



WAUKESHA COUNTY BUSINESS ALLIANCE

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WAUKESHA COUNTY BUSINESS SURVEY EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SEPTEMBER 25, 2015

About the survey:

The Waukesha County Business Survey was conducted in cooperation with Waukesha County Executive Paul Farrow, the Waukesha County Business Alliance, and the Waukesha-Ozaukee-Washington (WOW) Workforce Development Board.

The data contained in this executive summary was obtained by surveying Waukesha County employers during two weeks of August 2015. A total of 335 businesses responded to the survey, representing a near 20 percent response rate. Respondents included representatives from each of Waukesha County's 37 municipalities, a wide range of business sectors, and companies sized from the self-employed to operations with more than 1,000 employees.

The survey touched on topics in seven key areas:

1. Workforce Development
2. Physical Specifications and Future Plans
3. Transportation - Transit and Road/Highways, Airport
4. Financial and Business start-up assistance
5. Permitting and Licensing
6. Workforce Housing
7. Economic Visioning

What did we find out?

- More than two-thirds of Waukesha County businesses are Stage 1 businesses (2-9 employees) or Stage 2 businesses (10-99 employees).
- Strong job growth will continue: 84 percent indicated they plan to expand their workforce in the next three years
 - 48 percent project to hire between one and nine employees
 - 20 percent plan to hire 10 to 19 employees
 - 19 percent project to hire 20 to 49 employees
 - 9 percent plan to hire 50 to 99 employees
 - 1 percent plan to hire 100 to 249 employees
 - 4 percent project to hire 250 employees or more

WAUKESHA COUNTY BUSINESS SURVEY EXECUTIVE SUMMARY, CONT.

- 72 percent of respondents indicated they plan to expand/remodel their physical business in the next three years

Challenges:

- A majority of respondents across nearly every sector indicated a difficulty attracting/retaining employees.
- Staff recruitment issues include a lack of qualified applicants (77 percent) and difficulty finding workers that fit their business culture (61 percent).
- Businesses identified the major primary challenges to starting and growing their business as a skilled workforce (72 percent) and access to capital (39 percent)
- Businesses value infrastructure – 88 percent rated local streets and highways as either important or very important.
- A little over one-third of respondents (36 percent) believe that transit is an important issue.
- More than one quarter of respondents (29 percent), indicated they are struggling to identify financial resources. A total of 39 percent of business respondents said access to capital was a major roadblock to growth.

What do businesses need to help them grow?

According to the survey, in order to grow, Waukesha County businesses want a low tax environment (among the Top 5 most important factors in retaining a business), a pipeline of highly skilled workers, and access to a variety of financing options, such as SBA loans and grants, training assistance and funding for apprenticeships and workforce development programs.

What's next?

Waukesha County is considering creating a new economic development organization (EDO) early in 2016, to help support and grow existing county businesses and assist companies considering relocation to Waukesha County. The survey data will be used to drive the strategy for the new organization and will complement research being conducted to determine options for the entity's structure and financing.

A new EDO could enhance Waukesha County businesses' ability to grow by making connections between businesses in need and the tools available to help. The organization could also provide access to financial resources and other assistance and work closely with existing organizations like WOW in supporting workforce training and workforce development needs.

Full survey results available at www.waukesha.org/pages/EconomicDevelopmentSurveyResults1

