



Southeast Region Strategic Plan 2024-2028 **Two-Year Plan Modification 2026**


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Please be advised the WDBSE may revise this document at any time to comply with regulations provided by the Missouri Office of Workforce Development (OWD) and the U.S. Department of Labor. OWD guidance states the local plan will be made available publicly for a minimum of 14 calendar days prior to submission. The Plan will be published on website: www.job4you.org or a paper copy may be obtained at 1021 Kingsway, Suite 1, Cape Girardeau, MO 63701.

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Required Policies and Attachments

1. List of Comprehensive, Affiliate, Specialized and Other Centers and One Stop Operators
2. Memorandum of Understanding with IFA and Cost Sharing Budgets with All Partner Signatures
3. Chief Elected Officials Consortium Agreement and Bylaws
4. Local Workforce Development Board Membership List, Standing Committees, & Certification Letter
5. Local Workforce Development Board By-Laws and Attestation Form - **Form provided**
6. Local Fiscal Agent
7. Planning Budget Summaries (PBS)
8. Conflict of Interest Policy - Local Workforce Development Board, Staff, and Contracted Staff
9. Financial Procurement Policy / Financial (General) Policy (*See pages 26-28 of the accounting policy*)
10. Complaints and Grievance Policy – Nondiscrimination, Programmatic
11. Sub-state Monitoring Plan and Policy
12. Supportive Services Policy – General, Needs Related Payments Policy for ADLT and DW
13. Adult Priority of Service Policy
14. Expenditure Rates Policy
15. Training Criteria Policy (AD & DW)
16. Youth Barriers Eligibility Policy – OSY ISY additional assistance barrier
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19. Basic Skills Assessments (Testing) Policy
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56. Selective Service Policy
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Two-Year Plan Modifications 2026

- Strategic Elements Updated
 - 1. Local Workforce Development Board's Vision
 - 2. Local Workforce Development Board's Goals
 - 3. Local Workforce Development Board's Priorities
 - 4. Local Workforce Development Board's Strategies (b, c, e, g, i, j)
 - 6. Economic Analysis (a, b, c, d, e, f)
 - 7. Labor Market Analysis (a, b, c)
 - 8. Workforce Analysis (a & c)
- Operational Elements
 - 10. Local Workforce Development Area (LWDA) Profile
 - 26. Performance Negotiations
- Revised Attachments
 - 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 10, 13, 18,19, 30, 31, 34, 43, 47, 48, 50

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 Workforce Development Board of Southeast Missouri (WDBSE) maintains the vision of "A high-quality standard of life for our region," supported by its mission "To promote a state of economic well-being by helping to create a skilled, diverse, motivated, and adaptable workforce." This vision centers on ensuring that individuals, families, employers, and communities across Southeast Missouri have access to opportunity, economic mobility, and sustainable employment.

Governor Kehoe's administration, building upon the priorities reflected in the current WIOA Missouri Combined State Plan, emphasizes strengthening Missouri's workforce, supporting education and training pathways, expanding economic opportunity, improving public safety, and increasing competitiveness for both rural and urban regions. His message is clear: Missouri must secure its future through a reliable talent pipeline, vibrant communities, and strategic investment in workforce, education, and infrastructure.

The two visions strongly complement and reinforce one another.

- The WDBSE's commitment to building a skilled and adaptable workforce directly advances the Governor's focus on workforce development as the foundation of Missouri's economic future.
- The Board's emphasis on diversity and regional economic well-being supports the State Plan's goals of broadening workforce participation and ensuring access to training and careers for all Missourians.
- By preparing workers for high-demand sectors, the Board strengthens the region's ability to grow and sustain the infrastructure, industries, and employers that the Governor identifies as critical to Missouri's competitiveness.
- The Board's focus on motivated and work-ready individuals supports the state's goals for safer, stronger, and more prosperous communities, where meaningful employment contributes to stability and long-term success.

In these ways, the WDBSE vision not only aligns with but actively **further**s the **Governor's vision** and the objectives outlined in the Missouri Combined State Plan. A well-prepared workforce is essential for advancing economic growth, supporting families, strengthening rural communities, and ensuring Southeast Missouri contributes to and benefits from Missouri's broader statewide strategy.

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.

Engaging employers involves a combination of effective communication, networking, and showcasing the skills and values of those served by the Missouri Job Centers in the region. The goals of the WDBSE include: understanding what employers need and provide them with skilled applicants, understanding the job seekers needs, building a strong network of employers, preparing job seekers for employment, staying up to date on industry trends and changes, and ensuring young adults receive employment services.

Preparing youth and individuals with barriers to employment involves addressing a range of challenges they may face, such as lack of education, skills, limited resources, disabilities, or social disadvantages. Goals would include but not limited to access to quality education, comprehensive support to develop skills and confidence, establishing support networks, access to resources, financial literacy access, and person development support.

These goals are directly tied to the required performance outcomes of job seeker employment entry, employment retention, earning credentials, earning measurable skill gains and captured wages.

“Southeast Missouri’s 4-Year Plan aligns with federal workforce priorities by advancing equity in access, expanding training in high-demand sectors, strengthening employer-driven training, and promoting job quality.”

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 Southeast Region are in need of skilled labor, to fill the gaps of our workforce. Incumbent Worker training is available to enhance existing employees’ skills. This creates an opportunity for less skilled/entry level openings to enter the workforce. It’s an excellent opportunity to hire new employees with the help of On-Job-Training (OJT), hiring events and assistance from the region’s Business Representative Manager working closely with employers.

The Southeast Region’s priority for our Adult and Dislocated Workers is to obtain suitable and self-sustaining employment. The Board saw the benefit and success with work experience and decided to incorporate work experience into our adult populations. Work experience gives the job seekers a unique opportunity to explore different career paths and strengthen their soft skills. If needed, education is available for long term and short-term training. Case management is available in all avenues. Computers are available in all Job Centers offices for any job seeker to use and availability to connect via technology to any partner agency as needed.

The WIOA Youth program in the Southeast Region is diverse, with many rural areas which creates numerous barriers to employment and/or education. The WDBSE strives to support a high school diploma or its equivalent as a first priority. The WDBSE sees benefits in work experience, to strengthen their soft skills and help to identify a career path. Eliminating the barriers is often the biggest challenge. Through intense case management, building relationships with youth, career guidance, and support we achieve success.

Determining skilled labor needs in a local workforce area requires a systematic approach that involves gathering data and analyzing trends. This plan aligns with federal workforce priorities set forth by the administration. Connecting the federal priorities to local employer demand supports the national pillars. The regions data analysis of economic conditions, labor market demands, and workforce needs can be found in sections 6-8.

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. Required strategies are listed below. Please describe the strategies and objectives for:

By the very nature of WIOA, partnerships are developing and strengthening. We're continuing to seek innovative ways of communication and integration. Building reliable talent pipelines through a workforce system led by industry and aligned with economic priorities. This will allow for improvement to the current system, streamlining services, braiding funding, and working to create a seamless service system in our region.

a. Career Pathways

Career Pathways allow us 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. It is crucial for every enrolled participant to develop a career pathway so they have a completed plan with a time line to achieve the opportunities provided by the program including attaining credentials, finding employment, increasing wages, and advancing in career opportunities. While some WIOA participants have a plan that includes education, others may engage in work experience - the career path and services is specific to each individual based on their career pathway, assessment, needs, and barriers.

Labor market information is critical for each participant; this information will steer the career pathways initiative to ensure that participants are aware of job opportunities for both what they want to do and other opportunities available in the region. The sector strategies development in the Southeast Region will assist employers by providing qualified job seekers to those careers. Along with occupations that fall into the Southeast Regions Sector Strategies, participants should also be informed of high-wage, high-growth, and in-demand job opportunities. Which is a pathway to employment that leads to self-sufficiency being the key to success for the program, job seeker, and the employer.

b. Employer Engagement

We live in a different world. The WDBSE recognizes this and has prioritized meeting the current needs of employers, which in some cases are vastly different than they were prior to the pandemic. The Southeast Region has a dedicated Regional Business Services Representative (BSR) who works directly with employers and finds creative ways to assist them in the newest challenges they face; how to recruit, attract and retain adequate numbers of employees.

The WDBSE's employer engagement approach reflects Missouri's emphasis on sector strategies, business services, and demand-driven talent development. Engagement focuses on building strong relationships with employers, participating in regional economic development efforts, and coordinating outreach across partners to reduce duplication. The WDBSE supports priority sectors through employer-led discussions, pathway development, and expansion of work-based learning such as OJT, work experience, apprenticeships, and incumbent worker training. Rapid Response and layoff aversion efforts are delivered in partnership with state and local entities. Employer outcomes are monitored using Missouri's performance measures, and feedback is used to continually improve service delivery and strengthen long-term employer partnerships.

While not an exhaustive list, some of the most successful strategies for engagement have been the following:

- The region will expand employer partnerships that support good jobs, equitable hiring, and skills-based advancement: job quality, worker voice, economic mobility & sector partnerships.
- Combining in-person hiring events with community resource events. When an employer identifies a job seeker with barriers to employment that they would like to hire, they can refer them to the appropriate community resource partners table for assistance.
- Drive-thru hiring events. The BSR oversees the collection of applications, fliers, and other information from interested employers. The BSR sets up a parking lot workstation, employer job openings are distributed to job seekers allowing them to drive-thru and complete multiple job applications. This alleviates the childcare barrier for the job seeker and saves gas driving to various businesses. This approach also supports the employers who are faced with staffing shortages; therefore, an employee is not needed to oversee a table at a hiring event.

c. Business Needs Assessment

Employers across Southeast Missouri continue to face ongoing challenges related to workforce availability. While their core operational needs remain, businesses are increasingly focused on navigating staffing shortages, competing for skilled workers, and adopting flexible business practices to sustain operations.

To support these evolving needs:

- The BSR conducts onsite visits and facility tours to engage directly with employers. These visits include discussions on cost-effective strategies for both retaining current staff and attracting new talent in a competitive labor market.
- Customized support is available for employers' seeking solutions beyond the scope of traditional workforce services. The BSR provides direct, responsive assistance tailored to each employer's unique circumstances.

This approach reflects the region's commitment to a demand-driven workforce system that is responsive, adaptable, and aligned with the current needs of local industry.

d. Alignment and Coordination of Core Program Services

The Southeast Region has two Comprehensive (full service) Missouri Job Centers (CJC), one Affiliate Missouri Job Center (AJC) and one satellite Job Center. These centers are tasked with aligning services within the centers by developing outreach for jobseekers, businesses, customer service, assessments, and supportive services. The Southeast Region continues to work at developing and maintaining meaningful inter-agency relationships to continue working as the hub for all services, making referrals and being the connection between job seekers and employers. Interagency alignment and coordination will be an on-going process. Through communication, staff meetings/trainings, the One-Stop staff continue to become more knowledgeable of the services available through core programs and mandated partners. This will enable all staff to give customers the information they need to improve their knowledge of resources. Partners used to align and coordinate with their core programs include:

- WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, & Youth
- Job Corps
- MSFW-Migrant/Seasonal
- Wagner-Peyser Act

- AEL
- Carl Perkins
- Community Service Block Grant
- Housing and Urban Development
- Youth Build
- TANF/MWA
- Rehabilitation Services for the Blind
- Vocational Rehabilitation
- Veterans Services
- Division Employment Security – UI
- SNAP

e. Coordination with Economic Development

The Southeast Region board member who represents Economic Development is a great asset for the region. 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 workforce development in the Southeast Region. The Real-Time Labor Market Analysis developed by MERIC, provides a snapshot of current labor demands that can be helpful to current job seekers interested in who is hiring and for what occupations. The Labor Market Analysis provides both regional and statewide 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.

- Two-way coordination
- Alignment with state priorities
- Data-driven decision-making
- Aligning education & training programs
- Employer partnerships & job quality
- Skill-based training & apprenticeships

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.)

Educational partners and agency partners across the region are major factors in meeting the needs of both job seekers and employers. WDBSE continues strong partnerships with our community colleges, our university and with our Vo-Tech schools. We need their expertise to develop curriculum to educate our workforce. Working together with both education and agency partners is not only the best use of the funding, but also our best option for meeting the needs of both job seekers and employers. The Southeast Region's outreach plan for businesses is designed to increase the awareness of available services to increase the number of businesses that use the Missouri Job Center products and services.

- Gather business intelligence to identify current economy
- Work with local and regional economic development professionals
- Provide one-on-one assistance to employers with job matching system
- Encourage entrepreneurship with economic developers.

Outreach to businesses is conducted through WDBSE and Job Center involvement with

regional chambers of commerce, economic development departments, and contact from the Regional BSR. The region's Missouri Job Centers offer an array of services aimed at making every job seeker a better job candidate. Through the website www.jobs.mo.gov and the mobile app, job seekers are able to 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, employment services, supportive service information, job specific training, certifications, placement assistance, opportunities for on-the-job training, 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. The Southeast Region has a Priority of Service Policy for Veterans and their eligible spouses. Veteran Representatives in the Southeast Region work closely with Veteran Organizations to assist in the outreach and recruitment of qualified and eligible veterans. The Southeast Region also has an additional income eligible tier, Priority Level Two Enrollments. This tier allows participants to enroll into programs for assistance if their income does not exceed 250% of the Lower Living Income Level as compared to Priority Level One enrollments whose annual income cannot exceed 150% of the Lower Living Income Level. This allows us to serve participants who need assistance to achieve or maintain a level of self-sufficiency but are currently working in an effort to make a better life for them and their families.

g. Access—Improvements to Physical and Programmatic Accessibility

The Southeast Region has two comprehensive Missouri Job Centers. One is located in Park Hills MO and the other located in Kennett MO. The region also has one affiliate Missouri Job Center located in Cape Girardeau and a satellite office in Sikeston. All locations include WIOA Adult, WIOA DW, SkillUp, RESEA, Wagner/Peyser, and WIOA Youth. There are WIOA Youth services available in all counties as well. Customer services include computer access, program information, program referrals, AEL service referrals, assessment services, and testing services. Local community partnership coordination exists throughout the region. The region also has four Access Points for areas without a physical office location to assist with transportation barriers in the rural communities within our region, this allows potential participants physical and programmatic access in areas where that we do not have a brick-and-mortar set-up. We continue outreach efforts to provide additional access points with plans to be implemented in the future. 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 local monitoring process.
- Customers are provided reasonable accommodations upon request at the Job Centers. Job Center staff members have been trained to provide accommodations immediately for anything not resulting in a cost so 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 in addition to Braille documents from Rehabilitation Services for the Blind.
- Telephone language interpretation services are available to customers with limited English proficiency.
- Written translations for vital information are provided to customers with limited English proficiency when appropriate.
- Tagline, Babel Notices on all written communications, announcements, brochures, flyers.

Southeast Missouri’s Workforce Development Board is committed to advancing equity and expanding access to workforce opportunities for all residents. In alignment with federal priorities, the Board will continue to identify and remove barriers to participation for individuals with low incomes, justice-involved populations, veterans, older workers, and individuals residing in rural areas. This includes providing supportive services, transportation assistance, and targeted outreach strategies to ensure equitable access to training and employment programs. By prioritizing inclusivity in all program design and service delivery, the Board ensures that historically underserved populations benefit from the region’s workforce initiatives and opportunities for economic mobility.

h. Customer Service Training

Upon being hired, all staff are trained in necessary policies, procedures, Equal Opportunity Information, and Assistive Technology within their office. Customer service training is on-going as new directives are provided by the federal, state, and local levels.

- Program training begins on the second day of employment and continues throughout employment via meetings, trainings, and updates.
- Staff are provided access to all OWD Issuances and WDBSE local policies through website links and new hire orientation materials.
- Staff have been provided with the jobs.mo.gov link for all other Equal Opportunity related needs and resources.
- Staff have been provided the link for www.job4you.org which has all our Equal Opportunity related policies and notices for easy and unlimited access to this information.
- Staff are trained in the Missouri Case Management System so they are able to fill in appropriate elements for all participants. These elements begin at enrollment and continue throughout their year of follow-up after exiting the program.

i. Assessment

All customers who visit a Missouri Job Center in the Southeast Region are given information on assessments that can immediately engage the customer in job center activities. Customers cannot know what they want to be until they have seen all that there is to be. This starts with assessments, career exploration, eligibility, and needs of the customer that will identify skill levels, aptitudes, abilities, skill gaps, barriers to employment and/or supportive service needs.

Assessments allow assistance with setting goals and developing next steps. Specialized assessment tools include but are not limited to: Basic Skills Assessment, O*Net, Talify, TABE, ACT WorkKeys, Interest Profiler, and Coursera. 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. Support 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. The WDBSE will support workforce strategies that strengthen transitions into employment for populations such as veterans and individuals who were formerly incarcerated. These efforts will focus on building reemployment pathways that recognize prior experience, reduce barriers to entry, and connect individuals to training and supportive services that lead to high-demand jobs. The WDBSE will work with state and local partners to identify effective models and explore flexible uses of funding to support training, credentialing, and other supportive services where appropriate. 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, and Community Partnerships. The Family Support Division, SkillUp Program, has specific guidelines for Supportive Service items and needs specific to SkillUp Participants.

k. Outcome measures assessment, monitoring and management

The WDBSE has charged the Compliance Manager and the Fiscal Manager to conduct monitoring as these staff members are not authorized to operate programs. This ensures that we have an adequate firewall between providing services and overseeing the provision of those services from a monitoring standpoint. Compliance and Fiscal Monitoring includes but is not limited to fiscal expenditures, fiscal annual monitoring of subcontractor, WIOA program eligibility and compliance, Federal/State/Local policy adherence, and data system compliance. The OWD requires sub-state monitoring to be conducted quarterly on a statistically valid sample size. WDBSE 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. OWD requires an annual monitoring report presented to the CLEO and board members regarding compliance and performance reviews. To fulfil this annual requirement the WDBSE Compliance Manager presents a Sub-State Monitoring Report to the full board and subcontractor during the quarterly board meeting following the completion of the Sub-State Monitoring. This annual report includes 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 WDBSE adheres to the WIOA regulations and requires that these problems be resolved by prompt and appropriate corrective action. The WDBSE Compliance Manager tracks and monitors the 5% over income exception and the 5% In-School Youth "needs additional assistance" barrier. WDBSE Fiscal Manager monitors and tracks youth expenditures to ensure they are in line with WIOA regulations - 75% Out-Of-School Youth, 20% Work Experience, etc. Data Validation Monitoring will be conducted quarterly by the WDBSE Compliance Manager. Through this mandated monitoring the Southeast Region will be able 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 MOPerforms Rosters, the Southeast 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;

In 2023, the Southeast Region's per capita personal income was approximately \$48,936, reflecting the average income earned per person from wages, investment, and transfer payments within the region. This figure is below the statewide and national personal income averages, reflecting the region's economic composition and rural characteristics.

