

Leeds-Grenville-Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes 2024 Business Survey: Report March 25, 2024



Survey Timeframe: February 6 – March 10, 2024

Communities

Athens | Augusta | Brockville | Edwardsburgh Cardinal | Elizabethtown-Kitley | Front of Yonge
Gananoque | Leeds and the Thousand Islands | Merrickville-Wolford | North Grenville | Prescott
Rideau Lakes | Westport

Prepared by:

United Counties of Leeds and Grenville
Economic Development Office
32 Wall Street, Suite 300, Brockville, ON

www.investleedsgrenville.com

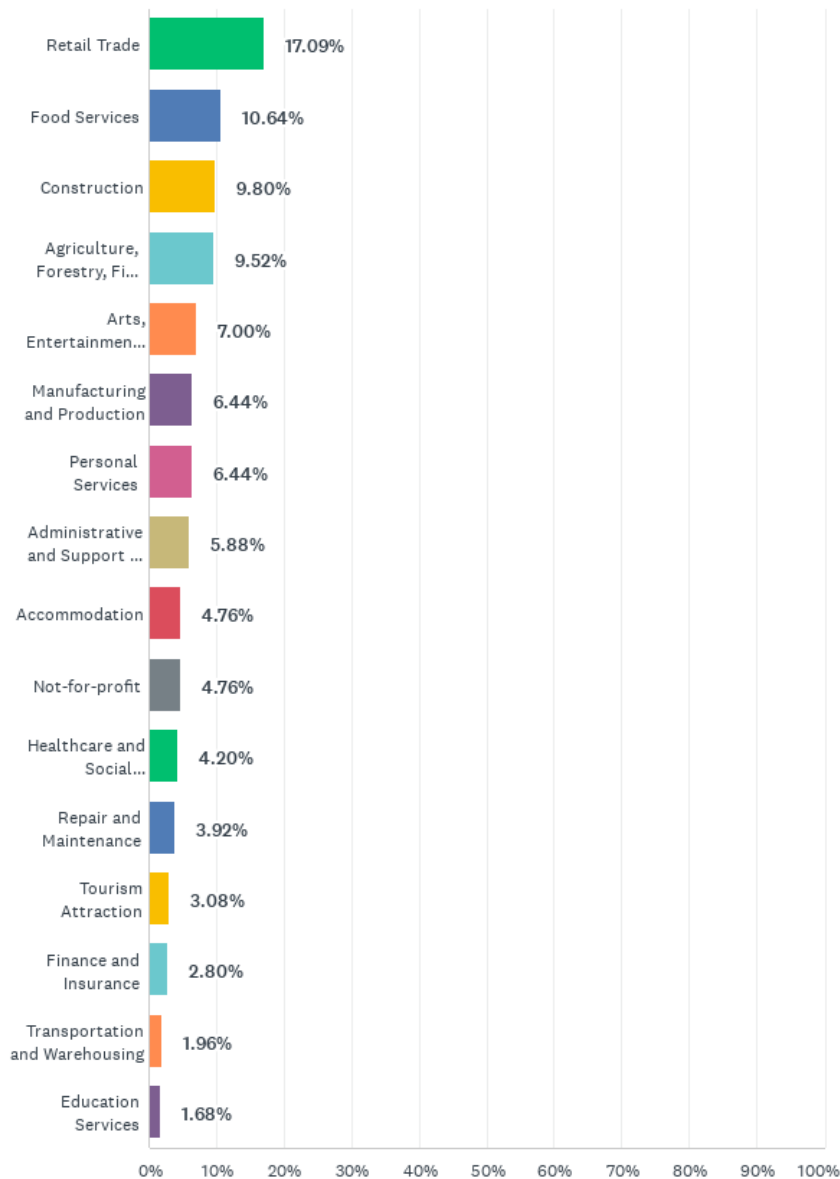
#1 Where is your business located? (if servicing multiple communities, please identify main office)

Answered: 362 Skipped: 1

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
▼ Township of Athens	3.59%	13
▼ Township of Augusta	4.14%	15
▼ City of Brockville	18.78%	68
▼ Township of Edwardsburgh Cardinal	6.08%	22
▼ Township of Elizabethtown-Kitley	5.52%	20
▼ Township of Front of Yonge	3.04%	11
▼ Town of Gananoque	4.70%	17
▼ Township of Leeds and the Thousand Islands	11.60%	42
▼ Village of Merrickville-Wolford	5.80%	21
▼ Municipality of North Grenville	16.30%	59
▼ Town of Prescott	5.52%	20
▼ Township of Rideau Lakes	9.12%	33
▼ Village of Westport	5.80%	21
TOTAL		362

#2 What sector is your business primarily operating in?

Answered: 357 Skipped: 6

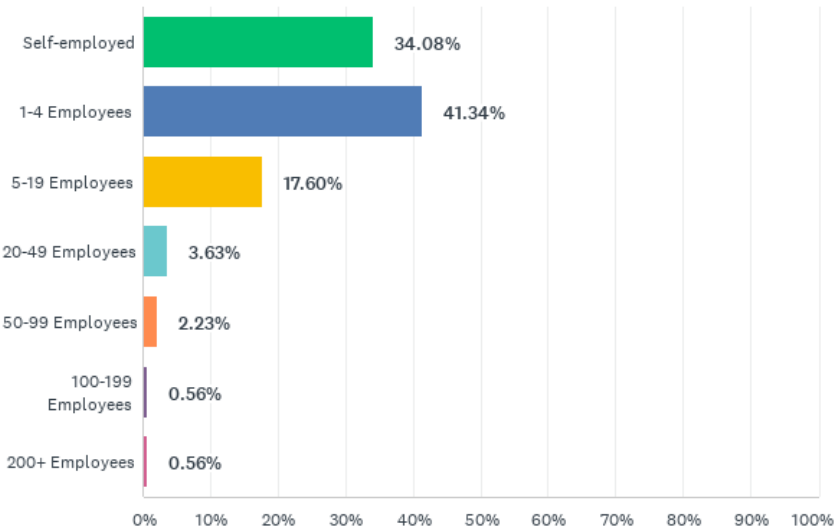


#2 continued...

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
▼ Retail Trade	17.09%	61
▼ Food Services	10.64%	38
▼ Construction	9.80%	35
▼ Agriculture, Forestry, Fish and Hunting	9.52%	34
▼ Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	7.00%	25
▼ Manufacturing and Production	6.44%	23
▼ Personal Services	6.44%	23
▼ Administrative and Support - Business Services	5.88%	21
▼ Accommodation	4.76%	17
▼ Not-for-profit	4.76%	17
▼ Healthcare and Social Assistance	4.20%	15
▼ Repair and Maintenance	3.92%	14
▼ Tourism Attraction	3.08%	11
▼ Finance and Insurance	2.80%	10
▼ Transportation and Warehousing	1.96%	7
▼ Education Services	1.68%	6
TOTAL		357

#3 Typically, how many full-time equivalent employees does your company have?

