

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT & ENTREPRENEURSHIP STRATEGY



Vibrant, dynamic communities require fresh and innovative talent. Grand Erie needs young professionals, employees and entrepreneurs to keep our economy moving forward.

This document includes research about how young people aged 18 - 30 are faring in Grand Erie's economy as well as recommendations developed by young workers within the region.

MARCH 2013



Workforce Planning Board of Grand Erie
Commission de planification de la main-d'oeuvre de Grand Erie

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Introduction

Whether they are young professionals, employees, or students, Grand Erie youth want to live, work and contribute to their community. During the past year, young workers aged 18 – 30, from Brant, Haldimand and Norfolk shared their goals, their passion for their community, and their ideas on how to improve employment outcomes for both themselves and local employers.

Youth out-migration is a major concern to the rural communities of Haldimand and Norfolk where population growth is slowing, the labour market is shrinking, and young people are leaving and not coming back. And although Brantford-Brant is becoming home to more and more youth, similar concerns exist due to the out-migration of skills and talent – young workers, unable to find jobs, are putting their skills to work in larger, surrounding urban communities.

This document examines why young people leave the community and what can be done to keep them. It reports on the challenges and successes of those who have stayed. It looks at the employer perspective and provides advice. It provides a framework of actions developed by youth for youth.

OUR DEFINITION OF YOUTH

For this project, youth are defined as individuals aged 18 – 30. This age range reflects Statistics Canada's definition of youth with the exception of those under 18 years of age who are required by legislation to be engaged in education. No other criteria or descriptions were assigned.

OUR OBJECTIVES

Our goal is to engage current and past Grand Erie residents, aged 18 – 30, in a collaborative consultation and planning process to:

1. Understand how youth are faring in Grand Erie's labour market
2. Identify how employment outcomes can be enhanced
3. Identify what employment services and supports are in place to support young workers and to identify gaps in service
4. Identify actions and strategies to support stronger employment outcomes for high school and post-secondary students and young workers

Current Environment

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT IN ONTARIO'S LABOUR MARKET

They've lived through 9-11, the dot.com bust, a world-wide financial crisis, war, the highest housing prices ever recorded, and a world recession – and most are only in their 20's.

Young workers face tough competition in a shrinking job market that has reduced the number of entry level positions. Companies dependent on exports are reluctant to hire due to the continued financial crisis across the globe, boomers are choosing to remain in the job market increasing financial costs to their employers and reducing openings, and companies have responded to productivity demands by increasing the use of technology.

The costs are high. Post-secondary graduates are finishing school with record high debt resulting in crushing financial pressure. Other young people, disheartened by the lack of jobs, are simply choosing not to finish their post-secondary schooling believing further education is futile. And for many who have found work, the gap between the type of job available and their field of study is so great and so long that their skills and knowledge are depreciating.

How are youth coping? Many continue to be financially dependent on their parents, becoming basement dwellers in their family home. Others are going west and north to follow jobs in the oil fields and mines. Both options contribute to a significant loss of human capital in their home communities.

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT IN GRAND ERIE

Youth aged 18 to 30 represent 14% of the total Grand Erie population, just slightly below the provincial ratio of 15%. The number of youth in Brant is on an upward trend, likely as a result of young families choosing Brant for its affordable housing and lifestyle. In contrast, the number of youth declined substantially in Haldimand-Norfolk with migration figures showing the loss of over 2,000 people aged 18 – 24 between 2006 and 2011. Many of these young people left to attend post-secondary education and have not returned.

Migration Characteristics 2006 – 2011

Age Group	Brant			Haldimand-Norfolk		
	In-migrants	Out-migrants	Net-migrants	In-migrants	Out-migrants	Net-migrants
0 – 17	6,250	5,073	1,177	5,025	4,941	84
18 – 24	3,209	3,644	-435	2,267	4,352	-2,085
25 – 44	9,803	8,467	1,336	6,889	7,476	-587

