BUSINESS RETENTION & EXPANSION

VISITATION PROGRAM

2004

Colorado Springs Economic Vitality Group

A Better Living. A Better Life.

CITY OF COLORADO SPRINGS

Colorado Springs Utilities

It's how we're all connected

PIKES PEAK COMMUNITY COLLEGE

EL PASO COUNTY COLORADO 1861

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Colorado Springs Economic Development Corporation

STATE OF COLORADO 1876

PIKES PEAK WORKFORCE CENTER

THE CHAMBER colorado springs

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For questions or comments, please contact Kevin McKinnon at
(719) 385-5561 or **kmckinnon@springsgov.com**.

Dear Reader,

In 2003, the Economic Vitality Group (EVG) implemented a formal business retention program to meet continuing challenges our business community was facing and to anticipate future issues. The Business Retention and Expansion Visitation Program (BREV) was designed to fill this void in the community's economic development program for the region. The objectives of the BREV program are to:

1. Identify concerns and opportunities local businesses may be experiencing related to economic development;
2. Provide local businesses with information about local and State programs and resources to increase efficiency and competitiveness;
3. Establish or maintain a channel of communication between the business community and community leaders and address issues at the local level;
4. Continually update and implement a strategic action plan for economic development.

It is the goal of the EVG to sustain the economic base in the region and promote the growth of new enterprises. The EVG clearly understands the economic health of the region depends on existing business as they provide the wealth creation necessary to sustain the quality of life we all enjoy. The focus of the BREV program is to reinforce Colorado Springs as a good place to do business. The EVG is responsive to the needs of existing businesses and continues to make every effort to address concerns.

All surveys completed in 2004 have been aggregated for the purposes of this report. This report is intended to reflect the current business climate as opined by local executives and business owners. Previous results have assisted community leaders and economic development professionals in understanding our economic base, identifying threats and opportunities and have served as a catalyst for implementing the new economic development strategy – Springs into Action '04. In fact, one of the top priorities, as determined by the Mayor's Oversight Committee, was to create a full-time Business Retention position. Since that time, the Greater Colorado Springs Economic Development Corporation has created the position with funding assistance from Colorado Springs Utilities, the City of Colorado Springs and El Paso County.

Congratulations to Mr. Maurice Gaubatz, President and CEO of Pyxant Labs. Mr. Gaubatz won the Personal Digital Assistant (PDA) given away by the EVG just for participating in the program during 2004.

The EVG especially would like to thank all participating companies for their time and effort in this program. The EVG is also appreciative they have chosen the Pikes Peak region in which to do business.

The Economic Vitality Group

<u>Executive Summary</u>

Effective community development programs require three elements:
(1) support for expansion and retention of existing business
(2) attraction of new business to diversify the economy as it changes
(3) encouragement for the creation of new wealth-generating enterprises

Following the most recent recession, the Business Retention and Expansion Visitation (BREV) program has become an important element of economic development efforts. However, due to a restructuring of the City's Office of Economic Development and the transition of the program to the EDC in 2004, the number of participants was fewer than expected. For 2005, a full-time position has been created to manage the BREV program and coordinate the Springs into Action '04 economic development strategy. The goal of the program does not change: expand and coordinate business retention and expansion activities to assist local primary employers.

In 2004, visits continued to local primary employers through the efforts of Economic Vitality Group members and community leaders. The focus in 2004 was to visit with smaller companies than those visited in the previous year.

2003 Average Employer Size – 422 employees
2004 Average Employer Size – 36 employees

BREV facts since inception in 2003:
- Roughly 340 companies invited to participate
- Nearly 190 companies have participated (120 in 2003, 65 in 2004)
- 6 sectors of the local economic base represented
- Firms ranged in size from 5 to over 1000 employees
- Continued low participation rate from businesses with less than 15 employees
- Many BREV participants also serve on SIA '04 task forces

Many similar issues, strengths and weaknesses were identified when comparing yearly results. <u>However, caution is advised when comparing results due to the disparity in employer size, needs of different companies and sample size.</u> Also, in 2004, a mail survey was conducted in addition to business visits that may impact the results since an economic development professional was not present to expand on the comments.

As in 2003, there were similar responses from executives and business owners about community's strengths. They are listed in order of response frequency:

Community Strengths

2004 Responses	2003 Responses
Quality of Life	Quality of Life
Workforce	Workforce
Location	Business Climate
Suppliers	Location
Business Climate	Suppliers
Community	Military Presence

Many similar responses were also received regarding weaknesses. They are listed in order of response frequency:

Community Weaknesses

2004 Responses	2003 Responses
Transportation Infrastructure	Transportation Infrastructure
Community Issues	Air Service
Workforce	Workforce
Business Climate	Business Climate
Boom/Bust Cycles	Local Regulation
Air Service	Community Issues

Interestingly, business climate is listed both as a strength and a weakness. Capital intensive industries such as manufacturing responded that the business climate is a weakness.

Barriers to growth, listed in order of response frequency:

Barriers to Growth

2004 Responses	2003 Responses
Transportation Infrastructure	Loss of Customer Base
Community Issues	Absence of Business Name (Bill Gates)
Loss of Customer Base	Inadequate City Services (Transit etc.)
Business Climate	Lack of Major Research University
Workforce	Workforce
Location	Lack of Incentives

Vital to the BREV program is addressing issues facing local companies. Over 45 issues were addressed in 2004 and over 130 since 2003. Issues in frequency order included:

Issues Addressed

2004 Responses	2003 Responses
Financing	Financing
Workforce Attraction	Workforce Attraction
Workforce Training	Workforce Training
Expansion Support	Local Regulation
Export Assistance	Utility Related
Political Networking	Community Problems

Once again, employers are optimistic regarding expansion plans. Roughly 45% of all companies surveyed indicated a planned expansion. When considering the size of the firms responding, it is quite impressive that they project to increase employment by over 50%. Note: Not all companies provided information in all categories.

Year	Estimated Investment	Estimated New Jobs	Estimated New Space (sf)
2004	$6,500,000	441	103,500
2003	$237,914,250	2,923	1,278,000

Also important to note is that several companies that indicated expansion plans in 2003 have completed their project and added jobs. In fact, 2004 was the first year of positive job growth in the region since 2001. Projections from 2004 included estimates of 50% employment growth but, interestingly, the 2003 increase was a change of 20% in employment due to the larger workforce employed by the companies participating.

