

Thank you for your support.

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2024 Business Retention & Expansion Program Report

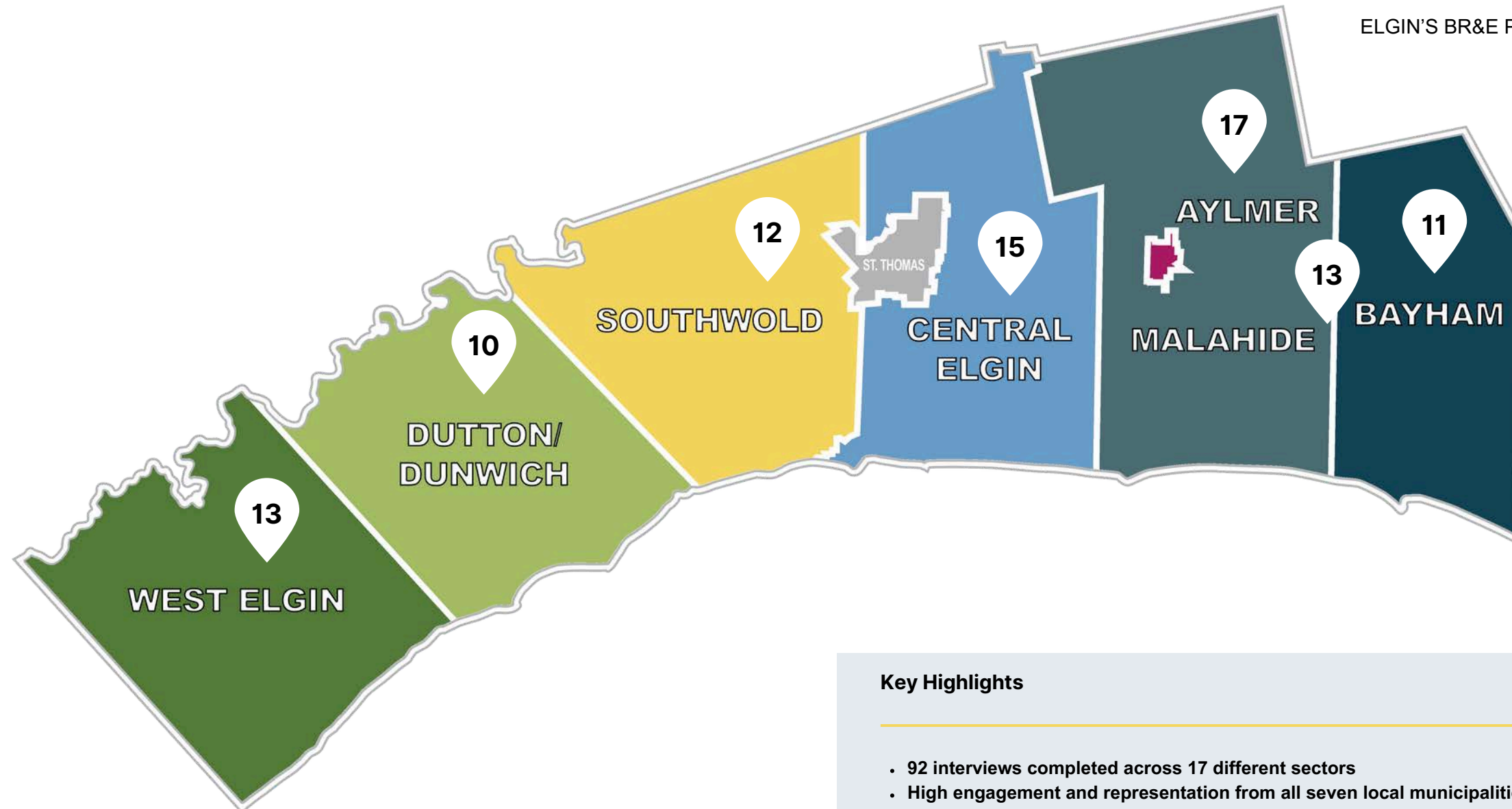
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Executive Summary

The County of Elgin's Business Retention and Expansion (BR&E) Program, initiated by the Economic Development Department, aims to support local businesses in preparation for expected regional growth. The program interviewed 92 businesses across various sectors to gather insights on their needs, challenges, and opportunities. This report outlines the findings from the program's first round, conducted from November 2023 to February 2024, and presents the priorities identified by the leadership team, along with an action plan to promote a thriving business environment.

Key Highlights

- 92 interviews completed across 17 different sectors
- High engagement and representation from all seven local municipalities
- Strong representation from five sectors in particular:
 - Manufacturing
 - Construction
 - Accommodation & Food Services
 - Retail Trade
 - Agriculture
- Identification of key areas for improvement, including housing, serviced land, workforce development, and municipal support.
- Comprehensive action plan to address identified challenges and opportunities for support business growth.



