SUDBURY AND MANITOULIN DISTRICTS

2016 employerone Survey Results

Sudbury & Manitoulin
Workforce Planning
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EMPLOYERONE SURVEY 2016

Sudbury & Manitoulin Districts

RESULTS

Prepared by:
Reggie Caverson, Executive Director,
Workforce Planning for Sudbury & Manitoulin
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or contact info@planningourworkforce.ca

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2016 EMPLOYERONE SURVEY RESULTS

Some industries, such as forestry, mining and manufacturing, have conducted industry-specific research, but there is no good mechanism to gather information directly from employers about current and emerging workforce issues. While limited labour market information is available through various sources such as Statistics Canada, job vacancy postings, key stakeholder consultations and other labour market research, it is difficult to pinpoint the diverse needs of industries and employers when it comes to their workforce. This includes information on current recruitment practices, reasons behind separations, hiring projections, top employee competencies, skills and job training requirements, and willingness to train, to name a few.

To better understand the needs and challenges faced by employers, Workforce Planning for Sudbury & Manitoulin (WPSM) has conducted an annual survey of local employers for the past three years. During this time, just over 600 local employers have responded with some information about their workforce, and just under 300 have completed the entire survey(s).

With each survey year, while the number of respondents, industries they represent and the size of their businesses has varied, employer responses having striking similarities. For example:

- 64% – 76% of all jobs were identified as full time;
- estimated annual turnover rate (people who have left or lost their job) is between 9% – 11%;
- in terms of recruitment: word of mouth, personal contacts, and informal networks continue be the top recruitment method for employers, followed by on-line job boards/postings; job/career fairs are seldom used to recruit; most employers target the Sudbury and Manitoulin area with their recruitment activities with less than 5% going international; 75% – 88% said they did not receive assistance from a free employment service agency; and few reported using a paid recruitment agency;
- one of the top competencies employers identified is work ethic/dedication/dependability;
- although cautious, with each survey year, 67% – 73% of all respondents reported that they plan to hire over the next 12 months (following the survey); and
- 79% – 89% of employers provide/support ongoing training/education for their employees (information only available for 2015 and 2016).

While there are similarities, there are also differences. Increasingly, over the last three years, it appears that more employees are continuing to work as they get older and fewer are quitting their job. For example:

- in 2014, employers reported that only 10% of their workforce was 55 or older, by 2015 it was 18% and by 2016 it was 19%;
- in 2014, employers reported that for all separations, 59% quit their job; 60% quit in 2015; and only 27% quit in 2016; and
- hiring and separations were equal in 2014; however, in both 2015 and 2016, hirings outpaced separations by over 50%.

Surveys such as *employerone* help us to better understand the broader workforce needs of employers across various industries. While employers who responded provided a snapshot of their workforce, the surveys have fallen short in providing more detailed, industry-specific information.

In an effort to focus future surveys on industry-specific needs and challenges, WPSM is planning to target only two industries for the 2017 survey. From other local data sources, both the IT (information technology) and healthcare industries show continued growth and increased demand for specialization. Only through more focussed and targeted employer surveys will we be able to uncover some of the ever-changing workforce needs of individual sectors to help identify training that is essential and opportunities that exist for growth and employment in the future.

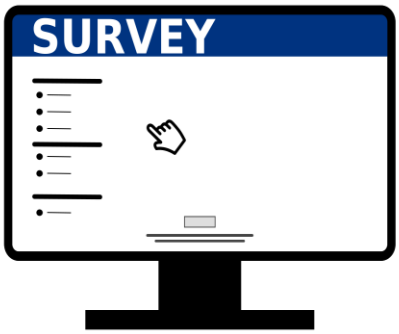
INTRODUCTION

Good labour market information is essential to a wide variety of stakeholders. Employment Ontario and other employment services use the information to identify jobs and job skills that are in demand and training that is required to help those looking for work. The education system uses it to guide students as they explore career options. Postsecondary institutions rely on it to identify specialized training for both highly skilled professional and skilled trades occupations. Additionally, economic development departments, governments and others use it to support strategic planning and allocation of resources.

Obtaining good labour market data can be challenging. Further research is often required to supplement available data. Some industries have taken it upon themselves to identify current and future workforce needs within their own industry, however, this information is not readily available nor is it consistent across all industries.

Since 2014, the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development (formerly the Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities) has asked workforce planning boards in northern Ontario to conduct an online survey of employers each year. This survey has been modified and refined each year, but continues to ask questions related to:

- demographics of the workforce;
- separations and hiring;
- current and projected vacancies;
- recruitment strategies/challenges;
- perspective on candidate skills, education and training;
- top competencies required;
- training provided and
- any workforce concerns over the last twelve months.



SURVEY METHODOLOGY

OUTREACH STRATEGY and SELECTION PROCESS: Each year, various strategies have been used to reach employers in Greater Sudbury and the Districts of Sudbury and Manitoulin (herein referred to as Sudbury/Manitoulin). Employers of all sizes in all sectors are targeted and a previously generated database of employer contacts continues to be added to and used. Strategies included: posting a direct link to the survey on the WPSM website and on other employer-related websites; business-targeted and personalized emails; media releases; employer site visits; use of other business networks; and disseminating survey information at employer events.

