Far West NSW Workforce Development Report

Regional Development Australia

FAR WEST NSW

2022

This report has been developed to provide the evidence that enables strong planning, industry growth and a sustainable and prosperous region. RDA Far West offer our sincere appreciation to the regions employers that took the time to complete the survey and inform this report.

1.0 Executive Summary

The number of occupations suffering skills shortages in Australia has nearly doubled in the past year according to the National Skills Commission's (NSC) 2022 Skills Priority list. The Skills Priority list shows that 286 assessed occupations were in national shortage, compared to 153 occupations in 2021.

This is a staggering increase, highlighting the urgent need to respond to the biggest skills and labour shortage in decades, which is compounding economic challenges.

The demand for workers has grown with the number of jobs advertised nationally reaching 309,900 in August 2022 – a 42 per cent increase from the same time last year with employers struggling to fill vacancies.

Skill shortages across Far West NSW mirror the national issues with 64 percent of responding employers reporting they have advertised a position in the past 12 months they were unable to fill.

The Far West Workforce Development Survey highlights skill shortages across every industry sector and whilst access to skilled labour presents significant challenges, businesses also report issues with training and professional development opportunities, housing shortages, physical and digital connectivity, liveability and access to health professionals as barriers to growth and sustainability.

Access to off the job training for apprentices is a point of frustration for many employers and presents as a barrier for both employers and apprentices.

Connectivity, both physical and digital are reported as substantial barriers to attracting and retaining the skilled workforce required to meet the current and emerging needs with employers raising their concerns about poor quality internet and telecommunication services as barriers to growth and meeting the safety needs of their businesses.

The region's employers have reported their willingness to create career pathways to support the aspirations of young people but also report a lack of applicants when they do create the pathways.

The region's skill shortages are very real, and the impacts of labour shortages are not sustainable as a region.

This report outlines the survey responses of more than 150 regional businesses, highlights the changes between the 2016, 2019 and 2022 survey and highlights potential opportunities to address some of the barriers.

Regional Development Australia Far West look forward to working with all stakeholders to develop and support strategies that enable regional growth, develop and nurture the aspirations of our young people and support meaningful career pathways that encourage and cultivate economic growth.

2.0 Table of Contents

We're in the middle of a work revolution. Globalisation and the rise of artificial intelligence, paired with a new generation of consumers who desire more personal, intuitive brand experiences, are forcing companies to rethink their approach to talent management and acquisition. Workers with capabilities that allow them to keep up with this pace of change — such as adaptability, technological literacy, and people-management — are now in steep demand. But today's employers are struggling to keep them on board.

Promises of cushy perks and pay are often used to compete for top talent. Still, when you consider the cost of employee turnover — $600 billion in 2018 and $680 billion in 2020 — this extravagance seems counterintuitive. A Work Institute report predicted that one in four workers would leave their jobs in 2018. Nearly one-third of that turnover was attributed to unsupportive management and a lack of development opportunities.

The most obvious solution to upping employee retention, then, is creating more effective training and development programs. However, we hear from business leaders every day who struggle to achieve their goals despite having elaborate programs in place. The main issue here is that many of these programs aren't designed with the user, or the employee, in mind.

- Harvard business review

3.0 background

The first Far West NSW Workforce Development Study was conducted in 2016, anecdotal evidence and the community narrative indicated growing issues around attracting and retaining staff, a misalignment with education and training opportunities and pathways and a growing need to better understand if the narrative had substance, and if so, what were the real experiences from an employer's perspective.

Regional Development Australia Far West (RDA Far West) developed a comprehensive online survey, trialled the survey with a number of community organisations and government representatives to ensure its suitability, structure and intent, and encouraged all employers in the region to undertake the survey and provide input from their experiences across a number of areas including growth aspirations, education and training opportunities and alignment, attraction and retention of staff, impacts, opportunities and barriers. The survey also sought to collect the employer's perspective in a number of areas to support work readiness programs in local schools, including job readiness, resume satisfaction, advice from employers and generic employability skills.

As a direct outcome of the 2016 survey RDA Far West worked with a number of government departments and community and regional organisations to develop strategies to overcome some of the identified issues employers were experiencing. The establishment of Country Universities Centre Far West, the Far West Proud campaign and the establishment of a Training and Employment Coordinator position were direct outcomes from the 2016 survey.

The Board of RDA Far West determined to update the study on a triannual basis to better understand the effectiveness of implemented strategies and the impact of time and rapidly changing circumstances.

In 2019 it was determined to retain the original survey with minor changes to reflect the changing circumstances of the region. Retaining the original survey enabled far greater comparison of the data over the 3 year period to understand if the needs of employers had changed, implemented strategies had achieved their desired outcomes and if the workforce needs of the region had changed over the 3 year period.

The 2019 survey was facilitated by RDA Far West and supported by the NSW Government, Broken Hill City Council, Central Darling Shire Council and Country Universities Centre Far West.

The 2019 survey provided important information about the aspirations of local employers, their confidence in local training providers to meet their needs and the barriers regularly faced by local businesses.

The outcomes of the 2019 study provided the evidence required to develop new strategies, enhance existing strategies and better understand the challenges and opportunities across the region.

Much has changed in the world since the 2019 Study, COVID, border closures and lockdowns impacted almost every aspect of life and significantly impacted the sustainability and opportunities for employers across the globe. Skill and/or labour shortages were reported daily, impacting supply and for the first time in many years the world witnessed shortages of everyday items. Manufacturing struggled to keep pace with demand; transport was impacted and today in 2022 as we learn to live with COVID the impacts are still very visible.

In 2022 it was again determined to retain the bulk of the original survey and again make minor updates and changes to reflect the changing world and the very different circumstances we are living with.

The 2022 Study was supported by Foundation Broken Hill who understood the need to ensure the region continued to develop evidence based strategies to meet growing needs and expectations.

Supporting the growing workforce needs of the Far West NSW region is not the role of one organisation, government department of service provider. Developing, implementing, and monitoring strategies that make a real difference and support the needs of the region is a role for the region and will only be successful with the collaboration and shared vision of all stakeholders.

What is clear is the need for far greater collaboration, leadership, support and a shared and well communicated vision, supporting the needs of the region is beyond ego, ownership and working in isolation.

If the region is to reach its potential and capitalise on the current and emerging opportunities a collaborative approach is required. Strategies need to be discussed, developed and monitored and any strategies must be developed as part of a holistic approach to sustainable growth.

Alone, we can do so little; together we can do so much – Helen Keller

The optimism across the region is buoyant, rain has changed the landscape and enhanced confidence and major events including the Mundi Mundi Bash has created real opportunities across almost every industry sector.

The real estate market is strong, vacant shops are rapidly filling and the positivity across the region is contagious, however, the challenges many businesses face in recruitment and retention continue to grow, a shortage of quality housing is reported regularly, many are still not happy with training and development opportunities and both physical and digital connectivity must be enhanced.

Whilst the temptation of meeting individual workforce needs by employing a remote workforce is attractive and may address immediate needs it won't support sustainable growth over the long term, and it appears the majority of employers have resisted the temptation – hopefully with the bigger picture in mind.

4.0 Study Area

The geographical area of this study focuses on Far West NSW. The region consists of two local Government Areas, Broken Hill City and Central Darling Shire and Unincorporated Area of NSW and covers approx. 146,000 km2
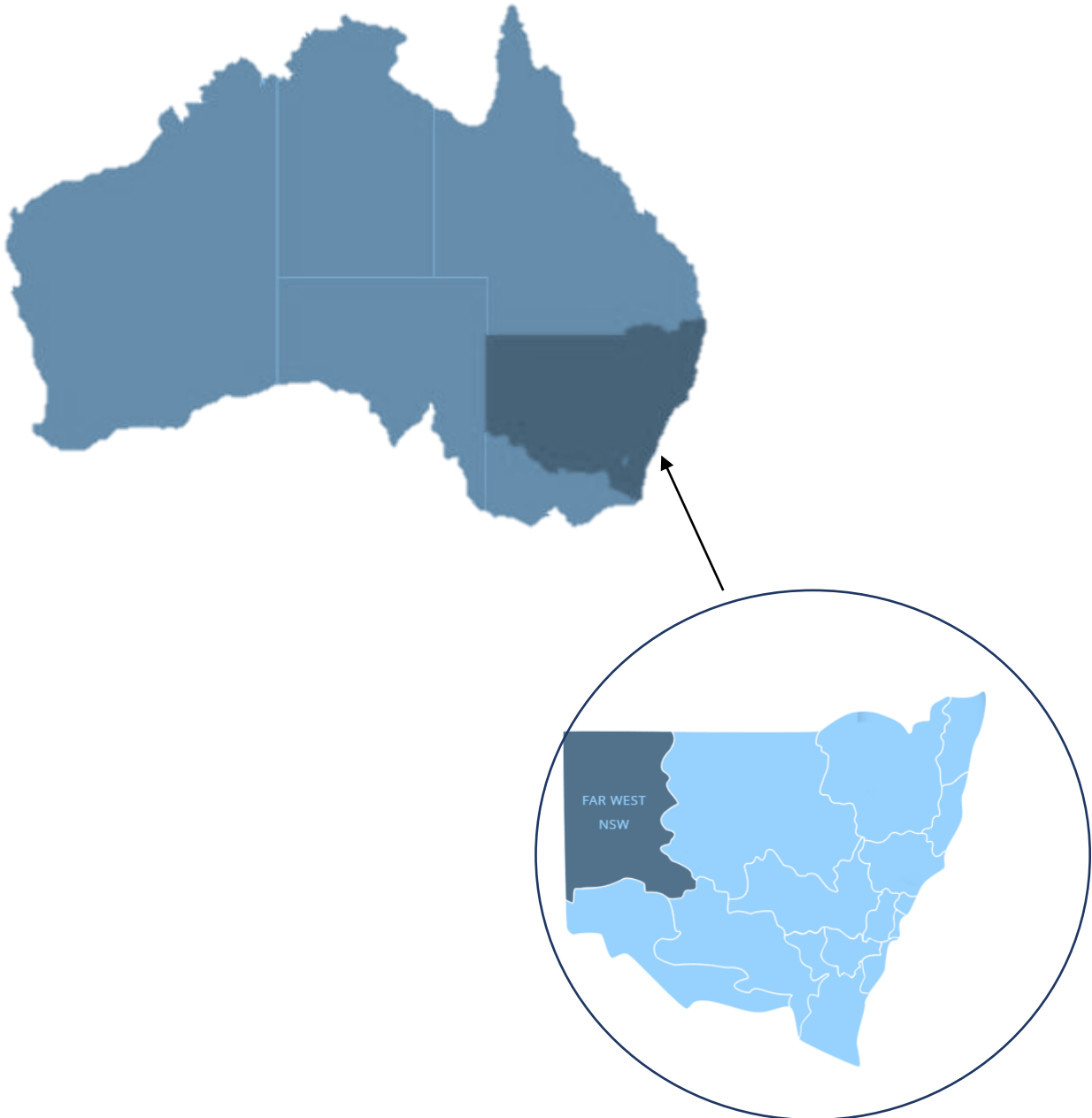
5.0 Methodology

This study retained the basis of the survey utilised in 2016 and 2019 to enable a comparison of data over the three study periods.

The original survey was developed in consultation and trialled with a number of NSW RDAs, industry sectors and government departments to ensure its suitability in both content and structure.

In 2022 a number of additional questions were included to capture supplementary information critical to the holistic growth of the region and to enable all stakeholders to better understand the needs and expectations of employers in the region.

The survey was comprehensively promoted across the region's media, and individual invitations to complete the survey were forwarded to over 530 businesses across the region.

More than 150 regional business contributed to the survey with a completion rate of over 90 percent providing an in depth understanding of their experiences. The survey results represent approx. 4427 full time equivalent positions across the Far West NSW region, representing just over 52 percent of all employed people in the region.

Note: Some of the questions asked in the survey offered respondents the opportunity to choose more than one response, as such percentages in the graphs may total more than 100% as respondents identified with several responses.

Australian and international research shows that turnover costs a business anywhere from 100% (for blue-collar workers) to 200% (white-collar workers) of the annual salary of the position.

Gartner HR survey shows 24 % of Australian employees are actively seeking other employment.

Work-life balance, manager quality and respect are the top three reason Australian workers cite for leaving their organisation.

9.5 percent of the Australian workforce changed their employer or the business they operated in the year to February 2022 – the highest annual rate since 2012 – up from 7.5 percent in February 2021

- ABS 2022

During the year ending February 2022 the annual retrenchment rate in Australia was 1.5%, which was the lowest annual rate on record since 1974.

Only about 11% of employed people had been in their current job for 20 years or more.

-ABS 2022

6.0   Profile of the Far West NSW Region

$1.5 billion

GROSS REGIONAL PRODUCT

(2019-2020)

UNEMPLOYMENT
5.1%
(JUNE 2021)

JOBS
8,508
(2020)

BUSINESS
1,297
(2016)

NON-RESIDENTIAL BUILDING APPROVALS
$63,024.4
$MILLION

Major Industries

Industry	Value	Jobs
MINING	$357.7m	956 JOBS
HEALTH CARE & SOCIAL ASSISTANCE	$142.5m	1,640 JOBS
PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION & SAFETY	$81.7m	739 JOBS
AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY & FISHING	$80.6m	607 JOBS
CONSTRUCTION	$77.4m	551 JOBS
ELECTRICITY, GAS, WATER & WASTE SERV	$71.2m	105 JOBS

The region at a glance

POPULATION	INDIGENOUS POPULATION	AVERAGE AGE	AVG HOUSEHOLD INCOME	PERSONS BORN OVERSEAS
20,441	**13.2%** % OF POPULATION	**42.6** YEARS	**$83,658** (Oct 2022)	**5.5 %**

The Region

Broken Hill   Central Darling   Unincorporated

BROKEN HILL		CENTRAL DARLING SHIRE		UNINCORPORATED FAR WEST NSW	
POPULATION		**POPULATION**		**POPULATION**	
ESTIMATED RESIDENTIAL POPULATION	17,661	ESTIMATED RESIDENTIAL POPULATION	1,760	ESTIMATED RESIDENTIAL POPULATION	1,020
AVERAGE AGE	43.1	AVERAGE AGE	38.9	AVERAGE AGE	40.9
HOUSEHOLD AND DWELLINGS		HOUSEHOLD AND DWELLINGS		HOUSEHOLD AND DWELLINGS	
AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD SIZE	2	AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD SIZE	2	AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD SIZE	2
AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD INCOME (P/A)	$82,907	AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD INCOME (P/A)	$83,414	AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD INCOME (P/A)	$97,363
EMPLOYMENT		EMPLOYMENT		EMPLOYMENT	
TOTAL EMPLOYMENT (PLACE OF WORK)	7,266	TOTAL EMPLOYMENT (PLACE OF WORK)	680	TOTAL EMPLOYMENT (PLACE OF WORK)	562
AVERAGE WORKER INCOME	$59,264	AVERAGE WORKER INCOME	$59,002	AVERAGE WORKER INCOME	$61,742
UMEMPLOYMENT RATE	4.90%	UMEMPLOYMENT RATE	7.00%	UMEMPLOYMENT RATE	4.00%
NUMBER OF BUSINESSES	956	NUMBER OF BUSINESSES	174	NUMBER OF BUSINESSES	167
TOURISM		TOURISM		TOURISM	
TOTAL VISITORS	220,000	TOTAL VISITORS	140,000	TOTAL VISITORS	25,000
INTERSTATE	45.3%	INTERSTATE	34.1%	INTERSTATE	25.0%
INTERNATIONAL	2.3%	INTERNATIONAL	0.7%	INTERNATIONAL	3.6%
INTRASTATE	37.3%	INTRASTATE	44.0%	INTRASTATE	46.6%
TOP 4 INDUSTRIES BY GRP		TOP 4 INDUSTRIES BY GRP		TOP 4 INDUSTRIES BY GRP	
MINING	$353.4M	AGRICULTURE FORESTRY AND FISHING	$31.3M	AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY, FISHING	$31.6M
HEALTH CARE AND SOCIAL ASSISTANCE	$137.6	PUBLIC ADMINISTRATIO AND SAFETY	$12.3M	ACCOMMODATION AND FOOD SERVICES	$7.1M
OWNERSHIP OF DWELLINGS	$96.2M	EDUCATION AND TRAINING	$8.6M	PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND SAFETY	$5.7M
CONSTRUCTION	$68.9M	ELECTRICITY, GAS, WATER AND WASTE SERVICES	$5.6M	CONSTRUCTION	$4.8M
GROSS REGIONAL PRODUCT		GROSS REGIONAL PRODUCT		GROSS REGIONAL PRODUCT	
TOTAL GRP ($M)	$1,310	TOTAL GRP ($M)	$90	TOTAL GRP ($M)	$77

7.0 Survey Results

7.1 Demographic Profile of Responding Businesses

The Far West NSW region (RDA Far West region) incorporates Broken Hill City, Central Darling Shire and the Unincorporated Area of Far West NSW. To ensure a relevant cross section of employers the region was separated into Local Government Areas (LGA's). Figure 1 and 2 below, indicate the population spread in comparison to the survey respondents.

Figure 1 (pie chart):
- Broken Hill City, 86%
- Central Darling Shire, 8%
- Unincorporated Far West NSW, 6%

Figure 2 (pie chart):
- Broken Hill City Council 65%
- We work across all Local Government Areas in the region 24%
- Unincorporated Area 7%
- Central Darling Shire Council 4%
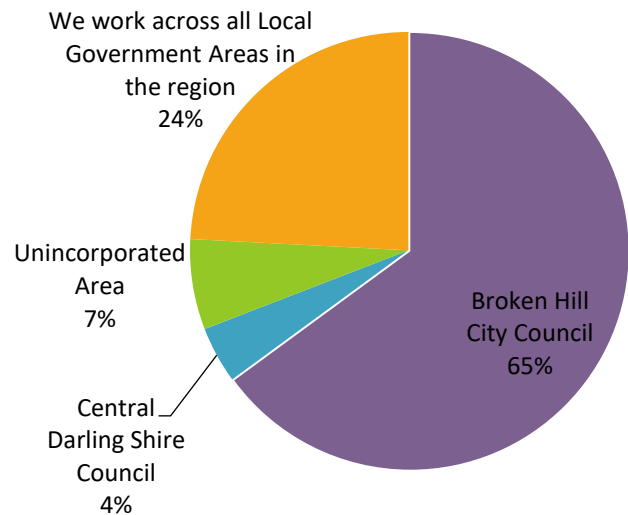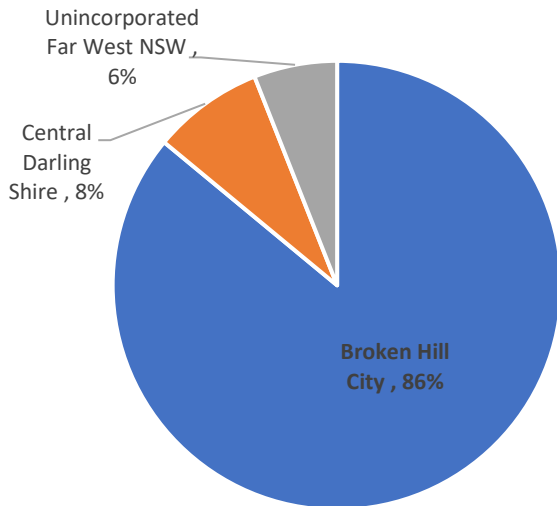
Figure 1. Far West NSW population spread

Figure 2. Survey respondents

What is the primary industry area of your business?

Pie chart:
- Accommodation 4%
- Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing 5%
- Cafe's and Restaurants 10%
- Community services 4%
- Construction 4%
- Education 5%
- Health care 9%
- Mining 4%
- Property and business services 4%
- Retail 11%
- Technicians and trades 4%
- Tourism 3%
- Other, please specify 5%
- All Others 28%
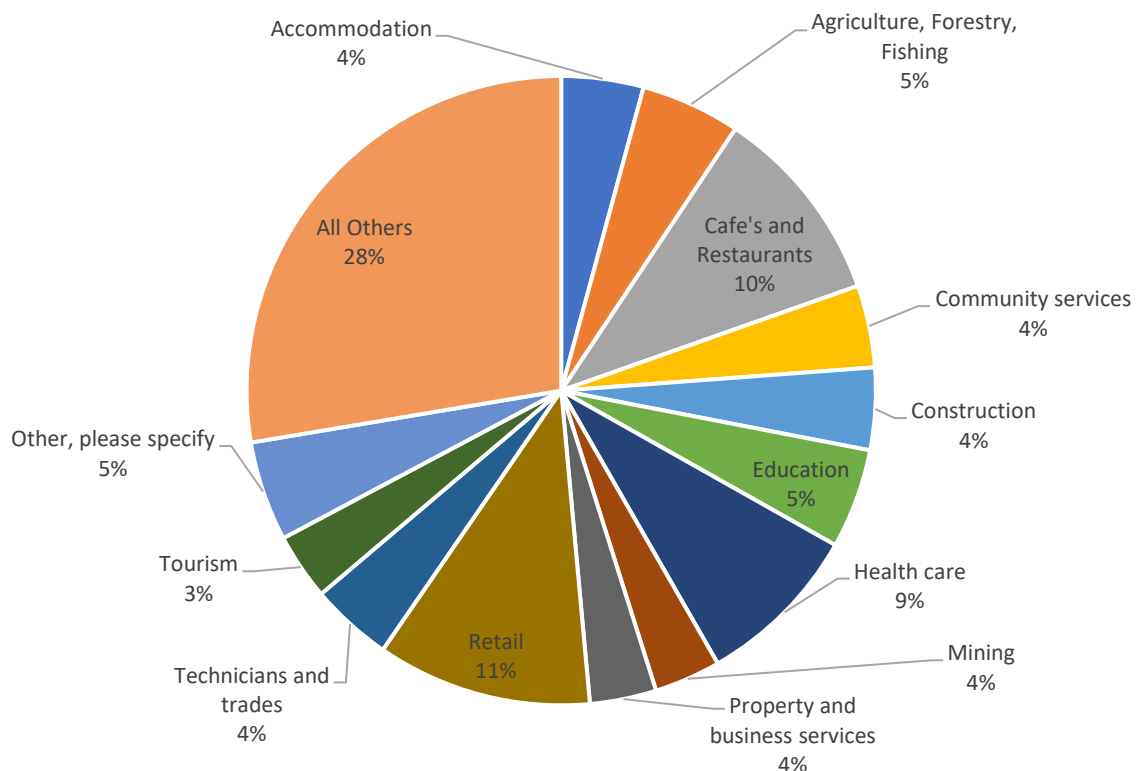
7.2 Digital connectivity

There are clear benefits for the wider economy when our local businesses have access to high quality internet and phone services, and the businesses themselves benefit from growth and increased productivity. Small businesses who embrace the digital economy are more productive and more likely to grow. Being online allows many small businesses to sell goods and services in markets they would otherwise not be able to access, and for consumers across the world to search them out. Smaller businesses also increasingly see the internet as enabling them to use video content, cloud-based services, and remote work.

Regardless of the size of the business or the location, access to quality digital connectivity is an essential tool. Digital technologies give businesses new tools to design, produce and sell goods and services, and provide individuals with new ways for social and economic interactions. Technology adoption and improved digital skills have the potential to increase the contribution of capital and labor to productivity and growth (OECD, Sep 2021).

Digital connectivity has been anecdotally highlighted as a barrier to growth and sustainability across the region. With 96.7 percent of respondent stating their business relies on digital connectivity the responses below provide a snapshot of business digital connectivity and their satisfaction with that connectivity in Far West NSW.

