

*Brazos Valley Community
Audit
Survey Report*



**Public Policy Research
Institute**



Ann Lessem, Ph.D.

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Public Policy Research Institute
Texas A&M University
H.C. Dulie Building, Suite 329
College Station, TX 77843-4476

Telephone: (979)845-8800
Fax (979)845-0249

Email: postmaster@ppri.tamu.edu

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Survey Report

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In April and May 2002 Public Policy Research Institute at Texas A&M University conducted a telephone survey of employers who had 20 or more employees and who were located in the six rural counties included in the Brazos Valley Workforce Development Board area. This included Burleson, Grimes, Leon, Madison, Robertson and Washington Counties.

The total population of 342 employers was contacted. Of these employers:

- 240 of the 342 agreed to participate in the telephone survey, for a participation rate of 70%;
- 32 of a possible 47 Burleson County employers chose to participate, for a rate of 68%;
- 43 of a possible 65 Grimes County employers chose to participate, for a rate of 66%;
- 24 of a possible 38 Leon County employers chose to participate, for a rate of 63%;
- 24 of a possible 33 Madison County employers chose to participate, for a rate of 73%;
- 27 of a possible 43 Robertson County employers chose to participate, for a rate of 63%; and
- 90 of a possible 116 Washington County employers chose to participate, for a rate of 78%.

The majority of employers who participated in the survey (59%) had between 20 – 49 employees. Twenty percent of the employers had between 50 – 99 employees. Fifteen percent of employers had between 100 – 499 employees. And 4% of employers had over 500 employees.

70% of the employers participated in the survey

Important survey findings included the following:

- Of the 240 survey respondents, only 32 (13%) said that they had used workforce services in the past year;
- The most utilized service was the Employment Service function of posting job openings (30 employers);
- Employer ratings for “helpfulness of workforce staff”, “ease of completing the process” and “efficiency of the process” showed that most employers were pleased with the service delivery of these items;
- Employer ratings for “quality of applicants” showed that employers were not always pleased with the service delivery of this item;
- The majority of employers (63%) said workforce services were not utilized because they were not needed;
- Employers identified “finding applicants for jobs”, “posting job openings”, “screening for criminal history” and “screening for drugs” as the most important services that workforce could provide:
- Over half of the employers said that they would not use these services if the workforce office was not convenient to their business location;
- Good work ethics were identified as the most important characteristic wanted in entry-level employees;
- The most common method of attracting entry-level employees was “word of mouth”;
- Having a high school diploma was the most important minimum education requirement for all job categories;
- Employers felt that people-related items (such as employee relations, morale, training, etc.) were more important in ensuring the success of their company than non-people related items (such as technology and venture capital);
- Slightly less than a quarter of the employers (23%) required that entry-level employees work overtime;
- Slightly more than half of the employers (53%) only hired individuals aged 18 or older;
- Most employers (69%) indicated that their entry-level positions were permanent-full time;
- Most employers (86%) believed their employees lived in the same county as the company they worked for;
- Employers generally supported transportation and childcare initiatives (62%); and
- Most employers supported assessment / screening of employees (71%).

Only 13% of employers used workforce services in the past year

Having a high school diploma was the most important minimum educational requirement

Based on the findings from this survey, it is apparent that employers in the rural counties are not utilizing Brazos Valley workforce services. The primary reason the employers gave for this non-utilization was that they did not need these services. While the survey did not go into detail about why the employers felt this way, one possible explanation is that they are unaware of how workforce services could help their companies. The employers also seemed reluctant to use workforce services (even if they thought those services might be important) if the workforce offices were not in a location that was convenient to their business.

*Employers
wanted
workforce
offices located
close to their
businesses*

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Introduction

In April and May 2002 Public Policy Research Institute at Texas A&M University conducted a telephone survey of employers who had 20 or more employees and who were located in the six rural counties included in the Brazos Valley Workforce Development Board area. This included the following counties:

- Burleson
- Grimes
- Leon
- Madison
- Robertson
- Washington

A copy of the survey instrument is included in the appendix.

The total population of 342 employers was contacted¹. Of these employers, 240 (70%) agreed to participate in the telephone survey. In Burleson County, 32 of a possible 47 employers chose to participate, for a rate of 68%. In Grimes County, 43 of a possible 65 employers chose to participate, for a rate of 66%. In Leon County, 24 of a possible 38 employers chose to participate, for a rate of 63%. In Madison County, 24 of a possible 33 employers chose to participate, for a rate of 73%. In Robertson County, 27 of a possible 43 employers chose to participate, for a rate of 63%. In Washington County, 90 of a possible 116 employers chose to participate, for a rate of 78%.

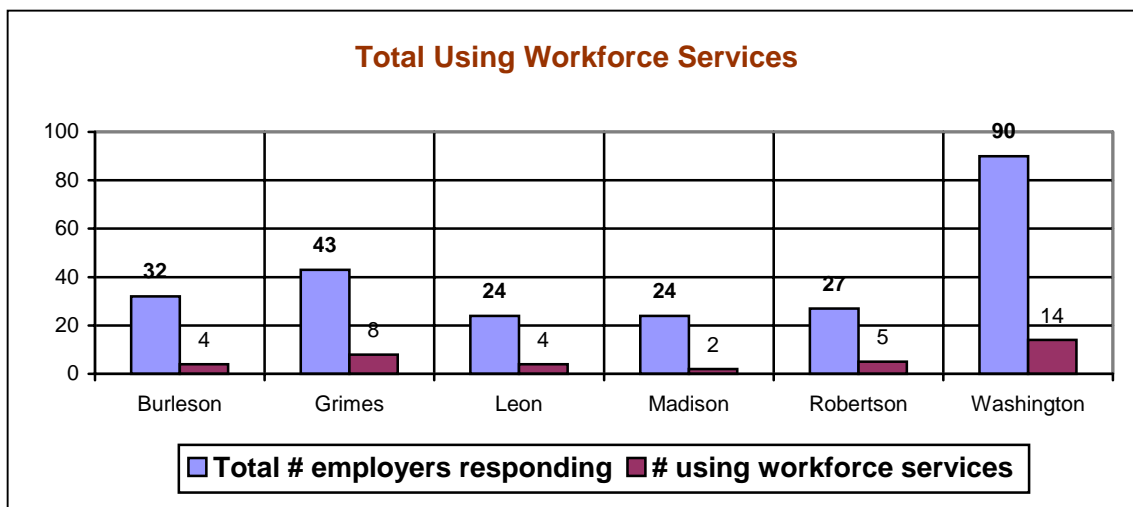
| County | Total # Employers | # Employers Participating in the Survey | Participation Rate |
|------------|-------------------|---|--------------------|
| Burleson | 47 | 32 | 68% |
| Grimes | 65 | 43 | 66% |
| Leon | 38 | 24 | 63% |
| Madison | 33 | 24 | 73% |
| Robertson | 43 | 27 | 63% |
| Washington | 116 | 90 | 78% |
| TOTAL | 342 | 240 | 70% |

¹ Employer data was obtained from Texas Workforce Commission

Findings

Use of Workforce Services

Several of the initial survey questions dealt with employer use of Brazos Valley workforce services within the past year. Of the 240 survey respondents, only 32 (13%) said that they had used these services. Fourteen of these employers were located in Washington County, eight were located in Grimes County, five were located in Robertson County, four were located in Burleson County, four were located in Leon County, and only two were located in Madison County.



This corresponded to the following utilization rates:

| County | Total # Employers | # Employers Using Services | Utilization Rate |
|--------------|-------------------|----------------------------|------------------|
| Burleson | 32 | 4 | 13% |
| Grimes | 43 | 8 | 19% |
| Leon | 24 | 4 | 17% |
| Madison | 24 | 2 | 08% |
| Robertson | 27 | 5 | 19% |
| Washington | 90 | 14 | 16% |
| TOTAL | 240 | 32 | 13% |

Most Highly Utilized Services

Because there were numerous workforce services that employers could utilize, and because each employer could utilize multiple services, the 37 employers who indicated that they had used some workforce service within the past year were asked which services they used. The services utilized, in descending order, were as follows:

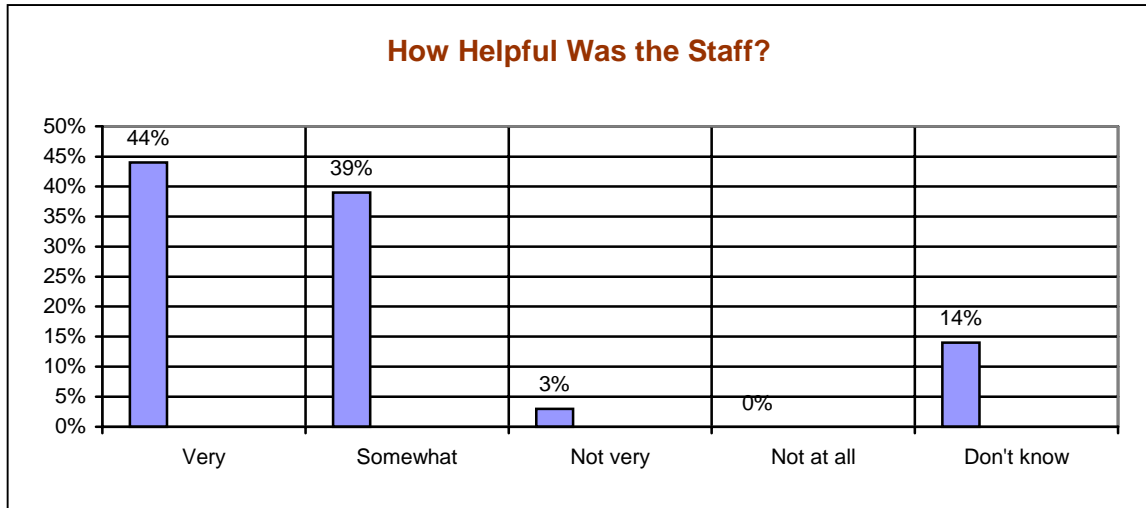
| Service | Number and Percentage Utilizing Service |
|---|---|
| Posting job <u>openings</u> | 30 employers – 81% |
| Finding <u>applicants</u> for jobs | 14 employers – 38% |
| Getting <u>training</u> assistance | 4 employers – 11% |
| <u>Screening</u> potential employees | 3 employers – 8% |
| <u>Assessing</u> potential employees | 1 employer – 3% |
| Getting <u>grant assistance</u> | 1 employer – 3% |
| Getting information about <u>lay-off assistance</u> | 1 employer – 3% |
| Getting wage and skill data | 0 employers – NA |
| Having applicants <u>pre-interviewed</u> | 0 employers – NA |

