

# **2010 BUFFALO COUNTY WAGE & BENEFIT SURVEY**

## **CLIENT**

**Buffalo County Economic Development Council  
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# Report Summary

## UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA AT KEARNEY MARKETING RESEARCH CLASS

**Case Title:** Buffalo County Wage and Benefit Survey

**Client:** Economic Development Council of Buffalo County

**Contact Person:** Darren Robinson – President, Economic Development Council of Buffalo County

**Address:** 1007 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave. - P.O. Box 607  
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**Phone:** (308) 237-9346

**Date:** December, 2009

**Number of Visits:** 1

**Number of Phone Calls:** 3

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### Research Objectives:

1. Conduct a wage/benefit survey of Buffalo County get a snapshot of what wages and benefits area employers are offering in specific industries and occupations and compare the findings to the 2007 data.
2. Create a benchmark for business advising:
  - I. Show variations between employer wages and benefits to facilitate employee retention
  - II. Determine what the workforce is lacking/offering area employers
3. Gain an employer perspective of the future of the local economy:
  - I. Gather perceptions of the local economy now and/or in the future
  - II. Gather input on what resources local businesses want Buffalo County to provide them
  - III. Collect thoughts on co-existence of area businesses (What businesses impact others the most and how?)

### Recommendations:

1. Keep surveying the county; it's a valuable benchmark for both employers and the Council.
2. Gather perceptions frequently; a wealth of information came from comments and some employers are more than willing to speak their minds.
3. Consider creating an open forum dedicated to hearing area employer's thoughts that is visible to everyone.
4. Provide a clear direction to area businesses to communicate where Buffalo County should be in the future.

### Major Findings:

1. Employers have a diverse range of needs and outlooks on employment for their companies.
2. Wages & benefits stayed relatively the same from the 2007 survey.
3. In some areas, entry level wages decreased from the 2007 survey.
4. Health Insurance had the largest change in major benefits from the 2007 survey.

## **Introduction**

### ***Perceptions of the US Economy: Views from the Mid-West***

Expanding, mid-level communities need research to explore and build on opportunities they present to local employers. Employers, in turn, need metrics to manage their labor costs to effectively compete in the broader economy. Therefore this study surveyed over 150 Human Resource managers from a mid-level Midwestern community in order to 1) to gain an employer perspective on the future of the region's economy 2) assess the wages and benefits provided currently to employees, and 3) find changes in wages and benefits since 2007. Survey data was collected online using Qualtrics and analyzed using SPSS. The survey results were compiled into a report that was given to the Economic Development Council as well as participating employers to provide insight into their relative position within the local economy. A similar survey was conducted in 2007 that allows a statistical comparison to be made between 2007 and 2010. The last survey is lacking employer perspective on the state of the region's economy. By using comparisons from 2010 data and future surveys, we will be able to understand how employer perspective of the future of the region's economy coincides with the actual wage and benefit statistics.

### ***The Economic Development Council of Buffalo County***

The Economic Development Council of Buffalo County is a non-profit organization that works to support and promote responsible and sustainable economic development. The Council develops and implements programs designed to promote startup, relocation, expansion and retention of business in Kearney and Buffalo County area. The Council is funded from a combination of sources including the City of Kearney, Buffalo County and 30 private businesses. The Council provides information about financial resources, government advocacy, building and land inventories, economic and demographic information as well as assistance with labor training resources to area employers and interested businesses. This service is necessary for Buffalo County to continue to attract outside business as well as to facilitate already established businesses.

### ***Background and Experience***

Our initial discussions regarding the Buffalo County Wage and Benefit Survey with was Nikki Masek whom worked for the Buffalo County Economic Development Council until recently.. The office of the Council is located within the Kearney Area Chamber of Commerce building in Kearney, Nebraska. Ms. Masek stated that they were in need of another wages and benefits survey in the county so they could compare results from the 2007 survey that was conducted. She reiterated about how important this information was to area employers.

The Council is now led by the President, Darren Robinson. Mr. Robinson took over council and is consulting with us on this project. On November 2, we met with him to discuss what we had accomplished till date and the rest of the process. He too mentioned that this was a very important survey to most employers and he was committed to helping in every which way he can.

*Objectives of the study were to:*

1. Conduct a wage/benefit survey of Buffalo County to get a snapshot of what wages and benefits area employers are offering in specific industries and occupations and compare the findings to the 2007 data.
2. Create a benchmark for the county on wages and benefits:
  - I. Show variations between employer wages and benefits to facilitate employee retention
  - II. Determine what the workforce is lacking/offering area employers
3. Gain an employer perspective about the future of the local economy:
  - I. Gather perceptions of the local economy now and/or in the future
  - II. Gather input on what resources local businesses want Buffalo County to provide them
  - III. Collect thoughts on co-existence of area businesses (What businesses impact others the most and how?)

This study's purpose is to get a current measure of the wage and benefits Buffalo County employers are offering to their employees. The previous wage and benefit survey had been conducted in Buffalo County in 2007, assessing them for the 2005-2006 period. The data collected will indicate the wages and benefits Buffalo county employers are offering, by industries and occupations. They will also provide insight into determining benefits that the workforce is lacking. Employers will also be able to analyze competition between one another in wages and benefits by comparing the averages with their data. Macroeconomic factors will also be explored by gathering perceptions of the local economy among managers, now and in the near future.

The data will help the Buffalo County Economic Development Council to develop strategies that will facilitate employee retention in the area as well as assist in attracting a skilled labor force to the area.

## Research Method

### *Previous Research*

A brief summary of previous research follows to place the current study into context. The previous research that has been collected will aid in comparing, contrasting, and building assumptions concerning the new research. The main data set that will be used from the previous research will be from the last area wage and benefit survey. Additional previous research was collected from other wage and benefit surveys as well as reports from other relevant studies.

