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Oklahoma Main Street Releases Findings of COVID-19 Impact Survey

The Oklahoma Main Street Center recently conducted a survey to measure the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on businesses in communities participating in the Oklahoma Main Street program. The survey, which was open May 13-19, was sent to business owners and operators in all 30 active Oklahoma Main Street communities and resulted in 155 responses from 17 of those communities.

The survey took into account whether or not local merchants had online sales in place, what sales looked like last year compared to 2020 during the crisis period, whether or not the business was considered essential, business resilience, and what services and assistance will be beneficial going forward.

“When the COVID-19 pandemic brought the closure of nonessential businesses to our state, the Oklahoma Main Street team knew that our communities would be highly impacted,” said Buffy Hughes, State Director, Oklahoma Main Street Center. “We worked for weeks to provide as much immediate assistance as possible. And then, as some time passed, we wanted to take the opportunity to survey the communities and their businesses to measure how deeply they were affected.”

Results from the survey show that restaurant respondents reported a 66% decrease in sales, while retail respondents reported a decrease of 70%.

“This crisis is causing all small businesses to look at their practices,” said Brent Kisling, Executive Director, Oklahoma Department of Commerce. “One thing that’s been spotlighted in this survey, and from our own experiences as consumers during this time, is the need for all small businesses to have an e-commerce presence in order to better withstand disasters. With this information, Commerce and our Main Street team can step up and help small businesses

navigate the fundamentals and best practices of establishing and maintaining an e-commerce presence.”

Web presence appeared to play a significant role in the severity of the disruption to businesses. Restaurants and retail with the ability to sell online suffered a 49% decrease in sales, while those without e-commerce suffered a 67% loss. Despite the loss in sales, the majority of respondents reported they do not expect to go out of business, but will likely need further assistance from groups like Oklahoma Main Street, in addition to access to grants and loans.

“The feedback we received was very informative and highlights the need for increased social media, technology in the form of online sales, and other gaps in small businesses like these. We can now take this information and develop a plan to assist these businesses and communities going forward,” said Hughes.

[An executive summary of the findings can be found here.](#)

The Main Street Program is a comprehensive revitalization effort that provides communities with tools to improve their historic central and neighborhood business district areas. The Oklahoma Main Street program serves as the state coordinating program for Main Street America, a program of the National Main Street Center, Inc. The Oklahoma Department of Commerce oversees the state Main Street Program.

For more information about the Oklahoma Main Street Program, please call (405) 815-6552 or visit OKcommerce.gov/main-street.

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