Service utilization by employers in each of the six counties was as follows

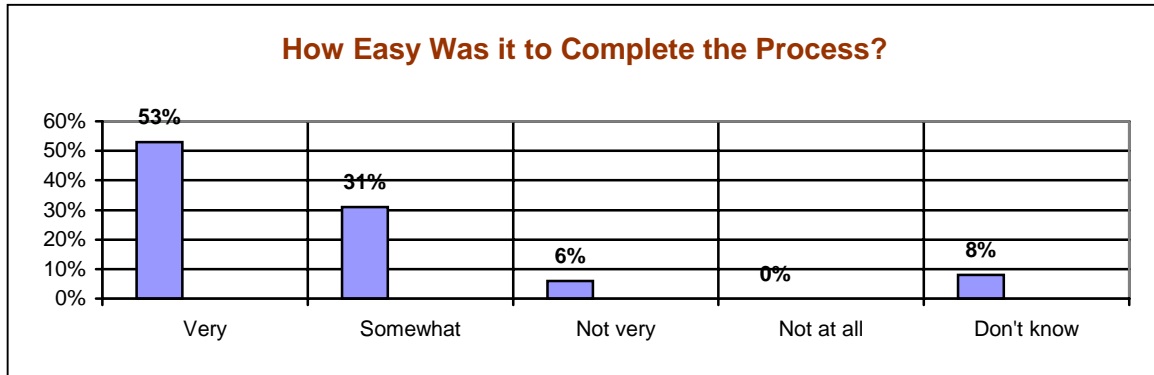
| Service | County | | | | | |
|------------------|----------|--------|------|---------|-----------|------------|
| | Burleson | Grimes | Leon | Madison | Robertson | Washington |
| Openings | 2 | 7 | 3 | 1 | 5 | 12 |
| Applicants | 1 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 2 |
| Training | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| Screening | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Assessing | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Grant assistance | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Lay-off info | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Wage/skill data | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Pre-interview | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Ratings of Workforce Service Provision

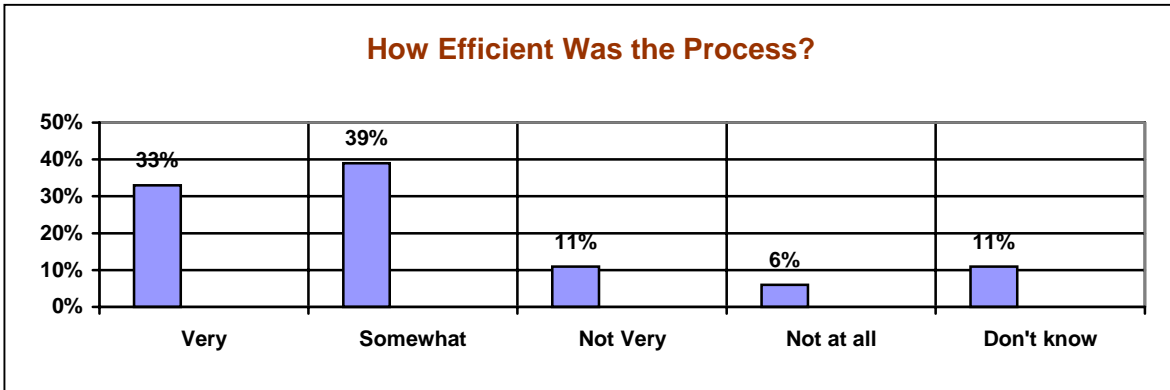
Even though service utilization was minimal in these six counties, those employers who did use workforce services rated them fairly highly. When asked how helpful the workforce staff was, 44% said they were very helpful, 39% said they were somewhat helpful and only 3% said they were not very helpful.



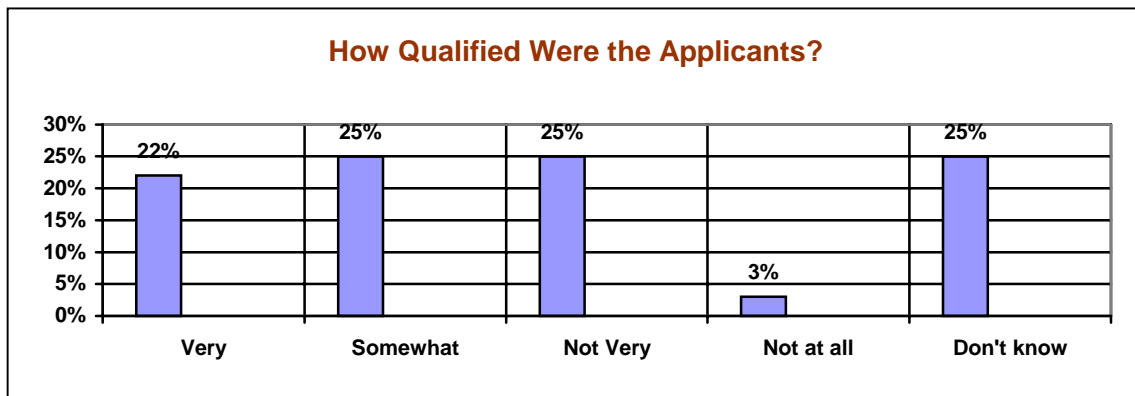
The majority of employers (53%) said that it was very easy to complete the process, 31% thought it was somewhat easy, and 6% thought that it was not very easy.



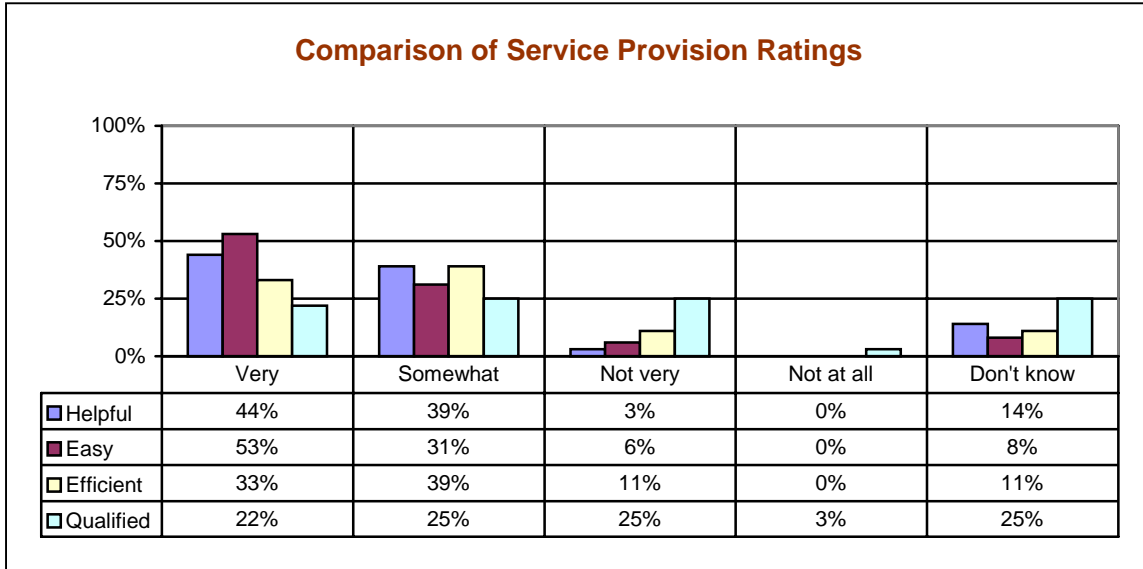
Thirty-three percent of employers who used workforce services felt that the process was very efficient, 39% thought it was somewhat efficient, 11% thought it was not very efficient and 6% felt that it wasn't at all efficient.



However, the employers were not quite so complimentary when asked about the quality of applicants who were referred to them by the workforce center. Twenty-two percent said that the applicants were very qualified, 25% thought they were somewhat qualified, 25% thought they were not very qualified, and 3% thought the applicants were not at all qualified.

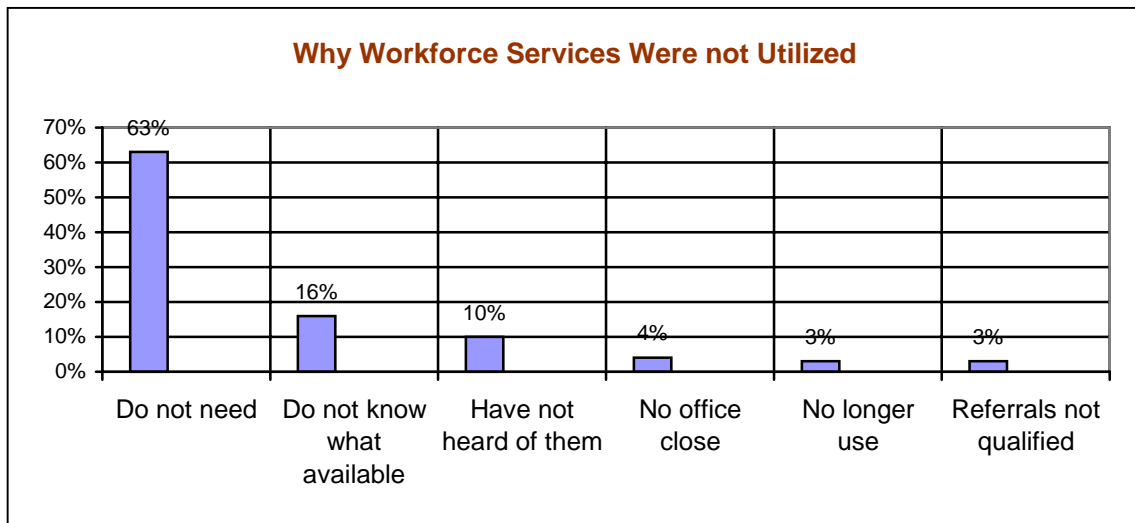


A comparison of the service ratings showed that the highest rated services were (a) ease to complete the process, and (b) helpfulness of the staff. Efficiency of the process was rated slightly lower and the quality of the applicants was the lowest rated service.



