South Central
WORKFORCE
Investment Board

WIOA Local Plan

2024-2027

Questions regarding the local plan should be sent to Jody James at jjames@scwib.org or
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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 **"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 its workforce and workplaces."**

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. The South Central Region has customized our vision statement to compliment both the State Workforce Board and the Governor's vision of the future.

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 take 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. Incumbent Worker training is offered to help fill the gap and upgrade existing employees. This creates an opportunity for less skilled/entry level openings to enter the workforce. This is an excellent opportunity to hire new employees with the help of On-Job-Training (OJT), hiring events and our Employment Specialists working 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 in an effort 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 is 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 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 Development Business Support Unit, 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 them 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 needs 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 one Comprehensive (full service) Missouri Job Centers (CJC) also known as One-Stop centers and one affiliate site. The comprehensive Job Center is located in West Plains and the affiliate site is located in 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 Jobseekers 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 MOUs, we realize the value of bringing all partners to the table for their 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 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 Jobseekers 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 Jobseekers and Businesses in a way that attracts, entices, and excites them to want to learn more about the services that are available to them and then use 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?

Jobseekers – 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 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? WDB continues 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.

Veteran Representatives in the South Central Region work closely with Veteran Service and Veteran Support Organizations to assist in the outreach and recruitment of qualified and eligible veterans and their spouses.

g.   Access—Improvements to Physical and Programmatic Accessibility
The South Central Region has one Comprehensive Missouri Job Centers (CJC) located in West Plains (Howell County) and one affiliate site located in Poplar Bluff (Butler County). Both locations include WIOA Adult, WIOA DW, SkillUp, Re-Employment Services, Wagner/Peyser, Trade, WIOA Youth, and RESEA. In addition to the two counties with the CJC's, 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).

The comprehensive center and affiliate location offer customer services including computer access, program information, program referrals, AEL services, assessment services, and testing services. Local community partnership coordination exists in each rural area. As 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 rate 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 all full service job centers in the region. All staff complete OWD EO and assistive technology trainings. 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. New hires have received training from the OWD Regional Retention Specialist.
• Program training begins on the first day of employment and continues throughout employment via meetings, 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 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 setting 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, Talify, TABE, 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 Department and Fiscal Department staff 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 and subcontractor attendees 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 regions 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**

In 2022, per capita income in all counties of the South Central Region was below the statewide average of $57,818. The county with the highest per capita income in the region was Carter County ($46,372) and the county with the lowest per capita income was Texas County ($36,058).

In 2022, personal income for the US and Missouri increased 2.0 percent and 3.2 percent respectively when compared to 2021.

In 2022, the statewide poverty rate of working age persons, or those 18-64 years, was 12.3 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 (25.2%) and Ozark (23.3%). Counties with the lowest poverty rate in the region were Shannon (15.0%) and Reynolds (17.0%).

Name	2022 Per Capita Personal Income	Working Age (18-64) Population living below poverty level	
		Number	**Percentage**
Missouri	$57,818	445,345	12.3%
Butler	$43,455	4,828	20.0%
Carter	$46,372	544	17.8%
Douglas	$36,760	1,151	18.6%
Howell	$40,595	4,801	21.5%
Oregon	$42,614	896	19.1%
Ozark	$39,465	1,050	23.3%
Reynolds	$40,496	594	17.0%
Ripley	$45,501	1,319	21.5%
Shannon	$40,142	590	15.0%
Texas	$36,058	2,474	18.7%
Wayne	$42,370	1,539	25.2%
Wright	$38,068	1,748	17.6%

Sources:

    Per Capita Personal Income - U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2022

    Poverty Level - American Community Survey-5 Year data (2018-2022)

    c.   **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 2022, 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 12.3 percent. However, the percentage of the working age population that speak a language other than English language was lower than the state average (7.1%) in all counties.

In Missouri, 10.8 percent of the working age population did not have a high school diploma in 2022. Three counties in the region had a lower percentage of the working age population without a high school diploma than the state average. Carter County had the highest percentage of the working age population without a high school diploma at 12.9 percent whereas Oregon County had the lowest percentage of the working age population without a high school diploma at 10.2 percent.

Barriers To Employment								
Area	Total Population	Total Population 18-64	% of 18-64 in Population	Total Population 18-64 with less than high school diploma	% of Population 18- 64 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	6,154,422	3,697,543	60.1%	265,816	10.8%	449,967	12.3%	261,796	7.1%
Butler	42,280	24,384	57.7%	1,645	11.2%	5,285	21.9%	528	2.2%
Carter	5,299	3,053	57.6%	122	12.9%	723	23.7%	38	1.2%
Douglas	11,803	6,232	52.8%	191	10.4%	1,277	20.6%	54	0.9%
Howell	39,960	22,509	56.3%	1,364	10.6%	4,273	19.1%	794	3.5%
Oregon	8,783	4,763	54.2%	182	10.2%	752	16.0%	85	1.8%
Ozark	8,688	4,506	51.9%	113	11.2%	936	20.8%	70	1.6%
Reynolds	6,102	3,531	57.9%	192	12.2%	929	26.6%	29	0.8%
Ripley	10,839	6,141	56.7%	256	12.2%	1,289	21.0%	116	1.9%
Shannon	7,132	3,960	55.5%	146	12.5%	796	20.2%	48	1.2%
Texas	24,828	14,229	57.3%	414	11.0%	3,504	26.6%	387	2.7%
Wayne	11,081	6,181	55.8%	189	12.8%	1,506	24.7%	57	0.9%
Wright	18,475	9,976	54.0%	410	11.7%	1,890	19.0%	291	2.9%

Source: *American Community Survey-5 Year data (2018-2022)*

d. Employment rates for the last 5 years

The unemployment rate in the South Central Region is declining after peaking in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The unemployment rate for 2022 was above the state average of 2.5 percent for all counties in the region. The highest unemployment rate was in Ozark County (3.7%) and the lowest in Douglas and Wright Counties (2.7%).

Unemployment Rate by County South Central Region					
Year	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**
US	**3.9%**	**3.7%**	**8.1%**	**5.3%**	**3.6%**
Missouri	**3.2%**	**3.2%**	**6.1%**	**4.1%**	**2.5%**
Butler	4.6%	4.6%	6.3%	4.4%	2.9%
Carter	5.1%	4.8%	6.6%	4.9%	3.6%
Douglas	4.5%	4.9%	7.7%	4.0%	2.7%
Howell	3.6%	4.0%	6.7%	4.5%	2.9%
Oregon	3.5%	3.9%	6.8%	5.0%	3.1%
Ozark	5.2%	5.6%	7.3%	5.1%	3.7%
Reynolds	3.2%	3.6%	5.6%	3.9%	2.9%
Ripley	5.3%	5.4%	7.9%	5.1%	3.2%
Shannon	5.0%	5.4%	7.3%	5.3%	3.6%
Texas	4.1%	4.4%	5.8%	4.3%	3.0%
Wayne	4.8%	4.7%	6.2%	4.7%	3.6%
Wright	4.2%	5.2%	7.0%	3.8%	2.7%

Source: *Local Area Unemployment Statistics, Not Seasonally Adjusted*

e. **Major layoff events over the past 3 years and any anticipated layoffs**
    2021 – Numbers were not accurately captured during the COVID Pandemic
    2022 – Briggs & Stratton – Poplar Bluff – 135 workers
    2023 – Briggs & Stratton – Poplar Bluff – 130 workers
            Ozarks Health Care – West Plains – 130 workers
            Starting USA – Poplar Bluff – Plant Closure
            Revere Plastic – Poplar Bluff – Plant Closure

f. **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

Provide an analysis of the LWDA's current labor market including:

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 had a positive compound annual growth rate of 1.4 percent over the past 5-year period from 2017 to 2022 with a 7.3 percent overall gain from 2017 to 2022. Nine industry groups have increased employment and experienced a growth rate. Those industries were *Educational Services (Excluding Government)* (50 employments increase at 9.2% compound annual growth rate); *Health Care and Social Assistance* (3,026 at 8.0%); *Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction* (9 at 5.2%); *Management of Companies and Enterprises* (73 at 3.8%); *Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services* (64 at 1.2%); *Accommodation and Food Services* (202 at 0.97%); *Retail Trade* (376 at 0.89%); *Utilities* (7 at 0.83%); and *Real Estate and Rental and Leasing* (13 at 0.8%).

South Central Region Industry Employment 2017-2022

South Central Region Industry Growth 2017-2022
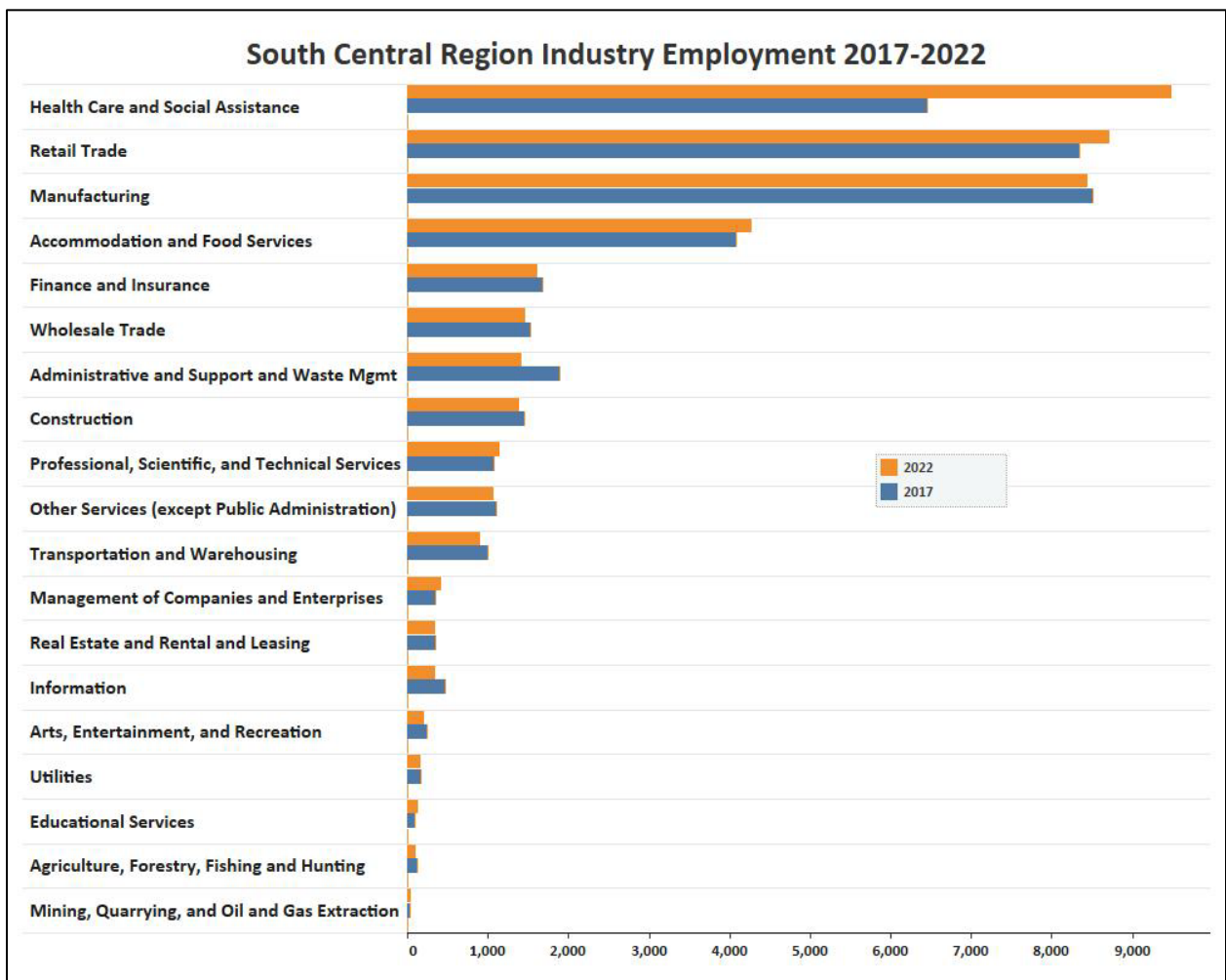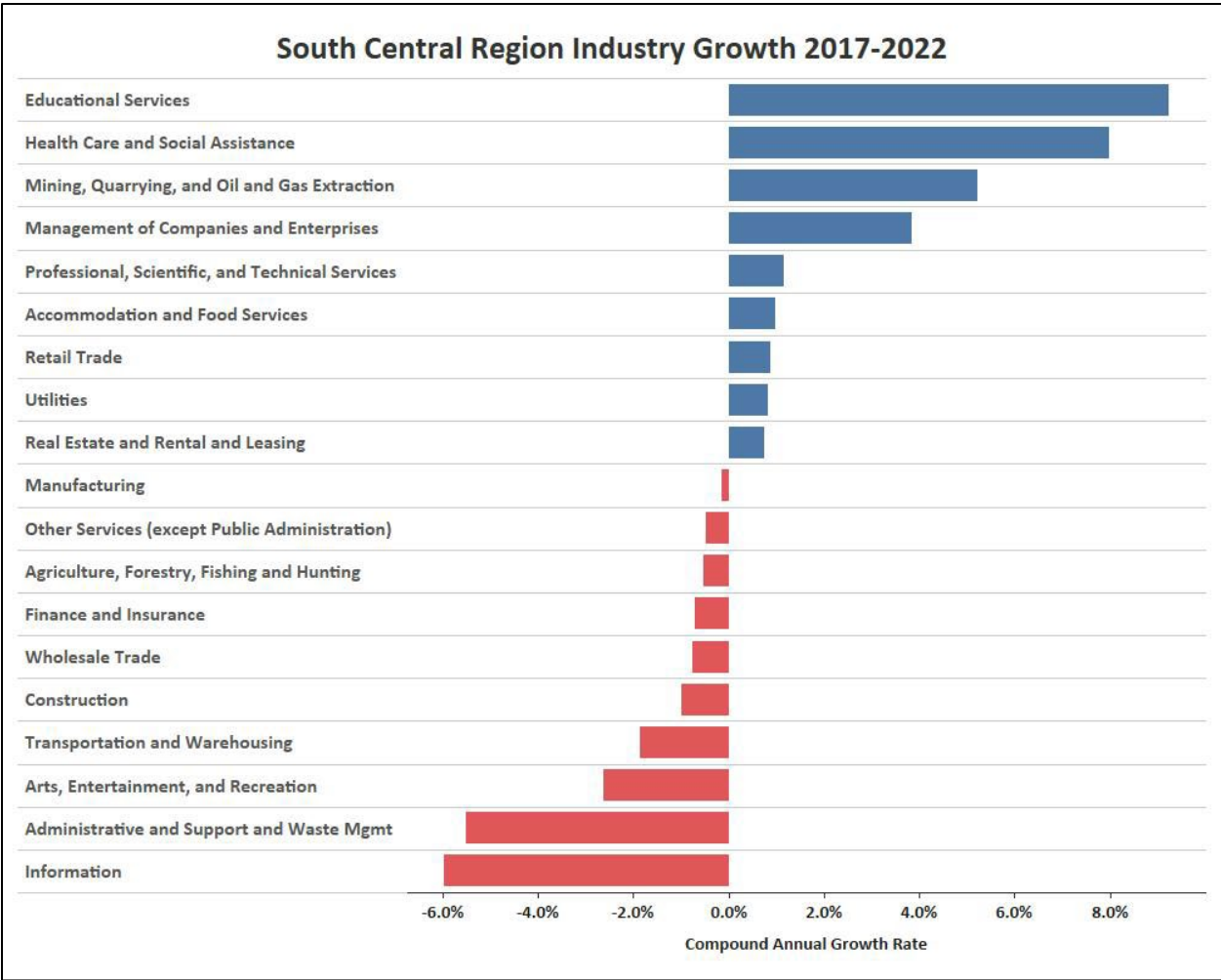
Location Quotient

