LICKING COUNTY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

An analysis of the gaps in education & workforce development in Licking County, & opportunities for improved alignment.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The following report is a collection of quantitative and qualitative data collected with the purpose of identifying the needs of the workforce development efforts in Licking County, Ohio. The recommendations resulting from this study are based on a process of gathering appropriate labor market data, collecting feedback from area employers, and evaluating the successes of existing programs and strategies through the lens of those who have been directly affected by them. The purpose of this report is to aid community leaders in assessing what is working and what can be improved upon as Licking County continues to grow and develop its approaches to a competitive and sustainable workforce.

This report was commissioned by community leaders representing a variety of Licking County organizations to assess needs in three areas: (1) Existing Skill Gaps, (2) Current Approaches to Workforce Development, and (3) Wage and Benefit Trends.

To address these areas, this needs assessment is divided into five sections:

1. Labor Market Information Analysis Summary
2. Employer Survey Analysis Summary
3. Stakeholder Input Sessions Summary
4. SWOT Analysis
5. Recommendations

Based on the quantitative and qualitative research completed, Thomas P. Miller & Associates, LLC (TPMA) has developed the following recommendations. They have been organized around the topics of Talent Recruitment, Skill Development, and Talent Retention.

Talent Recruitment	• Skills-Based Hiring • Diverse & Non-Traditional Talent
Skills Development	• Sector Strategies & Career Pathways • Work-Based Learning • Employability Skill Development
Talent Retention	• Job Quality

Introduction

TPMA was contracted by GROW Licking County Community Improvement Corporation (GROW LC) in partnership with Ohio Means Jobs – Licking County (OMJ-LC), The Career and Technology Education Centers of Licking County (C-TEC), the Central Ohio Technical College (COTC), and the Licking County Educational Service Center (ESC) to conduct a needs assessment around gaps in education and workforce development. Data collection was conducted in three phases:

Phase I:
Labor Market Information Analysis

Phase II:
Employer Survey

Phase III:
Stakeholder Input Sessions

Upon launching the project, TPMA established bi-weekly meetings with the steering committee to share project updates, request information, and brainstorm ideas for the final report. Throughout all three phases of the project, members of the steering committee provided guidance, managed participant involvement, and collected information relating to Licking County resources.

Below are brief summaries of the data findings from each phase of this project. Each summary is organized by topic. A few terms that may require definition are:

- **Technical Skills:** Sets of abilities or knowledge used to perform practical tasks, often in jobs relating to mechanics, technology, manufacturing, and science. In most cases, these skills often require specialized training or education, completion of which occasionally earn the trainee a certification testifying to the individual's capability to perform this skill.
- **Employability Skills:** Also referred to as "soft skills," these are non-technical skills that relate to how a person approaches work assignments, responsibilities, or situations. They often refer to how a person solves problems, interacts with colleagues and supervisors, and manages work-related scenarios.

Labor Market Information Analysis Summary

During Phase I of the project, TPMA conducted research on the labor, industry, demographic, and economic conditions of Licking County and prepared a data and analysis report to identify strengths, gaps, and areas of opportunity for the region's approach to education and workforce development. This data provided a foundation on which to construct a strategy for the project's subsequent phases. The comprehensive labor market information analysis is in Appendix A.

Demographic & Labor Trends

Licking County is growing, showing a steady population increase for the past ten years. Although about 31% of the county's population is over 55 years old, over 43% is between the ages of 20 to 54, including 25% between the ages of 35 and 54. These figures suggest that the county is in a strong position to replace sections of workforce who are nearing retirement.

Regarding race, a vast majority of the county is white, although forecasts project increases in the Black, Hispanic, and Asian communities over the coming years.

The median household income (MHHI) in Licking County in 2018 was $62,715, above both the state ($55,111) and national ($61,937) averages.

At 17.2%, the poverty rate in Licking County is below both the state and national averages and is lower than all but two adjacent counties (Franklin and Delaware). The below-average poverty rate corresponds to the higher-than-average rate of high-school diploma attainment in the county, although attainment rates for two-year degrees and beyond are slightly lower than the state and national averages.

Licking County reported unemployment rates consistently below the state and national levels, although a significant number of Licking County residents leave the county for their jobs, resulting in a net loss of nearly 17,000 commuters as of 2018.

Industry Trends

The largest industries in Licking County are Government, Transportation & Warehousing, Manufacturing, Retail Trade, Health Care & Social Assistance, and Accommodation and Food Services. Each of these industries has grown since 2014 and is projected for further growth by 2024.

Among these top industries, Transportation and Warehousing experienced a significant increase in jobs, with 6,684 added between 2014 and 2019. Projections into the next five years indicate an increase of over 3,700 jobs for Transportation and Warehousing. However, the average annual salary in this industry is $40,581, which is below the county average of $52,128. Manufacturing, another top industry for the county, also experienced significant growth from 2014 to 2019, and is expected to continue to show growth over the coming years. Manufacturing jobs in Licking County provide an average annual salary of $67,591, well above the county average, and over 1,300 manufacturing job openings were posted from July 2019 to July 2020.

Wages

Despite median household income in Licking County being higher than national and state averages, wages paid in the county fall below the national and state average across industries and occupations. For example, in Transportation and Material Moving occupations, the national median salary (adjusted for region size) is $32,623; in the State of Ohio, the median salary is $31,453; in Licking County, the median salary is $28,655. Median wages are also below state and national levels in Production, Installation/Maintenance/Repair, Office/Administrative Support, and Building/ Grounds Cleaning/Maintenance occupations – all of which were selected as representing common entry-level positions. Many of these occupation groups also represent greater supply and demand than adjusted national averages.

The discrepancy between MHHI and wages in the county results from a number of factors including the net loss of commuters or remote workers who live in the county but work elsewhere or other sources of income such as retirement, disability, or Social Security income. The U.S. Census calculates MHHI based on residents living in a household in a defined geographic location. A county's average wages, on the other hand, are calculated by the Bureau of Labor Statistics based on the amount that employers in a region are paying their employees. For example, an individual living in Licking County but working in neighboring Franklin County would have their earnings reported in Licking County's MHHI but Franklin County's average wage data.

Wages paid by Licking County employers fall behind those of Franklin County, the largest regional competitor for workforce talent. For example, median annual salaries in Licking County fall below median annual salaries in Franklin County by $4,174 ($2.00/hr.) in Transportation/Material Moving, by $1,898 ($0.91/hr.) in Production occupations, and by $5,114 ($2.46/hr.) in Installation/Maintenance/Repair occupations. While these findings are to be expected given the contrast between Licking and Franklin counties in a number of important metrics, a discrepancy in wages between the two counties is likely to have significant impact on Licking County employers' hiring success due to the relative ease of commuting to the neighboring county.

Occupational Trends

Among the top 20 occupations in Licking County, those which experienced the greatest growth between 2014 and 2019 were Industrial Truck and Tractor Operators (357% growth); Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers (160% growth); Stockers and Order Fillers (120% growth); and Shipping Receiving, and Inventory Clerks (108% growth). Much of the growth in these occupations corresponds with the large growth in the Transportation and Warehousing industry (410% growth). Of these top 20 jobs, four typically require a bachelor's degree (Elementary School Teachers, Registered Nurses, Secondary School Teachers, and General and Operations Managers); one requires a postsecondary non degree award (Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers); eight require a high school diploma or equivalent; and seven require no formal educational credential. None of the top ten jobs require above a high school diploma or equivalent.

For the top 100 jobs in Licking County, 62% require a high school diploma or equivalent or no formal educational credential at time of entry-level hire and 41% typically receive no on-the-job training.

Skills

Data from online job postings show that the top three technical skills appearing in postings from July 2019 to July 2020 were Merchandising (7%), Flatbed Truck Operation (6%), and Warehousing (6%). The top common skills in job postings over the same period were Communications (19%), Customer Service (17%), Sales (15%), Management (13%), and Leadership (10%).

Employer Survey Analysis Summary

Phase II of this project focused on collecting survey responses from a variety of area employers, with an emphasis placed on identifying businesses of an array of sizes while also ensuring that the counties' largest industries were represented. With input from the steering committee, TPMA conducted an online survey that was distributed to over 200 area employers and prepared a findings and analysis report for the county. The comprehensive survey analysis is in Appendix B.

Hiring

When asked to select their three most pressing talent issues from a list, employers identified a lack of employability skills among applicants, difficulty with employee retention, and a lack of qualified candidates more than other options by a significant margin. Employers also indicated a strong preference for industry work experience over completed Work-Based Learning (WBL) programs, industry-recognized credentials (IRCs), technical certificates, or either associate's or bachelor's degrees.

Employability Skills

Employers were also asked to rank different employability skills based on their value as part of hiring decisions. Those skills identified most frequently as "extremely valuable" were: Dependability/reliability (63%), Teamwork (59%), and Integrity (59%). The employability skill of Dependability/reliability was also identified as the most difficult to find during hiring. When employers were asked to rank skills based on the level of importance that they be taught in K-12 curriculum, Teamwork outranked Basic Math as the skill deemed the most important. Respondents also identified Critical Thinking/Problem Solving Skills as anticipated needs for workers in the next 5-10 years.

Technical Skills

Mechanical and Electrical Skills were identified as the technical skills most lacking in new hires among survey respondents, followed by Specific Computer Software skills, Forklift and Heavy Machinery skills. This emphasis was echoed when employers were asked to anticipate skills needed by workers in the coming 5-10 years, in which Technological Skills and Mechanical and Electrical Skills tied for first among technical skills.

Training

Internal training was the most common type of career advancement opportunity offered by employers who took the survey, followed by leadership/management training and professional development. When asked about their partnership with education/training providers, more employers indicated that they partner with a third-party training provider (22%) or that they do not partner for education/training to upskill talent (17%) than partnered with K-12 Career & Technical Education (CTE) providers (14%), Adult Education CTE (16%), Technical/Community colleges (16%), or 4-year Colleges/Universities (12%).

Employers indicated that a lack of awareness of opportunities for collaboration was the greatest barrier to more engaged partnerships with education/training providers, followed by a lack of applicable training programs and the availability of funding.

Work-Based Learning

Work-Based Learning opportunities were reported as offering varying levels of effectiveness to employers, with on-the-job training considered the most effective. Apprenticeships were viewed the most negatively among respondents, with 56% viewing them as with very ineffective or somewhat ineffective. Apprenticeships were also the least prevalent form of WBL among employers who took the survey.

Stakeholder Input Session Summary

Phase III of the project was designed to collect stakeholder feedback on the labor market and survey data collected during Phases I and II. Working with guidance from TPMA, members of the steering committee identified individuals to participate in eight input sessions across three clusters:

1. Education, Training, and Workforce Development (3 sessions)
2. Employers (3 sessions)
3. Talent (2 sessions)

During these input sessions, stakeholders were invited to participate in an open-ended discussion about their experiences and recommendations for Licking County's workforce development. Members of the TPMA staff hosted the sessions and guided the conversation with questions arising from data collected through research and surveys. The comprehensive summary of the stakeholder input sessions is in Appendix C.

Employability Skills

Responses from all three data-collection phases point to a significant need to address employability skills, especially among the younger adult generation and workers who are currently in secondary education. According to survey results, this is the singular most pressing talent issue in the county. When asked to elaborate on these findings, employers commented that job candidates displayed an inability to: show up to work on time; arrive for scheduled interviews; perform well in interviews; pass drug tests; consistently complete an 8-hour work day; get along with coworkers; apply critical thinking skills; resolve conflicts; follow directions; ask appropriate questions; treat coworkers and supervisors with respect; demonstrate motivation to develop in their work and careers.

Employers emphasized that they would be able and willing to provide the technical skills training (or support workers in receiving technical skills training) if they were able to find employees who could already possessed these employability skills. Many employers suggested that they expected area high schools to prepare students to succeed in their careers by developing these skills in students starting at a young age.

In response to this, educators and administrators at the secondary level report a conflict in their myriad roles as developers of young talent. Many feel that the graduation requirements mandated by state-level officials limit their ability to respond to the employability skill development needs of employers in the region. Some educators expressed a desire for employers in the area to participate more directly in these issues, either by expressing their need for employability skill development to legislators or by working more closely with secondary educators and administrators to develop better communication around their skills-gap needs. Secondary educators and administrators would prefer the flexibility to incorporate more Project-Based Learning (PBL) opportunities into their curricula.

Workforce professionals also mentioned a focus on employability skills development. Adult workers are not often in the same structured environment that secondary students are, making PBL less of an option. Workforce professionals in Licking County have turned to Work-Based Learning (WBL) as a way to teach many of these employability skills, suggesting that the workplace setting is the best place to communicate the kinds of expectations that workers will face in their jobs.

During sessions with postsecondary educators and administrators, there was little discussion about training for employability skills. When asked specifically about these strategies, conversation was returned to an on-going debate around ways to approach the training and credentialing of technical skills.

Across all input sessions, a coordinated approach to measuring success in employability skill development did not emerge. Workforce development professionals reported that the lack of accepted certifications for employability skills lead to significant issues in workforce development. One K-12 superintendent did mention the use of PBL rubrics that are completed by a panel and aid in employability skill assessment.

Technical Skills

Survey results showed an apparent conflict between employers reporting that the availability of training programs was generally sufficient and the fact that 75% of surveyed employers reported that individuals entering the workforce had "some," "a few," or "none" of the technical skills required for their positions (as opposed to "all" or "most"). K-12 educators reported that employers seem to be pleased with the technical skills training that recent graduates demonstrate in the workplace.

When asked about the technical skills training in the region, workforce development professionals responded that this training is available and effective and that those workers who receive this training are being placed into jobs at high rates. Workers also reported success in the training they received when they related to resources by a workforce development organization or education/training provider.

Workers expressed an appreciation for the technical skills training they had received in high school and wished that these programs would continue and/or expand. K-12 educators report that recent graduates have reported a desire to have been trained on computer and coding skills more during high school.

Credentials

Across all three data collection phases, findings suggest a diminishing value placed on degree attainment in entry-level hiring. According to survey data, employers placed significantly greater value on industry experience than they did on degrees, certifications, or credentials. This trend was echoed during employer sessions. However, in manufacturing industries, there was still a focus on finding qualified candidates with the appropriate credentials for specific occupations.

The debate around technical skills training and how best to approach credentials was an area of focus during an input session that focused on postsecondary and adult education and training. Some postsecondary educators reported a desire to focus less on degree programs and more on short-term "micro-credentials" and specific skills training. Advocates for more traditional degree programs suggested that these micro-credentials should be "stackable" and worked into degree programs rather than exist as stand-alone options.

Workers who participated in input sessions reported a desire to pursue certifications rather than degrees.

Education-Employer Partnerships

In response to questions about existing education-employer relationships, there were a wide variety of experiences expressed throughout the eight input sessions. Educators and employers both expressed a desire to have better partnerships with one another. In many cases employers and educators each suggested that the other was the cause of difficulty in establishing these relationships. One K-12 administrator reported a successful program that was developed when a large employer had contacted the local schools to develop an apprenticeship program. Although the administrator admitted that the process of starting the program was challenging, he believed it to be worth the initial effort

Educators and employers largely reported a desire to focus more on developing these relationships after the COVID-19 public health crisis is over and these types of collaborations can be conducted safely.

Workforce development professionals reported success in connecting with education/training providers but expressed a desire for more collaboration in establishing apprenticeship programs.

Wages and Benefits

In discussing wages and benefits offered in Licking County, there was agreement among workforce development, education/training, employers, and talent that wages in Licking County were routinely lower than wages for similar positions in adjacent Franklin County. This is backed up by the occupations data, and typically the perceived amount of wage discrepancy (about $2-3/hr.) was at or near what the data show. In some cases, however, Franklin County

wages were only slightly higher in comparison to Licking County wages. This was particularly the case in manufacturing occupations in which the wage discrepancy between counties is less than a dollar per hour.

Generally, employers reported a belief that workers were more interested in the amount of their hourly wage and less interested in other benefits associated with employment. However, some employers did report that workers who left their positions for higher wages at area warehousing companies would often return after finding the warehousing job to be unpleasant. Employers acknowledged that they were not able to keep pace with Franklin County wages, although some had recently increased starting wages for entry-level positions to somewhat address this compensation gap. Other employers reported offering a variety of other benefits including flexible work schedules, reimbursement for professional development, scholarship opportunities for employees' family members, friendlier work environments, more open communication between executives and employees, and even weekly cartons of ice cream.

Workers, however, reported a preference for non-wage benefits such as workplace culture and scheduling flexibility over moderate pay increases.

Services

Employers, educators, workforce professionals, and workers all reported a desire for better options for transportation in Licking County. Many felt that a lack of transportation placed a limit on worker's ability to apply for or accept certain positions and employers' ability to fill their open positions. Limited access to high-speed broadband was also mentioned as a limiting factor in Licking County.

Workers overwhelmingly reported positive results from connecting with workforce services in the county, although respondents from all input sessions reported an overall lack of awareness about what services were available to schools, workers, and employers.

Diversity

A common theme expressed by employers, workforce development professionals, and workers was the lack of diversity in both the Licking County resident population and the workforce. Multiple workers reported that cultural differences were leading to discomfort in the workplace and multiple employers expressed a desire to create more diversity in their workplace. However, the lack of diversity in the population, the opportunity for higher wages in nearby Columbus/Franklin County, and difficulty around transportation were reported as barriers to developing improved workplace diversity. One employer reported significant efforts to address these concerns such as accepting non-English applications and the use of translating software on as much communication as possible. Some employers reported successes in establishing hiring relationships with specific immigrant communities.

SWOT ANALYSIS

The Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) Analysis is a combinational analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data collection as performed in the three phases.

S
- Existing educator-employer partnerships in Licking County, (e.g., COMP manufacturing sector partnership, Ariel Corp./C-TEC Adult Education apprenticeship program with area high schools)
- Committed and established workforce development infrastructure
- Cradle to PhD education options located within the county

W
- Little diversity in resident population
- Educator-employer partnerships do not exist at scale
- No uniform employability skills curriculum or assessment across education and training providers

O
- Willingness of employers to build relationships with education and training providers
- Building on successes of existing sector partnership, expanding into new sectors
- Renewed interest in and increased funding for upskilling and reskilling workers because of COVID-19

T
- Preponderance of low-skill warehousing, retail, and food service occupations that do not track to clearly articulated career pathways
- Proximity of major metropolitan area that offers higher wages and opportunities in most industries
- Uncertainty of workforce/employment conditions after COVID-19

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based upon the findings of the LMI report, employer survey, and input session above, recommendations for Licking County have been outlined in three key areas: Talent Recruitment, Skills Development, and Talent Retention. The purpose of these recommendations is to develop a skills-centered approach to talent development in Licking County that builds a robust talent pipeline for business, while also increasing access to quality jobs for workers.

Talent Recruitment

While the overall population of Licking County is expected to experience growth in the next five years, Licking County can further maximize its existing talent pools by promoting a skills-based hiring approach with employers and focusing on the recruitment of candidates from diverse talent pools.

Skills-Based Hiring

The disconnect between jobseeker qualifications and employer requirements is experienced across sectors, employer size, and geography in Licking County. This results in a familiar story of jobseekers going unemployed or underemployed, while employers report that they are unable to find the requisite talent for their open positions.[1] While the talent divide is a multi-faceted challenge, skills-based sourcing, hiring, and development provides a comprehensive and objective way to identify qualified candidates and maximize a region's existing talent pool. Research shows that the use of skills-based hiring practices has positive outcomes for employers, jobseekers, and the workforce system.

Employers

Through better job matching, employers see a larger, more diverse talent pool that is objectively assessed as qualified for their openings. In addition to providing a more robust talent pool, it can provide cost savings through decreased time-to-fill open positions, reduced turn-over, and decreased time to full productivity.

At Mercy Health Medical Systems in Grand Rapids, Michigan there was a desire to improve metrics like turnover, time-to-fill, retention, and diversity so they turned to an evidence-based selection process that "goes beyond standard hiring procedures that consider certification, experience, and performance in standard interviews."

The Mercy Health Regional Talent Acquisition team fills over 3,100 positions per year, with more than 1,200 internal transfers and 1,900 external hires, and they track and report detailed performance metrics each month. Using 2010-2011 baseline data, Mercy Health has achieved the following key performance improvements:

- First-year turnover was reduced from a baseline of 25.3% down as low as 19.66% in 2013
- Time to fill was reduced from a baseline of 37 days to 31 days.

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[1] https://www.knack.it/docs/MGI_Online_talent_A_labor_market_that_works_Full_report_June_2015.pdf

- Hiring diversity (non-white new hires) increased from an 18% baseline to 38% in 2016. By comparison, the West Michigan region is 21.6% non-white.
- Increased workforce diversity is up from 13.4% non-white in 2010 to 20% in 2016.
- Finally, there is the overall financial impact. Having calculated the average cost of turnover for an individual employee at $26,769, reduction in turnover alone has led to significant savings.[2]

Jobseekers

Education credentials have long been the blunt instrument that employers have used when determining jobseeker fit for open positions and it has had the effect of artificially limiting the talent pool[3]. In a place like Licking County, where only about 34% of the population has an associate degree or higher, educational credentials can keep whole career paths and advancement opportunities out of reach for local workers.[4]

In a skills-based approach, jobseekers have increased access to opportunities because they have an objective way to quantify their skills and abilities for employers. With the continually increasing costs of education and the general stagnation of wages[5], this allows jobseekers to be intentional about their educational investments, rather than spending time and money on degrees they may not need.

Workforce & Education System

A workforce system aligned with skills-based hiring could better allocate resources to strengthen efficiencies between career-readiness providers, adult education, the public workforce system, and industry groups. This type of demand driven alignment can ensure that employers are effectively signaling the required skills for a job, education and training providers are able to prepare workers, and workers are empowered to communicate their proficiency in the required skills[6].

In Western Michigan, a network of workforce, education, and economic development organizations came together to form the Talent Innovation Network of West Michigan (TalNet) to accelerate economic mobility in the region and improve the quality of the talent development system through enhanced education, training, and job selection processes for workers. This regional-based system focuses on five key areas of a skills centered talent development system – evidence-based hiring, career pathways, social emotional skills, job analysis, and diversity and inclusion. Through TalNet, 25 of West Michigan's leading employers have adopted a skills-based hiring approach and are reporting an improvement in the quality of hires, reduction in turnover, and increased diversity[7].

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[2] https://nationalfund.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Mercy-Case-Study_Final_2017-08-02.pdf
[3] https://www.hbs.edu/managing-the-future-of-work/Documents/dismissed-by-degrees.pdf
[4] See Table 4: *Educational Attainment, 2019*, in Appendix A: Labor Market Information Analysis.
[5] https://www.forbes.com/sites/camilomaldonado/2018/07/24/price-of-college-increasing-almost-8-times-faster-than-wages/?sh=60f2234866c1
[6] https://hopestreetgroup.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/HSG18-008_SOS_Program-Summary_FIN_Online.pdf
[7] http://www.talnet.org/

Diverse & Non-Traditional Talent

To maximize its existing talent pool, Licking County should develop concerted strategies to recruit and hire racially diverse workers and individuals from non-traditional talent pools who are not currently connected to work or school or who have faced systemic barriers to quality employment in the past.

Open Skills Network defines skills-based hiring as "hiring focused on a candidate's verified skills rather than other subjective criteria. Skills-based hiring can help employers access talent that is generally overlooked by traditional hiring methods, such as people of color, women, people with disabilities, people with criminal records, people who have paused their careers to care for family members, and people who lack a four-year degree."[8] By its very definition, skills-based hiring can begin to expand and diversify the local pool of available talent, but it must be done in parallel with other strategies that position a diverse talent pool as win-win for both business and workers.

Racial Diversity

Licking County is a relatively homogenous region where nearly 90% of residents identify as white. Presenting a stark contrast is nearby Franklin County where only 62% of the residents identify as white. While on its face, these types of demographic numbers may seem separate from the talent issues being faced by employers in Licking County, they are in fact, very much intertwined.

During TPMA-led input sessions, workers, employers, and workforce development organizations alike detailed struggles with racial diversity in Licking County. From the worker perspective, workers of color described feeling like they stick out in Licking County because of their skin color. They also detailed friends and family being surprised that they decided to stay in Licking County given the opportunity and diversity of nearby communities. From the employer perspective, there was a shared view that diversity was an issue, but few had attempted any concerted strategy to address it. Those who had made efforts felt as if they had hit a dead-end. Numerous companies stated that they would be interested in programs or guidance about hiring a more diverse workforce. This contrasts with what was reported by regional workforce development providers who felt as though racial diversity was a taboo conversation among workforce and economic development leadership – particularly when it comes to working with employer partners.

Talent from Non-Traditional Talent Pools

In order to increase its available talent pool, Licking County cannot focus solely on the attraction of new talent, but must also retain its current talent and tap into nontraditional talent that is unemployed, underemployed, or not currently connected to education. Examples of such groups include those with criminal backgrounds, individuals with disabilities, and Opportunity Youth.

Opportunity Youth, often known as Disconnected Youth, are young people ages 16-24 who are neither enrolled in school nor connected to the labor market. Prior to the pandemic, 1-in-9

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[8] https://www.openskillsnetwork.org/faq

young people were categorized as Opportunity Youth and that numbers soared as high as 40% when considering young people who are weakly attached to work or school[9]. Opportunity Youth are also often disproportionately people of color. Furthermore, given what we know about young people being the hardest hit and last to recover from recessions, it is expected that this number will only rise because of the COVID-19 pandemic.[10]

To successfully reconnect Opportunity Youth, Licking County should focus on community collaborations that remove barriers and align education, workforce systems, and employers along clearly defined career pathways. Across multiple input sessions, participants identified non-college bound seniors and recent graduates of technical training, two-year, and four-year degree programs as being ripe for such an intervention.

For non-college bound high school students, focus group participants expressed concern along two main issues. The first was that the K-12 system has limited engagement with employers and as a result, in-demand careers that do not require a college degree are often invisible to young people. Compounding this is a perception by parents and others that college is the only option after high school. This mentality undermines the importance of non-college career pathways for high school students. The second issue uncovered during the input sessions was a disconnection between the K-12 system and the young adult workforce system. The importance of a warm hand-off between education and workforce development providers cannot be overstated when supporting young people as they navigate this critical time between the completion of their formal education and work.

Another source of existing talent that Licking County should plan to tap into more effectively are those individuals with criminal backgrounds and the formerly incarcerated. Due to the systemic mass incarceration of Americans, one in three adults in the United States have a criminal record and because of the stigma and collateral sanctions associated with criminal records, nearly 75 percent of formerly incarcerated individuals are unemployed a year after re-entering society. From the economic perspective, a lack of stable employment is a leading indicator of recidivism and an ongoing dependence on public benefits. From an employer perspective, this is a robust talent pool which research has found to demonstrate higher rates of retention and company loyalty that is just sitting on the sidelines of the labor market.

