

# Final Report

## North Dakota Workforce Ecosystem Assessment

June 10, 2025





# Approach



## ASSESSMENT CONTEXT

Commerce aims to bolster the North Dakota workforce ecosystem by conducting a comprehensive assessment to gain a snapshot of the current-state landscape and to understand how current ecosystem programs and services operate.

### NORTH DAKOTA BY THE NUMBERS



**2<sup>nd</sup> Highest Labor Participation** rate in the country at 69%<sup>1</sup>



**3<sup>rd</sup> Lowest Unemployment** rate in the country, averaging 1.4% lower than the national average<sup>2</sup>



**9+** agencies overseeing workforce development programs



**80+** workforce development Programs



**~16,300** job openings<sup>3</sup>

### KEY OUTPUTS



Conduct a Comprehensive Workforce Ecosystem Maturity Assessment



Engage Stakeholders for In-depth Insights



Develop Strategic Recommendations



Create Strategic Plans for WDC and WIOA Core Programs

<sup>1</sup>[ND Job Service LMI, December 2024](#)

<sup>2</sup>[United States Senate Joint Economic Committee, December 2024](#)

<sup>3</sup> [NDLMI Job Opening Statistics March 2025](#)

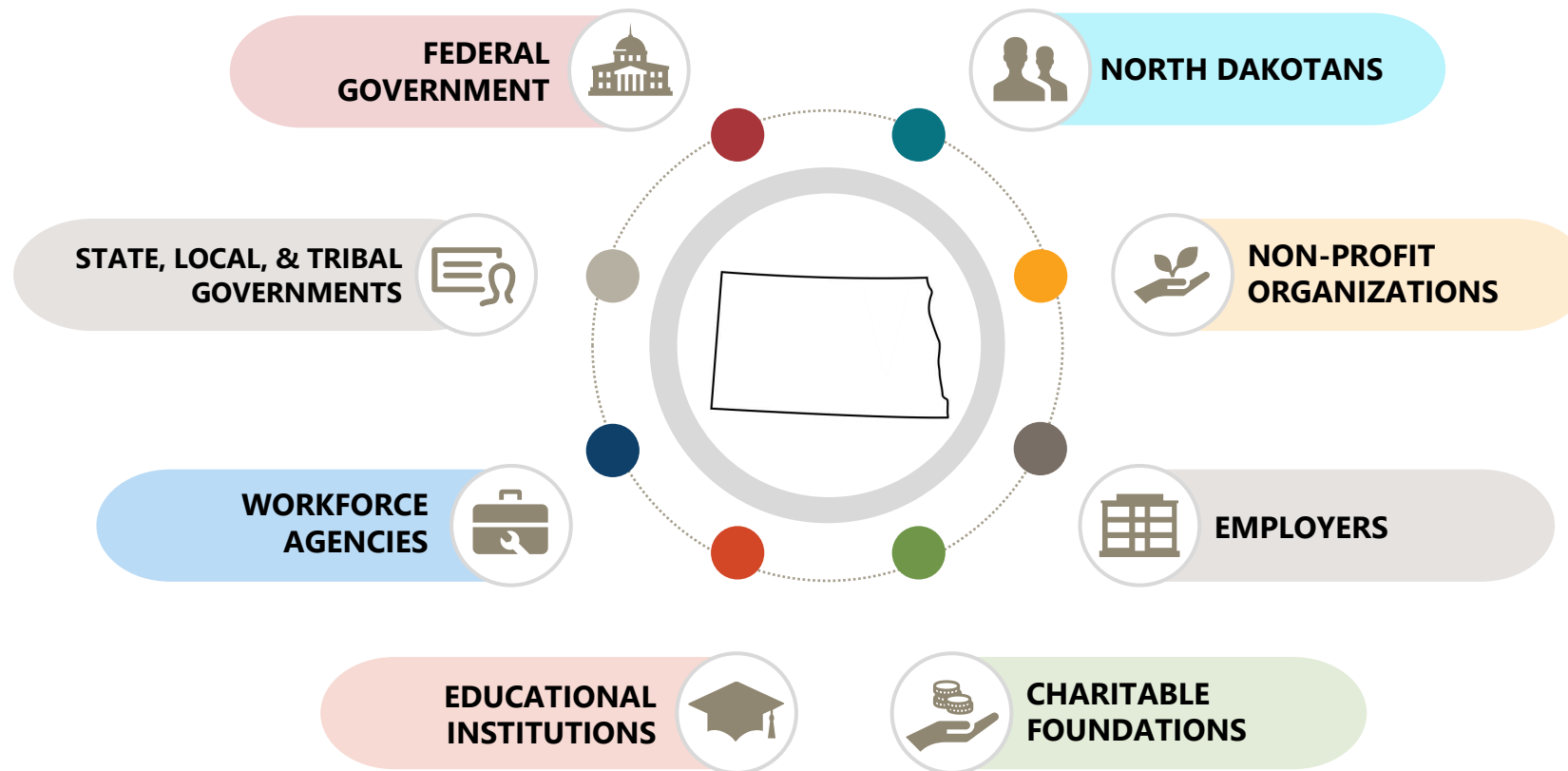
## ASSESSMENT APPROACH | TIMELINE

The assessment spanned approximately 20 weeks and provided ecosystem partners and customers multiple opportunities to participate and share feedback on strengths, gaps, and opportunities for improvement.



## ASSESSMENT APPROACH | WORKFORCE ECOSYSTEM

A workforce development ecosystem has many components and players, all working together to support and train workers and to meet employer needs. In categorizing workforce programs and services, we can visualize relationships and how individuals and employers move throughout the ecosystem.





## ASSESSMENT APPROACH | STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

A diverse group of stakeholders across the workforce ecosystem provided insights and perspectives on both current-state and future-state topics via a survey, interview, and focus groups.



### Stakeholder Engagement Topics

- **Successes & Challenges**
- **Measuring Program Efficacy**
- **Future Opportunities and Vision**
- **Program Availability, Familiarity, and Utilization**



14

### INTERVIEWS

*with leaders from North Dakota State agencies, community partners, and industry leaders*

5

### FOCUS GROUPS

*with Educational Institutions, Regional Councils, Local Chambers, Workforce Center Managers, and Workforce Development Council Members*

247

### EMPLOYERS

*representing a variety of employer sizes and industries the employer survey*

# Current State: Findings Summary & Programs



## SUMMARY OF THEMES FROM ASSESSMENT FINDINGS

### COMMON THEMES FROM THE ECOSYSTEM ASSESSMENT

Reduced **funding access and staffing numbers** is limiting program growth and service access

The limited **ability to share data and knowledge** across programs impacts the **customer experience**

The structure is **relationally-driven** with many strong partnerships, but access is based on “**who you know**”

The patchwork of programs and services would benefit from a **more unified leadership vision** to drive outcomes

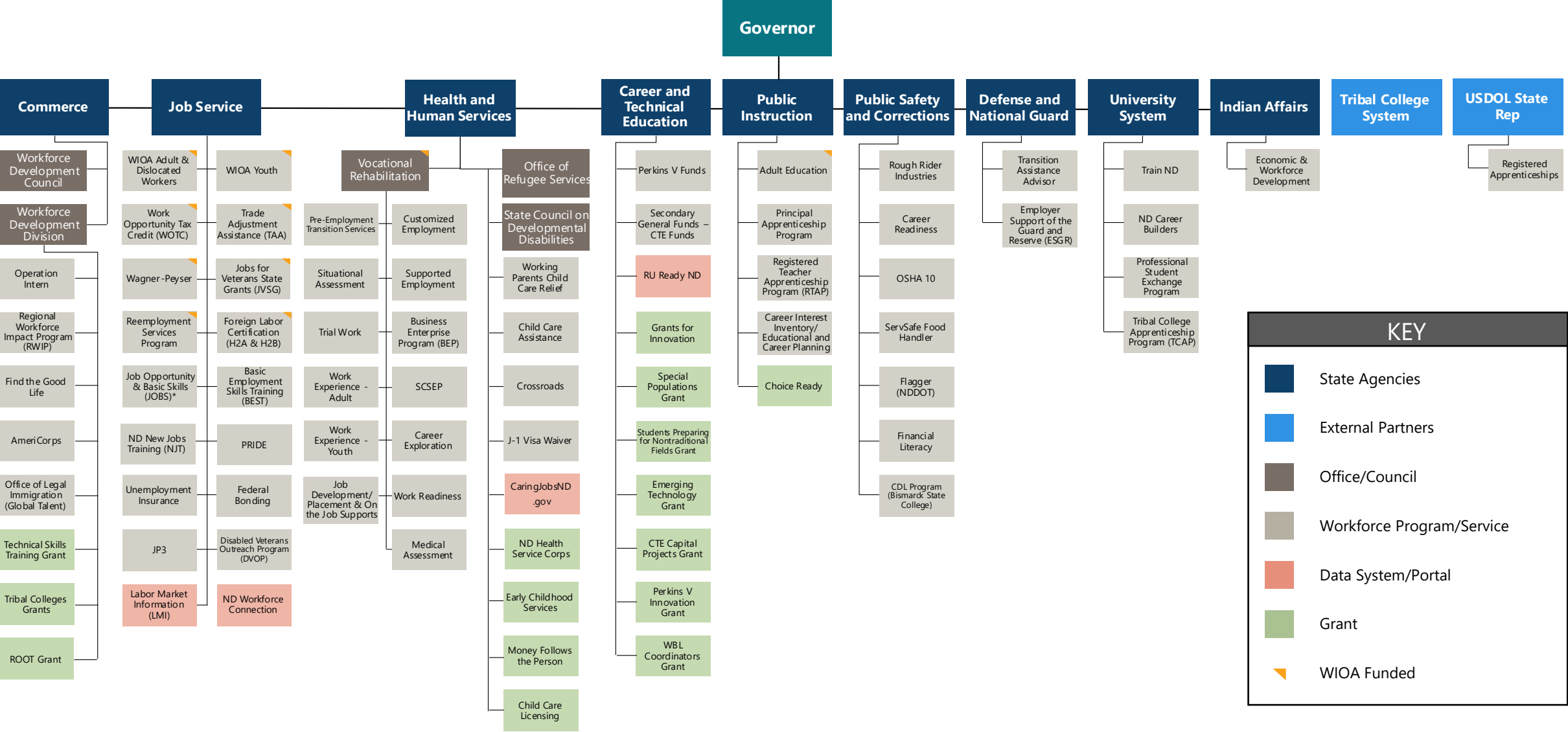
There is an increasing need for **wraparound services** in communities to reduce **barriers to employment**

The state has a **breadth of programs** available, but **access is more limited** in rural and highly rural areas

There is **misalignment** in the labor market needs between **available workers and employer opportunities**



ECOSYSTEM MAP | PROGRAMS BY AGENCY



# Current State: Interview and Focus Group Findings



## FUNDING & STAFFING

North Dakota has made great strides in funding workforce development programs, such as the Regional Workforce Impact Program (RWIP) and Job Placement Pilot Program (JP3). Although services needs have increased, federal and state funding for many programs has largely remained the same for many years, and federal funding restrictions make it difficult to innovate service delivery.