manufacturing

17.39%



construction

13.04%



accommodation & food

13.04%



retail trade

13.04%



agriculture

10.87%

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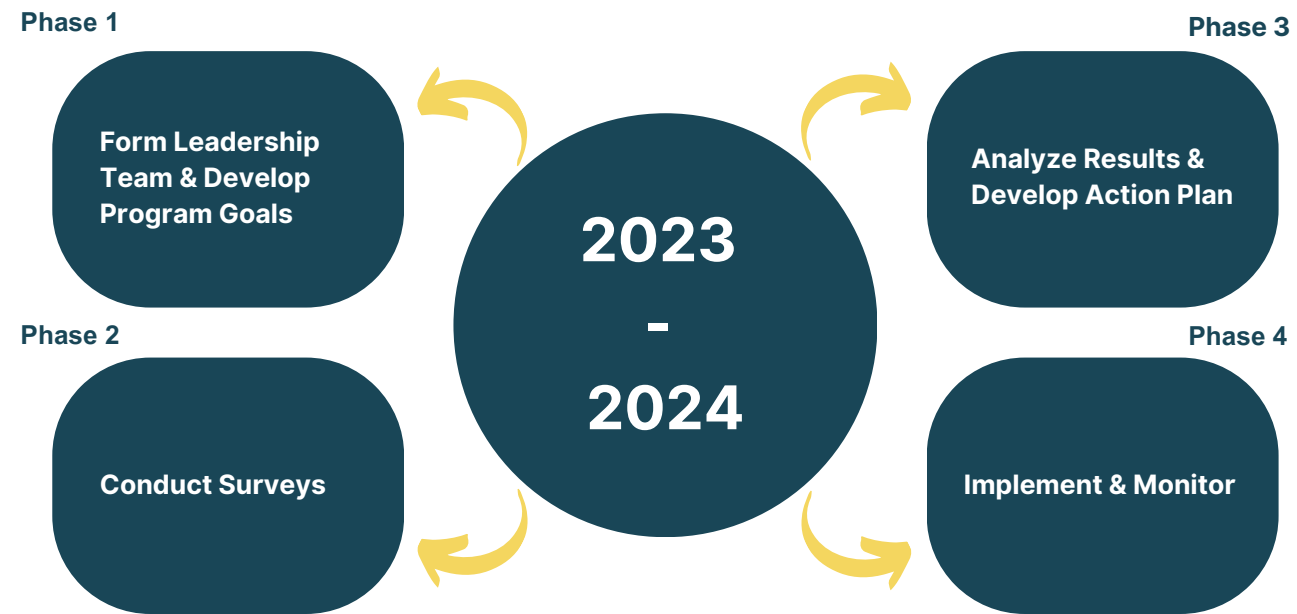
Report Objective: Highlight key findings, future goals, and a recommended action plan based on insights gathered through Elgin's 2023-2024 BR&E program.

1. Introduction



Elgin's BR+E Program

The Elgin County Business Retention and Expansion (BR&E) Program, initiated by Elgin County Economic Development, aims to support existing local businesses in anticipation of regional growth. The program focuses on understanding the needs and challenges of local businesses through confidential interview surveys. By strengthening relationships and fostering collaboration, the BR&E program aims to create a thriving business environment that can attract further investment and support sustainable economic development.



Why BR&E?

- Support our local business community.
- Strengthen relationship with existing businesses.
- Establish an early warning system.
- Improve community's self-awareness.





Vision

A thriving region where businesses feel connected, engaged, and empowered to grow and innovate, fostering a deep sense of community pride.

2. Program Overview

How It Works

The BR&E Program is a proactive approach to understanding, supporting, and enhancing the local business landscape. Through one-on-one interviews and data analysis, the program collects vital business information, identifies common challenges, and develops targeted strategies to address them. These interviews, conducted across various sectors in each municipality, form the basis for strategic initiatives aimed at fostering sustainable economic development in Elgin County over the next decade.

Goals

Short-Term:

- Strengthen relationships with existing businesses.
- Provide accessible and streamlined support.
- Collect vital business and market data.
- Identify strengths and weaknesses.
- Develop and implement a tailored action plan.

Long-Term:

- Address immediate concerns.
- Foster sustainable development and job creation.
- Increase competitiveness of existing businesses.

Engagement Summary

Surveys Conducted:

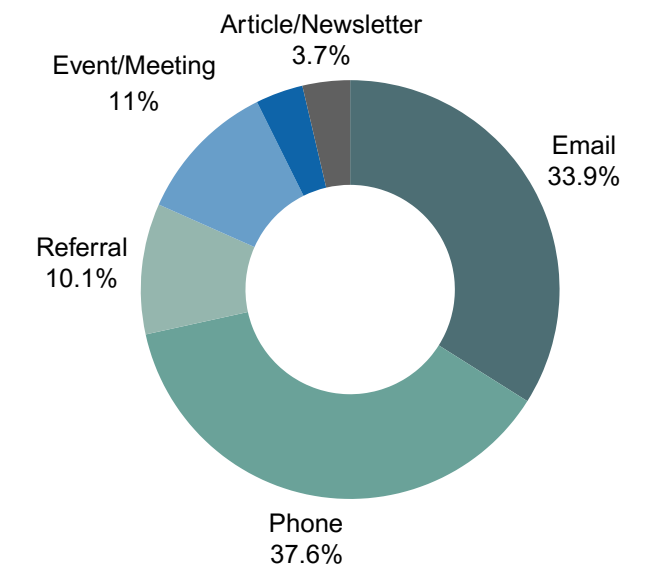
- 92 surveys across 7 local municipalities, ensuring representation from each community.

Engagement Tools:

- 72% of participants learned about the program by phone (38%) or email (34%).

Key Sectors Engaged

- Manufacturing (16), Accommodation and Food Services (13), Retail Trade (13), Construction (13), Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, and Hunting (11)



manufacturing

17.39%



construction

13.04%



accommodation & food

13.04%



retail trade

13.04%



agriculture

10.87%

The Leadership Team

A leadership team, comprised of representatives from all seven of our local member municipalities, was formed to ensure that every community in Elgin County benefits from the BR&E program. This team played a crucial role in voicing the unique needs and perspectives of each community. The department engaged with the leadership in three comprehensive meetings, focused on the development, implementation, and monitoring of the program. These collaborative efforts ensure the program's success and sustainability across all areas.