Reasons for Non-Utilization of Services

Employers were also asked why they did not use workforce services. Sixty-three percent said it was because these services were not needed, 16% said it was because they did not know what services were available, 10% said that they had not heard of the workforce center, 4% said that there was not a workforce center close to them, 3% said they used workforce services in the past but no longer used them, and 3% said they did not use workforce services because the job applicants they referred did not have the appropriate skills.



Importance of Services

All of the participating employers were asked their opinion about the importance of services that might be available through the workforce center or workforce board. Forty-six percent of the employers completing the survey said that posting job openings was a very important workforce service and 27% thought it was a somewhat important service. However, 25% thought that posting job openings was either not very important (13%) or not at all important (12%).

Slightly under one third (31%) of the employers queried thought that testing potential employees was a very important workforce service, 23% thought it was somewhat important, 24% thought it was not very important, and 18% thought it was not at all important.

The majority of employers (61%) thought that screening applicants for drugs was a very important service that could be performed by the workforce center, 9% believed it was somewhat important, 9% believed it was not very important, and 17% believed it was not at all important.

Thirty-nine percent of the employers thought that screening for appropriate skills was an important service of the workforce center, an additional 30% thought it was a somewhat important service, 14% thought it was not very important and an additional 14% thought it was not at all important.

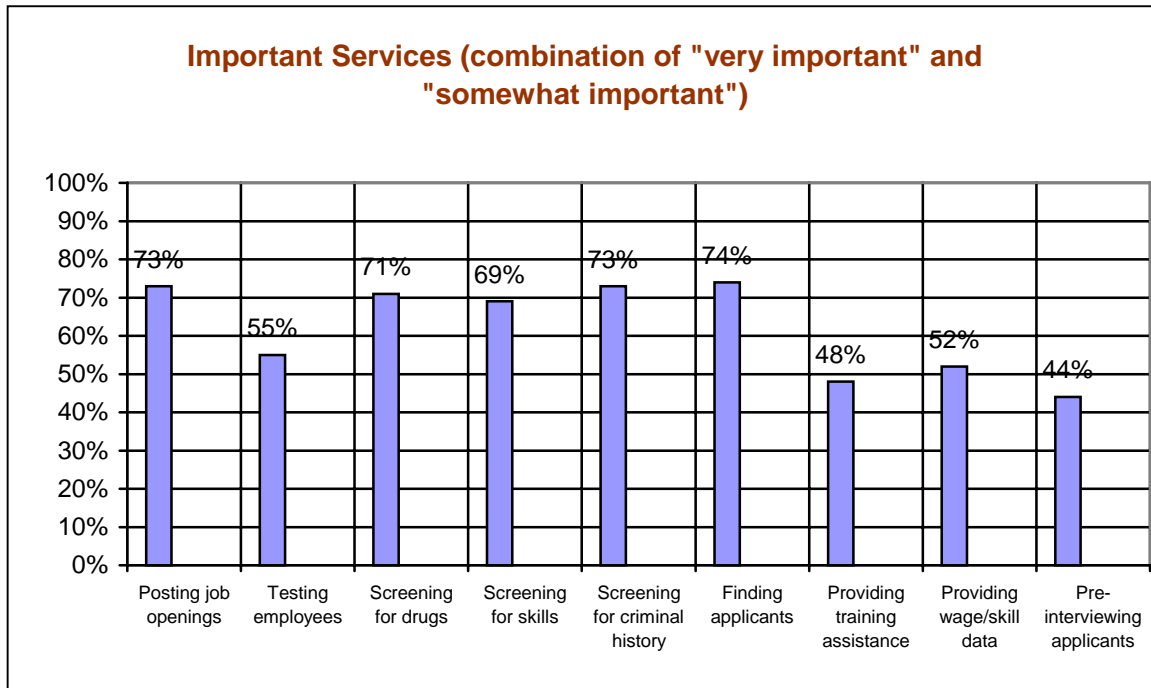
Fifty-eight percent of the employers thought that screening for a prior criminal history was a very important service, 15% thought it was somewhat important, 11% thought it was not very important, and 14% thought it was not at all important.

Less than half (45%) of the employers thought that it was very important for the workforce center to help them find applicants for jobs, 29% thought it was somewhat important, 11% thought it was not very important, and 13% thought that it was not at all important.

Employers were evenly divided over the importance of having workforce centers provide them with assistance training employees or potential employees. Twenty-five percent thought it was very important, 23% thought it was somewhat important, 23% thought it was not very important, and 26% thought it was not at all important.

Employers were equally divided in their opinions about the importance of workforce centers providing wage and skill data. Twenty-three percent thought it was very important, 29% thought it was somewhat important, 21% thought it was not very important, and 19% thought it was not at all important.

As a whole, the employers did not believe that having the workforce center pre-interview applicants was an important function. Only 21% percent thought it was very important and 23% thought it was somewhat important. However, 26% thought it was not very important and 27% thought it was not at all important. (NOTE: Percentages in each of the paragraphs above will not equal 100% because some of the 240 employers queried chose not to answer all questions.)



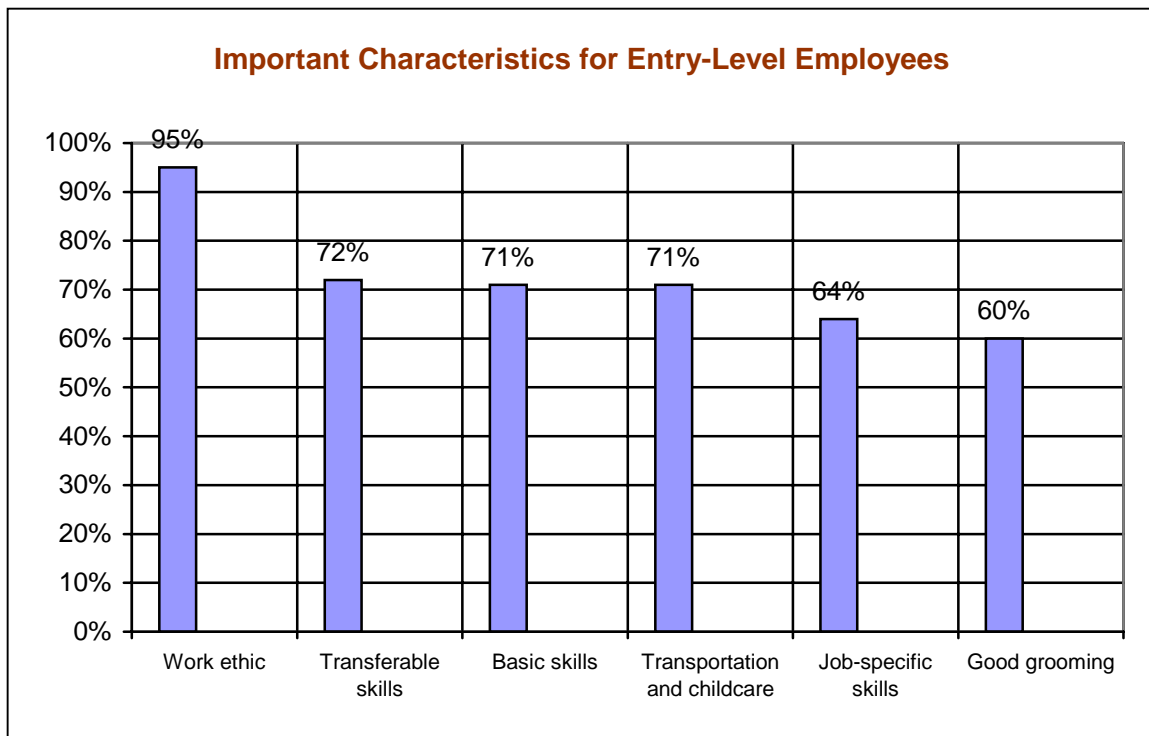
Obstacles to Using Workforce Services

All of the participating employers were asked to identify obstacles that would prevent them from using workforce services. These obstacles, in descending order, were as follows:

| Obstacle | Percentage Indicating Obstacle |
|--|--------------------------------|
| The location of the workforce center, including its distance from the employer | 55% |
| The referral of unqualified job applicants | 15% |
| The speed of the process for getting results | 3% |
| The employer had no need for any of the services | 3% |
| The workforce centers did not provide accurate information about applicants | 3% |
| The communication between the workforce center and the employer was not good | 2% |
| The employer could find no reason to use the workforce center | 2% |
| The workforce center staff was uninformed about the employer's specific business | 2% |
| There was too much bureaucracy | 1% |
| The workforce staff was unpleasant | 1% |

Entry-Level Applicants

The 240 employers who completed the survey were asked about the characteristics they wanted in applicants for entry-level positions. Ninety-five percent felt that it was very important for employees to have a good work ethic, 72% felt that employees should have good transferable skills, 71% wanted employees to have good basic skills, 71% thought that employees should have reliable transportation and childcare prior to coming to work, 64% wanted employees to have the job specific skills needed for the work, and 60% thought that good grooming was very important.



