

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF LEARN WITHOUT LEAVING: AN ASSESSMENT OF NANTUCKET'S EDUCATIONAL & WORKFORCE NEEDS

In August 2014, ReMain Nantucket, in partnership with the University of Massachusetts Boston College of Advancing and Professional Studies and Nantucket Community School, engaged Economic Development Research Group, Inc. (EDR Group), to study Nantucket's educational and workforce needs. EDR Group, in partnership with Mt. Auburn Associates, spent three months surveying, interviewing, and conducting focus groups with Nantucket residents, visitors, employers, and representatives from the public school system. Findings from this research, which have been paired with regional and national data when possible, include both career- and enrichment-related educational and training needs. **Importantly, the findings serve to highlight gaps in programming and should not be interpreted as proof of market potential for, or financial feasibility of, a given educational offering—both of which should be future considerations.**

Nantucket has undergone dramatic change since its emergence and eventual decline as a center of the American whaling industry. Today, the island is a destination for tourists and seasonal residents, but is also home to over 10,000 year-round residents. As Nantucket continues to grow, as tourism- and construction-driven projections suggest it will, new educational opportunities will reap important benefits¹: The stock of knowledge and skills among working age residents will expand, thereby improving wage potential and allowing businesses to grow. Similarly, personal enrichment opportunities will contribute to the island's social vitality by allowing residents and non-residents to interact with one another.

Several findings point to a need for new educational programming on Nantucket:

- It takes an **average of 6.6 weeks for surveyed employers to fill job openings**—two weeks longer than the U.S. average.² Interviewed employers echo this challenge.
- **Two-thirds of surveyed employers have difficulty filling job openings**, and around half expect to have difficulty in the future.
- **Over 60 percent of surveyed residents and visitors face challenges in advancing their career.** Reasons include the availability of jobs on Nantucket, their level of education, their current skillset, and a mismatch between their skillset and the available jobs. Some of the same reasons are cited by focus groups participants.
- **Over 80 percent of surveyed residents and visitors report at least one challenge in reaching their educational goals;** the most-cited challenge is the unavailability of educational opportunities on Nantucket.

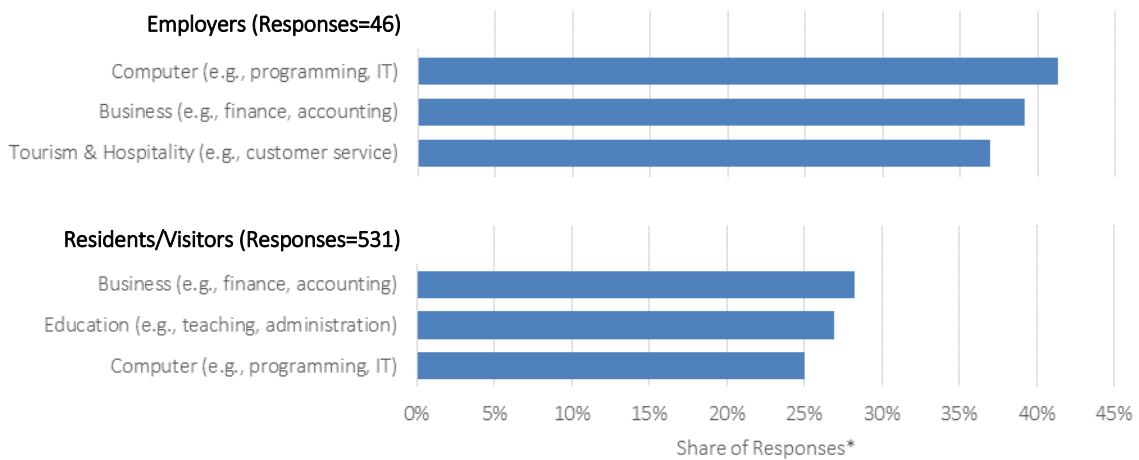
¹ See <http://lmi2.detma.org/Lmi/projections.asp> for short- and long-term industry projections.

² DiceHiring Indicators Dice-DFH Vacancy Duration Measure for the 12-month period beginning in October 2013 and ending in September 2014 (<http://bit.ly/1DFOAa2>).

