



Training, Trust, & Talent

What HR Pros Really Want from Education Partners



Presentation Agenda

Market Potential for Employer-Sponsored Education & Training

- Market Size and Growth Projections
- Types of Employer/Educator Partnerships

OHO National Survey of Human Resource Professionals

- Survey Goals
- Survey Participant Profiles

Program Preferences

- Vendor, Type, Delivery Mode, Length, Cost

Who to Sell to

- Roles, Titles, Decision Makers

HR Professional Attitudes & Preferences

- Research Approaches
- Engagement Preferences

Putting Insights Into Action

Enormous Market

Employee training is a multi-billion-dollar opportunity for colleges and universities—driven by rising demand for workforce development and employer-aligned education.



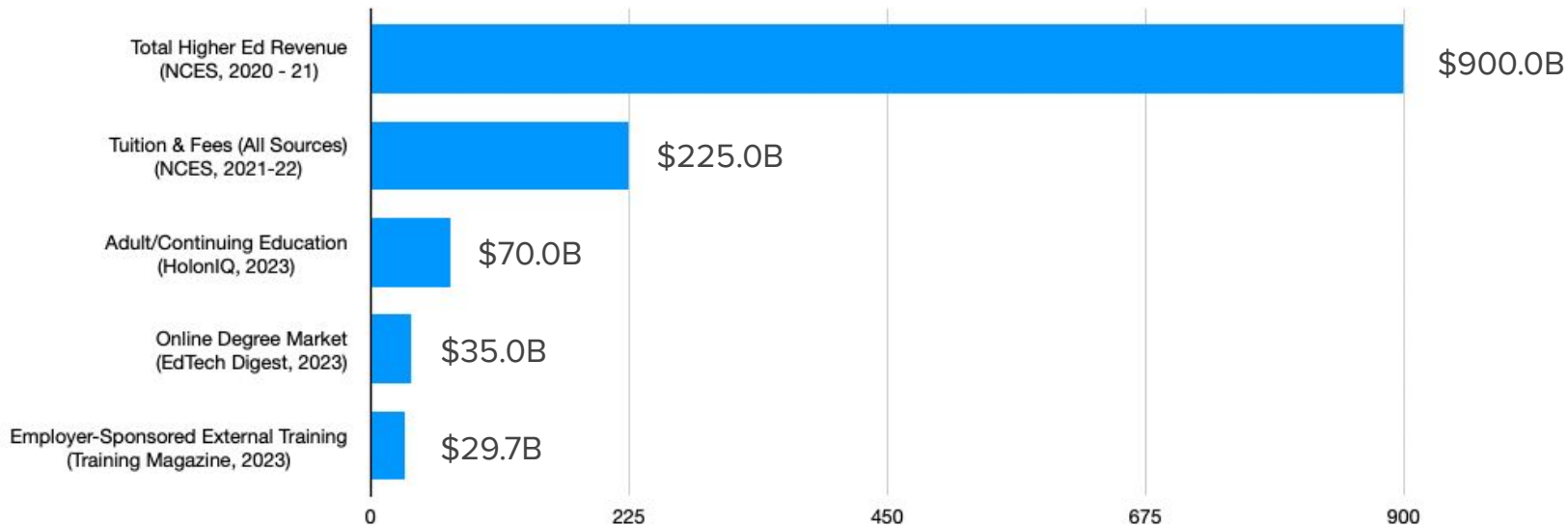


Higher Education Revenue

Overall revenue for U.S. higher education institutions is approximately **\$900 billion**.

Tuition and fees account for about **25–28%** of this revenue

Comparison of U.S. Postsecondary and Workforce Education Markets
(with Sources)





15% of Tuition Revenue

Employer-funded education now accounts for **\$30–35 billion** annually, making up nearly **15% of total U.S. higher ed tuition revenue**. It rivals the size of the online degree market and is half as large as the adult and continuing education sector.

- **\$200 - 250 Billion Tuition & Fees**
Tuition total for U.S. postsecondary institutions. (National Center for Education Statistics)
- **\$70 Billion Adult/Continuing Education**
Estimates for adult and continuing education market reflect the growing demand for lifelong learning. (HolonIQ / 2023 Education Market Expectations)
- **\$30 - 40 Billion Online Degree**
Highlights the increasing shift towards digital learning platforms. (EdTech Digest – The Future of EdTech.)
- **\$30 - 35 Billion Employer Sponsored**
Nearly as large as the entire online degree market and half the size of the adult/continuing ed market. (Training Magazine, 2023)



Growing Market

Over the next five years, U.S. companies are expected to sharply increase spending on employee training—creating a strong growth market for education providers.

- **11.7% Overall Increase in Employer-Sponsored Training**

HR respondents anticipate an 11.7% increase in overall training spending in 2025. (Blanchard, 2025 HR/L&D Trends Survey)

- **13.3% Growth in Leadership Development**

Respondents singled out leadership training – specifically in leadership development spending. (Blanchard, 2025 HR/L&D Trends Survey)

- **8% Annual Growth Rate Projection**

The employee skills-based training services market was valued at \$163.6 billion in 2022 and is projected to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 8% from 2023 to 2030. (Grand View Research, Employee Training Services Procurement Intelligence Report, 2023 - 2030)



Types of Education / Training

84% of working adults have received formal training with their current employer. Computer and technical skills are the most common types of training. Management training is the third-most popular.

Training Category	Formal Training (While with Current Employer)	Formal Training (Within Last 12 Months)
All employed*	84.4%	69.8%
Job Skills		
Computer procedures, programming, and software	38.4	23.5
Professional and technical skills	30.9	21.4
Management	28.4	16.3
Sales and customer relations	26.6	15.1
Production and construction-related	21.0	11.3
Clerical and administrative support skills	18.7	8.4
Service-related	12.5	5.9
General Skills		
Occupational safety	58.0	42.8
Communications, employee development, and quality training	40.2	22.8
Basic skills	6.7	2.3
Other	3.4	1.4

Typical workforce programs offered by colleges and universities.

(U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics)



Types of Workforce Partnerships

Workforce partnerships vary in formality, employer involvement, funding structure, and alignment with labor market needs. CHEPP outlines five primary partnership models widely used across sectors.

