

*McLean
County
Workforce
Issues
1998*

Produced for the
McLean County Chamber of Commerce

by the
Applied Social Research Unit
Illinois State University
September 1998

Acknowledgments

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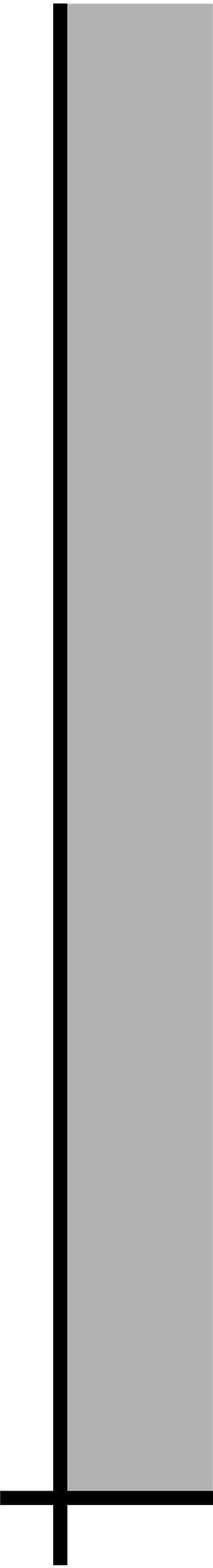
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Summary

Rapid demographic, social, economic, and technological changes are demanding new skills from American workers. Like their counterparts elsewhere in the United States, with unemployment levels at an historic low, McLean County employers face increasing challenges recruiting employees at all points along the skill and wage spectrum.

The McLean County Chamber of Commerce supports the changing needs of businesses and the wider community. In 1998 the Chamber commissioned the Applied Social Research Unit (ASRU) of Illinois State University to conduct a study of workforce development and support issues in McLean County to inform its planning activities. For the purposes of this study, workforce development and support are broadly conceptualized to include programs, facilities, and services that prepare people for the workforce, match applicants with jobs, help people keep jobs, and improve the skills and career opportunities of workers.

Research activities for the *McLean County Workforce Issues 1998* project included:

- Review of public demographic, economic, educational, industrial, and occupational data;
- Review of quantitative and qualitative data collected for other recent studies of area educational and workforce development issues;
- Review of literature describing best practices in workforce development and support services; and
- Conduct of five focus groups with McLean County employers, educators, and support service providers.

Research findings indicate that:

- McLean County enjoys a strong mixed economy that will generate active demand for workers during the next twenty years—particularly in the areas of financial services, retail, computer and management information systems, management, and health care support.
- Employers require a mixture of "hard" and "soft" skills and strong character in job applicants and workers. They agree with other community leaders (i.e., educators, labor unionists, public and social service providers) that current educational preparation must be improved to qualify young people for the workforce.
- There is also general agreement that continued collaboration among educators, employers, unions, and agencies as well as coordination of educational, training, and employment support services is necessary to stimulate successful employment of public aid recipients and other special populations (e.g., persons with disabilities, ex-offenders, and older adults).
- The professional literature provides examples of workforce development and support programs that have been successful elsewhere. These selected models for career development, work-based learning, job-readiness training, skills upgrade training, and employment support services may include programs that can be adapted for use in McLean County.

McLean County is well on the way to creating a new workforce development and support system for the 21st century. Representatives from key stakeholder groups—employers, educators, labor union leaders, public and social service representatives—meet regularly to discuss welfare-to-work and school-to-work needs and strategies. Collaborative projects such as those managed by the McLean County Compact, the Job Partners life skills training course, and the education-to-careers programs planned by the Heartland Regional Partnership will help to prepare both members of special populations and McLean County's young people for employment. However, the following enhancements of and additions to current activities would improve McLean County's workforce development and support system:

- A comprehensive McLean County workforce development and support plan endorsed by all major stakeholder organizations.
- A community fund for workforce development, support structure, and programs.
- A "virtual" (Internet-based) or "actual" (facility) information clearinghouse to store, share, and update information about community workforce development and support resources.
- A technology access and training center accessible to all community members.
- An administrative position or positions to run the clearinghouse and technology center and coordinate activities of voluntary collaborative workforce development and support committees.
- Skills-based clusters, composed of small and large businesses, focused on working with high school and community college educators to develop curriculum, work experience placements, and skills upgrade programs.
- Involvement of all high school students in appropriate work experience opportunities.
- Across-the-board teacher and counselor training to foster the best possible use of new careers education and work-based learning curricula.
- Solve pressing needs for entry-level workers by taking recruiters/hiring managers to potential workers (students in area high schools, community colleges, and universities).
- Mentoring programs involving a large number of McLean County's current workforce that will offer services and support to new workers.
- Use of media to raise consciousness about labor force issues and publicize workforce development and support resources, facilities, and programs.

Introduction

Why study workforce issues in McLean County?

Rapid demographic, social, economic, and technological changes are demanding new skills from American workers. Like their counterparts elsewhere in the United States, with unemployment levels at an historic low, McLean County employers face increasing challenges recruiting employees at all points along the skill and wage spectrum. Although area employers are currently collaborating with educators and social service professionals to improve the preparation of young people for jobs and the transition of welfare recipients to employment, there is widespread feeling that more could be done to improve workforce development and support. Together and separately, community leaders are working to develop new resources and systems to ease the transition to work, help workers keep jobs, and provide opportunities to upgrade skills.

The McLean County Chamber of Commerce supports the changing needs of businesses and the wider community. In 1998 the Chamber commissioned the Applied Social Research Unit (ASRU) of Illinois State University to conduct a study of workforce development and support issues in McLean County to inform its planning activities. For purposes of this study, workforce development and support are broadly conceptualized to include programs, facilities, and services that prepare people for the workforce, match applicants with jobs, help people keep jobs, and improve the skills and career opportunities of workers. The following report is based on research completed between January and June 1998.

How does the *McLean County Workforce Issues 1998* research project support the goals of the Chamber of Commerce?

A primary goal of the McLean County Chamber of Commerce is to “attract, retain, and train a quality educated workforce.”¹ The *McLean County Workforce Issues 1998* project report supports this goal by discussing:

- The County’s current, projected, and potential labor force;
- Current and projected employment by industrial sector, occupational category, qualifications, and wages;
- Current and future skills needs of area employers; and
- McLean County’s current workforce development and support system.

This report goes on to identify ways workforce development and support could be improved and describes selected model projects that illustrate best practice. Finally, the report recommends

¹ McLean County Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors Report, October 31, 1997, p. 2.

actions the McLean County Chamber of Commerce might take to improve workforce development and support in the County.

In addition to the report, the research process helped to engage the interest and focus the attention of many community leaders on broad issues surrounding workforce development and support. A total of 38 people representing area businesses, educational institutions, labor unions, and services participated in the five focus groups conducted for this project. Members of the McLean County Chamber of Commerce and other area professionals helped with research design and participated in informal interviews. All of the individuals involved in the *McLean County Workforce Issues 1998* project wear more than one hat; in addition to their work responsibilities, they are community residents and tax payers. They are also usually property owners, parents and family members, and participants in civic and religious organizations. Because of this broad participation, it can truly be said that the project's process is an important part of its product.

How was the information for the report collected?

Research activities for the *McLean County Workforce Issues 1998* project included:

- Review of public demographic, economic, educational, industrial, and occupational data;
- Review of quantitative and qualitative data collected for other recent studies of area educational and workforce development issues;
- Review of literature describing best practices in workforce development and support services; and
- Conduct of five focus groups with McLean County employers, educators, and support service providers.

The *review of public data* involved collection of federal and state data to profile current and future conditions in McLean County. Analysis of the data yielded information about area educational attainment, labor needs within specific occupational groups, and the actual and potential labor market within sex and age groups. The *quantitative and qualitative data* reviewed for this project included survey and focus group data collected for the 1995 and 1997 *Central Illinois Workforce Issues* studies and the 1997 *Spoon River College Needs Assessment* project conducted by ASRU; the 1997 *Heartland Education-to-Careers Partnership* study conducted to support planning for Partnership activities; the *McLean County Community TANF Plan*; and the *Bloomington Public Schools District 87 Strategic Plan*. The *literature review* involved a search of the published literature and unpublished research reports to identify innovative and effective business-education-community partnerships that support workforce development, job placement, and worker retention in other areas. Finally, ASRU staff members conducted five *focus groups* composed of area employers, educators, and social service professionals to elicit current qualitative information about local workforce development and support needs and opportunities for innovative collaborative solutions. Formal data collection and reporting activities were enhanced by informal interviews with individuals who are familiar with school-to-work and welfare-to-work initiatives in McLean County. (See Appendix C: Methodology.)

Workers, Occupations, and Skills: Getting the Job Done in McLean County

Who lives and works in McLean County?

Most McLean County workers (91%) live in McLean County.² Therefore, information about the County's population, in general, supports understanding of its current, future, and potential labor force.

The majority of McLean County's 140,797 residents live in the twin cities of Bloomington (41%) and Normal (30%). (See Figure 1, Appendix A.) However, 29 percent live in rural communities or out in the country. Since most (83%) of the business establishments in the County are located in Bloomington-Normal, most rural County residents must travel to the twin cities to work. (See Figure 2, Appendix A.)

Implications for workforce development and support:

- Nearly one-third of County residents live and are educated in rural areas. Improvements in the education, training, and support of rural young people, workers, and potential workers will enhance the quality of the County workforce as a whole.

Reflecting national trends, McLean County's workforce is composed of approximately equal proportions of men (52%) and women (48%). Since 1980, the percentage of women has risen and the percentage of men has declined slightly. (See Figure 3, Appendix A.) Authorities predict that both male and female labor force participation will increase, with numbers reaching parity in the near future.³

Implications for workforce development and support:

- To retain workers and enhance area prosperity and quality of life, employers must offer gender-appropriate work environments and training, as well as family-friendly benefits and working conditions.

McLean County's population is growing rapidly. Indeed, according to a recent study, County population is projected to have increased by 28 percent between 1990 and 2020. Due to the aging of the baby boomers, the largest percentage growth will be among mature and older adults—people who will be age 50 and older in 2020. However, there will also be a significant increase in the population that will be under age 20 in 2020. The smallest increase will be among people aged 20 to 40—that is, adults of prime working age. However, in terms of actual numbers, throughout the next two decades there will be more very young people, under the age of 14, and

² U.S. Bureau of the Census. 1994. Census Transportation Planning Products, CD-ROM.

³ *Workforce 2020: Work and Workers in the 21st Century*, Indianapolis, IN: Hudson Institute (1997), p. 53.

young adults between the ages of 20 and 29, than local residents in any other age group.⁴ (See Figures 4 and 5, Appendix A.)

Implications for workforce development and support:

- Most of the people who will be in the McLean County labor force in the early 21st century are already working. Thus, to develop and maintain a high quality workforce, serious attention must be paid to providing skills upgrade training and employment support services for current workers.
- Due to the aging of the workforce, many skilled workers will retire during the next 20 years. Younger workers must be prepared and encouraged to fill their places.
- The expected growth in the number of young people under working age in the next two decades means that improvement of educational preparation for employment is an urgent matter.

McLean County's adult residents are comparatively well educated, with over half (52%) having at least some college and 9 percent possessing graduate or professional degrees. This is not surprising, since the County is home to several institutions of higher education—Illinois State University, Illinois Wesleyan University, Mennonite College of Nursing, Heartland Community College, and Lincoln College. One-third of McLean County's adult residents have high school diplomas. Only 16 percent have less than a high school education. (See Figure 6, Appendix A.)

Implications for workforce development and support:

- Attraction and retention of good jobs depends on availability of a skilled workforce. McLean County must continue to foster its educational institutions; institutionalize innovative, collaborative workforce preparation programs; and provide good jobs for area graduates.

McLean County residents are also comparatively prosperous. Although the 1996 per capita median income of \$24,504 lags behind the State of Illinois figure of \$26,855, the large number of students in the County makes that figure artificially low. (See Figure 7, Appendix A.) Indeed, at \$29,962 in 1996, the average annual pay level for Bloomington-Normal was second highest among Illinois metropolitan areas, ranked only behind Chicago where 1996 average annual pay was \$33,907.⁵

Implications for workforce development and support:

- McLean County offers many well-paid positions and a good quality of life for its residents.
- Average pay and median income figures mask the many who have higher incomes and the many more who have lower incomes than these figures. For poorer residents, general prosperity and rising costs—particularly rent—create increasing challenges.

⁴ Roy Treadway and Delbert J. Ervin, *Illinois Population Trends 1990 to 2020*, State of Illinois (1997). For further information, contact Census and Data Users Services, Illinois State University, (309) 438-5946.

⁵ "Average Annual Pay Levels in Metropolitan Areas for the State of Illinois, 1996," News Release, U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics, February 11, 1998.

What is the unemployment and public assistance situation in McLean County?

At 2.6 percent, McLean County's unemployment rate is among the lowest in the State of Illinois.⁶ (See Figure 8, Appendix A.) It is also the lowest rate the County has experienced since 1974.

Implications for workforce development and support:

- McLean County employers face increasing challenges in filling jobs at all wage and skill levels, but particularly entry-level jobs.
- The pressure of full employment encourages recruitment of non-traditional applicants (e.g., people with disabilities, long-term welfare recipients, ex-offenders, retired people) into the workforce which, in turn, generates the need for customized support services to help new workers remain employed.

While the labor force participation of McLean County residents is high, there are many adults within all age and gender groups who are neither officially unemployed nor in paid employment (i.e., not considered part of the labor force). (See Figure 9, Appendix A.) For example, a constant 10 percent of men and approximately 25 percent of women between the ages of 25 and 50 are not in the labor force. Despite lengthening life expectancy and improvements in health among older adults, after age 60, labor force participation declines dramatically for both sexes.

Implications for workforce development and support:

- If County leaders wish to increase labor force participation, recruitment, training, support services, and working conditions can be tailored to meet the needs of targeted age and gender groups. For example, flexible family-friendly policies, services, and benefits will attract young and middle-aged women into the workforce. An appeal to the life skills and character of older adults, combined with reduction of age prejudice in the workplace and provision of age-appropriate skills upgrade training, work schedules, and benefits, may attract seniors into the workforce.

The average monthly number and percentage of McLean County residents receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) has decreased since 1995. (See Figure 10, Appendix A.) While the majority (70%) of adult TANF recipients have at least a high school diploma or GED and some work experience, a significant number (30%) lack some or all of these important qualifications for employment. (See Figure 11, Appendix A.) Federal welfare reform legislation mandates the transition from dependence on public aid to employment. However, it is noteworthy that dropping people from the welfare rolls is not equivalent to making them economically and socially independent.

Implications for workforce development and support:

- "Many individuals currently moving toward their lifetime limit of receiving public assistance have little or no successful employment

⁶ Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS) Annual Averages for Counties, Illinois Department of Employment Security, Updated March 18, 1998.

experience and may lack education and work skills. Therefore, in addition to addressing basic needs, McLean County recognizes the need for education, pre-employment training, and mentoring in order for newly employed individuals to be successful at keeping their jobs.”⁷

- As those who find work stop receiving TANF, the remainder of public assistance recipients will represent the population that is hardest to train, place, and support in employment. To fill local job openings and enable this hard-to-serve population to become independent, the community will have to change its mindset and provide an unprecedented range and quality of services.
- Ex-welfare recipients and their dependents remain vulnerable to a host of factors threatening employment and independence. They will have continuing need for mentoring, transportation, child care, health care, and other employment support services.

What kinds of establishments employ McLean County workers?

The majority (67%) of McLean County workers are employed as wage-earners in the private, for-profit sector. Fourteen percent of workers are employed by state, local, or federal government employers; eight percent work in the not-for-profit sector; and six percent are self-employed. (See Figure 12, Appendix A.)

In McLean County, there are 3,410 establishments that employ people. Most of these establishments are very small. Indeed, only 12 organizations employ more than 499 people; 75 (2%) employ between 100 and 499 workers; 420 establishments (12%) employ between 20 and 99 people; and 2,903 establishments (85%) employ between 1 and 19 workers.⁸

Implications for workforce development and support:

- Because of their extensive human, material, and financial resources, large companies lead the way in working with educators and agencies on innovative education-to-careers and welfare-to-work programs; providing skills upgrade training for current employees; and offering employment support services. These companies could further overall area workforce development goals by collaborating with small firms with similar or complementary interests.
- Because they have a large and continuing need for well prepared new workers, small companies should band together in interest-based clusters to become proactive partners with stakeholders from education and support services in education-to-careers, welfare-to-work, skills upgrade, and employment support programs.

McLean County has a healthy, balanced economy, with stable numbers of people employed in all industrial sectors except financial services, retail trade, and miscellaneous services, where

⁷ McLean County Community TANF Plan, McLean County TANF Task Force, 1998, p. 1.

⁸ 1995 County Business Patterns, U.S. Census Bureau

employment is growing rapidly. (See Figure 13, Appendix A.) Demand is increasing most dramatically in retail and service employment for workers at all points on the wage and qualification spectrum—from fast food workers and janitors, on the one hand, to nurses, teachers, and executives, on the other.

Which occupations will be most in demand during the next few years?

This question can be considered from two main perspectives:

- Which occupations will employ the largest number of people?
- Which occupations will experience the largest increase of openings?

Although McLean County’s economy was historically driven by manufacturing, in recent years service industries—particularly financial services, education, health care, and retail trade—have become increasingly dominant. In McLean County in 2020, the following occupations are projected to employ the largest number of people:

Rank	Occupation	Number of workers in 2020
1	Office Clerks	3,160
2	Retail Salespeople	2,748
3	General Managers & Executives	2,469
4	Assemblers	2,375
5	Secretaries	2,258
6	Cashiers	2,120
7	Farmers	1,810
8	Bookkeepers	1,639
9	Elementary Teachers	1,498
9	Food Preparation Workers	1,498

The following occupations will experience the greatest percent increase in numbers of workers between 1992 and 2005 (also see Figure 14, Appendix A):

Rank	Occupation	Percent increase in workers, 1992-2005
1	Computer Systems Analysts	106%
2	Insurance Adjusters, Examiners, & Investigators	59%
3	Technicians—Health	54%
4	Restaurant Cooks	52%
5	Carpenters	46%
5	Food Preparation Workers	46%
7	Waiters & Waitresses	44%
7	Food Service & Lodging Managers	44%
9	Fast Food Preparation & Service	41%
9	Fast Food Cooks	41%

Local trends are likely to follow national developments. While the greatest job growth is expected to be among highly skilled and well paid occupations, a consistently large number of low-skilled, low-paid positions will remain.⁹

Which skills will workers need to perform the jobs of the future?

