



**BillingsWorks**  
Workforce Council

222 North 32nd St, Suite 200  
Billings, Mt 59101  
[www.BillingsWorks.org](http://www.BillingsWorks.org)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

# STATE OF THE WORKFORCE 2017



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Through this 2017 State of the Workforce Report, BillingsWorks aims to articulate the talent needs of Yellowstone County employers. The information in this report was compiled based on information gathered from an online employer survey and focus groups with industry and young professionals, as well as a thorough quantitative data analysis.

In its third year of publication, this report has established and confirmed some of the trends, challenges, and opportunities that exist in the Yellowstone County and regional economy. This is a summary of the major highlights of information gathered in 2017. For the full 2017 State of the Workforce Report please visit [www.bigskyeconomicdevelopment.org](http://www.bigskyeconomicdevelopment.org).

## TRENDS

### Historical Change: 2015-2017 BillingsWorks Talent Dashboard

I am confident in the overall quality of the workforce that is present in Yellowstone County

	2015	2016	2017	Change
Strongly Agree	6%	5%	5%	0%
Agree	41%	41%	40%	(1%)
No Opinion	4%	2%	4%	2%
Disagree	36%	42%	42%	0%
Strongly Disagree	13%	11%	8%	(3%)

Job Postings Filled within 3 Months

	2015	2016	2017	Change '16-'17
Professional positions	60%	65%	61%	(4%)
Technical positions	63%	66%	67%	1%
Skilled trade positions	60%	69%	68%	(1%)
Entry level/support positions	89%	90%	90%	0%

Reported increases in the number of qualified applicants

	2015	2016	2017	Change
Entry level/support positions		20%	21%	1%
Skilled trade positions		15%	17%	2%
Technical positions		12%	19%	7%
Professional positions		15%	24%	9%

Employability Skills: % Very Easy + Easy to find

Answer Options	2015	2016	2017	Change '16-'17
Drug-free	48%	56%	60%	4%
Team work	48%	50%	56%	6%
Integrity	47%	48%	56%	8%
Respect	48%	44%	55%	11%
Customer focus	40%	43%	46%	3%
Communication	34%	40%	44%	4%
Professionalism	36%	35%	42%	7%
Adaptability	41%	40%	40%	0%
Planning & organizing	31%	31%	36%	5%
Dependability & reliability	29%	29%	31%	2%
Business fundamentals	23%	26%	30%	4%
Initiative	21%	24%	26%	2%
Decision making	21%	30%	25%	(5%)
Problem solving	21%	28%	24%	(4%)
Critical thinking	16%	22%	17%	(5%)

Population growth 2013-2016  
Yellowstone County Population

	2013	2015	2016	Change '15-'16
Total Population	150,156	157,048	158,839	1.14%

Educational Attainment, Age 25 and over, Yellowstone County, Montana

Educational Attainment	2014	2015	2016	Change '15-'16
No High School Diploma	7.7%	7.7%	7.9%	0.1%
High School Graduate	30.7%	30.8%	30.6%	-0.2%
Some College, No Degree	25.0%	25.2%	25.0%	-0.2%
Associate's Degree	7.2%	7.4%	7.4%	0.0%
Bachelor's Degree	21.1%	20.5%	20.6%	0.1%
Postgraduate Degree	8.3%	8.4%	8.5%	0.1%

