

City of Brockville

Leeds-Grenville-Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes

2022 Business Survey: Report



BROCKVILLE
CITY OF THE 1000 ISLANDS

November 30, 2022

Survey Timeframe: October 4 – October 30, 2022

Prepared by:

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

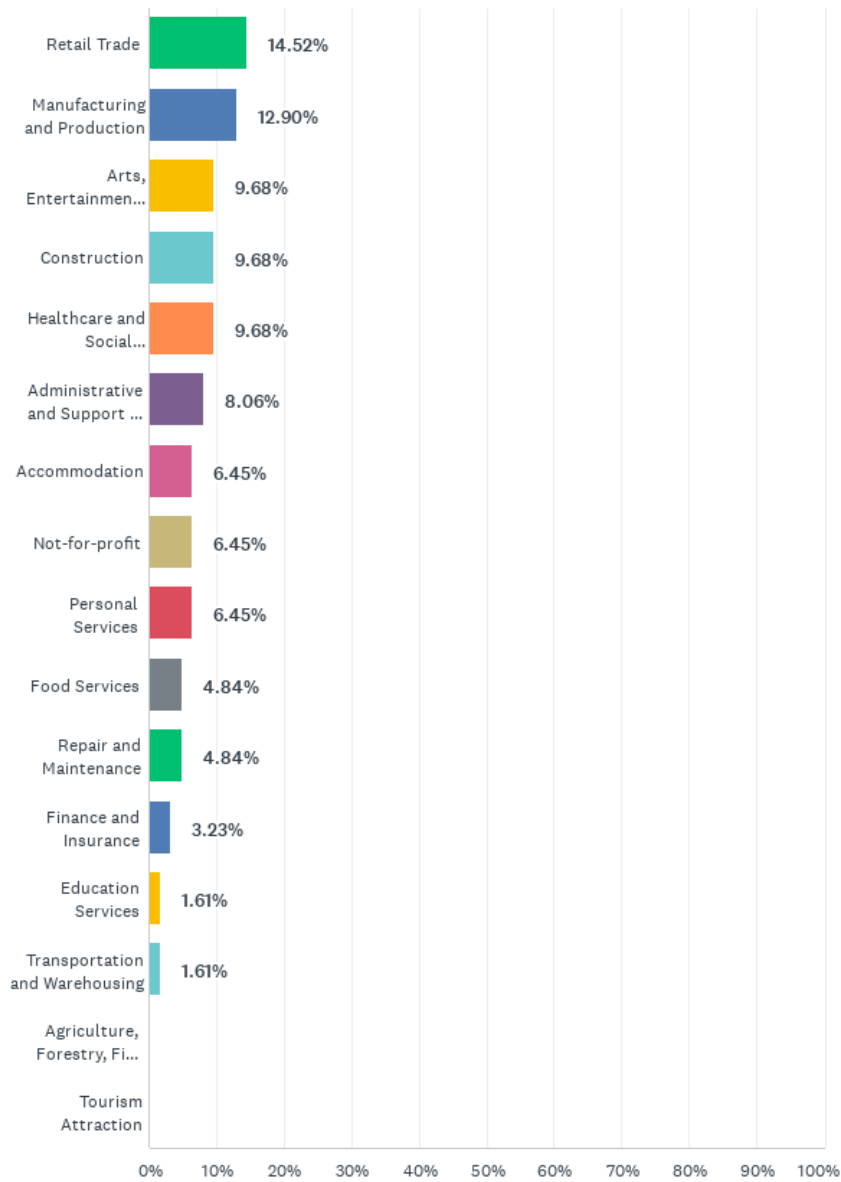


invest.leadsgrenville.com/reportsandplans

#2 What sector is your business primarily operating in?

