

# BCREB Workforce Needs Assessment Final.docBCREB Workforce Needs Assessment 2007

## Executive Summary

**Overview:** The Berkshire County Regional Employment Board, Inc. (BCREB), working with the Berkshire Compact for Higher Education and the Berkshire Chambers of Commerce, conducted a Workforce Development Needs assessment among Berkshire County employers to gain an understanding of their employee training and recruitment needs. The purpose of the comprehensive assessment was to assist the BCREB in effectively planning for future workforce development programs and strategies to serve a broad range of employers throughout the region.

The results of the assessment will help position the BCREB to obtain new resources that meet the changing needs of Berkshire employers. The information can also be used to expand existing resources in the region, by serving as a guide to local and regional education and training providers as well as workforce and economic development agencies. The results will help connect services to Berkshire employers and fill any needs that are not currently being met.

In developing the content of the needs assessment, it was determined that both skills training and recruitment needs should be explored. While training was initially intended to be the main focus of the assessment, through speaking with employers, it became apparent that recruitment is also a major concern. With today's low unemployment rates and shrinking labor pool, employers are having an increasingly difficult time recruiting employees and are looking for ways to address this problem and to share ideas with other employers.

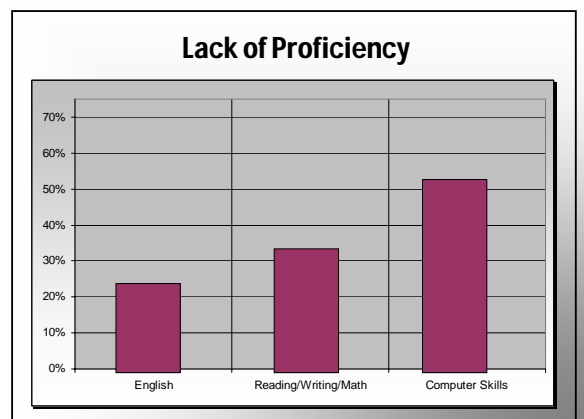
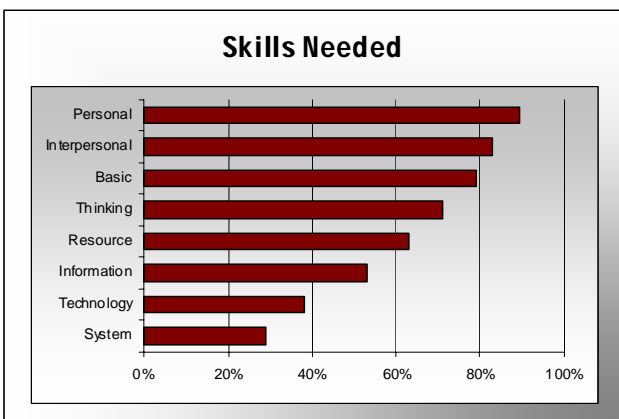
**Survey Methodology:** A four-page survey instrument was developed with input from the BCREB board members and staff, local human resource managers, and the Compact for Higher Education. The survey was mailed to 1,200 employers in October. The survey was also provided on-line through Survey Monkey and was emailed to an additional 600 employers in November. The survey was targeted toward employers of all sizes and from varied sectors including critical and emerging industries. Reminder phone calls and emails were made to selected employers to ensure a good response rate. In total, 288 employers responded to the survey, resulting in a response rate of approximately 16%. Following is a profile of the survey respondents:

- 59% from Central, 21% from Southern and 20% from Northern Berkshire County
- Employer categories - Applied technology (15%), Gov/NP/Social (15%), Tourism/Hospitality (14%), Business services (12%), Healthcare (11%), FIRE (9%), Retail/wholesale (7%), Education (7%), IT (5%) and construction (5%)
- 45% employ fewer than 50 employees; 20% employ more than 250 employees
- The median employer has 42 full-time and 7 part-time employees
- The size of employer ranged from one to 1,285 full-time and 1,635 part-time
- The respondent's workforce is comprised of more than half (54%) women and more than 22% of respondent's employees are over 50 years of age
- Over half of the respondents' employees (57%) have not completed a college degree, 29% have completed a college degree and 10% have completed graduate school.

