

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

One hundred organizations responded to the 2021 Workforce Employer Survey, which was three-times the number that replied to the 2020 survey. Lee County has the highest concentration (75%) of the responding businesses operating among the five SW Florida counties. Forty-six percent of the responding organizations replied that they are in education, which may suggest an over-representation of education organizations given that relatively few of Southwest Florida's largest employers from the retail trade, construction, and accommodation/food services industry segments replied to the survey. These education organizations, however, ranged from larger, regional universities and colleges to mid-sized specialized academies to smaller childcare organizations. Among all the responding organizations, 81% are small businesses with 99 employees or less. For the purposes of this report, some of the results were further examined by organization size: small (99 employees or less) vs. large (100 or more employees).

As in past years, a large proportion of surveyed organization (79%) reported that they are very likely or likely to prioritize recruiting and hiring new, qualified employees in 2021. A greater percent of large organizations (95%) responded very likely or likely that recruiting and hiring qualified employees is a priority compared to 72% of the small organizations in the survey. Similarly, 83% of the Southwest Florida employers replied that it is very likely or likely that improving the training of new or existing employees will be a priority in 2021. There was a minimal difference between large and small organizations, 89% vs. 80%, respectively, that improving training is a priority. More importantly and speaking to FutureMakers Coalition's mission, 64% of the organizations indicated that they would pay a *higher* starting salary to potential employees who have a post-high school credential (degree), certificate, or industry-recognized certification. The proportions of large and small organizations reporting "Yes" to paying higher starting salaries were similar, 53% and 61%, respectively.

A large proportion of the organizations (76%) reported that in addition to an employee's salary, the organization offers additional employee benefits with large and small organizations providing similar responses, 74% and 65%, respectively. The most offered benefits included health benefits (81%), personal time off (81%), and paid vacation (81%). A small majority of the organizations (52%) partners or collaborates with one or more of Southwest Florida's educational institutions to assist in finding, recruiting, and/or training qualified employees. A greater proportion of large organizations (63%) reported partnerships or collaborations with educational institutions compared to 41% of small organizations.

We will continue to analyze the survey data and publish new results in the FutureMakers Coalition [newsletter](#) to hopefully provide new insights into the needs of the region's employers and how to gain better access to a qualified workforce.

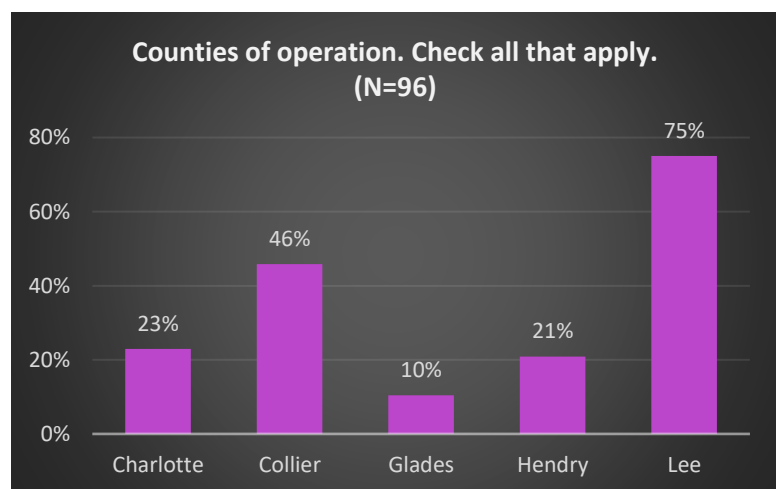
## INTRODUCTION

FutureMakers Coalition conducts the Workforce Employer Survey annually and uses the data to inform its Southwest Florida network, specifically our education partners, about employer needs and opportunities to better work together to ensure the desired qualified workforce is available to the region’s employers. COVID presented many challenges during 2020, so the employers’ input was particularly important as the region began to open and return to normal earlier this year.

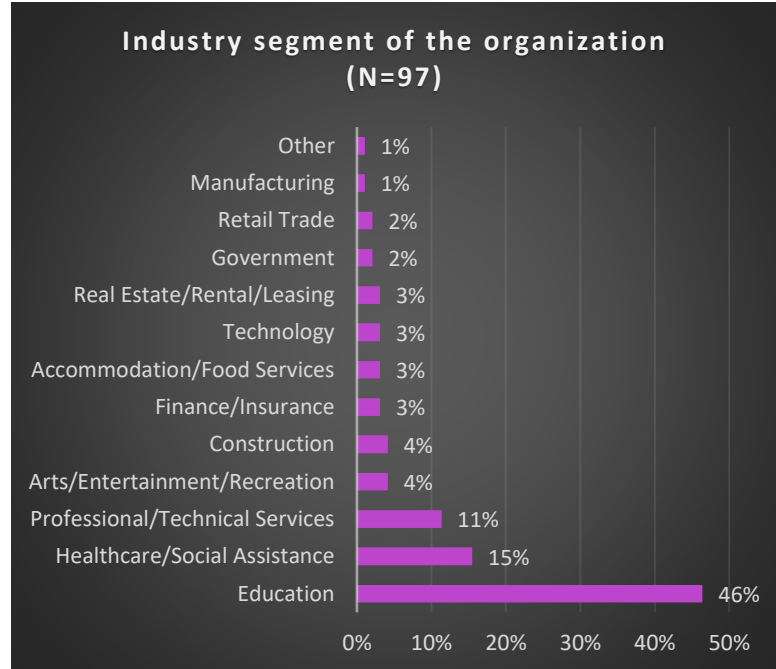
The survey was distributed to a wide variety of Southwest Florida businesses and organizations and available on the FutureMakers Coalition website for approximately two months between mid-April to mid-June. We are very pleased that 100 organizations responded to the 2021 survey – almost triple the number that replied to the 2020 survey – and thank these organizations for taking the time to offer their thoughts. We will continue to analyze the survey data and publish new results in the FutureMakers Coalition [newsletter](#) to hopefully provide new insights into the needs of the region’s employers and how to gain better access to a qualified workforce.

