



## Identifying Labour Issues and Challenges in the Landscape Horticulture Industry: Labour Development and Skills –Landscape Ontario’s Horticulture Stakeholder Survey

Prepared for: Landscape Ontario Horticultural Trades Association

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HORTICULTURAL TRADES ASSOCIATION  
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This Employment Ontario project is funded by the Ontario Government. Ce projet Emploi Ontario est financé par le gouvernement de l'Ontario.

## Executive Summary

As stated by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities 'a strong and modern skilled trades sector is vital to Ontario's economic prosperity' – this message rings true for the Ontario Landscape Horticulture industry as well. There is a need for a sustainable workforce in horticulture, with requisite production and business skills to meet the demands of the complex business environment.

However, a national horticulture labour issues survey conducted by the George Morris Centre in January 2010 found that there is currently a shortage of skilled labour in the industry, recruitment and retention difficulties exist, and there is a lack of awareness and use of training opportunities on behalf of stakeholders in the sector. Simultaneously, the Conference Board of Canada (2007) estimated that "in 2025 Ontario could face a shortfall of 364,000 workers. These observations suggest that Ontario needs to act proactively to mitigate future labour market pressures. One important way in which Ontario can help to relieve these pressures is to continue to develop and implement strategies and initiatives that develop skills and encourage higher labour force participation... Vigorous initiatives could substantially increase the size of the workforce and contribute to higher productivity by those in the workforce."

In order to improve some of the labour issues and challenges facing the Landscape Horticulture industry Landscape Ontario is leading an Ontario Labour Market Partnership (LMP) Project funded by the Ontario government titled: Identifying Labour Issues and Challenges in the Landscape Horticulture Industry" in partnership with Humber College and the Ontario Parks Association.

The project objectives are to:

- Understand the issues and barriers that challenge skilled labour availability and expansion in the Landscape Horticulture Industry
- Increase knowledge and awareness of trade specific skills development opportunities in Ontario
- Gather information concerning the barriers to Apprenticeship, Certification training and skills development in the Landscape Horticulture Industry that provide the foundation for the development of an industry specific Human Resource Capacity plan.
- Develop and circulate an Employer Human Resources tool kit that improves recruitment and retention practices in the sector.

In the first phase of this LMP project the George Morris Centre was asked to conduct an industry-wide survey to identify the issues and barriers that challenge skilled labour development and expansion in the landscape horticulture industry.

In order to capture insight from all stakeholders that could be, or are involved, in skills development and training in the Landscape Horticulture industry, four surveys were developed for each of the following stakeholders:

1. Employers
2. Employees
3. Students/Youth
4. Educators/Guidance Counsellors

Responses varied very little between the different groups surveyed. Employees in general tended to be more negative in their comments about training opportunities than other groups.

## **Key Observations**

### *Awareness*

While each group surveyed indicated that there was a lack awareness of programs and courses available in the industry, they also self-identified as being aware of most or all of the programs available, with the exception surprisingly of the students who were currently enrolled in Landscape Horticulture programs.

Each group suggested better advertising is needed to make employers, workers and potential students aware of training opportunities that exist. All groups surveyed indicated interest in a single point of data (e.g. on-line database) which would provide information on all training opportunities available, which would not require multiple web searches. Those working in the industry also indicated a need for increased communication between employees and employers on the training opportunities available.

### *Labour Shortage*

When asked about the shortage of skilled labour in the landscape horticulture industry, the most common potential factor mentioned was wages. It was often noted that both actual wages or perceived wages prevented youth from taking up careers in the industry, and the cost of training programs relative to their real or perceived effect on wages deterred many current employees from undertaking further training.

Many respondents in all categories discussed the image of the industry, as low paying, seasonal, physical labour and that public campaigns to improve this image might attract more skilled labour to the industry.

### *Access Barriers*

Responses to potential access barriers varied among the groups but generally location and other costs were considered the greatest barriers that prevent training. Employers generally felt that time of year and location were the greatest barriers preventing training, Employees other indirect costs of training such as transportation and loss of income to be their greatest barrier, with time of year as the second more important. Students responded strongly that location was the greatest barrier among that group. And educators felt that lack of awareness of programs and discouragement from parents and guidance counselors were the most important barriers preventing more students from obtaining additional training.

### *Curriculum and Skills Requirements*

Respondents generally noted that curriculums varied widely from program to program which creates a significant difference in skill sets acquired by new graduates. Specific skills' training was identified by each group as generally lacking and there were frequent requests for advanced training for experienced workers in the industry.

Overwhelmingly employers, employees, students and educators see a need for more business and management training. This is particularly important given that most long term plans by employees and students in the industry include owning and managing their own business.

### *Delivery Methods*

The majority of respondents in each group ranked kinaesthetic learning as their favorite learning style, which is reflected in the desire for hands-on courses.

#### *Training Culture*

The training culture in the workplace seemed to vary greatly, often dependent on the size of the company and the availability of both financial and human resources. Employers seemed to be the most positive about the training culture in their workplace, while employees often felt that little was being done to promote training and professional development. Additionally, few employers or employees indicated that they use training or career path development plans.

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## 1. Introduction and Objectives

As stated by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities 'a strong and modern skilled trades sector is vital to Ontario's economic prosperity' – this message rings true for the Ontario Landscape Horticulture industry as well. There is a need for a sustainable workforce in horticulture, with requisite production and business skills to meet the demands of the complex business environment.

However, a national horticulture labour issues survey conducted by the George Morris Centre in January 2010 found that there is currently a shortage of skilled labour in the industry, recruitment and retention difficulties and a lack of awareness and use of training opportunities. Simultaneously, the Conference Board of Canada (2007) estimated that "in 2025 Ontario could face a shortfall of 364,000 workers. These observations suggest that Ontario needs to act proactively to mitigate future labour market pressures. One important way in which Ontario can help to relieve these pressures is to continue to develop and implement strategies and initiatives that develop skills and encourage higher labour force participation... Vigorous initiatives could substantially increase the size of the workforce and contribute to higher productivity by those in the workforce."

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### 1.1 Purpose and Objectives

In the first phase of this LMP project the George Morris Centre was asked to conduct an industry-wide survey to identify the issues and barriers that challenge skilled labour development and expansion in the landscape horticulture industry.

### 1.2 Methods and Report Outline

In order to capture insight from all stakeholders that could be, or are involved, in skills development and training in the Landscape Horticulture industry, four surveys were developed for each of the following stakeholders:

1. Employers
2. Employees
3. Students/Youth
4. Educators/Guidance Counsellors

The George Morris Centre research team drafted the four surveys and then met with the project's Steering Committee to review and revise. Valuable insight and details were provided by the Steering Committee and the surveys were then finalized and posted on-line.

Landscape Ontario then distributed the surveys through their networks of contacts to reach as many industry stakeholders as possible to complete the survey. The surveys were posted online for approximately one month.

Each stakeholder survey was designed for each stakeholder group but they all follow similar formats, as laid out below:

- Demographics of Survey Respondents
- Awareness of Training Opportunities
- Access Barriers
- Curriculum and Skills Requirements
- Delivery Methods
- Training Culture

Note that the Educator/Guidance Counsellor survey ends at Curriculum and Skills Requirements.

The report is outlined as follows:

- Section 2: Employer Survey Results
- Section 3: Employee Survey Results
- Section 4: Student/Youth Survey Results
- Section 5: Educator/Guidance Counsellor Survey Results
- Section 6: Overall Summary and Observations

## 2. Employer Survey Results

This survey was completed by owners/managers of companies within the Landscape Horticulture industry.

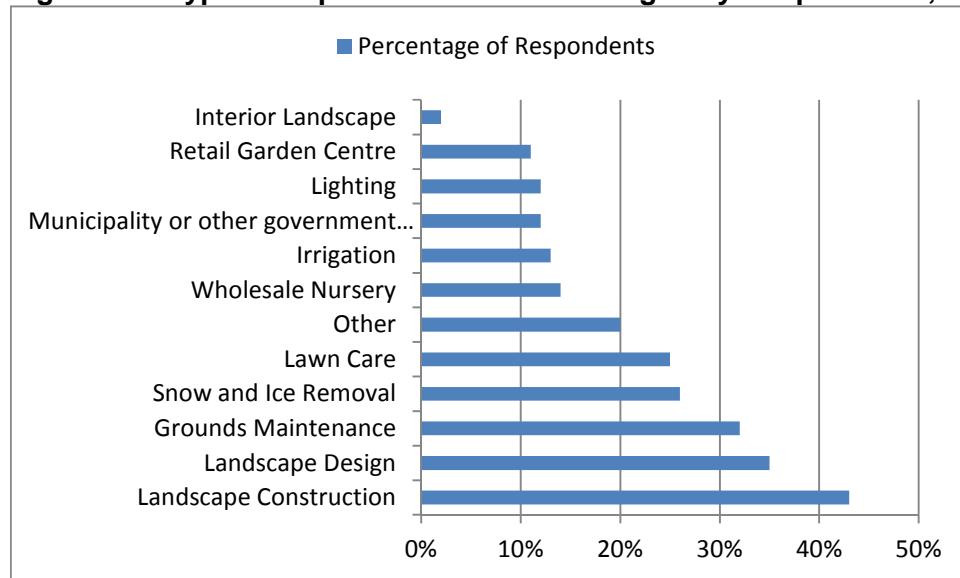
156 surveys were completed by employers, plus another 203 surveys were partially completed (359 in total). The following analysis reflects the information provided from both the completed and partially completed surveys.

### 2.1 Respondent Demographics

#### Type of Operation

Respondents were first asked what type of operation they own/manage. Figure 2.1 shows the breakdown of types of operations. Note that the percentages do not add up to 100 since respondents were asked to choose all that apply. It is clear that landscape horticulture operations provide a range of services.

**Figure 2.1: Types of Operations Owned/Managed by Respondents, % of Respondents**



Other types of operations owned/managed by respondents included:

- Golf courses
- Greenhouses
- Private garden consultation and/or maintenance
- Playground development
- Tree care and/or removal, planting and transplanting
- Public gardens
- Water feature design and development
- Manufacturers and distributors
- Cut flowers
- College and University landscape and maintenance
- Some managers and owners of operations are also industry consultants and trainers.

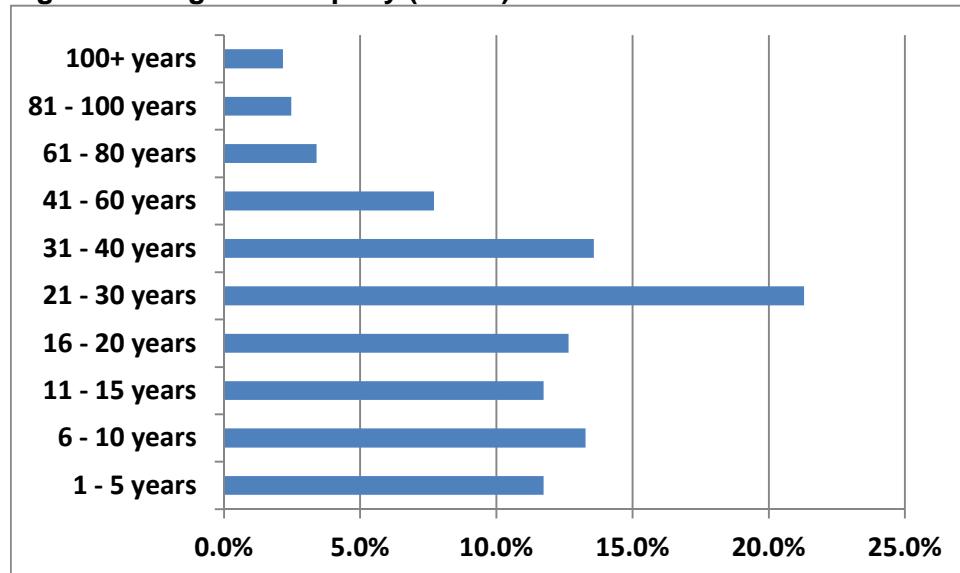
Overall, a wide range of operations within the sector have provided input.

### *Age of Company*

Figure 2.2 shows that respondents own/manage companies that vary widely by age (company ages). It's possible there are businesses that have likely been in the family for generations based on the ages shown and that there also are a large number of younger businesses in the sector. These younger businesses should have future growth plans that would include expansion of employment, while older operations may be seeking employees with management skills to carry the business forward. Both older and newer operations then, have a vested interest in ensuring that there is a sustainable workforce with the requisite skills in the future.

A few of the oldest operations are actually municipalities.

**Figure 2.2: Age of Company (n=324)<sup>1</sup>**



### *Number of Employees*

The size of respondents' companies by the number of employees varies greatly. Table 2.1 shows that the majority of respondents manage/own operations with 0-5 full time employees. Not surprisingly, the number of respondents declines as the company sizes get bigger – likely similar to the industry as a whole. In total, the 330 respondents employ over 11,000 full time employees and just fewer than 11,500 seasonal employees.

The reason that there is roughly the same number of full time employees as there are seasonal employees is that the three largest employers are municipalities. These employment numbers need to be put in context since the perception of the public would be that there would be significantly more seasonal employees than full time employees in this sector.

Table 2.1 shows that the majority of respondents are smaller operations, but it is the larger operations (by full-time employees) that hire the majority of the seasonal workers.

<sup>1</sup> n=X: The number of respondents that answered this question.

**Table 2.1: Number of Full-Time and Seasonal Employees (n=330)**

# of Full-time Employees	% of respondents <sup>2</sup>	% of Seasonal Employees that these operations employ <sup>3</sup>
0 – 5 FT	54%	9%
6 – 10 FT	20%	8%
11 – 20 FT	11%	8%
21 – 50 FT	6%	10%
51 – 100 FT	4%	8%
101-400 FT	4%	26%
600+ FT	1%	32%

#### *Owner/Manager Age*

**Figure 2.3: Age of Respondents**

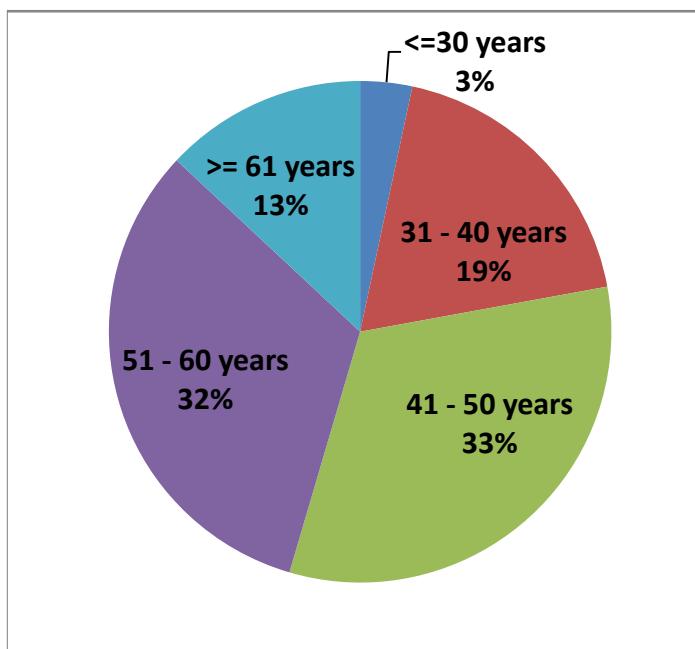


Figure 2.3 shows us that there are very few young entrepreneurs in the sector that are managing or own operations. Less than 3% of respondents (those that employ others) are 30 years of age or less.

The majority of respondents are over 41 years of age. This demographic closely resembles the overall sector as it is widely understood that a large proportion of the sector will be retiring over the next 10 years. This could put a significant strain on labour availability – both skilled and semi-skilled, as well as skills that are passed down from long-time owners/managers to employees.

#### *Education Level of Employers*

Figure 2.4 shows the various levels of education of respondents. Respondents were to choose all that apply, therefore the percentages do not add up to 100, but provide an indication of the proportion of respondents with each level of education. A very high proportion of the respondents have received a high school diploma. In Canada overall only 90% of the population has received a high school diploma<sup>4</sup>.

9% of respondents started their careers in this sector through the apprenticeship program.

<sup>2</sup> For example: 54% of respondents managed/owned operations with 0-5 full-time employees and 4% of respondents managed/owned operations with 51-100 full-time employees.

<sup>3</sup> Based on the total number of seasonal employees hired by the respondents (11,500) - operations that have 0-5 full-time employees hire approximately 9% of the seasonal employees. Whereas, operations that have 101-400 full-time employees hire 26% of the 11,500 seasonal employees.

<sup>4</sup> Education in Canada. Wikipedia. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Education\\_in\\_Canada](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Education_in_Canada)

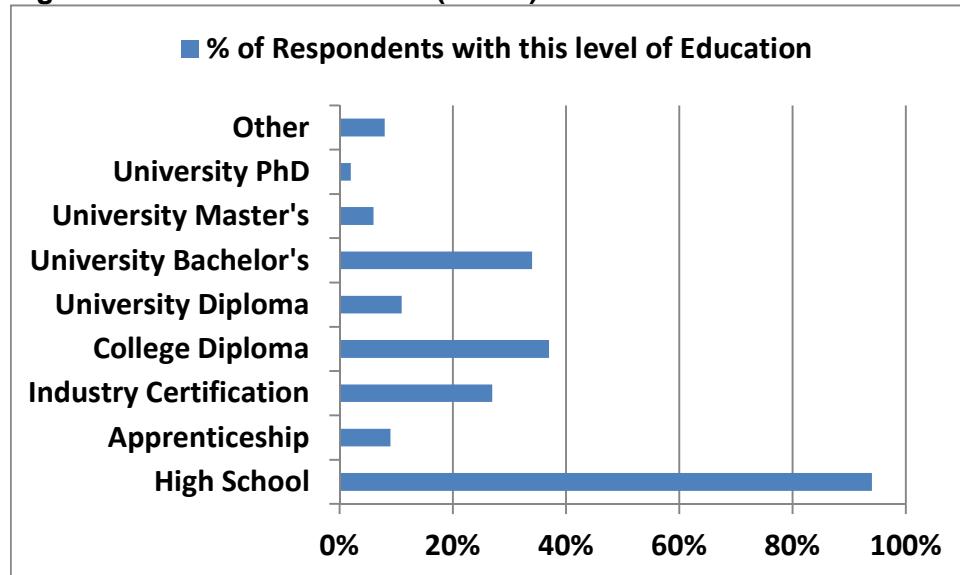
37% of the respondents have attained a college diploma, 11% a University diploma and 34% a University Bachelor's (in any program; this question was not landscape horticulture specific).

27% of respondents have completed industry certification.

Eight percent of respondents also chose 'other' which included six respondents noting that they did not attain a high school diploma but learned on the job directly, Niagara Parks Diploma, college certificate, post-graduate training in another career field and courses taken at the Guelph Turf Institute and the Ontario Parks Association.

Compared to the educational attainment of the total population<sup>5</sup>, overall, the owners/managers in this sector are well educated.

**Figure 2.4: Level of Education (n=334)**



## 2.2 Awareness of Training Opportunities

There are a variety of training programs offered to the Ontario Landscape Horticulture industry for graduating and mature students, new employees and experienced professionals.

Respondents were provided with a brief description of the opportunities available grouped into four categories<sup>6</sup>:

- Secondary and Post-Secondary Programs
- Horticulture Technician Apprenticeship Program
- Industry Certification Designation through Landscape Ontario
- Continuing Education Courses and Seminars

### *Participation*

Respondents were first asked whether they had participated in any of the training opportunities listed above. **58%** of the respondents (out of 237 responses) stated that they had participated in

<sup>5</sup> <http://www4.hrsdc.gc.ca/.3ndic.1t.4r@-eng.jsp?iid=29>

<sup>6</sup> See Appendix A for the complete description.

one or more of the training opportunities offered to the sector in Ontario. Table 2.2 provides a description of some of the courses that have been taken by respondents. It shows that there are a wide variety of courses and seminars offered to the industry and that these respondents value industry certification and continuing education.

**Table 2.2: Training Opportunities taken by Respondents (n=138)**

Secondary and Post-Secondary Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 3 respondents participated in OYAP</li><li>• 37 respondents have graduated from a post-secondary institution with a diploma in horticulture</li><li>• 7 respondents have taken one of the listed Bachelor programs (a couple took the program from Ryerson which is no longer available).</li></ul>
Horticulture Technician Apprenticeship Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 16 respondents were graduates of apprenticeship</li></ul>
Industry Certification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 52 respondents have completed one or more industry certifications including: CLP, CLT, CHT, and many of the irrigation certifications.</li></ul>
Continuing Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 54 respondents stated that they have participated in or regularly participate in continuing education seminars and courses.</li><li>• Above all, these respondents are most familiar with the seminars offered by Landscape Ontario.</li><li>• Other course providers noted include: Ontario Parks Association, Ontario Association of Landscape Architects, University of Guelph on-line distance education, American Society of Landscape Architects, Toronto Botanical Gardens, Master Gardeners' Correspondence Course, Ontario Commercial Arborist Association</li><li>• Topics covered included: urban arboriculture, stone masonry, irrigation, lighting, IPM symposium, sustainable landscapes, grounds maintenance, grading and surveying, chainsaw and other equipment training, highway protection.</li></ul>

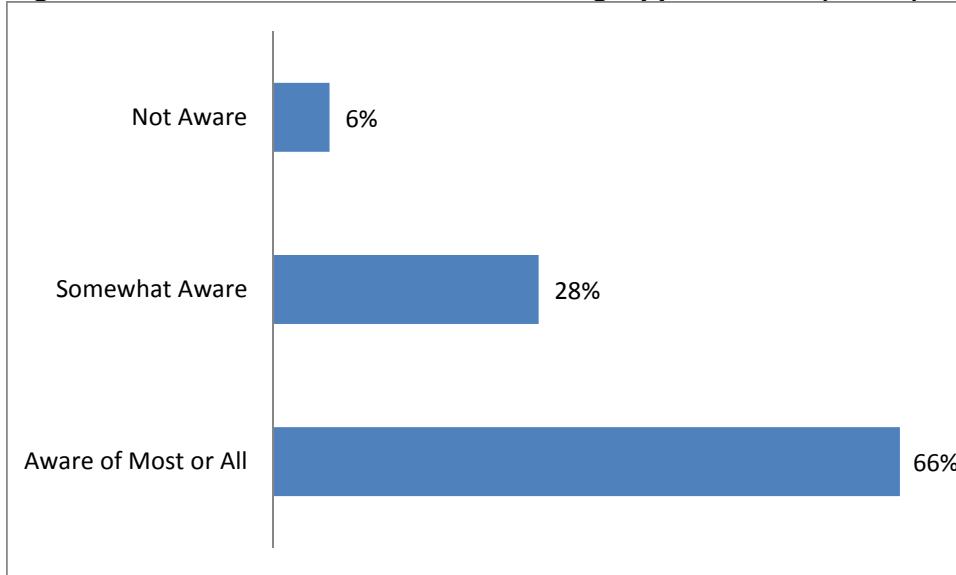
#### *Awareness of Training Opportunities*

After reading the list and description of training opportunities available to the industry we asked participants to what extent they were aware of the opportunities.

**64%** of respondents felt that they were aware of most or all of the training opportunities available. Many respondents noted that Landscape Ontario does a good job of informing the sector about these opportunities. Others mentioned that they stay on top of this by reading various trade publications such as the Horticulture Review and by participating in industry trade shows. Other respondents noted that they have participated in many of the programs and/or have employees participating in programs which allows them to stay informed.

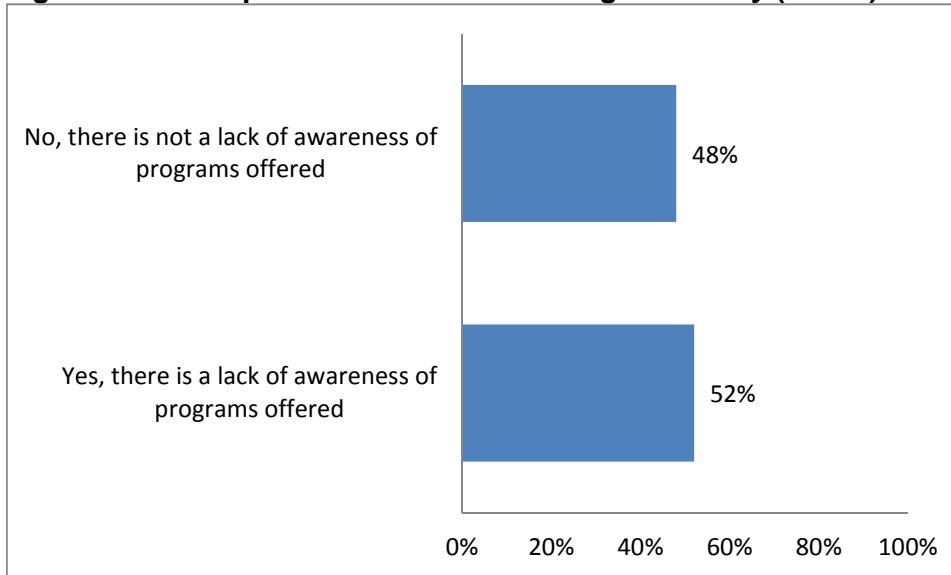
Of those respondents that felt they were somewhat aware, most were familiar with the Landscape Ontario continuing education seminar courses offered, certification and others were very familiar with the post-secondary applied programs. Specific courses that were mentioned that respondents were not aware of include the high school level courses and Women in Skilled Trades. Overall, respondents were aware of the extent of courses that are offered to the industry.

