

Lincoln County 2007 Labor Market Survey

*Gary Paul Green
Department of Rural Sociology
University of Wisconsin-Madison/Extension*

*Art Lersch
University of Wisconsin-Extension
Lincoln County*

*Evan Armstrong
University of Wisconsin-Madison*

July, 2007

Presented to the Lincoln County Economic Development Corporation

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements.....2

Executive Summary.....3

Introduction.....4

Methodology.....4

Characteristics of Employers.....4

Vacant Positions and Recruitment.....6

Training.....11

Retention.....11

Benefits and Wages.....13

Summary and Conclusions.....16

Appendix A. Survey of Lincoln County Establishments.....17

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study was sponsored by the Lincoln County Economic Development Corporation, Jack Sroka, Executive Director, and the University of Wisconsin - Extension, Lincoln County office. Surveys were sent and collected by the Community and Economic Development department of the UW-Extension office.

Survey data was compiled and summarized by Professor Gary Green, a Community Development Specialist at the University of Wisconsin -Madison. Evan Armstrong, a student at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, entered the data and contributed to the final report.

A comprehensive business mailing list was compiled by Art Lersch, UW-Extension, Lincoln County Community and Economic Development Educator and program assistant Ms. Rebecca Kludy. Ms. Kludy called all employers on the preliminary mailing list for their e-mail addresses. This resulted in nearly half of the surveys being sent directly to employers electronically. We thank her for ably performing this very time consuming task.

We also thank the Merrill Chamber of Commerce for its assistance in helping us compile a comprehensive list of businesses and for advertising the study in its newsletter. Local newspapers, the Foto News, the Merrill Courier and Tomahawk Leader, helped market the study to businesses through articles and notices.

Finally, we wish to express our gratitude to all those businesses/companies that completed the survey. Because of your efforts, Lincoln County employers will now have access to interesting and useful county labor market information that can be compared with 2004 Lincoln County Labor Market Study results.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Labor market conditions are changing rapidly in Wisconsin. Technological changes are increasing the demand for skilled workers in many regions. The aging of the baby boom generation is beginning to shape the supply of labor as many workers retire and decide to work part-time. Growth of the service sector is influencing the level of wage inequality, mobility of workers and the benefits offered by employers. To investigate these issues in Lincoln County, the University of Wisconsin-Extension was asked by the Lincoln County Development Corporation to collect data on the current and anticipated demand for labor in the county. A similar survey was conducted in 2004. The results presented here are based on surveys of 28 Lincoln County employers, accounting for about one-fourth of the workforce.

Most Lincoln County employers do not anticipate growing much in the next few years. Many employers hire part-time workers, but the vast majority of the workforce are full-time workers. Compared to many other regions of the state, Lincoln County has a relatively young workforce. However, approximately 17% of the workers are older than 55, which means that many of these employers can anticipate replacing many of their most experienced and skilled workers in the next 5-10 years.

Many employers are experiencing difficulty in recruiting qualified workers. Sixty-one percent of the employers said it was difficult to recruit workers, while in 2004 less than half reported any difficulty. Employers indicated that many applicants lack the skills necessary for the positions that are available. When asked about the positions that were vacant the longest, employers said that they tended to be the more skilled positions requiring additional training and/or experience. In terms of the number of vacancies, machine operators were the most in demand. In the previous survey, there was much more demand for assemblers and laborers. The turnover rate among workers was about 7%, which is well below average for the state. Moreover, the turnover rate declined from approximately 13% in 2004.

Most Lincoln County employers continue to provide a good benefit package to workers. Approximately four-fifths of the employers offer health insurance. As the cost of health care has risen in recent years, employees are being asked to pay a larger share of the cost, especially for family members. The overall wage increase for Lincoln County employers averaged about 3.5% last year and is expected to be about the same this year. The average wage raise in the previous survey was about the same. For some of the positions in greatest demand there has been a significant increase in entry level wages, such as machine operators.

INTRODUCTION

In response to a request from the Lincoln County Economic Development Corporation, the University of Wisconsin-Extension conducted a study of labor market conditions in Lincoln County in the spring of 2007. This was the second labor market study conducted in the county since 2004. The purpose of the study was to examine the existing and anticipated demand for labor in the county. Data for the study are drawn from e-mailed and mailed questionnaires completed by employers. Information was obtained on a variety of topics such as current and anticipated vacancies, recruitment efforts, training, retention of employees, and benefits and wages offered in firms. See Appendix A for a copy of the questionnaire.

METHODOLOGY

University of Wisconsin-Extension staff sent one hundred and ninety-two labor market surveys to selected businesses throughout Lincoln County. Nearly 48% of employers on the contact list received a survey via e-mail. The rest were mailed hard copies. University of Wisconsin-Extension staff created a mailing list using information from various sources including the Lincoln County Economic Development Corporation, UW-Extension, the Merrill Chamber of Commerce, and the phone book. When possible, surveys were either e-mailed or mailed directly to human resource directors, lead managers, or owners.

