

# CAPITAL AREA WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD YOUTH COUNCIL

## EMPLOYER FOCUS GROUP REPORT

### I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Nine employers participated in two focus groups or one-on-one interviews and shared their perceptions and views related to youth participation in the workforce. While the opinions and perceptions of such a small sample of employers may not be representative enough to draw conclusions, the findings and observations gleaned from these discussions do present valuable insights. Five themes emerged as indicative of how well youth are prepared to be valued workforce participants and what youth need in order to be better prepared.

**Employers See the Lack of Soft Skills and Basic Job Readiness as the Greatest Deficiencies of Young Workers—** Well developed soft skills are of primary importance to employers. Major deficiencies were identified in communication skills, interviewing techniques, preparing job applications, work ethic and commitment to a job. Employers described youth as unable to adequately communicate a positive self image or their qualifications for a job. Employers would value a “work readiness” credential as long as the curriculum behind the credential was understood.

**Employers Recognize and Value Non-Work Related Experience--**While a good work history is important to employers they look for non work related experiences in lieu of actual work experience when considering youth for employment. Employers consider involvement in extra curricular activities, church or community activities including volunteer work as indicators of skills and abilities.

**Technology Skills Training, Life-long Learning and Entrepreneurial Training are Increasingly Important—**The need for technology related skills and constant revisions to job descriptions were predominate themes expressed by employers. Employers are looking for workers with computer skills beyond basic computer literacy. Workers must also be willing to re-train and/or cross train to keep up with changing work requirements. Finally entrepreneurial training and increased emphasis on training for “blue collar” occupations reflect changes in occupational demand.

**There is Little to no Awareness or Use of the Public Workforce Development System Beyond Public Schools—**Employer knowledge of publicly funded workforce development entities was limited. Large employers are more familiar with public entities and increased marketing to small employers would be beneficial. Schools should be doing more to prepare youth to go to work and workforce development services should focus on alleviating the deficiencies they see in young job applicants, i.e., job readiness and soft skills training.

**Employers are Willing to Engage in and Support Youth Workforce Development Efforts—**Employers expressed a strong civic responsibility to support the community, its schools and youth. Specific and structured activities for employer engagement, feedback on the outcomes from their engagement and support of employer interests are needed to increase employer involvement.

## II. PROJECT OVERVIEW

The purpose of conducting a direct dialogue with employers through focus groups and interviews was to obtain information about their perceptions and views related to youth participation in the workforce. Focus group sessions and one-on-one interviews were conducted covering a range of subjects including:

- the hard and soft skills employers are seeking in entry level workers;
- how skill needs have changed over time;
- what interactions employers have with education systems; and
- employer willingness to engage in activities such as mentoring or curriculum development.

Employers were invited to participate to include a broad representation of business sectors likely to employ entry level or young workers or who have knowledge of employer perceptions through their own contact with a variety of employers. A total of seven employers participated in two focus group sessions and two one-on-one interviews were conducted to expand employer input. While the information collected through this process provides a degree of insight to youth workforce issues it should not be seen as the definitive source of information about the area's system of youth services. The information gathered should be viewed as supplemental to the data presented in the broader report and used accordingly in terms of policy or decision making.

## III. METHODOLOGY

Focus group sessions were scheduled to provide employers with a variety of locations and times of day to participate. Employer invitations were issued through e-mail and phone contacts. The Greater Richmond Chamber of Commerce and Retail Merchants Association were contacted to help broaden employer outreach. Even with concerted effort to engage employers, only seven participated in two of the three scheduled sessions. In order to expand employer input into the dialogue, one-on-one interviews were conducted.

Four topics covered by nine broad questions were developed with numerous probing questions designed to explore each broad question to the extent possible within a 1.5 hour time frame. The structure and questions were reviewed by the project's Steering Committee prior to convening and conducting the sessions. The four topics and nine broad questions covered were as follows.

**A. Employer Expectations**—*This topic will explore employer expectations related to hiring and qualifications for youth (new workforce entrants). The objective will be to define the skills/qualifications employers expect from job seekers and the relative importance of various skill sets.*

- What are the key skills and qualifications you expect new hires, in particular youth, to have in order to be valued employees?
- From your experience, what kinds of deficiencies do you observe among job applicants and new hires, in particular youth, that prevent you from hiring them or result in inadequate performance on the job?