By 2024, Missouri's per capita income increased to approximately \$64,920, continuing an upward trend in overall income levels across the state, although county-specific personal income estimates for 2024 are released with a lag at the regional and county levels. According to available data, the average annual wage for all occupations in the Southeast Region in 2024 was \$50,217, reflecting the region's employment income trends. These income measures indicate that while personal income and wages in the Southeast Region are increasing over time, they remain generally lower than statewide benchmarks, consistent with regional economic structures and industry composition.

b. Number and percent of working-age population living at or below poverty level;

In 2024, the statewide poverty rate of working age persons, or those 18-64 years, was 12.5%. The poverty rate in 11 of the 13 counties of the Southeast Region exceeded the state average. The highest poverty rate was in Pemiscot County (27.4%) and the lowest was in Ste. Genevieve County (7.9%).

County	2024 Annual Avg. Wages *Source MERIC	Percent of People Living at Poverty *Source Census.gov
Bollinger	\$41,699	12.2%
Cape Girardeau	\$52,279	12.8%
Dunklin	\$35,150	21.5%
Iron	\$49,273	20.7%
Madison	\$39,278	14.0%
Mississippi	\$42,370	23.0%
New Madrid	\$44,726	18.6%
Pemiscot	\$38,537	27.4%
Perry	\$50,786	11.0%
Ste. Genevieve	\$57,836	7.9%
St. Francois	\$43,086	14.7%
Scott	\$50,104	14.5%
Stoddard	\$46,494	17.0%
Regional Average	\$50,217	15.7%
Missouri State	\$64,754	12.5%

- 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 the Southeast Region, the percentage of the working age population (18-64 years old) with disabilities is 17%. The lowest percentage is Cape Girardeau County (10.9%) and Perry County (13.7%), with the highest percentage in Mississippi County (23.9%). The percentage of the working age population with English as second language in Missouri was 7.1%. Only Dunklin County at 8% was above the state average.

In Missouri, 8.5 percent of the population 25 years and up did not have a high school diploma in 2023. Eleven of the 13 counties in the region had higher percentage of this population group without a high school diploma than the state average. Dunklin County had the highest percentage of the population 25 years and up without a high school diploma at 20.0 percent whereas Cape Girardeau County had the lowest percentage of this population without a high school diploma at 7.2 percent.

Barriers To Employment									
Area	Total Population	Total Population 18-64	% of 18-64 in Population	25 years or up with less than high school diploma	% of 25 years or up without high school diploma	Total Population 18-64 with a disability	% of Population 18-64 with a disability	Total Population 18-64 who speak language other than English	% of Population 18-64 who speak language other than English
Missouri	6,168,181	3,702,481	60.0%	354,732	8.5%	457,446	12.6%	274,910	7.4%
Bollinger	10,591	6,080	57.4%	1,039	13.8%	938	15.7%	15	0.2%
Cape Girardeau	82,180	50,375	61.3%	3,805	7.2%	5,438	10.9%	2,252	4.5%
Dunklin	27,795	15,469	55.7%	3,672	20.0%	3,277	21.6%	1,239	8.0%
Iron	9,482	5,357	56.5%	967	14.1%	1,159	21.8%	73	1.4%
Madison	12,665	7,284	57.5%	1,045	11.9%	1,546	21.5%	191	2.6%
Mississippi	12,079	7,173	59.4%	1,542	18.1%	1,410	23.9%	136	1.9%
New Madrid	16,041	9,098	56.7%	1,836	16.6%	1,747	19.5%	315	3.5%
Pemiscot	15,232	8,559	56.2%	1,662	16.7%	1,810	21.4%	381	4.5%
Perry	18,947	10,953	57.8%	1,586	12.1%	1,482	13.7%	451	4.1%
Scott	37,967	21,794	57.4%	3,489	13.6%	3,617	16.7%	655	3.0%
St. Francois	66,864	41,473	62.0%	6,249	13.3%	7,752	20.9%	598	1.4%
Ste. Genevieve	18,551	10,674	57.5%	960	7.3%	1,578	15.2%	106	1.0%
Stoddard	28,547	16,359	57.3%	3,530	17.6%	2,844	17.5%	228	1.4%

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

d. Unemployment rates for the last five years;

The unemployment rate in the Southeast Region is declining after peaking in 2020. The unemployment rate for 2024 was below the state average of 3.7 percent in four of the 13 counties. In 2024, the highest unemployment rate in the Southeast Region was in Mississippi County (6.0%) and the lowest was in Perry County (3.1%).

Unemployment Rate by County - Southeast Region					
Year	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
US	8.1%	5.3%	3.6%	3.6%	4.0%
Missouri	6.1%	4.2%	2.6%	3.1%	3.7%
Bollinger	5.9%	4.0%	2.7%	2.9%	3.5%
Cape Girardeau	5.1%	3.4%	2.3%	2.7%	3.3%
Dunklin	7.0%	5.4%	3.9%	4.7%	5.6%
Iron	6.2%	4.8%	3.6%	4.3%	4.7%
Madison	6.6%	4.3%	3.1%	3.8%	4.2%
Mississippi	7.0%	5.7%	4.2%	4.9%	6.0%
New Madrid	6.3%	4.7%	3.2%	3.9%	5.5%
Pemiscot	8.3%	7.0%	3.9%	4.9%	5.8%
Perry	5.8%	3.1%	2.2%	2.6%	3.1%
Scott	5.7%	3.9%	2.6%	3.2%	3.8%
St. Francois	6.7%	4.4%	3.2%	3.7%	4.3%
Ste. Genevieve	4.9%	3.2%	2.3%	2.8%	3.3%
Stoddard	6.0%	4.3%	3.0%	3.9%	4.8%

Source: Local Area Unemployment Statistics, Not Seasonally Adjusted

e. Major layoff events over the past three years and any anticipated layoffs;

Over the past three years, Southeast Missouri has experienced several significant business closures that have impacted regional employment, economic stability, and workforce participation. These closures have occurred across multiple sectors, including manufacturing, food processing, retail, and small businesses, highlighting ongoing structural challenges within the regional economy.

One of the most significant employment disruptions was the closure of the Tyson Foods poultry processing facility in Dexter, Missouri, in 2023. This facility employed approximately 680 workers and served as a key economic anchor for Stoddard County and surrounding rural communities. The closure resulted in widespread job displacement and secondary economic impacts affecting local suppliers, transportation services, and agricultural producers.

Additionally, large-scale industrial job losses were reported in the Bootheel region following the closure or major reduction of operations at the Magnitude 7 Metals aluminum smelter in early 2024. As one of the nation's limited aluminum smelting facilities, the loss of this employer further reduced access to high-wage manufacturing jobs and increased the need for workforce retraining and career transition services.

Smaller-scale closures have also contributed to economic strain in the region. Grocery stores, including Save A Lot locations in Perryville (2024) and Cape Girardeau (2025), ceased operations, reducing both employment opportunities and access to essential services in affected neighborhoods. Long-standing local restaurants and small businesses, such as Little Kitchen and BG's Deli in Cape Girardeau, also closed during this period, reflecting broader challenges related to labor shortages, rising operating costs, and changing consumer behavior.

Collectively, these closures underscore the region's vulnerability to employment shocks, particularly in rural and manufacturing-dependent communities, and emphasize the importance of targeted workforce development strategies.

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

The recent business closures have displaced workers across a range of occupations, including production workers, food processing employees, retail staff, and service workers. Many affected individuals possess industry-specific skills that may not easily transfer to emerging or growing sectors without additional training or credentialing.

These disruptions have increased demand for:

- Rapid response and dislocated worker services
- Career counseling and reemployment assistance
- Short-term occupational training and upskilling
- Supportive services to address transportation, childcare, and income instability

The closures have also disproportionately impacted rural residents, individuals with limited formal education, and workers nearing retirement age, creating additional barriers to reentry into the labor market.

7. Labor Market Analysis

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

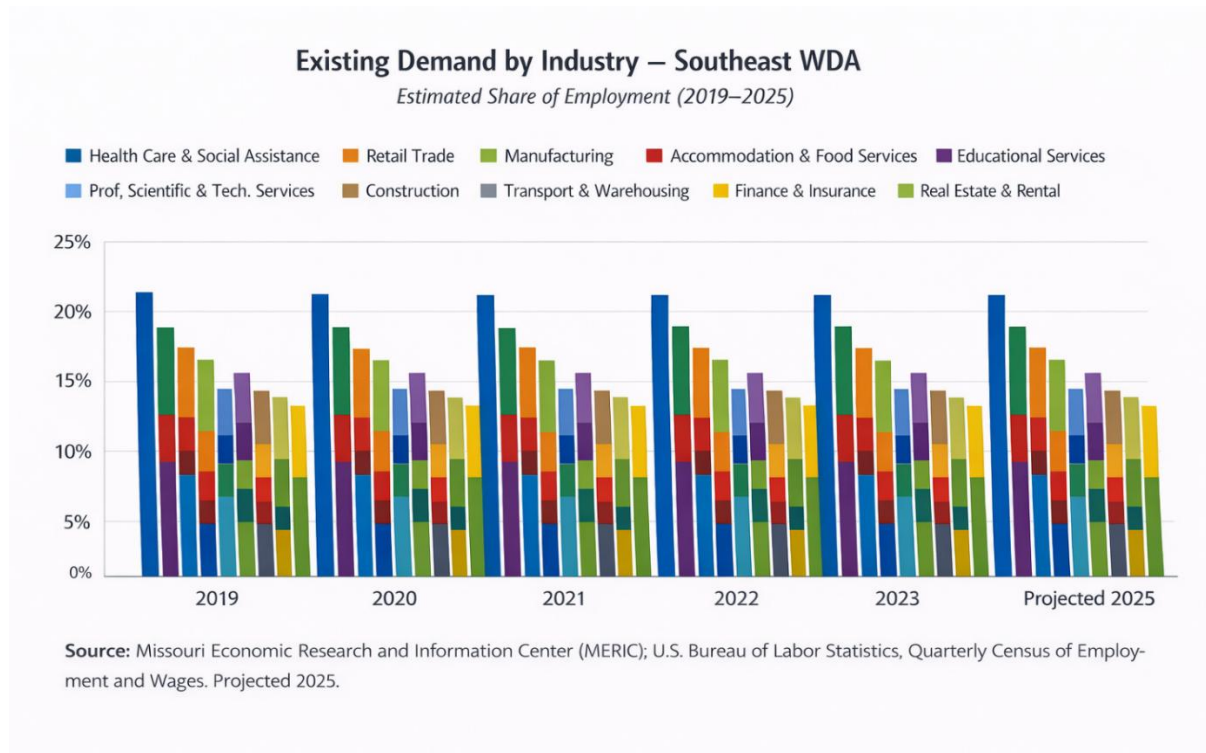
a. Existing Demand Industry Sectors and Occupations

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

Current Industry Demand

Based on available labor market information from 2019 through 2025, the Southeast Workforce Development Area continues to experience existing demand across several key industry sectors. Employment levels have remained generally stable during this period, with ongoing demand driven primarily by replacement needs.

Health Care and Social Assistance remain the largest employing industry, representing approximately 20% of total employment, with continued demand for registered nurses, licensed practical nurses, nursing assistants, home health aides, and medical assistants. Manufacturing accounts for roughly 13% of regional employment and demonstrates consistent demand for production workers, industrial maintenance technicians, welders, and first-line supervisors. Retail Trade, employing nearly 12% of the workforce, shows steady demand for sales associates, customer service representatives, stock clerks, and supervisors, largely due to turnover. Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services and Educational Services (excluding government) together represent approximately 8–9% of employment, with demand for accounting, information technology, business support, and instructional occupations. Additional existing demand is observed in Accommodation and Food Services (≈9%), Construction (≈4%), Transportation and Warehousing (≈3%), Finance and Insurance (≈2.5%), and Real Estate and Rental and Leasing (≈2%), particularly for food service workers, skilled trades occupations, commercial drivers, logistics support staff, and administrative occupations. These sectors collectively represent the primary sources of existing demand within the Southeast Workforce Development Area from 2019 through 2025.



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.

To understand the major industries within a region, an analysis of industry concentration or clustering can be useful. The Location Quotient (LQ) describes the concentration of an industry in a geographic region, in relation to the nation, with 1.0 being the national average. Industries with higher than 1.0 LQ indicate a concentration.

In 2024, the Southeast Region had higher concentrations in Mining (except Oil and Gas); Gasoline Stations and Fuel Dealers; Crop Production; Social Assistance; Wood Product Manufacturing; Nursing and Residential Care Facilities; and Truck Transportation.

2024 Southeast Region Location Quotients

Industry	Employment	Location Quotient
Mining (except Oil and Gas)	555	3.2
Gasoline Stations and Fuel Dealers	2,899	3.1
Crop Production	1,313	2.7
Social Assistance	9,025	2.1
Wood Product Manufacturing	741	2.0
Nursing and Residential Care Facilities	5,929	2.0
Truck Transportation	2,675	2.0
General Merchandise Retailers	4,578	1.6
Support Activities for Agriculture and Forestry	532	1.5
Building Material and Garden Equipment and Supplies Dealers	1,699	1.4
Motor Vehicle and Parts Dealers	2,477	1.3
Nonmetallic Mineral Product Manufacturing	462	1.2
Sporting Goods, Hobby, Musical Instrument, Book, and Miscellaneous Retailers	1,666	1.2
Health and Personal Care Retailers	1,198	1.2

SOURCE: U.S. BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS, QUARTERLY CENSUS OF EMPLOYMENT AND WAGES 2024

Current Occupational Demand

Current occupational demand within the Southeast Workforce Development Area reflects a range of entry-level, middle-skill, and professional occupations that align with the President's Workforce Pillars of expanding access to good jobs, supporting worker-centered training, and meeting employer workforce needs.

Now jobs typically require short-term on-the-job training, little to no prior work experience, and/or a high school diploma, supporting the Workforce Pillar focused on expanding access to employment opportunities. Now occupations with the most projected openings include Home Health and Personal Care Aides; Cashiers; and Stockers and Order Fillers, while Amusement and Recreation Attendants; Home Health and Personal Care Aides; and Receptionists and Information Clerks are projected to be the fastest growing Now occupations over the next decade. These occupations provide immediate labor market entry points and support essential service industries.

Next jobs typically require a non-degree certificate, associate degree, apprenticeship, some work experience, or moderate- to long-term training, aligning with the Workforce Pillars emphasizing skills-based training, credential attainment, and career pathway development. Nursing Assistants; Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers; and Cooks, Restaurant are projected to have the most openings in the Next category. Cabinetmakers and Bench Carpenters; Cutting, Punching, and Press Machine Setters, Operators, and Tenders, Metal and Plastic; and Medical Assistants are projected

to be the fastest growing Next occupations, reflecting regional demand in health care, manufacturing, construction, and transportation.

Later jobs typically require a bachelor's degree or higher and support the Workforce Pillars focused on career advancement, economic mobility, and the development of a skilled professional workforce. For Later occupations, General and Operations Managers; Registered Nurses; and Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education are projected to have the most openings, while Registered Nurses; Human Resources Specialists; and Accountants and Auditors are projected to be the fastest growing. These occupations represent long-term career opportunities aligned with leadership, education, healthcare, and business services.

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.



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 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. *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 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.

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.

Building upon this existing demand, emerging demand within the Southeast Region is identified through long-term projections that highlight industries expected to add employment over the 2022–2032 period. According to MERIC Southeast Region projections, industries demonstrating emerging demand include Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services; Crop Production; Ambulatory Health Care Services; Merchant Wholesalers, Durable Goods; and Couriers and Messengers. These industries reflect evolving demand related to business services, healthcare delivery, agriculture, and logistics, and align with the President’s Workforce Pillars focused on innovation, supply chain resilience, and employer competitiveness. Emerging occupational demand within these industries spans the Now–Next–Later continuum, including agricultural laborers, material movers, medical assistants, licensed practical nurses, truck drivers, logisticians, information technology professionals, registered nurses, and operations managers, creating opportunities for skills-based training, credential attainment, and career advancement aligned with regional economic priorities.

