

CAREER READINESS REPORT

Essential Skills Research and Results





GOAL



**75% of students in NKY will
graduate from high school
College and Career
(Transition) Ready by 2025**

NORTHERN KENTUCKY EDUCATION COUNCIL
in partnership with
NORTHERN KENTUCKY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND
NORTHERN KENTUCKY WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD

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INTRODUCTION

On behalf of the NKY Education Council I am pleased to share this Career Readiness Report: Essential Skills Research and Results. This report presents both qualitative and quantitative findings that answer the essential question; what are the most important employability skills that are critical for workplace success?

Educators are tasked with preparing students with academic, employability and technical skills to ensure college and career readiness, in other words transition ready. Each of these skill areas is important and mutually beneficial but this report is focused on employability skills.

Despite common perceptions about what we may think employers value most in an employee this report provides significant insight into the employer's expectations of high school graduates' preparedness for the workforce.

The Council is noted for our ability to convene leaders, find solutions, and align initiatives to reduce duplication. As such, the Council serves as the fundamental connection among education, business and the community.

This report is an example of the Council leveraging partnerships to gain critical information to inform P-12 educators as they prepare students for the workforce. Along with our partners we remain laser-focused on increasing the percentage of students in NKY from 66% to 75% that are College and Career Transition Ready by 2025.

Included in this report is the Council's 21st Century Skills Toolkit. The Toolkit was originally created in 2017 by convening education and business leaders to determine specific 21st Century Skills that represent authentic college and career readiness. While this new report validates the Toolkit it expands our knowledge by providing an in-depth view by industry sector.

In addition to utilizing the focus group structure that paved the way for robust discussion to capture the qualitative data, the report also draws from a variety of

sources including two employer surveys from two of our partner organizations; the NKY Workforce Investment Board and the NKY Chamber of Commerce/GROW.

Several key findings should be highlighted:

1. the most noted needs were communication skills, work ethic and problem solving,
2. it is critically important for both employers and schools to use the same definitions for work experiences, and
3. employers are willing to provide more job-shadowing and career mentoring to students.

The Council believes it is possible to close the gap in the alignment and preparedness of essential skills development. The research results offered in this report lead to recommendations to set the right targets for our youth.

The report was created to inform P-12 educators, but with the high demands of the current labor market it contains implications that are applicable for all job seekers.

There are no easy solutions and we know that preparing each of our youth for success is complicated and complex. Whether you are a business, education or community leader we hope you find our report useful as you design strategies and implement programs to ensure that each one of our youth are equipped for their future.

Sincerely,



Polly Lusk Page, Executive Director
Northern KY Education Council

SURVEY AND EMPLOYER FOCUS GROUPS

METHODOLOGY

Planning

The Employer Sub-committee of the Northern Kentucky Grow Initiative met on September 13, 2018 to review three documents related to employer needs:

1. Tuition benefit study conducted by Dr. Vicki Berling, Building Industry Association of NKY and Dave Schroeder, Kenton County Public Library for the NKY Education Council and the NKY Chamber of Commerce
2. A Logistics Career Pathway study conducted by Gateway Community and Technical College
3. A study conducted by the NKY Workforce Investment Board of basic and specialty skills needed in five industry sectors located in the NKY region

At this meeting, the participants discussed what data they needed beyond these three reports and it was determined that we needed to convene both focus groups and one-on-one interviews with employers. The members were shown the questions used in the Logistics Career Pathway study, which were used in Employer Focus Group meetings at Gateway Community and Technical College. Participants asked about the viability of these questions to use with our upcoming Employer Focus Groups. We also studied the NKY Workforce Investment Board questions and determined that we needed more data going deeper into what employers meant when they said, for example, they needed employees to have work ethic. It was also suggested that we triangulate the data by having an employer survey, followed by focus groups and then face-to-face interviews. Committee members were asked to submit questions for employers to be used in interviews by September 28. Questions were received from the Employer Sub-committee members.

On October 3, the Employer Sub-committee met again and worked through the creation of four questions for the survey conducted by the NKY Chamber of Commerce. The survey would go out in October and the Employer Focus Groups would be held in November. Lastly, the face-to-face interviews would be held in December. It was noted we would work with Leisa Mulcahy, NKY Chamber of Commerce on disseminating the survey questions to the NKY Chamber members. Dr.



Angie Taylor, Taylor Career Strategies spoke with Ms. Mulcahy before the survey was sent to the members and we discussed sending the survey to members in specific industry sectors.

Again, it was noted that we did not want to duplicate the questions used in the NKYWIB study and the questions we would create would be more focused on what education needs to do and what employers are doing on their end to solve the problem of a work-ready labor force.

Members of the Employer Sub-committee – Pillar 2: Pam Goetting, Heritage Bank, Andrew Farris, Mubea, Mike Grout, C-Forward and Michelle Kolb, Duke Energy were asked to review the nine questions for the employer focus group meetings and provide their feedback. Dr. Karen Cheser, Ft. Thomas Schools and Dr. Christy Petroze, Thomas More University were also asked to review the questions and offer any other suggestions.



3. If not already, what would you be willing to offer to help recruit more work-ready candidates and/or expose students to your field?

4. Would you be willing to participate in a focus group to discuss college and career ready candidates for employers?

Employers who checked yes to question 4 were then invited to participate in the focus group meetings.

Additional Surveys to Focus Group Participants

The Employer Focus Group participants were asked to answer the survey questions by taking the survey during the Employer Focus Group meetings. This was done to increase the number of surveys received from employers. If participants had already answered the survey through the Chamber portal, the surveys were not forwarded to Dr. Berling to be combined with the Chamber survey data. In total, there were 219 surveys submitted. The verbal responses from the employers during the focus group meetings are noted in this report.

Invitations to the Employer Focus Groups

There were five industry sectors targeted for the employer focus groups: Manufacturing, Healthcare, Construction, Logistics and Transportation and Business/IT/Finance. Initially, Dr. Taylor created letters of invitation to each industry sector and shared those with both Ms. Mulcahy and Polly Lusk Page, NKY Education Council for review. As survey results were returned, it was decided there was not enough time to issue letters of invitation and e-mails were disseminated instead. Invitations were extended to the Northern Kentucky Career Center employer base in each industry sector. Secondly, employers responding to the NKY Chamber of Commerce survey who asked to be included in future focus group meetings received an invitation. Chamber staff deferred to Ms. Page and Dr. Taylor to issue invitations. Lastly, invitations were sent to the NKY Education Council employer partners and to Dr. Taylor's employer partners. It should be noted that invitations were directly sent to 82 employers from three databases. Invitations to Dr. Taylor and Ms. Pages' contacts were sent out twice with the first dissemination on November 13.

Dr. Taylor also spoke to Dave Fleischer, Ignite Institute prior to finalizing the questions to ask if he had any specific questions to add to the focus group meetings. He noted that he was more concerned about how he would receive data – in what format, because his responsibility was to study the gap when all the data were collected.

Survey

The survey questions were sent to the NKY Chamber of Commerce members by Brent Cooper, President of the Chamber, on November 1. A second email from Mr. Cooper was sent on November 9 requesting for more responses. There were 199 respondents.

The questions were as follows:

1. How might pre-school through grade 12 education better prepare students to meet your workforce needs?

2. What are you currently offering to help recruit more work-ready candidates and/or expose students to your field?

Process of Focus Group Meetings

There were five employer focus groups held on November 27 and 28, 2018 with a total of 30 employers participating in the meetings. Some companies brought two representatives to the employer focus group meetings, and in total, there were 37 people participating in the meetings. There was a small number of individuals (5) representing colleges or non-profits observing during some of the sessions. These individuals were asked to hold their comments to give more time to the employer participants. Data from the meetings are shared in this report by industry sector.

When the employers arrived, they were asked to sign in and introduce themselves. They were then given a paper copy of the NKY Chamber of Commerce employer survey and at the top, they were asked to check yes if they had taken the survey on-line or no if they had not taken the survey. Then they were asked to answer the questions. Upon completion they discussed their questions as a group.

After answering the three questions from the survey, employers were asked each of the six additional focus group questions taking each question one at a time with Dr. Taylor facilitating the discussion and another person charting the answers as they discussed each question. Often throughout the discussion, employers spoke among themselves, asking each other questions about how they recruited employees, what retention strategies they used and if they were seeing similar patterns of employee behaviors. Several times, they were asked to study the questions and give their answers. Often, they agreed concerning their answers to the questions. It was noted that there was much discussion about their human resources practices and their expectations of employees' preparedness for the workforce.

At the end of the session, the employers were asked to return their paper surveys and several of the participants asked if there would be future meetings. Several of the participants also thanked us for having the meeting, and many expressed their desire to have partnerships with local schools to help them with their recruitment efforts.

Ms. Page sent all the participants thank you e-mails after the focus groups were concluded.

QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

This section of the report provides the qualitative findings of the Employer Focus Group data and provides further insight into the employers' expectations of high school graduates' preparedness for the workforce. As the reader will note, these detailed data are more granular in nature and build upon the foundation of the quantitative survey data. In other words, the qualitative data tell the story of what the quantitative data mean. For example, most all the participants noted that communication skills are their number one priority for schools to be teaching, but do we truly know what they mean by communication skills? Through the Employer Focus Groups, we were able to discuss their understanding of communication skills and what their needs are regarding students' communication skills and how they are used in the labor force. Through this report's explication of the quantitative data, the study areas of most importance for the future gap analysis between the school data and the employer data are illuminated.

Secondly, employers were asked to think about the difference between soft skills and technical skills. It was noted that soft skills are now called essential skills and their attention to the difference between essential skills and technical skills is critical for teachers to understand what employers are expecting high school graduates to know upon their matriculation into the workforce. While essential skills were most frequently requested, the employers also noted that they found math, writing and computer skills, all technical skills, to be important, as well.

Question 1:

How might pre-school through grade 12 education better prepare students to meet your workforce needs?

Employers had ten forced choice answers to this question and they rated communication skills as their first choice in





terms of what students should know when entering the labor force. The employers gave the following examples of their communication skill needs:

Employees would be able to:

1. Listen actively and then respond
2. Write clear and concise e-mails
3. Speak with correct grammar and have good spelling
4. Ask questions that make sense
5. Collaborate and problem solve with co-workers

The second most needed skill was work ethic. There were many remarks made about work ethic and it was the most discussed issue among the nine questions asked. Employers noted the following information concerning work ethic:

Employees would be able to:

1. Take initiative/be a self-starter and have self-confidence
2. Exhibit good social skills including making eye contact, speaking clearly, and conversing with others
3. Express curiosity about the work and aspire to grow with the company
4. Exhibit dependability, get along well with others, and have a positive attitude
5. Be on time, have good attendance, and a professional appearance

The last most needed skill was problem solving. Employers noted that employees needed to have the self-confidence to listen and respond when solving problems. As one employer said, "I need workers to have the ability to listen, learn and act."

Employees would be able to:

1. Act: if something is not working, try to fix it (manufacturing)
2. Be aware that problem solving, and teamwork often go together; work with others to solve problems
3. Know there is a sense of urgency that work is time sensitive and we need to solve the problems and get the work done
4. Strive to understand the work and be willing to learn

The most noted needs were communication skills, work ethic and problem solving. Employers asked several times that students receive training in these essential skills.

Question 2:

What are you currently offering to help recruit more work-ready candidates and/or expose students to your field?



Employers noted more ways they were exposing students to their field rather than ways they were recruiting more work-ready candidates.

Their priorities were:

- Internships
- Summer part-time/summer work
- Participation in career fairs
- Guest speakers in schools

The employers all agreed that they use interchangeable language for co-ops, internships, and apprenticeships. Some of these terms denote pay and some do not. Apprenticeships mostly are paid, and internships were sometimes not paid. Some employers said they sometimes have students in the workplace prior to graduation and they do not pay these students, but if the students then return and work over a holiday, they do get paid. They also noted that part-time or summer work is usually paid. There is a serious need to have all employers and schools using the same definitions for these types of work experiences.

Employers also noted that participating at career fairs and acting as guest speakers in classrooms were ways they help expose students to their industry sectors and recruit future workers. The employers were glad to be guest speakers, and this seemed a welcomed opportunity. Employers noted that career fairs were good, but they would prefer job fairs where they could recruit students for job openings for summer work or for full-time work upon high school graduation.

Question 3:

If not already, what would you be willing to offer to help recruit more work-ready candidates and/or expose students to your field?

This question was answered in a reverse manner of question 2. The employers noted that they were most willing to be guest speakers in classrooms followed by offering internships and part-time/summer work.

