Village of Westport

Leeds-Grenville-Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes

2024 Business Survey: Report

March 25, 2024

Survey Timeframe: February 6 – March 10, 2024

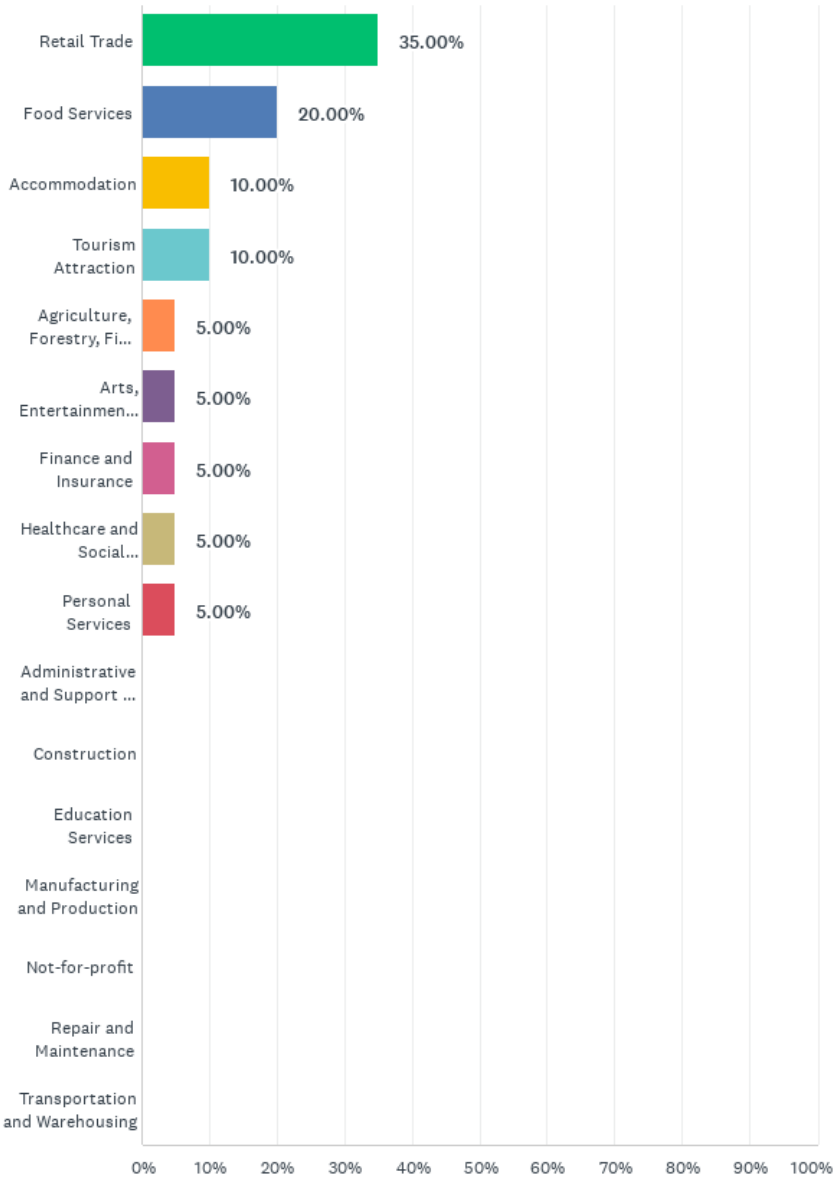
Prepared by:

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

invest.leedsgrenville.com/reportsandplans

#2 What sector is your business primarily operating in?

