



CREATE | | |
BRIDGES

The graphic consists of a semi-circular arch structure. The top arch is a solid blue line. Below it is a larger, lighter blue arch. Underneath that is an orange arch. Three vertical orange lines of varying heights are positioned within the orange arch, resembling bridge piers. The text 'CREATE' is in bold black, followed by three vertical bars, and 'BRIDGES' is in a spaced-out black font below.

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



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**College of Agricultural, Consumer
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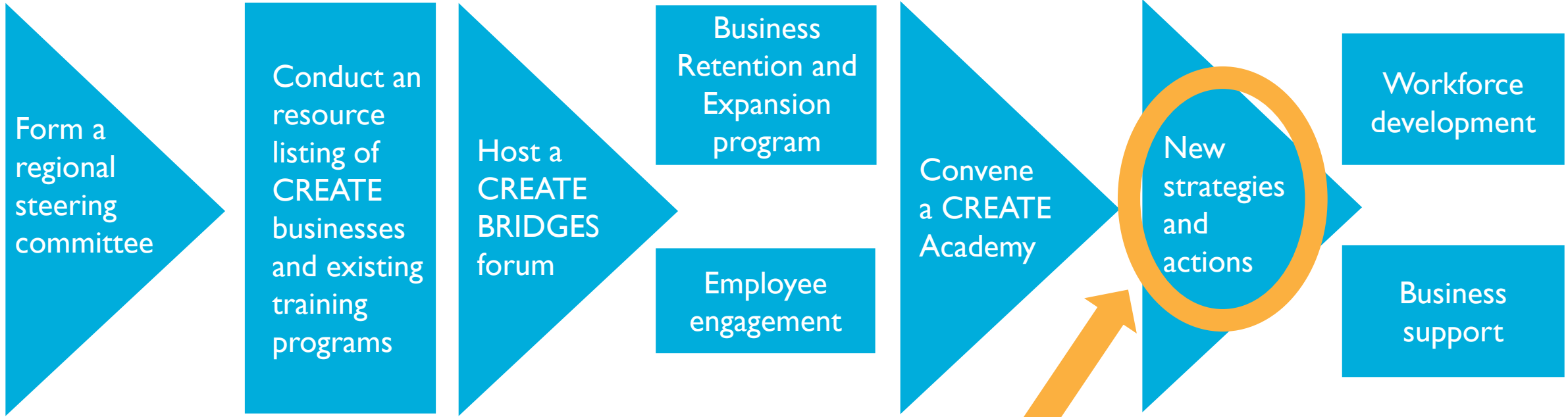
Today's Agenda



- Process Overview
- Recap
 - Key Data
 - Themes
 - Opportunities for Action
- Prioritize Focus Areas
- Set Strategies
- Develop a Plan of Action




