

The City of Charles Sturt Business Survey 2024 Results

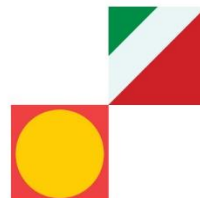


The City of Charles Sturt Business Survey 2024

Earlier this year we conducted a business survey to better understand and further support the needs of our business community.

These survey results help us to shape the services, programs, grants and activities we deliver to our business community.

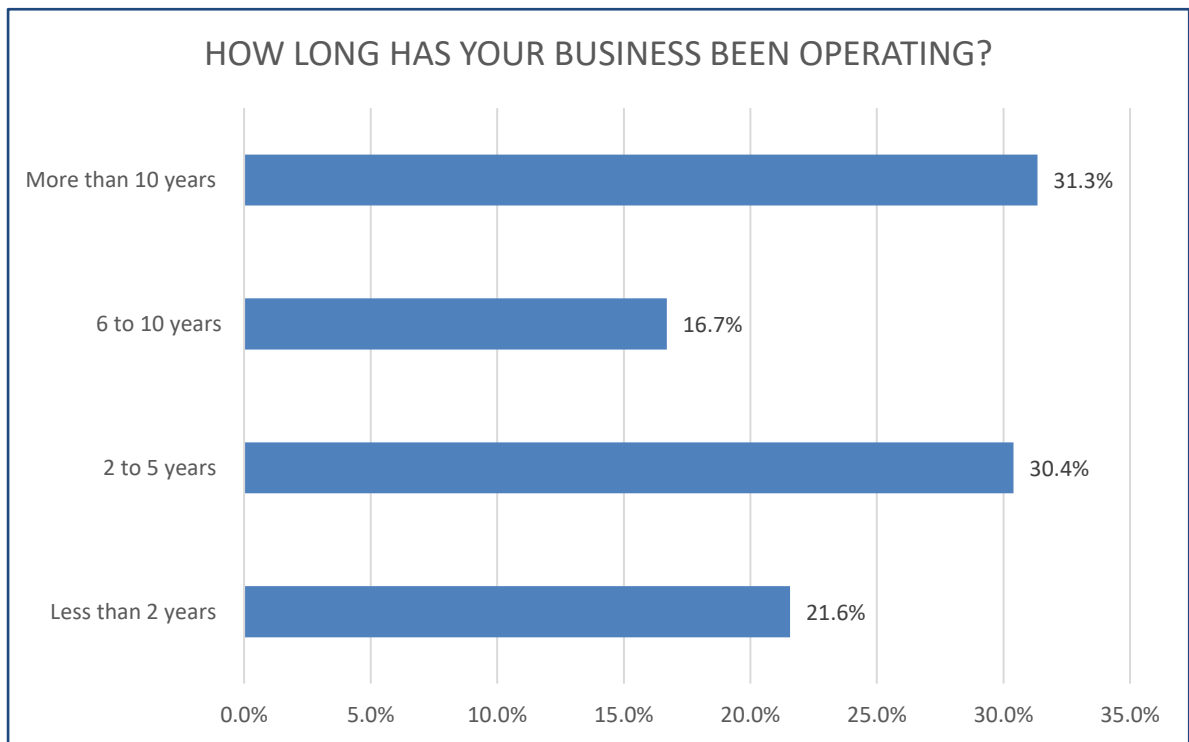
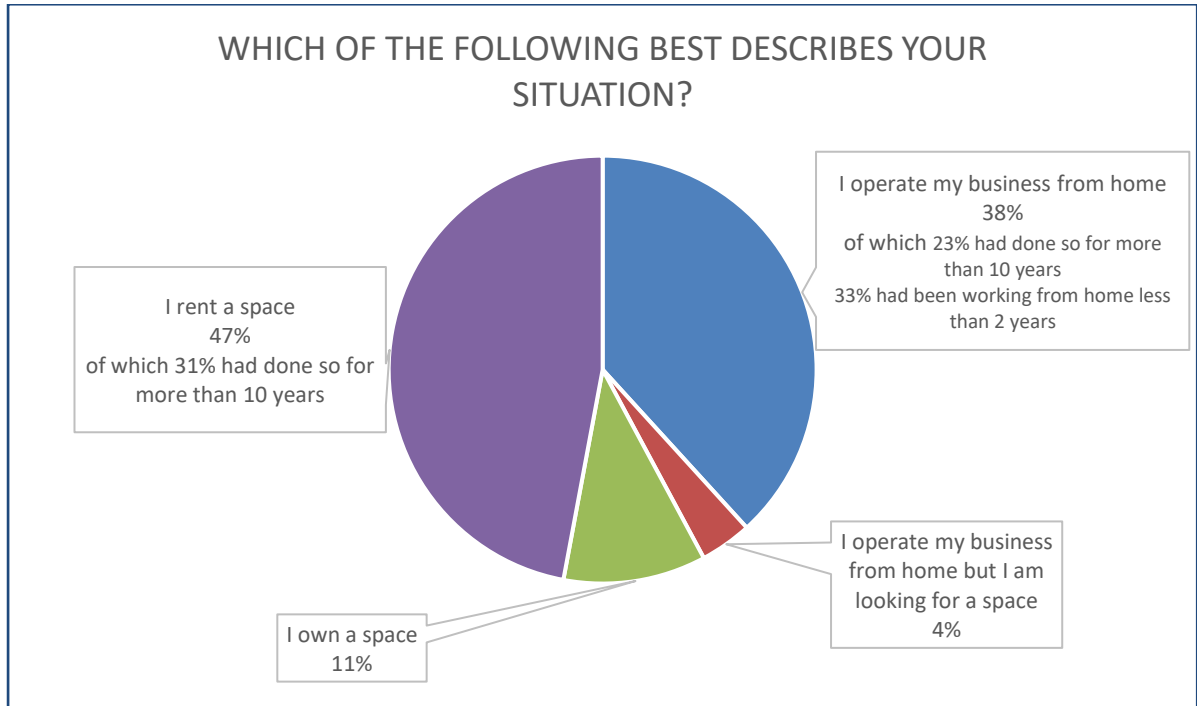
102 business owners responded, and this is what they told us...



