

Understanding Missouri's Workforce System

Understanding the workforce system in Missouri can be challenging. Numerous public and private actors work to prepare Missourians for the rigors of work, both now and into the future. As Missouri continues to emphasize workforce development, we must continue to find ways to work with partners across the state to prepare our workforce for the demands of the 21st Century.

Workforce Boards and Job Centers: Coordinating Missouri's Workforce System

The Office of Workforce Development, a division of state government, manages the public workforce system in Missouri. For decades this office was part of the Department of Economic Development (DED), but a 2019 reorganization of state government moved it into the newly formed [Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development](#) (DHEWD). This reorganization was intended to bring greater alignment between higher education and workforce development and place more emphasis on how Missouri's higher education institutions can support the workforce needs of the state's employers.

The [Missouri Office of Workforce Development's](#) primary responsibility is to administer numerous workforce development programs across the state. These programs support employer efforts to find and train employees, and help potential employees find jobs. The Office of Workforce Development also administers programs aimed at specific groups, such as dislocated workers and youth. It also oversees—in conjunction with local workforce development boards—the nearly 30 Job Centers located across the state.

The Office of Workforce Development works closely with the [state Workforce Development Board](#) to provide guidance for Missouri's workforce system. The state Workforce Development Board was formed on July 1, 2015 under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) as a successor to the Board established in 1998 under the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), with the following purposes:

- To study and make recommendations regarding the improvement of the state's employment and training delivery network, including improved federal and state resource use and expanded coordination of state job training and employment activities with other related activities.
- To serve as a forum for public and private sector representation to encourage cooperative uses of employment and training funding, facilities, and staff resources for a more comprehensive and coordinated statewide system.¹

The state Workforce Development Board has [25 members](#), including representatives from business, organized labor, economic development, education, nonprofits, elected officials, as well as the directors of multiple state agencies.

In addition to the Office of Workforce Development and the state Workforce Development Board, there are [14 regional Workforce Development Boards](#) that oversee all workforce activities in their designated region. These boards govern regions of varying size, ranging from the East Jackson County region to the 19 county Central region. These boards work in partnership with the state Workforce Development Board and the Office of Workforce Development in order to guide each respective region's workforce development activities. The [composition](#) of these boards resemble the state Workforce Development

¹ For more information on the state Workforce Development Board, including information on specific powers and Board Membership, see https://jobs.mo.gov/sites/jobs/files/mwdb_bylaws_effective_rev11-2015.pdf.

Board, in that they must include representatives from business, labor, education, and elected officials as well as specialists in particular areas of the law.



For additional information about Missouri Office of Workforce Development services, contact a Missouri Job Center near you. Locations and additional information are available at jobs.mo.gov or (888) 738-JOBS (5627). Missouri Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development is an equal opportunity employer/program. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities. Missouri Relay Services at 711. DWD-WDB-MAP 08-31-2020

Although the purpose of Missouri’s regional workforce boards is consistent, the organization of those boards varies. Some boards (e.g., [St. Louis City](#), [St. Louis County](#), [St. Charles County](#), and [Ozark](#) (Springfield)) are part of larger city and county governments. By contrast, other boards (e.g. [Northeast Workforce Investment Board](#), [Southwest Missouri Workforce Investment Board](#)) operate as independent nonprofit entities, complete with their own Director and fiscal oversight of their organization’s activities. Each board employs staff that works closely with Office of Workforce Development staff to implement programs and operate their regional [Job Centers](#). As part of their responsibilities, both regional Workforce Development Boards and the state Workforce Development Board must also create comprehensive strategic workforce plans to guide the region’s workforce development efforts.

Training and Service Providers in Missouri’s Workforce System

As we examine Missouri’s workforce system, we also need to recognize the other providers of education, training and workforce services. This not only includes post-secondary educational institutions, but also the many other providers that prepare youth for the workforce or deliver continuing education for incumbent, dislocated, or disadvantaged workers.

Missouri's post-secondary institutions are critical actors in meeting the state's workforce needs. This includes all public and private institutions of higher education, regardless of the type of degrees they are granting. These [79 institutions](#) educate thousands of Missourians every year so that they can enter the workforce.

Missouri's institutions of higher education train people for the workforce in two primary ways:

- Credit/Degree Programs;
- Non-Credit Programs, including customized training and certificates.

Within Missouri's post-secondary educational system, the fourteen public 2-year institutions are particularly significant providers of workforce training across the state. These institutions provide both credit and non-credit training programs that focus on workforce needs in their region, including customized training for employers.

A significant amount of workforce preparation and training in Missouri is also done by entities outside of the higher education system, including:

- Career and Technical Education (CTE) Programs;
- Apprenticeships.

[Career and Technical Education \(CTE\) programs](#) are wide-ranging educational programs that combine academic preparation with occupational skill training to prepare students for careers. [Missouri's CTE programs](#) are wide-ranging, with training programs available in fields from Agriculture and Skilled Technical Sciences to Culinary Arts and Graphic Design. Many – but not all – high schools offer CTE courses in their curriculum, and there are [54 Area Career Centers](#) located across the state to prepare students and adults for careers.

Apprentice Programs are educational pathways that combine paid, on-the-job training with classroom instruction. The US Department of Labor oversees [Registered Apprenticeship Programs](#) and establishes standards for those programs. [Missouri](#) has made a significant commitment towards promoting apprenticeships, focusing on reducing the administrative burden on employers so that more businesses will create registered apprenticeships. Application and admission procedures, as well as service areas, vary for each apprenticeship.

There are also many nonprofit organizations and other formal and informal partners who impact Missouri's workforce. These include entities providing targeted services to justice involved populations, special needs employment organizations, and exiting military, as well as organizations that work specifically to prepare youth for the workforce.² Each community is going to have their own set of organizations that are impacting workforce preparation for youth and adults. Identifying those organizations as well as their role in preparing Missouri's workforce is key to fully comprehending the spectrum of providers in your county and region.

² The Clark-Fox Family Foundation has created a Workforce Development Ecosystem Map, which can be accessed at <https://cdn.clarkfoxstl.com/resources/workforce-development-map.pdf>.