EMPLOYERONE REPORT
2018

ALGOMA WORKFORCE INVESTMENT CORPORATION

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The views expressed in this document do not necessarily reflect those of the Government of Ontario.

The information presented in this report is current at the time of printing.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Special thanks to:

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- Mamaweswen, The North Shore Tribal Council
- Regional Employment Help Centre
- Sault Community Career Centre
- Sault Ste. Marie Chamber of Commerce
- Sault Ste. Marie Construction Association

INTRODUCTION

The employerone survey is designed to collect information annually from local employers on HR issues, such as labour turnover, hard-to-fill positions, recruitment difficulties, current and future skill shortages, as well as issues in training and education practices.

The long-term objective of this initiative is to develop a mechanism to collect information in a coordinated, timely and standardized way in order to gain an understanding of the demand side of the local area's labour market. The ultimate goal is to better support local industries with the training and recruitment of their current and future workforce.

Employer outreach was done primarily with local business organizations, which provided direct access to employers while leveraging existing resources and networks. Our objectives with this approach were to: strengthen the working relationship with local business organizations, avoid duplication, address survey fatigue by having different agencies going to employers with the same questions, and demonstrate to employers that local agencies are working together in a coordinated and collaborative way to collect their input.

BACKGROUND

Initiated as a pilot project in 2014, the employerone survey is in its fourth year. Every year the survey instrument and the outreach process are evaluated and adjusted to reflect the input received from local business partners, and to improve the response rate in terms of the number of respondents, but also in regards to the sectoral and community representation within the pool of participating employers.

The employerone survey has seen an increase in the number and variety of respondents' year-over-year. This lends stronger credibility to the results and allows us to more accurately identify trends and issues in regards to local employers' recruitment challenges.

2014	2015	2016	2017
168	186	219	262

METHODOLODGY

Based on employer feedback and the lessons learned with previous employerone surveys, the questionnaire was edited to be more concise and shorter in 2017. We believe that the revised and shorter survey questionnaire contributed to the increased number of responses in this region.

The employerone survey was available online between October 21st and December 15th, 2017. Employers were invited via email to complete the survey. The invitation to respond was posted on the AWIC website. The participating business organizations also promoted employerone in their regular newsletters and communications with their membership. Several reminders were sent during that period to increase the number of responses.

LIMITATIONS

The information collected with the employerone survey is important for local labour market planning because it is current local labour market demand information. It does however have its limitations in that it is relevant at the time of its collection. Furthermore, the report will contain the input of a limited number of employers, as such the results will be influenced by the relevance of the questions to the responding employers.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

262

Surveyed in 2016

In total, 262 employers started the survey. Of those 216 answered all of the questions and 46 responding employers left some questions blank. We assume that the unanswered questions were not relevant or did not apply to their situation.

There are some imbalances when it comes to the distribution of respondents by industry, but in many instances the survey distribution is close to the actual distribution of firms by industry in the study area. The most notable differences between the survey distribution and the actual distribution were in the Retail Trade category (21.2% survey compared to 11.2% actual) and the Real Estate, Rental and Leasing category (3.3% survey compared to 18.0% actual).

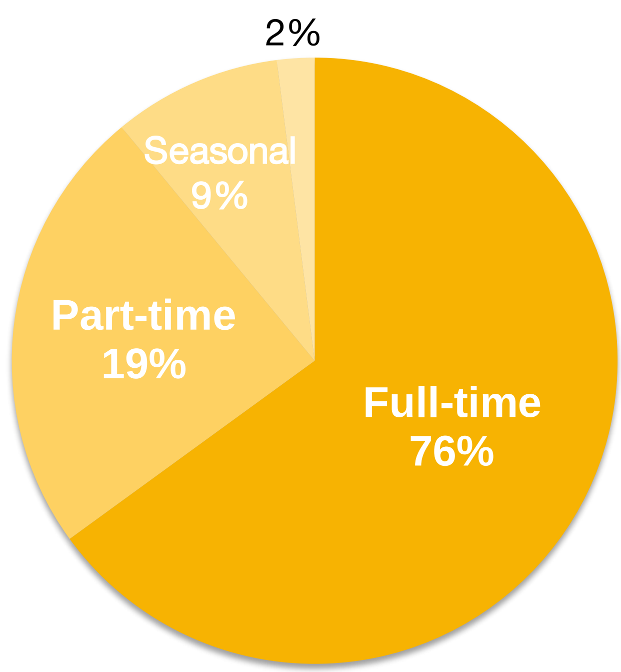
Overall, the respondents represented 4,454 employees. The 2016 Census data for the number of employed residents in the survey area amounts to 47,135. Thus, the number of jobs represented by the employers participating in the survey accounts for around 9% of the employment in the local area.

9%

of the Total Employment

According to the respondents:

- Three quarters of all jobs listed (65%) were full-time.
- 24% were part-time.
- 9% were seasonal
- The remainder 2 were contract.