About Businesses in the City of Charles Sturt

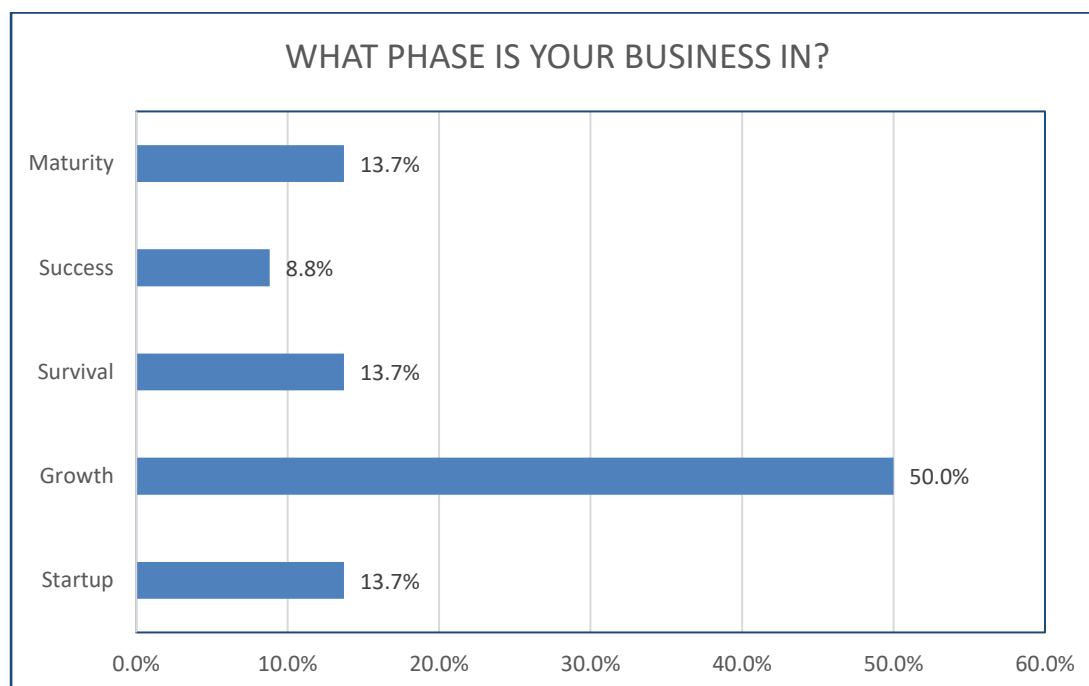
From our 102 responses 38% of business owners told us they operated their businesses from home, 47% rented a space.

Of the businesses operating from home... 23% had been doing so for more than 10 years, 33% for less than 2 years.



Growth

50% of business owners told us they were in '**growth**' phase, of which half expected to increase staff in the next 12 months.



Definitions

Startup	You are focused on obtaining customer and figuring out your business model that allows for a sustainable cashflow.
Growth	You are focused on growth and how to finance this whilst remaining profitable, alongside hiring staff to facilitate growth.
Survival	You have an established customer base and are focused on generating enough cashflow to stay in business.
Success	You are able to return an above average profit and are considering whether to keep the business stable and profitable or whether to expand.
Maturity	You are focused on consolidating and controlling the financial gains from your business growth phase. Revenue is steady safe and predictable.

Overall, almost 90% of business owners expected staffing numbers to either stay the same or increase.

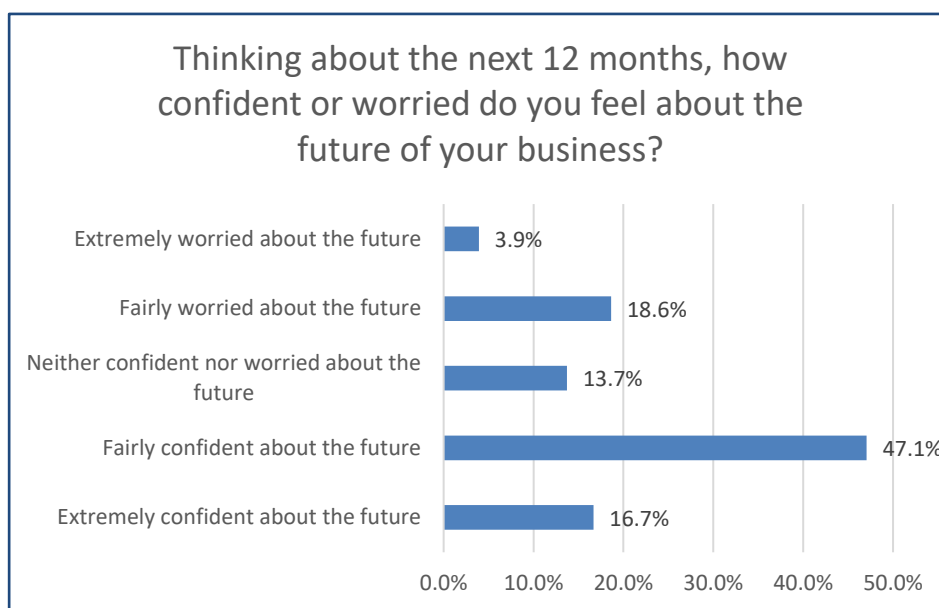
Less than 2% expected to be making reductions whilst the remaining respondents were unsure.

HOW MANY STAFF DOES YOUR BUSINESS EMPLOY?

How many staff does your business employ?	Home-based	Rent	Own a space	Looking for a space	Total
200+		1			1
20 to 199		7	2		9
6 to 19	1	13	4		18
1 to 5	16	16	5		37
Non-employing	22	11		4	37
Total					102

Business Confidence and Performance

Looking forward, **67%** of the businesses surveyed were feeling positive about the future of their business but looking back over the last 12 months said that business profitability had been mixed.



Over the last 12 months would you say that your business profitability has been..		
Excellent	5.9%	
Very good	18.6%	
Good	28.4%	
Fair	20.6%	
Poor	20.6%	
Please feel free to comment	6 comments	

