



Assessing the Continuing Education Needs of the Residents of Martha's Vineyard Executive Summary Sept 29, 2015

Background: In the fall of 2014 Adult and Community Education of Martha's Vineyard (ACE MV) undertook a comprehensive assessment of the adult and continuing education needs of the island community to provide data that would support strategic planning. The Executive Director appointed a Project Director and assembled a Needs Assessment Work Group to plan and implement the assessment. A board member volunteered to serve as a consultant on the project, and colleagues from the University of Massachusetts Worcester with expertise in survey research were added to the team.

Methods: The needs assessment was a two-stage study. In the first stage, the work group used qualitative data gathered from semi-structured interviews with community leaders to gain a general understanding of the respondents' perceptions of the strengths, opportunities, and challenges or weaknesses that ACE MV must address in planning for the future. In Fall 2014, the work group conducted 9 small group interviews with 47 respondents representing 45 organizations chosen based on the work group's familiarity with island leaders and the organizations that play a major part in the community. The second stage built on the findings of the first by using a survey created to further illuminate the areas of need and barriers identified in the first phase; 559 responses were collected from a larger sample of current and potential ACE MV students in Spring 2015 through a combination of paper and online surveys.

Identified needs/ opportunities: The primary educational needs identified in Phase 1 were:

- **Technical/job skills**
- **College/grad credit courses**
- **Professional development/certification**
- **Personal enrichment**

People were most interested in offerings for personal enrichment, with 328 people (58.7%) expressing interest, followed by professional development (n=227, 40.6%), college or graduate credit courses (n=195, 34.9%), and finally technical, job and basic skills (n=157, 28.1%).

- **Technical/ job skills:** The most commonly identified unmet need was the need for technical skills, including computer skills. Specialized skills such as boat handling and construction trade skills, farming and agriculture, marketing and bookkeeping were examples in this category. Municipal services such as building assessment, wastewater management, and more complex skills such as arts management and grant writing were identified, suggesting the broad range of needs in this category. A need for basic skills was identified by many interviewees. Interpersonal skills such as written and spoken communication, problem solving, and basic numeracy were mentioned as examples.
- **College credit courses:** Respondents reported the need for college credit courses, both undergraduate and graduate level. College course requirements for teachers, nurses, and social workers were mentioned. Respondents ask for credit-bearing courses in the "general education" category to fulfill requirements for completion of degrees, particularly in the sciences and with laboratory components.
- **Professional development/ certifications:** The need for professional development in the form of ongoing continuing education required by licensed workers such as nurses and teachers was noted. Some respondents mentioned the need for updating skills prompted

by increased regulations and the growing need for certifications in fields such as landscaping, building trades, and food service.

- **Personal enrichment:** Small-group respondents attuned to the needs of the workplace did not mention personal enrichment as often as might have been anticipated given that the most popular offerings at ACE MV have been courses of this type. Survey responses in Phase 2 affirmed the popularity of such courses, especially among the retired.

Barriers, Internal and External: Data were analyzed and interpreted relative to the perceived obstacles or challenges to adult education reported by the interviewees in stage 1, distinguishing between those barriers felt to be situated within ACE MV's programs, and those external to our programming but influencing the lives of potential students. .

- Internal barriers, weaknesses identified as being within the control of ACE MV, included problems of scheduling classes, maintaining a cohort of students for a sequential program of study, lack of collaboration with other educational organizations, lack of local awareness of existing opportunities, inadequate support for online courses, and the need for self-evaluation of ACE MV's programs. Many people were interested in employer assistance such as offering classes onsite (n=149, 26.7%) and tuition assistance (n=145, 25.9%) as well as interest in the idea of ACE offering in-person support for those taking online courses (n=130, 23.3%).
- External barriers included the island's seasonal economy, the cost of living (housing, child care, and transportation), wage competition from mainland employers and a "shadow system" of workers, an increasingly strict regulatory environment requiring credentialing of certain workers, and lack of succession planning by organizations. Challenging sociologic factors mentioned were the demands of balancing work and family life, an uncertain value attached to education, and the demand for increased services for an aging population. The barriers reported most frequently in the survey were lack of time (n=237, 42.4%) and lack of available funds (n=238, 42.6%). These correspond closely with Phase 1 results which pointed to difficulties with scheduling and cost. Transportation issues were identified by 52 (9.3%) of those surveyed, while family care issues for children and seniors were indicated as problematic by 92 (16.5%).

