



2021
**GRAND TRAVERSE
REGION SKILLS
GAP STUDY**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Employers have an overwhelming demand and face vast challenges when attracting and retaining talent. Nearly two thirds of local companies have unfilled jobs. The vacancies cut across all industries. Current challenges related to the pandemic including health concerns, expanded unemployment benefits, and trying to conduct remote training via spotty internet have added to long-standing labor-related issues such as lack of childcare, expensive housing, and infrastructure concerns.

The study garnered a strong survey response and represents a comprehensive cross section of employers. Over a dozen industry sectors are represented in the data and there were 120 individual responses from all positions of leadership, including Chief Executives, Human Resource Officers, Chief Operating Officers, Chief Financial Officers, Chief Technology Officers, and Marketing Executives, as well as many small business owners that fulfill all of these roles.

The region may be nearing a crisis point in our ability to hire, train, build critical skills, and develop core competencies in the workforce. Employers and local institutions need to take a dynamic approach toward addressing the lack of skilled talent in our region.

KEY FINDINGS



EDUCATION

Focus on associates degrees, vocational, and technical training

EXPERIENCE

Entry level positions are the highest area of need



JOB TYPE

Skilled Trades is first, but there is widespread demand

SKILL GAPS

Applicants lack both personal and technical skills

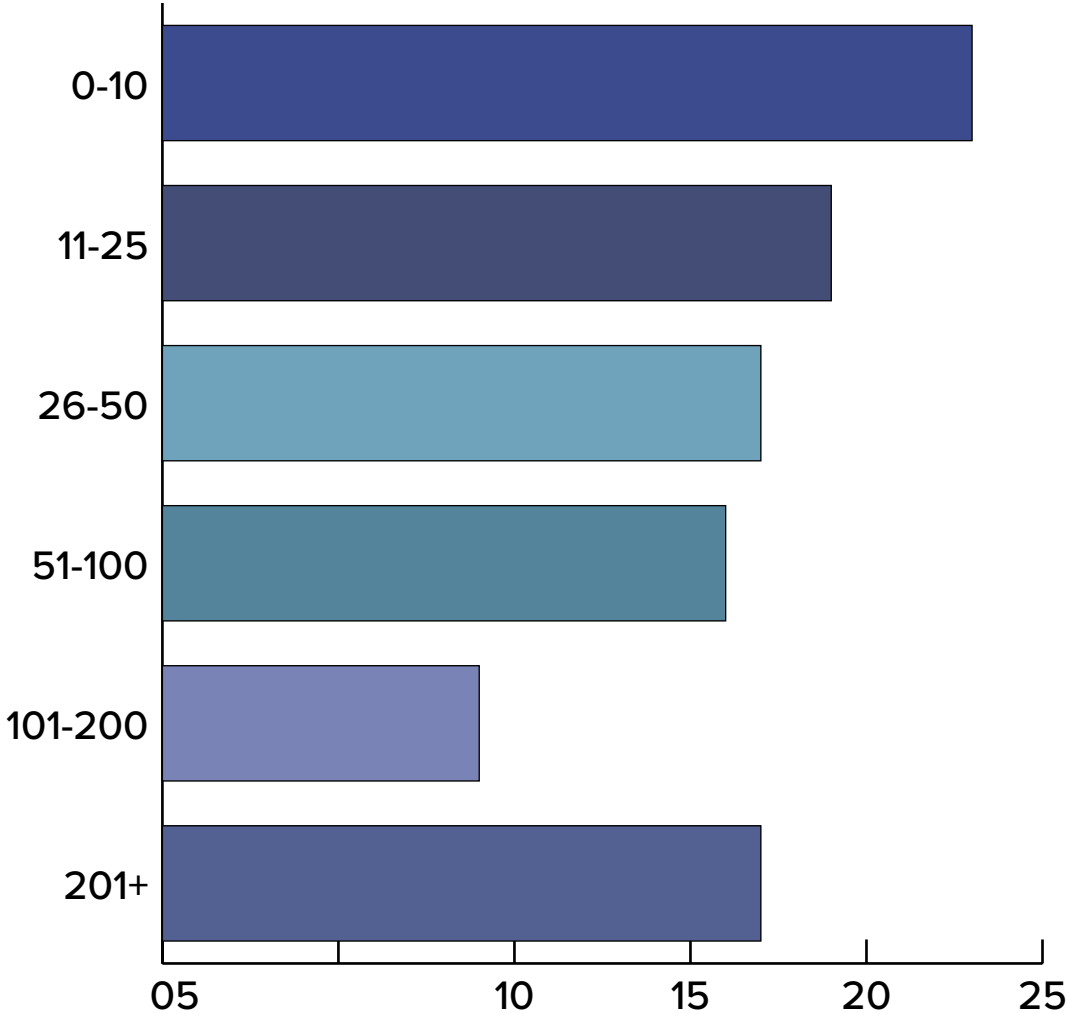


SHORT-TERM FIX

Micro-credential and short “bootcamp” training sessions

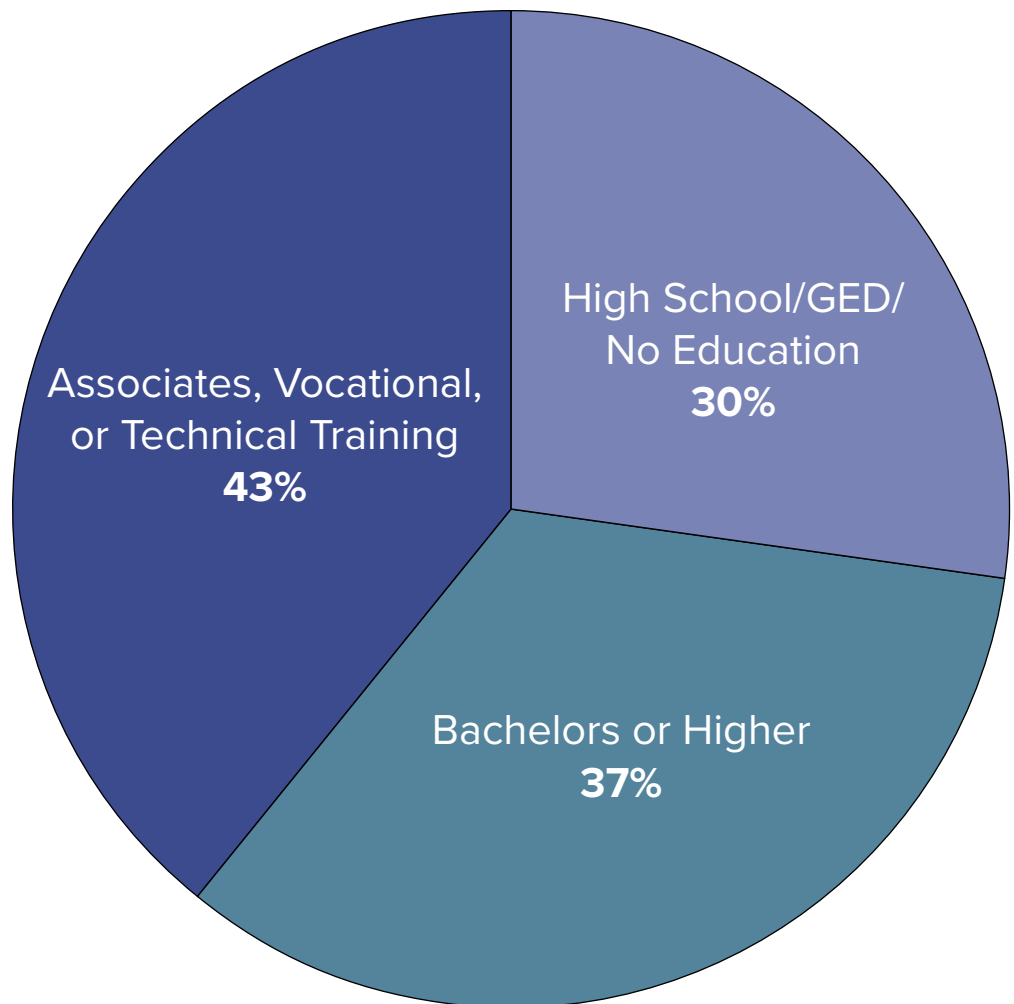
ORGANIZATION SIZE

Responses were received from employers of all sizes, from small businesses to large corporations and institutions.



