



**Ohio Travel
ASSOCIATION**

Ohio Tourism Industry Needs Assessment 2014 Report

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Ohio Tourism Industry Needs Assessment Report

Project Overview

Tourism is one of the fastest growing industry sectors in Ohio, growing two times faster than the overall employment in Ohio. Tourism accounts for almost 9% of jobs and \$11.4 billion in personal income. However, even as the industry grows in strength and concentration, there is an increasing disconnection between industry and education in regard to preparation of front line workers to meet future industry needs. This study demonstrates pivotal new findings, informing a broader discussion about addressing and managing workforce development

The study results:

- 1) Identify core competencies, training needs and educational delivery preferences of Ohio's tourism industry
- 2) Identify the level of competency of skills and knowledge of the existing workforce
- 3) Identify similarities and differences between what frontline workers feel is important and what business managers identify as essential skills and knowledge
- 4) Explore existing training and education programs statewide to determine what has or is being done to assess gaps in formal professional tourism training and certification programs in Ohio
- 5) Identify existing research and literature to support decision-making and future strategies for enhancing Ohio's tourism workforce

Introduction

Tourism is an important and growing industry in Ohio, producing \$38 billion in business activity in 2013 (Tourism Economics, 2014). In addition, tourism-related construction investments recently tallied more than \$3 billion over a three-year period, outpacing the average overall capital investment in the state by other industries (The Economic Impact of Tourism Capital Investment in Ohio, 2013).

Spending by visitors in Ohio, as well as business spending to service these visitors, supports 466,696 jobs, or 8.9% of all jobs in the state. These jobs generate \$11.4 billion in personal income for Ohioans. Job growth within the tourism industry is more than two times that of the overall employment rate, making the tourism industry an important component in securing a sustainable and balanced economy (Tourism Economics, 2014).

Jobs in the tourism industry offer a variety of benefits to the individuals employed in the sector. The skills necessary for Ohio's tourism workforce include critical thinking and interpersonal skills and provide a gateway to opportunity through education and professional and skill development. Individuals who begin working in the travel industry ultimately earn higher wages in their careers than those who begin in any other industry, except for financial services (United States Travel Association, 2012). And for many, tourism and hospitality is the chosen career path.

In addition to supporting businesses and jobs, tourism also supports communities. More than \$5.8 billion in taxes were directly or indirectly generated by tourism in 2013. Without the spending that occurs as visitors travel to and through Ohio, each household would need to pay an additional \$650 per year in taxes to replace the tourism-generated revenue received by state and local governments. This revenue is used to support infrastructure, libraries, police and fire protections, schools, and many other government-subsidized programs (Tourism Economics, 2014).

Statement of Need

The significance of tourism education is growing (Airey & Tribe, 2005).

Given the contributions of travel and tourism to Ohio's economy and society, attention should be given to this industry's current and future needs. Such analysis has to be done in consideration of global, national and regional trends. Faced with an ever-changing technological, social, cultural, and political environment, the tourism industry must be equipped with the resources necessary to operate within a supportive business climate to be sustainable and grow.

Through interviews and online surveys in 2013, the Ohio Travel Association identified key opportunities for improving Ohio's economy by addressing the follow issues important to tourism businesses:

- Address workforce development
- Increase access to business development funds and programs
- Lower the cost of doing business
- Manage technology
- Improve market intelligence
- Enact business-smart policies
- Increase competitiveness
- Build community relations

The key issues related to workforce development identified by the industry were retention of the existing workforce, workforce training, and finding adequate employees.

As governments have increasingly recognized the economic significance of tourism and hospitality, a growing emphasis on the need for workforce development services has emerged (Thomas et al., 2000). Tourism is a labor-intensive service industry, dependent on the availability of quality personnel to deliver, operate, and manage the tourist product (Amoah & Baum, 1997).

Purpose, Objectives and Format

The overarching goal of the study is to ensure that the tourism industry is equipped for the future with the resources it needs to prosper. The strategy addressed by this project is as follows:

Develop a needs assessment report to identify Ohio tourism industry core competencies, training needs and delivery preferences, to inform a curriculum for the development of a professional certification program, workforce development initiatives, and selection of education programming on an ongoing basis.

The primary objectives of this project are to:

1. Identify core competencies, training needs and delivery preferences of Ohio's tourism industry;
2. Begin to identify existing level of competency of skills and knowledge;
3. Identify similarities and differences between what frontline workers feel is important compared to business managers;
4. Explore existing training and education programs statewide to determine existing training and education programs to determine what has or is being done and to assess gaps in formal professional tourism training and certification programs in Ohio;
5. Identify existing research and literature to support decision-making and future strategies for enhancing Ohio's tourism workforce;

A critical step to workforce improvement is an assessment of the skills and knowledge targeted toward training and education needs (Masberg, Chase, & Madlem, 2003). This project examined existing training and education needs by surveying Ohio's tourism industry professionals to assess the important skills and knowledge needed, as well as the existing conditions. In addition, outreach through the Ohio Travel Association to sector-specific associations built additional project support and collaboration. The purpose of the assessment is to identify Ohio tourism industry core competencies, training needs and delivery preferences, to inform the development of a curriculum designed to produce a professional certification program, workforce development initiatives, and a catalog of education programming to be offered on an ongoing basis. The long-term goal of the project is to begin building professional capacity within the tourism industry in Ohio.

Depending on the situation, cost and access to targeted individuals, various methods are available to accomplish training needs assessment, including direct observation, questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, Delphi method and tests (Gupta, 1999; Rossett, 1999; Masberg, Chase & Madlem, 2003). The research protocol for this project included surveys to industry members as well as focus group interviews of front-line employees in the tourism industry. Focus groups were conducted to gather insights from employees with direct and regular contact with visitors. OSU Extension faculty members facilitated the focus group discussions to encourage conversation that was critical to the ultimate project results. An online survey of tourism industry workers was conducted throughout August and September 2014 and represented those in mid- to top-management positions.

Literature Review and Existing Conditions

A recent report, “Human Capital Trends: 2013 Leading Indicators” takes a look at workforce issues using economic theory, and reminds us that human capital is a scarce resource needed for the production of goods and services. This is paramount for the tourism industry, whose ability to efficiently and effectively produce economic activity is dependent on its workforce. Research identifies several reasons why it’s important for the tourism industry to have adequate and properly trained workers.

Improve customer service

Much has been written about the importance of customer service in service industries. Tourism success is dependent on delivering quality experiences for guests, whether it’s checking into a hotel, climbing onboard a roller coaster, ordering a meal, or purchasing a museum ticket. Interaction with employees creates the perception of a quality tourism experience (Ohnoutka & Hughes, 2002). Without properly trained and sufficient numbers of employees, poor customer service can quickly translate into lost revenues through lack of return visitation, negative reviews and word of mouth, and early departures.

Drive productivity

When the right people are in the right jobs and adequately trained, it improves performance, which leads to increased productivity (Chishamison & Chiptuva, 2013)

Increase competitiveness for the travel dollar

Competition has increased for both the traveler’s dollars and for attracting workers. Travelers expect personal and efficient service. Communities not delivering exceptional experiences, with exceptional service, will be overlooked for those communities who have invested in building this capacity. The success of the tourism industry is dependent on the quality of the personnel who deliver, operate and manage the tourist product (Sheldon & Gee, 1987; Zagonari, 2009; Chishamison & Chiptuva, 2013).

