



Workforce Development Survey

an action plan for Sonoma County employers

2014
SONOMA
COUNTY



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Executive Summary

In an effort to better align local education and training efforts with employer needs, the Sonoma County Economic Development Board (EDB) designed a survey for business owners, managers, and HR directors to evaluate the current demands of the workforce. Those surveyed were asked a series of questions highlighting certain aspects of their employee/employer needs. The data collected in this report exemplifies trends and concerns within the county.

- The greatest workforce concern for respondents was again, a “lack of human capital (e.g. the lack of qualified/trained workers).”
- 52 percent of respondents stated that some form of higher education would make him/her more valuable as an employee. Within that figure, 33 percent of respondents indicated that either a Bachelor’s degree or at least some college courses would benefit that employee’s worth.
- 99 percent of respondents reported having hired new employees in the past 12 months, however 62 percent indicated having difficulty finding qualified applicants in the past 12 months.
- 49 percent of Sonoma County employers are unaware of the Work Ready Certificate that is available to youth designed by the Sonoma County Office of Education.

The EDB encourages readers and employers to review this data as to better understand the needs and demands of the workforce within Sonoma County. The findings collected inside this report will be shared with the WIB for review and action on trends brought forth by the employers of Sonoma County.



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Economic Development Board



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Executive Director
Economic Development Board



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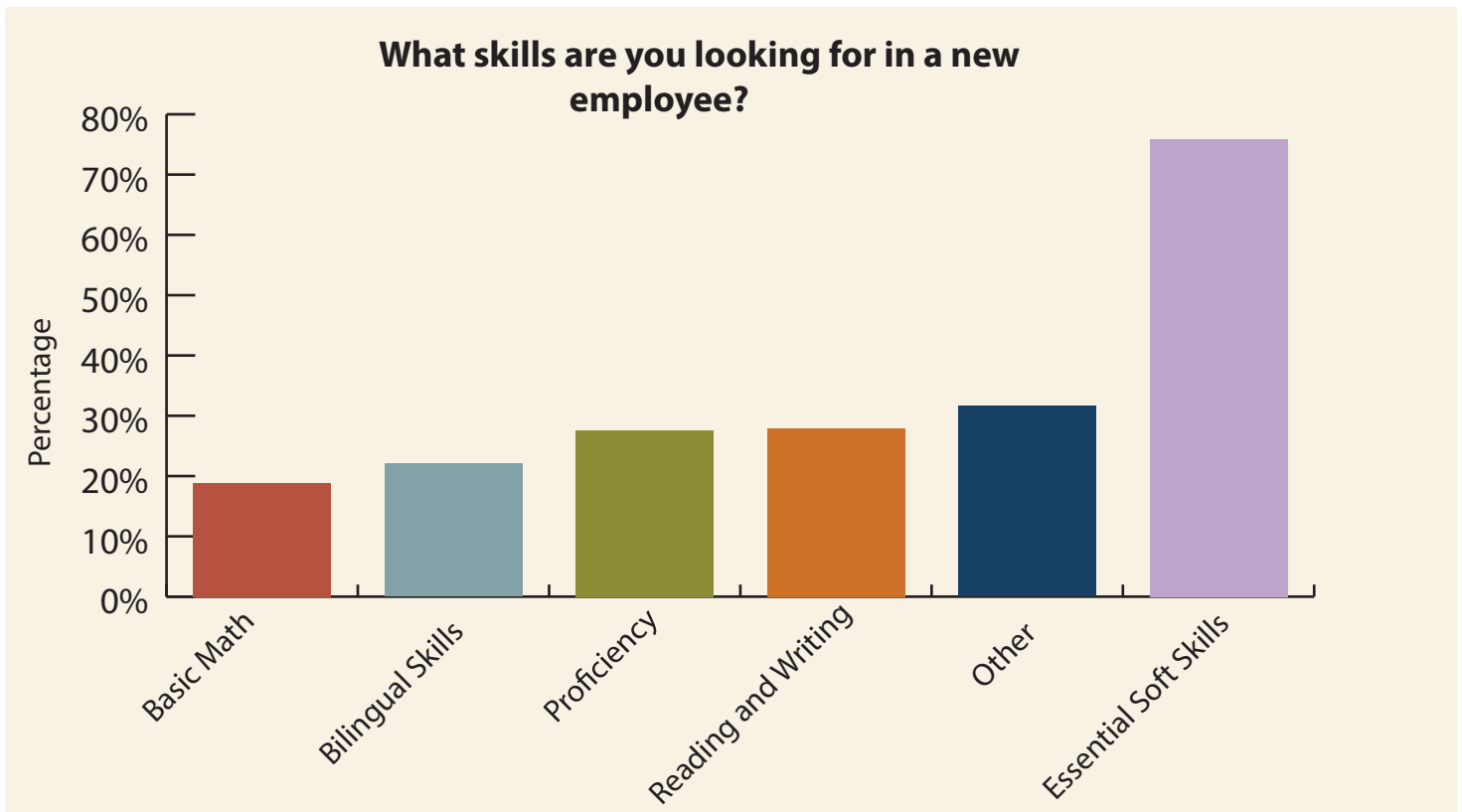
Situational Overview