Regions that have been successful in maximizing the talent pool of individuals with criminal backgrounds and the formerly incarcerated have deployed strategies deliberately aimed at creating and sustaining fair chance hiring practices. Three such foundational strategies for effective fair chance hiring outlined by the American Civil Liberties Union include banning the box, avoiding negligent hiring liability, and conducting accurate background checks. A campaign to "ban the box" asks employers to eliminate criminal record questions on job applications to encourage employers to eliminate blanket exclusions of individuals with criminal records. By moving this inquiry to later in the hiring process, hiring managers are forced to grapple with determining whether the offense is relevant to an individual's ability to do the job. The second strategy is shielding employers from negligent hiring liability when they

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[9] https://aspencommunitysolutions.org/who-are-opportunity-youth/
[10] https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/BMPP_Srvy_UnemploymentYouth_July20.pdf

hire individuals with criminal backgrounds. The current system as it stands today, allows employers to refuse to consider applicants with criminal records for fear that they might commit crimes on the job and the employer will be held responsible. Simple, common sense liability protections for employers can help to alleviate these fears and increase access to jobs for those with criminal backgrounds. In support of the previous strategy, the third is around conducting accurate background checks. With nearly 90% of criminal background checks including at least one error, it is essential that they contract with a qualified agency and request only information that is pertinent to the job at hand[11].

Skills Development

As described in the LMI report, Licking County has several growing industries with good jobs that include pathways to family sustaining wages. However, when reviewing the top occupations in Licking County, many workers are in historical vulnerable industries with limited advancement opportunities such as retail, food service, and home healthcare support. Licking County has many of the assets in place to deliver high quality skill development services, however, it must replicate and scale these strategies to ensure that employers have a qualified talent pool and workers do not become stagnated in low-wage work.

Sector Strategies & Career Pathways

Sector-based strategies are an employer-driven model for aligning resources and promoting collaboration among educational institutions, workforce service providers, and community-based organizations to meet the needs of business. They offer a way to simultaneously meet business' need for a robust and qualified workforce, while also expanding access to the skills that lead to jobs with family sustaining wages for workers.

Sector strategies can also provide education and training systems an important avenue for employer engagement and advocacy. Through input sessions with the K-12 system, it was identified that they struggle with regular, meaningful engagement with businesses and when they can engage, they often find themselves in the position of balancing business needs for work-based skills with the academic guidelines imposed by the state. As a partner in a regional sector strategy, the K-12 system will have opportunities to engage directly with industry and can join them to speak with a unified voice at the regional and state level about the mismatch between industry skill priorities and local K-12 curriculum[12][13]. Successful sector strategies that include K-12 and have resulted in regional and state-wide curriculum changes have proliferated in recent years[14][15].

Project Prepare, Licking County
C-TEC of Licking County's Project Prepare represents a promising adjustment to local curriculum, informed by industry, that will help build the manufacturing talent pipeline in the

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[11] https://www.aclu.org/sites/default/files/field_document/060917-trone-reportweb_0.pdf

[12] https://www.ohiomfg.com/wp-content/uploads/Industry_Sector_Partnerships_What_They_Are_and_Why_They_Work.pdf

[13] https://www.gssaweb.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Best-Practices-in-K-12-Business-Partnerships-1.pdf

[14] https://makingohio.com/partners/case-studies/

[15] https://www.successbound.ohio.gov/Promising-Practices

region by introducing high school students to opportunities available in the manufacturing and skilled trades. This program offers purposeful career exploration opportunities that include in-class activities, tours of local manufacturing facilities, and an introduction to manufacturing career pathways. Project Prepare is in nine schools, reaches more than 500 students each year and more than 20 Licking County manufacturers have signed on as supporters. This strategy shows promise that could be scaled and replicated across industries in Licking County.[16]

Learning Blade, Making Ohio
Developed by The Ohio Manufacturer's Association, *Making Ohio* is an educational tool to help highlight and promote manufacturing jobs in Ohio. In response to STEM and manufacturing sectors' struggles to attract talent, Learning Blade was designed to begin exposing students to these industries at an early age. This curriculum system can be used as a self-paced activity in the classroom or as a complement to project-based activities. Since its launch in Ohio, over 100 schools have integrated the Learning Blade system into their curriculum.[17]

The foundation of a sector strategy should be built upon clearly identified career pathways in targeted industries. A career pathway is a series of well-connected and easily navigated education, training credentials and support services that build increasing skills and competency as informed by industry needs. Career pathways should have multiple entry and exit points to quickly upskill and advance workers.
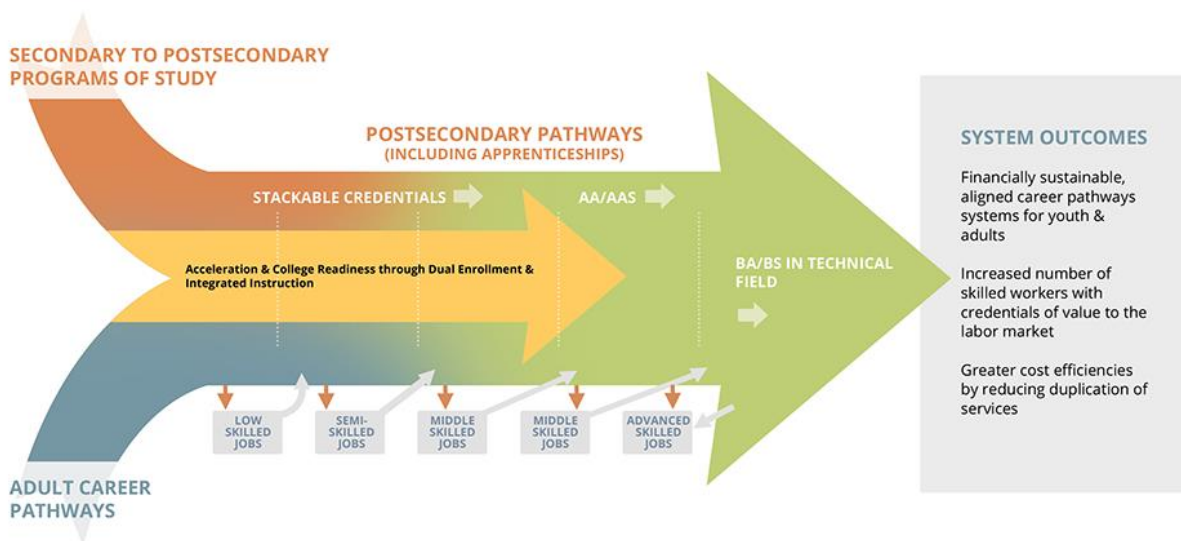
[18]

Using qualitative and quantitative data gleaned through the employer surveys, input sessions, and LMI data report, TPMA, in partnership with Licking County, plans to conduct an analysis and develop career pathways for Licking County in 2021. The career pathways will be developed for the following targeted sectors: Advanced Manufacturing, Business Services,

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[16] https://www.ohiomfg.com/communities/workforce/case-study-exposing-high-school-juniors-seniors-to-manufacturing-careers/
[17] https://makingohio.com/wp-content/uploads/Case_Studies2/MakingOhio_LearningBlade_CaseStudy.pdf
[18] https://cte.ed.gov/initiatives/career-pathways-systems

Distribution and Warehousing, and Healthcare. The development of these career pathways can serve as a launch pad for sector strategies by offering an opportunity to vet pathways with industry and build coalition with employer champions.

In its *Toolkit for Developing High Performing Industry Partnerships*, The National Fund for Workforce Solutions outlines five characteristics for a successful sector strategy – employer and industry engagement, stakeholder engagement, data informed strategy and continuous learning, operational capacity, and race equity and inclusion.[19] Licking County possesses a number of these characteristics and for many reasons is well-positioned for the development and implementation of sector strategies. First, sector strategies are not new to Licking County as it has seen a successful example of this type of employer-led organizing through its work with the Central Ohio Manufacturing Partnership. Second, unlike so many other regions, Licking County is fortunate in that it has a strong network of economic development and workforce development organizations and a full continuum of education institutions from K-12 through the graduate level. Given that resources are finite, sector strategies are an effective way to galvanize these partners around specific opportunity sectors. Of these characteristics outlined in the toolkit, the greatest limiting factor to the size and scope of Licking County's sector strategy efforts will be operational capacity.

Work-Based Learning

A common thread throughout the employer survey and the input sessions conducted by TPMA staff was the need to align the talent development system and its resources around a shared framework of sector-specific work-based learning opportunities. This was articulated in various ways from individual stakeholder groups. For the K-12 system, it was expressed as the need to balance rigorous academic guidelines imposed by the state with the development of real-time workplace skills that regional employers require. For employers, it was expressed as a frustration with current work-based learning opportunities and the persistent issues of entry-level employee churn, a shortage of middle-skill workers, and the desire to quickly upskill and advance entry-level workers.

A comprehensive work-based learning strategy connected to sector-specific career pathways brings value for educators, workers, and employers and is an important piece of a skills-centered talent development system. It can provide workers, in particular young workers and workers of color, with the important signposts and roadmap necessary to successfully transition from the K-12 system to the workforce[20]. JFF's Center for Apprenticeship and Work-Based Learning defines work-based learning "as a student or worker completing meaningful jobs and tasks in a workplace that develop readiness for work, knowledge, and skills that support entry or advancement in a particular field." While a work-based learning framework should be tailored to the specific needs of Licking County, JFF has developed a continuum for skill development that can be applied across a broad range of workers and learners – K-12 students, young adults, college students, adult jobseekers, and incumbent workers.

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[19] https://nationalfund.org/industry-partnership-toolkit/
[20] https://www.brookings.edu/research/work-based-learning-can-advance-equity-and-opportunity-for-americas-young-people/

CAREER **EXPERIENCE**
SPECIFIC SKILLS | PERMANENT EMPLOYMENT

Engages individuals as paid workers to gain specific skills, in conjunction with related classroom or lab instruction, in a particular industry or occupation.

Models include:

- Registered Apprenticeships
- Youth Apprenticeship
- Other Forms of Apprenticeships
- Transitional Jobs
- On-the-Job Training
- Work-Based Courses

CAREER **EXPOSURE**
INDUSTRY INTRO | SHORT-TERM

Brings participants to workplaces for short periods of time with the goal of gaining introductory information about an industry and associated occupations.

Models include:

- Job Shadows
- Company Tours
- Mentoring
- Simulations
- Information
- Interviews

CAREER **ENGAGEMENT**
BASIC TECHNICAL & EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS

Provides extended opportunities for participants to increase their knowledge of an identified field of interest and gain employability skills and some entry-level technical knowledge or skills.

Models include:

- Internships
- Pre-Apprenticeships
- Apprenticeship Readiness
- Cooperative Education
- Service Learning

WORK-BASED LEARNING

PREPARATION FOR **WORK-BASED LEARNING**

CAREER **EXPLORATION**
AWARENESS | FOUNDATION | PREPARATION

Builds awareness of careers. Career exploration activities do not take place in workplaces and are not work-based learning, but provide a foundation for work-based learning and prepare participants to make the most of opportunities.

Models include:

- Career Fairs
- Industry Projects
- Interest Inventories
- Mock Interviews

[21]

Of note in this framework for Licking County should be the Career Exploration piece which serves as the foundation upon which the rest of the work-based learning framework is built. Based on the results of the employer survey which placed an increased emphasis on workplace

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[21] https://www.jff.org/resources/work-based-learning-framework/

skills over academic skills and the ongoing employer demand for qualified talent, it will be important that work-based learning is embedded early and often into the K-12 system so that young people can make the most of work-based learning opportunities in the future. This will require effort on not just the part of education and workforce development organizations to develop these opportunities, but also employers who must find ways to engage with these systems to build their talent pipelines.

Employability Skill Development

When describing the lack of qualified, available workers, employers regularly cite employability skills (soft skills) development as a key contributing factor and employers in Licking County were no exception. The deficiency of individual employability skills is often a drum beat for employers and while there are strategies that can be undertaken to improve employability skills, it is critical to do so with the understanding that employability skills are not acquired in a vacuum. In many cases, they are a manifestation of the systemic racial and economic inequalities that underpin the American labor market. Characteristics often pointed to as employability skill deficiencies such as absenteeism, tardiness, and poor interpersonal skills are in fact the symptoms of an economic system that continually under resources education, public transportation, childcare, healthcare, etc. Thus, when embarking on the design and implementation of employability skill development strategies, particularly in conjunction with employers, it is important to do so with that systemic context in mind.[22]

There are a myriad of approaches that can be taken to employability skills development with countless curricula having been developed for delivery through both in-person and virtual classroom settings.[23] While these curricula have varying levels of efficacy, work-based learning has proven to be one of the most effective avenues for employability skill development. A successful work-based learning program can cultivate positive relationships that support growth and employability skill development, build social capital that provides an employment safety net, and generate opportunities for hands-on learning which exposes students and workers to new environments and norms.[24]

Another approach to employability skills development is to recognize the systemic barriers that keep workers, particularly low-wage workers from being successful in work and school and provide services that support them until they advance into occupations with family sustaining wages. WorkAdvance is an example of such an intervention that combines sector-specific career readiness, technical training, and job placement with ongoing career coaching and supportive services to improve outcomes for low-wage workers. When implemented in Northeast Ohio, workers were 4 times more likely to complete technical training and nearly 50% more likely to be working in a targeted in-demand sector when compared to participants in a control group.[25]

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[22] https://www.raceforward.org/system/files/pdf/reports/RaceForward_WorkforceDevelopment_BeyondTrainingAndTheSkillsGap_FullReport_2019.pdf
[23] https://jfforg-prod-new.s3.amazonaws.com/media/documents/Annotated_Employability_Resources_Guide.pdf
[24] https://www.brookings.edu/research/work-based-learning-can-advance-equity-and-opportunity-for-americas-young-people/
[25] https://www.towardsemployment.org/wp-content/uploads/WorkAdvance_LocalReport_112216.pdf

Talent Retention

Job Quality

Throughout input sessions, Licking County employers reported difficulty not only finding talent, but also in retaining talent. Employers perceived that workers, particularly entry-level staff, were job hopping and lacked a sense of loyalty and dedication to the job. This constant churn of employees at the entry level makes for costly turnover expenses[26] related to recruitment, onboarding, and training and makes it difficult to fill middle-skill jobs with employees who have been upskilled. Further exacerbating this situation is the fact that many companies reported not having a retention strategy and, in some cases, the strategy is to be constantly hiring at the entry-level to keep up with the turnover.

While there is much work to be done to align education, workforce development, and training systems to help employers solve for these retention-related issues as they relate to skills development, regions also have a role to play in ensuring that the quality of jobs offered by local employers are competitive and meet the needs of workers so that they *want to stay* at their current workplace.

When describing job quality strategies, conversations often default to wages and to be sure the foundation of a quality job includes wages that are sufficient to cover basic household expenses. However, wages are just one tool for advancing job quality and there is a kaleidoscope of other characteristics that can help determine the quality of a job. The National Fund for Workforce Solutions organizes these characteristics across three areas of their Job Design Framework: foundational, support, and opportunity[27]. Every element of the framework may not be relevant for every job, but the widespread adoption of these types of quality job characteristics can have positive impacts for workers and businesses alike. For instance, workers in low-quality jobs are less likely to be satisfied and more likely to be actively looking for another job when compared workers in high quality jobs. This shows a direct correlation between the quality of the job and the retention and productivity being experienced by the employer.[28] Some elements of job quality require capital, including improved wages and benefits, however, many of the elements of a high-quality job cited by workers are low or no cost including predictable scheduling, regular pay, and career advancement opportunities. [29]

Without an effective job quality strategy to complement improvements to the talent development system, employers will continue to find that they struggle to find, keep, and advance the requisite talent needed to meet their business needs.

[26] https://assets.aspeninstitute.org/content/uploads/2019/01/Cost-of-Turnover-Tool.pdf?_ga=2.59996462.227523107.1606170011-1884580553.1603386277
[27] https://nationalfund.org/our-solutions/make-jobs-better-for-competitive-advantage/job-quality-resource-center/
[28] https://www.gallup.com/education/267590/great-jobs-lumina-gates-omidyar-gallup-report-2019.aspx
[29] https://www.gallup.com/education/309911/characteristics-good-jobs-low-income-workers.aspx

CONCLUSION

A region's ability to connect workers with good quality jobs and employers with a skilled, qualified workforce is central to its economic vitality. With a cradle to PhD education system located within the county, a robust network of workforce development, economic development, and community-based organizations supporting both workers and employers, Licking County has the talent development system assets to rise to the challenge of further aligning the talent development system that equips workers with the requisite skills to meet the needs of employers with quality jobs.

Building on its strengths, lessons learned from across the country, and local LMI, survey, and focus group data, Licking County can take several steps to center skills and skills development at the heart of every stage of the talent development system:

Talent Recruitment

- Increase immediate access to skilled talent by promoting a skills-based approach to talent acquisition
- Maximize the existing talent pool by actively recruiting from racially diverse and non-traditional talent pools including opportunity youth, individuals with criminal backgrounds, and individuals with disabilities

Skills Development

- Address the sector-specific skill development needs of business through the creation of sector-specific strategies that align to targeted career pathway opportunities
- Promote a shared language and framework for work-based learning opportunities that fosters lifelong learning for residents
- Develop a nuanced approach to employability skills development that balances the need for skill development with the realities of low-wage work

Talent Retention

- Enhance the success of the talent development system by prioritizing the design and implementation of innovative job quality strategies with employers

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Labor Market Information Analysis
Appendix B: Employer Survey Analysis
Appendix C: Stakeholder Input Sessions Summary

APPENDIX A: LABOR MARKET INFORMATION ANALYSIS

Introduction

The following labor market information analysis details past, current, and projected trends in Licking County. By understanding the economic landscape of Licking County, GROW Licking County Community Improvement Corporation, OhioMeansJobs Licking County, and the Licking County Educational Service Center (ESC) can develop career pathways that accurately reflect Licking County's labor market. This analysis will highlight county demographics, emerging industries and occupations, earnings, labor force statistics, educational attainment, and training requirements.

Data was collected from a number of public and proprietary sources including Economic Modeling Specialists, Inc. (Emsi), Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, American Community Survey, Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA), Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, and the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

This analysis is an objective report that aims to describe the economic landscape of Licking County by identifying:

1. Population characteristics
2. Labor force statistics including employment, unemployment, and labor force participation
3. In-demand and emerging industries, as well as industries in decline
4. In-demand occupations
5. Educational attainment and training requirements
6. Job posting trends by companies across sectors and occupations

The labor market data collected in this analysis does not factor recent economic challenges due to the novel coronavirus, unless otherwise stated. The most complete data run was the third quarter of 2020, capturing data for the entire 2019 calendar year and prior. Unemployment in Licking County was historically low prior to 2020, but challenges were still present. The reader should review the data in this analysis in the context of "what next?". How can historical trends in the labor market forecast future changes? What current regional factors are influencing Licking County's economic growth? Are these factors subject to change due to the current economic crisis? How significant is that change?

Demographics

Over 43% of Licking County's population is between the working ages of 20 to 54 years of age. As detailed in Table 1, individuals between the ages of 35 to 54 represent over a quarter of the county's population, however, individuals 55 years and older represent 30.8% of the county's population. As the older population (55 to 64 years of age) prepares to exit the workforce due to retirement, Licking County is well positioned to retain its younger workforce. Over the last five years, Licking County has experienced a 4.5% population growth and is projected to experience an addition 3.5% growth over the next five years.

Table 1: Population by Age, 2019

	2019 Population	2019 % of Cohort	Change (2014-2019)		Projected Change (2019-2024)	
Under 5 years	10,783	6.1%	560	5.5%	1,014	9.4%
5 to 19 years	34,936	19.7%	375	1.1%	757	2.2%
20 to 34 years	32,079	18.1%	1,948	6.5%	537	1.7%
35 to 54 years	44,721	25.3%	(1,223)	(2.7%)	332	0.7%
55 to 64 years	24,806	14.0%	1,934	8.5%	(995)	(4.0%)
65+ years	29,742	16.8%	4,051	15.8%	4,477	15.1%
Total	177,067	100.0%	7,645	4.5%	6,122	3.5%

Source: Emsi 2020.3

The population in Licking County has consistently increased in recent years, as detailed in Figure 1. The largest single year increase in population occurred in 2018 when the county experienced a 1.21% increase, or +2,098. Since 2009, Licking County has experienced a total population increase of 11,783.

Figure 1: Total Population, 2009-2019
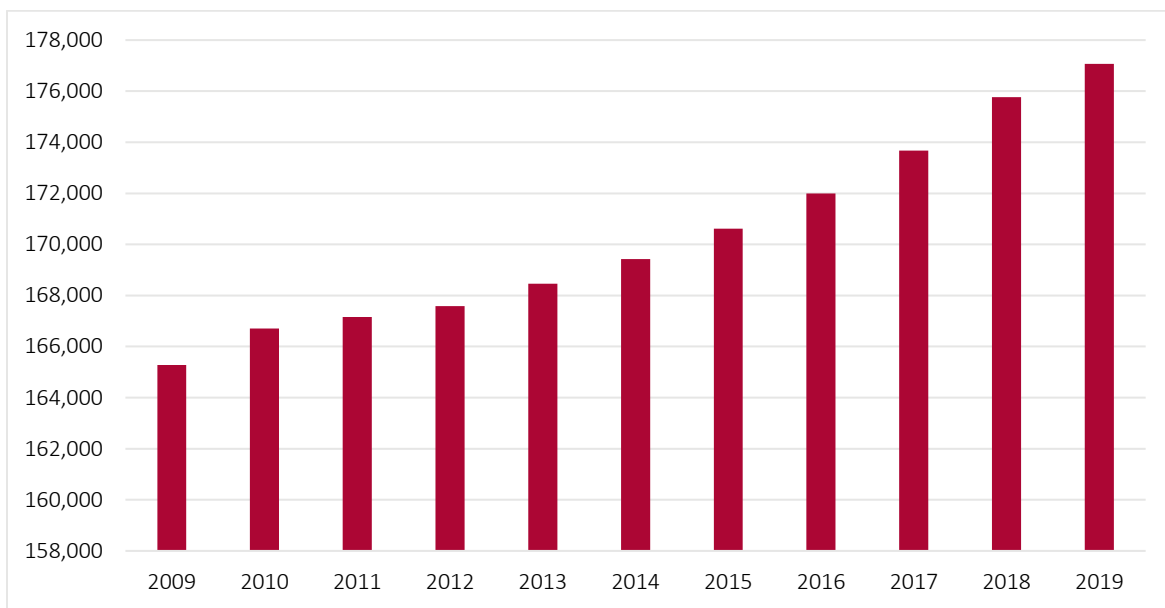
Source: Emsi 2020.3

A majority of the population in Licking County is White, followed by Black, Two or More Races, Hispanic, Asian, American Indian or Alaskan Native, and Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander. The greatest percentage change of any cohort over the last five years was Asian (+126%) and projections over the next five years suggest the greatest percentage change of any cohort will be experienced by Hispanics (+49.1%).

Although the county's population remains more than 89% White, increases in diverse populations could indicate a need for more diverse community resources to best serve those populations.

Table 2: Population by Race/Ethnicity

Race/Ethnicity	2019 Population	2019 % of Cohort	2014-2019 % Change	2019-2024 % Change
White	158,519	89.5%	2.1%	1.8%
Black	7,157	4.0%	16.4%	10.7%
Two or More Races	3,811	2.2%	17.0%	11.9%
Hispanic	3,655	2.1%	30.3%	49.1%
Asian	3,387	1.7%	125.5%	16.4%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	466	0.3%	4.7%	3.9%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	71	0.0%	77.5%	38.0%

Source: Emsi 2020.3

The poverty rate in Licking County is lower in comparison to the state and nation. At 17.2%, Licking County's poverty rate is also lower than five of its surrounding counties. The only two counties with a lower poverty rate are Fairfield County (12.2%) and Delaware County (4.7%). Median household income in Licking County exceeds the state by $6,604 and exceeds the nation by $778. Fairfield County ($66,175) and Delaware County ($104,322) both exceed Licking County's median household income, respectively.

Table 3: Poverty Rate & Median Household Income

Area	Poverty Rate	Median Household Income
Licking County, OH	17.2%	$62,715
Coshocton County, OH	24.8%	$44,491
Delaware County, OH	4.7%	$104,322
Fairfield County, OH	12.2%	$66,175
Franklin County, OH	23.5%	$58,762
Knox County, OH	21.5%	$55,131
Muskingum County, OH	23.3%	$45,276
Perry County, OH	26.3%	$48,811
Ohio	19.5%	$56,111
United States	18.0%	$61,937

Source: U.S. Census, 2018 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates, Table DP03

A smaller portion of the population in Licking County has attained education beyond a two-year degree than the state and the nation. Individuals with a two-year degree and beyond in Licking County account for 33.7%, which is 1.3 percentage points less than the state and 4.7 percentage points less than the nation. Licking County exceeds state and national figures among those with an educational attainment of a high school diploma.

Table 4: Educational Attainment, 2019

| Education Level	2019 County Pop.	2019 % of County Pop.	2019 % of OH Pop.	2019 % of U.S. Pop.
Less Than 9th Grade	3,259	2.7%	3.5%	6.5%
9th Grade to 12th Grade	9,273	7.7%	7.3%	6.9%
High School Diploma	42,985	35.7%	33.9%	27.5%
Some College	24,326	20.2%	20.3%	20.6%
Associate's Degree	10,482	8.7%	8.2%	8.1%
Bachelor's Degree	19,754	16.4%	16.7%	18.8%
Graduate Degree & Higher	10,339	8.6%	10.1%	11.5%

Source: Emsi 2020.3

Labor Force

The labor force in Licking County has increased consecutively each year since 2012. Between 2009-2019, labor force participation peaked in 2019 (90,521) and hit its lowest mark in 2009 (82,964). In 2010, the county experienced the greatest single year increase in labor force participation (+4,587).