Attract and retain valuable employees

People make many of the tourism industry experiences come to life. Faced with labor shortages and changing demographics, the tourism industry competes with other industries for workers. Ensuring that we’ve hired the right workers for the job, made sure they’re trained to enable them to do their jobs well, and invested in their professional and personal development, help with attracting and retaining our workers ((Watson, Maxwell & D’Annunzio-Green, 2008).

Control risk

Having enough carefully selected and trained employees protect guests, workers, and businesses alike (Brunot, 2012). Whether it’s ensuring enough security personnel are in place, or

guaranteeing employees are knowledgeable about labor law regulations when interviewing seasonal workers, tourism businesses manage personal, property and corporate risks.

In addition to information supporting the need to have adequate and properly trained workers, the literature provides a framework for tourism education research questions and methods. The literature review synthesizes what has already been accomplished in the area of study, provides a framework for planning primary research, and improves the quality and usefulness of subsequent research (Boote & Beile, 2005). Professional development in the tourism industry builds on the foundation of research and practice related to vocational training, postsecondary education, workforce development, career growth, and ongoing specialized improvement. While there are some variations based on type of respondent, geographic location, industry sector, and research objectives, some common themes surfaced.

Competencies

Communications, customer service, and interpersonal skills were common across areas of study. Tourism knowledge, marketing, product development, and technology were also identified with certain professions. At the supervisory and management level, additional skills included administration, operations, and financial management.

Instructional Methods and Logistics

Schools, employers, and industry organizations provide formal and informal instructional methods. Online and onsite education opportunities range from simple information acquisition to case study discussion, and hands-on learning that blends theory and practice. Other variables focused on the location, cost, and length of instruction. Within the broad scope of tourism, industry, academia, and government can meet the challenge of tourism education together (Airely, 1998, Hawes, 1988, Shepherd & Cooper, 1997, Baum, Amoah, & Spivack, 1997).

Education must be thought of as a journey, not a destination (Pavesic, 1993). In today's environment, continuous lifelong learning is a necessity (Chtristou, 1999). Empowerment through education results in committed individuals who bring decision-making skills and enthusiasm to lifelong learning (Iverson, 1995).

A Review of Ohio's Hospitality Training Programs

Hospitality Management is offered at numerous educational institutions throughout Ohio, either as a stand-alone Associate degree or certification program or as a specialization within a Bachelor's degree of business administration program. The programs are fully operational and accredited. Table 1 lists the institution, program, term and web links.

Table 1: Hospitality/Tourism Educational Programs in Ohio

Institution	Program	Term (Yrs.)	Web site
Bowling Green State U	Business Administration Hospitality Management	4	http://www2.bgsu.edu/offices/registrar/cat03/CBA/CBA25.html/
Columbus State CC	Hospitality Management	2 or 3	http://www.cscc.edu/academics/departments/hospitality/
Cuyahoga County CC	Hospitality Management & Culinary Arts	2	http://www.tri-c.edu/programs/hospitality-management/culinary-arts/
Kent State U	Hospitality Management	4	http://www2.kent.edu/ehhs/hm/index.cfm
Sinclair CC	Hospitality Management & Tourism	2	http://www.sinclair.edu/academics/bps/departments/hmt
Ohio U	Restaurant, Hotel, and Tourism	4	http://www.ohio.edu/education/academic-programs/human-and-consumer-sciences/restaurant-hotel-and-tourism.cfm
Sinclair CC	Hospitality Management & Tourism	2	http://www.sinclair.edu/academics/bps/departments/hmt
Tiffin U	Business Administration Hospitality Management & Tourism	4	http://www.tiffin.edu/management/hospitalitytourism/
U of Akron	Hospitality Management	2 or certificate	http://www.uakron.edu/summitcollege/business_technology/hospitality-management/
Youngstown U	Hospitality Management	2 or 4	http://web.ysu.edu/gen/bcohhs/Hospitality_Management_m116.html

A review of the programs indicates a variation between programs that are comprehensive, offering the full scope of curriculum, and those that are targeted to a specific segment of the hospitality industry, including culinary. Programs are located in all major regions of the state, from the southeast, to the northwest and central Ohio.

Trends and Implications for Ohio's Tourism Workforce

In September 2014, key trends were identified and discussed by an industry workgroup at an Ohio Department of Education (OTE) advisory meeting. The meeting was held to begin updating secondary and postsecondary tourism and hospitality standards. Identified trends:

Table 2. Workforce Training Trends (OTE)

CATEGORY OF TRENDS	TREND
<i>Technology</i>	Through social media and mobile technology, guests and employees can instantly access information
	Not all information easily accessible; negative information can go viral
	Technology is already beginning to replace some existing customer service jobs and tasks, such as concierge, restaurant servers, etc.
	As technology increases at a break-neck speed, there is a constant need to learn and adapt
	Over-dependence on technology means we need to make a conscientious effort to teach and reward the art of customer service
<i>Cultural and Societal Changes</i>	As our global economy becomes more diverse, we need to respect differences of all kinds and learn to build upon our diversified strengths. This also means understanding expectations for products and services.
	There is increasing popularity of authentic experiences (culinary, outdoor, heritage, etc.), meaning partners who provide these experiences may be new 'entries' to the tourism community with less experience and knowledge
	Consumers are increasingly demanding more meaningful and engaging experiences, necessitating greater understanding of our guests' expectations and travel motivations, as well as the ability to create and interpret unique stories and experiences
	Generational differences within the workforce are shifting the way we must work and manage employees
	Faced with labor shortages and increased competition from non tourism industry employers, our industry is also dealing with perception and reality of the quality of tourism jobs (pay, benefits, advancement opportunities, etc.)
<i>Environmental</i>	There is a decline in relationship-building skills and customer service
	Safety and security in the workplace and for our guests is paramount, meaning we have to manage personal, information, property, environmental, and litigation risks.

The trends have shifted all aspects of many businesses, including workforce expectations, competition, and types of education needed. The following table from the Institute of Museum and Library Services shows how an accelerating world has re-shaped aspects of the museum

world, which is applicable to nearly every other tourism business in Ohio (Institute of Museum and Library Services, 2009).

Table 3. Workforce Projections (Institute of Museum and Library Services)

	20 TH CENTURY	21 ST CENTURY
Number of jobs expected to hold in a lifetime	1 to 2 jobs	10 to 15 jobs (SOURCE: U.S. Department of Labor)
Job Requirements	Mastery of one field and subject	Simultaneous mastery of many rapidly changing fields and subjects
Job Competition	Local	Global
Work Model	Routine, hands-on, hierarchical, fact-based	Non-route, technical, creative, interactive
Education Model	Institution centered, formal degree attainment is primary goal	Learner-centered, self-directed, lifelong learning is primary goal
Organization Culture	Top down	Multi-directional (bottom-up, top down, side-to-side, etc.)

