



**ACRA Member Questionnaire
Spring 2017**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
March 30, 2017

ACRA Survey – March, 2017

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On **March 8, 2016**, an electronic invitation was sent to 650 ACRA members and their employees to assist in gathering information about the effectiveness of ACRA and what topics should be a priority for ACRA over the next three years. New questions on the 2017 survey addressed employee sustainability, challenges employers face and open-ended questions about top priorities for the next three years.

The survey was created to help ACRA better understand member priorities, challenges in running a successful business compared with ACRA's member services and strategic direction, but also allow for ACRA to gain a better understanding of employee sustainability and what issues directly contribute to employee sustainability.

A total of 238 surveys were returned — a 37% percent response rate.

Not all questions were answered by all of the 238 respondents. This executive summary will highlight general themes deduced from respondents, collected from both qualitative individual responses and quantitative numbers. The summary should serve as a directional, rather than definitive resource for assessing member opinion.

Respondent Profile – Demographics

The sample reflects a roughly 50% split between both employer and employee respondents. Respondents represent both newer and longer term members: 52 percent have been members for more than 10 years and 20 percent members for 1-3 years. Similar to last year's results an equal representative distribution of businesses across categories of chamber membership, including lodging, real estate, professional services, non-profit organizations, retailers and restaurants.

39% own business space.
62% lease business space.

The majority of respondents (71%) represent businesses with 20 or fewer employees, conversely 11 percent have 100 or more employees. The sample heavily weighs toward small businesses; although 40 percent of respondents have been employed for more than 10 years at their company and 20 percent between 6 – 10 years, this would indicate the majority of respondents can generally be described as someone with longevity.

Respondents: The majority of respondents can be defined as owning a single-family home, commuting within the Aspen area and registered to vote in Pitkin County.

73% of respondents own the place where they live, compared to only 25% who rent.

46% live in a single-family home.

66% commute from within the Aspen area.

67% are registered to vote in Pitkin County.

SURVEY INSIGHTS

ACRA needs to address Employee Sustainability this may include affordable housing or affordable rental workforce housing and programming or services that would help to develop a qualified, skilled workforce. ACRA ranked very high in respondents results in areas of strength such as tourism marketing, member benefits and communication.

ACRA Effectiveness

ACRA Services	Percentage of respondents who indicated effective or highly effective
Attracting visitors to the resort	88%
Producing events that enhance Aspen's vitality	85%
Providing relevant and timely communication	81%
Providing adding value through member benefits	79%
Delivering exemplary guest service	77%
Community resource for businesses	75%
Creating group meeting and event business year-round	72%
Serving the membership with marketing and advertising support	69 %
Addressing Employee Sustainability	42%

- Addressing employee sustainability was the topic identified as most improvement needed with 20% of respondents indicating that ACRA is either ineffective or highly ineffective. Thirty-eight percent of respondents indicated that ACRA is neither effective nor ineffective
- Survey results identified a need for greater internal business marketing services; specifically, web marketing or training around website marketing tools for businesses.

Challenges Running a Successful Business

This question asked participants to select any or all that apply as challenges in running a successful business. The cost of housing (58%), qualified pool of skilled employees (56%), cost of commercial office space (41%) and fluctuations in the economy (32%) all ranked as top challenges.

Interestingly, while 41% of respondents indicated that the cost of commercial space was a challenge, this area also reported the lowest overall level of importance for the long-term success of business. Other comments listed as cost of commute for employees living down-valley.

Long-Term Business Success

Respondents were asked to indicate how important 15 various issues are to the long-term success of their business. This question yielded a very strong reply rate with an average of 207 respondents per issue.

Most respondents (86% or more) considered **all of the listed issues** as at least somewhat important in contributing to the long-term success of their business.

The availability of commercial space, received the most “not important” or “not very important” rankings (21%).