Twenty-eight (28) completed surveys were returned to the Extension office. Although the percentage of completed surveys returned was somewhat low (14.6%), the number returned was similar to the number of completed surveys collected in other rural counties that have recently conducted labor market studies through UW-Extension. In 2004, when the previous Lincoln County Labor Market Study was conducted, 16% of employers completed the questionnaire. The number of employees represented in completed 2007 questionnaires (nearly 2,600) accounted for about 23% of the total number of wage paying jobs in the county. In addition to the county's largest private employer, five other employers with 100 workers or more completed the survey.

CHARACTERISTICS OF EMPLOYERS

Among the 28 employers interviewed, all but three were for-profit organizations. Fifty-nine percent of the firms are independently owned, 18.5% are owned by a multi-establishment firm (operating establishments at more than one place), 14.8% are locally owned but franchised, and 7.4% own branch firms. We obtained information on the current and anticipated employment in the firm, and different types of employment: full-time, part-time, temporary/seasonal, and contract workers. See Table 1 for the average for each of these categories. The size of the firms in the sample ranged from 2 to 577 employees. Employers anticipate having about the same number of full-time and part-time workers one year from now. Approximately two-thirds of the employers have some part-time workers. Relatively few, about one-fifth of the employers, hired

temporary or seasonal workers. This figure is fairly low compared to many other labor market areas in Wisconsin. Also, about one-fifth of employers used contract workers.

	Current	Anticipated
Full-time	82	85
Part-time	7	7
Temporary/Seasonal	2	3
Contract	3	3

As mentioned above, Lincoln County employers do not hire many temporary workers. About 46% of the employers have hired seasonal workers in the past five years and they tend to hire the same workers from year to year.

Recent census data suggests that immigration in the Midwest has increased significantly over the past decade. We were interested in assessing the extent to which employers in the region were hiring immigrant workers. Only two employers reported hiring immigrant workers in the past five years—one hired five and the other seven workers. Although few employers responding to the survey report employing immigrant workers, anecdotal evidence suggests that many agricultural based firms and some small manufacturing firms are relying on immigrant workers.

Several projections suggest that a relatively large percentage of the labor force will retire in the next five years or so as the baby boomers begin to reach retirement age. We asked each employer to identify the percentage of their workforce in various age categories (Table 2). Overall, we find that the majority of residents are in prime working age. Approximately 17% of the workforce is older than 55 years old, which suggests the potential of a relatively large number of retirees in the next few years.

	Percentage
Under 25 years old	9.1
25-34	22.6
35-54	49.1
55-64	13.5
65 years or older	3.4

We asked employers to identify the racial/ethnic composition of their workforce (Table 3). The workforce in the Lincoln County area is overwhelmingly white, with only a small number of minority workers. These figures pretty much mirror county demographic data.

	Percentage
African American	0.3
Asian and Pacific Islander	1.1
Native American	0.4
White (Non-Hispanic)	96.9
Hispanic/Latino	1.2
Other	0.1

VACANT POSITIONS AND RECRUITMENT

Several changes in the region have made it more difficult to recruit workers over the past decade. The aging of the population has reduced the growth rate in the number of young workers, and the labor force participation rates among women have peaked. Computerization and other technological changes have affected the demand for skilled workers in the area. In the following section we briefly examine the current and anticipated vacancies in the firm, how they recruit workers, and the attributes and skills they look for in applicants.

Approximately 61% of the employers report they are having difficulty recruiting qualified workers. In 2004 about half (49%) of the employers reported facing some difficulty in hiring qualified workers. For those employers reporting difficulty in hiring, we asked them to identify the reason. Employers are most likely to report that the problem was that applicants lack the necessary skills or that there were not enough applicants. We asked employers to identify the position that had been vacant the longest. There was a wide range of positions mentioned and no real pattern emerged. Most of the positions, however, tended to be skilled occupations, such as HVAC (heating, ventilation, air condition and cooling) service and installers, tool makers, truck drivers, plumbers, etc.

How do Lincoln County employers recruit new workers? We asked employers to identify all the strategies they use to recruit new workers. In Table 4, we report the responses to this question. Current employees increased in popularity as a recruiting method. In 2004, 64% of survey respondents indicated this to be their top recruiting method. The percentage rose to 82% in 2007. Relatively few of the employers are using the Job Center to search for workers. This figure is actually down from the 2004 survey. In 2004, only 18% of survey respondents

indicated that they used the Internet for recruitment purposes while in 2007 this figure increased to 41%.

Table 4. Methods Employers use to Recruit New Workers

	Percentage
Current Employees	81.5
Newspaper Ads	70.4
Walk-ins	63.0
Schools	40.7
Internet	40.7
Job Center	25.9
Temp Agency	25.9
Job Fair	22.2
Radio Ads	11.1
Recruiting Firm	11.1
Other	11.1
Community Agency	07.4
Post Signs	03.7
Referral Bonus	03.7
Television Ad	03.7
Hiring Bonus	00.0

In Table 5, we present a list of the current and anticipated (one year) vacancies among the employers interviewed in this study. The largest number of current vacancies and the largest number of anticipated vacancies are for assemblers, processors, and laborers. Most of these positions are primarily entry level. Across the board, employers reported more difficulty in 2007 than in 2004 in recruiting for various categories of workers. This is especially the case for some of the more skilled positions, such as machine operators. This trend appears to hold across the state the last few years. We also asked employers an additional question this time about the jobs within their business that they anticipate they will experience a shortage of applicants in the next decade. There were a wide variety of responses to this question, but almost all employers identified skilled positions that will require technical training, such as welders, electricians, automobile technicians and nurses.