Separations in the past 12 months:

952

Separations

- 60% of the 246 responding companies reported a total of 952 separations in the previous 12 months, resulting in an annual turnover rate of 21%, almost double last year's estimated turnover rate of 12%.
- Data on separations by type of employment and by type of separations reveals that:
    - 388 (41%) of employees quit their job.
    - 69 (7%) retired.
    - 235 (25%) were laid-off temporarily.
    - 136 (14%) were permanently laid-off.
    - 124 (13%) were dismissed.
- Full-time jobs make up 38% of all separations, and seasonal jobs came in second at 30%

Hires in the past 12 months:

1167

Hires

- 64% of the responding companies reported hiring a total of 1167 people in the previous 12 months:
    - 378 (32%) were full-time
    - 444 (38%) were part-time
    - 22 (2%) were contract
    - 319 (27%) were seasonal
- The top three occupations with the highest total number of hires in the past 12 months were:
    - Construction worker
    - Retail Clerk
    - Housekeeping

Projected hires in the next 12 months:

727

Projected Hires

- 47% of respondents to this question indicated that they planned on hiring in the next 12 months. The total number of anticipated new hires is 727 of which:
    - 220 are full-time
    - 221 are part-time
    - 11 are contract
    - 232 are seasonal
- Occupations with the highest number of anticipated new hires are:
    - Cashier
    - General labourers
    - Cooks
    - Housekeeping/Cleaning
    - Retail Salespersons

Recruitment methods:

The most frequently reported methods of recruitment are:

Word of Mouth, Personal Contacts, Networks and Referrals

Online Job Postings

Government Employment Centres

Company's own Website

Top methods or sources of training:

- On-the-job (96%)
- Peer-to-peer (82%)
- Industry and professional associations (59%)
- Distance/online education (54%).

Most important competencies employers look for in employees:

- Ability to follow instructions
- Willingness to learn
- Team work
- Professionalism
- Self-motivation/ability to work with little or no supervision.

It is important to note that this report contains the results of a survey conducted with a limited number of employers. Therefore, the answers are influenced by the relevance of the questions and/or the interest of those responding employers, and by the economic situation at the time that the survey was conducted.

Nonetheless, the results provide insight on some of the key hiring and recruitment challenges and opportunities. That information is essential to assist local stakeholders with the planning and tailoring of employment and training services to better meet the requirements of the local labour market.

PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

In total, 262 employers started the survey and 216 completed it, a healthy completion rate of 82%. Last year, 219 employers started the survey and 85% completed it. 55% of survey respondents requested a copy of the survey results, indicated a considerable interest on the part of employers in the findings of this survey. Almost half (46%) of the individuals completing the survey were the establishment owners; another quarter (26%) were either supervisors or managers, and 6% were in Human Resources. The rest identified as "Other."

Around two-thirds of the respondents were located in Sault Ste. Marie, with the following localities representing significant clusters of responses: Elliot Lake (15%); Blind River (7%); and Wawa (5%).

Respondents represented a range of industries as seen in Table 1. Respondents were asked to indicate the primary and secondary industries represented by their establishments. The figures in Table 1 are the results for the primary industry (there are 266 responses, as some respondents chose more than one primary industry). The percentage distribution of survey respondents by industry is provided (based on 241 respondents, thus the total percentage adds to more than 100%) and these percentages are compared with the distribution of businesses in Algoma in June 2017. The colour-coding for survey results highlights where the survey percentage share is much greater (yellow) or much lower (black) than the actual distribution.

Table 1: Number and percent of respondents by industry

INDUSTRY	SURVEY		ACTUAL
	NUMBER	PERCENT	
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	11	4.6%	4.5%
Mining, Quarrying and Oil and Gas Extraction	2	0.8%	0.2%
Utilities	2	0.8%	0.6%
Construction	19	7.9%	10.2%
Manufacturing	6	2.5%	2.3%
Wholesale Trade	4	1.7%	2.3%
Retail Trade	51	21.2%	11.2%
Transportation and Warehousing	6	2.5%	4.0%
Information and Cultural Industries	3	1.2%	0.8%
Finance and Insurance	16	6.6%	6.1%
Real Estate, Rental and Leasing	8	3.3%	18.0%
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	19	7.9%	7.4%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	1	0.4%	0.6%
Administration and Support, Waste Mgmt	3	1.2%	3.1%
Educational Services	4	1.7%	0.9%
Healthcare and Social Assistance	16	6.6%	9.4%
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	8	3.3%	2.0%
Accommodation and Food Services	17	7.1%	6.2%
Public Administration	8	3.3%	0.7%

Other Services (Except Public Administration)	13	5.4%	9.4%
Other	49	20.3%	--
TOTAL	**266**	**110.4%**	**100.0%**

Actual figures are from Statistics Canada's Canadian Business Counts, December 2018

There are some imbalances when it comes to the distribution of respondents by industry, but in many instances the survey distribution is close to the actual distribution of firms by industry in the study area. The most notable differences between the survey distribution and the actual distribution were in the Retail Trade category (21.2% survey compared to 11.2% actual) and the Real Estate, Rental and Leasing category (3.3% survey compared to 18.0% actual).

Respondents were further asked, apart from the industry which is their primary activity, what other industry categories might describe their establishments. Table 2 provides the percentage distribution of these secondary responses and compares them to the primary activity industry distribution (in this case, the percentages are calculated on the basis of total responses).

Table 2: Percent of respondents by industry activity, primary and secondary

INDUSTRY	PRIMARY PERCENT	SECONDARY PERCENT
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	4.1%	4.4%
Mining, Quarrying and Oil and Gas Extraction	0.8%	4.4%
Utilities	0.8%	4.4%
Construction	7.1%	8.2%
Manufacturing	2.3%	5.0%
Wholesale Trade	1.5%	3.8%
Retail Trade	19.2%	13.8%
Transportation and Warehousing	2.3%	5.0%
Information and Cultural Industries	1.1%	3.1%
Finance and Insurance	6.0%	2.5%
Real Estate, Rental and Leasing	3.0%	1.3%
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	7.1%	5.0%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	0.4%	3.8%
Administration and Support, Waste Management	1.1%	1.3%
Educational Services	1.5%	5.7%
Healthcare and Social Assistance	6.0%	3.8%
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	3.0%	8.2%
Accommodation and Food Services	6.4%	4.4%
Public Administration	3.0%	1.9%
Other Services (Except Public Administration)	4.9%	2.5%
Other	18.4%	7.5%
TOTAL	**100.0%**	**100.0%**

There are some variations between the distribution of industries by primary and secondary activity. Certain activities are less often carried out as secondary activities compared to their engagement as primary activities, namely Retail Trade, and Finance & Insurance. On the other hand, several items attract a high level of responses as secondary activities: Mining, Quarrying and Oil & Gas Extraction, Utilities, Educational Services, and Arts, Entertainment & Recreation.