Educational subjects most needed on Nantucket reflect the requirements of the island’s largest industries and those of today’s knowledge-based economy: business and computer skills, and training for positions in tourism, hospitality, and education.

- Over 40 percent of surveyed employers, as well as several represented in interviews and focus groups, feel job applicants and existing employees could use **more computer skills**. Specific needs include advanced training in
 - Microsoft Office (Excel, Word, PowerPoint),
 - Adobe Creative Suite (e.g., Photoshop), and
 - computer-aided design (CAD).
- **Business skills** are also in high demand, particularly those related to
 - entrepreneurship,
 - accounting, and
 - management.

Top Subjects Demanded by Employers & Needed by Residents/Visitors

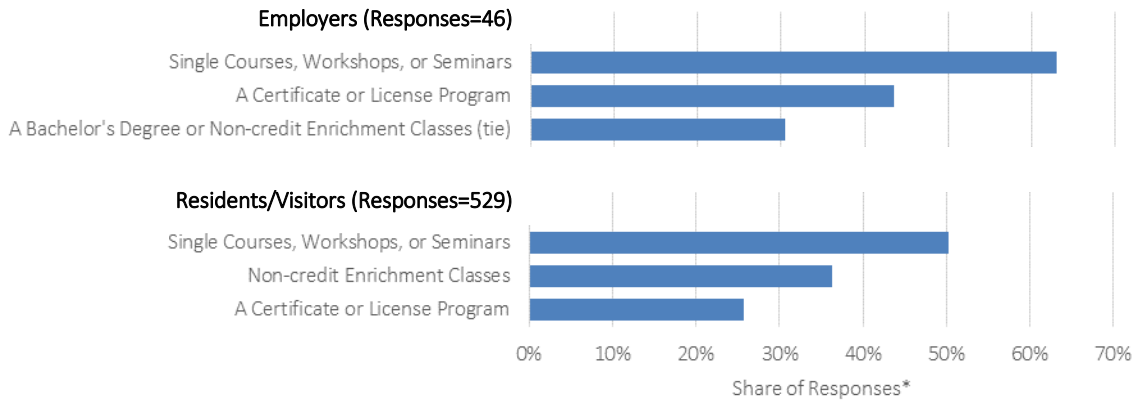


*Response shares may sum to more than 100 percent because respondents selected multiple choices.

Single courses, workshops, or seminars are most likely to be successful on Nantucket, with over 60 percent of surveyed employers believing they are needed and half of residents indicating a likelihood of enrolling in such programming.³ Both focus group participants and survey respondents see **opportunities for new certification and re-certification offerings**, but the two groups are somewhat split when it comes to the need for new enrichment offerings. Many surveyed employers, residents, and visitors express an interest in offerings that some focus group participants feel are already available on Nantucket (e.g., arts and humanities and basic education for immigrants, including English as a Second Language), suggesting a need for better marketing of existing programs.

³ While visitors to Nantucket were eligible to participate in the educational needs survey, over 95 percent of respondents are year-round residents.

Top Programming Needs of Employers & Most Likely to Be Enrolled In



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Regarding **professional certifications**, there is strong support among all stakeholders for programs targeted toward

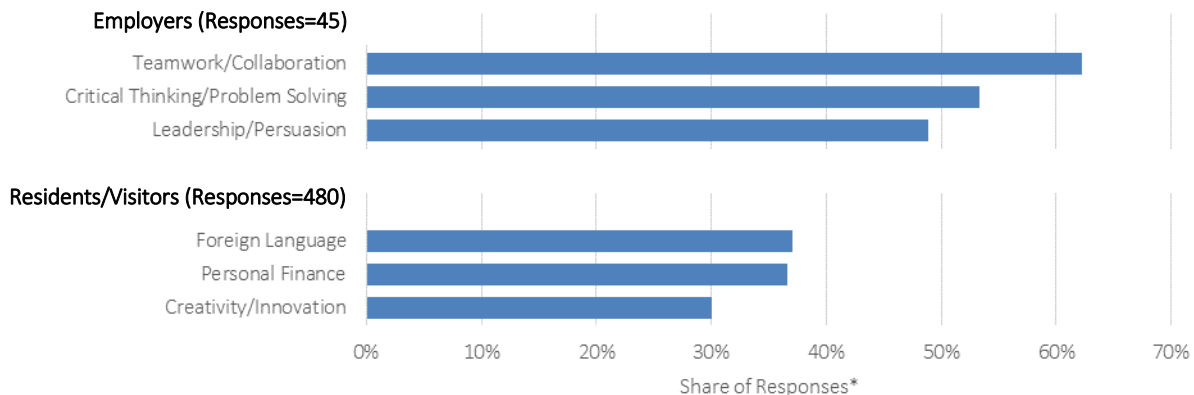
- teachers and early childhood educators;
- medical workers and healthcare providers; and
- those interested or employed in the skilled trades.

