

The Greater St. Louis Metropolitan WIOA Regional Plan

Program Years 2024-2027
Revised 03-2026

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014 Section 107(d) requires local WIOA areas that make up an economic region develop and submit a Regional Plan in collaboration with other local areas. This Plan will align service delivery, direct investments, apply job-driven strategies and enable the building of a skilled workforce across the metropolitan area.

The St. Louis Planning Region for the WIOA is comprised of the following Missouri Local Areas: St. Louis City, St. Louis County, St. Charles County and Jefferson/Franklin Counties. The St. Louis Planning Region also includes the Illinois Counties of Madison and St. Clair.

As a foundation to this Regional Plan, each Local Workforce Development Area's (LWDA) response to the requirements stated in WIOA Section 108(b)(1)-(22) can be found in their Local Plan which is attached to this document. The responses from each Local Plan to the requirements were taken into consideration and incorporated into the development of this collaborative regional effort.

Regional Planning Outcomes/Deliverables

There are eight Outcomes/Deliverables required of Regional Plans. The following sections (A) through (H) fulfill this requirement for the St. Louis Metropolitan Region:

A) “Contain each of the Local Plans within the regional planning area that meets the intent of the law”.

As stated above, each local WIOA Area's Plan is attached to this Regional Plan. Additionally, the narrative explaining regional planning is included in each of those Local Plans

B) “Establish regional service strategies, including use of cooperative service delivery agreements”.

The Directors of the St Louis Metropolitan Statistical Area (SLMSA) formed a group called the St. Louis Regional Workforce Development Board (WDB) Directors' Consortium.

The St. Louis Regional WDB Directors Consortium was designed to create a forum of workforce development professionals to collaborate and focus on issues

related to the economic development and the workforce systems that impact the greater St. Louis Metropolitan Service Area (SMSA), including the Illinois counties of St. Clair and Madison.

The St. Louis Regional WDB Directors Consortium was created in February 2012 and is comprised of the WDB Directors for St. Louis City, St. Louis County, St. Charles County, Jefferson / Franklin Counties in Missouri and Illinois counties of Madison and St. Clair. Other participants include; Deputy Directors and Wagner Peyser Regional Managers. The consortium schedules quarterly meetings and are hosted by each region on a rotational basis.

In 2017, the Association expanded to include members of the Business Services Team from each of the regional workforce agencies. This helped increase the flow of communication and planning. In 2022, the Committee also agreed to elect a Co-Chairs (one from each state) for one-year terms, with the goal of having the group's leadership rotate throughout the region on an annual basis. Elections are to be held at each December meeting for the coming year.

The vision of the consortium:

- Create a forum designed to promote proactive and effective collaborations and communications among the Workforce Development professionals and other stakeholders in the greater St. Louis MSA.
- To collaborate and develop partnerships for the implementation of regional projects/initiatives which would allow for joint applications for Federal grants.
- To ensure the workforce development activities/services meet the needs of employers and support economic growth in the region by; enhancing communication, coordination, and collaboration among employers, economic development entities and service providers.
- To develop and implement strategies for meeting the employment and skill needs of workers and employers such as; establishing industry and sector partnerships. To fully engage businesses in this endeavor.
- To promote 'value-added' training of the workforce that meets the demand and expectation of businesses, significantly enhancing the skills and abilities of job seekers, and ultimately strengthening the regions' economy.
- To better coordinate and when possible, synchronize regional planning of special workforce events including major job fairs, Annual Manufacturing Day, apprenticeship initiatives and other WIOA services to job-seekers

and employers.

The following regional service strategies have been developed as a result of the WDB Directors Consortium:

Business Service Strategy

Local Business Services Team and NEXUS groups from each area meet regularly to exchange current efforts in working with employers that seek services across the Region.

Additionally, each area uses email blasts to send notice of upcoming recruitment events to others in the St. Louis Region. These notices may then be shared in local Job Centers, local area's web sites and social media posts.

The Business Services Teams in the Region also work with the States' Rapid Response Teams to coordinate State Business services with local Job Center services.

The Regional Workforce Directors or their designee work with the Greater STL and other economic development groups such as the Missouri Partnership and Missouri Economic Development Council (MEDC) to better coordinate efforts between workforce and economic development agencies and professionals.

Serving those with Disabilities

The six WDBs of the region originally coordinated a regional disability initiative called, Accommodations for Success, in August 2015. The intent of this committee was to engage companies to understand the requirements of the new American with Disabilities Act and how public workforce agencies around the region could work with them to fulfill their obligations. A kick-off event, Accommodations for Success – Next Level was planned and successfully held in August 2016.

This has become an annual event and is now held every August and is moved around the region, allowing each Job Center to play a special role in hosting and formatting this successful event.

Referrals of Jobseekers between areas

In the past the Workforce Regions shared a formal referral process including referral forms. However, technology and a shared data system no longer require paper forms. Staff record the services provided to each jobseeker into the

shared case management system. If the individual visits a Job Center in a different area, staff in the new area can see what has already occurred and coordinate services to ensure no duplication of service or expenditure occurs.

The Region has developed a Cooperative Service Delivery Agreement to serve as an umbrella agreement to all these initiatives. See Attachment 1.

C) “Develop and implement sector initiatives for in-demand industry sectors or occupations for the region”.

Background:

The development of WIOA-focused sector strategies for the St. Louis Region began in meetings of the Directors’ Consortium. Strategy development continued at the Sector Strategy Kickoff hosted by the State Division of Workforce Development (DWD) in the fall of 2015. The first two sectors selected as a Regional focus were Advanced Manufacturing and Healthcare.

A formal Regional Sector Strategy was developed and submitted to OWD as required. The six LWDA’s collaborated with a regional effort spearheaded by the St. Louis Partnership (an Economic Development agency) to address the needs of advanced manufacturing throughout the entire Metropolitan Region. Several collaborative initiatives resulted and continue from this effort.

Currently:

The Region re-affirms their continued commitment to Advanced Manufacturing, Information Technology and Healthcare sector initiatives.

D) “Collection and analysis of regional labor market data (in conjunction with the State).... for the purpose of regional planning”

For statistical data and analysis of the entire region’s labor market see the following:

Greater STL 2030 Jobs Plan: <https://www.greaterstlinc.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/2030-Jobs-Plan.pdf>

Missouri Workforce 2025 St. Louis Region from Sept of Higher Education & Workforce Development: <https://meric.mo.gov/media/pdf/st-louis-economic-and-workforce-report>

Attachment 2: 2025 State of St. Louis Workforce Report to the Region

Data from these reports and discussion with area business and partners guided the LWDA in developing this Regional Plan.

To see how this analysis breaks out into the local areas see “Section 7. Labor Market Analysis” of each areas’ local plan attached to this document.

6. Economic Analysis

Describe the LWDA’s current economic condition, including the following information by county (if your LWDA includes more than one county) and the overall region.

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

Personal Income

In the St. Louis Region, two counties were above the state average of \$64,920 for per capita personal income in 2023. All five counties in the St. Louis Region had per capita personal income over \$55,000.

In 2024, personal income for the US and Missouri increased 4.6 percent and 5.6 percent respectively when compared to 2023.

The statewide poverty rate of working age persons, or those 18-64 years, was 12.1 percent in 2023. In the St. Louis Region, the poverty rate was lower than the state average in four counties. St. Charles County had the lowest poverty rate (4.3%) while St. Louis City had the highest poverty rate (18.2%).

Name	2023 Per Capita Personal Income	Working Age (18-64) Population living below poverty level	
		Number	Percentage
Missouri	\$64,920	435,313	12.1%
Franklin	\$57,522	4,950	8.0%
Jefferson	\$55,195	10,753	7.8%
St. Charles	\$69,693	10,632	4.3%
St. Louis County	\$101,151	51,436	8.9%
St. Louis City	\$63,316	34,267	18.2%

Sources:

Per Capita Personal Income - U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2023

Poverty Level - American Community Survey-5 Year data (2019-2023)

- 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. All counties but one in the St. Louis Region had a lower percentage of working age population (18-64 years old) with disabilities as compared to the state average of 12.6 percent. St. Louis City had the highest percentage of the working age population with a disability at 14.4 percent. The percentage of the working age population who speak a language other than English in Missouri was 7.4 percent. St. Louis County and St. Louis City had a higher percentage of the working age population who speak a language other than English, at 11.9 percent and 9.6 percent, respectively.

In Missouri, 8.5 percent of the population 25 years or up did not have a high school diploma in 2023. Two of the five counties in the region had higher percentage of this population group without a high school diploma than the state percentage. St. Louis City had the highest percentage of the population 25 years and up without a high school diploma at 9.5 percent. St. Charles County had the lowest percentage of this population group without a high school diploma, at 5.6 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%
Franklin	105,316	62,031	58.9%	6,602	9.0%	6,876	11.2%	1,330	2.1%
Jefferson	228,227	139,461	61.1%	13,602	8.5%	15,260	11.0%	5,528	4.0%
St. Charles	409,830	248,899	60.7%	12,875	4.5%	21,879	8.8%	15,943	6.4%
St. Louis County	996,618	589,997	59.2%	38,616	5.6%	56,300	9.6%	70,378	11.9%
St. Louis City	293,109	195,078	66.6%	20,282	9.5%	27,782	14.4%	18,782	9.6%

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

d. Employment rates for the last 5 years;

The unemployment rate in the St. Louis 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 five counties. St. Charles County had the lowest unemployment rate at 3.1 percent. The highest unemployment rate was in St. Louis City, at 4.1 percent.

Unemployment Rate by County - St. Louis 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%
Franklin	6.4%	3.9%	2.5%	2.9%	3.4%
Jefferson	6.1%	3.8%	2.4%	2.8%	3.3%
St. Charles	5.3%	3.3%	2.2%	2.6%	3.1%
St. Louis County	6.5%	4.3%	2.6%	3.1%	3.6%
St. Louis City	8.1%	5.5%	3.0%	3.5%	4.1%

Source: Local Area Unemployment Statistics, Not Seasonally Adjusted

- e. Major layoff events over the past 3 years and any anticipated layoffs; and
- f. Any other factors that may affect local/regional economic conditions.

7. Labor Market Analysis

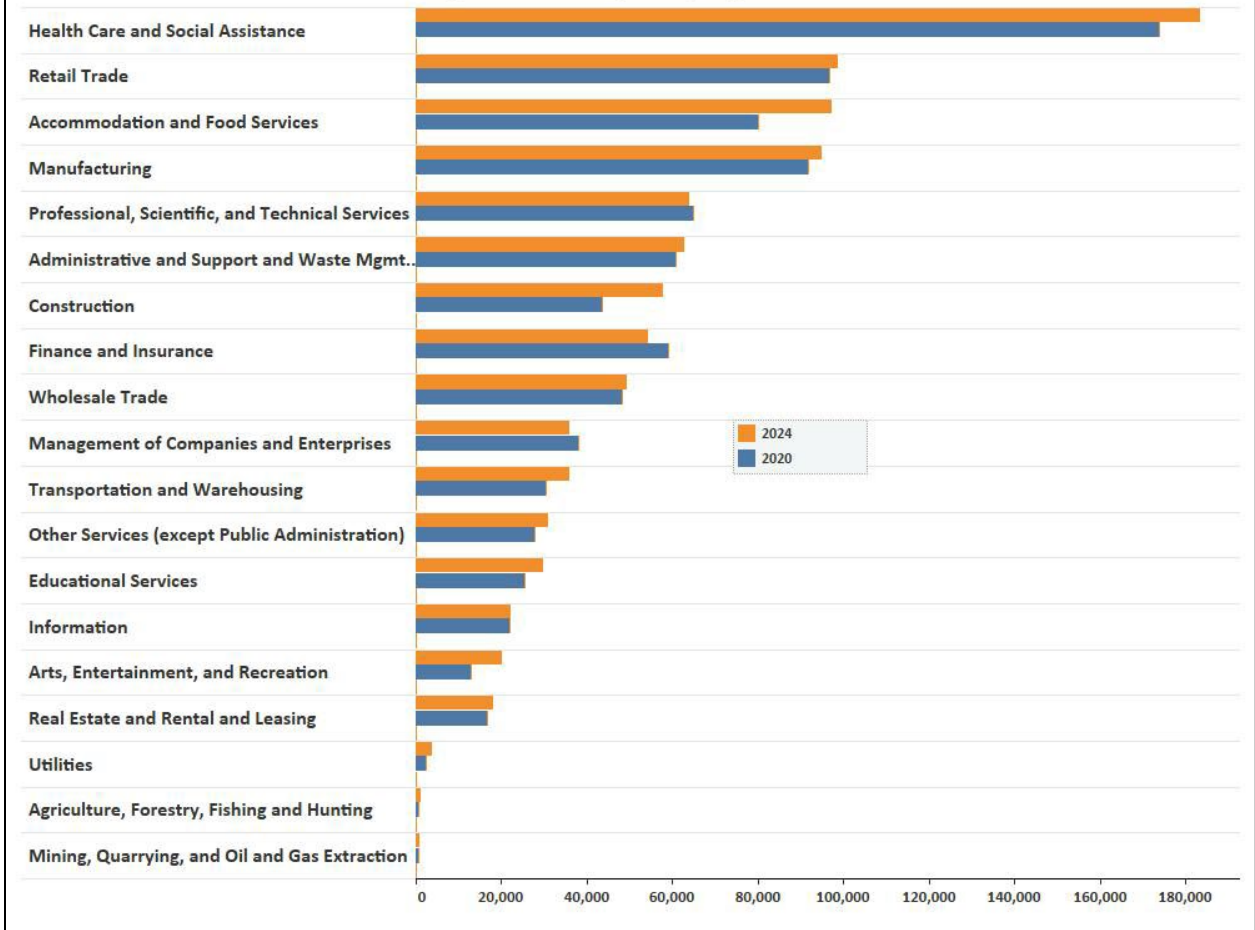
a. Existing Demand Industry Sectors and Occupations

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

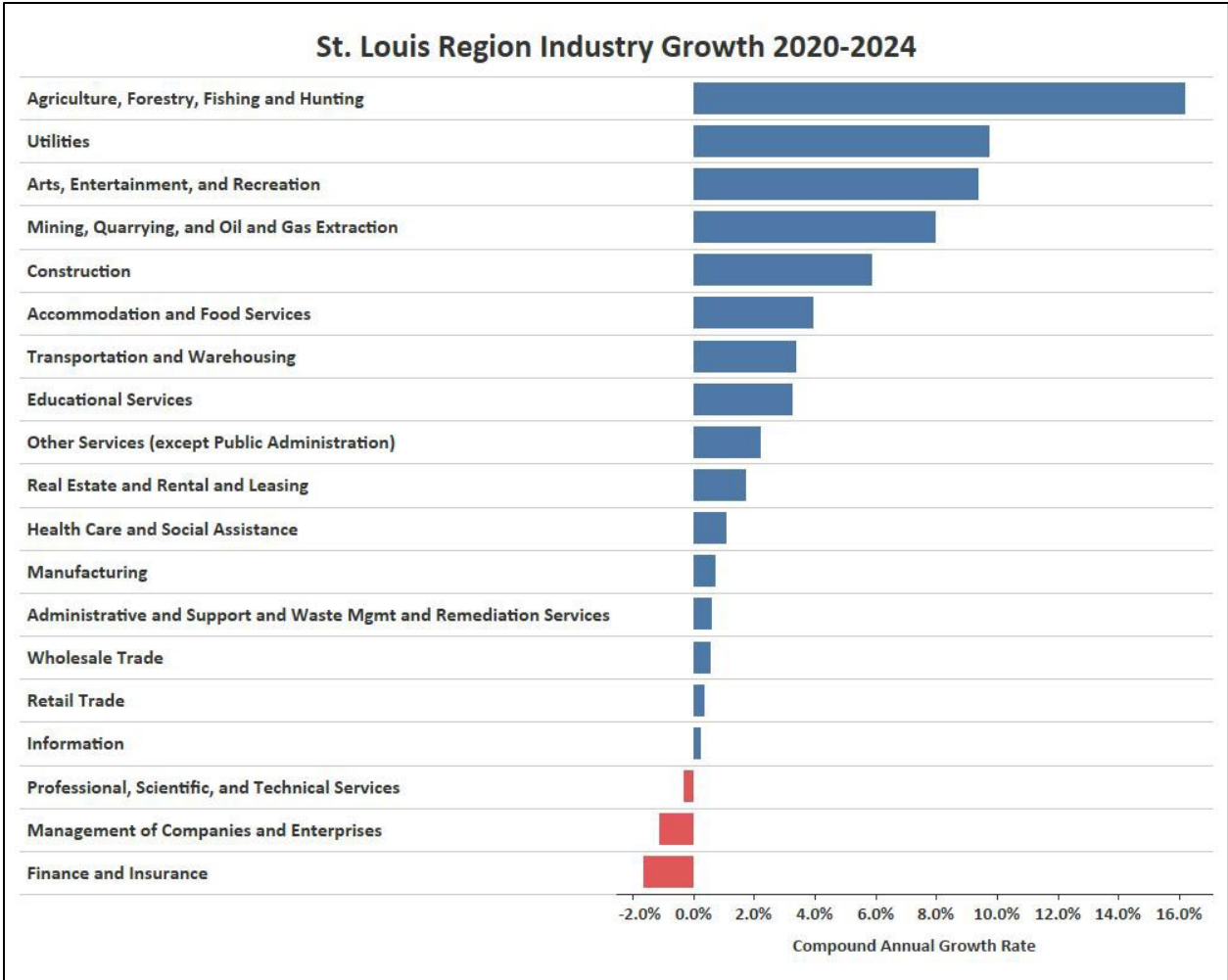
Current Industry Demand

The St. Louis Region averaged over one million jobs in 2024 and employment in the region was steady from 2023. Missouri employment increased by 0.8 percent in 2024. From 2020 to 2024, the St. Louis Region averaged 1.1 percent compound annual growth for an overall increase of 5.6 percent. During that same period (2020-2024) Missouri’s compound annual employment gain was 1.6 percent for an overall gain of 8.3 percent. Several industry groups had a positive growth rate over the same time period. Those industries included *Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting* (559 employment increase at 16.2% compound annual growth rate); *Utilities* (1,404 at 9.7%); and *Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation* (7,293 at 9.4%) among others.

St. Louis Region Industry Employment 2020-2024



Source: Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW), annual averages, private ownership



Source: Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW), annual averages, private ownership

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.

In 2024, the St. Louis Region had six industries with LQs of 1.5 or higher, including *Management of Companies and Enterprises* (2.0); *Chemical Manufacturing* (1.9); *Hospitals* (1.7); *Machinery Manufacturing* (1.5); *Beverage and Tobacco Product Manufacturing* (1.5); and *Printing and Related Support Activities* (1.5).

2024 St. Louis Region Location Quotients

Industry	Employment	Location Quotient
Management of Companies and Enterprises	35,864	2.0
Chemical Manufacturing	11,953	1.9
Hospitals	62,975	1.7
Machinery Manufacturing	11,722	1.5
Beverage and Tobacco Product Manufacturing	3,397	1.5
Printing and Related Support Activities	3,589	1.5
Social Assistance	44,979	1.4
Educational Services	29,715	1.3
Insurance Carriers and Related Activities	23,880	1.3
Museums, Historical Sites, and Similar Institutions	1,632	1.3
Merchant Wholesalers, Durable Goods	31,171	1.3
Securities, Commodity Contracts, and Other Financial Investments and Related Activities	9,546	1.3
Telecommunications	5,190	1.2
Computing Infrastructure Providers, Data Processing, Web Hosting, and Related Services	4,052	1.2
Performing Arts, Spectator Sports, and Related Industries	4,733	1.2

Source: Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW), 2024 Annual Averages

Current Occupational Demand

Current occupational demand can be attained through the job ads placed by employers. From October 2024 to September 2025, nearly 294,800 on-line job ads were placed for jobs located in the St. Louis Region according to Lightcast™.

Job ads were placed for positions at every skill and education level. Missouri uses a system of **Now**, **Next**, and **Later** to categorize jobs according to the typical education and experience required for success on the job. **Now** jobs typically require a high school education or less and short-term training. **Next** jobs typically require moderate to long-term training or experience or education beyond high school. **Later** jobs typically require a bachelor's degree or higher education.

Now occupations with the highest number of job postings included *Retail Salespersons; Customer Service Representatives; Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners; Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand; and Home Health and Personal Care Aides.*

Occupations with the most job postings in the **Next** category were *First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers; Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers; Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Except Technical and Scientific Products; Maintenance and Repair Workers, General; and Health Technologists and Technicians, All Other.*

Later occupations with the highest number of job postings were *Registered Nurses; Software Developers; Medical and Health Services Managers; Computer Occupations, All Other; and General and Operations Managers.*

Many of the occupations with the most job postings also have high numbers of projected openings through 2032. The occupations with high numbers of job postings and high numbers of projected annual openings are identified with the star.

Top Job Ads - St. Louis Region		
SOC Code	Occupation Title	Online Job Postings
NOW - Typically requires high school education or less and short-term training		
41-2031	Retail Salespersons	8,010 ★
43-4051	Customer Service Representatives	4,900 ★
37-2011	Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	3,130 ★
53-7062	Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	3,110 ★
31-1120	Home Health and Personal Care Aides	2,730 ★
37-2012	Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	2,400 ★
43-6014	Secretaries and Administrative Assistants, Except Legal, Medical, and Executive	2,360 ★
35-3023	Fast Food and Counter Workers	2,300 ★
35-3031	Waiters and Waitresses	2,120 ★
41-2011	Cashiers	2,080 ★
NEXT - Typically requires moderate/long-term training or experience or education beyond high school		
41-1011	First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers	5,440 ★
53-3032	Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	5,420 ★
41-4012	Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Except Technical and Scientific Products	3,950 ★
49-9071	Maintenance and Repair Workers, General	3,790 ★
29-2099	Health Technologists and Technicians, All Other	3,330
29-2061	Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	3,140
11-9051	Food Service Managers	2,890
43-1011	First-Line Supervisors of Office and Administrative Support Workers	2,740 ★
41-3091	Sales Representatives of Services, Except Advertising, Insurance, Financial Services, and Travel	2,490 ★
51-9199	Production Workers, All Other	2,400 ★
LATER - Typically requires a bachelor's degree or higher		
29-1141	Registered Nurses	23,480 ★
15-1252	Software Developers	3,970 ★
11-9111	Medical and Health Services Managers	3,450 ★
15-1299	Computer Occupations, All Other	3,230
11-1021	General and Operations Managers	2,820 ★
13-1082	Project Management Specialists	2,680 ★
11-3031	Financial Managers	2,410 ★
11-2022	Sales Managers	2,270
29-1123	Physical Therapists	2,260
13-2011	Accountants and Auditors	2,170 ★

Source: Lightcast, job ads between Oct. 1, 2024 - Sept. 30, 2025

★ = Top Job Openings in Now, Next and Later, 2022-2032 Occupational Projections for St. Louis Region, MERIC

b. Emerging Demand Industry Sectors and Occupation

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

Industry Projections

The long-term industry projections help determine the industries that are expected to experience job growth over time. The latest round of projections is through the ten-year period ending in 2032.

The top five industries by numeric employment change were *Hospitals; Ambulatory Health Care Services; Amusement, Gambling, and Recreation Industries; Warehousing and Storage; and Food Services and Drinking Places.*

St. Louis Region Industry Projections 2022-2032					
NAICS	Industry	Employment		2022-2032 Change	
		2022	2032	Numeric	Percent
10	Total All Industries	1,176,262	1,237,996	61,734	5.2%
622	Hospitals	68,984	89,414	20,430	29.6%
621	Ambulatory Health Care Services	48,044	54,218	6,174	12.9%
713	Amusement, Gambling, and Recreation Industries	11,411	15,827	4,416	38.7%
493	Warehousing and Storage	9,387	12,960	3,573	38.1%
722	Food Services and Drinking Places	82,300	85,655	3,355	4.1%
524	Insurance Carriers and Related Activities	36,412	39,765	3,353	9.2%
531	Real Estate	13,110	16,284	3,174	24.2%
238	Specialty Trade Contractors	36,979	39,864	2,885	7.8%
561	Administrative and Support Services	60,657	63,531	2,874	4.7%
455	General Merchandise Retailers	20,297	22,980	2,683	13.2%
721	Accommodation, including Hotels and Motels	10,151	12,077	1,926	19.0%
325	Chemical Manufacturing	11,886	12,940	1,054	8.9%
522	Credit Intermediation and Related Activities	20,175	21,063	888	4.4%
551	Management of Companies and Enterprises	36,386	37,231	845	2.3%
334	Computer and Electronic Product Manufacturing	3,342	4,110	768	23.0%

Source: MERIC 2022-2032 Long Term Projections

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 projected growth openings. The following chart identifies occupations that have the highest number of annual growth openings in the region. Total openings are the sum of transfers, exits, and growth, and indicates the projected number of vacancies that businesses will need to fill each year.

Missouri uses a system of **Now**, **Next**, and **Later** to categorize occupations according to these levels. **Now** jobs typically require a high school education or less and short-term training. **Next** occupations typically require moderate to long-term training or experience or education beyond high school. **Later** occupations typically require a bachelor’s degree or higher.

Growth openings are projected at all education and training levels. Occupations in the table below are listed by the highest number of growth openings. **Now** occupations with the highest numbers of projected growth openings were *Home Health and Personal Care Aides; Stockers and Order Fillers; and Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand*. **Next** occupations with the highest numbers of projected growth openings were *Cooks, Restaurant; Nursing Assistants; and Maintenance and Repair Workers, General*. **Later** occupations with the most projected growth openings were *Registered Nurses; Software Developers; and Medical and Health Services Managers*.

St. Louis Region Highest Growth Openings 2022-2032						
Occupation	Average Wage	Percent Growth	Annual Openings			Total
			Exits	Transfers	Growth	
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	\$32,446	15.7%	3,323	2,771	603	6,697
Stockers and Order Fillers	\$41,069	14.1%	1,475	2,321	312	4,108
Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	\$41,986	7.0%	820	1,395	116	2,331
Fast Food and Counter Workers	\$31,758	7.5%	1,380	1,474	90	2,944
Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	\$36,076	5.0%	1,273	1,271	89	2,633
Construction Laborers	\$63,627	9.2%	292	427	74	793
Exercise Trainers and Group Fitness Instructors	\$38,765	12.4%	359	724	69	1,152
Landscaping and Groundskeeping Workers	\$40,834	6.9%	456	712	61	1,229
Light Truck Drivers	\$49,551	9.0%	278	359	53	690
Industrial Truck and Tractor Operators	\$49,850	11.1%	159	318	52	529
NEXT - Typically requires non-degree certificate, associate degree, apprenticeship, some experience, or moderate- to long-term training						
Cooks, Restaurant	\$38,071	25.9%	916	1,095	308	2,319
Nursing Assistants	\$38,960	14.7%	724	895	157	1,776
Maintenance and Repair Workers, General	\$55,414	9.9%	514	532	110	1,156
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	\$56,016	6.1%	654	847	85	1,586
Carpenters	\$69,187	8.4%	338	457	78	873
First-Line Supervisors of Food Preparation and Serving Workers	\$44,748	8.7%	432	822	72	1,326
Pharmacy Technicians	\$43,129	17.7%	170	218	71	459
Medical Assistants	\$42,265	14.6%	232	398	68	698
Electricians	\$74,426	12.5%	189	307	67	563
Medical Secretaries and Administrative Assistants	\$44,815	10.5%	305	291	57	653
LATER - Typically requires a bachelor's degree or higher						
Registered Nurses	\$85,100	23.3%	1,246	772	784	2,802
Software Developers	\$119,405	19.5%	204	426	212	842
Medical and Health Services Managers	\$121,792	39.4%	136	201	160	497
Nurse Practitioners	\$129,021	47.4%	91	92	158	341
General and Operations Managers	\$112,165	4.3%	945	2,039	158	3,142
Personal Financial Advisors	\$124,732	33.5%	122	156	130	408
Financial Managers	\$163,307	17.6%	172	273	108	553
Market Research Analysts and Marketing Specialists	\$79,057	11.1%	226	420	76	722
Securities, Commodities, and Financial Services Sales Agents	\$88,938	18.0%	124	203	74	401
Clinical Laboratory Technologists and Technicians	\$61,065	15.2%	177	155	74	406

Source: MERIC 2022-2032 Long-Term Occupational Projections

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

Job ads placed by employers offer another source of information on the knowledge, skills, and certifications requested by Missouri's employers. Lightcast™ is a data tool that spiders to over several thousand different web sites with job ads. The information found in the ads are placed in a database that can be queried to gain insight on employer needs.

The following table lists the specialized skills, certifications, and software and programming abilities requested most frequently by employers in job ads.

Generally, in the software and programming category, Microsoft Office and its products such as Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and Access rank at the top of the list across all industries. Therefore, in the following list, these Microsoft products have not been included as those tend to crowd the list by appearing at the top across all the industries. Industry-specific programs identified in the job ads are listed in the table.

Employer Skill Needs - St. Louis Region			
Industry	Specialized Skills	Qualifications	Software and Programming
Health Care & Social Assistance	Nursing	Registered Nurse (RN)	Epic EMR
	Nursing Care	Basic Life Support (BLS) Certification	R (Programming Language)
	Direct Patient Care	Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN)	Spreadsheets
	Home Health Care	Valid Driver's License	Standard Template Library (STL)
	Data Entry	Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) Certification	Dentrix
Accommodation & Food Service	Customer Service	Valid Driver's License	Standard Template Library (STL)
	Communication	ServSafe Certification	R (Programming Language)
	Management	Food Handler's Card	Operating Systems
	Cleanliness	Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) Certification	Spreadsheets
	Operations	Functional Skills Qualification	Property Management Systems
Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services	Project Management	Valid Driver's License	Amazon Web Services
	Auditing	Top Secret-Sensitive Compartmented Information (TS/SCI Clearance)	Python (Programming Language)
	Marketing	Professional Engineer (PE) License	SQL (Programming Language)
	Computer Science	Security Clearance	Application Programming Interface (API)
	Workflow Management	Project Management Professional Certification	SAP Applications
Construction	Construction	Valid Driver's License	Inventory Management System
	Project Management	Commercial Driver's License	Procore
	Subcontracting	Professional Engineer (PE) License	Project Management Software
	Construction Management	30-Hour OSHA General Industry Card	AutoCAD
	Roofing	10-Hour OSHA General Industry Card	Autodesk Revit
Finance & Insurance	Financial Services	FINRA Series 7 (General Securities Representative)	SQL (Programming Language)
	Finance	Valid Driver's License	Python (Programming Language)
	Auditing	Master of Business Administration (MBA)	Salesforce
	Loans	Certified Public Accountant	Amazon Web Services
	Project Management	Insurance License	Tableau (Business Intelligence Software)
Wholesale Trade	Warehousing	Valid Driver's License	Web Browsers
	Merchandising	Commercial Driver's License (CDL)	SAP Applications
	Marketing	ServSafe Certification	Salesforce
	Food Services	Forklift Certification	SQL (Programming Language)
	Inventory Management	Master of Business Administration (MBA)	Dashboard
Transportation & Warehousing	Truck Driving	Commercial Driver's License (CDL)	Standard Template Library (STL)
	Warehousing	Valid Driver's License	Warehouse Management Systems
	Forklift Truck	Tanker Endorsement	SAP Applications
	No-Touch Freight	Tanker And Hazmat Combo X Endorsement	Spreadsheets
	Auditing	Hazmat Endorsement	Inventory Management System
Information	Marketing	Valid Driver's License	Salesforce
	Telecommunications	Top Secret-Sensitive Compartmented Information (TS/SCI Clearance)	Operating Systems
	Computer Science	Certified Information Systems Security Professional	Python (Programming Language)
	Sales Prospecting	Certified Public Accountant	Amazon Web Services
	Selling Techniques	Security Clearance	SQL (Programming Language)

Source: Lightcast, online job ads between Oct. 1, 2024 - Sept. 30, 2025

8. Workforce Analysis

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

a. Employment and Unemployment

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

Population Data

The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that Missouri's population grew to over 6.17 million in 2023, up by 0.2 percent from the previous year. In the St. Louis Region, from 2022 to 2023, three counties increased in population. The highest population increases were in the counties of Jefferson and St. Charles, adding over 1,200 and 3,560 residents respectively. St. Charles had the largest population growth over the five-year span from 2020 to 2024, with an increase of more than 15,500 residents.

St. Louis Region Population Change by County				
NAME	1 Year Change 2022-2023		5 Year Change 2019-2023	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Missouri	13,759	0.2%	63,271	1.0%
Franklin	458	0.4%	2,125	2.1%
Jefferson	1,243	0.5%	4,276	1.9%
St. Charles	3,568	0.9%	15,540	3.9%
St. Louis County	(3,085)	-0.3%	(301)	0.0%
St. Louis City	(4,909)	-1.6%	(15,065)	-4.9%

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

Demographics

In 2023, overall, for Missouri, 25.1 percent of the population was under the age of 20 years. In 2023, in the St. Louis Region, St. Charles County (25.1%) had the similar percentage of its population under the age of 20 years. The percentage of the population 55 and up was above the state average of 30.8 percent in three of the five counties. The county with the highest percentage of residents aged 55 and up was Franklin County with 34.0 percent of residents in this age group.

The Missouri statewide average is 49.3 percent male and 50.7 percent female. Jefferson County had the highest percent of male population (50.0%) in the region while St. Louis City had the highest percent of female population (52.2%).

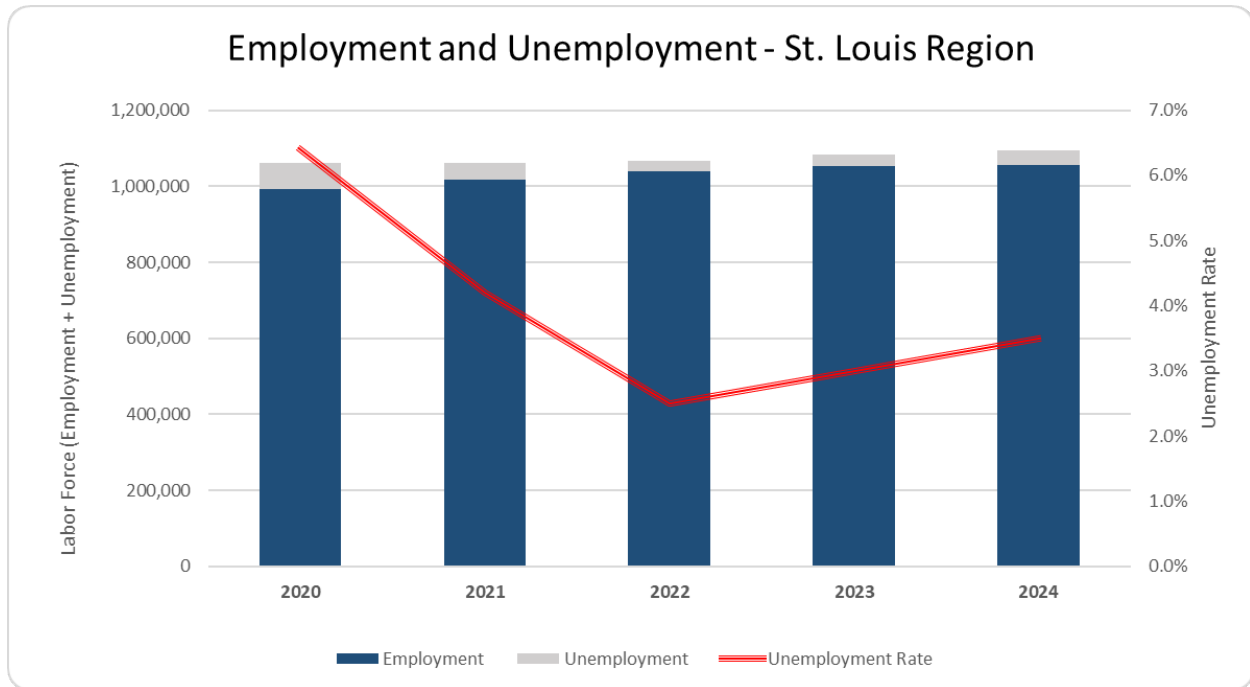
All counties in the St. Louis Region had either lower or similar percentage of Hispanic or Latino population, as compared to the Missouri average of 5.1 percent. St. Louis City had the highest Hispanic or Latino population percentage, at 5.1 percent. Two counties in the region had a higher percentage of the population who is Black or African American than the state average.

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%
Franklin	105,316	24.6%	5.4%	12.0%	24.1%	34.0%	49.9%	50.1%	89.8%	0.8%	0.5%	0.1%	0.0%	0.7%	92.0%	8.0%	2.2%
Jefferson	228,227	24.8%	5.5%	12.2%	26.6%	30.9%	50.0%	50.0%	90.0%	1.1%	1.0%	0.1%	0.0%	0.8%	93.1%	6.9%	2.5%
St. Charles	409,830	25.1%	5.8%	12.4%	26.7%	30.0%	49.4%	50.6%	85.0%	5.1%	2.9%	0.1%	0.0%	1.2%	94.3%	5.7%	4.0%
St. Louis County	996,618	24.6%	5.9%	12.7%	24.5%	32.3%	47.8%	52.2%	63.0%	24.2%	4.7%	0.1%	0.0%	1.6%	93.6%	6.4%	3.7%
St. Louis City	293,109	20.9%	6.4%	19.8%	25.3%	27.5%	48.5%	51.5%	45.7%	43.1%	3.4%	0.2%	0.0%	1.6%	94.1%	5.9%	5.1%

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

Employment and Unemployment

The number of St. Louis Region residents in the labor force has remained around one million from 2020 to 2024. The unemployment rate for the region was 6.4 percent in 2020. The unemployment rate for the region in 2023 and 2024 was 3.0 percent and 3.5 percent respectively.



Source: Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS)

Labor Force Participation

The labor force is the sum of employed and unemployed persons. The labor force participation rate is the labor force as a percent of the civilian population 16 years and older. Using American Community Survey, 5-year data through 2023, Missouri's labor force participation rate was 62.7 percent. In comparison, the rate for the St. Louis Region was higher, at 66.1 percent. The county with the highest labor force participation rate in the region was St. Charles County (69.3%) and the lowest was Franklin County (62.2%).

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%
St. Louis Region	1,641,447	1,085,018	66.1%
Franklin	84,412	52,503	62.2%
Jefferson	182,444	120,779	66.2%
St. Charles	327,666	227,050	69.3%
St. Louis County	802,671	522,620	65.1%
St. Louis City	244,254	162,066	66.4%

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 regions in the state 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 2032 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.

The **Now** occupations with the most annual job openings were *Home Health and Personal Care Aides* (6,697); *Stockers and Order Fillers* (4,108); *Cashiers* (3,865); *Retail Salesperson* (3,298); and *Waiters and Waitresses* (3,136). A main reason for the high number of openings in these occupations was transfers and exits.

Occupations with the highest number of annual openings in the **Next** category were *Cooks, Restaurant* (2,319); *Nursing Assistants* (1,776); *Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers* (1,586); *First-Line Supervisors of Food Preparation and Serving Workers* (1,326); and *Maintenance and Repair Workers, General* (1,156).

Later occupations with the highest number of annual openings were *General and Operations Managers* (3,142); *Registered Nurses* (2,802); *Accountants and Auditors* (993); *Software Developers* (842); and *Project Management Specialists* (728).

Many high demand occupations correspond directly with certain industry sectors, such as *Health Care*, *Educational Services*, and *Retail*. Other high demand occupations, such as *Cashiers* and *General and Operations Managers*, are found in many different industry sectors.