### *Benefits*

Recognizing the wages and benefits Buffalo County employers are offering will be an effective benchmark for area businesses to later compare themselves with companies from other counties in NE. Past nation-wide research has shown that workers value benefits less than they value their wages, but they also value insurance generosity highly (Royalty, 2008). Lower deductibles and additional services were also more valued than basic coverage amounts. Keeping this in mind, we will be able to how area employers have changed their benefit amounts and get a sense of whether or not local employers are following this notion. The last comprehensive area wage and benefit survey conducted in Buffalo county, NE, consisted of data from 2006-2007 and quarter 1 of 2009 for benefits and wages respectively. Several factors had changed from the 2005-2006 to the 2006-2007 including changes in the dollar amounts of benefits such as dental (+5%), vision (+5%), and health insurance (+7%). Retirement (+5%) and vacation (+3%) benefits also increased in the same time period. Some notable decreases were in travel expenses (-8%) and child care (-2%). Although these finding were somewhat mixed, some general patterns should be observable when research from the current survey is compared to the last two.

### *Wages and the Labor Force*

Average wages from the Q1 2009 data were \$15.41; \$8.01 for entry wages and \$18.81 for experienced position wages (Buffalo County Economic Development Council, 2008-2010). Of the 35,409 residents in Buffalo County in 2008, 25,692 were classified in the labor force with an unemployment rate of 4.5% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2008). In 2010, the labor force in Kearney has been steadily growing throughout the first two quarters of the year, while the unemployment rate has decreased overall.

From January 2010 to July 2010 the unemployment rate has fallen to 3.2%; a 1.1% decrease from January (Nebraska Department of Labor, 2010). In July of 2010, Buffalo County had a lower than average unemployment rate compared to other counties within state lines (NEDED, 2010). Generally, of total compensation, wages tended to account for 70% of the labor costs while benefits fill the remaining 30% (Wall Street Journal, 2010). This ratio between total compensation costs will be another important metric for area businesses to be aware of.

## *The Macroeconomic Environment*

Buffalo County's growth is projected to remain steady with the rest of Nebraska, which is projected to return to trend growth levels by 2011 (UNL Bureau of Business Research, July 2010). Other macroeconomic factors that have not been reviewed recently will be addressed in this report. Area business' perceptions of the future of the local economy and externalities shared amongst them will also be gathered.

## *Research Design*

The research that we conducted is descriptive. A descriptive study collects data that can be calculated to get a sense of *what* is taking place in a population. Before doing descriptive research, a survey is often conducted; much like the one we had area businesses take part in. The survey we conducted gives us data that can be analyzed and compared to previous survey data. Our study is beneficial to the area businesses in Buffalo County because it gives them a benchmark to compare themselves to others in the area.

## *Data Collection Methods*

All group members successfully completed CITI (Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative) training previous to any of the survey drafting and application. CITI training provides research ethics education to members of the research community. The survey was also submitted to the IRB (Institutional Review Board) before it was sent out.

All 2010 survey data came from primary sources. Results were collected by an online survey created with Qualtrics. The survey was 11 pages long and broken into various sections. These sections included wages, benefits, and employer perceptions of the local economy and job market. The survey consisted of a maximum of 96 questions. Some questions were skipped<sup>1</sup> depending on responses and 28 were also optional<sup>2</sup>. The survey should not have exceeded 45 minutes to complete, depending on the type of business and the number of employees.

Qualtrics is online software that works from essentially any computer with web access, with all the data submitted can be kept confidential. By using an online survey service, it was easier to send and collect data. Respondents could also access the survey anywhere, anytime and were not bound to a scheduled survey. The survey could also be easily monitored for up to date numbers on responses. Some respondents were unfamiliar with online survey platforms. Several reminders were necessary to get a sufficient number of responses.

The survey was tested several times by inputting data before the survey was launched to make sure the software was set up correctly so participants would not have trouble when completing the survey. This survey was created by using similar questions from the 2007 survey in order to be able to compare data on the same variables. In addition to these basic wage and benefit questions, the survey also included some new questions on employer perspectives on the future of the local economy.

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<sup>1</sup> For example, if "Do you offer health insurance to full-time employees?" had a response of "no", the amount of health insurance was not asked.

<sup>2</sup> Optional questions were added to collect additional comments, especially regarding benefits and perceptions.

## ***Sampling***

170 local employers from the Buffalo County area were asked to complete the survey. This list was previously gathered by the Economic Development Council and was used in prior surveys. The survey was sent by e-mail to the Human Resources offices of the 170 businesses selected. Response rates and further data on the sample can be found in Appendix A.





## Analysis

Averages were collected from the wage data to find the means of the average, highest, and lowest (entry-level) wages.

### The Development Council 2010 - 2011 Wage and Benefit Survey Results

Occupation Category:	Average Entry Level Wage (Hourly)	Average Wage Paid (Hourly)	Average Highest Wage (Hourly)
<b><u>Officials and Managers</u></b>			
Chief Executive Officers	\$28.83	\$55.76	\$40.29
Plant Managers	\$26.01	\$30.22	\$32.37
Engineering Managers	\$26.71	\$34.07	\$49.32
Accounting Managers	\$22.58	\$35.87	\$50.19
Office Managers	\$14.20	\$18.03	\$23.78
Production Managers	\$18.15	\$21.21	\$25.96
Superintendents/Supervisors	\$17.50	\$21.80	\$47.34
Purchasing Agents	\$18.18	\$20.18	\$22.66
Service Managers	\$14.09	\$16.81	\$21.14
Buyers	\$14.21	\$21.54	\$25.46
<b><u>Professionals</u></b>			
Accountants	\$17.41	\$21.46	\$23.15
Auditors	\$16.19	\$19.35	\$24.88
Computer Consultants	\$12.00	\$19.50	\$26.00
Designers	\$13.61	\$16.33	\$21.87
Engineers	\$23.44	\$27.14	\$39.37
Software Engineers	\$26.60	\$33.25	\$39.91
Manufacturing Engineers	\$21.42	\$32.94	\$42.90
Mechanical Engineers	\$21.42	\$31.26	\$42.90
Quality Control Engineers	\$18.53	\$23.08	\$27.80
Other Engineers	\$21.42	\$25.44	\$30.75
Safety Directors	\$15.00	\$21.03	\$26.00
Loan Officer	\$21.00	\$29.75	\$42.28
Marketing Spec.	\$16.00	\$20.82	\$22.00
Human Resources	\$19.67	\$24.44	\$30.29
Sys. Analysts/Network Adm.	\$18.81	\$24.67	\$28.71
Teachers	\$12.00	\$15.00	\$20.00

