21.6%	65	1.4%
Reynolds	6,058	3,489	57.6%	872	19.4%	757	22.0%	18	0.5%
Ripley	10,755	6,067	56.4%	1,226	16.3%	1,341	22.2%	102	1.7%
Shannon	7,137	3,940	55.2%	689	13.4%	812	20.8%	53	1.3%
Texas	24,956	14,354	57.5%	2,546	14.4%	3,441	26.0%	378	2.6%
Wayne	10,942	6,065	55.4%	1,549	19.3%	1,519	25.4%	44	0.7%
Wright	18,722	10,121	54.1%	2,134	17.2%	2,141	21.3%	407	4.0%

Source: American Community Survey-5 Year data (2019-2023)

a. Employment rates for the last 5 years;

The unemployment rate in the South Central Region is declining after peaking in 2020. The unemployment rate for 2024 was above the state average of 3.7 percent for all counties in the region. The highest unemployment rate was in Ozark County (6.2%) and the lowest in Douglas County (4.0%).

Unemployment Rate by County South Central Region					
Year	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
US	8.1%	5.3%	3.6%	3.6%	4.0%
Missouri	6.1%	4.2%	2.6%	3.1%	3.7%
Butler	6.6%	4.7%	3.2%	4.6%	4.9%
Carter	6.9%	5.2%	3.8%	4.4%	4.8%
Douglas	8.1%	4.1%	2.8%	3.3%	4.0%
Howell	6.6%	4.5%	3.0%	3.7%	4.4%
Oregon	7.4%	5.3%	3.3%	3.6%	4.2%
Ozark	7.6%	5.4%	4.1%	5.0%	6.2%
Reynolds	6.1%	4.2%	3.2%	3.6%	4.4%
Ripley	8.0%	5.1%	3.1%	4.0%	4.4%
Shannon	7.9%	5.7%	4.0%	4.8%	5.1%
Texas	5.3%	4.0%	2.8%	3.5%	4.2%
Wayne	7.6%	5.7%	4.3%	5.2%	5.5%
Wright	7.2%	4.0%	3.0%	3.7%	4.7%

Source: Local Area Unemployment Statistics, Not Seasonally Adjusted

b. Major layoff events over the past 3 years and any anticipated layoffs; and

2023 – Briggs & Stratton – Poplar Bluff – 130 workers; Ozarks Health Care – West Plains – 130 workers

2024 - Starting USA – Poplar Bluff – Plant Closure; Revere Plastic – Poplar Bluff – Plant Closure

2025 - Arlee Home Fashions - West Plains – Plant Closure for 35 employees; Ozark Action Inc. – Layoff

c. Any other factors that may affect local/regional economic conditions.

Although the South Central Region has seen recent layoffs in the manufacturing and health care industry it continues to be a strong sector. The diversification of manufacturing continues to expand and local training has been developed to support this growth. There has been a recent increase in the number of small and mid-sized manufacturing companies in the region as well as diversification within the larger more traditional companies.

South Central Region being a rural area is a big factor affecting our economic condition. Various issues that arise out of this is not only finding childcare that is reasonable and affordable but having childcare available for those parents who work 2nd and 3rd shifts. In the most rural of our areas, people travel several miles or even to other counties to find adequate employment to support their family.

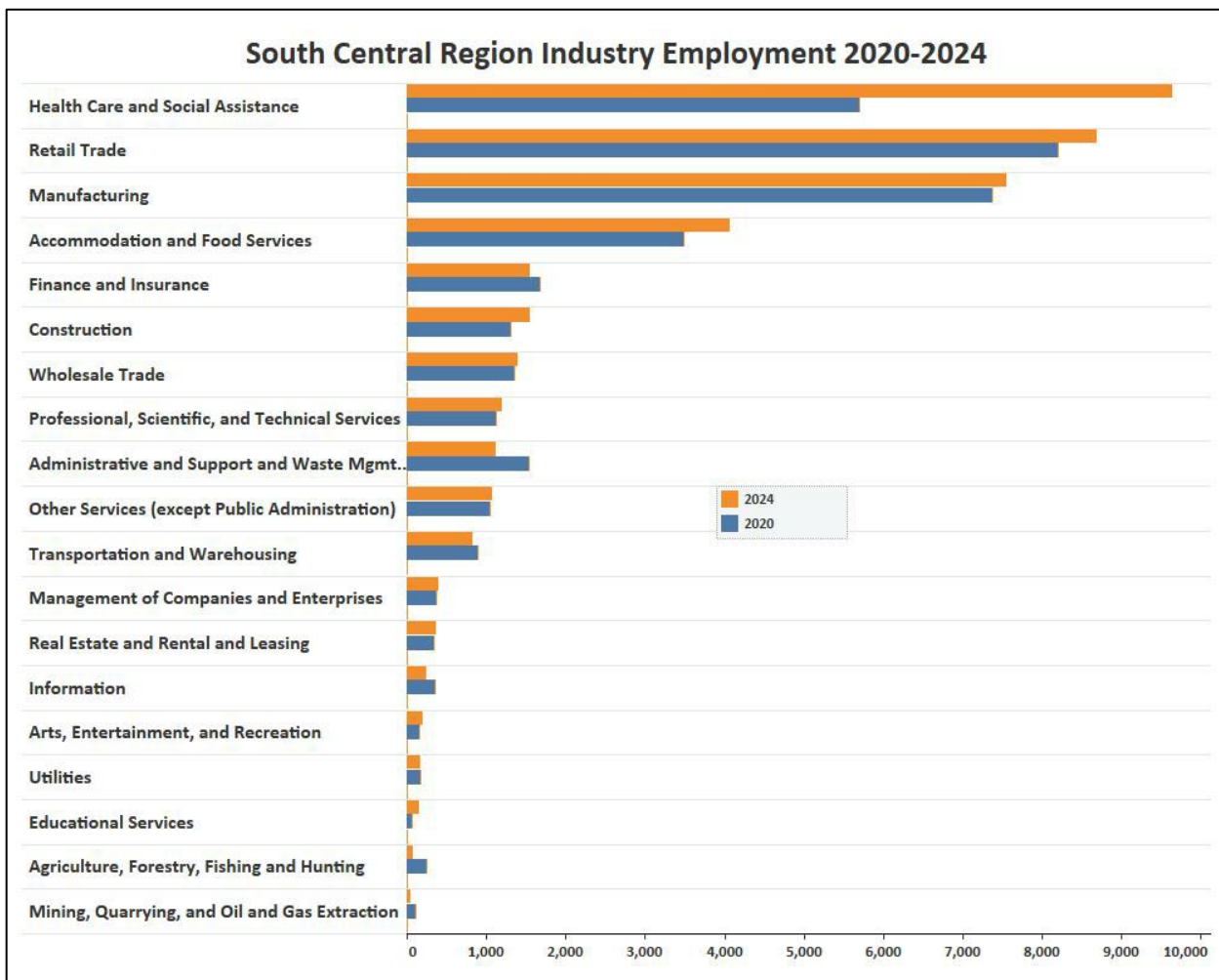
7. Labor Market Analysis

a. Existing Demand Industry Sectors and Occupations

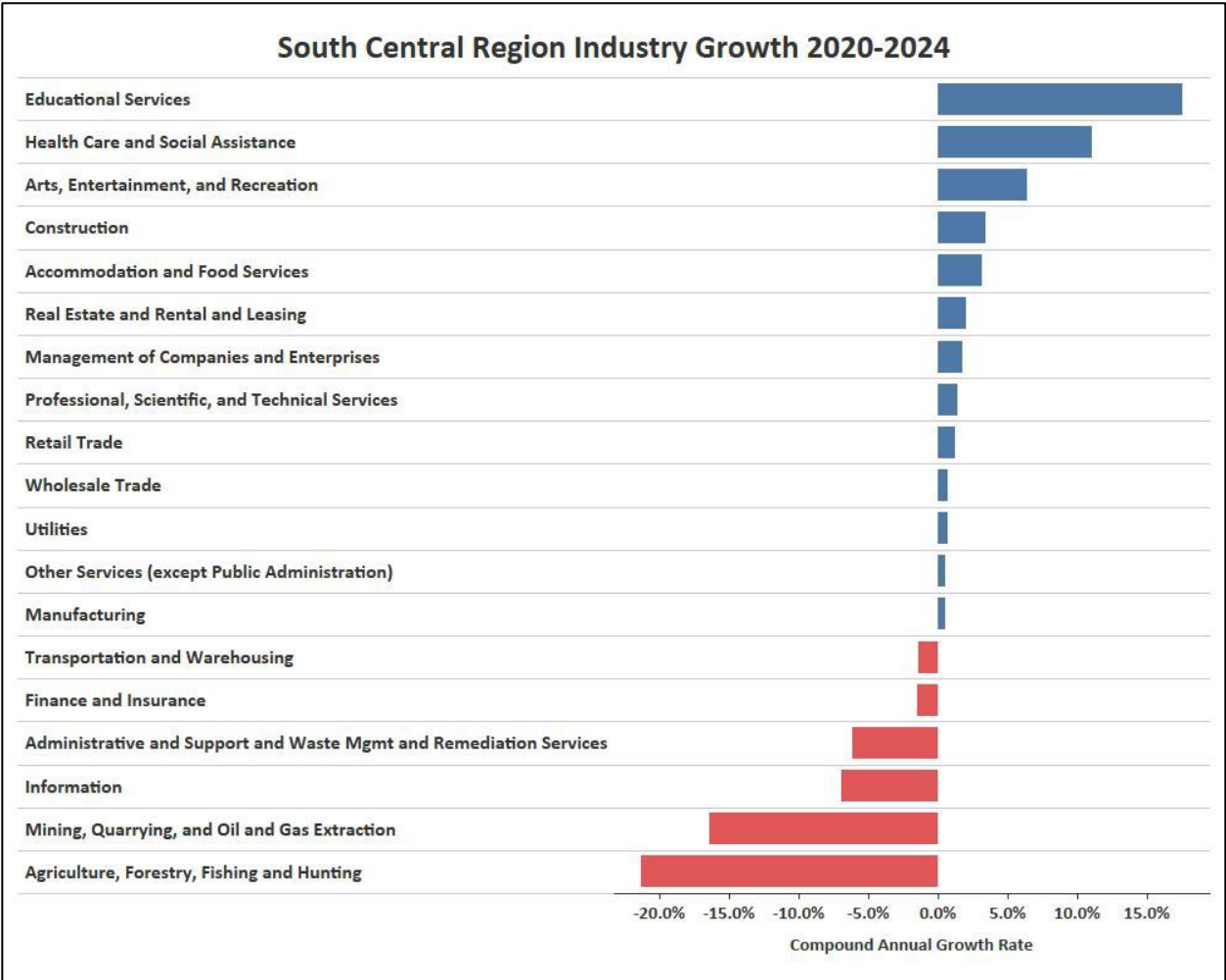
Provide an analysis of the industries and occupations for which there is existing demand.

Current Industry Demand

Over time, several of the South Central Region’s industries have grown steadily. The South Central Region averaged over 60,500 jobs in 2024. Employment in the region increased by 0.2 percent from 2023. Missouri employment increased by 0.8 percent in 2024. From 2020 to 2024, the South Central Region averaged a 1.1 percent annual growth rate for an overall gain 5.8 percent. During that same period (2020-2024) Missouri’s compound annual employment gain was 1.6 percent for an overall gain of 8.3 percent. Several industry groups have increased employment and experienced a positive growth rate. Those industries included *Educational Services* (83 employment increase at 17.5% compound annual growth rate); *Health Care and Social Assistance* (3,934 at 11.1%); *Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation* (55 at 6.4%); *Construction* (239 at 3.4%); and *Accommodation and Food Services* (578 at 3.1%).



Source: Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW), annual averages, private ownership



Source: Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW), annual averages, private ownership

Location Quotient

Location Quotient (LQ) describes the concentration of an industry in a geographic region in relation to the nation. The national average is 1.0. Industries with an LQ higher than 1.0 indicate an above average concentration of that industry in the area.

The South Central Region had five industries in 2024 with LQs higher than 2.0: *Wood Product Manufacturing* (8.8); *Gasoline Stations and Fuel Dealers* (3.6); *Machinery Manufacturing* (2.2); *Social Assistance* (2.2); and *Forestry and Logging* (2.1). Other industries with high LQs were *Nursing and Residential Care Facilities* (1.8); *Animal Production and Aquaculture* (1.8); and *General Merchandise Retailers* (1.8).

2024 South Central Region Location Quotients		
Industry	Employment	Location Quotient
Wood Product Manufacturing	1,417	8.8
Gasoline Stations and Fuel Dealers	1,472	3.6
Machinery Manufacturing	946	2.2
Social Assistance	3,951	2.2
Forestry and Logging	39	2.1
Nursing and Residential Care Facilities	2,361	1.8
Animal Production and Aquaculture	189	1.8
General Merchandise Retailers	2,255	1.8
Building Material and Garden Equipment and Supplies Dealers	909	1.7
Motor Vehicle and Parts Dealers	1,152	1.4
Credit Intermediation and Related Activities	1,215	1.2
Truck Transportation	714	1.2
Repair and Maintenance	645	1.1

Source: Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW), 2024 Annual Averages

Current Occupational Demand

Current occupational demand can be attained through the job ads placed by employers. From October 2024 to September 2025, nearly 9,500 on-line job ads were placed for jobs located in the South Central Region according to Lightcast™.

Job ads were placed for positions at every skill and education level. Missouri uses a system of **Now**, **Next**, and **Later** to categorize jobs according to the typical education and experience required for success on the job. **Now** jobs typically require a high school education or less and short-term training. **Next** jobs typically require moderate to long-term training or experience or education beyond high school. **Later** jobs typically require a bachelor's degree or higher education.

Now occupations with the highest number of job postings included *Home Health and Personal Care Aides; Merchandise Displayers and Window Trimmers; Retail Salespersons; Food Preparation Workers; and Cashiers*. Occupations with the most job postings in the **Next** category were *Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses; Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers; First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers; Health Technologists and Technicians, All Other; and Nursing Assistants*. **Later** occupations with the highest number of job postings were *Registered Nurses; Physical Therapists; Physicians, All Other; Medical and Health Services Managers; and Speech-Language Pathologists*.

Many of the occupations with the most job postings also appeared on the list of jobs with the highest number of projected openings through 2032. The occupations with high numbers of job postings and high numbers of projected annual openings are identified with the star.

Top Job Ads - South Central Region		
SOC Code	Occupation Title	Online Job Postings
NOW - Typically requires high school education or less and short-term training		
31-1120	Home Health and Personal Care Aides	340★
27-1026	Merchandise Displayers and Window Trimmers	270
41-2031	Retail Salespersons	260★
35-2021	Food Preparation Workers	150★
41-2011	Cashiers	100★
43-4051	Customer Service Representatives	90★
37-2011	Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	80★
37-2012	Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	80★
53-7062	Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	80★
35-3023	Fast Food and Counter Workers	70★
NEXT - Typically requires moderate/long-term training or experience or education beyond high school		
29-2061	Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	320★
53-3032	Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	290★
41-1011	First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers	260★
29-2099	Health Technologists and Technicians, All Other	180
31-1131	Nursing Assistants	120
29-2052	Pharmacy Technicians	120★
11-9051	Food Service Managers	100
49-9071	Maintenance and Repair Workers, General	90★
29-2031	Cardiovascular Technologists and Technicians	90
51-9199	Production Workers, All Other	90
LATER - typically requires a bachelor's degree or higher		
29-1141	Registered Nurses	840★
29-1123	Physical Therapists	160
29-1229	Physicians, All Other	120
11-9111	Medical and Health Services Managers	120★
29-1127	Speech-Language Pathologists	90
29-1171	Nurse Practitioners	80★
29-1023	Orthodontists	70
29-1215	Family Medicine Physicians	60
29-1122	Occupational Therapists	60
21-1021	Child, Family, and School Social Workers	60★

Source: Lightcast, online job ads between Oct. 1, 2024 - Sept. 30, 2025

★ = Top Job Openings in Now, Next and Later, 2022-2032 Occupational Projections for South Central Region, MERIC

b. Emerging Demand Industry Sectors and Occupation

Provide an analysis of the industries and occupations for which demand is emerging.

Industry Projections

The long-term industry projections help determine the industries that are expected to add positions within their organizations over time. The latest round of projections is through the ten-year period ending in 2032.

The projections reveal several industries with both high employment numbers and above average growth rates compared to the regional average. The top industries by numeric employment change were *Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services; Social Assistance; General Merchandise Retailers; and Machinery Manufacturing*.