Some salient concerns that emerged in the 2004 effort include:

- Small businesses believe there are no resources available to assist them, yet they are unaware of what is available to them
- The rising cost of insurance
- Difficulty locating qualified senior management from the local labor pool
- Housing costs and their employees' ability to purchase a home
- Companies are forced to keep prices low or lose business to overseas competition

Several steps have recently been undertaken to assist in the overall economic development goals of the region:

- The Rural Transportation Authority (RTA) may address the concern of transportation infrastructure but could remain a weakness until construction is complete
- Continued efforts of the Colorado Springs Airport to expand local air service and the development of the business park as an employment center
- Several bills currently in the State legislature are aimed at reducing business personal property tax to reduce the tax burden on employers
- On-going industry task forces have been formed to promote community collaboration as a result of Springs into Action '04
- The Greater Colorado Springs Chamber of Commerce insurance plan to reduce health insurance costs for participating Chamber members
- $250,000 awarded in workforce training grants (trained by PPCC)

Some potential action items resulting from the surveys include:

- Develop incentives and financing tools to encourage the growth of local firms to include start-ups and small business
- Expand incubator concept beyond technology to include other industries to encourage the growth of entrepreneurial ventures
- Collaborate with local industries to promote school-to-work programs with local high schools, particularly in the skilled trade field
- Promote existing economic development resources and programs through BREV and other outreach programs with support of local media
- Support legislation to reduce the cost of insurance

Although many of these findings may have been intuitively known, it is important to validate and quantify the perceptions about doing business locally. In 2005, the EVG intends to re-visit many of the companies that participated in 2003. As planned, the information gathered this year from larger employers will be compared to the 2003 baseline data.

The Economic Vitality Group

The Economic Vitality Group (EVG), formed in 1990, is a collaborative effort of Economic Development organizations and other key players in local business development. Without the involvement and cooperation of all of these organizations, the development and execution of an Economic Development Strategy would be very difficult. It is through this partnership that the true strength of the community is displayed. The group meets monthly to keep all organizations abreast of current economic and business issues. The EVG focuses on economic sustainability for the region and is comprised of the following organizations:

Greater Colorado Springs Economic Development Corporation
President – Rocky Scott Phone (719) 471-8183

To sustain and improve the quality of life in the greater Colorado Springs area by helping to meet community demand for the number, diversification and average income of primary jobs that are needed to support the population and the tax base.

City of Colorado Springs Office of Economic Development
Manager – Elena Nunez Phone (719) 385-5855

To provide the City government's business and economic development services including local business assistance, expansion and retention, industry attraction, incentive programs and downtown development to meet the needs of local and relocating businesses and community residents to create, grow, and retain high-quality jobs, enhance the community tax base and build wealth for local citizens.

El Paso County Office of Economic Development and Public Finance
Director – Frank Barber Phone (719) 520-6480

To promote community development which improves quality of life in the best interest of all residents of El Paso County. This is accomplished primarily through economic development, affordable housing, and public financing programs.

Colorado Springs Utilities
CEO – Phil Tollefson Phone (719) 668-3820

To add to the quality of life in Colorado Springs by working together to build value for our citizen-owners with a reputation for operational effectiveness, customer loyalty and competitive utility products and services.

Greater Colorado Springs Chamber of Commerce
President – Will Temby Phone (719) 635-1551

To promote the economic growth and prosperity of Colorado Springs and the Pikes Peak region; to strengthen the American system of free, competitive enterprise; and to represent the common interests of business, industry and the professionals in the development of sound public policy which promotes economic opportunity for all citizens.

Pikes Peak Community College
President – Joseph Garcia Phone (719) 540-7574

To provide high-quality, educational opportunities accessible to all, with a focus on student success and community needs: including occupational programs for youth and adults in career and technical fields: two-year transfer educational programs to qualify students for admission to the junior year at other colleges and universities: and a broad range of personal, career, and technical education for adults.

Pikes Peak Workforce Center
Director – Peggy Herbertson Phone (719) 667-3792

To create opportunities for workforce development by offering programs designed to serve a broad spectrum of the population.

Colorado Office of Economic Development and International Trade
Director – Brian Vogt Phone (719) 227-1699

To foster a positive business climate that encourages quality economic development through financial and technical assistance for local and regional economic development activities throughout the state of Colorado.

University of Colorado at Colorado Springs
Chancellor – Pam Shockley Phone (719) 262-3334

The Colorado Springs campus of the University of Colorado shall be a comprehensive baccalaureate liberal arts and sciences institution with selective admission standards. The Colorado Springs campus shall provide selected professional programs and such graduate programs as will serve the needs of the Colorado Springs metropolitan area, emphasizing those programs not offered by other institutions of higher education.

The Business Retention and Expansion Visitation Program

One of the objectives of the Year 2000 Economic Development Strategy was to expand and improve the coordination of business retention activities, thus the formation of the Business Retention and Expansion Visitation Program (BREV). In 2003, the initiative was undertaken and since has developed into a priority for the community's economic development efforts.

The goal of the BREV program is to maintain a healthy economy and positive business climate to achieve the growth and retention of local business, industry and jobs. Existing firms are the foundation of our economy and already have a commitment to the community. National research states that existing employers create 60-80% of a community's new jobs. In addition, companies being recruited to the area will also contact local firms to assess the business climate and workforce.

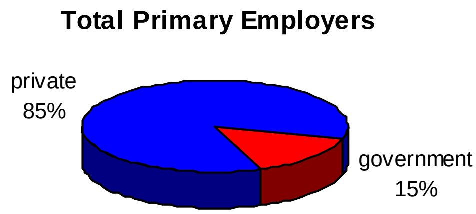
It was also evident that the economic development community, elected officials and other community leaders need to show more support for local companies by ultimately opening up channels of communication and truly listening to concerns the business community may have. Companies now have the opportunity to share their concerns and identify any issues that may affect their ability to run an effective operation in the region. The program also allows people outside of economic development to really understand what constitutes the local economic base.

For the purposes of this program, economic development efforts are focused on primary employers. A primary employer is a firm that sells goods and services outside the community, therefore bringing dollars back into the community and enhancing the tax base. These jobs also create a multiplier effect that translates to secondary jobs in retail or service sectors to support the primary jobs. For example, there is a large base in the electronic computer and instruments industry (firms with SIC codes starting with 35, 36 and 38). These jobs typically have a multiplier of 2.5. The multiplier effect means that for every job created in this sector, 1.5 jobs are created in the secondary labor force (secondary jobs would be in the form of support services to primary employers and their employees such as suppliers, drycleaners, restaurants etc). The suppliers are also critical since they promote import substitution thereby limiting the "outsourcing" of work to suppliers elsewhere.

The first step in implementing the BREV program was the purchase of the E-Synchronist software program. The software enables all EVG members to share information about existing employers while continuing to adhere to confidentiality guidelines. The information gathered is entered into the software program to generate reports analyzing workforce problems, expansion opportunities and warnings, strengths and weaknesses and other meaningful data. Assistance requests by businesses are also monitored to ensure the proper follow-up to identified issues. This software is a tool used to facilitate understanding of information gathered to support a new economic development strategy and to limit the numerous visits all organizations encompassing the EVG regularly conduct.

