



*Welcome
TO OUR*

CREATE Academy
Southern Five Region of Illinois
October 26, 2021

Partners



Phase I States



EXTENSION



Community, Professional & Economic Development
Strengthening Arkansas Communities

Phase II States

NC STATE

EXTENSION



Illinois Extension

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN



BE BOLD. Shape the Future.
College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences
Cooperative Extension Service
Extension Economics

CREATE BRIDGES



Stands for:

Celebrating **RE**tail, **A**ccommodations,
Tourism, and **E**ntertainment by
Building **R**ural **I**nnovations and **D**eveloping
Growth **E**conomies


Today's Agenda



- Highlight the Process to Date
- Overview of the CREATE BRIDGES data collection
 - CREATE Sector Businesses
 - CREATE Sector Employees
- Breakout Sessions - Opportunities for Action

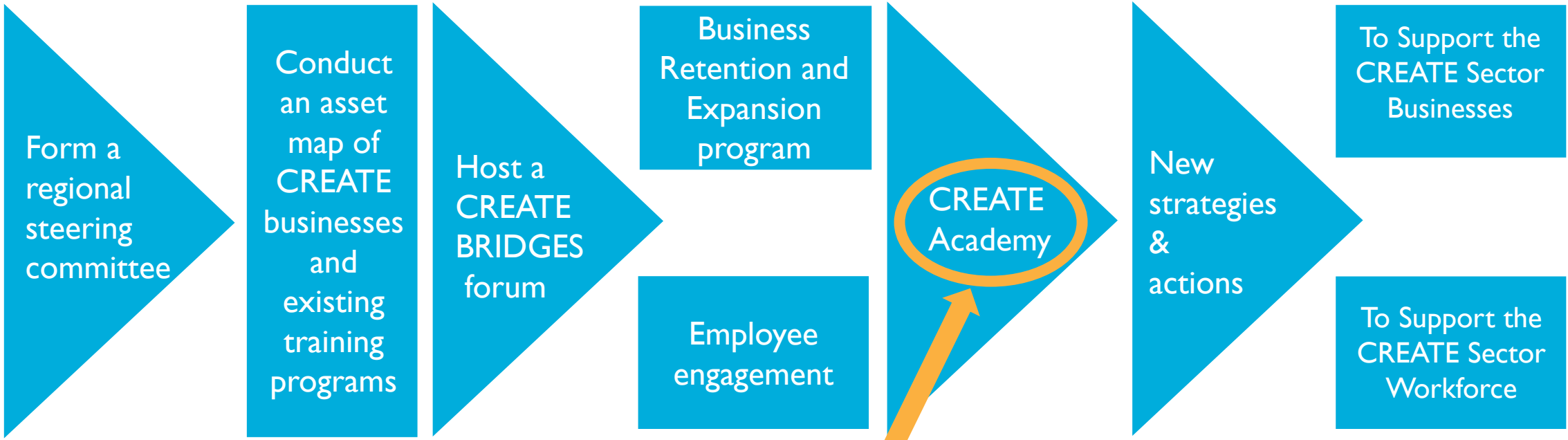
CREATE Bridges is Designed As a Data-driven Planning Process



- CREATE Forum perspectives (community engagement)
 - Secondary economic data (regional data profile)
 - Business owner perspectives (BR&E interviews)
 - Employee perspectives (anonymous online survey)
- 
- Themes & commonalities across datasets
 - Prioritization & strategy development



CREATE BRIDGES PROCESS



We're here!

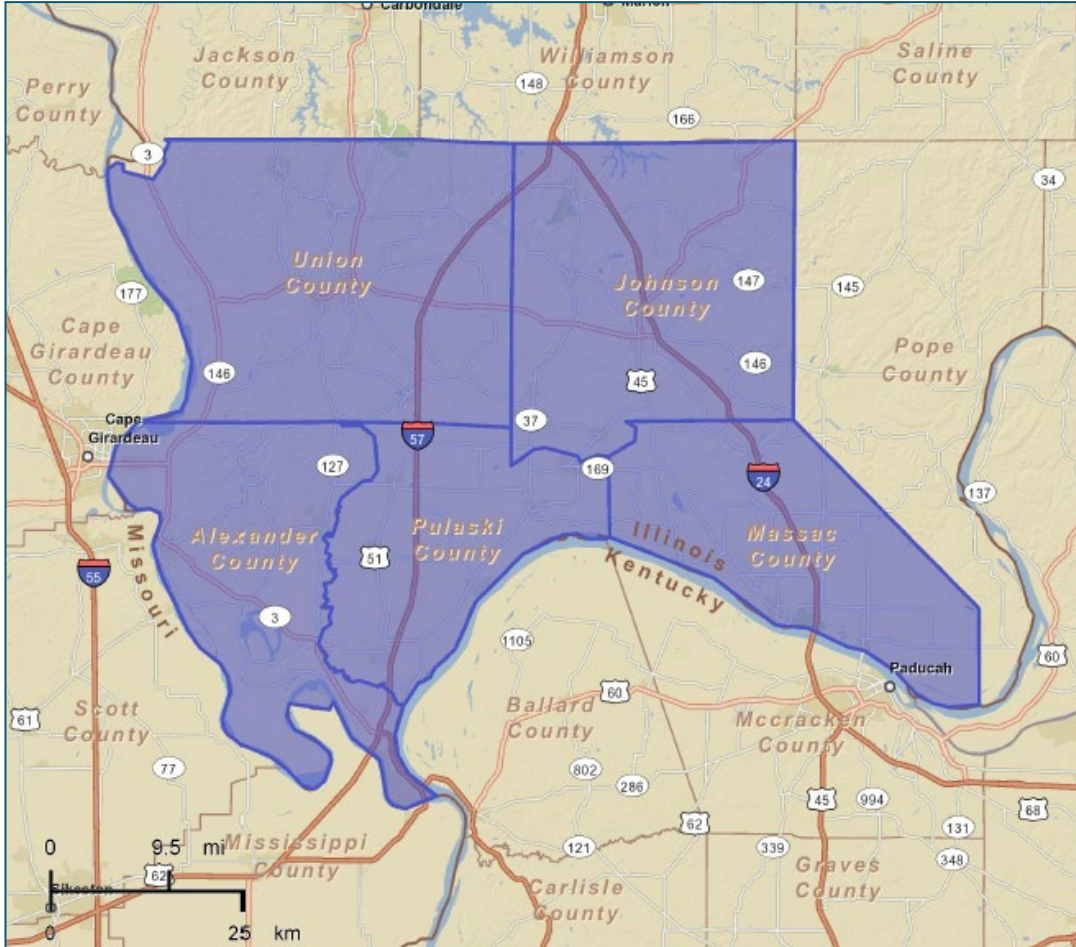
Community Forum Perspectives (common themes)



- Unified Vision for the Region
- Regional Marketing Initiative
- Small Business Support
- Supporting Creation, Attraction, Retention and Expansion
- Workforce Education and Training
- Youth Leadership Development and Mentoring



