

Fundamentals Course Homework

Session 3

Part A

In this session, we've touched on the idea of the necessity of reports and presentations for a BR&E program using a volunteer visitor methodology with a "blitz" approach.

For this session, I'd like for you to think about the benefits (and perhaps challenges) in preparing reports and presentations for the BR&E visitation program that you are envisioning in your area. Please think about the following questions:

- To whom or what groups would the reports/presentations be delivered?
- How would this benefit the strength of the BR&E program?
- What would be included in the report given that the collection of data in a continuous model is likely to be relatively slow?
- How would you turn data into information for the audience(s)?

Part B

The following Excel file (Open Ended Survey Homework.xlsx) contains a number of responses from a COVID-19 business retention and expansion survey conducted in Mississippi. What topics would you use to categorize these responses?

Part A

Response 1

Reports and Presentations in a BR&E Program

Reports and presentations play an important role in a BR&E program, especially when using a volunteer visitor or "blitz" approach. While the primary focus of BR&E is direct engagement with businesses, reporting helps ensure the information collected is organized, understood, and used to support decision-making.

Audience for Reports and Presentations

Reports and presentations would primarily be shared with City leadership, economic development boards or committees, and key partner organizations such as utilities or workforce agencies. In some cases, a summary may also be shared with volunteers who participated in business visits to help reinforce the value of their involvement and maintain engagement.

Benefits to the BR&E Program

Preparing reports strengthens the BR&E program by demonstrating that business feedback is taken seriously and not simply collected and set aside. Presentations help build internal support for the program, encourage collaboration across departments, and reinforce accountability. They also provide a structured way to identify common issues and align leadership around potential responses.

Report Content in a Continuous Data Collection Model

Because data collection in a continuous BR&E model is gradual, reports should focus on early trends and recurring themes rather than complete statistical analysis. Content may include the number of visits completed, common concerns raised by businesses, notable observations from volunteers or staff, and examples of issues that required follow-up. Including qualitative feedback helps provide meaningful insight even when the data set is still developing.

Turning Data into Information

To make the information useful, raw data should be organized into clear categories such as workforce, infrastructure, regulations, or general business conditions. Summarizing findings through short narratives, simple visuals, or example scenarios helps audiences better understand what the data is indicating. The goal is to present information in a way that supports informed discussion and practical next steps, rather than overwhelming the audience with details.

Response 2

In the City of Converse, a BRE program blitz would yield information to understand the pulse of local business. Stakeholders in the community would benefit from understanding the trends and what support our business owners need. I would present our findings to our EDC Board of Directors, City Council, City department heads, and Education leaders including CTE program directors. With this knowledge, we can have support from these local leaders to combine efforts to support these businesses with the regulatory process, patronage and labor generation. These leadership groups can help implement programs within their scope of work to support the findings of the BRE initiative. The program would strengthen tremendously with collective buy-in from community leaders.

In the report, I would include how the program was executed, categories of business concerns and strengths, and telling the story of why this information is important. I would include information on how the survey was conducted, how many visits were made, and what selection process we used for choosing businesses to survey. It's important for the community Stakeholders to understand how we got to the information we share.

By analyzing the responses to the survey, we can group together similar responses in each industry and quantify those with a percentage of businesses interviewed. Narrowing the information down into groups or categories begins to shape the data into usable information. As we tell the story, backing it with data gives credibility to the findings as well as suggestions for change and support. Painting a picture of common pain points for the businesses and sharing why these concerns need their attention can help community leaders begin to think of ways they can help. These presentations can start a conversation with collective input to strengthen the backbone of community and pave a better experience in attracting new businesses. Our goal is the information from the data would show where support is needed and how we could all work to implement new resources for our business owners.

Response 3

- To whom or what groups would the reports/presentations be delivered?
Chamber of Commerce, Bankers, Retired Executives, Local Government Staff, Local College, Community Leaders
 - How would this benefit the strength of the BR&E program?
It would be a diverse selection of local citizens with different knowledge, experience and walk of life.
 - What would be included in the report given that the collection of data in a continuous model is likely to be relatively slow?
Housing, transportation, retail, quality of life, workforce, education, incentives, logistics & accessibility advantages
 - How would you turn data into information for the audience(s)?
slide deck, charts, maps, infographics, brochures
-

Response 4

The survey is a short questionnaire with basic information on the business with whom it is being conducted.

