

WEST CENTRAL REGION LOCAL POLICY

| Subject | Effective Date | Revised | Policy Section |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------|-----------------------|
| Business Services Plan & Policy | 11/20/19 | | Programs |

The *Business Services Plan* for the West Central Region of Missouri highlights the needs of employers as revealed in *MERIC's 2019 Employer Survey*. The survey was conducted with over 1,600 Missouri companies, with five employees or more, during the time period April through June of 2019 to gauge the state of workforce from the employer's point of view.

(See <https://meric.mo.gov/media/pdf/missouri-employer-survey-results>)

This plan is an urgent call to action in meeting the economic challenges our region is facing regarding the demand for better trained and more skilled workers to boost productivity and help close the labor, wage, and skill gaps within our region.

The West Central Region will focus on developing and retaining a workforce with the education and skills to succeed in a 21st Century economy. *MERIC's 2019 Employer Survey* highlights several areas in which the local region's workforce partners can strategize:

- 1) A shortage of training programs was the highest barrier across the state, with significantly more non-metro employers (81%) than metro employers (64%).
- 2) Employers require occupations with different levels of experience or education, whether that is no experience to several years' experience, or low-skill to high-skill education. A majority of companies (72%) had half or more existing positions in low-skilled jobs. Middle skills were most required to meet the job applicant shortage.
- 3) Nearly nine in ten employers say they are addressing the skill shortage by hiring less experienced workers and training them. Non-metro areas stated they are more likely to take additional measures such as hiring contractors and hiring outside of the area.
- 4) By functional area the largest shortage of skilled applicants are in Patient Care, Manufacturing/Maintenance, and Skilled Trades.
- 5) The most common shortcoming in recent job applicants were shown to be poor work habits followed by lack of teamwork. Communication skills, problem solving and critical thinking were also high on the list.

Since businesses are faced with the above challenges the West Central Region's business services partners along with Job Center staff will assist businesses by providing training options and/or referral to the appropriate agency/organization or educational institution.

STRATEGIES FOR THE FUTURE

This plan will ensure that our region's business needs drive our efforts in meeting identified universal challenges. Strategies include:

- **Creating a single point of contact system**—a single point of contact system will be utilized for each of three defined areas of the region. A designated Missouri Job Center for each area will serve as the hub. Staff of the Missouri Job Centers will serve in lead positions to coordinate and deliver a streamlined business outreach system in collaboration with Nexus member agencies. Our region will emphasize customer service (measured by customer feedback through customer surveys) to identify and outline ways we can best meet the needs of the region's businesses.
- **Identifying training opportunities** – Seek out traditional and non-traditional deliveries of training often lacking in today's workforce such as soft skills, basic education, on-the-job training, and technical assistance training for partners. A broad spectrum of training opportunities and solutions for business training needs will be provided in order to match workers with the proper training needed to meet today's changing workforce demands. Efforts include:
 - Funding individual training accounts that are closely tied to Patient Care, Manufacturing/Maintenance, and Skilled Trades.
 - Using business leverage to encourage new training efforts and the creation of stackable credentials/career path opportunities.
 - Addressing needs for nationally-recognized, industry-based skill standards and occupational certifications.
 - Partnering with training providers able to deliver services in ways that respond to today's workforce development challenges (weekend classroom, on-line, open entry/open exit, short term credentials, quick course development turnaround, affordable, multi-lingual, etc.).
- **Incorporating strategies identified in the Workforce Development Board's Local Strategic Plan** – Align all activities and procedures to support the workforce development issues, services, targeted populations such as migrant seasonal farmworkers and other underserved populations, and coordinated delivery activities of the partners in the West Central Region.
- **Offering a tiered menu of services to businesses** - The identification of targeted industry clusters and current and new industry members will help to align training, job matching, and other resources. Services will be tailored to the needs of local businesses, and will be marketed via human resource meetings, local economic developer groups, Chambers of Commerce, plant manager organizations, Regional Planning Commissions, local community organizations, and special projects and initiatives. The West Central Region will support the State's overall plan for economic growth assisting employers in finding the best qualified

applicants for their job openings. At the same time, we will provide job seekers and other customers with information about Missouri's workforce needs.

LEADING THE PROCESS

Missouri Job Center staff will act as initiator, broker, and facilitator of the plan—charged with the role of moving the process forward to meet the ever-changing needs of businesses in the West Central Region.

The Product and Service offerings in the job centers are directly related to preparing local job seekers for the current demands of local employers. Workforce information is shared with Functional Leaders, job center staff, and Nexus partners.

The Workforce Development Board of Western Missouri, Inc., is currently a 22-member board with 51% private sector participation. The Board's involvement is critical, especially when access to industry leaders must be secured. The Board will act in an advisory capacity to all business related initiatives. Board members will act as ambassadors and will encourage business participation in focus groups and assist in engaging the support of human resource managers and CEOs to ensure strong private sector buy-in.

AREAS of OPPORTUNITY/PROJECTED GROWTH

According to MERIC's *West Central Region Summary* health care/social assistance continues to be the largest employing industry in the region with over 16,400 jobs. Manufacturing is the second largest industry with slightly over 12,100 jobs and an annual growth rate of 1.1 percent. Educational services is the third largest industry at over 10,700 jobs.