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 four industries in 2022 with LQs higher than 2.0: *Wood Product Manufacturing* (9.1); *Gasoline Stations and Fuel Dealers* (3.5); *Machinery Manufacturing* (3.1); and *Forestry and Logging* (2.5). Other industries with high LQs are *Building Materials and Garden Equipment Supplies* (1.8); *General Merchandise Retailers* (1.7); and *Social Assistance* (1.7).

2022 South Central Region Location Quotients		
Industry	**Employment**	**Location Quotient**
Wood Product Manufacturing	1,554	9.1
Gasoline Stations and Fuel Dealers	1,454	3.5
Machinery Manufacturing	1,364	3.1
Forestry and Logging	50	2.5
Building Material and Garden Equipment Supplies	1,009	1.8
General Merchandise Retailers	2,209	1.7
Social Assistance	2,771	1.7
Nursing and Residential Care Facilities	1,964	1.6
Animal Production and Aquaculture	164	1.6
Motor Vehicle and Parts Dealers	1,086	1.4
Goods-Producing	11,557	1.3
Truck Transportation	766	1.2
Credit Intermediation and Related Activities	1,179	1.1
Food and Beverage Retailers	1,308	1.0
Repair and Maintenance	558	1.0

Source: *Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW), 2022 Annual Averages*

Current Occupational Demand

Current occupational demand can be attained through job ads placed by employers. From November 2022 to October 2023, nearly 7,440 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; Retail Salespersons; Stockers and Order Fillers; Fast Food and Counter Workers;* and *Customer Service Representatives.* Occupations with the most job postings in the **Next** category were *Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses; Supervisors of Retail Sales Worker; Merchandise Displayers and Window Trimmers; Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers;* and *Nursing Assistants.* **Later** occupations with the highest number of job postings were *Registered Nurses; Physicians; General Internal Medicine Physicians; Medical and Health Services Managers;* and *Occupational Therapists.*

Many of the occupations with the most job postings also appeared on the list of jobs with the highest number of projected openings through 2030. 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	420	★
41-2031	Retail Salespersons	270	★
53-7065	Stockers and Order Fillers	100	★
35-3023	Fast Food and Counter Workers	100	★
43-4051	Customer Service Representatives	80	★
37-2011	Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	60	★
53-3031	Driver/Sales Workers	50	
41-2011	Cashiers	50	★
53-7062	Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	40	★
35-2021	Food Preparation Workers	40	
NEXT - Typically requires moderate/long-term training or experience or education beyond high school			
29-2061	Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	320	★
41-1011	First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers	230	★
27-1026	Merchandise Displayers and Window Trimmers	190	
53-3032	Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	130	★
31-1131	Nursing Assistants	110	
11-9051	Food Service Managers	100	
41-4012	Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing	100	
29-2072	Medical Records Specialists	90	
29-2099	Health Technologists and Technicians, All Other	90	
49-9071	Maintenance and Repair Workers, General	50	★
LATER - typically requires a bachelor's degree or higher			
29-1141	Registered Nurses	630	★
29-1229	Physicians, All Other	210	
29-1216	General Internal Medicine Physicians	170	
11-9111	Medical and Health Services Managers	140	★
29-1122	Occupational Therapists	130	
29-1215	Family Medicine Physicians	80	
29-1127	Speech-Language Pathologists	70	
29-1171	Nurse Practitioners	70	★
29-2010	Clinical Laboratory Technologists and Technicians	60	
29-1051	Pharmacists	60	

Source: Lightcast, online job ads between Nov. 1, 2022 - Oct. 31, 2023

★ *= Top Job Openings in Now, Next, and Later, 2020-2030 Occupational Projections for South Central Region, MERIC*

Missouri Workforce 2023 Survey

From February 20, 2023, to April 17, 2023, over 2,800 Missouri companies with five or more employees were surveyed to gauge the state of the workforce from the employer's perspective. A total of 1,705 employers started the survey but did not respond to all questions, and 1,183 employers completed every question in the survey. Seventy-three percent of employers responded over the phone and 27 percent completed the online version of the survey. Companies were asked 26 questions, some with multiple parts, about hiring trends, skill needs and shortages, workforce initiatives, recruitment strategies, and education and experience requirements.

Companies interviewed were randomly selected from a categorized list of Missouri businesses from the Data Axle employer database. The sample was selected to be representative of Missouri's industry sectors and workforce regions. Regional quotas were based on the region's share of employment relative to the state. Over half (51%) of employers surveyed had 11-49 employees. The industries selected for the survey were chosen to represent a composite picture of the state's industry mix with a statistically significant sample surveyed from each of the industry sector matching the approximate ratio of these industries across the state.

To gauge employment trends, employers were asked about their staffing levels and future hiring plans. When asked about employment changes over the last 12 months, half (50%) said that *employment levels (total employment) remained the same as before* (47% in 2021, 57% in 2020, and 48% in 2019). In 2019, more employers reported increasing employment levels rather than decreasing (21% reporting a significant or slight decrease compared to 32% reporting a significant or slight increase). This flipped in 2020 and 2021, mostly due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2023, about 28 percent of surveyed employers reported *increased* employment levels, either slightly or significantly, while 22 percent reported *significant or slight decrease* in employment levels.

For the third year in a row, *hiring new full-time employees* remained the top method of expanding employment, with 75 percent of employers stating they would *hire new full-time employees.* Fifty-nine percent of employers reported they would *hire part-time employees.*

Employers were asked about the barriers they encountered in expanding employment. *Lack of applicants overall* was a new option for employers in the 2023 survey, and 66 percent of surveyed employers selected this option, making it the top barrier to expansion of employment. The next highest barriers were *shortage of applicants with knowledge or skills* and *economic conditions*, which have been the top cited barriers since the survey began in 2019. A *Shortage of applicants with knowledge or skills* increased significantly from previous years, from 47 percent in 2019 and 2020, to 60 percent in 2021, and 65 percent in 2023. *Economic conditions* as a barrier to employment decreased from 37 percent in 2021 to 30 percent in 2023. Similarly, fewer employers encountered *government policies or regulations* as a barrier to expanding employment, dropping from 30 percent in 2021 to 13 percent in 2023.

Other significant barriers encountered in 2023 included *lack of childcare* and *transportation access,* with 21 percent of respondents reporting these as barriers to expanding employment.

The survey also asked employers to rate the importance of each barrier on a scale of one to five, with one being insignificant and five being critical. The highest weighted average response for any barrier cited this year was *lack of applicants overall,* getting an importance score of 4.05 out of 5. The next highest weighted response was *government policies or regulations* (3.88), followed by *shortage of applicants with knowledge or skills* (3.85). Although the share of employers choosing *government policies or regulations* as a barrier to employment expansion has decreased, for those that did encounter it, it was still a critical barrier. *Shortage of available training programs* dropped in importance from 3.98 in 2019 to 3.15 in 2023.

Companies employ workers in a variety of functional areas with different work responsibilities. *Patient Care* and *Skilled Trades* functional areas had the largest percentage of employers reporting shortages of skilled applicants at 65 percent each. Skill shortages in *Customer Service* have increased substantially, increasing from 25 percent in 2019 and 31 percent in 2020, to 47 percent in 2021, decreasing slightly to 45 percent in 2023.

To address the problem of skill shortages in the current workers, employers use several remedial measures, and *on-the-job-training* remains the most preferred method. Over 9 in 10 employers (91%) stated they used *on-the-job training* to assist current workers in addressing the need for new or increased skills. However, there is a significant decrease in applying these remedial measures in 2023 when compared to 2021, most significantly in *providing a flexible schedule to pursue outside continuing education* (67% in 2021 vs. 46% in 2023) and *in-house classroom training* (60% in 2021 vs. 41% in 2023).

Relatedly, employers were also asked if there was any change over the last two years in flexibility for hiring applicants with less than the advertised preferred level of qualifications in education, experience, and skill level. Most employers said they stayed about the same in flexibility for hiring applicants. The majority that changed became more flexible in their consideration of applicants. Twenty-three percent of employers were more flexible with education requirements, 31 percent were more flexible with experience level requirements, and 29 percent were more flexible on skill level requirements.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been an increased interest in understanding remote work. Prior to pandemic, (February 2020) about 15 percent of employers were having some workers working remotely. Remote work peaked in 2020 during the height of the pandemic, with over half of employers (56%) stating they had some workers working remotely, either full or part-time. This dropped significantly to 20 percent in 2021 and has increased slightly to 25 percent in 2023. When asked if they expected the number of remote workers to change over time, the vast majority (92%) of employers said they expected it to stay the same. In the question about workforce initiatives considered in the coming year, 13 percent of employers indicated considering *remote work*.

Employers evaluated various business concerns for the future on a scale of one to five, with one being not concerned and five being very concerned. Employers were most concerned about *attracting or retaining talent,* with a weighted average of 3.7. Several concerns decreased in importance from 2021, including *lack of information for decision making* (2.92 in 2021 vs. 2.38 in 2023) and *supply chain disruptions* (3.61 in 2021 vs. 3.1 in 2023). *Cost of health insurance* was among the major concerns reported in the 2023 survey.

Although employers are optimistic about expanding employment, with 44 percent planning to *increase employment levels* over the next 12 months, they continue to struggle to find skilled applicants. Sixty-two percent of employers had positions that took over 30 days to fill. A *lack of overall applicants* and *shortage of applicants with knowledge or skills* were the top barriers to expanding employment, with the *shortage of applicants with knowledge or skills* at the highest reported level it has been since the first survey in 2019. The most important business concern for employers was *attracting and retaining talent.* To try and retain existing workers, employers have *increased wages* (86%), *offered a flexible work schedule* (64%), or *offered additional training* (52%). Responses to this survey reinforce the widely held experience of a tight labor market and difficulty finding workers.

b. **Emerging Demand Industry Sectors and Occupations**
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 2030.

The projections reveal several industries with both high employment numbers and above average growth rates compared to the regional average. The top five industries by numeric employment change *were Food Services and Drinking Places; Social Assistance; Machinery Manufacturing; Accommodation, including Hotels and Motels;* and *Hospitals.*

		Employment		2020-2030 Change	
NAICS	**Industry**	**2020**	**2030**	**Numeric**	**Percent**
10	**Total All Industries**	**62,528**	**65,331**	**2,803**	**4.5%**
722	Food Services and Drinking Places	4,166	4,888	722	17.3%
624	Social Assistance	3,906	4,438	532	13.6%
333	Machinery Manufacturing	1,537	1,880	343	22.3%
721	Accommodation, including Hotels and Motels	707	926	219	31.0%
622	Hospitals	2,155	2,346	191	8.9%
336	Transportation Equipment Manufacturing	1,070	1,252	182	17.0%
541	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	1,298	1,450	152	11.7%
332	Fabricated Metal Product Manufacturing	865	960	95	11.0%
811	Repair and Maintenance	519	604	85	16.4%
423	Merchant Wholesalers, Durable Goods	852	930	78	9.2%
623	Nursing and Residential Care Facilities	2,969	3,041	72	2.4%
999	Federal Government, Excluding Post Office	1,126	1,196	70	6.2%
551	Management of Companies and Enterprises	576	639	63	10.9%
111	Crop Production	596	652	56	9.4%
311	Food Manufacturing	458	507	49	10.7%

Table title: South Central Region Industry Projections 2020-2030

Source: *MERIC 2020-2030 Long Term Projections*

Occupational Projections

Job openings occur due to 3 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 5.91 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.

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 4.5 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; Fast Food and Counter Workers; Waiters and Waitresses; Stockers and Order Fillers;* and *Passenger Vehicle Drivers, Except Bus Drivers, Transit and Intercity.* The largest growth in **Next** occupations was in the occupations of *Cooks, Restaurant; Miscellaneous Assemblers and Fabricators; Industrial Machinery Mechanics; Maintenance and Repair Workers, General;* an*d First-Line Supervisors of Production and Operating Workers.* **Later** occupations with the highest growth were *General and Operations Managers; Medical and Health Services Managers; Accountants and Auditors; Registered Nurses;* and *Nurse Practitioners.* These occupations are consistent with the industries identified as emerging industries.

