

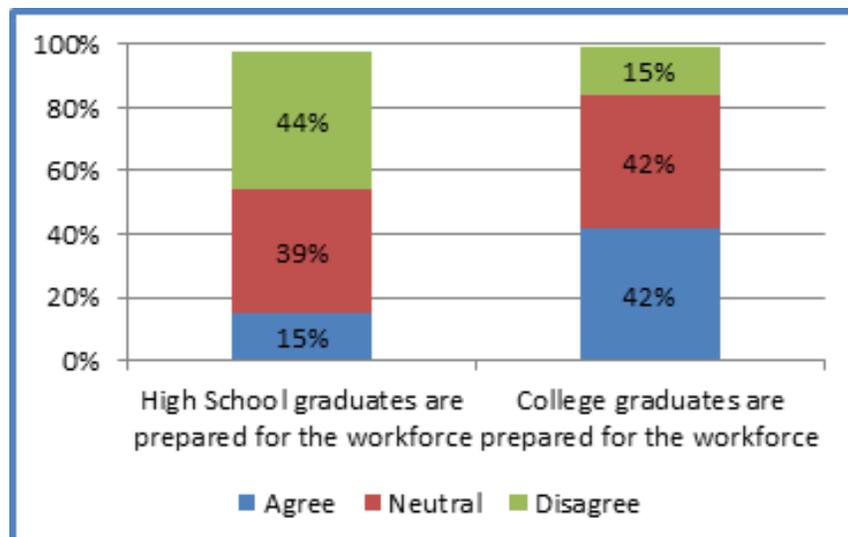
Preparing the Workforce

What the research revealed:

Through our Gallup research, we heard clearly that we need to invest in Missouri's workforce. Only 44 percent of Missouri business owners are satisfied with the state's availability of skilled workers. Employers cited weaknesses in the state's ability to prepare, attract and retain workers. According to the Gallup survey:

- Only 15 percent of Missouri business owners agree that high schools are preparing students for the workforce.
- Only 42 percent of Missouri businesses agree that colleges provide preparation for the workforce.
- Only 30 percent of Missouri business owners agree that Missouri attracts the top talent.
- Only 30 percent of Missouri business owners agree the state is able to retain top talent.

Prepared Workforce



One-on-one interviews with the CEOs from some of the state's largest employers mirrored the responses from the Gallup survey. More than 90 percent felt that actions to improve education and workforce preparedness were absolutely necessary.

While a major issue for existing businesses, workforce also is a key for attracting new jobs to the state. Gallup followed up the survey with business leaders to conduct in depth interviews with site selection consultants. Through these interviews, site selectors told Gallup:

- It is increasingly difficult for manufacturers to find skilled and semi-skilled labor, such as machinists, welders and maintenance technicians. Demand for these positions is outstripping supply.
- The site selectors praised community colleges and other higher education institutions, but believe that Missouri is not effectively promoting the social and economic value of industrial careers that may not require two and four year degrees.
- The site selectors interviewed also recommended that Missouri look to other states that have implemented training grants and reimbursement programs.

Another indicator of workforce strength analyzed by the Missouri Chamber Foundation was the status of 25-44 year olds. This population sector in Missouri is decreasing at three times the rate as the national average.

Addressing the top concern of workforce will require a new focus on the demand side of worker training. A demand-driven approach, according to Dr. Michael Porter "is made up of the public and private sector policies and programs that help

people acquire the knowledge and skills needed to earn a living."

By focusing on the demands of business, this type of approach allows local citizens and service providers to understand the opportunities that exist for current and future employment and what specific skills are necessary to take advantage of those opportunities.

"The community colleges have outstanding technical programs but we are not getting the throughput. It needs to be pushed to students, parents, teachers and adults with influence in their lives ... we are not effectively promoting the social and economic value of industrial careers ... we need a PR campaign ... we need to make this a cool thing to do."

Site Selector

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How Missouri 2030 can help Missouri better prepare:

No other issue is of more concern for businesses today. Missouri must improve the education system at all levels and integrate the skills needed by business into every curriculum. Gallup reported that a common sentiment was “unless Missouri changes the way we are preparing people for the jobs of the future, the current mismatch between employer skill needs and the talents of the workforce will widen.” Systemic education reform is needed, but it will take years. Therefore, initiatives that work around the current system must also be made available to help employers in the short term.

Goal – Increase the voice of business and industry on education and workforce issues at the state and national policy levels.

ACTION STEPS:

- Hire a dedicated governmental affairs liaison to address workforce needs.
- Advocate policy that competitively funds our K-12 and higher education system, implements much-needed reforms, provides better support for high performing teachers and administrators and sets higher standards for Missouri students.

Goal – Align workforce needs with outcomes from Missouri’s education systems by facilitating research and collaboration between business leaders, educators, policy makers and workforce development professionals.

ACTION STEPS:

- Create an alliance called Missouri 2030: Workforce consisting of business leaders, educators and workforce development professionals charged with the creation of an actionable plan to address the gap between workforce supply and demand.
- Commission a study/survey to identify gaps between student achievement and employer needs.

Goal – Increase the number of students considering technical employment, STEM and other targeted employment sectors by providing timely job, skill and wage information for students, parents and employers through a strong public relations campaign.

ACTION STEPS:

- Develop timely and informative, age-appropriate industry and occupation materials for students in middle and high school that also reference various educational and training pathways.
- Invest in paid media, earned media, public service announcements and a social media campaign in targeted regions of Missouri.
- Develop partnerships to channel information to students, parents and employers.

Goal – Optimize existing training programs and find innovation solutions to address gaps.

ACTION STEPS:

- Facilitate an alliance called Missouri 2030: Training consisting of human resource managers, educators and workforce development professionals to identify strengths and weaknesses in Missouri’s training systems. The alliance will produce an actionable plan to improve the efficiency of state training systems.
- Hold an annual training conference that brings together business leaders, community leaders, economic developers and workforce development professionals to share best practices and to align goals.
- Support statewide deployment of the Certified Work Ready Communities (CWRC) program through statewide public relations campaign.
- Advocate and secure the release of currently withheld state funds the legislature approved to support the CWRC.
- Provide grant-writing support to smaller communities to pull down federal and other funding available to support training programs.
- Advocate for more effective training funding.

Goal – Expand relevant work experience opportunities throughout the education system.

ACTION STEPS:

- Build a system to promote internship opportunities to Missouri’s employers, K-12 schools, post-secondary institutions, students and parents.
- Develop communication channels with high school counselors to encourage students to take rigorous courses and pursue relevant career pathways.

Goal – Encourage students to take more rigorous courses while in high school to be better prepared for the workforce or higher education.

ACTION STEPS:

- Deploy statewide the Show-Me Scholars initiative, which connects business leaders into junior high and high school classrooms to encourage students to take rigorous courses.
- Research outcomes of students taking more rigorous coursework and publicize the importance of raising the bar.
- Expand the number of scholarships for Show-Me Scholar students.
- Support the expansion of high-impact statewide STEM education efforts.
- Expand the active participation and support by business leaders for the Missouri Mathematics and Science Coalition.