The report is presented to the MDD Director and then to the Board of Directors.

There are other organizations that would benefit from the report and/or presentation of the report. The City Manager and City Council, District Superintendent and School Board, Chamber of Commerce, also local Workforce. It would be beneficial for the report to be posted on these organizations' websites for public access.

This would benefit the BR&E program because all the organizations involved would have access to the information and would have the opportunity to work together to strengthen the business community, which strengthens the needs of the local public. Transparency helps those who can help or have a resource that can solve specific problems be available to those in need.

The data would include industry, hiring status, future expectation, facility square footage, range of employees, and challenges.

The information would be easily understood with graphs that contain percentages and statistics. Including any suggestions for solutions to overall challenges.

Response 5

For a volunteer visitor, blitz style Business Retention and Expansion program in DeKalb County, reports and presentations are not just administrative outputs. They are strategic tools that help sustain momentum, build trust, and convert raw visitation data into actionable community intelligence.

1. Target Audiences for Reports and Presentations

Key audiences would include:

- DCEDA leadership and board members
- Local elected officials and municipal partners
- Workforce and education partners such as community colleges and training providers
- State and regional economic development partners
- Participating in businesses and volunteer visitors
- Community stakeholders such as chambers and industry groups

Each group would receive tailored versions of the same core findings. For example, elected officials may need high level trend summaries tied to policy implications, while workforce partners may need deeper detail on skills gaps and training needs.

2. Benefits to the Strength of the BR&E Program

Regular reporting strengthens the BR&E program in several ways:

- Accountability and transparency. Stakeholders can see measurable progress and outcomes.
- Credibility. Structured reporting positions the program as data driven and professional.
- Alignment. Shared findings help partners coordinate around common priorities.
- Engagement. Volunteers and businesses feel their input is valued and acted upon.
- Early intervention. Emerging risks can be flagged before they become crises.

In a blitz model, where many visits occur in a compressed timeframe, reports help capture insights quickly and translate them into coordinated follow up actions.

3. Report Content in a Slow, Continuous Data Collection Model

Because continuous visitation generates data gradually, reports should focus on trends and signals rather than waiting for perfect datasets. A practical report might include:

- Executive summary with key themes from recent visits
- Number and type of businesses visited
- Top recurring issues such as workforce, supply chain, or regulatory concerns
- Immediate assistance requests and status of follow up actions
- Early trend indicators compared to prior reporting periods
- Short case studies or business spotlights

Even with small sample sizes, consistent structure allows stakeholders to track movement over time.

4. Turning Data into Information for Audiences

Raw comments and survey notes become useful when they are:

- Coded into themes and categories
- Quantified where possible, such as frequency of issues mentioned

- Connected to local benchmarks or economic indicators
- Illustrated with short narratives or examples
- Linked to recommended actions or decision points

Dashboards, summary charts, and simple visualizations can make patterns easier to interpret. The goal is to move from isolated comments to clear stories about what local industries are experiencing and what responses are warranted.

Response 6

To whom or what groups would the reports/presentations be delivered?

Typically, the results of the survey will be available for the community. I will prepare several reports, social media posts, and presentations for different target audiences.

Example of Audiences

- General Public
- Elected officials
- Educational institutions
- Survey participants
- BR&E team
- Any entities mentioned in the survey
(Public infrastructure and public safety etc.)

• How would this benefit the strength of the BR&E program?

Reporting the results and findings of the survey will benefit the strength of the BR&E program by showing the work of BR&E team and driving results to survey participants' concerns and issues. Reports will contribute to building community support for the program.

• What would be included in the report given that the collection of data in a continuous model is likely to be relatively slow?

The continuous model, which focuses on relation building tends to require longer periods with several visits to complete survey questions compared to other models which focus on data collection for a short period of time. For reporting with continuous models, it should include the method used to complete the survey, period of the survey to consider political, economic, social, technological, legal, and environmental changes.

• How would you turn data into information for the audience(s)?

1. Determine the target audience and what information is critical and meaningful to them
 - Executives – strategic/political impact
 - Investors – Return on investment and risk
 - Community – Quality of life and jobs
 - Staff – Operational implications
2. Explain and narrate the findings from the survey data
Turn data into stories and visuals with key insights, simple charts, and infographics.