St. Louis Region Occupational Projections 2022-2032							
Occupation	2022	2032	Annual Openings			Total	Median Wage
	Employment	Employment	Growth	Exits	Transfers		
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 🔥	38,516	44,550	603	3,323	2,771	6,697	\$24,960
Stockers and Order Fillers	22,142	25,266	312	1,475	2,321	4,108	\$37,044
Cashiers	20,913	20,036	-88	1,969	1,984	3,865	\$29,827
Retail Salespersons 🔥	23,018	22,821	-20	1,504	1,814	3,298	\$31,854
Waiters and Waitresses 🔥	14,855	15,167	31	1,291	1,814	3,136	\$35,447
NEXT - Typically requires non-degree certificate, associate degree, apprenticeship, some experience, or moderate- to long-term training							
Cooks, Restaurant	11,891	14,974	308	916	1,095	2,319	\$35,317
Nursing Assistants	10,652	12,219	157	724	895	1,776	\$37,743
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers 🔥	14,026	14,877	85	654	847	1,586	\$52,704
First-Line Supervisors of Food Preparation and Serving Workers	8,226	8,944	72	432	822	1,326	\$36,901
Maintenance and Repair Workers, General 🔥	11,111	12,206	110	514	532	1,156	\$48,357
LATER - Typically requires a bachelor's degree or higher							
General and Operations Managers 🔥	37,165	38,746	158	945	2,039	3,142	\$82,950
Registered Nurses 🔥	33,599	41,435	784	1,246	772	2,802	\$81,238
Accountants and Auditors 🔥	12,245	12,680	44	385	564	993	\$77,654
Software Developers 🔥	10,842	12,957	212	204	426	842	\$109,318
Project Management Specialists 🔥	9,547	10,069	52	224	452	728	\$67,061

🔥 Flame icon indicates occupations with high numbers of job ads
 Sources: MERIC Long-Term Occupational Projections 2022-2032 and Lightcast, online job ads

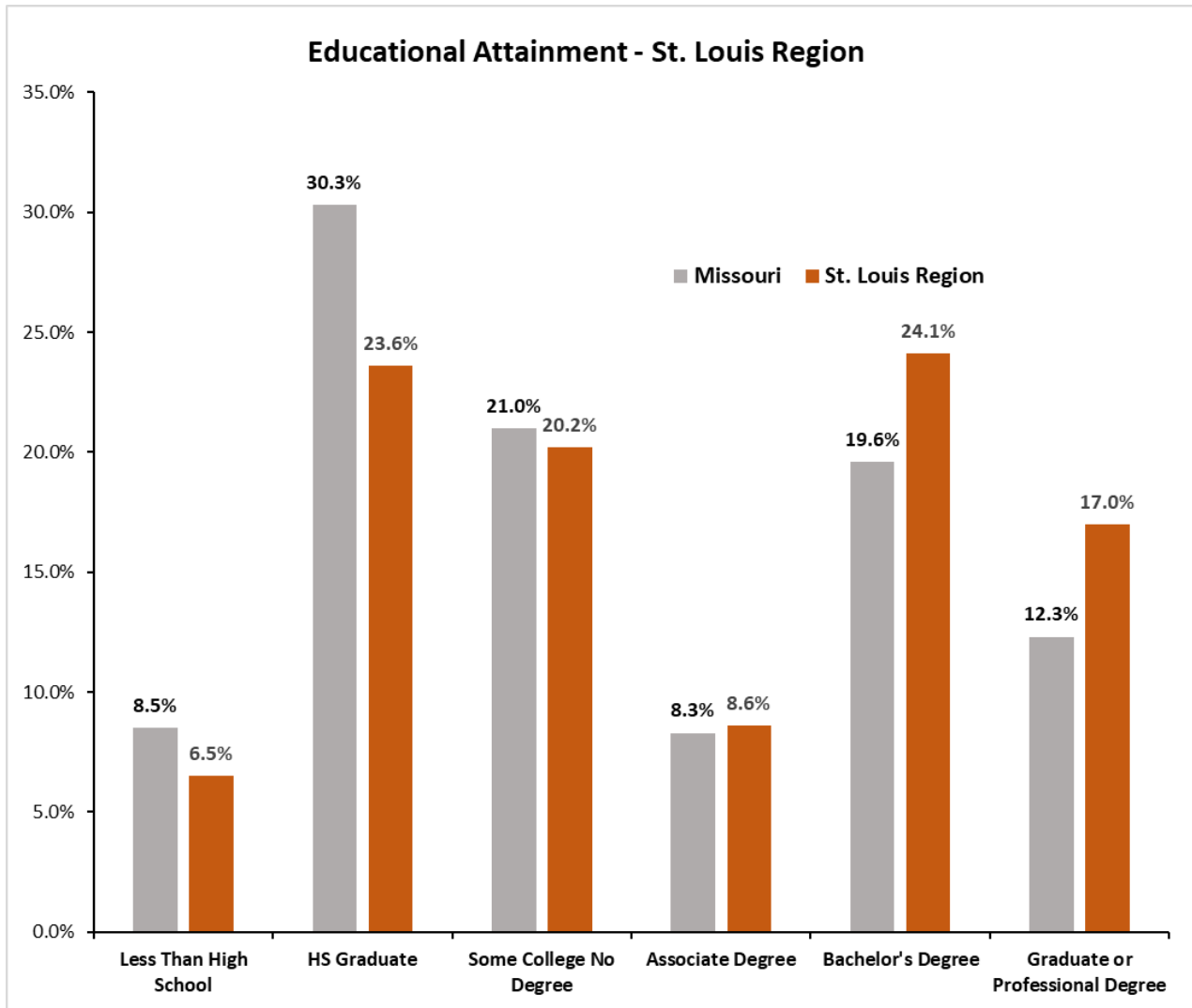
c. Education and Skill Levels of the Workforce

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

Educational Attainment

Educational attainment is a measure of the highest level of education obtained by individuals aged 25 and up, or the population generally in the workforce. Over ninety percent of Missouri's population age 25 and over was a high school graduate or higher in 2023. Over 19 percent held a bachelor's degree and over 12 percent held a graduate or professional degree.

The St. Louis Region had a higher percentage than the state average of people whose highest educational attainment was associate degree or higher. Missouri had a higher percentage of people whose highest educational attainment was some college no degree, or high school or less.



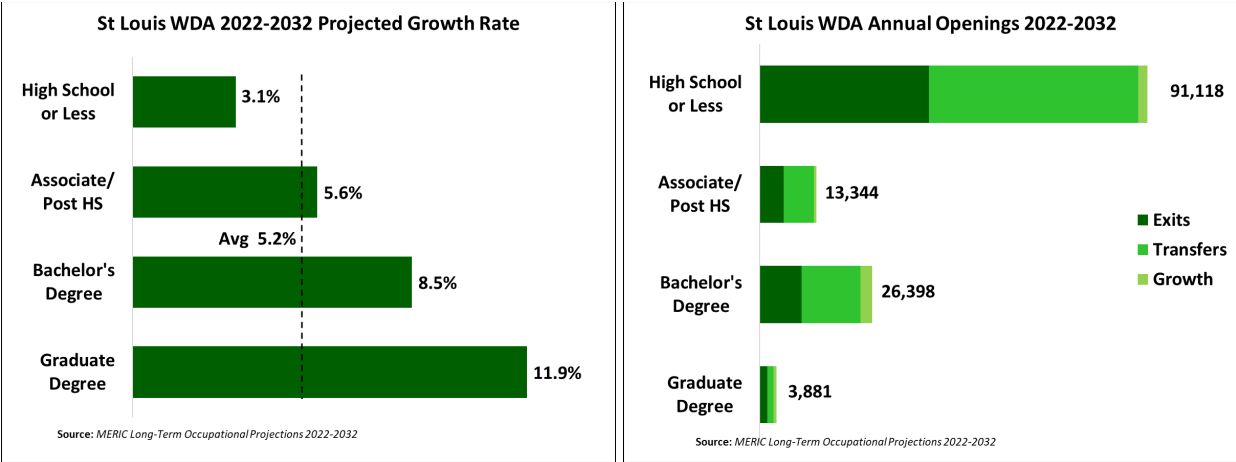
Source: American Community Survey-5 Year data (2019-2023)

Occupational Projections by Education

Long-term projections are used to identify the fastest growing occupations, as well as occupations with a high number of openings through 2032.

The growth rate of an occupation measures the percentage of job growth by an occupation between the base year and projected year. Occupations requiring a graduate degree are projected to have the fastest growth rate (11.9%), followed by occupations requiring a bachelor's degree (8.5%).

Long-term projections also present data on expected job openings for each occupation through 2032. 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. Skill Gaps

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

Skills Demand

Employers request a variety of skills from job applicants. Some skills are termed as durable, or soft skills, such as *communication, creativity, critical thinking, emotional intelligence, or customer service*; while others are more technical or hard skills, such as *sales, project management, computer science, or programming languages*.

Middle-Skills Overview

Middle-skill occupations are an essential part of Missouri's workforce, accounting for more than one-third of all jobs. These critical occupations are broadly defined as occupations that require some training after high school but less than a bachelor's degree. Low-skilled jobs are those that require, at most, a high school education, while high-skill jobs require at least a bachelor's degree.

There is always a need for a properly skilled workforce, and a lack of skilled workers impacts the ability of businesses and industries to compete globally. Lacking relevant skills hinders the ability to be more productive, thus deterring higher earning potential and improved living standards. Middle-skill workers are pivotal to maintaining and improving society and the U.S. economy. These workers are vital in health care, public services, construction, manufacturing, and information technology infrastructure development.¹

Meeting the continued demand for middle-skill occupations is an important factor in maintaining a strong economy in the state. Middle-skill jobs offer good pay and career opportunities with industry-recognized training and credentials. Such training programs can be as short as a few months. Middle-skill jobs offer an important opportunity for better pay and advancement without needing a bachelor's degree. This report highlights Missouri's middle-skill jobs and provides details on several occupational groups where middle-skilled workers are in high demand.

In 2023, middle-skill occupations had an average annual wage of \$53,603. This was lower than the average annual wage of \$57,580 for all occupations in the state, but higher than the average annual wage of \$36,925 for low-skill occupations.

Over 1.1 million jobs in Missouri's labor market were in middle-skill occupations. In 2022, 35.6 percent of the workforce was employed in middle-skill occupations, compared to 35.5 percent employed in low-skill occupations and 28.9 percent employed in high-skill occupations.

The middle-skill occupation with the highest individual employment was *Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers* (51,366), followed by *Miscellaneous Assemblers and Fabricators* (32,935) and *Maintenance and Repair Workers, General* (32,437). These three occupations combined employed over 116,000 workers in Missouri in 2022.

Middle-skill occupations are projected to produce over 117,000 annual job openings from 2022 to 2032, or 33 percent of all job openings during that period. High-skill occupations are projected to produce 20.6 percent of all job openings and low-skill occupations are projected to produce 46.4 percent of all job openings.

Total job openings are a combination of growth, exit, and transfer openings:

- Growth openings are the result of an occupation growing between the base year and the projected year.
- Exit openings occur when a worker leaves the workforce entirely, such as retirement.
- Transfer openings occur when a worker leaves their occupation for a different one.

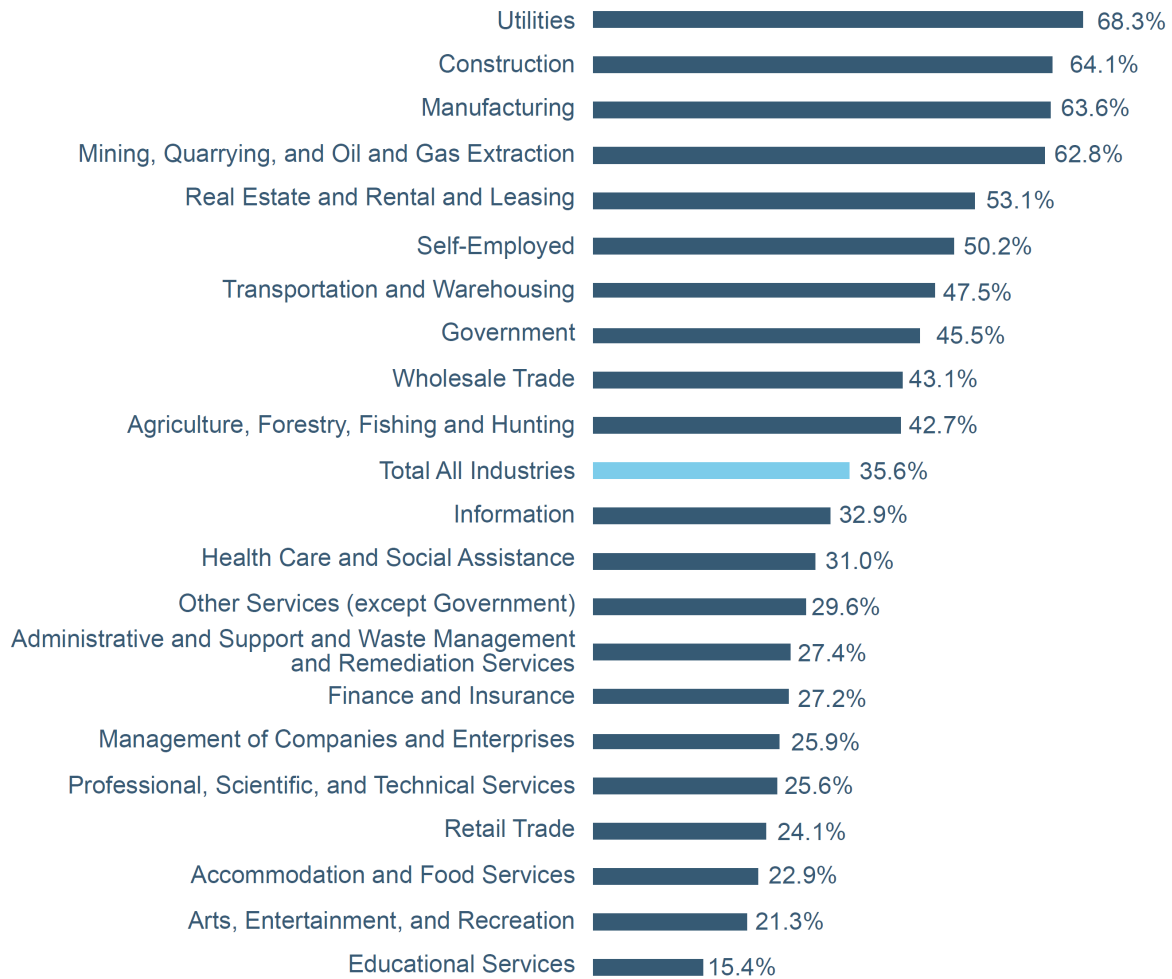
Four occupation groups have particularly high concentrations of middle-skill employment:

- *Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Occupations*
- *Production Occupations*
- *Construction and Extraction Occupations*
- *Protective Service Occupations*



Overall, middle-skill occupations made up 35.6 percent of total employment in Missouri. Some industries, however, had a much higher percentage of middle-skill employment. The *Utilities* industry had the highest percentage of middle-skill employment, followed by the *Construction* industry.

Middle-Skill Employment Percent of Industry 2022



TOTAL MIDDLE-SKILL EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY



179,598

MANUFACTURING



141,758

HEALTH CARE AND
SOCIAL ASSISTANCE



91,226

GOVERNMENT



88,972

CONSTRUCTION

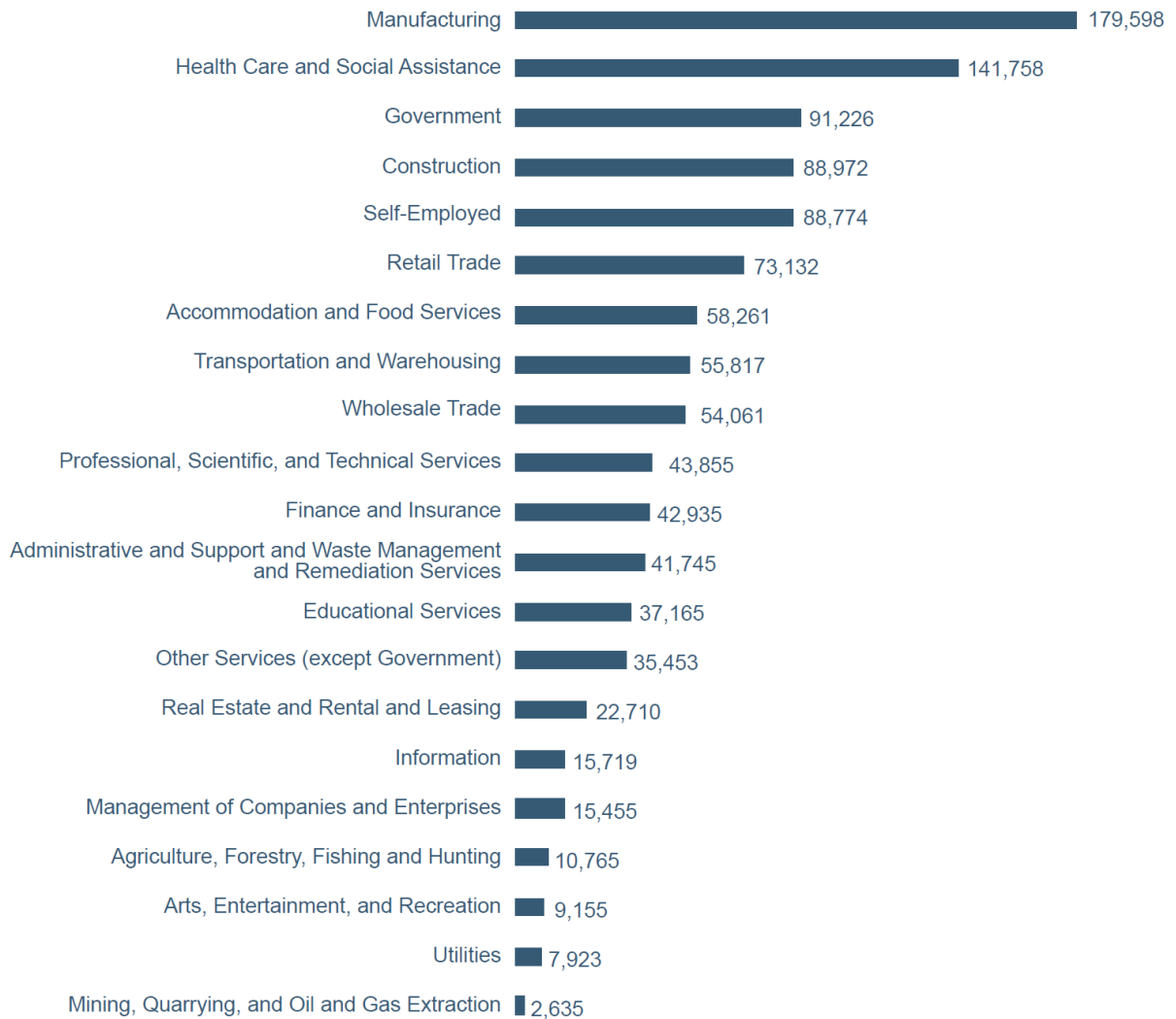


88,774

SELF-EMPLOYED

The *Manufacturing* industry had the highest total number of middle-skill employees, followed by the *Health Care and Social Assistance* sector. Government had the third highest employment. The *Utilities* industry had the highest percentage of middle-skill employment, but the lowest middle-skill employment in absolute numbers after the *Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction* industry.

Top Middle-Skill Employment by Industry 2022



The middle-skill occupations with the most annual job openings during the projection period are *Cooks, Restaurant; Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers; and Nursing Assistants*. These three occupations combined are projected to have over 16,000 job openings per year through 2032. *Cooks, Restaurant* are also projected to have high growth between 2022 and 2032.

Top Middle-Skill Occupations by Annual Openings 2022-2032						
2023 Average Wage	Occupations	2022 Estimated Employment	2032 Projected Employment	Net Change	Annual Total Openings	2023 Average Wage
\$34,000	Cooks, Restaurant		31,981	39,312	7,331	6,070
5,693	\$53,440 Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers			51,366	53,729	2,363
4,660	\$36,350 Nursing Assistants			30,420	32,489	2,069
28	3,518 \$39,460 First-Line Supervisors of Food Preparation and Serving Workers			22,151	23,779	1,628
75	3,254 \$48,080 Maintenance and Repair Workers, General			32,437	34,812	2,375
	-2,894 3,037 \$44,240 Miscellaneous Assemblers and Fabricators				32,935	30,041
	-813 2,519 \$46,990 Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks				22,861	22,048
19,674	379 2,301 \$34,550 Teaching Assistants, Except Postsecondary				19,295	19,674
22,797	-687 2,139 \$65,150 First-Line Supervisors of Office and Administrative Support Workers				23,484	22,797
	21,310 -940 2,040 \$49,020 First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers					22,250

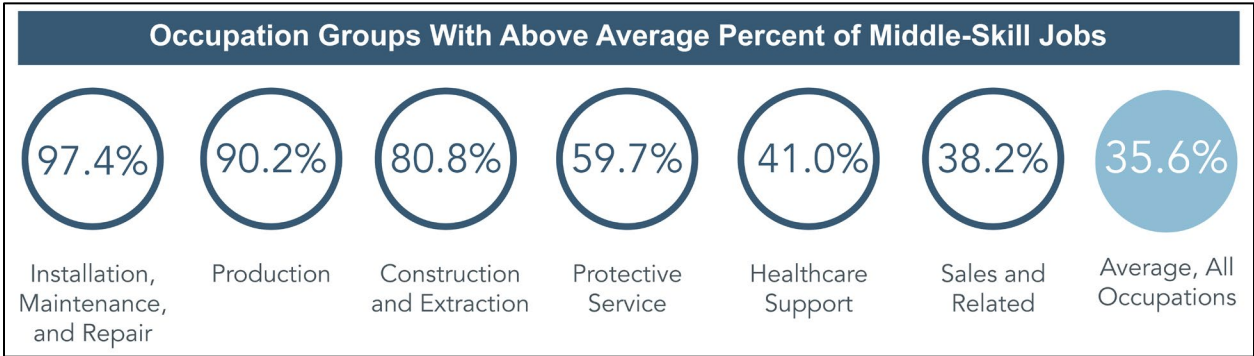
The middle-skill occupations that are projected to experience the fastest rates of growth are *Physical Therapist Assistants*, *Occupational Therapy Assistants*, and *Veterinary Technologists and Technicians*. Each of these three occupations have projected growth rates of over 25 percent, compared to a 4.3 percent growth for all occupations in Missouri. *Cooks, Restaurant* has the highest employment of the top 10 fastest growing occupations.

Middle-Skill Fastest Growing Occupations 2022-2032					
Occupations	2022 Estimated Employment	2032 Projected Employment	Net Change	Percent Change	2023 Average Wage
Physical Therapist Assistants	2,517	3,243	726	28.8%	\$62,750
Occupational Therapy Assistants	1,159	1,492	333	28.7%	\$61,290
Veterinary Technologists and Technicians	2,078	2,638	560	26.9%	\$38,600
Cooks, Restaurant	31,981	39,312	7,331	22.9%	\$34,000
Respiratory Therapists	3,110	3,738	628	20.2%	\$70,450
Computer Numerically Controlled Tool Programmers	456	548	92	20.2%	\$63,910
Health Information Technologists and Medical Registrars	1,462	1,749	287	19.6%	\$50,350
Hearing Aid Specialists	311	371	60	19.3%	\$56,830
Animal Trainers	863	1,017	154	17.8%	\$48,550
Diagnostic Medical Sonographers	1,301	1,532	231	17.8%	\$85,910

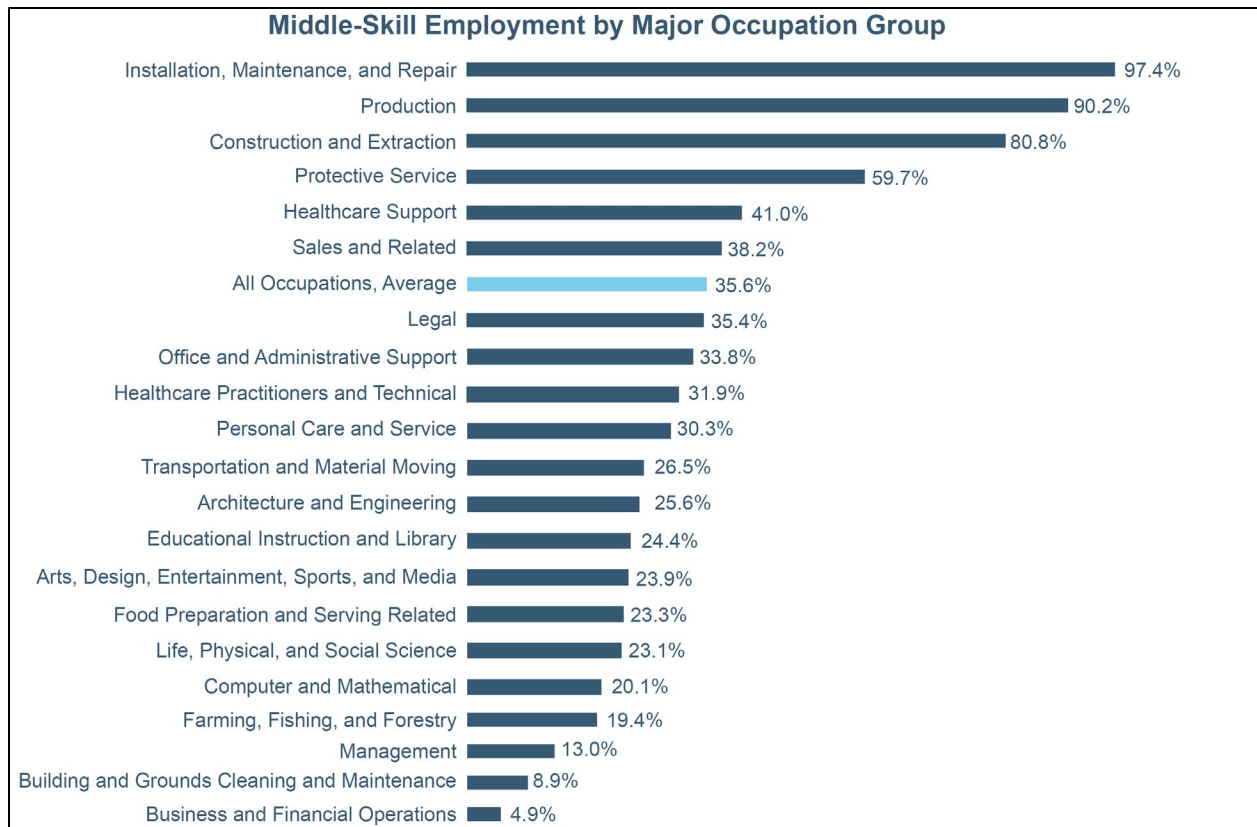
While the average annual wage for all middle-skill occupations was \$53,603 in 2023, some middle-skill occupations earn considerably more. The middle-skill occupation with the highest average annual wage is *Commercial Pilots*, followed by *Air Traffic Controllers*. Although these occupations have higher than average wages, they do not make up a large portion of Missouri's total and projected employment.

Top Middle-Skill Occupations by Average Wage					
Occupations	2022 Estimated Employment	2032 Projected Employment	Net Change	Annual Total Openings	2023 Average Wage
Commercial Pilots	1,122	1,187	65	135	\$128,830
Air Traffic Controllers	248	271	23	24	\$112,360
Power Distributors and Dispatchers	97	98	1	8	\$108,180
Transportation, Storage, and Distribution Managers	2,444	2,636	192	218	\$98,630
Electrical and Electronics Repairers, Powerhouse, Substation, and Relay	442	435	-7	36	\$94,650
First-Line Supervisors of Non-Retail Sales Workers	5,609	5,542	-67	442	\$92,940
Petroleum Pump System Operators, Refinery Operators, and Gaugers	930	935	5	85	\$92,680
Fire Inspectors and Investigators	196	207	11	18	\$90,970
Nuclear Technicians	157	160	3	16	\$89,090
Postmasters and Mail Superintendents	289	272	-17	19	\$88,900

All but one of the 22 major occupation groups have middle-skill jobs. The *Installation, Maintenance and Repair* occupation group has the highest percentage of middle-skill employment, followed by *Production*.



Six major occupation groups have higher middle-skill employment percentages than the state average of 35.6 percent for all occupations. Some occupation groups with above average middle-skill employment percentages, such as *Healthcare Support* and *Production*, are heavily concentrated in certain industries, such as the *Health Care and Social Assistance* industry and *Manufacturing* industry, respectively. Two of the exceptions include *Installation, Maintenance, and Repair* and *Office and Administrative Support* occupations, which are more evenly distributed among a variety of industries.



St. Louis Region Middle Skills Occupations

In the St. Louis Region, middle skill jobs made up nearly 32 percent of employment in 2022. The occupational groups with the largest amount of middle skill employment were *Production Occupations*; *Office and Administrative Support Occupations*; and *Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Occupations*.

Top Outlook Middle Skill (NEXT) Occupations - St. Louis Region

NEXT jobs typically require moderate/long-term training or experience or education beyond high school

Grade	Occupation Title	Annual Openings	Average Annual Wage 2024
A	Cooks, Restaurant	2,319	\$38,071
A	Nursing Assistants	1,776	\$38,960
B+	Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	1,586	\$56,016
B+	First-Line Supervisors of Food Preparation and Serving Workers	1,326	\$44,748
B+	Maintenance and Repair Workers, General	1,156	\$55,414
B	Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks	979	\$53,104
B+	Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Except Technical and Scientific Products	951	\$80,370
B	First-Line Supervisors of Office and Administrative Support Workers	931	\$71,912
A	Carpenters	873	\$69,187
C+	Miscellaneous Assemblers and Fabricators	801	\$44,687
B	First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers	715	\$51,326
B+	Medical Assistants	698	\$42,265
B+	Medical Secretaries and Administrative Assistants	653	\$44,815
B	Hairdressers, Hairstylists, and Cosmetologists	648	\$43,611
B+	Sales Representatives of Services, Except Advertising, Insurance, Financial Services, and Travel	629	\$71,507
C+	Teaching Assistants, Except Postsecondary	621	\$33,951
A	Electricians	563	\$74,426
B	Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics	535	\$53,845
A	Insurance Sales Agents	535	\$75,858
B	Production Workers, All Other	462	\$43,847

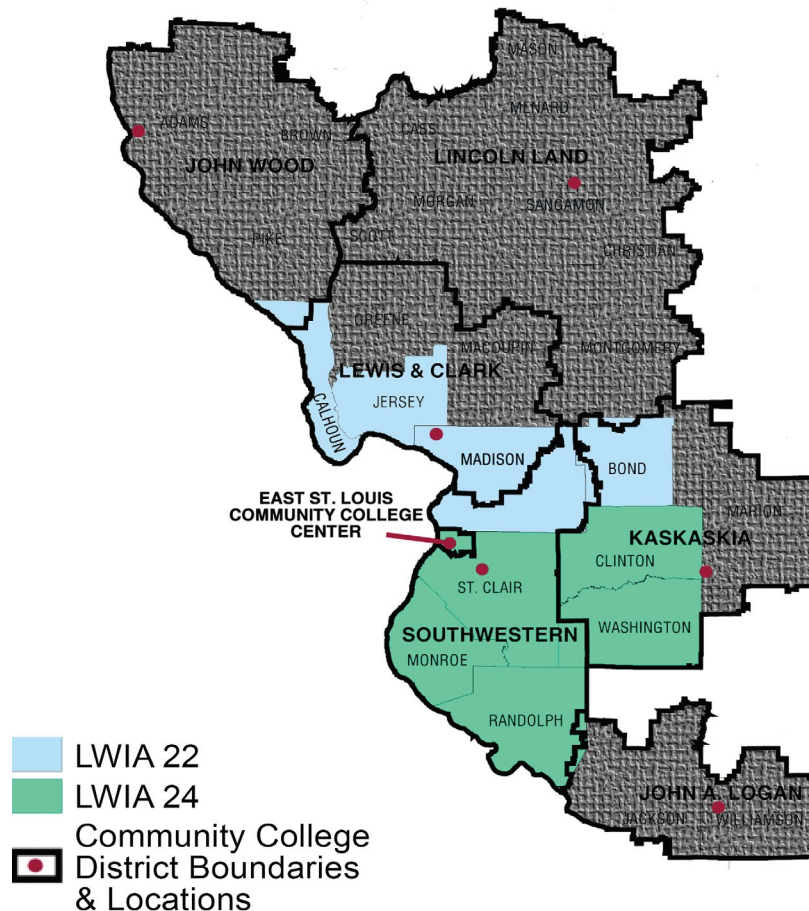
Source: MERIC Long-Term Projections 2022-2032

The St. Louis Metropolitan Regional Directors' Consortium Coordination Strategy

The six individual WIOA local regions that make up the St. Louis Metropolitan Region agree to the following service strategies:

1. Act as regional steering committee made up of at least the Local Area WIOA Directors.
 - The Committee will meet on a regular basis to share information on new initiatives, as well as, challenges found in the Region.
 - This committee will provide a forum for local areas to solve problems of common concern, develop and implement joint strategies and/or policies.
2. Build consensus around broad goals and strategies.
 - Shared goals to be discussed may be to increase the proportion of households in the region earning a family-supporting wage, decreased long-term reliance on income subsidies or to address the specific skill and talent needs of local industries/sectors.
 - The Region originally selected manufacturing and healthcare as the first sectors in our joint sector strategy initiative as required by WIOA. Recently, the Region has added Information Technology (IT) as its third sector initiative. The strategies developed to address the workforce needs of the two original sectors will continue to be implemented and updated. The Region will work together to develop new initiatives to meet the expanding needs of the IT sector in the St. Louis Metropolitan Region.
 - The regional collaboration will provide a clearinghouse for labor market information by linking existing resources, researching information gaps and marketing local assets.
 - The Region has begun to accomplish this by sharing workforce events in a calendar format, email blasts and through social media.
 - The Region conducts meetings of business team representatives across the Region to coordinate services to employers and avoid duplication of effort.
 - The Region also has a disability committee that crosses several local areas and invites all areas to participate, as appropriate, in service to this population.
 - Build closer alliances with local, regional and state economic development agencies to create more integration between business recruitment/retention efforts and workforce issues.
3. Develop a shared understanding of the region's customer base.
 - Work together to collect industry sector analysis throughout the Region.
 - Each area will report how local businesses are meeting their workforce needs.
 - Identify skills, talents and aptitudes of the local workforce areas.
 - Identify skill gaps as well as gaps in local systems to address the training needs.
 - Collect information on common barriers to skill attainment and employment.
4. Forge linkages between workforce development and other work-related systems
 - Identify resources outside the workforce system that can address individuals' barriers to employment.

Southwestern Illinois Region 9 WIOA Plan PY 2024 - PY 2028



Revised March 2026

Table of Contents

CHAPTER 1: ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE ANALYSIS

- A. Provide an analysis of the factors listed below
- B. Describe how the Local Workforce Innovation Board and WIOA partners support the development and implementation of sector initiatives for in-demand industry sectors or occupations for the planning region (§ 679.510(a)(1)(iii)). Plans must answer the following questions:
- C. If any employer collaboratives are engaged in the U.S. Chamber’s Talent Pipeline Management initiative, describe the following:
- D. Describe any broad economic development opportunities in the region within the context of the workforce, education and economic development plans.
- E. Describe any broad economic challenges in the region’s workforce, education and economic development plans.
- F. Describe how a workforce equity lens⁶ is incorporated into the local planning requirements for collecting and analyzing labor market information.

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGIES FOR SERVICE INTEGRATION

- A. Provide an analysis of workforce development activities, including education and training, in the region. This analysis must include the strengths and weaknesses of workforce development activities and capacity to provide the workforce development activities to address the education and skill needs of the workforce, including individuals with barriers to employment, and the employment needs of employers (§ 679.560(a)(4)). The plan must address the following areas:
- B. Describe how transportation and other supportive services are coordinated within the region (§ 679.510(a)(1)(vi)). The plan must address the following sections:
- C. Describe the coordination of services with regional economic development services and WIOA service providers (§ 679.510(a)(1)(vii)). The plan must address the following sections:
- D. Describe the coordination of administrative cost arrangements, including the pooling of funds for administrative costs, as appropriate (§ 679.510(a)(1)(v)).
- E. Describe how a *workforce equity lens*⁶ is or will be incorporated in the regional service integration strategies, including to job seekers and employers.

CHAPTER 3: VISION, GOALS AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

- A. Describe the local goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce (including youth and individuals with barriers to employment) and goals relating to the performance accountability measures based on performance indicators (§ 677.155(a)(1)). Include a description of how the region and local areas will accomplish local goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce and goals relating to performance.
- B. Provide a description of the regional and local strategies that will achieve the vision and principles. This section must include a description of the strategies and services that will be used in the local areas:
- C. Describe regional strategies that will increase apprenticeship and other work-based learning opportunities.

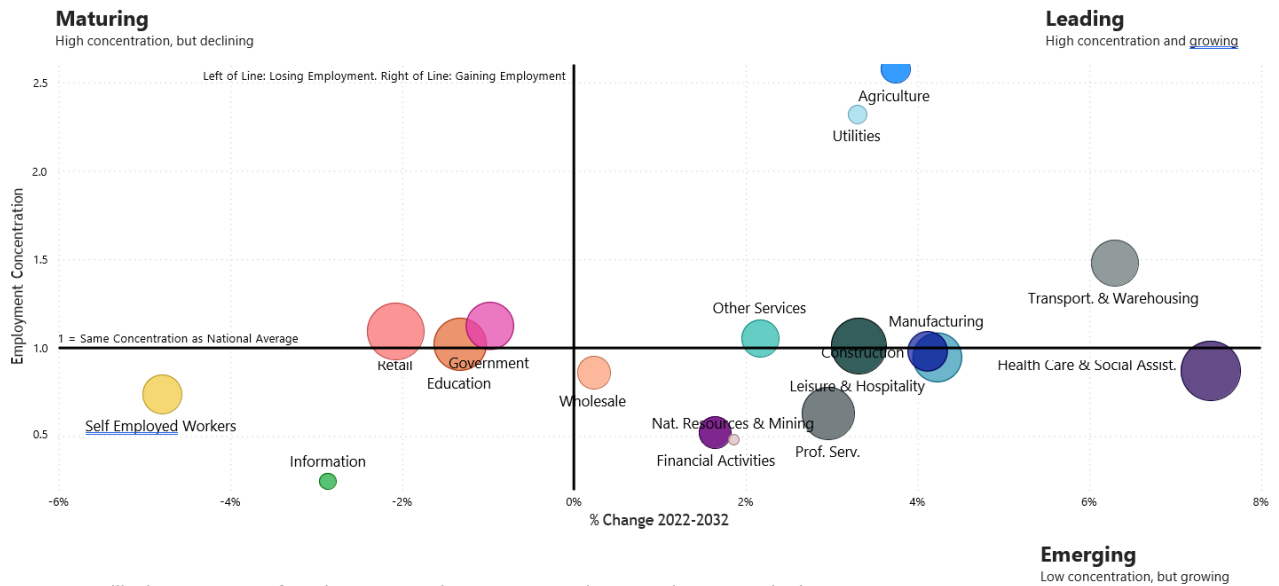
- D. Describe initiatives to shorten the time from credential to employment and address how the area will work with the education system to begin putting training opportunities in place to meet this strategy.
- E. Describe the steps that will be taken to support the state's efforts to align and integrate education, workforce and economic development, including:
- F. Describe how goals established in this plan will be monitored and evaluated.
- G. Describe how a *workforce equity lens*⁶ is or will be incorporated in the implementation of regional workforce, education, and economic development strategies.
- H. Describe how a *workforce equity lens*⁶ is or will be incorporated in the implementation of regional workforce, education, and economic development strategies.

CHAPTER 1: ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE ANALYSIS

This chapter must discuss how the region has collected and analyzed updated regional labor market information including the local planning requirements. Regional teams are encouraged to use the labor market information posted on <https://www.illinoisworknet.com/WIOA/RegPlanning> to provide consistency in the data used for regional analysis throughout the state³.

A. Provide an analysis of the factors listed below:

1. Economic conditions, including existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors and occupations (§ 679.560(a)(1)(i));



- a. What are the targeted industries, high-impact industry clusters, and in-demand occupations in the region?

The emerging in-demand industry clusters in our Economic Development Region 9 (EDR 9) are Agriculture, Construction, Healthcare, Manufacturing, Transportation Distribution & Logistics, Leisure & Hospitality, and Utilities. The emerging in-demand industry clusters in our area on the Missouri side of the St. Louis MSA is Biotechnology.

- b. What industries have favorable location quotients?

The figure above graphically depicts each sector of the region’s economy. The vertical axis represents each sector’s location quotient (LQ), while the horizontal axis depicts the percentage growth in payroll jobs in that sector between 2022 and 2030. The size of each bubble demonstrates the current size of the region’s workforce in that sector.

As shown in the figure, the Southwest Region contains several industrial sectors with favorable LQ. In Illinois’s Southwest Region, Agriculture and Utilities each had LQs

greater than 2.0 in 2022 and Transportation & Warehousing had LQs greater than 1.5 in 2022..

- c. What industries and occupations have favorable demand projections based on growth?