Ed Ketchabaw, Mayor,
Municipality of Bayham



Thomas Thayer, CAO,
Municipality of Bayham



Nathan Dias, CAO,
Township of Malahide



Steven Tripp, Manager,
Community Relations &
Economic Development,
Township of Malahide



Andy Grozelle, CAO,
Town of Aylmer



Robin Greenall, CAO,
Municipality of Central Elgin



Lisa Higgs, CAO,
Township of Southwold



Justin Pennings, Chair,
Southwold Economic
Development
Committee



Tracy Johnson, CAO
& Treasurer,
Municipality of Dutton
Dunwich



Henry Dryfhout,
Chair, Dutton
Dunwich Economic
Development
Committee



Magda Badura, CAO
& Treasurer,
Municipality of West
Elgin



3. Key Findings



Business Profile

1

Business Climate

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Workforce Dynamics

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Future Plans

4

Community
Development

5



Business Profile



Business Ownership and Location:

- 95% of participating businesses are locally owned.
- 77% operate from a single location.

Years in Business and Size:

- 73% have been operating for at least three years.
- 91% have been operating for less than 50 years.
- 87% employ fewer than 50 individuals.

Primary Market:

- 84% primarily serve Southwestern Ontario, within a 1.5-hour radius.

Sales Performance:

- 62% generate over \$500,000 in annual sales.

Please rate the following factors of doing business in the community:

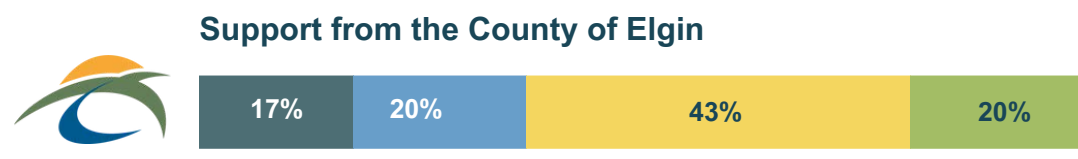
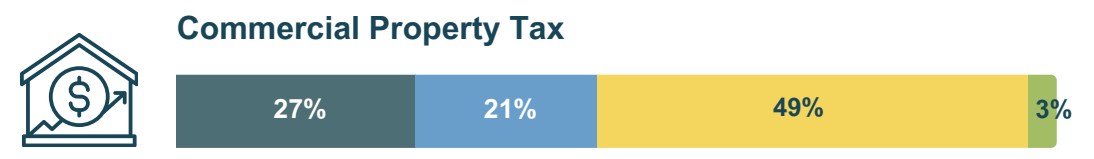
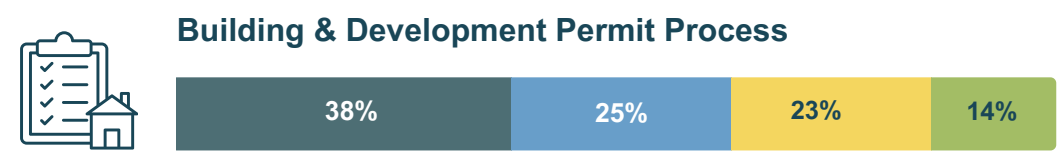
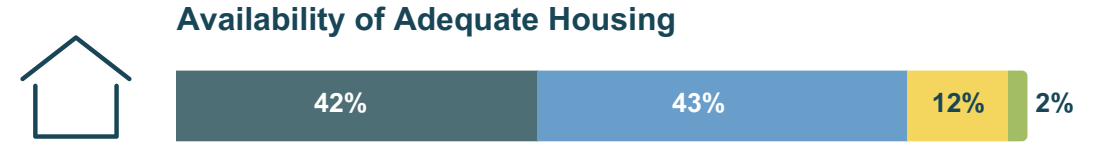
 N/A

 Good

 Poor

 Excellent

2 Business Climate





Availability of Adequate Housing

- N/A: 42%
- Poor: 43%
- Good: 12%
- Excellent: 2%

The data indicates a significant concern about the availability of adequate housing, with 43% rating it as poor and only 12% as good. This is corroborated by the qualitative feedback provided by businesses.

"There's a real lack of housing options here, especially for seniors. It's heartbreaking to see them unable to stay in the area as they age."

"There is a lack of affordable homes and rentals. With that said, even if they were available, the area still lacks the amenities needed to attract and retain employees."

"Many workers from local factories have to commute because there's not enough housing nearby. It creates a lot of stress and inconvenience for them."

"Many employees have to move to London or other nearby cities due to the lack of housing options here. It's frustrating for those who want to stay local."

"There is a severe lack of affordable housing and rental units. Rentals are nearly impossible to find, and purchasing a home is not affordable at all."



2

Business Climate

Key Themes

1) General Lack of Housing

- Scarcity of housing options, especially for seniors and factory workers, forces many workers to commute from distant locations, creating stress and inefficiency.

2) Affordability Issues

- High rental prices and the cost of purchasing homes are significant barriers. High infrastructure costs exacerbate these issues, making new developments financially unfeasible.

3) Impact on Workforce

- Lack of affordable housing negatively impacts businesses' ability to attract and retain employees, leading some businesses to invest in housing solutions themselves. Limited rental options further exacerbate this issue.

Addressing housing challenges is crucial for supporting local businesses and ensuring economic growth. Solutions might include incentivizing affordable housing development, improving infrastructure to reduce development costs, and creating policies that support a diverse range of housing needs.



Availability of Serviced Land

- N/A: 52%
- Poor: 25%
- Good: 13%
- Excellent: 2%

The data indicates significant concern about the availability of serviced land, with 25% rating it as poor and only 13% as good.

"There are limitations for expanding on my current property. I don't think I'd be able to find other affordable serviced land."

"It would be difficult for me to find land to build or expand on. There's not much available on the market right now, and what is available is expensive."

"There's no business park, and landowners are holding off on making land available."

"I won't expand my farm operations here because the land is in demand for industrial development."

"Land is available, but not affordable."

"If I want to expand, I would need to move to St. Thomas."

"I looked everywhere, but ended up having to service the land I already owned."

"It's not an issue for me because I own the land, but servicing it—like getting natural gas—can be a challenge since it's available only at a high cost."



2

Business Climate

Key Themes

1) General Lack of Serviced Land

- Many businesses find it challenging to locate land equipped with necessary utilities, making expansion difficult.

