



Full Circle

Fond du Lac County Existing Business Development Program

How can the Full Circle Program help your business?

First and foremost the Full Circle program is about developing relationships and providing resources for businesses. The meetings and the interview data can bring attention to issues and opportunities, small and large.

Highlight supply chain gaps

While the relationship is the focus of the program, the data collected can highlight trends and issues that are relevant to the areas' economic development efforts. A few years into the collection of data in the northeast Wisconsin region, staff began to notice, based on survey responses, that there was a gap in the supply of steel to the region. When an opportunity came to recruit a new supplier, McNeilus Steel, to Fond du Lac, all parties (FCEDC, the City and the Company) understood that this was a good fit and would help businesses in the region.

Findings

Below are some of the findings of the 639 surveys completed in the region since inception of the Full Circle program (July 2007)

- The companies surveyed represent 75,615 employees and over \$33 billion in sales
- 89% are privately owned; 83% are headquartered in the State
- 58% of those surveyed are in the manufacturing sector
- Companies report (on average) that 45% of their workforce is skilled/professional
- 62% of the companies report that their product is in an emerging or growing life cycle stage; 30% maturing and 8% declining.

Signs of the times – captured in the survey

- In 2007 and 2008 surveys, over 40% of companies planned to add jobs in the coming 12 months; only 29% of those surveyed in 2009 planned to add jobs.
- Companies experiencing employee retention problems went from 21% in 2007 to 12% in 2009; companies with recruitment problems from 54% to 31%. Fortunately, the number of companies providing in-house training programs has not changed.
- In 2009, 67% of companies projected sales growth in the coming year, compared to 91% in 2007.
- As markets have contracted, primary source of sales has contracted geographically – 47% of sales are reported to be within 50 miles in 2009 versus 36% in 2007 and 2008. Primary source of supplies has shifted to be more local as well.
- In 2007, companies were split evenly between the expectations that the business climate was better 5 years prior or will be better in 5 years. In 2009, 16% think the business climate is better than 5 years ago; 70% are hopeful that it will be better in 5 years.

Notable differences between Fond du Lac County and the entire region for 2007-2009 (note that 68% of the County's companies surveyed are in manufacturing versus 58% regionally)

- 43% of the 59 Fond du Lac County businesses surveyed hold a patent for their product, compared to 23% in the region; 91% of businesses consider themselves to be innovative.
- 52% of Fond du Lac County businesses export goods, while only 36% in the region say they export.
- 44% report having used university or technical college resources or consultants to augment their research and new product development compared to 33% regionally.
- 30% of companies report being ISO certified or currently seeking certification versus 21% regionally.