### FUNDING

- State workforce development programs highlighted issues with **stagnant federal funding sources** year over year, due to North Dakota's small population
- **RWIP** and other local and regional innovation grants have given partners the opportunity to **develop creative solutions** to meet the needs of their populations
- Some programs, particularly education, have been especially **impacted by inflation**
- Interviewees expressed **difficulty accessing additional federal, state, and regional grant funding**

### STAFFING

- State and regional workforce development programs cite the need for **increased staff** to address the **increased number of people seeking services**
- WIOA partners work hard to take care of their employees and retain knowledgeable, talented staff but are **unable to keep up with state raises due to tight budgets**

### SERVICE SUSTAINABILITY

- Many state workforce development programs are concerned about their ability to **keep up with demand** for services and **maintain quality**
- **Rural areas require additional investment** to provide similar service and opportunities, such as CTE's mobile training units and transportation costs
- Regional partners have launched workforce attraction efforts, but **programs do not have stable funding** and could come to a halt



#### IN OUR OWN WORDS...

- *"Our federal **funding** amount has **stayed the same**, but **service needs** have **increased**"*
- *"Everyone wears a lot of hats on their head and has **a lot of irons in the fire**"*



## DATA & KNOWLEDGE SHARING

State workforce development programs cite that clients often need to provide the same information to multiple programs, creating duplicative intake points. State and regional workforce development programs and partners also expressed a desire to share best practices across workforce programs to maximize funding.

### DUPLICATIVE PROCESSES

- Jobseekers make employment plans with each state workforce program; **workforce programs have a hard time aligning separate employment plans** to ensure jobseekers aren't pulled in too many directions
- Stakeholders share that **processes are overseen by too many separate workforce programs, leading customers to interact with many different agencies**, especially when co-enrolled in programs

### STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

- State and regional workforce development programs foster great relationships and have **meetings to talk about data**, but desire more efficiency in data sharing
- Regional workforce program partners have difficulty tracking workforce development efforts, especially when **metrics are spread out between systems** (Job Service, WDC, DPI, CTE, etc.)



#### IN OUR OWN WORDS...

- ***"We need a centralized workforce development ecosystem to allow for peer learning & knowledge sharing, better data & program communication between regional and local level, and better program assessment"***

## RELATIONALLY DRIVEN

State workforce programs, regional workforce partners, employers, and industry representatives recognize that knowledge of programs and services varies by individual. State leadership know who to call when they need to make a referral, but employers and jobseekers don't know all their available opportunities for workforce development.



### IN OUR OWN WORDS...

- *"We need to find a better way to sync employers with job service. **Employers still don't know where to go to find help.**"*
- *"The system is fragmented. **I know who to call but most people don't**"*

### PARTNERSHIPS

- North Dakota's workforce ecosystem has **strong relationships between leaders**
- Job Services' Workforce Centers are run by **top-notch service providers** and serve as an **innovative hubs for ecosystem partnerships**, offering programming spanning multiple agencies
- Several agencies shared that the **partnerships between these agencies were strong**: CTE and DPI; CTE and Commerce; Commerce and Job Service; Job Service and VocRehab
- State agencies appreciate that they can **easily access other agency leaders and legislators** for assistance
- **Programs care about each other's shared success** and willingly make referrals to other programs and services

### DISPARATE PROGRAM KNOWLEDGE

- Both employers and jobseekers don't know which workforce development programs and wraparound supports are available to them, as a result **programs are under-utilized**
- Many stakeholders and ecosystem leaders recognized that **while they have high ecosystem knowledge, the average customer does not**

## ECOSYSTEM STEERING

Many state programs expressed a desire for more alignment and leadership within the ecosystem to drive more effective outcomes through legislation and policy.



### IN OUR OWN WORDS...

- *"There has been no go-to player, **no defined leader for workforce**"*
- *"We understand the **needs of our local communities** better than the state does"*

### LEADERSHIP

- State workforce programs and regional partners expressed a need for **unified leadership to drive change** in the workforce and serve as a central resource for customers
- **Everyone is on everyone else's board or committee**, and a good portion of that time is spent presenting on agency services
- **Regional advisory groups work in relative isolation** from each other

### LEGISLATURE & POLICY

- Many programs have strong verbal support from legislators, but many interviewees expressed a **desire for more alignment with workforce efforts and policymaking**
- State workforce programs and regional partners expressed a **lack of clarity in how data is evaluated as part of policy-making** and funding allocation, exacerbating concerns about overall program funding
- **Legislators need additional education** on workforce ecosystem programs and services



## WRAPAROUND SERVICES

North Dakota is making progress in providing wraparound services to address these needs of jobseekers and students. However, employers and workforce programs expressed that many individuals in North Dakota still experience barriers to employment, such as a lack of childcare, limited housing in many communities throughout the state, a lack of transportation to get to work or training, and issues with substance use.

### INCREASED COMMUNITY NEEDS

- State programs, regional partners, and employers highlighted **barriers to employment across all regions**, with rural areas feeling the most impact
- Several **programs meet the needs of specific populations**, such as childcare assistance and employer-coordinated transportation
- State and regional programs express difficulty **balancing community needs with the rules and regulations** to receive federal funding

### GETTING "JOB READY"

- Employers expressed a need for "job ready" workers who **need minimal support**, have basic employment skills, and consistently show up to work
- Job readiness can make job placement difficult for people who **need additional support to get and sustain employment**, particularly those with disabilities or in addiction recovery
- State and regional programs recognize that **job readiness isn't linear**, but have difficulty getting employers on board

#### IN OUR OWN WORDS...

- *"We need **more open doors** for lower-skilled individuals"*
- *"**Childcare** is a workforce issue"*

## AVAILABILITY & ACCESS

There are many programs and opportunities to address the needs of employers and jobseekers. Disparities in workforce development program access continue to be a challenge for both jobseekers and employers in rural areas.

### BREADTH OF PROGRAMS

- There are **many programs and opportunities** to address the needs of employers and jobseekers
- State agencies, including but not limited to, Job Service, CTE, DPI, and Commerce are making great strides to ensure **equal access to workforce programs**
- **Program offerings are more numerous in cities**, particularly those with a workforce center or technical school
- Job Service and HHS lead the charge in available programming, partnering to offer reliable services through workforce centers

### RURAL-URBAN DISPARITIES

- Regional workforce partners and employers expressed concern that the areas in the four corners of ND and in between larger cities are **getting left behind**
- State workforce programs and regional workforce partners emphasized that there were **"different kinds of rural"** when it came to wraparound services and workforce program availability
- **Small business and rural employers feel the most strain** in the labor market and have difficulty offering competitive wages



#### IN OUR OWN WORDS...

- *"In rural areas, people have to get [to another city] to get to the bus"*
- *"Even if we get the applicants, **we don't have housing**"*

## MISALIGNMENT OF LABOR MARKET NEEDS

Stakeholders expressed difficulty aligning worker interest and employer need, and an overall need for more workers in the state. Stakeholders recognize a need for education programs to rapidly keep up with changing workforce demands.

### MATCHING WORKER INTEREST AND EMPLOYER NEED

- CTE requires local partners to complete a **comprehensive local needs assessment**
- Local chambers of commerce and regional development councils have a **pulse on the local labor market**
- Energy employers are hiring college and high school students before graduation and are **still understaffed**
- A remote CDL training program was costly to administer, but had **low registration numbers**

### AGILITY IN TRAINING PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

- State workforce programs and employers expressed a need for **faster updates in education and training** programs to keep up with changing workforce technology
- Change at the state level can be slow, which causes **delays in regional program adaptability**
- Technical Skills Training grant provides employers with additional **support to develop highly skilled workers**



#### IN OUR OWN WORDS...

- *"We have a vision for **truly seamless transition** between elementary, middle, high school, college, and work"*



# Current State: Employer Survey Findings



## EMPLOYER SURVEY INTRODUCTION

The information below describes the Employer Survey's purpose, methodology, distribution methods, and summary of survey topics.

### Purpose

To **gather key insights** on skill gaps, hiring challenges, recruitment efforts, vacancy costs, and investments related to staffing and training, with additional special focus on employer apprenticeship offerings and employer use of Artificial Intelligence (AI).

### Methodology

- **Target Audience:** Employers across all industries in North Dakota
- **Survey Length:** Designed to be completed in approximately 10 mins
- **Question Types:** Multiple-choice, short answer, and conditional questions to capture detailed responses

### Impact

- Provides **data-driven insights** to shape workforce development policy
- Identifies areas where **support and resources are needed**
- Helps understand **industry trends and challenges**
- **Informs strategic decisions** on recruitment, training, and technology adoption

### Distribution

We utilized the following **distribution methods** for the survey:

- Outreach to Industry Associations
- Social Media Posts
- News Bulletins
- Distribution Lists(ND Commerce; Local Chambers of Commerce; etc.)

### Topics

#### Skill Gaps and Hiring Challenges:

- Questions on the types of skills most needed in businesses
- Challenges faced in recruiting and retaining workers

#### Recruitment Efforts:

- Types of recruitment activities businesses participate in
- Collaboration with educational institutions and workforce organizations

#### Vacancy Impact:

- Tracking the cost/impact of unfilled vacancies
- Posting vacancies on job boards

#### Apprenticeships:

- Current participation in registered apprenticeship programs
- Interest in offering or expanding apprenticeship opportunities

#### Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI):

- Current and future use of AI in business processes
- Views on AI in the workplace

## DEMOGRAPHICS | RESPONSES AND EMPLOYER SIZES

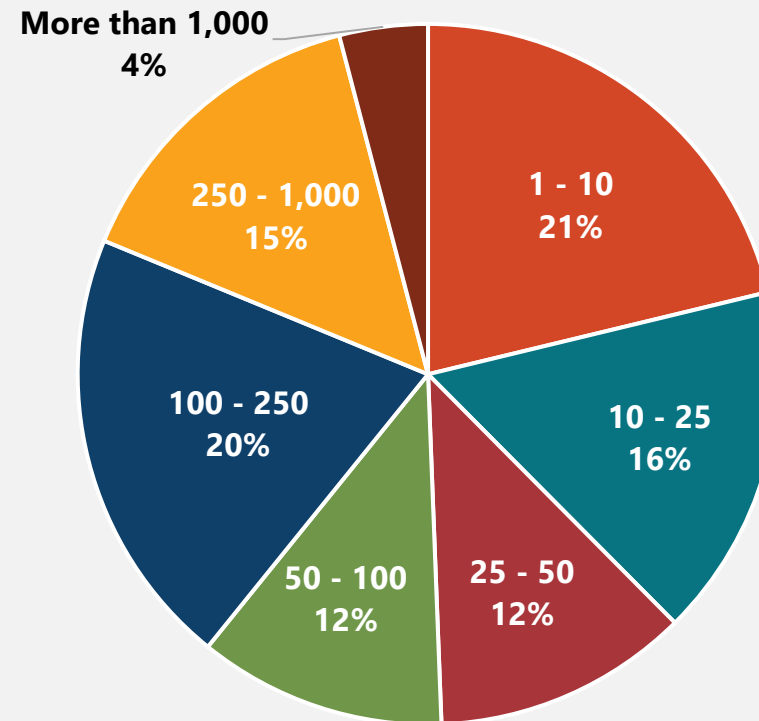
The graphics below contain information on the number of unique employer responses to the survey and the distribution of employer size by number of employees for all survey responses.



