

# THE GRADUATE! NETWORK!

## Corpus Christi, Texas

### Bridging The Talent Gap Employer Community Report



This project is made possible with support from the Trellis Foundation



The Graduate! Network's Bridging The Talent Gap Initiative

Submitted June 2019

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<http://graduate-network.org>  
[www.bridgingthetalentgap.org](http://www.bridgingthetalentgap.org)

# BRIDGING THE TALENT GAP SURVEY RESULTS

The Bridging The Talent Gap Survey was administered to HR professionals and other business leaders in Corpus Christi from October 2018 through January 2019. There were 96 completed or partially completed surveys.

## Executive Summary of Findings

### Community Landscape

Organization size among respondents is represented in the following ways:

- 63 percent represent small businesses (self-employed – 49 employees)
- 14 percent represent medium-sized businesses (50 – 499 employees)
- 23 percent represent businesses with more than 499 employees

### Industries Represented

Industry	Number	Percent
Accommodation and Food Services	9	10%
Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	10	11%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	4	5%
Construction	26	30%
Educational Services	12	14%
Finance and Insurance	9	10%
Health Care and Social Assistance	4	5%
Government Agencies	12	14%
Information	3	3%
Manufacturing	15	17%
Mining	3	3%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	14	16%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	4	5%
Religious, Grantmaking, Civic, Professional, and Similar Organizations	3	3%
Repair and Maintenance	4	5%
Retail Trade	6	7%
Transportation and Warehousing	6	7%
Utilities	5	6%
Wholesale Trade	1	1%
Other	10	11%

(Please note, percentages do not add up to 100% because survey respondents could choose more than one industry cluster).

- A total of 73% of survey respondents described the economic conditions in their community as positive. Of the industries most represented in the survey, manufacturing held the most optimistic view (87 percent positive). Conversely, the least optimistic industry among those most represented was retail trade, with 50 percent holding a positive view of the community's economic conditions.
- Seventy-nine percent of respondents report that their respective companies are preparing for moderate to high growth in the next 3-5 years. Among industries most represented in these categories, 93 percent of the manufacturing group anticipate moderate to fast growth. The retail trade group is the least likely (50 percent) to anticipate growth among survey respondents.

### Skill Needs Landscape

- Across all basic, multi-lingual, and applied skills, respondents reported that 48 percent of high school diploma holders in their labor pool possessed the skills needed for their jobs. This figure was 52 percent for technical/community college graduates and 59 percent for four-year college graduates.
- Across all applied skills (information technology application, teamwork/collaboration, diversity, problem solving and leadership), respondents reported that 47 percent of high school diploma holders in their labor pool possessed the skills needed for their jobs. This figure was 55 percent for technical/community college graduates and 63 percent for four-year college graduates. The applied skill experiencing the greatest increase in respondents' opinions was problem solving with an increase in the percent of "yes" responses of 26 percentage points from high school diploma holders to those with a four-year college degree.

### Hiring Landscape

- Among all respondents, 84 percent are hiring for full-time positions. Seventy-five percent of employers find it difficult to recruit for certain positions, while 54 percent say it is difficult to retain certain positions.
- Among applicable respondents, the jobs found most difficult to fill include skilled trades (92 percent difficult) and high-skill medical staff (91 percent difficult).
- The least difficult jobs to fill in the community include customer service representatives (50 percent difficult) and administrative support staff (53 percent difficult).
- The main reasons respondents experience difficulty in hiring include qualified candidates not being within the organization's pay range (46 percent), lack of the right job skills (46 percent), and lack of the right work experience (44 percent).

## Learning Landscape

- The education credential with the greatest percentage of respondents expecting increased need over the next five years was an industry/professional association credential (49 percent).
- Support for learning was mixed across respondents. Forty-six percent provide financial support to pursue college level courses, 51 percent offer financial support for learning/training that is not college coursework, 80 percent provide on-the-job learning or training, and 60 percent provide support in non-financial ways. Thirteen percent report that their organization does not provide any of these education benefits at this time.
- Respondents offer a variety of methods supporting education. Among those most often identified include allowing flexible work schedules to accommodate employees' classes (50 percent), mentoring programs with other workers who have had education success (39 percent), and advising employees on which degrees will benefit their career (35 percent).
- On average 34 percent of education benefits offered to employees is not utilized annually. The main reasons given for learning benefits not being utilized more fully involve workers being too busy or committed otherwise to pursue learning (64 percent), followed by few or no options for learning in the local area (21 percent).
- Ten percent of respondents indicated that they did not currently work with a local education provider to assess skill gaps that can be addressed through educational institutions' program offerings and curricula.
- Seventy-nine percent of respondents who do not currently partner with education institutions either definitely or would possibly consider doing so.
- Education was considered influential in helping respondents achieve their organizational goals. On a scale of 0 – 100 the average rating was 79 across all organizational goals, with a low of 72, for recruitment of new employees and a high of 86 on the average for increasing customer/client satisfaction. A rating of 0 would indicate no influence and a rating of 100 would indicate that education is very influential.

NOTE: These data represent a snapshot of your community at a specific time. It is always advisable to take care in generalizing survey information to the community at large. Up to date information can be seen on your community's interactive data dashboard at <https://www.bridgingthetalentgap.org/dashboard/>.

Use of any of these data in external or internal publications should be noted as follows:

“The Graduate! Network Bridging The Talent Gap Initiative. [Year of report publication]. The Bridging The Talent Gap Employer Survey” [Note: some survey questions contained in the survey are from

Society for Human Resource Management's (SHRM's) "Local Skills Shortages" survey and were used with permission from SHRM.]

For questions or additional information about The Graduate! Network's Bridging The Talent Gap initiative, please contact Bridgett Strickler, Vice President of Network Engagement and Co-Principal Investigator, [Bridgett.Strickler@Graduate-Network.org](mailto:Bridgett.Strickler@Graduate-Network.org).

For questions or additional information about how you can get involved with leaders in [insert location] and take action on these data, please contact Dr. Janet Cunningham, Executive Director of Citizens for Educational Excellence at [jcunningham@edexcellence.org](mailto:jcunningham@edexcellence.org).