Answered: 62

Skipped: 0



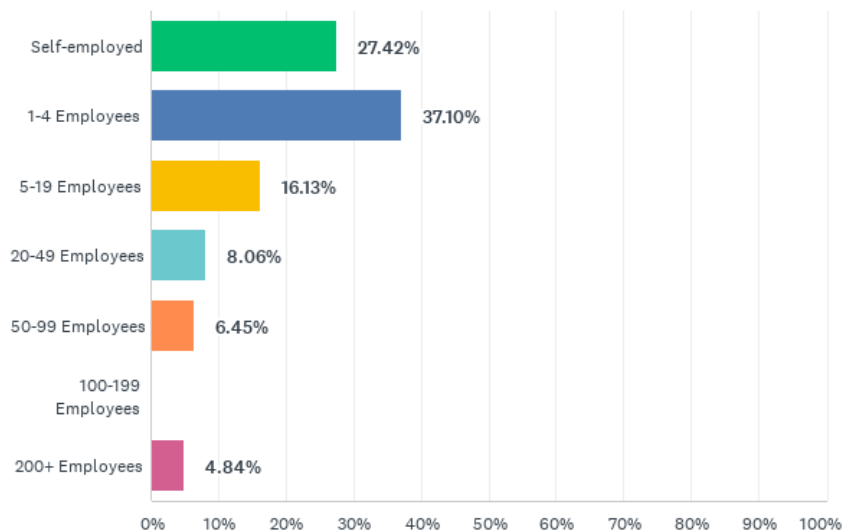
#2 continued...

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Retail Trade	14.52%	9
Manufacturing and Production	12.90%	8
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	9.68%	6
Construction	9.68%	6
Healthcare and Social Assistance	9.68%	6
Administrative and Support - Business Services	8.06%	5
Accommodation	6.45%	4
Not-for-profit	6.45%	4
Personal Services	6.45%	4
Food Services	4.84%	3
Repair and Maintenance	4.84%	3
Finance and Insurance	3.23%	2
Education Services	1.61%	1
Transportation and Warehousing	1.61%	1
Agriculture, Forestry, Fish and Hunting	0.00%	0
Tourism Attraction	0.00%	0
TOTAL		62

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

Answered: 62

Skipped: 0



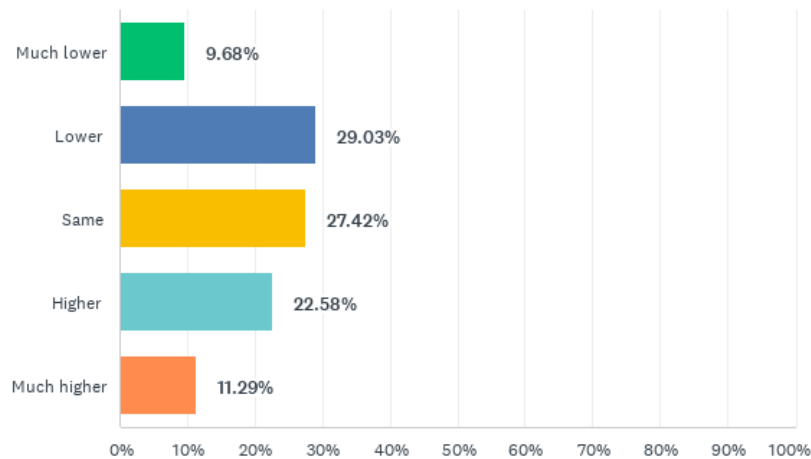
#3 continued...

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Self-employed	27.42%	17
1-4 Employees	37.10%	23
5-19 Employees	16.13%	10
20-49 Employees	8.06%	5
50-99 Employees	6.45%	4
100-199 Employees	0.00%	0
200+ Employees	4.84%	3
TOTAL		62

#4 Where is your business activity level today, compared with pre-COVID levels?

Answered: 62

Skipped: 0

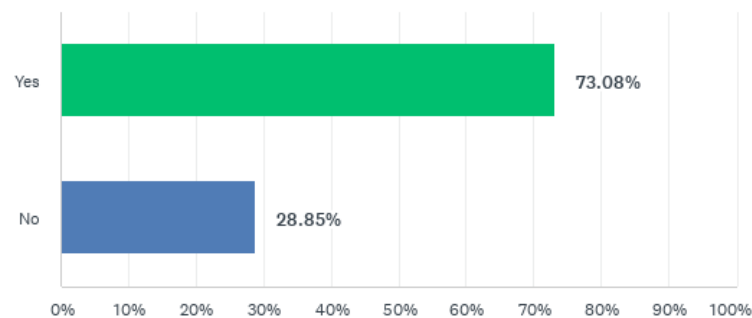


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Much lower	9.68%	6
Lower	29.03%	18
Same	27.42%	17
Higher	22.58%	14
Much higher	11.29%	7
TOTAL		62

#5 If your business is growing, are you confident your demand levels will continue?

