

SURVEY

# 2022

## CHAMBER ANNUAL SURVEY RESULTS

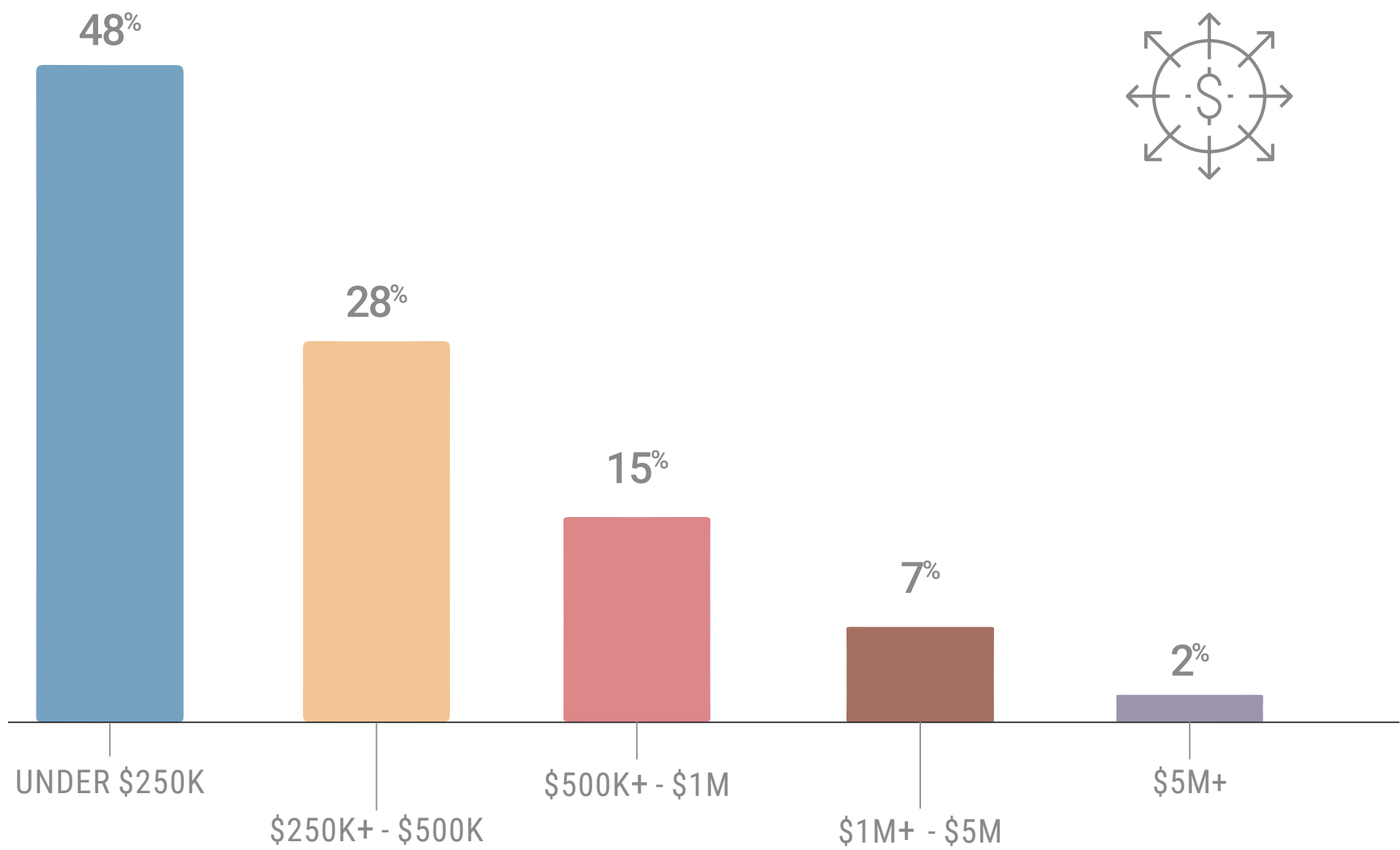


GrowthZone surveyed over 500 Chamber professionals across the U.S. and Canada. Topics included everything from non-dues revenue sources and operating budgets, to new service offerings and diversity practices. The results showed a number of interesting trends impacting today's Chambers of Commerce.

## ABOUT THE RESPONDENTS

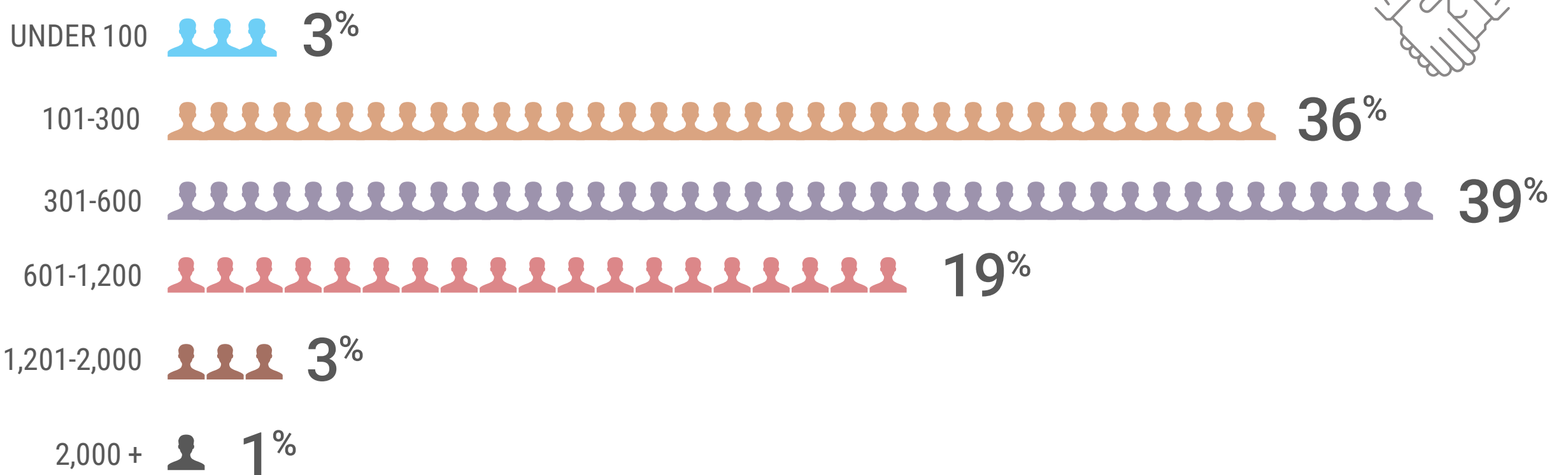
### ANNUAL OPERATING BUDGET | APPROXIMATE

Q: What is your organization's approximate annual operating budget?



### ANTICIPATED MEMBERSHIP

Q: What is your organization's anticipated membership as of 12/31/2021 (number of billing accounts)?