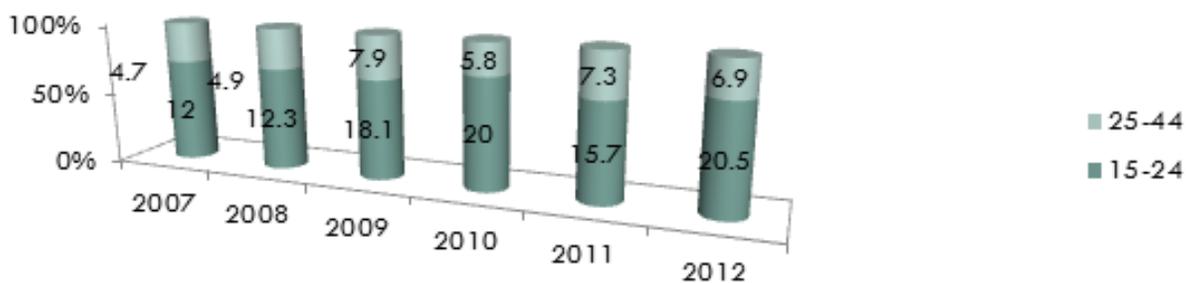
Source: Statistics Canada, Taxfiler

Employment rates for young workers aged 15 – 24 and 25 – 44 have fallen consistently since 2007. The most dramatic loss occurred for youth aged 15 – 24, declining by 11% between 2007 (62.9%) and 2012 (51.7%). Several factors contributed to the decline but the most significant include a new Learning to 18 legislation, introduced to keep students in school, and the financial crisis of 2009. Employment rates for youth aged 25 – 44 were less severe, falling 5.6% to the current rate of 79.1%.

As employment rates have fallen, unemployment levels have increased. Youth unemployment for those aged 15 - 24 reached 20% in 2010 and 2012, almost triple the rate for any other age group. Younger workers in the 25 - 44 age range fared much better, with unemployment peaking at 7.9% in 2009. Although youth unemployment rates have improved, participation rates and employment levels continue to decline suggesting that many young workers have given up.

For young people who are working, the most positive signs are for workers aged 25 - 44 working in full-time positions. Employment for this group grew by 1,300 jobs between 2007 and 2012. Full-time jobs for workers under 25 fell by an equal amount (1,300) and part-time jobs declined by -1,200 for each group.

Unemployment Rates by Age 2007-2012: Brantford CMA



Source: LFS, Brantford CMA

Future Outlook

Canada is showing signs of recovery from the 2009 recession, but the employment outlook for youth remains guarded. Research released by The Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)ⁱⁱ suggests that employment for youth and low-skilled workers will continue to lag behind other labour market participants and that without the resources and financial assistance available through traditional support systems such as employment insurance, a greater number of youth will depend on social assistance. This situation is expected to have life-long impacts on the youth generation including lower life-time earnings and lost skills.

Similar findings have been reported by Community Foundations of Canada in two studies released by Vital Signs Canada. In October 2012, CBC aired findings from the report *Generation in Flux: Seismic Shift Shaking Canadian Youth* highlighting the disappearance of a direct career path for today's graduates. Approximately 1 in 3 graduates, aged 25 - 29 are working in low skilled, low paid jobs just to scrape by, and the situation is complicated by older workers staying in the workforce, fewer summer jobs, and burgeoning student debtⁱⁱⁱ. A second report, *Generation Jobless* aired by CBC in February 2013, reinforces these findings and cautions that little improvement is expected. Employers, hammered by tough economic conditions have turned to technology and outsourcing to protect their profits. Few are willing to invest the considerable resources needed to train new workers.^{iv}

Research Methodology and Tools

Research for this study incorporated both qualitative and quantitative strategies. Separate approaches were implemented to lead the process in the communities of Brantford-Brant and Haldimand-Norfolk.

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Community and Youth Advisory Groups

Brantford-Brant Youth Advisory Young professionals and workers, aged 18 – 30 representing a diverse cross-section of occupations established a working group to oversee the creation of made-in Brant solutions for youth. This group shared their employment experiences, provided research support, and developed recommendations for action.

Norfolk Community Advisory The Workforce Planning Board of Grand Erie in partnership with co-leads, Norfolk County Tourism and Economic Development and Norfolk District Business Development Corporation established the Norfolk Youth Advisory. The advisory group is comprised of community, social, and educational services serving youth in Norfolk County. This group provided insight into existing youth services, gaps in services, and contributed to planning the Norfolk youth forum.

