



# 2024 Employment Survey Report

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**Economic Development and Tourism  
Infrastructure, Development and Environment  
City of Guelph**



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## Introduction

The City of Guelph Employment Survey is designed to capture key insights from Guelph businesses to build a current and accurate understanding of the local economy, while also strengthening the relationship between the City of Guelph and the local business community.

The program was created to fulfill the strategic direction of the Economic Development and Tourism Strategy (2022-2026):

- **Goal 1:** Expand support for existing businesses
- **Priority 1.1:** Implement a formalized business expansion and support program
- **Action:** Establish an employment survey program to obtain vital business intelligence and analysis to identify potential industry trends and report key findings.

The employment survey program enhances business intelligence and engagement by growing a verified database of business contacts and detailed operational data. It also supports evidence-based decision-making across departments and, over the long term, provides more accurate economic monitoring than is available from other levels of government.

Prior to the launch of the Employment Survey Program, there was no locally accurate source of Guelph business data. Employment data from other levels of government, such as Statistics Canada, had been utilized, but were found to not be granular enough to present the local intelligence needed to support business retention and expansion activities and economic monitoring.

This report examines the effectiveness of the 2024 Employment Survey in collecting a comprehensive dataset, the methodology for data collection, survey completion trends and outcomes of this year's program.

## Objective

The objective of the 2024 employment survey is to survey all brick-and-mortar businesses in Guelph. The 2024 survey aimed to verify information gathered from previous survey years and continue to build a more comprehensive business database for the City of Guelph.

## Methodology

### Survey Team

To visit 3,700 brick and mortar businesses in Guelph in person, three contract staff were hired for a 16-week span from May to August, directed by the employment survey project manager.

An in-person, boots on the ground approach is chosen for Guelph's employment survey to allow for more accurate data collection and to drive higher response rates. When the survey team visits businesses in person, questions can be more clearly articulated, and more information can be relayed about how the data will be used.

## **Employment Territories**

To prioritize geographic areas with the highest projected employment, the city was divided into designated territories, prioritized based on employment density. Territories with the greatest concentration of jobs were surveyed first to maximize the amount of employment-related data collected.

## **Questionnaire**

Survey staff interviewed business representatives and collected information on-site using tablets. Business representatives that were interviewed varied from front line staff to decision makers and owners. A phone or email version of the survey is also provided when a business representative was not available to complete the survey at their physical location.

## **Data validation and refinement**

All data collected is further verified and refined in-office at the end of each week, this entails confirming correct North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) codes and formatting for proper transition of the data to the live database used by Economic Development and Tourism staff.

## **Performance targets**

The following rates are used to measure the data collected through the survey; performance targets for these rates are used to measure the threshold by which the dataset collected is deemed to be comprehensive for the survey year.

- **Contact rate:** measures the surveys attempted. The performance target is to contact at least 90 per cent of all businesses in the database.
- **Submission rate:** measures the surveys conducted. The performance target is to conduct surveys with at least 80 per cent of the contacted businesses.
- **Completion rate:** measures the surveys completed. The performance target is to complete at least 50 per cent of the surveys conducted, meaning all primary information has been collected.
- Additionally, all 10 of Guelph's largest employers must have completed a survey.