South Central Region Highest Growth Openings 2020-2030						
	Average	Percent	Annual Openings			
Occupation	Wage	Growth	Exits	Transfers	Growth	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	$24,168	16.9%	258	228	**63**	549
Fast Food and Counter Workers	$22,848	10.2%	151	165	**15**	331
Waiters and Waitresses	$20,286	13.7%	59	96	**10**	165
Stockers and Order Fillers	$26,443	10.8%	52	90	**9**	151
Passenger Vehicle Drivers, Except Bus Drivers, Transit and Intercity	$22,742	11.2%	44	33	**7**	84
Light Truck or Delivery Services Drivers	$34,083	11.8%	21	35	**6**	62
Hosts and Hostesses, Restaurant, Lounge, and Coffee Shop	$21,243	20.1%	27	26	**4**	57
Nonfarm Animal Caretakers	$24,458	25.0%	13	16	**4**	33
Retail Salespersons	$29,201	3.1%	71	105	**4**	180
Hotel, Motel, and Resort Desk Clerks	$23,502	24.3%	11	20	**4**	35
NEXT - Typically requires non-degree certificate, associate degree, apprenticeship, some experience, or moderate- to long-term training						
Cooks, Restaurant	$23,495	42.8%	35	51	**21**	107
Miscellaneous Assemblers and Fabricators	$31,924	6.8%	74	139	**13**	226
Industrial Machinery Mechanics	$47,109	50.5%	4	6	**5**	15
Maintenance and Repair Workers, General	$35,353	8.4%	21	35	**5**	61
First-Line Supervisors of Production and Operating Workers	$47,207	11.4%	14	32	**5**	51
Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Brazers	$35,023	18.4%	7	22	**5**	34
Multiple Machine Tool Setters, Operators, and Tenders, Metal and Plasti	$33,365	23.8%	6	13	**4**	23
Recreation Workers	$31,687	17.9%	5	9	**2**	16
First-Line Supervisors of Mechanics, Installers, and Repairers	$51,442	10.1%	6	12	**2**	20
Extruding and Drawing Machine Setters, Operators, and Tenders, Metal	$30,945	16.0%	4	7	**2**	13
LATER - Typically requires a bachelor's degree or higher						
General and Operations Managers	$69,253	13.0%	22	68	**13**	103
Medical and Health Services Managers	$99,415	21.6%	6	12	**5**	23
Accountants and Auditors	$53,313	8.8%	13	28	**4**	45
Registered Nurses	$60,841	2.4%	45	43	**4**	92
Nurse Practitioners	$110,269	23.0%	4	6	**4**	14
Child, Family, and School Social Workers	$36,439	6.1%	12	28	**3**	43
Human Resources Specialists	$54,373	8.5%	5	13	**2**	20
Industrial Engineers	$65,555	34.4%	2	3	**2**	7
Substitute Teachers, Short-Term	$30,647	2.9%	44	40	**2**	86
Financial Managers	$90,318	12.8%	2	5	**1**	8

Source: *MERIC 2020-2030 Long-Term Occupational Projections*

a. **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.

The 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	Registered Nurse (RN)	MEDITECH EHR
	Oncology	Basic Life Support (BLS) Certification	Spreadsheets
	Loans	Advanced Cardiovascular Life Support (ACLS) Certification	Apple IOS
	Family Medicine	Board Certified/Board Eligible	Epic EMR
	Food Services	Pediatric Advanced Life Support (PALS)	Clinic Management Systems
Accommodation & Food Service	Restaurant Operation	Valid Driver's License	Spreadsheets
	Restaurant Management	ServSafe Certification	
	General Mathematics	Top Secret-Sensitive Compartmented Information (TS/SCI Clearance)	
	Marketing	Food Safety Certification	
	Cooking	Food Handler's Card	
Finance & Insurance	Loans	Nurse Practitioner (APRN-CNP)	Operating Systems
	Bank Regulations	American Association of Nurse Practitioners (AANP) Certified	Software Systems
	Cash Handling	ANCC Certified	Amazon S3
	Home Health Care	Valid Driver's License	PHP (Scripting Language)
	Bank Secrecy Act	Registered Nurse (RN)	VBScript (Visual Basic Scripting Edition)
Information	Merchandising	Valid Driver's License	Operating Systems
	Selling Techniques	Commercial Driver's License (CDL)	Google Applications
	Inventory Management	Chauffeur License	Apple IOS
	Hardware Security	CompTIA A+	IBM Basic Assembly Language And Successors
	Asset Management	Project Management Professional Certification	TurboTax

Source: *Lightcast, job ads between Nov. 1, 2022 - Oct. 31, 2023*

8. **Workforce Analysis**

Describe the current workforce, including individuals with barriers to employment, as defined in section 3 of WIOA[1]. This population must include individuals with disabilities among other groups[2] in the economic region and across the LWDA.

Population Data

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				
	1 Year Change 2021-2022		**5 Year Change 2017-2022**	
NAME	**Number**	**Percentage**	**Number**	**Percentage**
Missouri	**12,888**	**0.2%**	**79,122**	**1.3%**
Butler	(34)	-0.1%	(546)	-1.3%
Carter	(66)	-1.2%	(956)	-15.3%
Douglas	(5)	0.0%	(1,588)	-11.9%
Howell	207	0.5%	(179)	-0.4%
Oregon	(108)	-1.2%	(1,996)	-18.5%
Ozark	24	0.3%	(640)	-6.9%
Reynolds	(36)	-0.6%	(259)	-4.1%
Ripley	(193)	-1.7%	(2,968)	-21.5%
Shannon	(53)	-0.7%	(1,141)	-13.8%
Texas	(38)	-0.2%	(886)	-3.4%
Wayne	(217)	-1.9%	(2,288)	-17.1%
Wright	231	1.3%	171	0.9%

Source: *U.S. Census Bureau, Population Annual Estimates*

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 (6.7%). 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 (25.0%). The population age 55+ was above the state average of 30.6 percent in all counties in the region. The county with the highest percentage of residents age 55 and up was Ozark County with 46.5 percent of residents in this age group.

The male/female gender split was close to the state average in almost all counties. In seven of the 12 counties in the South Central Region male population was less than the female population. Texas County had the highest portion of male population in the region (52.7%) and the lowest female population in the region (47.3%).

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+	Female	Male	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	6,154,422	25.0%	6.7%	13.2%	24.4%	30.6%	50.6%	49.4%	79.4%	11.3%	2.1%	0.3%	0.1%	1.5%	94.6%	5.4%	4.6%
Butler	42,280	25.8%	5.6%	12.3%	24.0%	32.3%	51.1%	48.9%	87.7%	5.1%	0.2%	0.4%	0.1%	1.4%	94.9%	5.1%	2.4%
Carter	5,299	26.4%	6.0%	8.7%	22.0%	37.0%	51.1%	48.9%	94.1%	1.0%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	95.2%	4.8%	2.3%
Douglas	11,803	23.9%	4.3%	9.1%	22.6%	40.1%	49.2%	50.8%	93.5%	0.5%	0.1%	1.1%	0.0%	0.1%	95.3%	4.7%	1.0%
Howell	39,960	26.1%	5.7%	11.3%	23.7%	33.1%	51.3%	48.7%	93.9%	0.5%	0.5%	0.4%	0.0%	0.8%	96.0%	4.0%	2.4%
Oregon	8,783	24.4%	5.5%	9.9%	22.0%	38.3%	50.3%	49.7%	94.4%	0.1%	0.2%	0.4%	0.1%	0.2%	95.4%	4.6%	1.9%
Ozark	8,688	20.9%	3.6%	7.8%	21.1%	46.5%	50.0%	50.0%	94.6%	0.6%	0.0%	0.5%	0.0%	0.3%	96.0%	4.0%	2.1%
Reynolds	6,102	21.3%	4.4%	9.0%	25.6%	39.6%	47.9%	52.1%	92.7%	1.7%	0.2%	0.3%	0.0%	0.5%	95.4%	4.6%	1.7%
Ripley	10,839	25.5%	5.1%	12.0%	23.2%	34.1%	50.2%	49.8%	93.5%	0.1%	0.9%	0.1%	0.0%	0.9%	95.5%	4.5%	2.2%
Shannon	7,132	23.4%	4.6%	10.3%	22.8%	38.9%	49.0%	51.0%	93.0%	0.3%	0.3%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	93.8%	6.2%	0.4%
Texas	24,828	23.3%	5.6%	11.3%	24.1%	35.7%	47.3%	52.7%	90.7%	2.5%	0.5%	0.7%	0.0%	1.0%	95.3%	4.7%	2.4%
Wayne	11,081	21.3%	4.3%	9.2%	23.2%	42.0%	50.3%	49.7%	94.5%	1.0%	0.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.4%	96.6%	3.4%	2.0%
Wright	18,475	28.6%	5.4%	10.7%	21.9%	33.4%	50.5%	49.5%	94.6%	0.2%	0.4%	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%	95.5%	4.5%	2.4%

Source: *American Community Survey-5 Year data (2018-2022)*

Employment and Unemployment

The number of South Central Region residents in the labor force has decreased steadily over the past five years from over 82,400 in 2018 to about 80,900 in 2022. The number of persons employed has also decreased since 2018 from about 78,870 to just over 78,520 in 2022.

The unemployment rate in 2018 was 4.3 percent. The unemployment rate for the region jumped to 6.7 percent in 2020 because of COVID-19 pandemic. However, 2021 and 2022 data shows continuation of recovery with the unemployment rate decreasing to 4.5 percent and 3.0 percent respectively.

Employment and Unemployment - South Central Region
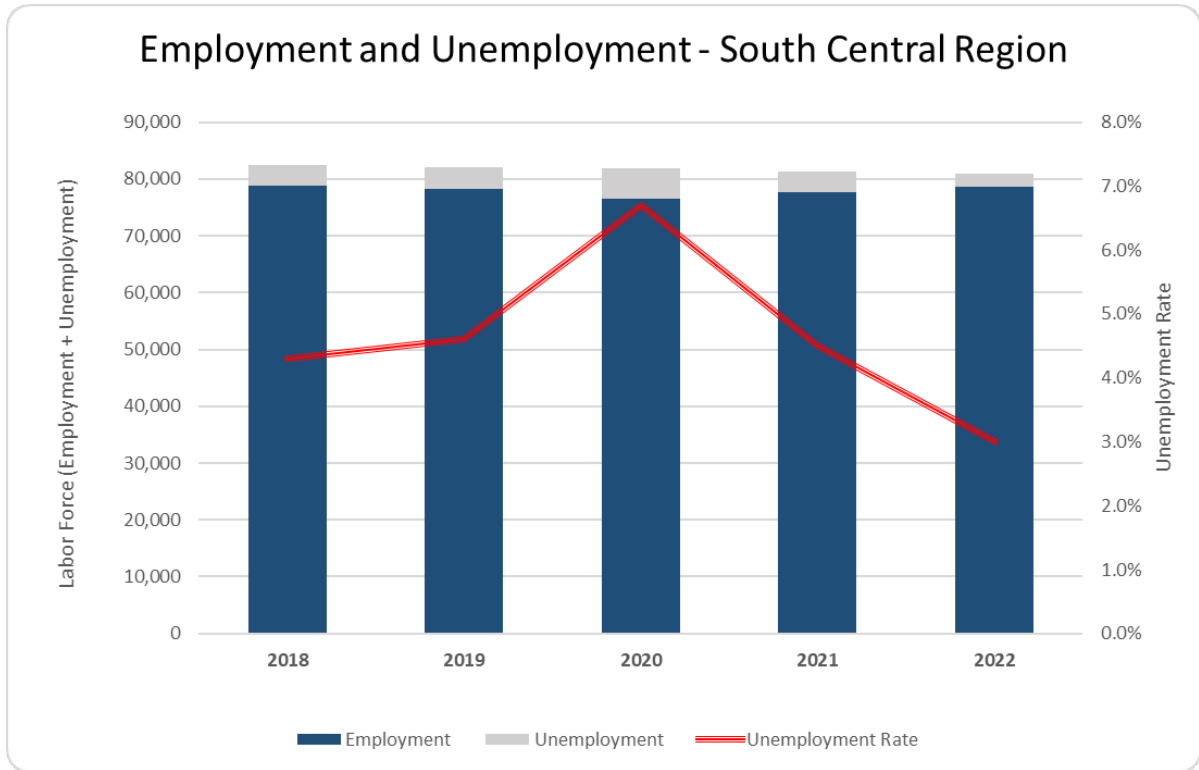
Labor Force Participation

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 2022, Missouri's labor force participation rate was 62.5 percent. In comparison, the rate for the South Central Region was at 51.0 percent. The county with the highest labor force participation rate in the region was Butler County (54.5%) and the lowest was Wayne County (43.6%).

Civilian Labor Force Participation Rate by County South Central Region			
Region	**Population 16 years and over**	**Civilian Population 16 years and over (In labor force)**	**Labor Force Participation Rate (Civilian)**
Missouri	**4,940,395**	**3,087,517**	**62.5%**
South-Central Total	**156,323**	**79,666**	**51.0%**
Butler	33,768	18,403	54.5%
Carter	4,325	2,342	54.2%
Douglas	9,461	4,647	49.1%
Howell	31,573	16,872	53.4%
Oregon	6,970	3,387	48.6%
Ozark	7,197	3,169	44.0%
Reynolds	5,151	2,722	52.8%
Ripley	8,524	4,417	51.8%
Shannon	5,772	2,765	47.9%
Texas	20,118	9,717	48.3%
Wayne	9,207	4,017	43.6%
Wright	14,257	7,208	50.6%

Source: *American Community Survey-5 Year data (2018-2022)*

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 2030 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 (549)*; *Cashiers* (539); *Fast Food and Counter Workers* (331); *Retail Salespersons* (180); and *Office Clerks, General* (175). The reason for a high number of openings was turnover and transfers within these occupations.

Occupations with the highest number of annual openings in the **Next** category were *Miscellaneous Assemblers and Fabricators* (226); *Cook, Restaurants* (107); *Secretaries and Administrative Assistants* (87); *Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers* (86); and *First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers* (66). Two of the top five occupations by the number of projected openings also saw a high number of job ads.

Later occupations with the highest number of annual openings were *General and Operations Managers* (103); *Registered Nurses* (92); *Substitute Teachers, Short-Term* (86); *Middle School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education* (76); and *Accountants and Auditors* (45). *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, Bookkeeping and Accounting Clerks, General and Operations Managers,* and *Accountants and Auditors*.

