

# 2018 BUSINESS RETENTION AND EXPANSION SURVEY REPORT





**2018 BUSINESS RETENTION SURVEY**  
 Please take a few minutes to complete this survey and return to us at [EDA@YorkCountyVA.gov](mailto:EDA@YorkCountyVA.gov) by **March 6, 2018**.  
 Business retention and expansion are the foundation of a healthy local economy. The Office of Economic Development recognizes and appreciates the contributions you make to York County and wants your business to be successful here. Your feedback will help us be proactive and responsive to the needs of the County's business community.  
**All responses will be kept strictly confidential. Thank you for your participation.**

**1 COMPANY INFORMATION**

Company Name \_\_\_\_\_ Corporately Owned? Yes  No

Local Contact Name \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Local Address \_\_\_\_\_

1a. Type of business:  Contracting and Construction  Manufacturing  Durable Goods (Retail)  
 Non-Durable Goods (Service)  Education and Health Services  Professional Services  
 Leisure/Tourism/Hospitality  Wholesale and Distribution  Other \_\_\_\_\_

1b. Briefly describe your main service/product: \_\_\_\_\_

2a. Current number of employees: \_\_\_\_\_

2b. Projected number of employees in two years: \_\_\_\_\_

3. New business was established in York County: \_\_\_\_\_

**2 BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT**

1. Has your company experienced increasing sales over the past two years? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes  No

2. Has your company experienced decreasing sales over the past two years? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes  No

3. Is your company experiencing difficulty obtaining fixed asset or working capital? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes  No

4. Is your company experiencing difficulty recruiting employees? If yes, please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

**2 BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT (continued)**

5. Has your company experienced problems with safety or security over the past two years? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes  No

6. Have any York County codes impacted your business over the past two years? If yes, please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

**3 COMPANY'S FUTURE PLANS**

1. Does your company own its current site/building? If yes, skip to question 2) \_\_\_\_\_ Yes  No

2a. Does your company lease its current site? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes  No

2b. Will your company renew its lease upon expiration? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes  No

3. Is your company planning closure or sale of the business? If yes, when (M/Y) and why? \_\_\_\_\_

4a. Is your company planning to relocate **within** York County? If yes, skip to question 5) \_\_\_\_\_ Yes  No

4b. Is your company planning to relocate **outside** of York County? If yes, where are you planning to relocate and when (M/Y)? \_\_\_\_\_

5. If you answered yes to 4a or 4b, what is the reason for relocation? (Check all that apply)  
 Access to Resources  Property Taxes  Market Changes  
 Land Constraints  Availability of Public Utilities  Other \_\_\_\_\_  
 Space/Building Constraints  Workforce/Labor Concerns  
 Code Requirements  Outdated Facility or Process

6. In the next two years is your company planning to expand in any of the following areas?  
 Employment \_\_\_\_\_ Yes  No   
 Building \_\_\_\_\_ Yes  No   
 Equipment \_\_\_\_\_ Yes  No

7. Is your company's current property/location large enough to allow expansion? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes  No

8. Can the Office of Economic Development assist you with any of the following? (Check all that apply)  
 Financing  Marketing  Training  Location  Permitting  Other \_\_\_\_\_  
 BNI Networking Groups  Virginia Peninsula Chamber of Commerce  
 Greater Williamsburg Chamber & Tourism Alliance  York County Chamber of Commerce  
 Other \_\_\_\_\_

**4 EVALUATION OF YORK COUNTY**

How do you rate the following?  Excellent  Good  Fair  Poor  Not Applicable

1. York County economic development efforts? \_\_\_\_\_

2. The Office of Economic Development's helpfulness during the start-up of your business? \_\_\_\_\_

3. The Office of Economic Development's helpfulness during the tenure of your business? \_\_\_\_\_

4. The availability of workforce training programs within York County and the local area? \_\_\_\_\_

5. The availability and cost of office space in York County? \_\_\_\_\_

6. The availability and cost of commercial space in York County? \_\_\_\_\_

7. York County's commercial/business regulatory environment? \_\_\_\_\_

8. York County in general, as a place to do business? \_\_\_\_\_

**5 ADDITIONAL FEEDBACK & FOLLOW-UP CONTACT**

1. Would you like a follow-up call from the Office of Economic Development? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes  No