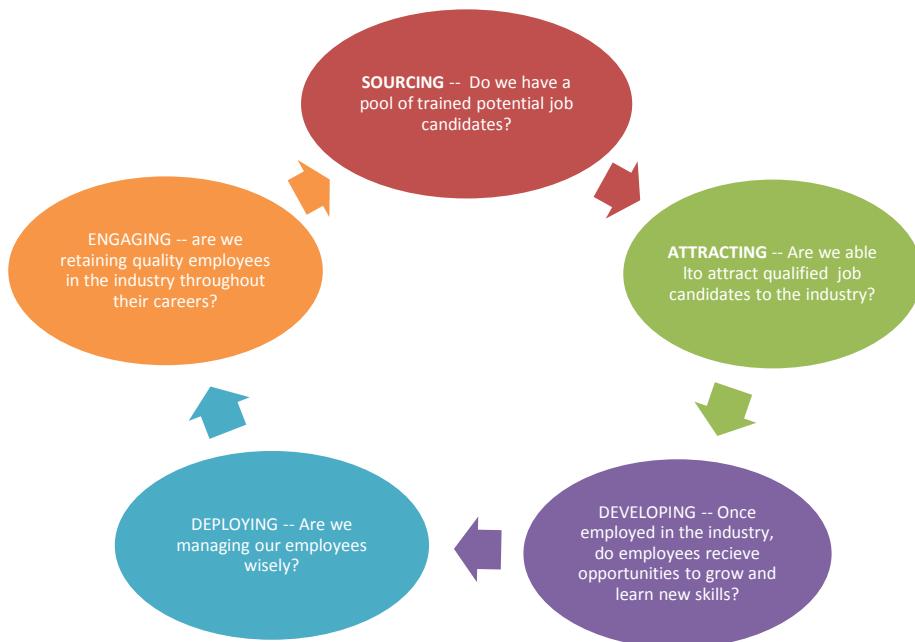
Managing Tourism Talent

The recruitment, retention, and training of human resources at all employment levels are components of a system which addresses hiring the right people, for the right job, at the right time, in order to provide quality service and satisfied travelers (Masberg, Chase, & Madelem, 2003, p.2).

Increased competition for our visitors and our ability to attract employees, combined with the need of our industry to constantly adapt to change, means we can no longer assume that employees enter our career pipeline with the skills needed to succeed. If anything, these trends demonstrate the importance of viewing Ohio's tourism industry workforce development as a lifelong process of developing talent (Christou, 1999).

A strategic way of thinking is needed to develop Ohio's tourism workforce is to consider using a talent management approach. Paul Barron, a researcher at Napier University, says strategic approaches must be used to source, attract select, train, develop and promote employees through an organization. Another researcher, L. Uren, says there are five elements to training a workforce using a talent management approach – attract, identify, develop, deploy and engage x. Using the work done by both, the Ohio Travel Association recommends the following five areas where potential for improvement could make a difference in retention and attraction of hospitality and travel employees.

Figure 1. Five Workforce Training Elements (Uren)



Using additional research on the five aspects of the tourism and hospitality workforce, we provide a description of each stage, potential challenges, and opportunities.

Table 4. Five Key Areas of Workforce Development

KEY AREA	DESCRIPTION	CHALLENGES	OPPORTUNITIES
SOURCING	<p>Having enough qualified applicants for travel and hospitality jobs</p> <p>This refers to applicants at all levels, so are students being properly prepared for jobs in the travel industry at high schools, vocational programs, career centers, 2-year and 4-year colleges and universities</p> <p>Difficult finding entry-level workers who possess basic soft skills needed for a customer service career (U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, 2006)</p>	<p>Disconnect between the academic curriculum and the training needs of the industry (Wang, 2008) (Whitelaw, Barron, & Buultjens) (Caimcross & Davidson, 2009)</p> <p>Curriculum design doesn't always include input from industry members (Whitelaw, Barron, & Buultjens)</p>	<p>Those involved with curriculum development should work closely with industry (Wang, 2008)</p> <p>Define a clear portable educational and skills scheme for qualifications, training and practice (Caimcross & Davidson, 2009)</p> <p>Develop strong industry internships and practicums (Zehrer & Mossenlechner, 2009)</p> <p>Develop labor force mapping to assist with workforce planning (Service Skills Australia, 2014)</p>

KEY AREA	DESCRIPTION	CHALLENGES	OPPORTUNITIES
ATTRACTING	<p>Having enough qualified applicants for positions at all levels.</p> <p>Are we attracting qualified candidates to our industry?</p> <p>We are competing with other industries for recruitment of top talent (Walsh & Taylor) (Hyde, 2013) (Adachi, Gretczko, & Pelster, 2013)</p> <p>Negative image of industry jobs exist among youth, parents, educators, and guidance counselors (U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, 2006)</p>	<p>There is a lack of awareness of the value of hospitality and travel jobs, as well as an overall negative perception of the role, wages and career development opportunities (Caimcross & Davidson, 2009) (Chishamison & Chipfuva, 2013) (Walsh & Taylor)</p> <p>Difficult for rural employers to attract and retain talent (Walsh & Taylor)</p>	<p>Develop a more positive image of the role, wages and career development opportunities of tourism industry jobs to attract applicants and those choosing the hospitality and travel industry as a career (Whitelaw, Barron, & Buultjens) (Caimcross & Davidson, 2009) (Chishamison & Chipfuva, 2013) (Walsh & Taylor)</p> <p>Brand tourism industry careers (Hyde, 2013)</p>
KEY AREA	DESCRIPTION	CHALLENGES	OPPORTUNITIES

DEVELOPING

KEY AREA	DESCRIPTION	CHALLENGES	OPPORTUNITIES
	<p>As the environment in which we work changes all the time, employees need to gain new skills and knowledge throughout their careers (Ohnoutka & Hughes, 2002) (Christou, 1999) (Adachi, Gretzko, & Pelster, 2013) (U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, 2006)</p> <p>Given expectation for professional development among new entries in the tourism profession, lack of professional development opportunities contributes to turnover (Walsh & Taylor) (Donkor, 2013)</p> <p>Forty-percent of CEOs and HR Directors in one survey said skill shortages impact their ability to do business (Hyde, 2013)</p> <p>Businesses who invest in training and development outperform the market by up to 35% (Bassi & McMurrer, 2004)</p>	<p>Businesses don't always have time for training (Ohnoutka & Hughes, 2002)</p> <p>Tourism industry lacks consistent training models and portable credentials that are recognized industry-wide (U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, 2006)</p> <p>International workers in the industry face different challenges (Chishamison & Chipfuva, 2013)</p> <p>Employees tend to rate themselves higher on those aspects of the job that are most important (Horng & Hsin-Yi, 2006)</p> <p>Lack of professional development leads to job dissatisfaction and staff turnover (Walsh & Taylor)</p> <p>Generational differences (Walsh & Taylor)</p> <p>Senior level support is needed for professional development (Walsh & Taylor)</p>	<p>Develop industry-wide training standards and/or programs.</p> <p>Identify training needs of the hospitality and travel industry.</p> <p>Identify existing training resources that are available and connect them to industry members.</p> <p>Create a central resource for available programs to enable upskilling of the workforce (Service Skills Australia, 2014)</p> <p>Create a responsive training and learning system (Service Skills Australia, 2014)</p> <p>Incorporate assessment of training offered to ensure quality and develop quality recognition program for providers (Service Skills Australia, 2014)</p>