**Figure 2.5: Previous Awareness of Training Opportunities (n=198)**



As shown in Figure 2.6 respondents are split on whether they believe there is a lack of awareness within the industry of the programs offered.

**Figure 2.6: Perception of Awareness amongst Industry (n=232)**



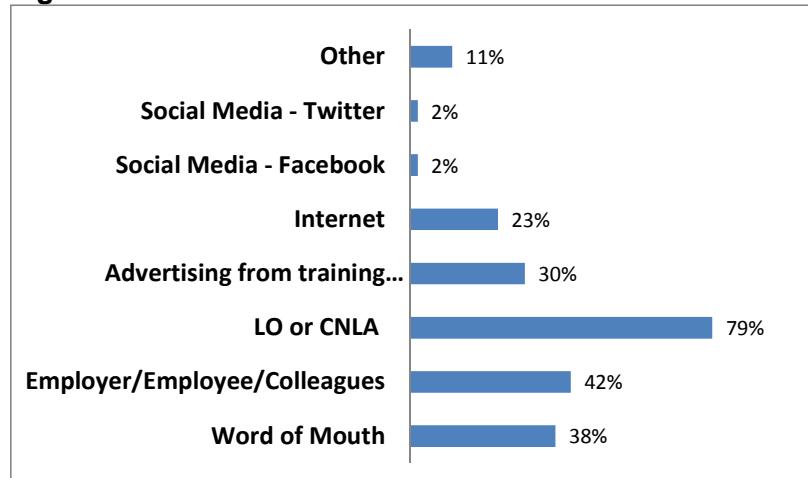
A number of comments were made regarding awareness of training amongst the industry:

- Landscape Ontario does a good job of promoting programs in their materials and meetings, therefore a Landscape Ontario member should be aware of the opportunities if he/she reads the materials provided.
  - Non-LO members would be unaware because it would be difficult to research all of the opportunities themselves.
  - Non-LO members are typically those in the industry that do not want to participate in meetings and training.

- There are two 'camps' in the industry – those that actively participate in the industry, including in training and those that do not and do not care to.
- It is understood that many employers, owners and managers would be familiar with the opportunities, but the communication between employers and employees is poor and therefore employees are not provided information on training opportunities. This includes foremen, lead hands, and other workers.
- New business owners and/or employees in the industry are likely unaware of extent of training available
- Many of the programs have been ignored and stakeholders have become unaware of what exists because they have not been relevant to the industry. If the training opportunities are not relevant then the industry will not engage.
- There is not a lack of awareness of what is offered but a lack of professionalism in the industry and the idea that formal training is not valuable.
- Many respondents are aware of the training offered but while running their own businesses there is little time to participate
- There is also a perception that there are too many training options available, and this makes it difficult to know which opportunities are valuable and who the good educators are.
- The public is not aware of the training that is available to the industry and the professionalism that comes with the training.
  - Not aware that Landscape is a certified trade
- "People assess an education program by asking 'how much more money will I make with a designation or by completing a course' and if they don't see an opportunity for that they do not engage.
- More promotion and flyers to workplaces would be helpful.

Respondents were asked how they were made aware of training programs available to the industry, overwhelmingly, most respondents learn of training through Landscape Ontario or the Canadian Nursery Landscape Association announcements and newsletters. Word of mouth and discussions with colleagues are also a good source of information. Social media and the internet do not play an important role in promoting training in the industry.

**Figure 2.7: Sources of Awareness**



Other methods of obtaining information on training included:

- Horticulture Review magazine
- Recruitment for a program at workplace
- Own research
- Through professional participation on committees, in organizations etc...
- Trade shows such as Canada Blooms
- Secondary school counsellors and educators
- Other industry organizations such as OALA, ISAO

Respondents were asked “**what could improve the awareness of training opportunities that are available?**” Responses were both traditional and creative.

- Better advertising
  - This includes both more flashy and catchy general mail outs that focus only on training as well as advertisements in trade publications  
e.g. Greenhouse Canada
  - Advertisements should come from not only Landscape Ontario, but also other training institutions, MTCU
  - Television advertisements and using HGTV since it is becoming increasingly popular
  - Promotion through supply companies (e.g. posters for bulletin boards) and other stakeholders not just landscape companies
  - Advertising must be ramped up in the pre-winter season
- Accreditation
  - Firms should be required to have staff trained and certified. This would also improve the professional image of the industry.
- One-stop shop for all training information
  - A website is required that would contain information on all training available to the industry: description of course, location, cost, benefits etc...
  - There is a similar website that has been created by the Canadian Agricultural Human Resources Council called Agritalent. <http://www.agritalent.ca/>
    - On this website you can search by location, training provider, subject of training or farm commodity
  - Seminars that describe all of the training available to employers and employees. It would allow stakeholders to ask questions and determine the right fit for their employees/themselves.
- Activities for Landscape Ontario
  - Make membership mandatory to LO, therefore all companies would receive information regarding training – whether they read it is up to them
  - Set up an ‘employee membership’ – that would allow any member company to register their employees. Then LO could directly contact employees (through mail-outs or emails) about training
  - Develop a training-specific newsletter or email that is sent regularly – list all available training opportunities and highlight a few each time
  - Take 5 pages or so in every LO magazine to list all training available every time it is published
  - Provide employers with training packets to provide to employees
  - Presentations need to be made to municipal councils
  - Target past trainees for new opportunities
  - Local chapters must become more involved in promoting training
    - LO, MTCU and educators must work together on this
- Better Employer/Employee Communication

- Employers need to communicate opportunities to employees
- Better Interaction with High Schools
  - More promotion required in high schools, including presentations by company owners
  - Need better communication between industry and educators/counsellors
  - Target youth on Facebook
- Promote Value of Training
  - Training institutions and LO need to show value of education to employers and employees – need to see ROI
  - Clear information about outcomes of each program
  - Case studies that highlight a company owner and the education that he/she has and the value it has resulted in
- Public Education
  - The more public education regarding the skills required in the Landscape Horticulture industry the more interest in the industry
  - Public must be aware that this is a skilled trade

Only a few respondents suggested that improvements in awareness were not needed. One respondent suggested that LO is already doing a good job and that the information is available to those who want it.

#### *Labour shortages*

Based on industry experience it is widely known that there is currently a shortage of skilled labour in the industry. Projections also suggest that this could become more severe in the next 5-10 years as the industry is expected to continue to grow and a significant number of owners/operators are expected to retire. Respondents were asked **what they feel are the most important reasons for this shortage**. 205 responses were provided and are characterized below.

Five ideas were consistently discussed amongst the responses, including:

- Wages (n=87)
  - Wage rates are low in the landscape horticulture industry
  - Higher wages are offered in other sectors, including construction
  - There is competition with other sectors for labour and landscape horticulture cannot compete based on wages
  - No benefits or security
  - It is difficult to pay for skilled employment and oftentimes there is no financial gain to be well-trained in this industry. In other words, training is not reflected in wage rates. This then results in less demand for training because there is no reward.
  - Wages are a negative influence on recruiting and result in a migratory labour force
- Seasonality (n=56)
  - The seasonal nature of the industry is perceived poorly by the public and can make employee retention difficult. Oftentimes, employees are lost during the winter to other industries.
  - Currently, the E.I. system does not value seasonal work and attempts to find employees “full-time” jobs during the winter months. This can lead to losses of employees over this time period.
- Physical Nature of the Job (n=52)
  - All levels of work in the Landscape Horticulture industry require some aspect of physical labour, long hours (due to seasonality as well) and working outside in the

- elements. Today's labour force and youth in particular are not interested in these types of jobs when they can be paid the same for a non-physical inside job.
- This industry is not glamorous but instead very physically demanding.
  - Poor Industry Image (n=36)
    - The Landscape Horticulture industry currently has a poor image as a profession.
    - There is social stigma around the industry as a career of choice. Many students view skilled trades as a fallback for those who can't get into university or college.
    - The general public does not consider the industry as a profession or a career but instead many employees use it as a stop-gap between other jobs/employment.
    - It is not as respected as a skilled trade compared to other skilled trades.
    - The public is unaware of the variety of skills required in the industry such as design, plant science, engineering, etc...
    - There is a lack of professionalism on behalf of some companies in the industry that has set a negative image to customers. There are fly-by-night companies that do not operate professionally.
    - Customers do not understand the value of certifications within the industry and do not always require companies to prove that they are certified. This has hurt the development of the industry in becoming a recognized trade and there is a lack of credibility of certifications.
  - Poor interaction between industry, educators and high schools (n=22)
    - There is a definite lack of interest on behalf of youth toward this industry; however it is thought that this is due in part to a lack of knowledge regarding the opportunities.
    - More emphasis needs to be made in promoting the industry to youth, guidance counsellors and parents
    - There is currently a lack of exposure to skilled trades in the high school system and more emphasis in this area is required.

These issues are not mutually exclusive. For example, the wages at some firms might be competitive with other sectors, but add on the physical requirements and long hours in the elements and there is a lack of interest in this sector.

Other ideas regarding the reasons for labour shortages:

- Many of the companies in the Landscape Horticulture industry are small firms which result in limited opportunity for advancement. An industry without promotion prospects and professional growth opportunities will limit interest from the labour force.
- Perceived lack of professionalism in the industry.
- Current immigration policies favour applicants with advanced degrees instead of those who may be willing to work in this type of industry.

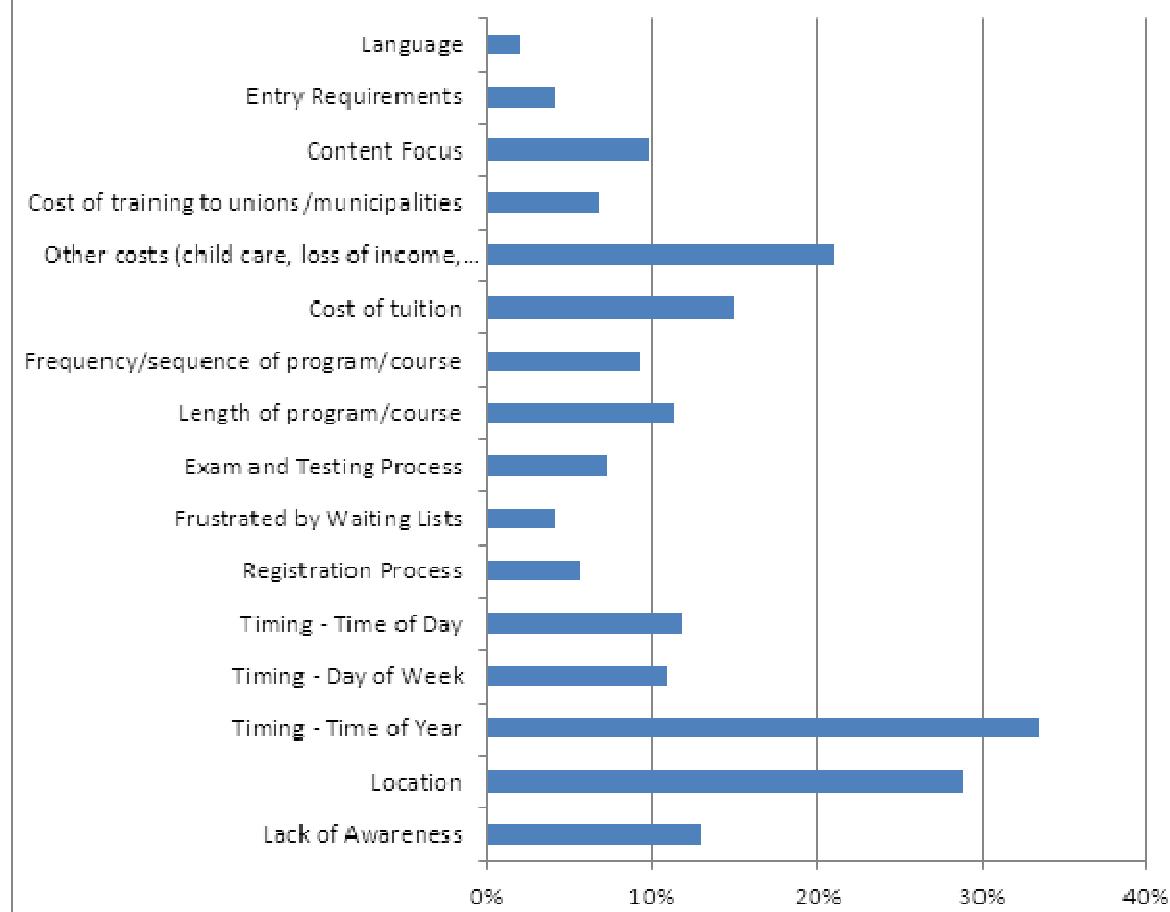
A few respondents stated that they have had little trouble finding skilled and semi-skilled labour.

### **2.3            Access Barriers**

This section of the survey asked Employers about the potential barriers to accessing the skill development opportunities available to the industry.

Respondents were provided with a list of potential barriers to accessing training opportunities and were asked if the barriers in the list had ever prevented them from taking any programs or courses (Secondary and Post-Secondary, Apprenticeship, Industry Certification or Continuing Education). Figure 2.8 shows the percentage of respondents that stated they were barriers.

**Figure 2.8: Identified Barriers, % of Respondents (n=194)**



### **Lack of Awareness**

Some respondents admitted that they are not aware of all of the courses offered and what is available for their employees in terms of training. However, much of this lack of awareness is not about knowing of the courses themselves but a lack of understanding regarding the curriculum and the value and return on investment the training would provide.

In order to participate in training small businesses require scheduling and planning months in advance. Therefore, potential participants must be made aware months in advance and not weeks in advance when organizers are trying to fill up courses last minute.

### **Location**

Location was identified as a barrier to accessing training by 29% of the respondents. Most respondents stated that most Landscape Ontario courses are held in Milton which is a prohibitive location for many potential participants. There is a cost associated with this location with respect to distance traveled and accommodation if the course is multi-day and this deters both employers and employees from participating. More courses need to be held outside of the GTA, in local chapters, including Eastern Ontario and Northern Ontario.

However, at the same time it was mentioned that for example, the Ottawa market is small and frequently classes are cancelled due to lack of registration. Suggestions were made to hold

more on-line courses and webinars to accommodate location barriers. On-line courses would also alleviate some of the timing barriers described below.

On the other hand, it was suggested that the Landscape Ontario Milton office offer the Horticulture Technician diploma program, as there was a respondent that would prefer to take it at that location than at the colleges.

For large companies and municipalities, a suggestion was made to hold on-site formal training, thus avoiding location as a barrier.

For youth, many jobs and cooperative placements are found in remote rural locations away from schools. Without arranged transportation with the company location of jobs and placements can be a barrier for many students.

The locations of the training portion of the apprenticeship program can be a barrier to students who do not live near any of the delivery agencies.

### **Timing of Course Delivery**

Overall, there is no perfect time for a business owner to participate in training, and clearly timing is a barrier to training. The time of year in which training opportunities are offered was the barrier identified by the most respondents at 34%.

- One suggestion was to provide more courses, or at least parts of them, that can be completed while working. For example, on-line or distance education.

Generally, the landscape horticulture sector is a very seasonal business with most operations having down time in the winter. Therefore, the majority respondents were very adamant about scheduling most courses to occur during this downtime between December and mid-March and to avoid 'peak' season. Winter works well for employers and returning employees, but courses offered in April are too late for some businesses. However, there are some constraints to winter courses as well:

- Snow removal operations find it difficult to guarantee their attendance at courses, since this is very much a weather-related industry. It was suggested that institutions and schools accommodate this industry by establishing a system that allows for 'snow make-up days' or an education credit if a registrant cannot attend for this reason.
- Although winter training works well for employers and returning employees, this training is often offered prior to new employees being hired. Some of this training would greatly benefit new hires. Winter is also the time when employers are hiring new staff.

On the other hand, other respondents suggested that Landscape Ontario hold courses year-round. In particular, some courses that provide direct actual experience should be offered during the season.

Depending on the type of business the day of the week in which a course is offered can be a barrier. For those who run businesses Monday to Friday, weekend courses are preferred. However, for retailers open on weekends, 'less busy' days such as Tuesdays and Wednesdays were suggested.

Evenings seem to work best for seminars at LO. This is especially true for those in snow removal where courses in the mornings can be a challenge to attend if it happened to snow that day.

Respondents mentioned specific courses and their timing barriers, discussed below:

- Apprenticeship:
  - formal training starts during landscape season
  - timing of formal training makes it difficult for those who work in snow removal
- University degrees:
  - Full time, full year requirements make it difficult for anyone with a business or working to participate
- The Lee Valley Tools sharpening course is offered in busy season
- Many irrigation courses are offered once the season has begun, but they need to be offered just prior in order to send employees
- Landscape design and construction
- Hydroponics/aquaculture and aquaponics courses
- Some courses are not in sync with the season. For example, a marketing course was offered in March, but this is a little late to use what is learned in this course and apply it to the upcoming season.

### **Registration Process/Waiting Lists**

As mentioned above, many businesses plan for training months in advance, however registration does not open, or spots are not available until a few months or weeks prior to the course. It would be beneficial to open registration earlier. Conversely, in many cases a minimum number of participants must be registered by a certain date; however those in snow removal will not register early due to the chance of snow, which can affect course planning.

Some respondents feel that the registration process, especially on-line, is not user-friendly and can cause confusion. One respondent suggested that an email confirmation or receipt of registration be provided.

The registration process for apprenticeship was noted as arduous and potentially a barrier.

Waiting lists for courses seems like a good problem. It was suggested that a policy be put in place that if a waiting list hits 'X' number of persons the training institution make an effort to run another course right away rather than making those on the list wait until the next offering.

### **Exam and Testing Process**

The exam and testing process for Certifications requires improvement. The following issues were provided and although they may make mention of one specific certification, the suggestions likely relate to all certifications.

- It is suggested that the standards and testing are not necessarily relevant to industry labour requirements.
- CHT testing is conducted by many different facilitators and therefore there is some inconsistency between facilitators
- CHT testing takes place only once per year and the timeframe for retesting is not acceptable
- Little feedback is provided to participants and consequently applicants become frustrated and give up on their certifications (CLP was mentioned)
- The portfolio designation in CLD is arduous and not necessary. Many participants pass the exam but do not obtain CLD due to the portfolio requirement

The following comment was made with respect to testing and examinations, and although the respondent did not state, it seems that this comment is directed toward apprenticeship. "The process for testing does not coincide with the training method. Students are trained practically but tested traditionally with a written exam. This method can be a barrier to completion since many students are not adept at 'traditional' schooling".

### **Length / Frequency / Sequence of Programs/Courses**

Respondents agree that it would be beneficial to concentrate courses into shorter timeframes to make it more economical for out-of-towners and to lessen time away from businesses. One example was to provide a 2-day sketch-up, Dynascape or grading program instead of offering different levels individually.

One respondent noted that classroom learning can be a slow way to learn. It may be more beneficial to offer distance education or on-line courses. However, this respondent stated that this would impact certification hours.

Other responses:

- Makes sense to offer theory in the winter and short practical courses in the summer
- Recertification is mandatory and can be difficult to obtain each year

### **Cost of Tuition**

The cost of tuition is a large factor when decisions are being made regarding training and can be a legitimate barrier to businesses and municipalities with training budgets. The economy and the previous years' bottom line play a part in determining whether or which formal training can be afforded. Some smaller companies may find it difficult to pay for training when there is no income coming in (winter), although it may be the right time to take it.

Most respondents to this barrier noted that they feel courses are expensive and tuition increases are making training prohibitive. Some feel that the cost of training is not commensurate with the value that participants gain from the training. Therefore curriculums need to be changed or the value of the courses needs to be better promoted.

There need to be volume discounts for companies with more than one participant.

Specific courses mentioned include:

- Landscape Ontario courses
- Lectures at Congress are expensive for what are essentially advertisements for various companies and consultants
- Parks Canada arborist courses
- Rigging and tree take down courses
- Guelph on-line courses

### **Other Costs**

It is not necessarily the tuition costs that make courses expensive and prohibitive but the extra costs incurred such as transportation and accommodation and the loss of income. Travel costs are borne more heavily on those participants not located in the GTA. The availability of more local options, on-line courses and webinars will lessen this barrier.

## **Content Focus**

Responses provided included many suggestions for new courses that could be provided to the sector – please see page 25.

There is a sense that many of the courses currently offered are dominated by landscape content and respondents suggest that this is a barrier to training because some of their needs are not being met. There is also a strong focus on entry level skills for individuals or new companies and few courses focused toward established companies and advanced level courses for experienced individuals. Experienced individuals do not want a review of what they already know, but need to be challenged and provided with new knowledge and value. More advanced level courses are required in continuing education as well as at the University level.

A focus on business skills is a must in the landscape horticulture industry and the courses reflect that. However, training institutions must not lose sight of the fact that basic horticulture production skills are required. It was suggested that the horticulture content and level of education provided in some courses must be improved. For example, the Loyalist Horticulture technician program was mentioned.

Respondents want to be educated by unbiased instructors who are not trying to sell something as well as teach.

One respondent felt that many of the training opportunities offered to the industry are not relevant to actual general labour requirements.

Content, and therefore training uptake, could be improved by addressing the following needs:

- Develop more advanced level courses for experienced individuals
- Improvement in horticulture production content
- Develop more courses for the hydroponic, aquaculture and aquaponics industry
- Develop courses that address customer relations
- Develop more courses aimed at retail garden centres

## **Entry Requirements**

Less than 5% of respondents identified entry requirements as a barrier; however entry requirements are hurdles that are difficult to overcome. There are many employees in this industry who have not obtained their high school diplomas but who have been working in the industry for years and have extensive horticultural knowledge. However, if they want to further their careers entry requirements for the apprenticeship program or college courses are a barrier. One suggestion was made that anyone with a certain amount of proven industry experience in a specified field should automatically be accepted into college level courses.

## **Language**

Currently, all training opportunities available are delivered in English. As a result, there is a large French population in Eastern Ontario that is not being serviced.

Many employees in the industry are first generation immigrants whose verbal English is good, but written English is weak. This makes it difficult for them to complete tests, exams, and assignments.

## **2.4 Skills Requirements and Curriculum**

Employers were asked what their skilled labour needs will be in the short term (next 1-5 years). The responses received show the significant diversity in the sector and the skills required to manage successful operations.

Above everything else, employers require employees with work ethic, a willingness to learn and willingness to perform physical work. In this industry reliable, self-motivated, initiative takers are required.

There is a need for both very technical horticulture and landscape-based skills as well as business skills as more management is required. There will be a strong demand for trained horticulturalists and arborists, therefore more graduates from post-secondary programs will be required. There is a need for highly technically skilled foremen so that owners can manage the business and not get caught up in day to day jobs.

Technical horticulture knowledge skills identified include:

- Basic biology and plant production skills
- Plant identification skills
- Greenhouse production
- Plant propagation
- Softscape and hardscape expertise
- Sustainable landscaping
- Irrigation technician
- IPM
- Aquaculture technician and hydroponics specialists
- Turf maintenance knowledge

Other technical skills identified include:

- Landscape Construction skills including concrete, stone masonry, woodworking, pavers, application and interlock
- Skilled installers
- Landscape designers, including planter designs
- Interior landscape maintenance
- Safety
- Equipment technicians and mechanics who know when to use equipment, how to use equipment and how to maintain equipment
- Landscape architect familiar with municipal planning
- Licensed pesticide applicators
- Drivers with AZ licenses

As owners begin to retire and as businesses expand there is a need for more business management and team management skills, including:

- Project managers with good people and time management and adaptability skills
- Managers with both business and people skills
- Managers that can lead teams
- Salespersons and marketers
- Managers with good customer relations skills
- Computer skills, including CAD
- Ability to read blueprints

Lastly, respondents mentioned that along with the technical and business skills they will be looking for leaders who can motivate, inspire and promote the industry.

For the most part, the skills requirements won't be very different in the long term. However, there may be a need for more skilled labour as companies plan to grow and retirement within the industry takes place. In general, employers want a labour force that is trained and specialized in advanced horticulture and landscape as well as business acumen and people management.

In order to promote employees and provide them with more responsibility a number of respondents stated that continuing education and training will be required.

Based on their experience either participating in or sending employees to training, respondents were asked to comment on the curriculum of the four categories of training offered to the industry.

#### **Secondary and Post-Secondary Programs:**

- To what extent do the programs provide the appropriate skills to youth, mature students and students?
- Do you feel that the curriculum covers the skills required to work in the industry?
- Is the curriculum up to date?
- Is something missing from the curriculum?
- What could be improved?

Most respondents felt that the secondary and post-secondary programs provided good entry level skills. In general, the skill sets covered are reasonable and content appropriate for the target careers. A respondent noted that all of his/her employees with post-secondary education have excelled professionally.