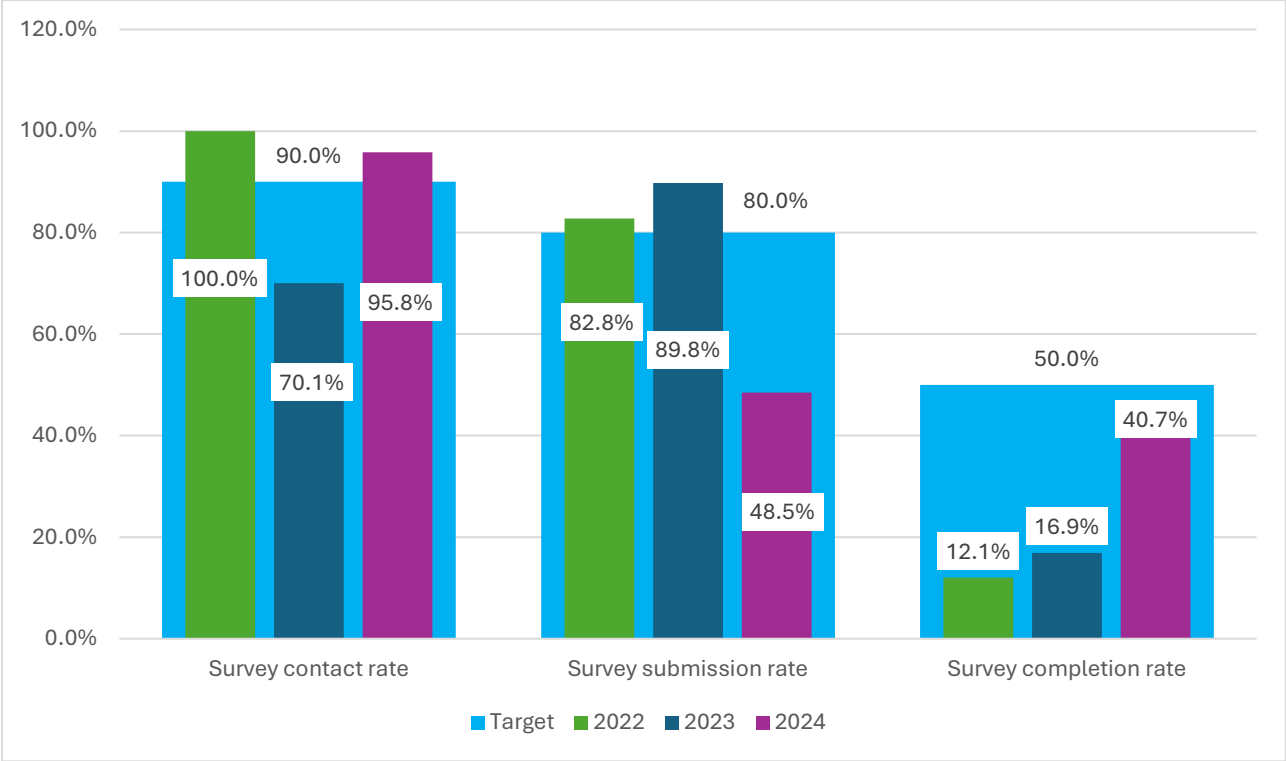
## **2024 Survey performance**

Figure 1 shows the performance of the 2024 survey in meeting thresholds to deem the dataset collected comprehensive; compared to previous survey years. In 2024

the survey team attempted to survey 96 per cent of the businesses in the database. Of the businesses attempted 49 per cent of surveys were successfully conducted and further, 41 per cent of surveys conducted were fully completed. In addition 6 of Guelph’s largest employers completed a survey.

While the 2024 survey year did not meet all of the performance targets to deem the dataset fully comprehensive, it improved on the overall contact and completion rates from the previous survey year. 96 per cent of the businesses were given the opportunity to complete the survey in 2024 versus 70 per cent in 2023. It is important to note that the 4 per cent of businesses who are shown as not attempted in 2024 were due to data clean up, reducing the number of total businesses from 2023.

**Figure 1: Survey comprehensiveness targets, comparison of 2022, 2023 and 2024**



Source: City of Guelph Employment Survey, 2022, 2023, and 2024.

Table 1 illustrates that while approximately 300 more surveys were conducted in 2023, the number of fully completed surveys in 2024 was more than double that of the previous year. Although overall survey submissions were lower in 2024, the significantly higher completion rate resulted in a more robust and reliable dataset.

This improvement enhanced the quality of information collected for the economic development and tourism database.

The increased data completeness in 2024 can be partly attributed to changes in engagement strategies, particularly the prioritization of follow-up contact with larger employers through phone and email.

**Table 1: Survey completion status, comparison 2022, 2023 and 2024**

Survey completion	2022 (baseline)	2023	2024
<b>Attempted</b>	<b>3,181</b>	<b>2,382</b>	<b>3,722</b>
Attempted: Survey conducted	2,633	2,138	1,805
Attempted: Complete	384	574	1,582
Attempted: Partially complete	1,872	1,126	86
Attempted: Opted out	377	438	137
Attempted: No response	548	244	1,917
<b>Not attempted</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1,018</b>	<b>163</b>

Source: City of Guelph Employment Survey, 2022, 2023, and 2024.

