



Montgomery County Employer Needs Analysis

The mission of this project was to conduct surveys to identify key challenges faced by Montgomery County businesses stemming from the Covid-19 pandemic. The surveys were conducted from May through July by representatives from the Delaware Valley Industrial Resource Center, the Hatfield Chamber of Commerce, the Indian Valley Chamber of Commerce, The Upper Perkiomen Valley Chamber of Commerce, the Main Line Chamber of Commerce, the Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce, the Chamber of Commerce for Greater Montgomery County, the Perkiomen Valley Chamber of Commerce, and the Pottstown Area Industrial Development, Inc. Interviewers were able to connect with 215 businesses representing all 10 key industry sectors.

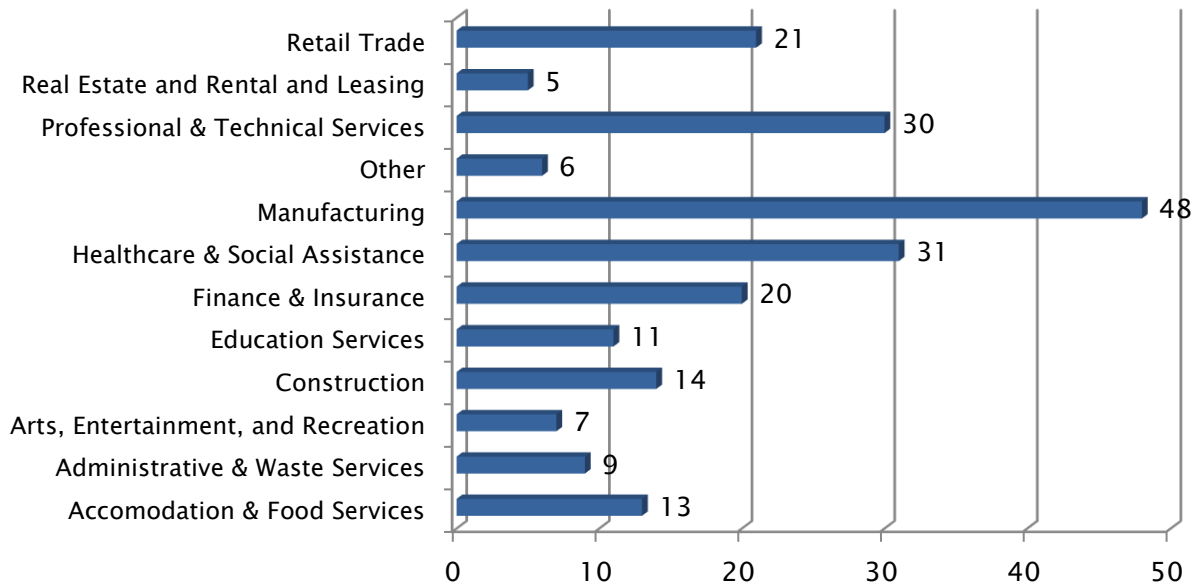
The following charts represent highlights of the survey results that will enable us to focus efforts on bouncing back from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Special thank you to Pam Kelly from the Chamber of Commerce for Greater Montgomery County for compiling the results.