Table 5. Current and Anticipated (One Year) Vacancies in Lincoln County			
	Current	Anticipated	% Very Difficult
Technical			
Computer Specialist	1	4	16.7
Engineering	3	1	40.0
Other Professional/Technical Specialty	2	8	25.0
Administrative Support			
Secretarial	0	5	10.0
Bookkeeping	0	6	9.1
General Office	1	6	10.0
Data Entry	0	1	0.0
Receptionist/Desk Clerk	0	1	0.0
Shipping & Inventory	1	1	20.0
Other Administrative Support	0	31	20.0
Sales & Marketing			
Retail Sales	0	1	0.0
Sales Representative	0	4	25.0
Service			
Chef/Cook	0	2	50.0
Kitchen Worker	0	10	0.0
Housekeeping	0	0	33.3
Child Care	0	0	0.0
Customer Service Representative	4	8	0.0
Other Service	0	1	0.0
Health Care			
RN	1	1	0.0
LPN	0	0	0.0
CAN	2	12	0.0
Mechanics			
Vehicle Repair	1	3	16.7
Industrial Machinery Repair	0	12	40.0
Electrical & Electrical Equipment Repair	0	0	0.0
Machine Operation			
CNC	0	2	16.7
Tool & Die	2	3	100.0
Machinists	1	12	28.6
Machine Tool Operators	4	10	0.0
Welder-Tig/Mig	5	13	0.0
Welder-Wire	1	2	33.3
Welder-Combination	2	9	0.0
Other Precision Production	2	2	33.3
Assembler & Laborer			
General Machine Operator	0	9	0.0
Assembler	1	5	0.0
Inspectors/Quality Control	0	1	0.0
Truck Driver (CDL)	0	2	33.3
Forklift Operator	1	5	0.0
Packager	0	10	0.0
Construction			
Carpenter	0	0	0.0
Plumber	0	2	0.0

We next asked employers whether they use a variety of pre-employment screening techniques (Table 6). Employers are most likely to check references, perform drug and alcohol testing, and use basic skills tests. Co-worker interviews are also widely used. More employers are using drug and alcohol testing in 2007 (41%) than was the case in 2004 (33%). Also, a substantially higher percentage of employers are now using reference checks (64% in 2004 and 85% in 2007).

	Percentage
Reference Checks	85.2
Drug & Alcohol Test	40.7
Basic Skills Test	33.3
Job-Specific Skills Test	29.6
Co-Worker Interviews	22.2
Other	18.5
Job Trails/Internships	14.8
Aptitude Test	07.4
Personality Test	03.7

There is substantial evidence that the skills demanded by employers are changing rapidly. To understand what skills are most valued by employers, we asked them to evaluate how important a variety of attributes were in their hiring decisions (Table 7). There were four levels of importance: very important, important, somewhat important, and not at all important. Employers value many of the standard skills, such as reading, writing and math. However, there appears to be much more emphasis placed on basic work skills, such as punctuality, productivity, safety awareness and motivation. The rating of skills by employers is remarkably similar across the two surveys (2004 and 2007).

Table 7. Employer Ratings of Importance of Employee Skills

	Percent Very Important
Attendance/Punctuality	92.3
Integrity/Honesty	92.3
Quality/Customer Satisfaction	84.0
Initiative/Motivation	73.1
Productivity	69.2
Listening	65.4
Teamwork	65.4
Reading Skills	57.7
Safety Awareness	53.8
Ability to learn and apply new concepts	48.0
Proper use of tools, equipment, and technology	42.3
Specific Job-Required Skills	41.7
Problem Solving Skills	38.5
Ability to interact with individuals from diverse backgrounds	38.5
Decision Making Skills	34.6
Speaking	26.9
Ability to organize and use info	26.9
Mathematics	26.9
Writing Skills	19.2
Creativity	19.2
Computer Skills	15.4

TRAINING

Technological change has resulted in a growing need for job training. To assess how much and what type of training Lincoln County employers offered we asked a series of questions regarding their training activities. This survey's results as compared with 2004 survey data seem to indicate that local employers are more concerned now with providing training for employees than they were a few years ago. This finding may be related to the data discussed below on retention. Many employers may find investments in training as a way to retain good employees. More than two out of five (44.4%) employers provide some type of informal training and 42.3% provide some type of formal training (usually defined as classroom instruction or other than on-the-job training) to new hires. On average, a new hire receives around 20 hours of formal training. Slightly less than one third (30.8%) of employers reported that they provide new hires with a mentor. Many employers also provide some type of orientation to the workplace. Fifty percent provided a formal orientation, with a median of 6.5 hours of orientation, and 55.6% gave new hires an informal orientation. Similarly, almost all (89.3%) employers report they provide on-going training and skill development. They are most likely to offer job specific skills for this type of training. On average, employers provided some formal training to about one-fourth of their employees and spent an average of \$9,048 (excluding one firm with very large expenditures) on training last year. This figure is up substantially from the \$2,500 reported by employers in 2004. In Table 8, we provide information on the educational requirements for various positions in Lincoln County. College and technical degrees are not required for most sales, service, and laborer positions. Employers generally do not require a technical college degree for many skilled positions, such as vehicle maintenance or industrial machinery repair.