# 247

total **survey  
responses** from  
North Dakota  
employers

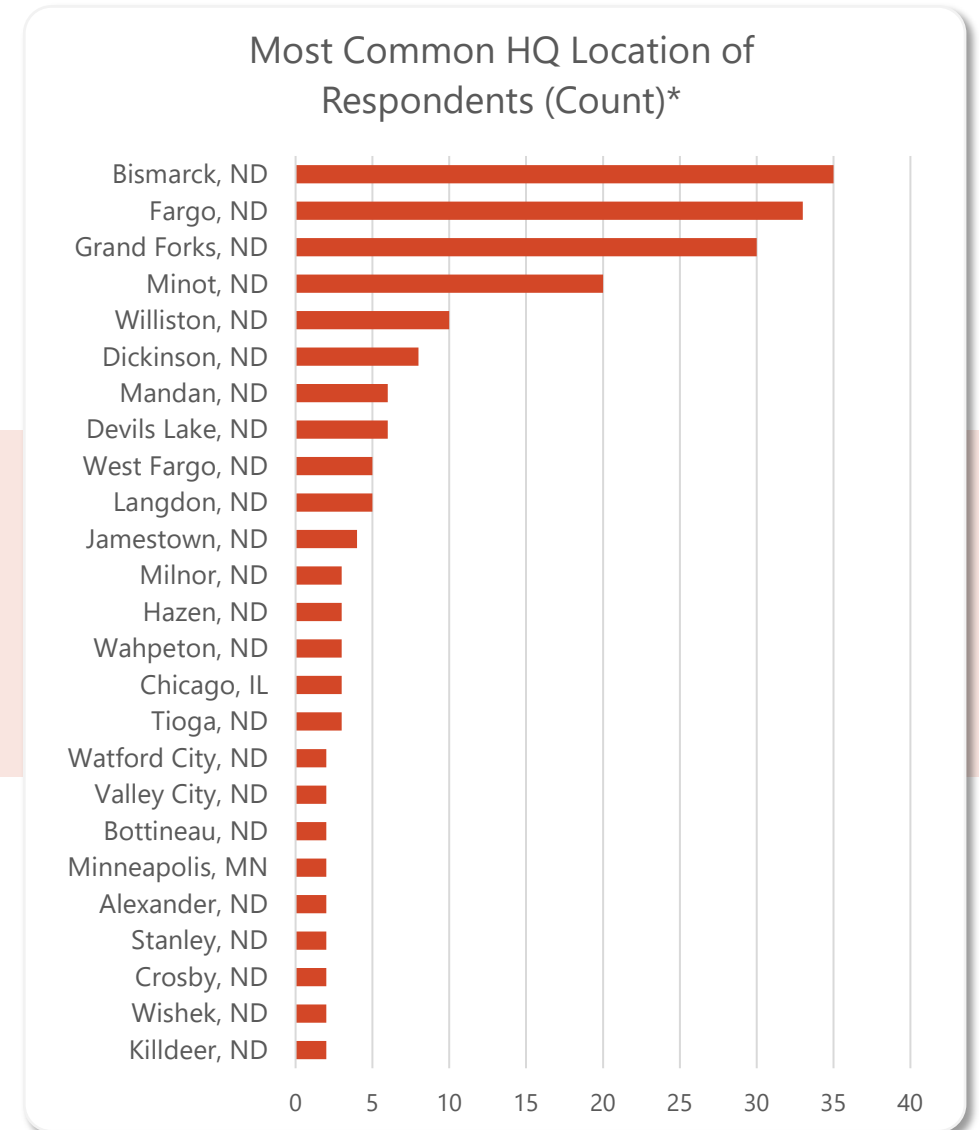
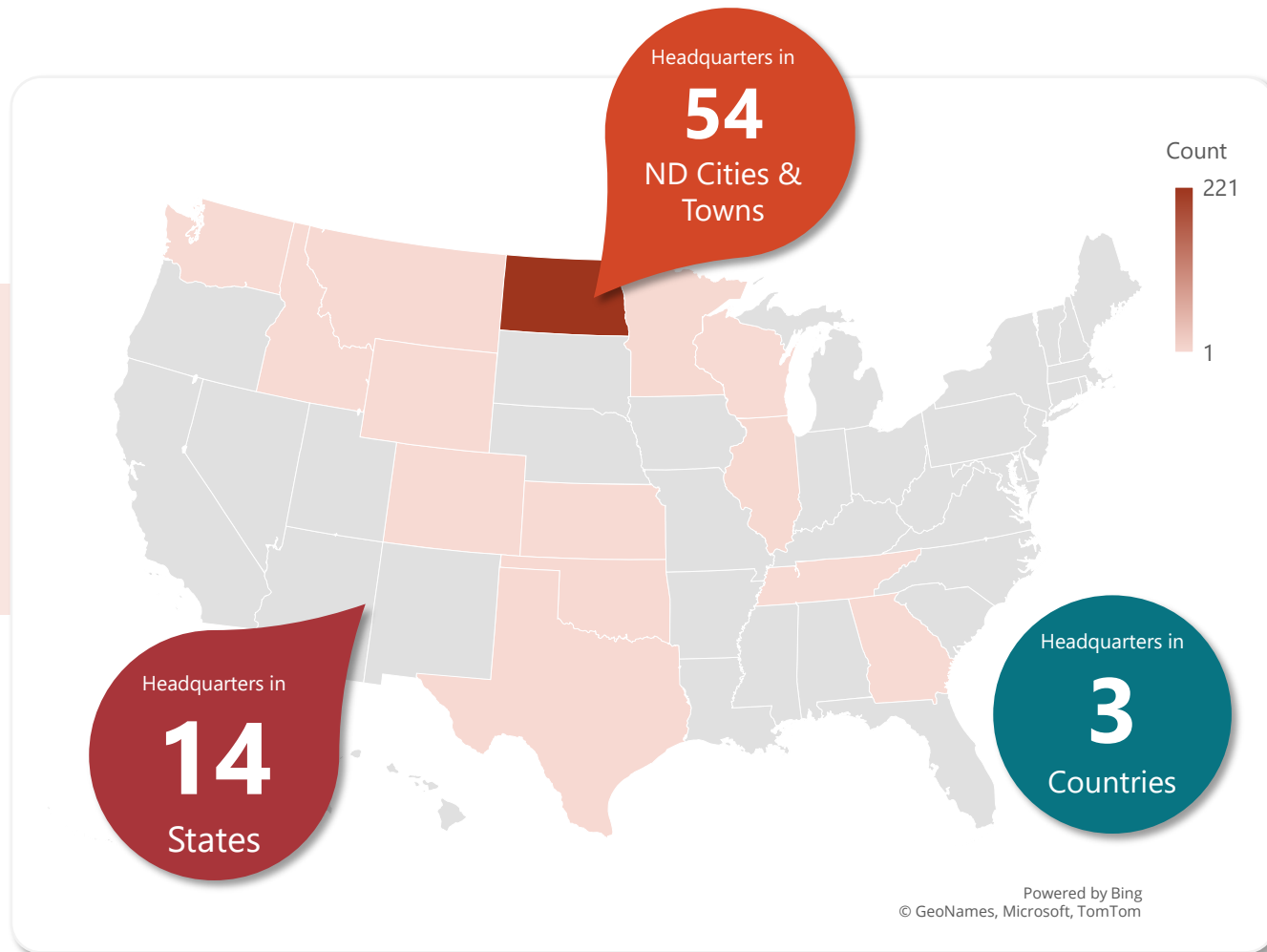
### Survey Responses by Employer Size





## DEMOGRAPHICS | EMPLOYER LOCATIONS

Employer respondents primarily represented multiple locations across North Dakota, with some representation across other states and outside the country.



\*NOTE: this graph includes cities in which at least two (2) employers had their headquarters and is not representative of all headquarter locations from respondents.

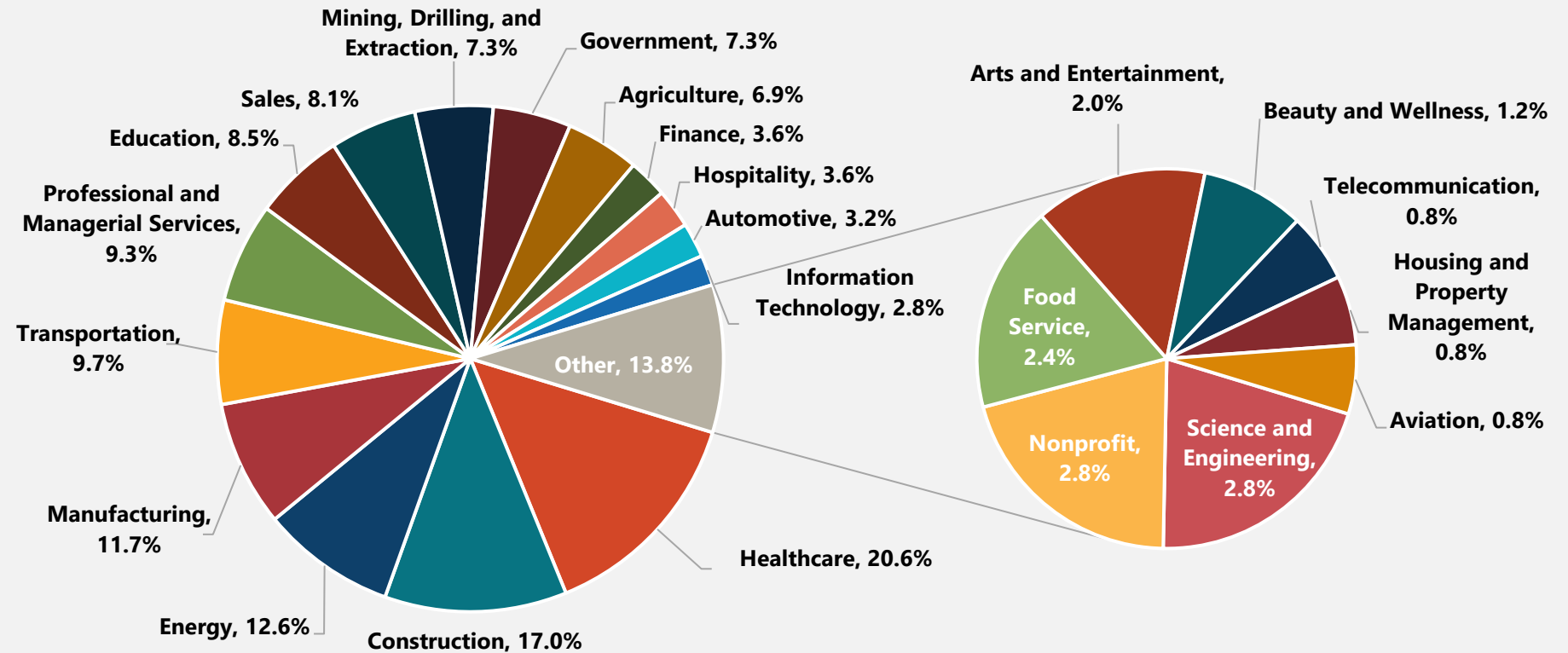
## DEMOGRAPHICS | INDUSTRY REPRESENTATION

The chart below shows the industries represented by respondents of the employer survey.\*