2. What, in your opinion, could York County do to better serve firms in your industry and attract new firms? \_\_\_\_\_

3. Are you aware of any of your suppliers, partners, and/or customers, not already in the area, who might benefit from a location in York County? If so, please provide their contact information: \_\_\_\_\_ Yes  No

4. Are you familiar with York County's Biz Local website [www.kleppitribunal.com/yorkcount/](http://www.kleppitribunal.com/yorkcount/)? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes  No   
 If so, do you actively update your business listing, coupons, and events on the site? \_\_\_\_\_

5. Please share any additional comments regarding York County: \_\_\_\_\_

6. To receive a copy of this year's survey results and be added to our email distribution list, please write your email address below: \_\_\_\_\_

# INTRODUCTION

**IN DECEMBER OF 1999**, the Industrial Development Authority (IDA) initiated a Business Retention and Expansion Survey Program for York County.

## THE OBJECTIVES OF THE BUSINESS RETENTION SURVEY ARE TO:

- ➔ Learn about the local business community's perceptions of York County and the advantages and disadvantages of operating a business here.
- ➔ Identify pervasive problems or trends negatively impacting businesses and develop programs and/or processes to address these impacts and improve the economic environment in York County.
- ➔ Identify "red flag" situations and companies that are at risk of closing or relocating.
- ➔ Respond to the needs of "red flag" businesses with a variety of services, from providing information on financing and marketing, to acting as a liaison to County/State agencies.
- ➔ Establish a benchmark for measuring the effectiveness of our business retention and expansion program.

**IN JANUARY 2000**, over 1,000 surveys were sent to a sample of businesses in York County. This initial survey established a benchmark to measure the effectiveness of our business retention and expansion program, as well as the overall perception of economic development in the County. Over the years, list scrubbing has led to a reduction in the number of mailed surveys (2006 and 2008), but also an increase in the percentage of responses received. During 2007, staff worked closely with a team of students from William and Mary's Thomas Jefferson Public Policy Program to review and revamp the survey, making it more useful and user-friendly. The format, question style, and visual appeal were all greatly improved, as was the response rate.

**IN FEBRUARY 2018**, the EDA mailed **984 surveys** and received **69 responses** via mail and the Economic Development website for a 7% return rate. This represented a 1% decrease from the response rates received in 2016.

## SURVEY RESPONSE RATES ARE AS FOLLOWS:

SURVEY YEAR	NUMBER OF SURVEYS MAILED	NUMBER OF RESPONSES RECEIVED	RETURN RATE
2002	1,200	210	17.5%
2004	1,650	229	13.9%
2006	1,230	215	17.5%
2008	840	178	21.0%
2010	970	182	18.8%
2012	798	78	9.8%
2014	760	119	15.7%
2016	936	78	8.3%
2018	984	69	7.0%

Survey respondents consisted of **52% Corporately-owned businesses** and **46% independently-owned enterprises** (2% answered N/A).

## SURVEY RESPONDENTS CONSISTED OF BUSINESSES REPRESENTING THE FOLLOWING INDUSTRIES:

INDUSTRY	2012 RESULTS	2014 RESULTS	2016 RESULTS	2018 RESULTS
Contracting or Construction	21.8%	22.1%	14.1%	17.4%
Manufacturing	3.8%	4.1%	2.6%	2.9%
Durable Goods (Retail)	24.4%	13.1%	19.2%	13.0%
Non-Durable Goods (Service)	9.0%	5.7%	21.8%	1.5%
Education or Health Services	2.6%	5.7%	3.9%	1.5%
Professional Services	16.7%	22.1%	24.4%	34.8%
Leisure/Tourism/Hospitality	2.6%	3.3%	12.8%	5.8%
Wholesale or Distribution	2.6%	2.5%	1.3%	4.4%
Other	26.9%	30.3%	0%	27.5%

