



The following brainstorm items were identified in summer 2019 by the members of TEAM (Training & Employment Administrators of Missouri), the state-wide association of workforce directors who are responsible for operations and management of Missouri's 14 workforce regions, as actionable and prioritized improvement suggestions for improving Missouri's workforce system. These suggestions are divided into two prioritized lists: 1) Program & Operational Suggestions and 2) Fiscal Suggestions. They are being offered for consideration to our CLEOS and local workforce boards, the Missouri Workforce Development Board, the Missouri Department of Higher Education & Workforce Development, the Governor's Office, State legislators and others.

Program & Operational Suggestions

1. Further Integration of State Workforce Programs and Coordination with Workforce Regions

The Missouri Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development should work toward even more integration of policy and operations of all workforce-related programs and grants that are undertaken by other state departments to avoid competition for limited resources, duplication and inefficiency. At the same time, we are suggesting the Workforce Directors of TEAM be involved in those efforts to streamline and better coordinate workforce activities around Missouri, especially as they involve implementation by the Job Centers.

Examples include re-entry programs through the Department of Corrections and Department of Social Services, the new Apprenticeship Office of the Department of Economic Development, and workforce training initiatives through DED's Division of Business and Community Solutions.

2. Improving Access to Missouri's Data Systems

The Missouri Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development needs to help lead the way for Missouri's data systems to be better integrated and allow access to important information from across all State Government Departments with the Workforce Regions and with WIOA required partners for participant enrollment and cased management purposes. Currently, critical data is inaccessible between the Job Centers, State and Partners because it is too segregated and firewalled if not completely inaccessible or only available as physical documents.

This includes everything from general information about jobseekers that is needed for the workforce intake process, to household income as reported by annual state tax returns or current employment payroll, and even shared calendar and document platforms between State and non-State employees in the Job Centers.

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Program & Operational Suggestions - continued

3. State Leadership on Collaboration Between the 19 Required Partners and Job Centers

The Missouri Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development needs to take the leadership position when it comes requiring and working out vital issues between the 19 required workforce partners and the 14 workforce regions in Missouri as it relates to the Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) agreements and establishing “one-stop” Job Centers that require at least some level of part-time “co-location” in the facilities by the mandated partners.

State leadership on helping to secure 14 MOU agreements is more efficient than 266 agreements being chased after around Missouri. Likewise, the “one-stop” model of co-locating workforce services has proven successful in other states and will only happen if partners are required to take this innovative step by the state.

4. Include WIOA Eligibility into All Post-High School Public Education Enrollment

The Missouri Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development should include basic WIOA eligibility questions into the enrollment application process at every public school's adult education program, every public trade school, every public community college and every public university.

While schools do verify Pell Grant eligibility and SNAP/SkillUp eligibility, verification is not done in coordination with Missouri's workforce system when it comes to eligibility for WIOA adult, dislocated and youth programs and resources. As a result, untold thousands of Missouri residents miss out on using the resources available to them through WIOA at the Missouri Job Centers. (Please see Attachment #1 for sample questions that could be added to the educational enrollment process.)

5. Statewide Workforce Marketing Campaign Needed

The Missouri Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development should borrow the best practices of some of its neighbors and begin a statewide promotion of its workforce system services and programs to jobseekers and employers. One example of this is the successful “Kansas Works” campaign.

Program marketing is usually left to individual workforce regions across Missouri and funded for this kind of outreach is not typically allowed with WIOA funds. As a result, the Missouri Job Centers and their services are among the best kept secrets in the state.

6. Revamp and Shorten the Job Center Enrollment Process from Registration to ITA Issuance

The Missouri Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development needs to work with TEAM to revamp and shorten the amount of time needed to take a brand-new enrollee in Missouri's workforce system to the point of issuing them an Individual Training Account (ITA). This can now take up to 3 hours or more and at least two visits to the Job Center because of the documentation and research required of the participant.

(more)

Program & Operational Suggestions – continued

6. – continued

Even though many other states use Geographic Solutions, the same workforce software provider used by Missouri, some like Florida have successfully condensed their process from enrollment to ITA by implementing GeoSol’s “Common In-Take” upgrade. Missouri should adopt this best practice to better serve our customers.

7. Expand Access to State Training for Critical Job Center Positions

The Missouri Department of Higher Education & Workforce Development needs to ensure that training manuals, PowerPoint presentations, Webex conferencing, training videos and in-person training opportunities are available for critical positions at the Missouri Job Centers such as Career Counselors, Quality Assurance Officers, Fiscal Grant Managers, DWD Supervisors and Executive Directors.

For some of these positions, no training manuals exist. In other cases, new staff must wait months to be properly trained and granted vital access to the systems they need from day one. In the last few years, there has been ongoing staff turnover in nearly all those vital positions at numerous Job Centers across Missouri and access to immediate training is not available as it should be.

8. Address the Daycare Challenges of Struggling Missouri Workers

The Missouri Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development should work to help expand affordable day care across the state and especially in workforce regions lacking this critical resource because it can impact and hinder training and career advancement for some single parents, the underemployed and households trapped in poverty.

