

2020

Berks County Workforce  
Development Board  
Employer Outreach

**Retention and Development Best  
Practices Study**

# Table of Contents

I. Executive Summary .....	3
II. About the Project .....	6
A) Talent Strategy Assessment .....	6
B) COVID-19 Impact Supplemental Questions .....	8
C) Focus Groups and Individual Interviews.....	8
III. Analysis and Summaries .....	9
A) Talent Strategy Assessment Survey Overall Results.....	9
B) Talent Strategy Assessment Survey Results by Number of Employees .....	14
C) Talent Survey Assessment Survey Results by Industry.....	21
D) COVID-19 Supplemental Survey Results .....	28
E) Focus Group Summaries .....	31
IV. Identified Best Practices .....	37
V. Recommendations and Next Steps .....	41
VI. About EDSI.....	43
VII. Attachments.....	44
A) Attachment A – Talent Strategy Assessment Survey Questions.....	44
B) Attachment B – Detailed Talent Survey Results by Employer Size and Industry ...	50

# I. Executive Summary

The scope of this project was to conduct a comprehensive study of current employee recruitment, retention, development, satisfaction, and engagement best practices in the Greater Reading and Berks County region. The study was to include an emphasis on low turnover, high employee satisfaction, and talent pipelines. After the beginning of the project, the scope was amended to include a review of how employer best practices have been impacted by COVID-19.

The first phase of the study was to conduct an online Talent Strategy Assessment. The EDSI talent survey is a self-rated “agree-disagree” style questionnaire with 31 items related to an organization’s current state of talent strategy, culture and vision, recruitment, development, and retention. The survey was completed by 159 Berks County employers, representing a broad cross-section of industries and sizes (by number of employees).

The results of the talent survey showed two major, broad findings: 1) Berks County employers as a group rated themselves higher than the average of 1100+ previous organizations who have completed the survey. This held for the overall average and each analyzed talent category: strategy, attraction, development, retention, and culture. 2) Berks County employers scored relatively lower in the retention section, and this held for each industry subgroup and employer size subgroup analyzed. Items with the highest scores tended to be items related to employers’ clear knowledge of jobs and skills needed and the diagnosis of their talent challenges. Items with relatively lower scores tended to relate to mixed results in the implementation of this knowledge. It was clear employers struggle with turnover in an environment of challenging market conditions.

The study continued with focus groups and individual interviews to understand the context of the talent survey responses and to identify specific best practices in use for each talent area. Eleven companies participated in this phase, which by size, industry, and survey responses were representative of the 159 total responses. While individual strengths, challenges, and strategies pursued varied significantly, the overall picture was of organizations proactively addressing talent issues, and displaying incremental successes, while facing broader market conditions that are difficult to solve individually.


Best practices that emerged included:

1. High performing talent organizations understand their job titles, roles, when openings are occurring or new positions are needed, and the specific skills needed to fill these roles.

2. Talent strategy and vision is in place, connected to the overall strategy, and communicated and supported.
3. Strong knowledge of positions and particular skills needed, priorities of skills and applied knowledge of positions among local competitors, and demographic challenges.
4. Efforts are in place for long-term pipeline building via internal career ladders and broader partnerships and targeted OJT investments.
5. Recruiting strategy is customized for the organization and recruiting processes are reviewed and improved regularly.
6. Wages, benefits, and work environment are competitive and integrated into the overall talent strategy.
7. Recruiting and development relationships are established with local educational institutions.
8. Promotion from within culture, “retention by company growth,” job sculpting, flexibility, and unique opportunities are regularly provided.
9. Internal training investments and individualized training and career plans for high-value employees.

The survey and focus group results and detailed best practices can help Berks County WDB to understand employers’ responses to critical market challenges, improve their services, and enable employers to learn from each other’s successes. To achieve these goals, we recommend follow up efforts in three major areas:

1. **Individual employers:** Survey participants will receive a full report of survey results and best practices and received a summary of their results at the time of participation. Employers are encouraged to understand their strengths and weaknesses in the survey items, review the corresponding best practices, identify best practices with significant opportunity for improved implementation, and to make targeted investments in their workforce and talent strategy based on their particular situation. Employers are also encouraged to identify systemic challenges beyond their scope and to communicate these items to the WDB.
2. **WDB Business Services:** Business services staff should receive a thorough review of the survey and best practices results and marketing material summarizing results. Staff should conduct follow up conversations with survey participants to encourage taking full advantage of the survey results and best practices report, and to use it as a model for outreach to other employers and to listen for opportunities to integrate best practices.
3. **WDB and Outside Partners:** There are some systemic talent issues that cannot be successfully addressed by individual employers implementing best practices. Identifying these issues and developing long-term responses is critical. WDB should ensure industry and sector partnerships understand survey results and best practices



and can bring members together to address industry-specific talent issues and support industry-specific best practices. Partner with chambers and/or industry associations to promote follow up opportunities for analysis and facilitate individual employer and sector-based talent efforts.

## II. About the Project

At the beginning of 2020, the Berks County Workforce Development Board identified several related systemic workforce challenges for Greater Reading and Berks County. An aging population, stemming from a lower birth rate and fewer immigrants successfully migrating to the US, means labor shortages are expected to persist into the foreseeable future. There are also challenging issues around education and skill development. Many employers have recognized that “taking what the market gives” is not sufficient in successfully addressing their talent needs in a highly competitive market. Employers have begun to respond to competition for workers with an increased focus on employee recruitment, retention, development, satisfaction, and performance/engagement. The WDB sought to understand employers’ responses to these challenges, in part to improve their services, and to enable employers to learn from each other through documenting and sharing best practices.

In response to these challenges, the Berks County WDB engaged EDSI to develop, conduct, and report-out on a comprehensive study of current employee recruitment, retention, development, satisfaction, and engagement best practices in the Greater Reading and Berks County region, with an emphasis on low turnover, high employee satisfaction, and talent pipelines. After the project started in March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic hit Pennsylvania. The study was put on hold during the lockdown but proceeded in June 2020 when employer engagement was again possible. Although the extent of the pandemic induced recession remains unclear, it is clear that all the long-term labor and talent shortage challenges remain in place, and identifying best practices is as crucial as ever.

EDSI’s approach to the project included three phases:

Phase I – Conduct Talent Strategy Assessment

Phase II – Facilitate Focus Groups and Document Best Practices

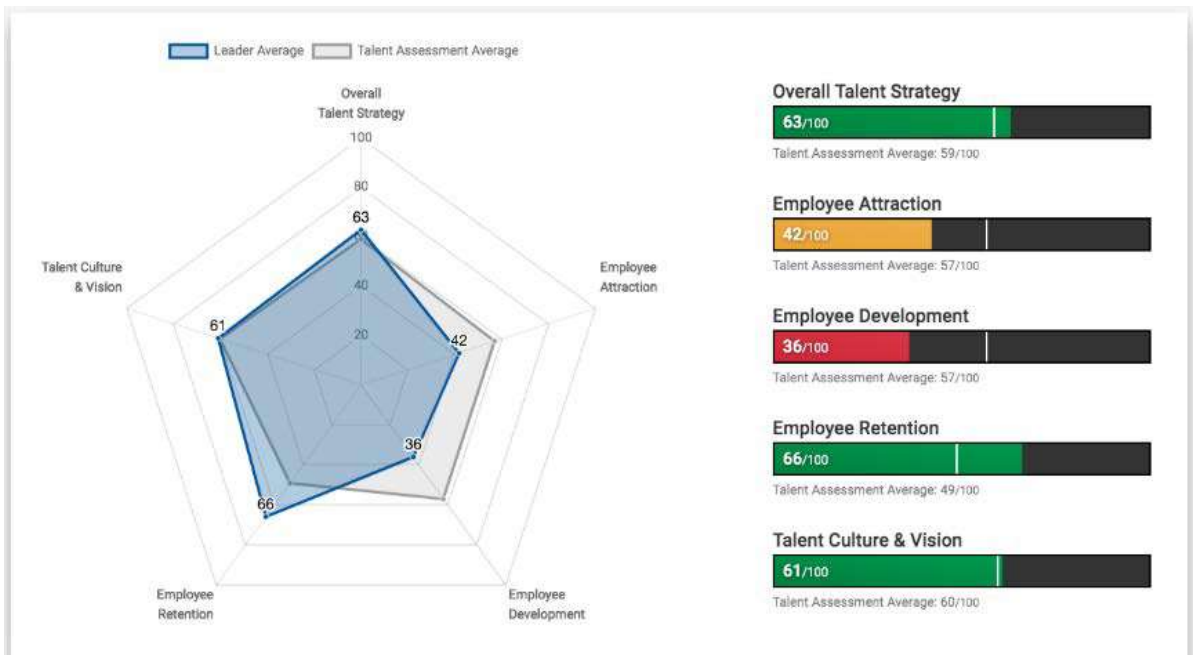
Phase III – Generate Report and Present Findings

### A) Talent Strategy Assessment

For this project, EDSI utilized our Talent Strategy Assessment tool that includes a short 31 question survey on a 7 point Disagree-Agree scale. The survey, which takes less than 10 minutes to complete, analyzes the strength of an organization’s talent management strategy in five key areas: overall talent strategy, employee attraction, employee development, employee retention, and talent culture and vision. The response for each item is turned into a 0-100 score; similar items are grouped and averaged to provide a category score (Strategy, Retention, Attraction, Development, and Vision/Culture).

More than 1,000 companies nationwide have completed this assessment over the past three years. The assessment tool provides critical insight on the overall strength of an organization’s talent management strategy, which of the five primary talent management factors they are succeeding at, and which represent opportunities for improvement. Participating employers also learn how their organization’s talent strategy compares to others in the region and nationally.

The assessment results identify which employers are excelling at talent management, and which organizations struggle. The employers that are excelling are targeted to participate in follow-up conversations and focus groups to identify and document their best practices. The employers that the assessment identified as struggling are identified for follow-up and will likely benefit from outcomes created through the best practices study.



Sample Assessment Results

All participating employers received a complimentary report (sample excerpted above) comparing their results to benchmark data from hundreds of companies to identify areas where they are performing above average, average, or below average to their peers. The benchmark report provided employers in Berks County an incentive to participate in the assessment.

The full set of Talent Strategy Assessment survey questions are attached as Appendix A. The questions are presented in random order, and some questions are phrased negatively, so that “strongly agree” is not always the highest scoring answer. This helps ensure the integrity of the survey process.

## B) COVID-19 Impact Supplemental Questions

After the survey was relaunched in mid-June 2020, four additional questions were added related to the business impact of the pandemic. These questions include:

1. As of today, what percentage of operational capacity are you at, compared to where you were on March 1, 2020?
2. What percentage of operational capacity do you anticipate you will be at by September 1, 2020?
3. What percentage of operational capacity do you anticipate you will be at in one year (July 1, 2021)?
4. How do you feel about the long-term success of your business? (1-5 scale)

## C) Focus Groups and Individual Interviews

As talent survey results came in, EDSI sorted these employers by industry sector and then ranked them based on their assessment results. The top employers in each industry sector were targeted, along with others, to participate in a one-on-one interview or a focus group regarding their talent management best practices. These discussions intended to identify specific employer and industry sector best practices, including attracting, training, and retaining employees.