3. Divide action items into timelines (short, medium, long) and assign appropriate groups as action team for long-term action items and response teams for short-term action items with detailed breakdowns and outcome expectations.
 4. Use multiple sources to share the survey results
 - Business meetings
 - Civic group meetings
 - Social media
 - Website
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Response 7

1. To whom or what groups would the reports/presentations be delivered?

Reports and presentations would be delivered to:

- Western REN's funders, such as the Municipality of Digby, Yarmouth, Clare, Argyle, and the Town of Yarmouth and Digby.
- Western REN Board of Directors
- Business community groups (Chambers of Commerce, sector associations)
- Provincial departments and partner agencies
- Economic development stakeholders (workforce agencies, post-secondary institutions, industry groups)

Different versions may be required: a technical report for internal partners and a summary presentation for business audiences.

2. How would this benefit the strength of the BR&E program?

Preparing reports strengthens the program in several ways:

- Demonstrates accountability to municipalities and funders
- Shows businesses that their input leads to action
- Builds regional alignment around shared priorities
- Enhances Western REN's credibility as a trusted convener

In rural Southwest Nova Scotia, visible follow-through is essential. If businesses see no reporting or action, trust weakens quickly.

3. What would be included in the report given that the collection of data in a continuous model is likely to be relatively slow?

Because data collection in a continuous model is gradual, reports should focus on:

- Emerging themes rather than large statistics
- Early trends (e.g., workforce shortages, broadband gaps, succession risk)
- Case examples (anonymous success stories or issue resolution examples)

- Actions taken to date

The goal is not volume of data, but meaningful insight.

4. How would you turn data into information for the audience(s)?

To turn raw data into useful information:

- Group responses into key themes aligned with regional priorities
- Compare findings across sectors and municipalities
- Highlight implications (e.g., “Broadband gaps are limiting tourism expansion”)
- Identify recommended actions

Visual summaries, short dashboards, and clear key messages are especially effective for our funders and business groups.

Response 8

Reports from BR&E visits serve multiple audiences, including the action team, stakeholders and businesses, city and county officials, workforce partners, and educators. These reports provide valuable insights by identifying what is working well within a business and highlighting any challenges it may be facing. By clearly outlining findings, the reports help inform both the action team and the business about the appropriate next steps to support retention and expansion efforts. They also improve responsiveness by identifying potential issues early.

One analytic approach suggested in the material is the SWOT analysis. In the past, I have utilized another method known as SOAR (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, and Results). I prefer the SOAR framework because it keeps desired outcomes and long-term goals at the forefront of the conversation. While it still surfaces potential threats and weaknesses, it fosters a more collaborative and positively focused approach to problem-solving. Including a business’s future aspirations in the report allows those goals to be incorporated into action plans, creating a proactive strategy for growth and retention. Information gathered through this process also equips staff and the action team to serve as stronger advocates for local businesses.

In addition, reports should document the number of businesses visited, the size and type of each business, any identified red or green flags, concerns or opportunities to monitor, and action steps that have been taken or are planned. One challenge in reporting, however, is maintaining confidentiality. Data ultimately tells the story of the business being represented, and that story must often be tailored to the audience. For example, when communicating with city officials, the data may highlight infrastructure needs. In contrast, when working with educators and workforce partners, the focus may shift to workforce gaps and skill development needs.

Response 9

The primary audiences for these reports include city councils and county commissioners, who need to understand the challenges and opportunities facing local businesses in order to make informed policy and investment decisions. Reports would also be shared with business owners themselves, helping them see that their concerns are not isolated and that many of their peers are navigating similar issues. Finally, the general public benefits from high-level summaries that highlight the health of the local economy and reinforce the importance of supporting local businesses.

Delivering tailored reports to these three groups strengthens the BR&E program by ensuring that the data collected during the blitz is translated into meaningful, actionable insights. Each audience requires a slightly different lens: elected officials need strategic implications, business owners need peer-to-peer validation and resource connections, and residents need a sense of pride and awareness. Knowing these audiences in advance helps shape the survey questions, volunteer training, and data-collection priorities so the program remains focused and relevant.

Because data collection in a continuous BR&E model can be slow, early reports would focus on themes rather than numbers. These might include emerging trends, common challenges, shared opportunities, and stories that illustrate the lived experience of local business owners. As more data accumulates, reports can gradually incorporate metrics, comparisons, and year-over-year insights.