- What can be done to help alleviate the deficiencies of new young workers? What roles should employers play in helping youth prepare for employment?
- B. Use of Public Resources**—*This topic will explore the degree to which employers interact with the public workforce development system. The objective will be to ascertain to what degree employers use the public workforce system, what they value in the system and what they need from the system that is not available or adequate.*
- Are you aware of public workforce services? To what degree do you use public workforce system services?
  - What kinds of public workforce services would be valuable to you?
  - What improvements need to be made to current services and what role can employers play in supporting such improvements?
- C. Skills/Credentialing**—*This topic will explore employer interest and valuation of credentials. The objective will be to understand what credentials are important and the relative value of the new Career Readiness Certification credential.*
- How important are credentials for assessing the skills and abilities of potential new hires?
- D. Future trends/Expectations**—*This topic will explore employer perspectives on future trends. The objective will be to better understand how the workforce development system can better prepare workers to meet employer demands in the future.*
- What key trends do you see relative to meeting your future workforce needs?
  - What do you think will be the two to three most significant changes that must be made to current workforce preparation services necessary to meet future demand?

Two focus group sessions were convened at the following locations.

- Tuesday December 7, 2004; 11:00 am-12:30 pm; at Dorey Park Recreation Center (Eastern Henrico County) 7200 Dorey Park Drive.
- Thursday December 9, 2004; 7:30-9:00 am; Henrico County Training Center 7701 Parham Rd. Rm. 2031.

A third session was scheduled for Wednesday December 1, 2004 5:30-7:00 pm, at La Prade Library (Chesterfield County), however, no employers registered or attended.

Each session was facilitated as an informal discussion among participants with questions posed by the facilitator along with follow-up or probing questions designed to more fully explore each major discussion topic. Permission was requested and granted by each group to tape record the session and to record responses in the form of note taking.

**Composition of Each Group**—A total of 7 employers participated; 5 in the December 7<sup>th</sup> noon session and 2 in the December 9<sup>th</sup> morning session. The employers represented included: December 7<sup>th</sup>—The Richmond Airport Commission; Ajilon Staffing; Kings Dominion; Capital Area Training Consortium; and Virginia Department of Rehabilitative Services. December 9<sup>th</sup>—Sun Trust Bank, Virginia Business Leadership Network; and Robinson Business Solutions.

One-on-one interviews were conducted with representatives from Overnight Transportation and Ukrop's Super Markets.

## **IV. KEY FINDINGS**

First impressions are critical and too often youth do not make a good first impression.

Deficiencies include:

- Lack proper interviewing skills
- Do not know how to act or dress
- Lack verbal and written communication skills
- Applications poorly prepared and incomplete

Youth do not do a good job of presenting their skills and qualifications. They do not translate overall experience to work related experience such as volunteer activities, church activities or participation in clubs, extra-curricular activities in school or what they do in their free time. Youth need to be able to communicate skills even if they are not obtained on a job and to be able to relate those skills to the job requirements.

Too often youth do not have a good work ethic or understand proper work behavior. Deficiencies include:

- Inappropriate dress
- Lack of social skills
- Youth are often unreliable even having to be called to remind them to show up for orientation, even parents call and make excuses for failing to show up
- Lack of work ethics such as coming to work and being on time, putting the cell phone away while at work, taking excessive breaks, fitting in with the group and company philosophy

Those coming back from college are more mature and reliable. High school graduates or older high school students are least reliable. Younger youth (15 year olds) are often more reliable because they are so happy to get a job. Youth who have been out working for a while are more reliable than 1<sup>st</sup> time entrants.

Employment screening includes personality tests to determine how well applicants will fit in at the work site. Some employers only look at college graduates even for entry level positions as indicative of commitment to a task. (Degrees do not necessarily have to match job requirements.) Computer skills are increasingly important and more than just basic computer literacy but rather being skilled in computer applications such as Office Suite, Word, Excel, PowerPoint and Access. A low percent of youth can pass WorkKeys assessments when used.

Employers are willing to teach specific job skills and even give breaks to younger workers if they demonstrate a good work ethic and a willingness to learn.

Public workforce services need to teach better communication skills as well as technical skills.

- How to speak with confidence
- Basics in how to interview, interview role playing, preparing for interviews (going over possible interview questions)
- The need to understand and know about a company prior to an interview

Public workforce entities need to reach out more to youth to help them get the resources that will help them; help to bridge the mistrust between youth and employers; and be more aggressive in extending a helping hand to youth.

Transportation is a critical need of youth going to work.