FINDINGS

LIMITATIONS: While the survey has been modified and the length reduced, some employers (in both the private and public sectors) who were approached this year to complete the survey expressed concern about doing the survey again. Concerns were related to the repetitive nature of the questions (since changes from year to year are minimal), the annual nature of the survey and the time required to complete the survey. For private business, time means money. Interestingly however, just over one half of respondents from the 2015 survey completed the 2016 survey, though an analysis was not done on whether they were from the public or private sector.

PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS: For the 2016 survey, a variable number of respondents answered each question. In total, 199 employers started the survey, 70 completed the full survey and others answered only parts of the survey.

Respondents reflected a range of industries. Table 1 provides the breakdown of respondents by industry and compares the percentage distribution with the distribution of businesses in Sudbury/Manitoulin in June 2016. The colour-coding for survey results highlights where the 2016 survey percentage share is much greater (green) or much lower (red) than the actual distribution.

TABLE 1: NUMBER AND PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS BY INDUSTRY			
INDUSTRY	SURVEY RESPONDENTS		ACTUAL
	NUMBER	PERCENT	
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	2	1.9%	1.8%
Mining, Quarrying and Oil and Gas Extraction	5	4.7%	0.8%
Utilities	1	0.9%	0.2%
Construction	11	10.3%	12.3%
Manufacturing	7	6.5%	3.9%
Wholesale Trade	1	0.9%	5.0%
Retail Trade	10	9.3%	15.8%
Transportation and Warehousing	7	6.5%	3.1%
Information and Cultural Industries	2	1.9%	0.9%
Finance and Insurance	4	3.7%	3.5%
Real Estate, Rental and Leasing	1	0.9%	4.6%
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	8	7.5%	7.5%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	0	0.0%	0.5%
Administration and Support, Waste Mgmt	1	0.9%	4.2%
Educational Services	10	9.3%	1.1%
Healthcare and Social Assistance	19	17.8%	13.3%
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	1	0.9%	2.1%
Accommodation and Food Services	4	3.7%	9.1%
Other Services (Except Public Administration)	5	4.7%	9.5%
Public Administration	8	7.5%	0.9%
TOTAL	107	100.0%	100.0%

There are some imbalances when it comes to the distribution of respondents by industry, but far more instances where the survey distribution is quite close to the actual distribution of firms by industry in the study area.

The distribution of respondents by number of employees (Table 2) shows a considerably greater proportion of respondents with a larger number of employees compared to the actual figures. *Actual* figures are derived from Statistics Canada's Canadian Business Counts for June 2016.

TABLE 2: PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS BY NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES TO ACTUAL PERCENTAGE				
	1-4 EMPLOYEES	5-19 EMPLOYEES	20-99 EMPLOYEES	100+ EMPLOYEES
SURVEY	14%	39%	27%	21%
ACTUAL	48%	36%	15%	2%

Overall, employer respondents represented 12,386 employees. In the 2011 National Household Survey, the area covered by Workforce Planning for Sudbury & Manitoulin accounted for 78,435 jobs. The number of employed has stayed more or less at the same level since 2011 in Sudbury/Manitoulin. This means that employer respondents to the 2016 employerone survey are responsible for a sizeable chunk of local employment, somewhere around a sixth or roughly 16% of all jobs.

Employers were also asked about the employment category of their employees (i.e., full time, part time, etc.) and their demographics. Interestingly, the demographics of the workforce identified by employer respondents seems to reflect less of a diverse population when compared to actual data from Statistics Canada.

TABLE 3: CURRENT WORFORCE DEMOGRAPHICS REPORTED	
• 76% were full time	• 14% were part time
• 6% were contract	• 4% were seasonal
• 12% were filled by youth under 25	• 19% were filled by those 55+
• 29% were filled by women (Statistics Canada reports 50% of jobs are filled by women)	
• 2% were filled by immigrants (Statistics Canada reports 5% of jobs are filled by immigrants and 0.5% by newcomers who arrived in Canada in the last 5 years)	
• 5% were filled by persons with a disability	
• 4% were filled by an Indigenous person (Statistics Canada reports almost 8% of jobs are filled by an Indigenous person)	

SEPARATIONS OVER THE LAST 12 MONTHS: Of the 89 respondents who answered this question, 70% said they experienced a separation in the last year and 55 of these respondents provided data. In total, these employers represented 6,307 jobs, around half (51%) of the jobs represented in this survey, and they reported 587 separations, resulting in an estimated annual turnover rate of 9.3%. Last year, the estimated turnover rate was 11.2%. Table 4 presents data on separation by type of employment and by type of separation (reason).