## Introduction

Thank you for participating in the Bridging The Talent Gap Employer Survey. This survey is an integral outreach of The Graduate! Network, a national organization dedicated to working in communities across the U. S. to provide education opportunity for adults seeking to complete their post-secondary credentials. In Corpus Christi, we have partnered with Citizens for Educational Excellence to do this work. Your input on this survey lays the ground work for consideration of the ways your community can best concentrate efforts to connect your needs with the education and learning resources in your community. Your responses equip business, education and government leaders with vital information to guide thinking and response to the areas of concern reflected in the results covered in this report.

At its core, the business community's responses on the Bridging The Talent Gap Employer Survey provide an honest and objective window into the viewpoints of employers in your area. This report seeks to provide *context* – by summarizing how your region has responded – and *focus* – by revealing your community's specific perspective on key issues concerning hiring challenges, skill gaps among your labor pool, and the roles education and learning play in helping you address these issues and achieve your organization's goals.

This initiative is a critical building block for your community's quality of life. Without an educated and work-ready labor pool we cannot thrive economically. The survey has amplified your voice, and leaders in your community are listening, eager to share ideas, and ready to take action with you. One way you can take action now is to consider using the Landscape reflections in this report. We also invite you to explore the interactive data dashboard for your community at <https://bridgingthetalentgap.org>. In the coming months Citizens for Educational Excellence will reach out to explore solutions. We look forward to working together!

## The Business Community Landscape

### Respondent Profile

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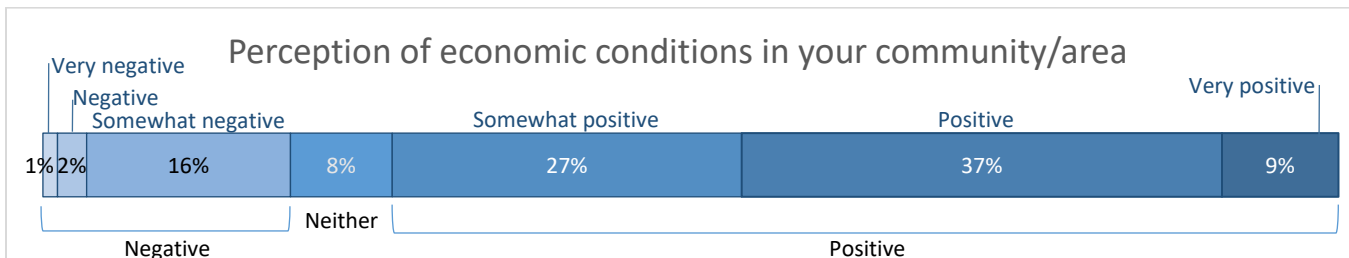
Small organizations (self-employed – 49 employees) were the most represented among survey respondents with 63 percent of respondents identifying themselves in this category. Other organization sizes represented in the survey included 14 percent of respondents from medium-sized (50 – 499 employees) organizations, and 23 percent of respondents from organizations with 500 or more employees.

The distribution of industries represented among survey respondents can be seen in the Industry Table below. Those industries most represented among the survey respondents include construction; manufacturing; and professional, scientific and technical services.

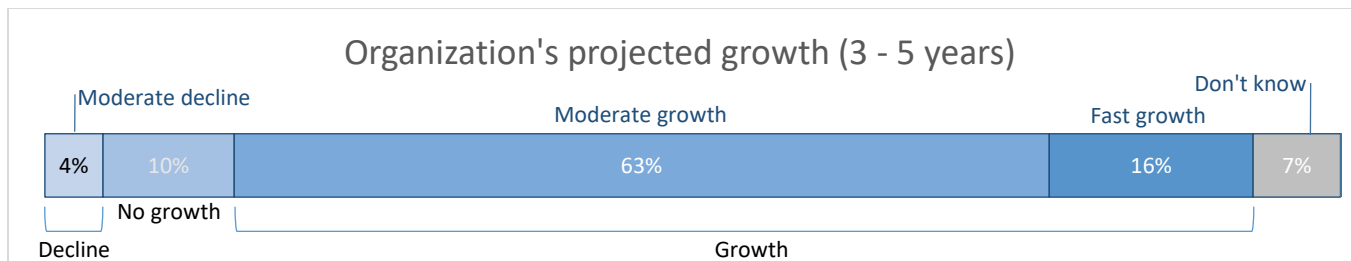
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Other	10	11%

### Economic Outlook

The chart below shows a total of 73 percent of survey respondents describing economic conditions in their community as positive. Of the industries most represented in the survey, manufacturing held the most optimistic view (87 percent). Conversely, the least optimistic industry among those most represented was the retail trades sector, with 50 percent holding a positive view of the community's economic conditions.



The chart below indicates optimism each respondent had regarding their own organization. Seventy-nine percent of respondents report that their respective companies are preparing for moderate to high growth in the next 3-5 years. The industry most optimistic about future growth was manufacturing (93 percent anticipating moderate to fast growth). The retail trade group is the least likely (50 percent) to anticipate growth among survey respondents.



## Landscape Reflection

- How do economic conditions in your area affect your ability to plan for and ensure a well-educated, well prepared work force?
- How might your community take advantage of local resources offered by local colleges and learning providers (e.g., subject matter experts for your business focus, curriculum to upgrade job skills, push for employees to complete credentials).
- What economic forces are driving your organization's expectations of growth?
- How will this affect the hiring of new employees and the skills upgrades needed for your existing workforce?
- If you would like to learn more about how you can take action on these data, please contact Dr. Janet Cunningham, Executive Director of Citizens for Educational Excellence at [jcunningham@edexcellence.org](mailto:jcunningham@edexcellence.org).

Citizens for Educational Excellence (CEE), in partnership with education, community, and workforce organizations, serves to increase educational and job attainment by connecting Coastal Bend citizens with supports and resources. CEE is working hard to "bridge the talent gap" through several initiatives, including:

- Coastal Compass Education and Career Resource Center - a free source of education and career information and assistance, located at La Palmera Mall ([www.coastalcompass.org](http://www.coastalcompass.org))
- Recapture Your Dream program - assisting adults with some college and no degree to complete their education ([www.e2epartners.org/recapture-your-dream](http://www.e2epartners.org/recapture-your-dream))
- Emerging Professionals Internship Program - preparing and placing high school seniors in internship positions with local employers ([www.e2epartners.org/emerging-professionals-internship-program](http://www.e2epartners.org/emerging-professionals-internship-program))
- Education to Employment Partners Regional P-16 Council - promoting a seamless educational continuum that ensures postsecondary and career readiness by providing conferences for students and professional development for educators ([www.e2epartners.org](http://www.e2epartners.org))

For more information on any of these programs, contact Dr. Janet Cunningham, CEE Executive Director, [jcunningham@edexcellence.org](mailto:jcunningham@edexcellence.org).