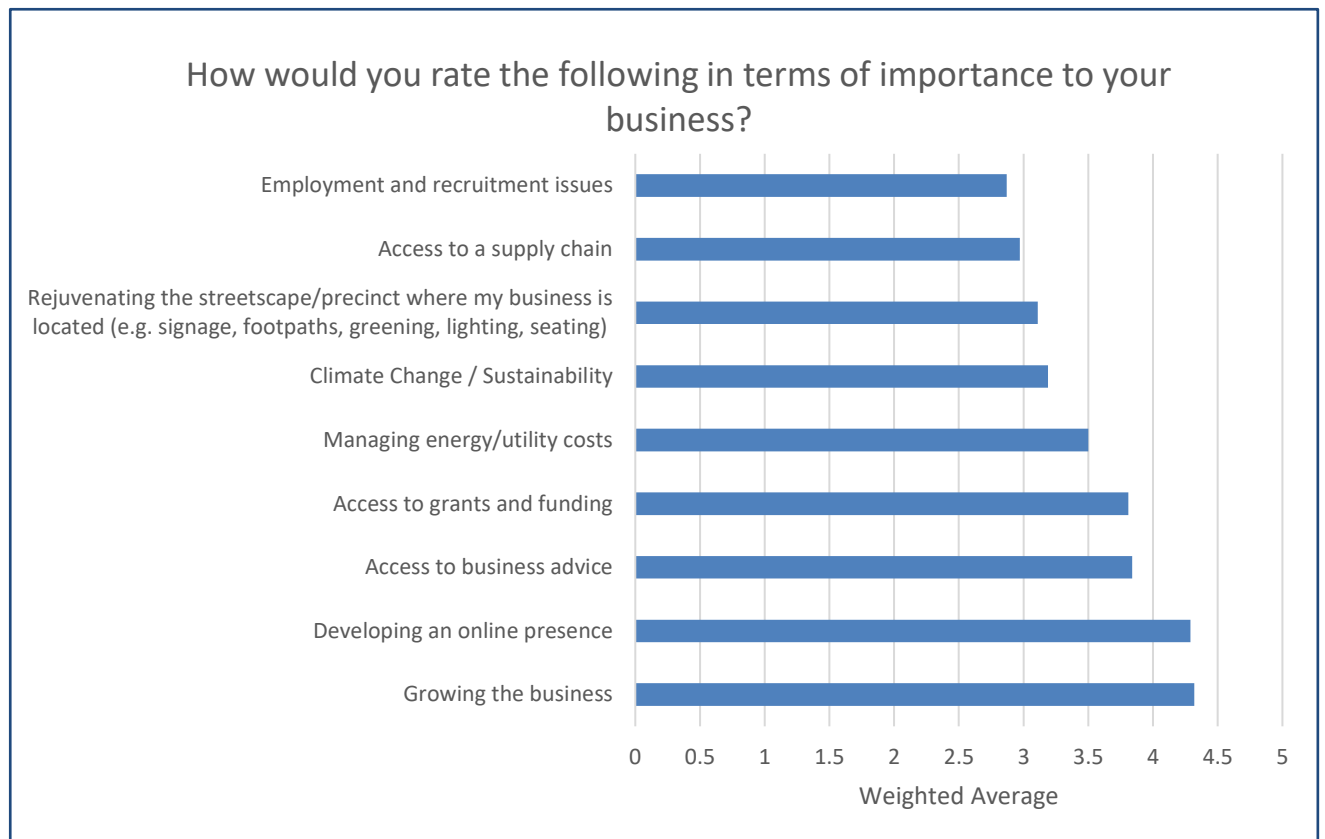
Several respondents told us that they were in start-up phase so it would be some time before they broke even. Others told us that they were working long hours to break even and hadn't paid themselves as they should.

What is important to your business?

Growing the business, developing an online presence, access to business advice, grants and funding and managing energy costs were important to business.

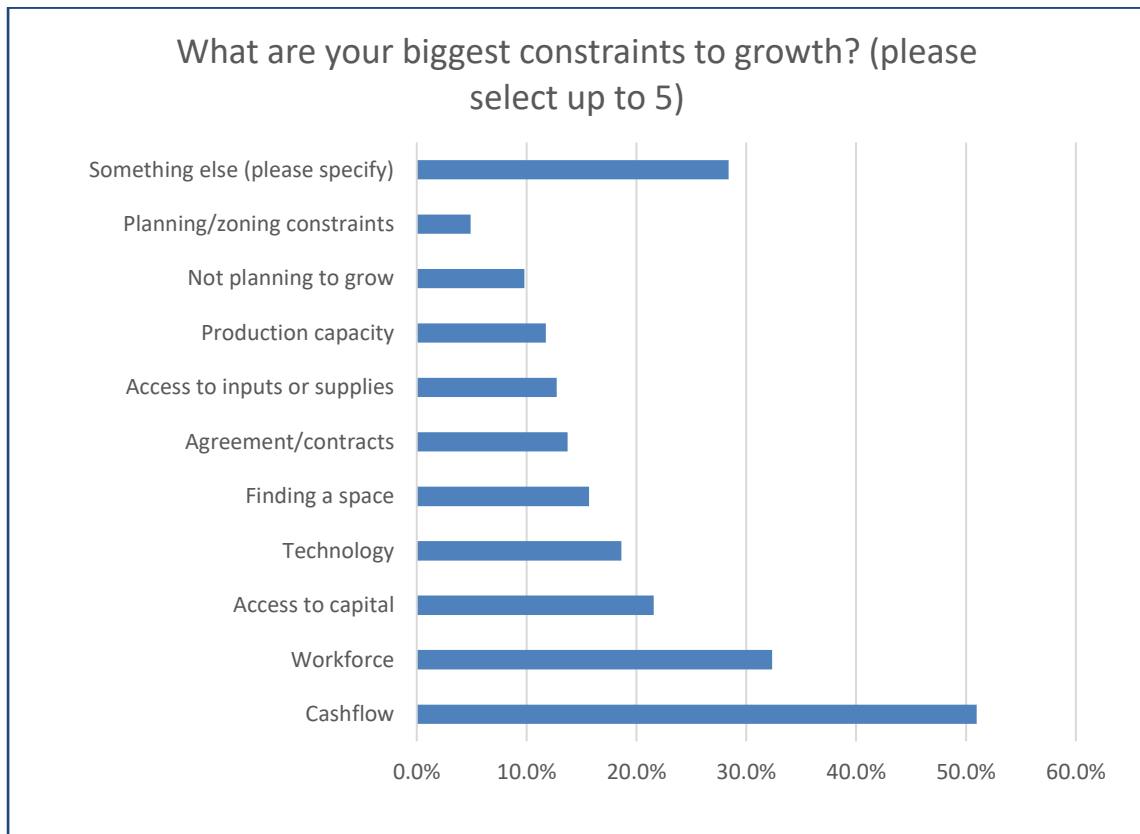
These priorities are the same as those identified in 2022 and 2023.

Employment and recruitment issues were considered less important than previous years however, feedback was provided requesting improvements to the external environment and support for shop front upgrades.