Norfolk Youth Forum 18 young people, aged 18 – 30 participated in roundtable discussions on Norfolk's youth retention and employment situation. Participants were asked to identify Norfolk's strengths, the area's opportunities for graduates, and how they, as young residents of Norfolk can take a leadership role in supporting each other in establishing their careers. Ten individuals from this forum have stepped forward and agreed to work with local leaders to develop made by youth for youth solutions.

QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

Young Worker Survey

An online survey was widely distributed to youth aged 18 – 30 who live, or have previously lived, in the City of Brantford, County of Brant, Norfolk County, Haldimand County or Six Nations of the Grand River. 16 questions collected information about their choice of residence and lifestyle, employment and job search status, self-employment, and recommendations to other youth. Seventy-two respondents completed the survey.

Employer Survey

An online survey was designed to learn about the local employers' perspective on hiring young workers. 112 employers, predominantly from the Brantford-Brant and Norfolk region, representing 9 major industry sectors provided demographic information about their current employees, youth recruitment strategies, education/industry partnerships and advice for young workers.

What We've Learned

Youth attraction and retention is not a “one size fits all” situation. There are significant differences between the experience and needs of youth-at-risk and those that are moving forward with their education and careers. Both need their communities' support and guidance.

AT-RISK YOUTH POPULATIONS

An environmental scan of services across Grand Erie suggests that there are many services in existence to support youth-at-risk. These programs range from school board programs including Turning Point and School Within a College, to community-based organizations such as Why Not City Missions.

Considerable discussion and research by the community advisory group suggests that youth-at-risk will be better served if individual services work collaboratively to address the socio-economic needs of the at-risk population. All of the services recognize that many of these young people lack the family, social, and financial support needed to achieve academic and employment success. By coordinating services and working together a more holistic approach can enhance the benefits of existing services.

YOUNG WORKERS (NEW ENTRANTS)

A significant proportion of Grand Erie's youth population is educated and ready to work. These young people have completed high school, college, or university or are seeking entry into apprenticeships.

These young adults are eager to establish their careers and their place within the community, but many are struggling to find sustainable employment in their field of expertise or career of choice. A lack of job experience appears to be the biggest stumbling block and few volunteer or work experience opportunities appear to be available to help them overcome the gap.

Despite wanting to stay within their home community, many face the prospect of “moving for employment”.

This is what they've told us!

“Planning, perseverance, and networking are critical to getting a toe-hold in the local job market” is the message received from our Brantford-Brant working group. If young people are to be retained within the community, steps must be taken to connect people to the community through networking, better linkages to services, and jobs.

The outlook is bright.

The Youth Perspective

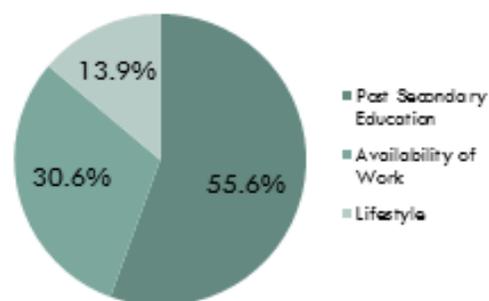
72 youth, aged 18 - 30 responded to an online survey. The majority (72%) attended high school in the Brantford-Brant and Norfolk regions and the balance reported attending high school outside of Grand Erie. All but 17 reported living within the Grand Erie region at the time of the survey.

THE PARTICIPANTS

Approximately half of survey participants indicated that they had lived or live outside the region. Education was the primary reason for moving, followed by work opportunities.

Only 13.9% indicated they moved because of lifestyle - an important fact that dispels the common belief that young people are most interested in the cultural, social, and economic environments offered in larger urban areas.