<b>Occupation Category:</b>	<b>Average Entry Level Wage (Hourly)</b>	<b>Average Wage Paid (Hourly)</b>	<b>Average Highest Wage (Hourly )</b>
<b><u>Technical</u></b>			
Computer Programmers	\$20.00	\$20.00	\$20.00
Computer Support	\$14.14	\$17.01	\$21.42
Database Manager	n/a	\$ 9.00	n/a
Drafters	\$12.62	\$14.75	\$17.01
Engineering Aides	\$15.85	\$18.50	\$21.96
Comp. Operators	\$10.00	\$13.00	\$15.50
Lab Technicians	\$15.28	\$17.85	\$18.92
RNs	\$19.98	\$24.32	\$27.97
LPNs	\$13.52	\$16.38	\$18.68
Nurses' Aides	\$ 9.00	\$11.18	\$12.63
X-Ray Technicians	\$16.67	\$21.02	\$25.53
Dieticians	\$17.67	\$20.33	\$22.50
<b><u>Sales</u></b>			
Advertising Agent	\$12.00	\$15.00	\$24.00
Sales Clerk	\$ 9.35	\$13.13	\$15.87
Outside Sales	\$23.48	\$23.60	\$30.31
Cashiers/Checkers	\$ 8.03	\$ 8.55	\$11.78
Customer Service Reps.	\$10.45	\$13.07	\$15.79
In-Bound Telemarketers	\$10.00	\$12.00	\$11.00
Out-Bound Telemarketer	\$ 5.00	\$ 6.00	\$ 8.00
<b><u>Office and Clerical</u></b>			
Bank Tellers	\$ 8.84	\$11.25	\$11.80
Bookkeepers	\$13.33	\$14.20	\$16.00
File/Office Clerks	\$ 9.29	\$11.25	\$14.85
Shipping/Receiving Clerks	\$ 9.84	\$13.20	\$14.27
Secretaries	\$12.33	\$14.56	\$16.49
Receptionists	\$ 9.40	\$11.14	\$12.50
Legal Assistants	\$16.00	\$16.00	\$20.00
Transcriptionists	\$10.86	\$12.97	\$15.39

<b>Occupation Category:</b>	<b>Average Entry Level Wage (Hourly)</b>	<b>Average Wage Paid (Hourly)</b>	<b>Average Highest Wage (Hourly)</b>
<b><u>Craft Workers</u></b>			
Hourly Paid Supervisors	\$12.64	\$16.30	\$15.86
Lead Operators	\$16.74	\$16.82	\$17.57
Machine Mechanics/Repair Repairers	\$15.45	\$17.13	\$16.58
Skilled Machine Operators	\$15.33	\$18.43	\$25.33
Typesetters	\$12.52	\$15.38	\$16.23
Electricians	n/a	\$16.50	n/a
Carpenters	\$13.80	\$15.65	\$19.07
Painters	\$11.70	\$15.38	\$17.66
Tool Die Makers	\$13.80	\$13.93	\$16.34
HVAC Technicians	\$14.98	\$21.60	\$18.69
Journeyman	\$14.19	\$16.20	\$17.04
Foremen	n/a	n/a	\$14.00
Plumbers	\$18.00	\$19.90	\$17.00
<b><u>Operators</u></b>			
Assemblers	\$13.80	\$15.65	\$16.61
Printing Press Operators	\$11.60	\$12.83	\$13.14
Machinists	\$10.00	\$14.00	\$16.00
Machine Op.	n/a	\$16.11	\$11.00
Truck Drivers	\$ 9.82	\$11.42	\$12.81
Tractor Drivers	\$11.00	\$12.97	\$15.20
Welders	\$30.00	\$33.00	\$37.00
Quality Control Inspectors	\$12.38	\$14.68	\$15.72
Testers	\$13.08	\$16.29	\$19.43
Material Handlers	\$13.70	\$15.63	\$16.11
Line Production Workers	\$12.04	\$13.61	\$14.01
Forklift Operators	\$11.30	\$11.50	\$11.35
	\$ 8.75	\$11.17	\$12.50

<b>Occupation Category:</b>	<b>Average Entry Level Wage (Hourly)</b>	<b>Average Wage Paid (Hourly)</b>	<b>Average Highest Wage (Hourly)</b>
<b><u>Unskilled Laborers</u></b>	\$ 9.60	\$10.85	\$11.41
<b><u>Service Workers</u></b>			
Guards	\$10.83	\$13.63	\$15.70
Janitors	\$ 9.63	\$11.26	\$12.49
Delivery Persons	n/a	\$ 9.50	n/a
Food Service Workers	\$ 8.00	\$ 9.00	\$11.00
Bartender	\$ 8.00	n/a	n/a
Chef	n/a	n/a	\$16.00
Kitchen Staff	\$ 8.50	\$ 9.50	\$11.00

The analysis showed that greater changes applied to; engineering managers, accounting managers, supervisors, human resources, system analysts, lab technicians, computer support, RNS, outside sales, bookkeepers, secretaries, receptionists, food service workers, CEOs, office managers, production managers, service managers, and buyers. According to survey results in Buffalo County, average wages of technical managers, professionals, technical labor, office and clerical workers and service workers have been affected the most negatively, when wages of CEOs, office managers, production managers, service managers and buyers have been affected the most positively. Results also show that compared to the 2007 Buffalo County Wage and Benefits Survey; 35% of the entry level employees are more likely to earn more, while this rate is 31% for average level and 50% for highest level wages.

<b>Change In Wages From 2009</b>		
	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>
Management	41	2.41%
Clerical	39	2.38%
Production Work	24	2.58%
Unskilled Laborer	24	1.88%

## Benefits

### Internal Advancement Opportunities

We had 54 respondents answer the question about the internal advancement opportunities within their company. Seven people responded that they have excellent internal advancement opportunities, 22 said they had good advancement, 16 said fair, 7 poor, and 2 of the respondents were unsure.