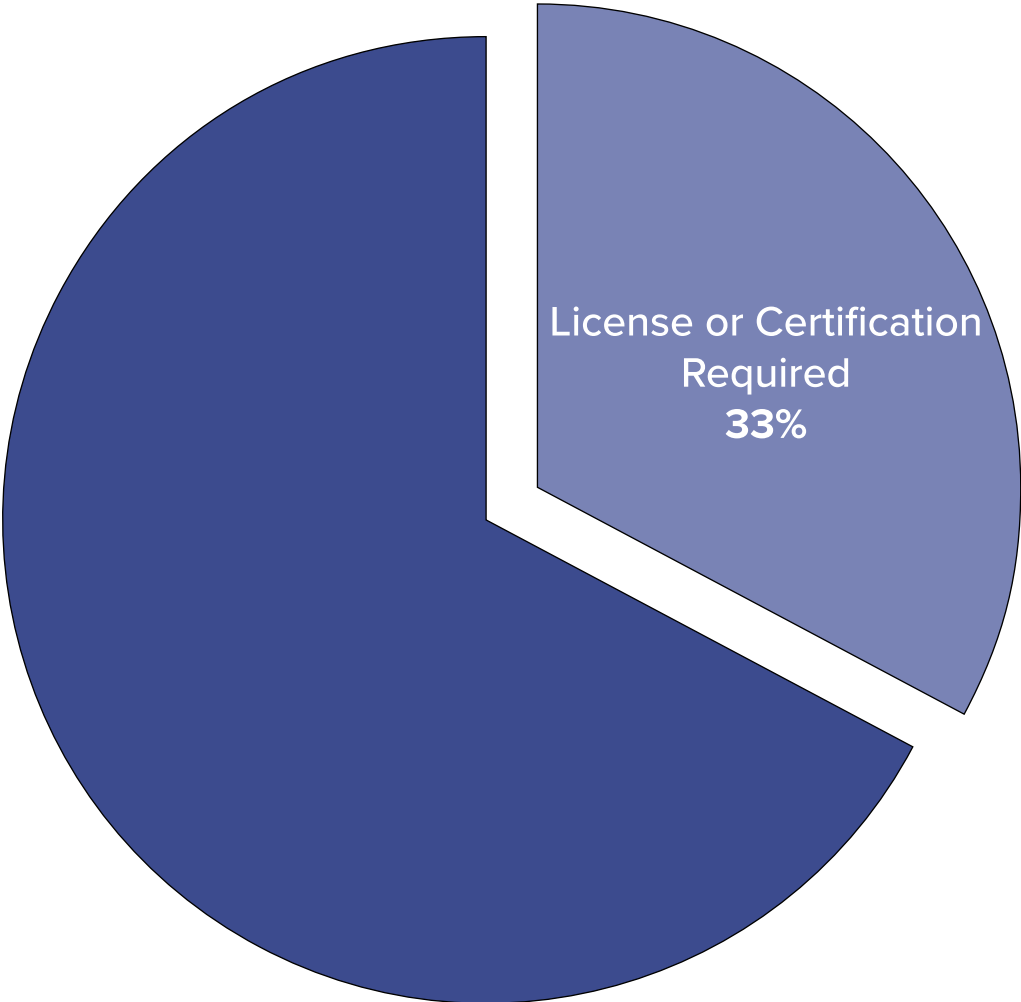
EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

Current job openings require a range of education levels.