**Key Findings:** The key findings of the needs assessment were as follows:

**1. Training Priorities:** Being able to offer training in a variety of areas and having convenient access to information on training resources and programs is a high priority for the majority of survey respondents. Participants noted that more effective training resources would emerge if the specific training needs of Berkshire employers could be shared with education and training providers. **Computer training** and **“soft skill”** training are in demand across a broad cross-section of industries. The areas identified as the highest priorities in the next five years by the most survey respondents are:

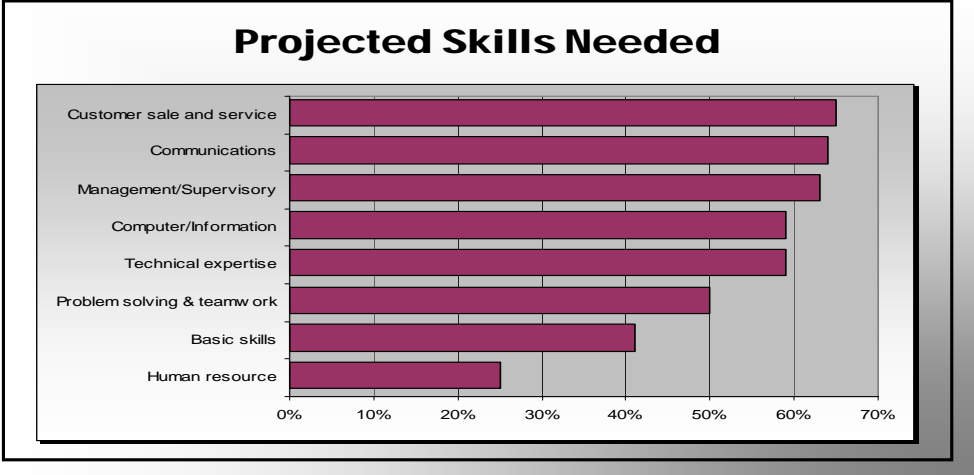
- **Personal Skills** (self management, attitude, communication, listening)
- **Interpersonal Skills** (customer service, teamwork, etiquette)
- **Basic** (math, reading, writing, some English as a Second Language)
- **Thinking** (supervisory, leadership, problem solving, conflict resolution)
- **Resource** (managing time and money)
- **Information** (analyzing & interpreting data)
- **Technology** (computers & procedures)
- **System** (understanding the organization; health & safety)



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Employers identified that training in **basic skills** (English, reading, writing, math, and communication skills) is among the highest training priorities. Employers would like short-term, effective programs that are convenient and non-threatening to their employees.

Employers also viewed the continued availability of **industry-specific technical training courses** as an important element in their ability to grow and expand their business. The survey showed that the demand for technical training occurs among not only employers in the applied technology sector, but also employers in the telecommunications, retail, utility, health care, hospitality, and cultural/recreational industries. Topics include: **Accounting, Database, Computers/Microsoft Office, Spreadsheets, Word Processing, Computer Aided Design, Equipment Maintenance, Inventory Management, Total Quality Management, and OSHA** related training. **First Aid/CPR** and **Sexual Harassment** training needs were also highlighted.



**2. Training Resources:** Most survey respondents have budgets and staffs dedicated for training, are eager to gain more information about available training resources, and are looking for a convenient mechanism to access this information and to network within the business community.

- Over 69% of respondents offer at least 75% **tuition reimbursement**
- 92% offer **on-the-job-training**
- 88% send employees to **external training courses**
- 64% offer **in-house training**
- 61% participate in **school-to-career activities**
- Nearly 65% of employers utilize **internal trainers**
- 71% of companies use **outside trainers**. 28% use **Berkshire Community College**, 20% use the **Employers Association of the Northeast**, 12% utilize **Mass College of Liberal Arts**, 9% utilize **Berkshire Works**, and 2% use **Mildred Elley**.

