2012
WILLMAR AREA
AFRICAN BUSINESS SURVEY

FINDINGS REPORT - PUBLIC RELEASE

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SURVEY SUMMARY

Purpose
The purpose of this regional survey was to serve as a mechanism to begin to compare the status of this new and growing business community of African-owned establishments with the larger business community of the region, as well as increase awareness in the larger community to the presence and potential of this new business group. This was done by attempting to determine: the overall health of these businesses, areas of success and challenges, opportunities for growth, current network utilization and capacity, and assistance needs from groups like ADC and the WLA.

Details
In all, 11 local businesses were surveyed on questions in the categories of: Owner Education / Experience, Financial Health, Perceived Challenges, Regional Opportunities, and the Use of Regional Services and Networks. The contents of this survey, as well as the full Findings Report can be accessed at www.adcminnesota.org.

Findings
- Business ownership in the African community is experiencing a recent growth trend
  - 91% established within the past 5 years
- Majority of owners (64%) have completed High School - only one with a Bachelor’s Degree
- A trend of diversity growing in business sectors represented
- Small Business category dominates with a significant economic impact on the community
  - Roughly 23 full-time jobs have been created by these businesses (100% African-immigrants)
  - 16 part-time jobs have been created (77% African-immigrants)
- Majority of surveyed (90%) are optimistic that financial future of the business will either remain at current levels or increase (with over 40% predicting revenue increases)

Challenges
- Employee benefits are essentially nonexistent for both part and full-time employees
- Stability and growth may become an issue if more financing options are not made available
  - While only 10% of those surveyed are “not satisfied at all” with current lending options, 82% are unaware of any options available to them in the area
  - Limited access to financing was a cited concern
- Expressed need for more training and regulation education programs in the area
  - 75% only “somewhat satisfied” or unaware of available business training and industry regulations education
- Networking is not currently fostered or utilized in a way that can fulfill its potential impact on the area
  - 91% currently at low level or no interaction with larger business community and market

This survey of African-owned businesses in the Willmar area, and the findings reported here, is meant to be a catalyst for organizations and businesses of this area to realize the potential of this business community, and work towards efforts that: expand and integrate business networks and supply chains, develop appropriate tools and services to enhance growth, and offer effective resources to a community with the demand and skills to utilize them for the betterment and vitality of the entire region.