2) Affordability Issues

- Even when serviced land is available, it is often unaffordable, posing a significant barrier for businesses looking to expand.

3) Impact on Expansion Plans

- The lack of affordable and available serviced land negatively impacts businesses' ability to expand, forcing some to consider relocating to nearby areas like St. Thomas.

4) Specific Needs and Challenges

- Servicing existing land can be a challenge due to high costs, and there are issues with internet connectivity.

Addressing these challenges is crucial for supporting local businesses and ensuring economic growth. Solutions might include incentivizing the development of serviced land, improving infrastructure to reduce development costs, and creating policies that streamline the process of securing and developing land.



Development & Building Permit Process

- N/A: 40%
- Poor: 30%
- Good: 10%
- Excellent: 5%

The data suggests significant dissatisfaction with the building and development permit process, with 30% rating it as poor and only 10% as good.

"The municipality's website is confusing and difficult to navigate. It adds to the frustration."

"I received inadequate and vague information from the building inspector regarding installing a new hood range. It was very frustrating."

"With my most recent expansion, I encountered more red tape than ever before."

"It has become a lot more complicated and time-consuming compared to a few years ago when I last expanded."

"It was difficult, time-consuming, and costly."

"I am very dissatisfied with the customer service and the high development charges."

"The planning department can be misleading at times. It can be difficult to get confident and straightforward answers from them."

"It took a long time to get the process started, but everything went well once I finally received the permit."



2

Business Climate

Key Themes

1) Bureaucratic Delays and Red Tape

- Many businesses reported increased bureaucracy, slow service, and scheduling challenges for inspections.

2) Inadequate Information and Communication

- Several businesses received vague or inadequate information from building inspectors and faced poor communication from the County.

3) Costly and Onerous Requirements

- Some businesses mentioned that high development charges and stringent zoning regulations restrict innovation and expansion.

Improving the building and development permit process is essential for business satisfaction and economic growth. Potential solutions include streamlining the permit process, improving communication and support from planning authorities, reducing unnecessary red tape, and providing clearer guidelines and online resources for businesses.



Commercial Property Taxes

- N/A: 27%
- Poor: 21%
- Good: 49%
- Excellent: 3%

While there is general satisfaction with commercial property taxes, there is clear room for improvement with 21% rating it as poor and only 3% as excellent.

"Low taxes attract people to this area."

"High for limited services in return."

"Businesses should be allowed at least the same garbage collection and recycling as residential properties."

"No issue with the current rate; would pay more for improved services."

"Very high considering we are on well and septic."

"Very high considering we don't receive any services."

"It's frustrating that businesses receive the same number of garbage tags as one household despite paying more in taxes."

"Very expensive considering the limited services provided (garbage, mail, and roads). Businesses only receive two sets of tags, which is not enough."

"High considering the economic benefit our business brings to the community."

"Municipalities should view taxpayers as customers and regularly seek feedback from them."



2

Business Climate

Key Themes

- **High Tax Rates with Limited Services:**
 - Some businesses feel that property taxes are high, especially considering the limited services provided in return.
- **Assessment Issues:**
 - Several businesses experienced significant increases in their property taxes due to reassessments by MPAC, often without corresponding service improvements.
- **Infrastructure and Service Needs:**
 - Improved infrastructure, such as sewage systems and better road maintenance, is a recurring need. Flooding and drainage issues also need attention.

The survey data revealed that businesses are generally satisfied with commercial property taxes. The primary reasons for poor ratings included limited and/or inadequate infrastructure and services, additional costs incurred from delays with the building and development permit process, and lack of engagement with businesses. Addressing these concerns involves improving service delivery, providing better infrastructure, ensuring fair tax assessments, enhancing customer service, and actively engaging with businesses to understand and meet their needs. Implementing these improvements could lead to greater business satisfaction and economic growth in the region.



Support from Local Municipality

- **N/A: 8%**
- **Poor: 20%**
- **Good: 48%**
- **Excellent: 25%**

The data shows a generally positive perception of support from local municipalities, with nearly half (48%) rating it as good and a quarter (25%) rating it as excellent. However, there is still a notable portion (20%) that rates the support as poor.

"They listen well and provide proactive and supportive assistance. Staff were excellent in addressing recent concerns."

"Fire Chief is excellent. Timely, personable, and goes the extra mile in helping find solutions."

"Office staff are friendly and helpful, but more effort is needed to get fiber internet."

"Lack of information regarding VW situation and airport expansion. Poor communication from Council."

"Supportive during COVID-19, but zoning amendments were costly and time-consuming."

"Poor planning and communication with businesses regarding upcoming projects and development."



2

Business Climate

Key Themes

1) Poor Communication and Transparency

- Businesses expressed frustration with the lack of information and transparency regarding local developments and zoning changes.

2) Inconsistent Support

- Some businesses felt neglected or unsupported in their efforts to expand or resolve issues.

3) Positive Interactions with Staff

- Many businesses highlighted positive interactions with municipal staff, noting their helpfulness and supportiveness.

4) Need for Better Infrastructure and Services

- Improved infrastructure, especially internet connectivity, is crucial for business operations.

Enhancing communication, increasing outreach, and promoting all regions equally can help address some of the concerns raised. Ensuring consistency in support and improving infrastructure are key areas for improvement.



Support from the County of Elgin

- N/A: 17%
- Poor: 20%
- Good: 43%
- Excellent: 20%

The feedback on support from the County of Elgin reflects a generally positive sentiment, with 63% of businesses rating the support as good or excellent. However, a significant portion (20%) rated it as poor, indicating areas for improvement.

Key Themes

1) Challenges with Permits and Processes

- Difficulties in obtaining permits for projects on County roads were mentioned.

2) Desire for More Outreach

- Many businesses expressed a desire for more direct outreach and proactive communication from the County.