Perceived Strengths: Perceived strengths identified in the first stage were willingness of organizations to collaborate, an eagerness of employees and island residents to learn, and the pool of available talent on the island that would be willing to teach. Some respondents expressed a guarded optimism relative to the improvement of the island economy. Survey respondents in the second stage wrote extensive comments thanking ACE-MV for providing island residents with opportunities to enrich their lives and to come together as a community.

Conclusion: The findings suggest that much can be done to fill the identified needs through more effective use of existing resources. Developing needed courses, improving marketing, and strengthening existing relationships with institutions of higher learning and other organizations that share ACE MV's mission are immediate steps that may be productive. Additional recommendations include developing innovative onsite programs in collaboration with employers to address needs they have identified among their employees, critically evaluating existing courses and programs, and exploring new roles for ACE MV that will promote its mission.

Assessing the Continuing Education Needs of the Residents of Martha's Vineyard



SEPTEMBER 29, 2015

ADULT AND COMMUNITY EDUCATION OF MARTHA'S VINEYARD NEEDS ASSESSMENT WORK GROUP

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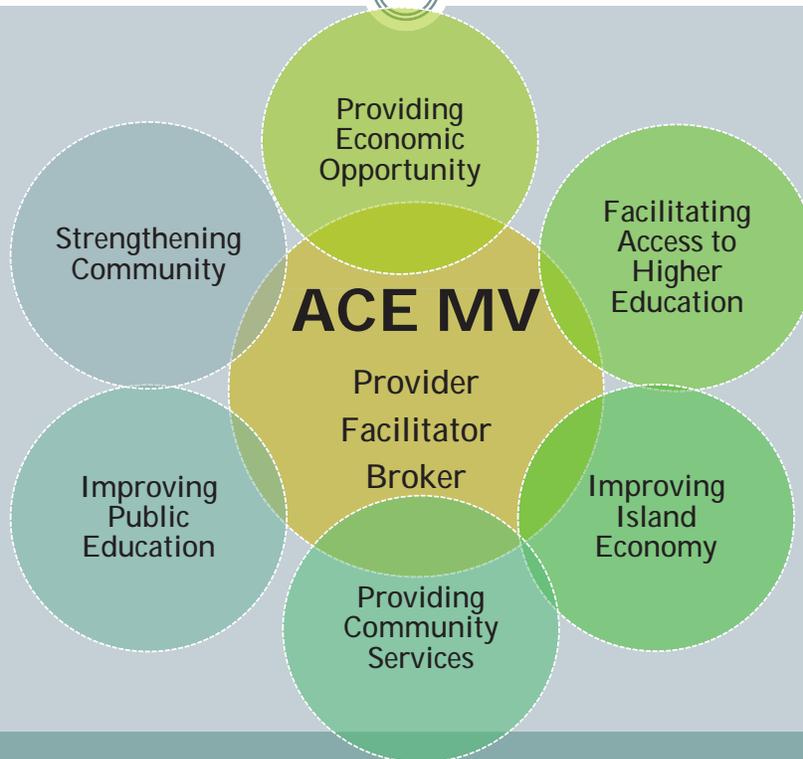


ACE MV Adult & Community Education of Martha's Vineyard

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Model of ACE MV's Role

2



Scope and Design

3

A systematic comprehensive inquiry in two complementary phases

- First phase: Qualitative survey using semi-structured interviews with Level 2 stakeholders: those who provide information, oversight, employment, training
- Second phase: Quantitative survey using questionnaire developed from first phase results with Level 1 stakeholders: primary recipients of ACE MV services; students

Phase 1 Targeted Level 2 Stakeholders

4

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| • Health Care: | 5 Respondents |
| • Public Schools: | 5 Respondents |
| • Municipal Services: | 8 Respondents |
| • Nonprofit Organizations: | 6 Respondents |
| • Arts and Cultural Organizations: | 8 Respondents |
| • Businesses | 15 Respondents |
| ○ Hospitality (3) | |
| ○ Retail/Services (6) | |
| ○ Building Trades (4) | |
| ○ Agriculture/Aquaculture (2) | |
| | TOTAL=47 people in 9 semi-structured interviews |