- **Custom Employer Training Programs**
Example: a college creating a tailor-made program for a particular company or organization.
- **Tuition as a Benefit** (Direct Partnership)
Example: employer reimburses or pre-pays tuition for employees at a specific college or university.
- **Tuition as a Benefit** (Third-Party Intermediary)
Example: employer outsources tuition benefit management to a platform - EdAssist and InStride.
- **Regional Sector Partnerships**
Example: colleges collaborate with groups of employers in the same industry and region. Employers offer paid internships, donate equipment, and participate in advisory councils.
- **Career Pathways & Apprenticeships**
Example: a regional community college partners with a hospital network to offer a Medical Assistant Apprenticeship



College / Employer Partnerships

A sizable percentage of employers work with colleges, universities, and education and training vendors and intermediaries to create **customized programs** to meet their employee needs.

- **40% of Employers Partner to Customize Programs**

40% of employer respondents (650 sample size) reported partnering with four-year higher education institutions to deliver customized training programs or degrees. (Etter, B., Fong, J., Sullberg, D., & Wang, K., 2024).

- **Third-party Education Providers**

Intermediary organizations, such as EdAssist and InStride, help streamline and scale employer and postsecondary partnerships to serve a greater number of learners.

(Center for Higher Education Policy and Practice, Unpacking Workforce Partnerships, 2024)

(Etter, B., Fong, J., Sullberg, D., & Wang, K., Unveiling the Employer's View: An Employer-Centric Approach to Higher Education Partnerships. Washington, DC: UPCEA & Collegis Education 2024).

Findings from the National Survey

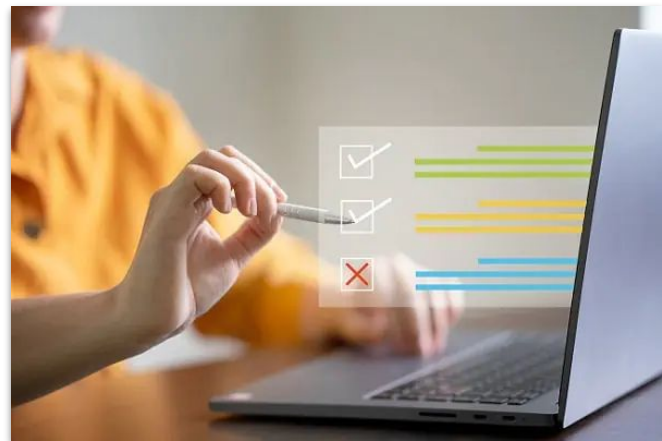
The latest look into the practices of HR professionals as they evaluate education and training programs for their students.



Survey Goals

The primary aim of this survey was to **understand how HR professionals in the U.S. identify, manage, and evaluate professional education and training opportunities for their employees**, particularly those that involve partnerships with colleges, universities, and other educational vendors.

- **Explore Decision-Making Roles**
Identify which HR roles are involved in selecting, coordinating, budgeting, and enrolling employees in education programs.
- **Distinguish Between Program Types**
Capture data on both **customized** programs (co-developed with providers) and **out-of-the-box** programs (off-the-shelf offerings).
- **Identify Key Challenges**
Understand the biggest hurdles HR professionals face when: creating custom training programs, finding appropriate education providers; securing engagement and buy-in from employees
- **Uncover Program Preferences**
Assess preferences for **delivery formats** (online, hybrid, in-person), **duration**, and **content types** (certificates, degrees, credentials).
- **Evaluate Budgeting and Funding Approaches**
Investigate how professional education is funded (e.g., tuition reimbursement, stipends) and typical per-employee budgets.



Survey Participant Profile



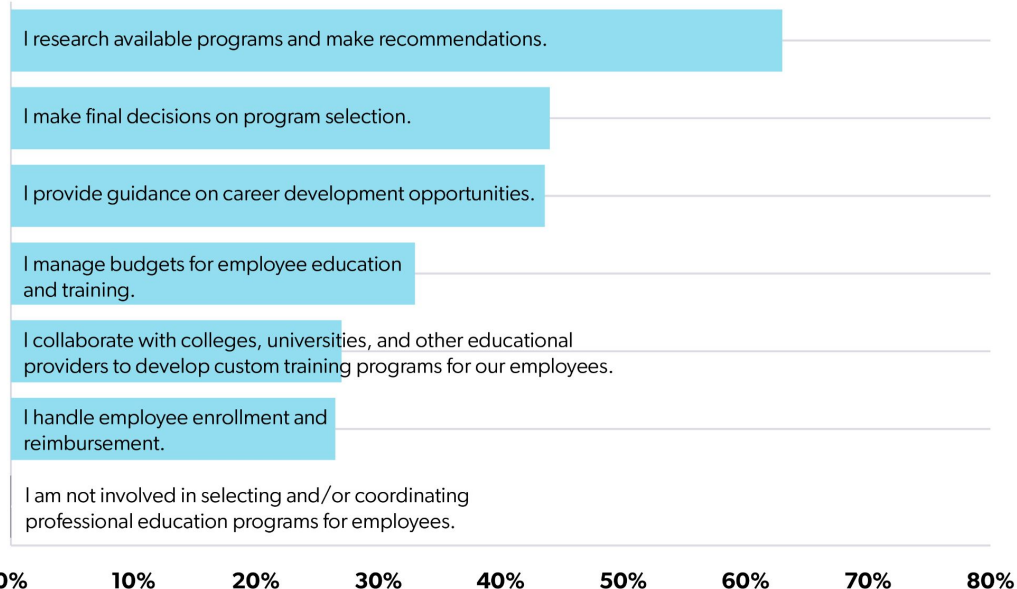


Participant Roles

Survey participants were screened to ensure that only HR professionals who were engaged in the **research, facilitation** and/or **decision-making process** were included.

The survey netted **107 participants** who met these qualifications.

What is your role in selecting and coordinating professional education programs for employees?



