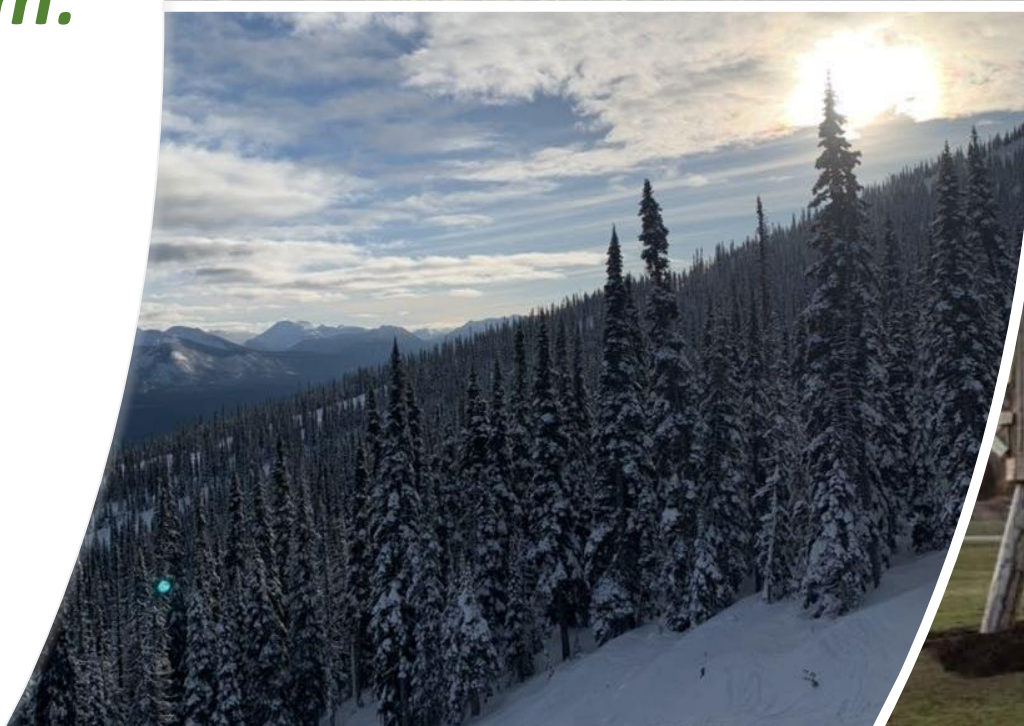


Community Futures Fraser-Fort George Outreach Program: Council Update



Community Futures is a community-based economic renewal **initiative**, established by the Federal Government in 1985. Our main objectives are to help **rural Canadians** start or expand a business and to help **sustain and improve communities** and their local economies.

Recognizing the **impact of Covid-19**, Community Futures Fraser Fort George launched the **Fraser Fort George Outreach Program** in August 2020, with funding from the Northern Development Initiative Trust Regional Business Liaison program and Western Economic Diversification COVID-19 contribution.

Through this program we listen **deeply** and meaningfully **engage** businesses and organizations in the Fraser-Fort George Region in order to guide and strengthen **collaborative*** efforts to support **communities flourish** into the future.

1. **In-depth qualitative interviews** with 160 Businesses & Organizations
2. **Refer** 125 Businesses & Organizations to programs, services & resources
3. **Collaborating** to solve problems together
4. **Amplify** the voices of Northern Businesses & Organizations



The Team

Community Futures Region Business Liaisons

- ❖ Mackenzie Regional Business Liaison (Jesse Wright: jessew@cfdc.bc.ca)
- ❖ Prince George Lead Regional Business Liaison (Amelia Merrick: ameliam@cfdc.bc.ca)
- ❖ Robson Valley Regional Business Liaison (Shona Thorne: shonat@cfdc.bc.ca)

Supported by:

- ❖ General Manager (Susan Stearns susans@cfdc.bc.ca)
- ❖ Project Coordinator (Krystin Dubuc krystind@cfdc.bc.ca)

Round Table Partners

- ❖ Aboriginal Business and Community Development Centre
- ❖ Municipal Government Partners
- ❖ Northern Development Initiative Trust
- ❖ Chamber of Commerce(s)
- ❖ Regional District of Fraser-Fort George