Figure 2: Labor Force, 2009-2019
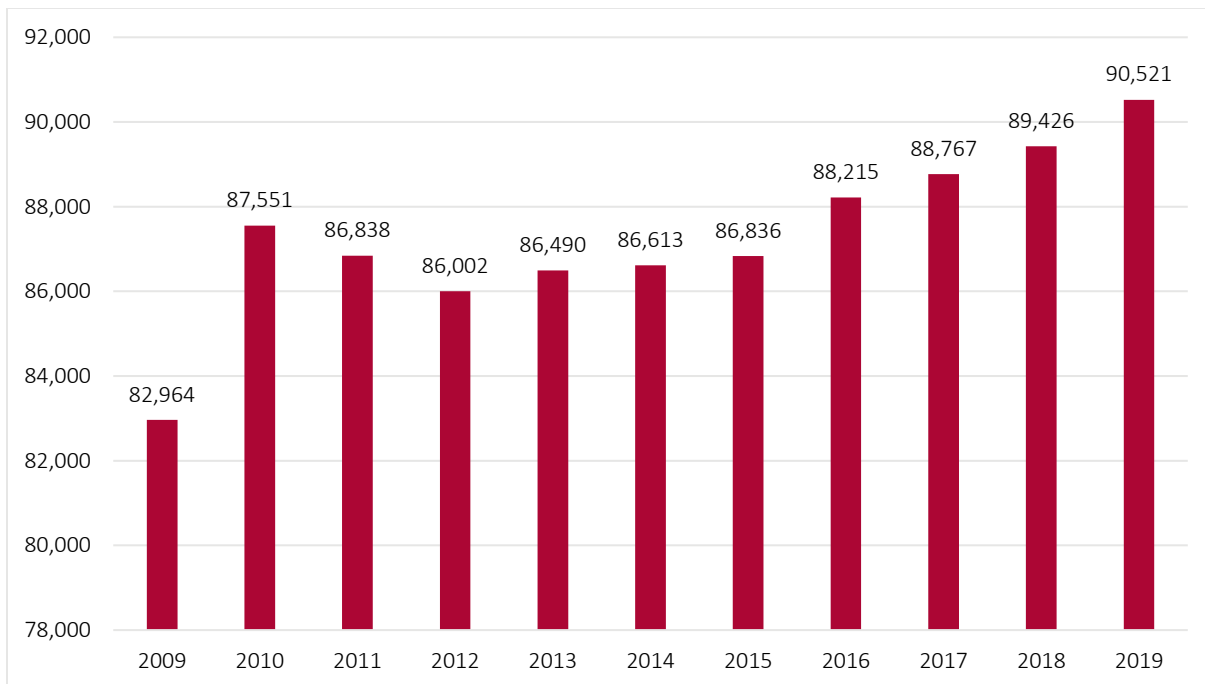
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS)

Average annual employment in Licking County has increased consecutively each year to its current peak in 2019 of 87,159. In 2019, the difference in the number of people in the labor force and those employed was at its smallest figure of 3,362. The difference between labor force and employment was at its highest mark in 2010 when the number of employed persons was over 8,400 less than those in the labor force. During this time, Licking County and much of the nation was reeling back from the economic impact of the Great Recession.

Table 5: Labor Force vs. Employed Persons in Licking County, 2009-2019

| Year	Labor Force	Employment	Difference
2009	82,964	75,014	7,950
2010	87,551	79,133	8,418
2011	86,838	79,550	7,288
2012	86,002	80,186	5,816
2013	86,490	80,506	5,984
2014	86,613	82,052	4,561
2015	86,836	82,968	3,868
2016	88,215	84,323	3,892
2017	88,767	84,997	3,770
2018	89,426	85,887	3,539
2019	90,521	87,159	3,362

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS)

The average annual unemployment rate in Licking County has decreased consecutively since 2013 to its current low of 3.7% in 2019. Licking County's unemployment rate over the last ten years mirrors that of the state and nation. Following the Great Recession in 2009, unemployment rates in Licking County and Ohio declined until 2013 when they inched slightly higher than the year prior. At its peak, unemployment in Licking County was 7,950 in 2009 and at its lowest in 2019 (3,362). During the 2020 COVID-19 epidemic, unemployment skyrocketed from 4,065 in March to 11,532 in April. That figure has dropped to 8,240 in June.[30]

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[30] These figures in the context of COVID-19 have been Seasonally Adjusted.

Figure 3: Average Annual Unemployment Rates, 2009-2019
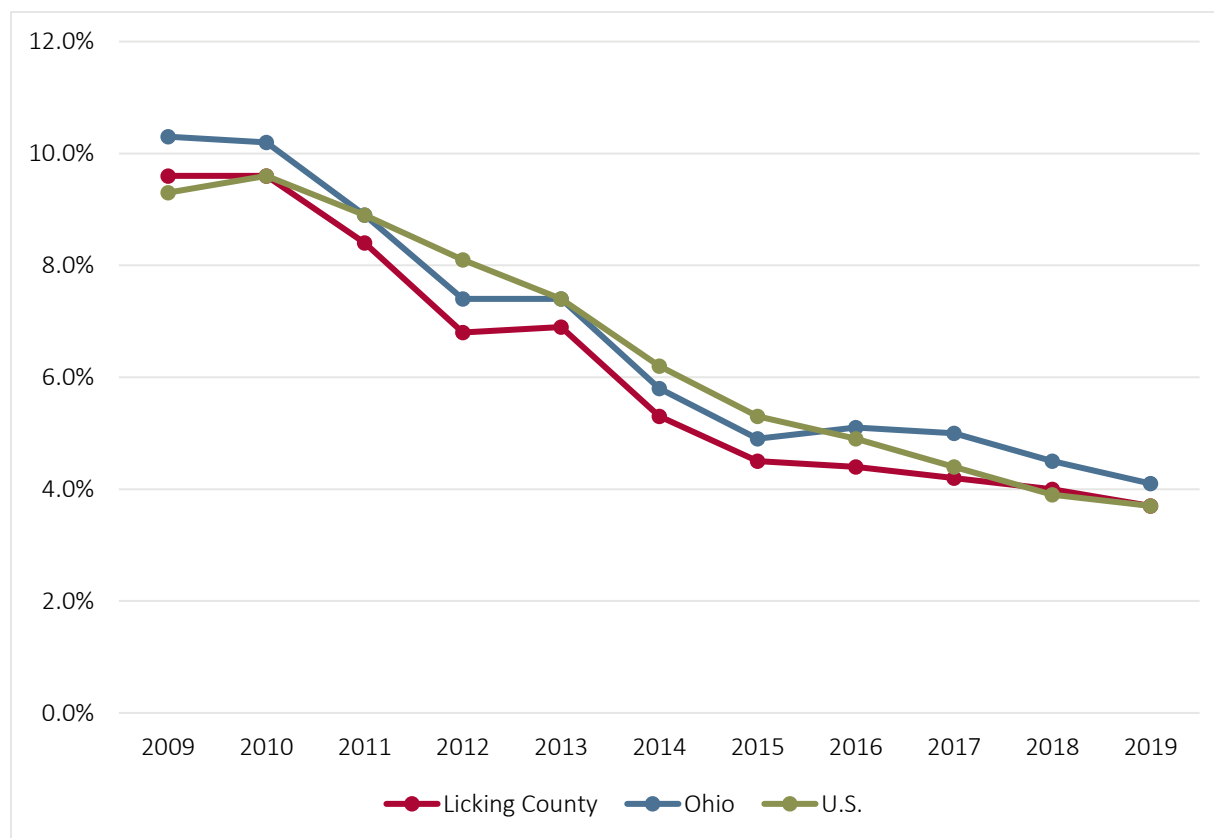
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS)

Analyzing the commuting patterns of inbound and outbound workers can give a clearer understanding of the living and working opportunities in the region. For example, if a region has more outbound than inbound workers, the region likely has fewer or less desirable job opportunities. On the other hand, if it has more inbound than outbound workers, the region's jobs are usually more numerous and high quality than surrounding areas.
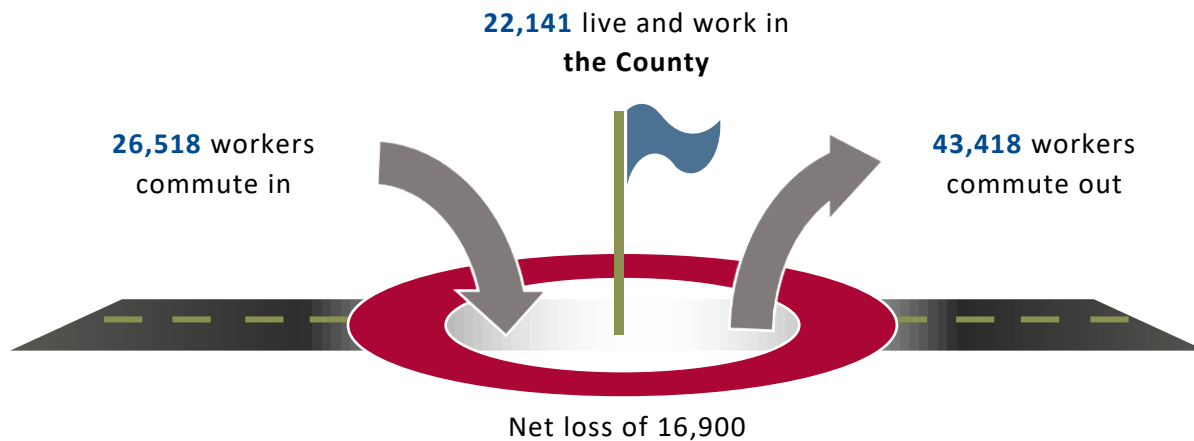
In Licking County, over 26,500 people commute into the county to work and over 43,400 people commute out of the region for work, making the region a net exporter of 16,900 workers. Nearly 22,150 people both live and work in the region.

The largest share of jobs in the region are held by residents from Licking County (45.5%), Franklin County (16.9%), Fairfield County (5.4%), Muskingum County (5.0%), Knox County (2.8%), Perry County (2.7%), and Delaware County (1.9%). A majority of the residents in Licking County work in the City of Newark (47.0%), City of Heath (19.4%), City of Pataskala (6.4%), and the Village of Hebron (6.4%).[31]

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[31] OnTheMap, 2017 (most recent available data as of 08/2020).

Figure 4: Commuting Patterns In/Out of Licking County

22,141 live and work in
the County

26,518 workers
commute in

43,418 workers
commute out

Net loss of 16,900

Industry Analysis

An examination of industries at the 2-digit NAICS (North American Industry Classification System) is detailed in Figure 5. In 2019, Government represented the largest share of jobs in Licking County (9,190 jobs), followed by Transportation and Warehousing (8,314 jobs); Manufacturing (7,618 jobs); and Retail Trade (7,582 jobs). Transportation and Warehousing experienced a significant increase in jobs between 2014 and 2019, accounting for an increase of 6,684 jobs among those five years. Projections into the next five years indicate an increase of over 3,700 jobs for Transportation and Warehousing.

Retail Trade is the only sector among the top ten sectors in Licking County that does not experience growth from 2014-2019 and again in 2019-2024. Projections indicate that over the next five years, Retail Trade will experience a slight decline of 379 jobs. Only three sectors represent continual decline in jobs: Finance and Insurance; Information; and Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction.

Figure 5: Licking County Industry Mix 2014-2019-2024, 2-Digit NAICS
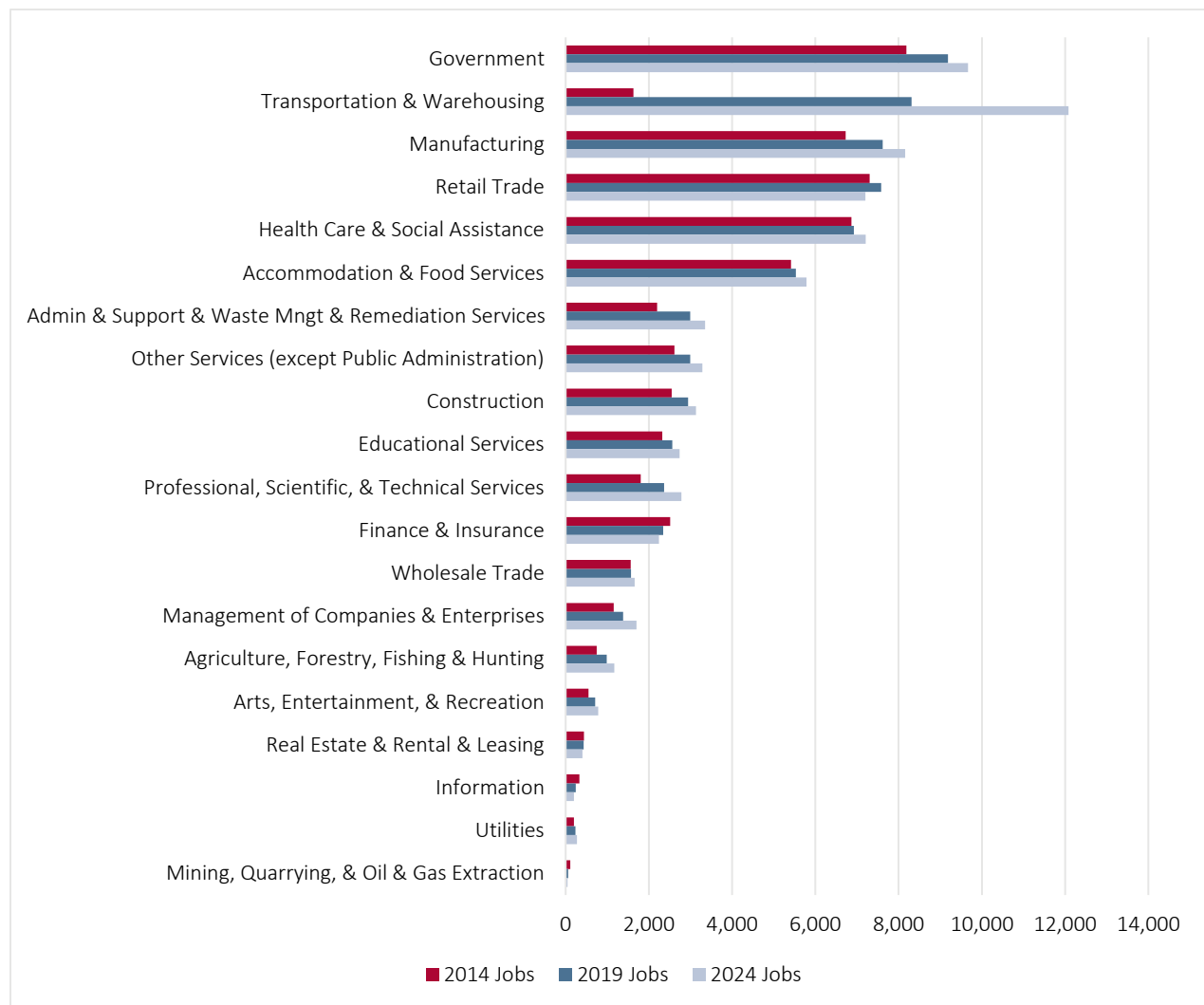
Source: Emsi 2020.3

Average annual earnings in Licking County range from $18,699 for Accommodation and Food Services to $119,197 for Management of Companies and Enterprises. Transportation and Warehousing, which added the most jobs over the last five years and is projected to add the most over the next five years, has an average annual salary of $40,581, $11,547 less than the county's average salary of $52,128. Utilities, which has the second least number of jobs in 2019, has the second highest average annual salary of $116,978. This sector is projected to experience a small increase in jobs (+36) over the next five years.

In addition to adding the most jobs, Transportation and Warehousing also has the highest location quotient (LQ). Industry LQ provides a measure of how "concentrated" an industry is in a region compared to the nation, with a measure of 1.00 indicating the same concentration as the nation.[32] In this analysis, LQs greater than 1.25 are considered to be the threshold for identifying an industry as relatively strong for the county's economic base. Sectors that meet

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[32] Industry LQ is calculated as [% of total local employment/% of total national employment].

that threshold in Licking County include Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, and Hunting (1.61); Educational Services (1.50); Manufacturing (1.38); and Management of Companies and Enterprises (1.33).

Table 6: Top Sectors in Licking County, 2-Digit NAICS

Description	2019 Jobs	Job Change (2014-2019)		Job Change (2019-2024)		Avg. Earnings Per Job	2019 LQ
Government	9,190	1,002	12%	479	5%	$65,593	0.86
Transportation and Warehousing	8,314	6,684	410%	3,766	45%	$40,581	3.37
Manufacturing	7,618	889	13%	536	7%	$67,591	1.38
Retail Trade	7,582	278	4%	(379)	(5%)	$36,490	1.12
Health Care and Social Assistance	6,928	61	1%	282	4%	$54,767	0.79
Accommodation and Food Services	5,533	117	2%	253	5%	$18,699	0.91
Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	2,996	796	36%	356	12%	$35,317	0.75
Other Services (except Public Administration)	2,990	374	14%	297	10%	$40,085	1.14
Construction	2,943	393	15%	190	6%	$62,815	0.89
Educational Services	2,566	243	10%	172	7%	$37,488	1.50
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	2,364	561	31%	420	18%	$77,990	0.57
Finance and Insurance	2,342	(166)	(7%)	(103)	(4%)	$79,913	0.85
Wholesale Trade	1,573	10	1%	86	5%	$62,860	0.62
Management of Companies and Enterprises	1,384	231	20%	316	23%	$119,197	1.33
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	987	239	32%	185	19%	$51,087	1.61
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	709	158	29%	71	10%	$25,040	0.68
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	435	(4)	(1%)	(35)	(8%)	$50,120	0.43
Information	240	(88)	(27%)	(39)	(16%)	$58,807	0.19
Utilities	236	40	20%	36	15%	$116,978	0.99
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	57	(53)	(48%)	(13)	(23%)	$60,829	0.19

Source: Emsi 2020.3

A closer examination of industry data can help GROW Licking County prioritize resources to upskill talent in the county's most emerging sectors with high average annual salaries. Table 7 details the top 20 NAICS industries in Licking County at the 5-digit NAICS. The top NAICS Industries include General Warehousing and Storage (7,196 jobs); Restaurants and Other Eating Places (4,958 jobs); Education (Local Government) (4,825 jobs); Local Government, Excluding Education and Hospitals (2,337 jobs); and Colleges, Universities, and Professional Schools (2,079 jobs). The top eleven NAICS industries in Licking County have all experienced job growth over the last five years and are each projected to experience continual job growth over the next five years.

Aside from General Warehousing and Storage, which added the most jobs by far, NAICS industries projected to experience significant job growth include Toilet Preparation Manufacturing[33] (+385 jobs); Management of Companies and Enterprises (+316 jobs); Restaurants and Other Eating Places (+315 jobs); and State Government, Excluding Education and Hospitals (+212 jobs). Each of these NAICS industries have average annual salaries above $50,000 except for Restaurants and Other Eating Places ($18,169). Only three NAICS industries have experienced a decline in jobs over the last five years and are projected to continue that decline over the next five years: Nursing Care Facilities (Skilled Nursing Facilities); Temporary Help Services; and Direct Insurance (except Life, Health, and Medical) Carriers. The latter earns the highest average annual salary of the three ($88,700).

NAICS industries that are more concentrated in Licking County compared to the nation (LQ above 1.25) include Toilet Preparation Manufacturing (44.05); All Other Nonmetallic Mineral Product Manufacturing (24.22); General Warehousing and Storage (14.87); Electronic Shopping and Mail-Order Houses (4.37); Direct Insurance (except Life, Health, and Medical) Carriers (3.08); Colleges, Universities, and Professional Schools (2.42); Education (Local Government) (1.40); New Car Dealers (1.39); Commercial Banking (1.35); and Management of Companies and Enterprises (1.33).

In shift share analysis, competitive effect (CE) is the portion of regional growth that cannot be explained by either overall national growth or industry/occupation-specific trends. Rather, competitive effect is the growth or decline of a sector that is unique to Licking County. NAICS industries with the largest positive CE include General Warehousing and Storage (6,087 jobs); Toilet Preparation Manufacturing (624 jobs); State Government, Excluding Education and Hospitals (372 jobs); and Education (Local Government) (346 jobs). NAICS industries with the negative CE include Direct Insurance (except Life, Health, and Medical) Carriers (-581 jobs); Restaurants and Other Eating Places (-358 jobs); Nursing Care Facilities (Skilled Nursing Facilities) (-305 jobs); and Temporary Help Services (-93 jobs).

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[33] Toilet Preparation Manufacturing is defined by NAICS Association as an industry comprised of establishments primarily engaged in preparing, blending, compounding, and packaging toilet preparations, such as perfumes, shaving preparations, hair preparations, face creams, lotions, and other cosmetic preparations. In Licking County, significant Toilet Preparation Manufacturing companies include Newell Brands and L Brands.

Table 7: Top 20 NAICS Industries in Licking County, 5-Digit NAICS

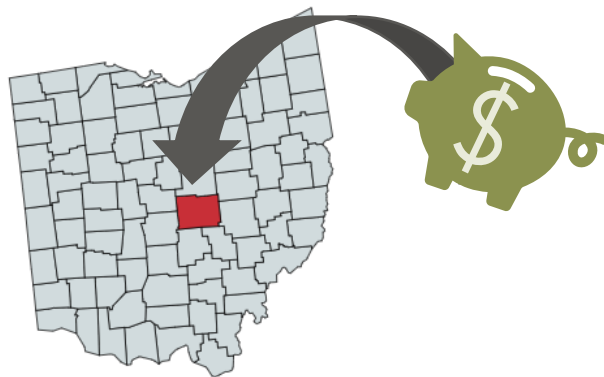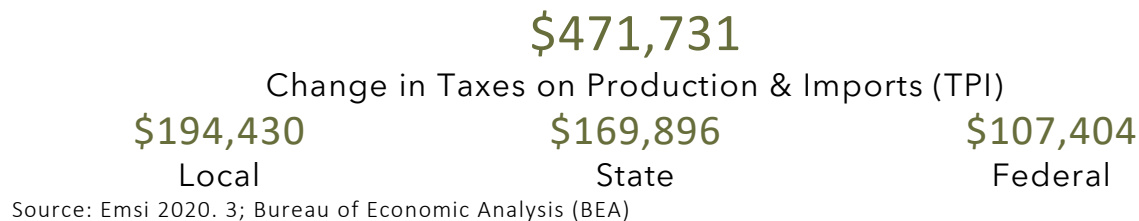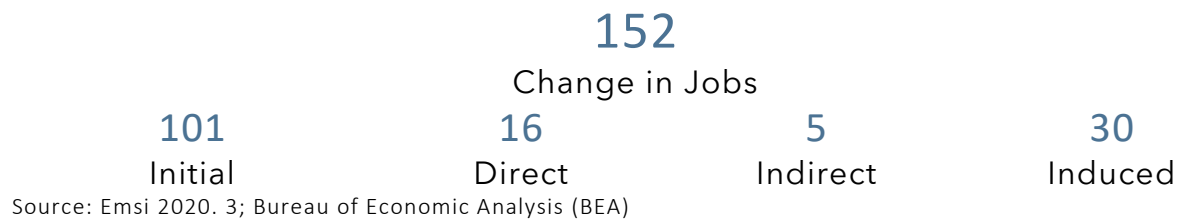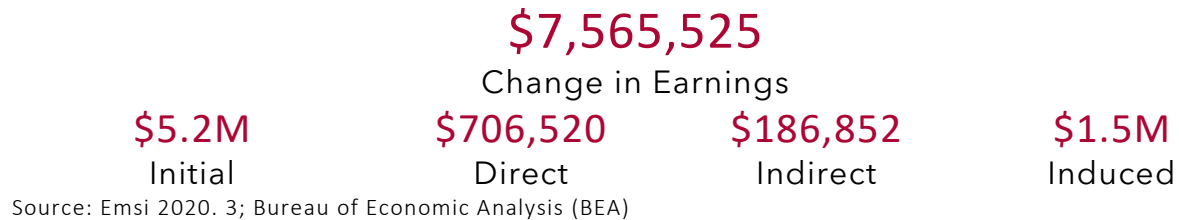| Description	2019 Jobs	Job Change (2014-2019)		Job Change (2019-2024)		Avg. Earnings Per Job	2019 LQ	CE
General Warehousing and Storage	7,196	6,567	1,044%	3,682	51%	$37,115	14.87	6,087
Restaurants and Other Eating Places	4,958	217	5%	315	6%	$18,169	1.06	(358)
Education (Local Government)	4,825	452	10%	161	3%	$63,497	1.40	346
Local Government, Excluding Education and Hospitals	2,337	181	8%	117	5%	$64,209	0.94	90
Colleges, Universities, and Professional Schools	2,079	122	6%	127	6%	$38,816	2.42	30
Management of Companies and Enterprises	1,384	231	20%	316	23%	$119,197	1.33	95
General Medical and Surgical Hospitals	1,336	150	13%	117	9%	$57,399	0.65	62
Supermarkets and Other Grocery (except Convenience) Stores	1,287	77	6%	20	2%	$31,235	1.18	52
Toilet Preparation Manufacturing	1,067	663	164%	385	36%	$66,552	44.05	624
General Merchandise Stores, including Warehouse Clubs and Supercenters	873	47	6%	4	0%	$28,362	1.03	9
State Government, Excluding Education and Hospitals	851	371	77%	212	25%	$96,455	0.86	372
Nursing Care Facilities (Skilled Nursing Facilities)	817	(347)	(30%)	(245)	(30%)	$41,642	1.19	(305)
Commercial Banking	814	355	77%	86	11%	$70,074	1.35	319
Temporary Help Services	793	(46)	(5%)	(72)	(9%)	$29,146	0.63	(93)
Direct Insurance (except Life, Health, and Medical) Carriers	780	(542)	(41%)	(287)	(37%)	$88,700	3.08	(581)
Electronic Shopping and Mail-Order Houses	757	371	96%	(452)	(60%)	$29,693	4.37	280
Offices of Physicians	752	63	9%	49	7%	$128,872	0.65	6
Religious Organizations	743	38	5%	33	4%	$19,012	1.00	24
All Other Nonmetallic Mineral Product Manufacturing	725	116	19%	(54)	(7%)	$70,731	24.22	39
New Car Dealers	683	60	10%	63	9%	$70,702	1.39	4

Source: Emsi 2020.3

By taking a closer look at the economic impact of new jobs added to the Licking County economy, we can forecast change in earnings, jobs, and taxes on production and imports (TPI). The table below takes the top ten emerging national industries (6-digit NAICS) in Licking County and distributes 100 jobs proportionally to each national industry based on their 2019 job count to determine the economic impact those 100 jobs would have on earnings, job growth, and TPI. The *Change in Earnings* and *Change in Jobs* tables break down the changes by initial, direct, indirect, and induced. These are defined as follows:

- Initial Change: the conversion from initial jobs to earnings (i.e., 100 jobs)
- Direct Change: the first round of impacts by initial job change of national industries
- Indirect Change: the sales change in the supply chain because of the first, or direct change
- Induced Change: change due to the new earnings and investments created because of the initial, direct, and indirect changes

Table 8: Economic Impact of 100 New Jobs to Licking County's Top 10 National Industries (6-Digit NAICS)

$7,565,525
Change in Earnings

$5.2M	$706,520	$186,852	$1.5M
Initial	Direct	Indirect	Induced

Source: Emsi 2020. 3; Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA)

152
Change in Jobs

101	16	5	30
Initial	Direct	Indirect	Induced

Source: Emsi 2020. 3; Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA)

$471,731
Change in Taxes on Production & Imports (TPI)

$194,430	$169,896	$107,404
Local	State	Federal

Source: Emsi 2020. 3; Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA)

Occupational Analysis

While industry represents the specific economic activity, occupations are the specific jobs or profession. The top occupations at the 2-digit SOC (Standard Occupational Classification) in Licking County include Transportation and Material Moving Occupations (10,296 jobs); Office and Administrative Support Occupations (9,209 jobs); Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations (5,895 jobs); Sales and Related Occupations (5,521 jobs); and Production Occupations (4,925 jobs). Over the last five years, only Military Occupations experienced a decline in jobs (-5, -2%), but it is projected to experience job growth over the next five years (+3, +1%). Transportation and Material Moving Occupations added the most jobs over the last five years (+5,158 jobs), followed by Office and Administrative Support Occupations (+1,365 jobs); Business and Financial Operations Occupations (+829 jobs); and Management Occupations (+617 jobs). These occupations are also among the top growing occupations over the next five years with the addition of Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Occupations (+400 jobs).

