

Missouri Competency Models FACT SHEET

July, 2009

Background

The Missouri Department of Economic Development says access to skilled workers is one of the top criteria that companies and site selectors consider when locating and expanding businesses in Missouri. The objective of designing a competency model is to develop a dynamic, industry-driven framework for workers that will help them meet the demands of the globally competitive economy. The competency models also can serve as a useful human resource tool within organizations and can help shape policies that will address the skill and curriculum gaps in order to meet the future needs of Missouri businesses.

Competency Models

The first competency model was developed by McBer and Company in the early 1970s for the US Department of State. In the last 30 years, this technique has gained importance as an integral practice in human resource management. Competency models benefit a wide array of users — as a standard set of skills that can be used for recruiting, profiling jobs, evaluating employees, and designing academic and professional certification programs. They serve as a bridge between educators, businesses and other stakeholders who are invested in preparing students and workers for today's workplace challenges. For example, the competency models can help identify needs for short-term employment training programs for students to develop appropriate skill sets.

Targeted Industry Clusters

Targeted Industry Clusters serve as an economic development and workforce development framework by which various stakeholders and policy makers can develop coordinated strategies for strengthening target industries with regards to skill development, educational alignment, recruitment, and retention. The Missouri Targeted Industry Clusters are based on research by the Missouri Department of Economic Development Missouri Economic Research and Information Center (MERIC). The clusters were defined based on industry strength and concentration as well as future growth potential.

- DED: www.missouridevelopment.org/Business%20Solutions/Targeted%20Industries.html
- MERIC: www.missourieconomy.org/industry/cluster/targetclusters.stm

Comparing “Industry Clusters” to “Career Clusters”

It may be helpful to point out how the economic development model interrelates with the “Career Clusters” model adopted by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and nearly all states. In short, the Targeted Industry Clusters are statewide economic development priority areas while the Career Clusters model is student-focused for educational planning. Although developed separately, competencies for both models complement one another and demonstrate similar findings. Both were developed and validated based on significant input from business and industry.

Career Clusters

From an educational point of view, Career Clusters can serve as an organizing tool for curriculum design and instruction to provide knowledge and skills needed for success as students transition from elementary school (the 6 Career Paths) to high school (16 Career Clusters), then to postsecondary (79 Career Pathways). Missouri Career Education has adopted the national Career Clusters framework and is in the process of helping schools implement Career Clusters and Programs of Study. Career Clusters

are 16 broad categories that encompass virtually all occupations from entry-level jobs through professional levels. These groupings can be used for curriculum design, guidance and instruction, and provide a framework to facilitate transition from secondary education to postsecondary and/or a career. From a student's point of view, Career Clusters provide a focus and relevance for school, as well as promotes career progression and lifelong learning.

Career Clusters: www.dese.mo.gov/divcareered/career_clusters.htm

Programs of Study

A Program of Study within a Career Cluster or Career Pathway offers a series of seamless and, ideally, articulated education and work-related experiences that enables students to advance over time to successively higher levels of education and employment in a given industry or occupational sector. Each step is designed to prepare students to progress to the next level of employment and education. While it will be impracticable for schools to offer Programs of Study in every Career Cluster or Career Pathway, those offered locally will primarily target needs of industries important to local and regional economies. Within this effort, education and business partners will be working together to create stronger avenues of advancement for workers, job seekers, and new labor market entrants, as well as a supply of qualified workers for local employers. National competencies developed through the States' Career Clusters Initiative were validated statewide by Missouri business and industry in January 2007 for purposes of the federal Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006. Missouri's new competency models can be another important resource for educators and advisors in development of curriculum and Programs of Study, such as identifying course selections and sequence and reinforcing the need for supportive skills, such as business, technology and communication.

Programs of Study: http://dese.mo.gov/divcareered/perkins_iv_pos.htm

Missouri "Skills Gap" Report

MERIC released a "Skills Gap" report in October 2008. It addresses the issue of worker skill gaps – described as the difference between skills needed for a job and those possessed by an applicant. The report was produced through employer feedback collected through the Missouri Job Vacancy Survey (JVS). Skills gap serves as a tool to help students discover what their future employers are saying about skills necessary to fill open job vacancies. The report addresses questions in the survey about job applicant's competencies and shortcoming; education and experience; and thinking, math, and reading skills. For example, a "soft skill" such as interpersonal skills was deemed an important competency of the position for 90 percent of vacancies. Employers responded that such skills like interpersonal skills were common shortcomings among recent applicants. They indicated that recent applicants had the highest rates of deficiencies for the "soft skills" of a positive attitude, good work ethic, good customer skills, and good communication skills.

MERIC Occupational Studies: www.missourieconomy.org/occupations/index.stm

Soft Skills and the Missouri Career Preparation Certificate

Findings in development of Missouri's competency models emphasize not only the academic and technical knowledge necessary but also the importance of "soft skills" in the workplace. The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) launched the Career Prep Certificate program in response to 2006 legislation that required the development of a "ready-to-work" endorsement program. In 2008, DESE awarded four implementation grants to projects representing 29 schools and 18,000 students. The upcoming school year will start the second year of pilots, which aim to develop certificate programs tailored to the needs of employers in each project's areas.

Missouri CPC program: www.dese.mo.gov/divcareered/career_prep_certificate.htm