Employers' comments concerning this question covered a myriad of requests. Employers noted that they offer internships as small as 1.5 hours a day to students who are receiving high school credit for the work they perform at the company. The employers also noted that they participate in career fairs, but they would be much more interested in job fairs to showcase their job openings for high school juniors and seniors. They were especially interested in job fairs for graduating students. Further, they would like to provide more job shadowing. They would also be willing to offer career mentoring.

Question 4:

What are the top three qualities you find in your current best entry level employees?

While the employers spoke first about essential skills such as initiative, work ethic, dependability, positive attitude, problem solving, etc., they also mentioned technical skills such as the following:

1. Computer literacy – specifically Microsoft Office Suite
2. Excel
3. Math skills
4. Mechanical aptitude
5. Customer service skills

As one employer noted, "Teach them how to work." Employers specifically asked for employees who have the big picture concerning what it takes to make the company successful and they welcomed questions about how the company works. They also noted that they want employees who want to get the job done.

Question 5:

What are the three greatest weaknesses you see in entry level employees?

1. Lack of social skills, maturity and professionalism
2. Lack of confidence/curiosity to ask questions
3. Lack of respect, ability to listen, life skills
4. Lack of ability to follow instructions
5. Lack of understanding about external and internal customers
6. Problems with transportation, attendance, and punctuality

This question garnered a great deal of discussion and employers even noted the "ghosting" behavior when applicants and first day workers do not show up. This appears to be an increasing problem. The employers further noted that a basic lack of knowledge regarding how to work seemed to be pervasive. Employers responded that only 10-30% of their employees have the essential skills to do the work and this did not include

technical skills. Suggestions for educators included a life coach – someone to help new employees handle the myriad of personal challenges they must overcome to be successful in the workplace. They further noted they have considered hiring a “go-between” someone who would work in a coaching or supervisory role and then work with human resources to help the employees with not only learning the work but handling personal issues (essential skills). Employers also noted they conduct drug testing and some use personality testing to determine the “right fit” of a potential candidate. Teaching social skills such as eye contact, self-confidence, holding conversations with others, coupled with punctuality, good attendance, and respectfulness would give new employees the path to successful employment.

One employer said, “A real-life lab would be a good addition to the curriculum at all schools.”

Lastly, the employers suggested having industry tours for parents to increase their knowledge of career opportunities.

Question 6:

What needs do you foresee for your industry as a result of changes happening with Artificial Intelligence, the Internet of Things, automation, global economy, “out-of-the-box” computing and the rise of start-ups?

Employees need to have:

1. A knowledge of geography
2. An ability to think outside the box
3. An awareness of customer satisfaction and ability to make quick decisions
4. Critical thinking skills
5. An awareness of inclusion and diversity
6. More knowledge of computer skills
7. An understanding of new technology

Employers first answered this question by saying essential skills and more technical skills are needed before they can think about these oncoming technology opportunities. However, when going deeper into the question, many of the employers gave examples of how they are using new technologies to stay abreast of industry changes. Employers noted that they use training videos, I-Pads at the workplace to provide training opportunities and one employer said his two- and five-minute video clips used at the job site teach employees how to and how not to do their work for the day. Other employers mentioned the use of new technologies to increase their response time to customer needs. CVG is particularly progressive in their ability to use technology to increase customer satisfaction. The

banking industry was also noted as an industry where technology would “make or break” the future of their industry. The employer who responded that students needed to know geography was speaking to the fact that companies are global, and students do not always know where companies are located in the world. Employers made the following suggestions for educators: offer more teacher externships to help teachers understand how new technologies are being used in the workplace; use more training such as what is offered through the Imagineering Academy (critical thinking skills); provide more opportunities for students to gain skilled certifications such as through National Center for Construction Education and Research before graduation; offer more computer training to prepare for electronic medical record usage; and lastly, we received a reminder that relationship building will always be needed no matter what the technologies of the future hold.

Question 7:

Do you anticipate having a large enough pool of qualified candidates from which to draw entry level employees in the next 18 months? Two years?

1. 18 months: all answered no with an exception of 3-4 companies who were unsure; one manufacturing company was at capacity
2. Two years: all answered no

Some employers are using creative ways to keep their employment rosters full. One company mentioned offering “casual” work schedules to newly retired employees allowing them to pick their work shifts on a weekly basis. They also offer benefits including tools, trucks, and uniforms. They also noted the possibility of an oncoming recession as a possible larger problem for recruitment in two years. Lastly, they are offering a myriad of benefits to encourage more people to apply for their openings including tuition reimbursement.

In total, the employers needed to hire 1,500 people at this time. There were some outliers to these hiring projections such as at St. Elizabeth and Duke Energy, as they need to hire hundreds of employees and CVG also needs to hire large numbers of workers for their 70 companies on airport property.

Question 8:

What are your top three concerns with the region’s employment climate and its effect on your industry?

1. Competition/wages
2. Low population growth/talent attraction to the area
3. Transportation

4. Childcare
5. Lack of diversity/need to solve the immigration problem
6. Opioid epidemic
7. Retirement of current workforce

Employers were vocal about this question and answers were rapidly forthcoming. Employers suggested that we need to do a better job of marketing our region. They noted that educating parents is an important step to recruitment and they discussed helping students understand career pathways and creating a better future through career building at their companies. The employers also said retention strategies are as important as recruitment strategies, in that keeping people employed is also a challenge. **The employers suggested that students need to learn financial literacy and understand benefit packages. It was also noted that 67% of the employers offer tuition benefits and students need to understand the value of going to college and completing degrees debt-free.**

Question 9:

What strategies do you have for partnering with the Education Council and local schools to improve your business now?

1. Offering co-ops, internships, and apprenticeships
2. Partnering with Navigo
3. Providing Uber/Ride Share
4. Offering scholarships
5. Offering certificates (Erlanger Independent Schools Logistics Certificate)

Employers had many ideas about ways to partner with schools and several asked about how to get involved with local schools. Suggestions for new ways of partnering with schools included the following:

1. Need for life-lab and the teaching essential skills and financial literacy
2. Career pathway education for students and parents
3. Job shadowing opportunities for students and parents
4. A clearinghouse for co-ops, internships and apprenticeships – employers make one call, and someone handles this for all schools
5. Offer certificates and other credentials to help students have a “jump” on employment opportunities.
6. Job fairs
7. Tuition reimbursement
8. “Work hardening” curriculum
9. Teach students how to work
10. Junior Achievement at the high school level

11. Teach interviewing skills and how to fill out an application electronically
12. Have employers be story tellers about their careers and their companies
13. Mentoring of students through the career decision making process



TEN LESSONS LEARNED

1. Essential skills still rule over technical skills

While employers wanted students to have computer and math skills; mechanical aptitude; and correct grammar and good spelling skills, they were most adamant about the need for essential skills. Again, and again, they mentioned the need for communication skills (ability to converse with others, direct eye contact, and self-confidence), problem-solving and critical thinking skills. Lastly, communication, work ethic and problem solving were the most targeted asks from the employers.

2. Life Lab for high school students

This suggestion came from a manufacturing employer but was noted by several other employers through the five industry sector focus group meetings. Not only did they focus on essential skills, but they also noted the need for financial literacy and teaching students how to understand benefit packages. Work hardening was a term used by one industry sector, but together with that was the need to just teach students how to work.

3. Clearinghouse

Employers were especially interested in the creation of a clearinghouse to handle information about their need for co-ops, interns, and apprentices. They also said this clearinghouse could be used to disseminate information about their scholarship offerings and their tuition reimbursement benefits.

4. Job Fairs

Employers were clear that they like attending career fairs, but job fairs would be more advantageous to them. They would like to offer students the opportunity to work for their companies while in high school and offer them part-time or full-time jobs upon high school graduation. Student matriculation into the workforce would be much smoother if this occurred while in high school.

5. Tuition Reimbursement

Most of the companies offered tuition reimbursement and they noted that most students do not know about this opportunity. While this information could be disseminated through the Clearinghouse, it would be better for employers to note that during job fairs and for teachers to note this when helping students create their career pathways. It was suggested to the employers by Dr. Taylor that they might want to change the wording on this benefit and offer tuition as scholarships. Employers were asked to imagine being on stage at high school graduation offering the scholarship and paid employment as a package to the new high school graduate.

6. College Credentials

Offering high school credentials such as certificates to students in preparation for the workforce is not a new idea, but one that certainly needs more focus. Employers noted that they would welcome NCCER certificates and healthcare certificates in medical assisting, phlebotomy and medical terminology. This knowledge makes high school graduates more marketable and their transition into the workplace would be smoother with these credentials in hand.

7. Global Economy

Students need to have more critical thinking skills and an awareness of advancement in technology. One employer noted that Rocket Mortgage gave more mortgage loans last year than all the brick and mortar banks in Kentucky. Students need increased awareness of AI, automation and “out of the box” computing, but first they will need solid knowledge in Microsoft Office Suite. There was also a call for more understanding of inclusion and diversity. Collaboration and teamwork were noted essential skills that will require a broader understanding of others.

8. Grade 13 for the Disabled

One employer offers this award-winning program for the disabled at their distribution company and this innovative way of offering disabled students the opportunity to learn through “Grade 13” caught the attention of other employers who are not only striving to increase their employee base, but to offer employment to a more diverse and inclusive employee pool of workers. These students spend half day in a company classroom and half day on the plant floor five days a week. Most matriculate to full-time employment at the end of Grade 13.

Two Recommendations about Employment Climate:

9. Competition/Wage Wars

Employers noted competition and wage wars as detrimental to their recruitment efforts for new employees. Employers asked that students be taught about benefit packages including tuition reimbursement before seeking the top dollar per hour at local distribution companies. They also noted that they are shifting work schedules to better accommodate employees’ lifestyles and they encourage educators to bring parents and students into their workplaces to learn more about the actual work.

10. Population growth

Employers talked about our two percent population growth and the fact that we do not always promote Northern Kentucky as a great place to live and work. Perhaps students could become a part of the solution by creating and implementing a campaign to make NKY the place to raise a family, have a meaningful career, and live a quality life.



APPRENDICES

BY INDUSTRY SECTOR

APPENDIX ONE MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY SECTOR

Participating companies:

A-Tech Training
Duke Energy
Meritor
Schwan's
Safran Landing Systems
Wolf Steel USA
Gateway Community and Technical College
Representative

Question 1:

How might pre-school through grade 12 education better prepare students to meet your workforce needs?

Work ethic
Problem solving
Communication
Teamwork

It was then explained to the participants that there is a difference in "soft" skills – referred to as Essential Skills by the KY Chamber of Commerce and Technical Skills. When asked if they would like to delineate between the two for their expectations regarding students' preparedness for the workforce, they said that the two Technical Skills that would be helpful were computer skills – Microsoft Office Suite, specifically Excel, and Math Skills. They were, however, most concerned about Essential Skills.

It was also noted that Financial Literacy is very much needed by employees and offering that training in high school would be extremely helpful. Several employers mentioned that students need financial literacy to better understand their benefit packages and the importance of benefits when making salary considerations.

Question 2:

What are you currently offering to help recruit more work-ready candidates and/or expose students to your field?

Internships (3-6) months
Apprenticeship (Long Term)

Career Fairs
Co-ops-more flexible in scheduling
Summer- part time work

When asked if there needed to be a common language among the terms: co-op, internships, and apprenticeships, the group participants responded with yes. They noted that many companies call their programs by different names and often they have different meanings depending upon the company having the offering. They noted that internships can frequently be non-paid, but apprenticeships are usually paid positions. Apprenticeships are also longer in length of time and internships are frequently offered in the summer. Co-ops are often unpaid, but sometimes paid over holidays if the student wishes to work while on a school break. Employers also mentioned that they could use a staff person to handle the paperwork involved in having co-ops, interns and apprentices.

Question 3:

If not already, what would you be willing to offer to help recruit more work-ready candidates and/or expose students to your field?

Guest speakers in schools
Part-time employment
Apprenticeships

It was noted that the participants would like the opportunity to participate in job fairs at high schools. They noted that Career Fairs are offered, but they more specifically would like to participate in job fairs showcasing their job openings for those students who are not matriculating on to college or for those who want to work while in college.

When asked, the employers noted that they all offered tuition benefits to their employees.

Question 4:

What are the top three qualities you find in your current best entry level employees?

Initiative
Work ethic
Aspiration to grow in company

The employers noted that about 20% or 2 out of 10 of their current employees have these qualities and they would like to hire more individuals that possess these qualities.