<b>Internal Advancement Opportunities</b>						
N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Answers	Number of Responses	Percentage
54	1.00	4.00	2.54	1. Excellent	7	13%
	"Excellent"	"Poor"		2. Good	22	41%
				3. Fair	16	30%
				4. Poor	7	13%
				5. Don't know	2	4%

### Travel Reimbursement

98% of the 55 companies that answered said they offer travel reimbursement. The average rate per mile was 45-50 cents. 65% of the companies answered saying they did not have a maximum daily out of pocket maximum for travel meal reimbursement. The maximum travel meal reimbursements ranged from \$15 a meal to \$30-\$45 a day.

<b>Travel Reimbursement</b>						
N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Answers	Percentage	
Offered	55	1	2	1.02	Yes	98%
Rate per mile	11	0.35	50	16.21	45 - 50 Cents/mile	
Do you have a daily out of pocket maximum for travel meal reimbursement	54	1	2	1.65	1. No maximum	65%
		"Yes"	"No"		2. Yes, there is a maximum	35%
Travel meal reimbursement maximum (daily)	54	1	2	1.65	Ranges from \$15 a meal to \$30 - \$40 a day	

## Health Insurance

87% of the 53 respondents said they offer health insurance to employees while 9% responded that they do not offer any health insurance. 4% said they offer a stipend. 14% of respondents stated that the employees must work 21 to 30 hours per week to receive health insurance benefits, 43% must work from 31-45 hours and 43% also said the employees must work 36-40 hours before health insurance is available. 72% of the companies said they pay more than half of the premium. 84% of the companies offer health insurance for employees' dependents and 43% of the employers said they pay more than half of the premium for the dependents.

Health Insurance							
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Answers	Number of Responses	Percentage
Offered	53	1.00 "Yes"	2.00 "No"	1.17	1. Yes	46	87%
					2. No	5	9%
					3. No, but we offer a stipend	2	4%
Required hours per week to receive health insurance	44	1.00 "0-20"	4.00 "36-40"	3.30	1. 0 to 20 hours	0	0%
					2. 21 to 30 hours	6	14%
					3. 31 to 35 hours	19	43%
					4. 36 to 40 hours	19	43%
Who pays the premium	43	1.00 "Employer pays all"	6.00 "Employee pays all"	3.28	1. Employer pays all	2	5%
					2. Employer pays all for key positions only	0	0%
					3. Employer pays more than half	31	72%
					4. Employer and employee pay about the same	6	14%
					5. Employee pays more than half	2	5%
					6. Employee pays all	2	5%

## Health Insurance (continued)

<b>Health Insurance</b>							
	<b>N</b>	<b>Minimum</b>	<b>Maximum</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Answers</b>	<b>Number of Responses</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Do you offer health insurance for dependents	51	1.00	2.00	1.16	1. Yes	43	84%
		"Yes"	"No"		2. No	8	16%
Who pays the premium	42	2.00	5.00	3.26	1. Employer pays all	0	0%
					2. Employer pays more than half	18	43%
					3. Employer and employee pay about the same	7	17%
					4. Employee pays more than half	5	12%
					5. Employee pays all	12	29%

## Dental Insurance

75% of the 51 companies that responded to the question stated that they do provide dental insurance. 41% of the companies stated that the employer pays the entire premium while 38% said the employer pays for more than half of the dental insurance premium.

<b>Dental Insurance</b>							
	<b>N</b>	<b>Minimum</b>	<b>Maximum</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Answers</b>	<b>Number of Responses</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Offered	51	1.00	2.00	1.25	1. Yes	38	75%
		"Yes"	"No"		2. No	13	25%
Who pays the premium	37	1.00	5.00	3.24	1. Employer pays all	4	11%
					2. Employer pays more than half	14	38%
					3. Employer and employee pay about the same	3	8%
					4. Employee pays more than half	1	3%
					5. Employee pays all	15	41%

## Vision Insurance

59% of the 51 respondents stated that they offer vision insurance. 55% said that the employees pay the entire premium while 34% said the employer pays more than half.

<b>Vision Insurance</b>							
	<b>N</b>	<b>Minimum</b>	<b>Maximum</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Answers</b>	<b>Number of Responses</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Offered	51	1.00	2.00	1.41	Yes	30	59%
		"Yes"	"No"		No	21	41%
Who pays the premium	29	2.00	5.00	3.83	1. Employer pays all	0	0%
					2. Employer pays more than half	10	34%
					3. Employer and employee pay about the same	1	3%
					4. Employee pays more than half	2	7%
					5. Employee pays all	16	55%



## Life Insurance

Out of the 51 businesses who responded, 82% said they offer life insurance policies. 63% of the businesses stated that the employer pays the entire premium. 36% said that \$25,000 or less is the amount available for life insurance policies while 27% said that \$25,001 to 50,000 is available.

<b>Life Insurance</b>							
	<b>N</b>	<b>Minimum</b>	<b>Maximum</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Answers</b>	<b>Number of Responses</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Offered</b>	51	1.00	2.00	1.18	1. Yes	42	82%
		"Yes"	"No"		2. No	9	18%
<b>Who pays the premium</b>	40	1.00	5.00	2.00	1. Employer pays all	25	63%
					2. Employer pays more than half	4	10%
					3. Employer and employee pay about the same	4	10%
					4. Employee pays more than half	0	0%
					5. Employee pays all	7	18%
<b>What amount is available</b>	33	1.00	5.00	2.30	1. \$25,000 or less	12	36%
					2. \$25,001-50,000	9	27%
					3. \$50,001-100,000	5	15%
					4. \$100,001-200,000	4	12%
					5. \$200,001+	3	9%

## Retirement

85% of the area businesses stated they offer retirement and 63% have a 401k retirement plan.

<b>Retirement</b>							
	<b>N</b>	<b>Minimum</b>	<b>Maximum</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Answers</b>	<b>Number of Responses</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Offered</b>	52	1.00 "Yes"	3.00 "No, Stipend"	1.17	1. Yes	44	85%
					2. No	7	13%
					3. No, but we offer a stipend	1	2%
<b>How much is the stipend</b>	0						
<b>Who pays the premium</b>	43				401k		63%

## Disability Insurance

76% responded saying they offer disability insurance and 47% stated the employer pays the entire premium while 39% said the employee pays all.