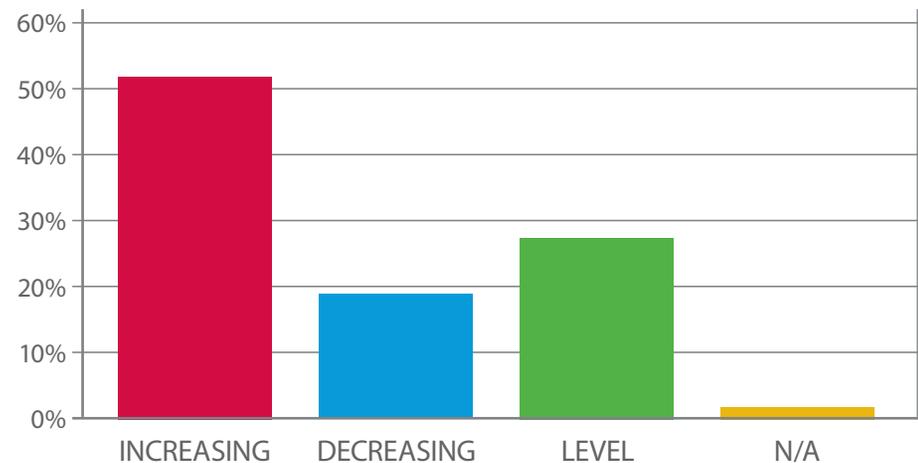
# SURVEY RESULTS

The following data depicts results for several of the survey questions that provide insight into the business owners' perceptions of doing business in York County in our current economy.

**QUESTION:  
HAS YOUR COMPANY  
EXPERIENCED INCREASING,  
DECREASING, OR LEVEL  
SALES OVER THE PAST  
TWO YEARS?**

The majority of respondents (79.7%) noted that they experienced level or increasing sales over the past two years, which is a positive indicator that the economy is improving.

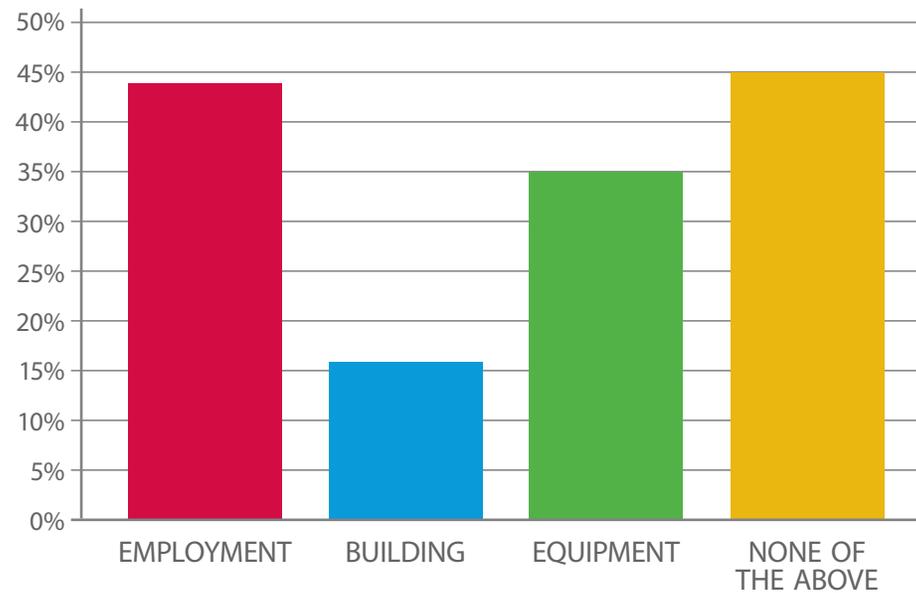
### SALES OVER THE PAST 2 YEARS



**QUESTION:  
IN THE NEXT TWO YEARS, IS YOUR BUSINESS  
PLANNING TO EXPAND IN THE  
FOLLOWING AREAS?**

A very positive trend in this year's survey is the expected growth and expansion of the respondent's businesses in several key areas; employment, building, and equipment. The OED is ramping up outreach efforts to the business community so that staff can be ready to assist when needed.