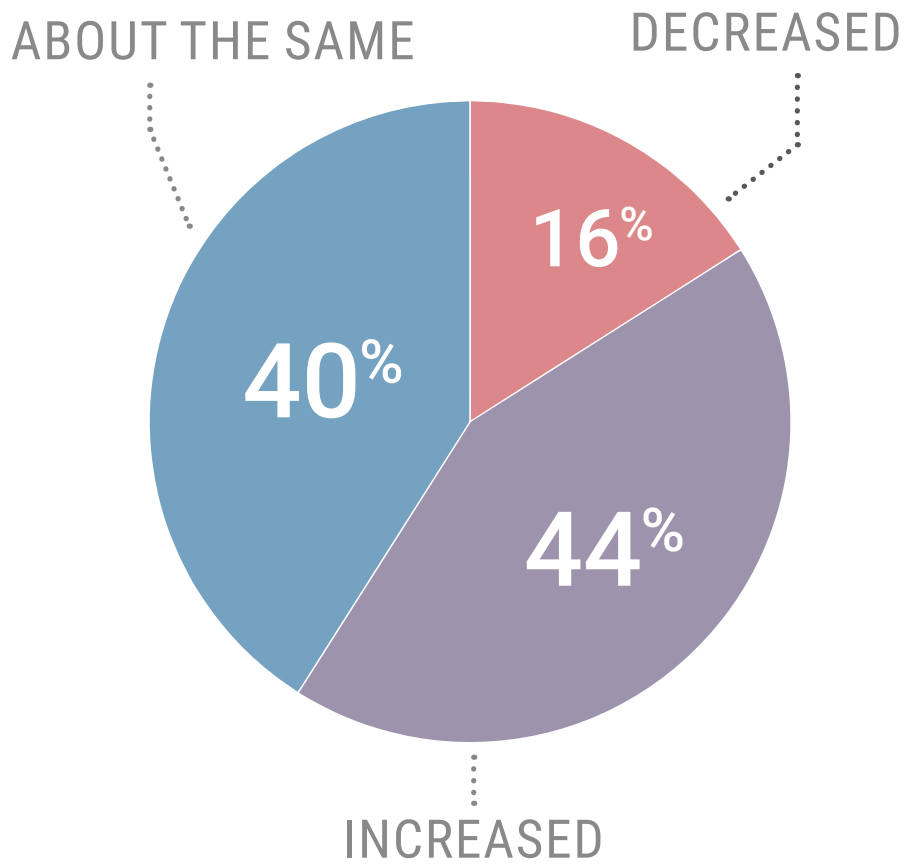


# MEMBERSHIP GROWTH

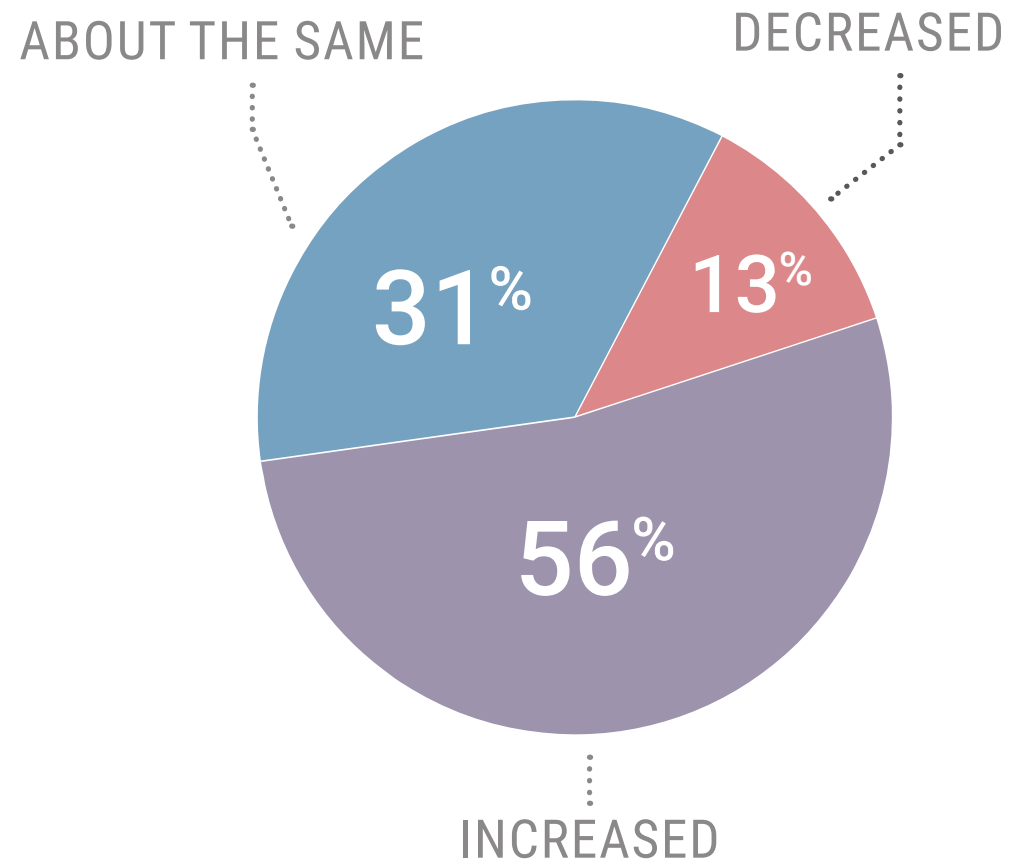


## NET GROWTH | NEW + RENEWAL CHANGES OVER THE LAST YEAR

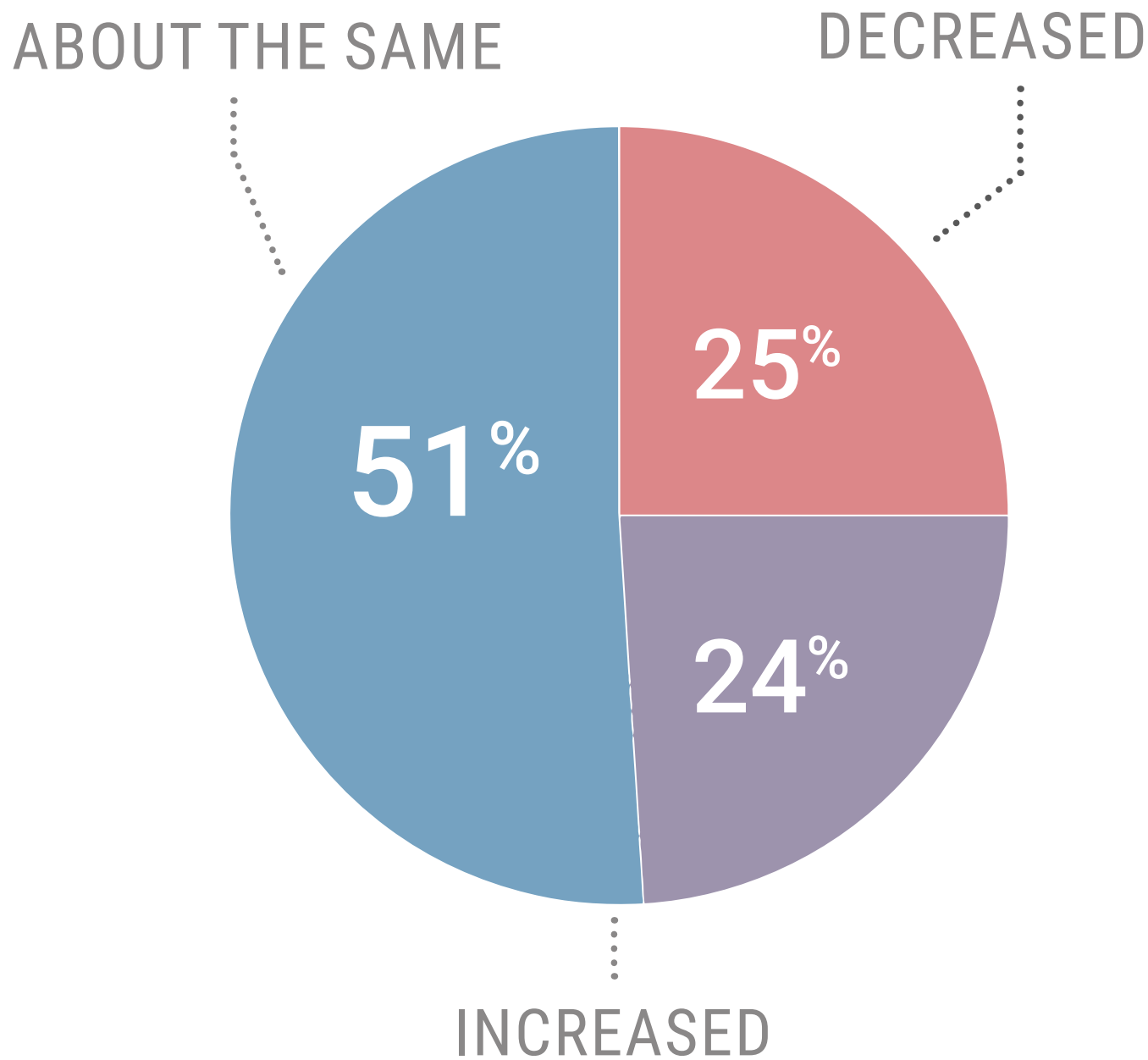
Q: Do you anticipate your membership at year end will show a NET increase or decrease over 12/31/20?



