

Business Walk Program



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Business Walks Program Finds 90% of Central Okanagan Businesses Steady or Increasing

Executive Summary

The Central Okanagan Economic Development Commission facilitated the first Business Walk in Canada in October, 2012. To date, over 750 businesses have been visited through the Business Walks program as one means to gather information from the business community and identify programs to facilitate business growth.

The information obtained captures the pulse of businesses throughout the region, connects business support agencies to the business community, communicates industry intelligence to multiple civic and business stakeholders and identifies opportunities for COEDC's Business Enhancement programming.

Outcomes from Business Walks to date include:

- One-on-one assistance has been provided to over **100 companies** across all sectors as a result of the Business Walks program;
- The Ministry of Jobs Tourism and Skills Training is now using the Business Walks program as a [best practice](#);
- Following the May, 2013 Walk to manufacturers, the COEDC facilitated a Business Beyond Borders session to **25 Okanagan Manufacturer's** to address employee recruitment and retention strategies;
- Information from the May Manufacturer's walk provided industry intelligence to District of West Kelowna staff in the facilitation of a Manufacturers Round Table session;
- A Central Okanagan [Manufacturers Resources Guide](#) was created;
- Internal reports communicating barriers to conducting business and program opportunities such as specific truck routing, sector-specific networking needs, buy local campaigns and signage issues have been communicated to municipalities, chambers of commerce and business improvement areas throughout the region.

October 1, 2013 Business Walk

Within a three hour blitz more than **65 business and civic leaders** walked door-to-door and connected with **360 businesses** throughout Peachland, West Kelowna, West bank First Nation, Kelowna and Lake Country business districts.



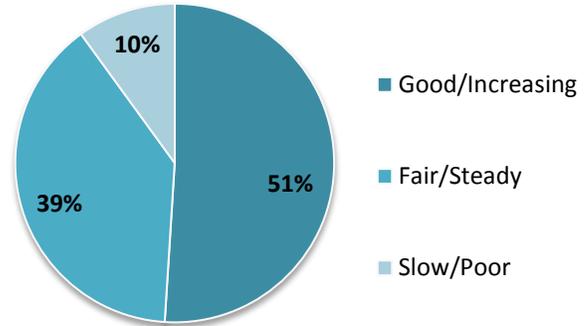
Businesses were asked:

- *How is Business?*
- *What do you like most about doing business in the region?*
- *What can be done to help your business thrive?*
- *What specific information would you like to have access to?*

Summary/Results

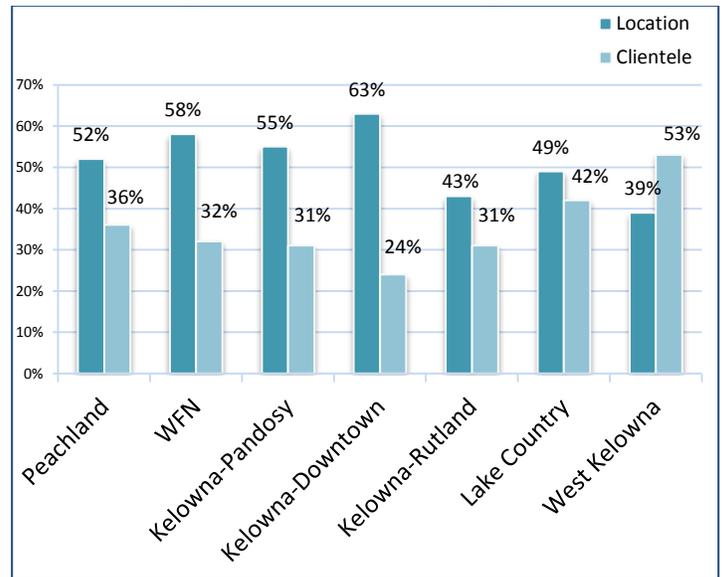
Of the 360 businesses visited, 42 were conducted in Peachland, 49 in West Kelowna, 31 in Westbank First Nation, 166 in Kelowna (76 Downtown, 29 in Pandosy, 61 in Rutland) and 72 in Lake Country.

Question 1: How is Business?



Results indicate a generally positive outlook from 90% of the businesses visited.

Question 2: What do you like most about doing business in the region?



When asked what they like most about doing business in their region, just over half the respondents (51 %) stated their **Location** was what they liked most, followed by Clientele at 35%.

6% of the 360 businesses visited mentioned various “Other” factors they liked about doing business in their area – these were mainly lifestyle-related. 3% of businesses cited “Availability of talented labour,” reflecting the challenges of attracting and retaining skilled workers increasingly experienced by businesses throughout the region. 3% said the Cost of Doing Business was what they liked most, and 2% said Business Friendly Local Government.

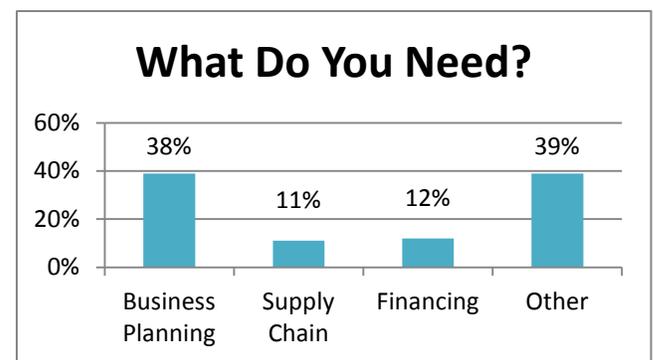


Question #3: What can be done to make your business thrive?

Responses ranged from tangible needs such as increased signage, to technical assistance requirements such as marketing. Common themes throughout the Region include:

- Upgrading infrastructure i.e. road and sidewalk improvements and continued revitalization projects;

- Due to the nature of Hwy 97, many business feel there is a need for increased directional signage to entice potential consumers from the highway to business districts;
- Additional parking options and increased monitoring of regulated areas;
- Increased buy local campaigns collectively throughout the Region;
- Increased communication of projects in community and region. i.e. growth plans, available services etc.



Question #4: What specific information would you like to have access to?

Information related to Business Planning was an area of need expressed by 38% of businesses visited. Another 39% cited their category of need as “Other”– frequently stated within this category was the need for “marketing,” “advertising” and “statistics”.

What's Next?



The Business Walks program is facilitated and made possible by regional partnerships. The Economic Development Commission would like to recognize and thank the following:



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