**Data collected**

Primary survey questions remain consistent each year for reliable data tracking. City departments can suggest new questions to be included for secondary data collection based on corporate priorities; for example, in 2024, a question on hybrid work was added to assess existing building space unitization to inform employment land strategic policy directions in 2026.

Table 2 shows collected and validated data cumulative from each survey year to show the amount of total information collected over time.

**Table 2: Collected business information 2022 - 2024**

Information collected/verified	2022	2023	2024
Surveys Attempted	3,181	2,382	3,722
<b>Primary data collected</b>			
Number of employees	1,414	1,695	2,061
Business contacts	1,616	1,861	2,398
Year established	1,272	1,579	2,100
<b>Secondary data collected</b>			
Building ownership	1,354	1,638	2,091
Owner demographics	243	344	468
Organizational structure	1,488	1,737	1,711
Hybrid Workplace Policy	*	*	119

Source: City of Guelph Employment Survey, 2022, 2023, and 2024.

## How survey data supports City work

The survey captures valuable business contact information to support Economic Development and Tourism’s engagement efforts. As of 2024, 2,398 businesses had provided at least one contact (Table 2), and 2,128 direct email addresses have been collected (Table 3). Increasing contacts per business improves business outreach efforts, and the data shows steady growth in both the quantity and verification of contact information over time.

**Table 3: Collected contact information 2022-2024**

Information Collected	2022	2023	2024
Organization emails	1,157	1,416	2,524
Organization phone numbers	1,288	1,452	3,514
Direct contact emails	650	1,118	2,128

Direct access to business representatives improves communication and strengthens engagement, helping the City better support local businesses through the following areas:

- **Direct outreach:** The Economic Development and Tourism team has leveraged the business contact database to target communications to specific sectors for outreach about funding and programming opportunities.
- **Impact response:** Economic Development staff have been able to use the contacts gathered to reach out directly to businesses who need impact support, those impacts can range from emergency infrastructure work or those who may be experiencing impacts from the U.S. trade tensions.
- **Business to business:** Staff utilize the contact database to make business to business connections where appropriate to support the growth of local supply chains.
- **Consistent communication:** The economic development e-newsletter (Mind Your Business), provides monthly information and opportunities for Guelph businesses, gained 771 new subscribers since the survey program began.

Beyond Economic Development and Tourism, the employment survey data is used across City departments to inform policy and support growth-related decision-making. Development Planning has applied downtown employment data to calculate employment density for the Downtown Heights Study and Official Plan targets, while the Solid Waste department has used information on food service businesses to assess impacts of the 2024 Single-use Plastics By-law and identify opportunities for the Food Recovery and Redistribution pilot project.

Design and Construction and Engineering Technical Services staff use the data to estimate impacts on businesses and employees and to improve communication during construction projects. Transportation Planning has also drawn on the data to support the Goods Movement Strategy, while Energy and Climate Change used business contact information for targeted outreach for their Sustainability Stocktake Event.

## **Business Engagement and Follow-up**

While the Employment Survey is primarily a data collection exercise, in-person visits also generate valuable relationship-building opportunities. Businesses frequently raise questions, provide feedback, or identify issues requiring follow-up, offering insight into operational challenges and service gaps.

A total of **141 businesses** required direct follow-up in 2024:

- 79 inquiries were addressed directly by Economic Development staff
- 62 comments/feedback items were shared with relevant City departments

Key themes included:

- Solid waste (55 businesses): questions about waste pick up, Solid Waste staff responded to those that requested a follow up call with further information.
- Safety and vandalism (21): information was sent to Corporate and Community Safety staff and were referred to Guelph Police where appropriate.
- Business support (18): inquires on financial assistance, workforce and general business support, Economic Development and Tourism staff reached out to determine exact needs and referrals were made to government funding programs or organizations such as the Workforce Planning Board and the Business Centre Guelph-Wellington.
- Parking (17): primarily downtown businesses were referred to downtown revitalization staff for timely follow up.
- Infrastructure (15): including sidewalks, bike lanes and traffic lights that were relayed to the Transportation Engineering department for follow up.
- Licensing and permits (11): addressed by Bylaw and Licensing, with feedback on timelines and processes
- Water Smart program (7): interested parties in the City's water conservation programming and were referred to Environmental Services.
- Accessibility (5): information was provided about the responsibilities of the landlord and options for business owners on private property to address accessibility concerns.