<b>Disability Insurance</b>							
	<b>N</b>	<b>Minimum</b>	<b>Maximum</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Answers</b>	<b>Number of Responses</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Offered</b>	51	1.00 "Yes"	2.00 "No"	1.24	1. Yes	39	76%
					2. No	12	24%
<b>Who pays the premium</b>	38	1.00	5.00	2.84	1. Employer pays all	18	47%
					2. Employer pays more than half	2	5%
					3. Employer and employee pay about the same	1	3%
					4. Employee pays more than half	2	5%
					5. Employee pays all	15	39%

## Education Reimbursement

25% said they offer an unlimited amount of education reimbursement, 18% said they have a limitation, but they pay for more than half. 20% said they are limited to less than half while 37% don't cover any education reimbursement. 91% said that the education the employee is seeking must be job related in order to be reimbursed. 94% of the respondents who offered reimbursement said they cover tuition while 68% cover books, 58% fees, 32% mileage, and 32% room and board.

<b>Education Reimbursement</b>							
	<b>N</b>	<b>Minimum</b>	<b>Maximum</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Answers</b>	<b>Number of Responses</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Offered</b>	51	1.00	4.00	2.69	1. Yes, unlimited	13	25%
					2. Yes, limited, but more than half	9	18%
					3. Yes, limited to less than half	10	20%
					4. No	19	37%
<b>Does job have to relate</b>	33	1.00	2.00	1.09	1. Yes	30	91%
					"Yes"	"No"	2. No
<b>What expenses do you pay</b>	21 (68%)	<b>Books</b>	<b>Tuition</b>	<b>Fees</b>	<b>Mileage</b>		
			29 (94%)	18 (58%)	10 (32%)		
<b>Do you have employees seeking education</b>	52	1.00	2.00	1.44		29	56%
					"Yes"	"No"	1. Yes
<b>How Many</b>	16	.00	17.00	5.31			

## Maternity Leave

Businesses were asked what they did for maternity leave. 67% stated the employee may use vacation leave, 63% may take unpaid leave, 43% may use sick leave, and 24% can use paid maternity leave instead of using sick or vacation leave while 10% stated they offer no maternity leave.

<b>Maternity Leave</b>							
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Answers	Number of Responses	Percentage
Offered					Employee may use paid maternity leave (instead of using sick leave and vacation leave)	12	24%
	12				Employee may use sick leave	22	43%
	22				Employee may use vacation leave	34	67%
	34				Employee may take unpaid leave	32	63%
	32				None	5	10%
	5						
Paid maternity leave (instead of using sick/vacation)	12	1.00	1.00	1.00			
Employee may use sick leave	22	1.00	1.00	1.00			
Employee may use vacation leave	34	1.00	1.00	1.00			
Employee may take unpaid leave	32	1.00	1.00	1.00			
None	5	1.00	1.00	1.00			

## Paid Vacation

This question compared the different amounts of paid vacation days offered within different industries. Clerical jobs offered the most paid vacation days on average with unskilled labor offering the least.

<b>Paid Vacation (in days)</b>				
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
Management	35	2.00	35.00	13.23
Clerical	32	2.00	214.00	17.84
Production Work	23	2.00	23.00	10.43
Unskilled Laborer	18	.00	35.00	9.67

## Paid Holidays

Employers were asked if they offered paid holidays. The results varied with 3 not offering any paid holiday days, 2 offering 3-4 days, 19 offering 5-6 days, 14 offering 7-8 days and 12 offering 9 or more days of paid holidays.

<b>Paid Holidays</b>							
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Answers	Number of Responses	Percentage
Offered	50	1.00 "No"	6.00 "Yes, 9+"	4.54	1. No	3	6%
					2. Yes 1-2 days	0	0%
					3. Yes 3-4 days	2	4%
					4. Yes 5-6 days	19	38%
					5. Yes 7-8 days	14	28%
					6. Yes 9 or more days	12	24%
Premium Holiday Pay?	47	1.00 "No"	5.00 "+76-100%"	2.1064	1. No	29	62%
					2. +1-25%	2	4%
					3. +26-50%	6	13%
					4. +51-75%	2	4%
					5. +76-100%	8	17%

## Paid Sick Leave

Employers were asked if they had paid sick leave for their employees. The results varied with a range from 4 to 11. Production work reported only offering 4 days of paid sick leave on average while clerical stated offering 11 days of paid sick leave.

<b>Paid Sick Leave (in days)</b>		
	N	Mean
Management	33	9.18
Clerical	28	11.00
Production Work	20	4.15
Unskilled Laborer	19	9.95

## Childcare assistance

98% of the employers stated that they don't offer childcare assistance to those employees who are in need of assistance. Employers were asked if they felt there was a need for increased childcare in the area. 60% stated they did not feel there was a need for more childcare with 28% saying they could use more childcare from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

<b>Childcare assistance (Full-time)</b>				
	Answers	Percentage		
Offered	No	98%		
	Yes	2%		
<b>Do you see a need for childcare?</b>				
	N	Answers	Number of Responses	Percentage
7 am - 6 pm	14	Yes, 7:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.	14	28%
6 pm - Midnight	6	Yes, 6:00 p.m. - Midnight	6	12%
Midnight - 7 am	2	Yes, Midnight – 7:00 a.m.	2	4%
Yes, Saturday	7	Yes, Saturday	7	14%
No	30	No	30	60%

## Commuting

Obviously, Buffalo County has many rural communities surrounding Kearney. The high rate of commuting within some companies isn't overwhelming but with only 14% of businesses claiming no commuters, it does show that some companies do have a strong dependence on reaching into outside areas. Larger cities such as Holdrege, Kearney, and Minden provide a high number of commuters because of larger populations while smaller cities like Gibbon, Elm Creek, and Pleasanton provide higher numbers because of their shorter distance from Kearney.

