



Business Retention & Expansion Summary Report 2022-23



The ELNOS Business Retention & Expansion (BR+E) project was completed in conjunction with the City of Elliot Lake's BR+E project which commenced in the Fall of 2022 and continued through the winter with the completion of the survey process in February 2023. This report is a summary of the responses from the surveys.

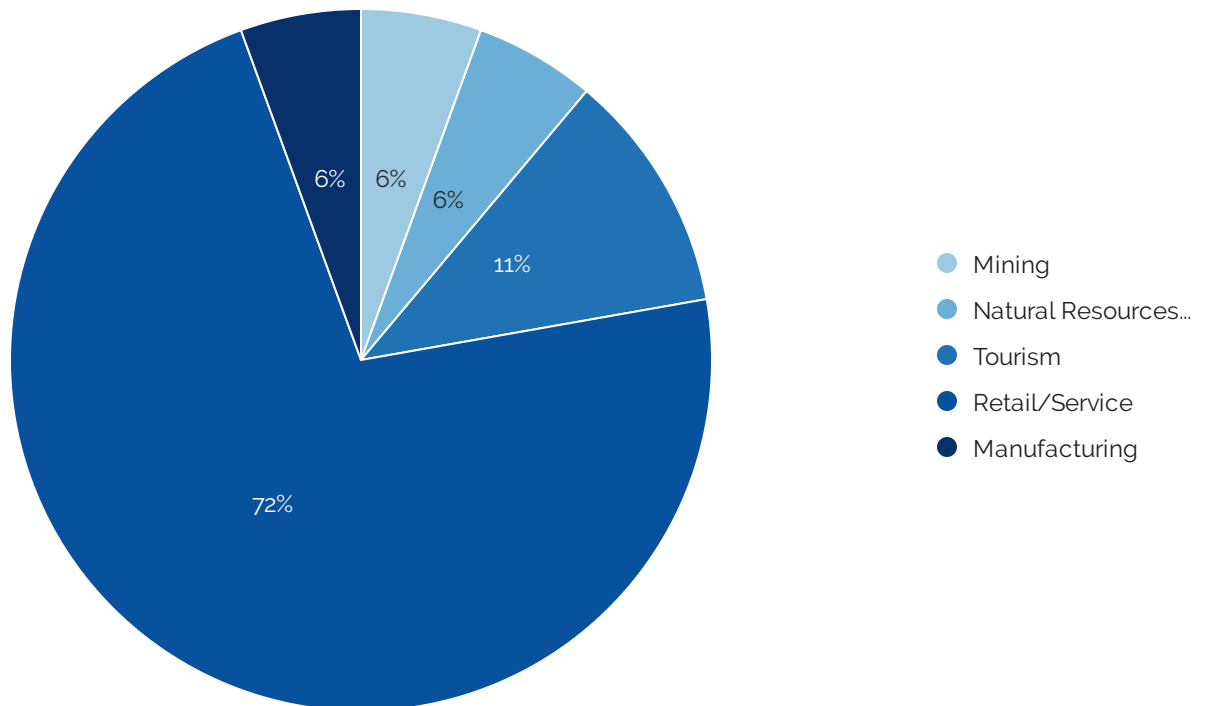
ELNOS' project surveyed businesses in the Town of Blind River, the Town of Spanish, the Township of the North Shore, and Serpent River First Nation. 23 online surveys were completed representing approximately 15% of local businesses in the ELNOS region -- excluding Elliot Lake. The City of Elliot Lake completed 69 surveys (23% of businesses) and a report on their project was completed.

The purpose of the survey was to collect current data on the businesses in the Region (the last survey was completed in 2006) as well as reconnect with local entrepreneurs and let them know that there are resources available to them. The data will be used to assist businesses in their goals and promote communities that are prosperous and growing.

The following information provides an overview of the responses received from the ELNOS surveys.