CREATE BRIDGES Process



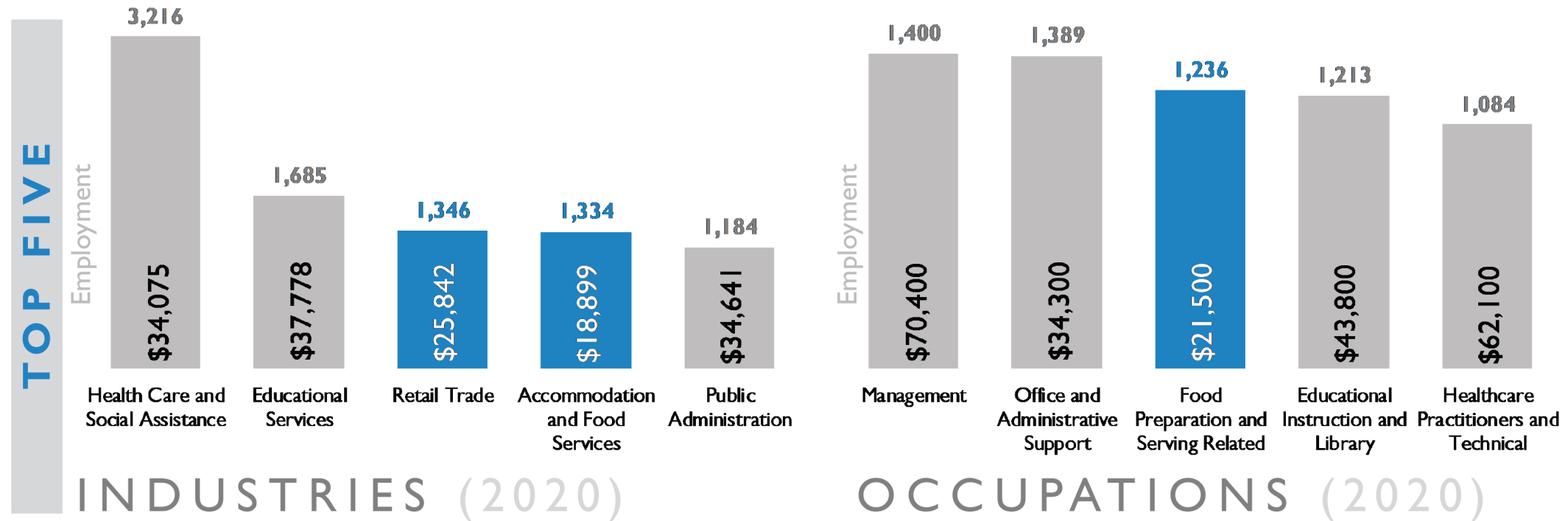
We are here

Data-driven Planning



- CREATE Forum perspectives
 - Secondary economic data
 - Business owner perspectives (BR&E)
 - Employee perspectives (survey)
- 
- Initial reactions & groundtruthing
 - Themes & commonalities across datasets
 - Prioritization & strategy development

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)



2020 Retail Sales correction

**CREATE
BRIDGES
Region**

RETAIL SALES
(2020)

\$442.2 million



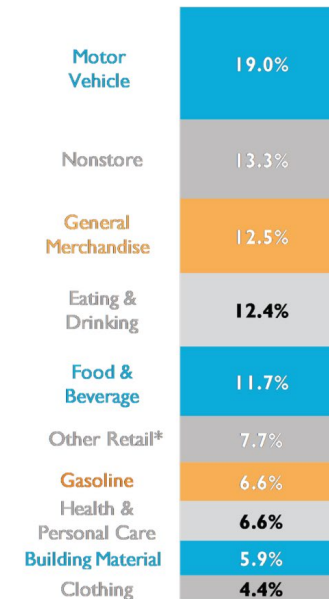
Data Source: Woods & Poole

*Other Retail includes: NonStore (2.0%),
Sporting Goods (1.7%), Clothing (1.5%),
Miscellaneous (1.4%), and Electronics (0.6%)



RETAIL SALES
(2020)