Answered: 20 Skipped: 1

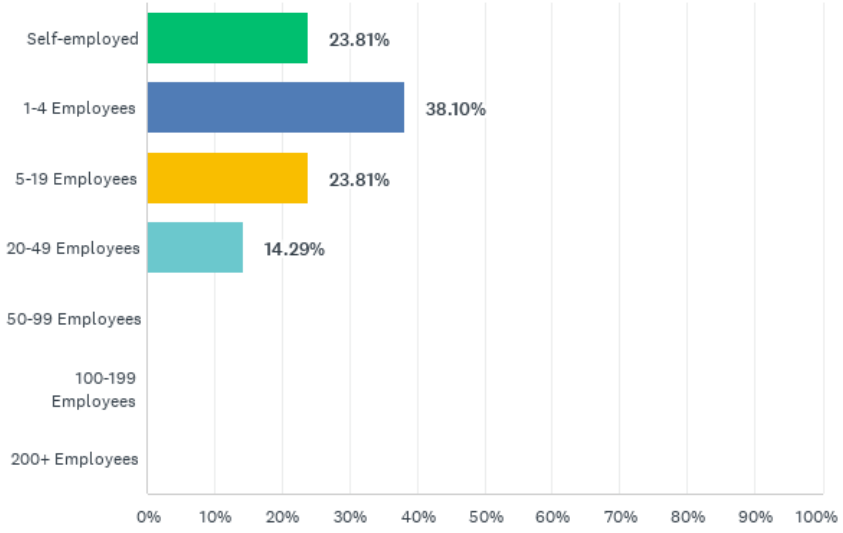


#2 continued…

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Retail Trade	35.00%	7
Food Services	20.00%	4
Accommodation	10.00%	2
Tourism Attraction	10.00%	2
Agriculture, Forestry, Fish and Hunting	5.00%	1
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	5.00%	1
Finance and Insurance	5.00%	1
Healthcare and Social Assistance	5.00%	1
Personal Services	5.00%	1
Administrative and Support - Business Services	0.00%	0
Construction	0.00%	0
Education Services	0.00%	0
Manufacturing and Production	0.00%	0
Not-for-profit	0.00%	0
Repair and Maintenance	0.00%	0
Transportation and Warehousing	0.00%	0
TOTAL		20

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

Answered: 21 Skipped: 0



#3 continued...

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Self-employed	23.81%	5
1-4 Employees	38.10%	8
5-19 Employees	23.81%	5
20-49 Employees	14.29%	3
50-99 Employees	0.00%	0
100-199 Employees	0.00%	0
200+ Employees	0.00%	0
TOTAL		21

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

Answered: 0

No response.

#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: 0

No response.

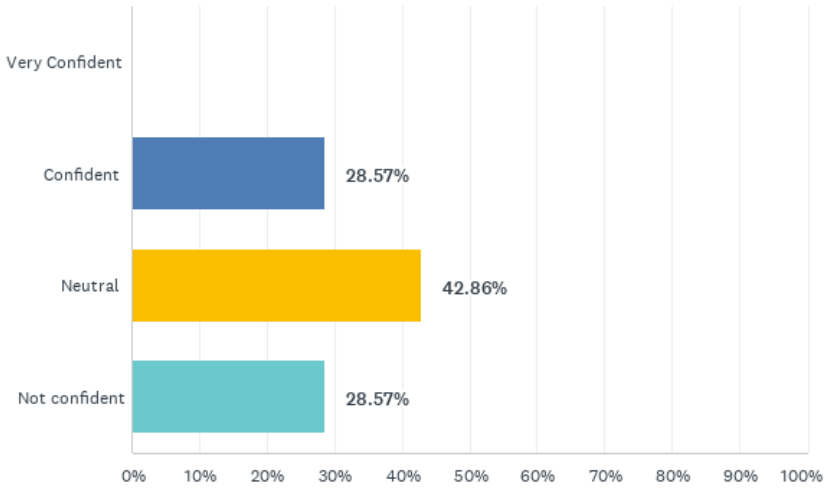
#6 For medium / large business (50 and above employees) - Are you interested in participating in an Ottawa job fair in October?

Answered: 0

No response.