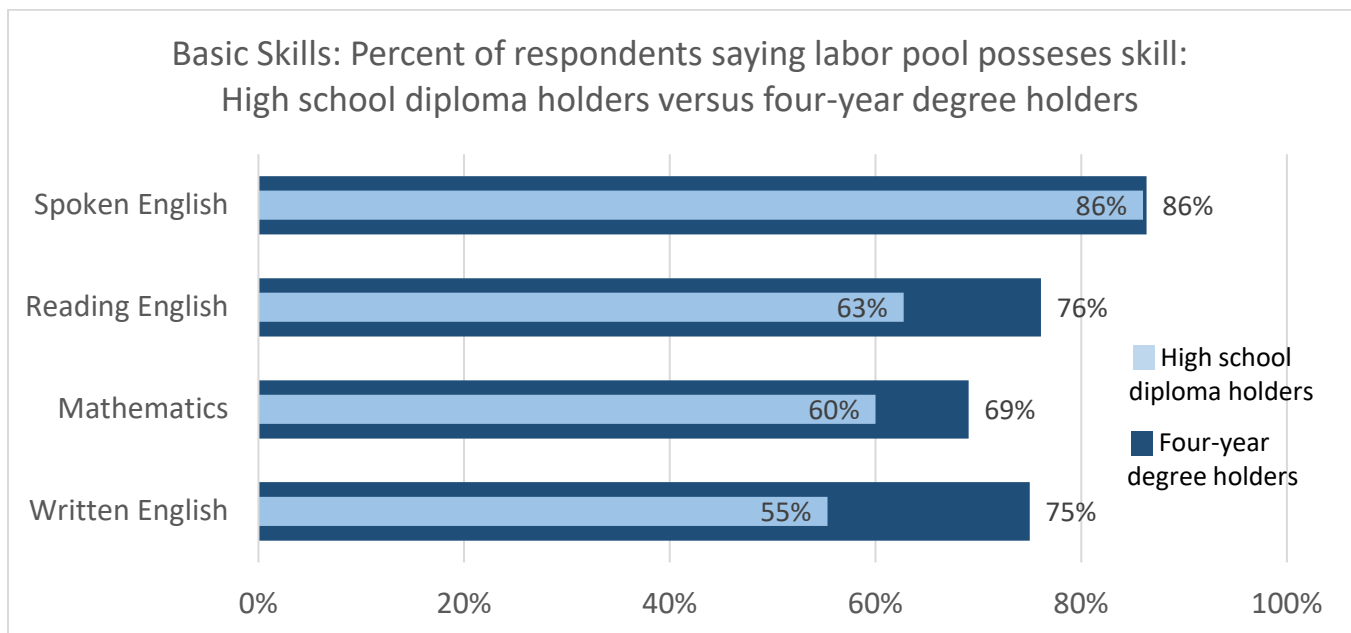


## The Skill Needs Landscape

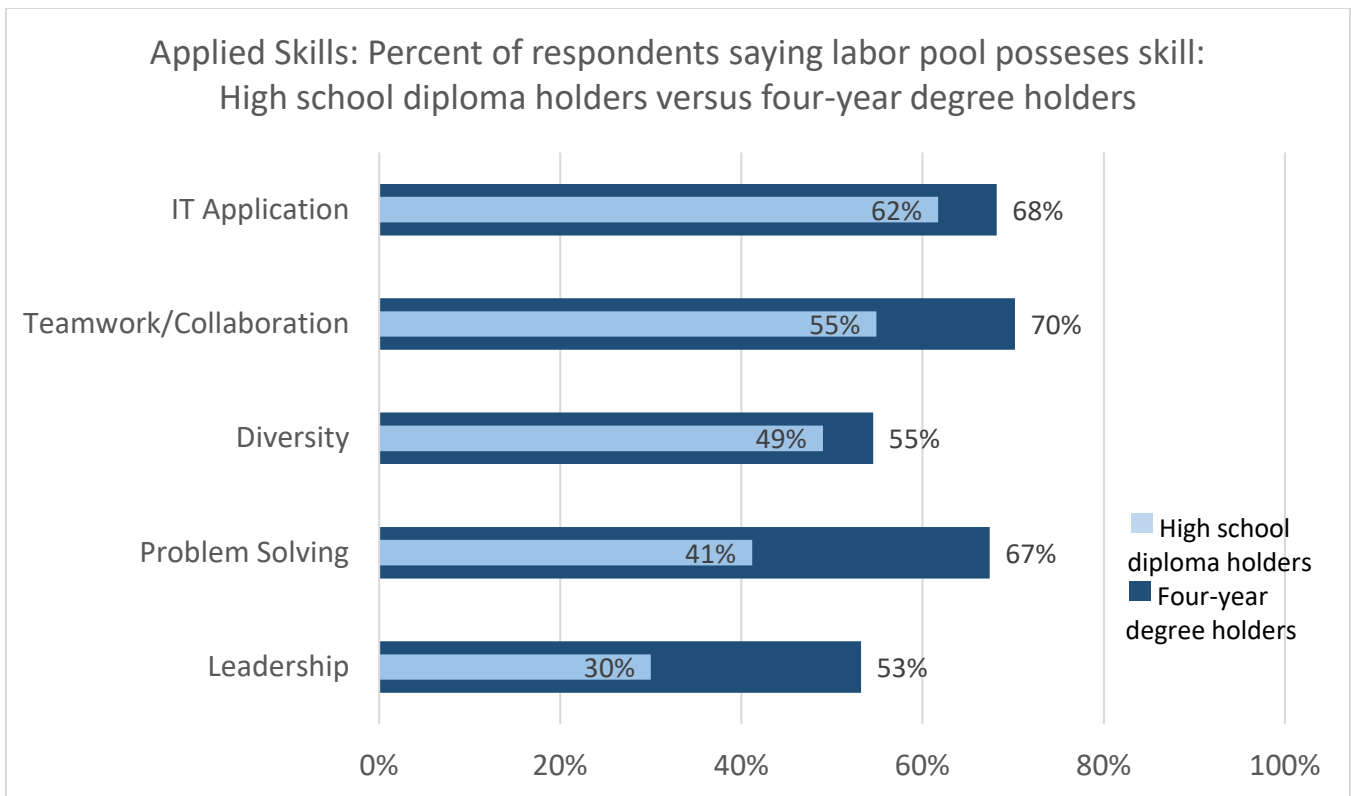
Across all basic, applied and multi-lingual skills, respondents reported that 48 percent of high school diploma holders in their labor pool possessed the skills needed for their jobs. This figure was 52 percent for technical/community college graduates and 59 percent for four-year college graduates.