Answered: 358 Skipped: 5

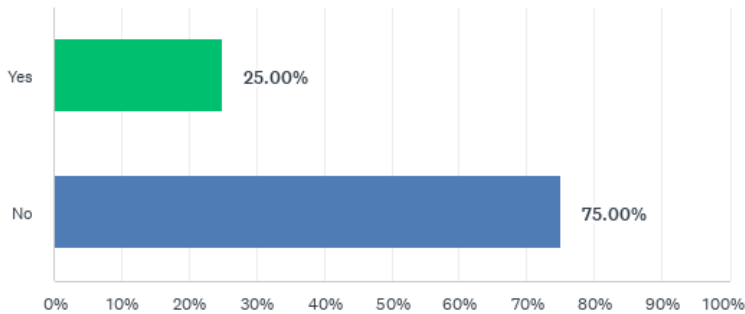


#3 continued...

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Self-employed	34.08%	122
1-4 Employees	41.34%	148
5-19 Employees	17.60%	63
20-49 Employees	3.63%	13
50-99 Employees	2.23%	8
100-199 Employees	0.56%	2
200+ Employees	0.56%	2
TOTAL		358

#4 For medium / large business (50 and above employees) -
Are your employees unionized?

Answered: 12



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	25.00%	3
No	75.00%	9
TOTAL		12

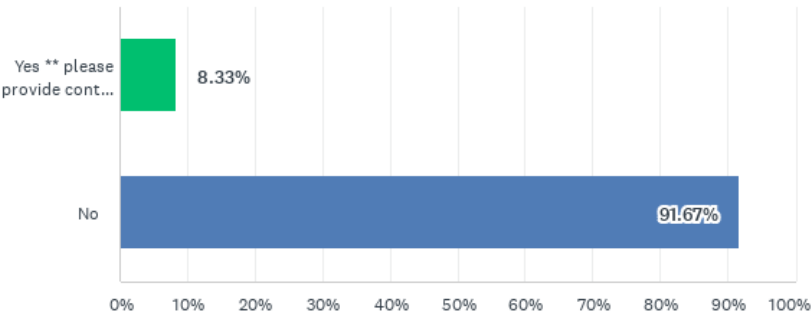
#5 For medium / large business (50 and above employees) -
What are your top infrastructure issues, and why? i.e. hydro, natural gas, rail, etc.

Answered: 12

- Hydro (x4)
- Internet connectivity (x2)
- Aging facilities
- Gas inflation
- Roads and bridges because they've been underfunded for years
- Rail - transport by rail has become difficult at best. Railcars become "stuck" at the Brockville interchange for days, sometimes weeks. Scheduled switches are regularly missed due to rail issues with staffing.
- As the first tier of learning, lack of registered early childhood educator staff affects the stability of the service we are providing. Lack of child care due to staffing shortages affects the economy when parents cannot join or stay in the workforce.

#6 For medium / large business (50 and above employees) -
Are you interested in participating in an Ottawa job fair in October?

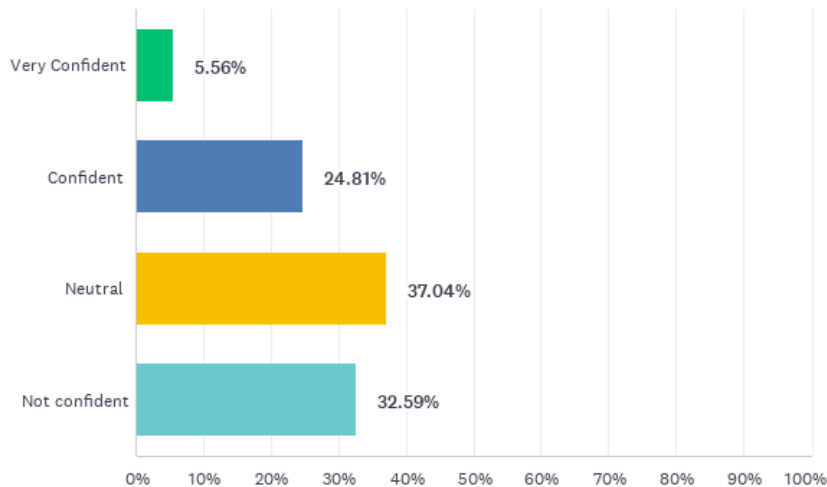
Answered: 12



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes ** please provide contact info at end of survey	8.33%	1
No	91.67%	11
TOTAL		12

#7 How confident are you in the strength of the economy?

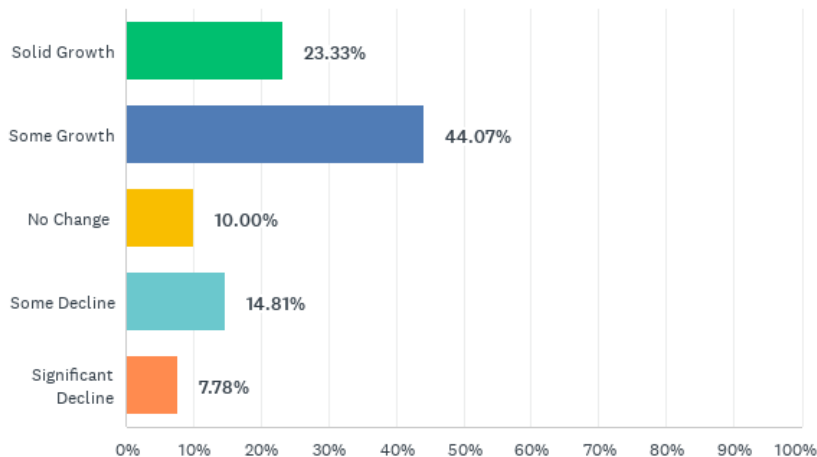
Answered: 270 Skipped: 93



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Very Confident	5.56%	15
Confident	24.81%	67
Neutral	37.04%	100
Not confident	32.59%	88
TOTAL		270

#8 In the last couple of years, what has your business experienced?

Answered: 270 Skipped: 93



#8 continued...

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
▼ Solid Growth	23.33% 63
▼ Some Growth	44.07% 119
▼ No Change	10.00% 27
▼ Some Decline	14.81% 40
▼ Significant Decline	7.78% 21
TOTAL	270

#9 Rate the level of challenge to your business for each item.

Answered: 270

Skipped: 93

	1-NOT A CHALLENGE	2	3-SOMEWHAT CHALLENGING	4	5-VERY CHALLENGING	TOTAL
▼ Increasing overhead costs	5.24% 14	7.12% 19	32.21% 86	23.60% 63	31.84% 85	267
▼ Increasing product prices	8.65% 23	7.52% 20	24.81% 66	25.94% 69	33.08% 88	266
▼ Changes in demand for your product / service	20.45% 55	23.05% 62	31.23% 84	14.13% 38	11.15% 30	269
▼ Borrowing costs	33.85% 88	14.23% 37	20.38% 53	13.46% 35	18.08% 47	260
▼ Repayment of CEBA loan	69.41% 177	5.10% 13	4.71% 12	3.92% 10	16.86% 43	255
▼ Supply chain instability	33.33% 88	18.18% 48	27.27% 72	14.02% 37	7.20% 19	264
▼ Ability to find skilled employees	27.80% 72	10.42% 27	19.69% 51	13.90% 36	28.19% 73	259
▼ Ability to offer competitive wages and benefits	27.10% 71	7.63% 20	23.28% 61	19.08% 50	22.90% 60	262
▼ Ability to retain employees	40.23% 105	17.24% 45	19.92% 52	9.96% 26	12.64% 33	261
▼ Absenteeism due to reliable child care	71.04% 184	9.65% 25	9.27% 24	5.02% 13	5.02% 13	259

#9 continued...