### III. Analysis and Summaries

#### A) Talent Strategy Assessment Survey Overall Results

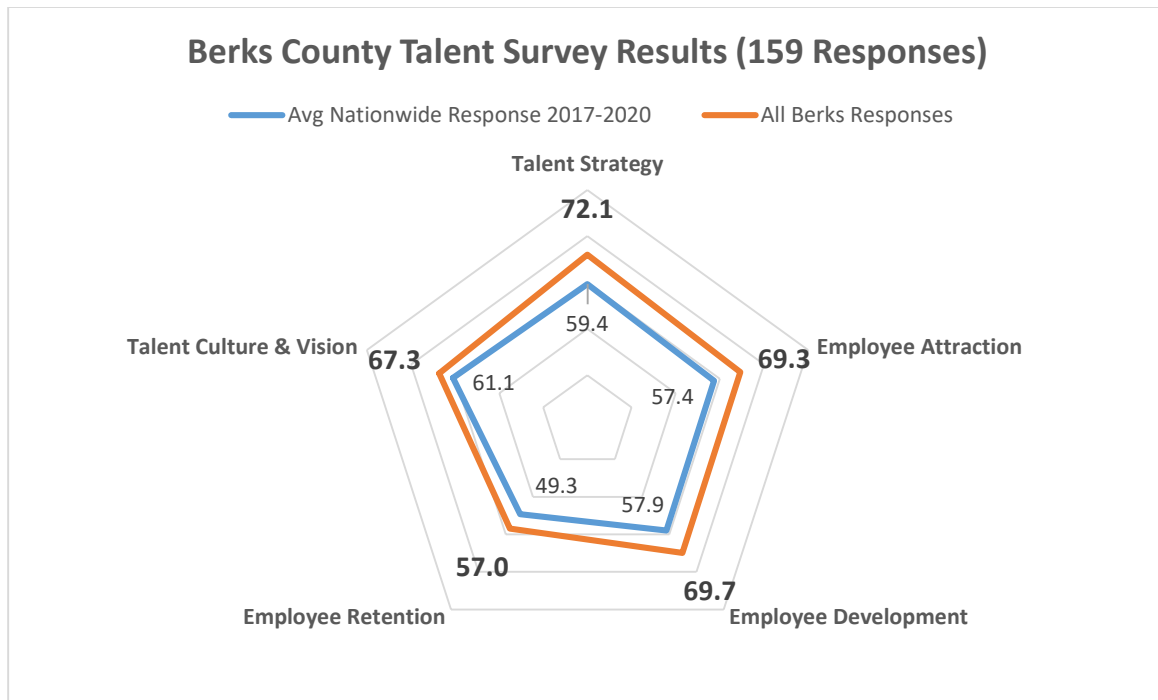
The Talent Strategy Assessment was taken by 172 people from 159 organizations. The employers range from very small to large multi-national corporations, and represent a wide variety of Berks County Industries:

	# of Employers
<b>Participation by size*:</b>	
0-49 employees	80
50-99 employees	21
100-249 employees	23
250-999 employees	17
1000+ employees	18
<b>Participation by Industry Category:</b>	
Construction, Repair, Maintenance, and or Utility	31
Manufacturing	32
Healthcare	24
Non-Profit, Government and/or Education	33
All other industries (Services B2B or to Public)	39

*\*Note: Analysis based on the total # of employees in the organization, which may exceed the number of employees within Berks County locations, sometimes significantly.*

For analysis purposes, any organization that submitted multiple responses had an average response calculated and used as the organization's overall score. This prevented overweighting these companies in the results.

In each of the five analysis categories, the average responding organization had a slightly to a significantly higher score than the national benchmark (average of all 1,099 participating companies in the past three years). Berks County Employers scored highest in Talent Strategy (72.1 vs. 59.4 benchmark) and lowest in Employee Retention (57.0 vs. 49.3 benchmark), as illustrated on the radar graph on the next page.



#### *Talent Strategy*

The scores for individual items in this category were consistently high across organization types. Berks employers have a clear awareness of positions to hire for (87.5), with clear definitions of responsibilities for the jobs (78.3), and a defined organizational culture (77.4). Organizations are relatively weaker in communicating HR talent strategy throughout the company (59.0) and implementing progressive HR talent strategies (58.6).

#### *Employee Attraction*

The Employee Attraction category had one of the items rated consistently among the highest (We understand the skills needed to maintain and grow our business), and one rated consistently among the lowest (Our job postings return enough qualified applicants). The tension between this knowledge and an ineffective response is a consistent theme in the results.

#### *Employee Development*

Results in the Employee Development category are mostly “middle of the road” rarely among the highest or lowest scores in the subcategories. Industries, like Construction and Healthcare, and larger sized organizations, had relatively higher scores in this category.

### Employee Retention

Employee retention was the lowest rated category overall and across every industry and employer size designation. The most consistently low score was “Our organization is in a constant state of hiring” (38.0), a sure indicator that employees are not being retained, although this may be an unavoidable natural state in certain industries. Other items contributing to retention challenges were challenges around retaining top talent (53.9) and defining clear career paths for current employees (58.4). Items that were relatively high for the category, but not high on an absolute basis included addressing employees preparing to leave the organization (65.9), utilizing targeted retention strategies (64.3), and the strategies around developing future leaders (61.2),

### Talent Culture & Vision

Organizations indicated they have a defined vision for talent (70.5) and that the company’s core values are communicated clearly (80.7). The challenging item here was “talent issues limit the growth of our organization” (46.9). The following table shows the contribution to the scores from all individual survey questions (Green-Yellow-Red shading shows the relatively highest and lowest scores):

	# of Responses	1,099	159
		Avg Nationwide Response 2017-2020	All Berks Responses
<b>Total Talent Score Average</b>		<b>57</b>	<b>67.1</b>
<b>Talent Strategy</b>		<b>59.4</b>	<b>72.1</b>
I am aware of positions that I need to hire for	61		87.5
Our talent strategy is clearly communicated throughout the company	53.2		59.0
We have a clear definition of the responsibilities performed within our jobs	64		78.3
Our teams are properly structured within the organization	58.6		71.7
We have a defined culture within our organization	66.1		77.4
We have implemented progressive HR strategies around talent	53.1		58.6
<b>Employee Attraction</b>		<b>57.4</b>	<b>69.3</b>
Employees feel they are fairly paid	51.4		66.9

	# of Responses	1,099	159
		Avg Nationwide Response 2017-2020	All Berks Responses
Employees see a future for themselves within the organization	60.3	70.7	
Job seekers have trouble finding and understanding our organization	56.3	67.1	
Our job postings return enough qualified applications	48.2	47.8	
We understand the skills needed to maintain and grow our business	67.2	82.2	
We have updated job descriptions and job profiles	54.3	72.2	
We assess prospective employees for their fit within our organization's culture	64.1	77.9	
<b>Employee Development</b>	<b>57.9</b>	<b>69.7</b>	
Our organization has dedicated, structured training	50.9	63.4	
Our organization has an established onboarding process	58.5	73.5	
Our employees do not have the proper skills to perform their jobs	67.3	75.6	
Our employees are trained across multiple job functions	63.2	68.0	
We have proper training plans in place for new hires	55.2	70.3	
We have a structured review process that provides feedback to employees	52.3	67.6	
<b>Employee Retention</b>	<b>49.3</b>	<b>57.0</b>	
Our biggest challenge is retaining our top talent	46.5	53.9	
We have and utilize strategies targeted around retention	55.5	64.3	
Defined career paths exist for our current employees	48.5	58.4	
Our organization is in a constant state of hiring	40.1	38.0	
We have defined and executed a strategy for developing our future leaders	51.3	61.2	
We are aware of and will address the employees who are preparing to exit our organization	53.7	65.9	
<b>Talent Culture &amp; Vision</b>	<b>61.1</b>	<b>67.3</b>	
Our organization has a defined vision for talent	58.6	70.5	
Our HR team and operations work well together in developing our people	56.4	66.6	
We excel in managing talent	53.8	60.0	

	# of Responses	1,099	159
		Avg Nationwide Response 2017-2020	All Berks Responses
Talent issues are limiting the growth of our organization	52		46.9
The company's core values are clearly communicated and understood	69		79.1
Improving talent will have no impact on our organizational success	76.6		80.7

The seven items with the highest and lowest scores were:

Category	Top 7 Talent Survey Items	Score
Strategy	I am aware of positions that I need to hire for	87.5
Attraction	We understand the skills needed to maintain and grow our business	82.2
Culture/Vision	Improving talent will have no impact on our organizational success	80.7
Culture/Vision	The company's core values are clearly communicated and understood	79.1
Strategy	We have a clear definition of the responsibilities performed within our jobs	78.3
Attraction	We assess prospective employees for their fit within our organization's culture	77.9
Strategy	We have a defined culture within our organization	77.4
Category	Bottom 7 Talent Survey Items	Score
Retention	Our organization is in a constant state of hiring	38.0
Culture/Vision	Talent issues are limiting the growth of our organization	46.9
Attraction	Our job postings return enough qualified applications	47.8
Retention	Our biggest challenge is retaining our top talent	53.9
Retention	Defined career paths exist for our current employees	58.4
Strategy	We have implemented progressive HR strategies around talent	58.6
Strategy	Our talent strategy is clearly communicated throughout the company	59.0

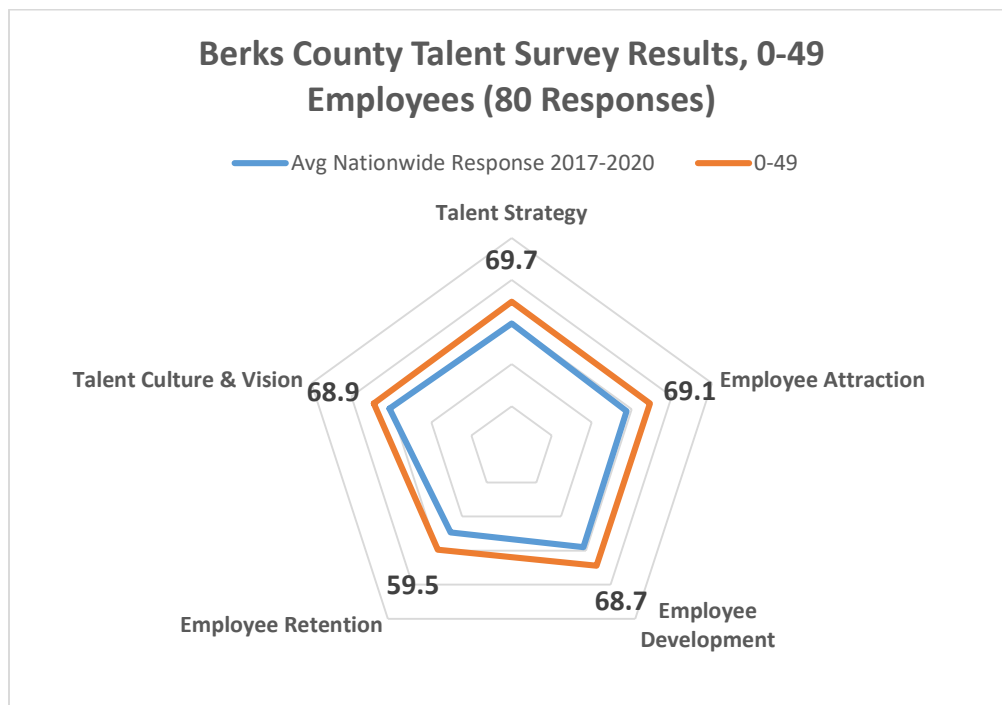
The top two items: "I am aware of the positions I need to hire for," and "We understand the skills needed to maintain and grow our business," indicate a clear knowledge of the basic hiring and talent needs of the organizations. The two lowest items: "Our job postings return enough qualified applications," and "Our organization is in a constant state of hiring," identify the universal challenge of successfully applying that knowledge. Turnover leads to constant hiring, and labor market conditions make it difficult to find qualified applications. Therefore, a lot of effort is expended to keep pace with operational demands and there is less money and

time to pursue higher value HR and Talent initiatives for competitive advantage. The low score on “Our job posting return enough qualified applications” may also be leading to non-ideal hires that are difficult or undesirable to retain. At the same time, when strong hires are successfully made, the talent shortages at competitors will work against successful retention.

## B) Talent Strategy Assessment Survey Results by Number of Employees

### Under 50 Employees (80 responses)

Turning to results by employer size, over half of responding organizations were smaller than 50 employees. The average response is close to the overall score for the county. The highest category was Talent Culture & Vision (70.2 vs. 66.2 for Berks overall and 61.1 for the national benchmark). The lowest category, Employee Retention was still strong on a relative basis (61.7 vs. 56.9 for Berks overall and 49.3 for the national benchmark).



