

Lawrence County Workforce Feasibility Study

Prepared by Center for Economic Development and Community Resilience, the Voinovich School of Leadership and
Public Service

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Lawrence County
Workforce Training Center Feasibility Study

Executive Summary

Introduction

This study advances information collected through qualitative survey responses obtained from various stakeholders and businesses in Lawrence County to gain a better understanding of the workforce training needs throughout the county. The study is corroborated by a skilled analysis that profiles labor force characteristics in Lawrence and Scioto Counties, thus identifying occupations that are likely to support economic growth.

Background

The Voinovich School, in partnership with Ohio University Southern, and the Lawrence County Economic Development Corporation collected data to gain insight about the needs of Lawrence County's workforce and the potential to build a workforce training center that would be used to retrain coal economy and other displaced workers. The feasibility study is positioned to explore industry demand and potential needs for emerging occupations that would be supported through the workforce training center.

Feasibility Study Summary

The Workforce Training and Facility Needs Survey provided twenty one responses from various businesses participating in multiple industries throughout Lawrence County. These survey responses were recorded to better understand quickly changing workforce training needs in Lawrence County. This qualitative approach assists with identifying workforce training needs to best suit the needs of Lawrence County's workforce. Survey responses were then used to create strategic recommendations for the application of these responses. Survey results are explained throughout the methodology of this report with charts and examples of responses; where, a copy of the provided survey with full participant answers for questions eight, thirteen, and fourteen can be found in the appendix.

Strategic Recommendations

The survey responses provided suggest the implementation of a workforce training facility in Lawrence County. This facility will assist these rural communities to advance past the once heavily relied on coal supply chain. These survey responses also suggest area of education to provide for these beneficiaries, as participating businesses provided areas of education they provide their employees. Multiple industries are identified from survey responses which should be used to design these programs.

Research Methodology

To gain a better understanding of the workforce training needs in Lawrence County, a survey (see Attachment 1) was sent to various stakeholders and businesses in the county. The goal of this survey was to learn what the businesses were experiencing firsthand and to use this information to help determine the best programs and best uses for a potential workforce training center in Lawrence County. This survey project was completed with help from Dr. Bill Dingus and his staff at the Lawrence Economic Development Corporation (LEDC). Sarah Diamond Burroway was the main contributor from the LEDC staff.

The project team also conducted a skillshed analysis for both Lawrence and Scioto Counties to corroborate. The skillshed analysis enables economic development groups to better understand an area's labor force characteristics and further supports the overall feasibility study by documenting the declining occupations in the coal economy supply chain. (see Skillshed Analysis in section X).