Workforce Challenges:

- Ability to find regular/student employees
- Very hard to find suitable professional healthcare worker
- No before and after school care available
- Lack of work ethic from many
- Seasonal employment - finding summer employees

Financial Challenges:

- Increasing service costs to the customer is no longer an option to increase revenue
- Affordability: Inability to reinvest in facilities, therefore no growth; carbon tax on inputs
- I hire contract people for specialized jobs; they are more costly every year and hard to find
- The interest rates on the COVID loans have doubled, combined with decreased consumer spending because of a lagging economy, making it almost impossible to make our monthly payments
- Specialized training costs and time are very challenging

Regulatory and Administrative Challenges:

- Access to grants for non-profit corporations that have a business side
- Government is far too excessive in the administration to operate a business
- Municipal government... too big, uneducated
- Government legislation and red tape

Environmental and External Factors:

- Water levels unpredictably low on St Lawrence River
- Seasonal flux is a high challenge of a tourist area (very busy in summer, very quiet in winter)
- Changing weather patterns & how it affects outdoor events
- A pervasive sense of insecurity due to the wars in Ukraine and in Palestine and the deterioration of the environment.

Pandemic-Related Challenges:

- Most of the challenges above have been a direct result of all of the damages done during the pandemic and all of the knockdowns imposed on our business. Also, people's habits have changed.
- The bigger issue is since the pandemic, a child can't go to school if they have as much as a sniffle or a headache, and that makes the mom unable to work or the dad.

Others:

- No housing for employees
- Getting people to understand the links of mass timber, housing, and mental health in the bio-economy
- Off-season support of our business
- N/A

#10 Rate the level of challenge to your employees or as a self employed individual for each item.

Answered: 267

Skipped: 96

	1-NOT A CHALLENGE	2	3-SOMEWHAT CHALLENGING	4	5- VERY CHALLENGING	TOTAL
Available housing / accommodation	43.68% 114	6.51% 17	22.61% 59	13.03% 34	14.18% 37	261
Available daycare	62.65% 161	6.61% 17	12.45% 32	8.56% 22	9.73% 25	257
Cost of Living ie. inflation	7.95% 21	6.44% 17	22.35% 59	27.65% 73	35.61% 94	264
Public transportation	59.00% 154	10.34% 27	12.64% 33	4.21% 11	13.79% 36	261
Caring for elders	50.78% 130	11.72% 30	19.92% 51	11.33% 29	6.25% 16	256

Transportation Challenges:

- One of our staff members is using a taxi to and from work as they don't drive and there is no option for transportation.
- Rural remote location for part-time seasonal contracts
- Employee commuting costs are very high; no public transit in rural Ontario. Need the provincial government to offer rebate/tax break for employee commuting expenses.
- None of my employees use Brockville Transit. I don't believe any of them have ever used Brockville Transit.

Staffing Challenges:

- Sustaining full-time employment during the slow season is very challenging, keeping competitive with wages/perks.
- Finding younger workers that aren't nearly at retirement age.

Miscellaneous Challenges:

- Not Applicable (x6)
- Lack of local knowledge and collaboration from local authorities
- Cost of food, working multiple positions, even as full-time employees.
- Lack of medical/dental/health benefits.
- Township of Rideau Lakes municipal bureaucracy.
- No doctors or NP available, and not one of the 32 walk-in clinics are taking new patients! So, no healthcare for many, many thousands of people in this whole region. Disabled parent (legally blind, no doctors, so they can't get the disability forms signed by a GP!) so a legally blind person is without ANY disability supports or disability income too. We can't even get a disability parking permit without a GP Doctor! The MP and MPP have completely failed everyone in this region and are not honestly funding Canadians with the medical care they pay for in their taxes!

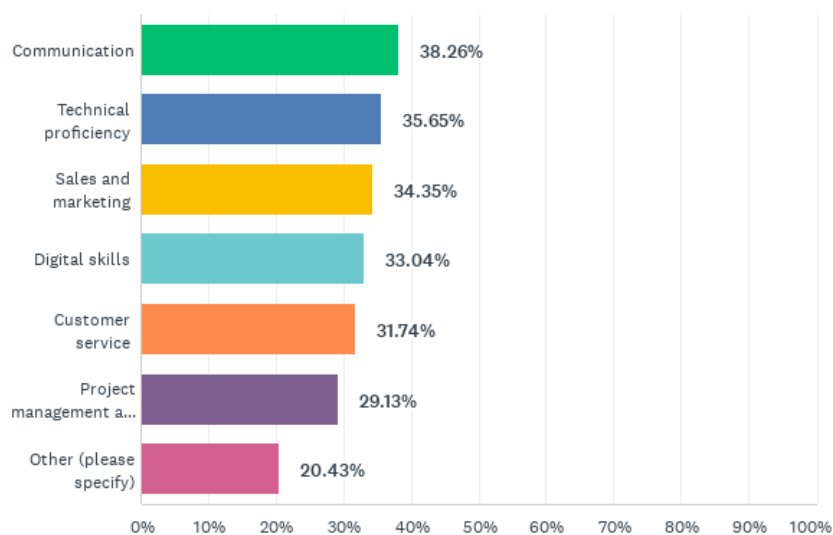
#10 continued...

- Inflation.
- We own a campground, there is a home on the property, and we no longer have school-age children or elders to care for.
- Our employees are treated as family members, and we have been able to reduce their challenge levels by effective people management.
- I employ 1 part-time individual.

#11 What skill gaps do you believe exist within your employees?

(Choose all that apply)

Answered: 230 Skipped: 133



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Communication	38.26%	88
Technical proficiency	35.65%	82
Sales and marketing	34.35%	79
Digital skills	33.04%	76
Customer service	31.74%	73
Project management and organization	29.13%	67
Other (please specify)	Responses 20.43%	47
Total Respondents: 230		

#11 continued...

Employee Skills and Training:

- Experience in our trade.
- Experience.
- Leadership.
- Specific, I have a law practice and have many applicants with no law office experience.
- Wanting to do hard work.
- Trade knowledge. Work ethics.
- Ability to learn new skills and operate different machinery.
- Basic math, spelling, and writing.
- Understanding the whole concept of running a small business.
- Lack of dedication and devotion to the employer and the employment engagement agreement.
- Many people in the service industry left during the pandemic, and have not returned so skilled hairstylists and aestheticians are at a shortage.
- Technology advancements.
- Skilled labourers.
- Drive & motivation. Drive for financial success.
- Penmanship of students and young adults is not legible; leading to many problems and concerns.

No Employees/ Not Applicable

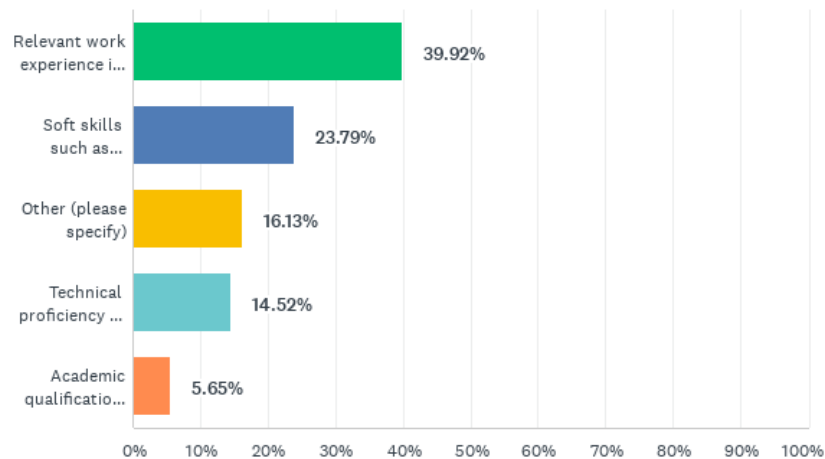
- No employees (x8)
- Not Applicable (x6)
- We don't have any employees other than us. We are looking for one for 6-8 months.
- We have no employees, minimum wage too high for us. It's just my husband and I.
- We have laid off all staff. There isn't enough income to support a payroll with decreased consumer spending and increased cost of doing business.