## RESULTS

Among the organizations responding to the survey, Lee County has the highest concentration of these businesses operating in the county (75%) followed by Collier County (46%). Glades County has the lowest concentration of businesses operating in the county (10%).

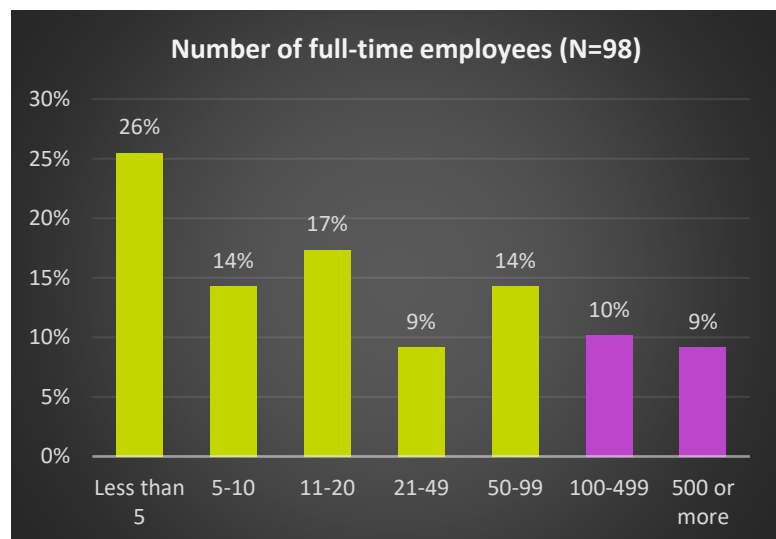


Forty-six percent of the responding organizations replied that they are in education. These education organizations ranged from larger, regional universities and colleges to mid-sized specialized academies to smaller childcare organizations. The education industry may be over-represented in this survey since relatively few of the largest employers in Southwest Florida from the retail trade, construction, and accommodation/food services industry segments<sup>1</sup> replied to the survey. Therefore, the survey results should be interpreted with this in mind.

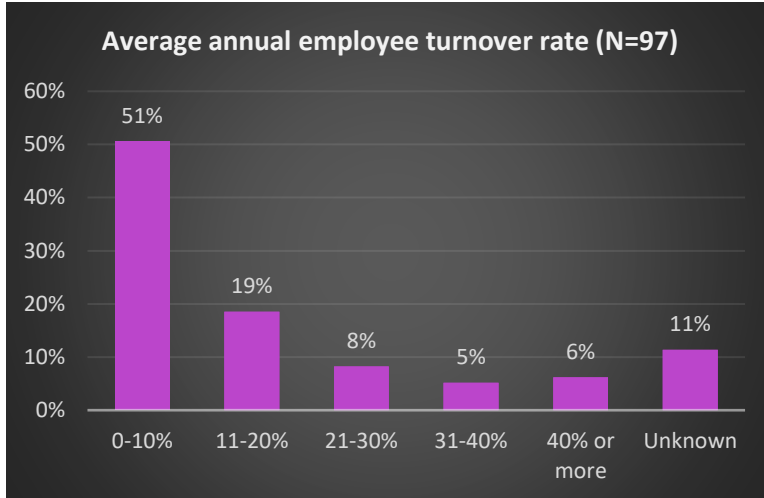


The largest proportion (26%) of the surveyed organizations reported fewer than five employees. Nine percent of the responding organizations reported having 500 or more employees. As noted above for the purposes of this report, we will examine some of the results by organization size:

- **Small** = 99 employees or less (81% of the responding organizations)
- **Large** = 100 or more employees (19% of the responding organizations).



<sup>1</sup> U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages 2019*



Most Southwest Florida organizations in the survey (51%) reported an employee turnover rate of 0-10%. For comparison, the annual average employee turnover rate in the U.S. in 2019 was 44.3%, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The food service industry has one of the highest employee turnover rates (74.9%) with the education industry segment having one of the lowest (18.5%). A turnover rate of 10% or less is considered ideal.<sup>2</sup>

Interestingly, an employee turnover rate of 0-10% (ideal) was reported by a larger proportion of small organizations in the survey, 56% (44/79), compared to only 26% (5/19) of the large organizations.

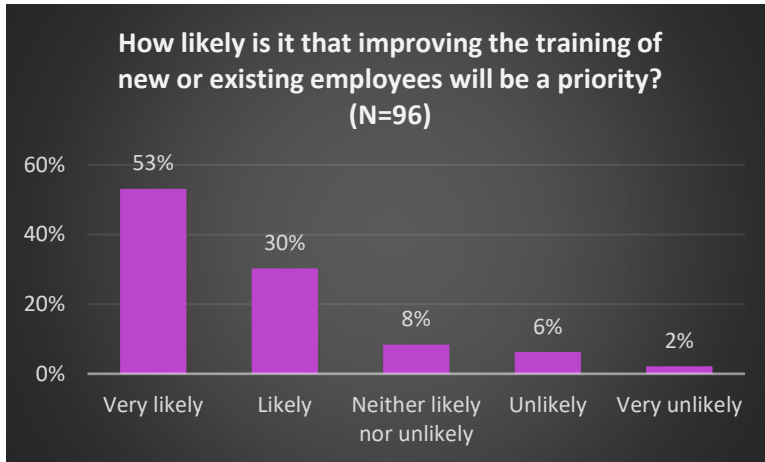


In the next 6 months, as Southwest Florida begins to reopen, 79% of the surveyed organization reporting that it is very likely or likely that recruiting and hiring new, qualified employees will be a priority in 2021. Only 5% of organizations reported that it is unlikely or very unlikely that recruiting and hiring new, qualified employees will be a priority in 2021.