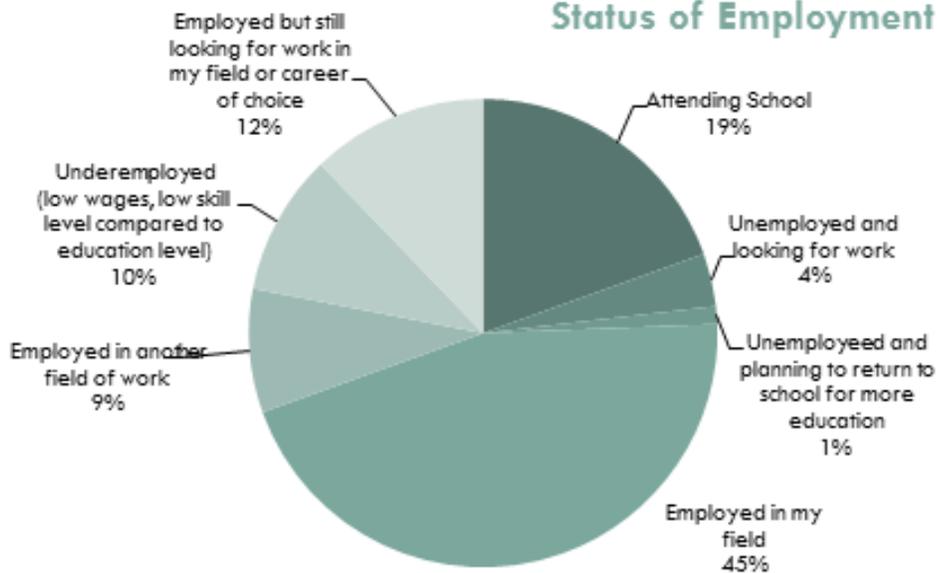
Reason for Moving Outside of Grand Erie



EMPLOYMENT STATUS

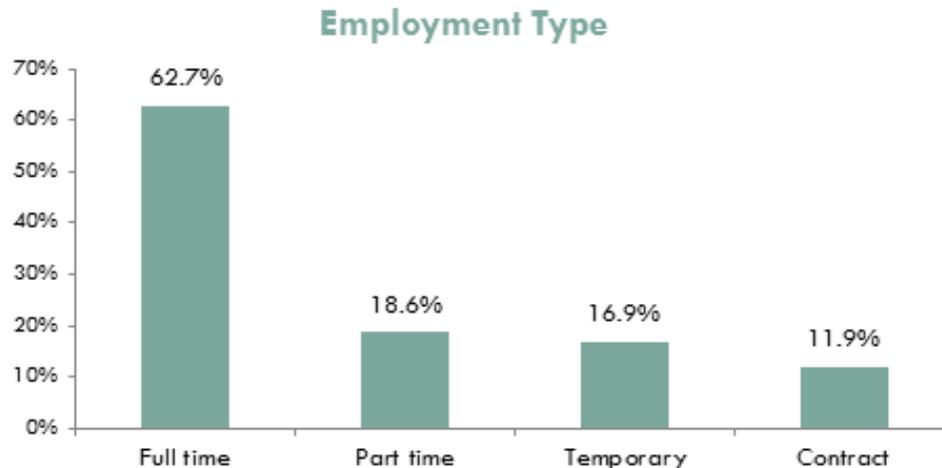
All 62 participants responded to the question asking about their employment situation. 22.2% reported they were still attending school and the balance were working or looking for work. Just less than half reported they were working in their field of study or career of choice. A quarter of those participating, however, noted they are underemployed or working in other fields while they continue to look for work in their field.

Status of Employment



EMPLOYMENT TYPE

The number of youth working full time was higher than anticipated, while just less than half continue to work in precarious part-time, temporary, or contract employment.



THE JOB SEARCH

Participants ranked family and friends and business networks highest in terms of assisting them through the job search period. Comments from the participants noted that personal connections (family and friends) provide emotional, financial and practical support during the search for work and were a source of inspiration and encouragement when things get discouraging. Business connections provide access to the right people and to information about jobs. Participants who identified a strong connection to peers in their field of expertise or industry reported learning much more about job requirements, resources, and job postings.

Community-based employment services (Employment Ontario) and school career resource centres ranked lowest, with 15 participants noting that they were unaware of the community-based services. Another 5 indicated that these services did not offer the resources needed to find suitable jobs within their field of study. Career resource centres were identified as a good source of pre-employment information but of little help to graduates returning to their home communities.