Does your organisation have a website?
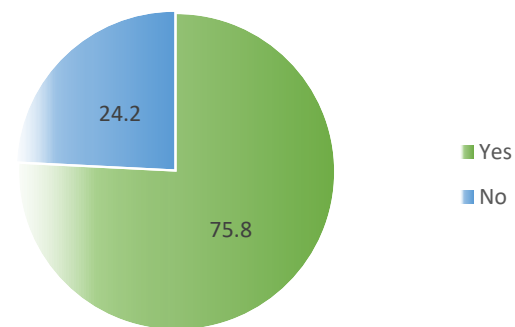
For what purpose does your organisation use its website?
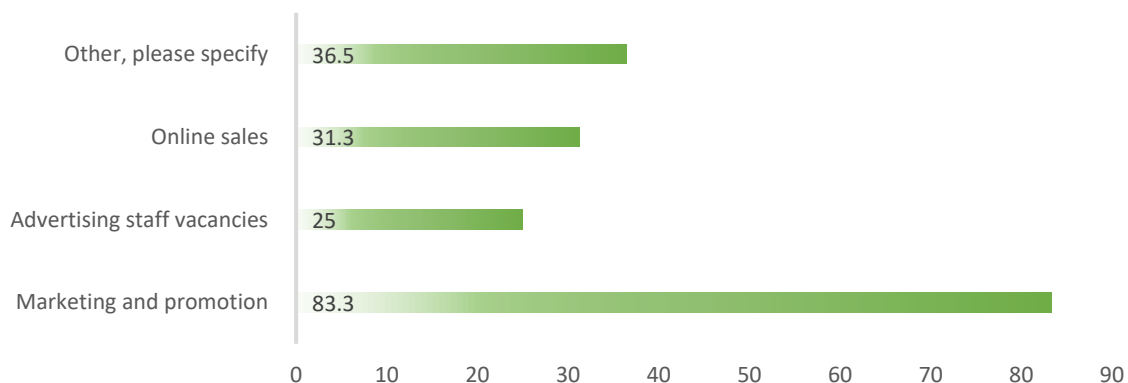
Does your organisation rely on electronic communications?

No	3.3
Yes	96.7

(x-axis: 0, 20, 40, 60, 80, 100, 120)
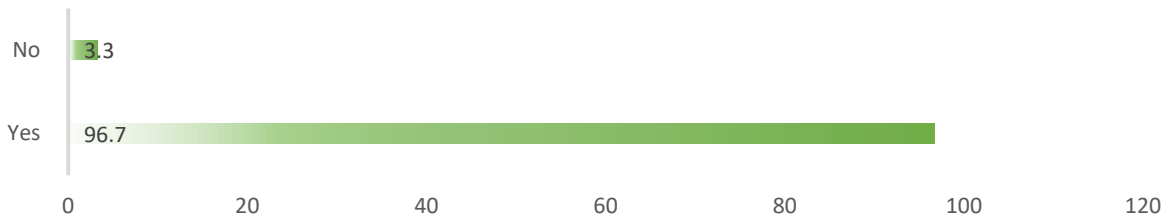
Regardless of how your organisation utilises electronic communication, are you satisfied with the speed / quality of internet and telecommunication services?

No	62
Yes	38

(x-axis: 0, 10, 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, 70)
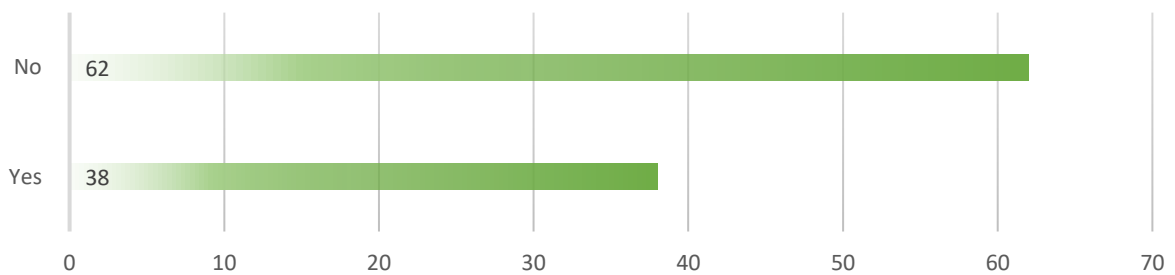
If you are not satisfied with internet and telecommunication services in the region, please expand on the issues unsatisfactory telecommunications creates for your business

Digital communication across the region creates no issue for our organisation	12.3
Digital communication across the region hinders tourism growth	40.7
Digital communication across the region is a safety issue for our organisation	45.7
Digital communication services across the region hinders attraction and retention	39.5
Digital communication across the region is a barrier to regional growth	60.5
Phone connectivity is a barrier to growth for our business	63
Internet connectivity is a barrier to growth for our business	70.4

(x-axis: 0, 10, 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, 70, 80)

As technology progresses, new communications are born and the old ones, many of which seemed new not so long ago fade away. Modern business utilises communication for almost every aspect of business, be it trying to connect with employees, colleagues, clients, customers, suppliers or any other business contact.

Electronic communication, whether it's in the form of an email or video call, can improve work patterns and drive productivity. Employees no longer need to spend long hours in meetings or travel large distances to share ideas, fill out paperwork or make decisions. Thanks to digital technology, most tasks can be performed quickly and more efficiently.

With this approach, business owners can cut costs and expand their services. Employees, on the other hand, have the chance to work with culturally diverse teams and develop a global mindset. Plus, they will get more done in less time. Digital communication platforms often have built-in analytics, automation and data management tools, allowing for greater productivity and efficiency across the team.

This new way of doing things wouldn't be possible without digital communication tools. Electronic communication allows businesses to work with experts from all over the world. This may result in lower overhead costs, increased job satisfaction and improved collaboration. Teams across the globe can connect in real time, solve problems and complete projects without being stuck in the office.

Whilst almost 97 percent of regional businesses rely on electronic communications 62 percent report they are unsatisfied with the speed/quality of those services. However, it's not just about satisfaction, 63 percent report the quality/speed of digital communications services in the region are a barrier to growth for their business, and 60 percent believe digital connectivity is a barrier to regional growth. Respondents categorically believe the region requires better digital connectivity services with 40 percent believing the regions connectivity is a barrier to attracting and retaining employees and 40 percent believe it hinders tourism. Potentially one of the most concerning issues reported about the quality of digital communication in the region is the 45 percent of respondents that report digital communication is a safety issue for their organisation.

Where do you sell / market your goods and / or services?

| Category	Value
Internationally	12
Nationally	37.6
NSW Only	18.8
Far West region	76.9
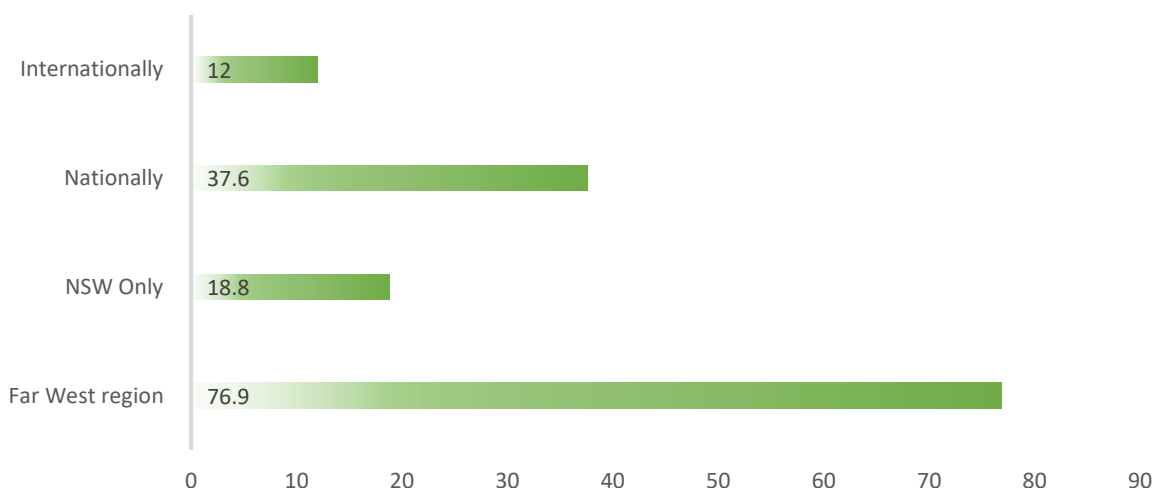
7.3   Our current workforce

To gain a deeper understanding of the current workforce composition and if, as a region, we are utilising all opportunities, respondents were asked about their current workforce.

One of the most obvious solutions to addressing workforce needs is to develop strategies, pathways, and opportunities to train, or retrain our own people. Creating more on-the-job opportunities may help retain local people, especially our young people. If we are to meet our needs and provide meaningful, attractive career pathways for local people we need employers committed to developing and supporting training pathways, however, we also need support, guidance, strong relevant and locally delivered training, local assessment and supported career development.

Do you currently employ any of the following?
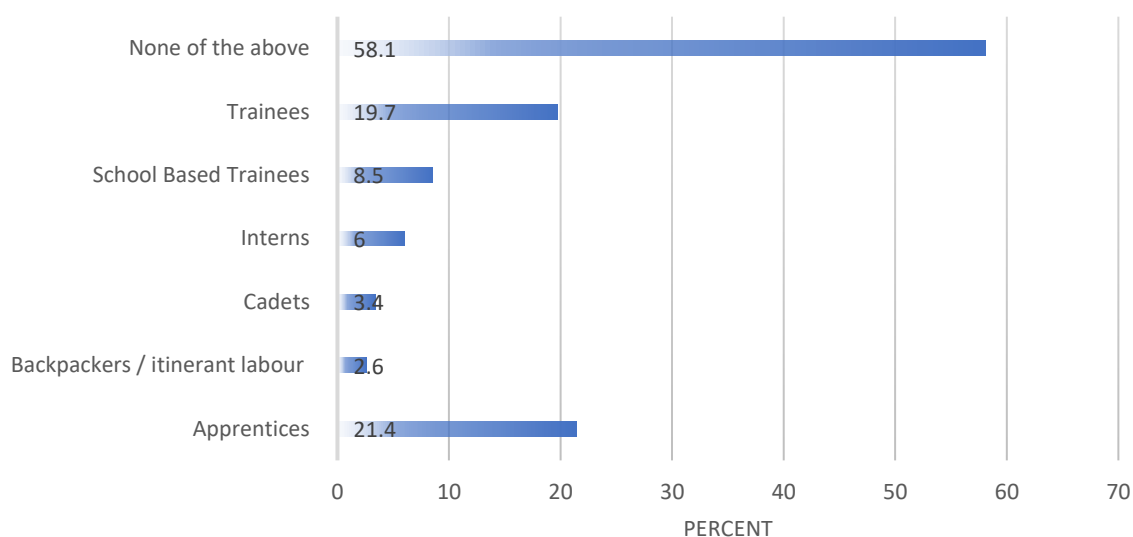
As demonstrated above 21.4 percent of respondents identified as employing apprentices, almost 20 percent employ trainees and only 8.5 percent employ school based trainees, yet when asked who they would employ, 40 percent responded that they would employ apprentices, 53 percent trainees and 36.5 percent that would employ school based trainees, clearly demonstrating a significant gap between current practices and potential opportunities.

Similarly, only 6 percent of respondents report employing interns and 3 percent employ cadets, yet 15 percent would employ interns and almost 11 percent stated they would employ cadets, again highlighting a significant difference between current practices and potential opportunity.

7.4 Training and professional development

Training presents a prime opportunity to expand the knowledge base of all employees, however, it's never that simple. Training is not always cheap and easy to access, employees attending training sessions also miss out on work time which may delay the completion of projects. However, despite these potential drawbacks, training and development provides both the individual and organisation with benefits that make the cost and time a worthwhile investment. Relevant high quality training provides many benefits including improved employee performance, satisfaction and morale, an opportunity to address weaknesses and enhance consistency and employee engagement.

Regardless of the reason local employers seek training and professional development opportunities for their employees, the survey was interested in their satisfaction with the opportunities available to them locally and their assistance to identify any gaps in the training and professional development opportunities presented locally.

Are you satisfied with the training and professional development options available for your current workforce?
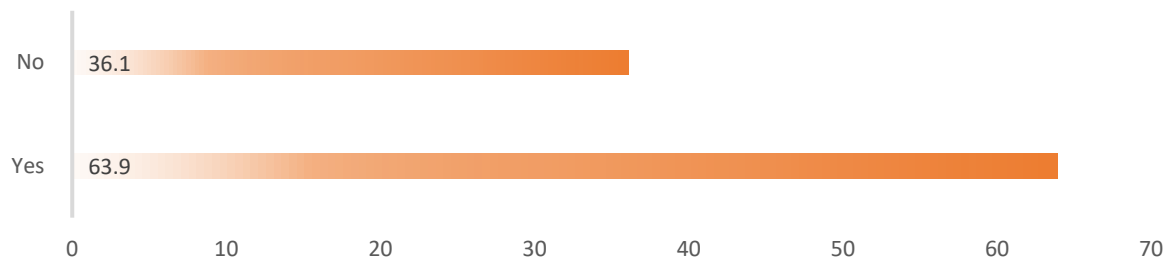
Almost 64 percent of respondents were satisfied with the opportunities available locally. The regions employers seek a combination of technical, soft skills and mentoring training and the majority are prepared to pay for training and professional development. Whilst almost 64 percent are satisfied with the options available to them, a similar percentage report they are not confident the current options meet their organisational needs.

Respondents were asked to provide specific additional information about the training they require with several themes potentially providing the evidence and opportunity local training providers need to plan their delivery and/or marketing of training options and opportunities.

If you answered no to the above question what training / professional development is required?

TRADES
- More face to face training for apprentices.   - Ability for Broken Hill TAFE to provide all trade courses, this will eliminate the requirement for our heavy plant fitters to have to travel to Dubbo TAFE.   - Apprenticeships, we have gone from world class training to almost nothing being delivered.   - We were once the leaders in training and now we deliver almost nothing, the decision makers should be held accountable for training opportunities going backwards.   - It feels that again the Far West of the state is forgotten, are our people less important?   - Most don't recognise the on the job training and require classroom. Courses required are not available at all or in a timely manner. E.g. testing and tagging requiring accommodation and transport to Adelaide or Mildura to complete.   - It's really difficult and expensive to access the training we require. We regularly pay for trainers to travel from Sydney and Melbourne. Also, our apprentice has to stay in Melbourne for up to 4 weeks at a time to attend trade school. To add to that, the local TAFE cannot provide full week blocks meaning more weeks are disrupted when the apprentice attends TAFE for only a few days at a time.   **Automotive**   - Automotive body repair   - Automotive paint & refinishing   - Automotive Glazing   - Spray painting - general   *This theme was repeated* **Construction**   - We have NSW Master Builders who offer CPD but never in the Far West   - We need quality construction training and post trade development   - Painting (trade outcome)   - Scaffolding   - I need to send staff to Mildura or Adelaide to access scaffolding training and accreditation   - Handymen/women yardmen/women   - Tiling (trade). We have a critical housing shortage and huge opportunity, but we can't train apprentices locally   - Stone Mason, so many beautiful stone buildings in the community and no training to preserve them   - Fence Construction   - Plastering (trade), Every house needs a plasterer, and we still can't access local training   - Testing tagging   **Mechanical**   - We need mechanical trades consistently delivered in Broken Hill   - Heavy Plant Apprenticeship Training   - Engineering   - Equipment maintenance   - Trade school for Mechanical Apprenticeships.   **Hospitality**   - More hospitality industry specific

- The consistent depredation of NSW TAFE over many years has resulted in very few training options for Hospitality staff, such as chefs and front of house, security etc.
- There is not sufficient training locally to skill people in the hospitality industry. Entry-level hospitality training would be extremely beneficial
- We need proper barista training and ongoing support. *(raised consistently)*
- Hospitality certificate courses for food safety and hygiene.
- We need flexible training options for the Hospitality industry
- There is no current hospitality training for apprentice/ bar staff
- We are now required to have security for almost every event, yet we cannot access suitable training locally.
- Certificate III commercial cookery
- Kitchen hand training
- Hospitality - general
- Entry level hospitality
- Housekeeping
- Food Safety Supervisor
- Food handling
- Relevant Computer training
- Customer service
- More RSA courses outside common service hours
- Introductory hospitality

This theme was strongly represented

Horticulture
- We haven't been able to access horticulture training locally for many years and it has impacted our ability to employ apprentices
- General grounds maintenance
- Greens keeper

Metal Fabrication
- When attending TAFE for apprentices doing Metal Fabrication it would be advantageous for them to use current & up to date machinery that is used in the workforce to guarantee the maximum exposure in their trade

Many staff need the basics, specific entry level training would be very valuable.

BUSINESS / ADMINISTRATION

- Office staff, Phone etiquette...
- Teamwork
- Conflict resolution
- Coaching and mentoring
- Business skills for yearly planning for continued growth
  - Business development skills
  - Business administration
  - Business management,
- Marketing *(raised consistently)*
  - Publicity and promotions
- Leadership *(raised consistently)*
- Customer service *(raised consistently)*
- Computer skills for office work
- Learning various point of sale programs

- Communication *(raised constantly)*
- Stock control
- The highest possible standard of customer service suitable for national and international tourism
- Time management *(raised consistently)*
- Governance
- General management skills
- Conveyancing
- Legal
- Stress management *(raised consistently)*
- On the job / in-store mentoring and training opportunities
- Customer relations
- Project management

LICENCING

- Forklift *(raised consistently)*
- Heavy Vehicle Licence
- Four wheel drive and driver training
- Working at heights,
  - EWP *(raised consistently)*
- Crane operator *(raised consistently)*
- Confined space
- Forklift truck
- Dangerous goods courses currently not available in Broken Hill
- Basic fire training
- Chemical Handling
- Testing and tagging *(raised constantly)*
- White card
- Dogman certification
- Heavy plant (grader, truck etc)
- Trainer and Assessor training not available locally

HEALTH

- There are minimal training options for Allied Health in this region. All upskilling is carried out either online or with the requirement to travel
- All areas that are traditionally clinical or clinically related
- Ongoing professional development is difficult in the region, we have a lot of health workers and surely we could develop better opportunities for professional development locally
- Our training budgets are taken up by travel and accommodation, we need ongoing professional development opportunities
- We could employ more health professionals if training and professional development costs didn't include airfares and accommodation
- CPR
- Networking to help growth business and be informed around health reforms and changes and the relevant business opportunities.
- Nursing degrees
- Cert IV in Allied Health Assisting - Diploma and Advanced Diploma options
- First Aid
- Accessing training often costs more than the training, local development opportunities
- Specific Physiotherapy training and professional development

- Specialised remote area first-aid training
- Disability Certificate (3 and above)

FINANCIAL SERVICES

- Tier 2 FSR -AML/CTF -Financial Services/Credit Management
- Financial compliance training
- We require Certificate III Financial Services which we cannot access locally
- Accounting qualification and ongoing CDPE courses
- Entry level Accounting
- Certificate 4 Bookkeeping

EARLY CHILDCARE

- Certificate IV in Early Childcare
- Child protection
- First Aid

RETAIL

- Leadership support / development
- Mentoring
- Customer Service / Customer relations *(raised constantly)*
- Digital Literacy for the retail environment
- Communication
- Automotive and retail sales
- Digital Marketing
- Retail industry courses
- Media and Communications
- General sales skills

DIGITAL AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

- Computer training, especially use of recording and broadcasting equipment
- Our regional areas require more communications trained staff
- Podcasting and film making
- Information technology
- Information technology systems training

ARTS

- Art project management
- Art practices
- Studio art practices

PRIMARY INDUSTRIES

- Technical skills on livestock handling, agriculture.
- Horticulture marketing skills
- Animal Husbandry
- Native Vegetation Management
- Greens keeping

GENERAL

- Although there are many online courses, students are still required to travel elsewhere to complete training in many subjects

- Job ready training
- Local usable options for TAE and assessors
- On the job, venue-specific training is a huge issue. There is no return on time, money or other resources invested to do this in a pandemic due to stop/start nature of last few years
- I would have liked to send my only worker to a short weekend course, but they are never available here. In other communities' short courses over the weekend run regularly.
- Access to relevant training is limited, with training largely either delivered some distance away, or delivered locally using external resources
- Extremely hard to find information for applicable courses for my team
- There is no on the job training linked to educational services in Broken Hill for arts & cultural development, arts administration, or cultural development
- Aboriginal cultural awareness
- Waste management
- Environmental sustainability
- Building surveying
- Car detailing
- Real estate Services
- Cleaners
- Wellbeing support
- Library Services

When you think about the training and professional development for your organisation, is accredited training required? That is training that provides a recognised qualification upon completion.

Response	Value
Sometimes	38.4
No	9.1
Yes	52.5
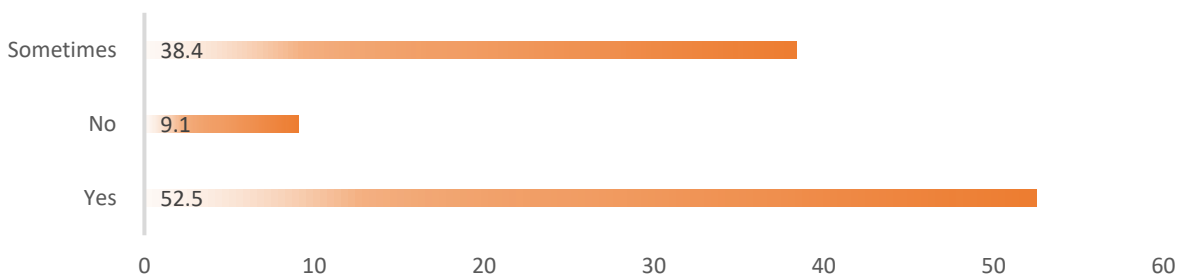
What are the most important training needs for your organisation?

Response	Value
Other - please specify	13.5
Coaching and mentoring (a dedicated person who guides an employee in performing	40.6
Soft skills training (leadership, management, communication, time management *	51
Technical training (training related to practical aspects of the job e.g forklift	75
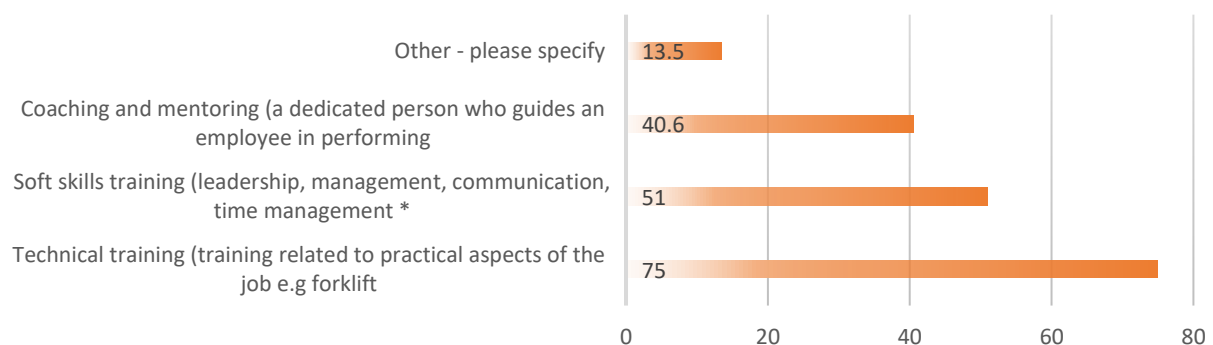
* Soft skills training (leadership, management, communication, time management, stress management, customer service

What training options would suit your organisation?