MontcoWorks October 2020

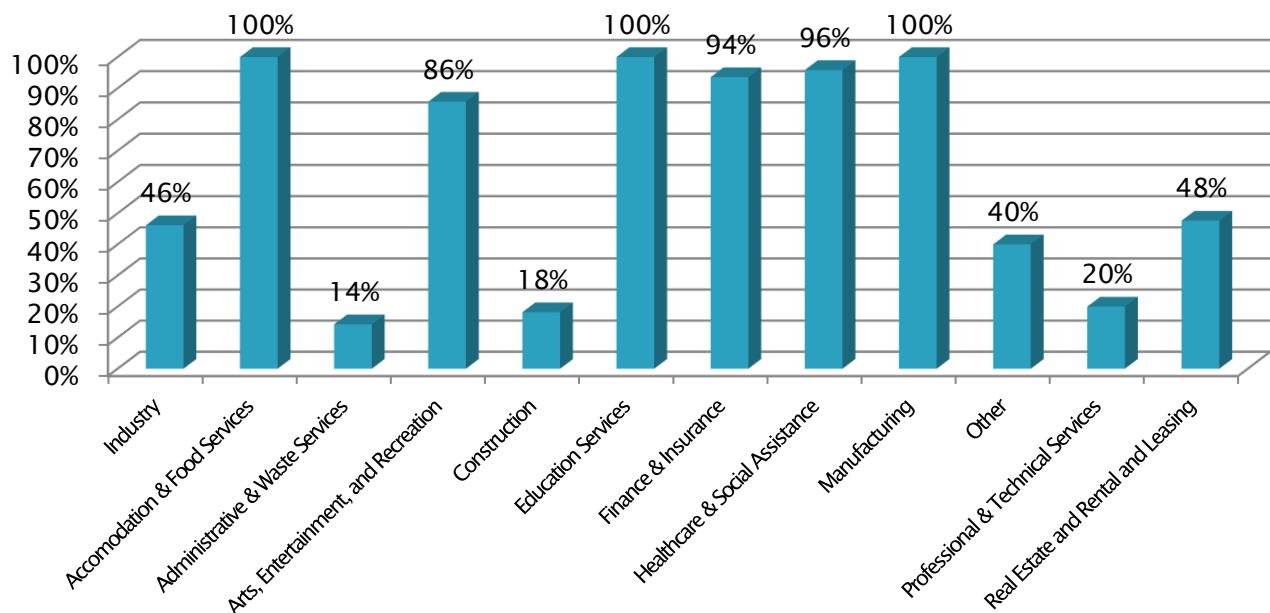
Industry Distribution

215 businesses were contacted with the following industry designation breakdown. Manufacturers made up 22% of respondents, with representation from all major industry sectors.



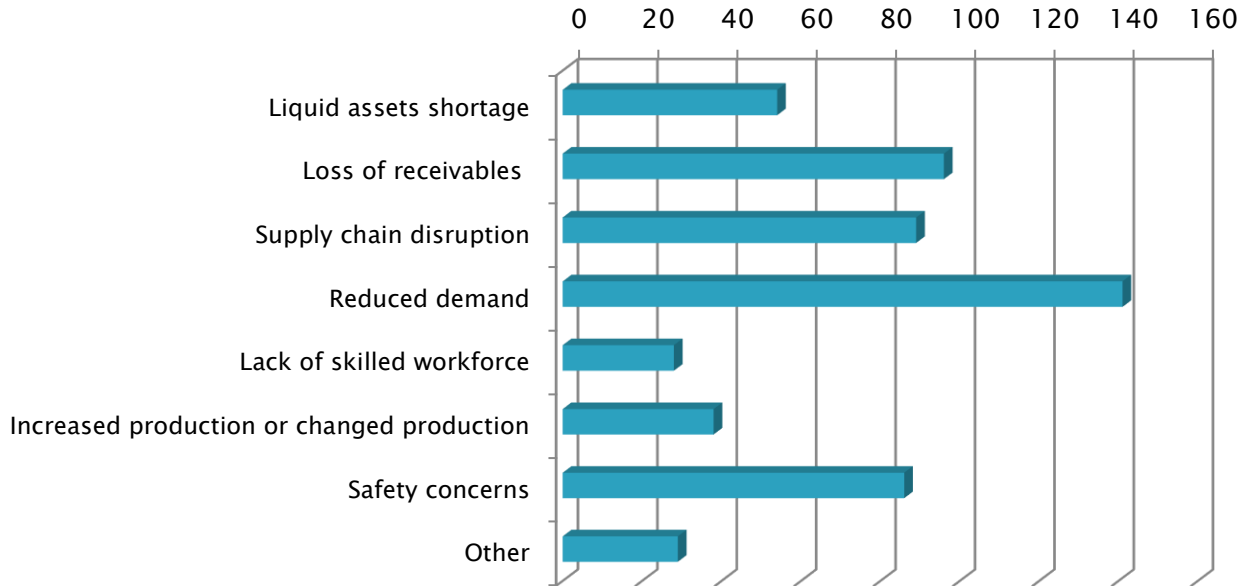
Essential & Non Essential

72% of surveyed businesses indicated they were classified as essential.



