

# REPORT OF CONTINUING CHALLENGES & BEST PRACTICES



2015-2016 **HR Skills Advisory Council**



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### **Summary**

The goal of this assessment is to provide a qualitative guide highlighting the knowledge, skill and ability (KSA) gaps in the area and sharing best practices for overcoming these gaps. Advisory Council participants comprised of the area’s representative industry met four times during calendar year 2015 and 2016 to discuss their responses to four survey questions originally incorporated in the Martinsburg–Berkeley County Chamber of Commerce’s Business and Industry Comprehensive Assessment of Workforce Needs Report.

Participants responded that they continue to face the same or similar challenges as identified in the 2013 survey results. The primary reason for rejecting applicants is lack of job-specific experience. For areas where employers experience challenging finding qualified applicants, skilled trades received the highest response rate. Participants indicated that a lack of work ethic is a continuous challenge which affects the performance of existing employees. Participants identified online training as the greatest educational resource utilized.

This report includes a comparison of 2013 survey responses vs. that obtained from Advisory Council survey responses. For each survey area, the report identifies challenges that were prevalent amongst the group of diverse industry professionals. Additionally, the report provides several best practices to overcome challenges. Participant feedback was analyzed to determine cited best practices.

## **Mission**

The HR Skills Advisory Council is a group of HR professionals that identify skill gaps in the local labor market of the Eastern Panhandle of West Virginia and the greater tri-state area.

## **Vision**

The HR skills Advisory Council will become a leading authority on labor trends in the Eastern Panhandle of West Virginia and greater tri-state area and provide key information to assist with closing the skills gaps of the local labor market.

## **Goals**

- Identify the challenges that HR professionals are experiencing and will experience in future recruitment activity within the local labor market.
- Create more detailed analysis of the most promising and practical solutions for HR professionals to overcome shortcomings in the local labor market.
- Facilitate sharing of best practices by local professionals of how to combat the knowledge, skill, and abilities gaps present in the local labor market.

## **Focus Areas**

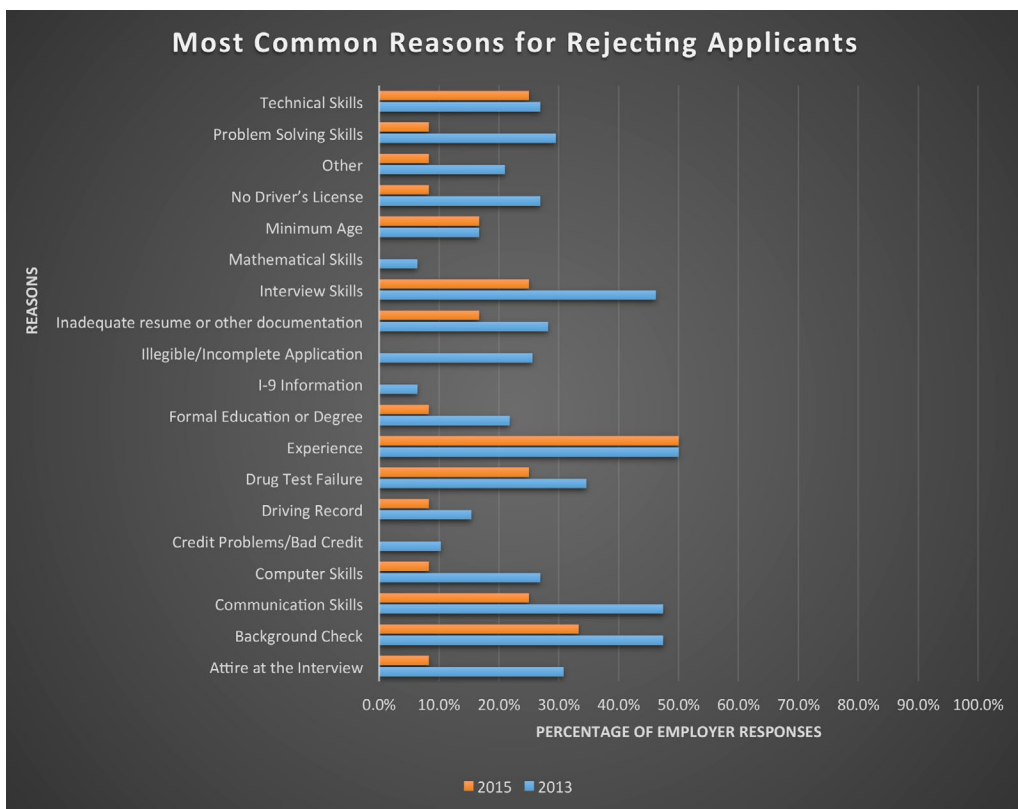
- Reasons for rejecting applicants
- Areas where employers experience challenges finding qualified applicants
- Continuing challenges affecting performance of existing employees
- Training and educational resources utilized

