



A WORK-READY WORKFORCE

When companies in the MOKAN 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 MOKAN 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 MOKAN Region are certified ACT's Work Ready Communities (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 MOKAN 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.



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Choose Joplin

The Joplin Area Chamber of Commerce and its partners have come up with an innovative way to attract talent and businesses to the region. The Joplin Region has just started up the “Choose Joplin” initiative. We are targeting entrepreneurs, veterans, remote workers and others to invite them to come live and work in the Joplin Region.

Joplin has transformed into an affordable, livable version of the urban lifestyle that offers viable career, entrepreneurial, and education opportunities, burgeoning music and cultural venues, bike trails and walkable streets, and robust culinary and coffee scenes.

We are a community committed to creating opportunities for dreamers and doers to thrive and belong. United by the fun of living our purpose, Joplin is where entrepreneurs come to build thriving businesses. Leveraging our low cost of living, transportation infrastructure, and the moxie of our regional workforce, businesses large and small choose Joplin to base their regional, national and international operations. From national leaders in trucking, building products and food production, to emerging e-commerce and tech startups, Joplin offers a supportive business community and a culture of innovation.

Dozens of trucking companies and distribution centers, a central location, and easy access to Interstates 44 and 49 have produced 336% more trucking jobs in Joplin than the national average. In 2019, AdvisorSmith named Joplin one of the best cities for truckers in the country.

Two major hospitals, dozens of specialty clinics, and a new state-of-the-art medical campus have created a boom in Joplin's rapidly expanding healthcare industry, which employs over 15% of the population. In 2021, Kansas City University broke ground on the new College of Dental Medicine here in Joplin. We are now the smallest community in the country with both a medical and dental school.

Manufacturing employs another 15% of the population. National and internationally renowned manufacturing companies have chosen to make their home in Joplin, including EaglePicher Technologies, Ajinomoto Foods, Coca-Cola, and Heartland Pet Food. In 2019, Smart Asset named Joplin the country's 14th best place for those working in the manufacturing industry, with a wage increase of 6%.

For more information, please visit www.choosejoplin.com



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Apprenticeships

Registered Apprenticeships are an employer-driven model combining on-the-job learning (2,000 hours per year) with related classroom instruction (144 hours per year) that increases an apprentice's skill level and wages. It is a proven solution for businesses to recruit, train, and retain highly skilled workers.

At Crowder College, apprenticeships are a flexible training strategy that can be customized to meet the needs of every business. Apprentices can be new hires or businesses can select current employees to join the apprenticeship program. Apprenticeships are a good way to reward high-performing entry-level employees and move them up the career ladder within the business.

Apprenticeships are an "earn and learn" model - apprentices receive a paycheck from day one, so they earn wages while they learn on the job.

Crowder college has been a member of the Registered Apprenticeship College Consortium (RACC) since 2015. RACC is composed of employers, labor-management groups and associations that have Registered Apprenticeship programs, and two- and four- year postsecondary institutions. In 2017, Crowder College became an official Department of Labor Registered Apprenticeship Sponsor.

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

Missouri Apprentice Connect is a free service that matches Missouri apprentices with great work opportunities across our state. For more information, visit www.moapprenticeconnect.com

The Kansas Registered Apprenticeship Program balances a unique partnership between job seekers and employers throughout the state. Find out more about the program at sekworks.org/kansas-registered-apprenticeship-program/

The Oklahoma Office of Workforce Development is committed to helping workers find apprenticeships, and assisting employers through every stage of creating and maintaining a program. Contact their office at www.apprenticeshipsok.com to learn more about apprenticeship opportunities.