They also noted that they would like employees to have some mechanical aptitude, but mostly the willingness to learn more about mechanical skills. Further, they think problem solving is a key skill to be successful in the manufacturing environment. They noted that computer literacy is a big plus and specifically Excel skills. They noted that many of their employees have one of these skills – either computer literacy or mechanical aptitude, but rarely do they have both.

Question 5:

What are the three greatest weaknesses you see in entry level employees?

Maturity/Professionalism/Conflict Resolution (lack of problem-solving ability)
Lack of social skills and no support system

The participants noted that their weakest employees don't know how to work. They also said that a life coach would be a potential help, because employees have many problems that are personal in nature. They also said a "go-between" who would work between the employee and the Human Resource office would be helpful in keeping the employee working.

Other ideas in this category included an internal mentor for the employees and one company had mentors on board. They noted it would be helpful if employees could visualize the big picture - the future of the company and why their work matters. They noted that a Real-Life Lab would be helpful in preparing students for the workforce. They suggested role playing in various problem-solving situations at all high school levels. They noted that some of their employees seem to have a sense of entitlement and this was not helpful when getting employees to invest in the success of the company. Lastly, they thought that company tours for parents might be a good place to begin to recruit students and perhaps their parents to work.

Again, they mentioned job fairs and suggested that high schools could host "Employer Nights in high schools to increase students' awareness of employment opportunities. The tuition benefit could also be shared at those "Employer Nights".

Question 6:

What needs do you foresee for your industry as a result of changes happening with Artificial Intelligence, the Internet of Things, automation, global economy, "out of the box" computing and the rise of start-ups?

The participants noted that the basics needed to be there first. As one employer noted, we would love to have these problems, but these issues are not on the radar of



most employers. One employer noted that her parent company was in Canada and they were working on the Internet of Things as directed by their parent company. One employer said to tackle the global economy, employees needed to know basic geography. They also suggested that schools need to use local resources to get kids educated/interested in things like global logistics. As one employer said, "Regardless of anything else, it all comes back to essential skills after that, we can evaluate what skills are needed." Lastly, one employer noted that school districts should approach issues as a united entity and offer teacher externships to learn more about what companies face.

Question 7:

Do you anticipate having a large enough pool of qualified candidates from which to draw entry level employees in the next 18 months? Two years?

18 months: no

Two years: no

They also noted that all the companies had hiring shortages, but one and it was at capacity. In total, five of the companies needed to hire 130 individuals with Duke Energy reporting that they might need hundreds of new workers.

One company did note they offer "casual" employee status for those retiring. These employees may work any shift at any time they wish. They just let HR know when they want to work. This method of keeping employees engaged works well and they don't completely lose the talent and skills these employees have to offer. Some do offer part-time schedules to their employee base and some do not.

Question 8:

What are your top three concerns with the region's employment climate and its effect on your industry?

Competition – other manufacturing, logistics and production companies
 Companies offering higher wages and higher tuition benefits
 Employees chasing extra dollars on the hour
 Would like students to see bigger picture/career pathway opportunities, retirement benefits – more knowledge of financial literacy
 Educate people on why they should care about benefits
 Capable employees who want to work but need to figure out residency status to increase the labor force.
 Transportation
 Child care
 Promote our company across the river to recruit more employees

Question 9:

What strategies do you have for partnering with the Education Council and local schools to improve your business now?

High school co-ops
 Partnering with Adecco
 Navigo Scholars
 One-to-One Reading
 Attending this meeting to learn more

And employers' questions:
 Are schools having these conversations?
 Are there college-career readiness courses required in schools?
 Are schools integrating business/career options into schools – some districts seem to be doing more than others
 Need for a Communications Clearinghouse for all types of these meetings, events, etc.
 Need to stream more meetings using SKYPE
 Need concentrated Financial Literacy classes at the ATCs.



APPENDIX TWO CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY SECTOR

Century
 Fedders Construction
 Fischer Homes
 Messer
 Specialty Interiors
 Associated Builders and Contractors

Question 1:

How might pre-school through grade 12 education better prepare students to meet your workforce needs?

Collaboration/Teamwork
 Work Ethic
 Technical Skills/Certification
 Problem Solving
 Self-confidence

One of the companies brought an apprentice to the meeting and he noted that collaboration and teamwork were critical to the success of the employee. If a student cannot work with others, then he/she will not be successful. It was also noted that a great deal of problem solving is required on the job and teamwork is critical to solve problems quickly and move forward with the work. Lastly, self-confidence was discussed at length. Have employees who have enough self-confidence to ask questions and speak up when problem solving is key to the company's success.

Question 2:

What are you currently offering to help recruit more work-ready candidates and/or expose students to your field?

Apprenticeships
 Counselor breakfasts
 Scholarships
 Guest speaking
 Career Fairs – limited
 Summer jobs

Question 3:

If not already, what would you be willing to offer to help recruit more work-ready candidates and/or expose students to your field?

Internships
 Job Shadowing

It was specifically noted by one employer that they are interested in hiring students from other academic majors such as accounting, because they need that

balance of knowledge and talent. Secondly, some of the construction companies were contracting to manage projects and some required craftsman. Therefore, there is a wide range of skills needed in this industry. The employers believed that internships and job shadowing would help students understand that you do not necessarily need to be a tradesman to work in this industry.

Question 4:

What are the top three qualities you find in your current best entry level employees?

- Dependable
- Ready to work
- Work ethic/hard working
- Collaborative/gets along with others
- Attitude
- Leader skills
- Career goals
- Self-starter/initiative

One company participant noted that their company is looking for a construction athlete – someone who likes to do the heavy lifting. The employers also noted that it would be helpful if students had basic safety in high school. Lastly, basic Math skills would be helpful.

Questions 5:

What are the three greatest weaknesses you see in entry level employees?

- Transportation
- Drug testing
- Attendance
- Lack of confidence/curiosity to ask questions

One employer noted that they used to have the paychecks issued every Thursday electronically to the employees. They stopped this practice, because the employees would not return on Friday to work. Then they moved to paper checks and gave them out Friday at noon. The employees didn't return from lunch. Now, they give them out on Friday afternoon.

Two out of the five companies noted that they do provide tuition benefits. One employer said he bought his employee a truck to assure that he gets to the job sites every day. The employee is a hard worker and oversees project work. Therefore, transportation was a necessity and the employer hopes the employee will stay long-term with the company.



When asked how many employees actually have the skills needed to be effective on the job, the employers noted that 10-30% have the needed skills.

Employers also noted that they require drug testing, and some do personality testing to see if the person is a "good fit" for the job. Helping students understand their requirements is important.

Question 6:

What needs do you foresee for your industry as a result of changes happening with Artificial Intelligence, the Internet of Things, automation, global economy, "Out of the box" computing and the rise of start-ups?

The employers noted that they wished there was more need for these things, but at this time they need employees to have basic skills. One employer noted that she uses video tutorials on the job and another employer said he uses I-pads to show workers how to do specifics on the job site when needed. These are 2-5 minute videos. As he noted we teach employees how to or how not to do specific work. One employer said they use the webuildtheUSA.org website as a part of their training tools. One employer also noted that they use an on-line learning system as their training tool. Lastly, the employers noted that it would be helpful if students had some of their NCCER certifications before high school graduation. One employer mentioned the Imagineering Academy and the importance of having future employees who can think outside the box.

Question 7:

Do you anticipate having a large enough pool of qualified candidates from which to draw entry level employees in the next 18 months? Two years?

All the employers answered no to both time periods. In total, the employers reported that they need over 500 employees at this time.

Question 8:

What are your top three concerns with the region's employment climate and its effect on your industry?

Wage competition
Low unemployment rate
Retirement of current workers
Retention of quality workers
Stealing from similar companies
Transportation - lack of driver's license & reliable vehicle. Legislation that requires driver's education course and costs money
Educating parents

One employer noted that we need to teach students about career pathways. She noted that when an employee learned that he was going to use his concrete skills to build a water park, he was much more invested in the work and seemed to enjoy it more.

Employers also mentioned that we no longer require driver's education in the high school curriculum and parents cannot always pay for the training. Therefore, students may not have a driver's license to get to the work site. One of the participants noted that if a man is arrested for not paying child support, he then loses his driver's license and he cannot get to work to earn the money to pay child support. This speaks to a policy issue that has great impact on the industry.

Another employer said he is concerned about his older workers who are approaching retirement. He specifically noted that these older workers do not always want to teach the younger workers how to do the work.

Lastly, some of the employers noted that they are stretching to offer more incentives to appeal to a larger audience of workers. For example, they purchase the workers' tools, provide vehicles, uniforms, pay full benefits and some even pay family benefits.



Question 9:

What strategies do you have for partnering with the Education Council and local schools to improve your business now?

Uber/Ride Share options
"Work hardening" in schools
Educating students on ALL career pathways
Educating parents on career pathways
Different electives/learning experiences for students
On the Job Training and Department of Labor
Journeyman preparation

APPENDIX THREE LOGISTICS/TRANSPORTATION

Cengage
Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky Airport Board Authority
DHL
Legion Logistics
Partners for a Competitive Workforce
Gateway Community and Technical College

Question 1:

How might pre-school through grade 12 education better prepare students to meet your workforce needs?

Problem solving
Work ethic
Collaboration/teamwork
Communication

It was noted that they would like students to learn the Microsoft Office Suite and they could use a course on Essential Skills.

Question 2:

What are you currently offering to help recruit more work-ready candidates and/or expose students to your field?

The participants checked all but career mentoring. Their list of answers:
Internships
Job shadowing
Apprenticeships
Student part-time/summer work
Guest speakers
Participating in career fairs
Other – tuition reimbursement

It should be noted that all the companies offer tuition benefits.

Question 3:

If not already, what would you be willing to offer to help recruit more work-ready candidates and/or expose students to your field?

The employers noted that they are working on all the items listed in the survey. They offer internships, apprenticeships and student part-time/summer work. They also offer job shadowing and act as guest speakers in schools. They participate in career fairs.

One participant noted that her company offers a Grade 13 for disabled students. Her company has built a classroom within the company and students spend a half day on the floor of the company's distribution site and half a day in classroom studies. Several of the students have matriculated to full-time employment after their 13th Grade completion.

Another employer noted that he has interns working at his bank who spend 1.5 hours a day at the bank working and receive high school credit for that internship. Another bank noted they offer a program called Future Focus, which is a mentoring program for high school students interested in the financial industry.

Question 4:

What are the top three qualities you find in your current best entry level skilled employees?

Motivation/Passion for learning – positive attitude
 Adaptability
 Sense of urgency
 Commitment
 Interest and engagement in the work

One employer noted that it was extremely helpful when an employee had the big picture concerning the success of the company and questions concerning how the company works were always welcomed. A sense of urgency was mentioned noting that much of the work was time sensitive and to understand and note the importance of getting the job done was always a sign of a good employee.

Question 5:

What are the three greatest weaknesses you see in entry level employees?

Lack of respect
 Ambivalence
 No ability to listen
 Not Showing up
 Lack of computer skills
 Lack of life skills – understanding benefits, resources, etc.

There was a conversation among the employers about letting employees choose their shifts and deciding as a team when they would work. Some of the employers said there were benefits to doing this practice and the employees felt more invested when they tried this model.

Some employers also noted that employees sometimes have a sense of entitlement and as one employer said, "They need to learn to pay their dues."

Question 6:

What needs do you foresee for your industry as a result of changes happening with Artificial Intelligence, the Internet of Things, automation, global economy, "Out of the Box" computing and the rise of start-ups?

It was noted by one employer that AI and other types of automation are currently happening in her company. She noted several examples of ways customers are interacting with the business that allows for quick decisions and other ways to increase customer satisfaction. For example, customers may mark their satisfaction with the restroom facilities and if the ratings are low, the

employees move to that area for better housekeeping. Another employer also said it is important to keep training employees to move into the future of AI and automation.

Another employer mentioned working with Centrifuse and moving forward with new areas of automation. One company noted the use of more digital platforms and less printing of items to be sold by their company. As one company representative noted, "We are always changing and adapting, and we have to be sure our employers can keep up with those changes."



Question 7:

Do you anticipate having a large enough pool of qualified candidates from which to draw entry level employees in the next 18 months? Two years? All employers answered no to these two questions. In total the employers noted that they need thousands of employees to fill their openings. It should be noted that the airport has over 70 companies on airport property and therefore, they need thousands among those 70 companies. The other company participants noted that they need an additional 320 employees.

Question 8:

What are your top three concerns with the region’s employment climate and its effect on your industry?