3) Positive Feedback on Elgincentives Program

- The Elgincentives program received significant praise for its support and positive impact on businesses.

4) Need for Better Promotion and Support:

- Some businesses felt that certain areas, like Port Burwell, are neglected compared to others like Port Stanley.

While the County of Elgin is generally perceived positively, enhancing communication, increasing outreach, and promoting all regions equally can help address some of the concerns raised. Similar efforts to Elgincentives could further strengthen the relationship between the County and local businesses.

2

Business Climate

"Everyone has been great to work with and very accommodating of requests."

"Limited engagement, but this program seems like a good start. It's nice to know businesses are being taken seriously."

"We appreciate when the County purchases locally and hope they continue to support local businesses."

"Obtaining permits for projects on County roads can be challenging. Some requirements are expensive and seem unnecessary."

"Support has been good, but we would appreciate more direct outreach."

"Excellent programs like Elgincentives, but priority seems to be on Central and East Elgin."

"We appreciate the Elgincentives program, tourism operator event, and promotion online and in printed materials."

"Good programs, partner organizations (SBEC and EBRC), and events. Elgincentives and the Starter Company Plus grants have been helpful for completing small projects."

"Good, but could use more general support to tap into the local labour market."

"COVID was tough, but this meeting is great. Tourism is also great, but we could use more networking opportunities and coordinated initiatives (like farm tours)."

"Received great support throughout Elgincentives."

"Great advertising and access to grants. Contact is personal and positive. Willing to go above and beyond to help."

"Challenging to find information on grants and funding."

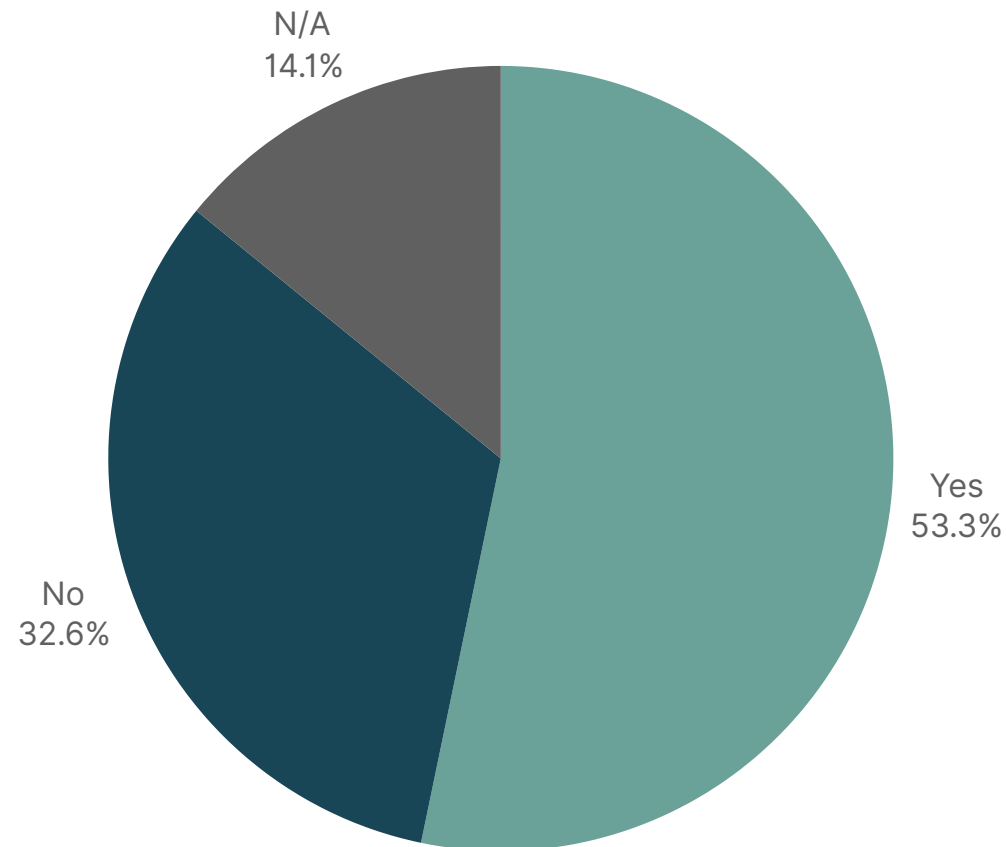
"Needs to do better at promoting the importance/impacts of supporting local."

"Tourism has been great - we appreciate that they have taken the time to come out and see us."

"Unaware of the County's services; could benefit from a more significant presence and communication."

"Has appreciated help promoting events but it would be nice if there was more outreach. It's been difficult to become known in the community."

Does your business face any challenges with hiring?



A significant portion of businesses (53.26%) face challenges with hiring. The main reasons for these challenges include a lack of applicants, inadequate skills and training, and insufficient relevant experience among candidates.

Top Reasons for Hiring Challenges

1) Lack of Appropriate Skills and Training: 29%

- Common roles struggling with this issue include kitchen staff, sales, management, automotive technicians, healthcare professionals, equipment operators, and skilled trades.

2) Other: 29%

- Issues such as remote locations, seasonal work, and high competition for skilled workers also contribute to hiring difficulties.
 - Remote locations are a significant barrier, making it difficult to attract talent for general labor, skilled trades, and office positions.
 - Seasonal work leads to fluctuating availability of workers.
 - Competition for skilled workers affects positions such as mechanics, welders, and engineers, making it harder for businesses to fill these roles.

3) Too Few Applicants: 28%

- Some businesses report a lack of applicants across various positions.

4) Lack of Relevant Experience: 15%

- This is particularly problematic for positions requiring specific technical skills or industry knowledge.

