



NEW HAMPSHIRE
Outdoor Workforce
ASSESSMENT SURVEY

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Objectives

The New Hampshire Outdoor Workforce Assessment Survey (the “Survey”) created and distributed by Granite Outdoor Alliance (“Granite Outdoor”) is intended to capture a limited snapshot of the outdoor industry’s workforce landscape in New Hampshire during the Fall of 2021 amidst the COVID-19 global pandemic. The Survey provides preliminary insight into the industry’s workforce profile identifying certain challenges and opportunities in preparation for the development of a more robust industry-driven statewide strategic workforce plan.

Survey Source and Methodology

The survey was modeled after similar workforce surveys, including the Maine Outdoor Brands Workforce Needs Assessment Survey Report, Vermont Outdoor Business Alliance Needs Assessment, and the Utah Workforce Needs Assessment. These organizations, together with Granite Outdoor, are members of the State Outdoor Business Alliance Network (“SOBAN”). Additional information, including questions specific to diversity, equity, and inclusion, were crafted with guidance from the Outdoor Industry Association and Outdoor Recreation Roundtable.

The Survey was created in Google forms and distributed to the Granite Outdoor member base, listserv, and social media. GOA association members were encouraged to distribute the Survey to their corresponding email lists. Other informal outlets of distribution included Survey distribution to individual social networks of each Director of Granite Outdoor as well as others in industry leadership positions. The Survey was open for approximately 8 weeks.

Granite Outdoor Alliance is a membership-based non-profit organization supporting the New Hampshire outdoor industry through representation of brands, retailers, non-profits, professional services and outdoor enthusiasts



graniteoutdooralliance.org



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Scope

The scope of the survey was threefold, namely:



gaining a better understanding of the existing workforce profile and the challenges and opportunities over the next five years;



gaining a better understanding of positions that are most difficult to fill and the barriers to hiring; and



collecting information to help align education and training programs in New Hampshire with employer needs.

Given the small sample size, care should be taken when interpreting the summary statistics and charts and drawing inferences from the identified changes.

Respondents

Overall, sixty-two (62) total organizations responded to the Survey, of which three-quarters were private sector businesses and one-quarter nonprofits. Collectively, respondents ranged from one (1) year to 170 years old. Participant location included predominantly urban areas, the Seacoast, the White Mountains, and the North Country regions. Sixty-one percent (61%) of organizations have an annual budget over \$250,000 per year, 22% employ over 51 employees, and 11.9% employ between 26-50 employees. There are a wide variety of industries represented in the Survey. Specifically, 20% of respondents describe their industry as “Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation” and 16% as “Accommodation and Food Services” and 11.7% as “Retail” with the balance being spread out over twenty other sectors.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY & COMMENTARY

Executive Summary

The Survey revealed that, generally, New Hampshire outdoor industry businesses are actively hustling to meet demand yet struggling to attract, recruit and retain qualified applicants and/or employees. Despite targeting a younger workforce, Survey participants indicate applicants are lacking soft and hard skills forcing employers to hire underqualified applicants and self-train employees. Together with non-work-related market barriers such as housing, cost of living, and low wages, the overall Survey outcomes demonstrate a challenging labor environment. Despite this workforce challenge, employers predict strong hiring practices over the next five years anticipating growth in roles ranging from administrative/clerical and customer service/hospitality to management and outdoor guides. Employers have yet to embrace diversity, equity, and inclusion practices in a formal way yet many contemplate doing so.

IMPORTANT STATISTICS

Key takeaways from the Survey include:

- Over 64% of employers offer entry level hourly wages between \$11-\$17.00
- The most sought-after age bracket is between 29-34
- Types of positions most in demand in the next five years include, in order:



**administrative/
clerical**



**customer
service/
hospitalit**



management



**marketing/
digital marketing**



**operations/
logistics**



retail sales



**guide/
instructor**

- Employer recruitment methods focus on referrals and social media while few Survey respondents use resources like job fairs, NH Works, employment agencies, or TV/Print/Radio.



Commentary & Analysis

The Survey paints a picture of small and mid-size companies hustling to meet market demand and struggling to improve hiring or recruitment practices. The responses demonstrate a widespread lack of organizational capacity to operate businesses during high demand periods which likely impacts the ability for companies to invest time and resources into recruiting quality applicants. As such, we begin to see a pattern of limited employee recruitment and retention practices leading to the hiring of applicants that lack proper experience and qualifications. Over time, this downward trend will further compound and adversely impact industry productivity. Add in non-work-related barriers such as cost of living, the housing crisis, seasonality, and low-wage standards and the workforce outlook appears less than optimistic.

While we see a strong pool of positions most in demand over the next five years, we did not evaluate freelancer and “gig-economy” prospects, which contributed to the employee exodus from the workforce during the pandemic. Strong demand for marketing and digital marketing positions are an indicator of that surging segment’s potential growth and employers’ reliance on referrals and social media support that trajectory.

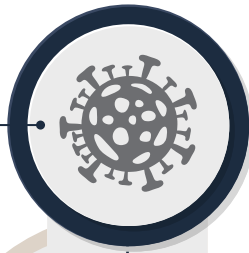
Moreover, the Survey revealed a lack of workforce reinvestment, professional development, and employer investment in diversity, equity, and inclusion policies into the workplace, which has led to a weakened talent pool of applicants.



“ It is surprising and encouraging that most employers are looking for full time year round help, as the narrative usually surrounds the part-time and/or seasonal nature of outdoor industry jobs and thus might imply that a career isn't as easily made in this industry. However, these new findings may suggest otherwise. ”

- Shannon Rogers | Ph.D

Pandemic Influence



The pandemic changed the number of employees for 37 organizations. Respondents varied from having 1-5 employees during the busiest time of year to over 51 employees since March 2022

All except for 5 respondents will be hiring in some capacity in the next five years, with year-round positions being desired over seasonal roles in full time and part time capacities. 72% of respondents predict needing full time year-round employees, while 43% predict needing full time seasonal employees. Part time seasonal roles are more desirable than full time seasonal, with 56.5% anticipating needing part time seasonal hires. The number of positions needing to be filled varies.

Most Desired Position



Hiring Patterns

The most coveted position is Customer Service/ Hospitality, as the highest number of respondents rated it in three categories when compared to other positions. 39% of respondents state this position will be one of the most desired roles over the next five years, 25% of respondents state is the position they need to fill most, and 23% of respondents believe it is the most challenging position for them to fill.

74% of respondents believe housing options where they are located are barriers for recruiting. Only 3% of respondents believe the quality of life where the job is located is a barrier for recruiting. Online Job Boards, Social Networking Sites, organizational websites, and word of mouth are the most effective recruiting methods. Few organizations use resources like Job Fairs, NH Works, Employment Agencies, or TV/ Print/ Radio media to recruit.

Education and Skills

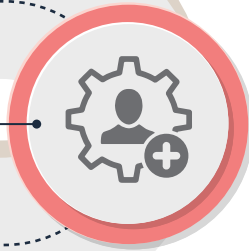


Barriers to Recruiting

The survey respondents look for different educational levels, certifications, and skills when hiring. If the applicant does not have the required skill (such as CPR or Technical Skill Cert), employers, many employers will hire and do internal training (54%) external training (10%) or internal mentoring (27%)

79% of our respondents do not have comprehensive DEI plans in place but would be open to establishing them with guidance and easily accessible resources. Several respondents feel that a DEI does not apply to them in their current state as they are founder run or have a skeleton staff.

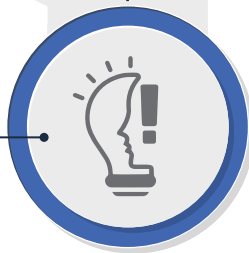
Education and Skills



DEI



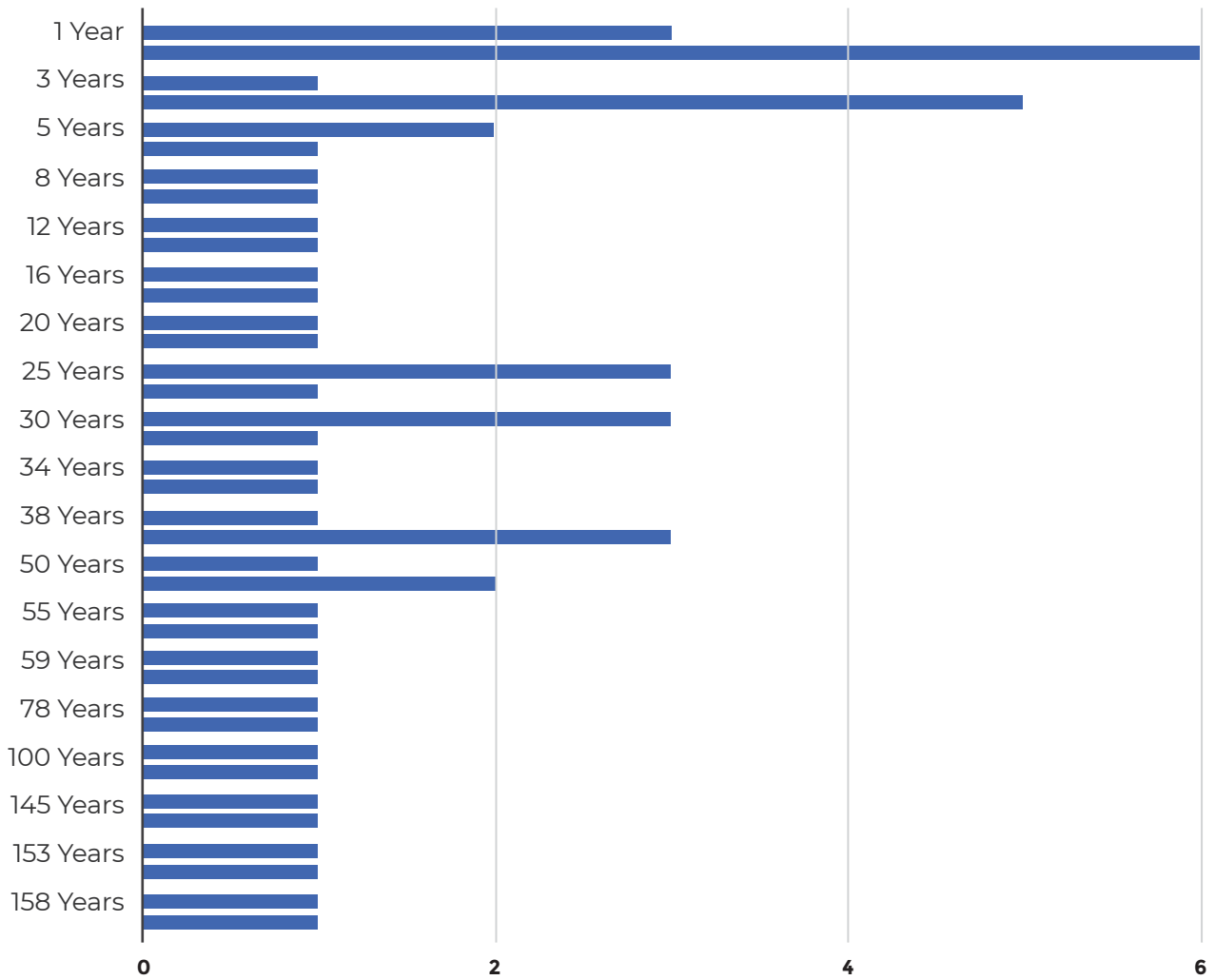
Conclusion



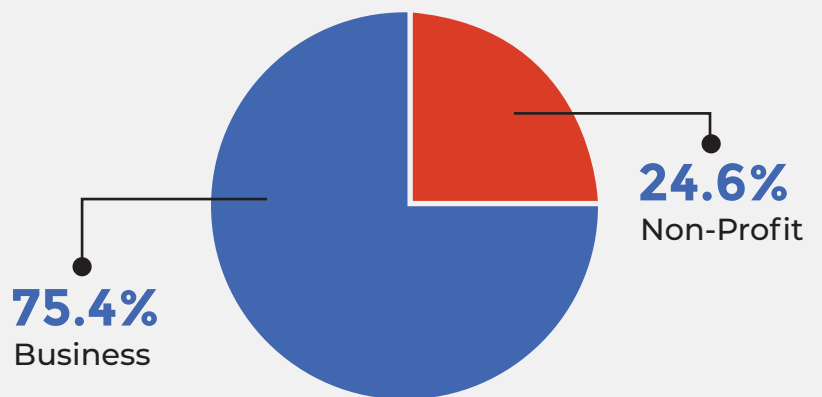
The workforce challenges facing the outdoor industry is difficult to address because the challenges such as housing are beyond the scope of what the industry can manage, and such difficulty also threatens other adjacent industries. While this Survey provides a glimpse into current workforce challenges, it does offer new data that should drive (or catalyze) more in-depth inquiries into the needs of the current labor market to enlighten business owners and policymakers on how to address these problems over the next five years – by reinvesting back into the workforce.