Three out of every five surveyed employers believe job applicants and existing employees need **better teamwork and collaboration skills**, and around half place an emphasis on critical thinking, problem solving, leadership, and persuasion. Residents most desire

- foreign language skills,
- personal finance skills, and
- greater creativity and innovation.

Interviewees, focus group participants, and Spanish-speaking survey respondents echo many of these needs, believing that they and others will benefit from **enrichment opportunities related to money management, writing skills, and professionalism**.

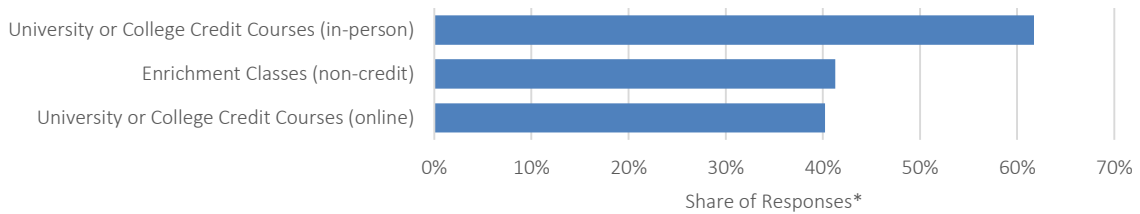
Top Transferable Skills Demanded by Employers & Needed by Residents/Visitors



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In-person, **credit-granting university or college courses are the most preferred format** for new educational opportunities on Nantucket, followed by enrichment classes and online, credit-granting courses. Close to half of surveyed employers are willing to provide their workers with education or training through an educational institution, indicating that **partnerships with Nantucket businesses will increase the feasibility of new programming**. Several interviewees spoke to the benefits of online learning, especially in an island setting, but feel that **hybrid courses (those combining online and in-person learning) will be most successful**.

Top Formats Preferred by Residents/Visitors (Responses=567)

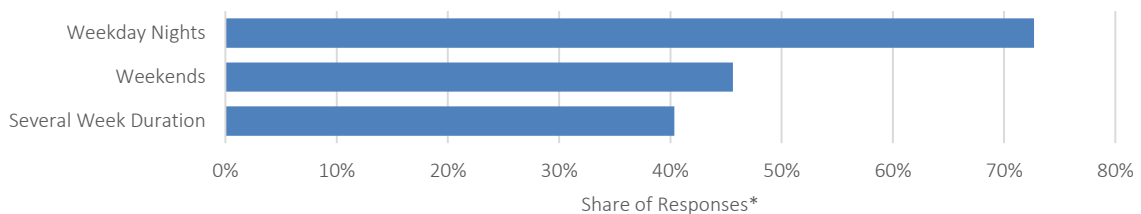


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Reflecting the constraints faced by working adults, **over 70 percent of survey respondents prefer weekday night classes lasting several weeks**. Weekends are also preferred by many respondents, and focus group participants emphasize the importance of providing off-season opportunities for prospective students who are too busy during the summer. Other scheduling suggestions include

- self-paced online classes and programs,
- flexible class hours, and
- yearlong classes meeting weekly or monthly with study requirements in between.

Top Scheduling Options Preferred by Residents/Visitors (Responses=399)



*Response shares may sum to more than 100 percent because respondents selected multiple choices.