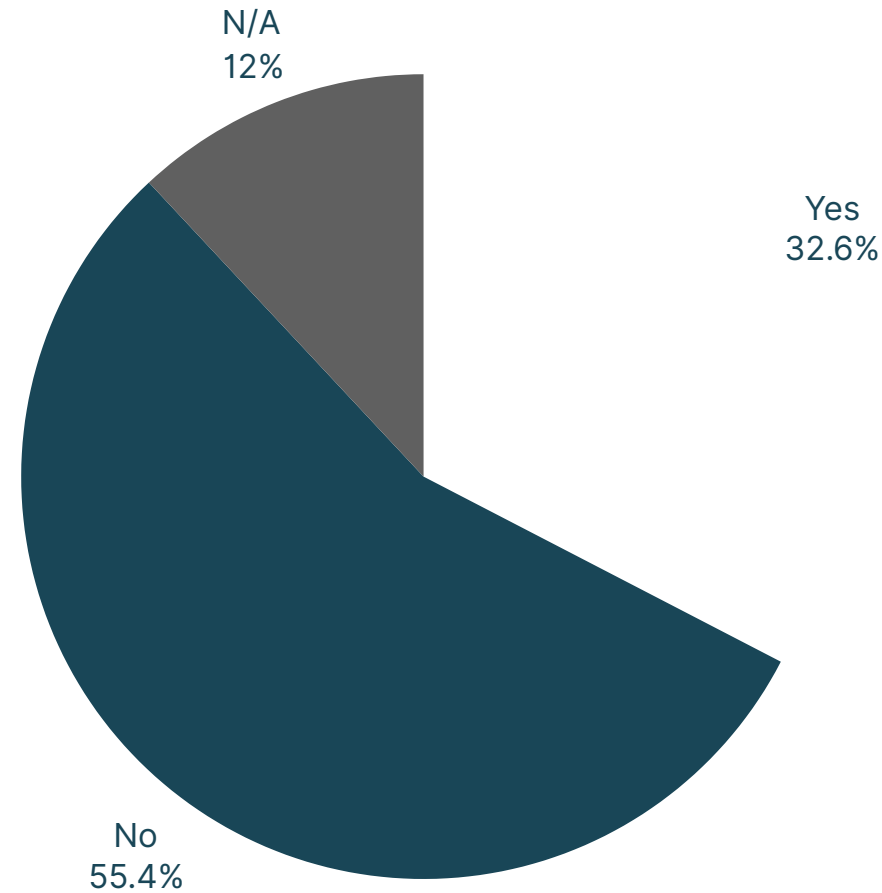
Sector-Specific Hiring Challenges

- Manufacturing: 75%
- Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, and Hunting: 70%
- Retail Trade: 58%
- Construction: 75%
- Accommodation and Food Services: 75%

These sectors report high rates of hiring challenges, indicating industry-specific issues such as skill shortages and competition for qualified candidates.



Does your business face any challenges with retention?



Retention is a challenge for 32.61% of businesses, with key reasons including wages, seasonal factors, competition, and other unspecified issues.

Top Reasons for Retention Challenges

1) Other: 44%

- Factors such as long commutes, poor work ethic, and lack of basic skills also play a role in retention difficulties.

2) Wages: 22%

- Low wages and non-competitive compensation packages are significant factors leading to high turnover.

3) Seasonal: 18%

- Seasonal work, which offers less stability, contributes to retention issues.

4) Competition: 16%

- High competition for workers impacts retention, especially in roles requiring specific skills.

Sector-Specific Retention Challenges

- Manufacturing: 50%
- Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, and Hunting: 40%
- Retail Trade: 33.33%
- Construction: 25%
- Accommodation and Food Services: 25%

Manufacturing and agriculture sectors report higher retention challenges compared to other sectors, highlighting industry-specific retention issues such as wage competition and seasonal work patterns.



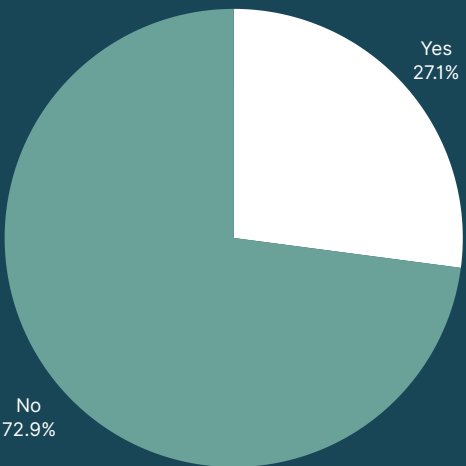
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Workforce Dynamics

Does your business participate in any co-op, internship, or apprenticeship opportunities?



If no, would you be interested in learning more?



While nearly half of the businesses participate in co-op, internship, or apprenticeship programs, there is still a significant portion that does not. Among those not participating, 27% expressed interest in learning more about these programs.