The vast majority of jobs of the near future will require short-term training plus work experience.¹⁰ In McLean County as elsewhere, education and training are closely linked to earnings; generally speaking, the more education required, the more the worker is paid. Of the 42 occupations with 20 or more projected average annual openings in McLean County during the years 1992 to 2005 (Figure 14, Appendix A):

- 38% require less than one month of on-the-job training,
- 10% require Associate's degrees,
- 17% require moderate to long-term on-the-job training,
- 12% require work experience or post-secondary vocational training,
- 12% require a Bachelor's degree, and
- 12% require either a Bachelor's degree and work experience or a Master's degree.

⁹ *Workforce 2020: Work and Workers in the 21st Century*, Indianapolis, IN: Hudson Institute (1997), p. 73.

¹⁰ Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1996.

This is not to say that lots of education—a college degree in any discipline, for instance—guarantees high earnings. Experts maintain that educational plans must be tailored to the needs of the labor market for a degree to command a high price tag. According to the recent Hudson Institute study, Workforce 2020,

Simply getting a college degree, regardless of major, will not be all that helpful for those entering the twenty-first century workplace. The specific field of study matters a great deal—far more than simply getting a diploma. Students should therefore focus their energies on acquiring the specific skills and kinds of knowledge demanded by occupations that are both growing rapidly and paying well.¹¹

In addition, although "Among college graduates aged 25 to 64, women's median annual earnings were 73 percent of men's in 1993," young women preparing for the job market should be aware that the gap between women's and men's earnings varies considerably depending on major field. For example, women taking Bachelor's degrees in business can expect to earn 86 percent of their male classmates, while women taking Bachelor's degrees in foreign languages and linguistics earn, on average, 101 percent of male graduates in the same field.¹²

So, what specific abilities and skills do employers seek in job applicants? How should young people prepare themselves for employment? How should educators and trainers design their programs to meet the labor needs of business and industry?

The Applied Social Research Unit (ASRU) conducted workforce issues studies commissioned by the Central Illinois Private Industry Council in Peoria, Illinois in 1995 and 1997. The 1995 research concerned eight counties including McLean County. (See Figure 15, Appendix A, for information provided by McLean County employers surveyed for this project.) The 1997 study concerned five counties, not including McLean. Also in 1997, the ASRU conducted a needs assessment study for Spoon River College (Canton, Illinois). For all of these projects, employers were surveyed about their skills needs.¹³

Information emerging from these studies supports a consensus, summarized in the table on the next page, about the skills employers currently seek in job applicants and expect to need from workers in the future.

Employers agree that both basic skills and technical competencies are increasingly desirable. They emphasize the need for computer skills among workers in all types of jobs; indeed, half of the employers surveyed for the *Central Illinois Workforce Issues 1997* study indicated a need for computer skills in the future, compared to their need for technological literacy skills (23%), interactive skills (22%), and occupational knowledge (17%).

¹¹ Workforce 2020, p. 69.

¹² "Earnings of college graduates: women compared with men," Monthly Labor Review, March 1998, pp.62-64.

¹³ *Central Illinois Workforce Issues: Labor Market Research Report*, Applied Social Research Unit, Illinois State University (1995); *Central Illinois Workforce Issues 1997*, Applied Social Research Unit, Illinois State University (1997); *Spoon River College Needs Assessment*, Applied Social Research Unit, Illinois State University (1997). For access to project reports, please call (309) 438-7771.

Employers' Skills Needs		
"Hard" Skills	"Soft" Skills	Character Traits
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Computer • Technological literacy • Basic math & measuring • Reading • Writing • Cash management • Filing • Keyboarding/typing • Manual dexterity • Occupational knowledge/experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interactive/interpersonal • Customer service • Listening • Team work • Problem solving • Leadership • Time management • Job search • Ability to learn • Ability to ask for help 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work ethic • Common sense • Integrity • Good attitude • Willingness to do "menial" tasks • Self-motivation

"Soft" skills and positive character traits are equally important to employers. Of those surveyed for the *Spoon River College Needs Assessment*, more voiced a need for personal (61%) and interactive (44%) skills than for math (27%), computer (24%), or analytical (19%) skills.¹⁴ The following points summarize information about "soft" skills and personal characteristics that was provided by Central Illinois employers, educators, and social service professionals:

- To be competitive in the marketplace, companies of all kinds must cultivate good customer service; thus employees at all levels must be able to listen, communicate, and project a service orientation.
- Workers are increasingly required to work independently, both within the firm and at remote job sites; thus, they must be able to follow instructions and have the confidence, common sense, and problem solving skills to operate effectively.
- In the place of traditional hierarchical chains of command, employees at all levels are increasingly required to work in inter- and intra-departmental teams; thus, they must be able to negotiate tasks, take on leadership and/or collaborative roles, and work with others harmoniously.
- In order to find and keep jobs, workers must demonstrate a strong work ethic, including reliability, honesty, enthusiasm, commitment, good demeanor and appearance, and willingness to work hard at assigned tasks.
- Generally speaking, employers seek *trainability* in job applicants. Those coming in with a good work ethic and the ability to learn new skills are preferred over applicants without these traits, however strong their qualifications may appear on paper.¹⁵

¹⁴ *Spoon River College Needs Assessment*, p. 15.

¹⁵ *Central Illinois Workforce Issues: Labor Market Research Report*, Applied Social Research Unit, Illinois State University (1995), pp. 72-3.

■ What do job-seekers say?

It was beyond the scope of this research to collect information about job-seekers' experience of the labor market. However, 34 McLean County job-seekers, recruited from among Illinois Department of Employment Security clients, were surveyed about this issue for the 1995 *Central Illinois Workforce Issues* project.

By and large, job-seekers are aware of employers' skills and qualifications needs. If anything, they exaggerate the extent to which employers require formal degrees. Some indicate an interest in working in a specific field or obtaining particular types of training; the largest number specified computer-related training. However, most state they are willing to be trained for and do any job available to them.¹⁶

How do job-seekers look for jobs? Want ads are regarded as most helpful, with word of mouth and Job Service coming second and third. (See Figure 16, Appendix A.) Few survey respondents reported having used temporary agencies, school placement offices, or job fairs.

According to these job-seekers, what keeps them from finding work? Most survey respondents, who were mainly women under age 24, say that "too many other applicants for jobs," "lack of skills," and "lack of child care" prevent them from finding work. Also important are lack of knowledge about job openings and "no job openings right for me."

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 73-74 and Appendix E.

McLean County's Workforce Development and Support System

What does McLean County's current workforce development and support system look like?

It is beyond the scope of this report to describe McLean County's workforce development and support system in detail. However, a general understanding of current facilities, systems, and resources that provide educational, training, and employment support services is required to inform recommendations for actions the McLean County Chamber of Commerce might take to improve workforce development and support. Information appearing in this report was collected through focus group discussions and informal conversations with individuals involved in planning and administration of local programs and services. The Applied Social Research Unit apologizes to any organization inadvertently overlooked by the following discussion.

McLean County's workforce development and support system is large and complex. In part, it comprises organizations that offer formal programs and/or services designed to prepare people for work, help them find jobs, and support their career development. These organizations include:

- Education and training providers, including public and private schools (K-12), the Area Vocational Center, two- and four-year colleges, for-profit tutoring and training firms, and second chance educational and training programs addressing the needs of at-risk and special populations;
- Social agencies and programs, including government and not-for-profit organizations offering a variety of training and employment support services to many special populations; and
- Employers offering work experience opportunities to area students and teachers, and training, support services, and benefits to their employees.

In addition, the County's workforce development and support system includes facilities and services not explicitly organized to support workers, but offering necessary services including transportation, housing, child care, respite care for disabled or elderly dependents, cash assistance, counseling, and health care.

Finally, the County's workforce development and support system includes a growing array of committees and organizations intended to foster communication and collaboration among the diverse organizations referred to above. Each of these groups has a somewhat different composition and focus. For example:

- The Heartland Regional Partnership, which serves McLean, Logan, and Livingston counties and is composed of representatives from education, business, social services, and labor, exists to "make Education-to-Careers an integral part of every child's

education in this district, and will help local employers meet the workforce needs of the 21st century.”¹⁷

- The McLean County Compact, housed by the Cooperative Extension Service, “through a coalition of business, education, community and government, offers support to our school-age youth to help them become self-sufficient, contributing citizens. The Compact facilitates the preparation of school-age youth for a more effective transition from formal schooling to the world of work.”¹⁸
- The United Workforce Development Board involves representatives from social service agencies, business, and education to determine ways the needs of eligible people can be met through expenditure of targeted public funds and to integrate services provided to these people.
- The Employment Support Services group was organized by State Representative William Brady's office “to mobilize local resources in addressing barriers to employment and workforce development” and “to facilitate job placement and job retention for hard to employ families by providing links to services and with employers which will lead to self-sufficiency.”¹⁹
- Job Partners, which was organized by the McLean County Chamber of Commerce “includes representatives of business, government, and social services” who work together “to deliver work preparedness training to Public Aid recipients who wish to enter the local job market ‘ready to work.’”²⁰

Despite growing activity and collaboration, there is a gathering consensus that further changes in area workforce development and support provision will be necessary to meet the current and future needs of employers, workers, and potential workers.

What plans are currently underway to improve workforce development and support in McLean County?

As is true elsewhere in the United States, the current planning and investment emphasis of McLean County's workforce development and support system is on school-to-work initiatives. Both the McLean County Compact, founded in 1989, and the Heartland Regional Partnership, established in 1995, have as their primary goal the improvement of educational preparation of young people for the workforce.

The McLean County Compact, funded by a combination of Cooperative Extension Service and local support, uses its committees, which are composed of educators, employers, business people, and others, to organize and implement teacher training, career awareness, and school-business collaboration programs for public schools and students. Current Compact programs include "Sixth Grade Business Partnerships," "Career Preparation Realities," "World-wide Youth

¹⁷ Heartland Regional Partnership Education-to-Careers Federal Implementation Grant, 1998, p. 10.

¹⁸ *McLean County Community Compact Annual Program Report, 1995-96*, Mission Statement, p. 1.

¹⁹ Report on the Strategic Planning Workshop for the ESS, February 5, 1998.

²⁰ Job Partners brochure.

in Science and Engineering," "Character Counts," and "Welcome to the Real World." The Compact's Clearinghouse Committee focuses on leveling the technological playing field for disadvantaged youth by providing access to computers. The Compact's planning is driven by the interests of committee members and association with other area school-to-work initiatives.²¹

A planning study funded by the Illinois State Board of Education was completed in January 1997 for the Heartland Regional Partnership. This research used surveys and focus groups involving educators, business people, labor representatives, and local government officials to formulate recommendations and action steps to be implemented by the Partnership. Its primary recommendations were to:

- Provide experiences for students to increase their knowledge of the world of work.
- Implement a structured staff development program for the Heartland region's teachers and counselors.
- Develop a comprehensive public relations program for the Heartland Region that helps to make the community aware of the importance of the education-to-careers initiative.
- Develop and extend partnerships between the region's school districts and community college and business/industry, labor, and government.²²

The \$206,200 Education-to-Careers Federal Implementation Grant recently awarded to the Heartland Regional Partnership will support implementation of programs including teacher and counselor training, career awareness education, work-based learning opportunities, and resources facilitating programs.²³ These programs will be administered by staff housed by Heartland Community College.

In addition to these plans, school districts are incorporating explicit school-to-work goals and activities into their long-term strategies. For example, in its October 1997 document, "Planning Our Future," the Bloomington Public Schools District 87 identified as a major priority "School-to-Work—Provide a comprehensive plan, based upon community partnerships that develops career planning skills, relates instruction to the real world, and provides opportunities for work-based learning." The District's four main goals, which support this priority in different ways, are to:

- Encourage effective communication among and between our students, staff, administration, business partners, parents, and the general community.
- Implement a challenging curriculum which engages students in real world applications.
- Implement a comprehensive technology program to support education.
- Provide programming for children ages 3 to 8 to ensure success in school.²⁴

²¹ Interview with Sue Bandy conducted by Lucinda Beier on May 7, 1998.

²² Heartland Education-to-Careers Partnership: Synopsis of surveys and focus group meetings prepared for review/reaction by residents in Livingston, Logan, and McLean Counties, January 1997.

²³ Education-to-Careers Federal Implementation Grant proposal submitted by the Heartland Regional Partnership in February 1998.

²⁴ "Planning Our Future," Bloomington Public Schools District 87, October 1997, p.13.

Supporting the successful transition of welfare recipients to employment is another major priority of McLean County leaders. According to the "McLean County Community TANF Plan" completed early in 1998 by the McLean county TANF Task Force:

McLean County partners representing services, local government, and employers recognize the process of transition as critical to successfully bridging the changes a family is making in the shift from welfare to work. The successful navigation of this transition is essential to the health and growth of McLean County as well as beneficial to local business and to the community as a whole. . . . To accomplish the goal, McLean County needs:

1. A local appeal process of TANF determinations that is community-based, fair, quick, and impartial.
2. Funds locally administered to provide wraparound services for individual family basic needs and emergencies that jeopardize getting or keeping employment.
3. A locally controlled pool of funds to provide the services (employment readiness, mentorship, etc.) necessary to ensure families will successfully gain and retain employment.
4. A pool of funds to address local transportation needs.
5. Acceptance of local plan unfettered by federal and state mandates and restrictions.

It is too soon to expect realization of this plan. However, employment readiness training is currently offered by the "Job Partners" program and a Heartland Community College course and mentoring services are planned by a collaborative initiative spearheaded by the United Way.

In addition to these programs, the Illinois Employment and Training Center (IETC) offers job search, career counseling, applicant screening, training, and other services to job-seekers and employers in McLean County. Part of the developing national network of One-Stop Career Centers, the IETC plans to reach beyond populations served by Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES) and Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) programs to offer comprehensive workforce development and support services to County residents.

As the above examples indicate, collaborative school-to-work and welfare-to-work planning and programming are well underway in McLean County. What might be called "work-to-work" (i.e., skills upgrade training and career development services) initiatives tend to be managed either within companies/employing organizations, by private firms such as temporary agencies, or *via* contracts between employers and external suppliers of training or support services, such as community colleges, universities, and consulting firms. At present, "no work-to-work" (i.e., easing the transition of people who are currently not in the workforce into employment) training and support services are offered mainly by community colleges, temporary agencies, and public or nonprofit agencies serving special populations such as persons with disabilities and older adults.

How could McLean County's workforce development and support system be improved?

The 38 employers, labor union representatives, educators (i.e., teachers, counselors, and administrators), and public and social service agency professionals who participated in one of five focus groups conducted for this study were asked to suggest improvements that could be made in McLean County's workforce development and support system. According to focus group participants, most necessary are:

- A comprehensive *vision* shared by all stakeholders in McLean County's workforce development and support system;
- A range of *workforce development programs and resources* including careers education, work-based learning experiences, access to technology, skills upgrade training, and job readiness training;
- *Employment support services* necessary for people to gain and retain employment; and
- Overall *administration, coordination, and support of the workforce development and support system* in McLean County.

– *Vision*

Focus group participants articulated the need for a shared vision for McLean County's workforce development and support system. One participant specifically mentioned the need for a comprehensive “community plan with buy-ins from all sectors” regarding workforce development and support. S/he commented that agencies do not read each other's strategic plans, and that the exercise of identifying common goals and strategies would create broad-based support and better use of existing resources.

Other focus group participants discussed specific components of a shared vision, including:

- The need for employers, educators, unions, and trainers to work together to standardize, communicate, and train the specific skills necessary for specific jobs.
- Increased communication about differences in perspective, culture, incentives, and needs among employers, public agency staff members, educators, workers, and other stakeholders in workforce development and support.
- Development of outcomes measures for workforce development, support services, and programs.
- Development of strategies to attract and retain potential and non-traditional workers.
- A shift in employers' perceptions of various categories of new workers including high school graduates and ex-welfare recipients.

The general goal of increasing business participation in workforce development, support planning, and service provision was mentioned in all five focus groups.

– *Workforce development programs and resources*

Focus group participants suggested new or enhanced workforce development programs, projects, and facilities for McLean County including:

- provision of careers information and work-based learning opportunities to students throughout K-12 education;
- job readiness, basic, and skilled training programs; and
- access to technology equipment, careers information, and training.

Focus group participants repeatedly pointed out the need for a close, on-going relationship between businesses and educational institutions. Many called for a facility where up-to-date computer technology could be made available to the general public. Participants also emphasized the importance of using local media to provide labor market information, cultivate changes in public perceptions, and market resources, programs, and facilities.

Different categories of focus group participants voiced different needs regarding workforce development programs and resources. The perspectives of educators, employers, and social service professionals will be discussed separately below.

Educators want to give information to students about careers, locally available jobs, and associated earnings and lifestyles. They ask that workers come to schools on a regular basis to provide such information or that employers invite students, parents, and the community at large to meetings at business sites.

Educators also request that businesses of all sizes and types offer internships, job shadowing, or other work experience opportunities to students. Educators believe that as students receive information from and participate in work experiences with businesses they not only increase their job skills but are better able to see how concepts learned in the classroom apply to the work world. Many educators said that summer is an excellent time for students to participate in work experience programs. A few focus group participants also mentioned the value of having teachers and counselors take internships with businesses during summer months so they can relate what they are teaching to current work skills and environments. Focus group participants suggested that a directory be produced of businesses willing to offer work experience placements and/or to talk in schools about career opportunities and business culture.

Employers called for improvement in the work skills of students, job-seekers, and current employees. One employer noted the need for training to increase language, computation, and judgment skills in workers hoping to move from lower to higher paying positions. Other employers suggested development of community-based workshops for adult job-seekers on job search strategies, résumé writing, and interviewing. An employer from the manufacturing sector said he needs workers with process safety management training; another called for updated vocational training using current equipment.

Social service professionals emphasized the special training and support needs of people making the transition from welfare to work. Many public aid recipients need training to prepare them for work focusing on issues such as what it means to have a job, time management, employer expectations, and how to resolve family issues while working. These issues must be addressed for job retention and further skills training to occur. Several focus group participants also mentioned the special skills development and support needs of persons with disabilities as well as the need for employers to understand both their special needs and their unique strengths as workers.