Phase 2 Targeted Level 1 Stakeholders

5

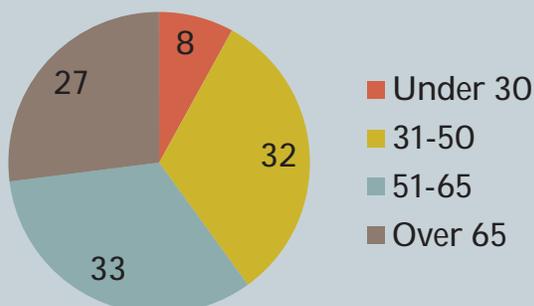
- Pilot test at YMCA: 25 Respondents
- Town meetings (hard copy): 131 Respondents
- Online request 1: 108 Respondents
- Online request 2: 320 Respondents
- ACE database mailing list
- Local newspaper web edition
- Local blog/online resource

TOTAL=559 people

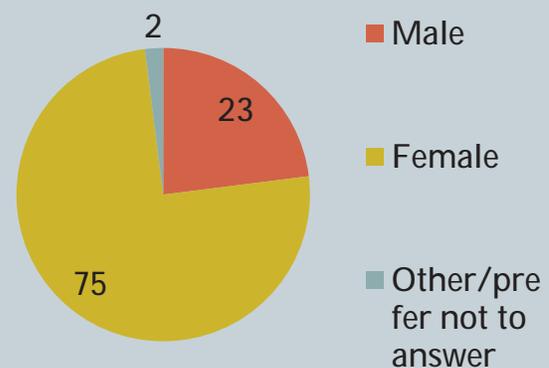
Demographics

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% in each age category
(n=523)



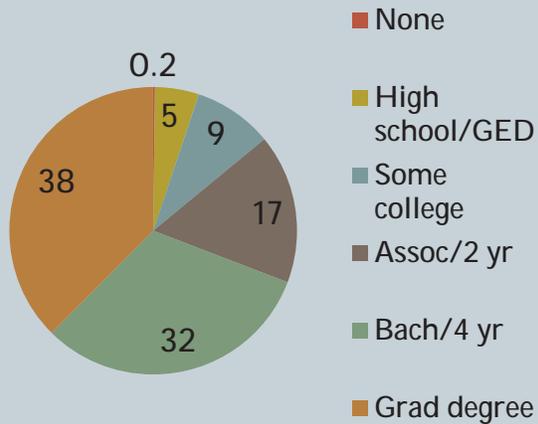
% in each gender category
(n=523)



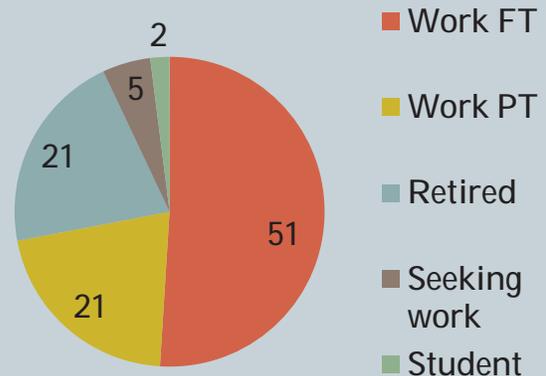
Demographics (cont.)

7

% reporting each level of educational attainment (n=522)



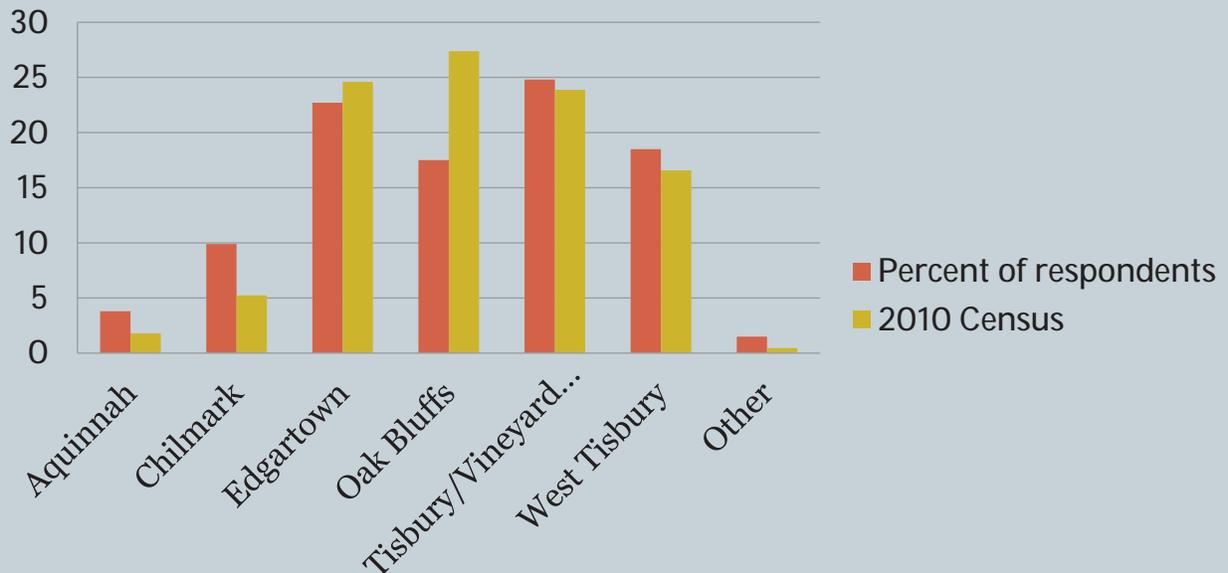
% reporting each employment status (n=522)