Option	Value
Any	37.5
Short workshops	34.4
Online learning	35.4
Face to face training and development	60.4
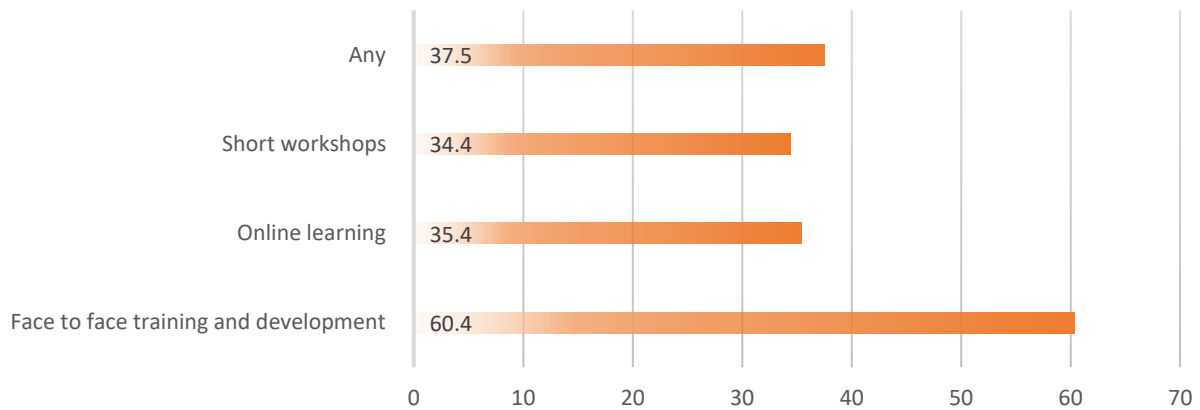
Does your organisation currently interact / negotiate / have a defined partnership with any training providers to develop suitable training programs for your staff?

Option	Value
Not applicable	9.4
No	51
Yes	39.6
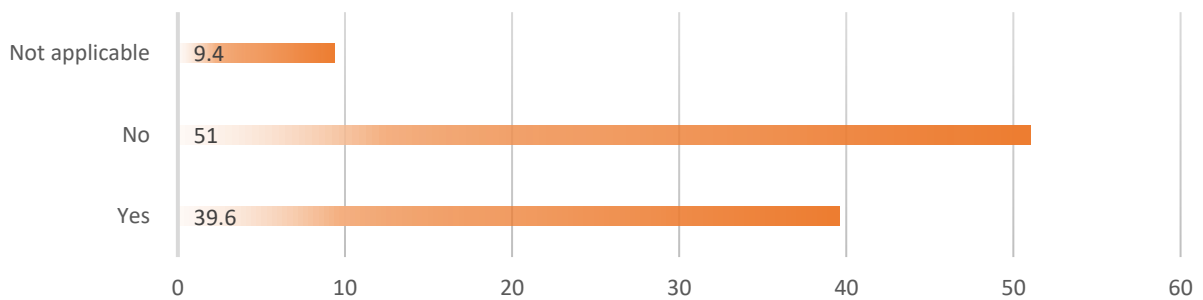
Are you aware that you can access funded training through registered training providers by working directly with them?

Option	Value
No	37.9
Yes	62.1
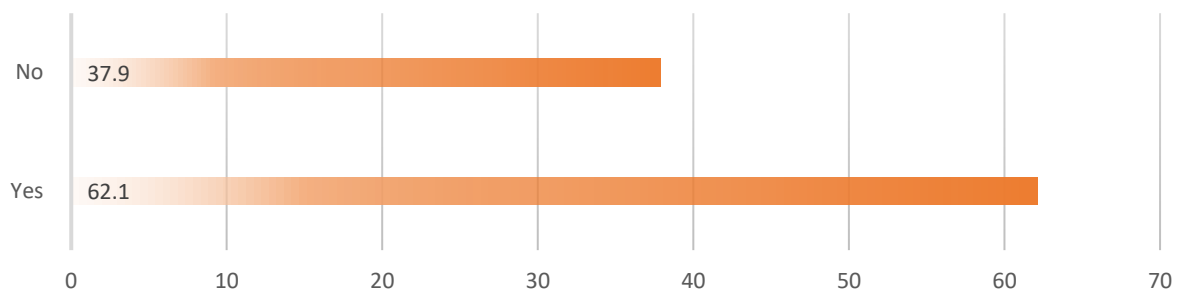
Are you prepared to pay for training and professional development for your staff?

Response	Percent
Maybe	30.9
No	6.2
Yes	62.9
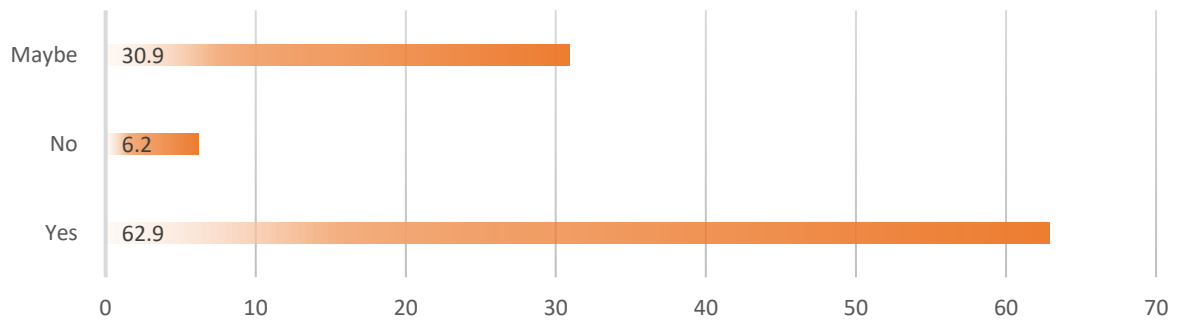
Thinking of the current education, training and professional development opportunities within the region do you feel the training / opportunities provided aligns with the required skills in your organisation?

Response	Percent
Unsure	29.2
No	46.9
Yes	24
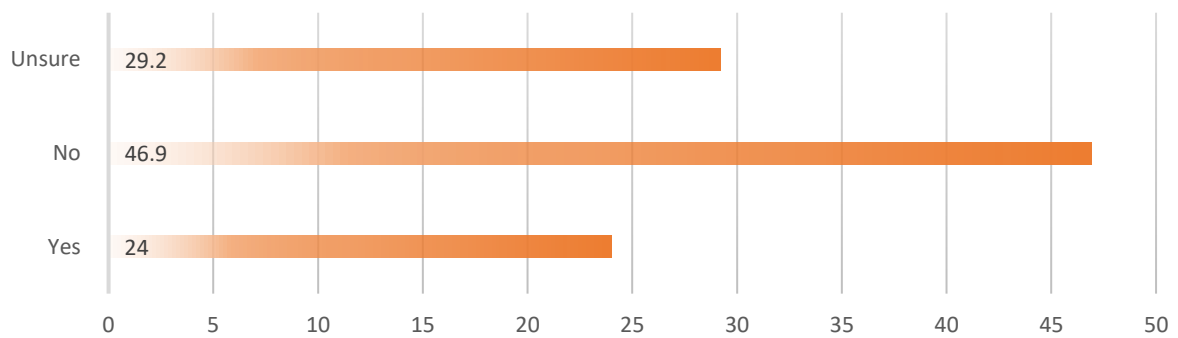
How confident do you feel that your organisations education and training needs over the next 5 years will be met within the Far West region?

Response	Percent
Unsure	24
Not confident	45.8
Confident	26
Very confident	6.3
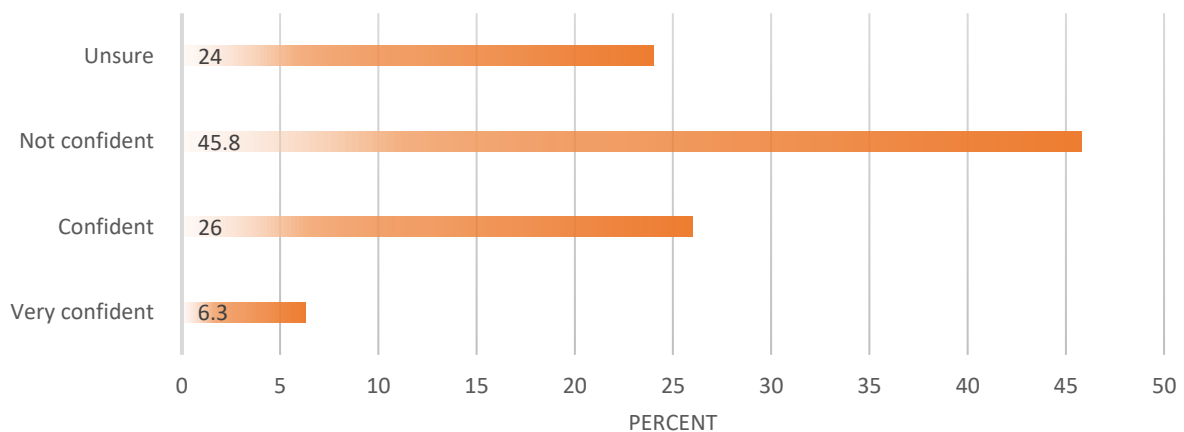
PERCENT

Whilst 64 percent of respondents report being satisfied with the training and professional development opportunities available for their current workforce, 47 percent don't believe the current

opportunities align to the needs of their organisation and almost 46 percent are not confident their organisations education and training needs over the next 5 years can be meet within the region.

Training current employees is important, and the majority of respondents are satisfied with the opportunities right now but when it comes to apprentices and trainees it's a very different story with 55 percent stating they are unable to access the required off the job training locally. Of that 55 percent that are unable to access training locally 51 percent can access distance delivery. Given the dissatisfaction with digital connectivity one must question the quality, reliability, and appropriateness of online delivery to meet the region's needs. However, 48 percent of apprentices and trainees are required to travel to access their mandatory training. The National Visitor Survey Monthly Snapshot (June 2022) report average overnight spending at $263, equating to a significant amount of money that leaves the region to access mandatory training and an expense our apprentices, trainees and businesses potentially can't afford.

If you employ trainees or apprentices, are you able to access the required off the job training locally?
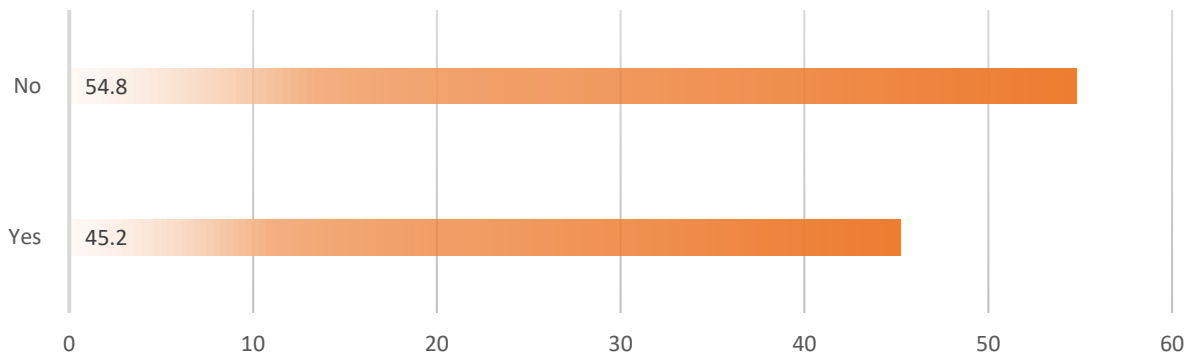
If you answered no to the above question, please tell us where/how your apprentices or trainees access they're off the job training.
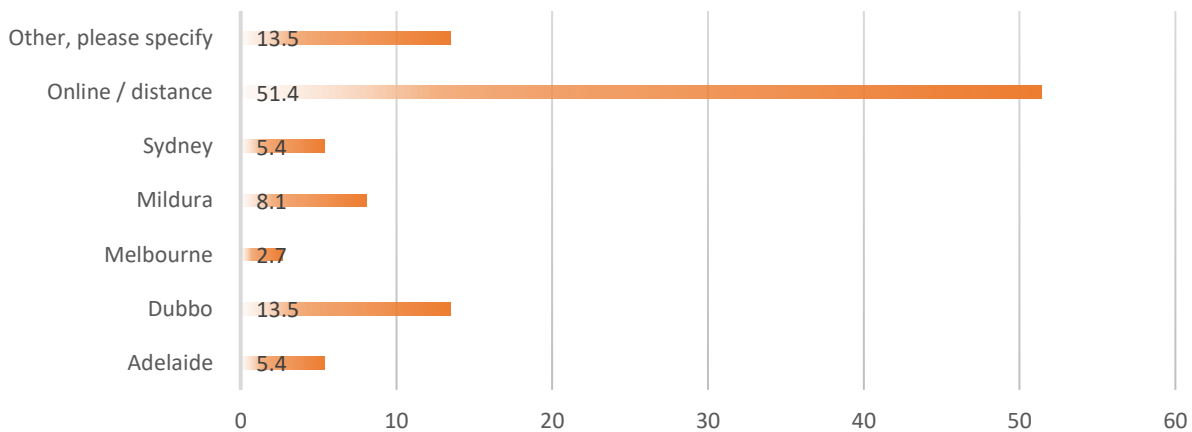
If your apprentices / trainees are required to travel for their off the job training, from your experience, do you believe this impacts their motivation and/or retention?

Response	Value
Not relevant to me	57.1
No	11.9
Yes	31
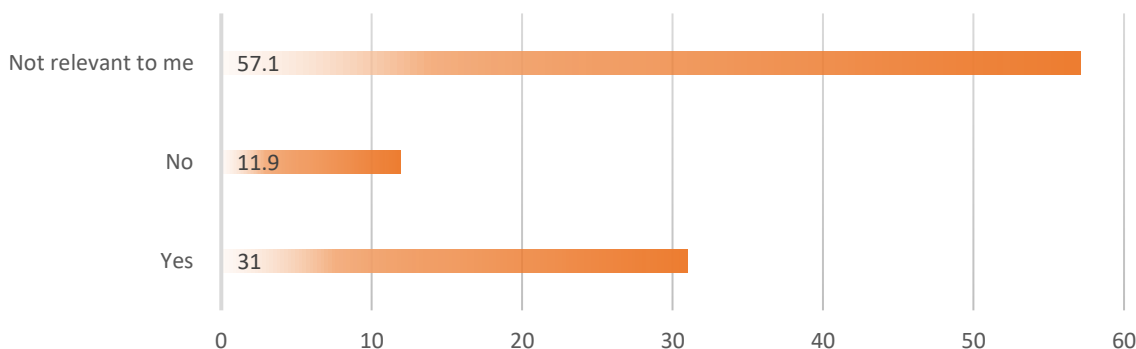
If your apprentices / trainees are required to travel for their off the job training does this impact your ability / motivation / capacity to employ further apprentices?

Response	Value
Not an issue for me	46.3
Maybe	15.9
No	12.2
Yes	25.6
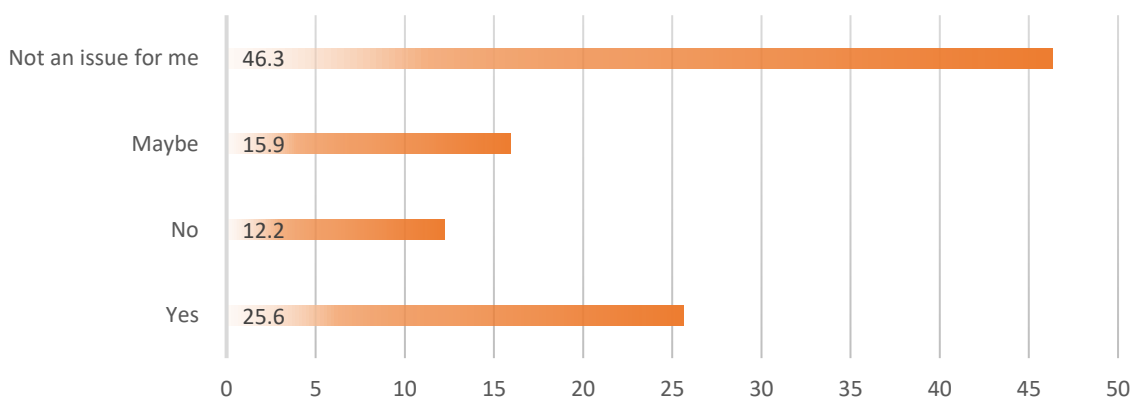
Considering local apprentices and trainees are travelling vast distances to access off the job training (Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Dubbo) and the costs associated, disruption to the business, personal impact and of course Work Health and Safety concerns the effect of that requirement to travel has an impact on both the employee and the employer.

From an employer's perspective the requirement for young people to travel to access training impacts the motivation/retention of 31 percent, no data is available from the employee's perspective and anecdotal data suggest from an employee's perspective that figure could be considerably higher.

Regardless of the impact for our young people it certainly impacts employers with only 12 percent reporting no impacts on their motivation/capacity to continue to employ apprentices.

What training is currently offered by your organisation?

Category	Percent
None	~14
Other - please specify	~24
Trade training, I employ apprentices or trainees	~24
Computer, IT - please specify	~16
Customer Service	~35
Finance	~14
Sales	~26
Technical	~41
Management	~34
Leadership	~36
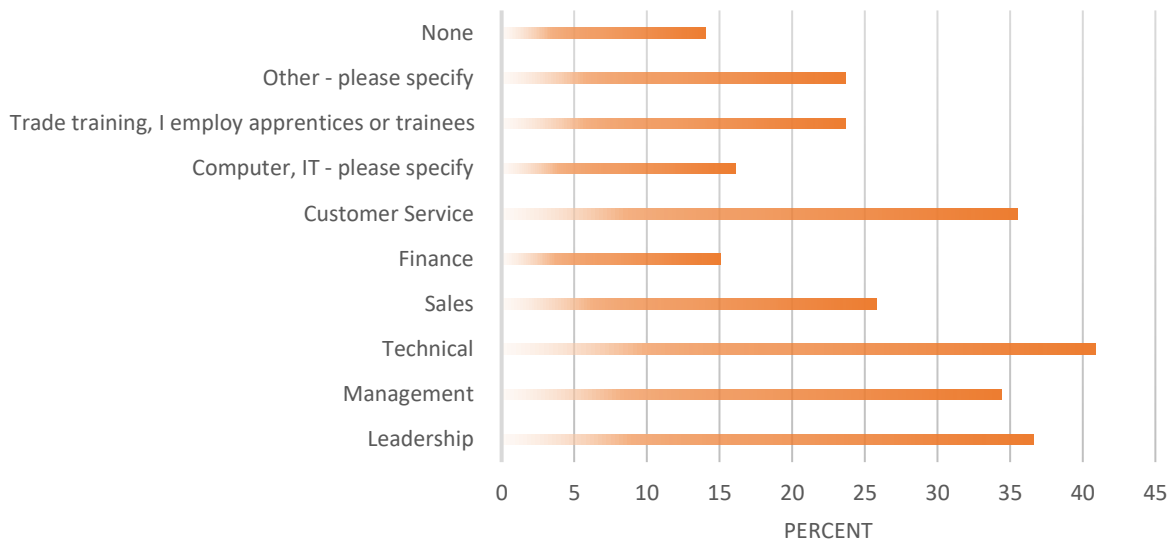
What type of assistance does your organisation offer staff for professional development / training?

Category	Percent
Other - please specify	6.7
Coaching and mentoring	50
On the job training	87.8
Study leave or time off	36.7
Financial assistance	42.2
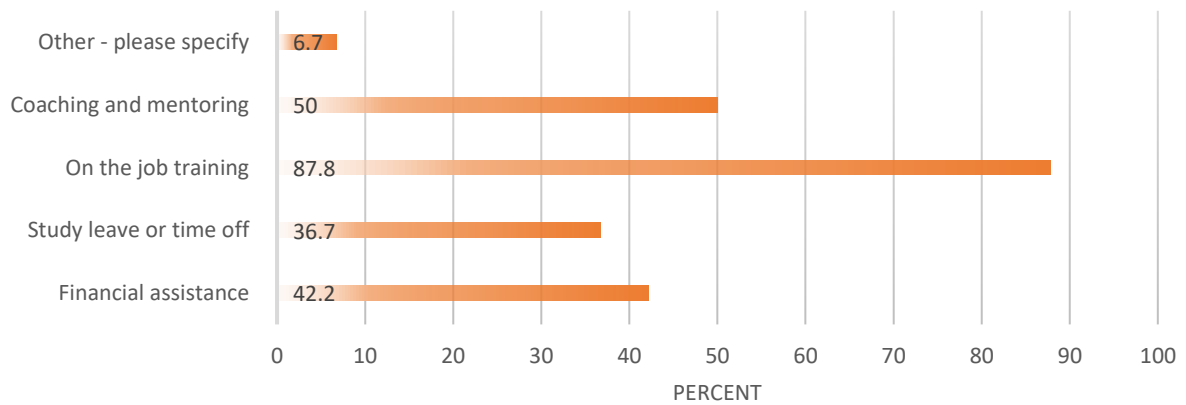
Our children have access to dedicated and skilled Career Advisors in school. Do you believe a careers advisory / support service to provide advice about career changes and development post-secondary school would support retention and career development?

Response	Value
Maybe	41.5
No	9.6
Yes	48.9
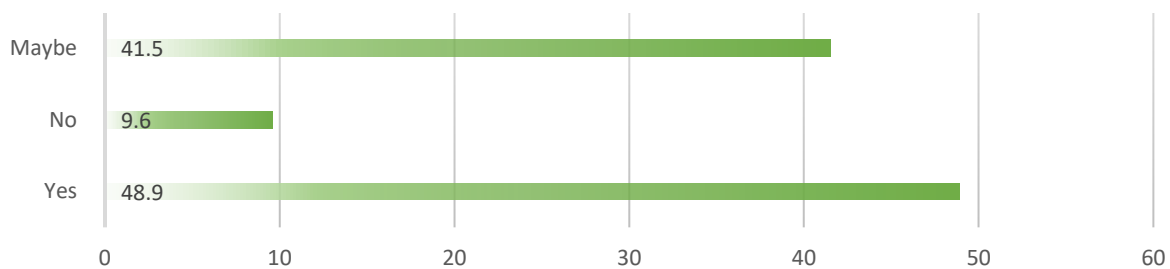
When it comes to planning a career, it's so easy to rely on the advice of friends and family, or even personal intuition, without considering getting professional advice and support. However, the advantages of career guidance are well documented.

Career guidance describes the services which help people of any age to manage their careers and to make the educational, training and occupational choices that are right for them. It helps people to reflect on their ambitions, interests, qualifications, skills and talents, and to relate this knowledge about who they are to who they might become within the labour market.

Career guidance involves a range of connected activities, including provision of careers information, personalised guidance/counselling, skills assessment, engaging with the world of work and the teaching of decision-making and career management skills.

Career guidance is a continuous process throughout life. It is critical to the smooth transitions of young people as they make choices about education and training and to the mobility and (re)engagement of adults within the labour market.

Effective career guidance helps individuals to reach their potential, economies to become more efficient and societies to become fairer. It provides people with personalised, impartial, and timely information and support to make informed decisions about their lives. It acts as a lubricant for developing and nurturing human talent to power innovation, creativity and competitiveness. It helps to implement lifelong approaches to learning and active approaches to labour market engagement and transition. As the working world becomes increasingly complex, career guidance is becoming ever more important to individuals, employers and to society.

We know young people have access to careers professionals in school and we know the value and benefits of that guidance, but what about the benefits for adults and people already in the workforce.