SURVEY

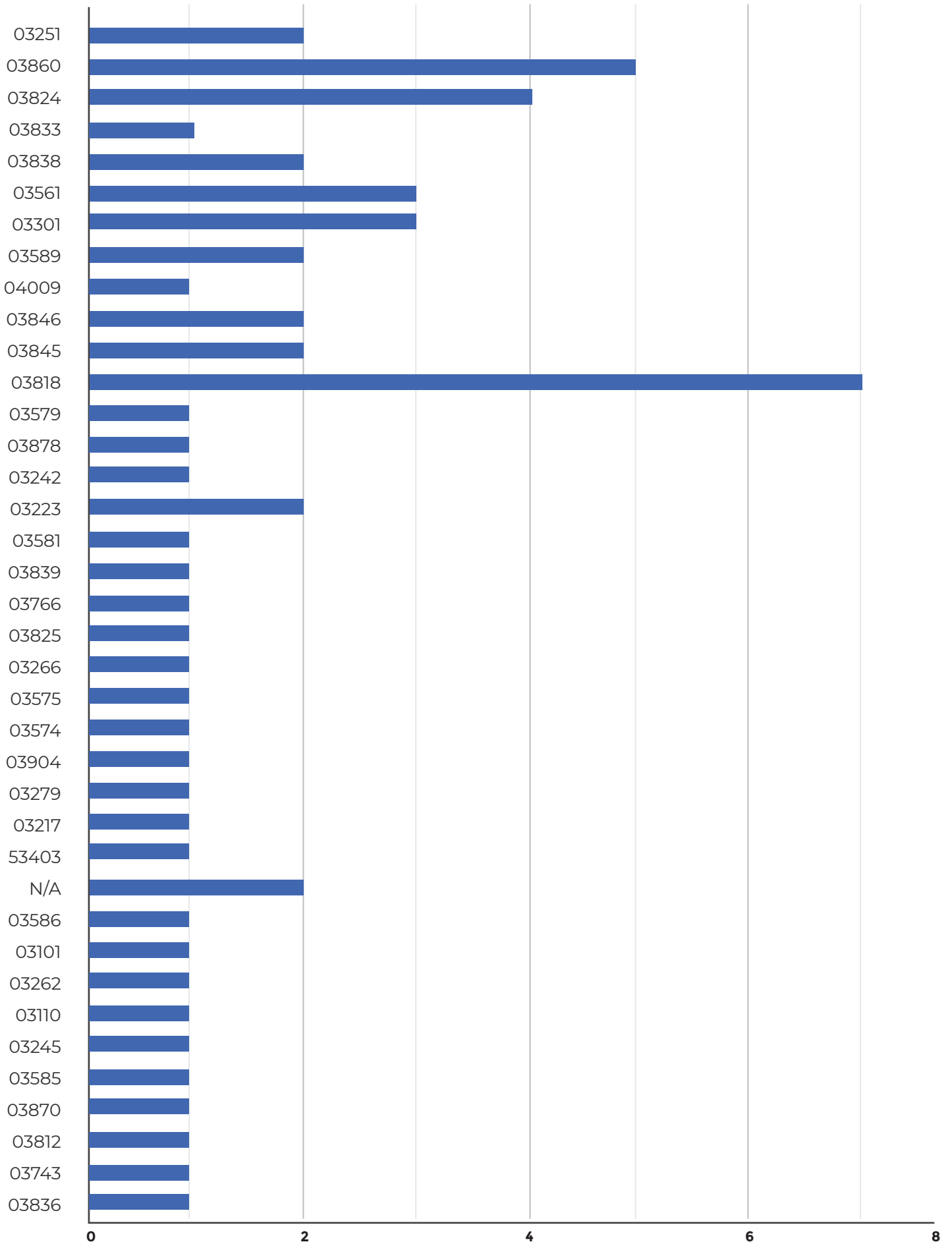
How old is your business or organization?



What type of business or organization are you | 61 responses

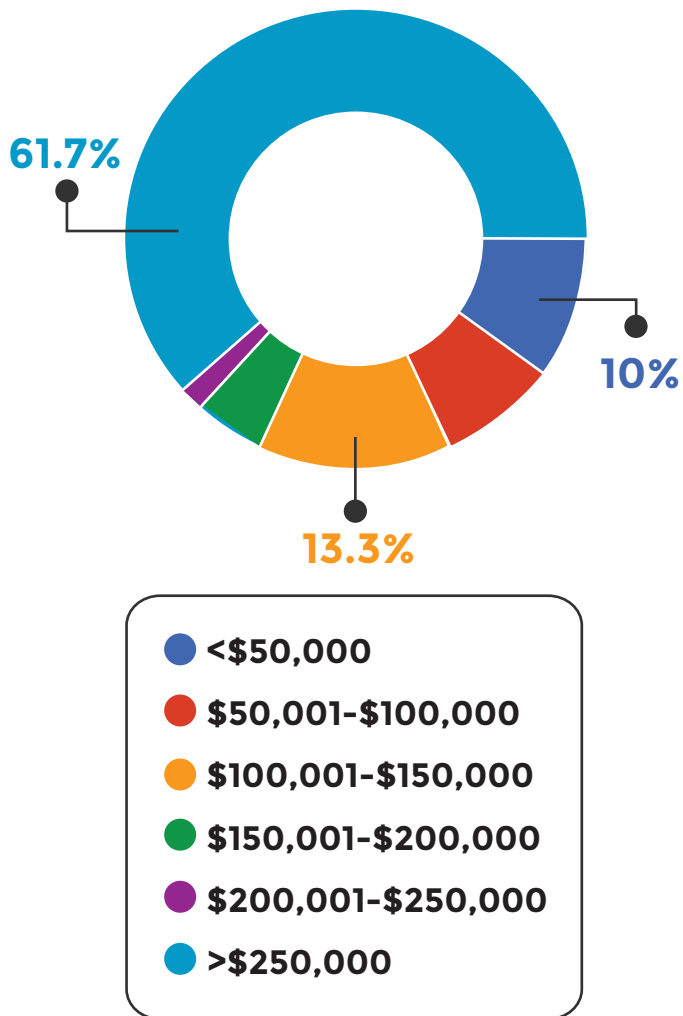


What is the zip code of your primary location?

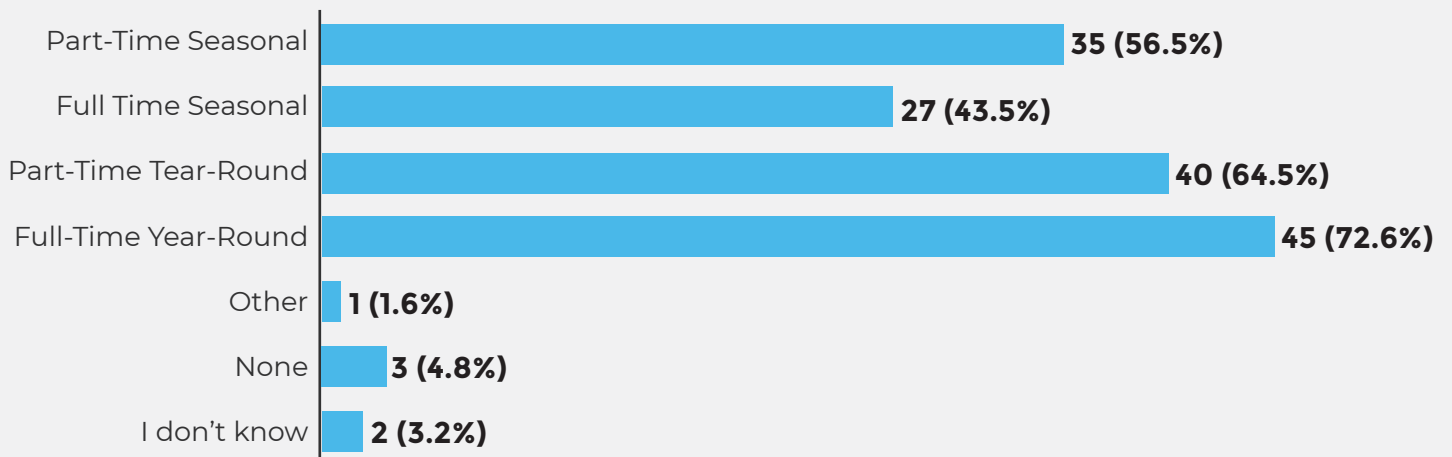


What is the annual budget of your business or organization |

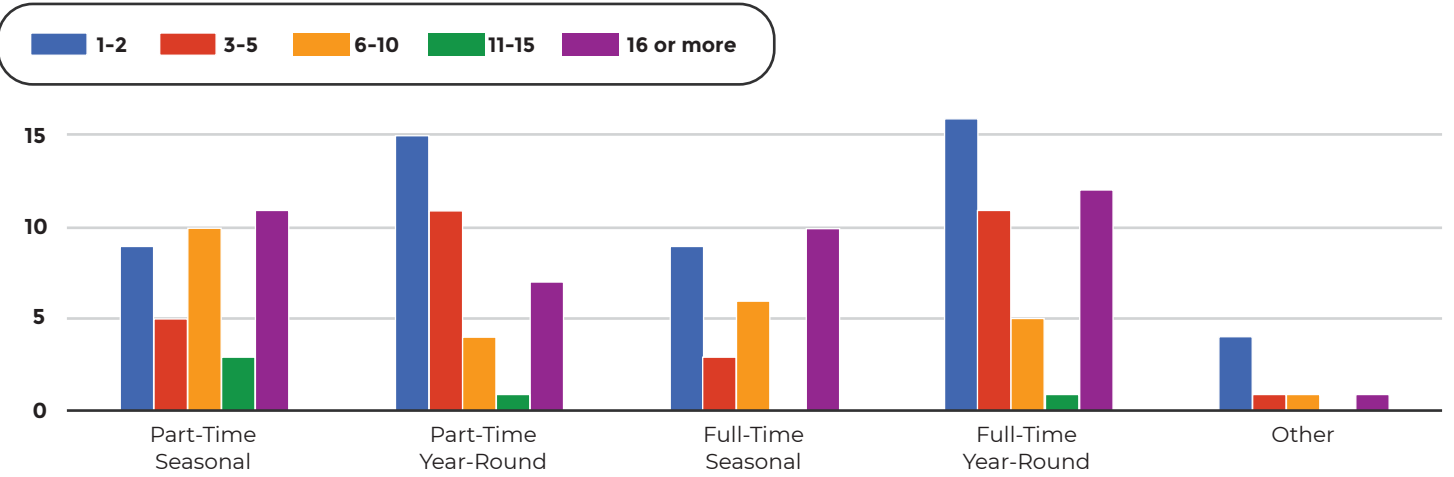
60 responses



What types of employees do you predict you will need over the next 5 years (select all that apply) | 60 responses

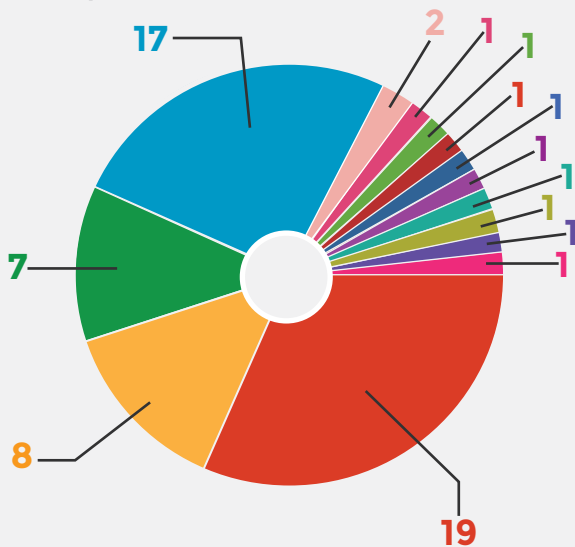


How many positions do you expect you'll need to fill over the next 5 years?



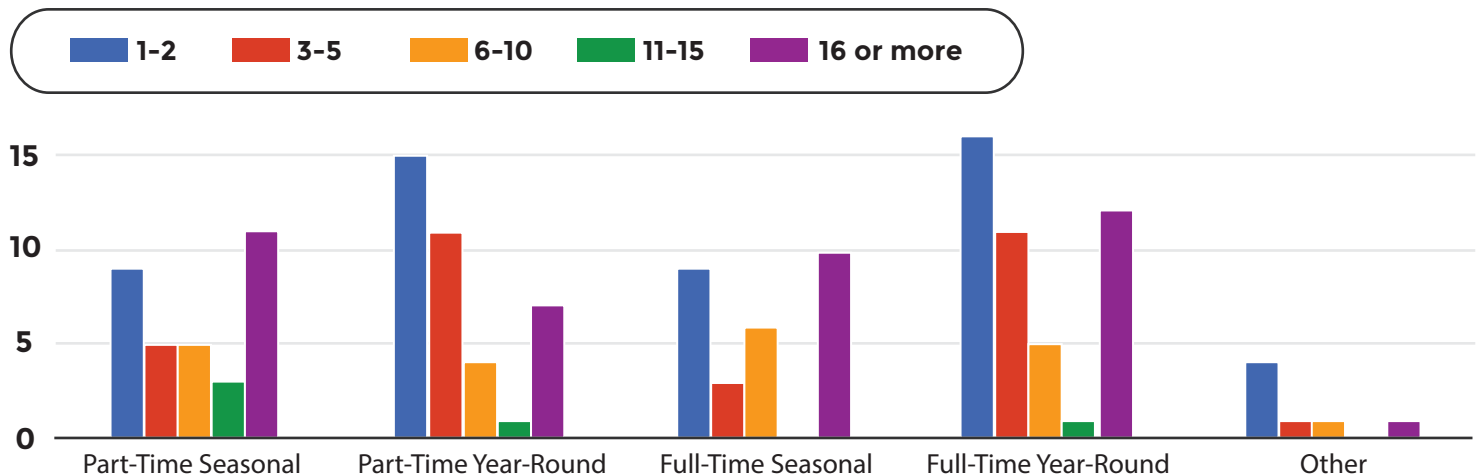
Overall, what level of education is most preferred for the employees of your business or organization?

