

The Greater St. Louis Metropolitan WIOA Regional Plan

Program Years 2016-2020
(Modified February 2018)

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014 require local WIOA areas that make up an economic region to submit their local plan as part of a combined Regional Plan. The intent is to describe a coordination of resources across local areas.

The St. Louis Planning Region for the WIOA is comprised of the following Missouri Local Areas: St. Louis City, St. Louis County, St. Charles County and Jefferson/ Franklin Counties. The St. Louis Planning Region also includes the Illinois Counties of Madison and St. Clair.

Section 106 (c) of the Act states that local boards and chief elected officials in each planning region shall engage in a regional planning process that results in:

- A) The preparation of a regional plan
- B) The establishment of regional service strategies, including use of cooperative service delivery agreements
- C) The development and implementation of sector initiatives for in-demand industry sectors or occupations for the region
- D) The collection and analysis of regional labor market data (in conjunction with the State)
- E) The establishment of administrative cost arrangements, including the pooling of funds for administrative costs, as appropriate, for the region
- F) The coordination of transportation and other supportive services, as appropriate, for the region
- G) The coordination of services with regional economic development services and providers
- H) The establishment of an agreement concerning how the planning region will collectively negotiate and reach agreement with the Governor on local levels of performance for and report on the performance accountability measures described in Section 116(c) for the local areas **or** the planning region

A) The preparation of the Regional Plan

The Directors of the WIOA Regions that make up the Greater St. Louis Metropolitan Area originally met to begin the development of a shared Regional Plan in late 2015. After deciding the scope and details of the Plan, each Director assigned a staff writer to draft one shared document to be added to each Region's local Plan. This document was written to stand alone as the Region's Plan and to be added to each Region's Local Plan.

The Regional Plan was originally adopted by the Directors on February 26, 2016. The modified Regional Plan was adopted by the Directors on February 16, 2018.

B) The Establishment of Regional Service Strategies, including use of Cooperative Agreements

1. The St. Louis Regional Workforce Development Board Directors' Consortium

The Directors of the St Louis Metropolitan Statistical Area (SLMSA) formed a group that consist of themselves and their key staff for the purpose of regional planning prior to the requirements mandated in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

The group is called the St. Louis Regional Workforce Development Board (WDB) Directors' Consortium.

Background

The St. Louis Regional WDB Directors Consortium was designed to create a forum of workforce development professionals to collaborate and focus on issues related to the economic development and the workforce system that impact the greater St. Louis Metropolitan Service Area (MSA), including the Illinois counties of St. Clair and Madison.

The St. Louis Regional WDB Directors Consortium was created in February 2012 comprised of the WDB Directors for St. Louis City, St. Louis County, St. Charles County, Jefferson / Franklin Counties in Missouri and Illinois counties of Madison and St. Clair. Other participants include; Deputy Directors, Regional Managers and Functional Leaders. The consortium schedules bi-monthly meetings and are hosted by each region on a rotational basis.

In late 2017, the Association expanded to include members of the Business Services Team from each of the regional workforce agencies. This helped to increase the flow of communication and planning and took down one of the silos between efforts to effectively provide WIOA services to individuals as well as to regional employers.

Also in late 2017, the Committee agreed to elect a Chair and Vice-Chair for one-year terms, with the goal of having the group's leadership rotate throughout the region on an annual basis. Elections are to be held at each December meeting for the coming year.

The vision of the consortium:

- Create a forum designed to promote proactive and effective collaborations and communications among the Workforce Development professionals and other stakeholders in the greater St. Louis MSA.
- To collaborate and develop partnerships for the implementation of regional projects/initiatives which would allow for joint applications for Federal grants.
- To ensure the workforce development activities/services meet the needs of employers and support economic growth in the region by; enhancing communication, coordination, and collaboration among employers, economic development entities and service providers.
- To develop and implement strategies for meeting the employment and skill needs of workers and employers such as; establishing industry and sector partnerships. To fully engage businesses in this endeavor.
- To promote 'value-added' training of the workforce that meets the demand and expectation of businesses, significantly enhancing the skills and abilities of job seekers, and ultimately strengthening the regions' economy.
- To better coordinate and when possible synchronize regional planning of special workforce events including major job fairs, Annual Manufacturing Day, apprenticeship efforts, and other WIOA services to job-seekers and employers.

