



Workforce Preparation for the 21st Century

A Survey of Employer Needs in Stanislaus County

**A Report Prepared by the Center for Public Policy Studies
at
California State University, Stanislaus**

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INTRODUCTION

For almost three decades, Stanislaus County has experienced the apparently contradictory phenomena of rapid job growth and high unemployment rates. Compared to state-wide averages and to coastal, metropolitan counties, wage rates in Stanislaus County tend to be low and poverty rates tend to be high. Additionally, as indicated by such measures as average educational attainment level and standardized test scores, the level of workforce preparation appears to be low relative to state-wide levels and to coastal, metropolitan counties¹. The importance of worker training programs becomes clear when faced with these conditions.

A highly educated and trained workforce is no longer a luxury but a necessity for businesses in the current competitive environment. Communities and regions will need to have a quality workforce in order to attract new businesses. Existing firms will also need high quality labor if they want to continue to thrive in the competitive, global economy.

Workforce training is also seen as a tool to fight poverty. This is becoming critical for many communities in the face of welfare reform. Increasingly, work is viewed as a central component of any strategy to improve the economic well being of people in poverty. Policy makers recognize that for a work-based strategy to succeed, it must be accompanied by workforce development.

It is important to note, however, that improving the job skills of the county's workforce will not, by itself, solve the employment problem. Nor will better job skills inevitably increase wages. The county must also attract more industry with high paying jobs. Such industries, however, will not relocate to Stanislaus County until an appropriately trained workforce exists. Communities around the country are discovering that partnerships,

which include educators, job training providers, policy makers, and businesses, can be effective in developing appropriate strategies and programs to deal with this conundrum.

Ultimately, what must happen is the development of a coordinated, county-wide (and region-wide), strategic plan for simultaneously improving job skills and retaining and creating high paying jobs. This report focuses on the workforce training part of the equation. *Critical Links: Employment Growth, Unemployment, and Welfare-to-Work* offers a more comprehensive analysis of the county's economy and includes recommendations about the economic development side of the equation.

Partnerships among a number of organizations have evolved to tackle issues of workforce preparation in Stanislaus County. One such partnership involves Modesto Junior College, the Private Industry Council, the Community Services Agency, the Stanislaus County Office of Education, the Stanislaus Literacy Center, and the Employment Development Department. Working with the Center for Public Policy Studies at California State University, Stanislaus, this partnership embarked on a project to improve workforce training delivery through detailed and timely information and a coordinated response to employer needs.

The report that follows covers the second phase of the Workforce Preparation for the 21st Century study. The first phase of the project was conducted in the spring and early summer of 1997. The goals of the first phase were to develop a survey instrument and to convene meetings with area organizations involved in job training. In developing the survey instrument, researchers reviewed other worker training surveys and interviewed individuals responsible for hiring. The draft survey was sent to a small number of people who were also interviewed about the clarity of the survey.

Phase one ended with a report that included a final survey instrument along with a detailed description of the process used to develop the survey. The phase one report also

¹ See, *Critical Links: Employment Growth, Unemployment, and Welfare-to-Work*. Center for Public Policy Studies, California State University, Stanislaus 1998, for a comprehensive treatment of job growth,

included detailed summaries of three workforce preparation studies. These were included because they were particularly helpful in designing workforce surveys.

METHODOLOGY

Subsequent to phase I, members of the partnership made final changes in the survey instrument to reflect input from phase I participants. Three human resource directors were then interviewed to determine final question clarity and relevance.

A three-page survey was mailed to 4523 businesses and public agencies in the county; 207 employers completed and returned the questionnaire. The survey solicited information about hiring practices and experiences, predicted job openings, worker skills and skill deficiencies, interest in training programs, interest in business services, and recruitment practices, as well as two demographic items--the type of industry and the size of the firm (as measured by number of employees).

We anticipated a relatively low rate of return because employers were asked to identify themselves so those members of the workforce training partnership could contact them about their job training needs. To promote employer interest in the survey, the Modesto Bee carried an article describing the project. Additionally, 1776 firms with 20 or more employees who had not responded to the original mailing were targeted for a second mailing.

PARTICIPANTS' PROFILE

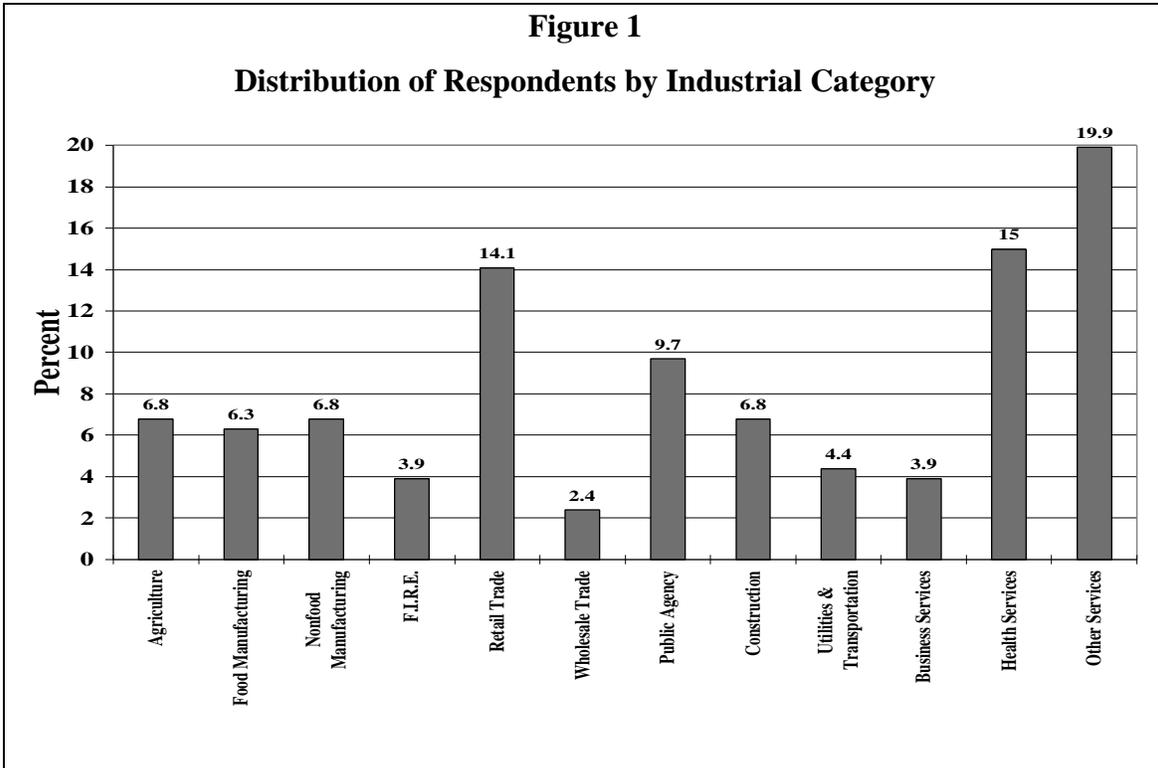
This section describes the 207 firms and agencies that completed and returned the surveys. This includes a description of the types of firms that responded by industry categories and firm size. It also includes information regarding future hiring projections and wage scales. In addition, data regarding certain aspects of recruiting practices were gathered.

