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Assessing and Evaluating Workforce Challenges

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This chapter offers practical suggestions for organizations about how to develop an internal system for monitoring interventions that address workforce challenges. Formulas for measuring turnover rates and tenure are provided. Strategies to assess recruitment success, staff satisfaction, organizational commitment, and other important outcomes are described. In addition, feedback processes such as surveys, focus groups, and exit interviews are discussed. Sample surveys are provided at the end of the chapter.

This chapter focuses on the assessment of the problem or challenge in an organization, the selection and use of measurement methods or tools, and the evaluation of progress and success. Other stages are briefly outlined to put the assessment information into context. Chapter 14 provides a more in-depth look at identifying a *specific* problem or challenge and choosing the appropriate intervention with which to address that problem.

TARGETED FRONT-LINE SUPERVISOR COMPETENCIES

The front-line supervisor (FLS) competencies addressed in this chapter focus on personnel management skills needed to assess turnover rates, vacancy rates, consumer satisfaction and other workforce outcomes. Effective FLSs and managers assess challenges and evaluate organizational outcomes on an ongoing basis using the following skills:

Primary Skills

5 FLSs know the annual turnover and vacancy rate at the sites for which they have direct responsibility and how these compare with those for the organization as a whole.

FLSs monitor turnover, recruitment success, and employee satisfaction and use the results to improve personnel practices.

Related Skills

3 FLSs maintain regular contacts with and follow up with supported individuals and their family members and support team members regarding complaints and issues.

FLSs design, implement, and develop strategies to address issues identified in satisfaction surveys completed by individuals receiving supports.

UNDERSTANDING THE PROBLEM

Throughout this book, a host of strategies for addressing recruitment, retention, and training challenges have been described. To devise effective solutions for those challenges, it is essential to have a clear idea of the size and nature of the problems in the organization. Organizations need a baseline of their current status so that they can measure whether a selected intervention actually makes a difference. A study examining more than 1,000 organizations found that those that conduct formal job analyses for all positions and administer attitude surveys on a regular basis have lower turnover, improved productivity, and improved corporate financial performance (Huselid, 1995). Up-to-date information about organizational outcomes such as turnover rates, employee satisfaction, and satisfaction of supported individuals is also important when an organization is deciding which problem is most important to address first. Furthermore, assessment and evaluation are important to identify strategies that work and those that do not so that changes can be made.

RESEARCH SUPPORT FOR SOLUTIONS

Many research textbooks describe how to use a scientific approach to identify challenge, create a hypothesis or idea about why the challenge exists, and test whether the hypothesis or idea is true (e.g., Cook & Campbell, 1990; Cozby, 2004). This chapter describes this approach in nontechnical terms to assist FLSs to use the scientific method to define a problem, select a solution, and test whether the solution has actually remedied workforce challenges. In this chapter, we describe tools that supervisors can use in this process, along with the scientific or research support for these tools.

STRATEGIES FOR RESPONDING TO THE PROBLEM

Jeremy's Story: A Template for Assessment and Evaluation

The following fictional example of Jeremy and his approach to his weight problem is a simplified version of an approach that organizations can use when assessing workforce issues.

Identify the Problem

Like many other Americans, on New Year's Day, Jeremy made several resolutions to improve his life. One of his challenges was to identify the problem he most wanted to overcome. This decision was complicated because he had several top priorities. He wanted to improve his health by stopping smoking, limiting his alcohol intake, and reducing his weight. He also wanted to spend more time with his children. He realized, however, that trying to make all of those changes at once could be a formula for failure. So he decided his top priority would be to lose some weight.

In this illustration, Jeremy first identified his concerns and then selected the issue most important to him. It is much the same in an organization. To make positive changes, an organization must first identify the most important problems or issues and then prioritize them, selecting the most pressing issue(s) first.

Assess the Problem

Once Jeremy has decided that the goal of weight loss was most important, several related questions remain. For example, how does Jeremy know that he should lose weight? His doctor once told him that losing some weight would help to reduce his risk of diabetes. Also, Jeremy struggles to walk up a flight of stairs at his current weight but remembers that he didn't have any trouble with that when he was thinner. In addition, Jeremy realizes that none of his clothes fit anymore. Weight problems, like workforce challenges, can present themselves in a variety of ways. It is important to use available information to assess whether a problem exists.

Once a problem has been identified, the next step is to determine the size of the problem, and, if possible, its cause. In this example, Jeremy needs to find out how much a person of his age and height should weigh so that he can compare that with his weight. After weighing himself, Jeremy learns that he is 20 pounds heavier than the recommended weight for a person of his age and height. This information provides Jeremy with a starting point, or a baseline measurement.

Another part of the assessment is to determine why Jeremy weighs too much. He needs to learn where the problem *really* lies. Is he eating too much at each meal? Is he skipping breakfast, then gulping down a huge lunch because he is too hungry to worry about how much he is eating? Is he eating the wrong types of food (e.g., too much fast food)? Does he need to add exercise to his life? It would be foolish to make an action plan without knowing the real cause of the problem. Jeremy needs to gather information about his behavior and then compare his information with some kind of standard. Keeping a food diary would help Jeremy compute his calorie intake for the day. Then he could use a reference book or his doctor's guidelines to see how many calories he should be eating for a person of his age and height. If his total calorie intake exceeds the recommendations for his age and height, he would know that reducing the amount he eats or changing the types of foods he is eating could help him come closer to the standard. If he learns that his calorie intake is about right compared with the standard, however, he would have to continue his assessment to identify another possible reason for his problem. Perhaps tracking how many minutes per week spent exercising would reveal that Jeremy is not getting the recommended amount of exercise.

Through these assessments, Jeremy learns that although his food intake is reasonable, he only gets 15 minutes of exercise per week. His doctor recommended at least 20 minutes per day, 4 or more days per week. Jeremy's assessment has helped him identify the likely source of the problem and also points to a possible solution. The lesson is the same when evaluating problems in the workplace. A thoughtful assessment helps in identifying the extent of the problem, and it can often highlight a problem's causes or related issues. If the goal is to make a plan and take action, a solid understanding of the nature of the problem is critical to the process. Without this understanding, an organization could end up spinning its wheels while going nowhere.

Select an Intervention Strategy

Having identified and assessed the problem, Jeremy's next step is to decide on a plan of action and to implement that plan. He has to choose one intervention from the many available (e.g., working out at a gym, buying a treadmill, swimming at the local

pool). After considering the alternatives, he decides to start walking with his children for 20 minutes, 4 days per week. This plan meets his need to increase his exercise and his desire to spend more time with his children. Similarly, in addressing workforce challenges, an intervention that is appropriate for the problem should be identified and put into place. Chapter 14 describes how to select interventions based on assessment results and reviews available alternatives.

Set Goals and Measure Progress

Jeremy set a goal of losing 20 pounds in 6 months by increasing his level of exercise. In measuring his progress, Jeremy has several choices. As mentioned earlier, Jeremy took a baseline measurement by weighing himself at the beginning of his weight-loss plan. He could also have chosen to measure various points on his body or to assess his body fat percentage. Regardless of the method, Jeremy needs to use the same tool or assessment procedure again to accurately measure any change. By weighing himself, Jeremy would obtain accurate information on the impact of his weight loss program. If he were to use the same measurement tool in the beginning and at the end, he would accurately measure his progress. Likewise, when creating workforce interventions, accurate assessment of the impact of the intervention can best be made by obtaining a baseline measurement and then assessing progress by utilizing the same measurement tool used in the initial evaluation.

Establish a Time Frame for the Intervention

The next step for Jeremy is to decide how and when to evaluate his progress. His initial assessment of the problem (i.e., his baseline) revealed that he was 20 pounds heavier than his desired goal. To evaluate his progress, he needs to measure any change in weight as a result of implementing the intervention. He needs to decide the time frame in which the evaluation would occur.

Jeremy has several choices with regard to time frames. In the beginning, Jeremy chose walking for his exercise (intervention) because he was overweight (identified problem). He decided to walk four times per week for 6 months (duration). Finally, Jeremy decided to check his progress by using a scale to weigh himself (measurement tool). However, he has one last decision before implementing his weight-loss program: He has to decide the points in time that he wants to weigh himself to check his progress. He could weigh himself once at the beginning and once at the end of the 6 months. He also could weigh himself once per week. Sometimes people want to measure at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end, so he could weigh himself at the beginning, at the third month, and at the end of the 6 months. He could also track his progress in a journal or on a wall chart.

Jeremy realizes that weighing himself on a scale every day is not an efficient use of his time. Instead, he decided to weigh himself once each week. It is the same in the workplace. The measurement intervals should be an effective use of the time, money, and energy available for the project. For an evaluation that is shorter in duration, one baseline measurement and one final measurement are adequate. In a longer time frame, additional measurement times may be useful.

Evaluate Success

Jeremy began to exercise with his children. He soon found that they grew bored walking the same route each day, so to keep things interesting he had his children select the route two days a week and he selected the route twice a week. He and the children put a check on the calendar each day they walked and celebrated each week's progress by renting a video. After 3 months, Jeremy and his children averaged 3.5 walks per week and Jeremy had lost 10 pounds. He had developed plans to walk at an enclosed shopping mall on days when the weather was bad. By the end of 6 months, Jeremy had achieved his goal of losing 20 pounds and felt more energetic. Similarly, when organizations implement interventions to reduce turnover or improve training, evaluating whether those interventions were successful is critical. By checking success against the goal at least twice during the intervention, an organization can learn whether the intervention is working.