Listed alphabetically

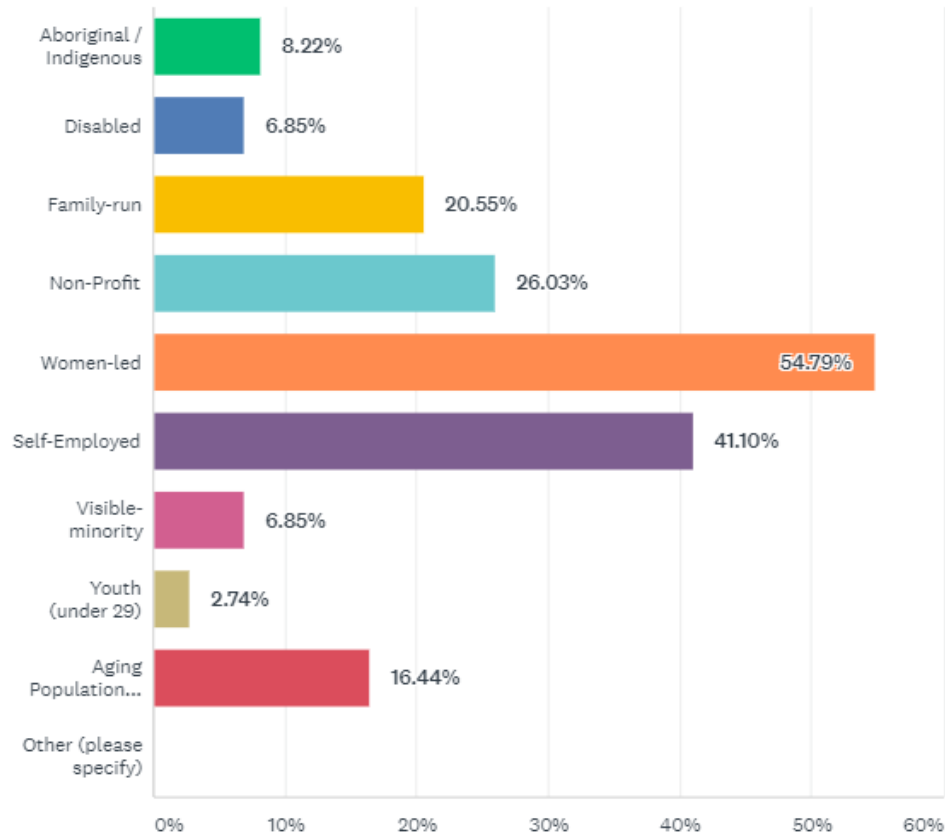
We are listening deeply

1. How did COVID-19 change your **CONTEXT**?
2. How did you **RESPOND**?
3. What **SUPPORTS & RESOURCES** do you value? Which ones are less useful?
4. What **MORE** can we do so that non-profits and communities in the region flourish?

80 interviews

We have completed 80 anonymous in-depth qualitative interviews.
Interviews follow a semi-structure survey, are transcribed and entered into Survey Monkey.

Business owners are diverse people

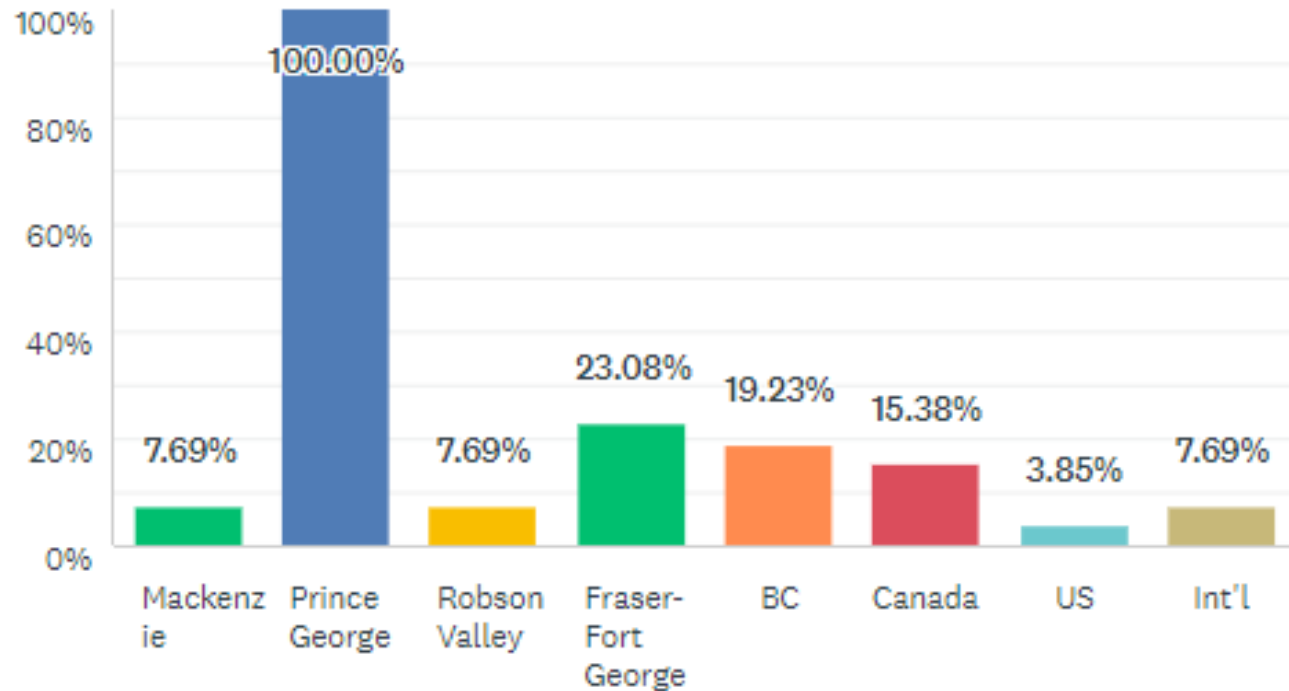


Sectors: agriculture, construction, accommodations and food services, education services, health care and social assistance, information, culture and recreation, professional, services, wholesale, retail trade

- 61.5% microbusinesses (<5 staff)
- From 1 year to 52 years in business
- 40% have been in business between 2 – 5 years

77% of PG businesses are “hyper-local”

Where are the customers that you serve?