**EXPANSION PLANS OVER THE NEXT 2 YEARS**

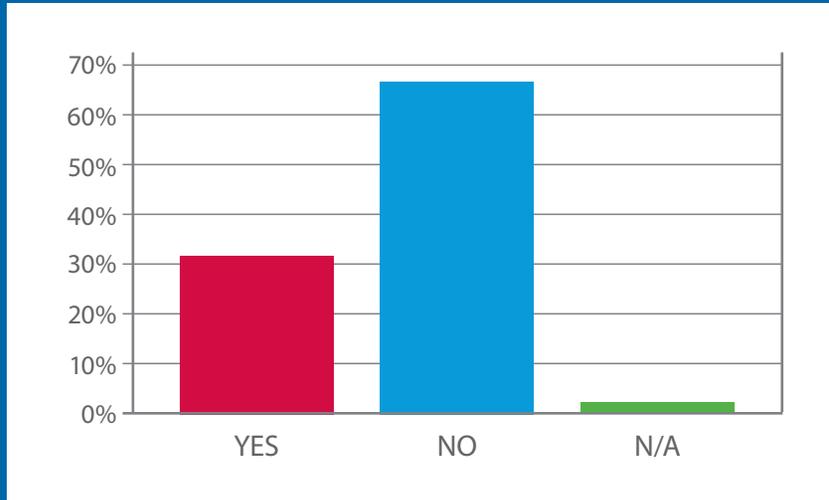


**QUESTION:  
DOES YOUR COMPANY EXPERIENCE  
DIFFICULTIES RECRUITING  
EMPLOYEES WITH ADEQUATE SKILLS?**

**IF YES, PLEASE DESCRIBE.**

In previous surveys, workforce concerns seemed to be the most consistent and problematic issues facing the survey respondents. In 2008, 25% said they had issues in the areas of workforce development and employee attraction and retention. In 2010 and 2012, that percentage fell quite a bit, to just 13%. This year, the response has risen again to **22 respondents (or 32%)** citing workforce issues. Still, the overwhelming majority (67%) of respondents say they are not experiencing difficulty recruiting and retaining employees.

**EMPLOYEE  
RECRUITMENT DIFFICULTIES**



*\* Note: Several organizations, such as The Virginia Employment Commission, Peninsula Worklink, and The Peninsula Council for Workforce Development provide employment services, funding, and/or training for both employers and employees in Hampton Roads. Visit [www.pcfwd.org](http://www.pcfwd.org) for more information on the many workforce programs offered.*

**QUESTION:  
HAS YOUR COMPANY  
EXPERIENCED PROBLEMS  
WITH SAFETY OVER THE  
PAST TWO YEARS?**

**Over 95%** of respondents indicated that they have not had any safety or security concerns or situations over the past two years. This is very positive feedback that speaks to the high quality of the county's law enforcement program. While many respondents indicated that the costs of doing business in York County were a bit higher than in neighboring localities, due mainly to the cost of real estate and space rental, most were willing to accept these higher costs because of the safety and security they enjoy here.

**QUESTION:  
HAVE ANY YORK  
COUNTY CODES  
IMPACTED YOUR  
BUSINESS OVER THE  
PAST TWO YEARS?**

Another positive statistic is that over 78% of respondents said No, that no York County codes had impacted their business over the past two years. This, in concert with the above security question, imply that neither codes nor security are causing a major concern for York County's business community.

**QUESTION:  
WHAT CAN YORK  
COUNTY DO TO BETTER  
SERVE LOCAL  
BUSINESSES?**

When asked what York County could do to better serve firms and to attract new companies to the area, comments centered on the following:

1. Create a more business-friendly environment by reducing building regulation restrictions and improving staff's attitudes
2. Offer more support to existing small businesses and "call/touch" more of them more often
3. Better promote available OED services, resources, and local businesses