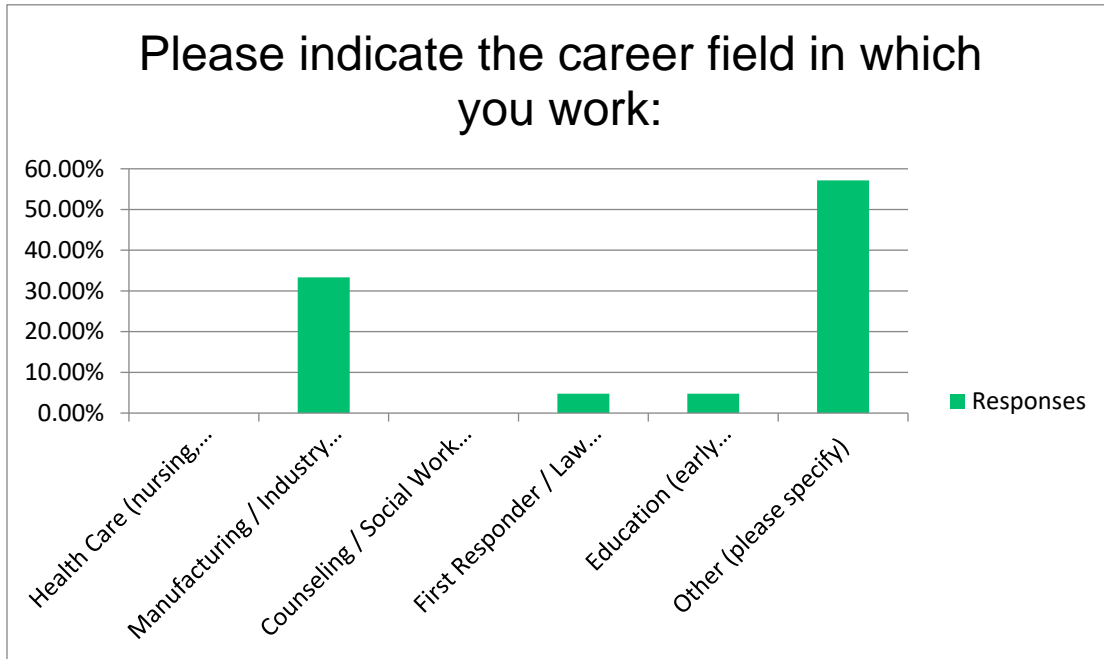
Participants Responses

The survey was sent to members of the Lawrence County Business Advisory Council, Chamber of Commerce, and local businesses in Lawrence County. It was also sent out via email and phone calls with responses being tracked by surveymonkey.com. Overall, twenty-one responses were gathered from the survey requests. (n=21)

Survey Responses

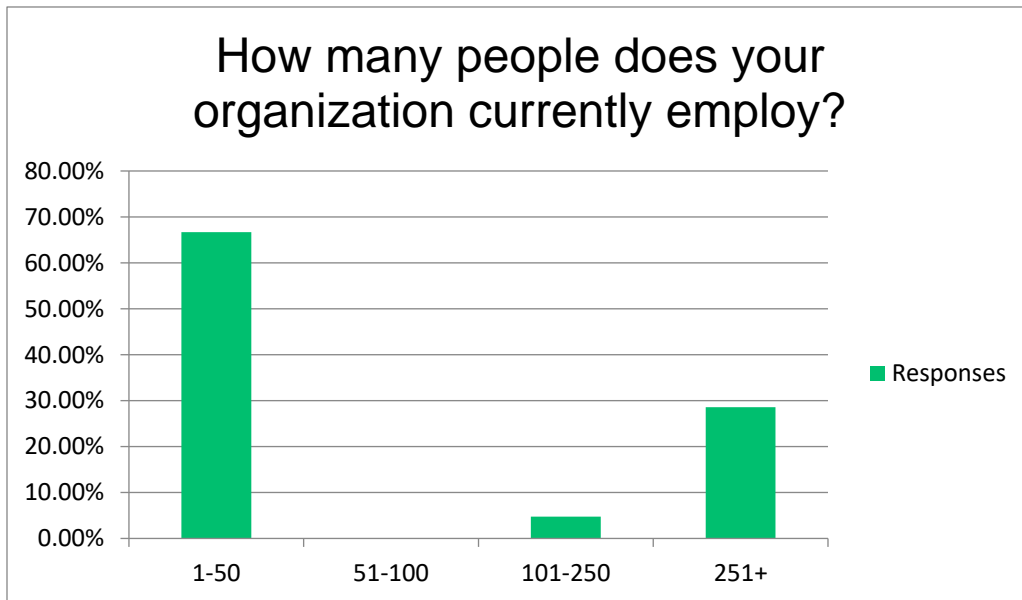
Question one of the surveys recorded the respondents' names and contact information. Of the twenty-one respondents, three did not provide either professional title. The remaining 18 respondents had the following titles: Engineer, QA Manager, HR Manager, Vice President of Innovation, General Manager, Retired Public Health Officer, Service Center Manager, Senior Partner, General Manager of Eastern Division, Director, Technical Consultant, Assistant Executive Director, Director, Deputy Auditor, Owner, and Senior Human Resources Consultant.

Question 2. Please Indicate the career field in which you currently work: (21 responses)



Other included: media/publishing/marketing, public health, financial, job training, grant opportunities consultant, rental sector, family-owned businesses, retail, and hospitality.