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

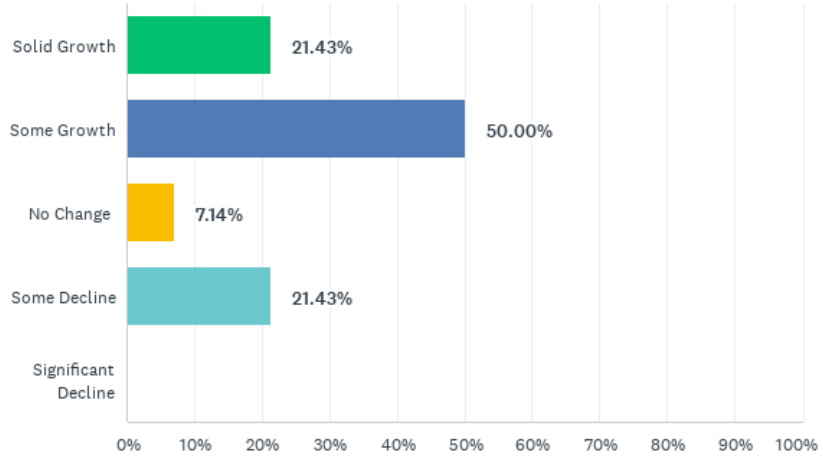
Answered: 14 Skipped: 7



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Very Confident	0.00%	0
Confident	28.57%	4
Neutral	42.86%	6
Not confident	28.57%	4
TOTAL		14

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

Answered: 14 Skipped: 7



#8 continued…

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Solid Growth	21.43%	3
Some Growth	50.00%	7
No Change	7.14%	1
Some Decline	21.43%	3
Significant Decline	0.00%	0
TOTAL		14

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

Answered: 14 Skipped: 7

	1-NOT A CHALLENGE	2	3-SOMEWHAT CHALLENGING	4	5-VERY CHALLENGING	TOTAL
Increasing overhead costs	0.00% 0	7.14% 1	35.71% 5	7.14% 1	50.00% 7	14
Increasing product prices	7.14% 1	0.00% 0	21.43% 3	14.29% 2	57.14% 8	14
Changes in demand for your product / service	14.29% 2	14.29% 2	50.00% 7	21.43% 3	0.00% 0	14
Borrowing costs	35.71% 5	14.29% 2	21.43% 3	0.00% 0	28.57% 4	14
Repayment of CEBA loan	71.43% 10	7.14% 1	7.14% 1	7.14% 1	7.14% 1	14
Supply chain instability	14.29% 2	7.14% 1	35.71% 5	35.71% 5	7.14% 1	14
Ability to find skilled employees	14.29% 2	0.00% 0	21.43% 3	35.71% 5	28.57% 4	14
Ability to offer competitive wages and benefits	14.29% 2	0.00% 0	35.71% 5	42.86% 6	7.14% 1	14
Ability to retain employees	14.29% 2	7.14% 1	35.71% 5	35.71% 5	7.14% 1	14
Absenteeism due to reliable child care	64.29% 9	7.14% 1	28.57% 4	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	14

- Municipal government…toooo big, uneducated
- Seasonal flux is a high challenge of a tourist area (very busy in summer, very quiet in winter)
- Off season support of our business

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

Answered: 14 Skipped: 7

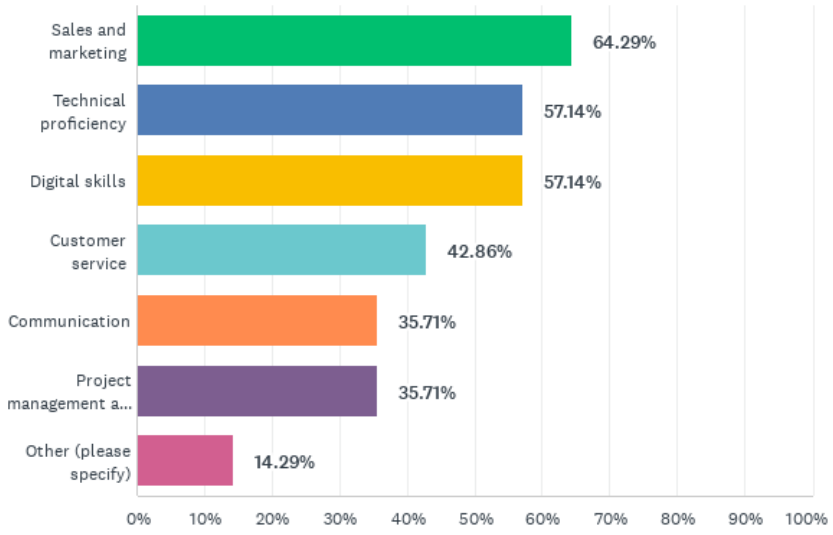
	1-NOT A CHALLENGE	2	3-SOMEWHAT CHALLENGING	4	5- VERY CHALLENGING	TOTAL
Available housing / accommodation	21.43% 3	0.00% 0	42.86% 6	14.29% 2	21.43% 3	14
Available daycare	46.15% 6	15.38% 2	30.77% 4	0.00% 0	7.69% 1	13
Cost of Living ie. inflation	7.69% 1	0.00% 0	30.77% 4	15.38% 2	46.15% 6	13
Public transportation	35.71% 5	0.00% 0	21.43% 3	0.00% 0	42.86% 6	14
Caring for elders	38.46% 5	7.69% 1	46.15% 6	0.00% 0	7.69% 1	13