Q: Have NEW memberships increased or decreased since last year (since 12/31/20)?



Q: Did your overall RENEWALS change for 2021 over the year 2020?

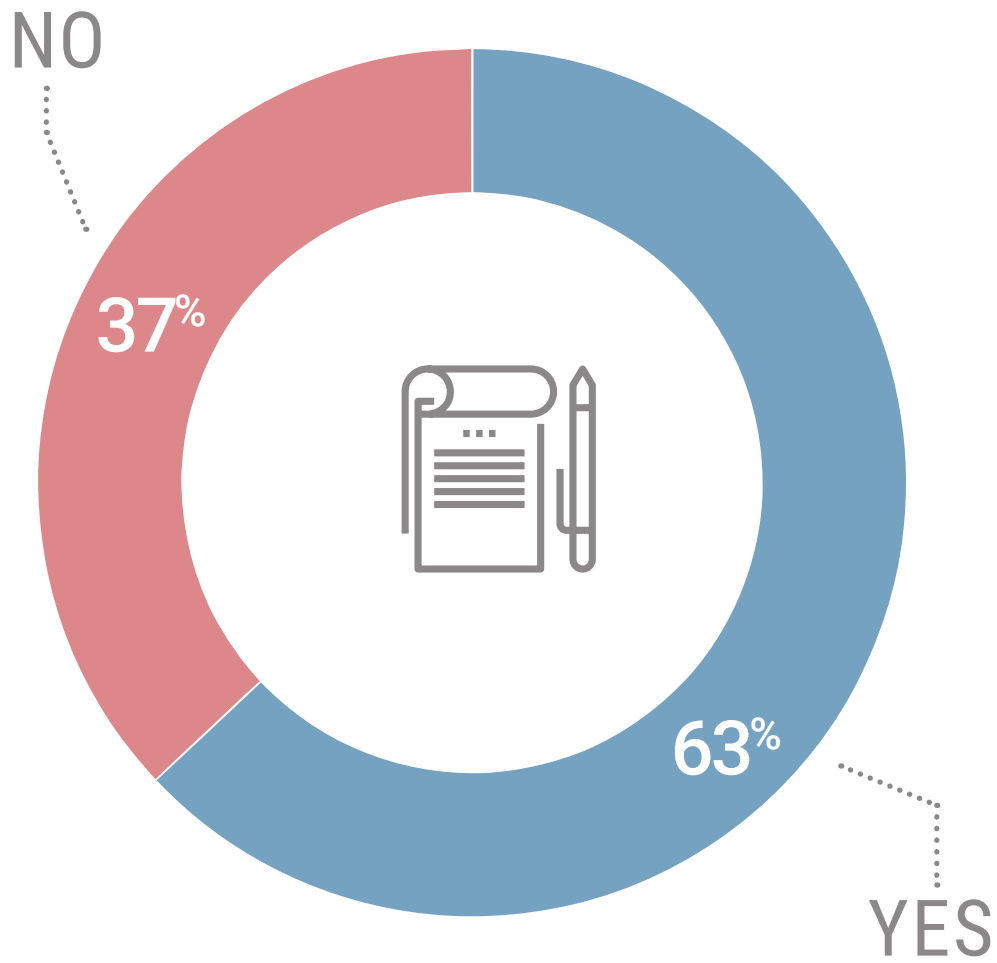


# VALUES & POLICIES

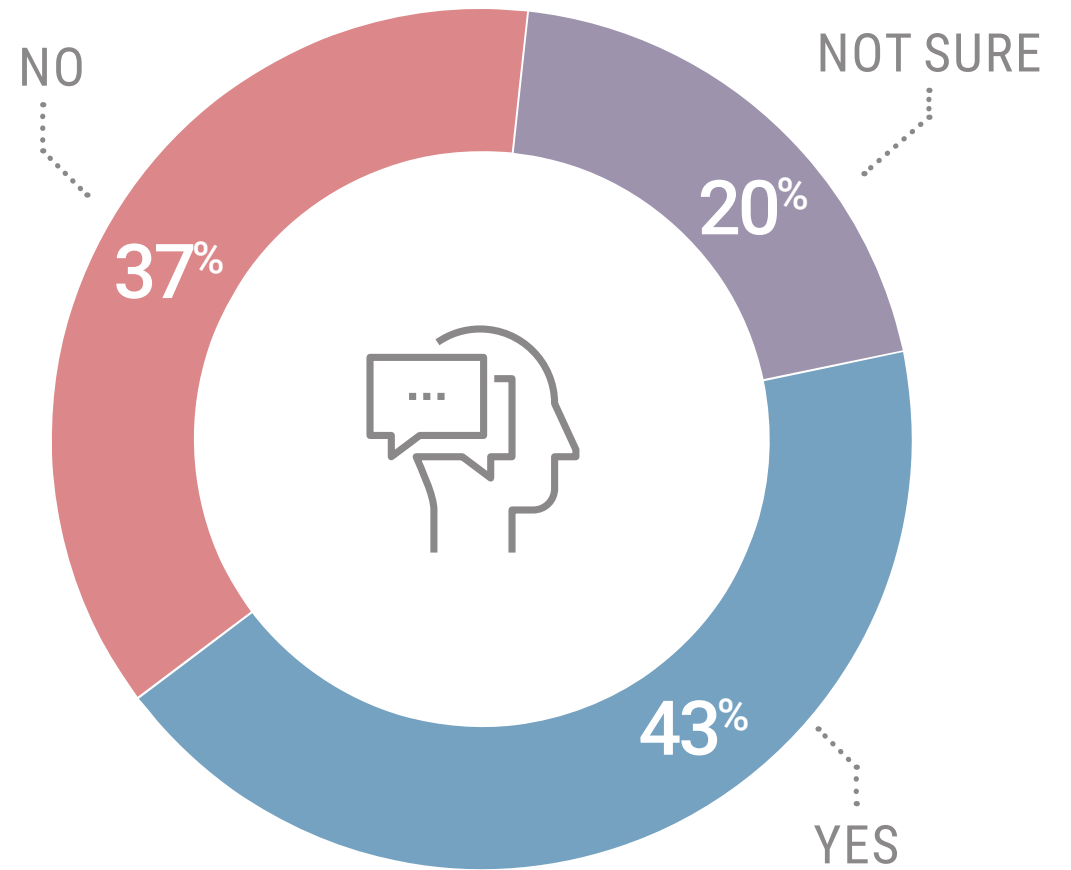


## VALUE PROPOSITIONS

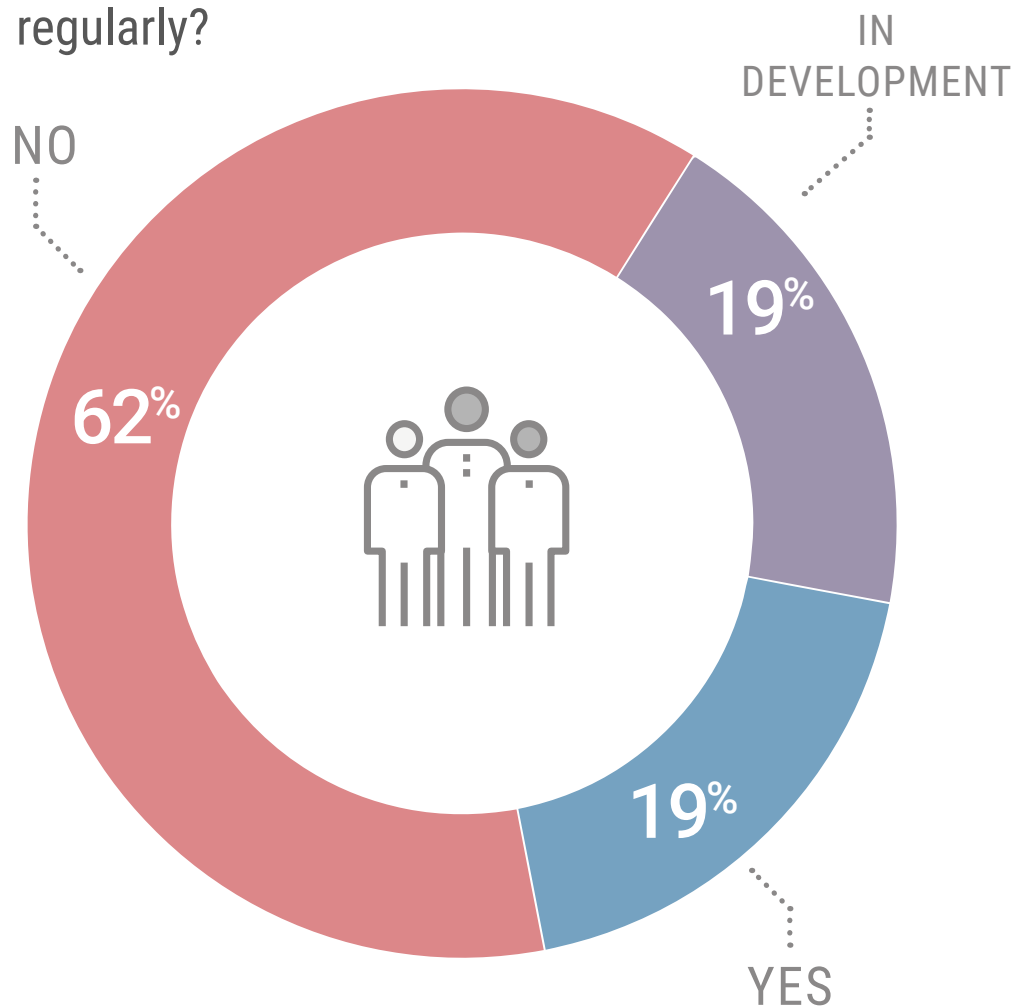
Q: Do you have a documented value proposition message that you use in your planning and your member interactions?



Q: Do you believe members clearly understand the value of your organization and the specific solutions you offer them?



Q: Does your organization have a documented diversity and inclusion policy that you use regularly?

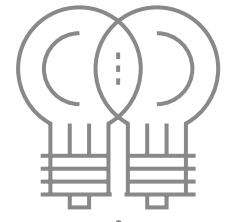


Q: What benefit have you seen from putting this policy in place, if any?

- ” An open network - where members are free to share their thoughts and concerns.
- ” It is important for organizations to see what we believe in and where we put our energy.
- ” We are conscious of our decisions.
- ” Internally, it helps serve as a guide to our DE&I efforts such as our programming and events as well as issues to take a stance on, if any.
- ” It's helped guide our programming planning and committee recruitment goals.
- ” Not putting the policy in place, but by leading through example.
- ” It helps when our town gets negative views.
- ” No change.
- ” Has increased our visibility to prospects interested in the initiative.
- ” Ensuring appropriate and meaningful engagement.
- ” More engagement from communities that have not normally been involved with us.
- ” Discussions regarding diversity are started more easily; and problem solving and promoting is much easier.
- ” Increased membership among minority and women owned businesses; more participation.
- ” The Board is pleased.
- ” The only feedback I received about the policy was from those who didn't agree with it. They dropped their membership. We anticipated a few people would do so and decided that we want members to be aligned with our values.



## INNOVATION & INITIATIVES



### PROCESS

Q: Does your organization currently have a formal innovation process or plan to pursue new ideas for adding value to your members' business?

59%

No, we do not have a formal innovation process

26%

Yes, we have a formal, ongoing process

15%

Yes, we have a task force in place for short term innovation

### NEW SERVICES

Q: Did you launch any new member service, offering or tool during 2021 that is showing promise today?

NO

49%

YES

51%

### COMMON INNOVATIONS

- Events
- Membership Programs
- Technology
- Financial
- New Services
- Social Media
- Marketing/Promotion
- Work Force Development
- Member Benefits
- Dues

# INNOVATION & INITIATIVES (CONT.)

Q: Can you offer a short explanation about the offering and any results so far?

## EVENTS

- Town hall forums with City Council.
- Changed annual awards dinner format from more formal to more casual and fun, including games/activities.
- Grand openings and re-openings.
- Networking events that help members justify their membership dues. Members look forward to providing a "90-second" commercial about their business.
- Monthly Friday Forums - luncheon with guest speakers on relevant business and community topics.