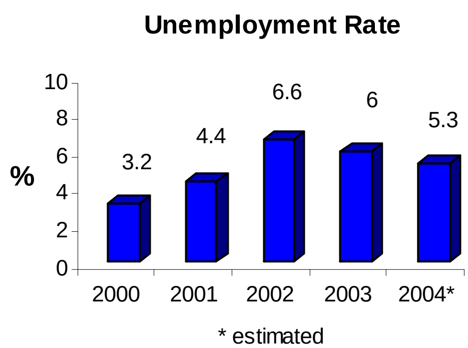
Local Economic Base

It is estimated that less than 5% of the estimated 17,000 businesses in the region are primary employers (those companies generating more than 50% of their revenue from selling goods and services outside of El Paso County). An estimated 85% of these primary employers are in the private sector, and the remaining 15% are in the government sector including military bases. At these firms, there are an estimated 120,000 employees representing roughly 40% of the total workforce in the Pikes Peak region.



Note:
Primary Workforce - 56% employed at private firms, 44% employed by governments (military etc.)

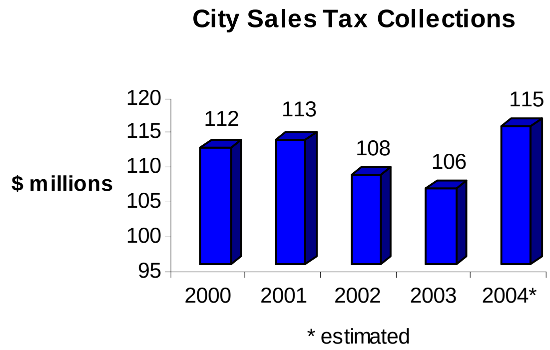
In the past 5 years, unemployment numbers have been a key statistic describing our economy. The impact of the most recent economic downturn is evidenced by the increased unemployment rate of the area peaking in 2002. However, this past year was the first in several years that the region has experienced job growth.



It is estimated that all primary employers and their employees contribute over $4 billion dollars annually to the economy as they purchase goods and services in the community. Over 50% of total City revenue is generated from sales tax collections, which is elastic and expands and contracts with the economy.

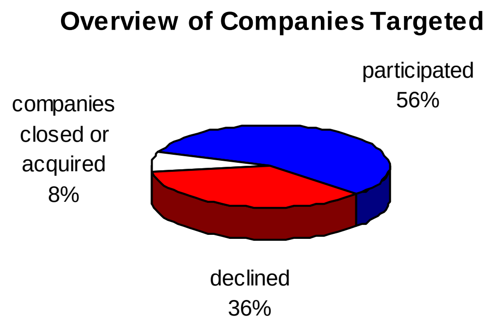
Why is this important? When the collection contracts, there is tremendous pressure on the City budget. Less revenue impacts the City's ability to provide the services that contribute to the quality of life such as parks and public safety for residents and visitors. The decrease in sales tax collections coincides with local residents' reduction in discretionary income from lay-offs, military deployment and/or a decline in tourism.

This is not only a City issue as the County and State have faced similar problems and have cut programs and services to account for less revenue.

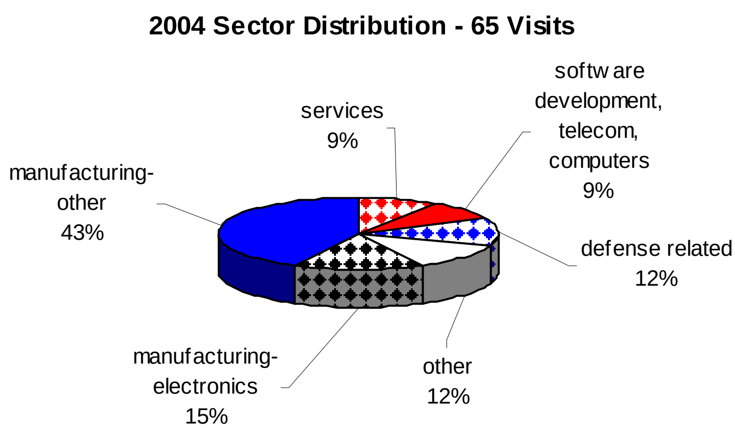


Demographics of Sample

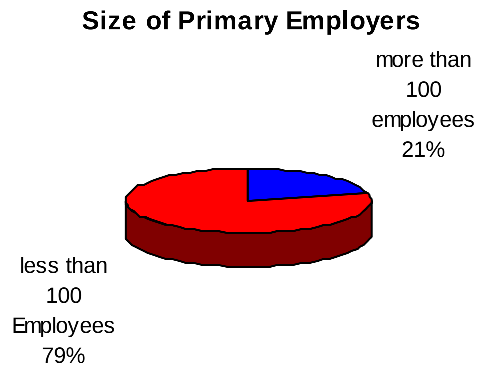
Since September 2002, the EVG has been identifying and contacting companies to participate in the BREV program. Major local employers, at-risk industries and other potential growth sectors have all been targeted. Overall, the program has been well received by local companies as shown by the participation rate.



In 2004, a cross section of the area's economic base was targeted in order to project an accurate representation of the local business climate according to business owners and local executives.

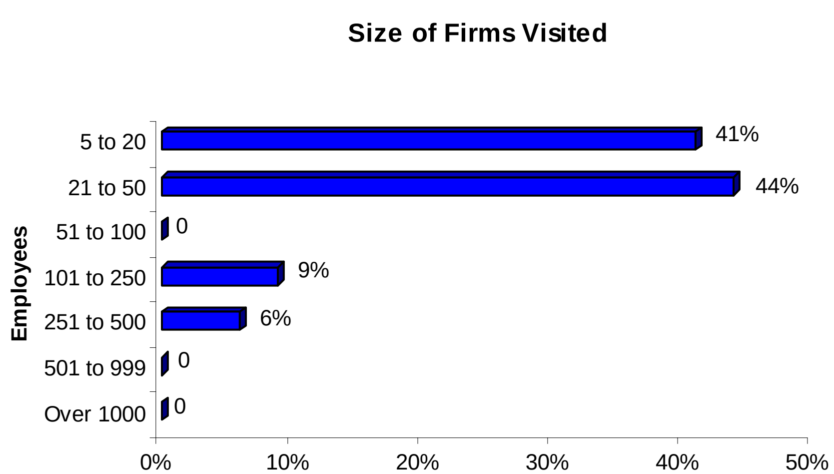


When considering targets, obviously the companies that provide the majority of local jobs are critical but those employers with less than 100 may someday turn into major employers and it behooves economic development professionals to foster that growth.



Note:
Employers with more than 100 employees represent 73% of the total private primary workforce
Employers with less than 100 employees represent 27% of the total private primary workforce

Since the 2003 effort focused on larger employers, the Economic Vitality Group felt that small and medium-sized companies should be targeted due to the fact the majority of local primary employers have less than 100 employees.

