

A Year of Pandemic Industry Survey Findings

32 organizations responded to the industry survey in preparation for an upcoming meeting with MP Blake Richards, MLA Miranda Rosin, and Banff Mayor Karen Sorensen to share their insights and experiences as we hit the one-year mark of managing through COVID-19.

1. Revenue growth expectations
 - 48% of businesses expect some growth over 2020
 - 29% of businesses expect growth to be on par with 2020
2. The biggest issues business leaders are worried about from a cost containment perspective in 2021 include:
 1. 94% are worried about the impact of COVID-19 restrictions on business revenue
 2. 58% are worried about rebuilding the labour force
 3. 38% are worried about the cost of managing increased debt levels
 4. 35% are worried about the cost of insurance
3. 2021 capital spending priorities for businesses look to be:
 - Higher than 2020 for 35% of businesses
 - On par with 2020 for 26% of businesses
 - It's too soon to tell for 26% of businesses
4. The strategies that businesses will use to control costs in 2021 include:
 - 80% of businesses will streamline labour requirements
 - 77% of businesses will access COVID business supports from the government
 - 50% of businesses will pause a portion of business operations
5. What are your labour needs looking like for 2021?
 - 26% about the same as 2020
 - 26% depends on the further easing of restrictions under Step 2
 - 23% higher than 2020
6. Which of the thematic areas matter most to you in terms of the future prioritization of issues by a new town council?
 - 80% said an economic recovery strategy
 - 50% said communications support for the return of visitors to the community
 - 43% said increased supports for visitor movements (transit, ped zones, bike lanes)
7. Which Town of Banff departments (and programs and services) are of the greatest interest to your business?
 - 83% said pandemic recovery and response for businesses
 - 44% said planning
 - 41% said transit
 - 31% said communications
 - 28% said housing

8. What departmental service areas would like to see changed from a service perspective?
- Planning and communications tied for 1st
 - Communications: attract visitors, focus on municipal issues not marketing, are people even welcome?
 - Planning: land use updates
 - Transit, recovery support and budget reductions tied for 2nd
 - Need more transit options, support smaller businesses in recovery
9. Here is the businesses community's assessment of how helpful "federal" programs have been:
- Most helpful:
 - 81% CEWS expansion most helpful (factoring in ranking of 1 & 2)
 - 41% CERS expansion most helpful (factoring in ranking of 1 & 2)
 - Not applicable:
 - 72% said Large Employer Emergency Financing Facility (LEEEFF) was N/A to their business
 - 61% said EDC Business Credit Availability Program (BCAP) Guarantee was N/A to their business
 - 60% said Regional Relief & Recovery Fund (RRRF) and Community Futures Fund was N/A to their business
 - 54% said Highly Affected Credit Availability Program (HASCAP) was N/A to their business
10. Here is the businesses community's assessment of how helpful "provincial" programs have been:
- *list does not include Enhanced COVID-19 Business Benefit as it begins April 2021*
- Most helpful:
 - 55% Small and Medium Enterprise Relaunch Grant (SMERG) (factoring in ranking of 1 & 2, though 35% said this was N/A to their business)
 - 38% Increased Investment in Travel Alberta (factoring in ranking of 1 & 2, but with 33% of weighting on 2)
 - Mixed results:
 - 41% said Alberta Tourism Levy Abatement was helpful, though 36% also said this was N/A to their business
 - Not applicable:
 - Deferral of Workers Compensation Board Premiums and Education Property Taxes tallied high as being N/A to their businesses
11. Here is the businesses community's assessment of how helpful "municipal" programs have been:
- Most helpful:
 - 60% said Property Tax Deferrals were helpful (though 24% said this was N/A to their business)
 - 55% said the creation of Banff Ave's pedestrian zone was helpful (though 22% said this was N/A to their business)
 - Not applicable:
 - 39% said the suspension of accumulation of penalties on amounts owed for utilities was N/A to their business

- 30% said the business bylaw amendments were N/A to their business
12. What statement best reflects your business outlook for summer 2021?
- 41% said it's still too soon to say as it depends on a number of issues such as: rate of vaccination of Albertans, messaging from government that it is 'ok' to travel within the province, etc.
 - 31% said they have accessed one or more federal/provincial support programs and believe this will be sufficient to get us through summer, irrespective of whether we move beyond Stage 2 reopening.
 - 24% said they are still struggling to cover fixed expenses (i.e. rent, utilities, insurance, property taxes) every month under current Stage 2 restrictions. Our business requires more liquidity supports in the form of non-repayable grants or loans to make it through this coming summer.

**Comments requested for funding to be extended well beyond June*

13. How is your team doing in terms of mental health?
- 93% of employers are seeing mental distress in their teams
 - 55% of employers are seeing mental health problems in their teams
 - 33% are seeing mental health disorders in their teams
14. How would you compare your team's mental health today with a year ago?
- 64% said worse or much worse
 - 21% said about the same
15. Is there anything else you would like to share on the topic of workforce mental health and resilience?
- "The small business owners are experiencing a high level of mental stress. You invest a lot in your business, and need to be ready to drop the keys and walk. Losing everything."
 - "COVID fatigue has really impacted employees. Need to start moving forward."
 - "It's been a trying year mentally for our team. I think presently our team is relieved that we are open and that they have work - however the stress and uncertainty of the year is weighing on our team members. Operationally the year has been harder as both our clients and team members adapt to the changes in protocols. Business wide, our team is tired and we are dealing with mental fatigue related to the ongoing stress of the pandemic."
 - "We are numb to the scenario. It has become the new normal to be on edge. While everything was shocking 1 year ago and dramatic, now its just constant status quo of general unease and concern."
 - "Thank you for asking this question. We are looking at new ways of offering support and will appreciate learning from everyone. People that are still working with us are struggling to disconnect and even when they do it is hard for them to recharge. People seem to need rest and something to look forward to."