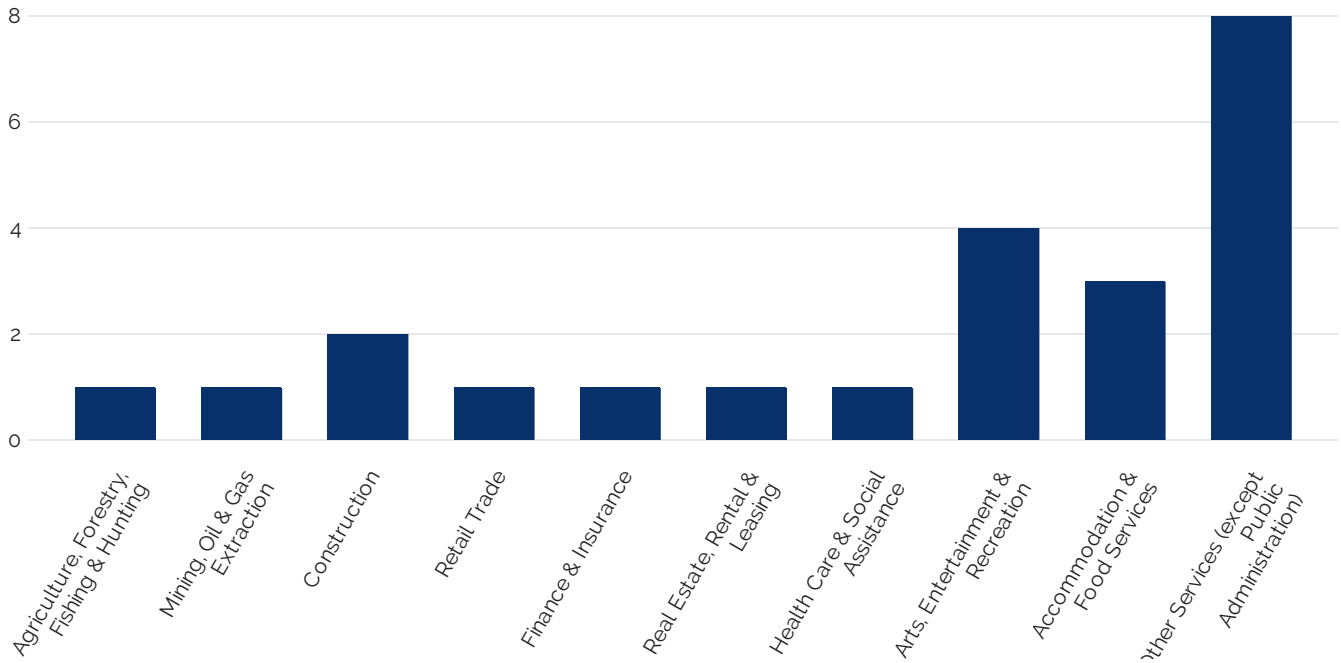
NOTE: As this is a summary report, not all questions from the survey are included. Answer options with a value of zero have been removed from graphs for simpler display.

Business Sectors



Company Information

What primary activity is conducted by your business?



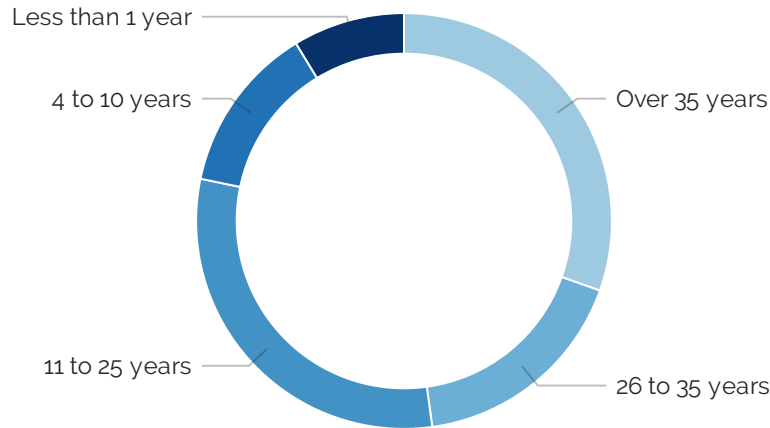
Businesses who did not fit within the categories provided described their primary activity as the following:



- 74% of businesses are family owned
- 96% of business owners are involved in the day-to-day operation of the business
- 87% of business owners are residents of the community where their business is located
- 91% of businesses are headquartered in the ELNOS region
- 70% of businesses are Corporations
- 22% of businesses are Sole Proprietorships
- 8% of businesses are Not-for-Profit organizations

Business Operation

How many years has this business been in operation in the community?