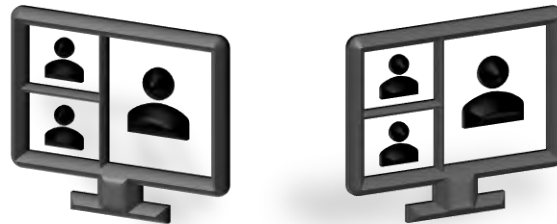
A greater proportion of large organizations, 95% (18/19), responded very likely or likely that recruiting and hiring qualified employees is a priority compared to 72% (57/79) of the small organizations in the survey.



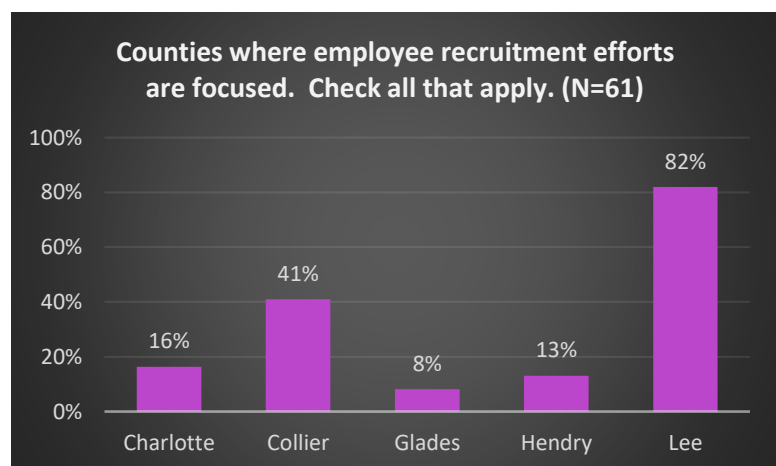
<sup>2</sup> [CreditDonkey](#)



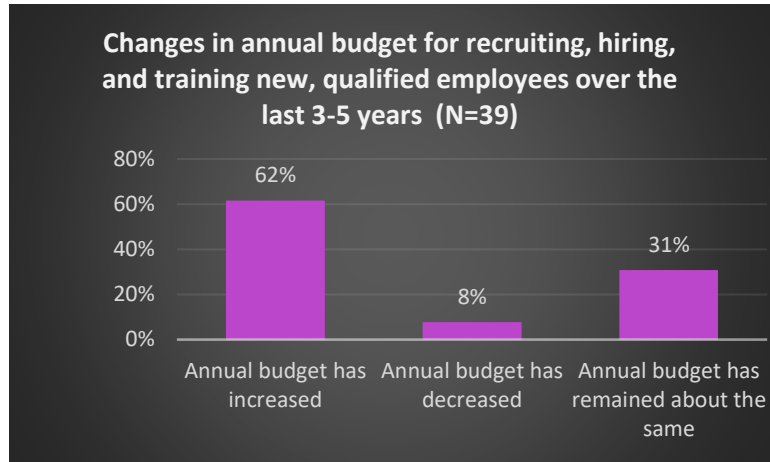
Similarly, 83% of the Southwest Florida employers replied that it is very likely or likely that improving the training of new or existing employees will be a priority in the next six months as Southwest Florida begins to reopen. The percentages of large and small organizations responding that improving training is a priority is similar, 89% (17/19) and 80% (63/79), respectively.



Sixty-four percent of the Southwest Florida organizations reported that they focus their employee recruitment efforts in a specific Southwest Florida county. Among these organizations, recruitment efforts are focused most in Lee County (82%) with the lowest recruitment focus in Glades County (8%).



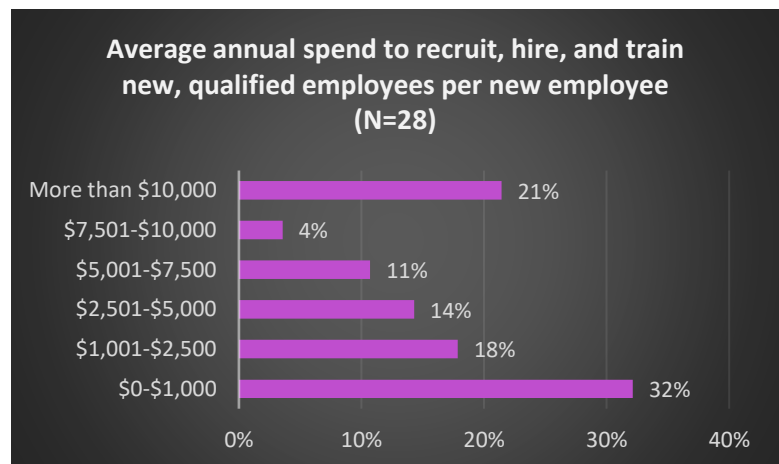
As noted, the region's employers identified finding qualified employees as the biggest challenge to meeting their workforce/talent needs. Forty-four percent (42/96) of the organizations reported that they have an annual budget for recruiting, hiring, and training new, qualified employees. Among these companies, 62% reported that their annual recruiting budgets have increased over the last 3-5 years.



Comparing organization size, large organizations are more likely to have annual budgets for recruiting, hiring, and training new, qualified employees compared to small organizations, 79% (15/19) vs. 34% (27/79), respectively. Among the 15 large organizations with annual budgets, 60% (9/15) reported that their annual budgets have increased over the last 3-5 years.