– Employment support services

The primary employment support services called for by focus group participants were:

- public transportation available 24 hours a day and for people living outside the Twin Cities;
- affordable, accessible child care services—particularly for parents who work at night and for children with special needs;
- mentoring for new workers;
- family-friendly working conditions such as flexible hours and the opportunity to work at home;
- co-ops to provide support services and benefits to employees of small businesses; and
- information for businesses about innovative ways to attract new staff and support current employees.

Having gained employment, many workers need continued support in the workplace if they are to keep their jobs. Failure to make stable arrangements for basic services such as transportation and child care affect worker reliability and productivity. Participants discussed the potential value of mentoring for new workers and for adults who have been out of the workforce for a long time. One-to-one support and follow-up can help workers make the decisions and arrangements necessary to comply with workplace demands. Mentors can also provide encouragement, understanding, advocacy, and advice based on experience.

With the growing number of two-earner households, family-friendly working conditions are more necessary than ever before. In addition, in the coming years many retirees may find they want to augment their incomes without returning to the rat race. Employers offering benefits such as flexible hours and the option to work at home will have greater success attracting and retaining workers in today's tight labor market.

Several focus group participants called for greater employer flexibility, acceptance of strengths and weaknesses in employees, commitment to work with these strengths and weaknesses, and exploration of common perceptions about special populations (e.g., the welfare-to-work population and persons with disabilities). Participants also said employers must communicate expectations for work to new hires and then apply them consistently.

One focus group participant mentioned the challenges faced by small businesses in offering benefits and support services to employees. One suggestion was for small businesses to band together to offer employee benefits and services such as child care, transportation, and health care coverage. Finally, focus group participants discussed employers' ongoing need for information about innovative and successful employment support initiatives.

– Administration, coordination, and support of the workforce development and support system

A strong message emerging from each focus group discussion was that there is a need for coordination of current workforce development and support services in McLean County. Furthermore, new programs and services could be administered by the person or persons undertaking coordination responsibilities. Focus group participants called for establishment of:

- A "virtual" (Internet-based) or actual (facility) information clearinghouse serving the needs of employers, educators, agencies, and job-seekers;
- A locally controlled pool of funds to meet workforce development and support needs not addressed by federal and state program funds; and
- A person whose main job is to coordinate and administer workforce development and support services in McLean County.

The information clearinghouse would house:

- A directory of McLean County workforce development and support services;
- A list of employers and workers willing to give classroom presentations, offer job-shadowing opportunities, help develop educational programs, and provide work site work experience opportunities;
- A list of schools and teachers seeking employer/worker presentations and work experience opportunities for students and staff;
- A list of jobs available in McLean County;
- A list of job-seekers (and their job skills) looking for specific types of employment;
- Information about training resources and opportunities; and
- A referral service or specialist offering one-to-one assistance.

There was some discussion about whether the Illinois Employment Training Center (IETC) is already serving as an information clearinghouse. While focus group participants agreed that the IETC has improved services to traditional Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) and IDES clients, it is not currently appropriate for use by the general population. More than one person said that the IETC is in a bad location and has a poor image.

The coordination function suggested by focus group participants could bring persons serving on various workforce development committees and programs together to create a unified County effort, work to reduce overlap among programs, address gaps in service, and seek to serve the general population as opposed to targeting individuals who meet specific program eligibility criteria. Running this function should be the administrator's main job—not a voluntary responsibility. Funding for this function should come from the community.

What Works?

Review of Selected Model Programs

There are literally hundreds of innovative workforce development and support programs operating in the United States. Many have design or implementation features that could be adapted for use in McLean County. These programs will be discussed within the following, often overlapping, categories:

- Career development;
- Work-based learning programs;
- Job-readiness training;
- Skills upgrade training; and
- Employment support services.

McLean County organizations are already involved in planning or providing many programs and/or services embodying these elements.

Career development

According to a recent national evaluation study, the School-to-Work Opportunities Act (STWOA) of 1994:

promotes activities to help students become aware of careers and explore work environments. These activities include career counseling, interest assessments, career awareness, and work-readiness classes or units in academic classes, worksite visits, and job shadowing. Making these activities a systematic part of students' experiences requires overcoming shortages of counseling personnel and expanding the role of counselors beyond the traditional focus on helping students get into college.²⁵

The STWOA promotes career development approaches including:

- creation of *career majors*—career-focused programs of study for secondary school students;
- *integration of academic and vocational curriculum*; and
- integration of *specific skills standards* students must master to enter particular careers.

One example of a successfully operating model incorporating some of these approaches is the Career Academy—a school within a school "in which students (usually 30 to 60 per grade in grades 9-12 or 10-12) take several academic and career theme-related classes together." These

²⁵ *Partners in Progress: Early Steps in Creating School-to-Work Systems*, Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., April 1997, p. xx.

programs, which date back over 25 years, were initially targeted at disadvantaged youth, but have come to include a broad cross-section of students. Each Academy has:

- A career theme, such as health, business and finance, or electronics, which is usually determined by local employment opportunities and evidence of growing demand for such expertise in the marketplace;
- Traditional academic classes combined with career theme-related classes, innovative instructional methods and, often, project-based learning;
- Local employers from the career field who help plan and guide the program, serve as mentors, and provide work experience for students;
- An advisory group including these local employers, Career Academy representatives, and school district officials;
- Clusters of teachers from academic and vocational disciplines who focus mainly on Academy students who meet with each other regarding Academy curriculum and who help shape Academy policy, curriculum content, and methods of instruction;
- A lead teacher or director responsible for administrative tasks and communicating with the school principal, other administrators school- and district-wide, and employer partners;
- Career and college counseling; and
- Financial or in-kind support from employers.²⁶

Another model is the Pueblo (Colorado) Compact, which creates a structure for systemic change in local career education, work-based learning, and skills upgrade training services. Funded by the Pew Charitable Trust, the Pueblo Compact was organized in 1993 with six partners:

- Two local school districts;
- The Chamber of Commerce;
- The Latino Chamber of Commerce;
- The local community college; and
- The University of Southern Colorado.

Together, these organizations formed a Joint Education Committee whose goal is to make systemic changes rather than just to organize projects. The Compact is staffed out of the Chamber of Commerce and is closely linked with local economic development activities.

Fifteen years ago, Pueblo, an old steel city, was in dire economic straits. The community raised taxes to offer incentives to businesses to locate there. Pueblo businesses are now the heart and soul of the workforce development and support initiatives spearheaded and supported by the Compact. Businesses see the creation of a skilled labor force as a central factor in development of a business climate that will attract high-wage industries to the community. In turn, educators

²⁶ Some Things Do Make a Difference for Youth: A Compendium of Evaluations of Youth Programs and Practices, Washington D.C.: American Youth Policy Forum (1997), pp. 12-14. For further information, contact John Dow, Jr., President, National Academy Foundation, 235 Park Avenue South, 7th Floor, New York, NY 1003, (217) 420-8400.

work to integrate academic and work-based education and smooth transitions between high school, community college, and university.²⁷

Work-based learning

Closely related to largely school-based career development initiatives, work-based learning programs integrate academic and skills training with work site job experience opportunities. Generally targeted at students in the final two years of high school, work-based learning programs involve progressively responsible paid work experience and often take the form of co-ops (offering academic credit for work), youth apprenticeships (providing career or skills-focused high school course-work linked to work experience in the appropriate skills area), or two-plus-two programs (linking career-focused high school, job experience, and community college preparation).

One example of a successful work-based learning program is the Manufacturing Technology Partnership (MTP) program in Flint, Michigan. The curriculum is designed by area manufacturers, union representatives, and educators at both high school and community college levels. It integrates academic with specific job skills to prepare graduates for General Motors' apprenticeship program. Eleventh- and twelfth-grade students accepted into the program undergo specialized classroom training and are guaranteed summer jobs in area factories. Key components of the program are:

- Integrated curriculum;
- Teachers from industry using appropriate equipment;
- Involvement of employers;
- High eligibility standards for students; and
- Paid work.

The success of the program is indicated by the fact that there are now 22 manufacturing employers involved in MTP. The program's initial goal of building in an Associate's degree program for students has not been realized.²⁸

Job readiness training

This category of programs straddles the divide between high school career development activities and second-chance opportunities offered to out-of-school, out-of-work young people, welfare recipients, and ex-offenders transitioning to employment. These programs can offer:

- Life skills training;

²⁷ Telephone interview with LeeAnn Withnell who manages the Pueblo Community Compact for Student Success. This account also draws from a draft evaluation report by Policy Studies Associates which was produced in 1997 and cannot be cited.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 30-33. Also see MTP program evaluation report cited in bibliography.

- Attitude readjustment;
- Job search coaching;
- Job match services; and
- Follow-up support for clients.

One example of a successful job readiness training program is Support Training Results in Valuable Employment, or STRIVE, which was established in 1984. STRIVE has operated successfully in large cities to help young adults who have had difficulty getting and keeping jobs to gain stable employment. The three-week classroom-based program uses tough-love, work-place (office) simulation, and motivational techniques to ready students for the job market. It then provides job development and follow-up services.

Success factors include:

- The attitudinal training model;
- Course content and environment designed to replicate job experience;
- Individual attention from trainers;
- Development of a trusting relationship between trainers and participants; and
- Long-term follow-up.

STRIVE is supported primarily by private funding. Its objectives are to achieve 80 percent job placement with an 80 percent retention rate.²⁹

■ Skills upgrade training

As indicated above, skills upgrade training for current workers has traditionally been managed by employers, either through in-house skills training or by the use of external contractors including community colleges, consulting firms, and specialized training organizations. Yet, with accelerating technological change and an aging workforce, retraining and skills upgrade training are necessary to keep U.S. business and industry globally competitive. One authority wrote in 1995:

Worker retraining must be considered separately from the growing school reform movement. Some 75 percent of people who will make up the workforce of the year 2000 are already out of school and on the job. Their abilities cannot be upgraded *via* the primary and secondary school systems.³⁰

There is, in particular, a need for training to move low-skilled, low-paid workers into higher skilled, higher paid jobs. With implementation of welfare-to-work legislation, this need will

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 89-90. See also *A Generation of Challenge: Pathways to Success for Urban Youth: A Policy Study of the Levitan Youth Policy Network*, Policy Issues Monograph 97-03, Sar Levitan Center for Social Policy Studies, Institute for Policy Studies, Johns Hopkins University, June 1997, pp. 74-75.

³⁰ Scott Liddell and Dayna Ashley-Oehm, "Adult Workers: Retraining the American Workforce," Issue Paper No. 4, Investing in People Project, A joint project of National Conference of State Legislatures and Jobs for the Future, January 1995, p. 1.

become increasingly pressing, both to create job openings at the lowest end of the skills and wage spectrum and to offer a path out of poverty for good workers. Yet, most training dollars are spent on upgrading the skills of managers, technicians, and other highly educated employees.³¹

Illinois has several programs to help fund worker training of various kinds. For example, the Workplace Literacy Grant Program provides matching grants to qualifying businesses who independently contract with educational providers to develop and deliver basic skills programs at worksites. The Illinois Prairie State 2000 Authority "provides grants and loans to qualifying businesses to retrain workers in new technologies."³² The Industrial Training Program administered by the Illinois Department of Commerce and Community Affairs, trains or retrains current workers through grants to individual companies as well as to multi-company training projects.

New technologies may provide platforms for cost-effective, flexible, easily accessible worker training. Interactive, distance learning classrooms facilitate links among businesses and between worksites and educational institutions. Computer-based training programs can be housed in company libraries and training centers to provide self-paced learning to workers. World Wide Web-based "help" and training programs can offer on-line services to workers as they do their jobs.

■ Employment support services

National studies of youth employment programs emphasize the need for follow-up and wrap-around services. In its summary of best practice, one report maintains, "Each young person must feel that the program will stick with him or her, through several jobs and attempts at education, if need be. There must be effective connections between the program and external supports such as housing, counseling, medical assistance, food, and clothing."³³ Another study includes among "elements contributing to successful youth outcomes. . . . Continuity of contact with caring adults—teachers, employers, community members, others. . . . [and] Post-placement support and leadership development."³⁴

The same principles can be applied to school-to-work, welfare-to-work, and other services easing transitions into the workforce and among jobs. It is easily forgotten that in many times and places these transitions were traditionally eased through family and neighborhood networks. In recent years, they have been left to chance and the coping skills of individuals. Employment support services including mentoring, flexible scheduling, transportation, child care, and benefits ultimately support both community quality of life and employers' bottom line.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 7, 10.

³³ *A Generation of Challenge*, p. 9.

³⁴ *Some Things Do Make a Difference for Youth*, p. 167.

Conclusions and Recommendations

McLean County is well on the way to creating a new workforce development and support system for the 21st century. Representatives from key stakeholder groups—employers, educators, labor union leaders, public and social service representatives—meet regularly to discuss welfare-to-work and school-to-work needs and strategies. Collaborative projects such as those managed by the McLean County Compact, the Job Partners life skills training course, and the education-to-careers programs planned by the Heartland Regional Partnership will help to prepare both members of special populations and McLean County's young people for employment. However, the following enhancements of and additions to current activities would improve McLean County's workforce development and support system:

- Comprehensive McLean County workforce development and support plan.
- Community fund to support workforce development and support structure and programs.
- Information Clearinghouse.
- Technology access and training center.
- Administrative position or positions to run the Clearinghouse and Technology Center and coordinate activities of voluntary collaborative workforce development and support committees.
- Skills-based clusters, composed of small and large businesses, focused on working with high school and community college educators to develop curriculum, work experience placements, and skills upgrade programs.
- Involvement of all high school students in appropriate work experience opportunities.
- Across-the-board teacher and counselor training.
- Take recruiters/hiring managers to potential workers.
- Mentoring programs involving a large number of McLean County's current workforce that will offer services to new workers.
- Use of media to raise consciousness about issues and publicize resources, facilities, and programs.

Comprehensive plan

Current strategic plans of stakeholder organizations involved with workforce development and support, including educational districts and organizations, local government, civic organizations, and public agencies, should be reviewed for common and disparate elements. On the basis of this review, a County-wide plan that addresses school-to-work, welfare-to-work, skills upgrade,

and employment support issues should be developed. All stakeholder organizations should then be invited to endorse the plan.

■ Community fund

Public funding programs tend to target workforce development and support needs of specific groups and individuals. While it may be possible for County leaders to be more creative about attraction and utilization of these funds, it would also be useful for McLean County to develop a fund earmarked for local use—whether it be for individual safety-net purposes or for community-based projects. McLean County is wealthy; if area businesses and residents agree about the need for workforce development and support facilities and services, the money can be found to fund them.

■ Information clearinghouse

A "virtual" (Internet-based) or "actual" (facility) Information Clearinghouse should be set up to make better use of current resources and encourage increased communication and participation in County workforce development and support activities. This Clearinghouse will share information about the need for and availability of employers/workers to speak in schools, worksite work experience opportunities, training opportunities, and employment support resources. It will also advertise job openings and the qualifications of job-seekers. Finally, it will keep track of the large and rapidly changing set of workforce development and support programs and resources available in McLean County.

■ Technology access and training center

A technology access and training center would improve access of both young people and adults to current computer and telecommunications hardware and software. Training courses pitched at specific age and ability levels, together with computer-based training and on-line self-study materials, will improve local computer skills and improve local confidence about using new information and communications technologies.

■ Administrative position or positions

Much of the collaborative activity driving current workforce development and support planning in McLean County is voluntary. The amount and intensity of that activity exemplifies the commitment of local stakeholders to change. However, much current activity is devoted either to brainstorming about problems and solutions or to development and management of specific projects limited in scope and effect. Creation of an administrative position or positions would make it someone's job to know about and coordinate the welfare-to-work and school-to-work

activities going on in McLean County. That person or persons could also run the Information Clearinghouse and technology access and training center.

Skills-based clusters

It is apparent that McLean County businesses will have ongoing and growing need for certain types of skills including computer and information systems, financial services, management, retail, and health technician skills. Businesses of all sizes with common skills needs should band together in clusters to work with educators to create high school, community college, and company-based training courses to develop the skills of local workers.

Involvement of all high school students in appropriate work experience opportunities

At present, most McLean County students involved in work site work experience opportunities are vocational education students. The majority of area high school students, who are involved in college preparatory courses, do not choose to participate in co-ops, internships, or other work experience programs. Thus, despite the best efforts of their organizers, these programs are little known and suffer from relatively low status. If a wide range of work experience opportunities were available, if these opportunities were strongly linked to classroom-based preparation, and if all students had to participate in at least one of these opportunities in order to graduate from high school, work experience would be of greater value.

Across-the-board teacher and counselor training

Most teachers and counselors have spent most of their working lives in educational institutions. Their experience of other working environments and job skills is limited. Yet, authorities agree that education integrating academic, careers information, and skills training will provide young people with the best possible preparation for the world of work. Teachers and counselors will do better at presenting innovative curricula if they receive thorough training involving work experience placement in business and industry.

Introducing recruiters/hiring managers to potential workers

Employers facing critical shortage of workers—particularly those trying to fill entry-level, low-skilled, service positions—should work with educators to solicit job applications from high school, community college, and university students on campus. Specific days, times, and places for meeting recruiters could be arranged and advertised to students. Recruiters could provide support for filling out applications and conduct on-the-spot interviews. Not only would these

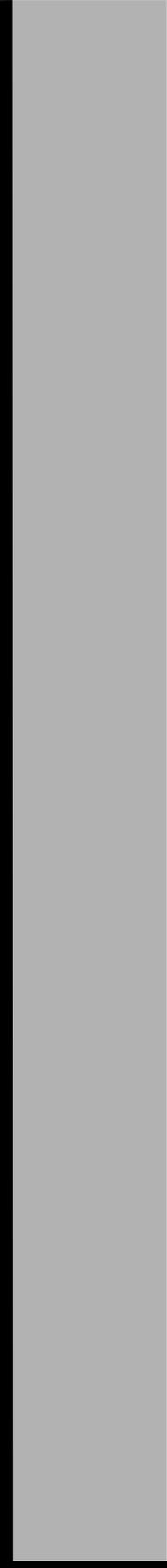
opportunities help employers fill jobs, they would provide useful job readiness training for students.

■ Mentoring programs

Research indicates that for disadvantaged, hard-to-employ populations, one-to-one, long-term support programs are more successful than quick-fix, short-term training programs. Findings from the present study suggest that other new workers—high school graduates, in particular—could benefit from similar support services. Community-based volunteer programs matching successful workers with new workers would improve job retention in the County.

