

## **Kansas Department of Commerce Workforce Services and Initiatives Overview Deputy Secretary Michael Copeland**

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The Kansas Department of Commerce's Workforce Services division links businesses, job candidates and educational institutions to ensure that employers can find skilled workers. The Division provides services to assist employers and job seekers, including incentives and training, assistance with closings and mass layoffs, disability resources and **KANSASWORKS** virtual services. The Department also works with military veterans and employees with special needs. In addition to these services, the Department partners with other agencies including the Department of Labor and the Department for Children and Families to provide reemployment and training services, and the Department of Corrections and Board of Regents on workforce initiatives.

### **Workforce System**

Federally funded workforce services job placement and training programs are delivered through workforce centers located across the state. Employment services are provided to employers and job candidates electronically or through the workforce centers. These employer-driven services include recruiting skilled workers, screening and assessing job candidates and identifying individuals needing skill enhancement.

In Fiscal Year 2014, the workforce system provided services to 191,412 total adult participants, 1,475 dislocated worker participants and 1,652 youth participants. Adults receiving services had an entered employment rate of 78 percent, while the rate was 82 percent for dislocated workers. Among youth participants, 75 percent entered employment or education. Kansas met or exceeded federally negotiated performance measures in all categories for these three populations. This is the sixth consecutive year that the state has met or exceeded its negotiated performance levels.

In addition, Workforce Center staff provides comprehensive services to meet the employment and training needs of eligible veterans, especially those with significant barriers to employment. Veteran representatives connect employers across Kansas with work-ready veterans through a number of signature programs and initiatives. In Fiscal Year 2014, approximately 9,900 veterans received services from veteran representatives. The veterans' unemployment rate for the state of Kansas dropped from 10.5 percent in Fiscal Year 2013 to 5.5 percent in Fiscal Year 2014.

On July 1, 2015, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) will take effect. This federal legislation was passed with broad bipartisan support and will supersede the Workforce Investment Act. WIOA requires a four year workforce plan from each state, enhances data-based performance measures and promotes the use of career pathways and sector partnerships to increase employment in in-demand industries and occupations.

### **Disability Resources**

In October of 2014, Commerce received a competitive grant to increase the number of individuals with disabilities served by the workforce system. Through the grant, the Department is utilizing post-secondary and on-the-job training methods to improve employment outcomes and help these individuals achieve self-sufficiency. Furthermore, the Department continues to forge relationships with employers and other state agencies to implement the Kansas Employer Partner Incentive to encourage businesses to hire qualified individuals who have disabilities.

### **Work Opportunity Tax Credit**

The Work Opportunity Tax Credit Program (WOTC) encourages the hiring of targeted employees to help them move from economic dependency to self-sufficiency, earn a steady income and become taxpayers. Participating employers receive compensation by reducing their federal income tax liabilities. In Fiscal Year 2014, a total of 26,246 certification requests were received, resulting in 18,881 eligible for tax credits. This is a federal tax savings to Kansas businesses of almost \$50 million.

### **Workforce AID**

Commerce, in partnership with the Kansas Board of Regents, is implementing a pilot project to align workforce training and education with industry opportunities and demands. Workforce Aligned with Industry Demand (Workforce AID) supports Governor Brownback's strategic plan for economic development by keeping Kansas businesses competitive and promoting a more robust economy.

Workforce AID provides an industry driven training process that teaches relevant skills that are critical to business. Participating businesses outline the skills and industry recognized credentials their employees need for success and partner with community and technical colleges to design short term, highly focused training programs.

Workforce AID links education to jobs by connecting businesses and potential employees throughout the training process. Businesses and potential employees connect at the beginning and throughout the training process, with opportunities for participants to meet employers to learn about job expectations and a guaranteed interview for those who complete the program. Pilot projects have been so successful that many companies are taking the next step and pre-hiring potential employees contingent upon successful completion of training.

Projects in Topeka, Dodge City and Coffeyville boast participation from more than 25 companies, including industries such as food manufacturing, machining, welding, manufacturing production and industrial maintenance. More than 20 additional Kansas companies continue to partner on projects in Hays, Independence, Manhattan, Olathe and Wichita. Successful participants who have completed training have secured employment around the state, creating a nearly \$3 million impact on the economy in less than 12 months through payroll increases.

### **Second Chance Act Grant**

In Fiscal Year 2012, the Kansas Department of Corrections was awarded \$894,304 through a Second Chance Act Grant from the U.S. Department of Justice to increase offender participation in job development and technical training. This effort recognizes that the offender population includes individuals who can become viable members of the workforce with the proper instruction and training.

The grant facilitated the creation of a new position at Commerce to serve as a link for offenders between Commerce, Corrections and the workforce system. This position partners with Barton Community College

and the Washburn Institute of Technology to provide career and employment development to offenders at four correctional facilities on a pre-release basis.

Through this position, Commerce and Corrections have facilitated training and GED courses for 144 adult and 150 juvenile offenders, provided individualized employment services to 209 offenders and conducted hundreds of career advisement sessions, juvenile information sessions and informational workshops. Among male offenders participating in pre-release training at Ellsworth and Larned Correctional Facilities, 70 percent of those released within a year have gone on to employment and/or continuation of training.

A recently awarded Second Chance Act Grant of \$639,684 supports a partnership between Topeka Correctional Facility (TCF), the Washburn Institute of Technology and Commerce to provide career training to female offenders. This program, which began in October 2014, offers courses at TCF for a Certified Production Training (CPT) and forklift certification credential. Classes include contextualized learning as well as theoretical concepts to prepare women nearing release from incarceration for job opportunities available in northeast Kansas.

Of the first group of 27 female offenders at TCF to enter the training program, all participants received forklift certification and 96 percent passed one or more modules of the CPT program. The participants also took Kansas WORKReady! certification testing and earned 6 gold, 13 silver and 2 bronze certificates.

#### **Registered Apprenticeship**

Registered Apprenticeship provides industry-driven, paid, full-time employment and training in a structured setting under the guidance of a skilled employee. The on-the-job learning is supplemented by classroom instruction in technical subjects related to the occupation. Apprentices who complete training receive a nationally recognized, portable credential. Kansas currently has more than 1,900 registered apprentices. The average start wage is \$16.71, with an average end wage of \$27.71.

Commerce is partnering with the Workforce Alliance of South Central Kansas on a statewide U.S. Department of Labor grant proposal to seek funding to support employer use of Registered Apprenticeship.

#### **KIT/KIR**

The Kansas Industrial Training (KIT) program helps new and expanding companies offset the costs of training workers for new jobs. The Kansas Industrial Retraining (KIR) program assists companies who are restructuring or retraining their existing workers when they are incorporating new technology, diversifying production or developing or implementing new production. In Fiscal Year 2014, Commerce awarded \$1,878,874.50 to 90 projects (59 KIT and 31 KIR) involving a total of 7,420 trainees, with 3,837 new jobs through KIT and 3,583 retrained employees through KIR.

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