Answered: 52

Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	73.08% 38
No	28.85% 15

Total Respondents: 52

Positive

- We currently can't find enough skilled people to keep up with demand.
- We are exploring possible further revenue strains particularly e-commerce.
- We are growing outside of the community.
- We've been 20-30% growth every year since we started. Except for year 2 where it was 110%.

Negative

- Inflationary pressure on disposable income is worrisome for an entertainment business. The retail side of the business should be ok.
- Watching disposable income remain the same however costs are rising not sure it will sustain.
- To a nearly detrimental affect as our resources are not able to increase and we are fighting more imbalances with inflation and demand.
- Business subject to construction industry demand which may have peaked this year.
- Some of our products are impacted by the upcoming ban on grocery-type bags. As well we are being impacted by the difficulty in international shipping and increasing energy prices and carbon tax.
- When COVID hit my industry was the only one that was completely left behind with no plan or guidance to rebuild. Youth sport/development quickly fell to the lowest priority of government officials and local MP's.

Other

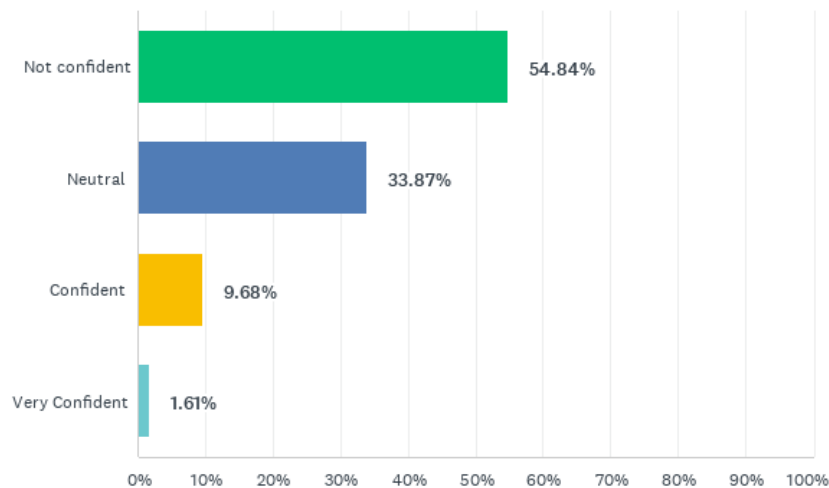
- We are an elementary school.
- We are in the legal sector. We expect real estate transactions and corporate matters to decrease as they have been over the last several months. Family matters, Estates and Estate Planning, are at full capacity and will likely remain so.
- Customer quantity achieved, no longer looking for new clients.

#5 continued...

- This isn't really a yes or no question for me. I am a new business that just opened in July 2022. I hope to continue to grow, but can't be confident in that happening.
- 25 % Pre-COVID came from USA, Japan, China, UK, Europe, Middle East. Virtually none has returned but my reputation has led to becoming a destination and the go to accommodation in Brockville (Top 1 % of small hotels worldwide according to Trip Advisor). I think that 75% of pre-COVID US visitors and 10% of other Foreign will never return as folks are creatures of habit. Folks that routinely came here year over year every summer could have waited 1 year but after 3 they have found other equally attractive domestic venues and after 3 years established a new pattern. We have to cultivate domestic many of whom will stay in Canada vs cruise ships or Europe as was the case when the 1000 Islands was the Riviera of North America and the focal point with Muskoka of summer vacation (before affordable rapid transatlantic flight supplanted it).
- It would help if the town would support us, by including us in more events around town. We keep finding out about events after the fact.
- We hope so but will depend on how much our clients are able to afford during rough times.