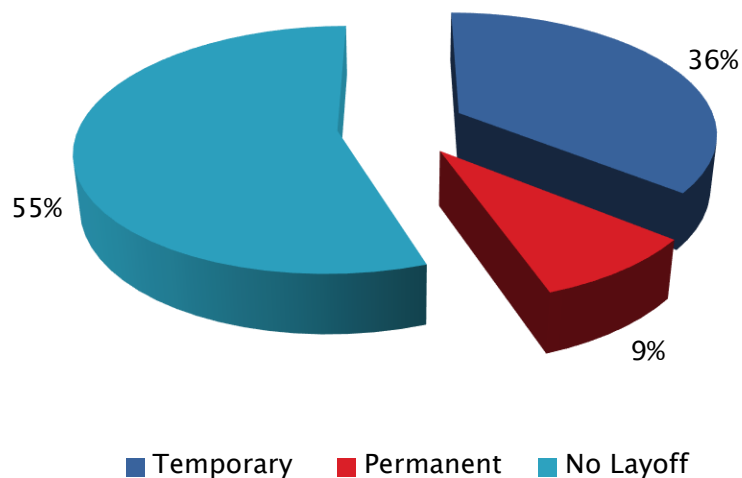
COVID-19 Impact

Businesses were asked for the top 4 ways COVID-19 had affected their business operations. The most frequent response was that they faced a reduced demand for goods and services.



Layoffs

55% of businesses reported no need to lay off employees as a result of COVID-19, 36% indicated temporary layoffs were necessary, and 9% had to permanently lay off staff.