RETENTION

We asked employers whether they had difficulty retaining workers in the labor market. Only one-third of the employers reported difficulty. The majority of reasons employers cited for this were claims that they could not keep up with the pay scales needed to attract workers. Along those lines, when asked what they had differently in the last three years to retain workers, nearly all employers who reported making changes claimed to have raised any or all of wages, incentives, and benefits. The average turnover rate in the county was around 7%, which is below average for the state. In 2004 the turnover rate was about 13%. The majority of vacancies were due to resignations. Among the employers in the study who had some turnover in the last year, the average number of resignations was 8, versus about 5 terminations and 3 retirements.

A growing number of firms in Wisconsin were laying off employees over the past few years due to the slowdown in the economy. Approximately two-fifths (37%) of the Lincoln County employers we interviewed reported that they had laid off employees in the past 12 months. In the 2004 survey, only about 21% of the employers reported layoffs. The average number laid off was 4 and the average number recalled was 3. To get an aggregate picture, the total number of workers laid off from our sample was 40, while only 30 have been recalled. The average absentee rate among Lincoln County employers was 2.5% in 2006.

Table 8. Education Required for Various Positions in Lincoln County	
	% Technical College or Above
Technical	
Computer Specialists	100.0
Engineering	100.0
Other Professional/Technical Specialty	75.0
Clerical & Administrative Support	
Secretarial/Wordprocessing	11.1
Bookkeeping & Accounting	63.6
General Office	18.2
Computer Operation & Data Entry	0.0
Receptionist/Desk clerk	0.0
Shipping, Receiving, Stock & Inventory	0.0
Other Clerical & Administrative Support	40.0
Sales, Marketing, and Tellers	
Retail Sales	0.0
Sales Representative	0.0
Service	
Chefs & Cooks	0.0
Kitchen Staff	0.0
Other Food and Beverage	0.0
Child Care	0.0
Cleaning/Janitorial	0.0
Customer Service Representative	0.0
Health Care	
RN	66.7
LPN	66.7
CNA & Health Aides	33.3
Mechanics & Repair:	
Vehicle Maintenance and Repair	83.3
Industrial Machinery Maintenance & Repair	60.0
Electrical & Electrical Equipment Repair	100.0
Machine Operation:	
CNC Programmer/Operator	60.0
Tool & Die Makers	100.0
Machinists	57.1
Machine Tool Setter/Operator	0.0
Welder-Tig/Mig	50.0
Welder-Wire	50.0
Welder-Combination	50.0
Extruding Machine Operator	100.0
Other Precision Production	33.3
Assemblers, Processors & Laborers	
General Machine Feeders/Offbearers	14.3
Assemblers	0.0
Inspectors/Quality Control	33.3
Truck Driver (CDL)	0.0
Forklift Operators/Material Movers	0.0
Hand Packers and Packagers	0.0
Construction	
Carpenter	50.0
Plumber	100.00

BENEFITS AND WAGES

Employers were asked to report whether they provided a number of benefits to workers in their firm (Table 9). Almost all of employers offer paid vacations and four out of five offer health insurance to their employees. Many employers offer health insurance to family members, however, most employers are requiring workers to pay a larger percentage of the costs. Other common benefits include retirement plans, maternity or family leave and dental care coverage. Overall, the percentage of employers offering a variety of benefits has increased substantially since 2004. All the major types of benefits (i.e. health insurance, retirement plans) showed substantial increases (greater than 10%). Two-thirds of the employers provided health insurance to employees in 2004, while 82% say they do now.

Table 9. Benefits Offered by Lincoln County Employers

	Percent
Paid vacations	88.9
Health insurance to employees	82.1
(% employee pays ____%)	28.2
Health insurance to family members of employees	77.8
(% employee pays ____%)	34.5
Retirement plan	74.1
401k/403(b) match	65.0
Company provided	31.6
401k/403(b) plan	36.8
Disability	53.8
Long-term	42.3
Short-term	38.5
Maternity or family leave (paid or unpaid)	50.0
Dental care coverage	46.2
Section 125 Flex-benefits	42.3
Tuition reimbursements	38.5
Time off to attend classes	38.5
Profit sharing	34.6
Paid sick leave	34.6
Employee assistance programs	26.9
Vision care	26.9
Cafeteria benefit plan	23.1
Transportation assistance	7.7
Stock options	3.8
Technology assistance	3.8

Employers do recognize the growing importance of benefits in attracting good workers—62% report that their benefit package has become more important in attracting workers over the past five years. This figure is exactly the same as in the previous survey in 2004. Forty-five percent have made some changes in their benefit package and nineteen percent anticipate making changes over the next year. Seventy-four percent of the employers require new employees to work for a specified time before receiving benefits. Employers estimated the cost of providing benefits (e.g., health insurance, retirement, etc.) increased by 15% in 2006 and anticipate an increase of 16% during the next year. These figures also support the earlier conclusion that benefit packages have become much more important for employers to have even since the 2004 survey was taken.