Industry Make-up

unemployment, educational attainment levels, etc.

Employers were asked to place their firm into one of 13 industry categories. These categories correspond to the general Standard Industrial Classification system used by government agencies. **Four industrial categories dominated among the respondents: other services (19.9%), health services (15%), retail services (14.1%) and public agency (9.7%).** Consistent with government reporting practices, **manufacturing was divided into food and nonfood. When these two are combined, it becomes a significant respondent category as well at 13.1%.**

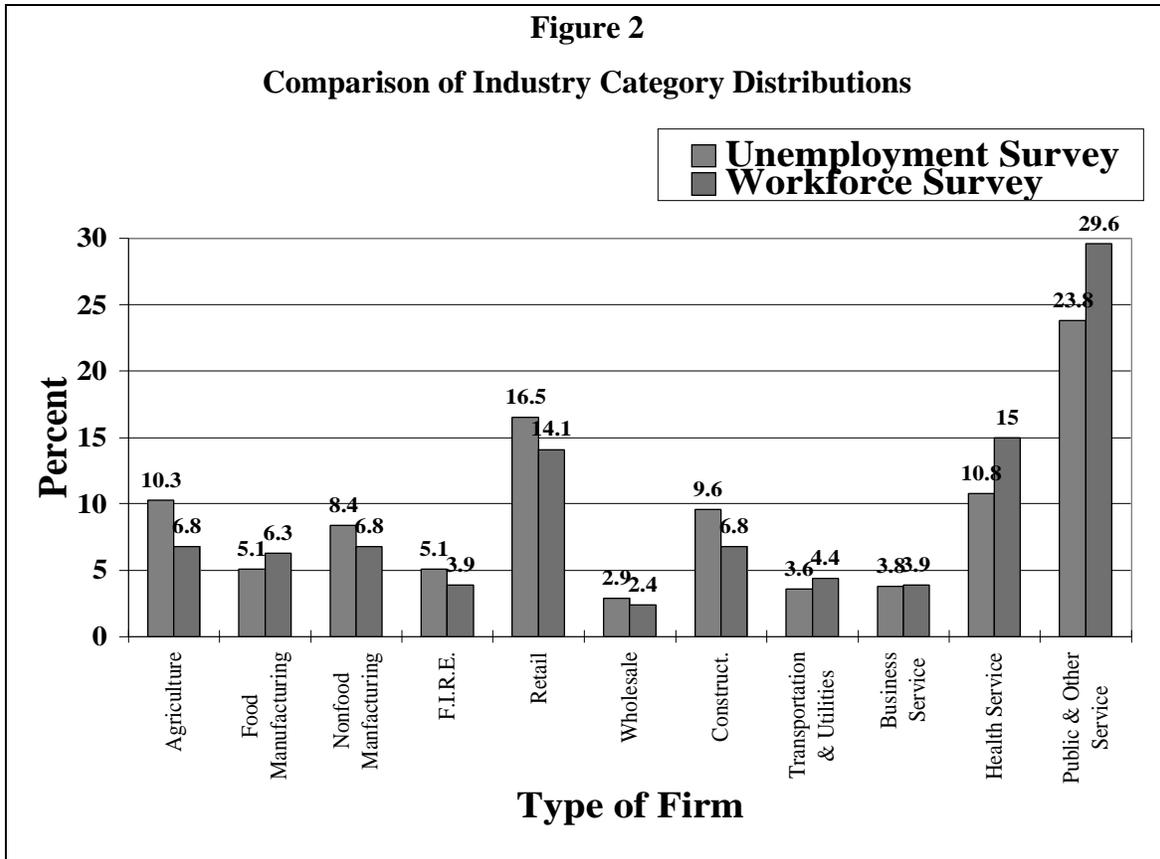
Figure 1 shows the distribution of responses by industrial category for this survey. Figure 2 provides a comparison of the response distribution for this survey with another survey



F.I.R.E.=Finance, Insurance, Real Estate

of all Stanislaus County employers. The second survey was undertaken in 1997 by the Center for Public Policy Studies as part of a study of unemployment and job growth in the county and had 592 respondents. We include the comparison to validate responses to this survey.

There are two important differences between the surveys, which must be noted. Respondents to the unemployment survey were guaranteed anonymity whereas respondents to the workforce survey were asked to identify themselves. The other difference is that in the unemployment survey the public agency and other services categories were collapsed into a single category. For comparison purposes, we aggregated the two categories for the workforce survey in Figure 2.



As the results in Figure 2 clearly illustrate, the general patterns are the same for the two surveys. The most notable differences are the larger number of responses to this survey from the “public and other services” and health services categories and the relatively small number of responses to this survey from the agriculture/agriculture service sector.

Firm Size

Figure 3 presents information on the distribution of respondents to this survey by the number of employees. By far, the two largest categories are firms with 20-49 and 10-19 employees. These two categories account for over 45% of all respondents.

As can be seen in Figure 4 below, the distribution of respondents to this survey by firm size is virtually identical to the distribution for the employer survey of the unemployment study. Consistent with the intent of this survey, there are proportionally more larger firms