Summary of the Assessment and Evaluation Steps

Although workforce issues can often appear more complicated and involved than a weight problem, by following the six steps just outlined, dealing with such workforce issues should be no more intimidating or difficult than Jeremy's task. In the following sections, the six assessment and evaluation steps are discussed as they relate to creating change within a community human services organization.

Identify the Problem

Organizations often realize that problems exist in their workplace. Often, however, there are so many concerns or problems that knowing which problem to address first can be difficult. Or, the opposite might be true: The organization understands that problems exist but is not quite sure what those problems are. Often, the issues or concerns center on recruitment and retention of staff members. Although an organization might understand the overall issues, it may have difficulty pinpointing the exact nature of the problem. Common workforce challenges include the following:

- The organization has trouble finding new employees.
- The organization has difficulty recruiting individuals who are qualified to take open positions.
- New hires quit in the first 6 months.
- Supervisors are constantly hiring new employees to replace those who have left the organization.
- New employees are unsure of their job roles and functions.
- The organization has difficulty finding training that addresses the skills needed by employees.
- Training does not produce desired results. Employees display poor skills on the job.
- Co-workers do not get along.
- There is conflict between employees and supervisors or managers.
- Employees complain about the supervision they get.
- Supervisors report being overwhelmed or do not know how to do their job.

- Employees have morale problems.
- Long-term employees are dissatisfied with or quit their jobs.
- Employees have inadequate wages or benefits.

The first step in assessing challenges and evaluating outcomes is to select a specific challenge as the focus. The challenges just listed are common, but an organization may identify another problem that is not on this list at all.

Assess the Problem

Knowing that a challenge exists is often one of the easiest parts of developing an organizational change plan. Challenges are the things that make daily work life unpleasant. Once a specific challenge has been identified, the next step is to assess the nature and extent of challenge. Questions to answer include:

- What exactly is the challenge?
- How big is the challenge?
- How costly is the challenge?
- Whom does the challenge affect the most?

To accurately and efficiently assess the problem or challenge, an organization needs to select a measurement tool or method. This measurement tool will also be used to evaluate progress at the end of the determined time frame. (See Table 13.1 for a summary of common workforce challenges and ways of assessing them.) Both general and specific assessments may be needed. General assessments are those that all organizations should conduct at least annually.

Baselines are critical to defining the challenge. Baseline information can be from numerical data, such as turnover, vacancy, and tenure rates. Calculating these rates both at the organizational level and at the program or work-site level offers the most complete picture of the organization's experiences with staff transitions. It is also important to gather other types of baseline information. For example, if high turnover is one of the organization's biggest challenges, then turnover, tenure, and vacancy rates are of great importance, but so are exit interviews, which can provide a clearer picture of why people are leaving. Calculating the costs of turnover in terms of money and service outcomes is crucial. Depending on the challenge identified, the organization may benefit from consumer satisfaction surveys, which can identify training needs; job satisfaction surveys, which can identify challenges related to benefits, the work environment, or supervision; and/or an assessment of recruitment sources and strategies, which can identify challenges in finding qualified applicants. Baseline data can be compared with benchmarks in other organizations (see Chapter 1) and with future annual assessments for the organization itself.

The baseline assessment should allow the organization to determine if the challenge is systemwide or if it is isolated to particular work sites or programs. For example, if higher staff turnover or lower staff satisfaction exists only at some locations, a targeted intervention can be more effective than an intervention designed to blanket the entire organization. It may be that certain supervisors have not been adequately trained for their roles and responsibilities or that a new program has just begun at one location.

Although identifying the challenge is important, it is easy to fall into the trap of spending an inordinate amount of time and resources studying a challenge without

Table 13.1. Workforce challenges and ways to assess them

Challenge	Assessment measures or strategies
The organization has trouble finding new employees.	Recruitment source cost–benefit analysis Vacancy rate
The organization has difficulties recruiting qualified individuals.	Wage–benefit market analysis Recruitment and hiring bonuses effectiveness analysis
New hires quit in the first 6 months. Supervisors are constantly hiring new employees to replace those who have left the organization.	Turnover (crude separation rate) Tenure of current employees (stayers) Tenure of leavers Staff satisfaction survey (given to new hires) New staff survey Exit interview or survey
New employees are unsure of their job roles and functions.	Job description review Training needs assessment (given to new hires)
The organization has difficulty finding training that addresses the skills needed by employees.	Training needs assessment Inventory of current employee skills
Training does not produce desired results. Employees display poor skills on the job.	Competency assessments Performance review system
Co-workers do not get along.	Teamwork assessment Staff satisfaction survey Personality or style inventories
There is conflict between employees and supervisors or managers. Employees complain about the supervision they get. Supervisors report being overwhelmed or do not know how to do their job.	Teamwork assessment Supervisor training needs assessment Staff satisfaction survey
Employees have morale problems.	Staff satisfaction survey Organizational commitment survey
Long-term staff are dissatisfied with or quit their jobs.	Staff satisfaction survey (given to current and exiting long-term employees) Training needs assessment Exit interviews or survey

taking any action to address the challenge. To avoid that trap, an organization should determine ahead of time what information will be sought, develop an assessment strategy, and stick to the assessment plans and time lines.

Specific follow-up assessments should be used as needed to measure the nature, extent, and cause of specific problems. In many cases, instruments or strategies to conduct the suggested specific assessment are included in earlier chapters of this book. There are many types of specialized workforce assessment strategies, including standardized and nonstandardized instruments and other methods. The following sections describe general and specialized workforce development assessments and review factors that should be considered in selecting or constructing an assessment.

General Workforce Development Assessments

Several general workforce development assessments can help organizations understand the challenges they face and select the most important challenge for intervention. To establish a baseline, the organization must clearly define who is considered a direct support professional (DSP) and how employees performing job duties at multiple sites or only serving as on-call staff will be counted. It is most efficient if the same definitions and formulas are used for all sites and services within the organization. Retention outcomes for DSPs and FLSs that should be assessed at baseline and again at least annually include the following:

- Turnover (crude separation rate)
- Average tenure (months worked)
- Percentage of employees who leave the organization within 6 months of hire (tenure category of leavers)
- Vacancy rate (percentage of positions vacant on a specific day)

A worksheet with the formulas (Larson, 1998) used in these general computations appears at the end of this chapter.

It is also helpful to identify factors that may have contributed to the turnover rates in each site and differences in rates between sites. This includes gathering information about positive and negative job features and describing any changes or special incentives that may have influenced retention outcomes. Establishing benchmark rates and goals for each site and for the organization as a whole allows the organization to identify sites that are struggling and those that are doing well. This can help the organization to identify why recruitment outcomes differ across sites. It is also important to understand turnover differences in new programs, in programs located in areas of low unemployment, in programs in which wages compare unfavorably with prevailing wages, and so forth.

Turnover (Crude Separation Rate)

Turnover, or the crude separation rate, compares the number of people who left the organization with the number of positions in a site or organization. Turnover is a convenient measure to compare retention problems across sites within an organization or to compare an organization with similar organizations. To compute the turnover rate in a particular site, count the number of employees in a particular category (e.g., DSPs) who left the site within the last 12 months (leavers). Include all employees who left or were fired, even if they quit 1 day after hire or were hired but never showed up for work. Divide this number by the average number employees at the site during the last 12 months. Multiply the result by 100. The resulting percentage (which may be higher than 100%) reflects the annual crude separation rate for that category of employees. Turnover rates can be compared across sites and can be computed for the organization as a whole.

$$\text{turnover (crude separation rate)} = \frac{\text{number of leavers in 12 months at the site (or in the organization)}}{\text{number of positions at the site (or in the organization)}} \times 100$$

Tenure of Current Employees (Stayers)

Tenure is the length of time an employee has worked for a site or organization. Like turnover, the average tenure of current employees (stayers) is a convenient measure to use when comparing retention success for sites within an organization or to compare an organization's retention success with that of similar organizations. To compute the average tenure of employees at a particular site (or across the organization), list each employee and the number of months the employee has been at the site (or in the organization). Add the number of months for all employees at the site (or in the organization) and divide by the total number of employees. This calculation will yield the average number of months employees have been at the site (or in the organization). Be sure to consider the number of months the site has been open when evaluating the results. Separate computations for DSPs and FLSs can be helpful.

$$\text{average tenure of current employees (stayers)} = \frac{\begin{array}{c}\text{total number of months' tenure} \\ \text{of current staff at the site} \\ \text{(or in the organization)}\end{array}}{\begin{array}{c}\text{total number of staff at the site} \\ \text{(or in the organization)}\end{array}}$$

Tenure of Leavers

To compute the average tenure of people who have left a site or an organization (leavers), identify all those who have left in the past 12 months. For each leaver, note the total number of months worked before leaving the organization. Sum the number of months for all leavers and divide the total by the number of leavers. The result is the average number of months the employees stayed before leaving. Computing separate numbers for employees who were fired and for those who left voluntarily may be helpful. Be sure to include all employees who were paid for 1 or more hours of work, even those who quit after training or in their first few days.

$$\text{average tenure of leavers} = \frac{\text{total number of months worked by all leavers}}{\text{total number of leavers}}$$

Tenure Category (of Stayers or Leavers)

Examining tenure in more detail can assist organizations in targeting interventions for employees at a particular point in their career. For example, when many leavers have 6 or fewer months' tenure, intervention strategies that address the needs of recruits and new hires are likely to be helpful, such as using inside sources to refer potential new hires, providing realistic job previews (RJPs; see Chapter 3), providing mentoring for new hires, and conducting socialization interventions. Conversely, if most of the leavers have 2 or more years' tenure, a different set of interventions may be called for. To compute tenure category, divide stayers or leavers into groups according to the number of months they have worked. For example, to compute the proportion of leavers who stayed less than 6 months, count the number of employees who left in the last 12 months. Then count the number of employees in that group who stayed less

than 6 months before leaving. Divide this number by the total number of employees who left, and multiply the result by 100.

$$\text{percentage of leavers with less than 6 months' tenure} = \frac{\text{total number of leavers with less than 6 months' tenure}}{\text{total number of leavers}} \times 100$$

This same formula can be used to compute the proportion of leavers who stayed 6–12 months, 12–24 months, and more than 2 years.