Schools need to do a better job of preparing youth for work.

- Those in college prep curricula are least likely to get work readiness training
- SOLs cover some basic readiness questions so schools should be teaching them
- Technical training for “blue collar occupations” needs increased emphasis
- Teachers and guidance counselors are not playing as active a role as in the past, teachers are the ones who can truly help

Employers are willing to participate in job fairs and career days but youth must have enough maturity to engage and not put company representatives or property in jeopardy.

More and more employers are looking for training beyond a high school diploma. Employers will value credentials if they understand the curriculum being taught.

Willingness to re-train or cross train to take on a new job is increasingly important. Technical skills and job descriptions are constantly changing.

- Technical skills are going to be increasingly important
- Apprenticeship and internships should get more emphasis as training opportunities
- Community college is a good resource if people take advantage of it

Large employers are more likely to be aware of public resources than small employers.

- Employers are aware of the VEC by law
- Affirmative action programs push employers to public resources
- There may be a perception among employers that public entities are less likely to provide good skilled workers. Private staffing companies may provide more qualified candidates.
- Small employers do not have time to find public resources. Public resources do not market well to small employers
- Employers have trouble finding employees (small employers lack time and money to recruit workers)

Other points included:

- College graduates will only look for high skill/high wage jobs (when I started I was just happy to get a job)
- Youth need to understand they may have to take any job to get some kind of work history
- Youth are not willing to take jobs that pay minimum wage or even \$8 per hour
- Parents need to play a more active role in their children’s preparation for work and participation in the labor force

## **V. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

The focus groups and one-on-one interviews were structured to cover employer perceptions and knowledge around four major topics:

- the hard and soft skills employers are seeking in entry level workers;
- how skill needs have changed over time;
- what interactions employers have with education systems; and
- employer willingness to engage in activities such as mentoring or curriculum development.

Following is a summary of findings as they relate to these four areas.

### **What are the hard and soft skills employers seek in entry level workers?**

Well developed soft skills are of primary importance to employers. Even though youth may be trained and certified in occupations requiring licensure, the lack of soft skills is a significant barrier to meeting employer hiring criteria and job retention.

Employers described deficiencies among youth in the following key soft skill areas. Youth lack communication skills both verbal and written. Again and again employers described youth who could not adequately communicate a positive self image or their qualifications for a job. They noted deficiencies in properly completing job applications or being adequately prepared for job interviews. For many employers good customer service is a key job requirement yet too many youth lacked the communication skills necessary to interact with the public, other employees or supervisors. Verbal skills are the skills employers expressed as most valued.

While a good work history is important to employers they look for non work related experiences in lieu of actual work experience when considering youth for employment. Employers consider involvement in extra curricular activities, church or community activities including volunteer work as indicators of skills and abilities, however, youth do not communicate these types of experiences when applying for or interviewing for jobs. Conversely the youth who participated in the youth focus groups believed that employers primarily base hiring decisions on an applicants work history.

A lack of work ethic was also noted as a key deficiency among youth. Issues such as not showing up for work, excessive breaks, lack of respect for supervisors, inappropriate dress and attitude were all identified as problematic among youth hires. Employers expressed an overall observation of a lack of commitment to the job as the missing ingredient in having a good work ethic. They cited one possible cause for this lack of commitment as youth coming to a job with unrealistic salary and job advancement expectations. When their expectations are not met, they are not committed to the job and behave accordingly.

### **How are skill needs changing over time?**

The need for technology related skills and constant revisions to job descriptions were predominate themes expressed by employers relative to how skill requirements are changing. Employers are looking for workers with computer skills beyond basic computer literacy or keyboarding skills. They identified familiarity with and ability to utilize software applications such as Office Suite (Word, Excel, Access, & PowerPoint) as an increasingly important job qualification. Workers must also be willing to re-train and/or cross train in order to keep up with changing job descriptions.

Employers are looking more and more for applicants with training beyond high-school with some even limiting employment opportunities to those with 4-year college degrees as a measure of one's ability to make a long-term commitment. The degree does not necessarily have to match job requirements.

Finally entrepreneurial training and increased emphasis on training for "blue collar" occupations was identified as current and future trends in occupational demand. An opinion was expressed

that schools should do more to encourage youth to pursue training in skilled trades areas and de-emphasize college preparatory curriculum as the predominate pathway to good employment. Business ownership was also identified as a growing trend and thereby suggesting the need to increase the availability of entrepreneurial training.