This offers both risks and opportunities in a pandemic.

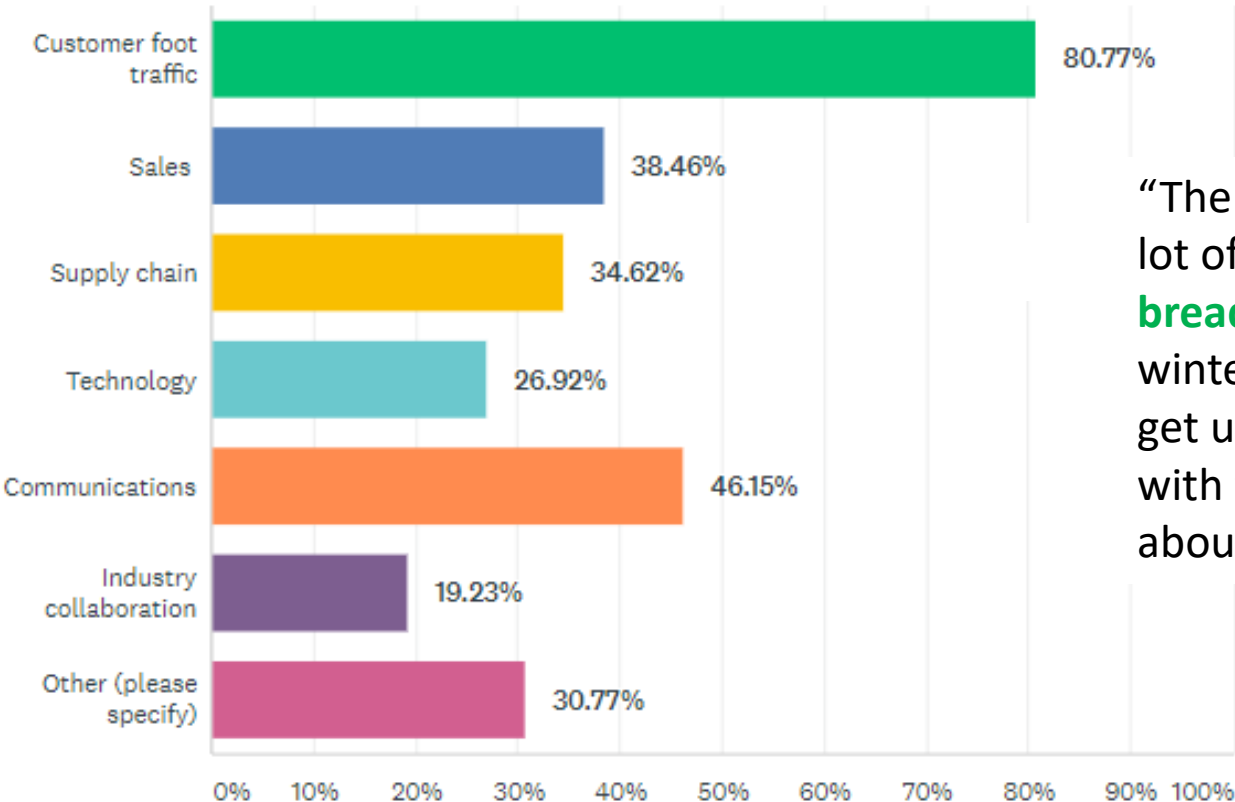
Risks: supply chain, competition with AMAZON, few businesses have online platforms to sell regionally

Opportunity: local relationships endure, community investment, local supply chain

Biggest impact = foot traffic

What has changed since COVID-19?

Answered: 26 Skipped: 0



“The markets and the fairs [are important] for a lot of us smaller businesses. I mean, **that's our bread and butter** for, you know, for the fall and winter markets. I mean, that's where we fund to get us through to the spring markets, right. And with those not happening, you know, it's, I worry about my fellow vendors.”

40%

Of businesses and
organizations in Prince
George say they are doing
OK or **FLOURISHING**