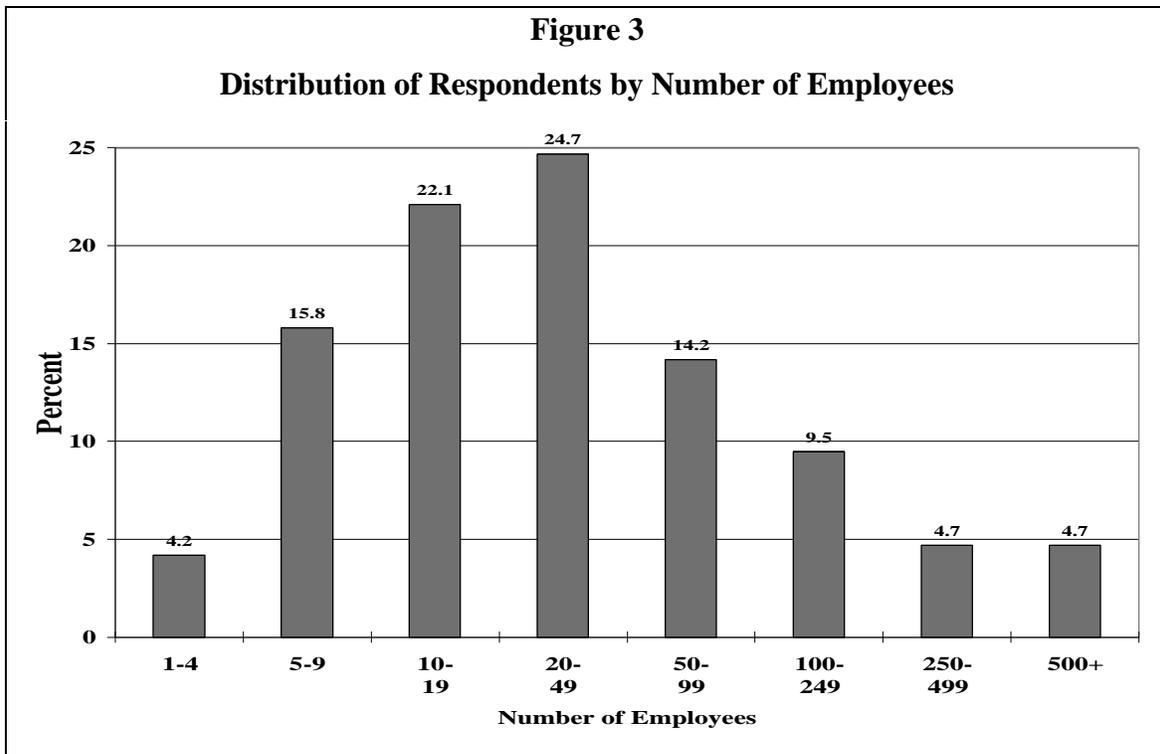
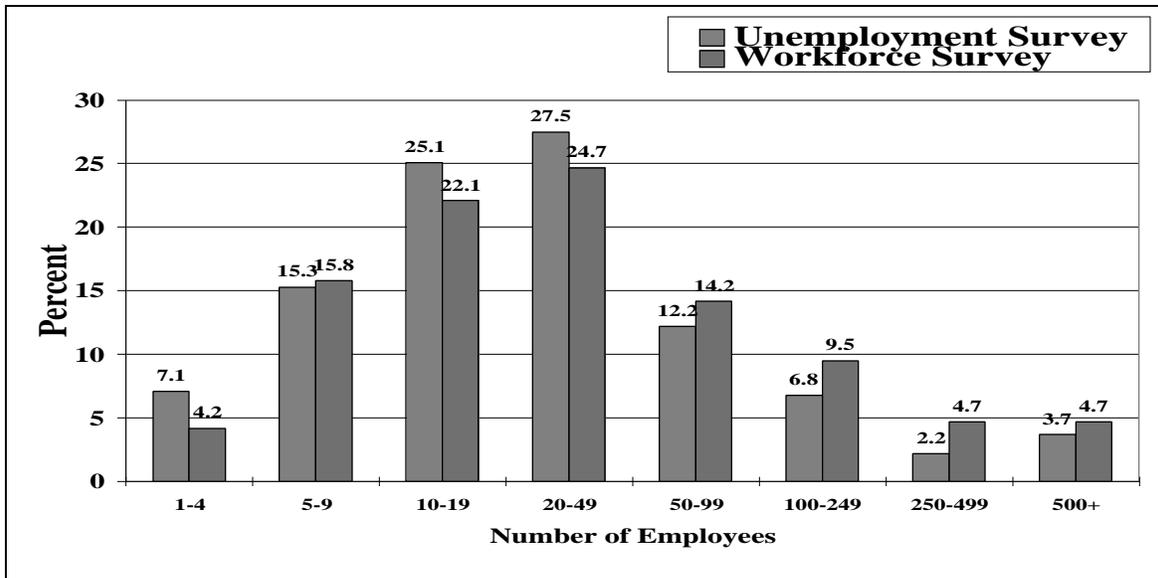


Figure 4
Comparison of Firm Size Distribution



and fewer smaller firms responding. This distribution pattern of firms is typical of the American economy: large numbers of small firms but most workers employed by medium-sized firms.

Future Hiring

Another feature of the profile of respondents to this survey is their anticipated future hiring. Questions regarding anticipated hiring included information about whether the new hires are likely to be part-time, full-time, and/or seasonal.

The questionnaire asked respondents to estimate the number of job openings they are likely to have over the next year and the next three years. Assuming that we interpret a no response as an indication the firm has no openings, then the information in Table 1

Table 1
Predicted Number of Openings in the Next Year (N)

Position	1-2	3-5	6-10	11-20	21+	No Response
Office Clerks	55	9	1	1	1	140
Warehouse/Factory Clerks	15	0	2	0	0	190
Secretaries	33	0	0	0	0	174

Retail Sales	15	5	6	0	1	180
Customer Service	34	10	7	1	2	153
Unskilled Labor	28	15	7	4	5	148
General Skilled Labor	25	10	10	2	5	155
Machinists	4	2	0	0	0	201
Mechanics	14	3	0	1	0	189
Computer Techs	18	1	1	0	0	187
Medical/lab Techs	6	1	0	0	0	200
Entry-level Admin	17	0	0	1	0	189
Electricians	6	1	0	0	0	200

clearly indicates that **most firms will not have any openings over the next twelve months**. In fact, for most positions, at least 80% of the employers did not respond. **General office clerks and customer service positions are the most likely to see openings over the next year.**

Fifty-one percent of the firms indicated they would be hiring part-time or seasonal employees. Very few responded to the next item on the questionnaire requesting them to indicate what percentage of these new hires would be part-time or seasonal for various positions. Of those who did respond, more intend to hire part-time than seasonal. Of the part-time hires, most will be in clerical and secondarily in unskilled labor and sales. Of the few who indicated they intend to do seasonal hiring, most will be in unskilled labor.

Certain situations, however, present interesting hiring possibilities. For instance, one firm indicated it would have 150 openings for unskilled labor, two firms indicated they would have at least 40 openings in customer service, and another business that it would have 50 openings in retail sales. (These firms include a food processor, a medical billing business, a car wash, and a service station.)

Table 2 presents the results for employer estimates regarding position openings over the next three years. As the data indicate, the number of firms which expect to have openings

is not much different. The number of firms estimating that they would have 1-2 openings for positions is actually smaller in Table 2 (203) than in Table 1 (270). There are more firms that expect a larger number of openings over the next three years. But once again few employers expect a large number of openings. Based on the responses to this survey, we can conclude that most employers anticipate very modest hiring in the near future.