Vacancy Rates

One indicator of recruitment problems at a particular site or within the organization is the vacancy rate. Vacancies can occur either because a new position was created or because an existing employee left the position. The vacancy rate can be computed by counting the number of positions at the site (or in the organization) that are currently funded but that have no specific person assigned (the organization may be using overtime or substitutes to cover these open positions). Divide that number by the total number of positions at the site (or organization), and multiply the result by 100.

$$\text{vacancy rate} = \frac{\text{total number of funded positions currently vacant}}{\text{total number of funded positions}} \times 100$$

Table 13.2. Direct support professionals (DSPs) in Site A (11/1/03–10/31/04)

Staff member (ID or initials)	Status	Hire date	Compute date	Months at site	Tenure group
1. JB	Stayer	11/6/99	10/31/04	60	13+
2. MC	Stayer	8/12/00	11/31/04	45	13+
3. YX	Stayer	11/30/01	10/31/04	35	13+
4. JM	Stayer	10/3/02	10/31/04	25	13+
5. RJ	Stayer	7/5/03	10/31/04	20	13+
6. AA	Stayer	1/31/04	10/31/04	10	7–12
7. SM	Stayer	6/14/04	10/31/04	5	0–6
8. JW	Stayer	9/5/04	10/31/04	2	0–6
9. JC	Stayer	10/1/04	10/31/04	1	0–6
10.	Vacancy				
Stayer total	10			203	
11. MR	Quit	2/5/02	3/5/04	25	13+
12. PC	Quit	10/2/02	1/2/04	15	13+
13. JN	Fired	11/1/03	6/10/04	8	7–12
14. AP	Quit	4/30/04	9/25/04	5	0–6
15. OT	Quit	6/25/04	9/1/04	2	0–6
Leaver total	5			55	

From O'Nell, S., Hewitt, A., Sauer, J., & Larson, S. (2001). *Removing the revolving door: Strategies to address recruitment and retention challenges* (p. 41 of facilitator guide). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, Institute on Community Integration, Research and Training Center on Community Living; adapted by permission.
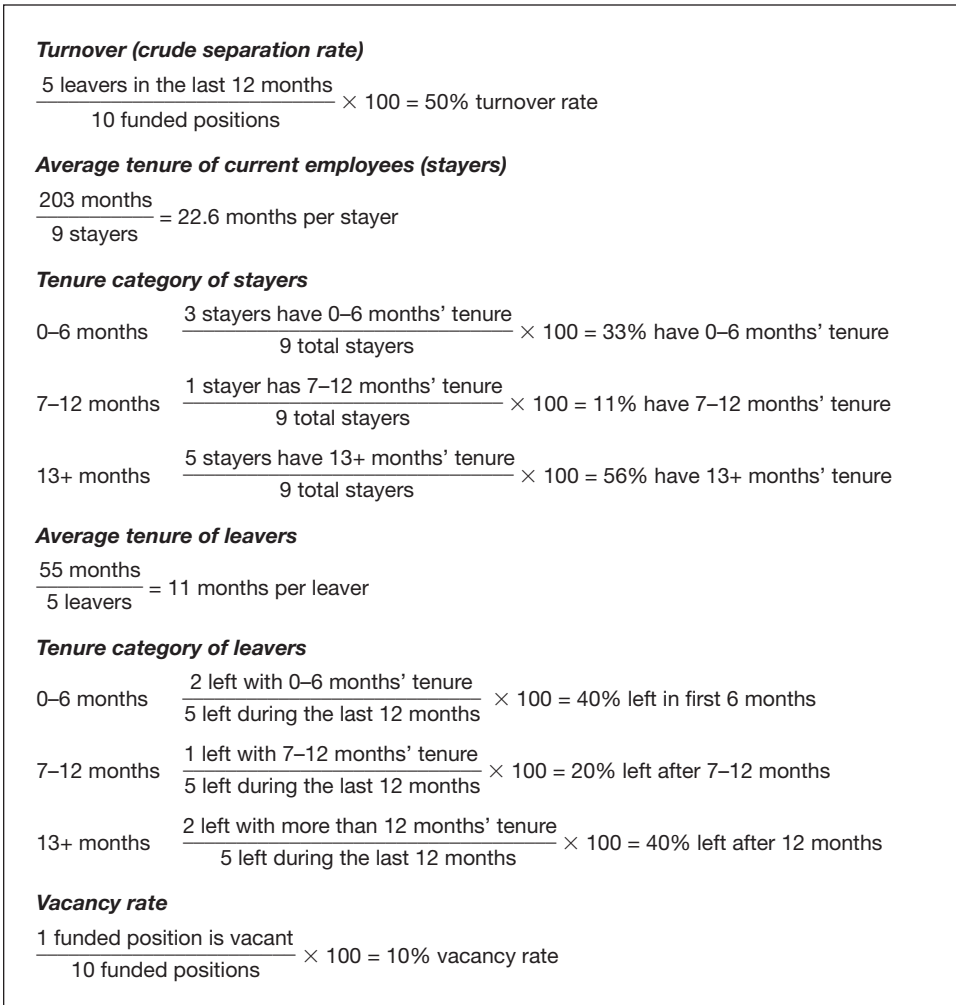

Turnover (crude separation rate)

$$\frac{5 \text{ leavers in the last 12 months}}{10 \text{ funded positions}} \times 100 = 50\% \text{ turnover rate}$$

Average tenure of current employees (stayers)

$$\frac{203 \text{ months}}{9 \text{ stayers}} = 22.6 \text{ months per stayer}$$

Tenure category of stayers

0–6 months $\quad \dfrac{3 \text{ stayers have 0–6 months' tenure}}{9 \text{ total stayers}} \times 100 = 33\% \text{ have 0–6 months' tenure}$

7–12 months $\quad \dfrac{1 \text{ stayer has 7–12 months' tenure}}{9 \text{ total stayers}} \times 100 = 11\% \text{ have 7–12 months' tenure}$

13+ months $\quad \dfrac{5 \text{ stayers have 13+ months' tenure}}{9 \text{ total stayers}} \times 100 = 56\% \text{ have 13+ months' tenure}$

Average tenure of leavers

$$\frac{55 \text{ months}}{5 \text{ leavers}} = 11 \text{ months per leaver}$$

Tenure category of leavers

0–6 months $\quad \dfrac{2 \text{ left with 0–6 months' tenure}}{5 \text{ left during the last 12 months}} \times 100 = 40\% \text{ left in first 6 months}$

7–12 months $\quad \dfrac{1 \text{ left with 7–12 months' tenure}}{5 \text{ left during the last 12 months}} \times 100 = 20\% \text{ left after 7–12 months}$

13+ months $\quad \dfrac{2 \text{ left with more than 12 months' tenure}}{5 \text{ left during the last 12 months}} \times 100 = 40\% \text{ left after 12 months}$

Vacancy rate

$$\frac{1 \text{ funded position is vacant}}{10 \text{ funded positions}} \times 100 = 10\% \text{ vacancy rate}$$

Figure 13.1. Computation summary of turnover, tenure, and vacancy of direct support professionals (DSPs) in Site ABC (11/1/03–10/31/04). (From O'Nell, S., Hewitt, A., Sauer, J., & Larson, S. [2001]. *Removing the revolving door: Strategies to address recruitment and retention challenges* [p. 42 of facilitator guide]. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, Institute on Community Integration, Research and Training Center on Community Living; adapted by permission. *Source of formulas used as basis for these calculations:* Larson, 1998.)

Examining Retention Outcomes: An Example

The following is an example of how these general retention measures were calculated for one particular site. Table 13.2 shows the information needed to compute the values for the baseline, and Figure 13.1 shows the computations. Included in Table 13.2 are all of the current employees at the site (stayers), positions that have been funded but are currently not filled (vacancies), the employees from this site who have left (leavers), and whether each person who left did so voluntarily or was fired. Data are included for every person who worked at this site in a 12-month period.

Tenure for stayers at the site, recorded in terms of months and rounded to the nearest month, was calculated by using each person's start date and the date the analy-

sis was conducted as the reference points. At the time of the analysis, current employees had been at Site ABC for an average of 22.6 months. Among the stayers, 33% had been at the site for less than 6 months, 11% had been at the site 7–12 months, and 56% had been in the home for more than 1 year.

Employees who left Site ABC during the last 12 months had worked at the site an average of 11 months before quitting. The turnover rate was 50% for the last 12 months. Among the people who left, 40% left in the first 6 months after hire, 20% left 7–12 months after hire, and 40% had been with the home for more than a year before they left. Four of five of the leavers left voluntarily. The fifth was fired (20% of all leavers were fired). The vacancy rate in this home was 10%.