<b>Percent of employees commuting 10+ Miles to work</b>						
N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Answers	Number of Responses	Percentage
50	1.00	6.00	2.82	1. 0%	7	14%
				2. 10%	14	28%
				3. 25%	19	38%
				4. 40%	3	6%
				5. 50%	5	10%
				6. 75%+	2	4%

### Breakdown by City

	N	Percentage		N	Percentage
Amherst	16	38%	Kearney	23	55%
Axtell	14	33%	Miller	3	7%
Eddyville	2	5%	Minden	24	57%
Elm Creek	17	40%	Other	10	24%
Funk	5	12%	Pleasanton	21	50%
Gibbon	25	60%	Ravenna	16	38%
Grand Island	11	26%	Riverdale	12	29%
Hastings	9	21%	Shelton	14	33%
Hildreth	5	12%	Sumner	3	7%
Holdrege	17	40%	Wilcox	5	12%

## Dependent Care Cafeteria Plan

Area Businesses were asked if they offered a dependent care cafeteria plan. 54% states that they do in fact offer a dependent care cafeteria plan while 46% stated they do not offer a dependent care cafeteria plan.

<b>Dependent Care Cafeteria Plan</b>							
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Answers	Number of Responses	Percentage
Offered	50	1.00	2.00	1.46	1. Yes	27	54%
		"Yes"	"No"		2. No	23	46%

## Positions accepting applications

When businesses were asked what jobs were accepting applications, Sales jobs topped the others while Managerial, clerical, and administrative work followed closely.

<b>Positions accepting applications</b>		
	N	Mean
Managerial & Administrative	17	.71
Sales	20	1.30
Clerical and Administrative	17	.35
Information Technology	16	.19
Service	15	.87
Agriculture	13	.23
Production, Construction, Operating, Maintenance and Material Handling	16	1.19
Engineering	13	.15
Total	127	



## Additional full-time jobs

When asked if there were plans for additional full-time jobs within the next year, half of businesses responded "no" while "yes" and "maybe" received a quarter of the responses each. From the data collected on where jobs may be added if yes or maybe was answered, production work and unskilled labor had far more additions than management or clerical positions. This is most likely due to maximum answers of 30 and 50 on production work and unskilled labor. This could be from an increase in seasonal jobs.

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Answers	Number of Responses	Percentage
<b>Additional full-time jobs</b>							
		1.00	3.00	2.02	1. Yes	12	24%
		"Yes"	"Maybe"		2. No	26	51%
					3. Maybe	13	25%
Management	6	.00	2.00	.6667			
Clerical	6	.00	1.00	.3333			
Production Work	14	.00	30.00	4.6429			
Unskilled Laborer	8	.00	50.00	9.5000			

## Layoffs

When asked about the chance of layoffs within the next year, nine in ten answered "no". This coupled with nobody responding "Yes, 5+" hopefully suggests a rise in the longevity of area jobs.

<b>Layoffs</b>							
Anticipated layoffs within a year	50	1.00	4.00	3.02	1. Yes: 1-5	1	2%
		"Yes: 1-5"	"Maybe"		2. Yes: 5+	0	0%
					3. No	46	92%
					4. Maybe	3	6%

## Internships

UNK offers a big opportunity for area employers to take advantage of with internships. Half of respondents said that they do offer internships. Of that half, 4 out of 5 said they are paid.

<b>Internships</b>				
	N	Answers	Number of Responses	Percentage
Do you offer internships	50	Yes	26	52%
		No	24	48%
Paid or Unpaid	24	Paid	20	83%
		Unpaid	4	17%

## Difficulty

When asked how difficult it is to find qualified applicants, 3 in 5 said it was “difficult” with a small portion saying it was “very difficult”. With UNK in Kearney, qualified college graduates should be plentiful. With this train of thought, the employers claiming to have difficulty in finding applicants could be looking for unskilled or production work.

### How difficult is it for you to find qualified applicants for job openings?

N	Answers	Number of Responses	Percentage
50	Very Difficult	4	8%
	Difficult	28	56%
	Easy	17	34%
	Very Easy	1	2%

- The following are some of the comments from those struggling to find qualified applicants:
- “We are looking for new doctors and feel that there are too many openings in other cities that can pay more and offer more opportunities”
  - “Language, Spanish speaking workers need additional assistant for orientation and ongoing training. We are challenged with teachers and schools in our industry that provide this service as well as the testing for certification in our industry. Tests need to be in the proper language.”
  - “Not enough qualified people in the Kearney area. Need training programs to get high school kids interested in and ready for construction jobs.”
  - “Many financial institutions in Kearney means we are all competing for the same workforce.”
  - “Buffalo county is nearly fully employed, meaning we are having to draw applicants from other towns and area or from other employers.”

## Challenges in filing job openings

Differing reasons for challenges in filling jobs were rated on a scale of 1 (Strongly Agree) to 5 (Strongly Disagree) meaning that 3 was the middle ground. From this view, employers said that a lack of job placement services was not to blame for challenges in filling openings. A lack of skill in applicants and a small pool of qualified applicants were rated as the biggest challenge in filling openings while a lack of applicants and low unemployment rates were also viewed as challenges. This begs the question; what skills are employers looking for? Are they outside of university graduate qualifications?

<b>Challenges in filing job openings</b>				
	N	Minimum (Strongly Agree)	Maximum (Strongly Disagree)	Mean
Lack of job placement services	50	1.00	5.00	3.24
Lack of skills in applicants	50	1.00	5.00	2.46
Lack of applicants	50	1.00	5.00	2.76
Low unemployment rates	50	1.00	5.00	2.70
Small pool of qualified applicants	50	1.00	5.00	2.16

## Employee Turnover

Perceived employee turnover was low for the most part with 3 out of 5 stating they have low employee turnover compared to their industry. The comments left yielded some excellent information. The loss of the local Workforce Development Office was mentioned twice as a setback for employing. This contradicts the earlier finding that a lack of placement offices was not to blame for finding employees.