- Technological advances are driving massive changes in the labour market – old jobs and skills are disappearing, or radically changing and new jobs and skills are emerging.

- Re-skilling and upskilling are increasingly seen as integral parts of working life.
- People are working longer and moving between locations more frequently.
- Some job losers have fallen into situations of long-term unemployment and inactivity, being demotivated, with outdated skills and limited knowledge of learning options.
- New forms and ways of working mean that individuals are increasingly responsible for their own education and training.
- Guidance is essential to people who want to validate skills obtained outside formal learning contexts.
- European surveys show most adults recognise that career guidance is useful for finding and choosing suitable jobs, courses and other opportunities.
- Individuals with lower levels of qualifications are much less likely to use career guidance – but are more likely to need it because their jobs are at greater risk of automation.

Effective career guidance empowers people!

7.5   Customer Service

Customer service is the support you offer your customers — both before and after they buy and use your products or services — that helps them have an easy and enjoyable experience with you. Offering amazing customer service is important if you want to retain customers and grow your business. Today's customer service goes far beyond the traditional telephone support agent. It's available via email, web, text message, and social media. Many companies also provide self-service support, so customers can find their own answers at any time of the day or night. Customer support is more than just providing answers; it's an important part of the promise your brand makes to its customers.

"89% of companies now expect to compete mostly on the basis of customer experience"

— GARTNER RESEARCH

Customer service can have a big impact on your bottom line

It's often said that its cheaper to keep existing customers than to find new ones. It's even been estimated that acquiring customers costs 6-7 times more, and it's true: Bad customer service is a key driver of churn.

In your organisation whose role is it to set and maintain customer service standards?

Category	Percent
Not relevant	2.1
Everybody within the organisation	64.2
Operational staff - the people that deal with our customers	25.3
Customer service specialist	3.2
Supervisor	27.4
Senior management	60
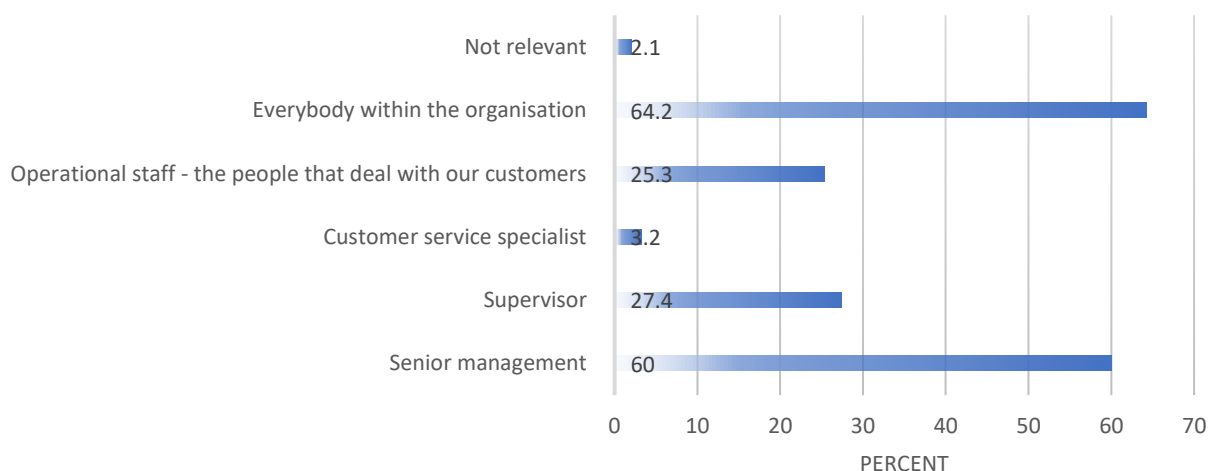
In your organisation are customer service standards / principles measured and monitored?

Category	Value
Unsure	1.1
No	18.9
Yes, on occasions	24.2
Yes, regularly	55.8
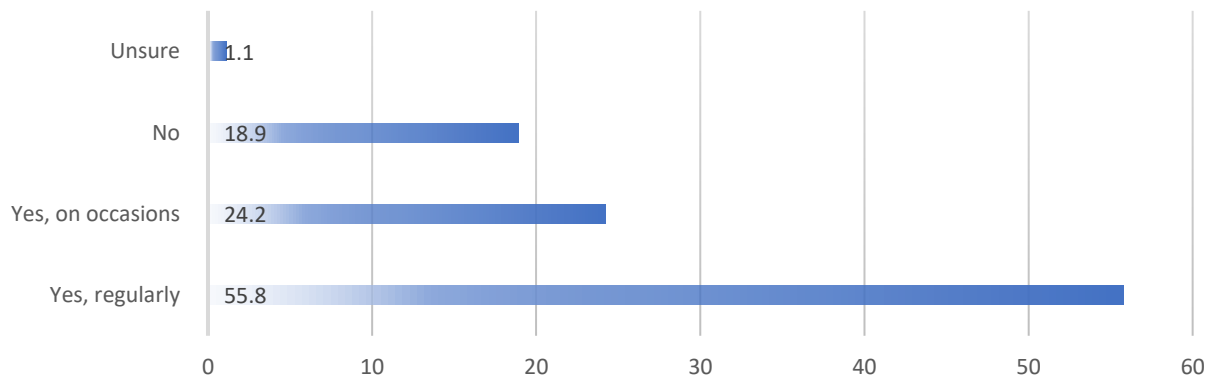
It's no surprise that as today's social, mobile consumers have grown accustomed to getting what they want, when they want it, their expectations have risen accordingly. In fact, in a recent poll, 82 percent of CEOs reported that customer expectations of their companies were "somewhat" or "much" higher than they were three years ago. What's more, today's customers are quick to share negative experiences online, where they can quickly reach large audiences. It's more important than ever to support customers on every channel from day one and establish what good customer service looks like internally and externally.

Focusing on the customer experience isn't just the latest trend — it's also smart business. It turns out that making every touchpoint great doesn't just make customers love you; it can also increase your profits. Surveys have shown that 86 percent of consumers would pay more for a better customer experience.

Since customer service is a key driver of business success, it's time for businesses to stop thinking of support as a cost centre and start recognising customer service for what it is: an opportunity waiting to happen.

7.6   Growth

An expanding company will usually be increasing sales and strengthening its position in the market. However, growth isn't a strictly defined concept. A growing business is one that is expanding in one or more ways. There is no single metric used to measure growth. Instead, several data points can be highlighted to show a company is growing. These include:

- Revenue
- Sales
- Company value
- Profits
- Number of employees
- Number of customers

Companies can grow in some of these metrics but not in others. For example, revenue can grow without an increase in customers if the gains are caused by existing clients buying more. It's even possible for one metric to increase while another decreases; if sales growth is brought about by a reduction in product price, a business's overall revenue could still go down.

It's important that all companies experience growth. However, the type of growth required will depend on the stage of growth the business is in. Start-ups usually need to grow in order to cement their position in the market and quickly get to a size that is large enough to bring in enough revenue to cover costs and begin to make a profit.

Mature companies don't need to grow quite as fast. However, they may still want to ensure their metrics are going in the correct direction. An increase in profitability, brought about by sales process efficiencies, could help a stable business build liquidity to protect against future risk, even if revenue and sales stays the same.

Do you have plans for your organisation to grow in?
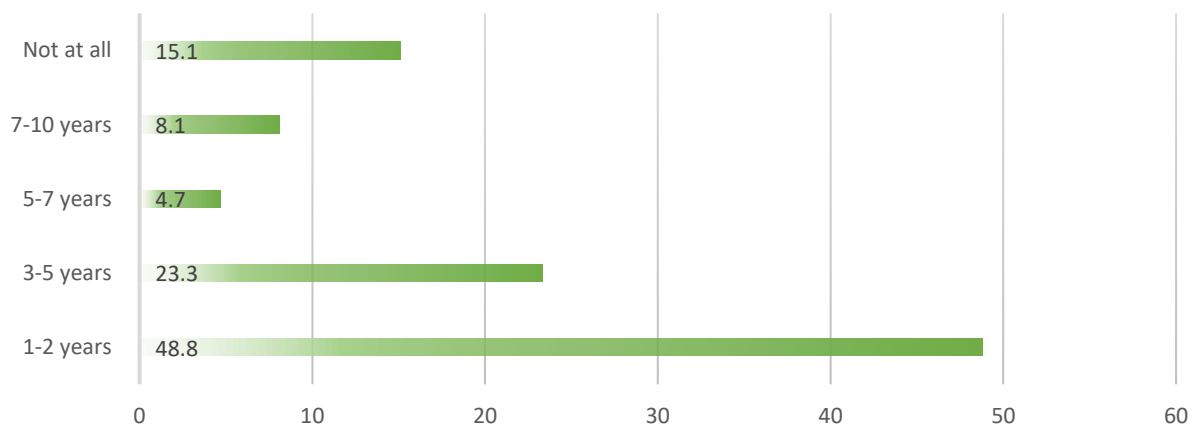
If you are planning for your organisation to grow to what degree are you planning to grow?

Category	Value
Not sure at this stage	16
Significantly, more than double	14.8
Moderately	58
A little	11.1
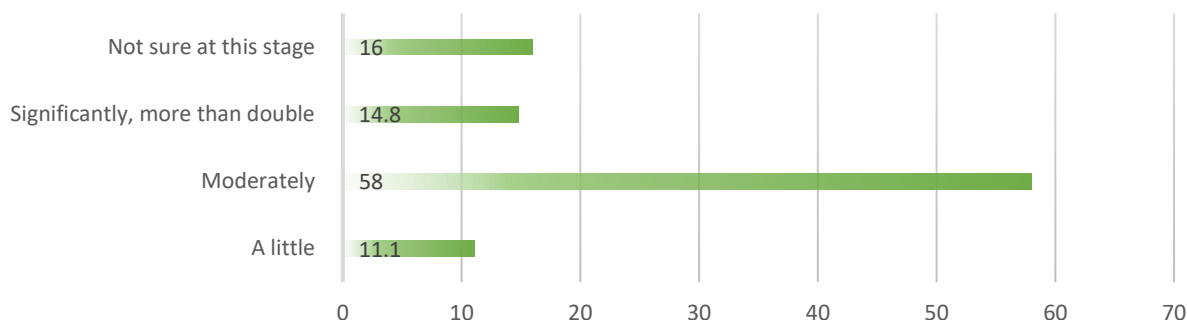
If you envision your organisation growing are there any fundamental barriers?

Barrier	Value
Other - please specify	21
We attract applicants but the people that do apply don't have *	27.2
Regional liveability	28.4
Regional infrastructure (telecommunication, high speed broadband **	25.9
Suitable premises are difficult to find	11.1
Suitable training is difficult to access	18.5
The people that do apply have suitable technical skills but very ***	17.3
Legislation / regulations - please specify	6.2
Current employees don't have suitable skill sets to meet growth plans	22.2
Cost of utilities (electricity, gas, water)	19.8
Cost of rent for suitable premises	17.3
Can't attract suitable mature employees	45.7
Can't attract suitable young people	51.9
Applicants often have suitable qualifications but very little experience	33.3
Access to required/desired support and advice	11.1
Access to utilities (electricity, gas, water)	7.4

*We attract applicant but the people that do apply don't have suitable skills

**Regional infrastructure (telecommunications, high speed broadband, transport etc)

***The people that do apply have suitable technical skills but very few employability skills – that is they are not job ready.

85 percent of responding business are planning for growth, 73 percent are planning for moderate to significant growth, yet 52 percent can't attract suitable young people, 46 percent can't attract suitable mature aged people and 33 percent are attracting applicants, but without the necessary experience.

7.7 Staffing

The vast majority of regional businesses are planning for growth and 64 percent have advertised a position within the past 12 months they were unable to fill, up from 46 percent in 2019 and 38 percent in 2016.

Staff shortages are impacting business growth and sustainability with 52 percent of respondents reporting staffing difficulties have forced delays in production or provision of services, 53 percent report missed opportunities for growth, 42 percent report additional operating expenses and around 32 percent report failures to meet deadlines, impacts on credibility and low productivity.

The effects of staffing difficulties are significantly impacting the regions businesses, their sustainability, opportunities for growth and in turn the economic sustainability of the region.

This section provides an overview of the staffing difficulties businesses in the region face and the different strategies they have employed to try and overcome these difficulties.

When looking for new staff would you employ?

Category	Value
Trainees	52.9
Young people up to 25 years old	75.3
Unemployed (unemployed for more than 6 months)	56.5
School Based Trainees	36.5
Skilled migrants	45.9
People who would need significant investment in training…	16.5
People with limited work experience	56.5
People who are largely unskilled	29.4
People with literacy and numeracy difficulties	32.9
People with disabilities	49.4
People that have added to their qualifications and skills over…	58.8
People aged 45 - 60 years old	85.9
People aged 25 - 45 years old	96.5
Mature aged people over 60 years old	56.5
Interns	15.3
Indigenous people	69.4
Cadets	10.6
Backpackers	16.5
Apprentices	40

Does your organisation employ interns and/or cadets as a strategy to address your workforce needs and provide opportunities for potential candidates to gain experience?

Response	Value
No	82.4
Yes	17.6
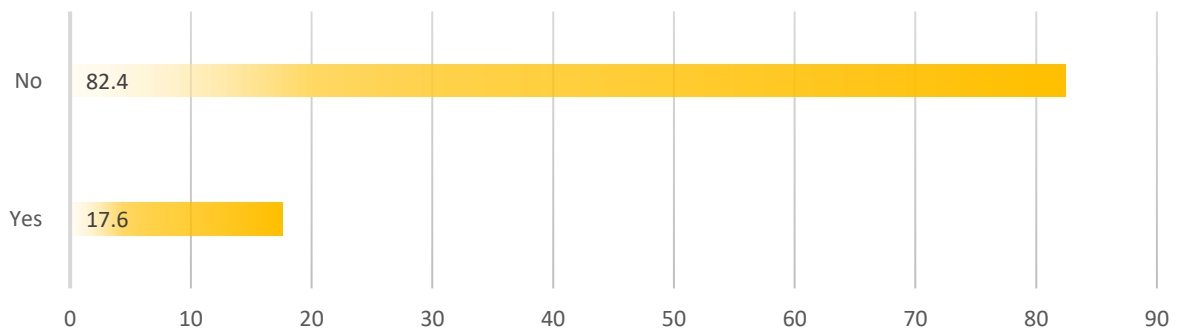
Have you, in the past 2 years, investigated opportunities for recruitment through skilled migrants?

Response	Value
No	85.2
Yes	14.8
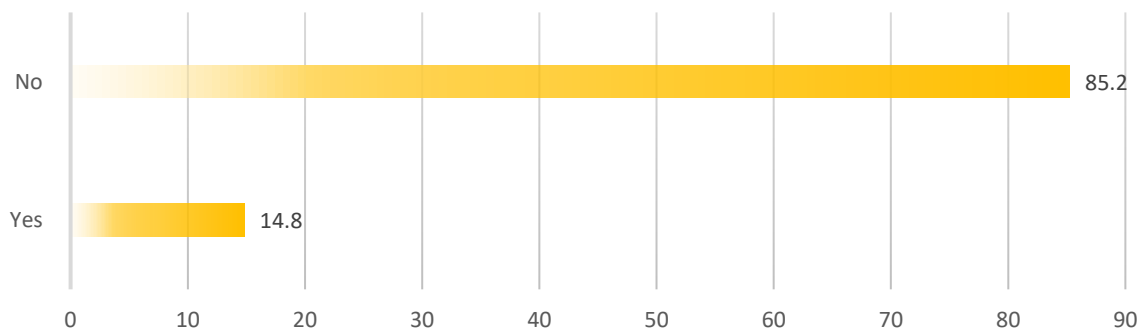
Are you interested in understanding more about opportunities through skilled migrants?

Response	Value
No	59.3
Yes	40.7
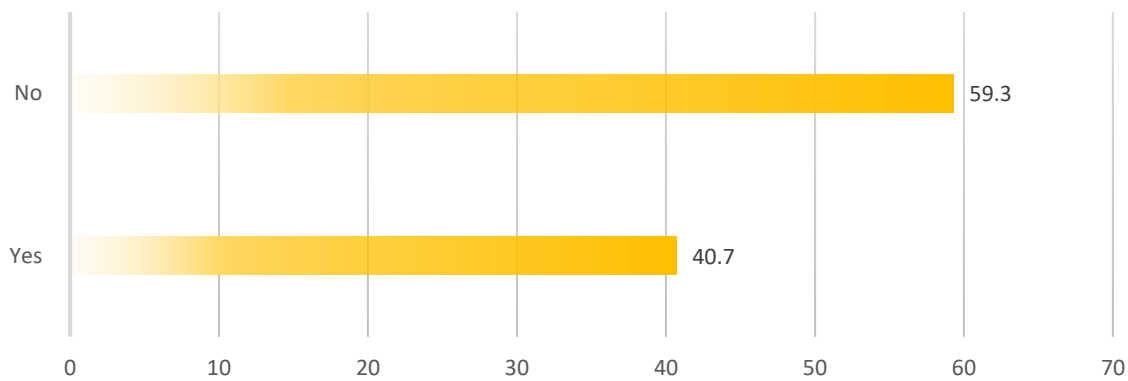
Have you advertised / promoted vacancies over the past 12 months and not been able to fill the position?

	Value
No	35.6
Yes	64.4
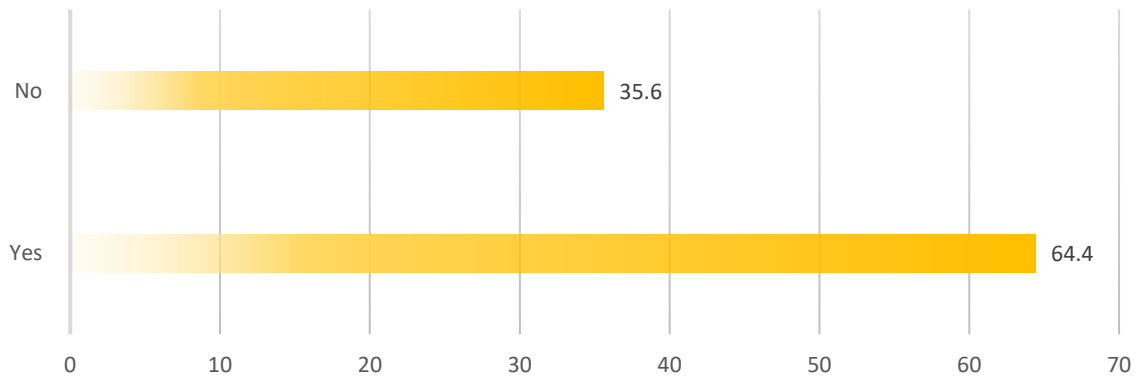
Have you advertised / promoted vacancies over the past 12 months and settled for an employee that didn't really meet your expectations during the interview? i.e., the best of the applicants.

	Value
No	38.8
Yes	61.2
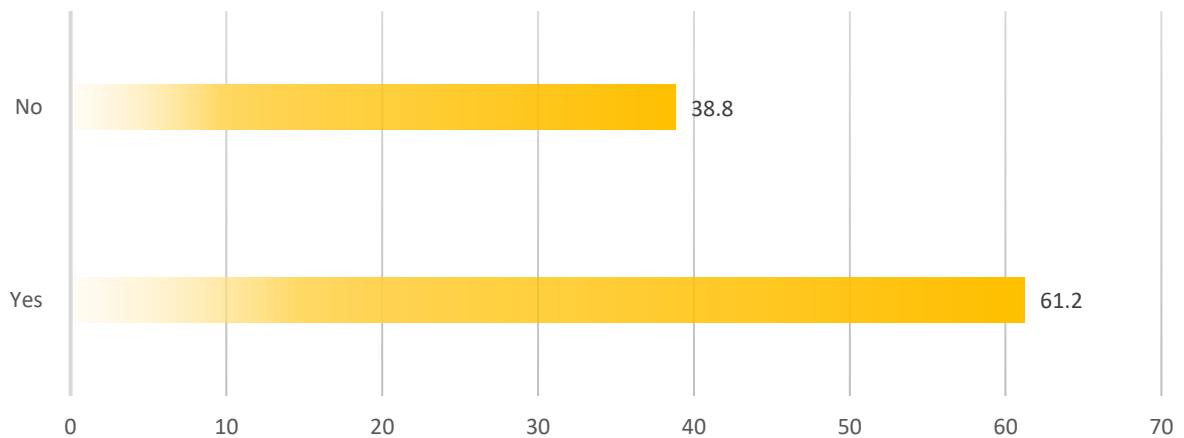
The following section provides greater detail about the difficulties regional employers have experienced in attracting the staff they require to meet their business needs.

Please indicate the level of difficulty your organisation has faced over the past 12 months in attracting suitable staff in the following areas.

	Easy	Not easy but still attracted suitable staff	Difficult	Tried but couldn't attract
Accounting and finance	0%	14.1%	14.1%	1.6%
Administration and support staff	3.0%	25.4%	20.9%	6.0%
Apprentices and trainees	3.2%	21.0%	21.0%	1.6%
Chefs and other hospitality professionals	0%	11.9%	5.1%	8.5%
Customer services	0%	18.2%	21.2%	10.6%
Disability support workers	0%	1.8%	3.6%	0%
Education workers, teachers, assistants etc.	0%	3.4%	6.9%	5.2%
Environmental professionals	0%	3.6%	5.5%	1.8%
Health professionals	0%	0%	5.4%	8.9%
Information technology professionals	3.6%	3.6%	7.1%	0%
Labourers	3.4%	13.6%	16.9%	1.7%
Machinery operators and drivers	1.7%	8.6%	3.4%	5.2%
Managers and other professionals	0%	8.6%	15.5%	20.7%
Mechanical and engineering	0%	1.8%	5.5%	3.6%
Mining specific	0%	0%	3.6%	1.8%

	Easy	Not easy but still attracted suitable staff	Difficult	Tried but couldn't attract
Retail assistants	1.6%	6.3%	14.3%	3.2%
Sales and marketing	0%	3.3%	15.0%	3.3%
Tour guides and other tourism industry professionals	0%	3.5%	3.5%	3.5%
Trades (general)	1.9%	5.7%	11.3%	7.5%
Agriculture/large scale grazing	0%	0%	100.0%	0%
Builder / carpentry	0%	33%	33%	33%
Tiler	0%	100%	0%	0%
Carpet layers	0%	0%	0%	100.0%
Concreters	0%	0%	100.0%	0%
Electrician	0%	33.0%	33%	33%
Plumbers	0%	100%	0%	0%
Mechanic / automotive	0%	0%	0%	100%
Panel beaters	0%	0%	0%	100%
Powerline workers	0%	0%	0%	100%
Flight nurses	0%	100.0%	0%	0%
GPs	0%	0%	100.0%	0%
Horticulture	0%	0%	100.0%	0%

	Easy	Not easy but still attracted suitable staff	Difficult	Tried but couldn't attract
Local delivery drivers	0%	0%	100.0%	0%
Truck driver	0%	0%	100%	0%
Phone system techs	0%	0%	100.0%	0%
Registered nurses	0%	100.0%	0%	0%
Shearers	0%	0%	100.0%	0%
Traffic controllers	0%	0%	100.0%	0%
Workforce & development manager	0%	0%	0%	100.0%
Counselling	0%	0%	0%	100.0%
Property managers	0%	0%	100.0%	0%

Please indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements.