■ Use of media

All local media resources should become partners in the effort to raise public consciousness about labor force issues and publicize area workforce development and support resources, facilities, and programs. This research calls for a change in mindset about these issues; local newspapers, radio, and television can do more than any other stakeholder to convince McLean County residents that workforce development and support is everybody's business.

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*McLean
County
Workforce
Issues
1998*

Appendices

- A. Figures*
 - B. Focus group summaries*
 - C. Methodology*
 - D. Bibliography*
- 
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Appendix A: Figures

Figure 1: Estimated 1997 Population Distribution for McLean County

Source: Population Estimates Program, Population Division, U.S. Census Bureau

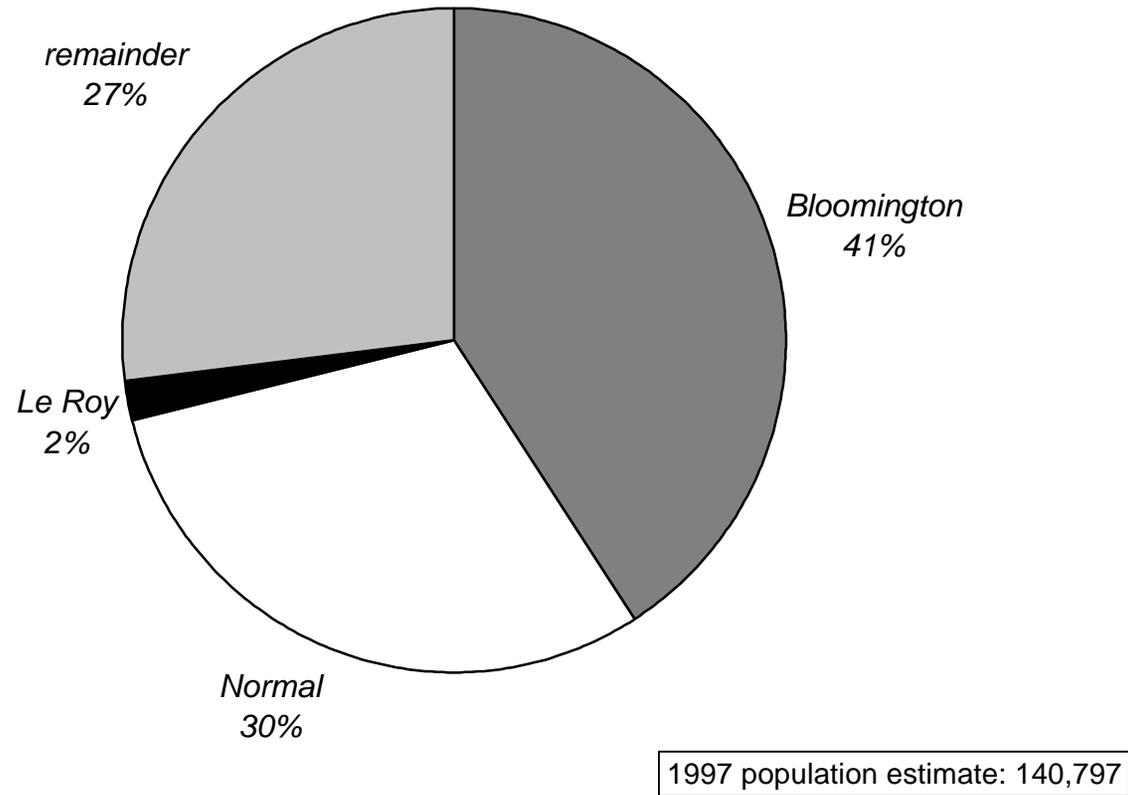


Figure 2: Number of Business Establishments in McLean County

Sources: 1995 Zip Code Business Patterns and 1995 County Business Patterns, U.S. Census Bureau

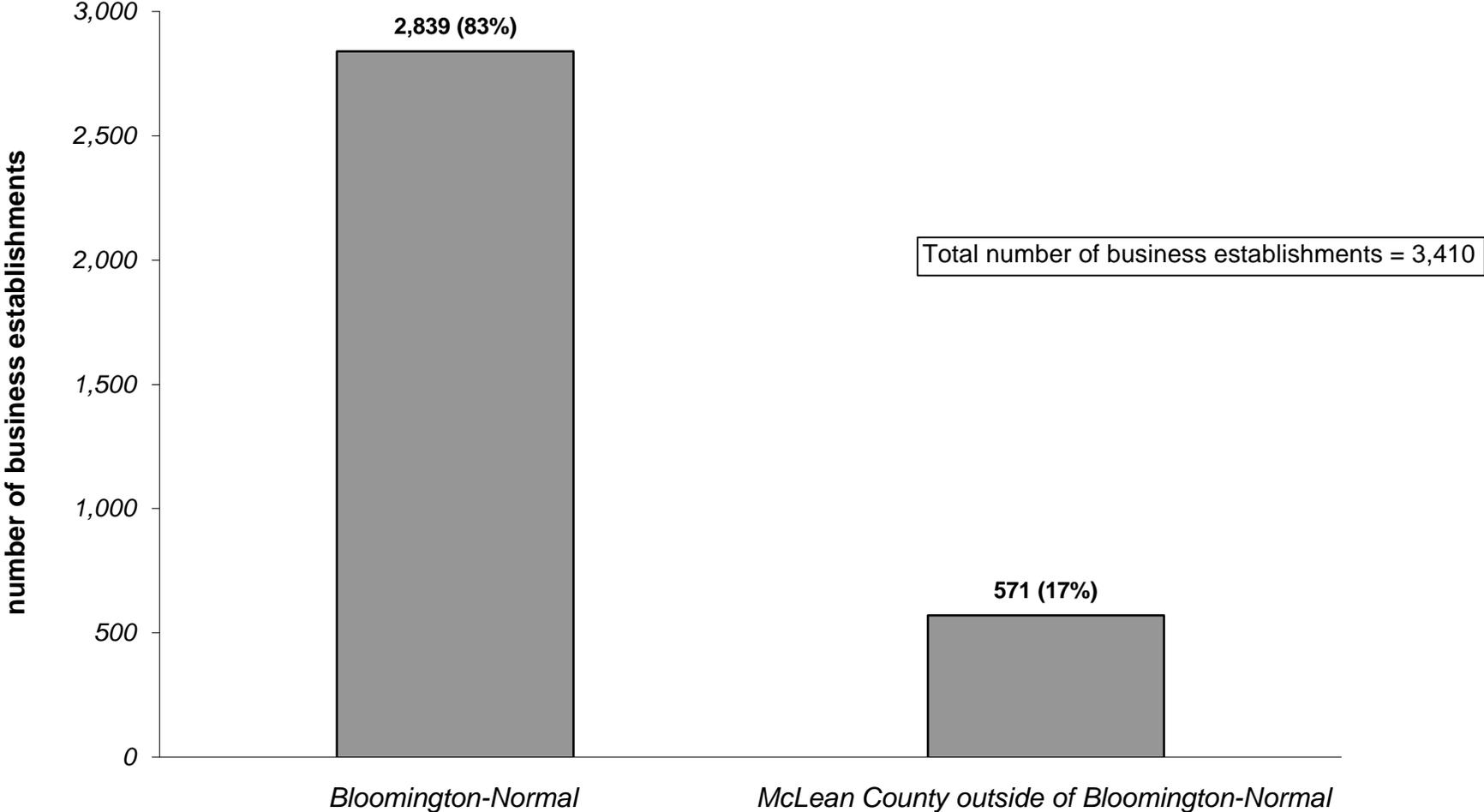


Figure 3: Percentage of Males and Females in the Civilian Labor Force

Source: 1990 Census of Population and Housing STF-3A, U.S. Census Bureau

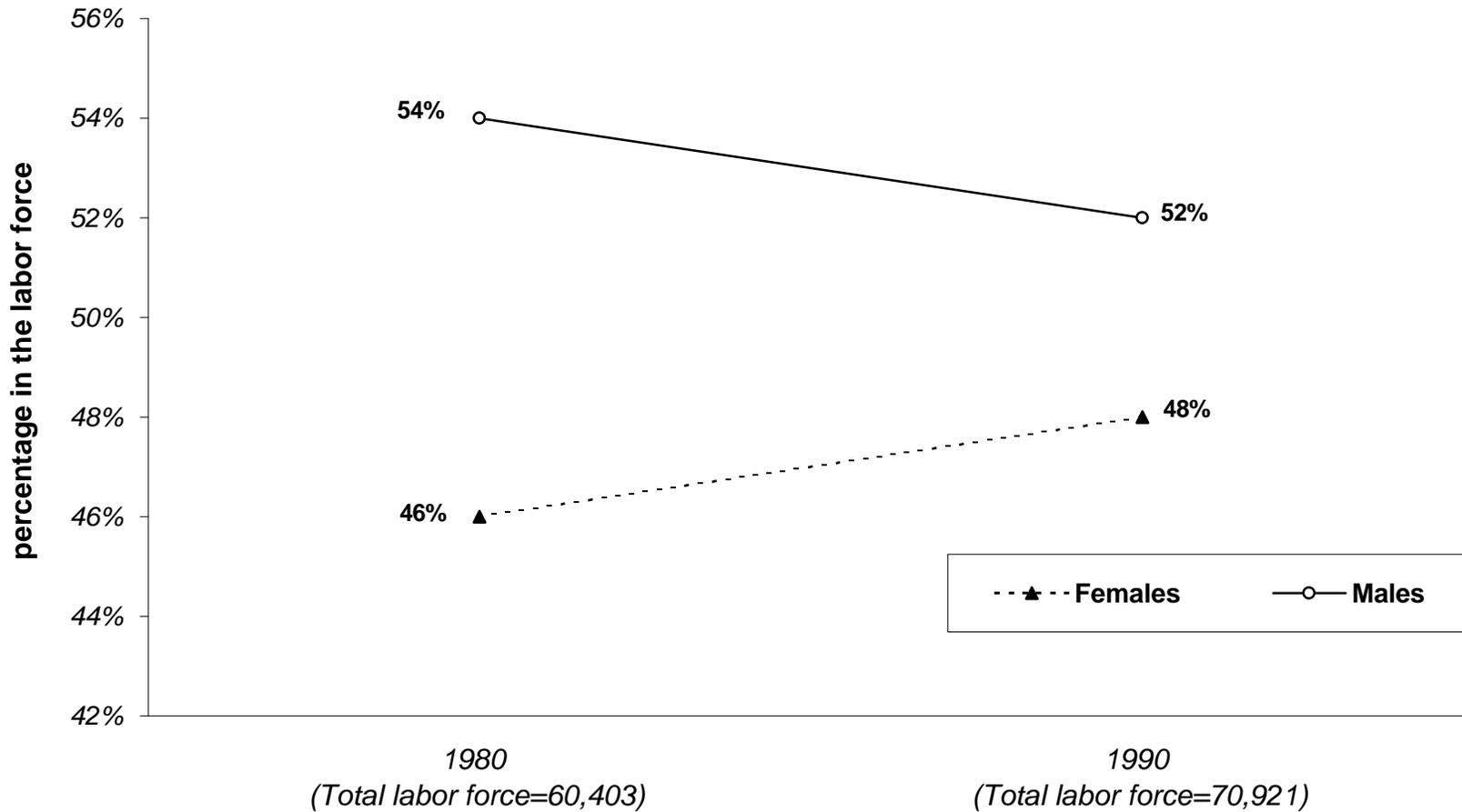


Figure 4: Percentage Increase in Population by Age in McLean County, 1990-2020 (Projected)

Source: *Illinois Population Trends 1990 to 2020, State of Illinois, 1997*

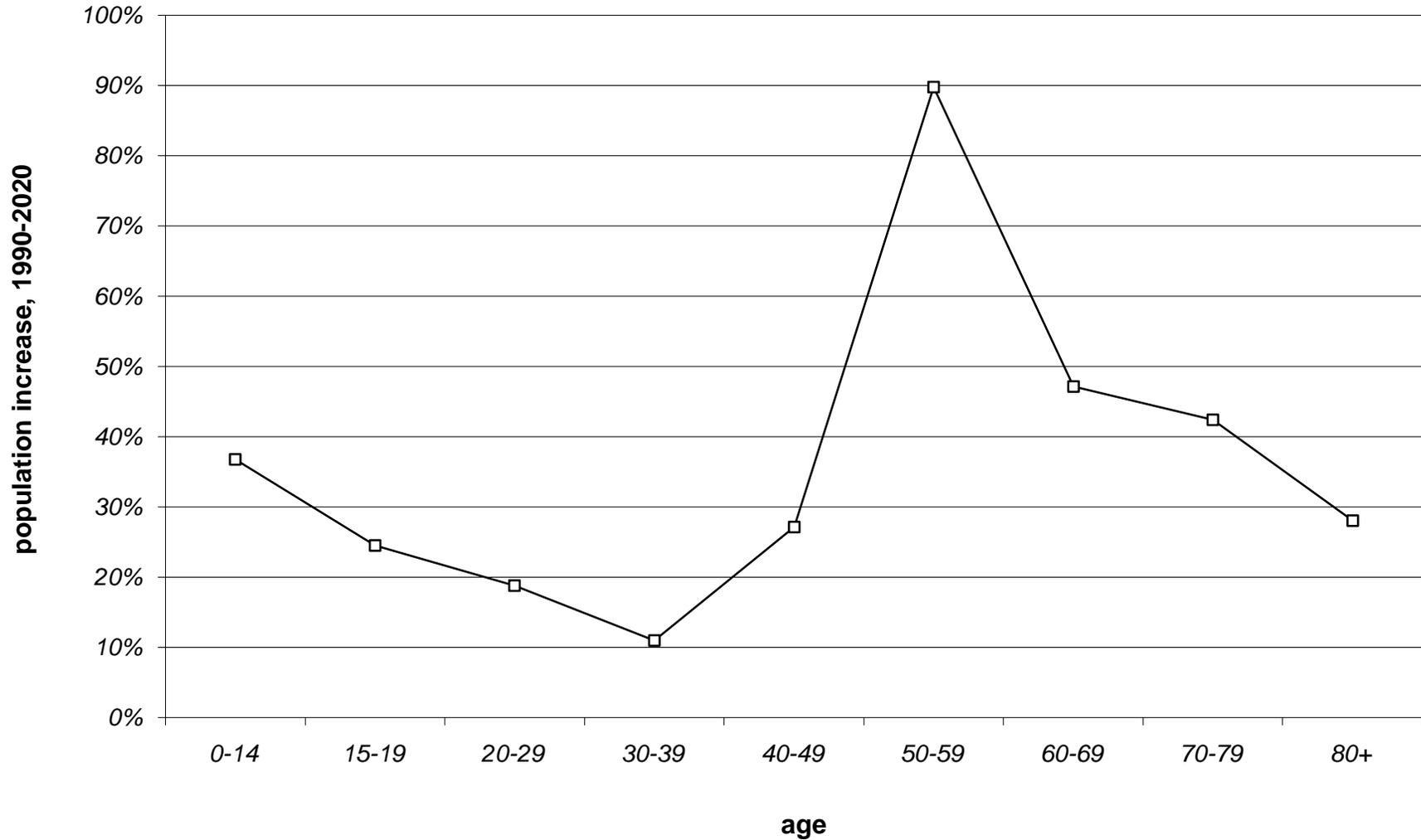


Figure 5: Population by Age in McLean County, 1990-2020 (Projected)