From the perspective of the employers in your community completing the survey, it is worthwhile to explore the value added to completion of post-secondary credentials. Technical/community college graduates experienced a gain of 4 percent in the proportion of respondents saying this segment of the labor pool possessed the skills being considered compared to high school diploma holders. Four-year college degree holders among the labor pool experienced a gain of 11 percent among respondents who said these individuals possessed skills employers need compared to high school diploma holders.

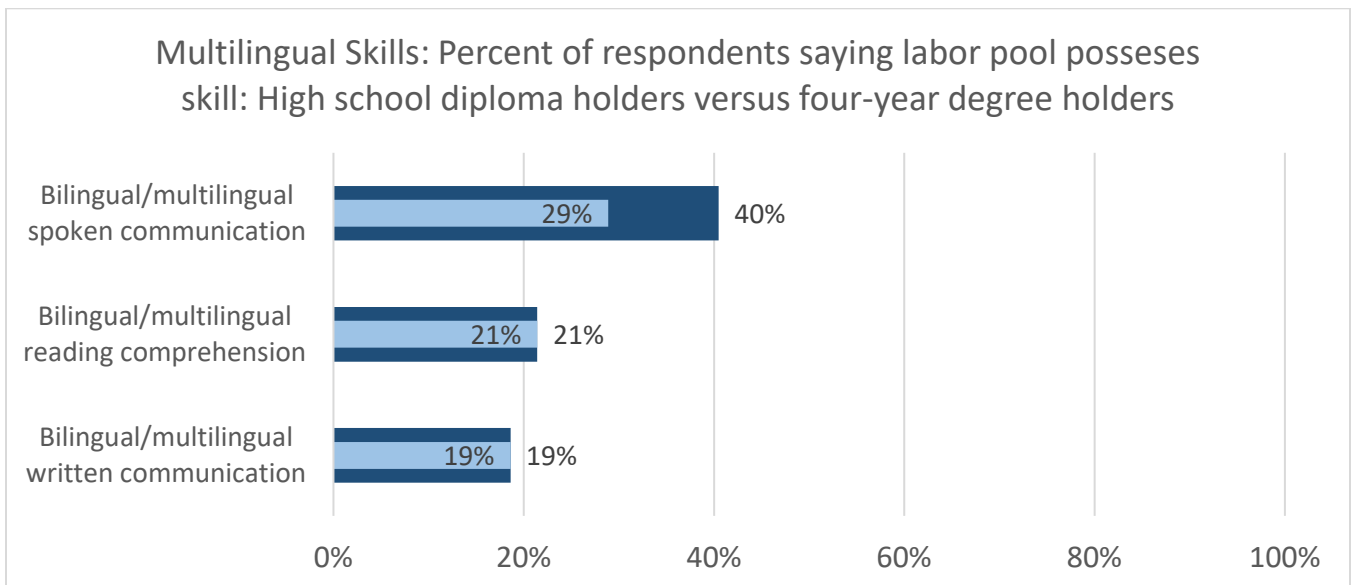
**Basic Skills.** Virtually all beneficial work skillsets are built on the foundation of a solid mastery of basic skills. Employers' opinions of their labor pool as a function of education achievement can be seen in the chart below.



**Applied Skills.** Employers' perspectives of applied skills possessed by high school diploma recipients versus four-year college degree holders is shown below. The proportion of employer respondents who said high school diploma holders in the labor pool possess the listed skills are shown in the light-tone bars. These proportions can be compared with those in the labor pool holding a four-year degree, who are represented by the dark bars. These differences provide some insight into the value added by the completion of post-secondary credentials, especially regarding applied skills.



**Multilingual Skills.** In recent years, the increase in ethnic and language group diversity has placed a premium on workers with multilingual skills. The chart below shows the level of these skills employers see in their labor pools' skill level as impacted by education attainment.



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## Landscape Reflection

- What skills that are most resistant to education and learning are important to your community (i.e, those skills that don't change significantly with education attainment)? What steps might be taken to address this issue?
- What are the issues you are facing with the applied skills (for example, diversity, leadership, problem solving, teamwork and collaboration, and technical skills) that might benefit from partnerships with local colleges and universities, and other community organizations?
- From the perspective of businesses in your community, there is a general acknowledgement that a four-year degree provides substantial increases in the labor pool possessing these applied skills. How might your community take advantage of these gains?
- Are there specific workforce groups or certain industry sectors in your community who could benefit from a targeted approach to encourage degree completion?
- If you would like to learn more about how you can take action on these data, please contact Dr. Janet Cunningham, Executive Director of Citizens for Educational Excellence at [jcunningham@edexcellence.org](mailto:jcunningham@edexcellence.org).