Credentials other than high school diplomas, post secondary education degrees or occupational specific certifications were addressed with a degree of skepticism about their value. Employers would need to fully understand the curriculum behind the credential in order for it to have value. There was recognition that if the curriculum were understood, employers would desire a credential that would attest to basic job readiness.

### **What interactions do employers have with education systems and publicly funded workforce development entities?**

Employers expressed their willingness to interact with schools, however, their descriptions of how they interact was somewhat limited in scope. For the most part, their interactions were limited to participation in job fairs or career days, and to some extent participating in classroom presentations or class projects. Providing structured and supportive mechanisms for employer interactions and addressing employer interests were cited as means that would help to encourage employer involvement. There was virtually no indication that employers were involved in curriculum development at either the secondary or post-secondary levels.

There were consistent expressions from the employers that schools should be doing more to prepare youth to go to work. Opinions ranged from schools did not provide work readiness types of training to if they were providing such training the youth were not listening. There was recognition that when employers present information to youth about what it takes to be work ready, the youth paid attention as opposed to receiving the same information as merely an academic exercise.

Employer knowledge of publicly funded workforce development entities was limited. Most knew of the Virginia Employment Commission primarily through Unemployment Insurance and as an employment regulatory entity. There was limited use of the VEC's labor exchange function. It was expressed that larger employers are more familiar with public entities and that increased marketing to small employers would be beneficial. Concerns were also expressed that public entities do not refer qualified job applicants thus creating negative impressions among employers. When specifically questioned about what employers would value from a workforce development system, they went back to providing services that would alleviate the deficiencies they see in young job applicants, i.e., job readiness and soft skills training.

One area noted for improvement was the need to decrease redundancy in the services delivered by workforce development entities and included a specific recommendation to implement a single system for posting job orders that is used by all public entities, is employer friendly and simple to use.

### **In what ways are employers willing to engage in workforce preparation activities for youth?**

Employers expressed a strong civic responsibility to support the community, its schools and youth. For the most part employers indicated that they do engage in activities when requested. As described above, employers participate regularly in job fairs and career days and support

various classroom activities. Suggestions for improving employer engagement included: providing specific and structured activities for employer engagement; providing feedback on the outcomes of their engagement; and, supporting employer interests.

**Employer Focus Group  
Notes**

**Number in Group**

Seven businesses attended one of two group sessions and 3 engaged in a one-on-one interview. The responses from all employers have been captured in a single report.

**Businesses Represented**

The Richmond Airport Commission

Ajilon Staffing

Kings Dominion

Capital Area Training Consortium

Virginia Department of Rehabilitative Services

Robinson Business Solutions

Sun Trust Bank—The Virginia Business Leadership Network

Sun Trust Bank-Staffing Department

Overnight Transportation

Ukrop's Super Markets

**A. Employer Expectations—This topic will explore employer expectations related to hiring and qualifications for youth (new workforce entrants). The objective will be to define the skills/qualifications employers expect from job seekers and the relative importance of various skill sets.**

**What are the key skills and qualifications you expect new hires, in particular youth, to have in order to be valued employees?**

1. What kinds of jobs do you typically hire youth for? What portion of your workforce comes from the age group 14-18 and 19-21?

Of those employers who hired entry level workers in any significant numbers the types of jobs included: maintenance (all kinds) grounds crews, custodial, clerical (clerks); seasonal restaurant workers, maintenance, landscaping; customer service, file clerks, data entry clerks, dock workers, freight handlers.

2. Do you look for different qualifications in the youth population than you do in the adult population? If so what are the differences?

Qualifications for entry level jobs included: drug screening, high school diploma or GED, basic English writing and verbal skills, ability to understand the job description. Security positions were limited to age 18 and older. Some employers use personality tests to measure how well new workers will fit in with other workers.

Employers may give a break to younger workers knowing they will have to explain the job description to excess but will hire anyway. Older youth coming back from college are more mature and responsible. Older high school students are the least reliable. Younger in school youth are more responsible—they are often just happy to get a job.

3. How important is school achievement in your selection process – does it play a role at all. If so in what way?

Some employers expressed the importance of extra curricular activities. Employers will use information on the types of activities youth have been involved in such as participation in school clubs, church activities, volunteer activities (what they do in their free time) to assess youth qualifications in lieu of work history. Employers are looking more and more at education beyond a high school diploma. Some will only hire college graduates as a measurement of commitment. The degree does not necessarily have to match the job requirements.