TABLE 4: NUMBER OF SEPARATIONS, BY TYPE OF EMPLOYMENT AND REASON							
EMPLOYMENT CATEGORY	quit	retirement	temporary lay-off	permanent lay-off	dismissal	other	TOTAL
Full time	76	43	120	72	39	17	367
Part time	40	4	1	1	9	10	65
Contract	43	0	0	2	5	78	128
Seasonal	0	1	8	5	0	13	27
TOTAL	159	48	129	80	53	118	587

Most separations involve full-time jobs (63%), which could be expected because most jobs are full-time (76%). The largest category/reason for separations was ***quits*** (27%), followed by ***temporary lay-offs*** (22%) and ***other*** (20%). The ***other*** category includes such reasons as: "end of contract," "parental/maternity leave," and "deceased." The single largest individual category of separations involved ***temporary lay-offs of full-time staff*** (20%).

Interestingly, however, in the 2015 employerone survey, ***quits*** represented almost half of all separations, and in 2014 ***quits*** represented 60%. In all three survey periods (2014, 2015, 2016), it is not known why people quit their job (did the person leave for a better job? did they return to school? were they unhappy in their current job? did they move away? etc.). With the progressively declining number of people quitting their job, it is also not clear whether this might be an indication of concerns regarding the area's economic stability and as a result, more people who are reluctant to leave their current job.

HIRING OVER THE LAST 12 MONTHS: Table 5 lists the number of hires over the previous 12 months by type of employment and compares it to the number of separations during the same period.

TABLE 5: TOTAL NUMBER OF HIRES OVER LAST 12 MONTHS COMPARED TO TOTAL NUMBER OF SEPARATIONS					
HIRING	FULL-TIME	PART-TIME	CONTRACT	SEASONAL	TOTAL
Number	384	232	216	105	901
Percent	39%	26%	24%	12%	100%
SEPARATIONS	FULL-TIME	PART-TIME	CONTRACT	SEASONAL	TOTAL
Number	367	65	128	27	587
Percent	63%	11%	22%	5%	100%

The number of hires significantly outpaced the number of separations by over 50%, which was similar to the employerone survey in 2015. The noticeable differences were among the part-time, contract and seasonal categories. It is possible that respondents do not include in their calculation of separations, the individuals whose employment ended because their contract came to an end or because they were only a seasonal hire.

In most cases, employers reported both hiring and separation activity in the same year (Table 6). Only 11% of respondents indicated that they had neither a hire nor a separation in the previous year.

Respondents were further asked the question: Of the total number of hires in the past 12 months, how many were previously laid-off employees who were re-hired? Of these 901 hires, only 59 hirings were identified as re-hires, representing 6.5% of all hires.

TABLE 6: % OF EMPLOYERS REPORTING HIRING/SEPARATIONS		
% REPORTING	SEPARATIONS	HIRING
56%	yes	yes
6%	yes	no
20%	no	yes
11%	no	no
6%	yes	---

HIRING - HIGH FREQUENCY OCCUPATIONS AND HIRING CHALLENGES:

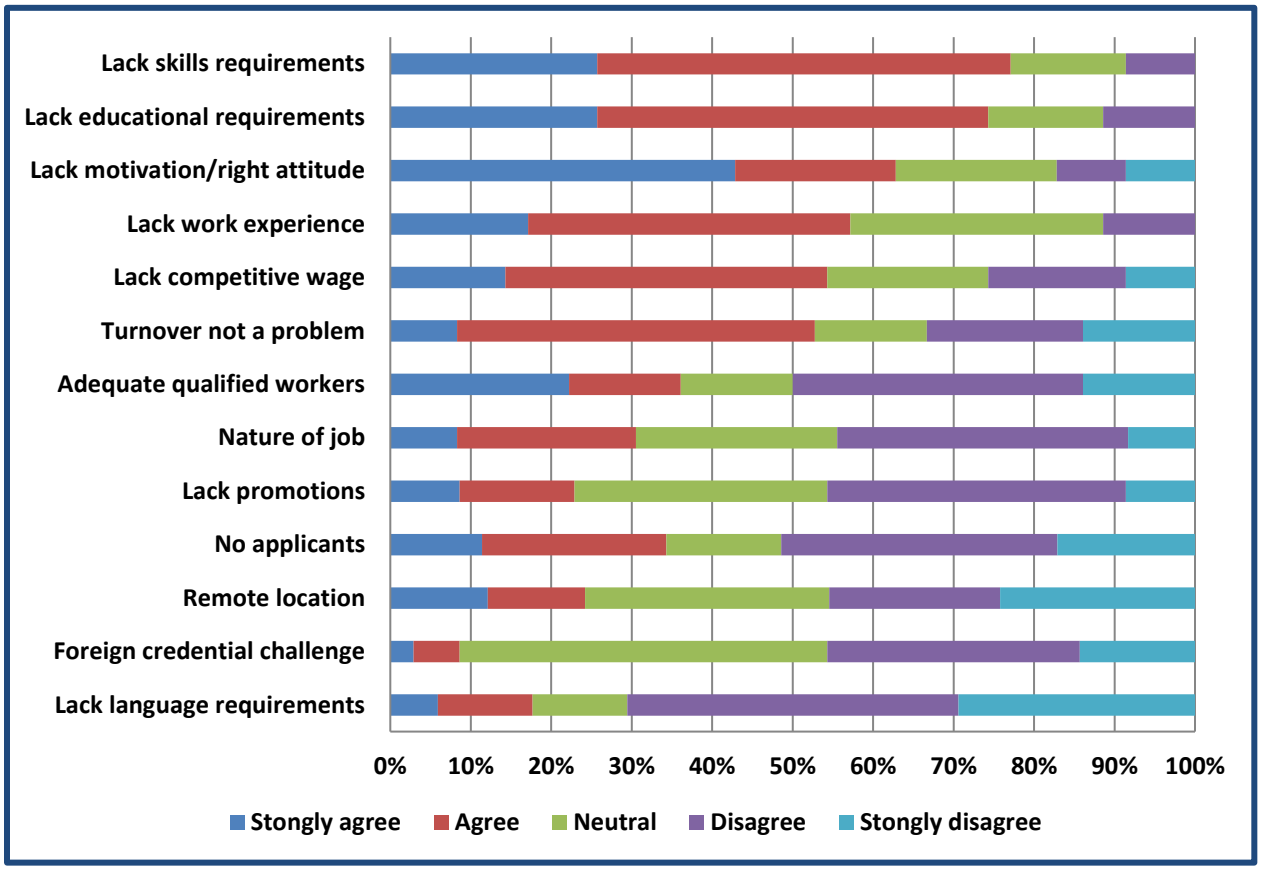
TABLE 7: LARGEST NUMBER OF HIRINGS AMONG HIGH FREQUENCY HIRING OCCUPATIONS	
OCCUPATION	NUMBER
Admin Support/Admin Assistant/Clerical	93
Personal Support Worker (PSW)	87
Registered Nurse	30
Registered Practical Nurse	25
Summer student	22
Paramedic	17
Truck Driver	17