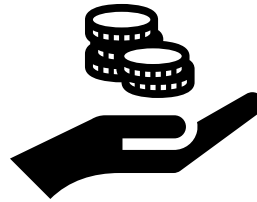
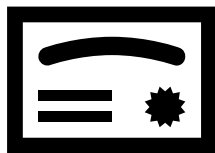


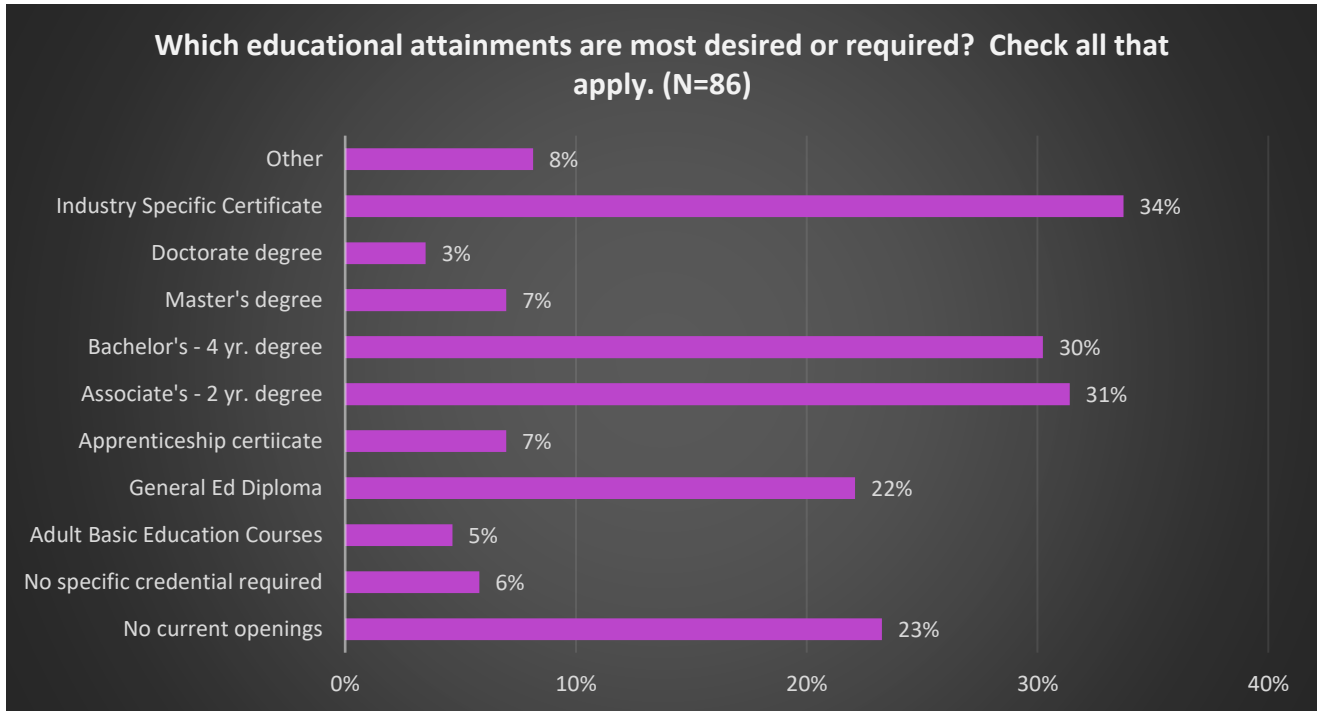
A smaller percentage of organizations, 33% (30/91), track their annual spending for recruiting, hiring, and training new, qualified employees. Among the organizations that track their annual spending, 21% spend more than \$10,000 while 32% spend between \$0 - \$1,000.





When asked about starting salaries, 64% of the organizations indicated that they would pay a higher starting salary to potential employees who have a credential (degree), certificate, or industry-recognized certification. The proportions of large and small organizations reporting “Yes” were similar, 53% (10/19) and 61% (48/79), respectively.