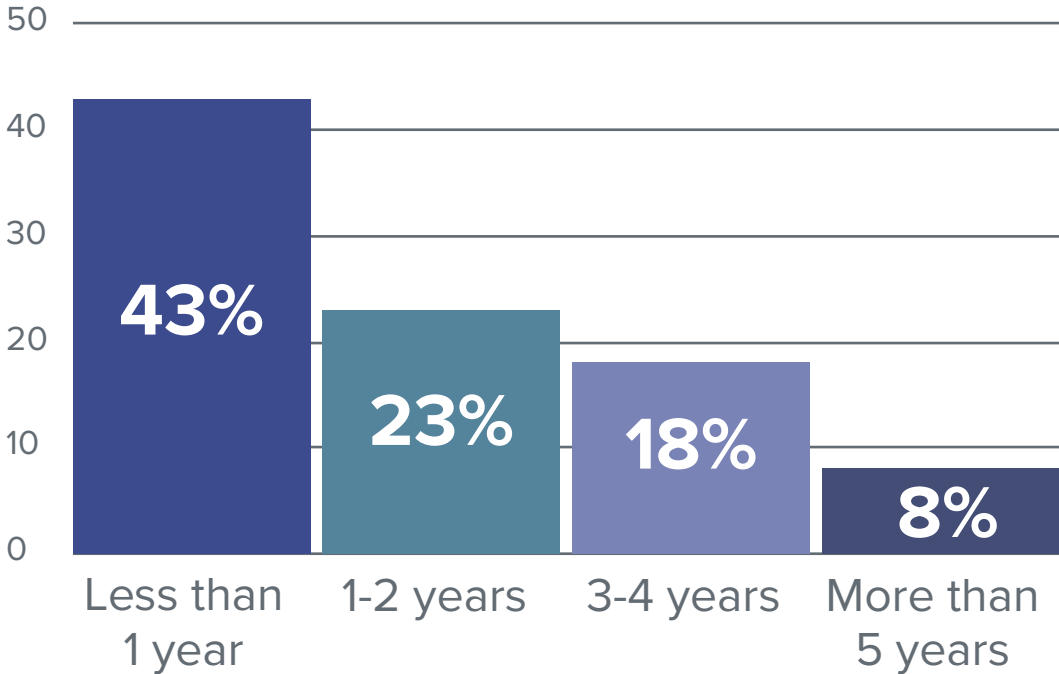
LICENSING REQUIREMENTS

Nearly one third of open positions require some level of license or certificate.



REQUIRED WORK EXPERIENCE

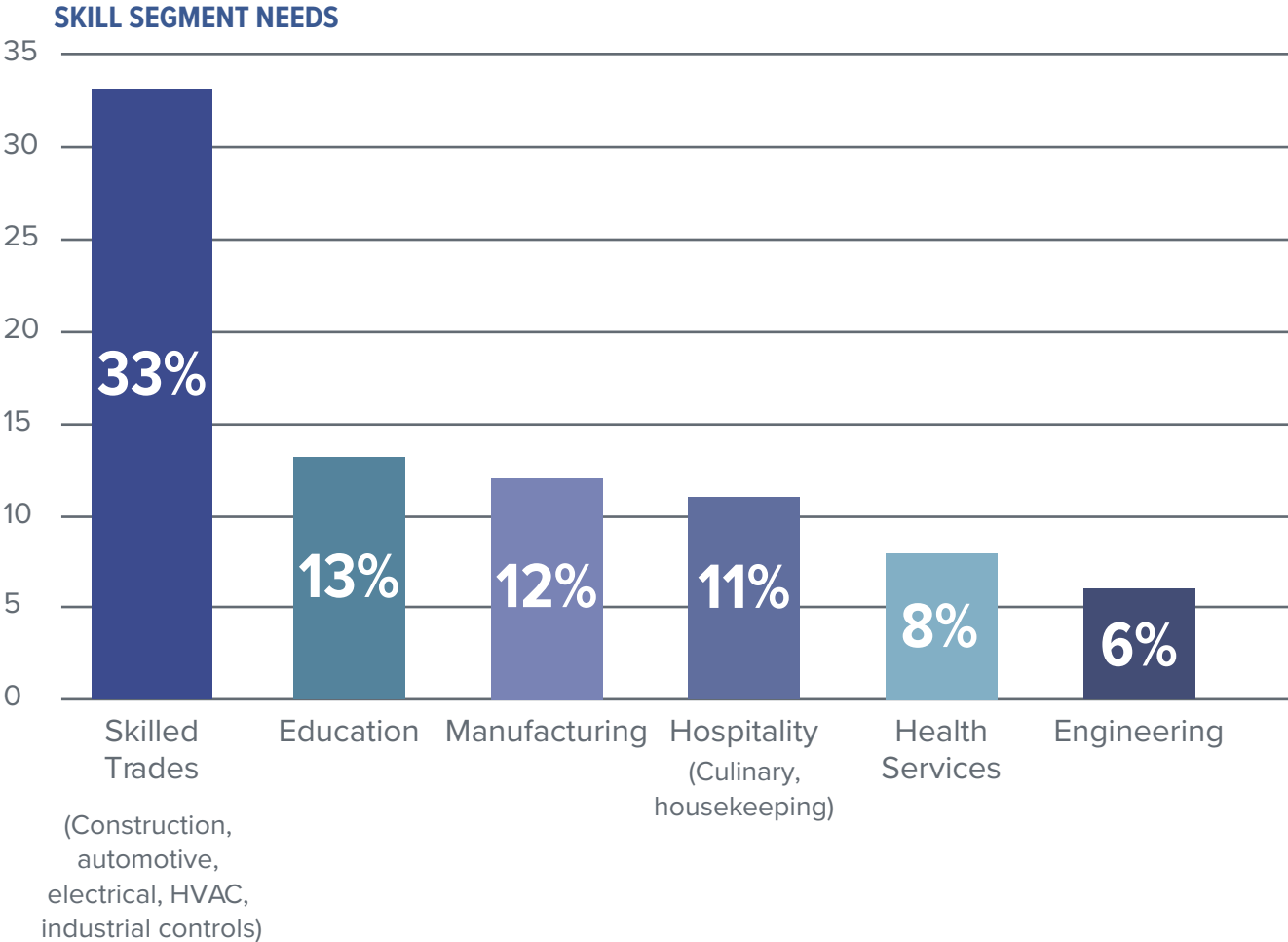
Required work experience varies, but is more concentrated in entry level positions.