This site has two distinct groups of employees, long-term staff and new hires. Interventions such as RJPs (see Chapter 3) or improved orientation practices (see Chapter 5) designed to reduce the number of employees who leave early in their employment will be helpful. In addition, this organization needs to consider the needs of long-term employees. Perhaps interventions for this group might include enhanced training or career development opportunities (see Chapters 6 and 7). Using other specialized assessments could help the organization to understand these issues more fully and could point to particular intervention strategies.

Specific Workforce Development Assessments

Many different types of workforce assessments can be used to learn more about the specific types of challenges an organization is facing. These assessments can be used periodically to measure the general status or health of an organization or to assess a particular problem that has emerged. Specific assessments include measures of job satisfaction, organizational commitment, leadership, socialization, opinions of exiting employees, skills or competency assessments for employees, and so forth.

One specific assessment that should be used periodically (every 1–2 years) is a survey or assessment of employee job satisfaction. Regular assessments of job satisfaction show how employees feel about their job. Using such indexes over time allows the organization to identify areas of relative weakness within the organizational culture and to monitor changes that might be associated with positive initiatives (e.g., a training program for supervisors) or with changing contextual factors (e.g., decreasing real dollar wages). Another area for ongoing evaluation is the extent to which the expectations of new hires were met during their first few months on the job. The results of such evaluations can be used to improve the information provided to recruits before they are hired.

The Gallup Organization evaluated responses to hundreds of questions obtained from more than 1 million employees on different aspects of the workplace (Buckingham & Coffman, 1999). Buckingham and Coffman identified the top 12 questions that predicted productivity, profit, employee retention, and improved customer service:

- Do I know what is expected of me at work?
- Do I have the materials and equipment I need to do my work right?
- At work, do I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day?
- In the last 7 days, have I received recognition or praise for good work?
- Does my supervisor, or someone at work, seem to care about me as a person?
- Is there someone at work who encourages my development?
- At work, do my opinions seem to count?

- Do the mission and/or purpose of my company make me feel like my work is important?
- Are my co-employees committed to doing quality work?
- Do I have a best friend at work?
- In the last 6 months, have I talked with someone about my progress?
- At work, have I had opportunities to learn and grow? (1999, p. 28)

These questions can help an organization decide what questions to include in a staff satisfaction survey. For further guidance, an organization may want to consult the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (Griffin & Bateman, 1986; discussed later in this chapter) and the satisfaction survey that appears at the end of this chapter. It includes several of the items just listed, as well as other items that may be helpful.

The following sections describe some existing standardized and nonstandardized assessment instruments that can be used to examine a specific challenge that an organization is dealing with.

Standardized Specific Assessment Instruments

Careful consideration should be given to the type of instrument to be used based on what information the organization hopes to obtain. One type of measurement tool is a *standardized* instrument, which is a survey or a questionnaire that has been tested for validity and reliability.

Validity is the degree to which a measure accurately captures the concept it is intending to measure (Babbie, 1990; Price, 1997). In other words, does the question ask what it is supposed to ask, and how well does it do this? Validity plays an important role in the quality of a question (Price, 1997). *Reliability* looks at the quality of an instrument by examining the extent to which it produces the same results when used repeatedly (Price, 1997). For example, "Did you fill out a report in the last week?" would yield higher reliability than the question "How many times in the last year have you filled out a report?" Most respondents would remember whether they filled out a report for the last week but might struggle to recall the reporting events for the last year and may therefore give different answers on different days or at different times. Validity and reliability can be relatively difficult to establish, which is why many organizations use measurement instruments that are standardized rather than create their own and test them for validity and reliability.

Many standardized instruments have been constructed to measure the workforce challenges mentioned in Table 13.1. Only a few of the thousands of instruments measuring workforce issues and outcomes are profiled here.

Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire

The Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) is one of three widely accepted measures of job satisfaction (Griffin & Bateman, 1986). The MSQ measures satisfaction with several different aspects of the work environment (Weiss, Dawis, England, & Lofquist, 1967). The short form contains 20 items that measure satisfaction with the present job on a scale of 1 (*very dissatisfied*) to 5 (*very satisfied*). For example, one item asks, "On my present job, this is how I feel about the chance to do things for other people." The MSQ yields three scale scores: intrinsic satisfaction, extrinsic satisfaction, and general satisfaction. Intrinsic satisfaction includes items such as the chance to do things for other people and the chance for a person to do something that makes use of his or her abilities and that focuses on internal factors the person values. Ex-

trinsic satisfaction focuses on items that describe things other people do to recognize a person's value and work, such as the pay for the amount of work the person does. Other standardized assessments of job satisfaction include the Job Description Index (Smith, Kendall, & Hulin, 1969) and the Michigan Measure of Facet Satisfaction (Quinn & Staines, 1979).

Organizational Commitment Questionnaire

Organizational commitment is "the relative strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organization" (Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982, p. 226) and is characterized by a strong belief in and acceptance of the organization's goals and values, a willingness to exert considerable effort for the organization, and a strong desire to maintain membership in the organization. Although several instruments measure organizational commitment, the most commonly used scale is the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ; Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1979). This 15-item scale has been normed on 2,563 employees in nine different occupations, including psychiatric technicians working with people with intellectual disabilities. The items ask employees to rate items on a scale of 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). For example, one item states, "I am proud to tell others that I am part of this organization." Several studies document that the OCQ has adequate reliability and validity (e.g., Ferris & Aranya, 1983; Sullivan, 1982).

Leader Behavior Descriptive Questionnaire

The extent to which a supervisor is considerate of the people he or she supervises is a predictor of turnover identified by Michaels and Spector (1982). Perception by the DSPs of their supervisors can be assessed using the Leader Behavior Descriptive Questionnaire (College of Administrative Science, 1957). Respondents rate the frequency that their supervisors engage in specific behaviors on a 5-point Likert scale with 1 meaning *always* and 5 meaning *never*. This instrument rates supervisors on initiating structure and consideration. For example, one of the items is "makes his/her attitudes clear to the group."

Organizational Socialization Scale

A scale by Jones (1986) measures organizational socialization, the manner in which a person new to the job is taught the customary and desirable behavior and perspectives for a particular role within the work setting (Bachelder & Braddock, 1994). Items are rated on a scale of 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). For example, one item is "This organization puts all newcomers through the same set of learning experiences."

Nonstandardized Specific Assessment Instruments

Although using a standardized instrument is beneficial for collecting valid and reliable data, it can also be potentially limiting. A standardized instrument may not ask questions or collect data on issues that are important to an organization. Furthermore, there is often a cost associated with using a standardized instrument.

Modifying an existing standardized instrument allows an organization to capture additional information specific to that organization. A modified instrument, however, may not be as valid or reliable as the original standardized version.

If no existing survey is found that fits the organization's needs, a tool may need to be designed. In creating an instrument, validity and reliability are important. Although an organization may choose to test an instrument prior to its actual use, numerous repeat trials will probably not occur. Therefore, it is vital to build an instrument based on carefully thought-out questions. Poorly written questions will yield poor data.

Before designing a survey, the organization should ask, "What do we want to measure?" The organization needs to prepare a clear, detailed statement of the purpose of the survey and the type of information to be obtained. Do one or two key issues such as recruitment and/or retention seem most important? The organization can limit the scope of the survey by addressing the most pressing concerns.

The next step is to construct specific questions. There are two types of questions: open-ended and closed. In open-ended questions respondents provide their own answers to the questions (Babbie, 2001). Responses to open-ended questions must be categorized for analysis. This involves transcribing all of the responses, grouping similar responses together, and naming each group. This is time-consuming and costly (Singleton, Straits, & Straits, 1993). In contrast, closed-ended questions require that respondents select an answer from a list. This type of question is popular in surveys because it can provide greater uniformity of responses and is more easily processed. A disadvantage of this type of question is that it forces the respondent to select an answer that may not be a good fit. In general, response choices should include all possible responses to be expected and should be mutually exclusive; respondents should not feel compelled to select more than one answer for each question (Singleton et al., 1993).

Both open-ended and closed-ended questions should have the following features:

- Questions should be clear and unambiguous. The organization should avoid questions that ask about two things. The use of the word *and* in a question can signal that the designer should take a second look at the question. For example, if respondents are asked to agree or disagree with the statement "DSPs are not paid enough, and the state government should do something about this," it will be difficult to know if they are responding to the statement that DSPs aren't paid enough, the suggestion that states should help increase DSP wages, or both. It might be clearer to ask respondents to disagree or agree with the statement "DSPs aren't paid enough" and then ask them to disagree or agree with the statement "State governments should help increase DSP wages." In addition, the organization should avoid using indefinite words such as *usually, seldom, many, few, here,* and *there,* which can have different meanings to different people (Singleton et al., 1993).
- Questions should be relevant to most respondents. If not, respondents might make up answers on the spot to questions they have never really thought about. Respondents should be able to understand the connection between the questions, the purpose of the survey, and their role as respondents.
- Questions should use vocabulary that is appropriate to the respondents. The words should be understandable and should be culturally relevant and sensitive.
- Questions should be short. Respondents should be able to read each question quickly, understand its intent, and select an answer without difficulty (Babbie, 2001).
- Negative items should be avoided. Negation in a questionnaire item can lead to misinterpretation. For example, asking respondents to agree or disagree with the

statement "FLSs should not have to provide direct support" could be confusing. Too often, readers misinterpret the question to mean the opposite of its intended meaning.

- Biased items and terms should be avoided. Biased questions or terms such as "Don't you agree that . . . " should instead be phrased as "Do you agree or disagree that. . . . " The first question is an example of a leading question. This type of question suggests a possible answer or makes some responses seem more acceptable than others (Babbie, 2001; Singleton et al., 1993).
- Include a complete listing of alternatives. For closed-ended questions, give a complete listing of alternatives to a question, representing both moderate attitudes and extreme attitudes in each direction (Singleton et al., 1993).

