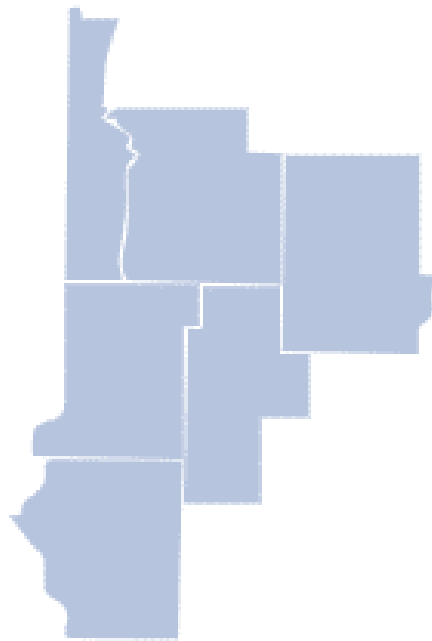


Rural Economic Development Model

**West Central
AG REGION**



**AGRICULTURAL
STRATEGY
2023**

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Executive Summary

The West Central Ag Region (the 'Region') is comprised of six primarily rural counties in west central Indiana: Clay, Parke, Putnam, Sullivan, Vermillion, and Vigo counties.

Task Force members reviewed relevant industry data, developed a uniform survey tool, and visited 22 local agribusinesses and allied industries.

After listening to concerns of these regional businesses and exploring future opportunities, the Task Force identified ways local and regional economic development professionals and partners could support the long-term sustainability and growth of these and other businesses and the regional economy through an enhanced focus on agricultural development. Key insights from the aggregated BR&E survey results are included in **Appendix A**. Company interviews were shared by the Task Force members, and the qualitative outcomes are included in **Appendix B**. Participating businesses were afforded a clearer view of the tools that local governments and economic-development organizations possess to assist in promoting the agribusiness industry cluster, especially given the prominent agriculture presence in the Region.



The REDM Process

The Rural Economic Development Model ('REDM') is a framework developed by a partnership of agricultural organizations, including the Indiana Corn Marketing Council, Indiana Economic Development Association, Indiana Farm Bureau, Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs, Indiana Soybean Alliance, Indiana State Department of Agriculture, and Purdue Center for Regional Development, to guide communities in the development of agricultural strategies for rural regions. Self-selected regions analyze data in an effort to discover their major agricultural assets and work to attract value-added agriculture — agribusiness and food-processing facilities and their connected supply chains — that fit with the region's capacity, vision, and needs.

Agriculture, as a leading Indiana economic sector, is shaped by world-renowned agribusiness firms, strong trade and membership organizations, productive farmers and soil, thoughtful and skilled leaders in public and private arenas, and innovative entrepreneurs. Agricultural strength is prevalent in the Region, and the Task Force's goal in implementing the REDM is to identify the ag assets (raw materials) and resources that will help leaders to develop the policies, infrastructure, sites, and support needed to create long-term improvements in their rural economies.

The REDM process focuses on the following components:

Assets – Understanding a region's core industry clusters, agricultural output, and supply chains is key for supporting, attracting and growing investment.

Policy – Agriculture processing may require specialized policy provisions such as changes to zoning standards or target-specific environmental provisions. Reviewing local zoning, development standards, and other relevant policies, and crafting responsible, flexible amendments as necessary is critical for facilitating the expansion of current industry or attraction of new, targeted industry.

Infrastructure – Agriculture and ag-based businesses may require a different infrastructure footprint than other industry. Verifying that local infrastructure can meet the needs of growing agribusiness operations and planning for development to allow these needs to be met is crucial for successful and sustainable growth.

Sites - The development of sites that meet the unique needs of targeted industries in a way that protects existing uses in the community is necessary for growth opportunities that meet the needs of targeted industries and the Region’s communities.

West Central Region Business Snapshot

A look at West Central Region business data provides valuable insights on why an ongoing focus on retaining and expanding existing companies in the region makes sense. There are two sets of data. The first examines changes occurring in the number of jobs and the factors that are fueling the growth and decline of jobs in the West Central Region (see **Table 1**). The second reviews the distribution of existing firms in the region by stages, from the self-employed to business enterprises that employ 500 people or more (see **Figure 1**).

Table 1. Changes in Jobs (2004 thru 2019)

Jobs	Factors	West Central Region
Gained by	New Startups	63,678
	Expansions and Spinoffs	40,016
	In-migration	2,305
	TOTAL GAINED	105,999
Lost by	Closings	74,346
	Contractions	28,398
	Out-migration	3,024
	TOTAL LOST	105,768
Net change		231

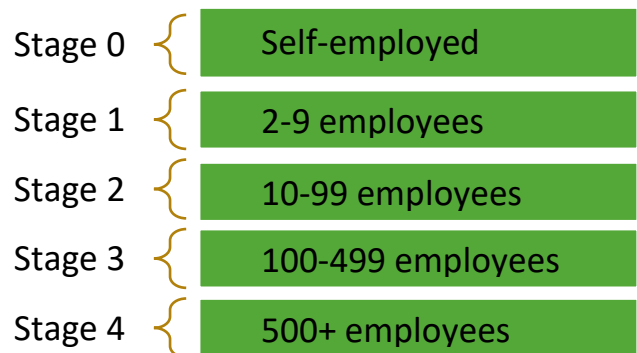
Source: YourEconomy.org: <http://youreconomy.org/>

Over the span of the 2004 to 2019 period, the churning of jobs in the region has been rooted in a number of factors. The top panel of Table 1 focuses on the components that were instrumental in adding jobs to the local economy. Most of the job gains came from new startups (63,678 jobs, 60 percent) followed by expansion and spinoff activities of existing firms (40,016 jobs, 38 percent). The remainder came from the migration of firms into the region over the course of the last several years (2,305 jobs, 2 percent).

The bottom panel of Table 1 highlights job losses occurring in the region between 2004 and 2019. Without question, business closures were the primary contributors to job losses (70 percent, or 74,346 of jobs lost) occurring in the region during this time period. The downsizing of existing companies in the region accounted for 28,398 jobs lost (27 percent), while 3,024 jobs (3 percent) were lost due to the relocation of firms to another Indiana region or to another state. All told, the economic shifts taking place in the West Central region from 2004 to 2019 resulted in a net gain of 231 jobs in business establishments, the majority of which were lost due to closure of the existing businesses.

Jobs in the West Central Region by Employment Stages

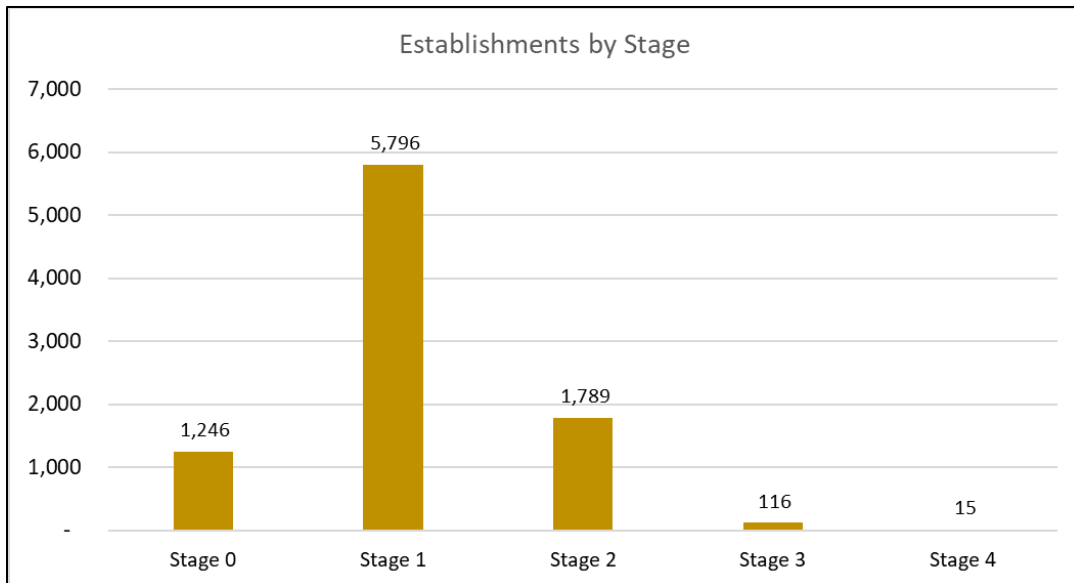
In reviewing job changes, it is useful to give attention to the size of firms that may be associated with jobs. This can be done by delineating the number of employees into five employment stages. The five stages are shown in the accompanying diagram (shown right).



The second part of the analysis highlights companies and stages in the West Central Region for 2019. (See **Figures 1 and 2**).

Figure 1 examines the number of establishments in the West Central Region. Over 64 percent of companies are Stage 1 (5,796), 14 percent are Stage 0 (1,246) and 20 percent are Stage 2 (1,789) which, combined, reflects more than 98 percent of the business establishments in the West Central Region. The fourth largest number of establishments in the West Central Region is Stage 3 companies at 1.3 percent (116), followed by Stage 4 companies at just 0.2 percent (15).

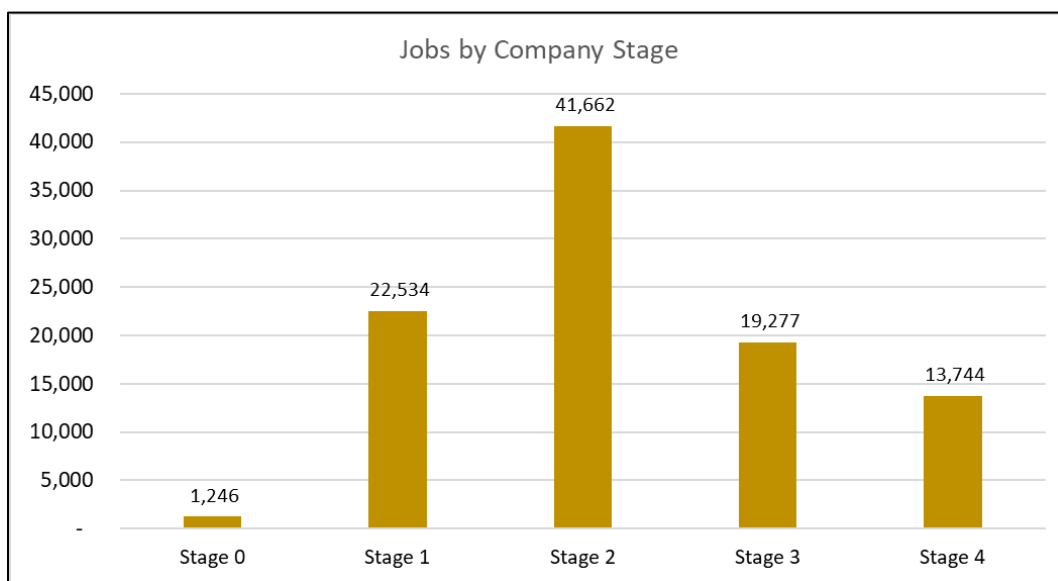
Figure 1. Companies by Stages (2019) – West Central Region



Source: YourEconomy.org: <http://youreconomy.org/>

Figure 2 focuses on the number of jobs by company stage. In the West Central Region, the largest number of people were employed by Stage 2 firms as of 2019 at 42.3 percent (41,662), followed by 23 percent (22,534) of people employed in Stage 1 firms. The Stage 3 firms comprised 20 percent (19,277) of total employees and Stage 4 firms were 14 percent (13,744). Lastly, 1.3 percent of those employed in the region were self-employed (1,246).

Figure 2. Jobs by Stages (2019) – West Central Region



Source: YourEconomy.org: <http://youreconomy.org/>

The Business Retention and Expansion (BR&E) program specifically targets Stage 1 and 2 firms. The data highlighted in Figure 2 reveals, like many communities in Indiana, that Stage 1 and 2 firms are the key sources of jobs in the West Central Region. As such, a BR&E program targeted to these two stages is a focus that makes sense for West Central Region. Not only could the attention be devoted to identifying factors that are limiting some Stage 1 and Stage 2 companies from growing, but also delineating the “red flags” (challenges that require immediate action) that are jeopardizing the ability of other Stage 1 and Stage 2 firms to survive over the near term.

Regional Data Overview

The West Central Region includes six counties which belong to the Thrive West Central, which is Region 13 of the Indiana Association of Regional Councils. Demographic and industry data were presented to the West Central Region Task Force to assist them in determining the focus of their efforts. A total of seven industry clusters were identified as competitive and at least four having potential connections and providing support to the value-added supply chain of the Agribusiness, Food Processing & Technology Cluster:

- Primary Metal Manufacturing
- Chemicals
- Glass and Ceramics
- Fabricated Metal Product Manufacturing



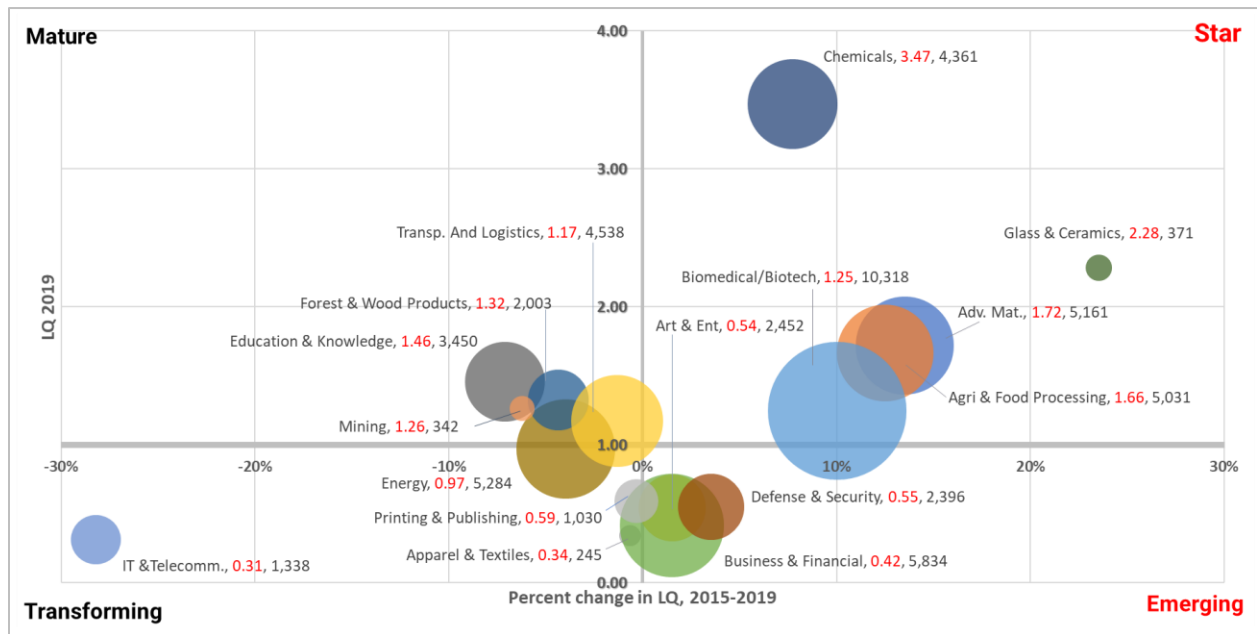
Key Data Highlights (2021)

- ✓ Approximately **222,365** individuals call the West Central Region home.
- ✓ Largest share of population has a high school diploma or higher (**89 percent**) with **20 percent** of the population having a B.A. or higher degree.
- ✓ The top five occupations in the West Central Region:
 - o **10.4 percent** Sales and Related
 - o **9.7 percent** Office and Administrative Support
 - o **9.0 percent** Transportation and Material Moving
 - o **9.0 percent** Production
 - o **9.0 percent** Food Preparation and Serving Related
- ✓ The median household income in 2019 was **\$53,697**.
- ✓ The median value of owner-occupied housing units in 2019 was **\$94,983**.
- ✓ Demographics:
 - o **90.2 percent** White
 - o **4.4 percent** Black or African American
 - o **0.1 percent** American Indian or Alaska Native
 - o **1.5 percent** Asian
 - o **0.1 percent** Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander
 - o **3.1 percent** two or more races
 - o **2.2 percent** of the above races combined are of Hispanic or Latino Origin

Source: [U.S. Census Bureau](#), [Headwaters Economics](#)

Industry Cluster

Purdue Center for Regional Development (PCRD) employs industry cluster analysis to determine economic competitiveness of a region. The West Central region has a unique set of industry clusters that are competitive. The Region had several STAR or competitive clusters, which included Agribusiness, food processing and technology cluster; Chemicals; Glass and ceramics; Advanced materials; and Biomedical/Biotechnical (health cluster). In addition, Primary Metal and Fabricated Metal Product manufacturing emerged as competitive clusters within manufacturing. The emergence of Agribusiness, food processing, and technology as a competitive cluster aligns with the project goals. The cluster had an LQ of 1.7¹ and employment of 5,031 in 2019. Additionally, the cluster observed a growth of nearly 10% in LQ between 2015 and 2019 rendering it as a STAR or a competitive cluster for the region. The cluster is defined by 69 NAICS (North American Industry Classification System) 6-digit industry sectors comprised of agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting; non-durable manufacturing (food processing and manufacturing); chemical manufacturing (fertilizers); durable manufacturing (farm and food product machinery); and wholesalers of grain, livestock, and farm supplies. In 2021, the Agribusiness, food processing, and technology cluster had a LQ of 1.65 making it a competitive cluster. The Agribusiness, food processing, and technology cluster also had a GRP (Gross Regional Product)² of approximately \$441M or slightly less than half a billion dollars in 2021.



¹ The concentration of jobs in agribusiness, food processing and technology cluster was nearly two times the national average indicating the capacity for exports.

² GRP shows the final market value of the goods and services produced in the cluster in West Central region.

[https://kb.emsidata.com/glossary/gross-regional-product-or-grp-i0/#:~:text=Gross%20Regional%20Product%20\(GRP\)%20is,in%20the%20region%20of%20study.](https://kb.emsidata.com/glossary/gross-regional-product-or-grp-i0/#:~:text=Gross%20Regional%20Product%20(GRP)%20is,in%20the%20region%20of%20study.)

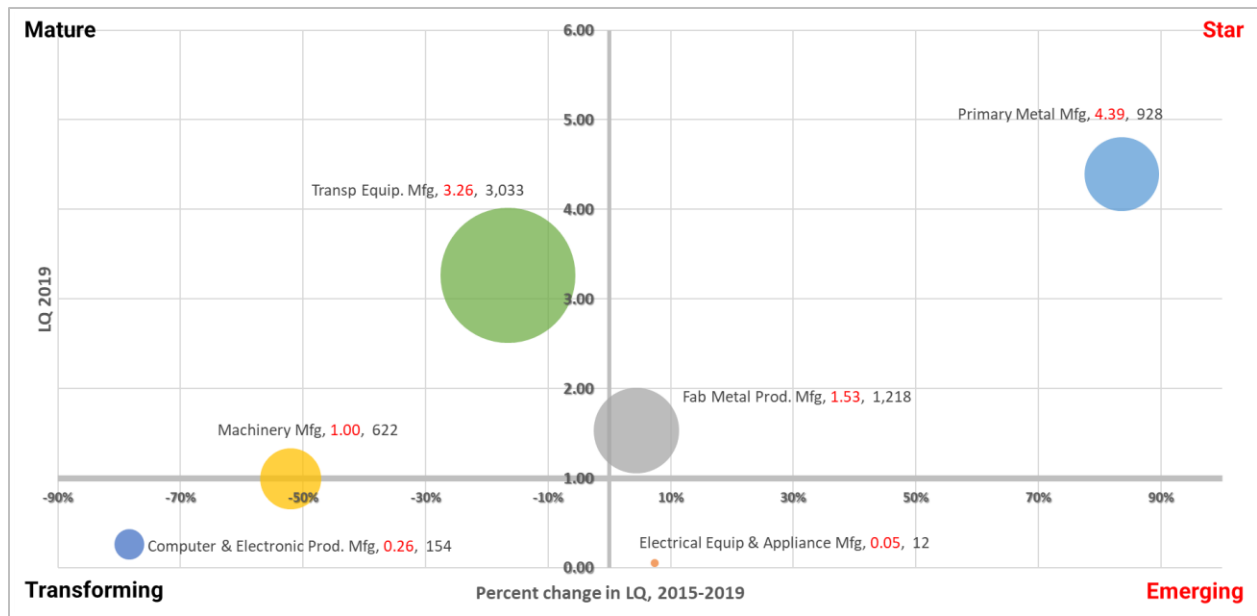


Figure 3. West Central Region Industry Cluster Analysis (2015-2019)

Shift-share Analysis

Shift-share analysis identifies industry sectors within a cluster that have unique competitive advantages and are able to counter the declining economic trends. For example, a particular industry sector might be declining nationally in jobs or the industry might be shrinking at the national level, but that particular industry sector might be growing jobs in the region. Such industry sectors are considered as having “competitive shift” or unique competitive advantages in the region. Availability of raw materials, transportation linkages, skilled-labor availability, industrial legacy, etc., are considered to provide the unique regional competitiveness to these industries.

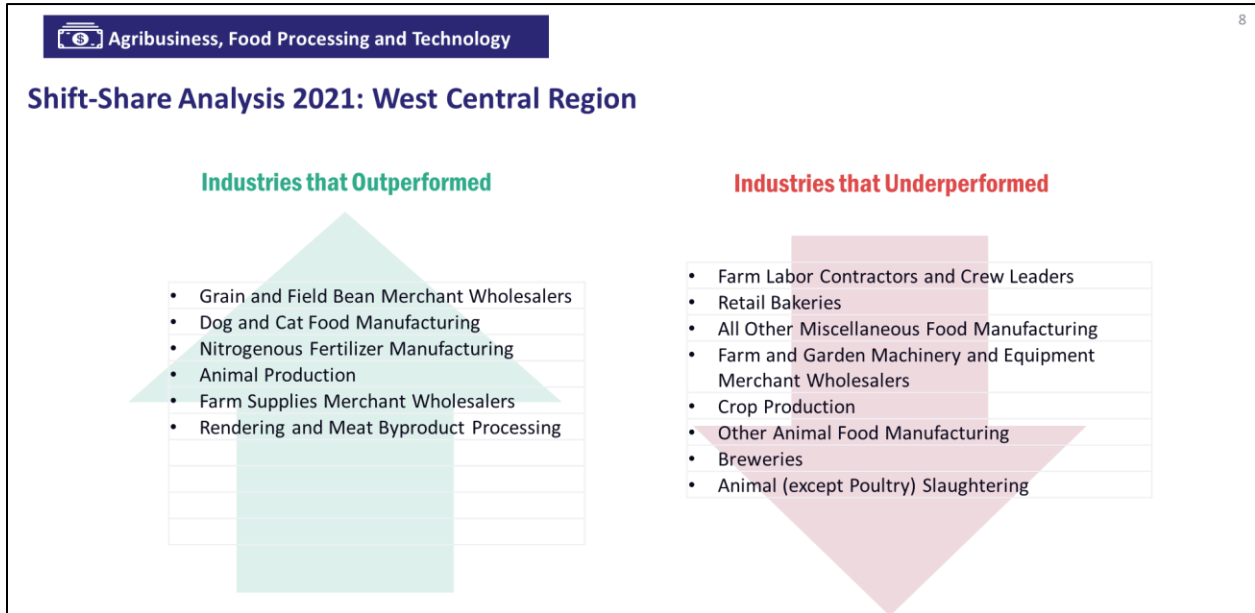
In the West Central Region, animal (except Poultry) slaughtering, nitrogenous fertilizer manufacturing, other animal food manufacturing, rendering and meat byproduct processing, soil preparation planting and cultivating, breweries, animal production, retail bakeries, postharvest crop activities (except cotton ginning), and grain and field bean merchant wholesalers were competitive and outperformed other industry sectors within the agribusiness, food processing, and technology cluster. Refer to the 4a below for listing of outperforming and underperforming industry sectors pre-COVID 19 within the agribusiness food processing and technology cluster. During the post-COVID 2020 period in 2021, the number of outperforming industry sectors decreased and underperforming industry sectors increased. Nitrogenous fertilizer manufacturing, rendering and meat byproduct processing, and animal production remained outperforming during the pre- and post-COVID periods. Farm supplies merchant wholesalers changed from underperforming in 2019 to outperforming in 2021. The dog and cat food manufacturing sector emerged as a new outperforming industry in 2021. Refer to Figure 4b for 2021 outperforming and underperforming industry sectors.

Figure 4a. Shift-Share Analysis (2019) Pre-COVID



Source: Developed by PCRD by using EMSI 2021.4 Class of Worker (4) Data

Figure 4b. Shift-Share Analysis (2021) COVID

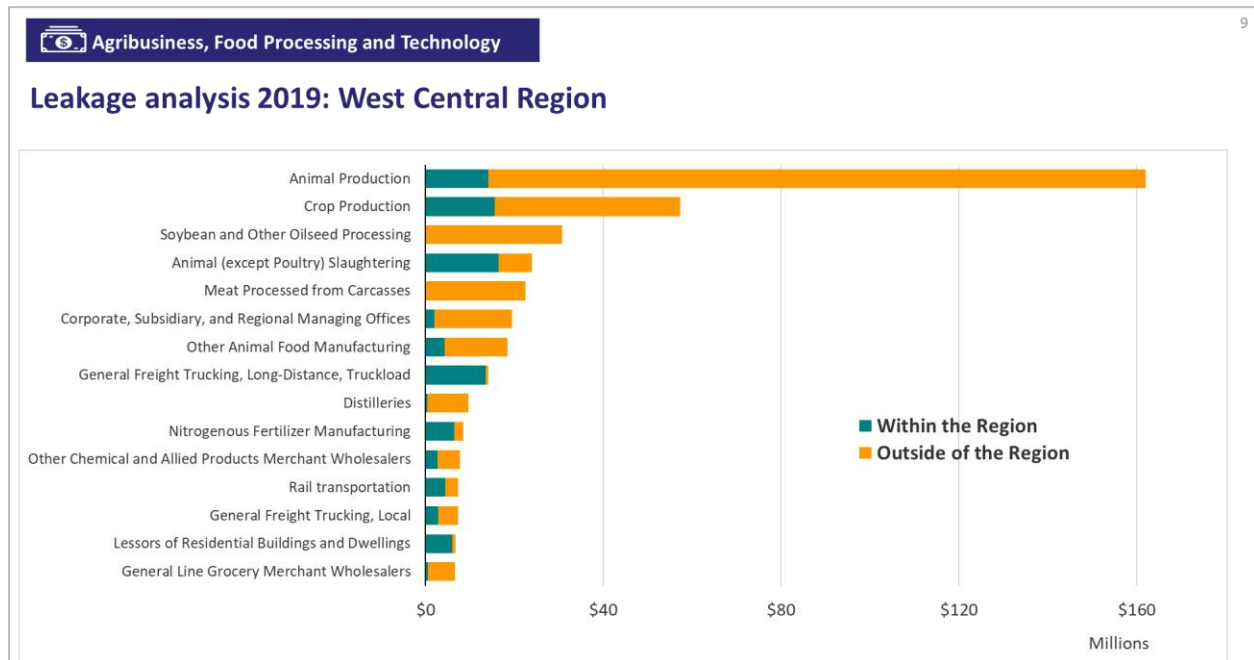


Economic Leakage Analysis

The industries require supplies and raw materials for production. A region might not be self-sufficient in fulfilling all the requirements of an industry and hence, a supplier might be located outside of the region. The \$ value of supplies and raw materials (goods and services) imported from outside of the region is known as economic leakages. The knowledge of economic leakages reveals the market \$ value of demand available in the region.