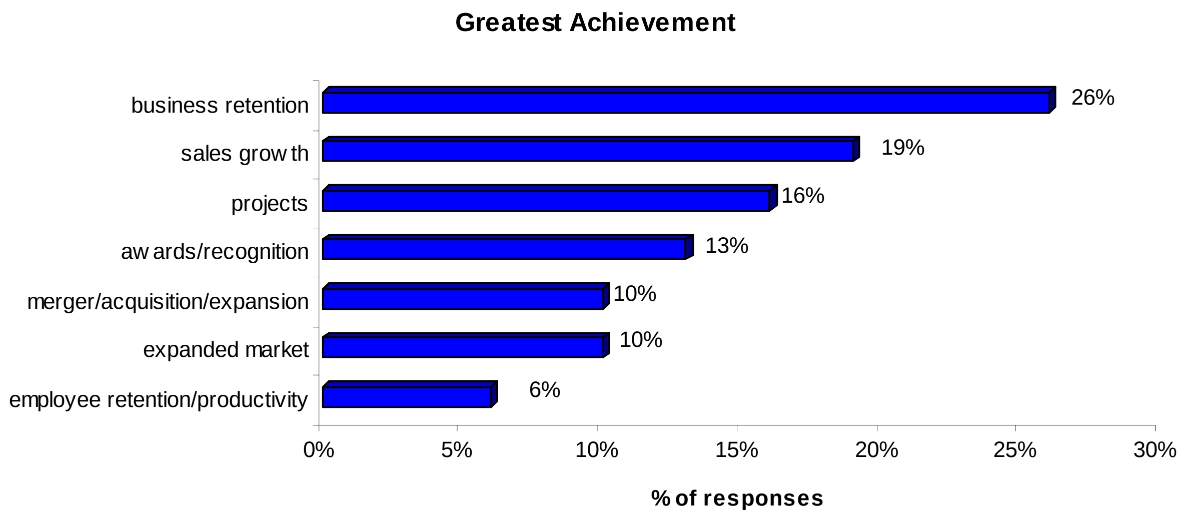


The following graphs represent responses from local executives and business owners. Some participants did not answer all questions.

Business/Product Development

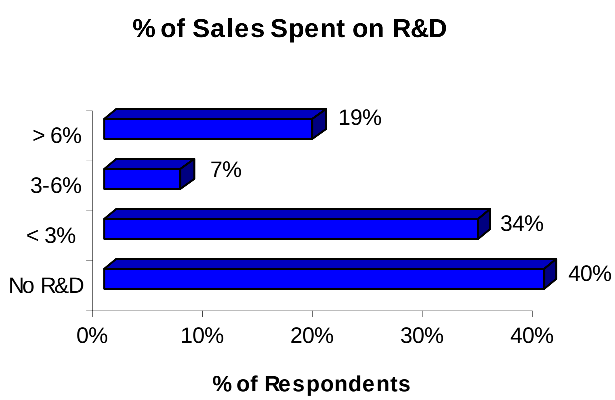
What is your company's greatest achievement in the last five years?

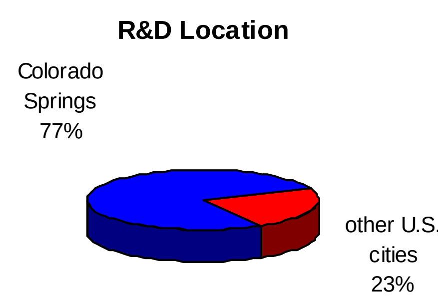
Like 2003, business retention was the top response to this question. Many local firms experienced a significant decline in sales and staying in business has been an achievement in itself. Others that are competitive in the market have been able to increase sales either during the recession or as the recovery continues.



As a percentage of sales, how much does the company spend on R & D?
Where is the facility located?

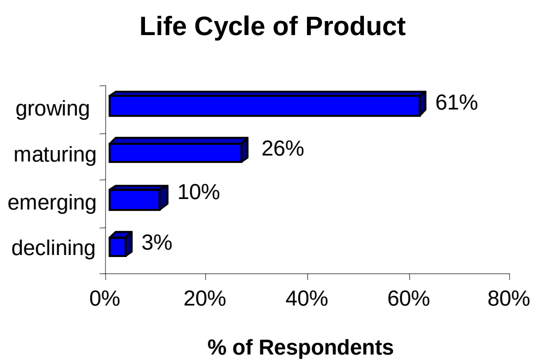
Local companies continue to evolve to meet market demand and continue to have a tremendous capacity for innovation. A particular strength of the region continues to be that many firms invest a significant amount of capital into research and development (compared to similar samples around the country), and many perform that function locally. With the current trends in business, a constant is the fact that the U.S. still has the edge in innovation, and it will be a challenge to move intellectual capital offshore.

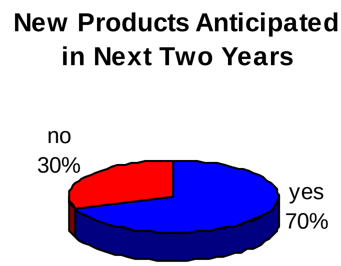




<u>Where is your company's primary product/service in its life cycle?</u>
<u>Are new products anticipated in the next two years?</u>

Product life cycle is based on an industry model of cyclical growth. As new products emerge, they enter into new markets and grow. As products grow and mature, new products emerge to replace the old ones, and the product enters into the declining phase. The position in which the product lies is a good indicator of its future prospects for growth. A number of employers also had products in different life cycles.

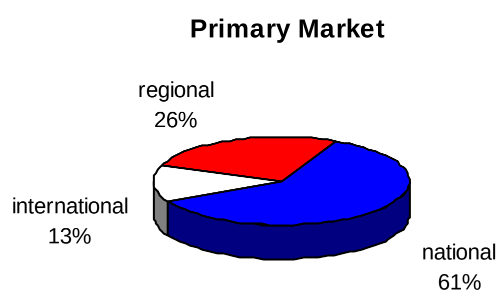




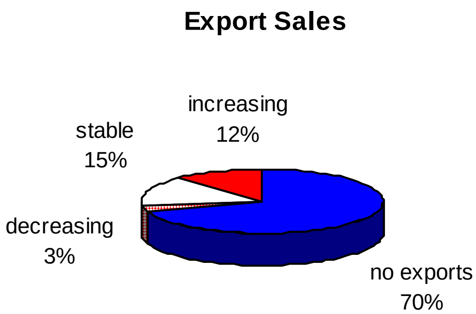
Market/Industry

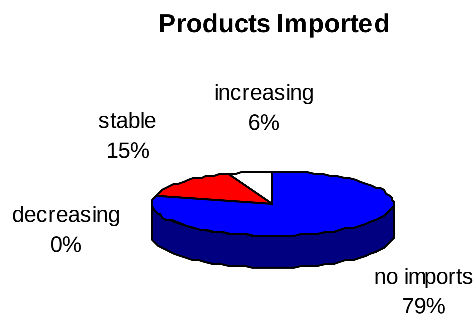
<u>Where is your company's primary market?</u>

Many firms located in Colorado Springs have markets for their products outside of Colorado. It is significant that they have chosen to do business in Colorado Springs, as it is clear they could produce their products elsewhere. Since smaller companies participated in 2004, it is not surprising that more respondents had regional markets.