CREATE BRIDGES Regional Population Changes



2010 CENSUS	
Alexander	8,238
Johnson	12,582
Massac	15,429
Pulaski	6,161
Union	17,808
Total	60,218

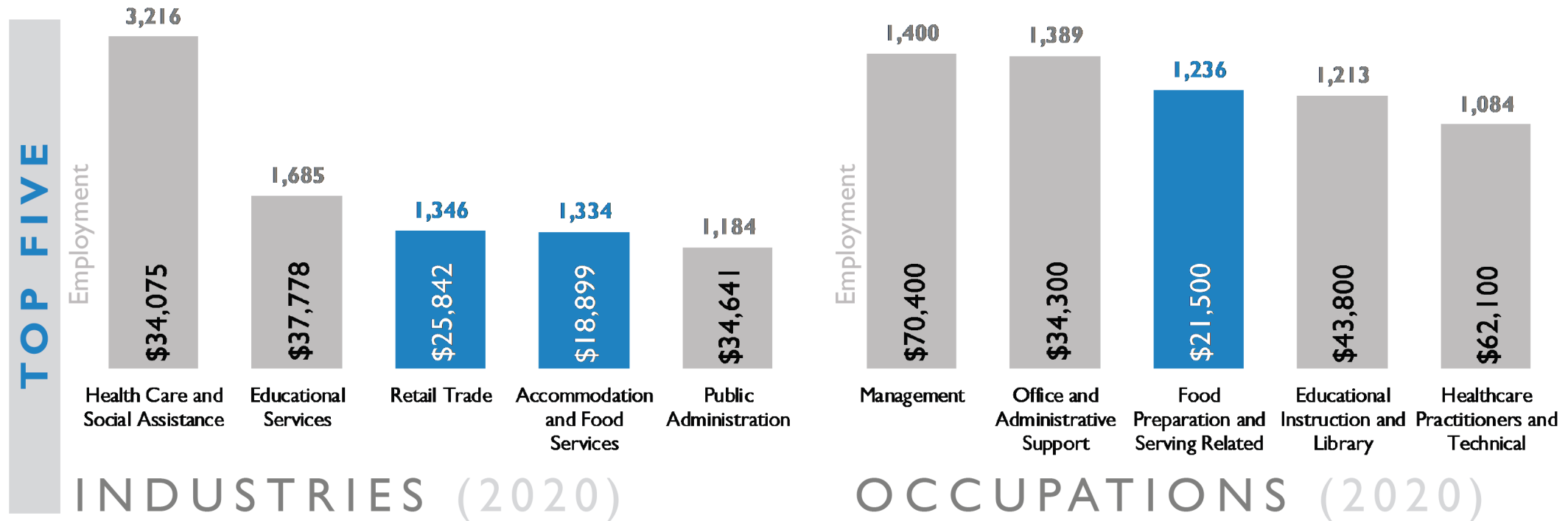
2020 CENSUS	
Alexander	5,240
Johnson	13,308
Massac	14,169
Pulaski	5,193
Union	17,244
Total	55,154

Change in Population: -5,064

Percentage Change in Population: -8.4%



Top 5 Industries and Occupations



Educational Services - Schools, Colleges, Universities and Training Centers

Public Administration – Federal, State and Local Government Agencies

Data Source: JobsEQ, 2020

Accommodation and Food Services – Leisure & Hospitality (lodging and meals)



Retail Sales (2020) & Sales Tax (2019)



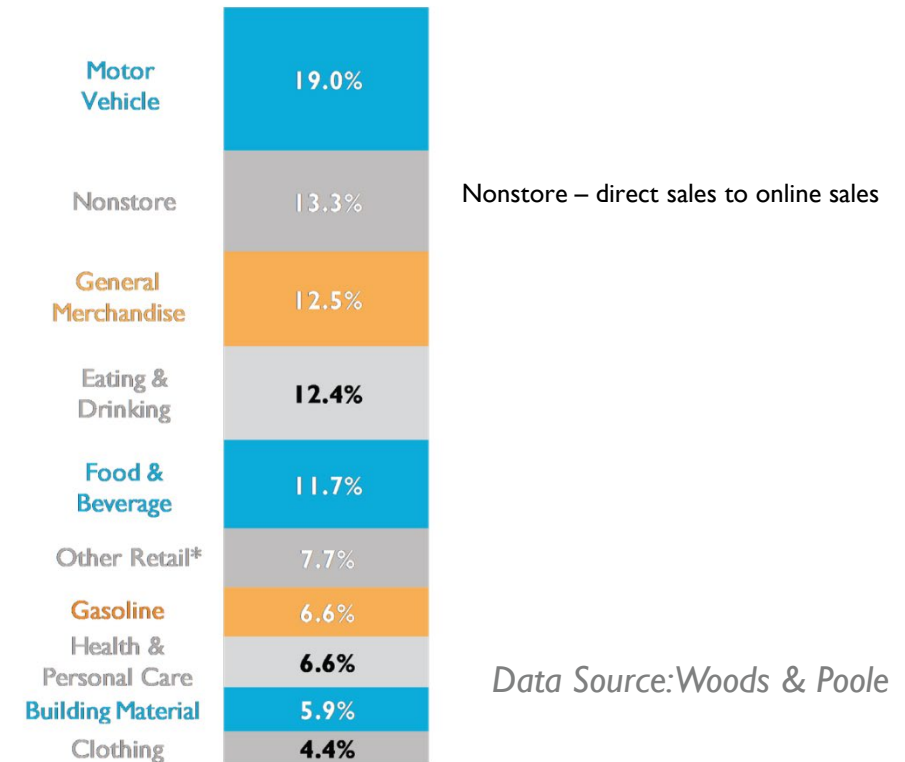
SALES TAX (2019)

Industry	Sales tax revenues
General Merchandise	\$2,082,382
Food	\$2,669,971
Drinking and Eating Places	\$3,392,070
Automotive & Filling Stations	\$7,116,572
Drugs & Miscellaneous Retail	\$2,248,545
Agriculture & All Others	\$1,734,272
Manufacturers	\$3,101,744
All Other (apparel, furniture, lumber & hardware, suppressed)	\$3,238,941
Total for the Region	\$25,584,496

Data Source: Illinois Department of Revenue

RETAIL SALES (2020)

