

When companies in the Joplin Region talk about our being the Heart of Work, they'll tell you that one of our most important assets is a remarkably motivated and well-skilled workforce. Our seven-county region boasts a population of more than 300,000, with a workforce that has a strong heritage in a broad range of industries. The region is still 18% manufacturing which is nearly 4 times the national average. We know how to make things.

Today, you'll find people with solid skills in fields such as manufacturing, food, plastics, technology, professional services, energy, and logistics. That means even companies with challenging needs will be able to staff new facilities much more quickly and build upon the experience our residents already have.

We're constantly working to ensure that employers have a steady supply of high-quality employees, too. In addition to worker development programs in our area's K-12 schools, the Joplin Region is served by a variety of higher education institutions that are focused on everything from vocational training to postgraduate options. We have a strong network of community colleges that provides programs in areas that are in high demand by employers, such as business, plastics, manufacturing, healthcare, and alternative energy. And even though our region crosses state lines, local workers can take advantage of in-state tuition thanks to reciprocal agreements.

### **Certified Work Ready Communities**

Six of the seven counties in the Joplin Region are certified ACT's Work Ready Communities ([WorkReadyCommunities.org](http://WorkReadyCommunities.org)). In fact, in 2013 Jasper County, Missouri became the very first Certified Work Ready Community in the United States and the first to be re-certified. Cherokee County, Kansas and Ottawa County, Oklahoma were the very first counties in their respective states to become Certified Work Ready. By being Certified Work ready, the Joplin Region is demonstrating that we have a robust workforce development effort aligned to our economic development needs. Businesses and industries in the Region can learn exactly what foundational skills are needed for a productive workforce and can easily communicate their needs to job seekers. Individuals can understand what skills employers require and how to prepare for career success. Policymakers can consistently measure skills gaps in a timely manner at the local level. Educators can close skills gaps via tools integrated into career pathways with stackable, industry-recognized credentials and local economic developers can use an on-demand reporting tool to market the quality of their workforce. Participants in the region are leveraging the ACT WorkKeys National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC™) to measure and close the skills gap — and building common frameworks that link, align and match our workforce development efforts.

We all have a stake in making our Region more competitive and closing the skills gap. Change starts at the grassroots level, by providing a community-based framework that:

- Links workforce development to education
- Aligns with the economic development needs of communities, regions and states
- Matches individuals to jobs based on skill levels

The foundation of a community's certification is based on individuals at the county level across the current, transitioning and emerging workforce earning an ACT WorkKeys National Career Readiness Certificate and employers recognizing the Certificate. The ACT WorkKeys NCRC is a portable, industry-recognized credential that clearly identifies an individual's WorkKeys® skills in workplace documents, applied math and graphic literacy - skills required for 77 percent of jobs based on ACT JobPro database.

## Labor Studies

The Joplin Regional Partnership and the Southwest Missouri Workforce Investment Board commissioned a Labor Supply Study to measure the amount and quality of potential employees in both the 7 county Joplin Region and the 2-county Joplin MSA of Jasper and Newton Counties. Copies of the full studies can be found [here](#).

## General Findings, Opportunities, and Challenges

The Labor Supply Certification Study shows that Joplin Regional Partnership (JRP) provides a stable and productive workforce. The availability, education, and skills add value and competitiveness to the area labor market. The components of this study quantify the strengths and challenges of this labor force.

A subset of the total available workforce of interest to many employers in a large scale hiring mode are those who are identified as underemployed. These individuals are currently working and would take a better job if offered. They possess the skills, education, and experience to qualify them to do so.

With the right employment opportunities, the Joplin Region is positioned to retain and attract the talent necessary for growth of new and existing businesses representing regional, national, and international markets. The Joplin Region has several advantages. As home to several post-secondary schools, including Missouri Southern State University and Pittsburg State University, and a variety of occupational training centers, the region provides access to flexible training options to meet changing requirements for businesses and industries.