**QUESTION:  
IS YOUR COMPANY  
PLANNING CLOSURE  
OR SALE OF THE  
BUSINESS?**

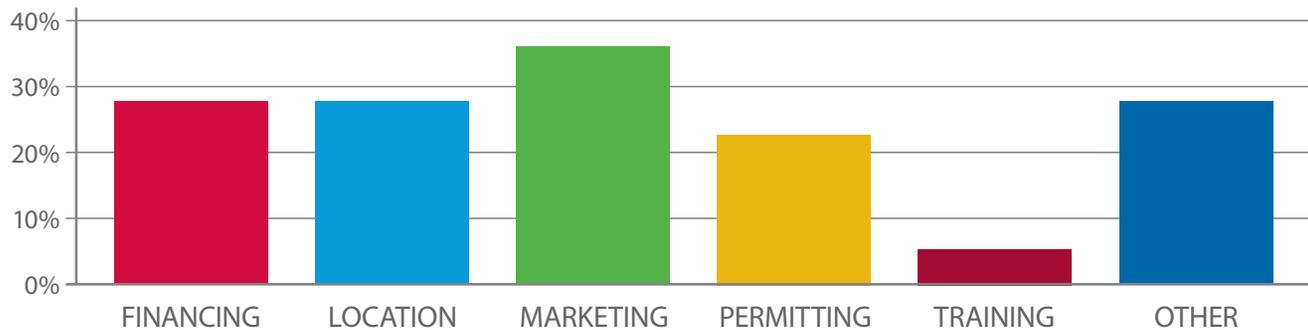
**IF YES, WHY?**

Only three respondents indicated they have plans to close and/or sell their business. Two did not disclose a reason for the closure/sale of the business. The other was planning to close their businesses due to the property being sold in the near future.

**QUESTION:  
CAN THE OED ASSIST YOU WITH  
ANY OF THE FOLLOWING?**

The following chart shows the areas in which respondents, who plan to expand their businesses, would like help from the OED:

**AREAS BUSINESSES WOULD LIKE HELP FROM THE OED**



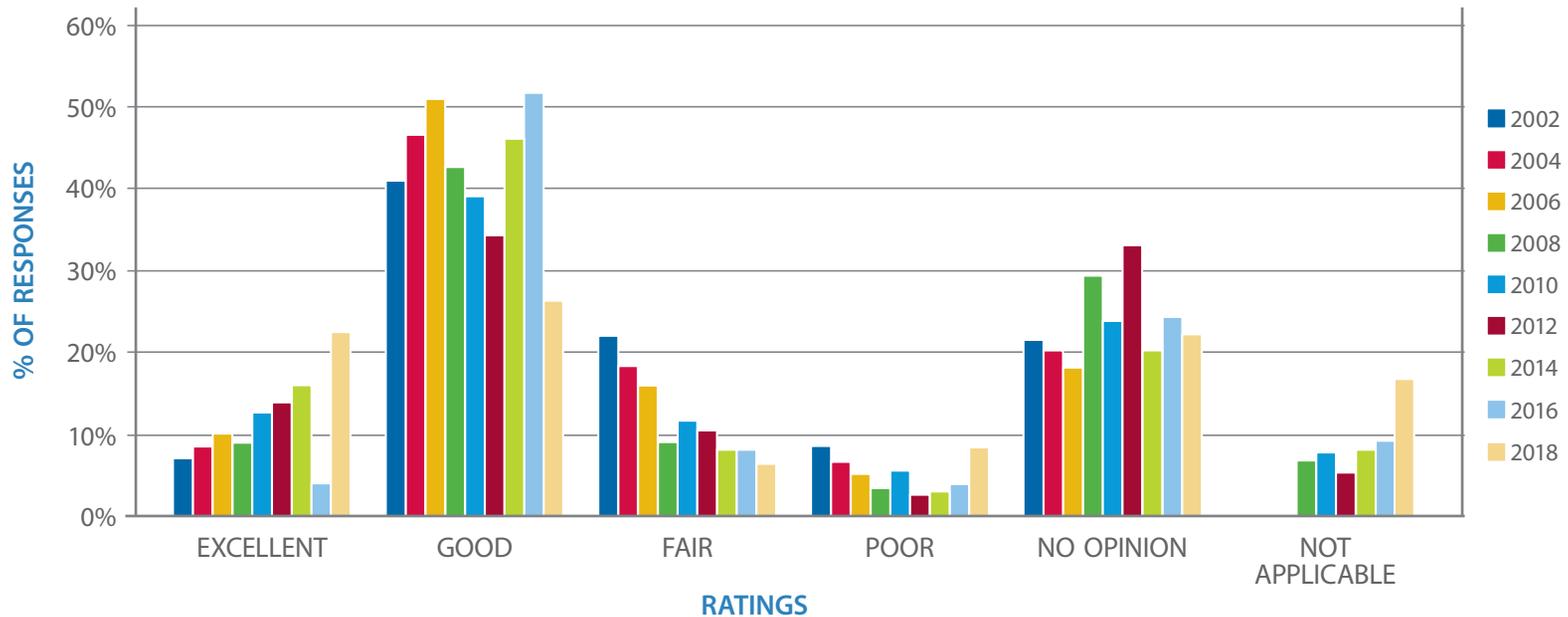
Consistent with responses from 2006 to 2016, marketing is the category for the 2018 survey in which respondents indicated they needed the most assistance. In response to this, the OED has developed new initiatives aimed at training businesses in new and innovative marketing techniques and at actually promoting the businesses to the local community and increasing their exposure. More efforts have been made to help promote new and existing businesses and offer them free marketing assistance. Staff efforts have been increased on the following initiatives: business grand openings, Buy Local website listings and promotion, TV exposure, press releases, social media coverage, and more.