DEPLOYING	Premature promotions may mean people are promoted before they are ready to manage. (Walsh & Taylor) Industry members may be promoted for one skill set (as an example, customer service) without the skills to manage others (which leads to dissatisfaction and increased turnover among these managers and their employees). (Walsh & Taylor) Generational differences creating complexity in managing others (Donkor, 2013) Policies, job descriptions, structural changes must also be considered; do we create the best working environment for today's employee? (Service Skills Australia, 2014) (U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, 2006)	New generation of workers do not like hierarchies, which is the structure most experienced industry members have had in place throughout their careers (Donkor, 2013) New generation of workers want supervisors who are mentors/coaches and not top-down instructors (Donkor, 2013) Melinda – this article may be of interest	Create opportunities to boost management, leadership and governance skills at all levels. (Service Skills Australia, 2014) Develop programs to improve mentoring skills.
KEY AREA	DESCRIPTION	CHALLENGES	OPPORTUNITIES

ENGAGING	<p>Hospitality and travel professionals at all levels are actively managing their careers in the industry, reducing turnover and increasing commitment and customer service (Walsh & Taylor)</p>	<p>Negative perception of tourism jobs may be keeping entry employees and others from choosing the industry as a career (Chishamison & Chipfuva, 2013)</p> <p>Attention to long-term career development often exists only at the management level (Walsh & Taylor)</p> <p>The tourism industry is leaking valuable employees (Walsh & Taylor)</p>	<p>Develop best practices and assistance for helping businesses develop learning contracts with employees (Walsh & Taylor)</p> <p>Conduct research on why employees leave the industry to better understand opportunities for improving retention (Walsh & Taylor)</p> <p>Provide assistance to businesses in order to “brand” and promote their employment opportunities (Hyde, 2013)</p> <p>Better define career pathways and opportunities in the industry (Service Skills Australia, 2014)</p>
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Research Methodology

Training needs analysis is the initial step in a cyclical process, which contributes to the overall training and educational strategy of staff in an organization or a professional group (Gould D1, Kelly D, White I, Chidgey J., 2004).

Process

OSU Extension researchers and OTA staff held a planning session in February 2014 to develop the parameters of a tourism industry needs assessment focused on training needs. The process and timeline for the project was laid out, including the need to complete an IRB application for exemption allowing the team to pursue the survey-based research project. The team met biweekly through March-April to design a survey and focus group protocol and to begin a literature review and examination of existing training conditions that will assist in data analysis and developing recommendations for OTA training initiatives.

The application for exemption was completed in March and approved within two weeks by the review board. A survey instrument was developed in Survey Monkey and tested internally and by an expert review panel determined by the project team. The on-line survey was launched in August 2014, sent through e-mail correspondence to a database of industry contacts maintained by the Ohio Travel Association. This database included OTA members, as well as nonmembers.

Design

The study, which employed the use of mixed methods, combined quantitative and qualitative techniques (Arendt & Gregoire 2008; Felizer, 2009).

Researchers worked with OTA to develop the survey instrument using primarily closed-ended questions. The on-line survey gathered information from tourism managers and supervisory employees about education and training needs for the industry. They were asked to identify skills and competencies for nine different categories related to the tourism profession. They were also asked to evaluate existing training programs and to identify gaps that exist. The survey instrument was based on a thorough review of the relevant literature.

In addition, tourism front-line employees, who have direct contact with tourists, were recruited to attend one of four focus group meetings in different regions throughout Ohio to provide input about training and education needs. Seven questions were developed for use at the focus group meetings, including questions about perceptions for skill sets or training needs, whether they have participated in training and what training or education methods they would prefer. The identities of respondents and participants were kept confidential for purposes of the IRB exemption.

Focus group and survey results were compiled, aggregated and analyzed by OSUE researchers and results are being shared in this report to OTA.

Sample

A total of 21 people participated in four focus group sessions held in Dayton, Columbus, Toledo and Cleveland on June 11 and 18, 2014. The breakdown of the number of participants by location is as follows:

- 4 - Adventure Central in Dayton
- 3 - Nationwide/4-H Center in Columbus
- 6 - Botanical Gardens in Toledo
- 8 - Metro park in Cleveland

The recommended number of people per focus group is usually six to ten (MacIntosh 1993), but some researchers have used as few as four (Kitzinger 1995). Some studies use only one meeting with each of several focus groups (Burgess 1996). Focus group sessions usually last from one to two hours. Neutral locations can be helpful for avoiding either negative or positive associations with a particular site or building (Powell & Single 1996).

For OTA database survey, the researchers surveyed 163 adult respondents who were either owners or managers of tourism facilities or businesses. For the scope of this project, industry sectors included CVB/Agents, attractions, lodging, restaurants, retail, transportation, and suppliers.

Analysis

This report summarizes the results of the OTA database survey and focus group meetings. The statistical analyses included in this report are summary tables of counts of respondents in the various categories, summary statistics for the various variables, and comparison between the front-line focus group (qualitative) focus group results and survey (quantitative) survey results of owner and manager respondents.

Focus Group Data Results

Focus Groups

Interaction is the crucial feature of focus groups Kitzinger (1994).

Merton and Kendall's (1946) influential article set parameters for focus group development in terms of ensuring that participants have a specific experience with the topic under investigation; that an explicit interview guide is used; and that the subjective experiences of participants are explored in relation to predetermined research questions.

Facilitators conducted a round-robin method of collecting responses at four focus group meetings by going from person to person and then back around the table again for additional comments. The seven questions asked and key findings are listed and summarized below.

1. What experience and/or skills do you think someone new would need in order to do well at this job?
2. What are the biggest challenges you have in doing your job?
3. What skill have you developed while employed in your position?
4. Have you participated in any training related to your job? If so, what was it? Was it beneficial?
5. What is the best way for you to take advantage of training opportunities?
6. What ideas do you have for training that would help you in doing your job?
7. (Optional) Are you planning to remain in the hospitality field as a career goal?

Key Observations (Executive Director)

Front line employees are our brands. They are the ones who create the experiences needed to be true to your business or community.

"Customer service and hospitality is both an art and a science." – the skills and knowledge needed to adapt, as well as policies that permit employees to adapt to situations without risking their jobs, is important.

Front-line employees don't fit in a neat box. Demographically, they are extremely diverse. Also, you shouldn't assume because someone is closer to the customer that they are only part-time or young. We also have to recognize that many of these employees are also managing staff.

They are **extremely passionate . . .** about providing good customer service and about their businesses and/or community.

These individuals chose to be in customer service jobs; most won't consider ever leaving a service job. It's what makes them feel fulfilled.

Training Needs

Advancements within their organizations have occurred because they were good at their jobs (great customer service, reliable, good tour guides, etc.), not because they are good supervisors or managers. And then, these **folks are put into managerial situations without the training needed for them to succeed.**

Getting a better understanding of people was a key need identified, whether that is referring to guests, employees under their supervision, or coworkers.

How to communicate with people who think that because they are in a service job, they are “beneath them.”

How to “mentor” or help another employee succeed is important. If learning from others is important, then those who are “mentors” should have the skill sets and objectives needed.