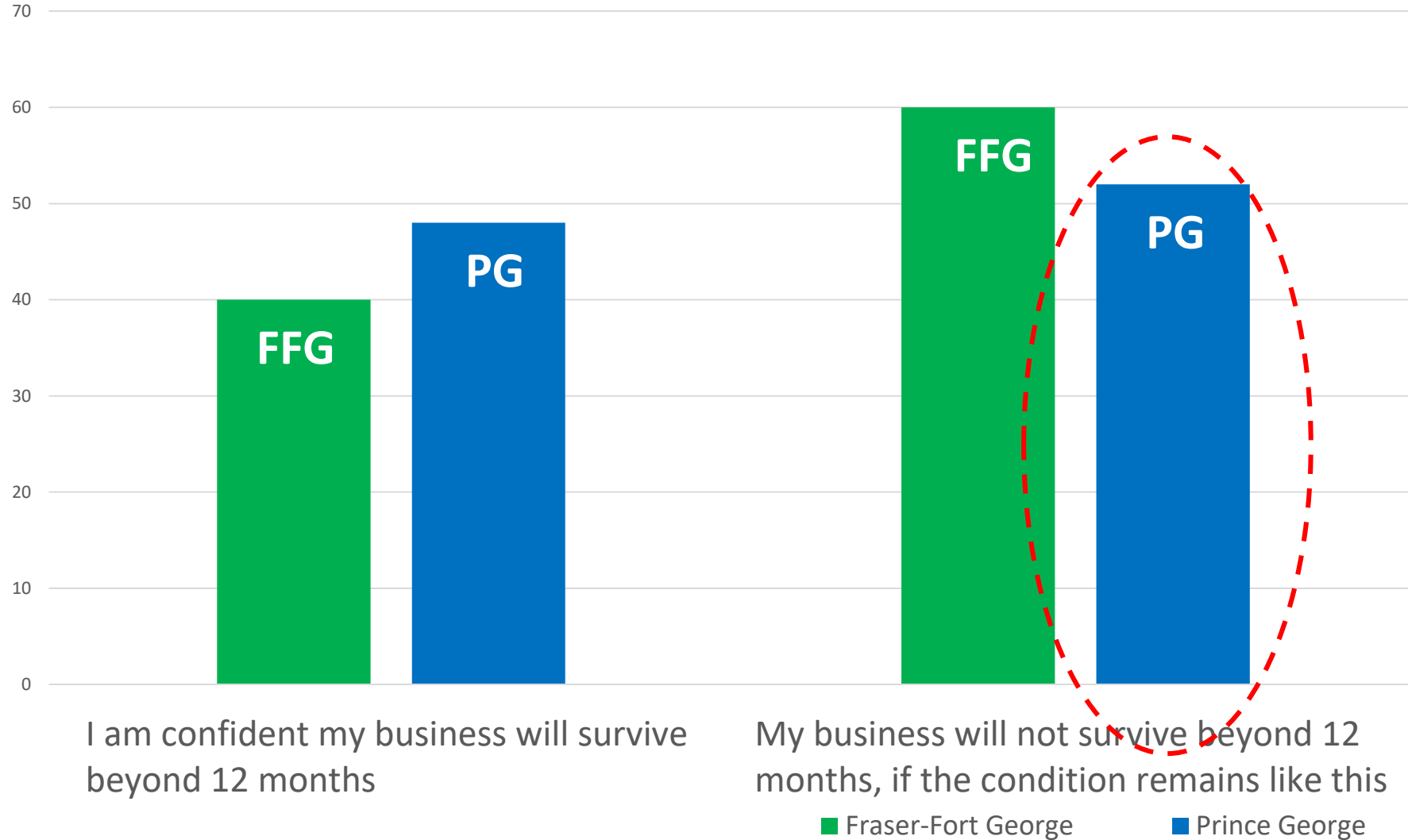
“I think our staff is more fired up and **sees a brighter future** than ever, simply because we have not sat back waiting for something the miracle that happened. **We have rolled up our sleeves, we've made the adjustments** we've retooled our business...We're focused on what we're doing. We're exploring new revenue opportunities within Prince George, that would be completely unexpected of a organization like ours.”

“Oh, I’m very optimistic [about the future of my business]. A lot of people have slowed down, because they've been working from home. ...And they're using it as a way to **spend time with their family.** So I've seen a lot more that where people have actually gone “**Oh, you know, I was always too busy to go out or too busy** to visit my horse, and they've just been sitting in a field. But you know what? I actually remember that I enjoy spending time with them and riding them again.” You know, so a lot of people have had a bit of a rekindled love.”

60%

Of businesses and organizations
in Prince George are **unsure** of
the future and say they
NEED HELP

52% not confident of 12 month forecast



Which businesses are struggling most?

New businesses

Microbusinesses (<5 staff)