The largest growing occupations are among those with the largest number of annual openings. The largest number of annual openings are experienced by Transportation and Material Moving Occupations (1,871 openings); Office and Administrative Support Occupations (1,413 openings); and Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations (1,119 openings). While Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations provide job opportunity in Licking County, it has the lowest average hourly wage of $11.10. Of the top 10 occupations in the county, five earn less than the county hourly wage average of $21.28. Those occupations round out the top five occupations in Table 9.

Table 9: Top Occupations in Licking County, 2-Digit SOC

Description	2019 Jobs	% Job Change (2014-2019)	% Job Change (2019-2024)	Annual Openings	Avg. Hourly Earnings
Transportation and Material Moving Occupations	10,296	100%	27%	1,871	$15.14
Office and Administrative Support Occupations	9,209	17%	7%	1,413	$17.65
Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations	5,895	1%	5%	1,119	$11.10
Sales and Related Occupations	5,521	6%	3%	896	$17.62
Production Occupations	4,925	12%	6%	747	$18.50
Educational Instruction and Library Occupations	4,552	12%	4%	495	$26.06
Business and Financial Operations Occupations	3,463	31%	10%	482	$31.67
Management Occupations	2,903	27%	13%	353	$49.95
Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Occupations	2,818	17%	14%	375	$21.38
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations	2,561	6%	5%	216	$35.12
Healthcare Support Occupations	2,179	2%	6%	338	$14.25

Construction and Extraction Occupations	2,068	11%	6%	345	$22.10
Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance Occupations	1,968	7%	7%	302	$13.27
Computer and Mathematical Occupations	1,582	33%	9%	199	$36.79
Personal Care and Service Occupations	1,286	13%	8%	225	$12.86
Protective Service Occupations	1,243	25%	12%	163	$24.15
Architecture and Engineering Occupations	1,103	19%	11%	125	$36.30
Community and Social Service Occupations	991	7%	8%	126	$21.96
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media Occupations	788	27%	9%	132	$23.30
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry Occupations	672	26%	17%	138	$14.80
Life, Physical, and Social Science Occupations	474	30%	13%	66	$33.63
Legal Occupations	276	5%	3%	25	$38.41
Military-only occupations	218	(2%)	1%	27	$25.07

Source: Emsi 2020.3

For specific occupations like Transportation and Material Moving; Production; Installation, Maintenance, and Repair; Office and Administrative Support; and Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance, median annual earnings are higher in nearby Franklin County than in Licking County.[34] This impacts median household income figures as individuals who live in Licking County but work in Franklin County may increase the median household income level although the work is not physically in Licking County.

By examining earnings at the 10th and 90th percentile, we can identify the earnings band for each occupation and how they stack up against the average median earnings for the county as a whole. Figure 6 details those bands. Earnings begin to peak higher beginning at Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations.

Management Occupations has the greatest range in earnings between the 10th and 90th percentile ($60.41), followed by Legal Occupations ($55.23); Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations ($40.40); and Military-only Occupations ($36.64). Occupations with the lowest range in earnings between the 10th and 90th percentile include Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations ($6.70); Healthcare Support ($8.40); Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance Occupations ($10.33); and Personal Care and Service Occupations ($11.41).

Median hourly wage identifies the amount earned by half of the lowest-paid and highest-paid workers. The median hourly wage in Licking County for all occupations is $19.03.

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[34] Emsi, 2020.4 Regional Comparison Table

Figure 6: 10th – 90th Percentile Earnings for Occupations at the 2-Digit SOC Level
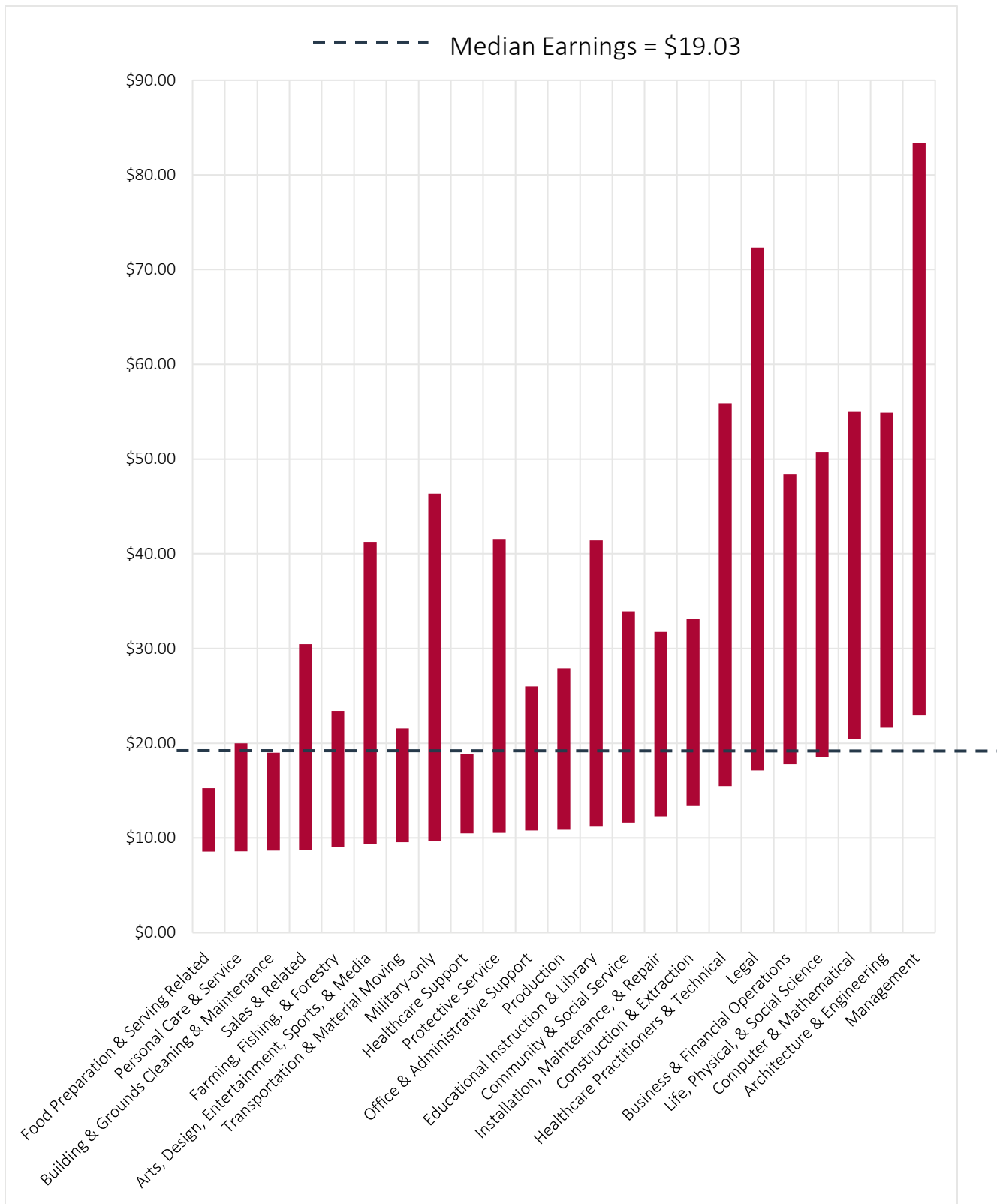
Source: Emsi 2020.3

Diving deeper into the occupational data, Table 10 details the top 20 occupations in Licking County at the 5-digit SOC level. The top occupations include Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand (3,091 jobs); Fast Food and Counter Workers (2,134 jobs); Stockers and Order Fillers (2,034 jobs); and Retail Salespersons (1,733 jobs). Retail Salespersons was the single occupation that experienced a decline over the last five years (-4 jobs). Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand added the most jobs over the last five years (+1,903 jobs) and is projected to add the most over the next five years (+1,041 jobs).

Average hourly wages range from $9.87 for Fast Food and Counter Workers to $53.12 for General and Operations Managers. Other high-paying occupations include Registered Nurses ($31.32); Secondary School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education ($29.54); Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education ($28.73); and Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers ($20.39). Each of these occupations require at least Bachelor's degree to be qualified except for Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers, which requires postsecondary non-degree award. Of the top 20 occupations, the highest-paying occupation with the lowest level of education necessary is Industrial Truck and Tractor Operators ($15.44).

Table 10: Top 20 Occupations in Licking County, 5-Digit SOC

| Description	2019 Jobs	% Job Change (2014-2019)	% Job Change (2019-2024)	Average Hourly Earnings	Typical Entry Level Education	Typical On-The-Job Training
Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	3,091	160%	34%	$13.77	No formal educational credential	Short-term on-the-job training
Fast Food and Counter Workers	2,134	0%	6%	$9.87	No formal educational credential	Short-term on-the-job training
Stockers and Order Fillers	2,034	120%	25%	$12.81	High school diploma or equivalent	Short-term on-the-job training
Retail Salespersons	1,733	(<1%)	2%	$12.77	No formal educational credential	Short-term on-the-job training
Industrial Truck and Tractor Operators	1,494	357%	40%	$15.44	No formal educational credential	Short-term on-the-job training
Customer Service Representatives	1,469	34%	1%	$16.10	High school diploma or equivalent	Short-term on-the-job training
Office Clerks, General	1,413	11%	6%	$16.98	High school diploma or equivalent	Short-term on-the-job training
Cashiers	1,382	3%	(3%)	$10.80	No formal educational credential	Short-term on-the-job training
Waiters and Waitresses	1,146	1%	6%	$11.16	No formal educational credential	Short-term on-the-job training

Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	1,082	12%	9%	$12.77	No formal educational credential	Short-term on-the-job training
Home Health and Personal Care Aides	1,067	12%	11%	$12.73	High school diploma or equivalent	Short-term on-the-job training
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	1,000	30%	19%	$20.39	Postsecondary nondegree award	Short-term on-the-job training
Shipping, Receiving, and Inventory Clerks	936	108%	21%	$15.11	High school diploma or equivalent	Short-term on-the-job training
Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education	896	15%	4%	$28.73	Bachelor's degree	None
Secretaries and Administrative Assistants, Except Legal, Medical, and Executive	890	1%	3%	$17.46	High school diploma or equivalent	Short-term on-the-job training
Registered Nurses	788	2%	6%	$31.32	Bachelor's degree	None
Miscellaneous Assemblers and Fabricators	745	6%	2%	$17.32	High school diploma or equivalent	Moderate-term on-the-job training
Secondary School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education	705	18%	3%	$29.54	Bachelor's degree	None
General and Operations Managers	698	22%	14%	$53.12	Bachelor's degree	None
Maintenance and Repair Workers, General	689	28%	14%	$18.49	High school diploma or equivalent	Moderate-term on-the-job training

Source: Emsi 2020.3

Expanding the list to the top 100 occupations in Licking County at the 5-digit SOC, we can examine typical entry-level education and on-the-job training more broadly. A majority of occupations require a high school diploma or equivalent (43%) followed by Bachelor's degree (23%), no formal educational credential (19%), and postsecondary non-degree award (8%). The gap between high school diploma or equivalent and Bachelor's degree can best be described by opportunities for on-the-job learning. Over half of the top 100 occupations require some form of on-the-job training (57%) with a majority of occupations requiring short-term on-the-job training (34%). However, 41% of top occupations in Licking County do not require any type of on-the-job training.
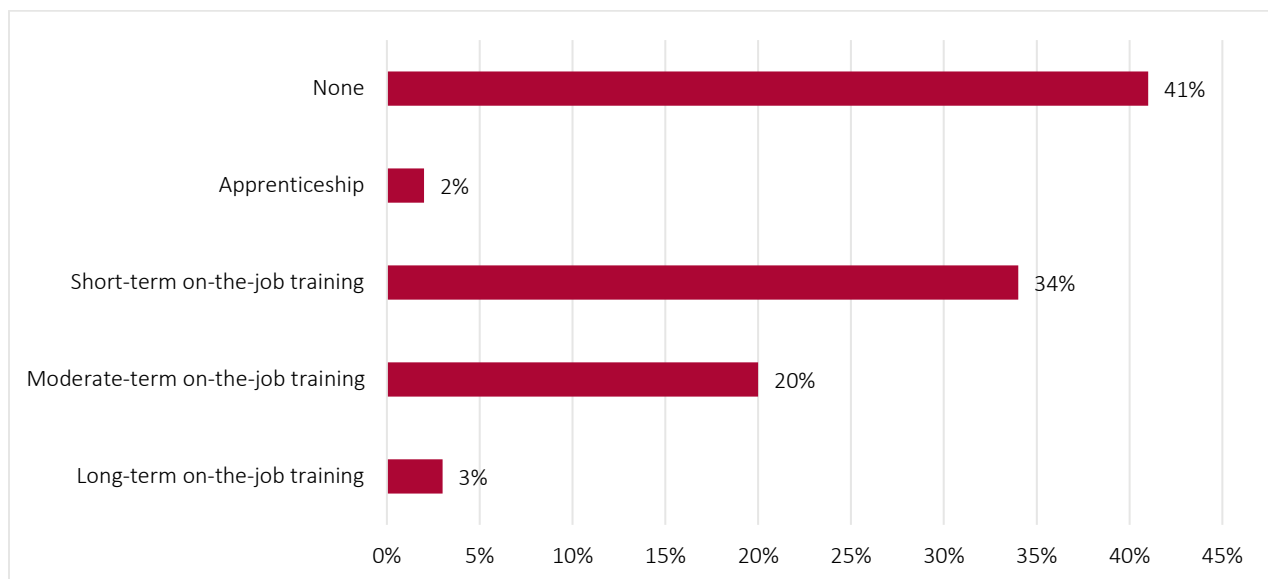
Figure 7: Typical Entry-Level Education of Top 100 Occupations, 5-Digit SOC
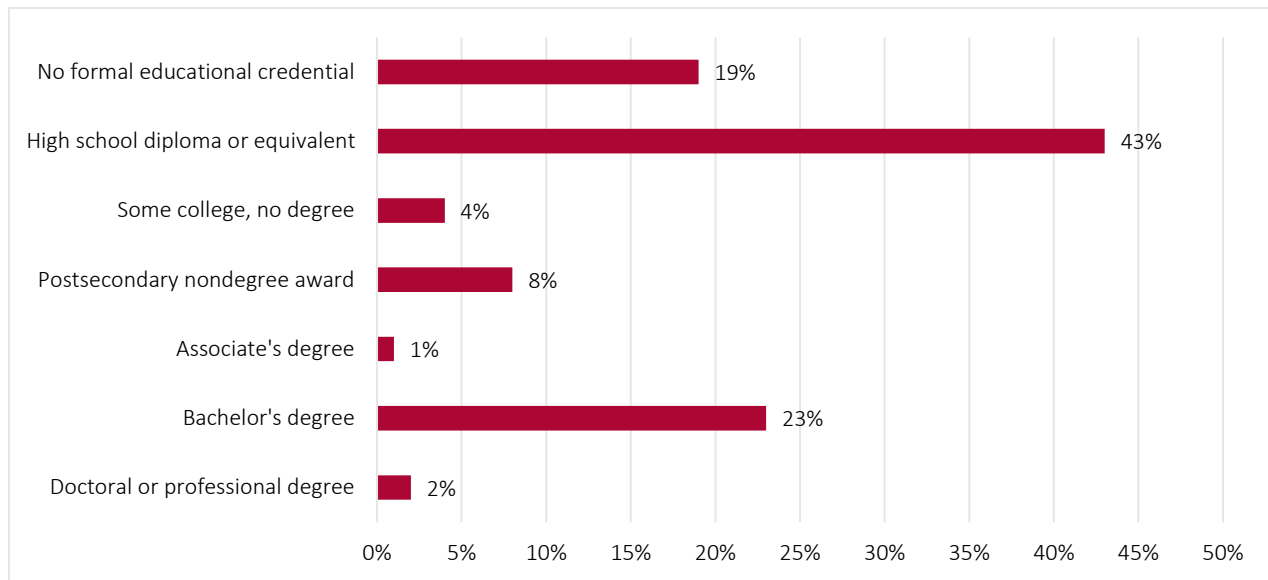
Source: Emsi 2020.3

Figure 8: Typical On-the-Job Training of Top 100 Occupations, 5-digit SOC

Source: Emsi 2020.3

Job Posting Analysis

Identifying the top hiring companies in the county provides GROW Licking County with insight into the top in-demand sectors and their mutual hiring needs. Table 11 lists the top 20 hiring companies in Licking County from July 2019 through July 2020. These companies cover a broad range of industries with the top five representing transportation and logistics, healthcare, and grocery/retail trade. CRST International, Inc. had the greatest number of unique job postings over the past year with 1,205 postings. Unique job postings are the number of deduplicated job vacancy advertisements from several job posting websites. Other top hiring companies

include HealthCare Employment Network (501 postings); Giant Eagle, Inc. (441 postings); Hogan Transports, Inc. (339 postings); Licking Memorial Health Systems (388 postings); and Randstad N.V. (345 postings).

The top hiring companies in Licking County had median posting durations lasting between 9 days (Giant Eagle, Inc.) to 59 days (LV Trucking, LLC). Companies with shorter job posting durations include Spectrum (10 days), Remedy Intelligent Staffing (15 days), and Aerotek, Inc. (16 days). Companies with longer job posting durations, or unable to fill jobs quickly include The Kroger Company (58 days), Mutual of Omaha (47 days), and CRST International, Inc. (44 days).

Table 11: Top Hiring Companies in Licking County, July 2019 – July 2020

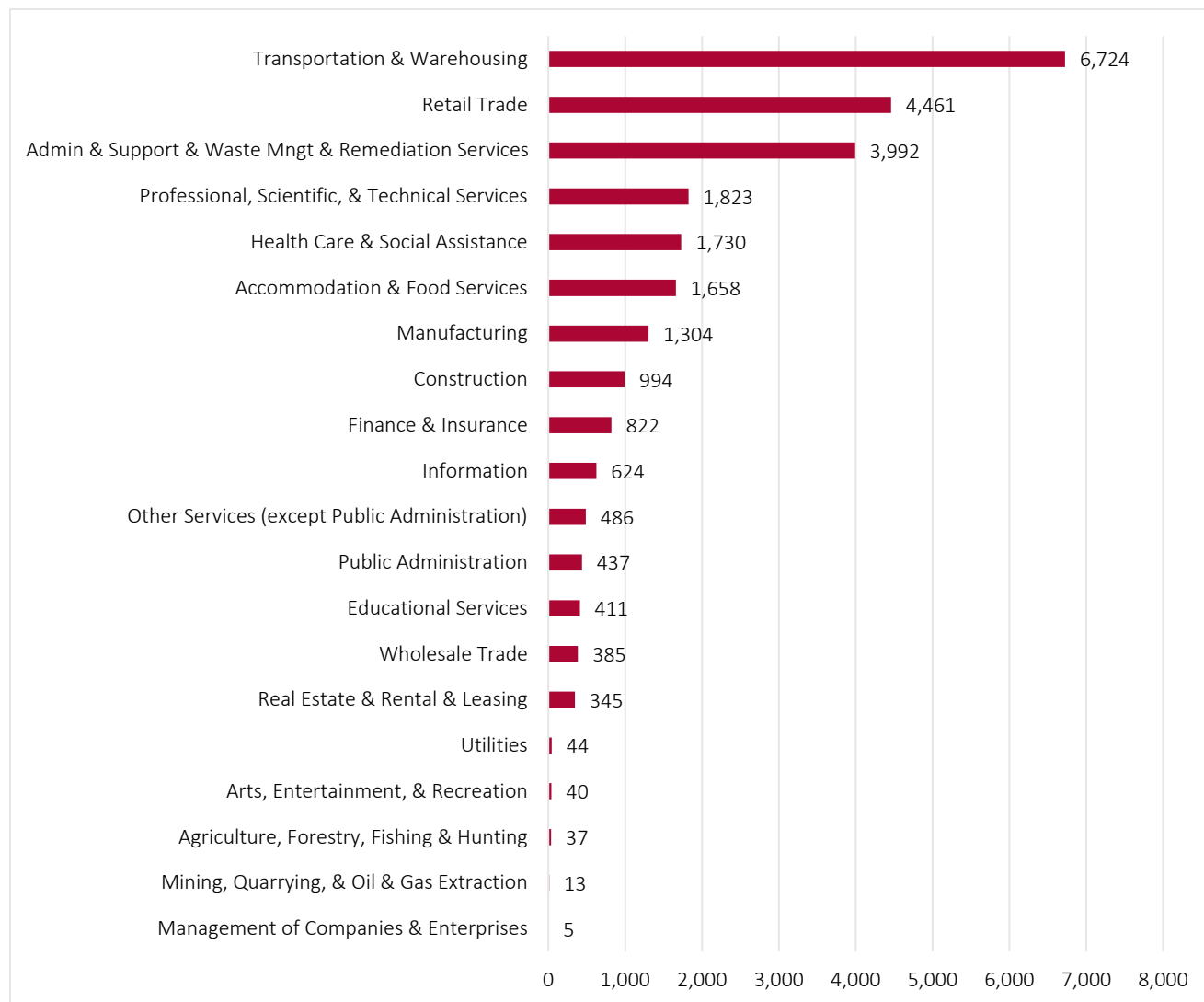| Company	Unique Postings July 2019 – July 2020	Median Posting Durations July 2019 – July 2020
CRST International, Inc.	1,205	44 days
HealthCare Employment Network	501	26 days
Giant Eagle, Inc.	441	9 days
Hogan Transports, Inc.	399	34 days
Licking Memorial Health Systems	388	34 days
Randstad N.V.	345	43 days
Amazon.com, Inc.	263	22 days
U.S. Xpress, Inc.	260	41 days
LV Trucking LLC	257	59 days
Spectrum	235	10 days
FedEx Corporation	226	31 days
Remedy Intelligent Staffing	216	15 days
Care.com, Inc.	214	19 days
Mutual of Omaha	214	47 days
Denison University	170	42 days
Aerotek, Inc.	160	16 days
The Home Depot	150	30 days
Dart Transit Co., Inc.	146	23 days
Maxim Healthcare Services, Inc.	144	19 days
The Kroger Company	142	58 days

Source: Emsi 2020.3; Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, Labor Market Information Division

Communities with the most job postings in Licking County include City of Newark (7,817 postings), City of Heath (3,777 postings), City of Pataskala (3,530 postings), Village of Hebron (2,272 postings), and Village of Granville (2,115 postings). Of these communities, Village of Hebron has the longest median job posting duration of 41 days versus City of Pataskala which has the shortest median job posting duration of 28 days.

Data collection from Emsi and the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services identified job postings by industry and occupation. Figure 9 details jobs by industry sector from July 2019 – July 2020. The top job-posting sectors include Transportation and Warehousing (6,724 postings); Retail Trade (4,461 postings); Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services (3,992 postings); and Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services (1,823 postings).

Figure 9: Job Postings by Industry (2-Digit NAICS) in Licking County, July 2019 – July 2020

Industry	Postings
Transportation & Warehousing	6,724
Retail Trade	4,461
Admin & Support & Waste Mngt & Remediation Services	3,992
Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services	1,823
Health Care & Social Assistance	1,730
Accommodation & Food Services	1,658
Manufacturing	1,304
Construction	994
Finance & Insurance	822
Information	624
Other Services (except Public Administration)	486
Public Administration	437
Educational Services	411
Wholesale Trade	385
Real Estate & Rental & Leasing	345
Utilities	44
Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation	40
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting	37
Mining, Quarrying, & Oil & Gas Extraction	13
Management of Companies & Enterprises	5

Source: Emsi 2020.3; Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, Labor Market Information Division

The top occupations posted in Licking County as detailed in Table 12 include Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers (6,397 postings); Registered Nurses (1,072 postings); Retail Salespersons (807 postings); First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers (800 postings); and Stocker and Order Fillers (754 postings). Average hourly wages for top occupations range from $9.87 for Fast Food and Counter Workers to $53.12 for General and Operations Mangers. The top two occupations, Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers and Registered Nurses, have relatively high hourly wages, above $20.00.

Table 12: Top Occupations Posted in Licking County, July 2019 – July 2020

Occupation	Number of Postings	Avg. Hourly Earnings
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	6,397	$20.39
Registered Nurses	1,072	$31.32
Retail Salespersons	807	$12.77
First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers	800	$20.37
Stockers and Order Fillers	754	$12.81
Light Truck Drivers	648	$15.93
Home Health and Personal Care Aides	506	$12.73
Customer Service Representatives	472	$16.10
Maintenance and Repair Workers, General	448	$18.49
Cashiers	367	$10.80
Childcare Workers	340	$11.10
Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	331	$13.77
Insurance Sales Agents	311	$26.71
First-Line Supervisors of Food Preparation and Serving Workers	310	$14.66
Fast Food and Counter Workers	299	$9.87
General and Operations Managers	289	$53.12
Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	288	$22.23
First-Line Supervisors of Production and Operating Workers	272	$28.95
Nursing Assistants	265	$13.46
First-Line Supervisors of Office and Administrative Support Workers	257	$25.58

Source: Emsi 2020.3; Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, Labor Market Information Division

Table 13 identifies the top job titles, rather than occupations, in Licking County. Truck Drivers was the most common job title listed in job postings (3,208), followed by Commercial Driver's License (CDL) Drivers (1,521 postings), Registered Nurses (606 postings), and Flatbed Drivers (541 postings).