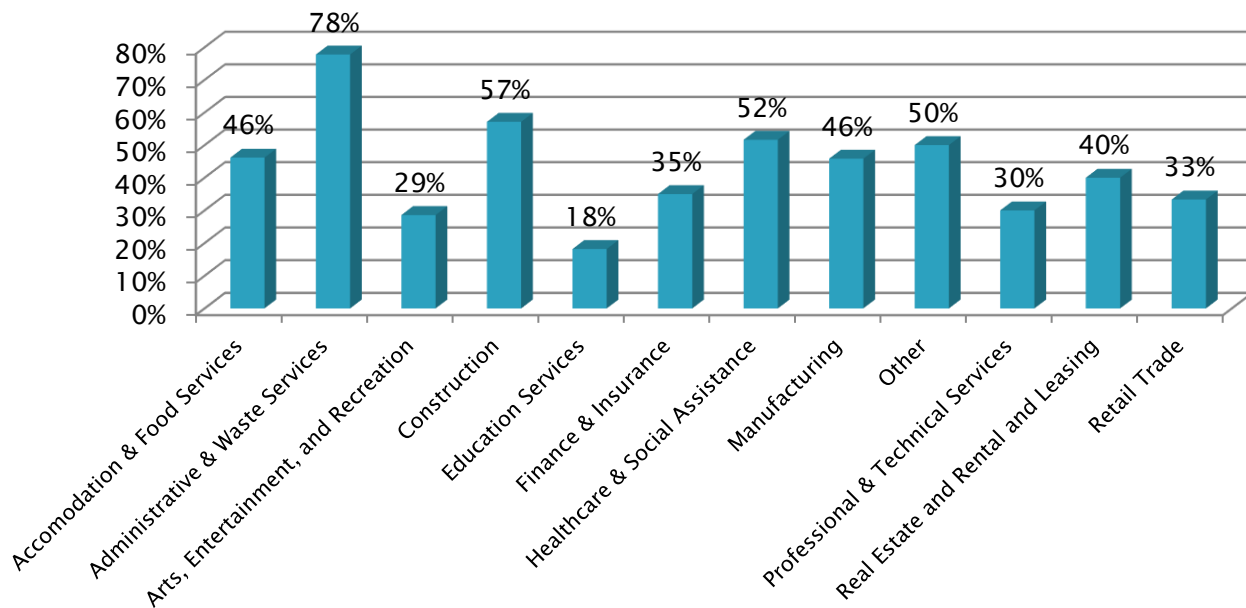
Grants

74% of surveyed businesses indicated they had applied for federal, state or local grants. At the time of the survey, 88% of businesses that had applied for grants and received at least one.



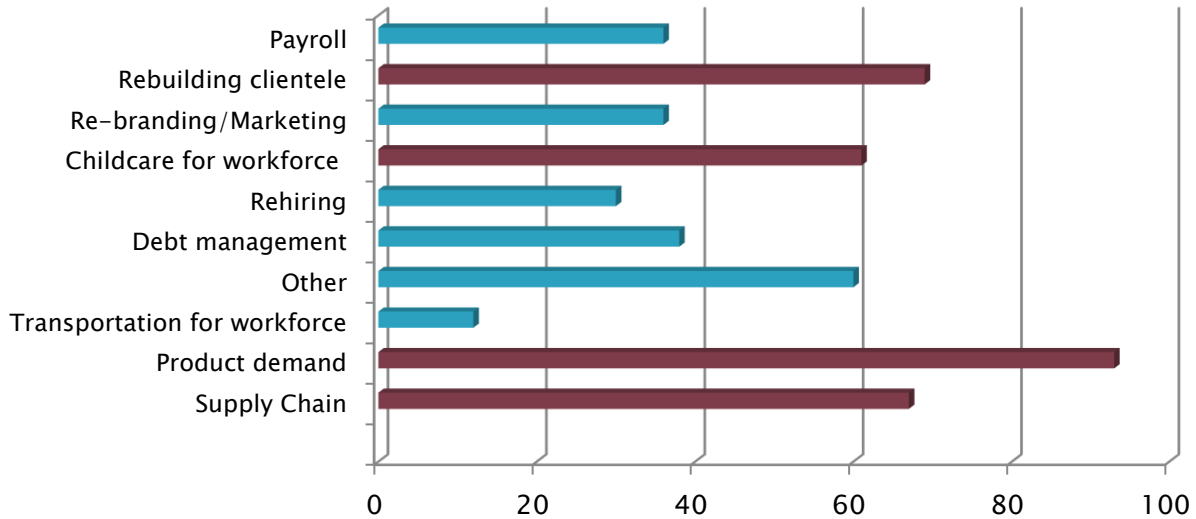
Skilled Workforce

42% of the businesses surveyed indicated a need for additional skilled workers. Within their given industries, the highest rate needing skilled workers were Administrative & Waste Services (78%), Construction (57%), and Healthcare & Social Assistance (52%). Administrative & Waste Services is a broad industry that includes establishments supporting the ongoing operations of other organizations by assisting with daily tasks and maintenance.