Unfilled vacancies within our organisation over the past 12 months are caused by;

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
A lack of succession planning from within the organisation	4.9%	11.5%	42.6%	24.6%	16.4%
Applicants lacked technical and specific skill sets	16.7%	45.5%	25.8%	7.6%	4.5%
Applicants lacked sufficient experience	18.2%	45.5%	25.8%	6.1%	4.5%
Applicants were not job ready	12.5%	34.4%	39.1%	7.8%	6.3%
Competition from other employers	22.7%	36.4%	30.3%	4.5%	6.1%
Location - remoteness / isolation	34.8%	28.8%	28.8%	4.5%	3.0%
Negative perception of the region	14.5%	24.2%	45.2%	12.9%	3.2%
Remuneration rates are not attractive enough	11.5%	32.8%	27.9%	21.3%	6.6%
Perception of or lack of services in the region	16.1%	29.0%	41.9%	8.1%	4.8%
Regional connectivity	10.2%	23.7%	55.9%	6.8%	3.4%
Shortage of qualified applicants	42.0%	40.6%	15.9%	%	1.4%
Type of work is not seen as desirable	21.9%	28.1%	29.7%	15.6%	4.7%

7.8 The Impact

Whilst 10 percent of businesses report that staffing difficulties have not impacted their business, the impact has been felt across many areas for the other 90 percent, with missed opportunities and delays impacting more than half and additional operating expenses impacting almost 42 percent.

What impact has hard to fill vacancies had on your organisation?

Category	Percent
Other - please specify	12.7
Not applicable, we have experienced no difficulties	10.1
No negative impacts	1.3
Missed opportunities for growth	53.2
Impacts on the organisation's viability	19
Lower quality of goods/services	24.1
Loss of orders/services to competitors	24.1
Low productivity	31.6
Impacts on the organisation's credibility	31.6
Failure to meet deadlines	32.9
Delays in production or provision of goods/services	51.9
Additional operating expenses	41.8

PERCENT

7.9   Retention

A certain amount of turnover will always exist in an organisation, and some may be beneficial as it makes way for new talent. Industries that tend to employ many first-time, part-time, seasonal and student workers are naturally prone to extreme or fluctuating attrition.

In an increasingly competitive and fast-moving labor market, it is critical for businesses to understand why some employees go and others stay — not only for the bottom line, but also to retain top talent. Understanding what employees value, measuring the financial impact of retention and turnover, and managing and improving employee retention are all strategic advantages.

Individuals leave their jobs for many different reasons. Some are voluntary, such as taking another job, while others are involuntary, such as getting laid off. Employee retention strategies primarily focus on voluntary turnover that is detrimental to the organisation, as opposed to the loss of a poor performer. It also focuses on turnover that is avoidable.

As businesses compete for top talent, employee retention is crucial. While some experts suggest that a 90 percent retention rate is a good goal, the reality is, it varies across different companies and industries. However, the ability to retain employees is universally beneficial for many reasons.

Following is nine of the top benefits:

Cost reduction. Employers spend hundreds of millions of dollars every year recruiting and training new workers. Those costs are sunk if an employee leaves prematurely.

Recruitment and training efficiency. By focusing on employee retention, companies reduce recruiting costs and enjoy greater returns on employee training. Recruiting costs include fees paid to recruiters or to advertise the position, interview-related travel and possible signing bonuses. Next comes training, which can also be costly.

Increased productivity. Employee turnover sets back productivity because it takes time for a new worker to get up to speed and produce at a comparable level as their predecessor. It also takes a toll on remaining staff, who must take on additional work and may produce lower-quality output as a result.

Improved employee morale. Organisations with successful employee retention programs foster greater connectedness and engagement, which helps morale and, in turn, boosts retention.

Experienced employees. It stands to reason that the longer employees remain at an organisation, the more engaged, knowledgeable and skillful they are. They have also forged valuable relationships with customers and co-workers.

Better customer experience. Inexperienced and less adept new staff may be more prone to missteps that negatively impact a customer's experience with the company.

Improved employee satisfaction and experience. A symbiotic relationship exists between retention and both employee satisfaction — worker happiness and fulfillment — and employee engagement, the level of commitment workers bring to their roles. Satisfied and engaged employees are often more likely to stay in an organisation, and organisations with high retention rates often experience greater employee satisfaction and engagement.

Stronger corporate culture. Corporate culture develops over time, based on employees' cumulative traits and interactions. When engaged employees who are aligned with an organisation's culture stay, they strengthen the organisational ethos. A strong corporate culture also improves productivity and performance.

Increased revenue. Employee retention is not just about cutting costs; anecdotal evidence shows it can have a positive impact on revenue as well. Employers with better retention rates deliver a better customer and employee experience, hold on to experienced top talent and are more productive — each of which can boost growth.

In the past 12 months have you experienced difficulty retaining staff?
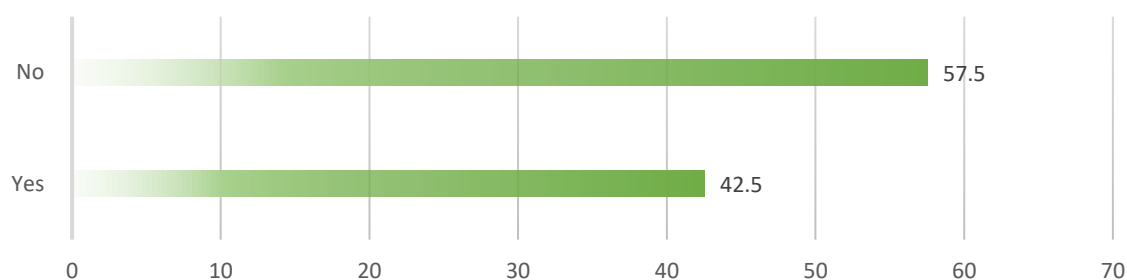
If you answered yes to the question above, to what extent has your organisation experienced difficulty in retaining appropriately skilled staff in the past 12 months? Are you experiencing what you consider to be?
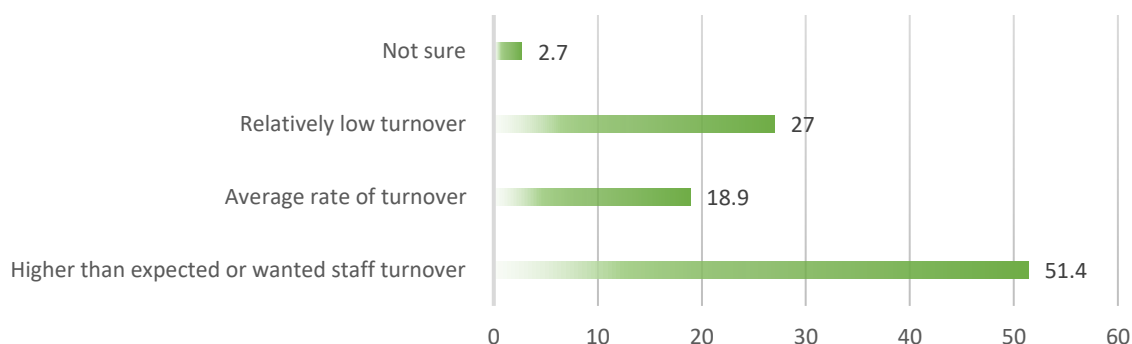
What do you believe are the main reasons for staff voluntary leaving your organisation?

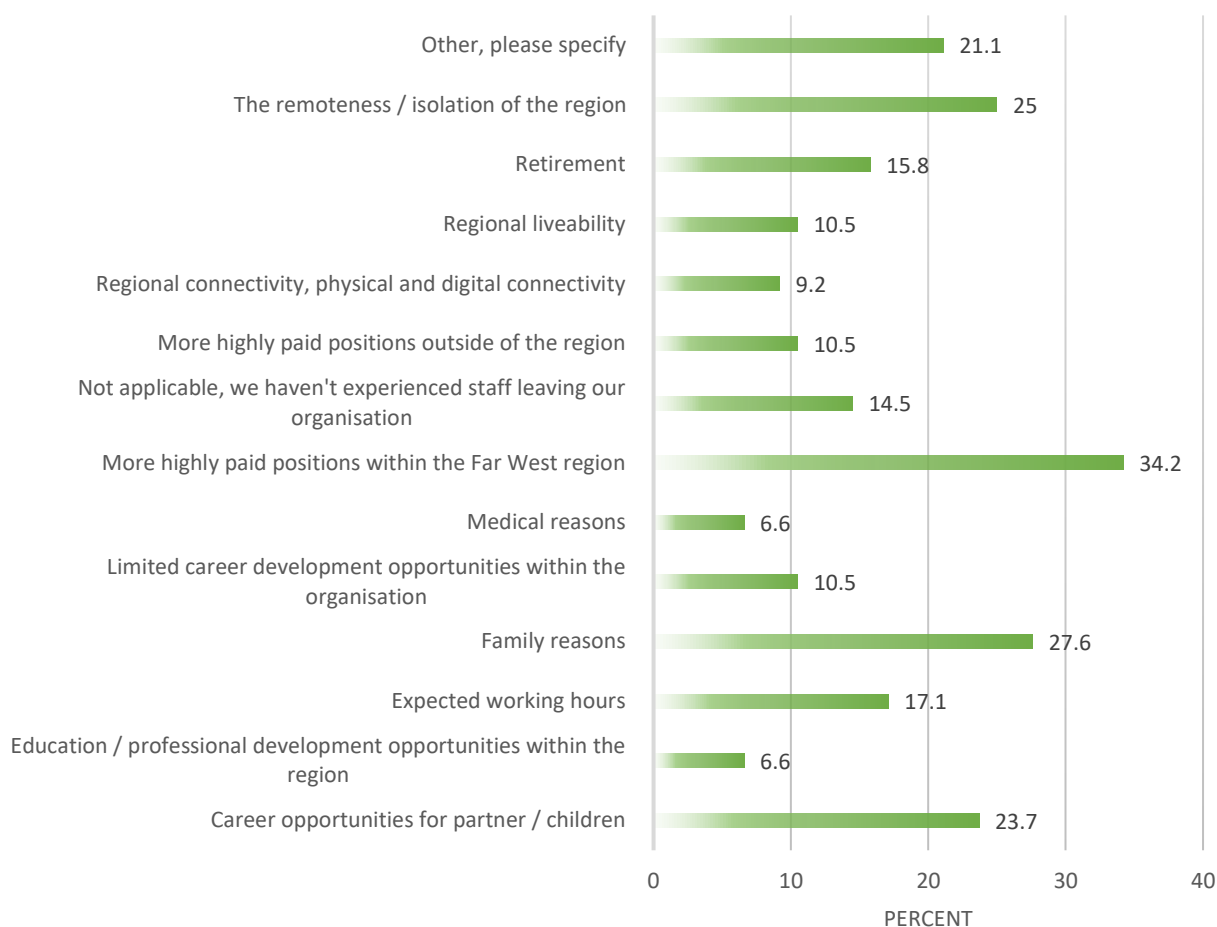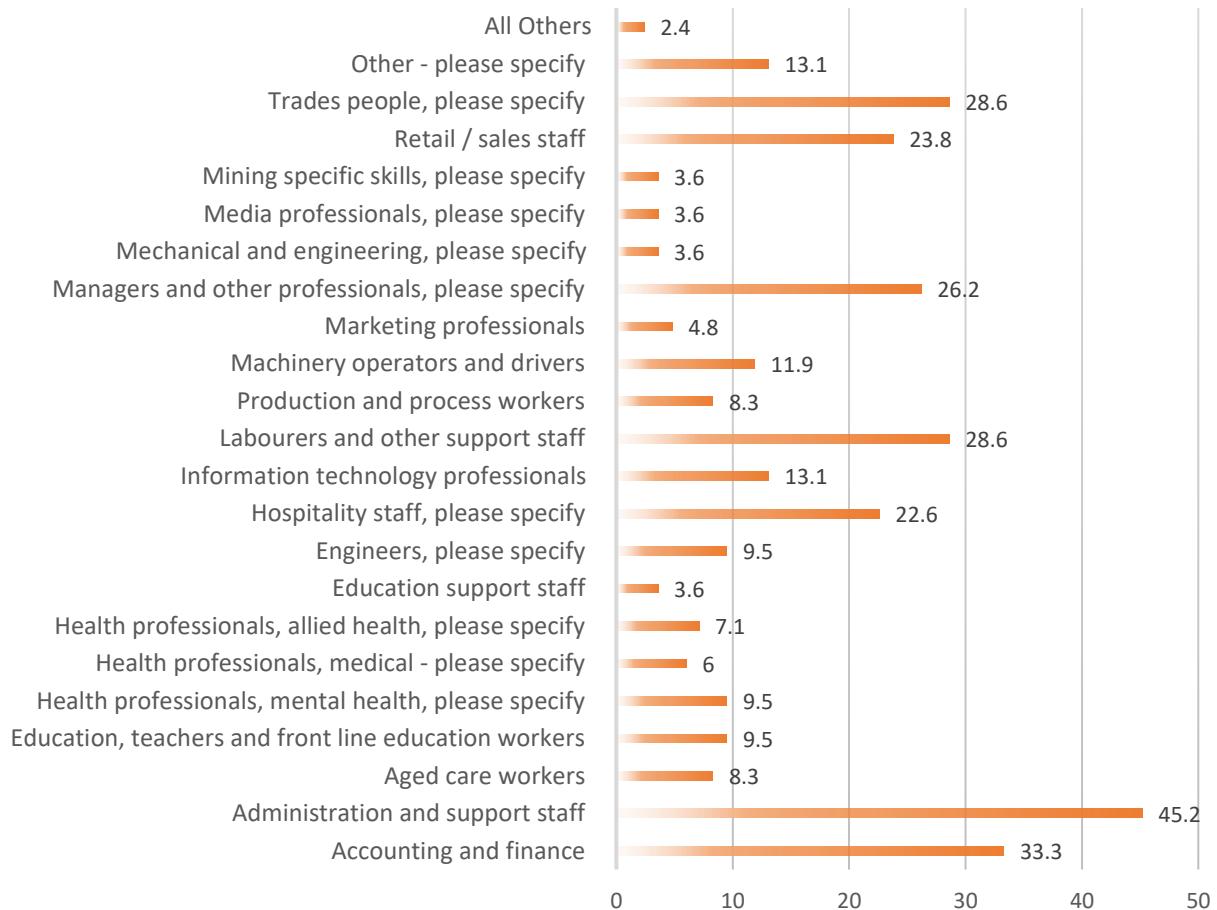| Reason	Percent
Other, please specify	21.1
The remoteness / isolation of the region	25
Retirement	15.8
Regional liveability	10.5
Regional connectivity, physical and digital connectivity	9.2
More highly paid positions outside of the region	10.5
Not applicable, we haven't experienced staff leaving our organisation	14.5
More highly paid positions within the Far West region	34.2
Medical reasons	6.6
Limited career development opportunities within the organisation	10.5
Family reasons	27.6
Expected working hours	17.1
Education / professional development opportunities within the region	6.6
Career opportunities for partner / children	23.7

PERCENT

In the Doors of Opportunity are Open research report, employees identified these five factors as the leading contributors to job satisfaction:

1. Respectful treatment of all employees at all levels.
2. Remuneration/pay.
3. Trust between employees and senior management.
4. Job security.
5. Opportunities to use their skills and abilities at work.

Employee job satisfaction and engagement factors are key ingredients of employee retention programs. The importance of addressing these factors is obvious, but actually doing so takes time and these tasks are often left for another day. However, the payoff of focusing on employee retention—in terms of increased performance, productivity, employee morale and quality of work, plus a reduction in both turnover and employee-related problems—is well worth the time and financial investment. The bottom line is that by managing for employee retention, organisations will retain talented and motivated employees who truly want to be a part of the company and who are focused on contributing to the organisation's overall success.

7.10 Future skill needs

What skills and positions do you envision being required in the next 5 years?

Category	Value
All Others	2.4
Other - please specify	13.1
Trades people, please specify	28.6
Retail / sales staff	23.8
Mining specific skills, please specify	3.6
Media professionals, please specify	3.6
Mechanical and engineering, please specify	3.6
Managers and other professionals, please specify	26.2
Marketing professionals	4.8
Machinery operators and drivers	11.9
Production and process workers	8.3
Labourers and other support staff	28.6
Information technology professionals	13.1
Hospitality staff, please specify	22.6
Engineers, please specify	9.5
Education support staff	3.6
Health professionals, allied health, please specify	7.1
Health professionals, medical - please specify	6
Health professionals, mental health, please specify	9.5
Education, teachers and front line education workers	9.5
Aged care workers	8.3
Administration and support staff	45.2
Accounting and finance	33.3

Respondents were asked to be specific about their future skill needs, as demonstrated below the skill needs across the region are varied and reach across every industry sector. The responses below represent the needs of employers, many requests are duplicated across industry sectors.

Health professionals, mental health		Engineers
AoD; Counsellors; Psychologist; Child & Family		Mining engineers
Child and Family nurses, psychologists, AOD workers, MH counsellors		Aircraft engineers
All health professionals		Civil engineers
Health professionals, medical		Electrical Design Engineer
GPs; Retrieval Registrars		Mechanic engineer
All Health professionals		Chemical engineers
Most categories of health professionals		Technical design
Staff in general		Structural engineers
Health professionals, allied health		Electrical engineers
All categories of allied health professionals		Building engineers
Pharmacists, Vaccinators		
Physiotherapist, occupational therapists and speech pathologists		
Dieticians		
Diabetes educators		

Hospitality staff		Managers and other professionals
All, we need every type of hospitality staff		Assessors
All, chefs, food & beverage		Building Surveyors
Bar persons and house keeping		Geologists, Surveyors, Geotech's
Baristas		HR Executive Assistant
Cafe workers		Managers at all levels
Cooks, cleaners, laundry		Normal professions at upper middle, senior and executive levels
Guest services front and back of house reception, sales, and housekeeping grounds and maintenance		Operational Supervisors, Senior HR Generalist, Project Managers
Housekeepers		
Staff with RSA		Rangers
All areas of hospitality operations		Service locators
All areas		Store manager
All areas, especially chefs and bar staff		Commercial experience managers
All roles, we have ongoing vacancies		Management staff at all levels
Baristas & all rounders		Middle managers
Chefs / waiter staff		Project and park motel managers
Customer interface - service and support		

Mechanical		Media professionals
Mechanics, light and heavy		Marketing and communications manager
Fitters and machinists		Postproduction especially
High quality welders		Presenters / producers
Mining specific skills		Journalists
UG Supervisors, Jumbo Operators, Production Drillers		**Trades**
Laboratory		All trades people, we have roles in every trade area
Operators		Automotive
Labourers		Carpet layers
Planning design		Chefs
We have opportunities in most roles		Communications data
Other Industry areas		Concreters, locators
Drivers		HV Electricians
Housekeeping		Handypersons
Support Workers		Heavy Plant, Electricians
Arts projects and communications, arts administration		Horticulture
Management, property managers		Metal Fabricators

On ground advisory staff		Plumbers
Property management support		Automotive mechanics
Qualified real estate agent		Carpentry and joinery
Safety consultants		Chefs
		Fitter machinists, boilermakers
		Mechanical and electrical
		Plumbers, roofing crew
		Spray painter
		Grit blaster

What priority is your organisation currently giving to managing skills shortages and workforce needs in the future?
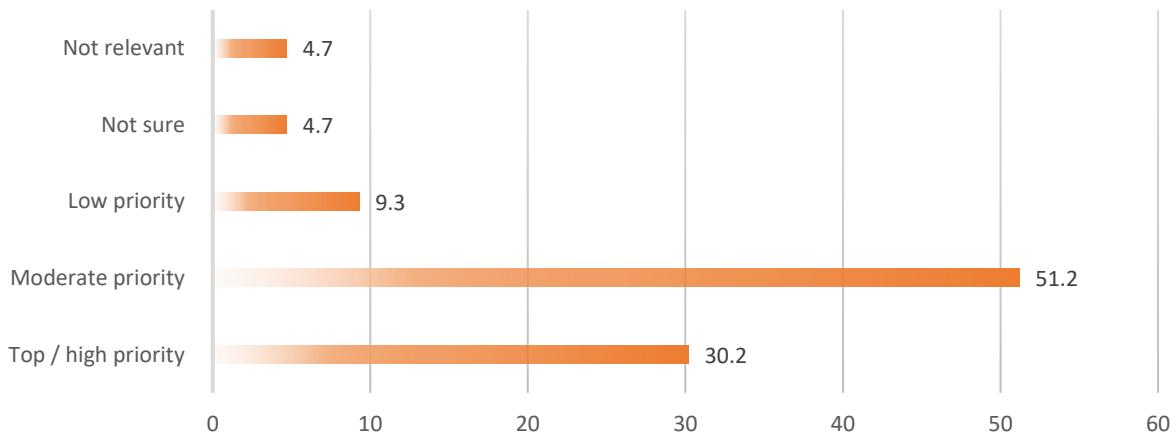

After two years of enduring a global pandemic, Australia is suffering from a very real skills shortage, with many businesses struggling as a result. In fact, KPMG's post-COVID-19 CIO survey showed that 62 percent of respondents believe the skills shortage is preventing their organisation from keeping up with the pace of change.

A second survey from Australian CEOs showed that 73 percent of Chief Executive Officers are anticipating difficulties in finding and retaining talent in 2022.