EMPLOYER ASSESSMENT

SKILL DIFFICULT TO RECRUIT

Employers encounter recruiting challenges across a wide range of skill segments, but the skilled trades are in especially high demand.

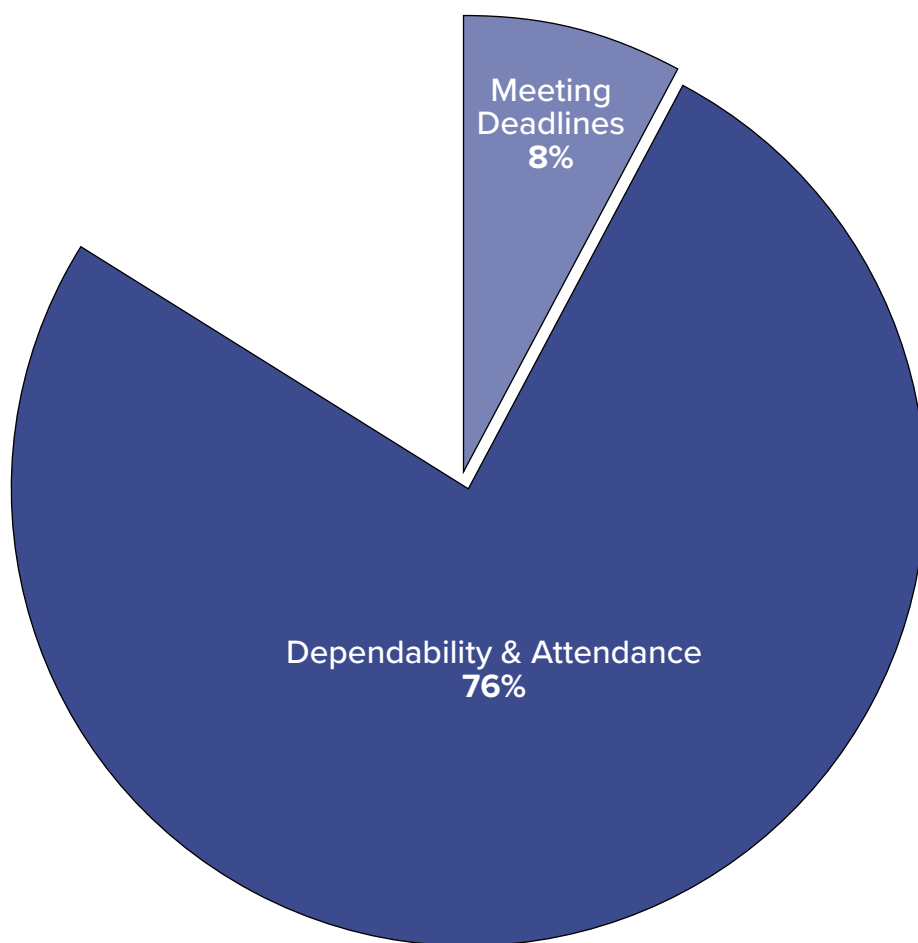


PERSONAL SKILLS GAPS

Managers face a number of significant challenges with the current pool of job applicants as it relates to personal skills.

RELIABILITY

Employers site reliability as a key issue with applicants, with over 75% of respondents highlighting gaps in dependability and attendance.