Source: Illinois Population Trends 1990 to 2020, State of Illinois, 1997

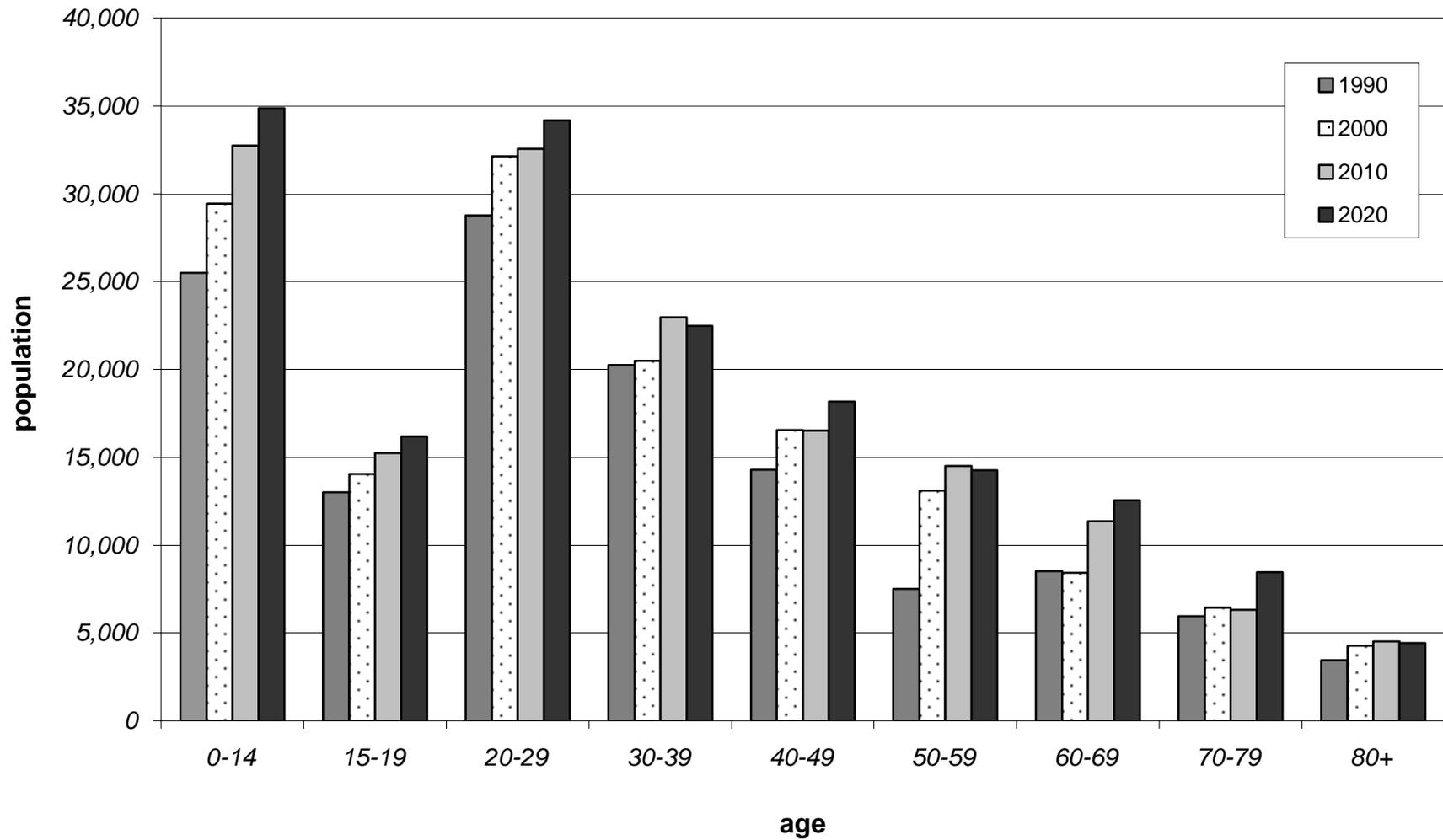


Figure 6: Educational Attainment of Persons 25 Years and Older in McLean County

Source: 1995 County Business Patterns, U.S. Census Bureau

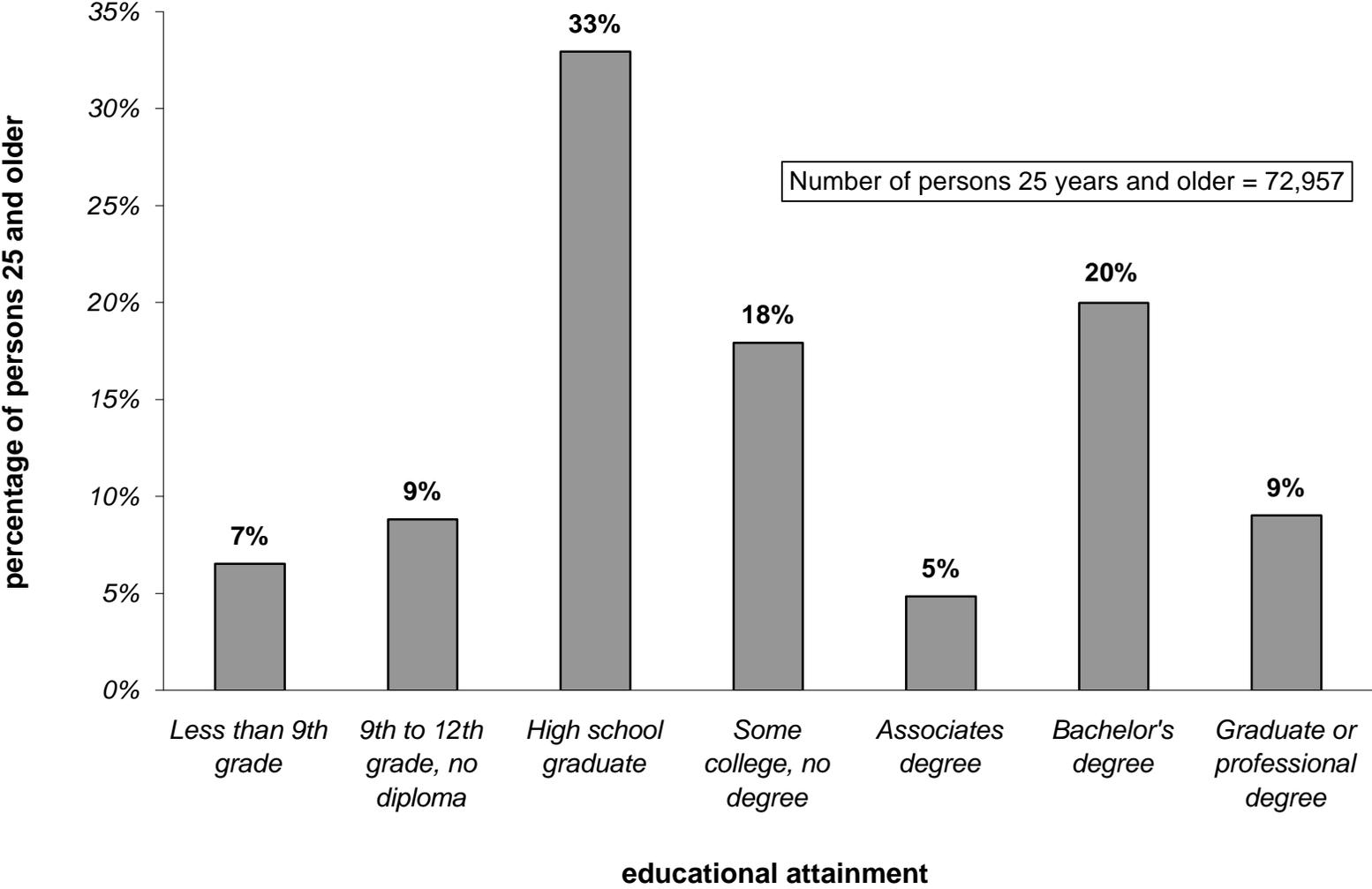


Figure 7: 1996 Per Capita Median Income for McLean County and the State of Illinois

Source: *Regional Economic Information System 1969-1996, U.S. Department of Commerce*

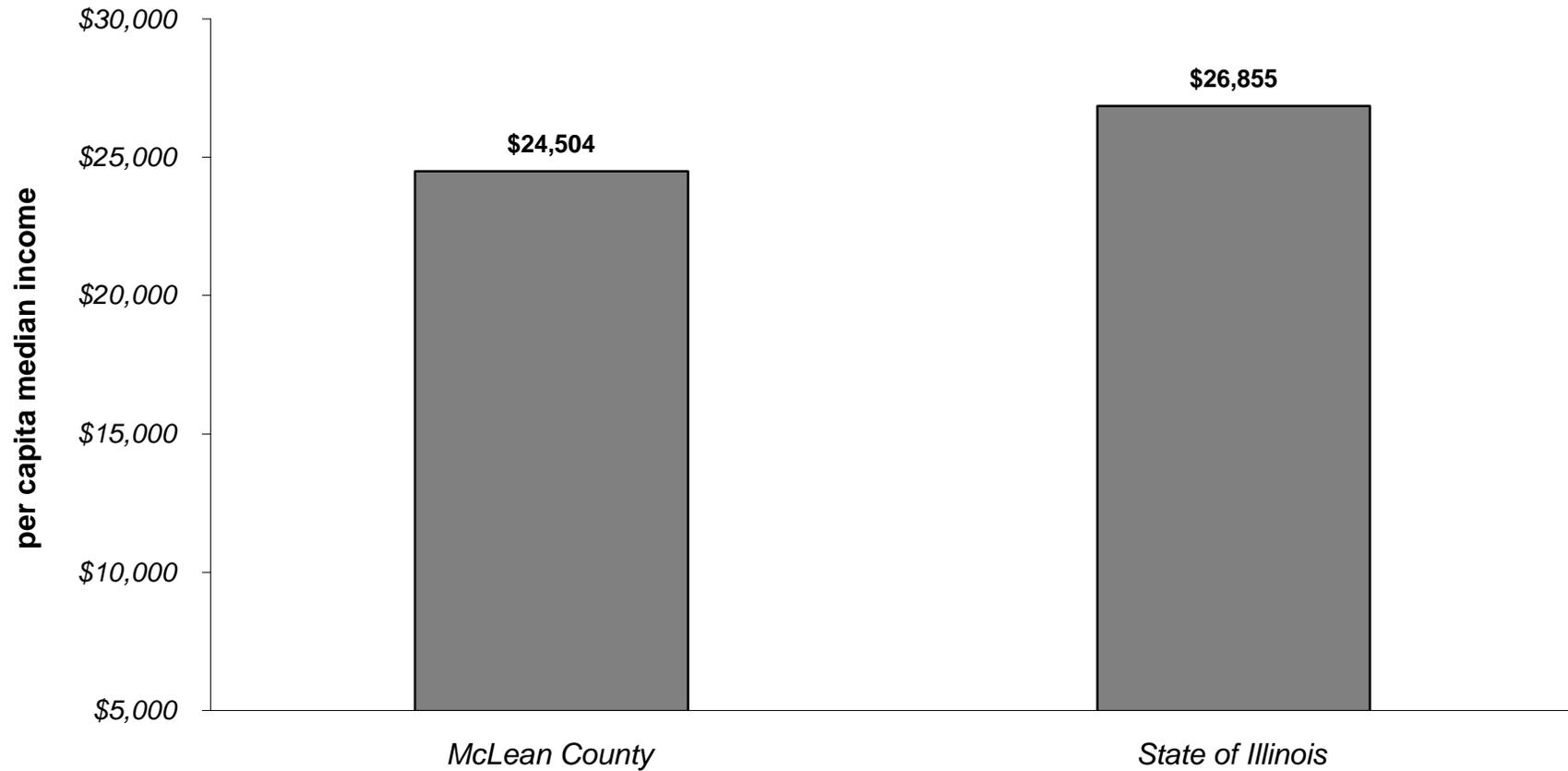


Figure 8: Unemployment Rate in McLean County from 1974 through 1997

Source: 1974-1996 Local Area Unemployment Statistics Annual Averages for Counties, Illinois Department of Employment Security

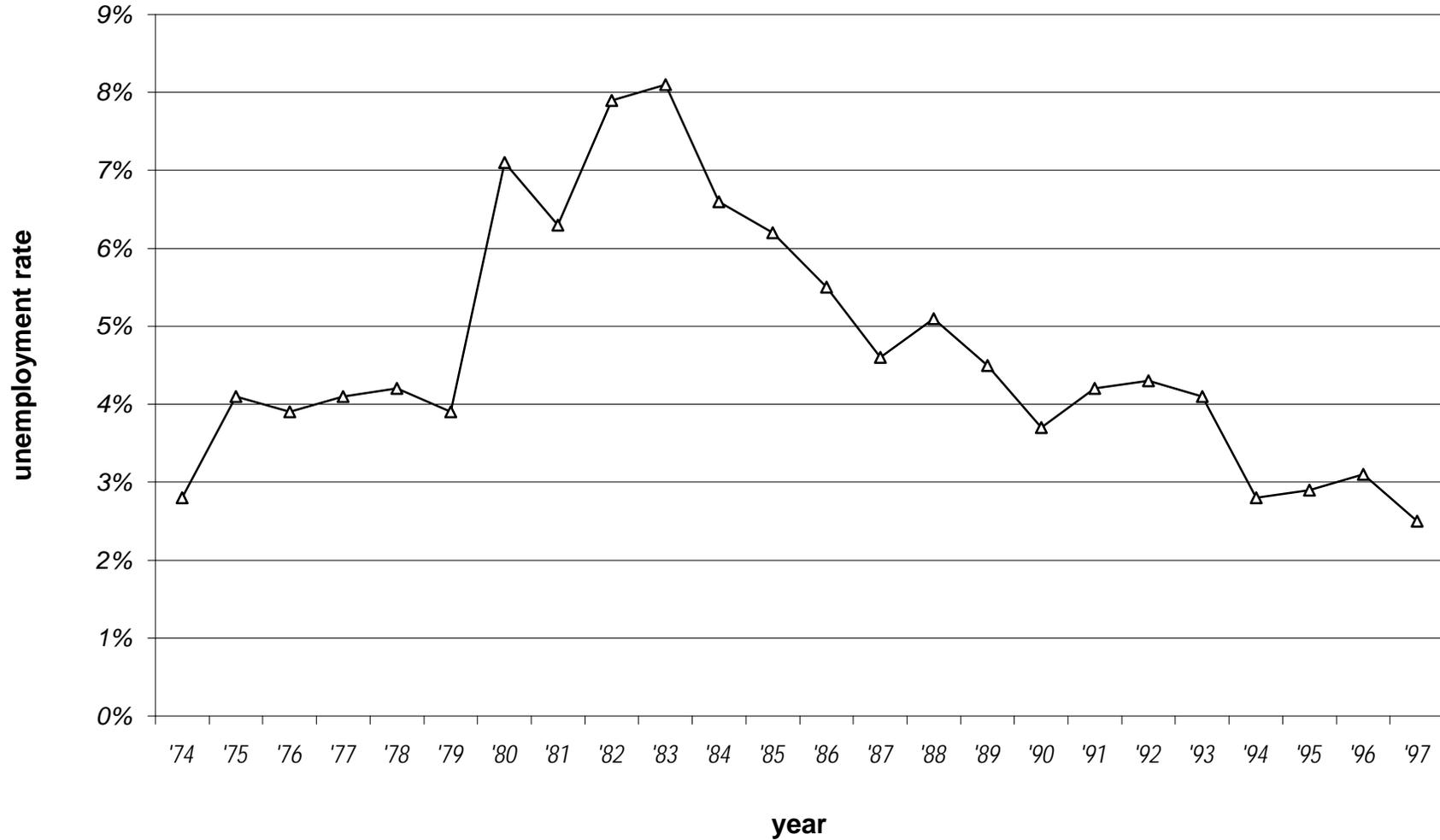


Figure 9: McLean County Labor Force Participation

*Sources: 1990 Census of Population and Housing, U.S. Census Bureau;
Illinois Population Trends 1990 to 2020, State of Illinois, 1997*

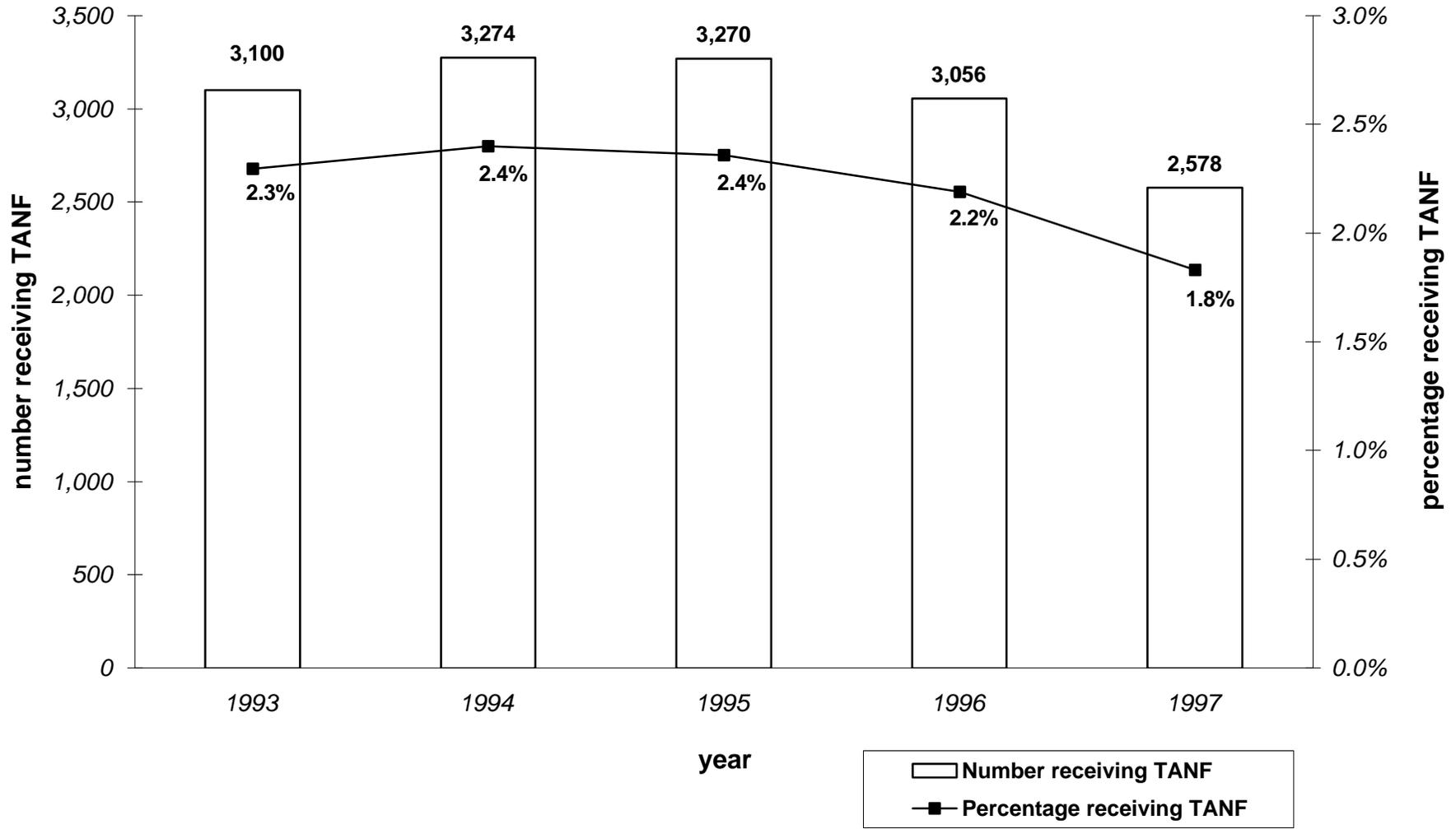
	Age	Population			Labor Force*			1990 Labor Force Participation** (%)	Potential Additions		
		1990	est. 1995	est. 2000	1990	est. 1995	est. 2000		1990	est. 1995	est. 2000
Male	15 to 19	6,101	6,391	6,471	2,996	3,139	3,178	49.11	3,105	3,252	3,293
	20 to 24	8,673	10,030	9,901	6,269	7,249	7,156	72.28	2,404	2,781	2,745
	25 to 29	5,185	4,349	5,580	4,694	3,937	5,051	90.52	491	412	529
	30 to 34	5,042	5,674	4,593	4,587	5,162	4,179	90.98	455	512	414
	35 to 39	4,727	4,869	5,437	4,302	4,431	4,948	91.01	425	438	489
	40 to 44	4,105	4,194	4,274	3,705	3,786	3,858	90.27	400	408	416
	45 to 49	2,985	3,956	3,898	2,695	3,572	3,520	90.29	290	384	378
	50 to 54	2,469	2,902	3,699	2,168	2,548	3,248	87.80	301	354	451
	55 to 59	2,115	2,383	2,720	1,647	1,856	2,118	77.88	468	527	602
	60 to 64	2,069	1,931	2,150	1,149	1,073	1,194	55.56	920	858	956
	65 to 69	1,789	1,901	1,766	492	523	486	27.53	1,297	1,378	1,280
	70 to 74	1,322	1,462	1,542	242	267	282	18.29	1,080	1,195	1,260
	75 +	1,994	2,067	2,149	154	160	166	7.73	1,840	1,907	1,983
Female	15 to 19	6,906	7,414	7,572	3,646	3,914	3,998	52.80	3,260	3,500	3,574
	20 to 24	9,556	10,867	10,863	6,742	7,667	7,665	70.56	2,814	3,200	3,198
	25 to 29	5,351	4,548	5,773	4,125	3,506	4,451	77.10	1,226	1,042	1,322
	30 to 34	5,393	5,800	4,897	4,021	4,324	3,651	74.55	1,372	1,476	1,246
	35 to 39	5,088	5,216	5,560	3,920	4,019	4,284	77.05	1,168	1,197	1,276
	40 to 44	4,084	4,328	4,362	3,203	3,395	3,421	78.44	881	933	941
	45 to 49	3,113	3,906	4,017	2,430	3,048	3,135	78.04	683	858	882
	50 to 54	2,497	3,059	3,713	1,858	2,276	2,762	74.40	639	783	951
	55 to 59	2,354	2,491	2,973	1,451	1,536	1,833	61.64	903	955	1,140
	60 to 64	2,459	2,246	2,370	989	903	953	40.23	1,470	1,343	1,417
	65 to 69	2,215	2,321	2,131	413	433	397	18.65	1,802	1,888	1,734
	70 to 74	1,950	1,946	2,038	170	170	178	8.73	1,780	1,776	1,860
	75 +	4,138	4,775	4,972	121	140	146	2.93	4,017	4,635	4,826
TOTAL		103,680	111,026	115,421	68,191	73,035	76,258		35,489	37,991	39,163

*Labor Force includes both employed and unemployed (but looking for work) civilians.