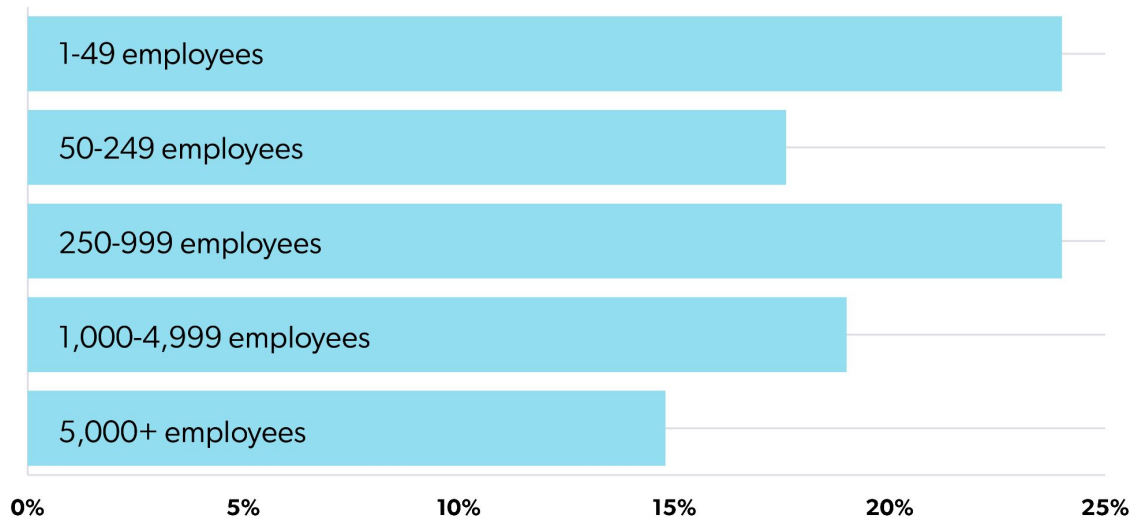


Size of Organization

Good representation across multiple organization sizes.

This data allowed OHO to segment the responses by size of organization.

What is the size of your organization based on the number of employees?





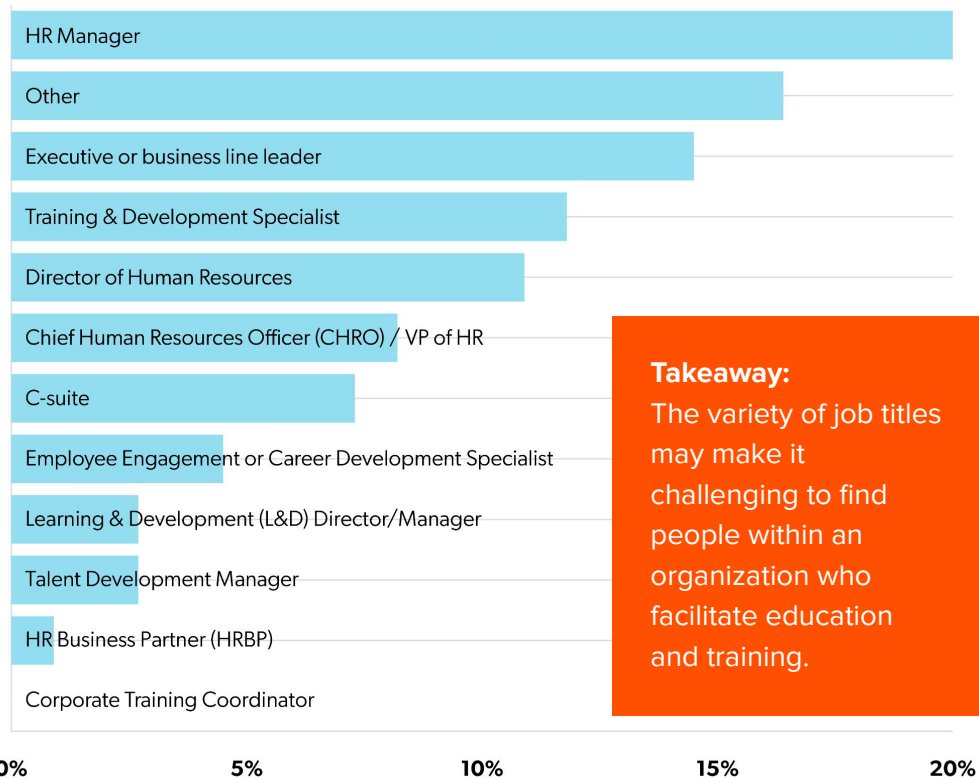
Job Titles

Job titles reflect the **vast spectrum** of professional titles used by people who are engaged with education and training of their employees.

Top respondents were **HR Managers** and **Executive Business Line Sponsors**.

“Other” Choices: Nurse manager, Analyst, Billing Specialist, Business Management, CEO, Cyber Security Manager, Division Chief, Executive Assistant to Owner, IT Manager, Materials Manager, Supervisor, Training Associate, Administration, Department Head, Director, Grant Writer, Contract Manager, Teacher

What is your current job title? (Though the exact wording of your title may differ, please select the option that is closest to yours.)



Takeaway:

The variety of job titles may make it challenging to find people within an organization who facilitate education and training.



Industries Represented

Diverse and Broadly Applicable

Respondents came from a wide range of industries, with no single sector dominating:

Top sectors:

- **Education** and **Healthcare** (10% each)
- **Tech (Computers/Software)** and **Manufacturing** (8% each)

Others include Transportation, Business Services, Finance, Construction, and Nonprofit—each under 6%

Over 25% selected “Other,” indicating broad relevance across many sectors.

Takeaway:

Professional education is a cross-industry priority. Programs must be flexible and industry-aligned to meet varied employer needs.