Other:

- Our current staff (albeit limited) is highly skilled and experienced where they need to be. Previous recent new hires (who are no longer with us) are a different story.
- No skill gaps.
- None - we work hard to train and support our staff.
- Time - not really a skill, just not enough hours.

#12 When hiring new employees, which is the most significant? (Choose 1)

Answered: 248 Skipped: 115



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
▼ Relevant work experience in a similar role	39.92%	99
▼ Soft skills such as teamwork and communication	23.79%	59
▼ Other (please specify)	Responses 16.13%	40
▼ Technical proficiency and specific job-related skills	14.52%	36
▼ Academic qualifications and certifications	5.65%	14
TOTAL	248	

Soft Skills and Attitudes:

- Motivation.
- Academics are important for the job; however, dedication to the job (coming to work) and a willingness to learn are most important today!
- Attitude - we can train skills required.
- The ability to work diligently and consistently.
- Willingness to learn.
- Drive, motivation, willingness, and eagerness to learn, personal drive to improve skillset for advancement.
- Willing to show up and work. Grow with the business.
- Customer service.
- Time management
- Interaction with the public, self-confidence, working alone, and decision-making.

#12 continued...

Technical Proficiency and Specific Skills:

- Technical proficiency in terms of their specific job-related skills while also being able to market themselves and fill their practices.
- That the custom operator has all the right equipment and skills and training needed for the job.

Financial Constraints:

- Because we ask for OCT certification but can only pay 1/2 to 1/3 of what is offered in the public boards, we struggle.
- We aren't generating enough income to support staff.

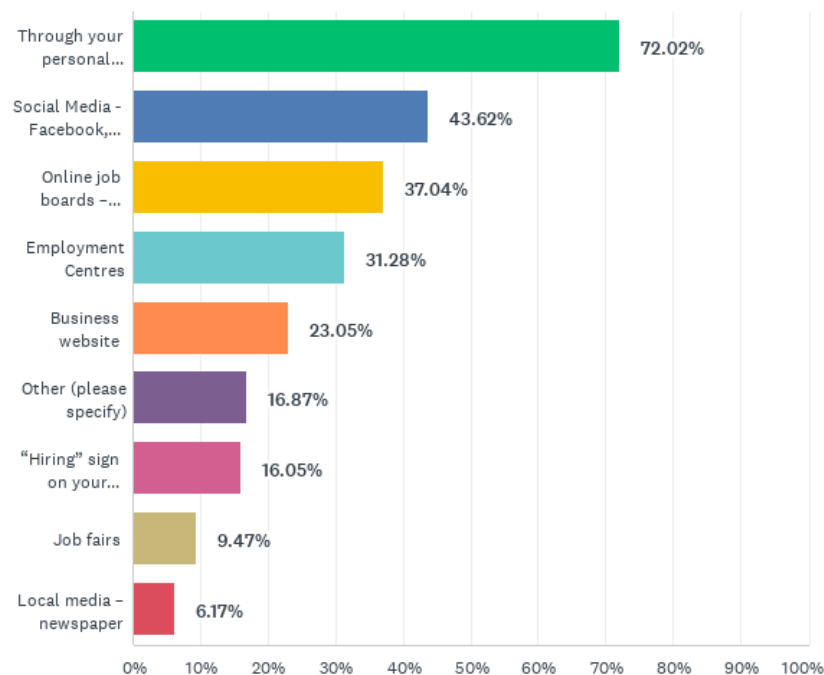
Others:

- Not Applicable or Irrelevant (x12)
- Finding services in Canadian dollars.
- Transportation.
- Meet Rotary's objectives.
- Physical ability to lift, work on uneven ground, endure a longer day.
- As with most small businesses, a long-term hire would require a broad skill set to be able to wear multiple hats. I can train people but they have to be a rare person.
- We have learned the hard way, through experience, that each of the above are almost of equal importance.
- A pulse. The market is so tight we basically hire anyone.

#13 What methods do you utilize for employee recruitment?

(Choose all that apply)

Answered: 243 Skipped: 120



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Through your personal network	72.02% 175
Social Media - Facebook, Instagram	43.62% 106
Online job boards - Indeed, LinkedIn	37.04% 90
Employment Centres	31.28% 76
Business website	23.05% 56
Other (please specify)	Responses 16.87% 41
"Hiring" sign on your premises	16.05% 39
Job fairs	9.47% 23
Local media - newspaper	6.17% 15
Total Respondents: 243	

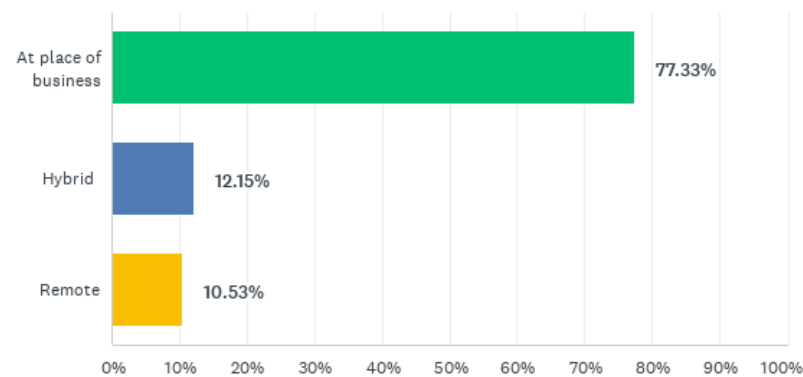
#13 continued...

Recruitment Methods:

- Not Applicable (x13)
- Referrals (x5)
- Word of mouth (x2)
- Resumes
- Indeed website
- Kijiji
- Always have resumes on file
- Head-hunter
- Walk-ins
- Government sites
- Recruiter services
- Have used all of the above with the exception of a job fair
- Family

#14 What type of work environment do you offer?