- Sustaining full time employment during slow season is very challenging keeping competitive with wages/perks
- I employ 1 part time individual
- Finding younger workers that aren't nearly at retirement age

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

(Choose all that apply)

Answered: 14 Skipped: 7



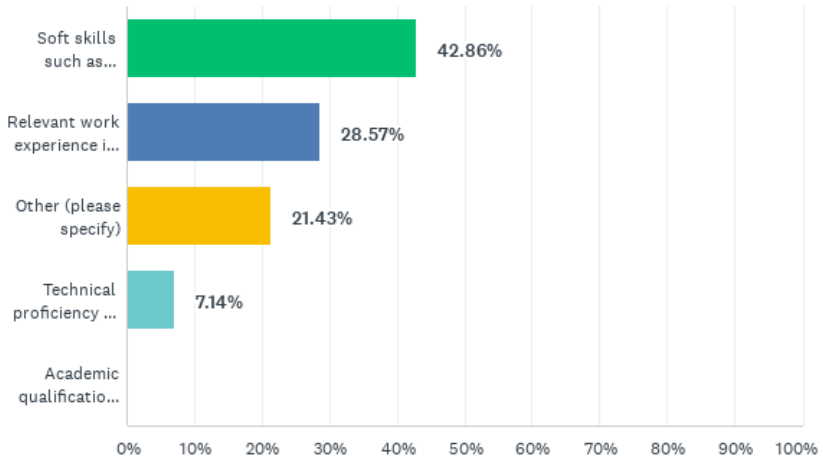
#11 continued…

ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES	
Sales and marketing		64.29%	9
Technical proficiency		57.14%	8
Digital skills		57.14%	8
Customer service		42.86%	6
Communication		35.71%	5
Project management and organization		35.71%	5
Other (please specify)	Responses	14.29%	2
Total Respondents: 14			

- Leadership

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

Answered: 14 Skipped: 7



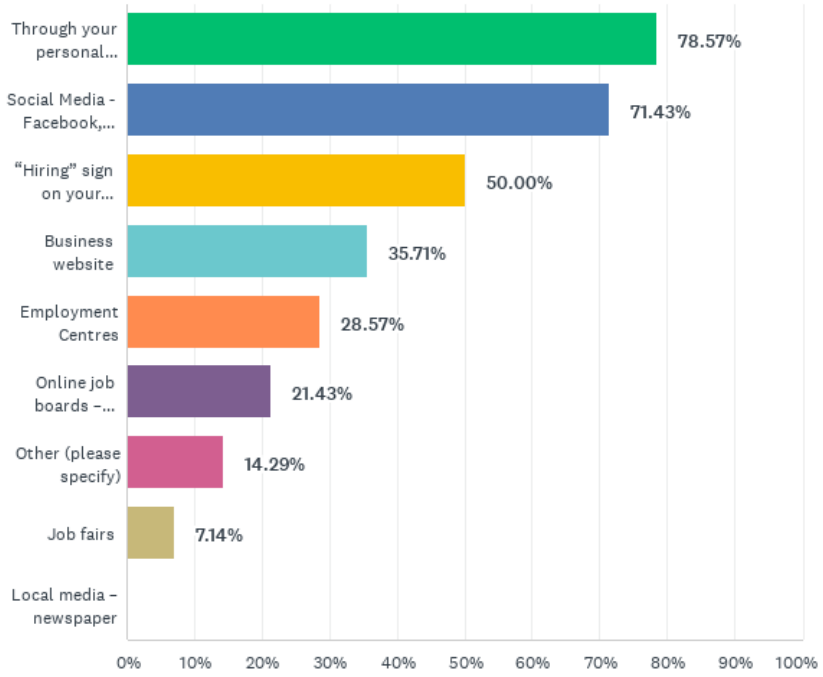
ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES	
Soft skills such as teamwork and communication		42.86%	6
Relevant work experience in a similar role		28.57%	4
Other (please specify)	Responses	21.43%	3
Technical proficiency and specific job-related skills		7.14%	1
Academic qualifications and certifications		0.00%	0
TOTAL			14