Table 1.1: In-demand occupations based on economic growth

Occupation Title (SOC 2-digit)	Median Annual Salary	Estimated annual job openings from economic growth
Transportation & Material Moving Occupations	\$40,958	352
Food Preparation & Serving Occupations	\$29,070	340
Management Occupations	\$94,944	154
Healthcare Support Occupations	\$35,259	91
Business & Financial Operations Occupations	\$76,154	89

Source: Illinois Department of Employment Security Employment Projections Program

Payroll employment projections are obtained from the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Employment Projections program and follow these definitions:

Total job openings = Growth + Replacement openings

Growth = difference between base-year employment level and projection-year employment level

Replacement openings = Exits + Transfers

Exits = Current workers exiting the labor force

Transfers = Current workers who leave an industry or occupation to work in a different industry or occupation

Based on long-term projected growth in labor demand, the occupations with the most growth are as follows, and are representative of many industries but particularly Health Care and Social Assistance, Retail Trade, and Transportation, Warehousing, and Utilities:]

SOC Code	SOC Name	Annual Growth
31-1120	Home Health and Personal Care Aides	57
35-2014	Cooks, Restaurant	57
53-7062	Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	49
11-1021	General and Operations Managers	32
53-7065	Stockers and Order Fillers	29
15-1252	Software Developers	27
53-3032	Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	23

- d. What industries and occupations have favorable demand projections based on replacements?

Based on long-term projected job transfers, the occupations with the most replacement openings are as follows, and are most highly represented in the Retail Trade industrial sector:

SOC Code	SOC Name	Annual Replacements
35-3023	Fast Food and Counter Workers	1,490
41-2011	Cashiers	1,349
53-7062	Laborers and Freight, Stock and Material Movers, Hand	1,130
53-7065	Stockers and Order Fillers	949
41-2031	Retail Salespersons	940

- e. What industries are considered mature but still important to the economy?

Three sectors in the region, Education, Government, and Retail are considered maturing sectors. The number of jobs in these sectors is anticipated to decrease looking out to 2030.

- f. What industries are considered emerging in the regional economy?

The Agriculture and Utilities sectors are considered emerging in the Southwest Region due to their projected job growth and low LQ.

- g. What is the projected regional key in-demand occupations?

The projected regional key in-demand industry occupations in our EDR 9 are Agriculture, Aviation, Healthcare, Manufacturing, Transportation Distribution & Logistics, Information Technology and Utilities. The emerging in-demand industry clusters in our area on the Missouri side of the St. Louis MSA is Biotechnology.

- h. What sources of supply and demand data were used to determine the targeted industries occupations and skills?

Supply and demand for occupations are provided through the Illinois Department of Employment Security's (IDES) Employment Projections Program. The skills correlating with those occupations were identified by IDES through occupational descriptions obtained via O*Net Online.

2. Employment needs of employers in existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors and occupations (§ 679.560(a)(1)(ii));

The following analysis is segmented by the extent to which education credentials are required for an entry-level position. Among occupations requiring a certificate or license, the top three occupations by projected annual openings are Heavy and Tractor Trailer Truck Drivers, Nursing Assistants, Teaching Assistants, and Childcare Workers.

Among occupations requiring at least an Associate's degree, the top three occupations by projected annual openings are Registered Nurses, Preschool Teachers, and Paralegals & Legal Assistants.

Among occupations requiring at least a Bachelor's degree, the top three occupations by projected annual openings are General and Operations Managers, Elementary School Teachers, Business Operations Specialists.

Among occupations requiring education beyond a Bachelor's degree, the top three occupations by projected annual openings are Managers (All other), Financial Managers, and Software Developers.

3. Knowledge and skills needed to meet the employment needs of the employers in the region, including employment needs in in-demand industry sectors and occupations (§ 679.560(a)(2)); Based on the Southwest Region’s list of in-demand occupations, the following details form the basis for an ongoing nurturing of local career pathways.

- a. What are the targeted career pathway clusters in the region?

Agriculture, Aviation, Construction, Information Technology, Manufacturing, Transportation & Warehousing, and Utilities.

- b. What skills are in demand in the region?

The top skills for in-demand occupations, not necessarily arranged by quantitative methods, will be: Active listening, reading comprehension, critical thinking, service orientation, social perceptiveness.

- c. How well do the existing skills of job seekers match the demands of local businesses?

EDR 9 uses Talent Pipeline Management (TPM) techniques to identify the skills preferred by employers and works with the secondary and post-secondary education entities to develop and train for those skills identified to produce a well-trained and ready workforce.

4. Regional workforce considering current labor force employment and unemployment data, information on labor market trends, and educational and skill levels of the workforce, including individuals with barriers to employment⁴ (§ 679.510(a)(1)(iv) and § 679.560(a)(3)).

- a. How is the region changing in terms of demographics, labor supply and occupational demand?

In total, the region’s population in 2024 was 671,610. Of the total, 75.9% of the population reported their race as White, while 14.5% were Black, 1.1% were Asian, 0.1% were American Indian, and 0.4% were either Pacific Islander or multi-race.¹ In terms of demographics, the region has seen some demographic shifts between 2019 and 2023. In particular, the number of Asian (-1.1%), American Indian (-.3%) and Pacific Islander/Multi-race (-2.0%) residents has decreased in percentage terms. The number of Black residents increased by (-1.6%). During this time period, the number of residents under age 20 increased to 29.7%, while the number of residents age 60 and over increased by a sizeable 26.5% while the Statewide percentage is 18%.

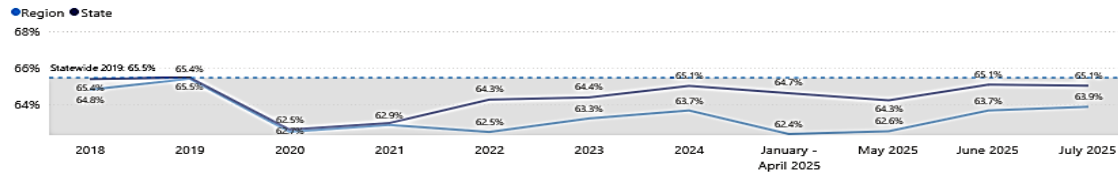
As seen in the graphic, the region’s labor supply in July of 2025 was approximately 429,159 persons strong, buoyed by growth in industries such as Agriculture, Construction, Transportation, Warehousing and Utilities. The region’s unemployment rate in 2024-Q4 was 4.3%.

¹ Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding

Southwest Region Labor Force Participation & Unemployment Over Time

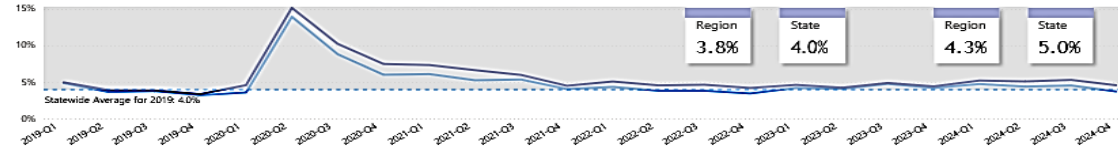
Labor Force Participation Rates

Source: Estimates from [Lighthouse](#), 2025. Shaded area shows participation rate below statewide rate in 2019.



Unemployment Rates

Source: Illinois Department of Employment Security, Local Area Unemployment Statistics, respective years.



²For clarity on what resources to use, regions can discuss the most appropriate data to select with their local IDES labor market economist.

³The term “individual with barrier to employment” means one or more of the following populations: 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, eligible migrant and seasonal farmworkers, individuals within 2 years of exhausting lifetime eligibility under part A of title IV of the Social Security Act, single parents, including pregnant single women, long-term unemployed individuals, and such other groups as the Governor determines to have barriers to employment (WIOA Sec. 3(24)).

- b. What special populations exist in the region, what is their magnitude, and what are the policy and service implications to meet the needs of these individuals?

In this region, special populations include disabled persons, justice-involved individuals, a small homeless population, persons aged out of foster care, migrant workers, persons facing language or culture barriers, single parents, long-term unemployed individuals, persons living in qualified census tracts, and persons who are deficient in basic workforce skills.

Low-income indicators⁵

- TANF Persons, May 2023: 3,861
- TANF Cases, May 2023: 1,474
- SNAP Cases, April 2023: 94,390
- SNAP Households, April 2023: 51,921

Foster care⁶

- Total: 1,788

Justice-involved population⁷

- Adult prison population (committing region): 2,054
- Adult parolee population (residence region): 757

Persons with disabilities⁸

- Total: 100,440
- Hearing difficulties: 18,682
- Vision difficulties: 17,979
- Cognitive difficulties: 43,290
- Ambulatory difficulties: 45,901
- Self-care difficulties: 17,577
- Independent living difficulties: 36861

⁵ Source: Illinois Department of Employment Security, US Bureau of Labor Statistics

⁶ Source: Illinois Department of Children & Family Services; data as of July 2023

⁷ Source: Illinois Department of Corrections; data as of July 2023

⁸ Source: American Community Survey 5-year estimates

- B. Describe how the Local Workforce Innovation Board and WIOA partners support the development and implementation of sector initiatives for in-demand industry sectors or occupations for the planning region (§ 679.510(a)(1)(iii)). Plans must answer the following questions:

The economy in Illinois's Southwest Region is dynamic and must remain so during the country's continued push for business efficiency, innovation, and advanced manufacturing presence. In support of growing demand for uncommon skills or knowledge, the region's sector partnerships with workforce development leaders are as vital as ever as some employers consider expanding in EDR 9 while others seek to reskill their existing workforces to better meet the skill requirements of tomorrow's business community.

1. How will the workforce partners convene or support the convening of regional employers, foundations, institutions and other stakeholders to create or maintain sector partnerships?

Workforce partners will provide sector-based round tables, regionals summits that strengthen relationships with employers, foundations and institutions providing common topics, areas of training or open discussions for areas of concern. Past round table topics have included: Apprenticeships, Healthcare, Manufacturing and Education. Sector partnerships are often facilitated and fostered by organizations such as Leadership Council of Southwestern Illinois, and Illinois Manufacturing Association. The Leadership Council Southwestern Illinois is a not-for-profit member based economic development corporation, which unites many business members from a broad spectrum of industry. They work to engage their coalition of over 250 members of the business community. The Leadership Council works hard to partner with area workforce partners, by providing education, networking, and providing a voice for their members. The mission of the Leadership Council is to unite business, industry, government, education, and labor for economic growth in Southwestern Illinois, hosting member meetings featuring informative presentations on regional economic issues, participation in committees

such as Military Affairs, Levee Issue Alliance, Workforce Development, Agriculture, Aerospace, and Economic Development. Illinois Manufacturers Association (IMA) is a trade association for Illinois Manufacturers bringing education, promotion and advocacy for their manufacturing members, which will partner with workforce to build better resources for manufacturers.

2. Identify the established and active sector partnerships in the region (as defined in Illinois' Next Generation Sector Strategies Guide⁵). If any exist, are they business-led and what is their role in WIOA planning?

No current sector partnerships meet the criteria as defined. Sector partnerships are developing between the National Restaurant Association, High School CTE programs, Collinsville Vocational Center, and Madison County Employment and Training to provide industry recognized training to the hospitality industry across the region, with curriculum development and testing resulting in Industry Recognized credentials. The Hospitality Industry has a strong demand for a trained labor force. There are career pathways for individuals to move up in the industry, or across different lines of hospitality. The Hospitality Industry in the region is vast considering the restaurant and hotel industry that serve the area on a daily basis, and for events that attract national attendance, such as NASCAR racing. Madison County Employment and Training, and St. Clair County Intergovernmental Grants Department have been trained in the National Restaurant Association's Customer Service Training. This training has been provided to area businesses that work directly in the hospitality sector, along with other community members, such as local area high schools, and non-profits that are public facing or beginning their careers in the Hospitality Industry. This training will continue to be provided throughout the region using state supplemental grant funds. The National Restaurant Association adopted the DOL Apprenticeship Standards from Soucial Kitchen for the first National Food Truck Apprenticeship Program, in St. Clair County. This sector partnership was developed as a result of the ongoing partnership the local workforce areas have with the National Restaurant Association and the hospitality industry in the region. The hospitality training was initially implemented through a grant serving at risk youth, providing a foundation for a career in the hospitality industry, along with additional curriculum being taught in the Local Area Vocational Center Culinary Program. Area business partners have also expressed a desired interest in the training, which will be provided through the local workforce, Madison County Employment and Training and St. Clair County Intergovernmental Grants Department.

The Aerospace Industry in Madison and St. Clair Counties is robust and contain several employers such as, West Star Aviation, Boeing, and Gulf Stream. These employers are leading the sector partnerships through training their labor force to meet the needs and demands of the business, and to build a talented, qualified labor force. West Star Aviation has developed a training academy and apprenticeship in coordination with Southwestern Illinois College. Madison County Employment and Training partners with West Star providing on the job training assistance to WIOA eligible employees. Individuals are hired by West Star Aviation and Trained by Southwestern Illinois College receiving their airframe certificates, while being paid a living wage and working in a relevant, progressive worksite. Gulf Stream has been engaging with Lewis and Clark Community College to implement a progressive avionics program in house that will be implemented by an accredited program. Students can receive training for the aviation industry through the local area community colleges and have a pathway to connect to the industry. Both Madison County Employment and Training and St. Clair County Intergovernmental Grants Dept promote the industry with distribution of hiring events and

partnering for on-the job training and incumbent worker training for the employers.

The Steel Industry in Madison County is centered around US Steel. US Steel needs qualified employees in various departments from equipment operators to maintenance technicians. The Local Workforce Areas are providing assistance through job postings to promote recruitment efforts, providing incumbent worker training to upskill existing workers, and on-the-job training for new hires. Due to the increase in steel production the region Heidtman Steel Products and Steel and Pipe Supply company have joined to create a joint venture and launch of Granite City Processing LLC, this venture aims to enhance regional steel capabilities and services to broaden the product distribution from the area. The merger will continue to offer existing steel products, increase the products available, provide expansion and growth for another company within the industry.

Madison County Employment and Training has received a Department of Labor Apprenticeship Building America grant to develop Registered Apprenticeship Programs and pre-apprenticeship programs for the Healthcare, Education and Bioscience industries throughout the St Louis Metropolitan Region. There have been active sector partnerships established between multiple area industries and businesses through grant activities. McKendree University has developed partnerships to upskill working paraprofessionals into licensed Elementary Education teachers through Registered Apprenticeship Programs, which is greatly needed in the area. McKendree partners directly with area school districts for this program. The community colleges in the region, including Southwestern Illinois College (SWIC), Lewis & Clark Community College (LCCC) and Kaskaskia College (KC), are working to develop education-focused Associate degree programs to work into apprenticeship models that will allow high school graduates to flow straight into full-time employment as paraprofessionals, and will qualify them for McKendree's teaching apprenticeship upon completion. The strategic partnerships between McKendree, the community colleges and numerous school districts throughout the region are creating a skilled pipeline of future teachers who will be tied to the region. The grant has been used to assist in developing the necessary curriculum and in supporting instructor costs associated with running the programs. In addition to the groundbreaking working happening in the Education sector through this grant, there have been 700 apprentices served under the umbrella of bio-science, healthcare, and education.

3. What public-private partnerships exist in the region that could support sector strategies, and what is their role in planning?

Through Madison County's USDOL grant, pre-apprenticeship and Registered Apprenticeship Programs for laboratory technicians have been launched through the public university, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville (SIUE) in partnership with leading private industry employers such as Washington University, Thermo Fisher Scientific and Millipore Sigma. Programs have also been expanded and developed in the healthcare field for occupations such as Certified Nursing Assistants, EMT/Paramedics, Medical Assistants and Licensed Practical Nurses through partnerships with community colleges (KC, LCCC, & SWIC) and private healthcare employers such as HSHS Health System, BJC Health Systems, and various senior living and skilled nursing facilities. When developing any of these programs, the grant team has ensured a connection between the training providers, the employers, and the LWIA offices in order to open doors for WIOA planning opportunities.

4. What neutral conveners with the capacity to help establish sector partnerships exist in the region, and what is their role in planning?

The Leadership Council, Illinois Manufacturing Association, Local Chambers of Commerce would be natural conveners for the area. These associations work with members to provide networking, resources, and solutions to their members. They would be able to provide guidance between members and outside organizations.

- C. If any employer collaboratives are engaged in the U.S. Chamber's Talent Pipeline Management initiative, describe the following:
- a. What is the focus of the collaborative(s)?
 - b. How is the workforce system supporting the needs of these employers?

At this time, there are no employer collaboratives actively engaged in the US Chamber's Talent Pipeline Management initiative. LWIA 24, St. Clair County Intergovernmental Grants Dept., LWIA 22, Madison County Employment and Training, along with Leadership Council introduced Talent Pipeline Management and initiated a conversation within the local Aviation Industry. The industry is reviewing the possibilities of further exploration of TPM. Outreach has been ongoing presenting to area organizations and chambers. The following organizations have had presentations to learn about the benefits of Talent Pipeline Management: Belleville Chamber, Metro East Chamber, Belle Clair Rotary, Fairview Heights Rotary, Leadership Belleville, Terra Source, MAC Medical, Tyson Foods, World Wide Technologies, Soucial Kitchen, BJC, HSHS St. Elisabeths, Jerseyville Community Hospital, Sparta Hospital, Washing Community Hospital, Glister Mary-Lee, Amazon, and Empire Comfort Systems.

Between LWIA 24 and LWIA 22, there are 4 staff trained in the U. S. Chambers Talent Pipeline Management, to provide facilitation and assistance in the local workforce areas.

- D. Describe any broad economic development opportunities in the region within the context of the workforce, education and economic development plans.

Opportunities: across the Mississippi River from metropolitan St. Louis, MO. One of the key assets in the region is the availability and the cost of land. Madison and St. Clair counties have opportunities for growth and expansions. The St. Louis Region's world-class freight network is one of the region's greatest advantages, with freight transportation including, the interstate system, river-ways, and rail system. The St. Louis Regional Freightways has 26 projects funded or partially funded to improve the freight infrastructure in the bi-state region, including southwestern Illinois. Projects include strengthening critical roads, bridges, rail infrastructure, port and airport facilities across the region. There are attractive incentives through enterprise zones, Tax Increment Financing (TIF) and business districts. The Reimagining Energy and Vehicles (REV) Illinois Program is a highly competitive incentives program aimed at increasing manufacturing in the clean-energy jobs, to attract companies along the supply chain in the electric vehicle and renewables sectors, which has already attracted employer such as Tesla to the area and has prompted the EV training program at Kaskaskia College. Climate and Equitable Jobs Act, (CEJA) will also provide training opportunities for underserved individuals to learn in demand skills within the clean energy workforce, with a hub located in the Madison County Region. Southwestern Illinois has three access points to higher education through Southwestern Illinois College, Lewis and Clark Community College, Kaskaskia College, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville, McKendree University. There are several private training institutions, specializing in training for in-demand occupations such as medical industry, CDL, and IT,

such as Career Center of Southern Illinois, CALC Institute of Technology, 160 Driving Academy, New Horizons Computer Learning Center. The Community Colleges and Local Universities have also become more creative in programming and training programs to meet the needs and demands of employers and students. For Example, SIUE has created a badging program allowing students to earn stackable credentials that are relevant to employer's needs. The state of Illinois has implemented STAR Bonds across the state Region 9 qualifies for 3 of them. STAR Bonds are an economic development tool, allowing local governments to issue bonds to finance large-scale commercial, tourism, or entertainment projects, with debt repaid by the incremental sales tax revenue generated within the designated development districts, rather than general funds, aiming to spur economic growth and job creation. These districts focus on areas with potential significant retail, dining, and attractions, using new tax dollars from development to fund infrastructure, property acquisition, and other project costs.

The list below are examples of economic expansion in the region:

1. St. Louis region positioned to be part of supply chain solution at America's Central Port with merger between Kansas City Southern and Canadian Pacific Railway. The merger puts shippers at two-day truck drive reaching 70% of US population. St. Louis Metro East and Chicago are the only two regions with access to all six Class 1 railroads.
2. Expansion of MidAmerica Airport in Mascoutah.
3. Expansion of MetroLink service to east of MidAmerica Airport.
4. New Manufacturing Training Academy at SWIC.
5. In 2021 & 2022, IDOT completed six major road infrastructure projects totaling more than \$89.1 million including improvements to Interstates 255 and 70.
6. Expansions of several current Metro East businesses including Wieland, Gulfstream, West Star Aviation, Boeing, Tyson Foods and LTI Trucking.

E. Describe any broad economic challenges in the region's workforce, education and economic development plans.

Challenges across the Mississippi River from metropolitan St. Louis, MO is a net loss in population between St. Clair and Madison County. Industries are attracted to the area due to the availability of land, enterprise zones and tax increment financing (TIF) however, the workforce is a topic of concern. The census of residents does not always support the demands of employers who may be attracted to the area. Affordable workforce housing or affordable post graduate housing continues to be unmet. Childcare is an ongoing need for the workforce. There are not enough affordable childcare facilities available to the workforce. Broadband access and connectivity have been a challenge for industries across the metropolitan area.

The list below are issues in the region:

1. Continuation of population decline in region. In 1970 the St. Louis MSA was the 10th largest in the nation. Today it is the 21st. The 2020 Census showed a population decline in eight of the nine Metro East counties.
2. US Steel in Granite City sale to Tokyo Nippon.
3. Ameren Missouri's regulated rates are approximately 24 percent below the national average for similar industrial class customers.
4. Needed expansions of the Center for Advanced Vocational Excellence (C.A.V.E.) in Belleville and Collinsville Area Vocational Center (CAVC) in Collinsville to accommodate additional vocational educational programs to meet the needs of local employers. Currently Collinsville CAVC is turning away 100+ students into their programs due to lack of space.

- F. Describe how responsiveness, inclusivity, accessibility is incorporated into the local planning requirements for collecting and analyzing labor market information.

The U.S. Census Bureau collects and distributes detailed demographic information for every county in the nation. Outside the often subjective views of county residents, business owners and workforce development coordinators, data on the age, gender and racial composition of communities is collected and distributed via multiple channels.

More directly, as part of the region's *workforce equity lens*, all program participants that are not self-service-only participants must submit personal Equal Opportunity (EO) data, including race/ethnicity, gender, age, and disability status. The Southwest Region's EO Officer assures proper maintenance of these records, and oversees group demographic analysis to ensure each LWIA recipient's activities comply with EO nondiscrimination obligations.

4 Source: Illinois Department of Children & Family Services

5 Source: Illinois Department of Corrections

6 Source: American Community Survey 5-year estimates

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGIES FOR SERVICE INTEGRATION

This regional component of the plan must describe the regional service strategies, including use of cooperative service delivery strategies and the connection of job seekers with employers. Regions are required to provide information and analysis of the steps that will be taken to address the challenges and opportunities associated with the regional service integration strategies.

- A. Provide an analysis of workforce development activities, including education and training, in the region. This analysis must include the strengths and weaknesses of workforce development activities and capacity to provide the workforce development activities to address the education and skill needs of the workforce, including individuals with barriers to employment, and the employment needs of employers (§ 679.560(a)(4)). The plan must address the following areas:
1. Analyze the strengths and weaknesses of workforce development activities in the region.

EDR 9 has many workforce development strengths, many of which have expanded and grown over the past few years. Whether it's serving businesses, working with individual job seekers or partnering on a regional project, EDR 9's greatest strength is its strong collaboration among its Workforce innovation and opportunity Act (WIOA) core and extended partners through the Regional Business Services Team (BST). This collaboration benefits the 9 counties within EDR 9, but also often times extends across the river to our Missouri workforce partners. Some of these regional collaborative efforts and strengths have included the following:

- ***Apprenticeship Expansion Grant*** - EDR 9 consortium has an apprenticeship grant totaling \$5,800,000.00.

- ***MOU Partnerships*** – LWIA 22 and 24 continue to maintain successful partnerships and Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) for their respective certified one-stops. This includes successful completion of the one-stop certification process.
- ***Metro-East Business Services Team*** – Regional Business Services team that includes the WIOA partners and additional organizations. The team has many accomplishments to date, including the introduction of *Talent Pipeline Management (TPM)* and many collaborative efforts such as the recent regional apprenticeship event and numerous hiring, community and career day events.
- ***Additional Examples of the Region’s Strong Collaborations*** – St. Louis Regional WIB Consortium, Southwestern Illinois College’s Annual Manufacturing Day, Kaskaskia/Southwestern Illinois Growth Alliance’s Manufacturing Career Fair, Accommodations for Success Reverse Job Fair, SICAP Construction Industry Career Expo, Madison County ROE Career Days and Gateway Trade Port.

Despite these many strengths within our region, there are still weaknesses within the workforce development system that are being addressed on an ongoing basis. These weaknesses include a lack of overall available workforce participants to fill the many open positions in our region. In addition, as addressed in the previously mentioned *Bridging the Talent Gap* report and outlined in the state’s unified plan, there is an urgent need to develop career pathways and strategies to fill skills gaps, strengthen our workforce and grow our talent pipeline. Finally, our last perceived weakness is related to a lack of workforce development funding. Working within a system that continues to see annual budget cuts has made it difficult to not only maintain staffing, but it is a challenge to direct outreach and name recognition efforts. However, EDR 9 has recognized these weaknesses in the system, acknowledged them and is utilizing its many strengths to deal with them.

2. Analyze the capacity of the regional partners to provide workforce development activities to address the education and skill needs of the workforce including individuals with barriers to employment.

EDR 9 as part of its collaboration with its WIOA and other partners has a variety of programs and services in place to address the education and skill needs for the workforce, including individuals that are harder to serve or have significant barriers to finding employment, retaining employment and finding a suitable career pathway. The following are some of the programs and services throughout the region designed to address those needs:

- ***Accommodations For Success*** – A regional reverse job fair geared toward job seekers with a disability.
- ***Nexus Group*** (as part of the BST) - Community agencies coming together *to leverage career opportunities for individuals with barriers to employment through collaboration and business partnership*
- ***Cahokia and Belleville 201 Fairs*** – Local career fairs designed to promote career and technical education opportunities, especially hard to serve and underserved students.
- ***SIUE/East St. Louis Higher Education Center*** – Run by a consortium of educational providers (SIUE, LCCC & SWIC), the center is designed to promote a variety of educational and work-based learning opportunities for hard to serve and underserved youth & adults.

- **TAP** – Transition Assistance Program for Veterans, conducted at Scott Air Force Base every two weeks. The class is designed to provide career and educational information to transitioning military personnel and their spouses.
 - **Project Homeless Connect** – Annual event intended to engage homeless individuals and families to learn about and receive numerous services.
 - **Connections To Success** – Regional comprehensive network of services and support to help people living in poverty become economically self-sufficient.
 - **LCCC Supported College Transition Program** – Academic preparation and support services provided to students with limited mainstreaming activity in high school.
 - **EDR 9 Vocational Schools** – Area vocational centers offering many certificate programs and preparation for post-secondary education & employment.
 - **EDR 9 Transition Events** – Numerous regional events offering a variety of resources to students that are transitioning from high school to adulthood.
 - **Madison County & St. Clair County Career & Technical Education Programs (CTE)** – Career and technical education programs current and relevant to meet industry standards and needs.
 - **CSBG Skills Training** – Training and other programs designed for CSBG eligible participants. Madison County Community Development continued to provide CSBG services to customers during the COVID pandemic. While some of our partnering agencies worked remotely others limited in-person appointments whereas using electronic devices for completing and/or receiving applications, supporting documentation and determining eligibility.
 - **Bridge Programming & ICAPS** – Adult Education programs focusing on contextualized bridge programs and ICAPS (Integrated Career and Academic Preparation System) integrated instructional models.
 - **SWIC Technical Education** – Custom designed programming and career readiness for employment in advanced manufacturing.
 - **PACE Programming** – Vocational based programming in area high schools for students with disabilities. Previously known as the STEP Program.
 - **Illinois Department of Rehabilitation Services** – DRS offers employment support services at the time of referral to assist with job retention as well as ongoing assistance for an extended period of time.
3. Analyze the capacity of the regional partners to provide activities to address the needs of employers.

EDR 9, comprised of LWIA 22 and 24, has developed a BST to address business needs throughout the 9-county region. Officially named the *Metro-East Business Services Team*, it is comprised of 20 plus members that incorporate WIOA partners as well as additional organizations that serve the business community. Also, the team works closely with municipal, county and state economic development organizations in Illinois & Missouri as well as numerous chambers of commerce. The team has also been going through an ongoing self-assessment and continuous improvement process since its inception. These accomplishments and partnerships have included Illinois Job Link training & access, Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities, an Threats (SWOT) Analysis, Asset Mapping, TPM, Nexus Group and team services brochures as well as a future business services team certification. Led by EDR 9's Business

Services Representatives, the group has also led many efforts to promote, grow and expand regional apprenticeships in the region. The BST members have also been responsible for organizing hiring events at the local one-stops as well as at offsite locations. Beyond hiring events and assisting businesses with recruitment needs, the team also works to provide informational workshops for businesses as well as individuals. For example, IDES hosts employer roundtables throughout the region. The team is also partnering with numerous high schools and vocational training institutions to promote career and technical educational opportunities to students and parents as part of the region's efforts to grow its talent pipeline.

4. How well do existing training programs in the region and local areas prepare job seekers to enter and retain employment with regional businesses?

One of the major ways that EDR 9 addresses the need for a skilled and prepared workforce is through a variety of work-based learning strategies. These “earn while you learn” initiatives provide an opportunity for an individual to upgrade their skills as part of a career pathways model while also earning wages. Also, some of these programs are often times shorter in duration than normal training programs. These work-based learning strategies include Paid Work Experience (PWE), On-the-Job Training (OJT), Incumbent Worker Training (IWT), and Registered Apprenticeships.

5. Summarize the commitments of each program partner to implement the selected strategies described in the “Action Plan for Improving Service Integration in the Region.”

Both LWIA's, 22 and 24, conducted service integration self-assessments in their respective areas. In each area, the core partners as well as the extended one-stop partners are greatly involved in the Regional Business Services Team and implementing a coordinated effort to improve service integration for the region.

B. Describe how transportation and other supportive services are coordinated within the region (§ 679.510(a)(1)(vi)). The plan must address the following sections:

1. What regional organizations currently provide or could provide supportive services?
 - EDR 9 boasts an excellent mass transit system including bus and light rail & Metro Link. The schedules are available at the job centers to assist customers who rely on public transportation.
 - Door to door Paratransit services are available to qualifying individuals with a disability that are unable to utilize Madison County Transit (MCT) or Alternative Transportation Service (ATS) in St. Clair County. MCT and ATS also provide travel training programs to teach riders how to travel confidently and independently.
 - Salvation Army: Alton Corps issues bus passes to residents of their *Booth House* homeless shelter who are looking for employment.
 - Catholic Urban Programs will provide a bus pass to low-income residents who have begun employment for their first week until they receive a paycheck.
 - Southwestern Illinois College provides transportation services for students enrolled in their programs, including bus and Metro Link passes. They also provide career training (including how to conduct a job search, resume development, interviewing skills and on the job behaviors),

transition services (inclusive of filing for FAFSA and other forms of financial aid and enrolling in college classes at SWIC) and childcare assistance (through Children's Home and Aid). In addition, all students are entitled to utilize SWIC's Disability and Access Center, Student Success Center, Library, computer labs and free, on-campus parking. SWIC also provides an office at both its Granite City and Belleville Campus that is a single point of contact for all students being funded through WIOA/TAA programs in various Workforce Development Areas in Illinois and Missouri. This enables the customer to deal only with one office at the College staffed by personnel with knowledge of college requirements and Government Regulations.

- Kaskaskia College (KC) Kaskaskia College provides services for students including: Career services - resume assistance, career assessment and research, assistance with job placement; support services including transportation assistance, counseling, and childcare; accommodations for students with documented disabilities; tutoring services; mental health screenings.
- Lewis and Clark Community College (LCCC) provides transportation services to eligible students including bus passes and bus tokens. They also provides career services, tutoring through its student success centers and financial assistance and supports for all students. Students have access to LCCC's Access and Accommodations Center, counseling, the Library Resource Center, computer labs and free parking at the main campus and all of the centers across the district. LCCC's Adult Education programming provides transportation, case management and transition services for its students as well.
- Metro St. Louis-Travel Training Program teaches persons who are elderly or have a disability how to use public transportation in St. Clair County, St. Louis City and St. Louis County. Once a participant is comfortable with their progress and able to travel independently, a customized travel route is developed.
- Community Hope Center provides weekly computer classes and budgeting food dollar classes.
- Urban League offers computer courses and a variety of other job readiness classes & services in Fairview Heights and St. Louis.
- The MET Center offers training programs for special populations requiring supportive services on both the Missouri and Illinois side of the river.
- Madison County Employment and Training (LWIA 22) offers free Madison County Transit bus passes to their youth and veteran customers that need to come to the one stop center for job search, see an employer for a job interview, or initially need transportation to a new job until they receive their first paycheck.
- LWIA 22 offers other supportive services to their WIOA enrolled customers to assist in filling an employment or training need. An example of this need may be auto insurance payment, limited childcare while conducting a job search or attending an interview, a car repair payment, rent assistance, temporary shelter payment, utility payment, job interview clothing, or other legitimate need of a customer that is reasonable and necessary.
- LWIA 24 provides transportation and childcare on a case-by-case basis. Also, LWIA 24 refers clients to appropriate agencies within their county of residence for additional supportive services, i.e., LIHEAP, CSBG, etc.
- The Community Resource Packet published by Madison County Community Development offers a comprehensive regional compilation of supportive service providers.

- St. Clair County Intergovernmental Grants Department (IGD) offers a listing of supportive services through its office at 19 Public Square, Suite 200, Belleville, Illinois 62220.
- The Madison County Career and Technical Education Program has placed an increased focus on connecting with their high school counselors to share information regarding career opportunities in the CTE fields. They have an annual joint counselor meeting with schools from this region of the state. During the past few years, they have asked CTE students to sit on a panel and share their experiences with the counselors. As a result, the counselors have and continue to become increasingly aware of the impact high school CTE programs have had on their students (and not just dumping grounds for students who are not otherwise able/willing to perform). The counselors are also learning about the importance of the opportunities available in the workforce without a traditional four-year university education, including Process Operations Program at LCCC and Registered Apprenticeship Programs through the local trades. Counselors are realizing once again that high school CTE programs are a very viable way to bridge many of the current skills gaps.
- Illinois Department of Rehabilitation Services (Madison County and St. Clair County) provides books, transportation, assistive technology, information and referral/counseling and guidance and other substantial services to customers who qualify.
- The standardized curriculums used by Adult Education providers include instruction designed to enhance individual's self-management skills, ability to develop interpersonal relationships and workplace readiness skills.
- IMPACT CIL offers a Community Technology Center/Learning Lab that is available upon an appointment request. Individualized assistance is available for keyboarding skills, WORD, PowerPoint, Email, Internet usage, as well as other basic career development skills (resume and cover letter writing and job searching).

2. What policies and procedures will be established to promote coordination of supportive services delivery?

Through partner meetings and continuing cross-training among partners, policies and procedures may be established to promote coordination of supportive services delivery by ensuring that:

- Sufficient supportive services funding is available.
- Skilled program leaders and staff maintain linkages and coordination.
- Collaborative partners share a common purpose and understand the customer's needs.
- Initiatives with a customer do not take a "one size fits all" approach.
- The timeline for the customer career plan must be reasonable.
- Communication among collaborating partners by utilizing partner referral form.

- Expand Career Center focus toward longer-term career development with Career Information System and Career Clusters.

C. Describe the coordination of services with regional economic development services and WIOA service providers (§ 679.510(a)(1)(vii)). The plan must address the following sections: 1. What economic development organizations, WIOA service providers or businesses are actively engaged in regional planning?

Illinois Department of Economic Development Regional Economic Development Team RED serves the state of Illinois with Economic Development strategies and support.

Southwestern Illinois Development Authority works with the public and private sectors to jumpstart investment and job creation & retention.

Chamber of Commerce of Southwestern Madison County represents the cities of Granite City, Madison, Venice, the Village of Pontoon Beach, and the unincorporated area known as Mitchell.

Edwardsville-Glen Carbon Chamber of Commerce represents nearly 500 businesses in the city of Edwardsville and village of Glen Carbon.

Collinsville Chamber of Commerce serves the business community in the City of Collinsville through supporting growth and economic development opportunities.

Riverbend Growth Association is both the Chamber of Commerce and the Economic Development Organization for Alton, Bethalto, East Alton, Elsah, Foster Township, Godfrey, Grafton, Hartford, Roxana, South Roxana, Wood River and the Wood River Township.

Troy/Maryville/St. Jacob/Marine Area Chamber of Commerce promotes business development and networking to enhance growth in their communities.

Greater Belleville Chamber of Commerce supports and advances business and community interests, promoting the quality of life in Belleville and surrounding communities.

O'Fallon-Shiloh Chamber of Commerce serves the city of O'Fallon and the village of Shiloh by promoting business and fostering economic growth.

Highland Chamber of Commerce serves the city of Highland. The Chamber's mission is Community Prosperity: Making Highland the best place to live, learn, work, shop and play. The chamber is an advocate and service organization for business and provides a venue through which business professionals can take effective action for the progress and growth of their communities.

East Side Aligned promotes policy, practice and investment across sectors to ensure all children &

youth within the greater East St. Louis area are supported and ready for life.

Madison County Community Development houses an economic development division that offers a wide range of programs to help businesses cost-effectively locate and expand their operations within Madison County. These programs are designed to provide assistance in the form of tax incentives, business financing, infrastructure development, employee recruitment and training, and general technical assistance such as confidential site location services. A network of economic development assistance organizations, staffed by experienced professionals at the state, regional, and local level, are linked together in Madison County to provide optimum assistance to businesses interested in development or expansion in the County. This network is ready to utilize all available resources to confidentially develop a comprehensive incentive proposal.

St. Clair County Intergovernmental Grants Department (IGD) The Intergovernmental Grants Department serves as an umbrella agency containing three divisions providing services to the public. They are Community Development; Community Services; and Workforce Development. Economic Development activities are also administered by IGD's Executive Director.

LWIA 22 and 24 One-Stop MOU Partners (core and other partners) actively promote and administer services for both businesses and individuals under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

2. What economic development organizations, WIOA service providers or businesses were invited to participate but declined?

No organization declined to participate.

D. Describe the coordination of administrative cost arrangements, including the pooling of funds for administrative costs, as appropriate (§ 679.510(a)(1)(v)).

If an issue is found that is not addressed in our local MOU's, we will proceed as follows: In the event of a need for administrative cost pooling or coordination, the parties involved will enter negotiations. Any administrative costs will be reviewed by the partners and examined for appropriate cost allocation. The results of this procedure will determine the course of action to be taken to address administrative costs sharing.

If an issue arises that is not addressed by the MOU and budget, the local WIOA agrees to absorb any administrative costs until such time that appropriate cost allocation can be reviewed and negotiated among the one-stop partners. Given the current state budget crisis and its toll on one-stop partner budgets, this would be the most effective way to address administrative costs in a timely manner. Recent examples of partner negotiations include the One-Stop Operator Consortium and the agreement to negotiate the funding of a resource room Business Services Representative after the expiration of a proposed service integration grant.

E. Describe how *responsiveness, inclusivity and accessibility*⁶ is or will be incorporated in the regional service integration strategies, including job seekers and employers.

Southwestern Illinois Area Planning Council #522 in partnership with the St. Clair County Intergovernmental Grants Department hosts a bi-monthly meeting with regional educators, community-based organizations and employers to discuss education and workforce needs. The Homeless Coalition of St. Clair County (HCSCC) attended a recent meeting and brought up a need for their clients to have transportation. HCSCC stated that some of their clients wanted employment in the warehouse and manufacturing tract along the Highway 255/111 corridor in Edwardsville. HCSCC also brought up that the Salvation Army location on Main Street in Belleville would be opening a homeless resources center.

Recognizing the need to provide convenient healthcare training opportunities to its employees, Memorial Hospital partners with Midwest Career Source Vocational School (MCS) and St. Clair County's Intergovernmental Grants Department (IGD) to create a unique opportunity to "grow" its direct patient care team and help reduce turnover in entry level roles. The program is targeted at employees working in other hospital departments who have a passion for a role in direct patient care. Currently, MCS offers a patient care technician (PCT) program at Memorial, however, there is a desire to expand program offerings in the future to include other roles in direct patient care. Memorial's goal was to implement this training opportunity as a pilot for other healthcare career needs. If there are not enough internal candidates to fill the class, we take referrals from our employees or from a list of applicants who have applied to work at BJC but need additional training for the role.

Person-centered planning is a growing priority across local workforce areas, focusing on understanding the unique needs, strengths, and goals of job seekers and program participants. Through service integration and strong partner collaboration, referrals are timelier and more effective, and services are better coordinated. This approach streamlines service delivery, reduces duplication, and improves outcomes by ensuring participants receive comprehensive, responsive support aligned with their employment goals.