Managing skill shortages is certainly a higher priority for local business with the 2019 Far West Workforce Development Study revealing 15 percent of respondents reporting managing skills shortages was not relevant for them, that is now down to 4.7 percent. In 2019 only 29 percent of businesses reported managing skills shortages as a moderate priority, in 2022 that figure is now 51 percent.
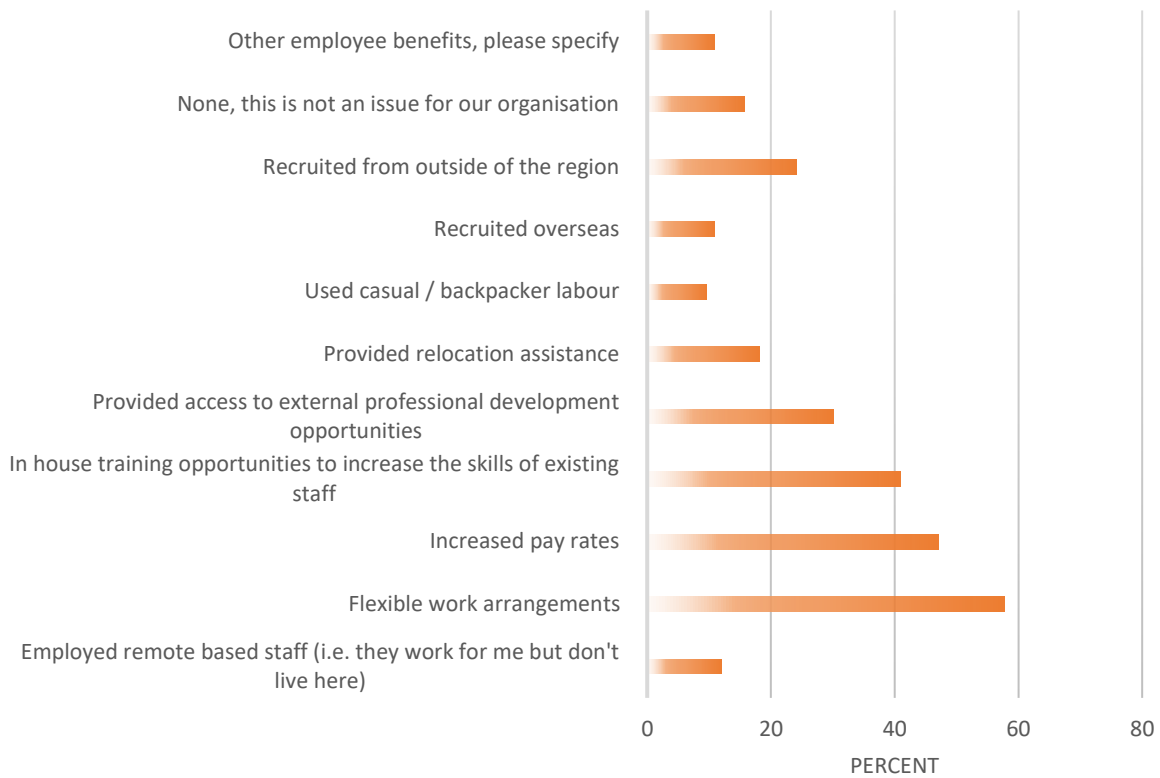
When you require new staff how do you advertise staff vacancies in your organisation or attract new staff members?
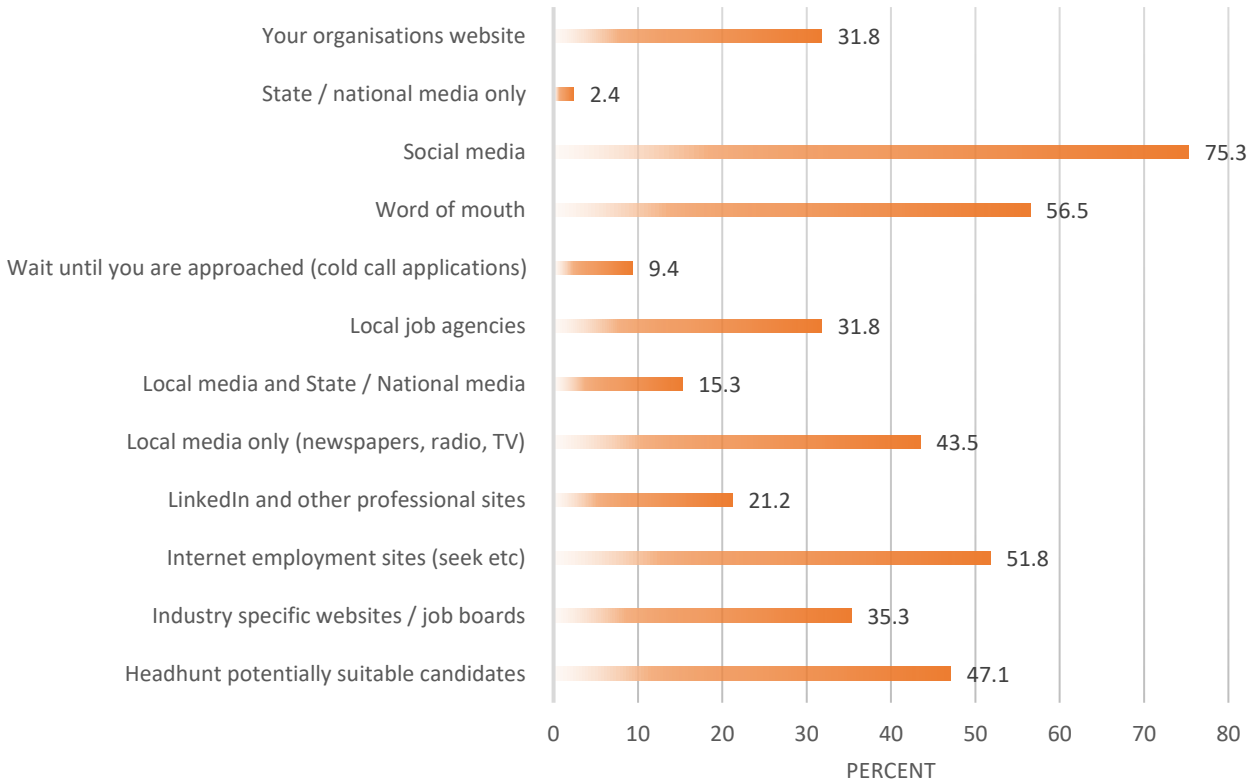
Do you believe the current options for marketing job vacancies meets your organisations needs?
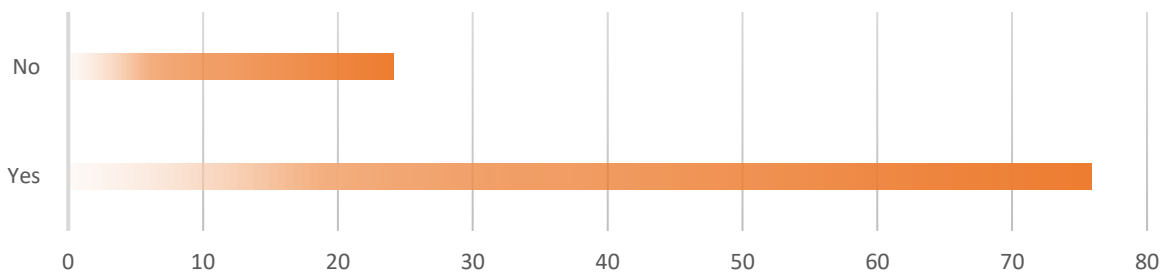
What adjustments / strategies have you introduced to assist with attracting / retaining staff?

Additional week's annual leave, Christmas shopping days, free flu shots, attractive staff facilities (kitchen, coffee machine, etc.)
Bonuses
Introduction of a monthly RDO, Salary Packaging, Gym Subsidy
Rental subsidy
Provide housing for up to 3 months + flights home
We offer above award rates
Return flights to original place

7.11 Support

Managing regional skill shortages and attracting the workforce required to support growth of the region and individual business is not the role of one agency, department of organisation.

Likewise, a single approach to addressing the workforce needs of the region will not position Far West NSW to capitalise on the opportunities being presented and support sustainable growth. Respondents were asked to identify the support and information valuable to them in addressing their individual workforce needs.
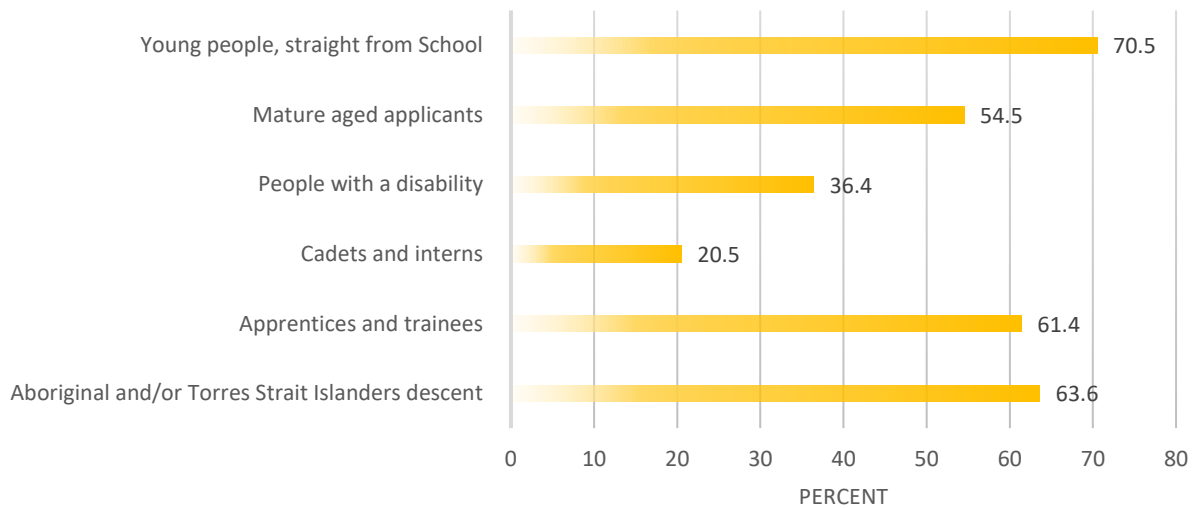
The region is supported by many services providers, agencies and individuals developing strategies to support workforce needs. Collaboration and understanding the needs of individual business and industry sectors is key to developing information sessions that support growth and meet the needs of local employers.

As demonstrated in this section the employers of the region are seeking information, guidance and support, they are particularly interested in better understanding how to recruit young people straight from school with 70 percent seeking advice on how to better recruit and retain young people.

Thinking about some of the challenges you may face over the next 5 years in attracting and retaining suitable staff would you like information or assistance with any of the following?

Would your organisation be interested in getting information or advice on how to recruit and retain any of the following groups of people?

Group	Percent
Young people, straight from School	70.5
Mature aged applicants	54.5
People with a disability	36.4
Cadets and interns	20.5
Apprentices and trainees	61.4
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islanders descent	63.6

PERCENT

Would your organisation be interested in opportunities to interact with young people in schools to support the development of their career aspirations, promote opportunities in your industry / organisation and help retain our young people?

Maybe	35.8
No	18.5
Yes	45.7
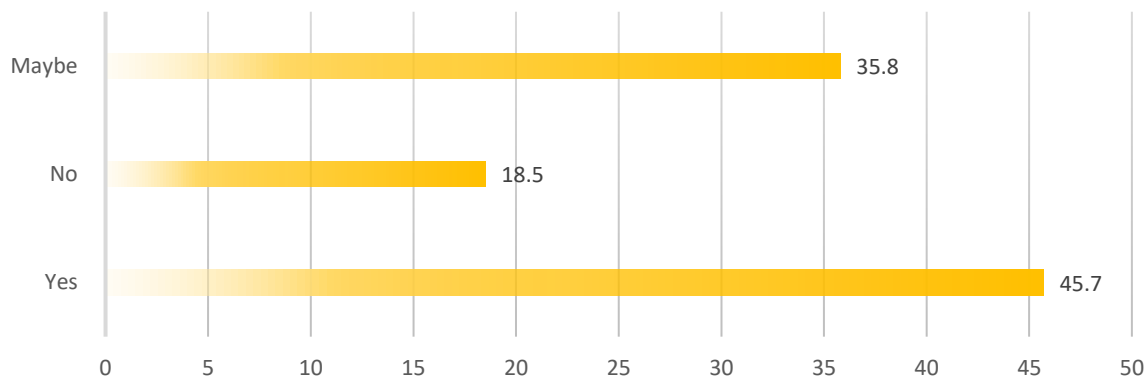
Does your organisation participate in the annual Careers Expo to promote your organisation / industry and the opportunities available within?

|	
Not aware of it	17.9
No	51.2
Yes	31
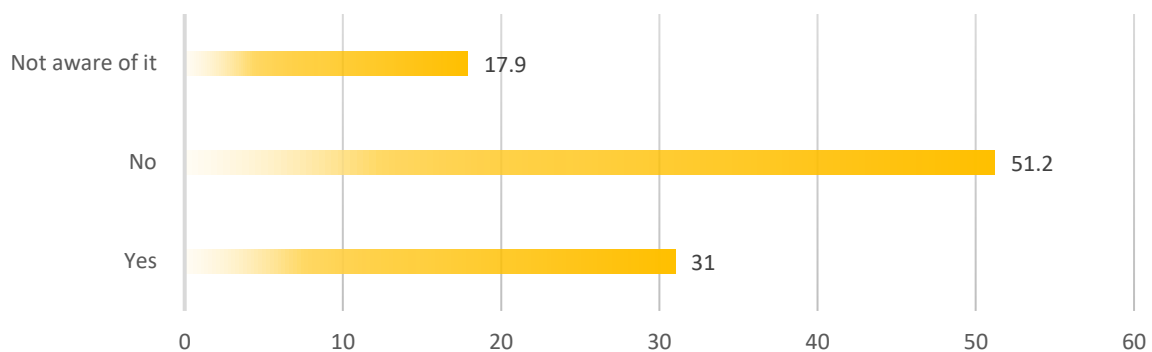
What importance does your organisation place on being an Employer of Choice?

What does it mean to be an employer of choice? An employer of choice is someone whom workers choose to work for when presented with other employment choices. This choice is a conscious decision made when joining an organisation and when deciding to stay with an organisation. Today's workers have more choices than ever before in history. Everyone has a wide range of choices of occupation, employer location, industry, and work arrangements. As long as the economy remains strong, the abundance of employment opportunities will continue.

Being an employer of choice is an advantageous position to be in. below are some benefits.

- First and foremost, it helps you attract top talent. The best employees want to work for companies with great cultures, where they can learn and grow. They also want to know that their employer cares about them as a person, not just as a worker. Being an Employer of Choice shows that you are committed to creating a positive workplace culture and investing in your employees' development.

- Second, being an Employer of Choice can help you retain your best employees. If your company is a great place to work, your employees will be less likely to leave for another opportunity. They will also be more engaged and productive in their roles. Research shows that engaged employees are more likely to stay with their company, be less absent, and produce better work.

- Finally, being an Employer of Choice can boost your company's bottom line. Studies have shown that companies who prioritise being an Employer of Choice tend to outperform their competitors. They also have lower turnover rates, which saves money on recruiting and training costs.
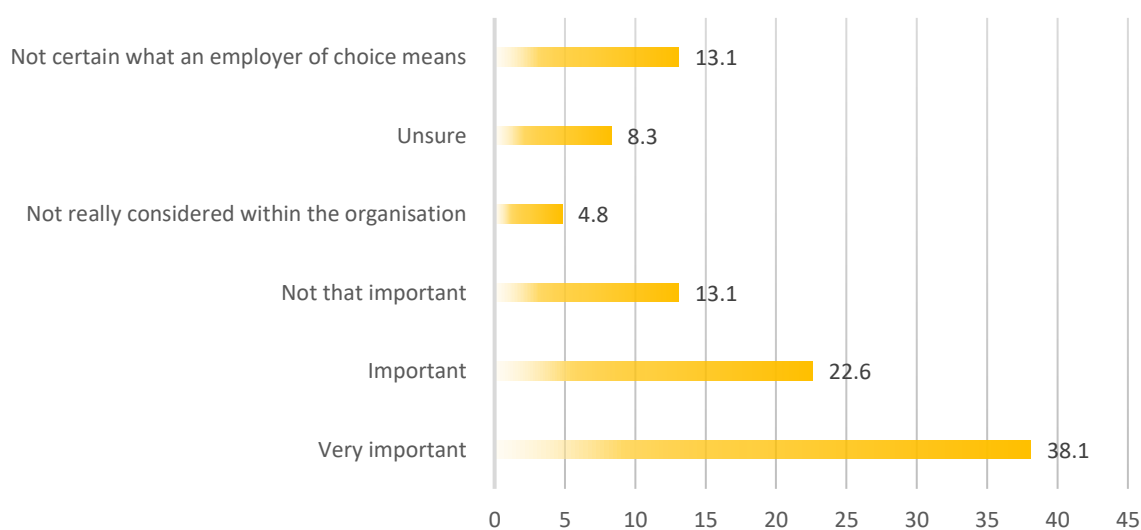
7.12 Generic employability skills

Employability skills (sometimes called 'soft' skills) refer to a set of transferable skills and key personal attributes which are highly valued by employers and essential for effective performance in the workplace. Unlike professional or technical skills, these employability skills are generic in nature, rather than job-specific, and are common to all work roles and workplaces across all industry types - for instance, communication and teamwork.

Employability skills are important because they give employees the confidence to cope with deadlines, unforeseen delays and unique personalities. They allow us to manage emotions and remain motivated under pressure.

Employability Skills Training aims to get individuals job ready. This improves the likelihood that they will be a suitable candidate.

As employers complain about the lack of work readiness amongst young people entering the workplace, it's important to look at ways in which employability skills can be developed through work experience, work shadowing and volunteering and helping our young people understand the value of these skills and the importance employers place on them.

The following pages highlight the importance regional employers place on these generic employability skills and may help job seekers, especially our young people understand the importance and consider the generic employability skills they have developed through life experiences.

Raising awareness of employability skills are key to helping young people develop them.

Developing employability skills is not just important for young people and job seekers, they are important skills for every employee and every business and as demonstrated in this section many of the regions' employers highlight a lack of employability skills across all demographics. 77 percent of respondents highlighted employability skills as the most valuable transferable skills that cross over industry and economic sectors.

The generic employability skills focused upon in this survey included.

- Communication
- Teamwork
- Problem solving
- Personal and social responsibility
- Initiative
- Planning and organising
- Self-management
- Learning
- Technology

Communication

The ability to give and receive information - both verbally and in writing - that is clear, well-structured, and targeted to the intended audience. Communication skills also include listening and questioning skills as well as non-verbal communication, such as eye-contact, body language and pace and tone of voice.

Communication that contributes to productive and harmonious relations across employees and customers.

	Important	Nice to have but not really important	Not so important	Not relevant
Listening & understanding	98.7%	1.3%	0.0%	0.0%
Speaking clearly & directly	97.3%	2.7%	0.0%	0.0%
Writing to the needs of the audience	64.8%	21.1%	7.0%	7.0%
Negotiating responsively	71.4%	18.6%	5.7%	4.3%
Understanding the needs of internal & external customers	83.8%	10.8%	0.0%	5.4%
Persuading effectively	50.0%	31.9%	11.1%	6.9%
Establishing & using networks	53.6%	34.8%	8.7%	2.9%
Sharing information	72.2%	22.2%	2.8%	2.8%
Reading independently	62.0%	31.0%	4.2%	2.8%
Using numeracy effectively	75.0%	22.2%	2.8%	0.0%

Teamwork

Teamwork helps in delegating tasks according to each member's abilities. This work-sharing improves efficiency and the productivity of each individual. A successful team is one where everyone's unique skills and strengths help the team achieve a shared goal in the most effective way.

Teamwork that contributes to productive working relationships and outcomes.

	Important	Nice to have but not really important	Not so important	Not relevant
Working as an individual & as a member of a team	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Working across different ages, irrespective of gender, race, religion or political persuasion	91.9%	4.1%	1.4%	2.7%
Knowing how to define a role as part of the team	78.7%	16.0%	5.3%	0.0%
Applying team work to a range of situations	90.5%	8.1%	1.4%	0.0%
Coaching & mentoring skills including giving feedback	75.0%	19.4%	5.6%	0.0%
Identifying the strengths of team members	78.7%	16.0%	4.0%	1.3%

Problem solving

Solving problems involves both analytical and creative skills. The skills required can vary, depending on the problem and the role in the organisation, but the following skills are key to problem-solving: analytical ability, lateral thinking, initiative, logical reasoning and persistence.

Problem-solving that contributes to productive outcomes.

	Important	Nice to have but not really important	Not so important	Not relevant
Developing creative, innovative and practical solutions	83.6%	13.7%	2.7%	0.0%
Showing independence and innovation to solve problems	83.6%	15.1%	1.4%	0.0%
Solving problems in teams	81.9%	16.7%	1.4%	0.0%
Applying a range of strategies to problem solving	83.1%	15.5%	1.4%	0.0%
Applying problem solving strategies across a range of areas	80.3%	16.9%	0.0%	2.8%
Using mathematics including budgeting and financial management to solve problems	60.0%	24.3%	7.1%	8.6%
Resolving customer concerns in relation to complex projects issues	76.8%	14.5%	1.4%	7.2%

Personal and social responsibility

A workplace culture that is respectful, courteous, fair and that values individual differences is a core aspect of building a positive workplace culture. Promoting equity and diversity is a key component of managing employees and by focusing on building a positive and respectful culture we will enhance the performance of all employees.

Personal and social responsibility.

	Important	Nice to have but not really important	Not so important	Not relevant
Knowledge of codes of conduct	94.4%	5.6%	0.0%	0.0%
High standard of manners	90.3%	9.7%	0.0%	0.0%
Showing interest and respect for the opinions of others	94.4%	5.6%	0.0%	0.0%
A respect for ethical practice and social responsibility	93.2%	6.8%	0.0%	0.0%
An appreciation of, and respect for, diversity	93.1%	5.6%	1.4%	0.0%

Initiative and enterprise

Initiative and enterprise are important skills to help develop new and better opportunities within our work. Being able to recognise a need to improve something is a valuable skill for making work more productive. Being enterprising goes beyond normal effort; it means showing enthusiasm to see your ideas into reality.

Recognising the need for a new opportunity or way of doing things can lead to a useful change in work practice. With the initiative to find better solutions to usual habits, we can improve the way we work and have a more effective outcome.

Initiative and enterprise that contributes to innovative outcomes.

	Important	Nice to have but not really important	Not so important	Not relevant
Adapting to new situations	86.5%	12.2%	1.4%	0.0%
Developing a strategic, creative and long-term vision	61.6%	26.0%	11.0%	1.4%
Being creative	59.7%	31.9%	6.9%	1.4%
Identifying opportunities not obvious to others	61.1%	27.8%	8.3%	2.8%
Translating ideas into action	75.0%	18.1%	5.6%	1.4%

Planning and organising

Planning and organising skills help us manage time, tools, and resources to reach a goal. They help us work out what is needed to achieve the aims. Planning is vital at all levels in the workplace. You'll need to plan your own tasks and time. Your manager must plan the workload, resources and time required of your team. Senior managers have to plan the goals and aims of the department.

They're useful skills. Without planning and organising, there would be chaos. Nothing would get done and everything would be a mess.

Planning and organising are a power couple!

Although planning and organising are individual skills, they go hand in hand. When they're combined, a super skill is born!

Planning and organising that contributes to long- and short-term strategic planning.

	Important	Nice to have but not really important	Not so important	Not relevant
Managing time and priorities – setting timelines, coordinating tasks for self and with others	87.7%	9.6%	0.0%	2.7%
Being resourceful	79.7%	17.6%	1.4%	1.4%
Taking initiative and making decisions	83.8%	14.9%	1.4%	0.0%
Adapting resource allocations to cope with contingencies	72.2%	20.8%	2.8%	4.2%
Establishing clear project goals and deliverables	64.8%	25.4%	5.6%	4.2%
Allocating people and other resources to tasks	69.9%	17.8%	6.8%	5.5%

Planning the use of resources, including time management	80.6%	11.1%	2.8%	5.6%
Participating in continuous improvement and planning processes	70.8%	22.2%	5.6%	1.4%
Developing a vision and a proactive plan to accompany it	57.7%	29.6%	7.0%	5.6%
Predicting – weighing up risk, evaluating alternatives and applying evaluation criteria	60.6%	33.8%	4.2%	1.4%
Collecting, analysing and organising information	60.6%	26.8%	4.2%	8.5%
Understanding basic business systems and their relationships	63.4%	26.8%	2.8%	7.0%

Self-management

Self-management is the ability to manage workflow and productivity in the workplace without reliance on a supervisor. Developing and practicing self-management skills can help improve workplace performance and positively impact career development.

Self-management that contributes to employee satisfaction and growth.

	Important	Nice to have but not really important	Not so important	Not relevant
Having a personal vision and goals	70.3%	27.0%	2.7%	0.0%
Evaluating and monitoring own performance	83.6%	16.4%	0.0%	0.0%
Having knowledge and confidence in own ideas and visions	79.7%	20.3%	0.0%	0.0%
Articulating own ideas and visions	75.3%	24.7%	0.0%	0.0%
Taking responsibility	95.9%	4.1%	0.0%	0.0%

Learning

Learning is about wanting to understand new things and picking them up quickly. It also involves taking on new tasks and being able to adapt to change.

Learning that contributes to ongoing improvement and expansion in employee and organisational operations and outcomes.

	Important	Nice to have but not really important	Not so important	Not relevant
Managing own learning	73.2%	23.9%	2.8%	0.0%
Contributing to the learning community at the workplace	68.1%	27.8%	4.2%	0.0%
Using a range of mediums to learn – mentoring, peer support and networking, IT and courses	59.2%	32.4%	7.0%	1.4%
Applying learning to technical issues (e.g. learning about products) and people issues (eg interpersonal and cultural aspects of work)	63.9%	29.2%	5.6%	1.4%
Having enthusiasm for ongoing learning	70.4%	26.8%	1.4%	1.4%
Being willing to learn in any setting – on and off the job	75.0%	22.2%	1.4%	1.4%
Being open to new ideas and techniques	87.5%	11.1%	1.4%	0.0%
Being prepared to invest time and effort in learning new skills	78.9%	21.1%	0.0%	0.0%
Acknowledging the need to learn in order to accommodate change	75.7%	22.9%	0.0%	1.4%

Technology

Technology skills are part of every workplace in modern society. Thus, building up technical skills can make us all a more attractive job candidate. Depending on the role, we may need more software knowledge. As a basic requirement, most employees should be adept at the Microsoft Office Suite.