MISSING SUPPORTS AND PROGRAMS

Job experience through mentoring, volunteer, or co-operative work placements tops the list as the most needed support across the region. Participants noted that opportunities to gain experience are simply “not available” in our communities.

Participants also noted an absence of career planning and support services geared to graduates and young professionals, noting that services appear to be geared to youth-at-risk and those who have not completed their education. Many noted the need for one-on-one support to assist them with goal setting, strategy, and career building.

JOB SEARCH TOOLS AND STRATEGIES

Young people are using traditional methods of job searching. 84.5% of the participants identified that their primary source of learning about job postings was through job banks and employment websites such as Workopolis and Monster, followed by word-of-mouth (67.2%). The two least used sources included Employment Ontario services (27.5%) and in-person/cold calls (27.6%).

SELF-EMPLOYMENT

About a third of all participants indicated an interest in self-employment as a viable career option. Most of these individuals noted that they found the services through community future offices in the region to be very helpful even though they did not qualify for financial supports through the Ontario Self Employment Benefit program.

When asked about what supports and services would help them reach their self-employment goals, the majority noted access to loans and funding and to wage subsidies or government funding. Participants also noted that programs focused on managing a business, and product/market research would be extremely useful.

STUDENTS NEEDS

For participants still completing their education, the need for mentoring, work experience and job shadowing topped the list of current needs, followed by better information about occupations and industries.

ADVICE FROM OUR PARTICIPANTS

“Don’t give up. Stick with it. Hard work and perseverance will pay off” is the message threading through the advice given from youth to youth. Our participants provide insightful and honest advice in the areas of:

- Persevere** Don’t let the doubters get in your way. Develop a good support system for the days you are down or don’t feel like looking for work. Stay focused on your vision. Ask for help and don’t be afraid to ask questions.
- Research** Educate yourself about the labour market. Learn what jobs are available within your community before choosing your field of study. If your career choice is in a highly-competitive field or at a stand-still, be willing to explore the alternatives.
- Experience** Before leaving school, get experience. Take every opportunity to volunteer, job shadow, work part-time, or participate in co-operative education. Don’t leave it until graduation.
- Learn** As one participant noted, “it’s not about what you know, it’s about what you learn and retain”. Take advantage of every opportunity given to you to gain experience.
- Network** “Treat everyone you meet as though they could help you further your career”.
- Bust the Myths** Many stereotypes abound about young workers. Make sure that you aren’t fulfilling these perceptions - dress for success, be careful how you use social media, display enthusiasm and a willingness to learn and be prepared to earn your dues.
- Be Flexible** Be willing to work in a field outside of your educational experience. Be willing to take any job that allows you to build your skills. If you can’t find work in your home community, look at jobs in other locations.

The Employer Perspective

In January 2013, Workforce Planning Board implemented an on-line employer survey to:

- identify youth employment levels
- assess the level of industry-education partnerships
- seek advice on how youth can enter the labour force

Preliminary findings show that although young workers do not represent a significant portion of our local industries' workforce, employers are aware that young people bring skills, knowledge, and enthusiasm that is critical to future business growth.

The survey findings also indicate that although employers value co-operative education and internships as an excellent opportunity to develop a skilled talent pool, the number of industry-education partnerships is relatively low. Employers noted several challenges to participating, including limited financial and human resources, onerous red-tape, and a lack of communication from educational facilities.

Finally, employers provided sound advice for young workers seeking employment. Almost all recommended volunteering as an excellent way of developing skills and demonstrating commitment. The majority also reinforced the need for young workers to develop both work skills and personal skills - noting that attitude, eagerness to learn, and a willingness to work their way up are just as important as specific skills and knowledge.

Perhaps most surprising, is the continued use of traditional recruitment techniques. Word of mouth (who we know) continues to be the major method of recruiting, followed by job banks and paid advertisements.