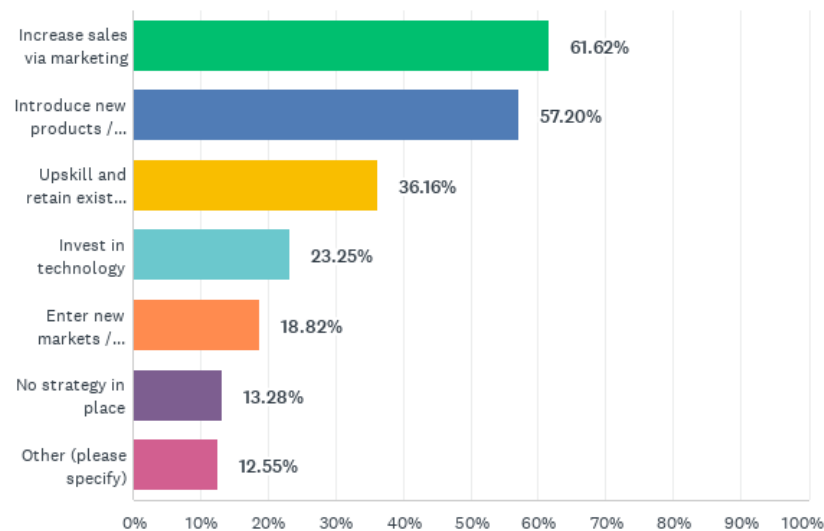
Answered: 247 Skipped: 116



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
At place of business	77.33%	191
Hybrid	12.15%	30
Remote	10.53%	26
TOTAL		247

#15 What are your top 3 strategies for growing your business. (Choose 3)

Answered: 271 Skipped: 92



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
▼ Increase sales via marketing	61.62%	167
▼ Introduce new products / services	57.20%	155
▼ Upskill and retain existing talent	36.16%	98
▼ Invest in technology	23.25%	63
▼ Enter new markets / export	18.82%	51
▼ No strategy in place	13.28%	36
▼ Other (please specify)	Responses 12.55%	34
Total Respondents: 271		

Growth / Increase in Assets or Staff:

- Provide new products and services in response to current client’s requests.
- Find 1 or 2 qualified trainers.
- Bring on more practitioners offering additional services.
- Scale up/hire.
- Purchase other properties.
- Upgrade equipment.
- Currently preparing to publish a book, marketing it through established networks to build reputation.
Public Speaking has also been a huge asset for building a client base that meets my target market.

#15 continued...

Improving Current Processes / Assets:

- Focus on top selling products.
- Keep doing what we're doing, it works well, lots of word of mouth publicity.
- My current strategies deliver the results I want.
- My business is where I want it to be. Growing through client referrals.
- My business grows as my skills have no competition
- Quality, customer-focused service.
- Offer exceptional customer service from older knowledgeable employees.
- To provide the very best quality training in a safe, welcoming, and inclusive atmosphere.
- Build relationships to turn one-time customers into lifetime fans

Marketing and Advertising:

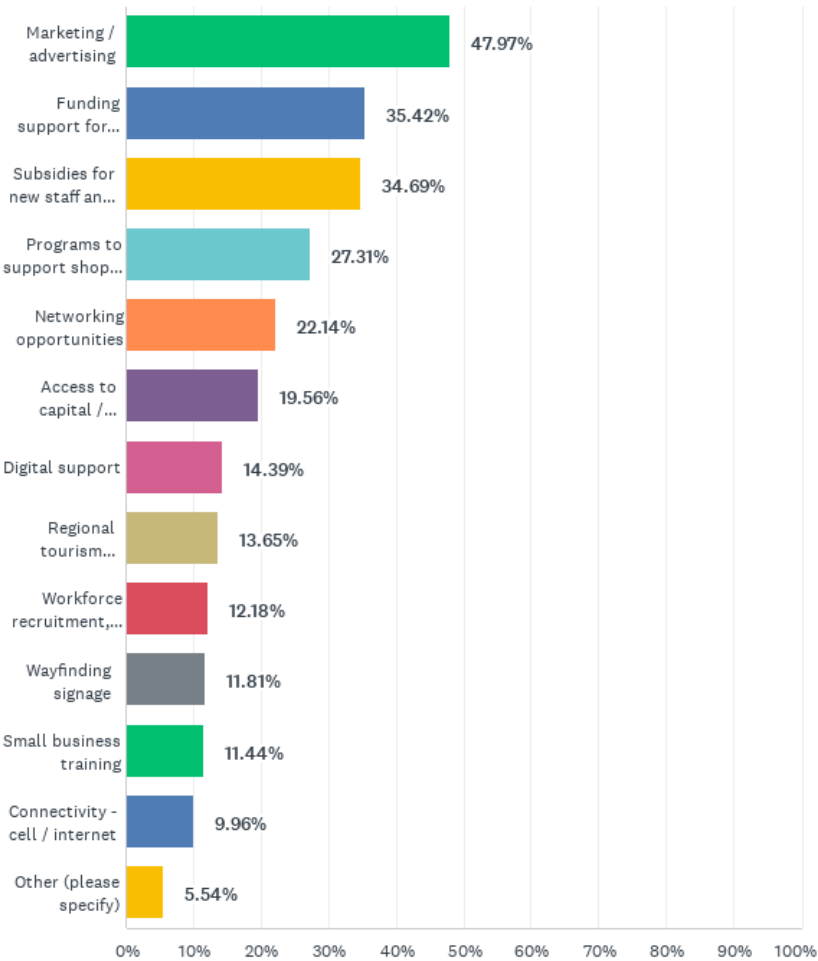
- Word of mouth
- Online advertising
- Advertising, social media, newspaper
- Word of mouth and referrals
- Networking and references

Other:

- Raise the price
- Cost control
- We are maxed out, trying to coast now.
- Status quo
- We are just trying to pay our monthly expenses at the moment. Strategic "break even" with minor maintenance & operational upgrades. Playing a long game to stay open.

#16 What are the 3 top areas of support that would be most helpful to your business right now? (Choose 3)

Answered: 271 Skipped: 92



#16 continued...

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Marketing / advertising	47.97%	130
Funding support for business expansion	35.42%	96
Subsidies for new staff and training	34.69%	94
Programs to support shop local	27.31%	74
Networking opportunities	22.14%	60
Access to capital / business loans	19.56%	53
Digital support	14.39%	39
Regional tourism destination development – products, marketing	13.65%	37
Workforce recruitment, hiring and resourcing staff	12.18%	33
Wayfinding signage	11.81%	32
Small business training	11.44%	31
Connectivity - cell / internet	9.96%	27
Other (please specify)	Responses 5.54%	15
Total Respondents: 271		

Funding and Support for Businesses:

- Funding assistance for specialized training for solopreneurs.
- Funding support for business expansion and being able to access My Main Street and/or CIP or other grants.
- Specific opportunities for sole proprietors running virtual businesses to connect. We don't have storefronts or brick and mortar businesses and I feel our businesses and our needs as business owners are not seen or understood by business development organizations.
- Be nice if Digital Main Street was an actual program.

Government and Policy Changes:

- Recognition at the Municipal level that agriculture is a thriving BUSINESS (not potential land for development); and transferring Economic Development from OMAFRA to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs.
- Scrap the carbon tax.
- Cut social catchall so people must work. Open more immigrants who all like older Canadians want a job and want to work.
- Less taxes - less government intervention.

Housing and Accommodation:

- Housing, housing, housing. Did I mention housing?
- Ability to have temporary housing for farm partners, interns.