## **Participants**

The Advisory Council was comprised of 30 HR professionals and business managers from a broad array of industries including: Education, Manufacturing, Distribution, Transportation, Healthcare, Wholesale, Retail, Hospitality/Leisure, IT, Energy, Construction/Architecture, Federal Government and Government Contractors. The four meetings had an average group size of 14 participants. All participants had the opportunity to complete the survey regardless of their intent to attend each meeting, and thus survey response rates were higher than meeting participation rates.

# Most Common Reasons for Rejecting Applicants

In 2013, 50% of participating employers responded that the most common reason for rejecting applicants was related to a lack of prior job experience for a particular position. More than 45% of employers responded that poor communication skills, an unsatisfactory background check, and poor interview skills were reasons for rejecting applicants. In 2015, 50% of participating employers still responded that a lack of job experience for a particular position was the most common reason for rejecting applicants. Unsatisfactory background checks remained a reason for rejecting applicants by 33% of respondents.



**Figure 1 Sources:** Business & Industry Comprehensive Assessment of Workforce Needs Report, April 2013; Martinsburg–Berkeley County Chamber of Commerce and Blue Ridge CTC. HR Skills Advisory Council Survey Item #1, September 2015.

## Continuing Challenges

## Best Practices Shared

Candidates do not meet minimum qualifications	Utilize screening questions or applicant filters to ensure minimum qualifications are met
Unsatisfactory applicant materials	Have a clear applicant/employee value proposition
Candidate's inability to articulate experiences relevant to a position in the interview	Create and reinforce an employment brand
Candidates have general experience but lack specialization needed	Streamline the hiring process for managers and thus enhance the turnaround time and communication for applicants
Lack of licensures or certifications for nurses, med techs, nurse practitioner, sleep techs	Utilize temporary staffing agencies to quickly fill needs and have the ability to evaluate talent before hiring
Job hopping within industry due to technical skill set demand is causing salary creep and counter offering	Veteran hiring
Staffing agencies can quickly fill a need but retention rate is poor and volume is required to identify those eligible for employment	Develop an equivalency work model for military backgrounds.
Veterans find it difficult to describe their work experience to relate to civilian positions	WorkKeys job skills assessment system. Use the tool to benchmark applicants
Credentialing of veterans to accurately reflect the skills and experience they have coming out of the military	Wonderlic intelligence assessment
Union environment presents obstacles	Utilize pre-employment assessments based on recruitment challenges (i.e., behavioral, work styles, cognitive ability, specific skills)
Ability to successfully complete a background and/or drug test	

# Areas Where Employers Experience Challenges Finding Qualified Applicants

In 2013, employers indicated there are significant training needs in the following areas: skilled trades, sales, marketing, customer service, clerical, computer technology/operators, and engineers. Employers experienced difficulty in finding applicants in the areas of skills specific to their business or industry as indicated by the “other” category of 30.77%. A small number of employers did not report any problems locating qualified applicants. In 2016, skilled trades remained a challenging area with an increase to 42% of respondents, the highest response rate. Scientists, Health or Medical Professionals, Managerial/Supervisor, and Other received response rates above 20%. For the “other” category, participating employers indicated challenges for the following job types and skills: maintenance, maintenance equipment, mechanics with industrial electrical, programmable logic controllers, ammonia refrigeration, direct care staff, and logistics.