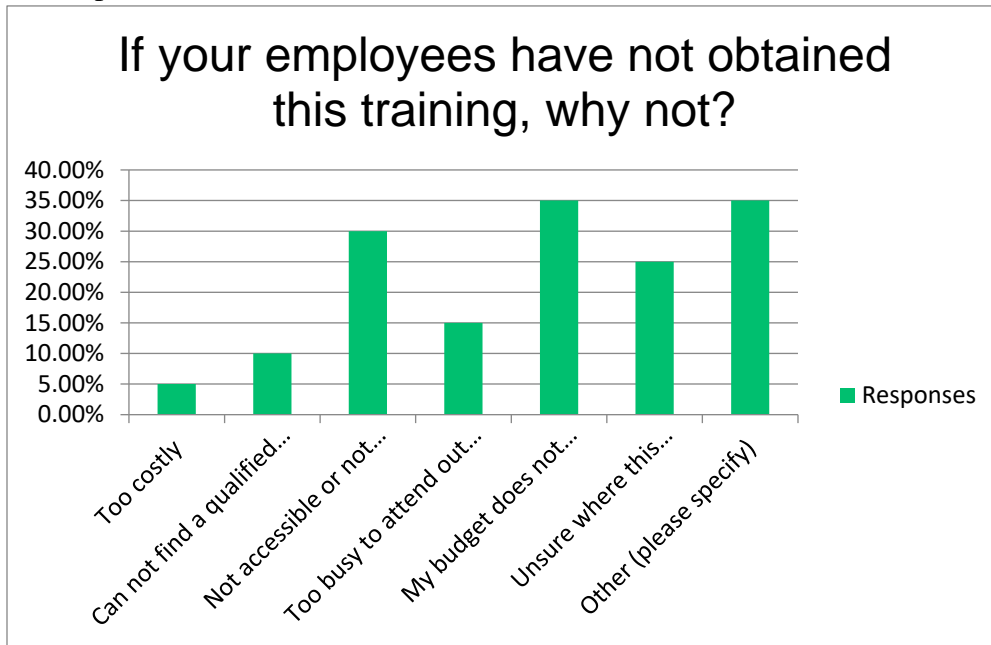
Question 3. How many people does your organization currently employ? (21 responses)



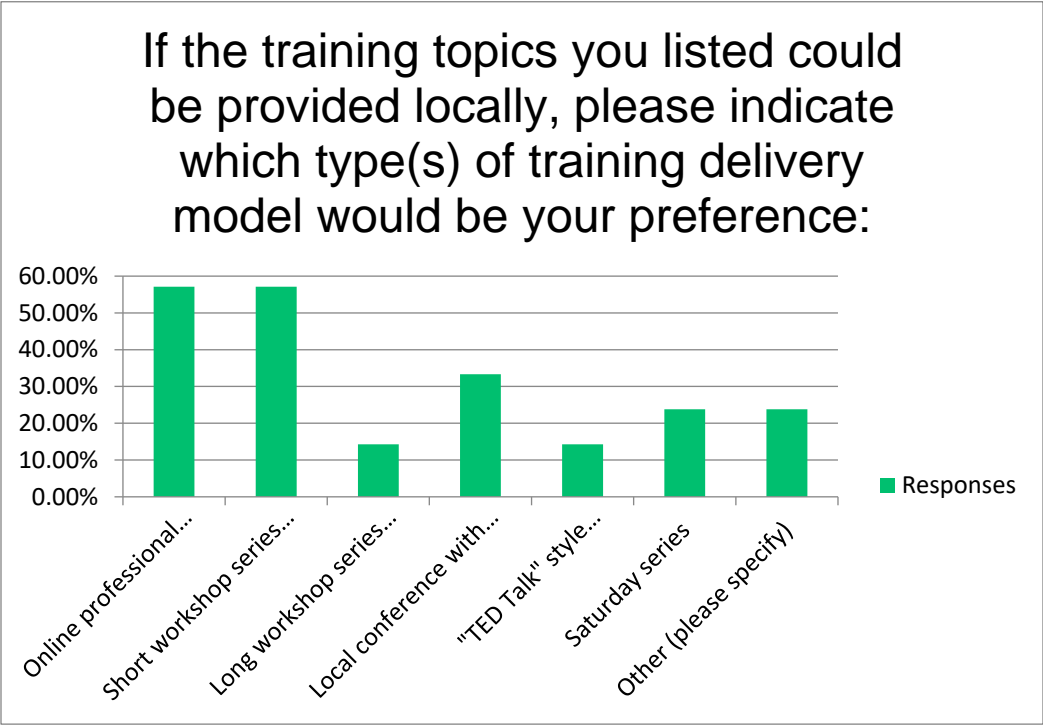
Question 4. What are the top three-five training topics for which your employees need specialized training? (21 responses)