South Central Region Occupational Projections 2020-2030							
	2020	**2030**		**Annual Openings**			**Average**
Occupation	**Employment**	**Employment**	**Exits**	**Transfers**	**Growth**	**Total**	**Wage**
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 🔥	3,712	4,338	258	228	63	**549**	$24,168
Cashiers 🔥	3,114	2,988	260	292	-13	**539**	$23,091
Fast Food and Counter Workers 🔥	1,485	1,636	151	165	15	**331**	$22,848
Retail Salespersons 🔥	1,251	1,290	71	105	4	**180**	$29,201
Office Clerks, General	1,637	1,566	87	95	-7	**175**	$29,987
NEXT - Typically requires non-degree certificate, associate degree, apprenticeship, some experience, or moderate- to long-term training							
Miscellaneous Assemblers and Fabricators	1,884	2,012	74	139	13	**226**	$31,924
Cooks, Restaurant	495	707	35	51	21	**107**	$23,495
Secretaries and Administrative Assistants, Except Legal, Medical, and Executive	955	857	46	51	-10	**87**	$29,587
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers 🔥	813	797	33	55	-2	**86**	$39,355
First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers 🔥	660	645	23	45	-2	**66**	$38,519
LATER - Typically requires a bachelor's degree or higher							
General and Operations Managers	1,026	1,159	22	68	13	**103**	$69,253
Registered Nurses 🔥	1,675	1,715	45	43	4	**92**	$60,841
Substitute Teachers, Short-Term	735	756	44	40	2	**86**	$30,647
Middle School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education	1,120	1,099	34	44	-2	**76**	$48,464
Accountants and Auditors	444	483	13	28	4	**45**	$53,313

🔥 Flame icon indicates occupations with high numbers of job ads between Nov. 1, 2022 - Oct. 31, 2023

Sources: *MERIC Long-Term Occupational Projections 2020-2030 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. Ninety-two percent of Missouri's population age 25 and over was a high school graduate or higher in 2022. About 19 percent held a bachelor's degree and 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.
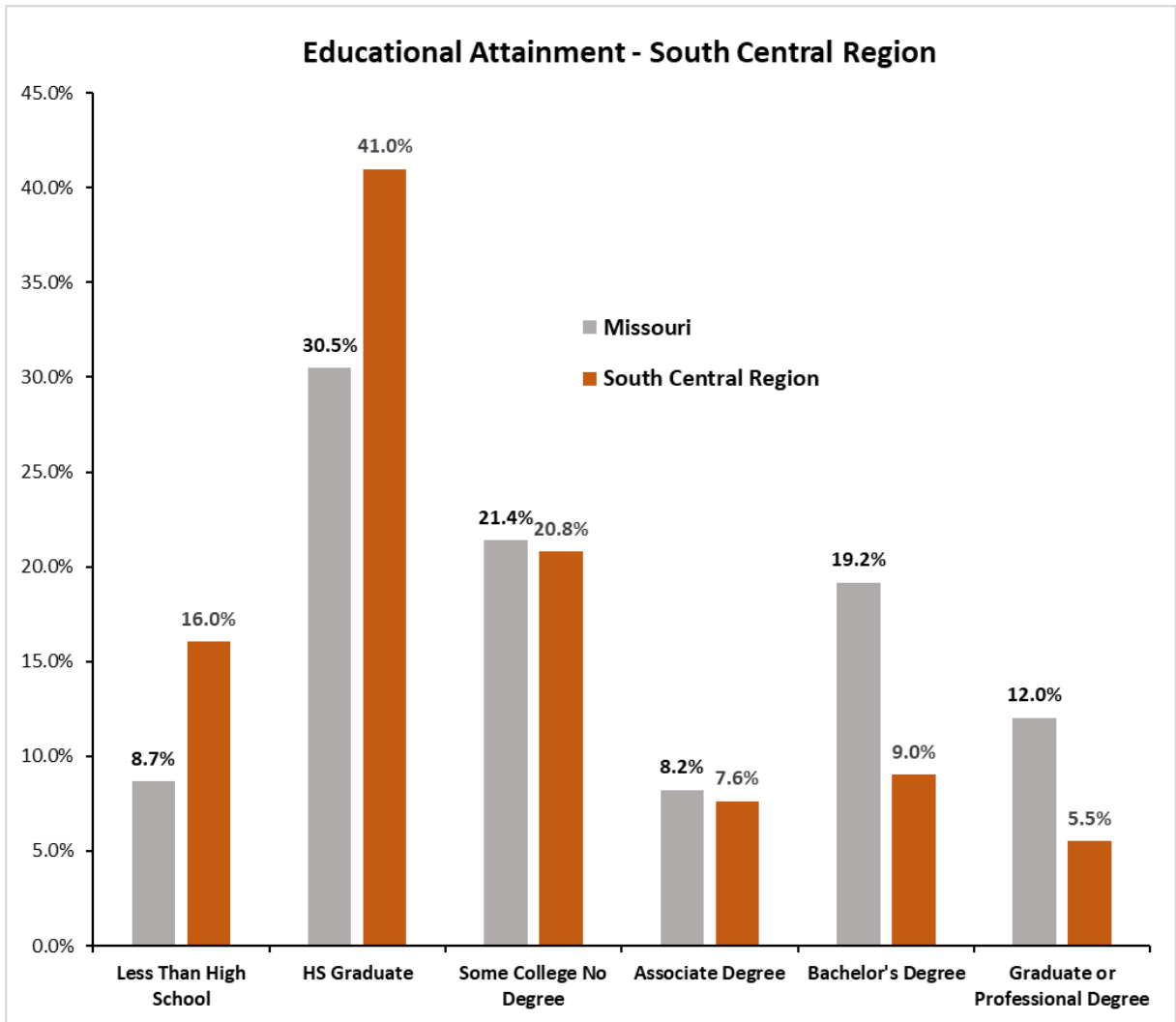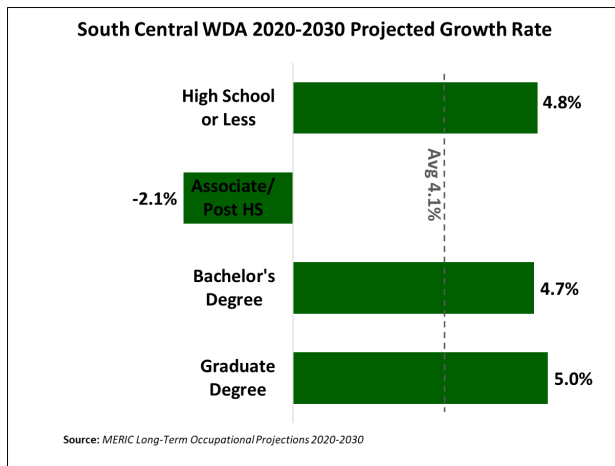

Source: *American Community Survey-5 Year data (2018-2022)*

Occupational Projections

Long-term projections are used to identify the fastest growing occupations, as well as occupations with a high number of openings through 2030.

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 or High school diploma or less are projected to grow at a faster rate in the South Central Region. The occupation groups that are projected to grow the fastest are *Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations*, *Sales and Related Occupations, Office and Administrative Support Occupations*, and *Healthcare Support Occupations*.

Long-term projections also present data on expected job openings for each occupation through 2030. 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.

South Central WDA 2020-2030 Projected Growth Rate

Education Level	Growth Rate
High School or Less	4.8%
Associate/Post HS	-2.1%
Bachelor's Degree	4.7%
Graduate Degree	5.0%

Avg 4.1%

Source: *MERIC Long-Term Occupational Projections 2020-2030*

d. Skill Gaps

South Central WDA Annual Openings 2020-2030

Education Level	Annual Openings
High School or Less	4,338
Associate/Post HS	372
Bachelor's Degree	745
Graduate Degree	88

Legend: Exits, Transfers, Growth

Source: *MERIC Long-Term Occupational Projections 2020-2030*

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

Missouri Workforce 2023 Survey

The Missouri Employer Survey has been conducted four times since 2019. Some questions have remained consistent each year, and others have changed to reflect current issues impacting the state's employers. Methodologies were held as consistent as possible from year-to- year. Comparisons to previous years are made throughout the report where applicable, but each survey indicates a snapshot in time. It can be used to infer changing trends in the labor market and employer sentiment but was not designed as a stringent time series analysis.

Missouri has more than 230,000 payroll employers who provide jobs to over 2.8 million people. Understanding the current hiring trends and challenges faced by the state's employers is essential not only in providing targeted resources and services to help these employers but also in supporting the state's economic and workforce development. Keeping these objectives in view, over 2,800 Missouri companies with five or more employees were surveyed from February 20, 2023, to April 17, 2023. This helped gauge the state of the workforce from the employer's perspective, with 1,183 employers completing the survey. Throughout the report, data in the graphs may not add to 100 percent due to rounding or the ability to select more than one response.

A few takeaways from this survey include:

• Employer's main concerns are hiring and retaining top talent.

• Sixty-two percent of employers had job postings that took more than 30 days to fill.

• The top barrier to expanding employment is a shortage of applicants with knowledge or skills, which has increased significantly from previous years (47% in 2019 and 2020, 60% in 2021, and 65% in 2023).

• Most employees work in person vs. working remotely.

• The top strategy used to retain existing workers is offering increased wages.

• Eighty-nine percent of surveyed employers have increased wages at an average of 11 percent in the last 12 months.

Difficulty hiring quality employees was a constant theme throughout the survey. Sixty-two percent of employers reported they had some positions that took over 30 days to fill and 38 percent reported to have their vacant positions filled in less than 30 days.
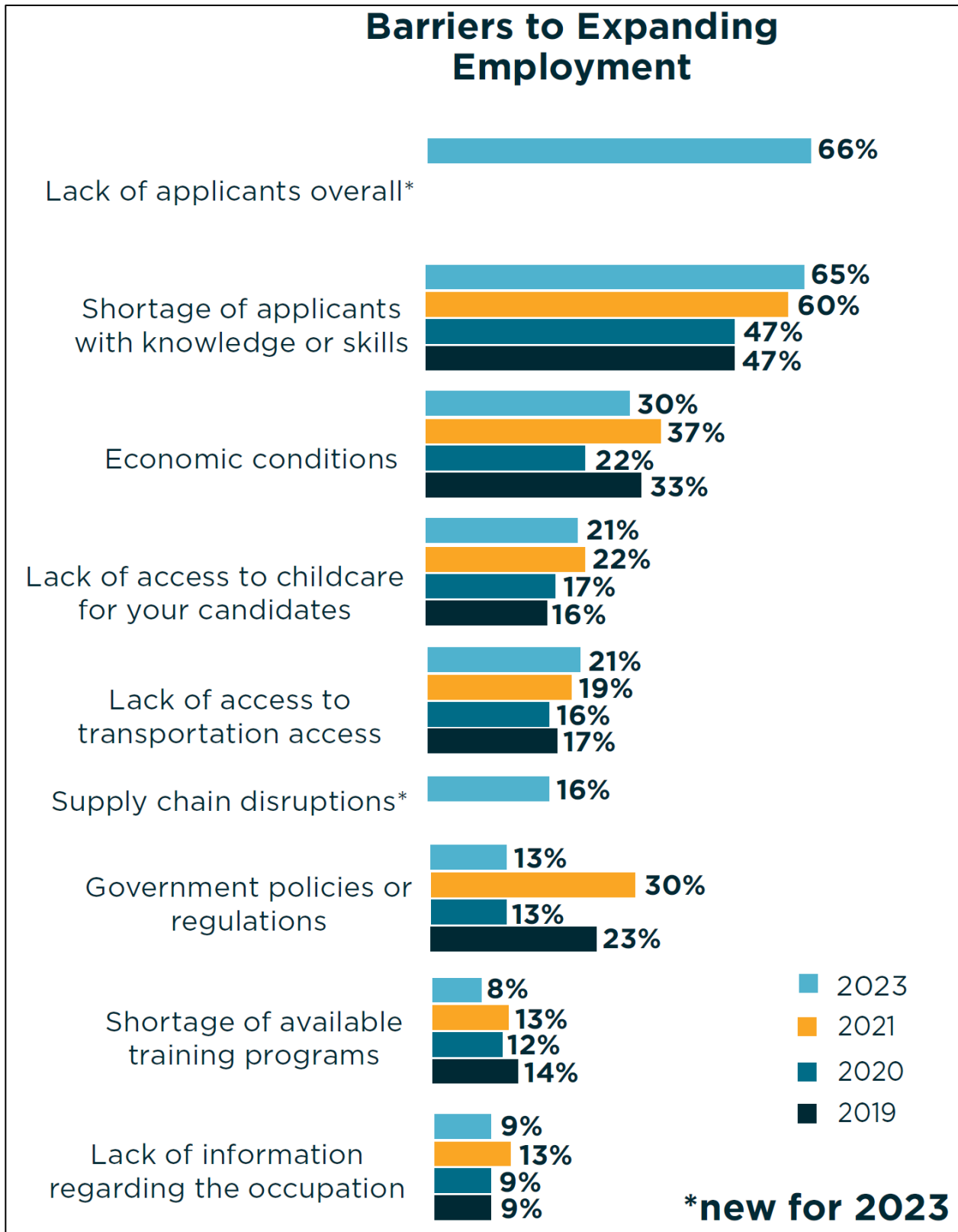
Fifteen percent reported 75-100 percent of their vacant positions took over 30 days to fill. Jobs that were the hardest to fill were in *healthcare*; particularly *nursing* occupations; *sales*; and *food service.*
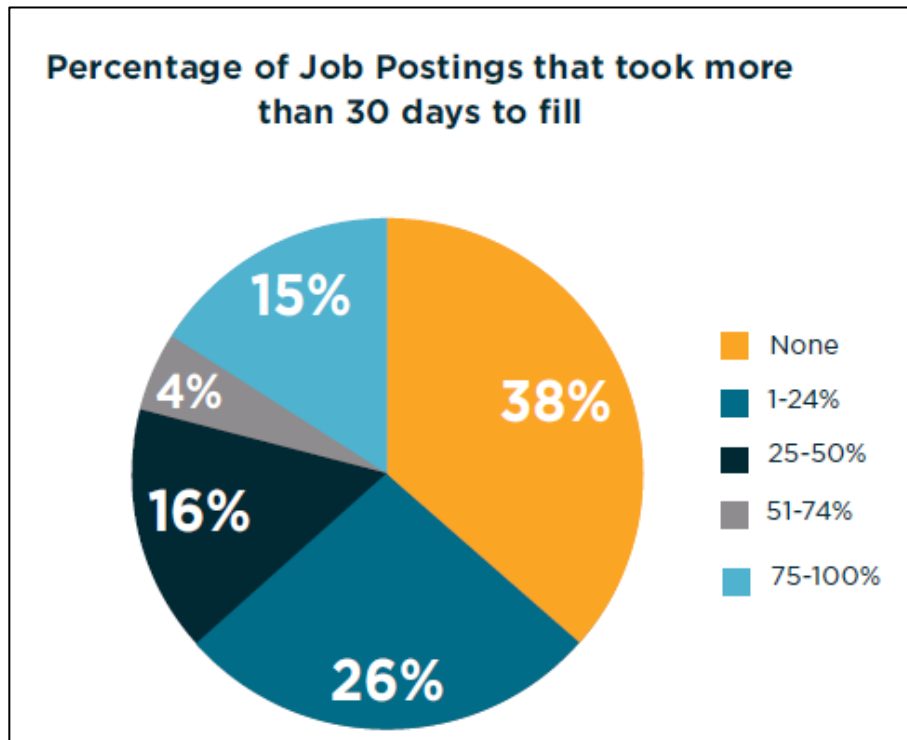
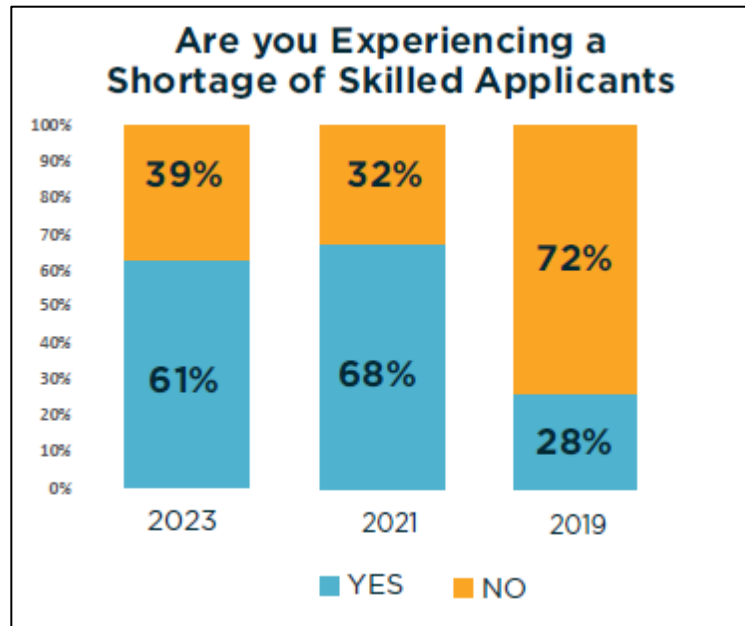**Percentage of Job Postings that took more than 30 days to fill**