The distribution of respondents by number of employees shows a considerably greater proportion of respondents with 5 to 99 employees compared to the actual figures. The actual figures are derived from Statistics Canada's Canadian Business Counts, for which the latest figures are June 2017.

Table 3: Percent of respondents by number of employees compared to actual percentage

	1-4 employees	5-19 employees	20-99 employees	100+ employees
Survey	27%	48%	21%	3%
Actual	46%	39%	12%	3%

Actual figures are from Statistics Canada's Canadian Business Counts, December 2018

Overall, the respondents represented 4,454 employees. The 2016 Census data for the number of employed residents in the survey area amounts to 47,135. Thus, the number of jobs represented by the employers participating in the survey accounts for around 9% of the employment in the local area.

According to the respondents, around 65% of these jobs were full-time, 24% were part-time, and 1% were contract jobs. Approximately, 9% of jobs were seasonal.

Roughly 52% of respondents said that less than 10% of their jobs were filled by youth under the age of 25 years old whereas only 7% of respondents said that youth filled more than 50% of jobs. Conversely, adults between the ages of 25 and 49 tended to fill the most jobs in the responding workforces. Adults between these ages filled 26-50% of jobs 39% of the time, and they filled more than 50% of jobs in a firm 37% of the time. Respondents said that females fill more than half of the jobs 50% of the time, and around one-fifth of the time they filled somewhere between 26 and 50% of the positions. Newcomers, Indigenous peoples, and persons with disabilities tended to fill less than 10% of jobs in respondent firms.

The rest of the analysis will present the substantive responses.

SURVEY RESULTS

SEPARATIONS

Separations over the last 12 months

Of the 246 respondents who answered this question, roughly 60% said they experienced a separation in the last year (eleven did not provide more data). In total, these employers represented 2,115 jobs, around 47% of the jobs represented by employers taking the survey, and they experienced a total of 950 separations. This resulted in an estimated annual turnover rate of 21%. Last year and the year before, the turnover rate was around 12%. However, when the turnover rate is calculated by the various categories of employment, the picture looks slightly different: turnover among full-time jobs of 13%; among part-time jobs: 24%; among contract jobs: 34%; and among seasonal jobs: 73%.

Table 4 presents the data on separations by type of employment and by type of separation. Table 5 presents these same figures as a percentage distribution, in order to make comparisons between the categories easier.

Table 4: Number of separations, by type of employment and by reason for separation

	Quit	Retirement	Temporary Lay-off	Permanent Lay-off	Dismissal	Total
Full-time	132	57	43	43	91	**366**
Part-time	171	10	22	19	31	**253**
Contract	9	1	0	11	0	**21**
Seasonal	57	1	165	58	0	**281**
Other	19	0	5	5	2	**31**
TOTAL	**388**	**69**	**235**	**136**	**124**	**952**

Table 5: Percentage distribution of separations, by type of employment and by reason for separation

	Quit	Retirement	Temp Lay-off	Perm Lay-off	Dismissal	TOTAL
Full-time	14%	6%	5%	5%	10%	**38%**
Part-time	18%	1%	2%	2%	3%	**27%**
Contract	1%	0%	0%	1%	0%	**2%**
Seasonal	6%	0%	17%	6%	0%	**30%**
Other	2%	0%	1%	1%	0%	**3%**
TOTAL	**41%**	**7%**	**25%**	**14%**	**13%**	**100%**

Most separations involved full-time jobs (38%), because that is the largest category of employment. The largest category for separations was “Quits” (41%), followed by “Temporary Lay-offs” (25%) and “Permanent Lay-offs” (14%). The single largest individual category was “Part-time Quits” (18%).

HIRES

Number of hires over the last 12 months

Table 6 lists the figures for total hires over the previous 12 months, by type of employment, and compares it to the number of separations during the same period.

Table 6: Total number of hires over the last 12 months, comparison to separations during same period

	Full-time	Part-time	Contract	Seasonal	Other	TOTAL
Hiring						
Number	378	444	22	319	4	1167
Percent	32%	38%	2%	27%	0%	
Separations						
Number	366	253	21	281	31	952
Percent	38%	27%	2%	30%	3%	

There was some concordance between the number of hires and the number of separations. In the full-time category it was almost equal, while it was considerably higher among part-time workers. Last year there was a similar equivalence between hires (863) and separations (824), with hires only slightly out-numbering separations, whereas in this survey hires outnumbered separations by over 20%.

In most cases, employers reported both hiring and separation activity in the same year (Table 7). Only 22% of respondents indicated that they had neither a hire nor a separation in the previous year.

Table 7: Instances of hiring and/or separation

Hiring	Separation	% Reporting
YES	YES	52%
YES	NO	19%
NO	YES	7%
NO	NO	22%
YES	---	0%

Respondents were further asked the question: 'Of the total number of hires in the past 12 months, how many were previously laid-off employees who were re-hired?' Of these 533 hires, 295 of them were rehires, or 55%.

In the last 12 months, please list the occupations (up to 3) for which you hired the most employees

157 employers responded to this question and suggested at least one occupation. Of those responding, 88 named two occupations and 49 cited three occupations. In the end, there were 292 entries (2 entries were invalid), and with some light editing, these were narrowed down to 190 occupations adding up to 859 jobs. Table 8 lists the top ten (which represent 42% of the jobs). 112 of the occupations represented only one or two jobs.