Respondents provided suggestions of what is missing and/or needs to be improved in these programs:

- Secondary programs need to be more focused and are quite different across schools, there needs to be some consistency
- The practical training needs to be strengthened; there was agreement that real technical field skills and hands-on training are a little light within the curriculum, however this differs by school
- There needs to be more complete science offered. For example, plant identification skills and basic electrical skills were identified as weak
- Business management content needs to be improved
  - The economics of running a landscape operation
  - Communications skills – talking with customers, employees, employers
- Work ethic and leadership skills need to be addressed in these programs – more so in high school coop programs
- It would be very beneficial to have guest lectures from professionals in the industry

Specific skills and training mentioned includes:

- More emphasis on AutoCAD
- Drainage and surveying courses within the programs, including zip level
- Interlocking, concrete and paving skills should be offered at the high school level
- Problem solving skills

- Driving landscape trailers should be part of a seminar
- Arboriculture training needs to be improved

The post-secondary programs are excellent programs for the industry. However, there is a need to determine how to provide more formal training opportunities for high school dropouts. One respondent stated that it would be beneficial to break down post-secondary programs into shorter pieces that can be completed over time for those new to the industry or those working while training. Similarly, one respondent suggested that it would be good if the Landscape Architecture program at the University of Guelph was offered in other locations or offered on a part-time basis.

#### **Horticulture Technician Apprenticeship Program / Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program / Women in Skilled Trades:**

- To what extent does the apprenticeship program provide appropriate skills to youth, mature students and trainees?
- Do you feel that the curriculum cover the skills required to work in the industry?
- Is it up to date?
- Is something missing from the curriculum?
- What could be improved?
- As a potential apprenticeship sponsor, would an exam preparation course be beneficial?

In general, these programs provide solid foundations for entry level employees in the industry. However, like all training programs curriculum needs to be updated and refined to meet industry needs.

One respondent mentioned that the curriculum is out of date and needs to include the latest science including understanding species invasiveness. A number of respondents stated that the curriculum is too generalized and doesn't focus on how to apply theory in the workplace.

Suggestions on curriculum included:

- Too much emphasis on residential landscaping, and not enough time spent on the management of larger properties
- Plant ID curriculum is weak
- More focus on business management skills is required, including customer service, cost estimates, budgeting and cost efficiency
- There is a lot of focus on hardscape, instead of both hardscape and softscape and how they interact
- More landscape construction skills are required

There was a suggestion to improve testing in order to ensure the appropriate level of achievement from graduates. There was agreement that an exam preparation course would be very beneficial.

There is a division in how respondents value these programs. For example, one employer has enrolled a student but feels that there has been no appreciable carry-over of skills learned in the course to the day to day activities of the business. Conversely, other employers mentioned their satisfaction with the programs.

One issue that requires improvement is location and transportation. Most students must commute to placements and training and this makes it difficult for those without access to transportation.

One respondent from a municipality mentioned that they cannot be involved in apprenticeships. The author of this report is unclear if this applies to all municipalities or just the respondent's municipality. However, it would seem that these operations could be very valuable placements for apprentices.

Lastly, the timing of the OYAP program is an issue since the busy season in this industry occurs when secondary schools are on vacation.

#### **Industry Certification Designations:**

- To what extent does the testing process cover the appropriate skills for each designation?
- Is the testing up to date?
- Is the certification testing relevant to you, your employees or your business?
- Is something missing from the testing in any of the designations?
- Are you aware of the requirement to recertify?
- As an employer, is it easy to manage recertification for your employees?
- What could be improved?

Many respondents are very positive about the industry certification designations since they have helped to raise the level of professionalism in the industry and image to the public. However, a few noted that customers are not aware of or do not understand the meaning of the designations.

One respondent stated that he/she has had no employee interest in certification because they understand that it will not automatically lead to a raise or a promotion. Employee certifications can become very expensive because most employers pay for the certification, and must pay for wages while employee is attending class and recertification. Two respondents perceive that certification and recertification is a money-grab by LO. Another respondent from a municipality stated that municipal councils do not see the value in certification and therefore he/she cannot get approval for themselves or staff to become certified.

One respondent who has graduated from a post-secondary program feels that the certification is not valuable to him/her since he/she graduated from a 2-year college program that he/she felt included a lot more comprehensive curriculum.

#### *Curriculum*

There was a sense that the curriculum is always improving and updated and many respondents agreed that the content is suitable and rigorous. Suggestions regarding the curriculum include:

- In some certifications the curriculum is too general and does not apply to real work
- Respondent felt that curriculum was too concentrated on sales and hardscaping
- There is a request for a Nursery Worker Designation
- Health and safety related designations are good
- More hands-on training is required in CLD and ODH
- The surveying course needs to be improved
- CLP (Management): since a significant part of management deals with people, emphasis in this course should be put on working through material in groups, or requiring participants to speak to other managers in the industry.

#### *Testing*

It was stated that no feedback on testing is provided. Therefore, there is no way for participants to understand how to improve. There was also concern that testing between courses and certifications is not always consistent.

#### *Recertification*

Some respondents value recertification and believe that regular training requirements are positive for the industry. However, recertification seems to be a barrier for others. Due to the recertification requirement some respondents will not become certified because they feel that having to spend hours in a classroom each year is too much of a requirement. The recertification process becomes difficult to manage when many employees are certified. One employer noted that if it wasn't for the in-house training they provide, their employees would not recertify. It was suggested that recertification include a component for hours worked and experience gained since skills improve in the field.

#### **Continuing Education Courses and Seminars**

There are a variety of professional development seminars and courses that are offered throughout the year. The curriculum in these offerings ranges from technical to business management to leadership skills. These courses are offered through Landscape Ontario and its various chapters, Ontario Parks Association, the various colleges and the Canadian Society of Landscape Architects, among others. Respondents were asked to comment on the following:

- To what extent does the curriculum cover the appropriate skills?
- Is the curriculum up to date?
- Are there seminars/programs missing that would be valuable? If so, what?
- Are there seminars/programs that you think are not required? If so, what?
- What could be improved?

Overall, these courses are valued and the broad range of topics that cover the needs of both managers and employees result in training uptake. Landscape Ontario is doing an excellent job of improving the already excellent course content.

Uptake of the courses and seminars could be improved if they were offered in more locations across the province or on-line. On-line courses would give remote and time-sensitive participants the opportunity to participate.

Due to the broad range of topics offered it was suggested that in order to better choose an appropriate course it would be beneficial to display complete course agendas on-line rather than just short descriptions. Speaker bios could also be included.

One respondent noted that the curriculum content is very good but a lack of industry standards or best practices makes each course's value very subjective. A number of suggestions were made on curriculum improvement:

- More emphasis on new irrigation methods including low flow and smart controllers
- More in-depth business courses should be offered and instructed by business people, for example CMA
- More emphasis on management skills: managing teams, development and leading of staff, customer service, sales

#### *Delivery*

In some courses, prerequisites should be required. Therefore, instructors do not have to teach to the lowest level of knowledge and experienced participants are not just receiving a review.

There was a suggestion to provide less lecture-based training and include simulations to apply theory.

It was suggested that LO seminars be open up to the public (e.g. horticultural societies, Master Gardeners) because it would help link the industry and the public.

### *Instruction*

The value from the courses is dependent on the ability of the instructor to deliver the material in an engaging and knowledgeable fashion. However, it is felt that there is a wide range in instructors that teach in the Landscape Ontario seminars and courses. Instructors can be hit and miss which greatly affects the value of the program. Some instructors need more preparation and some are just not good in their delivery of the curriculum. A consistent level of instruction is required.

On-line courses with peer reviewed curriculum could solve the inconsistent instruction issue.

Lastly, instructors should not be allowed to sell products/software during the seminars.

### **Course Suggestions**

Respondents were asked if there are other courses that could benefit the landscape horticulture industry. The following table provides a description of what was suggested. Overwhelmingly the industry is looking for more business management and leadership courses.

<b>Business Skills</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Business management for Landscape Horticulture<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◦ Managerial accounting: profit analysis, cash flow analysis, balance sheets, tracking expenses</li><li>◦ Estimation skills</li></ul></li><li>• Project planning &amp; management: guide students through PM including: site layout, material coordination, order of operations, crew management, time tracking, site conduct, safety responsibility and final quality checklist</li><li>• Office Management: HR files, basic bookkeeping, understanding MTO paperwork requirements and compliance, understanding health and safety paperwork requirement and compliance</li><li>• Social media for marketing and sales/branding</li><li>• Sales – should also look at the Canadian Professional Sales Assoc</li><li>• Hiring &amp; Evaluation: how to recruit, conduct</li></ul>	<b>Leadership Skills</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Leadership training</li><li>• People Management<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◦ How to manage people, inspire people, team development</li></ul></li><li>• Communications: with customers, employees, colleagues, industry, public</li></ul>
	<b>Workplace Skills</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Site layout training</li><li>• Safety training combined with first aid<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◦ Full courses in May (evenings) for new employees</li><li>◦ Refresher course for returning employees</li></ul></li></ul>
	<b>Industry Awareness</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Understanding labour regulations</li></ul>

<p>interviews, assess a skill set, schedule employees, evaluate performance and provide feedback</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Customer service skills</li><li>• Problem solving</li><li>• Computer skills and software for landscape designers</li><li>• Succession Planning: involving family, valuing a business, preparing a business for sale.</li></ul>	
<p><b>Technical Skills</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Aquaculture:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◦ Focus on ponds, water gardens, filtration and water quality issues</li><li>◦ Hydroponics, aquaponics</li></ul></li><li>• Greenhouse production techniques</li><li>• Short programs on production concerns:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◦ Pest management, plant maintenance, plant propagation and production, native plant production, alternatives to pesticide use, invasiveness, pruning</li></ul></li><li>• Technical training for lawn care: weed, insect and disease identification</li><li>• Advanced level courses such as specialty pruning, topiary, espalier</li><li>• Hardscape installations</li><li>• Reading blueprints and surveys, how to do perspective drawings</li><li>• Arboriculture basics: tree care and protection, tree identification</li><li>• Post-Secondary University programs in Garden Design and Garden Centre Management</li><li>• Nursery Worker Designation</li></ul>	

There was also a suggestion to develop a 3-4 year program that would provide full certification for all designations (Manager, nursery, design, irrigation, etc...) with business courses included.

### **Industry / Training Institution Communication**

Seventy percent (n=99) of respondents feel that the training institutions work with the industry and understand what the industry requires. In order to stay up to date relationships with industry must be maintained and in many cases institutions have program steering committees that help to guide curriculum development.

Some respondents commented that most institutions do a good job of teaching theory and technical knowledge but there needs to be more dovetailing with reality and putting theory to work. The theory and technical knowledge is a good base for employees but institutions should also consider putting more emphasis on applied knowledge and the life skills that make a well-rounded employee.

It is felt that some institutions create unrealistic expectations for pay and the range of work that most students will find after graduation.

Institutions must be on top of industry labour trends and develop programs to meet the industry's needs not simply create programs based on the interests of participants.

There is always room for improvement with respect to communication and liaison between the training institutions and industry. One example, is that Algonquin College listened to regional

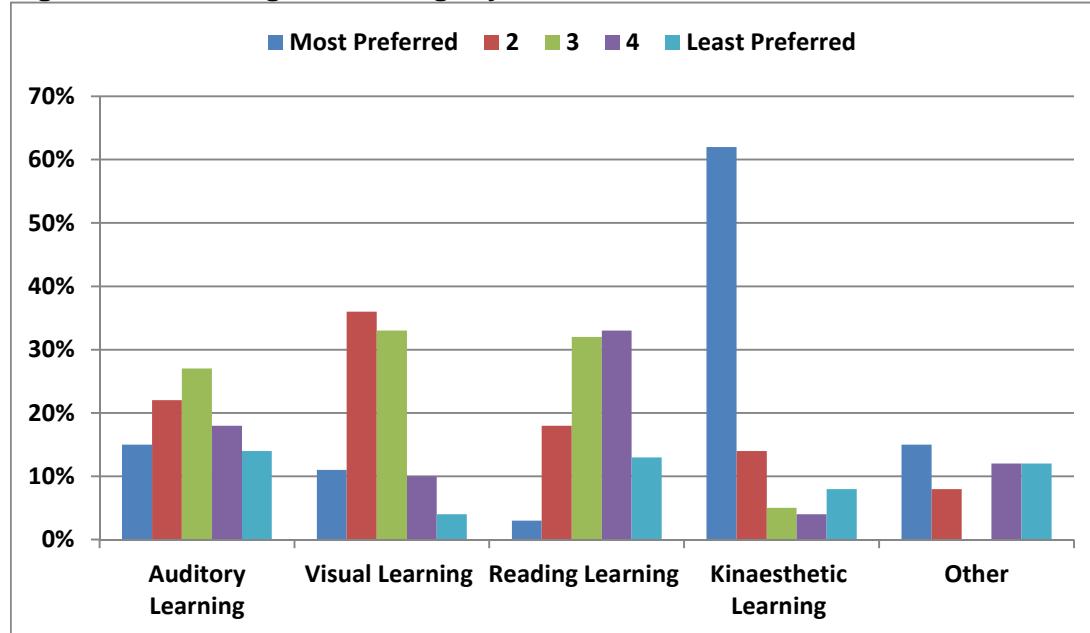
employers and are now offering the Landscape Technician program rather than the Horticulture Technician program. Conversely, one respondent noted that communication between Loyalist College and Landscape Ontario was lacking and resulted in poor program delivery that was addressed too late.

Lastly, the goals of industry and Landscape Ontario are different than the training institutions, as industry wants to create a well-rounded offering of programs across the province to advance the industry as a whole, while institutions are territorial and profit driven and want to retain students. These goal differences can have an effect on communication between the two parties.

## 2.5 Delivery Methods

In order for Landscape Ontario and other training institutions to develop more effective training programs respondents were asked about their preferred learning styles. Figure 2.9 clearly shows that the majority of respondents prefer to learn by doing and practicing, followed by visual learning and then learning by reading and writing.

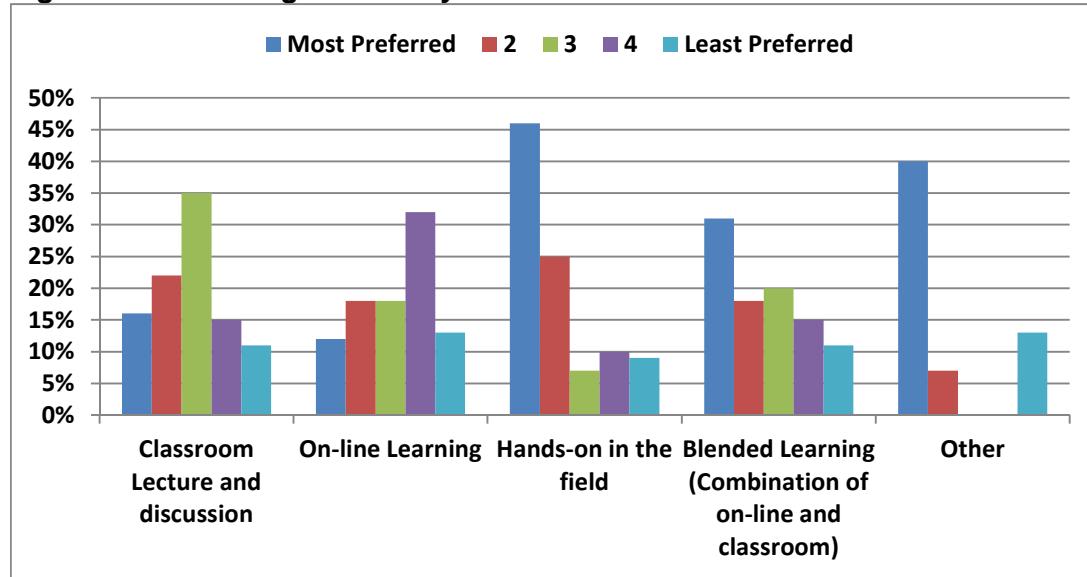
**Figure 2.9: Ranking of Learning Styles**



Most of the respondents that chose 'other' stated that a combination of all of the learning styles works well. For example reading, then discussing, then applying it. Others mentioned on-the-job training and learning through problem-solving.

Based on the number of suggestions for on-line courses throughout the discussion in this survey, the fact that it was not ranked higher is surprising (see Figure 2.10). Still, students like to learn in the field, which fits exactly with their preferred learning style as well. However, 'Other' ranked very high which includes a combination of hands-on and in-classroom, as well as a combination of hands-on and on-line with no classroom time. Delivery method is very dependent on the type of course.

**Figure 2.10: Ranking of Delivery Methods**



## 2.6 Training Culture

75% (n =134) of respondents stated that they feel there is a **culture of professional development** within their businesses. It should be noted that just by way of this survey, this statistic is high since it is likely those employers who value skills and professional development that were more inclined to participate.

There are many respondents who value skill and knowledge development and work with employees in many ways to ensure skills are being learned either through on-the-job training or sending employees to third party training. Some respondents have been doing this for years and others admit that this is fairly new in their operations but they are making progress.

There are many ways in which employers are creating a culture of development in the workplace, including:

- Pairing new employees up with experienced employees to teach skills
- On-the-job training sessions
- Bring in skilled trades in off-season to teach employees specific skills
- Sending employees to formal training
  - Must be related to their job requirements
  - Only provide professional development support to those employees who are interested in this business as a career.
  - One respondent's goal is to have all foremen CHT designated by 2015.
- Implemented performance reviews

One respondent admitted that the training culture would be better in his/her organization if he/she had a steady workforce, but that it is difficult to develop employees because recruitment and retainment issues exist. Others noted that many times employees are not interested in training unless it is required as a condition of their employment and it's paid for by the company on company time.

78% (n=143) of respondents **continue to participate** in industry training programs as part of their professional development.

Most respondents feel that this is very important. Others acknowledge that this needs to be a priority for them in the future.

The difficulty in attending formal training is finding the time and finding an appropriate course.

63% (n=136) of respondents stated that their **employees have participated** in external industry training programs or seminars and this is encouraged by employers. Many mentioned that this training has taken place during the employment with them. In many cases this happens during the winter. Most courses have been taken through Landscape Ontario, but other associations that employers have sent employees to include the Electrical Utilities Safety Association, OPA, Interlocking Concrete Paving Institute, Canadian Nursery Certification Institute, Ontario Recreation Facilities Association, the Landscape Management Network and the Canadian Professional Sales Association.

Employers also encourage employees to attend industry trade shows and conferences including Congress, Canada Blooms, Guelph Turf Symposium, IPM Symposium and LO's Design Conference.

The following table lists the courses that employees have been engaged in:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Seminars</li><li>• Pruning skills</li><li>• Water feature construction</li><li>• Arboriculture</li><li>• Lawn care software</li><li>• Unilock seminars</li><li>• Equipment training and maintenance</li><li>• Pesticide safety</li><li>• Hiring practices</li><li>• Estimating</li><li>• Green roof</li><li>• Business management</li><li>• Product awareness</li><li>• Online budgeting and productivity training</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Apprenticeship</li><li>• Post-Secondary Programs</li><li>• University of Guelph on-line</li><li>• Leadership training</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Certification<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◦ CHT, CLD, Arborist, lighting, CLT, irrigation</li></ul></li><li>• Chainsaw certification</li><li>• Forklift certification</li><li>• Safety, WHMIS, first aid, CPR, WSIB seminars</li><li>• </li></ul>
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71% (n=137) of respondents stated that they **offer their employees an in-house training** program. This can be informal or formal including on-the-job training, one on one coaching and tailgate meetings. Many employers conduct tailgate meetings regularly on specific topics and the on-the-job training is constant and on-going.

The majority of in-house training involves health and safety training including WHMIS, first aid and CPR, lifting/back care, etc... Equipment training, use and maintenance is also a very popular in-house training topic

Orientation is also very important – some respondents have formal orientation programs and others do not. Some employers also bring in specialty trades for demonstrations.

Employers were asked if they support their employees who want to develop their skills and participate in training programs. Out of 115 responses, **94% of employers stated that they support the professional development of their employees** because it helps the whole industry in the long run.

Ideally, formal training would occur in the winter during their downtime but training is supported all year long. Some respondents noted that they offer support to those employees who are interested in this industry as a career and will be with them in the long term.

Ways in which employers support (not financially) their employees include:

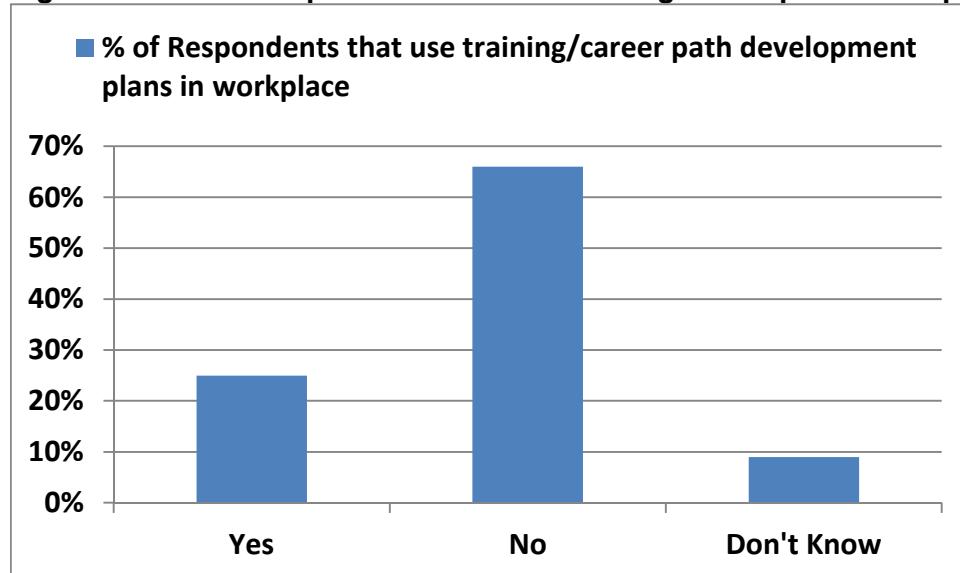
- Adapting work schedule to school and training schedule
- Flexible hours
- Use of company vehicle to get to training

Beyond support, employers were asked if they provide any incentives to their employees to develop skills (fund training, career promotion, pay raise, etc...). Out of 113 responses, **75% of employers stated that they provide incentives for staff professional development** when needs and goals of company align with the training. In most cases, companies fund the training directly. In one case, the payment of tuition required the employee to stay with that company for one year after completion. Others compensate for training once the employee has passed the course, and another pays employees one hour's wage for every on-line training course completed.

Other incentives include pay raises once course is completed and promotion in the organization.

Just over 20% of employers actually use training/career path development plans in their workplaces, for both them and their employees. Just under 10% of respondents did not know what training/career path development plans were.

**Figure 2.11: % of Respondents that use training/career path development plans**



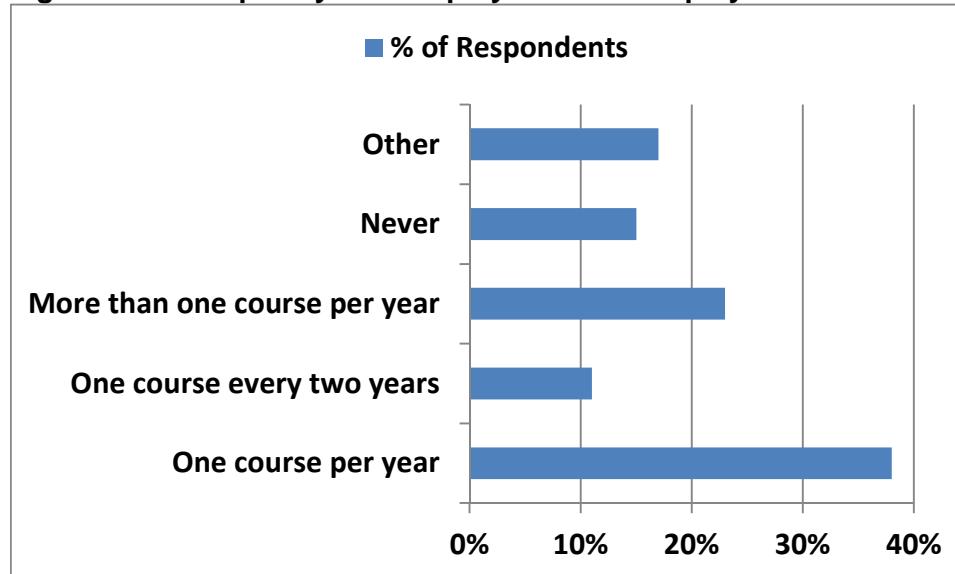
24% (n=137) of respondents have formally established training budgets for employees. However, it is clear that training is supported. Many respondents stated that they do not have

established budgets but will pay for any and all training that an employee would like to take. Others do not have a budget but requests are assessed on an individual basis. Others have set budgets that are determined in various ways, including:

- Total training budget for company which can be divided up amongst employees and what they want to take. For example in some years training may be more expensive for one employee compared to another
- Per person – some are the same per all employees and others differ depending on the position of the employee and the potential of the employee
- Budget based on hours of training per course
- Budget based on percentage of earnings

Employers were asked how often they send staff members to external training. Figure 2.12 shows that most send staff to one course per year. However, this can easily change from year to year depending on the individual or company needs and what is being offered. For those employers who encourage training, many have said it is up to the employee as requested and can be as often as justified.