Employers were asked about the barriers they encountered in expanding employment. *Lack of applicants overall* was a new option for employers in the 2023 survey, and 66 percent of surveyed employers selected this option, making it the top barrier to expansion of employment. The next highest barriers were *shortage of applicants with knowledge or skills* and *economic conditions*, which have been the top cited barriers since the survey began in 2019. *Shortage of applicants with knowledge or skills* increased significantly from previous years, from 47 percent in 2019 and 2020, to 60 percent in 2021, and 65 percent in 2023. *Economic conditions* as a barrier to employment decreased from 37 percent in 2021 to 30 percent in 2023. Similarly, fewer employers encountered *government policies or regulations* as a barrier to expanding employment, dropping from 30 percent in 2021 to 13 percent in 2023.

Other significant barriers encountered in 2023 included *lack of childcare* and *transportation access,* with 21 percent of respondents reporting these as barriers to expanding employment.

The survey also asked employers to rate the importance of each barrier on a scale of one to five, with one being insignificant and five being critical. The highest weighted average response for any barrier cited this year was *lack of applicants overall,* getting an importance score of 4.05 out of 5. The next highest weighted response was *government policies or regulations* (3.88), followed by *shortage of applicants with knowledge or skills* (3.85). Although the share of employers choosing *government policies or regulations* as a barrier to employment expansion has decreased, for those that did encounter it, it was still a critical barrier. *Shortage of available training programs* dropped in importance from 3.98 in 2019 to 3.15 in 2023.

Barriers to Expanding Employment

Lack of applicants overall*
- 2023: 66%

Shortage of applicants with knowledge or skills
- 2023: 65%
- 2021: 60%
- 2020: 47%
- 2019: 47%

Economic conditions
- 2023: 30%
- 2021: 37%
- 2020: 22%
- 2019: 33%

Lack of access to childcare for your candidates
- 2023: 21%
- 2021: 22%
- 2020: 17%
- 2019: 16%

Lack of access to transportation access
- 2023: 21%
- 2021: 19%
- 2020: 16%
- 2019: 17%

Supply chain disruptions*
- 2023: 16%

Government policies or regulations
- 2023: 13%
- 2021: 30%
- 2020: 13%
- 2019: 23%

Shortage of available training programs
- 2023: 8%
- 2021: 13%
- 2020: 12%
- 2019: 14%

Lack of information regarding the occupation
- 2023: 9%
- 2021: 13%
- 2020: 9%
- 2019: 9%

Legend: 2023, 2021, 2020, 2019
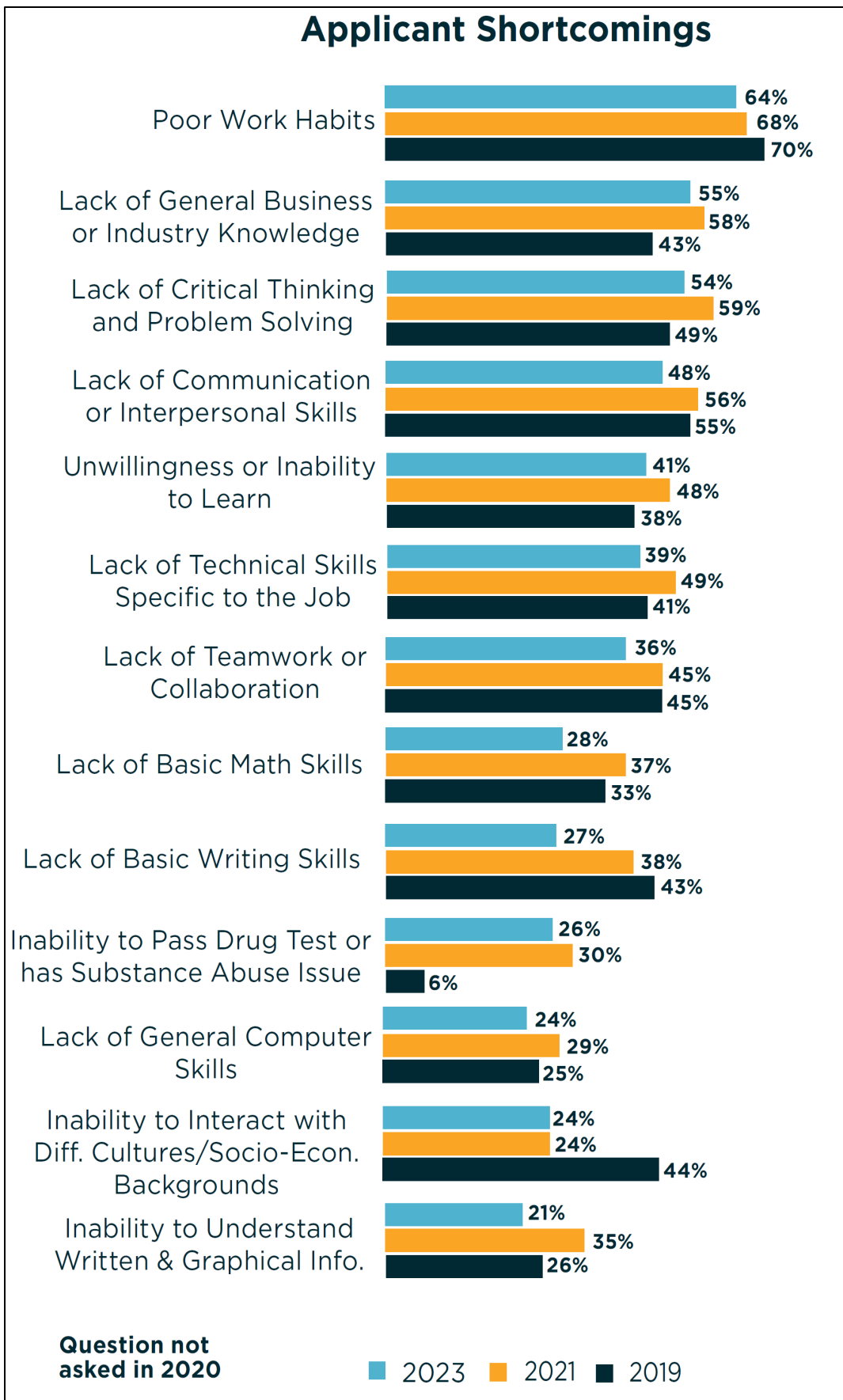
***new for 2023**

33

Sixty-one percent of employers stated they were experiencing a *shortage of skilled applicants.* This is slightly lower than the 68 percent reported in 2021 and much higher than the 28 percent cited in 2019.
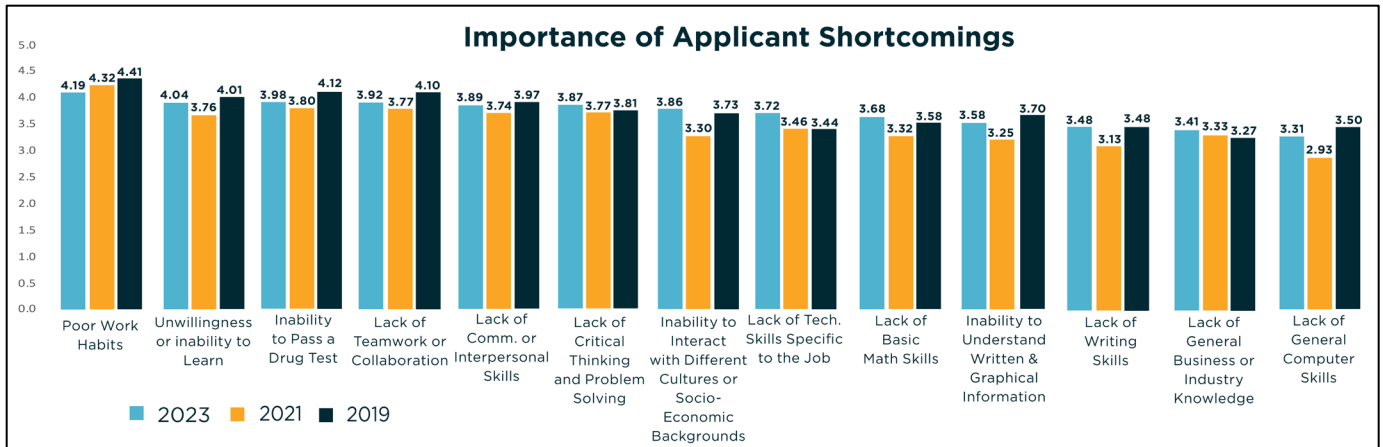

Employers were asked about possible shortcomings of applicants. As in previous years, *poor work habits* is the most frequently cited shortcoming at 64 percent (68% in 2021 and 70% in 2019). Other top shortcomings include *lack of general business or industry knowledge* (55% in 2023, 58% in 2021, and 43% in 2019) and *lack of critical thinking and problem solving* (54% in 2023, 59% in 2021, and 49% in 2019).

Since 2019, large changes have occurred in two less frequently mentioned shortcomings – *inability to interact effectively with people of different cultures and socio-economic backgrounds* and *inability to pass a drug test or having a substance abuse issue.* In 2019, 44 percent of employers cited applicant's *inability to interact effectively with people of different cultures and socio-economic backgrounds* as a shortcoming. This dropped to 24 percent in 2021 and 2023. *Inability to pass drug test or has substance abuse issue* increased from 6 percent in 2019 to 30 percent in 2021 and 26 percent in 2023.