Table 8: Largest number of hires among high frequency hiring occupations

OCCUPATION	NUMBER
Laborer	77
Youth Program/Day Camp staff	60
Retail clerk	45
Housekeeping	38
Cashier	36
Server	29
Lifeguard/Swim Instructor	22
Production worker	20
Cook	17
Customer Service Representative	15

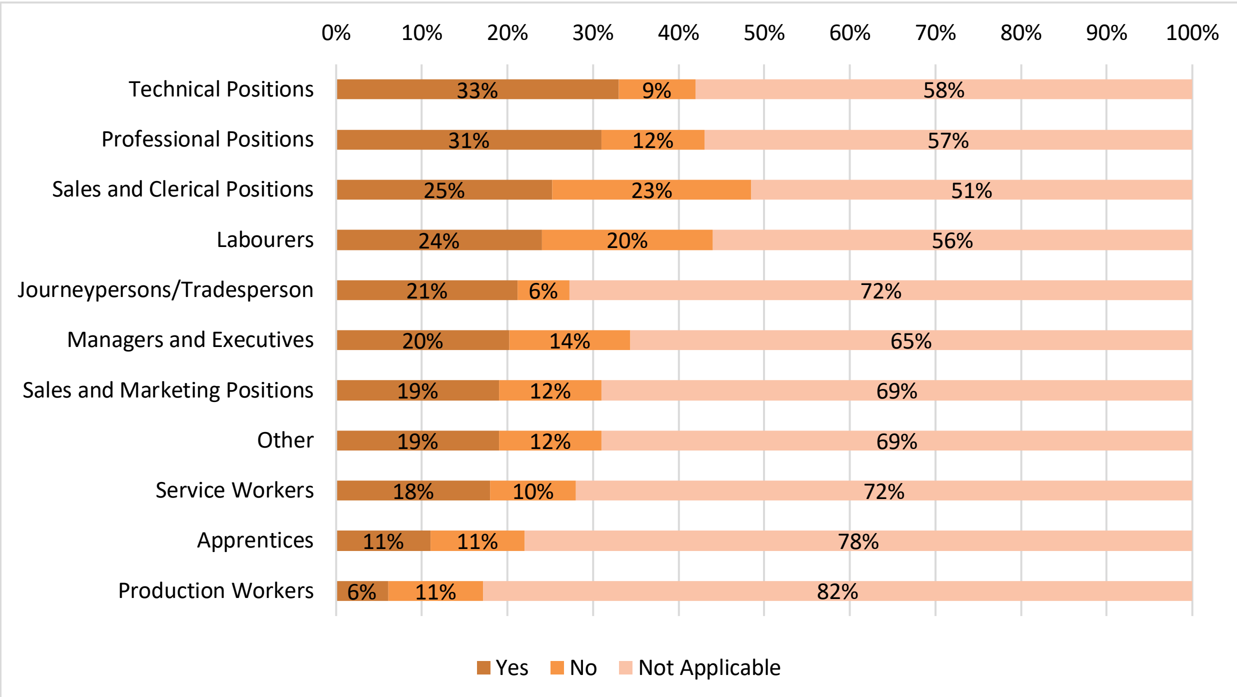
When hiring, does your business/organization find that some positions are hard-to-fill (challenging to find suitable candidates)?

Overall, 70% of employers said that they had difficulty finding suitable candidates for hard to fill positions. In response to specific occupations, one third (33%) find it difficult to find suitable candidates among technical occupations (Chart 1). Other occupations where employers also expressed recruitment challenges included Professional positions, as well as Sales and Clerical positions. In most instances, employers stated that the question was not applicable, presumably because they had not recently hired for that occupation. Excluding the not applicable responses and only focusing on the "Yes" or "No" responses changed the results slightly: 78% of employers hiring for Technical positions expressed difficulty, but now Journeypersons jumped to having the second highest difficult score, with 77% of employers in this category. The results for all occupations were as follows:

- Managers and Executives (58%)
- Professional positions (72%)
- Technical positions (78%)
- Journeypersons (77%)
- Apprentices (52%)
- Sales and Marketing positions (61%)

- Sales and Clerical positions (52%)
- Production workers (36%)
- Service workers (64%)
- Laborers (55%)

Chart 1: Results regarding hard-to-fill occupations



Reasons why occupations are hard to fill

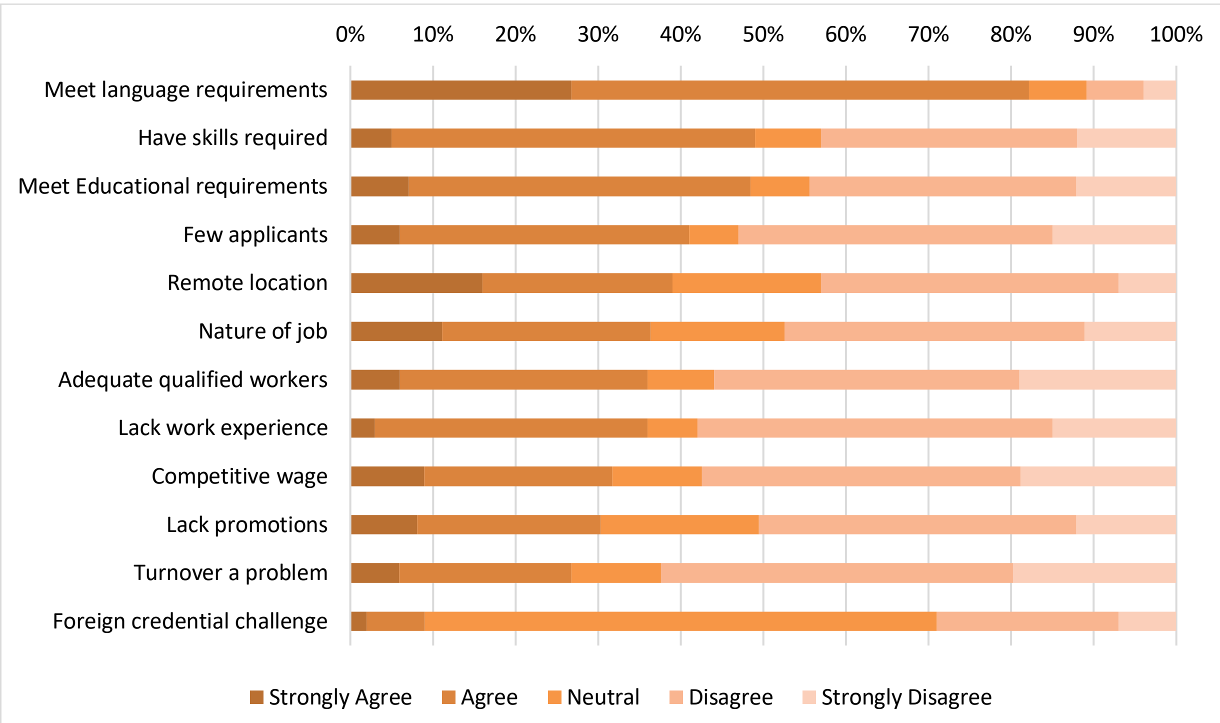
Employers were then asked to list their level of agreement or disagreement with a number of statements relating to recruitment for hard-to-fill jobs. The full statement in the survey is provided in the table below, together with its abbreviated form used to report the results. Chart 2 presents the responses of employers.