Category	Top 7 Talent Survey Items (0-49 Employees)	Score
Attraction	We understand the skills needed to maintain and grow our business	84.0
Strategy	I'm aware of positions that I need to hire for	83.4
Culture/Vision	Improving talent will have no impact on our organizational success	81.6
Culture/Vision	The company's core values are clearly communicated and understood	80.1
Attraction	We assess prospective employees for their fit within our organization's culture	79.4
Development	Our employees do not have the proper skills to perform their jobs	78.0
Strategy	We have a clear definition of the responsibilities performed within our jobs	76.1

Category	Bottom 7 Talent Survey Items (0-49 Employees)	Score
Attraction	Our job postings return enough qualified applications	43.5
Retention	Our organization is in a constant state of hiring	51.4
Strategy	We have implemented progressive HR strategies around talent	53.1
Culture/Vision	Talent issues are limiting the growth of our organization	54.4
Retention	Defined career paths exist for our current employees	56.8
Strategy	Our talent strategy is clearly communicated throughout the company	57.5
Development	Our organization has dedicated, structured training	59.7

Just as with the overall results, the two lowest scores came from the questions “Our job postings return enough qualified applications,” and “Our organization is in a constant state of hiring.” However, on a relative basis, the “constant hiring” is a less serious issue in smaller organizations: 50.4 for 0-49 employees, vs. 38.0 for Berks responses overall. “We have implemented progressive HR strategies around talent” is the 3<sup>rd</sup> lowest score, reflecting the challenges of small organizations implementing HR policies. “Our organization has dedicated, structured training” is also scored low, and likely related to company size. The high scoring items indicate a clear understanding of positions and skills needed and an established culture and vision into which the organizations seek to hire.

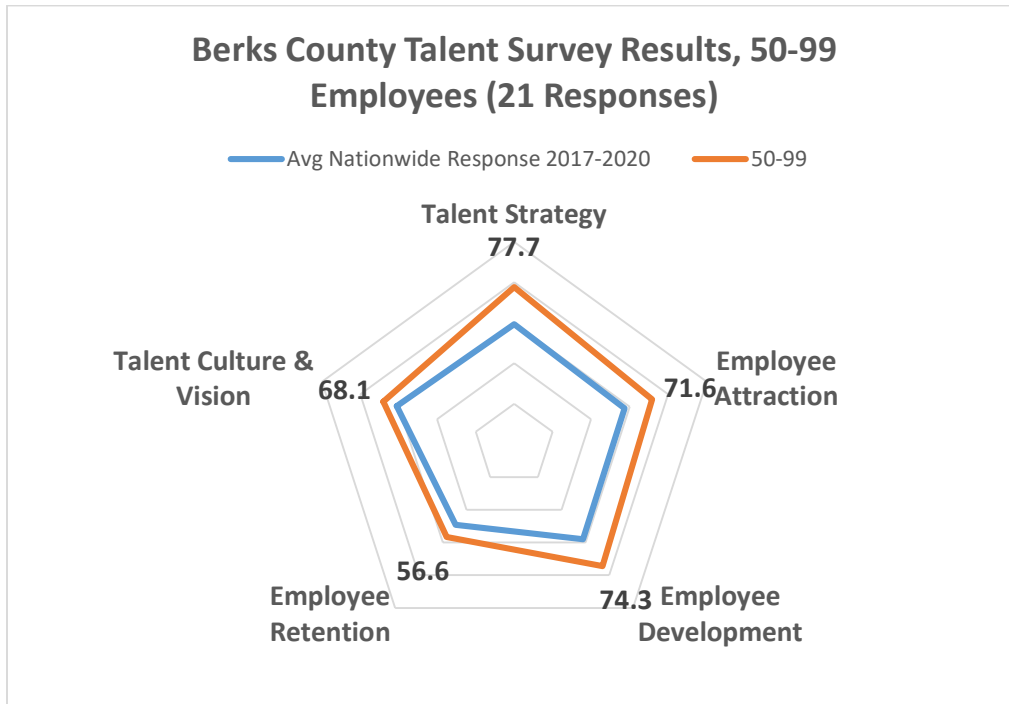
There are three items where these small organizations score much lower than Berks respondents overall. In each case, it makes sense that the smaller organization might have difficulty with resources to respond to these talent challenges. Counterintuitively, smaller companies were relatively less worried about “our biggest challenge is retaining our top talent” compared to larger organizations:

Category	Survey Item	All Berks	0-49
<i>Small companies lower than Berks overall:</i>			
Development	Our organization has an established onboarding process	73.5	65.
Strategy	I’m aware of positions that I need to hire for	87.5	83.4
Strategy	We have implemented progressive HR strategies around talent	58.6	53.1
<i>Small companies higher than Berks overall:</i>			
Retention	Our biggest challenge is retaining our top talent	53.0	61.4
Retention	Our organization is in a constant state of hiring	38.0	51.4

50-99 Employees (21 responses)

For organizations with 50-99 employees, average responses are close to the overall scores for the county and exceed the national benchmark in all five categories. The highest category was Talent Strategy (77.7 vs. 70.1 for Berks overall and 59.4 for the national benchmark). The

lowest category was Employee Retention, the same as the county overall, (56.6 vs. 56.9 for Berks overall and 49.3 for the national benchmark).



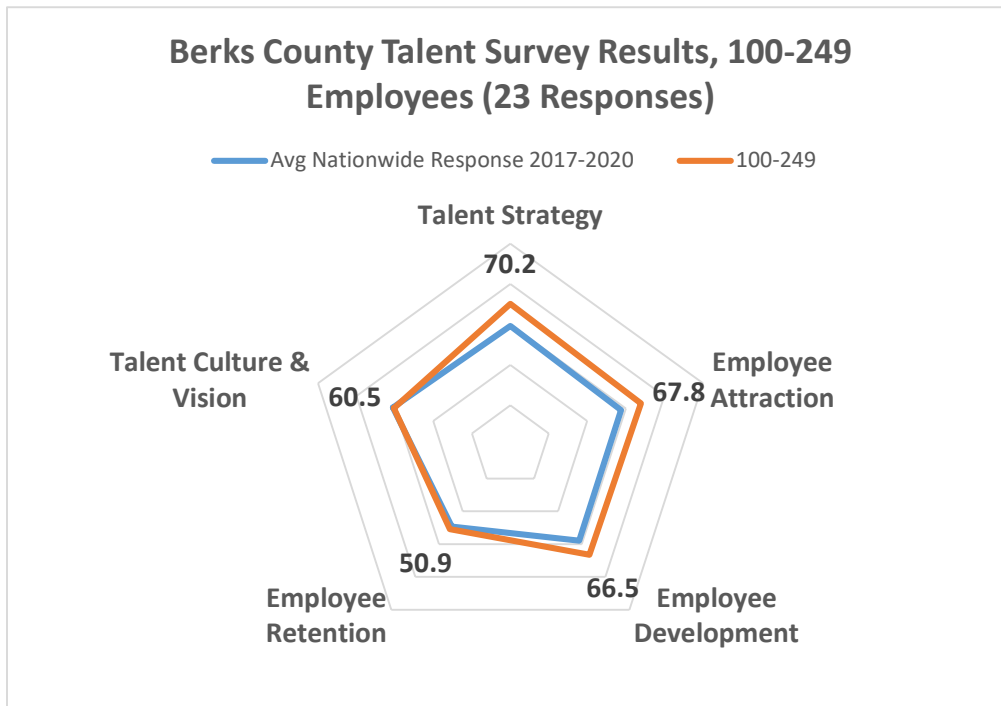
Category	Top 7 Talent Survey Items (50-99 Employees)	Score
Strategy	I'm aware of positions that I need to hire for	90.3
Strategy	We have a clear definition of the responsibilities performed within our jobs	86.3
Attraction	We have updated job descriptions and job profiles	85.4
Attraction	We understand the skills needed to maintain and grow our business	83.9
Development	Our organization has an established onboarding process	83.2
Culture/Vision	Improving talent will have no impact on our organizational success	80.8
Attraction	We assess prospective employees for their fit within our organization's culture	80.7
Category	Bottom 7 Talent Survey Items (50-99 Employees)	Score
Retention	Our organization is in a constant state of hiring	31.0
Culture/Vision	Talent issues are limiting the growth of our organization	38.2
Attraction	Our job postings return enough qualified applications	52.4
Attraction	Employees feel they are fairly paid	55.4
Retention	We have defined and executed a strategy for developing our future leaders	59.4
Retention	Our biggest challenge is retaining our top talent	60.2
Retention	Defined career paths exist for our current employees	60.2



The lowest scored talent survey item was “Our organization is in a constant state of hiring.” This set of employers is the first group to have “employees feel they are fairly paid” among the lowest scored items. Internal career paths and training are also issues. The highly rated items indicate a strong awareness of positions and skills needed and a strongly defined culture and screening for cultural fit.

100-249 Employees (23 responses)

The 23 responses for organizations with 100-249 employees are slightly lower than the Berks County overall response in each category. In one category the score was below the national benchmark: Talent Culture & Vision (60.5 vs. 61.1 benchmark and 67.3 for Berks overall). Once again, the lowest category was Employee Retention (50.9 vs. 49.3 benchmark and 57.0 for Berks overall). The highest category was Talent Strategy (70.2 vs. 72.1 for Berks overall and 59.4 for the national benchmark).



Category	Top 7 Talent Survey Items (100-249 Employees)	Score
Strategy	I'm aware of positions that I need to hire for	93.4
Culture/Vision	Improving talent will have no impact on our organizational success	85.4
Attraction	We assess prospective employees for their fit within our organization's culture	78.8
Attraction	We understand the skills needed to maintain and grow our business	78.0
Development	Our organization has an established onboarding process	77.2
Strategy	We have a clear definition of the responsibilities performed within our jobs	77.0

Strategy	We have a defined culture within our organization	75.5
<b>Category</b>	<b>Bottom 7 Talent Survey Items (100-249 Employees)</b>	<b>Score</b>
Retention	Our organization is in a constant state of hiring	26.1
Culture/Vision	Talent issues are limiting the growth of our organization	33.8
Retention	Our biggest challenge is retaining our top talent	46.8
Culture/Vision	We excel in managing talent	47.1
Attraction	Our job postings return enough qualified applications	48.5
Retention	Defined career paths exist for our current employees	49.9
Strategy	Our talent strategy is clearly communicated throughout the company	50.7

The strong assessment items indicate a clear understanding of positions and skills needed and how they fit into an overall culture, and now additionally that there is benefit from a clearly defined onboarding process. Despite this, the lowest scoring items are again retention related: “Our organization is in a constant state of hiring,” and “Our biggest challenge is retaining our top talent.” The challenge of returning enough qualified applications may be leading to non-ideal hires that are difficult or undesirable to retain.

250-999 Employees (17 responses)

Seventeen organizations were between 250 and 999 employees. The average responses are close to the overall scores for the county as a whole and exceeded the national benchmark in each category. The highest category in this group was Talent Strategy (70.2 vs. 72.1 for Berks overall and 59.4 for the national benchmark). The lowest category was Employee Retention (57.7 vs. 56.9 for Berks overall and 49.3 for the national benchmark).