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

Answered: 62 Skipped: 0

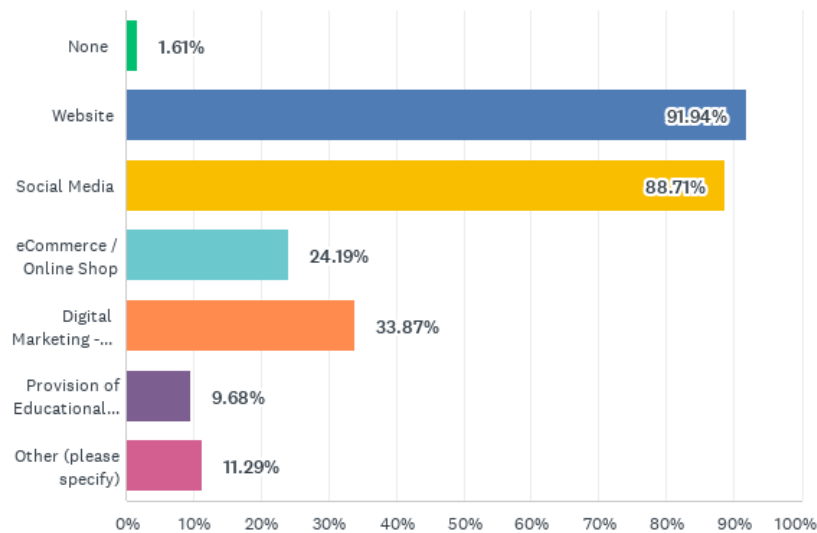


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Not confident	54.84% 34
Neutral	33.87% 21
Confident	9.68% 6
Very Confident	1.61% 1
TOTAL	62

#7 What type of online presence does your company have? (choose all that apply)

Answered: 62

Skipped: 0

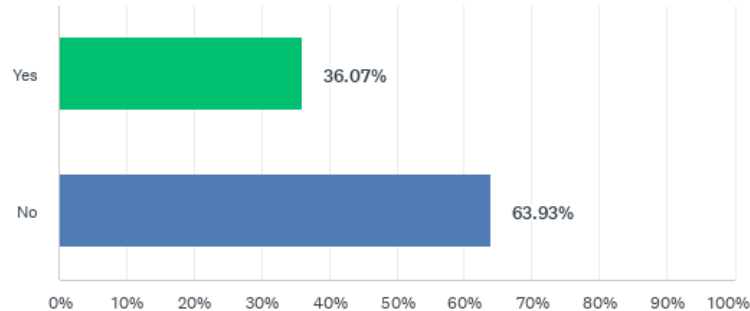


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
None	1.61% 1
Website	91.94% 57
Social Media	88.71% 55
eCommerce / Online Shop	24.19% 15
Digital Marketing - Advertising / Email	33.87% 21
Provision of Educational Webinars	9.68% 6
Other (please specify)	Responses 11.29% 7
Total Respondents: 62	

- Paid Google Ads.
- Closed my online store it wasn't worth the money and time.
- We support businesses, non-profits and local governments all over Ontario via remote access systems.
- Working on e-commerce site. Not up and running yet.
- Google presence.
- Livestreaming.
- Paid media relationships.

#8 Would you like to receive assistance with your online presence (website, social media, e-Commerce / online shop, digital marketing)? Please provide your contact information in #16.

Answered: 61 Skipped: 1



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	36.07%	22
No	63.93%	39
TOTAL		61

#9 Identify your biggest challenges using the rating scale for each item, with 1 being smallest and 10 being your biggest challenge.

Answered: 61 Skipped: 1

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	TOTAL
Increasing product prices	15.25% 9	3.39% 2	5.08% 3	6.78% 4	8.47% 5	5.08% 3	3.39% 2	20.34% 12	8.47% 5	23.73% 14	59
Supply chain	20.34% 12	5.08% 3	8.47% 5	5.08% 3	13.56% 8	8.47% 5	8.47% 5	15.25% 9	6.78% 4	8.47% 5	59
Labour force	22.03% 13	10.17% 6	5.08% 3	0.00% 0	6.78% 4	3.39% 2	5.08% 3	3.39% 2	8.47% 5	35.59% 21	59
Changes in your product demand	22.95% 14	8.20% 5	6.56% 4	3.28% 2	13.11% 8	6.56% 4	8.20% 5	9.84% 6	6.56% 4	14.75% 9	61
Increased overhead costs	5.08% 3	8.47% 5	6.78% 4	3.39% 2	11.86% 7	10.17% 6	3.39% 2	11.86% 7	8.47% 5	30.51% 18	59
Debt servicing capacity	30.36% 17	16.07% 9	1.79% 1	7.14% 4	8.93% 5	1.79% 1	10.71% 6	8.93% 5	1.79% 1	12.50% 7	56

#9 continued...