\$197.9 billion



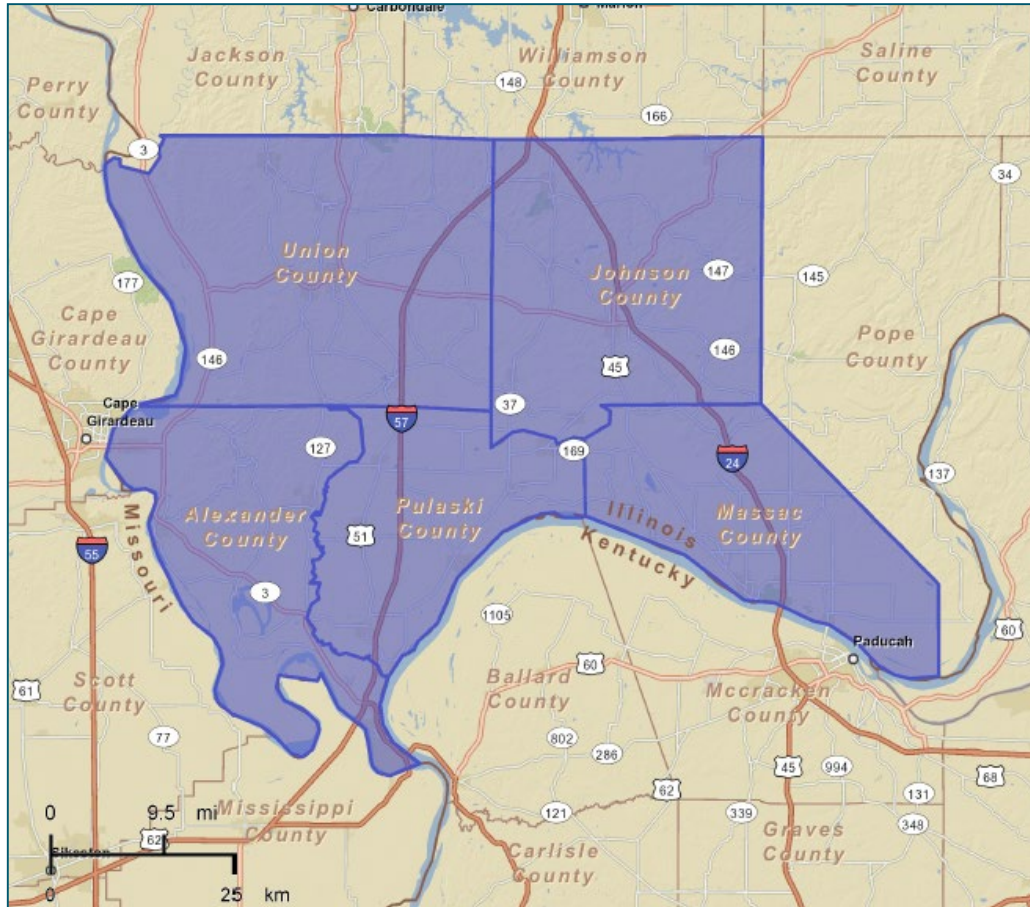
Data Source: Woods & Poole

Data Source: Woods & Poole

*Other Retail includes: Electronics (2.3%), Furniture (2.1%), Miscellaneous (1.9%), and Sporting Goods (1.4%)



CREATE BRIDGES Region Retail Gap 2017



TOTAL RETAIL LEAKAGE BY COUNTY	
Alexander	\$55,872,201
Johnson	\$78,699,357
Massac	\$88,068,239
Pulaski	\$38,422,661
Union	\$40,982,871
CREATE BRIDGES Region	RETAIL GAP
Total Retail Trade	\$272,656,165
Total Food & Drink	\$29,389,164
Total Retail Trade and Food & Drink	\$302,045,329

Despite tourists and travelers – demand for retail goods is leaking out of the 5-county region’s economy

Source: ESRI Business Analyst
Most Recent Data Based on 2017 Census Estimates





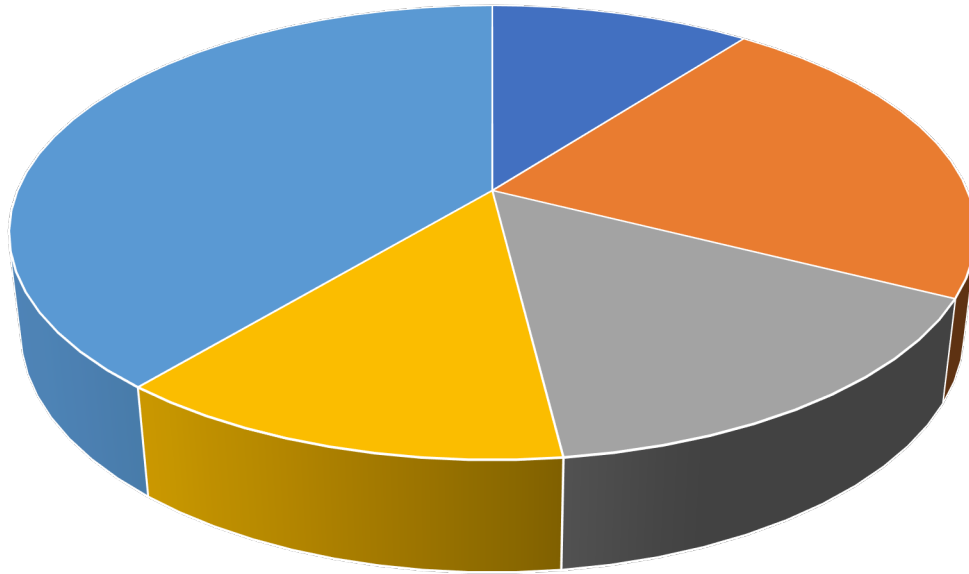


CREATE Businesses Surveyed

BRE Survey Stats

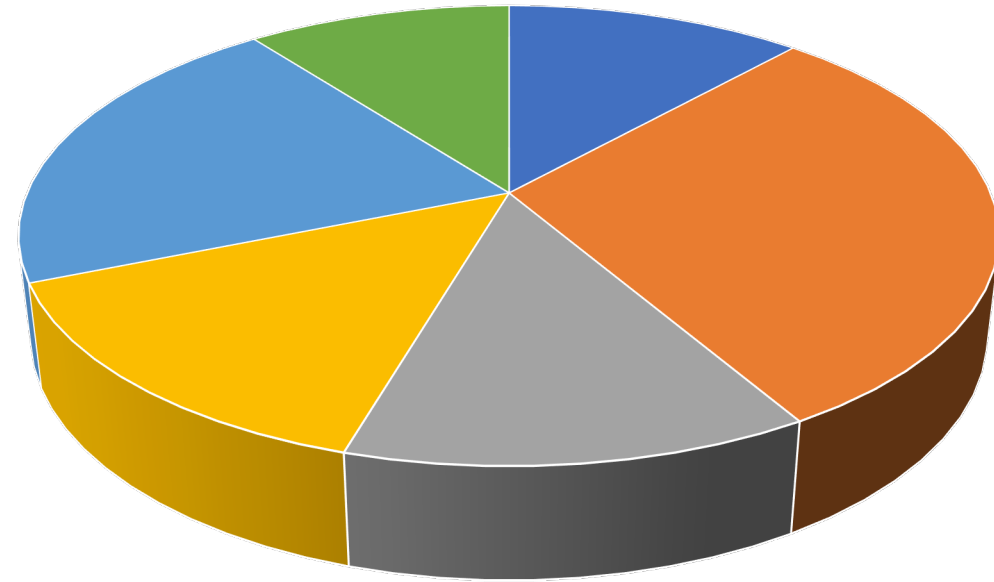


BRE Interviews by County



■ Alexander ■ Johnson ■ Massac ■ Pulaski ■ Union

BRE Interviews By Sector



■ Retail - General ■ Retail - Specialty ■ Accommodations - Restaurants
■ Accommodations - Lodging ■ Tourism ■ Entertainment

77 Business Interviews Conducted

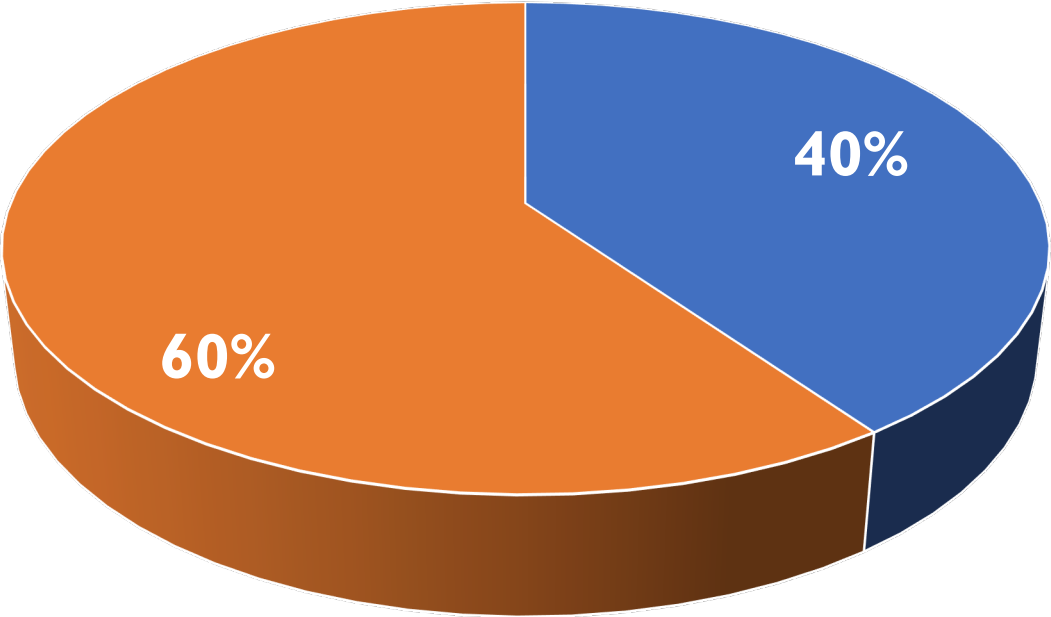
Note: While only counted once, some retail and hospitality businesses operate in more than one sector