Table 13: Top Job Titles in Job Postings in Licking County, July 2019 – July 2020

| Job Titles	Number of Postings
Truck Drivers	3,208
Commercial Driver's License (CDL) Drivers	1,521
Registered Nurses	606
Flatbed Drivers	541
Retail Sales Associates	492
Delivery Drivers	452
Regional Truck Drivers	412
Customer Service Representatives (Office and Administrative Support)	394
Owner Operators	332
Sales Managers (Sales and Related)	297
Sales Representatives	261
Restaurant Crew Team Members	255
Licensed Practical Nurses (LPN)	236
Forklift Operators	229
Restaurant Managers (Food Preparation and Serving Related)	224
Warehouse Workers (Office and Administrative Support)	202
Maintenance Mechanics	191
Caregivers (Personal Care and Service)	170
Over the Road (OTR) Drivers	167
Business-to-Business (B2B) Sales Representatives	164

Source: Emsi 2020.3; Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, Labor Market Information Division

Harvesting data from online job postings can provide an indication of the skills that manufacturers are seeking. It must be emphasized that while job postings data are helpful for providing a snapshot of demand for certain skill sets, it is an imperfect tool since job postings themselves are typically highly concentrated in a small number of fields. Hence, job postings data have inherent biases toward fields where online recruitment is the primary mode of finding new workers.

Figure 10 lists the top hard, or technical, skills found in all job postings in Licking County. The most common hard skills include Merchandising (7%), Flatbed Truck Operation (6%), Warehousing (6%), Selling Techniques (5%), Restaurant Operation (4%), and Nursing (4%).

Figure 10: Frequency of Top Hard Skills in All Job Postings in Licking County, July 2019 – July 2020
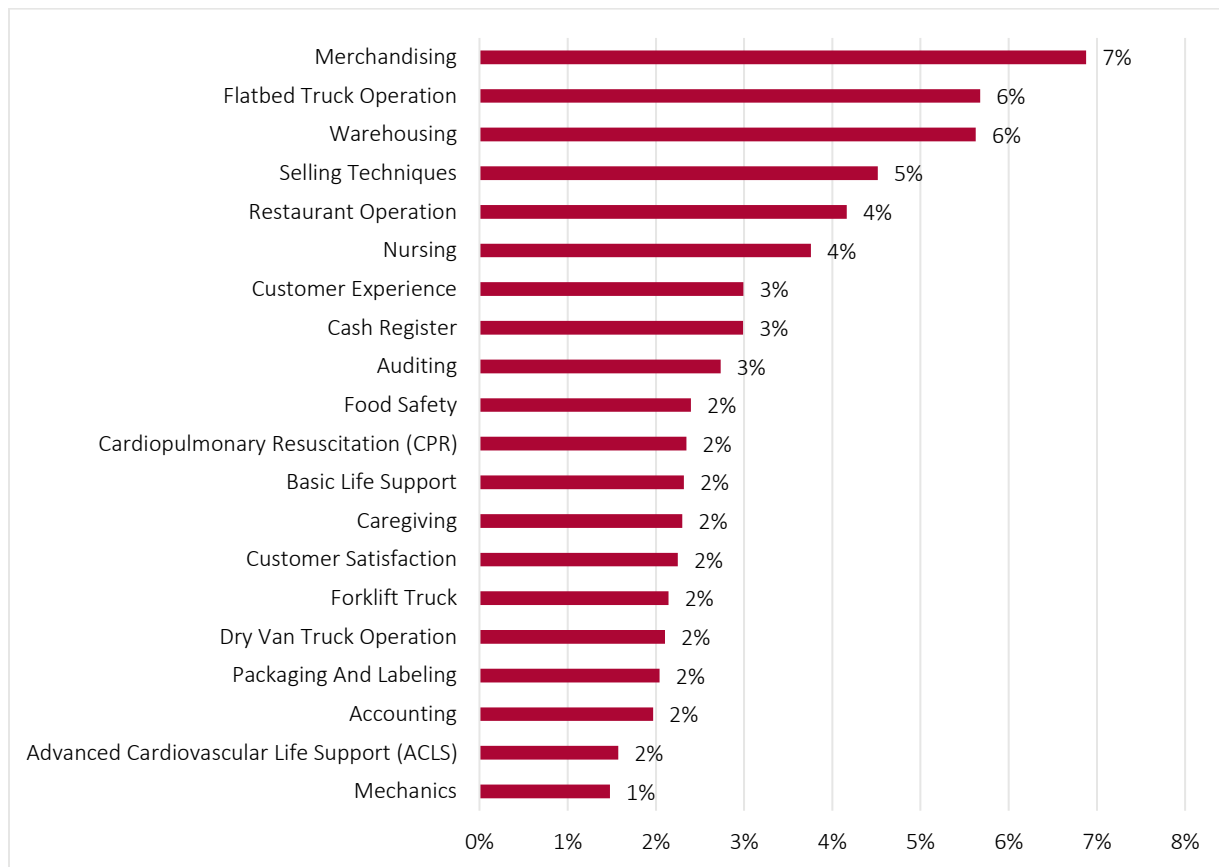
Figure 11 lists the frequency of top common skills in all job postings in Licking County. The most frequent common skills include Communications (19%), Customer Service (17%), Sales (15%), Management (13%), and Leadership (10%).

Figure 11: Top Common Skills in All Job Postings in Licking County, July 2019 – July 2020
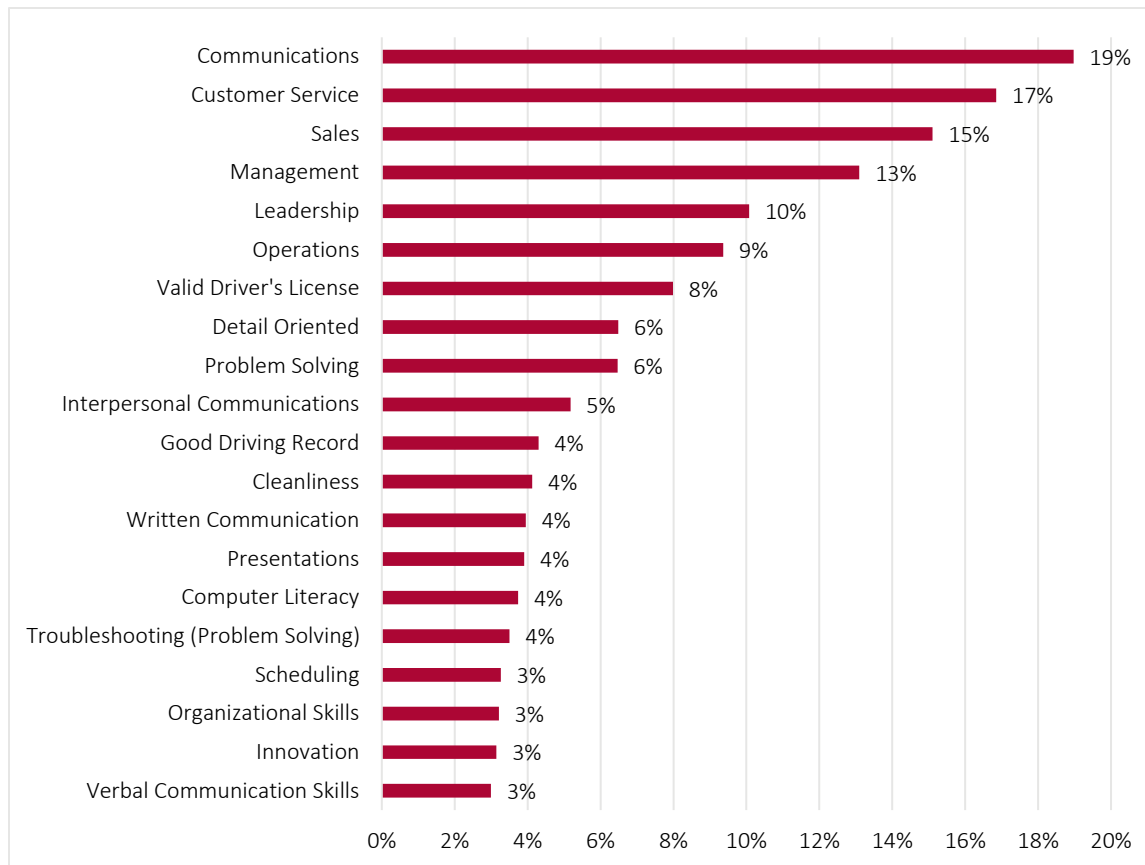
Source: Emsi 2020.3; Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, Labor Market Information Division

COVID-19 Impact

Licking County has not been immune to the effects of COVID-19. As of 08/13/2020, Licking County represents the fourth highest number of positive COVID-19 cases, but second highest number of COVID-related deaths among its surrounding counties. Only Franklin County reported a higher number of COVID-related deaths (533).

Table 14: COVID-19 Cases (as of 08/13/2020)

Area	Positive COVID-19 Cases	Hospitalizations	Deaths	Presumed Recovered
Licking County	1,367	113	51	1,001
Coshocton County, OH	199	26	9	171
Delaware County, OH	1,378	83	19	1,093
Fairfield County, OH	1,449	117	33	1,097
Franklin County, OH	19,124	1,652	533	15,752
Knox County, OH	218	33	9	136
Muskingum County, OH	256	28	1	159
Perry County, OH	164	15	3	78

Source: Ohio Department of Health COVID-19 Dashboard

COVID-19 has affected individuals in Licking County disproportionately. While individuals identifying as White represent 43% of the county's entire confirmed COVID-19 cases, they also represent 86% of the county's COVID-related deaths. Individuals who identify as Asian represent 8% of all positive cases but just 2% of all COVID-related deaths. In Licking County, only 12 positive COVID-19 cases and zero deaths were reported by individuals identifying as Hispanic.

Figure 12: COVID-19 Cases & Deaths by Race in Licking County (as of 08/13/2020)
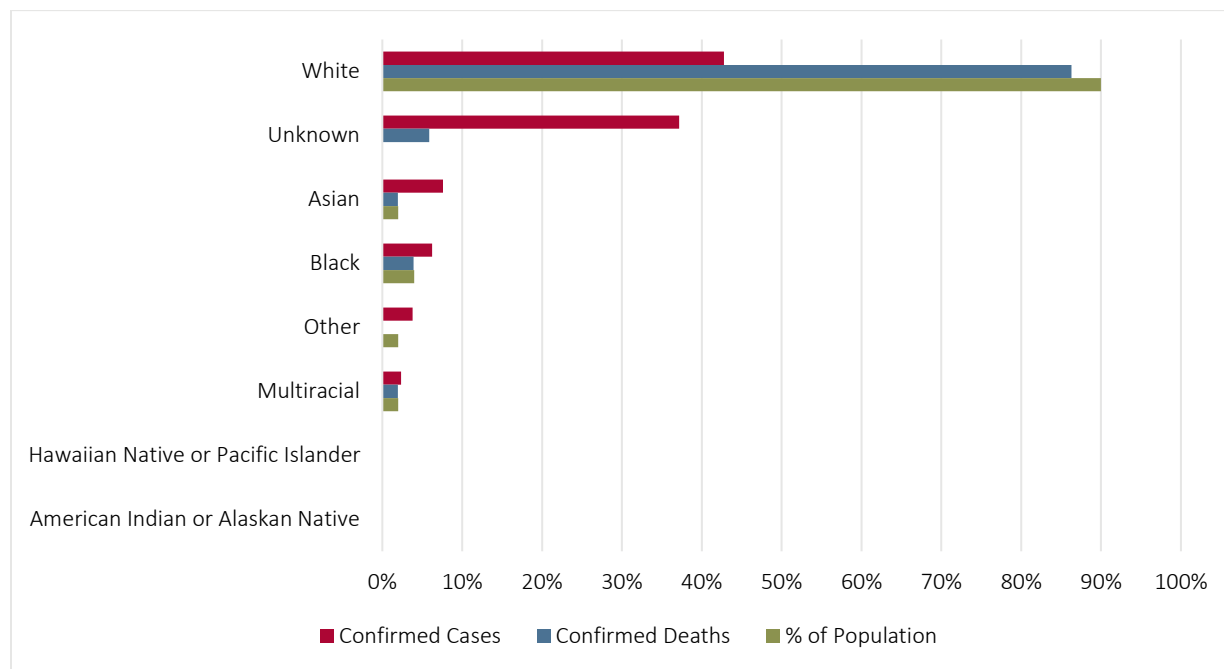
Source: Ohio Department of Health COVID-19 Dashboard

COVID-19 has also impacted the county's labor force. Prime working-aged individuals 20-59 represent 63% of all positive cases in Licking County, but only 4% of all COVID-related deaths. Individuals who are more likely to have already exited the workforce (60 years and older) represent 25% of all positive cases but 97% of all COVID-related deaths.

Figure 13: COVID-19 Cases by Age in Licking County (as of 08/13/2020)
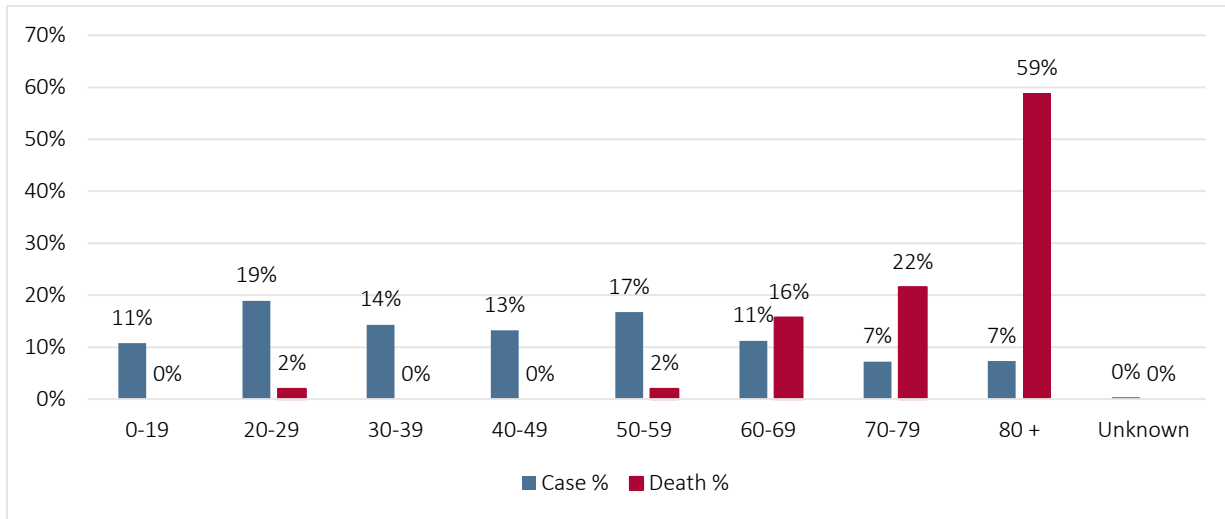
Source: Ohio Department of Health COVID-19 Dashboard

The number of initial unemployment insurance (UI) claims in Licking County has slowly decreased since it peaked at the end of March (week ending 03/28/2020). Initial UI claims decreased by 9 percentage points the following week. The number of continued UI claims peaked at the end of April (week ending 04/25/2020) with 9,418 claims.

The latest figures for this analysis collected UI data for the week ending August 8, 2020. Currently, the number of initial UI claims was 208 and the number of continued UI claims was 4,283.

Figure 14: Unemployment Insurance Claims in Licking County (01/01/2020 – 08/08/2020)
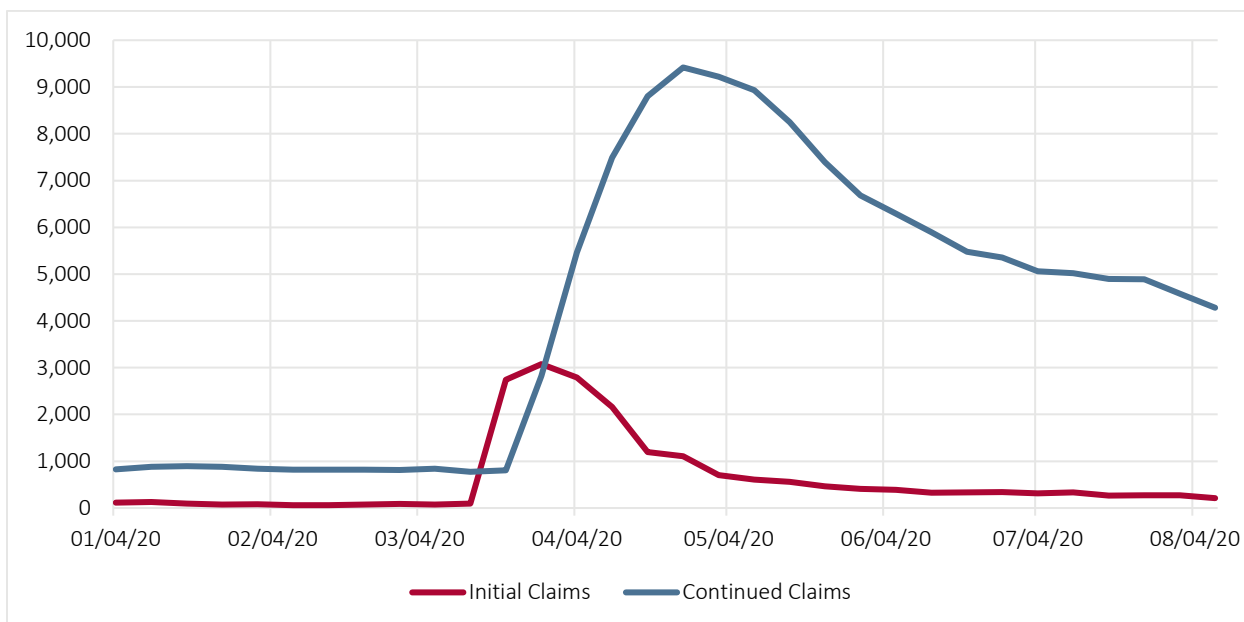
Source: Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, Ohio Unemployment Compensation System

Unemployment in Licking County has varied across subsectors. The largest subsectors (3-digit NAICS) experienced some of the highest unemployment numbers during the coronavirus pandemic. The table below lists the top ten subsectors by employment in Licking County and the unemployment numbers reported by each. In July, Food Services and Drinking Places; Administrative and Support Services; and Specialty Trade Contractors reported unemployment numbers between 101-300. Though not listed in the table below, Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services reported unemployment numbers of 300+ since April 2020.

Table 15: Unemployment by Top Employing Subsectors

Subsector	Week of 3/14/20	Week of 4/25/20	Week of 6/6/20	Week of 7/11/20	Week of 7/25/20
Educational Services	1-10	26-100	101-300	26-100	26-100
Food Services and Drinking Places	1-10	300+	300+	101-300	101-300
Administrative and Support Services	26-100	26-100	101-300	101-300	101-300
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	1-10	300+	300+	300+	300+
Ambulatory Health Care Services	1-10	300+	101-300	26-100	26-100
Specialty Trade Contractors	26-100	26-100	101-300	101-300	101-300
Food and Beverage Stores	1-10	1-10	1-10	1-10	1-10
Management of Companies and Enterprises	0	1-10	1-10	1-10	1-10
Fabricated Metal Product Manufacturing	11-25	11-25	101-300	101-300	26-100
Motor Vehicle and Parts Dealers	1-10	101-300	26-100	26-100	26-100

Source: Ohio Jobs & Family Services

The economic vulnerability score of Licking County due to COVID-19 is in the middle of that of neighboring counties. Vulnerability index measures the negative impact COVID-19 can have on employment in a specific region. Scores above 100 represent job losses greater than national averages and scores below 100 represent job losses less than the national average. Licking County's vulnerability index is 89.65.[35]

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[35] Vulnerability Index only measures the impact of potential of a region related to the mix of industry employment and does not take into account variation due to a region's rate of virus infection or local government rules and policies. Source: Chmura Economics & Analytics, JobsEQ. http://www.chmuraecon.com/interactive/covid-19-economic-vulnerability-index/

Table 16: Economic Vulnerability due to COVID-19

Area	Vulnerability Index Score	National Ranking (by County)
Licking County	89.65	1,346
Coshocton County, OH	79.19	1,925
Delaware County, OH	121.01	230
Fairfield County, OH	120.24	244
Franklin County, OH	91.08	1,284
Knox County, OH	85.94	1,569
Muskingum County, OH	103.36	626
Perry County, OH	75.43	2,123

Source: Chmura Economics & Analytics, JobsEQ

Regional job postings can provide light on in-demand industries and sectors during the coronavirus pandemic. Since the week prior to Governor DeWine's Stay at Home Order (March 15, 2020 – March 21, 2020), Licking County experienced an 11.9% increase of job openings from May 24, 2020 – May 30, 2020, 20.7% of which were representative of new job ads. The top job ads by industry in the county were Retail Trade (410 ads); Accommodation and Food Services (200 ads); Health Care and Social Assistance (79 ads); and Transportation and Warehousing (78 ads).

Table 17: Job Ads by Industry in Licking County (05/24/2020 – 05/30/2020)

Industry	Total Ads	New Ads	% Change in Ads
Retail Trade	410	77	+25.0%
Accommodation & Food Services	200	26	+14.3%
Health Care & Social Assistance	79	14	-23.3%
Transportation & Warehousing	78	19	+151.6%
Manufacturing	71	27	-5.3%
Wholesale Trade	52	26	+40.5%
Admin., Support, Waste & Remediation	51	11	+6.3%
Other Services (except Public Administration)	48	4	+54.8%
Finance & Insurance	44	18	+41.9%
Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services	39	6	+18.2%
Public Administration	33	2	-25.0%
Real Estate & Rental & Leasing	31	11	+210.0%
Construction	20	4	+5.3%
Educational Services	20	3	-31.0%
Information	11	2	-47.6%
Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation	5	1	0.0%
Management of Companies & Enterprises	2	1	0.0%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting	1	0	-75.0%

Source: Ohio Jobs and Family Services

During that same time, the top occupations with the most job ads in Licking County were First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers (111 ads); Retail Salespersons (106 ads); Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers (95 ads); Interpreters and Translators (74 ads); and Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand (57 ads). Of these occupations, the latter experienced the greatest percentage change in ads (+338.5%). Only Interpreters and Translators experienced a percentage decrease change in ads (-1.3%).

The top employers with the most jobs ads from May 24, 2020 – May 30, 2020 included Amazon (84 ads); Language Line Solutions (74 ads); The Dollar General (60 ads); Goodwill Industries (47 ads); and FedEx Ground (30 ads).

Table 18: Top Employers with the Most Job Ads in Licking County (05/24/2020 – 05/30/2020)

Employer	Total Ads	New Ads	% Change in Ads
Amazon	84	22	+211.1%
Language Line Solutions	74	0	-1.3%
The Dollar General	60	5	+3.4%
Goodwill Industries	47	6	+38.2%
FedEx Ground	30	9	N/A
Home Depot	28	8	+115.4%
McDonald's Corporation	26	1	-7.1%
Domino's Pizza	25	2	+66.7%
Department of the Air Force	25	0	0.0%
AutoZone, Inc.	23	3	0.0%
CVS Health	22	6	+4.8%
Pizza HUT	20	6	+42.9%
Kroger	20	5	+5.3%
MPW Industrial Services	19	0	-13.6%
Great Clips	19	0	+111.1%
Licking Memorial Hospital	18	0	0.0%
U.S. Air Force	17	0	0.0%
Walmart	16	2	N/A

Source: Ohio Jobs and Family Services

APPENDIX B: EMPLOYER SURVEY ANALYSIS

Introduction

As part of the community needs assessment, GROW LC and TPMA developed an online survey to employers to capture data related to their workforce needs and their perspectives on the skills gaps that may exist in the talent pool.

An electronic survey was distributed by GROW LC to 380 individuals from 200 companies in Licking County to identify talent issues and opportunities in the region, including skill shortages, hiring concerns, employer needs, work-based learning opportunities, and partnership potential with education and training partners. The survey was sent to individuals who were directly involved in the hiring process (Human Resources, Hiring Managers), or depending on the size of the company, the survey was sent to company leadership (Presidents, CEOs, Managers, etc.). The survey remained open from August 10, 2020 through September 11, 2020 and reminder calls and emails were sent by GROW LC after week 1, 2, and 3 to encourage participation. A total of 100 individuals completed the survey and 16 either opened the survey or started but did not complete the survey. The responses of the 100 completers were used in this analysis report.

Background

A total of 100 participants completed the survey. The greatest number of survey responses came from employers of Manufacturing (25); Construction (11); Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services (11); and Other Services (except Public Administration) (10).