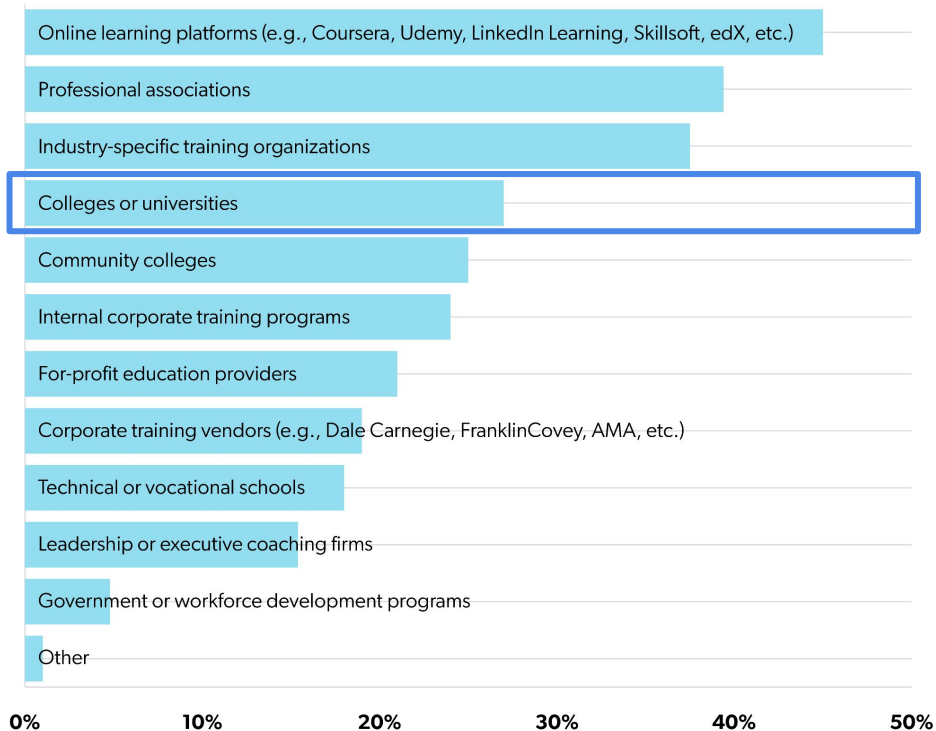
Program Preferences





Program Vendor Competition

Does your organization partner with any of the following to provide professional education and training for employees?



Insight:

Cross tabulation reveals that the size of organization appears to have little impact on the types of vendors preferred.



Higher Ed Underutilized

The survey reveals that **higher education institutions are currently underutilized as partners in employee education and training**, especially when compared to more flexible, accessible alternatives:

- **Online learning platforms** lead with **45%** of employers partnering with them—thanks to their scale, on-demand access, and ease of deployment.
- **Professional associations (39%)** and **industry-specific training providers (38%)** also rank well ahead of traditional colleges and universities.
- **Only 27% of employers** report partnering with four-year institutions, and **25%** with community colleges.
- Other competitors include **for-profit providers (21%)**, **corporate training vendors (19%)**, and **executive coaching firms (15%)**—all offering targeted, employer-friendly solutions.

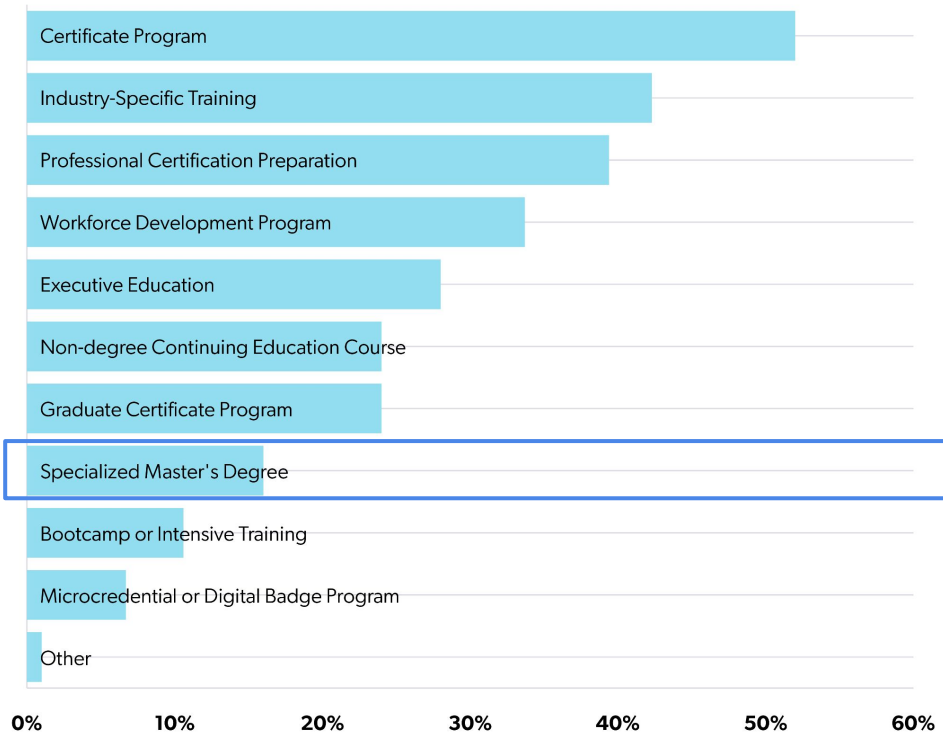
Takeaway:

Higher ed institutions are competing with a broad field of agile, market-driven providers. To stay relevant and win partnerships, they must evolve offerings to be more flexible, responsive, and outcome-oriented.



Types of Programs

Which of the following best describes the professional education program(s) your colleagues are interested in or have completed?



Insight:

Certificate programs, industry-specific training, and professional certificate preparation programs are the most popular. Executive education is the fifth most popular.



What's Gaining Traction

Top Choices

- **Certificate Programs** lead by a wide margin (**52%**), signaling high demand for focused learning options (including stackable).
Caveat: Certificates vary widely in length and rigor – ranging from short, skills-based courses completed in weeks to comprehensive programs that require months of study
- **Industry-Specific Training (42%)** and **Professional Certification Prep (39%)** show that employers and employees value **practical, role-aligned content** with clear job-market relevance.
- **Workforce Development Programs (34%)** and **Executive Education (28%)** further highlight demand for programs that support **job readiness** and **career advancement**.

Lower Interest in Degrees

- Only **16%** indicated interest in **specialized master's degrees**, and **24%** in **graduate certificates**, suggesting that **cost, time, and perceived ROI may be barriers** to traditional graduate offerings.
- **Microcredentials and digital badges**, while growing in higher ed conversations, showed **minimal traction (7%)** with this audience – possibly due to limited employer recognition or awareness.

Takeaway:

The professional education market favors accessible, industry-relevant, and non-degree offerings. Higher ed institutions that adapt to these preferences can better engage employers and adult learners—while building scalable pathways into longer credentials.



Delivery Mode Preference

Insight:

After cross tabulation, fully online and hybrid programs are slightly more popular with larger organizations than smaller organizations. This is in synch with other national surveys.

13. What program format is most effective for employees in your organization? (Rate each format on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 = Not Preferred and 5 = Strongly Preferred.)