South Central Region Industry Projections 2022-2032					
NAICS	Industry	Employment		2022-2032 Change	
		2022	2032	Numeric	Percent
0	Total All Industries	65,014	66,372	1,358	2.1%
541	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	1,365	1,928	563	41.2%
624	Social Assistance	4,052	4,526	474	11.7%
455	General Merchandise Retailers	2,511	2,862	351	14.0%
333	Machinery Manufacturing	1,895	2,195	300	15.8%
910	Total Federal Government Employment	1,443	1,601	158	10.9%
813	Religious, Grantmaking, Civic, Professional, and Similar Organizations	917	1,036	119	13.0%
485	Transit and Ground Passenger Transportation	209	295	86	41.1%
423	Merchant Wholesalers, Durable Goods	970	1,022	52	5.4%
424	Merchant Wholesalers, Nondurable Goods	684	735	51	7.5%

Source: MERIC 2022-2032 Long Term Projections

Occupational Projections

Job openings occur due to three reasons – **exits**, **transfers** and **growth**. **Exits** occur as people leave the workforce for reasons such as retirement. **Transfers** occur when workers leave one occupation for a different occupation. Occupational **growth** occurs as businesses grow and need more workers to serve their customers.

Emerging occupations can be identified through growth openings. The chart below identifies occupations that have the highest number of growth openings and higher than the average growth rate of 2.09 percent for the South Central Region. The total number of openings indicates the projected number of vacancies that businesses will need to fill annually.

Missouri uses a system of **Now**, **Next**, and **Later** to categorize occupations according to these levels. **Now** jobs typically require a high school education or less and short-term training. **Next** occupations typically require moderate to long-term training or experience or education beyond high school. **Later** occupations typically require a bachelor’s degree or higher.

Growth openings are projected at all education and training levels and are listed by the highest number of growth openings. The highest number of growth openings in **Now** occupations were *Home Health and Personal Care Aides; Stockers and Order Fillers; Retail Salespersons; Shuttle Drivers and Chauffeurs; and Light Truck Drivers*. The largest growth in **Next** occupations was in the occupations of *Cooks, Restaurant; Industrial Machinery Mechanics; Maintenance and Repair Workers, General; Billing and Posting Clerks; and Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses*. **Later** occupations with the highest growth were *Registered Nurses; General and Operations Managers; Nurse Practitioners; Medical and Health Services Managers; and Accountants and Auditors*. These occupations are consistent with the industries identified as emerging industries.

South Central Region Highest Growth Openings 2022-2032						
Occupation	Average Wage	Percent Growth	Annual Openings			Total
			Exits	Transfers	Growth	
NOW - Typically requires short-term on-the-job training or less, little to no experience, and/or a high school diploma						
Home Health and Personal Care Aides	\$32,083	16.7%	331	276	64	671
Stockers and Order Fillers	\$34,319	12.4%	85	134	16	235
Retail Salespersons	\$32,804	6.4%	84	101	8	193
Shuttle Drivers and Chauffeurs	\$31,292	25.6%	13	8	3	24
Light Truck Drivers	\$43,840	8.7%	16	21	3	40
Postal Service Mail Carriers	\$57,506	15.6%	9	8	3	20
Bartenders	\$29,777	9.9%	18	40	3	61
Social and Human Service Assistants	\$35,467	10.9%	14	18	3	35
Driver/Sales Workers	\$43,386	7.0%	13	17	2	32
Construction Laborers	\$54,810	5.3%	17	24	2	43
NEXT - Typically requires non-degree certificate, associate degree, apprenticeship, some experience, or moderate- to long-term training						
Cooks, Restaurant	\$31,095	23.1%	54	64	16	134
Industrial Machinery Mechanics	\$48,522	30.7%	19	22	14	55
Maintenance and Repair Workers, General	\$45,102	3.6%	39	40	3	82
Billing and Posting Clerks	\$39,619	14.6%	12	14	3	29
Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	\$55,163	5.6%	21	18	3	42
Carpenters	\$52,121	7.0%	10	14	2	26
Medical Assistants	\$37,109	10.0%	12	20	2	34
Medical Records Specialists	\$43,943	30.0%	2	2	2	6
Pharmacy Technicians	\$38,936	6.6%	10	12	2	24
Radiologic Technologists and Technicians	\$70,661	13.7%	4	3	2	9
LATER - Typically requires a bachelor's degree or higher						
Registered Nurses	\$77,587	12.0%	51	32	17	100
General and Operations Managers	\$76,415	6.0%	47	102	11	160
Nurse Practitioners	\$115,857	44.0%	5	5	8	18
Medical and Health Services Managers	\$102,753	34.1%	8	11	8	27
Accountants and Auditors	\$67,803	18.4%	11	16	6	33
Veterinarians	\$130,601	59.1%	1	1	3	5
Lawyers	\$93,350	27.7%	3	2	3	8
Financial Managers	\$119,364	19.4%	4	6	3	13
Clinical Laboratory Technologists and Technicians	\$54,897	14.0%	5	4	2	11
Public Relations Specialists	\$60,378	16.1%	3	7	2	12

Source: MERIC 2022-2032 Long-Term Occupational Projections

c. Employers' Employment Needs

Identify the job skills necessary to obtain current and projected employment opportunities. With regard to the industry sectors and occupations, provide an analysis of the employment needs of employers. Describe the knowledge, skills and abilities required, including credentials and licenses.

Real-Time Labor Market Data

Job ads placed by employers offer another source of information on the knowledge, skills, and certifications requested by Missouri's employers. Lightcast™ is a data tool that spiders to over several thousand different web sites with job ads. The information found in the ads are placed in a database that can be queried to gain insight on employer needs.

Following table lists the specialized skills, certifications, and software and programming abilities requested most frequently by employers in job ads.

Generally, in the software and programming category, Microsoft Office and its products such as Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and Access rank at the top of the list across all industries therefore, in this list, these Microsoft products have not been included as those tend to crowd the list by appearing at the top across all the industries. Industry-specific programs identified in the job ads are listed in the table.

Employer Skill Needs - South Central Region			
Industry	Specialized Skills	Qualifications	Software and Programming
Administrative & Support & Waste Management & Remediation	Nursing	Basic Life Support (BLS) Certification	Epic EMR
	Medical Records	Registered Nurse (RN)	Dragon Dictation
	Radiology	Valid Driver's License	Spreadsheets
	Emergency Departments	Advanced Cardiovascular Life Support (ACLS) Certification	MEDITECH EHR
	Treatment Planning	Board Certified/Board Eligible	Software Systems
Accommodation & Food Service	Restaurant Operation	Valid Driver's License	Disassembler
	Restaurant Management	ServSafe Certification	Amazon Web Services
	Food Safety And Sanitation	Food Handler's Card	Applicant Tracking Systems
	Food Services	Commercial Driver's License (CDL)	ArcGIS (GIS Software)
	General Mathematics	Food Safety Certification	Operating Systems
Finance & Insurance	Loans	Valid Driver's License	Operating Systems
	Bank Regulations	Registered Pharmacist (RPh)	Software Systems
	Bank Secrecy Act	Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) Certification	Spreadsheets
	Marketing	Nationwide Mortgage Licensing System (NMLS)	Financial Software
	Information Systems	Property And Casualty Insurance License	Salesforce
Information	Inventory Management	Google Applications	Valid Driver's License
	Merchandising	IBM Basic Assembly Language And Successors	Commercial Driver's License (CDL)
	Continuous Improvement Process	Operating Systems	Chauffeur License
	Forklift Truck	MicroStation (CAD Design Software)	Six Sigma Black Belt
	Selling Techniques	Network Installation Services	Security Clearance

Source: Lightcast, job ads between Oct. 1, 2024 - Sept. 30, 2025

8. Workforce Analysis

Describe the current workforce, including individuals with barriers to employment, as defined in section 3 of WIOA¹. This population must include individuals with disabilities among other groups² in the economic region and across the LWDA.

Population Data

The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that Missouri's population grew to over 6.17 million in 2023, up by 0.2 percent from the previous year. In the South Central Region, the population decreased in all counties except Wright and Howell counties over the 5-year period (2019-2023). The highest population loss was in Ripley County, decreasing by 2,812 residents from 2019 to 2023.

South Central Region Population Change by County				
NAME	1 Year Change 2022-2023		5 Year Change 2019-2023	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Missouri	13,759	0.2%	63,271	1.0%
Butler	(114)	-0.3%	(490)	-1.1%
Carter	(30)	-0.6%	(878)	-14.3%
Douglas	47	0.4%	(1,456)	-10.9%
Howell	208	0.5%	64	0.2%
Oregon	(79)	-0.9%	(1,943)	-18.2%
Ozark	85	1.0%	(434)	-4.7%
Reynolds	(44)	-0.7%	(232)	-3.7%
Ripley	(84)	-0.8%	(2,812)	-20.7%
Shannon	5	0.1%	(1,080)	-13.1%
Texas	128	0.5%	(648)	-2.5%
Wayne	(139)	-1.3%	(2,253)	-17.1%
Wright	247	1.3%	519	2.9%

Source: American Community Survey-5 Year data (2019-2023)

Demographics

In all the region’s counties, a smaller percentage of the population was in the age group of 20-24 years than the state average (6.5%). Most of the region’s counties had somewhat similar percentage of the population in the age group of under 20 years as that of Missouri for this age group (25.1%). The population age 55+ was above the state average of 30.8 percent in all counties in the region. The county with the highest percentage of residents aged 55 and up was Ozark County with 46.2 percent of residents in this age group.

In six of the 12 counties in the South Central Region the male population was less than the female population. Texas County had the highest percent of male population in the region (53.0%) and the lowest female population in the region (47.0%).

Race/Ethnicity statistics were different from the Missouri averages in most of the counties in the region. All counties in the region had a lower percentage of African American population than the state average. Wright County (2.5%) had the highest percentage of Hispanic or Latino population in the region in 2023.

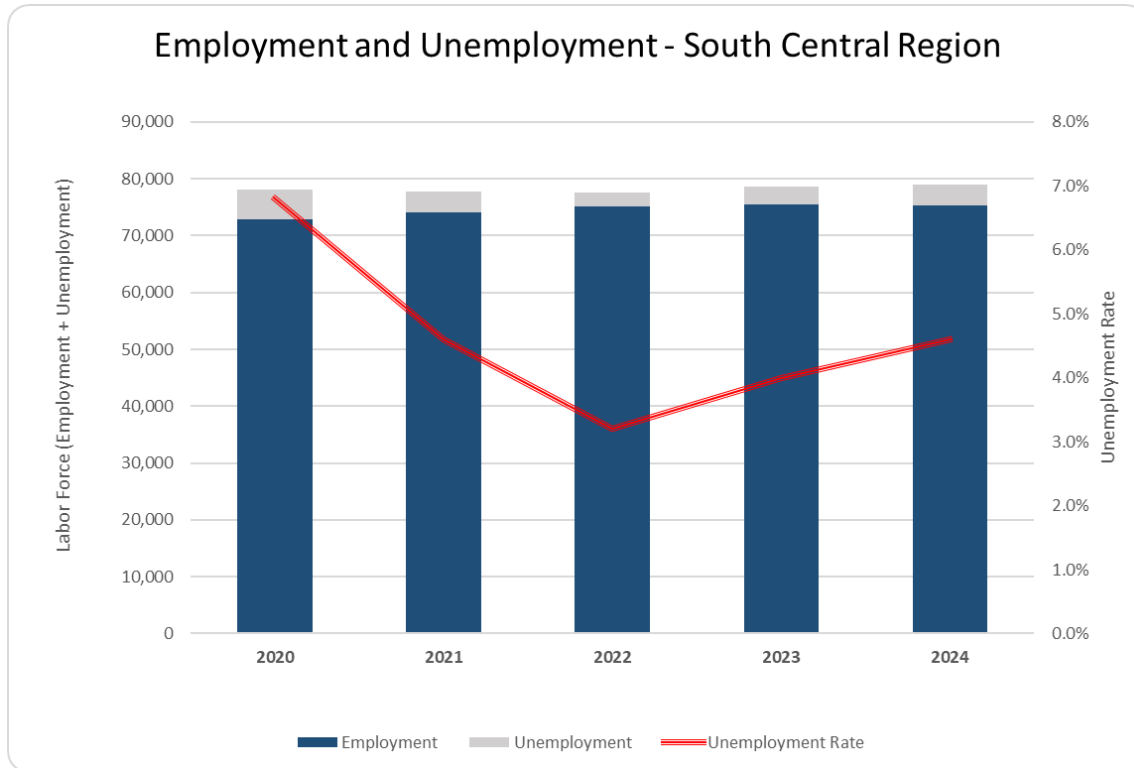
County	Population						Gender		Race/Ethnicity								
	Total	Under 20	20 to 24	25 to 34	35 to 54	55+	Male	Female	White	Black or African American	Asian	American Indian and Alaska Native	Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	Some other race	One Race	Two or more races	Hispanic or Latino
Missouri	6,168,181	25.1%	6.5%	13.2%	24.4%	30.8%	49.3%	50.7%	78.3%	11.1%	2.1%	0.3%	0.2%	1.7%	93.7%	6.3%	5.1%
Butler	42,166	25.8%	5.5%	12.1%	24.2%	32.5%	48.8%	51.2%	87.4%	4.6%	0.7%	0.2%	0.1%	1.2%	94.1%	5.9%	2.4%
Carter	5,269	27.7%	4.6%	9.9%	22.6%	35.1%	48.5%	51.5%	93.0%	0.6%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	93.8%	6.2%	2.0%
Douglas	11,850	24.5%	4.0%	8.9%	22.8%	39.8%	50.7%	49.3%	92.8%	0.9%	0.1%	1.1%	0.0%	0.3%	95.2%	4.8%	0.9%
Howell	40,168	26.4%	5.5%	11.5%	23.6%	33.0%	48.8%	51.2%	93.2%	0.4%	0.5%	0.2%	0.0%	0.9%	95.3%	4.7%	2.4%
Oregon	8,704	24.6%	5.0%	10.5%	21.5%	38.4%	49.6%	50.4%	93.7%	0.1%	0.3%	0.5%	0.0%	0.1%	94.7%	5.3%	1.3%
Ozark	8,773	21.1%	3.1%	7.8%	21.8%	46.2%	50.4%	49.6%	94.2%	0.4%	0.0%	0.3%	0.0%	0.5%	95.4%	4.6%	1.9%
Reynolds	6,058	21.9%	4.1%	9.1%	24.8%	40.1%	52.5%	47.5%	91.8%	1.5%	0.2%	0.2%	0.0%	0.6%	94.3%	5.7%	1.7%
Ripley	10,755	25.5%	4.6%	11.8%	23.3%	34.8%	49.8%	50.2%	93.7%	0.2%	0.5%	0.3%	0.0%	0.6%	95.2%	4.8%	1.2%
Shannon	7,137	23.7%	4.4%	10.2%	22.9%	38.8%	50.9%	49.1%	92.7%	0.2%	0.4%	0.3%	0.0%	0.2%	93.8%	6.2%	0.5%
Texas	24,956	23.5%	5.4%	11.4%	24.2%	35.5%	53.0%	47.0%	90.1%	2.2%	0.3%	0.4%	0.0%	1.0%	94.0%	6.0%	2.4%
Wayne	10,942	22.7%	3.9%	9.1%	23.2%	41.2%	50.4%	49.6%	93.6%	0.4%	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%	1.0%	95.2%	4.8%	1.0%
Wright	18,722	28.6%	5.1%	10.8%	22.3%	33.3%	49.6%	50.4%	93.2%	0.2%	0.4%	0.1%	0.1%	0.8%	94.9%	5.1%	2.5%

Source: American Community Survey-5 Year data (2019-2023)

Employment and Unemployment

The number of South Central Region residents in the labor force is somewhat steady over the past five years from over 78,100 in 2020 to about 79,000 in 2024. The number of persons employed has increased since 2020 from about 72,800 to just over 75,300 in 2024.

The unemployment rate for the region was 6.8 percent in 2020, decreasing to 4.6 percent and 3.2 percent in 2021 and 2022 respectively. The unemployment rate in 2023 and 2024 increased to 4.0 percent and 4.6 percent respectively.



Source: Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS)

Labor Force Participation

The labor force is the sum of employed and unemployed persons. The labor force participation rate is the labor force as a percent of the civilian population 16 years and older. Using American Community Survey, 5-year data through 2023, Missouri’s labor force participation rate was 62.7 percent. In comparison, the rate for the South Central Region was at 51.7 percent. The county with the highest labor force participation rate in the region was Butler County (55.3%) and the lowest was Ozark County (42.9%).