** 1990 Labor Force Participation = (1990 Labor Force/1990 Population)*100.

Figure 10: Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) in McLean County, 1993-1997 (Averages*)

Sources: Illinois Department of Human Services, Report #R8460-360-02; Population Estimates Program, Population Division, U.S. Census Bureau



*The monthly average of TANF recipients.

Figure 11: Education and Work Experience Characteristics of Adult TANF Recipients in McLean County

Source: Illinois Department of Human Services, June 1998 Characteristics, Report #R8662026-01

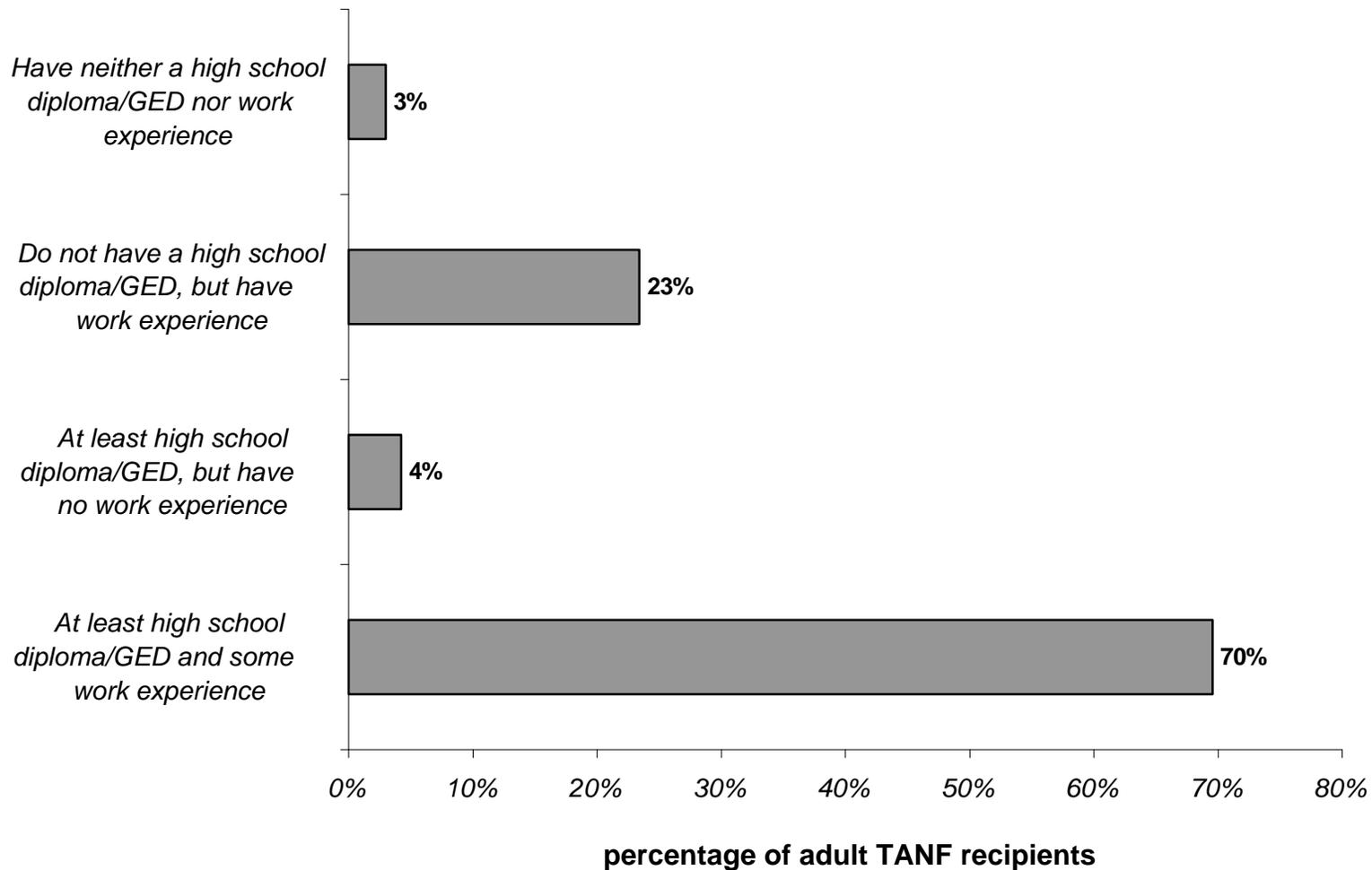


Figure 12: Class of Worker in McLean County

Source: 1996 Counties USA, U.S. Census Bureau

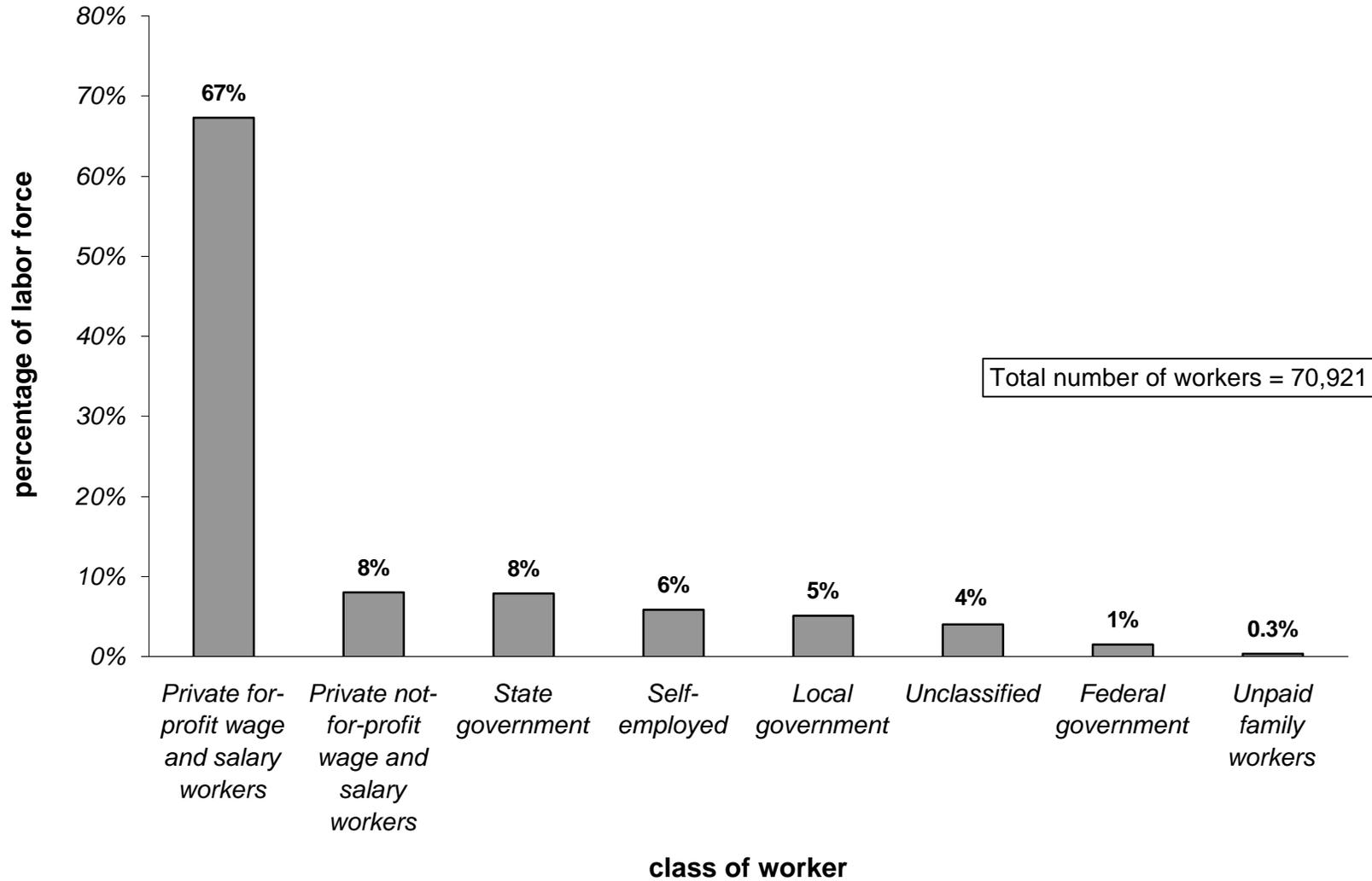


Figure 13: Number Employed by Industry in McLean County, 1990 and 2005 (Projected)

Source: 1992-2005 Occupational Projections, Illinois Department of Employment Security

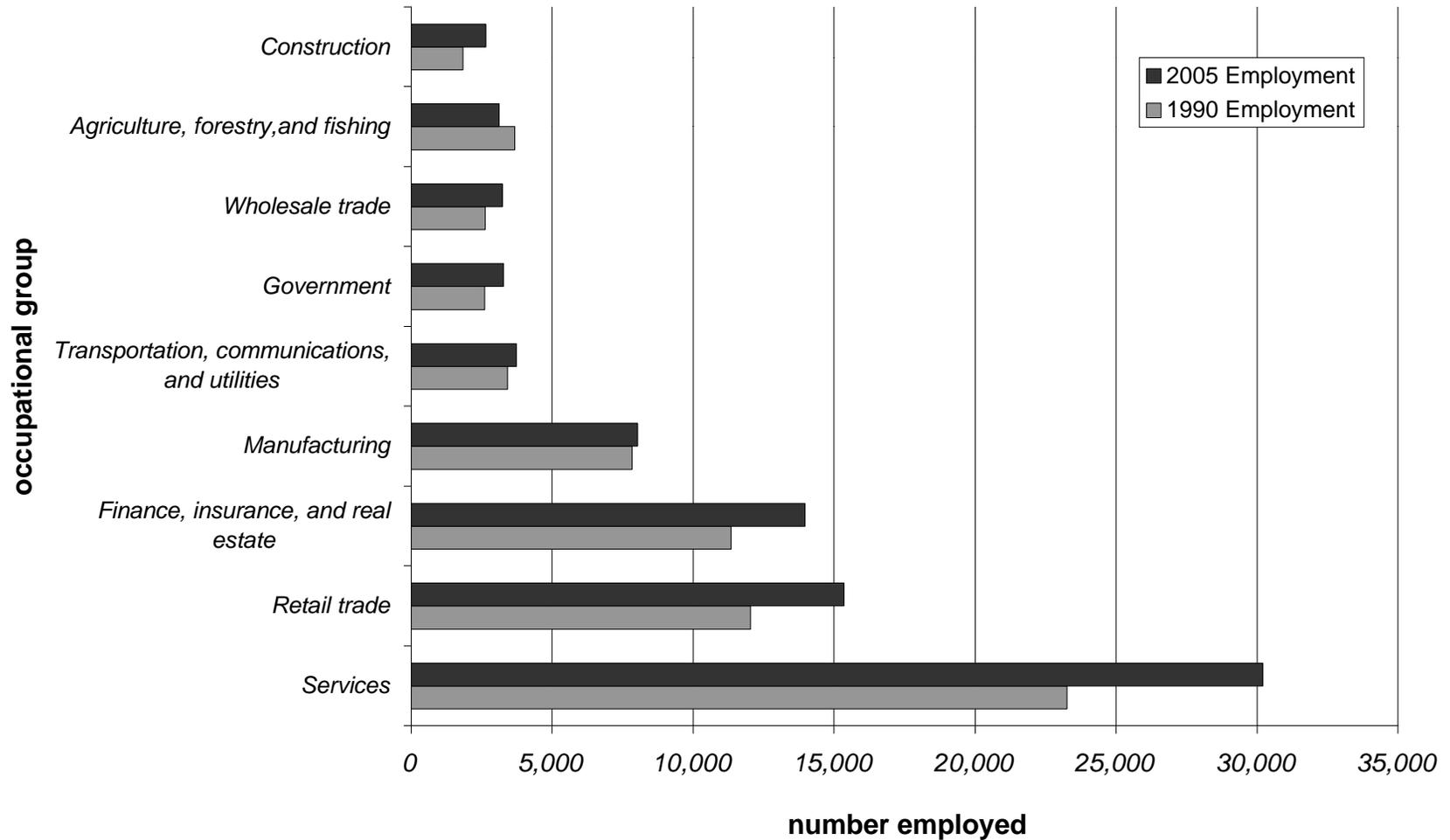


Figure 14a: Occupations in McLean County with 20 or More Projected Average Annual Openings Requiring Short-term Training

Sources: 1992-2005 Occupational Projections and 1996 Wage Survey for McLean County, Illinois Department of Employment Security

Occupation	1992 Employment	2005 Employment	Percent Change, 1992 to 2005	Average Annual Openings	Percent of All Average Annual Openings	Percent of Average Annual Openings due to Growth	Percent of Average Annual Openings due to Separation	Median Hourly Wage
All Occupations	76,130	95,309	25%	3216	100.0%	46%	54%	\$11.51
Short-term on-the-job training (<1 month)								
Salespersons, retail	2,028	2,748	36%	127	3.9%	76%	24%	\$5.82
Cashiers	1,581	2,120	34%	100	3.1%	41%	58%	\$5.00
Waiters & Waitresses	1,137	1,640	44%	93	2.9%	42%	58%	\$2.55
General Office Clerks	2,499	3,160	26%	92	2.9%	55%	45%	\$9.38
Food Preparation Workers	1,025	1,498	46%	81	2.5%	44%	56%	\$5.25
Fast Food Preparation & Service Workers	988	1,392	41%	73	2.3%	42%	58%	\$6.50
Janitors, Cleaners, and Maids	1,908	2,320	22%	72	2.2%	44%	56%	\$6.30
Assemblers & Fabricators, general	2,281	2,375	4%	43	1.3%	16%	84%	*
Precision Assemblers	2,281	2,375	4%	43	1.3%	16%	84%	*
Truck Drivers, Heavy	729	966	33%	40	1.2%	45%	55%	\$11.25
Dining Room and Cafeteria Attendants	449	597	33%	33	1.0%	33%	66%	*
Stock Clerks, Sales Floor	516	690	34%	30	0.9%	43%	53%	\$5.00
Fast Food Cooks	296	417	41%	25	0.8%	36%	64%	\$7.00
Nursing Aides and Orderlies	542	753	39%	25	0.8%	64%	36%	\$6.11
Lunchroom and Cafeteria Counter Attendants	295	368	25%	24	0.7%	25%	75%	*
Receptionists and Information Clerks	489	650	33%	20	0.6%	60%	40%	\$7.78

* indicates a median hourly wage could not be determined from the available data source.

Figure 14b: Occupations in McLean County with 20 or More Projected Average Annual Openings Requiring Additional Training/Work Experience

Sources: 1992-2005 Occupational Projections and 1996 Wage Survey for McLean County, Illinois Department of Employment Security

Occupation	1992 Employment	2005 Employment	Percent Change, 1992 to 2005	Average Annual Openings	Percent of All Average Annual Openings	Percent of Average Annual Openings due to Growth	Percent of Average Annual Openings due to Separation	Median Hourly Wage
All Occupations	76,130	95,309	25%	3216	100.0%	46%	54%	\$11.51
Moderate to long-term on-the-job training								
Insurance Adjusters, Examiners, and Investigators	800	1,270	59%	45	1.4%	80%	20%	*
Bookkeepers, Accountants, and Auditing Clerks	1,582	1,639	4%	37	1.2%	11%	86%	*
Farmers	1,779	1,810	2%	37	1.2%	5%	92%	*
Carpenters	503	736	46%	29	0.9%	61%	39%	\$11.67
Insurance Sales Workers	899	955	6%	28	0.9%	14%	86%	*
Sales Reps, excluding Retail	559	672	20%	22	0.7%	41%	59%	\$17.58
Maintenance Repairers, General Utility	592	758	28%	22	0.7%	59%	45%	*
Work experience or post-secondary vocational training								
Secretaries	2,108	2,258	7%	60	1.9%	20%	80%	\$9.89
Supervisors & Managers of Marketing & Sales Workers	1,129	1,481	31%	49	1.5%	55%	45%	*
Food Service and Lodging Managers	444	640	44%	24	0.7%	63%	37%	*
Restaurant Cooks	343	523	52%	23	0.7%	61%	39%	\$6.50
Automotive Mechanics	410	510	24%	21	0.7%	38%	62%	\$10.40

* indicates a median hourly wage could not be determined from the available data source.