CHAPTER 3: VISION, GOALS AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

This section will outline how the Local Workforce Board(s) will coordinate the regional workforce, education and economic development activities with regional activities that are carried out in the local areas. The responses must illustrate that business, education and workforce development stakeholders have provided input and are involved with the development of the strategies and to ensure alignment with other plans.

- A. Describe the local strategic vision to support state and regional economic growth (§ 679.560(a)(5)). Describe how this aligns with the State of Illinois' vision and principles (page 1). Include a description of how the region and local areas will accomplish the local strategic vision and support state and regional economic growth.

The strategic vision for EDR 9 and Local Workforce Innovation Area 22 and 24 (LWIA 22 and 24) is to provide business-driven talent and data-driven solutions that integrate education, workforce, and economic development resources across systems to provide businesses, individuals, and communities with the opportunity to prosper and contribute to growing the regional and state economies. Our vision aligns with the State of Illinois' vision, as declared in the 2024-2028 State of Illinois WIOA Unified State Plan, to foster a statewide workforce development system that supports the needs of individuals and businesses to ensure Illinois has a skilled workforce to effectively compete in the global economy.

Utilizing essential labor market data, this Regional Plan provides equal opportunity and equitable access for area residents to achieve economic independence and improved quality of life. These opportunities are provided through a collaborative workforce development system built on the solid foundation of strong partnerships with local businesses, integrated services, robust career pathways, and cross-agency connections. The combined efforts of all players in the local workforce will promote life-long learning and proactively address the talent and technical skill needs of employers in our region.

This is achieved through a comprehensive Illinois workNet Center and access sites throughout our 9-county region. These locations provide business driven services, with emphasis on developing and strengthening career services for businesses and job seekers, strive for continuous improvement, and provide accountability for results. By providing training and education to those who are unemployed or underemployed, as well as offering supportive services - such as employment readiness, resume building, interviewing skills, job referrals, mileage reimbursement, childcare, uniforms, etc. - to assist special populations facing increased obstacles to success, the LWIB will nourish and expand the local skill and talent pool for high-demand occupations in the region.

- B. Describe the local goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce (including youth and individuals with barriers to employment) and goals relating to the performance accountability measures based on performance indicators (§ 677.155(a)(1)). Include a description of how the region and local areas will accomplish local goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce and goals relating to performance.
- Develop curriculums that align with the state's elementary and secondary education content standards which will specify what adult education learners should know and be able to do in the areas of reading, language arts, mathematics, and English language acquisition.
 - Promote transition from adult education to postsecondary education and employment through career pathways by providing adult education instructional services that are contextually related to workforce training and the needs of employers.
 - Assist immigrants and English language learners in (a) improving reading, writing, math, speaking, and comprehending the English language and (b) acquiring understanding of American government, individual freedom, and responsibilities of citizenship.
 - Establish high quality professional development programs to enhance the instructional services provided by adult education providers.
 - Operate established One-Stop centers for services to employers, with job seekers prepared to meet employer hiring needs.
 - Promote educational attainment and credentials that meet employer hiring needs.

- Develop and support workforce strategies that respond to current economic conditions and specific regional and local needs, customizing services for specific employers.
- Proactively address future workforce needs.
- The community colleges are committed to improving methods to accurately track the employment of all completers and document the anecdotal data presently collected that demonstrates successfully obtaining a recognized academic credential. The credential will lead directly to employment in the field of study with employment continuing into the second and fourth quarter after exit. A valuable resource to find Illinois colleges that best fit a student's educational priorities and career goals within the state is the website, *Illinois College2Career* at <https://www.ilcollege2career.com>.
- Further develop the existing pipeline to area middle and high schools so their usage of the Illinois Career Information System increases. The Junior version (grades 5-8) and Standard (grades 9-college) provide learning plans and portfolios that are portable to Illinois schools. Curriculum in all subject areas is included, with an emphasis on the required state standards on career investigation and planning.
- Continue to utilize and expand the usage of the Jobseeker version of the Career Information System in the Illinois Job Centers, where customers can receive staff assistance in establishing their portfolio career plan.
- Assist veterans who access services in the job centers to make career goals based on their interests, establish career plans utilizing all job center partner services and support including financial.
- Ensure that educational goals for persons with disabilities are appropriate and provide necessary support services for success.
- Actively engage students with disabilities while in secondary school to ensure smooth transition to post-secondary school and/or workforce.

Title 1-B PY 2025-2026 Performance Goals

Performance Measurement	LWIA #22	LWIA #24
Adult Employment Rate 2 nd Quarter After Exit	80.0%	74%
Adult Employment Rate 4 th Quarter after Exit	78.0%	70%
Adult Median Earnings	\$11,00	\$9,000
Adult Credential Attainment	78%	76%
Adult Measurable Skills Gains	65%	73%
Dislocated Worker Employment Rate 2 nd Quarter After Exit	82.0%	75%
Dislocated Worker Employment Rate 4 th Quarter After Exit	80.0%	75%
Dislocated Worker Median Earnings	11,000	\$10,700
Dislocated Worker Credential Attainment	75%	80%

Dislocated Worker Measurable Skills Gains	70%	75%
Youth Employment/Placement in Education Rate 2 nd Quarter After Exit	72.0%	67%
Youth Employment/Placement in Education Rate 4 th Quarter after Exit	72.0%	69%
Youth Median Earnings	\$3,500	\$3,500
Youth Credential Attainment	74.0%	77%
Youth Measurable Skills Gains	65%	65%

Regional Adult Education Performance Measures

National Reporting System – FY2025 Illinois Targets

Rolled-up Level Completion	41%
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PY 2024-2025 Performance Targets: Jobs for Veterans State Grant Funded Services <i>(Source: ETA-9173 for JVSG)</i>	
Employment Rate - 2nd Quarter After Exit <i>(Source: Item D.1, Total Current Period column)</i>	58.0%
Employment Rate - 4th Quarter After Exit <i>(Source: Item D.2, Total Current Period column)</i>	59.0%
Median Earnings - 2nd Quarter After Exit <i>(Source: Item D.3, Total Current Period column)</i>	\$8,500

C. Provide a description of the regional and local strategies that will achieve the vision and principles. This section must include a description of the strategies and services that will be used in the local areas:

1. To facilitate engagement of employers in workforce development programs, including small employers and employers in in-demand industry sectors and occupations (§679.560(b)(3)(i));

Outreach is conducted to employers posting job orders to develop awareness of recruitment assistance available from the One-Stop Centers which may include on-the-job training grant opportunities, facilities for job fairs, interviewing, or testing, and some level of candidate screening. Additional services are offered to employers to strengthen the workforce in the form of work-based learning: on-the-job training; incumbent worker training; paid work experience and apprenticeship opportunities. Outreach to small businesses occurs through partnerships with the local chambers of commerce. BST members provide outreach at chamber sponsored events and educate small businesses on regional services. In-demand occupations and employers for in-demand occupations

are targeted for outreach by the BST once identified by monthly LMI at monthly BST meetings.

The local One-Stop Centers in Region 9 provides the following services that also support the workforce system: assessment of hiring needs, customized recruiting, job-postings, veteran recruiting, training grants for skilled, new and incumbent workers, soft-skills training, labor market information and space for hiring events.

2. To support a local workforce development system that meets the needs of businesses in the local area (§ 679.560(b)(3)(ii));

The two leading organizations representing EDR 9, St. Clair County Intergovernmental Grants Department – Workforce Development Group and Madison County Employment & Training, currently administer the WIOA grants as well as an existing Apprenticeship Expansion Grant. Both entities, as county departments, have been able to utilize the local government support and existing resources to effectively serve businesses throughout the region. This has enabled not only the administration of WIOA business services, but also the county (and state) incentives vital to not only retain businesses, but to help them thrive and expand. In addition, both organizations have led the formation and growth of the Regional Business Services Team. This team is dedicated to providing business services across EDR 9 and has grown to incorporate Business Services Representatives, and the focus on work-based learning, including registered apprenticeships. All of this has led to strong relationships within our regional business community, which in turn has led to business “buy-in” and participation when it comes to projects such as the Apprenticeship Expansion Grant.

Both St. Clair County Intergovernmental Grants Department – Workforce Development Group and Madison County Employment & Training have greatly utilized their extensive partnerships when it comes to key stakeholders within EDR 9. Representatives from both organizations, including the Business Services Representatives, participate in numerous committees and workgroups connected to chambers of commerce, economic development organizations and social service agencies. This has been vital to serving the business community and also is critical to implementing the TPM strategies throughout the region. These key relationships also allow the consortium to reach out to the harder to serve populations in a much more cohesive fashion. In addition, both workforce development organizations serve as registered apprenticeships intermediaries and work in cooperation with the Regional Business Services Representatives to develop and grow new intermediaries.

The manufacturing sector has long been a mainstay of the Southwestern Illinois economy and is currently the top maturing industry. Each October for several years now, SWIC, at the Sam Wolf Granite City Campus, hosts “*Manufacturing Day-from Handmade to High Tech*”. Open to the public, attendees start the day at the SWIC Industrial Technology Center Open House, tour the SWIC advanced manufacturing facility, see demonstrations of cutting-edge technology, try their hand at virtual welding and meet more than 25 local manufacturers. The event is presented in partnership with the Gene Haas Foundation, Granite City Economic Development Department,

IMEC – Illinois Manufacturing Excellence Center, Leadership Council Southwestern Illinois, Madison County Employment and Training, St. Clair County Intergovernmental Grants Department, and the Southwestern Madison County Chamber of Commerce.

3. To better coordinate workforce development programs and economic development (§ 679.560(b)(3)(iii));

Our Business Services Representatives for EDR 9 are members of the EDR 9's BST. Members of the BST meet and make contact with regional businesses. Members of the BST meet monthly. In an effort to reduce redundant business contacts, the BST developed a business contact protocol. The contact protocol sets forth that the first BST member making contact with a business will do an assessment of the business to determine the business' needs, then refer to the business the BST organization or other organization that can provide the resources to the business.

Training of the BST took place in March and April of 2019. The BST members were trained on the services that each member organization had available for businesses. In order to make sure all BST members are aware of contacts that are made, a communication system for business contacts was developed. When a BST member makes a business contact, an email with the business' name as the email subject is sent to all BST members via an Outlook group contact along with a brief summary of the contact substance, person(s) contacted, and needs of the business. A follow up action is listed and a referral made if needed.

The Business Services Representatives regularly attend Chamber of Commerce meetings and events creating awareness and understanding on apprenticeships, Talent Pipeline Management strategies and work-based learning opportunities. The Business Services Representative meets with the Regional Offices of Education and School Superintendents to create awareness and understanding on apprenticeships, Talent Pipeline Management strategies and work-based learning opportunities.

4. To strengthen linkages between the one-stop delivery system and unemployment insurance programs (§ 679.560(b)(3)(iv));

EDR 9 has two one-stop centers, one full service in Belleville that has Unemployment Representatives on site to address questions, issues and assist with filing claims online. The other center in Wood River provides direct linkage, computers for self-service filing of claims and phone to call customer service 1-800#. All staff located in the centers refer customers for employment and training services.

5. To promote entrepreneurial skills training and micro-enterprise services (§ 679.560(b)(4));

EDR 9 participates in initiatives of the Small Business Development Center at SIUE and encourages customers in the One Stop Centers to explore additional opportunities for small business startups.

The SIUE Small Business Development Center (SIUE SBDC) is a service to the community supported by the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, and Southern Illinois University Edwardsville (SIUE) School of Business.

SIUE operates two Small Business Development Centers and the International Trade Center. All Centers provide resources and information to Southwestern Illinois entrepreneurs, business owners, small business service providers, and the university community.

By assisting entrepreneurs and companies in defining their path to success, the SBDC network positively impacts the Southwestern Illinois Region by strengthening the business community, creating and retaining new jobs, and encouraging new investment. The SBDC enhances Southwestern Illinois's economic interests providing one-stop assistance to individuals by means of advising, training, research, and advocacy for new ventures and existing small businesses. When appropriate, the SBDC strives to affiliate its ties to the Southwestern Illinois Region to support the goals and objectives of both the SIUE School of Business and the University at large.

6. To implement initiatives such as incumbent worker training programs, on-the-job training programs, customized training programs, industry and sector strategies, career pathways initiatives, utilization of effective business intermediaries, and other business services and strategies designed to meet the needs of regional employers (§ 679.560(b)(3)(v)).

Our Regional Business Services Team, is currently working with the regions high school career and technical education facilities and programs to develop partnerships with local businesses to develop apprenticeships and work-based learning opportunities. Some of these facilities and programs are in underserved areas and have a large portion of students that qualify under the Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act of 2014 (WIOA) eligibility requirements.

The Business Services Representative gives presentations to local high school classes on apprenticeship and work-based learning opportunities that exist and how to connect with those opportunities. The Business Services Representative educates on the employability skills necessary to get and retain employment and where to learn these skills to increase the students' chances of getting and retaining employment.

Kaskaskia offers a non-credit training on Essential Workforce Skills which students can earn a badge for through our badging system. We would welcome the opportunity to expand this training. More information can be found [Essential Workplace Skills - Kaskaskia College](#) .

Our BST is working with local businesses in target sectors to host site visit events for the area high school students to develop interest in the businesses and to develop interest in possible apprenticeships with the businesses. The BST is also working with local businesses to host events for high school student's parents in order to get parental buy-in for possible apprenticeships.

The Business Services Representatives are working with the local high schools in an effort to get

the schools to use the Illinois Career Information System (ICIS) to access the students in order to know what career cluster the student's assessment identifies. The goal is to identify the career cluster, find out what jobs contained in the cluster interest the students and provide contextualized instruction for the identified jobs.

The Business Services Representatives are on a committee to develop a yearly career fair for the St. Clair County high school career and technical education programs. The first career fair was held on March of 2024. Kaskaskia College in partnership hosts a career fair on our campus yearly during the fall semester for all high schools in our district. It is in partnership with Marion, Clinton and Washington Counties Career & Technical Education Center.

The plan is to start with St. Clair County schools and to expand to include all of the schools in Economic Region 9.

The Business Services Representatives meets with all three community colleges in Region 9 to coordinate partnerships with the community colleges and the schools, businesses, and community-based organizations.

St. Clair IGD is currently engaged in an IWT project with MAC Medical to train 10 registered apprentices in welding. IGD will pay for the related training instruction and OJT for the apprentices.

EDR 9 will host four sector-based employer roundtable events each year to promote business services and work-based learning resources available to businesses.

- D. Describe regional strategies that will increase apprenticeship and other work-based learning opportunities.

Economic Development Region 9 Apprenticeship Consortium

EDR 9 Apprenticeship Consortium has requested funding for several apprenticeship proposals over the past couple of months. The EDR 9 Apprenticeship Consortium has chosen the medical and manufacturing sectors for this work. Both sectors are highlighted in the Unified State Plan as well as the WIOA Regional Plan for EDR 9.

Working as the Business Services Representatives, the Consortium will immediately pursue formal DOL approved apprenticeships for Gulfstream to provide a new approach for recruitment and training. Gulfstream has expressed their strong desire to be part of this opportunity. West Star Aviation, located in East Alton, Illinois, plans to utilize the Department of Labor approved Airframe and Power Plant Mechanic apprenticeship program. West Star has implemented 3 cohorts of the West Star Academy hiring and training employees. The educational provider is Southwestern Illinois College (SWIC) and the educational component will be an Associate in Applied Science Degree for Aviation Maintenance Technology. The classroom portion is 75 credit hours in length, and the anticipated length of the apprenticeship is 8,000 hours. EDR 9 is in an enviable position in that all of the WIOA Core partners and many of our non-core partners have already come together to create a formal Regional Business

Services team. This team holds regular meetings and has been granted access to and trained on the Illinois Job Link system as a means to operate cohesively under one system. Based on conversations with other Local Workforce Area Directors, this is unique to our region. By utilizing WIOA partners in our navigation plan, the Consortium will be able to leverage existing relationships, address eligibility and capacity issues and concerns, and cover a much broader geographical region. The Consortium expects that this model will vastly increase awareness and the rewards of apprenticeships to both employers and job seekers.

The Business Services Representatives from both LWIA 22 and LWIA 24 will educate employers and the public on the use of apprenticeships and Talent Pipeline Management strategies to produce a skilled workforce using WIOA eligible individuals and individuals with barriers. The team will educate employers and the public on responsiveness, inclusivity, and accessibility in the workforce. The Business Services Representatives educate employers and the public on using the Illinois Career Pathways Dictionary in order to standardize language and understanding and using the Illinois Career Information System to access student's career pathways.

The Business Services Representative's anticipated goal under this project is to develop apprenticeships for the occupations of Certified Medical Assistants, Aviation Maintenance Technicians, Avionics Maintenance Technicians, Industrial Maintenance Technicians, Diesel and Auto Mechanics, and Welders and other occupations as the need is identified by Labor Market Information. Every effort will be made to identify non-traditional occupations across all sectors.

The Business Services Representatives will assist the Community Colleges, Regional Offices of Education, Employer Associations, Employers and regional high schools to become intermediaries and provide technical and resource support in order to increase the number of effective intermediaries available to grow apprenticeships in Region 9.

Bridging the Talent Gap Report

A main reason employer survey respondents experience difficulty in hiring includes the lack of the right skills for the job (48%). 80% of respondents report that their business does not provide any support for work-based learning. 65% of respondents indicated that they did not currently work with a local education provider to assess skill gaps. It is our hope that this report has opened the eyes of businesses that they may need to work with the local one-stops in our region for assistance with work-based learning opportunities, including apprenticeships.

Southwestern Illinois Regional Apprenticeship Meeting

Madison County Employment & Training, St. Clair County Intergovernmental Grants Department and the City of Collinsville hosts a Southwestern Illinois Regional Apprenticeship Meeting from 9 a.m. to noon Thursday, each October at Collinsville's Gateway Convention Center. The meetings feature presentations and panel discussions exploring the apprenticeship opportunities in our local area. Area

business leaders, training providers, workforce professionals, and apprentices explained the benefits of implementing work-based learning, and attendees learned more about growing apprenticeship opportunities as part of building a sustainable talent pipeline in our region.

Regional Business Services Representatives

When a business decides that a registered apprenticeship is a tool of value to the business, the Business Services Representatives help navigate the business through the apprenticeship process from start to implementation of the apprenticeship. The team facilitates the contact between the business and the intermediary and provides any needed technical assistance to the business. An example of technical assistance to a business is sitting down with a business to analyze talent flows to see where their current talent came from.

The Regional Business Services Representatives assist pre-apprenticeship participants in transitioning to registered apprenticeships, for example, identifying to participants the requisites necessary to enter a registered apprenticeship.

Our Business Services Representatives have held meetings with businesses and educational providers from secondary and post-secondary education to use apprenticeships as a part of the TPM System. The team will continue to look at program offerings by the high school career and technical education programs and make recommendations on how to strengthen those programs to achieve better results with more recognized credentialing.

- E. Describe initiatives to shorten the time from credential to employment and address how the area will work with the education system to begin putting training opportunities in place to meet this strategy.

Digital Badging. SIUE has partnered with Acclaim to provide professionals with a digital version of their earned credentials. Digital badges can be used in email signatures or digital resumes, and on social media sites such as LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter. This digital image contains verified metadata that describes the professional's qualifications and the process required to earn them. SIUE currently offers 10 STEM badges and on-line certificates.

Kaskaskia College is also developing a digital badging program to promote qualifications and non-credit training that participants can use on resumes and social media sites.

Talent Pipeline Management (as defined in Section F) is another initiative to shorten the time from credential to employment. Strategy 2 (Engage in Demand Planning) addresses the quantity, location, and time in which talent needs to be ready for critical jobs identified by the employer collaborative. Strategy 3 (Communicate Competency & Credential Requirements) addresses the final missing piece – quality – by addressing the competency, credentialing, and other hiring requirements for these jobs. Employers need to work together to create a common language in describing skills, competencies, credentials, and other hiring requirements. Through a shared language, employers in a collaborative

can better communicate similarities and differences in hiring requirements to education and workforce partners. Strategy 3 takeaways are to understand the importance of better communicating competency and credentialing requirements to fill critical positions, to identify opportunities for employers to better communicate and prioritize hiring requirements, and how to combine and share the results of employer demand planning and communicating competency and credentialing requirements.

F. Describe the steps that will be taken to support the state’s efforts to align and integrate education, workforce and economic development, including:

1. Fostering the improvement and expansion of employer-driven regional sector partnerships to increase the focus on critical in-demand occupations in key sectors that are the engine of economic growth for the state and its regions.

EDR 9 employs the initiative, TPM, developed by the US Chamber of Commerce Foundation. TPM is a demand-driven, employer-led approach to close the skills gap that builds talent supply chains aligned to dynamic business needs. The demands of today’s economy require a strategic alignment between classroom and career, so through this approach, employers play an expanded leadership role as “end-customers” of our education and training systems. TPM is a workforce strategy for our time that can meet the needs of an ever-changing business environment.

2. Expanding career pathway⁷ opportunities through more accelerated and work-based training and align and integrate programs of study leading to industry-recognized credentials and improved employment and earnings.

In order to enhance the current WIOA services to expand career pathways, integrate programs of study to lead to industry-recognized credentials, and improve job opportunities and earnings, EDR 9 will plan and develop the following steps for a results-driven workforce development system:

- Engage employers and use labor market intelligence in determining providing training and hiring options in their industry sector.
 - Develop and implement earn-and-learn job opportunities with employers through on-the-job training, internships and apprenticeships.
 - Measure and evaluate employment gained by program enrollees and earnings outcomes by target enrollment group.
 - Promote steppingstones for employment from entry, to advancement, to career.
 - Promote competency attainment in industry sectors with training skills.
3. Expanding career services and opportunities for populations facing multiple barriers to close the gap in educational attainment and economic advancement through career pathways and improved career services.
 - Perkins V- reauthorized in 2019 as Strengthening Career and Technical Education Act for the 21st Century, develop more fully the academic knowledge and technical and employability skills of secondary and postsecondary students enrolled in CTE programs of

study, increasing the employment opportunities for special populations. Perkins V staff have a presence in all three community colleges in our region.

- DVR provides a program entitled "Community College Initiative". If a customer meets the approval criteria, he/she will be funded by DVR to begin and obtain an Associate's Degree. Bachelor's and Master's Degree programs may also be funded if approval criteria are met.
- DVR will also provide reasonable accommodations for the disabled individual if necessary.
- SWIC and L&C provides career services not only to students and graduates through their Career Services Department but has dedicated staff at the WIOA Career Services offices on the Belleville Campus, Granite City Campus and at the East St. Louis Higher Education Center performing general career services to student and the general public. In addition, by providing a single point of contact for WIOA students, the students receive additional job search assistance and counseling during their program of study. L&C also has IL High School Diploma classes at the MCETD One Stop Center. SWIC and L&C provides career services not only to students and graduates through their Career Services Department but has dedicated staff at the WIOA Career Services offices on the Belleville Campus, Granite City Campus and at the East St. Louis Higher Education Center performing general career services to student and the general public. In addition, by providing a single point of contact for WIOA students, the students receive additional job search assistance and counseling during their program of study. L&C also has IL High School Diploma classes at the MCETD One Stop Center. Kaskaskia College also provides Illinois High School Diploma classes at our education centers and main campus.
- SIUE's Career Development Center incorporates career counseling and development with co-ops and internships in a comprehensive program to prepare students to enter the world of work. Serving SIUE students and alumni, they provide a starting point to access valuable career information. Through comprehensive services, their experienced staff help students and alumni connect with employers and find the resources they need. They also work with employers seeking to network with and hire SIUE students and alumni.
- Monthly meetings of the Regional ROE Transition Planning Committee and monthly meetings of the Area Planning Committee will continue with program information sharing and updates on educational opportunities and bridge programs.
- The IDES Labor Market Economist continues to provide training to DRS vocational rehabilitation counselors on the Illinois Career Information System, including the portfolio feature, to assist clients with planning and achieving career goals after investigating and comparing available options.
- The IDES Labor Market Economist continues to provide training to WIOA staff in the job centers on the Illinois Career Information System, including Career Plan.
- EDR 9 seeks to develop a stronger pipeline to juvenile and adult probation, both state and federal for enhanced career and employment services.
- The Hire the Future program provides presentations on career/job readiness to youth probationers.
- The Re-Entry Employment Service Program (RESP) helps people with criminal records find a job. RESP also provides job readiness workshops and services.
- Madison County Employment and Training presents job readiness workshops to residents at the Madison County Housing Authority.

- Connection to Success offers a holistic approach to pathways to employment. Services include coaching, weekly group sessions, employment support, mentoring, personal and professional development, transportation and used vehicles.
- L&C Adult Education's Building Futures YouthBuild effort provides a comprehensive model of youth development for out-of-school young people. This includes IL High School Diploma classes, vocational training, case management and counseling, leadership development, a stipend so youth can earn while they learn and follow up and transition services for a year or more after programming.
- Kaskaskia College provides ICAPS programming for participants in the Adult Education program. Adults can obtain this Illinois High School diploma while simultaneously participating in college classes to jump start their post-secondary education.
 - Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA)
 - Welding
 - Automotive Technology
 - Carpentry
 - Disability Support Services

G. Describe how goals established in this plan will be monitored and evaluated.

Every year in January, the partners involved in the local and regional planning process will meet to evaluate the goals written into each plan. This is done to amend, if necessary, the local and regional plans as required by the WIOA Act.

H. Describe how responsiveness, inclusivity and accessibility is or will be incorporated in the implementation of regional workforce, education, and economic development strategies.

Apprenticeship opportunities for students with disabilities have been established in EDR-9. Apprenticeships for students participating in the PACE program, formally known as the STEP Program have been developed and shown great success with assisting high school students in obtaining and maintaining gainful employment beyond graduation. Apprenticeships have been established between Collinsville High School, and the Gateway Convention Center, Edwardsville High School and the ACT -All County Transit Bus System, Granite City High School and Weber Chevrolet, and Scoggins Law Office, and Icon Mechanical. Bond County High School and Supplied Energy. Apprentice occupations are: landscaping/groundskeeping, housekeeping, event set up, bus sanitizer, warehouse worker, law office receptionist, safety assistant. Additional apprenticeships have been established for non-profits assisting individuals with disabilities in the areas of childcare assistant, housekeeper, pool maintenance assistant, animal care attendant, and librarian.

Person centered planning will also be instrumental in understanding the needs of participants and job seekers, helping to braid funding and opportunities. Person-centered planning supports individuals with disabilities by ensuring services are guided by each individual's strengths, goals, and support needs. This approach promotes meaningful participation in education, training, and employment by aligning services with personal interests, abilities, and necessary accommodations. Through coordinated service delivery and partner collaboration, person-centered planning reduces service gaps, improves access to integrated supports, and increases opportunities for competitive, integrated employment. As a result,

individuals with disabilities receive more responsive, effective services that support long-term independence and economic self-sufficiency.

Soulcial Kitchen has established a food truck court and restaurant in Swansea, Illinois. The restaurant serves as a commissary and training facility for individuals with intellectual disabilities, veterans, and other hard-to-hire personnel that are Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funding eligible. The unique program, the first of its kind in the United States, provides access to a two-year registered apprenticeship (Cook – Restaurant and Mobile operations) developed with the U.S. Department of Labor’s Office of Apprenticeship. Upon successful completion of the apprenticeship the individual will have the opportunity to receive private funding to launch their own food truck and develop a unique hospitality business with an established route to market.

One of the ways that equity can be explored and goals developed is by participating in the Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment (CLNA) required as we undertake implementation of Perkins V. The following is taken directly from the plan, “the CLNA process is meant to be completed alongside a diverse body of external stakeholders ... Using responsiveness, inclusivity and accessibility, the CLNA requires disaggregation of data to highlight, analyze, and work toward closing equity gaps for underserved populations. The CLNA process also crosswalks Perkins V and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) requirements for standards and examination of equity and access for specific student subpopulations (Perkins V). Community colleges are required under Perkins V to engage a diverse body of stakeholders in the CLNA process.” In order to achieve equity, local boards and partners must be able to reflect on how existing practices and systems may be creating barriers for underrepresented and marginalized groups. They must then be willing to make changes that rectify these inequities. Participating in the CLNA process will guide our development of equity goals as well as ensure that we prepare action plans in order to achieve these goals.

One example of promoting accessibility access and overcoming a barrier for students is to offer services in multiple locations so that they are able to access services in a less intimidating location that may be closer to home. This effort is especially helpful for communities of color, English Language Learners and adult education students, many of whom have not had the experience of navigating a college environment. L&C is doing this at its Scott Bibb Center in the Alton community. This location focuses primarily on adult education students and offers the first semester of Integrated Education and Training in several career pathways. Integral to this first step of training is a comprehensive and high support first semester that also builds in the next step – a transition to CTE whenever appropriate.

Another example is L&C’s NO Nelson Center in Edwardsville reducing barriers for our English language learners and by offering ESL classes in a convenient, accessible location that data shows is near where most of our ESL students live. Once they have built their skills, we focus on transitioning them to CTE courses when they are interested in pursuing them.

L&C will be hosting the Alton Area’s Clean Jobs Workforce Network. L&C’s Scott Bibb Center will

become a CEJA HUB for the area's Climate and Equitable Jobs Act and will provide Clean Energy workforce training in solar and energy efficiency as well as a Clean Energy Bridge course for equity-eligible populations in the coming year. Demand-driven clean energy and related trainings will be added in the years to follow.

All DVR staff have been trained on Disability and Inclusion. In addition, we are getting ready to hold a Trans Humility Training for Regions 4/5 DVR staff next month. DVR Metro East (Madison and St. Clair County) has a pilot project in the works to do Digital Outreach and Education for potential customers.

Title 1B, under the equitable lens, advocates for participants to their training providers if they need a reasonable accommodation or modification that will allow them to complete the requirements of their program within the guidelines of the provider.

Southwestern Illinois College (SWIC) submitted an application for a Workforce Equity Initiative (WEI) Grant from the Illinois Community College Board for East St. Louis and surrounding areas. The principal goal of the grant is to provide accelerated workforce training programs and supportive services for the targeted population that will ultimately lead to employment in high-skilled, high-wage occupations. SWIC's overarching objective is to increase minority enrollment with emphasis on Health Sciences, Information Technology, HVAC, and Manufacturing program opportunities in the service region through expansion and development of programming and support services by the grant conclusion. This project would continue to actively promote equity and expand previous WEI programming while also embedding academic and personal support into previously established programs. In broadening the scope of the previous project, SWIC will address a larger array of gaps in workforce equity, with specific regard to the African American community. The overall project objectives will allow SWIC to establish new, streamlined avenues for strategic workforce placement that lead to at-risk and African American populations receiving training and credentials to support a fiscally sustainable lifestyle. WEI funding from the 2020 fiscal year resulted in a strong focus on racial equity with 70% of participants identifying as African American. This grant set the groundwork for other SWIC projects which promote racial equity, including a Cannabis Industry Certificate program designed to target communities disproportionately impacted by the criminalization of cannabis. Pending ICCB approval, SWIC will be working with local dispensaries and cultivation centers who actively hire from minority populations. SWIC also participates in a community revitalization project centered around Venice, Illinois, which seeks to impact holistic change to a historically underserved African American majority population through affordable housing, a health center, a new grocery store, and workforce training center.

Kaskaskia College also is the recipient of the WEI grant for their district. KC serves students in Health Sciences, Information Technology, HVAC, Welding, Carpentry Occupations, and Automotive Technology programs.

SWIC is also in the planning stages of constructing a new manufacturing training academy which will actively support the enrollment and employment of women and minorities. As with construction and building trades, regional demographics of the manufacturing industry overwhelmingly trend white and

male, and the college aims to balance that through equitable recruitment and programming, with a goal of at least 40% of manufacturing students identifying as minority and 25% identifying as women.

⁷The [State of Illinois Career Pathways Dictionary](https://isac.org/pace/cp_dictionary_11-13-18_final.pdf) is available at isac.org/pace/cp_dictionary_11-13-18_final.pdf

E) “Establish administrative cost arrangements, including the pooling of funds for administrative costs, as appropriate, in order to meet the Region’s needs”

At this time the establishment of administrative cost arrangements, including the pooling of funds for administrative costs is not appropriate or needed for the St. Louis Region.

F) “The Regional Plan will address the coordination of transportation and other supportive services, as appropriate, for the region and must address how individuals will be served given differing local Supportive Service policies”

Supportive service awards, whether for adult, dislocated worker, or youth participants are intended to enable enrolled individuals to participate in workforce-funded programs and activities to secure and retain employment. Based on individual assessment and availability of funds, supportive services such as transportation, childcare, dependent care, and needs-related payments, may be awarded to eligible participants on an as-needed basis according to the administering Area’s Supportive Service Policy.

Local Areas may call other Areas within the Region when funds are limited to collaborate on providing supportive service. For instance, if a participant from one Area is offered an On-the-Job Training position at an employer located in another Area, the two Areas may work together to provide the training and/or supportive service.

Local Areas agree to note services provided to each participant, including Supportive Service, in the State’s case management system. This ensures no duplication of service.

G) “The coordination of services with regional economic development services and providers....”

The six LWDA’s are collaborating with the following to coordinate services with regional economic development services and providers:

The Greater STL, East-West Gateway Council of Governments, St. Charles County Chambers, St. Louis Economic Development Partnership, the Leadership Council Southwestern Illinois, EDC Business & Community Partners St. Charles County, St. Louis Development Corporation and the Missouri Partnership.

The LWDA’s participate in planning meetings and regional economic development events. LWDA’s use data, analysis and reports from such economic planners as those mentioned above in Section D of this document to ensure service and expenditure Plans address the coordination.

H) “Establish an agreement concerning how the planning region will collectively negotiate and reach agreement with the Governor on local levels of performance for and report on the performance accountability measures described in Section 116(c) for the local areas or the planning region....”

The St. Louis Region has collaboratively developed a negotiation agreement for the Planning Region. In accordance with and allowed in OWD Policy 04-2023, Local and Regional Plan Guidelines for Local Workforce Development Boards, the Local Boards in this region elect to negotiate and report performance independently.

The St. Louis Metropolitan Regional Directors' Consortium Coordination Strategy

The six individual WIOA local regions that make up the St. Louis Metropolitan Region agree to the following service strategies:

1. Act as regional steering committee made up of at least the Local Area WIOA Directors.
 - The Committee will meet on a regular basis to share information on new initiatives, as well as, challenges found in the Region.
 - This committee will provide a forum for local areas to solve problems of common concern, develop and implement joint strategies and/or policies.
2. Build consensus around broad goals and strategies.
 - Shared goals to be discussed may be to increase the proportion of households in the region earning a family-supporting wage, decreased long-term reliance on income subsidies or to address the specific skill and talent needs of local industries/sectors.
 - The Region originally selected manufacturing and healthcare as the first sectors in our joint sector strategy initiative as required by WIOA. Recently, the Region has added Information Technology (IT) as its third sector initiative. The strategies developed to address the workforce needs of the two original sectors will continue to be implemented and updated. The Region will work together to develop new initiatives to meet the expanding needs of the IT sector in the St. Louis Metropolitan Region.
 - The regional collaboration will provide a clearinghouse for labor market information by linking existing resources, researching information gaps and marketing local assets.
 - The Region has begun to accomplish this by sharing workforce events in a calendar format, email blasts and through social media.
 - The Region conducts meetings of business team representatives across the Region to coordinate services to employers and avoid duplication of effort.
 - The Region also has a disability committee that crosses several local areas and invites all areas to participate, as appropriate, in service to this population.
 - Build closer alliances with local, regional and state economic development agencies to create more integration between business recruitment/retention efforts and workforce issues.
3. Develop a shared understanding of the region's customer base.
 - Work together to collect industry sector analysis throughout the Region.
 - Each area will report how local businesses are meeting their workforce needs.
 - Identify skills, talents and aptitudes of the local workforce areas.
 - Identify skill gaps as well as gaps in local systems to address the training needs.
 - Collect information on common barriers to skill attainment and employment.
4. Forge linkages between workforce development and other work-related systems
 - Identify resources outside the workforce system that can address individuals' barriers to employment.

- Identify resources outside the workforce system that can affect the growth or decline of local industries.
 - Invite outside entities to collaborate on initiatives across the Region.
 - Work to influence and align educational curriculum and career preparation between K-12, college, and vocational institutions with the workforce needs of growing business sectors in our region.
5. Building on the current Department of Labor funded initiative called Gateway Apprenticeship Hub, coordinate across regional individual WIOA local regions to support the expansion and utilization of apprenticeship as a regional workforce strategy and pursue joint funding opportunities to support sustaining this initiative.

WORKFORCE





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FOREWORD

St. Louis Community College is here for you.

St. Louis Community College (STLCC) has been a dependable pillar in the region for over 60 years, fostering students' growth in knowledge and skills to either transfer to a four-year university or directly enter the workforce. This commitment extends to learners of all ages.

STLCC is here for you with new state-of-the-art facilities. In 2025, STLCC is adding six new state-of-the-art buildings and upgrading many others. The STLCC Transformed initiative ensures our students receive the hands-on experiences they need to be ready for their next step. Our four campuses and additional locations across St. Louis City and County serve as community-embedded centers of learning.

We are expanding enrollment in our most popular programs as the new buildings open this year, including nursing, dental hygiene, welding, EMT, precision machining, automotive technology, CDL-A truck driving, and IT. These programs now feature upgraded labs and facilities to accommodate more students.

STLCC is here to support your journey as a student. STLCC supports students at every stage of their journey, offering classes, certificates, and degrees to help them advance. We also provide academic, financial, and personal support to ensure students succeed.

Online learning is a key part of our offerings, with a wide range of classes available to fit flexible schedules and support career growth. Whether students need a summer class or a full semester, our online options help them achieve their goals.

STLCC is here to support businesses in the region. We work with companies to create custom training for existing employees to grow in their current jobs or prepare for a new role within an organization. Additionally, we collaborate with employers to launch new programs and apprenticeships that attract and educate workers for a company. There are many ways a company can consider using its recruiting and training budgets to draw the workers a company needs.

While Americans' confidence in higher education has faced challenges in recent years, STLCC remains committed to providing quality education at an affordable price.

STCC is here for you.



Jeff L. Pittman, PhD
Chancellor
St. Louis Community College



Phyllis Ellison, MBA
Associate Vice Chancellor
St. Louis Community College
Workforce Solutions Group

**The illiterate of the 21st century
will not be those who cannot read
and write, but those who cannot
learn, unlearn, and relearn.**

Alvin Toffler

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METHODOLOGY

The 2025 State of the St. Louis Workforce report includes four distinct sections: The St. Louis Economy, a compilation of labor market information using public and proprietary sources and tools; the Employer Survey; and two Spotlight sections, focusing on Startups and Transportation.

St. Louis Economy

This section includes an analysis of available data from public sources, including the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics and the United States Census Bureau, which describes the characteristics of the labor force and correlates unemployment with various labor force demographics. Analysis of real-time labor market demand is aggregated through the proprietary Lightcast™ tool, which searches web-based job boards to discern the level of demand for certain occupations, and the skills and certifications that employers are requesting.

Employer Survey

The State of the St. Louis Workforce report utilizes first-person telephonic interviews of regional employers. Each of the 2025 survey interviews averaged 20 minutes to complete. During April, 2025, 600 local companies in 16 industry categories were surveyed. These companies covered the 23 two-digit North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) codes that represent a composite picture of the St. Louis regional economy.

NAICS	Category Description	Businesses Surveyed	Percent
NAICS 23	Construction	42	7.0%
NAICS 31-33	Manufacturing	37	6.2%
NAICS 42	Wholesale trade	25	4.2%
NAICS 44-45	Retail trade	83	13.8%
NAICS 48-49	Transportation and warehousing	12	2.0%
NAICS 51	Information	9	1.5%
NAICS 52	Finance and insurance	37	6.2%
NAICS 53	Real estate and rental and leasing	22	3.7%
NAICS 54	Professional and technical services	58	9.7%
NAICS 56	Administrative and waste services	25	4.2%
NAICS 61	Educational services	9	1.5%
NAICS 62	Health care and social assistance	113	18.8%
NAICS 71	Arts, entertainment, and recreation	13	2.2%
NAICS 72	Accommodation and food services	77	12.8%
NAICS 81	Other services	36	6.0%
	Other small sectors and unclassified*	2	0.3%
	Total	600	100.00%

Survey respondents were asked 26 questions, some with multiple parts, related to hiring trends, job applicants, skill needs and training budgets. Companies interviewed for the survey were selected randomly within each of the 16 industry categories from a categorized list of the 42,192 businesses in the St. Louis Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) that employed five or more employees from the Reference USA employer database provided by the Missouri Economic Research and Information Center (MERIC). The survey instrument is provided in the Appendix to this report.