Several different types of questions can be used on a survey. Rating scales that convert respondents' reactions to a numerical rating can prove useful. For example, a Likert scale uses numbers representing degrees of liking something; such as 1 = *dislike very much*, 2 = *dislike somewhat*, 3 = *like somewhat*, 4 = *like very much*. It is the most commonly used question type in surveys (Babbie, 1990; Singleton et al., 1993).

Another type of scale is the behaviorally anchored rating scale. In this type of scale, skills needed to function in a job are anchored around a midpoint. For example, on a scale of 1–5, the midpoint would be described as the level of skill required to perform the job competently. A rating of five would be considered ideal; conversely, a score of one would represent a severe deficiency. To create a rating scale that can be used objectively and uniformly, it is helpful to attach a behavior to each score (Barnhart, 2002). This type of rating scale is often used in structured interviews (see Table 4.2 in Chapter 4 for an example).

Asking respondents to rank questions is also useful. Pretesting with open-ended questions, however, should be done to ensure that the items chosen are inclusive and meaningful to respondents (Singleton et al., 1993). For example, employees may be asked to select the top three reasons they want to leave their job. The first 50 to 100 respondents may be asked to answer an open-ended question. Those first responses would be used to establish a set of categories that reflect common responses to the question. The question can then be converted to a ranking question by listing all of the responses given by three or more people and leaving a space for people to enter responses that are not on the list.

Instructions at the beginning of any survey should inform the participant how many questions are included and should estimate the length of time it will take to complete the survey. Demographic questions at the beginning or the end of the survey can be used to learn whether certain groups of employees have better outcomes (e.g., lower turnover, greater job satisfaction) than others (e.g., FLSs versus DSPs). A set of sample demographic questions are included at the end of this chapter. As with any other type of question, only include demographic items that are directly related to the purpose of the survey. Each organization using a survey or other assessment technique should be careful to comply with legal requirements such as managing private information as mandated by the Health Insurance Accountability and Portability Act of 1996 (PL 104-191). In some organizations, a human subjects review board will also need to be consulted.

A cover letter should point out the purpose of the study. The cover letter should also explain how confidentiality will be handled. A coding system on each survey could be used to protect the identity of the participants yet allow those conducting the survey to distinguish between respondents. Some organizations hire an independent consultant to design, administer, and analyze survey results. This lends additional objectivity to the survey and has the added advantage of discreetness. Respondents feel more secure in giving an honest response when they know that a disinterested party is reviewing their written reactions. Other organizations have the human resources department handle the survey and present only aggregate responses to supervisors and managers. Maintaining confidentiality is critical to avoid retaliation against respondents who report a negative reaction to a question. Furthermore, respondents who do not trust that their responses will be treated confidentially are less likely to answer truthfully and are more likely to avoid responding at all. Such a problem can make it very difficult to accurately assess the extent and nature of concerns.

Once the questions for a survey have been drafted, it is helpful to have a small group of employees complete the survey to test the questions. This test group can be asked to report how long it took them to complete the survey and if any of the questions were confusing, difficult to understand, ambiguous, and/or unclear. The feedback can then be used to refine the survey before it is used with the rest of the employees (Babbie, 2001). This testing can help the organization to avoid irritating employees with instructions that are unclear, questions that are difficult to answer, or surveys that take too long to complete.

Sometimes surveys are given to all possible respondents (the whole population). Other times, only a sample of respondents is used. A sample is a subset of respondents that represents a larger group. An adequate sample can allow an organization to learn about the total population without having to ask everyone to participate (Babbie, 1990). With organizations of fewer than 100 employees, it is often advisable to survey all appropriate staff members. In larger organizations, however, it is often possible to select a sample of the target population to survey.

In selecting a sample, the objective is to obtain a representation of a particular group of employees, also known as the sample frame. For example, an organization interested in learning more about its 500 DSPs would select participants from this sample frame. To achieve this, the basic principle of probability sampling must be applied. That is, all members of a particular group should have an equal chance of being included in the sample (Babbie, 1990). One approach is to employ systematic sampling, in which every nth person is selected from a list. For example, in a list of 500 people, every fifth person is selected to be in the sample, for a total sample of 100 (20% of the total population).

The question of size of sample depends on how the answers will be used. For purposes of grouping the answers by division, unit, or manager, it is important to get surveys back from at least 10–20 people per division, unit, or manager. This number is usually large enough for a statistical test of differences to detect true differences that exist between groups. Another consideration is the extent of involvement or proportion of the organization to be involved in the survey. If at least 20% involvement is desired, and there are 600 people at the organization, the sample size should be at least 120 participants.

Another factor in deciding on how many people to survey is the proportion of people who actually return the survey. This proportion is called the response rate. The goal should be to get surveys back from at least 50%–80% of respondents. If 120 people receive surveys and 60 people return them, the response rate is 50% (60 divided by 120 times 100). If 96 people return surveys, the response rate is 80%. Response rates can be increased with encouragement from supervisors who emphasize the importance of the feedback that is obtained from the survey. Also, higher response rates can be obtained by preliminary notification of the survey and its importance (Singleton et al., 1993). Once staff members understand that the organization is interested in issues of concern to the staff and is looking to make necessary changes, the participation rate usually increases. Response rates are also often higher when responses are anonymous or when another trusted mechanism to ensure confidentiality is used.

Several assessment instruments (described next) are included at the end of this chapter. They were developed for research purposes by the University of Minnesota. Other examples can be found at the ends of other chapters in this book.

Staff Satisfaction Survey

The Staff Satisfaction Survey was created with the assistance of a large provider organization in Minnesota. The first part solicits information about satisfaction with various job components. The second part asks employees to provide suggestions about what they like and do not like about their jobs and what they wish would be changed. It was developed based on analysis of hundreds of responses to open-ended questions about these topics. The responses were grouped into themes that were then incorporated into the survey. This instrument has not undergone reliability testing. Its face validity has been assessed through reviews by managers, administrators, and human resources professionals. It has been used with hundreds of employees in several different organizations.

New Staff Survey

The New Staff Survey was developed to evaluate the extent to which the expectations of newly hired DSPs matched their experiences on the job. It has been used in conjunction with RJPs to assess the effectiveness of those interventions. In some organizations, it is used as a survey to be completed independently by a newly hired employee after 30 days on the job. In other organizations, the survey is completed and is discussed directly with the new employee's supervisor.

Training Experiences Satisfaction Survey

The Training Experiences Satisfaction Survey was developed to assess staff satisfaction with the training provided by the employer. An earlier eight-item version of the Training Experiences Satisfaction Survey was used in a series of research projects to evaluate employee opinions about the training they had received. Internal consistency (a measure of whether all of the items on the scale measure the same category of information) for the eight-item scale was .81 based on responses from more than 100 DSPs in community residential settings. The Training Experiences Satisfaction Survey that appears in this chapter is a later version of this instrument, refined based on research use of the original version.

Other Methods of Workforce Assessment

Exit Interview or Survey

Exit interviews or surveys can ask leavers the extent to which several factors made them want to stay or leave. A recent national study of human resources managers found that 87% of all organizations surveyed conducted exit interviews or surveys (Society for Human Resource Management, 2001b). Some organizations have found it useful to ask leavers questions similar to or the same as those asked on the Staff Satisfaction Survey. Qualitative exit interviews are also useful in drawing out information to assess and modify organization practices. Among the most productive qualitative interview items are questions such as the following:

- If your best friend were considering a job like yours at this site, what two or three things would you tell him or her? Give specific examples.
- Give an example of one or two specific incidents that made you want to stay on this job.
- Give an example of one or two specific incidents that made you want to leave this job.
- What could (your supervisor and/or this organization) do to make your job better?
- What type of position (if any) do you plan to work in after you leave this position (e.g., DSP, supervisor, job coach, bank teller, full-time student, stay-at-home parent)?

Asking leavers to respond to these questions can provide valuable information to assess and modify organization practices. Other information to review includes the employee's status at exit (e.g., whether leavers were fired or left for other reasons such as spousal transfer or to complete a college degree). Organizations may also want to include the job performance of the leavers, whether the leavers will continue to be on-call workers, and where the people went when they left the organization (e.g., to perform similar roles for another organization; to better position in the field; to make lateral move for higher pay, such as becoming a paraprofessional in the public schools).

Focus Groups

Focus groups are another common method to gather information from people about what they think and feel. Focus groups can help an organization discover underlying concerns and issues or to identify perceptions about a specific area. Focus groups are used not only to determine concerns but also to further refine questions, define challenges, or gather ideas about solutions to problems that exist in the work environment. Focus groups can be used alone or in conjunction with another strategy such as a survey.

A focus group is a specific group of people who have been brought together for the purpose of informing others about important issues. Focus groups have a specific structure and a strategic process designed to yield certain outcomes. When an organization uses focus groups on workforce practices and issues, it is important to identify the specific purpose for the focus group before it occurs. The purpose provides the reason for the focus group, is the driving force when the organization is formulating questions to ask participants, defines the scope of the focus group process, keeps the group focused during the meeting, and guides analysis of the information gathered.

Participants are selected for a focus group because they share characteristics that relate to the topic of the focus group. They can provide information about the topic. For example, all FLSs with 1 or more years of experience in that position may be selected to discuss how training for supervisors might be improved. A group of newly hired DSPs may provide greater insight into how well the organization does at welcoming new employees. When using focus groups, carefully consider who should be involved in the group. Asking the questions shown in Table 13.3 assists an organization in defining who should attend.