- 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: 14 Skipped: 7

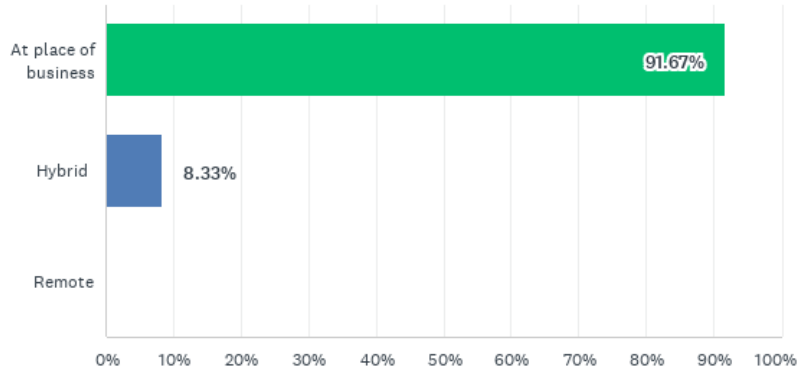


ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES	
Through your personal network		78.57%	11
Social Media - Facebook, Instagram		71.43%	10
"Hiring" sign on your premises		50.00%	7
Business website		35.71%	5
Employment Centres		28.57%	4
Online job boards – Indeed, LinkedIn		21.43%	3
Other (please specify)	Responses	14.29%	2
Job fairs		7.14%	1
Local media – newspaper		0.00%	0
Total Respondents: 14			

- N/A

#14 What type of work environment do you offer?

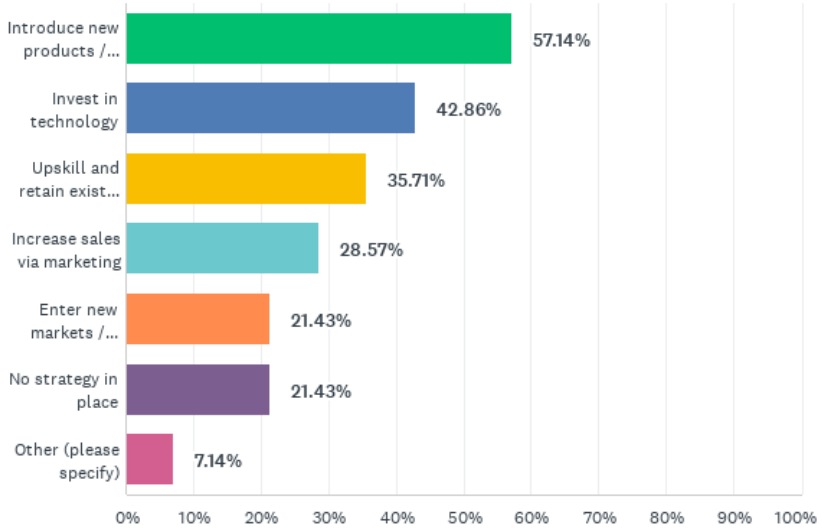
Answered: 12 Skipped: 9



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
At place of business	91.67%	11
Hybrid	8.33%	1
Remote	0.00%	0
TOTAL		12