- Programming for working women. Short 1-hour events from 4-5pm.
- Community Conversations on Diversity and Inclusion via Zoom.
- Free membership mixers in the evenings.
- Third Thursday lunch break for members to network during work hours and they love it. It doesn't take away from family time.
- Business operation classes.
- Additional outdoor events: craft fair and golf tournaments.
- Annual Innovation Workshop for kids ages 8-13 at local libraries.
- Industry-specific round table discussions that provide members a forum to learn from each other and discuss concerns.
- Virtual & in-person options provided.
- Chamber 101: Maximizing Your Membership events have been added.
- A vendor fair to serve in-home businesses and bring more people into our community.

## MEMBER BENEFITS

- Health insurance.
- A local scholarship for all Chamber members and their dependents to attend a local liberal arts college.
- Added curbside and in-office Notary work in response to the pandemic in 2020. It was very popular so in 2021 we made it a permanent offering.
- We created a form with ideas about what to do with your Chamber membership in the first 30, 60, 90 days.
- We opened a new facility, and it houses a state-of-the-art co-working space for members and community.

## WORK FORCE DEVELOPMENT

- Launching a pilot program for a workforce development initiative with our special education school districts.
- We offered a job expo this year.
- Workers Compensation Affinity Program.
- We created a Workforce Development Director position and have seen engagement from members never seen before thanks to job fairs, education partnership offerings, and the ability to meet one-on-one with more members.
- Various job skills training programs. Skilled trades program has seen significant response.
- About 90% of members are seeking employees so we created a drive-thru job fair to get simple local job descriptions into the hands of job seekers.
- We registered an apprenticeship program with the state; members are signing up to participate.
- Utilizing the job board through our AMS.
- Work Force Academy where our businesspeople go into the local work/study high school program classroom and instruct the students on how businesses would like their employees to work such as customer service etc.
- Boot camp for life skills for employment.
- An employment taskforce.

## FINANCIAL

- 401 K MEAP Program and a Nurse Practitioner concierge program.
- Implemented Quickbooks; it has helped track payments.
- Billing structures that work with members.
- We're assisting small businesses with applying for a COVID-19 relief grant through New York State. Successfully getting money into the hands of small businesses. Working with members and non-members.
- We created a Good Work Fund. A % of investments from sponsors goes to this fund to help us do good work in the community.
- Relocation incentive for our County.
- New tiered dues benefits packages with optional advertising/promotional bundles.
- Through our cooperation with our state Chamber, we are offering a cooperative 401K program for small businesses or businesses that cannot financially take on that responsibility.