<b>Employee Turnover</b>				
	N	Answers	Number of Responses	Percentage
How does employee turnover compare to your industry average	50	High	1	2%
		Medium	11	22%
		Low	30	60%
		Don't know	8	16%

## Company's Current Situation

When companies were asked about their current situation, every category had increased. 7 in 10 said that their number of customers was increasing; half said the volume of purchases by customers was increasing and marketing expenses and capital expenditures also increased.

<b>Company's Current Situation</b>								
Question	Increasing	%	Decreasing	%	Don't know	%	Responses	Mean
The number of clients/customers that your company serves are	35	70%	5	10%	10	20%	50	1.5
The volume of purchases by the company's clients/customers is	26	52%	9	18%	15	30%	50	1.78
Travel to visit your clients/customers is	19	38%	6	12%	25	50%	50	2.12
Marketing expenses are	26	52%	10	20%	14	28%	50	1.76
Your capital expenditures are	28	56%	10	20%	12	24%	50	1.68

## Optimism & Confidence

How optimistic is your company about its future (3-5 years)?	Answer	Number of Responses	Percentage
	Very Optimistic	14	28%
	Optimistic	33	66%
	Somewhat pessimistic	3	6%
	Pessimistic	0	0%
	Total	50	100%

How confident are you about the future of your company?	Answer	Number of Responses	Percentage
	Very Confident	20	40%
	Confident	30	60%
	Somewhat unconfident	0	0%
	Not at all confident	0	0%
	Total	50	100%

The overwhelming majority of participants were optimistic about the future and confidence was at 100%. Related comments praised Kearney as having an excellent atmosphere for business. Here are some of the key comments participants left:

“We are very fortunate to be in the Midwest and in the middle of Nebraska. Our real estate market is very good.”

“There is a lot of new competition in the fund raising field in Kearney. Organizations across the state are very aware of the good economy here, and are adding to their fundraising efforts.”

“Kearney is an excellent place to call home.”

“Whatever the state of Nebraska and the Buffalo County area have done in the last twenty years has brought relative stability and good growth to this area. Foresight is wonderful. Don't let up in planning for the future.”

“We need to attract more workers who are involved in this community. We need affordable transportation for our employees that commute, carpooling, and bus service to local towns. We would do well to embrace the Hispanic community into Kearney. At present we do not have affordable housing for a labor force at the lower wages of entry into our small business community.”

“We post jobs on the Buffalo County Economic Development website and we have never received an applicant.”

## Limitations

Out of the 170 employers asked to participate in the survey, 94 responded and only 51 completely finished the survey. Because of this low number of respondents, industry numbers could be misrepresented in some areas. Since the survey was conducted online, there was no way to validate responders or answers. Some respondents also entered information incorrectly, such as hourly wages in annual form

Some respondents were unhappy that the survey could not be saved for later and that they could not go back and change answers. This made it necessary for the survey to be completed in one sitting. Others commented that it was too long and in contrast, some said it didn't provide enough in the form of answer selection. It is important to note that the survey was merged with another survey for WPCI and drug testing which resulted in an additional 30 questions. This addition made the survey longer to complete but may have also contributed to the high number of unfinished surveys.

The survey was also offline for a brief period of time because it was set to expire too early. This problem was caught and dealt with quickly but it may have led some to believe that the survey's open period was complete.

## Conclusions & Recommendations

From the data collected on Internal Advancement it is noted that over half of the respondents feel that the opportunity is either good or excellent. This is promising and is very comparable to the 2007 survey results. We saw an increase in the number of companies who offer travel reimbursement from the past 2007 survey. 98% said they offered travel reimbursement in this survey and only 82% did back in 2007. This could be due to the increase in oil prices causing any travel to be fairly costly.

The number of businesses that offer employees health insurance has showed no change at all from the 2007 survey. A huge decrease was shown in the number of employers who paid the entire premium for the health insurance coverage. In 2007 the area businesses reported that 23% of employers paid the entire premium and this survey showed that only 5% paid the entire premium. This huge decrease could be caused from the continued increase in health care costs.

For dental insurance the only big change compared with the 2007 survey was that employers reported that 41% of employees now have to pay the entire premium compared to 25% back in 2007. An 18% increase was shown in the number of employers who provide vision insurance compared to the previous 2007 survey.

A 25% decrease in the number of employers providing education reimbursement to employees was found compared to 2007. Of the employers that do offer education reimbursement there seems to be an increase in the amounts they pay for in terms of books, tuition, fees, and mileage. Increasing education costs and the current economic situation could be reasons for decreasing the amount of reimbursements for education.

Only 2% of the employers questioned provide childcare assistance for those who have children. This is a 4% decrease from the 2007 survey. Over half of the employers stated they did not feel that there was a need for childcare assistance.

When asked about layoffs, 9 in 10 said they were expecting none within the coming year. When asked about difficulty in finding qualified applicants, 3 in 5 said it was "difficult" with a small portion answering "very difficult". When asked about challenges, "a small pool of qualified applicants" was the top barrier, followed by a "lack of skills in applicants".

Commuting showed only 14% of respondents remarking that they did not have any commuters throughout the business. From the data and comments, it is apparent that many employers rely on commuting employees. Some even went as far as suggesting setting up easier ways for employees to commute between cities whether it is in the form of carpooling or a bus service system. An affordable housing system (most likely in Kearney) was also suggested. Embracing the Hispanic community was also a perceived problem for a few employers. These comments are all based around bringing in and maintaining mass labor. When we first sat down with Mr. Robinson, the clear emphasis was on quality and not quantity regarding the job and labor market.

These views contrast somewhat and it becomes evident that Buffalo County has a range of employers with differing objectives and needs. Within the county, some communities have even adopted certain businesses as their mainstay (Gibbon Packing).

A recommendation would be to keep gathering perceptions from area businesses. In the limited amount of comments that were received, some valuable insight was provided. Keeping an open forum for ideas and comments from area employers encourages collaboration between employers, individuals, and the Council. Also, stating the community's objectives as far as what businesses it would like to attract and retain would be good. Explaining what direction Kearney wants to take in different industries would give the community an idea of what it's to achieve collectively.



## Appendix A

The survey was initially released by the Development Council on November 10<sup>th</sup> at 1:00 pm. Some were re-sent because of email errors (returns). Participants were asked throughout to finish the survey by November 20<sup>th</sup>.

