

# 2022 North Dakota Small Business Needs Assessment

**Survey Code**

Please enter the Survey Code found on our invitation letter.

**Business Status**

1. What is the current status of your business?
  - Currently operating a small business (Continue Q2)
  - Opened a small business, but sold it (Skip to Q41)
  - Opened a small business, but had to close (Skip to Q41)

**Firm Performance**

2. Early in the COVID pandemic please indicate any changes in the following: (Please check one circle for each item)

	Increase	No Change	Decrease
Number of Employees	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sales Revenue	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Spending on Equipment/Facilities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Overall Business Opportunities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Early in the COVID pandemic Employee Change Increase** (ask if Q2 = Increase)

2a. What were the reasons for increasing employees? (Please check all that apply).

- Growing Demand for products/services
- Expanded business locations
- Current Staff being overworked
- Increase in benefits/pay
- Attractiveness of job
- Offer flexible work hours
- Other reasons (Please Specify)

**Early in the COVID pandemic Employee Change Decrease** (ask if Q2 = Decrease)

2b. What were the reasons for decreasing employees? (Please check all that apply).

- Economic Climate not good/uncertain
- Wages/benefits Costs
- Business' Financial Status
- Unable to locate employees with the right skills
- Due to the COVID pandemic
- Other reasons (Please Specify)

**Firm Performance**

3. In the current calendar year (2022) please indicate any changes in the following: (Please check one circle for each item)

	Increase	No Change	Decrease
Number of Employees	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sales Revenue	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Spending on Equipment/Facilities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Overall Business Opportunities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**In the Current Calendar Year Employee Change Increase** (ask if Q3 = Increase)

3a. What were the reasons for increasing employees? (Please check all that apply).

- Growing Demand for products/services
- Expanded business locations
- Current Staff being overworked
- Increase in benefits/pay
- Attractiveness of job
- Offer flexible work hours
- Other reasons (Please Specify)

**In the Current Calendar Year Employee Change Decrease** (ask if Q3 = Decrease)

3b. What were the reasons for decreasing employees? (Please check all that apply).

- Economic Climate not good/uncertain
- Wages/benefits Costs
- Business' Financial Status
- Unable to locate employees with the right skills
- Due to the effects of the COVID pandemic
- Other reasons (Please Specify)

### Business Outlook

5. What are your expectations in the following areas for 2023? (Please check one circle for each item)

	Increase	No Change	Decrease
Number of Employees	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sales Revenue	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Spending on Equipment/Facilities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Overall Business Opportunities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

### Financing and Access to Capital

6. What are the major sources of financing for your business? (Please check all responses that apply)

- Personal savings
- Credit card
- Equity financing
- Crowd funding
- Business earnings
- U.S. Small Business Administration programs
- Commercial Bank (incl. Bank of ND)
- No need (either paid down debt; or did not apply for credit)
- Rather not disclose
- Other source (please specify)

### Employee Skills

7. What are the top three qualifications your employees need to possess? (Please **rank** the top three, typing a 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, or 3<sup>rd</sup> next to the respective skill)

- 2-yr Degree (Associates)
- 4-yr Degree (Bachelors)
- Basic computer skills
- Advanced Computer skills
- Advanced Technology skills
- Bookkeeping/Accounting training
- Interpersonal skills
- Sales and Marketing
- Punctuality/Reliability
- Basic English skills
- Foreign-language skills
- Trade/Industry Specific Skills
- Other source (please specify)
- None of these

**Employee Skills and Needs**

8. How difficult has it been to find employees with the following skills? Please check one circle in each row that most closely represents your opinion. NA means “Don’t Know” or “Not Applicable”

	Very Easy	Somewhat Easy	Somewhat Difficult	Very Difficult	NA
2-yr Degree (Associates)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4-yr Degree (Bachelors)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Basic computer skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Advanced Computer skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Advanced Technology skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Bookkeeping/Accounting training	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Interpersonal skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sales and Marketing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Punctuality/Reliability	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Basic English skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Foreign-language skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Trade/Industry Specific Skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**ND Small Business Development Centers Services**