How to interview candidates to find exceptional customer service employees. “We need to separate the servers from the processors,” said one. Those who are true servers are superstars, versus those who just go through the process.

Challenges

Management is seen as “out of touch” with the reality of the dealing with customers in today’s world. For some front-line employees, they feel that managers need to spend some time on the front line occasionally to connect with the customers and to better understand the challenges. Some said they don’t feel empowered to correct a guest’s problem. Developing a policy that allows them to correct a situation without waiting for managerial approval would help.

When managers of the day are from different departments, confusion and challenges arise because of different policies within departments. There needs to be standardized policies between departments.

Not all employees feel managers “have their back” when a difficult situation arises.

Professional Development

Don't use the word "training;" it sounds like education forced upon them for the betterment of the business who employs them. Use something like "professional development," as this demonstrates the employer's investment in employees as individuals. Training isn't identified as an employee benefit, but a benefit for only the employer.

Learning on-the-job through working one-on-one with others is very important; however, they don't connect with the word "mentoring." In high school, most of these individuals learned the term "job shadowing."

Preferred professional developments included on-the-job training, workshops and printed materials. They don't really want only online programs or webinars. They preferred printed materials that are easily digestible because they can start to read something and come back to it if interrupted by a guest. They can also pass these along to others.

Other Key Findings

All groups expressed gratitude for the opportunity to mingle with other front-line employees from different industry sectors. "You probably have the same guest that was at our attraction staying at your hotel," said one. They would like opportunities to meet more frequently.

They don't identify themselves as being part of the tourism industry. They work for a hotel, or a museum, or a zoo, or a restaurant. One individual said he had nowhere to go within his attraction because there weren't any fulltime openings, so he was going to go back to school in another discipline. When asked if he'd ever considered staying in the industry and working for another attraction, he said he'd never even thought about it.

OTA Survey Database Results

The survey database results section is organized by respondent demographics, key survey results, and correlation analysis methodology and results.

Survey Demographics

163 tourism industry representatives responded to the survey, self-identifying in a variety of tourism industry sector categories. The particular sector with which each respondent was associated was determined using a 23-option question about the respondent's organization. Sector categories ranged from ad agency/graphic artist to bed and breakfast/cabin. For the purposes of this need assessment, the Ohio tourism industry categories were combined into four sectors:

- Convention and Visitors Bureaus (CVB)
- Attractions
- Lodging
- Other

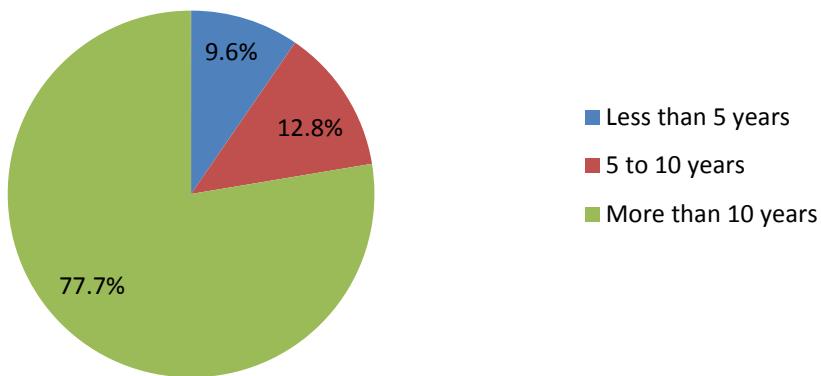
The largest majority of respondents (44) were identified as CVB's with the remainder split almost evenly between lodging and attractions. A few were identified as 'other'.

In addition to 36-questions about workforce needs, respondents were asked to answer several questions about perceived opportunities and barriers to hospitality education and training. In addition to the tourism industry sector question, other organizational and demographic questions included:

- Years worked in industry
- Job title
- Education level obtained
- Degrees or certifications
- Number of employees
- Percentage employees with degrees or certifications

The vast majority of respondents, almost 78%, have worked in the tourism industry more than 10 years (see Figure 1).

Figure 2. Years Worked in the Tourism Industry



About 93% of the respondents are owners or managers, including 33% being CEO's or owners and almost 32% identifying themselves as directors. Another 25.3% are managers or supervisors.

Figure 3. Respondent Job Title

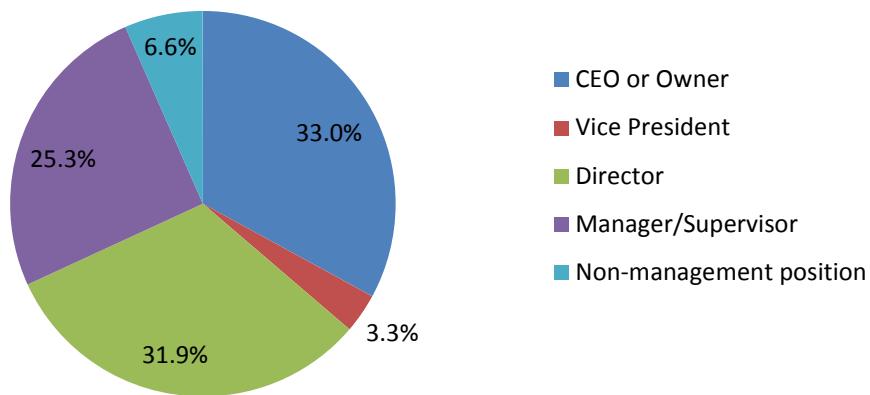
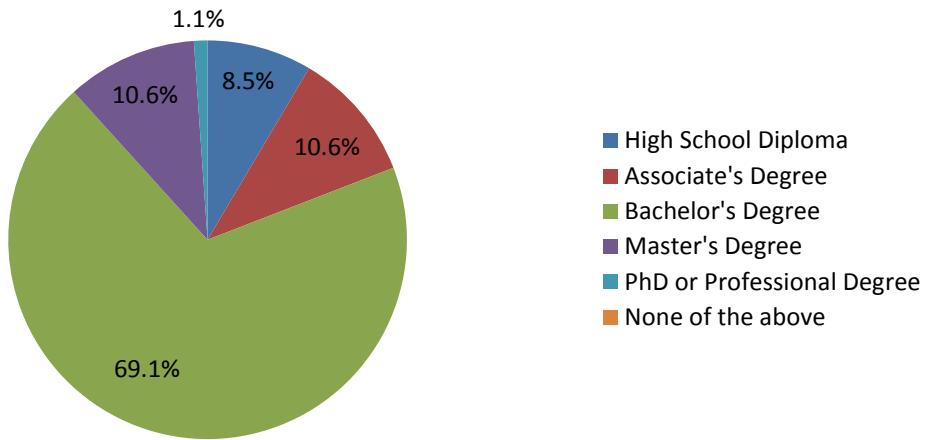


Figure 4, on the following page, shows that over 80% of respondents have a Bachelor's degree or higher. Of the remainder, 8.5% have a high school diploma and almost 11% have associate degrees. In addition, about 27% say they have a degree or certification specific to tourism or hospitality management.