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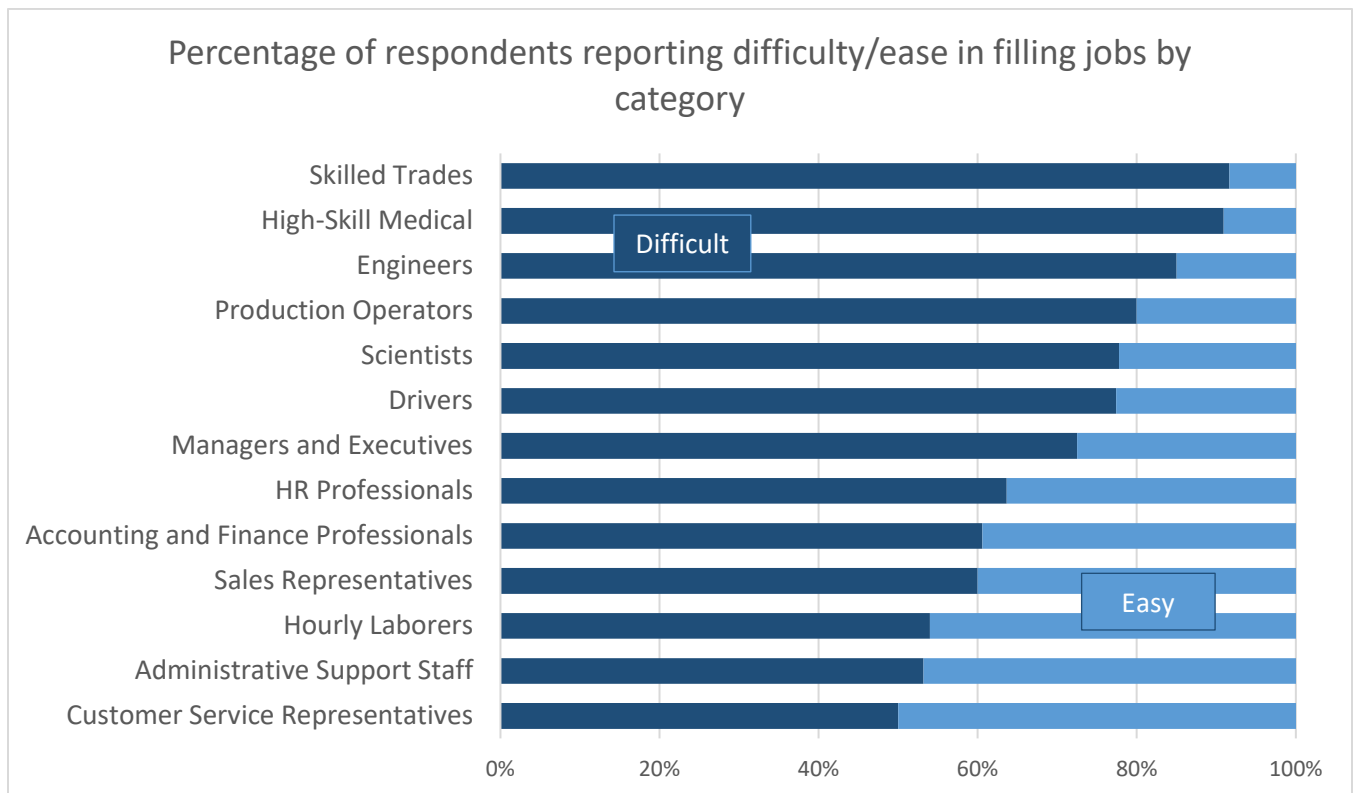
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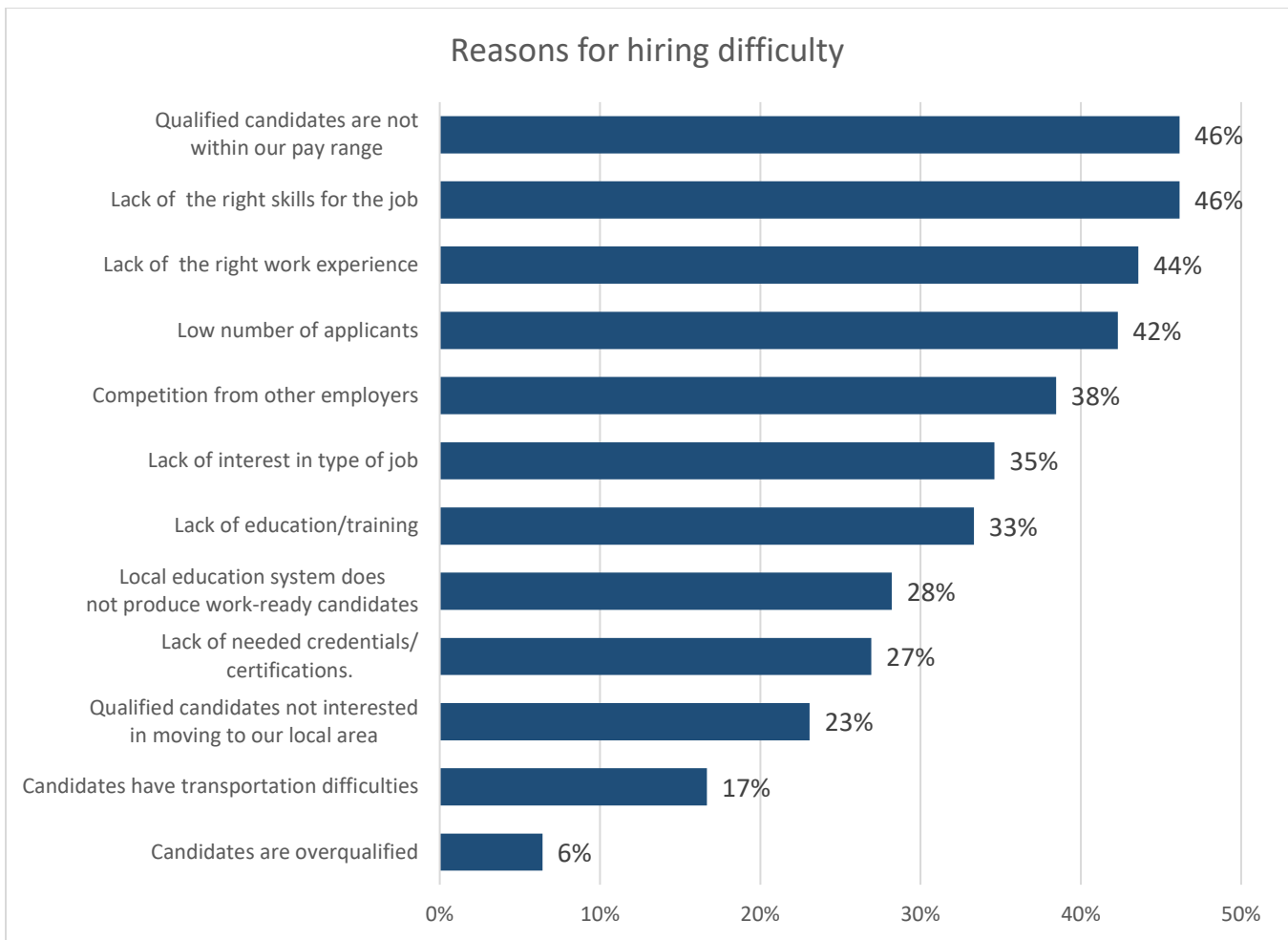
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## The Hiring Landscape