- Low population growth
- Wage wars
- Talent attraction to the area
- Transportation

One employer said he had moved here from Colorado and he was surprised how many people asked him why he would leave Colorado for Kentucky. There was some discussion about the fact that we don’t talk about Northern Kentucky being a great place to live.

Wage wars were especially a long discussion and a couple of companies were mentioned for offering \$18 per hour or more. These concerns are critical for local logistics/distribution companies.

Lastly, the employers talked extensively about ghosting. The fact that job applicants often do not show up for interviews and then when hired they often do not show up to work. There was also repeated discussion about workers leaving after the first day or first week on the job.

Question 9:

What strategies do you have for partnering with the Education Council and local schools to improve your business now?

- Hosting onsite events to expose and explain the industry
- Interactive promotional videos for increasing awareness of the industry - #supplychainOKI videos
- The future Ignite Institute

One of the employers mentioned the Navigo tours at the airport and how important it was for students from the river cities to see the airport and understand the great career opportunities. The group discussed the importance of on-site experiences at all companies in the region.

Several employers also noted that parents need to understand the value of careers and the great variety open to students. As one employer noted, parents probably need to take the tours, too.

It was noted that they would like more information about the Ignite Institute.

It was noted that one of the companies at the focus group meeting has the highest tuition reimbursement rate in the region. Therefore, the opportunity to go to college free of charge is a great benefit and one that needs to be shared with students who are trying to determine how to pay for college.

Lastly, it was discussed that 27 students at Erlanger Independent School District are participating in dual credit classes with Gateway for two logistics certificates and this type of programming could be premium if offered to the river city school districts.

**APPENDIX FOUR
HEALTHCARE INDUSTRY SECTOR**

- Baptist Life
- Madonna Manor
- Magnolia Springs
- NKY Health Department
- St. Elizabeth Health Care
- St. Elizabeth Physicians
- Navigo

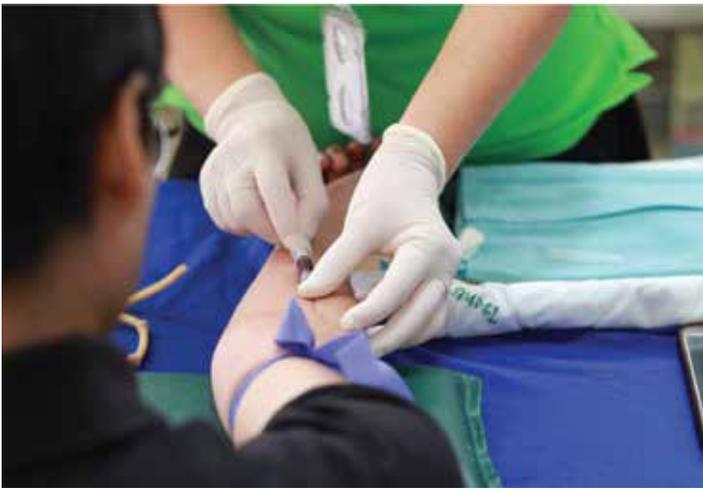
Question 1:

How might pre-school through grade 12 education better prepare students to meet your workforce needs?

- Work ethic
- Communication Skills
- Problem solving
- Computer Literacy – Microsoft Office Suite

When discussing ways schools could better prepare their future workforce, the employers noted that communication is critical in their environment. They also noted that listening may be more important than speaking with their patients. When asked to think about the difference between soft skills or Essential Skills and Technical Skills, they noted that computer skills will be important on the job, for example use of the software, EPIC, was noted as a necessity on the job, but more importantly were the Essential Skills for job success.

The employers discussed interview questions they use to determine if the candidates for employment had the



essential skills to be successful at work. One employer said she asks candidates to tell her about themselves and often their answers reveal personal situations that would hinder their success on the job. The employers also noted that candidates have many barriers to make it almost impossible for them to work.

Lastly, it was noted that Junior Achievement would be a great offering for high school students. Junior Achievement is only offered at the 5th and 8th grade levels.

Question 2:

What are you currently offering to help recruit more work-ready candidates and/or expose students to your field?

- Unpaid internships
- Job shadowing
- Career mentoring
- Part-time/summer work
- Guest speakers
- Career fairs
- Clinical rotations
- Pre-hire testing

One of the employers said she frequently visits a local Area Technology Center (ATC) to meet with the students studying healthcare. She finds this to be an excellent recruitment method and she often speaks to classes about hiring needs and the industry as a whole.

As one employer noted, "Healthcare is a human care and we need to be recruiting to find those who have compassion and empathy."

Question 3:

If not already, what would you be willing to offer to help recruit more work-ready candidates and/or expose students to your field?

- Career mentoring
- High school job fairs

It was noted that these employers frequently attend career fairs, but they would like for high schools to offer job fairs for seniors helping them recruit more students upon their high school graduation.

Question 4:

What are the top three qualities you find in your current best entry level employees?

- Work ethic
- Ability to listen/learn/act
- Nurturing/compassion
- Character – What do you like about long-term care and working with seniors?
- Managing their outside life
- Professionalism – attendance, on-time, appearance
- Basic technology skills
- Quick learner
- Knowledge of required certifications/skills sets
- Integrity
- Some basic math skills

One employer noted that to determine a person's character, she will ask "What was your biggest mistake at work? They also noted that most interview questions are behavioral, which allows them to listen to the candidate and think about how they would respond to a situation. They also noted that appearance is critical, and they often have dress code requirements.

Question 5:

What are the three greatest weaknesses you see in entry level employees?

- Punctuality
- Poise/confidence
- Following instructions

There was much discussion around this question and when discussing poise and self-confidence, the employers noted that one of the things they look for during the interview is whether the candidate can make eye contact. They noted that this is a critical skill for working with their patients/clients. Secondly, they noted that the candidates' speaking voice is also very important. How a candidate speaks during the interview reflects how successful they will be with patients. When discussing following instructions, the employer noted that if the candidate can fill out the application correctly, then maybe he/she will be successful in following written directions at work. Employers also noted that they look for candidates who have done volunteer work to determine their genuine interest in working. There was much discussion regarding the fact that we have a transient population in

NKY and that coupled with foster care issues, child care issues and transportation may be the barriers which will keep these candidates from being successful on the job.

Question 6:

What needs do you foresee for your industry as a result of changes happening with Artificial Intelligence, the Internet of Things, automation, global economy, “Out of the box” computing and the rise of start-ups?

The employers noted that critical thinking skills are extremely important and there is a difference between automation and paper. Some of the employers reported that they now do paper applications, because the applicants could not fill out applications on-line.

Employers also noted that when thinking about the global economy, they thought of inclusion and diversity. They said they see a need for leadership to be diverse and inclusive. They also mentioned the need to deal with immigration laws so that they can hire more people. They did note the need for basic computer skills since they use the EPIC software for electronic medical records. They noted that with the expansion of electronic medical records, employees will need to be more computer literate and need to possess a willingness to learn. It was also noted that they sometimes use gamification applications in training.

Question 7:

Do you anticipate having a large enough pool of qualified candidates from which to draw entry level employees in the next 18 months? Two years?

The employees answered no to these two questions. They noted that collectively, they need to hire approximately 100 employees. There was a differential with St. Elizabeth Medical Center in that they need to hire hundreds of people. They especially need transporters, nutrition workers and housekeeping personnel.

The employers also talked about retention and the fact that it is not only hiring employees but keeping them that creates challenges. Interestingly, one employer said she sees the pattern of people becoming employed to participate in orientation, which can last a week and then they quit and move to another company taking orientation again. This ensures that they never have to work on the floor and they continue to get paid one week at a time. Again, large distribution centers were mentioned since their starting wages are higher and more appealing to applicants.

The employers noted that the region is very homogeneous, and they would like to see more immigrants in the workplace.

The employers also noted that there is a shortage of high school students to take entry level jobs, but they cannot be hired until they are 18 years of age and therefore, it is often after graduation when they can begin working in a medical setting. They also mentioned the low unemployment rate and the small population growth as factors impacting their hiring practices.

Wage wars were mentioned again and the fact that Amazon and Fed Ex pay higher wages. But they noted that their benefit packages are excellent, and this is a bonus for working in healthcare.

They also noted that they do drug screening and background checks, which often prohibit people from being hired.

Question 8:

What are your top three concerns with the region’s employment climate and its effect on your industry?

- Amazon competition
- Healthcare competition is booming – where do we find these people?
- Taxing
- Transportation
- Not being able to pull from Cincinnati – licenses don’t transfer
- Slow population growth
- Lack of diversity – immigration is a factor and often other cultures want to work
- Pros and cons of a recession – a recession might make people want to work in healthcare if they lose their jobs in other industries

The employers expressed gratefulness for the employer focus group meeting. They noted that they rarely have the opportunity to “weigh in” on school curriculum or what they would like taught to prepare students for the workforce. They also said it was a great opportunity to network with their colleagues from other companies. They also noted that this type of collaboration is critical to their mission to fill their job openings and these meetings also allow for further partnership development.

Again, the discussion regarding a Clearinghouse model to help make better linkages, increase students’ awareness of job opportunities and fill their job openings would be welcomed.

Question 9:

What strategies do you have to partner with the Education Council and local schools to improve your business now?

The employers suggested that we include high school students in the industry at an earlier age. They especially cited DePaul Cristo Rey High School as a partnership of which they are invested. They noted that this helps high school students become invested in the visioning process concerning their career pathway. One employer also mentioned that her company offers mentoring for new hires and this is a helpful retention strategy. They also offer customized scheduling to help employees.

The employers also noted that some high schools are creating CNA and phlebotomy training, which allows the student to graduate with a healthcare certificate. They noted that “life learning” curriculum is needed, and all Essential Skills should be taught at the high school level. Again, they wanted the Junior Achievement curriculum offered at the high school level.

The employers asked if high schools were teaching career pathway awareness and do students understand career pathways and how to build them.

An interesting idea offered by the employers was industry leaders becoming “story tellers” for high school students. These employers would share their career pathway planning and their journey through their career. One employer said this would be a great idea to combine with mentoring individual students and hopefully would produce “ah-ha” moments for students. It was specifically noted that a mentor does not guarantee a job, but instead helps students change their expectations about the labor market. The employers also suggested that students learn how to look for a job and how to apply for jobs. The employers believed this needed to start at the sophomore level.

APPENDIX FIVE BUSINESS/IT/FINANCE INDUSTRY SECTORS

C-Forward
Central Bank
Citi
Dwyer Insurance
Heritage Bank
L&N Federal Credit Union
PNC
Staffmark
Kenton County Public Library



Question 1:

How might pre-school through grade 12 education better prepare students to meet your workforce needs?

Work ethic
Communication skills
Problem solving
Collaboration
Math skills

Specifically, employers said situational communication is important to get the results you want. They suggested that employees need to know how to have a professional conversation. They need to be responsive and understand what it takes to be a receiver of communication. They noted that being a good listener requires good listening skills and that this may be more important than speaking. They also noted that written communication is critical to their success and suggested that grammar and spelling are requirements for success on the job. They also noted that communication in the workplace is not similar to communication used in social media.

Question 2:

What are you currently offering to help recruit more work ready candidates and/or expose students to your field?

Junior Achievement – grades 5 and 8
Future Focus – workforce preparedness for high school students
Community engagement
Guest speaking
Internships – class credit for high school and paid for college
Summer work

Future Focus is a program offered at Citi, which offers mentoring to high school students.

Question 3:

If not already, what would you be willing to offer to help recruit more work-ready candidates and/or expose students to your field?

Job shadowing

Career mentoring to help students see the big picture and career pathways to success

Question 4:

What are the top three qualities you find in your current best entry level skilled employees?

Dependability – good attendance and following policies

Willingness to learn and make progress

Take initiative

Manners/etiquette

Professionalism

The employers noted that customer service is the key to building success in their workforce. They noted again that communication skills are essential for their businesses.

Question 5:

What are the three greatest weaknesses you see in entry level employees?

Entitlement

Respect for co-workers/management

Not thinking about how to contribute to the company

Understanding of internal and external customers

Employers noted that they see a lot of quick quits. The churn is especially problematic in these industry sectors and they also mentioned ghosting as a real problem for their human resources office.

Question 6:

What needs do you foresee for your industry as a result of changes happening with Artificial Intelligence, the Internet of Things, automation, global economy, “Out of the box” computing and the rise of start-ups?

One employer said more people need technical skills, but the need for soft skills is still there. Another person said community banks must integrate new technology or they will not survive. Another person added that banking must shift to less brick and mortar businesses. For example, Rocket Mortgage did more loans last year than all the brick and mortar banks did collectively in Kentucky. Rocket is an on-line lender. Lastly, employers agreed that there needs to be more emphasis on relationship building, because this is what makes an employee standout.