Spotlight on...

This year's report highlights two key aspects of our regional economy with additional data and analysis: startups and the jobs they create, and the transportation sector.

Spotlight on Startups explores the creation of first-time jobs in the St. Louis region. Through analysis supplied by MOSourceLink, this section showcases the number of new firms and the new first-time jobs that they create in the Missouri portion of the St. Louis MSA.

For this identification of new jobs, a new startup is identified with the first appearance of firm records in the employer file in the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW). Individual records of wages paid for Unemployment Insurance serve as the trigger for identifying new jobs.

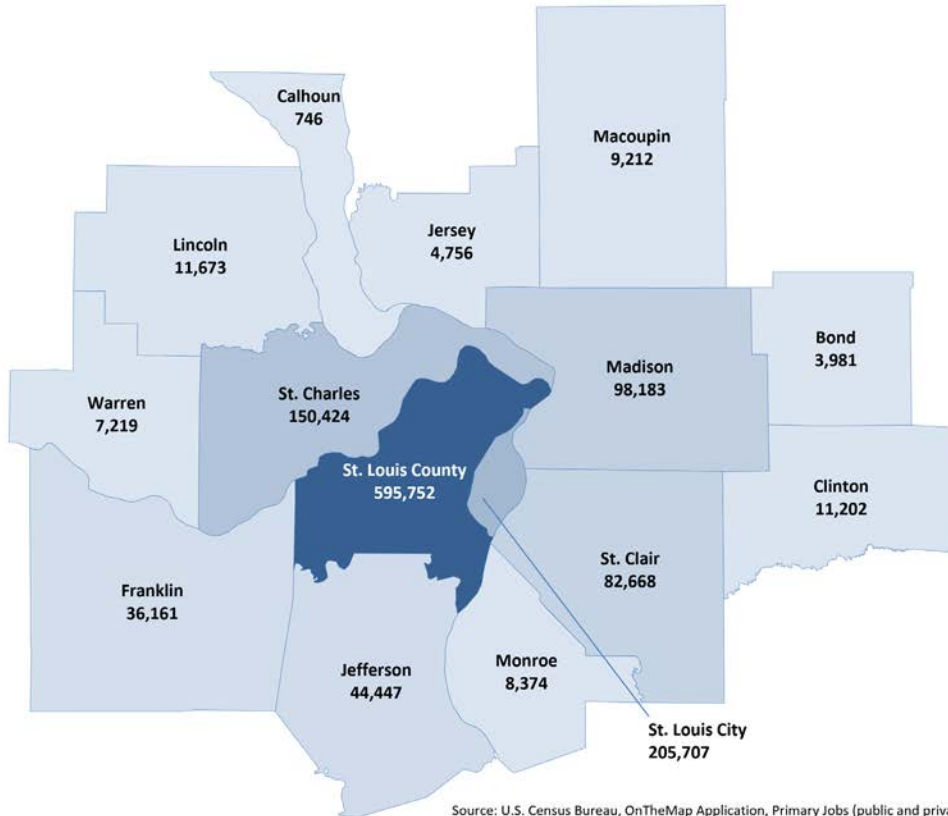
In this method, new startups are new establishments. Only employees that were hired for wages paid for Unemployment Insurance are counted as employees, whether full-time or part-time, and do not include those who are self-employed or contract employees.

The Spotlight on Transportation section focuses on the size of the industry in the region, the breadth of the impact of the Transportation industry, its workforce and the challenges it faces.

ST. LOUIS ECONOMY

The cross-state St. Louis MO-IL Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) includes 15 counties in Missouri and Illinois with an estimated population of over 2.8 million, and a workforce of over 1.4 million.

St. Louis MSA Job Count by County



According to the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, in 2023, the area had a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of \$226.5 billion in current dollars (not adjusted for inflation). This was a 7.1 % increase from \$211.5 billion in 2022. Private Sector businesses accounted for 92% of the region’s output, while Government accounted for the remaining 8%.

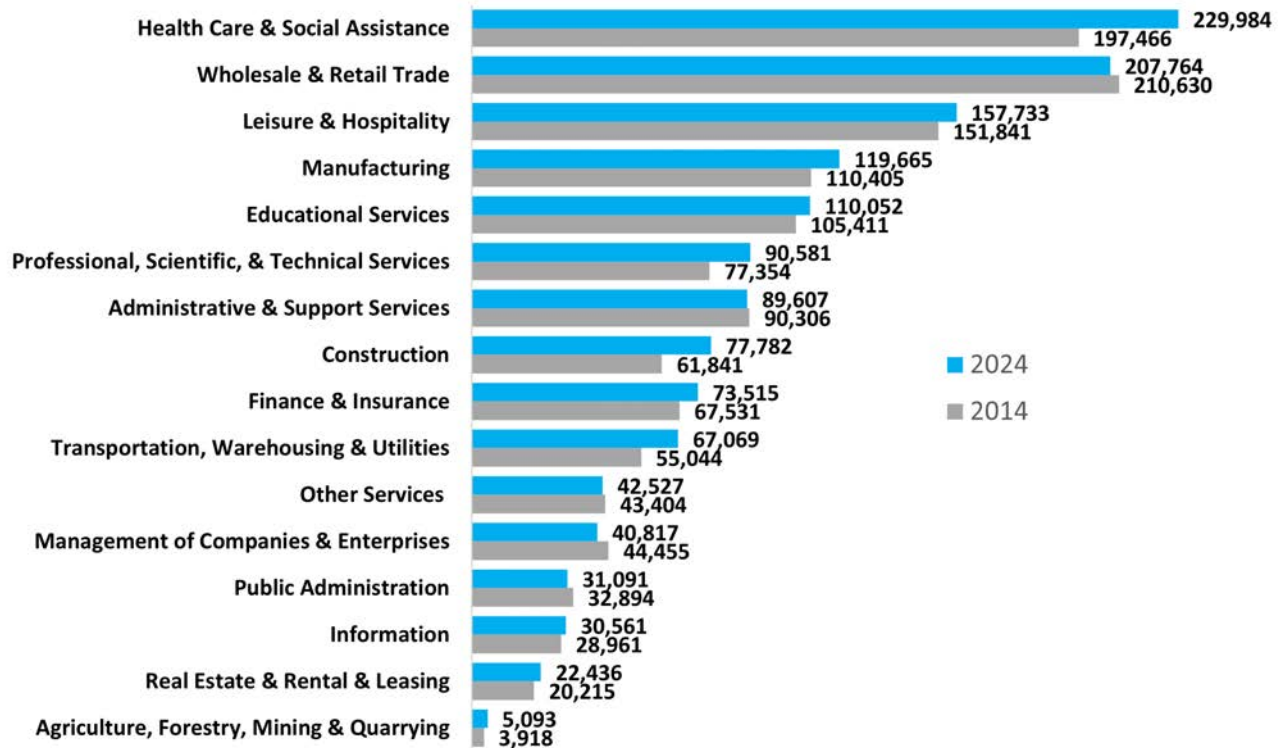
The seven Missouri counties in the St. Louis MSA provide for 53% of Missouri’s GDP.

St. Louis City, St. Louis County and St. Charles County each grew by more than 2-4%, while most of the counties in the MSA remained near the same population or experienced a slight decrease in population.

Employment

The St. Louis MSA has a diverse economy with a labor force of nearly 1.4 million that works in a wide range of industries. Health Care & Social Assistance makes up 16.5% of total employment, followed by Wholesale & Retail Trade (14.9%), and Leisure & Hospitality (11.3%). Health Care & Social Assistance employment has increased by over 32,000 workers or 16.5% over the last decade. Other industries with large increases over the last 10 years include Construction, increasing by nearly 16,000 employees (25.8%), and Transportation, Warehousing, & Utilities, which increased by 12,000 employees (21.8%). Management of Companies & Enterprises decreased the most over the last 10 years, shrinking by 3,600 employees (-8.2%). Overall, the St. Louis workforce increased by over 94,000 employees (7.3%) from 2014 to 2024.

St. Louis MSA Industry Employment

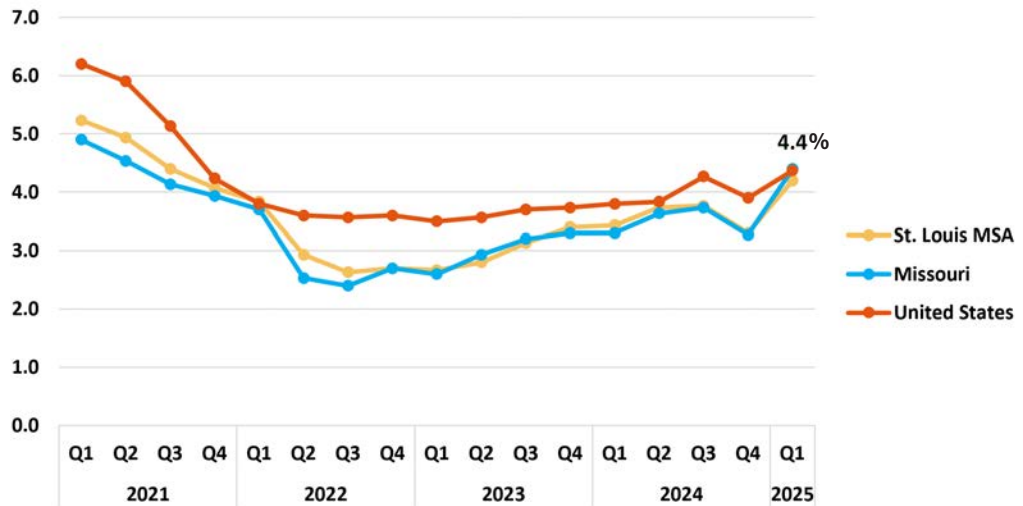


Source: Quarterly Workforce Indicators, U.S. Census Bureau, Annual Averages

Unemployment

Unemployment rates in the St. Louis MSA have slowly increased over the past year, from 3.4% in April 2024 to 3.8% in May of 2025. Over the past year, unemployment rates for the St. Louis MSA have consistently been lower than the national rate, except for May 2024.

Not-Seasonally Adjusted Unemployment Rate by Quarter

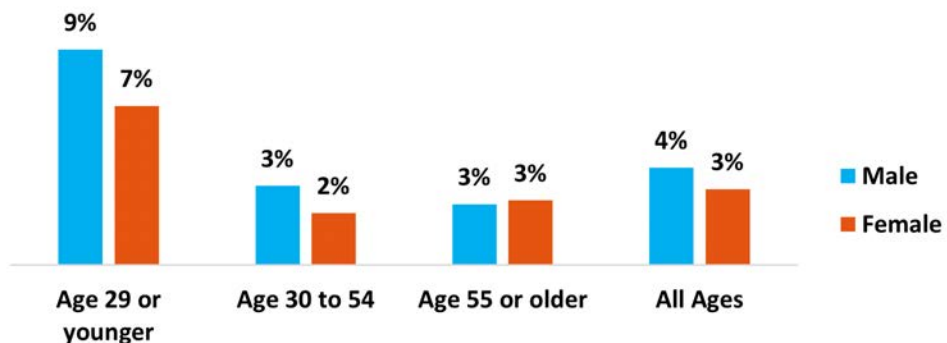


Source: Local Area Unemployment Statistics, Bureau of Labor Statistics

Unemployment Demographics

Unemployment rates vary greatly across the demographics of age and sex. The largest differences in unemployment rates from the 2023 U.S. Census Bureau continue to be between males and females in two younger (16-21 and 22-24) age groups. Unemployment rates between males and females were similar in the 35-59 years age groups. In 2023, the St. Louis MSA unemployment rate for all ages was 4% in males and 3.1% in females.

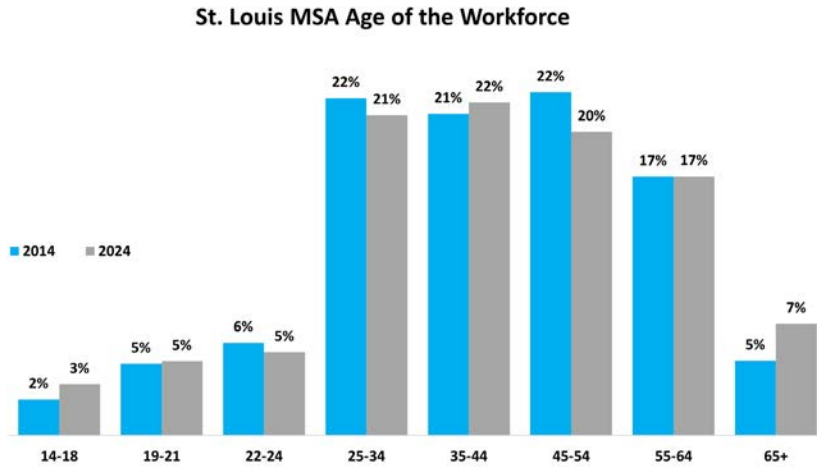
St. Louis MSA Unemployment Rates by Age and Sex



Source: 2023 American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau

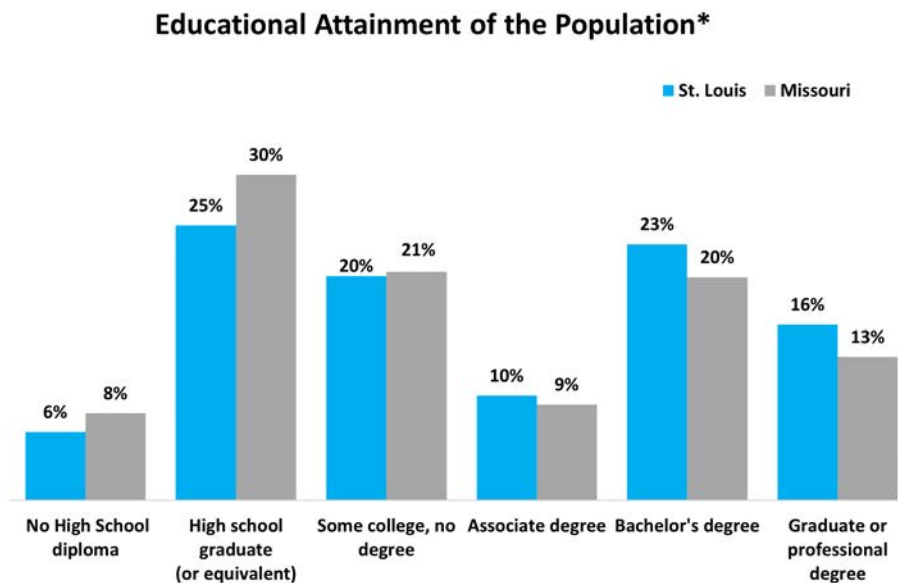
Workforce Demographics

In 2024, the 35-44 years age group had the largest share of the workforce at 21.7%. The St. Louis age profile has changed over time. The share of workers in the oldest and youngest age groups has increased over the last 10 years, while the share of workers in the 45-54 years age group has decreased.



Educational Attainment

Over one-half (51%) of the region’s 25 years and older population have no post-secondary degree. This is lower than the state rate of 59%. Thirty-nine percent of the St. Louis population has a bachelor’s degree or greater, which is higher than both the state (33%) and national (36%) rates. Only 6% do not have a high school diploma or equivalent, which is lower than both the state (8%) and national (10%) levels.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2023 1-year estimates.
 *Population age 25 and over

St. Louis MSA data for 2023 shows that unemployment rates decrease, and income increases with additional education levels. Workers with some college or a college degree have unemployment rates under 3%. Median earnings for those with some college or an associate’s degree are \$46,767 and increase to \$73,694 with a bachelor’s degree or higher. The median earnings continued to grow at all education levels over the past two years.

The highest unemployment rates and lowest wages belong to workers with less than a high school education. Unemployment rates are 2.7 percentage points higher than those with a high school diploma, and five times higher than those with a bachelor’s degree or higher. Median earnings for those workers are nearly \$10,000 lower than workers with a high school diploma, and less than half of those with a bachelor’s degree or higher.

Missouri shows similar trends, with workers who do not have a high school education having an unemployment rate of 5.9%, and those with a bachelor’s degree or higher having a rate of 1.5%. Young and/or less educated job seekers often have a more difficult time finding employment.

Unemployment Rates and Earnings by Education Population 25 years and older

	Unemployment Rates	Educational Attainment	Median Earnings
Missouri	5.9%	Less than high school graduate	\$31,777
	3.5%	High school graduate (includes equivalency)	\$37,420
	2.9%	Some college or associate's degree	\$43,300
	1.5%	Bachelor's degree or higher	\$66,921
St. Louis MSA	7.4%	Less than high school graduate	\$30,562
	4.7%	High school graduate (includes equivalency)	\$40,042
	2.9%	Some college or associate's degree	\$46,767
	1.4%	Bachelor's degree or higher	\$73,694

**Bachelors (\$61,418) and Graduate (\$72,423) degree medians for Missouri.*

**Bachelors (\$67,367) and Graduate (\$80,021) degree medians for St. Louis MSA.*

Source: US Census Bureau, 2023 American Community Survey 1-year estimates.

Commuting Profile

The St. Louis MSA employed over 1.1 million people in 2022. Most workers lived in the area, but 145,223 commuted into the MSA for jobs, while 111,828 of the residents commuted outside of the St. Louis MSA for work.

Forty-one percent of the workforce commuted less than 10 miles to work, while 11% traveled more than 50 miles.

Current Job Demand

Job postings provide a way to measure current employment demand. Over the past year, there were over 338,000 online job postings in the St. Louis MSA. This is down from 346,000 online postings last year and a large drop from the 450,000 postings two years ago.

Of the online job postings for the St. Louis MSA from May 2024 to April 2025, the overall top-posted job was again Registered Nurses (25,840), followed by Retail Salespersons (8,970) and Heavy & Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers (6,910).

Four of the top online job postings were related to retail sales and customer service, and three were related to health care occupations.

Top Job Postings		
Now		
High School Education or Less and/or Short-Term Training		
SOC Code	Occupation Title	Online Job Ads
41-2031	Retail Salespersons	8,970
43-4051	Customer Service Representatives	5,690
31-1120	Home Health & Personal Care Aides	4,030
Next		
Moderate/Long-Term Training to Associate Degree		
SOC Code	Occupation Title	Online Job Ads
53-3032	Heavy & Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	6,910
41-1011	First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers	6,470
49-9071	Maintenance & Repair Workers, General	4,460
41-4012	Sales Representatives, Wholesale & Manufacturing	4,420
29-2061	Licensed Practical & Licensed Vocational Nurses	4,190
Later		
Bachelor's Degree or Higher		
SOC Code	Occupation Title	Online Job Ads
29-1141	Registered Nurses	25,840
15-1252	Software Developers	4,320

Source: Lightcast™, Online Job Ads May 1, 2024 - April 30, 2025

Skills and Qualifications

In the St. Louis MSA, communication was the top skill demand of employers, requested in over one-third (34%) of total job postings last year. Other common skills in demand included customer service, management, and sales. Registered nurse was the occupation with the most job postings, and nursing was the top requested specialized skill, followed by project management and merchandising. Microsoft® Office and its products such as Word®, Excel®, PowerPoint®, and Access® were the most requested software skills across all occupations and industries. Other top-requested software and programming skills included SQL, Python, and SAP applications.

Top Common Skills	Online Job Ads	% of Total Postings
Communication	114,610	34%
Customer Service	86,440	26%
Management	74,470	22%
Sales	52,230	15%
Operations	52,140	15%
Leadership	51,730	15%
Detail Oriented	43,830	13%
Problem Solving	42,850	13%
Planning	30,600	9%
Writing	28,750	8%

Source: Lightcast™, Online Job Ads May 1, 2024 - April 30, 2025

Top Specialized Skills	Online Job Ads	% of Total Postings
Nursing	28,840	9%
Project Management	19,090	6%
Merchandising	18,050	5%
Marketing	17,310	5%
Auditing	15,990	5%
Selling Techniques	12,980	4%
Accounting	12,650	4%
Data Entry	12,300	4%
Warehousing	11,200	3%
Workflow Management	11,140	3%

Source: Lightcast™, Online Job Ads May 1, 2024 - April 30, 2025

Top Software Skills	Online Job Ads	% of Total Postings
SQL (Programming Language)	4,900	1%
Python (Programming Language)	3,910	1%
SAP Applications	3,840	1%
Salesforce	3,370	1%
Amazon Web Services	3,200	1%
Operating Systems	3,180	1%
Epic EMR	3,170	1%
Application Programming Interface (API)	2,630	1%
Java (Programming Language)	2,550	1%
Microsoft Azure	2,310	1%

Source: Lightcast™, Online Job Ads May 1, 2024 - April 30, 2025

Employers also request various qualifications, which are degrees, certificates, or licenses rather than specific skills. The top requested qualifications were a valid driver’s license, followed by a registered nurse license. Seven health care related qualifications were among the top ten requested qualifications, including registered nurse and life support certifications.

Top Qualifications	Online Job Ads
Valid Driver's License	36,640
Registered Nurse (RN)	29,760
Basic Life Support (BLS) Certification	18,090
Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) Certification	10,240
Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN)	8,380
Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA)	3,860
Security Clearance	3,690
Nurse Practitioner (APRN-CNP)	3,610
Secret Clearance	3,450
Advanced Cardiovascular Life Support (ACLS) Certification	3,270

Source: Lightcast™, Online Job Ads May 1, 2024 - April 30, 2025

Projected Job Demand

Looking at what jobs will be in demand in the future helps ensure the workforce is prepared for the needs of tomorrow. Employment projections through the year 2032, developed by the Missouri Economic Research and Information Center (MERIC) in partnership with the Bureau of Labor Statistics, estimate the jobs expected to be in greatest demand over a ten-year period. The table shows the occupations, by typical education or training needed, with top projected job openings from 2022-2032 for the St. Louis Workforce Development Area (WDA).

Occupations with the most openings are determined by looking at openings created by new job growth, as well as those created through the need for replacement workers. Replacement openings are created by workers moving to another occupation or leaving the workforce entirely. The jobs with the most projected openings are home health and personal care aides, stockers and order fillers, and cashiers.

Several occupations, including registered nurses; home health and personal care aides; and heavy and tractor-trailer truck drivers, were among the top occupations in terms of current job postings and projected future openings. This implies these occupations are in demand now and will be in demand in the future.

Jobs with the Most Projected Openings, 2022-2032		
St. Louis Workforce Development Area		
Now		
High School Education or Less and/or Short-Term Training		
SOC Code	Occupation Title	Annual Openings
31-1120	Home Health & Personal Care Aides	6,697
53-7065	Stockers & Order Fillers	4,108
41-2011	Cashiers	3,865
41-2031	Retail Salespersons	3,298
35-3031	Waiters & Waitresses	3,136
43-4051	Customer Service Representatives	3,084
35-3023	Fast Food & Counter Workers	2,944
37-2011	Janitors & Cleaners	2,633
43-9061	Office Clerks, General	2,569
53-7062	Laborers & Freight, Stock, & Material Movers, Hand	2,331
Next		
Moderate/Long-Term Training to Associate Degree		
SOC Code	Occupation Title	Annual Openings
35-2014	Cooks, Restaurant	2,319
31-1131	Nursing Assistants	1,776
53-3032	Heavy & Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	1,586
35-1012	First-Line Supervisors of Food Prep. & Serving Workers	1,326
49-9071	Maintenance & Repair Workers, General	1,156
43-3031	Bookkeeping, Accounting, & Auditing Clerks	979
41-4012	Sales Representatives, Wholesale & Manufacturing	951
43-1011	First-Line Supervisors of Office & Admin. Support Workers	931
47-2031	Carpenters	873
51-2090	Miscellaneous Assemblers & Fabricators	801
Later		
Bachelor's Degree or Higher		
SOC Code	Occupation Title	Annual Openings
11-1021	General & Operations Managers	3,142
29-1141	Registered Nurses	2,802
13-2011	Accountants & Auditors	993
15-1252	Software Developers	842
13-1082	Project Management Specialists	728
13-1161	Market Research Analysts & Marketing Specialists	722
11-9199	Managers, All Other	712
13-1071	Human Resources Specialists	657
13-1199	Business Operations Specialists, All Other	649
25-2021	Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education	646
Source: Long-Term Occupational Projections 2022-2032, St. Louis Workforce Development Area, MERIC		

EMPLOYER SURVEY

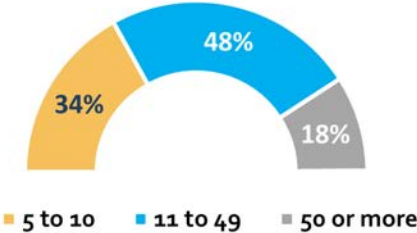
The 2025 Employer Survey marks the 17th annual telephone survey conducted with companies throughout the St. Louis metropolitan area. The purpose of the survey is to assess hiring trends, business climate conditions, occupational skills, and workforce demands across the region. This year’s survey included responses from 600 companies, spanning 16 employer categories and 23 industry segments as defined by the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS). These companies collectively represent a comprehensive profile of the region’s industries and economic sectors.

The sample is consistent with previous years and represents a diverse cross-section of industry categories, company sizes, and geographic locations. Survey respondents were intentionally selected to ensure broad representation across the entire St. Louis Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) (see “Methodology” section). As in prior surveys, the majority of respondents were small- to mid-sized businesses employing fewer than 50 individuals. Companies with less than five employees were excluded from the survey sample (see “Spotlight on Startups” section for information on new companies).

82% of companies have fewer than 50 employees.

Each employer responded to a series of 26 survey questions, many of which included multiple components, designed to explore hiring forecasts, workforce challenges, and practices that either pose barriers to or create pathways for employment and career advancement. Notably, this year’s survey introduced new questions addressing the use and impact of artificial intelligence (AI) in the workplace. Specific survey questions are provided in the “Appendix.”

Employment Size of Firms Surveyed



Hiring Trends

National hiring trends present a mixed picture, reflecting both a gradual move toward a more balanced labor market and slower year-over-year job growth. The unemployment rate remained relatively steady (4.0%–4.2%) and job openings saw an uptick in April 2025—suggesting a labor market stronger than anticipated. However, these gains were tempered by May’s employment report, which showed the smallest monthly job increase in over two years. Prevailing economic and political factors have contributed to employer caution and a hiring rate below pre-pandemic levels. National, sector-specific trends reveal ongoing strength in health care and social assistance, transportation and warehousing, and financial activities—with health care and social assistance emerging as the fastest-growing sector in early 2025.

On the local level, between May 2024 and May 2025, the St. Louis MSA recorded simultaneous increases in labor force participation and unemployment. During this period, the labor force reached 1,489,700, representing a 2.1% year-over-year increase, equivalent to 30,500 people. Employment also grew with the number of employed individuals reaching 1,436,600, representing a .5% increase, equivalent to 7,400 people. The unemployment rate rose a modest .2% from 3.4% to 3.6%, suggesting that the rate of labor force growth outpaced the availability of new employment opportunities. This divergence may reflect ongoing economic uncertainty and employer caution, contributing to a measured pace of hiring across the region.

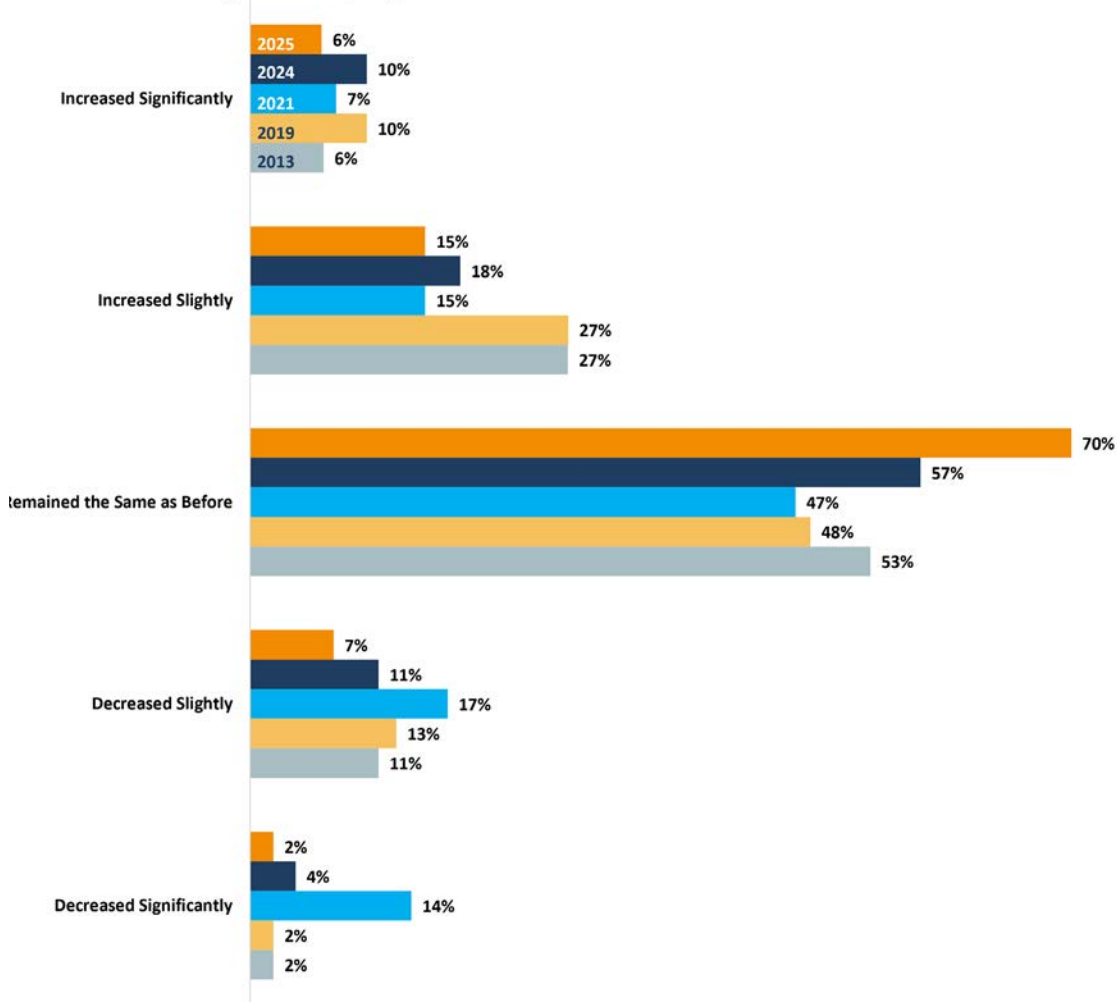
Employment in the Past Year

Employment levels remained steady among surveyed employers with 70% maintaining the same workforce size as the previous year. By comparison, in recent years the percentage of employers reporting unchanged employment levels has ranged from 47% to 57%.

Fewer companies reported increases or decreases in employment levels this year. Only 21% of employers reported increased employment in the 2025 survey, down from 28% in 2024. Just 9% of surveyed companies reported decreased employment levels, marking the lowest rate since 2013.

The lack of significant change in employment levels over the last 12 months could signal a period of labor market stability or of stagnation. Contributing factors may include economic uncertainty, less turnover, or shifts in operational strategies like automation or outsourcing. Employers may have recalibrated staffing levels to meet post-pandemic demands and are now maintaining those levels until there is a clearer understanding of the impact of government changes on taxes, foreign trade tariffs and domestic subsidies in specific industries.

Change in Employment Levels over the Last 12 Months

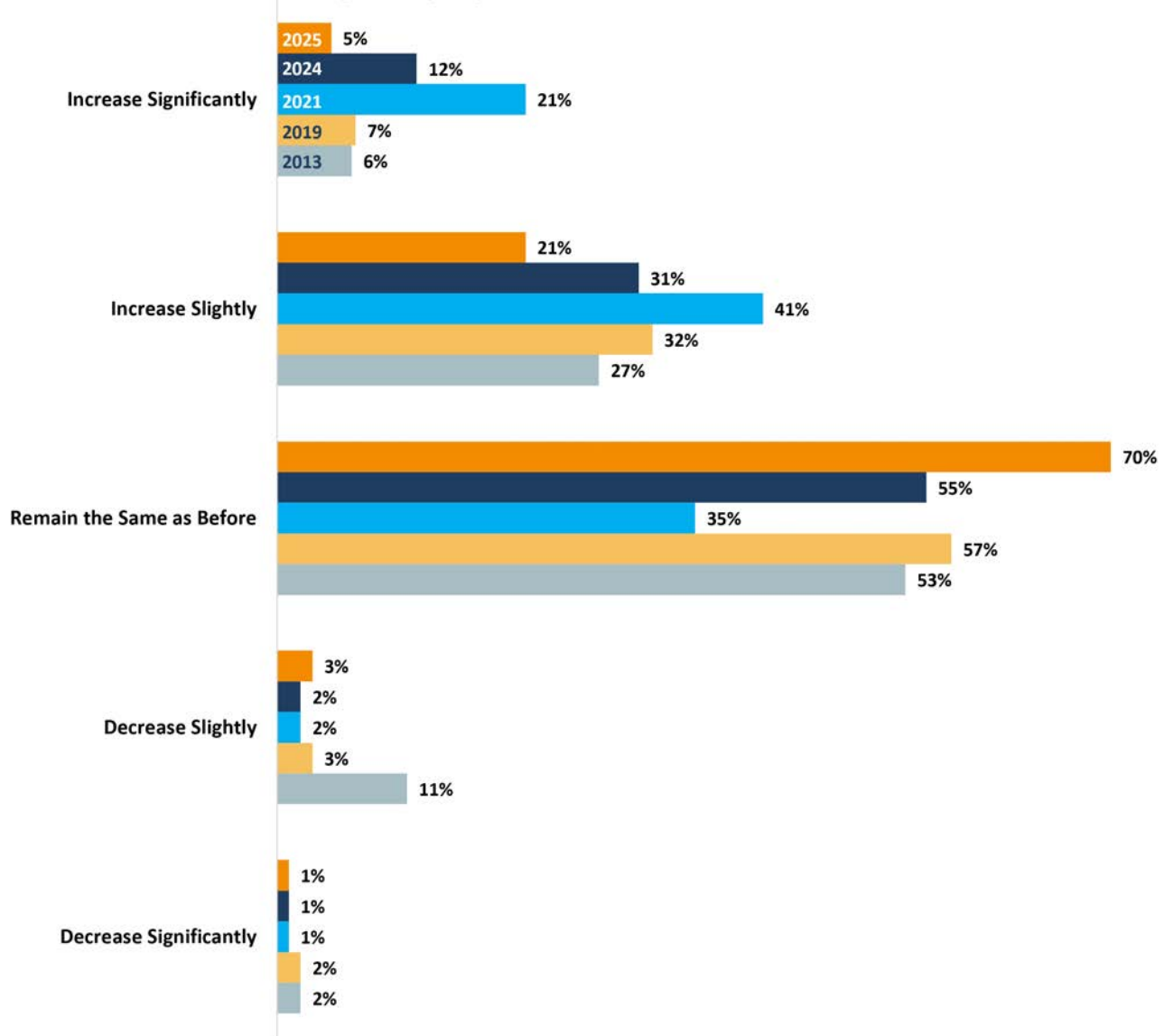


Employment Forecast for the Next Year

Looking ahead to 2026, 70% of respondents reported plans to maintain their current hiring levels. However, there is a discernible increase in caution around workforce projections. Unlike in previous years—when employers often expressed optimistic hiring intentions that were not fully realized—current projections are notably more conservative and fall below projections reported during pandemic years of 2020 and 2021.

This shift in sentiment may reflect a range of factors, including: ongoing economic uncertainty, productivity gains resulting from a more highly skilled workforce, and/or the integration of technology and automation.

Plans to Change Employment Levels in the Next 12 Months

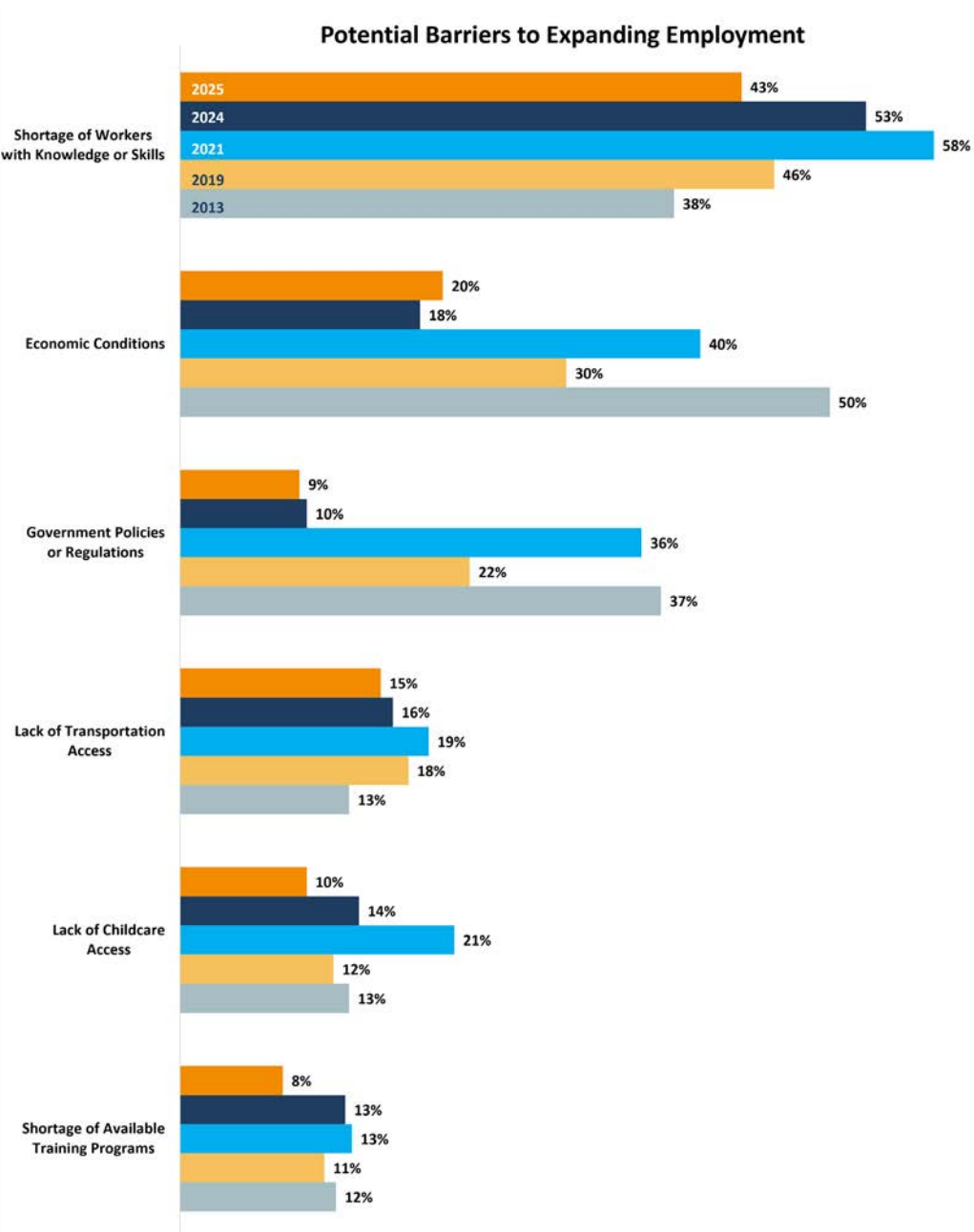


Expanding Employment

The State of the St. Louis Workforce survey queried employers about a range of barriers to expanding employment.