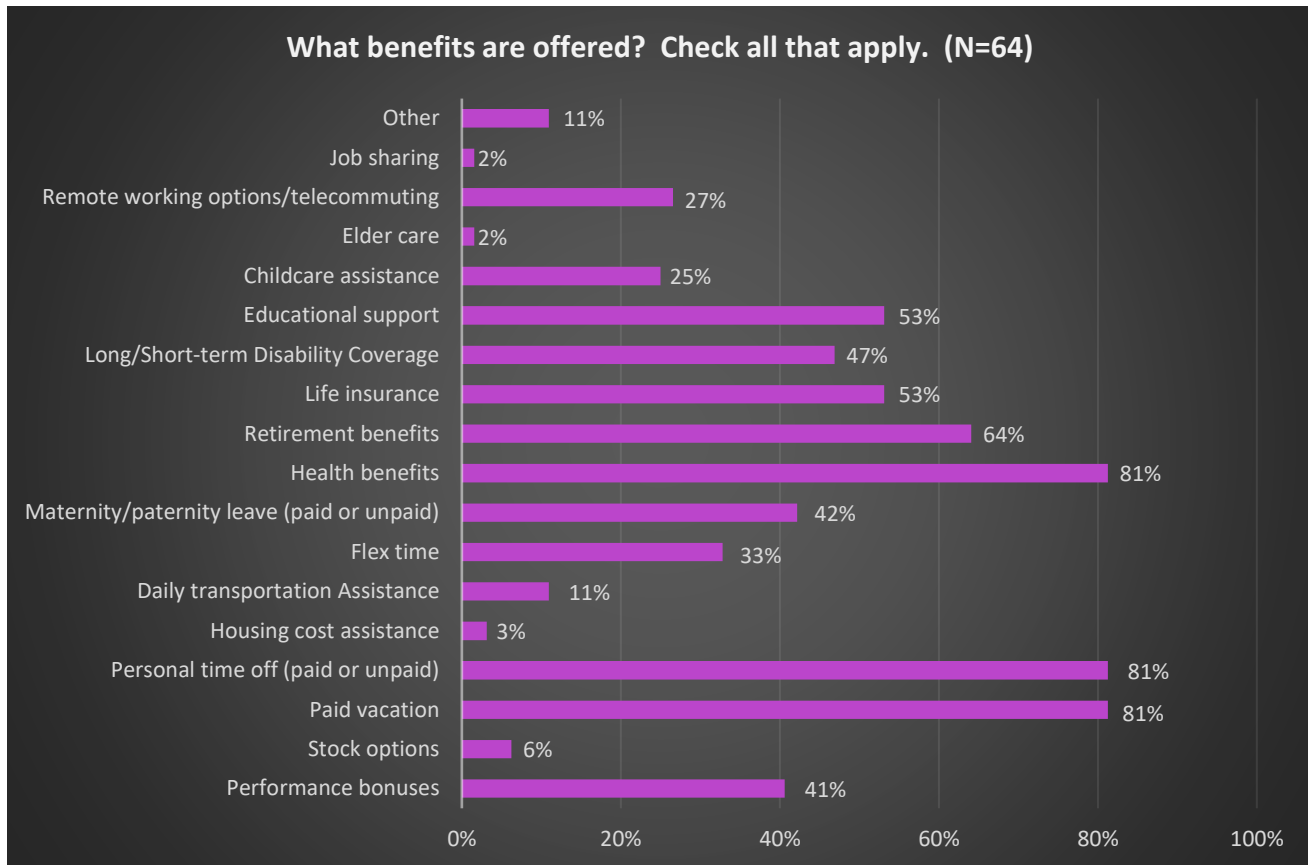




When the organizations considered their current top 1-3 job openings, the most desired or required credentials included an industry-specific certificate (34%), an Associate’s degree (31%), and a Bachelor’s degree (30%). Among the organizations reporting “No current openings”, all were small organizations with 60% (12/20) having less than 5 employees.

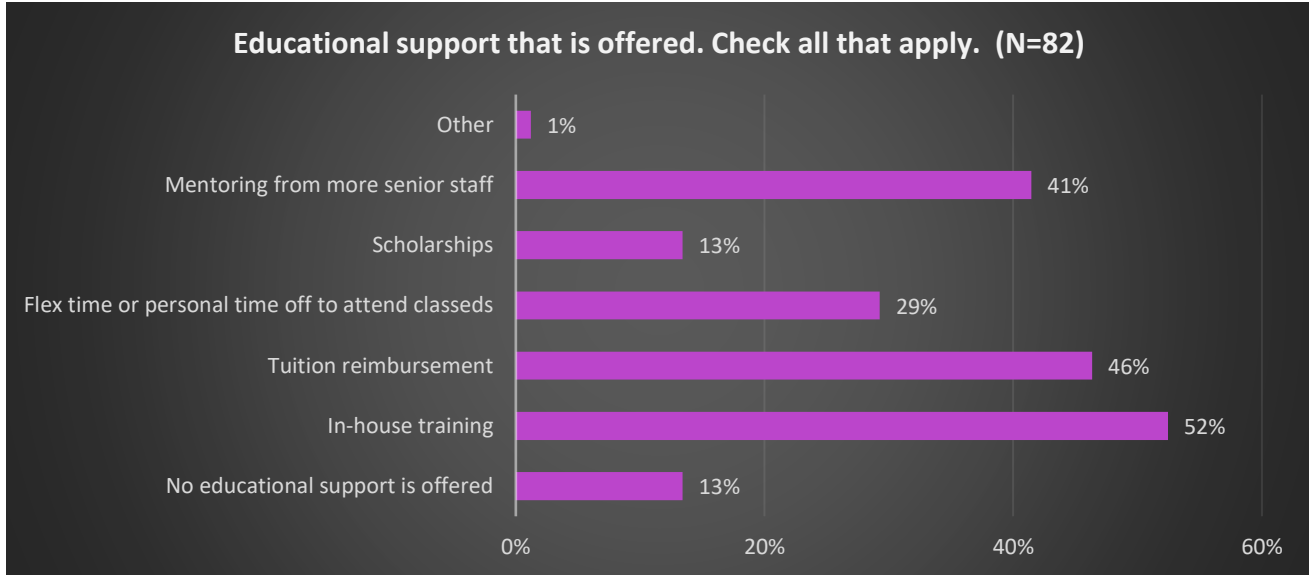




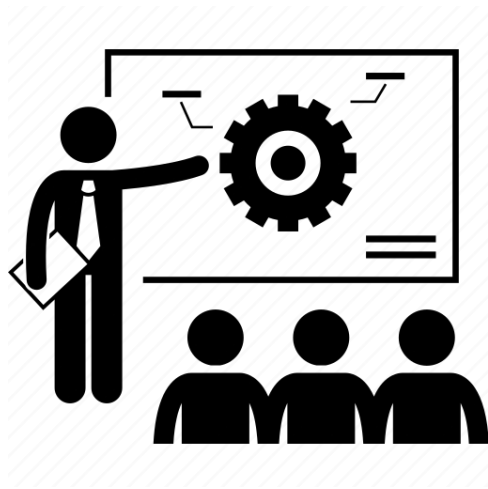


Seventy-six percent (65/86) of the organizations reported that, in addition to an employee’s salary, the organization offers additional employee benefits. The proportions of large and small organizations reporting that they offer benefits were similar, 74% (14/19) and 65% (51/79), respectively. Small organizations with less than 5 employees are the least likely, 29% (6/21), to offer additional employee benefits. Among all organizations that offer additional employee benefits, the most offered benefits included health benefits (81%), personal time off (81%), and paid vacation (81%). In the Other category, employee benefits include access to wellness programs (e.g. health clubs) and product discounts.