BRE Survey Stats

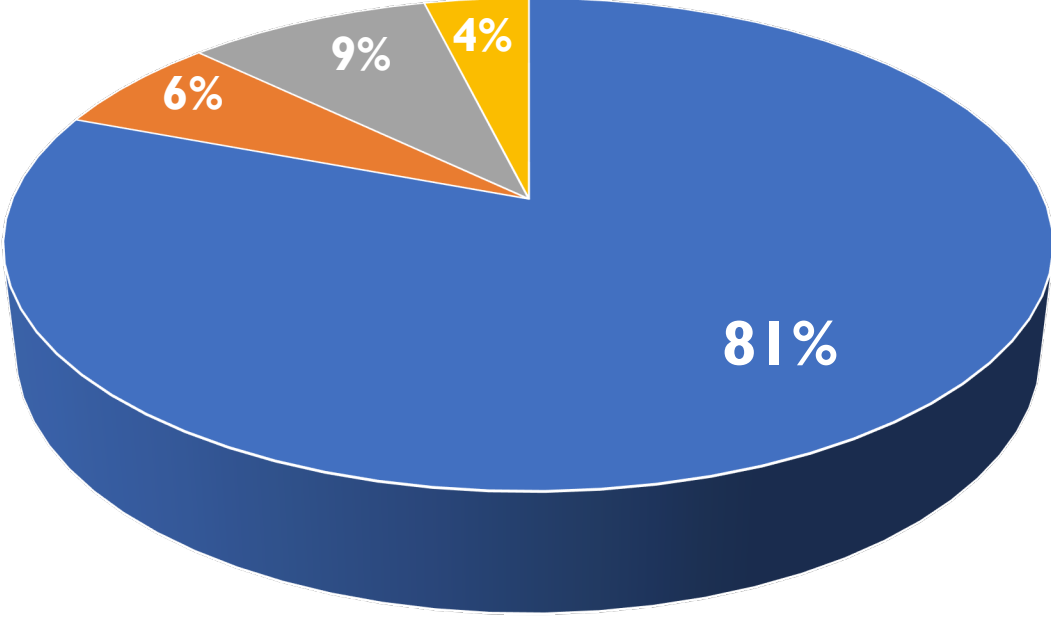


Business Type



■ Sole Proprietor ■ Business with Employees

Employee Composition for Businesses with Employees



■ Five or Less Employees ■ Six to Ten Employees
■ Eleven to Twenty-Five Employees ■ Twenty-Six or More Employees



According to YourEconomy.org –
82.6% of Southern Five establishments
have 9 or less employees

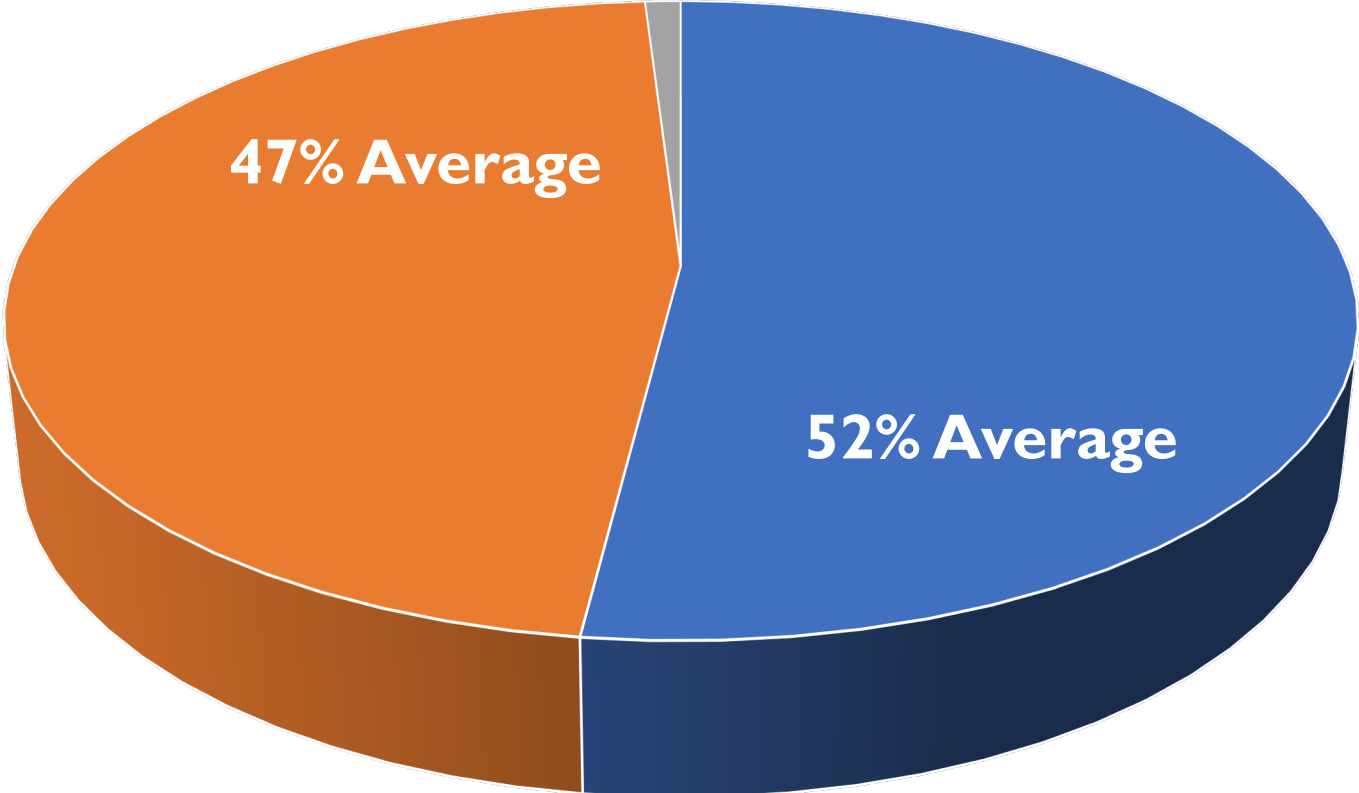


CREATE Survey Stats

BRE Survey Stats



Where Gross Sales Are Generated From



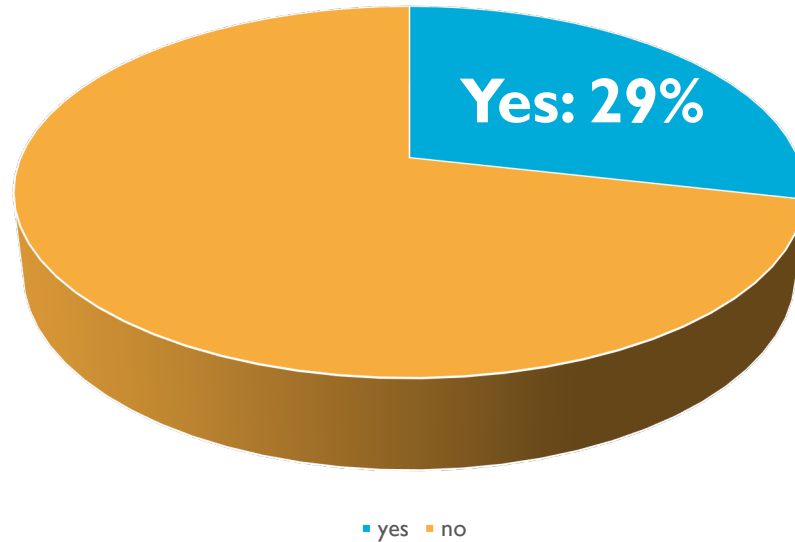
Note: Some Retail and Hospitality Businesses Serve Residents of the Region While Others Serve Tourists and Travelers – Some Serve Both