Geographic identification (n=524)

8

% from each town



Results of Qualitative Survey (Phase 1)

9

Three major categories

1. Identified needs/opportunities
2. Barriers/obstacles (Internal and External)
3. Strengths

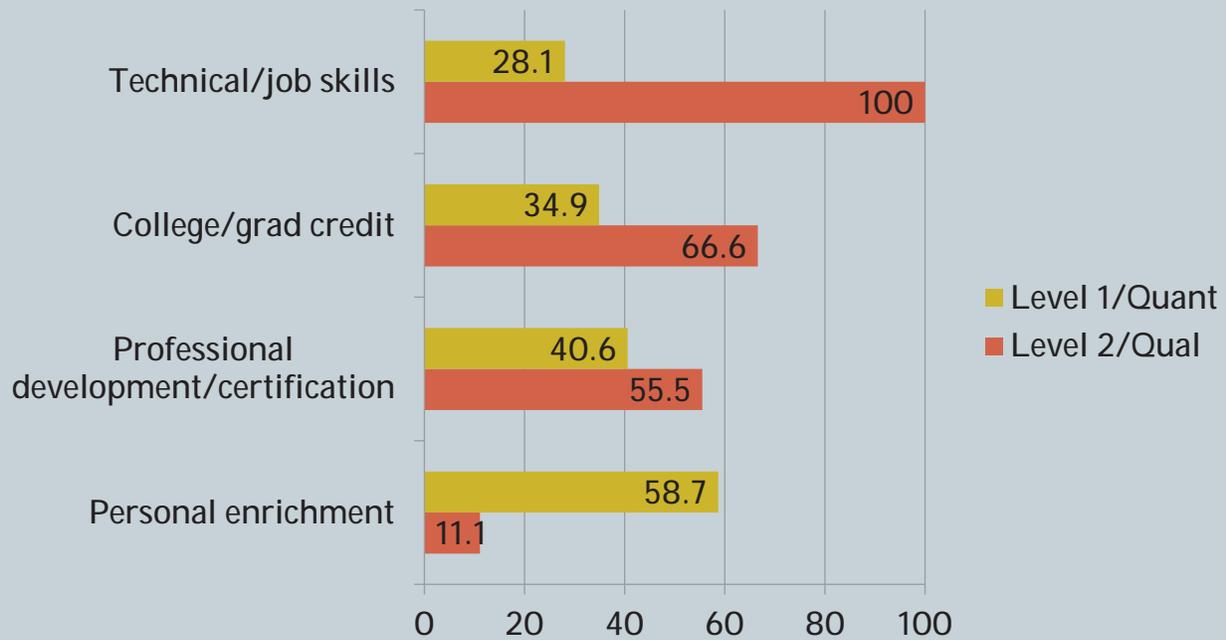
Identified needs/opportunities

10

- Technical/job skills
- College/grad credit courses
- Professional development/ certifications
- Personal enrichment

Emphasis on needs varies

11



12

Identified needs

"The old back yard auto mechanic is no longer a real way to learn about the maintenance of engines. Everything now is computerized."

"We have many volunteers ... They need to have computer skills, and to know where to go for information and what to download. They need to bring joy!"