**Figure 2.12: Frequency that Employers Send Employees to External Training**



## 2.7 Miscellaneous

### *Seasonality and Retention*

50% (n=127) of employers have put a strategy in place to address seasonality issues and retention of the workforce.

Many respondents noted that they bank hours on behalf of their employees to extend their pay through the winter months. Many suggest this is working well but for a few others it has not and employees have not been interested in it. This seems to be working well in Ontario for most who use it but it is not legal in all provinces.

Other operations are involved in snow removal in order to keep their full time staff year round. Others have expanded into renovations and decorating in the off season or find other 'winter

'work' in order to keep employees. Some respondents noted that they help find short term employment for employees.

Many respondents encourage and fund winter training.

Some respondents feel that a fair salary level, benefits, flexible hours and paid time off and on-the-job training are enough to keep employees around each year.

#### *Hiring Requirements*

When hiring, 51% (n=133) of respondents state or require that candidates should have formal training or education. However, in reality it's not that simple since there are limited number of applications and a limited number of graduates from programs every year. Some respondents hire horticulture graduates and students as much as possible but they just couldn't fill up their labour needs with these alone.

The level of training and education required differs by position. For example, in one case education is preferred for general labourers but required for supervisory roles.

Many responses noted that training can be provided and taught on-the-job and externally, but what is much more important is hiring employees with the right attitude, work ethic and interest in the industry.

#### *Other Comments*

Employers were asked to provide any other comments they had regarding skill development opportunities and issues in the industry. They are characterized below:

- There has been vast improvement in training and skills development in the industry. The industry needs to keep it up as there is still a long way to go.
  - Need to keep talking about skills development, its benefits, and listen to industry needs
- Industry is full of training options, but the problem is that there is not one source to go to to review all of the options that are available and make educated decisions on which courses would be valuable to each individual.
  - More awareness is key, especially of courses offered by institutions other than the 'usual suspects'
- Instruction in courses at all levels and institutions needs to be improved.
- Need to close the disconnect between horticulture theory and practice – courses need to apply theory
- Need a campaign to attract individuals to this industry
  - There are real growth opportunities in this industry but growth is stifled by lack of educated staff
  - Need more promotion of the industry as a skilled trade within the Ontario high school system
- Training can be provided on the job and while working but interest, attitude and work ethic are keys to good employees
- Need a campaign to make the public aware of the certification designations, what they mean and why they should hire certified contractors

### 3. Employee Survey Results

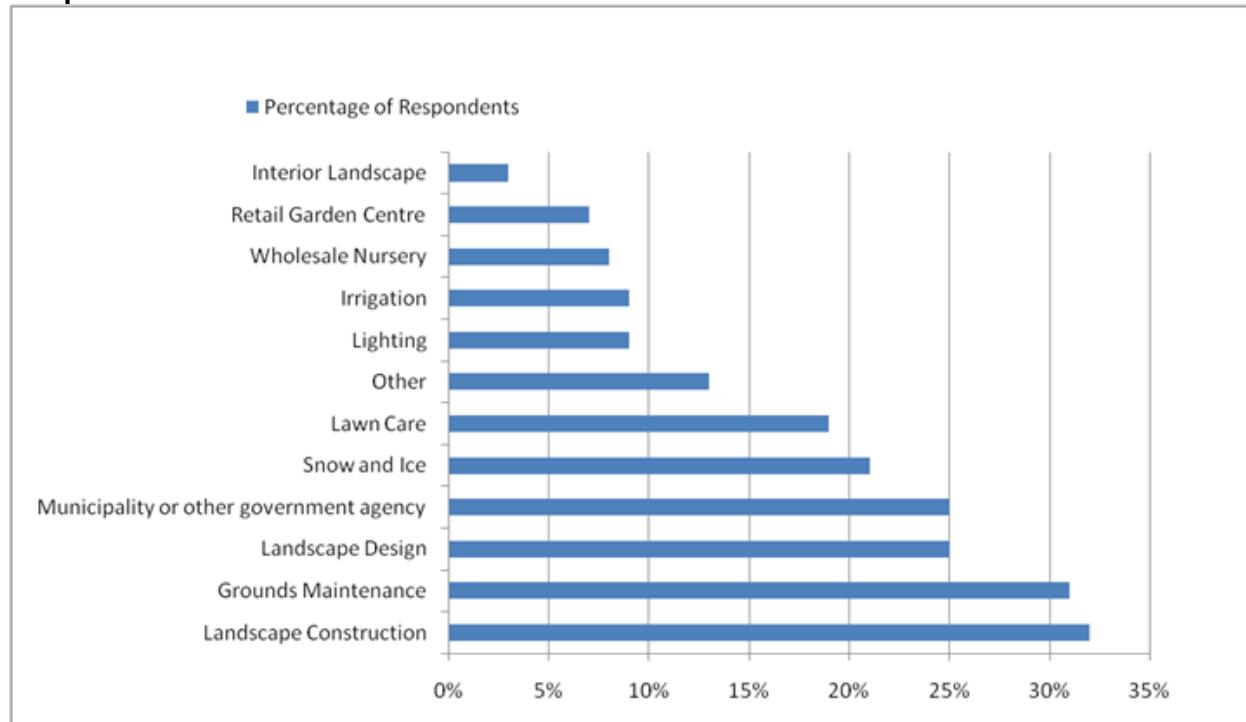
This survey was completed by employees of companies within the Landscape Horticulture industry. 80 surveys were completed and an additional 71 surveys were partially completed by employees (151 in total). The following analysis reflects the information provided from both the completed and partially completed surveys.

#### 3.1 Respondent Demographics

##### Type of Operation

Respondents were first asked what type of operation they work for. Figure 3.1 shows the breakdown of types of operations. Note that the percentages do not add up to 100 since respondents were asked to choose all that apply. It is clear that landscape horticulture operations provide a range of services.

**Figure 3.1: Types of Operations Employing Respondents by Respondents, % of Respondents**



Other types of operations employing respondents included:

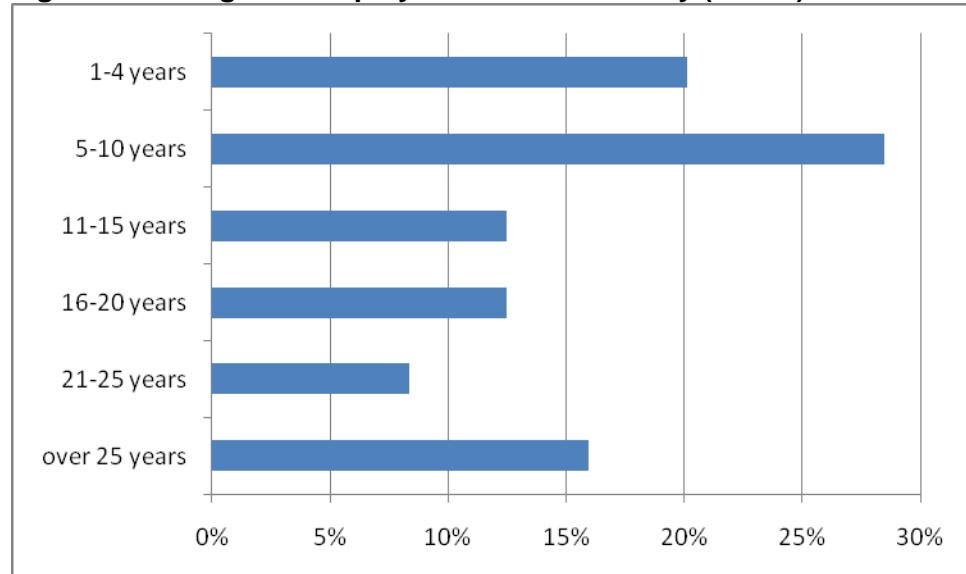
- Golf courses
- Wholesale Distributors
- Inventory Management/ Mobile Worker Technology & Software
- Landscape Architecture
- Arborist
- Tree Care

Overall, employees are employed in a wide range of fields within the landscape horticulture industry.

### *Length of Employment*

Employees were asked to indicate how long they have worked in the industry. Figure 3.2 shows the range of responses, showing that half of the respondents have been in the industry more than 10 years.

**Figure 3.2: Length of Employment in the Industry (n=144)**



### *Age of Respondents*

**Figure 3.3: Age of Respondents**

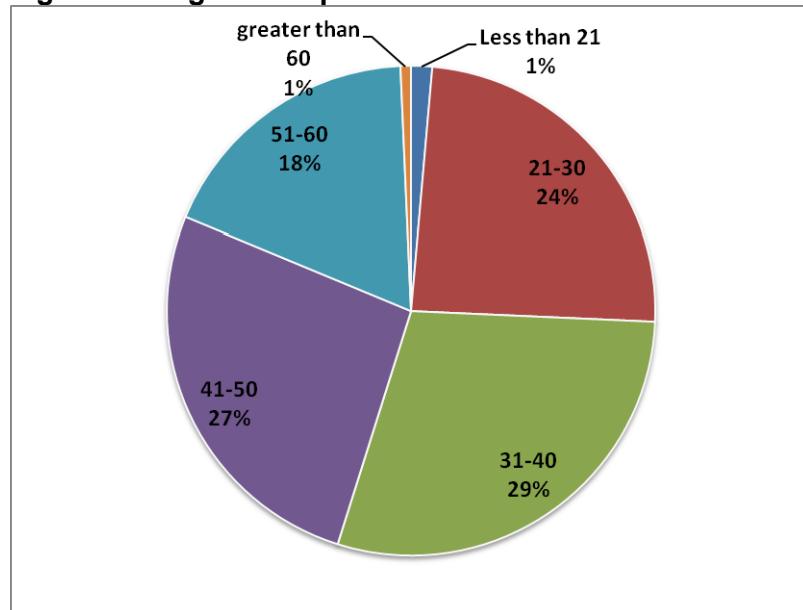


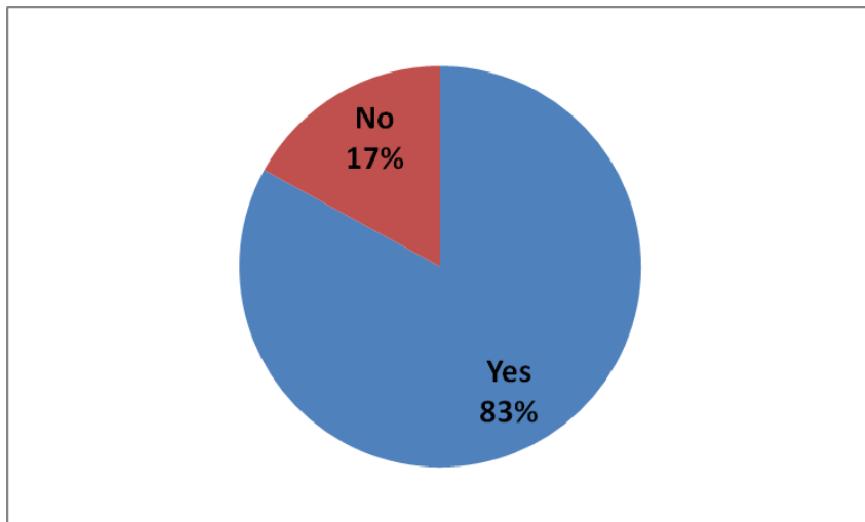
Figure 3.3 shows us the age of employees who responded to the survey. It shows that most respondents are in the mid to late stages of their careers.

### *Gender of Employees*

Nearly 2/3 of employees surveyed were male.

### Career Choice

**Figure 3.4: Is Landscape Horticulture your Career of Choice (n=141)?**



Respondents were asked if a career in the landscape horticulture industry was their career choice. Of 141 respondents, 117 (83%) responded affirmatively. Respondents were able to comment on why or why not this industry is their chosen career.

Twelve of the respondents provided further clarification on why they chose this career. Most of these responses dealt with enjoyment of outdoors and plants. Others responded that they have family ties to the industry.

chose this career. Most of these responses dealt with enjoyment of outdoors and plants. Others responded that they have family ties to the industry.

Of those who responded that this was not their chosen career, eight indicated that they trained in other areas before entering the industry. Others responded that the part-time and seasonal conditions of their employment are motivation to look for work in other industries.

### 3.2 Awareness of Training Opportunities

Like employers, employees were provided with a list of training opportunities and then asked about their awareness and participation in these programs.

#### Participation

Respondents were first asked whether they had participated in any of the training opportunities listed. 74% of the respondents (out of 99) stated that they had participated in one or more of the training opportunities offered to the sector. Table 3.1 provides a description of some of the courses that have been taken by respondents. It shows that there are a wide variety of courses and seminars offered to the industry and that employees are willing to make efforts to attend courses and obtain certification that they believe will help them in their careers.

**Table 3.1: Training Opportunities taken by Respondents (n=73)**

Secondary and Post-Secondary Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 17 respondents attended Horticulture Technician or Horticulture Technicians Co-op programs</li><li>• 7 respondents were graduates of Landscape Technician or Landscape technician co-op programs</li><li>• 6 respondents have obtained a horticulture diploma</li><li>• 4 respondents were graduates of landscape design programs</li><li>• 1 respondent obtained graduate level training in the listed programs</li><li>• Other areas of training were groundskeeping and greenhouse, arborist apprenticeship, landscape technology, horticulture</li></ul>
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	certification
Horticulture Technician Apprenticeship Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7 respondents identified apprenticeship as part of their training</li> </ul>
Industry Certification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>31 respondents have completed one or more industry certifications including hardscape and softscape installation, turf maintenance, ISA certification, and retail horticulturist</li> </ul>
Continuing Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>24 of the respondents identified attending workshops, seminars and courses offered by Landscape Ontario and other courses.</li> <li>16 respondents specifically noted that they attended Landscape Ontario courses</li> <li>1 respondent identified training through Women in Skilled Trades.</li> </ul>

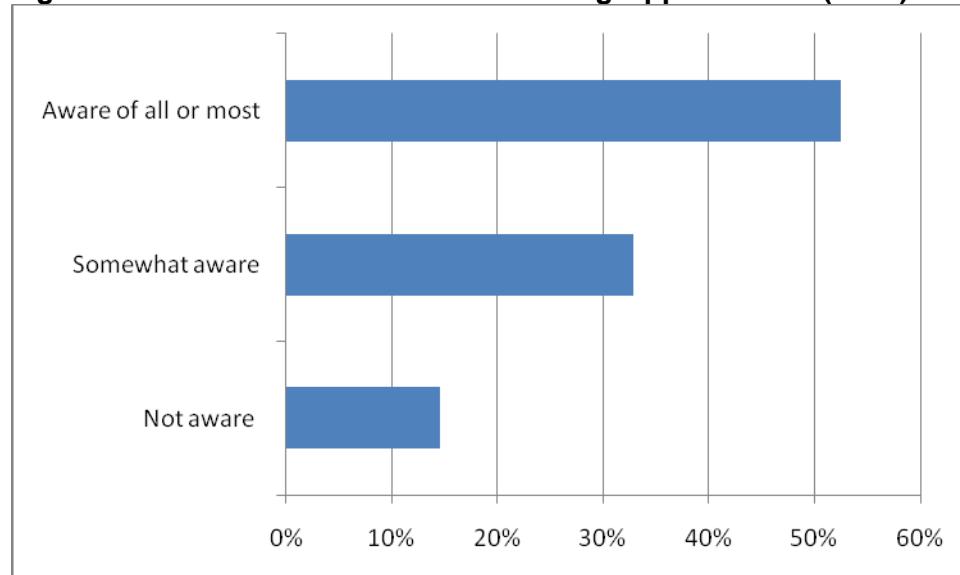
#### Awareness of Training Opportunities

84 respondents indicated their awareness of the programs in the list provided to them (see Appendix A for full list provided). Of those providing answers 52% felt they were aware of most of all of the training programs available. Figure 3.5 summarizes respondent awareness.

Some respondents felt that they are more aware of the post-secondary training opportunities now that they have completed their programs. Many had a general knowledge that training programs existed but were not familiar with specific programs.

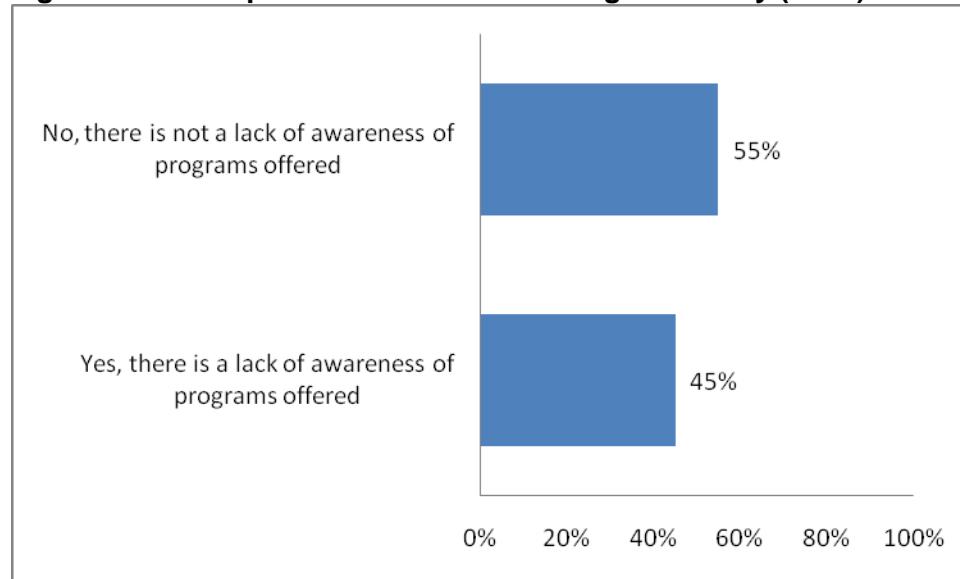
Many felt that trade shows, publications and information provided by their employers kept them aware of training opportunities available.

**Figure 3.5: Previous Awareness of Training Opportunities (n=84)**



Similar to employer results, employees are split as to whether they believe there is a lack of awareness of programs within the industry, with only slightly more than half indicating that there was no lack of awareness of programs available.

**Figure 3.6: Perception of Awareness amongst Industry (n=97)**



A number of comments were made regarding awareness of training amongst the industry:

Some of comments about awareness follow:

- “We are members of Landscape Ontario which helps in keeping awareness”
- “I think that there is a lack of initiative and or lack of time and resources for individuals/companies to pursue these programs.”
- If somebody is serious about the landscape industry and a career within it, there is no shortage of awareness. There is however reluctance by employers to lose a good employee to a 2-4 year program for many reasons. Employers are more open to daily or weekly training sessions to improve an employee’s skills. From my experience, employers do not proactively educate employees about programs. If an employee shows interest and is serious about a career in the industry, an employer is less reluctant to make aware the opportunities available.”
- “Unless you are a member of LO or CNLA the information doesn’t filter down to the employees.”
- “It requires very little investigation to find a course”
- “Yes. I myself am not up to date. Further, I don’t have time to investigate the opportunities. When I do notice these opportunities, they’re too expensive.”
- “I think that LO does a great job at providing information and opportunities to engage in certification and other industry programs for members of our industry. I think emphasis of awareness needs to be put out to the public. Because of the lack of public awareness I feel many employers don’t place/reciprocate the value of certification and training the employee has completed or achieved.”
- “It’s hard to find training, and, if there’s a course offered sometimes it is cancelled because not enough people registered for the course”

As these comments demonstrate, there is a wide range of opinion on the information available about training opportunities available.

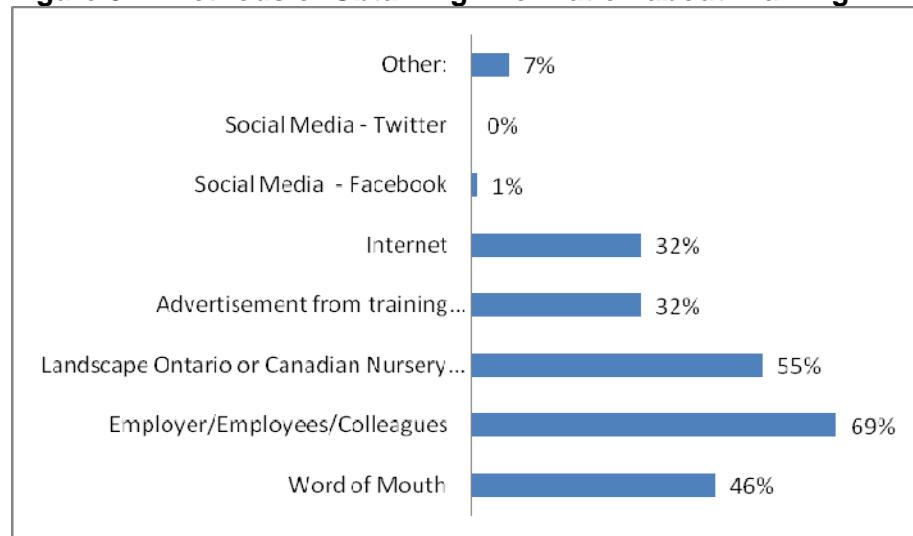
Respondents were then asked why people may be unaware of the opportunities available. Responses included:

- Lack of time

- Lack of interest
- Information not available in the right places
- Lack of promotion and advertising
- Employers are not interested in having staff take time off for training

When respondents were asked how they were made aware of training programs available in the industry, **69%** said that they obtain information through their Employer, Employees or other Colleagues. Figure 3.7 summarizes the results, note that these results do not equal 100 as respondents were asked to check all that apply. Word of mouth was not defined within the survey, and respondents may have selected both employer/employees/colleagues as well as word of mouth. Other sources were not specifically identified by respondents.

**Figure 3.7: Methods of Obtaining Information about Training**



Other methods of obtaining information on training included:

- Newspaper
- Research on their own
- WSIB retraining program

Respondents were asked "**what could improve the awareness of training opportunities that are available?**" Responses included:

- Better information for high school students by providing information to guidance counsellors
- Improving employer involvement
  - Providing better information to employers about training opportunities
  - Providing information to employers about the benefits of training employees
- Creating a database/databank of information from a number of training programs
- Newsletters and communications from Landscape Ontario with listings of current offerings
- Expanding the training season
  - Make courses available in spring

Several respondents commented that there was not much more that needed to be done, as current sources are sufficient.

### *Labour shortages*

89 respondents commented on the factors creating the current shortage of labour in the industry. Participants were asked to discuss the reasons for this shortage.

Common themes among responses were:

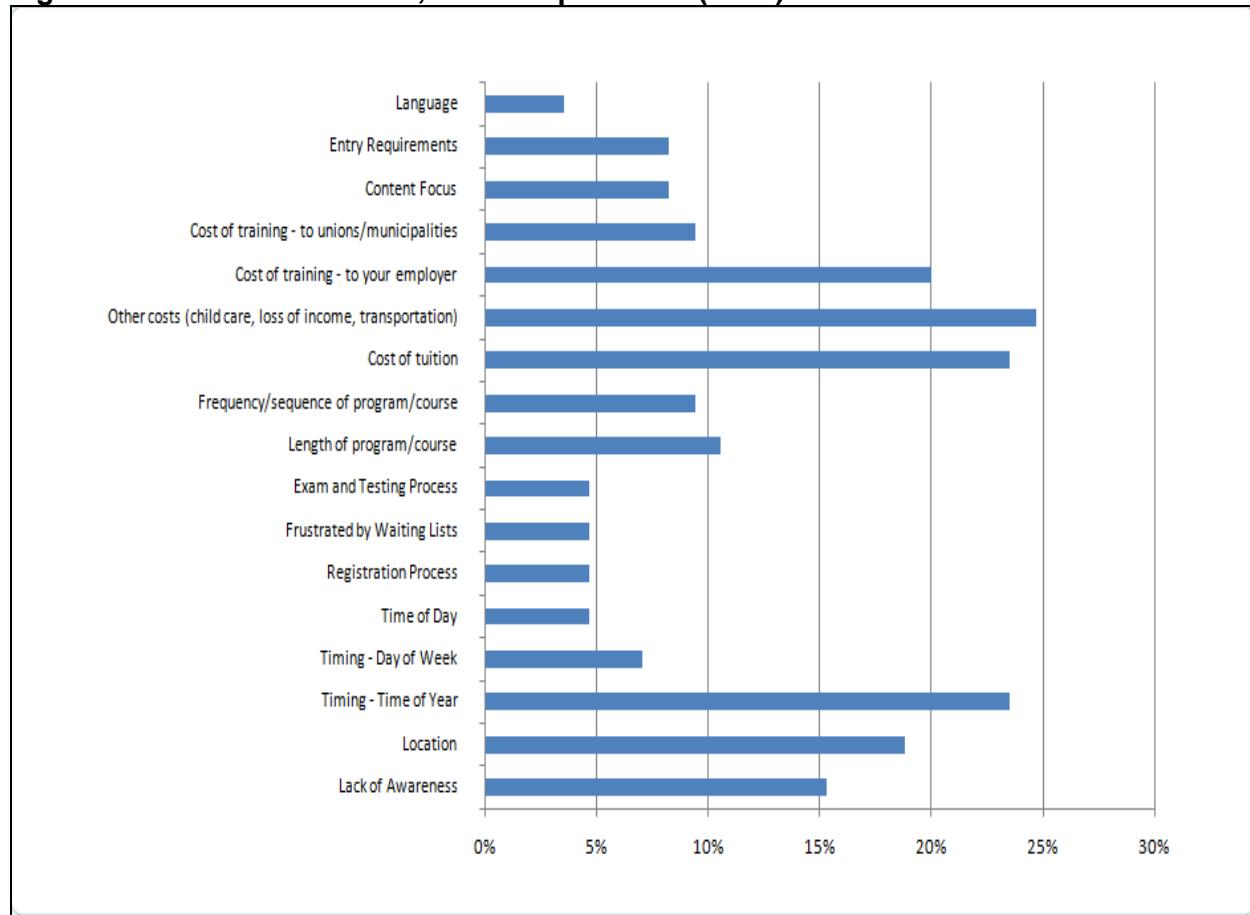
- Wages/salary too low to attract skilled labour (n=33)
- Seasonality of jobs discourages people from entering the industry (n=18)
- Public perception of the industry discourages people from entering (n=14)
  - Young people are not encouraged to enter the industry
  - “Anyone with a shovel thinks they can be a landscaper”
- Young people prefer to work in other industries for a variety of reasons (n=15)
  - Better pay, holidays
  - Year round work
  - “Young people are not willing to accept skilled trades as a career path”
- Benefits are either too low or non-existent (n=11)
- Positions require long hours that discourage people from entering industry (n=7)
  - Long hours leave little time for formal training
- Lack of incentive for those already in the industry to train (n=6), particularly as income does not seem to increase as a result of training
- Lack of interest/support from employers for further training (n=5)
- High cost of training relative to potential benefits (n=3)
- Not enough training programs (n=2)
  - Lack of training for foreign workers
  - Lack of awareness of training programs or career opportunities in the industry

### **3.3 Access Barriers**

This section of the survey asked employees about the potential barriers to accessing the skill development opportunities available to the industry.