11b. For each area **rate** how likely your business would be to use this type of assistance. NA means “Don’t Know” or “Not Applicable”

	Extremely Likely	Somewhat Likely	Neither Likely nor Unlikely	Somewhat Unlikely	Extremely Unlikely	NA
Start-up Logistics	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Purchase of Sale of a Business	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Business Expansions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Business Planning	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Financial Projections and Budgeting	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Accessing Capital	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Marketing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Operating Challenges	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Exit & Succession Planning	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Doing Business with the Government (Procurement)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
International Trade	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## Business Needs

### TECHNOLOGY

11. Please **rank** the top 3 areas that presently concern you, by entering a 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, or 3<sup>rd</sup> next to the respective topic. If none apply, enter 1 next to "None of these" and click >> to move to the next question.

- Accounting software
- Cybersecurity
- Databases
- E-commerce (sales)
- Email
- Human Resources Management Software
- Overview of computers
- Spreadsheets
- Use of internet
- Word processing
- Other area (please specify)
- None of these

### MARKETING

12. Please **rank** the top 3 areas that presently concern you, by entering a 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, or 3<sup>rd</sup> next to the respective topic. If none apply, enter 1 next to "None of these" and click >> to move to the next question.

- Advertising
- Digital marketing
- Networking
- Market/demographic research
- Marketing Plan
- Merchandising techniques
- Public relations
- Sales techniques
- Social media
- Other area (please specify)
- None of these

### **GENERAL MANAGEMENT**

13. Please **rank** the top 3 areas that presently concern you, by entering a 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, or 3<sup>rd</sup> next to the respective topic. If none apply, enter 1 next to "None of these" and click >> to move to the next question.

- Business growth/expansion
- Business/industry research & trends
- Buying/selling a business
- Disaster/contingency planning
- Facility planning and management
- Inventory control
- Insurance
- Leasing versus buying
- Legal/compliance
- Organizing as employee owned (ESOP)
- Patents/trademarks/copyrights/other IP
- Policies and procedures manuals
- Project Management
- Quality control
- Setting goals
- Strategic planning
- Succession/transition planning
- Other area (please specify)
- None of these

### **FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT**

14. Please **rank** the top 3 areas that presently concern you, by entering a 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, or 3<sup>rd</sup> next to the respective topic.

- Annual fiscal check-up
- Bookkeeping/financial statements
- Budgeting/financial projections
- Cash flow management
- Credit and collections
- Overview of money management
- Payroll processes
- Pricing
- Purchasing/cost control
- Sources of/Access to capital
- Taxes
- Other area (please specify)
- None of these

## **PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT**

15. Please **rank** the top 3 areas that presently concern you, by entering a 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, or 3<sup>rd</sup> next to the respective topic.

- Conflict management
- Customer service
- General HR best practices
- Hiring/firing
- Labor law compliance
- Motivating employees
- Overview of personnel management
- Performance evaluations
- Time management
- Workplace ethics
- Other area (please specify)
- None of these

## **REGULATIONS and COMPLIANCE**

16. Please **rank** the top 3 areas that presently concern you, by entering a 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, or 3<sup>rd</sup> next to the respective topic.

- Compliance with federal regulations
- Conservation/recycling
- Drug-free workplace
- Federal regulations
- Government services to small businesses
- Health care reform
- Local ordinances
- State laws
- Small business legislation
- Other area (please specify)
- None of these

## **INTERNATIONAL TRADE**

17. Please **rank** the top 3 areas that presently concern you, by entering a 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, or 3<sup>rd</sup> next to the respective **International Trade** topic.