## Workforce Availability Findings

The workforce availability findings reflect the views and perspectives of people between the ages of 18 and 64 who would consider seeking or changing employment. This group represents the supply side of the labor market. The overall findings are as follows:

- About forty-four percent (132,165 persons) of the total Census Population Estimate in the Joplin Regional Partnership ALM is considered to be the total available workforce. About 45 percent (79,065 persons) of the Census Population Estimate in the Jasper and Newton County ALM is considered to be the total available workforce.
- There is an estimated 40,236 of non-workers and 91,929 of workers in the total available workforce in the Joplin Regional Partnership ALM; 48,898 are seeking different employment or are willing to change jobs if the right opportunity arises. In the Joplin MSA, it is estimated 23,485 non-worker and 55,580 persons in the worker available segments of the total available workforce are seeking different employment or are willing to change jobs if the right opportunity arises.
- The primary occupational clusters of the worker available workforce of the Joplin Regional Partnership ALM include 9.8 percent in management, 16.8 percent in production/repair/installation, 19.9 percent in professional/technical, and 51.6 percent in service occupations. The primary occupational clusters of the worker available workforce of the Joplin MSA ALM include 10.3 percent in management, 18.8 percent in production/repair/installation, 17.9 percent in professional/technical, and 53.1 percent in service occupations.
- In the Joplin Regional Partnership ALM approximately 33 percent of the total available workforce are underemployed. Approximately 31 percent of the total available workforce are underemployed in the Joplin MSA ALM.
- Thirty-eight percent of the total available workforce in both the Joplin Regional Partnership's and the Joplin MSA's ALM would be interested in employment with a wage up to \$12.99 per hour.

- The education level of the total available workforce in the Joplin Region and the Joplin MSA includes 52.4 percent with at least some college education and 87 percent with at least a high school diploma.
- The total available workforce is willing to commute an average of 23-25 minutes/miles.
- The overall average age of the total available workforce is 41 years old in the region and 43.5 in the Joplin MSA.
- The top motivators for changing jobs among those open for the right opportunities are health benefits, salary, and retirement benefits.
- A majority, approximately 80% percent, of the worker available workforce stated they are willing to work outside of their primary field of employment.
- The average number of years on the job for the JRP ALM is 7.1 years and 6 years for the Joplin MSA which reflects both a stable and mature workforce.
- Approximately ten percent of the worker available workforce live inside the Joplin Regional Partnership ALM but work outside of the 7-county ALM. In the Joplin MSA, approximately 9 percent of the worker available workforce live inside the Jasper and Newton County ALM but work outside of the 2-county ALM.
- The underemployed provide the best opportunity for potential applicants. They represent a subset of the total available workforce that is normally more experienced, better educated, and more motivated than the total available workforce in general

### **More Information**

Joplin Metro Area Labor Study (PDF)  
7 County Region Labor Study (PDF)

### **“Welcome Home to Joplin Region” Initiative**

With the unemployment rate so low in the region and the labor supply not keeping up with the continued need for workers from our manufacturers, the Joplin Area Chamber of Commerce and its partners have come up with an innovative way to attract talent to the region. The Joplin Region has just started up the “Welcome Home to Joplin” initiative. We are targeting military personnel from bases within a 500-mile radius of Joplin who have recently transitioned, or are about to transition, out of military service and inviting them to come live and work in the Joplin Region.

When military personnel leave the military, they decide if they want to go back home, stay and live around the base, or go somewhere else. We want them to come to live and work in the Joplin region by showing them that there is a great quality of place here, affordable housing and healthcare, veteran services, and fellow veterans who already live and work in the region. Plus, there is a listing of available jobs in the region that they can look through.

The Joplin Region is a very welcome place for veterans and their families and we invite them to check us out at [www.joplincc.com/welcomehometojoplin/](http://www.joplincc.com/welcomehometojoplin/)

## **Apprenticeships**

Crowder College in Neosho has been recognized by the United States Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration as a member of the Registered Apprenticeship-College Consortium (RACC). RACC is composed of employers, labor-management groups and associations that have Registered Apprenticeship programs, and two- and four- year postsecondary institutions.

Crowder College also received approval from the Department of Labor that recognizes the institution as an official Apprenticeship Sponsor.

The College currently has two apprenticeship programs; Carpentry apprenticeship with Branco Enterprises, Inc. and an Electrical apprenticeship with Bill's Electric, Inc.

Plans are currently in the works to develop apprenticeship programs for other industries. We have been working with the German American Chamber of Commerce in Chicago to develop a German style apprenticeship program for our area manufacturer.