



News Release

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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.

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 Missouri Economic Research and Information Center (MERIC) spent months collecting data and interviewing Missouri employers to determine which competencies should go into the models.

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 and integrity.

The models also show that workers who can offer a broad range of support skills to go along with their specialties are at the highest premium.

"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," said Mary Bruton, a workforce research manager with MERIC. "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.

"We hope that schools and training centers will take what we have learned through our research and our consultations with Missouri industry leaders and develop curriculum aligned with the talent needs of employers," she said. "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."

Other potential users of the models include businesses looking for an HR resource and job-seekers wanting 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.

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Full-length news release, quotes and fact sheet are available at
www.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 Harrison.