However, businesses looking to grow ranked 'workforce' high when asked what their biggest constraints to growth were:

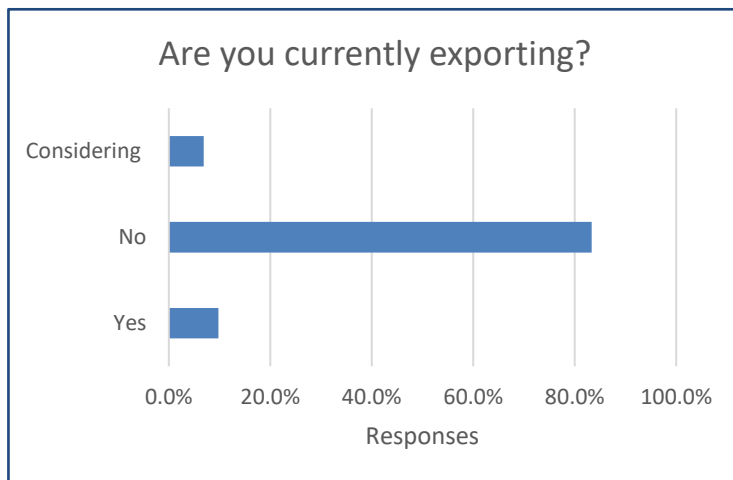
1. Cashflow
2. Workforce
3. Access to capital
4. Technology
5. Access to space



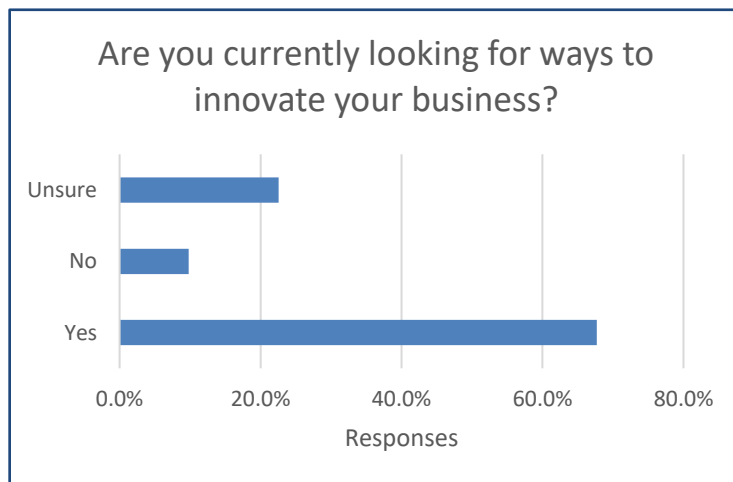
Business also told us that other constraints to growth included....

- Increasing their visibility, developing a stronger market presence and marketing
- Finding time to further educate themselves and their staff
- Access to export markets and ability to be competitive
- Working alone
- Compliance and Government policies
- External environment – signage, parking and shade

What is important to your business



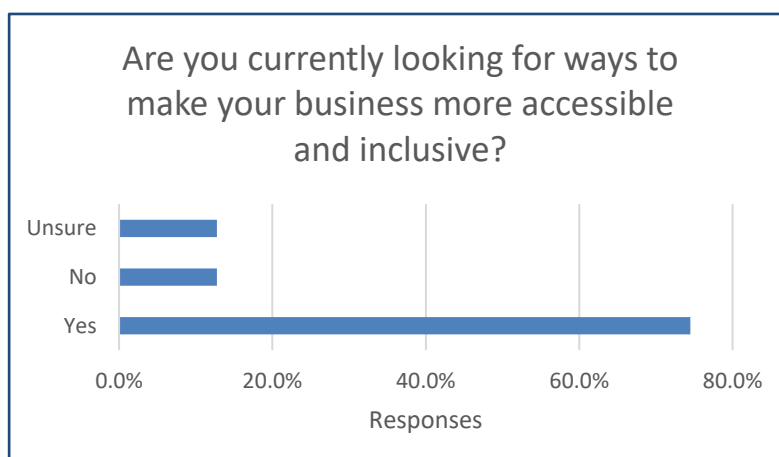
Less than 10% of the business surveyed were currently exporting however a further 7% were considering it.



Over 60% of respondents were looking for ways to innovate in their business. This included investigating new technology and online integration as well as incorporating artificial intelligence into their businesses.

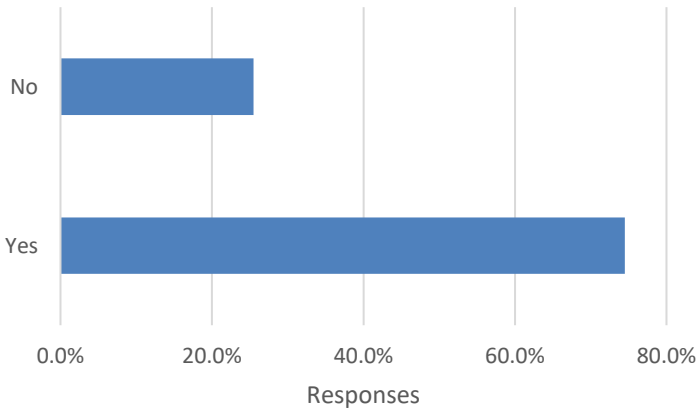
Almost 75% of businesses said they were looking for ways to make their business more accessible.

Several commented on physical access to their businesses whilst others were interested in making their website and social media more accessible.



What is important to your business?

Does your business source goods and services from other local businesses?



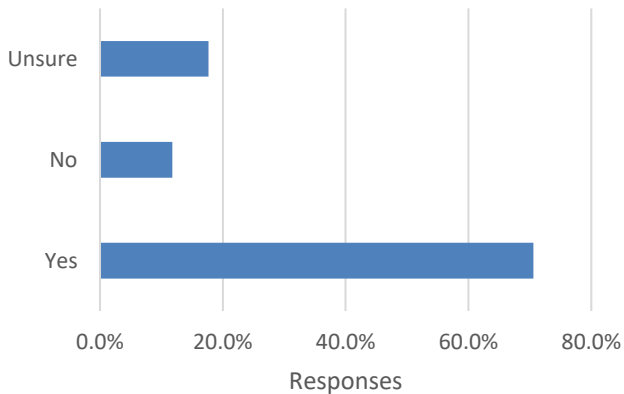
75% of the business surveyed sourced goods and services locally.

You told us, "you do try to support local wherever you can, but it can be difficult to find affordable products manufactured locally."