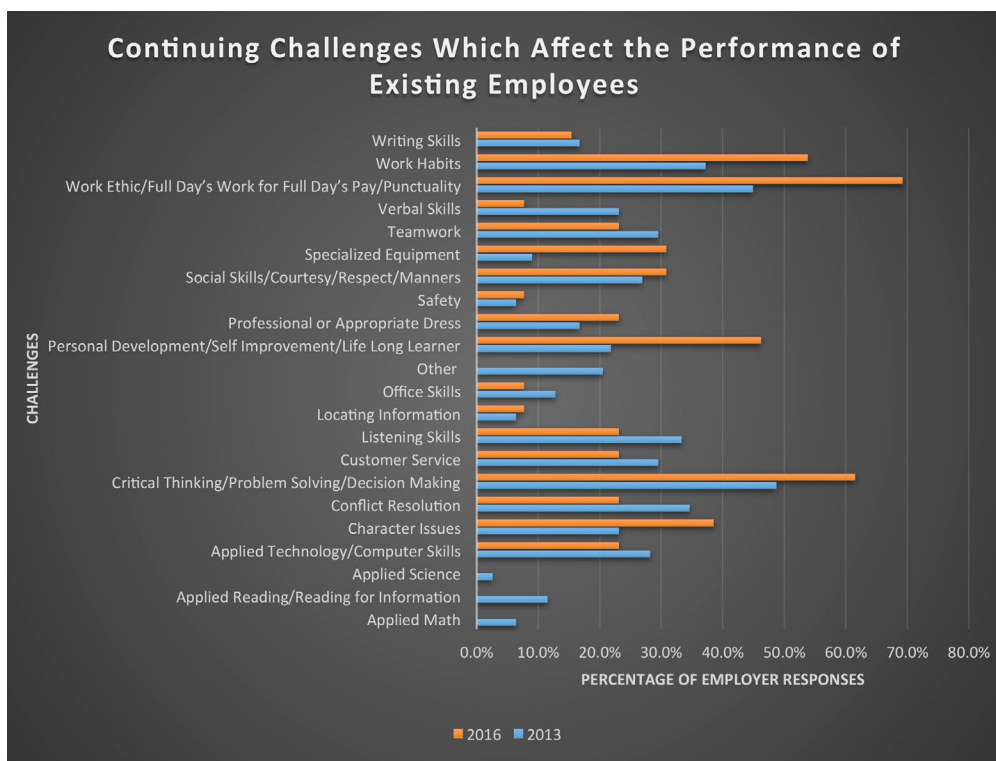


**Figure 2 Sources:** Business & Industry Comprehensive Assessment of Workforce Needs Report, April 2013; Martinsburg-Berkeley County Chamber of Commerce and Blue Ridge CTC. HR Skills Advisory Council Survey Item #2, April 2016

Hiring academic leadership positions	Organizational development and succession planning
Instrumentation electrician and maintenance mechanic. Specific skill lacking in industrial experience, instrumentation of equipment.	Develop middle management pipeline of talent beginning at entry level
Forklift operators and stand-up operators.	Partnering with local Colleges as a pipeline for talent based on program availability
All skilled trades due to increase in competition locally and retirement of baby boomer generation	Seek grant funding through State and/or local community college for WorkKeys
Insufficient labor pool to meet demand for maintenance technician positions	Seek apprenticeship programs through State grants
Insufficient labor pool for software and firmware engineers	Emphasize internal application or transfer to allow opportunity for professional development and skill building
Licensure and/or certifications for nurses, sleep techs, med techs, nurse practitioners	Use WorkKeys to identify skill deficiency and then develop a training program to enhance skill level
Psychology and Ultrasound	Utilize employment probationary periods to lower minimum qualification standards yet emphasize onboarding programs
Credentialing of veterans to accurately reflect the skills and experience they have coming out of the military	Broaden geographic parameters for search
Computer networking and application administrators. Skills at the program or product level	Offer referral, sign-on or retention bonuses for difficult positions
	Focus on a defined work culture and environment
	Offer student loan repayment or tuition reimbursement
	Utilize a writing assessment for managerial skills and competencies
	Utilize a diverse sourcing strategy and be sure to leverage key job board aggregators such as Indeed. Passive recruiting works with saturation. Depending on nature of positions, consider retained or contingent recruiting firms.
	Create dual career ladders