Civilian Labor Force Participation Rate by County			
Region	Population 16 years and over	Civilian Population 16 years and over (In labor force)	Labor Force Participation Rate (Civilian)
Missouri	4,945,676	3,102,218	62.7%
South-Central Total	156,000	80,596	51.7%
Butler	33,537	18,548	55.3%
Carter	4,164	2,201	52.9%
Douglas	9,485	4,820	50.8%
Howell	31,632	17,163	54.3%
Oregon	6,871	3,450	50.2%
Ozark	7,330	3,145	42.9%
Reynolds	5,101	2,709	53.1%
Ripley	8,481	4,410	52.0%
Shannon	5,787	2,704	46.7%
Texas	20,162	9,924	49.2%
Wayne	9,049	4,123	45.6%
Wright	14,401	7,399	51.4%

Source: American Community Survey-5 Year data (2019-2023)

b. Labor Market Trends

Provide an analysis of key labor market trends, including across existing industries and occupations.

In-Demand Occupations

Over the long term, industry needs for certain occupations grow while for others decline. A trained and ready workforce is needed to fill employer demand and offer job seekers bright prospects of employment.

Long-term projections are produced in each state in conjunction with the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Since economies vary throughout the state, projections are also generated for the state and regions and provide insight on the occupations that are growing and declining. The total number of openings account for three different types of vacancies - **exits**, **transfers**, and **growth**. **Exits** occur as individuals leave the workforce for reasons such as retirement. **Transfers** occur as a person leaves an occupation to work in a different occupation. **Growth** simply means that more people are needed to work in the occupation. No matter the reason for the vacancy, skilled workers are needed to fill the job openings.

Missouri adds value to the standard projections template by including the ACT WorkKeys Assessment Levels typically required for success in each of the 800+ occupations. Since most of Missouri’s counties participate in the Certified Work Ready Communities program, the levels help those researching careers find good options based on their personal assessment.

Missouri uses a system of **Now**, **Next**, and **Later** to categorize the occupations according to the training and education typically required for success on the job. **Now** occupations typically require a high school education or less along with short-term training. **Next** occupations typically require moderate to long-term training or experience and/or education beyond high school. **Later** occupations typically require a bachelor’s degree or higher.

While long-term projections offer a solid understanding of longer-term employer needs, job ads placed by employers help in recognizing the current needs of employers. When projections predict a high number of future openings and job ads show current demand for the same occupation, the occupation may be a good career possibility.









The table below displays the top five jobs by the number of projected openings for the 10-year projection period through 2032 in the **Now**, **Next**, and **Later** categories for the region. The flame beside some of the occupations represents “hot jobs” determined by the number of job ads placed by employers.


Top occupations by the total number of annual openings in the **Now** category were *Home Health and Personal Care Aides* (671); *Cashiers* (397); *Stockers and Order Fillers* (235); *Retail Salespersons* (193); and *Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand* (170). The reason for a high number of openings was exits and transfers within these occupations.

Occupations with the highest number of annual openings in the **Next** category were *Cook, Restaurants* (134); *Miscellaneous Assemblers and Fabricators* (126); *Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers* (109); *Maintenance and Repair Workers, General* (82); and *Teaching Assistants, Except Postsecondary* (76). Of the top five occupations by the number of projected openings, *Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers* also saw a high number of job ads.

Later occupations with the highest number of annual openings were *General and Operations Managers* (160); *Registered Nurses* (100); *Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education* (71); *Secondary School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education* (47); and *Substitute Teachers, Short-Term* (46). *General and Operations Managers* and *Registered Nurses* listed in this category are also in high demand in the region according to the job ads.

Many high demand occupations correspond directly with the high growth industry groups, such as *Food Services/Drinking Places*, *Health Care* and *Retail Trade*. Other high demand occupations cross many industry groups, like *Cashiers*, *General and Operations Managers*, and *Salespersons*.

South Central Region Occupational Projections 2022-2032							
Occupation	2022	2032	Annual Openings			Median Wage	
	Employment	Employment	Growth	Exits	Transfers		Total
NOW - Typically requires short-term on-the-job training or less, little to no experience, and/or a high school diploma							
Home Health and Personal Care Aides 	3,816	4,452	64	331	276	671	\$28,836
Cashiers 	2,412	2,058	-35	215	217	397	\$27,079
Stockers and Order Fillers 	1,290	1,450	16	85	134	235	\$30,264
Retail Salespersons 	1,239	1,318	8	84	101	193	\$29,783
Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand 	1,343	1,327	-2	64	108	170	\$30,629
NEXT - Typically requires non-degree certificate, associate degree, apprenticeship, some experience, or moderate- to long-term training							
Cooks, Restaurant	709	873	16	54	64	134	\$29,632
Miscellaneous Assemblers and Fabricators	1,307	1,223	-8	54	80	126	\$33,963
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers 	1,124	1,078	-5	50	64	109	\$46,239
Maintenance and Repair Workers, General	865	896	3	39	40	82	\$40,362
Teaching Assistants, Except Postsecondary	724	670	-5	40	41	76	\$29,178
LATER - Typically requires a bachelor's degree or higher							
General and Operations Managers 	1,839	1,950	11	47	102	160	\$59,986
Registered Nurses 	1,443	1,616	17	51	32	100	\$74,421
Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education	1,266	1,169	-10	41	40	71	\$45,809
Secondary School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education	931	855	-8	26	29	47	\$48,077
Substitute Teachers, Short-Term	413	392	-2	25	23	46	\$30,897

 Flame icon indicates occupations with high numbers of job ads

Sources: MERIC Long-Term Occupational Projections 2022-2032 and Lightcast, online job ads

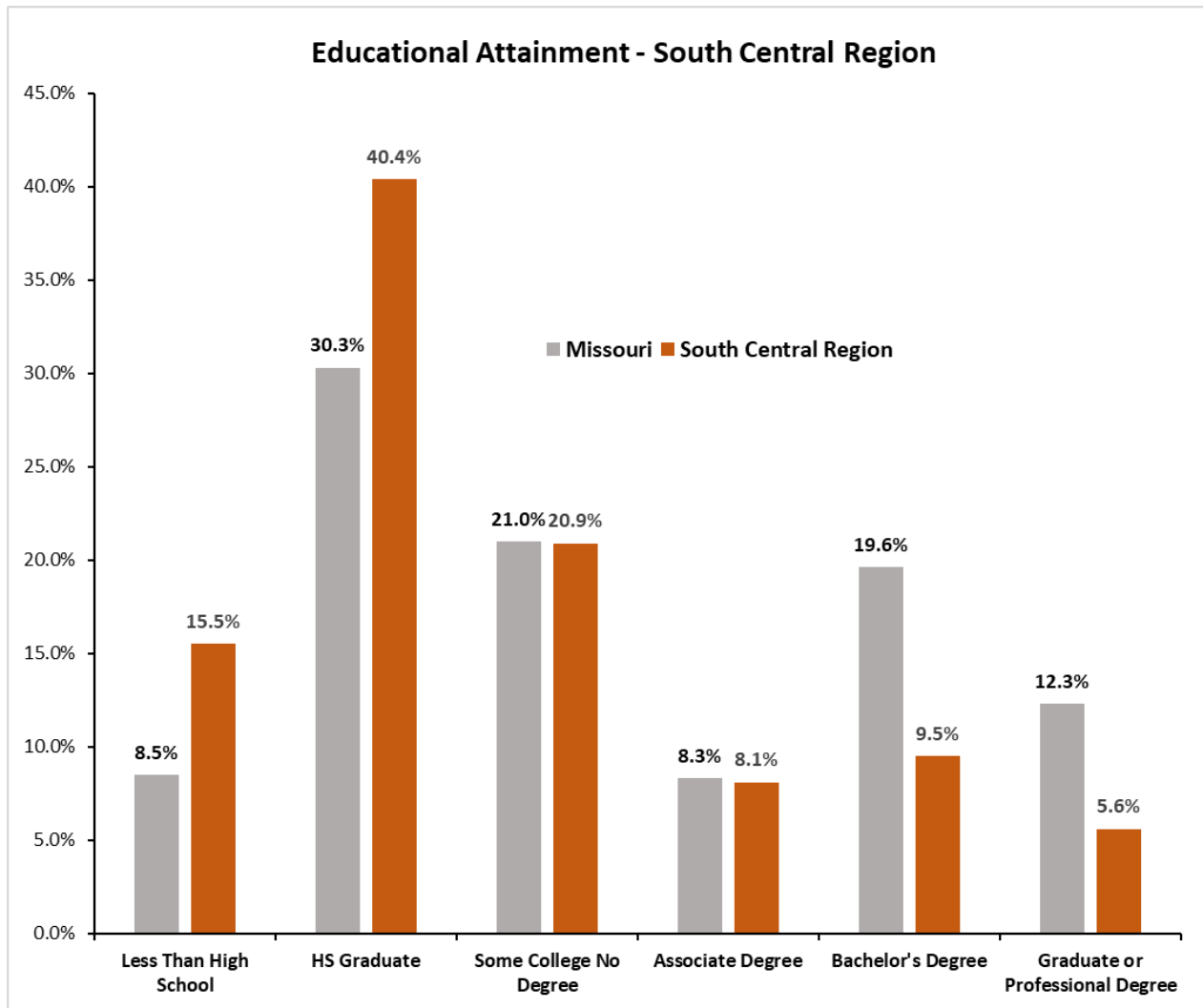
c. Education and Skill Levels of the Workforce

Provide an analysis of the educational and skill levels of the workforce.

Educational Attainment

Educational attainment is a measure of the highest level of education obtained by individuals aged 25 and up, or the population generally in the workforce. Over ninety percent of Missouri’s population age 25 and over was a high school graduate or higher in 2023. Over 19 percent held a bachelor’s degree and over 12 percent held a graduate or professional degree.

In the South Central Region, the educational attainment rates for individuals were lower than the state average in the categories of some college but no degree, associate degrees, bachelor’s degrees, and graduate or professional degrees. The rates were higher than the state average for those with less than a high school diploma and high school and equivalent.



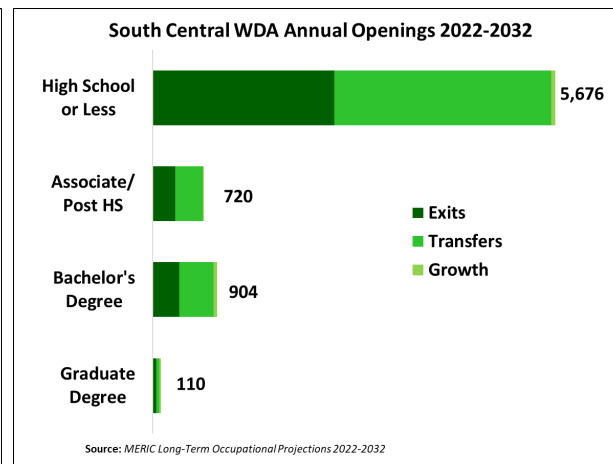
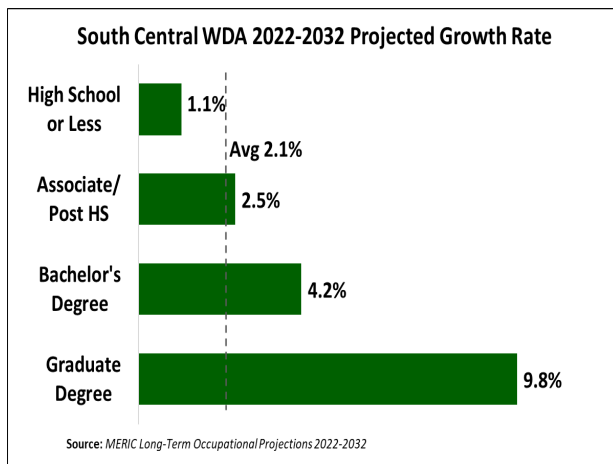
Source: American Community Survey-5 Year data (2019-2023)

Occupational Projections by Education

Long-term projections are used to identify the fastest growing occupations, as well as occupations with a high number of openings through 2032.

The growth rate of an occupation measures the percentage of jobs added by an occupation between the base year and projected year. Occupations requiring a graduate degree are projected to grow at a faster rate in the South Central Region.

Long-term projections also present data on expected job openings for each occupation through 2032. Openings in an occupation can occur due to an occupation growing, workers moving into a different occupation, or workers leaving the workforce entirely. No matter the reason, qualified individuals are still needed to fill job vacancies. Most openings will be in entry-level jobs, mostly due to high turnover rates as workers either transfer to other occupations or leave the workforce.



d. Skill Gaps

Describe apparent 'skill gaps' in the local area. How were the "skills gaps" determined?

Skills Demand

Employers request a variety of skills from job applicants. Some skills are termed as durable, or soft skills, such as *communication, creativity, critical thinking, emotional intelligence, or customer service*; while others are more technical or hard skills, such as *sales, project management, computer science, or programming languages*.

Middle-Skills Overview

Middle-skill occupations are an essential part of Missouri's workforce, accounting for more than one-third of all jobs. These critical occupations are broadly defined as occupations that require some training after high school but less than a bachelor's degree. Low-skilled jobs are those that require, at most, a high school education, while high-skill jobs require at least a bachelor's degree.

There is always a need for a properly skilled workforce, and a lack of skilled workers impacts the ability of businesses and industries to compete globally. Lacking relevant skills hinders the ability to be more productive, thus deterring higher earning potential and improved living standards. Middle-skill workers are pivotal to maintaining and improving society and the U.S. economy. These workers are vital in health care, public services, construction, manufacturing, and information technology infrastructure development.¹

Meeting the continued demand for middle-skill occupations is an important factor in maintaining a strong economy in the state. Middle-skill jobs offer good pay and career opportunities with industry-recognized training and credentials. Such training programs can be as short as a few months. Middle-skill jobs offer an important opportunity for better pay and advancement without needing a bachelor's degree. This report highlights Missouri's middle-skill jobs and provides details on several occupational groups where middle-skilled workers are in high demand.

In 2023, middle-skill occupations had an average annual wage of \$53,603. This was lower than the average annual wage of \$57,580 for all occupations in the state, but higher than the average annual wage of \$36,925 for low-skill occupations.

Over 1.1 million jobs in Missouri’s labor market were in middle-skill occupations. In 2022, 35.6 percent of the workforce was employed in middle-skill occupations, compared to 35.5 percent employed in low-skill occupations and 28.9 percent employed in high-skill occupations.

The middle-skill occupation with the highest individual employment was *Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers* (51,366), followed by *Miscellaneous Assemblers and Fabricators* (32,935) and *Maintenance and Repair Workers, General* (32,437). These three occupations combined employed over 116,000 workers in Missouri in 2022.

Middle-skill occupations are projected to produce over 117,000 annual job openings from 2022 to 2032, or 33 percent of all job openings during that period. High-skill occupations are projected to produce 20.6 percent of all job openings and low-skill occupations are projected to produce 46.4 percent of all job openings.