**30+**  
Industries  
represented

### Top 3 Industries

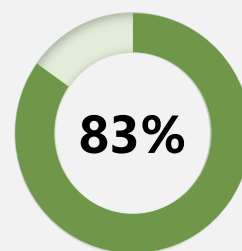
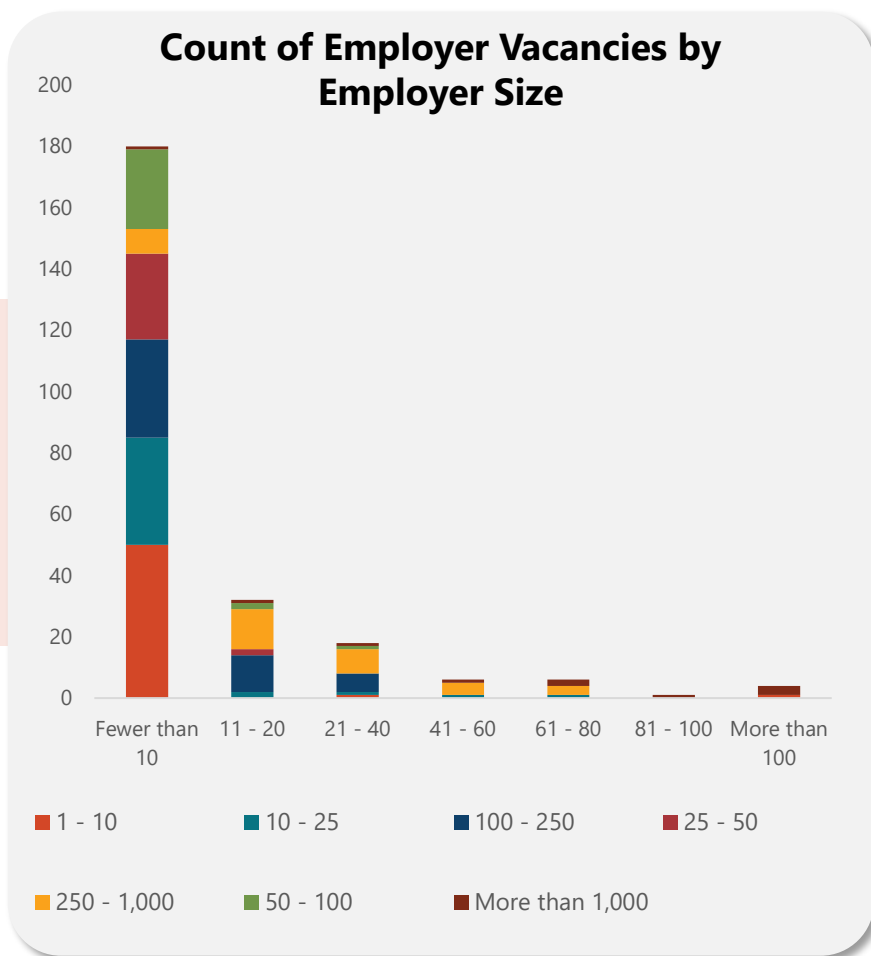
1. Healthcare
2. Construction
3. Energy



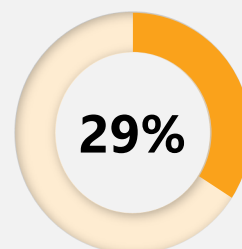
\*NOTE: Employers were able to select multiple applicable industries.

# VACANCIES

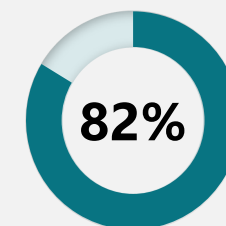
Employers provided the following insights about their retention and recruitment efforts.



of employers **list their vacancies on a job board**



of the 83% of employers listing their vacancies on a job board, **only 29% list their vacancies on JobsND**



of employers **do not track the cost of their vacancies** annually



## KEY INSIGHT

Most employers have **reported fewer than 10 vacancies** but only 29% of them list vacancies on JobsND, suggesting an opportunity to further **educate employers on state workforce development services**.

# RECRUITING | CHALLENGES FROM EMPLOYERS

Employers provided the following insights about their recruitment challenges.

## #1 "Not Enough Workers"

What are Your Top Challenges with Recruiting and Hiring Workers?



### "OTHER" RESPONSES

- "Attracting talent to come to ND"
- "No one is willing to work"
- "Lack of housing"
- "Qualified workers are moving out of North Dakota"
- "Shortage of applicants with appropriate credentials"
- "Applicants lack professional skills"
- "Ability to pass a drug test"



### KEY INSIGHT

Employers' recruitment efforts have been **stifled by a lack of workers** and **mismatched skillsets** in the labor economy.

What types of skills are most needed in your business?

**#1 Functional skills:** practical skills for everyday work

**#2 Soft skills:** interpersonal skills and interactions

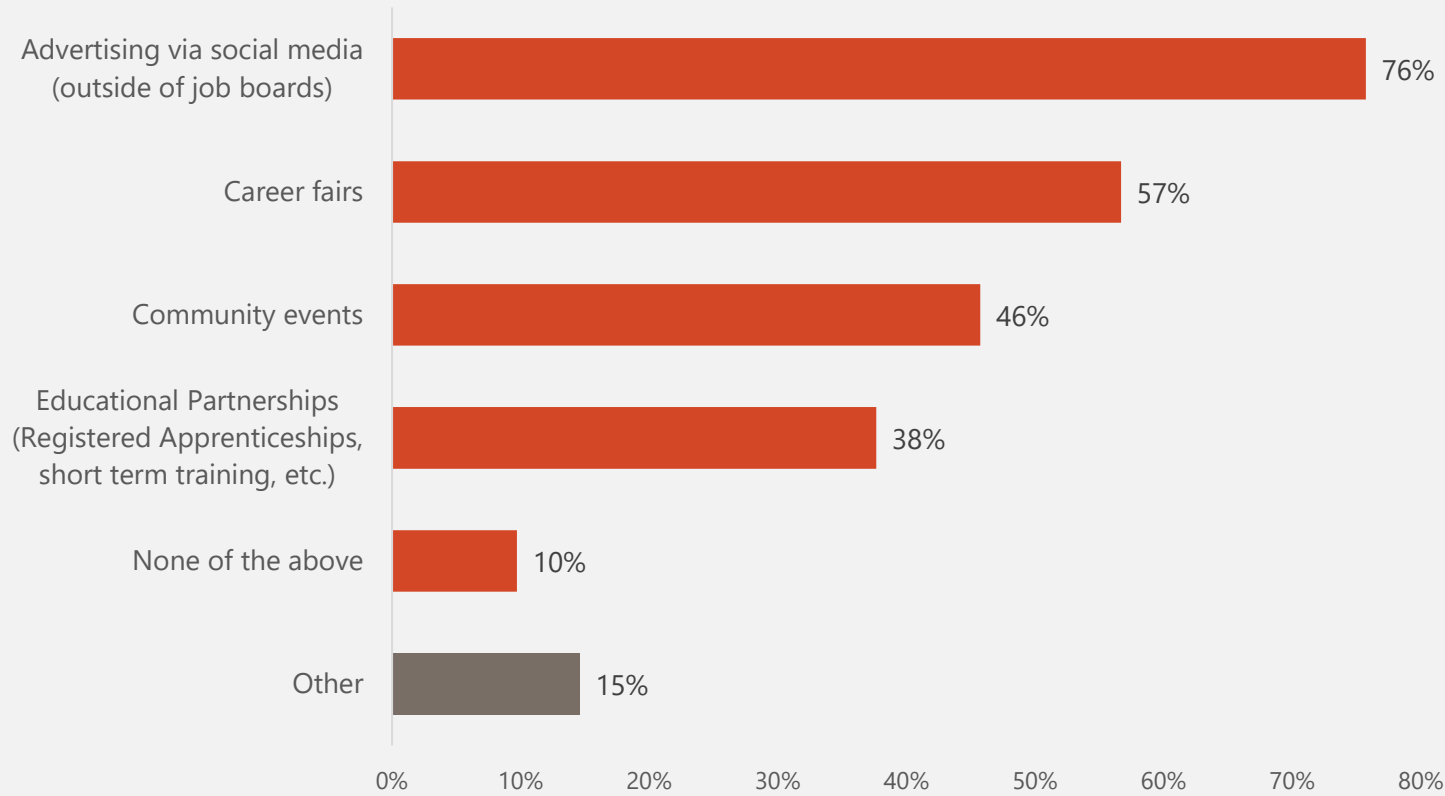
**#3 Technical skills:** specific knowledge to perform a job



## RECRUITING | STRATEGIES

Employers were asked to select all recruitment strategies that their organization currently participates in.

### Recruitment Strategies Utilized by Employers



### #1 Social Media

was the **top utilized** recruitment strategy used by employers



#### "OTHER" RESPONSES

- "Mentorship"
- "Participation in college education advisory committees"
- "Word of mouth – craigslist"
- "Internship programs – Tuition reimbursement"
- "T4 Events"
- "Sponsorship of local teams, sports and events"

## CHALLENGES WITH RETAINING WORKERS

The survey included four base options on retention challenges, with the option for employers to write-in additional information<sup>2</sup>. The percentage of employers facing a particular retention challenge is reflected in the table below.

Issue		% of employers <sup>1</sup>	Description of issue
Workers not prepared for the workplace		39.7%	Workers lack interpersonal skills to retain work or keep up with work demands
Compensation not competitive		28.7%	Other employers offer better compensation packages
Lack of career growth opportunities		21.5%	Employees are leaving for other opportunities to advance their careers
Lack of relevant skills		20.6%	Employees lack technical or functional skills; are unable to attain skills after completing relevant training; are unable to get/maintain relevant licensure to keep job
Other <sup>2</sup>	No Issue with Retention	8.1%	No issue with retention; employers can retain employees, or are a sole proprietor/self-employed and do not have employees
	Relocation	7.7%	Employees are relocating to another part of the state or another part of the US; includes difficulty retaining employees due to cold weather
	Work Hours/Schedule	4.0%	Work requires too many hours or too few hours (such as wanting full-time work when only part-time/seasonal opportunities are available); employees don't like work schedule (need more flexibility or predictability depending on the job)
	Burnout	2.8%	Worker burnout and/or mental health strain from the industry
	Economic Change/Financial Risk	2.4%	Economic risk for startups or small businesses; political climate leading to uncertainty with funding
	Substance Use	2.0%	Drug and alcohol use; inability to pass a drug test
	Lack of Childcare	2.0%	Leaving the workforce or unable to come back from parental leave due to lack of childcare
	Aging Workforce	1.6%	Concerns for workers retiring and no talent in pipeline
	Want Remote Work	1.2%	Workers want to work inside the home

**#1** ***"Workers not prepared for the workplace"*** is the top issue overall for employers surveyed.

Employers with **1-25 employees** were more likely to identify ***"Lack of Relevant Skills"*** as a top retention issue.

Employers with **more than 25 employees** were more likely to identify ***"Compensation not Competitive"*** as a top issue with retaining workers.



### IN OUR OWN WORDS...

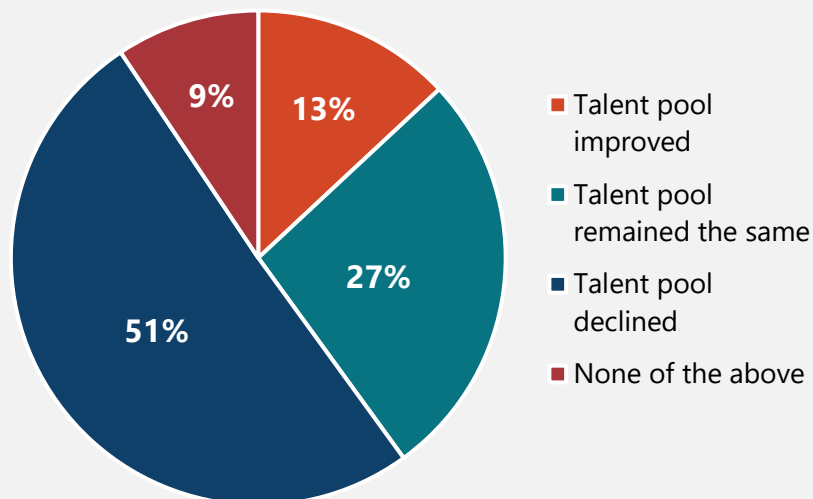
- *"[We have] employees not returning from maternity leave due to **issues finding affordable childcare.**"*
- *"Currently no significant retention issues, but **an aging workforce is presenting a challenge** down the road."*
- *"The trades in general are short of personnel, **competition is pricing the markets through the roof.**"*
- *"Employees [are] simply **pursuing new opportunities.**"*

<sup>1</sup> Employers were able to select all applicable responses. <sup>2</sup> "Other" represents write-in responses from employers, which have been grouped according to common issues and themes.

## TALENT POOL | QUALITY OF APPLICANTS

Employers provided a range of insights on the talent pool and their perspectives on applicant quality.

In the last four years, what impact have you seen in the talent pool for positions you have hired for?