	Not preferred	2	Neutral	4	Strongly preferred	Average
Fully Online (Asynchronous - Self-paced)	4	4	20	37	37	4.0
Hybrid (Mix of Online & In-Person)	7	5	25	36	29	3.7
Accelerated Learning	5	8	31	39	19	3.6
Fully Online (Synchronous - Live Classes)	9	7	30	36	20	3.5
Traditional In-Person	10	10	26	36	20	3.5
Low-Residency (Mostly Online with Some In-Person)	10	9	30	41	12	3.4
Weekend or Evening Program	17	14	23	27	21	3.2



Flexibility Matters

Across all program types, respondents favor **flexible, online learning formats** for employee education:

Top Choice

- **Fully Online, Asynchronous** (Avg. 4.0) — most preferred format, valued for its self-paced flexibility.

Also Preferred

- **Hybrid** (3.7) and **Accelerated Learning** (3.6) — balance structure with convenience.
- **Fully Online, Synchronous** (3.5) — slightly less favored due to scheduling demands.

Less Preferred

- **Traditional In-Person** (3.4), **Low-Residency** (3.3), and **Weekend/Evening** (3.2) — rated lower, likely due to logistical challenges.

Takeaway:
Flexible, self-paced formats are most effective for **working learners**—a critical consideration for higher ed looking to grow employer partnerships.



Executive Education Programs

Respondents who focus on **professional education programs** show strong preferences for **flexible** but **structured** formats—particularly those that blend **online convenience with some level of interaction or in-person engagement**.

Top-Ranked Format

- **Hybrid (Online & In-Person):** Highest average rating (4.2)

Other Strong Performers

- **Fully Online, Asynchronous:** 4.0
- **Accelerated Learning** (3.8)
- **Fully Online, Synchronous** (3.7) and **Low-Residency** (3.7)

Lower Preference

- **Weekend or Evening Programs** (3.2)

Takeaway:

Those seeking executive education programs seem to favor **hybrid models** and self-paced online formats, suggesting that institutions should emphasize **program designs that are adaptable, time-sensitive, and professionally relevant**.



Length of Program

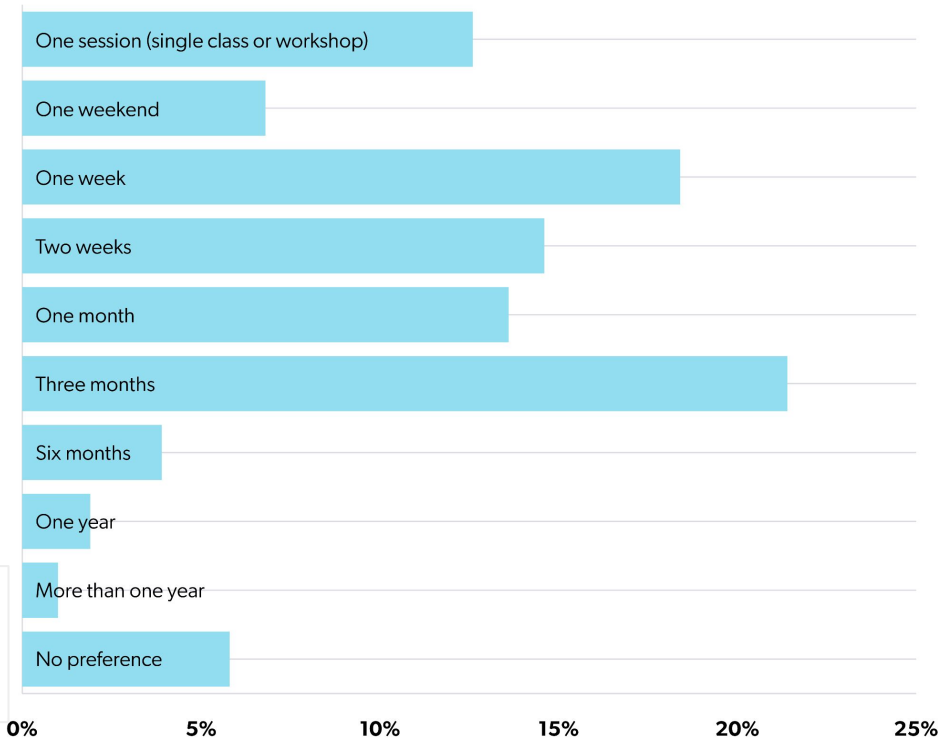
Most respondents favor short, time-bound programs

- **1 week to 3 months** - 70% of responses fell between these lengths.
- **3 Months** - Most preferred at 21%
- **1 Week** - Second-most preferred (18%)
- **2 Weeks** - Third-most preferred (15%)
- **Longer programs** - 6+ months had little support (7%)
- **Single-session formats** - drew moderate interest (13%).

Insight:

Employers want **compact, high-impact programs** that minimize time away from work while delivering real value.

How long should an ideal professional education program last for your employees?





Cost of Program

Most Under \$10K per Employee

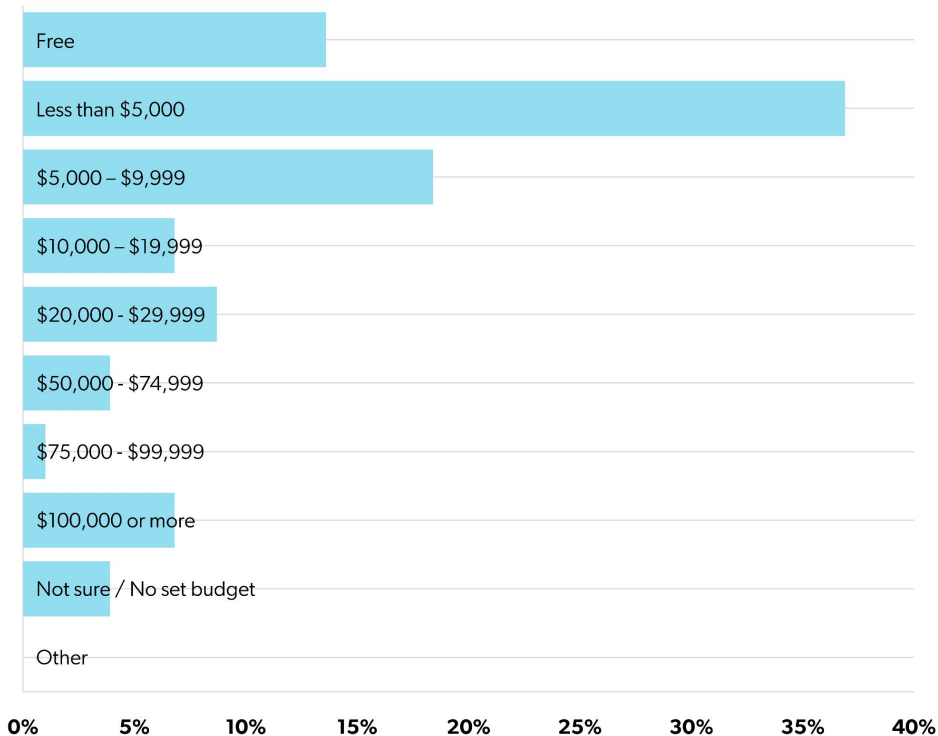
- **Less than \$10,000** - Nearly 70% of organizations spend less than \$10,000 per employee.
- **Under \$5,000** - 37% spend under \$5,000.
- **No Cost** - 14% offer training at no cost.