Statements about recruitment for hard-to-fill jobs

STATEMENT	ABBREVIATED
The supply of qualified workers is adequate in my community	Adequate qualified workers
There are few suitable applicants for positions	Few applicants
Applicants have the required credentials and meet the educational requirements for the position	Meet Educational requirements
Applicants have the technical skills required for the position	Have skills required
Applicants do not have the work experience required	Lack work experience
Applicants meet the language requirements for the position	Meet language requirements
We have difficulty competing for good employees due to our remote location and transportation issues	Remote location

We find it challenging to compete with other employers due to the nature of our work (seasonal, shift, irregular hours, job responsibilities)	Nature of job
Our wage and benefit packages are competitive with similar employers with whom we compete	Competitive wage
We have difficulty competing with other employers, due to limited promotional opportunities	Lack promotions
Employee turnover is a problem in our organization	Turnover a problem
We have difficulty evaluating credentials of foreign workers who apply for positions with us	Foreign credential challenge

Chart 2: Assessment of challenges filling hard to find jobs



The challenges in the table are listed in order of agreement, from the most agreement to the least agreement. The item with the highest level of agreement is with respect to language requirements. What is being expressed here is that most employers feel that job candidates do meet language requirements. Otherwise, one can see from the chart that for most other items, there is a rough equivalence between those who agree and disagree with a statement, or else there are many of those who disagree.

Another way of assessing the responses is to create a ranking by using a numerical formula, giving a +2 to each "strongly agree" assessment, +1 for "agree," -1 for "disagree," -2 for "strongly disagree," and a zero for either "don't know" or "neutral." The total score is then divided by the total number of respondents for each item, resulting in an average score, listed in Table 9.

Table 9: Scoring for assessment of challenges filling hard-to-fill jobs

Statement	Score
Meet language requirements	0.93
Remote location	0.03
Meet Educational requirements	0.00
Have skills required	0.00
Nature of job	-0.12
Few applicants	-0.22
Lack promotions	-0.24
Foreign credential challenge	-0.25
Adequate qualified workers	-0.34
Lack work experience	-0.34
Competitive wage	-0.37
Turnover a problem	-0.50

As noted earlier, only one statement attracted particularly high levels of agreements (an average score of 1.0 would represent “agree”): “Meeting language requirements.” It scored a 0.93 degree of agreement. The next highest level of agreement was 0.03 relating to “Remote location”, which represents more or less an equal number of those agreeing as disagreeing. The statement with the highest level of disagreement was “Turnover a problem”, a negative 0.50, which is halfway between – “1.0” (Disagree) and “0.0” (Neither agree or disagree). That is, there are more respondents who disagree that turnover is a problem. Similarly, slightly more disagree with the following statements:

- Our wage and benefit packages are competitive with similar employers with whom we compete
- Applicants do not have the work experience required
- The supply of qualified workers is adequate in my community

RECRUITMENT

What recruitment methods were used to find job candidates?

Respondents were asked to indicate what mechanisms they used to recruit job candidates, for any hiring. Answers were provided by 175 respondents and the percentage frequency of use for each recruitment method is listed in Table 10.

Table 10: Frequency of use of recruitment methods (Number of respondents: N= 175)

Recruitment method	2017	2016
Word of mouth, personal contacts, referrals, and informal networks	92%	80%
Online job boards/online posting	75%	49%
Unsolicited resumes	62%	25%
Our business/organization's own website	58%	32%
Government employment centres or websites	56%	36%
Non-government or community employment service centres or websites	48%	21%
On-site job signs or posters	35%	20%
Onsite recruitment at schools, colleges and universities	35%	16%
Newspaper ads	30%	20%
Other	29%	2%
Trade or professional publications or websites	16%	10%
Temporary help agencies or services	14%	4%
Job Fairs	13%	10%
Executive search companies/head-hunters	8%	4%

The most used recruitment method in this survey by a substantial margin was word of mouth (92%), followed by online job boards (75%) and unsolicited resumes (62%). 126 respondents (72%) used three or more methods. The top two methods haven't changed since last year, and apart of minor shuffles in the order, the ranking by frequency of use hasn't changed much. The few notable changes include a 26% increase in the use of online job boards/online postings, and the 19% increase in the use of onsite recruitment at schools, colleges and universities.