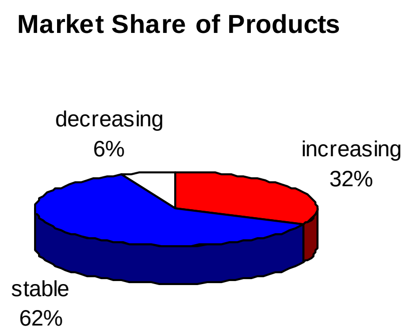


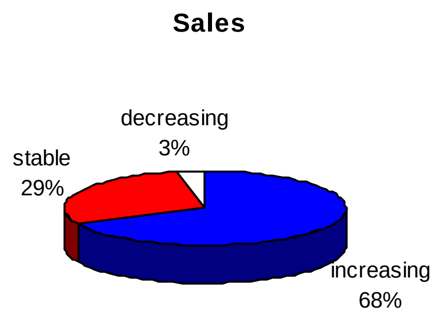
Are your export sales as a percentage of total sales increasing, stable or decreasing?
Is the percentage of products imported by company increasing, stable or decreasing?





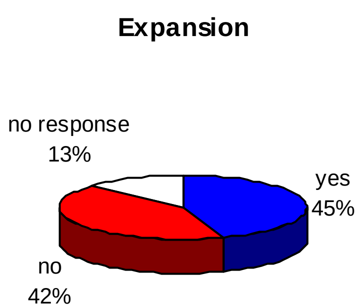
Is the market share of your company's key products: increasing, decreasing or stable?
Are total company sales: increasing, decreasing or stable?





Expansion

Does the company plan to expand in the next three years?

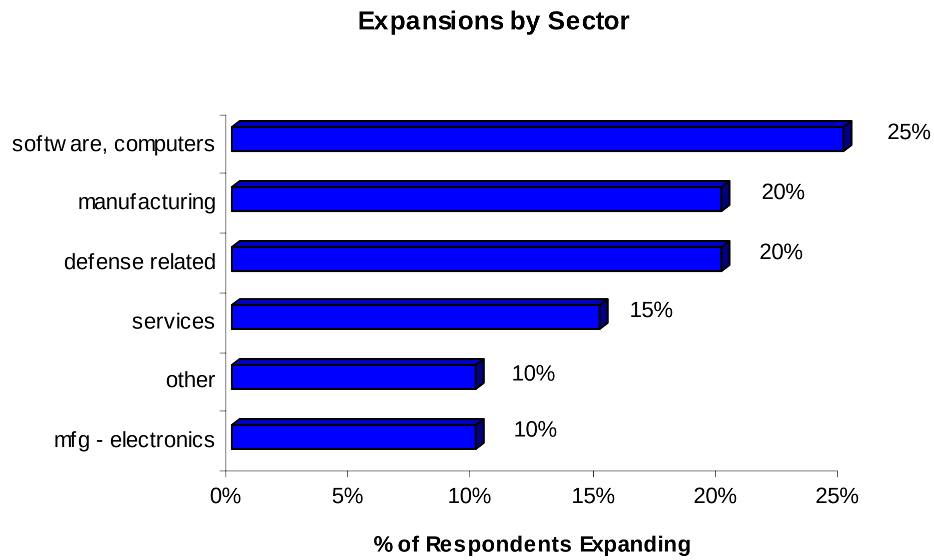


Estimated investment, new jobs created and facility size increase?

Investment	New Jobs Created	Space Requirement (sf)
$6,500,000	441	103,500
35% responding	71% responding	42% responding

These numbers are significant since it represents nearly a 50% increase in the workforce currently employed at responding companies.

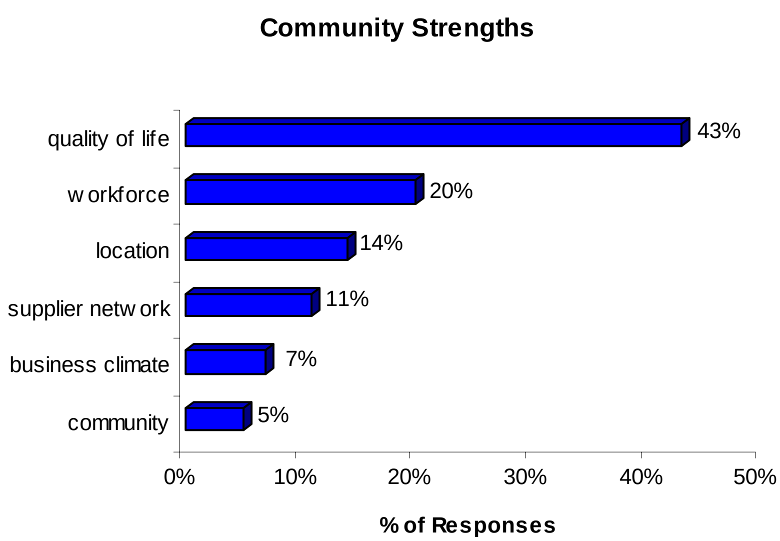
The following chart depicts the sectors in which the growth is planned to occur.



Community Evaluation

<u>What are the community's strengths as a place to do business?</u>

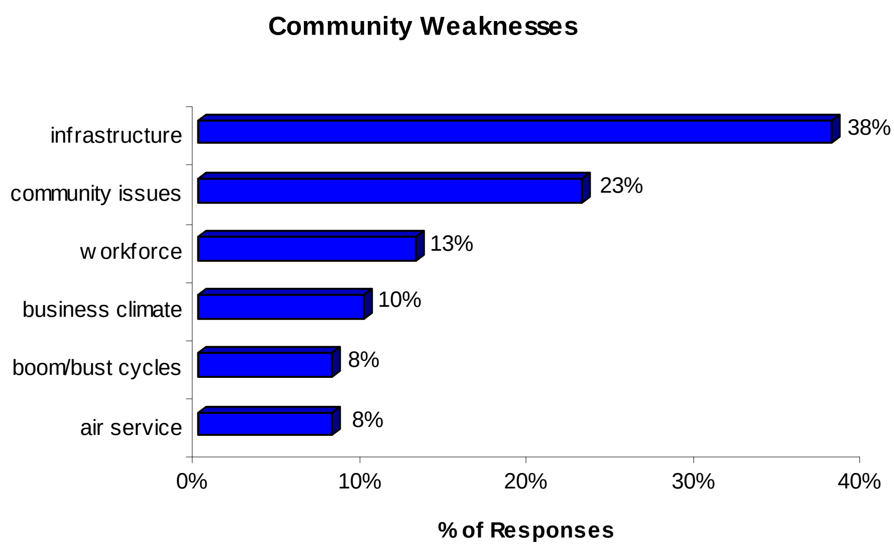
The strengths of a community are a good selling point for attraction, retention and expansion of industry. As expected, quality of life (aesthetics, schools, recreation and cost of living) tops the list and workforce is the next most frequent response. Many companies feel that location is a strength probably due to their market being regional.