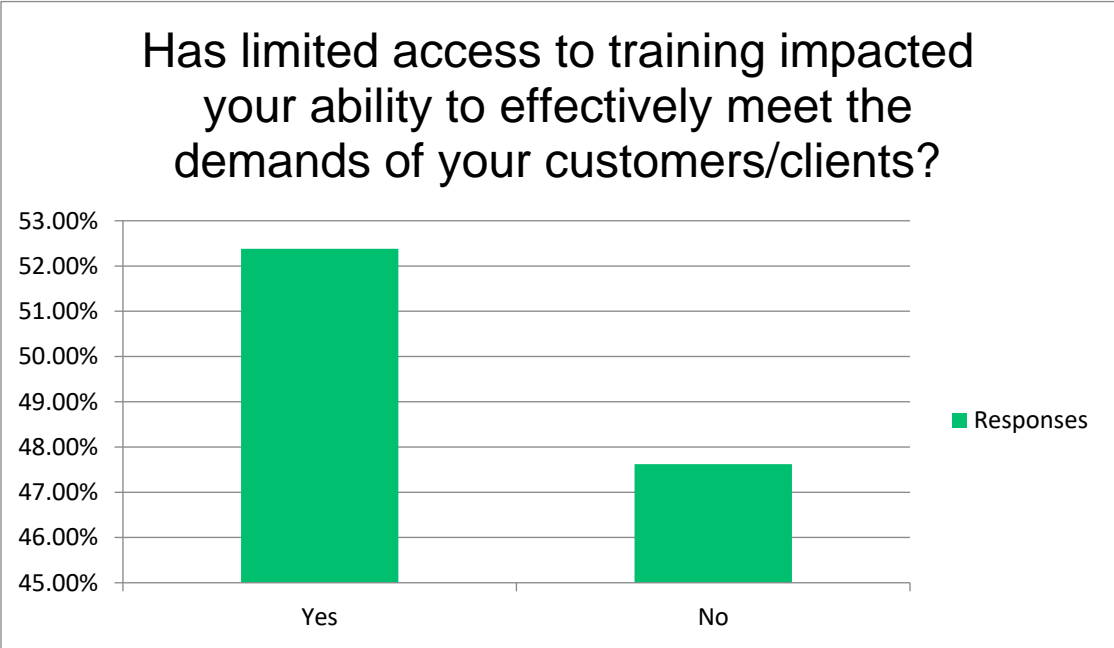
Question 5. If your employees have not obtained this training, why not? (Circle all that apply)
(20 responses)



Question 6. If the training topics you listed could be provided locally, please indicate which type(s) of training mode would be your preference: (21 responses)



Question 7. Has limited access or a lack of access to training impacted your ability to effectively meet the demands of your customers/clients? Yes/No (21 responses)



Question 8. Please provide any additional information about training needs that would assist LEDC in planning professional development to help your employees and other professionals improve their skills and capacity to retain or grow in their work.

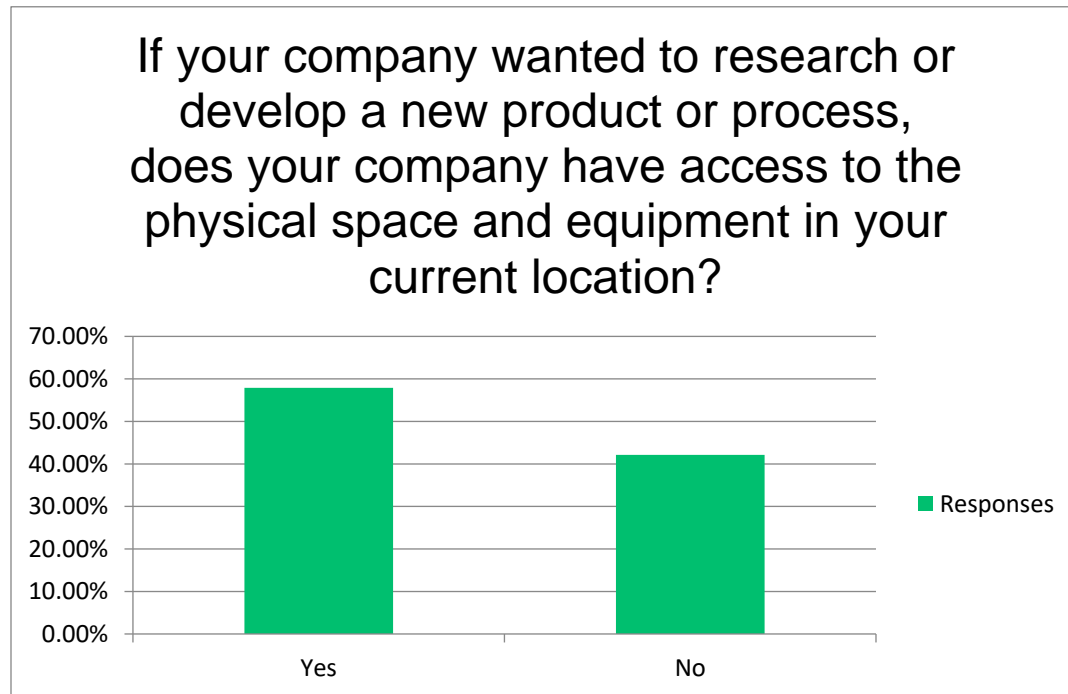
The following question provided the respondents with an opportunity to elaborate on their responses to the previous questions. There was a total of 16 responses but three of the responses were “n/a”. All the responses are included in Attachment 2. Two common answers were the need for employees to have better professional skills like career readiness and time management as well as the time of the training. Businesses were concerned with balancing the positive impact of increased training opportunities with the impact of having workers away from work. Many respondents recommended online training or shorter training for this reason.