Respondents were provided with a list of potential barriers to accessing training opportunities and were asked if the barriers in the list had ever prevented them from taking any programs or courses (Secondary and Post-Secondary, Apprenticeship, Industry Certification or Continuing Education). Figure 3.8 shows the percentage of respondents that stated they were barriers.

**Figure 3.8: Identified Barriers, % of Respondents (n=85)**



### **Lack of Awareness**

Survey participants noted a number of courses that they have missed due to lack of awareness.

### **Location**

Respondents noted that most Landscape Ontario courses were usually offered in Toronto or Ottawa, while Bachelor or Master's level courses were offered only in Guelph or Toronto. Some participants noted that location is becoming less of a barrier as courses are being offered in other locations, but they felt that courses could still be more available.

Some respondents noted an interest in distance learning if courses were made available.

### **Timing of Course Delivery**

Aside from cost, timing was the most commonly identified barrier to access for training. While respondents generally agreed that winter was the best time to hold courses, some also noted that they are participating in other activities such as snow removal to increase income in winter months, leaving little time for training.

Some respondents have noted that some Landscape Ontario courses which they would like to participate in are offered during busy periods, which prevents them from attending courses. While some mentioned they would like to see courses offered in the evening during busy

summer hours, others felt that the long hours they put in on the job would prevent them from participating in courses during summer.

Respondents mentioned that they didn't feel they could take paid leave in order participate in the courses as such they did not feel that they could participate in courses during work hours.

### **Registration Process/Waiting Lists**

Waiting list and registration process did not seem to be a major issue for employees surveyed. One respondent noted a desire to take the LARE exam but was prevented due to the requirements to write the exam. One respondent also noted that they felt the experience of having to meet with the Ministry and then register for Humber College separately for entering the apprenticeship program was awkward.

### **Exam and Testing Process**

Four respondents replied that exam and testing processes prevented them from taking a course.

### **Length / Frequency / Sequence of Programs/Courses**

Length of the course was a barrier for all levels of courses, as identified by respondents. Suggestions provided were condensing training modules to two months in winter, and expanding continuing education programs beyond one day. One respondent noted that they would have liked more time and practice with computer programs related to specific courses they attended, however this respondent did not refer to any specific course.

### **Cost of Tuition**

Respondents noted that cost of tuition for courses was quite high compared to the additional value they expected to get out of the courses in terms of financial remuneration. Some respondents noted that employers are willing to pay the costs of their tuition or to cover time away for training, however many do not which puts further education out of reach for some.

One respondent mentioned that involving industry suppliers in education programs may help decrease the cost of materials, leading to decreased tuition costs.

### **Other Costs**

Other costs were also a frequent barrier to additional training. Many respondents noted that courses are often offered in winter when many employees are laid off and are unable to afford tuition fees.

Loss of income was the most common concern mentioned in this category, as employees were often not paid for training time. Respondents also frequently noted other financial or family commitments that prevent them from taking courses.

### **Costs to Employer/Unions/Municipalities**

Courses offered in winter are often not paid for by employers as employees are laid off and therefore not on staff during the period in which most courses are offered, leaving employees to pay costs on their own. Other respondents noted that their own employers feel training courses

are expensive and compete with other costs within the overall budget. Additionally, respondents felt that their employers did not have the resources to replace time lost by employees away for training.

### **Content Focus**

Respondents seemed to favour hands-on versus theoretical learning, particularly in the apprenticeship program.

Comments by respondents touched on the following issues:

- Need for more advanced courses for employees who are already experienced or have already attended some of the seminars
- Courses should be more practical and hands on, particularly in the apprenticeship program
- The apprenticeship program should be less broad, and should expand on hardscaping
- Courses cover a good cross section of industry interest

### **Entry Requirements/Language Skills**

One respondent commented that English was an essential skill for training that they wished to participate in.

### **Other Barriers**

Respondents offered a number of other reasons that they felt were barriers to training.

Comments include:

- General uncertainty of industry due to fluctuations in economy
- Employers do not value having educated employees; lack of increased pay as a result of further training
- Employers do not show a willingness to train employees.
- Employers are not clear on what to expect from courses that they send employees to

### **Solutions to Barriers**

Respondents were asked to provide comments on ways they felt delivery of programs and courses could be offered to remove barriers. 22 responses were made. Many of the solutions provided had been discussed under individual barriers; however the following is a summary of comments made in response to specific steps that could be taken to remove barriers:

- Offer courses through distance education, particularly online
- Offer job protection for employees who wish to attend training programs
- Offer courses in more locations; expand apprenticeship program to other locations
- Improve the registration process
- Reduce course tuition fees
- Offer advanced level courses for experienced workers
- Offer courses in fall and winter to accommodate heavy work hours in spring and summer

### **3.4 Skills Requirements and Curriculum**

Employees were asked to provide comments about their long term goals in the industry, whether they felt they would stay in the industry and where they saw themselves within the

industry in the future. Some examples were provided to give direction to the comments. 68 respondents provided comments on career goals. The results are summarized in Table 3.2.

**Table 3.2 Employee Career Goals**

Goal	% of respondents
Summer Position	1%
Career In Related Fields	7%
Leave for Another Industry	6%
Unsure	9%
Long Term Career	41%
Business Owner Teacher Retirement Advancement within current or other organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 18%</li> <li>• 16%</li> <li>• 6%</li> <li>• 25%</li> </ul>

Overall comments pertaining to long-term goals were positive, with only a few respondents indicating their intention to leave the industry. Specific comments that were made by respondents about their long term plans include:

- “I see myself taking the horticulture program to all new lengths and having new limits. I will win us awards and make this city something to be proud of.”
- ” I would love to start my own business, but feel it is far too competitive an industry. I think I've moved up as far as I can without a University education. I've thought many times that I should just leave the industry all together.”
- “Would like to be able to teach and inspire others”
- “Consultant”
- “Long term career with a focus on improving my design skills to a high degree”
- “Returning to school to complete my certification”
- “ I am already there”

49 respondents provided comments about programs and courses that would help them achieve their goals. Respondents' answers were grouped into 7 general categories:

- Business/management/leadership (n=9)
- Certifications that are currently offered (n=10)
- Bachelors or Masters level training (n=4)
- Design Courses (n=5)
- Refresher/Advanced Courses (n=4)
- Job Search Skills (e.g. resume writing, internet search skills, self promotion) (n=2)
- Courses specifically for women in the Landscape industry, particularly equipment use (n=1)

Most respondents noted that these courses are available but they have not accessed them yet, however some also suggested that more courses in specific areas need to be offered.

Employees were then asked to provide insight on their training experiences within four different program categories. They were asked a number of questions about their experience. The questions for each type of program are provided as well as some general comments on responses that were given.

**Secondary and Post-Secondary Programs:**

- To what extent do the programs provide the appropriate skills to youth, mature students and students?
- Do you feel that the curriculum covers the skills required to work in the industry?
- Is the curriculum up to date?
- Is something missing from the curriculum?
- What could be improved?

Respondents generally made positive comments about their experiences in secondary and post-secondary programs. Many noted that secondary or post-secondary training programs are simply a starting point and that industry experience is required in order to be successful. Given the broad scope of these programs it is not surprising that some respondents felt that there was not enough focus in specific areas, while others appreciated exposure to a variety of different subjects within the field. Responses were split with some feeling that curriculum was up to date while others felt that it could be updated.

Suggestions for improvement were:

- Stronger background courses in biology
- Communications courses
- Additional mathematics training
- More hands-on training
- "I believe more time should be spent on resumes and interviews-through Micro skills-earlier in the school year so that concentration near the end can be on proper co-op placement."

**Horticultural Technician Apprenticeship Program / Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program / Women in Skilled Trades**

- To what extent do the programs provide the appropriate skills to youth, mature students and students?
- Do you feel that the curriculum covers the skills required to work in the industry?
- Is the curriculum up to date?
- Is something missing from the curriculum?
- What could be improved?
- Would an exam preparation course be beneficial to complete the Apprenticeship and become a Journey person (CofQ)?

Respondents again were generally positive about the programs. They felt the curriculum was up to date but provided specific comments on areas of potential improvement:

- Need more hands-on training
- Need more training for leadership positions
- Courses covered basic skills but respondents would like to see work in specific areas:
  - Horticulture knowledge, plant identification
  - Design
  - Computer training for mature students
  - Physical strength and stamina

Respondents felt that exam preparation would be useful for these courses, as some knowledge requires brief refreshers prior to writing the exam due to the time between the end of course work and end of apprenticeship training.

## Industry Certification Designations

- To what extent does the testing process cover the appropriate skills for each designation?
- Is the testing up to date?
- Is the certification testing relevant to you and your employer?
- Is something missing from the testing in any of the designations?
- Are you aware of the requirement to recertify?
- As an employee, is it easy to manage recertification?
- What could be improved?

Some respondents offered general comments about certification programs while others offered suggestions and comments on specific programs.

### General comments

- "I think the certification put on by Landscape Ontario is great. It's challenging and strikes the mind."
- Testing was too elementary to cover the skills for the designation
- The cost of testing is too high
- "...as I progress in my career, I find it harder to find programs that are relevant to my designation."
- "I thought that the testing is prepared, delivered and judged well. For the range in areas it covers, it is developed in such a way that someone needs the experience to do well and won't get by without doing any prep work."
- "They were nice enough to provide us with a test that proved we could read, write and do the math. The work ethic was still up to us."
- "ISA certification holds more merit than Ontario certification because of constant media promotion and continuing education."
- There is overlap between post-secondary courses and certification courses

### Recertification

- "Recertification could be easier in the sense of being able to track your activity. Having a website with a login for each member to log their activities or achievements towards their recertification would be helpful. Having online membership would provide more traffic and access to what is available through Landscape Ontario and other organizations. This would make the recertification process easier and would likely encourage people to maintain active status"

### Certified Landscape Technician

- "Testing is way too easy to become a technician"

### Certified Landscape Design

- "The certifications cover the skills required and are relevant. The CLD certification was a long process and I almost did not complete it; it was relevant but time consuming. I would not start the process over. I would be happy to perform certain tasks (courses, attending events etc) to keep my certification but I wouldn't start over."
- "CLD testing is missing the structure and study material that is available to those testing for other designations. A list of readings is inappropriate because unless you are a landscape architect, chances are the consistency from one design/build company to another is minor. I feel CLD testing should be geared more towards those trying to achieve relevance in an industry that so many people create designs on napkins."

Someone with the structure, continuity, and accreditation as a Landscape Architect does not benefit from a CLD designation from my perspective. Testing should be more geared towards design principles and plant knowledge rather than covering your butt (legal jargon that architects deal with, but not the common landscape designer). A study manual would be beneficial. The deciding factor or more emphasis should be on a comprehensive portfolio, rather than the continuity that only architects work with on a daily basis."

- "The testing process for CLD only covers practical skills and construction skills, and some designing skills/people skills, the certification process should make sure a person does all of the above correctly, but does not test anything on by-laws, knowledge of what not to do in designs. It is not strong enough to parallel with other design professions"

### **Continuing Education Courses and Seminars**

- To what extent does the curriculum cover the appropriate skills?
- Is the curriculum up to date?
- Are there seminars/programs missing that would be valuable? If so, what?
- Are there seminars/programs that you think are not required? If so, what?
- What could be improved?

One concern that was frequently mentioned was the quality and expertise of some of the instructors.

Other comments provided on continuing education courses and seminars include:

- Courses offered training in more specific areas, which compliments broad training provided by secondary and post-secondary programs.
  - Some courses are too basic for experienced workers
- Part time courses would be helpful for people wishing to transition into other segments within horticulture or arboriculture.
- Curriculum should include new techniques and technologies.

### **Other Course Suggestions**

To end this section of the survey participants were asked to indicate if there were other courses that they felt would be beneficial to the Landscape Horticulture Industry. The results are listed in the following table.

**Table 3.3: Additional Course Suggestions**

Management Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Leadership Skills</li><li>• Negotiation Skills</li><li>• Costing/Quoting</li><li>• Project Management</li><li>• Customer Service</li></ul>
Technical Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Advanced pruning</li><li>• Advanced perennial maintenance</li><li>• Arboriculture</li><li>• Fruit and Vegetable plant care</li><li>• Weed Management</li><li>• Pest Management</li></ul>
Sales and Retail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Retail Training</li><li>• Advanced Sales</li></ul>

Equipment and Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>General Safety</li> <li>Bucket Truck (non-hydro) Training</li> </ul>
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Laws and Regulations</li> </ul>

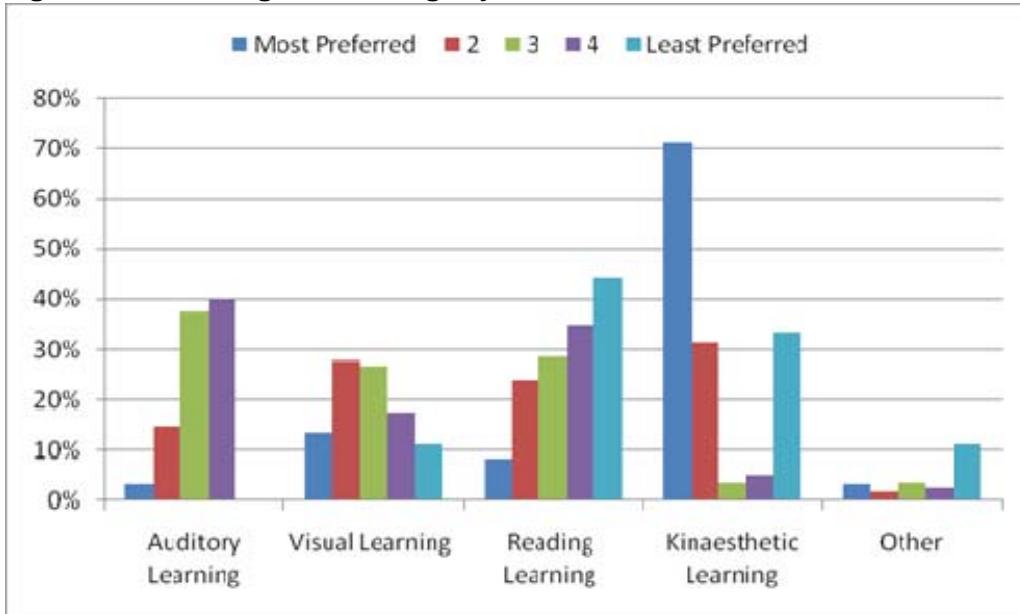
### Collaboration between Training Institutions and Industry

Employees were asked if they felt that training institutions worked with industry to understand the training requirements of the industry, 60 respondents answered this question with **73%** responding that they did feel that training institutions worked with industry to provide relevant courses.

### 3.5 Delivery Methods

In order to provide information about the types of courses that employees found most useful they were asked to rank their preferred learning style. Like the employer results, kinaesthetic learning is the most preferred learning style among current employees in the landscape industry. This is also consistent with many of the requests for more hands-on learning in previous sections of the survey.

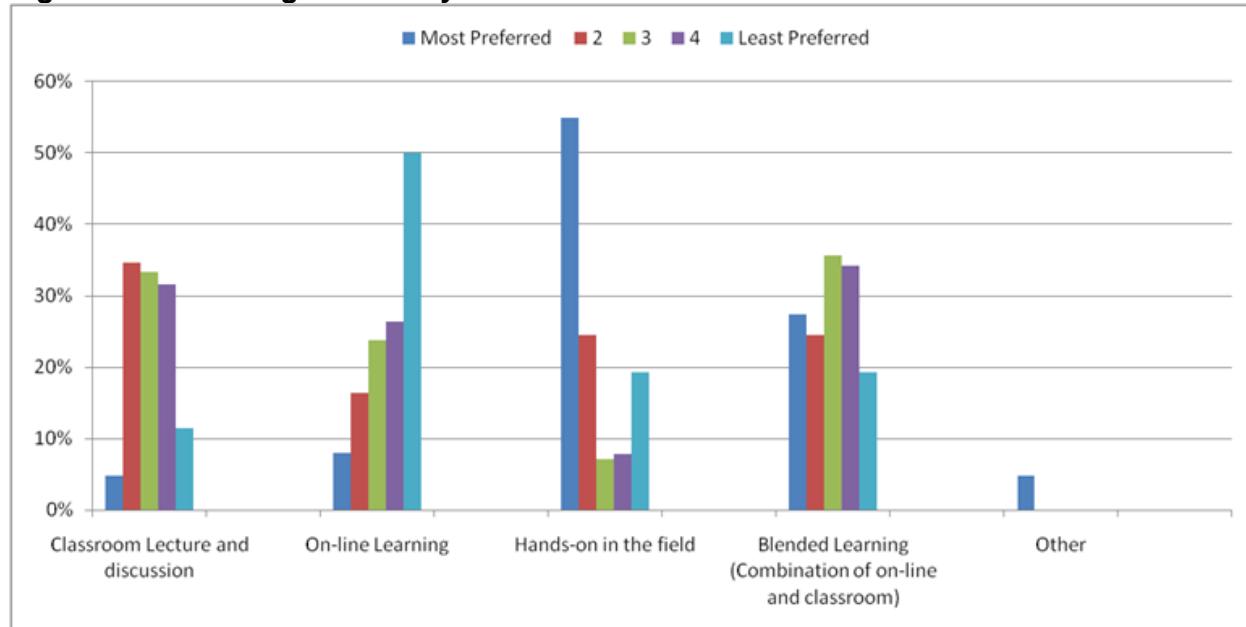
**Figure 3.9: Ranking of Learning Styles**



Most respondents who selected other cited a combination of different learning styles is most useful for them to learn new skills. Others feel that they learn best through experience, which corresponds with kinaesthetic learning.

Most respondents chose hands-on in the field as their first choice for delivery method. Blended learning was the second favourite choice of our respondents; this reflects their desire for flexibility in training programs. While some specific requests were made for online learning through comments provided, as a group most respondents ranked online learning as their least preferred deliver option. Based on these results it is concluded that online courses must include an interactive component to suit different learning styles.

**Figure 3.10: Ranking of Delivery Methods**



### **3.6 Training Culture**

Section 6 of the employee survey asked about the training culture at the individual's place of employment, the methods and attitudes of employers towards training in the industry. 77% of employees (n=70) agreed that there is a culture of professional development in their workplace. Respondents noted that financial support is not always available for professional development, or that attempts to foster professional development are hindered by sending employees to courses that are inappropriate for what they feel they need to develop.

Participants were then asked if they continued to participate in industry training programs while they were working. Of 71 respondents, 75% said that they do attend additional training while working, particularly during slower periods of the year. Many noted that it is difficult or nearly impossible to balance additional courses with work and other commitments. Others noted that financial constraints are the most important factor in them not participating in courses.

On issues of employer support for employee training and development 86% of respondents (n=70) felt that their employer does provide support for employees who wish to attend training activities. Respondents provided comments about how their employer has provided support for them. Common supports include:

- Reimbursement for courses in which a passing grade is obtained
- Time off for courses
- Flexible hours to accommodate course work
- Support during off-season
- Partial tuition payment for courses deemed necessary by employer

Others commented that the level of support can vary depending on size of the company and financial resources available to employers, as larger companies are better able to juggle staff schedules to allow for time off or financial contribution to training.

When respondents were asked about incentives offered by employers for training and development **58%** of 69 respondents indicated that incentives were available. This is consistent with comments from previous sections indicating that some employees felt little motivation to attend training as it did not offer career benefits. Some indicated that they received pay raises on completion of certification programs, however others said that there was little room for upward movement in their company and that no raises were available, indicating that the financial rewards for further training vary significantly by employer. Some respondents also said that their employer offered financial support to help employees achieve training goals, but again this varied from employer to employer and often depends on the financial position of the employer.

Only **19%** of respondents (n=73) said that there was training or career path development plans used in their workplace, while 16% were unsure or did not know what these were or whether they were in use.

All respondents (n=71) indicated that learning was important to them in their career. Many of the comments discussed new developments in the field and that they felt that learning new skills and techniques was important in order to provide services to clients. One respondent felt that while learning was important there was a lack of courses available for experienced workers who would like to learn advanced techniques.

### ***Other Comments***

Employees were encouraged to provide other comments about skill development opportunities and challenges.

- Several respondents mentioned that they would be interested in online courses if they were made available
- Some mentioned that they felt there was still an attitude bias that made it difficult for women in the industry, particularly in landscape construction
- Generally comments noted that there are many different areas in the field to explore and that training and experience were both required in order to become a proficient service provider

## 4. Youth/Student Survey Results

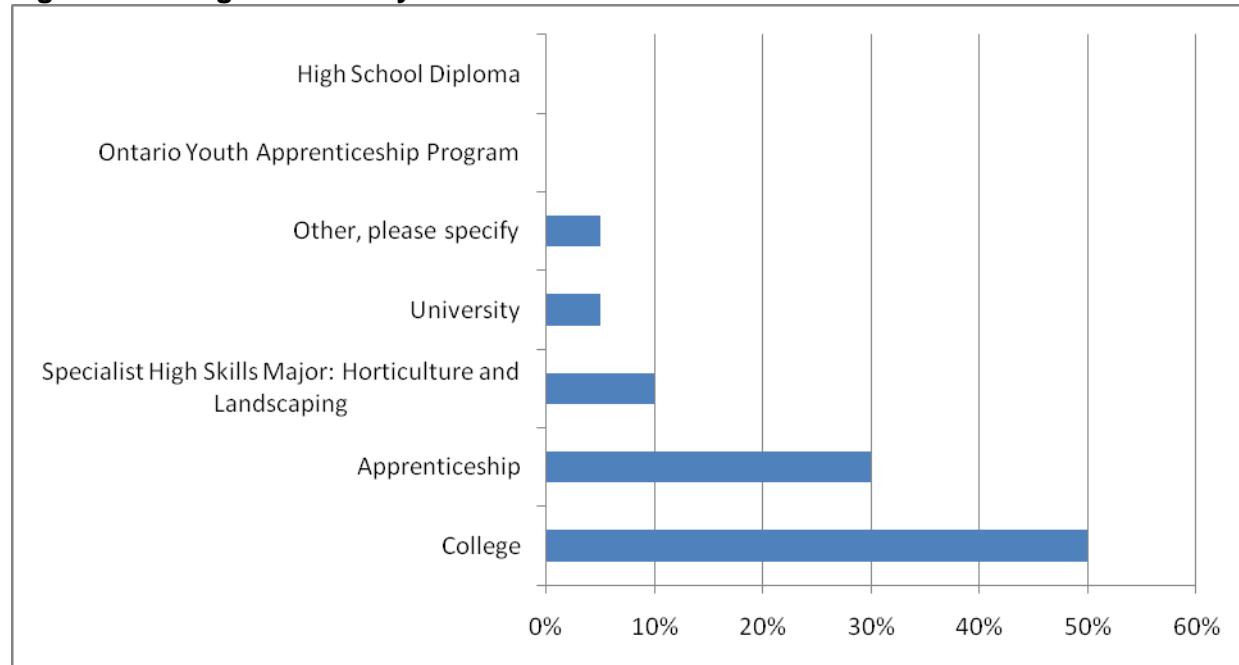
This survey was completed by current students or recent graduates of landscape horticulture programs offered at high school, college and university levels. 20 respondents filled out the survey including 6 partial surveys.

### 4.1 Respondent Demographics

#### *Program of Study*

Respondents were asked to indicate which program of study they were currently taking or had recently graduated from. 50% of respondents were involved in college programs. One indicated that they were involved in the continuing education program in horticulture studies at Sheridan College.