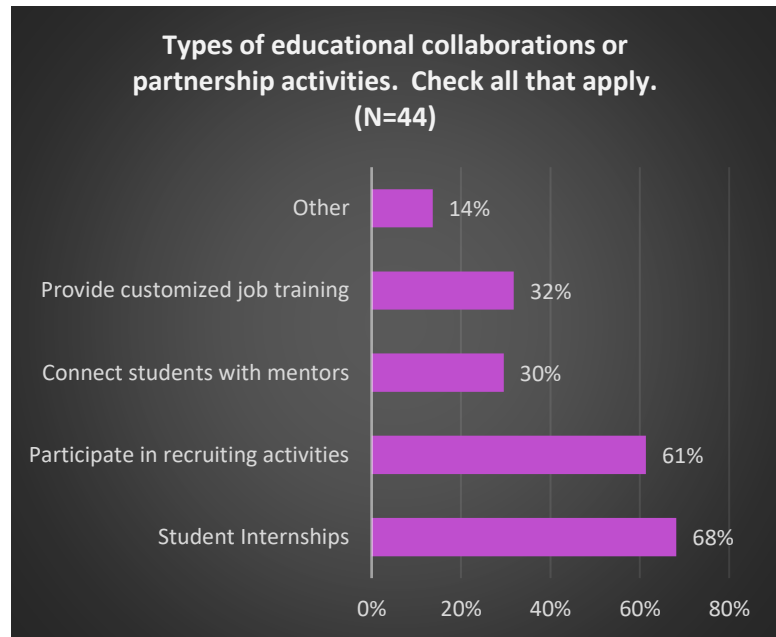


Among the organizations that offer educational support to their employees, the most offered educational support included in-house training (52%), tuition reimbursement (46%), and mentoring from more senior staff (41%).

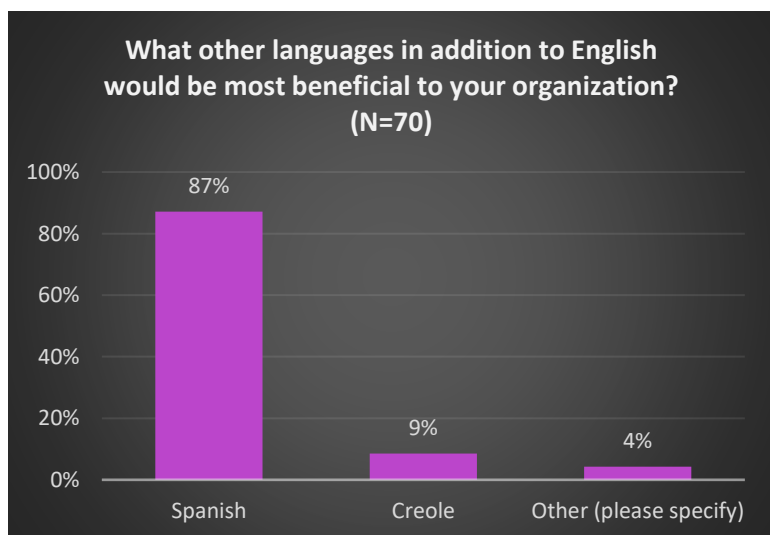


Fifty-two percent (44/85) of the organizations partners or collaborates with one or more of Southwest Florida’s educational institutions to assist in finding, recruiting, and/or training qualified employees. A greater proportion of large organizations, 63% (12/19), reported partnerships or collaborations compared to 41% (32/79) of small organizations.

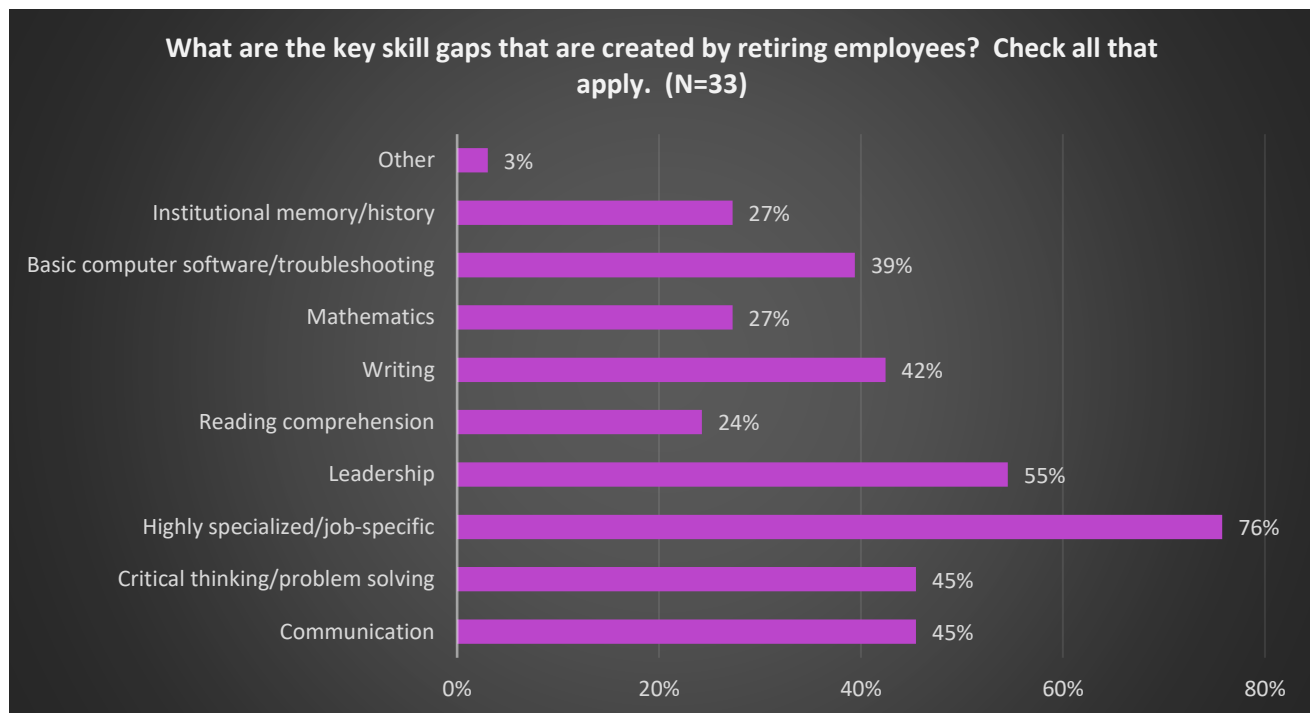
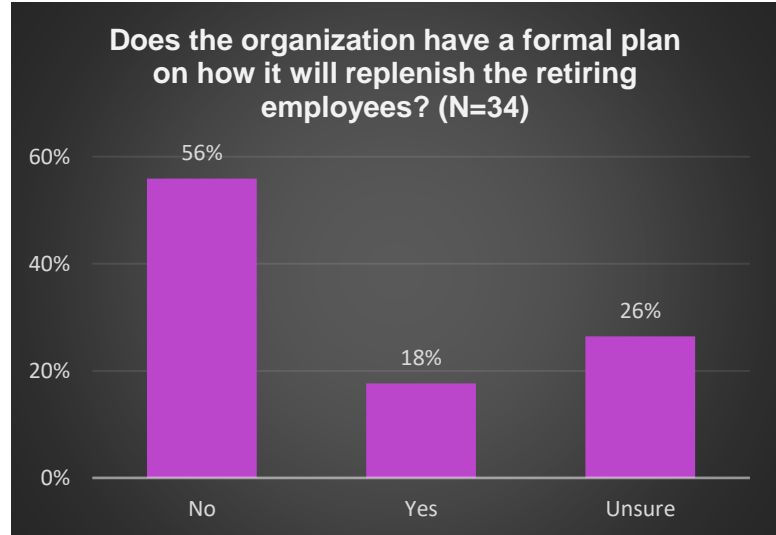
Among both large and small organizations, offering student internships (68%) and participating in recruiting activities (61%) were the most often reported partnerships or collaborations.