Question 9. If you are qualified to offer trainings to others working in your industry, please list the topics here:

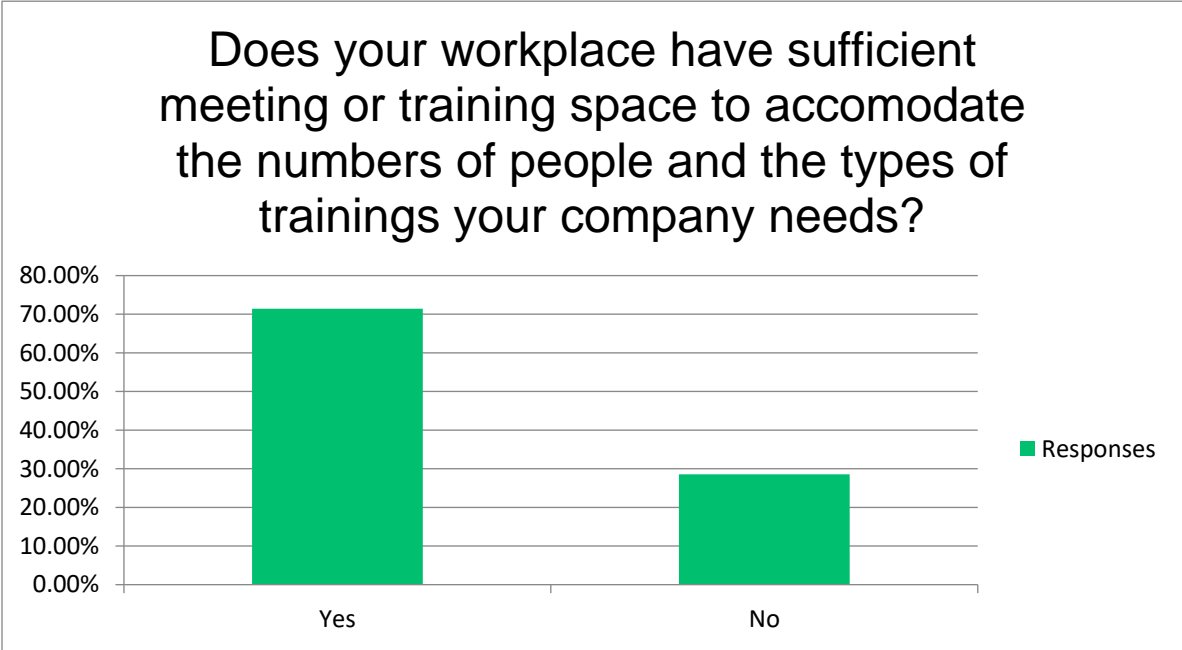
This question was geared toward finding local employers with knowledge in different areas of training needs and seeing if they would be willing to offer their time to train others in the community. This question received 12 responses with five saying they would be able to train. The training potential from these five includes design, machining, public health management, program management, fieldwork, grant-writing, grant review, and emergency services training.