Lack of Essential Soft Skills

The biggest concern from employers when looking for new employees was a lack of essential “soft skills.” 73 percent indicated that this had been an issue for them within the past 12 months. Soft skills include willingness to work, attention to detail, promptness, availability, and willingness to learn.

In 2013, 96 percent of respondents reported having hired new employees within the past 12 months, but 62 percent of these respondents indicated having difficulty finding qualified applicants for their positions. This is a 5 percent increase in finding qualified applicants in comparison to last year’s results, but still is a negative trend for the workforce.

In the category of “other,” 13 percent of respondents specified that they were looking for new hires with industry-specific skills. 9 percent also indicated that they were looking for specific business skills in that open position.



When asked for extra commentary, one respondent stated

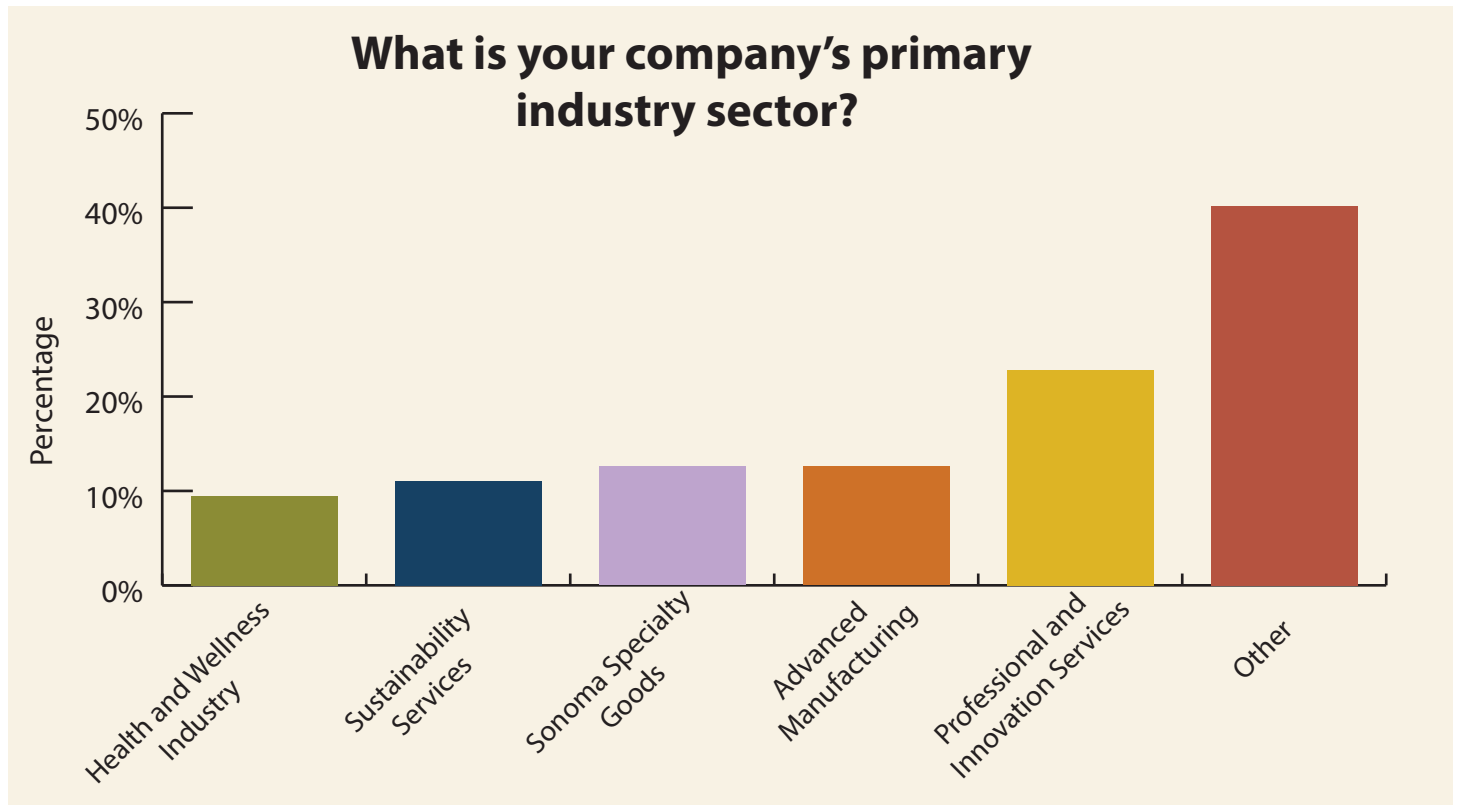
“I feel new employees have an entitlement problem, they feel as though we owe them something and we should be thankful that they are willing to work for us. Those with that attitude do not excel nearly as fast as those who don’t.”

Survey Results

Industry Clusters

Respondents of the survey were asked to identify which industry sector that they operated within, with the options of:

- Sonoma Specialty Goods (agriculture, tourism-related sectors, food and beverage manufacturing)
- Sustainability Services (construction, energy and water, environmental consulting)