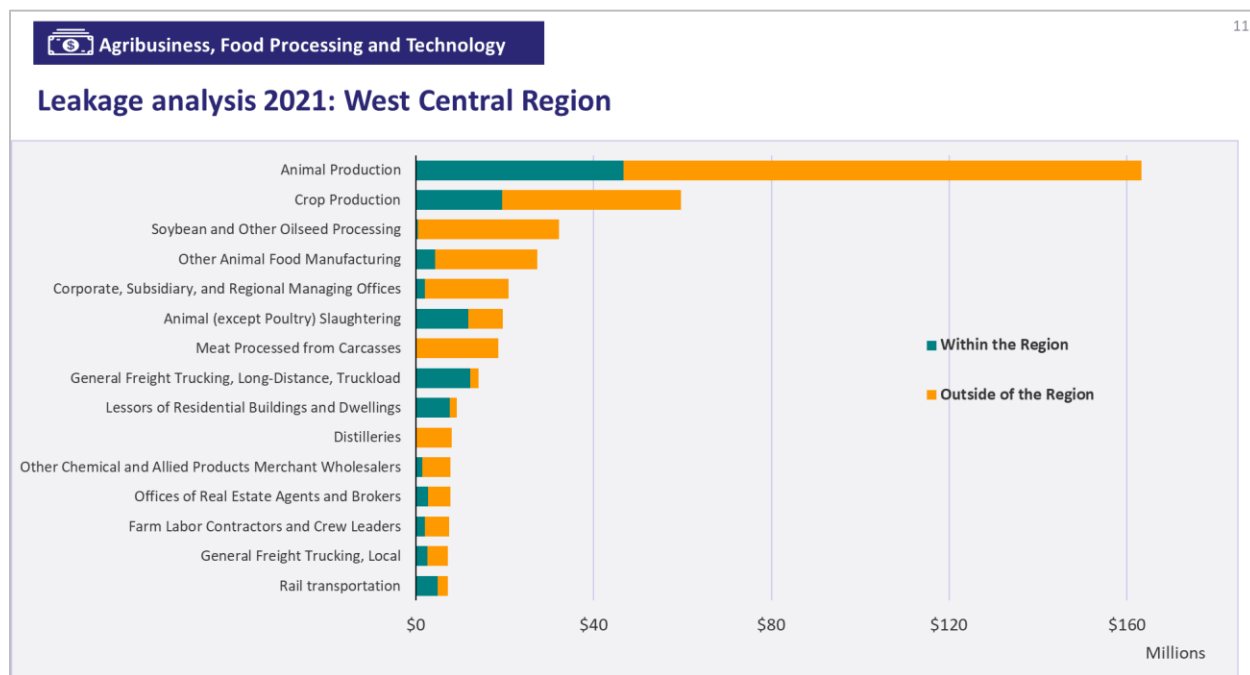
In the agribusiness, food processing, and technology cluster, the West Central Region used inputs of \$162 million for animal production, \$57 million for crop production, and nearly \$31 million for soybean and other oilseed processing. A large proportion of this demand leaked out and was met by suppliers from outside of the region, either from Indiana, other U.S. states, or international imports. For example, animal production had leakages in excess of \$147 million and crop production had leakages of \$42 million in 2019. Refer to Figure 5a below for the top leaking sectors related to the agribusiness, food processing, and technology cluster during the pre-COVID 2019. In the post-COVID 2021 period, the overall magnitude of leakages remained almost the same. The West Central Region used inputs of \$163 million for animal production, \$60 million for crop production, and slightly more than \$32 million for soybean and other oilseed processing. The leakages were in excess of \$116 million in animal production, \$40 million in crop production, and almost \$32 million in soybean and other oilseed processing. The supply chain impacts during the COVID period of 2020 might have caused local producers to search for raw material suppliers within the region. Refer to Figure 5b for leakage analysis in the post-COVID 2021 period.

Figure 5a. Leakage Analysis (2019) Pre-COVID



Source: Developed by PCRD by using EMSI 2021.4 Class of Worker (4) Data

Figure 5b. Leakage Analysis (2021) COVID



Source: Developed by PCRD by using EMSI 2021.4 Class of Worker (4) Data

Occupational and Worker Demographics

The top occupations engaged within the agribusiness, food processing and technology cluster include farmers, ranchers, and other agricultural managers; farmworkers and laborers in crop, nursery, and greenhouse; farmworkers in farm, ranch, and aquacultural animals; laborers and freight stock, and material movers by hand, packaging and filling machine operators and tenders, etc. The median hourly earnings range from \$9.55 for farmworkers in farm, ranch and aquacultural animals to \$38.4 for general and operations managers. A majority of the top occupations require either a high school diploma or on the job training with no formal educational credential. It is important to know that some of these occupations that require manual work and repetitive tasks have higher than average probability for getting automated. For example, laborers and freight stock and material movers by hand have an Automation Index value of 117.2 or a 17% higher probability for automation than the average Automation Index of 100.

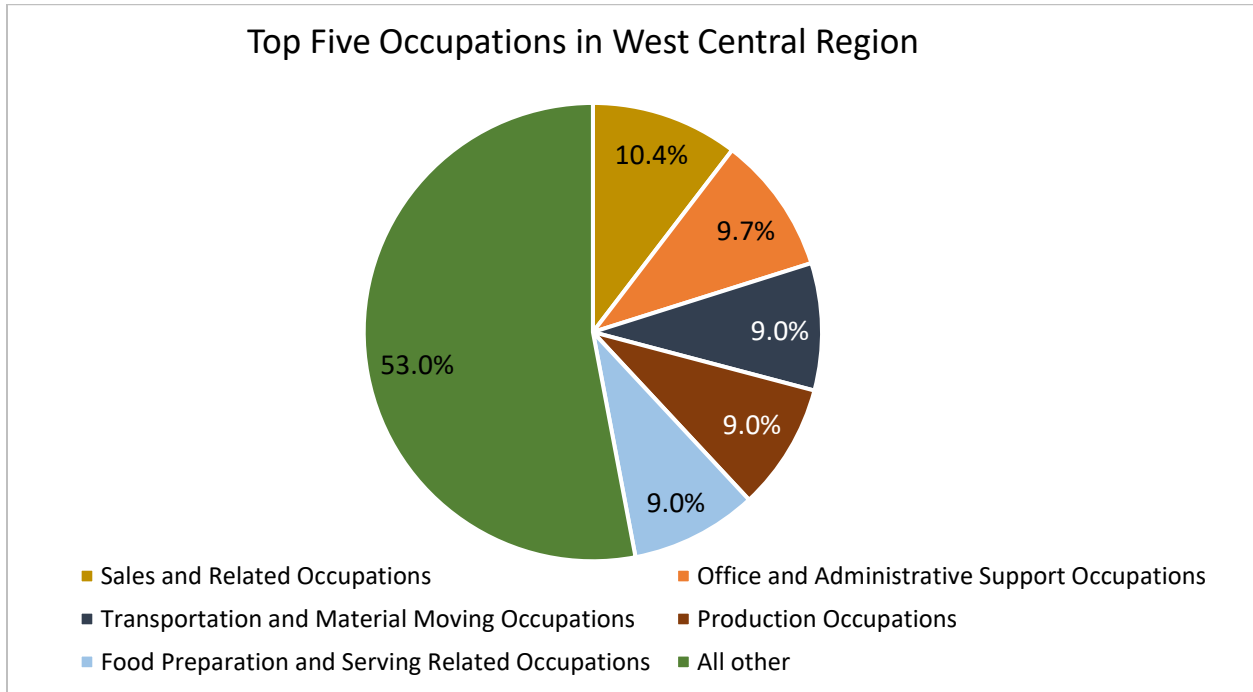
More than one-third (37%) of the workers employed in the agribusiness, food processing and technology cluster are matured (age 55 years or more). It is higher than the state average of 31% matured workers in the agribusiness, food processing and technology cluster. The West Central Region has less Hispanic workers (5%) compared to Indiana’s average of 11% in this cluster. Similarly, the proportion of Black workers in the West Central Region (1%) is lower than Indiana’s average of 5%. In terms of gender, the West Central Region has 20% female workers compared to Indiana’s average of 26% female workers. In the West Central Region, more than one-third of the workers are near retirement age and the proportion of younger workers (age 14-24 years) is only 12%. Whereas automation might help in the future, but

the region needs to consider the future pipeline of workers to replace the retiring workforce in this cluster.

Occupations

In 2019, the most common occupations in the West Central Region were Sales and Related (10.4 percent), Office and Administrative Support (9.7 percent), Transportation and Material Moving (9 percent), production (9 percent), and Food Preparation and Serving Related (9 percent) (see **Figure 6**).

Figure 6. Total Jobs and Top Five Occupations in West Central Region (2019)

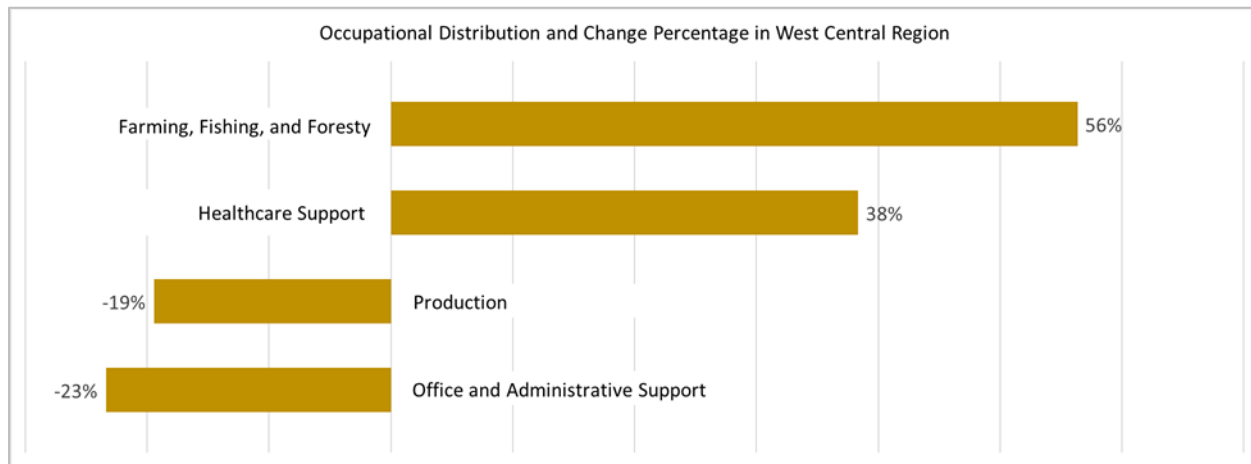


Source: Developed by PCRD by using EMSI 2022.4 Class of Worker (4) Data

Next, we look at occupations with the largest gains and losses in employment numbers between 2003 and 2019 (see **Figure 7**). Changes in employment levels are particularly of interest when they have occurred in sector related occupations where a high percentage of local employment is concentrated.

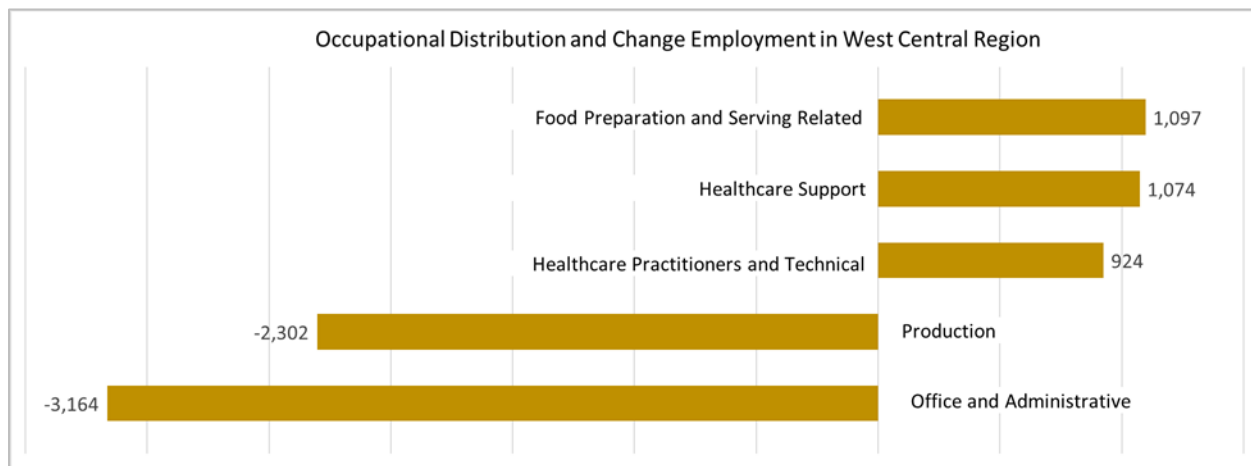
The largest percentage gained in occupations was Farming, Fishing, and Forestry at 56 percent followed by Healthcare Support at 38 percent. Occupation decreases were in Production (-19 percent) and Office and Administrative Support (-23 percent).

Figures 7a & 7b. Occupational Distribution and Change in the West Central Region (2003-2019)



Source: Developed by PCRD by using EMSI 2022.4 Class of Worker (4) Data

Employment numbers increased in Food Preparation and Serving (1,097 jobs), Healthcare Support (1,074 jobs), and Healthcare Practitioners and Technical (924 jobs) while they decreased in Production (-2,302 jobs) and Office and Administrative Support (-3,164 jobs) occupations.

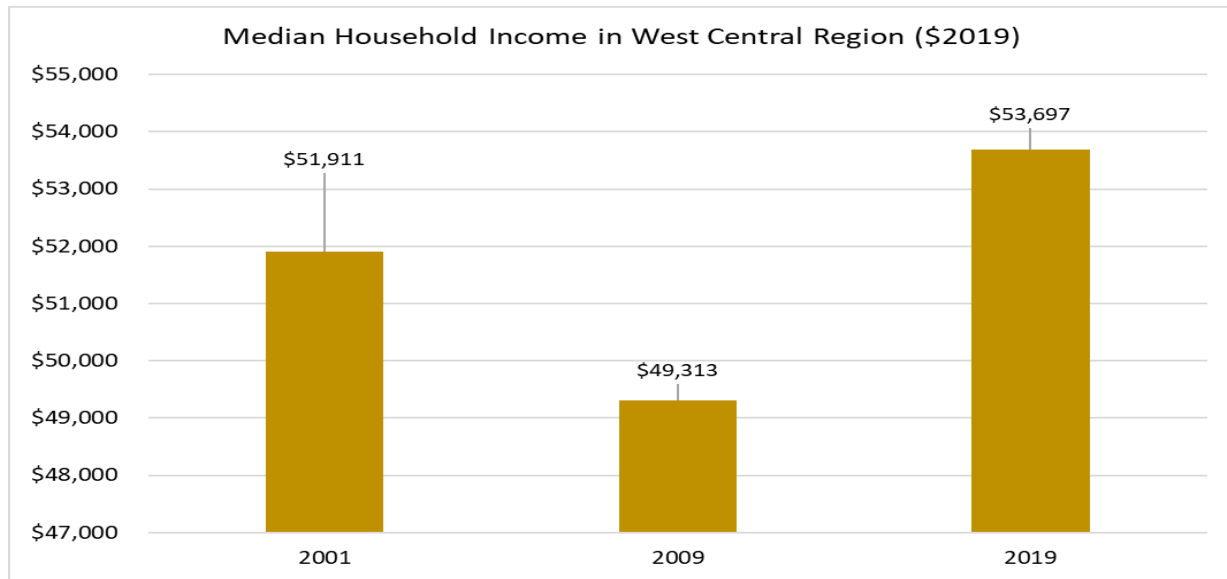


Source: Developed by PCRD by using EMSI 2022.4 Class of Worker (4) Data

Income and Poverty

The Census Bureau estimated a median household income of \$53,697 in 2019 for the West Central region (see **Figure 8**). The real median household income has increased by more than three percent since 2001. Household income can include: Labor Earnings, Social Security, Retirement Income, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Cash Public Assistance Income, and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

Figure 8. Income in the West Central Region (2001-2019)

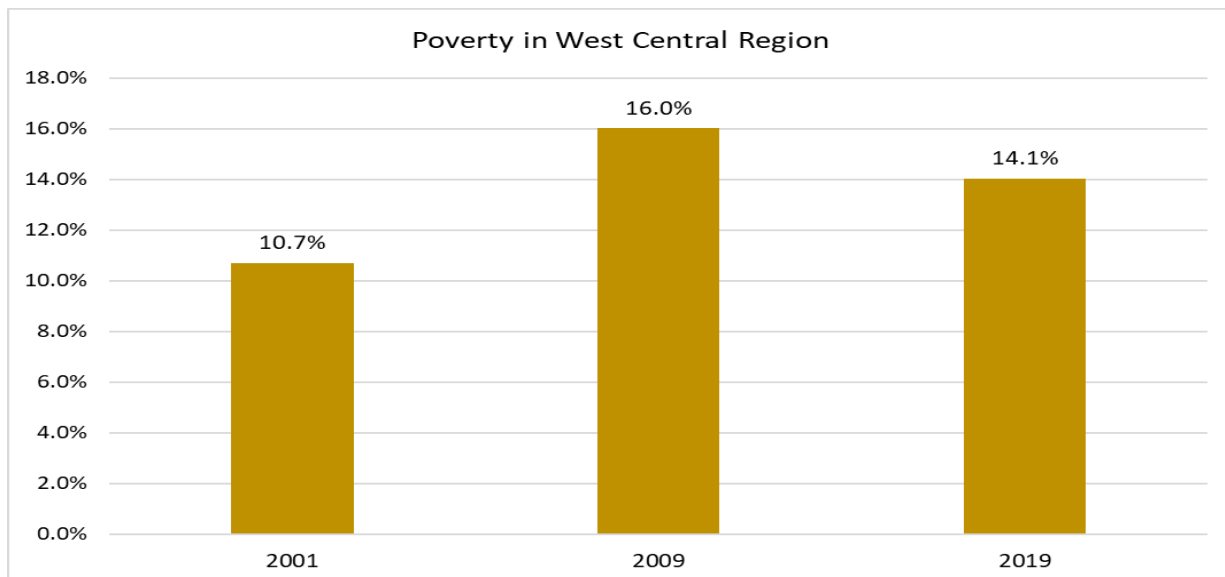


Source:

SAIPE - Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates: <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/saipe.html>

We further examine income by including poverty trends (see **Figure 9**). While the median household income increased by more than three percent since 2001, poverty levels in the West Central region also increased by more than three percentage points from 2001-2019.

Figure 9. Poverty Trends in the West Central Region (2001-2019)



Source:

SAIPE - Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates: <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/saipe.html>

West Central Region Ag Strategy

Analysis of current data and trends within the existing businesses was key to selecting prime targets for the West Central Ag Region. The regional Task Force initiated a Business Retention & Expansion (BR&E) program to tap into existing businesses as key “barometers” of the target industry clusters’ economic health. The process was intentionally focused on identifying gaps in the supply chain and regional leakages for the purpose of understanding and proactively responding to the threats limiting growth and, sometimes, even survival in today’s economic climate.

Through the data analysis and company interviews, the West Central Task Force identified the following four key strategies:

- develop a strong innovative labor force to support agriculture across the region,
- increase and diversify value-added ag processing and production in the region,
- develop and advocate for strong regional and state processes to support agriculture and agribusiness, and
- fill gaps in the regional agribusiness supply chain.

DEVELOP A STRONG INNOVATIVE LABOR FORCE TO SUPPORT AGRICULTURE ACROSS THE REGION.

- 1) Improve awareness of jobs in the ag industry pertaining to farming.

Action Steps:

- Meet with Indiana Career Connect and the Workforce Development Board to discuss including a section for agribusinesses in their labor database.
- Survey agribusinesses as to their needs and challenges, especially with skillsets.
 - Analyze the survey results and identify the best approach to use in the region, which may include developing a regional ag labor database.
- Once a path is identified, schedule a meeting with the agribusinesses to share the resources on identifying eligible workforce training grants.
- Begin outreach through newsletters, breakfast meetings, workshops, and using existing meetings as an opportunity to share the information. Partner with Purdue Ag Extension in each county.

- 2) Develop internships and on-the-job training programs for the farm, with a focus on work-based learning in agriculture.

Action Steps:

- Each counties’ economic development director to meet with their Purdue Ag Extension agent to discuss the potential for establishing internships and how 4-H and FFA can support the initiative.
- Meet with Career and Technical Education and adult education staff to determine if and how they are using these resources, such as workforce training grants, in agriculture.
- Visit with the Ag Charter School in Trafalgar to discuss how to identify and source interns.

- Reach out to the FFA leaders in the various communities to find internship opportunities and identify who is interested in an internship.
- Develop an internship program and outreach material. Share the list with students of companies interested in working with interns.

3) Expand the Tech School for Agriculture that includes technology training, New Tech on the Farm, and AgBot research & development.

Action Steps:

- Meet with the Ag Charter School in Trafalgar to ask if they are interested in opening a satellite center or offering online programs in the Region.
- Meet with Indiana Small Business Development – Ag Initiative staff to discuss how to connect with Rose Hulman's AgBot program in an effort to expand programming in to the Region.
 - Meet with County Extension agents to discuss collaboration.
 - Meet with Ivy Tech to discuss their ag programming and interest in expanding.
- Meet with public school superintendents to discuss an interest in providing alternative ag programming with their FFA and ag classes.
 - Meet with Adult Educational organizations to discuss collaboration.
- Meet with Purdue Extension and Purdue Council for Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching (P-CARET) members to share the Ag Strategy goal and how to engage with the ag community.
 - Meet with Purdue Ag and Natural Resource staff to discuss how to connect with the Amish population.
- Develop a tracking program to track 4-H programs, identify trends, education interests, and career opportunities.
- Schedule presentations to 4-H, FFA and ag students to discuss career opportunities.

4) Provide educational workshops for the ag community, entrepreneurs, veterans, and beginning farmers.

Action Steps:

- Schedule a meeting with Indiana Small Business Development Center – Ag Initiative, local extension agents, local and state Farm Bureau representatives, Purdue-Manufacturing Extension Partnership, and USDA-Rural Development to determine an interest in partnering on a series of workshops for the ag industry.
- Inventory the workshops currently being offered and who is providing the information.
- Schedule initial workshops to help agribusinesses and farm families with transition planning and for beginning farmers.
- Develop outreach material and plan to disseminate the details of the workshops well in advance and in various media to allow for easy access registrations.
 - Share information on workshops, resources, market research, writing business plans, and grant opportunities through various media and economic development connections.

- 5) Develop an Education Network Database that focuses on 'Business Best Practices' for farmers.

Action Steps:

- Research current resources, such as Purdue Education Online, or others on what information is easily available.
- Meet with Purdue Extension Agents, Indiana Small Business Development Center – Ag Initiative, Purdue Manufacturing Extension Partnership, and Indiana Farm Bureau to identify all resources and determine which agency is interested in housing and maintaining the database.
 - Develop the format for the resource database and include Indiana Small Business Development Center – Ag Initiative, Indiana State Department of Agriculture, AgriInstitute, and the Ag Leadership Council in the conversations.
- Determine the best agency to host and maintain the database. If other agencies are willing to host the database, the West Central Region's Task Force can assist with promoting the database to the ag industry.
- Determine methods of outreach and promotion of the database.

INCREASE & DIVERSIFY VALUE-ADDED AG PROCESSING & PRODUCTION IN THE REGION

- 1) Increase the number of state-certified meat inspectors in regional facilities to improve access to local meats for retail outlets.

Action Steps:

- Select one or two regional contacts to be involved in the development of a state-wide committee to meet with Indiana Board of Animal Health and other commodity groups to address the shortage of meat inspectors.
- Meet with Board of Animal Health to discuss the need for meat inspectors and review their list of processors and meat packers.
 - Work with the Board of Animal Health and Purdue Center for Regional Development to obtain the list of current meat packing and cutting facilities and map the existing facilities.
- Reach out to local meat packers to discuss expansion opportunities and potential funding sources. Request information from the county Health Departments and include a specialist in these meetings.
- Determine the market or end user for meat cuts within the region for smaller facilities. Utilize the Indiana Small Business Development Center – Ag Initiative and Purdue Manufacturing Extension Partnership to help in analyzing the markets.
 - Meet with Purdue Extension, Indiana Small Business Development Center – Ag Initiative, and Indiana Beef, Pork and Poultry associations to assist with data collection to understand the market and volume needed to develop a local outlet.
- Review the information collected and determine our next step before proceeding with the creation of additional facilities, especially with the shortage of meat inspectors.

2) Stabilize local grain elevators, grain handling and drying facilities in the region.

Action Steps:

- Meet with Indiana Small Business Development Center – Ag Initiative to discuss the mapping of locations of grain elevators that are in the region or in close proximity and identify grain elevator deserts.
 - Meet with key facilities to discuss expansion opportunities and transition plans.
 - Schedule a meeting with the CERES company to determine the reason for closing down facilities and discuss expansion opportunities.
- If opportunities arise, work with the company on funding sources and potential buyers or operators.

3) Increase crop and livestock diversification and develop niche markets for farm operations.

Action Steps:

- Schedule a meeting and site visit with Purdue Food Science Lab and their Local Foods Division.
- Meet with Purdue, Purdue Manufacturing Extension Partnership, Indiana Small Business Development Center – Ag Initiative, and County's Ag and Natural Resources staff to research availability of product based on what is grown today as shown in the Ag Asset Maps included in **Appendix C**. Discuss the potential for growing diverse crops.
- Engage Purdue Extension Ag and Natural Resource team members to identify farmers interested in diversifying.
- Set up workshops with Indiana Small Business Development Center – Ag Initiative and Purdue Manufacturing Extension Partnership to discuss opportunities and explain the resources available to help these businesses identify their niche markets.
- Assist in connecting these farm businesses to Indiana Small Business Development Center – Ag Initiative to obtain help in writing their business plans and expanding operations.

DEVELOP AND ADVOCATE FOR STRONG REGIONAL AND STATE PROCESSES TO SUPPORT AGRICULTURE AND AGRIBUSINESS.

1) Increase support for state incentives from the Indiana Economic Development Corporation on agribusiness projects.

Action Steps:

- Identify individuals in the region to serve on a statewide team with the other REDM Regions to approach Indiana Economic Development Corporation (IEDC).
- Meet with other regions to create an ag business coalition who will approach IEDC.
- Develop talking points with the Ag Cluster Data to propose alternative eligibility criteria for incentives for IEDC to use.
- Schedule a meeting with IEDC and the State Ag Business Coalition to discuss the incentive proposal.

- 2) Ensure each county in the region has a Right-to-Farm policy that supports the Indiana State Code.

Action Steps:

- Review State legislation and compare with current local policies.
- Identify which counties do not currently have a Right-to-Farm policy.
- Review current Right-to-Farm policies from other counties around the state and develop a policy suitable for the Region.
- Meet with area plan directors to propose the Right-to-Farm policy be adopted in every county.
- Promote the adoption of the Right-to-Farm policy in each of the counties by attending the appropriate county meetings.

- 3) Propose a standardized state permitting and fee structure to address the differences between commercial grain carriers versus farm use.

Action Steps:

- Meet with the local and regional Indiana Farm Bureau reps to propose that Farm Bureau adopts this strategy as a state-wide legislative policy.
- Determine which agency controls this issue.
- Work with the newly formed Ag Business Coalition and Indiana Farm Bureau to meet with the controlling agency to help promote standardized policies.

- 4) Develop a process playbook for zoning & permitting for agribusinesses and renewable energy.

Action Steps:

- Meet with each county's local area plan director to identify current processes.
- Develop a 'How-To' playbook on local zoning and permitting for the Region.
- Determine which media to use and publish the information through various means, including print and digitally on various websites.
- Meet with organizations working in the renewable energy field to identify sources of information and workshops currently being offered in the Region.
- Develop an outreach plan to make county governments aware of available resources on renewable energy development.

- 5) Advocate for a positive outlook and increased awareness of the importance of the ethanol industry in the region.

Action Steps:

- Meet with the local ethanol plant to develop a plan to share information with the ag industry.
- Develop community outreach material about the current status of the industry in the region and the economics of the ethanol industry, including the positive impact on the corn basis.
- If counties hold annual meetings, ask the local ethanol plant to sponsor events and share information at the meetings.

FILL GAPS IN THE REGIONAL AGRIBUSINESS SUPPLY CHAIN.

- 1) Advocate for the development of a new concrete specialist in the region to provide slabs for propane tanks.

Action Steps:

- Schedule a meeting with the propane company in Parke County to discuss their needs, volume, quality, and timing for concrete slabs to identify specifics related to funding, space requirements, and infrastructure needs.
- Connect existing company with the Indiana Small Business Development Center-Ag Initiative to help with developing a Request for Proposal to attract a potential business partner.

- 2) Ensure the long-term viability of livestock auction houses in the region.

Action Steps:

- Meet with the auction house in Rockville in Parke County and the Indiana Small Business Development Center – Ag Initiative director to discuss growth opportunities and next steps.
- Connect the Auction House to the Indiana State Department of Agriculture (ISDA) to identify opportunities, especially with ISDA's Market Reporting Program.

Priority Steps

The West Central Ag Region's Task Force believes that the Ag Strategy is a change in economic development philosophy and that this work is the beginning of an ongoing and ever-evolving process in and for the West Central Region.

Realizing all steps are important to the overall success of the Ag Strategy, the core team believes it is important to identify the initial steps needed to set the stage for successful implementation. Following are the priority steps to begin the implementation process:

- 1) Select a representative from each county who will serve on the Ag Strategy Implementation Team.
- 2) Identify a chairperson to serve as the regional lead and who will be responsible for notifications and follow-ups to the implementation team.
- 3) Schedule regular meetings for the implementation team and partners.
- 4) Post the Ag Strategy on Thrive's and each of the county's websites.
- 5) Host a regional kick-off meeting to share the Ag Strategy.