There were slightly over 110 different occupations named among these high-frequency hiring occupations, but in almost 60% of the cases, the number of hires was only one or two. Table 6 lists the seven occupations with at least 15 new hires. These seven occupations accounted for almost half of the 612 high-frequency new hires, and the top two occupations account for three out of ten (29%). Almost all of the personal support worker hiring was with one employer.

In terms of hiring challenges, employers were further asked whether any of these high frequency hires were hard to fill. Their responses were almost evenly split: 47% said they were hard to fill and 53% said they were not hard to fill. Analyzing these results in terms of the number of high frequency hires undertaken by these employers (those who said these jobs were not hard to fill), represented 60% of the high frequency hires.

Employers were then asked to list their level of agreement or disagreement with a number of statements related to recruitment for hard-to-fill jobs as illustrated in Chart 1 (please note, the full statement as it appeared in the actual survey is below the chart).

CHART 1: ASSESSMENT OF CHALLENGES FILLING HARD TO FILL JOBS



definitions:

- adequate qualified workers = currently there is an adequate supply of qualified workers in your community
- no applicants = no applicants at all
- lack educational requirements = applicants not meeting qualifications (education level/credentials)
- lack skills requirements = applicants not meeting skills
- lack work experience = applicants not meeting work experience
- lack motivation/right attitude = applicants not meeting motivation, attitude or interpersonal abilities
- lack language requirements = applicants not meeting language requirements
- remote location = inability to compete with other employers due to remote location/poor public transit
- lack competitive wage = company's wage and benefit package is competitive with similar companies in the regions outside your community
- nature of job = inability to compete with other employers due to the nature of work (seasonal, shift work, irregular hours, job content)
- foreign credential challenge = inability to assess foreign educational qualifications or credentials
- lack promotions = inability to compete with other employers due to promotion opportunities
- turnover not a problem = workforce turnover is typically not a problem for our company

As *Chart 1: Assessment of Challenges Filling Hard to Fill Jobs* indicates, close to 75% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the following statements: *applicants not meeting skills* and *applicants not meeting qualifications (education level/credentials).* More than 60% of respondents

indicated that they either agreed or strongly agreed with the following statement: *lack of motivation/right attitude,* which was followed by *applicants not meeting work experience* (just under 60%). It is worth noting that these top four statements/challenges all speak to qualifications and quality of the job applicant.

In response to the following statement: *currently there is an adequate supply of qualified workers in your community*, 50% disagreed and 36% agreed and last, the following three statements had the highest levels of disagreement as a challenge when hiring:

- *applicants not meeting language requirements;*
- *inability to assess a foreign educational qualifications or credentials;* and
- *inability to compete with other employers due to remote location/poor public transit.*

RECRUITMENT METHODS: Respondents were asked to indicate what mechanisms they used to recruit job candidates for any hiring. Answers were provided by 74 respondents and the frequency of use for each recruitment method is listed in Table 8.