Figure 14c: Occupations in McLean County with 20 or More Projected Average Annual Openings Requiring Education

Sources: 1992-2005 Occupational Projections and 1996 Wage Survey for McLean County, Illinois Department of Employment Security

Occupation	1992 Employment	2005 Employment	Percent Change, 1992 to 2005	Average Annual Openings	Percent of All Average Annual Openings	Percent of Average Annual Openings due to Growth	Percent of Average Annual Openings due to Separation	Median Hourly Wage
All Occupations	76,130	95,309	25%	3216	100.0%	46%	54%	\$11.51
Associates degree								
Supervisors & Managers of Clerical & Administrative Support Workers	1,121	1,480	32%	59	1.8%	47%	53%	*
Registered Nurses	978	1,294	32%	51	1.6%	47%	53%	*
Computer Programmer Technicians, Excluding Health and Engineering	513	626	22%	21	0.7%	43%	57%	\$15.21
Technicians - Health Professional and Paraprofessional	385	591	54%	20	0.6%	80%	20%	*
Bachelor's degree								
Computer Systems Analysts, Electronic Data Processing	616	1,266	106%	58	1.8%	86%	14%	*
Teachers, Elementary School	1,199	1,498	25%	50	1.6%	46%	54%	*
Teachers, Secondary School	989	1,229	24%	43	1.3%	72%	28%	*
Underwriters	638	854	34%	30	0.9%	57%	43%	\$14.17
All Other (non-specified) Management Support Workers	512	673	31%	20	0.6%	60%	40%	*
Bachelor's degree and work experience or Master's degree								
General Managers & Top Executives	2,101	2,469	18%	65	2.0%	43%	57%	*
All other (non-specified) Managers and Administrators	1,150	1,295	13%	31	1.0%	35%	65%	*
Graduate Assistants, Teaching	646	803	24%	35	1.1%	34%	66%	*
Accountants and Auditors	683	924	35%	31	1.0%	61%	39%	*
All other (non-specified) Postsecondary Faculty	396	492	24%	21	0.7%	33%	66%	*

* indicates a median hourly wage could not be determined from the available data source.

Figure 15: McLean County Employers' Survey Results

Source: Central Illinois Workforce Issues: Labor Market Research Report,
Applied Social Research Unit, Illinois State University, 1995

Survey Respondents by Number of Employees

	<u>Number of respondents</u>
1-9 employees	2
10-19	1
20-99	1
100-249	6
250-999	2
1000 and over	2
Missing	1
TOTAL	15

What skills are you looking for in prospective employees?

	<u>Number of respondents</u> <u>(15 possible for each item)</u>
Technical skills	5
Trade skills (e.g., welding, electrician)	0
General skills (e.g., reading, writing, and math)	8
College education	1
Professional license	1
Other (e.g., people skills, work ethic, experience)	13

Can you identify skills shortages in your current applicant pool...

	<u>Number of respondents</u>
No	4
Yes	9



...if yes, what are they?

	<u>Number of respondents</u> <u>(9 possible for each item)</u>
Technical skills	2
Trade skills (e.g., welding, electrician)	0
General skills (e.g., reading, writing, and math)	2
College education	0
Professional license	1
Other (e.g., language/communication skills)	6

Figure 16: McLean County Job-Seekers' Survey Results

Source: Central Illinois Workforce Issues: Labor Market Research Report,
Applied Social Research Unit, Illinois State University, 1995

Age Distribution of Survey Respondents

	<u>Number of respondents</u>
20 - 24 years	6
25 - 34	11
35 - 44	6
45 and older	3
Missing	<u>8</u>
TOTAL	34

How helpful are the following resources when looking for a job?

	<u>Very helpful</u>	<u>Helpful</u>	<u>Not helpful</u>	<u>Never used/ Don't know</u>	TOTAL <u>respondents</u>
Want ads	11	17	4	1	33
Word of mouth	9	13	6	5	33
Temporary agency	3	9	7	12	31
School placement office	3	8	4	13	28
Job service	5	12	6	9	32
Job fairs	4	9	2	15	30

What keeps you from finding jobs?

	<u>Number of respondents</u> <u>(34 possible for each item)</u>
Too many other applicants for jobs	11
Lack of skills	11
Lack of child care	10
Do not know about job openings	9
No job openings right for me	9
Other	8
No transportation	6
Can not relocate	6
Do not want to return to work	0

Appendix B: Focus group summaries

Summary of Focus Group 1

Rural Educators

McLean County Workforce Issues Study 1998

Date: March 18, 1998
Time: 4:30-6:00 p.m.
Place: Private Dining Room, Bone Student Center
Facilitators: Dr. Lucinda Beier
Ms. Sue Savage
Participants: Ms. Debbie Brown, Tech/Prep Coordinator, Olympia High School
Mr. Jim Carstens, Executive Director, Tri-County Special Education Association
Ms. Connie J. Link, Language Arts Chairperson, Heyworth High School
Mr. Al Schroeder, Teacher, Lexington High School
Ms. Mary Beth Trakinat, Director, Community Education, Heartland Community College

Discussion of programs, facilities, or services that would improve workforce development and support in McLean County

Continued business partnerships with schools

- Harder to do in rural areas.
- McLean County Compact helps.
- Resources needed to find business people/professionals willing to give time to come into schools and talk to classes or provide job shadowing, etc.
- Full page ad in Pantagraph "We Need You" as way to get businesses/people involved.
- Directory of businesses or people who would be willing to come to or work with schools. (ISU had made such a list several years ago of college people who would go to schools and talk to the students.)
- Computer WWW directory that businesses can add to at their discretion. Directory would include business people, professions, students. Maybe a volunteer committee could oversee it. Coordinate efforts with computer consortium.
- Coordinating agency or a clearinghouse for sharing information. (Compact may have been working on this).
- Give employers (like State Farm) a chance to present their needs and information to the schools.
- Work experience opportunities for rural students particularly.
- Employees could be given release time for volunteer work in schools.

Coordinating agency to bring business partnerships to schools

Communication between employers and schools about actual qualifications for jobs

- The schools stress tardiness to school and work has dire consequences but students say employers accept tardiness.

- Employers must provide good information about what is needed in time for schools to train students.

Employers legally inhibited about asking for information about students

- Employers should be able to ask for and receive accurate information (such as character traits) from the schools about student applicants.
- Schools are willing to provide information about applicants.

Employers want to draw from a better prepared workforce

Opportunities for students to learn on the job (particularly people with disabilities)

- Unrealistic demands of employers for special education students who aren't going to be able to meet hard skills. Other skills, such as teamwork, can be just as important to being a successful employee.
- Employers should recognize a person's strengths and weaknesses and commit to making the most of them just as schools and governments do.
- Also there are students with visual, audio, or physical disabilities but who have good hard skills.

Well funded facility that stays one step ahead in computer technologies

- Partnership between business and education.

Work experience for students while still in school

More follow up and support for new employees

- Mentoring can be built in to employment.

Summary of Focus Group 2 Urban Educators McLean County Workforce Issues Study 1998

Date: March 19, 1998
Time: 4:30-6:00 p.m.
Place: Private Dining Room, Bone Student Center
Facilitators: Ms. Sharon Mills
Ms. Sue Savage
Participants: Ms. Yvonne Clogston, Counselor, Unit 5 Schools, Chiddix Jr. High School
Ms. Joyce Fritsch, Director, GED/Adult Literacy of DeWitt-Livingston-McLean R.O.E
Ms. Jennifer Hamilton, Counselor, Normal Community High School
Mr. J. D. Hawkins, Counselor, University High School
Dr. Robert Malito, Superintendent, McLean County Unit School District 5
Mr. Robert B. Meeker, Assistant Superintendent of Operations, Bloomington Public Schools
Mr. Steve Poznic, Director, Bloomington Area Vocational Center
Ms. Susan Silvey, Principal, Bloomington Junior High School
Mr. Bill Weber, Lead Counselor, Bloomington High School
Ms. Pam Wilfinger, Counselor, Central Catholic High School
Ms. Diane Petrotte, Counselor, Normal Community West High School

Programs, facilities, or services that would improve workforce development and support in McLean County

Apprenticeship programs for high school students (3*)

Coordinator for apprenticeship programs (5)

Technology training focus (6)

Directory of programs with focus on workforce development (2)

Curriculum related to work, K through 12th grade (1)

Technology and other career information for students and parents (other than college prep) (8)

Coordinated recruitment program

- Include more than apprenticeships.
- Provide a plan so students know they are trained for specific job(s) and/or are linked with a specific organization. Could include part or full time jobs after graduation.
- Start in junior year.
- Include recruitment and job placement.

* Each participant was asked to cast three votes for the topic(s) they would most like to discuss. The number in parentheses indicates the number of votes each topic received.

Free 24 hours/7 days a week child care for adults in training (1)

Computer technology training site/center

Coordinated projects

- Prevent duplication & increase efficiency.

Summer (or after school) work for 7th and 8th graders

- Start learning job retention skills.
- Develop career awareness.

Communicate more information about workforce requirements to parents

Summer time training (5)

Free 24 hours/7 days a week transportation (2)

Topics chosen for further discussion

Technology and other career information for students and parents (other than college prep)

A. General discussion

- Dissemination of information, especially to newspapers. Maybe TV, other media. Web site page could be used (easily updated), but some want information in hard copy form.
- Current lists of local jobs & what qualifications are required.
- Include salary range because money is important & impresses the students. Personnel departments could provide information.
- List the jobs by educational levels required and by salary paid.
- Job projection for next few years, for various levels: local, community college district, McLean County, and Central IL.
- Parents need to know this information also. Information meetings for parents and students could be held as town meetings or at businesses (State Farm or Mitsubishi) rather than at school. Or have a community career expo.

B. Discussion focused on collaborative efforts between businesses and schools.

- Businesses provide guidance counselors with job lists. Explain the list of jobs & pay scales to counselors, maybe in a half or full day meeting, so that they can work from this. Do annually. Bloomington-Normal Human Resource Council annual wage survey does this.
- Businesses could provide packets of information that include job lists and their related required courses. This information should be endorsed by the businesses by their going to the schools, or publishing the endorsement in the paper, or placing their names or logos in the list. The packet might include some successful biographies of former students. It should be periodically updated.
- Businesses could provide opportunities for counselors to do paid internship programs in Human Resources offices during summers. This kind of experience provides very meaningful experiences for counselors.
- Create a new position for a coordinator or find someone who already has this as part of job description such as Heartland Regional Partnership. Money could come from businesses that want qualified workers from the student population.

- Efforts coordinated through state so that school and business partnerships could be done more efficiently instead of a lot of little groups doing same things with separate funds. Pool money for state.

Technology training focus

- Maybe some of the existing training centers located in businesses (State Farm Corporate South), educational organizations (public schools, ISU, career lab at Bloomington High School) or unions, could be opened up to community.
- Costs would include equipment maintenance, teachers and upgrades.
- Illinois Employment and Training Center provides a type of One Stop service and includes assessment. Employment and Training Center has resource room.
- Illinois Professional Development Partnership Center, Illinois State University, is funded by the Illinois State Board of Education and provides professional development for educators (teachers, administrators, counselors, etc.). The Center has computer facilities, training rooms, and meeting space.*
- Careers labs, such as Bloomington High School's lab, could be used for career awareness (including technology).
- Training centers might be able to be used for apprenticeships and other training.
- Need to look at high-risk students and dropouts, under-educated and under-employed adults as participants in apprenticeship programs. They are both a rich source for jobs and potentially a huge burden to society. They need access to the training centers maybe even more than students in school do.

Coordinator for apprenticeship programs

- Coordination won't be done unless someone is paid to do it. Where will pay come from? Compact has coordinator that does something like this.
- The level of coordination that is being talked about may not be able to be done by one person. May need several part-time people to do their specialized parts (i.e. teachers/counselors could do part of it in summers. Someone would still need to coordinate and plan the individual parts.) That is something Heartland Partnership could do—coordinate the plan. Then different organizations (such as McLean County Community Compact, McLean County Chamber of Commerce, etc.) could each be responsible for a part of the plan.
- Coordination of summer programs and internships for incoming 7th graders through young adults or older.
- Teachers (in addition to counselors) must be very involved and committed to apprenticeships or it won't work. They may need incentives such as summer training so they can become engaged learners.
- Summer might be the time and way to do some of the coordination and to start some of the new programs. Look for models.

* Education, community, or other groups may contact the Center about its potential uses at 309-664-5498.

Summary of Focus Group 3 Social Agencies McLean County Workforce Issues Study 1998

Date: March 23, 1998
Time: 11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.
Place: Founder's Suite, Bone Student Center
Facilitators: Dr. Lucinda Beier
Ms. Sue Savage
Participants: Ms. Cathy Ahart, Economic Development Director, Community Action
Ms. Susan Bandy, Executive Director, McLean County Community Compact
Mr. Gary Cicciu, Vice President, United Workforce Development Board
Ms. Karen Daudelin, President, United Way of McLean County
Ms. Charlotte Dotts, Subsidy Coordinator, Child Care Resource & Referral Network
Ms. Laura Furlong, Director of Human Resources, MARC Center
Mr. Gary Gwin, Transportation Superintendent, Bloomington-Normal Public Transit System
Ms. Christi Hall, Employment Security Field Office Supervisor, Illinois Department of Employment Security
Ms. Jan Hood, Legislative Assistant, State Representative Bill Brady
Ms. Jan Rossiter, Lead Caseworker Specialist—TANF Unit, Department of Human Services

Programs, facilities, or services that would improve workforce development and support in McLean County

Level playing field for access to technology

- Don't want to expand gap between "haves" and "have nots" for technical opportunities.

Refinement of One Stop Shop (5*)

- Continue ones already in place.
- Increase participation and services.

Continuation of employment support services (3)

- More employer participation & continued employee participation.

Collaborative job retention mentoring (7)

- Need more resources for low income and welfare clients.

Identify transportation needs and transportation funding sources

Directory of services and funds

- To locate and emphasize gaps in services.

* Each participant was asked to cast three votes for the topic(s) they would most like to discuss. The number in parentheses indicates the number of votes each topic received.

Communication between workers about services provided in different agencies

Inclusive day care and child support for children with disabilities

Clearinghouse to serve as link between employers, employees, and agencies

- Need database, maybe two.
- Clients need someone to talk to for guidance as to next step.

Job readiness (7)

- Basic needs and skills must be met before job retention can happen.

Need pool of untargeted money for persons or organizations in need

Community plan including businesses, local citizens, agencies, educators, etc. (11)

Connect with business community more

Topics chosen for further discussion

Community plan including businesses, local citizens, agencies, educators, etc.

- Governor Edgar's clearinghouse concept. DHS coming to community to forge partnership to open doors to “good” jobs. Partnerships with United Way and other similar agencies that already have connections with local higher wage employers. This might lead to development of community plan by bringing in industry.
- Industry must buy in.
- Problem is not enough skilled people for the GOOD jobs. Mismatch between jobs and people. The people who fill the good jobs come from other good jobs, not from the presently unemployed.
- Employers will never buy in unless it satisfies their bottom line. Therefore, standardize skills for both sides and communicate skills necessary for specific jobs. Need to know from employers what they want and expect. Identify, standardize, communicate, and train skills necessary for specific jobs.
- Mind change needed from employer for the new, previously unemployed and on-welfare employee. The employers may have to help solve the employee’s problems. (Example: what if the bus drops the employee off 5 minutes after they are supposed to start?) Need involvement of employers in mentoring and awareness and flexibility of employers about employee problems.
- Agencies don’t read each other’s future plans. Need peer review.
- Consider non-traditional workers—not only placement but retention.
- Need to understand corporate culture.
- Set up outcome measurements for services, projects, etc.
- Employer faces investment of time and money.
- Trying to match the needs and projected needs for both employees and employers. Looking at using appropriate services and resources.

Collaborative job retention mentoring

- Heartland Community College has a pilot mentoring collaborative but very little funding for project.
- Will need a full time coordinator for that program to expand beyond pilot. Money comes from where? State, United Way, mix of money?
- Churches are providing the volunteer mentors now.

Concluding comments

- Employers comment they are happy to meet with agencies, but they think agencies act too slow for employers' needs. The things that do happen are not solving their problems. Therefore businesses don't stick with committees.
- Service providers should come with action plan to meet business needs.
- Make specific requests of business—processes of businesses and agencies are different.
- Need a local agency that can act quickly or have the funds readily available for the businesses' immediate needs.

Summary of Focus Group 4 Employers 1 McLean County Workforce Issues Study 1998

Date: March 30, 1998
Time: 11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.
Place: Founder's Suite, Bone Student Center
Facilitators: Ms. Sharon Mills
Mr. Tom Muraoka
Participants: Mr. Dave Anderson, City Manager, Town of Normal
Rev. David Gaffron, Directing Pastor, Wesley United Methodist Church
Ms. Julie Jenson, Manager of Staffing and Development, Illinois State University
Mr. Ed Johnson, Operation Team Leader, E. I. DuPont
Ms. Michele McClelland, Human Resources Consultant, BroMenn Healthcare
Mr. John Ryan, Owner, Norrell Services

Programs, facilities, or services that would improve workforce development and support in McLean County

Process Safety Management (PSM)

- Covers training and performance, auditing, pre-startup safety review, etc.
- Consists of 11 parts.

Apprenticeship Programs (4*)

- Examples: Heartland, Education-to-Careers.
- Recruit high school students/graduates into 2-year educational process by promising a job when they complete the course(s). Similar program could be applied to college students.
- Examples of applicable fields: nursing, manufacturing, and construction.

Workshops for employment seekers (2)

- Examples of what to offer: interviewing tips, résumé preparation, filling out applications, computer skills training, Internet job searching.
- ISU is working on such a program, but not implemented yet.
- Need to help people overcome fear of computers.
- Similar to Welfare-to-Work program.

Employees with lower level jobs need special workshops (3)

- People just above the Welfare-to-Work level are often overlooked and/or neglected. Need class(es) to provide basic skills (language, computation, and judgement skills) to prepare for better basic, entry level jobs.

Teach skills and provide career information at high school level

* Each participant was asked to cast three votes for the topic(s) they would most like to discuss. The number in parentheses indicates the number of votes each topic received.

Support Services (6)

- Important to train workforce but also need to provide adequate support services to make it worthwhile to work.
- Need to ensure there is no “dis-incentive” to work. For some welfare recipients, it’s more economically sensible to stay on welfare because costs of childcare and transportation, for example, make working more expensive.
- Plans that are in place to help: United Way-Child Care; Latch Key Program.

Make community more desirable place to live (2)

- Improve “Quality of Life.”
- Encourage diversity, for example, airport services, shopping, etc.

Succession Planning and Development

- Organizations hit middle sector of employees with most programs—neglect low and high end of spectrum.

