



# EmployerOne Survey Observations

BRUCE, GREY, HURON AND PERTH COUNTIES  
MARCH 2015

# Acknowledgments

Four County Labour Market Planning Board (FCLMPB) is a community-directed, not-for-profit corporation assisting Bruce, Grey, Huron and Perth counties in its approach to workforce development and labour market planning. Our mission is to plan and promote local labour market strategies to meet the challenges of a changing economy.

## We wish to thank the following:

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### Memorandum of Understanding Community Partners:

Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters (CME)

The Centres for Employment and Learning of the Avon Maitland District School Board

Conestoga Career Centre

The Corporation of the County of Grey

The Corporation of the County of Perth

Excellence in Manufacturing Consortium (EMC)

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The views of this document do not necessarily reflect those of Employment Ontario.



Four County Labour Market  
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# Highlight Observations

LABOUR MARKET CONDITIONS

## UNEMPLOYMENT RATES



4.8%

Four County

7.3%

Ontario

Bruce, Grey, Huron and Perth's unemployment rate in 2014 was considerably lower than Ontario's, suggesting a much tighter supply of local labour

# 67%

Respondents who felt the availability of qualified workers was fair or poor

## Construction and Manufacturing

Sector respondents reported the greatest discontent with the quality of the workforce

↑ THIS WARRANTS ATTENTION



# 2,956

NEW JOBS CREATED

160 of 222 surveyed businesses created at least one job in 2014. There are 10,744 payroll businesses in the Bruce, Grey, Huron and Perth Counties.

The majority of those positions:

{
866
1,212
}

permanent full-time      temporary full-time



# 5%

Workers who quit their job or retired in 2014



## SEASONAL WORK

appears to account for a large part of the 1,079 temporary layoffs in 2014

HIRING



Jobs were created in a wide range of occupations; however the majority of jobs were created in occupations requiring less formal skills (i.e. labourers)

Jobs are being created for people with and without post-secondary credentials



HIRING



**85** of 160 businesses surveyed found some positions hard to fill

**TOP REASONS POSITIONS WERE HARD TO FILL INCLUDE:**

- not enough applicants
- not meeting attitude, motivation or interpersonal abilities



There is a disconnect between the business main method of recruitment (*Word of Mouth*) and job seeker approach (*Look at Job Ads*)

Business geographic area of recruitment mainly focuses on the Four County Area, but **should be expanded** within Ontario, particularly Waterloo Region and Wellington County



TRAINING

**78%**



or 161 of surveyed businesses provided ongoing training and education opportunities for their employees



Cost is the main barrier to providing training, both direct and indirect cost (i.e. loss of productivity)

**LOW RISK**

The risk of losing an employee after training them is low, only 4.1 percent of employees quit their job in 2014



BROADER IMPLICATIONS

Employee work ethic and soft skills are critical to businesses



Short term precarious employment may not be conducive to enhancing employee work ethic and soft skill development



The importance of soft skills extends to all occupations

# Background

The EmployerOne Survey was conducted for the first time in January 2015 for the Four County Area which includes the Counties of Bruce, Grey, Huron and Perth. In total, 222 businesses completed the survey, representing 14,297 employees. The business respondents provided valuable insights regarding their labour outlook.

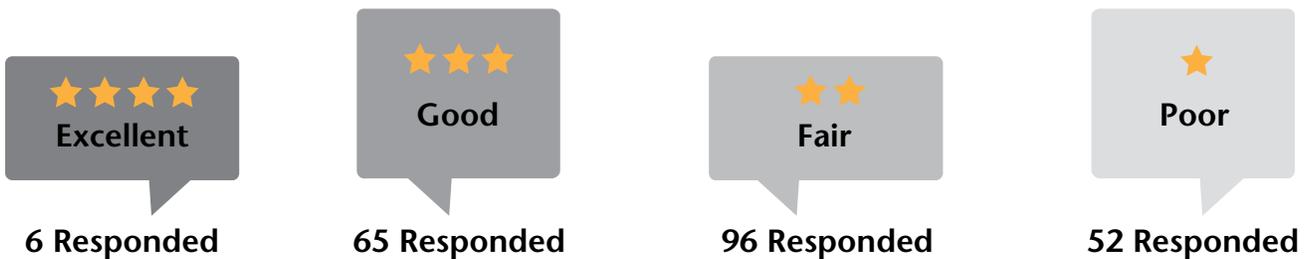
While businesses face many obstacles, the goal of the survey is to understand their labour market challenges in order to provide direction on activities and initiatives that will minimize labour issues.

## General Labour Market Conditions

While Four County Area businesses have unique labour needs, the general conditions of the local labour market set the stage for survey responses. In 2014, the local labour market consisted of 158,600 persons: an estimated 151,000 residents were employed and 7,600 residents were unemployed (unable to find employment). Four County's 4.8 percent unemployment rate (in 2014) is considerably lower than Ontario's 7.3 percent, suggesting a much tighter supply of local labour.