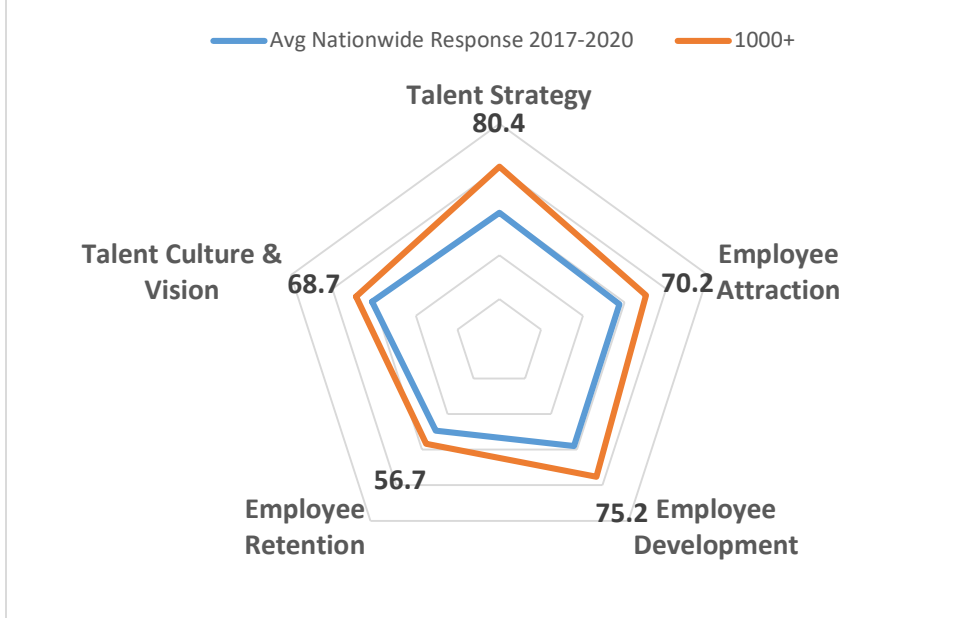
<b>Category</b>	<b>Top 7 Talent Survey Items (250-999 Employees)</b>	<b>Score</b>
Strategy	I'm aware of positions that I need to hire for	90.5
Development	Our organization has an established onboarding process	84.1
Culture/Vision	The company's core values are clearly communicated and understood	80.7
Attraction	Employees see a future for themselves within the organization	80.6
Strategy	We have a defined culture within our organization	79.1
Strategy	We have a clear definition of the responsibilities performed within our jobs	75.2
Culture/Vision	Improving talent will have no impact on our organizational success	75.2
<b>Category</b>	<b>Bottom 7 Talent Survey Items (250-999 Employees)</b>	<b>Score</b>
Retention	Our organization is in a constant state of hiring	28.5
Attraction	Our job postings return enough qualified applications	51.6
Retention	Our biggest challenge is retaining our top talent	52.0
Strategy	We have implemented progressive HR strategies around talent	52.8
Development	Our employees are trained across multiple job functions	54.3
Culture/Vision	Talent issues are limiting the growth of our organization	54.4
Strategy	Our talent strategy is clearly communicated throughout the company	54.7

The strengths continue to indicate a clear understanding of position and skills sought, a defined culture and strategy, and defined onboarding process. The related retention challenges are stemming from a continuous state of hiring and job postings not returning enough qualified applications.

1000+ Employees (18 responses)

For the 18 largest responding employers, the highest category by far was Talent Strategy (80.4 vs. 72.1 for Berks overall and 59.4 for the national benchmark), likely benefiting from a scale that allows for larger and more specialized HR staffing. The lowest category, as has been the case in every size subgroup, was Employee Retention (56.7 vs. 57.0 for Berks overall and 49.3 for the national benchmark).

## Berks County Talent Survey Results, 1000+ Employees (18 Responses)



Category	Top 7 Talent Survey Items (1000+ Employees)	Score
Strategy	I'm aware of positions that I need to hire for	92.4
Attraction	We have updated job descriptions and job profiles	87.4
Attraction	We understand the skills needed to maintain and grow our business	86.4
Strategy	We have a defined culture within our organization	85.9
Development	Our organization has an established onboarding process	84.6
Strategy	We have a clear definition of the responsibilities performed within our jobs	83.6
Culture/Vision	The company's core values are clearly communicated and understood	82.3
Category	Bottom 7 Talent Survey Items (1000+ Employees)	Score
Retention	Our organization is in a constant state of hiring	11.2
Culture/Vision	Talent issues are limiting the growth of our organization	33.5
Attraction	Job seekers have trouble finding and understanding our organization	54.1
Retention	Our biggest challenge is retaining our top talent	56.7
Attraction	Our job postings return enough qualified applications	56.9
Strategy	Our talent strategy is clearly communicated throughout the company	65.2
Retention	Defined career paths exist for our current employees	66.1

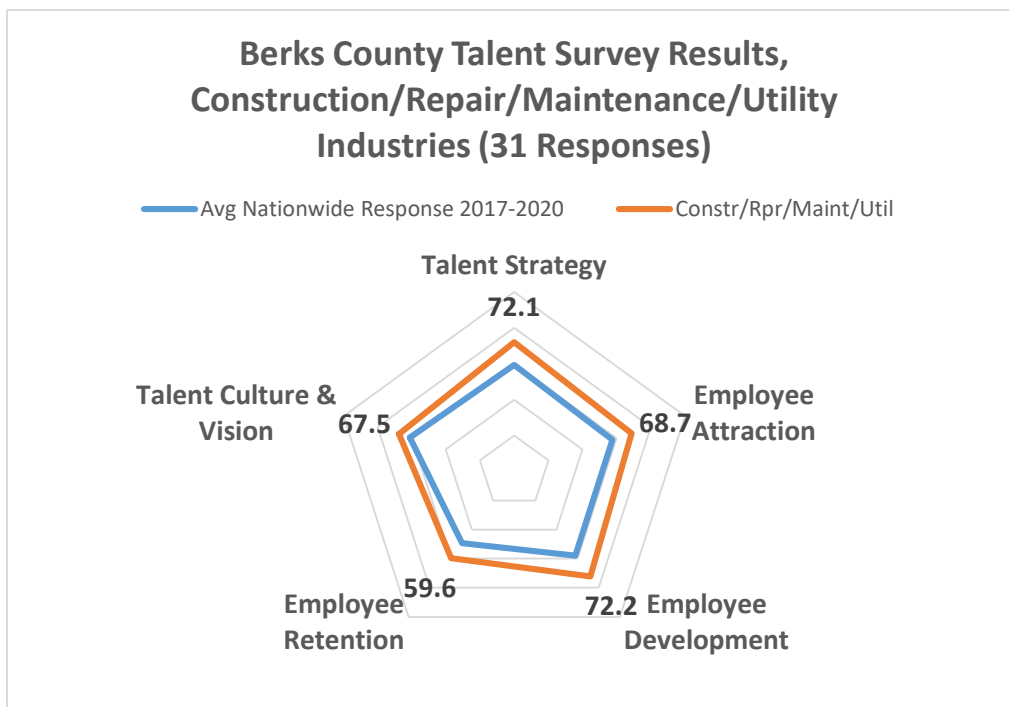
The top talent items indicate the usual clear understanding of job, skill, and responsibility needs, a defined onboarding process, and strong talent strategy and culture.

Among the lowest scores, there is some divergence from smaller organizations. The constant state of hiring remains the same, but the common challenge of finding enough qualified applicants, while still the 5<sup>th</sup> lowest item, seems less severe among the large employers. Counterintuitively, “Job Seekers have a hard time finding and understanding our organization” is rated much lower by the largest employers than the smaller ones.

C) Talent Survey Assessment Survey Results by Industry

Construction/Repair/Maintenance/Utility (31 responses)

There were 31 construction and related companies in the talent survey results. (Organizations that were not strictly construction, but likely to have a significant number of skilled trades positions included in this group for analysis). The average responses are close to the overall scores for the county. The highest category was Employee Development (72.2 vs. 69.7 for Berks overall and 57.9 for the national benchmark). The lowest category was Employee Retention (59.6 vs. 57.0 for Berks and 49.3 for national).



Category	Top 7 Talent Survey Items (Constr/Rpr/Maint/Util industry)	Score
Strategy	I'm aware of positions that I need to hire for	87.5
Attraction	We understand the skills needed to maintain and grow our business	83.1
Development	Our employees do not have the proper skills to perform their jobs	81.1
Culture/Vision	The company's core values are clearly communicated and understood	78.9

Attraction	We assess prospective employees for their fit within our organization's culture	78.4
Strategy	We have a clear definition of the responsibilities performed within our jobs	78.3
Attraction	Employees feel they are fairly paid	77.7
<b>Category</b>	<b>Bottom 7 Talent Survey Items (Constr/Rpr/Maint/Utility)</b>	<b>Score</b>
Attraction	Our job postings return enough qualified applications	31.3
Retention	Our organization is in a constant state of hiring	40.3
Culture/Vision	Talent issues are limiting the growth of our organization	48.1
Strategy	We have implemented progressive HR strategies around talent	58.2
Retention	Our biggest challenge is retaining our top talent	60.8
Strategy	Our talent strategy is clearly communicated throughout the company	61.5
Retention	Defined career paths exist for our current employees	63.3

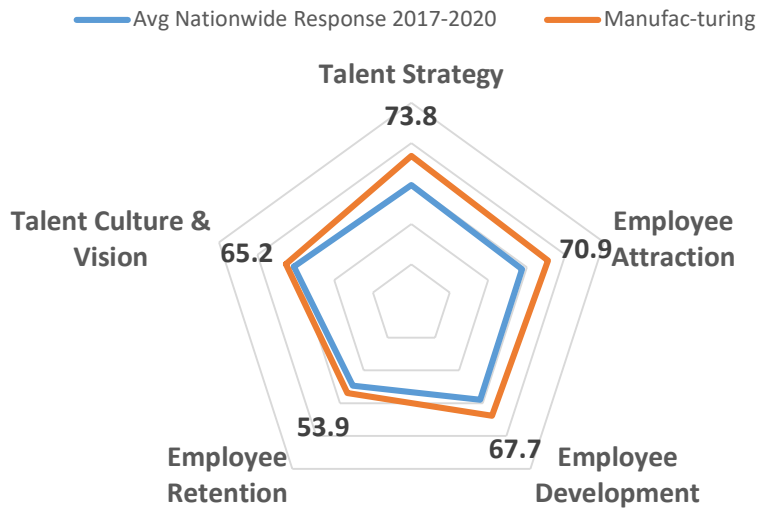
The top two items here once again match the overall highest rated items, “I’m aware of positions that I need to hire for” and “We understand the skills needed to maintain and grow our business.” After that there are some particular outlying strengths of the construction industry “Our employees do not have the proper skills to perform their jobs” (questions negatively phrased like this are scored high when answered with “strongly disagree”), “We have a clear definition of the responsibilities performed within our jobs,” and “Employees feel they are fairly paid.”

Among the challenges, “Our job postings return enough qualified application” has been a consistent theme overall and among employers of every size, but the score for construction is particularly low (31.3 vs. 47.2 for Berks overall and 48.2 nationally) and can be considered a very strong source of the industry’s overall talent challenges.

#### Manufacturing (32 responses)

The 32 manufacturing responses are close to the overall category scores for the county. The highest category was Talent Strategy (73.8 vs. 72.1 for Berks overall and 59.4 for the national benchmark). The lowest category in each size and industry was Employee Retention (53.9 vs. 57.0 for Berks overall and 49.3 for the national benchmark).