Barriers and Skill Gaps

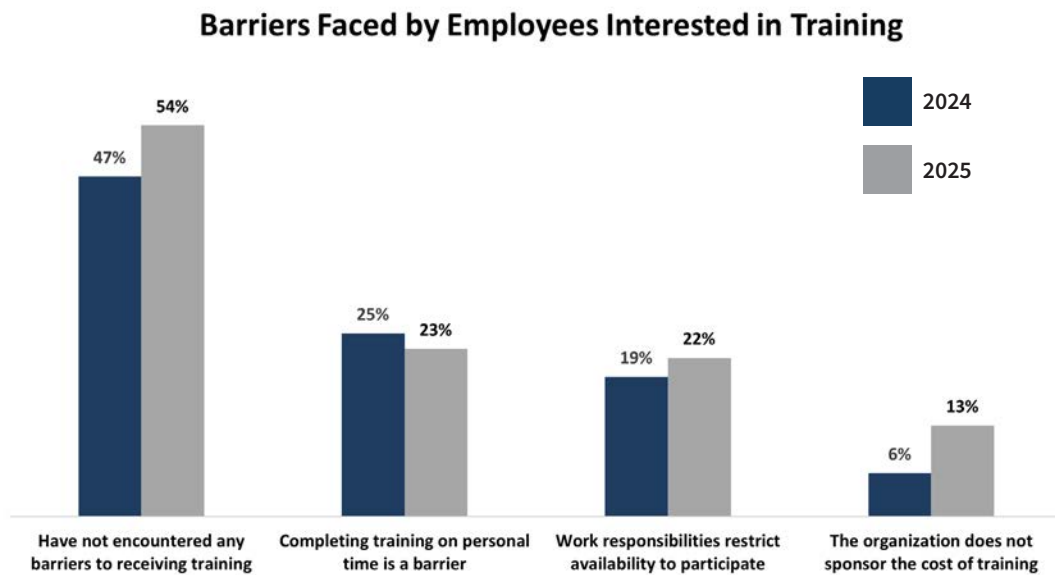
A shortage of workers with knowledge or skills remains the most frequently cited barrier to employment expansion among surveyed employers; however, the share of employers reporting this challenge declined from 53% (2024) to 43% (2025). At the same time, concerns over broader economic conditions have steadily increased over the previous three years, emerging as the second most significant barrier to hiring, followed by a lack access to transportation for employees. A shortage of available training programs remains a lower-tier barrier.



Employment Training

In a series of questions introduced in the 2024 survey, employers were asked to identify potential barriers faced by employees interested in training. In 2025, more than half of respondents indicated that most of their employees have not encountered any barriers to receiving training.

The survey focused on three specific barriers: completing training on personal time, work responsibilities restricting availability to participate, and the organization not sponsoring the cost of training. While there were modest changes in personal time and work-related barriers, the most notable change was employers who indicated that their organizations do not cover the cost of training, which doubled in 2025.



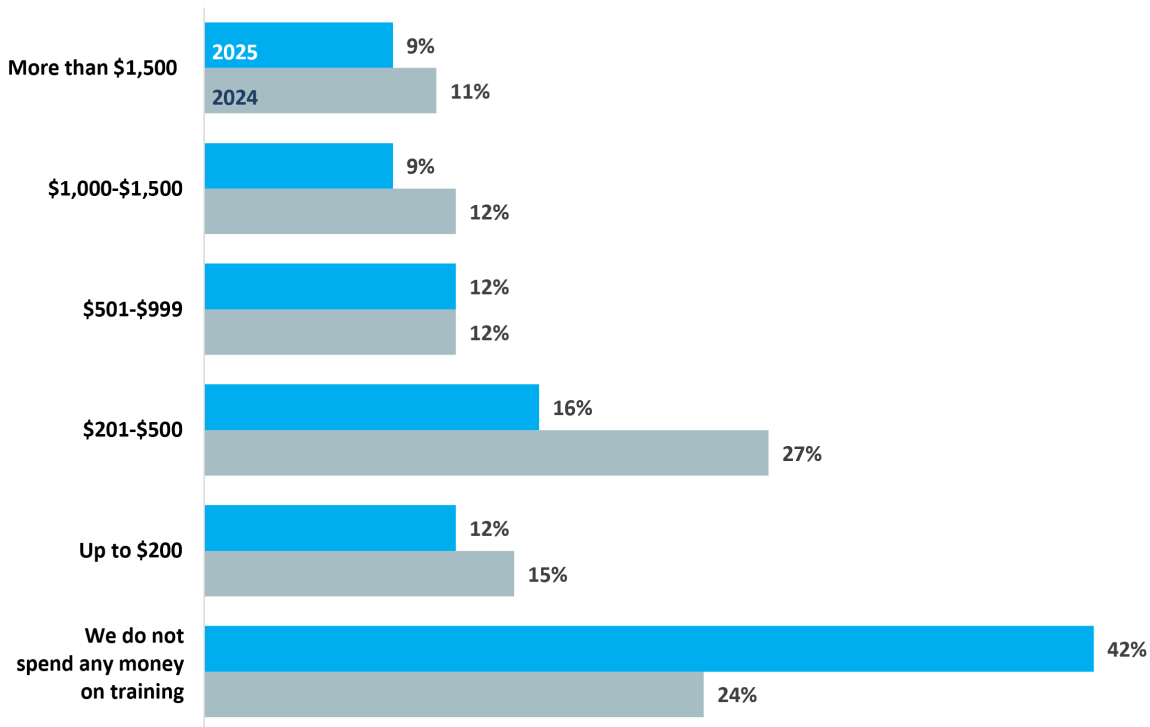
Investing in Employees

Employers were asked to discuss their level of investment in employee training. In 2025, there was a significant increase in the proportion of employers who reported no spending on training, rising from 24% in 2024 to 42% in 2025.

Spending levels across all training investment categories also declined compared to the previous year, a trend suggesting that despite a skills shortage, fewer employers appear to be investing in solutions to address them. Only 30% of employers surveyed spend more than \$500 per worker on training each year.

42% of employers surveyed spend no money on training employees.

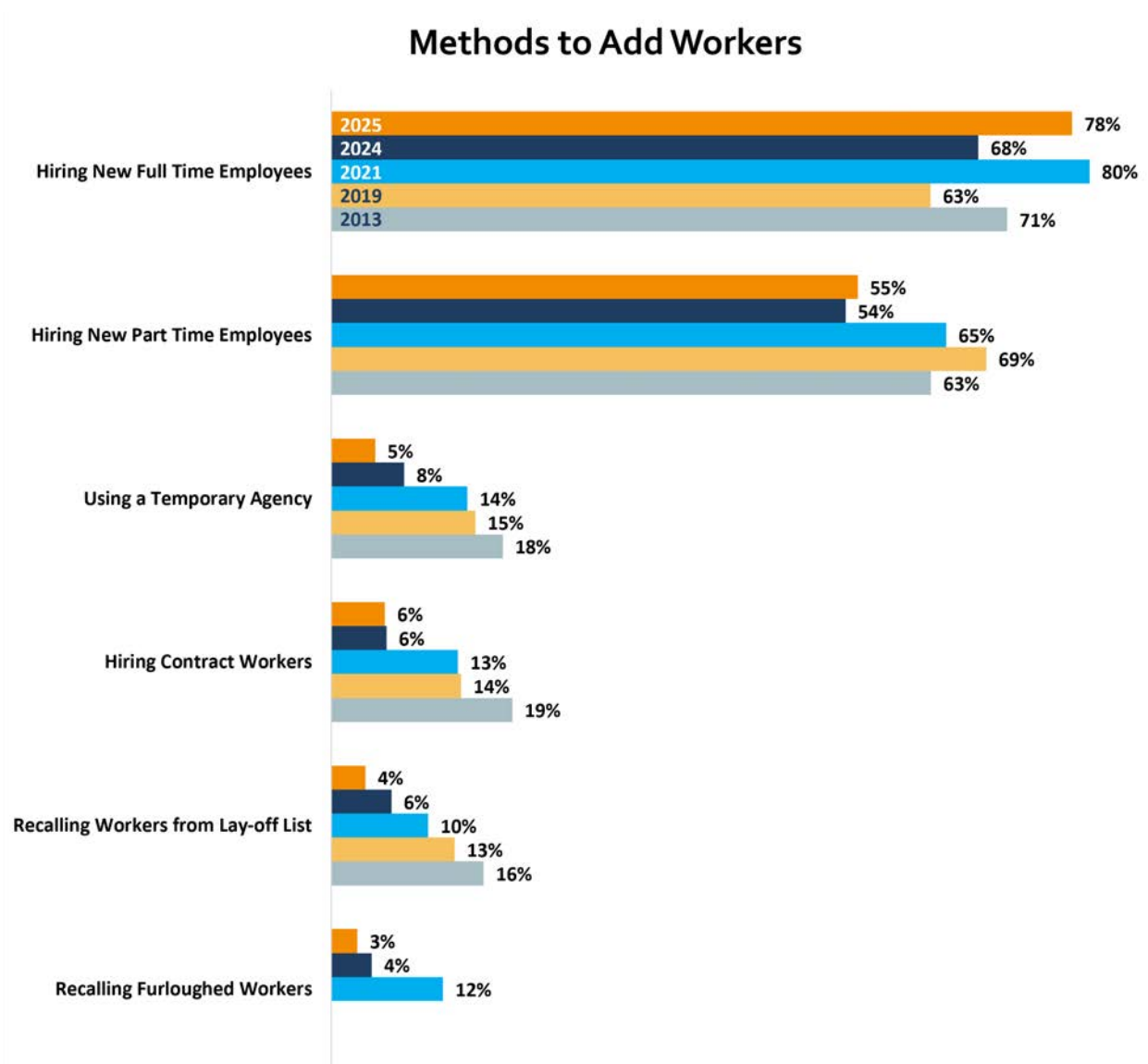
Annual Amount Spent on Training per Employee



Adding Employees

Hiring new, full-time employees continues to be the predominant workforce expansion strategy among surveyed employers. In 2025, 78% identified full-time hires as their preferred method for adding workers, an increase from 68% in the previous year.

Hiring new, part-time employees also showed relative robustness, with 55% of employers indicating its continued use. Other hiring strategies—using a temporary agency, hiring contract workers, recalling workers from lay-off lists, and recalling furloughed workers—remained largely unchanged and consistently low over the past several years.

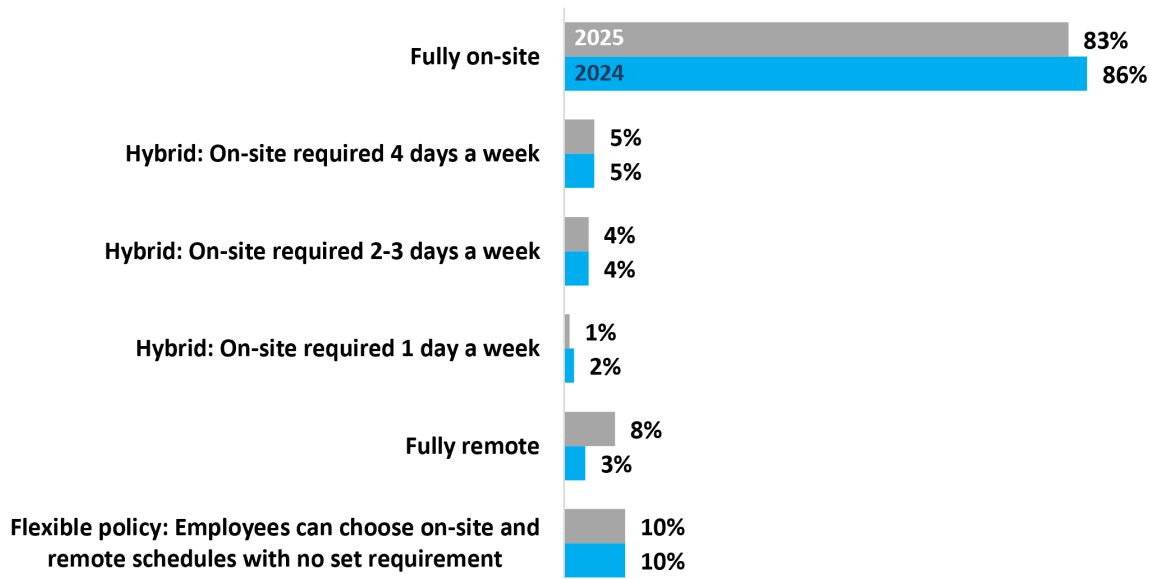


Remote Work

In 2020, the pandemic prompted companies to reassess which jobs could be performed remotely without compromising productivity. Five years later, most employers have returned to or maintained pre-pandemic work arrangements. In 2025, fully on-site work policies continued to dominate, with 83% of employers reporting such arrangements—down slightly from 86% in 2024. Although still a minority, the proportion of employers offering fully remote work increased over the past year, increasing from 3% to 8%. Hybrid and flexible work arrangements, encompassing a range of remote and on-site combinations, remained minimal and steady. For perspective, prior to the pandemic, it is estimated that 6% of employees worked remotely in any way.

83% of companies surveyed expect employees to work in the office full time.

Employers Remote Work Policy



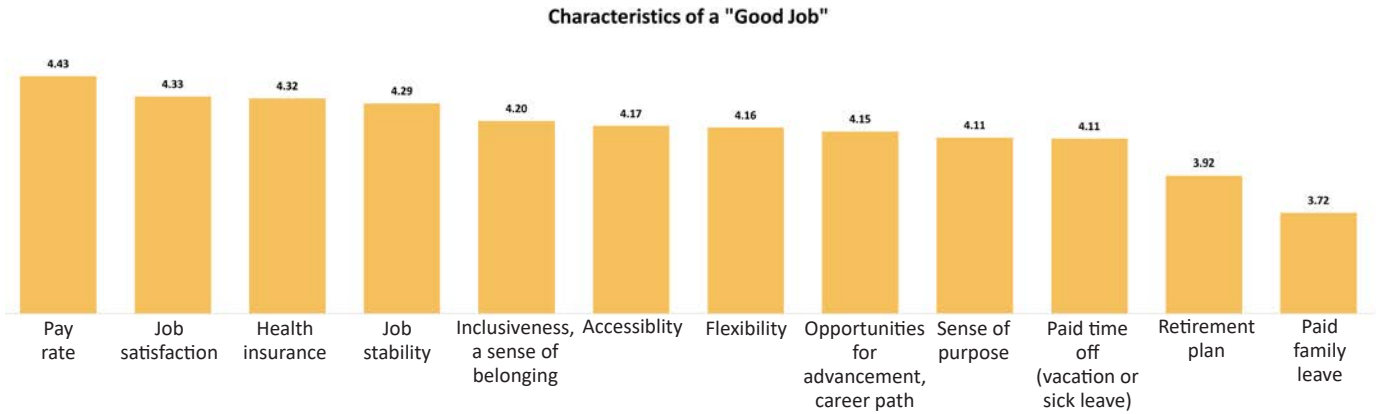
Remote work arrangements have become well-established with fewer anticipated changes compared to previous years. In 2025, 90% of surveyed employers reported no expected changes to their remote work policies within the next 12 months, an increase from 87% in 2024. Additionally, the percentage of employers anticipating an increase in remote workers has declined each year since 2022. This trend suggests that organizations have largely settled into their preferred workplace models.

Characteristics of a “Good Job”

Employers consistently have identified job stability, job satisfaction, pay rate, and a sense of belonging as the most important characteristics of a good job. In 2025, however, health insurance replaced a sense of belonging in the top four priorities cited by employers. The lowest-ranked characteristics—retirement plans and family paid leave—have also remained relatively consistent over time.

One of the most significant shifts in recent years has been the ranking of paid time off (vacation or sick leave), which rose from ninth place in 2023 to fifth in 2024, but declined to tenth place in 2025.

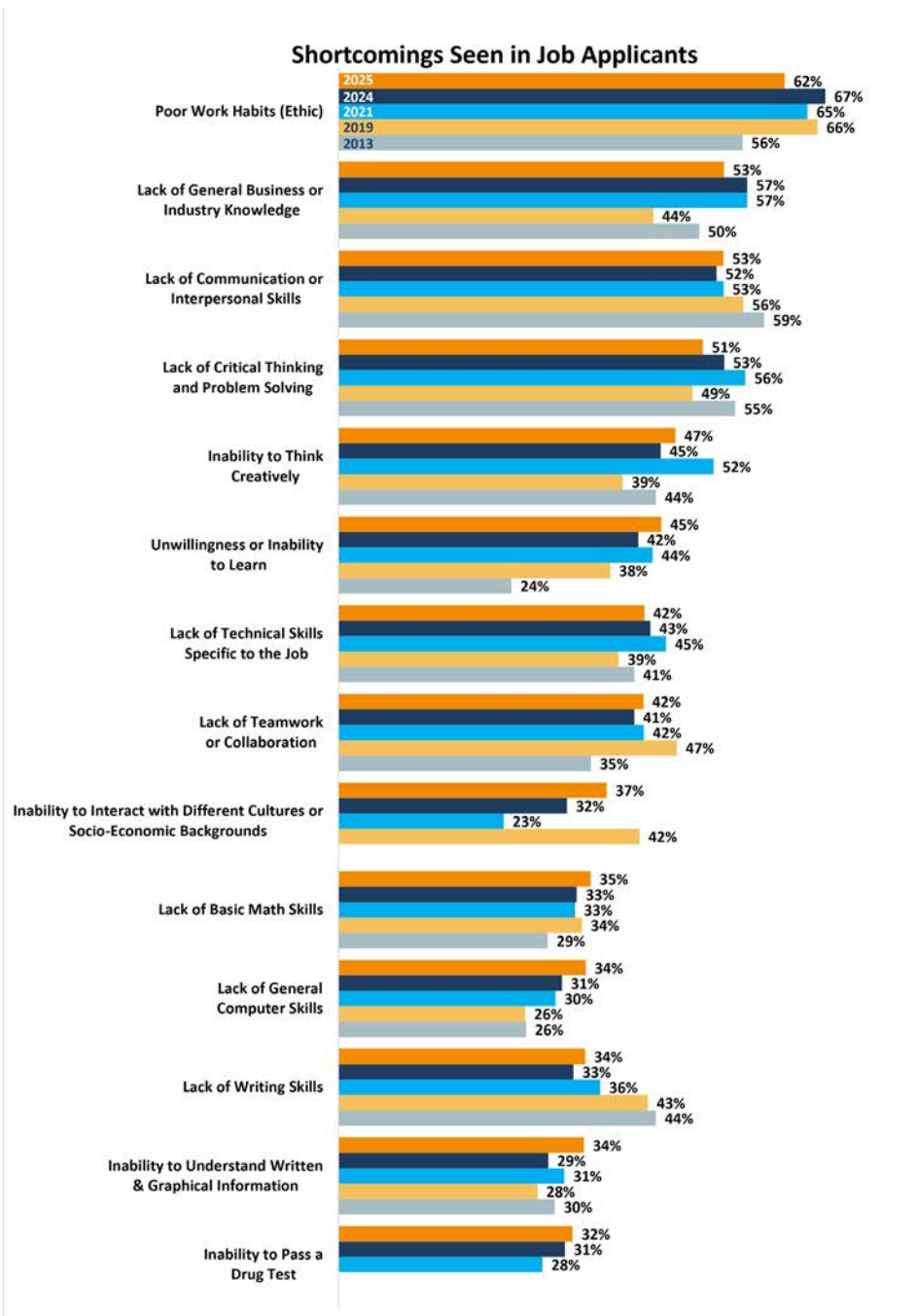
It is important to note that these findings reflect the employer’s perspective on what constitutes a good job. Research conducted during the pandemic indicated that employee priorities had evolved, particularly in response to the unique stresses and risks experienced during that time. According to a Federal Reserve survey of workers affected by the pandemic, employees increasingly value flexibility, career advancement opportunities, and compensation that aligns with their responsibilities. These evolving worker preferences may not yet be fully reflected in employer perceptions.



Shortcomings Seen in Job Applicants

A consistent decline in concerns over poor work habits among job applicants—from 79% in 2015 to 67% in 2024 to 62% in 2025—is an encouraging trend. Despite the improvement, it remains a frequent concern of employers. Other shortcomings noted by more than half of surveyed employers include: lack of industry-specific knowledge (53%), insufficient communication or interpersonal skills (53%), and/or limited critical thinking abilities (51%).

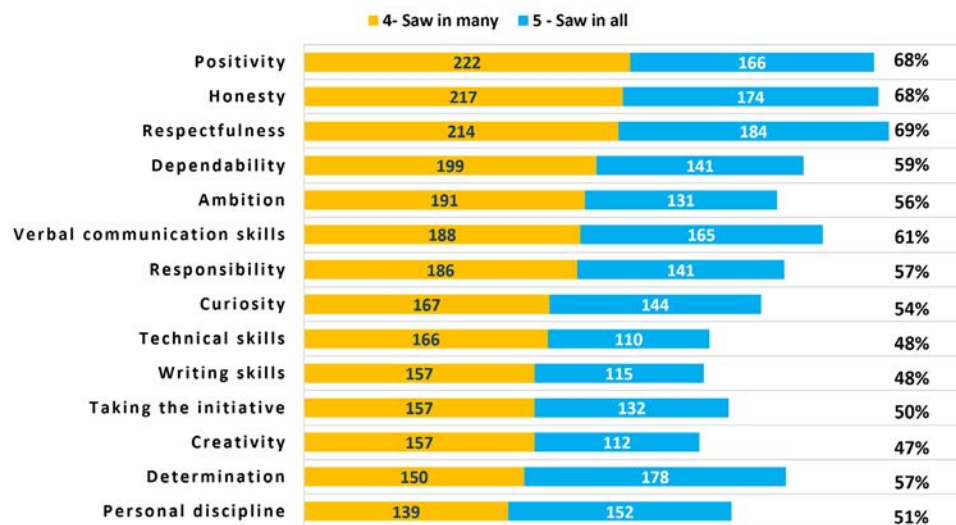
Applicants lacking basic skills such as writing, computer literacy, reading comprehension, and math have ticked modestly upward for three consecutive years. One of the most significant changes in recent years, however, is the concern that applicants are increasingly unable to engage effectively with individuals from different cultural or socioeconomic backgrounds—cited by 37% of employers in 2025, up from 23% in 2021.



Strengths Seen in Job Applicants

In contrast to the noted shortcomings among job applicants, employers reported a broad improvement in soft skills over the past year, with notable gains in ambition, curiosity, and initiative—each increasing by at least 10 percentage points. Foundational traits such as honesty and respectfulness continued to rank among the top three most commonly observed characteristics in many or all applicants, with positivity emerging as a new addition to this leading group.

Strengths Seen in More Job Applicants



Shortage of Applicants

The slight easing of unemployment rates in St. Louis is balanced with the continued expansion of companies. Skilled workers in most fields are hard to find, though there is less of a hiring frenzy or motivation to increase wages that was seen a few years ago. The number of businesses in the survey reporting a shortage of skilled applicants has dropped from 63% in 2022 to 38% in 2025.

The number of available job seekers is not in perfect alignment with the skill needs in the region, with some industries experiencing a larger gap in skilled workers. The health care sector continues to struggle with turnover and retention. It takes years to replace workers that may have exited the industry or to fill new jobs created by an aging workforce moving into retirement.

The IT industry, on the other hand, saw a significant drop in job postings since late 2023. There is speculation that some companies were keeping blanket IT posts up, even when they were not actively hiring because it was so difficult to find IT skills. The decrease in job postings may be influenced by these being removed from online job boards.

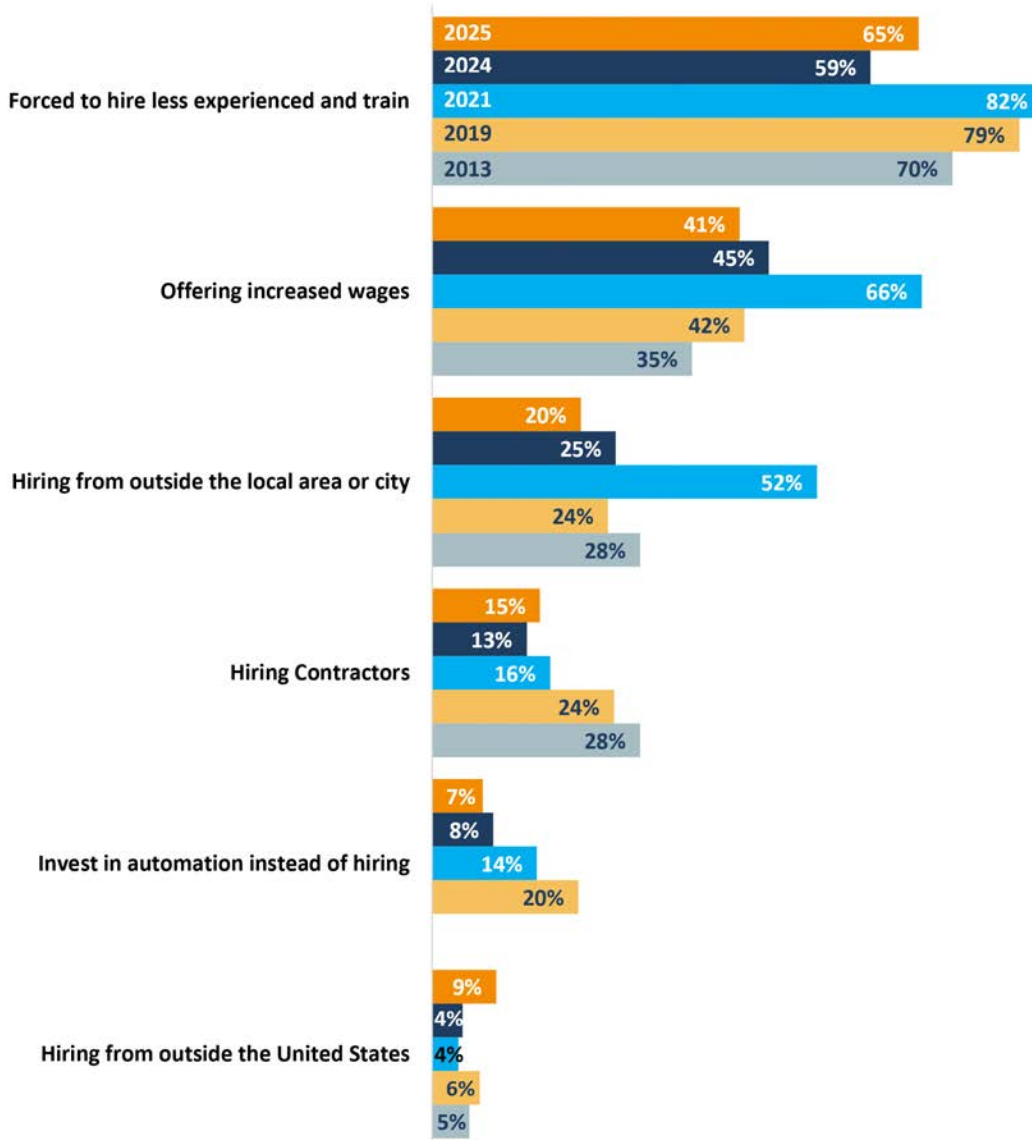
Between the use of AI and a shrinking demand for IT jobs, companies appear to still be significantly reevaluating their IT hiring needs. Companies are balancing a different need for IT skills; every employee is expected to have basic IT skills, with a smaller need for highly specialized technology skills. Additionally, larger IT companies continue to quietly lay off workers, creating a pool of available talent for small and mid-size firms across the industry.

Measures Taken

Employers have continued to adapt their hiring strategies in response to ongoing skill shortages. In 2025, 65% of employers reported being forced to hire and train workers who were less experienced, which represents a six-point increase from the previous year. Employers offering increased wages as a way to fill positions remains the second most common strategy at 41%, despite a sharp and steady decline since 2021 (66%).

Recruitment from outside the local area also continued a downward trend, falling to 20% in 2025. In contrast, hiring from outside of the United States doubled in 2025 (albeit still nominal at 9%), and for the first time, surpassed investment in automation as a preferred measure to address skill shortages.

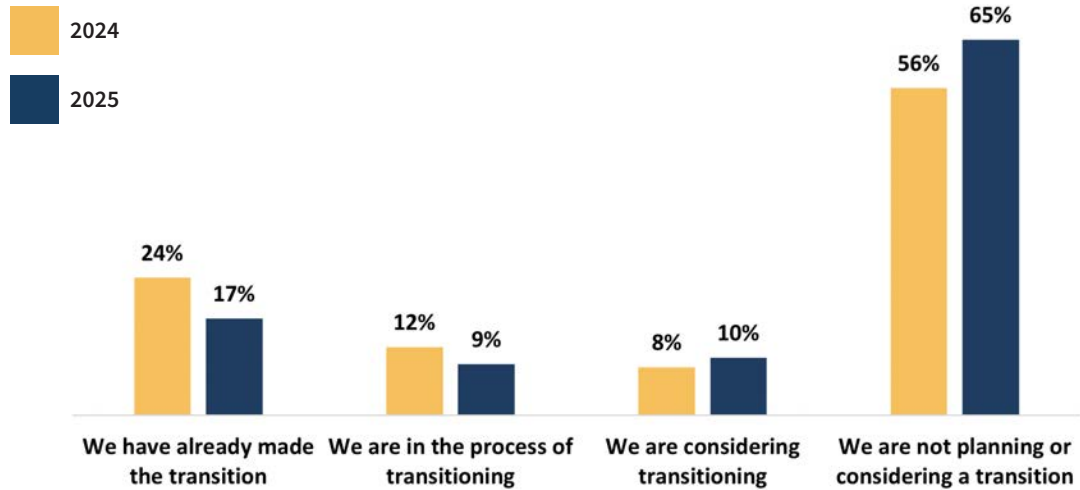
Measures Taken to Meet the Skill Shortages of Applicants



Transition from Degree-Focused Hiring

In 2025, 65% of employers reported that they are neither planning nor considering a transition away from a degree-focused hiring approach. This year, fewer employers indicated they have either completed a transition to skills-based hiring or are currently in the process of doing so.

Employers Transitioning To a Skills-Based Hiring Approach

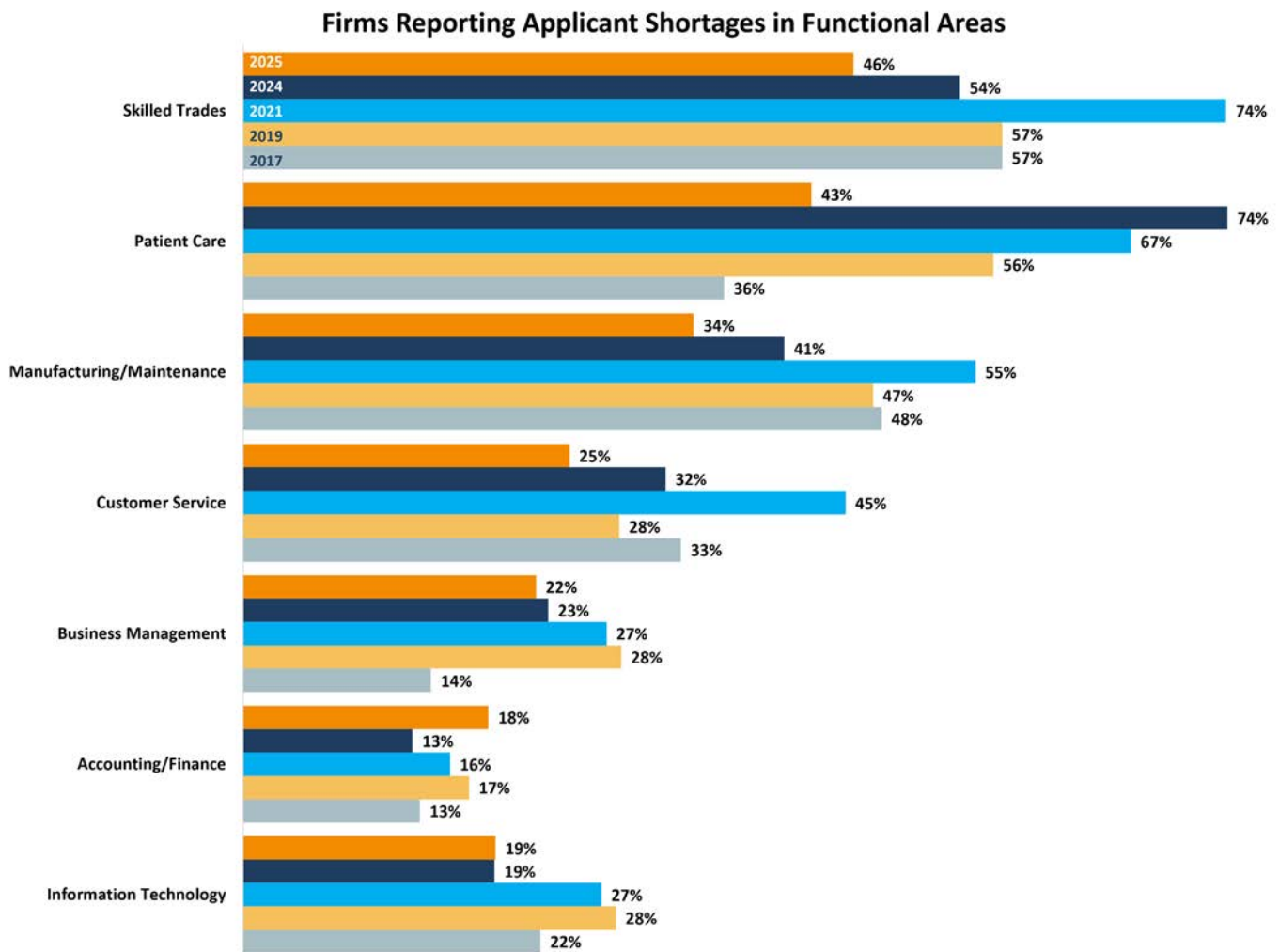


Skills Shortages in Functional Areas

Since 2017, the survey has tracked employer-reported applicant shortages across seven functional business areas: skilled trades, patient care, manufacturing/maintenance, customer service, business management, accounting/finance, and information technology.

In the 2025 survey, five of the seven categories showed a decline from last year in reported applicant shortages. The only category to increase was accounting/finance, rising from 13% (2024) to 18% (2025). Information technology remained unchanged at 19%.

Skilled trades continued to have the highest level of applicant shortages, with 46% of employers reporting difficulties. The most significant year-over-year improvement occurred in patient care, where reported shortages dropped sharply from 74% (2024) to 43% (2025). This category in particular has experienced considerable fluctuation in recent years.



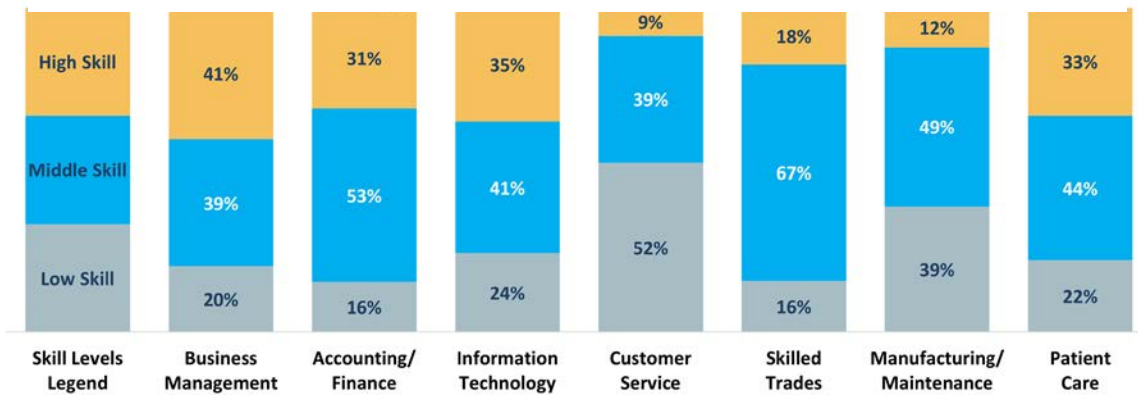
Skill Levels Sought

To assess the skill levels required to address workforce shortages, employers were asked to categorize their needs as high-skill, middle-skill, or low-skill across seven functional business areas. The most significant shifts in skill level demand were observed in business management, patient care, and manufacturing/maintenance.

In 2025, business management surpassed information technology as the sector with the highest demand for high-skilled applicants, rising sharply from 23% (2024) to 41% (2025). Patient care followed closely, with its share of employers seeking high-skilled applicants increasing from 20% (2024) to 33% (2025).

Conversely, notable declines were reported in the need for low-skilled applicants within skilled trades and manufacturing/maintenance sectors. Both areas experienced decreases of more than 10 percentage points.

Applicant Skill Levels Sought



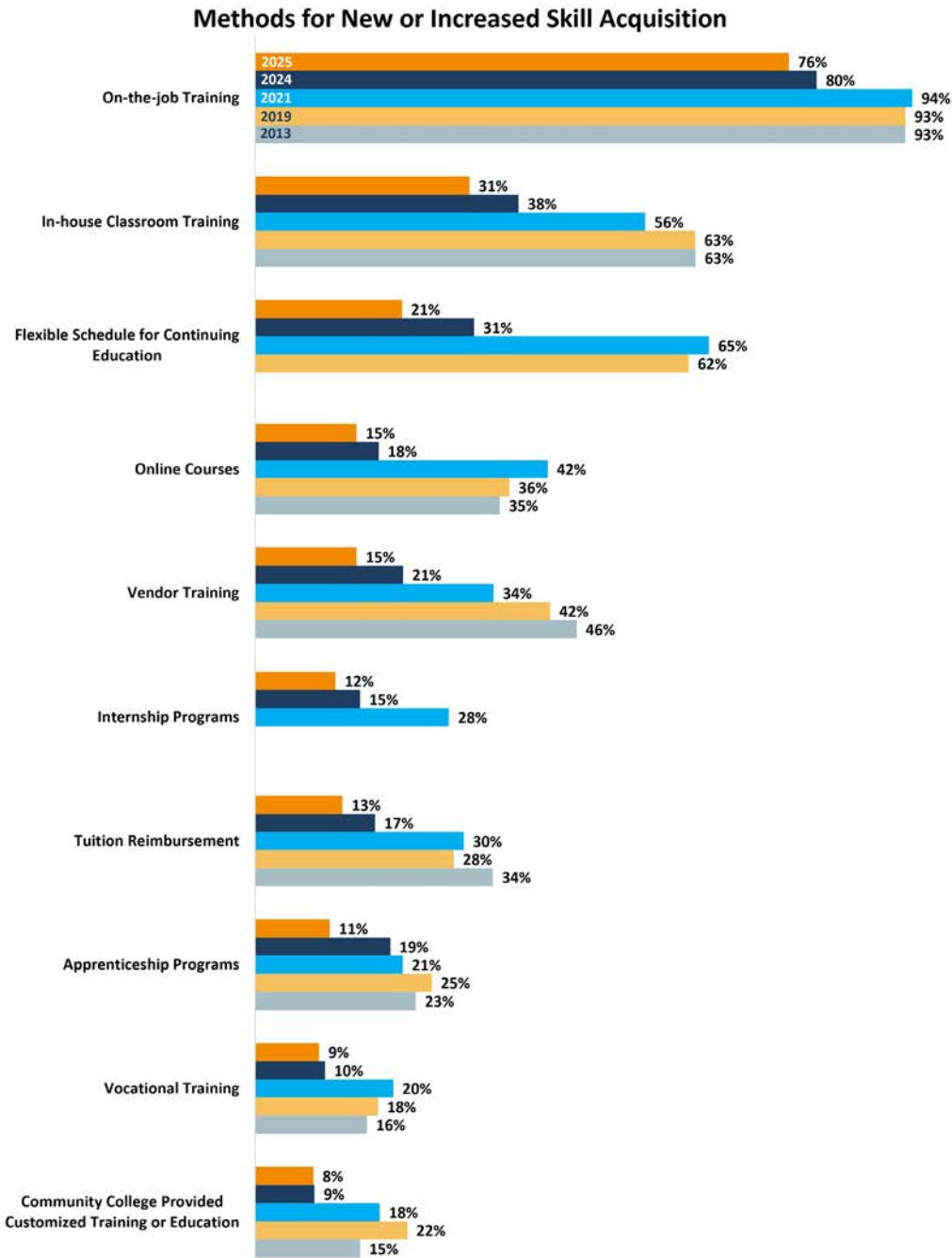
Methods of Skill Acquisition

On-the-job training remains the most commonly utilized method that surveyed companies reported using to facilitate new or enhanced skill acquisition; however, its prevalence has declined in recent years. In 2021, on-the-job training peaked at 94%; this figure fell to 76% in 2025.

In-house classroom training remains the second most widely used method, albeit at a significantly lower rate. In 2025, 31% of employers reported using this approach, down from 38% in the previous year.

Overall, 2025 marked the first year since 2021 in which all reported methods of skill acquisition showed a downward trend. The most pronounced decline was observed in the use of flexible schedules for continued education, which dropped from 31% (2024) to 21% (2025). Community colleges that provided customized training or education saw the smallest decline, but continued as the least utilized methods for improving skillsets.

Given the drop in use of reported training methods over the last decade, and the stagnation of training options during the pandemic, additional questions were added to the survey for further explanation. Training and reskilling workers will continue to be a key facet of economic growth, as employers strive to retain and support their workers, and as workers acquire new skills or upgrade their skills to remain employable and explore new options.



