

“Today’s best companies know that smart and skilled workers are the best business asset,” said David Lyons, director, Iowa Department of Economic Development. “In Iowa, we give companies an edge by collaboration to meet specific workforce needs, providing employees with necessary skills and expertise. Businesses in Iowa know that to stay competitive, this advantage is a must.”

— Industry Week - February 16, 1998

By 2005, Iowa’s economy is expected to generate more than 54,500 jobs each year. This positive growth adds to the challenge Iowa and other states are experiencing in finding enough skilled workers. Governor Tom Vilsack created the 21st Century Workforce Council to address one of his priority issues—Iowa’s labor force shortage. Lt. Governor Sally Pederson spearheads this unique group of employers, educators, nonprofit members, and labor and worker organizations.

Resources

Iowa’s Needs

Workforce Literacy

How Does the Employer Benefit from this Program?

The skills of the workforce can affect the success of the workplace. Workforce education help employees become better employees. Having improved their basic skills, employees become more self confident, self-reliant, conscientious and productive.

Businesses offering Adult Basic Skills in the workplace can demonstrate a decrease in employee turnover and reduced absenteeism. Skilled employees exhibit greater pride and competence in the job.

- Teamwork
- Customer Service
- Learning Environment
- Employee Retention



WWW.READIOWA.ORG
Iowa Department of Education



Iowa

Workforce Literacy

In order to stay competitive in the global economy, Iowa's employers need workers who can read, write, compute, solve problems, and communicate well.

NEED...

- American businesses are estimated to lose over \$60 billion in productivity each year due to employees lack of basic skills.
- About 20 percent of America's workers have low basic skills, and 75 percent of unemployed adults have reading or writing difficulties.
- A survey of more than 300 executives found that, while 71 percent reported that basic written communication training was critical to meeting their workplaces' changing skill demands, only 26 percent of companies offered this kind of training. While 47 percent of the executives reported the need for workers to improve basic math skills, only 5 percent of companies offered basic math skills training.

(The National Institute for Literacy)

SOLUTION...

- Workplace literacy programs provide workers with the skills needed to get or retain a job, advance in their careers, or increase productivity.
- Iowa's Community Colleges Adult Basic Education Programs can provide:
 - assessment of employability/workplace skills
 - basic skills certification
 - day/evening classes

For more information, visit the Iowa Literacy Resource Center website:

<http://www.readiowa.org>

Iowa's Needs

- According to the National Adult Literacy Survey, 1993, about 50 percent of Americans are operating at the two lowest levels of literacy.
- 22-25 percent of adults in Iowa are at the second lowest level measured by the Iowa State Adult Literacy Survey, 1993.
- Nationally, the number of companies reporting skilled worker shortages more than doubled between 1995 and 1998 from 27 percent to over 47 percent.
- More than 40 percent of the U.S. workforce and more than 50 percent of high school graduates do not have the basic skills to do their job. (Michael R. Bloom and Brenda Lafler, *Turning Skills into Profit: Economic Benefits of Workplace Education Programs*, The Conference Board, Inc., July, 1999).

In a recent Iowa Adult Basic Skills survey, the results from Business & Industry respondents rated these employability competencies as their highest priorities:

- Communicate effectively (speaking, listening, writing)
- Demonstrate effectiveness in working with people
- Work in a team environment
- Use thinking and problem solving skills
- Read and understand a variety of written materials
- Solve basic math problems
- Use weights, measurement scales and money
- Be organized and manage time
- Understand workplace safety procedures

Resources Provided by Iowa's Community Colleges

Basic Skills

A program of instruction designed for adults who lack competence in reading, writing, speaking, problem solving, or computation at a level to function in society, on a job, or in a family.

English Literacy Program

The term "English literacy program" means a program of instruction designed to help individuals of limited English proficiency achieve competence in the English language. [This definition replaces the term "English-as-a-Second Language (ESL)."]

GED (General Educational Development)

There are five GED Tests in the areas of Writing Skills, Social Studies, Science, Literature and the Arts, and Mathematics. The questions in each of these tests require the use of general knowledge and thinking skills. The successful completion of the GED test battery leads to the awarding of the Iowa high school diploma.

Workplace Literacy

A program designed to improve the productivity of the workforce through improvement of literacy skills needed in the workplace.