Applicant Shortcomings

Shortcoming	2023	2021	2019
Poor Work Habits	64%	68%	70%
Lack of General Business or Industry Knowledge	55%	58%	43%
Lack of Critical Thinking and Problem Solving	54%	59%	49%
Lack of Communication or Interpersonal Skills	48%	56%	55%
Unwillingness or Inability to Learn	41%	48%	38%
Lack of Technical Skills Specific to the Job	39%	49%	41%
Lack of Teamwork or Collaboration	36%	45%	45%
Lack of Basic Math Skills	28%	37%	33%
Lack of Basic Writing Skills	27%	38%	43%
Inability to Pass Drug Test or has Substance Abuse Issue	26%	30%	6%
Lack of General Computer Skills	24%	29%	25%
Inability to Interact with Diff. Cultures/Socio-Econ. Backgrounds	24%	24%	44%
Inability to Understand Written & Graphical Info.	21%	35%	26%

Question not asked in 2020

Legend: ■ 2023 ■ 2021 ■ 2019

Employers were also asked to rate importance of each shortcoming on a scale of one to five, with one being insignificant and five being critical. *Poor work habits* was the most cited shortcoming and also ranked as the most important, with an average importance score of 4.19 out of 5.0. *Poor work habits* was also ranked the highest shortcoming in 2019 and 2021. Other high-ranking shortcomings are *unwillingness or inability to learn* (4.04) and *inability to pass a drug test* (3.98).
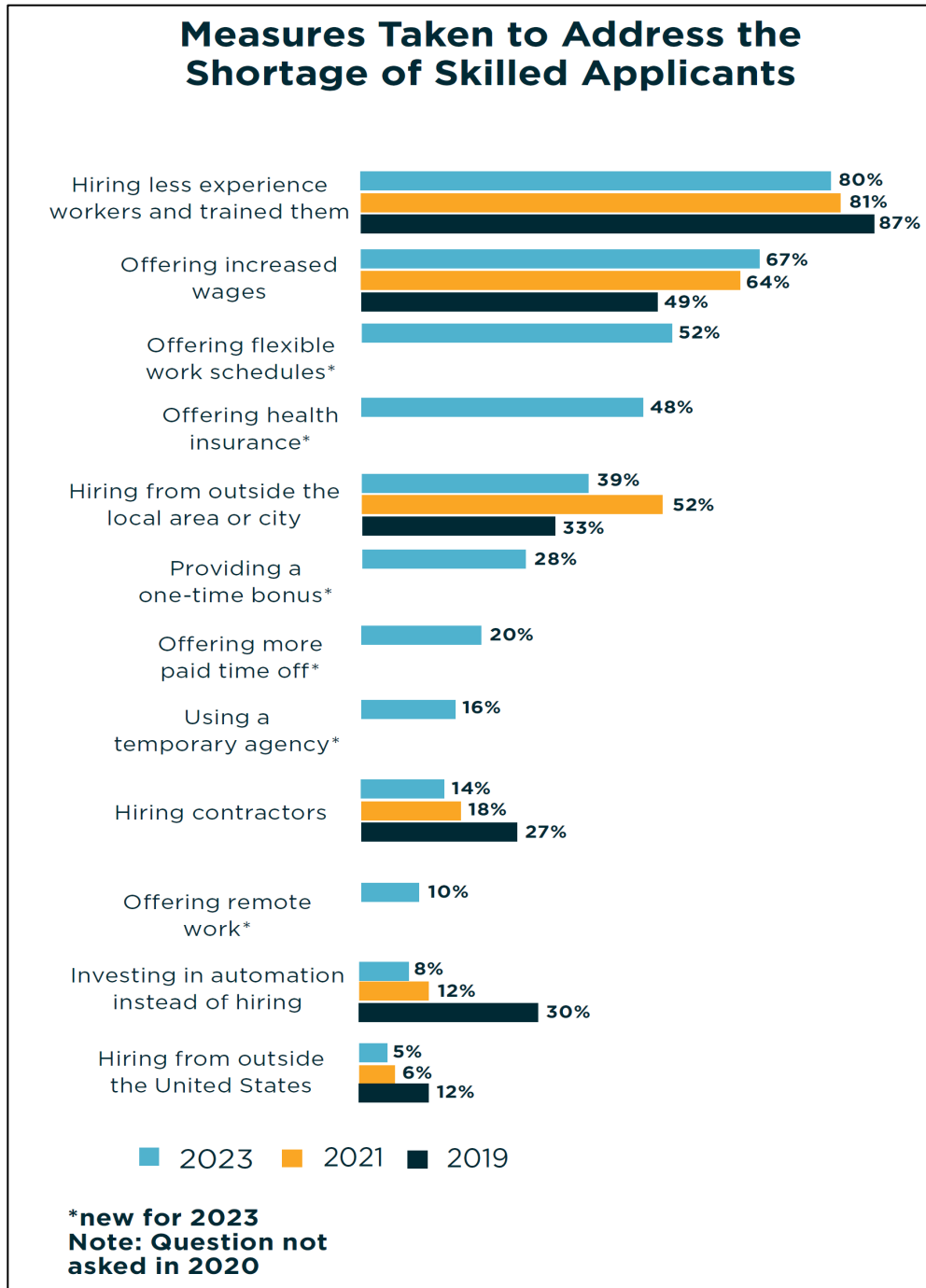
Importance of Applicant Shortcomings

	Poor Work Habits	Unwillingness or inability to Learn	Inability to Pass a Drug Test	Lack of Teamwork or Collaboration	Lack of Comm. or Interpersonal Skills	Lack of Critical Thinking and Problem Solving	Inability to Interact with Different Cultures or Socio-Economic Backgrounds	Lack of Tech. Skills Specific to the Job	Lack of Basic Math Skills	Inability to Understand Written & Graphical Information	Lack of Writing Skills	Lack of General Business or Industry Knowledge	Lack of General Computer Skills
2023	4.19	4.04	3.98	3.92	3.89	3.87	3.86	3.72	3.68	3.58	3.48	3.41	3.31
2021	4.32	3.76	3.80	3.77	3.74	3.77	3.30	3.46	3.32	3.25	3.13	3.33	2.93
2019	4.41	4.01	4.12	4.10	3.97	3.81	3.73	3.44	3.58	3.70	3.48	3.27	3.50

Sixty-one percent of employers stated they were experiencing a *shortage of skilled applicants.* This is slightly lower than the 68 percent reported in 2021 and much higher than the 28 percent cited in 2019.

Are you Experiencing a Shortage of Skilled Applicants

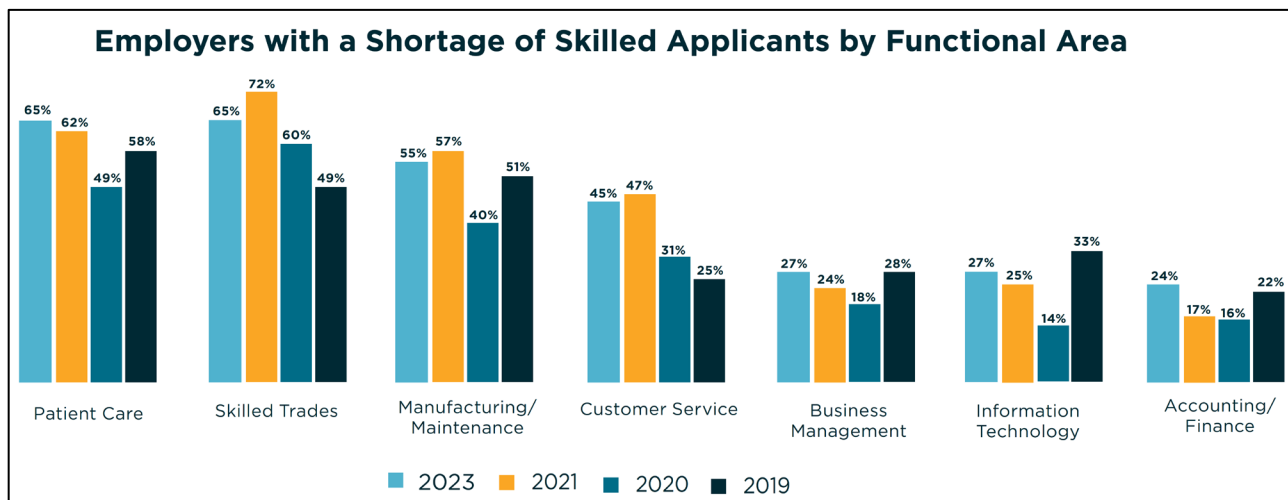|	2023	2021	2019
NO	39%	32%	72%
YES	61%	68%	28%

Employers take a variety of measures to address these shortages. Following the trend of previous years when this question was asked from the employers, 80 percent of the respondents reported *hiring less experienced workers and train* them as a measure to address skill shortages in the applicants (81% in 2021 and 87% in 2019). Other popular remedial measures were *offering increased wages* (67%) and *offering flexible work schedules* (52%). *Offering increased wages* rose as a remedial measure from 49 percent of respondents in 2019 to 64 percent in 2020 and 67 percent in 2023. Some less widely used measures, such as *investing in automation instead of hiring, hiring from outside the United States*, and *hiring contractors,* have decreased over the last four years.

Investing in automation instead of hiring decreased from 30 percent in 2019 to 8 percent in 2023, *hiring from outside the United States* decreased from 12 percent in 2019 to 5 percent in 2023, and *hiring contractors* went from 27 percent in 2019 to 14 percent in 2023. Other remedial measures to alleviate the shortage of skilled applicants that were included in the 2023 survey were *offering flexible work schedules* (52%), *offering health insurance* (48%), *providing a one-time bonus* (28%), *offering more paid time off* (20%), *using a temporary agency* (16%), and *offering remote work* (10%).
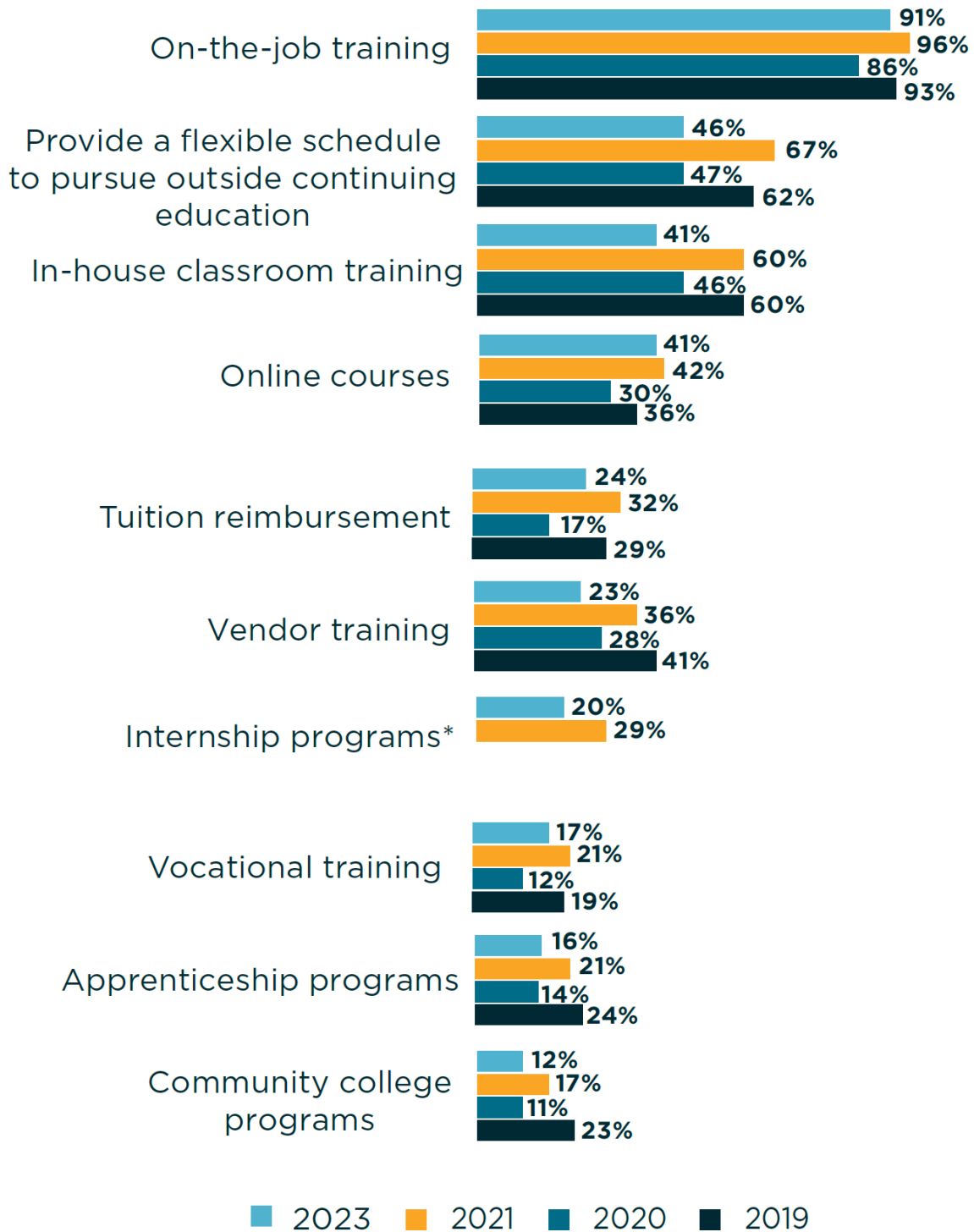
Measures Taken to Address the Shortage of Skilled Applicants

Measure	2023	2021	2019
Hiring less experience workers and trained them	80%	81%	87%
Offering increased wages	67%	64%	49%
Offering flexible work schedules*	52%		
Offering health insurance*	48%		
Hiring from outside the local area or city	39%	52%	33%
Providing a one-time bonus*	28%		
Offering more paid time off*	20%		
Using a temporary agency*	16%		
Hiring contractors	14%	18%	27%
Offering remote work*	10%		
Investing in automation instead of hiring	8%	12%	30%
Hiring from outside the United States	5%	6%	12%

■ 2023 ■ 2021 ■ 2019

***new for 2023
Note: Question not
asked in 2020**

Companies employ workers in a variety of functional areas with different work responsibilities. *Patient Care* and *Skilled Trades* functional areas had the largest percentage of employers reporting shortages of skilled applicants at 65 percent each. Skill shortages in *Customer Service* have increased substantially, increasing from 25 percent in 2019 and 31 percent in 2020, to 47 percent in 2021, decreasing slightly to 45 percent in 2023.

Employers with a Shortage of Skilled Applicants by Functional Area

Functional Area	2023	2021	2020	2019
Patient Care	65%	62%	49%	58%
Skilled Trades	65%	72%	60%	49%
Manufacturing/Maintenance	55%	57%	40%	51%
Customer Service	45%	47%	31%	25%
Business Management	27%	24%	18%	28%
Information Technology	27%	25%	14%	33%
Accounting/Finance	24%	17%	16%	22%

To address the problem of skill shortages in the current workers, employers use several remedial measures, and *on-the-job-training* remains the most preferred method. Over 9 in 10 employers (91%) stated they used *on-the-job training* to assist current workers in addressing the need for new or increased skills. However, there is a significant decrease in applying these remedial measures in 2023 when compared to 2021, most significantly in *providing a flexible schedule to pursue outside continuing education* (67% in 2021 vs. 46% in 2023) and *in-house classroom training* (60% in 2021 vs. 41% in 2023).