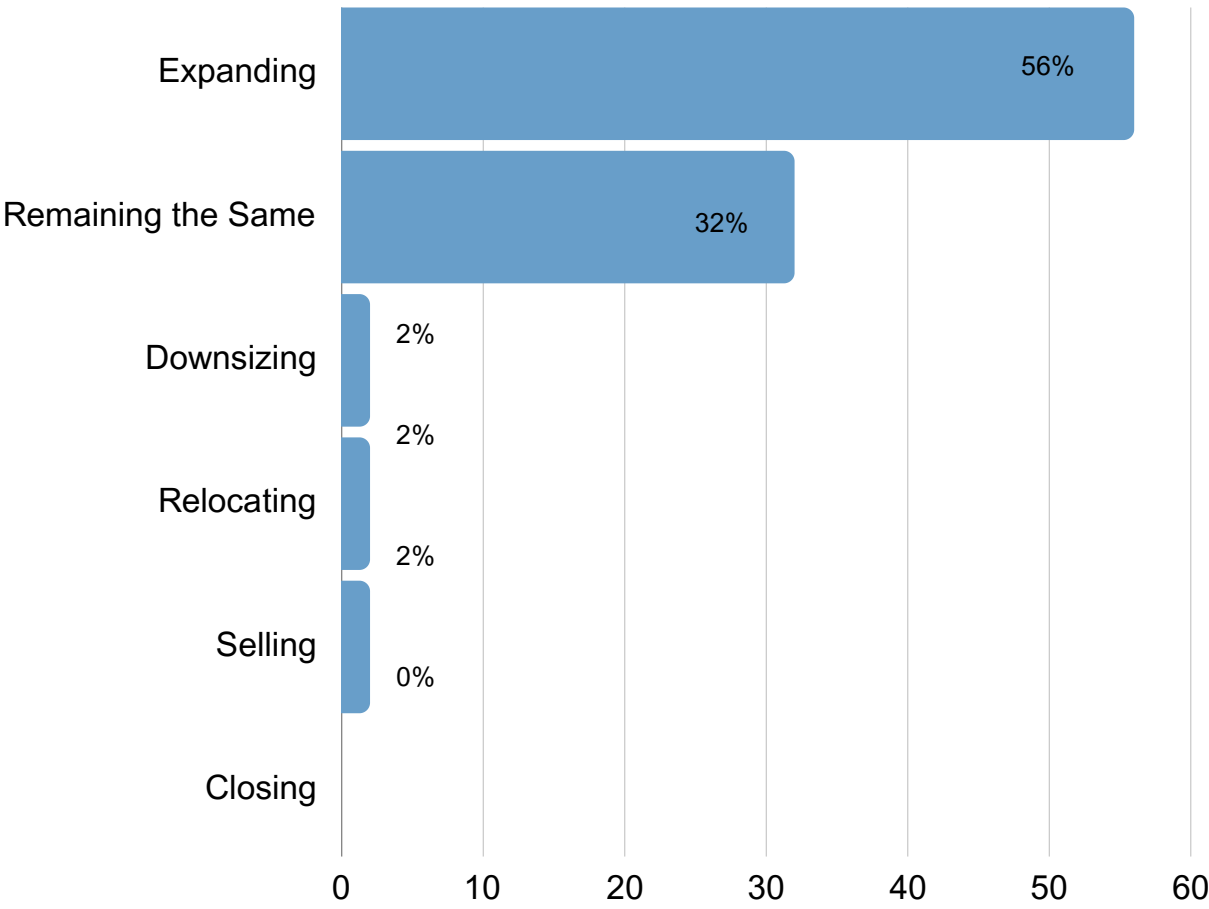
Workforce dynamics in the region are significantly impacted by hiring and retention challenges. A major issue is the lack of applicants and appropriate skills, compounded by remote locations and high competition for skilled workers. Retention issues are driven by low wages, seasonal work, and competition. Addressing these challenges requires improving local training programs, enhancing wages and benefits, and promoting the region to attract a larger workforce. Additionally, increasing participation in co-op and apprenticeship programs could help bridge skill gaps and improve both hiring and retention rates.

4

61% of participants plan on expanding within the next two years.



WHAT ARE PARTICIPANTS PLANNING WITHIN THE NEXT TWO YEARS?



A significant majority of businesses are planning to expand within the next two years, indicating optimism and potential growth in the local economy. However, challenges related to housing, serviced land, public support, and workforce dynamics need to be addressed to support this expansion.

Community Development

The data shows a generally positive perception of support from local municipalities, with nearly half (48%) rating it as good and a quarter (25%) rating it as excellent. However, there is still a notable portion (20%) that rates the support as poor. This is corroborated by the qualitative feedback provided by businesses:



Desired Changes for Improvement

Improved Cell Service:

"Impacts operations on a daily basis, although it hasn't been detrimental yet."

Better Accommodation and Hotels:

"Elevated lodging would be great for visiting employees, vendors, and potential clients."

Increased Communication and Transparency:

"More opportunities to participate in marketing initiatives."

Grants to Build Skills and Capabilities:

"Support would allow me to offer new services, explore fresh ideas, and potentially restart my business concepts."

Attractive and Welcoming Communities:

"Focus on supporting businesses and public spaces that make a community nice to live in."

Simple Welcome Package for New Businesses:

"A single point of contact would make the process of setting up much smoother."

Maintaining Community Charm:

"Port Stanley is a good example of how to grow while maintaining charm."

Reduced Bureaucracy:

"People are frustrated by the permit process."

Increased Marketing Efforts:

"Seasonal booklets promoting activities in West Elgin during spring/summer and fall/winter."

Promotion of Rural Businesses:

"Connecting and making the drive seem worth it to attract more customers."

Businesses want improved communication, transparency, support for local businesses, better infrastructure, simplified processes, effective promotion and marketing, and increased community engagement and events to improve the business environment.

Recommended Action Plan



**THEME
1**

Foundation and Immediate Improvements

**THEME
2**

Enhancing Community and Business Support

**THEME
3**

Expanding Services and Community Amenities

**THEME
4**

Long-Term Growth and Sustainability

THEME 1

Foundation and Immediate Improvements



Action #1: Conduct Community Improvement Plan (CIP) Program Review

- **Timeline**
 - Complete within 6 months.
- **Objectives**
 - Clear recommendations for CIP improvements and implementation of identified changes.
- **Responsible Parties**
 - Economic Development, Planning, Consultant, LMPs
- **Strategies**
 - Evaluate the effectiveness of the current CIP.
 - Gather feedback from businesses and stakeholders.
 - Update or rewrite the CIP based on the findings and implement recommended changes.