Table 2
Predicted Number of Openings in the Next Three Years (N)

Position	1-2	3-5	6-10	11-20	21+	No Response
Office Clerks	46	13	4	3	2	139
Warehouse/Factory Clerks	12	4	0	2	0	189
Secretaries	34	10	0	0	0	163
Retail Sales	15	4	2	4	4	178
Customer Service	13	10	7	6	6	165
Unskilled Labor	9	13	10	5	8	162
General Skilled Labor	12	8	9	7	12	159
Machinists	6	3	0	0	1	198
Mechanics	6	6	3	0	0	192
Computer Techs	13	4	4	1	0	185
Medical/lab Techs	5	3	1	0	0	198
Entry-level Admin	23	5	0	0	2	177
Electricians	9	1	1	0	0	196

Expected Wage Scales

We asked employers to indicate the hourly wage range paid for each position.

Unfortunately, most did not respond. For those who did, the responses are shown in Table 3 below. One respondent for most categories included the very low pay of \$5.75.

In the unskilled laborer category, this was not an unusual response. For others it was. The column providing the modal or most frequent range is a better indicator of wage rates for most employers who responded. As can be seen, however, **the wage ranges can be quite large and most seem to be towards the low end.** Where very few responded we do not provide a modal range.

Table 3
Hourly Wage Range for Positions

Position	Total Range	Most Frequently Mentioned Range	No Response (%)
General Office Clerks	\$5.75-\$17.00	\$7.00-\$10.00	80.2
Warehouse/Factory Clerks	\$5.75-\$16.00	\$7.00-\$8.500	96.1
Secretaries	5.75-12.5	8.00-10.00	88.9
Retail Sales	\$5.75-\$10.00	\$5.75-6.50	95.2
Customer Service	\$5.75-\$13.00		97.2
Unskilled Labor	\$5.00-\$11.00	\$5.75-7.50	84.1
General Skilled Labor	\$5.75-\$24.00	\$5.75-\$14.00	87.4
Machinists	\$5.75-\$21.50		97.1
Mechanics	\$5.75-\$21.50	\$9.00-\$16.50	95.2
Computer Techs	\$5.75-\$17.00	\$10.00-\$15.00	96.1
Medical/lab Techs	\$6.00-\$20.00		94.2
Entry-level Administrative	\$5.75-\$26.00	\$12.50	93.7
Electricians	\$5.75-\$21.5		96.6

Recruiting

We asked employers where they do their employee recruiting. As shown in Table 4, employers in Stanislaus County use a broad array of sources for their hiring. Interestingly, **the most commonly used source is to recruit internally**; almost 3/4 indicate they use this frequently or occasionally. Informal networks, walk-up applicants, and other businesses in the industry are the next most frequently used hiring sources. A likely reason for this type of behavior is that many firms are too small to have human resource departments.

Approximately equal percentages utilize Modesto Junior College, EDD, temp. agencies, CSU, Stanislaus, and private employment agencies. The least used is the Internet. Others used somewhat infrequently include the Private Industry Council, commercial private schools, and local high schools.

Table 4
Sources for Recruiting Employees (%)

SOURCE	Frequently	Occasionally	Never	No Response
Modesto Junior College	12	38	42	8
Private Industry Council	4	30	59	6
Local High Schools	6	30	58	7
Commercial Technical Schools	6	24	61	9
Other Businesses in Industry	16	31	44	8
Private Employment Agencies	9	23	60	8
Employment Development Department	11	27	57	6
CSU, Stanislaus	10	26	56	9
Recruit Internally	39	33	24	4
Informal Networks	26	30	38	7
Hire Walk-up Applicants	23	31	39	7
Internet	3	9	78	10
Temp Agencies	11	26	54	9

Tables 5 and 5a (below) provide recruitment information by type of industry. No discernible pattern emerges from the numbers. Most industries and businesses seem to spread their recruiting from among the resources and in the proportion identified in Table 4. A few specific patterns do stand out. For instance, retail more heavily recruits internally and from walk-up applicants, local high schools, other businesses in the

industry, and Modesto Junior College than other sources. Public agencies follow a similar pattern except that they more frequently recruit from CSU, Stanislaus and much less frequently hire from local high schools and walk-up applicants.

FROM THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR RESEARCH ON VOCATIONAL EDUCATION (NCVRE)

Proposed Principles for New Federal Legislation

- 1.** The increasing demand for continual learning throughout the working career implies that career-related education and training programs will be most effective if they combine academic and vocational content, integrate work-based with school-based learning, and ensure that each program can lead to more advanced programs.
- 2.** In secondary schools, all students--including those who expect to attend four-year colleges or universities, as well as students at risk of not completing high school--can benefit from having the option to pursue a career-related course of study that integrates academic and vocational content with work-based learning.
- 3.** Postsecondary institutions should continue to broaden and deepen tech-prep and other occupational programs, combining vocational and academic content and strengthening connections with the labor market.
- 4.** Teachers, administrators, counselors, and other staff need time and support to develop programs that meet these objectives.
- 5.** Career-oriented information, development, and counseling services ought to be improved, expanded, and integrated into the curriculum.
- 6.** Employers must be mobilized to collaborate in providing work-related education and training.
- 7.** Performance measures and standards should continue to be used to gauge the success of programs and guide their continuous improvement; these program measures should incorporate newly developing academic and occupational skill standards for individuals.
- 8.** While Federal funds should be distributed in greater amounts to low-income areas, states should be encouraged to develop their own programs of technical assistance for program improvement, including the possibility of targeting funds on high-performing programs.
- 9.** Collaboration among career-related education and training programs in different institutions, or with different funding sources, is desirable and can be facilitated if all programs adhere to the same principles, such as those stated in principle 1 above.

Table 5
Number of Respondents Who Frequently and Occasionally Recruit From Source

Source	Agriculture	Food Manufacturing	Nonfood Manufacturing	F.I.R.E.	Retail	Wholesale	Public Agency
Modesto Junior College	5	5	9	2	16	2	11
Private Industry Council	2	3	5	5	11	2	9
Local High Schools	5	5	7	0	18	2	5
Commercial Technical Schools	2	2	6	2	6	2	7
Other Businesses in Industry	5	2	9	4	17	2	10
Private Employment Agencies	6	4	7	5	8	2	5
E.D.D.	6	7	8	3	3	2	7
CSU Stanislaus	4	5	6	2	7	2	13
Recruit Internally	11	9	11	5	21	3	8
Informal Networks	8	6	8	4	13	1	9
Walk-up Applicants	9	6	8	2	20	2	5
Internet	1	2	2	0	0	1	5
Temp. Agencies	6	3	9	5	5	3	8

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Effective economic development strategies depend upon employers' ability to find qualified employees. This section describes information regarding the difficulty firms and agencies face in filling positions. This section also presents data about problems employers perceive with the new job applicants and with their existing workforce.