Turning raw data into useful information requires thoughtful interpretation. This means grouping responses into categories, identifying patterns, and translating business feedback into clear recommendations. Visuals such as charts, heat maps, or simple infographics can help audiences quickly grasp what the data means. For business owners, this might look like a summary of shared workforce challenges or opportunities for collaboration. For councils and commissioners, it might highlight policy gaps or areas where targeted investment could make a measurable difference. For the public, it could showcase success stories and reinforce the value of shopping local.

Ultimately, the reporting process is not just a formality, it is a relationship-building tool. When businesses see their voices reflected in the findings, when councils see data guiding decisions, and when residents see progress, the BR&E program gains credibility and long-term support. Thoughtful, audience-specific reporting ensures that the blitz visitation effort becomes more than a one-time event; it becomes a foundation for ongoing economic resilience and community pride.

Response 10

If the Sanger Economic Development Corporation implements a BR&E program using a volunteer “blitz” methodology, reports and presentations will be essential to maintaining credibility, accountability, and long-term support. Because a blitz generates a large amount of information in a short period of time, how that information is communicated will determine whether the effort builds momentum or quickly loses relevance.

In Sanger, reports would be presented regularly to the EDC Board, City Manager, and City Council. Additional briefings would be shared with key city departments, the Chamber of Commerce, and the volunteer visitors who participated in the blitz. Each audience serves a distinct purpose. The Board and Council need high-level insights to guide policy and funding priorities, while city departments require operational details related to infrastructure, permitting, and service delivery. Volunteers benefit from summary updates that reinforce the value of their participation and encourage continued involvement.

Structured reporting strengthens the BR&E program in several important ways. First, it builds transparency and trust by demonstrating that business feedback is being taken seriously. Second, it improves cross-department coordination by clearly identifying recurring issues such as workforce shortages, signage concerns, or infrastructure needs. Third, it sustains post-blitz momentum by publicly sharing findings and outlining next steps. Most importantly, reports provide a foundation for strategic decision-making, allowing Sanger EDC to prioritize initiatives that directly address documented business concerns.

Even if data collection continues gradually, reports should include both quantitative and qualitative information. This may include the number of visits conducted, industry sectors represented, common themes identified, urgent “red flag” issues, expansion interests, and anonymized business quotes. In a community like Sanger, where businesses range from retail and service providers to light industrial users along the I-35 corridor, identifying trends and patterns is often more valuable than focusing solely on numbers. Each report should also include a response plan that outlines actions taken and next steps, shifting the focus from data gathering to problem-solving.

To turn data into meaningful information, Sanger EDC must translate statistics into insights. Instead of simply listing percentages, presentations should highlight key themes, opportunities for action, short-term wins, and long-term considerations. Simple visuals and categorized summaries can clarify patterns, while pairing each major finding with a recommended action ensures the information guides decision-makers effectively.

Ultimately, for Sanger EDC, reports and presentations are strategic tools. When structured thoughtfully, they reinforce collaboration, strengthen accountability, and ensure that the energy generated through a BR&E blitz leads to measurable improvements in the city’s business climate and long-term economic stability.

Response 11

- To whom or what groups would the reports/presentations be delivered?

To the stakeholders = Community Leaders, City Council/City Utilities, Chamber of Commerce

- How would this benefit the strength of the BR&E program?

They would realize that we have taken feedback seriously. Reports would allow stakeholders and myself to detect common concerns and to bring ideas, suggestions to improve the reports and better support the businesses needs.

- What would be included in the report given that the collection of data in a continuous model is likely to be relatively slow?

Businesses that received surveys and which business reports derive from. A synopsis of the data that's been collected to date: issues/concerns that may have already been identified. So that we could start to collaborate on how to assist with those issues and determine if there are issues that may be able to immediately assist.

- How would you turn data into information for the audience(s)?

By creating my own format, creating a map brochure visualization with info proving what I feel the needs are, making it make sense for the audience.

Response 12

As the City of McAlester develops a Business Retention and Expansion (BR&E) program using a volunteer visitation and “blitz” approach, reports and presentations would be one of the most important tools in turning the information gathered from local businesses into action. Because McAlester is a smaller community where relationships matter, the ability to communicate what was learned, what issues are emerging, and what action is being taken will help keep businesses, volunteers, elected officials, and community partners engaged in the process.