SOUTHEAST REGION LONG-TERM OCCUPATIONAL PROJECTIONS BY TOP OPENINGS

OCCUPATION TITLE		2022 Estimated Employment	2032 Projected Employment	Annual Growth Openings	Annual Exits	Annual Transfers	Annual Total Openings	Median Wages
NOW OCCUPATIONS								
Home Health and Personal Care Aides	★	8,901	9,927	103	753	628	1,484	\$29,067
Cashiers	★	5,061	4,880	-18	478	482	942	\$27,161
Stockers and Order Fillers		3,367	3,497	13	214	336	563	\$33,547
Retail Salespersons	★	3,040	3,008	-3	198	239	434	\$30,419
Waiters and Waitresses		2,041	2,003	-4	174	244	414	\$29,673
NEXT OCCUPATIONS								
Nursing Assistants	★	2,519	2,685	17	165	204	386	\$34,569
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	★	3,692	3,622	-7	166	214	373	\$48,279
Cooks, Restaurant		1,663	1,608	-6	112	133	239	\$29,494
Miscellaneous Assemblers and Fabricators		1,648	1,674	3	70	105	178	\$36,581
Maintenance and Repair Workers, General	★	1,824	1,914	9	82	85	176	\$41,866
LATER OCCUPATIONS								
General and Operations Managers	★	4,269	4,342	7	107	231	345	\$63,344
Registered Nurses	★	4,137	4,493	36	143	89	268	\$75,253
Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education		1,673	1,626	-5	55	54	104	\$46,577
Secondary School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education		1,701	1,652	-5	49	54	98	\$58,269
Substitute Teachers, Short-Term		718	696	-2	44	40	82	\$32,442

SOURCE: MERIC OCCUPATIONAL PROJECTIONS, 2022-2032



★ DENOTES OCCUPATIONS IN THE TOP TEN ONLINE JOB ADS FOR MAY 2023- APRIL 2024 IN THE REGION AND WITHIN THE NOW-NEXT-LATER CLASSIFICATION

Occupational Projections

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

Emerging occupations can be identified through growth openings. The chart below identifies occupations that have the highest number of growth openings and higher than the average growth rate of 2.5 percent for the Southeast 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.

Among Now occupations, the highest number of growth openings are projected for Home Health and Personal Care Aides; Fast Food and Counter Workers; Waiters and Waitresses; Bartenders; and Stockers and Order Fillers, supporting immediate labor market access in essential service industries.

Next occupations with the largest growth include Cooks, Restaurant; Woodworking Machine Setters, Operators, and Tenders, Except Sawing; Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers; Insurance Sales Agents; and Industrial Machinery Mechanics, aligning with workforce strategies focused on skills-based training and middle-skill job creation.

Later occupations with the highest projected growth include General and Operations Managers; Market Research Analysts and Marketing Specialists; Accountants and Auditors; Medical and Health Services Managers; and Nurse Practitioners, supporting employer demand for professional talent and long-term workforce sustainability. Collectively, these occupations align with the industries identified as emerging demand sectors and reinforce workforce priorities consistent with the President's Workforce Pillars.

Emerging Demand Industries – Southeast Region WDB (2022–2032)

NAICS	Industry Sector	Projected Numeric Change (Jobs)	Projected Percent Change	Now–Next–Later Alignment	President's Workforce Pillars
54	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	+550 to 600	+15% to +18%	Next → Later	Innovation; Employer Demand; Quality Jobs
11	Crop Production	+300 to 350	+7% to +9%	Now → Next	Supply Chain Resilience; Access to Jobs
621	Ambulatory Health Care Services	+700 to 800	+14% to +17%	Now → Next → Later	Essential Services; Worker-Centered Training
423	Merchant Wholesalers, Durable Goods	+250 to 300	+5% to +7%	Next	Domestic Supply Chains; Employer Demand
492	Couriers and Messengers	+200 to 250	+10% to +13%	Now → Next	Infrastructure; Access to Employment

Projected numeric and percent changes reflect Southeast Region-specific MERIC projections and are rounded for workforce planning purposes.

Data Source

Missouri Economic Research and Information Center (MERIC), **Southeast Region Long-Term Industry and Occupational Employment Projections (2022–2032)**; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics; Missouri Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development.

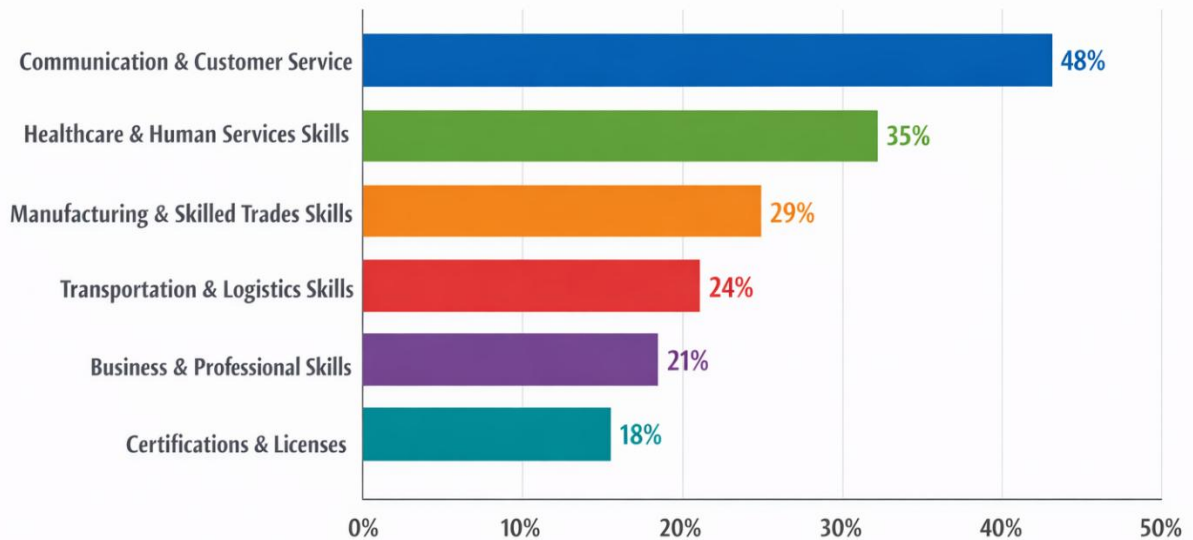
c. Employers' Employment Needs

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

Real-Time Labor Market Data

Employers in the Southeast Region Workforce Development Area report that current and projected employment needs require a combination of foundational, technical, and credentialed skills across Now, Next, and Later occupations, consistent with the President's Workforce Pillars of expanding access to good jobs, supporting worker-centered training, and meeting employer workforce needs. Now occupations emphasize foundational skills such as communication, customer service, teamwork, time management, and reliability, which align with high-volume service and entry-level roles reflected in the Southeast Region WDB skills tables. Next occupations require occupation-specific technical skills, industry-recognized credentials, and licenses, including healthcare certifications, skilled trades credentials, safety certifications, and Commercial Driver's Licenses (CDL), supporting skills-based hiring and career pathway advancement. Later occupations require advanced knowledge, professional competencies, and postsecondary credentials, including bachelor's degrees, professional licensure, and specialized technical expertise, to support leadership, healthcare, education, and business services roles. Analysis of Lightcast™ real-time labor market data, derived from employer job postings, confirms that these skill requirements are consistently requested across regional industry sectors and align with the Southeast Region WDB's identified priority occupations and training strategies.

Most Frequently Requested Skills in Employer Job Postings – Southeast Region WDB



Source: Lightcast™ Real-Time Job Postings Data (2023–2025)

8. Workforce Analysis

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

a. Employment and Unemployment Analysis

Provide an analysis of current employment and unemployment data and trends in the LWDA.

Population Data

The **Southeast Region Workforce Development Area (LWDA)** continues to experience modest population change that directly influences employment and unemployment conditions across the region. Between **2023 and 2024**, population levels remained relatively stable overall, with small gains in some counties and slight declines in others, contributing to uneven labor force availability. Over the **five-year period from 2020 to 2024**, population growth was concentrated in more urbanized counties such as **Cape Girardeau, St. Francois, and Madison**, while several rural counties experienced sustained population decline. These long-term trends contribute to labor force contraction, increased replacement needs, and challenges in maintaining workforce participation in declining counties.

A significant portion of the regional workforce includes **individuals with barriers to employment**, as defined in **Section 3 of WIOA**, including **individuals with disabilities**, older workers, individuals with low income, veterans, justice-involved individuals, and individuals with limited English

proficiency. Individuals with disabilities and other barrier populations continue to experience lower labor force participation and higher unemployment rates compared to the general population, consistent with statewide and national patterns.

Collectively, these population and workforce trends underscore the need for workforce strategies that **expand access to employment, support worker-centered training and supportive services, and meet employer workforce needs**, in alignment with the **President’s Workforce Pillars**, to promote a resilient and inclusive workforce across the Southeast Region.

Population Change by County – Southeast Region WDB

Annual Change (2023–2024) and Five-Year Change (2020–2024)

County	2023 Pop.	2024 Pop.	Change 2023–24	% Change 23–24	2020 Pop.	Change 2020–24	% Change 20–24
Bollinger	10,536	10,610	+74	+0.7%	10,562	+48	+0.5%
Cape Girardeau	83,110	83,658	+548	+0.7%	81,821	+1,837	+2.2%
Dunklin	27,066	27,002	–64	–0.2%	28,217	–1,215	–4.3%
Iron	9,454	9,420	–34	–0.4%	9,511	–91	–1.0%
Madison	12,739	12,852	+113	+0.9%	12,626	+226	+1.8%
Mississippi	11,852	11,750	–102	–0.9%	12,125	–375	–3.1%
New Madrid	15,388	15,212	–176	–1.1%	16,325	–1,113	–6.8%
Pemiscot	14,669	14,407	–262	–1.8%	15,588	–1,181	–7.6%
Perry	18,950	19,100	+150	+0.8%	18,970	+130	+0.7%
Scott	37,923	37,957	+34	+0.1%	38,020	–63	–0.2%
St. Francois	67,094	67,503	+409	+0.6%	66,443	+1,060	+1.6%
Ste. Genevieve	18,640	18,546	–94	–0.5%	18,476	+70	+0.4%
Stoddard	28,372	28,438	↓ 66	+0.2%	28,651	–213	–0.7%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census (2020) and Population Estimates (2023–2024).

Demographics

In all counties but Ste. Francois (14.4%), the percentage of the population in the age group 25–34 was below the state average of 13.2 percent in 2023. In the population group of 55 and over, eleven of the 13 counties had percentages over the state average of 30.8 percent.

In four of the 13 counties in the Southeast Region the percentage of male population was more than the percent female population. Pemiscot County had the lowest male percentage in the population in the region (47.4%) and Mississippi County had the lowest percent of female population in the region (47.1%).

Race/Ethnicity statistics were different from the Missouri averages in most of the counties in the region. Four counties in the region had a higher percentage of African American citizens than the state average.

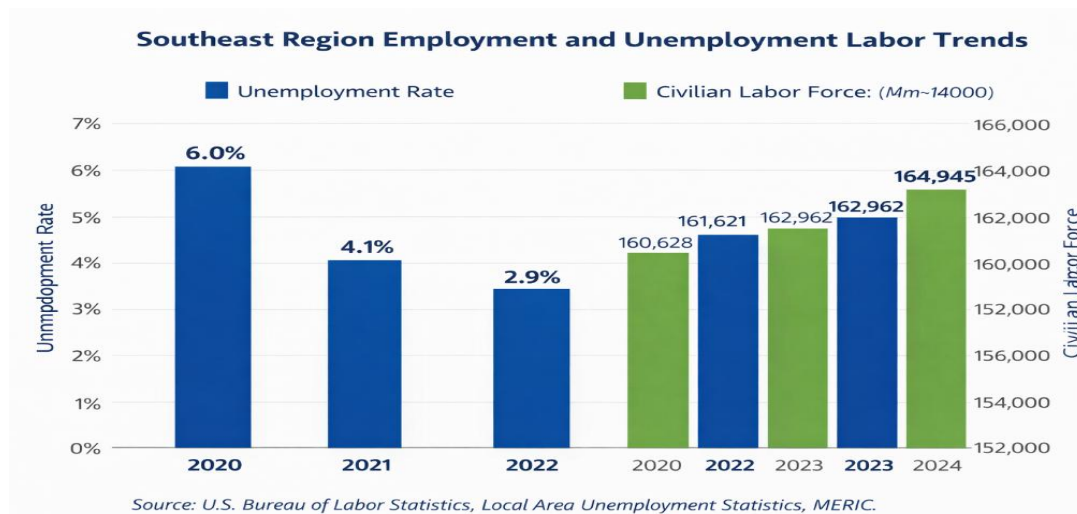
Dunklin County (7.4%) had a higher percentage of Hispanic or Latino population than the state average (5.1%) in 2023.

County	Population						Gender		Race/Ethnicity								
	Total	Under 20	20 to 24	25 to 34	35 to 54	55+	Male	Female	White	Black or African American	Asian	American Indian and Alaska Native	Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	Some other race	One Race	Two or more races	Hispanic or Latino
Missouri	6,168,181	25.1%	6.5%	13.2%	24.4%	30.8%	49.3%	50.7%	78.3%	11.1%	2.1%	0.3%	0.2%	1.7%	93.7%	6.3%	5.1%
Bollinger	10,591	23.7%	5.0%	10.4%	24.1%	36.7%	49.6%	50.4%	94.5%	0.6%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.6%	95.8%	4.2%	1.6%
Cape Girardeau	82,180	25.3%	10.2%	12.4%	22.6%	29.5%	48.9%	51.1%	85.4%	8.1%	1.4%	0.1%	0.1%	0.7%	95.9%	4.1%	2.8%
Dunklin	27,795	28.2%	5.8%	10.8%	23.3%	31.9%	47.8%	52.2%	79.0%	7.9%	0.3%	0.0%	0.1%	1.1%	88.4%	11.6%	7.4%
Iron	9,482	23.1%	4.6%	10.4%	24.2%	37.8%	49.7%	50.3%	92.7%	0.8%	0.9%	0.1%	0.1%	0.6%	95.2%	4.8%	2.1%
Madison	12,665	25.1%	5.6%	11.5%	24.3%	33.4%	50.3%	49.7%	94.2%	0.4%	0.4%	0.3%	0.0%	0.5%	95.7%	4.3%	2.6%
Mississippi	12,079	24.0%	5.4%	12.4%	26.4%	31.8%	52.9%	47.1%	71.9%	22.7%	0.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	94.9%	5.1%	1.5%
New Madrid	16,041	25.4%	5.7%	11.0%	24.0%	33.9%	47.6%	52.4%	76.5%	12.7%	0.3%	0.1%	0.0%	0.3%	89.8%	10.2%	1.8%
Pemiscot	15,232	28.7%	5.8%	11.2%	23.1%	31.2%	47.4%	52.6%	66.3%	24.9%	0.2%	0.2%	0.0%	1.4%	92.9%	7.1%	3.0%
Perry	18,947	25.1%	5.7%	11.1%	24.9%	33.2%	49.7%	50.3%	94.5%	0.8%	0.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.6%	96.7%	3.3%	2.3%
Scott	37,967	26.3%	6.0%	13.2%	22.8%	31.6%	48.4%	51.6%	82.5%	11.2%	0.2%	0.0%	0.1%	0.2%	94.2%	5.8%	2.5%
St. Francois	66,864	23.3%	6.3%	14.4%	26.2%	29.8%	52.7%	47.3%	91.3%	3.0%	0.4%	0.3%	0.0%	0.6%	95.7%	4.3%	1.8%
Ste. Genevieve	18,551	23.6%	5.2%	11.2%	23.3%	36.7%	51.4%	48.6%	94.2%	1.6%	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%	0.2%	96.1%	3.9%	1.4%
Stoddard	28,547	24.3%	5.6%	11.7%	24.2%	34.2%	49.3%	50.7%	93.8%	1.0%	0.3%	0.5%	0.2%	0.5%	96.2%	3.8%	2.1%

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

Employment and Unemployment

The number of residents in the Southeast Region Workforce Development Area participating in the civilian labor force has remained relatively stable from 2020 through 2024, despite population shifts across the region. Following elevated unemployment levels in 2020, the regional unemployment rate declined steadily through subsequent years as employment conditions improved. By 2023, unemployment rates across the Southeast Region had stabilized at comparatively low levels, reflecting sustained employer demand and tighter labor market conditions. Between 2023 and 2024, unemployment rates showed minimal year-over-year change, indicating continued labor market stability. While overall employment conditions have improved, labor force participation remains constrained in some counties due to population decline, workforce aging, and the prevalence of individuals with barriers to employment, contributing to ongoing replacement needs across key industries.



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.

Labor force participation in the Southeast Region Workforce Development Area reflects variation across counties and is influenced by population trends, age distribution, and the prevalence of individuals with barriers to employment. Using American Community Survey, 5-year data through 2023, Missouri's labor force participation rate was 62.7 percent. In comparison, the rate for the Southeast Region was 57.5 percent. The county with the highest labor force participation rate in the region was Cape Girardeau County (64.9%) and the lowest was Mississippi County (47.9%).

Estimated data indicate that participation rates for the civilian population age 16 and older tend to be lower in more rural counties, where population decline, workforce aging, and limited access to transportation and employment opportunities affect labor force engagement. Counties with larger population generally demonstrate higher participation rates, reflecting greater employment availability and access to workforce services. Individuals with disabilities, older workers, individuals with low income, and other populations defined in Section 3 of WIOA experience lower labor force participation rates compared to the general population. These participation patterns highlight the importance of workforce strategies that expand access to employment, reduce barriers to participation, and support inclusive labor force engagement across the Southeast Region.

Civilian Labor Force Participation Rate by County			
Region	Population 16 years and over	Civilian Population 16 years and over (In labor force)	Labor Force Participation Rate (Civilian)
Missouri	4,945,676	3,102,218	62.7%
Southeast Total	286,059	164,525	57.5%
Bollinger	8,579	5,108	59.5%
Cape Girardeau	66,599	43,231	64.9%
Dunklin	21,415	11,483	53.6%
Iron	7,662	3,832	50.0%
Madison	10,220	5,804	56.8%
Mississippi	9,765	4,676	47.9%
New Madrid	12,696	6,807	53.6%
Pemiscot	11,720	6,121	52.2%
Perry	15,228	9,532	62.6%
Scott	29,686	18,009	60.7%
St. Francois	54,594	28,446	52.1%
Ste. Genevieve	15,015	8,866	59.0%
Stoddard	22,880	12,610	55.1%

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

b. Labor Market Trends

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

In-Demand Occupations

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

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

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

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

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

The table below displays the top five jobs by the number of projected openings for the 10-year projection period through 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* (1,138); *Cashiers* (714); *Fast Food and Counter Workers* (687); *Retail Salespersons* (547); and *Stockers and Order Fillers* (412). 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 *Nursing Assistants* (418); *Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers* (367); *Cooks, Restaurants* (284); *Secretaries and Administrative Assistants, Except Legal, Medical, and Executive* (258); and *Maintenance and Repair Workers, General* (153). Three 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* (239); *Registered Nurses* (175); *Accountants and Auditors* (130); *Secondary School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education* (110); and *Market Research Analysts and Marketing Specialists* (67). Two of the jobs listed in this category were 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 *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*.