A lack of qualified workers will constrain the region's ability to attract new businesses. To determine the difficulty local firms and agencies have in filling positions, one survey item asked respondents to indicate the extent of difficulty they have in finding qualified applicants for a variety of positions. Table 6 below presents the results.

The first point to be noted is that **many positions are relevant only for a relatively small number of employers**. This is particularly true for warehouse/factory clerks, retail sales, machinists, mechanics, medical/lab technicians, and electricians.

The second general point is that there is a wide range of experiences. With the exception of machinists and medical/lab technicians, some employers have a relatively easy time filling the position while others experience more difficulty.

The third general point is that, by and large, **the more skill the position requires the more difficult it is to fill**. When response categories 1 and 2 are combined as "relatively easy" and categories 3 and 4 as "relatively difficult," a majority of firms for which a position exists have a relatively easy time filling the following: general office clerks, warehouse/factory clerks, secretaries, and unskilled laborers. Perhaps the one exception here is that a majority also has a "relatively easy" time filling entry-level administrative positions. Conversely, the following positions are "relatively difficult" to fill: retail sales, general skilled labor, customer service, machinists, mechanics, computer technicians, medical/lab technicians, and electricians.

Table 6
Extent of Difficulty in Finding Qualified Applicants (%)

Type of Positions	Not at All Difficult	2	3	Extremely Difficult	Not Applicable
General Office Clerks	15.1	28.8	22.9	3.9	29.3
Warehouse/Factory Clerks	6.4	10.3	7.4	1.0	75.0
Secretaries	5.4	28.6	22.7	5.4	37.9
Retail Sales	3.9	10.2	9.3	5.9	70.7
Customer Service	3.4	20.4	16.5	11.2	48.5
Unskilled Labor	25.9	18.0	7.3	1.5	47.3
General Skilled Labor	6.3	22.0	23.4	8.3	40.0
Machinists	0.5	3.4	5.9	3.9	86.2
Mechanics	1.5	5.4	10.3	9.8	73.0
Computer Technicians	2.5	9.8	13.7	10.3	63.7
Medical/lab Technicians	0.5	3.4	6.4	4.4	85.2
Entry-level Administrative	6.9	16.3	12.8	6.4	57.6
Electricians	1.5	2.0	6.4	4.4	85.7

A related set of questions asked employers to indicate the degree of problem they have with applicants and current employees with regard to such concerns as drug use, personal appearance, work ethic, wage expectations, and several kinds of skills. The results are presented below in Table 7. **Most employers find that most applicants evidence problems**--though more often they view the degree of the problem as minor rather than major.

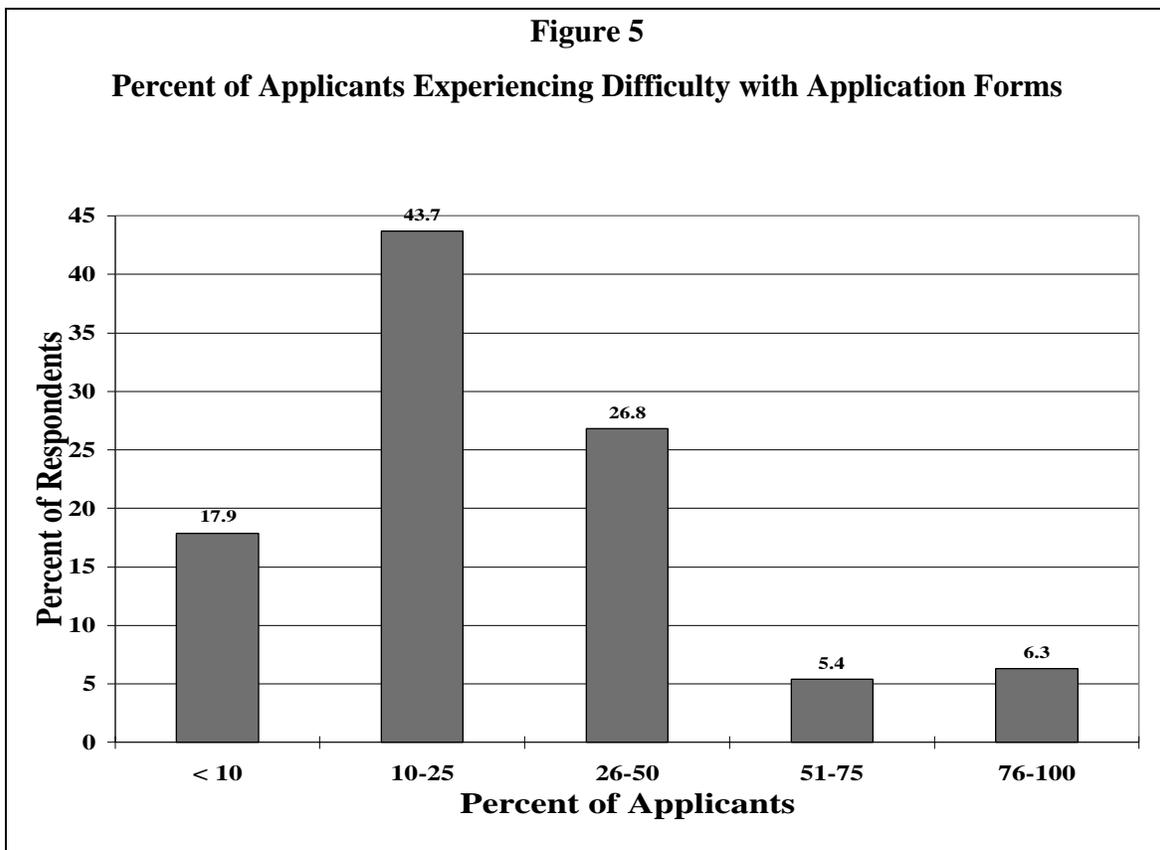
Table 7
Extent of Problems Among Applicants and Current Employees