Once the characteristics of participants have been identified, the next step is to seek participants. When recruiting participants, the organization should be certain to inform them of the purpose of the focus group. The organization needs to ensure that potential participants know the extent of their commitment, including how long meetings will last, the number of meetings they will be asked to attend, and whether they will be paid or will receive other incentives for participation. Finally, the organization should be certain that people clearly understand the logistics of the focus group (e.g., location, date, time, directions, dress code).

Some potential participants may be intimidated by the words *focus group*. Thus, it may help to call them *discussion groups*. It is important for the organization to inform the participants as to why they were selected for participation. It is also important to let participants know what process will be used and that the information shared within the focus group will remain confidential (if this is the case).

Table 13.3. Questions to consider when planning whom to include in focus groups

Whose perspectives do we need to obtain? Possibilities include
  Direct support professional (DSP), front-line supervisor (FLS), manager, administrator, supported individual and his or her family, support staff (e.g., office assistants, maintenance workers), trainees, human resources professionals, board members, community members, professionals outside the organization
  New hires, long-term employees
  Employees from different racial, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, or religious groups
  Young employees, older employees
  Single, married, partnered employees
  Excellent performers, poor performers
Should participants know one another, or should they be unfamiliar with one another?
Who are topic, issue, or content area experts on the questions to be discussed?
  Within the organization
  Within the community
Is it important to get a blended perspective in one group or to get separate perspectives from different groups?
What resources are available regarding the following?
  Time
  Ability to pay participants
  Incentives for participation
  Analysis of gathered data and information
How can people be encouraged to participate?

Finding a skilled facilitator is as important as selecting the correct participants. The facilitator needs to be comfortable working with groups and should have experience facilitating focus groups. Facilitators must promote a nonjudgmental, permissive environment that encourages self-disclosure among participants. Participants should feel free to share their perceptions and points of view without feeling pressure to conform or reach consensus (Krueger & Casey, 2000). It is also important to note that the moderator is not in a position of power and should promote comments of all types, both positive and negative.

Facilitators also need to be familiar with and have the ability to use various types of group processes including brainstorming and the nominal group process, in which each group member independently generates answers to a question and then shares, or nominates, an idea one at a time until all ideas have been shared (Morrison, 1998). In some circumstances, especially when controversial issues will be discussed or when the participants are very mistrustful, it may help to use a facilitator from outside of the organization. The person selected should be someone the participants can easily trust.

The ideal size for a focus group is 5–10 people. In groups smaller than 5, there is more opportunity to share ideas, but the restricted size results in a smaller pool of total ideas. If the group size exceeds 10, there is a tendency for the group to fragment (Krueger & Casey, 2000). When selecting the focus group size, the organization can consider how many different groups will be used. It is often better to have more than one group than to have one group that is too large.

Whatever technique is used to assess the organization, it will be necessary to summarize the results so that they can be used to inform decision making about strategies to remediate identified challenges.

Select an Intervention Strategy

The previous sections of this chapter have described many ways to learn the nature, size, and scope of the challenge an organization has. Once the problem or challenge has been identified, the next step is to select an intervention strategy to address that problem. Detailed instructions and guidance on how to select and implement an intervention for a specific problem can be found in Chapter 14 of this book. In that chapter, intervention selection and implementation are broken down into several parts:

- Selecting a strategy
- Identifying the major components of the strategy
- Identifying the major barriers to implementation
- Identifying supporting arguments and supporting stakeholders for the strategy
- Setting goals, measuring progress, and establishing a time frame

In addition, most of the chapters in this book describe one or more intervention strategies that can be used to overcome various challenges. For example, Chapter 3 describes how to use RJPs to reduce turnover by new employees who would not otherwise really understand what the job would be like. Readers are referred to those chapters for more information about selecting an intervention.

Set Goals and Measure Progress

Once the baseline measurement is established and the intervention is selected and implemented, a plan is needed for how to measure and evaluate any changes in the prob-

lem since the baseline measurement. This measurement will likely include both annual updates of all general workforce development assessments (e.g., turnover calculations, staff satisfaction surveys), as well as periodic reassessments of specific indicators used to establish the nature and extent of the problem (e.g., organizational commitment measures). The plan should specify what will be assessed, when it will be assessed, and how the information will be shared with those involved in the intervention. The guidelines described in the section on assessing the problem also apply to the process of selecting a measurement method or tool to assess progress once an intervention has been implemented.

When an organizational plan is created to address workforce challenges, an important component of that plan is the establishment of goals that can easily be observed and can be measured. Goals should be *s*pecific, *m*easurable, *a*ttainable, *r*ealistic, and *t*ime bound (SMART; Sauer et al., 1997). Such goals help set the direction for the intervention and help to determine, organize, and measure accomplishments or desired outcomes (Sauer et al., 1997). For example, a turnover goal might be "The organizationwide crude separation rate will decline from 50% to 40% for DSPs for the 12-month period following full implementation of the mentoring intervention." A goal for retention of new hires might be "The proportion of newly hired DSPs who stay at least 6 months will increase from a baseline of 45% to 60% when measured 1 year after an RJP intervention has been implemented." A goal for training might be "Within 6 months after the new training program has been implemented, 90% of the DSPs who have completed the training program will demonstrate competence in 8 of the 10 skills listed in the training program's performance checklist." The goals should also be based on the baseline data. An organization that is concerned about a baseline turnover rate of 60% per year may aim for reducing organizationwide turnover to 45% by 1 year after beginning its chosen intervention.

Establish a Time Frame for the Intervention

Different organizations need differing amounts of time to set up and use an intervention. In addition, different interventions will take different amounts of time to develop, implement, and evaluate. For example, it may be possible to design and implement a recruitment bonus program within a few months and to measure its effects within a year. In contrast, an RJP video may take substantially longer to plan and implement. The effects of using an RJP video may not be obvious until it has been in place for 6 months or more (depending on how many people are hired in a typical month).

Another consideration is whether a pilot test of the intervention will be conducted. Often, especially in larger organizations, it is helpful to select a few sites with supervisors who are highly motivated to change to pilot test the intervention. The pilot test sites devise and implement the initial intervention. They would then spend time evaluating whether changes are needed to make the intervention work. Then, when the intervention is implemented organizationwide, most of the bugs will have been worked out. In one organization, a pilot study was used to figure out exactly how to implement an RJP. One of the supervisors in the pilot study was not sold on the idea that RJPs would actually work and did not implement the intervention. When the pilot study was evaluated, all of the other supervisors had noticed measurable improvement in

turnover, but this person had not. The feedback that person got from the other supervisors helped to motivate him to implement the intervention.

The organization should consider how long the intervention will be in place. Often an intervention can last many months to several years. Different situations may dictate different time frames for evaluation of progress. There is no one correct answer, but a definite time frame for checking progress should be selected. The organization should not allow the intervention to continue indefinitely without an evaluation.

Evaluate Success

After the intervention is implemented, a final step is to evaluate the intervention, to identify whether it actually produced the results it was designed to produce. An organization can use the assessment strategies identified in this chapter to learn whether the intervention made a difference. For example, after initially having identified turnover as the problem, the organization may have decided to assess both the turnover rate and the proportion of new hires who left the organization during the first 6 months after hire. If those assessments showed that turnover was 50% and that 40% of all newly hired DSPs left the organization within 6 months after hire, the organization may have selected an RJP as its intervention. The intervention is not complete until an evaluation has been conducted to learn if it actually made a difference or not. In this example, the organization may choose to assess turnover and the tenure categories of leavers 1 year after the intervention started. If that evaluation shows no change in turnover or in the tenure of people who get an RJP, the organization will need to use some of the specialized assessment tools to learn more about why there was no change. For example, using the New Staff Survey may reveal that most new hires still have many unmet expectations when they are hired. In this case, the organization would need to refine the RJP to incorporate more of the information that new hires have unmet expectations about. In contrast, if the 1-year assessment shows that turnover has declined to 45% and that only 30% of all newly hired DSPs left within 6 months after hire, the organization can conclude that the intervention is working as designed and that it should be continued. What is important is that the organization have an evaluation plan and use it to learn if the intervention worked.

OVERCOMING IMPLEMENTATION BARRIERS

Just as some people resist going to the doctor for regular physical examinations, some organizations resist conducting regular assessments of their workforce. Without this assessment, however, it is impossible to accurately identify problems, assess potential causes, and monitor the effectiveness of strategies to address those challenges. Common barriers to evaluating progress on workforce development interventions and how they might be overcome are discussed next.

- *Not seeing the value of the assessment ("We don't have time because we already have too much paperwork to do"):* It is common for supervisors and human resources professionals who are struggling to find, hire, and train sufficient staff to not see the value of collecting assessment and evaluation information. An organization can over-

come this barrier by involving supervisors and human resources staff in planning the interventions so that they have a stake in the outcome. The organization can explain that the information from supervisors and human resources staff is needed to assess whether interventions actually make a difference or not and by using the most succinct assessment strategies that will actually get the job done. Organizations should not collect more information than is needed. In addition, they should be certain to use existing data whenever possible. Many organizations already have a database that can be used to assess turnover rates, tenure of stayers and leavers, and vacancy rates. Using those databases rather than asking employees to provide new information reduces the burden on those employees. Organizations that do not have such databases may wish to invest in a human resources database system as part of their intervention.