Projected growth in industry helps to identify future employment needs for an area. Projections indicate that the largest growth industries in the West Central Region will be Health Care/Social Assistance, Retail Trade, Educational Services, Local Government, and Manufacturing. To ensure business growth the West Central Region will concentrate on skilling up job seekers and incumbent workers in the areas just mentioned.

Other opportunities include:

- Building stronger cooperative partnerships between workforce, education, and economic development.
- Promoting "jobs.mo.gov" for employment and training services to businesses and job seekers.
- Providing the same range of employment services, benefits and protections, including counseling, testing, and job training referral services, to all populations.
- Promoting the National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC) as a value-added product/service for business customers and job seekers.
- Promoting the use of Apprenticeships as a work-based strategy to increase workers skills and meet employer needs.
- Promoting Incumbent Worker Training to enhance the skills of a company's current workforce and to encourage employee retention.
- Providing customized hiring events to connect with applicants who meet specific skill requirements.

- Providing meeting space to allow companies to provide training, conduct orientations or schedule interviews.

The following list includes but is not limited to the resources and partnerships utilized in identifying and meeting the needs of this region:

- Economic Development
- Chambers of Commerce
- Regional Planning Commissions
- Missouri Employer Committees
- Plant Manager Organizations
- Small Business Administration
- University of Missouri Extension
- Small Business Development Center
- Missouri Commission on Human Rights
- Missouri Employer Research and Information Center (MERIC)
- Local Councils of Government
- Professional Organizations
- Local Churches
- Migrant Education

BUSINESS SERVICES PARTNERSHIPS AND ACTIVITIES

The MO Job Center staff and Workforce Development Board lead NEXUS groups in the region to coordinate outreach, recruitment and placement activities that support single point of contact for a myriad of agencies. Some of the agencies include Adult, and Dislocated Worker Programs, Vocational Rehabilitation, Rehabilitation Services for the Blind, Community Action Agencies, Youth@Work staff, Job Point, Temp Agencies, Center for Human Services, Adult Education and Literacy, Wagner Peyser and WILS, etc.

All NEXUS members contribute to the promotion of subsidized placement through face-to-face employer meetings, preparing mass marketing campaigns, conducting business surveys, making telephone cold calls, and monitoring MoJobs for potential matches for specific job orders. The thirteen-county region is divided into three internal service areas for the purposes of rapid response, outreach, job development, business services, and public relations, etc.

This local configuration allows each job center within the region to develop a close working relationship and rapport with their community business and industry customers within an assigned area. It is a goal of the West Central Region to have local businesses look to their local Missouri Job Center for all their workforce needs, whether it be hiring or in cases of lay-off. As these relationships continue to be forged, county commissioners, local economic developers, human resource managers, postal workers, mechanics, shop clerks, neighbors, etc.; become part of an informal, yet highly effective, network that provides early information on job openings, company expansions, training issues, etc.

Utilization of such a grassroots intelligence system allows rapid action to meet employers' needs.

RECORDING BUSINESS PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Job Center staff assigned to business services will record detailed notes in MoJobs every time they speak with an employer; this will reduce the likelihood that other partner staff would ask the employer the same questions.

Job Center staff and other One-Stop partner staff will record the following information:

1. Employer Information and Support Services

Enter the total number of establishments that, during the reporting period, received staff-assisted services designed to educate them about and engage them in the local job market/economy and the range of services available through the local One-Stop delivery system. Establishment information services may be provided in a variety of service interventions including orientation sessions, workshops or other business consultations (e.g., initial site visits). Information and support services delivered to establishments through mass mailings or communications, cold calling or other follow-up contacts, and regular establishment newsletters, brochures or publications are not reportable services under this category. These services include, but are not limited to, providing information on the following:

- State and Federal tax credits or workforce investment incentives (State and Federal Tax credits or workforce investment incentives);
- Customized workforce information on State, regional and local labor market conditions, industries, occupations, and the characteristics of the workforce, skills businesses need, local employment dynamics information such as workforce availability, worker supply and demand, business turnover rates, job creation, and job identification of high growth and high demand industries; and
- Proactive linkage and referral of establishments to community resources that support their workforce needs.

2. Workforce Recruitment Assistance

• Enter the total number of establishments that, during the reporting period, received workforce recruitment assistance from staff or remotely through electronic technologies. Activities to meet their human capital and skilled workforce needs include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Supporting employer's search for qualified candidates;
- Securing information on job requirements and providing employers with One-Stop staff support for candidate screening and pre-employment interviews at the One-Stop Career Center (or affiliate site) or on site at the place of business;
- Taking job order information and promoting the employment opportunities (e.g., advertising the opening to the workforce);
- Conducting special recruitment efforts including out-of-the-area or out-of-state recruitment for candidates with special skills;
- Organizing, conducting and/or participating in job fairs;
- Providing employers with meeting/work space at the One-Stop Career Center (or an affiliate site) for screening or interviewing;
- Conducting pre-employment testing, background checks and assistance in completion of the I-9 paperwork.

3. Training Services

Enter the total number of establishments that, during the reporting period, received publicly funded training assistance, including customized training, OJT and incumbent worker training.