



WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

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THE PROBLEM: The quality and balance of a state’s workforce are among the most important factors in determining its future economic success. A strategy that prioritizes college degrees above all other career paths may meet the needs of some residents, but it ignores the needs of the nearly three-quarters of residents who do not have and will not pursue a degree in higher education.

THE SOLUTION: *Review existing workforce development programs for effectiveness, and reallocate funding to meet current and future training needs in the state.*

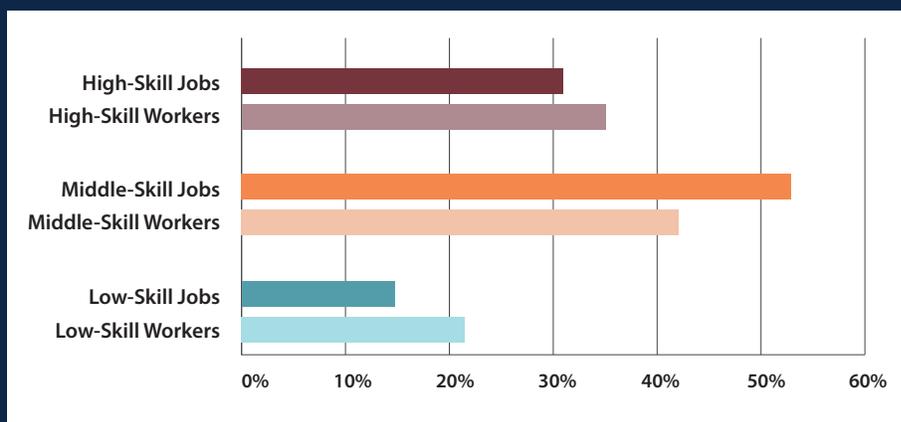
Our state has an entire department devoted to higher education, whose primary task is the education of Missourians seeking white collar employment. However, most jobs do not require a college degree, and blue-collar employment in the trades and elsewhere is often deemphasized, both by practice and by design. The purpose of reviewing existing workforce development programs is not to force an either-or decision about whether white-collar or blue-collar jobs are the priority in Missouri, but instead to make gainful employment—in all of its forms—a priority for the state, and for the state’s policies to reflect this emphasis.

WHO ELSE DOES IT: Many states have increased their emphasis on job training that does not require a college degree. In particular, states like South Carolina, Iowa, and Kentucky have innovative apprenticeship programs that have significantly increased the number of apprentices for quality jobs in those states. Those programs should be reviewed as part of an overall reimagining of Missouri’s own workforce development approach.

THE OPPORTUNITY: Diversifying educational opportunities for Missourians could create a greater variety of well-trained candidates to employers already in the state, as well as to employers considering moving here.

JOBS AND WORKERS BY SKILL LEVEL, UNITED STATES, 2015

Middle-skill jobs account for 53 percent of the United States’ labor market, but only 43 percent of the country’s workers are trained to the middle-skill.



Source: NSC analysis of Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Employment Statistics by State, May 2015, and American Community Survey data, 2015.

KEY POINTS

- Workforce development should not be undertaken exclusively as a means of “white-collar job development.”
- Many blue-collar jobs and jobs in the trades can rapidly become high-paying for those who enter into them.
- Missouri should take an all-of-the-above approach to workforce training to ensure that all of the state’s workforce needs—and the training needs of state’s students and job-seekers—are met, now and in the future.

SHOW-ME INSTITUTE RESOURCES

Blog Post: “An Emerging Policy Frontier: Workforce Development”

Blog Post: “Workforce Development Must Encompass the Spectrum of Professions”