Which of the following geographic areas were targeted for recruitment?

Respondents were asked to indicate the areas their recruitment efforts targeted. Table 11 lists the percentage of employers selecting each geography and the frequency of search in that geography.

Table 11: Geographic target areas for job recruitment activities)
(Number of respondents: N= 217)

2017	WITHIN THE COMMUNITY/ THE REGION	WITHIN THE PROVINCE	WITHIN CANADA	INTERNATIONALLY
Regularly	91%	30%	9%	3%
Sometimes	7%	33%	17%	5%
Never	1%	38%	74%	93%

Most of the recruitment efforts of employers is focused locally, with around one-third of employers extending their recruitment efforts across the province. Slightly less recruitment extends to Canada, and almost no recruitment extends Internationally. What may be surprising is that 1% of the respondents (three employers) claimed they do not recruit within the community or region.

Did you receive any assistance from an employment program or service to assist with your requirement or hiring activities?

Last year, the question asked if employers received any assistance from a free employment service agency *representing one of the following groups when recruiting for these occupations*, and then listed a number of demographic categories. This year the question asks for a yes or no answer to using employment services when hiring at all. Of the respondents, 32% said they received such assistance and 3% were uncertain if they had.

FUTURE HIRES

Do you plan on hiring anyone over the next 12 months? In what employment categories? Which occupations are forecast to be in demand? What is the reason for the job opening?

Nearly one-half (47%) of respondents said they plan to hire over the next 12 months. Table 12 provides the breakdown of the number of projected hires by type of employment and compares the figures to the reported hires undertaken in 2017.

Table 12: Number of projected hires for the coming year, compared to reported hires in past year, by employment categories

	Full-time	Part-time	Contract	Seasonal	TOTAL
Projected next year	220	221	11	232	**727**
Past year actual	378	444	22	319	**1163**
Project from last year	366	167	46	192	**771**

In every category, projected hires for next year fell short of actual hires for this year. However, compared to the project hires from last year's survey, the actual hires were greater, especially in the categories of part-time and seasonal work. It is more likely that employers are being cautious in their estimates of future hires rather than expecting that the business climate (and related hiring) will be slower.

Employers were further asked to name the top three occupations for which they planned to hire. The positions listed spanned many different skill levels (from housekeeping and general labourer to automotive service technician and manager) and numerous industries. Occupations that were cited several times by different employers included cashier, housekeeping, labourer, server, cook and retail salesperson.

Reasons for job openings

Employers were questioned about the reason for their forecasted hiring – the question was not in relation to a specific hire, but generally, why they might hire. Table 13 lists the number and percentage of employers who agreed with the suggested reason for a job opening.

Table 13: Percent choosing reason for expected hiring, 2015-2017

	2017	2016	2015
Retirements	40%	23%	16%
Expansion/Restructuring	75%	38%	41%
Technological Change	8%	2%	2%
Other	59%	48%	41%

For all occupations, the main reason for the hiring was for the purpose of expansion or restructuring. It is noteworthy that compared to the previous two years, a considerably higher proportion of employers chose both retirements and expansion as the reason for job openings. Among the other options provided, ten mentioned that the staff were seasonal.

SKILLS, EDUCATION AND TRAINING

What is the minimum level of education required for new hires in the various occupational categories?

Employers were asked to list their preference of level of educational attainment for new hires. The survey did not distinguish between different types of occupations. Employers often indicated more than one level of educational attainment, so that the percentage distribution of their responses adds up to more than 100%.

Since last year's question focused on minimum requirements, it is hard to compare the two sets of data. However, the majority of respondents this year said that having a high school diploma was 'very important' (67%) as opposed to the rest of the categories. Following to having a high school diploma, the number of respondents who said that having 'some post-secondary' (36%) or having a college diploma (28%) was 'very important' - dropped considerably. Employers were ambivalent about trade certificates being important, where almost equal proportions felt it was somewhat important and not important at all. On the other hand, more than half felt that an undergraduate degree was not at all important.

Table 14: Preferred degree of educational attainment for new hires

Preference	High school diploma	Some postsecondary	Trade certificate	College diploma	Undergraduate degree	Professional accreditation or graduate degree
Very Important	67%	36%	25%	28%	20%	15%
Somewhat important	21%	38%	27%	35%	24%	26%
Not important at all	12%	26%	48%	37%	56%	59%

The figures from last year are slightly more spread out, but respondents generally agreed that having a high school diploma was the most important, and having an undergraduate degree was the least important.

Table 15: Last year's minimum educational requirements for new hires

None	High school diploma	Some post-secondary	Trade certificate	College diploma	Undergraduate degree	Professional accreditation or graduate degree
18%	42%	14%	13%	21%	9%	10%

Competencies expected of employees

Employers were asked to rate the importance of each of the following competencies for their employees (the competencies are provided in their full form and then the abbreviated form used in the chart).