60 responses



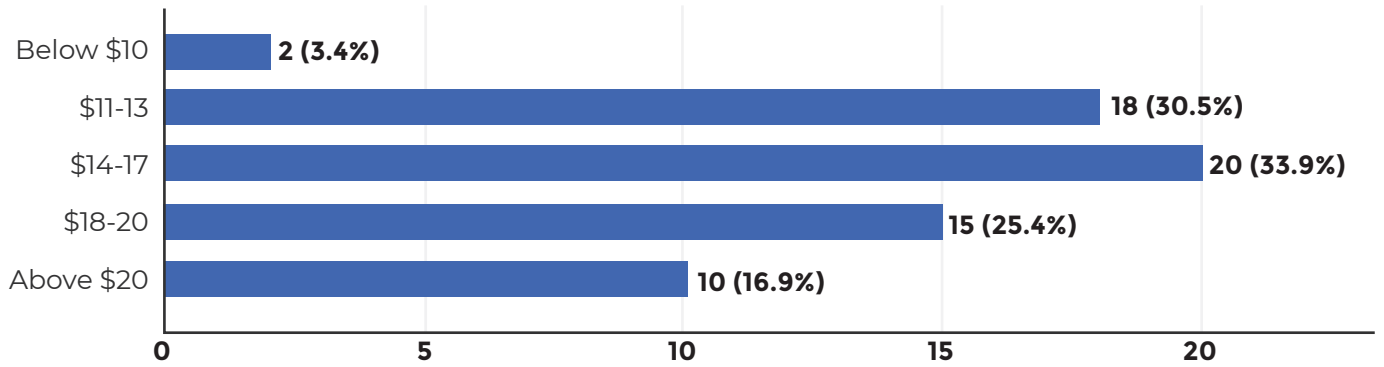
- High School/ High School equivalent
- Bachelor's Degree
- Technical or Occupational Certificate
- Some College
- Doctorate Degree
- ability to learn
- Education level isn't as important as willingness to learn, a good work ethic, and flexibility
- n/a
- Varies based on position.
- Both high school graduates and college students
- PhD or Masters for adjunct faculty. No FT permanent hires expected.
- College for office jobs, manufacturing positions based upon experience
- Master's Degree
- Work Ethic more than Education

How many positions do you expect you'll need to fill over the next 5 years?

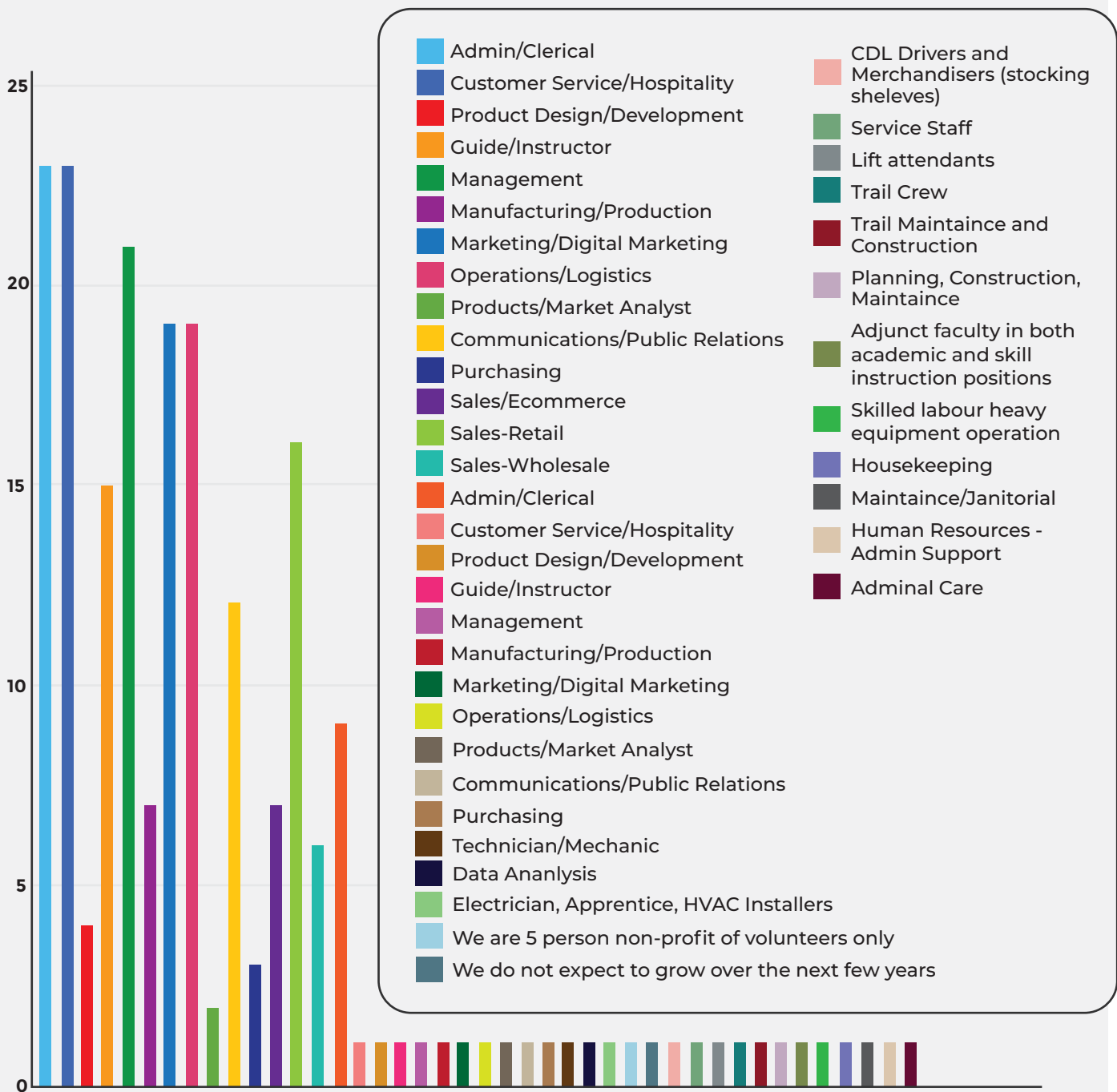


What is your current average entry-level starting hourly wage

(including tips, if applicable?) | 59 responses

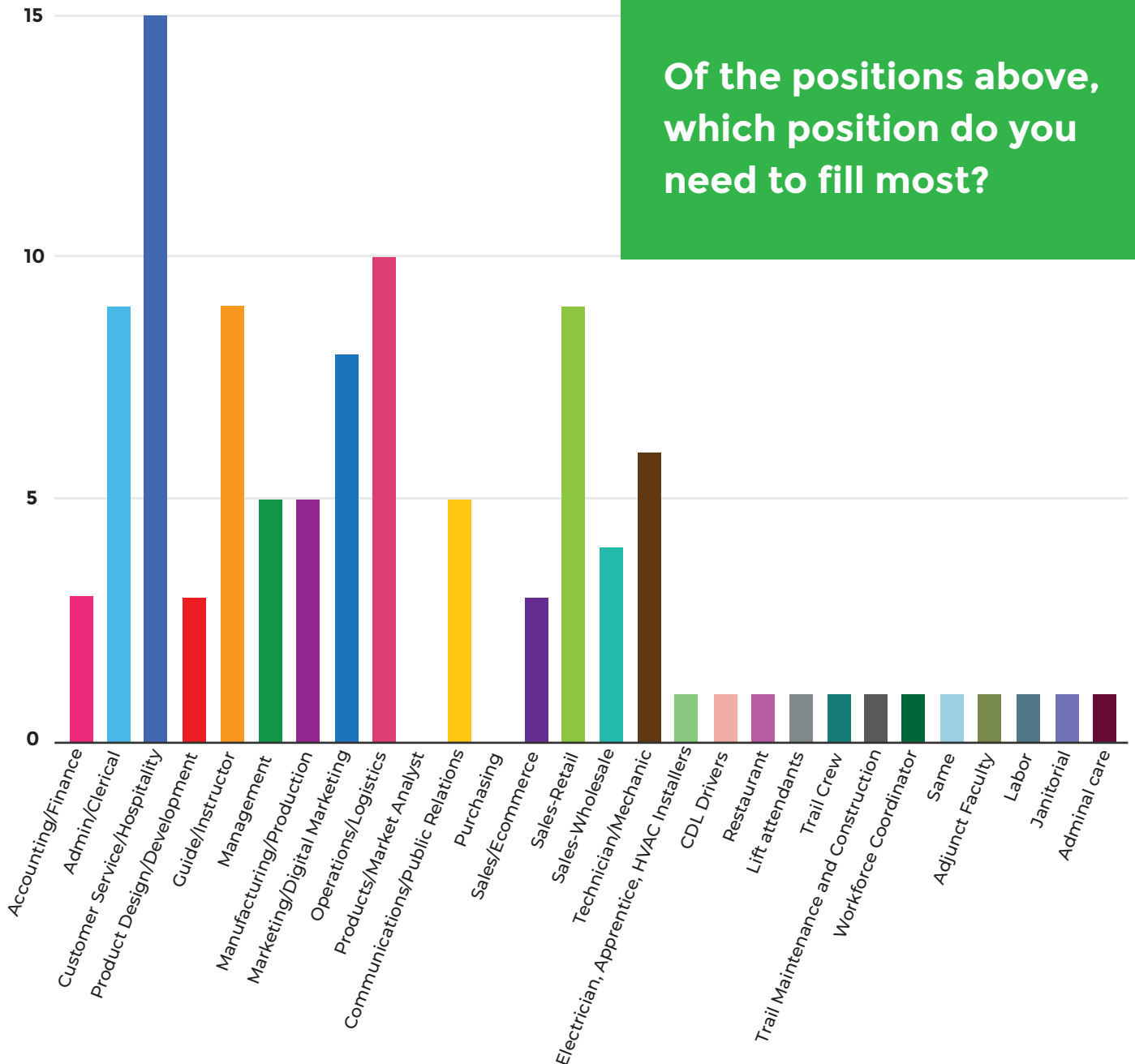


Please select all positions that will be the most needed by your business or organization over the next 5 years



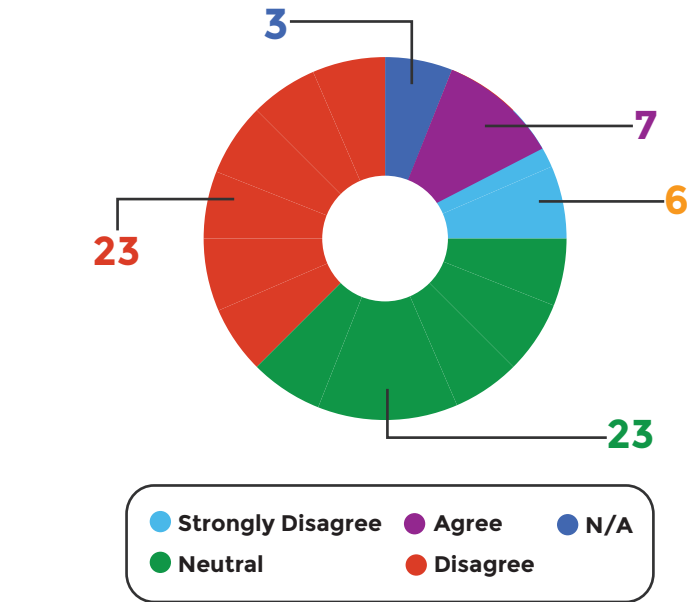
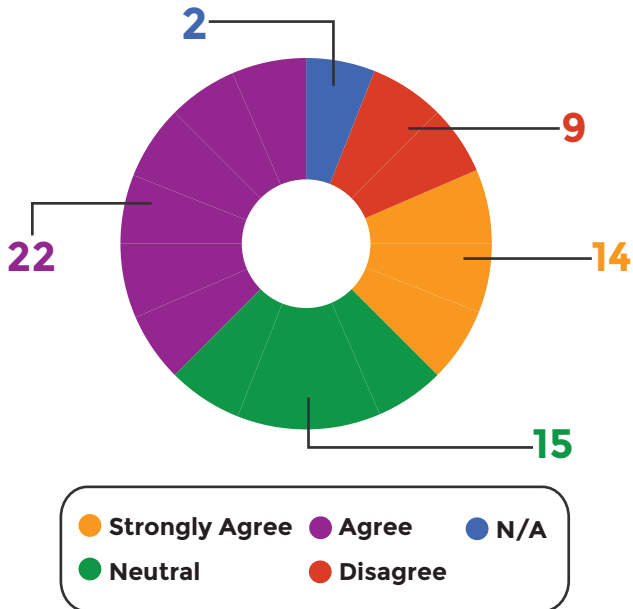


Of the positions above, which position do you need to fill most?



