CREATE BRIDGES (Celebrating REtail, Accommodations, Tourism, and Entertainment by Building Rural Innovations and Developing Growth Economies) is an economic development initiative that raises awareness about the role retail, accommodations, tourism and entertainment industries play in the local economy; examines current support and issues for these companies and their workforce; and develops and implements strategies to strengthen these sectors within a multi-county region.

Retaining and expanding local businesses is a central component of CREATE BRIDGES. The Business Retention & Expansion process engages local businesses to assess the strengths and challenges of running a business and inform strategies to address issues that may affect critical business activities.

# Business retention and expansion roundtable / Interview questions

Company name:

Type of company (retail, accommodation, tourism, entertainment):

Address:

Person interviewed:

Work title:

Day of the visit:

Email:

Interviewer:

Recorder:

# Labor Force:

1. How many employees (including you) are employed:
   1. Full time
   2. Half time
   3. Seasonal
   4. Temporary
2. What are your hours of operation?
   1. Do these hours change seasonally?
   2. Did these hours change during the pandemic?
3. Has the number of employees changed in the recent past (up to three years ago)? If so, how?
4. Does your rate of employee turnover create a barrier for your business?

a. If yes, what do you see as reasons for turnover?

1. What are some barriers you face when recruiting quality employees?
2. Are there particular types of jobs that are hard to fill? If so, what type of jobs?
3. Why do you think they are hard to fill?
4. How do you recruit for these positions?
5. What is the average starting wage or salary provided to your employees?
6. What benefits do you provide your employees? If you don’t offer the option, why don’t you provide the benefit?

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Employer Support | Currently provide | If not, why? | Notes |
| Flexible scheduling |  |  |  |
| Higher wages than similar employers in area |  |  |  |
| Periodic pay raises |  |  |  |
| Bonus (Seasonal and/or holiday) |  |  |  |
| Health insurance |  |  |  |
| Debt relief |  |  |  |
| Paid sick leave |  |  |  |
| Paid holidays (designated days off with pay) |  |  |  |
| Paid vacation (choice of days off with pay) |  |  |  |
| Child care assistance |  |  |  |
| Transportation assistance |  |  |  |
| Tuition support |  |  |  |
| Providing purpose |  |  |  |
| Cross training on other positions |  |  |  |
| Opportunities for learning |  |  |  |
| Information on how to be promoted |  |  |  |
| Discounts on inventory |  |  |  |
| Free product (meal, inventory, etc.) |  |  |  |
| Other. Please specify: |  |  |  |

1. From the table below, what skills do you believe your employees currently have and which skills would you like them to improve upon?

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Current skills | Skills for improvement |
| Soft skills: |  |  |
| Face to face communications |  |  |
| Phone etiquette |  |  |
| Team work |  |  |
| Being to work on time |  |  |
| Appropriate dress |  |  |
| Customer service |  |  |
| Time management |  |  |
| Educational skills: |  |  |
| Basic math |  |  |
| Reading and writing |  |  |
| Ability to understand, speak and write in English |  |  |
| Technical skills: |  |  |
| Basic accounting |  |  |
| Specialized equipment |  |  |
| Word processing |  |  |
| Spreadsheets |  |  |
| Database management |  |  |
| Marketing |  |  |
| Sales |  |  |
| Inventory control |  |  |
| Cash handling |  |  |
| Record keeping |  |  |
| Other. Please specify: |  |  |

* 1. Other. Please specify:

1. Do you provide a formal employee orientation or onboarding process? If so, what does it entail?
2. Do you offer training beyond orientation?
   1. To address changes in technology, policies, or trends?
   2. To provide opportunities for cross-training, leadership or career advancement?
   3. How is training delivered?
   4. Is it optional or mandatory?
   5. Do you pay for your employees to participate in training?
3. Which of the following factors impact your employee’s ability to work?
   1. Transportation availability
   2. Housing availability
   3. Broadband access
   4. Healthcare access
   5. Child or elder care
   6. Other

# Clients:

1. Please estimate the percentage of your gross sales generated from the following locations:
   1. Within the CREATE BRIDGES region?
   2. Outside the region?
   3. Outside the United States?
2. Does your business currently have an online presence? What platforms?
3. Is your business currently selling online?
   1. If yes, are you facing any obstacles selling online?
   2. Is there a dedicated person managing the online store?
4. How do you advertise your business?

