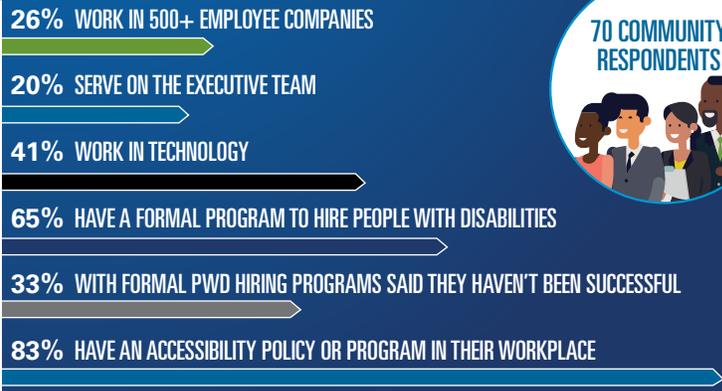# THE ACCESSIBLE TECHNOLOGY SKILLS GAP

In May 2018, PEAT and Teach Access asked our members and partners to tell us about accessible technology skills in their organizations. This infographic is a summary of our findings.

26% WORK IN 500+ EMPLOYEE COMPANIES

20% SERVE ON THE EXECUTIVE TEAM

41% WORK IN TECHNOLOGY

65% HAVE A FORMAL PROGRAM TO HIRE PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

33% WITH FORMAL PWD HIRING PROGRAMS SAID THEY HAVEN'T BEEN SUCCESSFUL

83% HAVE AN ACCESSIBILITY POLICY OR PROGRAM IN THEIR WORKPLACE

70 COMMUNITY RESPONDENTS

"We resign ourselves to the fact we can hire very bright people but are going to have to start from square one when it comes to accessibility."

55% of companies say accessibility expertise is now part of their standard job description for new developer and designer positions

41% of companies consider accessibility certification credentials as a differentiator in hiring

84% of industry respondents say it is important or very important to their company to hire developers and designers with accessible technology skills

60% said it was difficult or very difficult for their organization to find job candidates with accessibility skills. 0% said it was easy or very easy

"Hiring people with top-level accessibility technology skills is critically important to our work."

83% have seen a moderate or significant increase in demand for accessibility skills. 93% of companies say this demand will increase in the future

63% say their current staff don't have the accessible technology skills to meet their organizations' goals

"Failure to find qualified candidates/ employees with accessibility skills costs our company 12 weeks billing on all government contracts and adds 10% to development costs for corporate contracts."

"During orientation we ask whether new hires know the basics of accessible tech. Less than 1 in 10 have ever even heard of it."

THE TOP FIVE ORGANIZATIONAL IMPACTS OF THE SKILLS GAP

- Products/services are less accessible than they want
- Outside consultants or contractors are needed to supplement teams
- Have to pay for on-the-job training
- Jobs stay open longer or go unfilled
- Have to pay for supplemental external training

COST

PRODUCTIVITY

The Accessible Technology Skills Gap

Since PEAT's founding in 2013, we have helped dozens of companies build accessibility awareness into their workplace. The majority of the companies in our network now have accessibility policies and programs in place. They are also increasingly making digital accessibility an imperative, not an afterthought, for both their internal systems and the products and services they bring to the marketplace. They are doing this because they have looked at the business case and know that this is good for the bottom line and the right thing to do. But PEAT has found that a current major barrier is that many organizations can't find job candidates with the accessible tech skills they need—and 57% report that as a result, their products and services are less accessible than they want.

In December 2017, PEAT convened more than 60 leaders from across the tech sector to discuss how to increase accessible workplace technology. One major issue identified was a lack of availability of accessible technology skills in the IT sector. To better understand this issue, PEAT partnered with Teach Access (teachaccess.org) to ask our community to tell us about the accessible technology skills in their organizations.

"All our developers should know or at least be familiar with accessibility. Most of the time when asked about accessibility they don't even know what it is."

The Gap is Wide

We heard from 70 respondents across a broad range of companies and public sector organizations. 3 out of 5 respondents confirmed that it was "difficult or very difficult" for their organization to find job candidates with accessibility skills—and 0% felt it was easy. In fact, 63% say their current staff don't have the accessible technology skills to meet their organizations' goals, and 38% reported that jobs stay open longer or go unfilled as a result.

The True Cost

The responses indicate that although companies clearly feel such investment is worthwhile, the skills gap can lead to increased costs and decreased productivity. Specifically, organizations are paying for significant on-the-job training or supplementing with external training to help their staff build these skills. One respondent lamented that "we resign ourselves to the fact we can hire very bright people but are going to have to start from square one when it comes to accessibility." Almost 40% said that jobs in their organizations stay open longer or go unfilled because of a lack of accessible tech skills among candidates.

Demand Will Increase

Respondents project that the need for accessibility skills will only keep growing—which is great news for candidates looking for a way to stand out from the crowd! Among industry respondents, 83% reported seeing a moderate or significant increase in demand for accessibility skills over the last five years, and over 93% of industry respondents expect this demand will increase in the future. And 93.5% of all respondents reported that it was "very important" to them personally to hire more people with accessibility skills.

Closing the Gap

With future demand growing for these key skills, PEAT is working with its partners to look for ways to address this gap. Here are some of the things we are doing now and we look forward to YOUR ideas for how to make progress:

- Respondents confirmed the need to work with colleges and universities to infuse curricula with more accessible technology skills. PEAT is partnering with Teach Access (teachaccess.org) to help make this a reality.

- Only about one third of respondents said that their HR teams consider accessible technology skills when they recruit developer and designer candidates. PEAT is working with companies and HR organizations like SHRM (SHRM.org) to help HR professionals better understand why these skills matter and how to increase the supply of candidates with these skills.

- A majority of respondents said they would like to explore using an apprenticeship model to train and certify employees to have these skills. PEAT is partnering with organizations like Apprenti (apprenticareers.org) and IAAP (accessibilityassociation.org) to explore such approaches.

PEAT
peatworks.org/skillsgap

teach access
teachaccess.org