What are the community's weaknesses as a place to do business?

The weaknesses of a community can inhibit or prevent business expansion or attraction but can provide the foundation for the strategic planning process.

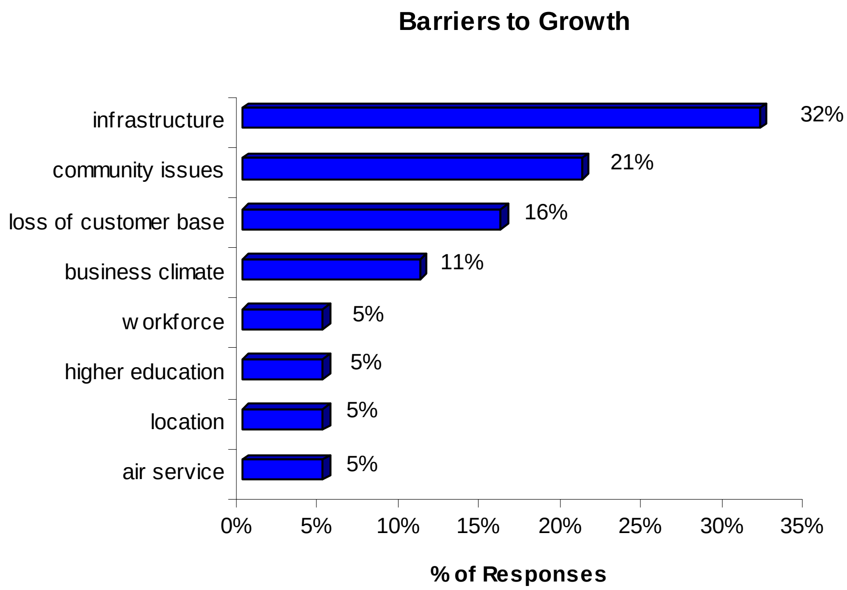
Again, as expected, inadequate transportation infrastructure was the most frequent response to this question. With the recent passing of the Rural Transportation Authority (RTA), many of these concerns will be addressed in the long term. However, until completion of the projects, construction zones will be a frequent sight. Community issues include lack of support for small business, the conservative nature of the voting community and a small–town mindset. Special workforce positions were also an issue for local businesses which includes the need for engineers and specific trades-people. Capital intensive industries listed business climate as a weakness.



Are there any barriers to growth in this community?

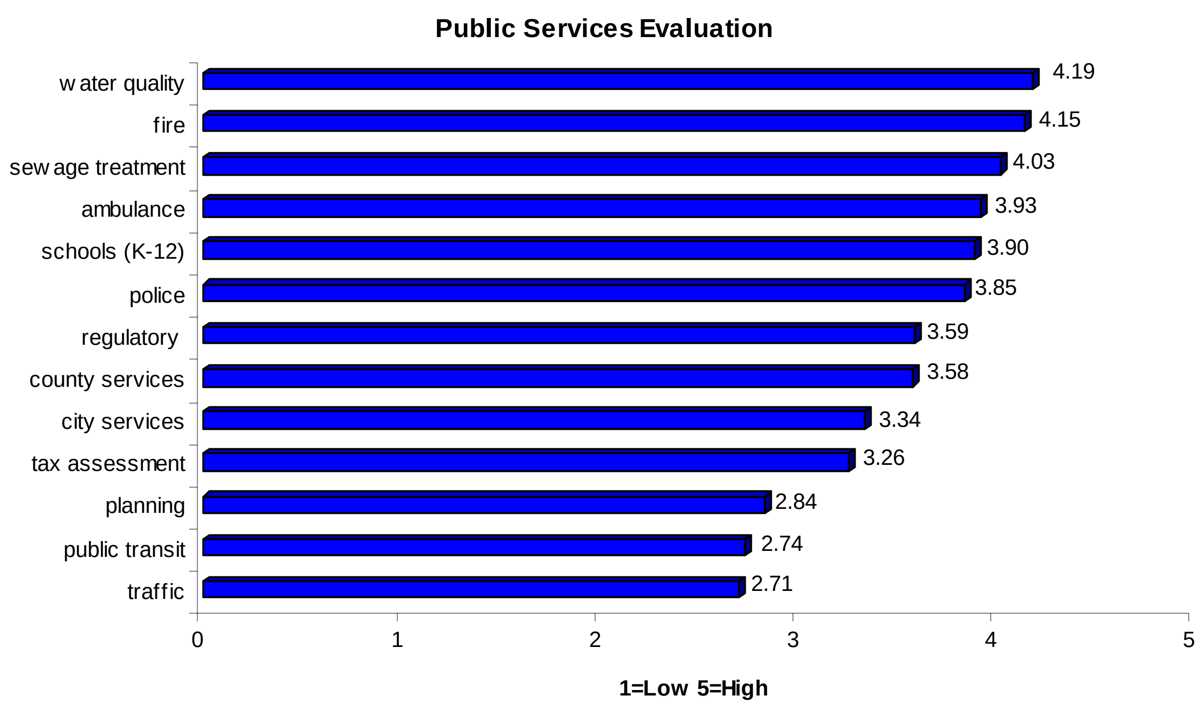
Barriers to growth of specific industries provide insight into both the attraction and retention of firms. However, if the responses are not clarified during the interview process, it is impossible to know if these barriers will prevent a company from expanding in the community.

Providing the necessary infrastructure to assist firms may be a personal "quality of life" preference but time is money, and for those companies with regional markets, their product could be transported via interstate. A number of the community issues can be directly linked to the conservative nature of the voting community. The loss of the large manufacturing base has hurt local suppliers and seriously damaged the area's ability to grow certain industries.



Rate the following services provided by the community on a scale of 1 to 5?

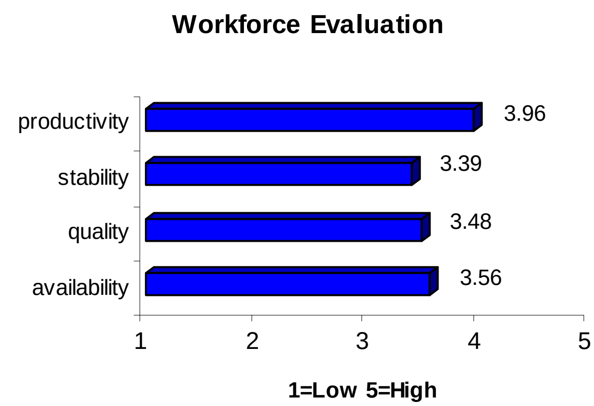
A vital part of a community's economic development program is the ability to provide essential public services to its residents. The chart offers a good gauge of where the community stands in this evaluation of public services by business executives surveyed. Some companies did not rate services unrelated to their business.