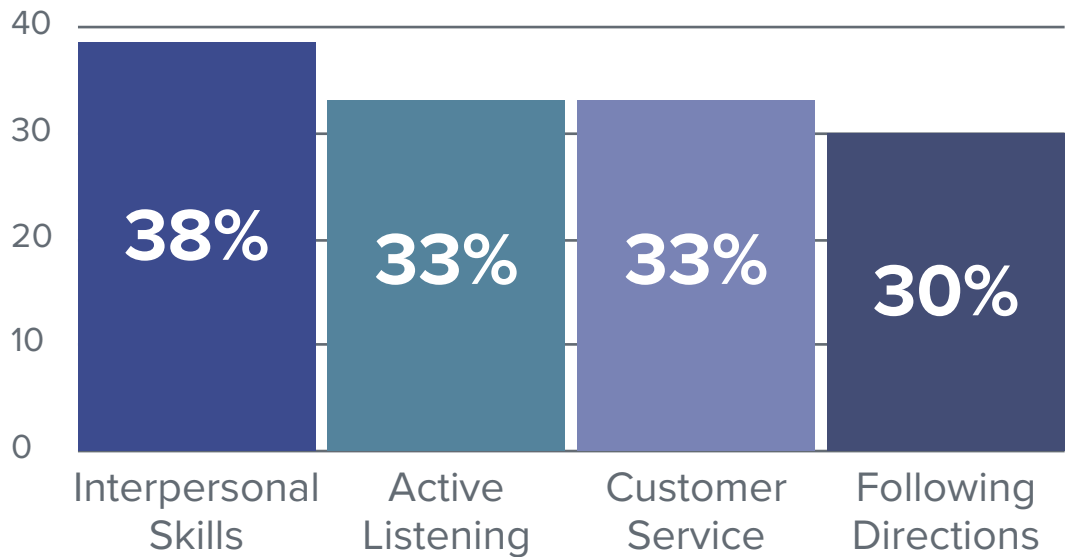


PERSONAL SKILLS GAP

COMMUNICATION

Many job applicants lack critical communication-related skills.

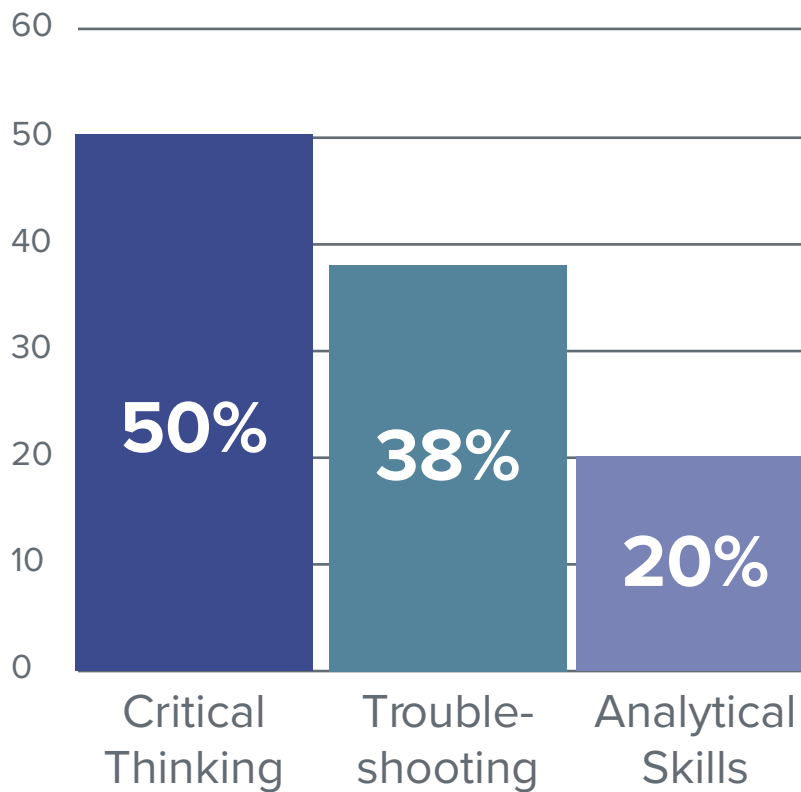
COMMUNICATION SKILL GAPS



PERSONAL SKILLS GAP

PROBLEM SOLVING

Employers need workers that are better equipped for creative problem solving and have the ability to think on their feet.