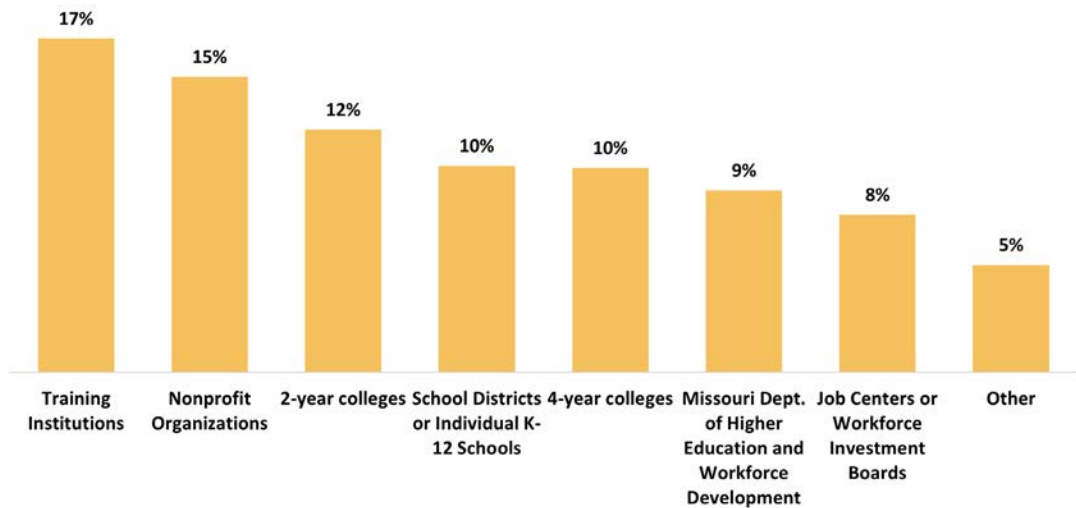
Sourcing Talent

In recent years, employers have adjusted their hiring strategies in response to traditional talent sources lacking sufficient returns. As a result, many organizations have turned to partnerships to address workforce challenges, the composition and effectiveness of which continues to evolve. In 2025, talent sourcing percentages shifted broadly across partner categories, with nearly every one experiencing a decline in reported usage.

Training institutions overtook nonprofit organizations as the most frequently cited partner type, followed by two-year colleges, which advanced from fifth to third place. Four-year colleges, once the top partnership choice for employers, continued a downward trend. After falling from the leading position in 2023, they declined by an additional five percentage points in 2025 and are now tied with K-12 school districts with only 10% of employers seeking to partner with them.

Job centers and workforce investment boards, along with the Missouri Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development (DHEWD), remained the least utilized among the options. These state- and locally-funded entities offer support services—including job matching, business counseling, and skill assessments—to employers through local job centers. Employers in Missouri can locate these services at jobs.mo.gov.

Current Partnerships to Source Talent

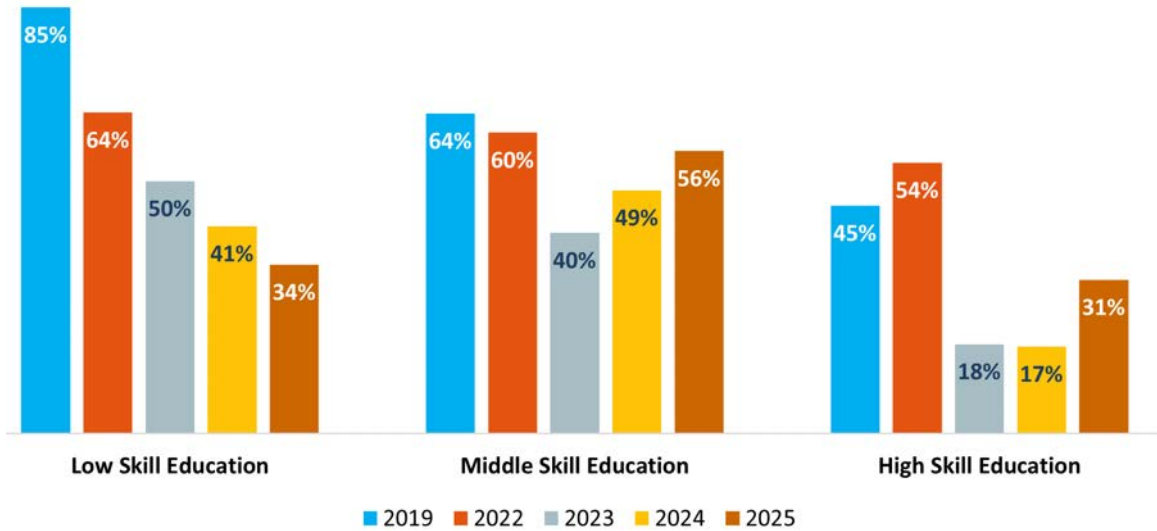


Education Requirements

While demand for low-skill positions (requiring a high school diploma or less) has steadily declined since 2019, employer requirements for middle- and high-skill positions have demonstrated notable fluctuation in recent years.

The proportion of employers seeking high-skill workers (positions requiring a four-year degree or higher) declined sharply between 2019 (54%) and 2023 (18%), but then rebounded in 2025 (31%). Middle-skill positions (requiring education or training beyond high school but less than a four-year degree) showed less extreme flux in the same time period. The number of employers with middle-skill positions increased from 49% in 2024 to 56% in 2025. Meanwhile, the prevalence of low-skill job openings has declined by more than 50% since 2019.

Employers with Jobs at Specified Education Levels



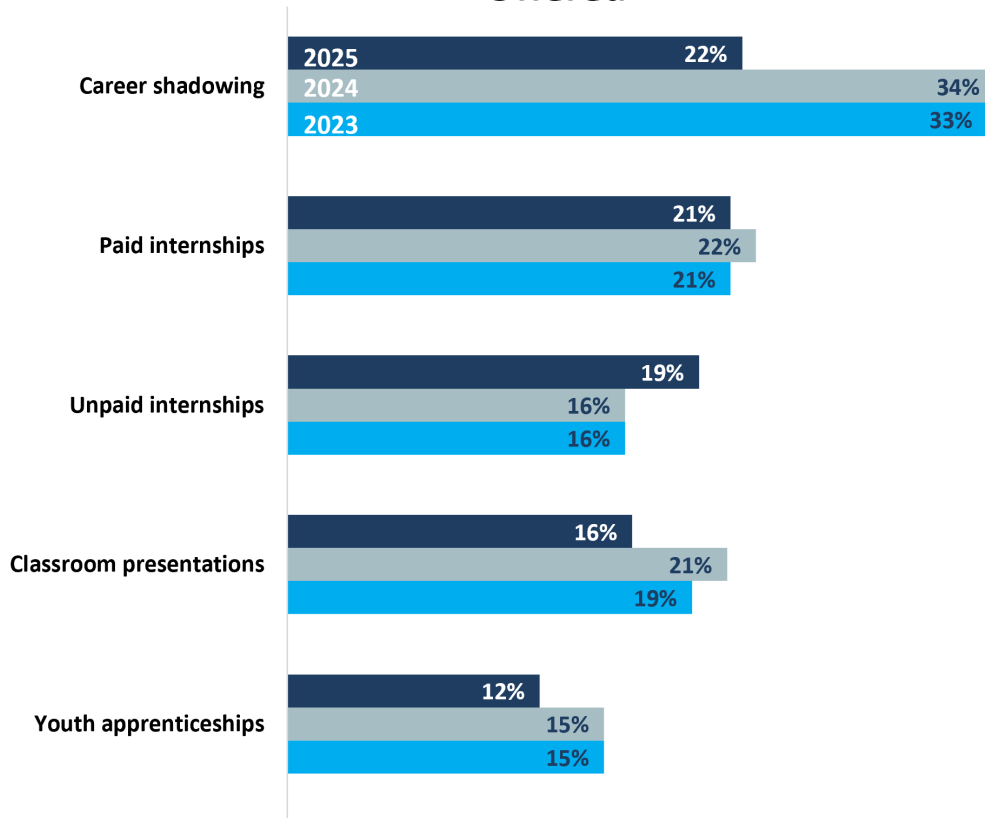
Experience Opportunities for Young Adults

Experiential learning opportunities offer students and young adults valuable exposure to real-world work environments.

After two years of relatively similar responses, 2025 survey data trended downward in nearly every category except for unpaid internships. Career shadowing remained the most frequently cited method of offering work-based learning experiences to students and young adults, although its prevalence declined significantly from 34% in 2024 to 22% in 2025.

Programs like these are instrumental in shaping career pathways for students and young adults, but they require time and resources to implement, factors that may be challenging for employers that are already short staffed. Nonetheless, access to work-based learning remains a critical investment in the development of the region's future workforce.

Young Adult Work-based Learning Experiences Offered



Employment Barriers

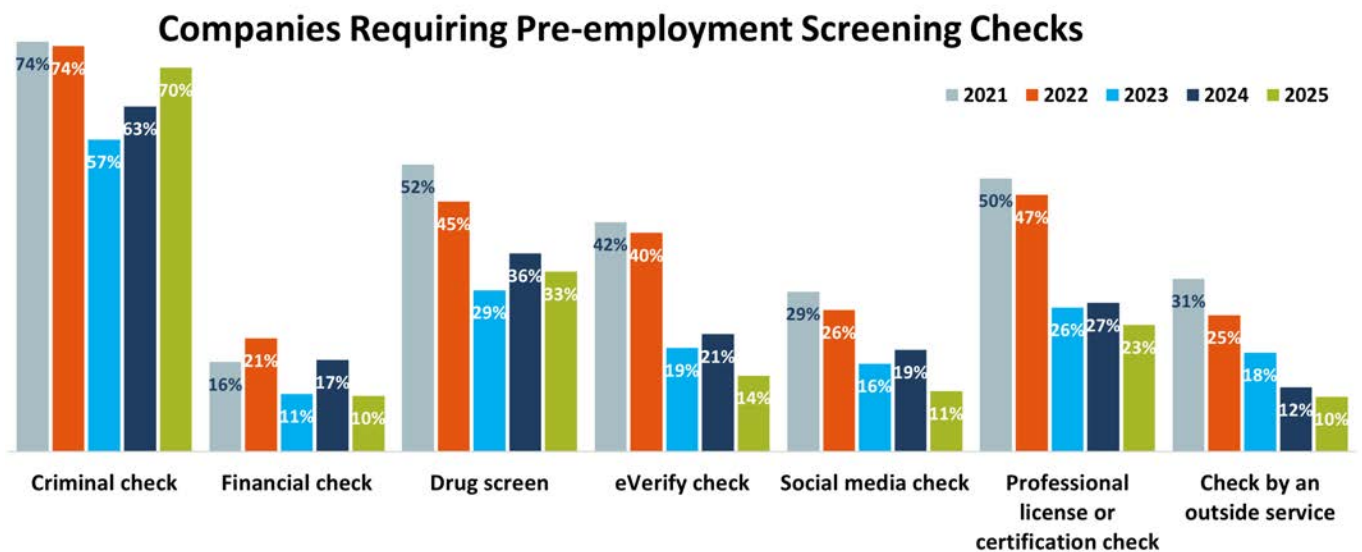
The survey examines a range of barriers to employment, including background checks and criminal convictions. While these screening tools may be designed to protect a company, they also eliminate job candidates who could be qualified and may have been convicted of lesser, non-violent offenses. Missouri releases 97% of incarcerated offenders back into the community. While the three-year recidivism rate dropped from 42.9% in 2019 to 28.9% in 2024, it remains that over one quarter of all released from incarceration will return to prison.

Each year, more than 128,000 people are booked into local jails in Missouri. That is a rate of 713 individuals per 100,000. (In contrast, Canada books 109 per 100,000.) This removes a large number of workers from the workforce, even for short stays or while awaiting trial. While the number of incarcerated individuals is higher in the urban areas of our state, the rate of incarceration is much higher, and rising, in the rural counties. Missouri has the third highest rate of prison admissions in the country. A felony conviction follows that individual for the rest of their life, permanently impacting options for employment, housing, and more, perpetuating a cycle of joblessness, under employment and poverty

70% of companies require criminal background checks.

Pre-employment Screening Checks

Companies have been gradually deprioritizing pre-employment screening checks as critical components of their candidate evaluation process. Since 2021, the overall use of these measures has declined by approximately 17%. An exception to the overall decline is the use of criminal background checks, which increased from 63% (2024) to 70% (2025). Criminal checks remain the most utilized form of pre-employment screening.

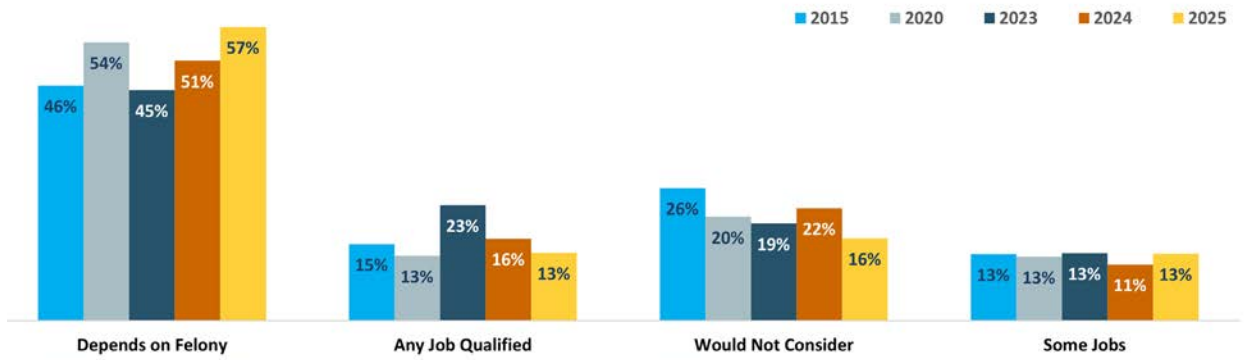


Justice-Involved Individuals

In 2025, approximately one in six employers (16%) reported that they would not consider hiring an applicant with a felony conviction, even if the individual had completed their sentence and/or probation. This figure has declined over the three years prior as well as in comparison to data reported a decade ago.

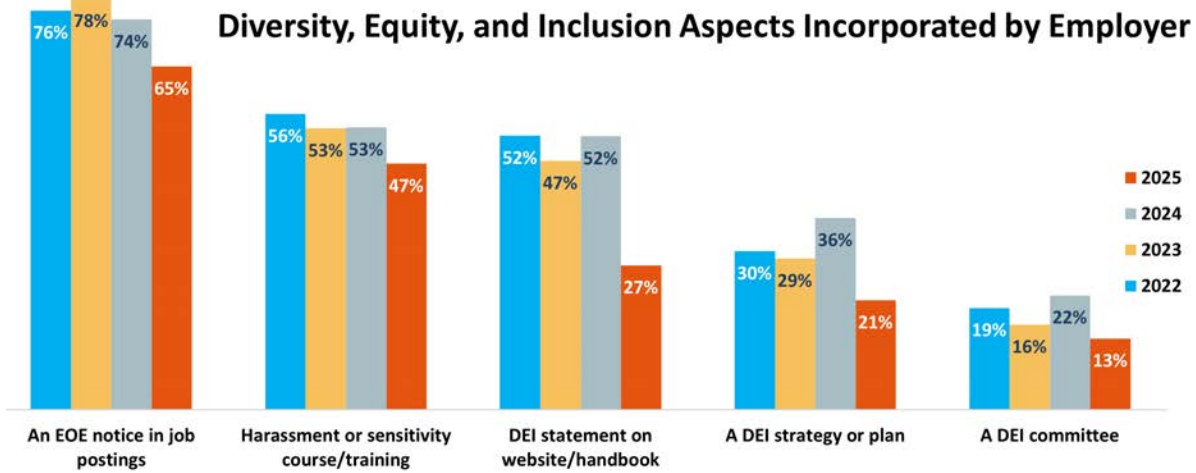
Generally, employer perspectives on this issue have remained relatively unchanged since the survey was introduced in 2015. However, there has been a consistent increase in the proportion of employers willing to hire, depending on the nature of the felony. This response has grown steadily over the past three years, from 45% to 57%. Conversely, the percentage of employers who stated they would hire an individual with a felony conviction for any position for which the applicant is qualified has declined during the same period, suggesting a shift toward a more conditional approach to hiring justice-involved individuals.

Employer Positions for Justice-involved Individuals

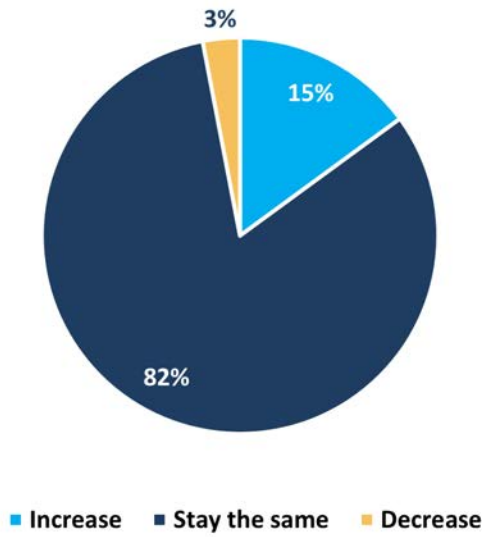


Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Initiatives

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives are programs and policies that aim to promote representation and encourage participation of employees from all walks of life. In other survey questions, employers identified a sense of belonging as among the most important characteristics of a good job. However, survey responses show a general reduction in DEI-related efforts among employers. It is important to note that only 3% of employers reported plans to further scale back their DEI initiatives in the coming year.



Anticipated Changes in DEI Efforts for the Upcoming Year

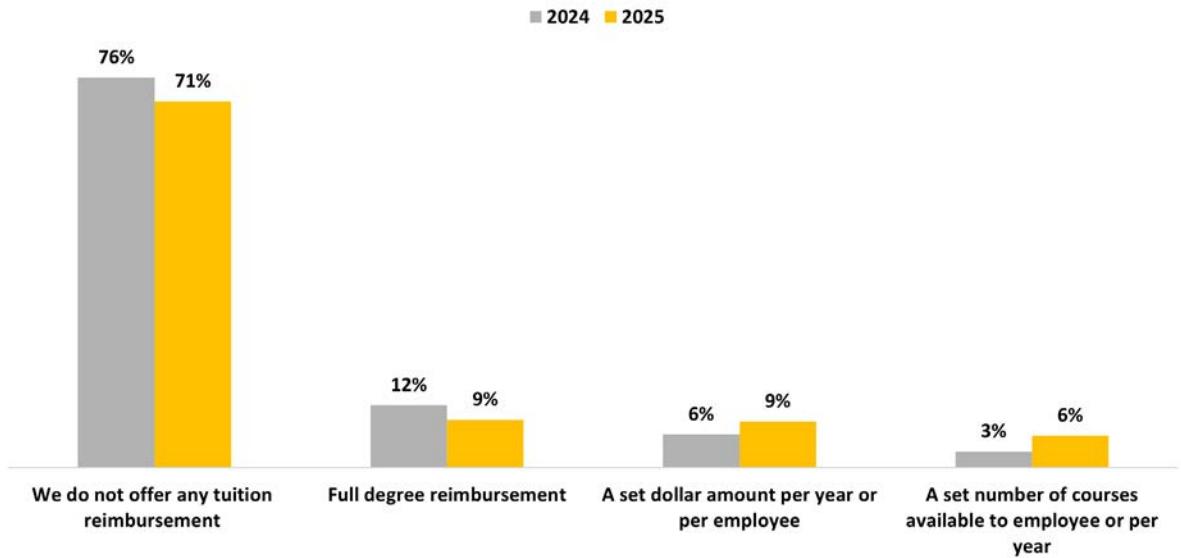


Type of Tuition Reimbursement Provided

The majority of employers continue to report that they do not offer financial assistance for college degrees. In 2025, 71% of employers indicated no financial support is provided, a slight improvement from 76% in 2024.

While full tuition reimbursement has declined, other forms of financial assistance have shown modest growth, including: employers offering a set dollar amount per employee, those covering a set number of courses, and others providing alternative forms of financial support. These trends suggest a gradual shift toward more limited, targeted forms of educational assistance rather than comprehensive tuition reimbursement.

Type of Tuition Reimbursement Employers Provide

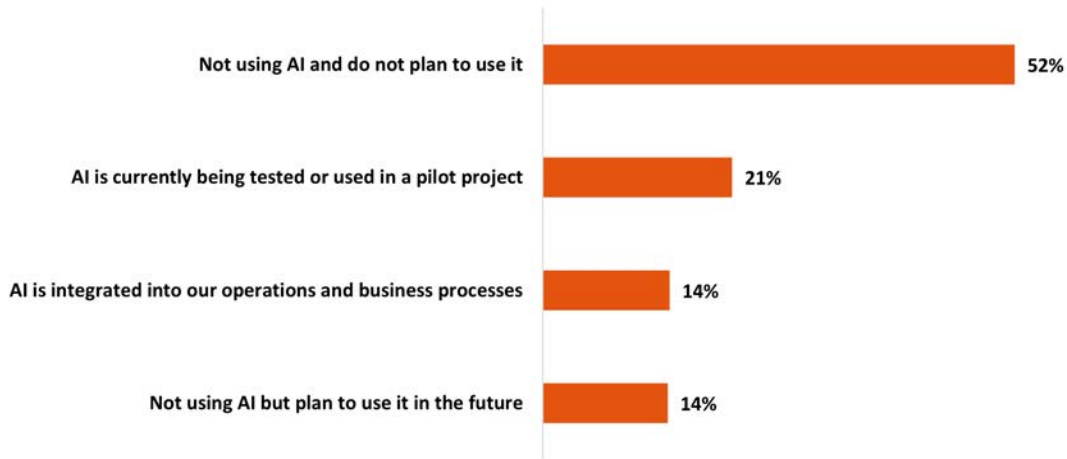


ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Current Use of AI

Just over half of companies reported they are not using AI nor do they have immediate plans to do so. An almost equal number of companies are testing, already using, or planning to use AI. Pilot projects and future adoption plans suggests a gradual but steady shift toward broader AI utilization. Companies not yet engaged may face increasing pressure to explore AI in order to remain competitive as its adoption becomes more widespread.

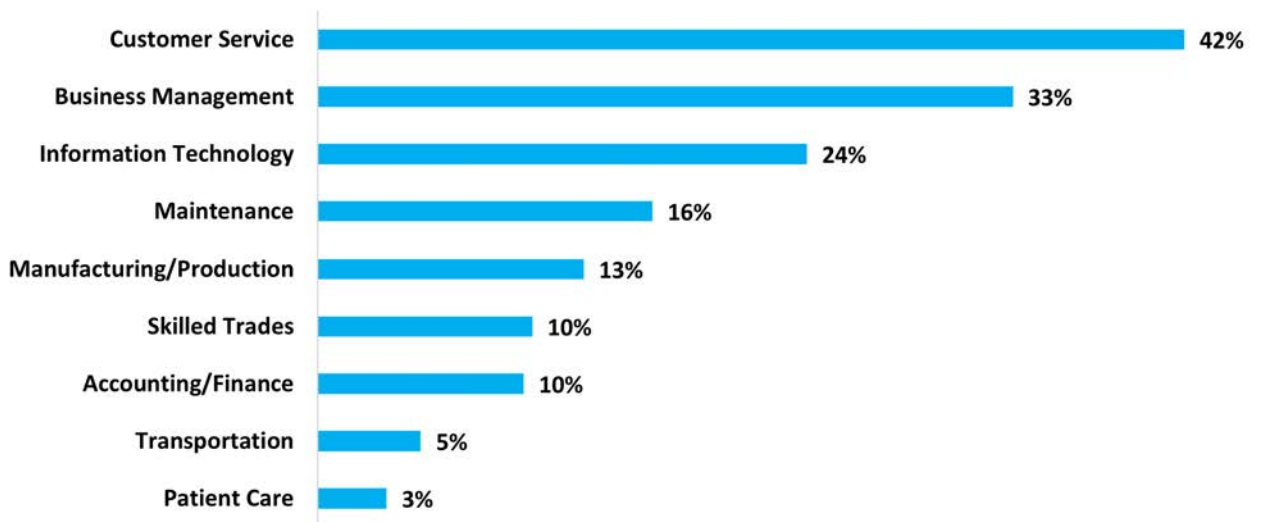
Current Use of Artificial Intelligence



Operational Uses of AI

Companies are most actively adopting AI in customer-facing and managerial functions, where automation and data-driven decision-making can provide immediate operational benefits. Customer service is the most common area, with 42% of companies reporting its use in this function, and business management follows, with 33% of companies integrating AI into management processes. In contrast, AI integration in sectors requiring physical tasks, high precision, or direct human interaction remains comparatively limited. These trends highlight both the expanding influence of AI across industries and the varying pace of adoption based on sector-specific requirements and challenges.

Areas of Company Using Artificial Intelligence(AI)



Benefits of Using AI

Understanding what benefits companies hope to achieve from using AI provides a glimpse into the creative uses of this emerging tool. Applications cover a wide range of uses and are not concentrated in only one or two dominant areas.

Benefits of Using Artificial Intelligence





SPOTLIGHT ON STARTUPS

The number of new startups created in St. Louis rebounded in 2024, after a major dip in 2023 for both new startup creation and new job creation. This trend of strong increases in 2022 and 2024, with a significant decline in 2023 is also seen at the state and national levels.

Higher interest rates, inflation, and uncertain economic growth may have had significant impacts on starting new businesses in 2023. By 2024, entrepreneurs had adjusted their models to account for those changes and got back to the business of starting companies.

In the most challenging economic times, people start businesses to feel a sense of control over their lives and their future. This may feel counterintuitive, as many workers associate corporate jobs as a secure option for a reliable salary and benefits. For workers that are creators and problems solvers, however, combining those skills with entrepreneurship may be the better option.

Over the past two years, there has been an increase in layoffs. Some have been large layoffs noted in the media, particularly in the tech industry. There have also been a number of quiet layoffs; individual or small numbers of separations that avoid the headlines. In 2025, layoffs in the federal sector and resulting from NIH and other research grants ending added a very different mix of people to the unemployment line, most very unexpectedly out of work.

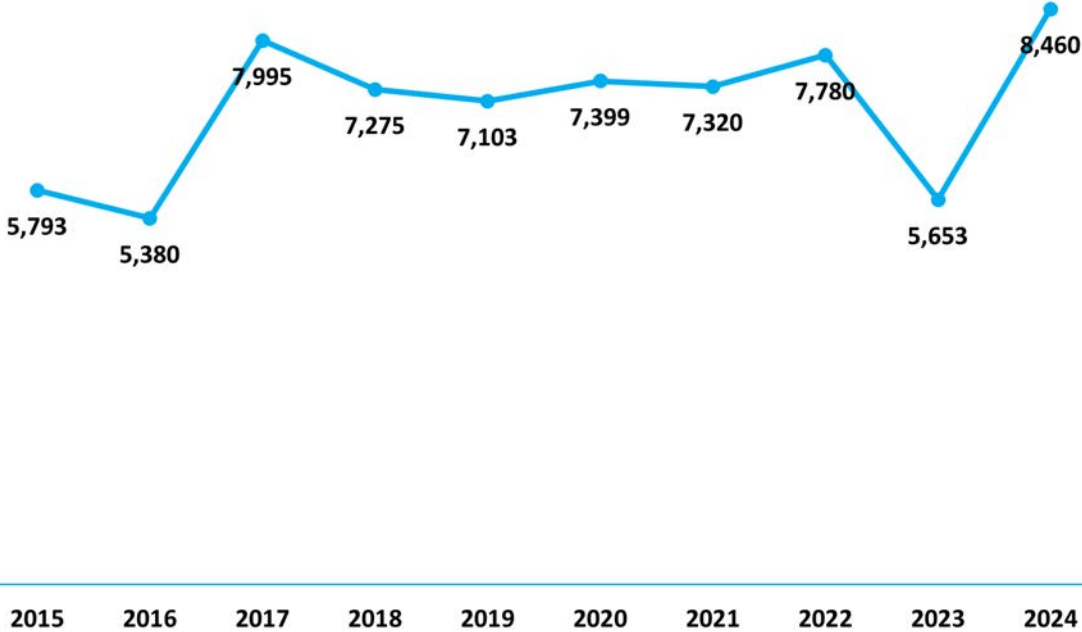
From past experience in St. Louis, the expectation is that around 10% of workers with strong skills that are laid off will start a new business. These are usually midcareer professionals that have experience and skills, see the opportunities in their industry, and also know the problems and gaps that need to be addressed. To put perspective to this, a 10% reduction in the Department of Defense workers based in St. Louis would lay off 2,500 workers. If 10% choose to start a company, there will be 250 new startups in the region.

**St. Louis
startups
created
15, 612
first-time
new jobs
in 2024.**

Startup Creation

This report identifies a first-year startup as a firm hiring its first employee, looking at a unique point in time when a solo entrepreneur takes the step of hiring workers. For 2024, 8,460 startups in the St. Louis area took that step. Every single job noted is a brand new position that did not exist the previous year.

St. Louis Region First-time Startups by Year



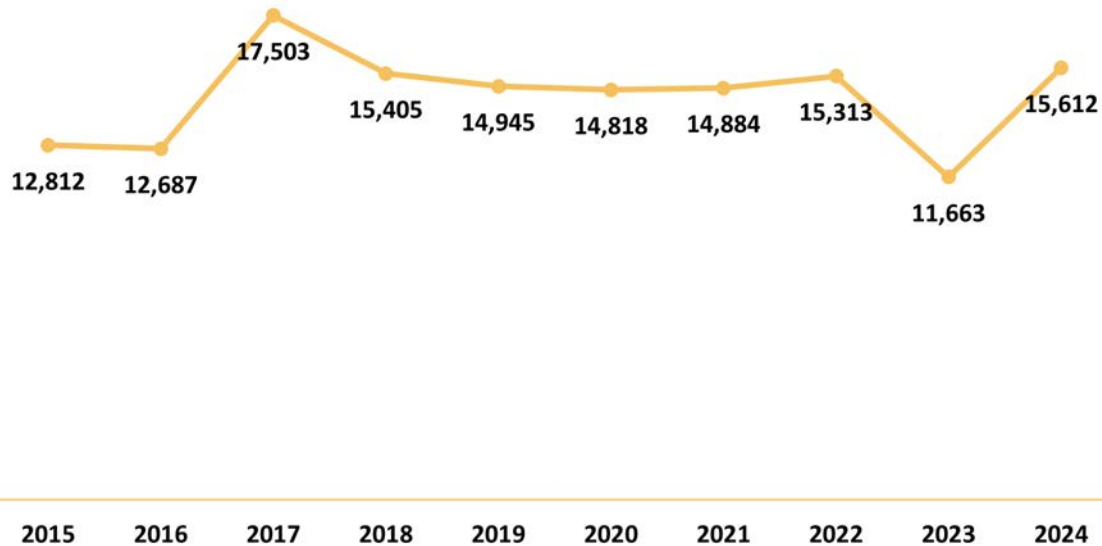
Total startups rose from 5,793 in 2015 to 8,460 in 2024, a 46% increase over the period. This growth was driven by surges in health care, construction, and professional, scientific and technical services startups.

Job Creation by First-Time Employers

The 8,460 new startups in the region created 15,612 new jobs in 2024. This was a significant rebound from the 11,663 jobs created in 2023 and continues a five-year trend of new jobs in the 14,800-15,600 range from 2018 to 2022.

For the last decade, startups in the area created a total of 145,642 new first-time jobs. For the same period, the St. Louis MSA grew by approximately 91,000 jobs. Startups were responsible for the net gain in new jobs, a scenario that plays out across the country and was documented by the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, based in Kansas City.

St. Louis Region Jobs Created by First-time Startups by Year

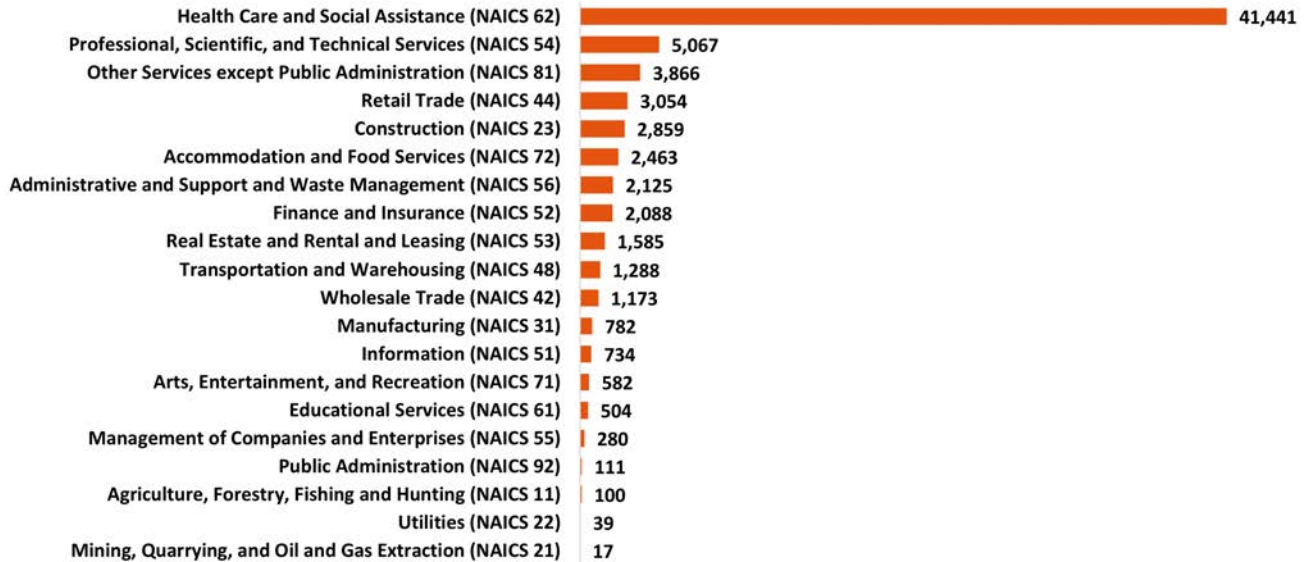


While about 20% of new businesses will fail in the first year, and an additional 35% will fail within four years, the remaining businesses will continue to grow and create more new positions that make up for the losses of those firms that failed.

Startups by Industry Sector

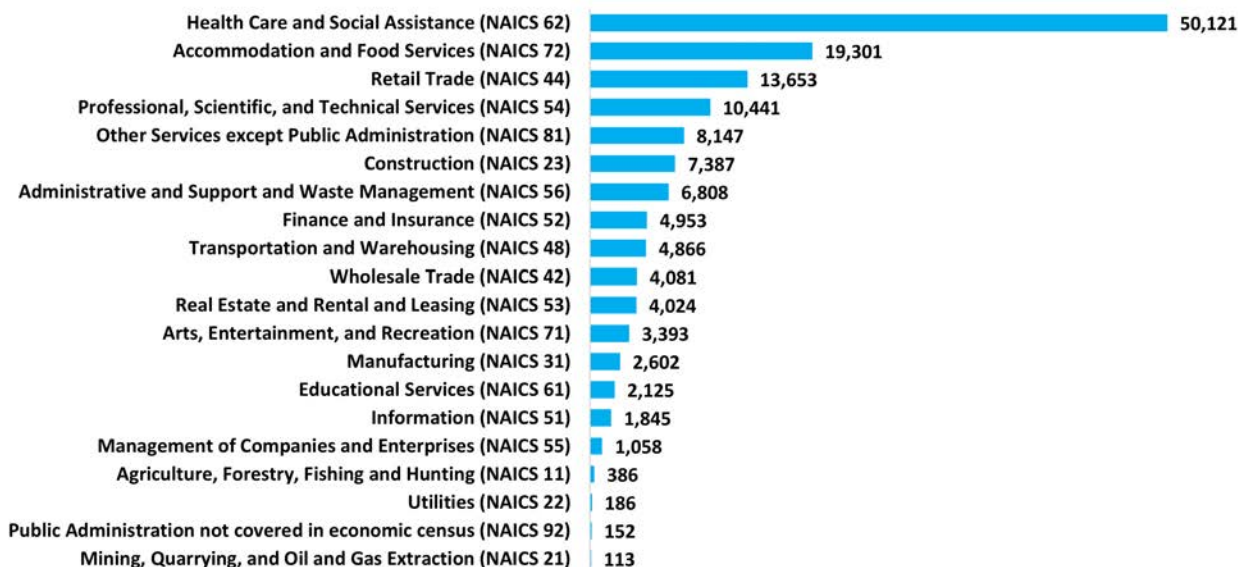
The St. Louis health care industry is the largest industry sector for the St. Louis MSA, and both the number of new startups and new jobs reflects the dominance of the industry in the region. In 2024, health care and social assistance added 5,585 startups. Professional, scientific and technical services added 510 startups. Every industry continues to add startups each year, even those that are capital intensive like mining and utilities.

St. Louis Region Startups by Industry (2015-2024)



The number of startups and jobs created by startups rebounded from 2023. Health care and social assistance new first-time jobs experienced growth of 6,225 jobs or 14.2% over last year. Accommodation and food services grew by 13.4%. Retail trade new first-time jobs grew by 10.9%. Professional, scientific and technical services added 970 new jobs, a 10.2% increase over 2023.

St. Louis Region Jobs Created by Startups (2015-2024)



Cumulative Job Contributions from St. Louis Region Startups



The data on each startup is tracked year-to-year, indicating which startups have closed their businesses and which continue. Due to the high number of failures, the first couple of years after launching result in a decline of jobs from that cohort. Over time, the companies that remain in business continue to grow, resulting in an increase in jobs.

Every company in the St. Louis region starts out this way: an entrepreneur with an idea. Eventually, top performers with a little luck and hard work grow to be major employers. Entrepreneurship support requires that we play the long game and support companies through each stage of growth. That investment of time and support results in large companies in the region who will be major employers for our workforce.

Indicators for 2025 Startup Growth

Uncertainty, unanticipated change, and unemployment will trigger a new level of entrepreneurial development in the St. Louis region in 2025 and 2026. This may result in small businesses and tech startups that can launch fairly quickly and often grow from personal funds and revenue. It will also result in science and technologically sophisticated businesses that take years and significant investment to develop.

The recent layoffs could have a significant impact on the future rate of entrepreneurial activity in the St. Louis region. Historically, layoffs from Boeing in the 1990s resulted in approximately 10% of those workers creating new companies. The recent layoffs of scientists and researchers, technology workers, nonprofit professionals, and defense and defense-related civilian workers have put a mix of people into the job market that are creative, highly skilled and adept problem solvers. The IT workers may have opportunities elsewhere in the tech industry, but many of the researchers and nonprofit professionals do not have similar roles available because the loss of grant funding impacted every organization. Those workers may be courted by other countries that are offering attractive packages of jobs, labs, research funding, housing and more. They could also decide to take control of their own destiny and start a company.

St. Louis has experienced a significant decline in the number of entrepreneur support organizations over the last decade. Several mentoring programs for early-stage startups have shuttered. Social events for connecting entrepreneurs with each other and with resources in the community dwindled during the pandemic. Few accelerators that provide cash investment remain; most have invested their funds and have not raised new rounds of capital. Venture capital has shifted towards investing in later stage companies.

From the small business perspective, recent federal funding cuts resulted in a loss of 43% of the Small Business Administration's workforce. Additionally, the SBA's SCORE mentoring program lost 60% of its funding.

It is not necessary to replace exactly what was supporting entrepreneurs in the region previously. It is, however, essential that the region take stock of the supports needed to nurture the next wave of startups. Making the investment and supporting those organizations will be critical for the long-term growth of the St. Louis region.

A vibrant welcoming startup community will keep and attract entrepreneurs and small business owners to the St. Louis region. If those startups grow and are successful, they will generate revenue, attract investment, hire workers, and grow the regional economy. If they do not find support here, they will shift to other cities that can provide the resources they need and the sense of community they desire.

SPOTLIGHT ON TRANSPORTATION

Transportation is an important industry for the St. Louis region, anchored by four key modes of transporting goods: water, rail, air and highway. Being home to major infrastructure in each of these areas allows movement of a significant amount of goods to, from, and through the St. Louis MSA. Transportation serves other significant industries for exports in advanced manufacturing, metals, food & agtech and chemicals. The 67,069 transportation jobs facilitate these industries, which would flounder without access to substantive means to move their exports or supplies.

The key strengths of the four modes of transportation contribute to the overall category of Transportation and it is worth understanding the details of each.

Ports

The ports and barge industries within the St. Louis Regional Freightway are based centrally along the Mississippi River, within close proximity to America's agricultural heartland, major Midwest populations and manufacturing centers. The port system includes both the Port of Metropolitan St. Louis and portions of the Port of Kaskaskia, IL, along a 70-mile stretch (8%) of the 855 miles from Minneapolis, MN to the Ohio River near Cairo, IL, comprised of over 200 private terminals.