- Cultural aspects of exporting
- Export credit insurance
- Exporting
- Export working capital
- International trade credit
- International trade overview
- Importing
- Logistics and international shipping
- Locating overseas buyers and agents
- Mentoring from other exporters
- Overseas trade shows
- Specialized trade topics
- Trade barriers
- Other area (please specify)
- None of these



### **BUSINESS CHALLENGES**

18. What do you perceive as potential challenges small business owners face in **starting a business**? **Rank** the top 3 by entering a 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, or 3<sup>rd</sup> next to the respective area.

- Adequate business-support network
- Lack of market awareness
- Lack of affordable/available legal knowledge or support
- Product promotion and advertising
- Lack of a written business plan
- Lack of business bookkeeping knowledge
- Lack of family/friend support network
- Lack of startup cash
- Marketing
- Obtaining financing from a traditional lender
- Product branding
- Securing a location
- Other area (please specify)
- None of these

### **BUSINESS CHALLENGES**

19. What do you perceive as potential challenges small business owners face in **managing their business**? **Rank** the top 3 by entering 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, or 3<sup>rd</sup> next to the respective area.

- Business succession knowledge (selling the business)
- Customer service
- Incomplete/Inadequate written business plan
- Lack of advertising
- Lack of affordable/available legal knowledge or support
- Lack of business finance knowledge
- Lack of market awareness for my business
- Long-term lending
- Obtaining a line of credit
- Obtaining financing from a traditional lender
- Online marketing
- Refinancing
- Short-term lending
- Working capital
- Other area (please specify)
- None of these

## **BUSINESS CHALLENGES**

20. What do you perceive as potential challenges small business owners face in **growing their business**?

**Rank** the top 3 by entering 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, or 3<sup>rd</sup> next to the respective area.

- Bookkeeping/managing resources
- Changes in your industry (regulations/market trends)
- Cost of hiring an employee (FICA, unemployment, insurance, etc.)
- eCommerce (how to get into or compete with)
- Employment law and/or liability issues (waivers/insurance)
- Financing – long term
- Financing – short term/line of credit
- Incomplete/inadequate business plan
- Lack of long-term planning
- Lack of mentorship
- Lack of strategic planning
- Lack of training (for owner, managers and/or employees)
- Overhead costs (utilities/rent)
- Quality of employees
- Quantity of employees (not enough qualified applicants)
- Regulatory and compliance issues
- Technology (lack of or underutilization)
- Understanding the business' true financial health
- Other area (please specify)
- None of these

## **Greatest COVID Business Challenges**

21. What was the greatest challenge that COVID presented for your business? Please explain.

22. How did your business recover from this COVID-related challenge, or are you still faced with it – please explain.

23. What is the biggest challenge you are currently facing in your business? Please explain.

23b. What are the most important issues to tackle for your business to grow/be more successful? Please explain.

24. Would you like to have someone from the ND Small Business Development Centers connect with you to help you with this/these challenges?

Yes (please be sure to add your contact information at the end of this survey)

No

25. If you could have someone conduct a confidential audit of your business to point out its strengths and weaknesses, at no cost to you, how likely would you be to take advantage of this service?

- Extremely likely
- Somewhat likely
- Neither likely nor unlikely
- Somewhat unlikely
- Extremely unlikely

### Local and Regional Business Support

26. Do you perceive local officials to be supportive of your small business needs?

Yes

No

26b. Please select those entities that you believe understand your small business needs.

(Check all that apply)

City

Local Economic Development Agencies

Local Chamber of Commerce

County

State Agencies

Legislature

Governor

None of these

26c. In your view, what measures could these entities take to be more supportive of small business needs? (Please specify)

### Educational Preferences

27. Please **rank** your top 3 methods for receiving training and/or assistance? **Rank** the top 3 by entering 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, or 3<sup>rd</sup> next to the respective area.

