



Jobs and Workforce Development Workgroup Minutes
September 24, 2025, 1:30PM – 3:00PM
Boone Electric Community Building (1413 Rangeline, Columbia MO) and via Zoom

Meeting Objective: Continue discussion on reassessing how to approach the workgroup results statement.

Attendees: Lisa Driskel-Hawxby, facilitator (Regional Economic Development, Inc (REDI)), Alaina Joyner (Flourish Initiative), Conrad Hake (Love Columbia (LC)), Darin Preis (Central Missouri Community Action (CMCA)), Kristalle Johnson (Connections to Success), Jennifer DeLaporte (Columbia Public Schools (CPS)), Lisa Buxman (LC), Terra Eavenson (Connections to Success), Joanne Nelson (Boone County Community Services Department (BCCSD), Gina Jenkins (BCCSD), Enola-Riann White (BCCSD)

1. Welcome and Introductions

- a. Enola-Riann White welcomed the workgroup and then did introductions.
- b. Enola provided an update on the annual feedback survey, which will be sent on October 1st. She also discussed a potential structure change “Workgroup Wednesdays” to ease workgroup coordination on staff. Jobs and Workforce Development would remain on Wednesdays, but the time may shift depending on results of the survey.

2. Review of workgroup efforts

- a. Enola reviewed the discussion from the August meeting which ended in ideas to develop a resource hub and employer champion program.
- b. Love Columbia Career Next Steps
 - i. Lisa Buxman and Conrad Hake provided a detailed overview of the Career Next Steps website, which includes navigational videos, quizzes, career pathways, and employer resources. The workgroup discussed how the website could be used throughout the community and how other organizations could provide support in the further development and maintained of the Career Next Steps website.
 - ii. The workgroup asked questions about webpage traffic. Due to limitations of the platform (Squarespace) there are few analytics. This is an area of improvement with future funding. Additional comments we positive about the use of the website by case managers and in career coaching
- c. Enola also shared the Missouri Family Resources site as an example of an existing resource hub that is statewide.

3. Workgroup Planning

- a. Workgroup Plan Discussion
 - i. Lisa Driskel-Hawxby thanked everyone for a robust conversation in August. She emphasized the importance of being realistic about the group’s capacity as volunteers with full-time jobs.
 - ii. The workgroup discussed the challenges of employer engagement including employer fatigue from multiple organizations reaching out, the need for a coordinated-unified approach, and creating a way to support employers and job seekers effectively. The conversation evolved around creating a survey to gather employer insights, with suggestions such as using existing questionnaires, developing questions that help understand employer needs, and creating a collaborative approach to employer engagement.
 - iii. Several individuals shared ideas about what an Employer Champion Program might look like, using models such as the Thompson Center’s “Autism Friendly Business” as a guide. The workgroup thought through training programs for employers to provide education, developing a designation for supportive employers, and highlighting employers who work with diverse populations.

**Upward Mobility is an initiative of the Boone County Community Services Department
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- b. Next Steps
 - i. Consider survey questions and add them to the shared document on the Employer Champion Program tab
- 4. Closing
 - a. Partner Updates
 - i. Central Missouri Community Action (CMCA) shared that Kids Win is hosting a childcare and early education planning project meeting on October 6th. The concept is to work with employers and the state to create a payment structure that is split between the parent, employer, and the state subsidy program to create affordable childcare. Additionally, individuals who are within 185% of the income limits and live in the city limits of Columbia are eligible for CMCA's Columbia Employment and Training Initiative.
 - ii. Connections 2 Success has hired two new staff and will be able to hire a third staff member. They are experiencing growth and have received several grants allowing them to help the community.
 - iii. Columbia Public Schools (CPS)
 - 1. Department of Special Services provided an overview of the students they serve. Any student with an IEP or 504 meets with their transition coordinator to make sure they have employment or volunteer experience to plan for their transition out of high school.
 - 2. Additionally, CPS is still working on their initiative to expand real world learning opportunities. They have expanded their partnership with the Missouri Higher Education and Workforce Development Departments for an I-70 job academy collaboration for high school seniors. The next cohort starts on November 10, 2025.
 - iv. Regional Economic Development, Inc (REDI) encouraged the workgroup to sign up for REDI monthly newsletters to learn more about events that impact the community. The upcoming annual mixer is November 12, 2025, from 4:00PM – 6:00PM at the Tiger Hotel. The event will provide an overview of what REDI has accomplished in 2025 and goals for 2026.
 - v. Love Columbia shared more information about a dental grant they received that will provide dental care for anyone under 24 that does not qualify for Medicaid or have Medicaid. Reach out to Conrad Hake for more information. They also have Family Development accounts that are a three-to-one match saving account. Families must be under 200% of the federal poverty level and there is a six-month waiting period. Savings can be used for education, entrepreneurship, homeownership, or home repairs.
 - vi. The Food Bank of Central & Northeast Missouri shared that there are 25-30 individuals placed with them for job experience. They work with a Resource Navigator to help them navigate their next steps
 - b. Comments and Questions
 - i. Enola reminded the workgroup to email flyers to upward@boonecountymmo.org.
 - ii. Lisa Driskel-Hawxby closed the meeting by thanking everyone for their time.

Next Workgroup Meeting: October 22, 2025, 1:30PM – 3:00PM at Boone Electric Community Building – Volt Room (1413 Rangeline, Columbia MO) or via [Zoom](#)

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