Total job openings are a combination of growth, exit, and transfer openings:

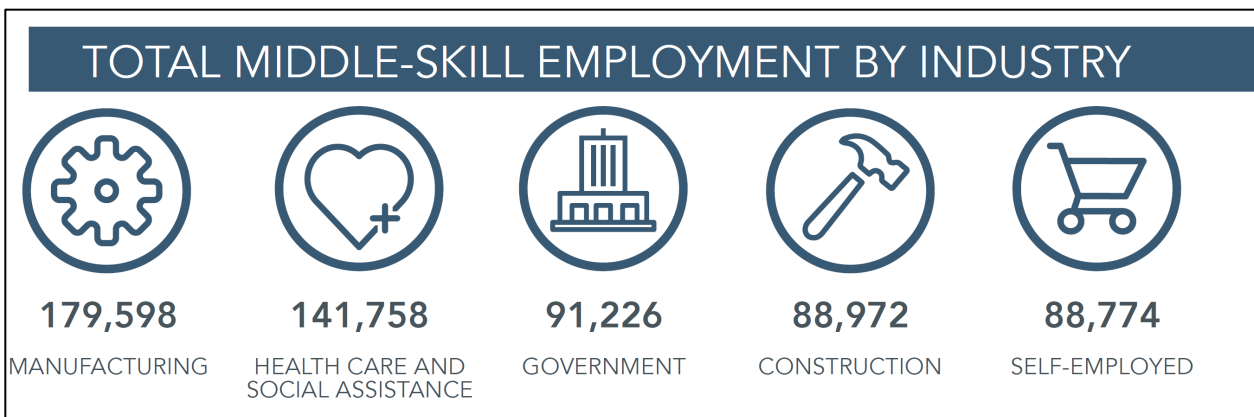
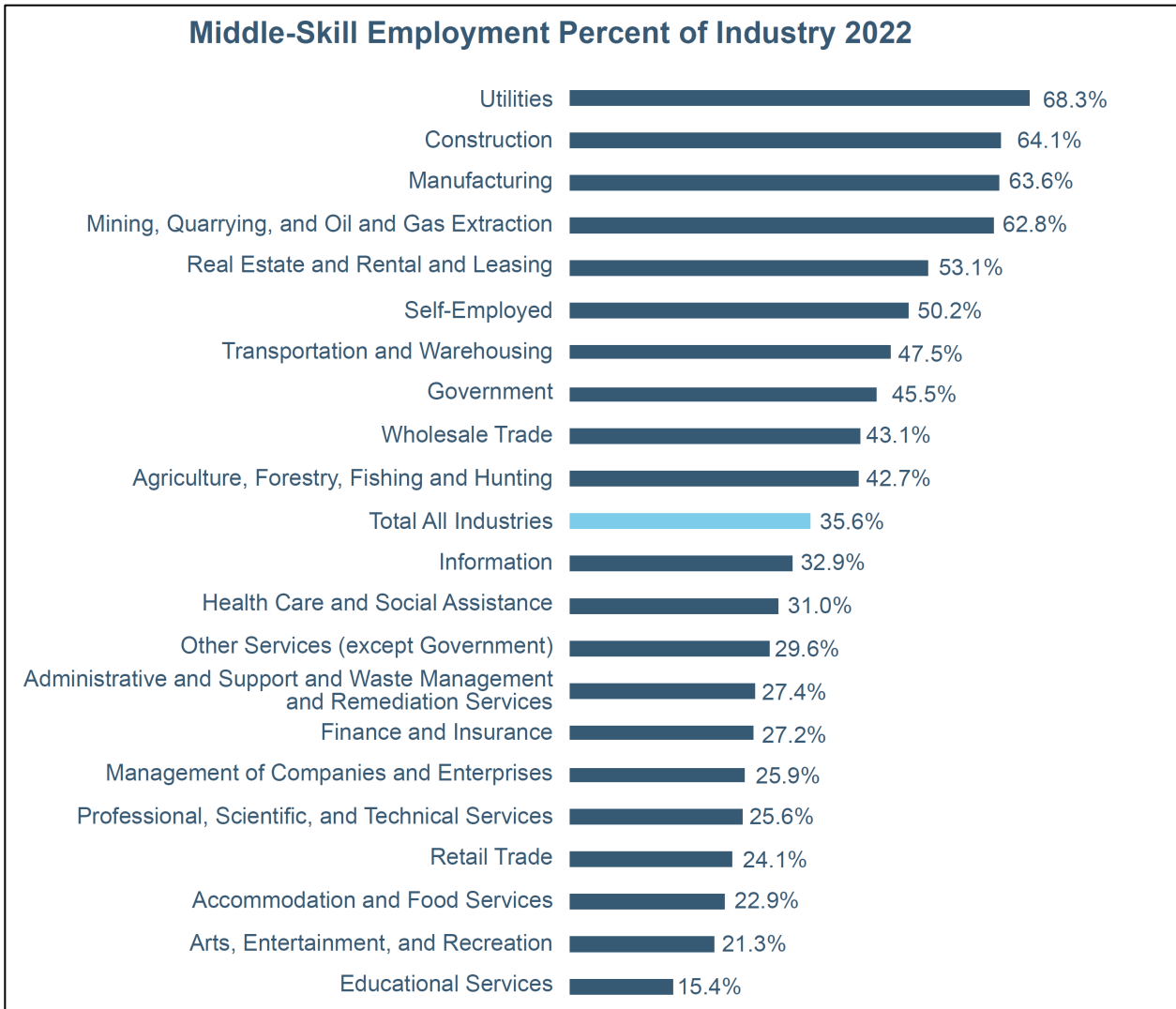
- Growth openings are the result of an occupation growing between the base year and the projected year.
- Exit openings occur when a worker leaves the workforce entirely, such as retirement.
- Transfer openings occur when a worker leaves their occupation for a different one.

Four occupation groups have particularly high concentrations of middle-skill employment:

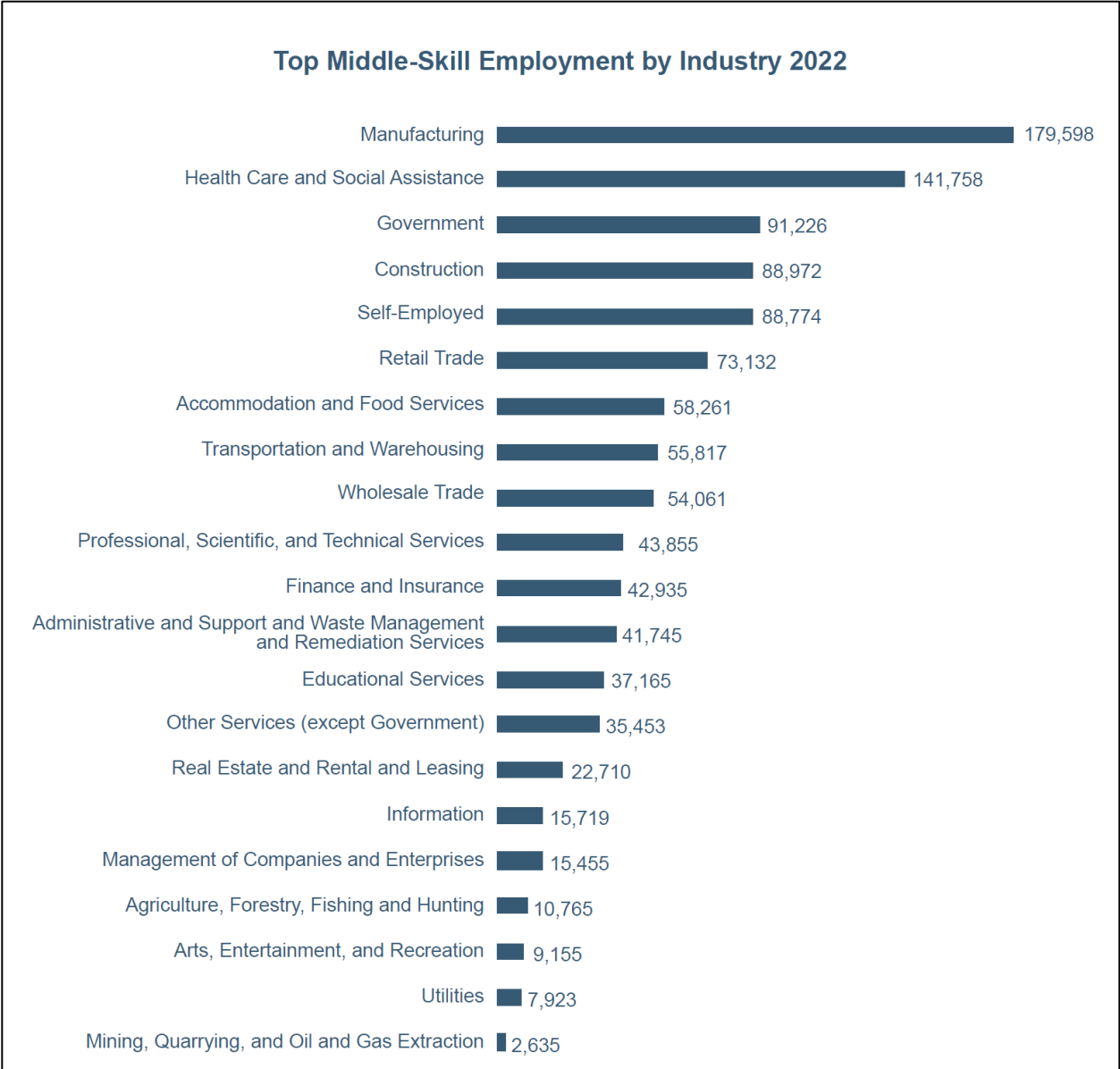
- *Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Occupations*
- *Production Occupations*
- *Construction and Extraction Occupations*
- *Protective Service Occupations*



Overall, middle-skill occupations made up 35.6 percent of total employment in Missouri. Some industries, however, had a much higher percentage of middle-skill employment. The *Utilities* industry had the highest percentage of middle-skill employment, followed by the *Construction* industry.



The *Manufacturing* industry had the highest total number of middle-skill employees, followed by the *Health Care and Social Assistance* sector. Government had the third highest employment. The *Utilities* industry had the highest percentage of middle-skill employment, but the lowest middle-skill employment in absolute numbers after the *Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction* industry.



The middle-skill occupations with the most annual job openings during the projection period are *Cooks, Restaurant; Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers; and Nursing Assistants*. These three occupations combined are projected to have over 16,000 job openings per year through 2032. *Cooks, Restaurant* are also projected to have high growth between 2022 and 2032.

Top Middle-Skill Occupations by Annual Openings 2022-2032					
Occupations	2022 Estimated Employment	2032 Projected Employment	Net Change	Annual Total Openings	2023 Average Wage
Cooks, Restaurant	31,981	39,312	7,331	6,070	\$34,000
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	51,366	53,729	2,363	5,693	\$53,440
Nursing Assistants	30,420	32,489	2,069	4,660	\$36,350
First-Line Supervisors of Food Preparation and Serving Workers	22,151	23,779	1,628	3,518	\$39,460
Maintenance and Repair Workers, General	32,437	34,812	2,375	3,254	\$48,080
Miscellaneous Assemblers and Fabricators	32,935	30,041	-2,894	3,037	\$44,240
Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks	22,861	22,048	-813	2,519	\$46,990
Teaching Assistants, Except Postsecondary	19,295	19,674	379	2,301	\$34,550
First-Line Supervisors of Office and Administrative Support Workers	23,484	22,797	-687	2,139	\$65,150
First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers	22,250	21,310	-940	2,040	\$49,020

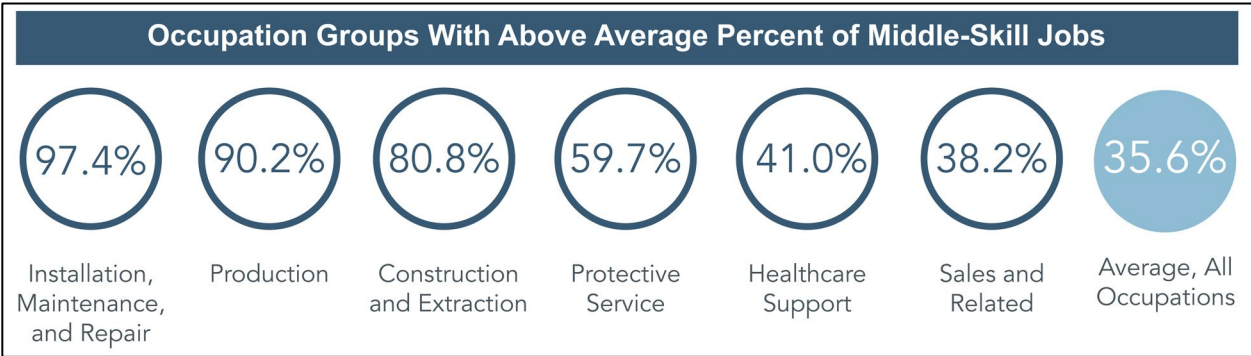
The middle-skill occupations that are projected to experience the fastest rates of growth are *Physical Therapist Assistants*, *Occupational Therapy Assistants*, and *Veterinary Technologists and Technicians*. Each of these three occupations have projected growth rates of over 25 percent, compared to a 4.3 percent growth for all occupations in Missouri. *Cooks, Restaurant* has the highest employment of the top 10 fastest growing occupations.

Middle-Skill Fastest Growing Occupations 2022-2032					
Occupations	2022 Estimated Employment	2032 Projected Employment	Net Change	Percent Change	2023 Average Wage
Physical Therapist Assistants	2,517	3,243	726	28.8%	\$62,750
Occupational Therapy Assistants	1,159	1,492	333	28.7%	\$61,290
Veterinary Technologists and Technicians	2,078	2,638	560	26.9%	\$38,600
Cooks, Restaurant	31,981	39,312	7,331	22.9%	\$34,000
Respiratory Therapists	3,110	3,738	628	20.2%	\$70,450
Computer Numerically Controlled Tool Programmers	456	548	92	20.2%	\$63,910
Health Information Technologists and Medical Registrars	1,462	1,749	287	19.6%	\$50,350
Hearing Aid Specialists	311	371	60	19.3%	\$56,830
Animal Trainers	863	1,017	154	17.8%	\$48,550
Diagnostic Medical Sonographers	1,301	1,532	231	17.8%	\$85,910

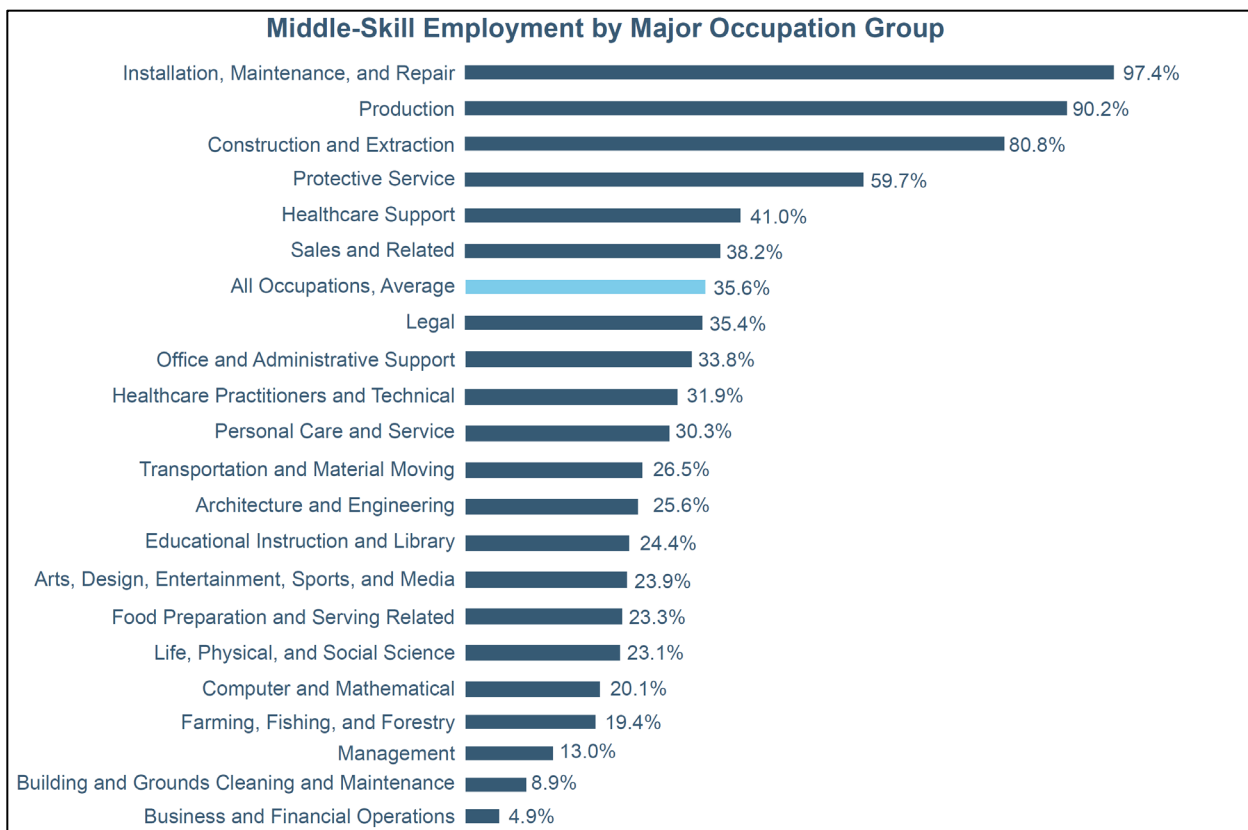
While the average annual wage for all middle-skill occupations was \$53,603 in 2023, some middle-skill occupations earn considerably more. The middle-skill occupation with the highest average annual wage is *Commercial Pilots*, followed by *Air Traffic Controllers*. Although these occupations have higher than average wages, they do not make up a large portion of Missouri’s total and projected employment.