In Person Workshop (one-time event)

In Person Workshop series (multiple sessions)

Live Webinar (delivered at a specific time, webinar)

On-demand Webinar (previously recorded, watch any time)

Online resource (handbook, podcast)

One-on-one assistance

Something else (please specify)

None of these

28. In general, about how many miles would you drive to attend a workshop? (Display this Q if Q27 Workshop or Workshop series are ranked)

Would not travel to attend a seminar

1 to 5 miles

6 to 25 miles

26 to 100 miles

101 to 200 miles

201 miles or more

29. In what months do you prefer to attend training? (Display this Q if Q27 Workshop or Workshop Series are ranked) Rank your preference by entering a 1, 2, or 3 next to the respective month.

- January
- February
- March
- April
- May
- June
- July
- August
- September
- October
- November
- December
- Prefer not to attend seminars

30. On what weekday do you prefer to attend training? Please check **only one** response. (Display this Q if Q27 Workshop, Workshop series, or Live Webinar are ranked)

- Monday
- Tuesday
- Wednesday
- Thursday
- Friday

31. What time of day do you prefer to attend training? Please check **only one** response. (Display this Q if Q27 Workshop, Workshop series, or Live Webinar are ranked)

- Morning
- Afternoon
- Anytime during the workday
- Evening

### Contact Preference

32. What are the most effective methods to communicate upcoming business development/learning opportunities? **Rank** the top 3 by entering 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, or 3<sup>rd</sup> next to the respective method.

- Email
- Informational mailing (US mail)
- Website (page advertising)
- Social Media
- Newsletter/eNewsletter
- Personal invitation by phone
- Chamber of Commerce communications
- Trade magazines
- Other method (please specify)

### **Business Training Workshops**

33. Please rank the types of business training and/or assistance you may be interested in. **Rank** the top 3 by entering 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, or 3<sup>rd</sup> next to the respective training. If none apply enter 1 next to "None of these" and click >> to move.

- Advanced bookkeeping
- Basic bookkeeping
- Business networking
- Brand development
- Business plan development
- Customer service
- Cybersecurity
- Client Relationship Management
- Exit & Succession planning
- Exporting
- Gaining market access
- Human Resources
- Legal/compliance
- Marketing, Advertising, Social Media
- Regulations
- Taxation
- Webpage development
- Other source (please specify)
- None of these

### **Business Stage**

34. How many years has your business been operating? Please check only **one response**.

- First year of business (start-up)
- 2-5 years in business
- 6-10 years in business
- 11 years or longer
- Prefer not to answer

34b. Are you in the process of transitioning or exiting your business in the next five years?

- Yes
- No

### **Business Demographics**

35. Please select **all that apply** to your business.

- Female-owned
- Home-based
- Minority-owned
- Family-owned
- Franchise unit
- Veteran-owned
- Service disabled/retired
- Prefer not to answer

### County Business Location

35b. What county do you conduct the majority of your business transactions? If you have multiple counties, please select the one in which you conduct the most business in the past year. Please select **one county from the dropdown menu**.

36. Please select your race. Please check only **one response**.

- Caucasian
- African American
- Multi-racial
- Asian/Pacific Islander
- Native American/Native Alaskan
- Prefer not to answer
- Other (please specify)

### Current Workforce

37. Please provide us with information on your current workforce as of today:

Number of full-time employees (work more than 35 hours a week) \_\_\_\_\_

Number of part-time employees (work 35 hours or less a week) \_\_\_\_\_

Number of temporary employees \_\_\_\_\_

The number of employees that you estimate your company will employ one year from now \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Contractors \_\_\_\_\_

### Business Revenue

38. Which of the following categories best describes your business revenue for the past fiscal year? Please check only **one response**.

Less than \$100,000

\$100,001 to \$500,000

\$500,001 to \$1,000,000

\$1,000,001 to \$5,000,000

\$1,000,001 to \$5,000,000

Prefer not to answer

### Anything Else?

39. Is there anything else you would like to add that would help us better understand the issues your business faces? (Please specify)

### Contact Information

40. Please provide us with your contact information (display if Q24 = yes)

Name, Email, Phone

41. Those are all the questions we have. This survey is directed at businesses that are **currently operating a small business**.

**Final Message:** We thank you for the time spent taking this survey. Your response has been recorded