Figure 1: Survey Participation by Employment Sector (2-Digit NAICS)
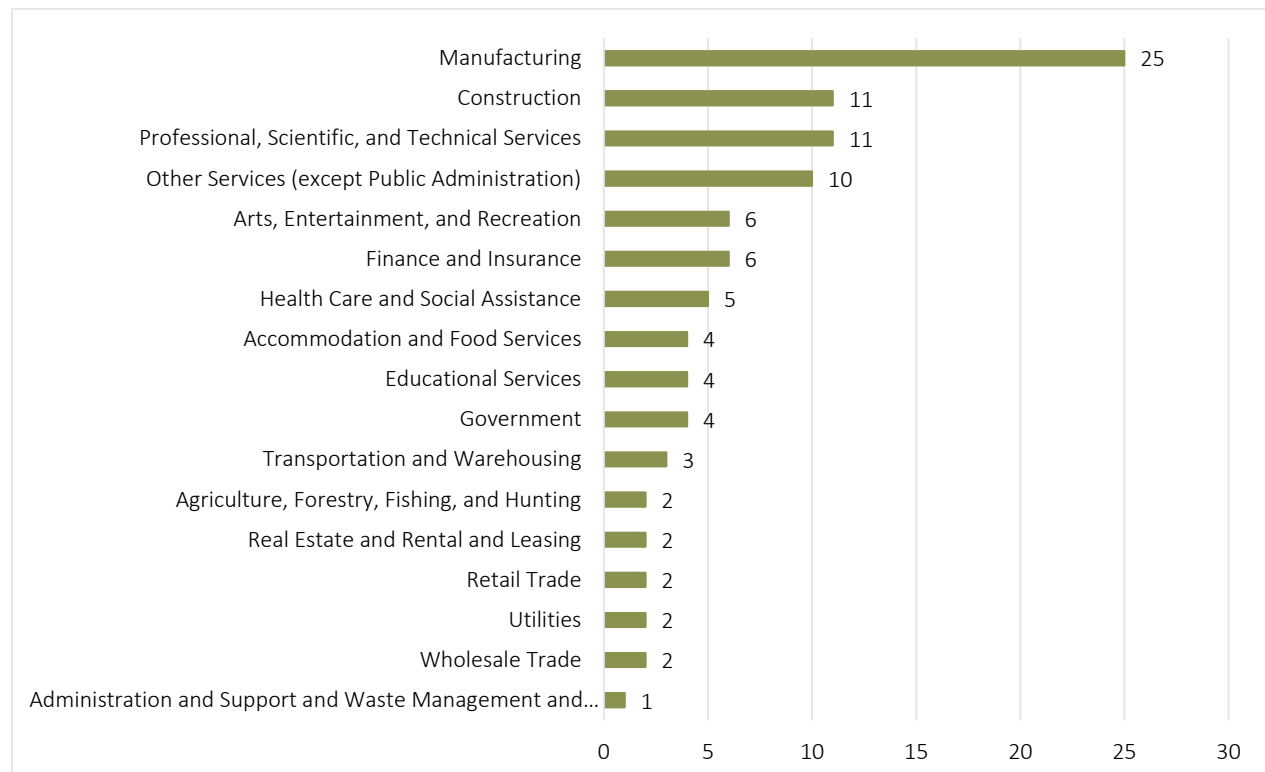
Over half of all survey respondents reported having a full-time equivalent (FTE) workforce of 51 or more (51%). Nearly one-fifth of respondents reported an FTE workforce of 251 or more. The most identified FTE workforce size by employers was 1-10, 11-25, and 51-100. Of those with an FTE of 1-25 employees, a majority of respondents are representative of Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services (8); Construction (5); and Other Services (except Public Administration) (4). Of those with an FTE of 51-100 employees, a majority of those respondents are representative of Manufacturing (6); Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation (2); Construction (2); Finance and Insurance (2); and Government (2). Respondents with an FTE of 501+ include Construction (2); Finance and Insurance (2); Other Services (except Public Administration) (2); and Transportation and Warehousing (2). Only Construction; Finance and Insurance; Health Care and Social Assistance; Other Services (except Public Administration); Real Estate; Retail Trade; Transportation and Warehousing; and Utilities reported having an FTE of 1,000+.[36]

Figure 2: Number of Full-Time Equivalent Workforce on Staff
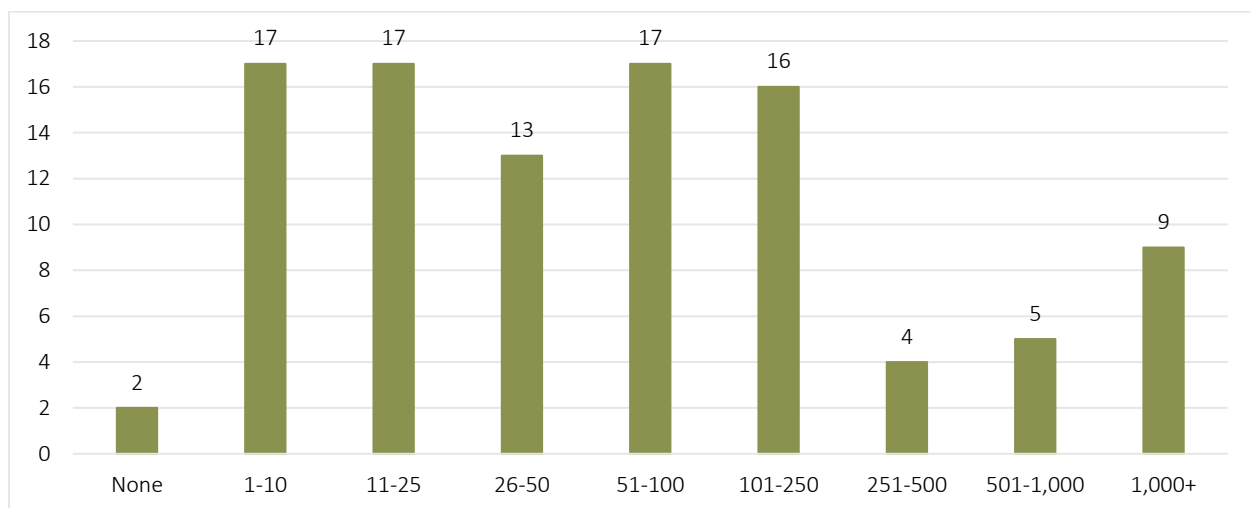
Participants were asked to cite the number of employees their organization hires annually, and the most identified number of employees was 1-9 (43). Respondents who reported hiring 10-25 employees annually were from Manufacturing (9 respondents); Health Care and Social Assistance (3 respondents); and Arts, Entertainment and Recreation (3 respondents). Respondents who indicated hiring 100+ employees annually are representative of Construction (2 respondents); Finance and Insurance (2 respondents); Manufacturing (2 respondents); Other Services (except Public Administration) (2 respondents); Transportation and Utilities (2 respondents); Health Care and Social Assistance (1 respondent); and Retail Trade (1 respondent).

Respondents who reported hiring the most employees annually were employers from Manufacturing (10 respondents); Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services (7 respondents); Construction (6 respondents); and Government (4 respondents).

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[36] Each of the identified sectors with an FTE of 1,000+ was had a single survey respondent with the exception of Transportation and Warehousing which had 2 respondents.

Talent Issues

Survey participants were asked to cite their company's top three most pressing talent issues from a list of options. The most pressing talent issue identified was the lack of job applicants with employability skills (48 respondents), followed by retention issues (44 respondents) and lack of qualified applicants in Licking County (43 respondents). The issue of talent lacking employability skills and technical skills is most identified by respondents from Manufacturing. While training talent was cited by some respondents as a top pressing talent issue, capacity for on-the-job training and availability of formal training programs were among the least pressing issues cited by respondents.

Sectors that have the most difficulty with finding talent from within Licking County include Manufacturing; Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services; Construction; and Other Services (except Public Administration). The position types all respondents cited as most difficult to fill is entry level/support positions (41%) followed by skilled trade (29%), professional (22%), and advanced technical positions.

Table 1: Most Pressing Talent Issues

Talent Issue	Count
Job applicants lack employability skills (aka soft skills, success skills)	48
Employee retention/high turnover	44
Insufficient number of qualified applicants from within Licking County	43
New hires lack the technical skills to perform the work	31
Increasing employee costs	30
Not enough interest among younger workers	29
Lack of diversity	20
Capacity for on-the-job training	17
Other	12
Impending retirements	11
Availability of relevant formal training programs	6

Twelve respondents cited their own specific talent issues via write-in response. These included individual challenges such as recruitment competition to nearby Columbus, employability skills, physical lack of people, hiring requirements for minorities and genders, and talent willing to invest time in the company to grow.

The decision of whether certain factors are valuable in making hiring and/or advancement decisions in a respondent's company are detailed in Figure 4. The factors that respondents placed the most value on are industry work experience (59%) and industry-recognized credentials (38%). However, respondents did not place value on a majority of the listed factors. 77% of respondents did not place value of completing an apprenticeship or internship and 72% did not place value on an Associate's degree (59% did not place value on a Bachelor's degree). For technical certificates, 22% of respondents were unsure – the highest yielding factor for an unsure decision.

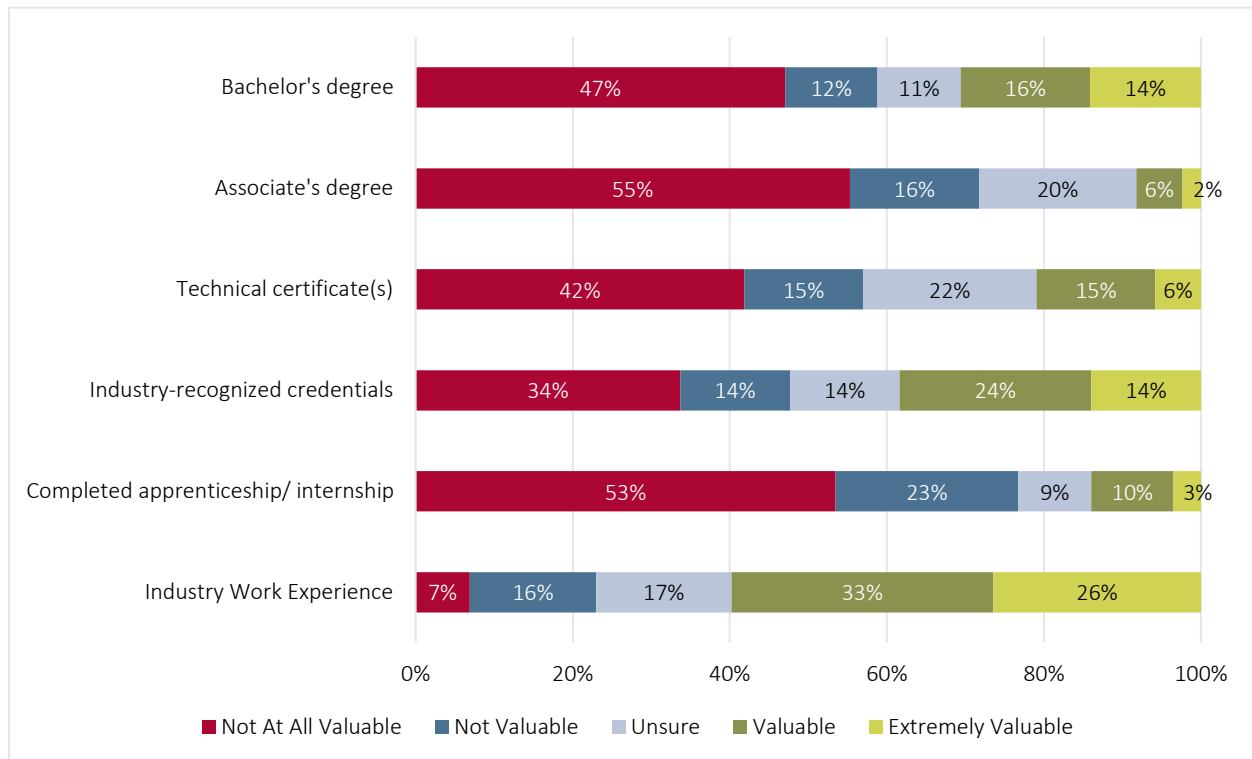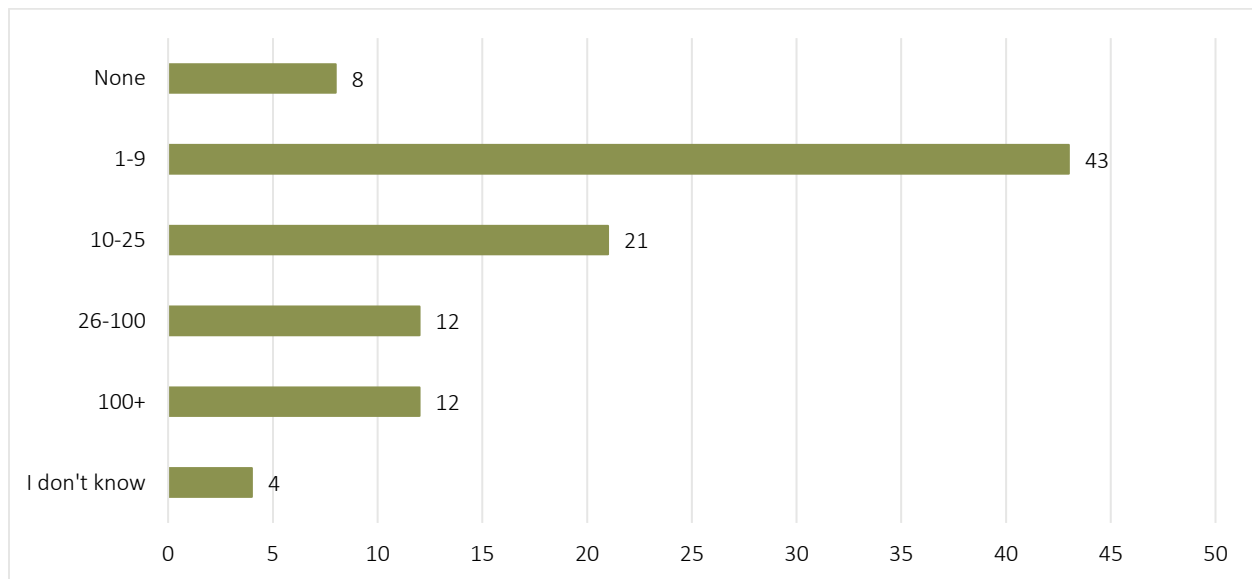**Figure 4: Value of Factors in Making Hiring/Advancement Decisions**
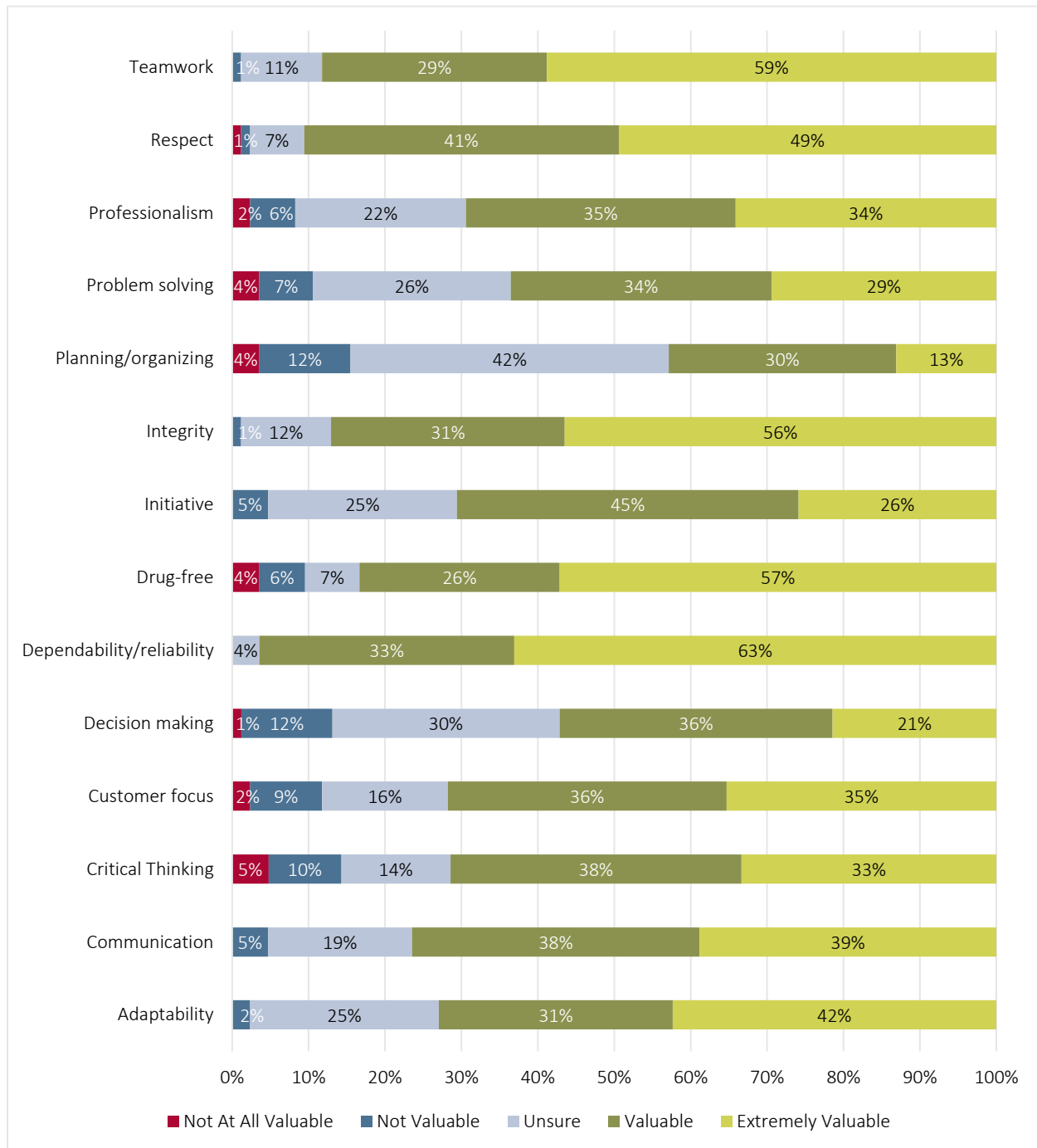

Figure 3: Number of Projected New Hires Annually

Skills Analysis

The decision of whether specific employability skills are valuable in making hiring decisions in a respondent's company are detailed in Figure 5. The most valued employability skills are dependability/reliability (96%), respect (91%), teamwork (88%), integrity (87%), and drug-free (83%). The least valued employability skills are planning/organizing (15%), critical thinking (14%), decision-making (13%), customer focus (12%), and problem solving (11%). Planning and organizing yielded the greatest number of "unsure" selections (42%), followed by decision-making (30%), problem-solving (26%), adaptability (25%), and initiative (25%).

In Figure 6, respondents identified the level of difficulty the listed employability skills are when hiring. The most difficult-to-find employability skills are dependability/reliability (54%), critical thinking (43%), adaptability (42%), and problem solving (35%). Employability skills that are not difficult to find when hiring include drug free (51%), planning/organizing (43%), respect (41%), and customer focus (40%). It is worth noting that drug free was among the most valued employability skills by employers and the least difficult to find when hiring.
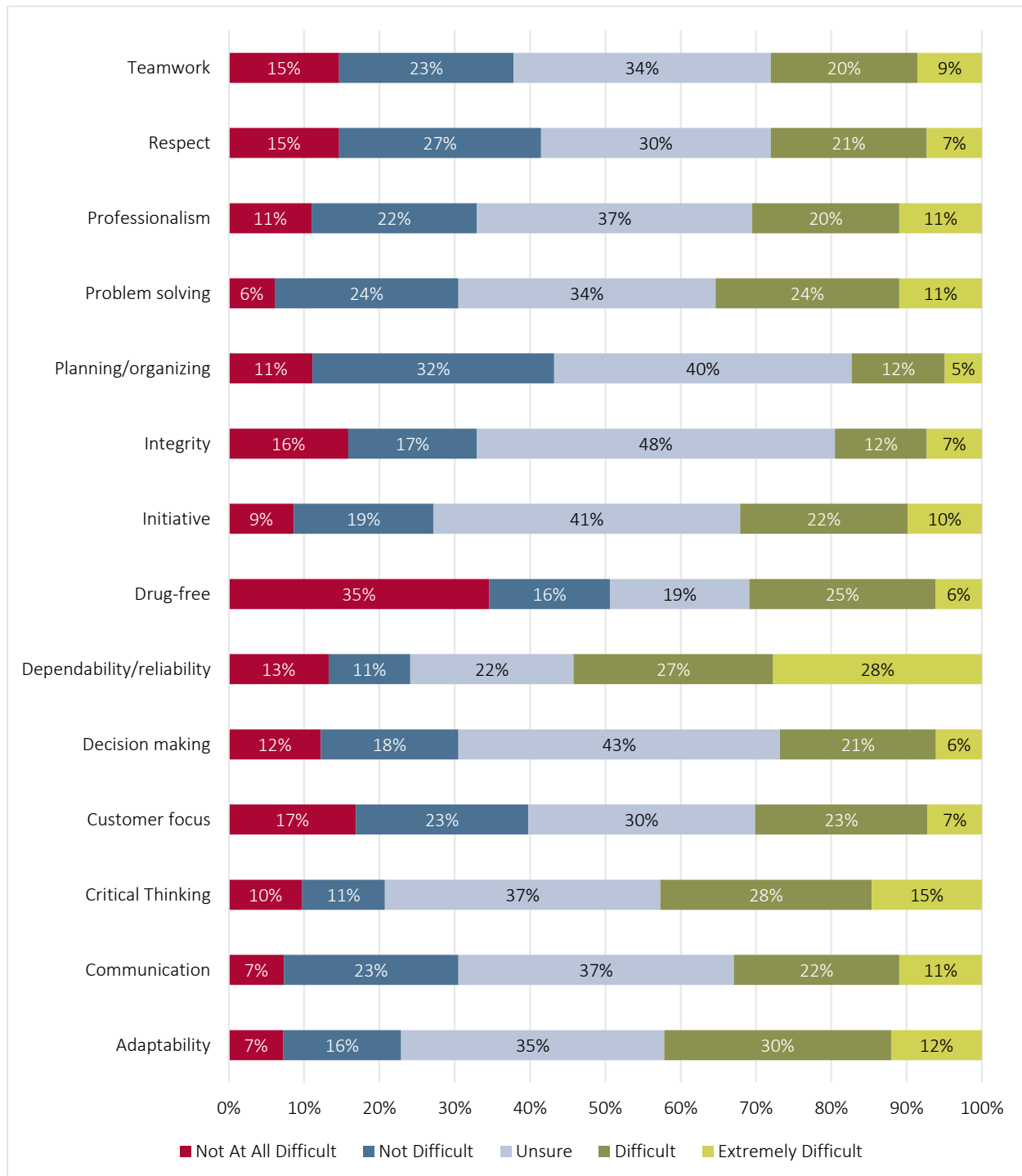
Figure 5: Value of Employability Skills in Hiring Decisions

Figure 5: Value of Employability Skills in Hiring Decisions

Legend: Not At All Valuable, Not Valuable, Unsure, Valuable, Extremely Valuable

Skill	Not At All Valuable	Not Valuable	Unsure	Valuable	Extremely Valuable
Teamwork		1%	11%	29%	59%
Respect	1%		7%	41%	49%
Professionalism	2%	6%	22%	35%	34%
Problem solving	4%	7%	26%	34%	29%
Planning/organizing	4%	12%	42%	30%	13%
Integrity		1%	12%	31%	56%
Initiative		5%	25%	45%	26%
Drug-free	4%	6%	7%	26%	57%
Dependability/reliability			4%	33%	63%
Decision making	1%	12%	30%	36%	21%
Customer focus	2%	9%	16%	36%	35%
Critical Thinking	5%	10%	14%	38%	33%
Communication		5%	19%	38%	39%
Adaptability		2%	25%	31%	42%

Figure 6: Level of Difficulty to Find Employability Skills in Hiring

Legend: ■ Not At All Difficult ■ Not Difficult ■ Unsure ■ Difficult ■ Extremely Difficult

| Skill	Not At All Difficult	Not Difficult	Unsure	Difficult	Extremely Difficult
Teamwork	15%	23%	34%	20%	9%
Respect	15%	27%	30%	21%	7%
Professionalism	11%	22%	37%	20%	11%
Problem solving	6%	24%	34%	24%	11%
Planning/organizing	11%	32%	40%	12%	5%
Integrity	16%	17%	48%	12%	7%
Initiative	9%	19%	41%	22%	10%
Drug-free	35%	16%	19%	25%	6%
Dependability/reliability	13%	11%	22%	27%	28%
Decision making	12%	18%	43%	21%	6%
Customer focus	17%	23%	30%	23%	7%
Critical Thinking	10%	11%	37%	28%	15%
Communication	7%	23%	37%	22%	11%
Adaptability	7%	16%	35%	30%	12%

Aside from employability skills, participants were asked to identify the extent to which individuals entering the workforce have the technical skills required for jobs in their industry. One-third of respondents noted that individuals have a few of the technical skills required compared to 10% which said individuals don't have any of the technical skills required, and 2% who said individuals have all of the technical skills. 55% of respondents said individuals have some or most of the required technical skills.

Survey participants were asked to rate a list of skills for high school/K-12 curriculum in preparing graduates to be hired into the workforce from least important to most important. The most important skills include teamwork, problem solving, critical thinking, basic math, decision-making, and reading comprehension. Advanced math was cited as the overwhelming least important skill for high school/K-12 curriculum in preparing graduates for the workforce.

Leadership skills collected the greatest percentage of "Unsure" selections. Respondents who selected rated leadership skills as "Unsure" were from Accommodation and Food Services (1); Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation (1); Construction (3); Educational Services (1); Finance and Insurance (1); Health Care and Social Assistance (2); Manufacturing (8); Other Services (except Public Administration) (2); and Transportation and Warehousing (1).

Figure 7: Level of Importance of Skills for High School/K-12 Curriculum in Preparing Graduates for the Workforce
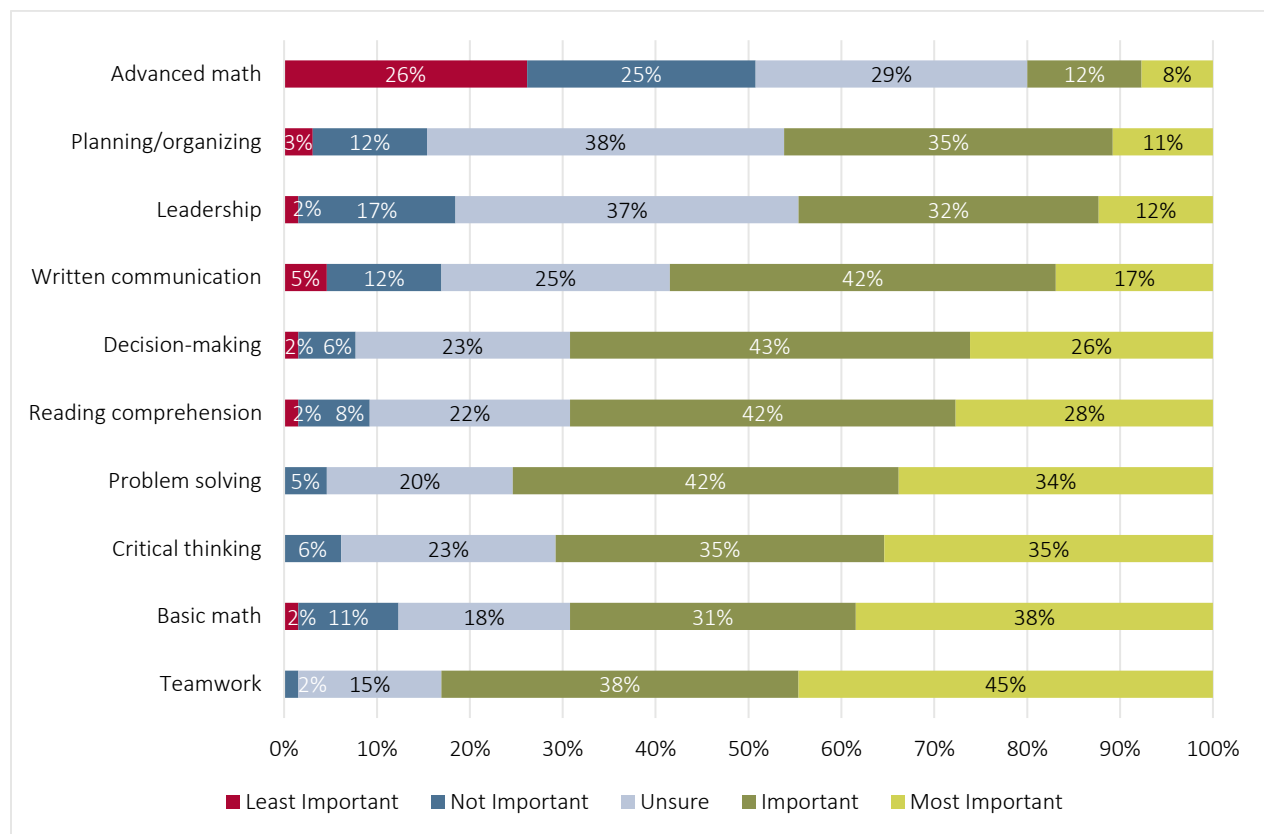
Participants were asked to identify the specific technical skills that are most lacking in new hires. The open-ended responses were analyzed and categorized appropriately. The most commonly identified technical skill lacking was mechanical and electrical skills (13), followed by specific computer software skills (9), and forklift and heavy machinery skills (8). Responses that did not fit into any of the categories or were not specific skills were cataloged under "Other".