## MEMBERSHIP PROGRAMS

- We offer an a la carte menu that allows member to pick and choose various options that best fit their business.
- Rapid COVID-19 tests for businesses have been well received and have positioned the Chamber as a resource for all businesses, not just Chamber Members.
- Realigned a speaker series into Economic Development committee to formally review items and give recommendations to the board for Chamber support.
- Peer Network Memberships. The goal of the group is for members to network with their peers, share their expertise, or provide guidance and/or ideas to their peers.
- Toolkit to help businesses address the Sustainable Development Goals.
- Two new groups within the Chamber: Black Business Alliance and Veterans Business Alliance.
- Our Women's Business Alliance has been very successful.
- Minority business initiative.
- We introduced a Business Ambassador program.
- Partnering with businesses to have their favorite non-profits join. A business sponsors their joining of the Chamber, providing recognition to the non-profit and the business.
- Launched an initiative to provide facts on issues that consistently get negative scrutiny on social media.
- Scavenger hunt to businesses through the holidays.
- We offer a "Jump-Start your Membership" class free to all new members (perspective members can attend, too).
- We have begun to offer more affinity programs.
- Human Resource Council was set up and is working well - to discuss and deal with workforce, talent issues by our larger industries and businesses.
- Started using a Job Board via our AMS.
- We offer a website audit to all members to see where they need to improve, and we run that audit against their biggest competitor.
- A Young Professionals Organization.
- We began a leadership institute that was well received!
- "Seat at the Table" - pulling community members together in informal setting to have difficult conversations about DEI.
- 6-month membership term.
- Tiered dues structure with more value at higher levels. These offerings include marketing, exposure, events, and recognition.
- Membership for local print and online orgs. Comes with a mutual benefits agreement.
- Professional Women's Group.
- Instituted a small group concept that is based on shared interests. We even have a "Cigar & Bourbon" small group that started as a joke. We have great attendance.



## INNOVATION & INITIATIVES (CONT.)

Q: Can you offer a short explanation about the offering and any results so far? (cont.)

### MARKETING/PROMOTION

- ” Monthly marketing piece distributed to almost every household and business in our service area.
- ” We launched a community-wide magazine - an opportunity for our municipalities to get information out to the region and opportunity for our members to advertise directly to local population.
- ” A bi-weekly podcast highlighting local business leaders and hearing the story about how they came to start a business in our county.
- ” Member Milestone Celebrations - when businesses request, we will have the mayor, other business owners, Chamber members, newspaper, and TV come to celebrate the business on their anniversary.
- ” Bi-weekly job posting email blasts.
- ” LGBTQ+ directory for the state.
- ” We designed and sold ads for a street map for our communityport local campaign.
- ” A shop local/support local campaign.
- ” New website & AMS - more people logging in & being connected.
- ” New window decals with the date and QR code linked to membership directory.
- ” More marketing opportunities in new-member packet.
- ” New resident welcome bags.
- ” “Plan your week” email sent every Sunday at 8:00 p.m. This email showcases all events that are being hosted the following week by the Chamber and our members.
- ” We are offering sessions explaining to business owners how to better market for themselves, specifically on social media.
- ” Business directory for all businesses in the area, Chamber members get premium placement and other benefits.
- ” Coffee with the Mayor sessions.
- ” Health insurance option with a local insurance company that is a member.
- ” Implemented an e-gift card program.
- ” Off-site business kiosk with monitor and brochures.
- ” We hired a marketing manager to assist with business development, and small business advisement.
- ” Using referral notecards that are sent to members.
- ” Member of the month - featured on website, social media, and newsletter.
- ” Our Chamber Bucks project alone has generated an extra \$217,000 in revenue in 2021.
- ” We partnered with Office Depot/Office Max and saw savings passed on to our members as well as a small kick back to our Chamber.
- ” “Hot Deals” quarterly coupon book.
- ” Cash Mob - Driving business to local businesses.

### DUES

- ” We had some large donors step forward to assist restaurants and other small businesses by subsidizing 1/2 dues for one year.
- ” Moving to value-based dues.
- ” We have switched to a membership tier structure, so businesses can choose what benefits we offer them.
- ” Freemium memberships.

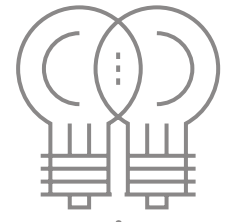
### TECHNOLOGY

- ” Through funding from a grant, we launched a member connection app.
- ” We are in process of finalizing a digital membership option to reach members that live outside our area.
- ” Digital passport to promote business visits & growth.
- ” We created an online marketplace where members can sell their merchandise/services on the e-commerce site at no cost (plus we handle advertising, SEO, etc. for the site).
- ” Switch to AMS to offer more to our members, a robust member hub, job board, hot deals, etc.
- ” Virtual video visits.
- ” We launched a podcast to help showcase our members and allow a deeper understanding into what they do for our community.
- ” Enhanced listings with video capability.
- ” Member sponsored webinars - virtual program with singular topic/lead by member sponsor to targeted audience.
- ” New website with additional marketing opportunities.
- ” Tech support for members.
- ” New membership database that offers online registrations and payments options.
- ” Created a mobile app that is focused on Eat, Shop, Play, Stay.

### SOCIAL MEDIA

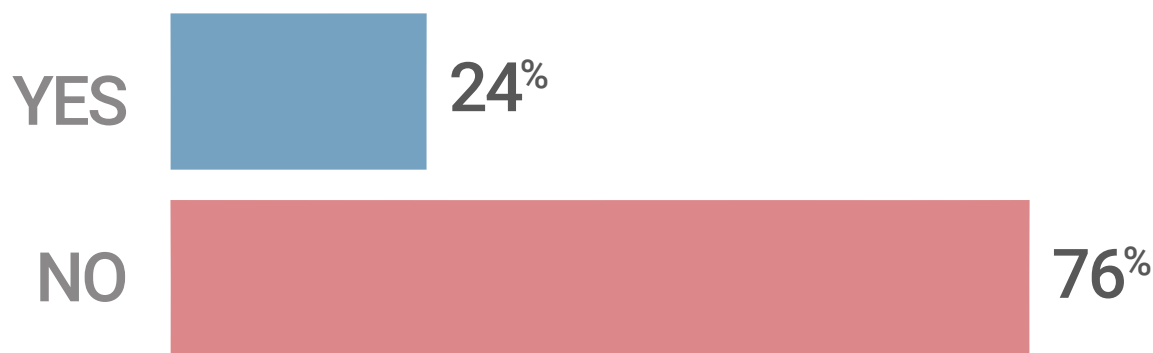
- ” Started a blog for social media that is getting more views and use than our weekly emails.
- ” We’ve created a new Facebook group with an emphasis on workforce development and connecting employers to job seekers.
- ” We started doing Facebook Live events as a complimentary service following a ribbon cutting, which are being viewed upwards of 1K times in less than 24 hours. Just for reference, we are small town of 12,000 and have 316 members.
- ” We are offering news releases to social media.
- ” Supporting small business exposure through social media, shop local campaigns.
- ” Social media & Google My Business help.
- ” We opened a Facebook group for members specifically geared toward job postings and have seen a lot of good responses.

# INNOVATION & INITIATIVES (CONT.)

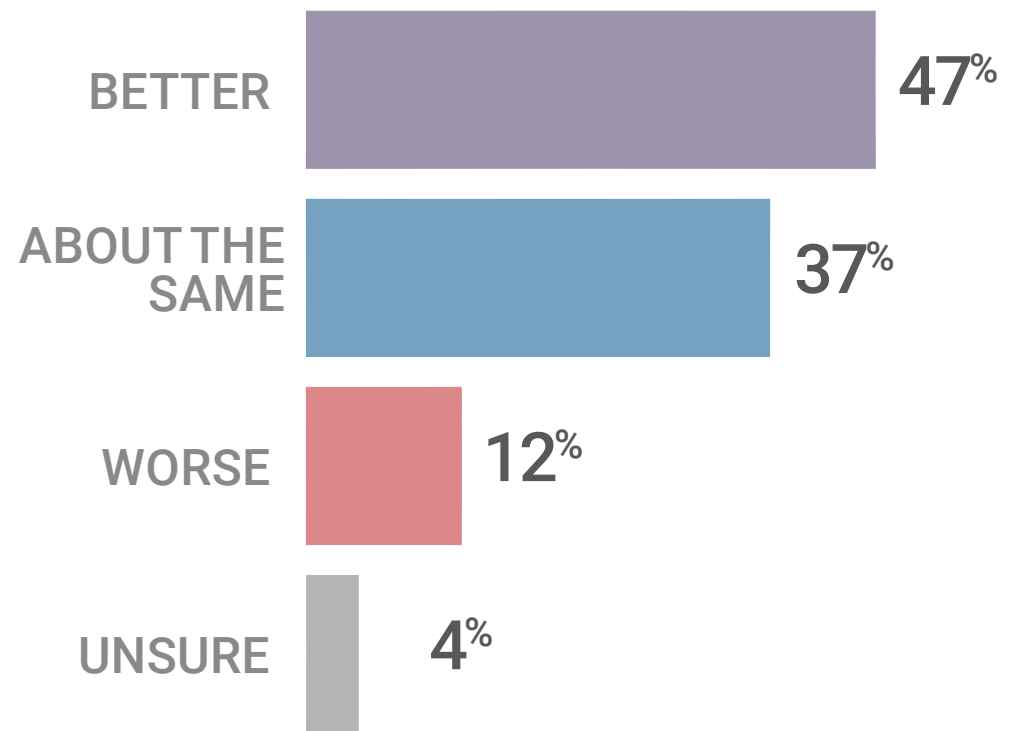


## INITIATIVES

Q: Do you have a formal reinstatement initiative in place to reengage members that you lost in previous years?