## Continuing Challenges Which Affect the Performance of Existing Employees

In 2013, the highest percentage of responses (48.72%) of local employers reported insufficiencies in the areas of critical thinking, decision making and problem solving. Employers also reported challenges with current employees in the areas of work ethic, work habits, conflict resolution, listening skills, customer service, and teamwork. This data indicates a need for educators and workforce development agencies to focus on these skills. In 2016, work ethic was the single highest response rate for continuing challenges which affect the performance of existing employees. Almost 70% of participating employers indicated a challenge with a full day's work for a full day's pay. Contributing to this is a concern for the work habits of employees with a response rate greater than 50%. Critical thinking, problem solving, and decision-making remained a challenge as well with a response rate greater than 60%.



**Figure 3 Sources:** Business & Industry Comprehensive Assessment of Workforce Needs Report, April 2013; Martinsburg–Berkeley County Chamber of Commerce and Blue Ridge CTC. HR Skills Advisory Council Survey Item #3, July 2016.



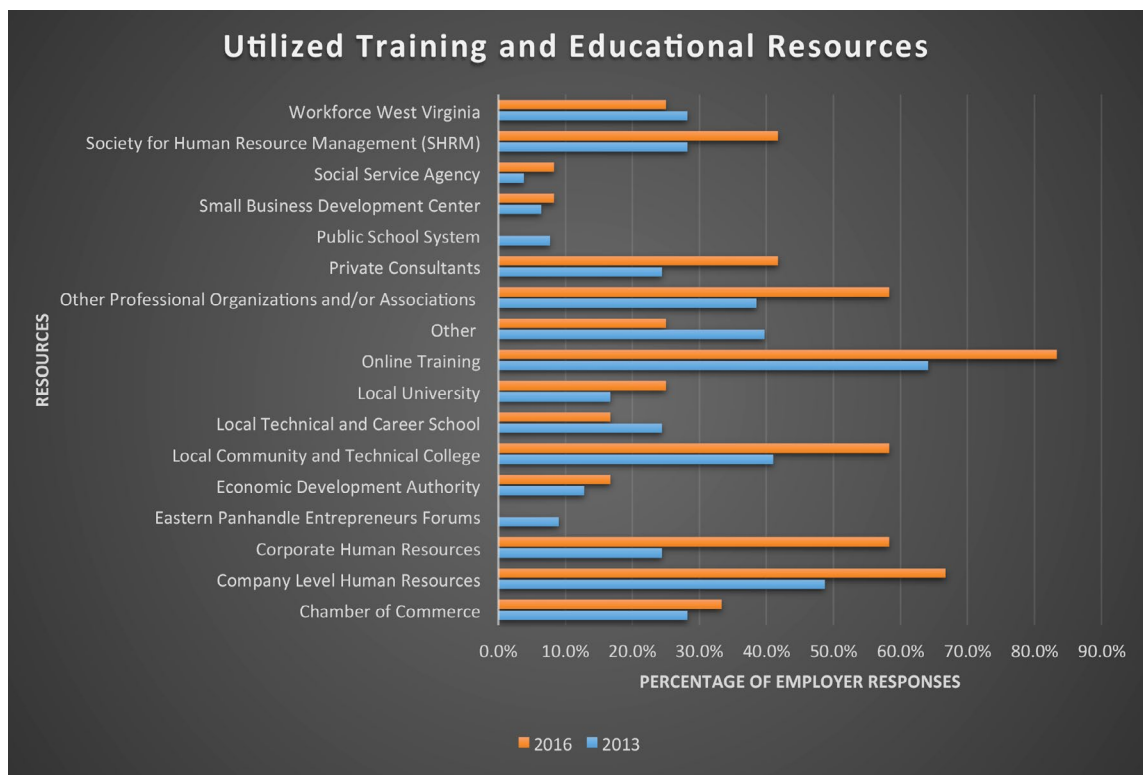
## Continuing Challenges

## Best Practices Shared

Work ethic: absenteeism, call offs, abuse of time rounding rules, abuse of doctor's note for sick leave utilization	Talk about work ethic but not direct and in your face. Speak to self-promotion, teamwork and business etiquette.
Generational differences for work expectations and work standards	To curb attendance abuse, implement a no-fault absenteeism policy (progressive discipline)
Current workforce negatively influences new hires and perpetuates cultural issues	Ensure uniform application of policies vertically and horizontally
Cultural change due to leadership change	Offer workshops and flexible training opportunities to management/supervision on topics from generational issues to communication styles and preferences
Highest performers promoted to leadership role with no tools or knowledge	Focus less on the generational difference and more on the needs of the relationship. The organization must adapt to the realities of the generation and not the opposite way around.
Corporate HR drives training initiatives that may not align with localized needs	Develop frontline supervisor training or partner with community resources
No in-house training resources locally	Create a business case to get buy-in from senior leadership for the critical training needs that are inhibiting employee growth or contributing to cultural issues
Training focuses on technical skills but not leadership skills	Prove It! assessment tool
Burnout	Perform job analysis to capture the job requirements and adjust pay if warranted
A demotivating factor being that an employee's classification does not match compensation	Utilize continuous feedback and quality control to support decision making and problem solving
The desire or need for flexible work arrangements are enticing many employees to seek jobs elsewhere, but those arrangements are not a reality for certain industries or positions due to the nature of the work	Tie compensation perks to problem solving and decision making metrics