In addition to the standard package of benefits offered to workers, we looked at several other work incentives. We asked employers if they provided flextime—allowing workers to set their starting time for work. Forty-four percent said they offer flextime, compared to only 28% in 2004. Only about 12% of the employers reported they offered job sharing at their establishment. Very few of the employers offer tele-commuting or other options that allow individuals to work out of their homes on a regular basis.

There is a growing concern that many low-wage workers are in dead-end jobs that provide little or no opportunities for mobility with their current employer. We asked employers to describe any actions the firm has taken to promote workers from within their organization. Five of the employers offer training to their workforce that enables them to move up to more skilled positions. Ten employers either only promote within the firm or give existing employees first opportunity to bid on the position. Only a few employers reported that there were no opportunities for mobility within the firm.

The overall wage increase for Lincoln County employers averaged (excluding one outlier) 3.5% in 2006 and is projected to be 3.5% in 2007. The wage increases were about in the same range in the previous survey. In Table 10 we report the mean entry and maximum wages for various positions in Lincoln County. It should be pointed out that three-fourths of the employers reported that the starting salaries/wages vary in the same position based on the applicant's skills, experience, and/or training.

Table 10. Entry Wage, Maximum Wage, and Current Employment			
	Entry Wage	Maximum Wage	# Workers
Technical			
Computer Specialists	15.68	24.88	14
Engineering	19.16	35.61	10
Other Professional/Technical Specialty	17.71	45.67	43
Clerical & Administrative Support			
Secretarial/Wordprocessing	9.68	15.42	24
Bookkeeping & Accounting	11.22	19.70	18
General Office	9.38	13.47	25
Computer Operation & Data Entry	11.36	16.03	5
Receptionist/Desk clerk	8.88	12.53	8
Shipping & Inventory	10.71	18.53	21
Other Administrative Support	13.30	21.35	56
Sales, Marketing, and Tellers			
Retail Sales	8.33	14.35	23
Commission Sales	15.87	30.04	17
Service			
Chef/Cook	9.20	11.71	9
Kitchen Workers	8.26	10.65	38
Housekeeping/cleaners	8.49	11.04	36
Child Care	8.10	9.58	5
Customer Service Representative	12.83	19.38	59
Other Service	9.70	16.07	9
Health Care			
RN	21.16	25.57	103
LPN	16.11	19.45	8
CNA & Health Aides	10.24	12.70	148
Mechanics & Repair:			
Vehicle Repair	15.06	22.24	33
Industrial Machinery Repair	14.49	20.12	96
Electrical & Electrical Equip. Repair	21.95	25.85	22
Machine Operation:			
CNC Programmer/Operator	11.46	16.64	11
Tool & Die Makers	13.18	20.66	9
Machinists	14.48	18.67	31
Machine Tool Setter/Operator	9.50	12.48	30
Welder-Tig/Mig	17.66	20.61	30
Welder-Wire	10.76	14.92	10
Welder-Combination	8.88	17.25	23
Other Precision Production	10.58	15.50	38
Assemblers, Processors & Laborers			
General Machine Operator	13.46	19.75	275
Assemblers	8.56	13.49	218
Inspectors/Quality Control	16.04	21.08	13
Truck Driver (CDL)	11.75	17.00	14
Forklift Operators/Material Movers	13.66	16.61	45
Packager	15.14	20.50	30
Construction			
Carpenter	16.04	20.49	5
Plumber	26.82	28.21	8

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The evidence from the Lincoln County 2007 Labor Market Study suggests employers are increasingly facing difficulty in hiring qualified workers. Sixty-one percent of the employers reported difficulty in hiring in 2007, while less than half reported difficulty in 2004. Employers are most likely to report difficulty in hiring skilled workers, although most anticipated vacancies are in entry level positions. Much of the difficulty can be attributed to the aging of the workforce and growth in the manufacturing sector in recent years in Wisconsin. We found that employers are intensifying their search for workers and relying more on current employees and the Internet to find qualified workers.

Lincoln County employers are relying increasingly on a skilled and trained workforce. We find some encouraging evidence in this survey in the growing number of employers offering informal and formal training, as well as providing opportunities for career mobility to workers. This increasing investment in the workforce may help explain the decline in the turnover rate in recent years (from 13% in 2004 to 7% in 2007).

A greater percentage of Lincoln County employers are offering health benefits and other major benefits to workers than was the case in 2004. Employers recognize the growing importance of benefits in attracting good workers and the survey found that an increasing percentage of employers in the county are offering health insurance and other basic benefits. Many employers have made or plan to make large changes in their benefit packages. But the increasing cost of health insurance constrains many employers, especially small firms. Innovative strategies for providing health care are needed to maintain the productivity of the workforce and to the competitiveness of Lincoln County employers.

Wages in Lincoln County, and throughout Wisconsin, have risen at about the rate of inflation over the past five years. Given the difficulty most employers are facing in hiring skilled workers, we can expect that wages for these positions should increase at a higher rate during the next few years. Many of the Lincoln County employers are providing training and opportunities for entry level workers to move into skilled positions. Additional coordination with training and educational institutions may be needed to address these needs.

APPENDIX A: SURVEY OF LINCOLN COUNTY WORK ESTABLISHMENTS (2007)

A. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ESTABLISHMENT

Q1. Which category best describes this establishment?

- 1. For-profit organization
- 2. Government organization (including public educational institutions)
- 3. Other non-profit organization
- 4. Other (please specify _____)

Q2. Which description best fits this establishment's situation.