The top three recruitment methods in this survey have been the same for three years now. *Word of mouth* continues to occupy the top spot, followed by more hi-tech approaches such as *online job boards/postings* and the *company's own website*. More than two-thirds of employers (70%) used three or more methods of recruitment. It is noteworthy that *job fairs* continue to come in last as a method to recruit, however it is not clear if this means that employer respondents don't host job fairs or they don't participate in job fairs organized by others (such as employment services, post secondary institutions and/or others).

TABLE 8: FREQUENCY OF USE FOR EACH RECRUITMENT METHOD (in 2016, N=74 RESPONDENTS; in 2015, N=105 RESPONDENTS)

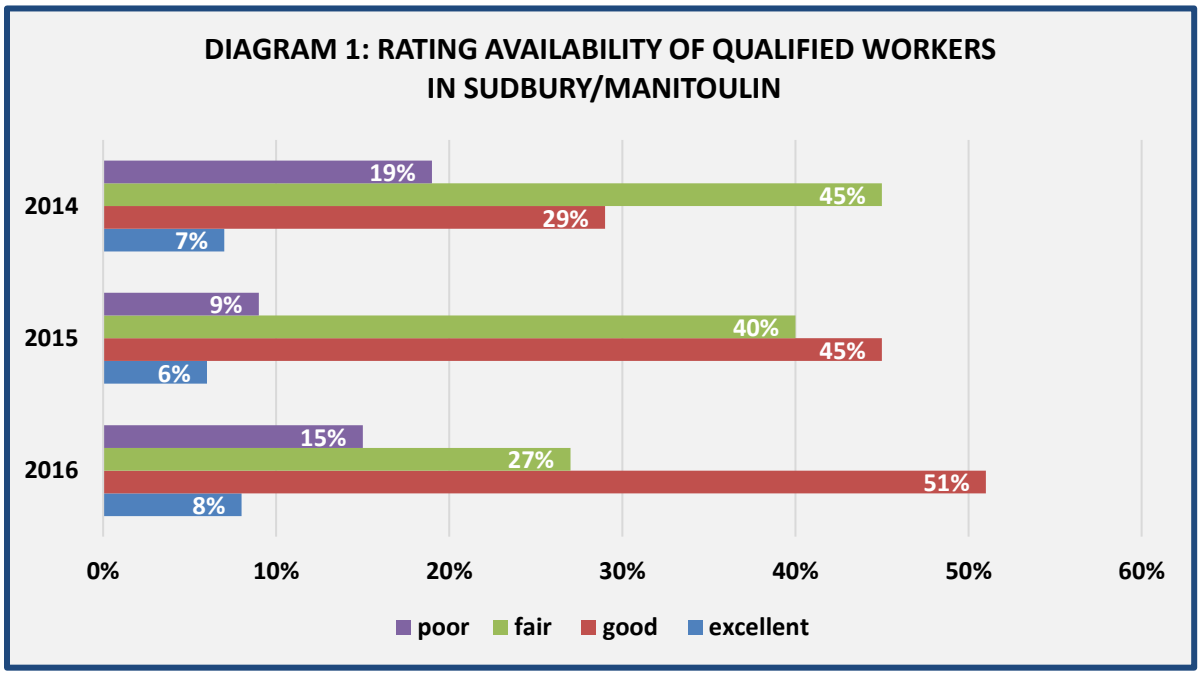
RECRUITMENT METHOD	% FREQUENCY OF USE	
	2016	2015
Word of Mouth / Personal Contacts / Referrals / Informal Networks	77%	66%
Online Job Boards / Postings	66%	55%
Company's Own Website	51%	42%
Newspaper Ads	45%	35%
Government Employment Centres or Websites	42%	31%
Unsolicited Resumes	39%	19%
On-Site Job Signs or Posters	27%	21%
Non-Government or Community Employment Service Centres/Websites	20%	17%
On-site Recruitment At Schools, Colleges, or Universities	20%	15%
Trade or Professional Association Publications	15%	12%
Executive Search Companies or Temporary Help Agencies	10%	8%
Job Fairs	8%	6%

RECRUITMENT AREAS: Respondents were asked to indicate the areas their recruitment efforts targeted. Table 9 lists the percentage of employers selecting each option, and compares it to the distribution of responses from last year.

Most of the recruitment efforts of employers is focussed on Sudbury/Manitoulin, with a fair amount of outreach extending to the province as a whole. Very little recruitment extends across Canada or internationally. Perhaps what is surprising, is that 7% of the respondents who replied (only 5 employers) claimed that they do not recruit within Sudbury/Manitoulin, but there was no mechanism to find out why. Again, note that the percentages add up to more than 100% because some employers listed more than one option.

TABLE 9: GEOGRAPHIC AREAS FOR JOB RECRUITMENT (2015 & 2016)				
	Sudbury/Manitoulin	within Ontario	within Canada	Internationally
2015	89%	34%	12%	4%
2016	93%	36%	10%	3%

AVAILABILITY OF QUALIFIED WORKERS: Half of employers (51%) had a good opinion about the availability of qualified workers in Sudbury/Manitoulin. The 2016 results are compared to the answers to the same question in 2015 and 2014.