Southeast Region Occupational Projections 2020-2030							
Occupation	2020 Employment	2030 Employment	Exits	Transfers	Annual Openings Growth	Total	Average 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 🔥	8,476	9,191	566	500	72	1,138	\$25,659
Cashiers 🔥	4,201	3,961	347	391	-24	714	\$22,848
Fast Food and Counter Workers 🔥	3,101	3,392	315	343	29	687	\$22,667
Retail Salespersons 🔥	3,923	3,944	220	325	2	547	\$27,324
Stockers and Order Fillers	2,484	2,646	146	250	16	412	\$26,297
NEXT - Typically requires non-degree certificate, associate degree, apprenticeship, some experience, or moderate- to long-term training							
Nursing Assistants 🔥	3,514	3,475	224	198	-4	418	\$28,403
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers 🔥	3,132	3,305	132	218	17	367	\$51,987
Cooks, Restaurant	1,299	1,858	93	135	56	284	\$23,124
Secretaries and Administrative Assistants, Except Legal, Medical, and Executive	2,911	2,567	139	153	-34	258	\$32,163
Maintenance and Repair Workers, General 🔥	1,561	1,611	56	92	5	153	\$37,838
LATER - Typically requires a bachelor's degree or higher							
General and Operations Managers 🔥	2,648	2,804	54	169	16	239	\$78,342
Registered Nurses 🔥	3,486	3,441	92	87	-4	175	\$60,719
Accountants and Auditors	1,326	1,426	38	82	10	130	\$52,832
Secondary School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education	1,623	1,633	43	66	1	110	\$44,822
Market Research Analysts and Marketing Specialists	523	634	14	42	11	67	\$50,246

🔥 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

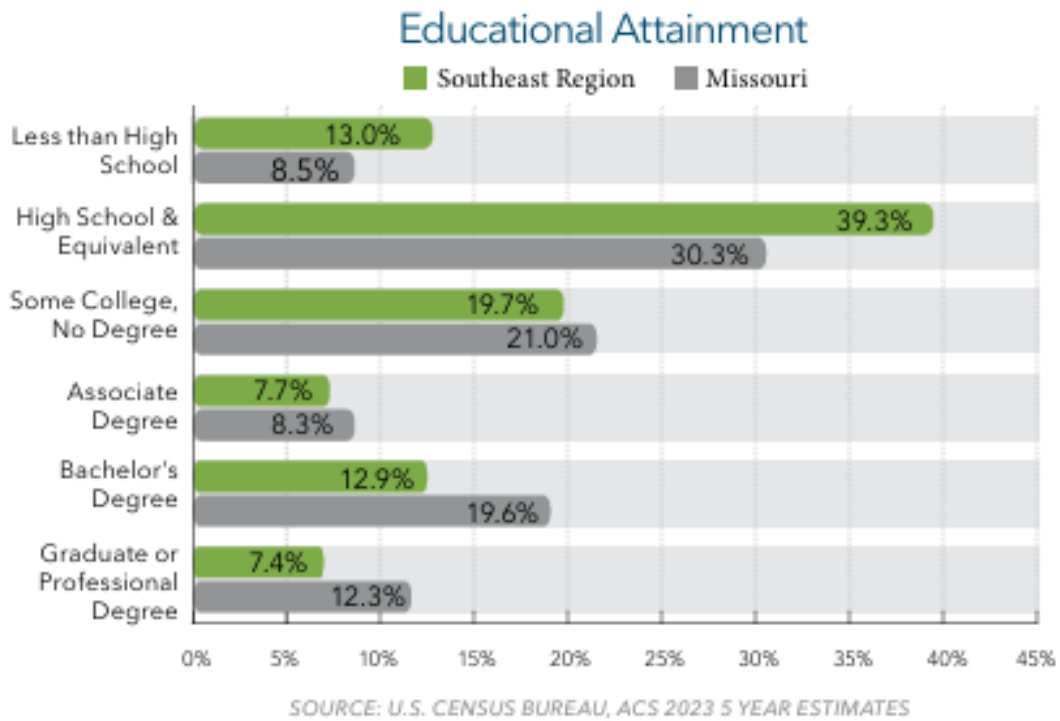
c. Education and Skills Levels of the Workforce Analysis

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

Educational Attainment

Educational attainment levels within the Southeast Region Workforce Development Area are lower than state and national averages, particularly for postsecondary credentials. Approximately 28 percent of the region's population age 25 and older has attained an associate, bachelor's, or advanced degree, compared to 40.2 percent statewide and 43.8 percent nationally, indicating a smaller pool of workers with higher-level credentials. In addition, about 13.0 percent of the region's population age 25 and older has less than a high school education, reflecting ongoing challenges related to educational access and attainment.

These education and skills patterns influence the region's ability to meet employer demand for middle-skill and professional occupations and contribute to workforce gaps in industries requiring postsecondary training. Addressing these gaps will require continued emphasis on adult education, credential attainment, skills-based training, and career pathway development aligned with regional industry needs.

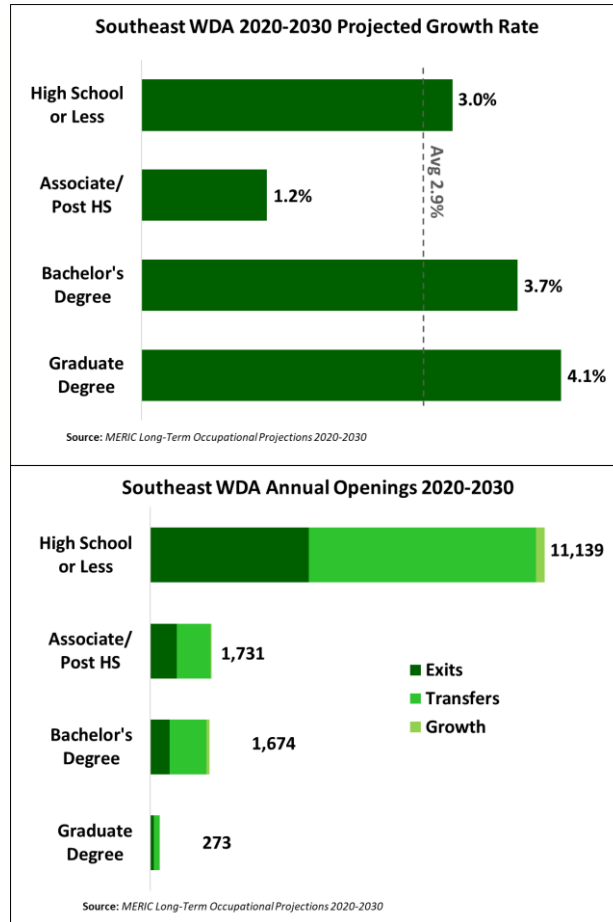


Occupational Projections

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 are projected to grow at a faster rate in the Southeast Region. The occupation groups that are projected to grow the fastest are *Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations*; *Sales and Related Occupations*; *Food Preparation and Serving Related 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.



d. Skills Gaps

Describe apparent “skills gaps” in the local area. How are the “skills gaps” determined?

Missouri Workforce 2023 Survey (source)

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.

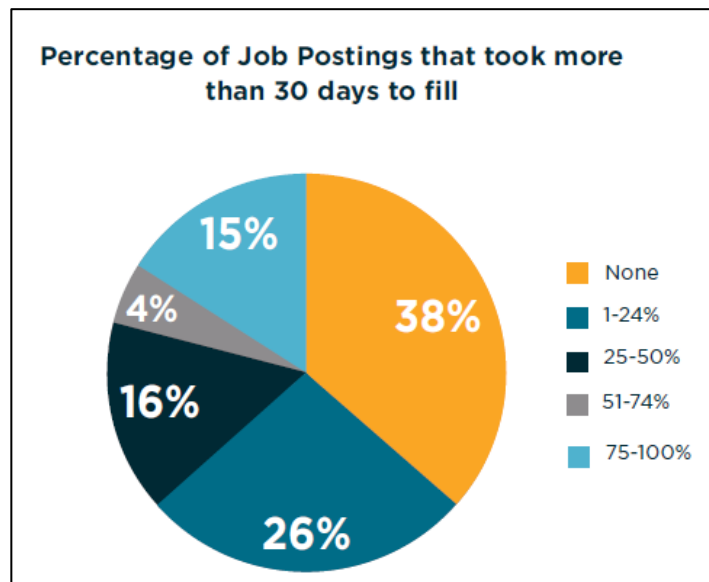
Missouri has more than 230,000 payroll employers who provide jobs to over 2.8 million people. Understanding the current hiring trends and challenges faced by the state’s employers is essential not only in providing targeted resources and services to help these employers but also in supporting the state’s 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.

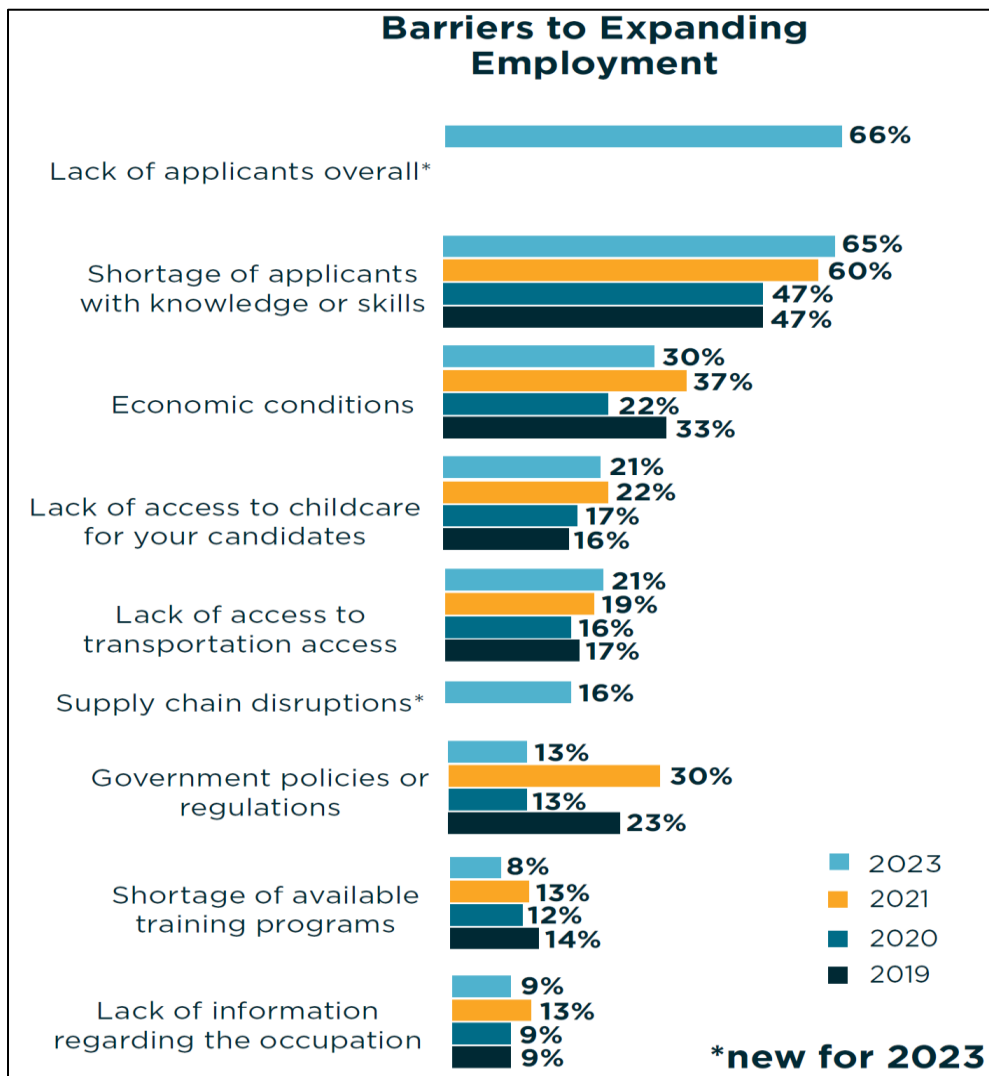
Fifteen percent reported 75-100 percent of their vacant positions took over 30 days to fill. Jobs that were the hardest to fill were in *healthcare*; particularly *nursing* occupations; *sales*; and *food service*.



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.

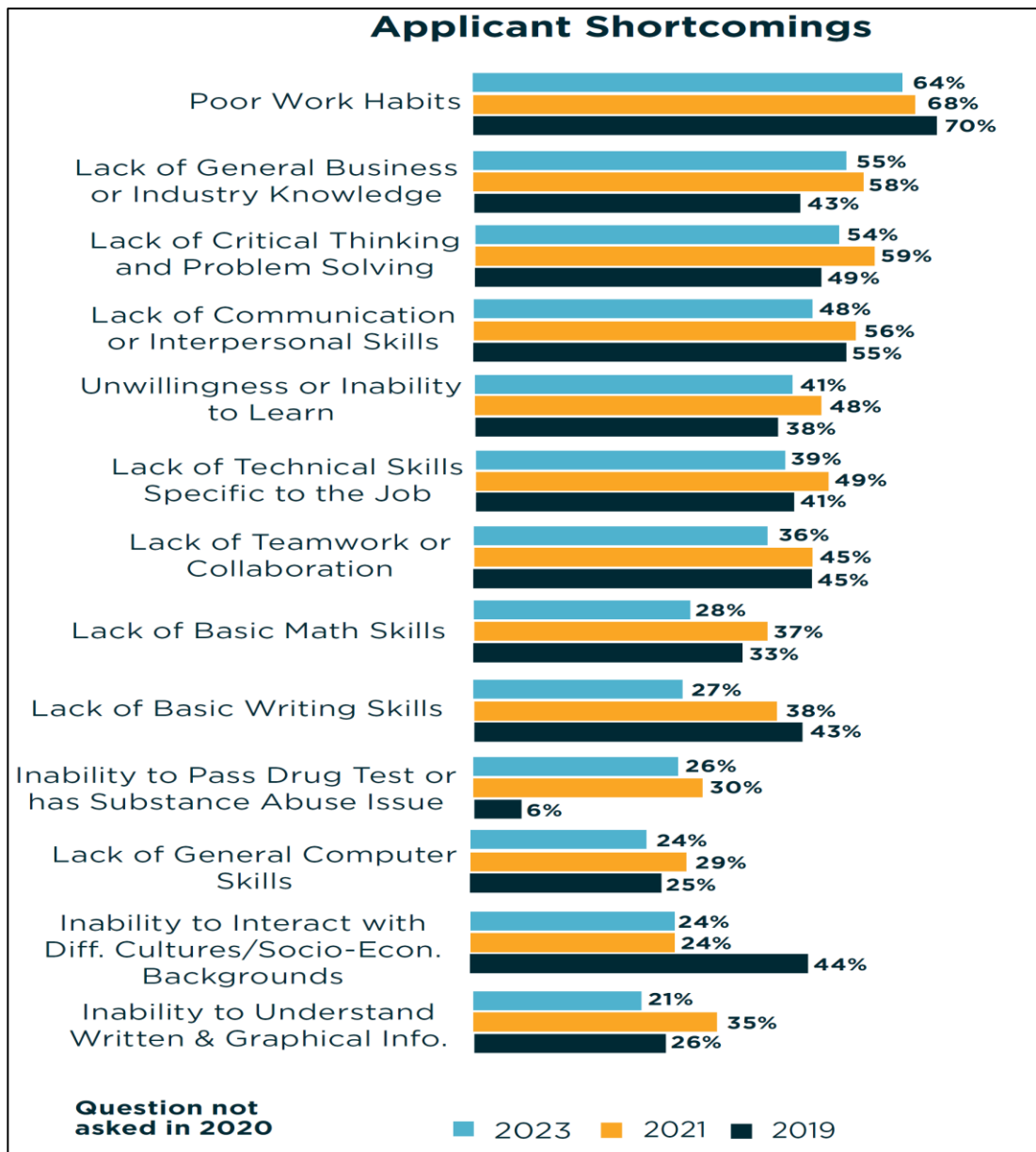
The survey also asked employers to rate the importance of each barrier on a scale of one to five, with one being insignificant and five being critical. The highest weighted average response for any barrier cited this year was *lack of applicants overall*, getting an importance score of 4.05 out of 5. 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.