The Directors Consortium has established many regional service strategies over the years. These strategies are continually monitored for effectiveness and updated as appropriate. An example would be:

1. Past Partnership-BJC Medical Billing and Coding Program

In 2013, BJC's Center for Lifelong Learning and St. Louis Community College (SLCC) started a partnership with the Workforce Boards of St. Louis and Madison County to offer employees a customized and comprehensive clinical

coding program, the first American Health Information Management Association (AHIMA) – approved program in Missouri. Twenty five (25) unemployed eligible adults and dislocated workers from St. Louis and Madison County in Illinois began their path to employment through a unique partnership among BJC, SLCC and the Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs) of St. Louis and Madison County. Those 25 unemployed customers attended the AHIMA-approved clinical coding program full time. The goal was to help people who are qualified and out of work, as well as returning veterans, along a new career pathway and back into the workforce. The program fulfilled a growing need in the health care industry and provided a much-needed entre in the workforce for citizens who were willing to learn a new career and work hard. The services of the WIBs were the key to helping those out of work make the connection to potential education and work based on existing skills and interest. Both WIBs screened potential candidates before recommending them to BJC and SLCC for program consideration. Relying on the expertise of the WIBs was key to ensuring that the program was filled with qualified candidates. The Medical Billing and Coding program took place at SLCC's Forest Park campus. The program was a 45-credit-hour course that prepared students for entry-level positions as Medical Billing Specialists, Medical Coders, Claims Examiners, Healthcare Reimbursement Specialists and Health Insurance Specialists. Students learned Diagnosis and Procedure coding standards and processes and prepared for the American Health Information Management Association's CCS (Certified Coding Specialist) and CCA (Certified Coding Associate) certifications and the HRS (Healthcare Reimbursement Specialist) credential offered by the National Electronic Billers Alliance (NEBA). The group of 25 students started the program in the fall of 2013 and graduated in spring 2014. Some graduates were hired by BJC, and many of the remaining graduates found employment at other local hospitals in the St. Louis Metro Area.

2. Business Service Strategy

The Business Teams from each area meet regularly to coordinate processes to employers that seek services across local areas. (See Attachment 1 – St. Louis Metropolitan Regional Service Strategy.)

Each area uses email blasts to send notice of upcoming recruitment events to others in the St. Louis Region. These notices may then be shared on CIC monitors in local Job Centers, local area's web sites and social media posts.

The Business Teams in the Region also work with the State's Employment Transition Team to coordinate with State Business services as well as local services.

The Association is also working with the St. Louis Regional Chamber and other economic development groups such as the Missouri Partnership and Missouri Economic Development Council (MEDC) to better coordinate efforts between workforce and economic development agencies and professionals.

3. Serving those with Disabilities

The six WDBs of the region originally coordinated a regional disability initiative called, Accommodations for Success, in August 2015. The intent of this committee was to engage companies to understand the requirements of the new American with Disabilities Act and how public workforce agencies around the region could work with them to fulfill their obligations.

A kick-off event, Accommodations for Success – Next Level was planned and successfully held in August 2016.

The Annual Accommodations for Success event is now held every August and is moved around the region, allowing each Job Center to play a special role in hosting and formatting this successful event.

Approximately 300-400 leaders from businesses, social service organizations, governments, civic groups and job-seekers usually attend this popular event which now includes a Reverse Job Fair.

See Attachment 2 – Accommodations for Success 2017.

The next Accommodations for Success event is scheduled to be held August 2018 in St. Charles County.

4. Referrals of Jobseekers between areas

In the past the Workforce Regions shared a formal referral process including referral forms. However, technology and a shared data system no longer require paper forms. Staff record the services provided to each jobseeker into a shared database (currently called Jobs.Mo.Gov). If the individual visits a Job Center in a different area, staff in the new area can see what has already occurred and coordinate services to ensure no duplication of service occurs.

The Region has developed a Cooperative Service Delivery Agreement to serve as an umbrella agreement to all of these initiatives. (See Attachment 4 3 – Regional Employment Nexus meeting.)

5. Sector Strategies

The Region has developed strategies to serve specific sectors that are shared amongst all Local Areas in the Region. The first two sectors chosen for Regional development are Advanced Manufacturing and Healthcare. All services developed in these strategies fall under the Cooperative Service Delivery Agreement. (See the next section for more detail.)