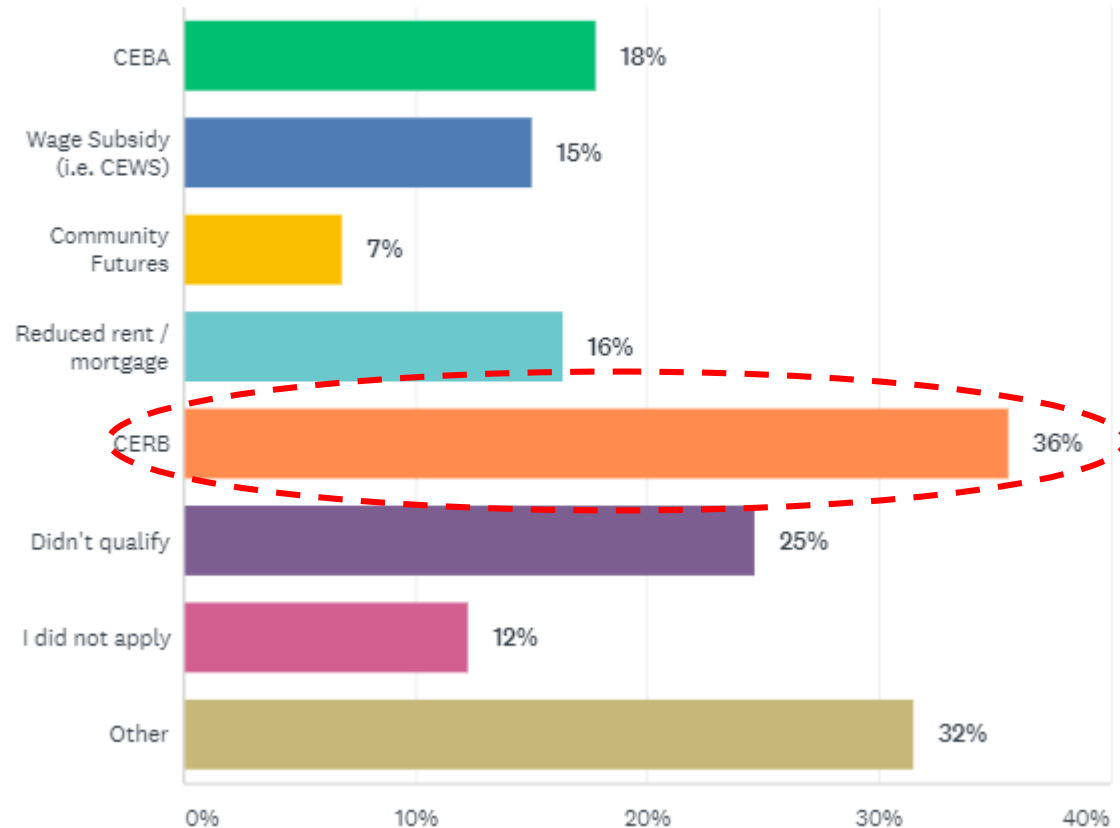
Women-led businesses

“there's so many businesses that are falling through the cracks, like mine, for example, where, you know, we can't show a revenue loss, because we're new, we don't have a comparison. So unless you have huge losses, you don't get help. Unless you have been around for a long time. You don't get help. **It's like the whole system is just left a lot of people falling through the cracks...**”