Some youth will attach school transcripts to their applications or resumes particularly if they have done well in school.

4. Do you require a high school diploma or equivalent for your entry level jobs? If not what are the base line requirements?

Most employers required a high school diploma or GED except for those who hire youth who are still in-school.

5. What are the key qualifications you look for in selecting someone to hire?
  - Previous work experience, work history.
  - Soft skills such as attitude, work ethic, appearance/dress.
  - Basic skills such as academic skills, communication skills, general information technology skills.
  - Hard occupational specific skills.

Computer skills beyond basic computer literacy are increasingly important. Skills in use of computer applications such as Office Suite (Word, Excel, Access, PowerPoint). Work ethic most important—reliability, willingness to learn, will show up and fit in with the group and company philosophy. Employers can and are willing to teach actual job functions.

Look for appropriate chemistry and rapport during an interview. Good communication skills was stressed. How they communicate verbally and in e-mails.

Work history is important but first must get past the first impression. How they can translate non work activities to job qualifications. Having a good referral was also identified as important.

6. What are the key criteria used to determine adequacy in each skill/qualifications category?

Communication skills and ability to interview, dress appropriately, and communicate non work experience was stressed as key to making hiring decisions.

7. What is the relative importance of each defined skill/qualification area?

8. How important are computer skills and customer service skills?

Computer skills were considered as very important and skills beyond basic computer literacy. Customer service in particular having strong verbal communication skills and ability to work with the public was also identified as very important.

**From your experience, what kinds of deficiencies do you observe among job applicants and new hires, in particular youth, that prevent you from hiring them or result in inadequate performance on the job?**

1. Do you turn many youth applicants away? What are the reasons for rejecting those applicants e.g. attitude, dress, appearance, verbal skills, demeanor, etc.

Reasons for not hiring applicants included: lack of communication skills, applications poorly presented (incomplete and sloppy), lack proper interviewing skills (how to act, dress—come in wearing dirty sweats or eating a sandwich during the interview),

2. Do you experience different issues with youth workers than with adult workers e.g. more turnover; more tardiness, etc. If so to what do you attribute the differences?

Younger workers do not seem to have realistic salary expectations. Older workers who apply for entry level positions have often made a conscience decision to take a step back or to start off in a new direction. Younger workers expect higher salaries, rapid salary increases and promotions. Low wages cause younger workers to lack commitment to the job. It's not a career, just a job and will not show up for work or will quit. Highest turnover is among workers who stay less than three years and younger workers will not stay long enough to move up in position or salary.

Youth lack social skills and will not ask what they should do after they complete an assignment. They wait for someone to give them something else to do. Youth are linear in their thinking and are unable to multi-task.

### **What can be done to help alleviate the deficiencies of new young workers? What roles should employers play in helping youth prepare for employment?**

Areas that would help alleviate deficiencies were cited as: help youth have more realistic expectations of what jobs pay, train youth on the value of benefits moving away from thinking benefits are an entitlement and more that benefits are real compensation. Teaching the importance of staying with an employer and not having a work history that looks like they are a "job hopper." Youth need to know they may have to take any job in order to get some kind of work history.

1. What roles should employers play in helping youth prepare for employment? Do you use internships/work study to attract and retain workers?

Employers will participate in job fairs, career exploration by offering tours of employer work sites. Employers will help if asked to help. Need to identify services employers can provide and have a structure on how employers can participate. Need to know what you want employers to do. Employers are interested in the community. Need to meet the interests of the business as well as the youth to be served. Time of year is important. Provide follow-up, statistics on how employer involvement went—employers want feedback.

Employers can meet and talk with youth about what employers expect for example how important it is to not leave blanks in their applications. Schools may be teaching these things but youth seem to hear it for the 1<sup>st</sup> time when it comes from employers.

2. In general how do youth move upward in your company – do you have formal training programs or formal career pathways?

### **B. Use of Public Resources—This topic will explore the degree to which employers interact with the public workforce development system. The objective will be to ascertain to what degree employers use the public workforce system, what they**

**value in the system and what they need from the system that is not available or adequate.**

**Are you aware of public workforce services? To what degree do you use public workforce system services?**

1. What are your sources of recruitment?

Newspapers, job fairs and temporary staffing agencies most frequently cited as recruitment sources.