RECRUITMENT ASSISTANCE: Employers were less likely to receive free employment services from an agency providing assistance on behalf of a particular demographic group. In the 2016 survey, 88% of respondents said they received no such assistance; in 2015, the figure was 78%, and in 2014, it was 81%. In other words, for each survey year, the majority of employer respondents had not used or received assistance from a free employment service.

In 2016, of the 12% of survey respondents who made use of a free employment service, they reported using the following:

- 11% received employment services from an agency assisting youth (15-24 years of age); in 2015 the figure was 17%;
- in both 2015 and 2016, 4% received assistance from an agency serving persons with disabilities;
- 3% received assistance from an agency serving Indigenous; in 2015 the figure was 4%;
- 1% received assistance from an agency serving older workers (55 years and older); in 2015 the figure was 2%; and
- in both 2015 and 2016, only 1% received assistance from an agency serving immigrants or visible minorities.

Finally, of all employer respondents in 2016, only 8% indicated that they used a paid recruitment agency, exactly the same proportion who answered in the affirmative last year, while in 2014, the figure was slightly higher at 12%.

HIRING PLANS FOR THE NEXT 12 MONTHS: As illustrated in Table 10, two-thirds of employers (67%) indicated that they planned on hiring over the next 12 months, within the same range as those who indicated they planned on hiring in the 2015 survey (70%) and the 2014 survey (73%).

Apart from contract workers, the projected hires in each category are somewhat smaller than the actual hires that occurred this past year. It may be that hiring intentions are lower or that employers are simply displaying caution regarding what their hiring intentions might be.

TABLE 10: NUMBER OF EXPECTED HIRES FOR THE NEXT 12 MONTHS COMPARED TO REPORTED HIRES BY EMPLOYMENT CATEGORY					
	FULL TIME	PART TIME	CONTRACT	SEASONAL	TOTAL
PROJECTED HIRES*	174	148	288	52	662
PAST YEAR HIRES	348	232	216	105	901

**does not include the one employer who projected 300 contract hires over the next 12 months*

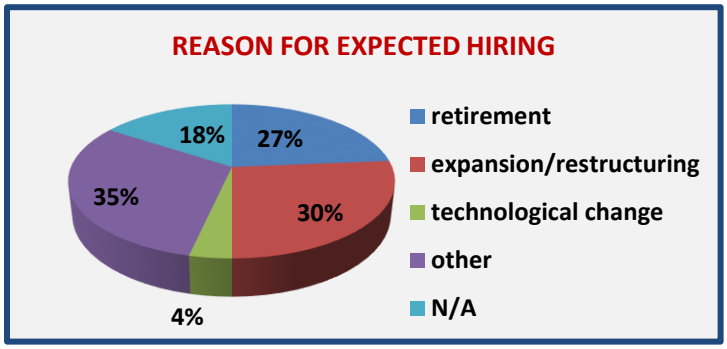
Employers were further asked to name the top three occupations for which they planned to hire. Over 100 occupations were named, and once the duplications were reduced, there were still around 90 different occupations named, spanning different skill levels (from housekeeping and general labourer to engineer and registered nurse) and numerous industries.

Occupations cited several times by different employers included lower paying/skilled occupations such as:

- administrative support/clerical;
- salespersons; and
- customer service representatives.

REASON FOR EXPECTED HIRING: Employers were questioned about the reason for their forecasted hiring – the question was not in relation to a specific hire, but generally, why they might hire. The following pie chart illustrates employer responses. Several employers chose more than one reason, so the percentage distribution of the responses adds up to more than 100%.

For all occupations, employer respondents indicated "other" as the reason they expected to hire, but the online survey questionnaire did not provide a list of examples for "other" reasons. Respondents were provided the option of volunteering a reason and several cited: "turnover" or the "need to find better workers." Among the options provided, "expansion/restructuring" and "retirements" came a close second and third as a reason for expected hiring.