Affordable housing and employee sustainability ranked just as important as top issues from 2016. Five key trends stood out as the contributing as both an important and very important issue:

- 1) 85% Perception of Aspen
- 2) 82% Affordable Housing
- 3) 81% Vitality of Downtown
- 4) 80% Employee Sustainability (New Question 2017)
- 5) 77% Traffic Entrance to Aspen
- 6) 77% Air Service/Terminal
- 7) 77% Tourism Marketing

2016	2017
Tourism Marketing: 87%	Tourism Marketing: 77% (decrease)
Aspen's Perception: 85%	Aspen's Perception: 85%
Vitality of Downtown: 85%	Vitality of Downtown: 81% (decrease)
	Affordable Housing: 82%
	Employee Sustainability: 80%

Membership Expectations - Continuing as an ACRA Member

Eleven of the thirteen reasons to continue as an ACRA member had a minimum of 54% of respondents indicating that it is important in their decision to continue as an ACRA member.

The reasons with the highest levels of importance were access to ACRA discounts and benefits (88% reported as important), supporting the resorts' overall tourism marketing initiatives (78%), receiving community news and information (78%) and networking with other business professionals (76%).

The reasons with the lowest levels of importance were staff education and training (37% reported as important), leadership opportunities for employees (47%) and learning best business practices (54%).

Reason to Continue ACRA Membership	Percentage of respondents who indicated somewhat or very important
To access ACRA discounts and benefits	88%
To support the resorts' overall tourism marketing initiatives	78%
To receive community news and information	78%
To network with other business professionals	76%
To support ACRA's economic sustainability efforts	75%
To help my business grow	69%
To market my individual business to destination visitors	67%
To market my individual business to other ACRA members and the community	65%
Retail Reports and Executive Summaries	58%
To sponsor events	57%
To learn best practices	54%
To provide leadership opportunities to my employees	47%
To receive education and training for my staff	37%

The discounted Aspen Skiing Company pass remains one of members' most valuable discount benefits. Respondents also indicated that the RFTA passes are a valuable benefit. In the space for open ended comments, a small handful of members requested that ACRA explore additional areas for discounts including festival passes, marketing and health insurance.

What is the most important thing ACRA can do for your business in the next three years?

This was an open-ended question for participants to self-identify the area that they perceive as the most important for ACRA to address. A total of 136 members provided a response.

Common themes among the answers included:

- Tourism Promotion / Business Promotion (Received the most comments.)
- Employee Sustainability (Provided good information to start define employee sustainability.)
 - ✓ Affordable Housing

- ✓ Skill Development
- ✓ Benefits and Service Items
- Politics (Specific political issues.)

Tourism Promotion / Business Promotion

Comments focused around: Maintaining promotional efforts to market Aspen as a global destination.

Employee Sustainability

Affordable Housing

Participants see a need for ACRA to address employee sustainability and that affordable housing is key part of this need. Respondents indicated the importance of employee housing in several areas of the survey.

Skill Development

Skill development is part of supporting a qualified pool of employees. The survey reflected an opportunity to provide instruction in the following areas:

- Leadership and business seminars, business growth
- Web marketing (Social Media, business websites, search engine optimization)
- Business to business best practices
- Identifying and marketing to target audiences, marketing to locals, marketing to visitors
- Sales team development
- Online, ISSD leads best practices
- Vitality during shoulder season

Benefits and Service Items

- Promotion and marketing
- Skill development
- Networking, especially B2B
- Ski Passes
- Information sharing

Politics

There was no evident mandate for any specific action on a political issue. However, there were a few comments on the following topics:

- Employee housing
- ACRA as a business advocate
- City regulations
- Entrance to Aspen
- Traffic and Parking
- Environmental sustainability

SURVEY NEXT STEPS

- Review and create plan with Employee Sustainability Committee
- Align with the City of Aspen Economic Sustainability Report
- Incorporate feedback into ACRA Strategic Plan
- Submit benchmarks and strategies to the City of Aspen to create standards for workforce development.