Who should be involved?

The BR&E reports and presentations in McAlester should be tailored to several different audiences, including but not limited to:

- McAlester City Council/City Manager
- McAlester Economic Development Staff/LEAD Committee
- Chamber of Commerce
- Pittsburg County Officials/Regional partners such as Choctaw Nation

- Local utility providers, workforce agencies, and educational institutions
- Participating Businesses
- The community/public (when appropriate)

The City Council, City Manager, LEAD Committee and Choctaw Nation would likely receive the most formal report and presentations. They would need to understand the major themes emerging from the visits, especially issues related to infrastructure, workforce, permitting, housing, transportation, utilities, or barriers to business growth. Since many of these issues could require policy changes, capital improvements, or additional funding, it is important that they see the data in a clear and organized manner.

The Chamber, workforce agencies and education institutions like Kiamichi Technology Center and Eastern Oklahoma State College, as well as local school partners would receive a more action-oriented presentation. These groups are often in the best position to help solve issues involving workforce development, training needs, supplier connections, succession planning, or business expansion opportunities.

Businesses that participated in the visitation process should also receive a summary report. Obviously, we would not identify individual companies, but the report should show that their concerns were heard and that the City and its partners are responding. Doing so helps build trust and encourages more businesses to participate in future visits.

Strengths & Challenges

Preparing these reports and presentations would strengthen the BR&E program in several ways. First, it demonstrates accountability. Too often, businesses are surveyed or interviewed and never hear what happened afterward. In McAlester, where business owners frequently know one another and have long-standing relationships with the community, it is important to show that the information collected during visits is leading to action. If businesses see that the City followed through, they will be more willing to participate again. Second, the reports would help build support for the program. Presenting the findings to the City Council, business organizations, and regional partners would help everyone understand why BR&E matters. In many communities, business retention and expansion creates more jobs than business recruitment. Showing local leaders the real concerns and opportunities identified by existing employers can help justify future investments and policy changes. Third, the reports help organize and prioritize issues. A blitz approach may generate a large amount of information very quickly. Without a formal

report, it would be easy for concerns to become scattered or forgotten. The report would allow McAlester to identify patterns, rank the most common concerns, and decide which issues should be addressed immediately, which need longer-term planning, and which can be referred to another organization. Finally, presentations create momentum. Volunteers and partners are more likely to stay involved if they can see measurable progress. Sharing early wins, such as solving a permitting issue, connecting a business with a training resource, or helping a local company expand, helps demonstrate that the BR&E program is producing results.

In a community like McAlester, one of the primary challenges in developing and delivering BR&E reports is managing expectations while working within a continuous data collection model. Businesses that participate in visits often expect timely results, but meaningful trends and solutions take time to develop. If early reports feel limited or if visible action does not follow, it can lead to skepticism and reduced participation. Additionally, the City may identify legitimate concerns, such as workforce shortages, infrastructure needs, or housing gaps, but lack the immediate resources to address them, creating a disconnect between identified issues and implemented solutions.

Another key challenge is maintaining trust and clarity in a smaller community environment. Protecting the confidentiality of business feedback is critical, as it can be easier to identify participants. At the same time, translating informal, volunteer-collected feedback into structured, credible information for decision-makers requires consistency and coordination. Finally, presenting findings in a way that is transparent yet constructive, especially when addressing sensitive or potentially negative issues, requires careful messaging to ensure continued support from elected officials, partners, and the business community. Ultimately, the challenge is not just producing the report, but ensuring it leads to action, builds trust, and sustains momentum over time.

What's included?

Because a continuous BR&E model gathers information over time rather than all at once, the reports in McAlester would likely need to focus less on large quantities of data and more on trends and emerging themes. Even if only a small number of visits have been completed, the report could still include:

- Number and type of businesses visited
- Industries represented
- General size of businesses visited
- Major themes or recurring concerns
- Expansion plans or opportunities identified
- Immediate “red flag” issues requiring follow-up
- Progress made on previously identified concerns
- Stories or examples that illustrate the data

For example, after several months of visits, the City might find that multiple businesses mention:

- Difficulty finding qualified workers
- Need for more housing options for employees
- Concerns about infrastructure or road access
- Challenges with childcare, utilities, or broadband
- Interest in expanding if additional land or workforce is available

Even if only ten or fifteen businesses have been visited, those themes can still provide useful information. The report does not need to wait until every business in McAlester has been visited before sharing what has been learned.