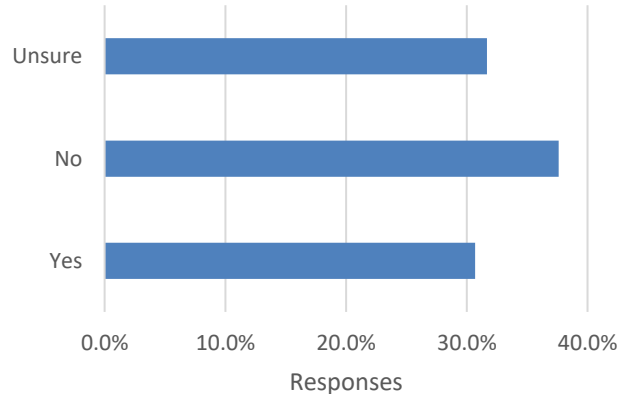
71% of our businesses understood the risks of cybersecurity but only 30% knew what to do in the event of an attack.

23% were interested in training and upskilling their staff in in this area.

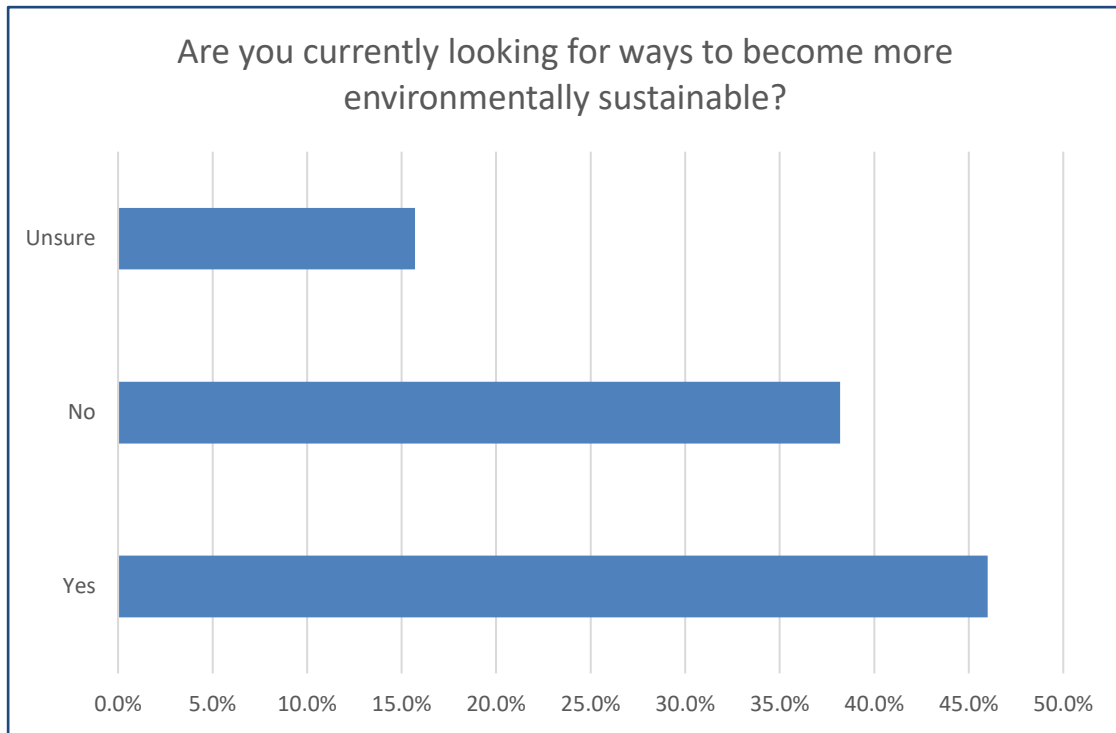
Do you understand the risk of Cyber Security?



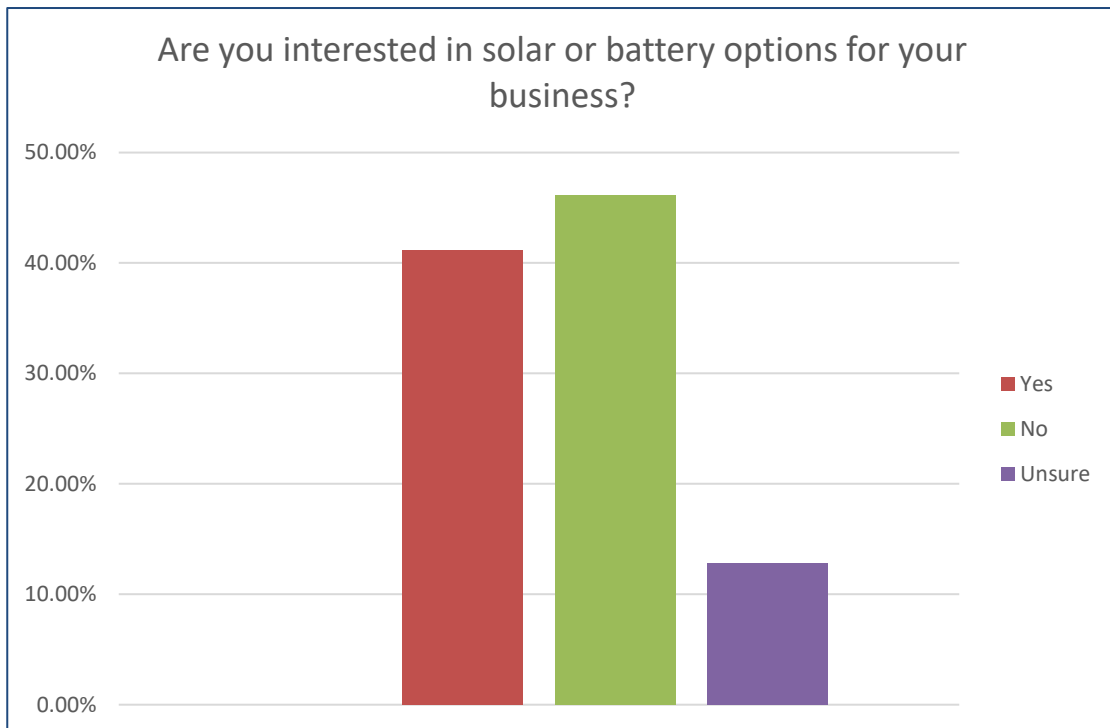
Would you know what to do in the event of a Cyber attack?



Are you currently looking for ways to become more environmentally sustainable?