Employers indicated that they typically found applicants for entry-level jobs in several ways. These included

| Method of Finding Applicants | Percentage Using Method |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Word of mouth | 34% |
| Newspaper ads | 31% |
| Walk-ins | 11% |
| Ads on the Internet | 5% |
| “Help Wanted” posters | 5% |
| Workforce center | 3% |
| Recruitment programs | 2% |
| Temporary employment agencies | 1% |
| In-house application process | 1% |
| Community college placement office | 1% |
| High school work program | >1% |
| Resumes on file | >1% |
| Job fairs | >1% |
| Referrals | >1% |
| References from current employers | >1% |
| University placement center | >1% |

Occupational Areas and Minimum Education Requirements for Entry-Level Applicants

Employers were asked about their minimum educational requirements for entry-level applicants in the following occupational areas:

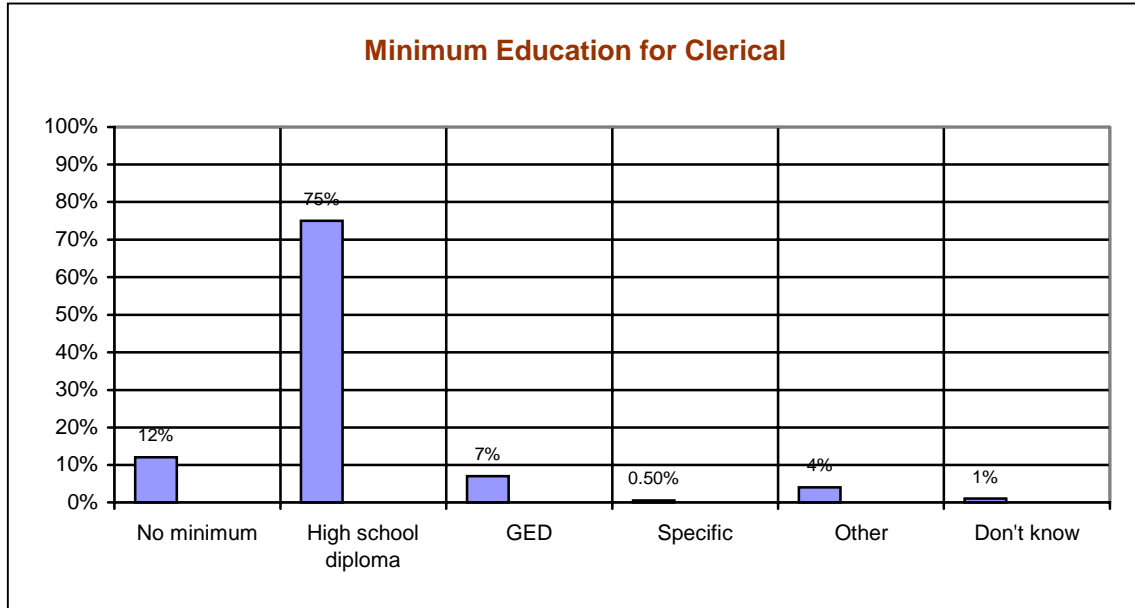
- Clerical
- Health care
- Service
- Maintenance
- Skilled craft
- Construction
- Technical

Clerical Occupations

Two hundred seven of the 240 employers surveyed indicated that they hired entry-level employees in clerical occupations. The number of employers hiring in this occupation in each of the six counties was as follows:

| Number of Employers in County Hiring Clerical Occupations | | | | | | |
|--|--------|------|---------|-----------|------------|-------|
| Burleson | Grimes | Leon | Madison | Robertson | Washington | Total |
| 29 | 41 | 20 | 19 | 24 | 74 | 207 |

Of the 207 employers who hired entry-level clerical positions, 156 (75%) employers required that applicants have a high school diploma. Twenty-four employers (12%) had no minimum educational requirements for clerical occupations. Fourteen employers (7%) accepted a GED in lieu of a high school diploma. Only one employer required a specific license or certificate. Three employers (1%) were not sure of the minimum educational requirements. Nine employers (4%) had other requirements, some of which included computer skills, some college, demonstrated office skills, age-related requirements, literacy, CPA certification, and 6th grade reading level.

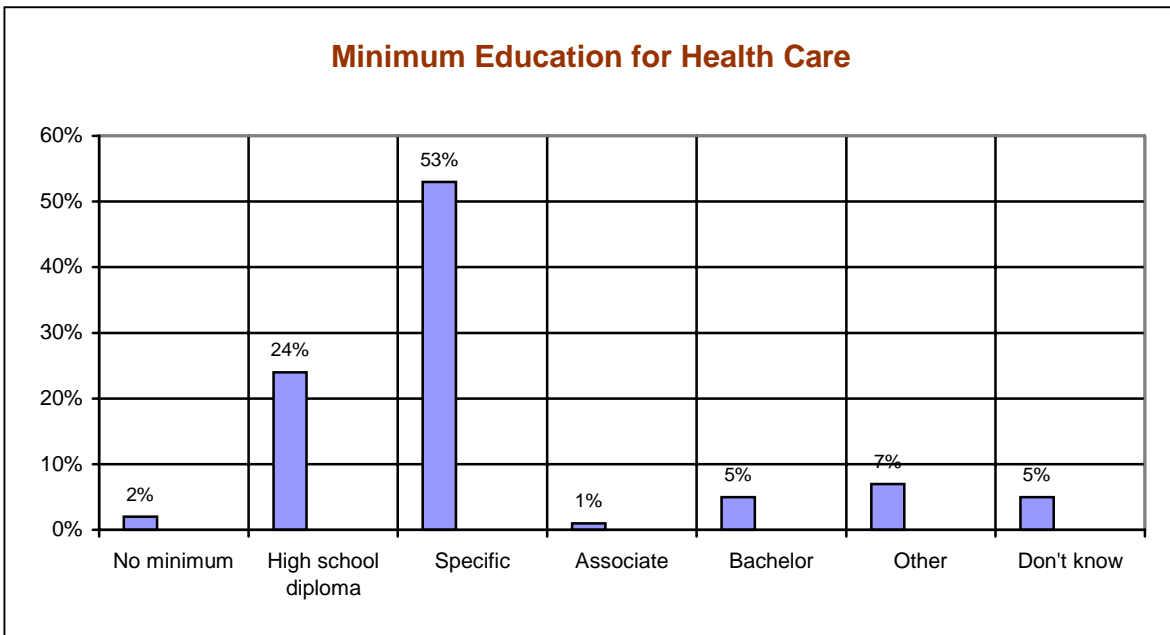


Health Care Occupations

Seventy-four of the 240 employers surveyed indicated that they hired entry-level employees in health care occupations. The number of employers hiring in this occupation in each of the six counties was as follows:

| Number of Employers in County Hiring Health Care Occupations | | | | | | |
|---|--------|------|---------|-----------|------------|-------|
| Burleson | Grimes | Leon | Madison | Robertson | Washington | Total |
| 13 | 9 | 13 | 9 | 9 | 21 | 74 |

Of the 74 employers, 39 employers (53%) required specific licenses or certificates. Eighteen employers (8%) required a high school diploma. Four employers (2%) required Bachelors Degrees. Two employers (1%) had no minimum educational requirement. One employer required an Associate’s Degree. Four employers (2%) were not sure of the minimum educational requirements. Five employers had other requirements, some of which included a Master’s Degree, some type of nursing degree, and a 6th grade reading level.

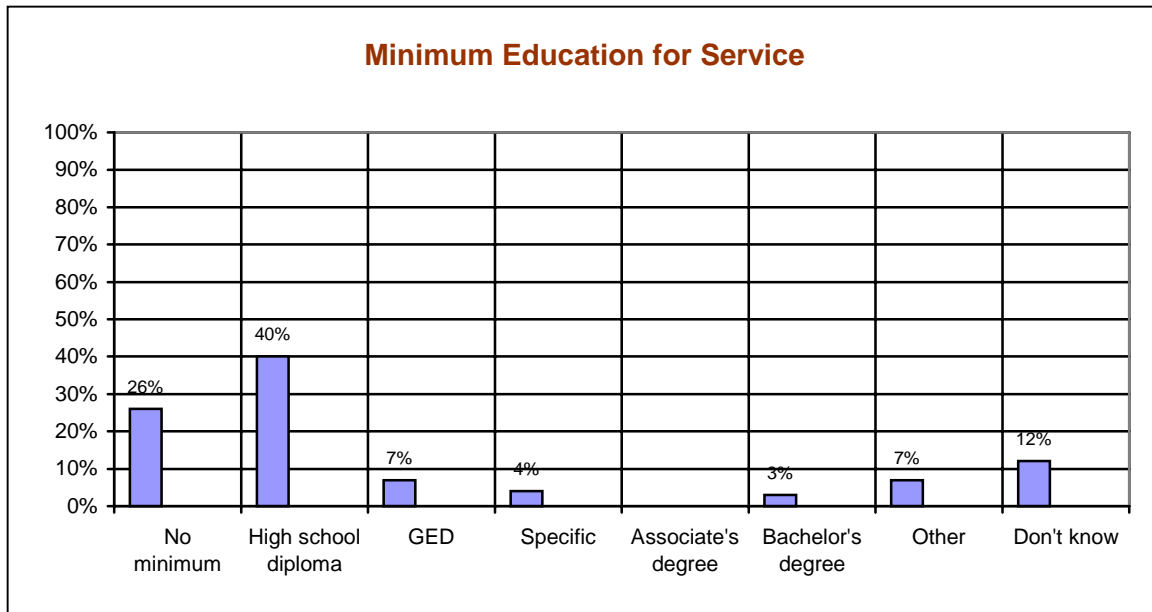


Service Occupations

One hundred seventy-two of the 240 employers surveyed indicated that they hired entry-level employees in service occupations. The number of employers hiring in this occupation in each of the six counties was as follows:

| Number of Employers in County Hiring Service Occupations | | | | | | |
|---|--------|------|---------|-----------|------------|-------|
| Burleson | Grimes | Leon | Madison | Robertson | Washington | Total |
| 20 | 32 | 18 | 19 | 21 | 62 | 172 |

Of the 172 employers who hired entry-level service positions, 68 (40%) required that applicants have a high school diploma. Forty-four employers (26%) had no minimum educational requirements for service occupations. Twelve employers (7%) accepted a GED in lieu of a high school diploma. Seven employers (4%) required a specific license or certificate. Only one employer required an Associate’s Degree. However, six employers (3%) required Bachelor’s Degrees. Twenty-one employers (12%) were not sure of the minimum educational requirements. Twelve employers (7%) had other requirements, some of which included comparable work experience, at least an 8th grade education, some high school, and applicants be over a specific age.