## Methods to Assist Workers for New or Increased Skills

On-the-job training
- 91% (2023)
- 96% (2021)
- 86% (2020)
- 93% (2019)

Provide a flexible schedule to pursue outside continuing education
- 46% (2023)
- 67% (2021)
- 47% (2020)
- 62% (2019)

In-house classroom training
- 41% (2023)
- 60% (2021)
- 46% (2020)
- 60% (2019)

Online courses
- 41% (2023)
- 42% (2021)
- 30% (2020)
- 36% (2019)

Tuition reimbursement
- 24% (2023)
- 32% (2021)
- 17% (2020)
- 29% (2019)

Vendor training
- 23% (2023)
- 36% (2021)
- 28% (2020)
- 41% (2019)

Internship programs*
- 20% (2023)
- 29% (2021)

Vocational training
- 17% (2023)
- 21% (2021)
- 12% (2020)
- 19% (2019)

Apprenticeship programs
- 16% (2023)
- 21% (2021)
- 14% (2020)
- 24% (2019)

Community college programs
- 12% (2023)
- 17% (2021)
- 11% (2020)
- 23% (2019)

Legend: ■ 2023 ■ 2021 ■ 2020 ■ 2019

*new in 2021

As the economy evolves, customer and workforce needs change. Now more than ever businesses must adapt to attract and retain quality employees, as well as serve customer's changing needs. Employers were asked which workforce initiatives they were considering for the next year.

Employer's likelihood to consider a variety of initiatives has changed significantly over the last three years. From 2020 to 2021, many employers were considering these workforce initiatives. However, from 2021 to 2023, responses were lower for almost all initiatives. The *remote working* option decreased significantly from 21 percent in 2021 to 13 percent in 2023, indicating a return to physical/centralized workspaces.

The top workforce initiative considered for the next year by employers was *cross-training and knowledge transfer* (67%), followed by *increased employee care and engagement* (53%) and *reskilling or upskilling employees to new ways of working* (46%).

Workforce Initiatives Considered for the Next Year

Initiative	2023	2021	2020
Cross-training and Knowledge Transfer	67%	75%	44%
Increased Employee Care and Engagement	53%	74%	35%
Reskilling or Upskilling Employees	46%	67%	38%
New Learning and Skill Training Delivery Methods	45%	57%	28%
Flexible Working	45%	56%	32%
New Ways to Serve Customers	45%	67%	46%
Technology Investments	37%	57%	35%
Succession Planning	35%	52%	26%
Learner Operations	32%	47%	23%
Reorganization or Restructuring	28%	41%	19%
Increased Agility in Product and Service Offerings	27%	58%	36%
Job and Task Automation Implementation	17%	27%	15%
Remote Working	13%	21%	19%

■ 2023　■ 2021　■ 2020

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been an increased interest in understanding remote work. Prior to pandemic, (February 2020) about 15 percent employers were having some workers working remotely. Remote work peaked in 2020 during the height of the pandemic, with over half of employers (56%) stating they had some workers working remotely, either full or part-time. This dropped significantly to 20 percent in 2021 and has increased slightly to 25 percent in 2023. When asked if they expected the number of remote workers to change over time, the vast majority (92%) of employers said they expected it to stay the same. In the question about workforce initiatives considered in the coming year, 13 percent of employers indicated considering *remote work.*

Employers with Employees Working Remotely

25% 2023

20% 2021

56% 2020
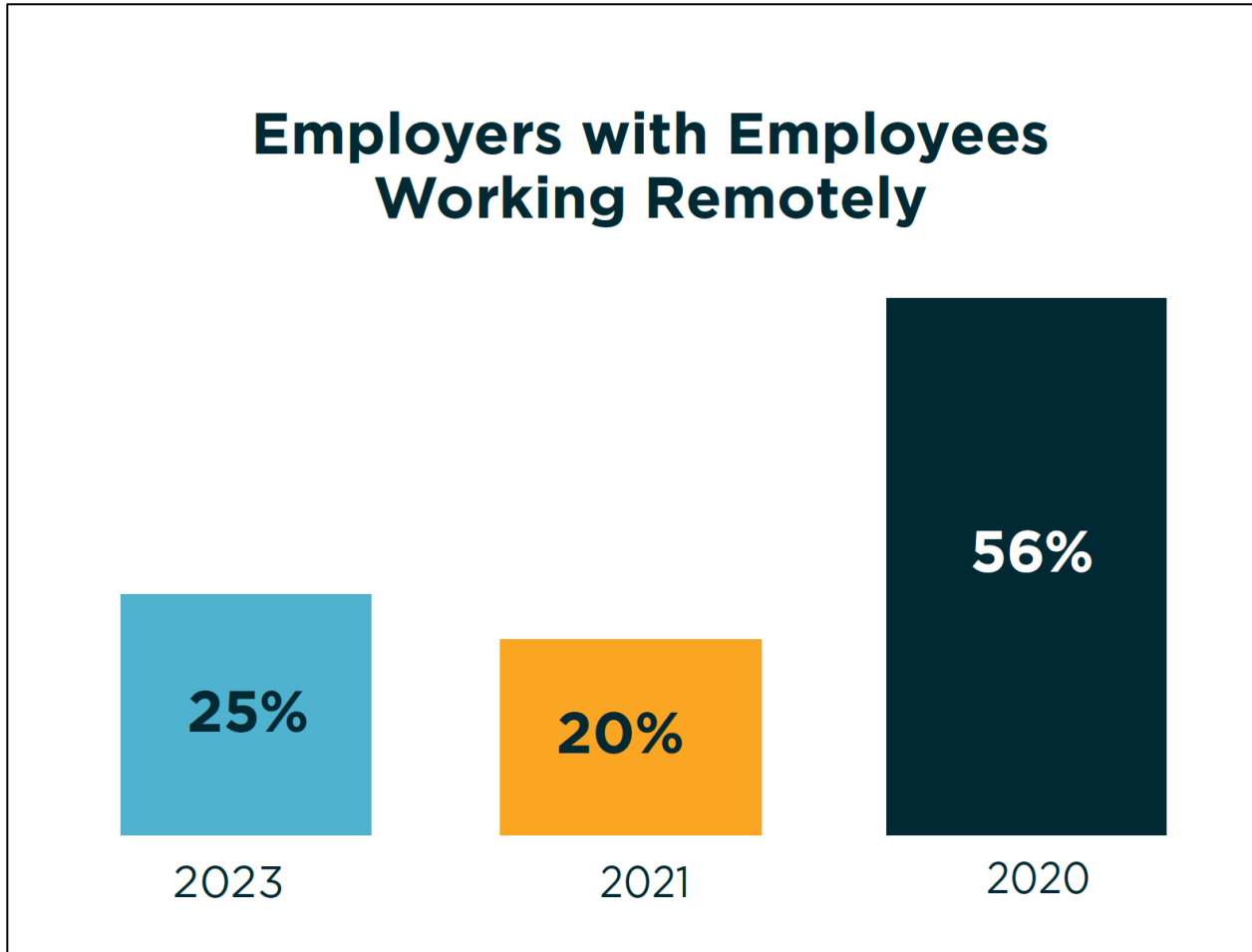
Employers may perform a variety of screening processes before hiring an employee. *Criminal checks* were the most common types of background checks conducted prior to hiring, with 74 percent of Missouri employers reporting they perform one. *Drug screens* were next at 46 percent. In 2023, background screenings involving *professional license or certification, social media, drug screen, and financial checks* decreased significantly from 2021.

Background checks required prior to hire

Category	2023	2021
Criminal	74%	75%
Drug Screen	46%	53%
eVerify	38%	41%
Check by an outside service	36%	30%
Professional license/certification	32%	48%
Social Media	24%	31%
Financial	9%	18%

■ 2023 ■ 2021
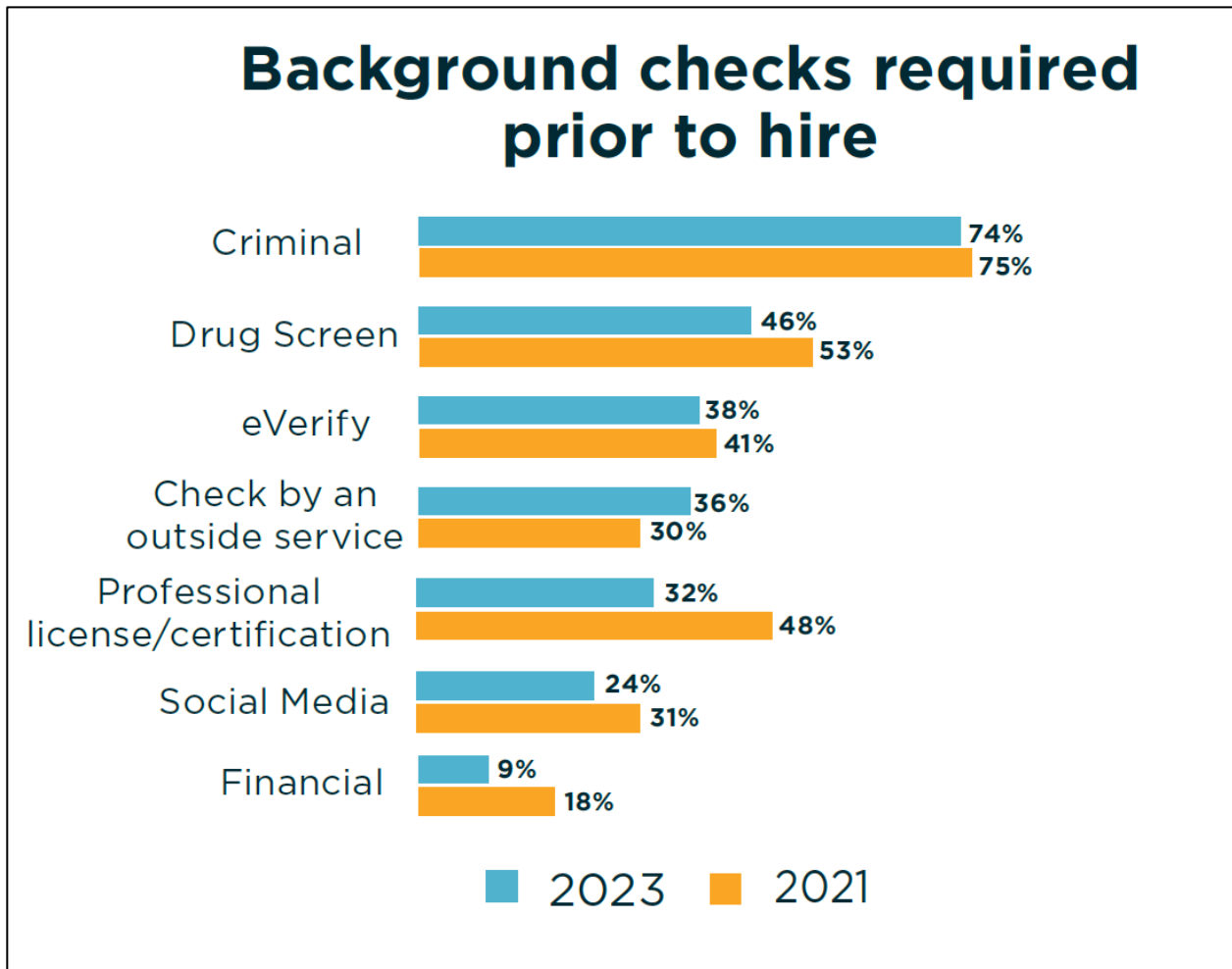
In 2019, less than one percent of Missouri employers *would not consider* hiring an applicant convicted of a felony offense who had completed his or her sentence and/or probation. This increased to 20 percent in 2020, was at 19 percent in 2021 and decreased slightly to 16 percent in 2023. Most employers (62%) reported it would *depend on the nature of the felony and time of the offense*, a significant increase from previous surveys Employers responding they would *consider for any job they are qualified for* decreased from 17 percent in 2020 and 2021 to 10 percent in 2023.

Hiring Justice-Involved Applicants

Depends on the nature of the felony and the time of the offense
- 62% (2023)
- 49% (2021)
- 51% (2020)
- 41% (2019)

Would not consider for any position
- 16% (2023)
- 19% (2021)
- 20% (2020)
- <1% (2019)

Would consider for some jobs
- 12% (2023)
- 14% (2021)
- 12% (2020)
- 43% (2019)

Would consider for any job they are qualified for
- 10% (2023)
- 17% (2021)
- 17% (2020)
- 15% (2019)

Legend: 2023 | 2021 | 2020 | 2019
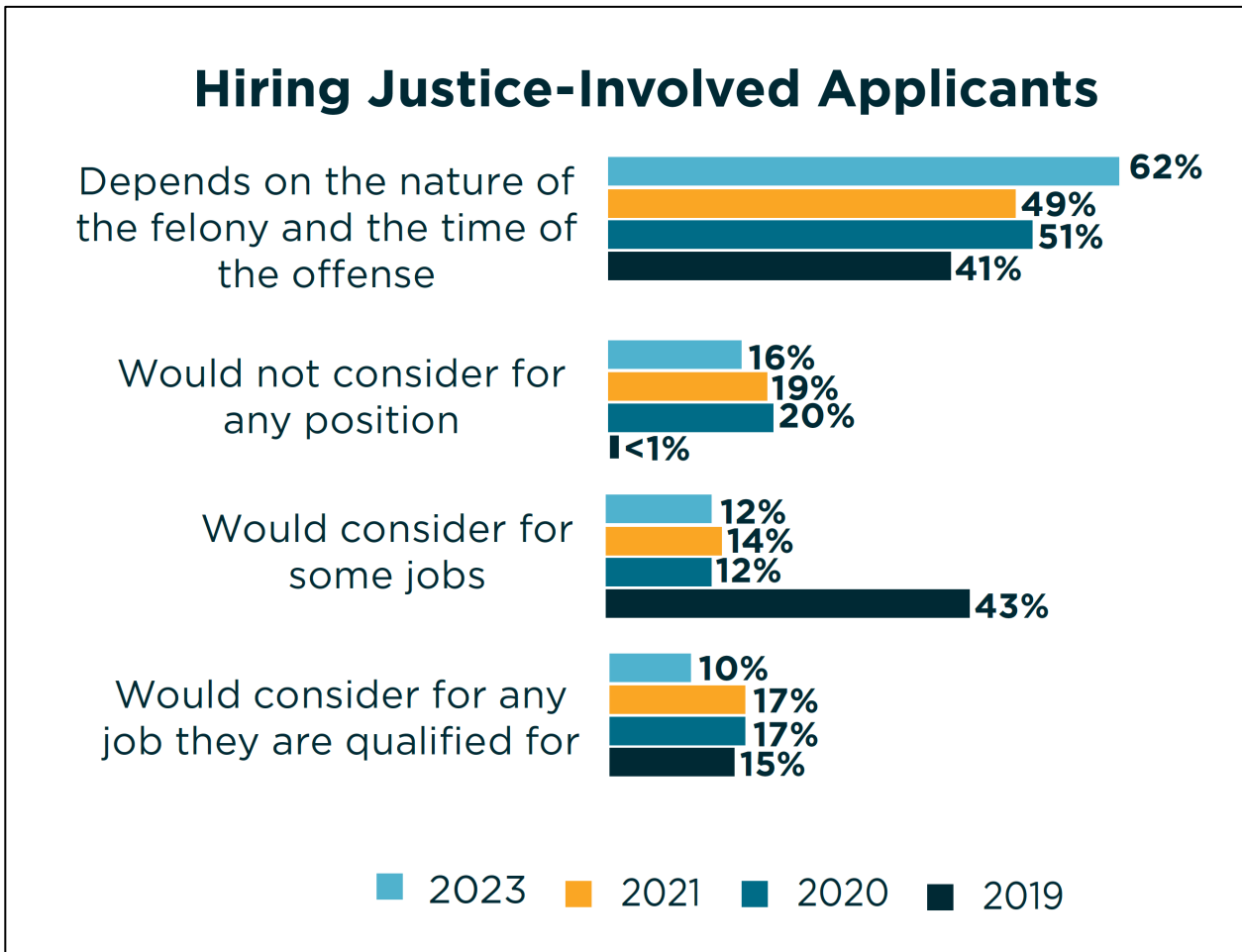
The top strategies used by employers in the last 12 months to retain existing workers included *offering increased wages* (86%), *offering a flexible work schedule* (64%), and *offering additional training* (52%). *Remote work* was listed as a strategy by only 13 percent of employers. When asked, "Have you increased wages in the last 12 months," 89 percent of employers said yes. Of the employers who increased wages, the average increase was 11 percent.