73% of businesses accessed C-19 support

Tell us about the support you accessed from your business / organization

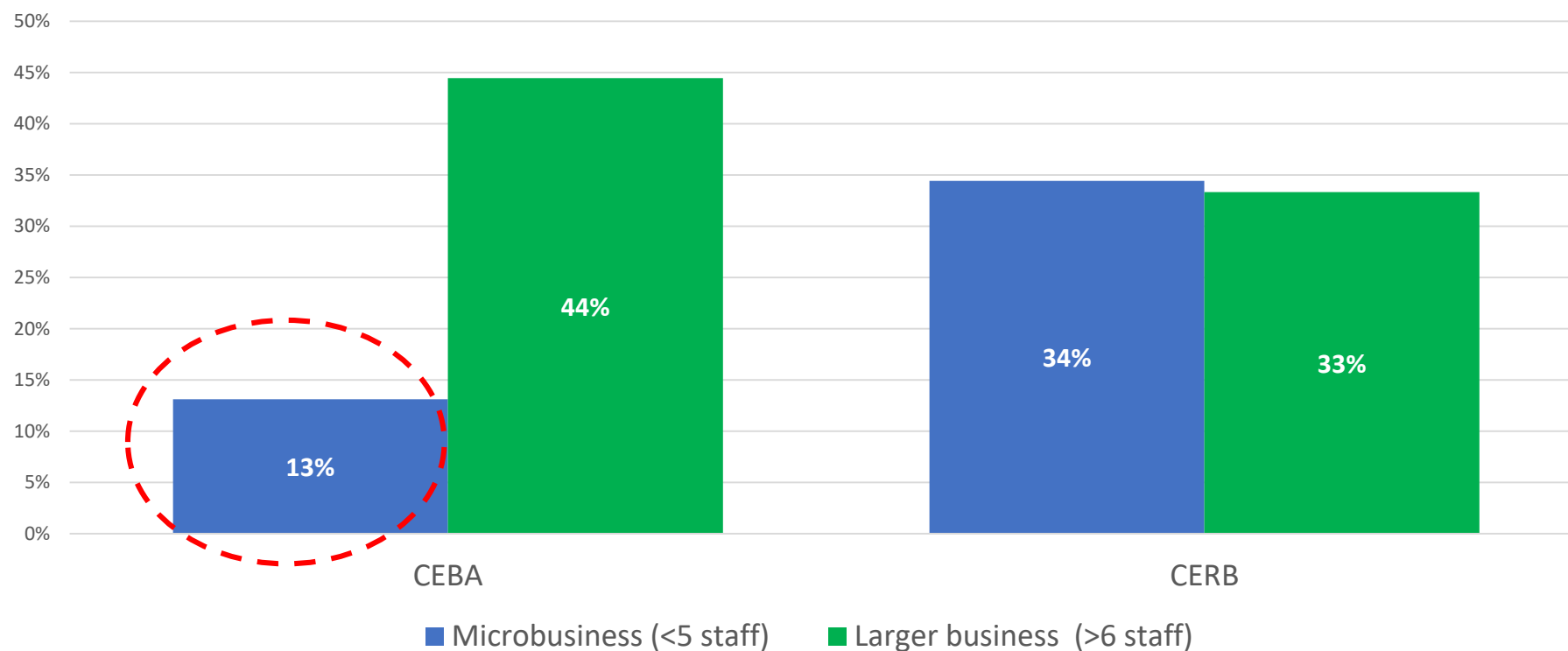
Answered: 73 Skipped: 7



But each COVID-19 program offers different value and our businesses accessed **DIFFERENT KINDS OF SUPPORT** than “most of BC”

13% of microbusinesses accessed CEBA

How did business size affect funding?



CERB doesn't enable businesses to pivot

When we asked CEBA and CERB recipients what the money was used for, both said to hire staff back and to off-set lost revenue. However, more than half of CEBA recipients said they used the money to **offset new expenses**, while only 27% of CERB recipients said the same.

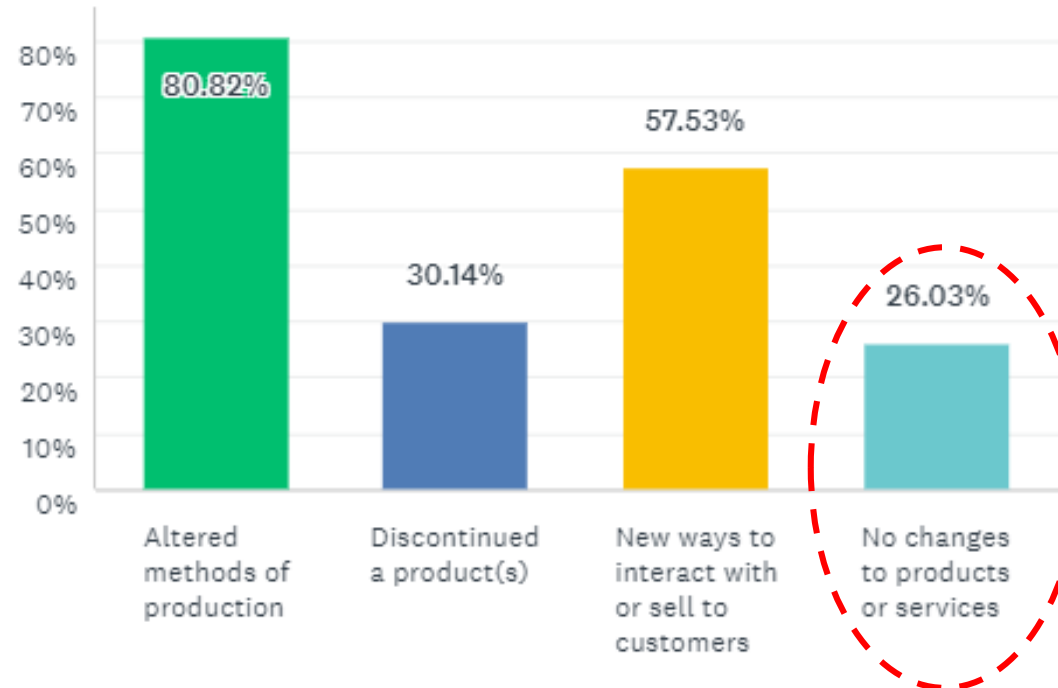
	CEBA	CERB
We were able to hire staff back	15%	12%
We were able to off-set new expenses	54%	27%
We were able to off-set lost revenue	62%	69%

This might suggest that while microbusinesses struggled to survive, **CEBA funding enabled larger businesses to pivot.**

Many businesses are adapting

Have you changed your products or services?

Answered: 73 Skipped: 7



Yet 26% didn't make any changes to their business.

What made it **more likely** for businesses to adapt?