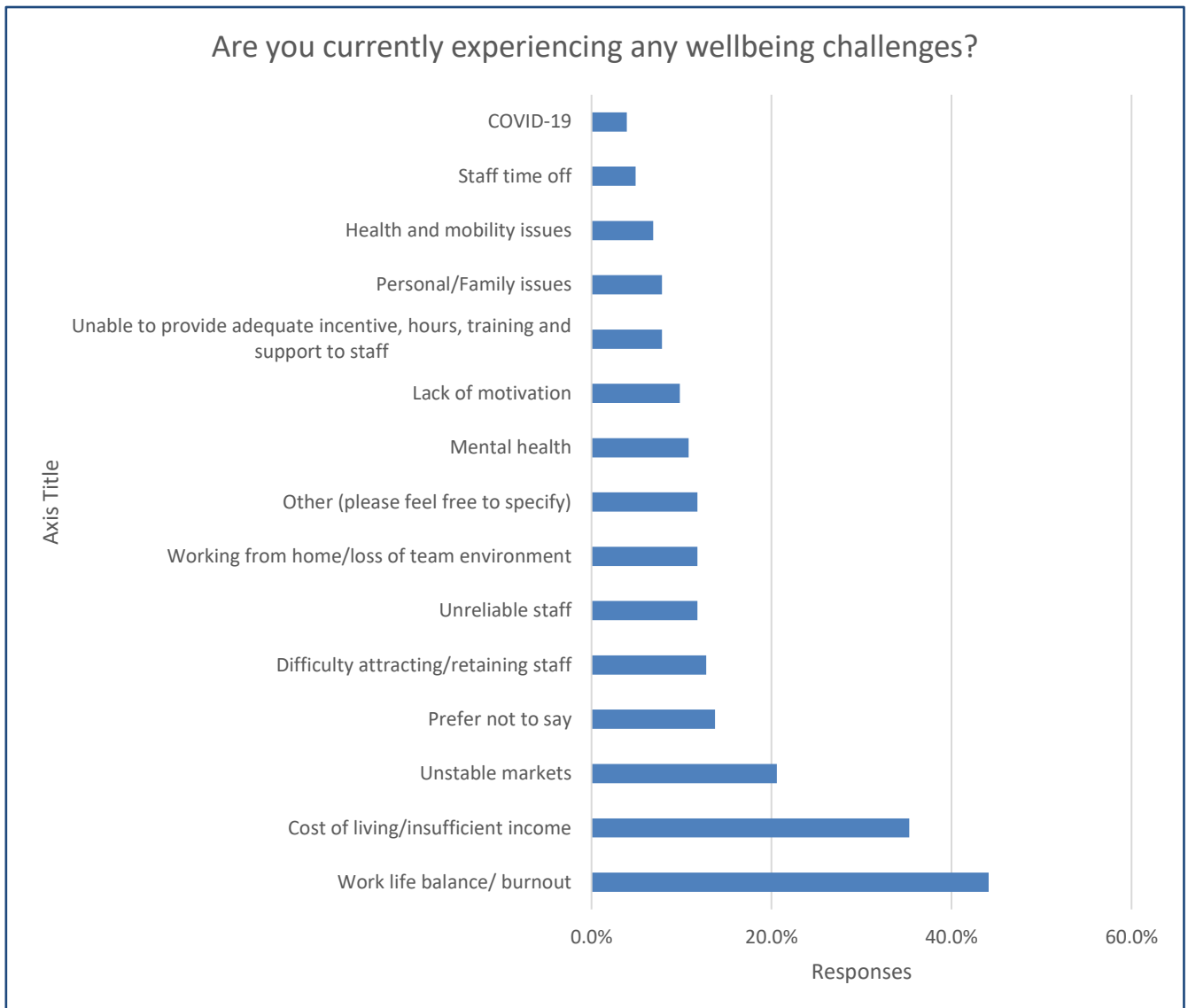
Many of our business owners were interested in solar options but expressed concerns about gaining approval for leased properties.



Wellbeing

Our business owners are finding their work life balance, burnout and the cost of living a real challenge. 20% of businesses also said that unstable markets were also causing issues.

Those that selected 'other' told us that they weren't experiencing any wellbeing challenges.

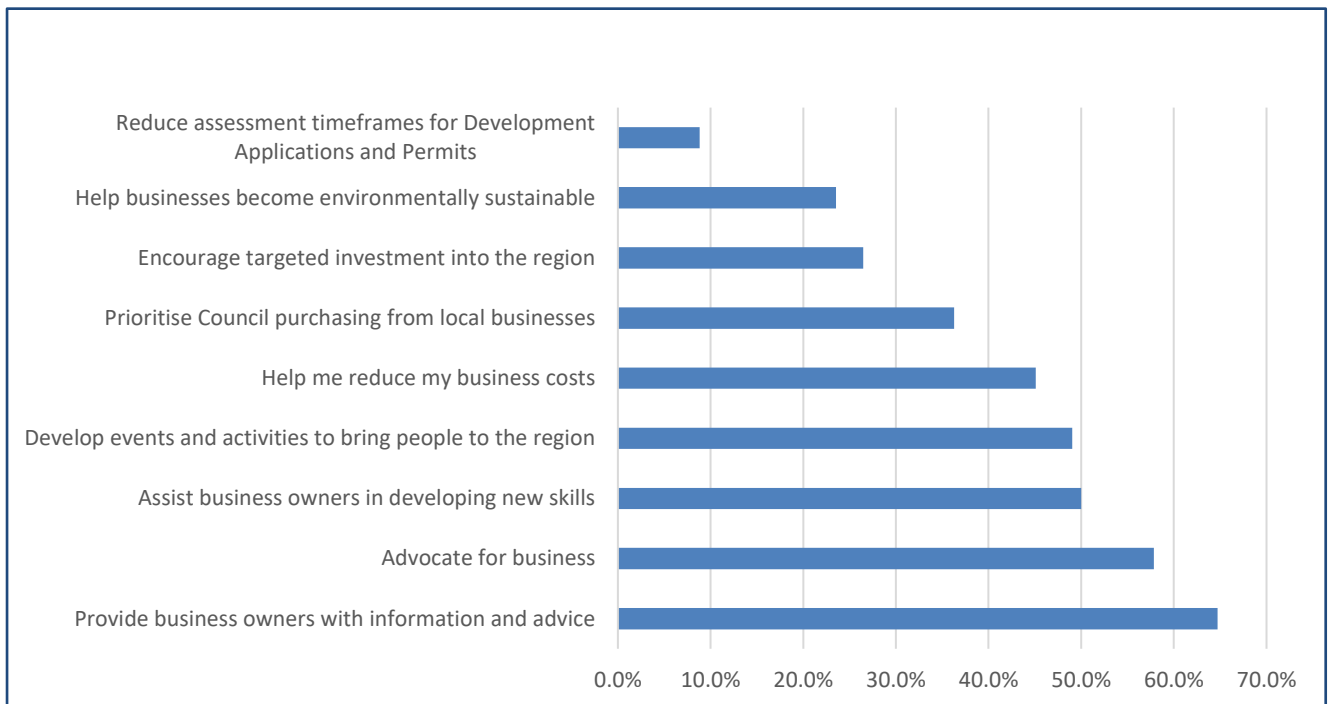


"There are no longer any boundaries between work and personal lives with the employer expected to manage all of these issues at the expense of the business and productivity. SME's aren't resourced to manage these issues so this results in burnout and lack of motivation."