**THE FOLLOWING GRAPHS** depict results for two of the survey questions that provide insight into the business owners' perceptions of York County and how these opinions have changed since 2002.

**QUESTION:  
HOW DO YOU RATE THE  
COUNTY'S ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS?**

The overall opinion regarding the County's economic development efforts is good. In 2018, **48%** of the respondents rated the County's economic development efforts as good or excellent, which represented a slight decrease from the 2016 ratings.

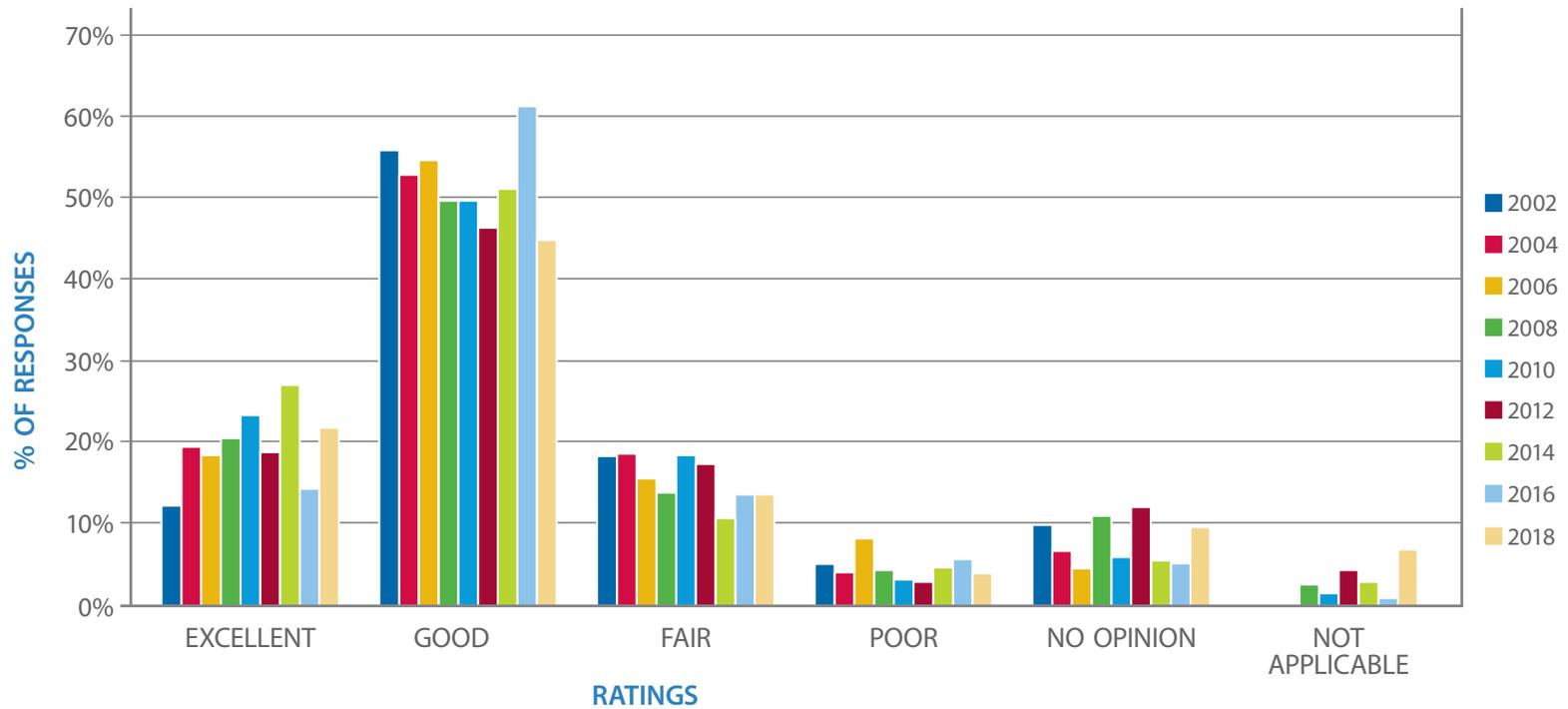
**RATING YORK COUNTY'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS**