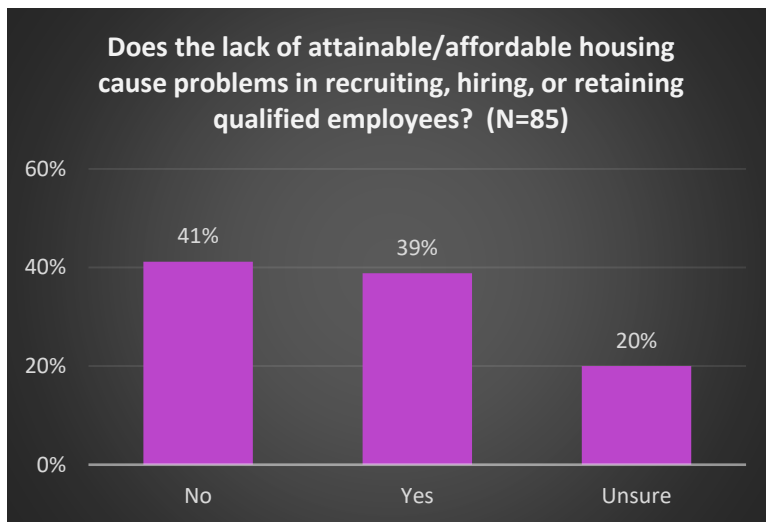
Eighty-two percent (70/85) of the organizations indicated that they would benefit from having multi-lingual employees. Employees able to speak Spanish (87%) was the most reported language that would benefit these companies.



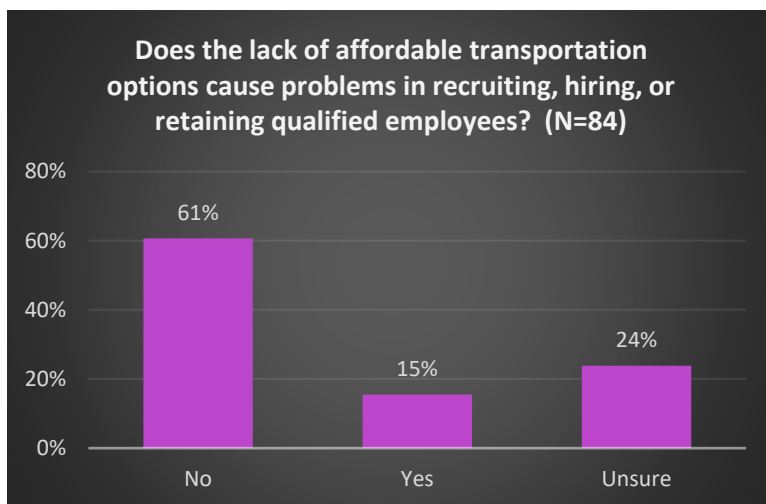
Less than half of the organizations, 40% (34/85) reported that they are concerned about how they will replenish retiring employees. There is a large difference, however, between the proportion of concerned large organizations, 68% (13/19), compared to concerned small organizations, 27% (21/79). Among all concerned organizations, 56% reported that they do not have a formal plan to replenish their retiring employees.



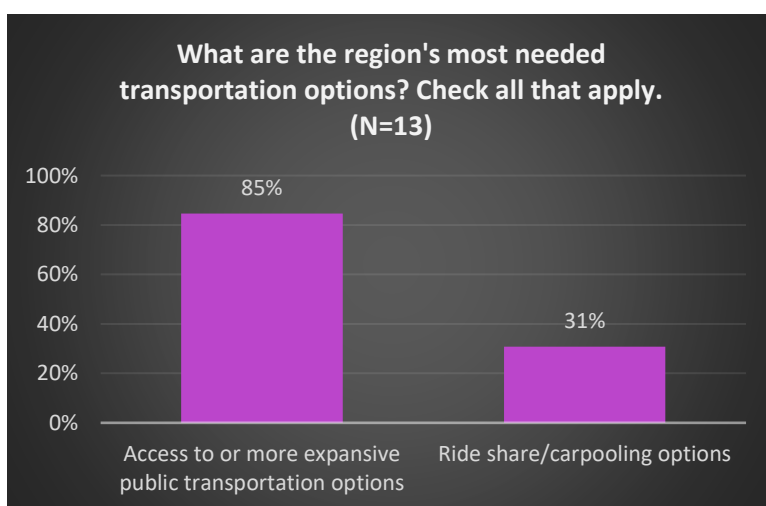
Highly specialized or job-specific skills were identified most often (76%) by the organizations. There was no major difference among the responses to this question between large and small organizations.