- Employee Retention and turn over.
- Upcoming CEBA loan repayment coming due.
- If we had affordable housing the labour pool could grow.
- Only labour force issue we have is getting young professionals to want to work. Our solution has been to go fully remote. We have staff in Nova Scotia, Ontario and Quebec.
- This is a church (registered charity) and the above challenges are hard to identify. We operate based on donations. Attendance has certainly decreased since COVID-19 but our online presence has increased. Our congregation is aging and is not being replaced.
- I'm a lawyer. My overhead keeps increasing, but my clients' ability to pay keeps decreasing. Government rates of pay for private lawyers have not increased in years. We make less and less each year on government file, and have to increase private rates or cut out government work altogether. Government is also making court process more complicated, inefficient, and therefore costly. Private rates need to go up, yet incomes in this area don't support this. This provincial government has been horrible for small town legal practice.
- Essentially, the feedback I have gotten from my former clients is that they cannot return to our programs because the increase of gasoline and grocery costs. September is usually a big reboot for us but we have been consistently losing more and more clients each month with no new income.

#10 Identify your biggest workforce challenges using the rating scale for each item, with 1 being smallest and 10 being your biggest challenge.

Answered: 59

Skipped: 3

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	TOTAL
Employees returning to the workplace	62.71% 37	11.86% 7	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	3.39% 2	3.39% 2	1.69% 1	6.78% 4	0.00% 0	10.17% 6	59
Ability to offer competitive wages and benefits	27.12% 16	10.17% 6	6.78% 4	3.39% 2	10.17% 6	3.39% 2	8.47% 5	5.08% 3	5.08% 3	20.34% 12	59
Desire for hybrid workplace models	62.07% 36	6.90% 4	6.90% 4	0.00% 0	6.90% 4	3.45% 2	5.17% 3	0.00% 0	1.72% 1	6.90% 4	58
Attraction of new employees	28.81% 17	1.69% 1	6.78% 4	5.08% 3	6.78% 4	3.39% 2	5.08% 3	6.78% 4	3.39% 2	32.20% 19	59

- If we had affordable housing the labour pool could grow.
- We are having a lot of issues finding people that want to work and are good workers.
- We are a new small business and do not have sufficient income or contracts yet to need employees.
- Our employees have all been with the church for a minimum of 10 years. There is no indication that they will be replaced in the foreseeable future.
- I can't afford to hire anyone that adds value because my overhead is too high and with no new revenue coming in I am stuck in limbo.

#10 continued...

- Where did they all go? If the CERB and other programs are still in place, they need to stop immediately and get people back to work.
- Tiers have shifted. There are 3 tiers, Tier 1 is service industry a lower paying employment up to \$17 per hour. Tier 2 \$17 plus, entry level manufacturing and office. Tier 3 \$20 plus. Tiers 2 and 3 are now accepting candidates they would not have typically taken pre-COVID. Its not that people do not want to work, Tier 1 has shrunk with the opening of the higher tier positions. We need additional support in the first tier! Needed Immigration etc...

#11 What should the region's focus be to address workforce shortages?

Answered: 41 Skipped: 21

Housing

- Affordable housing. x2
- Housing.
- Housing supply.
- Increasing housing supply.
- Construction of affordable housing for working individuals.
- Housing is an issue that prevents bringing in skilled talent.
- If we had affordable housing the labour pool could grow.
- Higher rental and housing costs are probably one of the biggest issues for potential workers to relocate to the region.
- Living wage, affordable housing and expediting processes to achieve a larger inventory of mixed-use housing, offsetting inflation for with rebates and incentives to support keeping people in their homes, encouraging employers to work with their employees on "what's in it for me" when they can't offer competitive wages.

Immigration/Resident Attraction

- Immigration for professional workers.
- Immigration and health services to attract people.
- Attracting skilled people.
- Increasing the availability of educated/skilled workers in our region.
- Speak with federal immigration minister to have immigrants settle here.
- Marketing to attract people still in the workforce to relocate to eastern Ontario.