I work 7 days...I cannot afford to hire staff and I don't spend enough time on exercise and self-care

How Council can help?

When asked how Council could help businesses the top 5 answers were; provide information and advice, advocate for them, assist them with developing new skills, attract people to the region through events and help them to reduce their business costs.

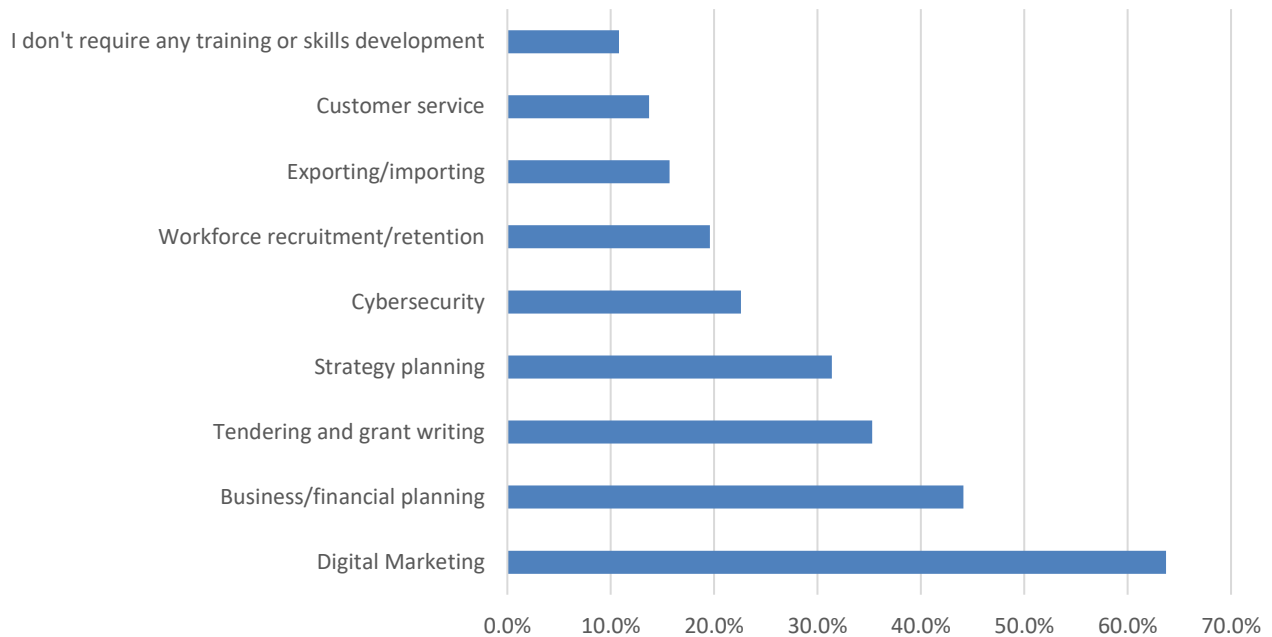


Additional responses	Number of comments
More networking and B2B opportunities	20
Grants	14
Skills development	13
More promotion	12
Signage	4
Car parking	3

Only 52% of businesses were aware of the grants available to support local businesses, artists and venues.

83% of businesses were aware of the Western Business Leaders, a group set up to support the City of Charles Sturt business community.

Are there any types of training or skills development that would be useful to your business and staff?



When asked were there any other workshops or topics they would like to see covered in the next 12 months, 64% of businesses selected digital marketing. This figure has remained unchanged from the previous year.

An increasing number of businesses requested topics on:

- Developing business growth strategies/ scaling up
- Financial planning, cashflow forecasting and budgeting
- Accessing grants/grants and tender writing
- Selling online
- Developing business to business connections

However, our businesses have changed how they like to receive business support...

How do you prefer to receive business support?	Responses	
	2023	2024
Masterclasses/events/workshops	54%	67%
One-to-one continued support (e.g. working with a business advisor or mentor)	40%	58%
Online	71%	52%
Not applicable	4%	3%
Total respondents	76	102