78% of employers think the talent pool has **remained the same or declined** in the last 4 years



### IN OUR OWN WORDS...

#### Talent Pool Improved

- "Applicants **have more credentials** and education"
- "[We] have **more applications** than in the past"
- "In the last 2 years, it seems there are **more people looking for employment**"

#### Talent Pool Declined

- "Applicants **don't meet our qualifications**"
- "**No motivation to work**, lack of skills"
- "There **aren't enough applicants**"
- "Qualified care professionals **leave for higher paying jobs**"
- "**Less people are looking for employment**"

#### Talent Pool Remained the Same

- "**Hard to find** qualified talent"
- "There has always been a **lack of qualified people**"
- "The pool seems to have remained the same, yet **demand for the pool has increased**"
- "**Workers are not prepared for the workplace**, unable to work independently"

#### None of the Above

- "Pool has increased the amount of candidates but **unproportionally increased unqualified candidates**"
- "Lack of **work ethic**"
- "We **hire from within**"



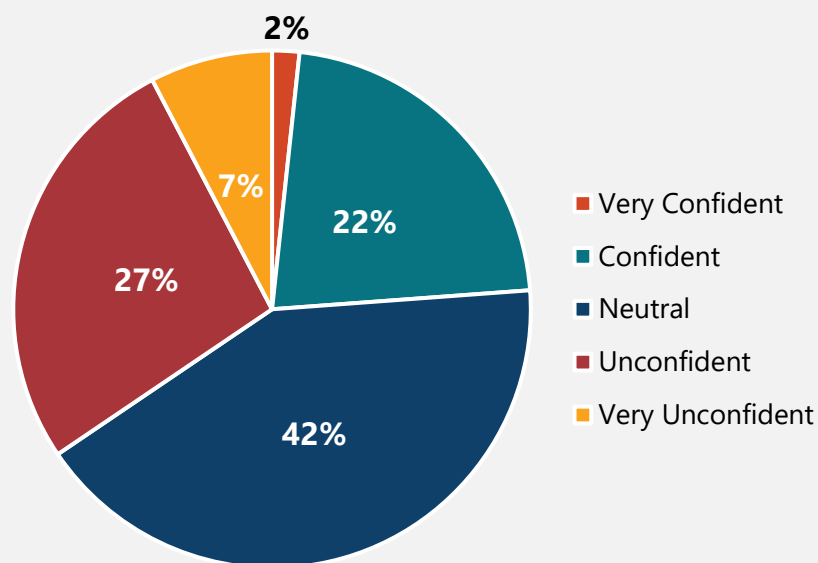
### KEY INSIGHT

While the talent pool has expanded and the overall number of applications has increased, **the majority of employers surveyed believe that the quality of the talent pool has decreased in the last four years.**

## TALENT POOL | YOUNGER APPLICANT/WORKER SOFT SKILLS

Employers provided the following insights on the talent pool in relation to the “soft skills” of younger applicants.

In the last four years, what has been your level of confidence in younger applicants/workers' soft skills?



**Only 24%** of employers surveyed have confidence in younger applicants' **soft skills**



### IN OUR OWN WORDS...

#### Unconfident

- “Younger applicants are **not coming out of HS with the skills they need** to succeed in the workforce”
- “**Lacking skills**, lacking interpersonal skills, and unreliable”
- “Workers **lack professional maturity**”
- “Workers are **not prepared for the workplace**, unable to work independently at all”

#### Confident

- “There are some very talented young people out there; **ambition lacks** in some”
- “My highschoolers and college **students are my best staff**”
- “We have hired some **great students coming out of college**”

#### Other

- “The **age of candidates does not reflect on their knowledge**”
- “Our youngest workers have great soft skills, frankly it is the **older workers who struggle with it more**”



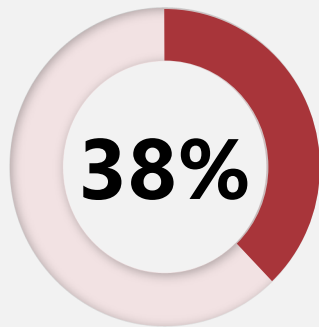
### KEY INSIGHT

**Surveyed employers have mixed confidence** in the soft skills of younger workers, with the plurality of employers expressing a neutral sentiment.



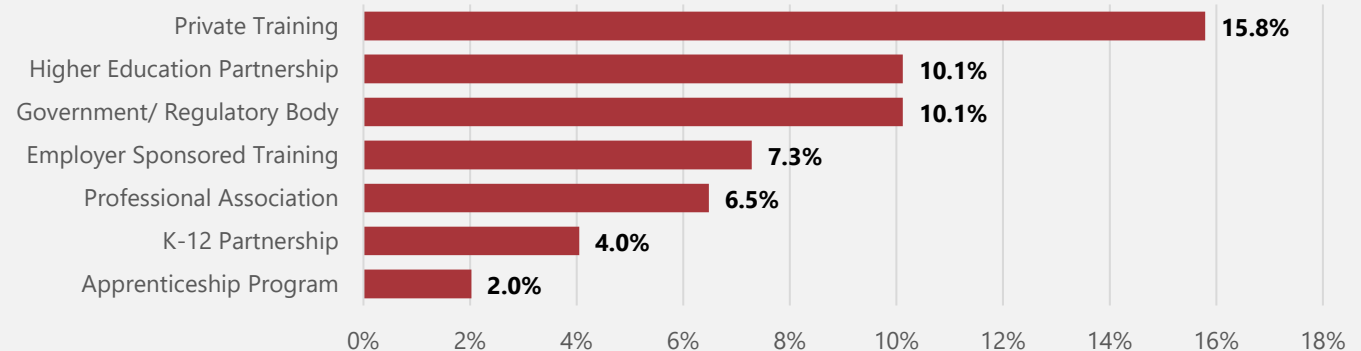
## PARTNERSHIP | WORKFORCE PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

Employers were asked about their general participation in workforce training programs, including workforce development programs offered through the State of ND. Of the employers that participate in any type of workforce program, 15.8% use a private company to train employees.



of employers **participate in any type of workforce program**

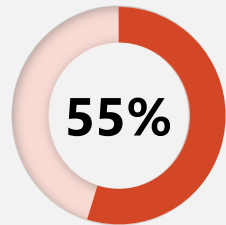
**Percent of Employers Who Participate in a Workforce Program by Program Type**



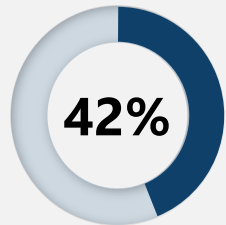
Program Type	Description
Private Training	Training offered by a private company or third party
Higher Education Partnership	Training or degree program offered by a Higher Education Institution (including professional development and internships)
Government or Regulatory Body	Training offered and facilitated by a government agency (local, state, or federal) or regulatory body
In-House or Employer Sponsored Training	Corporate trainings or trainings designed and developed by the company itself
Professional Association	Training or development program offered by a professional association
K-12 Partnership	Training or development program done in partnership with a K-12 institution (including internships and other work-based learning)
Apprenticeship	Training program through apprenticeship (includes both registered and non-registered apprenticeships)

## PARTNERSHIP | EMPLOYER PARTNER ENGAGEMENT

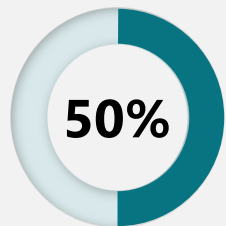
Employers were asked about partnerships they engage with and which universities they partner with.



of employers **recruit from, or collaborate with higher education** institutions

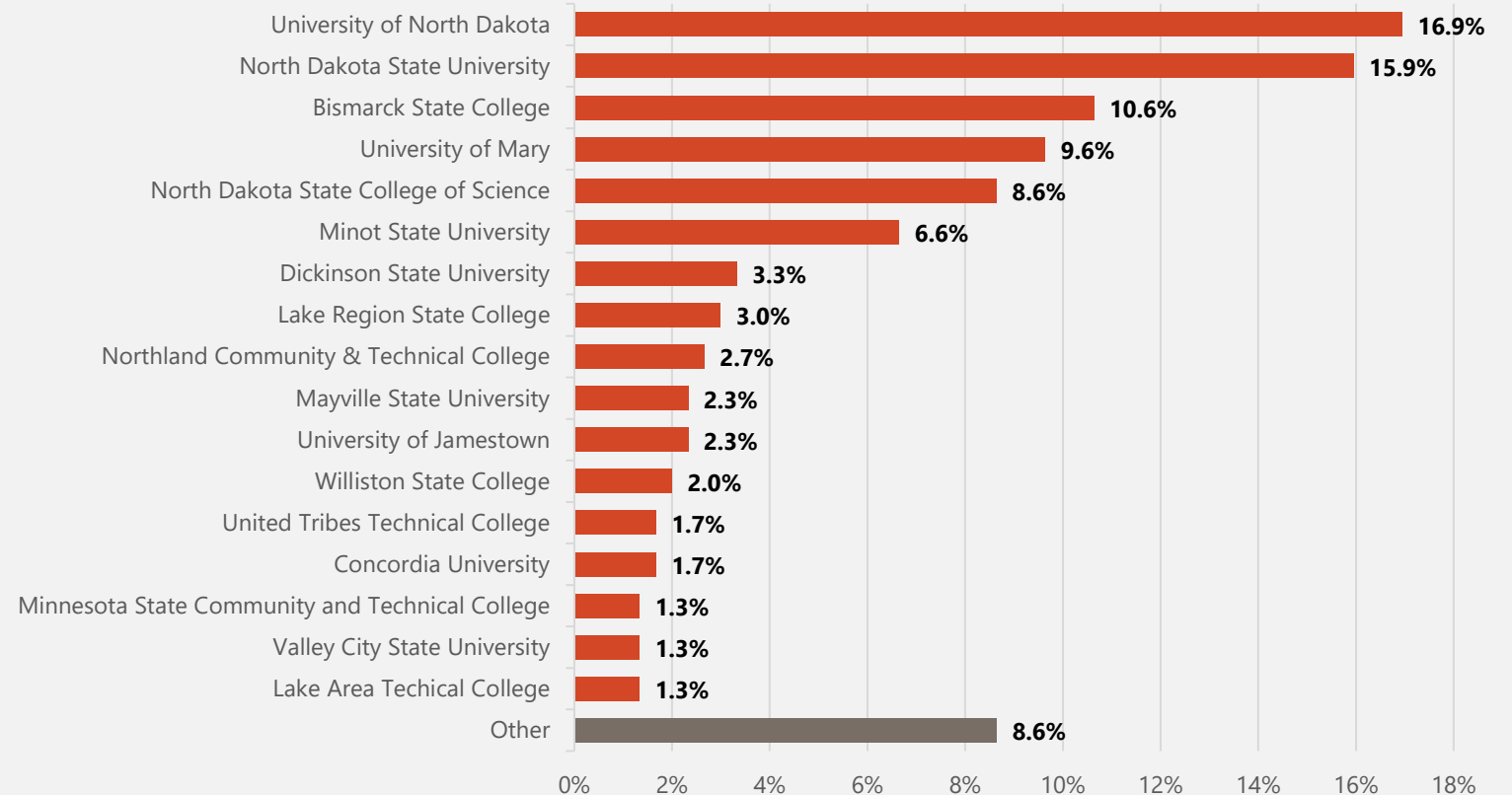


of employers **partner with the K-12 public or private education system** for recruitment, training, career awareness, or pre-apprenticeships



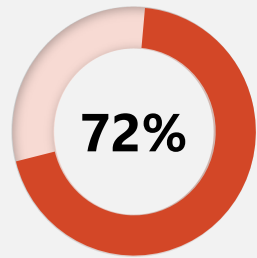
of employers **partner with local workforce or economic development** organizations, **faith-based** organizations or **non-profits**

**Top Higher Education Institutions for Recruitment or Collaboration (% of total employers surveyed)**



## JOB SERVICE FAMILIARITY

Employers were asked about their familiarity with Job Service and the programs and services they provide.