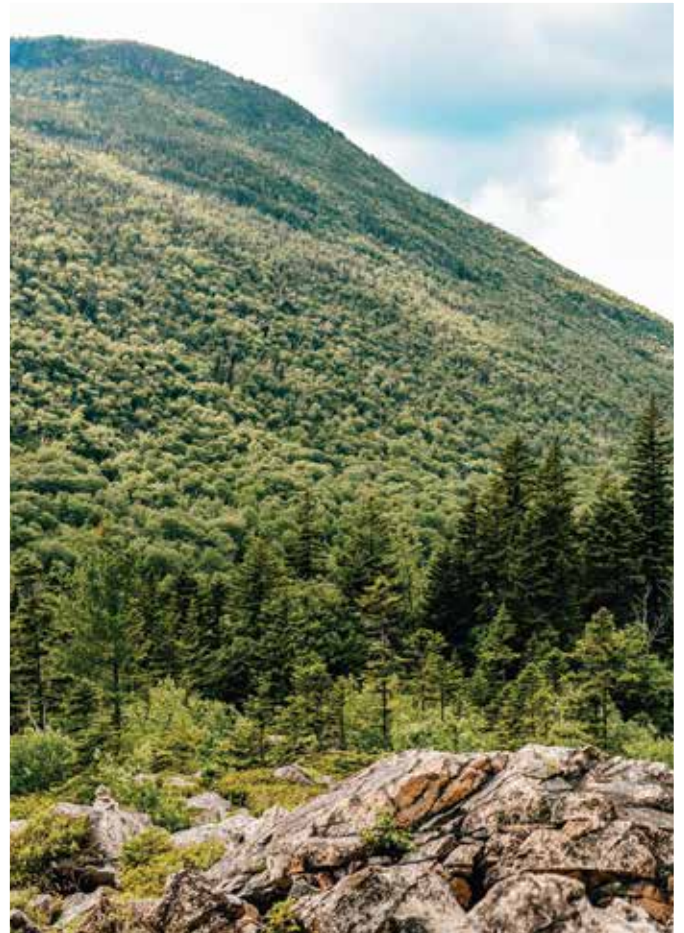
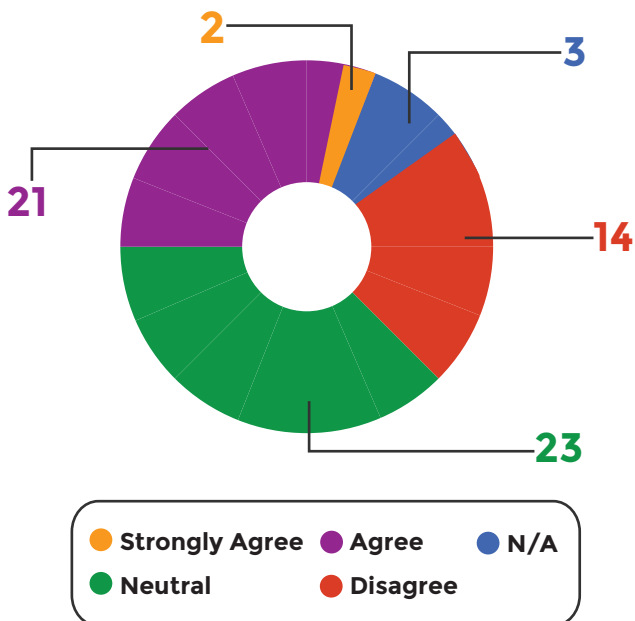
Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements

I have difficulty finding/reaching applicants

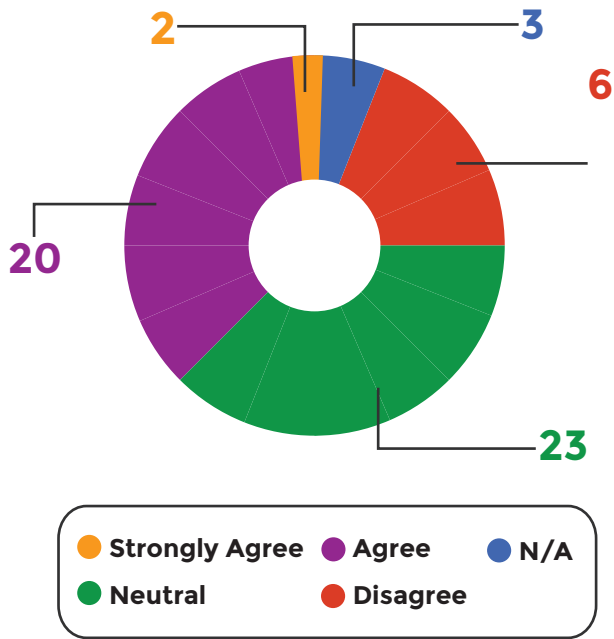


Applicants don't have necessary basic skills (locating information, reading for information, writing, arithmetic)

Applicants don't have necessary hard skills (technical and know-how skills)



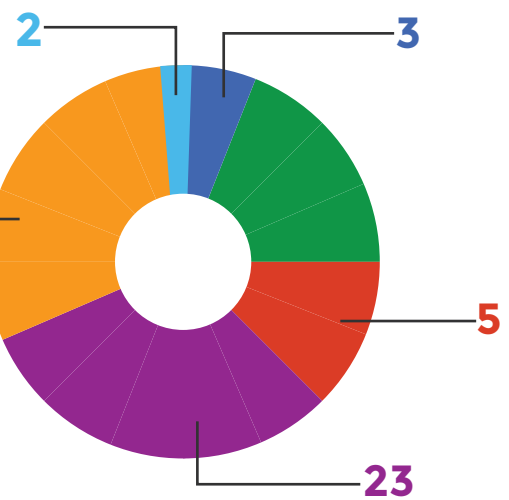
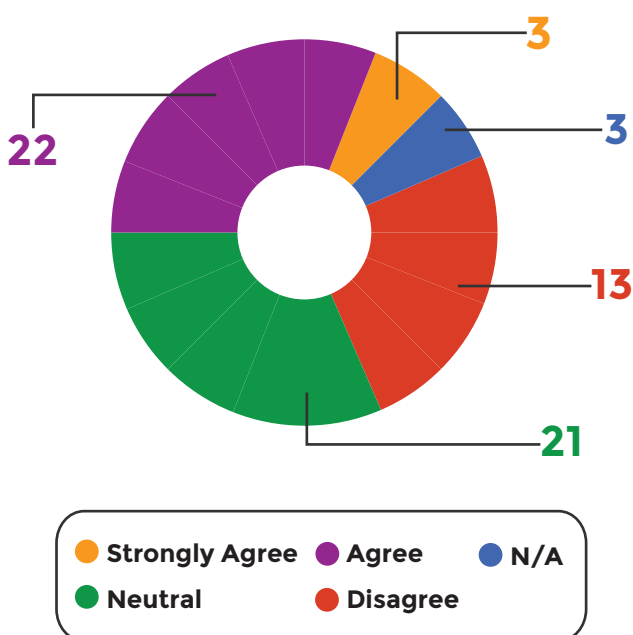
Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements



Applicants don't have necessary soft skills (skills associated with an individual's habits or associated with an individual's habits or interpersonal skills)

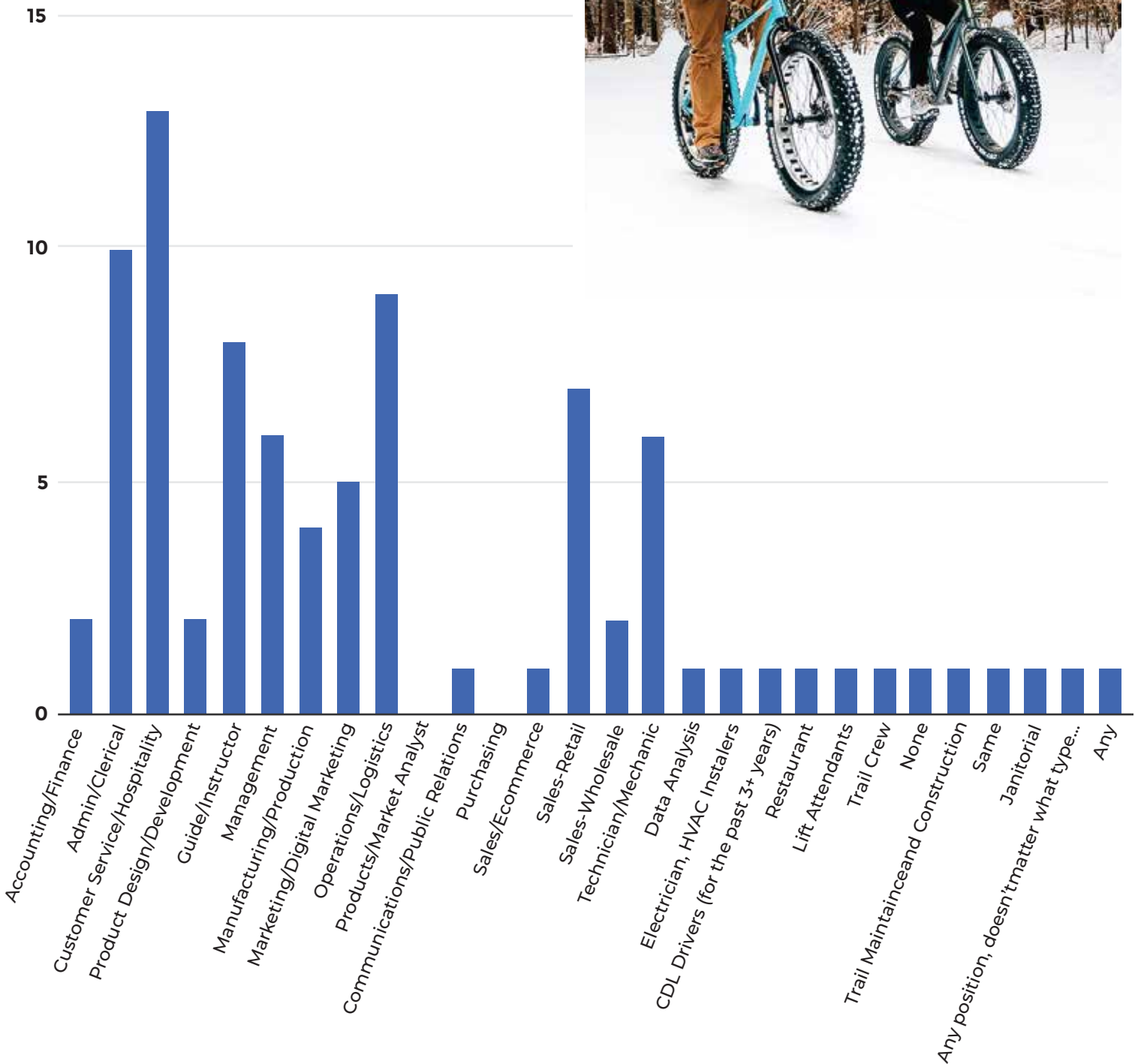


Applicants don't have necessary experience

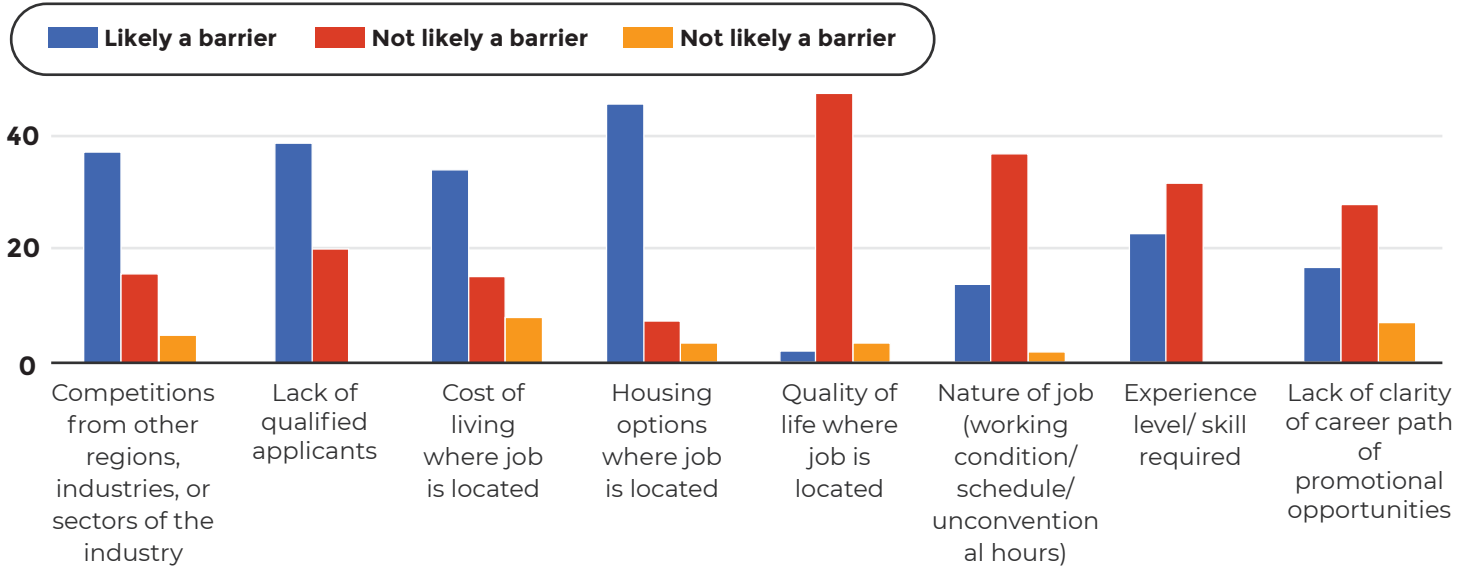


I have difficulty getting an applicant pool that is as diversified as I want

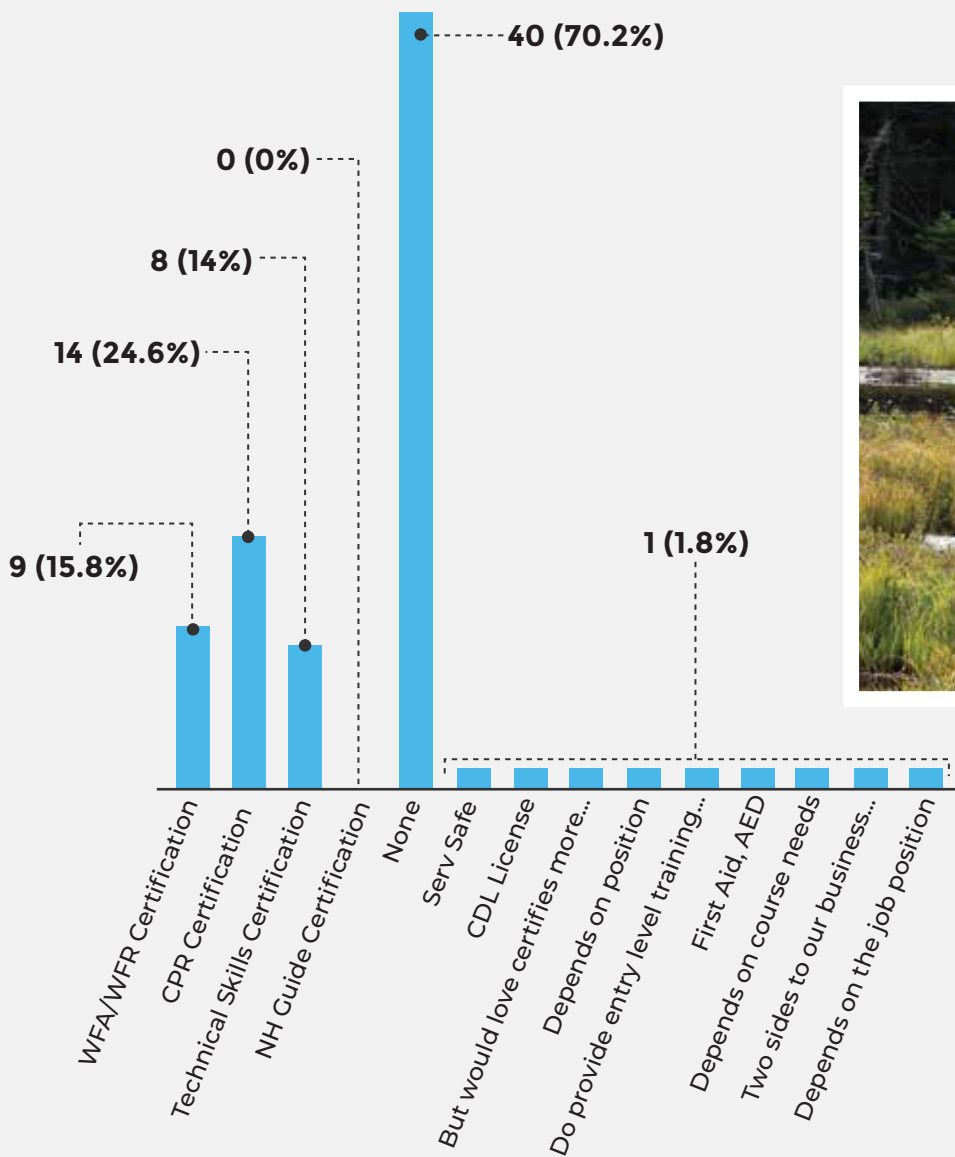
Of the positions above, which position do you traditionally have difficulty filling?