**QUESTION:  
WHAT IS YOUR OVERALL OPINION OF THE  
COUNTY AS A PLACE OF BUSINESS?**

The overall opinion regarding the County's business environment is positive. In 2018, 47 respondents (**68%**) believed that the County was a good or excellent place to operate a business.

**RATING YORK COUNTY AS A PLACE TO DO BUSINESS**



# CONCLUSION

In response to these survey results and feedback received throughout the past two years, the OED has taken several steps to improve the economic environment in York County and to address the recurring suggestion that we need to offer even more marketing assistance.

The OED constantly works to improve and increase **communication with our existing business community** to make them more aware of the programs and services currently being offered. The OED accomplishes this in four ways:

- Regularly utilizing **email marketing programs** to deliver important information and announcements to our new and existing businesses. To sign up for these emails, visit [www.YesYorkCounty.com](http://www.YesYorkCounty.com).
- Conducting **new business welcome visits** and **sending informational welcome letters** to all new business license applicants, to introduce our services and programs. Additionally, OED senior staff continues to conduct **regular business retention visits throughout the year**.
- Proactively **marketing our programs and services** via speaking engagements and attendance at local business networking events and trade shows, the placement of ads in local publications, and by increasing direct communications via email with the business community.

Each year the number one request has been for the OED to offer more marketing assistance to our existing businesses. In response, staff has created a **summary document** that describes the many ways in which the OED can help promote businesses. The New Business Promotion document provides guidance and resources for businesses to improve their marketing program.

New efforts this year focus on highlighting various businesses in the community and helping them to gain additional exposure via the County's website, TV Channel 46, and social media pages.

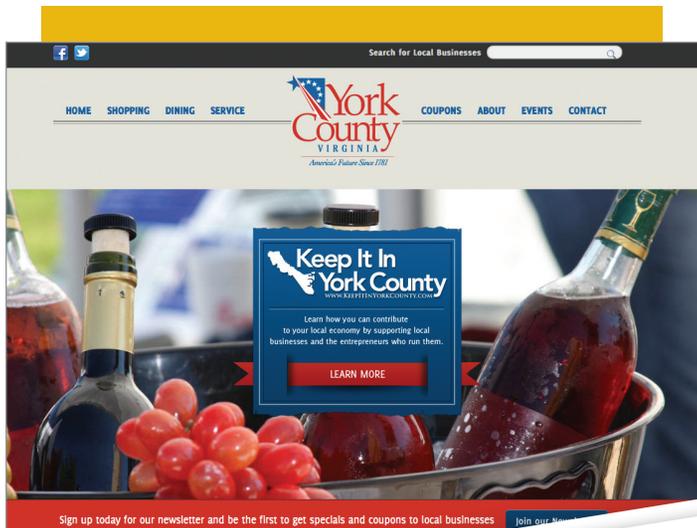
- **Long-standing Featured Business Stories** – In an effort to help our long-standing businesses gain exposure in the local community, the OED has begun writing feature stories about businesses that have been in York County for more than 20 years. Professional photos are also taken of the businesses for the story, and are provided to them for their own promotional use.
- **Featured Business Images** – Staff has contracted with local photographer, Alexander Kravets, and staff photographer, Jenn Armstrong, to have a series of photos taken of various local businesses. This allows us to provide additional exposure for our businesses, by featuring the high-quality images on our electronic and print materials, rather than relying on stock images. The edited images are provided to the businesses for their own promotional use.

→ **Coffee At Home TV Show** – As part of the Home-Based Business Assistance Program, staff has created a new casual interview style video show featuring unique home-based businesses in the County. The show will first air online, then on TV Channel 46.