- 1. It is an independent, single establishment firm.
- 2. It is owned by a multi-establishment firm.
- 3. It is locally owned, but franchised to offer "brand-name" products or services.
- 4. It owns one or more branch establishments besides the one at this location.
- 5. It is a franchise that sells the right to use its concept to one or more franchises.

Q3. What is your establishment's main product or service? Please describe this activity as specifically as possible. _____

Q4. In what year did it begin operations in this community? 19__ or 20__

All of the following questions refer to your establishment only.

Q5. What is the current number of employees working in your establishment now and the expected numbers one year from now?

	<u>Current</u>	<u>Anticipated 1 Year</u>
Full-time payroll employees	_____	_____
Part-time (<35 hours/week) payroll employees	_____	_____
Temporary/seasonal employees (hired for a specific time period)	_____	_____
Contract workers (hired for specific job/employed by another firm)	_____	_____
TOTAL	_____	_____

Q6. Over the past five years, have you used "staffing" (temporary) agencies for hiring temporary workers?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No
- 3. Don't know

Q7. During the past five years, have you used temporary employees as a recruitment method for locating permanent employees?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No
- 3. Don't know

Lincoln County 2007 Labor Market Survey

Q8. During the past five years, have you hired any seasonal workers for a specific time period, such as the summer?

- ___ 1. Yes
- ___ 2. No
- ___ 3. Don't know

Q8a. If yes, are you generally able to retain the same workers from year to year?

- ___ 1. Yes
- ___ 2. No
- ___ 3. Don't know

Q9. During the past five years, have you hired any immigrant workers (defined as someone who was not born in the United States and did not have their citizenship when you hired them)

- ___ 1. Yes
- ___ 2. No
- ___ 3. Don't know

Q9a. If yes, how many immigrant workers have you hired? _____

Q10. During the past five years, have you hired any guest workers (defined as someone who has a H1 visa)?

- ___ 1. Yes
- ___ 2. No
- ___ 3. Don't know

Q10a. If yes, please identify their country or origin and the number from each country.

Country	#
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Q11. Please estimate what percentage of your workforce is in the following age categories.

	Percent
1. Under 25 years old	_____
2. 25-34	_____
3. 35-54	_____
4. 55-64	_____
5. 65 years or older	_____

Q12. Please estimate what percentage of your workforce is in the following racial/ethnic categories.

	Percent
African American	_____
Asian and Pacific Islander	_____
Native American	_____
White (Non-Hispanic)	_____
Hispanic/Latino	_____
Other	_____

B. VACANT POSITIONS AND RECRUITMENT

Q13. Are qualified workers easy to **recruit** in this labor market (within an hour's commuting distance)?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No

Q13a. If no, what specific types of employees are you having difficulty finding? _____

Q13b. What have you done differently in the past three years to recruit workers? _____

Q13c. If no, what do you consider the most important reason for this difficulty?

- 1. Too few applicants
- 2. Applicants lack necessary skills
- 3. Applicants unwilling to work for the wages/benefits offered
- 4. Applicants unwilling to accept working conditions/requirements
- 5. Other (please specify _____)

Q14. Among positions that do not require a college degree, which position has been vacant for the longest period of time (leave blank if no vacancies) ? _____

Q14a. How many weeks has this position been vacant? _____ weeks

Q14b. Why is this position vacant?

- 1. New position
- 2. Previous employee left
- 3. Previous employee was fired
- 4. Other reason (please specify _____)

Q15. Which of the following methods do you normally use to recruit new workers? (check all methods that apply and underline the three most effective strategies)

- 1. Post help-wanted signs
- 2. List advertisements in newspapers
- 3. Consider walk-ins without referrals
- 4. Referrals from Job Center
- 5. Referrals from temp/staffing agency
- 6. Referrals from a community agency
- 7. Referrals from schools
- 8. Referrals from employee in your firm
- 9. Used recruiting firm
- 10. Internet
- 11. Job fair
- 12. Hiring bonuses
- 13. Referral bonuses
- 14. Television advertising
- 15. Radio advertising
- 16. Other sources (please specify _____)
- 17. Don't know

Lincoln County 2007 Labor Market Survey

The next few questions are about some factors that might or might not be important in your evaluation of a prospective employee.

Q16. Do you use any of the following pre-employment screening techniques?

- ___ 1. Basic skills testing
- ___ 2. Aptitude testing
- ___ 3. Job specific skills testing
- ___ 4. Personality testing
- ___ 5. Drug & alcohol testing
- ___ 6. Reference checks
- ___ 7. Job trails/internships
- ___ 8. Co-worker/team member interviews
- ___ 9. Other (please specify _____)

Q17. How important are the following attributes in selecting employees? (If it varies, use the last person hired)

	<u>Very Important</u>	<u>Somewhat Important</u>	<u>Not at all Important</u>
1. Reading skills	1	2	3
2. Writing skills	1	2	3
3. Mathematics	1	2	3
4. Speaking	1	2	3
5. Listening	1	2	3
6. Attendance/punctuality	1	2	3
7. Productivity	1	2	3
8. Initiative/motivation	1	2	3
9. Integrity/honesty	1	2	3
10. Quality/customer satisfaction	1	2	3
11. Teamwork	1	2	3
12. Ability to interact with individuals from diverse backgrounds	1	2	3
13. Ability to organize and use information	1	2	3
14. Problem solving skills	1	2	3
15. Creativity	1	2	3
16. Decision making skills	1	2	3
17. Ability to learn and apply new concepts	1	2	3
18. Proper use of tools, equipment, and technology	1	2	3
19. Safety awareness	1	2	3
20. Computer skills	1	2	3
21. Specific skills required for job	1	2	3
22. Other –specify below	1	2	3
_____	1	2	3
_____	1	2	3
_____	1	2	3

Q18. What jobs within your local business/industry do you anticipate will experience shortages of qualified applicants in the next decade?