Figure 4. Respondent Level of Education



80% of respondents say their employees have participated in training within the past 3 years with over half having participated in training provided by the OTA. Most respondents also participate in training with 60% saying they take advantage of company education and training offerings while 52% chose the OTA most often as their training provider. Postsecondary educational institutions were not among the top training provider options, listed below by percent participation.

Table 5. Training Providers by Percentage Used

Training Providers	Percentage Used
Company/business	60%
OTA	52%
Professional conference	47%
Other state trade association	30%

Nearly 80% of respondents prefer workshops as the training format of choice, while 63% say on-the-job training works best for them. Lack of funding is cited as a barrier to training by over 50% of respondents. Forty percent of respondents say there are no relevant training options available.

Key Survey Findings

This survey was conducted by The Ohio State University Extension, Community Development (OSUE-CD) for the Ohio Tourism Association. The purpose of this survey was to perform an industry needs assessment. In particular, the objective of the survey was to assist in determining workforce development needs for the tourism industry. The survey was

distributed electronically to tourism professionals in Ohio using Survey Monkey on-line survey software. In addition to collecting basic information about the respondent, for each of a set of 68 skills, the survey asked the respondents to rate (1) the skill set needs (i.e., level of importance) in the industry, and (2) the current skill competencies of their fellow tourism professionals. There were 163 respondents to the survey.

For each question regarding importance of skills and abilities, the respondent was asked to indicate whether the skill was, 1) unimportant, 2) important, or 3) extremely important. Skills and abilities were grouped into nine categories:

- Communications
- Management
- Leadership
- Technology
- Marketing
- Finances
- Customer Service
- Experience Development
- Operations

Table 1 below lists the top five skills in order of percentage importance as determined by survey respondents. Respondents rate a vast majority, over 80%, of employees as either competent or highly skilled in three of the most important skills (decision-making, problem-solving and written communications). More employees need improvement in the other two areas.

Table 6: Top Five Tourism Industry Skills and Levels of Competency

Skill	% Importance of Skill to Industry	% Competent or Highly Skilled
Decision-making	100%	87%
Problem-solving	100%	82%
Written communication	99%	84%
Conflict resolution	97%	67%
Negotiation skills	89%	70%

The survey assesses a total of 68 skills and abilities. Table 1 aggregates, organizes, and lists all 68 skill sets in order of importance and by percentage of respondents indicating a need for improvement in that skill or ability. The table lists the skill description, number of respondents, rating (mean 2.32 out of 3) and percentage need for improvement.

From a total of 68 skills assessed, there were 39 skills that ranked higher than the average in importance. Of the 39, 20 were identified as needing improvement by a higher than average number of respondents across all tourism sectors. These 20 skills or abilities are listed in Table 2 by percent of respondents indicating a need for improvement.

Table 7: Ranking by Skill Importance and % Need for Improvement

Skill/Ability	Number Responding	Rating Avg. (3 pt. scale)	Competency (% needs improvement)
1. Problem-solving skills	160	2.81	14.0
2. Hospitality skills	108	2.81	13.3
3. Knowledge of your tourism product and others in the area	107	2.79	11.4
4. Recognition of and pride in your part in the tourism industry	108	2.76	17.3
5. Decision-making skills	162	2.74	10.1
6. Written communications	162	2.71	10.8
7. <i>Marketing communications and advertising strategy</i>	106	2.68	24.3
8. Marketing plan development	107	2.64	19.8
9. Partnership development	101	2.60	16.0
10. Media relations	107	2.60	19.2
11. Monitoring and evaluating feedback	107	2.60	19.8
12. <i>Market strategy</i>	107	2.59	22.9
13. <i>Conflict resolution</i>	160	2.58	25.0
14. <i>Positioning and branding</i>	106	2.58	25.7
15. Accounting, budgeting, financial mgt.	107	2.56	9.6
16. <i>Improving/motivating employee</i>	127	2.55	27.4
17. <i>Implementation strategy</i>	119	2.55	26.5
18. <i>Strategic planning</i>	120	2.51	25.9
19. Developing brochures and collateral	107	2.51	9.5
20. <i>Linking a strategy to budget process</i>	119	2.50	33.0
21. Team management	127	2.50	18.2
22. <i>Developing a social media policy</i>	113	2.48	27.2
23. <i>Trend identification</i>	106	2.47	31.1
24. <i>Market research and analysis</i>	106	2.47	28.6
25. Quality control	102	2.46	14.3
26. <i>Niche market characteristics and best practices</i>	105	2.43	29.4
27. Project management	102	2.42	14.4
28. <i>Sales techniques</i>	107	2.41	22.6
29. <i>Developing a measurable metrics</i>	117	2.40	40.0
30. <i>Business plan development</i>	104	2.40	21.2
31. <i>Market segmentation</i>			
32. <i>Delegation</i>	128	2.38	27.2
Skill/Ability (continued)	Number Responding	Rating Average	Competency
33. Product development	100	2.37	18.2

34. Event management	102	2.36	14.0
35. Managing effective meetings	120	2.36	14.5
36. Network security	113	2.36	21.2
37. Database management	113	2.35	21.2
38. Staffing and hiring	125	2.35	20.2
39. Crisis communications planning	104	2.32	27.1
40. Negotiation skills	160	2.29	17.3
41. Security and emergency preparedness	96	2.29	22.3
42. Developing a social media policy	95	2.29	23.4
43. Compliance and legal obligations	95	2.28	19.4
44. Community planning	102	2.24	17.0
45. Experiential tourism development	99	2.24	26.3
46. Database management	96	2.24	18.3
47. Safety and risk management	96	2.23	25.5
48. Forecasting	104	2.22	27.2
49. Developing a technology plan	112	2.21	28.1
50. Crisis management	95	2.19	25.5
51. Employment and HR policy awareness	123	2.17	22.1
52. Developing a technology plan	95	2.17	25.0
53. Network security	96	2.14	26.9
54. Employee review process	128	2.13	23.2
55. Board governance	117	2.11	15.5
56. Facilities management	94	2.09	10.8
57. Interpretation	100	2.03	20.6
58. Performance management development	126	2.00	15.0
59. Managing contractors and contracts	125	1.94	10.7
60. Sustainability, 'greening' operations	96	1.92	31.2
61. Exhibit design	98	1.92	20.6
62. Managing volunteers	127	1.88	12.9
63. Procurement	104	1.81	16.3
64. Retail and merchandise management	96	1.73	17.0
65. Food service management	95	1.69	10.6
66. Fundraising	106	1.65	14.3
67. Grant writing	105	1.65	21.9
68. Foreign language skills	160	1.37	37.5
69. Mean Totals	112	2.32	20.9

Several skills that were ranked highest in importance were also rated as being either competent or highly competent by most respondents. Communication skills were frequently among these, including Problem-solving and Decision-making skills. Other skills or abilities that were ranked as more important than average were also flagged by respondents as needing improvement.

Table 2 lists the top 20 skills (rated 2.32 or higher) that respondents said lacked competency. For example, developing a measurable metrics was rated 2.40 as a highly valued skill set, but 40 percent of respondents said employees need improvement in this skill area. Marketing

communications and advertising strategy was rated very high, at 2.68, as a valued skill set, but over 24 percent of respondents said there is a need for improvement.