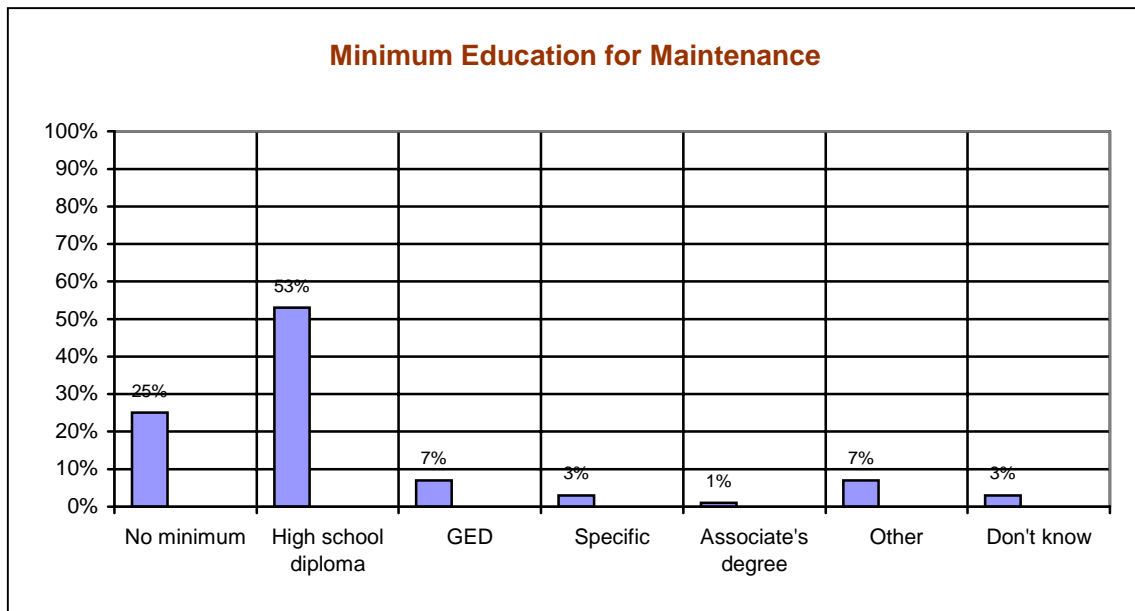


Maintenance Occupations

One hundred seventy-five of the 240 employers surveyed indicated that they hired entry-level employees in maintenance occupations. The number of employers hiring in this occupation in each of the six counties was as follows:

| Number of Employers in County Hiring Maintenance Occupations | | | | | | |
|---|--------|------|---------|-----------|------------|-------|
| Burleson | Grimes | Leon | Madison | Robertson | Washington | Total |
| 23 | 35 | 20 | 18 | 19 | 60 | 175 |

Of the 175 employers who hired entry-level maintenance positions, 93 (53%) required that applicants have a high school diploma. Forty-four employers (25%) had no minimum educational requirements for maintenance occupations. Twelve employers (7%) accepted a GED in lieu of a high school diploma. Six employers (3%) required a specific license or certificate. Two employers (1%) required an Associate's Degree. Five employers (3%) were not sure of the minimum educational requirements. Twelve employers (7%) had other requirements, some of which included comparable work experience, and at least an 8th grade education.

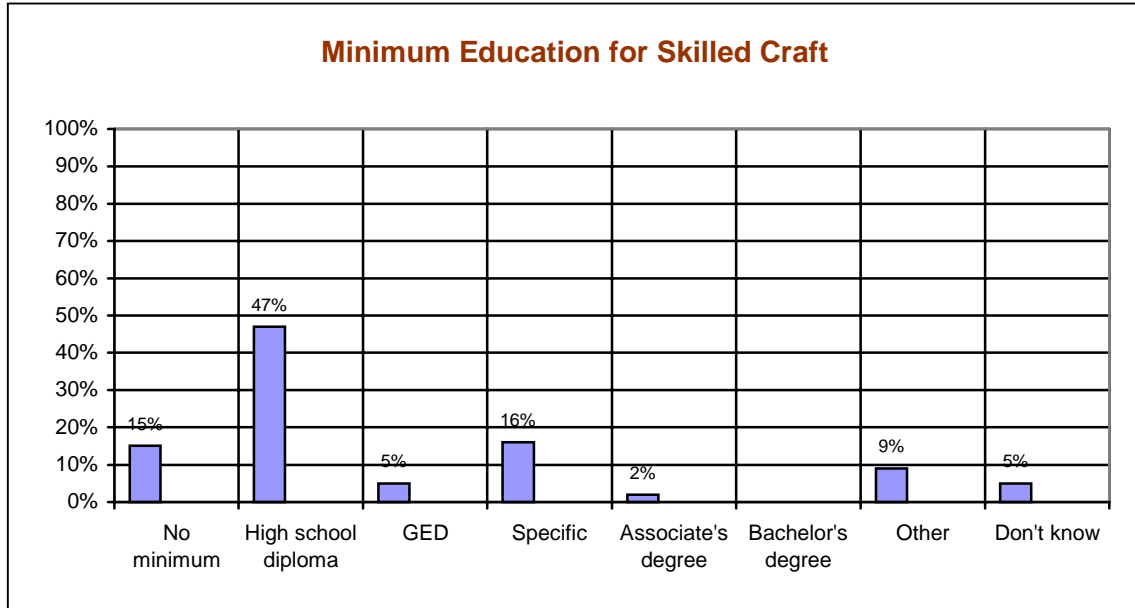


Skilled Craft Occupations

One hundred thirty-one of the 240 employers surveyed indicated that they hired entry-level employees in skilled craft occupations. The number of employers hiring in this occupation in each of the six counties was as follows:

| Number of Employers in County Hiring Skilled Craft Occupations | | | | | | |
|---|--------|------|---------|-----------|------------|-------|
| Burleson | Grimes | Leon | Madison | Robertson | Washington | Total |
| 19 | 25 | 11 | 11 | 18 | 47 | 131 |

Of the 131 employers who hired entry-level skilled craft positions, 61 (47%) required that applicants have a high school diploma. Nineteen employers (15%) had no minimum educational requirements for skilled craft occupations. Seven employers (5%) accepted a GED in lieu of a high school diploma. Twenty-one employers (16%) required a specific license or certificate. Three employers (2%) required an Associate’s Degree. Only one employer required Bachelor’s Degrees. Six employers (5%) were not sure of the minimum educational requirements. Twelve employers (9%) had other requirements, some of which included specific training, work experience, and literacy skills.

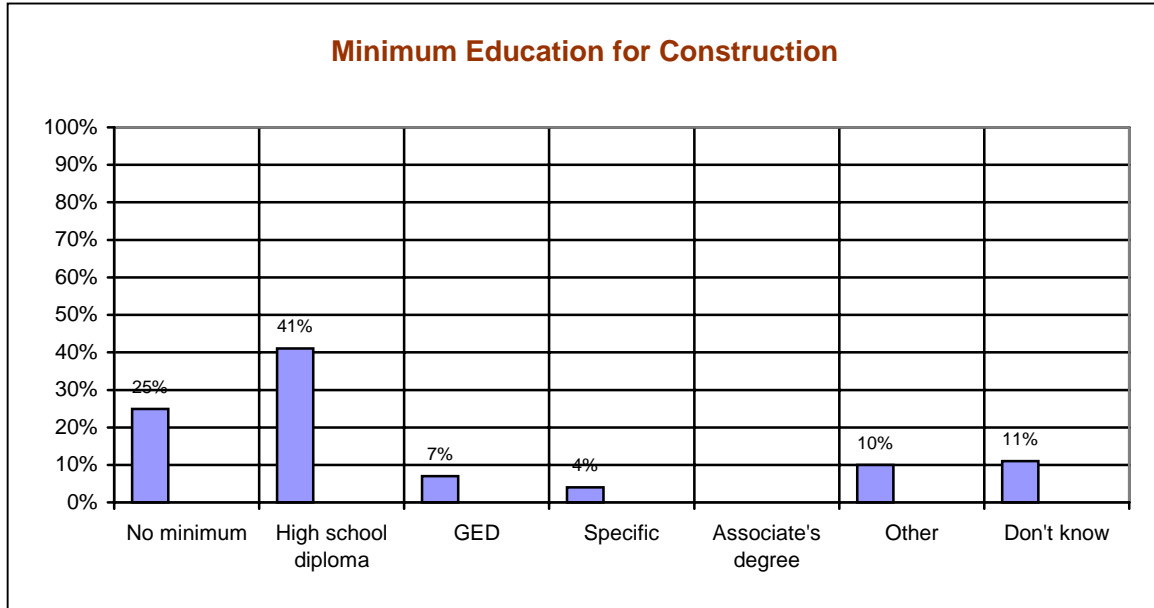


Construction Occupations

Seventy-three of the 240 employers surveyed indicated that they hired entry-level employees in construction occupations. The number of employers hiring in this occupation in each of the six counties was as follows:

| Number of Employers in County Hiring Construction Occupations | | | | | | |
|--|--------|------|---------|-----------|------------|-------|
| Burleson | Grimes | Leon | Madison | Robertson | Washington | Total |
| 16 | 14 | 5 | 5 | 10 | 23 | 73 |

Of the 73 employers who hired entry-level construction positions, 30 (41%) required that applicants have a high school diploma. Eighteen employers (25%) had no minimum educational requirements for construction occupations. Five employers (7%) accepted a GED in lieu of a high school diploma. Three employers (4%) required a specific license or certificate. Only one employer required an Associate’s Degree. Eight employers (11%) were not sure of the minimum educational requirements. Seven employers (10%) had other requirements, some of which included comparable work experience, at least an 8th grade education, and literacy skills.