Type of Problem	Applicants			Current Employees		
	% Rated as Major	% Rated as Minor	% Not a Problem	% Rated as Major	% Rated as Minor	% Not a Problem
Drug Use	23.7	36.4	39.9	3.5	21.4	75.1
Personal Appearance	20.0	55.5	24.5	2.5	35.7	61.8
Poor Work Habits	42.6	39.6	17.8	11.1	58.1	30.8
Poor Reading Ability	31.0	35.0	34.0	6.1	32.3	61.6
Poor Math Ability	27.2	34.2	38.6	8.0	33.2	58.8
Poor Technical Skills	27.3	38.9	33.8	7.6	31.3	61.1
Poor Office Skills	22.8	43.0	34.2	5.7	27.8	66.5
Poor English Skills	25.9	41.8	32.3	8.5	32.7	58.3
Poor Communication Skills	31.5	47.5	21.0	7.0	51.3	41.7
Expect Unrealistic Wages	24.0	47.0	29.0	9.0	39.7	51.3
Poor Problem Solving Skills	27.8	43.9	28.3	10.1	46.7	43.2
Poor Teamwork Skills	25.4	42.6	32.0	8.5	34.7	56.8

The remaining percentage did not respond

Consistent with the responses from other surveys, both local and national, the most prevalent concern expressed by employers is with the labor force’s work ethic. More employers rated poor work habits as a major problem (42.6%) than as a minor problem (39.6%) and only 17.8% responded that it wasn’t a problem at all. Beyond that, employers are generally concerned about the basic skill level of potential employees, particularly in reading, math, and general communication. Again, this is consistent with another survey undertaken by the Center for Public Policy Studies as well as by surveys undertaken by the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM).

Generally, **employers seem to feel that their screening and training programs are successful.** When assessments of current employees are compared with applicants, the percentage of respondents indicating their employees display “major problems” drops dramatically and the percentage indicating that the problem does not exist rises dramatically. **In only three areas are a majority of employers still concerned about their employees: work habits, general communication skills, and problem solving.**



Additional evidence from the survey supports the idea that too many applicants possess poor basic skills. Two survey items focused on difficulties applicants have when filling out job applications. We asked our respondents to indicate if they require applicants to complete application forms on site. Fifty-three percent said yes. We then asked respondents to estimate the percentage of these candidates who evidence difficulties completing the application form. The results are displayed in Figure 5 above.

Of those who require forms to be completed on the premises, **more than two-thirds (70.5%) estimate that between 10 percent and 50 percent of the applicants experience difficulties.** This would suggest a fairly significant problem with basic skills of writing, reading, and possibly of English comprehension.

Concern about basic skill levels of current employees was the focus of an additional item in the questionnaire. The survey listed a number of workplace activities, such as material waste handling, customer service, and filling out forms, and asked our respondents to indicate whether in any of these areas activities have been adversely affected by employees with functional illiteracy or low-level literacy skills. Table 8 below presents the results.

Table 8
Activities Affected by Poor Literacy Skills (%)

Activity	Major Problem	Minor Problem	No Problem	No Response
Material Waste Handling	3.9	26.1	61.8	8.2
Integration of New Equipment	9.2	41.5	41.5	7.7
Integration of New Processes	11.1	49.3	31.4	8.2
Reading Company Communications	10.1	35.7	46.4	7.7
Customer Service	9.7	40.6	43.5	6.3
Filling Out Forms and Reports	14.0	44.9	34.3	6.8
Quality and Accuracy of Work	16.4	51.2	26.6	5.8
Safety	4.8	35.3	54.1	5.8
Following Verbal Directions	10.1	45.4	38.2	6.3
Amount of Work Completed	9.7	43.0	40.6	6.8
Poor Self Image	8.2	35.7	48.3	7.7
Unable to Progress to Higher Positions	11.6	45.4	36.2	6.8

In most cases, the majority of employers are experiencing some degree of difficulty with the workforce. Again, this would suggest training needs in the basic skills area.

The data in this section suggest that economic development efforts would benefit from improved workforce training. Firms in the county report having difficulty in filling positions that require more skill. In addition, firms report problems related to poor basic skill levels: these include basic reading, writing, math, and work ethic.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING NEEDS

One of the reasons for cooperation among workforce development specialists is to create more effective means for training workers. A central purpose of the survey questionnaire was to obtain information about a firm's education and training needs. This information can be helpful in tailoring and revising programs to more fully meet employer needs.

Several of the items already discussed provide us with information about problems and deficiencies experienced by employers. These help us understand some of the county's workforce training needs and shed light on some of the hurdles to effective economic development. In this section of the report, we discuss additional information related to employee education and training programs and delivery.

Employers were given a list of programs and asked to indicate their interest in the programs. The two tables below list all of the categories and the percentages indicating an interest in a particular program. The responses provide an indication of the demand for new or continuing programs.

Among the **programs eliciting significant interest** were communication skills (46%), team building (45%), employee health/safety/wellness (36%), basic leadership skills (33%), and sales/customer service training (33%). **Basic skill programs also elicited notable levels of interest:** basic writing programs (29%), basic math (28%), and basic reading (26%).

The responses indicate that a program package in computer education also would be of interest to employers. Thirty-eight percent of respondents were interested in word processing, 34% expressed interest in spreadsheets, 22% were interested in computer programming, and 26% were interested in computer networking.

Further evidence of the importance of computer and other advanced technology training comes from a survey item that asked employers the extent to which their employees will require skills to cope with changing technology. Overwhelmingly, employers said that a majority of their workforce needs such skills. Of those responding to the question, 49% said that at least 2/3 of their employees need such skills, 41% said that at least 3/4 need the skills, and 29% said all their workers need the skills.

We then asked our respondents to indicate what percentage lack the skills to cope with changing technology. Of those responding, 28% believe that all their employees have the capacity to cope. Forty-five percent believe that no more than a quarter lack the skills, 19% believe that between 1/4 and 1/2 lack the skills, and 8% indicate that a majority of their employees lack the skills. Based on the data to date it is not possible to discern any pattern between firm size or firm type and the distribution of responses.

A training package in business skills appears to be another promising area. General business skill training was of interest to 28% of respondents. More specifically, 40% expressed interest in management/supervisory skills, 28% were interested in advanced management skills, 25% in bookkeeping/accounting, and 20% were interested in marketing/advertising.

Table 9
Employer Interest in Training Programs (%)

Programs	Interested	Not Interested
Communication Skills	46	54
Team Building	45	55
Management/Supervisory Skills	40	60
Word Processing	38	62
Employee Health/Safety/Wellness	36	64
Spreadsheets	34	66
Sales/Customer Service Training	33	67
Basic Leadership Skills	33	67
Basic Writing	29	71
Basic Math	28	72
Basic Business Skills	28	72
Advanced Management Skills	28	72
Basic Reading	26	74
Computer Networking	26	74
Bookkeeping/Accounting	25	75
Computer Programming	22	78
Marketing/Advertising	20	80
Professional Continuing Education	19	81
Technical Reading/Writing	19	81
Hazardous Material Training	19	81
Advanced Writing Skills	16	84

Table 9a
Employer Interest in Training Programs (%)

Programs	Interested	Not Interested
Web Design	16	84
English As a Second Language	16	84
Internet Navigation	15	85
Data Analysis	13	87
Mechanics	13	87
Computer Repair	9	91
Graphics/Design Technology	8	91
Health Technology	8	92
Industrial Maintenance	7	93
Food Production and Hospitality	7	93
Agricultural Technology	7	93
Multimedia Technology	6	94
Industrial Technology	6	94
Industrial Automation	5	95
Waste/Water Technology	5	95
Citizenship Courses	5	95

We also wanted to know if the firms themselves offer any of these training programs. Rarely do they. Employers reported that they do not offer any programs in 12 of the categories. Another 18 categories had fewer than 6 firms offering programs.