# The BillingsWorks 2017 Talent Dashboard

Overall Confidence in the Workforce\*

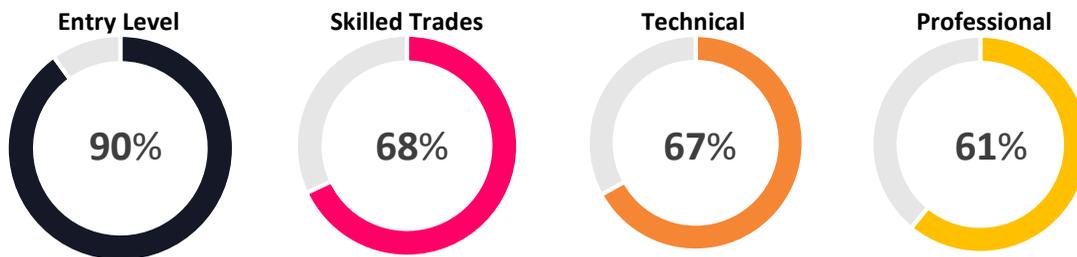


2015 – 2016 Population Growth

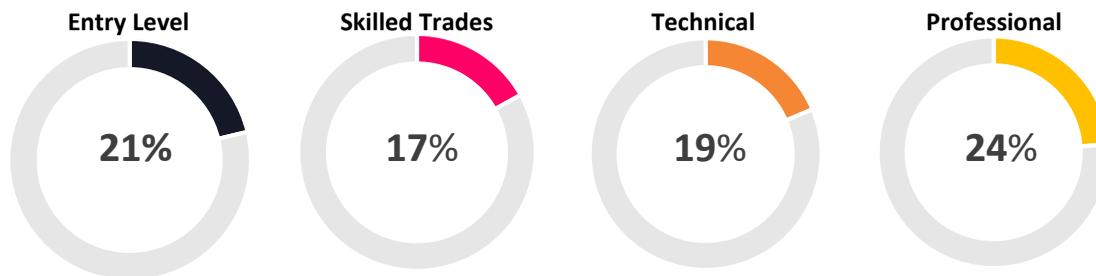
Age 25 - 64



## JOB POSTINGS FILLED WITHIN 3 MONTHS\*



## REPORTED INCREASES IN THE NUMBER OF QUALIFIED JOB APPLICANTS\*

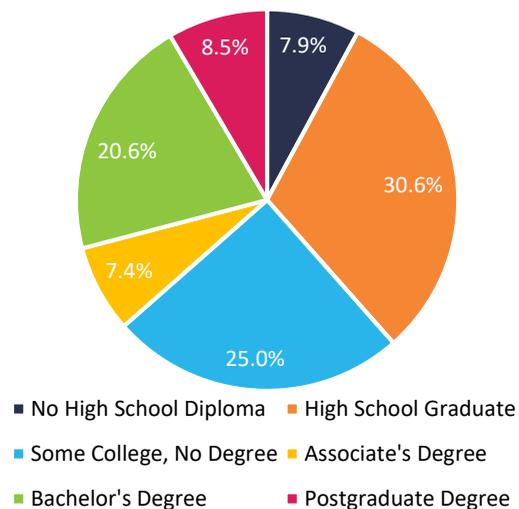


## EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS\*

Percent **EASY** + **VERY EASY** to find



## 2016 EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

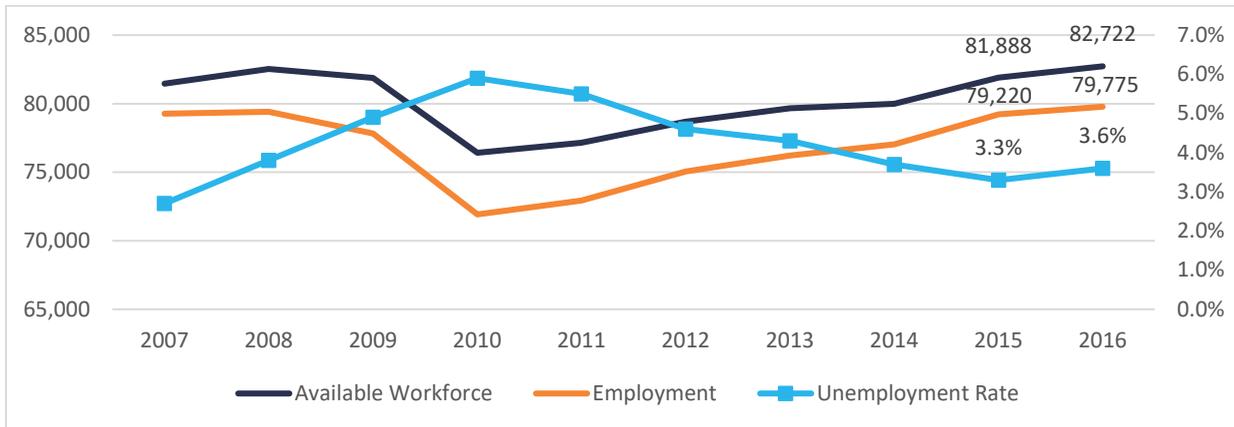


\*As reported in the BillingsWorks Workforce Survey. *Overall Confidence in the Workforce* represents the percentage of employers who "Strongly Agree" or "Agree" with the following statement: I am confident in the overall quality of the workforce in Yellowstone County. *Reported Increases in the Number of Job Applicants* indicates the percentage of employers who reported increases in the number of qualified applicants over the past year. Percentages for *Reported Increases in the Number of Job Applicants* and *Jobs Filled within 3 Months* do not include employers who responded "Not Applicable."

## CHALLENGES

### Area employers still need more employees and the talent pool continues to be shallow.

The economy in Yellowstone County is growing and employers are projected to have more than 15,000 job openings in the next five years, more than 5,000 of these due to economic growth, and 9,600 due to worker replacement.