## Berks County Talent Survey Results, Manufacturing Industry (32 Responses)

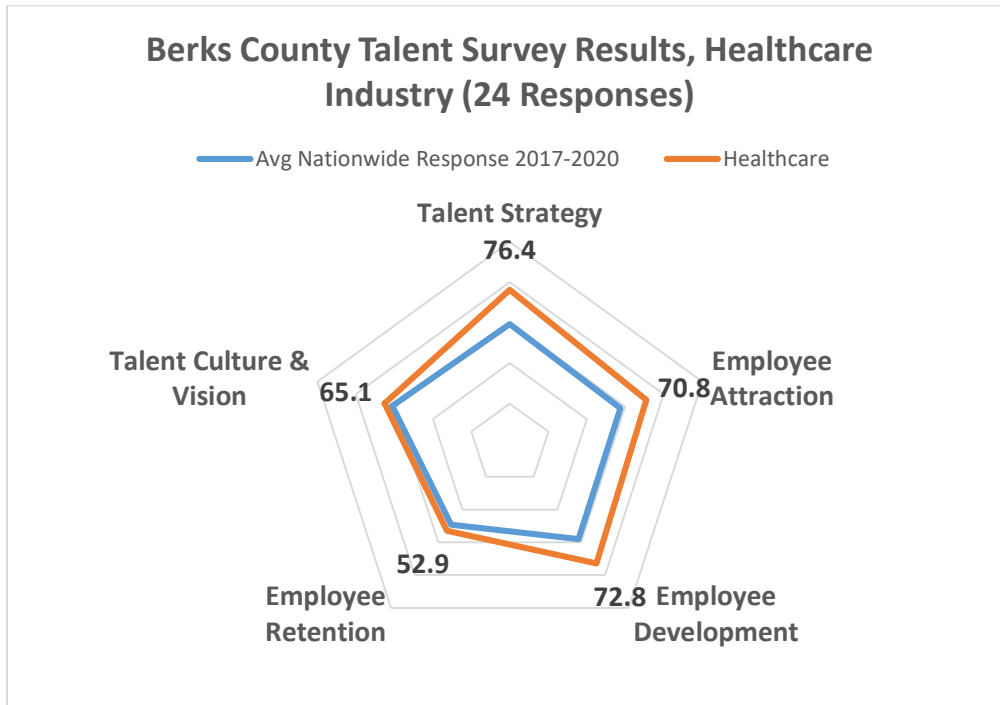


Category	Top 7 Talent Survey Items (Manufacturing Industry)	Score
Strategy	I'm aware of positions that I need to hire for	91.0
Culture/Vision	Improving talent will have no impact on our organizational success	83.5
Attraction	We understand the skills needed to maintain and grow our business	82.0
Attraction	We have updated job descriptions and job profiles	79.3
Strategy	We have a defined culture within our organization	78.5
Development	Our organization has an established onboarding process	77.8
Culture/Vision	The company's core values are clearly communicated and understood	77.5
Category	Bottom 7 Talent Survey Items (Manufacturing Industry)	Score
Retention	Our organization is in a constant state of hiring	28.7
Culture/Vision	Talent issues are limiting the growth of our organization	32.8
Attraction	Our job postings return enough qualified applications	56.0
Culture/Vision	We excel in managing talent	56.9
Retention	Our biggest challenge is retaining our top talent	57.4
Retention	Defined career paths exist for our current employees	58.8
Strategy	Our talent strategy is clearly communicated throughout the company	61.3

The biggest strengths and challenges remain the same as the overall results: a strong understanding of skill needs, clear job descriptions, and defined onboarding process, on the one hand, met with not enough qualified applicants and ill-defined internal career paths. Manufacturers uniquely among the industries had “We excel in managing talent” among their bottom seven items.

Healthcare Industry (24 responses)

Two dozen healthcare organizations responded to the survey. The averages exceed the nationwide benchmarks in all categories. Talent Strategy was the overall highest category, and relatively higher compared to Berks survey responses overall (76.4 vs. 72.1 Berks overall and 59.4 nationwide average). The lowest category Employee Retention was also low on a relative basis vs. other Berks employers (52.9 vs. 57.0 for Berks overall and 49.3 for the national benchmark).



Category	Top 7 Talent Survey Items (Healthcare Industry)	Score
Strategy	I'm aware of positions that I need to hire for	94.4
Strategy	We have a clear definition of the responsibilities performed within our jobs	86.0
Development	Our organization has an established onboarding process	85.7
Attraction	We understand the skills needed to maintain and grow our business	83.5
Culture/Vision	Improving talent will have no impact on our organizational success	81.5
Strategy	We have a defined culture within our organization	81.4
Development	Our employees do not have the proper skills to perform their jobs	79.1
Category	Bottom 7 Talent Survey Items (Healthcare Industry)	Score
Retention	Our organization is in a constant state of hiring	21.5
Culture/Vision	Talent issues are limiting the growth of our organization	38.2
Attraction	Our job postings return enough qualified applications	52.0
Culture/Vision	We excel in managing talent	54.5

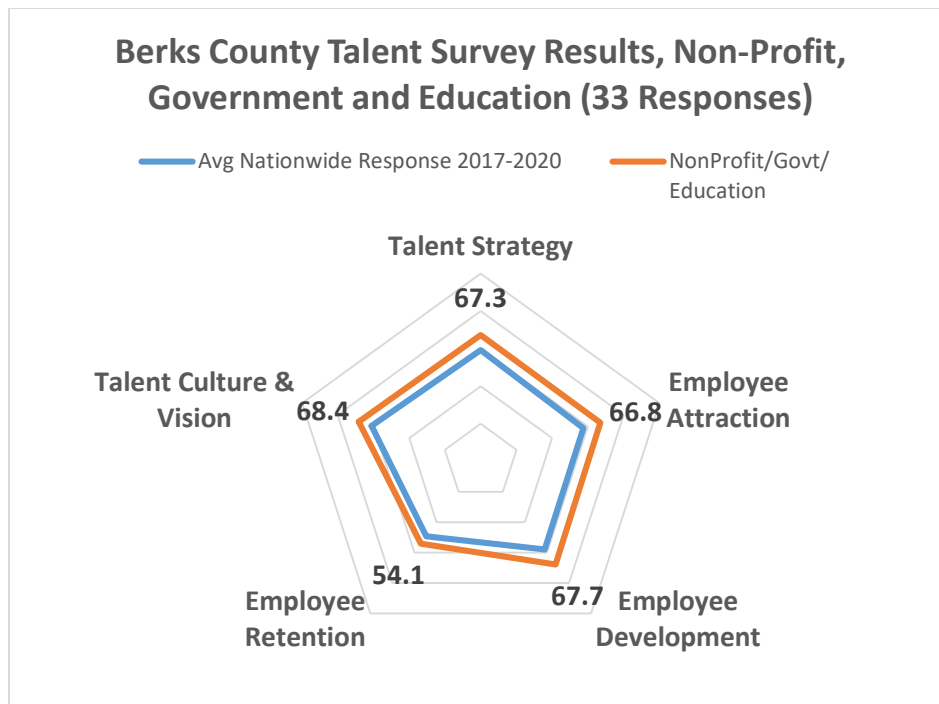


Retention	Our biggest challenge is retaining our top talent	58.1
Retention	Defined career paths exist for our current employees	58.6
Strategy	Our talent strategy is clearly communicated throughout the company	58.7

The mix of strengths and weaknesses were well matched to the overall responses. Healthcare employers have a clear understanding of titles and skills needed, defined culture and onboarding process, and those hired have the skills to perform the required work. Among the lower scores, a constant state of hiring and postings not returning enough qualified applications are again the critical items.

Non-Profit, Government and/or Education (33 responses)

Thirty-three responding organizations were from the non-profit, education, or government sectors. Overall results were relatively close to Berks responses overall in each category and exceeded the benchmark in each category. Uniquely, the highest category was Talent Culture & Vision (68.4 vs. 67.3 for Berks overall and 61.1 for the national benchmark). The lowest category was Employee Retention (54.1 vs. 57.0 for Berks overall and 49.3 for the national benchmark).



Category	Top 7 Talent Survey Items (Non-Profit, Gov't, Education)	Score
Culture/Vision	Improving talent will have no impact on our organizational success	84.5
Strategy	I'm aware of positions that I need to hire for	81.6
Culture/Vision	The company's core values are clearly communicated and understood	81.2

Attraction	We understand the skills needed to maintain and grow our business	79.3
Development	Our employees do not have the proper skills to perform their jobs	78.9
Attraction	We assess prospective employees for their fit within our organization's culture	78.2
Strategy	We have a clear definition of the responsibilities performed within our jobs	75.8
<b>Category</b>	<b>Bottom 7 Talent Survey Items (Non-Profit, Gov't, Educ.)</b>	<b>Score</b>
Retention	Defined career paths exist for our current employees	46.2
Attraction	Our job postings return enough qualified applications	48.7
Retention	Our organization is in a constant state of hiring	48.8
Strategy	Our talent strategy is clearly communicated throughout the company	51.3
Retention	We have defined and executed a strategy for developing our future leaders	52.5
Strategy	We have implemented progressive HR strategies around talent	53.3
Retention	Our biggest challenge is retaining our top talent	57.7

The overall strengths and challenges are very similar to the results for Berks as a whole. As usual, there is an understanding of positions and skills needed and the employer's cultural context for the skills, but this is offset by a lack of qualified candidates and a constant state of hiring. Uniquely "Defined career paths exist for our current employees" is the lowest scored item and represents a particular challenge for retention in these sectors.

*All Other Industries (39 responses)*

The remaining 39 responses cover a wide variety of services (both to consumers and B2B), consulting, retail, wholesale, and hospitality employers, but did not have sufficient representation stand-alone analyses. The average responses are close to the overall scores for the county. The highest category was Talent Strategy (72.1 vs. 72.1 for Berks overall and 59.4 for the national benchmark). The lowest category Employee Retention was still strong on a relative basis (62.2 vs. 57.0 for Berks overall and 49.3 for the national benchmark).

## Berks County Talent Survey Results, All Other Industries (39 Responses)



Category	Top 7 Talent Survey Items (All other industries)	Score
Strategy	I'm aware of positions that I need to hire for	85.6
Attraction	We understand the skills needed to maintain and grow our business	83.3
Culture/Vision	The company's core values are clearly communicated and understood	80.8
Strategy	We have a defined culture within our organization	79.5
Attraction	We assess prospective employees for their fit within our organization's culture	79.4
Culture/Vision	Improving talent will have no impact on our organizational success	78.1
Strategy	We have a clear definition of the responsibilities performed within our jobs	76.9
Category	Bottom 7 Talent Survey Items (All other industries)	Score
Retention	Our organization is in a constant state of hiring	44.9
Attraction	Our job postings return enough qualified applications	50.8
Culture/Vision	Talent issues are limiting the growth of our organization	51.1
Strategy	We have implemented progressive HR strategies around talent	55.5
Development	Our organization has dedicated, structured training	61.7
Strategy	Our talent strategy is clearly communicated throughout the company	61.9
Attraction	We have updated job descriptions and job profiles	63.5

The high and low scores reinforce the consistent picture we have seen in the overall results and the subgroups. Employers know what positions and skills they need, the responsibilities to be performed, have a defined culture and values, and a sense of how to assess for fit with

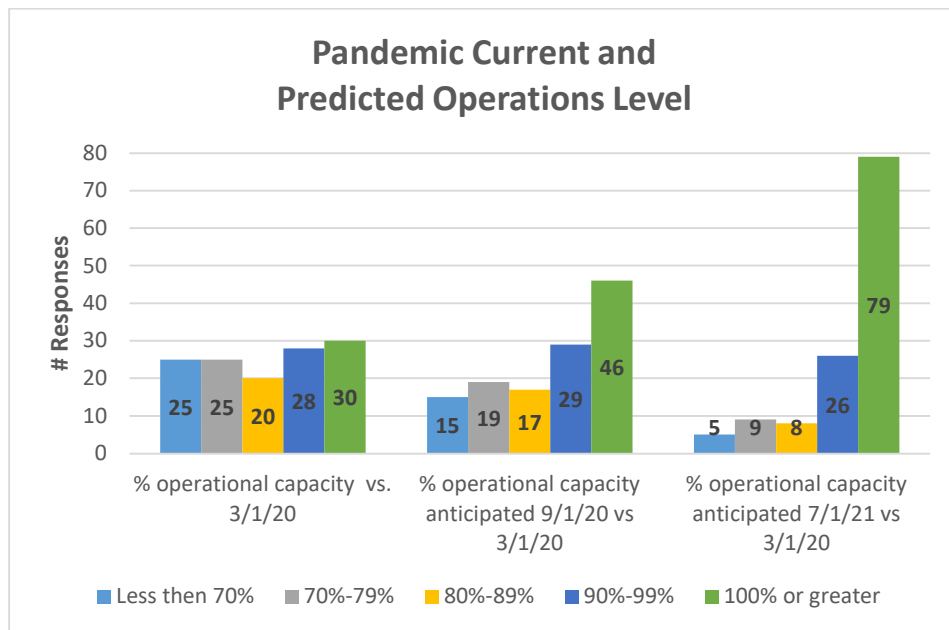
the culture. Nonetheless, they repeatedly face the same issues seen where postings do not return enough qualified applicants.