Top Middle-Skill Occupations by Average Wage					
Occupations	2022 Estimated Employment	2032 Projected Employment	Net Change	Annual Total Openings	2023 Average Wage
Commercial Pilots	1,122	1,187	65	135	\$128,830
Air Traffic Controllers	248	271	23	24	\$112,360
Power Distributors and Dispatchers	97	98	1	8	\$108,180
Transportation, Storage, and Distribution Managers	2,444	2,636	192	218	\$98,630
Electrical and Electronics Repairers, Powerhouse, Substation, and Relay	442	435	-7	36	\$94,650
First-Line Supervisors of Non-Retail Sales Workers	5,609	5,542	-67	442	\$92,940
Petroleum Pump System Operators, Refinery Operators, and Gaugers	930	935	5	85	\$92,680
Fire Inspectors and Investigators	196	207	11	18	\$90,970
Nuclear Technicians	157	160	3	16	\$89,090
Postmasters and Mail Superintendents	289	272	-17	19	\$88,900

All but one of the 22 major occupation groups have middle-skill jobs. The *Installation, Maintenance and Repair* occupation group has the highest percentage of middle-skill employment, followed by *Production*.



Six major occupation groups have higher middle-skill employment percentages than the state average of 35.6 percent for all occupations. Some occupation groups with above average middle-skill employment percentages, such as *Healthcare Support* and *Production*, are heavily concentrated in certain industries, such as the *Health Care and Social Assistance* industry and *Manufacturing* industry, respectively. Two of the exceptions include *Installation, Maintenance, and Repair* and *Office and Administrative Support* occupations, which are more evenly distributed among a variety of industries.



South Central Region Middle Skills Occupations

In the South Central Region, middle skill jobs made up nearly 33 percent of employment in 2022. The occupational groups with the largest amount of middle skill employment were *Production Occupations; Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Occupations; and Office and Administrative Support Occupations.*

Top Outlook Middle Skill (NEXT) Occupations - South Central Region			
<i>NEXT jobs typically require moderate/long-term training or experience or education beyond high school</i>			
Grade	Occupation Title	Annual Openings	Average Annual Wage 2024
A	Cooks, Restaurant	134	\$31,095
C+	Miscellaneous Assemblers and Fabricators	126	\$39,734
B	Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	109	\$50,376
B+	Maintenance and Repair Workers, General	82	\$45,102
C+	Teaching Assistants, Except Postsecondary	76	\$31,992
B	First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers	61	\$44,143
A	Industrial Machinery Mechanics	55	\$48,522
B	Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks	54	\$43,195
B	Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics	43	\$44,666
B	Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	42	\$55,163
B	First-Line Supervisors of Production and Operating Workers	37	\$63,450
B	Highway Maintenance Workers	36	\$45,901
B	Police and Sheriff's Patrol Officers	36	\$53,098
B	Medical Assistants	34	\$37,109
C+	Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Brazers	32	\$44,137
B	Billing and Posting Clerks	29	\$39,619
C	Sawing Machine Setters, Operators, and Tenders, Wood	28	\$35,801
B	Carpenters	26	\$52,121
C	Correctional Officers and Jailers	26	\$39,908
C+	Pharmacy Technicians	24	\$38,936

Source: MERIC Long-Term Projections 2022-2032

9. Workforce Development, Education, and Training Activities Analysis

Describe the workforce development services and activities, including education and training in the LWDA, to address the education and skills needs of the workforce. Include education and training activities of the core programs and mandatory and optional One-Stop Delivery System partners³.

a. The Strengths and Weaknesses of Workforce Development Activities

Provide an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the workforce developments services and activities identified above.

³ Mandatory One-Stop partners: Each LWDA must have one comprehensive One-Stop Center that provides access to physical services of the core programs and other required partners. In addition to the core programs, for individuals with multiple needs to access the services, the following partner programs are required to provide access through the One-Stops: Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Career and Technical Education (Perkins Act), Community Services Block Grant, Indian and Native American programs, Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Employment and Training programs, Job Corps, Local Veterans' Employment Representatives and Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program, National Farmworker Jobs Program, Senior Community Service Employment Program, Trade Adjustment Assistance programs, Unemployment Insurance, Re-entry Programs, and YouthBuild.

Our workforce system's capacity is established in our ability to provide seamless services through the one-stop system. Our ability to provide those direct links to mandatory one-stop partners and receive their referrals is crucial to our success in the Region.

Workforce development involves a comprehensive approach to enhancing the capabilities of a workforce over time. Here are some key aspects:

- **Education and Training:** Workforce development includes ongoing education and training programs. These programs are meant to build relevant expertise, allowing employees to continually upskill and expand their knowledge.
- **Industry-Recognized Certifications:** Providing access to certifications that validate specific skills and competencies.
- **Customized Training Programs:** Developing tailored training programs, such as pre-employment training, to address specific workforce needs.
- **Apprenticeships:** Connecting individuals to apprenticeship programs that combine instruction with on-the-job training.
- **Career Development Opportunities:** Offering pathways for career growth and skill enhancement, beyond job-specific training.

Workforce development benefits both employees and employers by addressing skill gaps and improving overall productivity. It is a long-term investment in building a skilled workforce that can adapt to changing industry demands.

Strengths:

The South Central Workforce Investment Board has focused on partnerships over the past several years. One major strength is the relationships with similar organizations, serving our customers. Our WIB leads efforts in information sharing, being able to utilize other services from other partners for a full "wrap around" service and the sharing of our available resources. We rely on the wisdom from partners and employers to meet the demands of occupational needs and guide our customers for a successful career path.

There is no single job training approach that is right for all workers. Having access to accurate and up-to-date labor market data provided by MERIC and other sources, as well as information and guidance about career and training opportunities, helps our customers customize a plan through more informed education and employment decisions.

The region has two Missouri Job Centers (CJC) located in the two largest communities of the region. These Centers are strategically positioned to effectively serve the eastern and western halves of the region. In addition, there are multiple affiliate sites available for customers in our smaller communities.

The South Central Region provides a local presence to our business communities, not only within Job Center locations, but outreach efforts. The Job Center staff meet with businesses to share our services and provide assistance with hiring events, job postings, etc.

Weaknesses:

The WDB recognizes the need for greater visibility of programs and services with our elected officials, local employers, and the community in general. WIB Staff recognize the need for improved communication and outreach/marketing to the public.

Employers have indicated that finding workers, even with college degrees, with adequate basic skills is a challenge. Often the lack of basic effective competencies such as communication skills, work ethic, discipline, critical thinking, or interpersonal skills are needed.

Information sharing among partners can be difficult. There is currently no universal release of information making a team based case management approach challenging. Within the Centers there are multiple redundancies due to State and Partner systems not being able to “talk” to each other.

Today’s jobs require more highly skilled workers. Workplace skills are essential in all industries to advance in the fast-paced economy and to improve efficiency within our region. Technology is changing at a rapid speed, this impacts even the employed and key skill deficiencies among the unemployed and underemployed population.

Recognizing the ever changing face of our workforce is a challenge for our region and the state of Missouri.

a. Local Workforce Development Capacity

There are opportunities available to the customer through the Job Centers. Staff assist them in recognizing their skills and where they have weaknesses. Assistance is available to increase existing skills, market their skills and work on areas of weakness to create “smart” goal strategies. Skills assessments help to clarify the next steps needed in an individual’s job search. Assessments help identify their need for training or skill improvement to achieve goals that are realistic and can be accomplished successfully. WorkKeys testing, along with Job Center workshops provide opportunities for enhancement of resume preparation, interviewing skills, networking, retaining employment, and more. All of this assists the customer in standing out as a job applicant, and in being a better employee. Earning a National Career Readiness Certification (NCRC) using the ACT skills certification system is an opportunity to take skills our customers have demonstrated to a national level. Our partners are working to ensure customers have a smooth referral process and access to valuable resources. Collaborating with our partners is the best way to assist our customers in their journey to a self-sufficient career pathway.

OPERATIONAL ELEMENTS

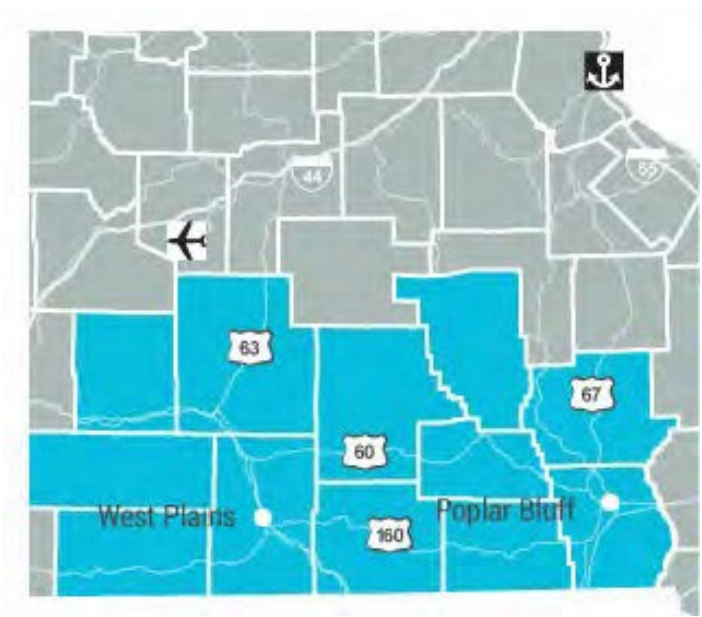
Local Structure

10. Local Workforce Development Area (LWDA) Profile

Describe the geographical workforce development area, including the LWDA's major communities, major employers, training and educational institutions (technical and community colleges, universities, etc.), population, diversity of the population, and relevant growth trends.

Geographical Workforce Development Area (LWDA) with Major Communities

The South Central Region consists of twelve counties in southern Missouri: Butler, Carter, Douglas, Howell, Oregon, Ozark, Reynolds, Ripley, Shannon, Texas, Wayne and Wright. It is one of the largest geographical regions in the state and is sparsely populated with the exception of two Micropolitan Statistical Areas: Poplar Bluff in Butler County and West Plains in Howell County.



Major Employers

- Briggs & Stratton (Poplar Bluff)
- Ozarks Health Care (West Plains & Surrounding Counties)
- Poplar Bluff Regional Healthcare (Poplar Bluff)
- Air Medical Group Holdings (West Plains)
- John J. Pershing Medical Center (Poplar Bluff)
- Leonardo DRS Land Systems:(West Plains)
- Gates Products (Poplar Bluff)
- Poplar Bluff School District (Poplar Bluff)
- West Plains School District (West Plains)

<http://www.missouripartnership.com/Sites-Incentives-Data/Regions/South-Central-Region>

Training and Educational Institutions

For a comprehensive list of the eligible training providers certified for the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act please refer to the Missouri Eligible Training Provider System. In brief, the region’s training and educational institutions include: Bolivar Technical School, Elite Truck Driving, Iron Eagle Welding Academy, Ozark Driving Institute, Southeast Lineman Training, Southern Missouri Technical Center, Texas County Technical School, Three Rivers Community College and Truck Dynasty.

Population and Growth Trends

The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that Missouri’s population grew to over 6.15 million in 2022, up by 0.2 percent from the previous year. In the South Central Region, the population decreased in all counties except Wright County over the 5-year period. The highest population loss was in Ripley County, decreasing by 2,968 residents from 2017 to 2022.

South Central Region Population Change by County				
NAME	1 Year Change 2022-2023		5 Year Change 2019-2023	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Missouri	13,759	0.2%	63,271	1.0%
Butler	(114)	-0.3%	(490)	-1.1%
Carter	(30)	-0.6%	(878)	-14.3%
Douglas	47	0.4%	(1,456)	-10.9%
Howell	208	0.5%	64	0.2%
Oregon	(79)	-0.9%	(1,943)	-18.2%
Ozark	85	1.0%	(434)	-4.7%
Reynolds	(44)	-0.7%	(232)	-3.7%
Ripley	(84)	-0.8%	(2,812)	-20.7%
Shannon	5	0.1%	(1,080)	-13.1%
Texas	128	0.5%	(648)	-2.5%
Wayne	(139)	-1.3%	(2,253)	-17.1%
Wright	247	1.3%	519	2.9%

Source: American Community Survey-5 Year data (2019-2023)

Diversity of the Population

In all the region’s counties, a smaller percentage of the population was in the age group of 20-24 years than the state average (6.5%). Most of the region’s counties had somewhat similar percentage of the population in the age group of under 20 years as that of Missouri for this age group (25.1%). The population age 55+ was above the state average of 30.8 percent in all counties in the region. The county with the highest percentage of residents age 55 and up was Ozark County with 46.2 percent of residents in this age group.

The male/female gender split was close to the state average in almost all counties. In six of the 12 counties in the South Central Region the male population was less than the female population. Texas County had the highest portion of male population in the region (53%) and the lowest female population in the region (47%).

Race/Ethnicity statistics were different from the Missouri averages in most of the counties in the region. All counties in the region had a lower percentage of minorities than the state average.

County	Population						Gender		Race/Ethnicity								
	Total	Under 20	20 to 24	25 to 34	35 to 54	55+	Male	Female	White	Black or African American	Asian	American Indian and Alaska Native	Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	Some other race	One Race	Two or more races	Hispanic or Latino
Missouri	6,168,181	25.1%	6.5%	13.2%	24.4%	30.8%	49.3%	50.7%	78.3%	11.1%	2.1%	0.3%	0.2%	1.7%	93.7%	6.3%	5.1%
Butler	42,166	25.8%	5.5%	12.1%	24.2%	32.5%	48.8%	51.2%	87.4%	4.6%	0.7%	0.2%	0.1%	1.2%	94.1%	5.9%	2.4%
Carter	5,269	27.7%	4.6%	9.9%	22.6%	35.1%	48.5%	51.5%	93.0%	0.6%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	93.8%	6.2%	2.0%
Douglas	11,850	24.5%	4.0%	8.9%	22.8%	39.8%	50.7%	49.3%	92.8%	0.9%	0.1%	1.1%	0.0%	0.3%	95.2%	4.8%	0.9%
Howell	40,168	26.4%	5.5%	11.5%	23.6%	33.0%	48.8%	51.2%	93.2%	0.4%	0.5%	0.2%	0.0%	0.9%	95.3%	4.7%	2.4%
Oregon	8,704	24.6%	5.0%	10.5%	21.5%	38.4%	49.6%	50.4%	93.7%	0.1%	0.3%	0.5%	0.0%	0.1%	94.7%	5.3%	1.3%
Ozark	8,773	21.1%	3.1%	7.8%	21.8%	46.2%	50.4%	49.6%	94.2%	0.4%	0.0%	0.3%	0.0%	0.5%	95.4%	4.6%	1.9%
Reynolds	6,058	21.9%	4.1%	9.1%	24.8%	40.1%	52.5%	47.5%	91.8%	1.5%	0.2%	0.2%	0.0%	0.6%	94.3%	5.7%	1.7%
Ripley	10,755	25.5%	4.6%	11.8%	23.3%	34.8%	49.8%	50.2%	93.7%	0.2%	0.5%	0.3%	0.0%	0.6%	95.2%	4.8%	1.2%
Shannon	7,137	23.7%	4.4%	10.2%	22.9%	38.8%	50.9%	49.1%	92.7%	0.2%	0.4%	0.3%	0.0%	0.2%	93.8%	6.2%	0.5%
Texas	24,956	23.5%	5.4%	11.4%	24.2%	35.5%	53.0%	47.0%	90.1%	2.2%	0.3%	0.4%	0.0%	1.0%	94.0%	6.0%	2.4%
Wayne	10,942	22.7%	3.9%	9.1%	23.2%	41.2%	50.4%	49.6%	93.6%	0.4%	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%	1.0%	95.2%	4.8%	1.0%
Wright	18,722	28.6%	5.1%	10.8%	22.3%	33.3%	49.6%	50.4%	93.2%	0.2%	0.4%	0.1%	0.1%	0.8%	94.9%	5.1%	2.5%

Source: American Community Survey-5 Year data (2019-2023)

11. Local Facility and Information

- a. Identify the local comprehensive One-Stop Center(s), including current mailing and street addresses, telephone and fax numbers and list them in **Attachment 1** to the Plan.
- b. Identify the local affiliate sites, including current mailing and street addresses, telephone and fax numbers and list them in **Attachment 1** to the Plan.
- c. Identify the local specialized sites, including current mailing and street addresses, telephone and fax numbers and list them in **Attachment 1** to the Plan.
- d. If your LWDA has any other additional service sites and the LWDA refers to them as anything other than comprehensive, affiliate or specialized centers, please list the service sites by the title your LWDA uses and describe the services provided in **Attachment 1**. Also, list the one-stop partners providing services at those locations.