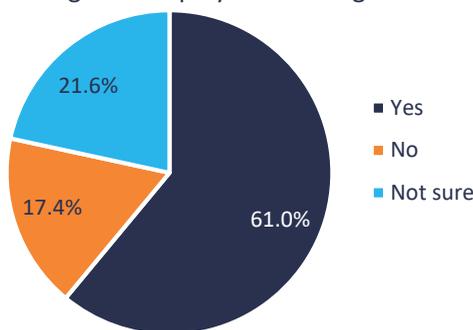


Source: BLS Local Area Unemployment Statistics

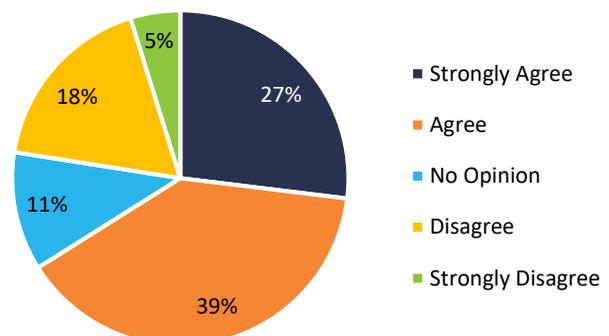
From 2015 to 2016 available workforce, employment, and the unemployment rate all increased. The increase in the unemployment rate occurred because over the year, the available workforce grew at a more rapid pace than did employment. More workers are starting to look for work, which could be an indication of the perceived economic strength of the region.

The 2017 Employer Survey revealed that 61% of respondents are considering hiring new employees in the next year due to business growth. Of those that indicated they may be hiring, 66% responded that they would hire between one and five workers. Unfortunately, though these employers may be looking to hire, 66% of all respondents agreed that a lack of available workers negatively impacts their ability to grow their businesses in Yellowstone County. However, the number of employers who strongly agreed with this statement decreased to 27% in 2017, from 29% in 2016 and 32% in 2015.

In the next year, is your business considering new employees due to growth?



A lack of available workers negatively impacts my ability to grow my business in Yellowstone County.



# OPPORTUNITIES

To tackle the workforce development challenges in Yellowstone County strategically, the BillingsWorks Workforce Council identified the following four goals in 2015.