The majority of businesses have a general impression that the Region is a good place in which to do business. 30% think it is excellent with only one business selecting fair and zero selected poor. These opinions have generally remained the same over the past 5 years with 30% expressing a positive change and 9% saying there has been a negative change in their impression.

Positive Comments:

- Supportive community
- The town has cleaned up nicely
- Strong working relationship with municipality

Negative Comments:

- Difficult to attract & retain qualified employees
- Challenges with selling specific products
- Covid-related challenges

65% of businesses do not have a succession plan while 30% do have one

48% of businesses do not have a business plan while 48% do

65% of businesses do not have a marketing plan while 30% do have one

35% of businesses review their financial plan against their actual numbers monthly

30% of businesses review their financial plan against their actual numbers quarterly

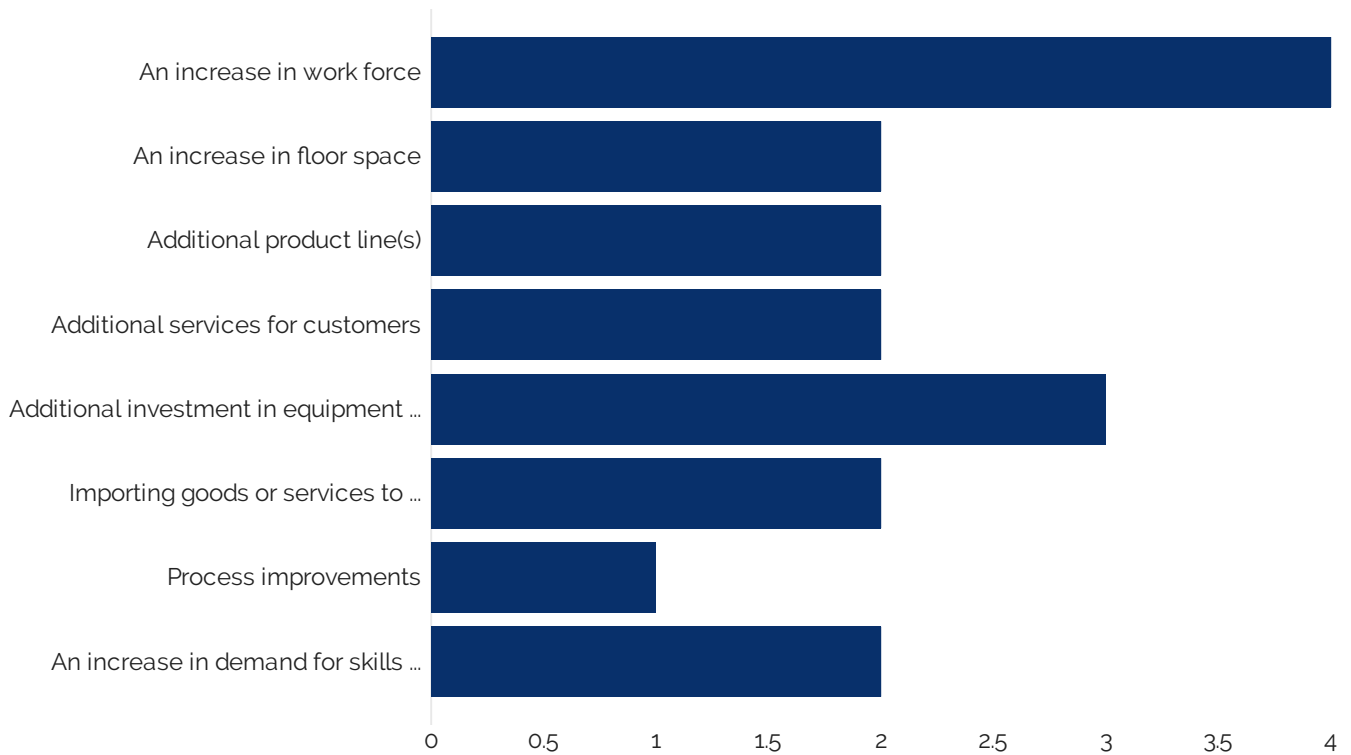
17% of businesses review their financial plan against their actual numbers yearly