See **Attachment 1**

12. Local One-Stop Partner/MOU/IFA Information

a. One-Stop Partners

Identify the **One-Stop Partners in Attachment 2** to the Plan. Please indicate the contact name, category, physical location, phone and email address. Indicate the specific services provided at each of the comprehensive, affiliate, or specialized job centers.

See **Attachment 2**

b. Memorandums of Understanding (MOU)

Include a copy of each MOU between the Board and each of the One-Stop partners (or one “umbrella” MOU for the same purpose) concerning the operation of the One-Stop Delivery System in the LWDA. The MOU must be up-to-date, signed and dated. Include the MOU(s) as Attachment 3. Missouri Job Centers must ensure that equal access to employment and training services are provided to the farm workers and agricultural employers in their LWDA.

See **Attachment 2**

c. Cost Sharing Agreement/Infrastructure Funding Agreement (IFA)

Include as part of the MOU in Attachment 3 the Infrastructure Funding Agreement (IFA) and negotiated cost-sharing worksheet/workbook for each Missouri Job Center that includes the line items, dollar amounts and percentage rates for One-stop partners, OWD and the Board. Indicate the number of FTEs present and the amount of space (sq. footage) utilized by the partner.

See **Attachment 2**

Integration of One-Stop Service Delivery

13. Local Workforce Development System

Describe the workforce development system in the LWDA.

- a. Describe how the Local Workforce Development Board (WDB) will coordinate workforce investment activities carried out in the local area with rapid response activities.

Staff work closely with the Office of Workforce Development Rapid Response Coordinator to develop a comprehensive approach to identifying and preparing for layoffs and plant closures. By planning and responding to the reduction in the workforce, we are able to work together to minimize the impact on front line workers, employers and families. We provide services as soon as possible to affected workers so they can transition to new employment.

- b. Describe how the Board will ensure the expenditure of funds for training providers are selected from both the Eligible Training Provider List/System approved for use by the State of Missouri as well as approved from the State list by the local workforce development board.

The South Central Region will only approve funding for training providers and courses on the State of Missouri’s Eligible Training Provider List. This is monitored at the program operation and administrative levels.

For initial local approval of an Eligible Training Provider (ETP) program the following conditions must be satisfied:

- All eligibility criteria required by OWD to be listed as an Eligible Training Provider must be complete and approved by the state including the ability for the Eligible Training Provider to:
 - Demonstrate they have been in business teaching a program for at least 12 months;
 - Show documentation that they are certified by the appropriate governing body; and
 - Maintain a website including the program descriptions, tuition, fees, and supplies.
- Eligible Training Providers must agree to comply with all provisions listed in the Eligible Training Provider System Training Provider Applicant – Assurances Agreement.
- The program must be listed as approved on the Missouri Eligible Training Provider List. The program must be approved, not just the provider.
- The training program must be an in-demand occupation for the South Central Region and classified with a Career Outlook grade of B or above. In-Demand occupations can be found in MERIC publication.
- The Eligible Training Provider must meet all local policy qualifications for approval in the South Central Region.
- The region does not fund training programs that are 100% virtual.

When the above criterion has been met, the Compliance Manager at the WDB will select the Training Provider as locally approved in the Eligible Training Provider website interface so the program can be selected in the data system. The South Central Compliance Manager maintains the access to locally approve or deny training programs within the state. These programs are reviewed and approved/denied on an as needed basis.

14. Accessibility

Describe how entities within the one-stop delivery system, including one-stop operators and one-stop partners will comply with WIOA section 188, if applicable, and applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.) regarding the physical and programmatic accessibility of facilities, programs and service, technology, and materials for individuals with disabilities including providing staff training and support for addressing the needs of individuals with disabilities.

Each Comprehensive Job Center is required to maintain specific Assistive Technology including: Window Eyes Screen Reader, Zoom Text, Big Keys I-X Keyboard, Trackball Mouse, Phone Amplifier, and Ubi Duo (Face to Face Communication), TTY, and Relay Service. Annual reviews of ADA equipment in our offices, ensuring proper functioning and training in the use of the equipment, are ways we attempt to increase the value of our services to individuals with a disability. The State of Missouri contracts to provide interpretive (ASL) services at all locations upon request. Specifics and a staff desk aid for these services are found at: <https://jobs.mo.gov/dwdeo>

In addition, a partnership with the Missouri Rehabilitation Services for the Blind, allows Missouri to provide each Job Center with the EO Notice in Braille and "large print" formats for the individual customers with low vision or who are blind.

In compliance with Federal requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), it is policy that Missouri Job Center team members must not directly or indirectly deny a qualified individual with a disability the opportunity to participate in or benefit from the aid, benefits, services or training on the

basis of disability. Additionally, steering individuals with disabilities to a certain occupation, partner agency, or training program based solely on their disability is not allowed and considered illegal. Staff members may consider the individual circumstances, needs, and assessment results to assist the customer with finding a career path that matches their employment goals and leads to self-sufficiency.

Reasonable accommodations will be made in services and procedures when necessary. Programs must be operated so that they are readily accessible to and usable by the individuals with disabilities in the most integrated setting. Communications with persons with disabilities must be as effective as communications with other individuals without a disability.

Reasonable accommodations will be made in policies, practices, or procedures when modifications are necessary to avoid discrimination on the basis of disability, unless making the modifications would fundamentally alter the nature of the service, program or activity.

Staff members have been encouraged to seek out resolutions for any reasonable accommodations that do not result in a funding cost and to act upon those requests immediately without the need of supervisor approval. Any request that would result in a funding cost should be requested in writing and sent to the South Central Workforce Investment Board Executive Director.

Staff are trained on a continuous basis on Equal Opportunity related topics including and addressing the needs of individuals with disabilities. One Stop Centers in the local area are encouraged to reach out and attend meetings with other area resources and other agencies for opportunities to inform employees of multiple agencies about the resources in the area.

15. Assessment of One-Stop Program and Partners

- a. Describe how the Board will ensure the continuous improvement of eligible providers of services through the system and ensure that such providers meet the employment needs of local employers and participants.

The WIB ensures continuous improvement of eligible providers of services by working closely with these agencies and organizations on a regular and continuing basis. Services like On-the-Job Training and/or Work Experience require Case Manager interaction throughout the employment period. The Case Manager visits the site for Mid-point and End-point monitoring as well as bi-weekly to collect the participant Timesheets for their payroll. Working with repeat employers allows us to build relationships with the employers so that we have an open line of communication for any issues that could arise. Eligible Training Providers are expected to meet the Governor's criteria for preliminary performance information per program, which includes: Institutional Credential Attainment Rate, Employment Six and Twelve Months after Exit, and Median Earning Six Months after Exit. In the South Central Region we have determined that if the state finds these expected performance levels to be acceptable, the South Central Region will deem them as acceptable as well. The South Central Region will also honor any waiver for Performance levels by an institution if it has been approved by the state.

All participants enrolled in a fundable training or employment service must have the Training Appropriateness Questions answered in the Case Management System. These questions include linking the job placement and/or training program with the employment opportunities in the local area. Each service is a little different in considering what meets the definition for linking the employment opportunities in the local area and could have some extenuating circumstances that would allow for an approval outside of the In-Demand need as reported by MERIC.

- b. Describe the actions the LWDB will take toward becoming or remaining a high-performance WDB.

As our state and region remain in a constant state of change, the South Central Region has adopted a resolve to be successful. WIOA funding changes mandates that the South Central Board continues to work on refining processes, building partnerships, and reviewing consolidations as necessary - to ensure that we continue on a path of growth for the South Central Region. Actions to specifically improve local WIOA Performance Rates include but are not limited to:

- Continuous monitoring reviews being completed by the case manager, program staff, and compliance manager. These reviews target the case management entries for validity.
- Review of 100% of all new enrollments - The South Central Region Compliance Manager reviews 100% of all program enrollments during two rounds of the Sub-State Monitoring to ensure eligibility, service activities, case note entries, and other policy guidelines are in compliance.
- Staff training is provided by the Compliance Manager and One Stop Operator.
- All staff attend monthly Q & A sessions with the OWD monitor.

The South Central Compliance Manager tracks negative performance outcomes for the region through the MoPerforms Database System. This system allows us to see who is and will be coming up in performance measures and allows us to investigate accounts showing a negative outcome to ensure all necessary information was put into the system. Monitoring the performance outcomes on at least a quarterly basis has allowed us to change some participants from negative status to a positive outcome.

Local Administration

16. Chief Elected Official (CEO)

Please identify the CEO. List the name, title, address, phone number and email address. Place it on a cover sheet in **Attachment 3**.

See **Attachment 3**

17. CEO Consortium Agreement and Bylaws

If the LWDA includes more than one unit of local government, the Chief Elected Officials (CEO) may develop a CEO agreement; however, it is not mandatory under WIOA law. If the LWDA is including a CEO agreement, please specify the respective roles of the individual CEOs and include the **CEO Consortium Agreement as Attachment 3 including any CEO Bylaws** that are in effect.

See **Attachment 3**

NOTE: (The CEO membership should be reviewed after each county and/or municipal election. If there are changes in the CEO membership, or leadership, a new CEO agreement will need to be signed and submitted to OWD by the first day of June following the election.) OWD must be notified with the contact information as soon as the CEO takes office.

18. Local Workforce Development Board (LWDB) Membership

Please list the LWDB members in **Attachment 4**. Identify the members of the Board, the organization or business they represent, and the category (i.e., business, labor, adult education and literacy, vocational rehabilitation, Wagner-Peyser/OWD, higher education, economic development, TANF, Other) The LWDB Certification Form may be used.

- **LWDB Standing Committees**
List of all **standing committees** on a separate page in **Attachment 4**.
- **LWDB Certification Letter (2023)**
Include in **Attachment 4** a copy of the current **LWDB certification letter**

See **Attachment 4**

19. **LWDB Bylaws**

The Board must review its by-laws annually and complete the “Local Workforce Development Board’s ATTESTATION FOR REVIEW OF BY-LAWS” form included near the end of this document. Include the Board’s current by-laws and the completed attestation form (copy is included in this guidance) as **Attachment 5** to the Plan.

See **Attachment 5**

Local Planning & Fiscal Oversight

20. **Local Fiscal Agent**

Identify the **Local Fiscal Agent**. Include contact information. Include the information as **Attachment 6**.

See **Attachment 6**

21. **Competitive Procurement**

Describe the competitive (procurement) process used to award the grants and contracts in the LWDA for activities carried out under Title I of WIOA, including the process to procure training services for Youth and any that are made as exceptions to the ITA process. Include the information on the following processes: advertisement/notification to prospective bidders, time period bidders have to respond to the solicitation, evaluation and award/non-award notification. This may include those pages from the Board’s procurement guidelines that describe the competitive-procurement process and the process to procure Youth training providers. Include the **Financial Procurement Policy as Attachment 9**.

See **Attachment 9**

22. **Duplicative Costs and Services**

a. **Eliminating Duplicative Administrative Costs**

Describe how the Board is working toward eliminating duplicative administrative costs to enable increased training investments.

Administrative costs have been streamlined by operating programs in house.

b. **Eliminating Duplicative Services**

Identify how the Board ensures that services are not duplicated.

Staff are aware that WIOA is the last resort for funding. They work with the participants to determine what other funding sources are available to them (i.e. CSBG, SkillUp, Delta Regional Authority funds, UMOs, Fast Track, PELL, grants, scholarships). Front line staff work diligently with partners to braid services.

23. Planning Budget Summaries (PBSs)

Include the Planning Budget Summaries for the upcoming Program Year and Fiscal Year in **Attachment 7** to the Plan.

See **Attachment 7**

24. Complaint and Grievance Policy / EEO Policy

Establish and define the local policy and procedure for Complaint and Grievance Implementation of the Nondiscrimination and Equal Opportunity Provisions of WIOA. Both policies should be incorporated into the MOU and disseminated throughout the LWDA for all workforce development professionals to understand and implement. This should adhere to federal and state complaint and grievance guidance and policy. Include either a statement that the Board will follow the state policy or develop a local policy and include a copy as **Attachment 10** to the Plan.

See **Attachment 10**

25. Planning Process and Partners

The expectation is that the Board will involve business, organized labor, local public officials, community-based organizations, WIOA service providers, and other stakeholders in the development and review of this Plan. Describe the local plan development process, including how input for the Local Plan was obtained by all the partners involved in the MOU. Also, see **Attachment 57 - Statement of Assurances**.

See **Attachment 57**

26. Performance Negotiations

Identify the local levels of performance negotiated with the Governor and CEO to be used to measure the performance of the Board and to be used by the Board for measuring the performance of the Local Fiscal Agent (where appropriate), eligible providers, and the One-Stop Delivery System in the LWD

Program Year 2025 Performance Negotiations.

	Adult	Dislocated Worker	Youth	Wagner Peyser
Employment Rate Q2	74%	80%	73%	67%
Employment Rate Q4	75%	78%	72%	64%
Credential Attainment	71%	72%	60%	N/A
Measurable Skills Gain	63%	64%	45%	N/A
Median Earnings	\$6,600	\$6,300	\$4,300	\$6,000

27. Public Comment

Describe the process used by the Board to provide an opportunity for public comment, including comment by representatives of businesses and labor organizations, and input into the development of the Plan, prior to submission of the Plan. Provide an affidavit of proof of this public announcement for comment.

See **Attachment 57 - Statement of Assurances**

We have requested assistance from multiple partners to develop this four year plan. We continually strive to improve by engaging in discussions with board and committee members, chambers, NEXUS meetings, economic development and leadership groups. While writing this plan we have conducted research to develop and update services for the South Central Region. The plan will be posted for public comment for fifteen business days on the SCWIB Website during the month of April 2026.

28. Assurances

- a. Complete and sign the “**Statement of Assurances Certification**” form located in this guidance and include this as **Attachment 57** to the Plan.

PROGRAM ELEMENTS

The **WIOA Core Program Partners** in Missouri are:

- Adult Program -(Title I)
- Dislocated Worker Program (Title I)
- Youth Program (Title I)
- Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Program (AEL; Title II)
- Wagner-Peyser Act Program (Title III)
- Vocational Rehabilitation Program (VR; Title IV); and Rehabilitation Services for the Blind Program (RSB; Title IV)

In addition to the above, the **WIOA Combined State Plan Partners** include employment and training activities carried out under:

- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF; 42 U.S.C. 601 et seq.)
- The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP; Programs authorized under Section 6(d)(4) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 [7 U.S.C. 2015(d)(4)]; and
- Community Services Block Grant (CSBG; Programs authorized under the Community Services Block Grant Act [42 U.S.C. 9901 et seq.]

Service Delivery

29. One-Stop Service Delivery

Describe how the LWDA is assisting customers in making informed choices based on quality workforce information and accessing quality training providers. Provide a list of one-stop partner products and services available at each Missouri Job Center.

Utilizing MERIC information, WorkKeys scores, and Talify assessments, the Job Center staff recognizes in-demand occupations and provides opportunities for consumer-choice training accordingly. The State determines eligibility of training providers and WDB adheres to that. This Eligible Training Provider List shows us how well these approved programs are performing in the areas of credentialing, employment 2nd and 4th Quarters after exit, and median earnings after 2nd Qtr. Work-based learning training providers are available that provide OJT for customers interested in training with those employers to enhance their skills set and gain employment immediately.

Adult and Dislocated Workers

30. Title I - Employment and Training Products and Services

Provide a description and assessment of the type and availability of all Adult and Dislocated Worker employment and training activities in the LWDA. Please include how the Board uses products and services, such as workshops, assessment products (Key Train, WorkKeys /National Career Readiness Certificate [NCRC], etc.) and jobseeker products (such as Résumé Builder, etc.), to engage customers and assist with their re-employment efforts.

AD and DW re-employment services will be accomplished through immediately engaging clients through career and training level services as eligibility, appropriateness, and funding allows. It is the goal of each Missouri Job Center staff to ensure customers leave the Job Center a better job applicant than when they walked in. To this end, staff-assisted services will be emphasized and Missouri Job Center services will be continuously promoted. Available employment and training activities include: eligibility determination; outreach, intake, and orientation to the information and services available through the one-stop delivery system; initial and specialized assessments including literacy, numeracy, English Language proficiency, aptitudes, abilities and supportive service needs; labor exchange services, job search and placement assistance; workshops, employment statistics information; performance information and program cost per eligible providers of training; local performance information; provision of information regarding filing claims for unemployment compensation; development of an individualized employment plan; short term pre-vocational services; adult work experience, occupational skills training; on-the-job training; skill enhancement services; adult education and literacy activities; retention assistance; and follow-up.