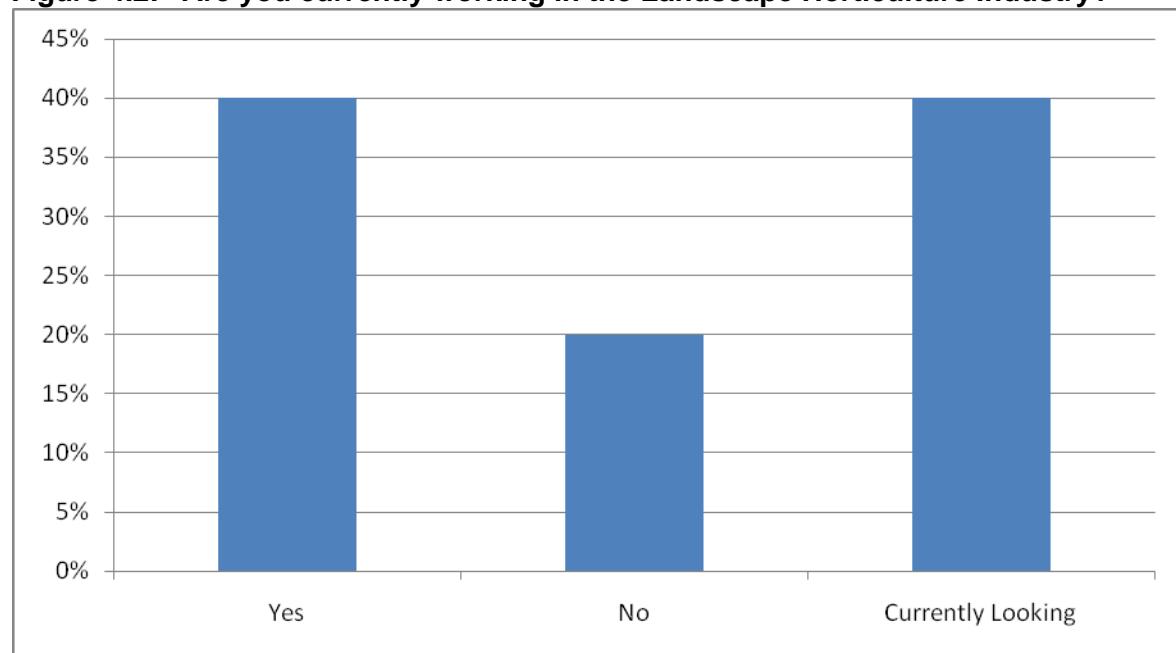
**Figure 4.1: Program of Study**



#### *Work Status*

Respondents were asked to indicate if they were currently working, not working or currently looking for work in the landscape horticulture industry. 40% indicated that they were currently working in the industry, while an additional 40% indicated that they were looking for work in the industry.

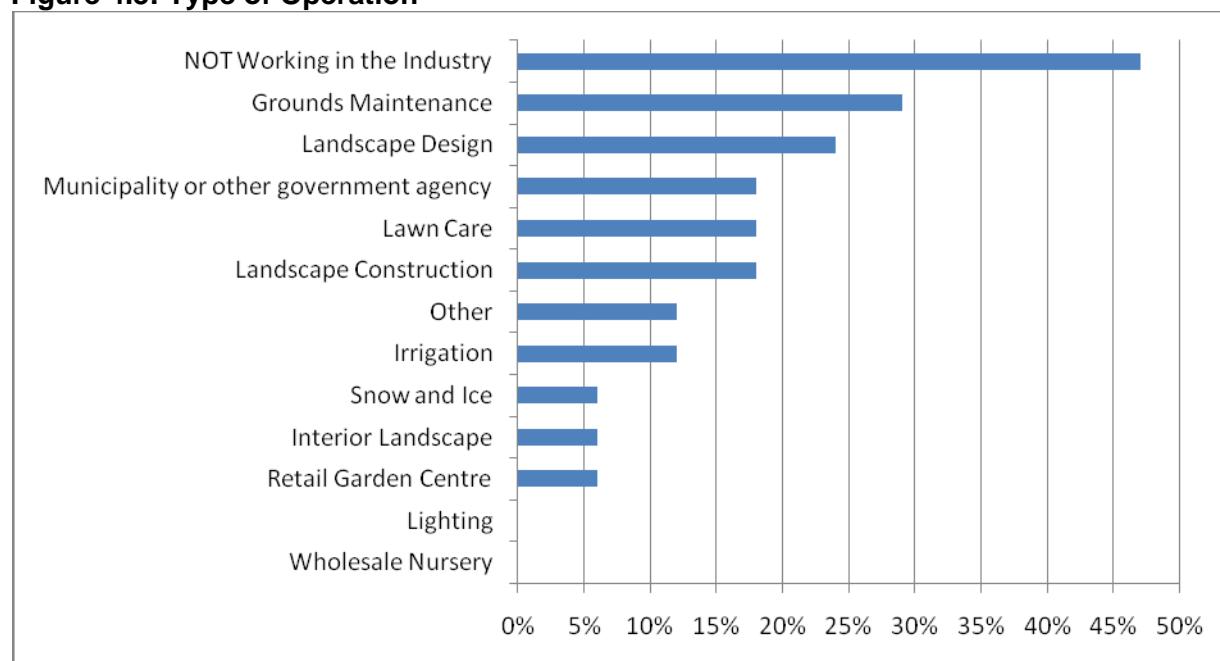
**Figure 4.2: “Are you currently working in the Landscape Horticulture Industry?”**



#### *Type of Operation*

Those respondents working in the industry were asked what type of operation they worked for. They were asked to indicate all fields in which their employer operated. Figure 4.3 shows that 29% of respondents worked for a company that did grounds maintenance. Other responses included rooftop landscaping and botany.

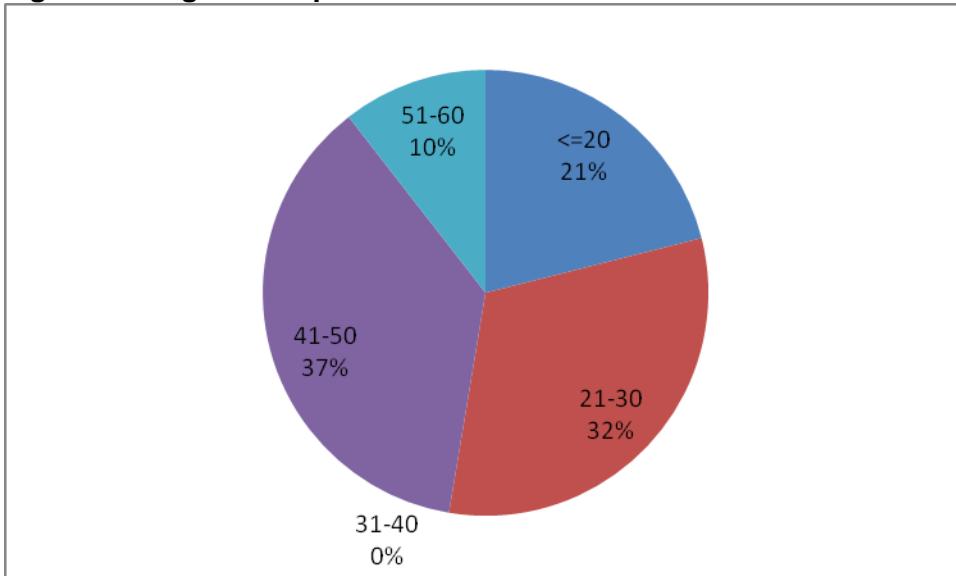
**Figure 4.3: Type of Operation**



## *Age*

Figure 4.4 shows that 53% of respondents were under 30, while 37% were between the ages of 41-50. The results indicate that people in varying stages of their career are undertaking studies in the industry or changing careers to be a part of the industry.

**Figure 4.4: Age of Respondents**



## *Gender*

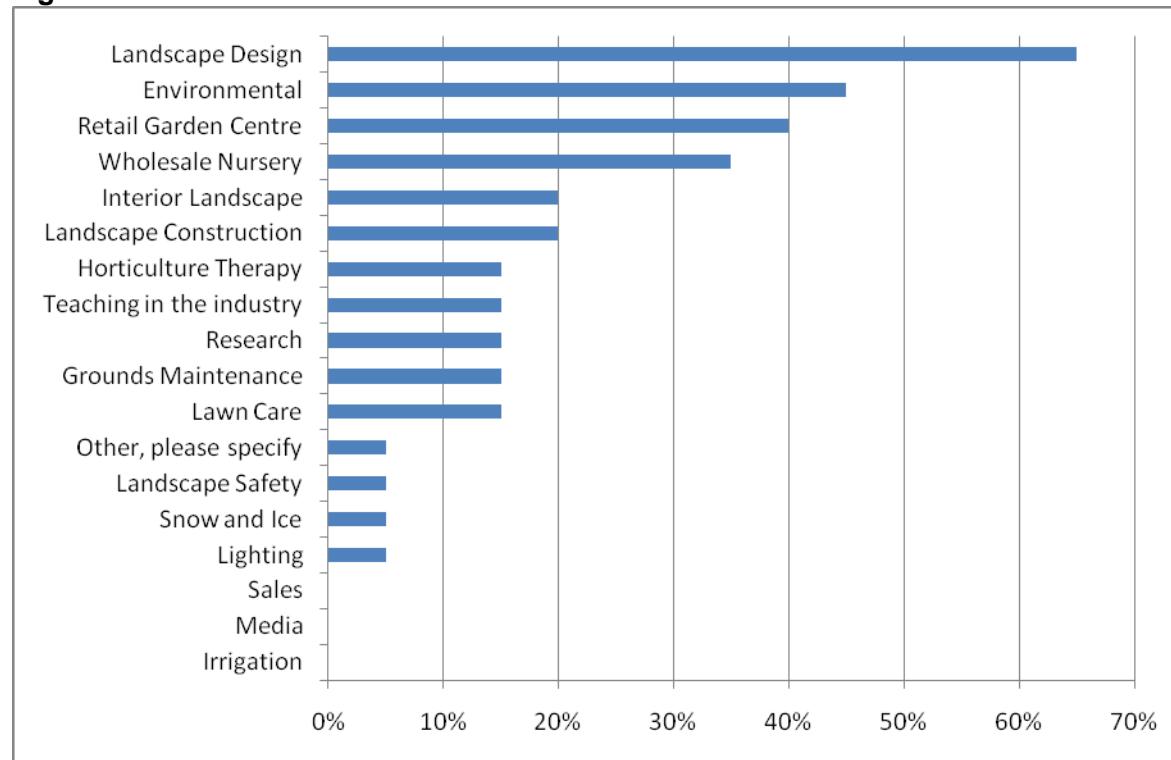
Unlike the results for employees, 90% of respondents in the student survey were women. With a small sample size it is difficult to draw any conclusions about gender from this survey.

## *Career Choice.*

The landscape horticulture industry is the career of choice for nearly all respondents. Two respondents indicated that they are undertaking this career later in life after pursuing other options prior to work in this industry.

Respondents were also asked to indicate which areas within the industry they would like to work, **65% indicated that they would like to work in landscape design**. One respondent indicated they would like to work within the floral sector of the industry.

**Figure 4.5: Desired Sector of Work**

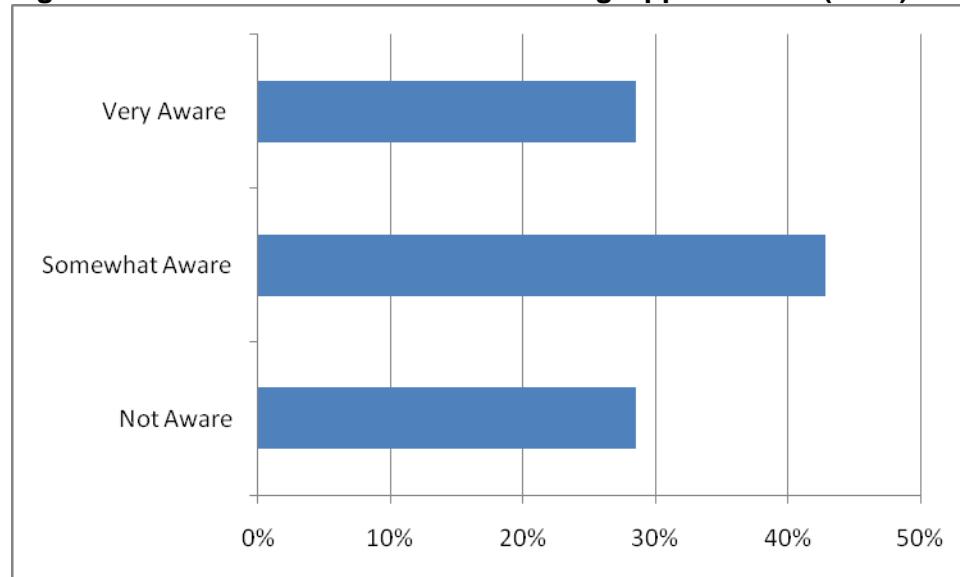


#### **4.2 Awareness of Training Opportunities**

Respondents were provided with a list of programs available and asked a series of questions about their awareness of industry related training programs.

Awareness of programs varied greatly among this group with some indicating that they were aware of only one or two programs, and some indicating that they had a more complete knowledge of training programs available to them. Overall, **71% indicated that they were at least somewhat aware of programs available.**

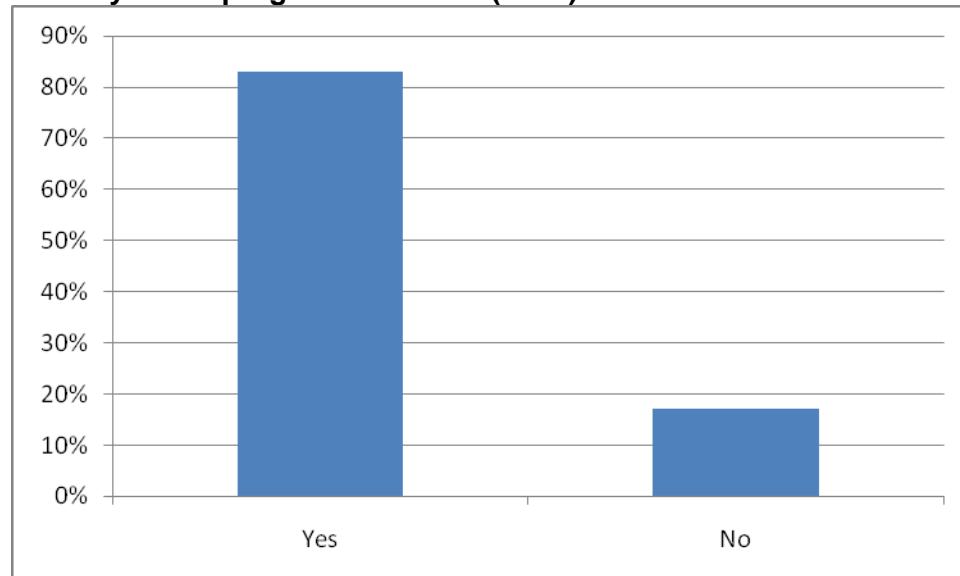
**Figure 4.6: Previous Awareness of Training Opportunities (n=14)**



*School/Industry Awareness of Programs*

Students were asked if they felt there was a lack of awareness within the school system/industry of the programs offered. Seven respondents offered their comments on awareness within industry and schools. Comments focused on the lack of programs available and the need for better advertising of programs and courses that do exist.

**Figure 4.7: In your opinion, is there a lack of awareness within the school system/industry of the programs offered? (n=18)**



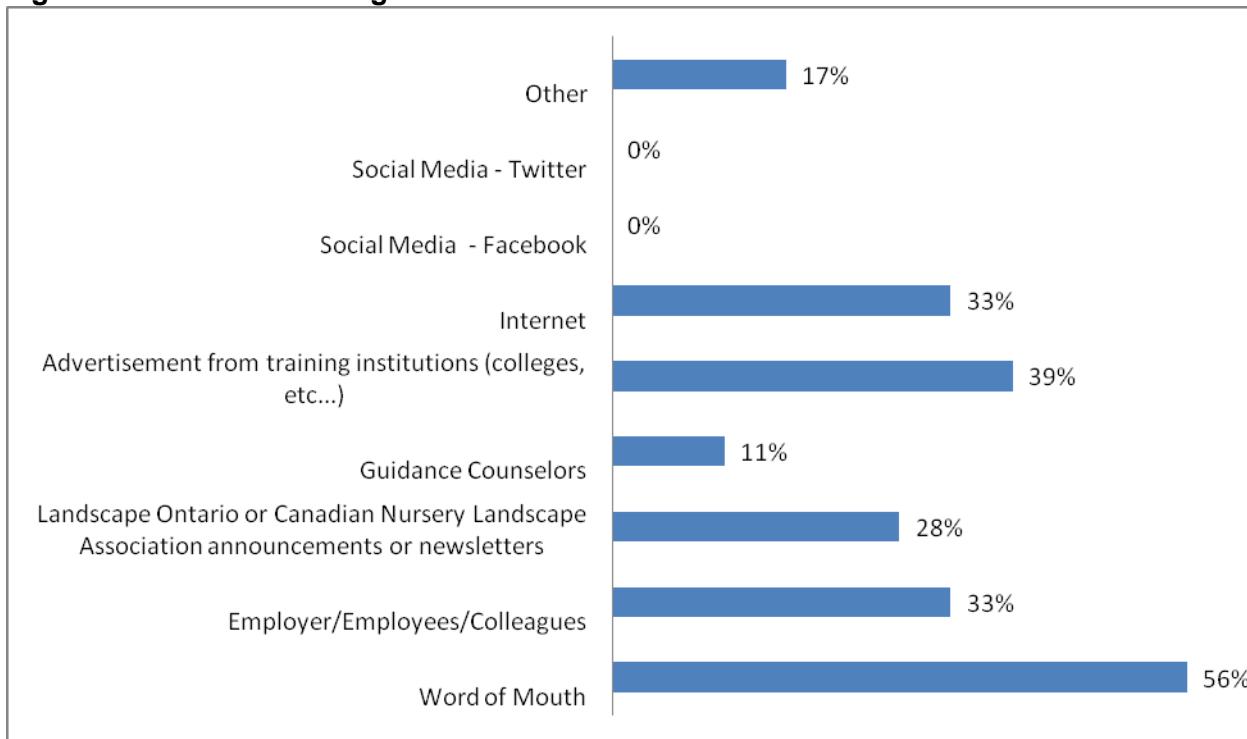
When asked how students were made aware of their current program responses were:

- From college website
- Newspaper
- Friend/Family
- Magazine

- School program guide
- Program Instructor
- Brochure
- College Counsellor
- Design Conference

When asked about sources for other industry programs most respondents used word of mouth as their primary source with advertising from the training institutions as the second most common source. Other sources mentioned were high school guidance counsellors. Word of mouth was not defined within the survey, and respondents may have selected both employer/employees/colleagues as well as word of mouth. Other sources were not specifically identified by respondents.

**Figure 4.8: Sources of Program Information**



When asked “**what would improve youth and student awareness of training programs offered in this industry?**” respondents provided a number of potential methods to create more awareness. These include:

- Awareness campaigns in industry
- Awareness campaigns in high schools
- Advertising in nurseries and garden centres
- Visits to high schools by industry advocates
- Visits to high schools from college staff promoting programs
- Increased internet presence

Students were then asked to provide their insights into the skilled labour shortage in the industry. Respondents offered several possible reasons for this shortfall.

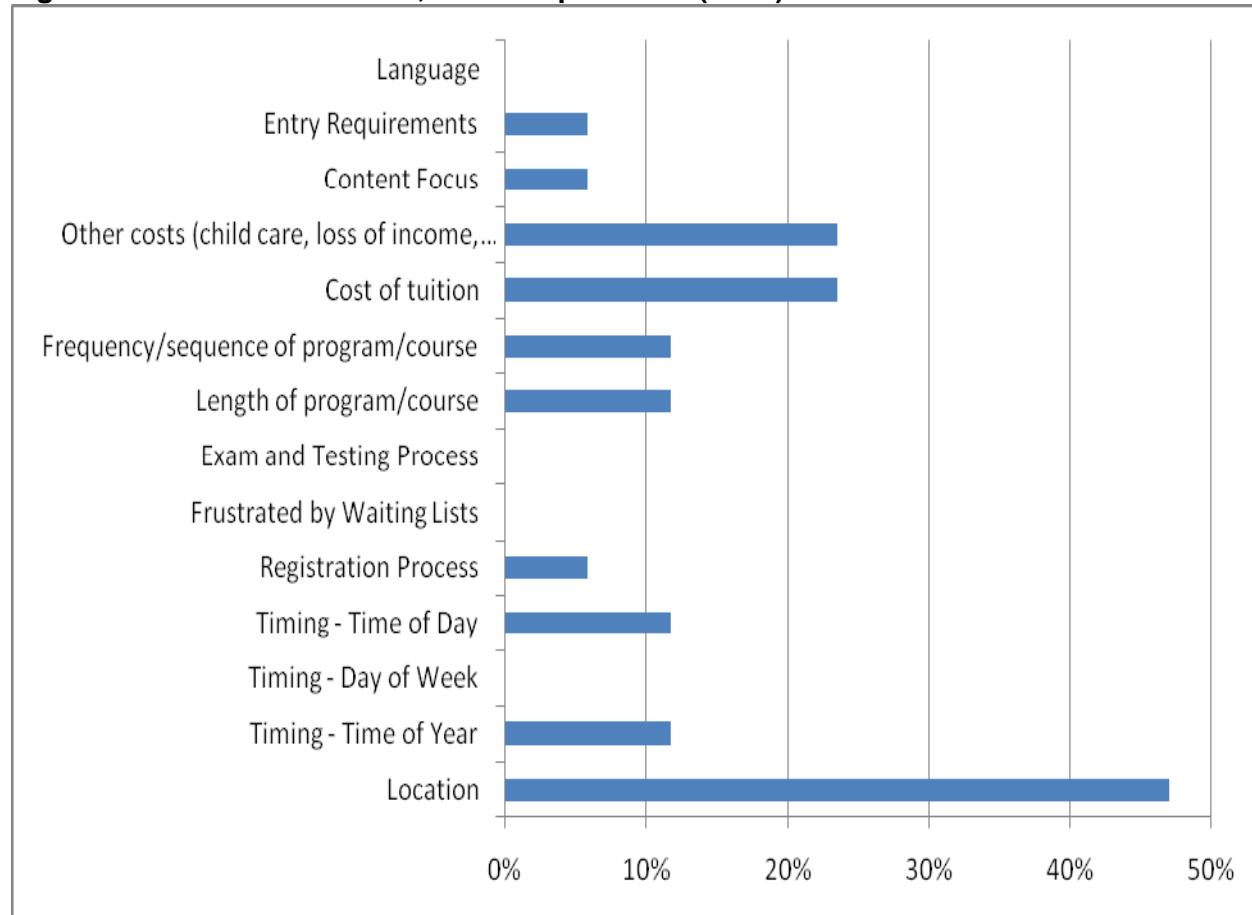
- Lack of communication about the need for skilled workers in the workplace and in high schools

- Low awareness among potential students for training programs
- Not enough communication about the variety of areas within landscape horticulture
- Graduates are being hired for maintenance positions rather than positions in which their training may be used more effectively.
- New graduates of training programs have difficulty finding work due to lack of experience
- Physical nature of the job
  - Need to capitalize on societal trend for healthy living and physical fitness
- High schools tend to encourage students away from trade careers
- Lack of appreciation within the industry for skilled workers
- Training is too expensive
- Wages are low, which discourages people from entering the trade

### 4.3 Access Barriers

Students in training programs have often overcome barriers that may have prevented them from seeking training. Participants were asked to identify barriers that could have prevented them from taking training programs or courses. Respondents felt that location was most likely to prevent them from attending courses that are provided. Both tuition and other costs of attending programs were the second most likely factor to prevent students from entering into training programs.

**Figure 4.9: Identified Barriers, % of Respondents (n=17)**



## **Location**

Students noted that programs were often offered far from their home location which required either relocation or commuting in order to undertake their programs.

## **Time of the Year**

Students noted that most college courses were offered with only fixed start dates once per year which may have prevented them from starting the course earlier.

## **Time of the day**

Some students prefer to take courses during the day while others prefer evening courses. This preference is largely dependent on the individual situation of the student.

## **Length of the Program**

One respondent felt that programs could be condensed into shorter time periods so that students could complete a diploma in 1.5 years and a degree in three years.

## **Frequency/sequence of program/course**

One respondent noted again that because the program they entered was only offered once per year they had to wait in order to start their program.

## **Tuition Costs**

Respondents noted that tuition costs for the programs were high; however another noted that perhaps other options would have been as expensive (university).

## **Other Costs**

One student mentioned child care and transportation costs, while another mentioned that they are pursing studies on a part time basis in order to maintain salary and benefits while training.

## **Content Focus**

One respondent felt that the content of the program did not always meet their needs to pursuing career goals.

## **Entry Requirements**

One respondent felt that continuing education programs in horticulture be made available to interested parties regardless of high school completion.

## **Other Barriers**

Respondents once again noted that the location of horticulture programs was the largest potential barrier. Also the class schedules for post secondary education tend to be full time, leaving few options for potential students who are working or have other commitments during these hours.