Question 10. If your company wanted to research or develop a new product or process, would your company have the physical space and equipment in your current location to do so? Yes/No

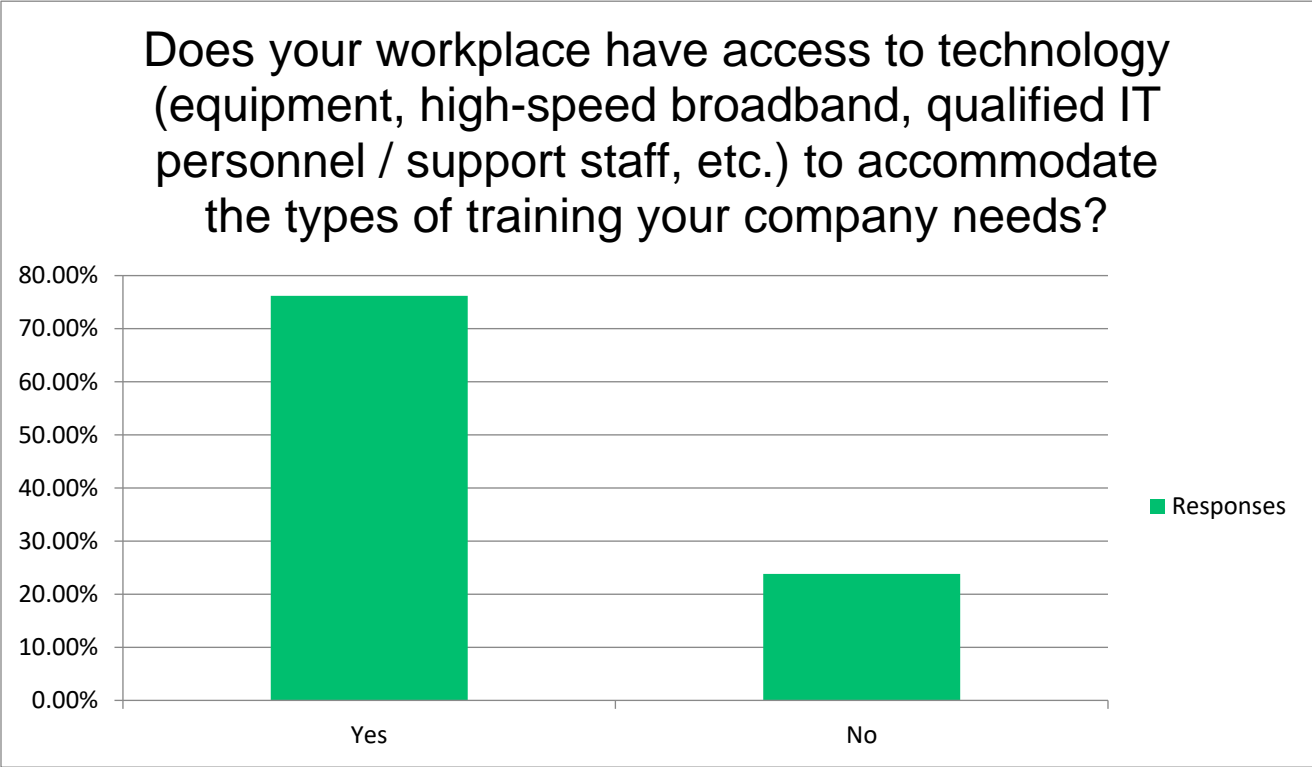
(19 responses)



Question 11. Does your workplace have sufficient meeting or training space to accommodate the number of people and the types of training your company needs? Yes/No (21 responses)



Question 12. Does your workplace have access to the technology (equipment, high-speed broadband, qualified IT personnel/support staff, etc.) to accommodate the types of trainings your company needs? (21 responses)



Question 13. How would having access to a local training facility impact your company’s ability to attract and retain qualified employees, and provide ongoing education/training?

The following question was intended to gather the level of importance and usefulness to the community that this potential workforce training center would provide. The question received 17 responses with all the responses included in Attachment x. The responses revealed that a training center in Lawrence County would be highly beneficial according to the working community.

