Executive Summary

The Workforce Development Task Force, on behalf of the Employer Engagement Work Group, administered a survey to assess needs of employers in McLean County. An email that included a link to the survey was sent to McLean County employers and potential respondents had the opportunity to participate in the survey, from December 10, 2016 to March 8, 2017. Multiple reminders were sent to increase participation in the survey.

One hundred and forty four organizations participated in the survey. All six industry clusters were represented, although participation varied across clusters. Healthcare (N = 17) was well represented, followed by Finance and Insurance cluster (N = 14). Participation from other clusters, Agribusiness (N = 3), Food Processing (N = 3), Information Technology (N = 4), and Transportation and Logistics (N = 2), was lower than expected. One hundred and one organizations identified themselves as falling into the "other" category. While four of the six clusters were not well represented in the survey, the 144 organizations collectively employed 39, 204 employees, which constitutes a majority of the workforce.

The survey included multiple sections. Section 1 listed jobs critical to each cluster as well as commonly found jobs and asked respondents to indicate: (1) current number of incumbents in these jobs, (2) new employees hired into these jobs, (3) replacement employees hired into these jobs, (4) projected number of new hires over the next 3-year period, and (5) the degree or education level needed to perform the job. In terms of commonly found jobs (i.e., jobs within the General cluster), jobs with the highest projected growth over the next 3-year period included, Customer Service Representative (N = 873), Helpers-Production Workers (N = 155), Sales Representatives (N = 121), Janitors/Cleaners (N = 77), and Accountants and Auditors (N = 64). Jobs within the Finance and Insurance cluster with the highest projected growth included Bill and Account Collectors (N = 364), Insurance Claims and Policy Processing Clerks (N = 50), Financial Analysts (N = 49), and Insurance Underwriters (N = 45). Jobs within the Healthcare cluster with the highest projected growth are Registered Nurses (N = 277), Nursing Assistants (N = 156), Home Health Aides (N = 60), and Emergency Medical Technicians and Paramedics (N = 20).

Section 2 inquired about the most frequently cited reasons job incumbents leave the community. While there was some variation across industry clusters, the primary reasons why job incumbents leave the community are for higher salary and for family or other interpersonal reasons.

Employability soft skills were assessed in section 4. Soft skills assessed included integrity, respect, perseverance, positive attitude, dependability, professionalism, communication, teamwork, and critical thinking. Each was assessment with a multi-item scale. Respondents were asked to indicate the importance of each skill and the extent to which new hires demonstrated these skills. In general, employers indicated each skill to be moderately important to extremely important and noted that new hires perform moderately to extremely well.

The final section of the survey assessed employers' interest in participating in various activities geared toward retaining talent within our community. More than 50% of the employers indicated a moderate to a very high level of interest in participating in various activities including creating an online profile to publicize careers at their organizations, connecting organizational experts with students in the community, offering job shadowing and internship programs, participating in or hosting a career fair at

their organizations. Activities that require more time and effort, such as hosting a career fair, were endorsed by fewer employers whereas activities requiring relatively less time and effort, such as developing an online profile or offering job shadowing opportunities were endorsed by more employers.