## Barrier Improvements

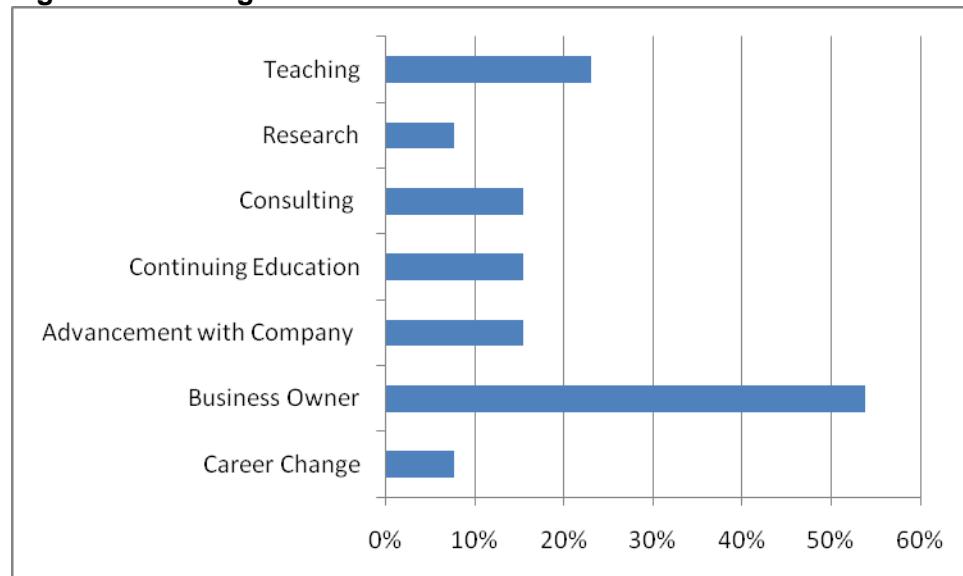
Students were asked to provide suggestions to help remove potential barriers that exist.

- Students noted they felt in some cases instructors lacked appropriate levels of expertise or teaching skills
- One respondent suggested the creation of specialty apprenticeship, diploma or degree programs. This would streamline programs while giving students skills in specific areas in which they would like to pursue careers.
- Creating smaller programs in more locations
- Offering programs with start dates throughout the year

## 4.4 Skills Requirements and Curriculum

Students were asked about their long term career goals. Thirteen respondents provided comments. Responses are summarized in Figure 4.10. Business ownership was the goal of many respondents with 54% indicating that they hoped to own a company in the industry.

**Figure 4.10: Long Term Goals**



Students were asked what skills and programs would help them to achieve their goals. Some respondents indicated that current training programs available are sufficient for them to achieve their goals. Other suggestions include:

- Business/Management courses
- Horticulture Therapy
- Arborist training
- Machinery maintenance
- Costing courses
- Organizational and other management skills
- Courses for teaching landscape horticulture

Respondents were asked about the curriculum of specific training programs that they are currently taking or had attended.

## **Secondary and Post Secondary Programs**

Students were asked to provide comment on the following questions for secondary and post secondary programs:

- To what extent do the programs provide the appropriate skills to youth, mature students and students?
- Do you feel that the curriculum covers the skills required to work in the industry?
- Based on your knowledge of the industry is the curriculum up to date?
- Is something missing from the curriculum?
- What could be improved?

Comments provided were:

- “I think that Landscape Construction can be reduced to one instead of 2 courses while more focus on botany and landscape design would better benefit those that want to focus on the botany itself.”
- “More business/management courses”
- More hands-on, in-the-field training to prepare for work in the industry would be beneficial
- “Based on what I see in garden centres and some landscaping businesses, the courses I am currently taking would provide the appropriate skills. I don't know enough about the industry to determine whether or not the curriculum is up-to-date.”
- “The curriculum covers most of the skills required but sometimes it's very one sided (only veg crops, only flowering crops), hands-on tasks are a must to keep interest and to make sure that we are learning the skills thus being able to bring this into the industry”
- “These programs provide us with the basic skills to go forth and continue our learning process. They could work more in favour of our continued learning by perhaps offering a course dedicated to all the new things coming and how they work and effect what is exciting.”
- “Not much experience in the use of equipment”.
- “Weed science and identification of weeds should be included in the curriculum of pre-apprenticeship”
- “I think that Fanshawe has done a great job getting its students ready for the work force. Teachers are all still participating in the field not just teaching and have years of experience”
- The co-op terms are helpful but having a better system to help students who do not have any connections get a job would be good.”

## **Horticultural Technician Apprenticeship Program / Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program / Women in Skilled Trades**

Respondents offered few comments on these programs due to their lack of experience with them. However they did indicate that they felt an exam preparation course seemed like a good idea.

## **Other Course Suggestions**

Students were asked if there were other courses that they felt would help them in the landscape industry. Responses in addition to those provided previously were:

- Machinery Use Course
- Extended environmental course

## Industry / Training Institution Communication

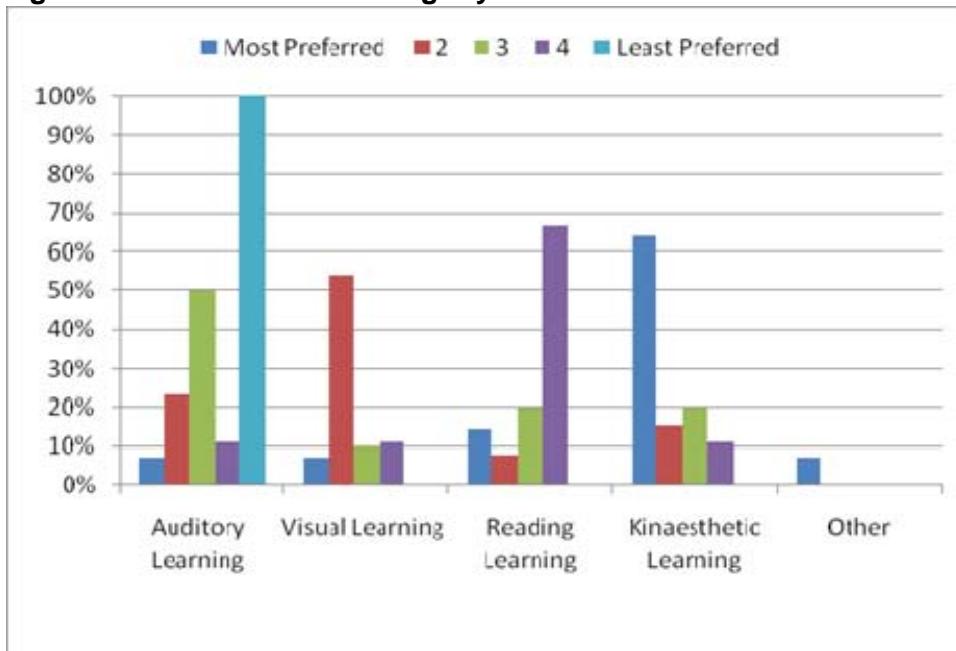
Respondents were asked to indicate if they believed that training institutions worked with the industry in order to graduate students with knowledge and skills needed in the workforce. While 75% of respondents felt that training institutions were working with industry to meet requirements, others offered comments about what could be done differently:

- Program staff assumed that students had background in the industry, whereas material presented was often completely new to students
- Shadowing could be done by program staff to better understand the needs of industry
- Some programs are using dated techniques that are no longer relevant to industry

### 4.5 Delivery Methods

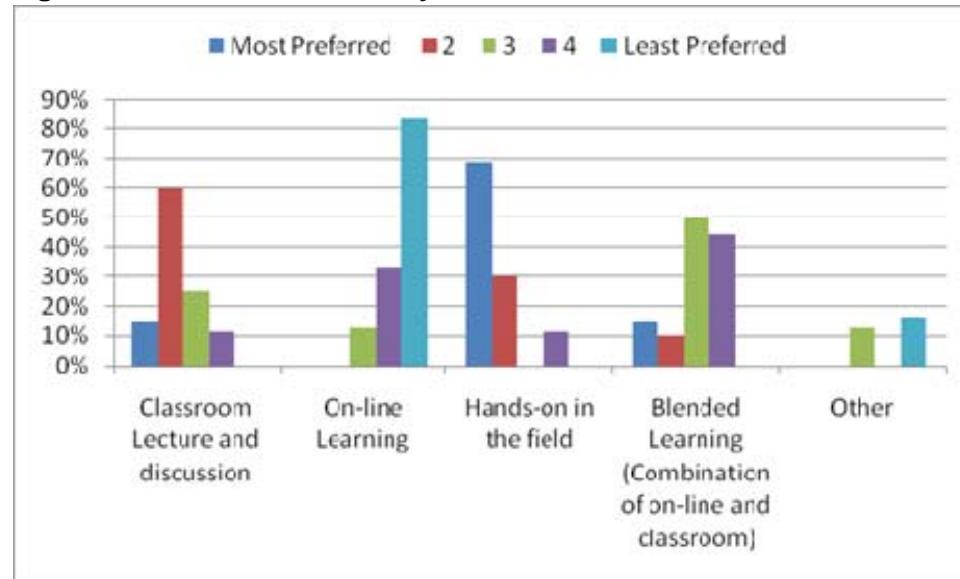
Students were asked how they preferred to learn. Students showed a clear preference for kinaesthetic and visual learning over other learning styles.

**Figure 4.11: Preferred Learning Style**



Students were also asked about their preferred delivery methods. Not surprisingly, given the results of preferred learning style, hands-on learning is the most preferred delivery method among student respondents. Perhaps more surprisingly is that online learning was ranked 5<sup>th</sup> among delivery methods by 80% of respondents.

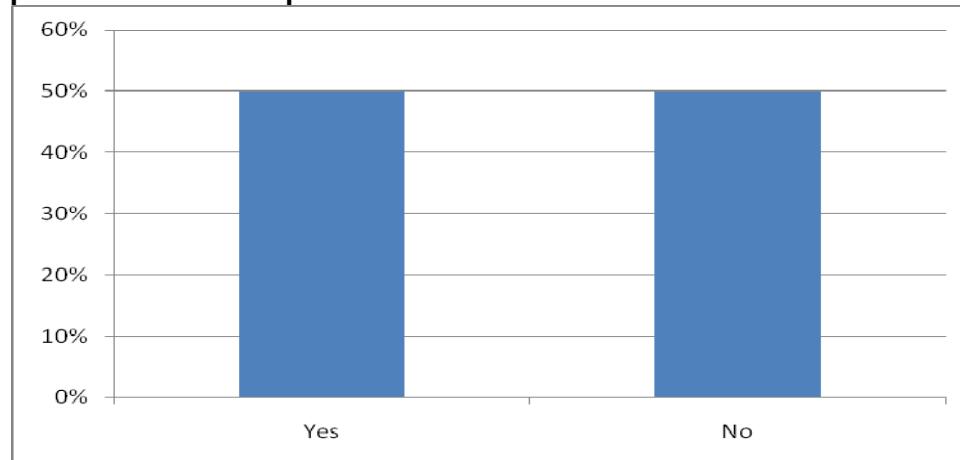
**Figure 4.12: Preferred Delivery Method**



#### 4.6 Training Culture

Respondents were asked a series of questions about the training culture in their work place. Responses about the professional development culture in their place of employment were evenly split among the eight respondents. Comments indicated that employers were reluctant to train employees and perhaps could have benefited from courses in managing a workforce.

**Figure 4.13: “Do you feel that within your place of employment there is/was a culture of professional development?”**



Students indicated a desire to undergo additional industry training while working, while four of nine respondents indicated that they were currently doing this.

Five of 8 respondents indicated that their employer supports employees who wish to develop skills and/or attend training programs. One respondent indicated that their employer would allow time off for training if the employee found a training program they wished to attend.

Only two of seven students indicated that their employer provided incentives to develop skills or participate in training programs.

And, only one respondent (n=9) said that they had training or career path development plans in their workplace. Four respondents were unsure if this was available to them. Two respondents felt that career path development and training plans would encourage them to stay in the industry long term.

Results from the student survey must be used with caution given that only 20 students provided responses to our survey.

## 5. Educator and Guidance Counsellor Survey Results

Forty-four educators and guidance councillors filled out the survey, including 14 partial completions.

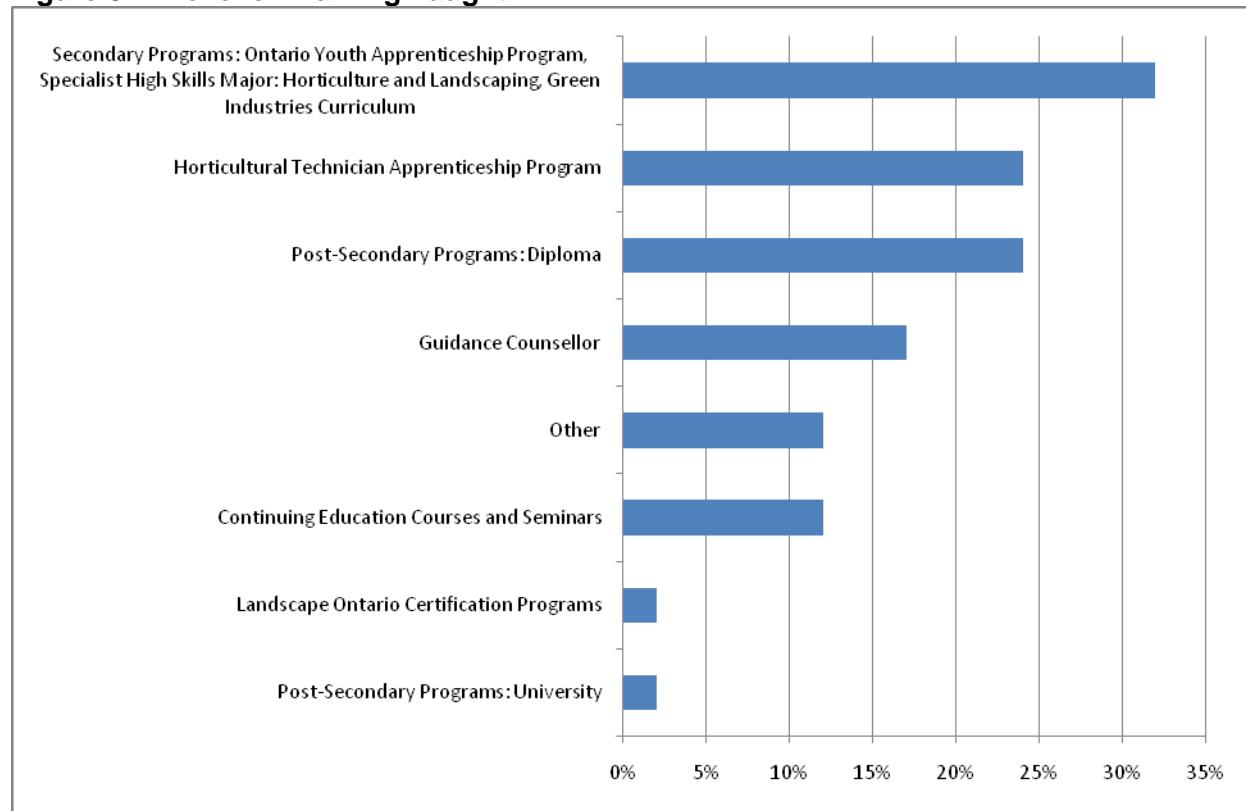
### 5.1 Respondent Demographics

Respondents were asked to indicate which category of program they taught. Respondents indicated that they were involved in a variety of different levels of programs teaching skills in landscape horticulture.

Other responses from those who are not currently involved in teaching include

- Industry education council
- Retired educator
- Apprenticeship program promoter
- Horticulture industry group
- Experiential youth programs outside of the classroom

**Figure 5.1: Level of Training Taught**



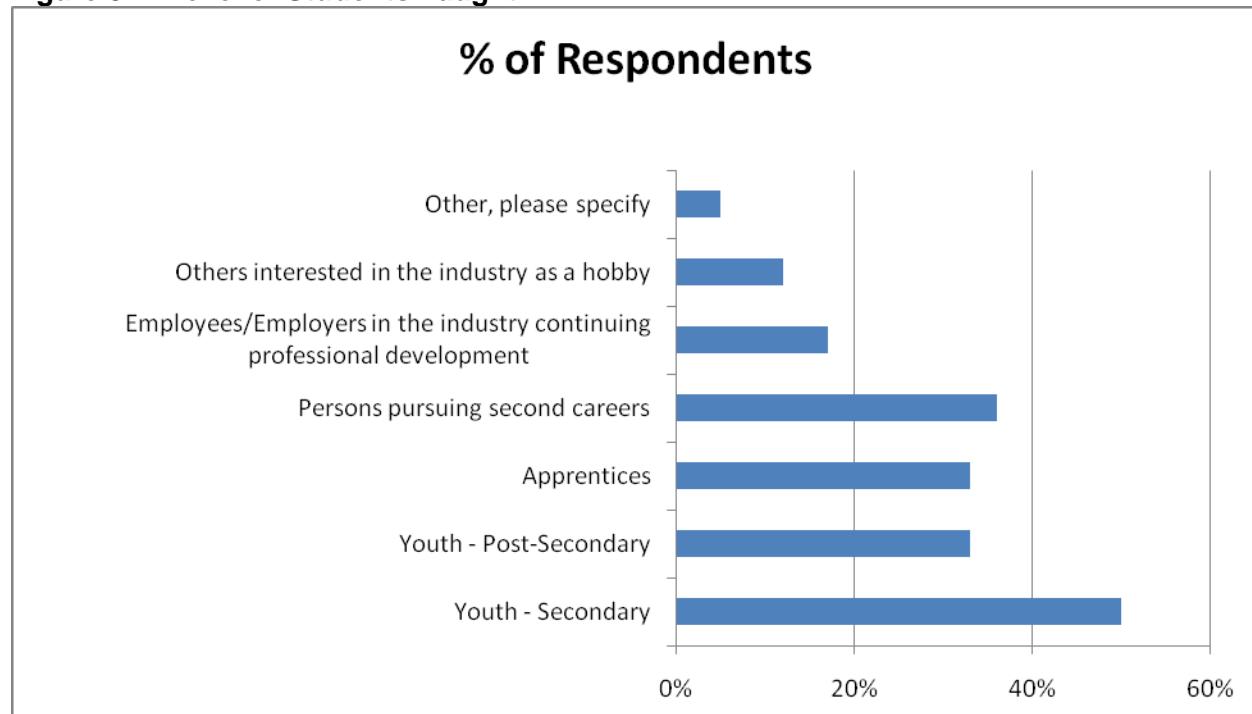
Respondents were also asked to indicate if they were working or had worked in the Landscape Horticulture industry. 59% of 41 respondents indicated that they had experience working in the industry. Respondents offered various levels of experience from summer students to more than 40 years in the industry, as well as various sectors of the industry. Sectors indicated by respondents were:

- Lawn Care
- Landscaping

- Commercial greenhouse
- Nursery
- Landscape Design
- Golf Course Maintenance
- Landscape Maintenance
- Floral Design

Educators were asked to indicate who students are in the courses/programs that they taught (ie: what category would best describe they teach). Most respondents were teaching courses or programs to youth either at the secondary or post-secondary level. Only 7 (n=27) said that they were involved in training for continuing professional development.

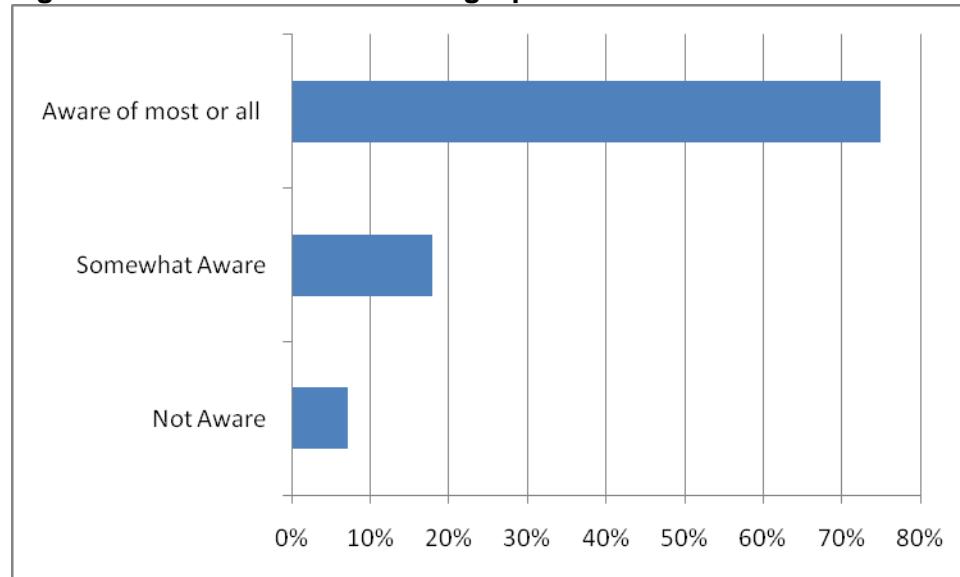
**Figure 5.2: Level of Students Taught**



## 5.2 Awareness of Training Opportunities

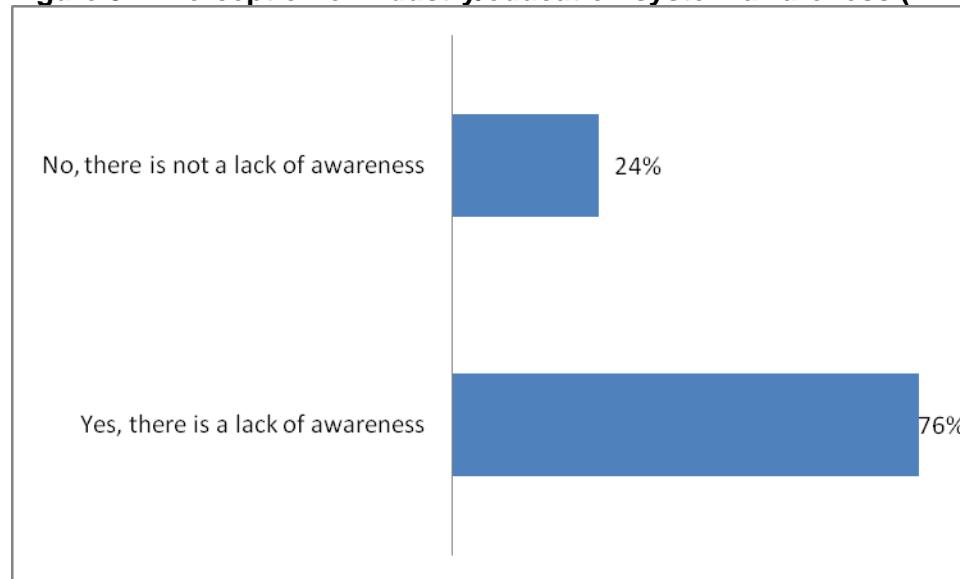
Educators were given a list of programs and courses that are available to students and asked about their level of awareness of training programs in Ontario for the Landscape Horticulture industry. 75% (n=28) of respondents felt they were aware of all or most training options available. Only 2 respondents felt that they were not aware of these programs before reading the list supplied.

**Figure 5.3: Awareness of Training Options**



When asked if they perceived a lack of awareness in the industry/education system most respondents indicated that they felt there was a lack of awareness. Comments were made that while educators were aware of programs; this often was not well communicated to potential students both at the high school and industry levels.

**Figure 5.4: Perception of industry/education system awareness (n=28)**



Given the perceived lack of awareness indicated above, educators provided many suggestions on improving awareness. Most focused on improving communication between various stakeholders: high school students; high school guidance counsellors; employers; Ministry officials; and industry workers. Specific suggestions from the survey are found below:

- “The ‘Adopt a School’ program is an excellent idea that has not really taken off. I have had industry representatives in my classroom and they have been excellent in speaking

of the realities of the workplace. Perhaps a regional L.O. rep could make it a priority to forge these relationships."

- "An outreach team representing ALL education opportunities would facilitate awareness"
- "... more general public focused advertising highlighting the training and qualifications of people in the industry"
- "We would be pleased to partner with you to deliver this information as part of our "Adventures In" series to grade 8 and secondary students in our area"
- "Better dissemination of information to employers and employees is a key point, especially for smaller organizations. Perhaps a database or mailing list of landscape industry companies for distribution of information"
- "Events that employers can attend to mingle with educators"
- "Landscape forums"

Educators were then given the opportunity to discuss how they felt industry training information could best be presented to them.

- Electronic information was very popular
- It was suggested that the e-newsletter that from Landscape Ontario to school boards should be enhanced
- Seminars from Landscape Ontario on opportunities have been found to be helpful
- Standardized Province-wide information on programs available
- Expanded presence at training seminars and professional development days
- Sponsorship of Ontario Federation of Teacher's summer institute
- They noted that HOSTA was doing a good job of providing information to secondary school teachers

When asked to give their opinion on why there was a shortage of skilled labour in the industry respondents provided a variety of answers most of which were consistent with answers provided by other survey respondents.