Question 7:

Do you anticipate having a large enough pool of qualified candidates from which to draw entry level employees in the next 18 months? Two years?

For the 18-month time frame the response was mixed. Some employers said yes and some no. For two years, the employers expressed concern that they would not be



able to find qualified candidates as they believe a recession is near and it will generate quick quits. They believe the disruption in the economy will impact their ability to find qualified candidates.

Collectively, the companies need to hire approximately 450 people. It was noted that all the companies have tuition benefits and they believe this will help them draw qualified candidates.

Question 8:

What are your top three concerns with the region's employment climate and its effect on your industry?

- Low population growth
- Lack of diversity in people and companies
- Transportation
- Opioid epidemic – not just for future employees but also for their families
- Wage competition

Again, population growth was a major concern.

Question 9:

What strategies do you have for partnering with the Education Council and local schools to improve your business now?

It was noted that they need a Clearinghouse to connect with local schools. As one employer noted, he does not want to contact each school when he needs an intern or a co-op student. He wants to use a Clearinghouse, so he can make one call and get his hiring needs met. The employers noted that they would like to have closer contact with guidance counselors to recruit more students for co-ops, internships, and employment. One employer noted that he gives three college scholarships every year and he has a difficult time getting guidance counselors to disseminate his application. They would like to work with more students on interviewing skills and they would like to participate in hiring fairs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The small number of employers at each focus group meeting was a bonus in that this allowed for more discussion by individual company representatives and everyone had a chance to be heard. Each company representative was offered the opportunity for a one-on-one meeting to discuss their specific needs. Only one company asked for an individual meeting. Secondly, it is recommended that future focus group meetings be held to allow other employers to participate.

Further, it would be helpful to bring these employers back to the table for a second discussion regarding their feedback and specific ways they may be directly involved with schools and their future employees.

Lastly, these employers expressed their thanks and gratitude for these employer focus group meetings and their recommendations are worthy of study and implementation. It will be important to let them know they were heard and that we are moving forward with the work of meeting their employment needs.





Chamber of
Commerce

GROW NKY

Growing Regional Outcomes through Workforce

NKY Employer Survey: Workforce Skills

Fall 2018

Total surveys = 219

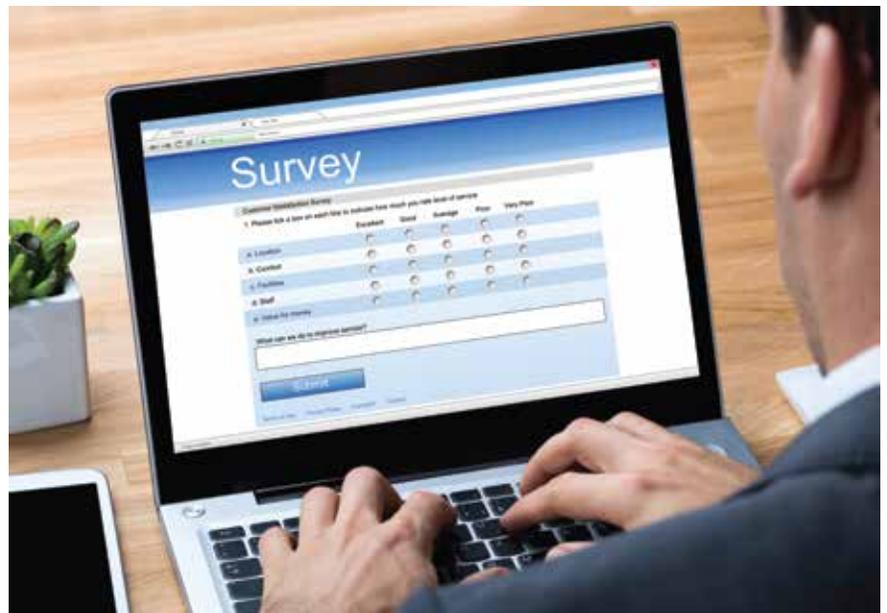
In November 2018, the Northern Kentucky Education Council and the Northern Kentucky Chamber of Commerce jointly hosted an employer survey. The purpose of the survey was to identify the skills most needed in the workplace and to provide direction to the K-12 school districts regarding those skills. The survey also sought to identify avenues for employers to partner with school districts to develop the needed skills. The survey was sent to the main contact of all Chamber members (approximately 1,200 organizations). A total of 199 organizations completed the survey.

Subsequently, a series of focus groups was held in December 2018. These focus groups were industry-specific and reflected the high-impact career fields for Northern Kentucky. Details of those focus groups are included in this report. Focus-group participants were given the opportunity to complete the survey, and an additional 20 participants took the survey as a result. In total, 219 participants completed the survey.

The following slides detail results by industry sector. The sectors represented are business/financial services; construction; health services; hospitality;

logistics-supply chain; manufacturing; non-profit and educational institutions; and "other." Please note that "IT" was one of the listed high-impact industry sectors. However, only eight organizations selected this response – too few to report separately. Therefore, IT responses were included in the category of "all other."

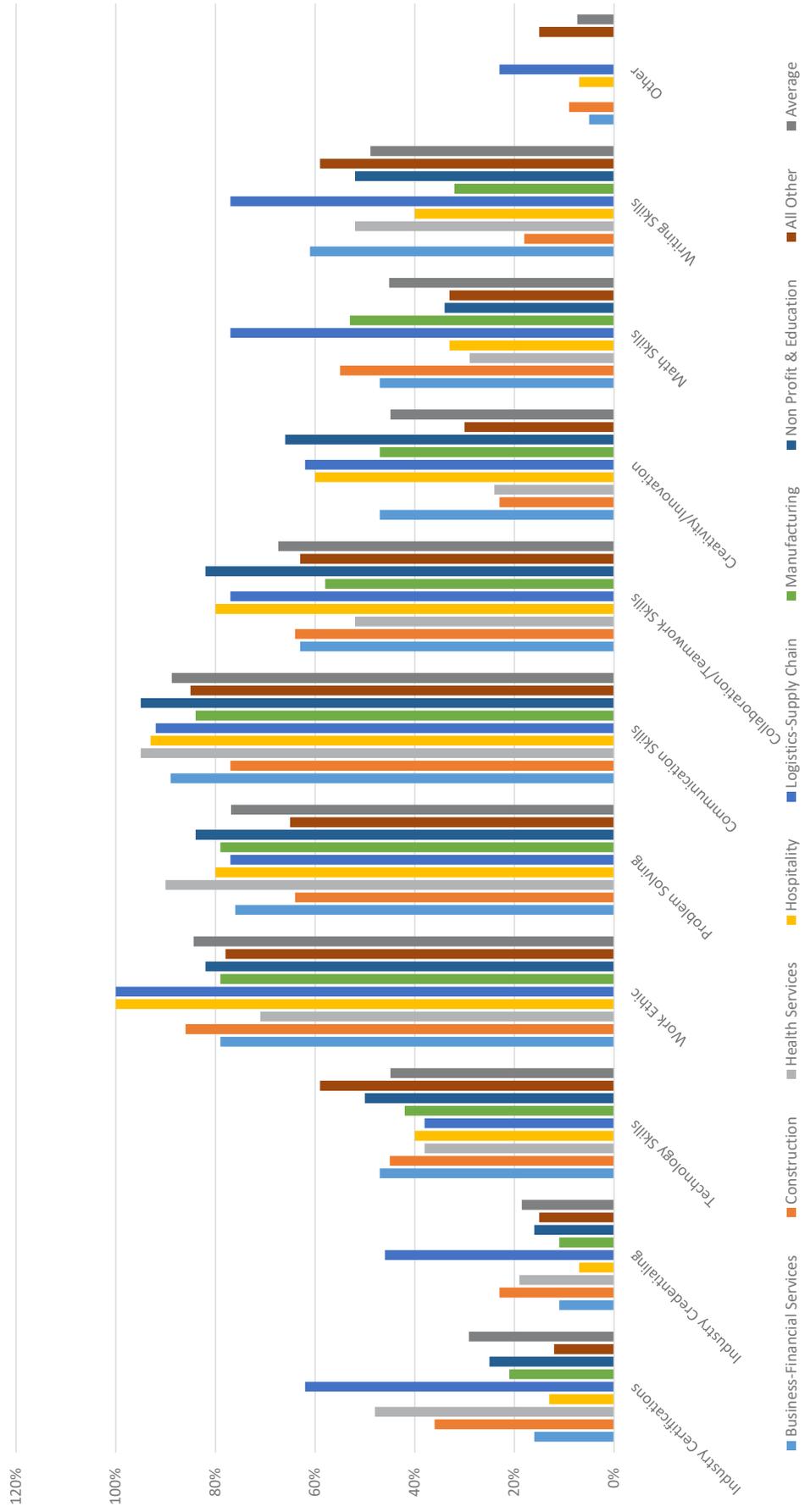
Key findings show a great deal of consistency across industry sectors about the most-needed skills and the activities most supported by employers.



21: How might P-12 Education better prepare students to meet your workforce needs?

	Business- Financial Services	Construction	Health Services	Hospitality	Logistics- Supply Chain	Manufacturing & Education	Non Profit	All Other	Average
Industry Certifications	16%	36%	48%	13%	62%	21%	25%	12%	29%
Industry Credentialing	11%	23%	19%	7%	46%	11%	16%	15%	19%
Technology Skills	47%	45%	38%	40%	38%	42%	50%	59%	45%
Work Ethic	79%	86%	71%	100%	100%	79%	82%	78%	84%
Problem Solving	76%	64%	90%	80%	77%	79%	84%	65%	77%
Communication Skills	89%	77%	95%	93%	92%	84%	95%	85%	89%
Collaboration/Teamwork Skills	63%	64%	52%	80%	77%	58%	82%	63%	67%
Creativity/Innovation	47%	23%	24%	60%	62%	47%	66%	30%	45%
Math Skills	47%	55%	29%	33%	77%	53%	34%	33%	45%
Writing Skills	61%	18%	52%	40%	77%	32%	52%	59%	49%
Other	5%	9%	0%	7%	23%	0%	0%	15%	7%

Survey Results by Industry Sector Question 1

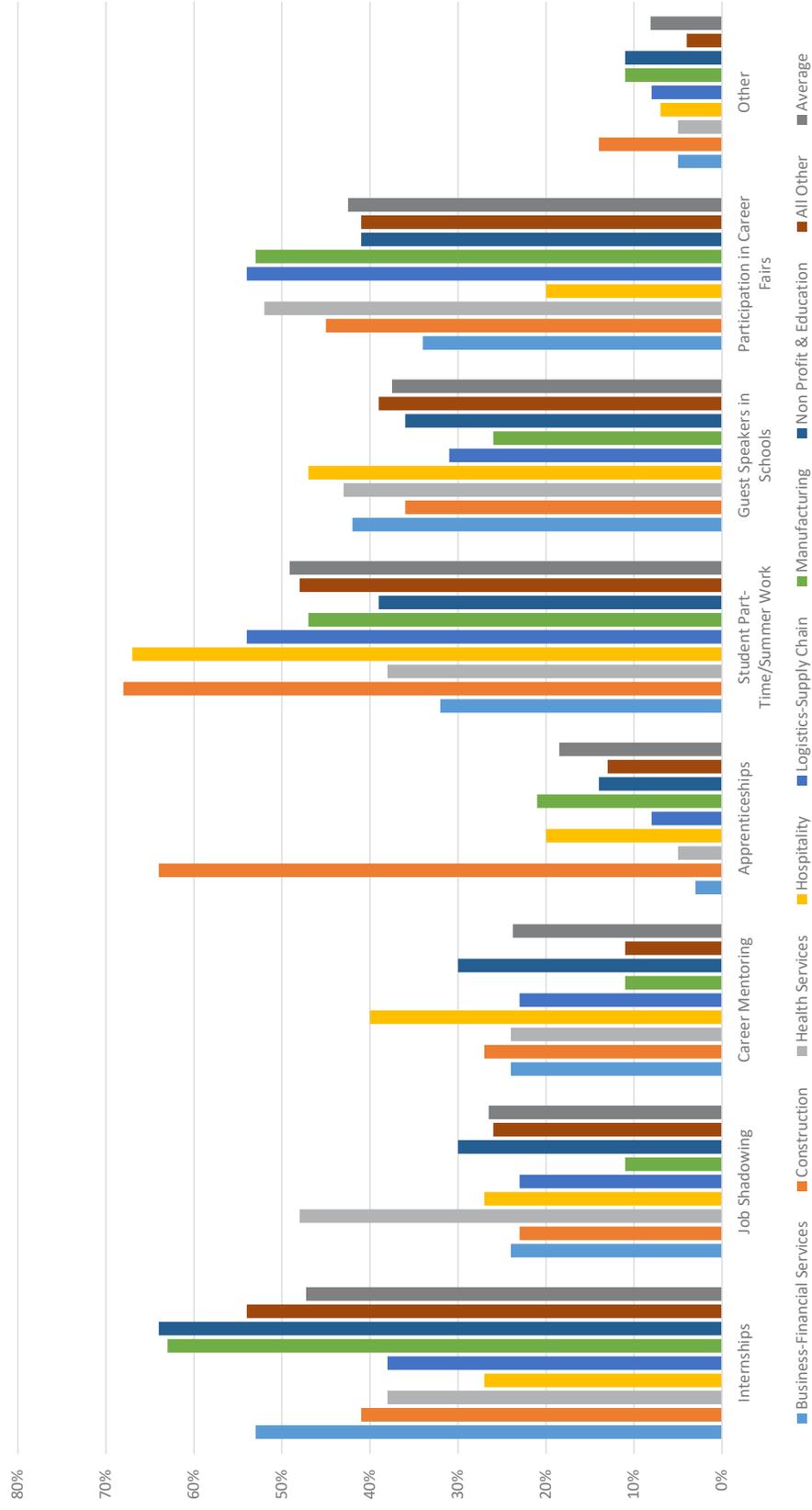


Q2: What are you currently offering to help recruit more work-ready candidates and/or expose students to your field?

