

Vocational Training in Missouri

What is the state of vocational training support in Missouri?

Vocational jobs often require short-term technical training or certification.

Vocational education and training (VET) programs prepare individuals for current and emerging occupations, including engineering, agriculture, consumer services, business/office administration, marketing and distribution, manufacturing, healthcare, and trade industries (NCES n.d.; NCES 2015; AEA 2022).

Vocational training typically does not require a 2- or 4-year degree and can be earned in secondary school or postsecondary classroom-apprenticeship programs.

Table 1 lists U.S. jobs that do not require an advanced degree and have a “much faster than average” projected growth rate, necessitating more than 50,000 employees in 2022 (BLS 2022; O-NET 2021).

Missouri. MO ranks 23rd in total number of vocational degrees/certifications awarded in the U.S. (NCES 2015).



Research Highlights

Many technical careers require vocational training.

Lack of robust funding or employer connections are leading barriers to vocational training in MO.

States can use some federal funds for vocational programs; relatively little spending is specific to postsecondary programs.

The U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) offers nationally-recognized job credentials for some vocational programs, which focus on technical and foundational skills such as reading and using work-related text, problem-solving, and critical thinking (ACT 2011).

- Most VET programs in MO (255 out of 282) do not offer technical apprenticeships or training programs that lead to a national DOL credential (Apprenticeship.gov 2023).

For more information on secondary school VET programs, see our Science Note on [Career & Technical Education in Missouri](#).

MO trainers cite few vocational programs & low funding as job training obstacles.

54 of 114 Missouri counties have not returned to pre-2008 financial crisis levels of employment or population.

- 27 counties are at pre-2008 population and employment (2/3 metropolitan; Dan 2019).

Table 1. Growing vocational jobs that do not require an advanced degree.

Average Salary in the U.S.	Occupation
Under \$30K	Bartending/hosting, animal caretakers, home health aides, hairdressers, drivers (delivery & sales)
\$30-80K	Cooks/food preparation, exercise trainers, extracurricular teachers, medical assistants, social services assistants, industrial machinery & mechanics

More than 50% of Missouri job seekers cited barriers to job training, including a lack of:

- vocational and specialized job training,
- information about training,
- financial support for training,
- broadband access, and
- proximity of jobs

For more information on broadband access, read the Science Notes [Broadband Deployment](#) and [Broadband Impacts](#).

95% of industry professionals who collaborate with community colleges (CC) in MO cite lack of state funding as the main job training obstacle.

- One CC in MO lost four workforce development and training programs from 2014-2019 ([Dan 2019](#)).

35% of MO employers report no working relationship with career and technical education centers, who provide sites for technical training to all education levels ([Russell & White 2020](#)).

[MO Job Centers](#) provide a non-exhaustive list of training opportunities for technical careers in the public or private sector, including:

- beverage serving,
- childcare providers,
- fire and emergency safety,
- law enforcement,
- food safety,
- drinking water and solid waste operations,
- public health,
- veterans' education services; [MO.gov n.d.](#)

Some states directly fund postsecondary VET programs.

States can fund secondary and postsecondary VET programs and career centers based on attendance, credits taken, performance, or other metrics ([ECS n.d.](#); [MOST 2022](#)).

75% of vocational training funds in MO go towards secondary schools; the remaining 25% goes to adult and postsecondary VET programs ([DESE 2023](#)).

- \$4 million out of a total \$28 million in vocational training funds went to post-secondary training sites ([DESE 2023](#)).

30 states do not distinguish between VET programs and community college funding. 7 provide specific postsecondary funds based on:

- Enrollment number (PA, MS)
- Units taken (KS, TX, WV)
- Attendance, costs, instructor count and training sites (OH and OK; [U.S. ED 2014](#)).

Federal grant funds ([Perkins V](#)) can be used for secondary and postsecondary vocational training programs at schools, colleges, or centers/training sites ([U.S. ED 2021](#); [2022](#)).

In 2021, VET programs were offered in 444 MO high schools (180,000 students), 13 technical /community colleges and 7 colleges/universities (58,000 students; [DESE n.d.](#)).

- Missouri provides competitive, performance-based grant funds for secondary school vocational programs ([EdBuild n.d.](#)).

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