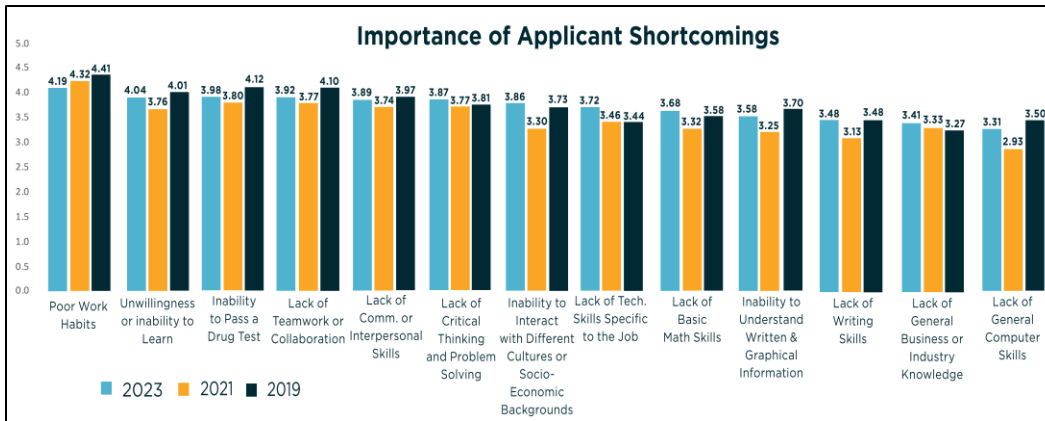
Employers were asked about possible shortcomings of applicants. As in previous years, *poor work habits* is the most frequently cited shortcoming at 64 percent (68% in 2021 and 70% in 2019). Other top shortcomings include *lack of general business or industry knowledge* (55% in 2023, 58% in 2021, and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

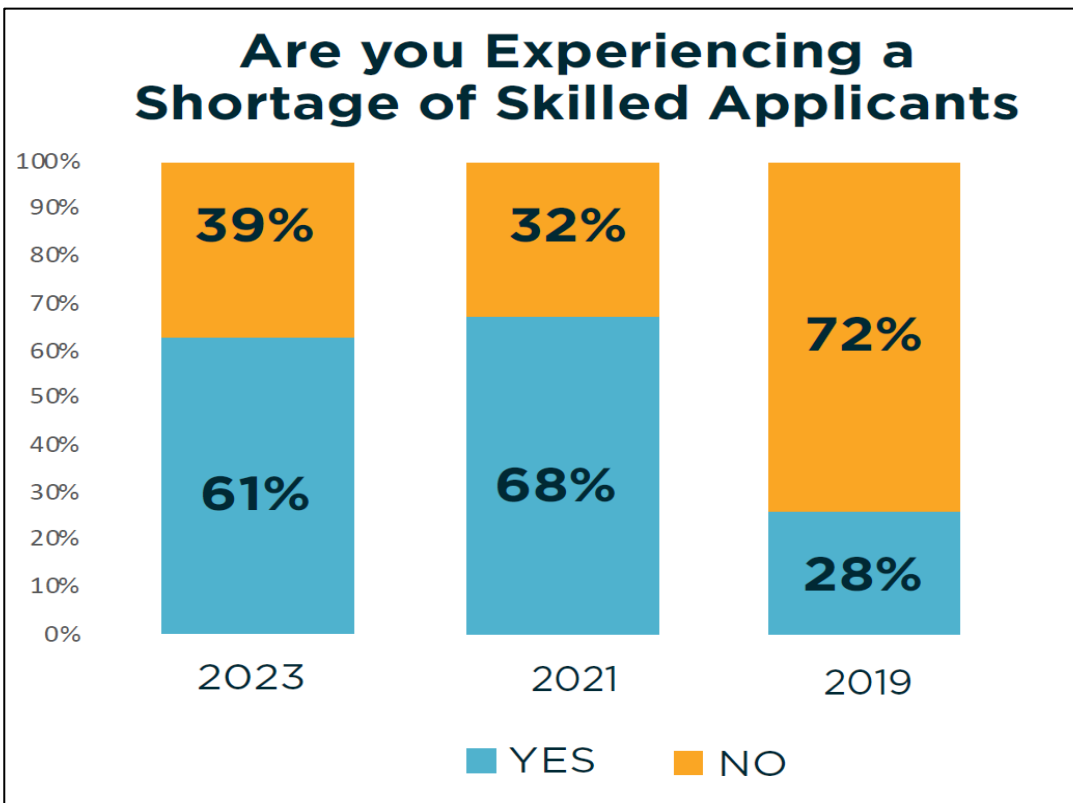
dropped to 24 percent in 2021 and 2023. *Inability to pass drug test or has substance abuse issue* increased from 6 percent in 2019 to 30 percent in 2021 and 26 percent in 2023.



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* were 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* were 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).

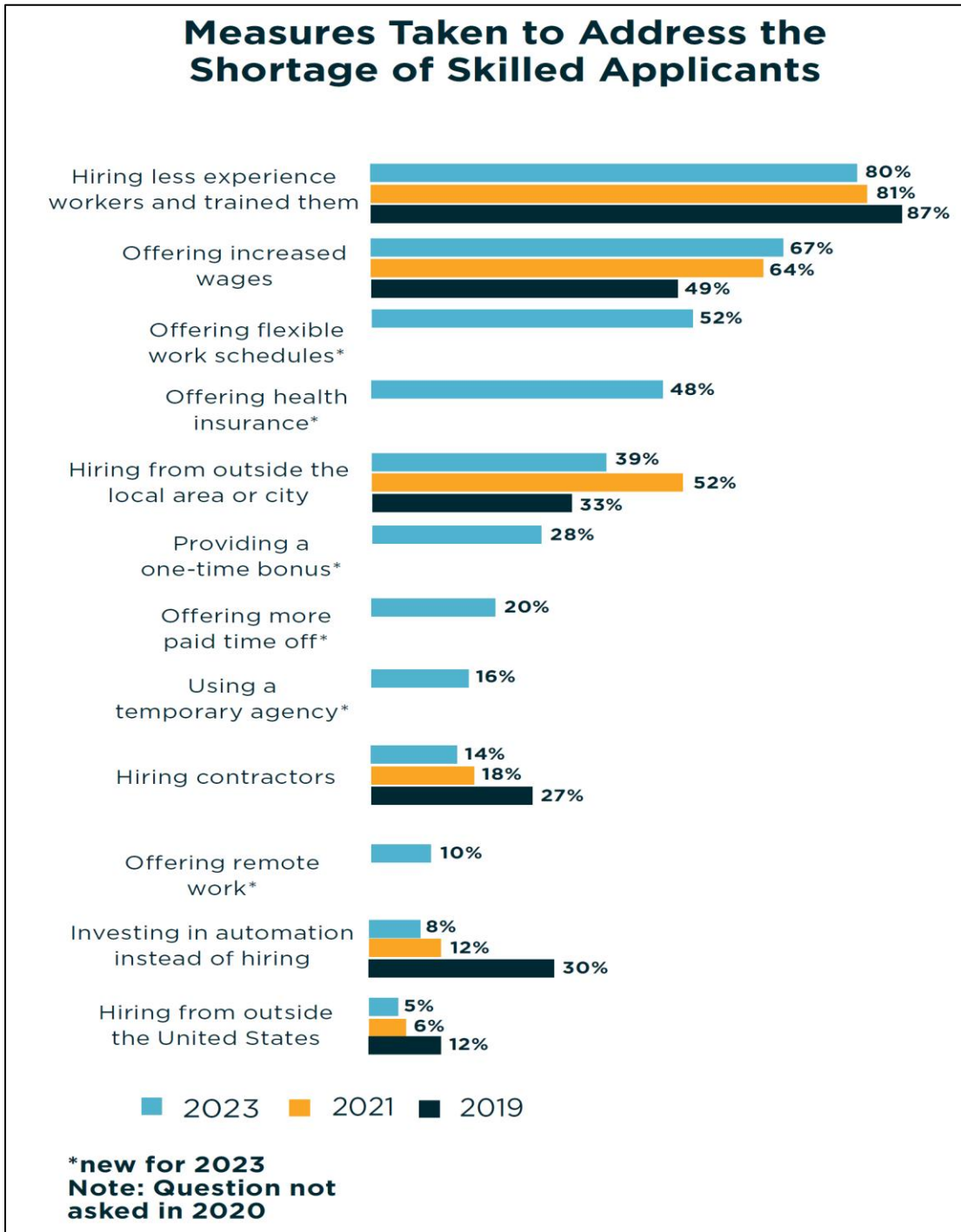


Sixty-one percent of employers stated they were experiencing a *shortage of skilled applicants*. This is slightly lower than the 68 percent reported in 2021 and much higher than the 28 percent cited in 2019

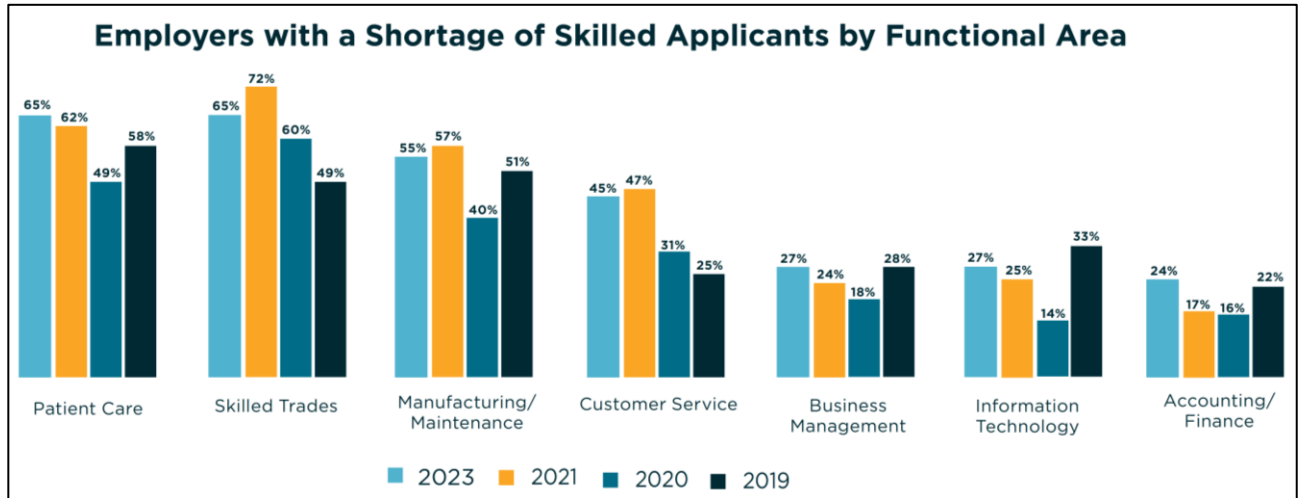


Employers take a variety of measures to address these shortages. Following the trend of previous years when this question was asked from the employers, 80 percent of the respondents reported hiring less experienced workers and train them as a measure to address skill shortages in the applicants (81% 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.

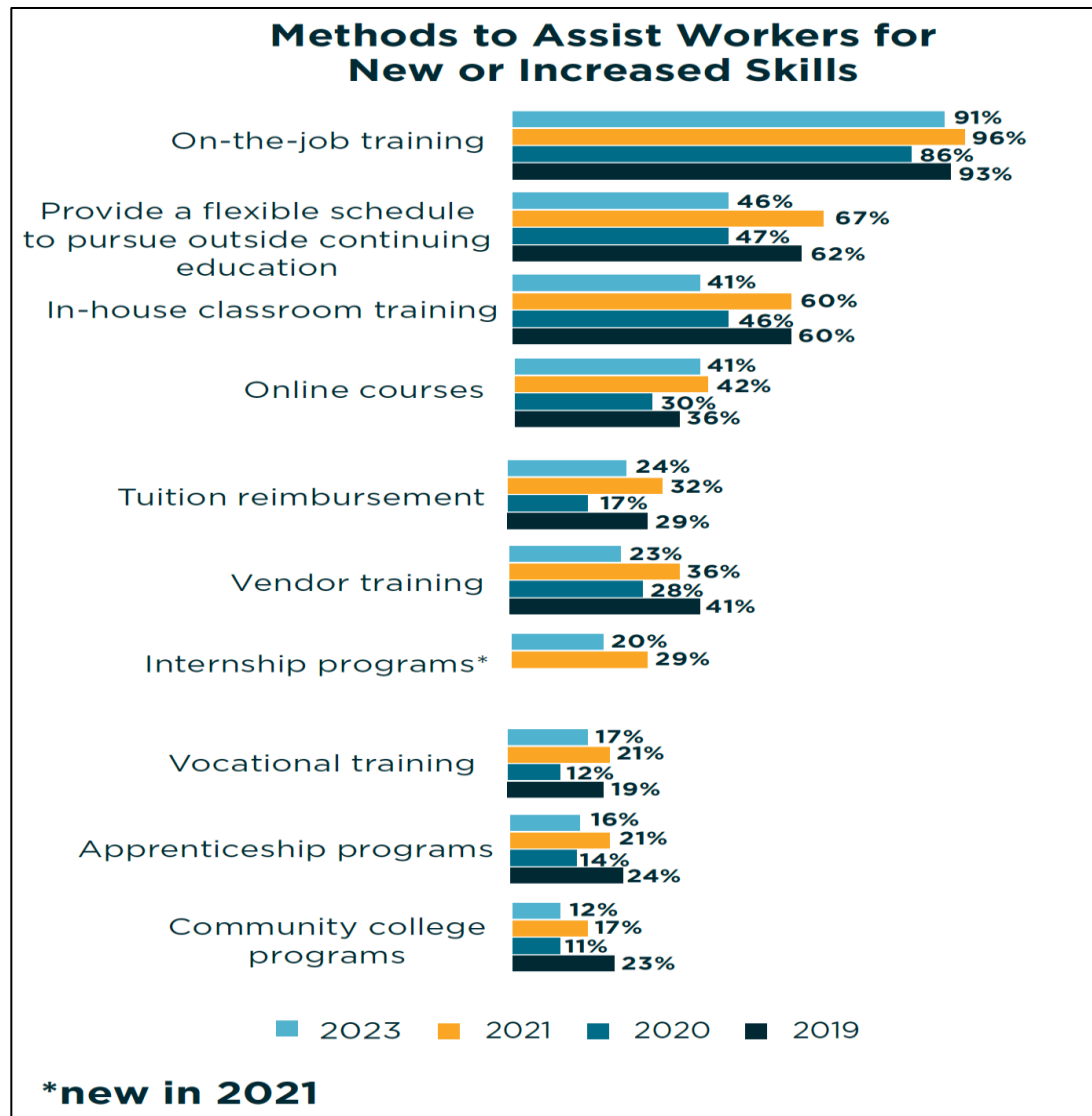
Investing in automation instead of hiring decreased from 30 percent in 2019 to 8 percent in 2023, hiring from outside the United States decreased from 12 percent in 2019 to 5 percent in 2023, and hiring contractors went from 27 percent in 2019 to 14 percent in 2023. Other remedial measures to alleviate 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%).



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.



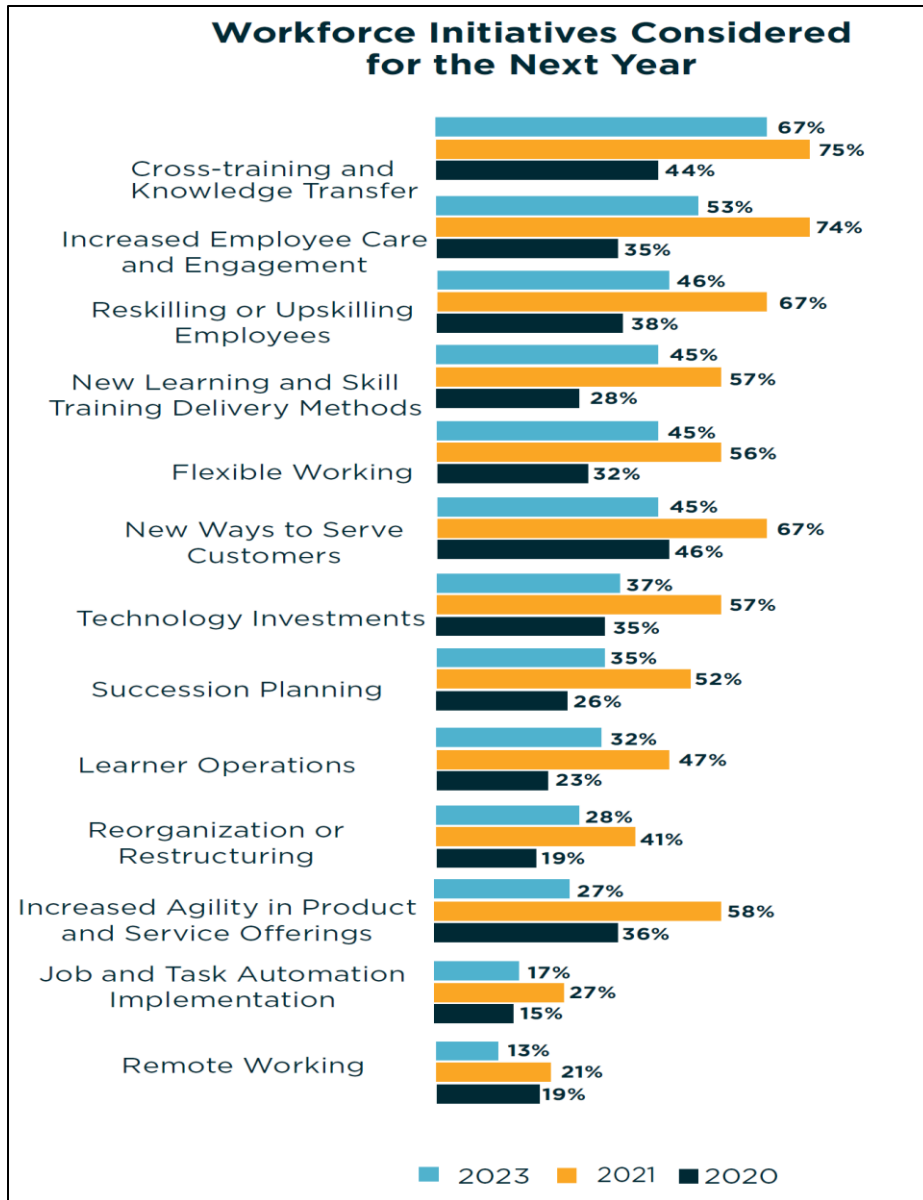
To address the problem of skill shortages in the current workers, employers use several remedial measures, and *on-the-job-training* remains the most preferred method. Over 9 in 10 employers (91%) stated they used *on-the-job training* to assist current workers in addressing the need for new or increased 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).