Which of the following do you think will be likely barriers for recruiting for your organization's hard-to-fill jobs?

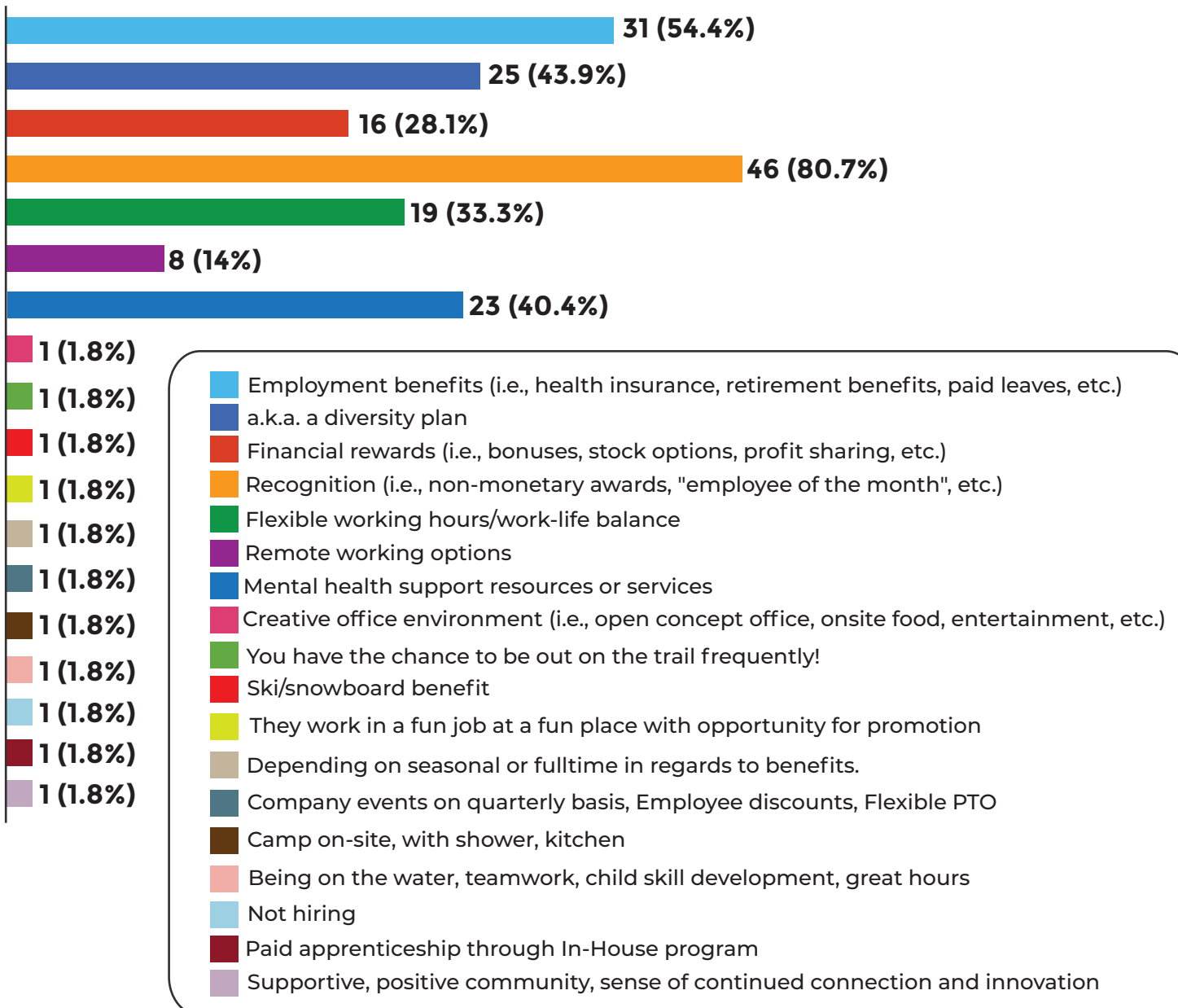


What certification do you require for the jobs you hire for | 57 responses



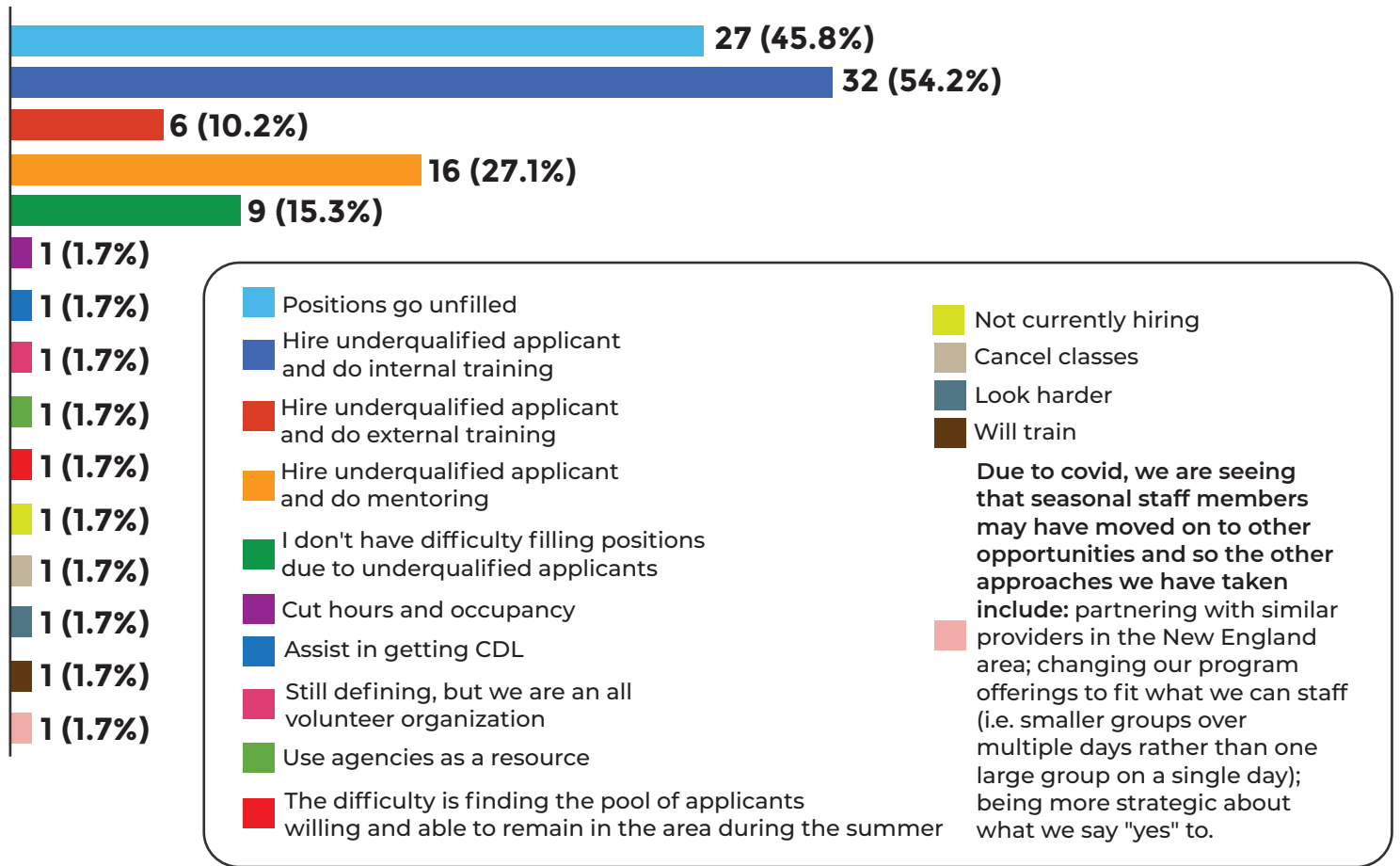


What types of employee attraction and retention strategies does your organization support currently? select all that apply | 57 responses

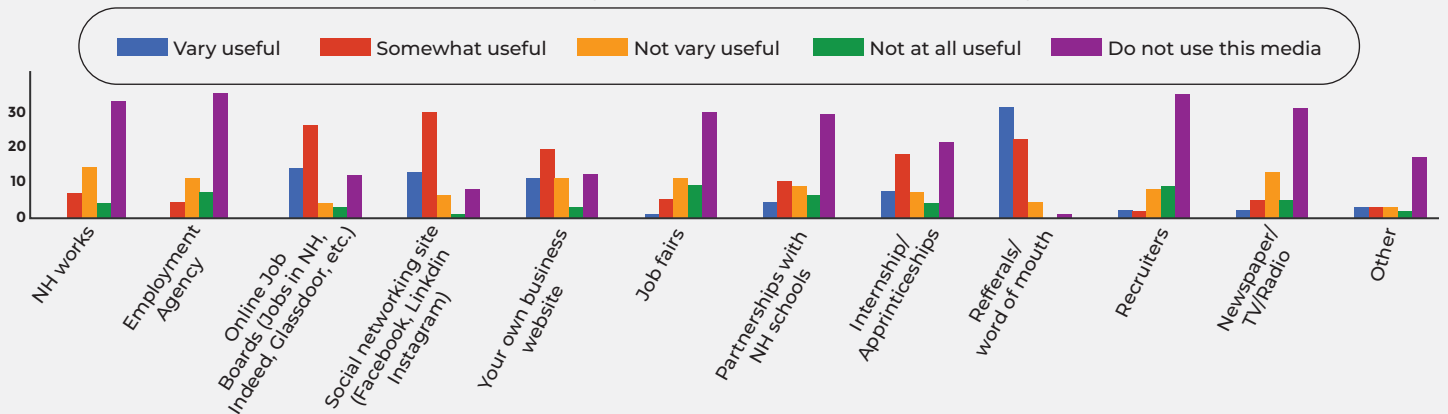


When you have difficulty filling positions due to underqualified applicants, how does your organization address this difficulty?

(Please check all that apply) | 59 responses

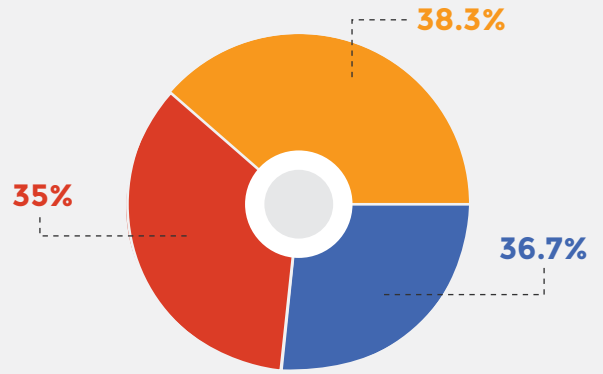
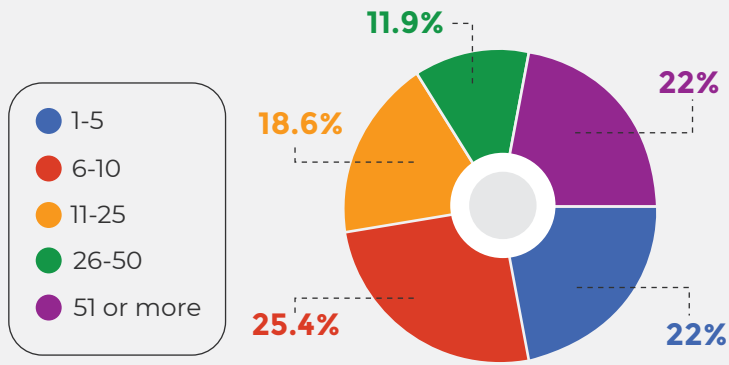


How useful are the following methods of recruiting



How many people are employed by your business or organization during your busiest time of year? Please include all employees (full-time, part-time, temporary, seasonal, etc.) at all locations in NH

59 responses



- Yes, the total number of employees increased
- Yes, the total number of employees decreased
- No Change

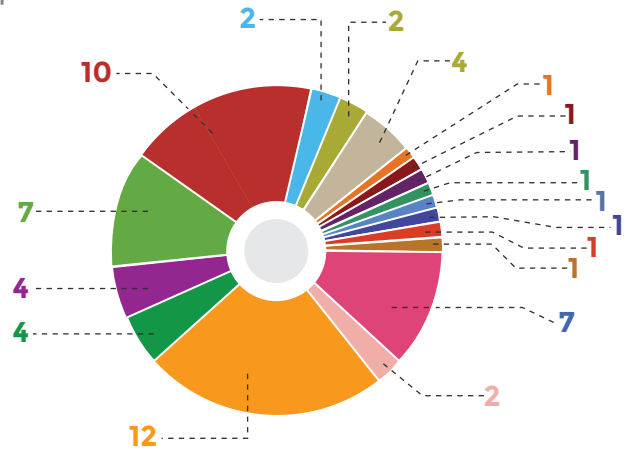
Did your total number of employees change due to the pandemic?