Implementation Timeline

RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MODEL

WEST CENTRAL INDIANA AG REGION

Project Start:

7/1/2023

TASK	START	END
DEVELOP A STRONG INNOVATIVE LABORFORCE TO SUPPORT AGRICULTURE ACROSS THE REGION.		
1. Improve Awareness of Jobs in the Ag Industry		
Meet with IN Career Connect	7/1/23	9/30/23
Survey agribusinesses as to their labor force needs	7/1/23	12/31/23
Analyze the survey results and identify best practices	12/1/23	12/31/23
Meet with agribusinesses to share resources	1/1/24	1/31/24
Begin outreach through newsletters, meetings and workshops	2/1/24	Ongoing
2. Develop Internships and On-the-Job Training Programs		
County LEDOs to meet with their Ag Extension agent	8/1/23	8/31/23
Meet with P-Caret & Technical Ed staff and adult ed	8/1/23	8/31/23
Visit with the Ag Charter School to discuss internships	9/1/23	9/30/23
Reach out to FFA leaders regarding internships	9/1/23	12/31/23
Develop an internship program and outreach material	1/1/24	Ongoing
3. Expand Tech School for Agriculture		
Meet with Ag Charter School to discuss program expansion	7/1/23	7/31/23

Meet with ISBDC-AG and connect with Rose Hulman's AgBot	7/1/23	7/31/23
Meet with County Extension agents	8/1/23	8/31/23
Meet with Ivy Tech	8/1/23	8/31/23
Meet with public school superintendents	9/1/23	9/30/23
Meet with Adult Ed organizations	9/1/23	9/30/23
Meet with Purdue Extension & P-CARET to share Ag Strategy	10/1/23	10/31/23
Meet with County ANR staff to connect with Amish	10/1/23	10/31/23
Develop program to track 4-H programs and trends	12/1/23	2/29/24
Schedule presentations to 4-H, FFA & ag students	3/1/24	Annually
4. Provide Educational Workshops for Ag Community		
Schedule a meeting with several ag organizations	9/1/23	9/30/23
Inventory workshops currently being offered	9/1/23	12/31/23
Schedule initial workshops	12/1/23	12/31/23
Develop outreach material and plan	1/1/24	1/31/24
Share information on workshops	1/1/24	1/31/24
5. Develop Education Network / Resource Database for Farmers		
Research current resources	1/1/24	03/31/24
Meet with Extension Agents and other ag organizations	3/1/24	4/31/24
Develop the format for the resource database	5/1/24	8/31/24
Determine the best agency to host and maintain	9/1/24	9/30/24

Determine methods of outreach and promotion	10/1/24	12/31/24
INCREASE & DIVERSIFY VALUE-ADDED AG PROCESSING & PRODUCTION		
1. Increase the number of state-certified meat inspectors		
Select a person to serve on the statewide committee	7/1/23	7/31/23
Meet with BOAH to discuss the needs and review processors	7/1/23	8/31/23
Compile list and map current meat cutters	7/1/23	9/30/23
Meet with current meat packers to discuss expansion	10/1/23	12/31/23
Meet with Purdue Extension to identify producers	10/1/23	3/31/24
Determine the market and end user	1/1/24	3/31/24
Review data collected and create a plan	4/1/24	5/31/24
2. Stabilize Local Grain Elevators, Handling & Drying Facilities		
Meet with ISBDC-Ag to discuss mapping elevators	8/1/23	09/31/23
Schedule meeting with local facility to discuss status	10/1/23	10/1/23
Meet with key facilities to discuss expansion	10/1/23	3/31/24
Work with local facility on expansion plans	10/1/23	3/31/24
3. Increase Crop & Livestock Diversification & Develop Niche Markets		
Schedule a meeting with Purdue Food Science Lab	10/1/23	12/31/23
Meet with organizations to research availability of product	1/1/24	3/31/24
Engage Purdue Extension ANR team	4/1/24	6/30/24
Set up workshops with ISBDC-Ag & Purdue MEP	7/1/24	12/31/24

Assist in connecting farm businesses to ISBDC-Ag for support	12/1/24	Ongoing
DEVELOP & ADVOCATE FOR STRONG REGIONAL & STATE PROCESSES FOR AG		
1. Increase support & Incentives for Agribusinesses		
Identify individual to serve on statewide committee	7/1/23	7/31/23
Meet with other regions to create an ag business coalition	8/1/23	8/31/23
Develop talking points to propose eligibility criteria	9/1/23	10/31/23
Schedule meeting with IEDC to propose incentive plan	11/1/23	12/31/23
2. Ensure Each County has a Right-to-Farm that Supports the State Code		
Review state legislation and compare to local policies	1/1/24	2/29/24
Identify counties without a Right-to-Farm policy	3/1/24	4/30/24
Develop a policy suitable for the region	5/1/24	8/31/24
Meet with Area Plan directors to propose the RTF policy	9/1/24	10/31/24
Promote the adoption of the RTF policy	11/1/24	12/31/24
3. Propose a Standardized Permitting & Fee Structure for Grain Carriers		
Meet with local and regional Farm Bureau reps	9/1/23	10/31/23
Determine which agency controls the issue	10/1/23	10/31/23
Work with newly formed Ag Business Coalition promote	11/1/23	12/31/23
4. Develop Process Playbook for Zoning & Permitting		
Meet with each County's APC to discuss current process	8/1/23	9/30/23
Develop a "how-To" playbook on zoning/permitting	10/1/23	12/31/23

Determine media plan to promote	12/1/23	12/31/23
Meet with organizations in renewable energy field	1/1/24	1/31/24
Develop outreach plan of renewable energy resources	2/1/24	3/31/24
5. Advocate for the Ethanol Industry		
Meet with local ethanol plant	1/1/24	1/31/24
Develop community outreach material about ethanol	2/1/24	2/29/24
Request ethanol plant to sponsor events	4/1/24	Ongoing
FILL GAPS IN THE REGIONAL AGRIBUSINESS SUPPLY CHAIN		
1. Advocate for the development of new concrete specialist		
Schedule meeting with propane company in Parke County	3/1/24	5/31/24
Refer existing company to ISBDC-Ag	3/1/24	5/31/24
2. Ensure the Long-term Viability of Livestock Auction House		
Meet with the local auction house and discuss succession	7/1/24	9/30/24
Connect ISDA with the auction house to discuss plan	7/1/24	9/30/24

Strategic Goals & Outcomes

The goals of the West Central Region Ag Strategy are:

- To let our existing agricultural industries, know that they are valuable participants in our economic development efforts in driving economic growth.
- To increase the number of agribusinesses and the success of existing agribusinesses in the region.

After careful review and discussion among the Task Force, the following outcomes were identified as achievable in the first two years:

1. Increase the number of state-certified meat inspectors by one in the region within one year to improve access to local meats for retail outlets.
2. Provide four educational workshops for farmers, veterans, and beginning farmers in the next two years with 10 – 15 farmers in attendance at each workshop.
3. Establish an Ag Labor Database for the farm community to increase awareness of jobs in the ag industry pertaining to farming and disseminate the information to all farmers in the region.
4. Develop a Farm Internship program with a focus on work-based learning in agriculture and place two to three interns in each county within the first year of implementation.
5. Host three to four entrepreneurial workshops to focus on the development and marketing of niche products and increase crop & livestock diversification in the next two years with a minimum of 25 attendees per workshop.

Marketing Plan

The development of a coordinated regional marketing plan is important to the success of fully developing the food supply chain for the region. The plan will be used to showcase the agricultural benefits of the six-county region as a prime location for meat processing and cold storage facilities and to attract entrepreneurs to the Region.

BUSINES ATTRACTION & EXPANSION:

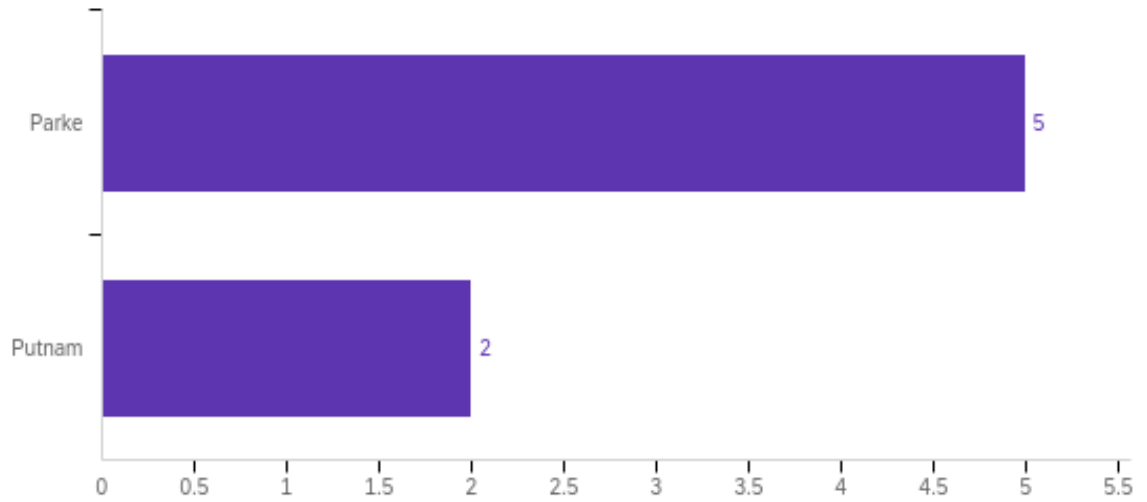
- 1) Develop a two-page informational sheet on the West Central Ag Strategy, including key data points and action steps to include the following points:
 - a. Sites that are available in the region today to support the prime targets.
 - b. The crops and livestock, as sources of raw material for value-added processing, as referenced in the Ag Asset Maps shown in **Appendix C**.
 - c. A formal request for the business to expand or locate in the Region.
- 2) Prepare regional marketing pieces that will be utilized at trade shows and mailed to cold storage facilities.
- 3) Schedule meetings with local meat packers and livestock farmers to share the West Central Ag Strategy and identify potential interest in expansion.
- 4) Schedule attendance at trade shows, such as:
 - a. American Association of Meat Processors – July 2023
 - b. Food Automation & Manufacturing Conference & Expo – October 2023
 - c. Winter Fancy Food Show – January 2024
 - d. Sweets & Snacks Expo – May 2024
- 5) Send out mail pieces as follow-ups to the trade shows.
- 6) Identify key site selectors in the target industries to contact and provide information on the region.
 - a. Deane Foote, Foote Consulting Group, LLC (FCG), Glendale, AZ
 - b. Jay Garner, Garner Economics, LLC., Fayetteville, GA
 - c. Tracey Hyatt Bosman, Biggins Lacy Shapiro & Company, Chicago, IL
 - d. Mike Mullis, J.M. Mullis, Inc., Memphis, TN
 - e. Don Schjeldahl, DSG Advisors, Cleveland, OH

APPENDIX A

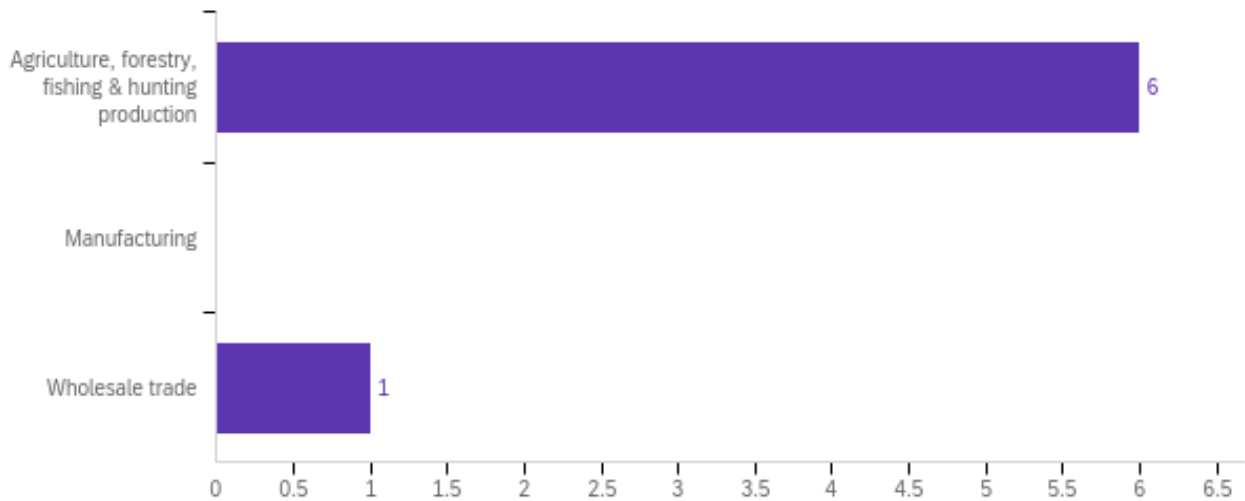
West Central Agribusiness Survey Results

REDM - Targeted BR&E Agribusiness Questionnaire

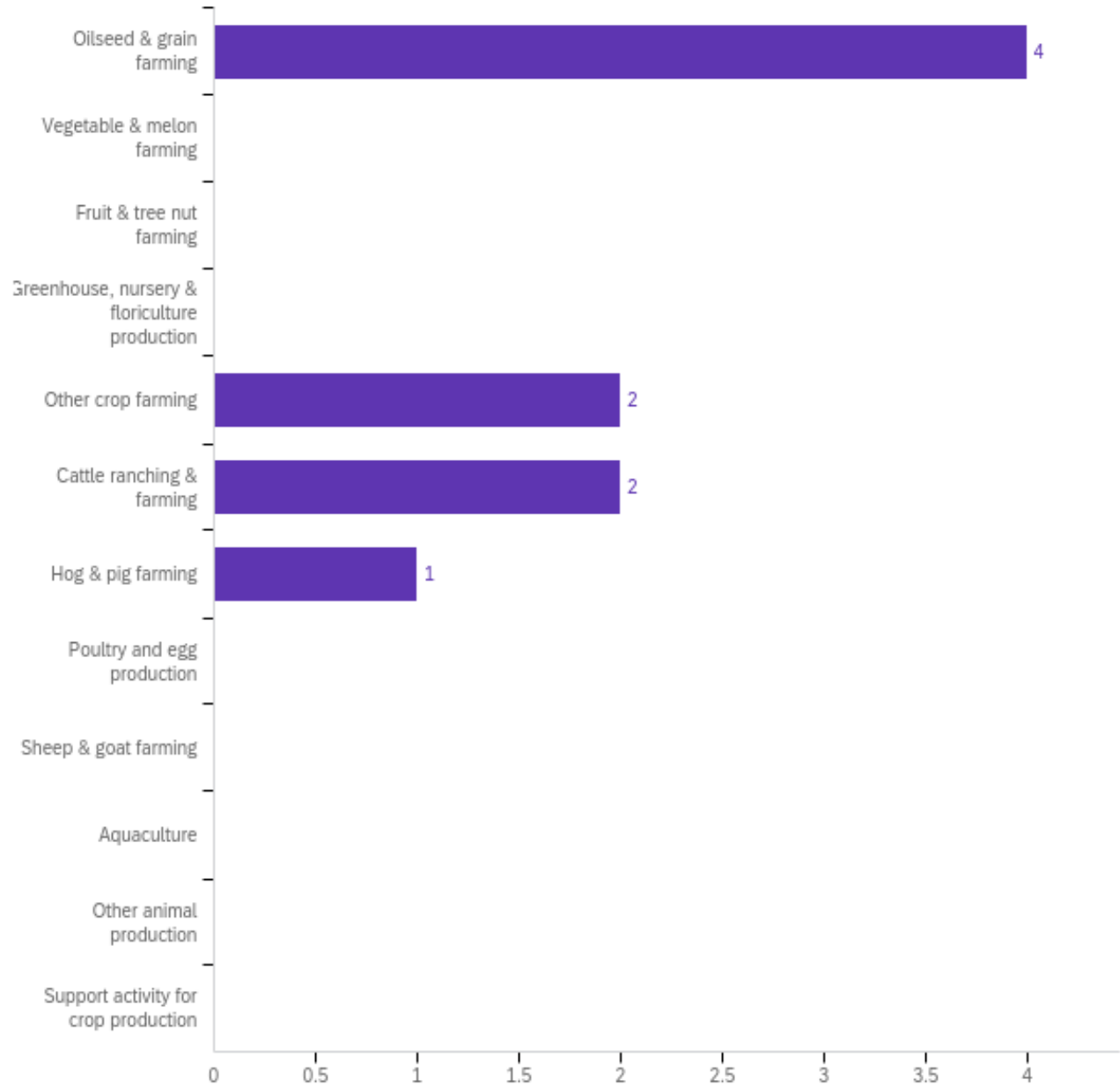
Qa - In which county is your company located in?



Q1 - Which of the following best describes your farm/agriculture business?



Q1a - Which of the following best describes your AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY, FISHING, & HUNTING PRODUCTION farm/agriculture business? Select all that apply.

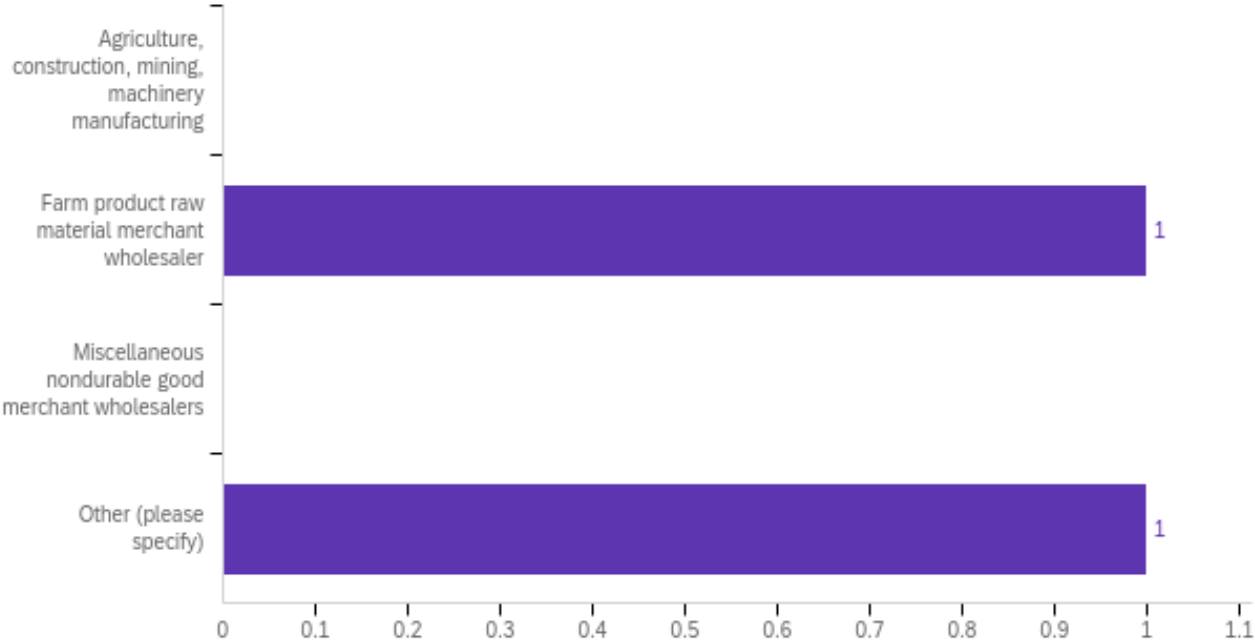


Q1a_5_TEXT - Other crop farming

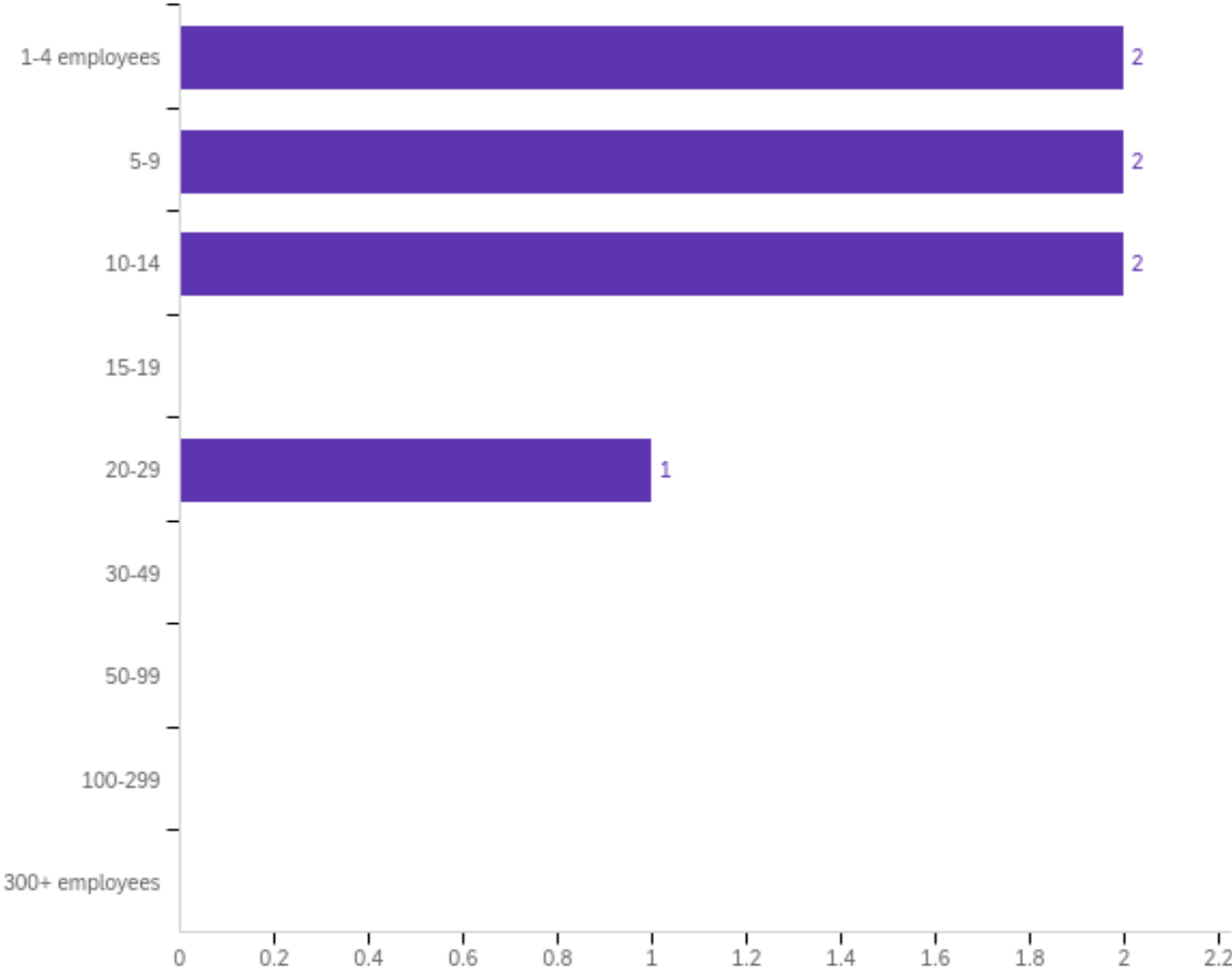
Other crop farming - Text

also farm product raw material merchant wholesalers

Q1c - Which of the following best describes your WHOLESALE TRADE farm/agriculture business?

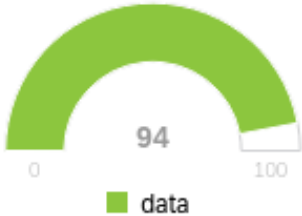


Q2 - Including owner-operators, how many employees work at this location?

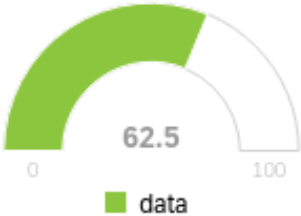


Q3 - What percentage of your employees live (should add 100% across all three categories):

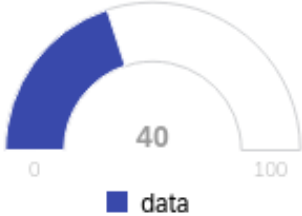
% Within your city/town



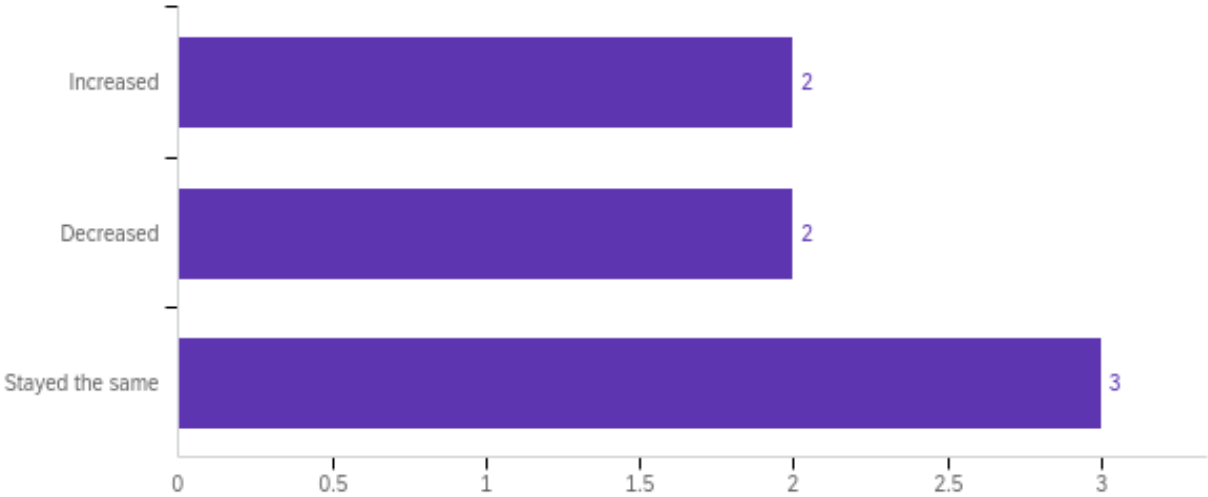
% Outside your city/town, but within county



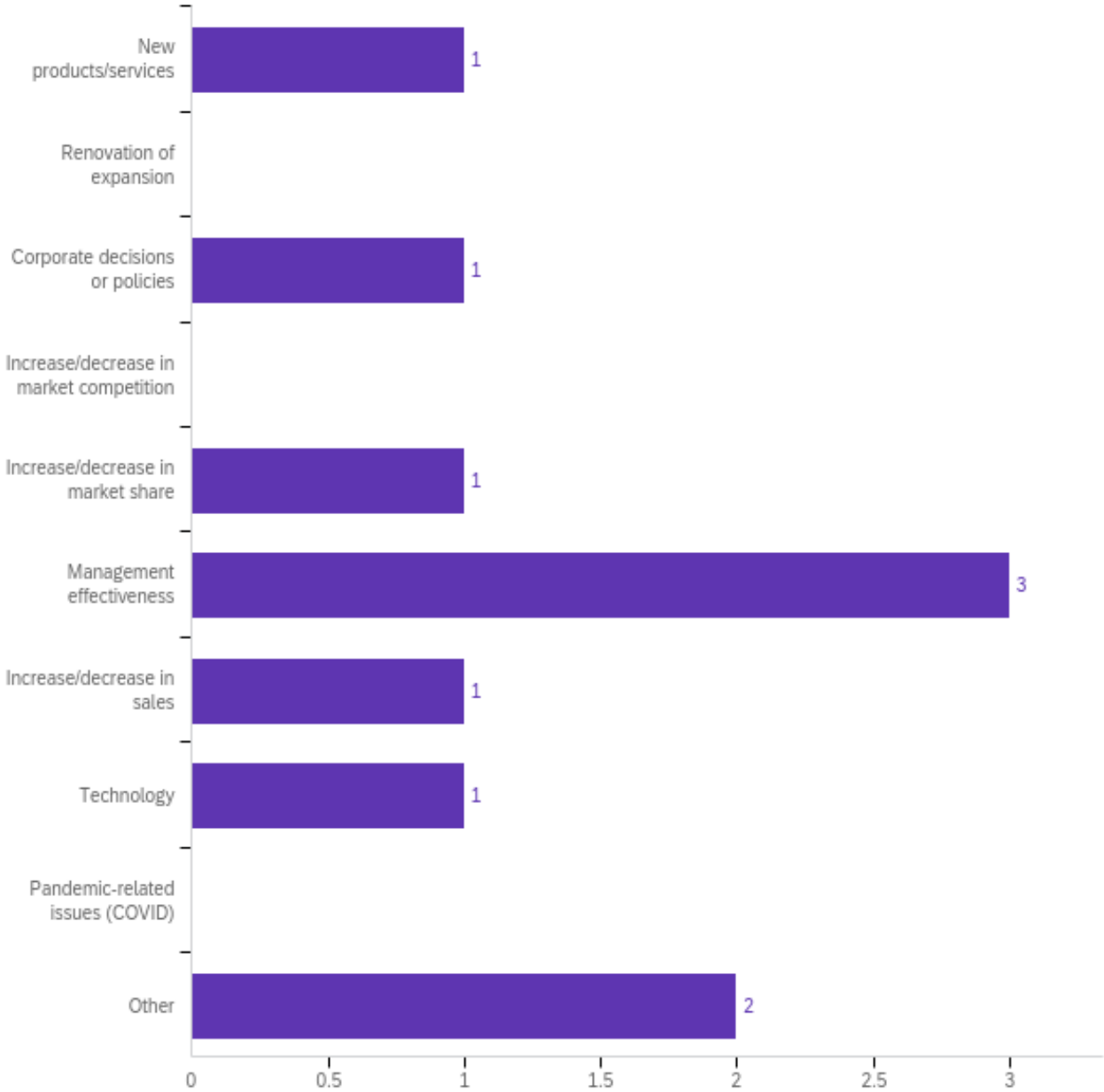
% Outside county



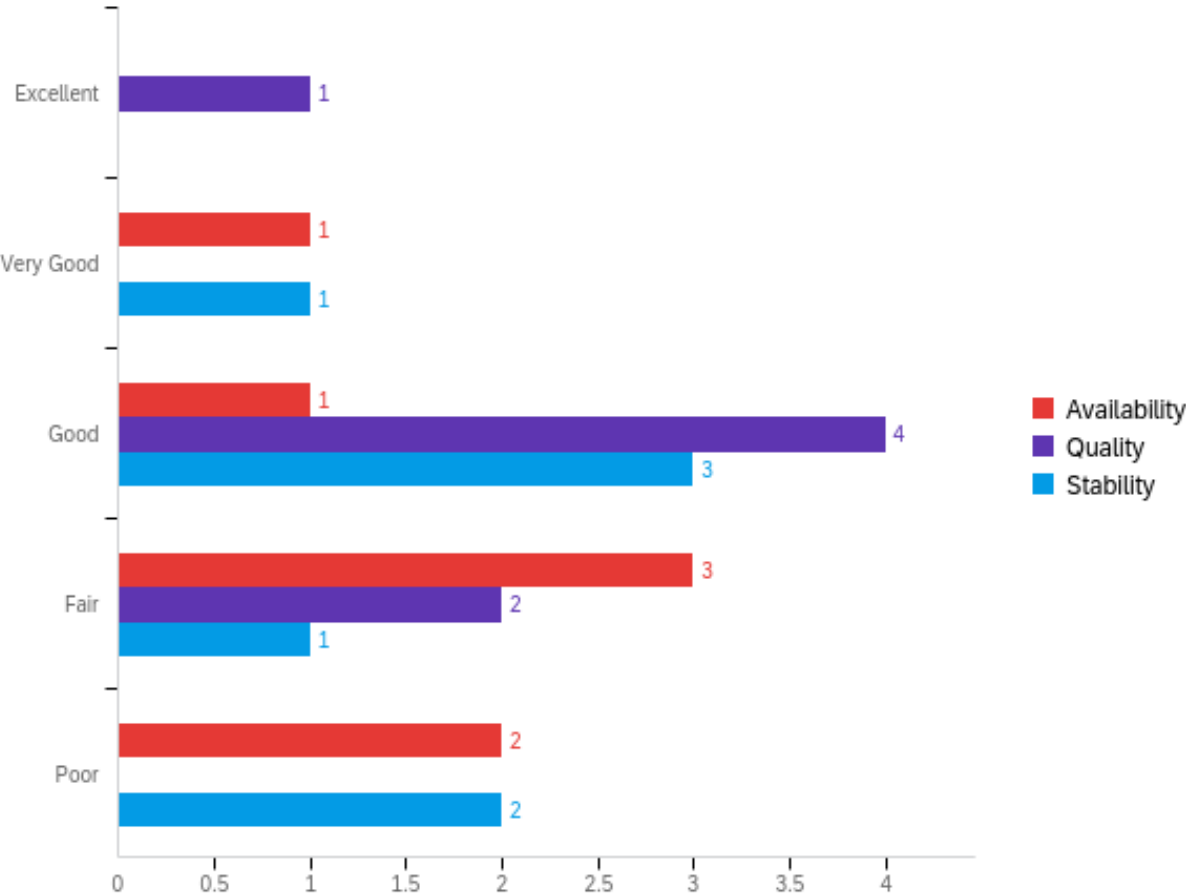
Q4 - During the past 3 years, has the number of employees in this business...?