There were a small number of programs that were offered by more than 10 firms. Training in management/supervisory skills were offered by 16 firms. Team building programs were offered by 19 firms. Sales/customer service training programs were offered by 15 firms. Hazardous material training was provided by 11 firms and 21 firms offered programs in employee health/safety/wellness.

Table 10
Assessment of Training Delivery Methods (%)

Method	Best Meets Needs	2	3	Worst Method	No Response
Off-site Training	16.0	28.3	23.5	18.7	13.4
On-site Training	42.3	26.5	10.1	9.5	11.6
Interactive Video	15.7	27.0	25.4	14.6	17.3
Computer-based Training	13.1	21.3	29.5	18.6	16.9
On-line/Internet	10.4	11.0	34.1	26.4	18.1
Pre-packaged Video/Workbook	12.0	32.8	22.4	15.3	17.5
During Weekday Hours	22.2	34.4	16.9	12.7	13.8
In the Evening	16.3	26.6	22.3	19.6	15.2
On Weekends	8.7	21.3	21.3	31.1	17.5
During Off-shift Hours	11.4	18.9	23.8	27.6	18.4
T.V. Courses	8.2	24.6	23.0	26.2	18.0

Another aspect of improving education and training efforts is to develop delivery methods that employers and their employees can use. Table 10 above provides the results from a question about preferences for types of delivery methods. Not surprisingly, **on-site training was the method responded to most favorably by employers.** Beyond that,

training providers will probably find the information in this table somewhat frustrating. For instance, when queried about the best time to deliver training, there was no consensus. Weekday hours is the period most preferred but a majority did not rate even that first or second. Interactive video and pre-packaged videos with workbooks also received significant percentages of favorable responses.

OTHER PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

In addition to obtaining information about education and training programs, the survey also sought to elicit information about employer interest in other programs and services. One item on the questionnaire asked respondents to indicate their level of interest in a variety of services provided by One-Stop Centers. Table 11 presents the results.

The level of interest appears surprisingly low, particularly since the survey does not request any sort of commitment to actually using the service. **The results suggest that a significant public education effort ought to be undertaken to inform businesses about the services and their benefits.**

The three areas that exhibited the strongest levels of interest are workforce skills training, skills testing/assessment for new employees, and pre-screening of employee candidates. All three had over forty percent of responses in the interested categories. Skills testing and pre-screening may complement each other quite well. Interest in workforce skills training further supports underscoring employer concern about basic skill levels. Size of firm has some bearing on responses. The smallest firms were generally the least interested. The most interest came from firms with between 10 and 49 employees.

Type of industry had a stronger influence on interest levels. The least interested in one-stop programs or services were utilities and transportation. In fact, on no occasion did any firm in these two categories indicate much interest. Firms in business services also exhibited low levels of interest.

Table 11
Employer Interest in One-Stop Center Services (%)

Type of Service	Very Interested	2	3	Not Interested
Business Planning	13.9	13.4	16.0	56.7
Gov't Financial Assistance	10.2	6.4	11.8	71.7
Information on Employee Benefits	13.8	18.6	16.5	51.1
Information on Loan Programs	9.6	5.9	17.1	67.4
Local/State Regulation Assistance	8.0	17.0	16.0	60.0
Simplified Permit Processing	12.4	12.9	11.3	63.4
Pre-screening Employee Candidates	24.2	25.8	17.9	32.1
Information About Available Expansion Sites	5.5	4.9	17.6	72.0
Marketing and Advertising Programs	15.8	17.4	15.3	51.6
Financial Management Programs	10.2	16.0	16.6	57.2
Information About Business-Oriented Services	8.8	17.6	19.8	53.8
On-the-job Training Subsidies for New Employees	17.9	23.7	15.8	42.6
Workforce Skills Training	19.0	27.5	14.8	38.6
Skills Testing/Assessment for New Employees	21.6	22.6	18.4	37.3
Skills Testing/Assessment for Current Employees	14.4	18.7	20.9	46.0

By far the most interest in the one-stop services came from other services, health services, public agencies, and retail trade, in that order. Firms in these areas exhibited significant interest in all services. Construction and nonfood manufacturing indicated moderately high levels of interest.

The programs with the narrowest range of interest were information about loan programs and information about expansion sites. Information about loan programs drew interest only from nonfood manufacturers and retail trade while information about expansion sites was of interest to firms in finance, insurance, real estate and construction, and public agencies. Information about government financial assistance and local/state regulation assistance also received a narrow range of interest, mostly from public agencies and firms in construction and other services.

Employers were asked about their interest in another set of programs and services. Results are presented in Table 12.

Responses indicate little interest in these programs and services. One must remember that most businesses in Stanislaus County are relatively small and do not have the resources to be donating time, services, or equipment. And, in fact, firm size did have a bearing on the responses. Firms of 1-4 employees never expressed much interest and firms of 5-9 employees expressed some but generally limited interest. The largest firms expressed interest in school-to-work and student internship programs and in hosting worksite visits but very little interest in anything else.

Table 12
Employer Interest in Programs and Services (%)

Program/Service	Very Interested	2	3	4	Need More Information	No Response
Welfare-to-work Programs	7.7	12.1	12.6	43.5	3.9	20.3
Work Experience	7.7	16.4	22.7	33.3	5.3	14.5
Donating Equipment for Vocational Programs	3.9	8.7	9.2	58.0	5.8	14.5
Donating Services for Vocational Programs	3.9	6.3	11.1	57.5	12.6	8.7
Serving in an Advisory Capacity in Voc. Ed. Curriculum Design	5.8	11.6	6.8	55.6	5.8	14.5
School-to-Work	8.7	20.8	18.4	35.7	3.4	13.0
Student Internships	10.1	19.8	13.5	39.6	3.4	13.5
Worksite Visits for Students	9.2	18.4	17.4	41.5	1.0	12.6
Teacher Internships	5.8	6.3	10.1	58.9	1.0	17.9

Consistent with the results above in regards to one-stop centers, the most interest came from firms in the size ranges of 10-49. Firms in the range between 50 and 249 employees expressed a moderate degree of interest. Programs receiving the widest range of support were school-to-work, student internships, and hosting worksite visits. The programs and services receiving the narrowest range of support were donating services to vocational education programs, donating equipment, and teacher internships.