- Health and Wellness Industry (hospitals, home care, community care facilities, wellness products and services)
- Advanced Manufacturing (electronic components manufacturing, medical tech equipment)
- Professional and Innovation Services (legal, accounting, management, scientific, technological consulting, software, and computer design)



The category of “other” is made up of 40 percent of respondents. Within that category, employers self identified as operating in the industries of Nonprofit work (16%), Education (8%), Banking (6%), and the rest of responses consisted of employees in sales, staffing, and hospitality.

Out of all respondents, 94 percent said that their organization has been in Sonoma County for 10 years or more. And more than 57 percent of respondents stated that their organization employs over 50 people in Sonoma County, with 24 percent employing 16-49 people, and 17 percent employing 1-15 people.

Survey Results

Recruitment



About 19 percent of respondents have recruited only within Sonoma County and 34 percent have reported recruiting throughout the North Bay. This is about a 9 percent increase of expansion from Sonoma County to the North Bay from last year’s report. Only 18 percent recruit within Northern California, and just 8 percent recruit on a state level.

Hiring

For hiring purposes, the main method of recruitment by Sonoma County employers is through internet sources, such as Craigslist, Monster, and Sonoma County Job Link. 66 percent of respondents indicated using “word of mouth” as a method of recruiting, while 45 percent of respondents use staffing agencies.