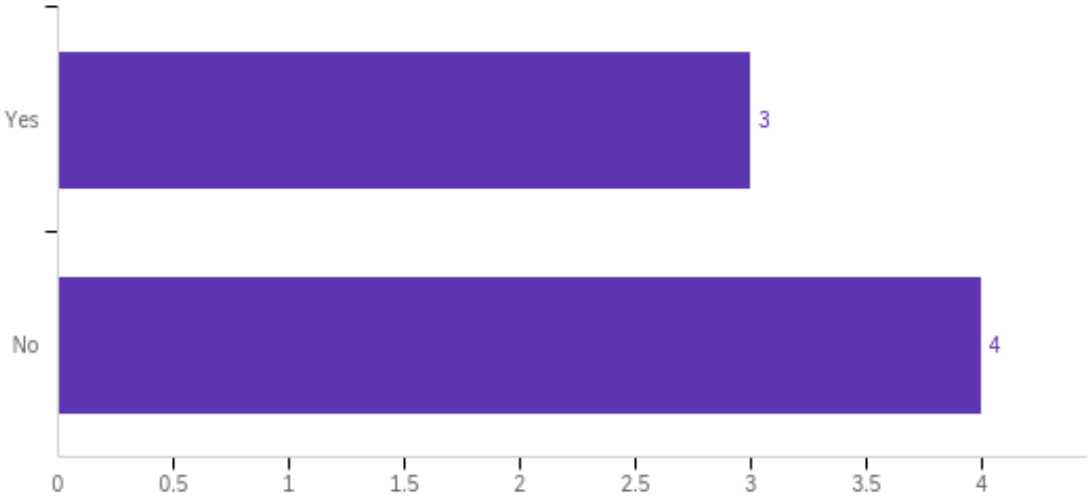
Q5 - What factors are responsible for this change? CHECK ALL THAT APPLY.



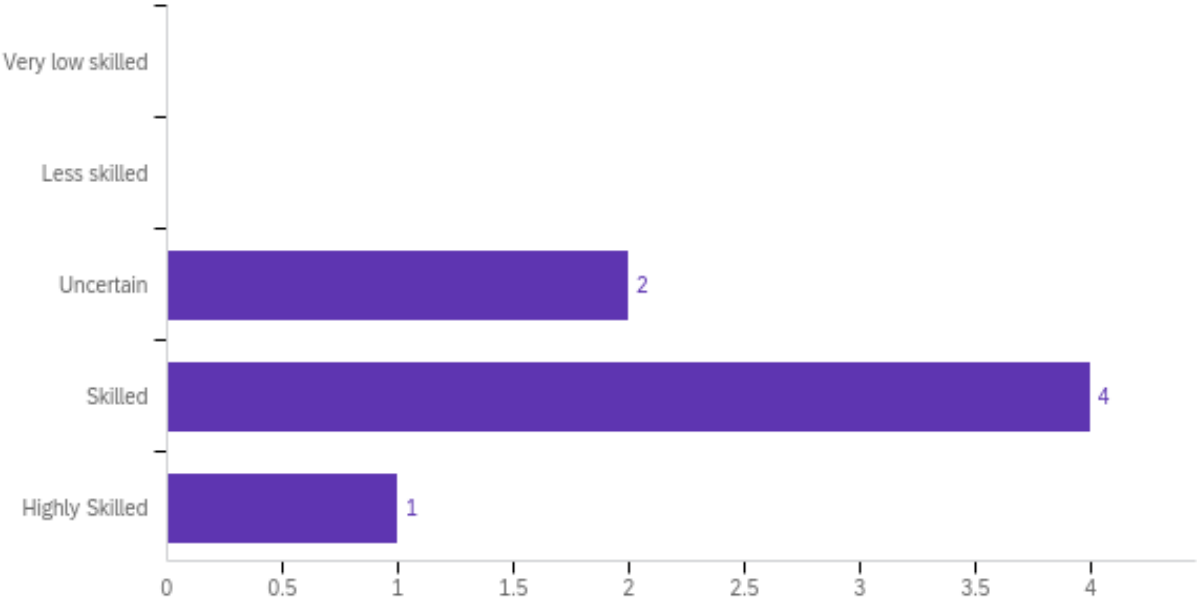
Q6 - How do you rate the availability, quality and stability of the workforce in this area for your business?



Q7 - Are you able to recruit sufficient qualified employees for your business?



Q8 - On a scale of 1-5, 1 being less skilled to 5 being highly skilled) how would you rate the skill profile of your company's workforce?



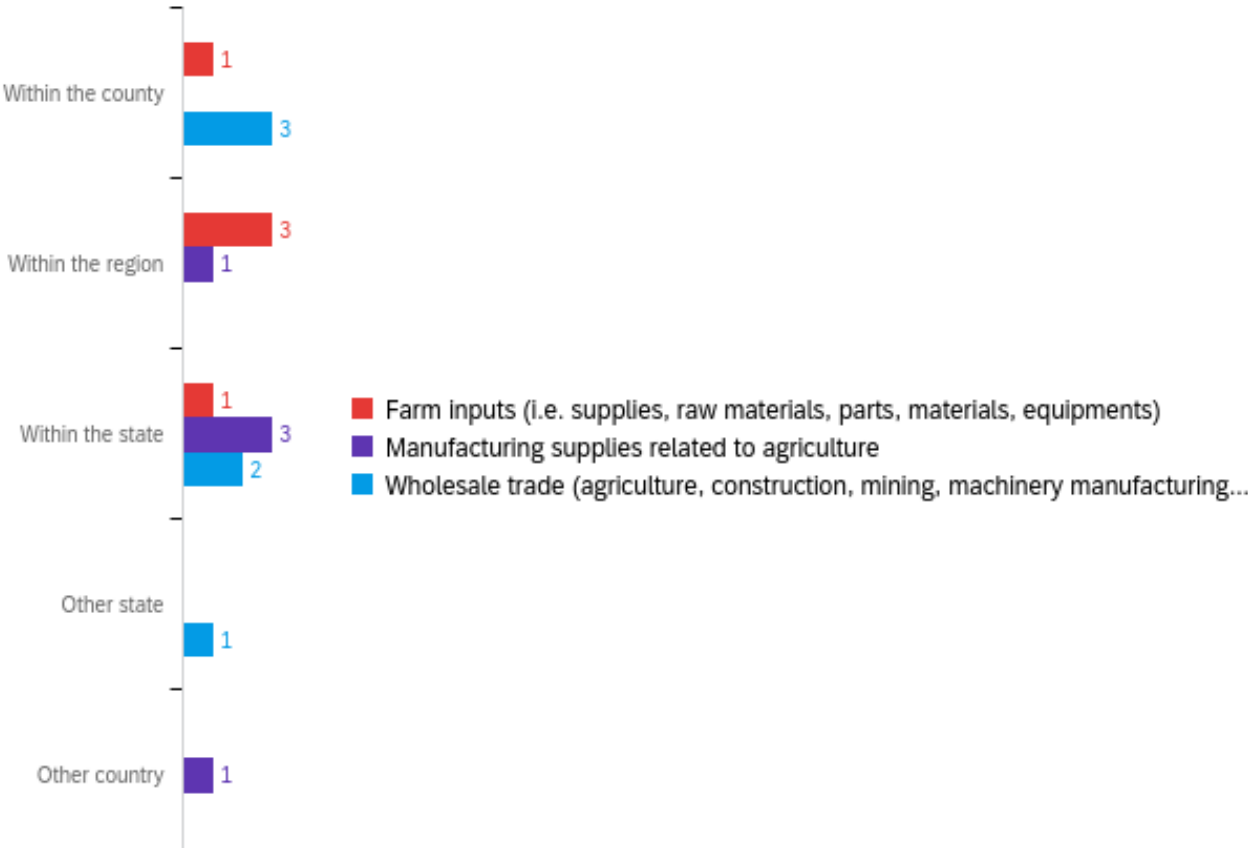
Q8_Text - Please use this space for any comments related to the skill profile of your company's workforce:

Please use this space for any comments related to the skill profile of your company's workforce:

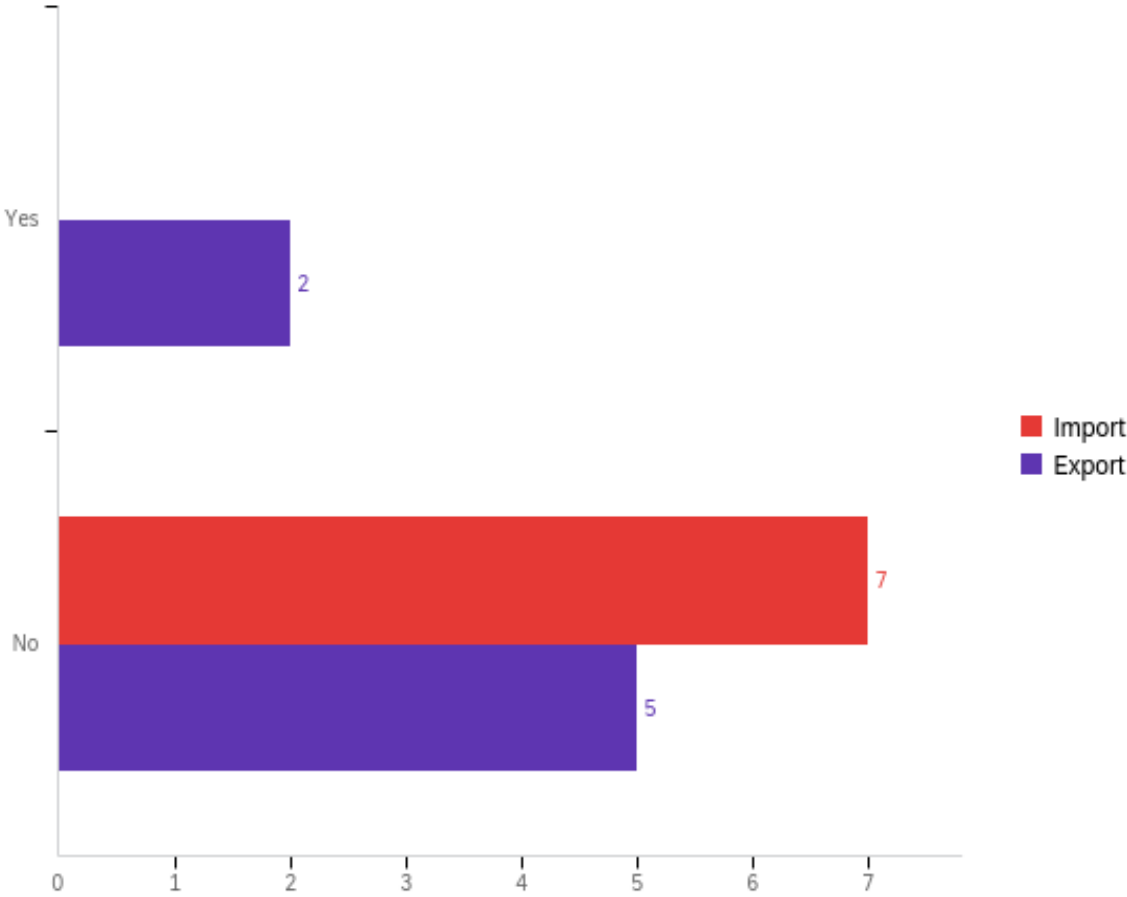
About 75% have been here and are very good. The other 6-8 are tough to fill

Split less skilled and skilled, mixed level and availability quality and stability depends on position

Q9 - Where do you purchase the majority of your agri-business supplies?



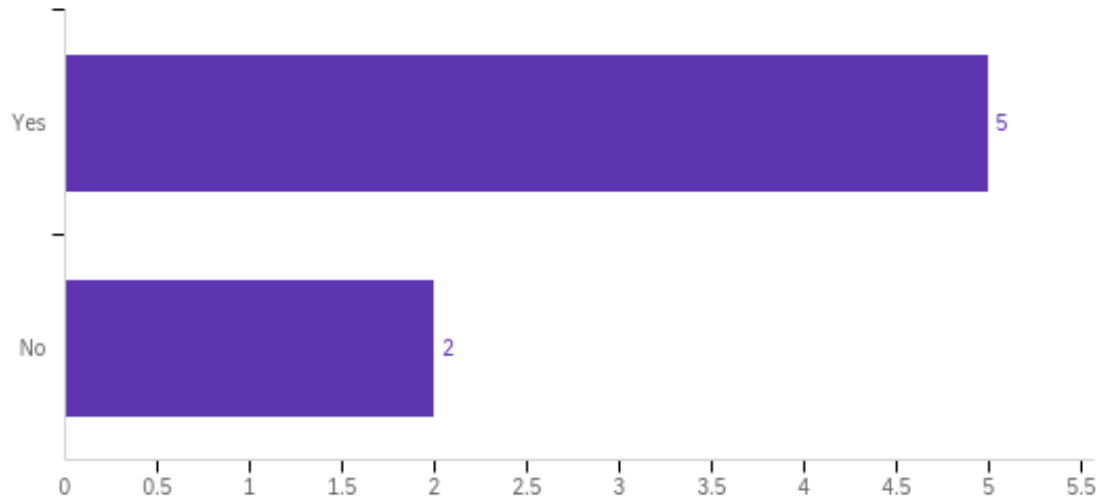
Q11 - Do you currently import/export products? If yes, please specify the corresponding country(ies) in the text box provided.



Q12 - What products do you import/export?

Import	Export
	10-15% beans

Q13 - Have you considered pursuing any new niche market or value-added opportunities? If yes, please elaborate.



Q13_1_TEXT - Yes

Yes - Text

Non-GMO maybe. The risks are very high, margins are not high enough

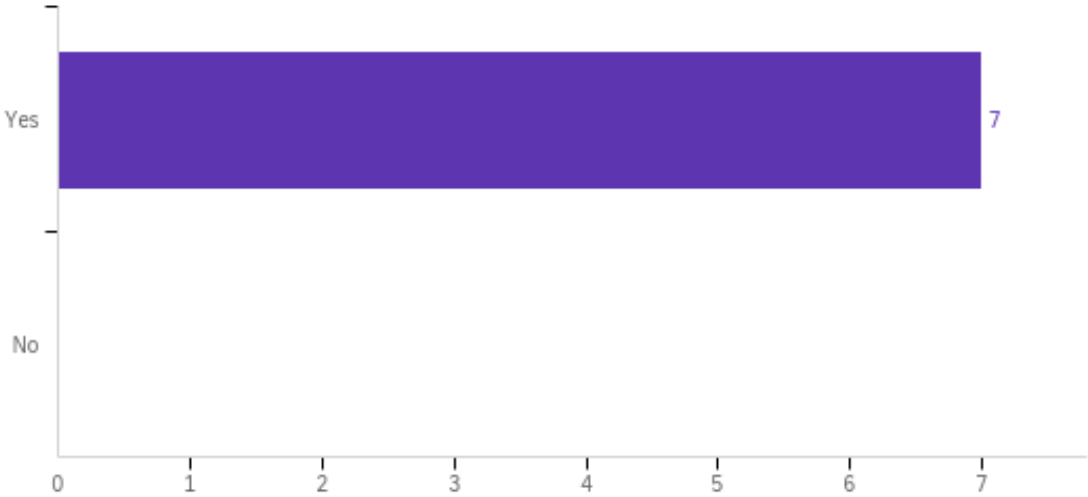
Pig organs for research, retail meat business processing

Been asked to raise non-GMO corn as a custom operation. Not been able to find a financial advantage for it yet.

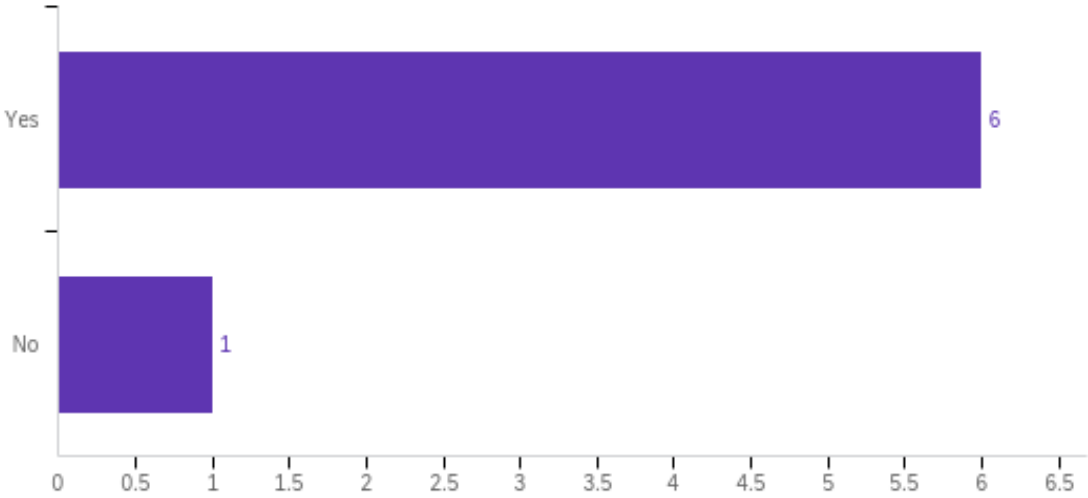
Hemp for fibers, high oleic soybeans

Automated electric powered ag bots and tractor retrofitting

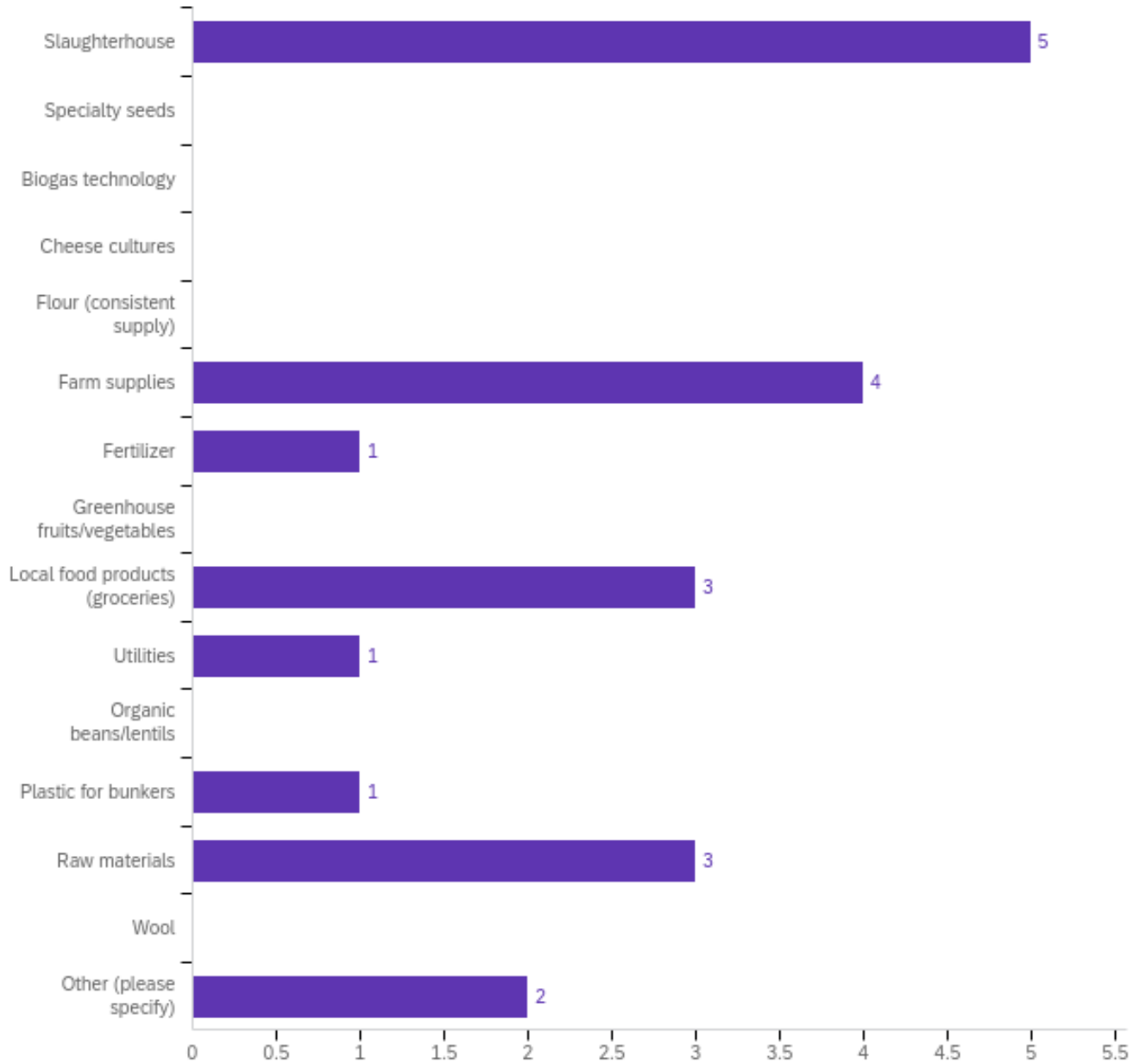
Q14 - Would you be interested in supplying local markets (retailers/institutional) if the distribution and management systems were in place?



Q15 - Do you have the capacity to increase production to supply local markets if additional buyers were identified?



Q16 - What inputs, products, or services would you like to purchase locally that are now being purchased outside the area? Check all that apply.



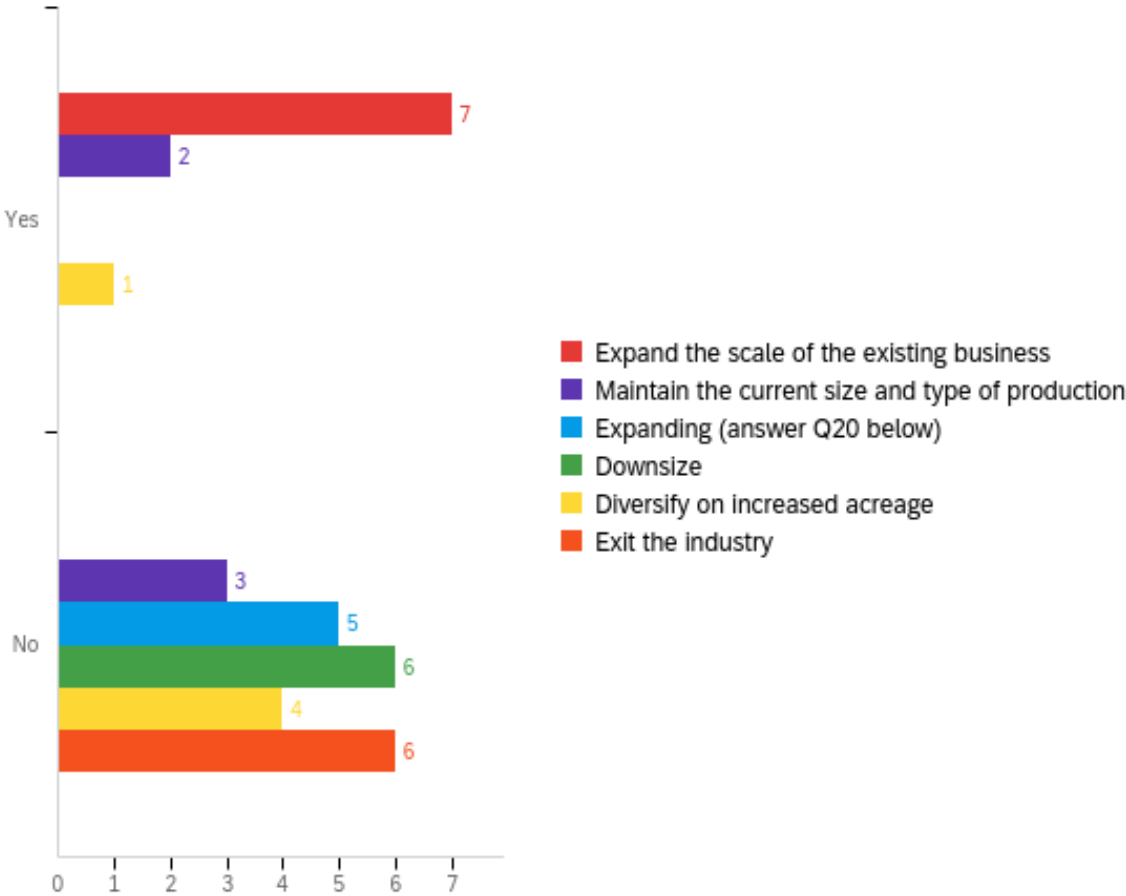
Q16_15_TEXT - Other (please specify)