60 responses



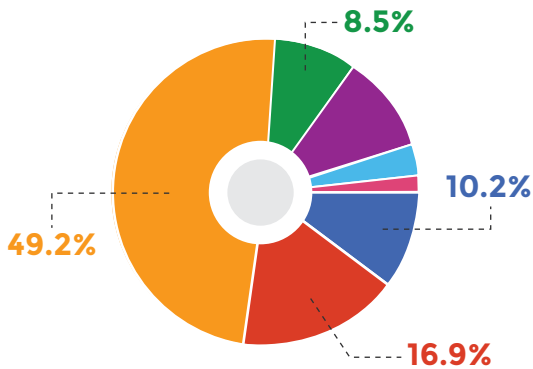
Please choose the industry that describes your business or organization from the list below |

60 responses



To the best of your knowledge, which age range best describes the typical new hire at your business or organization |

59 responses

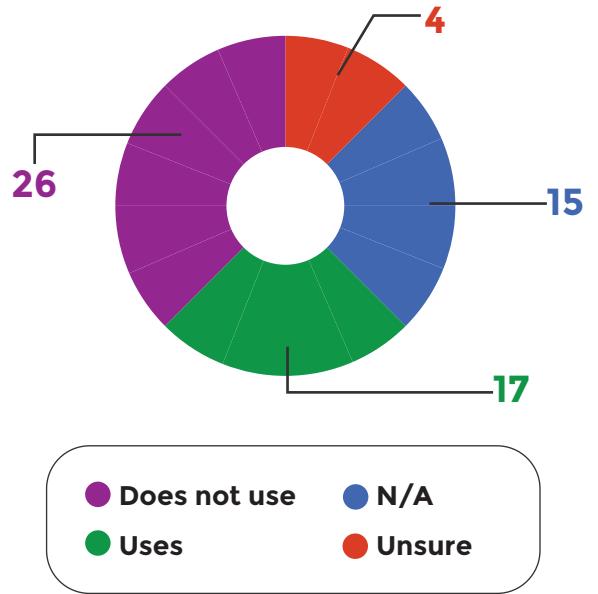
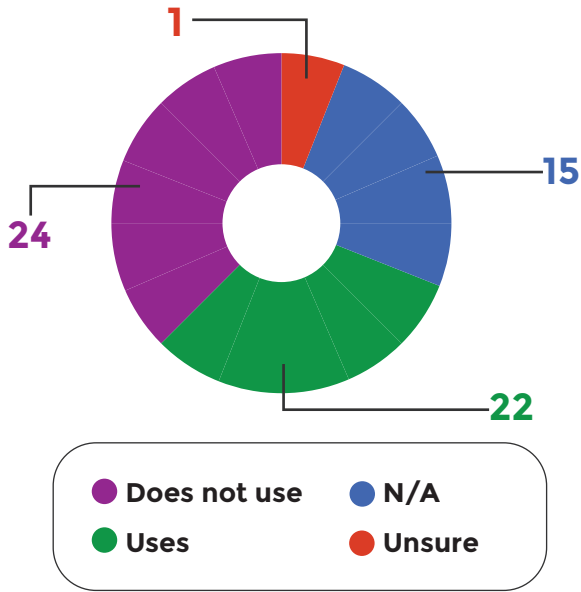


- 16-19 years old
- 20-24 years old
- 25-34 years old
- 35-44 years old
- 45-54 years old
- 55-64 years old
- 65 years or older

- Manufacturing
- Professional and business services
- Educational services
- Renewable Energy - Solar
- Mountain Guiding
- Retail trade
- Arts, entertainment, and recreation
- Health Care
- Non-profit
- Manufacturing & Retail
- N/A
- Government, Conservation, and Stewardship
- Wholesale trade
- Accommodation and food services
- Agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting
- Recreation (lodge and visitor centers), education (guiding), conservation (trails & recreation mgmt.)
- Conservation and stewardship
- We serve university and youth student populations as well as corporate and professional clients

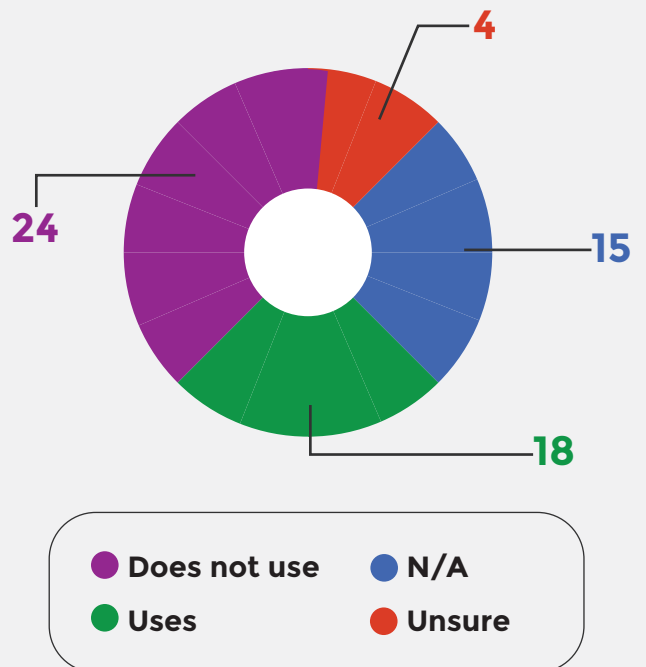
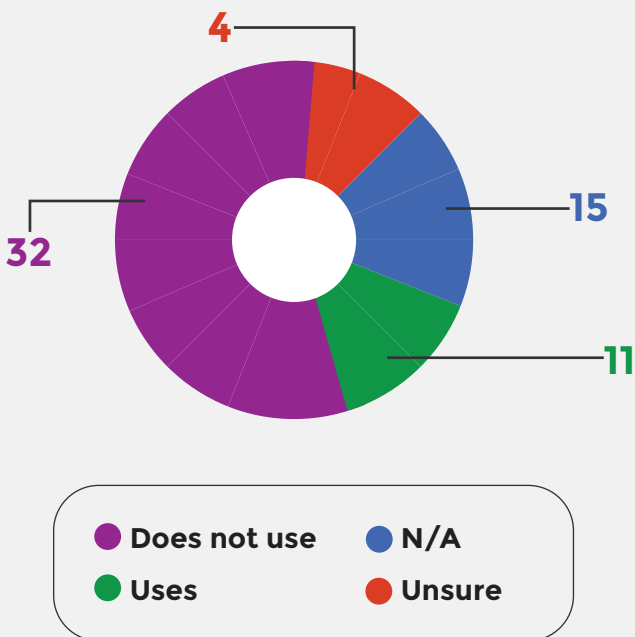
Which of the following strategies does your organization currently use to train or help employees develop competency in diversity, equity, and inclusion?

Diversity, equity and inclusion concepts are integrated in employee orientation and training curriculum



Diversity, equity and inclusion expectations are integrated in guidance for supervision

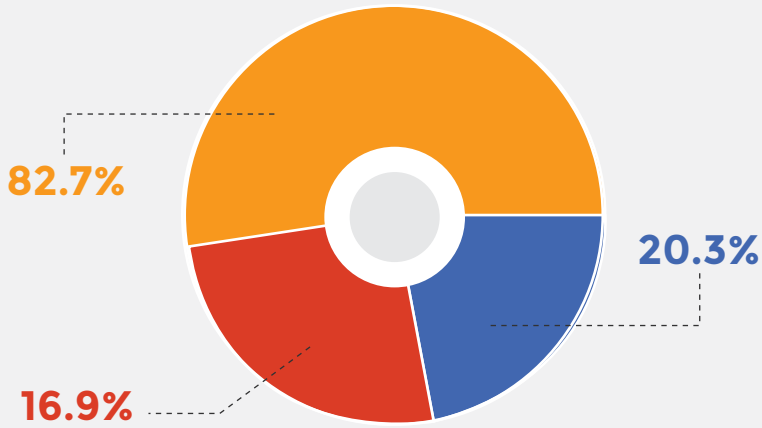
Diversity, equity and inclusion expectations are outlined in position descriptions and evaluated during employee review and promotion



Employees who model learning or excellence in cultural competence are acknowledged or encouraged

Does your organization currently have a plan for hiring and retaining employees of diverse backgrounds and identities (a.k.a a diversity plan)?

59 responses

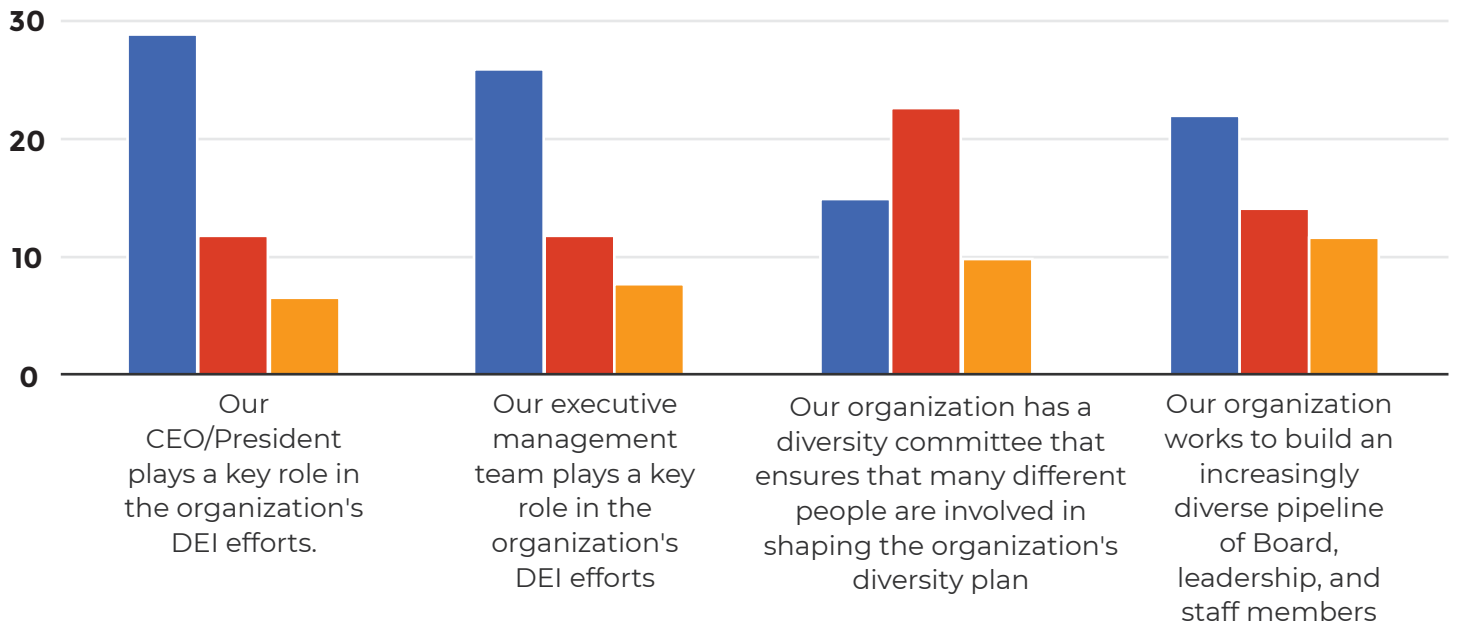


- Yes, we have a diversity plan in place
- We do not currently but we are in the process of building our plan
- No, we do not currently have a plan in place

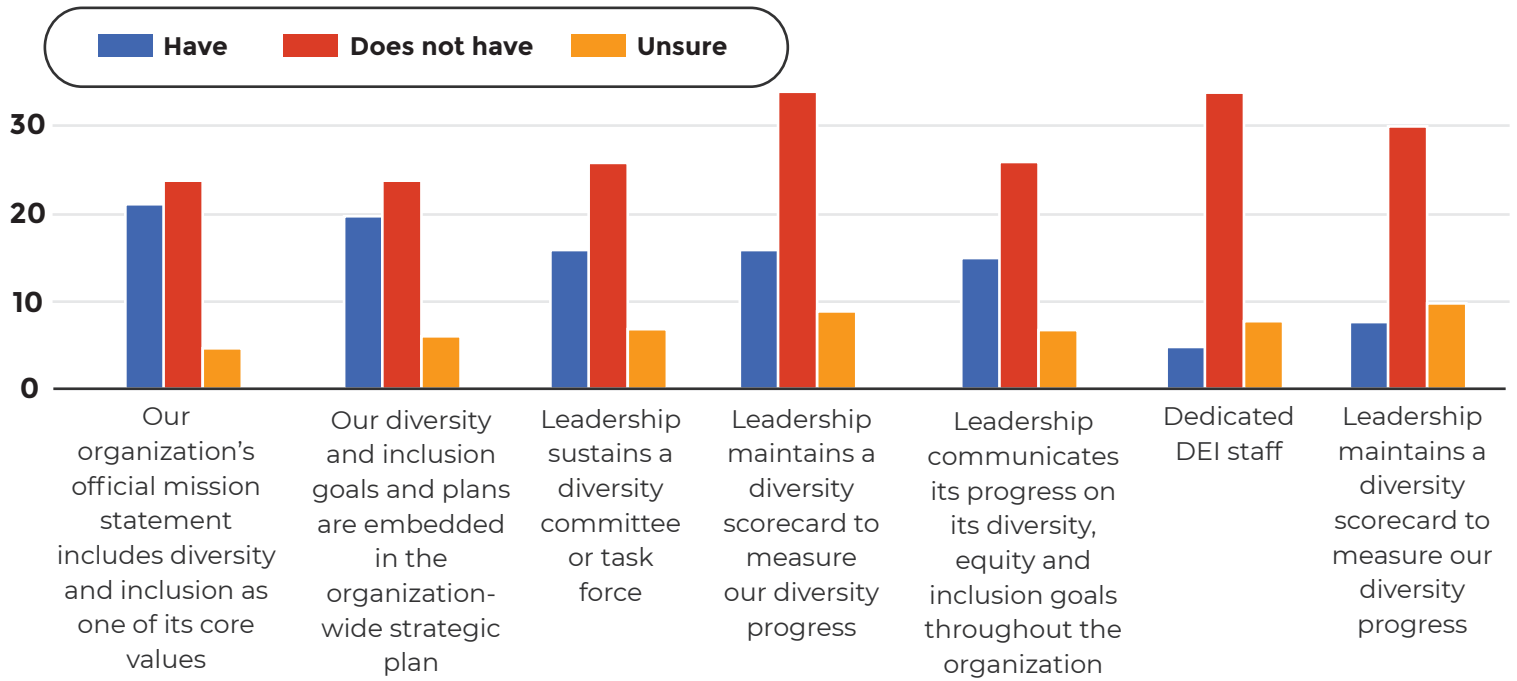


Which of the following procedures are practiced in your organization as it relates to DEI strategies at the leadership and organizational level?