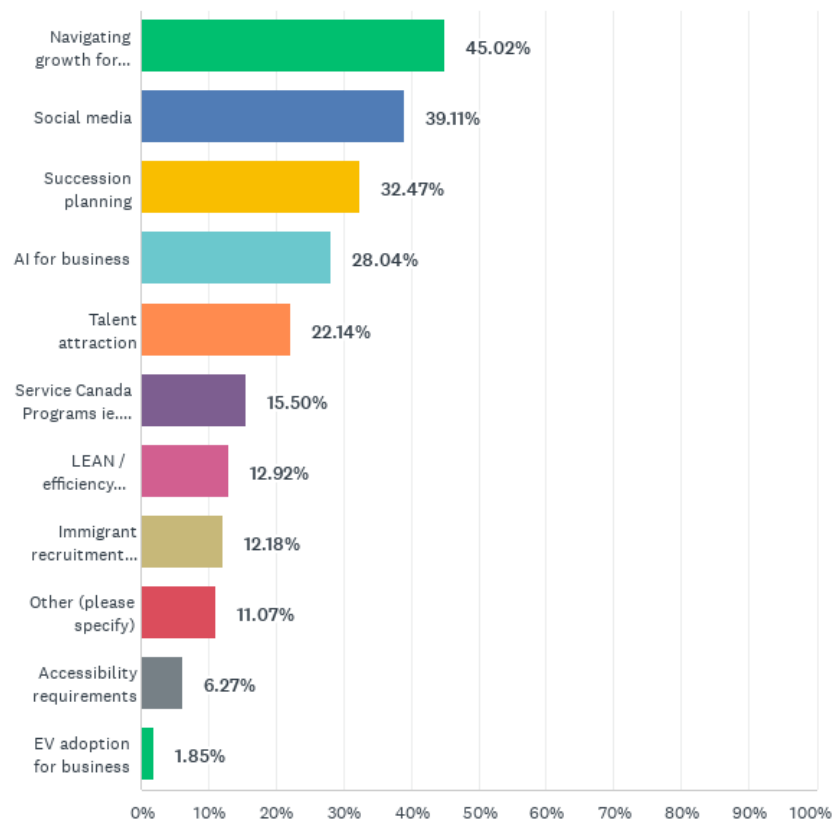
#16 continued...

Individual Statements:

- Subsidize highway 416 signage to drive business to Spencerville.
- Keeping up with changing technology of computers, phones, TV monitor.
- More focus on supporting local year-round; rather than focusing so much on a few months of tourists and seasonal.
- I'm not in need of support.
- Non-profit access to all of the above.

#17 What type of workshops / training would you like to see offered? (Choose 3)

Answered: 271 Skipped: 92



#17 continued...

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
▼ Navigating growth for small business	45.02%	122
▼ Social media	39.11%	106
▼ Succession planning	32.47%	88
▼ AI for business	28.04%	76
▼ Talent attraction	22.14%	60
▼ Service Canada Programs ie. work sharing, record of employment	15.50%	42
▼ LEAN / efficiency training	12.92%	35
▼ Immigrant recruitment programs	12.18%	33
▼ Other (please specify)	Responses 11.07%	30
▼ Accessibility requirements	6.27%	17
▼ EV adoption for business	1.85%	5
Total Respondents: 271		

Skill Development:

- Instagram training
- Safety training
- Need people who can sew drapery and do upholstery
- Advanced carpentry
- Customer service programs
- Basic like accounting, administration, and marketing advice and training
- Communication skills
- Social media but with a focus on understanding analytics and less about how to post or when to post etc.
- Basic math and writing skills; without the use of phones or calculator

Business Training

- Business Planning skills, the start-up program may be a good option if they'll accept me at this point in my business.
- Leadership training, wage subsidies for succession planning.
- HR workplace policies update.
- Scaling up for sole proprietors running virtual businesses.
- Maximizing corporation to further growth capabilities, grant potentials.
- Programs for women-owned businesses.
- Financial

#17 continued...

Legislative / Regulatory Requirements:

- Tax/Legislative Requirements.
- Offer webinar links to compliance, regulatory & legal updates by others.

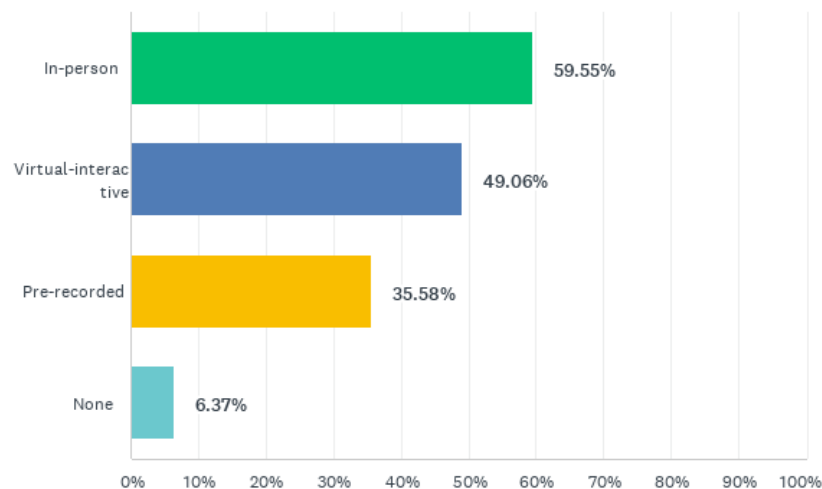
Other

- Newcomer education credential equivalency and assessments.
- How to attract labour to markets with no housing.
- There are lots of workshops and training offered online; more than I can attend. I think an approach of working directly on a problem or project or priority area would be more effective.
- Training is available everywhere, do not duplicate.
- How to survive high-interest rates on debt accumulated because of repeated mandatory lockdowns.
- Cap and Trade/Carbon tax avoidance.
- How a small business can survive when the government refused to extend the CEBA loan when small businesses are already drowning in debt
- GST.

#18 How do you prefer the delivery of workshops / training? (Choose all that apply)

Answered: 267

Skipped: 96



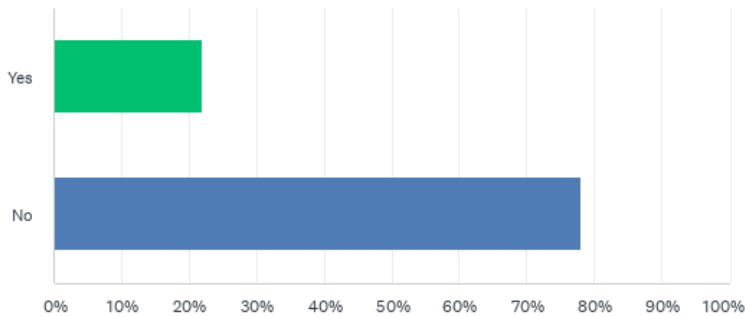
#18 continued...

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
In-person	59.55%	159
Virtual-interactive	49.06%	131
Pre-recorded	35.58%	95
None	6.37%	17
Total Respondents: 267		

- I don't find workshops very helpful to be honest.
- Posted to economic development web sites short information and training videos 24/7.
- In my business my schedule is set 2 months in advance so by the time I see the workshops in the newsletters it's difficult to work it into the schedule. I like workshops because it also can be a networking opportunity vs online.
- All
- Open to any delivery method.
- All of this is a waste of time if you don't address housing. I'm not doing any major capital investing in my business as long as there's no affordable housing in my community. Minimum income needed to live in Westport is a school teacher's salary.
- If pre-recorded, please have it in a format where it can be played back at a higher speed. I retain information better at 2-4x speed if I am unable to do hands on work.
- I like in-person workshops most - especially post COVID, but sometimes they are hard to attend due to timing. Evening or even lunch time is a good time to offer workshops. Even a Friday afternoon.

#19 Do you have plans to close your business or transfer ownership in the next 3-5 years?