	Business- Financial Services	Construction	Health Services	Hospitality	Logistics- Supply Chain	Manufacturing	Non Profit & Education	All Other	Average
Internships	53%	41%	38%	27%	38%	63%	64%	54%	47%
Job Shadowing	24%	23%	48%	27%	23%	11%	30%	26%	27%
Career Mentoring	24%	27%	24%	40%	23%	11%	30%	11%	24%
Apprenticeships	3%	64%	5%	20%	8%	21%	14%	13%	19%
Student Part-Time/Summer Work	32%	68%	38%	67%	54%	47%	39%	48%	49%
Guest Speakers in Schools	42%	36%	43%	47%	31%	26%	36%	39%	38%
Participation in Career Fairs	34%	45%	52%	20%	54%	53%	41%	41%	43%
Other	5%	14%	5%	7%	8%	11%	11%	4%	8%



Survey Results by Industry Sector Question 2

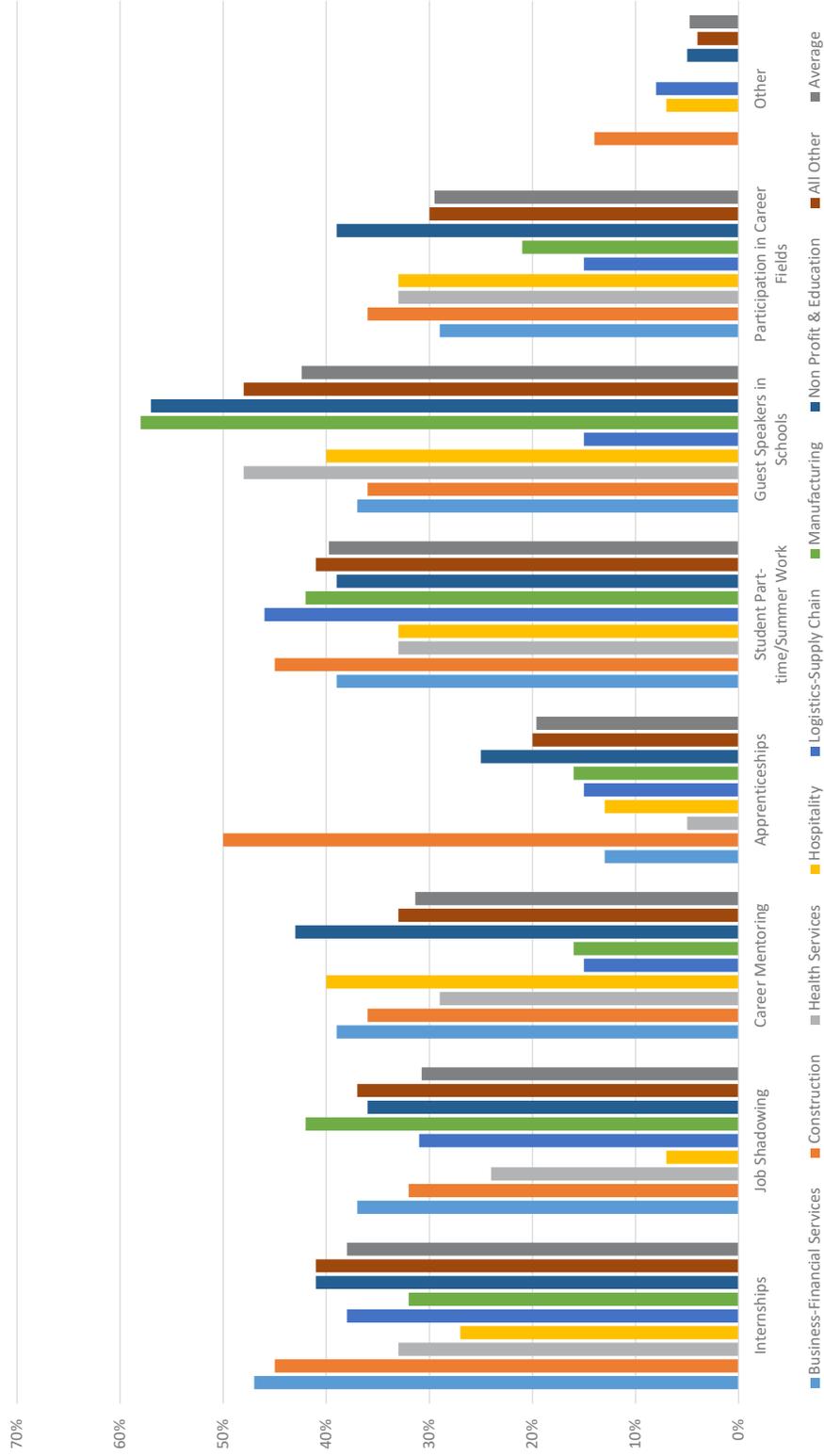


Q3: In not already, what would you be willing to offer to help recruit more work-ready candidates and/or expose students to your field?

	Business- Financial Services	Construction	Health Services	Hospitality	Logistics- Supply Chain	Manufacturing	Non Profit & Education	All Other	Average
Internships	47%	45%	33%	27%	38%	32%	41%	41%	38%
Job Shadowing	37%	32%	24%	7%	31%	42%	36%	37%	31%
Career Mentoring	39%	36%	29%	40%	15%	16%	43%	33%	31%
Apprenticeships	13%	50%	5%	13%	15%	16%	25%	20%	20%
Student Part-time/Summer Work	39%	45%	33%	33%	46%	42%	39%	41%	40%
Guest Speakers in Schools	37%	36%	48%	40%	15%	58%	57%	48%	42%
Participation in Career Fields	29%	36%	33%	33%	15%	21%	39%	30%	30%
Other	0%	14%	0%	7%	8%	0%	5%	4%	5%

Survey Results by Industry Sector

Question 3



NKWIB Data Analysis of Employers' Hiring Needs

The Northern Kentucky Workforce Investment Board (NKWIB) has the mission of driving innovative workforce development that meets the changing needs of employers and our labor force, resulting in the enhancement of economic development for our region.

To make this mission a reality, the NKWIB developed a strategic plan that focused on the employer as the primary customer of the Northern Kentucky Career Center (NKCC) system. The NKCC is composed of partner organizations working together to connect local businesses to workforce talent, and job seekers to career opportunities. (For more information go to <https://nkcareercenter.org>.)

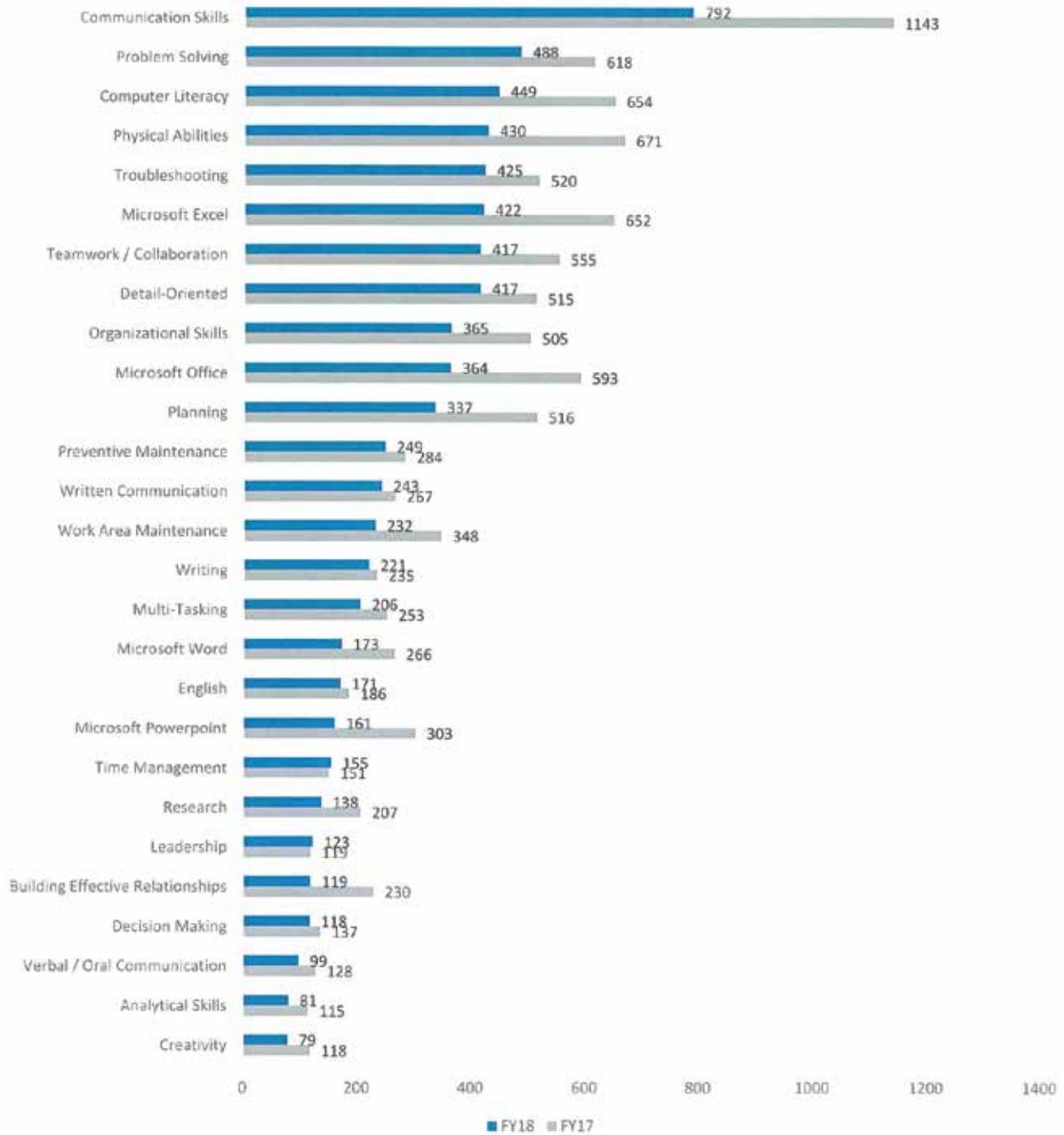
Also in the strategic plan, the NKWIB determined resources would be used to prepare job seekers for employment in the key industry sectors that make the local economy strong. Those sectors are Advanced Manufacturing, Healthcare, IT/Business/Finance, Logistics/Distribution and Construction/Trades. To support this strategic approach to workforce development, the NKWIB conducted a data analysis to truly understand the hiring needs of employers in our area. Data came from job postings and revealed the needs in 4 areas – certifications, post-secondary programs of study, specialized skills and baseline (essential) skills. The baseline skills are those that are foundational for job success. They identify the personal attributes that indicate a high level of emotional intelligence and are sometimes referred to as “people” skills.

Ultimately, this data has been used to inform the local educational systems about areas of study and curricula that are needed to prepare our youth for successful employment.