Question 14. Please provide any other comments relevant to workforce training, availability of training facilities, and space for research:

Question 14 received 12 responses with four of those responses being “n/a”. The responses to this question are varied, however, it does reveal that adequate training space is a challenge and would be beneficial for employers in the county. (See Attachment x)

Survey Insights & Opportunity

Capacity for Training

The survey illustrates that nearly 75% of the organizations do have an adequate technology infrastructure to support employee training needs. Along with a favorable response (70%) for

those having actual space to support employee training. However, no specifics were mentioned to imply that training in specific in-demand areas were currently in place in their organization. This of course could be connected to timing, budgeting, or training access restraints. Further insight from survey participants revealed that in-house training for new hires tends to slow down production and leads to quality issues. While others noted the challenges associated with finding specialized roles such as machinists or individuals with mastery digital marketing skills. It must also be noted that more than 65% of the respondents were from business with 1-50 employees. Giving small businesses an external means to reinforce their employees knowledge base with minimal distraction would be of a great benefit, while also strengthening the areas labor force.

Training Access for Emerging Occupations

Training is essential for an organizations labor force and enables employees to improve skills that are aligned to work tasks, as well as broaden knowledge for future standards and processes. More than 50% of the respondents in this study noted that limited access to training has impacted their organization's ability to meet customer/client demands. While the participants did demonstrate a willingness to train their employees, they remained mindful of barriers such as minimal to no access to nearby programs, as well as budget constraints. Nonetheless, a local workforce training facility in the county would be beneficial for upskilling the regions labor supply, while affording businesses an opportunity to grow and retain their current employee base. It was also noted that local facility access could provide an efficient means for reducing lost work hours, or even enable a potential higher pay for new job-ready hires whom have received prior training.

Further, as the coal supply chain jobs continue to decline, alternative occupations such as accounting, construction laborers, operations specialists, and emergency medical technician opportunities are among the many growing careers in the Southeastern Ohio region (see Table 1 of Skillshed Analysis). Along with these growing occupations, executive respondents have communicated a need for more specialized training in soft-skills, media-marketing, finance, and industrial areas to name a few. Being able to obtain this training locally, by means of workshops or conference continuing education (CEU) credits would not only close the skills gaps of existing workers but could support organizational efforts to meet future labor force demands.

Strategic Recommendations

The survey responses gathered support the implementation of a workforce training facility in areas involving multiple industries. This will provide education to people in an around the Lawrence County area, and assist with advancing from the former reliance on the coal industry. This workforce education will also assist local businesses as they will not have to spend time and money training new employees. This workforce training facility should include workforce education in the areas of accounting, construction, operations specialists, technical medical, soft-skills, media-marketing, finance, and industrial areas.

Closing Comments

Survey responses support the implementation of a workforce training facility in Lawrence County. These responses should be used as evidence to encourage investment in new emerging industries. This investment will provide a new spectrum of workforce feasibility throughout southern and southeastern Ohio, and assist these rural communities to advance past the coal supply chain that heavily dictated the economy of this region. The varied educational opportunities that would be provided in this workforce training facility will provide new and diverse industry clusters that will help sustain this area of Ohio.

Attachment 1: Full Survey



WORKFORCE TRAINING AND FACILITY NEEDS SURVEY

1. Name

Title

Company

Email Address

Street/City

Telephone

2. Please indicate the career field in which you currently work:

- Health Care (nursing, allied fields, medical, dental, vision, etc.)
- Manufacturing / Industry / Utilities (production, automation, transportation, construction, etc.)
- Counseling/Social Work/Social Services (addiction recovery, foster care, elder care, etc.)
- First Responders (police, fire, first responder, emergency services, public safety, etc.)
- Education (primary, secondary, postsecondary, other, etc.)
- Other _____

3. How many people does your organization currently employ?

_____ 1-50 _____ 51-100 _____ 101-250 _____ 251+

4. What are the top three - five training topics for which you or people in your field need specialized training?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

5. If you have not obtained the training, why not? (Circle all that apply)

- Too Costly
- Can not find qualified workshop on this topic
- Not accessible / not offered in my local area
- My budget does not include enough funding to support employee training
- Too busy to attend out of town conference or training
- Unsure where this training is offered near me
- Other _____

6. If the training topics you listed could be provided locally, please indicate which type(s) of training mode would be your preference:
- Short Workshop Series (ex: face to face, once per month)
 - Long Workshop Series (ex. one week, M-F, or, in Summer, etc.)
 - Local conference with CEU's or other credentials offered
 - Saturday series (face to face)
 - Online professional development
 - Other _____
7. Has limited access or a lack of access to training impacted your capacity as an employee OR the capacity of your employer to effectively meet demands of your customer/client? Yes / No
If yes, please describe:
8. Please provide any additional information about training needs that would assist LEDC in planning professional development to help frontline employees and professionals improve their skills and capacity to retain or grow in their work.
9. If you are qualified to offer trainings to others working in your field, please list the topics here;
10. If you or your company wanted to research or develop a new product or process, would you have the physical space and equipment in your current location to do so? Yes / No
If yes, please describe:
11. Does your workplace have sufficient meeting or training space to accommodate the numbers of people and the types of trainings you need? Yes / No
12. Does your workplace have access to the technology (equipment, high-speed broadband, qualified IT personnel/support staff, etc.) to accommodate the types of trainings you need?