- *Not being familiar with existing instruments or assessment procedures:* It is difficult to assess or evaluate workforce outcomes without the necessary tools. Often, organizations do not know where to obtain assessment tools including surveys, formulas, and comparison data. This chapter includes several instruments and instructions on how to compute common baseline data. The literature review in Chapter 1 provides some of the needed comparison data. The resources section in this chapter lists other sources of information about instruments and assessment procedures.

- *Lacking resources to pay for acquiring and using published instruments:* Published instruments can be expensive to use, but many have the advantage of being standardized. Some organizations find that investing in standardized instruments pays off because the information gathered is of high quality. Other organizations may wish to consult several published tools and, using the principles described in this chapter, modify them or create their own. A third option is to hire a consultant to create an instrument. Tools for conducting the most basic general workforce development assessments are included at the end of this chapter.

- *Forgetting to seek input from DSPs throughout the process:* A complete understanding of workforce issues and how to address them can only be obtained if all of the affected stakeholders are involved in the process. DSPs are key stakeholders for the issues discussed in this book, yet organizations often resist reaching out to DSPs to ask them about their problems and ideas for solutions. This resistance is sometimes the result of fear that if DSPs are brought together to discuss problems, they might organize a union. Other concerns include a reluctance to share information about what is learned with DSPs, having difficulty with work coverage so that DSPs participate in data collection and problem-solving meetings, and a reluctance to pay DSPs for work other than providing direct support. Although these fears are very real, organizations that reach out and include DSPs often find that the benefits of doing so far outweigh the negatives. Including DSPs can help DSPs feel empowered, important, and valued. It validates their opinions and input and fosters increased commitment to both the organization and to the field. Overcoming the barrier of excluding DSPs requires the organization to be open to change and to value the opinions of all its employees, including DSPs.

- *Spending too much time assessing the problem and never implementing an intervention:* Assessment and evaluation are very important parts of the intervention process,

but they are not the end in themselves. The lead authors of this book have worked with organizations that have spent years getting baseline information without actually implementing interventions to produce change. The predictable results of such a strategy are that the organization obtains a better idea of how it measures up to other organizations but that there is no change in the important indicators. Organizations should establish a baseline but should not let the process of doing so overwhelm its effort. Organization should begin implementing at least one intervention within 3–6 months of the baseline assessment so that progress can be made toward better workforce outcomes.

- *Implementing an intervention without first conducting a baseline assessment:* When an organization neglects to establish a baseline, it has no way to know if the intervention has made a difference, aside from relying on a gut feeling that may or may not be accurate. Organizations should be sure to conduct at least general workforce development assessments before moving on to interventions and evaluation of progress.
- *Neglecting to create a plan to evaluate progress:* It is easy for an organization to get so wrapped up in conducting interventions that it totally forgets to check if any progress is being made. To avoid this, the intervention plan should incorporate a plan to evaluate progress that is specified before the intervention is ever implemented (see the end of Chapter 14 for a tool to organize intervention planning). The organization can consult the plan periodically to ensure that it is being implemented as intended. Then at the specified interval, the evaluation can be conducted to assess progress.
- *Forgetting to provide feedback to people involved in the intervention to monitor progress and identify when adjustments are needed:* The purpose of conducting an evaluation is to measure progress and to motivate others in the organization to continue to implement selected interventions. People who have completed surveys or who have participated in focus groups need to learn how the information they provided was used. Failing to give this feedback will cause people to wonder if they wasted their time. Furthermore, if the organization does nothing visible with the results, the people who gave their time to the process will be much more reluctant to participate the next time the organization needs information. Another important function of providing feedback is to help people understand how they are doing. Providing information to supervisors about their turnover rates and vacancy rates and how those rates compare with those for the organization as a whole helps them to understand how well they are doing or to understand the extent of the problem they have.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER

1. How big are the workforce challenges your organization is experiencing? How do you know? How does your organization learn whether interventions actually make a difference?
2. How often does your organization measure turnover, tenure of leavers, and vacancy rates? (Does it measure those factors at least annually?)

3. How is information about turnover and retention challenges shared with employees at your organization?

4. When was the last time your organization measured staff satisfaction? What did you do with the results? What is your next step now?

5. What procedures has your organization established to gather information from employees who are leaving the organization?

6. In what ways does your organization seek information from various employees and stakeholders about workforce problems and solutions?

7. Have the purpose and outcome of data collection efforts been made clear to those asked to provide information?

8. How has your organization used the assessment information to guide its next steps?

CONCLUSION

This chapter provides an overview of the assessment and planning process that organizations can use to learn about the nature and extent of their workforce challenges. It suggests that baseline and follow-up evaluations are essential to guide the process of identifying a problem, understanding the scope and nature of the problem, guiding the selection of an intervention, and assessing whether an intervention worked as intended. Chapter 14 provides more detailed information about how to use the assessment process to select a strategy for change and to develop comprehensive organizational change interventions.

RESOURCES

On-line Cost Calculators

iFigure (http://www.ifigure.com/business/employee/employee.htm)

This site has links to calculators to estimate the costs of hiring and training, wages and benefits, and scheduling. (*Note:* Some of the links on this page do not work.)

University of Wisconsin Extension Services (http://www.uwex.edu/ces/cced/publicat/turn.html #calc)

This on-line calculator of the cost of turnover was developed by W.H. Pinkovitz, J. Moskal, and G. Green.

Information on Workforce Development Surveys

Information about other standardized surveys useful for workforce assessments can be obtained from the following web sites:

Society for Human Resources Management
(http://www.shrm.org/hrresources/surveys_published/AllSurveysTOC.asp#TopOfPage)

Workforce Management
(http://www.mediabrains.com/client/workforcema/bg1/shortlist.asp?ct_categoryID=
{9B3D366D-DBF2-11D4-A007-009027FC2163}&ct_categoryname=
Testing+and+Assessment)

Direct Support Professional Workforce Status and Outcomes

Please fill in the blanks for your organization, focusing only on direct support professional (DSP) positions. These formulas assume you are making computations based on a calendar year.

Turnover (crude separation rate) of DSPs

$$\frac{\text{total number of DSPs who left during the year}}{\text{total number of funded DSP positions as of December 31}} \times 100 = \text{turnover rate}$$

Fill in: $\dfrac{\boxed{} \;\text{total number of DSPs who left}}{\boxed{} \;\text{current staff} + \boxed{} \;\text{vacant positions}} \times 100 \qquad = \boxed{}$ % turnover rate

Average tenure of current DSPs (stayers)

$$\frac{\begin{array}{c}\text{total number of months worked by all current}\\ \text{DSPs in the organization as of December 31}\end{array}}{\begin{array}{c}\text{total number of DSPs employed by the}\\ \text{organization as of December 31}\end{array}} = \text{average tenure of stayers}$$

Fill in: $\dfrac{\boxed{} \;\text{total number of months worked by current DSPs}}{\boxed{} \;\text{total number of DSP stayers}} = \boxed{}$ months' average tenure

Average tenure of DSPs who left in the last 12 months (leavers)

$$\frac{\begin{array}{c}\text{total number of months worked during the year by}\\ \text{DSPs who left the organization by December 31}\end{array}}{\begin{array}{c}\text{total number of DSPs who worked during}\\ \text{the year and resigned by December 31}\end{array}} = \text{average tenure of leavers}$$

Fill in: $\dfrac{\boxed{} \;\text{total number of months worked by DSPs leavers}}{\boxed{} \;\text{total number of DSPs leavers}} = \boxed{}$ months' average tenure

Percentage of DSP leavers with less than 6 months' tenure

$$\frac{\begin{array}{c}\text{total number of DSPs who}\\ \text{worked during the year and left}\\ \text{before working 6 months}\end{array}}{\begin{array}{c}\text{total number of DSPs who worked}\\ \text{during the year and resigned}\\ \text{by December 31}\end{array}} \times 100 = \text{\% of leavers with less than 6 months' tenure}$$

Fill in: $\dfrac{\boxed{} \;\begin{array}{c}\text{total number of DSPs who}\\ \text{left before 6 months}\end{array}}{\boxed{} \;\text{total number of DSP leavers}} \times 100 \quad = \boxed{}$ % of leavers with less than 6 months' tenure

Vacancy rate

$$\frac{\text{total number of vacant positions as of December 31}}{\text{total number of funded DSP positions as of December 31}} \times 100 = \text{\% vacancy rate}$$

Fill in: $\dfrac{\boxed{} \;\text{total number of vacant positions}}{\boxed{} \;\begin{array}{c}\text{total number current staff} +\\ \text{total number of vacant positions}\end{array}} \times 100 \qquad = \boxed{}$ % vacancy rate

Staff Satisfaction Survey

Name: _____ Supervisor name: _____

Job title: _____ Site name: _____

Date: _____ Site number: _____

This survey will be used to improve our workforce practices. Please answer each question as accurately as possible. If you do not understand a question, answer it as well as you can and note your question(s) in the margin. *Your answers will be kept confidential and will not affect your status as an employee at our organization.* When you have completed this survey, please return it in the envelope provided. If you have questions, you can contact _____. Thank you.

Please rate your work at our organization in the following areas. For each numbered item, mark in the column that most closely describes your overall opinion of each item.