Is there a “company-town” mentality in Bloomington-Normal?

- Positive side: forces other employers to match salaries, benefits, etc.
- Negative side: makes competition difficult and can keep out prospective businesses/jobs wanting to avoid competition.

Qualified employees at all levels (1)

Topics chosen for further discussion

Support Services

- Emphasize welfare class, but also include those close to, but not technically welfare. Example: childcare assistance so it could be profitable for a second member of a family to work.
- Public transportation now stops at 6:00 p.m. This may prevent someone from taking a job if they need off-hours service. Organizations could provide van pools.
- Accommodate employees’ schedules and situations with flexible hours, childcare, work at home, employer subsidized programs, etc. The costs of these programs could be paid by employer only or shared with employees.
- Business co-ops where employers join together to offset costs of providing programs individually. For example, cooperative health insurance plans are already in place. Could extend the concept of co-ops to cover other costs.
- Help employers by providing them with a list of ideas, information, examples, etc., of ways to improve services to perspective (and current) employees. Examples: cooperative membership of businesses; United Way, in San Francisco, researched aspects/elements that affect families at work.

Apprenticeship Programs

- Ties in with skills upgrade and using community colleges as a training-ground. Could also use universities (e.g., the State Farm/Illinois State University Data Processor Training Program).
- Norrell applicants often lack basic, fundamental skills (e.g., language, computation skills, judgement). They need basic training to “fit in” when applying/competing for jobs.

- Providing training for clients at a place like Norrell may be less intimidating than sending people to Illinois State University, Heartland, etc. (i.e., unfamiliar places).
- Heartland Corporate Education Program, a cooperative effort with employers, may be a suitable means to provide training. It is in employers' interest to get people trained and placed.
- Trades already have formal apprenticeship programs in place in the area.
- At ISU and City Hall, for example, secretaries lack "soft" people skills. Employers willing to overlook some minor skill deficiencies if make up for it in other areas. Unemployment office offers some training in skills areas but not in people skills.
- Provide mentors (job coaches), teachers, employers, etc. with an opportunity to come together and discuss what's needed to succeed as mentors. Resources are required to meet these needs. People are too busy doing regular work to have time to help make these things happen.
- Available resources are underutilized. Some programs are already in place to address these needs such as extended university programs, junior colleges, universities, employment services, (they need something like an employee bank to screen/recruit employees), and the Heartland apprenticeship program which is just being started.
- Need specific courses to train safety and hard skills.
- Communication required between employers and service providers. Do providers know what employers want/need them to be training/providing?

Summary of Focus Group 5 Employers 2 McLean County Workforce Issues Study 1998

Date: March 31, 1998
Time: 11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.
Place: Founder's Suite, Bone Student Center
Facilitators: Dr. Lucinda Beier
Mr. Tom Muraoka
Ms. Sue Savage
Participants: Mr. Joe Bandy, Plant Manager, Pioneer Hi-Bred International, Inc.
Ms. Deb Dresslar, Manager-Human Resources, State Farm Insurance
Mr. Mark Klinger, President, Seibert, Inc.
Mr. David Reed, Rehabilitation Services Supervisor, Office of Rehabilitation Services, Department of Human Resources
Mr. Rick Terven, President, Livingston and McLean County Building Trades, and Business Manager, United Association of Plumbers and Pipe Fitters
Mr. Frank Wood, General Manager, Manpower

Discussion of programs, facilities, or services that would improve workforce development and support in McLean County

Businesses

- Give information about skills/qualifications necessary to be qualified for jobs.
- Increase involvement with students in classroom.
- Inform training sector about specific needs.
- Recognize maturation process in young people. Internships help with this maturation.
- Businesses link with employment agencies to find hands-on summer job experience for teachers, which they can then take back to classroom.
- Important for businesses to go into schools to talk to students. Students often don't listen to guidance counselors or teachers. State Farm has met with students in the classroom to tell them about jobs and their requirements. Follow-up student focus groups gave positive feedback.
- Provide work experience such as job shadowing, internships, etc. Important that teachers view them as worthwhile.

Provide more information about careers

- Web site could list jobs and their related skills.
- Students need to be more aware of choices open to them.

Teachers

- Let teachers work in private sector in summer so they can bring more practical work experience to classroom. There are some four week programs like that now.
- Provide programs and/or stipends for teachers to learn more about jobs.
- Advertise opportunities for teachers' summer employment. Lots of teachers come to Manpower looking for summer work.

Expand work experience opportunities (internships, etc.)

Technology Center to move people from low to high skills

- Would raise blue collar workers skills to fill the technology gap. They have some low-tech skills but need to be raised. Peoria has Technology Center, Bloomington-Normal needs one here.
- Could have a Learning Center on Internet. It could be accessed from remote sites. Manpower trying to develop local website for jobs, any kind of jobs. The website could be used by teachers for summer.

Training

- Job readiness training for high school students and TANF clients.
- Some businesses have training available to new hires if they come from high school with basic 3 Rs.
- Better marketing of training that is available now.
- Vocational training from schools is helpful, but can become outdated quickly.
- Need to better prepare students who aren't going to college.
- Great need for office related services: word processing, spreadsheets, computer skills.
- Local training (full range) services in local towns.
- Seibert pays tuition refunds for some courses their employees take as part of an Associates Degree. Of those employees, some stay 5-6 years, then move on, and other employees stay for many, many years. There are lots of good people who just want a good place to work and live.
- Willing to train good workers with the right work attitudes. Good workers are often those who have come on hard times and really want a good job.
- Most employers are willing to spend the dollars to train the employees.
- Ask businesses what their needs are and link with public training sector. Businesses could set up curriculum and then the training center could select and train candidates. Then businesses could hire who they need. Chamber of Commerce should do this.
- Attitudes and personality traits more important than skills sometimes. There are training programs for these things but how do you get people to come in for the classes? Maybe start in high school with Junior Achievement. There are schools already doing this.
- Worked with Chenoa High School on vocational training but it gets outdated too fast. Like them to have 3 Rs.
- Hard to get rehab people transported from Bloomington-Normal area.

Support transition from high school to college

- Good high school students often have a hard time when they go to college.

Business, education, public communication

- Frustrating to try to get education system to focus on something else besides college prep. Education to Career is trying to change this. ACT scores have been driving schools. Schools must be more flexible. Get school boards and superintendents to buy into change.

Create a “Job Store”

- For everybody.
- To find what jobs are available, to find where to go to improve skills or learn new ones. (IETC does this, but people don't know it.)
- Prepare for first job or increase skills for present job.
- Job Store should have good image, have employers offering good jobs.
- People could access internet list of jobs and their needed skills.
- Job Store should be life long learning. (Maybe Manpower could do it.)
- Maybe businesses could pay for Job Store rather than another public agency. It would be cheaper for businesses than doing their own recruiting.
- IETC has bad image because it is in bad location, the people aren't friendly, and people go there who are really desperate for a job. Employers are often concerned about people who have been referred from IETC because the people are often skilled in collecting unemployment which is an extra cost to the business.
- IETC should change focus from unemployment to upgrading skills.

Appendix C: Methodology

For this project, the Applied Social Research Unit used both quantitative and qualitative research approaches to obtain information about McLean County demographics and workforce development and support. The goal of this research was to give the McLean County Chamber of Commerce information it can use to plan its activities.

The *Review of public data* yielded McLean County population, industry, and workforce participation statistics. The *Review of past survey data and focus group discussions* gleaned information from workforce issues studies previously conducted in Central Illinois by the Applied Social Research Unit. *Focus groups* and *Key informant interviews*, conducted for this study, elicited opinions from stakeholders representing business, labor, social agencies, and education about programs, partnerships, and improvements that could be made in the area of workforce development and support. *Review of literature evaluating model workforce development programs and projects* summarized information about types of and guiding principles for programs and projects and provided insights about the types of programs not appearing in the literature that can be implemented in McLean County.

The approaches used for each research activity are discussed below. Information resulting from research is discussed throughout the report text. Tables, graphs, and focus group content summaries appear in Appendices A and B.

Review of public data

To contextualize information elicited by project research activities, the most recent available data about McLean County population, educational attainment and work experience, employment, occupations, and establishments were obtained from the following sources:

- *1974-1996 Local Area Unemployment Statistics Annual Averages for Counties*, Illinois Department of Employment Security;
- *1990 Census of Population and Housing STF-3A*, U.S. Census Bureau;
- *1992-2005 Occupational Projections*, Illinois Department of Employment Security;
- *1995 County Business Patterns*, U.S. Census Bureau;
- *1995 Zip Code Business Patterns*, U.S. Census Bureau;
- *1996 Counties USA*, U.S. Census Bureau;
- *1996 Current Population Survey Data*, U.S. Department of Commerce;
- *1996 Wage Survey for McLean County*, Illinois Department of Employment Security;
- Illinois Department of Human Services reports;
- *Population Estimates Program*, Population Division, U.S. Census Bureau;
- *Regional Economic Information System 1969-1996*, U.S. Department of Commerce; and

- *Illinois Population Trends 1990 to 2020*, State of Illinois, 1997.

A basic demographic and economic profile of the study area appears in the report text. Many of the graphs and tables appearing in Appendix A are based on public data.

■ Review of past survey data and focus group discussions

Since 1995 the Applied Social Research Unit has conducted two major studies of workforce issues in Central Illinois and a needs assessment for Spoon River College in Canton, Illinois. The Spoon River College needs assessment was conducted to aid the College in evaluating current programs and curricula and in planning for future program and service delivery.

Much of the workforce issues information gathered through these projects is consistent from one Illinois geographical area to another. Although some of the information is specific to areas outside of McLean County, it is referenced in the text because of its applicability to McLean County.

In 1995, the Applied Social Research Unit researched Central Illinois workforce issues in an eight county area, including McLean County, served by the Central Illinois Workforce Network. The Central Illinois Private Industry Council commissioned this 1995 study and commissioned a second study in 1997 of workforce issues in a five county area in Central Illinois that excluded McLean County.

Three major components of the 1995 study were a survey of job-seekers, a survey of employers, and a series of focus group discussions with business and education representatives. These project activities are summarized below; information pertaining to McLean County from these activities is referenced in the report and in Appendix A.

The *Central Illinois Workforce Issues 1997* study did not include McLean County as a study area county. Yet, information collected by 14 focus group discussions and a survey of 100 employers conducted for this study parallels information emerging for McLean County; thus, 1997 study information is referenced in report text with 1995 study information.

– *1995 Job-seekers' survey*

Unemployed or underemployed persons in Central Illinois were surveyed in 1995 for their opinions about the following:

- job search services and strategies they had utilized;
- obstacles to finding jobs;
- skills or qualifications sought by employers;
- services they believe would be useful in preparing them for employment; and
- type of work they were seeking

Thirty-four persons, or 24 percent, of the 187 persons responding to the survey were residing in McLean County. Appendix A of this report includes information from that survey for persons residing in McLean County.

– 1995 Employers’ survey

Of the 64 employers responding to the Employers’ Survey in the 1995 study, fifteen employers (23 percent) were from McLean County. The survey explored employers’ opinions about:

- kinds of position for which employers regularly hire;
- skills employers are seeking in applicants;
- current and projected skills shortages; and
- educational and skills preparation of the workforce.

Responses to this 1995 survey are referenced in the report text and Appendix A.

– 1995 Focus group discussions

For the 1995 study, two of four focus groups were conducted with McLean County employers, representing major industrial sectors, and with trainers concerned with secondary, post-secondary, and workplace programs. Two focus groups, conducted in Peoria, were composed in the same way. This research elicited information about current skills needs; emerging skills needs; ways in which workforce preparation programs can be improved; and job and candidate search support services which job-seekers and employers would find most useful. References to 1995 focus group discussions are made in the report text.

– 1997 Employers’ survey

The *Central Illinois Workforce Issues 1997* project concerned a five county study area including Peoria, Tazewell, Marshall, Stark, and Henry Counties. For this project, 100 employers were interviewed via telephone about high paying growth occupations in their organizations, occupations most often filled, and occupations that will be most in demand in the future. Employers were asked about current and future skills needs for each of these occupations. Information regarding skills needs is referenced in report text with information from the 1995 study.

– 1997 Focus group discussions

Also for the 1997 study, a total of 80 persons from Central Illinois participated in one of 14 focus groups. Participants included employers, educators, labor union representatives, local elected officials, economic developers, social service professionals, workforce support agency clients, and adult basic education students.

Participants in each group brainstormed about the components or characteristics of an ideal integrated workforce development and support system and indicated the changes necessary to achieve this ideal system. The “system” was conceptualized broadly to include education and other preparation of young people for careers, skills upgrades for current workers, and support for adults within special categories (e.g., persons with disabilities, older adults, homemakers, welfare recipients, and displaced workers) to enter or re-enter the workforce.

Focus groups

The Applied Social Research Unit utilized focus groups comprised of various stakeholders to gain qualitative information about improvements that could be made to the workforce development and support system in McLean County.

–Focus group composition

Focus groups were composed to represent education, social services, business, and labor in McLean County. Focus group participants were sought from Bloomington-Normal (categorized as “urban”) and outlying communities in McLean County (categorized as “rural”).

McLean County Chamber of Commerce staff provided contact lists of social and governmental agencies, schools, and Chamber member organizations from which potential focus group participants were selected. Three focus groups were devoted to urban/rural McLean County employers and labor organizations. (Only two of these three groups attracted enough participants to be held.)

Thirty urban employers and labor organizations were invited to participate in one of three employers’ focus groups. Representatives from the five largest employers in Bloomington-Normal were chosen to participate. Other businesses were chosen at random from a McLean County Chamber of Commerce business membership list that was printed by size of business from largest to smallest. A random number, 19, was determined and used to select potential business participants; every 19th business was selected from the list provided by the Chamber. Organizations with less than five employees were excluded.

When selected, businesses of Chamber Workforce Issues Committee members were replaced with a business of same industry and similar size. Businesses outside of McLean County and the local market (i.e., Peoria) were replaced with a business of same industry and similar size. A few additional businesses or organizations were hand-selected (i.e., retail business and trade unions) to ensure representation by industry and of the local business market. The resulting list of potential urban business participants was representative by industry and size of business.

Seventeen rural Chamber of Commerce business members were invited to participate in one of three employers’ focus groups. All rural Chamber business members were listed. Potential participants, 17 businesses, were hand-selected to represent rural businesses by size and industry classification.

Two focus groups were devoted to education (i.e., administrators, teachers, counselors, and technical preparation professionals) in McLean County. One group involved rural junior-senior high school education representatives and educational organizations; another group comprised urban junior-senior high school education representatives and educational organizations. Representatives from schools were chosen with an attempt to vary participation by job title.

One focus group was composed of representatives from social and public service agencies that deal with or affect the workforce development and support system in McLean County.

A total of 38 persons participated in focus groups. The following table represents the focus group and the number of participants.

Focus Group	Number of Participants
1: Rural Educators	5
2: Urban Educators	11
3: Social Agencies	10
4: Employers	6
5: Employers	6

–Focus group administration

Each potential participant was sent a letter that introduced the project, listed questions to be explored in focus groups, and invited participation. An Applied Social Research Unit staff member telephoned these individuals to schedule participation in a specific group. Confirmations were sent via mail or facsimile.

Focus groups were held in the Bone Student Center of Illinois State University. Refreshments or lunch was provided depending on the time the focus group was held. Free parking was offered to participants. Six focus groups were scheduled. One out of the six scheduled focus groups, an employer group, was not conducted due to unavailability of participants. Focus groups ran for two hours if lunch was provided or one and one half hours if refreshments were provided.

Each focus group followed this agenda:

- Introduction by the Applied Social Research Unit.
- Introduction of participants: name, place of employment, and job title or brief job description.
- Description of the McLean County Workforce Issues 1998 project and the focus group's applicability to the project.
- Description of focus group agenda.
- Indication by each participant of one program, facility, or service that would improve workforce development and support in McLean County.
- Open discussion of possible improvements.
- Voting by participants of two or three (depending on the size of the group) topics participants would like to discuss further.
- Open discussion about the resources needed to develop improvements in the topic areas selected and the organizations that could or should be involved in developing the selected programs, facilities, or services.
- Final comments by participants and wrap-up of group.

The first and last focus groups deviated from this agenda in that they were less structured (e.g., no voting) than other groups.

Participants completed a contact sheet and provided information about committees or projects they are working on or are aware of related to workforce development and support and how their organization could increase its involvement in workforce development and support.

–Focus groups summary and analysis

The content of each focus group and participants' names and organizations are summarized and presented in Appendix B.

Information emerging from focus group discussions was categorized as follows:

- A comprehensive *vision* shared by all stakeholders in McLean County's workforce development and support system;
- A range of *workforce development programs and resources* including careers education, work-based learning experiences, access to technology, skills upgrade training, and job readiness training;
- *Employment support services* necessary for people to gain and retain employment; and
- Overall *administration, coordination, and support of the workforce development and support system* in McLean County.

See the report text for further discussion of these major issues.

■ Key informant interviews

Four key informant interviews were conducted with representatives of the McLean County Chamber of Commerce, the Heartland Community College Heartland Partnership program, the Cooperative Extension Service Compact program, and the Community Action Agency. Key informants were selected for their knowledge of and perspective regarding workforce development and support in McLean County. Interviews were conducted to provide an up-to-date view of current workforce development and support activities in the County and to inform recommendations made by this report.

The following information was sought from each key informant:

- Position and/or job description;
- Responsibilities regarding workforce development and support;
- Extent to which key informant works with area employers, educational institutions, and social agencies;
- How well their programs are working;
- Things that would make their jobs easier;
- Things they would do differently if they could do them again;
- Awareness and opinion of other workforce development and support programs/projects;
- Improvements that could be made to the area workforce development and support system;
- Specifics about things businesses could do to improve the workforce development and support in this area; and
- Other comments.

Review of literature evaluating model workforce development projects and programs

The goal of the review of the literature on model workforce development projects and programs is to inform the McLean County Chamber of Commerce about best practices in the field and to suggest types of projects that might be adapted for use in McLean County. There are many studies that evaluate workforce development and support programs ranging from national pilots and statewide system reorganizations to local school-to-work and community projects.

Principles and program ideas emerging from successful workforce development and support programs are discussed in report text. The bibliography in Appendix D includes resources used for the literature review of model workforce development and support services.

Appendix D: Bibliography

This bibliography includes works cited in the Report, together with additional sources on workforce issues.

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