Higher budgets are uncommon—only **7%** report spending above **\$50,000** per employee.

Insight:

Cost is a key constraint. Programs priced under **\$10K** with **clear ROI** are best positioned to attract employer investment.

What is the typical budget per employee for professional education and training?





Reimbursement

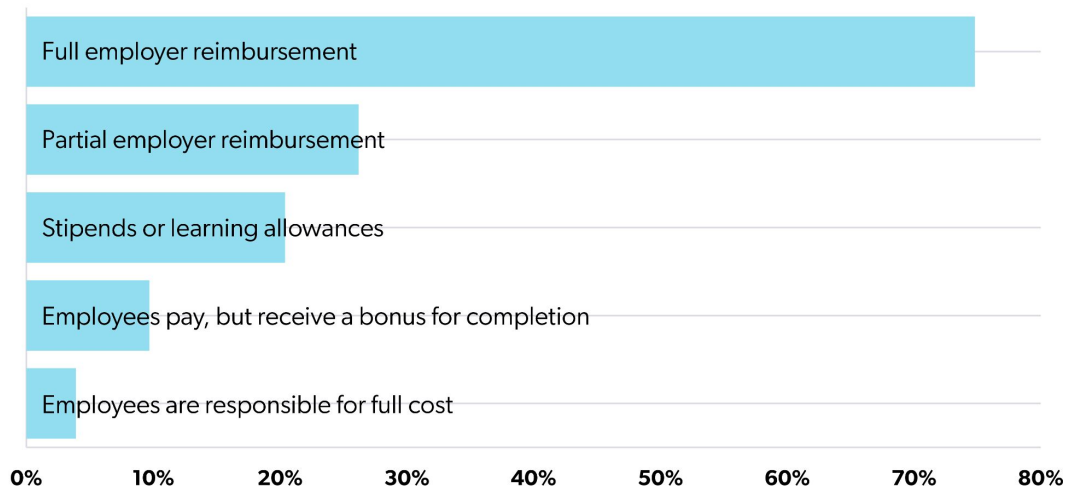
Mostly Employer-Paid

- **75%** offer **full reimbursement**
- **26%** provide **partial reimbursement**
- **20%** use **stipends or learning allowances**
- Few require employees to pay out-of-pocket (4%) or incentivize with bonuses (10%)

Insight:

Most organizations cover training costs, signaling strong employer commitment—but flexibility in funding models is growing.

How does your organization typically fund employee education and training?





Summary: What Employers Want

Make Programs Practical & Job-Aligned

- Prioritize certificates, industry-specific training, and certification prep.
- Ensure content is immediately applicable to real roles and advancement.

Emphasize Flexibility & Format Choice

- Offer hybrid and asynchronous online options.
- Structure programs in short, time-bound formats (1 week–3 months).

Price for Employer Budgets

- Keep offerings under \$10K per learner.
- Provide clear ROI narratives and real-world outcomes.

Reduce Friction for HR Partners

- Streamline enrollment, communication, and reporting.
- Package offerings in accessible, easy-to-understand formats.

Takeaway:

To compete in the employer education market, higher ed must offer **flexible, outcome-focused**, and **affordable** programs—and make them **easy for HR** professionals to find, recommend, and manage.

Who to Sell to





Number of People Engaged

The larger the organization, the larger the number of people who are engaged in the process of researching, managing, decision making.

Insight:

When appealing to larger organizations, education and training providers should anticipate more employer participants in the process.

	What is the size of your organization based on the number of employees? (Select one:)					Row Total
	1-49 employees	50-249 employees	250-999 employees	1,000-4,999 employees	5,000+ employees	
On average, how many people in your organization are responsible for reviewing and approving professional education programs for employees?						
1 person Frequency Row %	16 53.3%	3 10.0%	7 23.3%	4 13.3%	0 0.0%	30 9.4%
2 – 3 people Frequency Row %	27 29.0%	29 31.2%	18 19.4%	13 14.0%	6 6.5%	93 29.2%
4 – 5 people Frequency Row %	6 8.5%	21 29.6%	26 36.6%	12 16.9%	6 8.5%	71 22.3%
6 – 10 people Frequency Row %	2 3.4%	10 17.2%	16 27.6%	25 43.1%	5 8.6%	58 18.2%
More than 10 pe... Frequency Row %	4 6.2%	6 9.2%	18 27.7%	19 29.2%	18 27.7%	65 20.4%
Varies dependin... Frequency Row %	1 50.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	1 50.0%	0 0.0%	2 0.6%
Column Total	56	69	85	74	35	319 100%

Decision Makers



Approval authority is **widely distributed**, with no single decision-maker dominating:

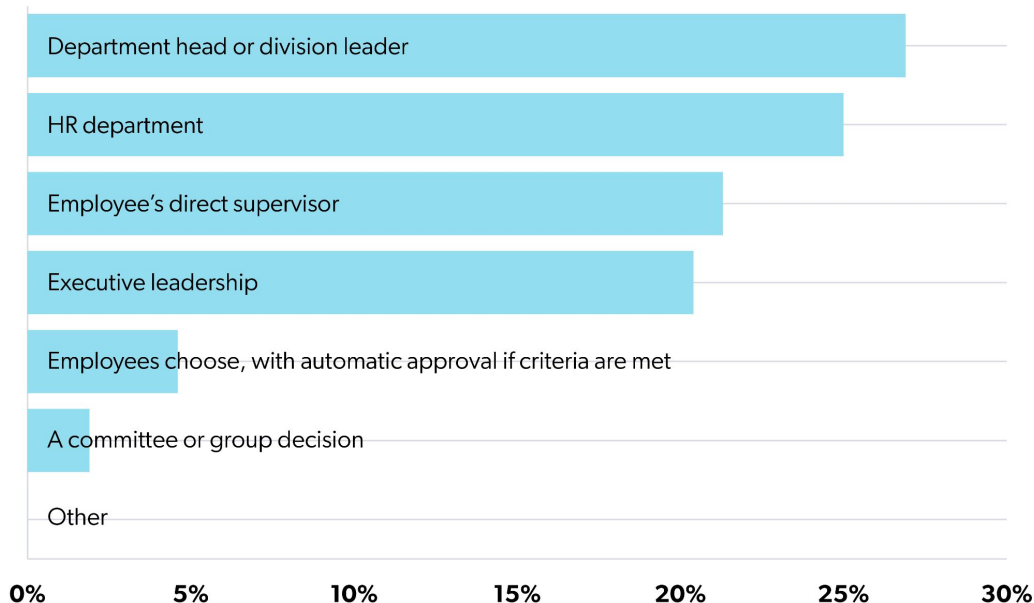
- **27%** – Department heads or division leaders
- **25%** – HR departments
- **21%** – Direct supervisors
- **20%** – Executive leadership

Only **5%** allow automatic approval, and **2%** use committees.

Insight:

Approval is often **decentralized**, highlighting the need to engage both HR and mid-level managers when promoting education partnerships.

Who makes the final decision on approving professional education programs for employees in your organization?



HR Professional Attitudes & Preferences





Reasons to Pursue Education

All reasons appear with frequency. Top reasons include:

- **Staying competitive** (Avg. 4.0)
- **Meeting certification requirements** (3.9)
- **Career advancement** and **earning potential** (3.8 each)
- **Employer Mandate** scored the lowest.

Insight:

Employees seem to be motivated by **career relevance** and **advancement**, less often from **employer mandates**.

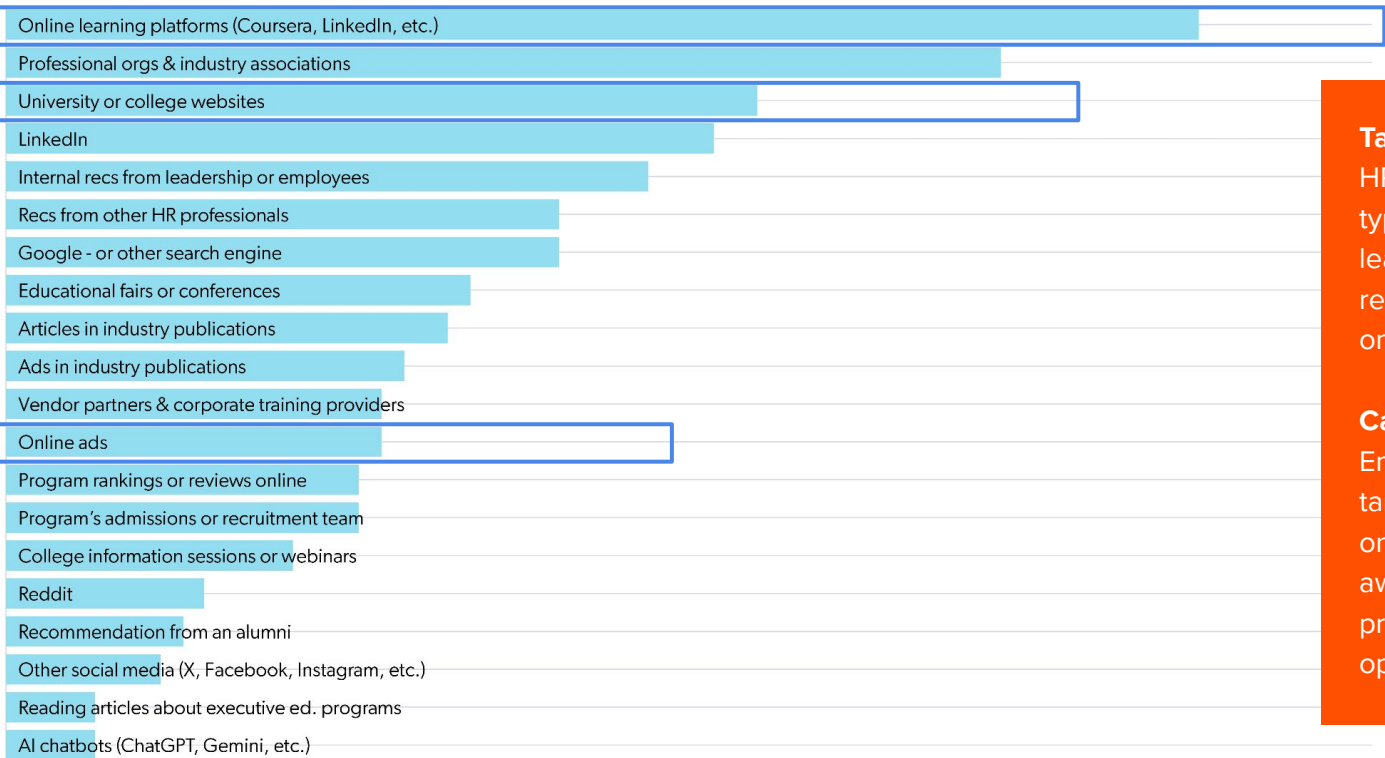
17. How often do employees in your organization pursue professional education for the following reasons?
(Rate each factor on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 = Never and 5 = Very Often.)

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very often	Average
To stay competitive in their field or industry	0	1	29	45	27	4.0
To gain skills for a promotion or career advancement	1	3	29	48	21	3.8
To meet job or industry certification requirements	1	4	30	42	25	3.8
To increase their earning potential	1	2	37	40	22	3.8
To gain leadership or management skills	1	3	39	39	20	3.7
To transition into a new role or career path	2	9	35	42	14	3.6
As part of a company-sponsored training initiative	1	8	40	34	19	3.6
To fulfill personal or lifelong learning goals	1	6	45	32	18	3.6
Because their supervisor or employer recommended it	2	9	41	36	14	3.5



Research Sources

Where do you primarily research and find professional education programs?