Other (please specify) - Text

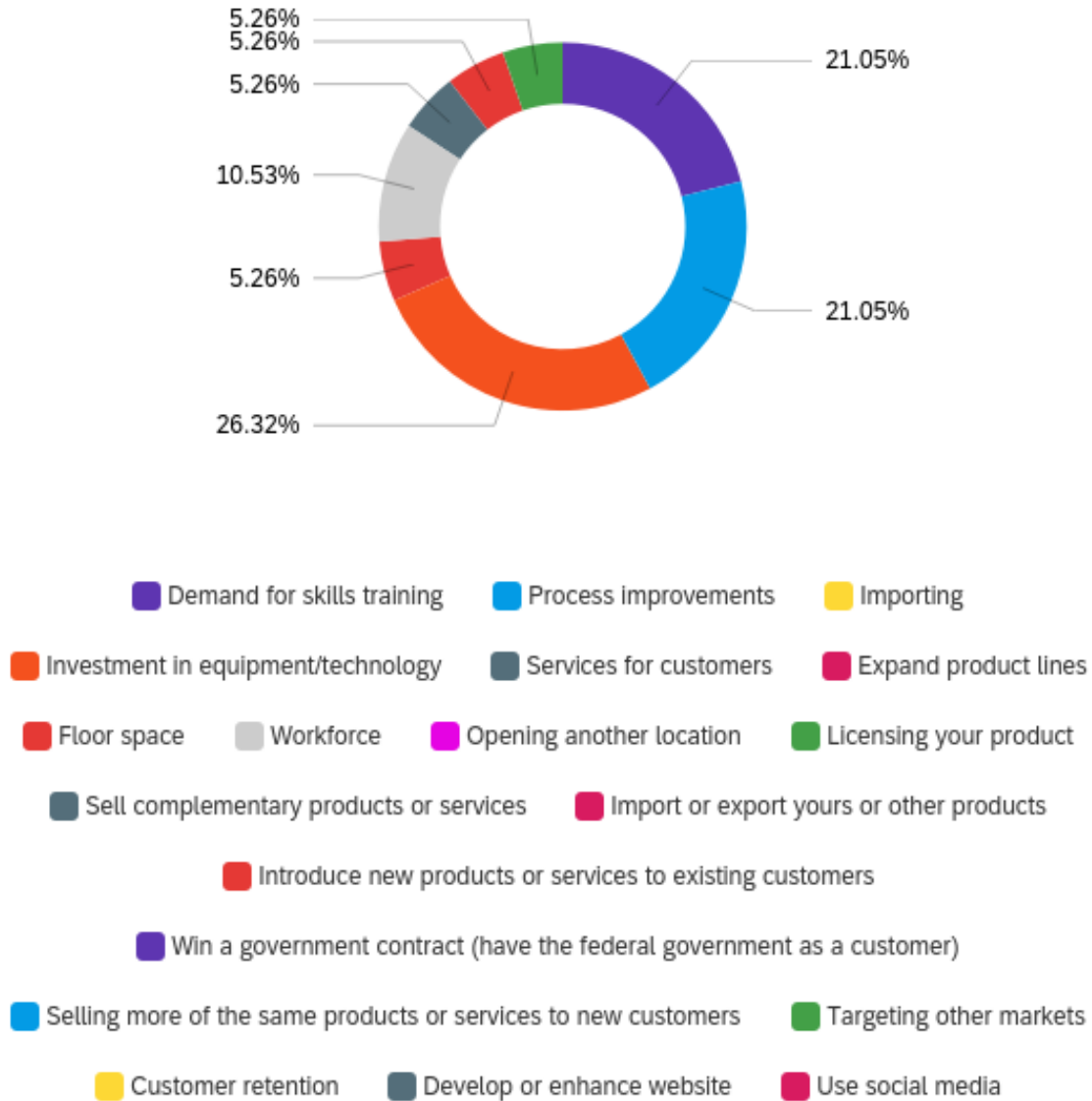
Grain elevator

Equipment

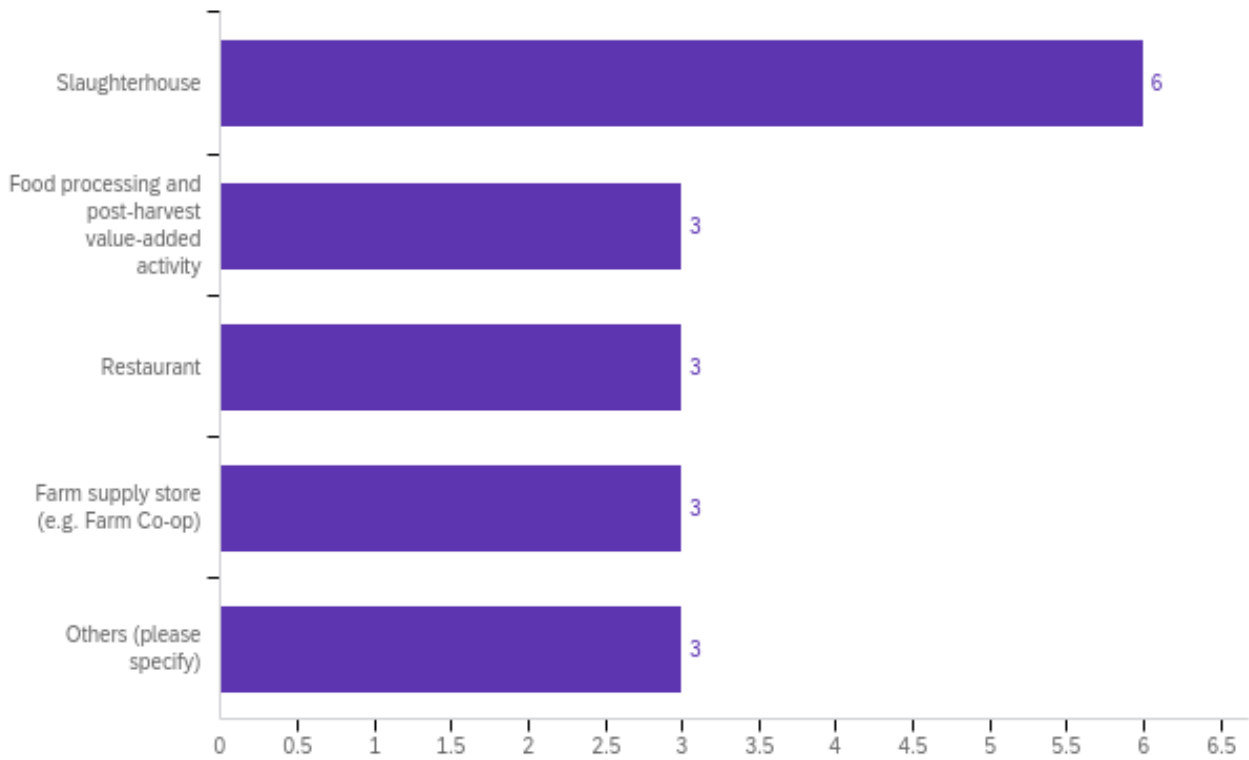
Q19 #1 - Which would best describe your plans for your business over the next 3 years? Select one answer. - Plan in 3 years



Q20 - If you are planning to diversify or expand the scale of your business, will your expansion lead to an increase in the following? Select all that apply.



Q21 - Which new businesses, services or products would you like to see added to your community? Select all that apply.



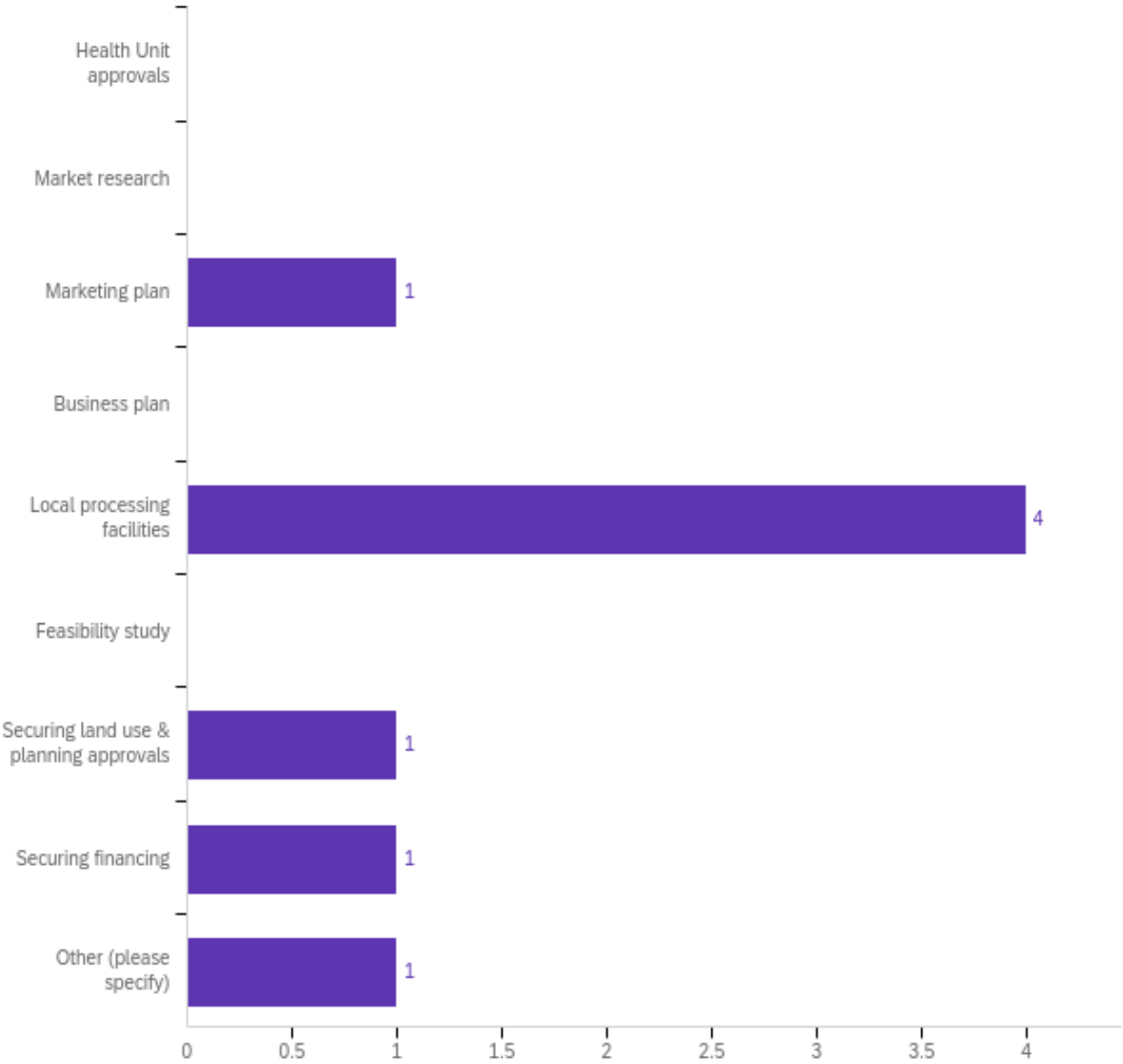
Q21_5_TEXT - Others (please specify)

Others (please specify) - Text

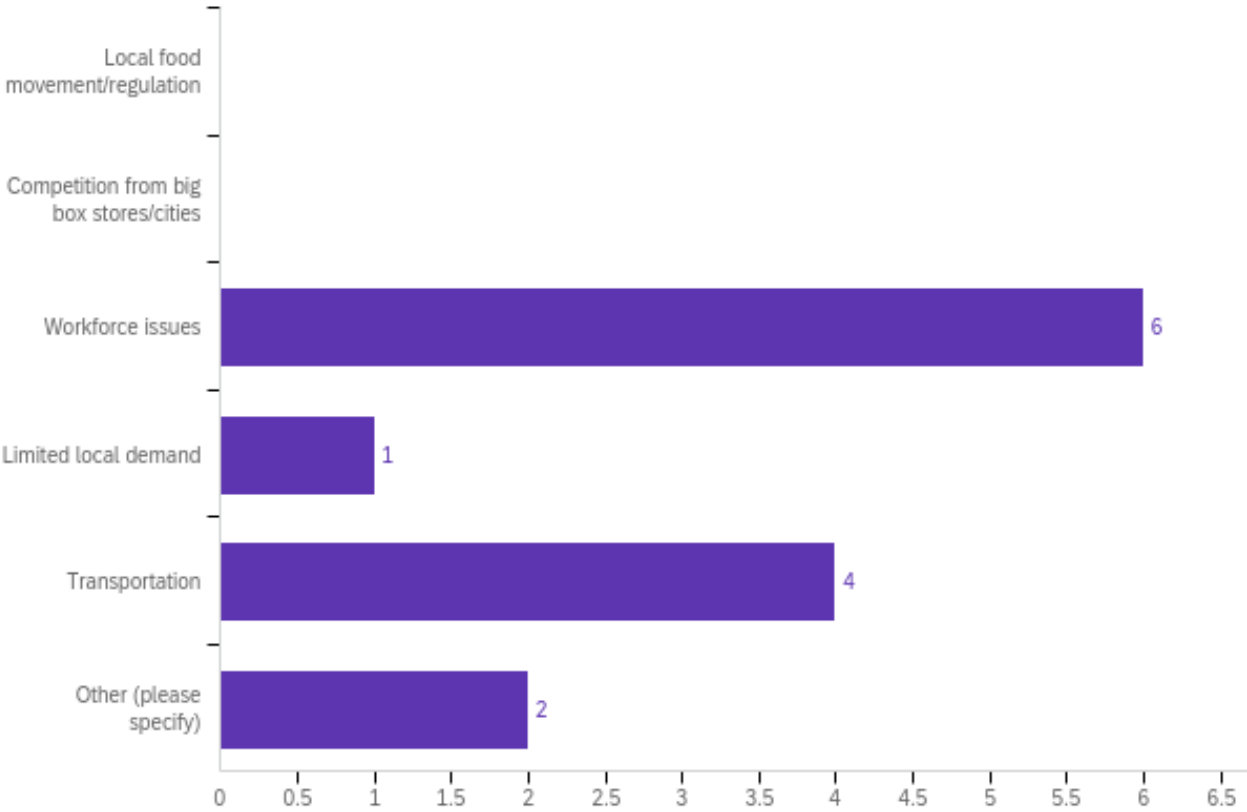
Grain elevator

Grocery store

Q22 - What information/assistance do you need to include processing as part of your farm business? Check all that apply.



Q23 - What are the biggest challenges facing local businesses in this community? Check all that apply.

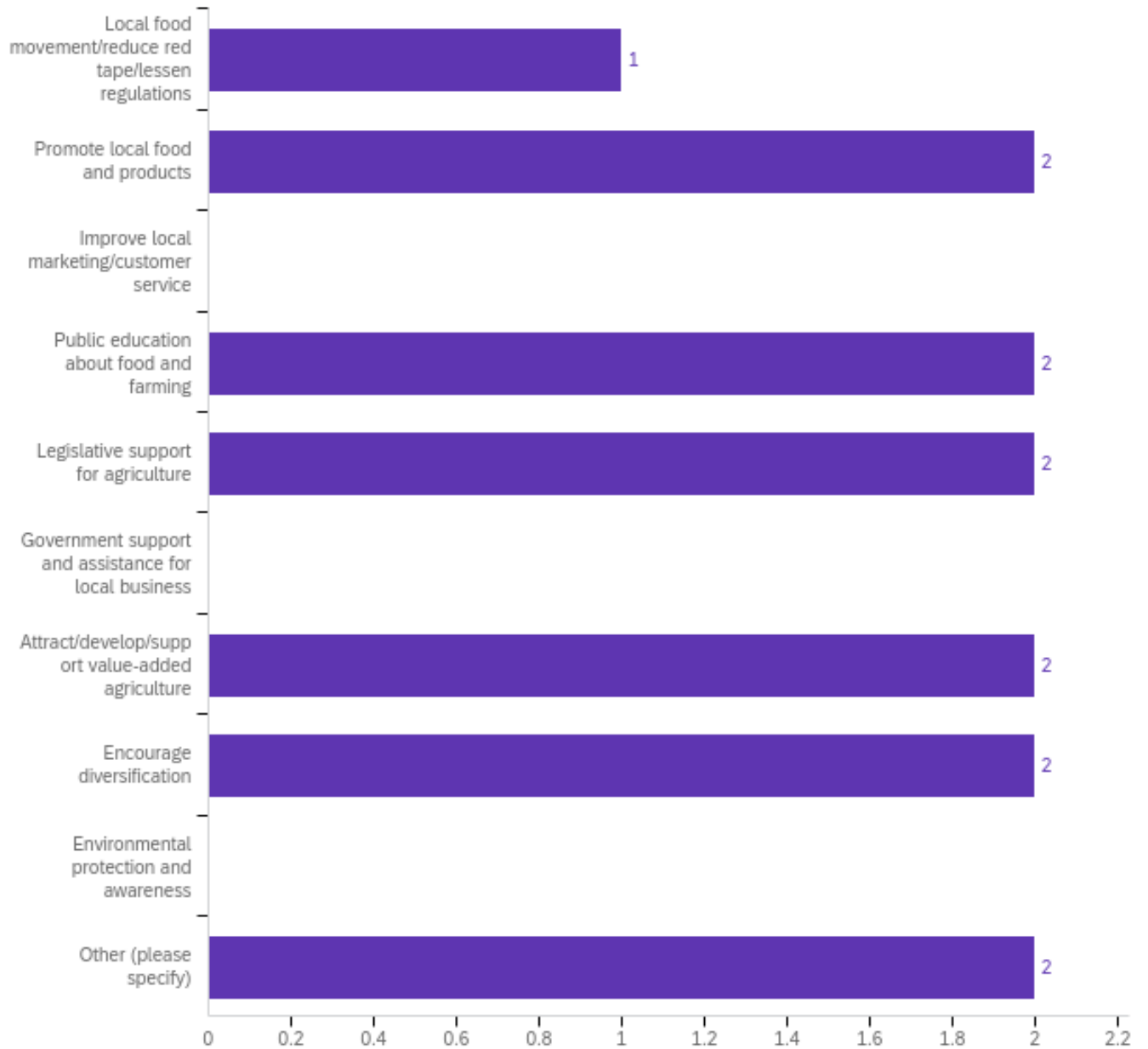


Q23_6_TEXT - Other (please specify)

Other (please specify) - Text

Land use by solar panels

Q24 - What are your specific recommendations to improve the local business climate? Check all that apply.



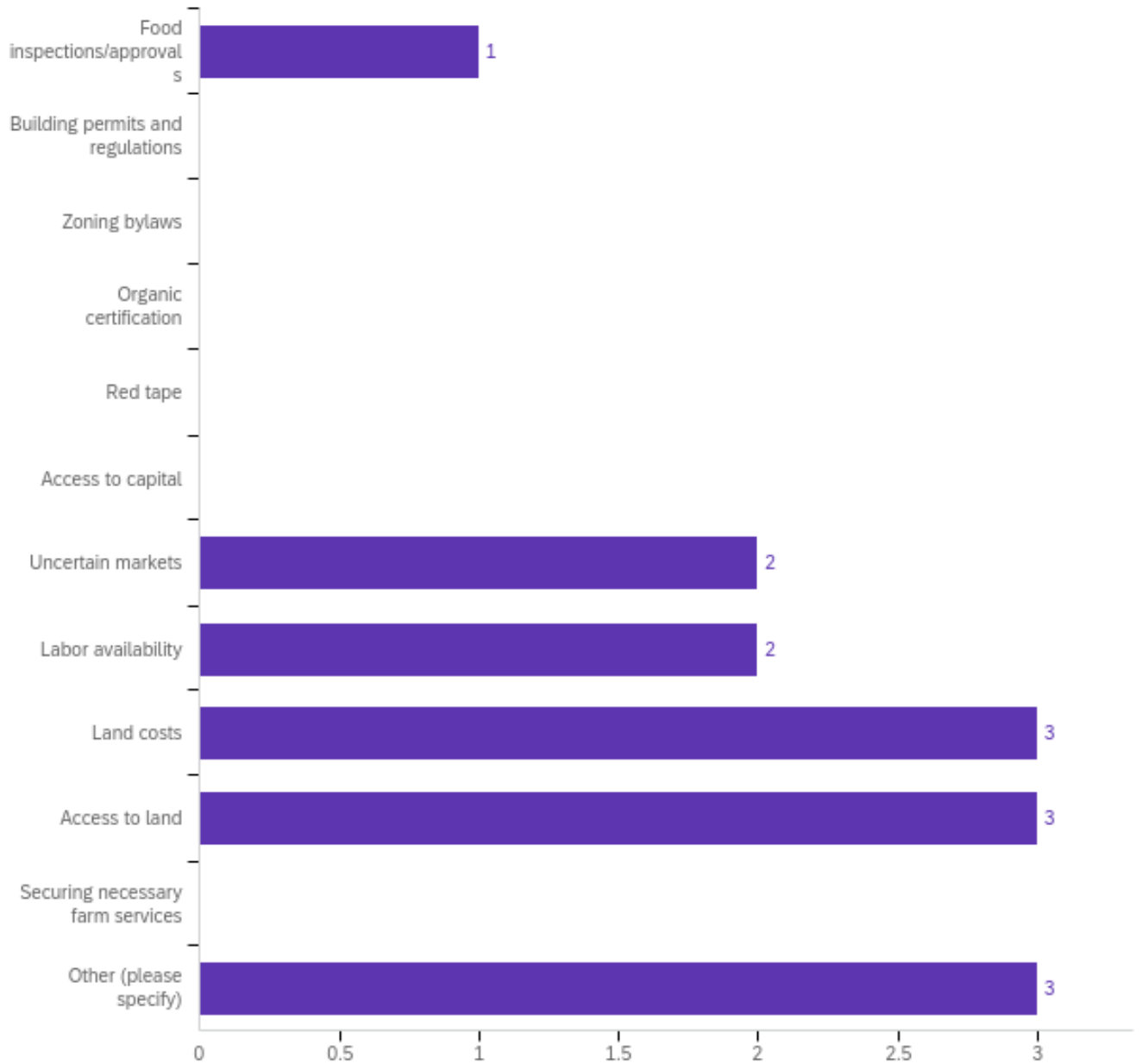
Q24_10_TEXT - Other (please specify)

Other (please specify) - Text

Labor availability, bussing people out of the county

Infrastructure

Q25 - What are the barriers to your agri-business operation? Check all that apply.



Q25_12_TEXT - Other (please specify)

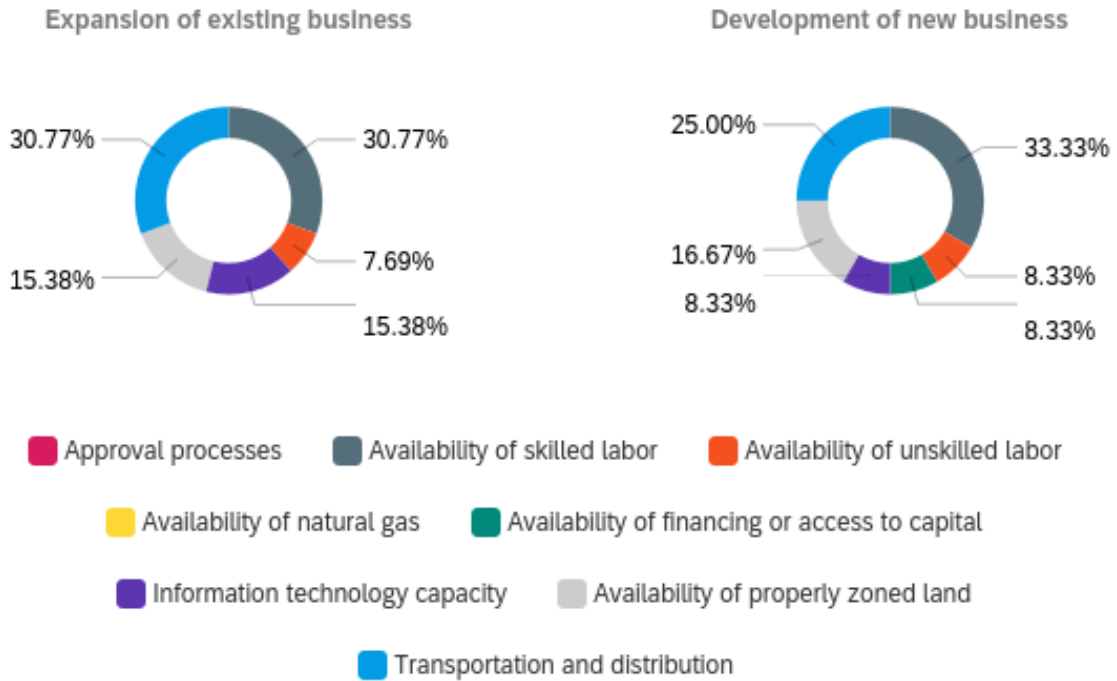
Other (please specify) - Text

Freight and the competitive advantage that farmers have in freight minimums. The lack of commercial grain companies will hurt the small farmer. Farmers have a 10% advantage in freight. Large farmers

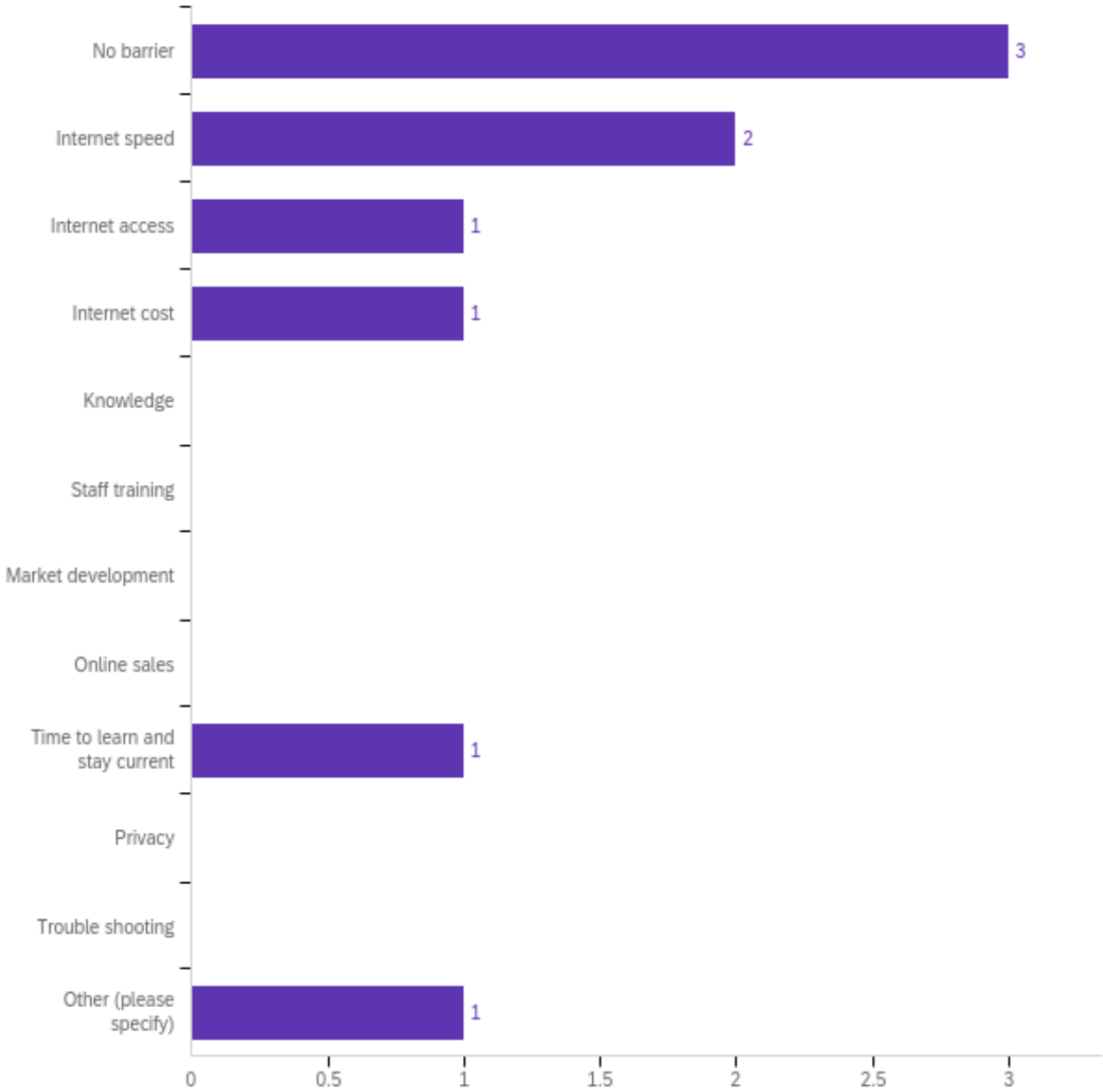
Food inspection/approvals: modernization, state has increased the funding

Concerned about what may become of WOTUS (Water of the U.S.)

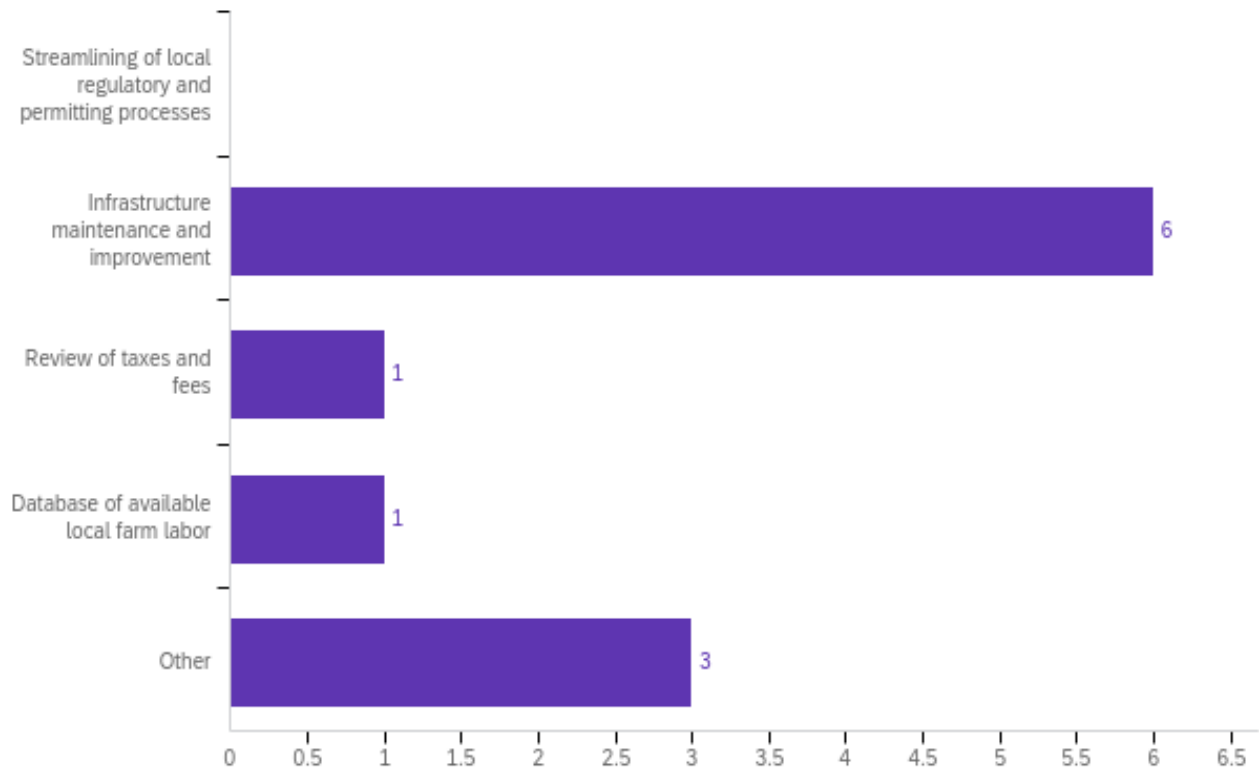
Q26 - Please indicate which of the issues will be considered barriers to the expansion of existing businesses and to the development of new businesses in the community. Check all that apply.