Among respondents completing the survey, hiring is a critical area of concern. Multiple categories of hiring present considerable difficulty in finding good candidates, as the chart below indicates. Hiring for skilled trades, high-skill medical staff, and engineers were rated as the top three positions that are somewhat or very difficult to fill by respondents for whom these positions were applicable. In comparison, those positions easiest to fill include customer service representatives, administrative support staff, and hourly laborers.



The main reasons organizations in your community had difficulty in hiring qualified candidates for full-time regular positions are shown in the chart below. The most often mentioned reasons include qualified candidates being outside the organization's pay range, lack of the right job skills and lack of the right work experience.



NOTE: Total percentages are greater than 100% because respondents could choose multiple categories

### Landscape Reflection

- What are some ways these responses underscore the difficulty your community is facing in finding qualified candidates for needed positions?
- What are some ways these responses underscore the difficulty your community is facing in finding qualified candidates for needed positions?
- One solution many communities and organizations pursue is to identify those already who are part of your workforce who would be good candidates for advancement with additional education, training, or focused experience. Regardless of your circumstances, greater numbers of candidates increase the likelihood of finding qualified individuals, especially in those jobs for which competition is more intense. It may be beneficial to consider use of pre-hiring, apprenticeships, or other partnering opportunities with local colleges and universities. Curricula and specialized training can often be created that optimize the skills you need in job candidates.

## The Learning Landscape

There is broad-based support for education among the Community's employers. The table below shows the percent of employers completing the survey who identified various ways they support education for their employees. Keep in mind that any given employer respondent may select as many means of supporting education as they offer.

Type of education support provided by the employer	Percent
We provide financial support for our employees to pursue college level courses.	46%
We provide financial support for our employees to pursue education, learning or training provided by outside agencies that is not college coursework.	51%
We provide on-the-job internal education, learning or training for our employees.	80%
We provide support for our employees to pursue education, learning or training in other ways besides financial support.	60%
None at this time	13%

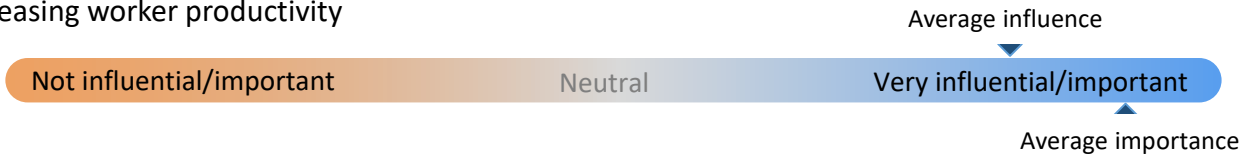
Learning has become an essential focus for employers who seek to optimize success. Ability to adjust to and thrive in a global marketplace requires an agile workforce who can learn new skills efficiently. Survey respondents reinforced this insight as can be seen in the graphs below. The chart below shows the relationship between the importance of each of a set of nine organization goals and the influence of education in achieving that goal. Respondents were asked to rate these factors on a scale of 0 (not influential/important at all) to 100 (very influential/important).

The business community respondents' most important goals included increasing customer/client satisfaction, and increasing worker productivity. Goals most influenced by education included increasing customer/client satisfaction, and development of employees' professional skills.

Increasing customer/client satisfaction



Increasing worker productivity



Development of employees' professional skills



Worker retention



Increasing employee engagement/organizational loyalty



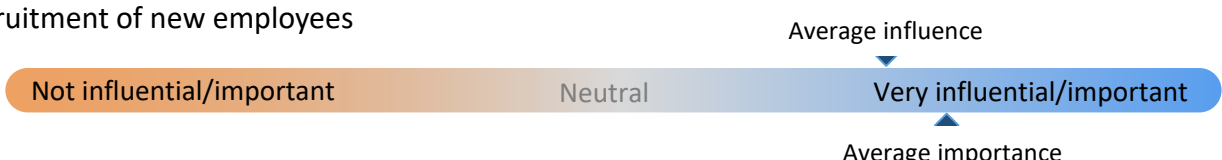
Development of employee leadership skills