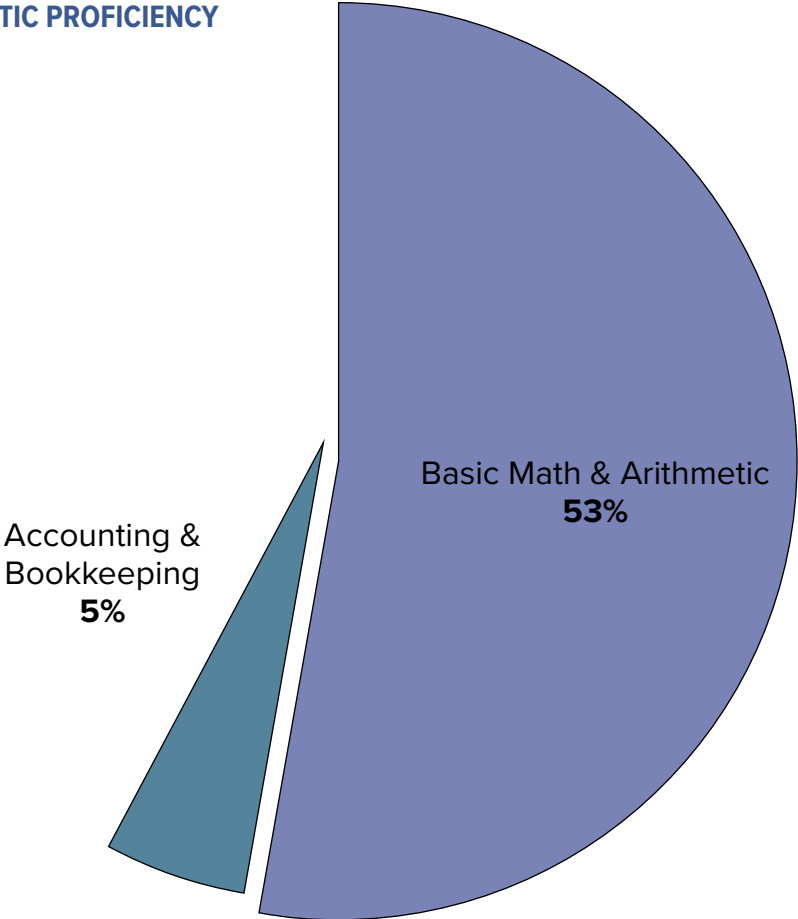
TECHNICAL SKILL GAPS

The existing talent pool needs additional training in a couple of key technical skills.

MATH SKILLS

Better mathematic proficiency is a gap in the workforce, with over 50% of respondents citing a lack of basic math and arithmetic skills.