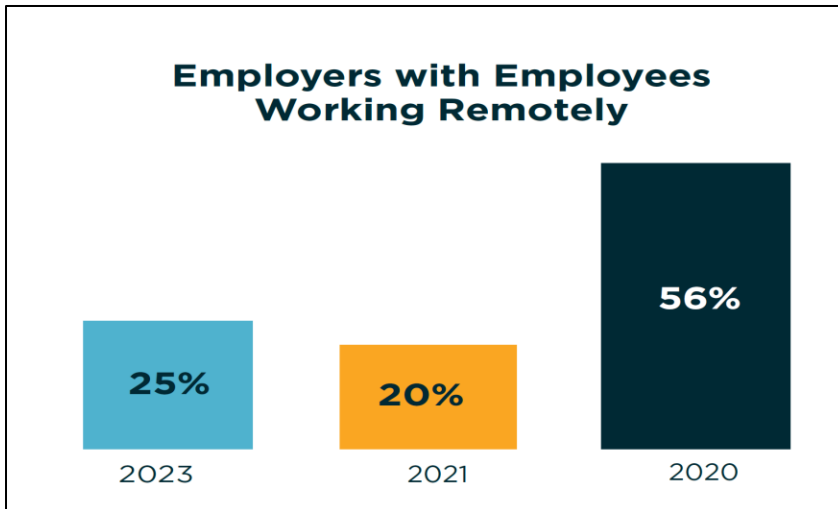
As the economy evolves, customers and workforce needs change. Now more than ever businesses must adapt to attract and retain quality employees, as well as serve customer's changing needs. Employers were asked which workforce initiatives they were considering for the next year.

Employer's likelihood to consider a variety of initiatives has changed significantly over the last three years. From 2020 to 2021, a large number of 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.

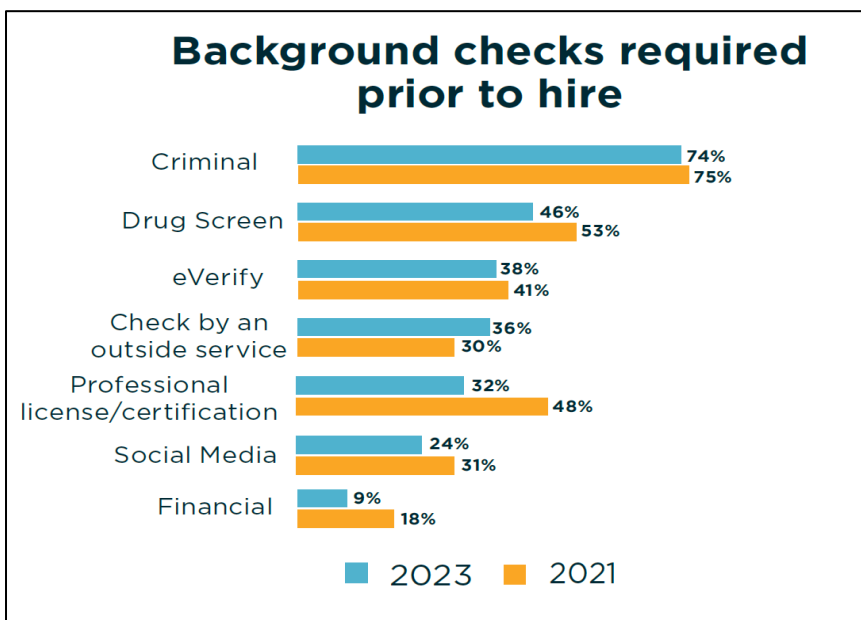
The top workforce initiative considered for the next year by employers was *cross-training and knowledge transfer* (67%), followed by *increased employee care and engagement* (53%) and *reskilling or upskilling employees to new ways of working* (46%).



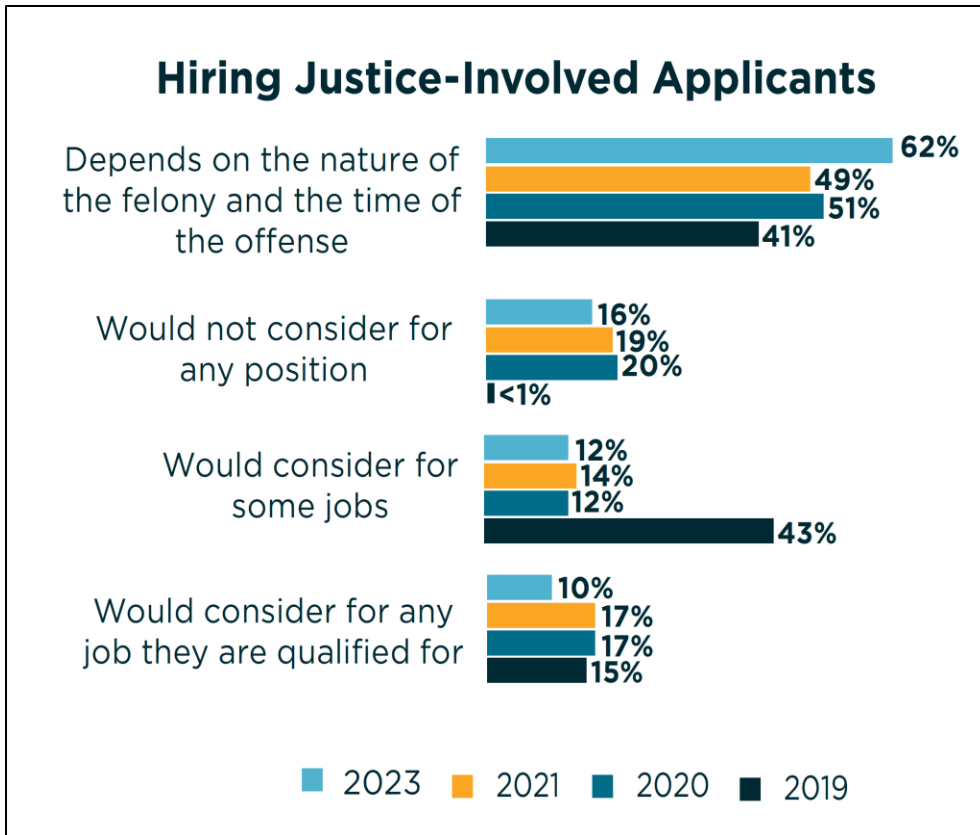
Since the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been an increased interest in understanding remote work. Prior to pandemic, (February 2020) about 15 percent employers were having some workers working remotely. Remote work peaked in 2020 during the height of the pandemic, with over half of employers (56%) stating 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*.



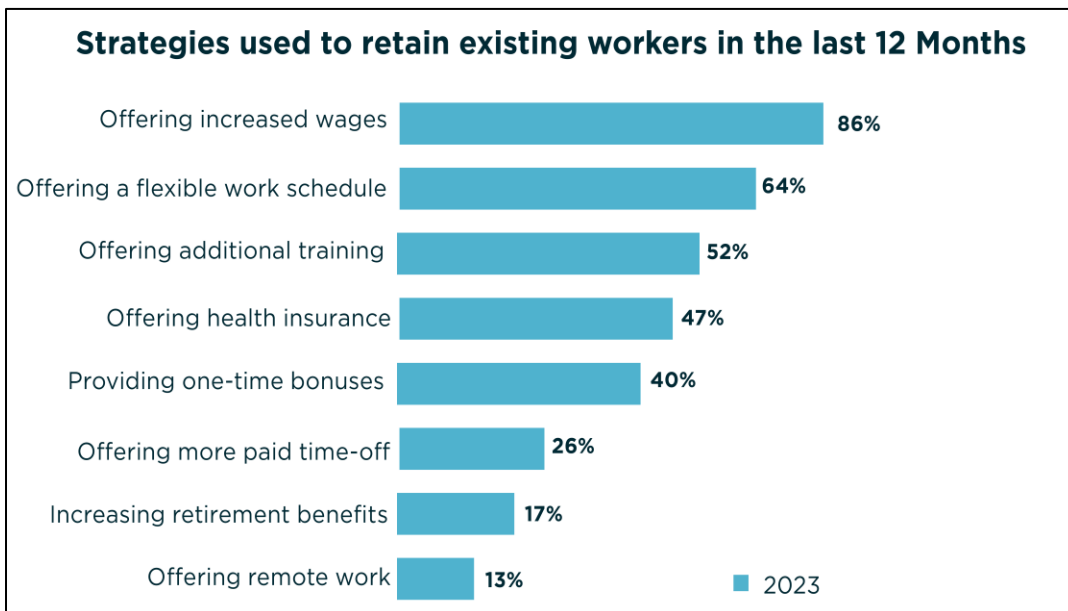
Employers may perform a variety of screening processes before hiring an employee. *Criminal checks* were the most common types of background checks conducted prior to hiring, with 74 percent of Missouri employers reporting they perform one. *Drug screens* were next at 46 percent. In 2023, background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



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.



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.



¹ Individuals with barriers to employment include displaced homemakers; low-income individuals; Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians; individuals with disabilities, including youth who are individuals with disabilities; older individuals; ex-offenders; homeless individuals, or homeless children and youths; youth who are in or have aged out of the foster care system; individuals who are English-language learners, individuals who have low levels of literacy, and individuals facing substantial cultural barriers; farmworkers (as defined at section 167(i) of WIOA and Training and Employment Guidance Letter No. 35-14); individuals within two years of exhausting lifetime eligibility under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program; single parents (including single pregnant women); and long-term unemployed individuals.

² Veterans, unemployed workers, and youth, and others that the State may identify.

9. Workforce Development, Education, and Training Activities Analysis

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

a. The Strengths and Weaknesses of Workforce Development Activities

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

Opportunities available to the customer through the Job Centers assist them in recognizing their skills and where they have weaknesses. Assistance is available to increase existing skills, market skills and work in areas of weakness. Skills assessments help to clarify the next steps needed in an individual's job search, their need for training or skill improvement. WorkKeys, 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 once employed. Earning a National Career Readiness Certification (NCRC) using the ACT skills certification system is an opportunity to take skills our customers have demonstrated on a national level. Our partners are working to ensure customers have a smooth referral process and access to valuable resources. Working together with our partners is the best way to assist our customers in their journey to a self-sufficient career pathway.

To improve our job-seekers skills will enhance the productivity and competitiveness of our employers. While 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.

Employers have indicated that finding workers, even with college degrees, with adequate basic essential skills is a challenge. Employers indicated that job applicants often lack basic personal effectiveness competencies such as communication skills, work ethic, discipline, critical thinking or interpersonal skills. Sharing the career pathways available in their local manufacturing areas and understanding the skills needed helps graduates be better prepared to move along the career continuum to on-the-job training, Career and Technical Education or higher post-secondary coursework. The negative side of the issues discussed is the complicated nature of the systems. The absence of aligned and standardized data systems makes it extremely difficult to track a client's progress. Jobs in today's world 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. The speed at which technology is changing at a rapid speed; this impacts even the employed and key skill deficiencies among the unemployed and underemployed population.

b. Local Workforce Development Capacity

Provide an analysis of the capacity of local entities to provide workforce development services and activities to address the identified education and skills needs of the workforce and the employment needs of employers in the LWDA.

WIOA requires strong partnerships across all programs, the Southeast Region, over the past ten years, demonstrated that strength. Each partner has capacities that are evident in the scope of services they provide and the excellent performance levels of their programs, as measured both by federally reported performance measures and key business metrics such as total number of customers served, effective labor force attachment and skills progression. The capacity of all partners is expected to grow as we build an integrated, demand-driven workforce system where all are equally included. The WDBSE focuses on outreach services to customers, especially individuals with barriers to employment, through enhanced collaboration, coordination and partnership development with local community agencies and chambers. Our local business staff are working together to improve employer outreach strategies incorporating local economic development partners that benefit both employers and job seekers in the local area. We can more effectively engage with employers in key, high-demand industries by continuing to strengthen partnerships with our local economic development. Southeast will coordinate on-the-job training programs to provide training in these high priority occupations through a larger business team.

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.

The Southeast Region is made up of 13 counties that include Bollinger, Cape Girardeau, Dunklin, Iron, Madison, Mississippi, New Madrid, Pemiscot, Perry, St. Francois, Ste. Genevieve, Scott, and Stoddard. This large area encompasses:

- 7,840 square miles
- Population of 356,455 individuals (2024)
- Labor force of 164,945 individuals (2024)
- 57 public schools and 26 private schools
- 7 Technical Training Schools
- 2 Community Colleges
- 1 State University



The largest city in the region is Cape Girardeau with a population of 83,658. The following is a list of each county, their major communities, major employers, training and educational institutes, population, diversity and relevant growth trends.

Bollinger County

Major Communities: Marble Hill

Major Employers: Woodland Hills, Crader Distributing Co., Liley Monument Works & Funeral Services, Black River Electric Coop, Stitch-It, and the following school districts: Meadow Heights, Woodland, Leopold and Zalma

Training and Educational Institutes: none

Demographic Category	2010 Census	2020 Census	Change Over Period
<i>Bollinger County</i>			
Total Population	12,363	10,567	-1,796
White	97.7%	96.3%	-1.4%
Black	0.5%	0.8%	0.3%
America Indian/Alaska Native	0.6%	0.9%	0.3%
Asian (alone)	0.3%	0.3%	0%
Hispanic/Latino	0.8%	1.8%	1%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%

Cape Girardeau County

Major Communities: Cape Girardeau, Jackson

Major Employers: Saint Francis Healthcare System, Mercy Hospital, Procter & Gamble Paper Products, Mondi Jackson LLC, Drury, Delta Companies Inc., Lutheran Home, Cape, and Jackson Public School Districts, Cape Girardeau VA Healthcare Center

Training and Educational Institutes: Southeast Missouri State University, Cape Girardeau Career & Technical Center, Southeast Missouri Hospital College of Nursing, Southeast Missouri State University Law Enforcement Academy.

Demographic Category	2010 Census	2020 Census	Change Over Period
<i>Cape Girardeau County</i>			
Total Population	73,957	81,710	7,753
White	93.1%	86.8%	-6.3%
Black	5.6%	8.1%	2.5%
America Indian/Alaska Native	0.5%	0.4%	-0.1%
Asian (alone)	0.8%	1.9%	1.1%
Hispanic/Latino	0.9%	2.8%	1.9%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%

Dunklin County

Major Communities: Kennett, Malden

Major Employers: Wal-Mart Supercenter, Genesis Homecare, Steele Technologies, Greenbriar

Training and Educational Institutes: Southeast Missouri State University-Kennett and Malden Campus, Three Rivers Community College-Kennett Campus, Kennett Career and Technology Center, Southern Missouri Trucking Driving School.

Demographic Category	2010 Census	2020 Census	Change Over Period
<i>Dunklin County</i>			
Total Population	31,953	28,283	-3,670
White	87.6%	85.4%	-2.2%
Black	10.1%	10.9%	0.8%
America Indian/Alaska Native	0.3%	0.5%	0.2%
Asian (alone)	0.4%	0.9%	0.5%
Hispanic/Latino	5.8%	7.5%	1.7%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%

Iron County

Major Communities: Ironton, Arcadia

Major Employers: Doe Run Company, Specialty Granules, Iron County Medical Center, Ironton Baptist Home, Disabled Citizens Alliance Inc.

Training and Educational Institutes: Mineral Area Outreach Center - Arcadia Valley Career Technical Center

Demographic Category	2010 Census	2020 Census	Change Over Period
<i>Iron County</i>			
Total Population	10,630	9,537	-1,093
White	96.2%	95.5%	-0.7%
Black	1.6%	1.8%	0.2%
America Indian/Alaska Native	0.5%	0.9%	0.4%
Asian (alone)	0.2%	0.2%	0.0%
Hispanic/Latino	1.3%	2.2%	0.9%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.0%	0%	0.0%

Madison County

Major Communities: Fredericktown

Major Employers: Madison Medical Center, Wal-Mart Supercenter, Cap America, Versa Tech, Black River Electric Coop

Training and Educational Institutes: Mineral Area Outreach Center

Demographic Category	2010 Census	2020 Census	Change Over Period
<i>Madison County</i>			
Total Population	12,226	12,626	400
White	97.8%	95.5%	-2.3%
Black	0.5%	0.8%	0.3%
America Indian/Alaska Native	0.4%	0.6%	0.2%
Asian (alone)	0.4%	1.0%	0.6%
Hispanic/Latino	2.1%	2.8%	0.7%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%

Mississippi County

Major Communities: Charleston, East Prairie

Major Employers: Southeast Correctional Center, Freight Logistics & Transportation, American Homecare, Edwards Transportation Company

Training and Educational Institutes: Susanna Wesley Family Learning Center

Demographic Category	2010 Census	2020 Census	Change Over Period
<i>Mississippi County</i>			
Total Population	14,358	12,577	-1,781
White	74.3%	74.7%	0.4%
Black	24.3%	22.6%	-1.7%
America Indian/Alaska Native	0.2%	0.5%	0.3%
Asian (alone)	0.2%	0.3%	0.1%
Hispanic/Latino	1.7%	2.8%	1.1%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0%	0.0%	0.0%

New Madrid County

Major Communities: Sikeston, New Madrid, Portageville

Major Employers: SRG Global, Associated Electric Coop, Inc., Alubar Inc., SEMO Health Network

Training and Educational Institutes: Three Rivers Community College-Portageville Center, New Madrid County Area Technical School

Demographic Category	2010 Census	2020 Census	Change Over Period
<i>New Madrid County</i>			
Total Population	18,956	16,434	-1,660
White	81.9%	80.5%	-2,522
Black	15.9%	16.2%	-0.3%
America Indian/Alaska Native	0.3%	0.4%	0.1%
Asian (alone)	0.5%	0.4%	-0.1%
Hispanic/Latino	1.3%	2.2%	0.9%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%

Pemiscot County

Major Communities: Caruthersville, Hayti

Major Employers: Isle Capri Casino, Pemiscot Memorial Hospital, Caruthersville Nursing Center, Arcosa Marine Products

Training and Educational Institutes: Pemiscot County Vocational School

Demographic Category	2010 Census	2020 Census	Change Over Period
<i>Pemiscot County</i>			
Total Population	18,296	15,661	-2,635
White	71.0%	70.0%	-1.0%
Black	27.0%	26.2%	-0.8%
America Indian/Alaska Native	0.4%	0.6%	0.2%
Asian (alone)	0.3%	0.5%	0.2%
Hispanic/Latino	2.0%	3.4%	1.4%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%