### Availability of Qualified Workers

When business respondents were asked how they rate the availability of qualified workers in the Four County Area:



The number of fair and poor responses warrants continued and focussed efforts to address identified labour shortcomings.

Survey respondents from the Construction and the Manufacturing Sectors reported the greatest discontent with the quality of workers available. The 53 respondents representing these sectors rated labour availability as follows:

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Construction Sector	0	5	7	4
Manufacturing Sector	0	9	19	9

## Availability of Qualified Workers by County

The majority of survey respondents from each County reported that the availability of qualified workers was fair or poor. Survey respondents from Grey and Huron counties reported the greatest discontent with the quality of workers available.

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Bruce County	4.1%	34.7%	38.8%	22.4%
Grey County	3.0%	28.4%	44.8%	23.9%
Huron County	3.2%	20.6%	52.4%	23.8%
Perth County	0%	35.3%	39.2%	25.5%

## Employment Dynamics

Survey respondents reported the following employment dynamics in 2014:





## Hiring

Businesses are constantly asked about their hiring activity because the wellbeing of the community and its residents depend on the access to quality jobs.

160 survey respondents hired at least one person in 2014, collectively accounting for 2,956 jobs.

The jobs by tenure include:

**866**

Permanent  
Full-time  
positions

**180**

Permanent  
Part-time  
positions

**1,212**

Temporary  
Full-time  
positions

**617**

Temporary  
Part-time  
positions

**81**

Independent  
Contractor  
positions

Hiring is a function of business expansion, shifting skill needs and a direct result of people leaving their jobs, as vacated positions may need to be refilled. Efforts to keep the number of job leavers to a minimum are critical as there are costs associated with this, particularly in a tight labour market where it's more difficult to find qualified workers.

Survey respondents reported the following job leavers:



Workers who quit their job or retired jointly accounted for just 5.0 percent of total employees in 2014 (of those surveyed).

Survey respondents reported 1,079 **temporary layoffs** in 2014. It appears seasonal work was the main reason for layoffs (and hiring) in 2014.

290 positions were also lost for other reasons not specified.

## Hiring: Occupations in Demand

Business ratings of the availability of qualified workers would partially stem from their hiring experience in 2014.

Jobs (2,956) were created in a wide range of occupations, from chartered accountants to cashiers, to waiters to welders and physiotherapist to farm workers.

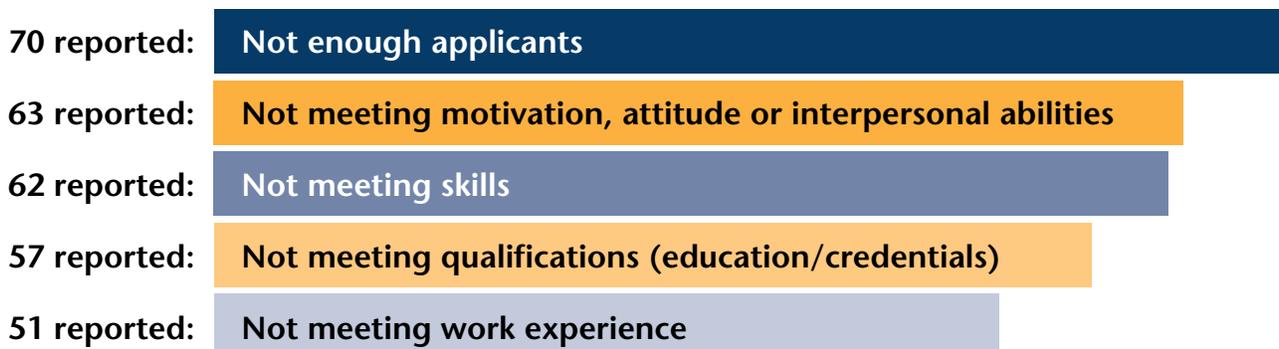
Only 17.5 percent of 2014 hires had completed post-secondary education and most jobs were created in the following occupational areas:

- ◆ Administration
- ◆ Cashiers
- ◆ Cooks
- ◆ Customer service
- ◆ General labourer
- ◆ Housekeeper/room attendant
- ◆ Production worker
- ◆ Sales
- ◆ Servers/waiter/waitress

## Hiring Challenges

Of the 160 surveyed businesses that hired in 2014, 85 found some positions hard to fill.

### Top reasons positions were hard to fill include:



It is critical to note, hard to fill positions include a wide range of occupations. Some required post-secondary education such as an engineer, but many did not, including labourers.

## Hard to Fill Positions by Size of Business

When survey respondents are examined by different employee size ranges, it appears that large businesses have the most difficulty filling positions. Over half of survey respondents with 50 or more employees reported difficulty filling some positions.