"I feel I need an update on technology, like how to use MailChimp, social media, etc." –written on survey

- **Technical or job skills –**
 - Mentioned by 9 of 9 discussion groups
 - ✦ Computer competence
 - ✦ Clinical/laboratory skills
 - ✦ Clerical skills, management
 - ✦ Food handling & safety
 - ✦ Small boat handling
 - ✦ Hydroponic farming
 - ✦ Commercial drivers
 - Indicated as an interest by 157 survey respondents (28.1%)
 - ✦ Wide range of IT training needs – GIS to Javascript, Quickbooks to CAD

Identified needs

"Why can't we educate nurses in our own community?" P1

"Our non-college students aged 18-30 also need much more in terms of college basics, no matter what they decide to do in life." P1

"Librarians are required to have a master's degree, but library science programs and online courses are scarce." –P1

- College or graduate credit-bearing courses—
 - Mentioned by 6 of 9 discussion groups
 - ✦ Health care, nursing, social work
 - ✦ Teaching – esp masters' level
 - ✦ Police need associates' degrees
 - ✦ Town assessors, managers, inspectors
 - ✦ Requirements of town positions such as treasurers, librarians or public health nurses
 - Indicated as an interest by 195 survey respondents (34.9%)
 - ✦ "sciences that fulfill gen ed requirements with labs" –P2 (written on survey)

Identified needs

"Hospitality management is a unique animal; either you get it or you don't. You have to know how to make a personal connection with people." –P1

"I would like to see on-island, post-200 hour yoga teacher training seminars."-P2

- Professional development/certification—
 - Mentioned by 5 of 9 discussion groups
 - ✦ Hospitality/arts management
 - ✦ Commercial drivers' license
 - ✦ Construction supervisor's license
 - ✦ ServSafe food handling
 - ✦ Teacher education
 - ✦ Nursing and health care
 - ✦ Law enforcement
 - ✦ Counseling/Social Work
 - Indicated as an interest by 227 respondents (40.6%)
 - ✦ Real estate license certification
 - ✦ "Special ed PD to fulfill new, mandated recertification requirements" – P2

Identified needs

"Even those who go off to college sometimes come home with a sense of failure and no direction. We need to expose kids and adults to opportunities they may not even know they would like." P1

"Acting (to help me be less shy/ reserved in my job)" P2

- Personal enrichment–
 - Mentioned by 1 of 9 discussion groups
 - ✦ Healthy aging
 - Indicated as an interest by 328 respondents (58.7%)
 - ✦ DIY home projects/ woodworking
 - ✦ Writing – business, creative, publishing
 - ✦ Language courses - conversational Portuguese
 - ✦ Arts and crafts – painting, sculpture, drawing, Photoshop

Summary of Phase 1 Results: Barriers

INTERNAL BARRIERS

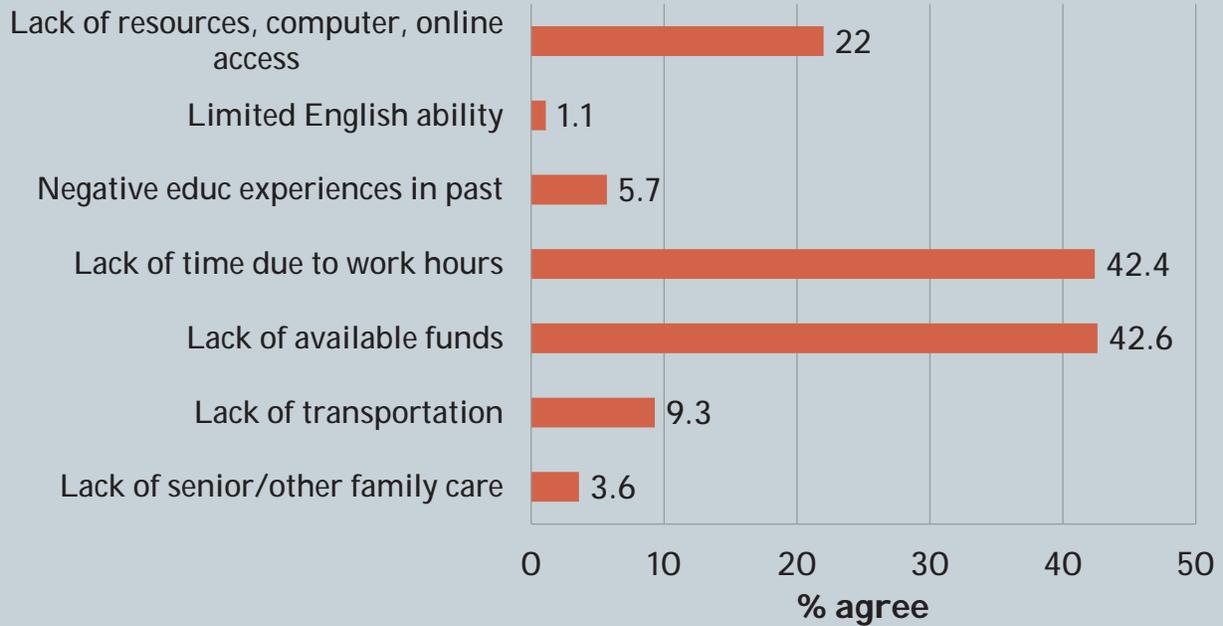
- Scheduling
- Maintaining cohorts
- Language barriers
- Lack of coordination
- Lack of support for online courses
- Lack of awareness of existing resources