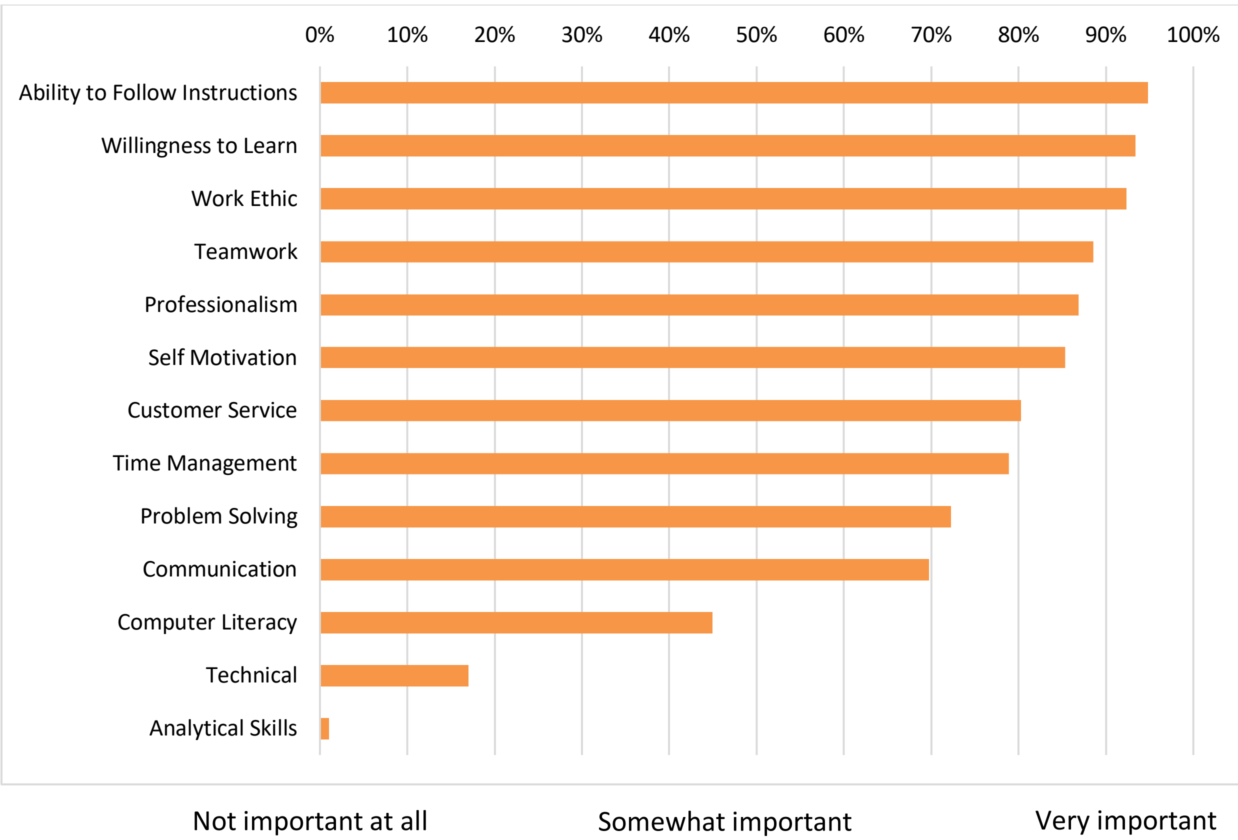
COMPETENCY	ABBREVIATED
Technical	Technical
Analytical/research	Analytical
Communication (both oral and written)	Communication
Customer service	Customer service
Teamwork/interpersonal	Teamwork
Work ethic, dedication, dependability	Work ethic
Computer literacy	Computer literacy
Time management/organizational	Time management
Problem solving, reasoning, creativity	Problem solving
Self-motivated/ability to work with little or no supervision	Self-motivated
Professionalism	Professionalism
Willingness to learn	Willingness to learn

Employers were asked to assess each competency according to its level of importance, with each response assigned a score, as follows:

Very important	2
Somewhat important	1
Not at all important	0

The addition of all the scores for each competency, divided by the number of responses, produced an average score that is illustrated in Chart 3.

Chart 3: Rating of competencies



The three most important competencies (scoring closer to very important than to somewhat important) were:

- Follow Instructions
- Willingness to learn
- Work ethic

The three lowest ranking competencies were:

- Computer literacy
- Technical skills
- Analytical skills

The top five categories speak to the importance of soft and team skills amongst employees. A seemingly important soft skill, 'Communication,' fell to the fourth last position, below problem solving.

Training for incumbent workers

Employers were asked whether they had provided or supported some form of training or education opportunities for their employees over the last year. Nearly nine out of ten (85%) said they supplied on-the-job training, and over one half (58%) offered educational programs delivered by third parties. Just under half (42%) said they provided upgrading programs in-house.

Respondents were further asked in what specific ways they supported training or education for their employees. Table 15 identifies the percentage of employers who provided each of the following supports. The figures added up to more than 100% because some employers identified more than one support – in fact, nearly two-thirds (63%) of employers provided more than one support. Table 15 also lists the percentage breakdown for responses to this question from last year's survey.

Table 16: Percent of employers providing supports
(Number of respondents: 2017 – 185; 2016 - 126)

	2017	2016
Fund it (fully or partially)	60%	68%
Supply information on opportunities available	59%	23%
Offer flexibility in work schedule	59%	52%
Using government hiring and training incentives	26%	21%
Other	34%	14%

The most used method of providing training support for employees was funding it, either fully or partially, which scored 8% lower than last year. Employers that offered information on opportunities available saw the largest increase, from 23% to 59%. Last year the question had different wording ("supply information on career advancement"), and the broad scope of the question may explain the higher scoring. Employers also offered other relatively concrete forms of support, by providing flexibility in the work schedule, as opposed to simply providing information. There is limited reliance on government hiring and training incentives.