Work Ethic

- Motivation!
- People that want to work.
- Getting workers who want to work and show up for work.
- Somehow the message needs to get out that young people need to develop a work ethic. A lot of them don't seem to be able to function without a phone in their hands and some places of business do not allow that. Social media platforms are causing a lot of issues for business that don't rely on social media for day to day processes.
- We have no constructive suggestions. There just don't seem to be people available or willing to work.

#11 continued...

Training

- Training. x3
- Incentives for retraining.
- Increase college programs in technical and construction fields.
- Training skilled workers to replace those who retired during the pandemic.
- More training programs for those looking for work but lacking skills in a job they are interested in.

Reduce Social Assistance

- Demand the governments STOP making it so easy to stay home!
- Encouraging the 35+% of those who have removed themselves from the workforce and unemployment counting to enter back into the system.
- Get people working not paying them to stay at home.
- Repeal the CERB and any other incentive that incentivizes people not to work.

Other

- Lower city taxes.
- Better internet in rural areas.
- "Return to normal" and entirely stop with the "fearmongering".
- Factors that affect employer's ability to pay competitive wages.
- Assisting employers in finding & retaining staff.
- Reduce government hiring.
- Pay equal to the amount of effort employers want.
- Attracting more middle-class jobs.
- Wage subsidies for employers to encourage people to work.
- Child care support incentives for people who left the work force to stay with children during the pandemic.
- Convince businesses that are capable of using remote workforces to use it. Office work is gone, businesses who don't see that will slowly die. Stop saying there is a shortage of workers, there isn't. There's a shortage of businesses willing to pay what people know they can get if they shop around. We pay around 15-20% higher than the rest of our industry plus have 5 weeks vacation to start. We have no problems finding staff.
- Look at why people aren't working or applying for the jobs available. Part-time hours, gas prices make it challenging for people to afford to go to work, lack of transportation....people can't survive on part-time work and expecting people to work multiple jobs to make ends meet isn't sustainable.
- The same model Alberta is using to attract people, our affordability, lifestyle and careers.
<https://www.albertaiscalling.ca>
- People cannot subsist on part time employment and minimum wage with the cost of living today.
- Not sure this is something that can be fixed by government and other organizations.
- Long term- SLC should offer a health and performance/wellness program to increase local education and produce high quality coaches. Other than that, it cannot be addressed locally.

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

Answered: 40

Skipped: 22

Employer Supports

- Mentoring.
- Business plan.
- Recruiting support.
- Consulting services.
- Accounting services.
- Social media education.
- Assistance with hiring.
- Partnership for hiring sites.
- HR/Business Related training.
- Training and skills development.
- Basic knowledge of running a successful business, including basic accounting, advertising & marketing in a digital age.
- Have seminars for business and government employees on how to communicate more effectively.
- Clear advice and assistance regarding online sales and transportation of refrigerated or frozen product.

Advertising/Marketing

- Advertising. x4
- Marketing. x2
- Promotion.
- Online marketing.
- Referrals to our services.
- City advertising small business in local events.
- Exposure for business in Brockville.
- Advertising at reasonably affordable rates. Marketing strategies in the face of an uncertain economy.
- Promotion of all local businesses within the community; make it easier to access community resources.

Business Grants

- Money/grants. x2
- Accessing programs.
- Government grants.
- Specific training funding.
- Grants to help expand stock.
- Government funding increase.
- More programs for mom and pop shops.
- Hiring subsidies or programs that are not just for skilled or trades.
- Continued support via grant programs while we bridge the gap of inflation and its impact on resources.
- Government grants that appropriately reimburse what I lost during the pandemic, and rent relief.
- Wage help for new employees, incentives for low to medium wage people to go to work.

#12 continued...

Labour

- Recruiting trades.
- Obtaining employees.
- Get reliable employees.
- Attracting young skilled people to the region.

Reduce Social Support

- Finding proper employees with a proper work ethic, keeping the Fed's hand out of our cookie jar, making incentives for people to get jobs and a trade as in STOP paying them to stay home.
- Stop the Government programs/EI programs and get people back to work.