The first reminder was sent on November 15<sup>th</sup> at 11:40 am.

A final reminder was sent on November 18<sup>th</sup> at 3:40 pm.

The survey was taken down November 28<sup>th</sup> at 11:59 pm.

Of the 170 employers the survey was emailed to, 94 started the survey and 51 completed it in its entirety. It is important to note that the survey was merged with another survey for WPCI and drug testing. This addition made the survey longer to complete but may have also contributed to the high number of unfinished surveys.

# Client/Acknowledgement Form

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FORM

I/We have received a copy of the report and have personally discussed the recommendations with the student team. I/We believe the study satisfactorily addressed areas of the business outlined in the Research Objectives.

\_\_\_\_\_

Client Name

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

# IRB Clearance



**Institutional Review Board**  
University of Nebraska at Kearney  
Founders Hall Room 2116  
Kearney, NE 68849  
Ph: (308) 865-8843  
Fax: (308) 865-8837

October 25, 2010

Robert Jones, Lucas Kaup, and Baris Bicer  
c/o Dr. Srivatsa Seshadri  
Department of Marketing and Management Information Systems  
University of Nebraska at Kearney

IRB # 102210-4

TITLE OF PROPOSAL: 2010 Kearney Area Wage and Benefit Survey

Dear Students:

The IRB has reviewed your Exemption Form for the above-titled research project. According to the information provided this project is exempt under 45 CFR 46:101(1), and you are authorized to begin the research.

It is understood this project will be conducted in full accordance with all applicable sections of the IRB Guidelines. It is also understood that the IRB will be immediately notified of any proposed changes that may affect the exempt status of your research project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "C.S. Lomicky", written over a horizontal line.

Carol S. Lomicky, Ph. D.  
Director, IRB

csl/js

## References

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- <sup>2</sup><https://docs.google.com/viewer?url=http://www.ci.kearney.ne.us/labor.pdf>
- <sup>3</sup><http://www.neded.org/content/view/447/721/>

# 2010 Wage and Benefit Survey Results

Robert Jones  
Baris Bicer  
Lucas Kaup

## Goals/Objectives

- Conduct a wage/benefit survey of Buffalo County to get a snapshot of what wages and benefits area employers are offering in specific industries and occupations and compare the findings to the 2007 data.
- Gain an employer perspective about the future of the local economy.
- Help to create a benchmark for the county on wages and benefits.
- Gather perceptions of the local economy now and/or in the future
- Show variations between employer wages and benefits to facilitate employee retention
- Gather input on what resources local businesses want Buffalo County to provide them
- Determine what the workforce is lacking/offering area employers
- Collect thoughts on co-existence of area businesses (What businesses impact others the most and how?)

## Methodology

- Looked at secondary research to see what others have done.
- Developed a survey so comparisons can be made with the past survey.
- Analyzed the survey results using SPSS to find the averages of different segments of the survey.

## Survey Questions

- Employer information
- Hourly wages of employees separated into three different parts by; entry level, average and highest.
- Benefits provided by company to its employees
- Opportunities in job openings
- Present and future economic situation of the company

## Issues with the Sample

- 94 businesses responded to the survey (55%)
- 51 (33%) respondents actually completed the survey in its entirety.
- Limited to only 170 local businesses.
- Some felt the survey was too long so may have hurried through it.

## Wages Relative to 2007

- Greater changes applied to managers of; engineering, accounting, office, production, service managers and supervisors, human resources, system analysts, lab technicians, computer support, CEOs, secretaries, receptionists, bookkeepers, and food service workers.
- Average wages of technical managers, professionals, technical labor, office and clerical workers and service workers have been affected the most negatively .
- Average wages of CEOs, office managers, production managers, service managers and buyers have been affected the most positively.

# Wages

Comparison to 2007 survey;

- 35% of the entry level employees earned more.
- 31% for average level employees received higher wages.
- 50% for highest level employees were more likely to earn more.

# Benefits

	2010	2007
Internal Advancement	Excellent: 13% Good: 41% Fair: 30% Poor: 13%	Excellent: 8% Good: 51% Fair: 23% Poor: 15%
Travel Reimbursement	98%	82%
Health Insurance	87%	87%
Dental Insurance	75%	74%
Vision Insurance	59%	41%
Life Insurance	82%	89%
Retirement	85%	87%



## Benefits

	2010	2007
Disability Insurance	76%	73%
Education Reimbursement	63%	49%
Maternity Leave	24% Provide Paid Maternity Leave	27% Provide Paid Maternity Leave
Paid Vacation	Clerical: 18 days Management: 13 days Production Work: 10 days Unskilled Laborer: 10 days	
Paid Holidays	None: 6% 3-4 days: 4% 5-6 days: 38% 7-8 days: 28% 9+ days: 24%	None: 6% 3-4 days: 3% 5-6 days: 36% 7-8 days: 33% 9 or more: 22%

## Perceptions

- Commuting
- Positions accepting applications
- Additional full-time jobs
- Layoffs
- Internships
- Difficulty in finding qualified applicants
- Challenges in filling job openings
- Employee turnover
- Current situation

## Perceptions

- "We are very fortunate to be in the Midwest and in the middle of Nebraska. Our real estate market is very good."
- "There is a lot of new competition in the fund raising field in Kearney. Organizations across the state are very aware of the good economy here, and are adding to their fundraising efforts."
  - "Kearney is an excellent place to call home."
- "Whatever the state of Nebraska and the Buffalo County area have done in the last twenty years has brought relative stability and good growth to this area. Foresight is wonderful. Don't let up in planning for the future."
- "We need to attract more workers who are involved in this community. We need affordable transportation for our employees that commute, carpooling, and bus service to local towns. We would do well to embrace the Hispanic community into Kearney. At present we do not have affordable housing for a labor force at the lower wages of entry into our small business community."
- "We post jobs on the Buffalo County Economic Development website and we have never received an applicant."

## Conclusions

- Reliable business atmosphere
  - Benefits are excellent
  - People are optimistic
  - Progressive community

Thank You!