There is an apparent contradiction in “We have a clear definition of the responsibilities performed within our jobs” rating high, while “We have updated job descriptions and job profiles” rated low.

#### D) COVID-19 Supplemental Survey Results

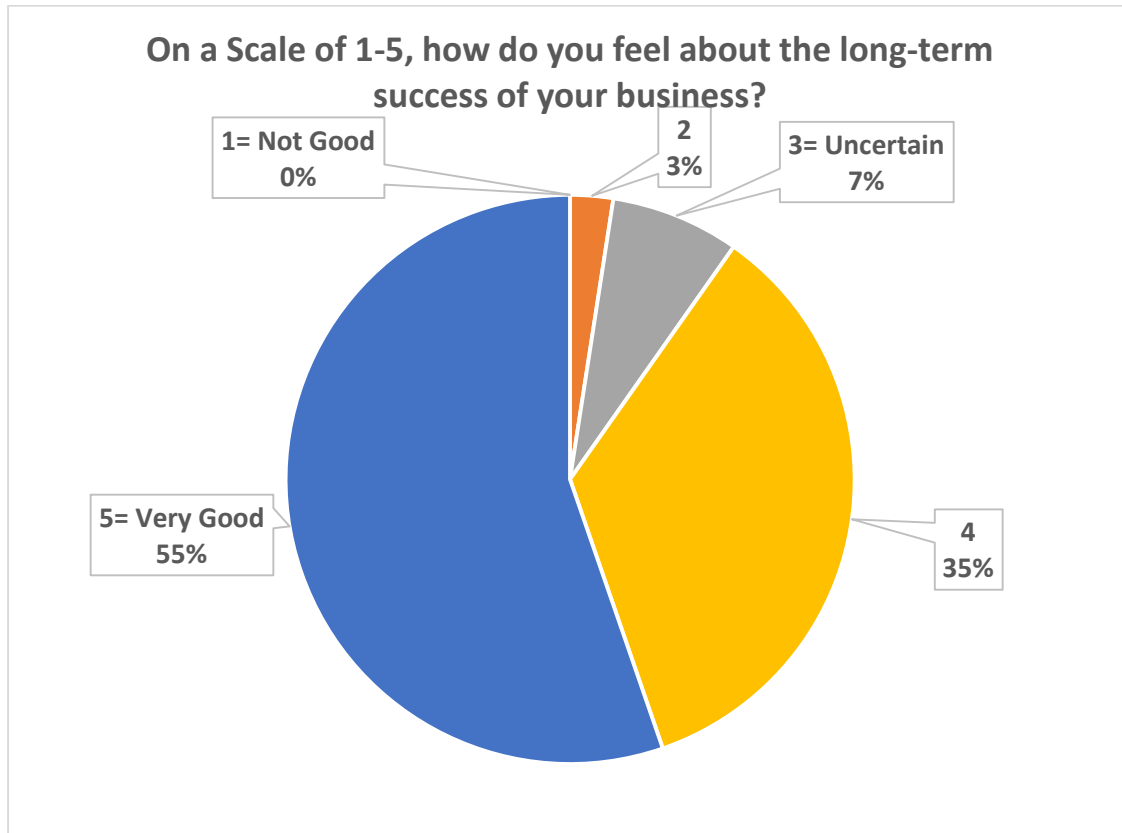
The Talent Strategy Assessment was suspended in mid-March. The project and assessment resumed after the lockdown with the addition of four questions relating to the business impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The survey, including these questions, was then completed by 128 additional organizations.

The first three questions were connected, asking employers to state the percentage of their 3/1/20 “operational capacity” they were at when they took the survey (between 6/24 and 8/24), what they predicted their operational capacity would be on September 1, 2020, and then on July 1, 2021. For reference, Berks County entered the “green phase” on June 26, 2020, and many mitigation restrictions remained in place, including a mandate to work remotely where possible and significant limitations on the size of gatherings. For some of the last companies to take the survey, the difference between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> question would be negligible as it became very close to September 1, 2020.



Overall, at the time of the survey, the average response was 80% of operational capacity. The average prediction for September 1, 2020, was 86% and the average for July 2021 was 94%. Seventy-nine of 128 organizations, or 62%, predict they will be at or above their March 2020 operation level by July 2021. About one-quarter of responses predict they will still be

experiencing mild to significant recession-like impact next summer. Twenty-two companies predict they will be at or below 89% of the March 2020 operations level in July 2021: a very significant medium to long-term contraction.



The last question was more qualitative, “how do you feel about the long-term success of your business?” On a 1-5 scale, 90% selected either 4 or 5.

COVID Questions by Size and Industry

For the respondents, there were slight but not significant differences in pandemic impact among industry groups and the number of employees. Smaller companies said they were more impacted immediately and predict a slower return to 100% capacity. Among industries, Construction and Manufacturing predicted, on average, a near-full return by next summer. While on average Healthcare, Non-Profit/Government/Education, and various service industries (“all other”) see recession like operation levels next summer.

Response Category	# Responses	% of Operational Capacity vs. 3/1/20 capacity:			How do you feel about the long-term success of your business?	% of responses 100% or >100%		
		on date survey taken (actual)	on 9/1/2020 (predicted)	on 7/1/2021 (predicted)		3/1/2020 (actual)	9/1/2020 (predicted)	7/1/2021 (predicted)
<b>Overall</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>86%</b>	<b>94%</b>	<b>4.4</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>62%</b>
<b>By Size</b>								
0-49 Employees	62	79%	84%	94%	4.4	26%	34%	68%
50-99	18	81%	88%	93%	4.3	28%	44%	50%
100-249	16	83%	87%	94%	4.4	19%	19%	44%
250-999	15	78%	86%	92%	4.4	20%	47%	67%
1000+	17	81%	87%	95%	4.8	18%	41%	65%
<b>By Industry Types</b>								
Constr/Rpr/Maint/Util	26	84%	87%	94%	4.4	31%	38%	54%
Manufacturing	29	89%	91%	96%	4.4	34%	48%	72%
Healthcare	18	80%	84%	96%	4.5	17%	17%	56%
Non/Profit/Govt/Education	21	72%	81%	90%	4.3	14%	38%	57%
All Other	34	75%	84%	94%	4.5	18%	32%	65%

## E) Focus Group Summaries

Twelve companies participated in focus group discussions and individual interviews to identify best practices around talent strategy, attracting, developing, and retaining employees. As a group, the participating organizations' talent survey results were in line with their Berks County peers, and they were not outliers:

	<b>Avg Nationwide Response 2017-2020</b>	<b>All Berks Responses</b>	<b>Focus Group Participants</b>
Talent Strategy	59.4	72.1	70.0
Employee Attraction	57.4	69.3	66.8
Employee Development	57.9	69.7	66.7
Employee Retention	49.3	57.0	50.8
Talent Culture & Vision	61.1	67.3	66.3

The group included representation from all employer sizes, and most of the major industries represented in the survey: Manufacturing, Healthcare, and Non-Profit, Government, Education. Non-Profit companies were over-represented in the focus groups compared to their participation in the Talent Survey.

### Characteristics of Participating Organizations:

Company 1	Non-Profit / Government / Education	1 - 49
Company 2	Services (B2B)	1 - 49
Company 3	Non-Profit / Government / Education	100 - 249
Company 4	Manufacturing	1,000+
Company 5	Non-Profit / Government / Education	1 - 49
Company 6	Services (B2B)	100 - 249
Company 7	Manufacturing	50 - 99
Company 8	Non-Profit / Government / Education	1 - 49
Company 9	Healthcare	100 - 249
Company 10	Non-Profit / Government / Education	50 - 99
Company 11	Non-Profit / Government / Education	1-49
Company 12	Healthcare	1,000+

Organizations' actual strategies varied greatly, stemming from their different individual industries, niches, local and national competitive environments, the physical location of the organization, shifts required, and transit availability. The focus group discussions focused on

determining the organizations' strengths and challenges, and included statements from employers:

- “We’re competing against the Philadelphia and New York City markets for position x and y and need to differentiate to sell ourselves and the Reading area.”
- “We’re competing against the big six accounting firms”
- “Suburban Philadelphia districts will always be able to pay more.” “Requirements and pay are set by the state and by contract.”
- “There’s a national shortage of EMTs and Paramedics, we can’t just put up a post”
- “Ideally we would get all the skills at the right price, but we’ve had to think through the best tradeoffs for us.”
- “We have to sell our mission; the purpose people will connect to.”
- “We know people will stay very long term is they get past the first five years”
- “We just won’t be able to find x, we will have to train internally”
- “We recognize our location will be a challenge” vs. “We have a lot of walk to work jobs and so focus on community recruiting”

To update and paraphrase a famous quote, the organizations with the most developed talent strategies had “identified and accepted the challenges they couldn’t change, commitment and resources to address issues they could change, and an ongoing process to know the difference and track their efforts.” The companies carefully thought through tradeoffs and how different efforts feed off of each other, understanding where they best fit in terms of wage competition, internal career ladders and training, and long-term retention.

### Talent Strategy, Vision, and Culture

*Questions: Which of your efforts and initiatives have been most successful in addressing your talent issues? Do you feel like your organization has a clear organizational culture and vision? How has this impacted your organization; how has it helped or hindered you with talent attraction, development, and retention?*

The smaller organizations and the non-profit employers emphasized mission and values as a key part of their overall talent strategy and the main consideration for both recruitment and retention. Making the values of the organization second nature to employees was seen as an integral part of meeting the operational mission as well. “We spend a lot of time considering culture and mission and view this as integral to development and retention. We need to focus on our staff so that our clients are served well. We not only treat our customers well but treat each other just as well.” Multiple organizations mentioned engaging consultants for strategic plan development, or to work through core values, and consider practical ways to apply them to internal culture. Organizations mentioned using culture, values, and mission to frame initial hiring efforts, employee development discussions, and exit interviews. Town halls and recognition meetings were discussed to communicate and reinforce culture.



Participants mentioned their core values and ways they bring them to the forefront on a day to day basis. Multiple employers were able to cite values and mission statements from memory, in a way that demonstrates they are an integrated part of the workday and frame talent strategy initiatives. For example, one mission is, “Our company values are accessibility, artistic excellence, collaboration, operational excellence, and social equity and inclusion,” and staff cultural values for professional growth are, “We are humble, hungry, curious and smart.” Another organization spoke of spending a lot of time keeping the core values in front of staff: “Commitment to excellence is transformational ... How we act, how we work, and what we believe” Those phrases are integrated into employee recognition, reviews, and internal trainings to provide motivation to follow procedures. Values are included in structured performance improvement plans. Another organization has one on one meetings between supervisor and staff person each week. The purpose of these meetings is to let the employees speak and supervisor to hear. There is a strong belief this practice contributes significantly to performance improvement and retention.

Multiple employers described a culture in terms of “family,” and not just the small non-profits. One participant touted its “anti-anti-nepotism” policy. They hoped to be a place you would want your family to work and that in hiring family, the vision would be reinforced. Promotion and development from within were commonly mentioned in terms of development and retention but more fundamentally as an organizational culture strategy. Employers mentioned their efforts to avoid layoffs during COVID and to pay insurance premiums. There was discussion of connecting to banks for financial literacy and other examples of providing opportunities for employees.

There was also frank discussion about the challenges of communicating a strategic vision and cultural values. We heard a few responses like: “As (leader/founder/HR) I think I understand (the vision, purpose, goals) but I’m not sure they’re understood, or staff has the tools to execute the strategy.

### *Attraction and Recruitment*

*Question: What sources have been most successful to fill your talent pipeline with the best quality applicants?*

Several employers believed a key best practice is to consider each position or group of positions and develop flexible approaches given the observed market conditions. The companies recognized some positions will naturally have substantial applications while others will not. Certain unique positions will require a nationwide search, while others can be locally sourced. Some will require investment and creativity in building a pipeline of qualified candidates. Participants spoke of several layered considerations: If the skills are not available, what is the possibility of post-hire training? Is the wage competitive, and where do they want to be in the market? Do they need to advertise outside the region?