Council initiatives to support businesses

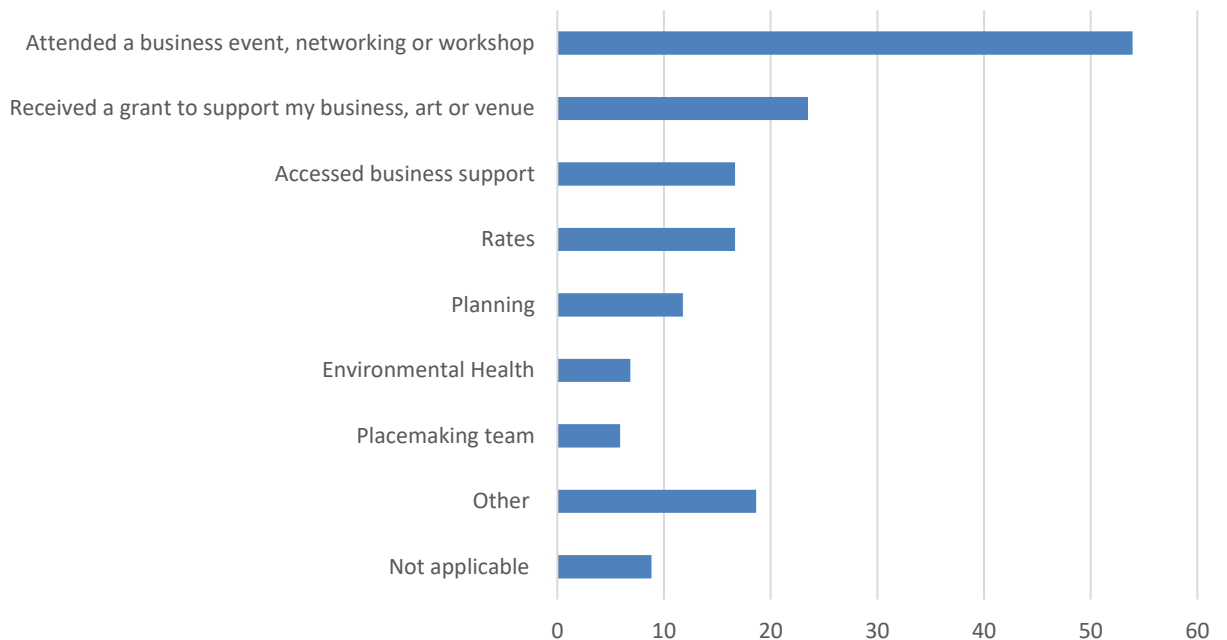
- Provide a Business Support Grant Program providing funding for advisors to help business owners develop new skills, adapt, innovate and grow.
- Host workshops on marketing, winning grants and tenders and accessing capital and cashflow.
- Provide a program of events and workshops through the Western Business Leaders and Women in the West to develop skills and facilitate business to business networking opportunities.
- Provide the Events and Festivals sponsorship program and Live & Local funding to attract events to the region.
- Promote businesses through the Western Business Leaders newsletter, the Charles Sturt Business Facebook page and Adelaide Beaches website and social media.
- Continue to promote local businesses through major events such as FIFA Women's World Cup, LIV Golf and Masters Games.
- Collaborate with organisations such as Responsible Cafes and Shinehub to help businesses become more sustainable and reduce costs.
- Promote Council tender opportunities to local businesses.
- Develop an Invest in the West Strategy.
- Continue to host events such as the Western Adelaide Jobs Expo 2024 and more targeted workshops to connect businesses with job seekers.
- Continue to advocate for businesses at all levels of Government.

Working with the City of Charles Sturt Council

87 businesses responded that they had been in contact with Council in the last two years of which 80 shared that their experience working with us was good, very good or excellent.

7 respondents rated their experiences as 'fair', these related to impact from construction works, permits and parking and unsuccessful applications for grants and subsidies.

Which of the following areas of Council did you have contact with?



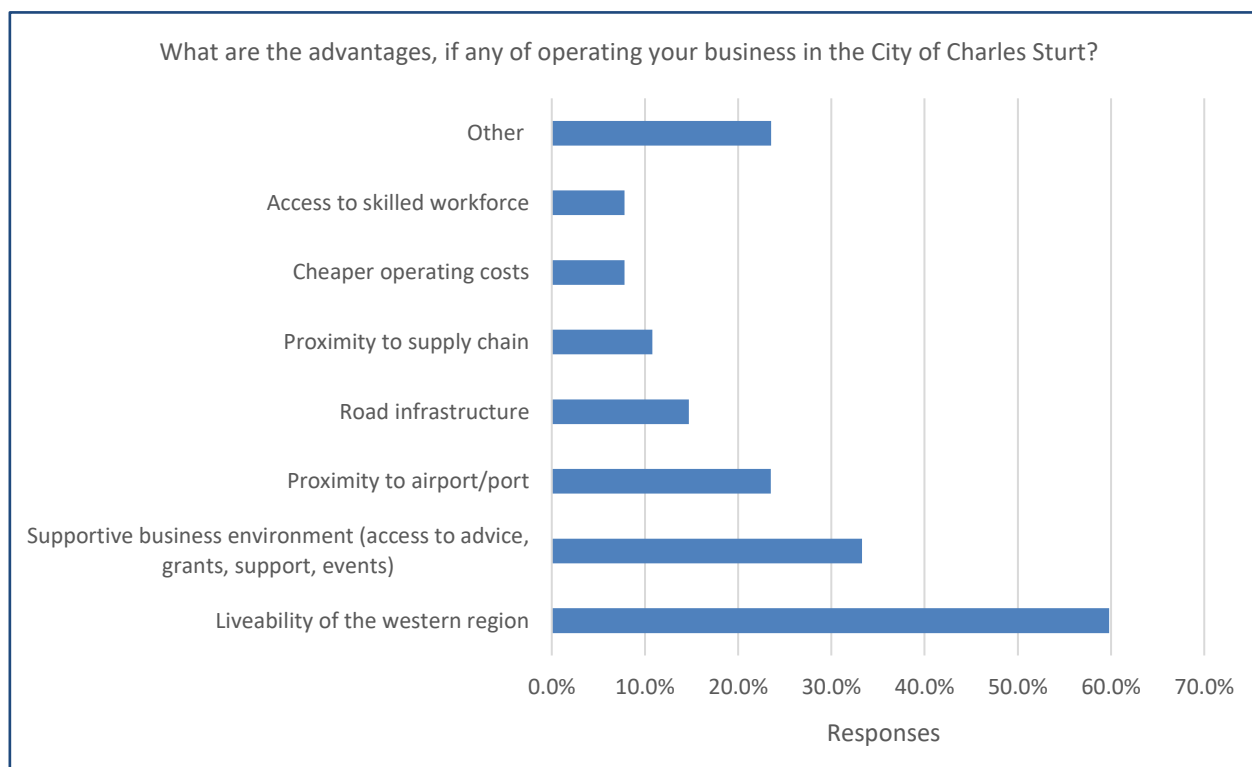
How was your experience working with us?

Excellent	36.3%
Very good	28.4%
Good	12.8%
Fair	4.9%
Poor	2.0%
Not applicable (hadn't worked with	10.7%
Please feel free to leave a comment	5 responses
	Answered 102

Doing business in the City of Charles Sturt

60% of businesses responded that **liveability** is what they loved about doing business in the Western Region.

Those that selected 'other' told us that the community and the central location were other reasons for doing business here.



61% of business respondents couldn't think of any disadvantages of doing business in the City of Charles Sturt compared to 83% in 2023.

9 businesses told us that lack of parking was an issue.

6 businesses told us that the lack of suitable commercial and warehouse space was preventing their business growing in the area.

We also received individual comments about...

- Impact from construction works and streetscape upgrades
- Disproportionate asset upgrades across the City.
- Rising costs due to high land values
- Poor perception and seasonal visitation to the City impacting trade
- Poor transport infrastructure/management and public transport

When asked if you could change one thing or solve one problem in your local community to improve the business environment, what would that be?