Employee Size Ranges	Survey Respondents	Survey Respondents With Hard to Fill Positions	Hard to Fill as a Percent of Total Respondents
1 to 4 employees	57	11	19.3
5 to 9 employees	43	16	37.2
10 to 19 employees	33	15	45.5
20 to 49 employees	38	16	42.1
50 to 99 employees	27	14	51.9
100+ employees	22	13	59.1

Source: Four County, EmployerOne survey responses

## Method of Recruitment

Of the surveyed businesses, the majority identified *Word of Mouth* as the most often used method to find workers, almost doubling the second most cited method, *Online Job Boards/Postings*. Interestingly, the most popular job search method reported by Ontario's unemployed (Labour Force Survey) was to *Look at Job Ads*. A disconnect between how survey respondents recruit employees and how unemployed people search for jobs may be an issue affecting employee recruitment success.

## Geographic Area of Recruitment

The majority (more than 70 percent) of survey respondents reported that workforce recruitment focussed on the Bruce, Grey, Huron and Perth area. About 20 percent of survey respondents recruited from outside the Four County Area, but staying within Ontario. Four County's businesses may want to consider expanding their employee search area within Ontario.

The communities from which the Four County Area draws the most people include: Waterloo Region, Wellington County, Toronto Region, Middlesex County, Peel Region and Simcoe County. Between 2006 and 2011, a combined 24,121 people have moved to the Four County Area from these communities.

## Free Employment Service Agency Recruitment

With regards to their 2014 hiring, surveyed businesses were asked if they received any assistance from free employment service agencies which include Employment Ontario providers, the majority reported they had not. Free employment service agencies that focussed on Youth employment were used by survey respondents the most.

No Assistance	188
Youth 15 to 24 years of age	48
Persons 55 and over	13
Aboriginals	9
Immigrants	9
Persons of Disabilities	6



## Business Investment in Training

When survey respondents were asked if they were able to provide or support ongoing training and education opportunities in 2014:



161 survey respondents reported YES



46 survey respondents reported NO

The fact that 78 percent of surveyed businesses provided ongoing training and educational opportunities for their employees suggests businesses are responding to the identified shortage of qualified workers.

Business investment in training is also, no doubt, a response to competitive pressures which require constant employee skills upgrading.

Business that reported yes to providing training cited the following barriers that made it difficult:

1. Cost
2. Distance to travel to facility
3. Loss of productivity
4. Relevant training is not offered locally

Business that reported they did not provide training to employees cited the same barriers (although in a different order) for not training:

1. Cost
2. Relevant training is not offered locally
3. Loss of productivity
4. Distance to travel to facility

Canada-Ontario Job Grant can help alleviate the main barrier to training; cost. The grant provides funds for employers to train existing staff and new hires. The aim of the program is to help boost the skill level of the workforce benefiting both employee and employer.

Other identified barriers pertaining to the location of training facilities are probably best addressed in a collaborative way, as numerous businesses have similar training needs. For example, numerous survey respondents cited the need for safety training and computer skills.

## What skills, training, and education needs are in the greatest demand today?

While some businesses cited specific skills such as: graphic design skills, management skills, machining skills and marketing skills to name a few, the most common skills identified to be in the greatest demand today were soft skills, including:

- ◆ Attention to detail
- ◆ Communication skills
- ◆ Critical thinking
- ◆ Customer service skills
- ◆ Interpersonal skills
- ◆ Literacy (writing, reading, mathematics and computer skills)
- ◆ Social skills
- ◆ Work ethic (motivation)

## Top Three Competencies Required

When asked to identify the top three employee competencies, survey respondents reiterated the importance of:



Employees and those seeking employment need to understand that employers require soft skills. The absence of soft skills negatively affects the quality of worker regardless of occupation.

# Broader Implications for Community

## Small Business Training

The 46 businesses that reported they were unable to support ongoing training and education tended to be small (fewer than 10 employees). Given that there are more than 8,000 of these small businesses in the Four County Area, the potential number of businesses unable to support training and education could be quite large.

## Hard to Fill Positions

Even though the survey is not a representative sample of Four County businesses (small businesses and some industries are underrepresented), the extent to which the entire business community may be affected can be estimated.

For example, 19.3 percent of survey respondents employing between 1 to 4 employees found it difficult to fill some positions. Over 59 percent of survey respondents with 100 or more employees reported some positions were hard to fill. If similar percentages are applied to all businesses in the Four County Area, a considerable number of businesses are finding it difficult to fill some positions. Even half the numbers presented below would be imposing.

### Potential Number of Businesses by Employee Size Range that may find new positions hard to fill – Four County Area, 2014

Employee Size Ranges	Total Number of Businesses	Percent of Survey Respondents with hard to fill positions	Potential Number of business with hard to fill positions
1 to 4 employees	5,807	19.3	1,120
5 to 9 employees	2,280	37.2	848
10 to 19 employees	1,436	45.5	653
20 to 49 employees	815	42.1	343
50 to 99 employees	226	51.9	117
100+ employees	180	59.1	106

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Business Patterns and Four County EmployerOne Survey



## We'll be looking for your input once again.

In January 2016, an updated version of the survey will be made available. Join our mailing list to stay informed; email [employerone@planningboard.ca](mailto:employerone@planningboard.ca)