The report should also include a section on actions taken. For example:

- A company was connected with Kiamichi Technology Center for workforce training.
- A transportation issue was referred to the City's Public Works Department.
- A local manufacturer interested in expansion was connected with available property in the Steven Taylor Industrial Park.
- Utility concerns were discussed with service providers.

Including these actions helps show that the BR&E process is not simply collecting information, but actively solving problems.

Turning Data Into Information

The most important step in a BR&E report is converting raw data into information that is meaningful to the audience.

Simply stating that "8 of 15 businesses mentioned workforce issues" is useful, but it becomes much more meaningful when interpreted. For example: More than half of the businesses identified workforce shortages as their greatest challenge, particularly in skilled trades and production positions. This suggests that McAlester should prioritize stronger partnerships with local schools such as Kiamichi Technology Center, Eastern Oklahoma State College and other workforce agencies. Likewise, if several businesses identify transportation and infrastructure concerns, that information should be connected to specific local conditions. In McAlester, that could include discussion of access to the Steven Taylor Industrial Park, traffic flow along Electric Avenue and U.S. Highway 69, or utility capacity in growth areas. Different audiences would need the information presented in different ways.

The report should not only describe problems, but also recommend next steps. Each major issue identified should be paired with a suggested action, a responsible party, and a timeline. This helps move the BR&E program from information gathering to problem solving.

For McAlester, reports and presentations are essential to the success of a BR&E program. They ensure that information gathered from local businesses is shared with the right people, translated into meaningful action, and used to strengthen the local economy. Even if data is collected slowly through a continuous model, the City can still provide valuable updates by focusing on trends, themes, and action steps. Ultimately, the report should answer three questions for the audience:

1. What did we hear from local businesses?
2. Why does it matter?
3. What are we going to do about it?

If the BR&E program consistently answers those questions, it will build credibility, strengthen relationships with businesses, and help McAlester better support the companies that already call the community home.

Part B

Response 1

Public Infrastructure

Funding/Financing

Communication/Information

Marketing skills

Labor

Supply Chain

Response 2

1. Public Infrastructure
 2. Communication
 3. Funding
 4. Local Business Support
 5. Economic Incentives
 6. Supply Chain
 7. Health Requirement Access
 8. Local Government Leadership/Support
 9. Federal Government Leadership/Support
 10. Education
 11. Social Media Marketing
 12. Child and Adult Day Care
 13. Grants
 14. Business Restrictions
 15. PPP
 16. Essential Needs
-

Response 3

- Labor and Transportation Shortages
 - Inventory and Demand Instability
 - Rising Costs
 - Crisis Management
 - Financial Stability
-

Response 4

- Financial Assistance and Funding
Grants, loans, relief funds, and direct financial support requests.
 - Public Health Guidance and Safety Measures
Masks, distancing, sanitation protocols, and workplace safety guidance.
 - Government Restrictions and Regulations
Concerns about closures, operating limits, and regulatory flexibility.
 - Communication and Information Clarity
Requests for accurate updates, consistent messaging, and reliable information.
 - Operational Adaptation and Business Continuity
Shifts to remote work, curbside service, digital tools, and process changes.
 - Workforce and Staffing Challenges
Employee availability, childcare issues, and labor stability.
 - Customer Demand and Market Conditions
Changes in sales, customer behavior, and economic uncertainty.
 - Media and Public Perception
Opinions about media coverage and public messaging.
 - No Assistance Needed or Uncertain
Responses such as none or not sure.
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Response 5

The survey received 100 responses. Some responses addressed multiple topics, so I separated those into individual items. As a result, the total number of response items is 107. First, I have categorized these 107 responses into 12 topics. After reviewing, those topics were merged and realigned into the final 10 topics. The result is as below.

“What business supports do you think would be beneficial as we navigate this global challenge?”