Technology that contributes to effective carrying out of tasks

	Important	Nice to have but not really important	Not so important	Not relevant
Having a range of basic IT skills	73.2%	19.7%	4.2%	2.8%
Applying IT as a management tool	45.7%	41.4%	7.1%	5.7%
Using IT to organise data	57.1%	32.9%	4.3%	5.7%
Being willing to learn new IT skills	64.4%	30.1%	1.4%	4.1%
Having the WHS knowledge to apply technology	62.0%	32.4%	1.4%	4.2%
Having the appropriate physical capacity	60.6%	33.8%	1.4%	4.2%

Thinking of the employability skills above are you satisfied the majority of your employees and new job seekers have these skills?

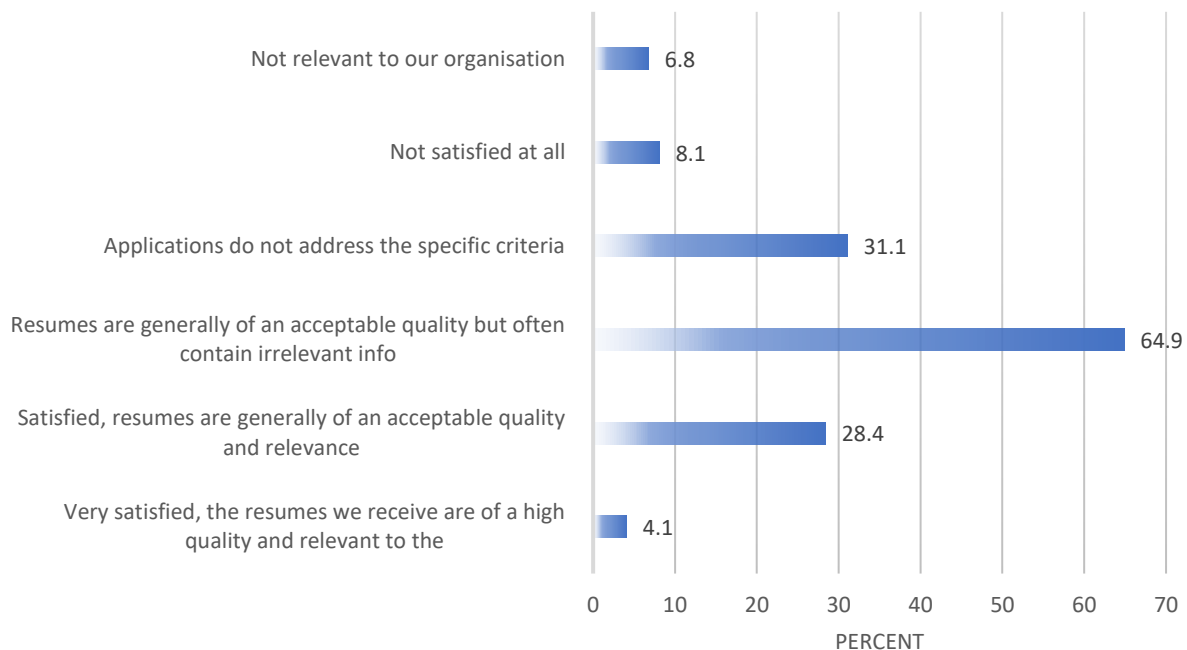|	Yes	No	Sometimes	Not relevant
Young people seeking employment (18-25 years old)	20.6%	20.6%	55.9%	2.9%
People seeking employment (25-45 years old)	26.9%	9.0%	62.7%	1.5%
Mature aged people seeking employment (over 45 years old)	26.5%	4.4%	66.2%	2.9%
Unemployed	7.6%	25.8%	54.5%	12.1%
Current employees	55.1%	0%	42.0%	2.9%

7.13 Advice to jobseekers

In the market for a new job? You've probably been urged to "pursue your passions," "leverage your network," "tailor and tidy up your resume," "do your homework," and "dress for success"—among other things.

These are foundational aspects to job seeking that are timeless but hearing that advice from the people that are best placed to offer that job is often valuable information.

Respondents were asked about their level of satisfaction with resumes and job applications and to provide advice to job seekers from their experience.

The advice below is directly from the regions employers, obviously this advice is repeated from different employers and begins to highlight the common advice across industry sectors.

As a general rule, how satisfied are you with the quality and relevance of resumes and applications you receive?

Category	Percent
Not relevant to our organisation	6.8
Not satisfied at all	8.1
Applications do not address the specific criteria	31.1
Resumes are generally of an acceptable quality but often contain irrelevant info	64.9
Satisfied, resumes are generally of an acceptable quality and relevance	28.4
Very satisfied, the resumes we receive are of a high quality and relevant to the	4.1

PERCENT

Whilst 65 percent of respondents have reported resumes are generally of an acceptable quality only 4 percent are very satisfied, meaning, across the region twice as many employers are not satisfied as very satisfied.

As an employer within the region what advice would you provide to potential employees and job seekers regarding their resume and applications?

- Be dressed ready to work when handing in a resume, turning up in tracksuit pants and thongs won't get you a job. I would give people a go/trial shift straight away if they turned up job ready.
- Address the criteria, have the required registration if it is an essential requirement.
- Address criteria and ensure relevance of information. Take time to investigate the organisation and know something about them.
- Don't worry about applying unless you have a serious interest in the role.
- Keep it simple and relevant to the role they are applying for.
- Be up to date and relevant. Accuracy.
- Tailor your resume for the job you are applying for.
- Clear, concise and relevant resume to the position being applied for. Have a relevant cover letter that addresses the position, even if the advert doesn't have specific criteria. Make the effort to relate the cover letter to the business that is advertising the position.
- Keep it simple and concise, well organised and current
- Be flexible, open to change and learn, be open and upfront, prepared to be accountable and responsible
- Only include those skills and attributes that are directly relevant to the position for which you are applying.   If your qualifications are in a completely different field, explain distinctly why you are seeking a career change and what skills your previous profession or experience brings to this new role. Check your grammar and spell-check your documents before submitting them.
- Be willing to try, learn and listen. Be honest about abilities and make good lifestyle choices (eg recreational and social). Use manners with all staff. Be conscientious and apply attention to detail.
- Please ensure the basics are met, contact details are current and proofread your document prior to sending and display in chronological order or similar so it is easy to read.
- Be honest.
- Just make sure the information provided is relevant to the role. Call the employer to discuss specific needs prior if you're unsure of what's required.
- Genuinely want the job, do background research on the role and organisation, understand the role, want a career not just a job for 12 months if that.
- Think about not only their formal qualifications but what they acquire through community activities such as sporting teams, volunteering, committees, etc.
- Describe what they can bring to the organisation if they don't have specific skills.
- Be honest.
- Read the Job Description and the advert and answer the essential criteria at a minimum. Sell yourself but don't embellish too much and conciseness can make resumes easier to read.
- Presentation needs to be improved. The amount of people who attend interviews / hand in their resume in shorts and thongs or not dressed accordingly is worrying. Also

resume and cover letters not correctly filled out and not relevant to the position. Surely this is being taught in our school systems??

- Invest time in making it perfect and error-free for each application, addressing all requests.
- To make sure they meet the criteria of the position you are applying for.
- I value how they are during the interview more than what they can write in a resume. These are often not written by the applicant.
- To include a cover letter addressing why they feel they are suitable for the role, when submitting applications in person to come well-presented and to be personable.
- Keep up to date with all qualifications and state a willingness to obtain qualifications.
- Just be honest.
- Consider tailoring resumes to specific jobs / employers, write a personal letter to the manager rather than a stock letter or no cover letter at all. Attitude trumps experience in my industry and can kill otherwise successful partnerships.
- Honesty
- Overall want the job rather than just putting it in to satisfy their jobseeker requirements.
- Keep it relevant and well laid out and address the specific role being applied for.
- Everyone has a chance, be truthful, confident and motivated.
- They need more details such as previous employment, as well as education achievements.
- Don't list skill sets if not competent to relevant task.
- Don't use words to describe your skills experience that you cannot explain or demonstrate. Double check to ensure you have addressed all the selection criteria Follow the instructions on how to submit your application (follow the instructions as to how to submit your application carefully. This can be used as part of the selection process - they can't do this then the resume is not read) Don't run down previous employers, If there is an issue explain, be honest. If you do not have the experience in the role look at what skills/experience, you do have or have gained and demonstrate/ explain how they are transferable.
- Do your own resume. Use words that you know and can explain often the resume is written by others or a generic format - applicant in interview has difficulty explaining the meaning, proofread respond to the advert. Address all the key selection criteria If applicant does not have experience for the role make sure to state this and then explain /demonstrate how their life experiences and skills are transferable to the position. Be neat and tidy, correct spelling etc, these matter and can be the difference of getting an interview or not, comply with the application process-shows you can follow simple instructions. If you don't do this, it is used to reject you application. Attach a short letter of why you want the job and what you can bring to the business. A lot of times this conveys more than your resume, Be honest.
- Answer the selection criteria, make sure examples are provided if requested. Understand the STAR approach to interviews. Use positive language. Always promote self realistically.
- Write a cover letter.

- Resumes need to be short and address only the position criteria.
- Reduce resumes to relevant qual's and work experience. Cover letters still need to address how you will succeed in the role, even if selection criteria is not required.
- Keep it brief but targeted to the role you are applying for. One CV for everything doesn't work
- Hand deliver resumes, read the job advertisement carefully.
- Read the position and respond accurately to that.
- Short and sweet.
- Be truthful and make sure you put in all the skills that you have, as well as solid referees.
- Dress correctly, and research the organisation.
- Address in depth the essential and desirable criteria as stated in the advertisement and provide examples. Not just a tick box attempt.
- Always have your last 2 school reports with your job application. If you get a job interview know what the position is before you apply. If questioned about your school reports have a half decent answer to why you were absent from school for 35 days of the year...
- Understand the difference between demonstrated ability, knowledge of, excellent etc.
- If the job advertisement asks you to address criteria, then do it. If you miss this simple step, it tells me that you can't follow simple instructions.
- If there is a contact number to call about the position, make sure you call don't just send a resume and consider that applying.
- Remember the reception people are the eyes and ears of any company, be respectful because I ask their opinions before hiring. If you can't be respectful and decent to the reception people, can you really represent my company.
- Every computer has spell check – use it.

7.14 Pre employment

Pre-employment testing is a standardised method to test job candidates on their qualifications for a job during the recruitment process. These can range from tests for standard job skills and knowledge of software to emotional integrity and cognitive ability.

Medical, drug and alcohol testing are common practice for many industry sectors and are critical for workplace safety.

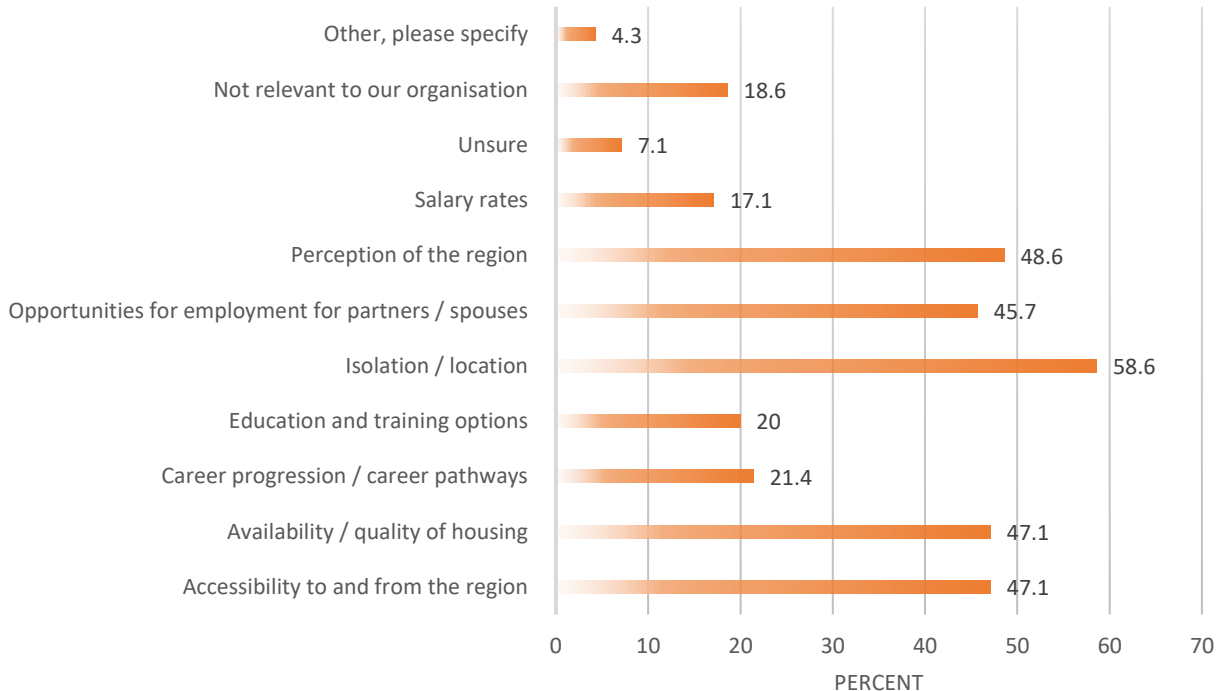**To what extent have the following been an issue for you with attracting or retaining employees?**

	Major problem	Moderate problem	No problem at all	Not relevant
Pre employment medical test	4.3%	15.7%	22.9%	57.1%
Drug and alcohol testing	5.5%	15.1%	28.8%	50.7%
Pre employment aptitude testing	1.4%	19.4%	19.4%	59.7%

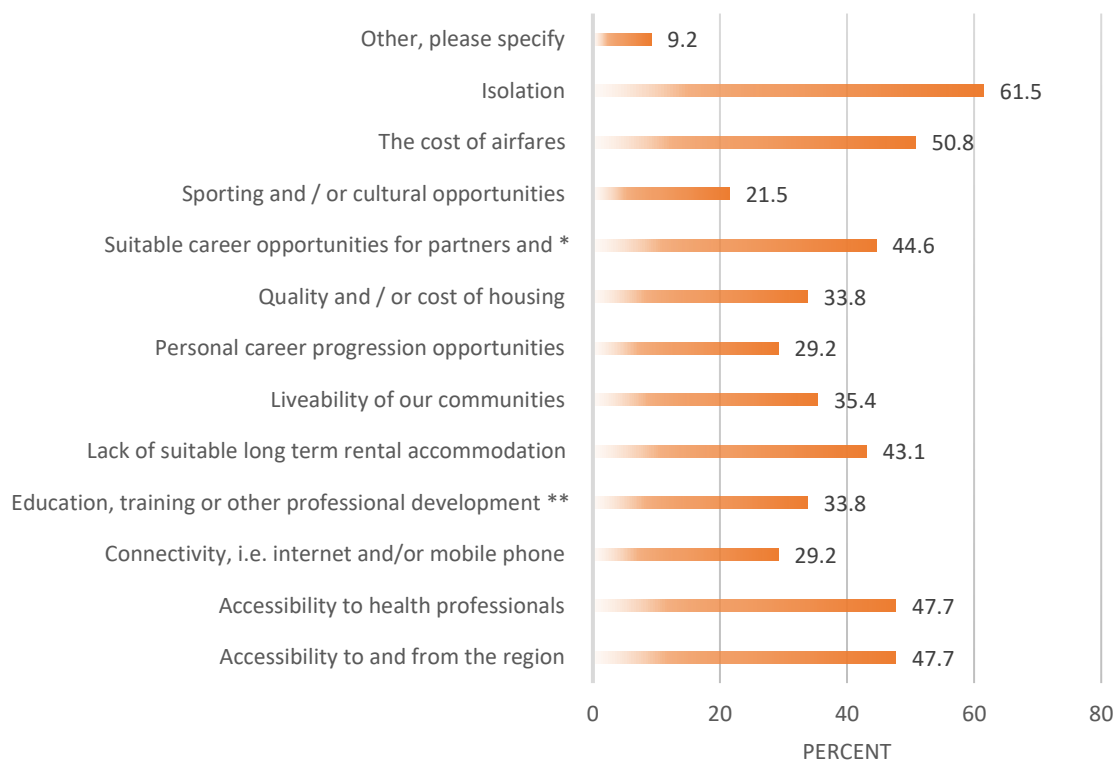# 7.15 The Barriers to attracting and retaining staff

People are the biggest asset when it comes to running a viable business today and positioning it for success going forward. They are the ones who make day-to-day magic; who serve customers; who act as the face of the company; who make the contributions that make a bottom-line difference. Challenges in attracting and retaining employees can impact a business's ability to succeed today… and thrive tomorrow.

Attracting the right staff is a not a Far West NSW regional issue but a challenge the entire world is currently struggling to overcome. There is obviously a strong demand for workers and specific skills but from an employer's perspective what are the barriers to attracting and retaining staff in Far West NSW?

From your experience what are the major barriers to attracting suitable staff from outside of the region?

Barrier	Percent
Other, please specify	4.3
Not relevant to our organisation	18.6
Unsure	7.1
Salary rates	17.1
Perception of the region	48.6
Opportunities for employment for partners / spouses	45.7
Isolation / location	58.6
Education and training options	20
Career progression / career pathways	21.4
Availability / quality of housing	47.1
Accessibility to and from the region	47.1

PERCENT

From your experience what are the issues that impact retention of staff in the region?

Issue	Percent
Other, please specify	9.2
Isolation	61.5
The cost of airfares	50.8
Sporting and / or cultural opportunities	21.5
Suitable career opportunities for partners and *	44.6
Quality and / or cost of housing	33.8
Personal career progression opportunities	29.2
Liveability of our communities	35.4
Lack of suitable long term rental accommodation	43.1
Education, training or other professional development **	33.8
Connectivity, i.e. internet and/or mobile phone	29.2
Accessibility to health professionals	47.7
Accessibility to and from the region	47.7

PERCENT

*Suitable career opportunities for partners and/or children
**Education, training or other professional development opportunities

Interestingly, whist 65 percent of employers have advertised a position in the past 12 months they were unable to fill and many of the region's employers have considered options to fulfill their workforce needs that maybe unconventional, opportunities for partners/spouses is raised as both a barrier to attracting staff and an issue impacting the retention of staff.

With staffing difficulties impacting so many employers across the region it appears an opportunity to address this barrier could also help support the workforce needs.

7.16 New residents

To meet the current and future workforce needs of the region it appears obvious we must develop and nurture many different strategies. Developing and supporting pathways to retrain local people provides obvious benefits.

Developing strategies to support the aspirational development of our young people to strive for the career goals of their choice is critical, as is ensuring we develop relevant and supported pathways for our young people to reach those goals.

However, given the current workforce needs and the potential needs, as outlined by local employers, it appears retaining and retraining local people will not be sufficient and the region must consider all options to build a suitably skilled, committed, and motivated workforce.

Migration, from other parts of NSW, another State or from overseas offers opportunities to meet our local workforce needs, enhance the skills within the region and enrich our communities. Attracting new residents is one aspect of the challenge, but ensuring they feel part of the community and know how/where to engage with the variety of sporting, cultural and community organisations is important to help them settle in, become connected and feel "at home".

Many local businesses have developed induction programs that go well beyond the standard workplace induction, and many have started to include an induction to the community. This could take any number of forms but as demonstrate below the majority of respondents believe a coordinated and structured approach to inducting new residents could have a positive impact on the happiness, engagement and retention new residents.

If new residents do decide to leave our communities, we need to ensure they are our greatest ambassadors in their next location.

Do you believe a regular coordinated approach to inducting new residents into our region would be valuable? E.g. An opportunity for them to meet other new residents, sporting and cultural organisations etc
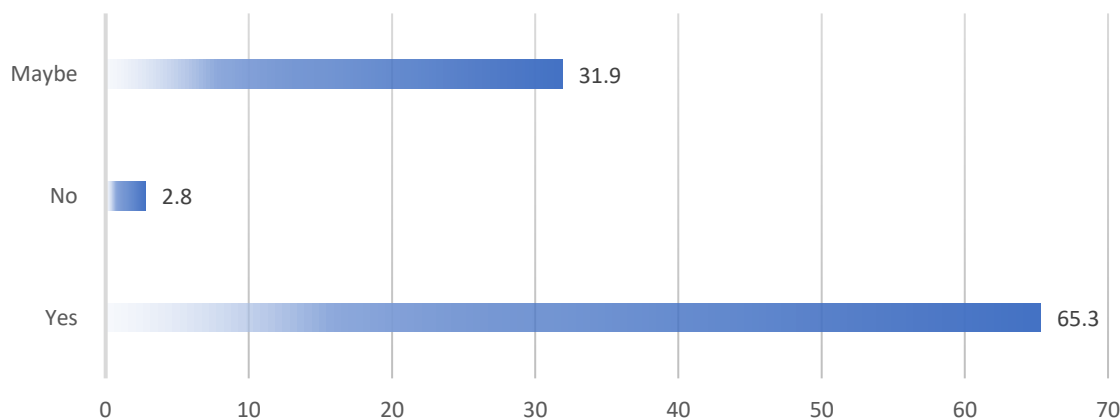
7.17 Transferability of skills

Transferable skills are often called "portable skills" because people can bring what they've learned from one job to another.

These general skills can be applied to various fields, working environments, and industries.

Even people that haven't yet had their first professional job have probably gained some transferable skills from internships, volunteering, classes, sport and even extracurriculars.

These may be soft skills, like collaboration and problem-solving, or hard skills, such as data analytics or coding.

The region has a long history of innovation, development and resilience and as such many people with comprehensive and diverse skill sets. We all know the world is changing, our jobs are changing, and we do different things now than our grandparents did, but many of the skills we have are transferable across a number of industry sectors.

To better understand how the region utilises every opportunity to meet our workforce needs respondents were asked about the best ways to recognise transferable skills, and what transferable skills they believe are the most important.

As demonstrated below, soft skills are potentially the most transferable but local employers have highlighted many other skillsets and the relevance they have across different industry sectors.