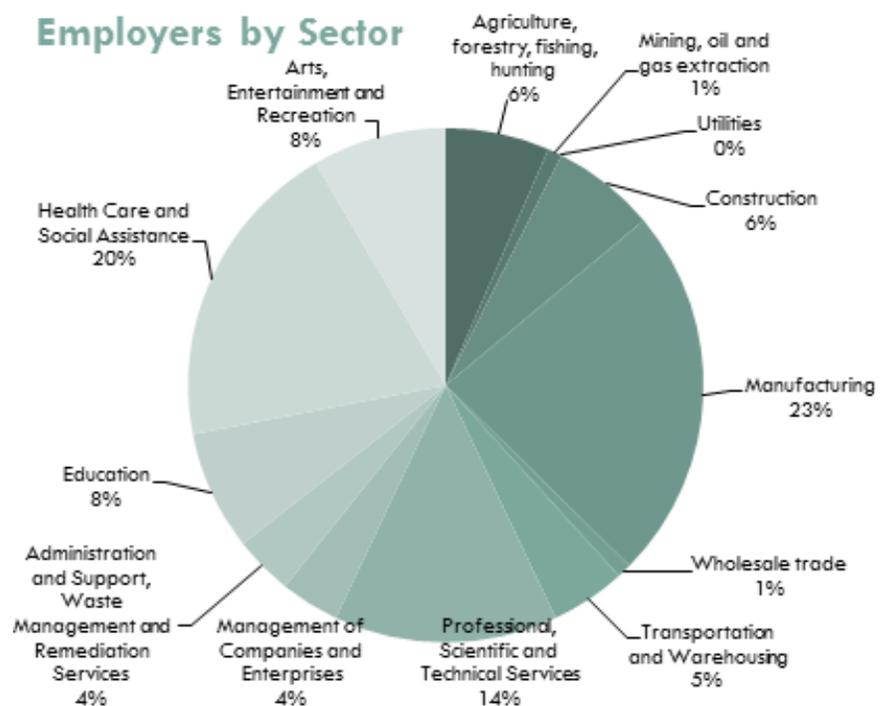
THE EMPLOYERS

112 employers completed the survey. 61% of all responses were received from employers located in the Brantford-Brant region, followed by 18% in Norfolk and 14% in Haldimand.

The survey participants represent the diverse economy of Grand Erie. The top 3 sectors included:

1. Manufacturing - 23.4%
2. Wholesale Trade 19.6%
3. Professional, Scientific and Technical Services 14.0%

These are consistent with labour market information for the region that shows manufacturing as the primary source of employment.



PERCENTAGE OF YOUNG WORKERS

Each employer was asked to estimate what percentage of their workforce is between 18 - 30 years of age. The results show that young workers are not a significant source of employees for the majority of employers. Less than 30% (32 employers) reported that youth represent more than 25% of their workforce.

YOUTH RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES

We asked employers to identify their primary recruitment strategies in order to develop a base-line for comparison. The top 3 recruiting methods were ranked as follows:

1. Word of Mouth
2. Job banks
3. Traditional Advertising

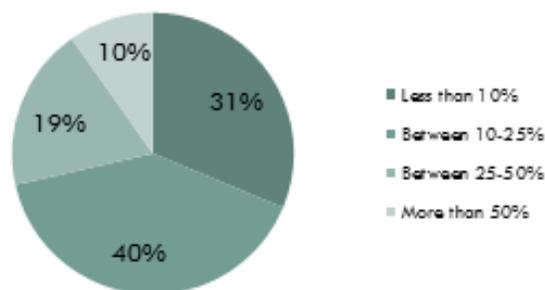
Other Methods included:

- Hiring from volunteer placements
- Professional Associations and websites
- Staffing Agencies
- University and College job boards
- College apprenticeship programs
- Summer Jobs Services - students
- Friends and families

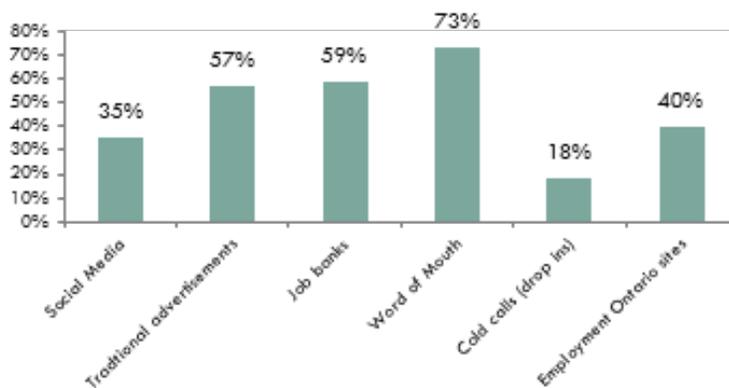
56% of the employers surveyed indicate that they actively seek new graduates and young workers as part of their recruitment strategy. However, only 21% reported using different (or unique) methods of recruitment for this audience. Some of these included:

- Co-operative Education programs
- Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program
- Referrals from college teachers
- Social Media (Twitter, Facebook, blogs)
- Summer students
- University and college job banks/fairs (one company covers the cost of books for student hires if the student maintains an 80% average while working an average of 20 hours/week.)
- Post-Secondary Internships
- Circulate postings to customers, member sites, and through other employees
- Wage subsidies and Ontario Job Creation Program

% of Employees 18 - 30



Recruitment Strategies



INDUSTRY-EDUCATION PARTNERSHIPS

In order to assess the level of industry-education partnerships, employers were asked to identify if they participate in co-operative education or internship programs with education facilities. Approximately 2/3 of the employers responded, with the majority identifying partnerships at the high school and college level.

Company participation in cooperative education or internship programs		
	Response Percent	Response Count
High schools	38.7%	29
Trades Training Centres	8.0%	6
Colleges	34.7%	26
Universities	14.7%	11
Private Career Colleges	4.0%	3
	<i>answered question</i>	75
	<i>skipped question</i>	37

The majority of these partnerships include companies participating in cooperative education placements at varying levels of education ranging from placements for special needs students to university internships. 61% of employers indicated that they do not partner with high schools, colleges or universities to support curriculum development or program delivery.

Several employers noted partnerships with specific universities or specific programs. In one instance, the employer is partnering with their local college to provide job shadowing opportunities for graduates. One company sponsors a student chapter with McMaster University, Mechanical/Civil Engineering, and provides two scholarships – one to an outreach program at an elementary school and the other to a Heavy Construction Chair Endowment. Others partner with local universities and colleges by providing “real life projects” for class development.

A small number of employers identified that they teach at the college level on an occasional basis, or sit on industry advisory teams for college programs.

EMPLOYERS ADVICE FOR YOUNG WORKERS

Employers were asked to give young workers advice on four labour force characteristics:

1. Education
2. Skills
3. Cooperative education/internships
4. Getting a job

Approximately 75% of those participating contributed their recommendations.

Education

50% of all respondents recommended that post-secondary education is the key to success in today’s labour market, and all agreed that high school should be viewed as a bare minimum. Respondents noted that education represents a willingness to learn and a broadening of experience and perspective; that education is the first step and not the final destination. Education provides a foundation for further learning at the ground level in their career.

Respondents also recommended that students should blend their education to ensure a good mix of practical and theoretical skills and knowledge, and to achieve the highest grades they can. Several noted that proof of credentials is expected.

Skills: The overriding message from respondents – develop diverse skills. Skills sets need to range from job specific to soft skills. As one respondent noted, “develop the practical skills that go with your knowledge. Take effort in skill development. Do not be afraid of failure!”

The chart below speaks to some of the skills recommendations:

Soft (Personal)	Job Specific
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be willing to learn – even when the job may not be what you studied for. Focus on learning the basics well before becoming the “specialist”. • Learn for life under your own initiative. Demonstrate your eagerness to learn and progress. • Communicate effectively – through written, verbal, and body-language. • Co-operate and collaborate – be a team player and leader. • Create your own experience – volunteer, work part-time, job shadow. • Know thy self – what are your skills? What are your aptitudes e.g. mechanical reasoning? • Be innovative and entrepreneurial – be a business building “champion”. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills for all workplaces: computer skills; customer service; health & safety; client service; marketing; math & science. • Skilled trades – assess your mechanical aptitude, pick something you love, and then practice, practice. • Demand for specific occupation/industry training was noted for natural resources, business management, tourism, advanced manufacturing, and health & social services.

