



NEWS RELEASE

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For more information, contact:

Jim Morris, DESE, 573-751-3469

Michael Waltman, DWD, 573-526-8267

David Lankford, MCC, 573-634-3511

Jeremy Kintzel, MDHE, 573-751-2361

Mary Bruton, MERIC, 573-751-3635

Missouri Employers ID the Skills They Need Most

New studies by state economic developers spell out the skills workers need to do well in occupations important to Missouri's future.

The Missouri Department of Economic Development and its business partners across the state are releasing "competency models" that identify the core competencies needed for careers in industries the state has targeted for growth, including information technology, transportation, energy and life sciences.

"We're finding a great deal of overlap among the different industries in their desired foundational skills, most of which can and should be attained before students graduate high school," said Mary Bruton, a workforce research manager with the Missouri Economic Research and Information Center, or MERIC. "We're also finding that workers who can offer a broad range of support skills to go along with their specialties are at the highest premium."

The models are based on a national tier-based framework created by the US Department of Labor. Each targeted industry identifies three main blocks of competencies: foundational, industry-related and occupation-related. Researchers from MERIC, the research arm of the Department of Economic Development, spent months reviewing relevant literature, collecting and analyzing data, and conducting focus groups and case study interviews with Missouri employers to determine which competencies should go into the models.

"The competencies in the Missouri models are specific to the needs of Missouri Employers, even though the framework is based on a national methodology," Bruton said.

Missouri has produced two models so far, one for transportation and one for information technology. The results reveal that strong reading, writing and arithmetic skills remain timeless values among employers, as do such soft skills as dependability, interpersonal skills, professionalism and integrity.

"The basics of education and those fundamental skills are not going out of style," Bruton said.

The models also show that employers are seeking workers with a broad range of support skills.

"For example, in the information technology industry, employers are not looking for someone who can just go into a cubicle and code away but who can also interact with customers and communicate information clearly and succinctly," Bruton said. "Or in the transportation industry, a good truck driver is not just someone who can drive from Point A to Point B but who is also a safety specialist."

Students interested in these occupations might not realize these competencies will be expected of them, and educators might not realize it, either, Bruton added.

“That’s one of the main reasons we are developing these models and getting them out to education providers and students,” Bruton said. “We hope that schools and training centers will take what we have learned through our consultations with Missouri industry leaders and develop curriculum aligned with the talent needs of employers. We also hope that students and parents will consult the models to ensure their short- and long-term educational plans include the broad range of courses and experiences that employers want.”

Businesses will be able to use the models to help them write job descriptions, make hiring decisions, evaluate employees and complete other HR tasks. Job-seekers also can use the models to identify occupations that match their skill sets and to build their résumés.

The next two Missouri industries targeted for competency models are energy and life sciences. To learn more about the project and to see the completed models, visit www.missourieconomy.org. Funding for this project comes from the U.S. Department of Education through appropriations for the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) and the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act.

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More information is available at http://dese.mo.gov/divcareered/missouri_connections_news_room.htm.

The Missouri Connections Public Outreach Partnership workgroup represents a collaboration of state agencies concerned with education and workforce development who are helping inform and build awareness among the public, particularly students and potential students, of targeted careers, educational and industry trends, and workforce development priorities. Workgroup members represent the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education; Department of Higher Education; Department of Economic Development, Division of Workforce Development and Missouri Economic Research & Information Center; Missouri Center for Career Education; and Missouri Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Freelance writer is Anita Neal Harrison.