	Answer Category	Count	%
1	Grant/Funding	33	31%
2	No Answer	27	25%
3	Policy	24	22%
4	Workforce	5	5%
5	Supply Chain	4	4%
6	PPE	4	4%
7	Sales	3	3%
8	Health Care	3	3%
9	Accurate Pandemic Information	2	2%
10	Internet Infrastructure	2	2%

According to this result majority (53%) of responses concentrated in categories of Grant/Funding and Policy. The one-third of all responses expressed financial assistance is beneficial, and one-fifth mentioned better policy, decision making, and better communication would be helpful. Interestingly, one-fourth of responses were non-suggestive such as “I don’t know” and “(they are not) affected.”

Response 6

1. **Public Infrastructure**
 - a. *Municipal assets*
 - b. *Community infrastructure systems*
 - c. *Core public facilities*
2. **Communication**
 - a. *Public engagement*
 - b. *Strategic messaging*
 - c. *Information dissemination*
3. **Funding**
 - a. *Financial capital*
 - b. *Monetary support*
 - c. *Fiscal resources*
4. **Local Business Support**
 - a. *Enterprise assistance*
 - b. *Small business advocacy*
 - c. *Commercial support services*
5. **Economic Incentives**
 - a. *Business inducements*
 - b. *Performance-based incentives*
 - c. *Development incentives*
6. **Supply Chain**
 - a. *Vendor network*
 - b. *Distribution channels*
 - c. *Operational pipeline*
7. **Health Requirement Access**
 - a. *Healthcare accessibility*
 - b. *Public health compliance resources*
 - c. *Health services availability*
8. **Local Government Leadership/Support**
 - a. *Municipal leadership*
 - b. *City-level governance support*
 - c. *Local administrative backing*

9. **Federal Government Leadership/Support**
 - a. *National policy guidance*
 - b. *Federal administrative support*
 - c. *National governance leadership*
-

Response 7

1. Intended Audiences for BR&E Reports & Presentations

BR&E reports and presentations should be tailored to multiple stakeholder groups, each with different interests and decision-making roles:

- Internal Economic Development Board, Staff & Leadership
 - City Leadership & Elected Officials (City Council, Mayor, Boards/Commissions)
 - Partner Organizations (Chamber of Commerce, Workforce Boards, Utilities, Colleges, Regional EDCs)
 - BR&E Volunteer Visitors / Ambassadors
 - Business Community (Aggregated/Non-Confidential)
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2. Benefits to the Strength of the BR&E Program

- Accountability & Credibility
 - Continuity in a Long-Term Program
 - Strategic Focus
 - Stakeholder Buy-In
 - Institutional Knowledge
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3. Report Content in a Continuous, Slow-Build Data Model

- Program Overview
 - Number of visits completed (to date: Q1/Q2/Q3/Q4)
 - Industry sectors represented
 - Size of organizations visited (employees, square footage, tenure in community)
- Early Findings & Emerging Themes
 - Common challenges and opportunities
 - Early warning signals (risk of relocation, workforce shortages)
 - Growth indicators (expansion interest, capital investment discussions)
- Response & Follow-Up Actions
 - Issues resolved or in progress
 - Referrals made to partners

- Policy or process changes under review
 - Case Snapshots (Non-Confidential)
 - Short narratives illustrating impact or responsiveness
 - Next Steps
 - Upcoming visit targets
 - Partner engagement needs
 - Resource or policy considerations
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4. Turning Data into Meaningful Information

- Aggregation & Trend Analysis
 - Group data by sector, size, or issue area to identify patterns.
 - Visualization
 - Simple charts, heat maps, or dashboards to quickly convey themes.
 - Narrative Framing
 - Explain why a trend matters and what happens if it's not addressed.
 - Comparative Context
 - Compare current findings to past visits or regional benchmarks when possible.
 - Audience-Specific Messaging
 - Elected officials: economic impact and risk mitigation
 - Partners: service gaps and collaboration opportunities
 - Volunteers: proof of impact and appreciation
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5. Challenges to Acknowledge

- Limited early sample sizes
 - Time lag between issue identification and resolution
 - Confidentiality constraints
 - Managing expectations about immediate outcomes
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Response 8

- Financial Assistance & Capital Access
 - Government Policy & Regulation
 - Workforce & Unemployment Issues
 - Health & Safety Measures
 - Supply Chain Disruptions
 - Business Operations
 - Business Sectors
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Response 9

Funding

Infrastructure (internet)