# Changes:

1. How does existing or emerging technology affect your business?
   1. What are some strategies you have implemented to incorporate these technological changes?
2. How do you see your business changing over the next three years?
   1. Are you considering expanding to new locations?
   2. Adding new equipment?
   3. Renovating?
   4. Going online?
   5. Downsizing?
   6. Moving?
   7. Closing?
   8. Selling?
3. What investments have you made in your business in the past three years?
   1. Facility improvement
   2. Added equipment
   3. Expanded inventory?
4. Is your client base changing? Preferences, age, ethnicity, income, etc.
5. Which of the following would you like to know more about to help position your business for success?
   1. Creating/updating my business plan
   2. Selling my business or transitioning it to new ownership
   3. Market research to identify existing or new customer bases
   4. Available economic incentives
   5. Energy efficiency upgrades
   6. Support in hiring employees
   7. Identifying financing options
   8. Disaster relief support
   9. Other. Please specify:
6. Does your business have a transition plan for new ownership, leadership or both?
   1. If yes, provide a brief summary of plans.
   2. If not, what do you think will happen to your business in 10-20 years?

# Community factors:

1. How has the region's business climate for retail, accommodations, tourism and entertainment changed in the past three years?
2. Which of the following factors impact your business?
   1. Cost and availability of land
   2. Cost and availability of buildings
   3. Access to credit to support business operations/expansion
   4. Transportation, infrastructure and planning (roads, zoning, design)
   5. Physical infrastructure limitations (sidewalks, signage)
   6. Utilities
      1. Water
      2. Sewer
      3. Street and sidewalk cleaning
      4. Solid waste disposal
      5. Gas service
      6. Electric
      7. Internet service
      8. Telephone service
      9. Cell services
   7. Government and regulation
   8. Property taxes
   9. Business insurance costs
   10. Cost of benefits
   11. Other:
3. How do the following affect your business:
   1. Local business Support
      1. Local elected leadership
      2. Chamber of Commerce
      3. Other economic development organizations
      4. Main Street Program
      5. Are there other programs from which your business has received assistance?
   2. Quality of life
      1. Quality of education
      2. Quality of health
      3. Recreation
      4. Other:
4. In what ways is the community supportive of your business?
5. What are some specific ways the community can be more supportive of your business?

# Tourism and travel:

1. Do you feel your business could benefit from regional branding or promotion?
2. Do you see yourself as part of the tourism economy or actively promoting tourism in your region? If so, how?

# COVID-19:

1. What impact has COVID-19 had on your business?
   1. Changes to facilities?
   2. Changes in equipment?
   3. Changes to services?
   4. Changes to inventory?
2. Have you reduced your workforce as a result of the Pandemic?

Circle one. Yes No

By how many employees? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. Have public health orders and restrictions related to the Pandemic impacted your ability to conduct business?

# Misc:

1. What percentage of profits do you reinvest in your business?
2. What is the one thing that can be accomplished by the CREATE BRIDGES project that would benefit your business?

# Thank you for participating in our Business Retention and Expansion Program. We appreciate the time you have given us and the contribution your business is making to our local economy.

**We cannot promise to solve all the concerns that you have mentioned, but we promise to try. If we can help you in the future, please call:**

*[Insert Names of Create Bridges Project Leads]*

# Immediate action

If we have encountered a problem through this process in which certain individuals or groups can respond to your concern in a beneficial way, do you authorize us to disclose your survey information?

# (Circle Yes or No)

(Yes) Your contact information will be shared with the resource person to help them understand your business and concern. Sign here to authorize the disclosure of your survey information to the appropriate resources selected.

*(Sign/Date)*

Problems you would like to focus on with the person who can grant you the necessary resources:

(No) We will provide you with information about the resources available to help you, and you will make the first contact with the resource. The person who will grant the resource will not have access to your survey, but will have access to the summary report based on the entire business retention and expansion process.