Problems with public resources related to recruitment included: public sector is viewed as anti-employer. Perception is that public resources are less likely to refer qualified candidates. Private staffing agencies refer more qualified applicants. When poor referrals are made future referrals are tainted. Have even suggested to public entities that their applicants not identify they were referred by a public entity.

2. Are you familiar with the Virginia Workforce Network or with the term "one stop services" as it applies to workforce development services? Do you use the system? How?

No employers that indicated familiarity with the Virginia Workforce Network or one-stop services. Exceptions were employers who are participating on a local WIB or were public employers. Problems cited included small employers do not have time to research where public resources are, public resources do not market well to small employers.

3. Do you use Capital Area Training Consortium services or the Virginia Employment Commission?

The Virginia Employment Commission was most known for U.I. and other legal issues. Often use the VEC to meet affirmative action requirements.

4. How do you interact with the public schools? Other providers of employment and training services? Who are they?

Employer interaction with public schools included participating in job fairs or career days. Participated in judging marketing plans presented by students.

**What kinds of public workforce services would be valuable to you?**

1. Are there services you would want from the public system that you are not receiving currently?
2. What is your relationship/use of the community colleges? What has been the experience with people you have hired from the community college?

**What improvements need to be made to current services and what role can employers play in supporting such improvements?**

1. How well do you think the educational institutions in the region, both secondary and postsecondary, are preparing the workforce you need? Are they developing the right kinds of skills and attitudes? If not, what do you perceive as deficiencies? Do you think educational institutions elsewhere are producing better skilled workers?

There were numerous comments around how services need improvements that would be valued by employers. Employers recommended improvements that would address the deficiencies they are seeing in young job applicants. These areas included: teach better communication skills (how to speak with confidence), teach basic interviewing skills, teach those things we used to learn from parents about work and work ethic, practice and role play interviewing, do informational interviews with employers, verbal skills are the hardest to teach and most valued by employers, go over possible interview questions and provide tips and techniques on interviewing, youth need to understand the need to know about a company before they apply for a job and have an interview.

Schools need to do more to help youth prepare to go to work. Those in a college prep. program are less likely to get work readiness than those in a vocational prep. curriculum.

Need more emphasis on technical training. There is a lack of emphasis on training for “blue collar” occupations. Need to provide training to develop entrepreneurial skills such as public speaking, raising capital, preparing business plans and marketing.

Time and money is wasted because of decentralization and redundancy. Employers would value having one place to post a job order and all public agencies use it. Such a system needs to be simple and employer friendly.

**C. Skills/Credentialing—This topic will explore employer interest and valuation of credentials. The objective will be to understand what credentials are important and the relative value of the new Career Readiness Certification credential.**

**How important are credentials for assessing the skills and abilities of potential new hires?**

1. What are the credentials you look for in a new hire? Are you interested in worker credentials?
2. Are you familiar with the Governor’s “Career Readiness Certificate”?

There was little to no awareness of the “Career Readiness Certificate.” In general the comments around credentials were that they would only be valued if employers understand the curriculum behind the credential.

3. Is an assurance that someone has the basic skills to perform on the job of value in your business?

If employers know what is included in the curriculum they would value work readiness, or computer literacy certification.

**D. Future trends/Expectations—This topic will explore employer perspectives on future trends. The objective will be to better understand how the workforce development system can better prepare workers to meet employer demands in the future.**

**What key trends do you see relative to meeting your future workforce needs?**

1. What are your hiring needs in the near and long term? What skills will be necessary?
2. What trends will affect your business in the future, both near and long term?
3. In what areas are potential employees most skill deficient? In what areas are current employees skill deficient?
4. What positions will be the hardest to fill in the next 12 months?
5. What do you think will be your best source for skilled workers?
6. Is your company contemplating any special efforts to find qualified workers?

**What do you think will be the two to three most significant changes that must be made to current workforce preparation services necessary to meet future demand?**

Future trends identified by employers included: increased demand for “blue collar” workers; increased opportunities for self employment and business ownership (large companies shrinking and sending jobs off-shore will create job churning and growth in owning small businesses especially in “blue collar” occupations); an aging workforce with new workers not staying at a business long enough to build skills to be potential replacements.

**Comments that did not fit with any particular question.**

Workforce dollars need to be invested in schools to fund a position to provide real career guidance and career planning.

Re-look at how schools are preparing youth for work, experimentation in apprenticeships, need to change so students are interested and engaged by providing more variety like colleges do, may need to completely retool school schedules and techniques.

Parents need to play a greater role. Current role models present negative message.