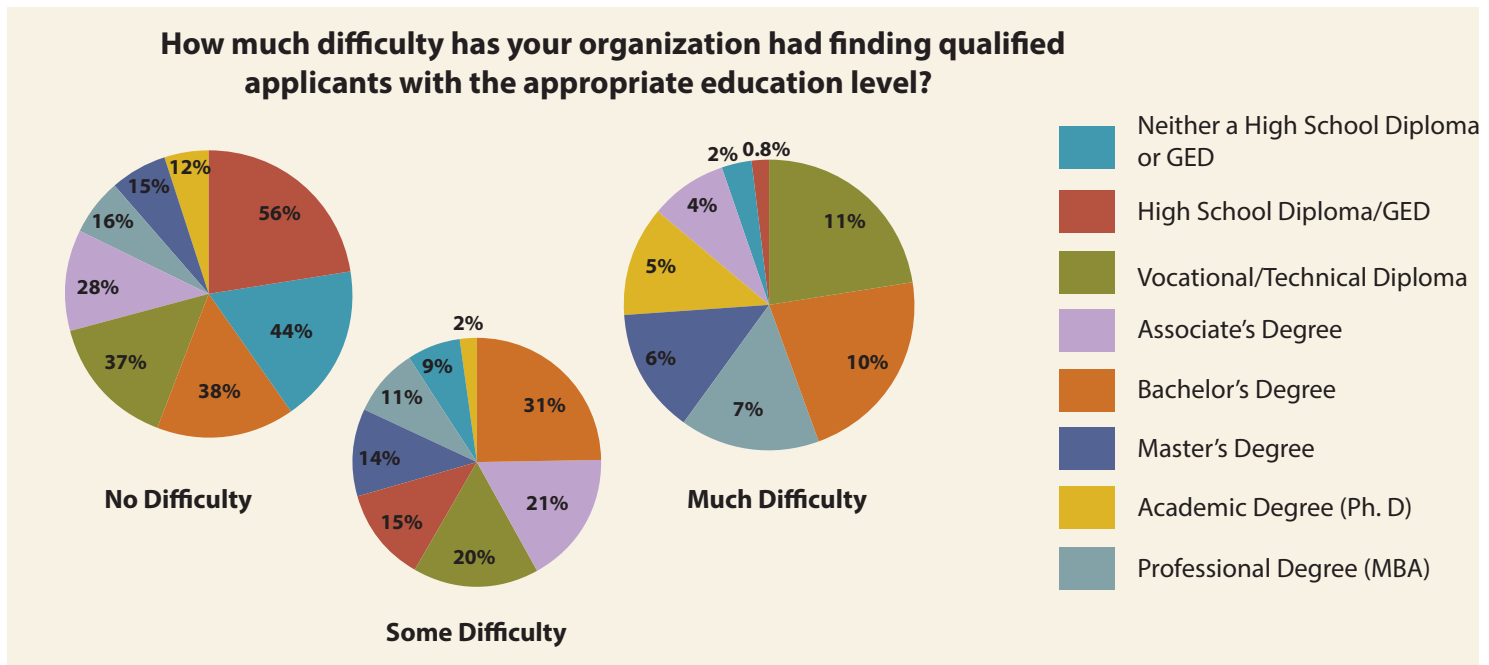
Survey Results

Training

When hiring new staff, respondents indicated that their organizations provide a mix of both internal and external training resources. Most companies provide training programs, job coaching, and internships as internal services for their employees. However, workshops/seminars and training programs are conducted almost evenly internally as well as externally.



Education



33 percent of respondents indicated that either a Bachelor's Degree or at least some college courses would benefit the employee's worth. The most sought-after level of educational attainment was a Bachelor's Degree, followed by a vocational/technical diploma, an Associate's Degree, followed by a High School Diploma or GED

Survey Results

Work Ready Certificate

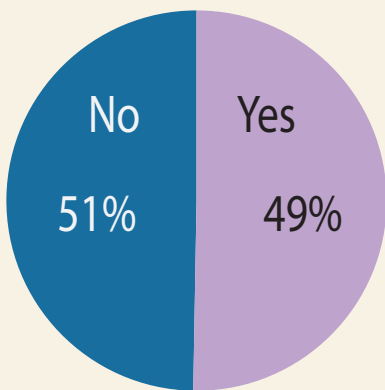
The Sonoma County Office of Education offers a curriculum that is designed to prepare students to enter the workforce by focusing on the development of essential work-ready skills. Only 49 percent of Sonoma County employer respondents are aware that this program exists. This free program helps Sonoma County youth to create a stable foundation for their future employment through the help of oral interviews, adult mentors, and online assessments.