The majority of businesses create forecasted financial statements on a monthly or yearly basis

35% of business owners lease their facility and only 1 has concerns about getting it renewed.
9% of businesses plan to downsize in the next 3 years as a result of financial or market issues
17% of businesses plan to expand in the next 3 years
65% of businesses plan to remain the same over the next 3 years
1 Business plans to close in the next 3 years due to retirement

Of the businesses planning an expansion, 13% are experiencing difficulty. These difficulties are the result of labour issues, land availability, and infrastructure concerns.

Will your expansion lead to:



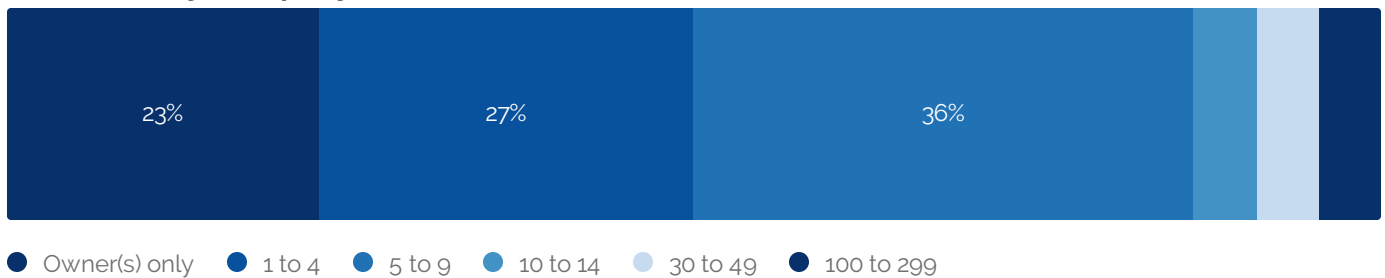
Workforce

For the most part, businesses find the quality of workers and the stability of the workforce to be fair-good, with most businesses having little difficulty retaining employees. However, they find there is a poor availability of workers in this area with recruiting issues being related to both the community and the industry. The greatest current and future workforce need according to businesses are skilled trade employees. In the next 3 years, there will also be a need for industry specialists.

Top 3 Barriers to Employee training:

1. Availability of local training
2. Distance to training facility
3. Awareness of training programs

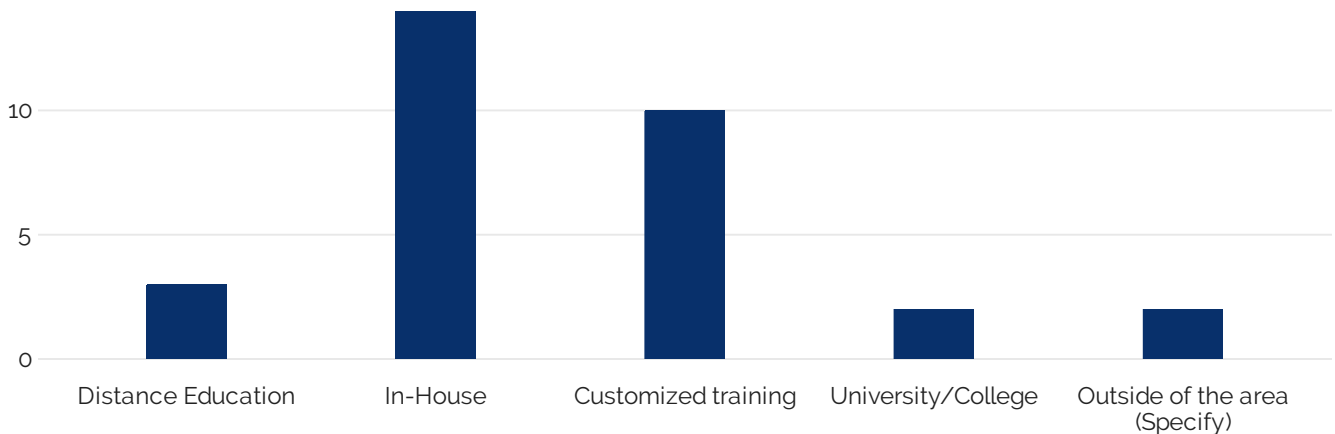
How many employees work at this location?



Over the past 5 years, 35% have seen an increase in the number of employees, 17% saw a decrease, and 26% remained the same. The majority of this change was as a result of an increase or decrease in business revenue.

Businesses report that most of their employees are permanent-full time, but there are also part-time and seasonal positions as well. All but 6 employees were reported to be living within the ELNOS region.

Where do your employees receive training?

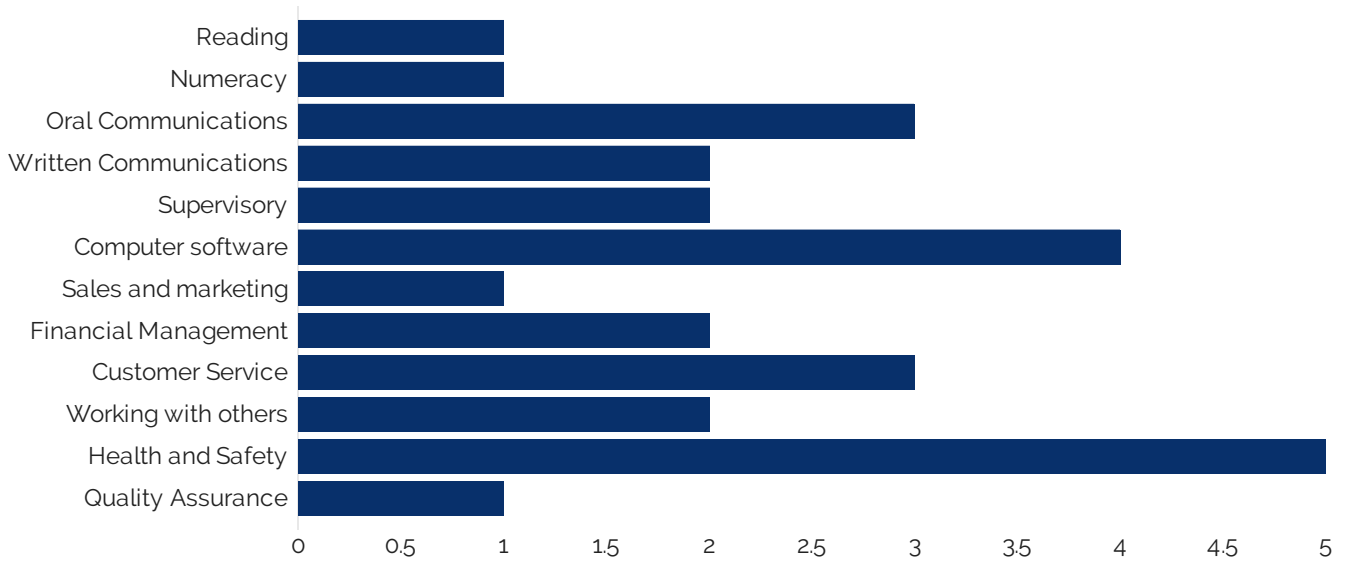


Businesses note the following skills and qualifications as the most difficult to recruit:

- Independent worker
- Work ethic
- Trade certified
- Heavy equipment operators
- Engineers
- Pipe layers
- Martial Arts Black Belts
- Safety trainers
- AZ Operator
- Service advisors
- Long term employees
- Supervisors

Health & Safety was noted as the greatest need for employee skill training.