Takeaway:

HR professionals typically consult online learning platforms more regularly than relying on online ads.

Caveat:

Employees the programs target often mention online ads as their first awareness of professional education opportunities.



Inbound Approaches / Peers Win

Discovery Is Digital, Platform-Driven, and Peer-Influence

Respondents primarily research professional education options through **online platforms and professional networks**—not through direct outreach from institutions.

Top Discovery Channels

- **Online learning platforms** (52%)
- **Professional associations** (44%)
- **University or college websites** (33%)
- **LinkedIn** (31%)
- **Internal or peer recommendations** (28–24%)

This shows a **clear preference for self-directed, trusted, and content-rich sources**—especially those that feel peer-validated or industry-aligned.



Successful Marketing Approaches

- **Increase Visibility on Major Learning Platforms**
If your programs aren't discoverable on **Coursera, LinkedIn Learning, or similar platforms**, you're missing half the market. Even if you're not delivering through these platforms, consider **syndicating content, cross-listing, or advertising** there to drive discovery.
- **Invest in Website Optimization and Program Pages**
With **1 in 3** respondents using university websites, it's critical to ensure that program pages have all the details HR professionals need to be effectively evaluated.
- **Leverage LinkedIn Strategically**
LinkedIn ranks as a key research tool (31%). Consider a thought-leadership approach that includes **white papers and webinars** to reach the decision makers.
- **Partner with Professional Associations**
Since **44% rely on associations**, colleges should form or expand **co-branded programs, sponsorships, or webinars** with those groups to boost credibility and exposure.
- **Support Peer-Based and Internal Sharing**
Referrals from **leadership, employees, and HR peers** (24–28%) carry weight.
- **Consider Deprioritizing Traditional Tactics**
Low-reach channels like **information sessions** (13%), **ads in publications** (18%), and **alumni referrals** (8%) suggest that **traditional push-marketing methods are less effective** for this audience.



Most Challenging Aspects

“What is the most challenging aspect of finding the right professional education and training programs for your employees?”

(In order of frequency:)

1. Cost & Budget Constraints

Rising prices, limited funding, and difficulty proving ROI.

“Cost is probably the most challenging.”

2. Alignment with Business & Employee Needs

Difficulty finding programs tailored to industry, roles, and learning goals.

“It has to be a good fit for the specific needs of the organization.”

3. Relevance & Quality of Content

Concerns about outdated, too-general, or ineffective training.

“The most challenging aspect is relevance to our field.”

4. Overwhelming Options

Too many choices, unclear value, and hard-to-navigate vendor landscape.

“There are too many to choose from.”

5. Time & Scheduling Constraints

Limited time for participation, staffing conflicts.

“Scheduling and having enough substitutes.”

6. Keeping Up with Trends

Fast-changing fields make it hard to stay current.

“It’s always changing.”

7. Employee Engagement & Buy-In

Motivating staff and leadership to prioritize participation.

“To get people enrolled.”



Participant Recommendations

“Can you share any specific ideas about how colleges and universities could better support your organization in finding, recommending, and coordinating employee education programs?”

(In order of frequency:)

1. Customize Programs to Business Needs

HR leaders want industry-specific, job-relevant training tailored to their goals.

“Courses tailored specially to our needs... they'd have life-long clients.”

2. Increase Outreach & Employer Engagement

Colleges should be proactive, not passive—through direct contact, site visits, and regular communication.

“By doing more outreach and having a dedicated person explaining what they can do.”

3. Improve Program Transparency & Accessibility

Clearer info on pricing, content, and delivery is essential.

“They could be more transparent in the options and pricing.”

4. Reduce Costs & Offer Financial Support

Pricing is a barrier—employers seek discounts, group rates, or free offerings.

“Offering discounts for employees to enroll.”

5. Provide Flexible Scheduling & Formats

Delivery options need to support working professionals – online, evening, hybrid.

“They need more options so they can fit our schedule better.”

6. Assign Dedicated Corporate Liaisons

A single point of contact who understands training needs builds trust and saves time.

“Support staff who can help turnkey.”

7. Ensure Real-World Relevance

Programs should reflect current industry trends and include hands-on, applied learning.

“Teach real world experience.”



Summary: Employer Attitudes

Motivations Matter

- Employees pursue education for career advancement, competitiveness, and certification—not because they're told to.
- HR teams are more likely to support programs that align with these intrinsic goals.

Discovery is Digital & Peer-Driven

- HR professionals turn to online platforms, associations, college websites, and peer networks, not ads or cold outreach.
- Institutions need to meet them where they already search.

Simplicity & Flexibility Win

- Top requests: flexible scheduling, clear program info, and smooth enrollment.
- Employers value partners who reduce friction and support internal advocacy.

Metrics That Matter

- Success is most often measured by employee performance, satisfaction, retention, and certification completion—not revenue impact.
- Institutions that offer clear, simple ROI tools and tracking support stand out.

Build Lasting Relationships

- HR teams prefer strategic, personalized engagement: info sessions, tailored recommendations, dedicated liaisons.

Takeaway:

To earn and grow employer relationships, higher ed must approach HR professionals as **strategic collaborators** — offering practical, flexible solutions with clear value, transparent communication, and ongoing support.

Turning Insights into Action





Let's turn research into results

We'd love to partner with you to design a marketing strategy and engagement plan that drives program growth. **We'll help you:**

Clarify the Opportunity – Workshop

- Dive deeper into the data for market segmentation and persona research
- Identify priority employer sectors and partnership models
- Assess opportunities for program development aligned to market demand, delivery preferences and employer needs

Define Your Message – Marketing Plans & Strategy

- Develop brand positioning and messaging
- Create compelling narratives around ROI, outcomes, and learner success
- Build messaging frameworks for HR leaders and working learners

Reach the Right Audience – Digital Marketing

- Design employer-focused marketing and outreach strategies
- Optimize your website and enrollment pathways for conversion

Measure & Communicate Impact

- Define KPIs and ROI measurement frameworks
- Create reporting tools and templates for employer partners
- Support outcome storytelling to drive retention and new partnerships