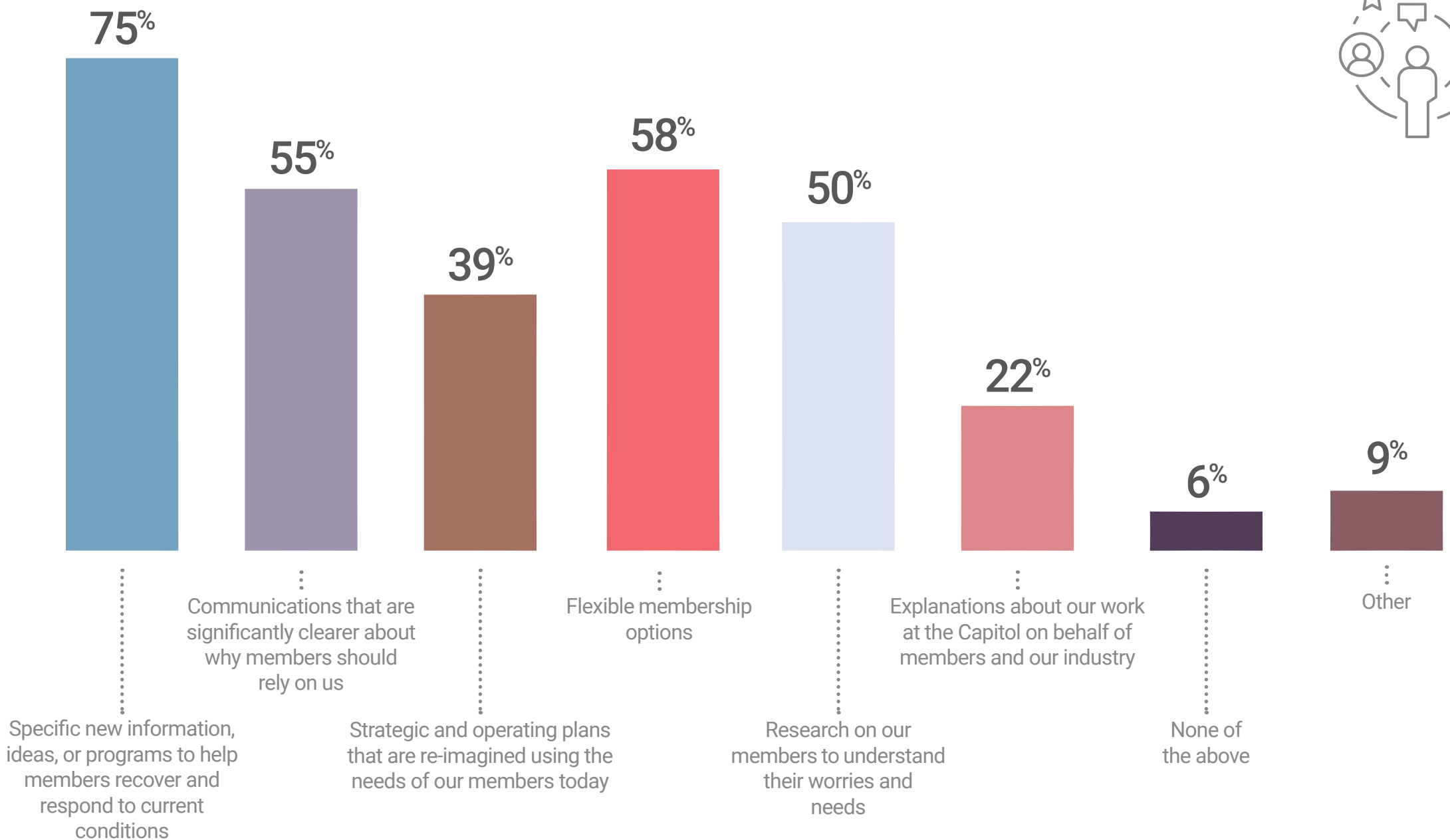


Q: Did overall member engagement change since 12/31/20?



## ACTIVITIES

Q: What activities helped your organization overcome the challenges of 2020?

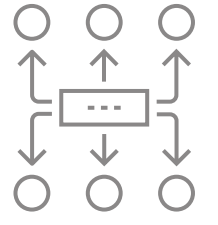


Q: What OTHER activities helped your organization overcome the challenges of 2020?

- Added a Director of Legislative Affairs.
- Board's belief/trust in staff to add/modify services as needed.
- Community-focused storytelling.
- Constant push of information to members about funding options, grant opportunities, clarification of mandates, etc.
- Expanded online meeting & training options.
- Flexibility was critical this past year.
- Grant writing and using our 501-c-3 foundation much more.
- In-Person Networking.
- Obtained a consulting contract.
- Protocols in place for events.
- Reduced membership fees.
- Provided free masks, sanitizer, signage, & online sessions for covid safety.
- Relied heavy on state Chamber.