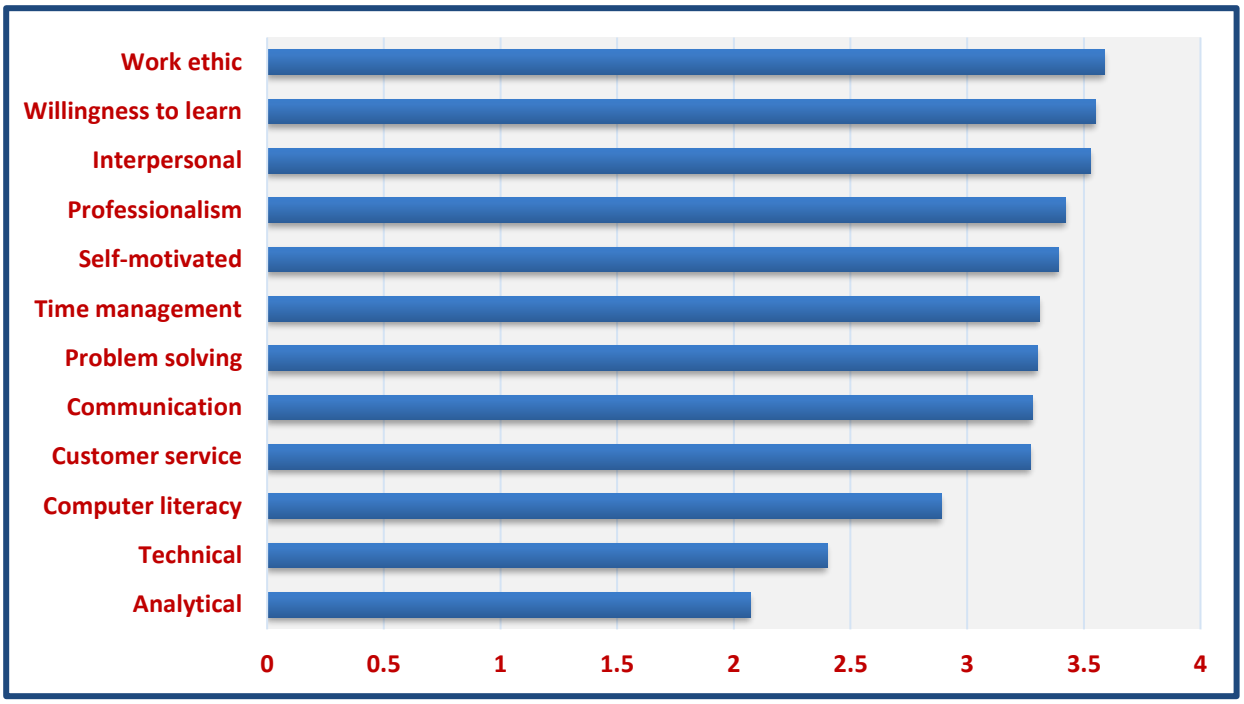


LEVEL OF EDUCATION – NEW HIRES: Employers were asked to list the minimum educational attainment requirements for new hires (Table 11). The 2016 employerone survey did not distinguish between different types of occupations, as it did in the previous year's survey, which makes the responses difficult to compare. Additionally, employers often indicated more than one level of educational attainment, so the percentage distribution of their responses will add up to more than 100%.

TABLE 11: MINIMUM EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS FOR NEW HIRES							
	NONE	HIGH SCHOOL	SOME POST SECONDARY	TRADES CERTIFICATE	COLLEGE DIPLOMA	UNDERGRAD DEGREE	PROFESSIONAL GRADUATE DEGREE
2016	16%	26%	22%	14%	40%	8%	16%
2015	42%	80%	39%	56%	106%	50%	43%

TOP COMPETENCIES: Employer respondents were asked to rate the importance of each of the following competencies for their employees and assess each competency according to its level of importance. Each response was assigned a score as follows: 4 = extremely important; 3 = very important; 2 = moderately important; 1 = slightly important and 0 = not important at all. The scores for each competency was added, and then divided by the number of responses to produce an average score that is illustrated below in Chart 2.

CHART 2: RATING OF COMPETENCIES



The three most important competencies (scoring half-way between very important and extremely important) were:

- work ethic, dedication, dependability;
- willingness to learn; and
- teamwork/interpersonal.

The three lowest ranking competencies (scoring between moderately important and very important) were:

- analytical/research;
- technical; and
- computer literacy.

Among these 12 competencies, it is noteworthy that technical skill, which by definition would be considered a hard skill, ranks second-to-last on the scoring compared to what are otherwise primarily soft skills. Yet, when employers advertise for positions, they are primarily focussed on hard skills and competencies, not the other characteristics or skills a potential employee brings.

TRAINING/EDUCATION: Employers were asked whether they were able to provide or support ongoing training and education opportunities for their employees over the last year. Nine out of ten employer respondents said yes (89%) compared to 79% last year in 2015.

Respondents were further asked in what specific ways they supported training or education for their employees. Table 12 identifies the percentage of employers who provided each of the following supports. The figures add to more than 100% because some employers identified more than one support. In fact, around half of employers (53%) provided more than one support. Table 12 also lists the percentage breakdown for responses to this question from last year's survey

TABLE 12: PERCENT OF EMPLOYERS PROVIDING TRAINING/EDUCATION SUPPORTS		
METHOD OF SUPPORT	2016	2015
Fund it (fully or partially)	77%	77%
Offer flexibility in work schedule	41%	44%
Supply information on career advancement	30%	25%
Use government hiring and training incentives	24%	21%
Other	17%	14%

Employers offer relatively concrete forms of support, either through funding the training (in whole or in part) or by providing flexibility in the work schedule, as opposed to simply providing information. There is limited reliance on government hiring and training incentives. It is not clear whether employers did not use government incentives available to them, or simply did not know they existed. During other consultations with key stakeholders however, employers have told us that the forms and reporting required is sometimes too cumbersome and time consuming to make it worthwhile.