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

Answered: 14 Skipped: 7

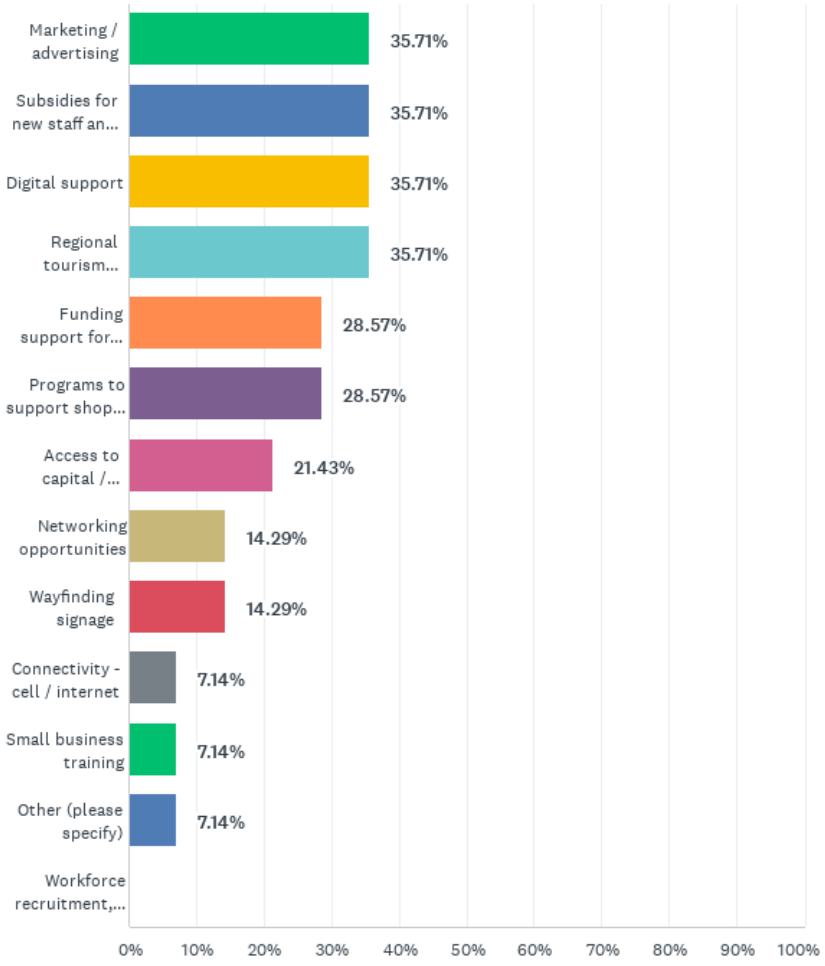


#15 continued…

ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES	
Introduce new products / services		57.14%	8
Invest in technology		42.86%	6
Upskill and retain existing talent		35.71%	5
Increase sales via marketing		28.57%	4
Enter new markets / export		21.43%	3
No strategy in place		21.43%	3
Other (please specify)	Responses	7.14%	1
Total Respondents: 14			