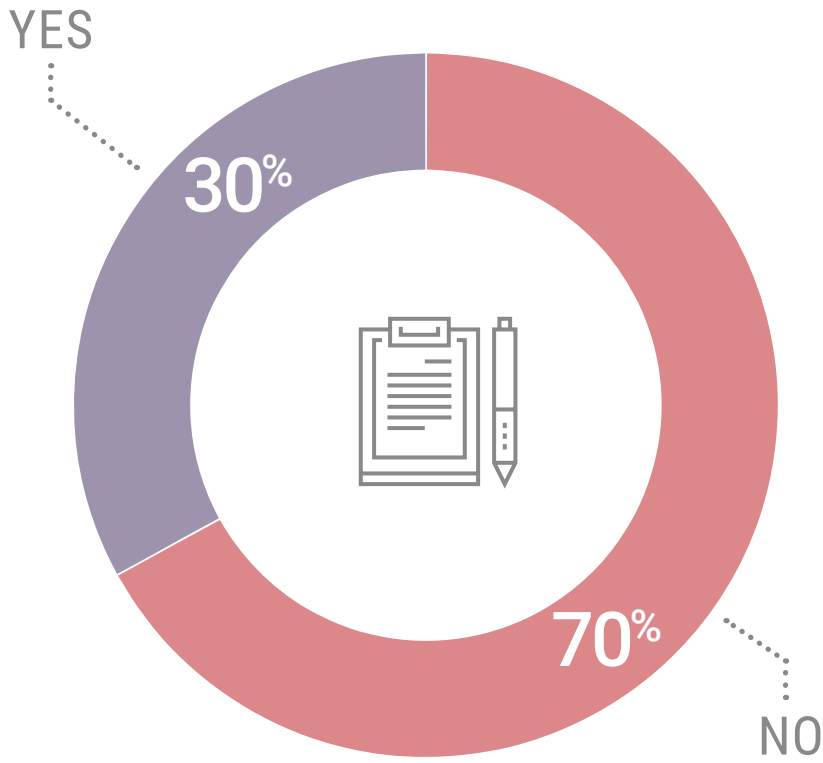


# MEMBERSHIP & ENGAGEMENT

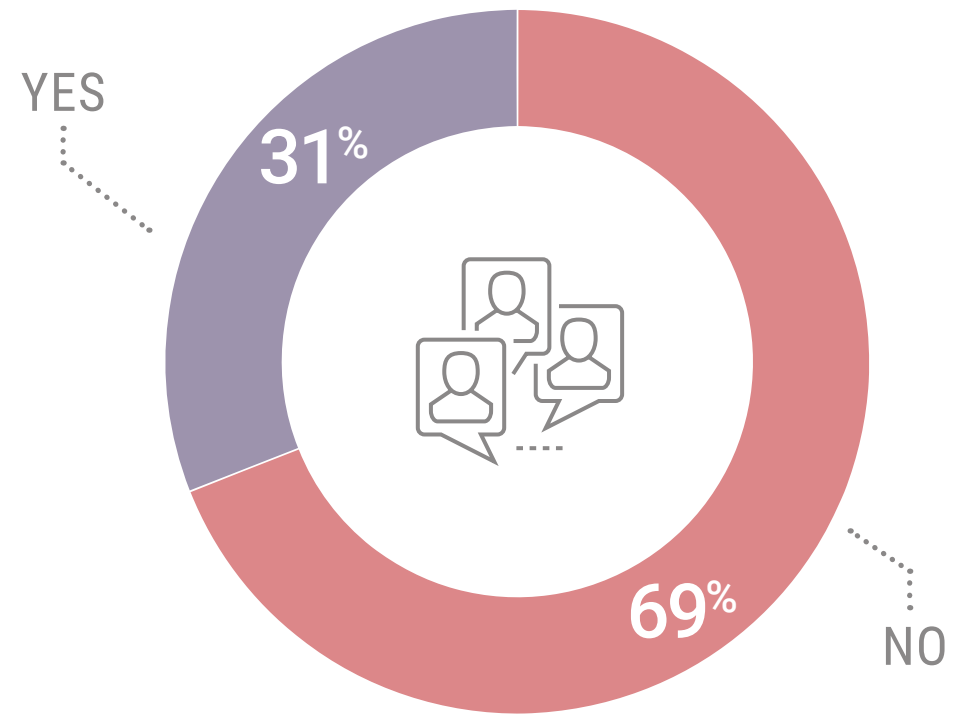


## PLANNING

Q: Do you have a written plan for increasing member engagement?



Q: Do you have one or more member committees that feed information into your strategy and/or operations?



Q: What would you consider is the top benefit of your member committee(s) to the chamber?

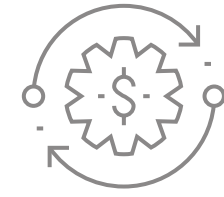
- ” Communication
- ” Outside ideas
- ” Blending historical concepts with new
- ” Networking
- ” Experience
- ” Recognition & Connections
- ” Access
- ” Programming and initiatives
- ” Visibility
- ” Connections
- ” Transparency

- ” Diversity
- ” Finding out what the real needs are vs perceived
- ” Industry insights
- ” Varied perspectives
- ” Resources to assist with member outreach
- ” Hands-on engagement
- ” Information & Resources
- ” Workforce Development programs
- ” Personal interaction with CEO

- ” Goal Setting
- ” Leadership
- ” Affinity programs
- ” Innovation

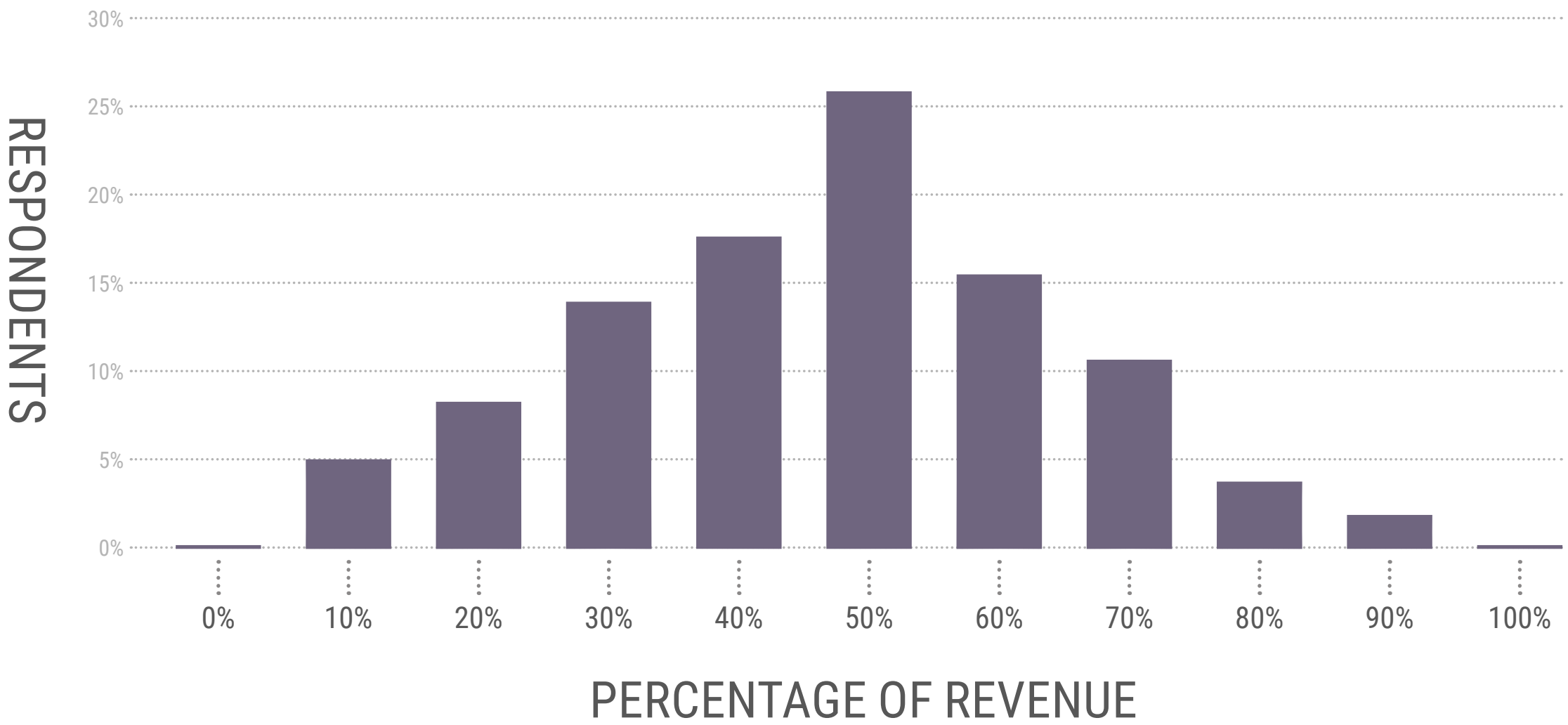


# REVENUE

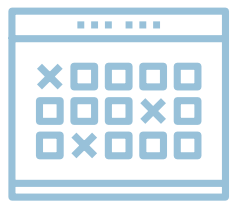


## DUES & NON-DUES REVENUE

Q: In an average year, approximately how much of your total revenue comes from non-dues sources?



## TOP NON-DUES REVENUE SOURCES



EVENTS



SPONSORSHIP



CONTRACT SERVICES



GRANTS



OTHER



ADVERTISING



# IMPROVEMENTS

## COMMON LESSONS LEARNED

- Empathy
- Keep Going
- Plan/Prioritize
- Communications
- Virtual
- Value/Relevance
- Connections/Engagement
- Live/In-Person
- Staff/Volunteers
- Flexibility
- Reevaluate

Q: What is your biggest lesson learned as an organization in the past 12 months?

### EMPATHY

- ” Patience.
- ” Realizing the extent that some of our businesses lost revenue due to COVID-19.
- ” Change/improvements are hard to implement.
- ” Humility and to help others that are under the stress of the new normal.
- ” People want you to be there and see that you are working for them in trying times.
- ” How important our job is not only for our members but for the entire business community.