Workforce

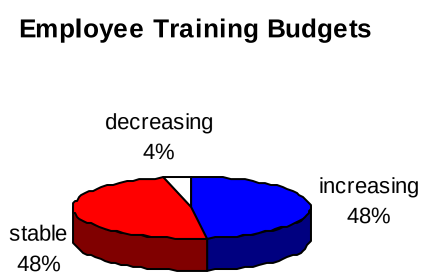
How would you rate the availability, stability, quality and productivity of the workforce in this area on a scale from 1 to 5?

Since the economic downturn, the region has been fortunate to have retained many well-educated and highly qualified workers. The area's strengths remain in the available workforce and the quality and stability of workers. Another advantage of doing business locally is illustrated when asked to compare the productivity of the local facility with facilities elsewhere (if applicable). The results were favorable.



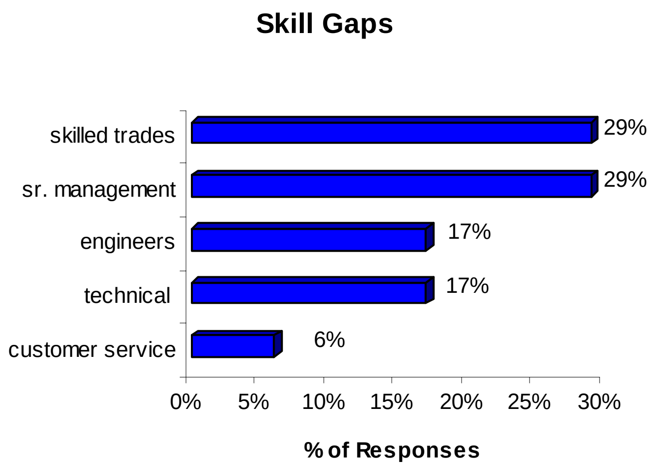
Is company investment in employee training increasing, decreasing or stable? What percentage of the training budget is for new skills versus remedial skills?

Approximately 80% of firms visited provide training for their employees. Half of those are increasing their budgets to increase the productivity and skill sets of their employees. Pikes Peak Community College continues to provide training for local companies.



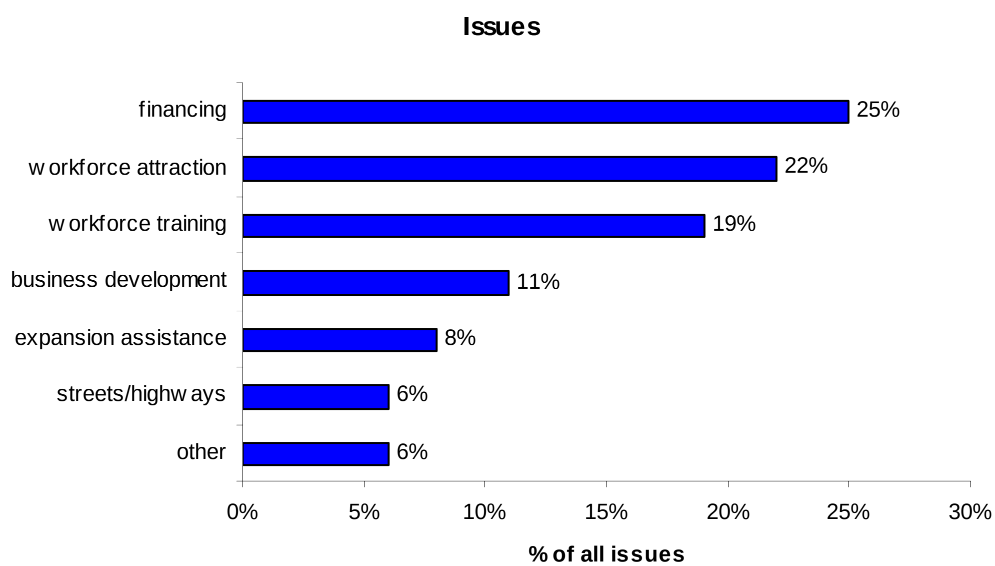
Is the company experiencing recruitment problems with any employee positions or skills?

Prior to the economic downturn, many local firms were experiencing problems identifying potential employees. Firms continue to report problems and are concerned that perhaps many qualified people in the technical or skilled trade professions have either left the field or the area. Many of the concerns were related to senior management personnel that require companies to search nationally. Pikes Peak Workforce Center continues to assist firms with identifying potential candidates.



Issues

A vital role of the BREV program is to address issues local firms are currently facing. In total, over 45 issues were addressed. Many issues were resolved with the cooperation of each organization involved in the EVG. The point is to make every effort to find a solution for a company's problem. It is this proactive approach that may assist expanding or relocating companies' business executives in the decision-making process about where to locate based on the economic development community's responsiveness.



Note: The other category includes issues such as political networking, utility related, procurement and other expansion and retention services.

2003- 2004 Comparison

Strengths of the Community

Strength	2004	2003
Quality of Life	43%	33%
Workforce	20%	28%
Location	14%	7%
Business Climate	7%	16%
Supplier Network	11%	4%
Community	5%	5%
Military Presence	N/A	4%

Weaknesses of the Community

Weakness	2004	2003
Transportation Infrastructure	38%	31%
Community Issues	23%	7%
Workforce	13%	11%
Business Climate	10%	10%
Boom/Bust Cycles	8%	6%
Air Service	8%	22%
Name Recognition	N/A	5%

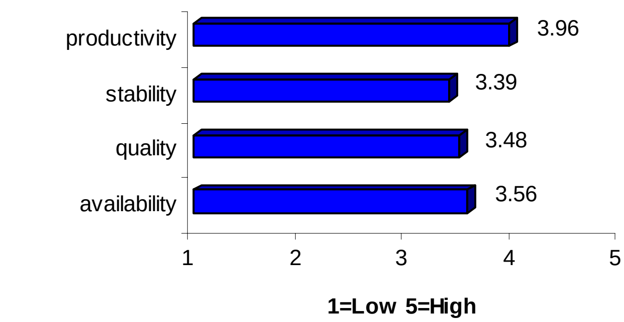
Barriers to Growth

Barrier	2004	2003
Transportation Infrastructure	32%	12%
Community Issues	21%	13%
Loss of Customer Base	16%	9%
Business Climate	11%	3%
Workforce	5%	17%
Higher Education	5%	5%
Location	5%	8%
Air Service	5%	11%
Local Regulation	N/A	6%

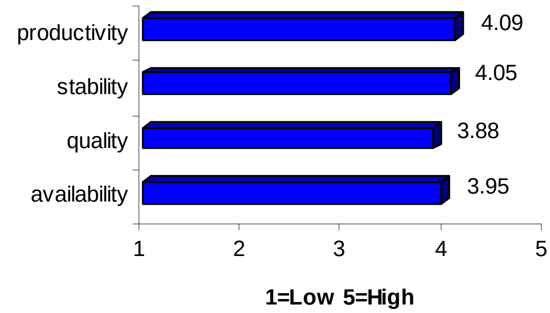
Greatest Achievement

Achievement	2004	2003
Business Retention	26%	24%
Sales Growth	19%	15%
Projects	16%	6%
Awards/Recognition	13%	7%
Merger/Acquisition/Expansion	10%	11%
Expanded Market	10%	16%
Employee Retention/Productivity	6%	8%