The organizations seemed split (41% = no, 39% = yes) as to whether their organizations have problems recruiting, hiring, or retaining qualified employees due to a lack of attainable/affordable housing in the Southwest Florida region.

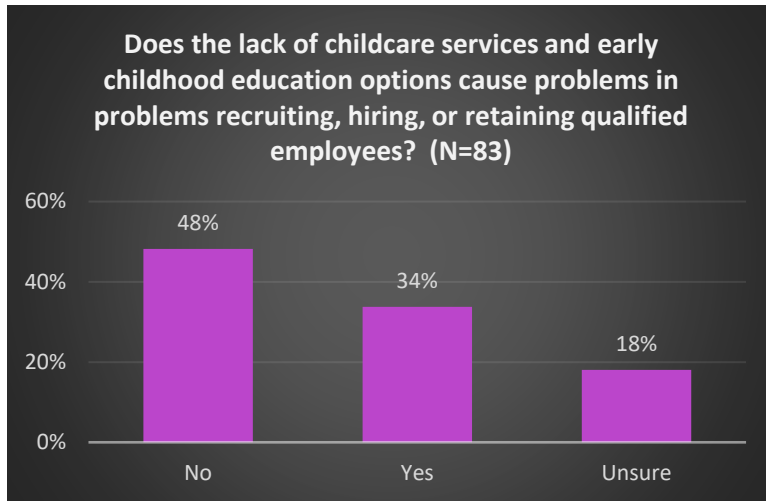


Sixty-one percent of the organizations suggested that their organizations do not have problems recruiting, hiring, or retaining qualified employees due to a lack of affordable transportation options in the Southwest Florida region.

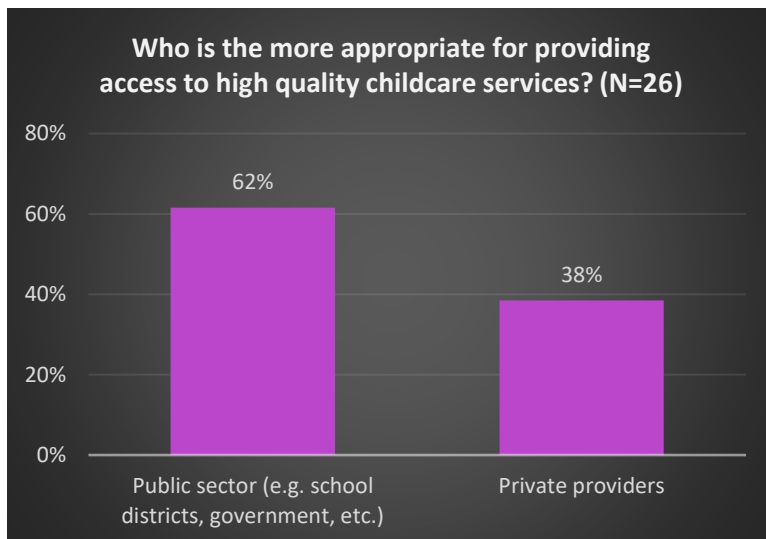


Among the small percent of organizations that indicated that a lack of affordable transportation is an issue, 85% suggested that access to or more expansive transportation options are the most needed solutions.





A larger percent of the organizations (48%) suggested that they do not have problems recruiting, hiring, or retaining qualified employees due to a lack of childcare services and early childhood education such as affordable day care options (either on-site or from local providers), access to childcare subsidies, and/or the availability of before/after school childcare programs.



Among the organizations who did suggest that a lack of childcare services and early childhood education options cause problems recruiting, hiring, or retaining qualified employees, 62% reported that the public sector is the more appropriate provider of these childcare services.

## CONCLUSION

Among the 100 organizations that responded to the 2021 Workforce Employer Survey, a large proportion (79%) reported that they are very likely or likely to prioritize recruiting and hiring new, qualified employees in 2021. This result is consistent with the findings from past Workforce Employer Surveys. Similarly, 83% of the Southwest Florida employers replied that it is very likely or likely that improving the training of new or existing employees will be a priority in 2021. More importantly and speaking to FutureMakers Coalition's mission, 64% of the responding organizations indicated that they would pay a *higher* starting salary to potential employees who have a post-high school credential (degree), certificate, or industry-recognized certification.

The results of the survey offer some potential opportunities to explore, especially as some of the results were further examined by organization size: small (99 employees or less), which comprise 81% of the responding organizations, vs. large (100 or more employees). For example, a greater percent of large organizations, 95%, responded very likely or likely that recruiting and hiring qualified employees is a priority compared to 72% of the small organizations in the survey. In addition, a small majority of all responding organizations, 52%, partners or collaborates with one or more of Southwest Florida's educational institutions to assist in finding, recruiting, and/or training qualified employees. A greater proportion of large organizations, 63%, reported partnerships or collaborations compared to 41% of small organizations.

There is room for improvement for next year's survey. For example, nearly half (46%) of the responding organizations in the 2021 survey replied that they are in education, which may suggest an over-representation of education organizations. Relatively few of Southwest Florida's largest employers from the retail trade, construction, and accommodation/food services industry segments replied to the survey and FutureMakers Coalition should make a greater effort to recruit these types of organizations in future years. Nonetheless, the results provide valuable information as Southwest Florida returns to normal after the challenges that COVID presented during 2020. We will continue to analyze the survey data and publish new results in the FutureMakers Coalition [newsletter](#) to hopefully provide new insights into the needs of the region's employers and how to gain better access to a qualified workforce.