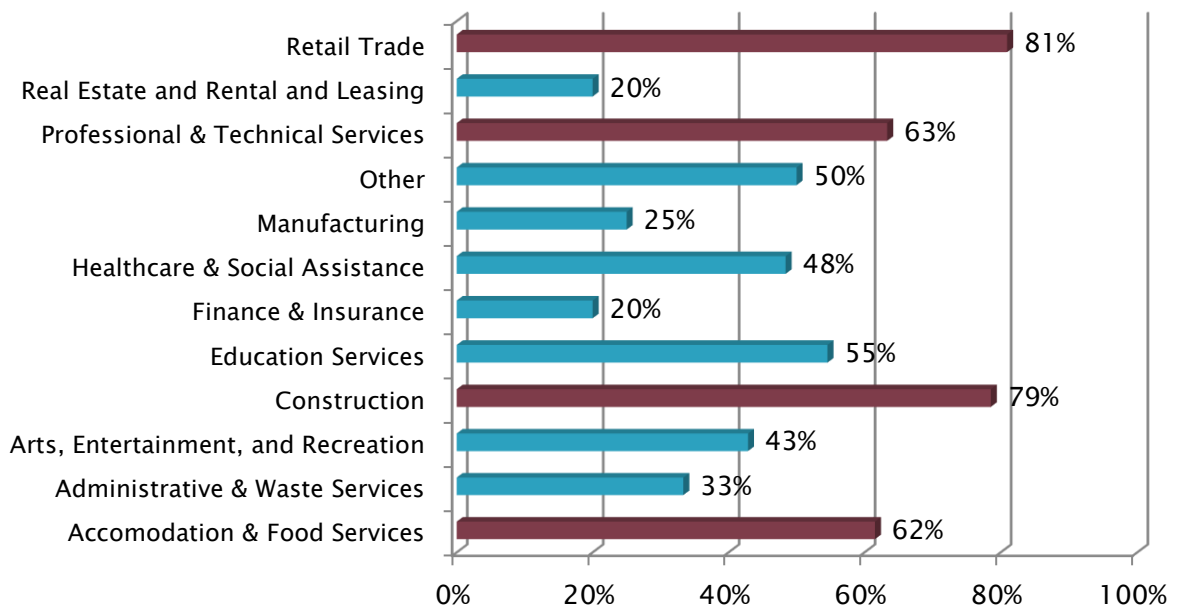
Concerns for reopening

On average, each business selected 2.33 concerns for reopening. The most frequent response, mentioned 93 times, was a concern for product demand.



Health & Safety Concerns

47% of respondents indicated health and safety concerns with reopening. The primary responses from businesses indicating health and safety concerns were access to personal protective equipment, ability to follow Center for Disease Control guidelines, and the transmission of COVID-19.



Next Steps

In response to the survey results, we planned several educational webinars to address common themes discussed with employers. The first was an Apprenticeship Event held on September 24th hosted by John Bond from First Quality and John Tkach from the Keystone Development Corporation. John Tkach shared his extensive experiences on partnering and developing newly registered apprenticeship programs and funding opportunities that are available through the State and Workforce Boards. John Bond shared the business perspective of developing and vetting applicants for their recently established Industrial Manufacturing Technician and Industrial Maintenance Technician Apprenticeships at their King of Prussia facility. The event was attended by 37 employers, educators and services agencies.

We also held, in partnership with EDSI, a Customer Service and Conflict Resolution Boot Camp. The presentations on September 23rd and 24th explored common responses to our rapidly changing circumstances, first impression bias, and specific COVID-19 related conflict resolution strategies to help customer service professionals overcome recent challenges and provide quality customer service during these unique times. During the virtual workshops, participants and business leaders were able to learn how to de-escalate COVID-19 induced interpersonal situations while understanding the importance of professional boundaries and constructive confrontation. The two general sessions and the train-the-trainer session were attended by a combined 25 business representatives.

Lastly, an Employer Liability Webinar is in development to help employers navigate through some of the legal concerns stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic.

We will be conducting more in depth surveys through Engage! to the employers indicating interest in how economic and workforce development efforts can assist in rebuilding and growth.

A key theme of the surveyed employers was a need for skilled workers. We will be looking to focus our efforts on recruiting WIOA customers and connecting them with training opportunities that can both help our local businesses and also lead to family sustaining wages.

Another way we can assist with upskilling existing employees is through Incumbent Worker Training. The focus of IWT is layoff aversion through skill development specific to the needs of the employer.

Finally, we will be looking to connect interested employers with the MontcoWorks*NOW WIOA youth program to explore opportunities in employment, training, mentorships, and more.

We are grateful to the participating chambers and businesses for taking the time to complete this survey. The results help to focus workforce development efforts in a meaningful way to positively impact both residents and businesses in Montgomery County.