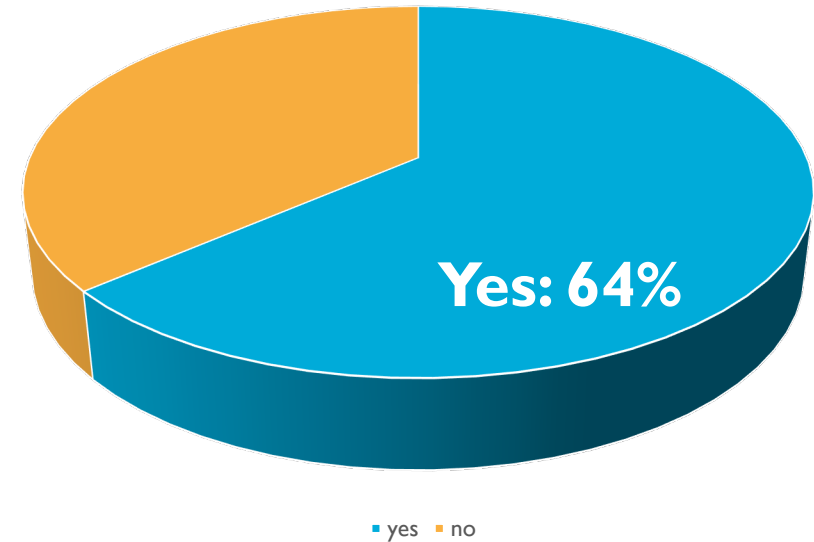
Changes in Hours of Operation



Hours Change Seasonally



Hours Changed During the Pandemic



Decreased hours of operation perhaps driven by demand and/or the need for additional employees



Online Presence



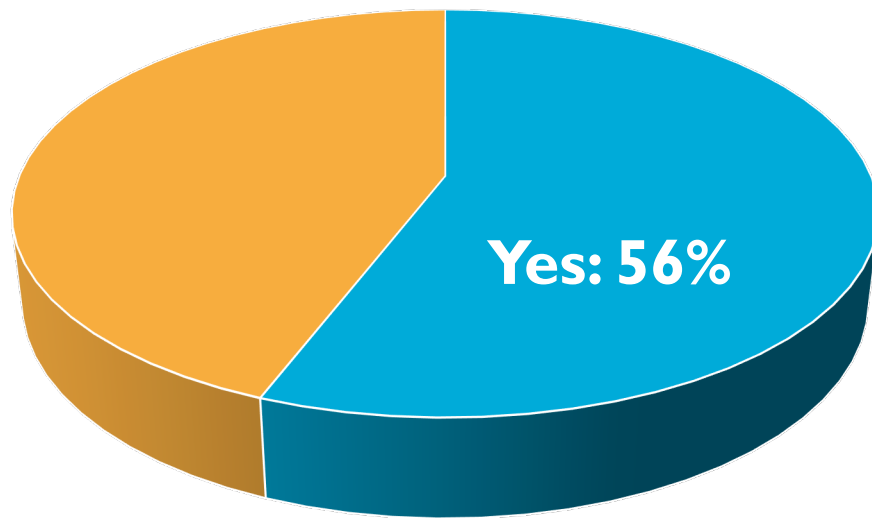
95% Reported Having An Online Presence for Their Business

The Most Common Platforms Were Facebook (65) and a Website (40)

When Asked How They Advertise Their Business

The Most Common Responses were Facebook, Website and/or Word-Of-Mouth

Is Your Business Currently Selling Online?



Obstacles to Selling Online

- Driving traffic to website
- Keeping up with Facebook algorithms / policies
- Delivery options aren't readily available in the area (food)
- Need training on selling online (Square, for example)
- Time commitment required





CREATE Survey Stats – Business & Technology Changes

Responses to How Does Existing/Emerging Technology Affect Your Business?



- Most common responses were:
 - Need for reliable internet service (cost, speed, availability)
 - Online sales, bookings and ordering is a necessity
 - Acceptance of credit cards is a must
- Other common responses:
 - Need to keep up with social media trends / algorithms
 - Need to be mobile friendly
 - Need to be tech savvy



Changes in Client Base



	Changing Client Base?
Yes	54
No	23

Common Changes in Client Base

- Trending Younger
- More Tech Savvy
- More Culturally Diverse
- Middle Income or Higher / More Affluent
- Highly Educated
- Appreciation for the Outdoors
- From Outside the Region – St Louis, Indy, Chicago, Kansas City, Memphis, Nashville

Notes: Online presence can be paramount to attracting this client base
Plus, important to recognize the increasing changes in client base related to outdoor tourism/recreation – what that means to the region's need for regional marketing and promotion





CREATE Survey Stats – Information to Position The Business for Success

Funding provided by



Information to Position Your Business for Success



- Available Economic Incentives (46)
- Energy Efficiency Upgrades (38)
- Market Research (34)
- **Support in Hiring Employees (29) note: 46 businesses surveyed had employees**
- Creating/Updating Business Plan (21)
- Identifying Financing Options (19)
- Disaster Relief Support (18)
- Selling/Transitioning My Business (5)

	Have Succession Plan?
Yes	10
No	67





CREATE Survey Stats – Region's Business Climate



Responses to Question: How Has the Region's Business Climate for Retail, Accommodations, Tourism and Entertainment Changed in the Past 3 Years?