Perry County***Major Communities:*** Perryville***Major Employers:*** Gilster-Mary Lee Corp, Perry County Memorial Hospital, TG Missouri, Robinson Construction Company, Citizens Electric Corp.***Training and Educational Institutes:*** Perry County Higher Educational Center, Mineral Area College, Central Methodist College and Rankin Technical College

Demographic Category	2010 Census	2020 Census	Change Over Period
<i>Perry County</i>			
Total Population	18,971	18,956	-15
White	97.5%	96.2%	-1.3%
Black	0.5%	0.7%	0.2%
America Indian/Alaska Native	0.4%	0.5%	0.1%
Asian (alone)	0.5%	1.2%	0.7%
Hispanic/Latino	2.0%	2.6%	0.6%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%

St. Francois County***Major Communities:*** Farmington***Major Employers:*** SRG Global, Centene Corp, Spartech Plastics, Farmington Correctional Center, US Tool Group, BJC Behavioral Health Center, Southeast Missouri Mental Health, Parkland Medical Center, Walmart, Lee Mechanical Contractors Inc.***Training and Educational Institutes:*** Mineral Area College, Unitec Career Center

Demographic Category	2010 Census	2020 Census	Change Over Period
<i>St. Francois County</i>			
Total Population	65,359	66,922	1,563
White	93.6%	92.9%	-0.7%
Black	4.5%	4.1%	-0.4%
America Indian/Alaska Native	0.4%	0.5%	0.1%
Asian (alone)	0.4%	0.5%	0.1%
Hispanic/Latino	1.3%	2.1%	0.8%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%

Ste. Genevieve County

Major Communities: Ste. Genevieve, Bloomsdale

Major Employers: Mississippi Lime Co., Ste. Genevieve County Memorial Hospital, Holcim US, Tower Rock & Stone Company, Bloomsdale Excavating

Training and Educational Institutes: Southeast Missouri State University-Ste. Genevieve

Demographic Category	2010 Census	2020 Census	Change Over Period
<i>Ste. Genevieve County</i>			
Total Population	18,145	18,479	334
White	97.6%	95.7%	-1.9%
Black	0.8%	1.8%	1.0%
America Indian/Alaska Native	0.3%	0.4%	0.1%
Asian (alone)	0.3%	0.3%	0.0%
Hispanic/Latino	0.9%	1.4%	0.5%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%

Scott County

Major Communities: Sikeston, Scott City

Major Employers: Unilever, Saint Francis Healthcare, Ferguson Medical Group, Burch Food Services Inc., S&W Cabinets, Havco Wood Products LLC, Orgill

Training and Educational Institutes: Southeast Missouri State University-Sikeston Campus, Scott County Career and Technical Center, Three Rivers Community College-Sikeston

Demographic Category	2010 Census	2020 Census	Change Over Period
<i>Scott County</i>			
Total Population	39,191	38,059	-1,132
White	86.3%	84.6%	-1.7%
Black	11.5%	12.3%	0.8%
America Indian/Alaska Native	0.2%	0.5%	0.3%
Asian (alone)	0.4%	0.5%	0.1%
Hispanic/Latino	1.9%	2.8%	0.9%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%

Stoddard County***Major Communities:*** Dexter, Puxico***Major Employers:*** WW Wood Products Inc., Dexter Public School District, Southeast HEALTH of Stoddard County, Wal-Mart Supercenter, US Poly Enterprise***Training and Educational Institutes:*** Three Rivers Community College-Dexter Campus, Stoddard County Career Learning Center

Demographic Category	2010 Census	2020 Census	Change Over Period
<i>Stoddard County</i>			
Total Population	29,968	28,672	-1,296
White	97.2%	96.2%	-0.1%
Black	1.1%	1.4%	0.3%
America Indian/Alaska Native	0.5%	0.5%	0.0%
Asian (alone)	0.2%	0.4%	0.2%
Hispanic/Latino	1.4%	2.2%	0.8%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%

Source for each Counties data: US Census Bureau

11. Local Facility and Information

- Identify the local comprehensive One-Stop Center(s), including current mailing and street addresses, telephone and fax numbers and list them in **Attachment 1** to the Plan.
See Attachment 1
- Identify the local affiliate sites, including current mailing and street addresses, telephone and fax numbers and list them in **Attachment 1** to the Plan.
See Attachment 1
- Identify the local specialized sites, including current mailing and street addresses, telephone and fax numbers and list them in **Attachment 1** to the Plan.
See Attachment 1
- If your LWDA has any other additional service sites and the LWDA refers to them as anything other than comprehensive, affiliate or specialized centers, please list the service sites by the title your LWDA uses and describe the services provided in **Attachment 1**. Also, list the one-stop partners providing services at those locations.
Not applicable

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, Trade Adjustment Assistance programs, Unemployment Insurance, Re-entry Programs, and Youth Build.

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

a. Memorandums of Understanding (MOU)

Include in **Attachment 2** 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 2. Missouri Job Centers must ensure that equal access to employment and training services are provided to the farm workers and agricultural employers in their LWDA.

[See Attachment 2](#)

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

Include as part of the MOU in **Attachment 2** 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/or the amount of space (sq. footage) utilized by the partner.

[See Attachment 2](#)

Integration of One-Stop Service Delivery

13. Local Workforce Development System

Describe the workforce development system in the LWDA.

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

The WDBSE utilizes the OWD regional team in our area for necessary information. This team is contacted at the first evidence or word that a lay-off is even being contemplated by any employer in our area. This team will notify other area coordinators if their area could be affected. This team will first utilize all elements of resources to prevent the layoff such as (but not limited to) Shared Work—Layoff Alternative. When the team has determined with the employer that no other measures can be employed to avoid laying off workers, transition services are provided which include no cost to the business or to the affected workers. The OWD team and the local workforce system staff are available to provide guidance to the employer and re-employment services for the affected employees. Staff will provide information including:

- Conducting employee assistance meetings
- Provide training program information for lay-offs affected by foreign trade
- Provide Unemployment Insurance information
- Connect employees with current job openings
- Assist employers with layoff obligations including providing information concerning legal requirements under the federal Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification (WARN) Act.

- 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.

For initial local approval of an Eligible Training Provider program all eligibility criteria must be completed 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;
 - 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 Southeast Region. In Demand occupations can be found in MERIC publication. In-Demand occupations are classified with a Career Outlook grade of B or above.
 - The Eligible Training Provider must meet all local policy qualifications for approval in the Southeast Region. When the above criterion has been met, the Compliance Department 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 WDBSE Compliance Manager maintains access to locally approved or denied 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. (See current OWD Issuance and the State of Missouri Non-discrimination Plan)

The Southeast Workforce Development Board, One-Stop Operator, WIOA Partners, and all WDBSE staff will comply with WIOA Section 188, Nondiscrimination and Equal Opportunity Policies, and WDBSE Accessibility Policies. No qualified individual with a disability may be excluded from participation in, or be denied the benefits of a recipient's service, program, or activity or be subjected to discrimination by any recipient because a recipient's facilities are inaccessible or unusable by individuals with disabilities. Recipients must also comply with physical accessibility standards specified in regulations implementing Title II and Title III of the ADA, if applicable, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.

Under Section 504, each facility or part of a facility constructed by, on behalf of, or for the use of a recipient or that is altered by, on behalf of, or for the use of a recipient must be designed, altered, and/or constructed in such a manner that the facility or part of the facility is readily accessible to and usable by qualified individuals with disabilities, if the construction and/or alterations were completed after November 6, 1980.

To Ensure Physical Accessibility, all WDBSE Job Center locations are reviewed for ADA Accessibility Compliance. The Comprehensive/Affiliate Job Center Certifications require accessibility audits to be performed on current job center locations. The WDBSE will consult with area organization to assist with physical reviews as needed.

To ensure Programmatic Accessibility, all WDBSE programs and activities must be programmatically accessible, which include but not limited to:

- Providing reasonable accommodations for individuals with disabilities and/or making reasonable modifications to policies, practices, and procedures. One key aspect of ensuring equal opportunity for individuals with disabilities who are applicants, registrants, and participants for employment with regard to aid, benefits, services, and training is the provision of reasonable accommodations. The WDBSE programs are required to provide reasonable accommodations for individuals with disabilities to ensure equal access and opportunity. In general, a reasonable accommodation is a modification or adjustment in the way the program is administered that enables an individual with a disability to receive any aid, benefit, service, training, or employment equal to those provided to individuals without disabilities. Many forms of reasonable accommodations are available, and the individual with a disability and AJC programs should work together to identify the most effective reasonable accommodation for each individual. The process of identifying and providing reasonable accommodation should be provided as quickly as possible to avoid delaying access to services. Staff members have been encouraged to seek out resolutions for any reasonable accommodation that does not result in a funding cost and to act upon those requests immediately without the need for supervisory approval. In some circumstances, the WDBSE may not be able to provide specific reasonable accommodation if it would cause undue hardship.
- Administering programs in the most integrated setting appropriate. When reviewing current or new locations, the WDBSE must give priority to those methods that offer programs and activities to individuals with disabilities in the most integrated setting appropriate.
- Communicating with persons with disabilities as effectively as with others; and providing appropriate auxiliary aids or services, including assistive technology devices and services, where necessary to afford individuals with disabilities an equal opportunity to participate in, and enjoy the benefits of, the program or activity. 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/sites/jobs/files/media/pdf/2022/07/sign_language_interpreter_desk_aid_checklist_user01-2020.pdf

Staff are trained on a continuous basis on Equal Opportunity related topics including disabilities 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. Equal Opportunity Topics can include the demonstrating or purpose of ADA equipment, promising practices providing services to individuals with disabilities, and resources like Leadership Exchange in Arts and Disability (LEAD) and Job Accommodation Network (JAN).

Please see Accessibility Policy and LEP policy for more information (attachments 22 & 23).

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 WDBSE 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 midpoint and end-point monitoring as well as bi-weekly to collect the participant timesheets for their payroll. Work Experience and OJT outcomes are tracked by the WDBSE Compliance Manager to ensure successful outcomes and placements. Any trends of unsuccessful outcomes are investigated. OJT contracts include a requirement that the participant is retained by the OJT employer for a minimum of six months after the OJT has ended, unless there are grounds for termination or the participant quits; staff make monthly contact with the participants to verify any changes in employment, which allows us to ensure the employment needs are being met. Working with repeat employers allows us to assist with meeting the State employer performance measure. This 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 credential attainment rate, employment six and twelve months after exit, and median earnings six months after exit. In the Southeast Region we have determined that if the state finds these expected performance levels to be acceptable, the Southeast Region will deem them as acceptable as well. The Southeast Region will also honor any waiver for performance levels by an institution if it has been approved by the state. The WDBSE ensures continuous improvement of training providers by evaluating and monitoring as required that fosters a culture of accountability from the providers on behalf of customers. The WDBSE also works closely with all participants served 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.

The WDBSE will take action to retain a high-performance region. As felt across the state, WIOA funding changes mandates that the Southeast Board continues to work on refining processes, building partnerships, and reviewing consolidations as necessary - to ensure that we can continue a path of growth for the Southeast 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, quality assurance staff, and compliance department. These monitoring target the case management entries for validity.

- To ensure compliance in every grant program the Southeast WDB operates, monitoring will include a statistically valid sample of participants as deemed appropriate by the OWD Sub-State Issuance and/or the WDBSE President/COO. If 100% of the files are not monitored, a random sampling technique will be used to identify the selection of files to be monitored. Monitoring will align with federal, state, local, and grant specific monitoring elements that includes a review of eligibility and documentation, complaint and grievance procedures, compliance to the grant terms, assessments provided, employment planning, training plans, complaint and grievance procedures, supportive services and the appropriateness of participant payments, outcome and performance.
- The WDBSE will conduct quarterly data validation reviews to verify that performance data elements reported by the WDBSE are valid, accurate, reliable, and integrity of the performance outcomes.
- The Southeast 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.
- Refer to the WDBSE Sub-State Compliance and Monitoring Policy for more information on monitoring, compliance, and performance strategies.

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. See current OWD Issuance Local Workforce Development Board Membership Requirements and Recertification Procedures under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. See **attachment 4**

a. LWDB Standing Committees

List of all **standing committees** on a separate page in **Attachment 4**.

b. LWDB Certification Letter (most recent)

Include in **Attachment 4** a copy of the current **LWDB certification letter**

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 current OWD Issuance Policy on Designation of a Local Fiscal Agent by the Chief Elected Official. [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, pages 26-28](#)

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.

[Internal controls have been strengthened and expanded during the last program year. The goal for the WDBSE is to eliminate any possibility of duplicative administrative costs by striving to improve efficiency and reducing unnecessary expenditures. Therefore, administrative costs are tracked semi-monthly to assess and avoid duplications.](#)

b. Eliminating Duplicative Services

Identify how the Board ensures that services are not duplicated.

[As a way of eliminating duplication of services and administrative costs, the firewall between WDBSE and our subcontractor is very strong. Subcontractors are monitored by the WDBSE Compliance Manager in accordance with the sub state monitoring policy. Any issues related to the provision of services by subcontractor shall be handled by the WDBSE Compliance Manager and/or the President/COO with a corrective action notice being issued.](#)

23. Planning Budget Summaries (PBSs)

Include the Planning Budget Summaries for the upcoming Program Year and Fiscal Year in **Attachment 7** to the Plan. (Instruction for this planning item will be sent after the locally negotiated performance goals are finalized.) [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 the State of Missouri Non-discrimination 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**.

Board staff are charged with the preliminary draft planning and data gathering of the plan. The plan is reviewed by private sector board members, public sector board members, the CLEO, County Commissioners, along with the One-Stop Operator and other partners. The plan is presented to full board and if approved the plan is given a 14-30 day public comment period. [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 LWDA.

Program Year 2024 and 2025 Performance Negotiations.

	Adult	Dislocated Worker	Youth	Wagner Peyser
Employment Rate Q2	78.00%	81.00%	77.00%	70.00%
Employment Rate Q4	77.00%	76.50%	75.00%	69.75%
Median Earning	\$7,800	\$9,000	\$6,400	\$6,300
Credential Attainment	74.00%	76.00%	60.00%	N/A
Measurable Skill Gain	59.00%	60.00%	45.00%	N/A

Source: Office of Workforce Development

PY24 and PY25 Performance Negotiations were completed in September 2024.

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**. See **Attachment 57**

The four-year plan and the two-year plan modification is shared with many partners, for input and information. One Stop Operator (OSO) convenes with WIOA partners and input is gleaned at those meetings. Sections of the plan are emailed to partners for their input and clarification. Through the process of creating/updating the local plan we have the opportunity to conduct research and update the services provided throughout our region. The plan including all attachments are posted on the WDBSE website via a link for public comment. The plan is shared with all WDBSE Board Members and CLEO. Each member will have the opportunity to review and prepare questions, before or at the full WDBSE meeting. After the board votes to approve the plan, it is submitted to OWD.

28. Assurances

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

PROGRAM ELEMENTS

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.

Missouri's Job Centers offer a variety of partner products and services to assist job seekers and employers. While the specific offerings may vary by location, here is a general list of one-stop partner products and services commonly available at MO Job Centers:

Job search assistance, career counseling and assessment, resume writing and interview preparation, training and education programs, Veterans services, labor market assistance, employer services, UI assistance, job fairs and hiring events, workshops, financial assistance programs, and referral services. These partner products and services are designed to create a comprehensive support system for job seekers and employers, helping them navigate the complexities of the job market and achieve their employment goals.

Utilizing MERIC information, WorkKeys scores, and other 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 WDBSE adheres to that. Job Center Workshops, ETPS, ACT Career Ready and offering Talify assists staff in guiding customers to make informed choices. Job Centers offer free use of computers, printers, copiers, fax machines and phones for your job search activities. Assistive technology is also available, including: WindowEyes screen reader, ZoomText screen enlarger, CCTV, and height adjustable tables for individuals with disabilities. TTY service and Ubiduo™ devices are available to assist the deaf and hard of hearing.

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], Talify, etc.) and jobseeker products (such as Résumé Builder, etc.), to engage customers and assist with their re-employment efforts.

Each job center leverages products and services to engage customers in several ways; Offering Comprehensive Job Search Tools, Tailored Recommendations, Skill Development Resources, Networking Opportunities, Resume and Profile Optimization, Job Market Insights, Support for Specific Demographics, Integration with social media, and Feedback Mechanisms.

WIOA AD/DW re-employment services will be accomplished through immediately engaging clients through career and training level services as eligibility, appropriateness, and funding allows. The goal of each Missouri Job Center is 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.

All of the products and services listed above have assisted with the increase of enrollments throughout the region. These products and services have also allowed the region to meet performance and self-sufficiency for individuals served.

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 OWD and Sub-contracted staff assist the customer filling their claim on the UIInteract 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(s) focuses 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 links 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 OWD and Sub-contracted 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 (s) 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 WDBSE has a strong network of ties in its community. The BSR together with the local Business Services Team, works with employers, community agencies and education institutions in order to promote the comprehensive programs that are available. The Business Services Team enhances the region's economic stability and prosperity by focusing on the demands and needs of the region. The team tackles 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 Business Services Team has networked with local employers to identify the skill demands for the local region. The Business Services Team works together as one unit, collaborating with each other to identify current underlying issues in the local workforce. Staff focus on community outreach to local businesses 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 the Business Services Team coordinates with local employers to collaborate on the obstacles and hurdles they face when hiring employees. By working in a partnership together towards developing the talent pipeline that is in demand while creating a bright career path for individuals/families.

The results associated with OJT/WBL outreach initiatives are multifaceted and impactful, spanning across various stakeholders involved. Here's a breakdown of some key results typically associated with OJT/WBL outreach: enhanced employability, improved learning outcomes, skilled workforce, business growth, retention and employee satisfaction, community impact, partnership building, and lifelong learning culture. The results associated with OJT outreach underscore its significance as a catalyst for individual empowerment, economic growth, and societal progress.

