



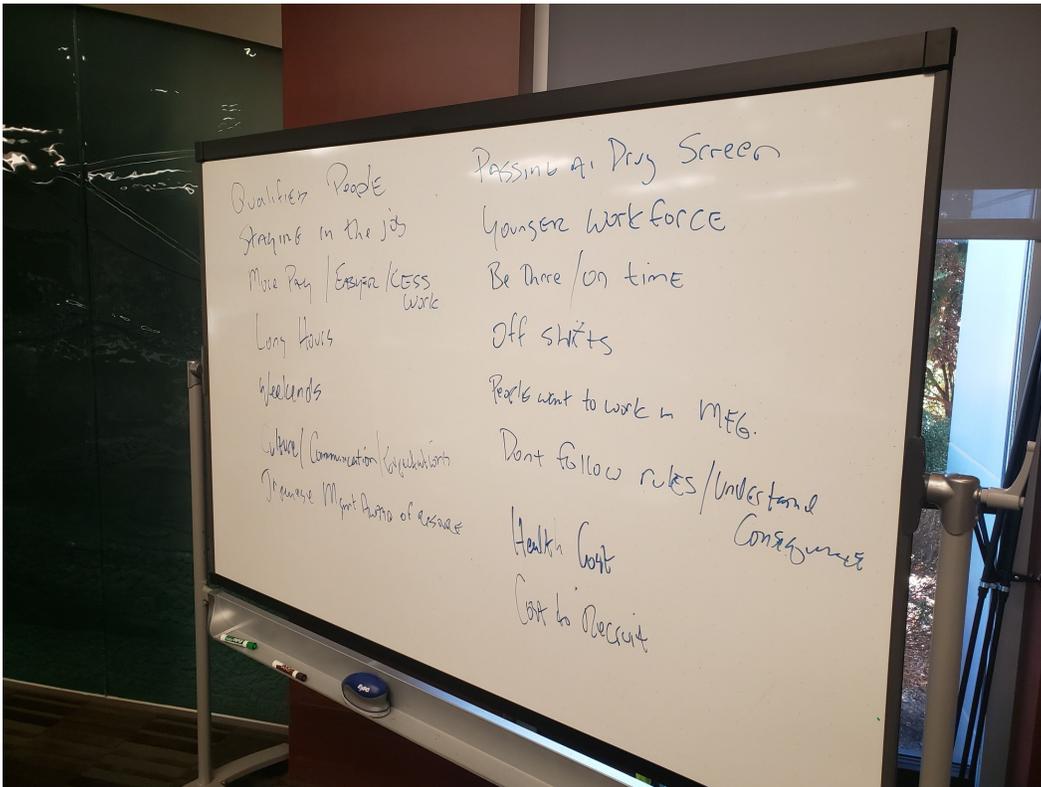
JETRO New York Organizes Workshop in Kentucky on Hiring and HR Development for

On November 15, JETRO New York organized a workshop in Frankfort, Kentucky to discuss the challenges faced by small and midsize Japanese manufacturers in hiring and human resource development. A total of 41 participants attended the event, representing 33 companies and institutions based in the State of Kentucky and nearby states.

Over 70% of Japanese Firms Cite “Hiring” as a Business Challenge

According to the “2018 Survey on Business Conditions for Japanese Companies in the U.S.” conducted by JETRO, 75.1% of small and midsize Japanese manufacturers with locations in the Southern United States* cited “hiring” as the leading factor behind their growing business costs. Although large enterprises in Kentucky are able to take advantage of programs offered by state govern-

ments, educational institutions, and related support organizations, in fact, JETRO's survey indicated that, small and midsize Japanese manufacturers expressed that they have not been fully able to obtain information on such programs and have struggled to make connections with these types of support organizations. On the other hand, these organizations have also suggested that they have had few opportunities to connect with Japanese companies, and therefore have not been able to ascertain their challenges.



Participants talk-through and discuss the challenges of work force development faced by Japanese small and midsize companies.

Given these circumstances, the first half of this workshop allowed representatives and HR officers from small and midsize Japanese manufacturers to meet with key members of support organizations, including the state government, state and regional Chambers of Commerce, and universities and community colleges, to share information on the current support environment and programs and to earnestly discuss the challenges faced by these firms. During the second half, in the interest of creating more opportunities for training company employees, a session was held to introduce a training program currently being

developed by JETRO and a local institution, Bluegrass Community College, additional participants to the program were also recruited.

Speaking on behalf of support organizations, Deputy Secretary of the Kentucky Education and Workforce Development Cabinet, Josh Benton remarked that there were as many as six available jobs on average for every job seeker, highlighting the stark difficulties that companies face in hiring. Conversely, the State Chamber of Commerce discussed various initiatives to address this situation, including a human resource development program focused on young adults that has been launched based on analyses of future needs. In addition, University of Kentucky officers noted that awareness of Japanese small and midsize enterprises among the student population is low, and discussed examples of branding through the use of job fairs and other methods.

Company representatives raised a number of common challenges they face, such as increasing difficulties in retaining employees, issues involving employee work attitudes (principally those of younger workers), and gaps between the business cultures of Japanese expatriate workers and their American team members. Multiple success stories were also shared on effective training methodologies provided by community colleges and other external institutions, while others commented that it was unnecessary for workers to have higher skill levels than their positions required. The discussion thus revealed differences among companies' needs.

JETRO New York

*Regional classification by the U.S. Department of Commerce Census Bureau.