

2024

FORECASTING FREDERICK

Frederick County benefits from a robust Construction/Trades industry that is vital to our local economy because it creates not only jobs, but careers and pathways for our residents. Our local Construction and Trades industry often engages community partners and fosters collaboration with local stakeholders, including residents, businesses, and government agencies, and community organizations building collective investment in the local area's future.

It's well known that difficulty in recruiting and retaining skilled workers has put a strain on businesses across the nation. Our desire to dig deeper into these issues drove our interest in talking to businesses one on one to hear their stories. During our tour, we collected information from over 30 local businesses representing a variety of sizes, specialty areas, and locations across Frederick County.

Our discussions were primarily focused on four main areas; Recruitment Needs and Practices, Workforce Challenges, Skills and Qualifications, and Future Visions.



Frederick County Workforce Services



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MESSAGE FROM OUR TEAM



We believe that Workforce Development works best when solutions are aligned with industry needs. In the Fall of 2023, our team set out to ensure that we have data directly from our business community to inform our programming. We launched the **Forecasting Frederick Listening Tour** in November and aimed to visit as many businesses as possible to learn about their business and hear their insight into the reasons behind some of the workforce challenges they face every day.

While we were not surprised by what we heard, the opportunity to hear directly from you gave us better perspective to design our programming in more impactful ways.

Here's what we heard....

We want to ensure that our programming is designed to be a solution to the challenges!

RECRUITMENT AND HIRING

It's no secret that finding qualified talent is a challenge for businesses. With all participating businesses reporting anticipated hiring needs over the next year, it underscores the need for us to provide support. Most (83%) of these hiring needs are for full-time positions at both entry-level and mid-senior level positions.

Anticipated hiring needs is a result of a mix of growth (43%) and turn-over related (46%). New positions related to growth could reach 300 new positions just within this sample.



Recruitment Sources

Top 3 most frequently used sources for recruitment used by these businesses:

- Referrals from current employees
- Job Search Engines
- Networking (word of mouth, social media)



Successful Candidates

Sources that businesses indicate yield the most successful candidates:

- Networking (word of mouth, social media)
- Working with a community partner (FCPS, Apprenticeship, trade schools,)
- Referrals from current employees

Stay tuned for updates from FCWS. Over the next year, we are planning to:

- Launch educational content for businesses to outline best practices for recruitment and retention.
- Create strategies to help businesses tap potential workforce that they may be missing.
- Create opportunities for businesses to more easily navigate community partners and resources for pipeline development.

WORKFORCE CHALLENGES

- 96% of responses indicate quality of candidates is either a significant challenge (52%) or somewhat of a challenge (44%).
- 19% of responses indicated the number of candidates is not a challenge.
- When asked what challenges business felt were impacting their workforce outside of the work, access to childcare and transportation was noted almost every time.
- Cost of living, access to health care, and other factors also contribute to recruitment and retention challenges.
- Many businesses are providing in-house/on-the-job training to bring individuals up to technical skills standards. Associated time and expense can be significant.



Access to Quality Candidates

Candidate quality is impacted by:

- Candidates' ability to perform technical skills at desired standards.
- Attitude towards industry conditions like working outdoors/physical labor.
- Soft skill deficiencies such as communication and customer service skills.
- Barriers that candidates face (transportation, childcare, legal issues, etc).



What Does the Future Hold?

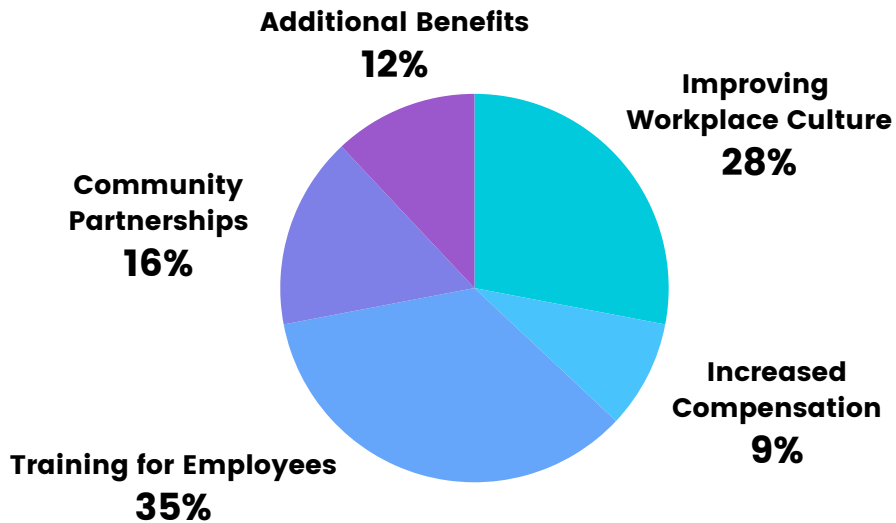
- 44% of business identified that attitude and aptitude (over technical skills) are paramount to successful entry points in their businesses.
- 90% of businesses expressed concerned about their ability to attract workforce to meet their growth needs in the future. Many noted a desire to see an increase in younger workers attracted to the industry.
- 30% report that wage and benefit competition is a significant issue for retention.

Stay tuned for updates from FCWS. Over the next year, we are planning to:

- Develop programming to increase work-based learning support for businesses who provide training for their workforce.
- Launch of a training portfolio focused on soft-skill development for current workers including Workplace Communication, Customer Service, and Business Etiquette.
- Leading a Workforce Summit focused on the Construction/Trades industry to align community partners/resources and leverage collective impact to address industry challenges.

During our discussions, retention came up frequently. Factors including an aging workforce, wage and benefit competition, competitive wages, and benefits and industry competition for a thin talent supply exacerbating the talent shortage. It's clear that most businesses are putting measures in place to try to reduce turn-over.

What are Business Doing to Improve Retention?



Frederick Business Works

provides reimbursement for a portion of the cost of training your current employees.

- **Professional Development:** 35% provide training for employee development.
- **Culture improvements:** 28% are improving workplace culture with mentorship opportunities, celebration events, culture of care, and/or assistance with personal issues.
- **Additional Benefits:** 12% are offering additional benefits like flexible work schedules, access to vehicles, PTO, and Health Care.
- **Community Partnerships:** 16% are seeking opportunities with community partners such as Apprenticeships, Internships, and other talent pipeline development programs,
- **Increased Wages:** 9% have increased wages to be avoid loss of talent.

100%

Of participating businesses anticipate hiring needs in the next year.

LET US HELP YOU NOW

In addition to new programs that we'll set out to build, there's support available now.

- Our team can help you reach more potential candidates when you have hiring needs.
- Access grant funds when you provide training for your current workforce.
- If Apprenticeship may be an option, we can help you through the process.
- Get in front of emerging talent by connecting with FCPS Career Coaches.
- Sign up to receive our newsletters for best practices, access to candidates, and resources.
- Join us for the annual FCPS Graduating Seniors Job Fair this spring.

Contact us today!

Visit us online:

www.frederickworks.com/employers



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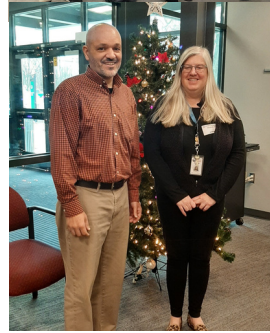


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LISTENING TOUR HIGHLIGHTS



Thank you for your participation