EXTERNAL BARRIERS

- Cost of island living
- Wage competition
- Strict regulatory climate
- Seasonal economy
- Aging workforce
- Community fault lines
 - Cultural, geographic

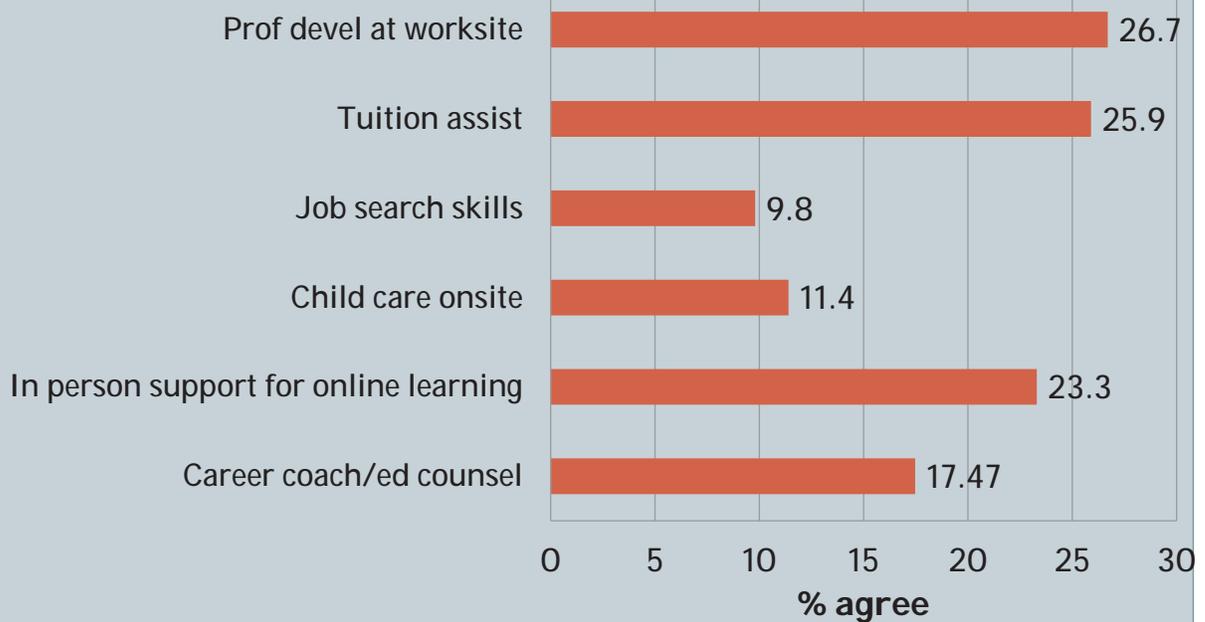
Barriers to participation in continuing ed

17



Respondents would like

18



Identified strengths

The civic engagement of businesses was remarked upon by one respondent.

"Today", he said, "there's not just a bottom line in business; there's a *triple* line: money, social justice, and community giveback."

One respondent noted that the island is "an inclusive place, with possibilities for all".

- Strengths - mentioned by 6 of 9 discussion groups

- Burgeoning island economy
- Strong community support
- Willingness to collaborate
- Pool of available talent
- Strong civic engagement
- From survey responses:

"Classes are a nice way to stay in touch with others in the community in the winter."

"ACE is important to all islanders and I wish all those well who are at the helm of ACE to keep it moving."

Workplace Context