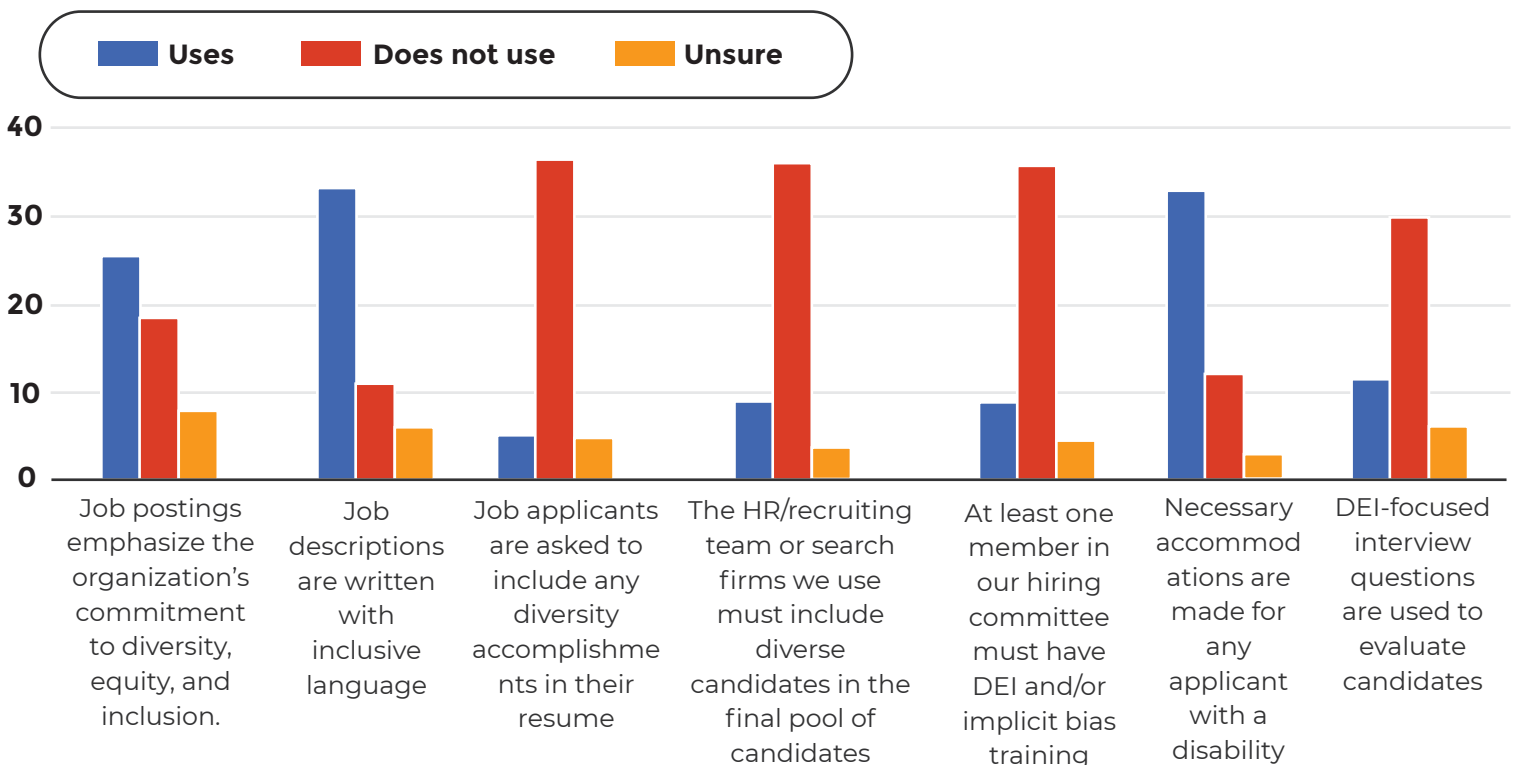
■ Is practiced ■ Is not practiced ■ Unsure



Which of the following strategies does your organization currently have to ensure diversity planning and accountability?

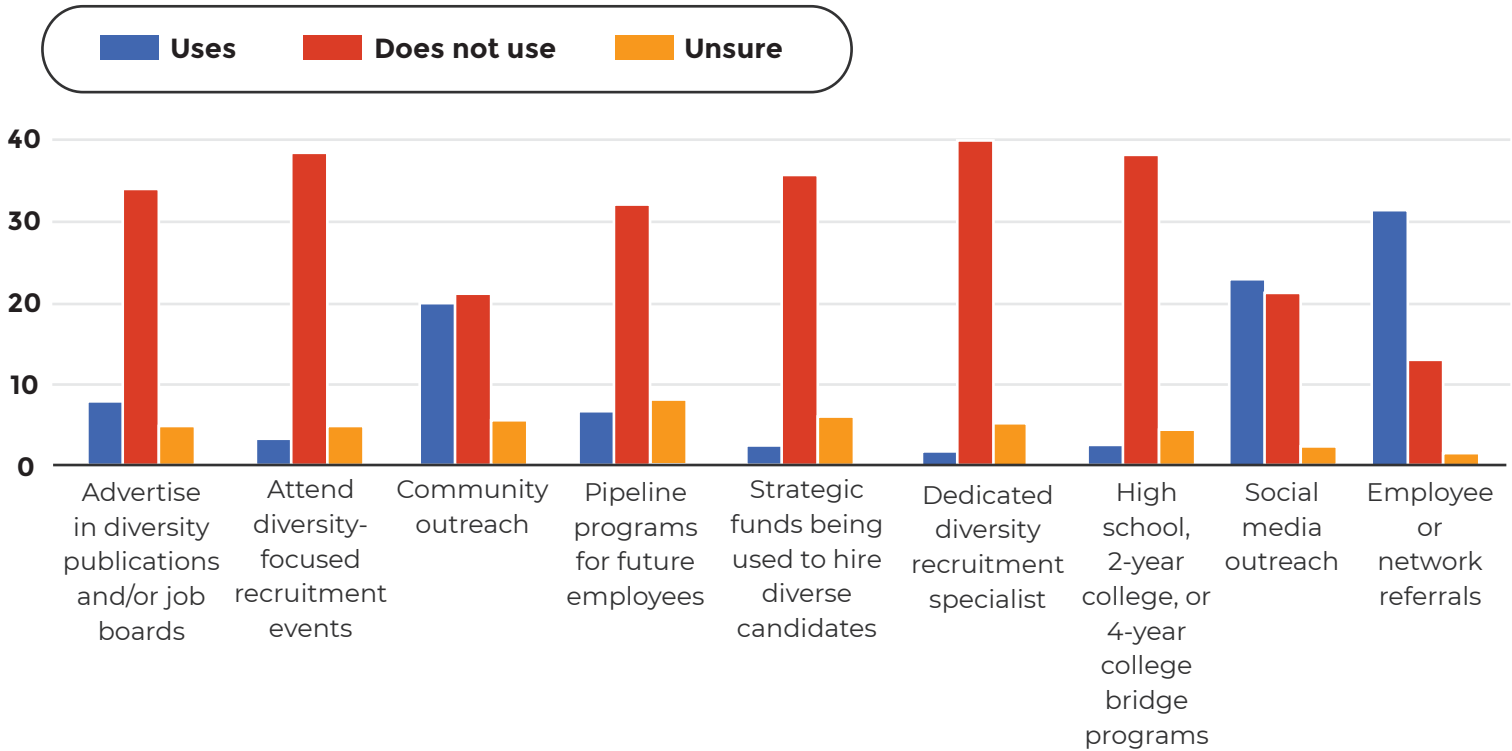


Which of the following strategies does your organization currently use in its hiring practices?

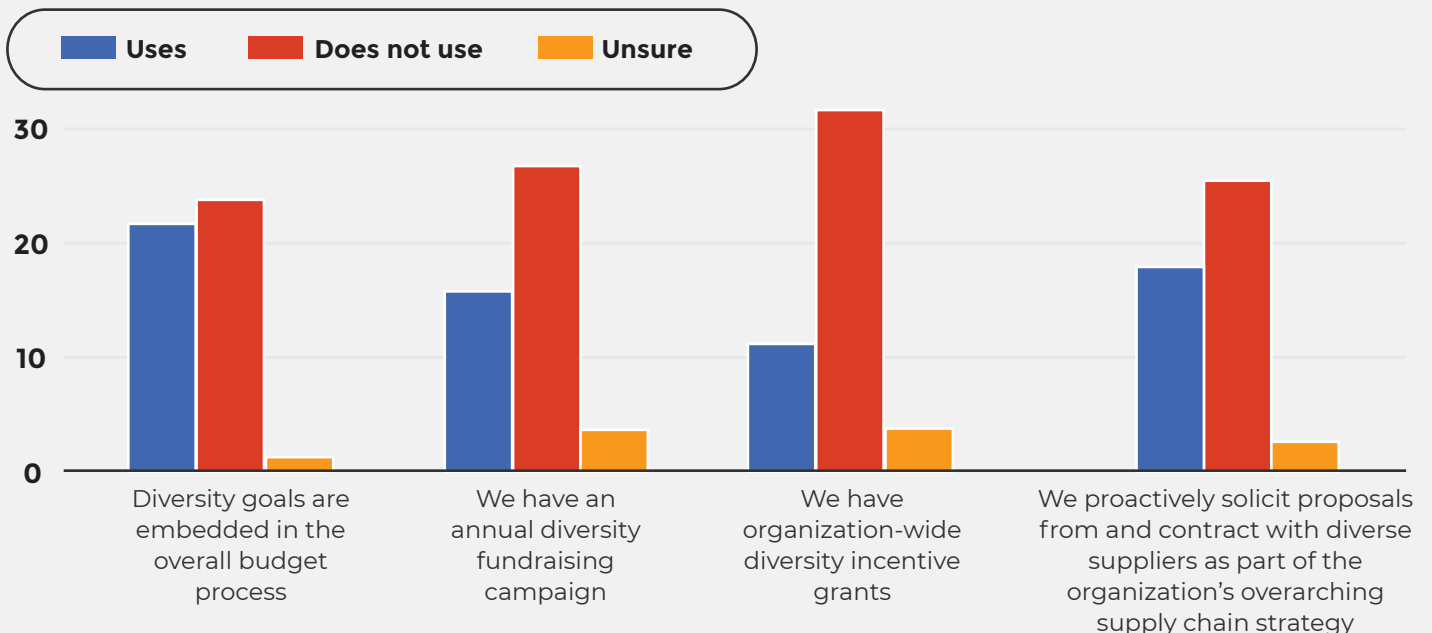




Which of the following strategies does your organization currently use to recruit historically underrepresented employees?



Which of the following procedures are practiced in your organization as it relates to DEI strategies at the leadership and organizational level?



Which of the following diversity-focused financial strategies currently exist in your organization?



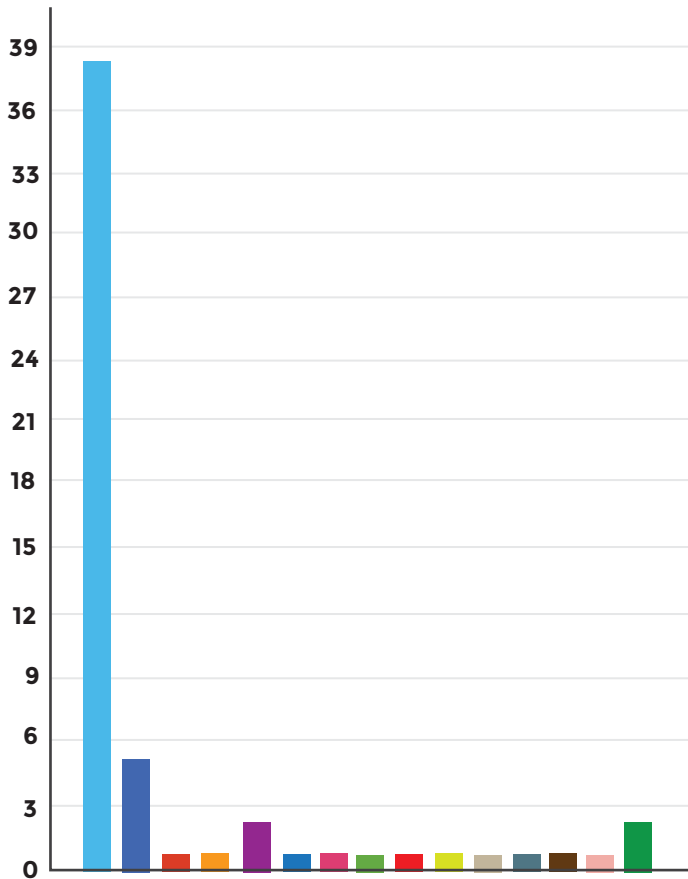
What are the highest valued skill sets in demand in your business?