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

Answered: 14 Skipped: 7



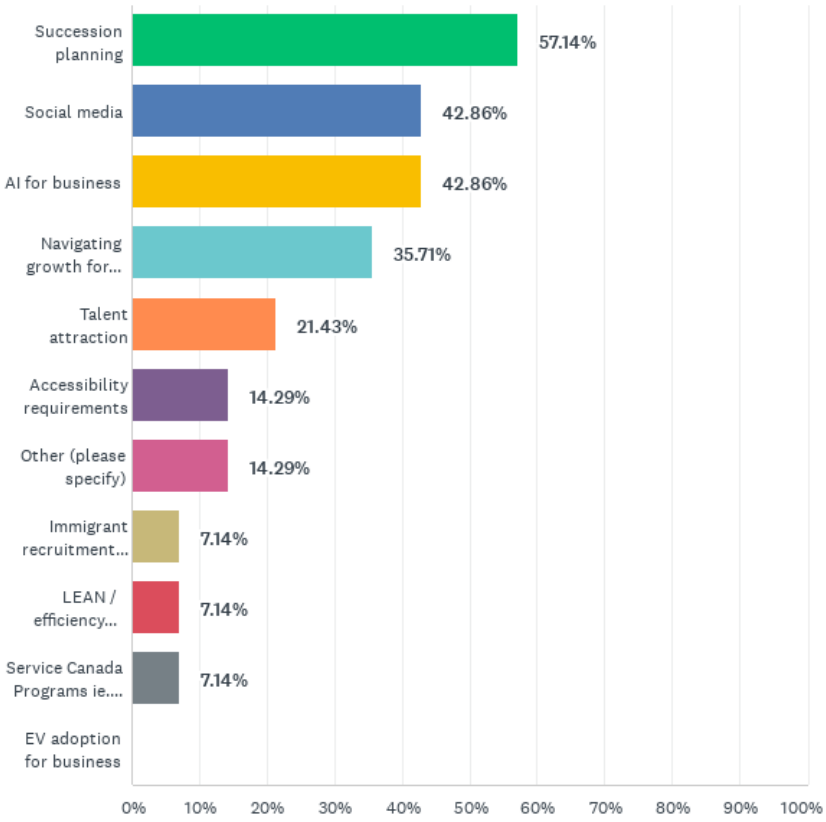
#16 continued…

ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES	
Marketing / advertising		35.71%	5
Subsidies for new staff and training		35.71%	5
Digital support		35.71%	5
Regional tourism destination development – products, marketing		35.71%	5
Funding support for business expansion		28.57%	4
Programs to support shop local		28.57%	4
Access to capital / business loans		21.43%	3
Networking opportunities		14.29%	2
Wayfinding signage		14.29%	2
Connectivity - cell / internet		7.14%	1
Small business training		7.14%	1
Other (please specify)	Responses	7.14%	1
Workforce recruitment, hiring and resourcing staff		0.00%	0
Total Respondents: 14			

- Housing, housing, housing. Did I mention housing?

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

Answered: 14 Skipped: 7

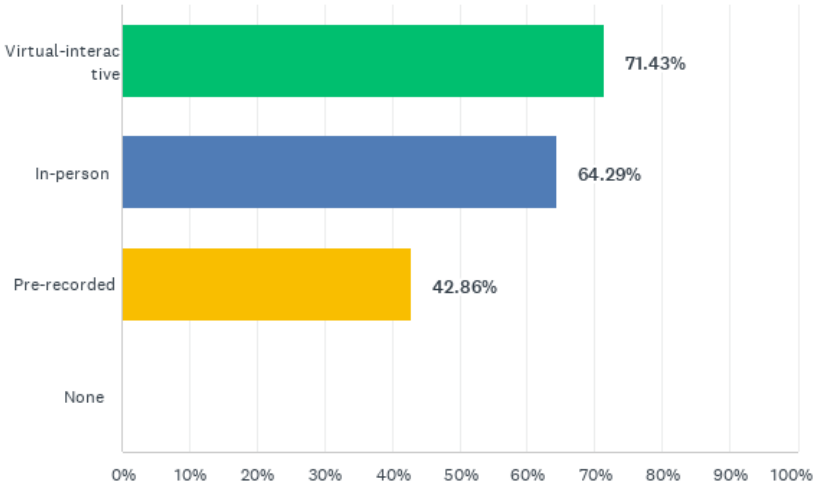


ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES	
Succession planning		57.14%	8
Social media		42.86%	6
AI for business		42.86%	6
Navigating growth for small business		35.71%	5
Talent attraction		21.43%	3
Accessibility requirements		14.29%	2
Other (please specify)	Responses	14.29%	2
Immigrant recruitment programs		7.14%	1
LEAN / efficiency training		7.14%	1
Service Canada Programs ie. work sharing, record of employment		7.14%	1
EV adoption for business		0.00%	0
Total Respondents: 14			