Q27 - Which of the following factors related to your use of information technology/internet are barriers to your business? Check all that apply.



Q28 - In what ways could local government assist the agriculture sector in your area?



Q28_5_TEXT - Other

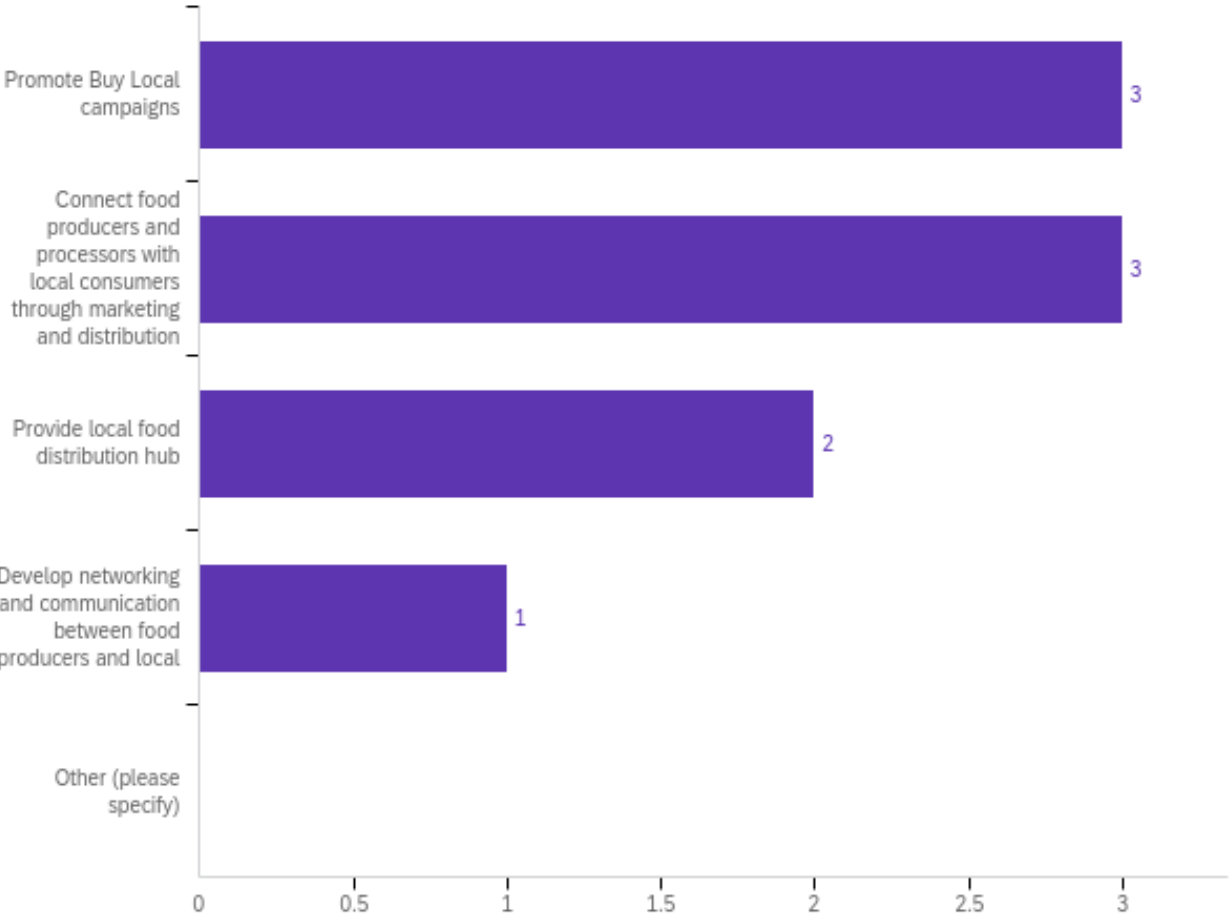
Other - Text

Laws to level the playing field for freight between farmers and grain elevators

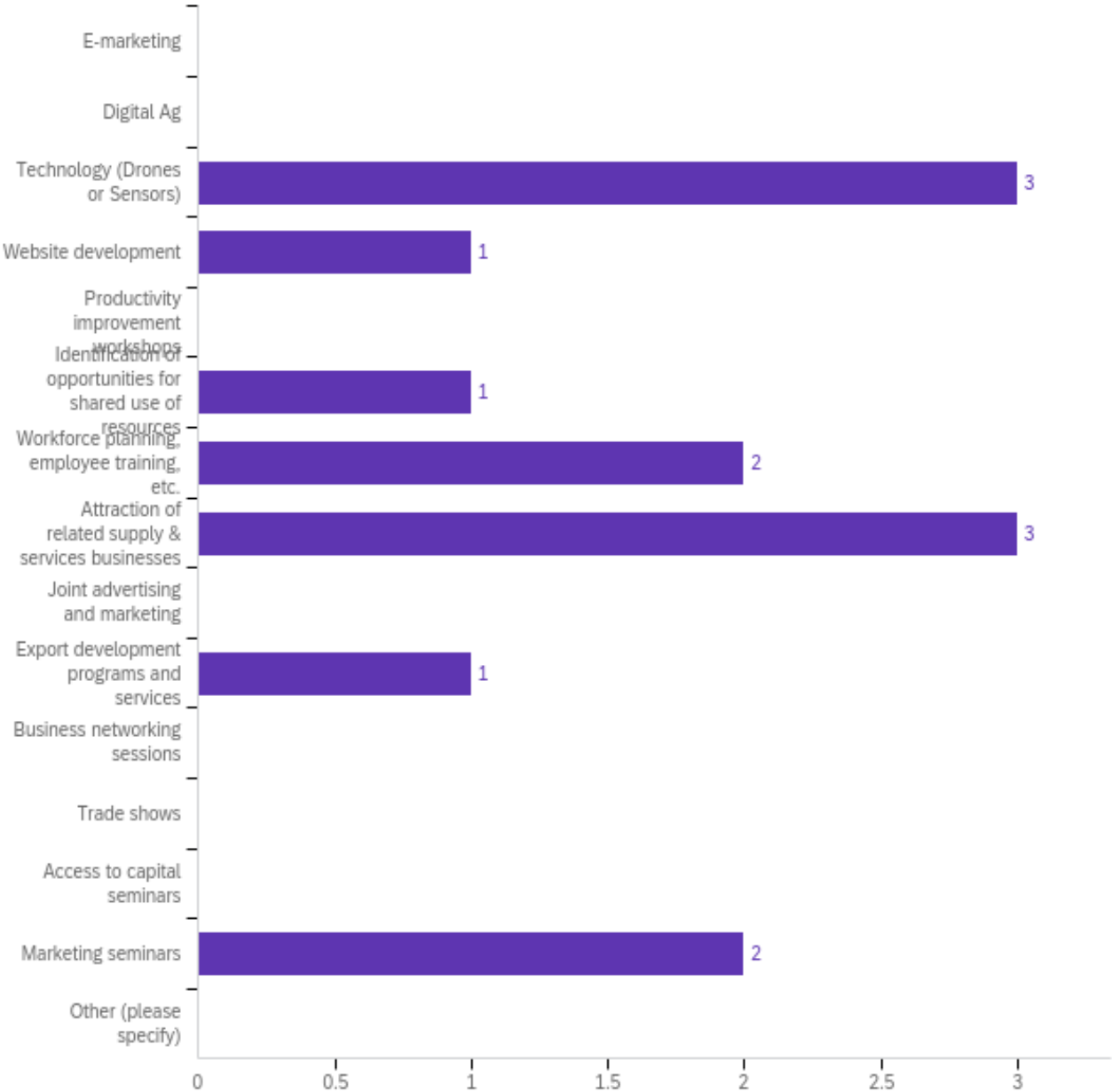
Weight limit on bridges and repairs are hindering transportation

Workforce

Q29 - In what ways could local/regional economic development organizations assist in increasing local food supply, demand and distribution? Check all that apply.



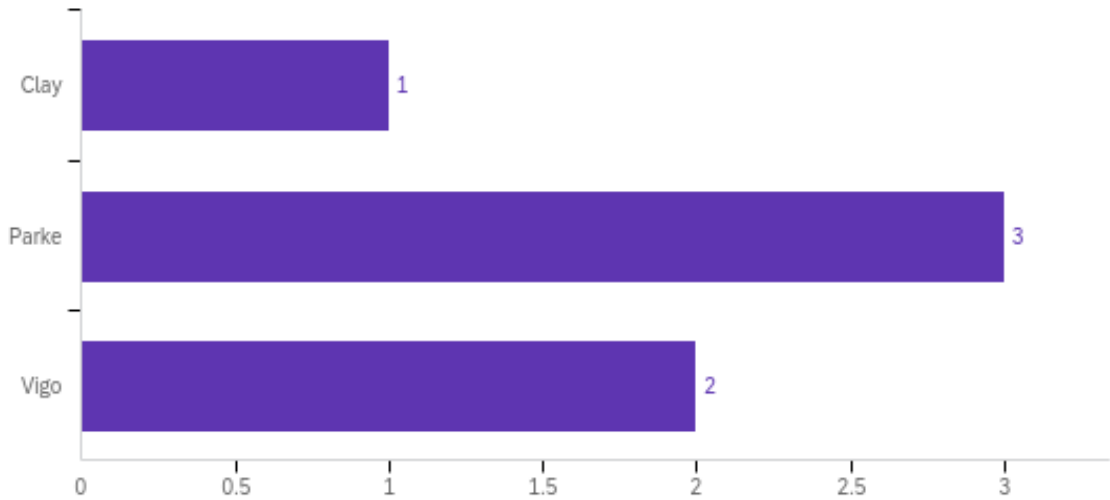
Q30 - What assistance, if any, could the community, local government or economic development organizations give to support your business? Check all that apply.



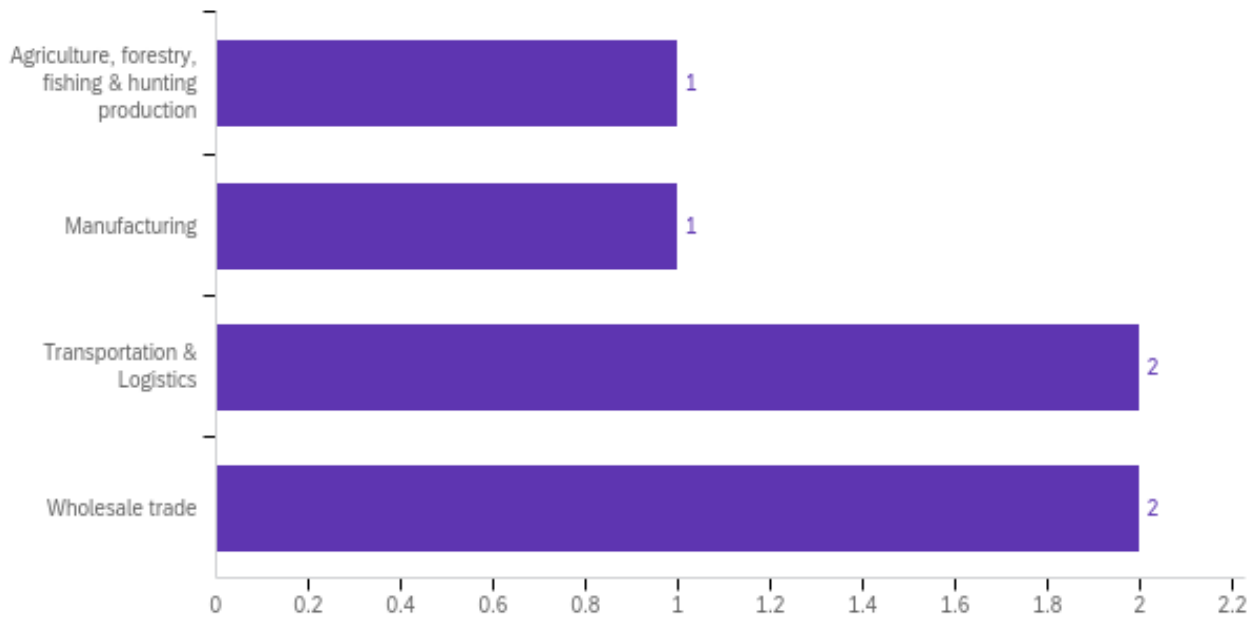
West Central General Survey Results

REDM- Targeted BR&E: General Business Questionnaire

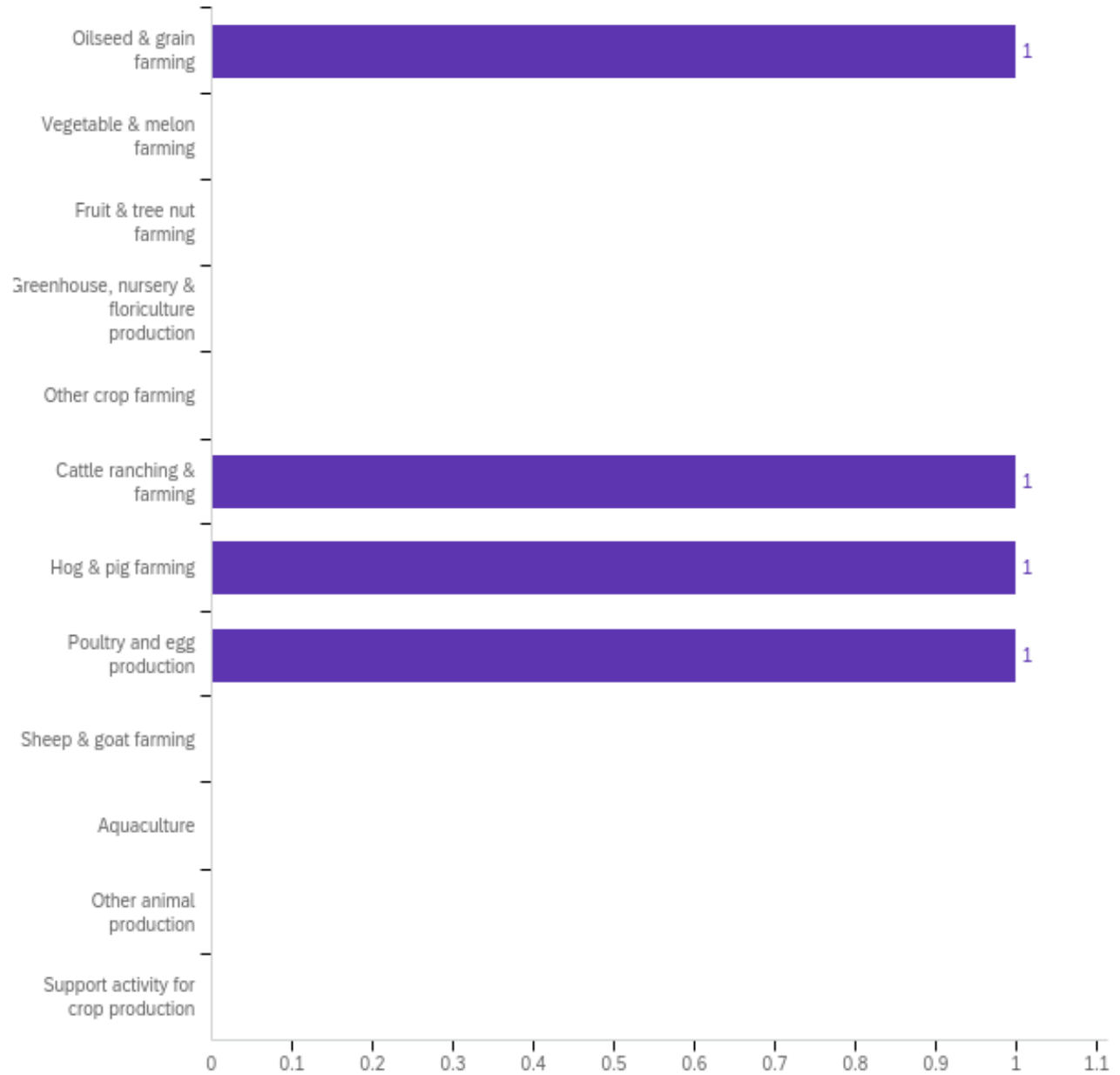
Qa - In which county is your company located in?



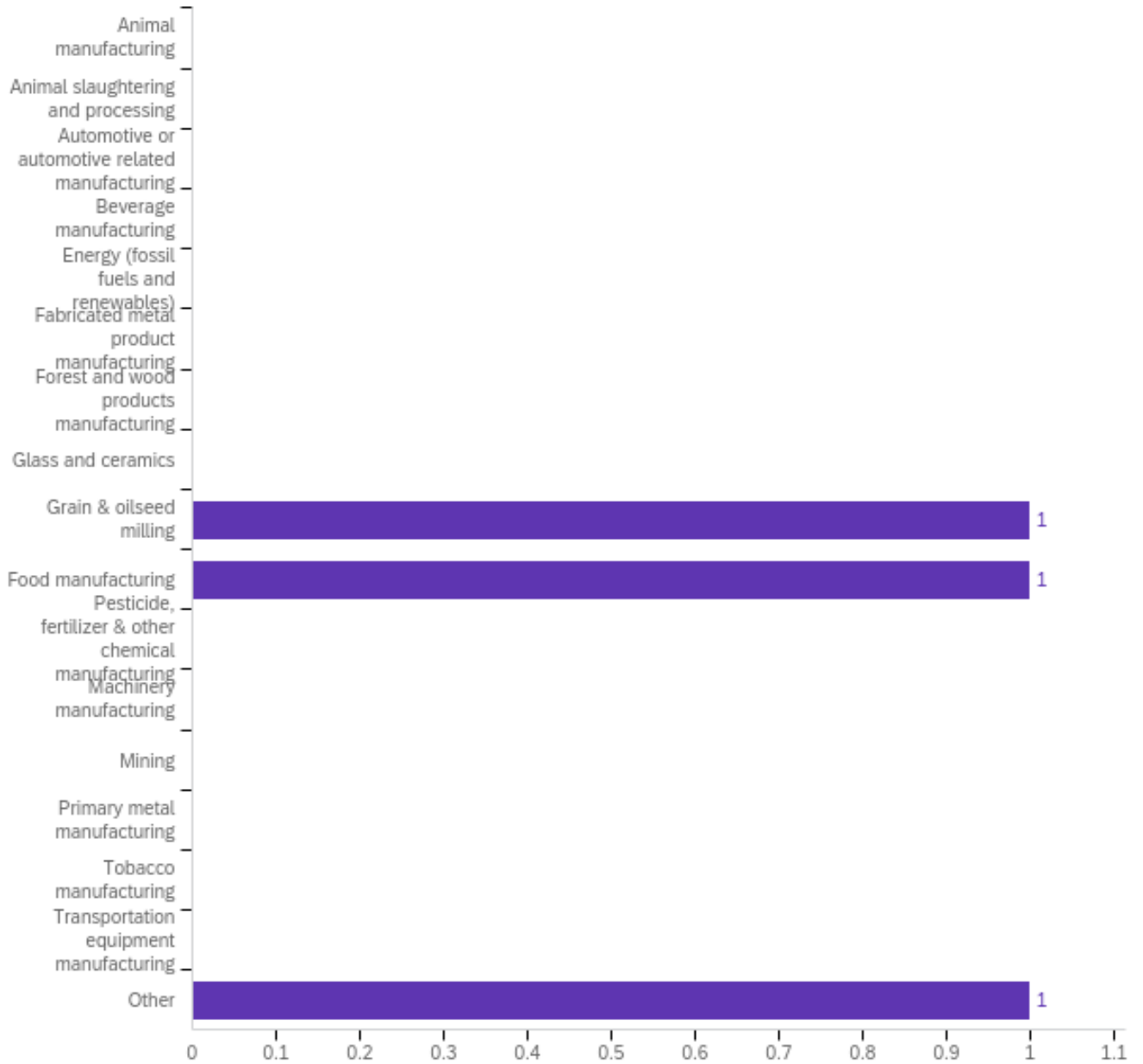
Q1 - Which of the following best describes your business?



Q1a - Which of the following best describes your AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY, FISHING, & HUNTING PRODUCTION farm/agriculture business? Select all that apply.



Q1b - Which of the following best describes your MANUFACTURING business?



Q1b_10_TEXT - Food manufacturing

Food manufacturing - Text

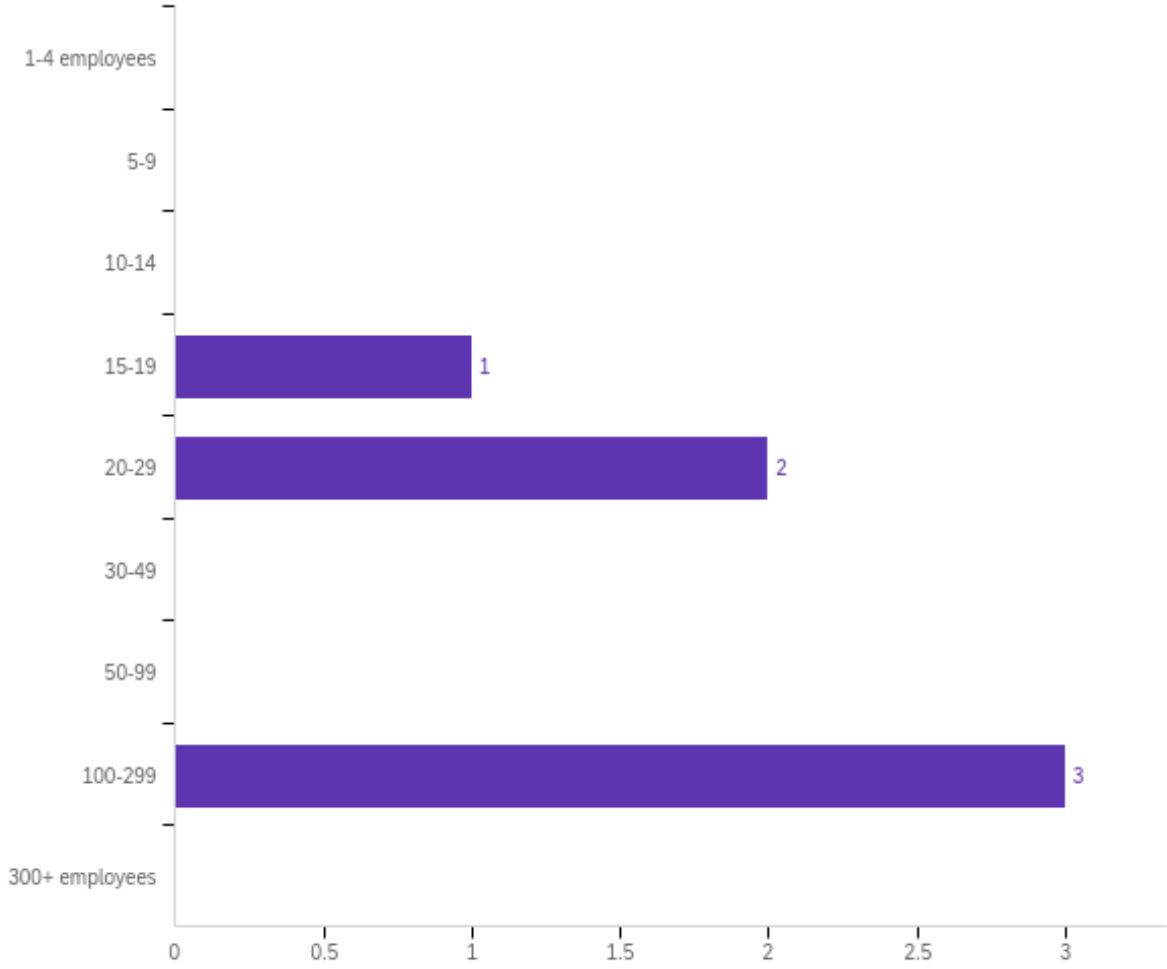
Animal food

Q1b_17_TEXT - Other

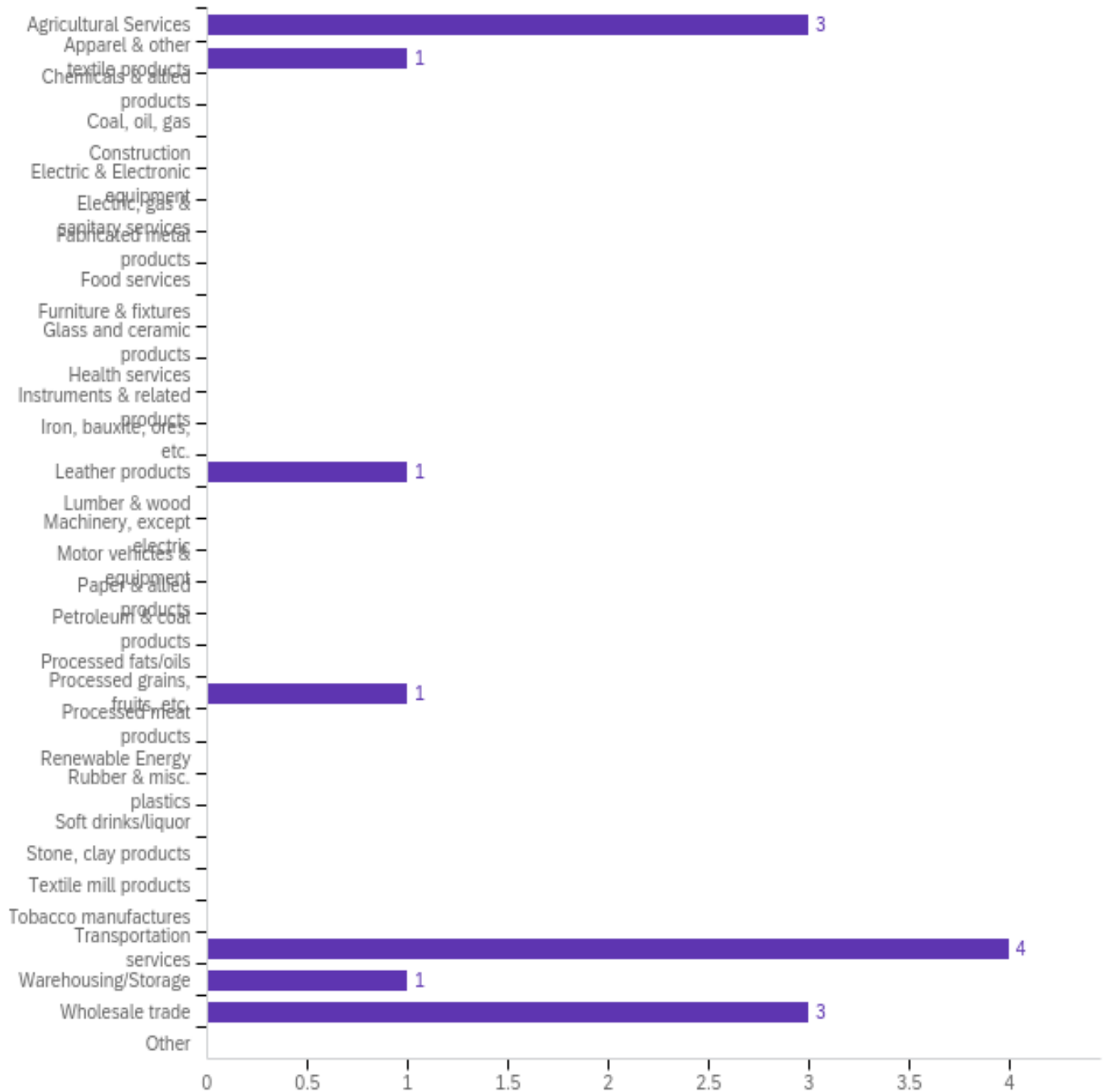
Other - Text

Durable goods

Q3 - Including owner-operators, how many employees work at this location?



Q10 - What are the major products or services produced at this establishment?



Q11 - Manufacturing Inputs: What products and where do you purchase your top 5 inputs for your business? (Please list the manufactured products and specify the county if it is different from your own county.)