How could the region best ensure the recognition of transferable skills for employers? (tick as many as relevant)
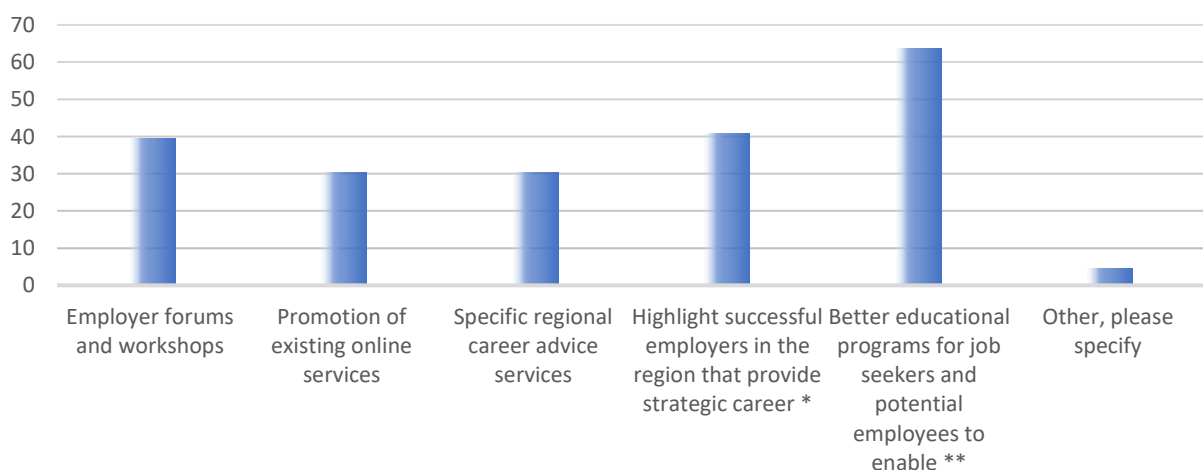
*Highlight successful employers in the region that provide strategic career planning and advice to their staff and develop case studies around them

**Better educational programs for job seekers and potential employees to enable them to identify the transferable skills and highlight them in their application

Thinking about the transferability of skills what do you believe are the valuable transferable skills that could cross over industry and economic sectors?
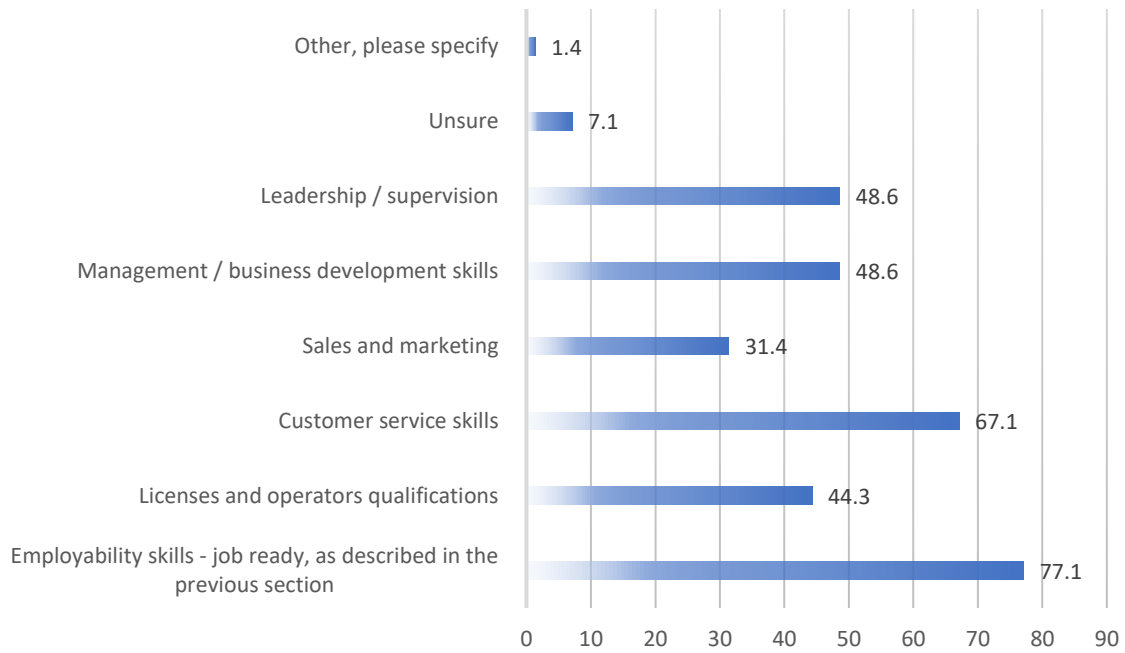
8.0   2016-2019-2022

Whether driven by technological change or unexpected disruptions such as COVID-19, recruitment trends and the top skills in demand naturally evolve over time.

Nationally, right now, we've never seen such a candidate short job market in so many industries. Despite easing COVID-19 travel restrictions and the opening of borders, vacancy activity is elevated to the extent that it's expected to take two years before internal and external migration curbs domestic skills shortages in certain fields. The expected departure of young Australians in 2022/23 for their overseas work experience will further add to the skills shortage.

At the same time, the pandemic and 2021 lockdowns prompted many people to re-evaluate their work-life priorities. As a result, record numbers plan to quit their jobs in a trend the media coined 'The Great Resignation'. This adds to candidate-short pressure, with demand exceeding supply. Together, the resulting momentum is fuelling a long list of skills in demand.

Far West employers remain positive and consistent about growth with plans for growth reasonably consistent over the 7 years, with the vast majority planning for moderate to significant growth. Yet, all employers report significant issues in attracting and retaining the skills they require to meet their growth plans.

Attracting the required skills has become a far greater issue over the years with 38 percent of respondents reporting they had advertised a position in the past 12 months they were unable to fill in 2016, that figure grew to 46 percent in 2019 and in 2022 that figure now sits at 64 percent.

Advetised a positoin in the past 12 months they were unable to fill


The need to fill positions has taken a similar path with 42 percent reporting they had settled for an employee that didn't really meet their expectations at the interview in 2016, again growing to 45 percent in 2019 and 61 percent in 2022.

The impact of staffing difficulties has also exacerbated over time with 33 percent reporting missed opportunities for growth in 2016, up to 45 percent in 2019 and in 2022, 53 percent report missed opportunities for growth as just one impact of staffing difficulties.

Operating expenses, operating expenditures, or "opex," refers to the costs incurred by a business for its operational activities. In other words, operating expenses are the costs that a company must make to perform its operational activities.

As expected, staffing difficulties have impacted the operating expenses of local businesses with 4.2 percent of respondents reporting additional operating expenses as a consequence in 2016, in 2019 that figure had jumped to 40 percent and in 2022, 42 percent report additional operating expenses as a consequence of staffing difficulties.

Additional operating expenses as a result of staffng difficulties
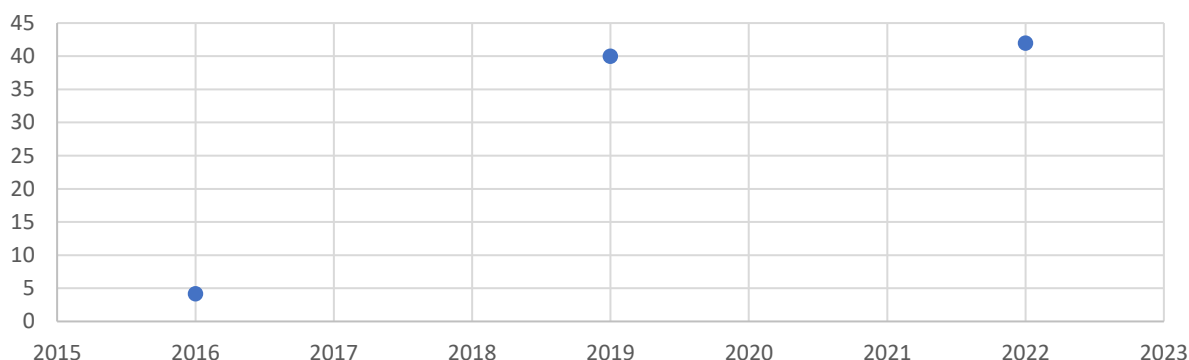
Attracting the required skills is challenging but the challenge doesn't stop once employers have recruited with 25 percent experiencing difficulties in retaining staff in 2016, in 2019 that figure had jumped to 34 percent and in 2022 over 42 percent of businesses report difficulties in retaining staff, of which 51 percent report a higher than expected or wanted turnover.

Predicting staffing needs over the coming years is always challenging, and potentially unnecessary, given respondents were asked about the skills and positions they envisioned being required over the coming years and responses covered a significant variety of skills and job titles across every industry sector.

Managing skill shortages is never easy yet more of our employers are dedicating resources to exactly that with 40 percent reporting managing skill shortages as a moderate or high priority in 2016 (4 percent high/top priority), as staffing difficulties increased so did the resources employers dedicated to managing those shortages with 65 percent in 2019 and in 2022, 81 percent report managing skill shortages as a moderate or high priority for their business. Over the previous seven years managing skill shortages jumped from a high priority for 4 percent of employers to 30 percent of employers.

What priority does your organisation give to managng skill shortages?

● Moderate to high   ● High
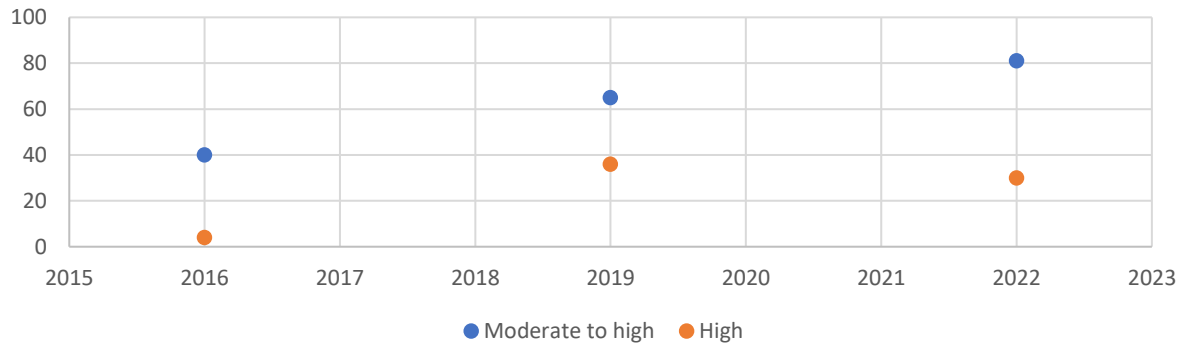
Employers across the region report many barriers to attracting staff and in 2016, 32 percent reported they were unable to attract young people, that figure jumped in 2019 to 43 percent and in 2022, 52 percent report they are unable to attract young people. A similar picture is presented around attracting mature aged people with 25 percent unable to attract suitable mature aged people in 2016, increasing to just over 40 percent in 2019 and in 2022, 46 percent are unable to attract suitable mature aged people.

Looking at who local employers would employ when they seek new staff members paints a similar picture of local employers broadening their preferences and potentially stepping outside their areas of familiarity. Obviously employing people aged 24-45 is important across almost every industry sector and for every employer. In 2016 over 90 percent stated they would employ in this demographic, 2019 saw similar numbers and in 2022 that figure has climbed slightly to 97 percent. Across every category the data has increased with local employers looking at every possibility to meet their current and future skill shortages.

9.0 A brief summary of the situation

Perceived v actual

Our perception of the issues is often the reality we experience but does that translate to the actual situation, or our experience of the situation?

Education, training and professional development

Respondents report significant concern about the training and professional development opportunities across the region and whilst many of these concerns are reality it appears a discrepancy exists between the training and development opportunities and the general knowledge of those opportunities across the region.

When asked about their level of satisfaction with current training and professional development options available to the current workforce 64 percent report being satisfied, yet only 24 percent report the current opportunities align to the required skills within their organisation, and only 32 percent are confident or very confident their education and training needs over the next 5 years can be met within the region.

Around 63 percent of respondents are prepared to pay for training and 62 percent are aware they can access funded training by working directly with registered training organisations but only 40 percent have a defined partnership with a training provider.

When employers were asked about the specific training requirements of their organisation, they reported significant needs and gaps, yet training providers report opportunities for some of those gaps are being delivered locally, suggesting a potential gap in the marketing and general knowledge of opportunities across the region.

Are our employers just too busy to seek these opportunities, is the marketing ineffective or are there other reasons training providers report opportunities and employers report gaps?

Apprentices and trainees

The workforce shortages of the region are beyond question, but as a region, is every opportunity being considered or are the access issues impacting the capacity and motivation of employers and job seekers. Twenty one percent of respondents report they currently employ apprentices, almost 20 percent trainees and only 8 percent currently employ school based trainees.

However, when asked about who they would employ 40 percent reported they would employ apprentices, 53 percent would employ trainees and over 36 percent would employ school based trainees.

It would appear the opportunities for vocational pathways far outstrip the actual pathways being created and accepted, so how do we account for the differences? When asked about access to off the job training less than half can access the off the job training locally and given the numbers of apprentices and trainees that are required to travel large distances to access training the impact could be significant. Only 12 percent of respondents reported that from their experience the required travel aspect didn't impact on the retention and motivation of their apprentice's and trainees and again only 12 percent of employers also reported that it didn't impact on their motivation and capacity to employ more apprentices.

Considering the associated costs with travel; transport, accommodation, meals and miscellaneous expenses the costs alone to access training outside the region are considerable, include the work health and safety concerns many employers have, especially when our young people are required to travel vast distance to access training, the loss of personnel for extended periods (travel, training and travel home) and the barriers are potentially too much for some employers and some apprentices.

Guidance

We all appreciate the value of good advice and guidance, and given the obvious workforce needs and issues every opportunity must be considered. Given 90 percent believe that access to a careers advisory/guidance service post-secondary school would support retention and career development it is highly possible that such a service could offer positive outcomes.

Meeting the needs

With 85 percent planning for growth, 73 percent for moderate or significant growth and the barriers reported to achieve that growth it appears obvious something must change. Fifty two percent can't attract young people and 46 percent can't attract mature aged employees leaving very little opportunities to meet those growth plans.

If 64 percent have advertised a position in the past 12 months they were unable to fill, and 61 percent settled for an employee that didn't meet their expectation at the interview are our business best placed to meet their growth plans?

The majority of respondents have expressed a desire for additional information and knowledge about engaging with specific demographic groups, attraction and retention strategies, training and professional development opportunities and understanding more about the opportunities through skilled migration.

When specifically looking at attracting employees from outside the region employers raised a number of issues with physical accessibility to and from the region, digital connectivity, the availability of quality housing, the isolation, opportunities for employment for partners and perception of the region rating the highest barriers from their experience.

Interestingly, when asked about retention similar issues were highlighted with physical accessibility, access to health professionals, digital connectivity, liveability, suitable housing, career opportunities for partners, isolation and the cost of airfares raised as the biggest issues.

Given so many employers are unable to attract the skills they require and opportunities for partners and/or children is raised as a barrier to both attraction and retention it appears this issue could possibly be addressed.

Employers report real issues attracting and retaining skills across the board and when asked about the positions/skills they envisioned being required in the next 5 years it appears opportunities are, or will be available in the region to meet the aspirations of the majority of people.

It appears then that exposing local people, especially our young people to the variety of careers available locally, developing and nurturing aspirations, establishing and maintaining strong, relevant and supported career pathways is an obvious opportunity.

Collaboration is the key

As previously discussed, developing strategies to better place businesses and the region to meet the growing workforce needs is not the role of one organisation, group, department of individual.

This issue appears to be impacting the majority of businesses which in turn impacts every resident in the region and the economic sustainability of the region. To begin to change the current situation and realise the opportunities that are being presented the region must work collaboratively, no longer can we enable ego, self-interest, parochialism, organisational reputation, or personal feeling to hinder real progress.

To really ensure the region is making progress and investigating every opportunity input from all stakeholders is critical. Also critical is a far deeper understanding of the plans, strategies and goals of every stakeholder. **When asked about the generic employability skills that were important only teamwork scored 100 percent and only by working as one team with a shared vision and common goals will the region overcome the barriers and realise the full potential.**

Obviously, further consultation is required to develop strategies to overcome the issues and barriers identified but given the responses from the regions employers some strategies could be developed in the short term.

Education, training and professional development opportunities

There appears no doubt that significant gaps exist between the opportunities and the needs, but it also appears possible that some opportunities are being delivered locally without the knowledge of local employers.

Alternate communication strategies could be developed by registered training organisations but what are they and what would suit every business? Does it require a personal approach from every training provider, but who has the resources for that, and which businesses would have the time to sit and chat with every training provider to better understand the opportunities.

Could an alternate platform specifically developed to promote professional development and training opportunities be developed and utilised by every training provider. Would this enable employers to better understand the opportunities available to them and training providers to better understand the gaps in training, or would it be just another platform that very soon we forget to access, maintain and support?

Apprentices and trainees

Without doubt the opportunities do not meet the needs of employers, especially when it comes to off the job training for apprentices and trainees, and the lack of opportunities appears to be a barrier for both the employer and the apprentice.

Training providers are businesses as well and their sustainability relies on making a profit, just like every other business, so they require reasonable class sizes, guaranteed attendance at professional development and training opportunities, and critically, qualified and motivated trainers.

Employers across the region have highlighted the need for face to face local training but to achieve that a commitment from employers will be required. Are our employers willing and able to make that commitment to employ apprentices and ensure the viability and long term sustainability of locally delivered classes?

Historically, a broker position that worked between industry, training providers and schools achieved success in building class sizes and returning face to face training opportunities to the region. Could that intermediate, or middleman type position support the needs of both industry and training providers, could a position that worked with industry sectors to create pathways and guarantee numbers for apprenticeship and traineeship classes meet the needs of training providers as a business and the needs of industry that require the training?

Engaging young people to better understand their aspirations.

A commitment from employers and training providers will not address the needs if young people in the region have no aspirations for career pathways being developed. There appears a real need to work closer with high schools to better understand the changing aspirations of young people and develop pathways through work experience, work placement and school based traineeships for young people to develop knowledge of pathways and careers and undertake opportunities to gain experience, and potentially a head start in their career pathways.

Given 52 percent of respondents are unable to attract young people, 75 percent would employ young people, 40 percent apprentices, 53 percent trainees and 36 percent school

based trainees and when specifically asked 70 percent were interested in further information about employing young people straight for school and 64 percent are interested in further information about employing apprentices and trainees there appears a significant opportunity to better inform the regions young people about career pathways and opportunities.

From the data it appears there are many employers willing to employ young people in a variety of careers, but if young people are not aware of these opportunities, or the opportunities do not align to their aspirations, what needs to change?

How does industry and the community work closer with our schools and better inform our young people of the opportunities available to them? Could this also be supported through an intermediate/broker type position that works with schools to inform young people of the opportunities.

Also critical to the development of apprenticeship pathways is the aspirational development of young people and opportunities to better understand trade pathways, the work associated and the opportunities once apprentices are qualified.

Understanding not only the aspirations of young people but their level of knowledge about various pathways, training requirements, salary potential and what different careers look like is essential to supporting aspirational development, workforce needs and community development.

Career guidance post-secondary school

The value of career guidance is well understood, and 90 percent of employers believe a service that provides guidance and support could help address workforce needs and career development.

Could a community careers advisor work across the communities in Far West NSW to support career development and pathways for people post-secondary school, could that position work with careers advisors in school to support their work and achieve stronger outcomes through a coordinated, structured and whole of community approach?

Could this position also work with industry and job seekers to support recognition of transferable skills. 64 percent of respondents believe better educational programs for job seekers to help them identify their transferable skills would be advantageous and 40 percent believe workshops and forums would help employers better understand transferable skills.

Information sharing and building knowledge

Data from the survey clearly indicates employers are seeking further information about a variety of opportunities, including employing different demographics, strategies to attract and retain staff, business leadership, skilled migration, succession planning, change management and workforce skills management.

It appears a variety of information sessions, workshops or other strategies to help inform employers of a range of opportunities is an obvious starting point.

Regional accessibility

Employers have highlighted regional accessibility and the cost of airfares as a barrier to attracting and retaining staff, but as a community what can be done to enhance access and reduce the associated costs? Is this work already being done? If so, perhaps greater transparency about the work being done and the barriers presented may enable the community to support what is currently being done in a far more visual and productive manner?

Digital connectivity

Again, employers have categorically highlighted digital connectivity as a barrier to attracting and retaining staff, furthermore 97 percent rely on electronic communication and 62 percent report they are unsatisfied with the speed and quality of internet and telecommunication services.

Regional employers have highlighted internet and telecommunication services as a barrier to growth of their business and a barrier to regional growth. 40 percent report digital communication hinders attraction and retention of staff, hinders tourism and 46 percent report digital connectivity as a safety issue for their business.

The evidence supports the community narrative that digital connectivity in the region is not at the required standard to support business growth, regional growth, liveability, economic sustainability and safety.

In 2022, when digital communication is recognised as a crucial business tool, a viable and growing health tool and the technology relied upon to deliver classes to our children during lockdown why is the region still suffering from poor quality and average speeds?

The issue is clearly a barrier for the region and a point of frustration for many.

Perception of the region

Almost 49 percent report that perception of the region as a barrier to attracting staff from outside of the region and almost 60 percent believe the location of the region is a barrier to attracting staff. Not much can be done about the location, but more accessible, affordable and regular air transport options may help to address the location concerns if new (and existing) residents are able to access regular, affordable flights.

Anecdotal evidence suggests many newer residents leave the region because they are unable to access affordable flights that enable regular visit to family and friends. Many have

suggested the location is not the primary issue, the unavailability of affordable flights to enable weekend trips to visit family as the defining point of their decision to leave.

It appears that affordable airfares that enable residents (especially new residents) to fly out Friday afternoon and return Sunday evening would enhance attraction and retention, enhance liveability and better support tourism and sustainable regional growth.

Changing the perception people have of Far West NSW is a long term strategy that requires a multi-level approach. Greater utilisation and engagement with the existing resources maybe an obvious starting point.

Is the perception issue about Far West NSW or a more general perception of living in regional Australia?

Regional Development Australia Far West established the Far West Proud campaign to support positive regional perception, community pride and marketing. The website has many resources and includes the Living in Far West NSW Prospectus and the Far West NSW Welcome Guide, extensive images and videos and a range of information to support regional marketing, but is the region aware of the resources freely available to them? and if so, are those resources being utilised and are those resources being accessed by potential residents?

No single strategy will change regional perception and as a region we can't hope to retain every person that moves to or visits the region, but the situation does create a fantastic opportunity to ensure that the people that do leave become regional ambassadors.

The region can never hope to stop the keyboard warriors that choose to focus on dissatisfaction and promote that to the world, but as individuals everyone has a choice and raising concerns in a more appropriate manner, ie directly with the organisation/group concerned may help support positive regional marketing.

Are the majority of employers and individuals aware of, and utilising the resources available, and, if not why? What other resources and strategies can be developed to support regional marketing and help change the perception of living in regional Australia.

What strategies and programs do the NSW and Commonwealth governments support to change the perception of living in regional Australia, is the region engaged with these strategies or even aware of them and how does the region work closer with these programs to realise the changes required?

Housing

Community narrative has regularly focused on the shortage of quality housing as a barrier to growth and attracting the workforce required, this is not just a Far West NSW issues but a national issue.

A number of local organisations have/are investigated the local housing shortage, but what has been the outcome, what are the plans moving forward and how well informed is the community? How much does the skilled workforce shortage and material supply shortages

impact on these strategies and how does the community support the planned outcomes or become more engaged in supporting the planned strategies?

Access to health providers

Again, a conversation that is regular and well know across the community, and employers have also highlighted the lack of access to health professionals as a barrier to attracting and retaining staff. Access to health professionals obviously impacts on liveability, social outcomes and quality of life and is reported regularly across the nation.
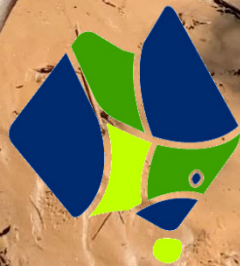
Is the region positioned to developed strategies to enhance access to health and attract additional health workers into the region, is this an issue the NSW and Commonwealth Governments should be addressing? and how does the community support strategies to enhance access?

Many of the issues raised in the 2022 Workforce Development Survey are interrelated and require strong planning, communication and consultation to address, they require a whole of community approach that engages and encourages every industry sector, every employer and every resident.

The sustainability of our region, creating attractive and meaningful career pathways that suit the aspirations of our young people, attracting and supporting training providers and working with them to enable training that better reflects the needs of our community are all issues that we, as a region own. To overcome this and build a prosperous and sustainable future for generations to come we as a region must address the issues with a shared vision and commitment.