



News Release

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CONTACT: [Michelle Day](#), Director
Frederick County Workforce Services
301-600-2761

Frederick County Workforce Services Leads Initiative to Strengthen Construction and Skilled Trades Industry

Details Findings in Workforce Engagement Summit Report

FREDERICK, Md. – Frederick County Workforce Services (FCWS) has embarked on a comprehensive initiative to support and strengthen the Construction and Skilled Trades Industry, a vital sector that accounts for 11.7% of all jobs in the county and plays a pivotal role in the local economy. This initiative aligns with County Executive Fitzwater's 2023 transition report, which highlighted economic development, jobs, and workforce development as top priorities for the administration.

"Every sector in our economy relies on the skilled trades, so supporting these local businesses and organizations is essential to the entire community," County Executive Fitzwater said. "Workforce Services' recent listening tour provided important information about the industry's needs. This will allow us to move forward strategically to best serve Frederick County employers and job seekers."

Recognizing the nationwide challenge of recruiting and retaining skilled workers, FCWS conducted a Listening Tour in the fall and winter of 2023, engaging with more than 30 local businesses. These discussions focused on key themes such as recruitment strategies, workforce challenges, skill requirements, and future outlooks. The insights gathered have been instrumental in developing tailored programs aimed at bridging the gap between talent and local businesses, thereby contributing to the economic growth of Frederick County.

In response to the findings from the Listening Tour, FCWS led a Workforce Engagement Summit on April 10, 2024. Supported by County Executive Fitzwater, the summit brought together over 25 government agencies, community non-profit organizations, educational institutions, and trade associations. The event provided an interactive forum for participants to discuss the needs of Trades employers, exchange ideas and best practices, and propose innovative and collaborative solutions to address critical areas for the county's more than 1,000 Trades employers.

Key Findings from the FCWS Listening Tour:

1. Candidate quality was identified as a more significant concern than candidate availability.
2. Businesses report success in leveraging partnerships to develop talent pipelines.
3. Transportation and dependent care remain the most significant external challenges.
4. Gaps in soft skills, aptitudes, and attitudes identified as barriers to meeting recruitment needs.
5. Majority of future hiring needs are projected to be full-time positions with advancement potential.
6. Unskilled candidates require significant training/retraining impacting time and retention.
7. Most employers are concerned about talent pipeline of new workers in the future.

The Construction and Skilled Trades Industry faces numerous recruitment and retention challenges, many of which are shared nationally, but also include unique barriers such as reputational perception and misunderstandings regarding the opportunities and benefits within the industry. The comprehensive exploration of these issues through direct engagement with Frederick County businesses has culminated in a post-summit report. This report, now available to the public, includes Workforce Engagement Summit Proposed Solutions and conclusions, and will guide FCWS in shaping future workforce development strategies to better assist the industry.

"Our Workforce Services team worked diligently this year to reach out to businesses to further understand the workforce needs of Frederick County's skilled trades industry," said Director of FCWS, Michelle Day. "This report will serve as a roadmap for us in designing programs and creating partnerships with organizations who can play a key role in addressing these needs."

Read the full 2023 – 2024 Workforce Engagement Summit Report

Frederick County Workforce Services (FCWS), a department within Frederick County Government's Division of Economic Opportunity, provides high-quality and innovative workforce development services to Frederick County residents and employers. FCWS acts as a conduit between the workforce and the talent needs of local businesses and individuals seeking employment and career opportunities.

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