Strategies used to retain existing workers in the last 12 Months

- Offering increased wages: 86%
- Offering a flexible work schedule: 64%
- Offering additional training: 52%
- Offering health insurance: 47%
- Providing one-time bonuses: 40%
- Offering more paid time-off: 26%
- Increasing retirement benefits: 17%
- Offering remote work: 13%

Legend: 2023
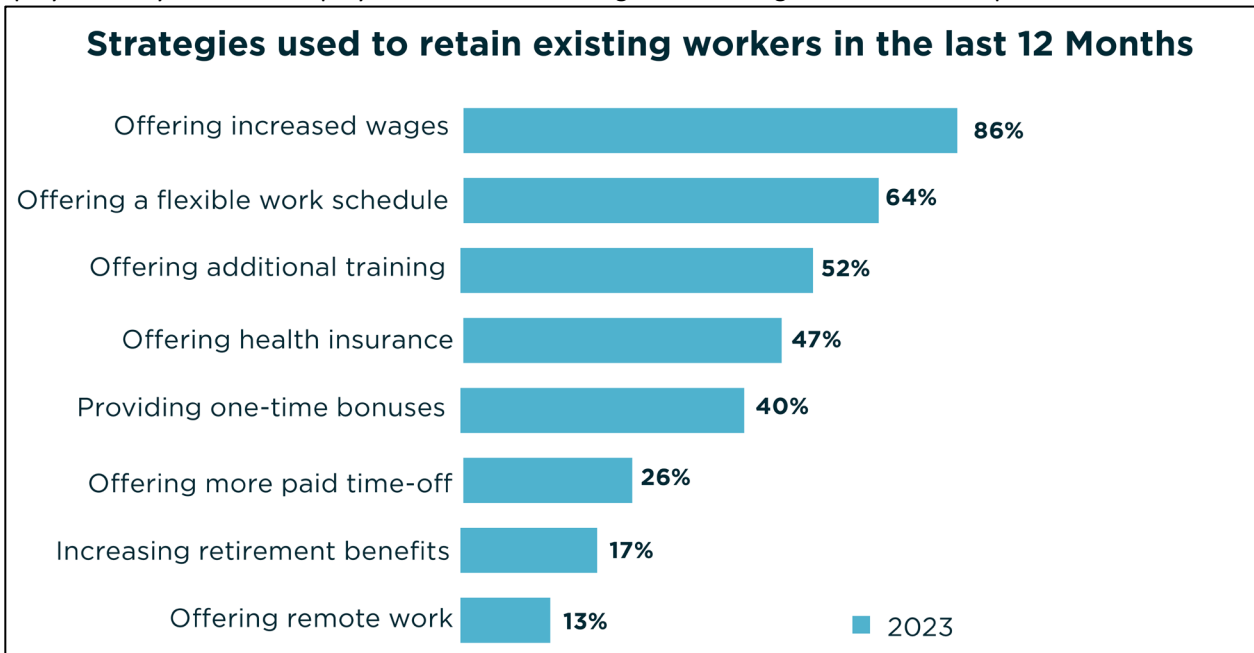
9. <mark>**Workforce Development, Education, and Training Activities Analysis**</mark>
Describe the workforce development services and activities, including education and training in the LWDA, to address the education and skills needs of the workforce. Include education and training activities of the core programs and mandatory and optional One-Stop Delivery System partners[3].

    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.

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[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 similar participants. 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 is difficult. There is currently no universal release of information making a team based case management approach difficult. 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 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: Popular Bluff in Butler County and West Plains in Howell County.

Major Employers

- ➢ Air Medical Group Holdings (West Plains)
- ➢ AHF Wood Products (West Plains)
- ➢ Caterpillar (Pomona)
- ➢ Leonardo DRS Land Systems:(West Plains)
- ➢ Gates (Poplar Bluff)
- ➢ Hutchens Industries (Mansfield)
- ➢ McClain Forest Products (West Plains)
- ➢ Mid Continent Nail Corporation (Poplar Bluff)
- ➢ Roy Oak Enterprises (West Plains)
- ➢ Western Dairy Transport: (Cabool)

(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: Missouri State University-West Plains, Three Rivers Community College, Southern Missouri Technical Center and Poplar Bluff Technical Career Center.

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				
	1 Year Change 2021-2022		**5 Year Change 2017-2022**	
NAME	**Number**	**Percentage**	**Number**	**Percentage**
Missouri	**12,888**	**0.2%**	**79,122**	**1.3%**
Butler	(34)	-0.1%	(546)	-1.3%
Carter	(66)	-1.2%	(956)	-15.3%
Douglas	(5)	0.0%	(1,588)	-11.9%
Howell	207	0.5%	(179)	-0.4%
Oregon	(108)	-1.2%	(1,996)	-18.5%
Ozark	24	0.3%	(640)	-6.9%
Reynolds	(36)	-0.6%	(259)	-4.1%
Ripley	(193)	-1.7%	(2,968)	-21.5%
Shannon	(53)	-0.7%	(1,141)	-13.8%
Texas	(38)	-0.2%	(886)	-3.4%
Wayne	(217)	-1.9%	(2,288)	-17.1%
Wright	231	1.3%	171	0.9%

Source: *U.S. Census Bureau, Population Annual Estimates*

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 (6.7%). 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 (25.0%). The population age 55+ was above the state average of 30.6 percent in all counties in the region. The county with the highest percentage of residents age 55 and up was Ozark County with 46.5 percent of residents in this age group.

The male/female gender split was close to the state average in almost all counties. In seven of the 12 counties in the South Central Region male population was less than the female population. Texas County had the highest portion of male population in the region (52.7%) and the lowest female population in the region (47.3%).

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+	Female	Male	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	6,154,422	25.0%	6.7%	13.2%	24.4%	30.6%	50.6%	49.4%	79.4%	11.3%	2.1%	0.3%	0.1%	1.5%	94.6%	5.4%	4.6%
Butler	42,280	25.8%	5.6%	12.3%	24.0%	32.3%	51.1%	48.9%	87.7%	5.1%	0.2%	0.4%	0.1%	1.4%	94.9%	5.1%	2.4%
Carter	5,299	26.4%	6.0%	8.7%	22.0%	37.0%	51.1%	48.9%	94.1%	1.0%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	95.2%	4.8%	2.3%
Douglas	11,803	23.9%	4.3%	9.1%	22.6%	40.1%	49.2%	50.8%	93.5%	0.5%	0.1%	1.1%	0.0%	0.1%	95.3%	4.7%	1.0%
Howell	39,960	26.1%	5.7%	11.3%	23.7%	33.1%	51.3%	48.7%	93.9%	0.5%	0.5%	0.4%	0.0%	0.8%	96.0%	4.0%	2.4%
Oregon	8,783	24.4%	5.5%	9.9%	22.0%	38.3%	50.3%	49.7%	94.4%	0.1%	0.2%	0.4%	0.1%	0.2%	95.4%	4.6%	1.9%
Ozark	8,688	20.9%	3.6%	7.8%	21.1%	46.5%	50.0%	50.0%	94.6%	0.6%	0.0%	0.5%	0.0%	0.3%	96.0%	4.0%	2.1%
Reynolds	6,102	21.3%	4.4%	9.0%	25.6%	39.6%	47.9%	52.1%	92.7%	1.7%	0.2%	0.3%	0.0%	0.5%	95.4%	4.6%	1.7%
Ripley	10,839	25.5%	5.1%	12.0%	23.2%	34.1%	50.2%	49.8%	93.5%	0.1%	0.9%	0.1%	0.0%	0.9%	95.5%	4.5%	2.2%
Shannon	7,132	23.4%	4.6%	10.3%	22.8%	38.9%	49.0%	51.0%	93.0%	0.3%	0.3%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	93.8%	6.2%	0.4%
Texas	24,828	23.3%	5.6%	11.3%	24.1%	35.7%	47.3%	52.7%	90.7%	2.5%	0.5%	0.7%	0.0%	1.0%	95.3%	4.7%	2.4%
Wayne	11,081	21.3%	4.3%	9.2%	23.2%	42.0%	50.3%	49.7%	94.5%	1.0%	0.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.4%	96.6%	3.4%	2.0%
Wright	18,475	28.6%	5.4%	10.7%	21.9%	33.4%	50.5%	49.5%	94.6%	0.2%	0.4%	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%	95.5%	4.5%	2.4%

Source: *American Community Survey-5 Year data (2018-2022)*

11. Local Facility and Information

a. Identify the local <u>comprehensive</u> 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 <u>affiliate</u> sites, including current mailing and street addresses, telephone and fax numbers and list them in **Attachment 1** to the Plan.

c. Identify the local <u>specialized</u> 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 <u>other</u> 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 <u>Attachment 2</u>** 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 *<u>Attachment 2</u>*

    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 LWDAs.

See <u>Attachment 2</u>

    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 <u>Attachment 2</u>

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 Business Support Team 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:

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- ➢ 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.

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 assist with meeting the states Repeat Customer Performance Measure and 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 put through 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 department. These monitoring 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.

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 status and so far, allows us to meet all negotiated performance levels.

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.

Quarterly benchmark score cards will be used to determine whether sub-recipients are staying on task with meeting the designated benchmarks that are designed to increase participant rates in the South Central Region which in turn will increase the training investment. Sub-recipients are required to attend a quarterly meeting where these benchmark score cards will be reviewed and discussed. These benchmark score cards will then be shared with the Executive Committee and the whole board at the board's quarterly meetings.

   b. **Eliminating Duplicative Services**
      Identify how the Board ensures that services are not duplicated.

Operating as a team with the sub-recipients and having the quarterly meetings will enable there to be an open dialog where plans can also be made to insure that duplication or services are being avoided through processes that are developed and followed.

Sub-recipients 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, Skill-Up, grants, scholarships, etc. Working with other partners also helps the sub-recipients to avoid duplicate administrative 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 2022 and 2023 Performance Negotiations.

	Adult	Dislocated Worker	Youth	Wagner Peyser
Employment Rate Q2	72%	73%	76%	66%
Employment Rate Q4	71%	72.5%	67%	63%
Median Earning	$5,800	$6,300	$3,800	$5,000
Credential Attainment	77%	77%	66%	N/A

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 2024.

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 PY23 to four enrollees one adult, one dislocated worker, and two youth compared to PY22 zero enrollments in OJT. 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.**

See Attachment 29

Youth

35. 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.

36. 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.

37. 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 provide individual tutoring, supervised on-line HSE and in 3 locations our Case Management staff are also certified AEL instructors providing AE/HSE in our offices. Staff work with HS counselors to re-engage youth in HS when possible.

- Alterative secondary school offerings or dropout recovery services: We do not operate Alternative Ed; however we directly provide AEL/HSE services in 3 offices. 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 goes towards paid work experiences. We also currently offer a Scholars@Work program, which employs youth while they work on studying for their HSE. 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 budges, 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 Region is currently in a state of transition. The Workforce Investment Board will be the provider of youth services for July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025 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 14–24 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 has 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 WorkBased 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.

38. 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 WIB Board oversees the Scholars@Work program, a program that allows part-time employment for out of school youth whose education has been interrupted and who have an adult responsibility. It is employment that demands responsible, focused, hard work. Obtaining their diploma is about 80% for the youth and going to the "next step" is the other 20%. The "next step" part focuses on the daily learning/working out the soft skills employers expect (punctuality and attendance, appropriate appearance, focus, following instructions, personal motivation and attitude, inter-personal communication skills, and personal adaptability); as well as a thoughtful, introspective, comprehensive work readiness course. This program is funded by WIOA Youth and is based on youth allocations.

Agricultural Employment Services (AES)

39. 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 Business Support Unit, 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 university 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 Incumbent Worker funds, On-Job-Training and Work Experience to our businesses.

The WIB works with local businesses and coordinates the implementation of its Incumbent Worker Training (IWT) program, which provides matching funds up to $5,000 for those businesses who choose to train and upgrade the skills of its existing employees with the agreement that those so trained will be given raises in the near future. Job Center staff are available to host local Company sponsored Hiring Events to facilitate the recruitment of individuals for those companies participating in the Hiring Event and promote their services available.

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 <u>Attachment 30</u>**.

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 identity 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 <u>Attachment 30</u>

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.

We have promoted Incumbent Worker trainer for several years. Job Center staff shares this program with companies and provides program information to small and large groups of businesses. On-Job-Training is promoted at these same meetings and shared at Chamber events.

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 Southwest Missouri State (SMU) – 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 <u>Attachment 33</u>**. 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.