13. How would having access to a local training facility impact your company's ability to attract and retain qualified employees, and provide on-going education/training?

14. Please provide any other comments relevant to workforce training, availability of training facilities, and space for research:

Attachment 2: Question 8 Responses

Response 1: "Machinists are tough to find because they use an older form of machining, usual manual lathes. Finding people trained in this older method is difficult."

Response 2: "n/a"

Response 3: "they provide 6 to 12 months of in-house training for all new hires and that slows down production and leads to potentially broken products etc."

Response 4: "Basics of being a good employee - on time, few call-offs, good attitude, work ethic, etc..."

Response 5: "Job/Career readiness is one that we believe is vastly lacking in training, as new associates enter the workforce, in addition to existing associates who will benefit from the same."

Response 6: "Interactive online training would be most helpful."

Response 7: "n/a"

Response 8: "I think it would be helpful to offer training at various times of the day and week so that folks with different work situations could attend."

Response 9: "Mine is a time factor"

Response 10: "Because it is frontline and professional staff, the training needs to be short and timely."

Response 11: "I would encourage outreach to the local regional education providers to be a part of the discussion with the businesses to listen and learn of the current needs."

Response 12: "Best if talk to those program director directly"

Response 13: "n/a"

Response 14: "This is not only helping the employer tremendously; I feel that employees would be very happy to attend this training and they would also feel privileged that I am dedicating time and money to them."

Response 15: "I would like to connect to other businesses with similar issues. Covid has us feeling isolated and I know we are not alone"

Response 16: "I could attract more customers if I had mastery of online and digital marketing"

Attachment 3: Question 13 Responses

Response 1: “A local training facility would definitely help our business and we would certainly enroll our employees in programs at a local center.”

Response 2: “Currently utilize Robert C. Byrd Center but having a local place would be greatly beneficial to this company.”

Response 3: “It would be a tremendous help. New hires start out at a higher rate of pay if they have the training beforehand. Also, would save the company the 6-12 months of training.”

Response 4: “Unknown. It certainly couldn't hurt.”

Response 5: “Having a flexible and contemporary training and research facility at reach will definitely help retain current and future associates”

Response 6: “Keeping training local or online would reduce lost work time.”

Response 7: “It would lead to career advancement.”

Response 8: “Having a local training area would draw in potential employees. It would also help retain and grow current employees.”

Response 9: “Access to these kinds of services would be a game-changer for my organization. They would help immensely and allow us to offer trainings for free or for a low fee.”

Response 10: “I'm the only employee.”

Response 11: “We provide training for job seekers and get them job ready.”

Response 12: “N/A due to my current position”

Response 13: “Probably not in our case”

Response 14: “It would allow for a more efficient and effective ways to provide the current services we offer.”

Response 15: “I think that would be a gigantic plus!”

Response 16: “We could possibly expand our business & need more employees, new jobs”

Response 17: “I do not know where I could have trainings”

Attachment 4: Question 14 Responses

Response 1: “n/a”

Response 2: “n/a”

Response 3: “Would love to see CAD training brought back to the area. Many local vocational schools have dropped the class, and respondent is unsure why.”

Response 4: “Training and research facilities are always a challenge for public agencies.”

Response 5: “n/a”

Response 6: “Thank you for designing this survey and supporting our community!”

Response 7: “When Scott Howard was living, he and I discussed on several occasions the need to a training grounds for commercial industrial training and rescue (I.e., confined space, rope rescue, high angle rescue, etc.)”

Response 8: “If our entire organization wanted to do training, we do not have adequate space for equipment for training.”

Response 9: “I have had conversations on the lack of availability of training facilities, cost and access to current research (lack of awareness to our higher education research availability)”

Response 10: “Probably need to focus on smaller employer needs”

Response 11: “n/a”

Response 12: “This would be a good thing for Lawrence County to have a workforce training center focused on helping business get and keep qualified workers”