

Summary of Final Report & Action Plan for 2014/2015 Regional Business Retention + Expansion Project

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For more information on the Regional BR+E Project contact the project coordinator at: chamber@drytel.net
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Regional Business Survey Results

Recap: What is BR+E?

Business Retention + Expansion (BR+E) is an action – oriented and community based approach to business and economic development. It promotes job growth by helping communities learn about issues and concerns of local businesses, and set priorities for projects to address those concerns. The BR+E program is focused around in-person business visitation and a confidential interview process. Business interviews are conducted by trained volunteers utilizing a standardized survey to collect data on; business climate, future plans, business development, workforce development, and community issues. Analysis of the survey results is used to develop strategic actions that will assist in addressing the concerns of business and promote growth.

What were our Project Goals?

Short Term:

- ⇒ Improved communications with the business community
- ⇒ Establish a current and relevant data base to support evidence based decision making and act as a baseline for future BR+E projects
- ⇒ Gain a better understanding of regional business climate and issues
- ⇒ Identification of specific strategies and achievable actions to help businesses
- ⇒ Capacity development via the volunteers and steering team working together on a complex issue as well as skill development for future BR+E projects.

Long Term:

- ⇒ Increase business development and job creation
- ⇒ Create a business friendly environment to promote business growth
- ⇒ Inform municipal and organizational strategic planning

The Project in Numbers!

- * 42 Volunteer Visitors Trained
- * 82 Businesses Interviewed
- * 32 Information Packages mailed
- * 35 attendees at planning session
- * 10 Strategies Identified
- * 30 Action Plans to deliver
- * 5 new projects underway or already completed

Many thanks to the participating businesses for their support of this project!

Funding for this project provided by:



Ontario
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Fund Corporation



Canada

Highlights of What We Learned from the Survey

- ◆ 43% of businesses surveyed had been in operation more than 26 yrs
- ◆ 35% of the businesses employed 1-4 people
- ◆ 49% identified their market as regional
- ◆ 64% of businesses were positive about doing business in the community
- ◆ Survey reports show 104 net new jobs were created over the past 3 years.
- ◆ 38% indicated they were considering expanding in the next 18 months
- ◆ 68% reported that the availability of qualified workers was poor
- ◆ 60% reported difficulty with hiring due to lack of appropriate skills or training, too few applicants, lack of experience
- ◆ 75% of businesses indicated a high degree of dependence upon internet technology
- ◆ Availability of Health & Medical Services was rated as good or excellent by 90% of the businesses
- ◆ 72% of businesses that pay municipal property taxes rated them as poor or fair.
- ◆ Survey results indicate that businesses had little to no contact with business support agencies.
- ◆ Networking opportunities, joint training, and joint marketing were identified the most often as the activity businesses would work on together
- ◆ Business networking, workforce development, e-commerce/social media workshops, and joint advertising were the highest rated topics when asked what would be the most beneficial to support their business
- ◆ 56% indicated their business would benefit from cultural diversity training.
- ◆ 73% of businesses would support a shop local campaign
- ◆ Top 3 Advantages to doing business in the community:
 1. Location
 2. Cost of doing business
 3. Quality of Life
- ◆ Top 3 Disadvantages:
 1. Location
 2. Municipal Government
 3. Workforce

When asked what change they would like to see in the next 5 years, top responses:

- * More People
- * Economic Development focused on business start up and expansion
- * Tourism Development
- * Cultural Diversity
- * Positive Municipal Leadership
- * Airport Development
- * Youth Attraction

The Final Report & Action Plan as well as complete appendices are available for viewing or download on the following project partner's websites:

- www.drydenchamber.ca
- www.dryden.ca
- www.ntab.on.ca
- www.pace-cf.on.ca
- www.freemap.ca
- www.visitmachin.com

How will this information be used?

The survey results have been compiled into summary reports, analyzed by the Steering Team, and discussed by Community Stakeholders with the goal of establishing strategies & actions to assist businesses. Four key opportunities were identified:

- ◆ Workforce Development
- ◆ Regional Economic Development
- ◆ Municipal & Community Services
- ◆ Business Support Services

Discussion on these opportunities resulted in 10 Strategies and 30 Action items to be addressed.

Highlights of Strategies & Action Plans:

- ◆ Develop business networking program
- ◆ Establish Young Professionals Network
- ◆ Adoption of Municipal and Economic Development Strategic Plans
- ◆ Investigate Shop Local Campaign
- ◆ Develop Employee Handbook
- ◆ Involve business community in annual municipal budgeting
- ◆ Research options for a regional business directory/guide
- ◆ Continued support for Visitor Information Centres
- ◆ Partner on regional marketing campaigns
- ◆ Organize a funders forum in 2015 to inform businesses about support services
- ◆ Establish informal business visitation program and plan for future BR+E

How will this help businesses?

- Business support agencies focused on what businesses need
- Improved communication between businesses and the community
- Improved understanding of regional business environment
- Increased collaboration of support agencies
- Improved communication between municipal government and businesses

For information on the Ontario BR+E Program visit:
www.omafra.gov.on.ca



Coming together is a beginning;
keeping together is progress;
working together is success.
Henry Ford