Table 2: Technical Skills Most Lacking in New Hires

Technical Skill	Count
Mechanical and Electrical Skills	13
Specific Computer Software Skills	9
Forklift and Heavy Machinery Skills	8
Basic Computer Skills	7
Basic Math and Reading Skills	5
Basic Tool Knowledge	4
Attention to Details	3
Technological Skills	3
Automotive Repair Skills	2
Cable Installation	1
Culinary Skills	1
Linguistics	1
Sales	1
Other	8

Through open-ended responses, participants identified the top three technical skills they anticipate being most important over the next five to ten years. The responses were organized by commonality and the top technical skills included critical thinking/problem solving skills (18), mechanical and electrical skills (18), technological skills (18), basic computer skills (16), and specific computer software skills (16).

Table 3: Anticipated Technical Skills in the Next 5-10 Years[37]

Technical Skill	Count
Technological Skills	18
Critical Thinking/Problem Solving Skills	18
Mechanical and Electrical Skills	18
Specific Computer Software Skills	16
Basic Computer Skills	16
Communication Skills (in-person & virtual)	16
Automation	9
Basic Math and Reading Skills	6
Advanced Computer Skills	5
Troubleshooting	5
Heavy Equipment Operation	4
Construction	4
Leadership	4
Automotive Repair Skills	3
Carpentry Skills	3
Information Security	3
Basic Tool Knowledge	2
Safety, Cleaning & Sterilization Skills	2
Cable Installation	2

Upskilling Talent

A majority of respondents offer opportunities for career advancement (88%) compared to 12% who do not. To offer career advancement opportunities, respondents expressed a need for more internal training (22%), followed by leadership or management training (19%), and professional development opportunities (19%). Over a quarter of respondents who selected internal training were from Manufacturing (27%); followed by Other Services (excepted Public Services) (15%); Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services (13%); Construction (8%); and Finance and Insurance (8%). Tuition reimbursement garnered 11% of total responses. Over half of those responses came from employers of Manufacturing and Construction.

[37] Skills that were not common in responses include 3D modeling, Physical Labor Skills, Accounting, Linguistics, Military Skills, Plumbing, Regulatory/Compliance Skills, and Lighting and Sound Skills. Also, some of these identified skills are not necessarily classified as "technical skills" however since they were cited by multiple respondents, they are reported as such in this analysis.

**Figure 8: Strategies Necessary to Offer Career Advancement Opportunities**

Survey participants cited leadership development training as the most needed training programs for their company (7), followed by technical skills training (6), work-based learning (3), compliance and safety regulation training (2), diversity and language training (2), organizational training (2), and customer service (1).

The types of education and training partners that are leveraged to help support upskilling vary from High School Career and Technical Education Providers to 4-year colleges and universities. The most commonly identified education and training partners by respondents was Third-Party Training Providers (22%), followed by Technical/Community Colleges (16%), Adult Education Career and Technical Education Providers (16%), High School Career and Technical Education Providers (14%), and 4-year colleges and universities (12%). 17% of respondents do not partner with any type of education and training provider and those who selected "Other" identified industry associations, private companies, chambers of commerce, and university alumni associations.

**Figure 9: Partnering Education & Training Providers to Upskill Talent**
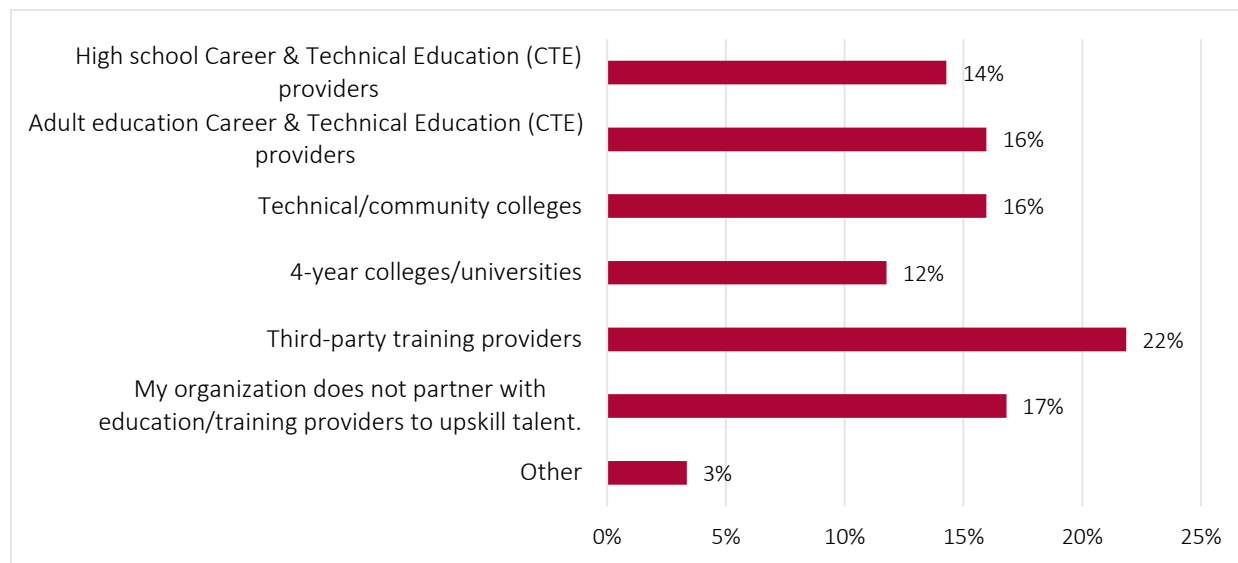
The greatest barrier that prevents respondents from being more engaged with education and training providers is awareness for collaboration opportunities (24%), followed by lack of applicable training programs in their particular industry (22%), and availability of funding opportunities and resources (20%) (i.e., not enough funding to do certain projects or activities). Compared to the latter, 13% reported an awareness of funding opportunities and resources as the barrier (i.e., not knowing about recently released grants, alternative funding streams, etc.). Less than 15% of respondents reported that their organization was too small for training providers to partner with for customized training and 8% reported the lack of available training programs in the region.

Figure 10 details the lack of applicable training programs in industry vs. region by respondents' sector. While 6 respondents from Manufacturing expressed a lack of training programs in their industry as a barrier to being more engaged with education and training providers, only 2 cited a lack of available training programs in the region. Apart from Construction, the lack of available training programs in the region was selected less often by respondents than the lack of applicable training programs by industry. This suggests that there are enough training providers in the Licking County region, but perhaps not the "right kind" of education and training programs to serve the needs of specific sectors like Manufacturing.

Figure 10: Lack of Training Programs by Industry vs. Lack of Available Training Programs in Region
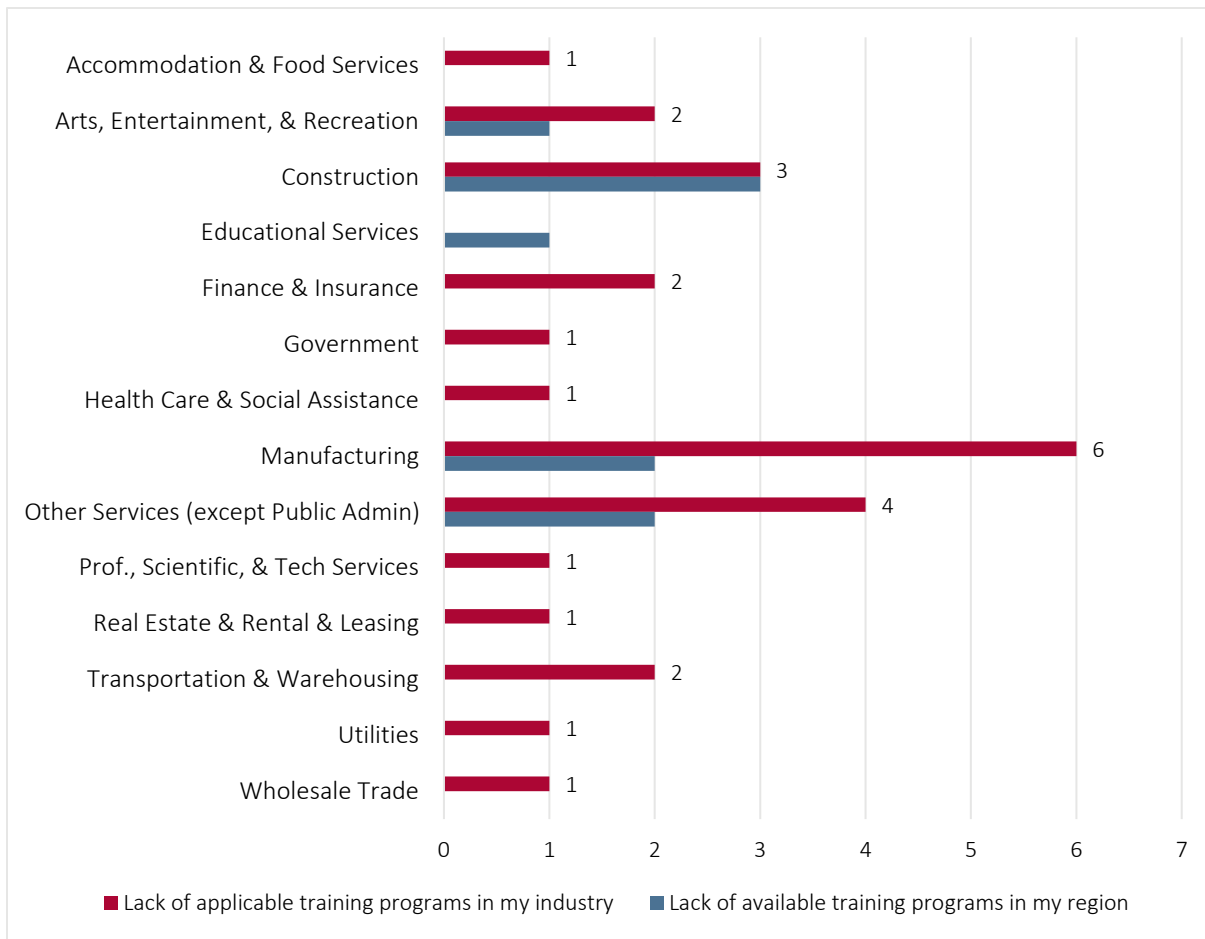
Nearly a third of survey respondents offer some type of on-the-job training. Job Shadowing is the second most common work-based learning opportunity offered (20%), followed by site visits (18%), paid internships (18%), and apprenticeships (7%). The 3% of respondents who selected "Other" cited unpaid internships and industry and occupation-specific training.

Figure 11: Offered Work-Based Learning Opportunities
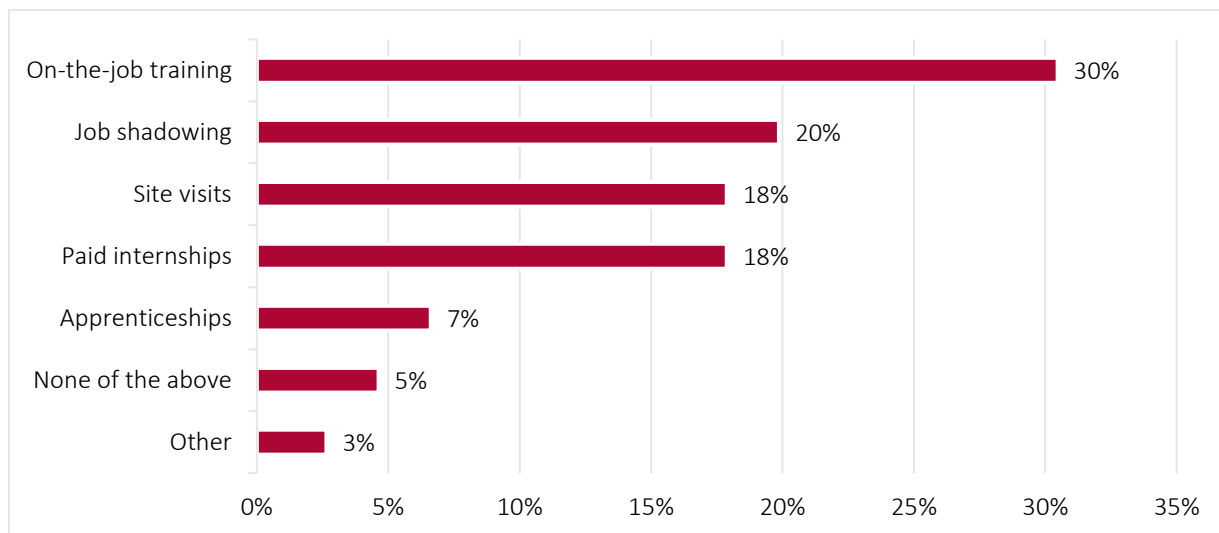
The work-based learning offerings have varying level of effectiveness. Respondents identified the most effect work-based learning opportunity to be on-the-job training. Over 85% of respondents said OJT was either somewhat effective or very effective. In contrast, 51% responded the same for paid internships, 41% for job shadowing, 39% for apprenticeships, and finally 21% for site visits. Apprenticeships received the greatest share of very ineffective or somewhat ineffective responses (56%). A closer examination of the responses reveals that a majority of respondents who answered this way towards apprenticeships were from sectors that do not typically offer apprenticeship programs (e.g., Accommodation and Food Services; Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation; Real Estate and Rental and Leasing; etc.).

**Figure 12: Effectiveness of Work-Based Learning Opportunities**
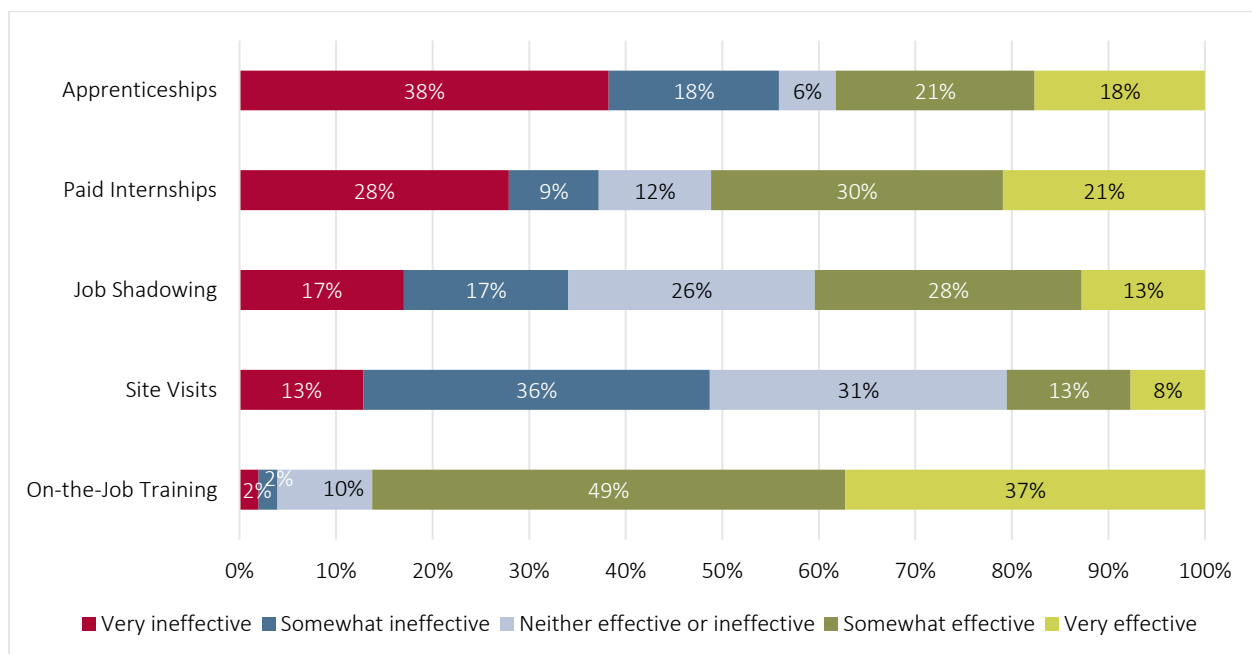
Outreach & Marketing

To engage in and implement work-based learning programs, a majority of respondents partner with third-party training providers (21%), followed by 4-year colleges/universities (18%), Technical/Community Colleges (18%), Adult Education and Career and Technical Education (CTE) providers (18%), High School Career and Technical Education providers (17%), and finally high school/K-12 (8%).

The most common method by respondents to market career opportunities to high school and/or college students was by social media (29%). Site visits for students to the employer's place of business garnered 11% of responses compared to 9% of respondents who present directly in the student's classroom.

Figure 13: Methods Used to Market Career Opportunities
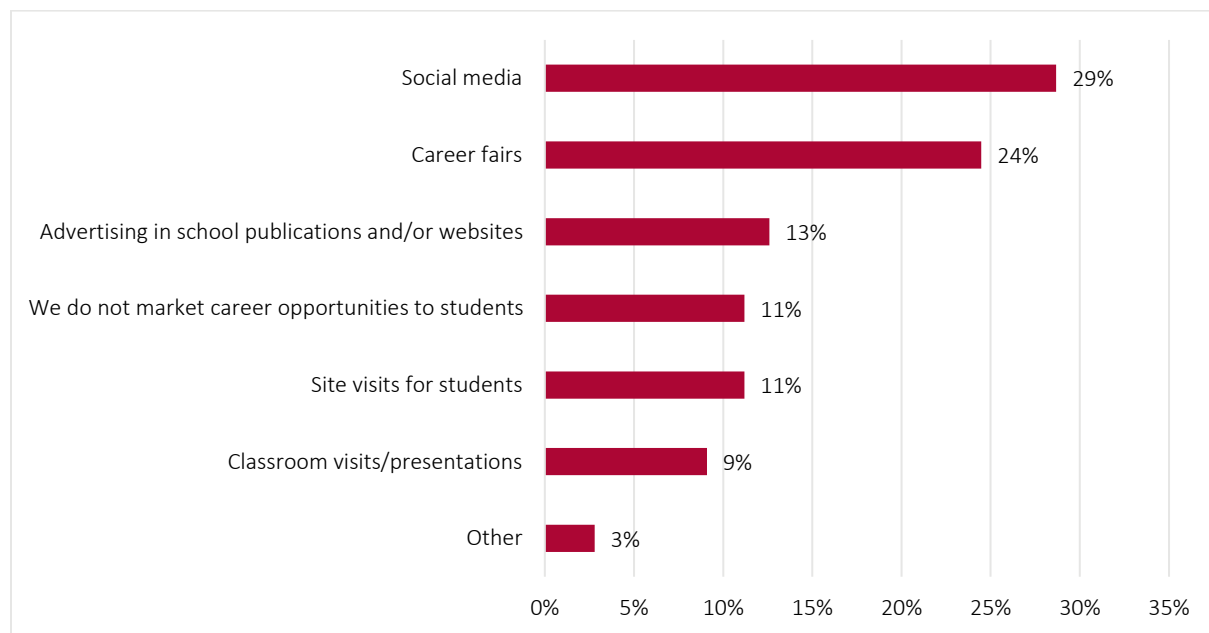
Whereas social media was the most common marketing strategy, it was also deemed the most effective with 44% identifying it as effective or very effective. Only 10% of respondents cited advertising in school publications/websites as effective compared to 70% who indicated it was not an effective marketing strategy. It is worth noting that the percentage of respondents who identified the listed marketing strategies as very effective is small. Only social media garnered more than 5% of responses, suggesting that these strategies are not most effective and perhaps a different strategy needs adopted.

Figure 14: Effectiveness of Marketing Strategies
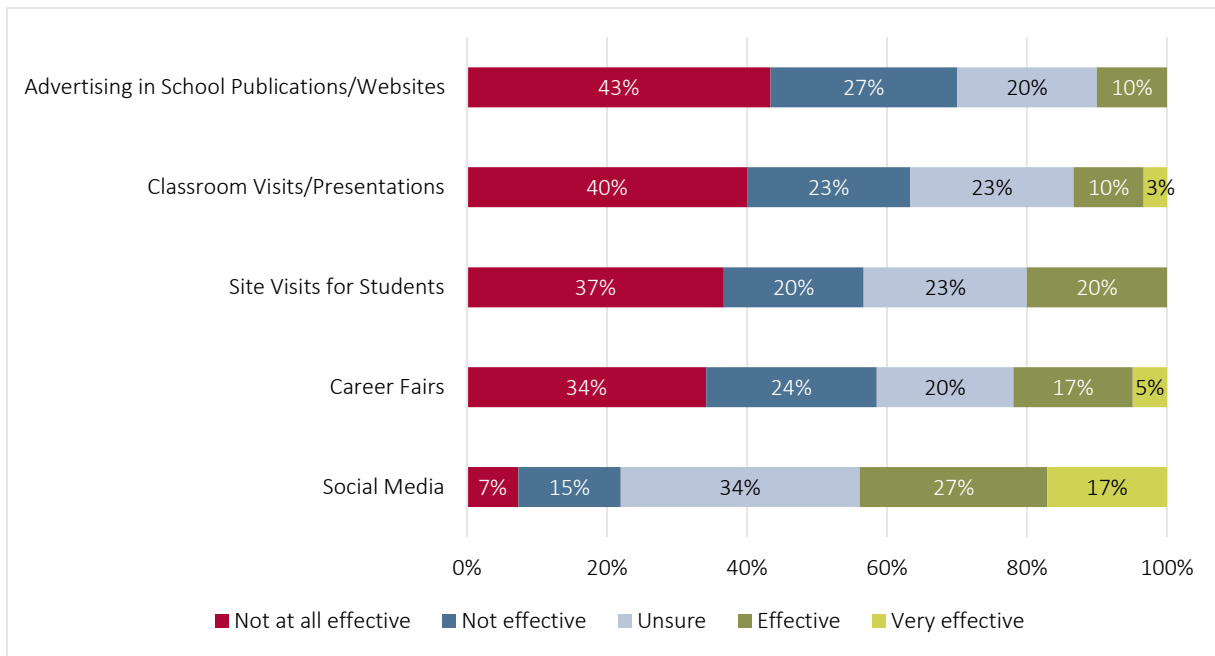
In an open-ended response question, participants were asked to identify the most important things that the education and training system can do to prepare students and adult workers for in-demand and hard-to-fill jobs in their respective industry. Responses were reviewed and organized by common themes. Teaching the importance of professionalism whether that is in the form of accountability, reliability, strong work ethic, or continued sense of drive, was the most commonly identified response. Some examples include:

" Dedication and willingness to learn and be patient for advancement"

"Lessons/training on dependability, reliability, and teamwork"

"Understanding of professional work manners/communication and speech/dependability and responsibility"

Other things education and training partners can do to prepare students and adult workers for the workforce is to teach and promote the importance of technical skills as well as basic math, reading, and writing skills. Career exploration was also recognized as an important action to prepare workers. Open-ended responses for career exploration expressed the importance of promoting tradesmen jobs and other types of good-paying jobs that do not require a degree.