	Tie performance to pay through Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) and scorecards
	Cross-train and tie compensation to skills obtained

## Utilized Training and Educational Resources

In 2013, employers indicated use of a wide range of training and educational resources with 64.1% reporting that they utilizing online training. Company level human resource departments (48.72%) and the local community and technical college (41.03%) were second and third on the list for training resources. Professional organizations and associations (the Chamber of Commerce, SHRM, and Workforce WV) comprised the next largest category of training providers. In 2016, online training remained the most utilized form of training and educational resources with more than 80% of participating employers using some form of online training. Company level human resources remained second with a response rate greater than 65%. Other training and educational resources with a greater than 50% response rate included corporate human resources, local community and technical college and other professional organizations and/or associations.



**Figure 4 Sources:** Business & Industry Comprehensive Assessment of Workforce Needs Report, April 2013; Martinsburg–Berkeley County Chamber of Commerce and Blue Ridge CTC. HR Skills Advisory Council Survey Item #4, November 2016.

<p>Time to invest in training</p>	<p>Utilize low-cost online training resources for compliance topics, but emphasize customized training for cultural and development topics</p>
<p>Online training delivery is practical and cost-effective but not a fit for all due to learning styles</p>	<p>Law Room learning management system for compliance training</p>
<p>Budget restrictive</p>	<p>SkillSoft for technical skill development</p>
	<p>NetLearning healthcare learning management system for compliance and professional development</p>
	<p>BLR learning management system for compliance</p>
	<p>Ensure online learning has checkpoints and requires engagement</p>
	<p>Create scenario-based online training wherein one has to understand and apply the newly-acquired knowledge in order to proceed</p>
	<p>Map training back to annual appraisal or annual development plan to determine effectiveness</p>
	<p>Utilize subject matter experts (SMEs) and emphasize level-to-level training for key topics such as leadership development, management development and supervisory development</p>
	<p>Partner SMEs with trained facilitators</p>
	<p>Training open and voluntary to all employees</p>
	<p>Compensate incentives for the cross trainer and the cross trained</p>
<p>Leverage workforce development at the local community college to develop customized training</p>	
<p>WorkforceGPS.org, LinkedIn, Wellness Counsel of America, Chamber of Women’s Network, &amp; HP University</p>	



### **Recommendations**

Blue Ridge Community & Technical College, Eastern Panhandle Society for Human Resource Management, and Workforce West Virginia recommend sharing this report with regional employers and agencies offering education and training opportunities to business and industry, the local workforce, and job seekers.

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