Q11_1_TEXT - Input #1

Input #1 - Text

Vomac Trucks

Shelled corn

Pipe, regulators, equipment

NH3/Anhydrous Ammonia

Q11_1_1 - Input #1 - Within the county? Yes/No

Input #1 - Within the county? Yes/No

Yes

Vigo

Q11_1_2 - Input #1 - Within the region? (list County)

Input #1 - Within the region? (list County)

Vigo

Vermillion

Q11_1_3 - Input #1 - Other counties within the state? (list County)

Input #1 - Other counties within the state? (list County)

Montgomery

Q11_1_7 - Input #1 - Other States (list State)

Input #1 - Other States (list State)

Illinois

Ohio

Q11_2_TEXT - Input #2

Input #2 - Text

Great Dane Trailers

Dry fertilizers

Grain sorghum

HVAC

Q11_2_1 - Input #2 - Within the county? Yes/No

Input #2 - Within the county? Yes/No

Vigo

Yes

Q11_2_2 - Input #2 - Within the region? (list County)

Input #2 - Within the region? (list County)

Vigo

Montgomery

Q11_2_3 - Input #2 - Other counties within the state? (list County)

Input #2 - Other counties within the state? (list County)

Vermillion

Q11_2_7 - Input #2 - Other States (list State)

Input #2 - Other States (list State)

Kentucky, Illinois

Missouri

Q11_3_TEXT - Input #3

Input #3 - Text

Crop production products

Wheat

Concrete

Q11_3_1 - Input #3 - Within the county? Yes/No

Input #3 - Within the county? Yes/No

Yes

Parke

Q11_3_2 - Input #3 - Within the region? (list County)

Input #3 - Within the region? (list County)

Montgomery

Q11_3_3 - Input #3 - Other counties within the state? (list County)

Input #3 - Other counties within the state? (list County)

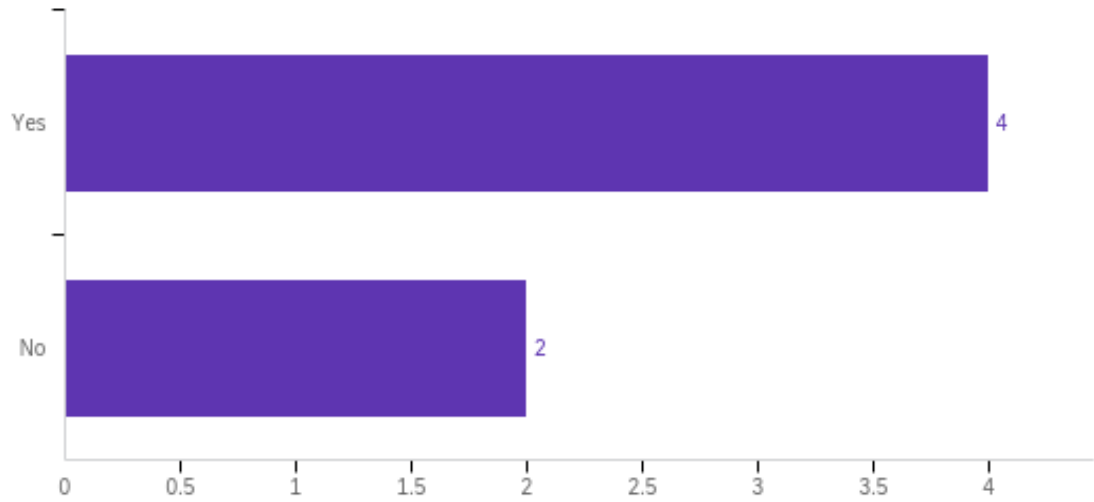
Vigo

Q11_3_7 - Input #3 - Other States (list State)

Input #3 - Other States (list State)

Illinois

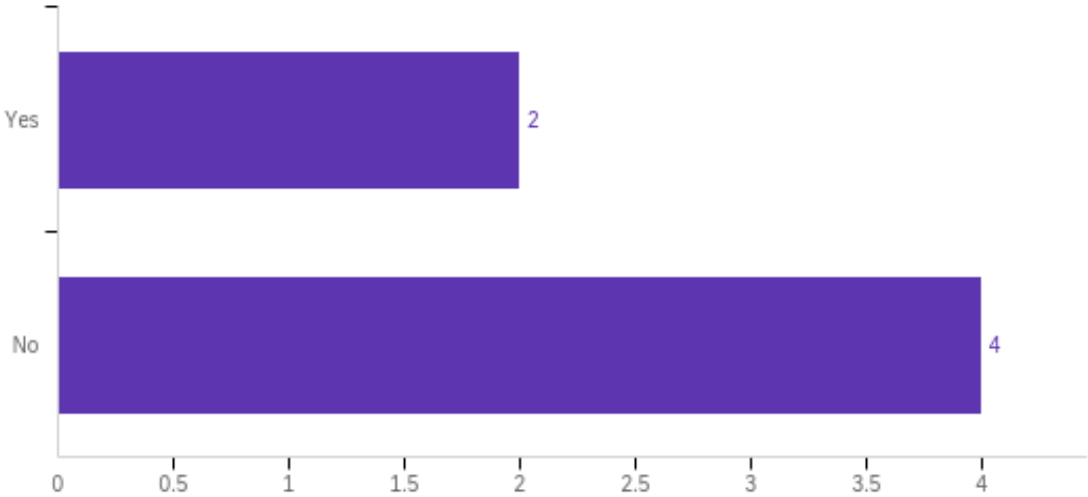
Q13 - If your business buys materials, supplies, and services from outside this 6-county region, could some of these items be produced in the area?



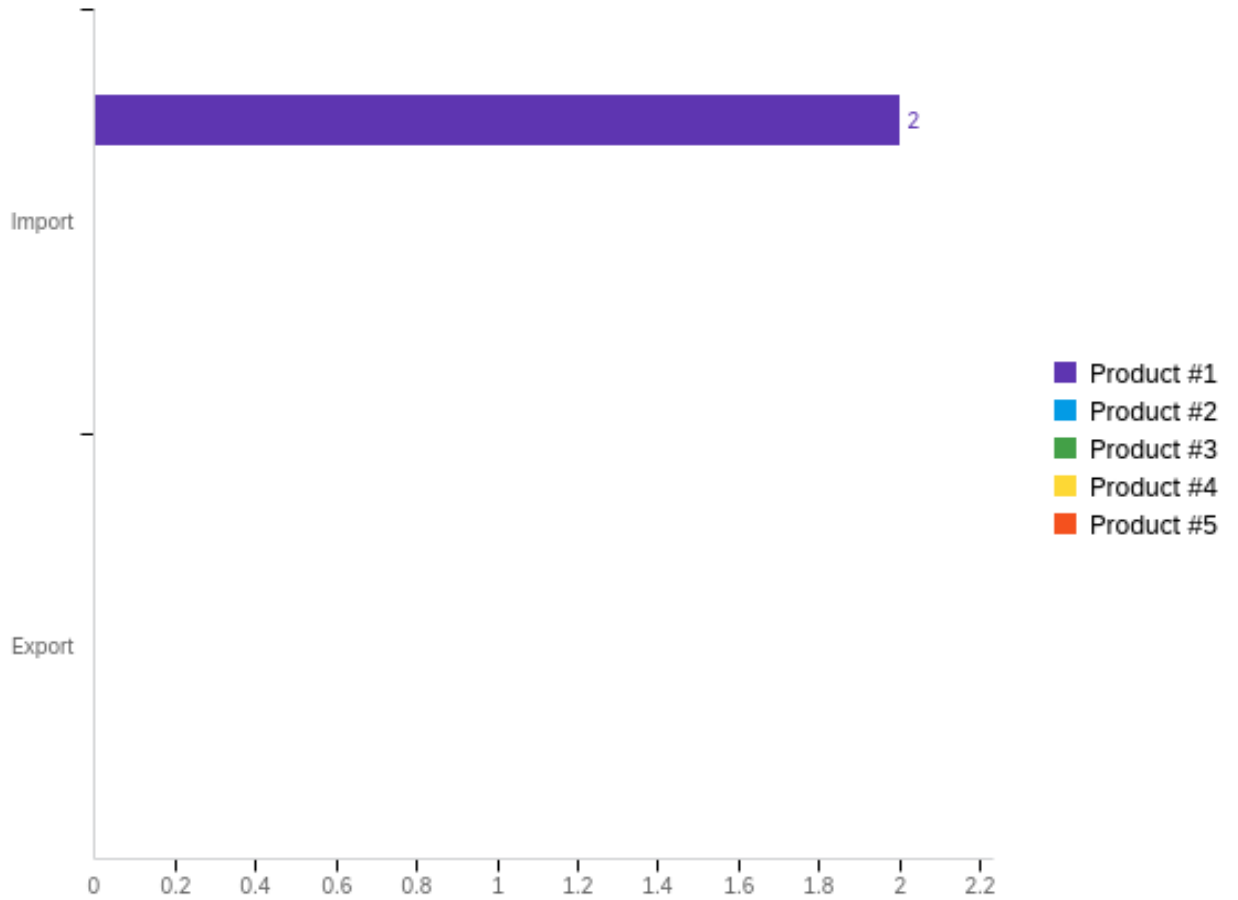
Q14 - If yes, please help us identify materials, supplies, or services that could be produced locally, in order of priority to your business.

1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
Freezer and regular warehouses	Qualified workforce			
Tires	More automotive	Printers	Furniture	
Crop production/protection				
U.S.-made steel	Copper tubing, black pipe, regulators	Propane storage tanks	Concrete pads for tank placement	

Q16 - Do you currently import/export products?



Q17 #1 - If yes, please specify the product and country for your top five (5) inputs: - Import or Export?



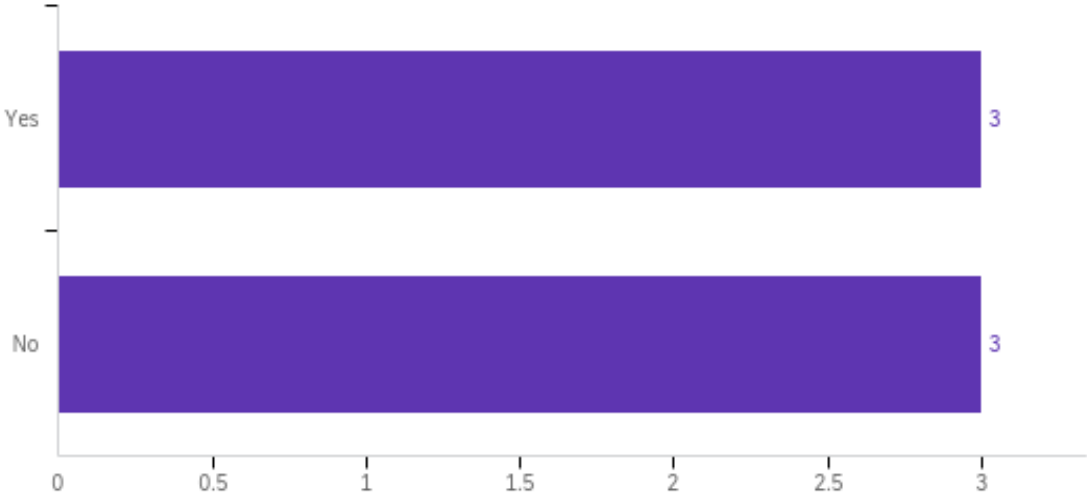
Q17 #2 - If yes, please specify the product and country for your top five (5) inputs: - Name of Country

Q17#2_1_TEXT - Product #1

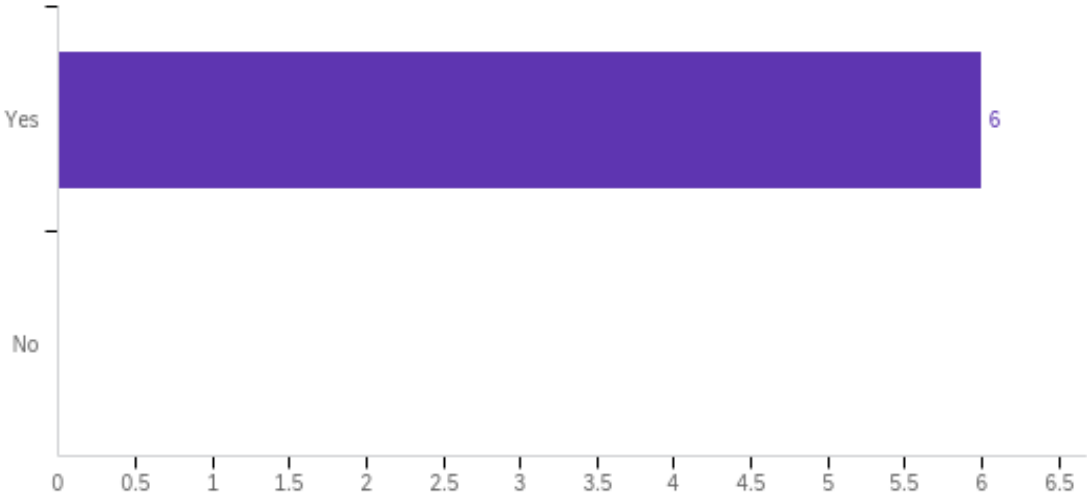
Raw material-frozen lamb

Dog treats

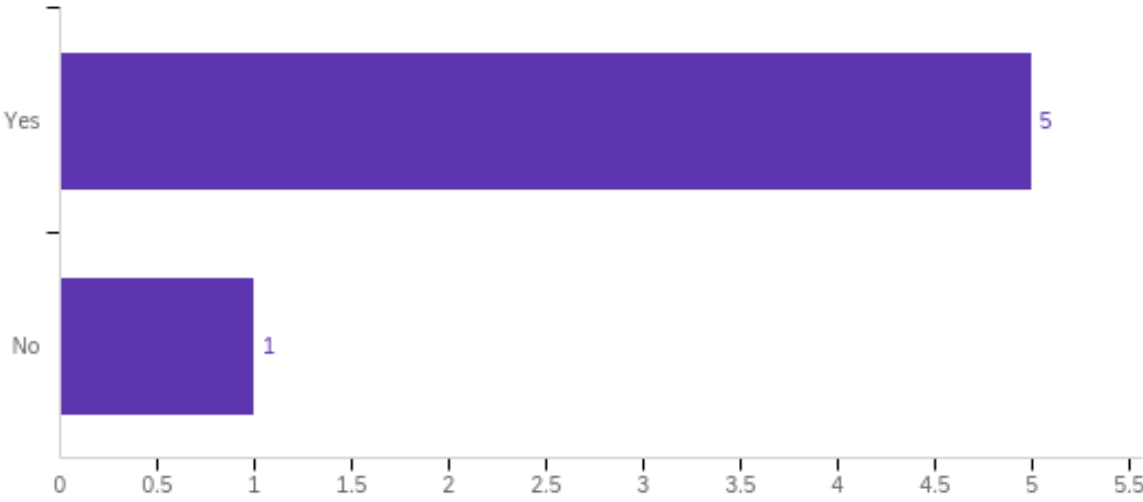
Q18a - Have you considered pursuing any new or niche market or value-added opportunities?



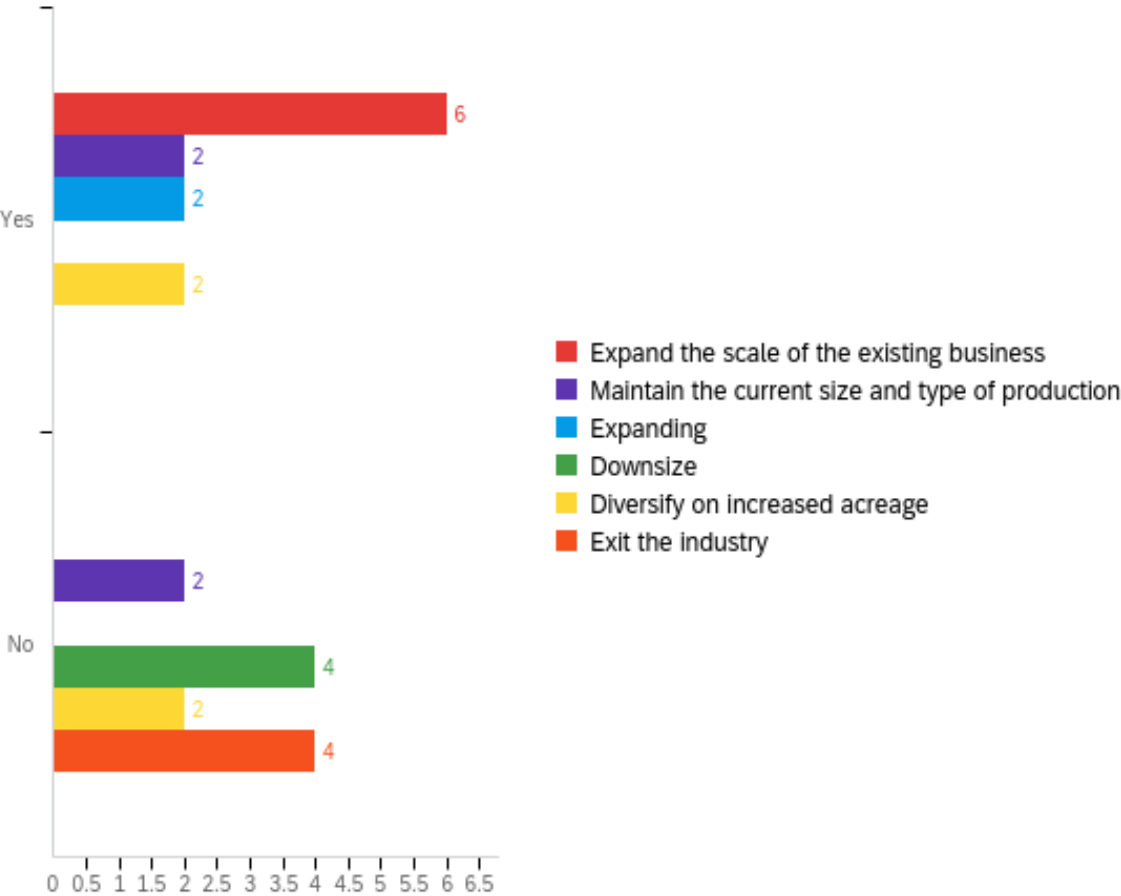
Q19a - Would you be interested in supplying local markets (retailers/institutional/wholesale buyers) if the distribution and management systems were in place?



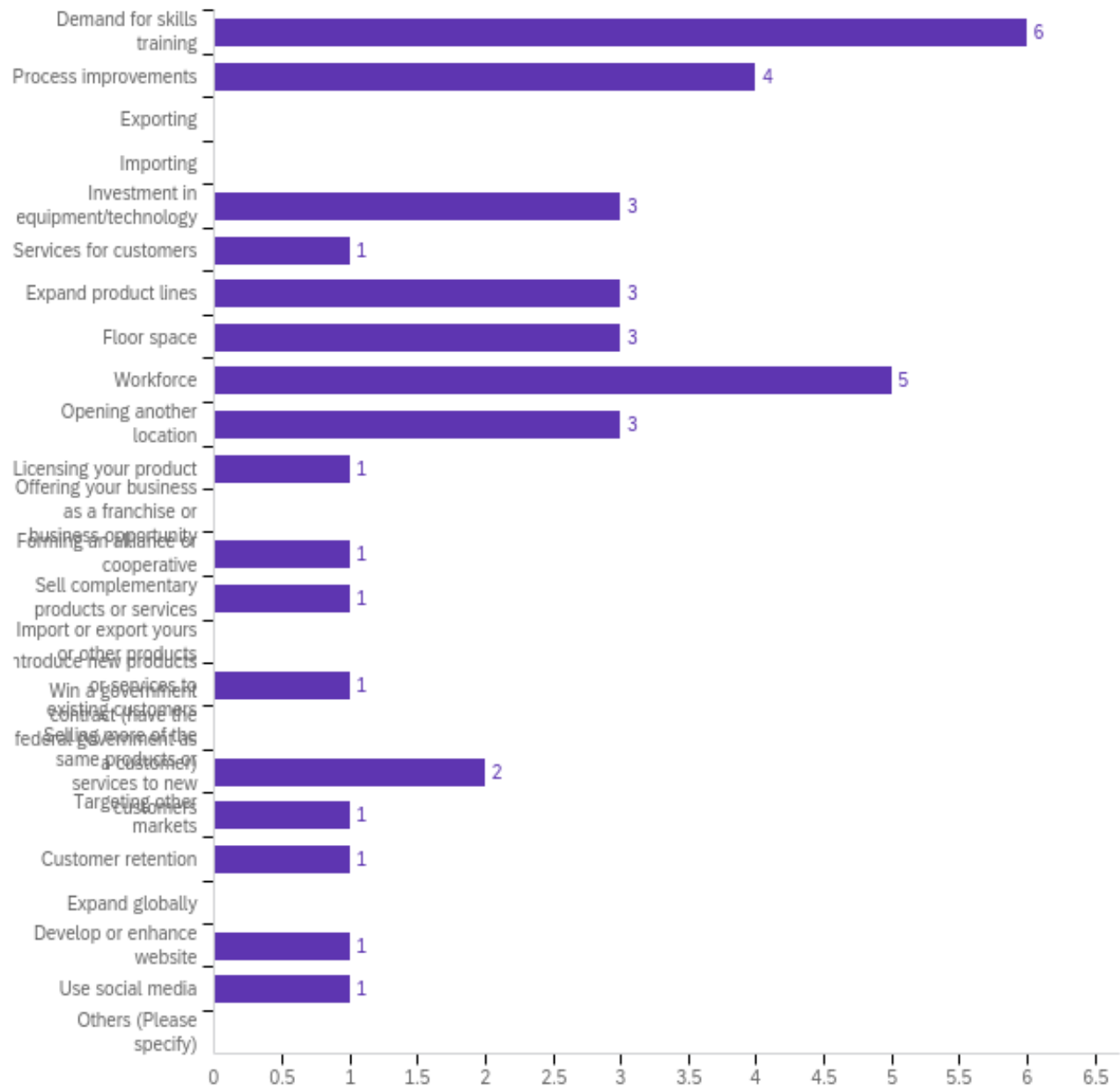
Q20 - Do you have the capacity to increase production/business to supply local markets if additional buyers were identified?



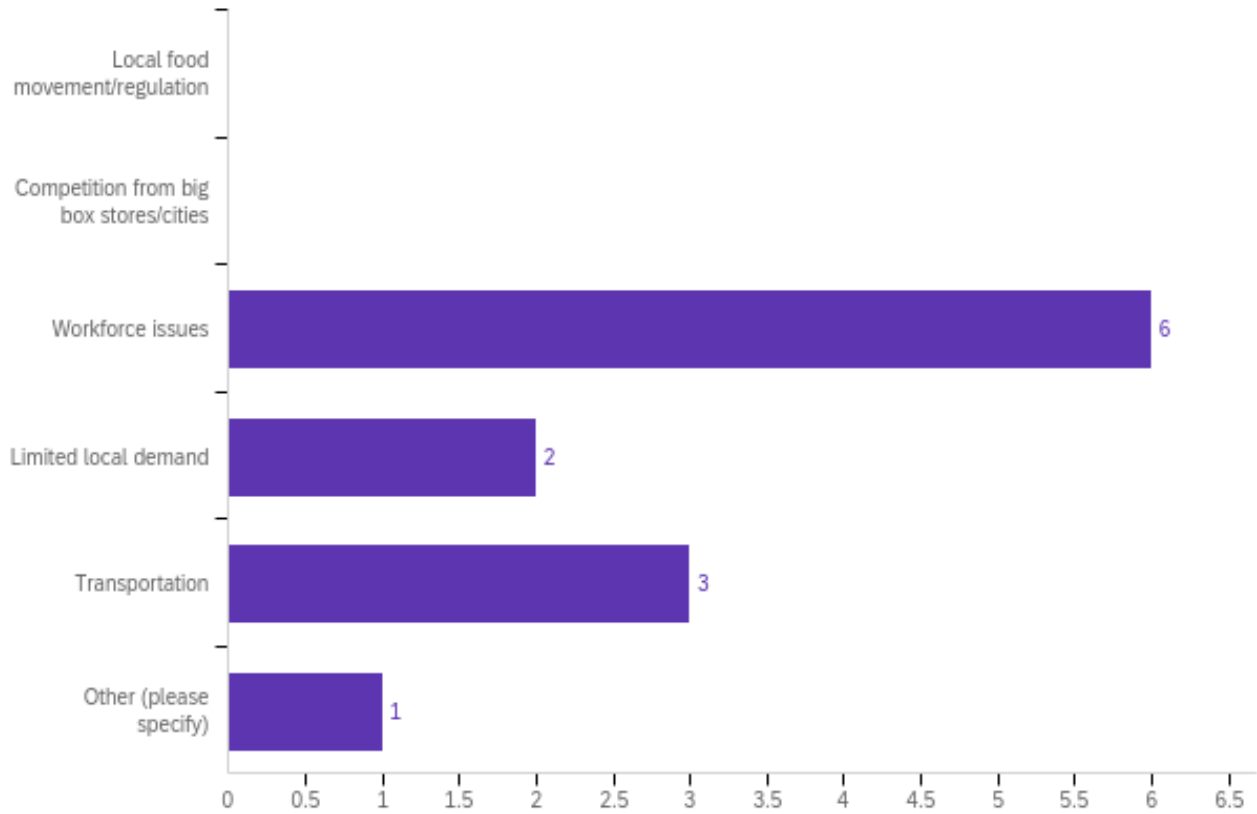
Q24 #1 - Which would best describe your plans for your business over the next 3 years? Select one answer. - Plan in 3 years



Q25 - If you are planning to diversify or expand the scale of your business, will your expansion lead to an increase in the following? Select all that apply.



Q27 - What are the biggest challenges facing local businesses in this community? Check all that apply.

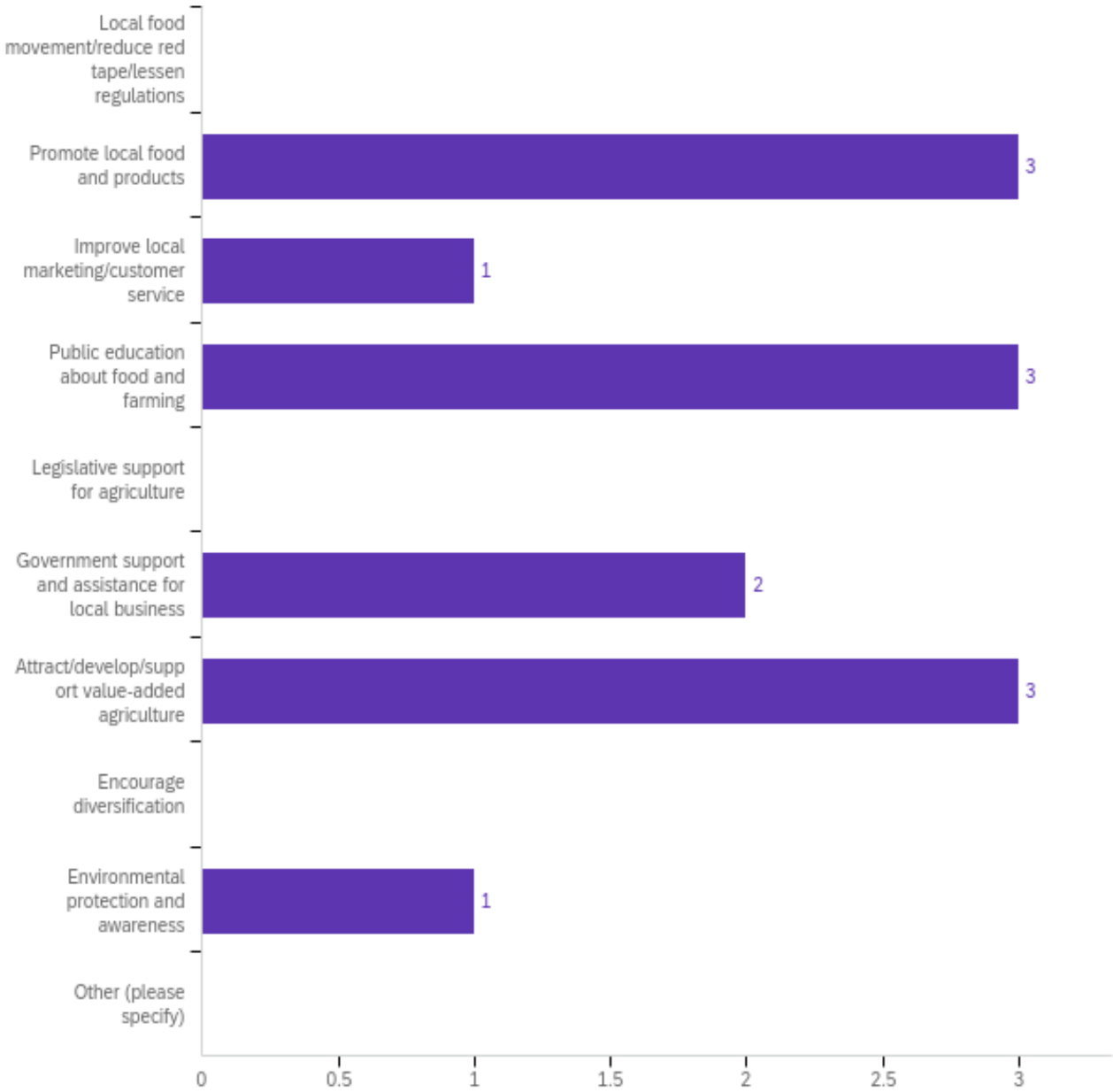


Q27_6_TEXT - Other (please specify)