Triple “P” adaptation

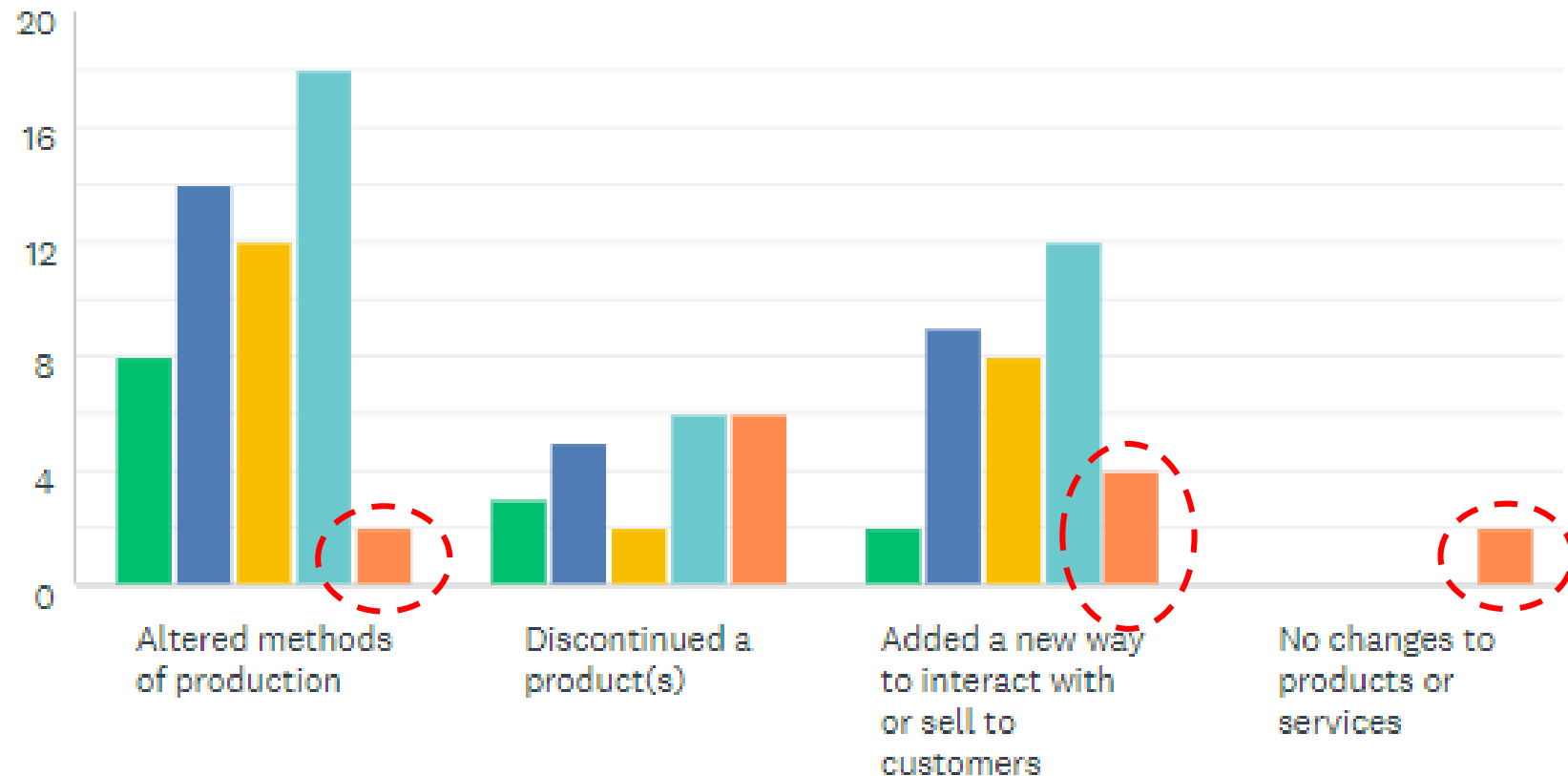
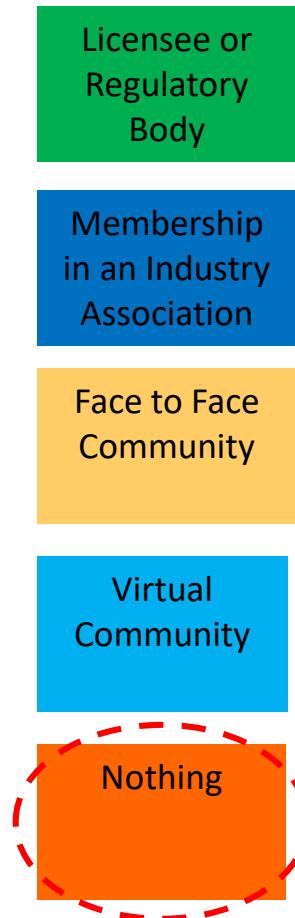
“So then we had a really good year, our second year seeing really positive growth signs. And that's when we start working with Community Futures to **acquire this equipment and start to be able to like scale our production** and you know, really push for growth.... We're here to grow and really like push for growth and see if we have something that could be sustainable and a viable business. This year COVID definitely threw a wrench...”

Adapted **PRODUCTION, PACKAGING** and online **PLATFORM**



“And I'm really used to high volume face painting... but don't think I'm ever gonna have an event where I have 200 people waiting in line to have their faces painted...”

In PG, businesses who have access to formal & informal relationships are more adaptable



“[Yes, I would like a place to talk to other people and bounce ideas off.] **And a safe place.** Because sometimes you can be like, hey, I have this idea. And someone goes, oh, really and then they run with it and they steal it. You're like, hang on, I was the one who came up with that. And so you become a little guarded, especially as a woman business owner because you, you have more to prove. And I hate to say that like, but people wait for women to fail.”