Table 8: Top 20 Skills Ranked as Most Important by Need for Improvement

Skill/Ability	Skill Set Category	Importance Rating (3 pt scale)	% Respondents Indicating needs Improvement
1. Developing a measurable metrics	Leadership	2.40	40.0
2. Linking a strategy to budget process	Leadership	2.50	33.0
3. Trend identification	Marketing	2.47	31.1
4. Niche market characteristics and best practices	Marketing	2.43	29.4
5. Market research and analysis	Marketing	2.47	28.6
6. Improving and motivating employee performance	Management	2.55	27.4
7. Delegation	Management	2.38	27.2
8. Developing a social media policy	Technology	2.48	27.2
9. Crisis communications planning	Marketing	2.32	27.1
10. Implementation strategy	Leadership	2.55	26.5
11. Strategic planning	Leadership	2.51	25.9
12. Positioning and branding	Marketing	2.58	25.7
13. Conflict resolution	Communications	2.58	25.0
14. Marketing communications and advertising strategy	Marketing	2.68	24.3
15. Market segmentation	Marketing	2.39	23.3
16. Market strategy	Marketing	2.59	22.9
17. Sales techniques	Marketing	2.41	22.6
18. Business plan development	Finances	2.40	21.2
19. Network security	Technology	2.36	21.2
20. Database management	Technology	2.35	21.2

Skill set categories that emerged as most in need of training/improvement were: Leadership (of the six skills, four were listed as most important and in need of improvement), Technology (of the four skills, three were listed), and Marketing (of the twelve skills, nine were listed).

Marketing skill sets share a preponderance of votes for both importance and need for competency.

One skill set, conflict resolution, is listed as both important and in need of improvement and no skills in Customer Service, Experience Development or Operations are included in Table 2. In the literature review section, communications, customer service and interpersonal skills were referenced as competencies required across all areas of the tourism spectrum. This is supported in Table 1 as these are skills that are considered most important. At the same time,

it is evident that persons hired in hospitality positions already have these basic skills required by the industry, so competencies are already high.

Correlation Analysis

The following correlation section focuses on 16 specific skills:

- Decision-Making Skills,
- Problem-Solving Skills,
- Hospitality Skills,
- Recognition and Pride in Tourism Industry,
- Written Communications,
- Monitoring and Evaluating Feedback,
- Knowledge of Tourism Product in Area,
- Conflict Resolution,
- Delegation,
- Event Management,
- Accounting, Budgeting, Financial Management
- Media Relations,
- Safety and Risk Management,
- Improving and motivating performance,
- Database Management, and
- Developing Measurable Metrics.

The sections that follow present the statistical methods used to compare the sectors and the results of the statistical analysis of the survey responses.

Sector Correlation Results

Statistical comparisons among the four tourism sectors consisted of chi-square tests of independence between the sector and the skill. In particular, the test compares the proportions of responders within each tourism sector who selected the various response options. Independence of the sector and skill implies that the proportion of responders within each sector who choose each response option should be similar. If the proportions for the response options vary among the sectors, then the skill and sector are not independent.

Separate statistical analyses were performed for each skill importance and each skill competence. Statistical analyses were performed using SAS® Version 9.4 with a significance level of 0.05 for each test.

Results

The question addressing tourism sector asked the responders to select from 23 different answers that described their sector of the tourism industry (one being “Other”). Several responders selected multiple answers. The various responses were used to categorize the

responders into the four tourism sectors. Eleven responders selected answers that indicated that they fit into more than one of the four tourism sectors (e.g., hotel and restaurant). These cases were reviewed individually, and the responder was placed into a single sector based on the perceived primary function. One responder, who positively marked all 23 answers, was eliminated from the study.

Table 1 summarizes the responses to each of the questions regarding the importance of the skills to the tourism sector. The right column indicates the p-value for the test of independence between skill and sector; values less than 0.05 indicate significant differences between the sectors. Of the 16 skills, significant differences were found between the sectors for 6 of the skills. The sector differences for these skills are as follows:

- Hospitality Skills: the Other and Attractions sectors had smaller proportions of respondents saying the skill was extremely important than the CVB and Lodging sectors;
- Written Communications: the Attractions and Lodging sectors had smaller proportions of responders say the skill was extremely important than the CVB and Other sectors;
- Knowledge of Tourism Product: the Attractions and Lodging sectors had smaller proportions of responders say the skill was extremely important than the CVB and Other
- Media Relations: the Lodging sector had a smaller proportion of respondents indicate that the skill was extremely important than the other three sectors;
- Database Management: the Attractions sector had a higher proportion of respondents indicate that the skill was extremely important than the other three sectors, and the CVB sector had a higher proportion of respondents indicate that the skill was extremely important than the Attractions and Other sectors
- Developing Measurable Metrics: The CVB sector had a higher proportion of respondents indicate that the skill was extremely important than the other three sectors.

Table 9. Responses by Tourism Sector to Questions Regarding Skill Importance (N, Percent)

Skill	Sector												p-value	
	CVB			Attractions			Lodging			Other				
	Response			Response			Response			Response				
	U	I	EI	U	I	EI	U	I	EI	U	I	EI		
Decision-Making Skills	0 0,0	7 16.3	36 83.7	0 0,0	4 23.5	13 76.5	0 0,0	8 36.4	14 63.6	0 0,0	2 15.4	11 84.6	0.283	
Problem-Solving Skills	0 0,0	8 18.6	35 81.4	0 0,0	1 5.9	16 94.1	0 0,0	6 27.3	16 72.7	0 0,0	2 15.4	11 84.6	0.383	
Hospitality Skills	0 0,0	3 7.1	39 92.9	1 5.9	4 23.5	12 70.6	0 0,0	2 9.1	20 90.9	0 0,0	5 38.5	8 61.5	0.029	
Recognition and Pride in Tourism Industry	0 0,0	5 11.9	37 88.1	1 5.9	4 23.5	12 70.6	1 7.7	4 23.5	17 77.3	1 7.7	4 30.8	8 61.5	0.412	
Written Communications	0 0,0	5 11.6	38 88.4	1 5.9	6 35.3	10 58.8	1 4.6	9 40.9	12 54.6	0 0,0	2 15.4	11 84.6	0.046	
Monitoring and Evaluating	0	12	29	0	7	10	1	6	15	1	7	5	0.258	