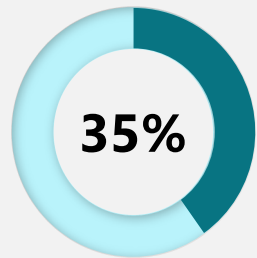


of employers are **familiar with Job Service** and the services they provide

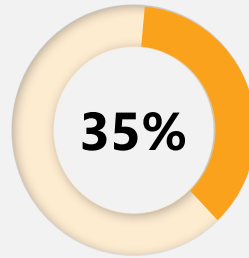
#1

***"Posting vacancies on ND Workforce Connection"***

was the top way employers surveyed interact with Job Service

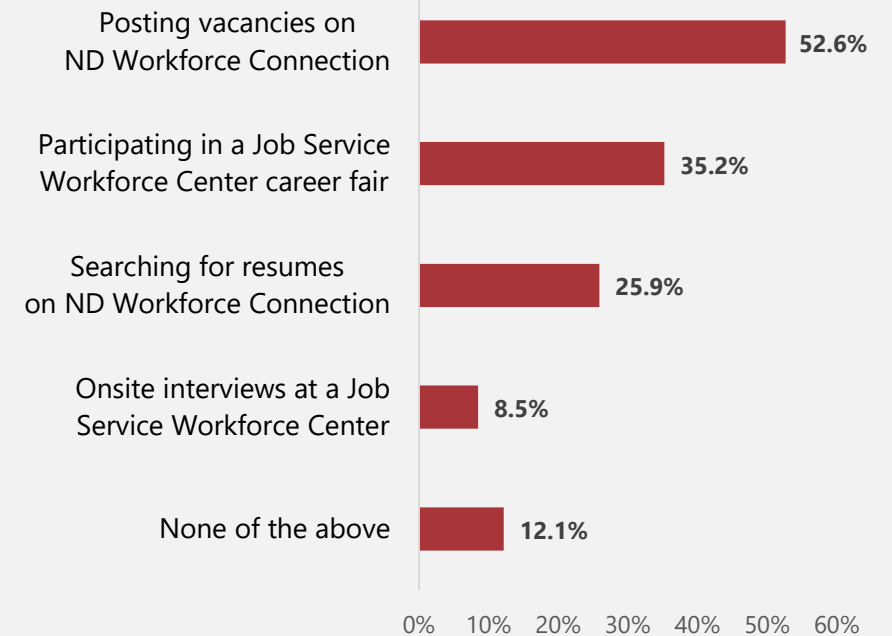


of employers **have utilized Unemployment Insurance**



of employers are **have participated in a Workforce Center Career Fair**

### Percentage of Employers Surveyed Utilizing Job Service Services

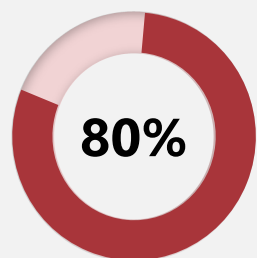


### KEY INSIGHT

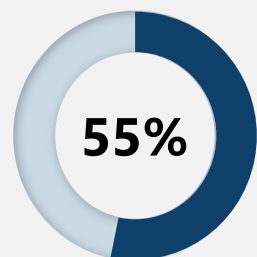
Overall, employers surveyed have **relatively high familiarity and use of Job Service** programs and services.

# COMMERCE FAMILIARITY

Employers were asked about their familiarity with Commerce's Workforce Development Division.



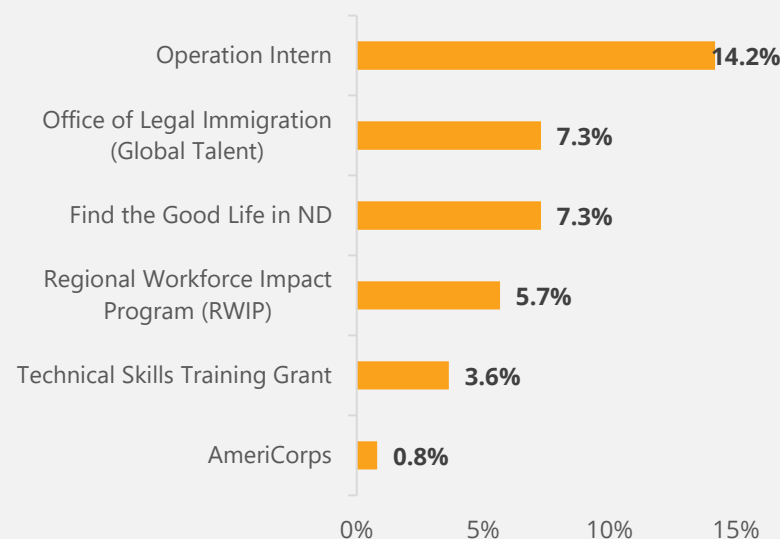
of employers said they **didn't know of or had no relationship** with Commerce's Workforce Development Division



of employers **have not utilized Commerce services and/or were unaware of programs**

## #1 "Operation Intern"

was the **top Commerce service utilized by surveyed employers**



### IN OUR OWN WORDS...

- "We don't really have a relationship"
- "We are aware of them but have no real relationship"
- "We have a great relationship with Commerce staff and have been building one with OLI."
- "We use their job board for our openings"<sup>1</sup>
- "We use them for Unemployment Insurance (UI)"<sup>1</sup>
- "We utilize Career Builder<sup>2</sup> and Operation Intern"
- "We have no relationship but have considered Operation Intern."
- "Our relationship is Fabulous! The team supports our communities at the highest level they can."



### KEY INSIGHT

Most surveyed employers are **unfamiliar with Commerce's Workforce Development Division** or have misconceptions about the services they offer.

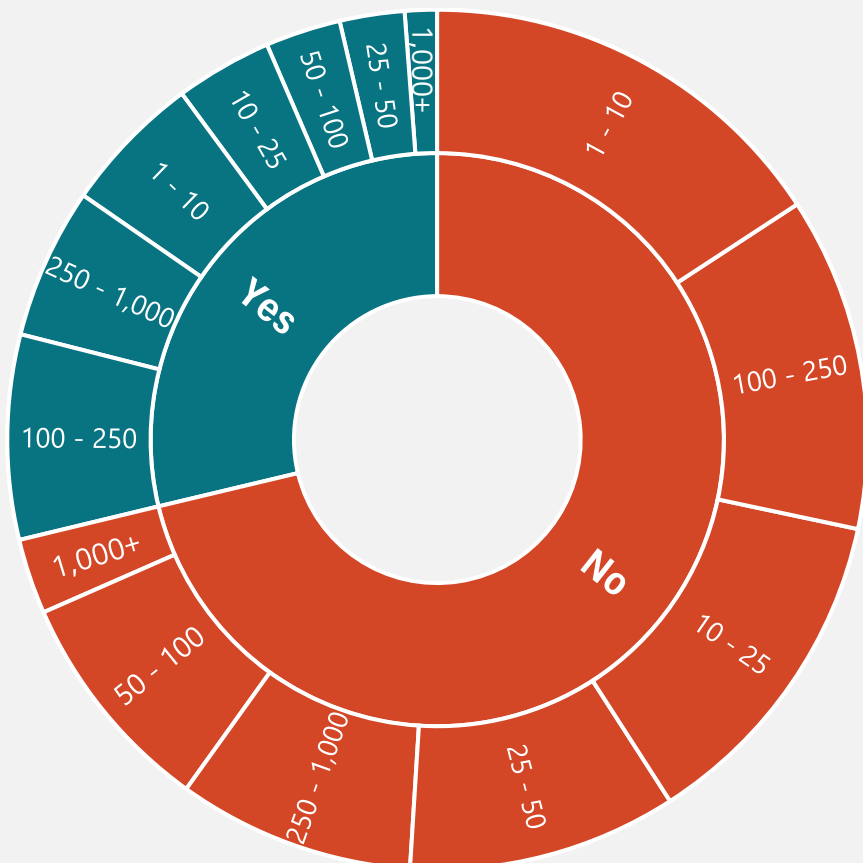
<sup>1</sup> These services are administered by Job Service, not Commerce. <sup>2</sup> Career Builders is under NDUS. This indicates a need for employer education on agency responsibilities and programs.



## WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL (WDC) FAMILIARITY

Employers were asked about their familiarity with the Workforce Development Council.

### WDC Familiarity of Employers by Size



# 71%

of employers surveyed  
are **not familiar with  
the WDC**



#### KEY INSIGHT

29% of employers indicated they were familiar with the North Dakota Workforce Development Council, however, **many employers listed programs under other state agencies when asked about their business relationship with the WDC** including:

- JP3 (Job Service)
- ND Career Builders (NDUS)
- Grants offered by ND Dept. of Commerce

This indicates some surveyed employers have a **misunderstanding of the WDC's role.**



#### IN OUR OWN WORDS...

- "I hear updates on the work of [WDC] typically through **attending workshops, seminars, LinkedIn posts and local news**"
- "We participate with meetings and **providing local information to the council**"
- "I work with them and **utilize some of their programs** for the justice involved people"
- "[We] use the **ND Career Builders Scholarship & Loan Repayment Program**"

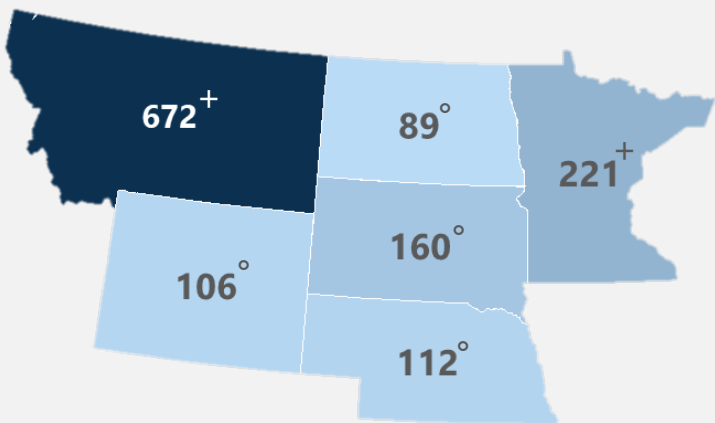
# APPRENTICESHIPS | APPRENTICESHIP LANDSCAPE

The information below details the landscape of apprenticeships in North Dakota compared to peer states as well as information on approved registered apprenticeships through USDOL.



## PEER STATE COMPARISON

### Number of USDOL Registered Apprenticeship Sponsors of Peer States



° **Office of Apprenticeship (OA) State:** States that offer Registered Apprenticeships through the USDOL's Office of Apprenticeship

+ **State Apprenticeship Agency (SAA) State:** States that offer Registered Apprenticeships through their own state agency

North Dakota is **surpassing Wyoming and South Dakota** in number of **active apprentices statewide**.

North Dakota is **lagging in total number of registered apprenticeship sponsors** compared to peer states.

State	OA° / SAA+	Number of Registered Apprenticeship Sponsors (2025)	Number of Active Apprentices (2025) <sup>2</sup>
North Dakota	OA	89	1,675
Wyoming	OA	106	507
Nebraska	OA	112	4,138
South Dakota	OA	160	1,461
Minnesota	SAA	221	11,244
Montana	SAA	672	2,515

1,140

Different **registered apprenticeship** paths currently **offered by the USDOL**

### Registered Apprenticeships are available for industries such as:

- Advanced Manufacturing
- Agriculture
- Construction
- Education
- Energy
- Financial Services
- Healthcare
- Hospitality
- Technology
- Telecommunication
- Transportation

<sup>1</sup> Apprenticeship.gov Partner Listing | <https://www.apprenticeship.gov/partner-finder/listings>

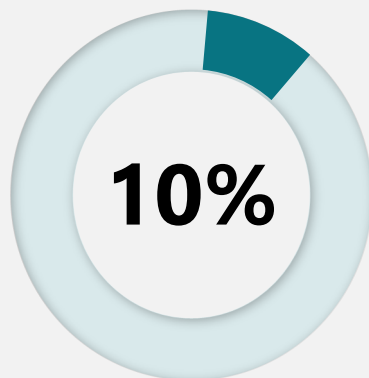
<sup>2</sup> Apprenticeship.gov State Dashboard | <https://www.apprenticeship.gov/data-and-statistics/apprentices-by-state-dashboard>

## APPRENTICESHIPS | EMPLOYER OFFERINGS

Employers were asked about their current registered apprenticeship offerings.



### REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP OFFERINGS AND MISUNDERSTANDINGS



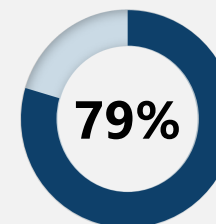
of employers surveyed **currently offer registered apprenticeships\***

**\* Responses indicate employers surveyed may have misconceptions or misunderstandings about what a registered apprenticeship is.**

When asked about current registered apprenticeship offerings, employers listed other work-based learning or job training opportunities such as:

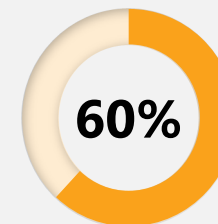
- "Counseling student internships"
- "A loan forgiveness program"
- "We offer a co-op"

**Only 16% of employers** (1.6% of total survey responses) who indicated that they offer registered apprenticeships were found on the **USDOL's registered apprenticeship sponsor list.**<sup>1</sup>



of employers **don't offer registered apprenticeships** or say that registered apprenticeships **aren't applicable to their business**

This suggests an opportunity to **educate employers** about the **1,100+** registered apprenticeships and relevant state industries.



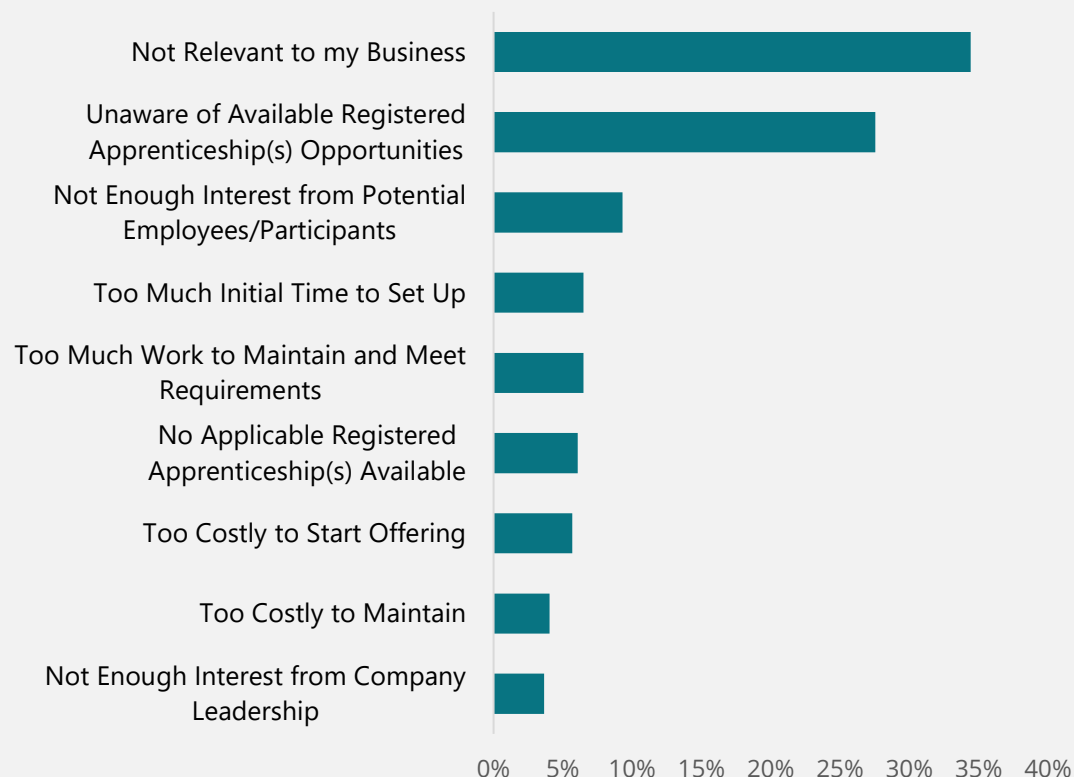
of employers offering registered apprenticeships have **more than 50 employees**

<sup>1</sup> Apprenticeship.gov Partner Listing | <https://www.apprenticeship.gov/partner-finder/listings>

# APPRENTICESHIPS | REASONS FOR NOT OFFERING

Employers were asked about their reasons for not offering registered apprenticeships.

**What are your reasons for not previously or not currently participating in a registered apprenticeship(s) program?**



## REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP RELEVANCY

**#1**

***“Not relevant to my business”\****

was the top reason why employers surveyed **do not currently offer nor have they previously offered registered apprenticeships**, followed by *“Unaware of Available Registered Apprenticeship Opportunities”*

\* ***“Not relevant to my business”*** and ***“Unaware of Available Registered Apprenticeship Opportunities”*** being the top reasons for employers to not currently offer registered apprenticeships indicates there is an **opportunity to educate North Dakota employers** on available registered apprenticeship opportunities and programs across industries.

**Potential registered apprenticeships for North Dakota include:**<sup>1</sup>

- Bison Herd Manager
- Cybersecurity Analyst
- Carpenter
- Electrician
- Farm Equipment Technician
- Truck Driver
- Agricultural Service Worker
- Accounting Technician
- Wind Turbine Technician
- Health IT Specialist
- Heating & AC Mechanic
- Hotel Manager
- Financial Planner
- *And many more!*

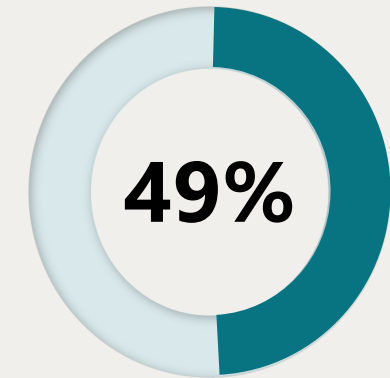
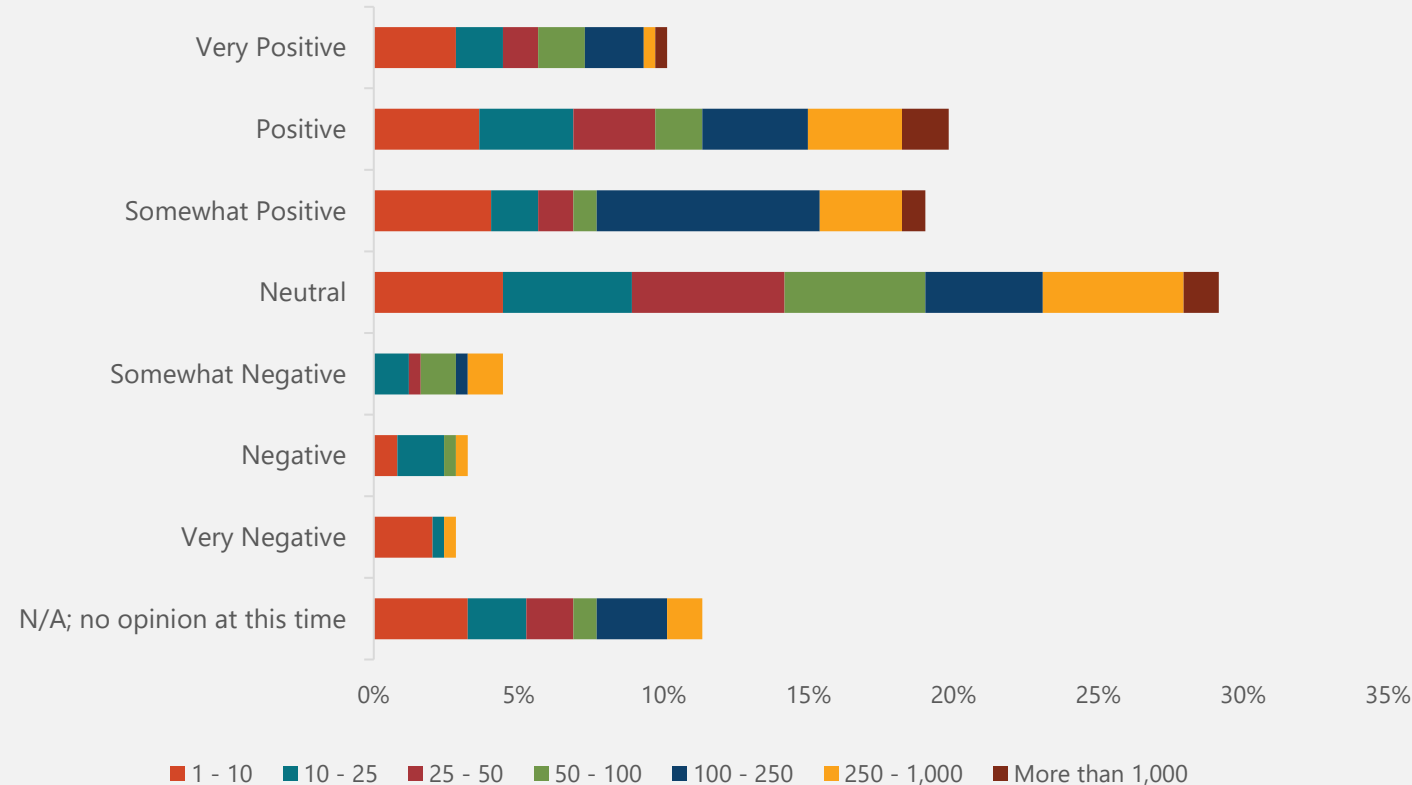
<sup>1</sup> Apprenticeship.gov Approved Apprenticeship Occupations | <https://www.apprenticeship.gov/apprenticeship-occupations>



# ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) | VIEW ON AI

Employers were asked about their company's overall view on AI.