## ADDITIONAL MARKETING AND PROMOTION IS BEING GIVEN TO THE COUNTY'S FOUR GRANT PROGRAMS:

1. The **Google Street View for Business Grant Program** offers matching funds up to \$500 per business towards having interior panoramic photos taken and made into an interactive tour to be posted on Google.
2. The **Home-based Business Transition Grant Program** offers funds up to \$2,000 to existing home-based York County businesses moving to commercial space in the County, thus giving the company better exposure and opportunities.
3. The **SBDC NxLevel/Business Plan Course Scholarship Program** encourages York County's business owners and entrepreneurs to attend the Hampton Roads Small Business Development Center's NxLevel course, a 15-week national entrepreneurial training program that helps entrepreneurs learn the skills needed to create and strengthen successful business ventures.
4. The **E-commerce Grant Program** encourages website development for York County's businesses, helping them to increase their online presence and capabilities and to better promote themselves.

## THE FOLLOWING PROGRAMS ARE SOME OF THE MOST IMPORTANT AND VISIBLE WAYS BUSINESSES CAN GAIN EXPOSURE AND EDUCATION:



→ **BUY LOCAL PROGRAM:** The EDA's Buy Local initiative and website, titled "Keep It In York County," serves as a free online marketing tool for York's existing businesses. The main component of the campaign is an interactive website [www.KeepItInYorkCounty.com](http://www.KeepItInYorkCounty.com) that features a searchable database of all of York County's existing commercially-based businesses. Each business automatically has a basic listing, however; businesses are encouraged to enhance their listing for free with photos, logos, coupons, events, descriptions, taglines, and more. The website provides a one-stop-shop for finding local businesses, events, sales, and specials. OED staff is continually promoting the site, and thus the businesses listed on it. Billboards have been placed at local sports fields, ads placed in local newspapers and publications, and much more.

- **E-NEWSLETTERS:** Each month OED staff composes and distributes two emailed newsletters to over 3400 local contacts. The **OED e-newsletter** features upcoming business events, recent EDA actions, relevant business announcements, stories about local businesses in the news, and the list of new businesses for the past month. The Buy Local e-newsletter promotes upcoming business sales and events and features current coupons and offers for local businesses. Each of these newsletters provides local businesses with additional free exposure.
- **GRAND OPENING/RIBBON CUTTING PROGRAM:** The OED offers free Grand Opening and Ribbon Cutting Assistance to all York County businesses. These services include planning assistance, scheduling speakers, providing the ribbon and large ceremonial scissors, taking event photos, and drafting and distributing a media release announcing the event. Due to the increase in requests for this service, OED staff recently developed a new brochure that details the process and best practices for these types of celebrations. The brochure is available online at [www.YesYorkCounty.com](http://www.YesYorkCounty.com) or at the OED office, located at 224 Ballard Street in Historic Yorktown.
- **OED WEBSITE:** In addition to publishing the new business list monthly, the OED website also features recent news stories about local businesses, including any recent awards or accomplishments received. Any York County business is welcome to submit news articles for publication on the site. This opportunity not only provides free advertising to new companies, but also promotes the 'Keep it in York County' theme.
- **EDUCATION COURSES:** Each year the EDA, in partnership with the Hampton Roads Small Business Development Center, the Williamsburg SCORE Chapter, James City County, and the City of Williamsburg, sponsors several education courses for local businesses to teach them how to better promote and market themselves. In recent years, with the creation and enhancement of the Home-based Business Assistance Program, the focus was expanded to include better assistance to home-based businesses, in addition to traditional brick-and-mortar companies. A series of Lunch & Learns is being held monthly to help attendees in important areas, such as legal, marketing, accounting, cyber security, etc. Please visit our website at [www.YesYorkCounty.com](http://www.YesYorkCounty.com) for detailed information on all available educational programs and to sign up for event notifications via email.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

224 Ballard Street | P.O. Box 612 | Yorktown, Virginia 23690

Phone: 757.890.3317 | Fax: 757.890.6670

Website: [www.yesyorckcounty.com](http://www.yesyorckcounty.com) | Email: [econdev@yorkcounty.gov](mailto:econdev@yorkcounty.gov)