### COMMUNICATIONS

- ” During this unprecedented time, we cannot rely on our normal annual events. Also, transparency and communication with our members is of the utmost importance.
- ” Communication is the key. Keep the membership informed of local and state issues.
- ” Over communicate and be flexible.
- ” Evaluate & re-do marketing material to emphasize what the Chamber does for the businesses, community & county. Change thought process from all about events to the bigger community initiatives we are working on.
- ” Focus on communication and compassion for our businesses.
- ” A large part of our value is in accurate reliable information to members. Small businesses turn to us first to get answers and trust us. We need to spend more time in that area.
- ” We are highly valuable to our business community but not very good at explaining that to businesses.
- ” Having an informative website and email contact helps retain members.
- ” Let members tell your story of how the Chamber helped them through this difficult time.

### VIRTUAL

- ” That it is possible to continue providing informational sessions virtually and/or in hybrid format.
- ” Virtual platforms are great engagement tools beyond the pandemic. Partnerships are key.
- ” Do not underestimate the power of doing Zoom calls.
- ” Virtual events are here to stay.
- ” We can work virtually when needed.

### CONNECTIONS/ENGAGEMENT

- ” Providing connection to resources and being a purveyor of hope significantly increased our standing in the business community.
- ” Connect with members as much as possible. It's times like these that they join us for & we have to be ready & resilient.
- ” People want to help each other. We are a connection point, and a person or organization doesn't know until they take a risk and ask.
- ” The biggest draw to our organization is based on real in-person contact, and personalized attention and connectivity.
- ” Get to know your members.
- ” The personal touch is better.
- ” Sometimes members need us to lend them an ear more than anything else.
- ” Ask questions, listen, and make necessary changes.

### FLEXIBILITY

- ” We must help our members react quickly to an unexpected crisis and be able to connect them with necessary resources.
- ” We need to not rely heavily on events and provide members with additional programming and opportunities to increase our revenue streams.
- ” That we can adapt to overcome challenges.
- ” Don't get comfortable.
- ” We learned a lot about ourselves, their leadership styles and our employees.
- ” You must be flexible and fluid.
- ” Market-driven policies yield better results.

### VALUE/RELEVANCE

- ” A member-based organization not intentionally-focused on serving its members will lose members and credibility in the community.
- ” Companies are looking for innovative offerings and they will pay for it.
- ” We must constantly show our value and the return on investment for the members.
- ” We need to do a better job of telling “our” story.
- ” The value of being “seen” in the community became even more important as we move out of the pandemic.
- ” We are still relevant and needed in our region.
- ” People truly don't understand what we do.



# IMPROVEMENTS

Q: What is your biggest lesson learned as an organization in the past 12 months? (cont.)

### KEEP GOING

- ” We can put our foot on the gas rather than sitting back on our laurels.
- ” Apply for any grant that is offered, you might get it!
- ” COVID-19 will not defeat us.
- ” Keep on “Keepin’ On.”
- ” Keep getting your name out there and be innovative.
- ” You need to be seen to be relevant. We’ve heard from so many within our membership that we are doing a great job getting the information out, even if it is on Zoom.
- ” We don’t need to be constantly knocking on doors to stay front and center in our communities.
- ” Stay true to the mission of the organization.
- ” Businesses are resilient and so is our organization, when pushed to be.
- ” Be proactive. Innovation is key.
- ” Focus on your members - help meet their needs and they will support your work.
- ” Just survive.
- ” Be persistent.
- ” Be available and present even if the office is closed.
- ” The Chamber can’t stop doing what we do best because of a pandemic. We are needed now more than ever to support our businesses and our community.
- ” Being active in the community and supportive of all businesses, regardless of whether they are members.
- ” Not everything works, and you must roll with the downs as well as the ups.

### PLAN/PRIORITIZE

- ” We need a written plan to engage members and let them know why partnering with the Chamber is important.
- ” Have a formal recruitment and retention plan in place and have ambassadors involved in that process. The result: Our retention and recruitment have skyrocketed.
- ” Plan for the worst but move forward and expect the best.
- ” Stick to what works best and always have a Plan B.
- ” Scale back on events and focus energies on what really matters.
- ” Have one person dedicated to membership - retention, sales, potential members and have them develop the plan and work it.
- ” Do a few things extremely well.
- ” We need to work on recruitment and retention.
- ” Big business dues keep us viable and healthy.
- ” Do not take long-time members for granted.
- ” The importance of ditching big box and supporting local.
- ” Mission directed, revenue-generating events only!
- ” A strong sense of community is essential to inspiring local support and collaboration.
- ” We need to increase non-dues revenue.

### LIVE/IN-PERSON

- ” In-person visits are most appreciated.
- ” Moving events online is possible, but not as effective as in-person events.
- ” People still see us at networking company.
- ” Members missed being together when we were virtual; in-person interaction is critical for relationship building.

### STAFF/VOLUNTEERS

- ” Employee flexibility and talent retention is a #1 priority for large and small companies.
- ” Be a leader. Even if no one else is. Even if your city isn’t doing what you think they should during a crisis...if it’s in your power - do it!
- ” You need staff to generate income.
- ” Hire the right office staff, they will make or break members perception of the Chamber.
- ” We need to be better about protecting staff from burning out and the stresses the past two years have brought our industry.
- ” You can do more with fewer employees.
- ” A small staff cannot do their jobs without the support and actions of volunteers.

### REEVALUATE

- ” We need to cater to a younger, entrepreneurial generation.
- ” Keep adding benefits.
- ” Help members through the pandemic by offering services that the community has in place or creating new ones to support them.
- ” Sometimes what members say they want/need is just the easy, surface, answer. It is important to drill down to the root of things to solve problems.
- ” Never trust your service providers and always be on the lookout for better products.
- ” It’s never too late to change something.
- ” The old way of ‘doing business’ will not cut it in the new normal.
- ” Take a deep breath and evaluate the entire situation from multiple angles.
- ” Make sure everyone is getting the chance to be heard before you plan.
- ” Using technology more to allow us to work smarter, not harder.
- ” We need to get away from what we have always done.
- ” Not only do you have to embrace change, but you also have to encourage & drive others to do so and do it quickly.
- ” It was okay to drop programs and not restart them after the pandemic. i.e., we’ve eliminated a lot of the smaller networking and time-consuming programming and it hasn’t been missed by the members.
- ” We can do more with less staff and still serve the community.
- ” We must diversify revenue so that a significant pandemic-style event cannot take us out of business.
- ” Our office efficiency has tripled since being forced into finding and learning software that we never had time to do pre-pandemic.
- ” Going forward after the pandemic, the standard business model of a Chamber of Commerce is not sustainable and must evolve.
- ” The need to cut back on social events and provide more of what our members need.
- ” The need to monetize services offered.
- ” Need to focus even more on workforce.
- ” Think big picture to solve challenges around economic recovery.
- ” We need to re-think how we are engaging members--events are not attended like they used to be.
- ” Our small businesses need more help than we realized and are not likely to reach out to us.
- ” The Chamber needs to evolve as the needs of our members, society and the economy evolve.





## About Growthzone

The GrowthZone mission is to empower organizations with the tools they need to grow membership, keep members engaged, keep members longer, and do more in less time.

GrowthZone is a full Membership Management System with built-in payment processing, e-commerce, fundraising, marketing automation, member prospecting, and more. GrowthZone is ideal for Chambers of Commerce, businesses, trade, and professional associations.

Schedule a quick, no-pressure demo to see GrowthZone in action.

**SCHEDULE DEMO**

GrowthZone features a comprehensive suite of productivity modules for Chambers of Commerce, including:

- Website Content Management
- Email Marketing Automation
- Fundraising
- Billing
- Event Registration
- Event Exhibitor/Session Management
- Membership Prospecting
- Payment Processing
- Certification Tracking
- Chapter Management
- Mobile Staff App
- Website Hosting
- Advertising/Sponsorship
- Online Store
- Project Management
- Form Builder
- Job Boards
- Contacts
- Communication
- Lists/Committees
- Fundraising