





PROFILE: GROWTH SERVICES GROUP

Missouri firm delivers next-level labor reporting for site selection

Founded in 1994 by a certified economic development professional with over 35 years of experience in management, research, and economic development, Growth Services Group, located in Moberly, Missouri, is a national workforce intelligence research and consulting firm.

Established to assist communities in better understanding their labor markets, GSG provides information services to businesses as well as local and regional economic development groups on a variety of issues.

GSG works closely with economic development organizations and their partners in developing workforce profiles for use in marketing, site evaluation, and support of community or regional planning for workforce development and to-work programs. GSG products include data from both primary and secondary sources. By utilizing publically held databases, primary surveys and focus groups for workforce market evaluation, strategic strengths, and opportunities can be identified for further planning.

GSG uses proprietary methodologies and processes to offer its clients rigorous data analysis, which results in an exhaustive knowledge of all aspects of the subject labor force. The products and services relate closely to the importance of quantifying and connecting workforce assets with traditional economic development practices for retention, expansion, and attraction; as well as entrepreneurial development.

In early 2014, economic development professional Corey Mehaffy purchased the company. Over the last several years, GSG has conducted consulting and research projects for a number of clients across the country. GSG has developed and conducted labor studies, workforce surveys and education and training needs assessments.



These projects have included one-on-one interviews, focus groups and working with project coordinating committees for customization to achieve client goals.

“A primary GSG goal is to help communities address the ongoing workforce needs of both existing and prospective businesses to promote investment within their region,” Mehaffy said. “New investment leads to creation of new jobs, increased tax base for taxing jurisdictions and municipalities and diversification of the local economy.”

GSG works with economic development organizations, communities, counties, and regions as well as private businesses and site selection consultants who are working to quantify workforce data such as skills, educational attainment, and commuting patterns, among others — whether for their existing employers or those they are trying to recruit.

Site selection consultants often mention their frustration with communities that do not have an independent labor survey on hand. According to Jim Renzas of the RSH Group, if a community does not have a labor survey on hand and the economic development professional does not know the workforce inside and out, he won’t waste time making a visit. The community will be eliminated and may never even know that they were. According to Renzas, labor is the paramount factor in the site selection process for 90 percent of his projects.

“Some of our clients already have labor surveys but understand the importance of keeping their data current,” Mehaffy said. “Site Consultants tell us that labor data older than 2-3 years is of no worth.

Communities should regularly renew their labor surveys to ensure the most current is available. Labor markets change constantly and keeping your finger on the pulse of the market is critical.”

When approaching GSG, clients are typically trying to answer both general workforce-related questions as well as those specifically related to their region, Mehaffy said. Most often, client concerns involve identifying workforce trends and answering the most critical questions about their workforce — ‘What is it? Where is it? At what cost? And in what quantities?’

“Our clients understand that site consultants and their clients are not interested in talk of a quality labor force, they need proof,” Mehaffy said. “Typically our clients are looking for help with an independent third party labor survey that will prove that their area has the necessary workforce to meet the demands of their existing businesses as well as those who are considering new investment in the area.”

Among GSG’s core products are workforce surveys from a demand, supply, and commuting perspective, retail reports, feasibility studies, and customized products and services.

“Our core labor surveys include the Labor Demand Certification, Labor Commuting Certification, and the Labor Supply Certification,” Mehaffy said. “The Labor Supply Certification provides primary research from a household survey of active and potential workers and their perspective. The Labor Demand Certification provides primary research from an employer’s survey and perspective. The

Labor Commuting Certification is derived from secondary sources such as government databases with a uniform methodology for all states enabling comparative analysis.”

Additionally, GSG offers its Comprehensive Labor Certification — a total assessment of the area labor market from the perspective of market supply, demand, and commuting patterns. This assessment combines all three of the above certifications into one comprehensive study.

GSG takes the approach of evaluating markets from a quantitative and qualitative perspective of workers and employers, providing information not normally available from government or public sources. This provides information of local significance in underemployment and changes in industry mix, such as major layoffs etc.

“Labor market information from GSG provides research information regarding the quality, availability, and cost of your community or regional area labor market for further strategic evaluation,” Mehaffy said. “It gives a competitive advantage no other study can provide by generating labor information necessary to make informed decisions — providing communities the information necessary to develop strategies and presenting information on the competitive realities of quality, availability, and cost.”

While traditional labor surveys often exist for communities or regions, those surveys often rely solely on secondary public data sources for survey and report information. In most cases, this public data is dated or includes estimates which can skew the survey results. Alternatively, GSG uses both primary and secondary research data to provide its clients with the most

up-to-date information specific to their region. This process also allows for customization if clients have certain questions or job classifications that they would like to add to the survey.

“In some cases, no public data exists regarding certain workforce information,” Mehaffy said. “For example, public data is not available regarding underemployment. Through primary research, GSG offers a product that surveys workers in an area who are underemployed to mine information about certain skills, certifications or educational attainment they may have but are not using in their current position. This same report also gathers information regarding the decision process for workers who may consider a new position including desired compensation level, benefits and commuting patterns.”

“We strongly endorse Growth Services Group as a premier supplier of work force data reporting. Their quality of labor reporting is not just critical, it is essential in the work that we do as site selectors.”

— James Renzas,
Principal of the RSH
Group



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