Several organizations mentioned local and regional colleges as a critical and successful pipeline. Multiple organizations mentioned working on developing strong internal career ladders, and then focusing more on hiring entry-level positions, which furthers the importance and value of relationships with training and education institutions. There were efforts around internship programs, developing recruiting pipelines with local colleges for undergraduate hires, and paid training programs discussed. There are multiple initiatives to market themselves and their respective industries to very young students to address the long-term pipeline (e.g. “What’s so cool about manufacturing?” days at middle and high schools).

Each organization understood the things potentially unattractive about their work environment: “we’re hiring almost always for 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> shift” or “we know our pay structure will lag as a non-profit.” This knowledge helps frame their recruiting case and ensures a better match of hires as more difficult points of the company or position are not glossed over.

Multiple organizations mentioned investments in technology for recruiting and tracking applicants electronically. There are efforts to streamline initial applications, not require resumes, and/or to make applications entirely mobile-friendly. Organizations made efforts to avoid just saying “this is how it was always done” but to consider each step in the traditional process and make adjustments that lead to more and better applications.

Almost everyone mentioned using multiple channels for recruitment: social media (Facebook the most), recruiting sites, newspapers, headhunters, job fairs, and partnerships with the CareerLink, targeted national searches, trade magazines, and organizations. The focus group participants knew how to search far and wide to find the candidates they need. “There is no one way to recruit, different strategies will attract different people, and be suited to different positions.” There was a discussion on how to consider generational differences in recruiting and communicating in ways that will attract different generations. Multiple employers mentioned incentivizing referrals from existing employees.

There were also layers of “soft recruiting” mentioned as a strategy. “We don’t just post and pray. We bring people in, we get out visually in the community, go out into high schools, connect with the prison system, reach out to shelters.” Another participant described drop-in discussion for nurses, or “wine and cheese” networking events that also provided opportunities to identify candidates for future openings or to connect the employer in the mind of the potential employer in the long-term. Non-profits again emphasized the mission and purpose for recruiting and attracting. For social service organizations, former clients were often successful candidates. Relationships with colleges and internships were critical.

COVID has led to a transition to virtual career events. Brazen software was mentioned as a particularly strong platform for these events. It allows scheduling career fairs, advertising through social media, connecting attendees to a particular booth for a local recruiter to chat

with them, to schedule a time to connect more formally, or the ability to convert to a live video interview.

### Development & Retention

*Questions: What are the most successful ways you train and develop employees? What are your most successful practices for improving employee retention?*


All focus group employees recognized development as generally important, and most had a clear vision to integrate development with a broader talent strategy. For larger organizations, growth provides opportunities, and internally developed candidates are the best options for those positions.

Most employers said there is regular informal job training, significant regulatory and health and safety training, and additional layers of opportunities around operational topics and skills. Certain employers, especially those with substantial skill shortages in the industry, have invested directly in their training programs. Two healthcare related companies, in particular, were examples of this, one with a paid training program toward certifications as an EMT or Paramedic is an excellent example, another providing substantial tuition reimbursement for pursuing additional nursing degrees. There is a recognition in both cases that education and credentialing cannot be left for schools and employers need to create their pipeline and solutions.

Despite relatively lower scores in the retention section of the Talent Survey (similar to Berks employers as a whole), these employers did not feel they had a particular challenge with retention. Usually, they describe it as “about average,” or enough to keep new talent coming through or break ties with non-ideal cultural fits or hires. Most described, in various ways, a threshold time, after which the employee was very likely to stay for the long-term. Turnover is more common with newer employees who may leave for a better opportunity or decide the industry or company is not right for them. Organizations that are growing had more opportunities to retain via promotion, and the more settled organizations had a focus on providing some variety within given job titles.

Schedule flexibility and generous PTO were cited by several organizations as a key retention tool. Employers described a variety of generational challenges and trying to discern what factors are more appreciated by the younger generation and make retention more likely. Employers cited not being an “up or out” company and striving to provide a strong work-life balance compared to industry competitors. Several companies, especially the non-profits, mentioned mission and purpose as key to long term retention.

For retaining key employees, there were a variety of responses. There seemed to be two approaches, depending on industry and growth trajectory or the organization. For growing organizations, part of the purpose of the growth, or at least a strong positive side effect, was



creating opportunities for employees to grow into new positions and build a full career. The larger and more growing organizations emphasized capital investment as a retention initiative. Putting earnings toward growth creates new positions and thus new opportunities and gives reassurance that employees can plan for a long-term career in the organization. Not having a natural ceiling, or needing to wait for the boss to retire, was a great benefit. For organizations that have reached a mature size, there are efforts to job sculpt, customized career paths/positions, or otherwise create new opportunities within existing positions as a retention tool.

One participant discussed a dichotomy in structure between contract positions that were of their nature not expected to be long term and internal positions where retention is a priority. This leads to a high bar to clear for creating a permanent internal position.

There was a general emphasis on building trust with employees to help them believe in the workplace: “just showing that you care; don’t just talk about the job, talk on a personal level, create a sense of trust and belonging. Having an open HR door and being seen on the floor/workplace too.” One participant emphasized bringing in programs that show concern for employee well-being that are not directly related to the employer operations. For example, this employer had Habitat for Humanity come in for a presentation, potentially showing employees a path to getting a house or a mortgage. Wellness programs and financial literacy programs are more common examples of these types of retention building initiatives.

One employer spoke of lowering turnover by removing inconsistency among supervisors. Ensuring procedures are consistently followed created a better sense of trust and fairness. Several employers mentioned training supervisors around generational differences, to understand different motivating values and communication styles in different age cohorts.

Miscellaneous recognition was also cited as a retention tool, through such things as annual service awards, dinners, cards from senior leaders, gift cards, and ongoing recognition. One organization specifically mentioned offering health benefits for positions greater than 20+ hours in some cases, and that there is virtually no turnover in these positions given this benefit.

## IV. Identified Best Practices

### Talent Survey Strongest Scores

Looking at the highest scored talent survey items provides insight into areas where Berks County employers are consistently implementing best practices and achieving strong results. The following table looks at the top ten survey items (of 31) overall and in each tracked subgroup of participants:

Talent Assessment Item	All Berks Responses	0-49	50-99	100-249	250-999	1000+	Construction	Manufacturing	Healthcare	Non-Profit/Govt/ Education	All other
I'm aware of positions that I need to hire for	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1
We understand the skills needed to maintain and grow our business	2	1	4	4	n/a	3	2	3	4	4	2
Improving talent will have no impact on our organizational success	3	3	6	2	6	n/a	9	2	5	1	6
The company's core values are clearly communicated and understood	4	4	10	8	3	7	4	7	10	3	3
We have a clear definition of the responsibilities performed within our jobs	5	7	2	6	7	6	6	8	2	7	7
We assess prospective employees for their fit within our organization's culture	6	5	7	3	9	n/a	5	9	9	6	5
We have a defined culture within our organization	7	8	9	7	5	4	10	5	6	8	4
Our employees do not have the proper skills to perform their jobs	8	6	8	10	10	n/a	3	n/a	7	5	n/a
Our organization has an established onboarding process	9	n/a	5	5	2	5	n/a	6	3	n/a	n/a
We have updated job descriptions and job profiles	10	n/a	3	9	n/a	2	n/a	4	8	9	n/a
Our teams are properly structured within the organization	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	8	n/a	10	n/a	10	10
Employees see a future for themselves within the organization	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	4	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	9

Talent Assessment Item	All Berks Responses	0-49	50-99	100-249	250-999	1000+	Construction	Manufacturing	Healthcare	Non-Profit/Govt/ Education	All other
Our organization has a defined vision for talent	n/a	10	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	8
We have proper training plans in place for new hires	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	8	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Our employees are trained across multiple job functions	n/a	9	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Job seekers have trouble finding and understanding our organization	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	8	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Employees feel they are fairly paid	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	7	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Our HR team and operations work well together in developing our people	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	9	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

The number one item overall, “We are aware of positions we need to hire for,” was never lower than 2<sup>nd</sup> in any subgroup. The 2<sup>nd</sup> overall highest item, “We understand the skills needed to maintain and grow our business,” was at least 4<sup>th</sup> or higher in each subgroup except for 250-999 employees, where it was 11<sup>th</sup>. The consistency of these two items is the basis for our main best practice:

**High performing talent organizations understand their job titles, roles, when openings are occurring or new positions are needed, and the specific skills needed to fill these roles.**

Additional best practices identified through a combination of previous research, Talent Survey results, and the responses in the focus groups and individual interviews include:

Best Practice Type	Examples / Characteristics
<u>Strategy/Culture/Vision</u>	
<b>Talent strategy and vision in place, connected to overall strategy, and communicated and supported</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A clear Talent Strategy is in place and connected to overall corporate strategy and goals</li> <li>• Culture and vision are clearly defined and has a strong talent component</li> <li>• Organizational mission is understood at all levels and connected to talent strategy</li> <li>• Strategy is communicated clearly and supported with resources and training</li> </ul>

<p><b>Strong knowledge of positions and skills needed</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Job Descriptions are defined, validated, and updated</li> <li>• Knowledge, skills, and abilities needed for success are known and ranked/prioritized</li> <li>• Job openings are projected; succession planning is in place for key positions</li> </ul>
<p><b>Applied Knowledge of position among local competitors, and demographic challenges</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organization is aware of competitors overlapping talent needs (or non-competitors seeking similar skills)</li> <li>• Organization understands local educational and skill demographics</li> <li>• Organization understands critical positions and focuses additional efforts on recruitment, development, and retention for these positions</li> <li>• Strategic programs and efforts to hire for skill shortage positions (e.g. apprenticeships, internal career ladders, etc.) in place</li> </ul>
<p><b>Efforts for long-term pipeline building</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategic relationships with educational providers, sector partnerships, governments, chambers of commerce, economic and/or workforce development organizations to promote industry</li> </ul>
<p><u>Recruitment/Attraction</u></p>	
<p><b>Customized recruiting</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recruiting processes and advertising channels are customized based on position / job family / skill needs</li> <li>• Varieties of recruiting channels are pursued and selected based on job needs, including multiple online and offline channels</li> </ul>
<p><b>Recruiting processes</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applicant tracking system is in place</li> <li>• Streamlined and mobile enabled recruiting processes are in place</li> <li>• Steps in recruiting process are deliberately chosen consistent with talent strategy, not inherited as “the way it’s always been”</li> </ul>
<p><b>Wages, benefits, and work environment</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organization provides a competitive mix of wages, benefits, and work environment</li> <li>• Organization recognizes importance of flexibility, work/life balance and other “quality of life” aspects of work environment</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organization knows best aspects of package and markets accordingly</li> <li>• Benefits are marketed differently based on position or generational cohorts</li> </ul>
<b>Relationships with educational institutions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishes strong relationships with local colleges or certifying organizations</li> <li>• Conducts outreach to educators to convey skill needs and desired curriculum</li> </ul>
<b>Soft recruiting, promotion, and pipeline development activities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creative outreach to community to communicate presence of the organization and its opportunities</li> <li>• Internship programs</li> <li>• K-12 outreach efforts</li> </ul>
<b>Targeted OJT investments</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identifies areas of skill shortage that justify “creating own pipeline” via an accredited apprenticeship, significant post-hire OJT, or similar programs</li> </ul>
<u><i>Development and Retention</i></u>	
<b>Promote from within culture</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish a preference for promotion from within</li> <li>• Connect promotion from within with strong recruiting best practices for entry level positions outlined above</li> </ul>
<b>Retention by growth</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognizing company growth and related capital investment as a retention tool, creating opportunities for high performers to stay and grow</li> </ul>
<b>Job sculpting, flexibility, unique opportunities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organization identifies opportunities for strong performers to have variety and flexibility within current positions</li> </ul>
<b>Internal training investments, individualized training, and career plans</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creates individualized training and career plans for high performers</li> <li>• Establishes strong career ladders and matrices</li> </ul>



## V. Recommendations and Next Steps

The detailed survey results, focus group findings, and compiled best practices represent a significant opportunity for Berks County employers to improve talent outcomes. We recommend these follow-up activities to take the most advantage of these findings:

### For Employers:


- In most cases only one person at an organization took the Talent Survey, employers should validate their survey results. If an executive leader took the survey, does HR staff agree with the assessment (and vice versa). Do the results seem true to the rank and file employees? This could be accomplished either through informal conversations or more formal internal surveys.
- Invest time to fully understand the strengths and weaknesses indicated in the survey results, and in comparison, to peers of similar size and industry.
- Review your practices against the list of best practices and identify areas with the greatest opportunity for improved implementation.
- Identify new investments or process changes needed, and develop internal plans, resources, deadlines, and accountability for implementation.
- Communicate to WDB, sector partnerships, and/or educators and other relevant organizations talent challenges that are systemic and beyond your control (see below).