- Customer service programs
- How to attract labour to markets with no housing

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

Answered: 14 Skipped: 7

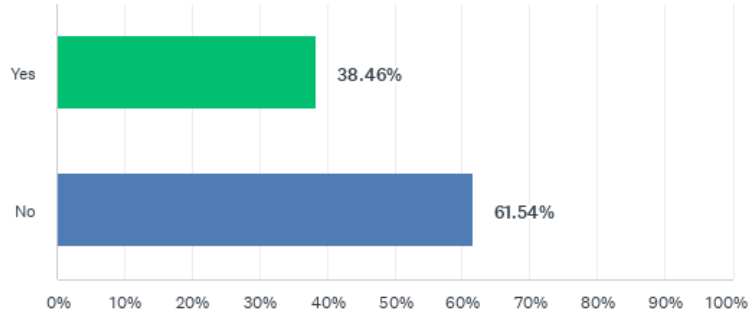


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Virtual-interactive	71.43%	10
In-person	64.29%	9
Pre-recorded	42.86%	6
None	0.00%	0
Total Respondents: 14		

- 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.

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

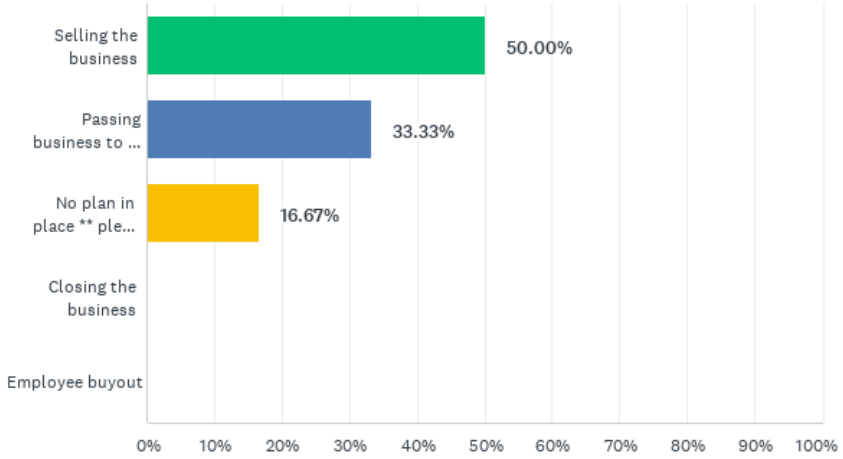
Answered: 13 Skipped: 8



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	38.46%	5
No	61.54%	8
TOTAL		13

#20 If yes, what is your succession plan?

Answered: 6

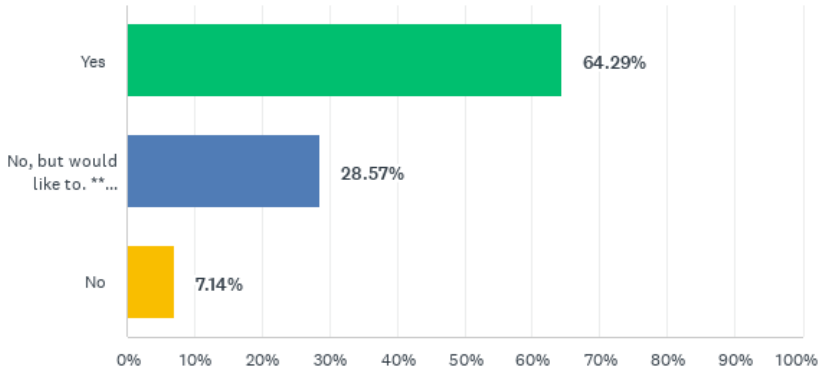


#20 continued…

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Selling the business	50.00%	3
Passing business to a family member	33.33%	2
No plan in place ** please provide contact info at end of survey for support	16.67%	1
Closing the business	0.00%	0
Employee buyout	0.00%	0
TOTAL		6

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

Answered: 14 Skipped: 7



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	64.29%	9
No, but would like to. ** Please provide contact info at end of survey	28.57%	4
No	7.14%	1
TOTAL		14

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

Answered: 2 Skipped: 19

- 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.
- 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.

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

Answered: 4 Skipped: 17

ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES	
Contact Name	Responses	75.00%	3
Business Name	Responses	75.00%	3
Contact Number	Responses	75.00%	3
Email	Responses	100.00%	4

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
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