

Focus Group Session Themes: (Themes identified sorted under overarching themes)

1. A need for greater flexibility and innovation (hiring and education)

A1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employers understand they need to make more strategic use out of tuition reimbursement programs to grow employee skills and credential achievement
A11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Current hiring models and practices are cumbersome and need to be re-evaluated to fit the current market
B7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilize apprenticeship model with employers
C2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See a gap in what the job description requires and the required credential which kicks out viable candidates from the onset
C4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of criminal background policies or length of time from last offense needs to be considered
D1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilization of remote workers
D2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schedule and Part-time positions to support older workers
D3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hiring of Veterans
D4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stay Interviews
D5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Culture of the organization
C1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Entry level positions offer wages that require work supports such as transportation assistance, healthcare, childcare, flexible schedules to make the job financially viable for the available low-income populations. (onsite day care, van pools, mentors)

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- = Recruitment, Outreach And Hiring Practices In The Region

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2. A need to increase interaction and collaboration (employers and education)





A2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional Education Centers and Workplace Learning Connection services are strong tools for K-12 pipeline and linkage to workforce development
A9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employers would like to see more emphasis on career services and career exploration for K-12 students and post-secondary students
A8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of awareness, comfort with, and priority within the organization to utilize internships
A10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employers expressed concern about the ease of acquiring interns from post-secondary institutions and quality of graduates in some degree areas
B1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opportunity for more experiential learning projects for the classrooms through employer partnerships
B2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need employer engagement and long-term commitments to support critical education programs
B4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expanded career services and more investment in placement services with regional employers
B5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employers identifying the key talent from their organizations to have on education advisory boards
B6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need additional information or communication campaign to assist faculty, advisors, counselors, and education staff understand Iowa's industry, job opportunities, skills needed, and wage rates
C3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employer partnerships with community based organizations can assist in recruitment of targeted populations and the additional services needed to support these hires
D6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use of ambassadors
D8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employee networking groups
D9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attending industry sector meetings to share best practices and jointly develop solutions
D11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social media

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3. A need to market the region and the opportunities it has to offer

A3	• Lack of available labor. In rural communities, in particular, lack of available labor is at a critical concern level and is challenging the ability to grow and expand operations.
A4	• Marketing of the region internally and externally as a great place to live, work, play is needed
D11	• Social media
D12	• Retention of recruits from outside of the state is critical and how we market the region has an impact
D13	• Employers need ready access to regional marketing tools and connections to networks

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Focus Group Session Themes: (Themes identified sorted under overarching themes)

4. A need to enhance the basic foundational skills of the region's workforce

A1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employers understand they need to make more strategic use out of tuition reimbursement programs to grow employee skills and credential achievement
A3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of available labor. In rural communities, in particular, lack of available labor is at a critical concern level and is challenging the ability to grow and expand operations.
A5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of basic skills, work readiness, ability to pass drug screening and background checks are more prevalent in applicant pools
A6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For entry level positions (production positions, customer service positions, front line positions) the skills sets required have increased this too is impacting the tightening of the applicant pool and available labor
A7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shortage of quality applicants for entry level positions across industry sectors; shortage in middle skill jobs particularly in manufacturing and shortage in high skill jobs in Information Technology, Engineering, and Electronics Manufacturing
B3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incorporate more use of career ladders, career exploration, and connection to the region's workforce priorities
B7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilize apprenticeship model with employers
C3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employer partnerships with community based organizations can assist in recruitment of targeted populations and the additional services needed to support these hires

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5. A need to better prepare students for success in their careers and in the workforce

A2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional Education Centers and Workplace Learning Connection services are strong tools for K-12 pipeline and linkage to workforce development
A9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employers would like to see more emphasis on career services and career exploration for K-12 students and post-secondary students
A8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of awareness, comfort with, and priority within the organization to utilize internships
A10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employers expressed concern about the ease of acquiring interns from post-secondary institutions and quality of graduates in some degree areas
B1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opportunity for more experiential learning projects for the classrooms through employer partnerships
B2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need employer engagement and long-term commitments to support critical education programs
B4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expanded career services and more investment in placement services with regional employers
B5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employers need to get in front of students at a younger age, be very involved in recruitment and outreach on college campuses
B6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need additional information or communication campaign to assist faculty, advisors, counselors, and education staff understand Iowa's industry, job opportunities, skills needed, and wage rates
B7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilize apprenticeship model with employers
D7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implemented an Internship Program, not just hiring interns but embedding this as a strategy in recruitment and hiring
D10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing supports for interns

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DRAFT Conclusions – Nov 2013

- Our population is not growing fast enough to keep up with retirements and out migration of young people to provide growing companies with needed talent.
- Fewer people coming out of rural areas with the vocational skills our manufacturing sector has relied on for decades
- Young people often not attracted or encouraged to careers where the skill gaps exist
- National shortage of people with advanced technical skills

DRAFT Bottom Lines – Nov 2013

- Our low unemployment and mismatch of skillsets has created a situation where many companies are unable to grow and our region is not attractive to new employers.
- What has been an inconvenience is quickly becoming a significant problem that we need to be more aggressive in addressing
- This issue is bigger than any one entity's ability to solve
- We need a coordinated regional implementation plan with proper resources, autonomy and flexibility

DRAFT Needs – Nov 2013

- To attract new people to the region with the skills and talents our existing and future companies need
- To advance the skillsets of our existing workforce and champion continuous learning
- To keep our educated young people from leaving the region / state or returning if they have left
- To ensure we are encouraging our very young towards areas where the careers for them will be

DRAFT Simplest Way to See It – Nov 2013

People choose to stay or move for the:

- Right position, with the
- Right company, with the
- Right culture, in a
- Vibrant, Educated, Safe, Affordable and Fun Community

DRAFT Our Tasks - 2013

- Ensure people have the right skills through more alignment between business / education at all levels
- Assist our companies to be chosen employers
- Market the region as a place to live, work & play to overcome perception gap
- Make sure the reality is more authentic and vibrant than the marketing