41 percent of respondents indicated that this certificate would have no bearing whatsoever on their hiring process. Only 26 percents reported saying that it would have some weight on an individual actually being hired for the position.

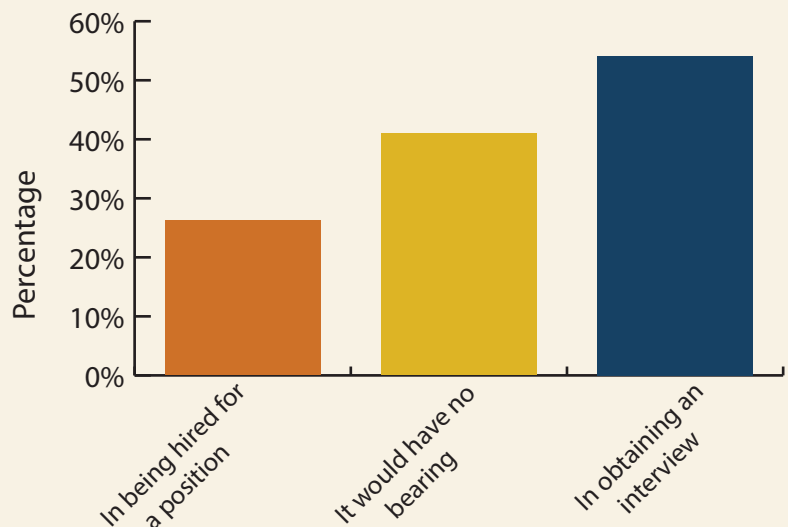
Sonoma County has developed an employer-drive strategic Workforce Development Plan headed by the Workforce Investment Board (WIB) with the goal of aligning businesses, education, and workforce to “meet the workforce needs of high demand sectors of the regional economy.” Also, it functions as a plan to improve the overall workforce of Sonoma County.

According to the respondents, only 42 percent of the employers are aware that this program exists, leaving 58 percent unaware of the benefits of this plan. Through the Strategic Workforce Development Plan, Sonoma County residents will be presented with the skills, training, and education to set them apart from other applicants. Sonoma County employers will also be better equipped to hire, develop, and retrain local employees with this plan.

Are you aware that this Work Ready Certificate is available to Sonoma County youth?



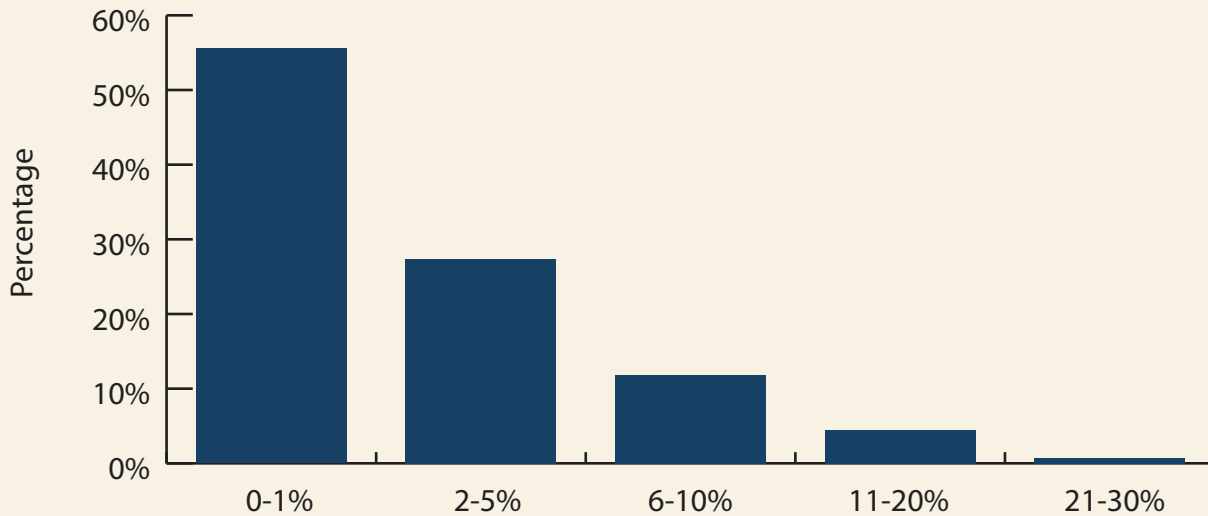
Would your business assign any weight to an applicant that had recently earned a Work Ready Certificate?