“Education should be blended as much as possible. If for example you have chosen a career as an administrative assistant, ensure that your education covers multiple aspects such as bookkeeping, customer service, project management skills, etc. The more diversified you are, the greater an asset you will be”

Co-operative Education/Internships

Co-operative education and internships were described as an “excellent way” to learn about career choices and to get experience but they also noted that people need to take these opportunities seriously. Listed below are the recommendations employers made for young workers:

- Research the field/occupation before signing up. Consider doing a bit of volunteering before the placement begins.
- Treat placements like a job – attend as scheduled, be punctual, demonstrate your great attitude and willingness to learn
- Be flexible and willing to try other jobs
- Be a team player – show your respect for fellow workers
- Try to align your work placements with companies that you would like to work for – show your ability to learn and do the job while building good relationships

Getting a Job

Employers' recommendations for a successful job search included:

- Be persistent – you will need to dedicate lots of time and hard work to learn what's out there.
- Be self-aware. Know your skills and abilities and communicate them well.
- Research the companies you are applying to – customize your cover letters and resume to meet the demands of the job.
- Volunteer, volunteer, volunteer.
- Demonstrate excellent communication skills – follow through on instructions.
- Dress for success – at every step of the job search process. Jeans are not appropriate.
- Don't expect to start at the top! Education is just the first step in “learning”.
- Position yourself as a “starter”.
- Let the positives show – great attitude, eagerness to learn, respect for others.

EMPLOYER SUCCESSION PLANNING

Despite an aging workforce, only 35 employers indicated that they have a succession plan in place to address the issue of retiring workers. Employers responding “yes” described strategies ranging from recruitment techniques to training for success. These activities included:

- Attraction and recruitment of “talent” with a focus on filling positions with the best candidates. Employers noted that they seek talent that can help the business grow by bringing in new skills and areas of expertise.
- Building talent – employers are utilizing former student employees, co-op students, part-time employees, contract, and apprentices for full-time positions. Unique strategies include a company who has created a student chapter providing an on-going talent pool.
- Internal recruitment – several employers noted that they “promote from within” using a variety of techniques ranging from staff reviews to identify skills and training upgrades; having managers look at their departments to identify candidates with leadership potential; leadership training; and review of positions to identify if the skill sets required have changed.
- Training for growth and advancement – ensuring that employees have strong core competencies and lots of opportunity to learn multiple and advanced skills is critical to succession planning.
- Policy, Procedure and Practice – employers noted that succession planning needs to be part of the company culture and be practices at all levels of the organization.

Next Steps...

Their passion for their community and their desire to be involved is real. Whether they live in the country or city, these young workers want to stay - they want to live and work in their community - they want to contribute to their community's prosperity.

Some are successfully building their careers. Others are struggling to find the foothold that will allow them to progress. All want and need to participate in meaningful employment that will allow them to establish themselves as contributing members of their home town.

They recognize the value of existing support systems and services, but they also know what is needed, and they are willing to work with their communities to make it happen.

Over the next 6 - 12 months, the Brantford-Brant Youth Advisory and the Norfolk Youth Advisory will continue working with their community to develop and implement the following strategies:

The Goal: To keep young people working and living in Grand Erie

Priorities

Job exploration

Student Engagement

Networking/Mentoring

Peer-to-Peer Connections and support

Municipal/civic engagement

Entrepreneurship

Employment Supports

Strategies

Career exploration campaign (web-based ,social media, video and print) highlighting the jobs we have, young people with successful careers in our community,

Engage leadership in high schools and universities (student leaders) to engage and support students in career planning

Develop tools and strategies to connect employers and community leaders to students and young professionals

Create and/or support young professional networks and communications circles (in person and on-line) as a mechanism for mentoring and professional development

Provide young workers with the opportunity to provide their perspective and contribute to municipal planning

Develop the tools, resources, and support systems that will help young entrepreneurs develop their business plans and provide them with the business management and marketing skills needed for success

Examine the programs and services available to young workers. Find ways of getting the word out. Market the skills of our graduates, young professionals and workers.

Building opportunities for young people in our labour market is an essential part of building the economic and social prosperity of our community. It will take everyone's commitment.

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A skilled, adaptable workforce contributing to a vibrant economy



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