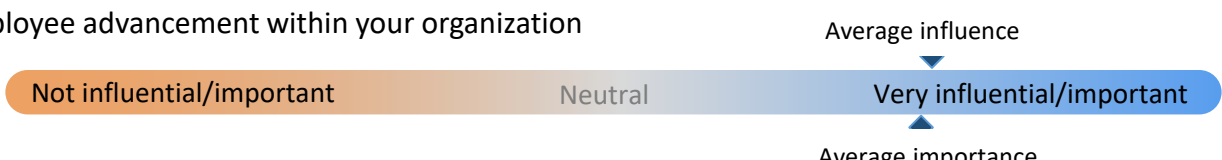
Increasing profits/savings



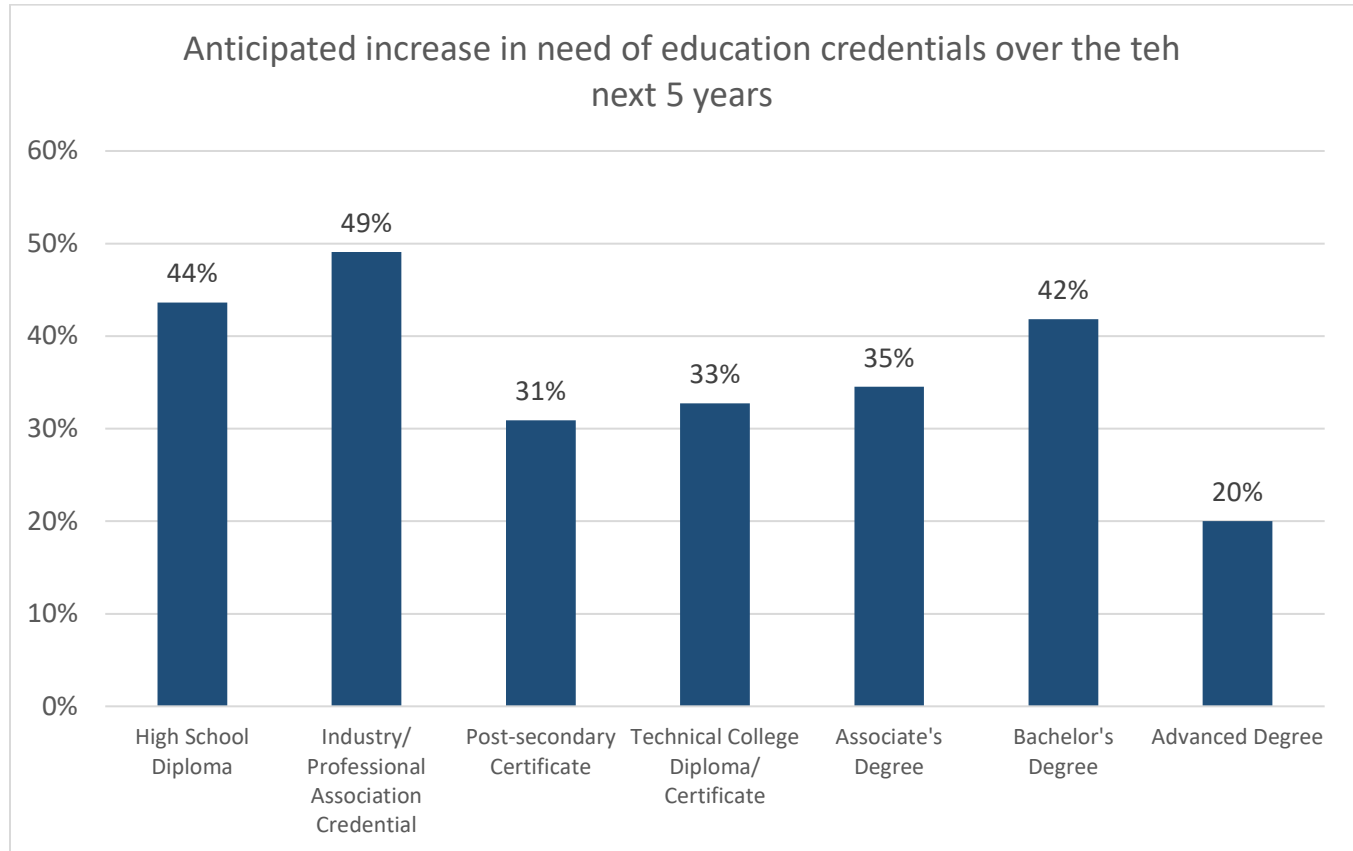
Recruitment of new employees



Employee advancement within your organization

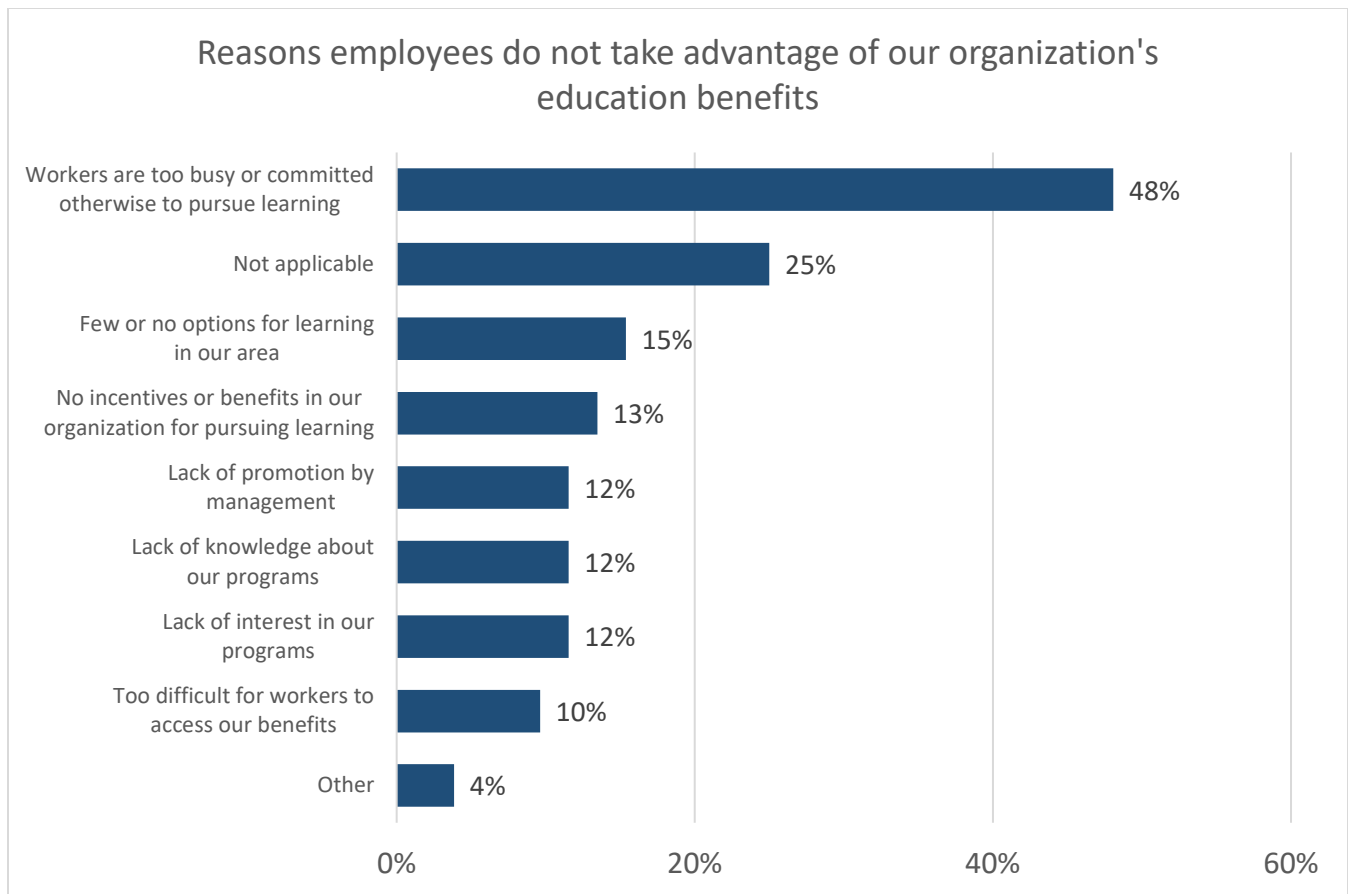


The influence of education on organizational success is underscored when the anticipated need for employees with credentials beyond high school is considered. The figure below shows your community organizations' expected increased need for graduates at various levels over the next five years. The credential with the greatest anticipated increased need is an industry or professional association credential.



The change in anticipated increased need for post-secondary education credentials points to the need to encourage and assist those in the workplace to pursue and persevere to complete their education goals. Unfortunately, there are multiple barriers and competing responsibilities for workers wanting to initiate or continue with their education. The chart below reflects community employers' perspectives on the reasons their employees do not take advantage of employer benefits for learning.

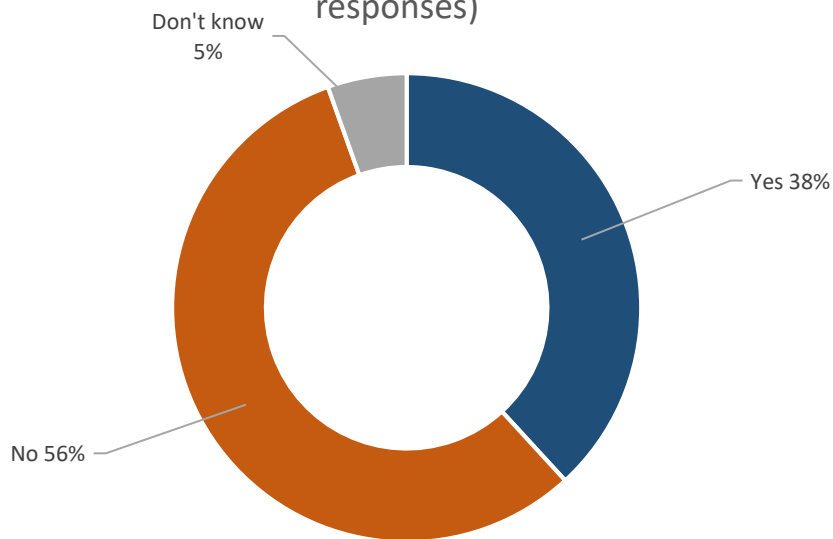




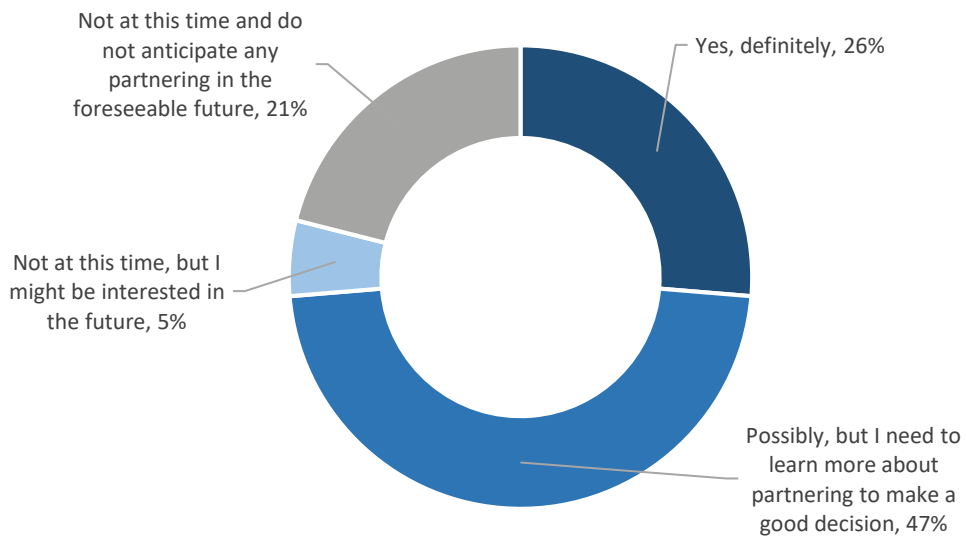
Finally, the charts below represent partnership opportunities in your community by exploring the level of collaboration between businesses, and local education and learning providers in your area. The top chart shows the degree to which businesses work with education to assess skill gaps that can be addressed through programs and curriculum. A total of 61 percent of respondents do not currently partner with or don't know if they partner with educational systems in your area for skill development.

The bottom chart indicates area organizations' general willingness to partner with education and learning providers to support education, learning or training for employees. Of all respondents, 21 percent indicate they already do so. Of those who do not currently partner with education institutions 79 percent expressed interest in such partnerships now or in the future.

Does your organization work with local education and training providers to help them assess local skills gaps that can be addressed through their program offerings and curricula? (percent of total responses)



Would your organization consider partnering with a local post-secondary institution or other learning provider to support education, learning or training for your employees? (Among those not currently partnering)



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## Landscape Reflection

- Which goals explored in this survey are important to your community and how influential is education in achieving them?
  - If there are important goals that reflect little influence from education, how might your community address these weaknesses (internal goals) or threats (external goals) by exploring education partnerships?
  - How might you build on the strengths and opportunities you already have for those goals in which education is influential?
  - For employers who already have an education support benefit for employees, how might you enhance and expand its effectiveness in getting more employees to take advantage of it?
  - For organizations who do not have an education support benefit, how might this benefit help you achieve organizational goals and address skill gaps among your employees?
  - What opportunities might exist in your area to explore education partnerships, and what areas in your business would most benefit from such partnership?
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## Follow Up

Thank you for your input in this important effort for your community. We hope the information from this report is thought provoking and generates some ideas which can be explored collaboratively with community groups and educational/learning institutions in your community.

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