Q19. Do starting salaries/wages vary for individuals in the same position based on the applicant/s skills, experience and/or training?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No
- 3. Don't know

C. TRAINING

Q20. Have the skill demands in your establishment changed in the past five years?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No

Q20a. If yes, would you say that the following skills are more in demand today? (check all that apply)

- 1. Basic reading
- 2. Writing
- 3. Numeric skills
- 4. Social and verbal skills
- 5. Problem solving skills
- 6. Basic computer skills
- 7. Other (please specify _____)

Q20b. If yes, have the skill needs of this job changed because of: (check all that apply)

- 1. New technology
- 2. More use of computers
- 3. New products produced
- 4. Higher level of product quality
- 5. New services provided
- 6. Change in the organization of work, such as broader job categories or new duties in this job?

Q21. Do you provide any of the following for new hires? (Check all that apply)

- 1. Formal Orientation # hours
- 2. Informal Orientation
- 3. Formal Training # hours
- 4. Informal Training # hours
- 5. Mentors

Q22. Do you provide workers with on-going training and skill development?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No
- 3. Don't know

Q22a. If yes, please give some examples of the types of programs you provide. _____

Q23. Do you offer on-site training at your establishment for any of the following (check all those that apply)?

- 1. Basic academic skills
- 2. Job specific skills
- 3. Other (please specify _____)

Q23a. If you provide any of these, please give some examples of the types of programs _____

Q24. Do you provide pay or other incentives for employees who participate in training to acquire new knowledge and skills?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No

Q25. How many of your employees received formal training last year? _____ workers

Q26. How much did your firm spend on formal training in 2006? \$ _____

Q27. Please indicate any areas that you would be interested in receiving assistance in addressing your employment needs.

- 1. Recruiting workers
- 2. Screening or matching applicant skills to job requirements
- 3. Analyzing skill requirements for jobs in my firm
- 4. Determining skill training needs of workers in my firm
- 5. Providing training to upgrade the skills of workers in my firm
- 6. Reducing employee absenteeism
- 7. Reducing turnover
- 8. Increasing employee productivity
- 9. Out-placement assistance for employees who may lose employment
- 10. Other (Please specify _____)

D. RETENTION

Q28. Are qualified workers difficult to **retain** in this labor market?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No

Q28a. If yes, What is the primary reason for this difficulty? _____

Q28b. What have you done differently in the past three years to retain workers? _____

Q29. What was the turnover rate (% of positions vacated) in your establishment in 2006? _____%
(Note: Do not include layoffs in this figure)

Q29a. What was your turnover rate in 2005? _____

Q30. Among the positions that were vacated, how many were due to resignations, retirees, or terminations?

- # of resignations _____
- # of retirees _____
- # of terminations _____

(Note: Do not include layoffs in these figures)

Q31. Did your establishment lay-off any employees in the past 12 months?

1. Yes

2. No

Q31a. If yes, how many workers were laid off? _____

Q31b. If yes, how many workers were recalled? _____

Q32. What was the average absenteeism rate (% of workdays missed) in your firm last year (2006)?
____%

Q32a. What was your absenteeism rate in 2005? _____

Q33. What are your major reasons for absenteeism? (Check all those that apply)

1. Illness

2. Child care problems

3. Family/personal problems

4. Transportation problems

5. Poor work ethic

6. Other

E. BENEFITS AND WAGES

Q34. Please indicate whether any of the following benefits are provided to workers in this position?
(check all that apply)

1. Health insurance to employees (% employee pays _____%)

2. Health insurance to family members of employees (% employee pays _____%)

3. Dental care coverage

4. Vision care

5. Disability 5a. Short-term 5b. Long-term

6. Retirement plan

6a. Company provided

6b. 401k/403(b) plan

6c. 401k/403(b) match

6d. Other

7. Paid vacations

8. Paid sick leave

9. Maternity or family leave (paid or unpaid)

10. Employee assistance programs

11. Tuition reimbursements

12. Time off to attend classes

13. Profit sharing

14. Cafeteria benefit plan (giving the employee the option of choosing benefits)

15. Company-provided childcare

16. Stock options

17. Section 125 Flex-benefits

18. Housing assistance

19. Transportation assistance

20. Technology assistance (providing employees with home computer, internet access, etc.)

21. Other (please specify _____)

Q35. Do you offer flextime (permitting workers to start and leave work at different times) at your establishment?