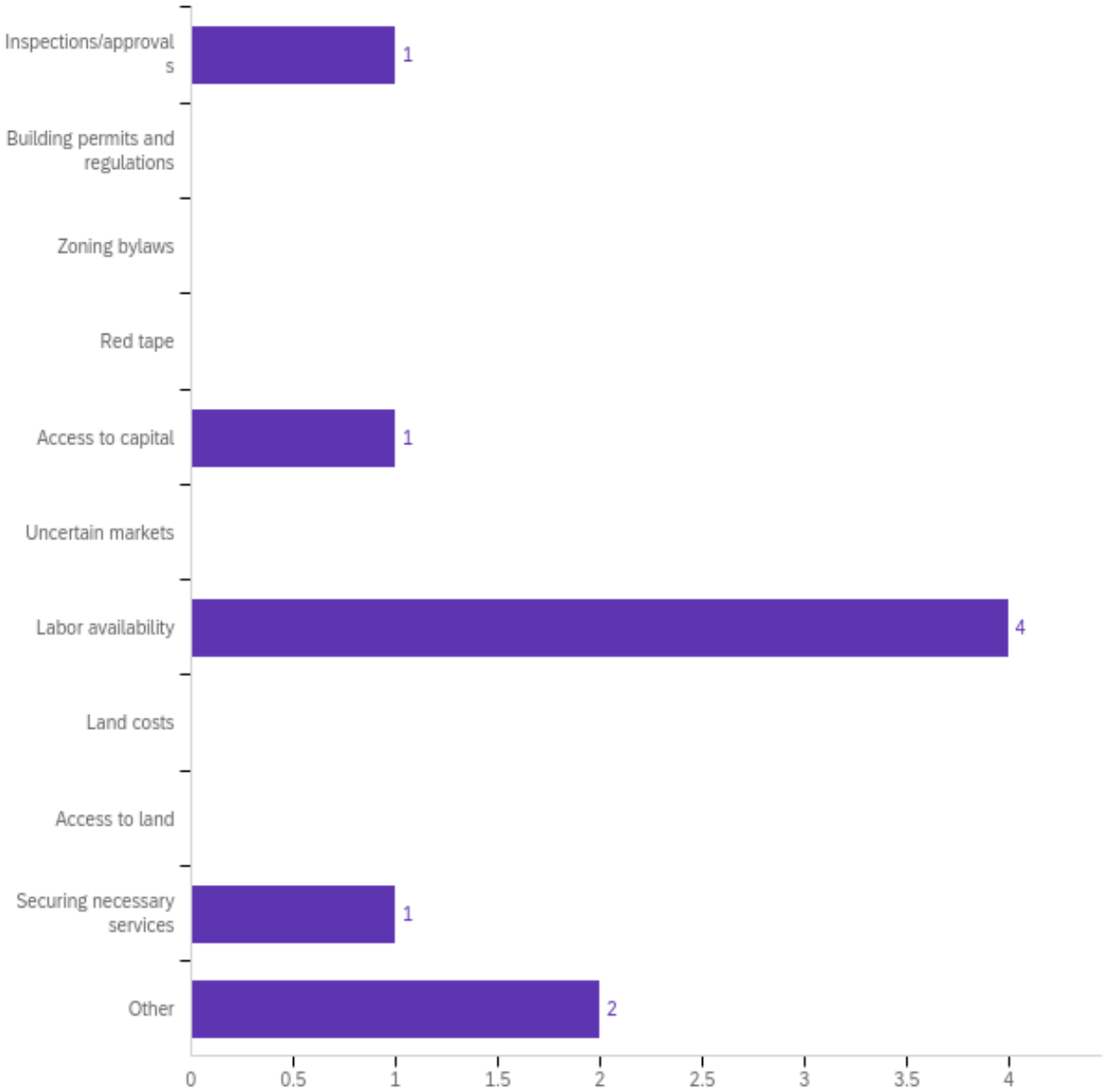
Other (please specify) - Text

Limited local demand-population driven

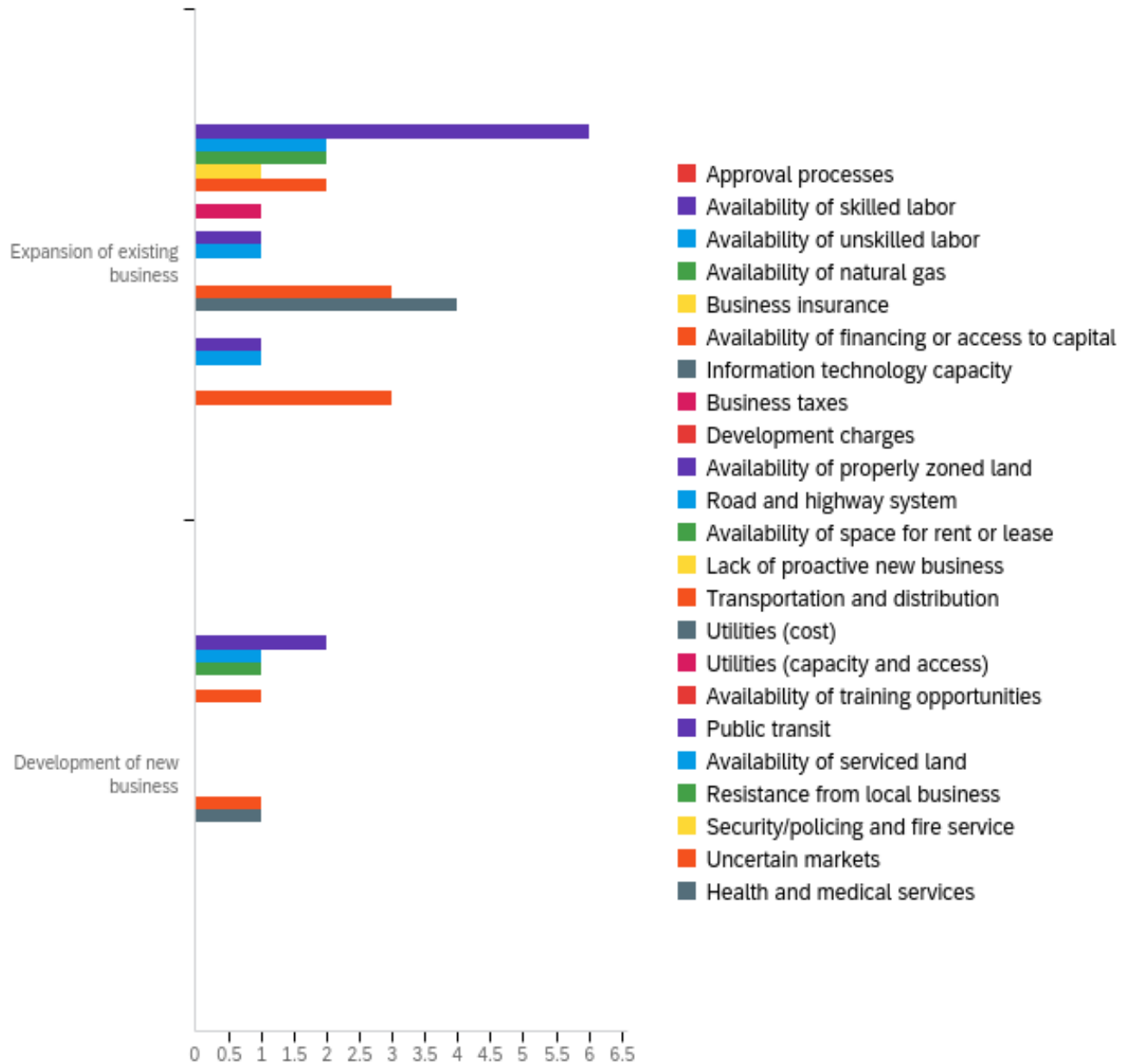
Q28 - What are your specific recommendations to improve the local business climate? Check all that apply.



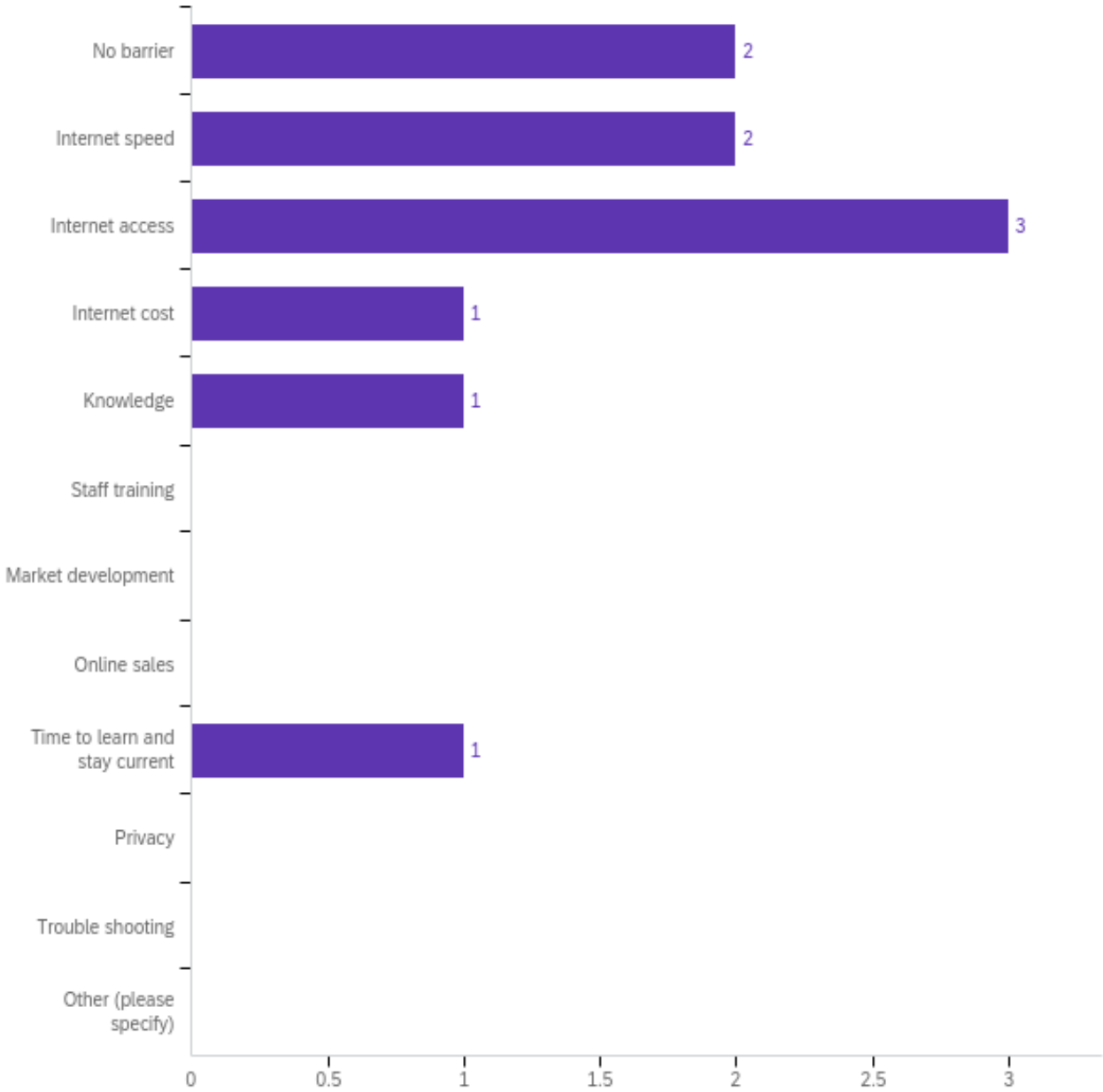
Q29 - What are the regulatory barriers to your business operation? Check all that apply.



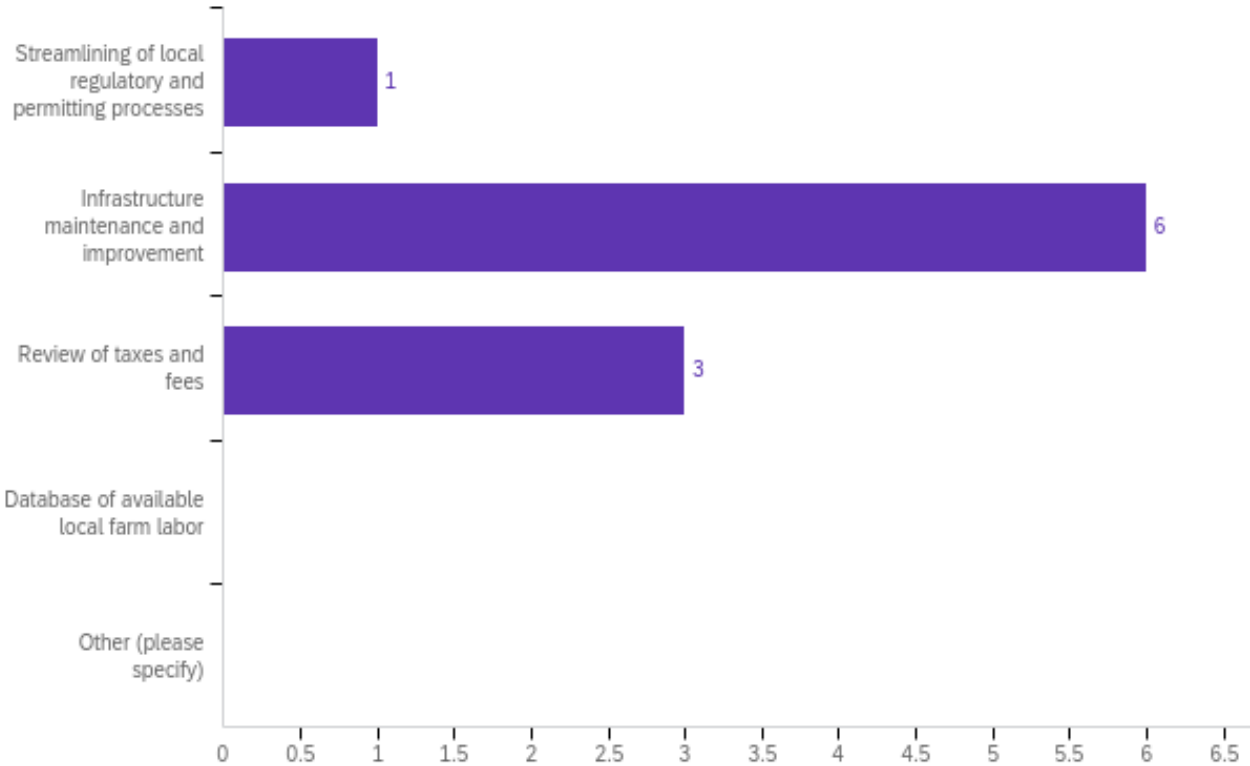
Q30 - Please indicate which of the issues will be considered barriers to the expansion of existing businesses and to the development of new businesses in the community. Check all that apply.



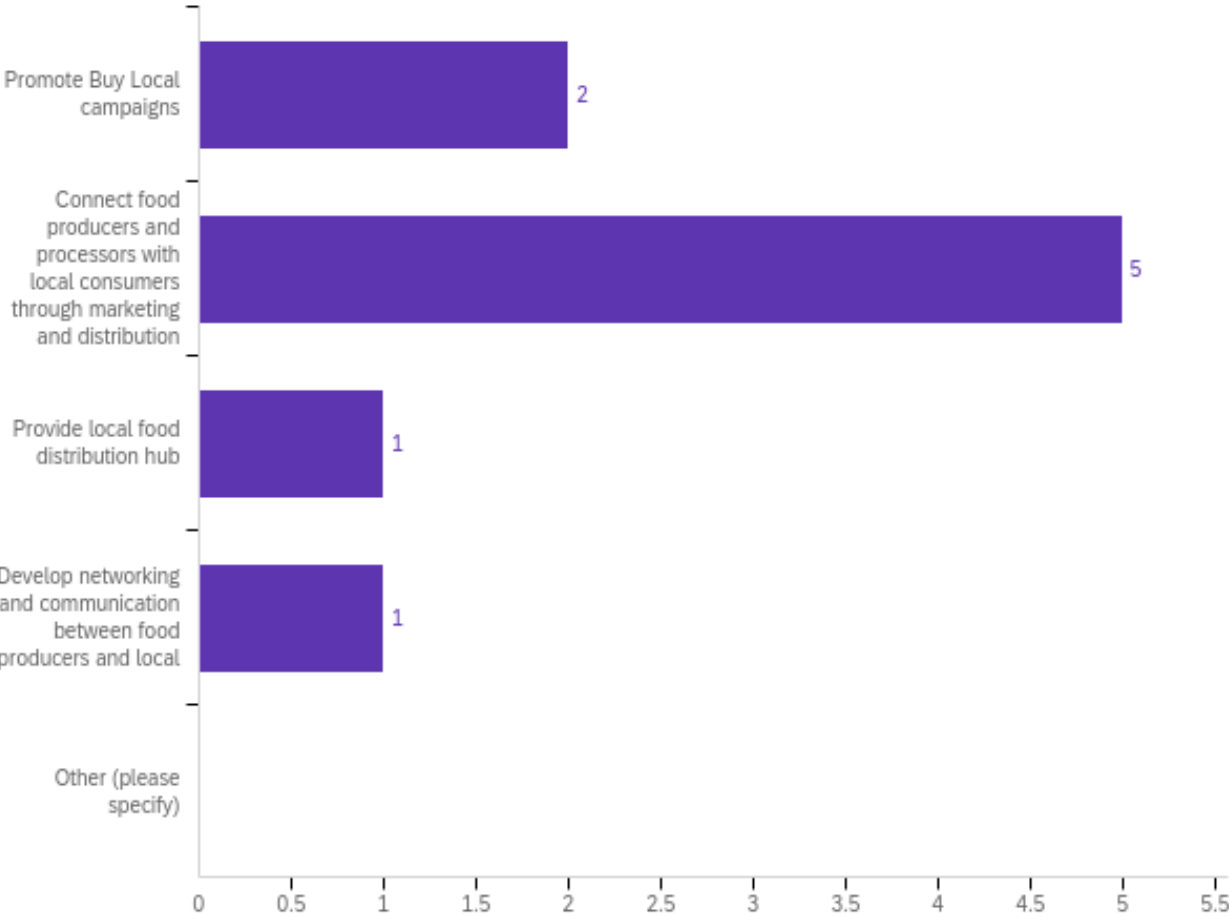
Q31 - Which of the following factors related to your use of information technology/internet are barriers to your business? Check all that apply.



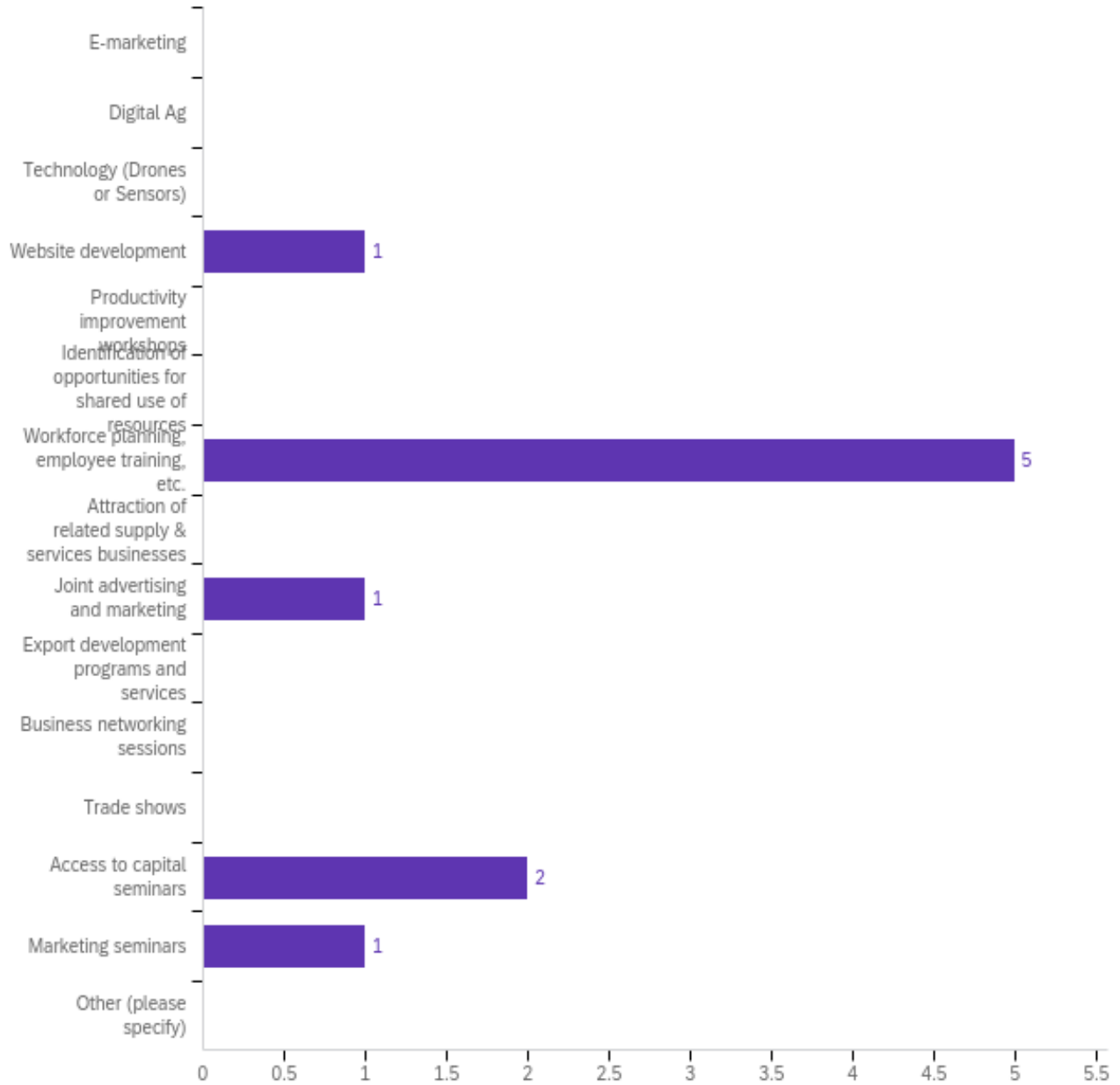
Q32 - In what ways could local government assist the businesses/industries in your area?



Q33 - In what ways could local/regional economic development organizations assist in increasing local food supply, demand and distribution? Check all that apply.



Q34 - What assistance, if any, could the community, local government or economic development organizations give to support your business? Check all that apply.



APPENDIX B

Site Visit Qualitative Outcomes

The team leaders from each of the six (6) counties in the West Central Region shared their “takeaways” and “ah-ha” moments from the site visits they conducted. Following are some of the key insights they shared, organized under the following themes that emerged from the conversations the regional local economic development officials (LEDOs) had with businesses:

Workforce Issues

“Farmers say employees come from ‘word of mouth’”

“When agribusinesses could not find the employees, they learned how to be more efficient – which may have affected the ‘management effectiveness’ score (question 6 of the survey)”

“Contrast the livable wage in our communities (reference United Way ALICE data) to the wage farmers are currently offering their workers; this plays into our workforce issues”

From the survey comments: “No one wants to move here. The people here are old and retiring. No new labor that can pass a drug screen. College graduates move away.”

Potential Niche Markets/Value-Added Opportunities

Grain handling and drying

Residential propane truck manufacturing, custom truck bed manufacturing

Germ plasma

Pig organs for research

Non-GMO

Agbots/tractor retrofitting

Butcher beef

Small trucking company that would custom haul for farmers

Local food hub in this region

- Create a food box distribution system – hub & spoke, drives around to deliver
- Model to consider: Family Farm Fresh on Hwy 41

Cooperative meat processing/new regional slaughterhouse:

- What is the barrier to slaughterhouse vs. small processor? Depends where they are selling it to – into retail or wholesale markets
- If you slaughter beef for a family, USDA inspector isn’t needed, but cleaning in between is crucial
- Could consider a cooperative approach between farmers rather than bringing in a new slaughterhouse
- Cold storage is necessary – could create a co-op approach (just coordinate the facility) – India has benefitted from the co-op systems they created
- Need more USDA meat inspectors – this is a bottleneck to meat processing

Marketing Needs

A grain elevator is needed within the county

More billboards, comprehensive county advertisement for industrial services

Bring in an ethanol plant. One may be opening in Cloverdale again

Individual outreach

List ours and other large, local manufacturers on county page

Area demographic reports (population, trends, etc.)

State/Local Government Assistance

Weight permitting for trucks due to bridge structural issues prohibit travel:

- The commercial companies have an 80k limit; the farmers do not, but some of the larger farms are as large as the commercial companies.

“Challenge: West side of Indiana being on Eastern Time (ET). Being on Central Time (CT) would ease the burden on operations like grain elevators struggling with workforce and extended hours.”

“Need infrastructure to handle water/waste.”

“Poor rail service and higher freight costs limit expansion.”

Community Needs (identified by survey respondents)

24-hour emergency vet

Grain handling/drying

Slaughterhouse, food processing and post-harvest value-added activity, local processing facilities. POET opening 15 miles away is a big help – having a local slaughter processing company.

Custom concrete pads

Home goods

Automotive manufacturing

Aquatic facility, state of the art

More trails, less trash

Better school corporations

Supply Chain Bottlenecks

Items in short supply include:

- Equipment parts

- Butcher gates
- Fungicides
- Round up
- Germ plasma
- U.S. steel, aluminum
- Quality concrete pads

Grain transportation, grain elevator, grain shortage

Farm equipment and repairs, 6-8 months out:

- Can't find parts for John Deere equipment
- Parts for farm equipment, especially ag electronics are in short supply
- Used combine market is very tight
- Parts for trucks and trailers- parts are backed up

"Limited local growers of certain crops (sorghum + black oil). There are limited growers partially due to inability to insure crops."

"Fertilizers, crop chemicals, herbicides, feeds have all had recent bottlenecks."

"There is a local livestock auction - Indianapolis. Concern over their succession plan."

"White corn (to Aztec in Evansville) - transportation cost too high."

Needed Inputs

Computer chips

AI technology development

Internet access

Freezer warehouses

Safety equipment; local stores have a limited supply

APPENDIX C

Ag Asset Maps

The Ag Asset Maps assist a community in understanding and documenting the agricultural outputs of a region and helps identify where there is a critical mass, what the existing supply chain looks like, and if the area has an agricultural output that could be promoted for a unique market. A sampling of the data in the Ag Asset Maps for the West Central Region is shown below and the detailed mapping program is available at: <https://pcrd.purdue.edu/ruralindianastats/>.

Figure 10. Major Crops in the West Central Region

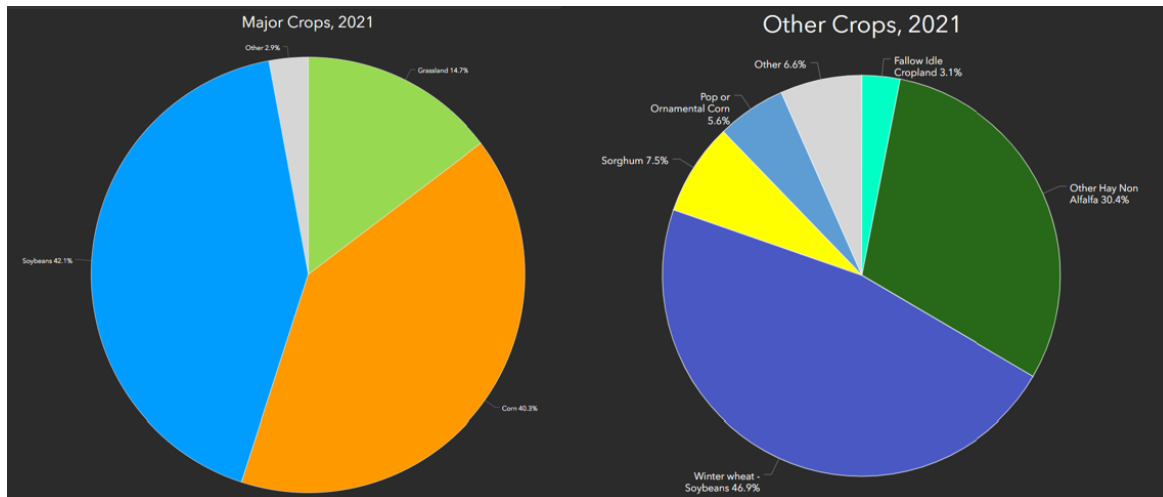


Figure 11. Crops & Livestock in the West Central Region

DIVERSITY OF CROPS & LIVESTOCK IN THE WEST CENTRAL REGION			
Alfalfa	Eggplant	Rye	Chickens
Asparagus	Garlic	Soybeans	Honey
Barley	Greens, kale	Squash	Wool
Beans snap	Hay	Sweet corn	Alpacas
Beets	Herbs	Tomatoes	Deer
Blueberries	Lettuce	Vegetables	Ducks
Broccoli	Melons	Watermelon	Mules / Burrows / Donkeys
Cabbage	Onions	Wheat	Geese
Carrots	Peppers	Hogs	Guineas
Clover, wildflower	Popcorn	Cattle	Llamas
Corn	Potatoes	Sheep	Peafowl
Cucumbers	Pumpkins	Goats	Rabbits
Dry beans	Radishes	Horses	Turkey

West Central Regional Task Force

The Task Force for the West Central Region Ag Strategy was comprised of the lead economic development director from each of the six counties and the executive director of the THRIVE West Central Economic Development District.

Clay County..... Ryan Schopmeyer, CEO
Schopmeyer Ag

Parke County..... Cyndi Todd, Executive Director
Partnership Parke County

Putnam County Kristin Clary, Executive Director
Franklin County Economic Development

Sullivan County..... Bobbi Hunt-Kincaid, Farmer
Sullivan County

Vermillion County Doug Hess, Executive Director
Vermillion County Economic Development

Vigo County..... Brenda Wilson, Farmer / Former Council Member
Vigo County

THRIVE West Central Jon Ford, Director of Business Development
THRIVE West Central

THRIVE West Central Ryan Keller, Economic Development Director
THRIVE West Central

Acknowledgements

Grant Award

The Indiana Economic Development Association and Purdue Center for Regional Development were co-applicants in the request for funding from the U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration’s Economic Adjustment Assistance Program to assist the counties of Clay, Parke, Putnam, Sullivan, Vermillion, and Vigo in developing the West Central Ag Strategy.

Local Match

Each of the six counties and Thrive West Central provided the local match required by the grant.

Regional Contact

Thrive West Central Ryan Keller, Executive Director
rkeller@thrivewestcentral.com
(812) 238-1561
www.thrivewestcentral.com