Feedback	0,0	29.3	70.7	0,0	41.2	58.8	4.6	27.3	66.2	7.7	53.9	38.5	
Knowledge of Tourism Product in Area	0 0,0	1 2.4	41 97.6	1 5.9	6 35.3	10 58.8	1 4.6	5 22.7	16 72.7	1 8.3	2 16.7	9 75.0	0.017
Conflict Resolution	1 2.4	16 38.1	25 59.5	1 5.9	7 41.2	9 52.9	0 0,0	6 27.3	16 72.7	0 0,0	4 30.8	9 69.2	0.759
Delegation	1 2.3	23 52.3	19 44.2	1 6.3	10 62.5	5 51.3	3 13.6	5 22.7	14 63.6	1 8.3	6 50.0	5 41.7	0.161
Event Management	10 23.8	13 31.0	19 45.2	1 6.3	5 31.3	10 62.5	2 9.1	8 36.4	12 54.6	1 7.7	5 38.5	7 53.9	0.550
Accounting, Budgeting, Financial Management	0 0,0	14 32.6	29 67.4	0 0,0	7 43.8	9 56.3	3 13.6	7 31.8	12 54.6	1 7.7	6 46.2	6 46.2	0.159
Media Relations	0 0,0	11 25.6	32 74.4	0 0,0	3 20.0	12 80.0	3 14.3	11 52.4	7 33.3	1 7.7	3 23.1	9 69.2	0.012
Safety and Risk Management	7 17.1	27 65.9	7 17.1	0 0,0	10 62.5	6 37.5	1 4.6	10 46.5	11 50.0	1 7.7	7 53.9	5 38.5	0.087
Improving and motivating performance	1 2.4	14 33.3	27 64.3	0 0,0	7 46.7	8 53.3	2 9.1	6 27.3	14 63.6	1 8.3	6 50.0	5 41.7	0.518
Database Management	1 2.4	20 47.6	21 50.0	0 0,0	4 26.7	11 73.3	4 18.2	14 63.6	4 18.2	1 8.3	8 66.7	3 25.0	0.008
Developing Measurable Metrics	0 0,0	14 32.6	29 67.4	1 6.3	9 56.3	6 37.5	6 30.0	8 40.0	6 30.0	2 15.4	6 46.2	5 38.5	0.003

Table 2 summarizes the results of the comparison of the tourism sectors with regard to their responses concerning the current skill competence within their sector. Of the 16 skills, a significant difference was found for only one skill: Recognition and Pride in Tourism Industry. For this skill, the CVB sector had a higher proportion of responders indicate that their sector was highly skilled than the other three sectors. In addition, respondents in the Other sector were less likely to indicate that their sector either needed improvement or were highly skilled than the other three sectors.

Table 10. Responses by Tourism Sector to Questions Regarding Skill Competence (N, Percent)

Skill	Sector												p-value	
	CVB			Attractions			Lodging			Other				
	Response			Response			Response			Response				
	N	C	HS	N	C	HS	N	C	HS	N	C	HS		
Decision-Making Skills	5 12.8	19 48.7	13 38.5	0 0.0	12 75.0	4 25.0	5 22.7	12 54.6	5 22.7	1 8.3	6 50.0	5 41.7	0.302	
Problem-Solving Skills	4 10.3	19 48.7	16 41.0	3 18.8	6 37.5	7 43.8	6 27.3	9 40.9	7 31.8	2 16.7	7 58.3	3 25.0	0.638	
Hospitality Skills	6 15.8	7 18.4	25 66.8	2 15.5	6 37.5	8 50.0	4 19.1	7 33.3	10 47.6	0 0.0	7 63.6	4 36.4	0.137	
Recognition and Pride in Tourism Industry	5 12.8	8 20.5	26 66.7	4 26.7	6 40.0	5 33.3	5 23.8	6 28.6	10 47.6	1 10.0	8 80.0	1 10.0	0.009	
Written Communications	4 10.5	11 29.0	23 60.5	1 6.7	8 53.3	6 40.0	5 22.7	12 54.6	5 22.7	1 9.1	5 45.5	5 45.5	0.134	
Monitoring and Evaluating Feedback	4 10.3	21 53.9	14 35.9	6 35.3	5 29.4	6 35.3	5 25.0	10 50.0	5 25.0	4 40.0	5 50.0	1 10.0	0.175	
Knowledge of Tourism Product in Area	2 5.1	11 28.2	26 66.7	2 15.5	7 43.8	7 43.8	5 23.8	8 38.1	8 38.1	2 22.2	5 55.6	2 22.2	0.107	
Conflict Resolution	8	18	11	6	6	3	7	10	5	4	5	1	0.759	

	21.6	48.7	29.7	40.0	40.0	20.0	31.8	45.5	22.7	40.0	50.0	10.0	
Delegation	5 13.2	24 63.2	9 23.7	7 43.8	7 43.8	2 12.5	10 47.6	6 28.6	5 23.8	4 44.4	3 33.3	2 22.2	0.065
Event Management	6 20.7	10 34.5	13 44.8	2 13.3	6 35.3	7 46.7	3 13.7	6 35.3	8 47.1	3 30.0	3 30.0	4 40.0	0.979
Accounting, Budgeting, Financial Management	6 18.2	13 39.4	14 42.4	3 20.0	6 40.0	6 40.0	6 37.5	6 37.5	4 25.0	2 20.0	4 40.0	4 40.0	0.831
Media Relations	7 18.9	19 51.4	11 29.7	3 21.4	6 42.9	5 35.7	6 35.3	8 47.1	3 17.7	3 30.0	6 60.0	1 10.0	0.674
Safety and Risk Management	9 34.6	17 65.4	0 0.0	5 35.7	6 42.9	3 21.4	6 31.6	8 42.1	5 26.3	3 27.3	4 36.4	4 36.4	0.120
Improving and motivating performance	7 18.9	22 59.5	8 21.6	6 42.9	6 42.9	2 11.1	8 44.4	8 44.4	2 11.1	4 44.4	3 33.3	2 22.2	0.406
Database Management	10 27.8	21 58.3	5 13.9	3 23.1	4 30.8	6 46.2	6 35.3	6 35.3	5 29.4	2 22.2	7 78.8	0 0.0	0.082
Developing Measurable Metrics	15 45.5	14 42.4	4 12.1	10 66.7	2 13.3	3 20.0	8 53.3	6 40.0	1 6.7	6 66.7	1 11.1	2 22.2	0.327

Conclusions and Recommendations

OSU researchers conclude that there are distinct needs and opportunities for educating the hospitality service-sector workforce of the future. OTA is the conduit for professional development and collaborative industry training initiatives statewide and, as such, is in a strategic position to meet Ohio's tourism industry training needs. Following are initial recommendations or ideas for potential programs or initiatives based on research findings.

- 1. Develop a stackable curriculum.** Develop stackable curriculum modules that stand-alone but can also be bundled as needed. Modules would be short term, fill industry training gaps, and would include certificates for completers.
- 2. Leverage industry and education partners.** Modules would be developed in coordination with industry partners and offered by OTA or in partnership with educational institutions on a continuum at regular intervals.
- 3. Competency-based certificates.** Certificates would be industry-recognized and require mastery of technical and specific service-sector skill sets as defined by industry partners.
- 4. Career pathway.** A clearly defined roadmap for advancement within the tourism industry would be included as part of the overall curriculum. This roadmap would be widely promoted among industry partners to increase understanding about career objectives and goals, while helping to retaining quality employees.
- 5. Offer incentives.** Incorporate incentives for participation in regularly scheduled training modules for front-line employees. Incentives could include paid time off, increased pay or promotional rewards, or college credit transferrable to partner institutions.

6. **Work-based learning.** Provide unique opportunities for front-line employees to shadow management and vice versa. Innovative off-site work-based learning can also be applied and included as a ‘module’ to allow for shadowing or internships within the industry.

7. **Teaching and research as retention.** Provide leadership opportunities for front-line “superstars” to offer and/or research new ideas and/or teach others targeted skill sets. This strategy can help to hone their skills while providing increased motivation and incentive to remain in the industry

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