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The Business Services Plan for the West Central Region of Missouri highlights the needs of employers as revealed in *MERIC's 2023 Employer Survey*. The survey was conducted with over 2,800 Missouri companies, with five or more employees, during the time period February to April 2023. (See [Missouri Workforce 2023 Employer Survey Report | Missouri Economic Research and Information Center \(mo.gov\)](#)).

The West Central Region will focus on developing and retaining a workforce with the education and skills to be successful in a 21st century economy. *MERIC's 2023 Employer Survey* highlights several areas in which the local region's workforce partners can strategize:

- 62% of employers reports that they had some positions that took over 30 days to fill.
- 44% of employers expected to see an increase in employment levels over the next 12 months.
- The top barrier to expanding employment is lack of applicants overall, where 66% of employers indicate this as the top barrier.
- The greatest shortages are found in Skilled Trades and Patient Care.

This plan will ensure that our region's business needs drive our efforts in meeting identified universal challenges. Since businesses are faced with the above challenges the West Central Region's business services partners along with Job Center staff with assist businesses by providing training options and/or referral to the appropriate agency/organization or educational institution.


Missouri Job Center staff will act as an 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.

The Workforce Development Board of Western Missouri, Inc. (WDB), is currently a 22 member board with 51% private sector participation. The WDB's involvement is critical, especially when access to industry leaders must be secured. The WDB 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.

According to *MERIC's 2023 Economic Report West Central Region*, healthcare/social assistance continues to be the largest employing industry in the region with over 15,400 jobs. Manufacturing and retail trade are the second largest employing industries with slightly over 13,700 jobs and 10,500 jobs.

Projected growth in industry helps to identify future employment needs in the region. Projections indicate that the largest industry growth in the West Central Region will be in Food Services and Drinking Places, Hospitals, Educational Services, Ambulatory Health Care Services, and Food Manufacturing. Strategies and opportunities for the future include:

- Creating a Single Point of Contact System – A single point of contact system will be utilized for each of the two 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

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deliver a streamlined business outreach system in collaboration with 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.


- Identify 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 meet today's changing workforce demands. Efforts include:
 - Funding individual training accounts that are closely tied to Healthcare/Social Assistance, Retail Trade, and Food Production
 - Using business leverage to encourage new training efforts and the creations 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/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 – 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 the 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 applicants for their job openings.

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

- 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, benefit and protections, including counseling, testing, and job training referral services, to all populations.

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- 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 work-based learning strategy to increase worker skills and meet employer needs.
- Promoting incumbent worker training to enhance 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 interview.

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

The Missouri Job Center staff and WDB lead 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 Programs
- Job Point
- Temp Agencies
- Center For Human Services
- Adult Education and Literacy (AEL)
- Wagner Peyser Program
- WILS

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



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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 their assigned area. It is a goal of the West Central Region to have local businesses look to their 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.

Job Center staff assigned to business services will record detailed notes in Mo Jobs each time they speak with an employer; this will reduce the likelihood that other partner staff would request the same information.

The following information will be recorded:

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;

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- 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.