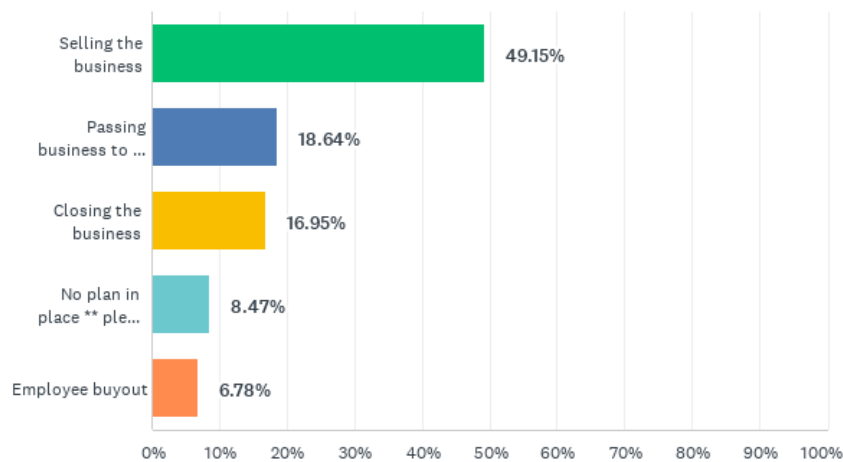
Answered: 268 Skipped: 95



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	22.01%	59
No	77.99%	209
TOTAL		268

#20 If yes, what is your succession plan?

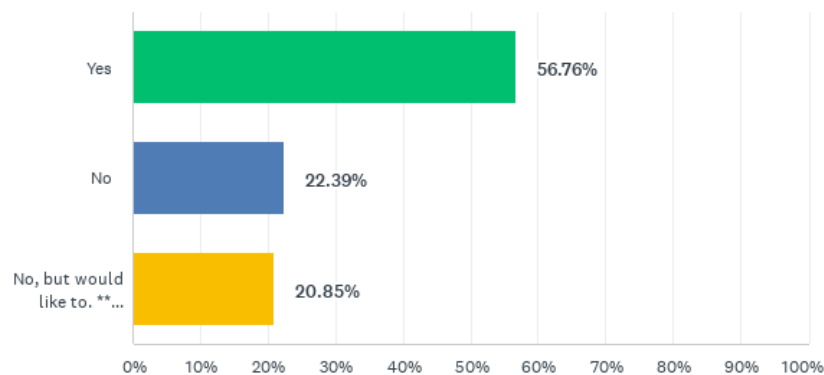
Answered: 59



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Selling the business	49.15%	29
Passing business to a family member	18.64%	11
Closing the business	16.95%	10
No plan in place ** please provide contact info at end of survey for support	8.47%	5
Employee buyout	6.78%	4
TOTAL		59

#21 Do you currently receive the Leeds Grenville business eNewsletter?

Answered: 259 Skipped: 104



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	56.76%	147
No	22.39%	58
No, but would like to. ** Please provide contact info at end of survey	20.85%	54
TOTAL	259	

#22 Please provide any additional comments related to your business viability and your challenges as a business owner.

Answered: 61 Skipped: 302

Financial Challenges:

- The current economic situation and lack of operational funding are our greatest challenges.
- I'm facing financial problems with the high price of everything. Finding good employees is a huge challenge
- Increased interest rates on the debit accumulated during mandatory lockdowns is unsustainable. Consumer spending is down - people are struggling to meet their basic needs leaving little left to spend on extras. We have no choice but to sell our property to pay back debit as the monthly payments are unsustainable. The water/sewer bills are outrageously high. Energy bills have doubled. We can't afford to stay in business.
- The cost of some of my inputs have almost doubled in the last 3 years but I've been unable to increase my sales prices to compensate because I'm pretty much already at what my market will bear
- This business just started in 2020 so we are learning as we go...it's gotten better each year for expenses and hopefully we get to a place where we can pay down our business loans significantly. Overhead and start-up costs were huge and now we are maintaining equipment and not thinking too big for our business future just yet. Making ends meet in this climate is a goal in itself.

#22 continued...

- Currently still in the "stage" of paying off business debt so that I can start paying myself. This is another factor that's deterring me from hiring help and growing the business.
- Not getting an extension beyond January 18th on the CEBA loan was very difficult. It will take the business YEARS to recover from the damages/losses incurred since March 2020. Staffing has become a MAJOR challenge since March 2020. We offer competitive wages and hardly get any hits on our job ads.
- Would like to wind business down gradually but cost of insurance and software seems to be forcing an abrupt sale or closure of the business.
- We expect to grow. The area we work in (sustainability) is growing exponentially. The sub-area (Circular Economy) likewise. We are a 're-startup' and our challenges right now is that there is more opportunity than we can address, and we are undercapitalized

Community and Government:

- Too much bureaucracy when trying to add some accommodation.
- I am actively trying to sell the store because the county and municipality aren't listening and there's no prospect of having access to a work force to support the growth of my business.
- Thankful for the support offered from the Municipality of North Grenville and their staff. They have helped me grow my business and learn more about the new digital world.
- Started a new business and the red tape was time consuming and expensive. No sense of urgency or understanding to get it started. Municipal and Provincial roadblocks from understanding rules diversified business on agricultural land to MOE to MOL on a provincial level. Even hydro getting something done was pain staking.
- I've seen growth every year since opening but have not made any money yet. The township has too many permit fees for expansion, does nothing to help businesses exist or grow, does not do the right things to promote tourism or encourage people to spend time in our villages. TLTI is not small business friendly.
- As a business owner in the Township of Leeds and the Thousand Islands, I'm disappointed by the lack of recognition that is given to small businesses. I see other neighbouring townships (Rideau Lakes and Front of Yonge) recognizing their small businesses annually with events and awards. To my knowledge, no such events occur in TLTI. While my motivation to be an entrepreneur and to operate a small business is not driven by whether or not I receive awards, holding recognition events is a nice way to thank small businesses for making contributions to the community. Do better TLTI.
- It seems that the town is finding more ways to charge businesses for new things, such as backflow water devices and charging for additional delivery fees for water to a property with more than one use. Our water is going up by 14%. I believe in taxes by 7% Considering small business is a backbone of our nation, it's becoming harder and harder to keep that backbone supported.
- The only signage on the 416 to Spencerville is Drummonds Gas Bar. The cost last time I was aware was \$5,000/yr. This is a very high cost for smaller businesses. Is it possible for Counties or Municipal support to subsidize this cost? I believe it would bring traffic to and from Ottawa down the 416 Corridor.
- The biggest challenge is government regulation. The cost of doing business. No control over input costs or what the market will pay for the product we produce.

#22 continued...