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 tool 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 assist in the attainment of needed credentials, degrees, or training. When needed, participants sign 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. Not all schools require this and some work well with our case managers, which increases our relationship with the school and the ability to get documentation needed based on the outcomes of training services. Partnerships with AEL, Career & Technology Centers, as well as Community Colleges allow for referrals, shared proctoring, and space.

34. ETT Services / Layoff Aversion

Describe how the Board coordinates with the OWD's Community Development Team 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, and how layoff aversion strategies are coordinated. See current OWD Issuance 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 meet 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 WDBSE does not have a youth standing committee. The Southeast region's Workforce System Network Committee contains representation from AEL, Department of Social Services, judicial system, and private sector WDBSE members with interest in serving to make a difference in the youth of our 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 WDBSE does not have a youth standing committee. The Southeast region's Workforce System Network Committee contains representation from AEL, Department of Social Services, judicial system, and private sector WDBSE 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 Workforce System Network Committee reviews services offered, enrollment numbers, activities, and performance. Plans are then put into place, with their input, regarding how best to service the WIOA youth population of the Southeast Region. Performance is monitored quarterly to ensure that all counties are being served equally.

- 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 current OWD Issuance WIOA Standing Youth Committees Requirements.

The WDBSE does not have a youth standing committee. The Southeast region's Workforce System Network Committee contains representation from AEL, Department of Social Services, judicial system, and private sector WDBSE members with interest in serving to make a difference in the youth of our region. All program elements are provided by the WDBSE subcontractor. Subcontractor provides and coordinates services to meet the 14 youth elements. If an element requires coordination with another entity the subcontractor will conduct those coordination's. A common referral form is used with all partner agencies. The referral is a reverse referral form where the partner agency that is contacted reaches out to the youth to provide needed services to overcome barriers.

- 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 Workforce System Network Committee meets quarterly prior to each full board meeting. Additional meetings may be scheduled should the need arise. The agenda varies, but most often includes any updates related to youth services, enrollments, performance, and any other areas in need. Each county is reviewed separately to ensure that all counties are being served.

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 WDBSE subcontractor. Subcontractor provides and coordinates services for the 14 elements. If an element requires coordination with another

entity, the subcontractor will develop those relationships. A common referral form is used with all partner agencies. The referral is a reverse referral form where the partner agency that is contacted reaches out to the youth to provide needed services to overcome barriers.

- 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 WIOA youth Case Managers provide individual tutoring. Staff work with high school counselors to re-engage youth in high school when possible.
 - Alternative secondary school offerings or dropout recovery services: We do not operate Alternative Ed.; however, we provide AEL referral services. We work with all the established Alternative Education programs. Staff work with high school counselors to re-engage youth in high school when possible.
 - Work Experience: 20% of WIOA budget goes towards paid work experience. Additionally, youth can participate, as appropriate, in unpaid work experience and job shadowing as well as paid and unpaid internships and OJT. This is monitored closely to ensure youth are in the appropriate Work Experience that will ensure success and long-term employment.
 - 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 the area Higher Education and Vocational Education 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 the program may be used to pay for some short-term training expenses. Youth will be referred to WIOA Adult services as appropriate. Most often we provide supportive services to assist the youth in getting started with schooling. We pay expenses such as application and testing fees, deposits etc. Occupational education for recognized post-secondary credentials aligned with in-demand industry will follow in the same manner as any other educational training program.
 - Leadership Development: Case Management staff provides leadership development through exposure to postsecondary education, community projects, etc. Workshops are also offered throughout the year to youth on a rotating basis that can include topics such as empowerment strategies, financial and credit management, buying or renting homes, social networking, the value of volunteering, community services, and top jobs.
 - Supportive Services and Incentives: It is the responsibility of the Case Manager to coordinate these services with applicable community agencies. See attached supportive service and Incentive policy. Incentive money is earned through earning credentials, training, and skill gains.
 - Adult mentoring: All workplace placements require youth be assigned an adult workplace mentor to work directly with the youth focusing on appropriate workplace habits and behaviors. Mentoring activities may include Job shadowing and guidance provided by an adult to assist the youth to increase his/her academic performance; goal setting; support meetings to increase youth motivation; career exploration assistance; world ethics and social skills improvement.
 - Follow-Up Services: Follow-up services are offered for at least twelve months after exit.

This may include Regular contact with a participant's employer, including assistance in addressing work-related problems that arise; assistance in securing better paying jobs, career development and further education; work-related peer support groups; mentoring; tracking the progress and earnings of participants in employment after training; and credential attainment post-program.

- Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling: Case Management staff provides a large amount of individual and group guidance and counseling related to career exploration, personal counseling, counseling, financial counseling, and goal setting as needed.
 - Financial Literacy Education: Case Management staff provides training through Financial Literacy module and outside training from financial resources to create budgets, initiate checking and savings accounts and learn how to effectively manage spending, credit and debt, teach the significance of credit reports and scores to include identity theft awareness and training.
 - 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.
- c. The process for identification of Youth service providers;
Request for Proposal (RFP) process is reviewed, discussed, possibly revised, and approved by the Workforce System Network Committee. The committee recommends RFP to the full board. Notification is produced via email, social media, website, etc. of the request for bids. The committee reviews the received proposals, scores them, and makes a recommendation to the full board. Once a provider has been voted on and approved by the full board, the awarded bidder receives a phone call or personal visit within 24 hours from the President/COO to confirm acceptance of the contract. All other bidders receive 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);
WDBSE staff work at the direction of the WDB President/COO, 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 Program Year Quarters of each contract year based on the direction of the WDBSE President/COO and the Board. WDBSE staff will also monitor appropriation programs during program operation to reduce compliance issues. A review of all files or a random selection technique based on OWD Issuance to be used to identify the files for that quarterly monitoring. 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 the full board and more information on the comments and findings is available on request. 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.

WDBSE staff also monitors for compliance with WIOA, Fair Labor Standards Act, and Americans with Disabilities Act, Child Labor Laws, and any other contracted grant requirements. Any findings from these reviews will be reviewed and reported to the board during the annual Sub-State Monitoring Report.

Data Element Validation Monitoring is conducted quarterly by OWD. The WDBSE follows OWD Issuance on Statewide Data Element Validation and coordinates with OWD as needed.

Equal Opportunity Staffing Data Analysis Reviews Employment Practices for the Southeast Board and any Sub-Contractor/One-Stop Operator broken down by demographics. The Equal Opportunity Program Data Analysis reviews the programs and services offered in the area broken down by demographics. The Staffing Analysis is completed in October of each year and the Program Analysis is completed each January so that performance information has been reported at the time of the review. These reports are included in the annually required Sub-State Monitoring Report.

Sub-Contractor and One-Stop Operators are also evaluated annually to ensure compliance with Job Description, Federal and State Requirements, Contract Requirements, and general direction of the way the programs are being run and operated. This report is also included in the annually required Sub-State Monitoring Report.

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

The WDBSE subcontracts service provider for youth services in all 13 counties of the region. The subcontractor is required to provide or make available all WIOA Youth elements. This is monitored and reviewed quarterly by the Workforce System Network Committee.

- f. How year-round services are provided to Youth 14–24 years of age that are still in high school or out of school;

All counties have WIOA Youth Case Managers assigned. The case managers are mobile, working 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. Youth case managers are able to stay in better contact with out of school youth through maintaining partnerships with partner agencies such as AEL programs and other partner agencies. For the past few years case managers have also had the privilege of promoting the Jobs League Program through the Family Support Division, which offers summer employment opportunities for eligible youth, both in and out-of-school. This program provides short-term employment in a field the youth has expressed interest in, to provide the youth with work experience and soft skills. Youth Case Managers are able to maintain contact with the youth during the summer months which keeps the youth engaged. 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 enrollments require an assessment before enrollment. The determination on the enrollment status of In-School or Out-of-School is made by what the youth is doing at the time they come in for enrollment/services. Based on that status determination the appropriate

assessment is completed, please see the local Basic Skills Deficiency Policy, Attachment 19 for more information. Additionally, participants must complete Aptitude and Interest Testing prior to enrollment. The results of those tests as well as the Labor Market Information for their chosen or top career path helps to develop the WIOA Services that are needed and create the Employment Plan for a map of how they will get to the long-term goal of self-sufficiency. Youth participants have many different options available to them through the 14 youth program elements and the combination of services, barriers, and needs. All these options are used to provide the best assistance we can provide. Co-enrollment in other grants, depending on the participants' eligibility, are also considered as possible options to maximize their participation and outcome. If a youth is not ready to actively participate to be eligible for enrollment, they are given information and the Case Manager will follow up with the youth at a future date to determine if they are ready to follow through. Once a participant has gone 90 days without a countable service, based on completing the program or making the decision to not participate in the program their record will exit. Upon exiting the program, a youth participant is put into "Follow-Up" status which opens the availability to additional follow-up services including supportive services if justified and appropriate to assist the participant as they work towards all their ultimate employment goals.

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

The Southeast Region partners with many local agencies, addresses' all at-risk youth through referrals and partnerships of committee involvement and community connections. This ensures that all areas of concern are addressed as available and includes the youth that are most in need. For services needed and not provided under WIOA, youth are referred to appropriate partner agencies.

- Youth who are subject to the juvenile or adult justice system-after needs are determined, services needed and provided through WIOA are administered.
- Youth who are disabled- after needs are determined, services needed and provided through WIOA are administered.
- Youth who are homeless- after needs are determined, services needed and provided through WIOA are administered.
- Youth who are pregnant or parenting- after needs are determined, services needed and provided through WIOA are administered.
- Youth who have dropped out of high school- after needs are determined, services needed and provided through WIOA are administered.
- Youth who are in the Foster Care Placement System are able to enroll into the WIOA Youth Program for services and assistance. When youth who are in the Foster Care System turn 18 many of those need additional resources to continue on their training and/or employment path. Working with area Foster Care organizations provides us with the ability to engage them in the program.

- i. The identification of the partnerships and describe the coordination of services with other agencies within the LWDA.

For outreach with Jobseekers, the job center staff, youth staff, and WDBSE subcontractor staff have each made it a priority to get out into the communities and help to spread the word about the job centers, services, and openings. Through this targeted outreach, we have been able to connect with county and city resource organizations. This outreach can include setting up booths at events, collaborating through meetings and taskforces, sharing and gathering information, co-enrollment for braiding of resources, and offering services off-site.

Working with other partners and agencies to assist with coordination of services and/or braiding funds, when appropriate, ensures the maximum benefit to the participant and to the funds of the Southeast Workforce Development Grants. A list of local partnerships and agencies that the Board works with includes but is not limited to: foster care agencies, local churches, community partnerships, chambers, self-improvement agencies, post-secondary universities, colleges, and career centers, school districts including Alternative Education, JAG Programs throughout the region, AEL Programs, Probation & Parole departments, social services, outpatient counseling services, food pantries, etc.

All of these agencies assist with resources, referrals, and the ability to coordinate services to best assist participants in our programs and in other programs.

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 Board supports numerous innovative projects that can engage and empower out-of-school youth. These projects aim to provide valuable skills, support personal development, and foster a sense of community. As a Board we know first-hand, that developing any project, it's crucial to involve the youth in the planning process to ensure that the initiatives are relevant, interesting, and meet their needs and aspirations.

- Environmental Conservation Projects
 - Engage youth in projects focused on environmental conservation, such as cleaning up local parks, planting trees, or participating in recycling initiatives. This fosters a sense of responsibility for the environment and community.
- Civic Engagement Initiatives
 - Encourage youth to get involved in their communities by organizing initiatives such as community clean up events and projects addressing specific local issues.
- Social Enterprise Development
 - Teach youth how to create and manage social enterprises that address local social issues. Projects such as poverty alleviation, education, and healthcare.
- Peer Mentorship Programs
 - Establish mentorship programs by partnering with community organizations for mentoring out-of-school youth. This will provide guidance, support, and help them navigate challenges for making informed decisions about their future.

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 Development Board of Southeast Missouri has an 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 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.

Southeast Regional BSR, Job Center Lead, OWD Job Center Supervisors and the Veteran Representatives bring the team/process together. This team collaborates to share information so that all businesses may be served, targeting the WDBSE identified in-demand sectors. The case management is utilized to track all business services being provided to employers. Nexus meetings are held within the region, giving the local team insight into local employers' needs.

Business services offered may include OJT, job postings, labor market information, Incumbent Worker program, tax credits, bonding, etc. When the opportunity presents itself WDBSE staff speak at engagements about services available at each Job Center. Economic Developers are at the table, meeting with companies as well as participating in WDBSE meetings, Sector Strategy exercises, and other projects throughout the region.

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.

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. WDBSE 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. 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. Outreach to businesses is conducted through subcontractor and Job Center involvement with regional chambers of commerce, and economic development departments, as well as by contact from the Business Representative Manager. The Southeast Region's outreach plan for

businesses is designed to increase the awareness of available services to increase the number of businesses that use the Missouri Job Center products and services.

- Gather business intelligence to identify current economy
- Work with local and regional economic development professionals
- Provide one-on-one assistance to employers with job matching system
- Encourage entrepreneurship with economic developers

By providing and promoting On-The-Job (OJT) training and Work Experience, the Southeast WDB is able to assist employers with their need for more workers informs the local Job Centers of the OJT Agreements as they are sanctioned by the Compliance Department. The Southeast Business Representative Manager combs the regional Job Center job postings to coordinate strategies to reach out to inform businesses of our numerous services that are available to them. As a service to the businesses utilizing our OJT program, the Business Representative Manager works closely with potential OJT candidates that match with OJT employer needs. Youth Case Managers communicate regularly with the Business Representative Manager to offer OJT to employers who employ youth. These youth work for said companies to develop an understanding of that particular industry, and if it is a fit for both the youth and the employer, an OJT agreement is put in place.

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 Southeast Region sits within two Regional Planning Commissions: Bootheel Regional Planning Commission and the SEMO Regional Planning Commission. The WDBSE works in two ways: coordinating the disbursement of the Job Centers information to businesses and in turn relays business needs to the Job Center. The Southeast Region supports Incumbent Worker training, On-Job-Training, Registered Apprenticeship, Pre-Apprenticeship and Work Experience to our businesses.

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

44. Business Services Plan

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

The mission of the WDBSE Regional Business Services is to develop a seamless delivery system for businesses. Partners will coordinate efforts to ensure a point of contact to deliver training and employment services. The WDBSE Business Services Plan includes the following: OWD Veterans Representatives, OWD Regional Manager, Regional Business Services Rep, and the Regional One-Stop Operator that will coordinate services to business sectors in the Southeast Region. The team will provide outreach to employers and promote Job Center services (i.e. OJT, Work Experience, Incumbent Worker funding, job orders, hiring events, etc.) Data input into MoJobs will keep all team members informed of region wide activities. The team will work with economic development partners to support attraction, growth and retention of businesses that bring wealth and provide jobs to the region.

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.

WDBSE supports the Missouri Re-entry Process for the Ex-Offender initiative by closely partnering with Probation & Parole, OWD Veteran staff, and Department of Corrections. These agencies are included in the monthly One-Stop partner meetings and provide strategic input on making services viable and available to ex-offenders. The BSR works one-on-one with employers, promoting the talents of justice involved individuals. 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.

The WDB's strategy for promoting and increasing enrollments in the work-based learning programs is to partner closely with OWD Regional Manager, OWD Job Center Supervisors, OWD Veteran staff, One-Stop Operator and the local BSR. 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.

The Southeast Region has encouraged Incumbent Worker Training for several years. The local BSR 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, including social meeting and shared at County Commission events.

Including all partners in discussions about local companies gives insight to local needs, example, if a company is expanding their business, our team will target that company for assistance. The team will offer hosting hiring events, virtual interviewing, OJT, job postings, etc. If a company is laying off, our team will target the employees, offering Job Center services, workshops, posting resumes, assisting with job search, paid training, etc. When the team works together with innovative ideas, coming together with a common goal to serve employers within the region, the outcome will be more successful.

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 24**)

See Attachment 24

The WDBSE will support all eligible Trade Act Participants. 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. OWD staff and WIOA staff in each 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. At times, there are extenuating circumstances that would not allow us to co-enroll a participant into multiple programs.

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. **See attachment 31.**

The Board strives to strengthen the connections between its partnerships with the local community colleges by maintaining open communication between the job center staff the community college staff. Community college staff are involved in the monthly One-Stop partner meetings. Referrals are open lines of interaction on behalf of job seekers and students.

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.

See Attachment 32

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
Engaging with faith-based organizations provides unique opportunities for community development. Fostering dialogue and collaboration with faith-based organizations promotes understanding of the Workforce Development System. This will aid in mutual understanding, appreciations of diversity and the building of stronger community bonds.

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

Strong partnerships are being built throughout the region. Most community-based organizations and many faith-based organizations are present and collaborating with local Job Centers. These partnerships are crucial in building trust and demonstrating genuine commitment to inclusivity for all customers.

Outline efforts for conducting outreach campaigns to educate faith-based and community organizations about the attributes and objectives of the demand-driven workforce development system. Indicate how these resources can be strategically and effectively leveraged in the LWDA to help meet the objectives of WIOA.

Actively engaging in community outreach efforts will assist in increasing awareness of the services and programs available throughout the region. This collaboration can facilitate cross-promotion of events, share resources, and broaden the reach of the local Board's and Job Center efforts.

REGIONAL PLANS

Regional Planning Guidance

51. Regional Plans

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

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

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

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

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

Include the **Regional Plan as Attachment 33 (not applicable to Southeast Region)** 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.

[Not applicable to Southeast Region](#)

REQUIRED POLICIES AND ATTACHMENTS

All local policies relating to WIOA are required to be approved by OWD and listed as part of the required attachments to the local plan regardless of whether or not they are required by the LWDB, state or federal guidelines. The below list is not an all-inclusive list of federal regulations. At any time the LWDB, state, or federal guidelines may require additional policies beyond the list below.

[See pages 2 and 3 of local plan](#)