Survey Results

Retirement

What percentage of your organization's workforce will actually retire over the next 2 years?



According to respondents, the estimation of their organization's workforce retirement rate is shown above. More than one-half of respondents believe that 0-1 percent of their workforce will actually retire within the next 2 years.

Future Concerns

In 2013, 96 percent of respondents reported having hired new employees in the past year, but 62 percent of these respondents indicated having difficulty finding qualified applicants in comparison to 2012 results. Within these results, the biggest concerns from respondents for the future were a lack of soft skills, the affordability of Sonoma County, and the tightening of the labor supply.

What workforce issues are you most concerned about?

- 1. Lack of Human Capital**
- 2. The affordability of Sonoma County**
- 3. The tightening of the labor supply**
- 4. Language skills (bilingual)**
- 5. The cost of business in Sonoma County**
- 6. Transportation issues**
- 7. The aging of Sonoma County's workforce**
- 8. The transfer of knowledge**

Methodology, Sources, and Notes

Notes on Data Sources

The *2014 Sonoma County Workforce Development Survey* provides a comprehensive look at the needs of Sonoma County employers. The Economic Development Board (EDB) research was obtained through the creation and distribution of surveys to employers throughout Sonoma County.

The *2014 Sonoma County Workforce Development Survey* does not provide complete in-depth analysis of all Sonoma County employers. The EDB believes all data contained within this report to be accurate and the most current available, but does not guarantee its accuracy or completeness. Use of data from an outside source does not represent an endorsement of any product or service by the EDB, its members, or affiliates.

Interested readers are encouraged to contact data source agencies or organizations for further research, or visit our website (www.sonomaedb.org). Readers are also invited to suggest information for further reports by calling (707) 585-7170 or e-mailing edb@sonoma-county.org

Sources

- 2014 Workforce Development Survey results
- Sonoma County Office of Education
- Sonoma County Workforce Investment Board

Methodology

We received 147 responses fully through local sources. This was a 35% response rate which is high for a written survey.

All calculations and percentages were developed through the inputting of data into SurveyMonkey (www.surveymonkey.com)

Acknowledgements

The EDB's 2014 Sonoma County Workforce Development Survey was designed to provide local education and training organizations with a comprehensive assessment of employer needs. Its findings can help local business and community leaders create useful approaches to future issues in workforce development.

This achievement would not have been possible without the aid of the Sonoma County Workforce Investment Board (WIB) and the Professional Association of Sonoma County for Human Resources (PASCO HR) who partnered with the EDB for this initiative.

Thanks are also due to the many Sonoma County Human Resource Directors who participated in this study. The willing involvement of these key community partners is critical to the success of this initiative and others like it.

This report and others like it would not be possible without the continued support of the EDB's research sponsors, a full listing of whom may be found on the following page.

Report Team

Jordan Nagy was the project lead, managed and edited the report's overall layout and content. She was responsible for collecting the data, analyzing the results, and combining all this information into the report.

Andres Peña was responsible for creating, preparing, and distributing the report. He also did all the initial research in order to write the survey.

With acknowledgement and appreciation to key local businesses that support economic development in Sonoma County

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