- Brick and mortar stores, independently owned by locals, and selling retail goods like clothing, jewelry, gift items etc. are being undermined in the recent explosion of craft and farmers' markets in small and medium-sized towns on weekends and across the warmer months at festivals. These markets have become prolific in recent years as more people look to add another income source to help make ends meet. Often the market promoters/owners as well as the vendors are not subject to municipal fees or tax collection requirements. In addition, these markets are allowed to advertise on social media pages which do not allow brick and mortar stores to do the same. This creates an unfair playing field. While weekend markets can be a great draw for a small town, they can also divert shoppers away from the downtown stores, and they tend to be perceived as less expensive sales-tax-free "supporting local growers and makers" alternatives. Fees for the smaller market vendors tend to be small. A town that doesn't promote and help its brick and mortars but is all gung-ho to encourage more craft festivals and markets is in danger of ending up with a hollowed-out shopping core that looks dismally unattractive.
- Townships are killing small businesses in villages settlement areas with Planning and Building Departments excessive use of additional permits and fees created since the pandemic started. Townships are being aggressive, and the Mayors and Councils are out of touch with reality, and are no longer even listening to the people they are supposed to serve. Townships Mayors and Councils are ONLY listening to staff who are killing businesses with no internet, and excessive damaging fees, permits, and a utter lack of housing available again due to land Planning and ridiculous issues with red tape hence cost out of control via massive delays, egregious additional fees created, excessive permits, and Building Departments refusing illegally to inspect, and demanding Engineers to their job and inspect, and write reports all which cost many many thousands hence costs businesses way too much unfairly as well.
- Consumer spending is down over 50% not just with our business but with all the others we've spoken to. Our small towns and villages will be forever changed if small family businesses are lost, replaced with big box stores. Our municipalities need to lobby the government to take the pressure off loan repayment. We haven't come close to reaching pre-pandemic sales yet with a dragging economy. Consumers have no money left over after basic expenses to spend. The government's refusal to extend the CEBA loan is going to cause a bloodbath of small business bankruptcies. We don't need your help expanding. We need you to fight for us to stay viable until consumers feel financially confident spending money again.

Tourism:

- An increase to tourism strategy
- We need additional businesses in our area to attract tourists.
- Stable water levels on the St Lawrence river. Maintaining higher levels into the end of October each year. Start taking recreational use of this waterway seriously as a commodity

Miscellaneous:

- Starter Company Plus program has helped in so many ways.
- Need for collaboration in-person!!
- Back to basics

#22 continued...

- National historic site- summer operation only, one summer student
- Work life balance and personal health
- World events, the economy in general and financing
- I would like to know how I can put up additional signage on nearby corners so people know we exist.
- Main challenge is balancing time/cost of apprenticing/training employees.
- Culture and Heritage should be a sector option in this survey
- Ability for future growth is dependent on other resources such as utilities (hydro) and their availability
- Hard to find well-paying part-time gigs in my field (editing, mainly medical, but experienced in many genres).
- My biggest challenge is growth but I am having more success with it through strategic social media marketing.
- Internet is the biggest concern as always. It's impossible to efficiently run a business without good internet
- I am a new sole proprietor and have had a successful launch. My goal at this time is to ensure sustainability and growth in a manageable way
- Cost of the supply chain and the inconsistency of supply. Interest rates and spiralling overhead costs. Navigating social media marketing.
- Our firm built the plant in 1985 producing business forms. Our relationship with many businesses from BC to Newfoundland developed with Canadian Tire stores. We now provide many Government required business forms related to Environmental policy, (Ozone Emission Control Service Logs & Driver's Vehicle Inspection Report Books) The business related to that fact alone makes us proud to taking part in this important field of work.
- On your Opening page - Gardening/ Landscaping aren't even listed as a business option! Supporting businesses that are providing service or teaching to build sustainable food networks in our communities has to be priority. Planting properties for biodiversity must start happening to ensure pollinators thrive. This survey doesn't address the need for businesses that exist to ensure our sustainability.
- Need more abattoirs, especially poultry. Need to have more flexible housing arrangements to allow tiny houses, bunkies, etc. for potential farm partners.
- We have proven we can overcome obstacles (e.g. Covid), and have a loyal customer base. Ongoing challenges would include the seasonality of our business (dries up in the winter), lack of corporate and week-day clients
- The homeless population often try to find refuge from the elements, and hang out in my front door, falling asleep, and leaving garbage, create a mess.
- Short of my frustration keeping up with daily changes on my computer, phone and tv, my business is thriving and I love it here!
- I find out the most challenging thing is finding professional therapist. And try to learn about marketing on social media and making advertisement.
- We sell books, which is how we are able to fund our work as a non-profit, but everything is so focused on the idea that a business must have employees. We're a volunteer-run organization, but have many of the same challenges, yet because we're a non-profit we're not given access to the same resources - when arguably we need them more.

#22 continued...

- Making our sanctuary accessible when grants from Rideau Lakes township are not extended to our street. We could offer an incredible opportunity for classrooms and retirement homes and other community members to experience an educational sanctuary tour, but are limited by our non-profit budget.
- The Leeds Community Pasture is an unincorporated volunteer not-for-profit that has provided livestock grazing services for the past 60+ years.
- Competition in the field. Local businesses are not actually locally owned but some have ownership out of county but have local employees
- Cell phone coverage in Elgin is basically non-existent. This impacts the ability to run the business properly and also impacts the attraction of customers since they can't use mobile navigation or search online while in this area.
- The big problem for my industry is beauty has been deemed "non-essential" thus with cost of living the industry as a whole has suffered with clients cutting back, and wages and products increasing revenue is stagnant.
- It has been a challenge to assess sales demographics; poor investments on my part for retail end of business. We will be moving to another province in the fall and I would like information regarding new location.
- Biggest challenge right now is needing space for expansion. To build my demonstration site, nursery, and to host workshops and classes I would benefit from 10-50 acres of land (ideally a minimum of 15 acres).

#23 If you would like to speak to someone regarding support available to business

Answered: 75 Skipped: 288

ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES	
Contact Name	Responses	97.33%	73
Business Name	Responses	93.33%	70
Contact Number	Responses	94.67%	71
Email	Responses	98.67%	74

Additional Notes:

- Survey Timeframe: February 6, 2024 to March 10, 2024
- Survey Distribution: Businesses that were part the Counties Economic Development business directory, with active email addresses, received the survey directly. In addition, some members of Business Support Working Group distributed the survey through their membership lists and social media channels.

Business Support Working Group:

Municipalities

Athens | Augusta | Brockville | Edwardsburgh Cardinal | Elizabethtown-Kitley | Front of Yonge | Gananoque | Leeds and the Thousand Islands | Merrickville-Wolford | North Grenville | Prescott | Rideau Lakes | Westport

MP / MPP

MP Office of Leeds-Grenville-Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes

MPP Office of Leeds-Grenville-Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes

Community Futures Development Corporations

1000 Islands CDC | Community Futures Grenville | Valley Heartland CFDC

Small Business Centres

Leeds Grenville Small Business

Small Business Advisory Centre – Smiths Falls | Lanark

Chambers of Commerce

1000 Islands Gananoque | Brockville and District | Lyndhurst, Seeley's Bay & District | Merrickville and District | North Grenville | South Grenville | Smiths Falls

BIAs

Downtown Brockville | Downtown Gananoque | Downtown Prescott | Old Town Kemptville

Employment Services

CSE Consulting | Employment and Education Centre | KEYS Job Centre

Other Business & Education Agencies

Regional Tourism Organization 9 | St. Lawrence Corridor Economic Development Commission | Eastern Ontario Workforce Innovation Board | St. Lawrence College | Kemptville Campus Education and Community Hub | Ontario Tourism Education Corporation | St. Lawrence-Rideau Immigration Partnership | Ministry of Economic Development Job Creation and Trade – East Region

THANK-YOU!

On behalf of the Business Support Working Group, I would like to thank each business who took the time to complete the survey. Members of the Working Group will be reaching out to assist businesses who indicated they would like assistance. The Working Group contact list is available on the webpage, along with any new programs and resources as they become available.

Ann Weir, Economic Development Manager

United Counties of Leeds and Grenville

W: invest.leedsgrenville.com/reportsandplans | E: ann.weir@uclg.on.ca