MATHEMATIC PROFICIENCY

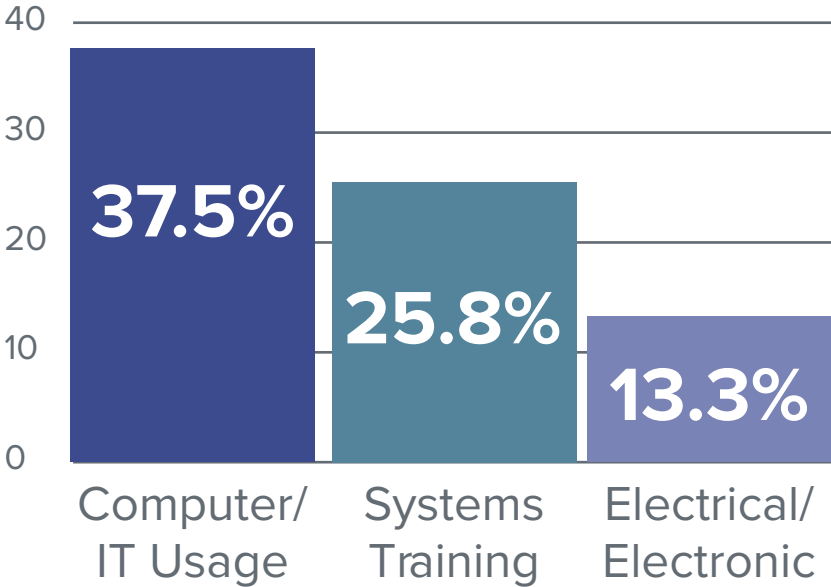


TECHNICAL SKILL GAPS

TECHNOLOGY SKILLS

Many open positions require IT, computer, and technical skills

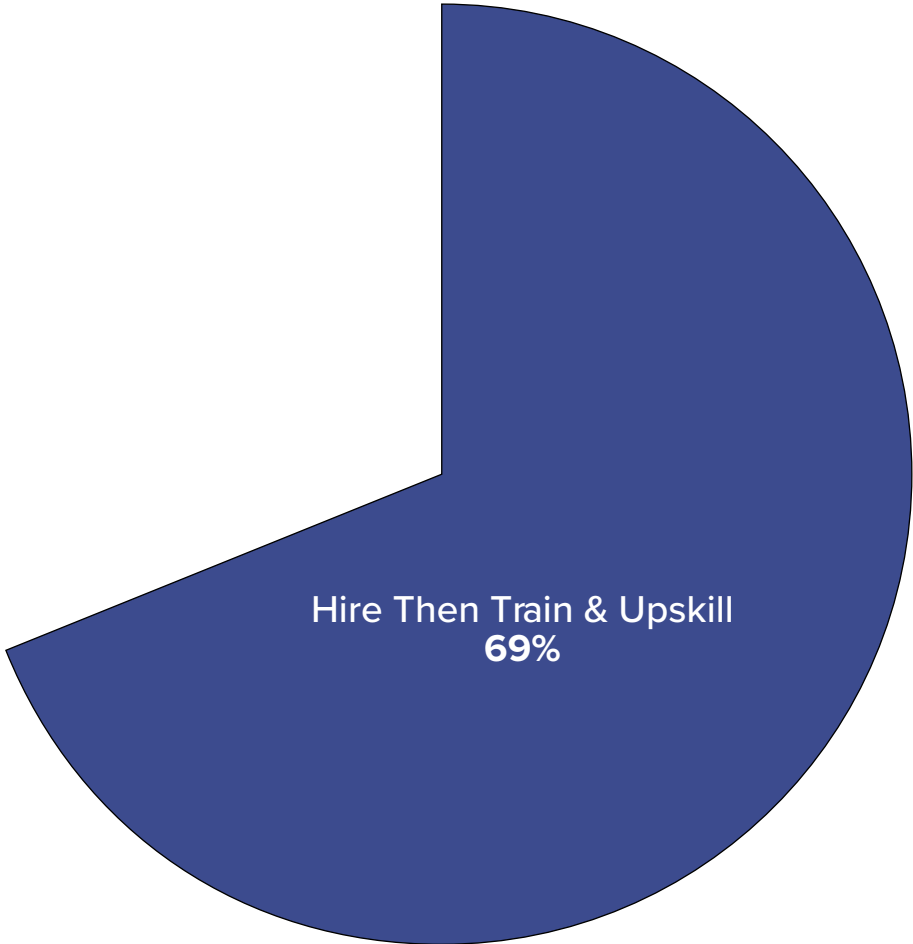
TECHNOLOGY NEEDS



TECHNICAL SKILL GAPS

TRAINING

Because many applicants lack job-specific technical skills, employers are increasingly focused on on-the-job training. Nearly 70% of respondent organizations are focused on hiring with the intent to train and upskill while on the job.



STUDY RECOMMENDATIONS

Our community needs to undertake a number of short, intermediate, and long-term solutions to address our labor issues and the shortage of workers with in-demand skills. Education providers, local governments, training organizations, and employers have an opportunity to work in collaboration to create new pathways and unique locally-tailored programs to ensure our region has a sustainable workforce and the ability to grow our economy. There is considerable value in conducting studies such as this on an ongoing basis to gauge both current areas of demand as well as changes and improvements over time.



STUDY RECOMMENDATIONS

SHORT-TERM SUGGESTIONS

IMMEDIATE

Develop a series of brief focused micro-credentials programs covering both personal and technical skills. Sessions should cover appropriate content in a brief timeframe, in a “workplace readiness” or “last-mile training” boot camp format. Target skills should be taught within the context of project-based learning and real-world case studies to foster a creative mindset in participants. Encouraging the development of creativity and innovation can be the overarching framework while integrating and reinforcing basic personal and technical skills. This series should be available as both a complete curriculum and as individual ‘a la carte’ sessions for employers to access in the most appropriate manner for the current needs of their workforce.

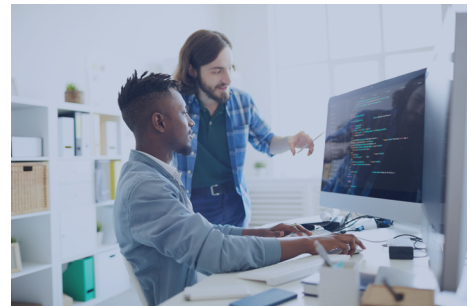
Micro-credential sessions should take an integrated approach to cover several content areas, including dependability, time management, basic math, basic computing, critical thinking, active listening, troubleshooting, and communication skills. These programs can integrate and reinforce the existing employer efforts to upskill workers once they have been hired.

STUDY RECOMMENDATIONS

MID-TERM SUGGESTION

2-3 YEARS

Consider development and expansion of job-related equipment training courses. Possible programs include heavy equipment operation, industrial control PLC certificates, SkyTrak forklift training, excavating training, rigging and signaling for construction, and a basic carpentry certificate. Explore agreements whereby private sector operators provide equipment to education and training providers in exchange for training workers.



LONG-TERM SUGGESTION

3-5 YEARS

Education providers and region partners collaborate on local community-based ways of developing a more robust local pipeline for skilled trades. Possible solutions include the reintroduction of shop class, expansion of career tech, increase guidance counseling, and full discussion of career pathing. These efforts can be combined with new and developing technology programs such as TC Codes and TC Cyber offered by 20Fathoms.



TRAVERSE CONNECT
202 East Grandview Parkway
Traverse City, MI 49684
traverseconnect.com

To advance the economic vitality of the Grand Traverse Region through the growth of family-sustaining careers.