31. Unemployment Insurance Claimant Services (UI)

Describe the strategies and services that will be used in the local area to strengthen linkages between the one-stop delivery system and unemployment insurance programs. Provide a description of how Unemployment Insurance claimants will be provided reemployment services. Include how Worker Profiling and Re-employment Services (WPRS) will be delivered on a weekly basis between the Office of Workforce Development and partner staff.

Assistance with Unemployment Insurance is an important Missouri Job Center service to many of the visitors that come to the Center. When a customer comes to the Job Center for job search, the following will be checked:

- Job Center staff will explain how to apply for unemployment and give the customer information on unemployment.
- If a customer needs significant assistance Job Center staff assist the customer filling their claim on the UInteract website.
- When a customer has questions about their unemployment they will be referred to the UI telephone bank to talk to a Regional Claims Center staff person.
- The RESEA activity focus on identifying customers receiving UI benefits that may be expected to exhaust these benefits without skill development and job search assistance. This activity also has several direct linkages to UI services, since participation for identified customers is mandatory and UI benefits can be jeopardized if participation does not occur. As such, this activity will be managed by Job Center staff to ensure that these critical UI linkages are maintained.
- Request RESEA Selection: The UI automated system will select worker profilers to be scheduled through the Missouri Job Center. In this letter, these customers will be informed of the specific services that they

will receive from Missouri Job Center as part of the RESEA activity as well as the specific date and time that they must attend an information session at the Missouri Job Center.

- RESEA enrollments: All customers that enroll in the program will have the following information entered into the MoJobs system (if it is not already entered): (1) their demographics, and (2) a career service. During enrollment customers will be given information that is required by the RESEA programs as well as job search advice and direction. Of critical importance, however, these customers will also be highly encouraged to participate in the services offered within the Missouri Job Center and these services will be described in some detail.

32. On-the-Job Training (OJT)

Describe the Board's on-going strategies for promoting and increasing the number of participants in work-based learning and On-the-Job Training (OJT). Provide a summary of the results.

The WDB has a strong network of ties in its community. The Job Center staff works with employers, community agencies and education institutions in order to promote the comprehensive programs that are available and enhances the region's economic stability and prosperity with focusing on the demands and needs of the region. They tackle the regular disparities in the local market by assisting businesses and jobseekers alike. The goal is to connect the jobseeker with employment opportunities and employers with a skilled labor force. The WDB team has networked with local employers to identify the skill demands for the local region. The WDB Team, WDB staff and the Missouri Job Center Staff work together as one unit, collaborating with each other to identify current underlying issues in the local workforce. The staff focuses on community outreach to local business and to the citizens. The goal is to provide the programs to the people and businesses it serves. The Job Center staff evaluates the skills, knowledge and barriers of the job seekers while coordinating with local employers to collaborate on the obstacles and hurdles they face when hiring employees. By working in a partnership, the WDB is working towards developing the talent pipeline that is in demand while creating a bright career path for individuals/families. Our OJT results indicate that we have increased enrollments for PY25 to five enrollees so far. Moving forward as we continue to network with local employers these numbers are expected to continue to increase.

33. Credential Attainment / WorkKeys Assessment

Explain the Board's strategies for increasing the attainment of credentials, degrees, and certificates by participants in your LWDA and any accommodations you have made to make attainment easier (i.e., collocation of AEL centers, extended hours, etc.). In addition, please describe the Board's approach to ensuring every Missouri Job Center customer has the opportunity to take the WorkKeys assessments and obtain a NCRC. This should include how the Board collaborates with the local community college(s) in the LWDA to provide space and/or proctoring services for WorkKeys assessments on an as-needed basis.

WorkKeys Assessments are promoted to the job seeker as a valuable credential to be utilized in their job search and as an identifier of their abilities. WorkKeys is promoted to employers as a tool to assist in identifying foundational skills needed. Job Center staff encourages employers to include NCRC preferred when posting job orders. Introducing WorkKeys to students 18 and over, by proctoring on-site, allows for an increase in training achievements. WorkKeys are highly encouraged but due to some accommodation limitations through ACT requirements, WorkKeys cannot be required. Utilizing WorkKeys in this fashion is the first step to identifying abilities and interests that lead to a fulfilling career pathway for our customers.

Once a career pathway is recognized, the Job Center staff, and partners, jointly assists in the attainment of needed credentials, degrees or training.

Upon enrollment, every participant signs a Release of Information that allows us to contact the schools to get information on attendance and progress as well as the authorization to release required documents that needed for performance related documentation.

Partnerships with AEL, Career & Technology Centers, as well as Community Colleges allows for referrals, shared proctoring, and space.

34. ETT Services / Layoff Aversion

Describe how the Board coordinates with the LWDA's Employment Transition Team Coordinators to ensure that information and services are delivered in a seamless fashion, including how pre-layoff services are coordinated and provided. In addition, please provide a description of the proactive measures that are taken to identify potential layoffs in the LWDA, how information is shared with LWDA's Employment Transition Team Coordinators and how layoff aversion strategies are coordinated.

See [OWD Issuance 07-2015 Statewide Employment Transition Team Policy](#). Include as **Attachment 29** the DW Employment Transition Team Policy.

35.

See **Attachment 29**

Youth

36. Youth Standing Committee Requirements

WIOA allows for a Youth Standing Committee if its membership and expertise meets the WIOA requirements [(WIOA sec. 107(b)(4)(C)]. Please document whether the Board will designate a Youth Standing Committee. If a Youth Standing Committee is not designated, then the Plan needs to state that the Board is not using a Youth Standing Committee. Whether the Board retains responsibility and oversight of Youth services or a Standing Committee is established, the Board should describe how the Board or Youth Standing Committee will meet the requirements of 20 CFR §681.100 and §681.120.

The South Central WIB has established a Youth Committee. The Youth Committee provides information and assists with planning, operation, and oversight of the provision of services to youth in the South Central region.

37. YSC Composition / Services / Procurement of Providers / Meeting Schedule & Agenda items

- a. Describe the composition of the Youth Standing Committee (if designated) and its participation in the design of Youth services in the LWDA

The South Central Region's Youth Committee contains representation of AEL, local apprenticeship, Department of Social Services, judicial system, and private sector WIB members with interest in serving to make a difference in the youth of our region.

- b. Describe the development of the Plan relating to Youth services

The Youth Committee reviews the services offered, enrollment numbers and activities and performance. Plans are then put into place, with their input, regarding how best to service the WIOA youth population of the South Central region.

- c. Provide an explanation of the YSC role in the procurement of Youth service providers, and recommending eligible Youth providers to the Board, ensuring the 14 elements are a part of the services planned and conducting oversight with respect to eligible Youth providers of Youth activities and the procurement of Youth service providers. See [OWD Issuance 16-2014 WIOA Standing Youth Committees Requirements](#).

Request for Proposal (RFP) is reviewed, discussed, possibly revised, and approved by the Youth Committee. The Youth Committee then recommends the RFP to the full board. Notification is produced via email, social media, website, etc. of the request for bids. A pre-bid orientation is required for those who intend to bid. The Youth Committee reviews the received proposals, scores them, and makes a recommendation to the board. Once a provider has been voted on and approved by the full board, the awarded bidder gets a phone call or personal visit within 24 hours from the Executive Director to confirm acceptance of the contract. All other bidders get a letter within 3-5 business days notifying them of the decision. The awarded bidder is published on our website.

- d. Also, provide information regarding the Youth Standing Committee meetings, such as any core agenda items that would be included, and the planned meeting schedule (i.e., the first Tuesday of every quarter, etc.).

The Youth Committee meets quarterly prior to the Board Meeting. Additional meetings may be scheduled should the need arise. The agenda varies, but most often includes any updates related to budgets, enrollments, and performance. Partner information is also shared with members.

38. Youth Activities

Provide a description and assessment of the types and availability of Youth activities in the LWDA, including an identification of successful providers of such activities. This description should include:

- a. How the Youth activities in the LWDA are developed to ensure the 14 program elements are available within the LWDA;

All program elements are provided by various individuals, state agencies, community action agencies, organizations, institutions, local schools, WDB Case Managers, etc. as applicable to the element that is being provided. Subcontractors will provide and/or coordinate services for the 14 elements; if coordinating with another entity procurement procedures will be followed and a MOU will be developed identifying the roles of each entity. (See Section 38. Youth – 14 Elements for a list of providers for each element.)

- b. The actual services provided by the LWDA for Youth, the element they represent, and how they fit within DOL's themes (see TEGl 05-12) for the emphasis on serving Youth within a comprehensive Youth development approach;

-Tutoring, study skills training, instruction, and evidence-based dropout prevention and recovery: All staff rely on our AEL partners to provide classroom instruction and tutoring for the HiSet exam. Staff work with High School counselors to re-engage youth in HS when possible.

- Alternative secondary school offerings or dropout recovery services: We work with all the established Alt. Ed programs. Staff work with HS counselors to re-engage youth in HS when possible.

-Work Experience: 20% of WIOA budget is dedicated to paid work experience. Additionally, youth can participate, as appropriate, in unpaid work experience and job shadowing as well as paid and unpaid internships and OJT.

-Occupational Skills Training: After completing a series of career exploration activities as a part of our work readiness curriculum, we assist youth in applying for available financial aid. If the chosen program of study is not Pell eligible, we have the option to pay for some short-term training expenses. Most often we provide supportive services to assist the youth in getting started with schooling. We pay expenses such as, application and testing fees. Periodic visits to area Higher Ed and Vocational Ed campuses including Job Corp are arranged as the need arises.

-Education-Workforce preparation, specific to occupation or occupational cluster: We assist in all education based programs for the youth. If the program of study is non-Pell eligible then program may be used to pay for some short-term training expenses. Youth will be referred to WIOA Adult services as appropriate. Most often we provide supportive services to assist the youth in getting started with schooling. We pay expenses such as application and testing fees, deposits etc. Occupational education for recognized post- secondary credentials aligned with in-demand industry will follow in the same manner as any other educational training program.

-Leadership Development: Case Management staff provides leadership development through exposure to postsecondary education, community projects, etc. Workshops are also offered throughout the year to youth on a rotating basis that can include topics such as empowerment strategies, financial and credit management, buying or renting homes, social networking, the value of volunteering, community services, and top jobs.

-Supportive Services and Incentives: It is the responsibility of the Case Manager to coordinate these services with applicable community agencies. See attached supportive service and Incentive policy. Incentive money is earned through earning credentials, training and skill gains.

-Adult mentoring: All workplace placements require youth be assigned an adult workplace mentor to work directly with the youth focusing on appropriate workplace habits and behaviors. Mentoring activities may include: Job shadowing and guidance provided by an adult to assist the youth to increase his/her academic performance; goal-setting; support meetings to increase youth motivation; career exploration assistance; world ethics and social skills improvement.

-Follow-Up Services: Follow-up services are offered for at least twelve months after exit. This may include Regular contact with a participant's employer, including assistance in addressing work-related problems that arise; assistance in securing better paying jobs, career development and further education; work-related peer support groups; mentoring; tracking the progress and earnings of participants in employment after training; and credential attainment post-program.

-Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling: Case Management staff provides a large amount of individual and group guidance and counseling related to career exploration, personal counseling, counseling, financial counseling, and goal setting as needed.

-Financial Literacy Education: Case Management staff provides training through Financial Literacy module and outside training from financial resources to create budgets, initiate checking and savings accounts and learn how to effectively manage spending, credit and debt, teach the significance of credit reports and scores to include identity theft awareness and training. Additionally, the Missouri Extension office is working in partnership with local career centers to offer financial workshops, and we will promote this to our youth population when available.

-Entrepreneurial Skills Training: Case Management provides training including DVD presentation titled, "Entrepreneurship: Be Your Own Boss" to teach the basics of starting and operating a small business.

Case Managers will track and offer Entrepreneurial training opportunities as they become available.

-Services Provided for Labor Market and Employment Information: Case Management provides training through the modules provided in Work Readiness workshops as well as workshops provided by other resources such as the Missouri Job Centers, Missouri Extension, etc.

- c. The process for identification of Youth service providers;

Request for Proposal (RFP) is reviewed, discussed, possibly revised, and approved by the Youth Action Network. The Youth Committee then recommends RFP to the full board. Notification is produced via email, social media, website, etc. of the request for bids. A pre-bid orientation is required for those who intend to bid. The Youth Committee reviews the received proposals, scores them, and makes a recommendation to the board. Once a provider has been voted on and approved by the full board, the awarded bidder gets a phone call or personal visit within 24 hours from the Executive Director to confirm acceptance of the contract. All other bidders get a letter within 3-5 business days notifying them of the decision. The awarded bidder is published on our website.

- d. The evaluation of service providers for performance and impact (please provide details on frequency and criteria);

WDB staff work at the direction of the WDB Executive Director and the board itself, to verify that the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) regulations are being upheld and the subcontractor or service provider are performing according to proposals submitted and contracts signed. WDB staff will monitor a percentage of all new WIOA past career enrollments per program (funding source-AD, DW, Youth) during the first and second quarter of each contract year based on the direction of the WDB Executive Director and the Board. WDB staff will also monitor appropriation programs during program operation to reduce compliance issues. A random technique will be used to identify the selection of files. All forms for eligibility documentation, services rendered, and payments are compared to MoJobs for data entry accuracy.

Process for and findings of the monitoring process are presented to and reviewed by the Youth Committee and then the full board. Participant files are reviewed for WIOA eligibility, priority of services, complaint and grievance procedures, employment plans, need for services past career, On-the-Job Training contracts, training plans, supportive services, assessments provided, outcome attainment, supplemental data and the appropriateness of participant payments. WDB staff also monitors for compliance with WIOA, NGCC, Fair Labor Standards Act, Americans with Disabilities Act, and Child Labor Laws. Process for and findings of the monitoring are presented, reviewed, and approved by the Youth Committee and ultimately the full board.

- e. The providers of the Youth services in the LWDA, including the areas and elements they provide;

South Central Investment Board will be the provider of youth services for July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026 and provide the following:

- Tutoring, study skills training, instruction, and evidence-based dropout prevention and recovery
- Alternative secondary school offerings or dropout recovery services
- Work Experience
- Occupational Skills Training
- Education-Workforce preparation, specific to occupation or occupational cluster
- Leadership development

- Supportive services
 - Adult mentoring
 - Follow-up services
 - Comprehensive guidance and counseling
 - Financial Literacy Education
 - Entrepreneurial Skills Training
 - Services provided for labor market and employment information
 - Transition to post-secondary Education and training
- f. How year-round services are provided to Youth 16–24 years of age that are still in high school or out of school;

The Employment Specialists are flexible and willing to work from various locations. Workshops, activities, and meetings are conducted year-round. Outreach to schools, and other locations youth frequent, are intensified as summer draws closer to promote WIOA youth services to in and out of school youth year-round. While promoting year round services, staff have also focused on offering summer employment opportunities for eligible youth, both in and out-of-school. Work experience provides short term employment in a field the youth have expressed interest in, to provide the youth with hands on training.

This has been a successful partnership with our local employers and has given much needed summer employment opportunities to rural youth.

- g. An example of the flow of services for a Youth in the LWDA (please include all aspects, including intake, objective assessment process, assessment, coordination of services, follow-up, etc.)

All Youth are assisted in completing the Wagner-Peyser registration, which includes:

- Job Center Orientation to describe all available services to the Youth and required steps to receive services, which includes the WIOA eligibility process;
- Entering demographic information, background employment history, education history and personal data regarding their potential to enter employment on the Wagner-Peyser application and selecting the Wagner-Peyser participation date;
- Developing a resume for a job search that is based on current work history, the highest level of education and volunteer experiences;
- Assessment of "occupational interest using ONET Interest Profile
- Provide Local Labor Market Information to determine how the Youth's interests match the local labor market and the skill requirements to gain employment in high-demand sustainable employment;
- Identification of potential barriers to employment and referral to partner agencies in an effort to resolve or eliminate the barrier(s); this includes referral to the WIOA Youth Program and services;
- WIOA eligibility must be determined and documented in MO Jobs prior to enrollment in WIOA activities and services. Activities include:
 - WorkKeys Assessment (when applicable) to determine if basic skills deficiency is a barrier;
 - Completion of Objective Assessment (OA) interview as a point-in-time assessment of the

youth's strengths, goals, and barriers. The OA identifies the Youth's strengths, talents, and abilities and any barriers to their active participation in the Youth program and the workforce.