- Goal 1: Position the BillingsWorks Workforce Council as the tool for collaboration, accountability, and reporting related to workforce needs and as the go-to resource for workforce development information, coordination, and connections**
- Goal 2: Address the immediate and sector-specific talent development and talent attraction needs of Yellowstone County businesses**
- Goal 3: Ensure the alignment of our higher education, career and technical education, and K-12 education and training systems with current and future workforce demand**
- Goal 4: Launch a talent attraction campaign that promotes the benefits of living and working in Billings and Yellowstone County**

Since these goals were identified, several major initiatives have been undertaken by partners throughout the Billings community to address workforce issues. The following are highlighted accomplishments from 2016-2017:

- **The CTE Partnership:** A private-public partnership between School District 2 and BillingsWorks/Big Sky Economic Development has been created to create and council a Career and Technical Business Liaison Director.
- **America's Promise Grant:** \$5 million grant was awarded to a collaboration between City College-MSUB, Northern Wyoming Community College District, Laramie County Community College, Casper College and Sheridan College. The program supports training in the IT field and applied for funding to re-train those affected by the energy industry downturn.
- **RN-BSN Program:** Called the RN to BSN Completion Program, it's designed for students who complete the associate degree in nursing at City College to transition toward a Bachelor of Science in nursing through MSUB.
- **Talent Attraction:** BillingsWorks, in conjunction with the Chamber's NextGEN group, has created movement in talent attraction for the city of Billings. The "Your Dream Career is Here" website serves as a resource to prospective employees and will continue to be at the center of conversations for talent attraction. Additionally, BillingsWorks has conducted outreach campaigns attending college fairs at UM, MSU, MSUB and Rocky.
- **State of the Workforce Report:** BillingsWorks has conducted its third-year State of the Workforce Report and Employer Survey. The community continues to partake in providing the workforce council with necessary information to address our community's workforce needs.

## NEXT STEPS

With a projected job growth of 15,000 in Yellowstone County in the next five years, 5,000 due to economic growth and 9,600 due to worker replacement, it is imperative that our community continues to work together to ensure we grow our workforce. BillingsWorks now has four years of existence and three State of the Workforce Reports and is at an ideal position to learn and answer the following questions – *Where have we had success?, How can we continue to do so?, and Where do we need to pivot to ensure we are placing energy and resources appropriately for impactful and sustainable change?*. The City of Billings is ready for progress and the implementation of innovative solutions. We are a fantastic county and are enthusiastic about what's to come as we continue to collaborate for the betterment of our community.

### Business

As you well know, the workforce is changing. It will be vital that you communicate your challenges so that BillingsWorks can assist you; ensuring you have information and resources to create a business environment that attracts and retains its employees.

**Business must continue to act as a champion for investment in our local higher education system and continue to invest in educating itself to attract and retain employees.**

### Individuals, Community Organizations and Local Government

Continue to invest in our community. Job seekers choose a place to live first, then begin looking for jobs there. They are attracted to a city's "quality of place": It is safe and clean, has amenities such as parks and walking trails, has high quality schools, a thriving downtown, and outdoor recreation opportunities.

**Making investments in our city is the best talent attraction strategy we can have!**

### Education and Training Providers

Education and training providers must keep up with the event present changes in the curriculum they teach. Processes must be put in place for constant curriculum evaluation and improvement.

**The ability to change and adapt curriculum to continually evolving business needs will be crucial to ensuring alignment with workforce needs.**

### For BillingsWorks

It is our expectation that following the April 26, 2017 State of the Workforce Report, the BillingsWorks Workforce Council will not only receive updated information regarding Yellowstone County's current workforce status, but provide relevant, candid, and meaningful feedback. With this feedback, the BillingsWorks Steering Committee will gather to refresh our strategies and ensure we are actively and progressively addressing workforce development.

**Continuing to collaborate across sectors to ensure we actively address workforce development is at the heart of BillingsWorks.**

**Think you'd like to be involved in BillingsWorks and workforce development? Contact us!**



**222 North 32<sup>nd</sup> Street, Suite 200**  
**Billings, MT 59101**  
[www.bigskyeconomicdevelopment.org](http://www.bigskyeconomicdevelopment.org)



**222 North 32<sup>nd</sup> Street, Suite 200**  
**Billings, MT 59101**  
[www.billingsworks.org](http://www.billingsworks.org)