Other

- Networking.
- Lower city taxes.
- Access to inexpensive money.
- Tourism attraction.
- e-Commerce.
- Lower supply cost.
- Increasing our efficiency in providing service to our clients.
- More events downtown Brockville for the slower months.
- Lower city taxes for occupied business properties instead of the vacant ones.
- Resolving supply chain issues (some of which are the result of not having reliable employees).
- Rental assistance and cost of living allowances.
- Interest free loans.
- Affordable office rentals for small business. More activities offered by the city and in the city.
- UBI. Universal basic income would increase the median wage of the area significantly which would help all local businesses and local businesses doing well would help our business.
- Improving downtown cores and tourism within our towns/city. Brockville's downtown is a ghost town and when it's not it's just crack heads. Encourage businesses to be open. This would make the area more attractive to young professionals and tourists.
- Stop shunning high tech businesses. Our payroll is higher than other businesses in the area with twice the staff quantity but nobody seems to care if we're here or not. Which begs the question, why keep our business here? We can work anywhere.
- Legislation to protect small business owners from the landlords taking their assets through litigation if small business owners have to terminate their leases early as a result of slow downs, closures, fear mongering and a failure of many businesses to return to the workplace "return to normal" having complied with the politicians dictates.
- Communication- we need to effectively communicate with each individual in the communities we live in, especially letting those in the workforce what the job opportunities are.
- If we had affordable housing the labour pool could grow. The provincial government needs to stop finding new policies for businesses to create and maintain.
- To not host outside foreign based (not a Brockville based business) retail goods sales event at the Memorial Centre... for a few days rent. It harms the local economy already struggling to maintain sales.

#12 continued...

- Reduce the number of competing fiefdoms to one tourism operator /marketer for the region. Combine the budgets so we can hire the best and the brightest together with resources aka the example of the Florida Keys marketing https://www.visitflorida.com/places-to-go/southeast/florida-keys/?cid=PS_M8_GPS_&gclid=CjwKCAjwqJ5aBhBUEiwAg5W9pyhviX-sMI42vakhvJPqSknQDmaclitmnXJEAoz8Uw2fF--Su10_LBoCkGsQAvD_BwE
- Have frontline people at business and governments return calls, answer email or texts within 24 hours.
- Have better data sharing and integration systems at all government places e.g. hospitals, service Ontario.

#13 What are your expectations for 2023?

Answered: 43

Skipped: 19

Positive Expectations

- Hopeful. x2
- Growth. x2
- Surpass 2019.
- Customer growth.
- Lots of downtown foot traffic.
- 10% growth to the bottom line.
- Increasing revenue and team size.
- To increase productivity by 10-15%.
- Business growth but at a slower pace.
- Expect to see growth and hope to hire.
- Good unless the economy tanks totally.
- To maintain 2021 income and grow in 2023.
- That it will be unpredictable and full of potential.
- Grow locally as the go to for voiceover services.
- To continue to grow the business and hire reliable workers.
- Hoping for a stable demand for construction materials in 2023.
- Increased growth but worried about supply chain issues and inflation.
- We would like to double our sales, by growing our rentals and styling services.
- I'm expecting 2023 to be a good year but I do worry about the state of the economy, supply chain issues and ever-increasing prices.
- Another 20-30% growth year, hire another staff. Likely in a big city or elsewhere in the country.
- Our company's workload is increasing. I'm expecting it to be easier to find highly skilled technical workers (engineers etc.) mainly due to economic slowdown.

Neutral Expectations

- Sustainability.
- Same as current year.
- That our revenues will remain neutral, and that we will aim at increasing our efficiency.

#13 continued...

Negative Expectations

- I will need to raise prices.
- Continued labour shortage.
- To keep the business alive.
- Increased hardship finding new employees.
- Difficulty continuing to survive as a viable business.
- Work harder to stay constant in a likely recessionary environment.