### For Business Services Staff:

- Business services staff should thoroughly review this and related reports for a strong understanding of survey and best practices results. This should be facilitated by formal review sessions.
- Marketing material should be developed for BSRs to communicate high level results and best practices.
- BSRs should facilitate follow up conversations with survey participants to encourage and assist in following individual employer recommendations above, create customized next steps, and to identify areas where further support is needed.
- BSRs should have resources to replicate the survey with new employer contacts, to listen for opportunities to recommend and support integrating best practices.

### For Berks WDB and Strategic Partners:

- There are systemic issues (usually related to particular skill shortages and lack of talent pipelines) that cannot be addressed through individual employers following best practices. Identifying these challenges by industry and organization size and seeking opportunities to address through new partnerships and collaboration is critical.
- Through outreach, marketing, and facilitated conversations, ensure that existing industry and sector partnerships understand results and best practices, and bring their



members together to address industry-specific talent issues, support industry-specific best practices.

- Partnering with chambers and/or industry associations to promote follow up opportunities for analysis; facilitate employer and sector plans, and track progress.
- Integrate findings and recommendations into annual goals and future strategic plans.



## VI. About EDSI

Founded in 1979 and headquartered in Dearborn, Michigan, EDSI is a national workforce development, customized training, and consulting company, intertwined with one common thread: helping people and companies in transition. EDSI has grown to a firm that employs more than 800 professionals across the country. EDSI is a purpose-driven company; we are passionate about helping our clients! We believe that we can make a difference and can help our clients achieve their financial, strategic, and social goals. We believe in living our professional lives in service to others, and exemplifying our Mission Statement on a daily basis: “We must strive to create enthusiasm in our clients, see through their eyes, understand their needs, and deliver more than they expect.”

# VII. Attachments

## A) Attachment A – Talent Strategy Assessment Survey Questions

Questions are presented in a random order.

### Step 1 of 7

Job seekers have trouble finding and understanding our organization

DISAGREE AGREE

Our organization has an established onboarding process

DISAGREE AGREE

I'm aware of positions that I need to hire for

DISAGREE AGREE

Our HR team and operations work well together in developing our people

DISAGREE AGREE

Improving talent will have no impact on our organizational success

DISAGREE AGREE

Our teams are properly structured within the organization

DISAGREE AGREE

← Back

Next →

# Step 2 of 7

We have implemented progressive HR strategies around talent

DISAGREE AGREE

We have a clear definition of the responsibilities performed within our jobs

DISAGREE AGREE

We have a defined culture within our organization

DISAGREE AGREE

We have defined and executed a strategy for developing our future leaders

DISAGREE AGREE

Our organization has a defined vision for talent

DISAGREE AGREE

Our talent strategy is clearly communicated throughout the company

DISAGREE AGREE

← Back

Next →

## Step 3 of 7

We assess prospective employees for their fit within our organization's culture

DISAGREE AGREE

We understand the skills needed to maintain and grow our business

DISAGREE AGREE

We have updated job descriptions and job profiles

DISAGREE AGREE

Talent issues are limiting the growth of our organization

DISAGREE AGREE

Our employees are trained across multiple job functions

DISAGREE AGREE

Our organization has dedicated, structured training

DISAGREE AGREE

◀ Back

▶ Next

# Step 4 of 7

We have proper training plans in place for new hires

DISAGREE AGREE

We have and utilize strategies targeted around retention

DISAGREE AGREE

Our employees do not have the proper skills to perform their jobs

DISAGREE AGREE

Our organization is in a constant state of hiring

DISAGREE AGREE

We have a structured review process that provides feedback to employees

DISAGREE AGREE

Our biggest challenge is retaining our top talent

DISAGREE AGREE

◀ Back

▶ Next

## Step 5 of 7

Defined career paths exist for our current employees

DISAGREE AGREE

The company's core values are clearly communicated and understood

DISAGREE AGREE

Our job postings return enough qualified applications

DISAGREE AGREE

Employees feel they are fairly paid

DISAGREE AGREE

We excel in managing talent

DISAGREE AGREE

We are aware of and will address the employees who are preparing to exit our organization

DISAGREE AGREE

Employees see a future for themselves within the organization

DISAGREE AGREE

← Back

Next →



# Step 6 of 7

## COVID-19 Business Impact

\* As of today, what percentage of operational capacity are you at, compared to where you were on March 1, 2020? (e.g. I am at 35% of my pre-March 1st capacity)

\* What percentage of operational capacity do you anticipate you will be at by September 1, 2020?

\* What percentage of operational capacity do you anticipate you will be at in one year (July 1, 2021)?

\* How do you feel about the long-term success of your business?

NOT GOOD

UNCERTAIN

VERY GOOD

B) Attachment B – Detailed Talent Survey Results by Employer Size and Industry

	# of Responses	1099	159	By Size (# of Employees)					By Industry Type				
				80	21	23	17	18	31	32	24	33	39
				Avg Nationwide Response 2017-2020	All Berks Responses	0-49	50-99	100-249	250-999	1000+	Constr/Rpr/Maintr/Util	Manufac-turing	Healthcare
<b>Talent Score Average</b>	57	67.1	67.2	69.7	63.2	65.3	70.2	68.0	66.3	67.6	64.9	68.5	
<b>Talent Strategy</b>	59.4	72.1	69.7	77.7	70.2	70.1	80.4	72.1	73.8	76.4	67.3	72.1	
I'm aware of positions that I need to hire for	61	87.5	83.4	90.3	93.4	90.5	92.4	87.5	91.0	94.4	81.6	85.6	
Our talent strategy is clearly communicated throughout the company	53.2	59.0	57.5	72.0	50.7	54.7	65.2	61.5	61.3	58.7	51.3	61.9	
We have a clear definition of the responsibilities performed within our jobs	64	78.3	76.1	86.3	77.0	75.2	83.6	78.3	76.9	86.0	75.8	76.9	
Our teams are properly structured within the organization	58.6	71.7	72.1	68.9	67.6	68.2	82.2	71.8	73.4	70.6	69.0	73.3	
We have a defined culture within our organization	66.1	77.4	76.0	76.1	75.5	79.1	85.9	75.4	78.5	81.4	72.8	79.5	
We have implemented progressive HR strategies around talent	53.1	58.6	53.1	72.9	57.1	52.8	73.3	58.2	61.5	67.2	53.3	55.5	
<b>Employee Attraction</b>	57.4	69.3	69.1	71.6	67.8	68.5	70.2	68.7	70.9	70.8	66.8	69.5	
Employees feel they are fairly paid	51.4	66.9	70.2	55.4	66.2	65.4	68.3	77.7	61.5	65.2	58.7	70.8	
Employees see a future for themselves within the organization	60.3	70.7	70.5	73.5	64.8	80.6	66.6	71.9	72.7	69.9	65.3	73.3	
Job seekers have trouble finding and understanding our organization	56.3	67.1	68.3	69.6	65.1	74.4	54.1	64.7	68.0	70.4	67.8	65.5	
Our job postings return enough qualified applications	48.2	47.8	43.5	52.4	48.5	51.6	56.9	31.3	56.0	52.0	48.7	50.8	
We understand the skills needed to maintain and grow our business	67.2	82.2	84.0	83.9	78.0	73.3	86.4	83.1	82.0	83.5	79.3	83.3	
We have updated job descriptions and job profiles	54.3	72.2	67.6	85.4	72.7	60.9	87.4	73.5	79.3	78.6	70.0	63.5	
We assess prospective employees for their fit within our organization's culture	64.1	77.9	79.4	80.7	78.8	73.4	71.6	78.4	76.7	76.3	78.2	79.4	
<b>Employee Development</b>	57.9	69.7	68.7	74.3	66.5	67.7	75.2	72.2	67.7	72.8	67.7	69.3	
Our organization has dedicated, structured training	50.9	63.4	59.7	74.3	58.2	61.5	75.8	66.8	62.0	69.2	59.5	61.7	
Our organization has an established onboarding process	58.5	73.5	65.2	83.2	77.2	84.1	84.6	68.1	77.8	85.7	67.5	72.0	
Our employees do not have the proper skills to perform their jobs	67.3	75.6	78.0	80.0	71.3	73.4	67.0	81.1	68.6	79.1	78.9	71.9	
Our employees are trained across multiple job functions	63.2	68.0	72.9	65.8	60.4	54.3	71.7	67.1	66.0	66.6	66.6	72.4	
We have proper training plans in place for new hires	55.2	70.3	70.9	75.3	65.7	61.6	76.3	77.3	64.2	72.7	66.3	71.9	
We have a structured review process that provides feedback to employees	52.3	67.6	65.5	67.3	66.1	71.4	75.8	72.9	67.6	63.4	67.6	66.0	
<b>Employee Retention</b>	49.3	57.0	59.5	56.6	50.9	53.7	56.7	59.6	53.9	52.9	54.1	62.2	
Our biggest challenge is retaining our top talent	46.5	53.9	61.4	60.2	46.8	52.0	56.7	60.8	57.4	58.1	57.7	63.6	
We have and utilize strategies targeted around retention	55.5	64.3	64.2	70.4	56.8	58.2	73.4	66.0	64.7	64.1	57.9	68.3	
Defined career paths exist for our current employees	48.5	58.4	56.8	60.2	49.9	67.4	66.1	63.3	58.8	58.6	46.2	64.6	
Our organization is in a constant state of hiring	40.1	38.0	51.4	31.0	26.1	28.5	11.2	40.3	28.7	21.5	48.8	44.9	
We have defined and executed a strategy for developing our future leaders	51.3	61.2	60.1	59.4	55.8	57.6	78.1	64.5	62.3	63.4	52.5	63.6	
We are aware of and will address the employees who are preparing to exit our organization	53.7	65.9	65.9	68.9	62.8	62.3	69.3	65.6	65.4	61.0	64.3	70.8	
<b>Talent Culture &amp; Vision</b>	61.1	67.3	68.9	68.1	60.5	66.5	68.7	67.5	65.2	65.1	68.4	69.3	
Our organization has a defined vision for talent	58.6	70.5	72.5	72.9	60.7	66.5	74.9	71.6	70.4	72.4	62.5	75.2	
Our HR team and operations work well together in developing our people	56.4	66.6	63.4	74.5	61.1	67.0	78.1	65.0	70.2	67.9	63.3	66.9	
We excel in managing talent	53.8	60.0	61.4	66.5	47.1	55.2	67.3	65.1	56.9	54.5	58.1	63.5	
Talent issues are limiting the growth of our organization	52	46.9	54.4	38.2	33.8	54.4	33.5	48.1	32.8	38.2	60.8	51.1	
The company's core values are clearly communicated and understood	69	79.1	80.1	76.0	75.0	80.7	82.3	78.9	77.5	75.9	81.2	80.8	
Improving talent will have no impact on our organizational success	76.6	80.7	81.6	80.8	85.4	75.2	75.9	76.6	83.5	81.5	84.5	78.1	