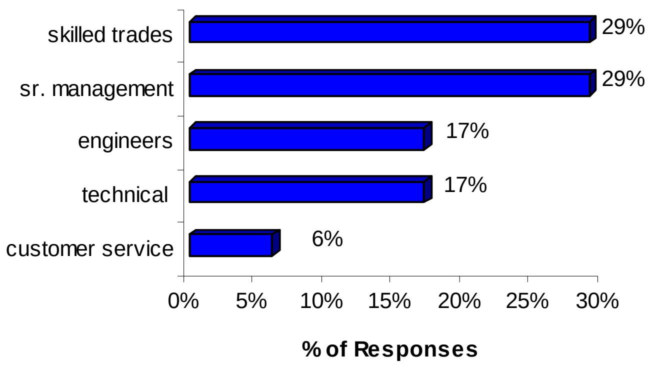
2004 Workforce Evaluation



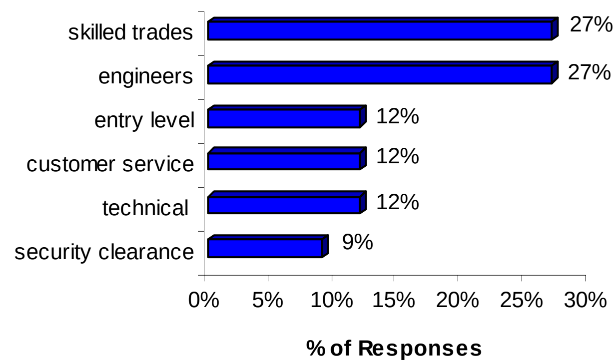
2003 Workforce Evaluation



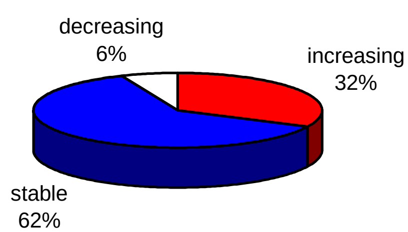
2004 Skill Gaps



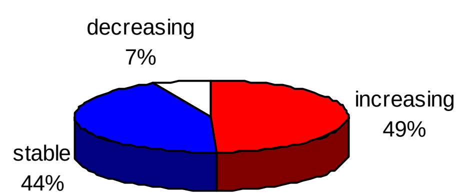
2003 Skill Gaps



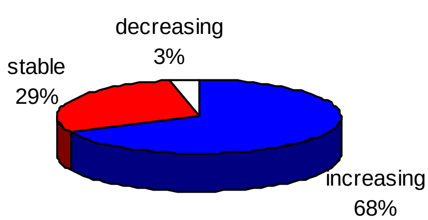
2004 Market Share of Products



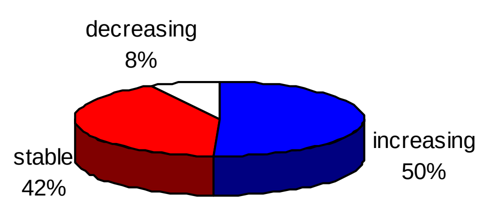
2003 Market Share of Products



2004 Sales



2003 Sales



Across two years, some issues have remained consistent (listed in frequency order):

Issues addressed

2004	2003
Financing	Financing
Workforce Attraction	Workforce Attraction
Workforce Training	Workforce Training
Expansion Support	Local Regulation
Export Assistance	Utility Related
Political Networking	Community Problems

Community Challenges:

In order to try and understand the challenges the community faces, three perspectives of most frequently cited responses may yield some insight. There are common themes that could limit growth and when analyzing the data, it may be valuable to consider how the responses affect corporate decision making and ultimately compound the weaknesses of the community. For the sake of comparison, workforce has been cited as a concern by most companies surveyed. Whether it be concern about sustaining the workforce for call center operations or identifying potential employees in the skilled trades field, workforce is a critical issue affecting corporate decisions in Colorado Springs.

2004 Community Challenges

Community Weakness	Growth Barriers	Issues
Transportation Infrastructure	Transportation Infrastructure	Financing
Community Issues	Community Issues	**Workforce Attraction**
Workforce	Loss of Customer Base	**Workforce Training**
Business Climate	Business Climate	Expansion Support
Boom/Bust Cycles	**Workforce**	Export Assistance
Air Service	Location	Political Networking

2003 Community Challenges

Community Weakness	Growth Barriers	Issues
Transportation Infrastructure	Loss of Customer Base	Financing
Air Service	Absence of Business Name (Bill Gates)	**Workforce Attraction**
Workforce	Inadequate City Services (Transit)	**Workforce Training**
Business Climate	Lack of Major Research University	Local Regulation
Local Regulation	**Workforce**	Utility Related
Community Issues	Lack of Incentives	Community Problems

Conclusion

Interview results continue to provide a base of information for further analysis of the area's economy. Fortunately, companies of all sizes and companies from many industries have participated in this effort. This provides information on how the local business climate impacts different employers and offers opinions from industry experts that may be implemented to improve the industry base.

Expansion forecasts, once again, clearly indicate that the area is poised for continued growth. In fact, 2004 was the first year of positive job growth in the past several years. The local aerospace/defense industry continues to become a more prominent part of the local economy. The local semiconductor industry is also showing signs of recovery and the region is fortunate that expansion has been planned in that sector. In addition, a number of companies have received venture capital investments and several local firms recently received funds to expand their business.

Several steps have recently been taken to assist in the overall economic development goals of the region:

- The Rural Transportation Authority (RTA) may address the concern of transportation infrastructure but could remain a weakness until construction is complete
- Continued efforts of the Colorado Springs Airport to expand local air service and the development of the business park as an employment center
- Several bills currently in the State legislature are aimed at reducing business personal property tax to reduce the tax burden on employers
- On-going industry task forces have been formed to promote community collaboration as a result of Springs into Action '04
- The Greater Colorado Springs Chamber of Commerce offering health insurance benefits to Chamber members.
- $250,000 awarded in workforce training grants (trained by PPCC)

Some potential action items resulting from the surveys include:

- Develop incentives and financing tools to encourage the growth of local firms to include start-ups and small business
- Expand incubator concept beyond technology to include other industries to encourage the growth of entrepreneurial ventures
- Collaborate with local industries to promote school-to-work programs with local high schools, particularly in the skilled trade field
- Promote existing economic development resources and programs through BREV and other outreach programs with support of local media
- Support legislation to reduce the cost of insurance

Combined with the Springs into Action '04 Economic Development Strategy, the survey results will foster discussion regarding the direction of the community's economic development program. Action items will be prioritized and assigned to existing strategy task forces to ultimately enhance economic development opportunities.

Although some of the findings may seem intuitively true, validating and quantifying is important to ensure that efforts in addressing these improvements are productive.