The same three programs--school-to-work, student internships, and hosting worksite visits--received the broadest range of interest in terms of different types of industry. The narrowest range of interest was expressed for donating services to vocational programs, providing teacher internships, and donating equipment. The overall distribution of expressions of interest was similar as for one-stop centers. Firms in other services and health services expressed most interest. The least interest was expressed by firms in food manufacturing, wholesale trade, utilities, and business services.

While there was only small interest in welfare-to-work programs, a slight majority (52%) of employers indicated they would be interested in hiring or training a pre-screened welfare recipient for some entry level positions. More than three-quarters (78%) of public agencies said they would be willing to hire welfare recipients.

Many employers regard pre-testing of all applicants as an important part of their hiring process. Forty-seven percent of respondents indicated they pre-test applicants. A majority of firms in manufacturing (72%), public agencies (74%), construction (64%), and health services (55%) pre-test those applying for jobs. Literacy (31%), drug use (30%), math skills (22%), and physical abilities (21%) were the areas where pre-tests were most often given. There is a modest relationship between firm size and pre-testing with a slight tendency for larger firms to engage in pre-testing. No significant relationship between firm type and pre-testing existed.

CONCLUSION

Based on the information provided by respondents about the number of employees at the firm and the type of firm, respondents to this survey are representative of all businesses

and public agencies in the county. Industry size and industry types are important factors in explaining the distribution of responses for some information.

Projected growth rates, interest in one-stop center services, and interest in other programs and services are all affected by firm size. Industry type has a noticeable impact on sources of recruitment, interest in one-stop center services, and interest in other programs and services. Of course, industry type also has some bearing on other aspects of recruitment practices and has some bearing on the types of positions for which the industry will be recruiting in the future.

Most employers do not foresee growth in their workforce over the next three years. Those who do, foresee very modest growth. A very few employers, however, anticipate significant expansion.

Employers in Stanislaus County use a broad array of sources for their hiring. The most commonly used source is to recruit internally; almost 3/4 indicate they use this frequently or occasionally. This explains the manner in which many upper level positions are filled. Walk-up applicants, informal networks, and other businesses in the industry are the next most frequently used hiring sources. The least used is the Internet. Others used somewhat infrequently include the Private Industry Council, commercial private schools, and private employment agencies.

Other than for unskilled labor and general office clerks, all industries expressed concern with the ability to hire qualified applicants. More than 80% of employers view the work ethic of the county's workforce as a problem. Even among their own employees, more than 2/3 of employers see work ethic as a major or minor problem. While employers appear to be generally critical of the skills and attitudes of the general workforce, a majority of employers are satisfied with their own employees except in three areas: work ethic, problem-solving skills, and general communication skills.

Consistent with their concerns about employee work attitudes and skills, employers indicate that more education and job training for their employees are needed. While concern is widespread, it is not at the alarm level. Most employers believe that some of their workers are experiencing problems due to lack of skills and/or appropriate work attitudes but in most cases the problems are seen as presenting more minor than major difficulties.

Many firms indicated an interest in programs related to technology and business skills such as marketing. These are areas that training providers may want to emphasize.

Generally, interest in one-stop services and in other programs and services seems unusually low. However, a fairly significant level of interest was expressed for workforce skills training, pre-screening of employee candidates, school-to-work, student internships, and worksite visits. Other programs and services received modest to very little levels of interest. However, as one might expect, firms of between 10 and 49 employees indicated the highest amount of interest. This ought to be encouraging because, especially for the one-stop centers, this presumably would be where the interest would be predicted. Very small firms typically are not in a position to either need the service or to easily avail themselves of it while very large firms generally deal with the concern in-house.

Public policy makers and public agency staff who deal with employment and economic development issues will find a good deal of information in this report to ponder. While little in this report likely leads to dramatically new or different thinking, much in this report helps define the details and specifics of firm behavior and firm attitudes and concerns in Stanislaus County with regard to workforce training issues. We believe that this county-specific information will help facilitate the process of economic development in Stanislaus County based on a coordinated plan of workforce preparation and the retention and attraction of well-paying jobs.

FROM THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR RESEARCH ON VOCATIONAL EDUCATION (NCVRE)

Proposed Principles for New Federal Legislation

- 1.** The increasing demand for continual learning throughout the working career implies that career-related education and training programs will be most effective if they combine academic and vocational content, integrate work-based with school-based learning, and ensure that each program can lead to more advanced programs.
- 2.** In secondary schools, all students--including those who expect to attend four-year colleges or universities, as well as students at risk of not completing high school--can benefit from having the option to pursue a career-related course of study that integrates academic and vocational content with work-based learning.
- 3.** Postsecondary institutions should continue to broaden and deepen tech-prep and other occupational programs, combining vocational and academic content and strengthening connections with the labor market.
- 4.** Teachers, administrators, counselors, and other staff need time and support to develop programs that meet these objectives.
- 5.** Career-oriented information, development, and counseling services ought to be improved, expanded, and integrated into the curriculum.
- 6.** Employers must be mobilized to collaborate in providing work-related education and training.
- 7.** Performance measures and standards should continue to be used to gauge the success of programs and guide their continuous improvement; these program measures should incorporate newly developing academic and occupational skill standards for individuals.
- 8.** While Federal funds should be distributed in greater amounts to low-income areas, states should be encouraged to develop their own programs of technical assistance for program improvement, including the possibility of targeting funds on high-performing programs.
- 9.** Collaboration among career-related education and training programs in different institutions, or with different funding sources, is desirable and can be facilitated if all programs adhere to the same principles, such as those stated in principle 1 above.

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Table 5a
Number of Respondents Who Frequently or Occasionally Recruit From Source

Source	Construction	Utilities	Transportation	Business Services	Health Services	Other Services
Modesto Junior College	4	1	5	4	18	19
Private Industry Council	3	0	4	1	11	14
Local High Schools	4	0	1	0	12	13
Commercial Technical Schools	3	1	2	2	16	9
Other Businesses in Industry	9	1	4	3	14	17
Private Employment Agencies	2	1	3	1	15	7
E.D.D.	4	1	3	1	13	14
CSU Stanislaus	1	1	2	5	8	20
Recruit Internally	6	1	5	4	24	31
Informal Networks	10	1	2	5	18	28
Walk-up Applicants	10	1	5	4	13	24
Internet	0	1	1	2	4	5
Temp. Agencies	6	1	0	3	18	8

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