WORKPLACE TRAINING FOR STUDENTS/FUTURE WORKERS: In terms of providing any workplace-relevant training to students or future workers, less than three out of ten (27%) said they do not provide any workplace-relevant training (the figure last year was slightly higher, at 42%).

Of all respondents (including those who said they did not provide any such opportunities), Table 13 provides the percentage breakdown for employers providing each type of workplace-relevant training to students or future workers.

TABLE 13: PERCENTAGE OF EMPLOYERS PROVIDING WORKPLACE EXPERIENCE OPPORTUNITIES (N=125)					
	Paid co-op	Unpaid co-op	Paid internship	Unpaid internship	Apprentice
High school student	10%	29%	1%	0%	7%
College student	11%	16%	21%	7%	16%
University student	10%	10%	14%	6%	7%
Job seeker	1%	6%	9%	0%	4%

Almost three out of ten employers said that they provide an unpaid co-op placement for high school students. This is particularly important as the current provincial government is beginning to recognize the value of co-operative education/experiential learning and have made this a priority – that all students should have some form of experiential learning during their school years to prepare them for the world of work.

Survey respondents were less likely to provide unpaid co-op for university or college students. However, it is not clear whether or not the opportunity simply did not exist, if they had not been asked and/or if their workplace is/is not conducive to student co-ops.

Some employers did say that they offer paid internships but were not asked whether government funding (such as internship programs offered through FedNor or the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation) was used to support this. It is, however, somewhat disconcerting that a small number of employers continue to have unpaid interns. Unpaid internships have been the centre of a lot of controversy as of late and employers have been discouraged from such practices.

From employer respondents, it is clear that job-seekers are often not provided the same types of opportunities for experiential learning as students.

Lastly, it is important to note that around 70% of employers who do provide workplace-relevant training offer more than one type, so it is not clear how many employers are actually engaged in providing workplace-relevant training to students and/or future workers.

SUMMARY COMMENTS

As noted, when the results of the 2016 survey are compared to the results from 2014 and 2015, there are a number of similarities in terms of the hiring practices, recruitment areas, and top competencies that employers are looking for, and level of training/support they provide. Employers from all industries, big or small, public or private, report similar workforce perspectives and surprisingly, similar workforce challenges.

Getting local employers to respond to surveys such as employerone, however, continues to be a challenge. It is important to remember that employers in the private sector are in the business of running their business and making money; their time is valuable. Anecdotal comments from some employers about the annual nature of the survey underscore the need to be respectful of this and to not repeat the same process year after year. After all, not much changes from year to year unless there is an industry crisis such as a major shutdown or closure.

In Sudbury, for example, deflated nickel prices have taught us that one or two major industries can have a devastating ripple effect on other related industries. While we have heard of local impacts and "creeping" layoffs, we have also heard that some mining supply service companies have not only managed to survive, but in some cases thrive in part due to their globalization efforts.

Interestingly, over the last two survey periods (2015 and 2016), employer hirings have actually outpaced separations. Whether globalization has anything to do with this, we can't say, but growth continues. Employers reported that they plan to hire in the next 12 months and, while they are being cautiously optimistic, it is a sign that business is continuing to grow.

Additionally, other economic outlook reports have identified a shift in our economy from goods producing industries (which are generally privately owned) to those that are service oriented (publically funded). This is somewhat supported by the employerone survey where many of the jobs that are in demand are those in the service industry; this would include Personal Support Workers; Registered Nurses; and other health-related occupations.

Although there are a lot of insights and take-aways from the results of not only the 2016, but 2015 and 2014 surveys, it is important to point out that employers are also clearly saying something about the calibre of people they want to hire. Yes, their job ads often focus on technical skills and certification, but at the end of the day, employers who were surveyed have repeatedly said that they are looking for employees who not only have these hard skills, but more importantly other competencies; all of which are very specific soft skills. For example, they are looking for skills and qualities such as: work ethic; customer service; willingness to learn; self-motivation; problem solving; good communication; and so on. These soft skills can be taught and they are transferrable for life.

All of the information as reported by employers in the employerone survey(s) is important for planners, economic development leads, educators, employment service providers, decision-makers,

students, job seekers and others, to take notice of. Information provided is foundational to our understanding of where education/training efforts should be focussed and who, at the end of the day is hiring, what they are looking for and why.

Current efforts underway by the provincial government to mandate experiential learning as part of the student experience will help, but Ontario and ultimately employers in our area will need to work collaboratively and step up to the plate to help provide experiential learning opportunities so that students know and learn what the real world of work is all about…it simply can't be done without them.

In summary, while broader labour market data is key to our understanding of what is happening in industry (trends, changes and growth/decline) and what occupations people are employed in, direct employer information and feedback is critical. As noted, it provides yet another important dimension to a very complex picture. Only by hearing from employers who are willing to share information on questions related to their workforce and their workforce needs will we continue to enhance our understanding of what employers are looking for in their current and future workforce.