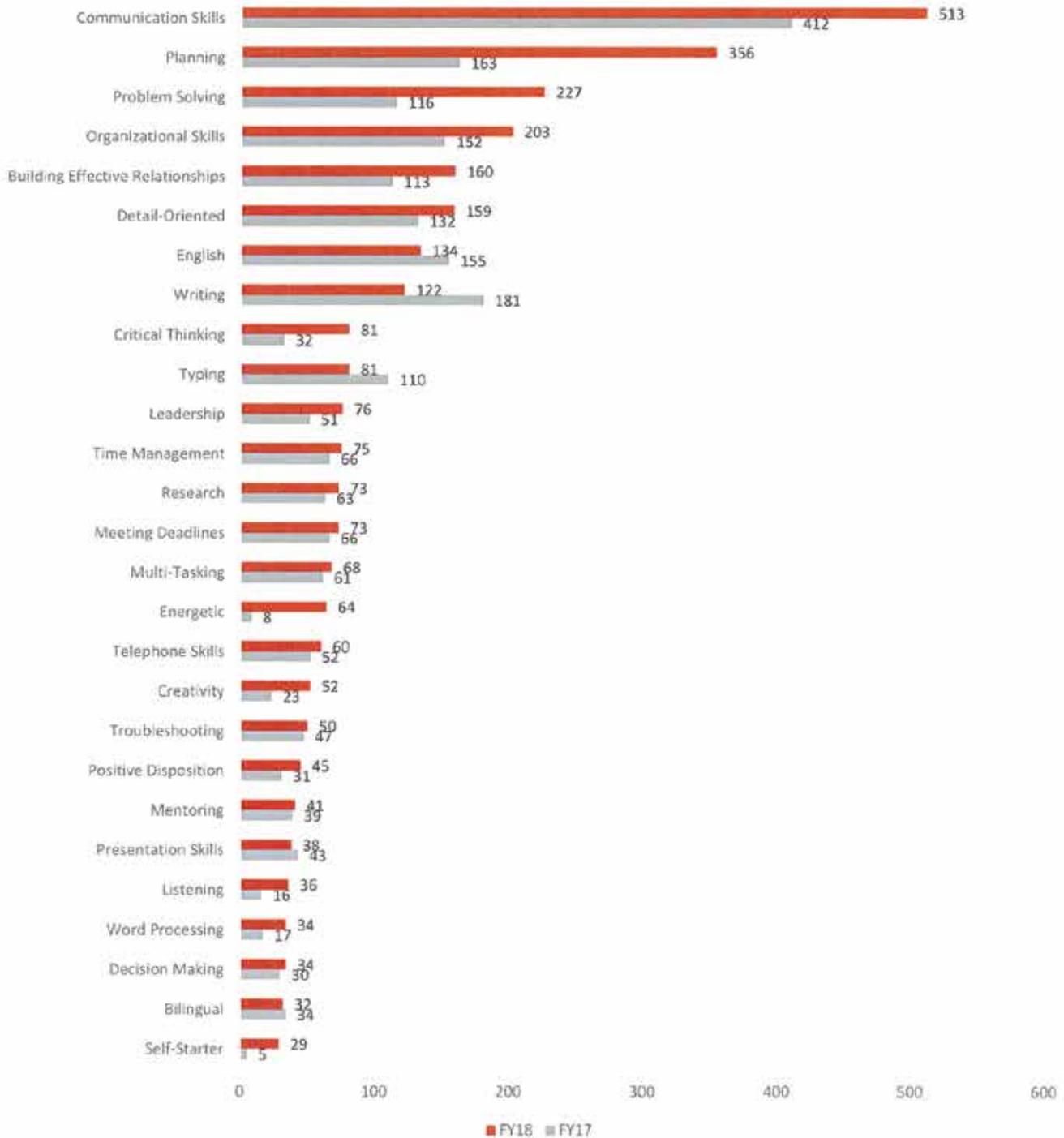
Advanced Manufacturing

Baseline Skills in Greatest Demand
2,993 Job Postings from 331 Businesses (FY18)
(3,574 Job Postings from 263 Businesses (FY17))



Healthcare

Baseline Skills in Greatest Demand
3,951 Job Postings from 304 Businesses (FY18)
(4,199 Job Postings from 256 Businesses (FY17))

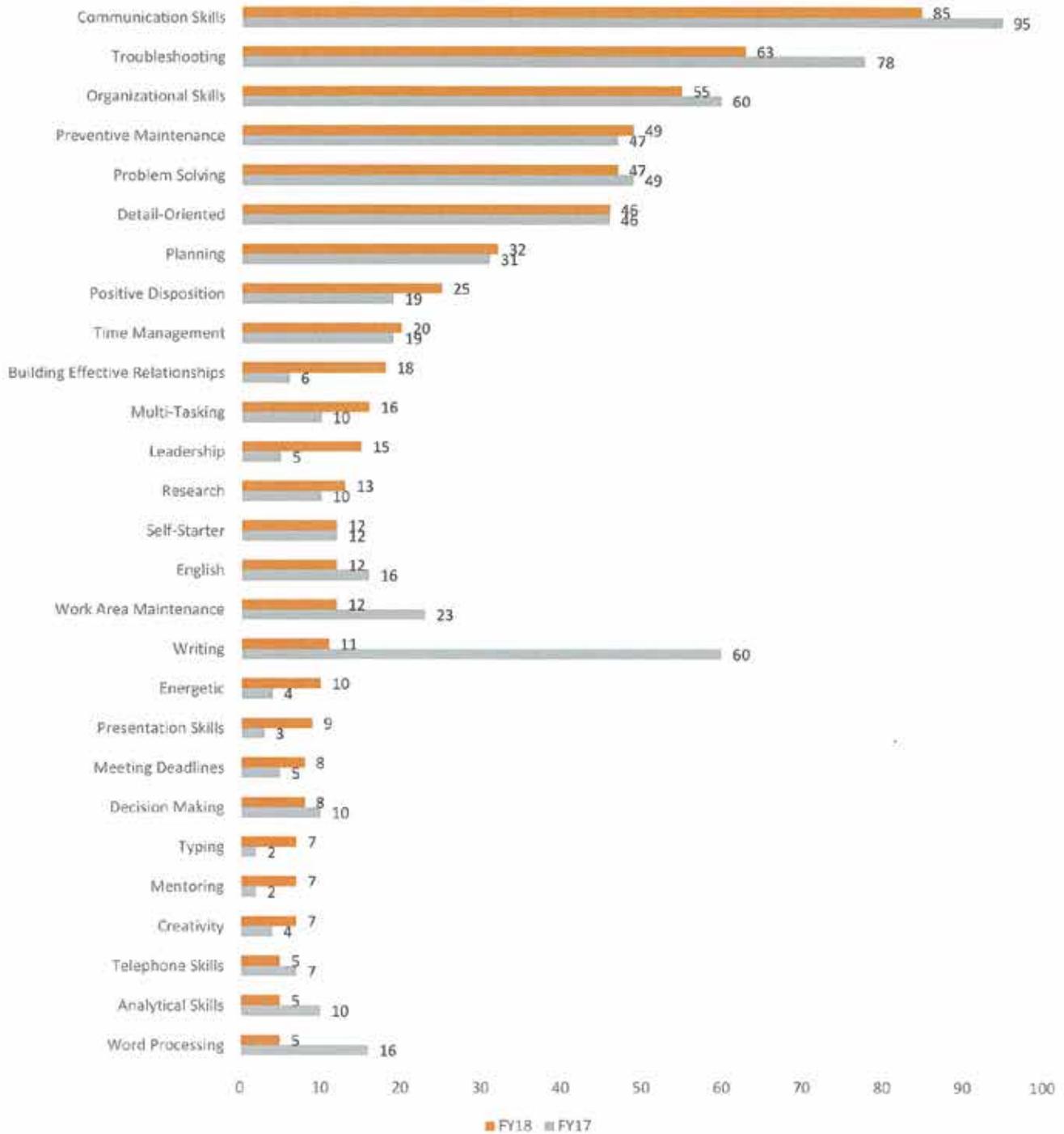


Construction and Trade

Baseline Skills in Greatest Demand Demand

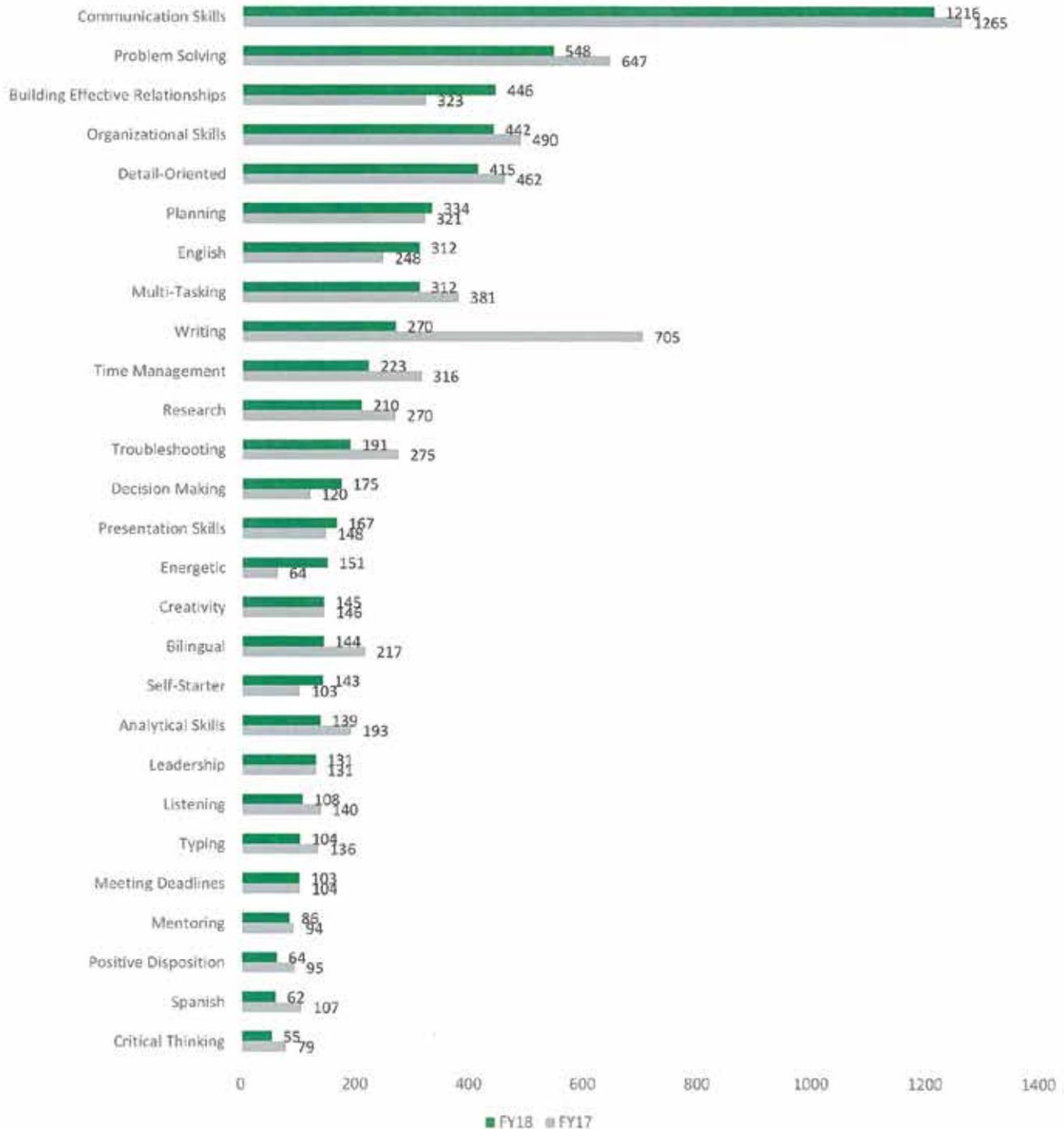
430 Job Postings from 118 Businesses (FY18)

(546 Job Postings from 118 Businesses (FY17))



IT, Business and Finance

Baseline Skills in Greatest Demand
3,928 Job Postings from 396 Businesses (FY18)
(3,980 Job Postings from 439 Businesses (FY17))