C) The Development and Implementation of Sector Initiatives for In-Demand Industry sectors or Occupations for the Region

The development of sector strategies for the St. Louis Region began in meetings of the Directors' Consortium. Strategy development continued at the Sector Strategy Kickoff hosted by the State Division of Workforce Development (DWD) and facilitated by Maher & Maher consultants in fall 2015. The Region worked with the consultants to learn their recommended methodology for Sector Strategy development. The two sectors developed under the guidance of the consultants were Advanced Manufacturing and Healthcare.

See Attachment 4 – St. Louis Regional Health and Life Sciences Pathways 2017.

See Attachment 5 – St. Louis Regional Transportation Logistics and Advanced Manufacturing Pathways 2017.

A formal Regional Sector Strategy was developed and submitted to DWD as required.

Other sector initiatives from the St. Louis region include:

There is a long history of collaboration between the workforce development entities on both sides of the Mississippi. The regional labor market and economy have presented opportunities going back the CETA and the Title VII/Private Sector Initiative Program. By working together to address workforce needs in the region, we have often found that there are economies of scale and efficiencies that come with coordination and collaboration.

SLATE (St. Louis Agency on Training and Employment) and MCETD (Madison County Employment and Training) partnered with the BJC Hospital Group, to train medical coders to satisfy the increased demand for that skill. We were able to get BJC to pay for the training at the local community college, as well as provide facilities and personnel to assist with training. This partnership allowed for increased participation at a much reduced cost.

SLATE also worked to assist two (2) different entities to prepare a proposal in response to a solicitation by US DOL to address the need for the IT workforce. Funding from the H-1B visas supported several training designs across the nation, and we in the region were proud to be one of those to receive the “Tech Hire Grant”.

On another front, the eastside workforce areas are collaborating on a campaign to develop interest in careers in manufacturing and the trades. This has taken form in the campaigns of “Craft Your Future” and “Manufacture Your Future”. A long term strategy of elevating the perception of these career tracks, and showing the promising future of the occupations. By incorporating the way the STEM Programs also prepare students for these jobs is a benefit as well. As this campaign moves forward there are already preliminary talks on bring this to the entire region, thus addressing the regional need for skilled labor moving forward.

In the past, when the McDonnell Douglas Company downsized, all of the areas workforce agencies shared an onsite facility to address the needs of workers subject to lay off. When there was a downsizing at the Defense Mapping agency, here again we shared space and had staff from all of the area to assist workers losing their jobs.

In addition all of the area’s six (6) Workforce Areas are working with the regional effort spearheaded by the St. Louis Partnership (an Economic Development agency) to address the needs of advanced manufacturing. In addition there are other realities as to our local economy and how it is tied to defense contracts. To better serve the industries that need workers or to those that have to downsize based on the defense industry’s ebbs and flows, we work as a region to provide services.

The past is always a good predictor of the future, and knowing this our past demonstrates our commitment to regional approaches to both increased demand for workers and the unfortunate opposite event ... downsizing and closings. The St. Louis region is a strong and diverse economy, that demands a regional approach to workforce services.

D) The collection and analysis of regional labor market data in conjunction with the State

See Attachment 6 - Maher & Maher Labor Market Analysis of St Louis Regional Plan.

See Attachment 7 – St. Louis Regional Top Openings 2016-2018.

See Attachment 8 – Workforce Development Area Commuting Profile 2016.

- E) The establishment of administrative cost arrangements, including the pooling of funds for administrative costs, as appropriate, for the region

At this time the establishment of administrative cost arrangements, including the pooling of funds for administrative costs is not appropriate or needed for the St. Louis Region.

- F) The coordination of transportation and other supportive services, as appropriate, for the region

Supportive service awards, whether for an adult, dislocated worker, or youth are intended to enable an individual to participate in workforce-funded programs and activities to secure and retain employment. Based on individual assessment and availability of funds, supportive services such as transportation, childcare, dependent care, and needs-related payments, may be awarded to eligible participants on an as-needed basis.

- G) The coordination of services with regional economic development services and providers

All six WDB's are collaborating with the following to coordinate services with regional economic development services and providers:

The St. Louis Regional Chamber, East-West Gateway Council of Governments, St. Charles County Chambers, St. Louis Economic Development Partnerships, the Southwest Illinois Leadership Council, EDC Business & Community Partners St. Charles County and St. Louis Economic Development Corporation.

- H) The establishment of an agreement concerning how the planning region will collectively negotiate and reach agreement with the Governor on local levels of performance for and report on the performance accountability measures described in Section 116(c) for the local areas or the planning region

The Local Boards in this region elected to negotiate and report performance independently.