Does your workforce need to improve skills in the following areas?



Community Outlook

More than half of the businesses noted that the main barrier they are facing for expansion and development of new businesses is the lack of skilled labour. Also noted, though less significantly, was the availability of financing, properly zoned and designated land, and business insurance. Generally, businesses are satisfied with the various services provided in the Region or had no contact with which to rate them. Several businesses were somewhat dissatisfied with the level of street repair, with a few concerned with Building & Planning Services, Health Services, Recreational Facilities, & Transit Services.

Suggestions to improve the local business climate include:

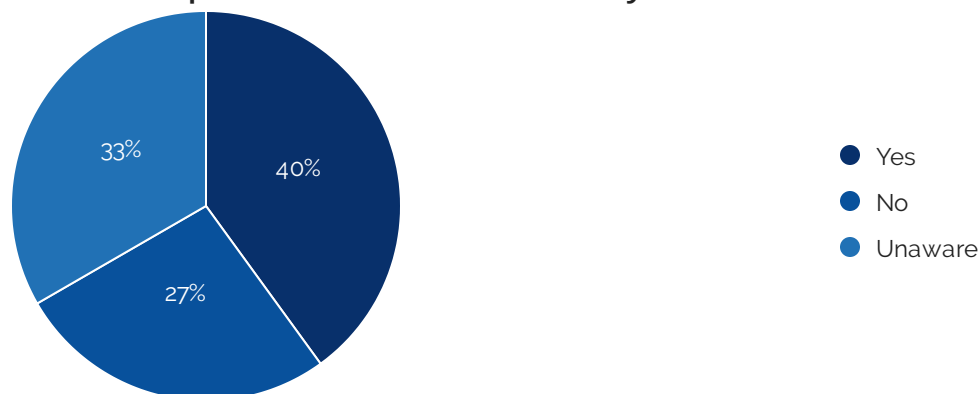
- Financial & Tax incentives
- More office space/shared workspace
- Access to healthcare providers
- Educating citizens on benefits of business development
- Small Business Training

The following products and services are currently being purchased outside of the Region but businesses would like to purchase locally if it was an option:



Most businesses are satisfied with the hours of their colleagues, however the few who were dissatisfied noted concerns over inconsistent hours and early closures.

In your opinion, does the local government take an adequate role in business and economic development in this community?



56% of businesses were unaware if the community had an economic development plan, while 39% knew that it existed. 73% of businesses did not feel they were able to take advantage of regional events because they were not aware of them in time.

Community Advantages:

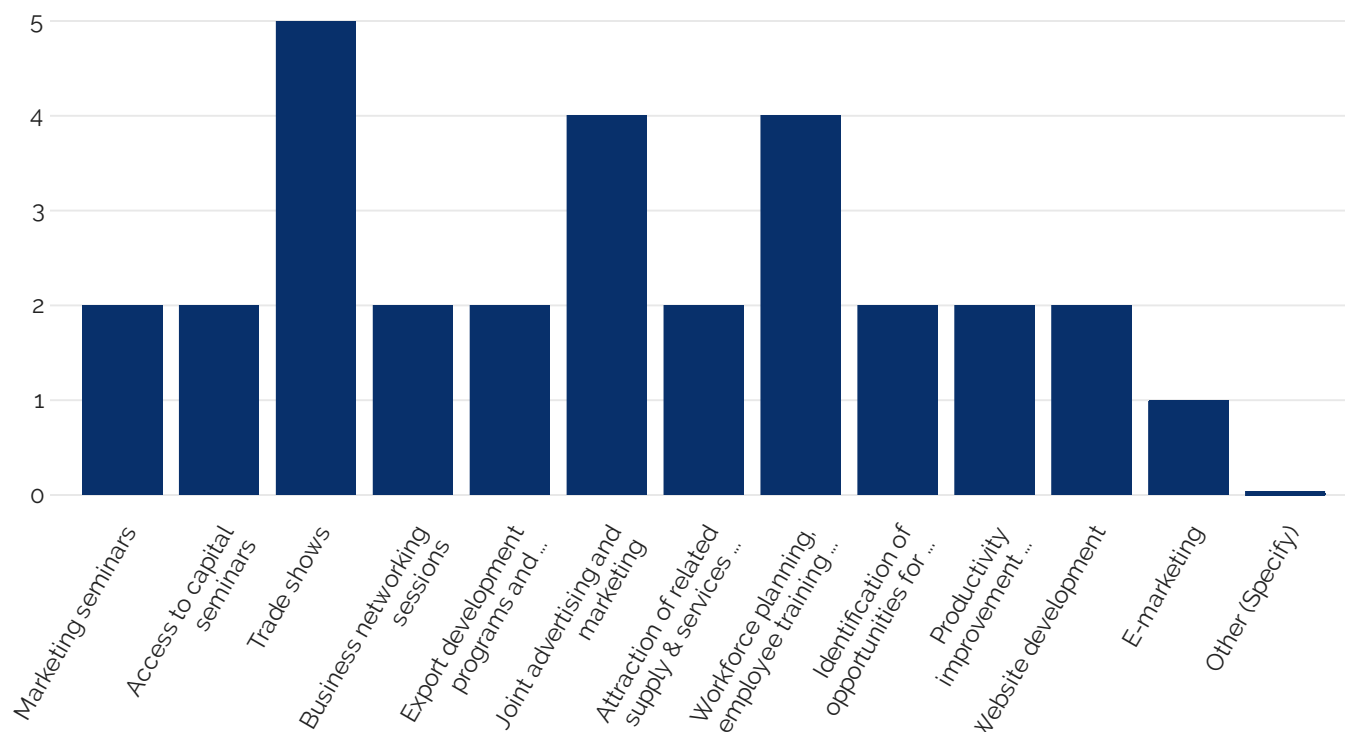
- location on Hwy 17
- cost of living
- lots of space/potential
- natural beauty
- friendly small town

Community Disadvantages:

- distance from major centers
- dependence on out of town markets/needs (ie. fire department)
- population
- availability of workers
- housing

Many businesses have not interacted with local business associations or economic development offices. Of those that have had contact, all expressed satisfaction with ELNOS and almost all are satisfied with the services provided through the local economic development office, employment solutions, and the chamber of commerce.

How can local business associations and/or economic development offices assist your business sector?



Conclusion

While we did not receive the number of surveys we would have liked for a better evaluation of the businesses in the region, we believe the consistencies in the responses received give a good, general picture of our communities. We acknowledge that the length of this survey was a deterrent to many busy entrepreneurs, and from this information we hope to create shorter surveys in the future to gather statistically accurate data for our region.

Overall, businesses have a positive outlook on their communities and the future of their business. While there are some concerns with the municipalities and business associations, they are rare in comparison to those who had helpful experiences. It would appear the more concerning issue is not negative concerns, but rather lack of knowledge or contact from the services available to assist businesses.

The main issue businesses seem to be facing is workforce concerns. As is typical in smaller communities, there appears to be a lack in availability of workers, especially skilled trade workers. The distance required to travel for training is a huge barrier in acquiring these skilled workers in our region.

There were also consistencies in the survey results with the City of Elliot Lake's study. Both report the Retail/Service sector as the largest represented in responses and most businesses are family-owned by residents of the area for more than 10 years. Both surveys showed that half or just more than half do not have a business, marketing, or succession plan. There were also similarities in businesses feeling there is a good level of community support, but a lack of skilled labour. Across the region, the largest barriers to staff training are availability of local training, distance to training centres, and lack of awareness of training programs.