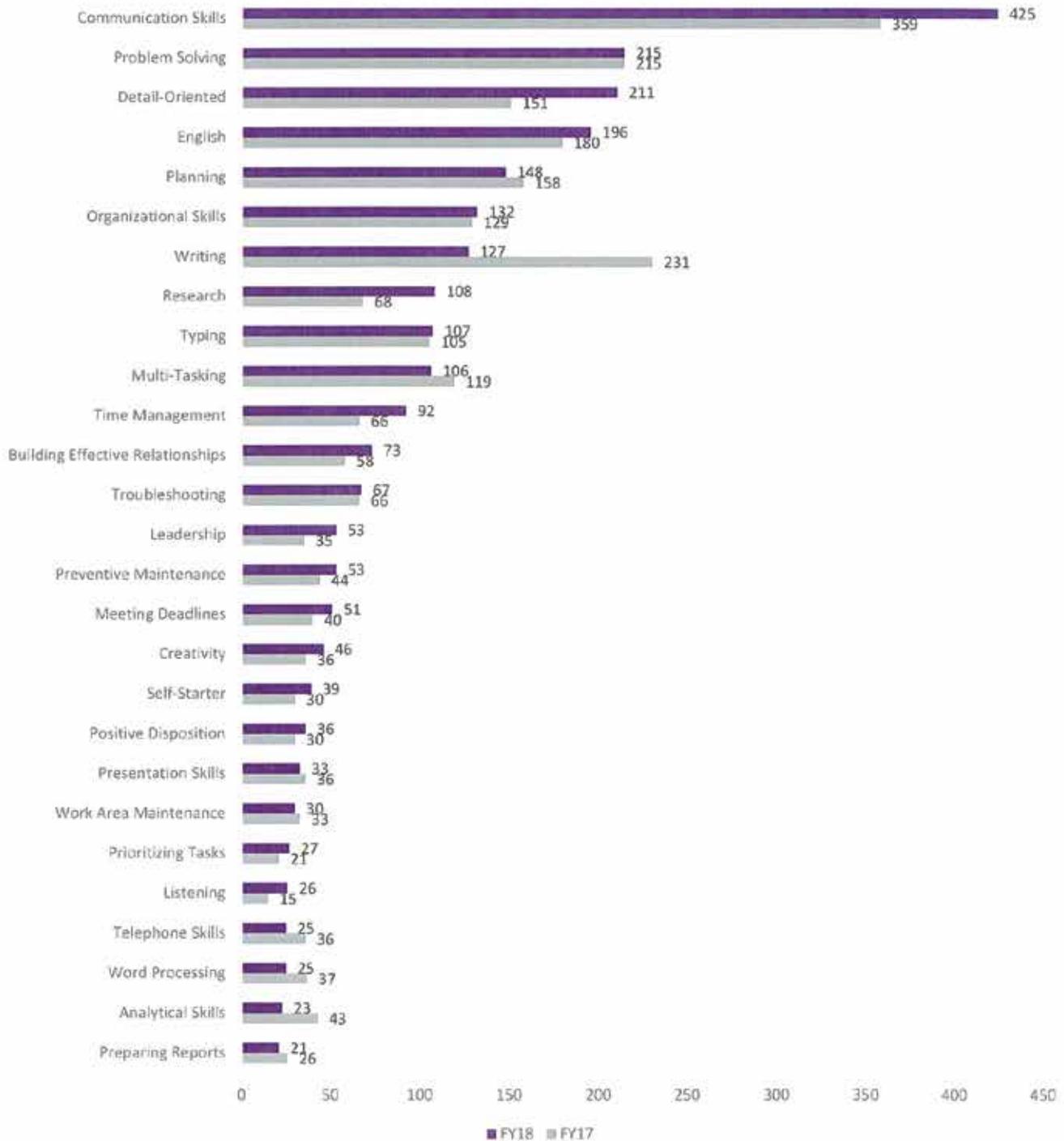


Transportation and Logistics

Baseline Skills in Greatest Demand

4,607 Job Postings from 438 Businesses (FY18)

(5,212 Job Postings from 412 Businesses (FY17))



21st Century SKILLS TOOLKIT



This Toolkit is designed to support educators in ensuring Northern Kentucky students have the **specific 21st Century Skills that represent authentic college and career readiness.**



Essential skills identified by NKY employers that represent college, career and life readiness:

- Interpersonal skills, listening skills, and empathy
- Critical thinking, problem solving, and creativity
- Collaboration and teamwork
- Appreciation of the importance of punctuality and attendance
- Productive time management in teams and independently
- Clear and effective written and oral communication
- Goal setting, planning, and organization
- Effective and responsible use of technology
- Tenacity and resiliency
- Ethical decision making and civic responsibility
- Smoothly transitioning between schools, jobs, and careers
- Awareness that being 100% drug free is fundamental for successful employment

Learn more about regional programs designed to instill these skills in your student.



For more information, contact **NKYEC at 859.282.9214** or visit our website **www.nkyec.org**.

Available regional programs and activities that help nurture and develop 21st Century skills.

FIRST LEGO League

A global program that introduces students to the excitement of science and technology through real-world team challenges. Students learn valuable life skills and discover career opportunities while learning they can make a positive contribution to society.

CONTACT

Beth Koch | koche4@nku.edu | 859.620.0087

Ignite Institute

A regional, public high school providing education and experience in career fields that are in high demand in Northern Kentucky. Through project-based learning, students have authentic, real-world experiences that help prepare them for the jobs of the future. Scholars have access to over 20 dual credit courses through a partnership with local universities that will allow them to graduate with an Associate's Degree.

CONTACT

Jerome Gels | jerome.gels@boone.kyschools.us

Julie Whitis | julie.whitis@kenton.kyschools.us

Junior Achievement

A program for students in grades K-12, where community volunteers teach students to plan for their futures, and make smart academic and economic choices. Upon completing a one-hour training session and receiving materials, volunteers present a grade-specific classroom program in 5-7 sessions over a period of several weeks.

CONTACT

Angie Smith, JA | angie.smith@ja.org | 513.346.7100

Magnified Giving

A program that empowers students to become junior philanthropists, entrusting them to wisely invest valuable financial resources. Students engage with philanthropists and foundation representatives, and learn how to make decisions, develop leadership skills, set high expectations, and accept accountability for their decisions.

CONTACT

Kelly Collison | kelly@magnifiedgiving.org | 513.733.9727

NaviGo Scholars

A program that connects students with industry professionals to learn job readiness, understand the value of networking, and hone interviewing and resume techniques. Students work in cohort peer groups to develop interpersonal, team building, and 21st Century skills.

CONTACT

Stephanie Layton | stephanie@navigoprep.com | 859.905.7830

NKY Drug Free Clubs of America

The NKY DFCA is empowering parents, educators and communities to build drug-free youth. We provide students with effective prevention tools to keep them on the right track.

CONTACT

NKYEC | 859.282.9214

NKY Makerspace

A regional program that serves K-12 students through field trips, workshops and internships. NKY Makerspace is an open community where individuals come together to share resources in a space that fosters creative exploration for the benefit of art, science and culture.

CONTACT

Emily Greene | emily.greene@boone.kyschools.us | 304.444.3972

Regional Youth Leadership

An initiative that provides high school juniors with the opportunity for collaboration among a diverse group of students from across the region. Through a series of monthly sessions that use the community as the classroom, students have the opportunity to collaborate with local business and civic leaders to enhance their educational experience. (Application Process)

CONTACT

Ann Marie Whelan | amwhelan@nkychamber.com | 859.578.6398

Service Learning

A teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, while encouraging students to give back to their community. Students build character and become active participants as they work with others in their school and community to create service projects.

CONTACT

Beth Griffith-Niemann | BNiemann@childreninc.org | 859.431.2075

Youth Leadership Development Program

An afterschool program that provides structured activities and opportunities for middle school youth to acquire and improve their life skills, decision making skills, and leadership skills. YLD uses the Wyman's Teen Outreach Program, designed to develop social and emotional well-being and mental health of pre-teens/teens.

CONTACT

Kate Arthur | karthur@brightoncenter.com | 859.491.8303

For more information, contact **NKYEC at 859.282.9214** or visit our website **www.nkyec.org**.

CONTRIBUTORS



Dr. Vicki Berling
*Director, Enzweiler
Institute
Building Industry
Association*

Dr. Vicki Berling was named Director of the Enzweiler Institute at the Building Industry Association of Northern Kentucky in October 2018. The Institute provides training in Carpentry,

Electricity, Heating and A/C, Facilities Maintenance & Remodeling, Masonry, Plumbing and Welding for secondary and post-secondary students. Established in 1967, it is the nation's longest running training program under the auspices of the National Association of Home Builders. Dr. Berling previously served as the founding director of the Sullivan University Center for Learning – Northern Kentucky. Prior to Sullivan, she was the Executive Director of Educational Outreach at Northern Kentucky University. In that role she worked with adult and online students, dual-credit high school students, and students at extended locations. Before NKU, Vicki managed the TAP Program at Thomas More College. She came to higher education after a successful career in healthcare marketing.

She earned a bachelor's degree in public relations from Western Kentucky University. She also holds a Master of Business Administration from Thomas More College and a doctorate in higher education leadership from Indiana State University.



Polly Lusk Page
*Executive Director,
Northern Kentucky
Education Council*

As Executive Director of the Northern Kentucky Education Council, Polly Lusk Page is responsible for advancing the vision, strategic direction and alignment of education initiatives for the Northern Kentucky Region. Under

her leadership the Council has focused on three priority goals for NKY: Every child on grade level in reading and math by the end of 3rd grade, Increase the number of youth who are hopeful, engaged and thriving-Resilient and Ready, and Increase the number of youth and young adults that are prepared for College, Career and Life.

Prior to assuming this position, Page was the Director for NKY Community Engagement and Education Initiatives with the Partnership for Successful Schools where she developed sustainable school and community partnerships that focused on accelerating student achievement. She also served as the literacy specialist for the Kentucky Department of Education, and taught at both the elementary and post-secondary levels for more than thirty years.

Page earned a bachelor's degree in education from Eastern Kentucky University and completed her masters and post-graduate Rank I at Xavier University.



Barbara B. Stewart
*Director, Northern
Kentucky Workforce
Investment Board*

For more than 32 years, Barbara Stewart has been a driving force behind workforce development in Northern Kentucky. With a BA in Social Work from the University of Cincinnati and a Masters in Business Administration from Xavier University,

she began her career in workforce development under the Job Training Partnership Act. She ultimately became the Director of the Northern Kentucky Workforce Investment Board (NKWIB) and was key in local Career Center implementation. Per the strategic plan of the NKWIB, Barbara has been instrumental in focusing the work of the Career Center system on providing valuable business services to meet the needs of employers, a robust sector-focused model to enhance utilization of allocations and resources, and making significant connections between the workforce development system and the education and economic development partners in the Northern Kentucky area. Through her efforts, the NKWIB was the first Workforce Investment Board in the state to receive designation as a "High Impact WIB".



Dr. Angie Taylor
*President, Taylor Career
Strategies, LLC*

Dr. Angie Taylor is the president of Taylor Career Strategies, LLC. Her services include a wide spectrum of employment support including career coaching, strategic planning facilitator and training. She provides coaching services to three populations: those who are 5-10 years into their career

and want to move up and have more game in their current positions, those who are transitioning to new companies or new careers and those who are planning second act careers.

Dr. Taylor began her career and college coaching work at Georgetown College, where she directed career planning and placement services. Moving to Northern Kentucky to pursue a doctorate at the University of Cincinnati, Dr. Taylor worked at the Re-Entry Center at Northern Kentucky University. There, she helped students prepare to enter college or the work world by providing workshops on college major selection, resume writing and interview preparation. For 18 years, Dr. Taylor served as vice president of Gateway Community and Technical College's Workforce Solutions Division, helping companies design customized training for employees who needed skill upgrades.

Dr. Taylor holds a bachelor's degree in psychology and school health from Eastern Kentucky University, a master's degree in counseling and personnel services from the University of Missouri and a doctorate in curriculum and instruction from the University of Cincinnati.

PSYCHOLOGIST ENGINEER
TEACHER LAWYER DOCTOR
WEB DEVELOPER
IT MANAGER DENTIST PROGRAMMER
PHOTOGRAPHER ANALYST BANKER PHARMACIST
ARCHITECT VETERINARIAN JOURNALIST
SCIENTIST ACCOUNTANT





7310 Turfway Road, Suite 115
Florence, KY 41042-1385
www.nkyec.org



300 Buttermilk Pike, Suite 330
Fort Mitchell, KY 41017
www.nkychamber.com



22 Spiral Drive
Florence, KY 41042
www.nkadd.org

NORTHERN KENTUCKY EDUCATION COUNCIL

www.nkyec.org

The Northern Kentucky Education Council is the region's backbone organization for the alignment of education initiatives that support youth from birth to career and serves as a catalyst for collaboration, change and progress to attain regional education goals. The Council is a nonpartisan, not-for-profit organization comprised of education, business and community members.