- All assessment results determine the category of services the Youth will need to obtain their long-term employment goal.
- WIOA requires the OA to identify career pathways and appropriate services for Youth based on the evaluation of the Youth's current skills at the time of assessment and the skills that need to be developed, including Work Readiness soft skills.
- An Individual Service Strategy (employment plan) is developed, including the career pathway identified as a result of labor market research, basic skills assessment, and occupational interest results; a long-term goal for employment is included, and the short-term goals and objectives needed to obtain the goals.
- A review of Mo Scores is conducted to identify appropriate training providers available to assist with career pathway development who are WIOA-approved when Occupational Skills Training is required.
- Additional local labor market review is conducted with work-based training if assessed to be needed to ensure career pathway development and attainment of the youth's long-term employment goal.
- Job Development may be needed to connect the Youth to approved employers when Work Based Training is assessed as a necessary training component to develop job-specific skills.
- Case Management is provided continuously throughout WIOA participation and case notes are entered accordingly.
- Evaluations are conducted to determine progress or shortcomings.
- Job development and placement services are provided at the end of training to ensure the youth enters a training-related occupation connected to their career development pathway.
- Credentials and entered employment are documented for performance standards.
- Follow-up services are conducted for 12 months following the Youth's exit from the program to ensure job retention.

h. The procedures for serving Youth that are most in need (homeless, disabled, offenders, etc.);

The South Central area local agency partners, with many local agencies, address all at-risk youth through referrals and partnerships of committee involvement and community connections. This ensures that all areas of concern are addressed and includes youth that are most in need. Youth who are subject to the juvenile or adult justice system-after needs are determined, services needed and provided through WIOA are administered. For services needed and not provided under WIOA, youth are referred to appropriate partner agencies.

- Youth are assessed to determine their barriers to completing their education or entering employment. Barriers may include basic skills deficient, runaway, offender, homeless, pregnant/parenting, school dropout, foster child, aged out of foster care, an individual with a disability, English language learner, justice-involved, and dealing with substance abuse.

- Youth most in need are of the highest priority, and all resources will be explored to assist them.
- Partner agencies, including the Department of Social Services, Division of Youth Services, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Adult Education and Literacy, faith-based organizations, homeless shelters, school districts, and the Juvenile Justice system, are engaged to assist in serving the Youth most in need.
- i. The identification of the partnerships and describe the coordination of services with other agencies within the LWDA.

The South Central agency partners address all at-risk youth through referrals and partnerships of committee involvement and community connections. This ensures that all areas of concern are addressed and includes youth that are most in need. Youth who are subject to the juvenile or adult justice system can receive services that are provided through WIOA.

For services needed and not provided under WIOA, youth are referred to appropriate partner agencies.

- Youth who are disabled- after needs are determined, services needed and provided through WIOA are administered. For services needed and not provided under WIOA, Youth are referred to appropriate partner agencies.
- Youth who are homeless- after needs are determined, services needed and provided through WIOA are administered. For services needed and not provided under WIOA, youth are referred to appropriate partner agencies.
- Youth who are pregnant or parenting- after needs are determined, services needed and provided through WIOA are administered. For services needed and not provided under WIOA, youth are referred to appropriate partner agencies.
- Youth who have dropped out of high school- after needs are determined, services needed and provided through WIOA are administered. For services needed and not provided under WIOA, youth are referred to appropriate partner agencies.

39. Innovative Service-Delivery Projects for OSY

Provide a description of any innovative service-delivery projects for OSY currently operating in the LWDA or a project the Board is planning to implement. Describe the Board’s involvement in the projects, and the Board’s efforts to continue involvement and funding for the continuation of these projects.

The South Central Region realizes the importance of developing Pre-Apprenticeship and Apprenticeship Programs. We are exploring the possibility of sponsoring both programs. We have also been in contact with employers in the trade industry (HVAC, electrical, plumbing, carpentry) to develop worksites.

Agricultural Employment Services (AES)

40. Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers / Agricultural Employment Services

WIOA section 167 provides the framework for agricultural services delivery. National Farmworkers Jobs Program (NFJP) services and grants are implemented at 20 CFR Part 685, as proposed. The current Section 167 Grantee, UMOS—United Migrant Opportunity Services, must be included in the MOU as the NFJP partner. The Plan should address how the LWDB will cooperate with UMOS and the State Agricultural Employment Services office to provide employment and training services to this population.

The Workforce Investment Board of South Central Missouri has a MOU with UMOS/AES in accordance with WIOA section 167 to provide employment and training services to this population. When participants are eligible for WIOA and UMOS, we refer them to the agency for dual enrollment. Allowing the co-enrollment with both agencies allows us to offer a wider variety of services for that participant and allows the braiding of funding for any training and/or employment associated participant cost.

Business Services

40. Employer Engagement

Describe the strategies and services that will be used in the LWDA facilitate engagement of employers in workforce development programs, including small employers and employers in in-demand industry sectors and occupations.

Employer engagement is conducted through the coordinated efforts of the team members, a comprehensive group of Board Staff, the OWD Rapid Response Team, the NEXUS group, the Department of Social Services, Vocational Rehabilitation, and local Veterans Representatives.

The South Central Workforce Investment Board recognizes the need to engage employers and provides input to staff for effective methods to facilitate communication and determine needs.

Our private sector board members bring a wealth of knowledge and valuable input in the fields of advanced manufacturing, transportation, health care, clean energy, construction trades and restaurant management. Their perspective is a valuable resource.

Board meetings are an opportunity to engage board members to provide strategic direction to enhance and streamline efforts to grow local economies. Members add expertise from both a customer and a local perspective, and bring strategies for recruiting, hiring, skills training, and entrepreneurial opportunities.

41. Services to Meet the Workforce Needs of Employers

Describe how the Board coordinates and provides comprehensive and integrated workforce system services to businesses, including the development and delivery of innovative workforce services and strategies to meet the needs of area employers. Explain the collaboration with Missouri Job Center Jobs Teams to facilitate recruitment and meet business demand.

Recognizing the uniqueness of each employer is essential in meeting their individual needs. This is achieved through Job Fairs, Manufacturing Days, round table discussions, town hall meetings, chamber meetings and local workforce committees. The services in the Job Centers are not only for Job Seekers but also for Employers, Organizations, and Community Partners as well. Education and agency partnerships are major factors in meeting the needs of both job seekers and employers. The South Central Workforce Investment Board continues strong partnerships with our two community colleges, our trade schools, driving academies and with our many vo-tech schools. We need their expertise to develop curriculum to educate our workforce.

42. Economic Development

Describe how the Board will better coordinate workforce development programs with economic development including how the LWDB will promote entrepreneurial skills training and microenterprise services.

The South Central Region sits within two Regional Planning organizations, South Central Ozarks Council of Governments (SCOCOG) and Ozark Foothills Regional Planning Commission (OFRPC). The WIB Executive Director sits on the SCOCOG Board and we have board members that sit on both of the Regional Planning Commissions. They are aware of our Job Center opportunities for business and job seekers. Economic Development leads the regional groups, working to bring growth, grant opportunities and an excellent resource for local information.

The WIB staff are available to work directly with businesses in our region, customizing agreements to fit their needs. The WIB works in two ways: coordinating the disbursement of Job Center information to businesses and in turn relays business needs to the Job Center. The South Central Region offers On-Job-Training and Work Experience to our businesses. We are also exploring Pre-Apprenticeship and Apprenticeship opportunities.

43. Sector Strategy Initiative / Career Pathways

Describe the Board's sector-strategy initiative. Describe how the Board will be collaborating and aligning resources of all partners, public and private, toward developing a talent pipeline, and how that alignment will create meaningful career pathways for workers possessing skill levels serving important regional industries. Indicate how system services will be framed by industry sectors that are data driven, regionally designed, and guided by employers and how these strategies will be sustained. Include the methods the Board will be using to inform and engage key public and private stakeholders in the development of sector-strategies and career pathways.

The South Central Workforce Investment Board and the local Job Center staff work together to create a framework that aligns various stakeholders, resources, and activities toward common goals, fostering growth and innovation within the chosen sectors. Key components of a sector strategy initiative include needs assessment, stakeholder engagement, goal setting, resources, skill development, and evaluation. A sector strategy initiative aims to create a conducive environment for sustainable growth and competitiveness, fostering economic development within the targeted industry. This strategy is sustained through various meetings throughout the region with key stakeholders involved.

44. Business Services Plan

Boards shall maintain a Business Services Plan, outlining team members, including WIOA core and combined partners, and the marketing and outreach roles and expectations of team members. The Business Services Plan also should outline the team's purpose, goals, and policies and procedures to ensure seamless delivery of services, avoid duplication, and ensure feedback to the Board's Job centers. The plan should explain how the services provided by business service staff will be recorded in the client case management system for the calculation of two types of Effectiveness in Serving Employers Measure. (1-number of businesses served and 2-market penetration of businesses in the area). Include the **Business Services Plan as Attachment 30**.

Business Service Plan – Part about Effectiveness in Serving Employers:

There are two Employer Performance Measures for Missouri. These two measures are:

1. Repeat Business Customers - the number of employer establishments that have used core program employer services during the current reporting period (current program year) that also have used core program employer services one or more times during the previous three program years. This can indicate whether employers who receive services from the core programs are satisfied with those services and become repeat customers. It also indicates the ability to develop and maintain strong relationships with employers over time.

1. Employer Penetration Rate - a percentage of employers using services out of all employers in the State. This tracks the percentage of employers who are using the core program services out of all the employers in the State. The number of employer establishments served within a program year will be compared to the aggregate total of State employers. That total will be based on the Bureau of Labor Statistics Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages.

All staff in the South Central Region that provide employer services must accurately record those services in the statewide electronic case management system (Currently MoJobs). To “Record” a service means to select the appropriate activity code for the service(s) provided to each business. Staff must record all applicable services for each employer at the time the service was provided. The OWD has published Issuance 04-2018 which includes the Participant Activity Codes, Durations, and Definitions provides policy guidelines and instructions. The Attachment for the Activity Code Policy lists activities and their definitions that identify those activities as a staff-assisted service to an employer. Staff are required to use this as a reference to determine which term is the best fit for the services provided to the employer. The Employer Services recorded in the system are monitored by the WDB Compliance Department. Training is provided on an as needed basis based on program requests, issues/concerns, or lack of recorded services.

See **Attachment 30**

Innovative Service Delivery Strategies

45. Missouri Re-entry Process / Ex-offender Initiative

Describe how the LWDB will support the Missouri re-entry process / ex-offender initiative. Include the services to be provided for ex-offenders and the process to be used to identify employers willing to hire ex-offenders.

South Central WIB supports the Missouri Re-entry Process ex-offender initiative by closely partnering with Probation & Parole. We have employers in South Central region that specifically request these participants for employment with their business. The Job Centers continue to work with justice involved individuals, exposing them to all services available. Staff encourage assessments, WorkKeys testing, attendance in workshops, education/training and job placement.

46. Work-based Learning / Transitional Jobs

Describe the Board’s innovative strategies for promoting and increasing enrollments in the work-based learning programs, such as Registered Apprenticeship, On-the-Job Training (OJT), Work Experience, Internships, Incumbent Worker Training, Transitional Jobs, and Customized Training. Include processes to target and encourage employer participation.

Our strategy for promoting and increasing enrollments in the work-based learning programs is to partner closely with OWD Regional Workforce Coordinator, OWD Job Center Supervisors and the local WIB staff. This partnership is accomplished by including them in the monthly One-Stop Partner meetings, the NEXUS meetings, as well as meetings to discuss appropriate businesses to target and ensure contact with businesses are coordinated so as not to duplicate visits, but to build relationships that will encourage participation with employers throughout the region.

47. Trade Adjustment Assistance

Describe the Board's strategies for ensuring customers are aware of the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) program and are co-enrolled into both WIOA Dislocated Worker and TAA, except in extenuating circumstances? (**Integration of Services or Co-enrollment Policy should be Attachment 23**)

The South Central Workforce Investment Region will make every attempt to co-enroll all eligible Trade Act Participants into the WIOA Dislocated Worker Program. Enrolling an individual into every program for which they are eligible is to maximize the options available to them to overcome barriers and successfully obtain self-sufficient employment. The Trade Act Staff Members and WIOA Staff Members in each comprehensive Job Center work together closely with participants that are eligible for both programs to ensure we are meeting co-enrollment requirements and offering the activities necessary to assist the participant with employment and training needs they are eligible to access. Participants enrolled into a program because of the OWD Co-Enrollment Policy are not given any special priority over other program participants. At times, there are extenuating circumstances that would not allow us to co-enroll a participant into both programs. These extenuating circumstances can include but are not limited to:

- If the Trade Participant has elected to go to a training program not approved by the Missouri State Eligible Training Provider System.
- If a participant was previously enrolled in the Trade Adjustment Act Program before the Co-Enrollment Policy went into effect on 7/29/2019, they were not co-enrolled unless it was requested/needed for the progress of the individual participant.
- If a participant is deemed ineligible for the WIOA DW Program based on information added to the Case Management System Application. (MoJobs WIOA Application)

Please see OWD Issuance 03-2019 FAQ for more information and OWD responses to extenuating circumstance concerns.

48. Missouri Community Colleges

Describe how the Board will coordinate with the local community colleges. Please describe in depth the referral process of participants between the Community Colleges and Job Centers. Please include the **MOU (cooperative agreement) between the Board and Community Colleges** if your LWDA has any as **Attachment 31** to the Plan.

Community colleges located in the South Central Region include Missouri State University(MSU) – West Plains Campus and Three Rivers Community College located in Poplar Bluff. The Board strives to strengthen the connections between its partnerships with the local community colleges by maintaining open communication between the job center staff and the community college staff. Faculty from the community colleges are involved in the monthly One-Stop partner meetings. Referrals are open lines of interaction on behalf of job seekers and students.

Upon enrollment, every participant signs a Release of Information that allows us to contact the schools to get information on attendance and progress as well as the authorization to release required documents that are needed for performance related documentation. Partnerships with Community Colleges allow for referrals, shared proctoring, and space.

49. Incumbent Worker Policy

If the LWDB has an **Incumbent Worker Policy**, please include it as **Attachment 32**. If not please include a statement that the LWDB does not have an Incumbent Worker Policy.

The South Central Region has discontinued the Incumbent Worker Policy.

Strategies for Faith-based and Community-based Organizations

50. Faith-based Strategies

Describe those activities to be undertaken to:

(1) increase the opportunities for participation of faith-based and community organizations as committed and active partners in the One-Stop Delivery System; and

In the South Central Region the Job Center staff, as well as the WIB staff, work on special projects and serve on committees through community based organizations.

(2) expand the access of faith-based and community-based organizations' customers to the services offered by the One-Stops in the LWDA.

Most community based organizations and many faith-based organizations are present and collaborating with other members to plan outreach and educate regarding the Workforce Development System in their respective areas.

REGIONAL PLANS

Regional Planning Guidance

51. Regional Plans

Missouri has designated 13 Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDAs). In accordance with WIOA sec. 106(c)(2), each of the LWDAs establish a Plan; however, collaboration must exist among the Kansas City and St. Louis Economic Regions for the creation of Regional Plans composed of the following:

1) For the Kansas City Region, one Regional Plan for the local planning areas of Kansas City and Vicinity Region and the East Jackson County Region; and

2) For the St. Louis Region, one Regional Plan for the local planning areas of: The City of St. Louis Region, the County of Saint Louis Region, the County of St. Charles Region, and the Jefferson/Franklin County Consortium Region.

While this establishes 13 Boards that are encouraged to collaborate, cooperate, and plan across common needs, they will not explicitly submit a Regional Plan. This establishes two Boards within the Kansas City Region that must contribute to a Regional Economic Plan for the Kansas City regional economy and four Boards within the St. Louis Region that must contribute to a Regional Economic Plan for the St. Louis regional economy.

Boards within the Kansas City and St. Louis regional economic planning areas must complete a regional planning requirement by including within each original LWDB Plan a Regional Economic Plan that is identically shared by all Boards in each economic region.

Include the **Regional Plan as Attachment 33**. Copies of Local Plans from other LWDAs in the region are not required for your Local Plan. Please submit the combined portion of the Regional Plan with signatures of the CEOs, Chairs and LWDB Directors.

NOTE:

Following approval of the Local Plan and Regional Plan, plans will be required to be posted on the LWDB website. Any updates or plan modifications will be required to be posted by the LWDB after approval. Please keep a current Local Plan and Regional Plan, if applicable, available on your website at all times.

No Regional Plan is required by South Central Region.