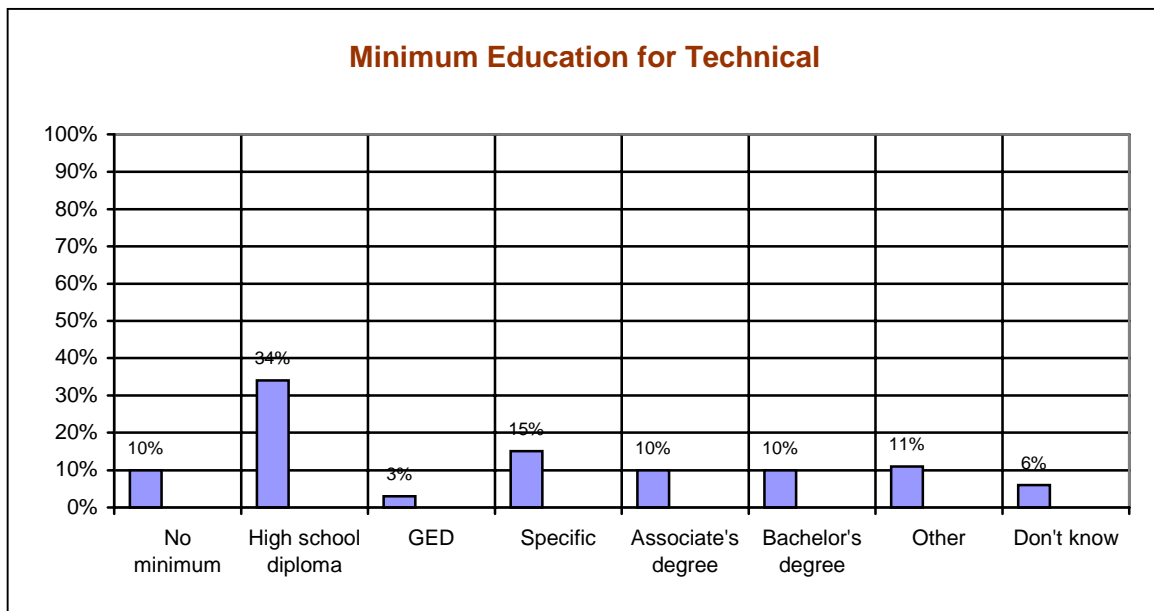


Technical Occupations

One hundred thirty-two of the 240 employers surveyed indicated that they hired entry-level employees in technical occupations. The number of employers hiring in this occupation in each of the six counties was as follows:

| Number of Employers in County Hiring Technical Occupations | | | | | | |
|---|--------|------|---------|-----------|------------|-------|
| Burleson | Grimes | Leon | Madison | Robertson | Washington | Total |
| 20 | 23 | 10 | 13 | 15 | 62 | 132 |

Of the 132 employers who hired entry-level technical positions, 45 (34%) required that applicants have a high school diploma. Thirteen employers (10%) had no minimum educational requirements for Technical occupations. Four employers (3%) accepted a GED in lieu of a high school diploma. Twenty employers (15%) required a specific license or certificate. Thirteen employers (10%) required an Associate's Degree and thirteen employers (10%) required a Bachelor's Degrees. Eight employers (6%) were not sure of the minimum educational requirements. Fifteen employers (11%) had other requirements, some of which included some college, specific training, CPA certification, work experience and computer skills.



Employer Characteristics

All of the employers who participated in the survey were asked specific questions about their company. These questions included the size of the company (based on number of employees), items that were important to their company, overtime requirements for their company, age-related hiring requirements, types of entry-level positions, home locale of employees, support for childcare and transportation services for employees, and support for an employee assessment/screening process.

Size

The majority of employers who participated in the survey (59%) had between 20 – 49 employees. Twenty percent of the employers had between 50 – 99 employees. Fifteen percent of employers had between 100 – 499 employees. And 4% of employers had over 500 employees. The breakdown of employers by size and county is detailed on the following table. (NOTE: only employers with 20 or more employees were included in the survey).

| County | 20 – 49 Employees | 50 – 99 Employees | 100 – 499 Employees | > 500 Employees |
|---------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Burleson | 21 | 7 | 4 | 0 |
| Grimes | 19 | 12 | 9 | 3 |
| Leon | 16 | 4 | 3 | 0 |
| Madison | 12 | 5 | 4 | 2 |
| Robertson | 15 | 9 | 3 | 0 |
| Washington | 59 | 13 | 13 | 5 |

Important Items

Almost all of the employers queried believed that maintaining good relations with employees was important. Two hundred eight employers (87%) said it was very important and twenty-nine (12%) said it was somewhat important. Only two employers (1%) indicated that maintaining good relations was not very important.

The employers also thought it was important to keep employee morale high. Of the 240 employers who participated in the survey, 217 of them (90%) believed that this was very important. Twenty employers (8%) believed that it was somewhat important. Only two employers disagreed – one thinking it was not very important and one thinking it was not at all important.

Employers believed that finding qualified employees was a very important aspect of maintaining a business. One hundred eighty-seven (78%) agreed that this was very

important and an additional thirty-six employers (15%) believed it was somewhat important. Only nine employers (4%) thought it was unimportant and only five employers (2%) thought it was not at all important.

The importance of keeping good employees was rated even higher than finding good employees. Two hundred employers (83%) believed this was very important. An additional twenty-nine employers (12%) believed this was somewhat important. Only five employers (2%) thought it was not very important and only three employers (1%) thought it was not at all important.

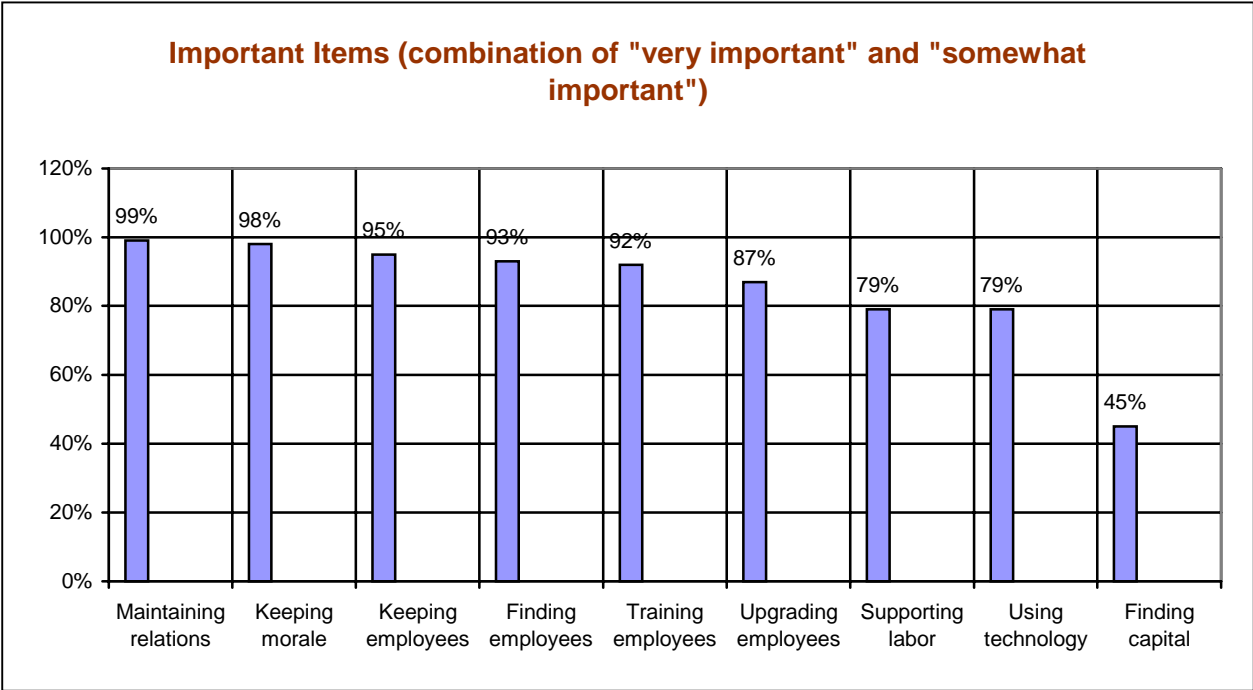
Employers indicated that employee training was important to their business. One hundred fifty-eight (66%) thought that training future and existing employees was very important. An additional 63 employers (26%) thought it was somewhat important. Fourteen employers (6%) thought it was not very important and four employers (2%) thought it was not at all important.

Area employers also thought it was important to upgrade the skills of their existing employees. One hundred twenty-four employers (52%) thought it was very important. An additional 85 (35%) employers thought it was somewhat important. Twenty-six employers thought it was not very important (11%) and four employers (2%) thought it was not at all important.

One hundred thirty-four employers (56%) believed that they should support labor relations. Fifty-six employers (23%) believed that this item was somewhat important. Fourteen (6%) felt that it was not very important. Twenty employers (8%) felt it was not at all important.

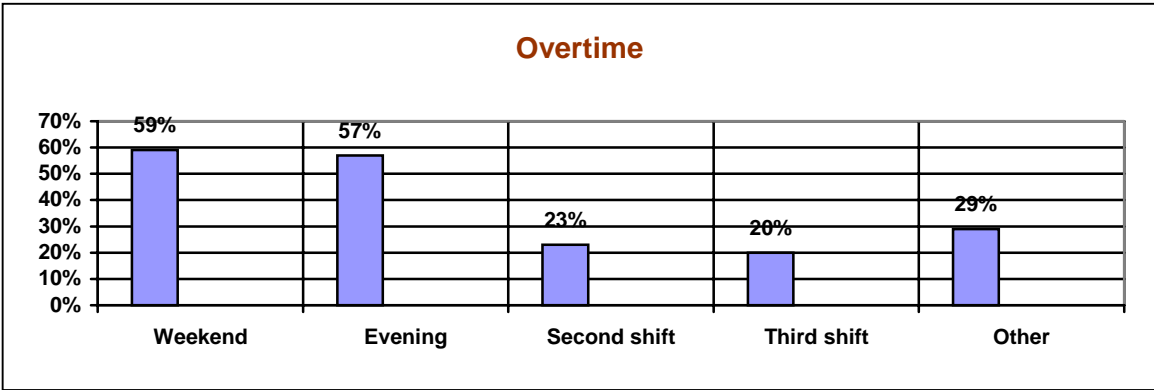
One hundred nine employers (45%) felt that it was very important for them to use new technology in their business. Eighty-one employers (34%) believed that this was somewhat important. On the other hand, thirty-eight employers (16%) believed that using new technology was not very important and eight employers believed it was not at all important.

Only 70 employers (29%) believed that it was very important that they find access to investment capital. Thirty-eight employers (16%) believed it was somewhat important. Forty-six employers (19%) believed that finding access to investment capital was not very important. Forty-two employers (18%) believed that it was not at all important.