12

**'Wicked Problems'
that impact resilience**

12 'Wicked Problems

1. **NEW** business are struggling and **not eligible for funding**.
2. **Information is overwhelming** and many businesses are struggling to respond or act.
3. **MICROBUSINESSES** are pivotal to economic recovery but **not prioritized** for funding and resources.
4. **MICROBUSINESSES** are agile but at **full capacity** and without time, resources, safety-net to adapt, pivot, and grow if they want to.
5. **WOMEN-LED** businesses are key to rural economies, bear multiple responsibilities in the economy, families, and communities, but often **not able to access funding** and resources.
6. **RURAL AND NORTHERN** community lived experiences are **not heard**, known, or considered in larger decision-making processes.

12 'Wicked Problems cont'd

7. **LOCAL BUYING BARRIER** make it easier and cheaper to purchase from big non-local businesses.
8. Businesses don't feel they have **control over their future**.
9. Businesses need more **formal and informal networks** for idea generation, resources, and to create collective power for advocacy.
10. Businesses are operating **hyper-local** and there are **missed opportunities** to connect regionally.
11. The **DIGITAL WORLD** is changing the way we do business.. And it's complicated!
12. **NON-PROFITS** play a crucial role in our communities and they have lost volunteers and fundraising and there are **minimal resources** or programs available to respond to COVID.

“As much as we like to talk about pivot - **pivot relies upon, basically, the will of the government and the large companies to make sure the smaller companies survive...** it might sound like I'm being negative. I don't want to be negative. But I will say that it's really difficult. I know, everyone says that a healthy economy always comes from small business. And, you know, perhaps it does, but I'll tell you, as someone who has been in small business for a long time, it's especially now with COVID, it's like, it's rough.”

Working on solutions together...



After talking to businesses and non-profits in the Fraser Fort George about the impact of COVID-19, Community Futures has identified 12 'Wicked' Problems that affect our resilience. We are now asking people in Fraser Fort George to tell us what issues are most important to you? **Please complete a 1-minute survey.**

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ListeningtoFFG>.

This will help inform next steps to support community economic recovery.

Thank you!

Questions? ameliam@cfdc.bc.ca or krystind@cfdc.bc.ca

Follow the Story: https://cfdc.bc.ca/regional_outreach_program/

APPENDICES

Where we are and where we are going

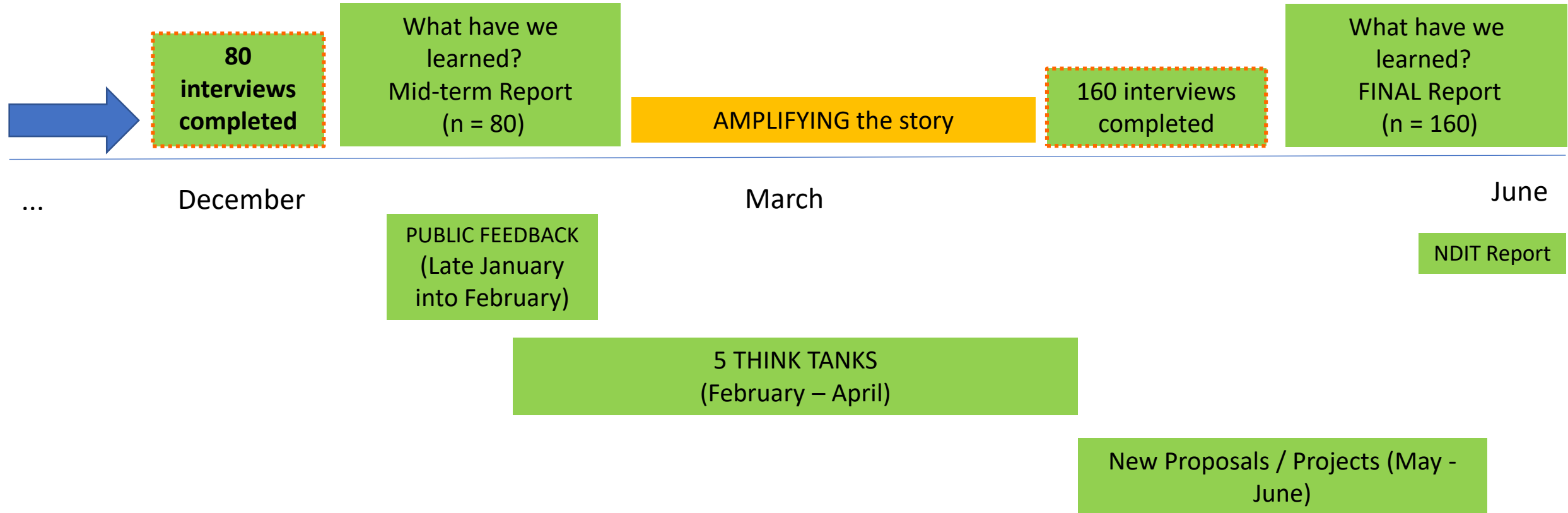


Image Sources

Valemount: <http://valemount.ca/>

McBride: [Photo Gallery - Village of McBride](#)

Prince George: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/author/andrew-kurjata-1.3947097>

MacKenzie: Jesse Wright

Robson Valley Region: Image Source: <http://www.discoverrvr.ca/communities/index.php>

Face Painting, window art and Hearts of PG: MP Makeup Artistry