



D.J. Reader

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Missouri Study Identifies Future Workforce Needs

Missourians who want maximum career opportunities in the future should 1) explore careers in shortage fields, 2) be diligent learners, and 3) hone their soft skills.

This advice comes from the Workforce 2025 report, recently published by the Missouri P-20 Council, a group created by state law to coordinate learning from preschool (P) to graduate school and the workforce (20).

The report contains a wealth of data on how Missouri's workforce and economic landscape will, and will not, be different by the year 2025.

One of the report's key findings was that Missouri is not producing enough graduates with strong foundations in math, engineering, technology and science (METS). While METS occupations are projected to grow at a rate of 20 percent from 2004 to 2015 with over 22,000 openings, the proportion of college students seeking METS degrees is on the decline. Compounding the deficit, a large proportion of current METS workers are at or nearing retirement age. All of these signs point toward a mismatch between supply and demand that would favor people with strong METS backgrounds.

Another recommendation for workers is to be diligent about lifelong learning. More than half of the 2025 workforce is already working but possibly at jobs that will be significantly different over time. Continuous learning will be crucial for workers' success. The report also stressed that successful workers must keep up with emerging technology, as some form of "digital literacy" will be required in all careers, from farming to health care.

Finally, the report highlighted the enduring importance of "soft skills." Though technology is changing the way Missourians work, employers will continue to place a high value on such skills as teamwork, integrity, professionalism and initiative.

For more information, visit www.p-20.mo.gov.

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Full news release, fact sheet and more information are available at

dese.mo.gov/divcareered/missouri_connections_news_room.htm.

The Missouri Connections Public Outreach Partnership workgroup represents a collaboration of state agencies concerned with education and workforce development who are helping inform and build awareness among the public, particularly students and potential students, of targeted careers, educational and industry trends, and workforce development priorities. Workgroup members represent the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education; Department of Higher Education; Department of Economic Development, Division of Workforce Development and Missouri Economic Research & Information Center; Missouri Center for Career Education; and Missouri Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Freelance writer is Anita Harrison.