Overtime

Fifty-six (23%) of the 240 employers required their employees to work mandatory overtime. For more than half of these employers, overtime hours occurred over the weekend (33 employers – 59%) or in the evening (i.e., at the end of the first shift) (32 employers – 57%). Thirteen employers (23%) indicated that employees often worked overtime hours at the end of the second shift. Overtime also occurred at the end of the third shift for 11 employers (20%). Sixteen employers (29%) indicated that overtime hours were not consistent and occurred at various non-uniform times. These included seasonal overtime, holiday overtime and morning overtime. Several employers required employees to work overtime at multiple times, therefore the combined percentage of employers in overtime categories equals more than 100%.



Age Requirements

Over 53% of employers (129 establishments) would not hire individuals who were under 18 years of age. The following table details the number and percentage of business in each county who only hired individuals who were 18 years of age or older.

| County | Number of establishments not hiring under 18 | Percentage of establishments within this county | Percentage of total not hiring under 18 |
|------------|--|---|---|
| Burleson | 15 | 47% | 12% |
| Grimes | 24 | 56% | 19% |
| Leon | 12 | 54% | 09% |
| Madison | 13 | 54% | 10% |
| Robertson | 19 | 70% | 15% |
| Washington | 46 | 51% | 37% |

Types of Entry-Level Jobs

Employers were asked if their typical entry-level jobs were permanent full-time, temporary full-time, part-time or something else. One hundred sixty-five of the 240 employers (69%) indicated that most of their entry-level positions were permanent full-time. Part-time positions were the next most common, with 46 employers (19%) indicating that the majority of their entry-level positions as being in this category. Fifteen employers (6%) believed that the majority of their entry-level positions were temporary part-time. Eleven employers (5%) said that their most common entry-level positions fell into another category such as a mix of full and part-time, seasonal, and temporary part-time.

The table below details this information by county.

| County | Permanent Full-Time | Temporary Full-Time | Part-Time |
|------------|---------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| Burleson | 20 employers (63%) | 2 employers (6%) | 6 employers (19%) |
| Grimes | 29 employers (67%) | 1 employer (4%) | 11 employers (26%) |
| Leon | 19 employers (79%) | 1 employer (4%) | 4 employers (17%) |
| Madison | 14 employers (58%) | 2 employers (8%) | 8 employers (33%) |
| Robertson | 22 employers (81%) | 2 employers (7%) | 3 employers (11%) |
| Washington | 61 employers (68%) | 7 employers (8%) | 14 employers (16%) |

Transportation and Childcare

Two hundred and seven of the 240 employers (86%) believed that the majority of their employees lived in the county in which they were employed. However, this percentage varied more than 24 percentage points depending on the county. Ninety-five percent of the employers in Madison County believed their employees also lived in Madison County. Ninety-three percent of the employers in Robertson County believed their employees lived in that county. Ninety percent of employers in Washington County believed their employees lived in Washington County. Eighty-eight percent of employers in Leon County believed their employees were local. Seventy-nine percent of employers in Grimes County believed their employees were local. Seventy-two percent of employers in Burleson County believed their employees were local.

Interestingly, employers in counties with the highest percentage of local employees also appeared to be more willing to support initiatives to provide reliable transportation and childcare for those employees. Madison and Washington County employers had higher percentages in both categories and Grimes and Burleson County employers had lower percentages in both categories. The exceptions were employers in Leon and Robertson Counties. Leon County employers had a lower percentage of employees who lived in that county but were the most willing to support transportation and childcare initiatives. On the other hand, Robertson County employers had a higher percentage of local employees but were less willing to support transportation and childcare initiatives.

The following table details this information.

| County | Percentage of Employees From Same County | Percentage of Employers Willing to Support Transportation and Childcare Initiatives |
|---------------|---|--|
| Burleson | 72% | 53% |
| Grimes | 79% | 58% |
| Leon | 88% | 75% |
| Madison | 95% | 63% |
| Robertson | 93% | 59% |
| Washington | 90% | 62% |

Assessment / Screening of Employees

Seventy-one percent of employers (172 establishments) said they would support an assessment or screening process that would help them match employees to jobs. However the percentages varied by over 24 percentage points. Robertson County employers were the most willing to support these assessments, with 85% responding positively. Leon County employers were the next most enthusiastic, with 83% having a positive response. Washington County employers had a 74% positive response, Madison County employers had a 67% positive response, Burleson County employers had a 63% positive response, and Grimes County employers had a 60% positive response.

| County | Number of Employers | Percentage of establishments within this county | Percentage of total |
|---------------|----------------------------|--|----------------------------|
| Burleson | 20 | 63% | 12% |
| Grimes | 26 | 60% | 15% |
| Leon | 20 | 83% | 12% |
| Madison | 16 | 67% | 9% |
| Robertson | 23 | 85% | 13% |
| Washington | 67 | 74% | 39% |

Observations

Based on the findings from this Brazos Valley Community Audit survey, it is apparent that employers in the rural counties are not utilizing Brazos Valley workforce services. Utilization rates ranged from a high of 19% for employers in Robertson County to a low of 8% for employers in Madison County. The primary reason given for non-utilization of services was that employers had no need for them. While the survey did not go into detail about why the employers might feel this way, one possible explanation is that they were unaware of how workforce services could help their companies. This lack of awareness about the benefits of workforce services is further confirmed by the secondary reasons given for non-utilization. These included a lack of knowledge about the available services and/or about the workforce system in general. In addition, employer ratings of workforce service delivery were quite high – so it is unlikely that services were not utilized due to unqualified staff or cumbersome processes.

While it is likely that an employer information campaign might be warranted to increase workforce utilization rates in the rural counties, it must also be noted that this campaign might be less successful than hoped if it is not accompanied by the opening of service locations that are convenient to the rural employers. When employers were asked why they did not use the services they said that the services were not needed. But when they were asked what would prevent them from using services if needed services were available, they indicated that the location of the office and the distance of the office from their establishment would be their greatest deterrent.

It is also interesting to note that when rural employers did use workforce services, they tended to use the Employment Services (ES) function of posting job openings (81% - 30 employers). On the other hand, only a handful of employers used services that were more traditionally associated with workforce programs. For example, only 4 employers (11%) took advantage of training assistance and only 1 employer (3%) used workforce to help with employee assessment. The relative unimportance of workforce services in helping employers find job applicants was demonstrated when only 3% indicated that they used workforce services in this manner. The low utilization of services such as training assistance and assessment is even more puzzling when compared to employer ratings regarding the importance of services that they might access through workforce. Forty-eight percent of the employers queried during the survey said that

As a general rule, rural Brazos Valley employers are not using workforce services

An employer information campaign might be warranted

The most utilized service was posting job openings

training assistance would be an important workforce service function and 55% said that testing employees would also be an important function.

The importance of workforce functions such as training and assessment was reconfirmed when employers ranked those items that were important to their business success. In general, employers rated employee-related items such as morale, retention, training, upgrading, etc. higher than non-employee-related items such as improving technology and finding investment capital. For example, 92% of the employers felt that employee training was important to their success.

When the employers were asked about minimum education requirements for entry-level positions within their company, the most consistent factor was that they expected applicants to have a high school diploma. This highlights the importance of workforce youth programs, especially those programs designed to keep kids in school and/or to help them re-enroll in school if they have dropped out. It also was apparent that obtaining a GED, while somewhat helpful for some occupations, was often irrelevant. If an applicant did not have a high school diploma, it appeared that employers were more inclined to hire them because there were no minimum education requirements for the job or because the applicant could demonstrate a level of literacy proficiency.

Employee-related items were the most important

Applicants were expected to have high school diplomas

Appendix

Brazos Valley Community Audit Survey

All surveyor instructions will be in bold type. These should not be read to the person on the phone.

Items to be read to the person on the phone will be in regular typeface.

Introduction

Hello, I'm calling from Texas A&M University. We are working with the Brazos Valley Workforce Board to survey area employers. The purpose of the survey is to help the workforce board better prepare their clients for entry-level jobs. Your company's participation in the survey is completely voluntary.

In order to complete the survey I will need to speak to someone at your company who is responsible for hiring entry level employees. Is this you?

If the individual on the phone answers no, please ask them the following

Can you please give me the name and phone number of the person who is responsible for hiring entry level employees? Can you transfer me to them or is it necessary for me to call them directly?

If the correct person is not the person who answered the call, please re-read the first paragraph of the introduction.

The survey will take about 10 – 15 minutes. May we begin?

A.1. Have you used any Brazos Valley workforce services within the past year?

If the person on the phone isn't familiar with Brazos Valley workforce services you should probe by saying the following

You might also refer to them as Texas Workforce Commission, Texas Employment Commission, TWC, TEC, Texas Works or Hire Texas. You might post a job or find training assistance or get wage and skill data, etc. Have you used any of those kinds of services in the past year?

| | |
|------------|------------------|
| Yes | 1 |
| No | 2 (Skip to B.1.) |
| Don't know | 8 (Skip to B.1.) |
| Refused | 9 (Skip to B.1.) |

A.2. What services do you typically use? (**Do not read responses – circle as many as apply**)

If necessary, probe by suggesting some of the responses listed below.

| | |
|--|-------------------|
| Posting job openings | 1 |
| Assessing potential employees | 2 |
| Screening potential employees | 3 |
| Finding applicants for jobs | 4 |
| Getting training assistance for employees or potential employees | 5 |
| Getting wage and skill data | 6 |
| Having the workforce center pre-interview job applicants | 7 |
| Other (specify)_____ | 8 |
| Don't know | 98 (Skip to A.4.) |
| Refused | 99 (Skip to A.4.) |

A.3. Of the services you used, which do you use the most often?

| | |
|--|----|
| Posting job openings | 1 |
| Assessing potential employees | 2 |
| Screening potential employees | 3 |
| Finding applicants for jobs | 4 |
| Getting training assistance for employees or potential employees | 5 |
| Getting wage and skill data | 6 |
| Having the workforce center pre-interview job applicants | 7 |
| Other (specify)_____ | 8 |
| Don't know | 98 |
| Refused | 99 |

A.4. On a scale of 1 – 4, where 4 is the highest rating and 1 is the lowest rating, how would you rate the following items based on your experiences with the workforce center.