- 29 responses indicated “growth” – specifically growth in outdoor tourism
- 23 responses indicated the region's business climate is either stagnant or in decline



Reasons Cited for Stagnation/Decline Included:



- Negative attitudes
- Area isn't welcoming to tourists
- Limited shopping/dining options and hours of operation
- Run down, vacant and dilapidated buildings
- Region hasn't fully embraced tourism as an economic engine
- Lack of investment in state parks and other tourism-based facilities
- Local tax dollars aren't being used to market the region to tourists (H/M Tax)
- Lack of Chambers to promote local businesses and encourage local shopping





CREATE Survey Stats – Factors Impacting Business

Responses to Question: Which of the Following Factors Impact Your Business



- Utilities (48)
- Property Taxes (40) – typically cited as high
- Business Insurance Costs (33)
- Government Regulation* (31)
- Transportation, Infrastructure & Planning (29)
- Physical Infrastructure Limitations (27)
- Cost/Availability of Land (17)
- Cost of Benefits (14)
- Cost/Availability of Buildings (11)
- Access to Credit to Support Business Operations/Expansion (9)

* licensing fees, restrictions and regulations vary by business type



Notes On:

Transportation, Infrastructure & Planning

- Lack of Public Transportation Options – Uber, Lyft, ride sharing
- Lack of Bicycle Lanes
- Roads in need of repair / need upgrades
- Current road construction
- Lack of or limited parking options
- Lack of signage to direct tourists
- General beautification is needed

Notes On: Cost of Benefits



- ❑ Cost of Benefits was cited as a concern as many businesses are unable to provide many benefits to their employees due to the cost
 - ❑ Inability to provide health insurance because of the cost was cited repeatedly as an area of concern
 - ❑ Limited ability to provide benefits was viewed as a negative factor in attracting employees





CREATE Survey Stats – Business Support

Responses to Question: How Do the Following Affect Your Business



- 39 Responses indicated that local elected leadership was supportive of their business

- 19 responses indicated that the Chamber of Commerce was supportive of their business
 - Note: not all five counties have a Chamber of Commerce





CREATE Survey Stats – Quality of Life Indicators

Responses to QOL Indicators Education



- 20 responded that the Quality of Education in the region is Good
- Other comments included the following:
 - Negatively impacts the talent pool for hiring
 - Basic skills aren't being taught in high school
 - Decrease in individuals that can do basic math and counting
 - Our youth are at a disadvantage in comparison to youth in school systems with more resources
 - Students aren't being challenged (IL School Report Card data)
 - Local education system doesn't embrace the arts
 - More educational pathways are needed for our youth



Responses to QOL Indicators Health



- 17 responded that the Quality of Health in the region is Good
- Other comments include the following:
 - Lack of urgent care / trauma center (ER) prohibits growth in the region
 - Lack of access to doctors for specialized care
 - Many residents leave the region for healthcare
 - Lack of healthcare access / focus on healthy living and walkability
 - A region of “haves” and “have-nots”
 - Not the healthiest region
 - Restaurants serve lots of fried food options
 - Chronic disease – Diabetes, High Blood Pressure & other poverty-related health issues
 - Serious drug problems in the region



Responses to QOL Indicators Recreation



- 28 responded that the Quality of Recreation in the region is Good
- Other comments include the following:
 - Recreation assets are great if you are an outdoors person – otherwise limited
 - Need more recreational opportunities for children, teens and 20s
 - Parents take their kids out of the region for sports & other recreational opportunities
 - Many of the community parks are in a state of decline and need renovation/refurbishment





CREATE Survey Stats – Community/Region Support

Responses to Question Specific Ways the Community Can Be More Supportive of Your Business?



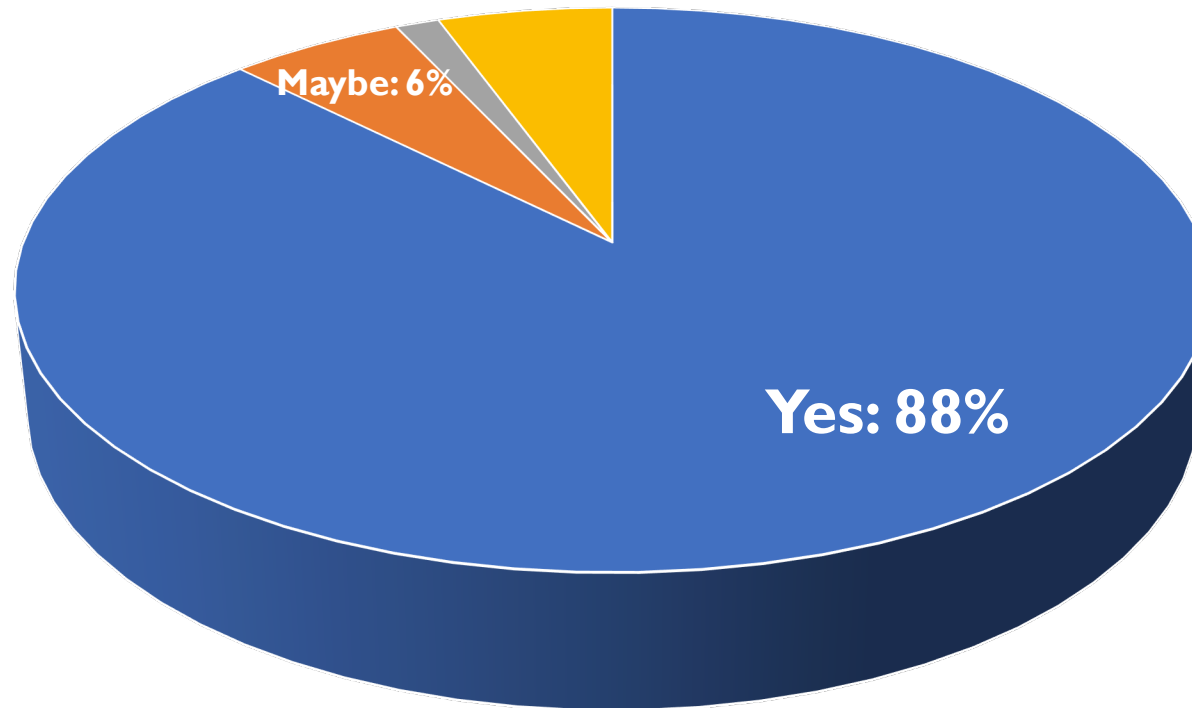
- Spend more money with local businesses
 - Don't just come in for donations and contributions
- Educate the public on the importance of shopping local
- Contribute more funds to support regional marketing efforts with SITB
- Encourage networking and interconnectivity between businesses
- Cities and counties need to be more supportive of tourism-based businesses
 - Tourism is an economic engine for the region
- Promote regional assets and position the region as a tourist destination
- Increase awareness of local businesses through local feature stories
- Improve the overall look of the community so it is more visually appealing and welcoming to visitors



Responses to Question Do You Feel Your Business Could Benefit from Regional Branding or Promotion?



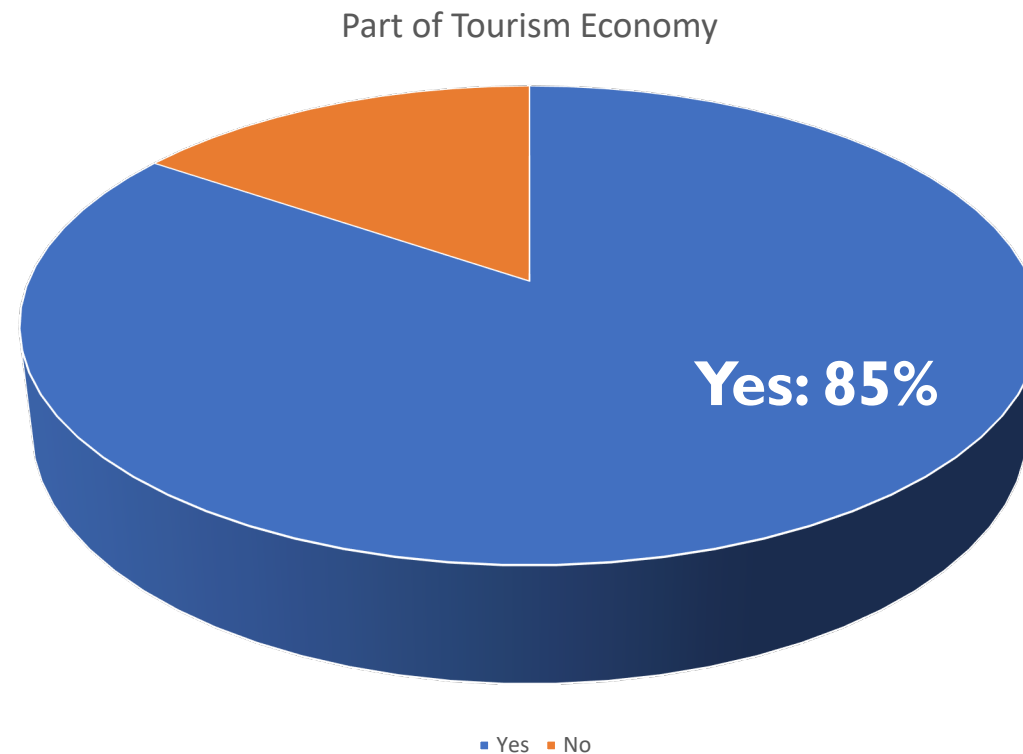
Benefit from Regional Branding or Promotion