Action #2: Conduct a Master Servicing Study

- **Timeline:**
 - Complete within 12-24 months.
- **Objectives:**
 - Updated vacant land inventory.
 - All LMPs committed to a regional approach.
- **Responsible Parties:**
 - Economic Development, Consultant, Engineering, LMPs.
- **Strategies:**
 - Collaborate with consultants and engineering to inventory existing infrastructure, assess needs, and identify gaps.
 - Engage LMPs in the planning process to ensure alignment and commitment to a shared vision.
 - Identify priority areas for servicing improvements to support business and housing development

Action #3: Develop Employment Lands Strategy and Action Plan

- **Timeline:**
 - Complete within 12-24 months.
- **Objectives:**
 - 3-5 year action plan that will guide industrial lands development with a targeted approach.
 - A range of opportunities for SMEs looking to start up and expand.
- **Responsible Parties:**
 - Economic Development, Consultant, Planning, LMPs.
- **Strategies:**
 - Collaborate with consultants and planning to identify and designate employment lands.
 - Create an action plan that includes marketing strategies to attract businesses to these lands.
 - Ensure the plan aligns with regional growth plans and infrastructure capabilities, offering opportunities for all types of businesses.

THEME 2

Enhancing Community Services and Support



Action #4: Increase Internal Awareness About Existing Resources

- **Timeline:**
 - Initiate within 6 months.
- **Objectives:**
 - Positive feedback from businesses and an increase in resource utilization.
- **Responsible Parties:**
 - Economic Development, Community Partners, LMPs.
- **Strategies:**
 - Launch a training campaign focused on how to better serve businesses.
 - Distribute resource guides and conduct information sessions for municipal staff.

Action #5: Enhance Development and Building Permit Process

- **Timeline:**
 - Complete within 6-12 months.
- **Objectives:**
 - Streamline the permit process for efficiency and user-friendliness across the county.
- **Responsible Parties:**
 - Economic Development, Planning, LMPs
- **Strategies:**
 - Develop a clear and user-friendly process map for the development and building permit process.
 - Conduct workshops and training sessions for staff to ensure consistency in permit processing and the overall customer service experience.

Action #6: Develop Educational Resources and Campaign Around Starting and Expanding a Business in Elgin County

- **Timeline:**
 - Complete within 6-12 months.
- **Objectives:**
 - Positive feedback from businesses and an increase in resource utilization.
- **Responsible Parties:**
 - Economic Development, Planning, LMPs.
- **Strategies:**
 - Create comprehensive guides and toolkits for entrepreneurs and existing businesses.
 - Conduct a marketing campaign to raise awareness of these resources.
 - Host workshops and seminars on business development.

THEME 3

Expanding Services and Amenities



Action #7: Establish a Communications Plan for Regular Updates

- **Timeline**
 - Implement within 6 months.
- **Objectives**
 - Successful events with high engagement, positive feedback, and demand for future events.
- **Responsible Parties**
 - Economic Development, Communications, LMPs
- **Strategies**
 - Develop a personalized and public approach for sharing essential updates.
 - Create and distribute promotional packages to LMPs.
 - Use multiple communication channels to reach a broader audience.

Action #8: Create Business Networking and Promotional Opportunities for Rural Businesses

- **Timeline**
 - Implement within 12 months.
- **Objectives**
 - Successful events with high engagement, positive feedback, and demand for future events.
- **Responsible Party**
 - Economic Development, EDCs, BIAs, Chambers, EBRC, SBEC.
- **Strategies**
 - Maintain events calendar for business community.
 - Organize regular events
 - Foster relationships between rural businesses and support organizations.
 - Provide platforms for businesses to share experiences and best practices.

Action #9: Enhance Database and Create Business Profiles

- **Timeline**
 - Initiate within 6-12 months.
- **Objectives**
 - An active engagement tool to assist in updating and maintaining and accurate dataset of economic indicators.
- **Responsible Parties**
 - Economic Development, Salesforce
- **Strategies**
 - Establish a Business Visitation Program (BVP) with an annual theme.
 - Develop and maintain a comprehensive database of local businesses.
 - Regularly update and maintain the dataset and engagement tool.

THEME 4

Long-Term Growth and Sustainability



Action #10: Strengthen Relationship with Community Partners and Streamline Business Support

- **Timeline**
 - Initiate within 6 months.
- **Objectives**
 - Partnerships formed and joint programming opportunities identified.
- **Responsible Parties**
 - Economic Development, Communications, LMPs
- **Strategies**
 - Conduct one-on-one meetings with resource network to share results of the BR&E.
 - Gauge interest in collaborating on a quarterly basis or bi-annual basis.
 - Map potential partners and develop joint programs to support business growth.

Action #11: Conduct Comprehensive Review and Future Planning

- **Timeline**
 - Initiate within 24-36 months.
- **Objectives**
 - Review action plan and report on results.
 - Evaluate need to conduct additional BR&E.
 - Set new goals based on community needs informed by business visits and leadership team.
- **Responsible Party**
 - Economic Development, Leadership Team
- **Strategies**
 - Review economic development initiatives and outcomes.



"I believe we should strive for excellence in this program. It's an effective way to survey taxpayers, and supportive follow-up will pay off. Helping existing businesses succeed is easier than trying to land large industrial projects. Commitment to follow-up will pay off and it also provides an opportunity for Council and Staff to hear success stories and positive feedback."

Conclusion

Elgin County provides a favourable business environment, but there is still room for improvement. Businesses require clarity on where to find support and how to engage with the local municipality. Many businesses, even those with established roots in the community, need clarification on where to access support and the reasons for understanding the two-tier system. In general, businesses need more guidance on collaborating with their local municipality to expand their operations. When information is unclear and not easy to find or understand, businesses may neglect their responsibilities, ultimately resulting in issues down the road. By implementing the recommendations detailed in this report, we aim to redefine our approach and cultivate a thriving, competitive, and sustainable business environment that can adjust to future growth and challenges.

What Next?

This document is the final step in the BR&E program delivery. The results of this initiative will help inform the work of Elgin County Economic Development and provide background information for the member municipalities and community partners that will assist them to implement the action plan and support local businesses.