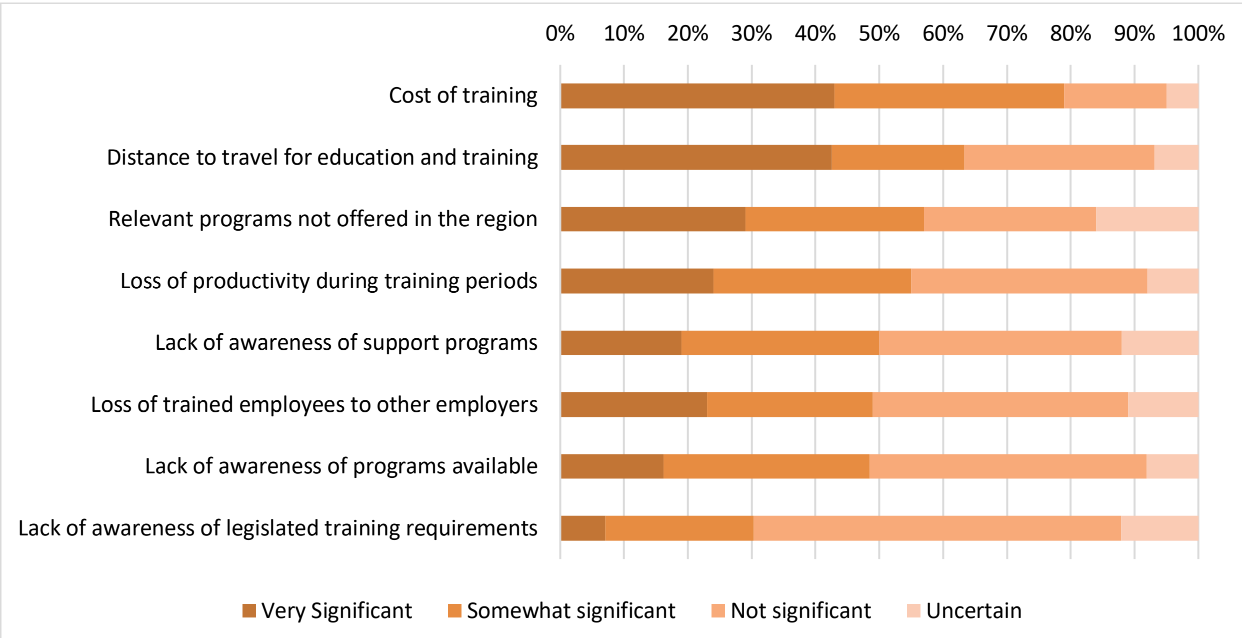
Table 17 shows the use of common sources of training and education for employees. Not surprisingly, on-the-job training ranked the highest, where almost every respondent (96%) said that they rely on it as a source of training and education (the remainder said they were uncertain). Next, 82% of respondents relied on peer-to-peer training. In the middle of the pack was industry and professional association programs and distance/online education. Reliance on universities was ranked the lowest, at 20%, half the rate of reliance on colleges (42%).

Table 17: Commonly used sources of training and education for employees

	2017	2016
On the job training	96%	90%
Peer-to-Peer training	82%	33%
Industry and Professional association programs	59%	25%
Distance/Online education	54%	22%
College (including continuing studies)	42%	17%
University	20%	9%

Chart 4 provides an overview of the significance of obstacles to education and training, as ranked by respondents.

Chart 4: Significance of obstacles to providing or supporting training and education



The top three obstacles to providing and supporting education and training are:

- Cost of training (43% chose very significant, 36% somewhat significant)
- Distance to travel to education or training (43% very significant, 21% somewhat significant)
- Relevant programs not offered in region (29% very significant, 28% somewhat significant)

Obstacles that related to practicalities (cost or availability of training) were ranked higher than issues related to awareness of programs, supports for those programs or of legislative requirements.

Do you provide any workplace-relevant training to students and future workers?

In terms of providing any workplace-relevant training to students, slightly over half (56%) of respondents said they did not offer any program. Among those who did offer a program, the type of training and whether it was paid or unpaid varied, as Table 17 illustrates. The percentages for Table 18 are calculated on the basis of all employers who answered that question, both those providing such an experience and those who do not.

Table 18: Percentage of employers providing workplace experience opportunities (N=81)

	Paid co-op	Unpaid co-op	Paid internship	Unpaid internship	Apprentice	No Programs offered
High school student	4%	19%	3%	1%	1%	73%
College student	6%	4%	6%	3%	4%	77%
University student	4%	2%	7%	3%	1%	83%

By far, the most common form of work experience offered is through unpaid co-op placements for high school students. Co-op placements for college and university students tend to favour paid positions. Apprenticeships were offered the least often, but only slightly less than unpaid internships.

Does your business/organization have a succession plan in place?

Around one-third (34%) of respondents indicated that their firm had a succession plan; 44% said they did not and the other 21% were uncertain. (In terms of the respondents to the survey, in 45% of the respondents, it was the owner who completed the survey. In 25% of the cases, it was a department head or manager, and in 24% of the responses, it was some other position. For 6% of the surveys, someone from HR provided the responses.)

What do you see as the main opportunities for your business/organization over the next five years?

Respondents were given up to four answers to this question, and in total 245 entries were written in as the main opportunities that employers foresaw. Slightly over 40% of the responses cited growth or expansion, which included either geographic expansion, additional product lines or simply more customers. Other themes that had a handful of mentions included the impact of retirements, an aging population and technological change.

What do you see as the main challenges for your business/organization over the next five years?

Around 320 entries were offered up as challenges. Around a quarter of these challenges related to staff (recruiting and retaining). Other big issues were costs in general, as well as concerns regarding the raising of the minimum wage in particular. An aging workforce and an aging resident population were also cited.

CONCLUSION

As was mentioned earlier in the report, the results of this survey provide insight on some of the key hiring and recruitment challenges that local employers are facing. We emphasize again the limitations of the information which represents 'a picture in time', the views of 262 responding employers across the region. This is based on their knowledge of what their future needs will be regarding their economic situation at the time of the data collection.

However, the survey results do represent one additional source of data to help us better understand areas where we need to focus some efforts in order to ensure that employers' requirements are well known and communicated to job seekers, and those whose mandate it is to train and prepare workers for the current and future employment opportunities.

Ultimately, we hope that the information contained in this report will complement other sources and that it will help inform local stakeholders as they plan and tailor employment and training services, and ultimately better align the local labour market supply with the demand.

Notes:

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