Table 4: Most Important Things Education/Training System Can Do to Best Prepare Students & Adult Workers for In-Demand & Hard-to-Fill Jobs

Categorized Response	Count
Professionalism, Accountability & Reliability	20
Technical Skills Training	9
Basic Math, Reading & Writing Skills	7
Communication	4
Critical Thinking	3
Career Exploration	3
Work-Based Learning	2
Short-Term Training Programs	1
Increased Funding	1
Diversity Training	1
Safety Skills Training	1

APPENDIX B.1: OPEN-ENDED SURVEY RESPONSES

Which technical skills are the most lacking in new hires to workforce in your industry?	
Ability to measure accurately; attention to detail; ability to follow directions accurately	Fewer and fewer have any relevant experience.
Ability to understand fundamental mechanical and electrical systems.	Have basic knowledge but are not familiar with software
Automotive	In higher end technology positions, there is a lack of applicants
Automotive Technician and Auto Body Repair	Industry experience
Basic computer skills for those over 40, and newly entering the workforce.	Knowledge of various computer systems and ability to learn new ones.
Basic machine operating and forklift operating skills	Machine Operations, Forklift Operations, Basic Math & Basic Reading
Basic machinery	Maintenance experience
Basic mechanical skills	Manufacturing or mechanical or electrical experience
Basic tool knowledge	math skills
cable installation in commercial buildings	Math, computer, comprehension
CAD experience.	Math, tool use, basic geometric equations/understanding
Comfortable with Technology	Mechanical aptitude.
Commercial Driver's License; Basic navigation skills for web-based software; Basic PC software applications (Microsoft Office)	Microsoft - Outlook, Excel, Word, Power Point
Commercial driving	Most all of the trade skills above the most basic
Computer Aided Design	PLC programming and maintenance skills
Computer knowledge / abilities	running a forklift, handling $$,
Computer literacy	Sales... no one seems to know how to network, reach out in a genuine way, build contacts, follow up afterwards, etc...
computer skills - equipment operation	specific software knowledge
Computer skills and professional writing.	Systemic thinking
Construction fundamentals. What technical skills do you anticipate? Inability to read a tape, cut straight, etc.	There are very few skilled trades workers that are younger and want to learn.
Cosmetic associate -dent removal and wheel/tire.	They are very industry specific, but some examples would be construction skills, lighting, and sound technician / design skills.
Culinary skills	Understanding difference between website and app usage.
Design sketching	Use of tools. Knowledge of construction techniques
Dryer Experience	Using hand gages, using shop tools, basic math
Each position is different, but generally must have military background/experience, or be fluent in multiple languages with linguistic experience; most of our positions require a security clearance	Varies by work area
Experience beyond what they learn in class	Warehouse management systems (WMS) and navigating tech/scanning equipment

Experienced carpenters and concrete finishers	Willingness to learn new methods	
Familiarity with industry-specific integrated software	Working with larger equipment/tools and the techniques/skills needed for that.	
Fear of learning new programs	Working with our sheet metal, older machines, and working piece rate	

What technical skills do you anticipate will be important in your industry in the next 5-10 years?		
3D modeling	Computerized CAD	Math skills
Ability to deal with automated office systems - door, printing, etc.	Concept sketching	Mechanic
Ability to handle physical labor	Concrete	Mechanical
Ability to learn new software systems for marketing, communications	Continued automation of equipment/systems	Mechanical
Ability to relate / work with different cultures of people	Continuous improvement	Mechanical
Ability to use tools	Critical Reasoning Skills	Mechanical Systems
Accounting	Critical think skills	Military experience with certain MOS's
Adaptability	Critical thinking	More advanced computer skills
Adaptability	Critical thinking	More computer skills
Adaptability to new software packages	Critical thinking	On the Job Initiative and problem solving
Adaptability to new innovations in tools/equipment	Critical thinking	Online marketing / social media
Adapting to tech advances	Cut rafters and stairs	Operating basic software
Advanced computer skills	Data analysis	OSHA training
Advanced inventory system - RF scanner	Data analysis	Our industry is a mix of conduit and wire installation and complex technology interface We can usually find or train for one or the other but the combination of the two is rare and also the most sought after
Advanced machine operation	Data Entry	Outlook
Advanced problem-solving skills	Design	PC based
Analysis of data	Driving	Personal flexibility and resilience
App usage. Tablet usage in our industry.	Drone knowledge/certification	Physical labor
Attention to detail	Drug free	Platform ambidexterity
Auto Body	Dryer Experience	PLC's
Automation	Economic development skills	Plumbers
Automation	Electrical	Powered equipment operation
Automation	Electrical and Control Systems	Problem Solving
Automotive Painter	Electrical experience	Professionalism, particularly as it relates to writing and communications skills

Basic computer knowledge and typing skill, not smart phone, and texting	Electrical/electronics	Programming
Basic computer skills	Electronic device skills (tablet)	Project management of software implementation
Basic mathematics	Electronic Testing	Project Superintendents and Managers
Basic technical understanding specific to job	Emerging technologies	Rapidly changing electronic platforms used for 360-degree view of customer
Basic tool knowledge	Enthusiasm	Regulatory/Compliance
Being able to easily use phone and computers.	Entry-Level commercial driver training	Responsibility
Better communication skills	Ever accelerating use of technology	Robotics
Carpenters	Excel	Robots
Carpentry	Extruder	Running automated machinery/automatic sorting
Centerline assessment	Fiber optic splicing and termination	Security based software knowledge
Certifications	Financial management - excel	Showing up to work on time everyday
CIP & GMP	Forklift skills	Social Media Experience
Clearance	General and specific software skills	Soft skills
Cloud based applications	General construction skills	Solid building practices
Cloud-based programming	General problem solving in correcting equipment failure. example: when credit card machine quits-employees just stand there and are lost of what to attempt.	Solid cosmetic work - paint and auto body work
CNC knowledge,	Greater IT understanding even in non-IT roles	Solid detail, inventory skills
CNC machine operation	Implementing new WMS systems	Strategic planning
Comfortable with Technology	Improved marketing and communication skills	Strategic Planning
Commercial driver	Info security	Survey Field Skills
Communication	Installation of security related systems	Technology skills - increase use of handheld devices/data collection within each job function
Communicate	Installation of wireless networks	Theatre specific: lighting, scenic, sound, acting and costuming
Communication	Instrumentation and pneumatic control systems	Trouble shooting skills
Communication	Interpersonal	Troubleshooting
Communication skills	IT project management and business analysis	Troubleshooting

Communication skills	Job can be done 100% from phone	Trouble-shooting and problem-solving skills
Communication skills...weakened in younger workers	Knowing how to manually do tasks when automated things fail.	Troubleshooting when the machine is not working properly
Computer	Knowledge of safety protocols	Understanding codes
Computer	Leadership	Understanding integrated technology
Computer	Leadership positions	Using online communications
Computer	Leadership track	Video conferencing
Computer Aided Design	Linguistic experience	Virtual closings
Computer literacy	Logic controls	Virtual meetings will increase even more
Computer literacy	Love of community	Virtual platform knowledge
Computer literacy	Machine Operations	Virtual teamwork
Computer Science	Maintenance	Web-based software navigation skills
Computer skills	Masons	Wielding
Computer skills	Math	Willingness to Learn
Computer skills	Math	Word
Computer skills	Math	Working remotely
Computer skills as it translates to both in-office and remote working	Math skills	

What training program(s) are needed by your organization that are not currently available?
Apprenticeship program
Compliance as it relates to the FDA and other state and federal policies.
Dedicated trainer organization to manage OJT for floor work
General Customer service, Money Handling and seeing how to prepare for next task prior to needing to start that task.
How to transition from a peer to a supervisor
Language / diversity training
Leadership and Ownership of growth and advancement
Learning to move from staff to supervisor
Mechanical test
Mentorship programs, longer term leadership development/succession development,
OSHA certifications, Confined Space, Slips Trips & falls
Planning a workday/work schedule planning
PLC programming
Secondary language training
Skills development (leadership, computer, hard/soft, etc.)
Soft Skills and Entry Level Leadership training
Soft skills training, leadership training
Specialization training for specific areas of construction/remodeling industry
Specific to in house technology
Teamwork
Technical skills, management training
Technician and Cosmetic Body work on cars

What are the most important things that the education/training system can do to prepare students and adult workers for in-demand and hard-to-fill jobs in your industry?
Accountability and reliability
Awareness and training
Basic and Intermediate Math Skills, Reading Comprehension, and Writing
Basic Math, Reading, and Writing skills
Bring back shop classes in middle and high school !!!!
Communication skills, professionalism, math
Dedication and willingness to learn and be patient for advancement
Develop good work ethic and interest in life-long learning
Focus on skilled trades
Give them basic mechanical skills and relay the importance of attendance and teamwork
Help them feel prepared to work 8-9 hours a day and to be patient in their careers. Advancement can take time.
I feel emerging workers have lacked awareness of their core strengths and drivers. Knowing these, and knowing how to
Increase emphasis on safety skills; familiarity with industry specific technology
Learn how to adapt and grow
Learn how to be openminded, critical thinking individuals that can adapt quickly
Learning a trade is a positive career decision.
Lessons/training on dependability, reliability, and teamwork
More technical theatre classes and instruction. Teaching students to be dependable and self-motivated.
Not only encourage college. Educated them on all the different types of careers available. Teach importance of teamwork and reliability in order to move up in an organization.
On-site training/real world scenarios
Partner with local businesses / collaborate
Prepare them with general or specialized training for lifelong careers in the trades on any/all levels
Promote skills trades
Provide CDL training in Licking County
Provide certificate programs which take 3 or 6 months to complete in multiple formats, such as in-person and remote learning with both synchronous and asynchronous options. Provide self-paced, short learning modules for basic PC skills. Allow enrollees to work while achieving certificates so we as employers can support them in their journey and promote or provide an incentive for achievement.
Provide funding
Provide real world experiences, including time management and meeting deadlines
Reading abilities
Reading/Writing/Comprehension
Teach basic skills in math and critical thinking.
Teach communication, technical skills, and work ethic
Teach customer service and critical thinking skills.
Teach the importance of 1. showing up to work on-time, every day.
Teaching basic life skills and accountability. Emphasis careers in manufacturing
Teamwork and Dependability awareness
Technical skills and diversity training
That not everyone needs to have a degree! There are enough trades in my industry that is lacking
The first thing is employability skills the second are trade foundation skills
Train students for real life and not standardized tests. Hire teachers who have worked in the real world and know what skills employers are looking for.

Understanding of professional work manners/communication and speech/dependability and responsibility	
We need more critical thinking, action-oriented, problem solvers. People who want to step out of the box and achieve results. Motivation has been lacking and I do not know if it is due to a low level of confidence because of inexperience, or another root cause?	

Please provide 2-3 recommendations for how GROW Licking County CIC can help you with your workforce needs.	
Ask high producing agents in Licking County to do Real Estate training	Help me get in front of candidates?
Ask the question -- are we offering a living wage in L.C.? If not, what will we do about it?	Help to find ways to diversify the hiring demographics
Basic math	Help us form groups to provide more opportunities for training
Basic new technology training - CTEC, COTC	Host hiring/networking events and allow local businesses to present their career openings.
Better background checks	How to have a new employee work from home
Better drug screening	How to train new employees remotely
Call us. Never heard of you	Increase the base of skilled workers in the county
Communicate the career fair options	Job offerings in local businesses that provide entry level positions to the community. where can I get work? at all levels or skills
Communicate the training options	Job opportunities in the construction field are worldwide, not just limited to Licking County
Communicate to see if you are able to help	Know who to share information with inside the organization (i.e. - HR, Managers, Directors, etcetc.)
Continue and enhance the virtual training opportunities-reduces cost and minimizes work time disruption	Market our firm for job openings
Continue to share information about the companies through social media	Marketing
Create an A-Z process to encourage individuals to become entrepreneurs and small business owners to complement our business, education, and industry sectors in L.C. We need them all!	Meet & greet
Create social work curriculum paths	Offer Real Estate classes locally
Critical thinking	Offering coursework for basic office technology
Develop curriculum to promote manufacturing	On-site shadowing opportunities
Directory for collaborative services among local businesses (i.e., who cleans offices? etc.)	Partner up with Carvana
Diversity training	Perhaps a newsletter detailing areas in the county that are having career/job fairs.
Diversity training to prepare students for the workforce. Columbus is diverse and students should be prepared for that.	Prepare students for a career in manufacturing
Emphasize people skills on all levels	Promote local jobs/businesses to C-TEC/COTC students/administration (they do not have to leave the area)

Encourage growth and education in life skills beyond the basics, understanding finances, insurance, and day-to-day personal management	Provide grants/support or partnership for apprenticeship program
Enlist opportunities for improved communication by either mentoring or other methods	Provide more training programs focused on skilled trades
Find funds for apprenticeships in manufacturing skills	Provide ongoing opportunities for partnership and collaboration
Focus on Engineering skills	Recruitment
Foster more on-the-job training opportunities	Referral
Foster ways to shrink the gap between available job opportunities and those unemployed or underemployed.	Show the benefits of working in Licking County as opposed to commuting to Columbus.
Generate more interest in manufacturing	Teach small business planning
Get students into skilled trades	Teach students about teamwork. Seems like most have learned how to "do their own work" and do not think of the workplace as a team.
Give young people exposure to professional workplaces so they learn how to act around professionals	Teach that the workplace is a job/career-not something to do at their connivance.
Grow LC could have a job fair or help coordinate something like this	The fact that you have this survey out is the first great idea
Have always wanted to hold an annual Licking Co. construction career day with multiple business owners in attendance, live demonstrations, etc. to attract an interest level for the future of trades	Train students/people to work in the remodeling industry (very MUCH in demand now)
Help connect companies who do manufacturing with design/engineering teams who could support them!	Training
Ask high producing agents in Licking County to do Real Estate training	Understanding the types of positions we fill yearly and helping to identify ways to tap into unknown talent, especially in area high schools.
Help develop the above competencies.	We all want to hire a diverse work force but struggle with how to do it in Licking County. Work with us so we can start to do this. Provide us with the tools and information to be able to do so.
Help educate the public that the construction field is a valuable career choice.	We are a fairly unique industry locally but helping to identify existing programs would be useful.

APPENDIX C: STAKEHOLDER INPUT SESSIONS SUMMARIES

Education, Workforce, Training Sessions

Most Common Talent-Related Issues

Workforce professionals report significant problems with infrastructure, notably access to transportation and high-speed broadband internet. They also report concerns about worker comfort with IT. Potential workers are having a difficult time accessing remote training opportunities and interviews. Transportation has been a long-standing issue in Licking County that continues to get worse as the workforce grows. As the job market grows and improves, the transportation infrastructure does not grow to match it.

Workforce professionals report a stigma attached to manufacturing careers because people think those careers will not be around long-term or that they are not good, clean, safe jobs. Postsecondary educators also report this tendency among parents of younger adult workers.

Workforce professionals report that some employers are not doing a good job of managing the need for training of their workers.

Workforce professionals report challenges relating to diversity in the workplace. Employers are not embracing diversity programs and many workplaces are not comfortable places for black workers.

K-12 educators report that state-mandated graduation requirements are outdated and are getting in the way of the schools' ability to prepare students for the workforce.

K-12 educators report wanting employers to communicate their needs with state officials. They do not feel that students who are not bound for a 4-year college are being considered when the graduation requirements are being established.

Postsecondary educators report difficulty in identifying candidates for specific programs and matching them to those programs.

Successes/Best Practices

Workforce professionals report success in teaching soft skills through a 3-week bootcamp on soft skills connected to the Manufacturing Mobile Crew program that teaches technical skills. The bootcamp takes place before the mobile crew program begins.

Workforce professionals report success with a summer program for high school students that revolves around career exploration with a job coach. This information is reported back to the high schools.

Workforce professionals report that the systems in place for training technical skills and placing completers into jobs are successful.

Workforce professionals report success with mentoring programs and connecting people entering the workforce with industry veterans.

Workforce professionals report success with the OMJ Options Program.

Workforce professionals report successes with the county jail not taking new inmates and forcing the community to consider other options like treatment.

K-12 educators report that programs with WBL models that send high school juniors and seniors to receive on-the-job training with employers have been successful and led to high employment rates.

K-12 educators report a successful program in which employer record a video with information about their field that show students who they are, what they do, and shows people performing work tasks associated with that field. This can help make up some of the knowledge gap that exist because most teachers are not very aware of many of these specifics.

Postsecondary educators report success with C-TEC's programming and use these are best practices for the region.

Postsecondary educators report large successes with sector partnerships in manufacturing.

Workforce professionals report that for adult workers, the best way to teach employability skills is in the workplace.

Services

Workforce professionals report a desire for different service organizations could do more to work collaboratively. Occasionally, individuals seeking these services are working with multiple organizations.

Workforce professionals report attempting corrective action immediately after an interview or role-playing interview activity as an effort to coach in real-time.

Workforce professionals report procedures for following up with workers after job placement. For veterans, there is a 30-, 60-, and 90-day follow-up and one at the one-year mark. For younger adults (under 24) there is also a follow up every 30 days. For adults over 24 years, there is no specific follow-up schedule, but they do follow up and let the client know they are available if they need any services. These services are limited by the size of the workforce staff.

Workforce professionals report an appropriate level of funding for providing childcare services and other non-training services.

K-12 educators report beginning to identify students as early as middle school who might be a good fit for career navigation services. Mandated success plans and career guidance are well established at the high school level. At the high school level, a lot of the focus is on skill development. At the middle school level, these services focus on gauging interest in different fields.

Postsecondary educators report using lifestyle-matching to help adult workers find occupations that will provide incomes that they need to support their lifestyle.

Skills Credentials

Workforce professionals reports that soft skills are extremely important, especially to the youngest generation of workers who do not seem to grasp some important workplace-ready skills. They struggle to comprehend the requirements of an 8-hour workday. They are not committed to being at their jobs for an extended period. Employers are struggling to find young workers "who show up, get along with coworkers, think on their feet."

Workforce professionals report a difficulty that there does not exist a certification for soft skills training.

Workforce professionals report that technical skill training is effective and that there are resources available to help workers receive training. They also report that workers who received this training are being placed at high rates.

K-12 educators report that employers seem to be pleased with the technical skills that their recent graduates are demonstrating in the workplace.

K-12 educators report that employers are looking for soft skill development from the K-12 system, but that state-mandated graduation requirements do not allow the schools to focus on this type of education.

K-12 educators report having rubrics that allow them to assess soft skills attainment among students and being able to then provide direct feedback through project-based learning activities.

K-12 educators report hearing from graduates that they wish they had been taught more computer coding skills and other computer application-based learning.

Postsecondary educators report research that suggests that credentials are less important to employers than skills and short-term "micro credentials" that attest to skills and not program completion. There must also be an effort made to ensure that these short-term credentials are stackable (towards a degree or career advancement along a specific pathway) and not one-and-done.

Postsecondary educators report a need to do better will teaching soft skills (and computer skills such as Excel) to everyone, not just those in specific career programs.

Partnerships

Workforce professionals report strong relationships and communication with area training centers and other post-secondary education providers. Instructors are willing to reach out to workforce professionals if students are struggling in the classroom.

Workforce professionals report strong relationships between certain workforce service providers. OOD has vocational counselors embedded in schools such as COTC. Adult Court Services refer clients to CTEC and welcomes speakers from OMJ regularly.

Workforce professionals report a desire for a program that helps employers with the cost of providing training to their workers. These costs are keeping some employers from addressing their training needs.

Workforce professionals report a desire for more workforce development boards to set up group models, which will help to mitigate some serious workforce issues and work directly with employers to set up apprenticeship programs.

K-12 educators report partnerships between C-TEC and CTE programs. C-TEC also works with advisory boards in multiple industries.

K-12 educators report that employers are not working with the high schools to instruct the schools on how to prepare students for the workforce. Employers also do not have a presence in the schools to interact with the students the way that colleges or the military do. Sometimes the schools reach out to employers, but the employer never reach out to the schools.

Many K-12 educators expressed interest in focusing more energy into inviting employers into their classrooms once the public health crisis has ended.

Some K-12 educators are working on programs that connect juniors and seniors directly with potential employers, including site tours. This is a current program for manufacturing, but they are working on expanding this program to other fields.

K-12 educators report that they would like to see more feedback from employers about what they would like to see in graduates that they are currently not seeing once they have assessed graduates entering the workforce.

K-12 educators do not need employers to participate in curriculum development.

Postsecondary educators report working with students as early as 6th grade to participate in career exploration.

Postsecondary educators report that adult workers are sent to C-TEC from OMJ to complete a comprehensive evaluation about their strengths and match them to careers.

One postsecondary educator reported that postsecondary institutions do not actually value the input they receive from employers and it leads to distrust and soured relationships. This educator feels that Perkins is forcing schools to do a better job at this.

Wages & Other Benefits

Workforce professionals report that workers are being overworked due to many unfilled positions and difficulty companies have in recruiting for their open positions.

Workforce professionals report opportunities for $17-$19/hr. jobs, but employers are struggling to fill them. Wages in Franklin county are higher and will always be higher.

Workforce professionals report that numerous employers are willing to pay tuition for training, and in some cases an hourly wage for time spent in training.

Apprenticeships and Work-based Learning

Workforce professionals report an interest in apprenticeships among employers and job seekers. In the past these partnerships have been with employers and unions and focused on incumbent workers. In the last few years, there has been a shift in trying to connect job seekers with apprenticeships, not incumbent workers.

Workforce professionals report that apprenticeship programs would help address some of the biggest challenges to workforce in Licking County. Apprenticeship programs address issues with mentorship, diversity, workforce analysis, and progressive wage skills.

K-12 educators report a high level of effort to start am apprenticeship/WBL-hybrid system with a local employer, but that the program was very successful once it was up and running. The program in question arose out of the employer contacting the school to inform them about what student profile would best match the company's employment needs.

Trends

Workforce professionals report being in the early stages of establishing training and workforce solutions to bring workers into healthcare fields.

One K-12 educator expressed concern that matching students to a specific pathway at a young age can be too limiting. Instead, the skills that should be taught are not career or industry-specific, but instead teach adaptability since younger workers are more likely to more around across industries.

Postsecondary educators report trends toward engineering technology and healthcare (including non-tradition nursing pathways)

Postsecondary educators report that after the public health crisis is over, they are expecting people displaced by the pandemic to want to return to the workforce in jobs other than restaurants and hospitality.

Workforce professionals report that based on successes in manufacturing sector partnerships, other industries such as healthcare and IT are starting to follow the same model.

Employer Sessions

Location

Employers report the benefits of being in Licking County as being close enough to serve Columbus and pull workforce from Columbus and surrounding counties. Good support from workforce and community in Licking County. There are young leaders here who have a lot of opportunities to get involved in the community. This is important for the millennials workforce and attracts people for mid- and high-level salaried positions.

Workforce Challenges in Licking County

Employers report having difficulty recruiting talent for entry-level "general labor". In some cases, employer report feeling that this is due to the "Amazon effect" in which employees are offered better wages at an Amazon warehouse, so they cycle in and out of work in entry-level positions because of the promise of higher wages with Amazon, but then find they don't enjoy that kind of work. This leads to difficulty in recruiting for entry-level jobs and high turnover in new hires. One employer suggested that the effort to bring in new companies such as Amazon further depletes the labor pool. Employers also report raising wages to compete, but still having issues with attracting entry-level workers.

Multiple employers reported having issues with the "employability skills" or "soft skills" of reliability, willingness to arrive at work on time, showing up for scheduled interviews, passing drug tests, etc. Some employers reported a low level of interview skills among job candidates.

Employers report struggling to find ways to keep their workers motivated or engaged in their work. Some employers reported a lack of motivation in their workers and an unwillingness to "work your way up" from entry-level occupations into better paying jobs.

Recruitment Approach/Strategies

For entry-level, non-skilled positions, employers reported a greater interest in experience than in degrees or credentials. Multiple employers reported recruiting based on matching their workplace culture – that they are willing to train employees who "are here for the right reasons."

Multiple employers reported looking at resumes for any consistent employment in the workers' history. They consider it ideal to hire people who have spent at least one full year at a job before moving on.

Employers also reported not seeing candidates with knowledge about how to compile a resume.

Some employers report success in working with their suppliers to help them identify candidates.

Skills

Employers repeatedly reported looking for interpersonal skills, leadership skills, and other employability skills such as: conflict resolution, critical thinking, following directions, asking questions, being on time, and being polite to coworkers and supervisors.

Many employers suggested that they would prefer high schools to focus on these skills, that technical skills can be taught after they have hired a reliable worker with the appropriate soft skills or who demonstrate good values.

Employers in manufacturing reported struggling to find qualified candidates for automation technician, machine operators, and other positions requiring technical skills in hydraulics and electrical.

One employer reported difficulty in finding people experienced in food safety and with knowledge about chemicals.

Diversity

Some employers report difficulty in recruiting a diverse workforce in Licking County. Due to the relatively low diversity in Licking County residence, this has led to efforts to recruit from nearby Franklin County to aid in finding a more diverse talent pool. However, this leads to issues surrounding transportation.

Employers reported a desire to have more resources available to them to help them attract a more diverse workforce.

One employer reported success with recruiting from Hispanic and Somalian populations. This employer actively attempts to accommodate workers with language barriers. Among these strategies is accepting applications in different languages and using Google translate to create and interpret documents for non-English speakers.

One employer reported great success in recruiting from the Nepali community, that workers from this community would arrive to work together and preferred to work in groups.

On-the-job Training & Work-Based Learning Programs
Multiple employers in different industries commented on the successes of their internal leadership training programs with prioritization placed on internal candidates.

One employer reported offering career programs that offer tuition forwards licenses and degrees.

Working with Workforce Partners
Multiple employers reported a lack of awareness or knowledge about Licking County workforce systems and programs available to help them recruit talent. One employer reported success in being a "second-chance employer," noting that several their most reliable employees had been previously incarcerated.

Some employers reported success in working with OMJ and OJFS but wonder what other resources are available to them.

One employer reported that Licking County OMJ was unable to advertise their position appropriately and that other area OMJs have led to better turnout for their events.

One employer wished that the CTEC website were clearer about what services they could offer to employers.

One employer wished there were a one-page flyer that outlined resources that were available to them.

Working with Education Partners:
Employers reported success in working with CTEC and creating opportunities for CTEC students to tour their facilities.

Two employers reported limited success in partnering with education providers. They felt that the school was not able to generate interest in their line of work (manufacturing).

Many employers reported interest in having students come tour their facilities after the COVID-19 pandemic is over and it is safe to do so.

One employer reported success with a COTC virtual training program in which new hires could take courses together as a group.

One employer reported a good experience in touring CTEC and meeting professors. Professors have been able to connect the employer with students who might be interested in working there.

Multiple employers report a desire for help in connecting with area high schools. They feel that if they could get help in identifying high school students with interest or mechanical skills, that they would be more successful. One employer reported a lack of ability to connect with their area high school (Utica).

Non-wage Benefits

One employer reported success in making top-level management available to feedback or questions from the entire workforce. They also allow listening to music at work and holding regular office parties.

One employer reported success in focusing on company culture and creating a feeling of community in the workplace. They have gotten feedback that Amazon workers do not feel like they are a part of a community, but instead "just feel like a number."

Employers reported successes in flexible scheduling, tuition reimbursement, expanded holiday time, and making employees eligible for benefits immediately upon hire.

Some employers reported that employees only care about wages and are uninterested in other benefits such as insurance or paid-time-off.

One employer reported giving a free carton of ice cream to each employee every week.

Industry-specific Responses

Manufacturing employers report difficulty in recruiting a workforce because students and potential workers are not aware of manufacturing as an option for good, safe, clean employment. One employer reported that education providers are not doing enough to generate interest in manufacturing.

Talent Sessions

Location

Workers reported feeling a sense of community in Licking County. Even workers who did not initially feel welcomed because of their race came to feel at home in time.

One worker was trained in their field in another country but was unable to work in this country without an additional certification.

Workers reported enjoying being close to home.

Challenges

Multiple individuals reported difficulty in negotiating different cultural norms and behaviors.

Multiple workers expressed a hope that more people would know about the services that are available to them through the workforce system.

Multiple workers mentioned issues relating to transportation that limited the jobs they could apply for.

Multiple workers reported the possibility of better pay in neighboring Franklin County.

Services

Talent reported that the services offered through OMJ were extremely helpful.

Multiple workers settled on a career they wanted before looking at education options for getting the training that they needed.

Multiple workers expressed a sense of "relief" after being connected with a member of staff at OMJ or C-TEC.

Skills

One worker felt they got a lot of important knowledge out of technical skills classes (wood shop) in high school.

One worker reported that her math classes from high school showed her that she liked solving problems, which has guided her career.

Successes

Multiple individuals reported finding more fulfillment by being happy in a job and liking the work and the people than just looking at financial aspects. There were multiple comments about the work environment offering opportunities for mentorship and individual growth. One worker appreciated the flexibility around scheduling and hours.

One individual began a career with a 6-month internship at the library and was then offered a job. The employer also helped this worker during the interview because there was difficulty in locating the worker's resume.

One worker reported success because they found the program lead at C-TEC to be a good mentor.

Experiences with the Public Workforce System

Multiple workers reported having difficulty being hired due to lack of experience. Some found success with employers who were looking for character and would contribute to a positive work environment. Some found that they needed to show they were capable through skills training.

One individual who started with the workforce system and now owns his own company also expressed an interest in hiring people who have a good attitude and who is going to care about the job. He is launching a training component to his company, so he has a direct hand in how his employees are trained.

One worker mentioned the choice between pursuing a degree or a certificate program and chose the certificate program. They had a position before they finished the program.

One individual wished that someone had connected with him while he was still in high school. Instead, he was set on attaining a four-year degree because he did not know what other options were available to him. Another worker wished that high school guidance counselors would discuss options other than 4-year colleges or the military. Another wished that employers would highlight exciting parts of their jobs during career fairs.