Lincoln County 2007 Labor Market Survey

- 1. Yes
- 2. No

Q36. Do you offer job sharing (permitting two or more workers to share one full-time job) at your establishment?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No

Q37. Do you offer tele-commuting or other options that allow individuals to work out of their homes on a regular basis?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No

Q38. Do you require most new employees in your establishment to work for a specified time before receiving benefits?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No

Q38a. If yes, what is that period? _____

Q39. In your experience with workers in this region, do you find that benefits are more important, less important, or equally important to wages?

- 1. Benefits are more important than wages
- 2. Benefits are equally important as wages
- 3. Wages are more important than benefits
- 4. Don't know/no response

Q40. Over the past five years, has your benefit package become more important to attract good workers?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No
- 3. Don't know/no response

Q41. Have you made any significant changes in your benefit package over the past five years?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No

Q41a.. If yes, what changes have you made? _____

Q42. Do you anticipate making any significant changes in your benefit package in the near year?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No

Q42a.. If yes, what types of change? _____

Q43. What was your overall wage increase (percentage) for 2006? ___%

Q44. What is your anticipated wage increase (percentage) for 2007? ___%

Q45. Please estimate how much the cost of providing benefits (health insurance, retirement, etc.) increased during the year 2006. _____%

Q46. How much you anticipate the cost of benefits will increase in 2007? _____%

Q47. What actions has your firm taken to promote workers from within the organization?

WAGE INFORMATION

The following table is an effort to summarize the occupational employment of your establishment. We need to establish the wage range, current employment level, current and anticipated vacancies, recruitment difficulty, and desired education and experience for each position in your workforce. For the question on recruitment difficulty, circle the appropriate answer—evaluate whether it is not difficult (N), somewhat difficult (S), or very difficult (V) to recruit for each position in your firm. What type of education, work experience, and special skills/abilities do you look for in hiring new employees? Circle whether an educational level of none (N), high school (H), technical college (T), college (C), or an advanced degree (A) is absolutely required and the number of years of experience you absolutely require. Use blank lines for occupations not listed.

Lincoln County 2007 Labor Market Survey

Position	Entry Wage	Max. Wage	# employed	# vacant	# anticipated Vacancies—1 year	Difficulty Recruiting	Education Required	Experience Required (# years)
Technical								
Computer specialist						N S V	NHTCA	
Teacher						N S V	NHTCA	
Engineer						N S V	NHTCA	
Other professional						N S V	NHTCA	
Adm. Support								
Secretarial						N S V	NHTCA	
Bookkeeping						N S V	NHTCA	
General office						N S V	NHTCA	
Data entry						N S V	NHTCA	
Receptionist						N S V	NHTCA	
Shipping & inventory						N S V	NHTCA	
Other adm. support						N S V	NHTCA	
Sales & Marketing								
Retail sales						N S V	NHTCA	
Sales representative						N S V	NHTCA	
Cashier						N S V	NHTCA	
Other sales						N S V	NHTCA	

Lincoln County 2007 Labor Market Survey

Position	Entry Wage	Max. Wage	# employed	# vacant	# anticipated Vacancies—1 year	Difficulty Recruiting	Education Required	Experience Required (# years)
Service								
Chef/Cook						N S V	NHTCA	
Kitchen worker						N S V	NHTCA	
Wait staff						N S V	NHTCA	
Bartender						N S V	NHTCA	
Housekeeping						N S V	NHTCA	
Cleaning/janitorial						N S V	NHTCA	
Domestic service						N S V	NHTCA	
Child care						N S V	NHTCA	
Protective service						N S V	NHTCA	
Customer service						N S V	NHTCA	
Gardening						N S V	NHTCA	
Health care								
RN						N S V	NHTCA	
LPN						N S V	NHTCA	
CNA						N S V	NHTCA	
Health care technician						N S V	NHTCA	
Other health care						N S V	NHTCA	
Mechanics								
Vehicle repair						N S V	NHTCA	
Industrial machinery repair						N S V	NHTCA	
Electrical equipment repair						N S V	NHTCA	
HVAC & refrigeration						N S V	NHTCA	
Machine operators								
CNC						N S V	NHTCA	
Tool & Die						N S V	NHTCA	
Machinist						N S V	NHTCA	

Lincoln County 2007 Labor Market Survey

Position	Entry Wage	Max. Wage	# employed	# vacant	# anticipated Vacancies—1 year	Difficulty Recruiting	Education Required	Experience Required (# years)
Machine tool operators						N S V	NHTCA	
Welder-Tig/Mig						N S V	NHTCA	
Welder-Wire						N S V	NHTCA	
Welder-Combination						N S V	NHTCA	
Woodworking						N S V	NHTCA	
Extruding machine operator						N S V	NHTCA	
Other precision production						N S V	NHTCA	
Assembler & Laborer								
General machine operator						N S V	NHTCA	
Electrical assembler						N S V	NHTCA	
Assembler						N S V	NHTCA	
Inspector & quality control						N S V	NHTCA	
Foundry worker						N S V	NHTCA	
Truck driver (CDL)						N S V	NHTCA	
Forklift operator						N S V	NHTCA	
Packager						N S V	NHTCA	
Construction								
Brickmason & stonemason						N S V	NHTCA	
Carpenter						N S V	NHTCA	
Electrician						N S V	NHTCA	
Plumber						N S V	NHTCA	