54 responses

- Technical expertise
- Communication
- My organization looks at mission alignment. We are a renewable energy company that is an employee owned B corp; people and planet are top priorities
 - Customer Service, Reliability, Technical Guiding Skills
- reliability, presentability
- Certified Guides
 - Ability to operate autonomously, soft/interpersonal skills, medical and rescue skills/experience, technical skills
- Attendance
- Hire for Heart. We look to hire for attitude and train for aptitude.
- Honesty
- Physical Therapy
- A commitment to serve others
 - Positive attitude and team player
 - Fabric cutter and stitchers
- Communication & writing skills; ability to be flexible, adaptable, and work on a variety of very different topics and with a variety of different people
- People skills, thinking ahead
- Customer Service and Maintenance
- Ability / License to drive CDL required vehicle
- Communication, team player, willingness to go above and beyond
- Trail maintenance skills
- Finance
- Soft skills, customer & public service orientation, technical skills (trails, outdoor ed), team oriented and mission driven
- Experience with Industrial Sewing Machine
- Customer service, sales, professionalism
- Interpersonal relations
- Personal Outdoor Experience and the interpersonal skills to create a warm and welcoming environment
 - for beg trips
- Ability to sail and teach sailing, ability to kayak and SUP and teach those skills
- We are looking to cultivate highly skilled facilitators, those who
 - understand team dynamics and can work well with a variety of client populations.
- Dependability
- Construction labor, skilled builder
- Experience/certifications in the outdoor industry AND working at the college level

- String work ethic
- It depends on the role, but we need a lot of housekeepers, and they're hard to find
- Extrovert
- Customer Service
- Ability to do what is needed and be flexible
- Customer Service, positive attitude
- Communication
 - Dependability, Cooking
- Commitment to working, showing up
- Building relationships with customers and co-workers
 - Teamwork, working autonomously, sales
- Desire to work
- No trouble finding qualified office and exec positions. So I'll answer to the manufacturing side. We value a strong work ethic and sense of urgency above all. In this current landscape, we have found great difficulty finding employees to fill manufacturing positions, period. Similar to what has been happening in the hospitality industry
- Good work ethic
- Customer service
- Product Development and
- Marketing
- Combination of great customer service skills and technical skills
- Accounting knowledge, efficiency, organization, diverse experience
- Superior guest service
 - Ability to work regular hours
- Writing, relationship-building
- Trail designers
- Detail-oriented

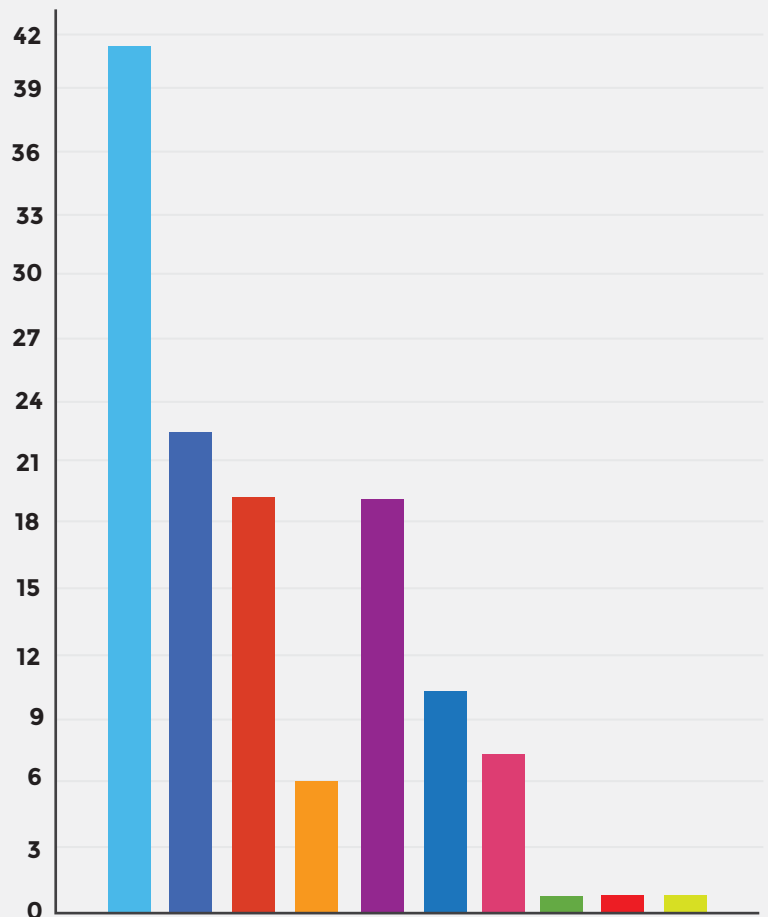
What certifications do you require for the jobs you hire for?



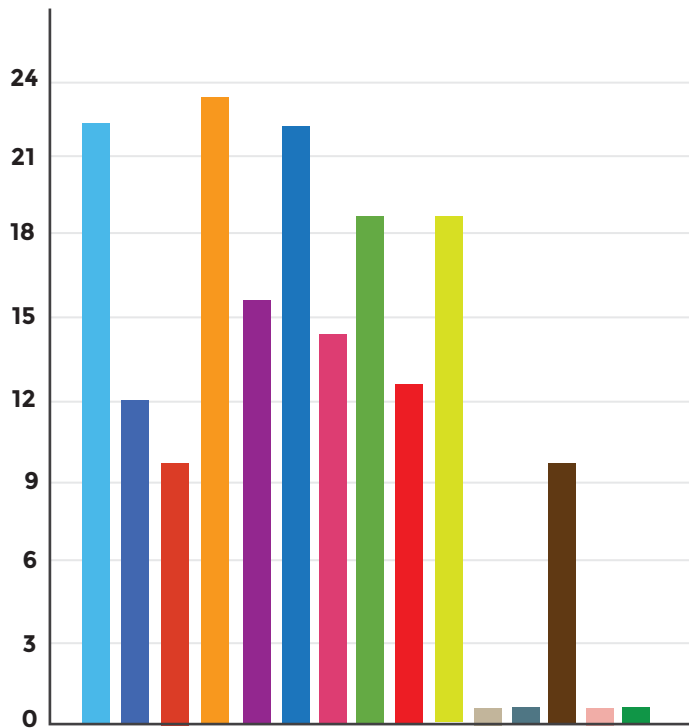
- None
- WFA/ WFR Certification, CPR Certification, Technical Skills Certification
- None, But would love certifies mechanics
- CPR Certification, None
- WFA/ WFR Certification, CPR Certification
- CPR Certification, None, Depends on position.
- CDL License
- Depends on the job position
- WFA/ WFR Certification, CPR Certification, Technical Skills Certification, do provide entry level training and certifications for those who don't have
- CPR Certification, Technical Skills Certification, First Aid, AED
- CPR Certification, Technical Skills Certification
- WFA/ WFR Certification, Depends on course needs
- Two sides to our business. We do all manufacturing in-house, so it varies greatly between executive positions and production, for example
- Serv Safe
- CPR Certification

What types of employee professional development does your organization support currently? Select all that apply

- New Employee training
- Reimbursement for external trainings, professional/continuing education, and travel expenses
- Internship/apprenticeship programs
- College tuition reimbursement
- Internal management/leadership trainings
- Mentorship programs
- We do not contribute to employee professional development at this time
- Discounted WFA course
- Some onboarding for adjuncts regarding UNH course management and administrative systems
- Webinars, conferences



Which of the following types of professional development do you believe could benefit your organization? Select all that apply



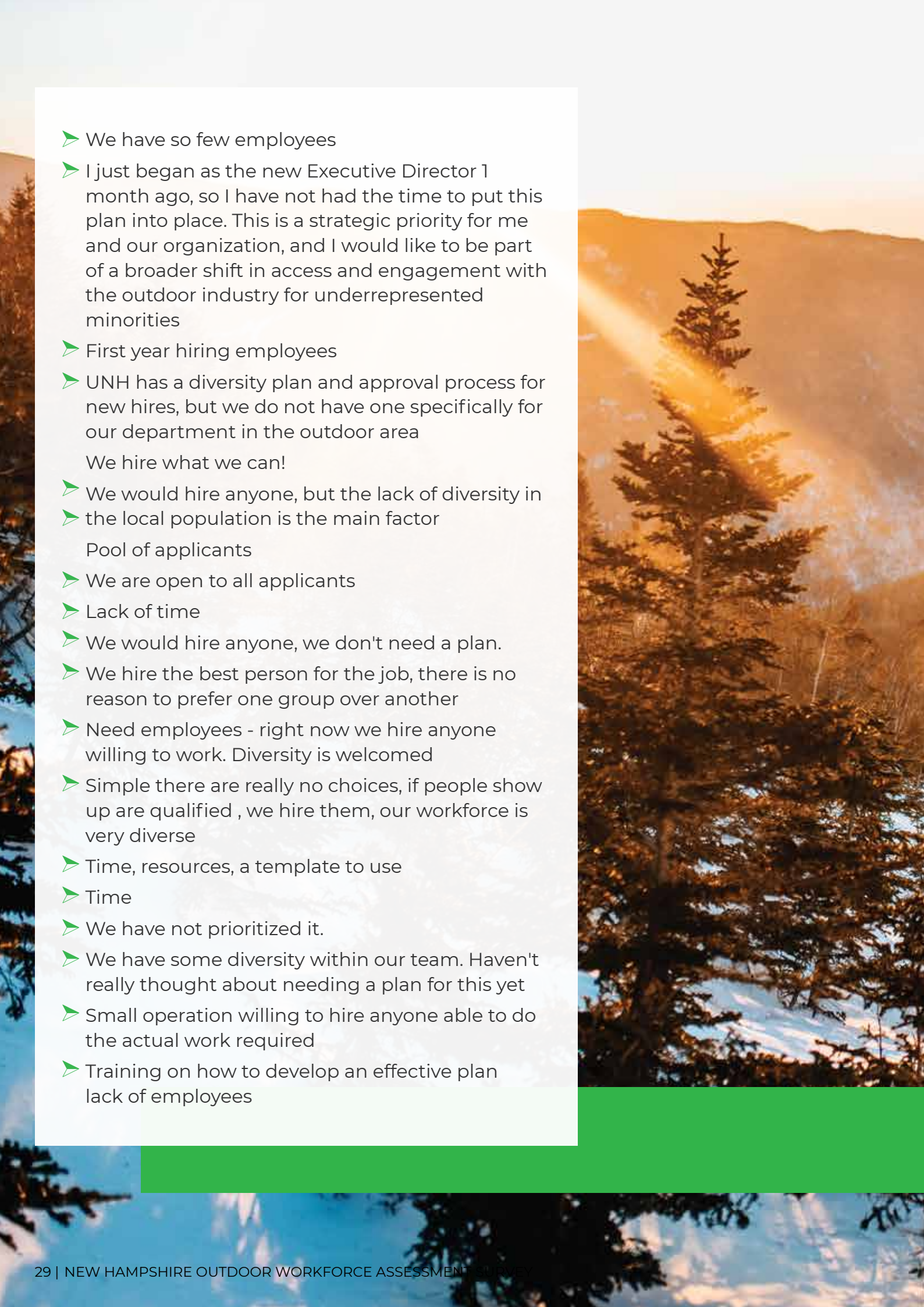
- Access to industry-specific train-the-trainer programming
- Replicable apprenticeship programs
- Increased programming at the technical/trade school level
- Collaboration with other industries seeking similar competencies
- Industry-created professional education for employers
- Increased marketing of careers in your industry
- Industry career center/network
- Support initiatives in K-12 schools
- Increased programming at higher education institutions (bachelor's and master's degree specific to industry)
- Creation and/or expansion of hiring pipelines for underrepresented communities
- Not applicable
- Our facility has unique needs and are very job specific, lots of pre program training occurs coupled with experience
- Industry-created professional education for employers
- Low cost housing options
- None of the above





If you do not currently have a diversity plan in place, what is preventing you from implementing one? What resources could help you create one?

- No need
- Not sure we need one.
- Trade group resources would be helpful, otherwise developing a plan feels complex/overwhelming
- We hire independent contractors and are happy to hire any and all qualified individuals
- For a small business some of these tasks feel enormous and hard to know where to even start.
- Limited staff size and other growth priorities.
- One of main goals is to be diverse, but we don't have a written plan
- All volunteers from the local bike club
- We currently hire based on the candidates qualifications. We are relatively small in terms of employees but are open to hiring all qualified candidates regardless of their background.
- have not had need
- The fact that we are a tiny organization and I don't hire on a regular basis.
- Small pool, Small business and small area. lack of interest in the area
- We have created a diversity team but no plan is currently in place.
- Startup company, only 1 employee so far. I (founder) am also a POC so will definitely be implementing a diversity search once we are able to go beyond our bootstrapped phase.
- Navigating the pandemic, limited bandwidth for strategic priorities in the face of operating season challenges, staff capacity and turnover.

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- We have so few employees
 - I just began as the new Executive Director 1 month ago, so I have not had the time to put this plan into place. This is a strategic priority for me and our organization, and I would like to be part of a broader shift in access and engagement with the outdoor industry for underrepresented minorities
 - First year hiring employees
 - UNH has a diversity plan and approval process for new hires, but we do not have one specifically for our department in the outdoor area
We hire what we can!
 - We would hire anyone, but the lack of diversity in
 - the local population is the main factor
Pool of applicants
 - We are open to all applicants
 - Lack of time
 - We would hire anyone, we don't need a plan.
 - We hire the best person for the job, there is no reason to prefer one group over another
 - Need employees - right now we hire anyone willing to work. Diversity is welcomed
 - Simple there are really no choices, if people show up are qualified , we hire them, our workforce is very diverse
 - Time, resources, a template to use
 - Time
 - We have not prioritized it.
 - We have some diversity within our team. Haven't really thought about needing a plan for this yet
 - Small operation willing to hire anyone able to do the actual work required
 - Training on how to develop an effective plan
lack of employees