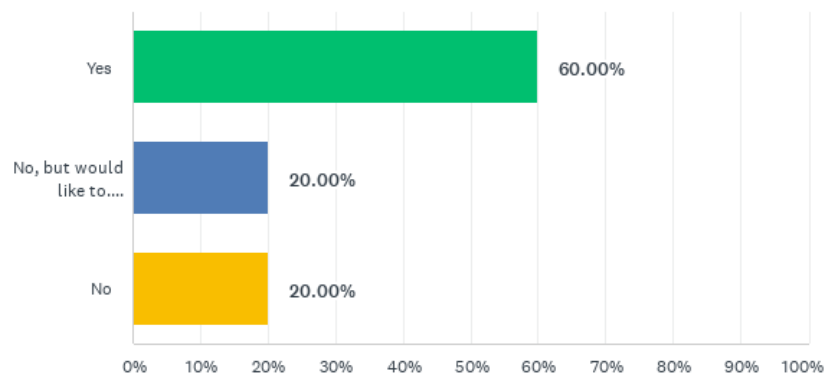
Other

- No idea.
- Government funding increase.
- Expect the worst - hope for the best.
- Obtain Registered Charity Status.
- An economical dip followed by increased consumption of goods and services
- None really, we hope to carry on and keep above the red
- I don't have any specific expectations as we are in a very apparent recession that is even affecting former wealthy families.

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

Answered: 60

Skipped: 2



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	60.00% 36
No, but would like to. (please provide your contact information in #16)	20.00% 12
No	20.00% 12
TOTAL	60

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

Answered: 15

Skipped: 47

Post COVID Challenges

- COVID cut my business in half. New clients are difficult to find. I'm exhausted and couldn't work more than 20 hours a week if I wanted to. I am just hanging on another 10 years until I'm 65 and can retire.
- Challenge in my business is after being deemed non-essential for three years expenses require price increases and current inflation means people cutting back. I need employees and can't afford to hire. So, working alone more than I'd like.
- Lack of exposure through 2 years of lockdowns and uncertainty has crushed a large-scale marketing plan we undertook pre-COVID.

Labour

- Employee turnover has been difficult. Finding skilled people in technical trades and professions. Unprecedented demand for services. A lot of stressed people due to the Pandemic makes service professions difficult.
- Recruiting trades is #1 challenge for us, Leeds Grenville has much to offer but we need to showcase it.

Other

- Networking locally.
- Challenged by costs of living (supplies, heating etc.). Also, by insurance companies who are now reducing coverage for the health service I provide. People less willing to pay out of pocket.
- As a young business, we learn something new every day. Finding new clients, reaching out and booking new events is actually a touch intimidating. Though we have been doing this type of work successfully for years through past careers, we still suffer from imposter syndrome! We don't have a concrete business plan, yet we know what we want to do, we are simply unsure how to accomplish that goal. We are learning as we go.
- Internet is a big problem in this area. We have multiple clients that are rural and they're running on terrible internet which reduces their effectiveness significantly. Costing money and stunting growth. Because we have no incentive to stay in the area, we're likely going to get rid of our office space when our lease is up and move all our equipment to Kingston or Ottawa.
- Health and recreation and the arts are the first to be cut when facing financial instability. So, my business is always affected by the economy.
- Not many cities can boast of having a unique waterfront historically themed boutique hotel that has been awarded as in the top 1% of small hotels worldwide. Most tourism regions would feature such a location... not ignore it as is the case here. Not a complaint as I am achieving quite well without recognition or support... just an observation. Feel-good self congratulatory newsletters do not bring new customers from outside the area nor does multiple competing separately funded economic and development departments 3 in Brockville County Township City... to say nothing of the DBIA ... then Prescott, etc. etc. with virtually no new industry resulting... Splintered fiefdoms can't compete with the likes of Kingston or Ottawa.
- We have a sense of urgency to get the job completed, unfortunately that is a foreign concept to most people
- I have found it difficult to find support locally as the business development programs favour supporting female entrepreneurs and leave the men to fend for themselves with unequal referrals and opportunity.

#16 If you would like to speak to someone regarding support available to business, or if you answered yes to question #8 or #14, please provide your contact information.

Answered: 17 Skipped: 45

ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES	
Contact Name	Responses	100.00%	17
Business Name	Responses	100.00%	17
Contact Number	Responses	88.24%	15
Email	Responses	100.00%	17

Additional Notes:

- Survey Timeframe: October 4, 2022 to October 30, 2022
- 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 | Grenville CFDC | Valley Heartland CFDC

Small Business Enterprise Centres

Leeds Grenville Small Business Centre
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

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

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

W: invest.leedsgrenville.com/reportsandplans | E: ann.weir@uclg.on.ca