**Overall View on AI by Business Size (# of Employees)**

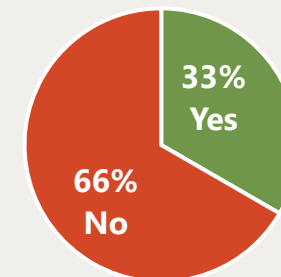
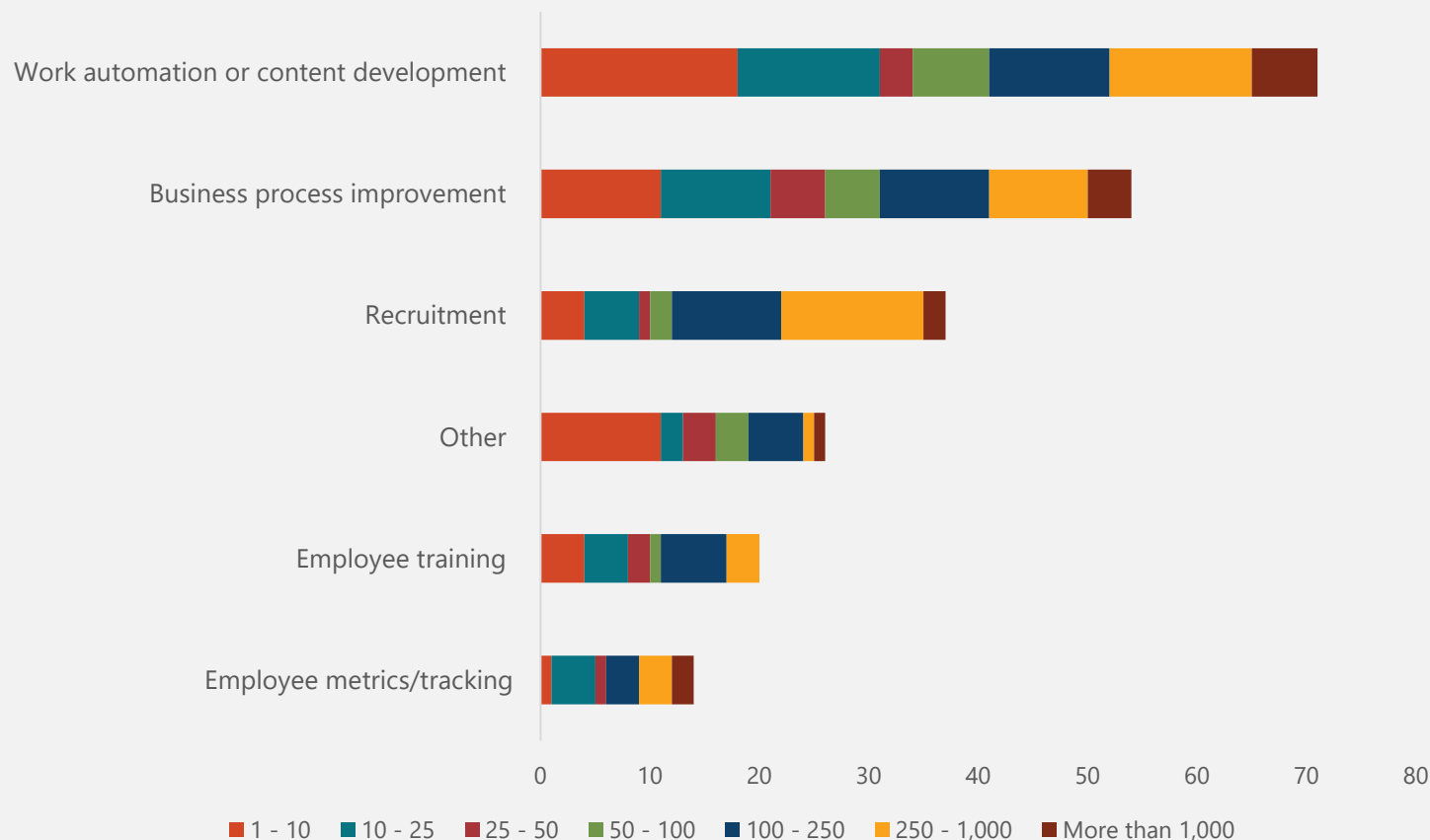


of respondents said they have a somewhat positive, positive, or very **positive view on AI in the workplace**

# ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) | CURRENT USE

Employers were asked whether they currently use AI in the workplace, and if so, how they utilize AI.

**Current Use of AI by Business Size (# of Employees)**



of employers are **using AI** in the workplace

**#1** *Work automation or content development*

Was the **top current use** for AI in the workplace by employers currently using AI



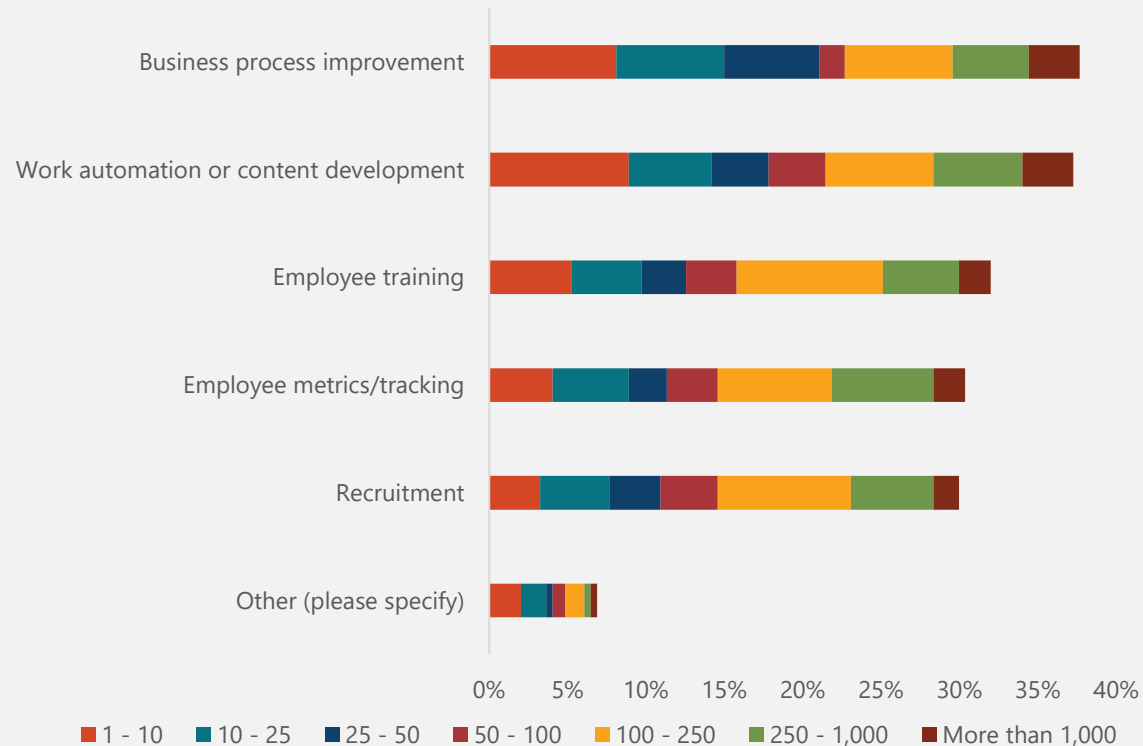
## "OTHER" RESPONSES

- "Write job descriptions"
- "Marketing"
- "Benefits enrollment"
- "Idea Generation"
- "Read or try things that would help with operations or employee retention"
- "Hiring Process"

## ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) | FUTURE USE

Employers were asked about which ways they intend to use AI in the future.

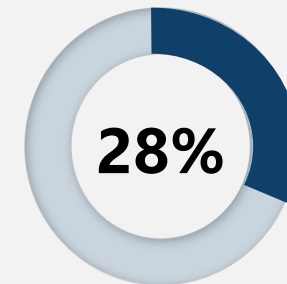
### Future Uses of AI by Business Size (# of Employees)



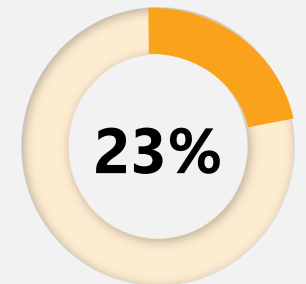
#1

### ***Business Process Improvement***

was the **top future desired use of AI** for employers in the workplace, followed by “*Work automation or content development*”



of employers **sized 1 -10**  
top desired use of AI is  
**work automation or  
content development**







of employers **sized 100 -  
250** top desired use of AI  
is **employee training**

# Future State: Recommendations



## RECOMMENDATIONS | FOCUS AREA OVERVIEW





There are four primary areas of focus that positions the solutions that North Dakota should consider to improve the workforce ecosystem.

FOCUS AREAS	DESCRIPTION
 <b>Strategic Vision</b>	Provide clear vision for <b>ecosystem steering</b> , determine what <b>goals to prioritize</b> , and define <b>roles and responsibilities for programs and partners</b> . Define strategic vision for better <b>alignment across programs</b> , the ability to <b>understand program needs</b> , and <b>set funding priorities</b> that align with overall goals.
 <b>Customer Focus</b>	<b>Streamline entry points</b> to programs and services within the ecosystem and/or work to encourage “ <b>warm handoffs</b> ” <b>between programs</b> . Develop a strategy for <b>assessing customer needs and engaging with customers</b> to <b>understand gaps in programming</b> .
 <b>Awareness and Engagement</b>	<b>Enhance and build relationships across programs and regions</b> to better engage with communities and partners across the ecosystem. Develop strategies for <b>socializing programs</b> to employers, jobseekers, and students. <b>Share programs successes</b> to encourage collaboration and celebrate accomplishments.
 <b>Information Tracking and Sharing</b>	Identify <b>success metrics across programs</b> that align with ND’s workforce strategic vision and track success to support <b>objective program decisions</b> and <b>assess program efficacy</b> over time. Develop a <b>strategy for data sharing</b> to enhance program efficiency and improve customer service.



## RECOMMENDATIONS | LIST OF TOP OPPORTUNITIES

In alignment with the four focus areas, 13 recommendations have been developed to align with the top opportunities for the state to address to improve workforce ecosystem operations and efficiencies.

FOCUS AREAS		LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS			
	Strategic Vision	Unified State Vision (1A)	Define Roles & Partnerships (1B)	Alignment Across Agencies & Regions (1C)	Understanding Funding Priorities (1D)
	Customer Focus	Single Entry Point (2A)	Warm Handoffs (2B)	Align Program Offerings to Customer Needs (2C)	Workforce of the Future (2D)
	Awareness and Engagement	Program Awareness (3A)	Sharing Program Successes (3B)	Relationship Building & Connections (3C)	
	Information Tracking and Sharing	Measuring Information (4A)	Data Sharing (4B)		

## RECOMMENDATIONS | DESCRIPTIONS

#	RECOMMENDATION	DESCRIPTION
<b>1A</b>	Unified State Vision	Create a single, unified state vision to serve as a “north star” for refining current workforce programs and designing new programs that align with the state’s workforce vision.
<b>1B</b>	Define & Communicate Roles & Partnerships	Align on and clearly document roles on responsibilities to determine who does what, who is responsible for what, what inputs do programs need to make decisions, how/who do programs report to.
<b>1C</b>	Alignment Across Agencies & Regions	Ensure that all agencies and programs within the ecosystem are and remain aligned in their goals and priorities and how they serve jobseekers & employers.
<b>1D</b>	Understanding Funding Priorities	Increase transparency in funding use and foster collaboration between agencies to understand current programs’ needs, funding sources, funding utilization, and funding opportunities to better meet workforce needs.
<b>2A</b>	Single Entry Point	Create a single-entry point, or “front door” to the Workforce Ecosystem for all stakeholders with the goal of helping them easily access programs and supports.
<b>2B</b>	Warm Handoffs	Develop and implement a cohesive “no wrong door” approach to route customers to the correct program(s), regardless of first contact.
<b>2C</b>	Align Program Offerings to Customer Needs	Create a flexible and adaptable approach to continue to target the needs of ecosystem stakeholders, including jobseekers, students, employers, and others, to ensure current ecosystem programs and services are in alignment with customer demand.
<b>2D</b>	Workforce of the Future	Enhance strategies to improve both workforce preparedness and employer readiness related to future-based skills that improve career adaptability and improve digital literacy in the face of technical, societal and economic change disparity across the state.

## RECOMMENDATIONS | DESCRIPTIONS

#	RECOMMENDATION	DESCRIPTION
3A	Program Awareness	Improve marketing and socialization of existing programs to better leverage current services and make services easier for customers to access.
3B	Sharing Program Successes	Publicly share the successes of WIOA Core Programs and the WDC's efforts to celebrate progress and increase support for workforce programs.
3C	Relationship Building & Connections	Deepen connections within local communities to understand needs and improve connections to small business and entrepreneurs.
4A	Measuring Information	Standardize success measurements, where possible, to allow for better program assessment and determine where alignments exist to improve clarity on measures that impact all workforce programs.
4B	Data Sharing	Identify opportunities for data sharing across workforce programs and state agencies to reduce workload for program staff and for individuals co-enrolled in programs.