Supplies

Customers

Hiring

Mental Health

Physical Health

Education around PPP Loans

Marketing

Childcare

Response 10

- Communication
 - Funding
 - Marketing
 - Retail Strategy
 - Employee Support and Recruitment
 - Infrastructure
 - Legislative Opportunity
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Response 11

- Financial Assistance and Relief Programs
(grants, stimulus checks, help with rent, utilities, taxes)
 - Access to Funding / Simplified Funding Processes
(less complicated state or federal funding, startup grants)
 - Workforce and Employment Concerns
(staffing challenges, keeping employees working)
 - Operational Changes and Business Restrictions
(lobby closures, limited operations, remaining open)
 - Public Health Guidance and COVID-19 Protocols
(clear guidelines, consistency, following expert advice)
 - Communication and Information Sharing
(accurate information, updates on the pandemic)
 - Technology and Internet Infrastructure
(internet reliability, online business capabilities)
 - E-Commerce and Online Business Support
(doing business online, online shopping tools)
 - Supply Chain and Access to Materials
(difficulty obtaining supplies)
 - Customer Demand and Consumer Behavior
(local buying, changes in customer activity)
 - Local Support and “Buy Local” Initiatives
(encouraging residents to shop locally)
 - Regulatory Environment and Government Policy
(rules affecting operations, economic shutdown concerns)
 - Business Confidence and Outlook
(uncertainty, feeling “lucky,” unsure responses)
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Response 12

After reviewing the survey responses, several clear themes emerge that can be used to categorize the open-ended answers.

The most dominant category is financial assistance and access to capital. Many respondents referenced PPP loans, the need for a second round of funding, grants, SBA loans, payroll support, rent and utility assistance, and relief that is not structured as additional debt. Closely related, but distinct, is workforce and unemployment concerns, including difficulty hiring due to federal unemployment supplements, requests to end enhanced benefits, payroll protection needs, childcare support, and assistance for self-employed individuals.

Another major category involves government policy, restrictions, and leadership. Numerous responses addressed shutdowns, business closures, mask mandates, and calls either for fewer restrictions or for more consistent and unified guidelines. These comments reflect strong opinions about the role of government during the pandemic.

A repeated and locally significant theme is broadband and internet infrastructure. Several businesses expressed frustration with slow or unreliable internet service and emphasized the need for stronger broadband to operate effectively or conduct business online.

Additional categories include health, PPE, and workplace safety needs, such as access to protective equipment, testing, vaccines, and guidance on safe reopening practices. Some respondents also mentioned supply chain disruptions, particularly in food service and construction-related industries.

Smaller but identifiable themes include marketing and customer support, such as buy-local efforts and social media assistance, and information and technical assistance, including clearer communication about funding programs and regulatory requirements.

Finally, a number of responses indicated no need, uncertainty, or that the business was self-sufficient, which should be categorized separately to avoid distorting the analysis.

Together, these categories capture the primary concerns reflected in the survey and provide a structured way to analyze the open-ended responses.

Response 13

I would use colored flag to categories topics such as: Infrastructure, Employee Concerns (workforce), Financial, Training/Leadership Resource Needs

Response 14

1. Financial Assistance / Grants / Loans
(PPP, relief funding, access to capital, cash flow support)
2. Taxes & Fees Relief
(sales tax relief, deferments, reduced local/state obligations)
3. Workforce Availability & Staffing
(labor shortages, layoffs, hiring challenges)
4. Workforce Support Programs
(training, unemployment systems, wage subsidies)
5. Health & Safety Regulations
(mask mandates, compliance requirements, OSHA-type concerns)
6. Communication & Information Clarity
(need for accurate, timely, consistent COVID information)
7. Government Guidance & Coordination
(local/state/federal alignment, confusion over rules)
8. Operational Adjustments / Business Model Changes
(curbside, remote work, reduced hours, closures)
9. Customer Demand / Revenue Loss
(decline in sales, reduced foot traffic)
10. Marketing & Promotion Support
(help attracting customers, “shop local” campaigns)
11. Technology & Digital Needs
(e-commerce, online ordering, remote systems)
12. Supply Chain Disruptions
(inventory shortages, vendor delays)
13. Childcare & Family Support Issues
(impact on workforce availability due to school closures)
14. Infrastructure & Utilities
(internet access, broadband, essential services)
15. General Uncertainty / No Needs / Neutral Responses
(“none,” “we’re okay,” or unclear/variable responses)