1=not at all 2=not very 3=somewhat 4=very 8=DK 9=R

A4.a. How helpful was the staff? 1 2 3 4 8 9

A4.b. How efficient was the process? 1 2 3 4 8 9

A4.c. How easy was it to complete the process? 1 2 3 4 8 9

A4.d. How qualified were the applicants they sent to you? 1 2 3 4 8 9

PRE B.1. IF A.1 = 1 SKIP TO C.1.

B.1. Why don't you use the workforce center? (**Do not read responses – circle as many as apply**)

- Haven't heard of it 1
- Don't know what services are available 2
- There isn't a workforce center office close to me 3
- The process is too slow 4
- The people they sent don't have the skills I need 5
- Used it in the past, but don't use it any longer (why)? 6
- Other (specify)_____ 7
- Don't know 8
- Refused 9

C.1. On a scale of 1 – 4, where 4 is the highest rating, how important is it to have the following services available through the workforce center?

1=not at all 2=not very 3=somewhat 4=very 8=DK 9=R

- C1.a. Posting your job openings 1 2 3 4 8 9
- C1.b. Testing potential employees? 1 2 3 4 8 9
- C1.c. Screening potential employees for drugs 1 2 3 4 8 9

C.1. On a scale of 1 – 4, where 4 is the highest rating, how important is it to have the following services available through the workforce center?

C1.d. Screening potential employees for appropriate skills 1 2 3 4 8 9

C1.e. Screening potential employees for a prior criminal history 1 2 3 4 8 9

C1.f. Finding applicants for jobs 1 2 3 4 8 9

C1.g. Getting training assistance for employees or potential employees 1 2 3 4 8 9

C1.h. Getting wage and skill data 1 2 3 4 8 9

C1.i. Having the workforce center pre-interview applicants 1 2 3 4 8 9

C.2. What obstacles would make using the workforce centers unacceptable?
(Do not read responses – circle as many as apply)

If job applicants referred to us by the workforce center did not meet job qualifications 1

If the process of getting referrals was too slow 2

If there was too much bureaucracy 3

If the staff was unpleasant, rude, unfriendly, etc. 4

If the staff was incompetent, not knowledgeable, etc. 5

If the staff was uninformed about my specific business hiring needs 6

Other (specify)_____ 7

Don't know 8

Refused 9

D.1. On a scale of 1 –4, with 4 being the highest rating, how would you rate the importance of the following items regarding individuals who you would like to employ as entry-level workers

1=not at all 2=not very 3=somewhat 4=very 8=DK 9=R

D1.a. They have the job-specific skills needed for the work 1 2 3 4 8 9

D1.b. They have good basic skills such as reading, math and language, etc. 1 2 3 4 8 9

D1.c. They have good work ethics such as showing up on time, being honest, adhering to rules, etc. 1 2 3 4 8 9

D1.d. They have good transferable skills such as communicating, working on a team, managing time, etc. 1 2 3 4 8 9

D1.e. They have good grooming and appropriate dress 1 2 3 4 8 9

D1.f. They have reliable transportation and childcare 1 2 3 4 8 9

E.1. What is the primary way your company finds entry-level applicants? Please choose one of the following. **Circle the choice.**

Newspaper 1

Radio 2

| | |
|---------------------------------|----|
| Cable | 3 |
| Web or Internet | 4 |
| Word of mouth | 5 |
| Workforce centers | 6 |
| Temporary employment agencies | 7 |
| “Help wanted” signs and posters | 8 |
| Other (specify)_____ | 9 |
| Don’t know | 98 |
| Refused | 99 |

E.2. What is your company’s minimum educational requirement for entry-level employees in clerical occupations? Please choose one of the following. **Circle the choice.**

| | |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Do not hire anyone in this occupation | 1 (Skip to E.3) |
| No minimum educational requirements | 2 |
| High school diploma | 3 |
| GED | 4 |
| Specific license or certificate | 5 |
| Associate’s degree | 6 |
| Bachelor’s degree | 7 |
| Other (specify)_____ | 8 |
| Don’t know | 98 |
| Refused | 99 |

E.3. What is your company's minimum educational requirement for entry-level employees in health care occupations? Please choose one of the following. **Circle the choice.**

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Do not hire anyone in this occupation | 1 (Skip to E.4) |
| No minimum educational requirements | 2 |
| High school diploma | 3 |
| GED | 4 |
| Specific license or certificate | 5 |
| Associate's degree | 6 |
| Bachelor's degree | 7 |
| Other (specify)_____ | 8 |
| Don't know | 98 |
| Refused | 99 |

E.4. What is your company's minimum educational requirement for entry-level employees in service occupations? Please choose one of the following. **Circle the choice.**

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Do not hire anyone in this occupation | 1 (Skip to E.5) |
| No minimum educational requirements | 2 |
| High school diploma | 3 |
| GED | 4 |
| Specific license or certificate | 5 |
| Associate's degree | 6 |
| Bachelor's degree | 7 |
| Other (specify)_____ | 8 |
| Don't know | 98 |

Refused 99

E.5. What is your company's minimum educational requirement for entry-level employees in maintenance occupations? Please choose one of the following. **Circle the choice.**

| | |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Do not hire anyone in this occupation | 1 (Skip to E.6) |
| No minimum educational requirements | 2 |
| High school diploma | 3 |
| GED | 4 |
| Specific license or certificate | 5 |
| Associate's degree | 6 |
| Bachelor's degree | 7 |
| Other (specify)_____ | 8 |
| Don't know | 98 |
| Refused | 99 |

E.6. What is your company's minimum educational requirement for entry-level employees in skilled craft occupations? Please choose one of the following. **Circle the choice.**

| | |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Do not hire anyone in this occupation | 1 (Skip to E.7) |
| No minimum educational requirements | 2 |
| High school diploma | 3 |
| GED | 4 |
| Specific license or certificate | 5 |
| Associate's degree | 6 |
| Bachelor's degree | 7 |

| | |
|----------------------|----|
| Other (specify)_____ | 8 |
| Don't know | 98 |
| Refused | 99 |

E.7. What is your company's minimum educational requirement for entry-level employees in construction occupations? Please choose one of the following. **Circle the choice.**

| | |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Do not hire anyone in this occupation | 1 (Skip to E.8) |
| No minimum educational requirements | 2 |
| High school diploma | 3 |
| GED | 4 |
| Specific license or certificate | 5 |
| Associate's degree | 6 |
| Bachelor's degree | 7 |
| Other (specify)_____ | 8 |
| Don't know | 98 |
| Refused | 99 |

E.8. What is your company's minimum educational requirement for entry-level employees in technical occupations? Please choose one of the following. **Circle the choice.**

| | |
|---------------------------------------|------------------|
| Do not hire anyone in this occupation | 1 (Skip to F.1.) |
| No minimum educational requirements | 2 |
| High school diploma | 3 |
| GED | 4 |
| Specific license or certificate | 5 |

| | |
|----------------------|----|
| Associate's degree | 6 |
| Bachelor's degree | 7 |
| Other (specify)_____ | 8 |
| Don't know | 98 |
| Refused | 99 |

F.1 On a scale of 1 – 4, with 4 being the highest rating, how important are the following items to your company

1=not at all 2=not very 3=somewhat 4=very 8=DK 9=R

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| F1.a. Finding qualified entry-level employees | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 8 | 9 |
| F1.b. Keeping qualified entry-level employees | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 8 | 9 |
| F1.c. Using new technology | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 8 | 9 |
| F1.d. Upgrading specific skills of existing employees | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 8 | 9 |
| F1.e. Maintaining good relations with employees | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 8 | 9 |
| F1.f. Keeping employee morale high | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 8 | 9 |
| F1.g. Finding access to more investment capital | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 8 | 9 |
| F1.h. Recruiting and retaining employees | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 8 | 9 |
| F1.i. Training current and future employees | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 8 | 9 |
| F1.j. Supporting labor relations | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 8 | 9 |

F.2. Does your company require mandatory overtime for entry-level employees?

| | |
|------------|------------------|
| Yes | 1 |
| No | 2 (Skip to G.1.) |
| Don't know | 3 (Skip to G.1.) |
| Refused | 4 (Skip to G.1.) |

F.3. What are typical overtime hours? **They can choose as many as apply.**

| | |
|---|---|
| Evenings (after the end of 1 st shift) | 1 |
| Weekends | 2 |
| 2 nd shift | 3 |
| 3 rd shift | 4 |
| Other (specify)_____ | 5 |
| Don't know | 8 |
| Refused | 9 |

G.1. Do you hire individuals who are under 18 years of age?

| | |
|------------|---|
| Yes | 1 |
| No | 2 |
| Don't know | 8 |
| Refused | 9 |

G.2. How would you characterize the majority of your entry-level jobs? Are they-

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| Permanent full time | 1 |
| Temporary full-time | 2 |
| Part-time | 3 |
| Other (specify)_____ | 4 |
| Don't know | 8 |
| Refused | 9 |

G.3. Do most of your employees live in the county your company is located in?

| | |
|------------|---|
| Yes | 1 |
| No | 2 |
| Don't know | 8 |
| Refused | 9 |

G.4. Would you support initiatives to promote reliable childcare for your employees?

| | |
|------------|---|
| Yes | 1 |
| No | 2 |
| Don't know | 8 |
| Refused | 9 |

G.5. Would you support initiatives to promote reliable transportation for your employees?

| | |
|------------|---|
| Yes | 1 |
| No | 2 |
| Don't know | 8 |

Refused 9

G.6. Would you support an assessment screening process to match applicants to jobs?

Yes 1

No 2

Don't know 8

Refused 9

H.1. The goal of the workforce center is to learn more about the needs of your company or organization in the areas of hiring, training and retaining employees so that they can provide effective services to you. Do you have any other suggestions that will help them do this?

Yes (complete suggestions lines below) 1

No 2

Suggestions _____

Don't know 8

Refused 9

H.2. Would you like someone from the Brazos Valley workforce Board to contact someone at your company about any of their services?

Yes 1

No 2 (Skip to "thank you")

Don't know 8 (Skip to "thank you")

Refused

9 (Skip to “thank
you”)

H.3. What is the name and phone number of the person they should contact?

Name_____ Phone_____

Thank you for completing this survey. If you have any questions please contact Patti Groff at the Brazos Valley Workforce Board. Her number is 979-775-4244.