This strategic location on the Mississippi River is the northernmost lock and ice-free port on the river and offers substantial fleeting operations. The region's port system is not only one of the country's largest inland ports, but also the most efficient. These 70 miles of the St. Louis Port system carry almost a quarter of the river's total freight. The St. Louis region's barge industry routinely handles approximately 369,000 tons per mile, while the average tons per mile across the other eight inland port districts is 92,863. Essentially, the St. Louis Metro Ports collectively move almost four times the average tons per mile, as compared to the other eight inland port districts in the U.S.

In addition to their importance to agriculture, handling a total of 14.45 million tons in inbound and outbound agriculture shipments in 2021, St. Louis Metro Ports handle large volumes of other products. In 2021, they moved more than one million tons each of 10 different products, including agricultural products, sand and gravel, crude petroleum, cement and concrete, petroleum coke, asphalt, tar and pitch, and coal and lignite. With 15 million tons of non-agriculture products moving through the region's ports, the system isn't dependent on a single industry.

St. Louis Region:
4th Largest Inland Port
2 International Airports
6 Class I Railroads
4 Major Interstates

Air

The St. Louis region includes two international cargo airports (St. Louis Lambert International Airport and MidAmerica St. Louis Airport) and several other regional airports with amenities beneficial to freight movement, including financial benefits from Foreign Trade Zones and Enterprise Zones, access to adjacent developable land, additional modes of transportation, cold storage for perishable goods, and 24/7 operations 365 days a year.

Rail

The nearly \$80-billion freight rail industry is operated by six Class I railroads (railroads with operating revenues of \$490 million or more), 22 regional and 584 local/short line railroads. The St. Louis region is one of the largest rail hubs in the U.S., linking these six Class I railroads with local and short line railroads. BNSF Railway Company, Canadian National Railway Company, CSX Corporation, CPKC, Norfolk Southern Corporation and Union Pacific Railroad allow the region's freight access to 145,000 route miles of rail across the country.

The region serves all corners of the U.S. without the need for railroad interchange. The barge/rail transload services provide supply-chain options for shipments to and from both Houston and New Orleans.

The region's cost-effective rail service and modal flexibility provide national reach, carrier reliability, reduced travel times and competitive transportation costs. Rail service offers ancillary benefits that other modes of transportation cannot, including reductions in road congestion, highway fatalities, fuel consumption, greenhouse gases, cost of logistics, and public infrastructure maintenance costs.

Unlike roadways, U.S. freight railroads are owned by private organizations who are responsible for their own maintenance and improvement projects. Compared with other major modes of transportation, railroad owners invest one of the highest percentages of revenues (19%) to maintain and add capacity to their system, spending nearly \$25 billion annually.

In April 2025, the top exports of Missouri were delivery trucks (\$315 million), nitrogen heterocyclic compounds (\$84.1 million), explosive ammunition (\$82.5 million), coal briquettes (\$78.2 million), and refined copper (\$48.8 million). Missouri exports mostly to Canada, Mexico, Israel, Japan and Brazil.

Highways

St. Louis is a significant highway hub, acting as a crossroads for major interstate routes. Four major interstates (I-44, I-55, I-64, and I-70) intersect in or near the city, making it highly accessible for freight and passenger travel. The highway infrastructure is a strong complement to the other modes of transportation in the region.

Significant Partner Industries

Advanced Manufacturing

With a significant workforce concentration in aerospace, automotive, and machinery and equipment manufacturing, the region has the existing labor pool needed to support growing companies seeking a location to grow their business. Key subsectors include aerospace, automotive, furniture, machinery and equipment, and HVAC and commercial equipment.

Metals

The St. Louis MSA is distinguished as the second-leading region in the United States for minerals and ores exports, with a primary focus on metals and metal products. Missouri stands out as one of only ten states possessing potentially economically viable rare earth element deposits. These minerals, found in the Earth's crust, are essential components in a variety of modern technologies, including smartphones, wind turbines, electric vehicles, and military equipment.

In 2022, the St. Louis metro area exported over \$2.9 billion in minerals and ores, securing its position as a major exporter. The region's prominence in the export market is driven by the abundance of minerals and ores, coupled with robust processing industries. Key sectors include iron & steel mills, foundries, forging & stamping, and coating, engraving, heat treating & allied activities. Overall, the combination of natural resources and industrial capabilities positions the St. Louis region as a significant player in the metals export market.

Food and AgTech: Ag Coast of America

A 15-mile stretch of the Mississippi River has gained recognition as the Ag Coast of America. It is home to 16 barge-transfer facilities that can handle more than 150 barges a day – the highest level of capacity on the Mississippi River. Currently, 50% of U.S. crops and livestock are produced within a 500-mile radius of the St. Louis region, including 80% of corn and soybean acreage.

The St. Louis region's strategic location on the river, infrastructure assets and multimodal connectivity enable it to play a crucial role in moving those commodities. The workforce related to these industries is equally significant. There are nearly 3.5 times as many animal food manufacturing employees as similar sized metros. Additionally over 1,000 plant scientists work in the St. Louis region, one of the highest concentrations of plant scientists in the world.

Chemicals

The St. Louis region ranks among the top 25 metro areas in the U.S. for chemical exports, with significant sub-sector clusters in pharmaceutical, soap and cleaning compounds, petroleum and coal products, and fertilizer and agricultural chemicals. The regional chemical industry benefits from a skilled workforce that can support manufacturing and research and development, with the presence of established chemical companies and research facilities.

Changes in the Transportation and Warehousing Sector

From 2014 to 2024, the total employment across these transportation and warehousing subsectors increased by 23%, rising from 47,742 to 58,544 jobs. The largest percentage of growth is seen in warehousing and storage, with more than a 100% increase. Couriers and messengers also showed significant growth, rising by 58%.

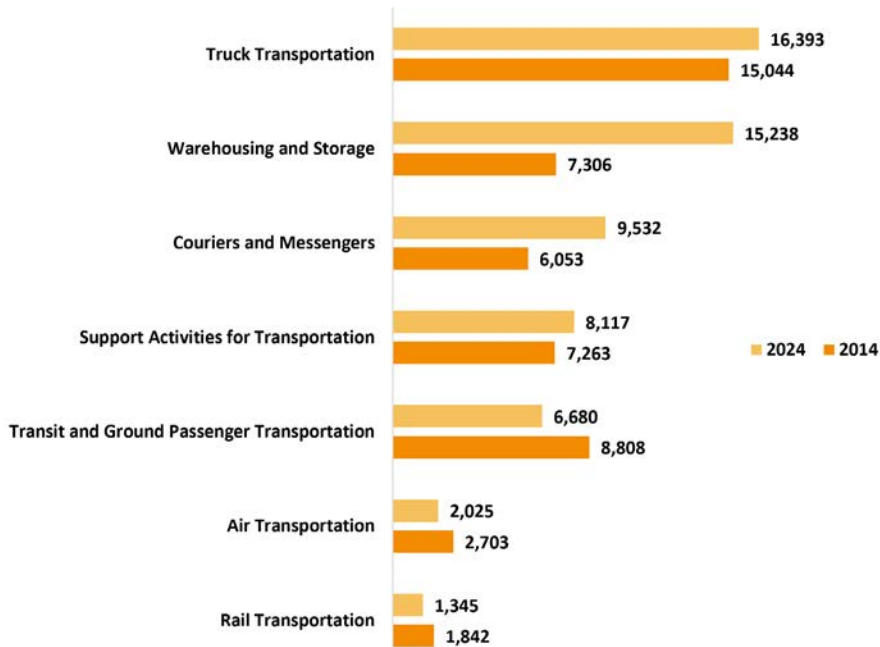
In contrast, employment in air transportation, transit and ground passenger transportation, and water transportation experienced a decline, decreasing by 20% for a loss of 2,884 jobs.

The top geographic centers for employment in transportation and warehousing are St. Louis County (22,132 workers) and Madison County, Illinois (10,334). St. Charles County (9,882) came in a close third, with St. Louis City (6,246) and St. Clair County (5,187) rounding out the top five largest counties for employment in the sector. These five counties account for 92% of the transportation and warehousing employment in the 15-county St. Louis MSA.

St. Charles County experienced a 148% increase in transportation and warehousing workers from 2014 to 2024. Madison County grew by 61% and Franklin County grew by 49%.

Several other counties experienced large decreased in employment in the sector over the same decade: St. Louis City lost 23% of its workers in the sector, a loss of 1,841 jobs. St. Clair County lost nearly 10% of its workers in this industry, a loss of 545 employees.

St. Louis MSA Transportation and Warehousing Employment by Subsector



Source: Quarterly Workforce Indicators, 2014 (Q1-Q4), 2023 (Q3, Q4), 2024 (Q1, Q2).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We sincerely thank the 600 companies that took the time away from their businesses to participate in the survey interview.

We also thank the *St. Louis Business Journal* for their support as our media partner.

We offer our deep appreciation to D'Andre Braddix, EdD of St. Louis Community College, for his talk on Gen Z and the modern workplace.

Thank you to Rhonda Hamm-Niebruegge of St. Louis Lambert International Airport, Ron Hines of United Parcel Service and Mary C. Lamie, PE of Bi-State Development for sharing their insights on the transportation industry.

Thank you to MOSourceLink for their contributions and analysis of the startup data for the St. Louis region.

Finally, we would like to acknowledge the contributions of Probolsky Research for their administration of the employer survey as well as the data collection and tabulation.

The 2025 State of the St. Louis Workforce report was made possible by the collaborative efforts of staff from the St. Louis Community College Workforce Solutions Group and the Missouri Economic Research and Information Center (MERIC), the research unit of the Missouri Department of Economic Development.

SAVE THE DATE:

2026 STATE OF THE ST. LOUIS
WORKFORCE
August 5 | 9 a.m. | STLCC–Meramec

State of the St. Louis Workforce Speakers and Panel

The State of the St. Louis Workforce event on August 6, 2025, featured D'Andre Braddix, EdD from St. Louis Community College. His talk focused on understanding Gen Z's impact on the modern workplace. The event panel, with Dr. Pittman moderating, discussed what's ahead for the transportation industry workforce in St. Louis and the impact it has on the region. Visit stlcc.edu/STLworkforce to access a link to the event recording and to download the report.



D'Andre Braddix, EdD
St. Louis Community College, Ombudsperson

D'Andre Braddix, EdD, has more than 20 years of leadership experience in higher education. He is currently STLCC's Ombudsperson, where he builds connection between faculty and students, promotes fairness, and fosters a collaborative and respectful educational environment.



Rhonda Hamm-Niebruegge
St. Louis Lambert International Airport, Director of Airports

Rhonda Hamm-Niebruegge is the Director of St. Louis Lambert International Airport and chair of the St. Louis Airport Commission. She has more than 25 years' experience in aviation management, largely based in St. Louis, including as managing director of American Airlines' St. Louis operation and as vice president of TWA's North American operations. Recently, she served as chairperson of the Airport Oversight Committee of the Airport Cooperative Research Program, a research program supported by the FAA.



Ron Hines
United Parcel Service, Director of Operations

Ron Hines is director of operations at UPS with more than 19 years' experience in planning and directing operation strategies, including scheduling, logistics, safety compliance and supply chain management. He manages more than 1,200 employees, achieving significant reductions in safety incidents and increasing operational efficiency and revenue. He holds an MBA from Fontbonne University and serves on the board of the St. Louis Crisis Nursery.



Mary Lamie, PE
Bi-State Development, Executive Vice President of Multi Modal Enterprises

Mary Lamie, PE, is the Executive Vice President of Multi Modal Enterprises at Bi-State Development, where she oversees a number of business enterprises, including the Gateway Arch operations of key assets, the St. Louis Downtown Airport and the St. Louis Regional Freightway. She has more than 30 years' experience in the transportation industry and has been recognized for her work by the U.S. Department of Transportation and U.S. Department of Agriculture.



Jeff L. Pittman, PhD
St. Louis Community College, Chancellor

Jeff Pittman leads STLCC Transformed, a multi-year, multi-campus, \$500 million initiative that ensures the College continues to meet the region's ever changing and ever-increasing workforce development demands. His work continues STLCC's tradition of providing quality, affordable and accessible education and workforce training for all St. Louis area residents in support of area businesses.



Phyllis Ellison, MBA
St. Louis Community College, Associate Vice Chancellor, Workforce Solutions Group

Phyllis Ellison leads the College's corporate and workforce development programs, personal enrichment education and professional development initiatives that meet the training and skill development needs of regional businesses.

Appendix:

State of the St. Louis Workforce Employer Survey 2025

The employer survey was conducted as phone interviews on weekdays starting March 14, 2025 - April 6, 2025.

Only complete surveys are used in this report.

Initial Question Employees

First, including yourself, how many employees does your company CURRENTLY employ in your area?

Less than 5 (Thank & Terminate)	01
5 to 10	02
11 to 49	03
50 or more	04
(Do not read) Refuse - Thank & Terminate	97
(Do not read) Don't know/Not sure - Thank & Terminate	98

1. Over the past 12 months, would you say your employment levels have increased significantly (by 15% or more), increased slightly (by less than 15%), remained the same as before, decreased slightly (by less than 15%), or decreased significantly (by 15% or more)?

Increased significantly, by 15% or more	01
Increased slightly, by less than 15%	02
Remained the same as before	03
Decreased slightly, by less than 15%	04
Decreased significantly, by 15% or more	05
(Do not read) Refuse	97
(Do not read) Don't know/Not sure	98

2. Looking ahead over the next 12 months, how does your business PLAN to change your employment levels? Would you say your employment levels will increase significantly (by 15% or more), increase slightly (by less than 15%), remain the same as before, decrease slightly (by less than 15%), or decrease significantly (by 15% or more)?

Increase significantly, by 15% or more	01
Increase slightly, by less than 15%	02
Remain the same as before	03
Decrease slightly, by less than 15%	04
Decrease significantly, by 15% or more	05
(Do not read) Refuse	97
(Do not read) Don't know/Not sure	98

3. If you were to add employees in the next 12 months, which of the following methods would you use?

(Read list; enter code for each method would use; enter all that apply.)

Recalling furloughed workers	01
Recalling workers from a lay-off list	02
Hiring new full-time employees	03
Hiring new part-time employees	04
Hiring contract workers	05
Using a temporary agency	06
(Do not read) Not applicable - Not wanting to add employees	95
(Do not read) Would not use any listed method	96
(Do not read) Refuse	97
(Do not read) Don't know/Not sure	98

4a. Please tell me if you have encountered the following barriers to expanding your employment level.

(Rotate barriers; ask "Any other barrier?" last)

Shortage of workers with knowledge or skills	01
Shortage of available training programs	02
Economic conditions	03
Government policies or regulations	04
Lack of information regarding the occupation	05
Lack of access to transportation to get to work	06
Lack of access to child care	07
Any other barrier? (If "Yes" - Record)	08
(Do not read) Have not encountered any barriers to expanding employment level	95
(Do not read) Not applicable - Not expanding employment level	96
(Do not read) Refuse	97
(Do not read) Don't know/Not sure	98

4b. (Re: each barrier named on Q.4a)

Please tell me how large of a barrier each is to your business using a 1-to-5 scale where 1 is "insignificant" and 5 is a "critical barrier." You may also use any number between 1 and 5. And, if an item is not applicable to your business, please tell me so.

96 - Not applicable

97 - Refuse

98 - Don't know/Not sure

Shortage of workers with knowledge or skills	—
Shortage of available training programs	—
Economic conditions	—
Government policies or regulations	—
Lack of information regarding the occupation	—
Lack of access to transportation to get to work	—
Lack of access to child care	—
Other barrier	—

5a. What is your company's current policy on remote work?

(Read list; enter code for each applicable policy type; enter all that apply.)

Fully on-site	
(Employees are required to work on-site everyday)	01
Fully remote	
(Employees work remotely with no on-site requirement)	02
Flexible policy	
(Employees can choose on-site and remote schedules with no set requirement)	03
Hybrid: On-site required 4 days a week	04
Hybrid: On-site required 2-3 days a week	05
Hybrid: On-site required 1 day a week	06
(Do not read) Refuse	97
(Do not read) Don't know/Not sure	98

5b. Under your current work policy, what percentage of employees work under each of the following arrangements? Answers MUST total 100%

Fully on-site (Employees are required to work on-site everyday)	___
Fully remote (Employees work remotely with no on-site requirement)	___
Flexible policy (Employees can choose on-site and remote schedules with no set requirement)	___
Hybrid: On-site required 4 days a week	___
Hybrid: On-site required 2-3 days a week	___
Hybrid: On-site required 1 day a week	___
(Do not read) Refuse	___
(Do not read) Don't know/Not sure	___

5c. Do you expect the number of your remote workers to increase, stay the same, or decrease over the next 12 months?

Increase	01
Stay the same	02
Decrease	03
(Do not read) Refuse	97
(Do not read) Don't know/Not sure	98

6. Next, I am going to read some possible shortcomings of job applicants and ask if you have or have not seen these characteristics in a significant number of applicants during the last 12 months. I would then like you to rank the importance of that shortcoming to your business on a 1 to 5 scale where 1 is "not at all important" and 5 is "very important."

6a-1. Please tell me if you have or have not noticed a significant number of applicants with "Poor work habits" (including attendance, punctuality, and attention to job).

Have seen this characteristic in job applicants	01
Have not seen this characteristic in job applicants	02
(Do not read) Refuse	97
(Do not read) Don't know/Not sure	98

6a-2. On the 1 to 5 scale, how important is this applicant shortcoming to your business?

(Do not read) 98 - Don't know/Not sure	
Poor work habits	___

6b-1. Please tell me if you have or have not noticed a significant number of applicants with a "Lack of general knowledge about business or industry."

Have seen this characteristic in job applicants	01
Have not seen this characteristic in job applicants	02
(Do not read) Refuse	97
(Do not read) Don't know/Not sure	98

6b-2. On the 1 to 5 scale, how important is this applicant shortcoming to your business?

(Do not read) 98 - Don't know/Not sure	
Lack of general knowledge about business or industry	___

6c-1. Please tell me if you have or have not noticed a significant number of applicants with a "Lack of ability to interact effectively with people of different cultures and socio-economic backgrounds."

Have seen this characteristic in job applicants	01
Have not seen this characteristic in job applicants	02
(Do not read) Refuse	97
(Do not read) Don't know/Not sure	98

6c-2. On the 1 to 5 scale, how important is this applicant shortcoming to your business?

(Do not read) 98 - Don't know/Not sure	
Lack of ability to interact effectively with people of different cultures and socio-economic backgrounds	___

6d-1. Please tell me if you have or have not noticed a significant number of applicants with a "Lack of communication or interpersonal skills."

Have seen this characteristic in job applicants	01
Have not seen this characteristic in job applicants	02
(Do not read) Refuse	97
(Do not read) Don't know/Not sure	98

6d-2. On the 1 to 5 scale, how important is this applicant shortcoming to your business?

(Do not read) 98 - Don't know/Not sure	
Lack of communication or interpersonal skills	___

6e-1. Please tell me if you have or have not noticed a significant number of applicants with a "Lack of willingness to learn or inability to learn."

Have seen this characteristic in job applicants	01
Have not seen this characteristic in job applicants	02
(Do not read) Refuse	97
(Do not read) Don't know/Not sure	98

6e-2. On the 1 to 5 scale, how important is this applicant shortcoming to your business?

(Do not read) 98 - Don't know/Not sure	
Lack of willingness to learn or inability to learn	___

6f-1. Please tell me if you have or have not noticed a significant number of applicants with a "Lack of teamwork or collaboration."

Have seen this characteristic in job applicants	01
Have not seen this characteristic in job applicants	02
(Do not read) Refuse	97
(Do not read) Don't know/Not sure	98

6f-2. On the 1 to 5 scale, how important is this applicant shortcoming to your business?

(Do not read) 98 - Don't know/Not sure	
Lack of teamwork or collaboration	___

6g-1. Please tell me if you have or have not noticed a significant number of applicants with a "Lack of general computer skills."

Have seen this characteristic in job applicants	01
Have not seen this characteristic in job applicants	02
(Do not read) Refuse	97
(Do not read) Don't know/Not sure	98

6g-2. On the 1 to 5 scale, how important is this applicant shortcoming to your business?

(Do not read) 98 - Don't know/Not sure	
Lack of general computer skill	___

6h-1. Please tell me if you have or have not noticed a significant number of applicants with a "Lack of critical thinking and problem solving."

Have seen this characteristic in job applicants	01
Have not seen this characteristic in job applicants	02
(Do not read) Refuse	97
(Do not read) Don't know/Not sure	98

6h-2. On the 1 to 5 scale, how important is this applicant shortcoming to your business?

(Do not read) 98 - Don't know/Not sure	
Lack of critical thinking and problem solving	___

6i-1. Please tell me if you have or have not noticed a significant number of applicants with an "Inability to think creatively or 'out of the box.'"

Have seen this characteristic in job applicants	01
Have not seen this characteristic in job applicants	02
(Do not read) Refuse	97
(Do not read) Don't know/Not sure	98

6i-2. On the 1 to 5 scale, how important is this applicant shortcoming to your business?

(Do not read) 98 - Don't know/Not sure
Inability to think creatively or 'out of the box' —

6j-1. Please tell me if you have or have not noticed a significant number of applicants with a "Lack of writing skills."

Have seen this characteristic in job applicants 01
Have not seen this characteristic in job applicants 02
(Do not read) Refuse 97
(Do not read) Don't know/Not sure 98

6j-2. On the 1 to 5 scale, how important is this applicant shortcoming to your business?

(Do not read) Don't know/Not sure 98
Lack of writing skills —

6k-1. Please tell me if you have or have not noticed a significant number of applicants with a "Lack of basic math skills."

Have seen this characteristic in job applicants 01
Have not seen this characteristic in job applicants 02
(Do not read) Refuse 97
(Do not read) Don't know/Not sure 98

6k-2. On the 1 to 5 scale, how important is this applicant shortcoming to your business?

(Do not read) Don't know/Not sure 98
Lack of basic math skills —

6l-1. Please tell me if you have or have not noticed a significant number of applicants with a "Lack of technical skills specific to the job."

Have seen this characteristic in job applicants 01
Have not seen this characteristic in job applicants 02
(Do not read) Refuse 97
(Do not read) Don't know/Not sure 98

6l-2. On the 1 to 5 scale, how important is this applicant shortcoming to your business?

(Do not read) Don't know/Not sure 98
Lack of technical skills specific to the job —

6m-1. Please tell me if you have or have not noticed a significant number of applicants with an "Inability to understand written and graphical information."

Have seen this characteristic in job applicants 01
Have not seen this characteristic in job applicants 02
(Do not read) Refuse 97
(Do not read) Don't know/Not sure 98

6m-2. On the 1 to 5 scale, how important is this applicant shortcoming to your business?

(Do not read) Don't know/Not sure 98
Inability to understand written and graphical information —

6n-1. Please tell me if you have or have not noticed a significant number of applicants with an "Inability to pass a drug test or has a substance abuse issue."

Have seen this characteristic in job applicants 01
Have not seen this characteristic in job applicants 02
(Do not read) Refuse 97
(Do not read) Don't know/Not sure 98

6n-2. On the 1 to 5 scale, how important is this applicant shortcoming to your business?

(Do not read) Don't know/Not sure 98
Inability to pass a drug test or has a substance abuse issue —

7. Now we would like you to share the strengths you have seen in job applicants during the last 12 months. Please rank each strength on a 1 to 5 scale where 1 is "did not see this strength in any applicants" and 5 is "saw this strength in all applicants."

(Do not read) Don't know/Not sure 98

7a. Determination
7b. Personal discipline
7c. Creativity
7d. Respectfulness
7e. Honesty
7f. Curiosity
7g. Verbal communication skills
7h. Writing skills
7i. Technical skills
7j. Taking the initiative
7k. Responsibility
7l. Positivity
7m. Ambition
7n. Dependability

8a. Are you experiencing a shortage of skilled applicants for your organization?

Yes 01
No (if "no" skip to question 8) 02
(Do not read) Refuse 97
(Do not read) Don't know/Not sure 98

8b. (If experiencing shortage of skilled applicants per Q.8a)

Please tell me the skill level required to meet your skill shortages. Approximately what percentage of the SHORTAGES you are experiencing require high-skill applicants (those with a 4-year degree or higher); middle-skill applicants (training or education beyond high school, but less than a 4-year degree); and low-skill applicants (high school or less). What percent of positions require ...

Answers MUST total 100%

Refuse 97
Don't know/Not sure 98
High-skill, requiring a 4-year degree or higher —
Middle-skill, training or education beyond high school, but less than a 4-year degree —
Low-skill, requiring high school or less —

8c. (If experiencing shortage of skilled applicants per Q.8a)

Please tell me if you are taking any of the following measures to meet the skill shortages of applicants.

Hiring from outside the St. Louis area 01
Hiring from outside the United States 02
Hiring contractors 03
Forced to hire less experienced workers and then train them 04
Invest in automation instead of hiring 05
Offering increased wages due to shortage of experienced workers 06
(Do not read) Not taking any of listed measures 96
(Do not read) Refuse 97
(Do not read) Don't know/Not sure 98

9. What is your business' plan to transition from a degree-centered hiring approach to a more skills-based approach for hiring new talent (e.g., eliminating Bachelor's degree requirement)?

We have already made the transition 01
We are in the process of transitioning 02
We are considering transitioning 03
We are not planning or considering a transition 04
(Do not read) Refuse 97
(Do not read) Don't know/Not sure 98

10. Which of the following methods do you use to assist current workers to address your company's need for new or increased skills? (Read list; enter all that apply.)

In-house classroom training	01
On-the-job training	02
Vendor training	03
Apprenticeship programs	04
Internship programs	05
Community college provided customized training or education	06
Vocational training	07
Tuition reimbursement	08
Online courses	09
Provide flexible schedule for outside continuing education	10
(Do not read) Not applicable – Do not need new or increased skills	95
(Do not read) Refuse	97
(Do not read) Don't know/Not sure	98

11a. What do you think your employees' attitudes are, in general, toward upskilling/reskilling training?

Interested:	
Interested and actively engages in training	01
Interested but training is not available	02
Neutral	03
Not interested in training	04
(Do not read) Refuse	97
(Do not read) Don't know/Not sure	98

11b. (If interested in training per Q.11a)

What barriers do your employees interested in training experience? (Read list; enter all that apply.)

Work responsibilities restrict availability to participate	01
Completing training on personal time is a barrier	02
The organization does not sponsor the cost of training	03
Any other barrier? (If "Yes" – Record)	04
Have not encountered any barriers to receiving training	95
(Do not read) Refuse	97
(Do not read) Don't know/Not sure	98

11c. Approximately how much do you spend on training per year per employee? (Include spending on internal and external training, certifications, or courses, but not tuition reimbursement for college degrees.)

Up to \$200	01
\$201-\$500	02
\$501-\$999	03
\$1,000-\$1,500	04
More than \$1,500	05
We do not spend any money on training	95
(Do not read) Refuse	97
(Do not read) Don't know/Not sure	98

12. Does your company offer financial assistance for employees pursuing college degrees? If yes, what type of financial assistance is available? (Enter all that apply.)

Full tuition reimbursement for a degree program	01
A set dollar amount per employee per year, please specify: _____	02
Coverage for a set number of courses per employee per year, please specify: _____	03
Other, please specify: _____	04
We do not offer financial assistance for college degrees	95
(Do not read) Refuse	97
(Do not read) Don't know/Not sure	98

13. Now we have some questions about your company's workforce by job function.

13a. Do you employ staff in the Accounting or Finance function?

Yes	01
No (if "no" skip to question 13b)	02
(Do not read) Refuse	97
(Do not read) Don't know/Not sure	98

13aa. (If employ staff in Accounting or Finance function per Q.13a)

Are you seeing a shortage of skilled applicants in the Accounting or Finance function?

Yes	01
No (if "no" skip to question 13b)	02
(Do not read) Refuse	97
(Do not read) Don't know/Not sure	98

13aaa. (If seeing shortage of skilled applicants in the Accounting or Finance function per Q.13aa)

Please tell me the skill level of applicants required to meet your Accounting or Finance skill shortages. Approximately what percentage of the shortages you are experiencing require high-skill applicants (those with a 4-year degree or higher); middle-skill applicants (training or education beyond high school, but less than a 4-year degree); and low-skill applicants (high school or less).

What percent of positions require ...

Answers MUST total 100%	
Refuse	97
Don't know/Not sure	98
High-skill, requiring a 4-year degree or higher	—
Middle-skill, training or education beyond high school, but less than a 4-year degree	—
Low-skill, requiring high school or less	—

13b. Do you employ staff in the Information Technology function?

Yes	01
No (if "no" skip to question 13c)	02
(Do not read) Refuse	97
(Do not read) Don't know/Not sure	98

13bb. (If employ staff in Information Technology function per Q.13b)

Are you seeing a shortage of skilled applicants in the Information Technology function?

Yes	01
No (if "no" skip to question 13c)	02
(Do not read) Refuse	97
(Do not read) Don't know/Not sure	98

13bbb. (If seeing shortage of skilled applicants in the Information Technology function per Q.13bb)

Please tell me the skill level of applicants required to meet your Information Technology skill shortages. Approximately what percentage of the shortages you are experiencing require high-skill applicants (those with a 4-year degree or higher); middle-skill applicants (training or education beyond high school, but less than a 4-year degree); and low-skill applicants (high school or less).

What percent of positions require ... Answers MUST total 100%

Refuse = 97	
Don't know/Not sure = 98	
High-skill, requiring a 4-year degree or higher	—
Middle-skill, training or education beyond high school, but less than a 4-year degree	—
Low-skill, requiring high school or less	—

13c. Do you employ staff in the Customer Service function?
 Yes 01
 No (if “no” skip to question 13d) 02
 (Do not read) Refuse 97
 (Do not read) Don’t know/Not sure 98

13cc. (If employ staff in Customer Service function per Q.13c) Are you seeing a shortage of skilled applicants in the Customer Service function?
 Yes 01
 No (if “no” skip to question 13d) 02
 (Do not read) Refuse 97
 (Do not read) Don’t know/Not sure 98

13ccc. (If seeing shortage of skilled applicants in the Customer Service function per Q.13cc)
 Please tell me the skill level of applicants required to meet your Customer Service skill shortages. Approximately what percentage of the shortages you are experiencing require high-skill applicants (those with a 4-year degree or higher); middle-skill applicants (training or education beyond high school, but less than a 4-year degree); and low-skill applicants (high school or less).
 What percent of positions require ...
 Answers MUST total 100%

Refuse	97
Don’t know/Not sure	98
High-skill, requiring a 4-year degree or higher	—
Middle-skill, training or education beyond high school, but less than a 4-year degree	—
Low-skill, requiring high school or less	—

13d. Do you employ staff in the Business Management function?
 Yes 01
 No (if “no” skip to question 13e) 02
 (Do not read) Refuse 97
 (Do not read) Don’t know/Not sure 98

13dd. (If employ staff in Business Management function per Q.9d) Are you seeing a shortage of skilled applicants in the Business Management function?
 Yes 01
 No (if “no” skip to question 13e) 02
 (Do not read) Refuse 97
 (Do not read) Don’t know/Not sure 98

13ddd. (If seeing shortage of skilled applicants in the Business Management function per Q.13dd)
 Please tell me the skill level of applicants required to meet your Business Management skill shortages. Approximately what percentage of the shortages you are experiencing require high-skill applicants (those with a 4-year degree or higher); middle-skill applicants (training or education beyond high school, but less than a 4-year degree); and low-skill applicants (high school or less).
 What percent of positions require ...
 Answers MUST total 100%

Refuse	97
Don’t know/Not sure	98
High-skill, requiring a 4-year degree or higher	—
Middle-skill, training or education beyond high school, but less than a 4-year degree	—
Low-skill, requiring high school or less	—

13e. Do you employ staff in the Skilled Trades function?
 Yes 01
 No (if “no” skip to question 13f) 02
 (Do not read) Refuse 97
 (Do not read) Don’t know/Not sure 98

13ee. (If employ staff in Skilled Trades function per Q.13e) Are you seeing a shortage of skilled applicants in the Skilled Trades function?
 Yes 01
 No (if “no” skip to question 13f) 02
 (Do not read) Refuse 97
 (Do not read) Don’t know/Not sure 98

13eee. (If seeing shortage of skilled applicants in the Skilled Trades function per Q.13ee)
 Please tell me the skill level of applicants required to meet your Skilled Trades skill shortages. Approximately what percentage of the shortages you are experiencing require high-skill applicants (those with a 4-year degree or higher); middle-skill applicants (training or education beyond high school, but less than a 4-year degree); and low-skill applicants (high school or less).
 What percent of positions require ...
 Answers MUST total 100%

Refuse	97
Don’t know/Not sure	98
High-skill, requiring a 4-year degree or higher	—
Middle-skill, training or education beyond high school, but less than a 4-year degree	—
Low-skill, requiring high school or less	—

13f. Do you employ staff in the Manufacturing, Production & Maintenance function?
 Yes 01
 No (if “no” skip to question 13g) 02
 (Do not read) Refuse 97
 (Do not read) Don’t know/Not sure 98

13ff. (If employ staff in Manufacturing, Production & Maintenance function per Q.13f) Are you seeing a shortage of skilled applicants in the Manufacturing, Production & Maintenance function?
 Yes 01
 No (if “no” skip to question 13g) 02
 (Do not read) Refuse 97
 (Do not read) Don’t know/Not sure 98

13fff. (If seeing shortage of skilled applicants in the Manufacturing, Production & Maintenance function per Q.13ff)
 Please tell me the skill level of applicants required to meet your Manufacturing, Production and Maintenance skill shortages. Approximately what percentage of the shortages you are experiencing require high-skill applicants (those with a 4-year degree or higher); middle-skill applicants (training or education beyond high school, but less than a 4-year degree); and low-skill applicants (high school or less).
 What percent of positions require ...
 Answers MUST total 100%

Refuse	97
Don’t know/Not sure	98
High-skill, requiring a 4-year degree or higher	—
Middle-skill, training or education beyond high school, but less than a 4-year degree	—
Low-skill, requiring high school or less	—

13g. Do you employ staff in the Patient Care function?
 Yes 01
 No (if “no” skip to question 14) 02
 (Do not read) Refuse 97
 (Do not read) Don’t know/Not sure 98

13gg. (If employ staff in Patient Care function per Q.13g) Are you seeing a shortage of skilled applicants in the Patient Care function?
 Yes 01
 No (if “no” skip to question 14) 02
 (Do not read) Refuse 97
 (Do not read) Don’t know/Not sure 98

13ggg. (If seeing shortage of skilled applicants in the Patient Care function per Q.13gg) Please tell me the skill level of applicants required to meet your Patient Care skill shortages. Approximately what percentage of the shortages you are experiencing require high-skill applicants (those with a 4-year degree or higher); middle-skill applicants (training or education beyond high school, but less than a 4-year degree); and low-skill applicants (high school or less). What percent of positions require ...		17d. Field trips	
Answers MUST total 100%		Yes	01
Refuse	97	No	02
Don't know/Not sure	98	17e. Classroom presentations	
High-skill, requiring a 4-year degree or higher	—	Yes	01
Middle-skill, training or education beyond high school, but less than a 4-year degree	—	No	02
Low-skill, requiring high school or less	—	17f. Youth apprenticeships	
14. In your business, what percentage of your TOTAL positions requires each of the following levels of experience?		Yes	01
What percent of positions require ...		No	02
Answers MUST total 100% Refuse	97	17g. (If 17a through 17f are all "No") Would you be interested in offering work-based learning experiences for students and young adults?	
Don't know/Not sure	98	Yes	01
A minimum of 4 or more years of experience	—	No	02
A minimum of 1 to 3 years of experience	—	18. Do you currently have partnerships with any of the following organizations to help you source talent?	
Some experience, but less than 1 year	—	(Do not read) Refuse	97
No Experience	—	(Do not read) Don't know/Not sure	98
15. In your business, what percentage of your TOTAL positions require each of the following levels of education as a minimum requirement? What percent of positions require...		18a. Job Centers or Workforce Investment Boards	
Answers MUST total 100%		Yes	01
Refuse	97	No	02
Don't know/Not sure	98	18b. School districts or individual K-12 schools	
High-skill, requiring a 4-year degree or higher	—	Yes	01
Middle-skill, training or education beyond high school, but less than a 4-year degree	—	No	02
Low-skill, requiring high school or less	—	18c. 2-year colleges	
16. What percentage of jobs in your business are available for individuals with industry relevant short-term training, meaning not more than 6 months of training beyond a high school diploma?		Yes	01
No jobs	01	No	02
1 to 49% of jobs	02	18d. 4-year colleges	
50 to 100% of jobs	03	Yes	01
(Do not read) Refuse	97	No	02
(Do not read) Don't know/Not sure	98	18e. Training institutions	
17. Do you offer any of the following work-based learning experiences for students and young adults?		Yes	01
(Do not read) Refuse	97	No	02
(Do not read) Don't know/Not sure	98	18f. Nonprofit organizations	
17a. Paid internships		Yes	01
Yes	01	No	021
No	02	18g. Missouri Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development	
17b. Unpaid internships		Yes	01
Yes	01	No	02
No	02	18h. Other (please record)	
17c. Career shadowing		Yes	01
Yes	01	No	02
No	02	19. What percentage of jobs in your firm receives each of the following types of background checks prior to hire?	
		Criminal check, percentage	—
		Financial check, percentage	—
		Drug screen, percentage	—
		eVerify check, percentage	—
		Social media check, percentage	—
		Professional license or certification check, percentage	—
		Check by an outside service, percentage	—

20. What aspects of DEI – Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion – does your business incorporate?		1 to 5 scale where 1 is “not at all important” and 5 is “very important.”	
(Do not read) Refuse	97	(Do not read) Refuse	97
(Do not read) Don’t know/Not sure	98	(Do not read) Don’t know/Not sure	98
20a. A DEI strategy or plan		Health Insurance	—
Yes	01	Pay rate	—
No	02	Sense of purpose	—
20b. An Equal Opportunity Employer notice in job postings		Accessibility	—
Yes	01	Retirement plan	—
No	02	Job stability	—
20c. A DEI statement on your website or in a handbook		Paid time off (vacation or sick leave)	—
Yes	01	Flexibility	—
No	02	Paid family leave	—
20d. A DEI committee		Inclusiveness, a sense of belonging	—
Yes	01	Job satisfaction	—
No	02	Opportunities for advancement or a career path	—
20e. Harassment or sensitivity course or training		24. In what areas of your company are you using Artificial Intelligence (AI)?	
Yes	01	(Read list; enter code for each area of your company; enter all that apply.)	
No	02	Accounting/Finance	01
20f. Affinity groups within your company (These are voluntary, employee-led groups that are typically based on shared characteristics or experiences. Examples include: Women’s Resource Group, Racial/Ethnic Groups, LGBTQ+ Employee Network, Veterans Group, Disability Support Group.)		Information Technology	02
Yes	01	Customer Service	03
No	02	Business Management	04
21. How do you anticipate your organization’s Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) efforts will change in the next year?		Skilled Trades	05
Increase	01	Manufacturing/Production	06
Stay the same	02	Maintenance	07
Decrease	03	Patient Care	08
(Do not read) Refuse	97	Transportation	09
(Do not read) Don’t know/Not sure	98	(Do not read) Refuse	97
22. Which statement best describes your company’s position on hiring an applicant convicted of a felony offense who has completed their sentence and/or probation? (Read list; single response only)		(Do not read) Don’t know/Not sure	98
Would not consider applicant for any position	01	25. How would you describe your organization’s current use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)?	
Depends on the nature of the felony and the time since the offense	02	Not using AI and do not plan to use it	01
Would consider for some jobs but not for others	03	Not using AI but plan to use it in the future	02
Would consider the applicant for any job for which they are qualified	04	AI is currently being tested or used in a pilot project	03
(Do not read) Refuse	97	AI is integrated into our operations & business processes	04
(Do not read) Don’t know/Not sure	98	(Do not read) Refuse	97
23. Finally, we want to understand the characteristics that best define a “good” job. Please rank the importance of each of the following job characteristics on a		(Do not read) Don’t know/Not sure	98
		26. What benefits has your organization experienced since using AI?	
		(Read list; enter code for each area of your company; enter all that apply.)	
		More efficient/saving time on some tasks	01
		Improved decision-making through data insights	02
		Cost reduction through automation and optimization	03
		Enhanced customer experience and satisfaction	04
		Fostering innovation and gaining a competitive edge	05
		Replacing workers or unfulfilled positions	06
		Reduced operational errors or mistakes	07
		Enhanced employee experience and satisfaction	08
		(Do not read) Refuse	97
		(Do not read) Don’t know/Not sure	98



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