Topic	1 Poor	2 Fair	3 Good	4 Excellent	0 No opinion/ N/A
Orientation and Training					
1. Availability of a clear job description for your position					
2. Communication of expectations about your job performance					
3. Completeness and timeliness of orientation about our organization in general and your workplace in particular					
4. Sufficient training materials and training opportunities to allow you to perform your job well					
5. Availability of follow-up training					
Supervision					
6. Availability of a supervisor to answer your questions and to assist you to carry out your duties					
7. Feedback and evaluation regarding your performance					
8. Recognition by your supervisor for your accomplishments					
9. Fairness in supervision and employment opportunities					
10. Relationship with your supervisor					
Compensation and Benefits					
11. Your rate of pay for your work					
12. Paid time off you receive					
13. Our policy regarding eligibility for paid time off					
14. Benefits you receive (for example, health and dental insurance, retirement)					
15. Our policy regarding eligibility for benefits					

(continued)

Topic	1 Poor	2 Fair	3 Good	4 Excellent	0 No opinion/ N/A
Other Aspects of Your Experience					
16. Opportunities to share your ideas about improving the services provided. You feel that your opinions count.					
17. Your schedule/flexibility					
18. Access to internal job postings					
19. Opportunities for ongoing professional development					
20. Degree to which your skills are used					
21. Morale in your office or program					
22. Relationship with your co-workers					
23. Relationship with your supervisor's manager					
24. Attitude of consumers and families toward our organization					
25. You have the opportunity to do what you do best every day.					
26. Your supervisor or someone at work cares about you as a person.					
27. Someone at work encourages your development.					
28. Your co-workers are committed to doing quality work.					
29. You have opportunities to learn and grow.					

30. What do you like best about our organization? (Mark up to 3 choices.)
_____ a. Nothing
_____ b. Benefits
_____ c. Co-employees
_____ d. Supervisors and managers
_____ e. Individuals supported
_____ f. The mission and service goals
_____ g. The tasks I do for my job
_____ h. Opportunity for personal or professional growth
_____ i. Location
_____ j. Work atmosphere
_____ k. Training and development opportunities
_____ l. Pay rate/salary
_____ m. Job variety
_____ n. Flexible hours/schedule
_____ o. Recognition for a job well done
_____ p. Rewarding work_____
_____ q. Other (specify):

31. What could our organization do differently to help you in your job? (Mark up to three choices.)
_____ a. Nothing
_____ b. My supervisor/manager could be more supportive.
_____ c. Improve training and support for supervisors.
_____ d. Increase wages.
_____ e. Improve access to paid time off.
_____ f. Improve access to benefits (health, dental, retirement).
_____ g. Clarify and communicate organization mission.
_____ h. Empower me to participate in decisions that affect my work.
_____ i. Provide more or better training.
_____ j. Reduce conflict between co-employees and/or improve team building.

_____ k. Improve supervisor–employee relations.
_____ l. Address low morale of workforce.
_____ m. Improve scheduling policies and practices.
_____ n. Improve communication between main office and program sites.
_____ o. Improve communication between supervisors/managers and other staff.
_____ p. Increase number of staff members in my work site.
_____ q. Improve recognition and feedback.
_____ r. Improve orientation for new employees.
_____ s. Increase opportunities for advancement.
_____ t. Reduce vacancy rate and turnover.
_____ u. Other (specify): _____

32. What are the top factors that make you want to leave our organization? (Mark up to three choices.)
_____ a. Nothing
_____ b. Low wages or benefits
_____ c. Conflicts with co-workers
_____ d. Not enough hours or unsatisfactory schedule
_____ e. Job is too stressful, difficult, or demanding.
_____ f. Our organization's focus or mission has changed for the worse.
_____ g. Demands of my other job or primary employment
_____ h. Lack of opportunities for professional growth or advancement
_____ i. Personal reasons
_____ j. Relocating out of area
_____ k. Conflict with supervisor or manager
_____ l. Favoritism or lack of fairness
_____ m. Lack of staff
_____ n. Too much criticism or lack of support
_____ o. Challenges with clients/individuals served
_____ p. Poor training
_____ q. None of the above
_____ r. Other (specify): _____

33. What makes you want to stay at our organization? (Mark up to 3 choices.)
_____ a. Nothing
_____ b. Benefits
_____ c. Co-workers
_____ d. Supervisors and managers
_____ e. I like the clients/individuals supported.
_____ f. The individuals supported like and/or appreciate me.
_____ g. The mission and service goals
_____ h. The tasks or activities I do for my job
_____ i. Opportunity for personal or professional growth
_____ j. Location
_____ k. Work atmosphere
_____ l. Training and development opportunities
_____ m. Pay rate or salary
_____ n. Job variety
_____ o. Flexible hours or schedule
_____ p. Recognition for a job well done
_____ q. Rewarding work
_____ r. The staff members are team players.
_____ s. This is a good company to work for.
_____ t. Other (specify): _____

New Staff Survey

Name: _____ Supervisor name: _____

Job title: _____ Site name: _____

Date: _____ Site number: _____

1. Is this your first job working with people with disabilities? (Mark one.)
   _____ 0. No
   _____ 1. Yes

2. Have your job responsibilities and working conditions turned out to be what you expected when you took this job? (Mark one.)
   _____ 1. Definitely not
   _____ 2. Somewhat not
   _____ 3. Neither yes nor no
   _____ 4. Somewhat yes
   _____ 5. Definitely yes

3. Overall, does this job meet your original expectations? (Mark one.)
   _____ 1. Definitely not
   _____ 2. Somewhat not
   _____ 3. Neither yes nor no
   _____ 4. Somewhat yes
   _____ 5. Definitely yes

4. Have you seen a copy of your job description? (Mark one.)
   _____ 0. No
   _____ 1. Yes

How closely have your experiences during your first 30 days at this site matched the expectations you had before you were hired in the following areas?

Job feature	1 (Didn't match my expectations at all)				5 (Completely matched my expectations)
5. The organization's mission and service goals	1	2	3	4	5
6. Your pay and benefits	1	2	3	4	5
7. Your schedule	1	2	3	4	5
8. Working conditions	1	2	3	4	5
9. Types of tasks you do	1	2	3	4	5
10. Needs and characteristics of the people supported at this site	1	2	3	4	5
11. Training you received	1	2	3	4	5
12. Acceptance and welcome from other DSPs	1	2	3	4	5
13. Help and support from other DSPs	1	2	3	4	5
14. How well staff at this site work together as a team	1	2	3	4	5
15. Availability of support from your supervisor	1	2	3	4	5

16. What do you wish you had known about this job before you were hired?

Training Experience Satisfaction Survey

Please answer these questions about the training you have received from the organization in which you now work. Mark in the column that most accurately reflects your opinion.

	1 Strongly disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neither agree nor disagree	4 Agree	5 Strongly agree
The training I have received so far . . .					
1. Prepared me to complete my specific job responsibilities					
2. Assisted me to develop skills in interacting with individuals with disabilities					
3. Helped me improve the quality of life of the people I support					
4. Provided information I need to perform my job					
5. Has been worthwhile					
6. Has sparked my interest					
7. Was offered at a time that made it easy for me to attend					
8. Was offered at a place that made it easy for me to attend					
9. Offered an opportunity for me to share my experiences					
10. Was tailored to meet my learning style (the way I learn best)					
11. Allowed me to test out of training on skills I already had					
12. Was delivered at a comfortable pace so that I could understand the content					
13. Inspired me to begin or continue my career as a DSP					
14. Gave me a chance to have my questions answered					
My recommendations					
15. This organization should keep its current training program.					
16. This organization should change its training program.					
17. I would recommend the training I have received so far to all new employees.					

Demographic Items for Surveys

1. Birth date: _____ _____
              Month   Year

2. Gender:
   _____ 0. Female
   _____ 1. Male

3. Is English your first language? (Mark one.)
   _____ 0. No
   _____ 1. Yes

4. Which of the following best describes your role? (Mark one)
   _____ 1. Direct support professional (DSP) (At least 50% of your time is spent in direct care.)
   _____ 2. Front-line supervisor (FLS) (You may provide direct support, but your primary role is to supervise direct support professionals.)
   _____ 3. Other supervisor/manager (You supervise FLSs or other staff.)
   _____ 4. Administrator (You provide overall direction and oversight for all workers.)
   _____ 5. Other (specify): _____

5. How many sites do you work at or are you responsible for? (Provide a number.)
   _____ Number of sites

6. How many years of paid employment experience do you having working with people with intellectual or developmental disabilities?

   _____ _____
   Years Months

7. How many years of paid employment experience do you have supervising DSPs who support people with intellectual or developmental disabilities?

   _____ _____
   Years Months

8. How long have you been working for your current employer?

   _____ _____
   Years Months

9. How many years of formal education have you had? (Circle one.)
   10 11 12 (High school/GED)
   13   14   (Associate's or 2-year degree)
   15   16   (Four-year degree)
   17   18   (Master's degree)
   19 20 21 (Doctoral degree)

10. Are you currently enrolled in college or vocational or technical school? (Mark one.)
    _____ 0. No
    _____ 1. Yes

11. How many hours are you scheduled to work per week in your current position?
    _____ Hours per week

12. Are you considered by your employer to be a full-time employee? (Mark one.)
    _____ 0. No
    _____ 1. Yes

13. What is your race? (Mark the *one* that best represents your race)[a]
    _____ 1. Caucasian
    _____ 2. African American or Black
    _____ 3. American Indian
    _____ 4. Alaska Native, Eskimo, or Aleut
    _____ 5. Asian or Pacific Islander
    _____ 6. Middle Eastern
    _____ 7. Other (specify): _____

14. Are you of Hispanic ancestry? (Mark one.)
    _____ 0. No
    _____ 1. Yes

Note: These questions can be asked of current employees, but some of the questions should not be asked before hire unless they pertain to a candidate's ability to perform an essential job function as identified in a written job description.

[a]Organizations can let respondents mark more than one race, but this can make data analysis more complex.