Some helpful steps could include increasing Missouri’s daycare reimbursement rate, offering tax credits to expand day care operations in partnership with workforce programs, expanding day care scholarship opportunities for income-eligible individuals and families, encouraging more on-site day care operations with more Missouri employers and increasing day care services at participating public schools.

Fiscal Suggestions

1. Revise Missouri’s Spending Definition of Career Counselor Time

The Missouri Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development needs to revisit the budget definitions issued by DWD with the PY19 WIOA annual agreements regarding staff costs and participant costs. Under the new spending caps imposed for PY19, Career Counselor time falls in the Staff expense column and only things such as wages and training costs fall into the Participant expense column. While the goal is to increase direct participant expenses and WIOA implementation, it devalues and redefines necessary staff functions.

(more)

Fiscal Suggestions – continued

1. – continued

Workforce services such as Enrollment, Counseling, Case Management, Training Workshops and all time spent directly serving clients of WIOA, Wagner-Peyser, TANF and other special workforce grant programs should we seen as: 1) A form of Pre-Employment Training, 2) Essential to the success of Missouri jobseekers, and 3) Expensed as an Indirect Participant cost equal to training and wage assistance rather than a separate and unrelated Staff cost.

2. Missouri's WIOA Regional Allocation Formula Needs Re-Tooling

The Missouri Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development should seek federal approval when needed or simply use their discretionary ability to update the regional WIOA allocation formula. The state's current formula is antiquated, geared for high unemployment/high labor supply economic conditions rather than the current climate of low unemployment/low labor supply. It does not adequately address the needs of incumbent workers and under-employed workers. It does not address the workforce needs of area's experiencing high job growth but struggling with workforce recruiting. And it does not provide enough equity and access for economically disadvantaged areas and populations.

State officials have told us repeatedly workforce development is not social service, but the State's current formula for regional allocation does not agree. On the other end of the spectrum, the new \$10 million Fast Track forgivable education scholarship program is available to middle class Missouri households with an income of up to \$80,000, rather than focusing attention on those who are more economically disadvantaged.

3. Allow More Program and Funding Individualization Based on Regional Needs

The Missouri Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development should allow more individualization when it comes to programs, services and funding in each workforce region based on the unique needs of those areas and their WIOA business sectors plan, once all federal requirements are met or the necessary waivers are issued.

The department should look for ways to use its discretionary ability to make special workforce allocations based on unique regional challenges which can include broadband access, affordable day care, lack of public transportation, high crime rates or generational poverty.

At the same time, the ability to be nimble and respond quickly in the ever-changing economy would be helpful as new companies suddenly open, existing companies suddenly close, new opportunities suddenly appear, and new partnerships suddenly present themselves. This might mean shifting resources to apprenticeships or paid internships, creating new training programs, providing specialized supportive services, or in other ways based on real needs on the ground.

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Fiscal Suggestions - continued

4. Offer Resource Incentives for Excellent Performance Achievements and Innovations

The Missouri Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development should consider using discretionary funds to reward workforce regions that achieve excellent performance benchmarks or who excel at successful service and program innovations.

5. Missouri Needs to Pursue Workforce Grants Beyond WIOA Funding from USDOL

The Missouri Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development needs to pursue other workforce grant opportunities rather than continue to primarily rely on the dwindling pool of federal workforce funds from the U.S. Department of Labor.

When possible, statewide grants should be pursued from all and any other sources such as the U.S. Department of Commerce, Kauffman Foundation, Microsoft Foundation, Missouri Hospital Association, Amazon, Google, Apple, Sprint, Cerner, The Boeing Corporation, MasterCard Worldwide, CitiMortgage, Enterprise Holdings, Hallmark, Bayer, Nestle Purina, Ford, General Motors, Honeywell FM&T, H&R Block, Spectrum and other domestic and global giants with operations in Missouri.

6. Missouri Needs to Decide if Businesses Are Really a WIOA Target and Valued Customer

The Missouri Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development needs to decide if the workforce needs and issues of Missouri employers are equal to or less important than the needs and issues of Missouri's workers.

Currently the WIOA regional allocation formula does not take into consideration the needs, challenges and opportunities of employers, just those of citizens in the labor force. Likewise, capped funding exists for career counselor positions but does not exist for business services representatives and business outreach efforts. At the same time, Job Centers are held to business performance standards even though it is an unfunded mandate.

7. State Workforce Contracts Need to Be Issued Ahead of Time

The Missouri Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development needs to correct a long-term issue in State workforce contracts that are habitually awarded after their start date and either issue them on-time or with future start dates.

A recent example was the Franklin Apprenticeship IT grant program that was announced as in the works in spring 2019. The Notice of Obligations and Agreement with Budget were issued 14 August 2019 with a start date of 1 June 2019 and an expiration date of 30 September 2019. An extension had to be immediately requested even as the grant paperwork was forwarded to the local governmental council for legislative action and adoption. Advanced planning and more timeliness are needed in this area.

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The aforementioned suggestions from the field are focused on improving Missouri's workforce system and are offered for consideration by TEAM (Training and Employment Administrators of Missouri) to our CLEOS and local workforce boards, the Missouri Workforce Development Board, the Missouri Department of Higher Education & Workforce Development, the Governor's Office, State legislators and others.

TEAM (Training & Employment Administrators of Missouri) – August 2019

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