These interactions demonstrate the survey's added value as a tool for identifying business needs, improving cross-departmental responsiveness, and strengthening relationships with the local business community.

## **Good News Stories**

Survey interactions enabled timely issue resolution, improved access to City services, and strengthened business relationships:

- Coordinated a direct on-site visit from operations staff to address a drainage and ice formation issue following recent infrastructure updates, supporting business continuity for an automotive firm
- Connected an after-school support provider with Guelph Transit to explore more efficient options for purchasing and managing bulk transit passes for students
- Provided clarity on temporary parking permit options, resolving repeated ticketing issues for a contractor working on a downtown project
- Shared planned transit expansion timelines (2026) with a new logistics company in the south end, supporting workforce access planning and site operations

- Reconnected a downtown business with City processes that had felt disengaged during COVID resulting in their participation in downtown revitalization planning.
- Linked a newly opened aquatic facility with Water Services to address specific questions related to water quality and chemical composition for operational requirements

Additional follow-ups addressed inquiries related to zoning requirements, tree removal, and water usage and adding new properties to the City's Vacant Employment Land Inventory.

These interactions highlight the survey's value in identifying and responding to business needs in real time, while also revealing opportunities to improve proactive communication and service delivery.

## **Conclusion**

Guelph's business community is a critical driver of economic growth, employment, and quality of life. The 2024 Employment Survey achieved strong results, with a 96% contact rate and 41% completion rate, producing the most reliable dataset to date. This work not only validated and expanded previous data but also significantly strengthened the City's ability to monitor employment distribution and will inform economic cluster activity across Guelph.

Survey data continues to support a wide range of corporate initiatives and has enhanced service delivery by equipping staff with better business intelligence and direct contacts. Insights gained through follow-up interactions have also identified opportunities to improve proactive communication and refine survey methods.

The next survey cycle, beginning May 2026, will focus on territories where information gaps exist to further strengthen data quality and ensure a comprehensive understanding of Guelph's evolving economic landscape.

## Definitions

### 1. **Basic data:**

Business information including

- Operating name
- Address
- Operational status
- North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) designation

2. **Business establishment:** An operating business with a brick-and-mortar location in Guelph.

3. **Dataset:** Specific data collected from the 2024 employment survey.

4. **Economic Development and Tourism database (database):** All business information contained in the economic development and tourism Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems.

5. **NAICS Codes:** An industry classification system developed by the statistical agencies of Canada, Mexico, and the United States.

6. **Not attempted:** A business establishment in the database where no attempt to collect business data occurred in the survey year.

7. **Primary data:** Business information that includes

- Employment information
- Contact information
- Year established in Guelph

### 8. **Rates**

- **Contact rate:** measures the surveys attempted. The performance target is to contact at least 90 per cent of all businesses in the database.
- **Submission rate:** measures the surveys conducted. The performance target is to conduct surveys with at least 80 per cent of the contacted businesses.
- **Completion rate:** measures the surveys completed. The performance target is to complete at least 50 per cent of the surveys conducted, meaning all primary information has been collected.

9. **Secondary data:** Business information that includes

- Building ownership
- Owner demographics
- Organizational structure

10. **Survey attempted:** A business establishment in the database where an attempt to collect business data through a survey occurred in the survey year (this can be in-person, phone, email or through online research by survey staff and economic development staff). Example: University of Guelph, Guelph General Hospital, etc.

11. **Survey attempted with no response:** A connection with a business representative was attempted with no response but basic information was still collected.
12. **Survey completed:** A conducted survey which was able to successfully collect or confirm basic information and primary information.
13. **Survey conducted:** A connection was made with a business representative during the survey (in-person, phone or email).
14. **Survey opted out:** A conducted survey where a connection was made, but the business representative opted out of the survey.
15. **Survey partially complete:** A conducted survey which was able to collect or confirm basic information and any additional information.