■ Yes ■ Possibly/Maybe ■ Unsure ■ No



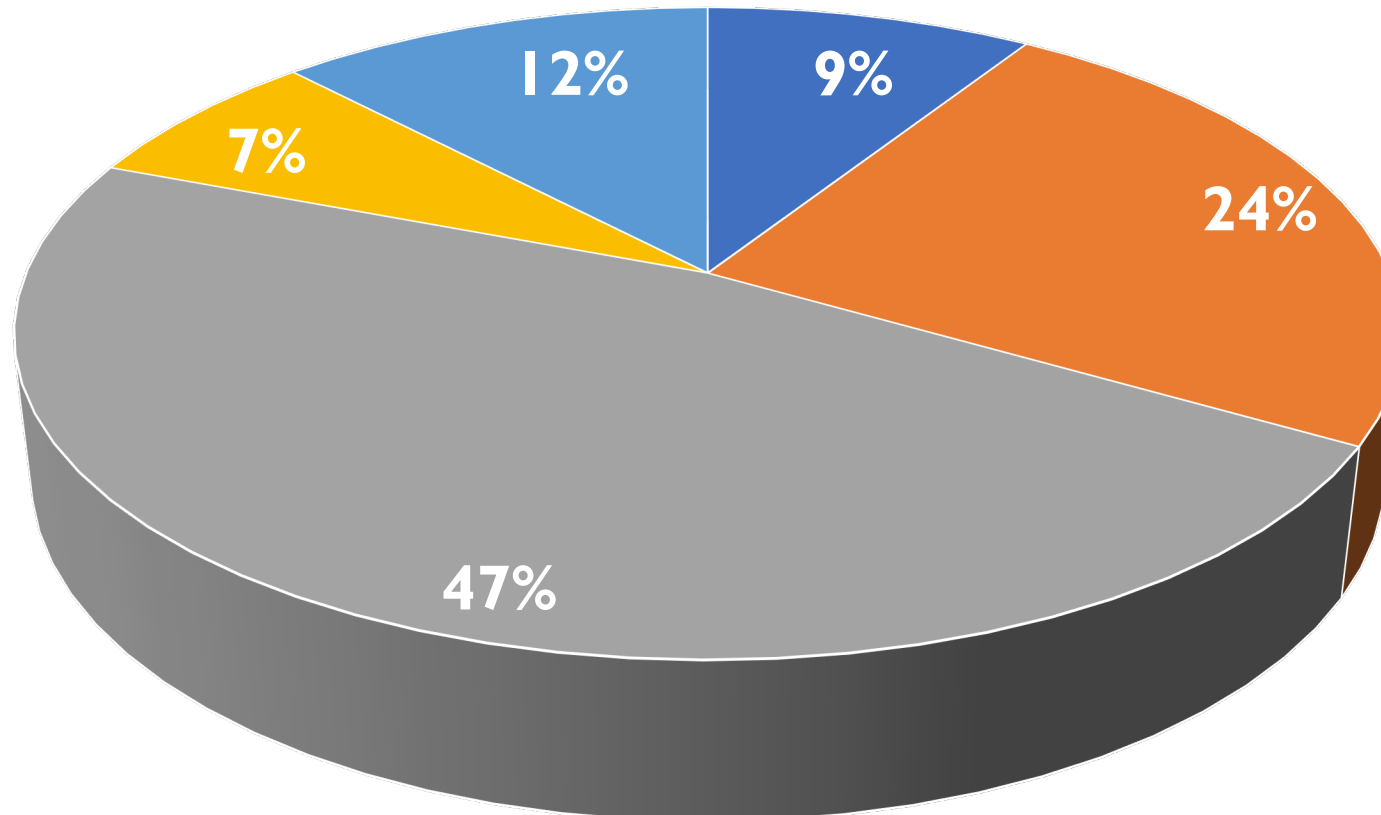
Responses to Question Do You See Yourself as Part of the Tourism Economy or Actively Promoting Tourism in the Region?



BRE Survey Stats



What Is The One Thing CREATE BRIDGES Could Do That Would Help My Business?



- Education / Awareness of Keeping Dollars Local
- Regional Coordination / Networking
- Regional Marketing & Promotion
- Workforce Development & Training
- Small Business Support Services

Notes:

Some Businesses Provided More Than One Suggestion

Responses Varied Based On Whether the Business Served the Region or Tourists/Travelers

While We Worked to Group the Responses Into Themes - We Will Also Provide You with the Complete List of Open-Ended Responses to This Question



CREATE | | |
B R I D G E S

A graphic of a bridge with a blue arch and orange supports. The text 'CREATE' is in bold black, followed by three vertical orange bars, and 'BRIDGES' is in spaced-out black letters below.

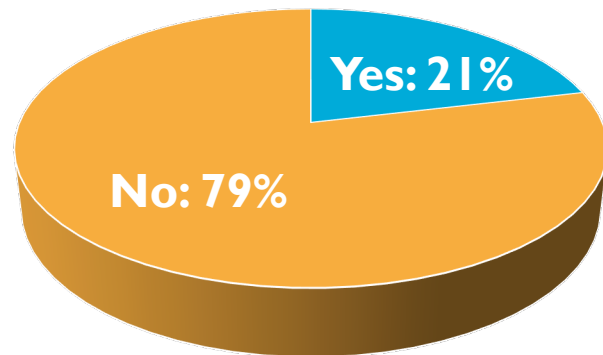


CREATE Workforce

Select Stats from the BRE Survey

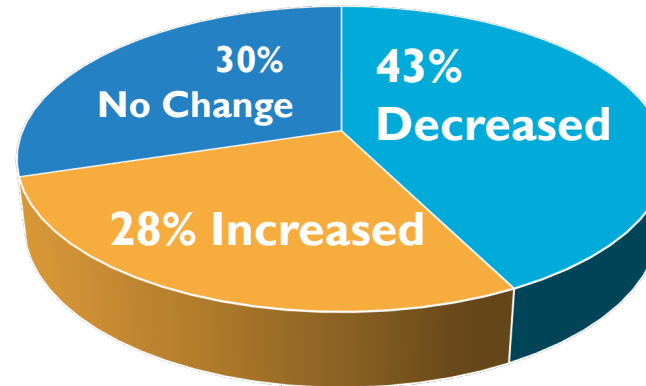


Reported Employing Seasonal or Temporary Workers



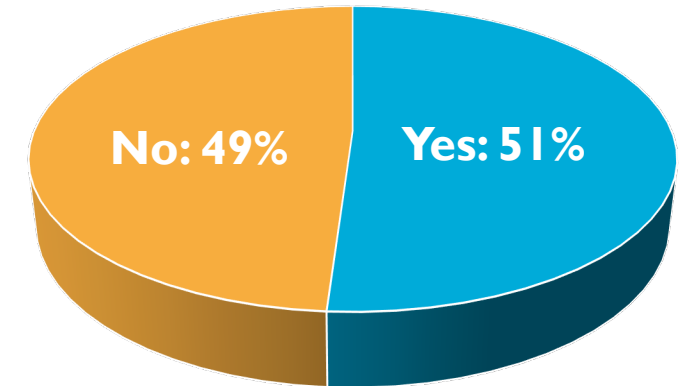
■ yes ■ no

of Employees Changed in Past 3 Years



■ Decreased ■ Increased ■ No Change

Employee Turnover Creates a Barrier



■ yes ■ no

Employee turnover perhaps driven by lack of benefits offered

N=47



CREATE Employees – Turnover and Recruitment

Reasons Cited for Employee Turnover



- Pandemic related unemployment benefits
- Positions not considered career jobs
- Workers leave for full-time positions
- Workers return to school / college
- Lack of work ethic
- Seasonality of positions
- People leaving the region

Responses to Question Barriers You Face When Recruiting Quality Employees?