\$197.9 billion



**State of
Illinois**

Data Source: Woods & Poole

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



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



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



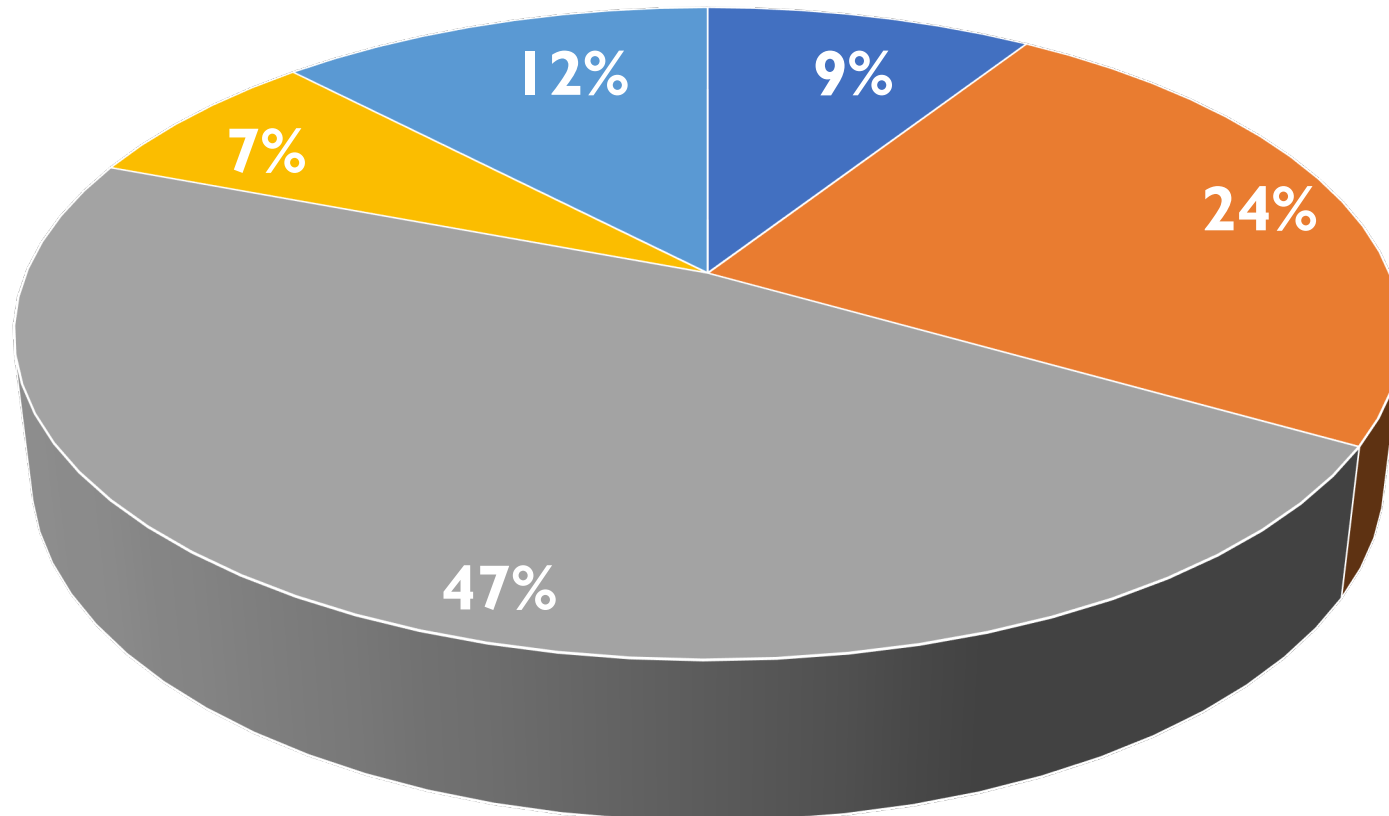
- Spend more money with local businesses
 - Don't just come in for donations and contributions
- Educate the public on the importance of shopping local
- Contribute more funds to support regional marketing efforts with SITB
- Encourage networking and interconnectivity between businesses
- Cities and 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



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

Recap: Key Information



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

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
- Time commitment required

Information to Position Your Business for Success

Support in Hiring Employees (29 responses) note: only 46 businesses surveyed had employees

Recap: Opportunities for Action (common themes from CREATE Academy)



- Regional Mindset as an Outdoor Recreation/Tourism Based Region
 - Focus on Regional Tourism Marketing, Promotion and Branding
 - Centralized Source of Information
- Create Opportunities for Networking/Collaboration for CREATE Sector Businesses
- Try to Tackle the Employee Benefits Issue
 - Regional Coop Insurance Benefits Option (for example)
- Customer Service / Hospitality Training for CREATE Sector Employees
- Youth Development
- Broadband – Affordable and Dependable

Priorities



From the Information Available and/or the Opportunities for Action that were identified at the CREATE Academy, create a list of priorities.

Strategies for Priorities



Now create specific strategies that match with each priority.

Note: There may be more than one strategy for each priority.

Plan of Action*



What (Strategy)	Who is Responsible*	Who is Helping*	Resources and Support Needed*	When*

*Workgroups/Subcommittees and a Timeline for the Plan of Action

Next Steps



- Establish a method for sharing resources and updates
- Review next steps for working groups/subcommittees
- Schedule next meeting
- Anything else??