While some efforts to share information are already underway, many of the survey respondents were unaware of the full range of resources available to them, including training grants. They are also generally satisfied with the technical training resources for both new hires and existing employees. Employers feel it is more difficult to find effective programs in other soft skill topics, such as supervision and conflict resolution.

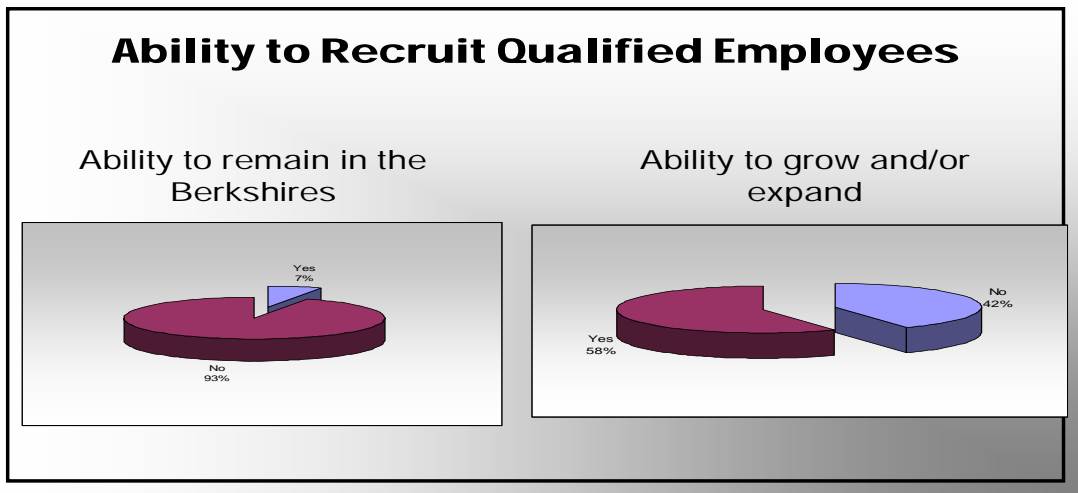
### Projected Occupation Growth 2012

Office and Administrative Support Occupations	9,770	Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations	3,290
Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations	7,735	Production Occupations	3,105
Sales and Related Occupations	6,891	Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance Occupations	2,900
Education, Training and Library Occupations	4,630	Construction and Extraction Occupations	2,750
Management Occupations	4,174	Transportation and Material Moving Occupations	2,702

**3. Recruitment:** The top three areas of concern for employers who are trying to recruit qualified employees include:

- Pool of available workers too small
- Lack of skills
- Poor attitude/work ethic

This impacts 58% of responding company's ability to grow and expand. It does not, however, impact the company's decision to remain in the Berkshires (93%). Most employers provide a variety of options to help retain employees including healthcare (84%), annual merit increases (68%), 401K programs (63%) and formal orientation programs and flex time.



**4. School-to-Career:** More than 60% of companies participate in school-to-career activities including guest speakers (57%), internships (52%), job shadowing programs (49%), Academy programs (26%) and career programs (18%). More than 55% of companies were interested in learning more about these programs.

**5. Next Steps:** The Workforce Development Needs Assessment offers an up-to-date analysis of employer's needs and perceptions regarding employee recruitment and training. Respondents show a strong interest in working with workforce programs to develop and implement solutions.

- **Public Relations Campaign** – distribute assessment results and inform area education and training providers about local employer needs
- **Educate employers** about programs offered and resources available
- Develop **short-term certificate** programs for computer and soft skills training
- **Connect employers to resources** – assist interested employers in applying for state and federal resources to develop internal and external training programs
- **Short-term, effective basic skills** classes need to be connected to employer needs
- **Expand the number of technical training** programs offered at educational facilities for both the current and future workforce
- **Connect and expand school-to-work** programs to interested employers