Most cited responses:

- Prospective employees making more money drawing unemployment
- Difficult to find people willing to work the number of hours expected
- Struggle to find people with a good work ethic (reliable, trustworthy)
- Inability to pay more than minimum wage

Other responses:

- Fill daytime hours when students are in school
- Basic educational skills lacking
- Can't offer consistent hours or benefits

Responses to Question Are There Any Jobs That Are Hard to Fill?



Most cited responses:

- Restaurant staff – cooks, prep, servers

- Deli / Bakery

 - Lack of culinary arts training in the region

- Maintenance / repairs (lack of trained people)

- Cashiers (lack basic math skills)

- Manual labor positions – packers / stackers

 - Hard work, long hours during peak season (seasonal)

- Specialized talent or training needed examples:

 - Bartenders (requires certification)

 - Pharmacy tech (requires certification)

 - Meat shop cutters (safe food handling at a minimum)

 - Floral arrangers (artistic talent)

 - Truck drivers (requires a CDL)

Responses to Question What Factors Impact Your Employee's Ability to Work?



Factor	Employer # of Responses
Child or Elder Care	21
Transportation Availability	17
Broadband Access	6
Housing Availability	3
Healthcare Access	2

Employee Cited Responses:

- Reliability of Co-Workers (3)
- Transportation Availability (2)
- Alcohol and Drug Use (2)
- Criminal Record (2)
- Broadband Access (1)
- Healthcare Access (1)
- Relationship with Co-Workers (1)
- Workplace Safety (1)
- Mental & Behavioral Health Service Access (1)



CREATE Employees – Wages and Benefits

Responses to Question What is the Average Starting Wage Provided?

- Minimum Wage (35)
- Above Minimum Wage (8)

Current Illinois Minimum Wage Rates

\$11 / hour for workers 18 years of age or older

\$6.60 / hour for tipped workers

\$8.50 / hour for workers under 18 who work less than 650 hours a calendar year

N = 46 Businesses
Surveyed with Employees

Employer Support for Employees



Note: The most common “EMPLOYER COMMENT” to this series of questions was – “We don’t provide the benefit because they are part-time “

Benefit	Employer Offers	Employee Receives	Employee Would Benefit From
Flexible Scheduling	35	14	3
Cross Training on Other Positions	31	5	9
Periodic Pay Raises	29	6	10
Opportunities for Learning	29	6	9
Providing Purpose / Meaningful Work	25	4	6
Bonus – Seasonal and/or Holiday	22	6	9
Information on How to Be Promoted	21	3	8
Higher Wages than Other Similar Employees in Area	20	7	10
Paid Vacation or Designated Days Off with Pay	18	7	9
Paid Holidays or Designated Days Off with Pay	15	7	8
Paid Sick Leave	10	6	10
Tuition Support	8	2	9
Health Insurance	7	6	9
Transportation Assistance	6	2	7
Debt Relief	1	2	7
Childcare Assistance	1	1	8



CREATE Employees – Skills and Skills for Improvement

Top Five Skills Needed



Retail

Customer and Personal Service
Sales and Marketing
Administration and Management
Oral Expression
Persuasion

Entertainment

Customer and Personal Service
Public Safety and Security
Problem Sensitivity
Static Strength
Far Vision

Accommodation

Customer and Personal Service
Food Production
Public Safety and Security
Oral Comprehension
Oral Expression

Tourism

Customer and Personal Service
Stamina
Gross Body Coordination
Instructing
Administration and Management

Data Source: JobsEQ, 2018

Employee Skills for Improvement



Skill	Employer Suggested	Employee Suggested
Face to Face Communications	20	4
Customer Service	18	3
Teamwork	16	1
Time Management	16	4
Being to Work on Time	14	1
Phone Etiquette	14	3
Marketing	14	11
Sales	13	5
Basic Math	11	1
Inventory Control	10	3

Skill	Employer Suggested	Employee Suggested
Cash Handling	9	0
Basic Accounting	9	3
Specialize Equipment	8	6
Appropriate Dress	7	0
Record Keeping	6	3
Word Processing	6	4
Spreadsheets	5	6
Database Management	4	8
Reading & Writing	3	2
Ability to Understand, Speak and Write in English	4	0



CREATE Employees – Onboarding Procedures

Responses to Question Do You Provide Formal Employee Orientation or On-Boarding Process



- 18 Employers Offer Formal On-Boarding
 - Mentored by management
 - Computer-based training / training videos to watch
 - Packet of information on guidelines
 - Employee / new hire handbook

- 23 Employers Offer Informal On-Boarding
 - Informal job shadowing
 - On the job training

30 Employers Offer Training Beyond Orientation

18 Employers Offer Training Beyond Orientation to Address Changes in Technology, Policies or Trends

27 Employers Offer Training Beyond Orientation for Cross-Training, Leadership or Career Advancement

Orientation – Employee Responses	# of Responses
Formal Training Class	3
Online Course / Materials	6
Written Handbook or Instructions	9
Informal with Supervisor or Co-worker	17
Training Beyond Orientation	10
To Stay Current in Position	6
To help you move up the career ladder	3
No additional training received	11

Responses to Employee Survey Questions



Have you, or are you, considering leaving your current position?

Yes (6)

No (15)

How much do you feel valued by your employer and/or supervisor?

Not Valued At All (3)

Somewhat Valued (8)

Very Valued (8)

Do you feel supported by your community?

Yes (14)

No (6)

Other Employee Perspectives



- 33% hope to stay with their current employer
 - 20% hope to stay in their current position
 - 13% want to move up the career ladder with current employer
- 20% enjoy working in the industry / the position is a good fit for their work skills
- 30% will likely pursue a new position or industry
 - 10% enjoy their current position but need more money
 - 3% will likely work for a different employer
 - 17% indicated the position is temporary until they find a position in a new industry / occupation
- 17% are undecided

Education Level of Employee Perspective Survey Participants

- | | |
|---|--------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 4% Some High School | 13% Some College |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 31% High School Graduate | 48% College Degree |

Opportunities for Action



- What surprised you?
- What perceptions did you have that were reinforced?

Opportunities for Action



- What needs seem really important to you (overall region perspective)?
- What are some topics in which we could get quick/easy wins?
- What are topics that might need longer-term investment?

Opportunities for Action



If we were to tackle these, who is missing today that needs to be involved?



Questions / Comments



*Thank You for
Attending*

CREATE Academy

Southern Five Region of Illinois

October 26, 2021