- Seasonality (n=12)
- Physicality of the job (n=6)
- Wages (n=9)
- Public perception of the industry, and skilled trades in general (n=9)
- Low return on investment for education, provides little incentive for workers to undergo training (n=2)
- Retirement of current labour force of skilled workers (n=1)
- Students are encouraged to pursue other fields (n=3)
- Industry regulations do not require workers to have education and training (n=2)
- Lack of understanding of what is required by workers to be successful in the industry (n=1)
- Lack of defined career path, other than owning own business (n=1)
- Employers are disorganized (n=1)

Additionally one respondent noted that there is a trend toward developing more skilled workers in the industry, but it is a transition that will take time.

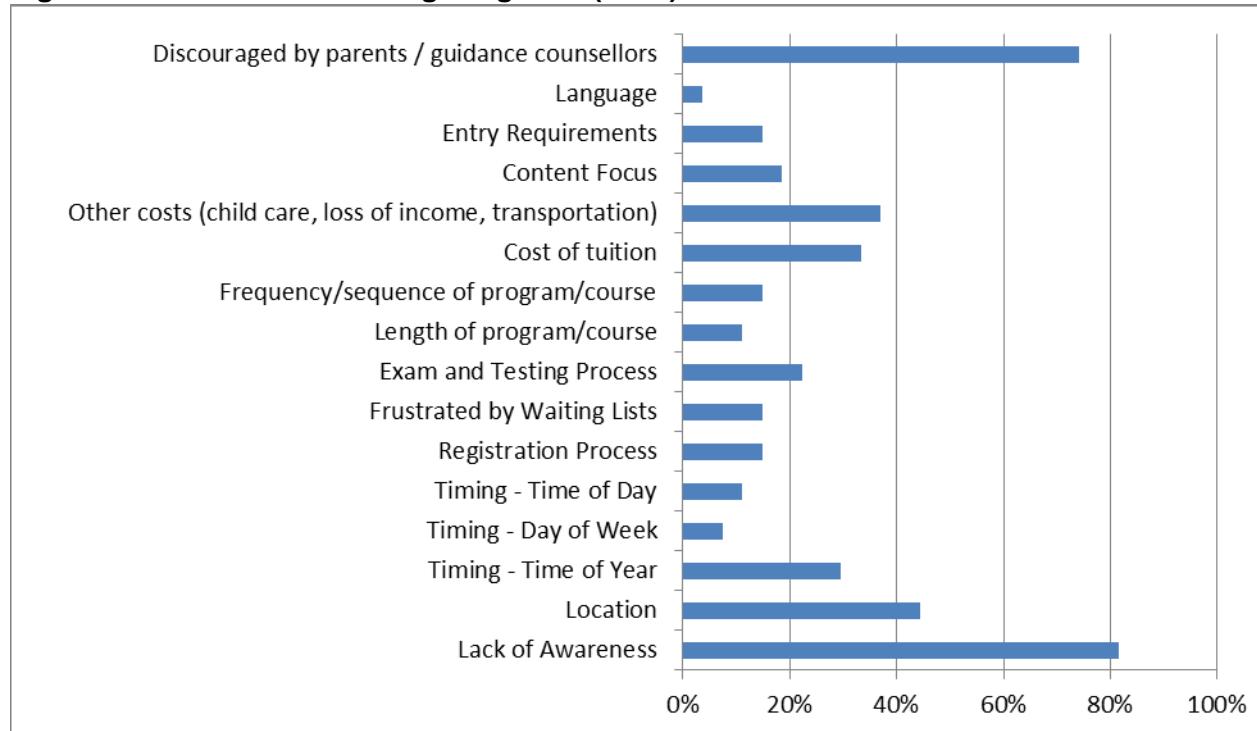
High school educators were asked about the motivation of their students to pursue courses in landscape horticulture, and judge whether their students were enrolled in these courses with the intention of pursuing a career in landscape horticulture. Most said that there was a mix of between 20-50% who are taking courses in an effort to explore a career in the landscape horticulture industry, while others are taking it because it offers something different from

traditional high school courses. One respondent noted that participation in this class was growing year over year, while another commented that having a passionate, dedicated teacher for these courses can convince some students who would not otherwise pursue this career to seriously look at it as an option.

### 5.3 Access and Training Barriers

Educators and guidance counsellors were asked to indicate what barriers might prevent their students from pursuing education and training for Secondary and Post-Secondary, Apprenticeship, Industry Certification or Continuing Education in the landscape horticulture industry. Lack of awareness and discouragement from parents or guidance counsellors were identified by most respondents as barriers to entry in these training programs.

**Figure 5.5: Barriers to Training Programs (n=27)**



#### Discouraged by parents/guidance counsellors

Educators mentioned many of the same issues mentioned above as reasons that students are discouraged by parents and guidance counsellors from pursuing training in horticulture. Most mentioned that this view is merely a perception on the part of the public and does not reflect the realities of the industry. One respondent felt that increasing professionalism within the industry would help to convince parents/guidance counsellors that this was a viable industry in which to make a career. Another respondent discussed the need to educate guidance counsellors about the industry.

#### Language

Language was mentioned as a barrier for new Canadians.

#### Entry Requirements

Educators felt that in the case of some students, the entry requirements did prevent capable students from entering into programs. Specifically the chemistry requirement for some programs was mentioned as a barrier.

### **Content Focus**

It was mentioned that some of the horticulture programs are too general to meet the needs of some students. It was suggested that more hands-on learning might help attract and retain students.

### **Other Costs**

The most common cost that was mentioned as a barrier was the loss of potential income. One respondent noted that if students have difficulty finding summer work in the industry and it affects their ability to pay for tuition they may switch to a different program entirely. Some respondents noted that the cost of transportation or relocation for some students may be prohibitive for post-secondary education.

### **Cost of Tuition**

Respondents indicated that tuition may be a barrier for some, particularly as employers in the industry are reluctant to spend money to train employees. One respondent indicated that this barrier can be overcome by working in the industry to gain some experience as well as increase savings prior to entering into the program. Educators felt that this was more of a barrier for post-secondary and apprenticeship programs.

### **Frequency/sequence of program/course**

Courses with start dates once per year discourage students from entering training programs by forcing them to postpone further education. Respondents also indicated that the traditional September-May model for post-secondary education is not always the best fit for all programs. Additionally, the infrequency and inflexible schedule of courses may prevent some potential students from taking them.

### **Length of Program/Course**

Three respondents stated that the length of the program or course may prevent students from entering into training programs. This was backed up by a comment that two years of full-time day courses can be expensive; this is true both in terms of tuition but also lost income.

### **Exam and Testing Process**

Six respondents indicated that the exam and testing process may be a barrier to entry in some programs. Some of our respondents noted that testing should be available at more times during the year. One indicated that students were interested in the CHT certificate but felt that the testing may be too difficult so they did not attempt it.

### **Frustrated by waiting lists**

One commenter noted that his own class often has a waiting list and that if more resources were available they could offer more slots for students.

## **Registration Process**

This barrier was particularly applicable to the apprenticeship programs in the opinion of our respondents. One respondent indicated that employers may not be well-informed about the relationship between government and colleges offering apprenticeship programs. Additionally, it was noted that for some programs the entrance requirements may be too high and that perhaps a medium level certificate with less advanced credit requirements may be helpful.

### **Timing – Time of the Day.**

One respondent noted that most courses are offered on weekdays and that there is very little continuing education offered at night.

### **Timing- Day of the week**

Very few respondents felt that the day of the week was a barrier for their students.

### **Timing- Time of Year**

Educators noted that at the secondary level they do not teach during the summer, but that students have difficulty finding work experience opportunities as most summer positions are filled by post-secondary students who have a longer summer period. Like employers, employees and students, they noted that courses should be provided in the winter as summer months are very busy for the industry. One commenter also noted that some students are required to wait for the start date of their program despite being ready for additional training sooner.

### **Location**

Most of the respondents who provided comments noted a need to expand these programs particularly at the secondary school level beyond the regional level, allowing more students access to these programs. One suggestion was to fund transportation to facilitate students from other schools within the same school division to access programs that are already offered by the division. Additionally at the secondary school level, not all potential students are able to take advantage of apprenticeship or work experience opportunities due to lack of transportation to and from work site, as many do not have access to a vehicle or have a valid driver's licence.

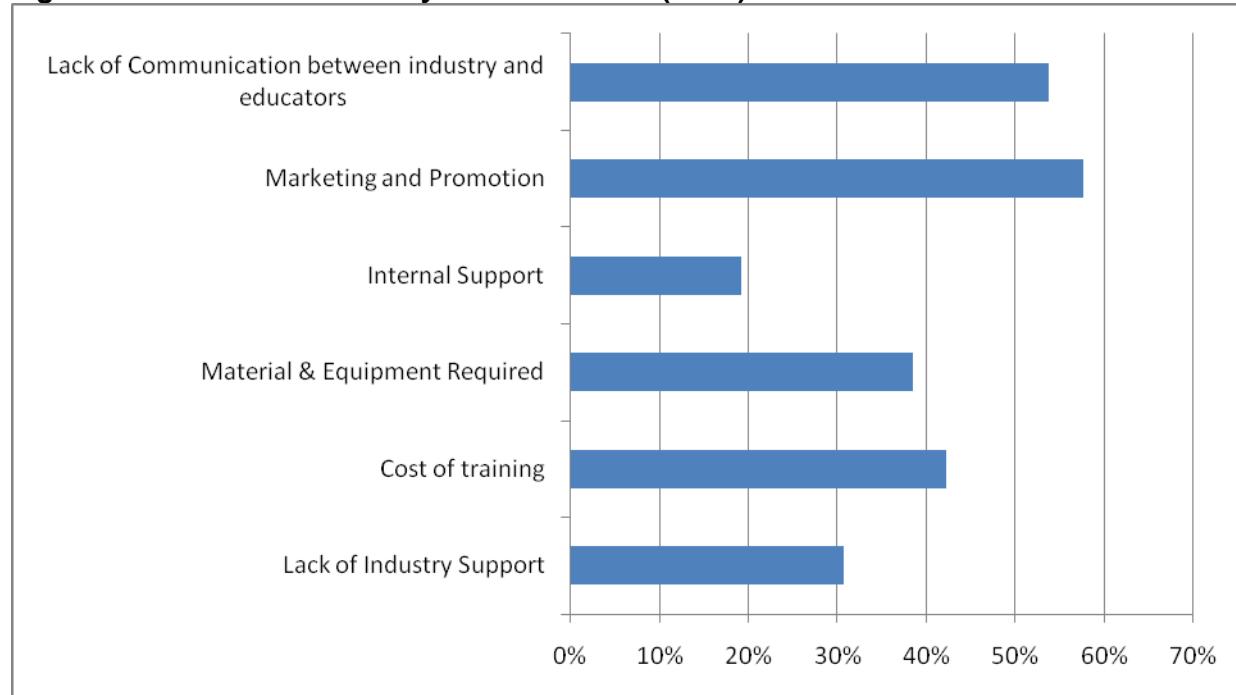
### **Lack of Awareness**

Twenty-four respondents indicated that lack of awareness was a barrier to entry for students. Respondents indicated this was particularly the case for apprenticeship programs, and that there was a need to make students more aware of programs available at all levels. They noted that at the secondary level, schools which offer green industry courses likely make students more aware of the opportunities for further education than those who do not offer these courses.

### ***Barriers to Delivery/Promotion***

Educators and Guidance Counsellors were also asked to provide feedback on barriers to delivery and promoting secondary, post secondary, apprenticeship, industry certification or continuing education programs. All of the barriers to promotion and delivery listed were considered barriers by at least 19% of respondents.

**Figure 5.6: Barriers to Delivery and Promotion (n=26)**



### **Lack of Communication between Industry and Educators**

**54% percent of respondents indicated that a lack of communication** between the two parties made it difficult to promote and offer training programs to potential students.

- Assessment to determine the needs of the industry would help trainers to determine what is needed in programs
- Industry should be more involved in helping schools find placements for students
- Educators feel that they reach out to the industry, but that the industry does not communicate back to them
- Suggested SHSM and LO day to improve communication between the two parties

### **Marketing and Promotion**

Marketing and support was indicated by 58% of respondents as a barrier to promotion and delivery of training programs.

- Time and money allotted for promotion of the program by secondary school teachers is considered insufficient by one commenter.
- Secondary schools do not have much experience in promoting specific courses, as most courses are compulsory and thus do not require promotion
- Post secondary opportunities need to be promoted more as awareness is a major issue
- Students may be more likely to enroll in programs if there was more indication of potential jobs at the end of the program
  - Need to have more participation from industry in listing job opportunities for students
- Programs should be promoted as a bundle
- The promotion of benefits of program need to take precedence in advertising over the availability of programs

- Landscape Horticulture programs are not promoted by post secondary institutions to the same extent as other programs

### **Internal Support**

Respondents felt that in some cases guidance counsellors or senior administration do not value skilled trades and push students and resources away from these programs.

- Needs to be more consistency in support of landscape horticulture programs from school to school, is currently highly dependent on support from senior administration and varies significantly
- Need to encourage support from administration
- Need to hire educators with more experience in the industry to teach at colleges and universities

### **Material and Equipment Required**

Comments generally noted that training programs in landscape horticulture lack the materials necessary to expose students to a wide variety of areas in the field.

- Schools offering SHSM programs are better equipped than other schools to offer secondary students exposure to the industry, but not all schools can afford to offer the SHSM
- It is difficult for schools to obtain capital required to upgrade existing equipment to teach new techniques
- Properly delivered programs require significant resources
- Using old equipment may pose safety issues to students

### **Cost of Training**

Respondents offered a number of comments on the cost of training in landscape horticulture programs

- With various certificate programs it is difficult to allocate funding to the correct programs.
- Fees for some certificate programs were too high to fit in schools' training program budgets
- The cost of developing training programs at various levels is considered a constraint by some respondents
- Educators would like to be able to offer more field trips for students to offer more familiarization with the industry, however these are high cost
- Colleges do not fund training programs in Landscape Horticulture as well as they do other skilled trades programs
- Programs lack administration funding
- Sponsorship from the industry might help schools to fund some of the training

### **Lack of Industry Support**

The major concern for educators and guidance counsellors was that it is difficult to align schedules between schools and industry to offer training at times that suit both groups. They also indicated that people in the industry as a whole are perhaps too busy to be helpful in promoting programs.

## Other Potential Barriers

Other barriers that were noted by respondents pertained to the relationship of training programs to the Ministry and school boards

- Funding is needed from government
- "School Board and Ministry budgeting, spending, and reporting deadlines make it very difficult to respond to seasonal, time-sensitive opportunities that would be very beneficial in presenting the broad realities of the Horticulture / Landscaping sector."

### *Suggestions for Removal of Barriers*

Respondents were asked to provide suggestions to improve the delivery and promotion of programs and courses.

- "Administrators, Board, and Ministry personnel need to be aware that one size does not fit all."
- "Industry can seek to align some continuing education at our school (e.g. night school) where students can get involved or hold their certifications at our school during the school day."
- "Get industry involved by providing summer employment opportunities and equipment/materials to programs on a demonstration, promotional or below manufacturer cost basis to encourage the development of these programs. I have no difficulty getting donations of plant material or arborist mulch but screenings, top soil, triple mix and brick are issues as well as specialized equipment like aerators, excavating equipment and large mowers."
- "More hands-on approach in association with industry"
- Provide hands-on training first, then information and classroom based courses
- Offer more online information and courses
- Hire more full time staff
- Improve relationships between high schools and colleges to ensure students have skills necessary to be successful.

## **5.4 Skills Requirements and Curriculum**

Educators were asked to discuss curriculum development for their course or programs. Educators are often guided by Ministry curriculum requirements and then expand on these requirements based on a variety of considerations.

- Input from industry (n=5)
- Input from Parent Advisory Council (n=1)
- Desired outcomes, needs and goals of students (n=2)
- Adjustments due to class size (n=1)
- Links to other courses that students are taking (n=1)
- Skills, abilities and experience of trainer (n=1)

When asked how they keep the curriculum current, educators noted that they were required to go beyond the curriculum outlined by the Ministry. They often noted that they meet with industry to discuss needs and innovations within the industry. Internal reviews and discussions with students also help to shape curriculum. Many noted they were using online resources to help teach students. Field trips and other industry experiential activities are used by educators to provide examples of how skills and techniques are being used in the workforce.

**62% of respondents indicated that their curriculum is reviewed by industry.** This is generally done by an industry advisory committee or by educators contacting industry. There was a general note that these reviews are done but not regularly, and that despite what is in the curriculum no one is monitoring what is actually taught to students in the classroom.

When asked if they were able to receive feedback from the industry on course curriculum 76% (n=21) said that they were. This indicates that while the industry doesn't review the curriculum for all programs, their input is considered. This varies depending on the level of program taught as high school curriculums are not required to be reviewed by industry, but most college level programs are reviewed by industry committees. Comments were that local industry is not able to influence the province wide curriculum and that industry groups have very little influence over what is actually presented to students; however educators do make efforts to include industry in course planning.

Educators and Guidance counsellors were asked to provide their insights on the various levels of training programs based on their experiences.

### **Secondary and Post Secondary Programs**

- To what extent do the programs provide the appropriate skills to youth, mature students and students?
- Do you feel that the curriculum covers the skills required to work in the industry?
- Is the curriculum up to date?
- Is something missing from the curriculum?
- What could be improved?

Comments provided were:

- SHSM provide appropriate skills because requirements are clearly defined and funding is provided for these programs
- Time constraints prevent students from obtaining full range of skills
- Secondary programs are new and are somewhat customizable to align with apprenticeship and certification
  - Leads to programs not being standardized from school to school, graduates of different programs graduate with different skills
  - Need to standardize programs to allow more continuity from high school to college to certification and apprenticeship
- Topics are well covered but relationships to real world scenarios is sometimes lacking
- Not enough emphasis on current trends and sustainable practices
- Need more business courses as most students go on to run their own businesses
- Some colleges are providing up to date programs
- University programs should include technical and industry skill course

### **Horticultural Technician Apprenticeship Program / Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program / Women in Skilled Trades**

- To what extent do the programs provide the appropriate skills to youth, mature students and students?
- Do you feel that the curriculum covers the skills required to work in the industry?
- Is the curriculum up to date?
- Is something missing from the curriculum?
- What could be improved?

- Would an exam preparation course be beneficial to complete Apprenticeship and become a Journey person (CofQ)?

Comments provided about these programs were:

- Turf and IPM need to be revised in the apprenticeship program
- Students entering this program vary widely in basic skills such as math
  - Suggest pre-testing in English and math
  - Suggest advanced courses for students who have grasp of basic skills
- Exam preparation course would be a great help to students particularly advance level apprentices to challenge the C of Q exam.
- Horticulture Technician Apprenticeship Program should be split into general horticulture and landscape specialities
- Plant Identification course needs to be updated to reflect trends in the industry

### **Industry Certification Designations**

- To what extent does the curriculum cover the appropriate skills for each designation?
- Is the testing up to date?
- Is something missing from the testing in any of the designations?
- What could be improved?

Comments were:

- The CLP tests a small subset of skills and knowledge
- Recommended standardization
- Suggested graduated levels of training for certification to match age and skill levels
- Provide certification for courses taken
- Update testing methods to include more logic and less recitation

### **Continuing Education and Seminars**

- To what extent does the curriculum cover the appropriate skills?
- Is the curriculum up to date?
- Are there seminars/programs missing that would be valuable? If so, what?
- Are there seminars/programs that you think are not required? If so, what?
- What could be improved?

Suggestions include:

- Offering more continuing education programs
- Offer online programs to allow more part-time students to take continuing education

### **Other Course Suggestions**

Business and management training were the main suggestions from respondents when asked what other courses would benefit landscape horticulture students. Other suggestions included

- Environmental science
- Construction
- Safety
- Lifeskills
  - Money management
  - Time management
- Communications
  - Public relations

- Personal Development
- Computer skills

All of the educators indicated they make efforts to discuss and encourage professional development with their students.

Finally, educators and guidance counsellors were asked to provide any additional comments on skill development opportunities in the landscape horticulture industry. These comments were generally positive, noting the strides that have been made in training for landscape horticulture through the development of online and hands-on learning, and consultation with industry. They noted the expanse of opportunity available to students, particularly as they become more aware of programs available. One commenter offered that additional specialization certifications could be offered such as masonry, maintenance, interlock and landscape lighting.

## **6. Summary and Observations**

Responses varied very little between the different groups surveyed. Employees in general tended to be more negative in their comments about training opportunities than other groups.

### *Awareness*

While each group surveyed indicated that there was a lack awareness of programs and courses available in the industry, they also self-identified as being aware of most or all of the programs available, with the exception surprisingly of the students who were currently enrolled in Landscape Horticulture programs.

Each group suggested better advertising is needed to make employers, workers and potential students aware of training opportunities that exist. All groups surveyed indicated interest in a single point of data which would provide information on all training opportunities available, which would not require multiple web searches. Those working in the industry also indicated a need for increased communication between employees and employers on the training opportunities available.

### *Labour Shortage*

When asked about the shortage of skilled labour in the landscape horticulture industry, the most common potential factor mentioned was wages. It was often noted that both actual wages or perceived wages prevented youth from taking up careers in the industry, and the cost of training programs relative to their real or perceived affect on wages deterred many current employees from undertaking further training.

Many respondents in all categories discussed the image of the industry, as low paying, seasonal, physical labour and that public campaigns to improve this image might attract more skilled labour to the industry.

### *Access Barriers*

Responses to potential access barriers varied among the groups but generally location and other costs were considered the greatest barriers that prevent training. Employers generally felt that time of year and location were the greatest barriers preventing training, Employees other indirect costs of training such as transportation and loss of income to be their greatest barrier, with time of year as the second more important. Students responded strongly that location was the greatest barrier among that group. And educators felt that lack of awareness of programs, and discouragement from parents and guidance counselors were likely the most important barriers preventing more students from obtaining additional training.

### *Curriculum and Skills Requirements*

Respondents generally noted that curriculums varied widely from program to program which creates a significant difference in skill sets acquired by new graduates. This is particularly important given that most long term plans by employees and students in the industry include owning and managing their own business. Overwhelmingly employers, employees, students and educators see a need for more business training. Specific skills training was identified by each group as generally lacking and there were frequent requests for advanced training for experienced workers in the industry.

### *Delivery Methods*

The majority of respondents in each group ranked kinaesthetic learning as their favorite learning style, which is reflected in the desire for hands-on courses.

### *Training Culture*

The training culture in the workplace seemed to vary greatly, often dependent on the size of the company and the availability of both financial and human resources. Employers seemed to be the most positive about the training culture in their workplace, while employees often felt that little was being done to promote training and professional development. Additionally, few employers or employees indicated that they use training or career path development plans.

## **Appendix A: Training Opportunities Description**

### **1. Secondary and Post-Secondary Programs**

- Specialist High Skills Major - Horticulture and Landscaping
- The Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program: a School to Work program that allows students to work in apprenticeship occupations in Grade 11 or 12 through the Cooperative Education program. Women in Skilled Trades
- Post-Secondary Applied Programs
  - Algonquin College: Horticulture Technician
  - Fanshawe College: Landscape Design; Horticulture Technician Co-op
  - Humber College: Landscape Technician Co-op; Urban Arboriculture - Tree Care; Arborist Apprenticeship; Pre-Apprenticeship Program
  - Kemptville College: Associate Diploma in Horticulture; Co-op Apprenticeship Diploma in Horticulture Technician
  - Niagara College: Greenhouse Technician Co-op; Horticultural Technician Co-op; Landscape Horticulture Technician; Landscape Technician Co-op
  - Niagara Parks School of Horticulture: Horticulture Diploma
  - Ridgetown College: Associate Diploma in Horticulture
  - Seneca College: Environmental Landscape Management Co-op
  - St. Clair College: Horticulture Technician - Landscape
  - University of Guelph: Associate Diploma in Turfgrass Management
- Bachelor and Masters' Degrees:
  - University of Guelph: Bachelor of Landscape Architecture; Master of Landscape Architecture
  - University of Toronto: Master of Landscape Architecture

### **2. Horticulture Technician Apprenticeship Program**

A training program for those who want to work in skilled trades or occupations. Involves on-the-job training by sponsors or employers and theoretical training delivered at an approved training delivery agency. Theoretical training offered at: Humber College, Kemptville College, Fleming College, Fanshawe College, Loyalist College, Mohawk College.

### **3. Industry Certification Designation through Landscape Ontario, includes the following certifications:**

- Landscape Industry Certified Technician (CLT):
  - Hardscape Installation,
  - Softscape Installation,
  - Turf Maintenance
  - Ornamental Maintenance
  - Interior Landscaping
- Landscape Industry Certified Manager (CLP)
- Landscape Industry Certified Retail Horticulturalist (CHT)
- Landscape Industry Certified Designer (CLD)
- Irrigation Association Certifications
  - Certified Irrigation Contractor
  - Certified Irrigation Designer
  - Certified Landscape Irrigation Auditor
  - Certified Golf Irrigation Auditor

- Certified Landscape Water Manager
- Certified Agricultural Irrigation Specialist
- Certified Agriculture Water Manager

#### 4. Continuing Education Courses and Seminars

There are a variety of professional development seminars and courses that are offered throughout the year. Curriculum ranges from technical to business management to leadership skills. These courses are offered through Landscape Ontario and its various chapters, Ontario Parks Association, the various colleges listed above, the Canadian Society of Landscape Architects and other commercial and professional organizations in Ontario.