



GREATER OMAHA CHAMBER
**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
PARTNERSHIP**

**BUSINESS RETENTION
& EXPANSION PROGRAM**

2023 ANNUAL REPORT



WHO WE ARE: GREATER OMAHA CHAMBER

Our Mission: To champion a thriving business community and a prosperous region through visionary leadership and collaboration.

Our Vision: The Chamber will be the catalyst organization that ensures Greater Omaha is a vibrant place to do business, work and live.

BUSINESS RETENTION & EXPANSION PROGRAM

2023 Executive Summary



OVERVIEW

Introduction to BRE Program & Objectives:

The Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) program, a core initiative of The Greater Omaha Chamber Economic Development Partnership, focuses on supporting and retaining local businesses for sustained economic growth. Recognizing the significance of existing businesses in driving economic development and job creation, BRE visits aim to address business needs, assist with expansions, and help companies navigate economic challenges. Annual BRE visits serve as a platform to connect with businesses, identify trends, and determine policies for advancing the regional economy.

METHODOLOGY

The Greater Omaha Chamber and our partners connected with over 270 companies in 2023. Data was collected on 245 employers in the Greater Omaha region. This includes 115 large employers (50 or more employees), 113 small businesses (less than 50 employees), and 17 startups, representing a total of 45,562 employees across diverse industries. Notable sectors surveyed include healthcare, manufacturing, IT, and public/not for profit/utilities. BRE visits were conducted by the Greater Omaha Economic Development Partnership staff. Interviews were conducted with business owners, CEOs, C-Suite level employees, and managers to gain a comprehensive view of the economic ecosystem. The BRE team individually reached out to businesses to conduct in-person discussions.

FINDINGS

Business Growth Projections:

Approximately one-third of companies expressed plans for capital expenditure in the next three years, totaling over \$3.3 billion. The investments include renovating current facilities, buying new equipment, and expanding or investing in new facilities.

Workforce Growth

A dynamic wave of growth is expected to happen in 2024. The companies that participated in our BRE program, expressed a total of 2,511 jobs to be added in 2024. This not only signals a commitment to their individual growth trajectories, but also contributing significantly to the overall employment landscape of Greater Omaha.

Top Issues Faced by Companies:

The survey identified labor availability as the most common challenge (103 companies), influenced by pandemic impacts, a competitive job market, remote work preferences, skills mismatch, wage pressures, and demographic trends. Access to capital ranked as a major concern for small businesses and startups, with connections established to community resources like Nebraska Enterprise Fund and Kiva Iowa, a microlending platform.

Workforce Trends:

130 employers maintained their current level of employment and 71 employers increased full-time equivalents (FTEs) in the past year, with a similar trend expected for the year ahead. The top positions needed included engineers, production/warehouse workers, office roles, and sales representatives. Industries foreseeing major job growth included food processing, professional services, IT/data processing, and commercial sales/retail.

Outcomes:

The BRE program resulted in positive outcomes, including 59 new economic development relationships, 28 instances of business assistance provided, 45 referrals to Greater Omaha Chamber programming, 64 referrals to community programming, and the identification of 11 potential investors and 12 new economic development projects.

In summary, the BRE program in the Greater Omaha area actively engages with businesses, addresses key challenges, facilitates connections to programming and resources, and contributes to substantial capital investments, fostering economic growth and sustainability.

Participating Organizations:

- Greater Omaha Chamber
- Grow Sarpy
- Greater Fremont Development Council
- Advance Southwest Iowa Corporation
- Nebraska City Area Economic Development
- Mills County Economic Development Foundation
- Cass County Nebraska Economic Development Council
- Gateway Development Corporation



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INTRODUCTION TO BRE PROGRAM & OBJECTIVES:

Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) is a core program of The Greater Omaha Chamber Economic Development Partnership. BRE is an economic development concept that focuses on initiatives aimed at supporting and retaining existing businesses within a community or region, as well as encouraging their growth and expansion. This approach recognizes the importance of local businesses as a primary driver of economic development and job creation. Research shows that the creation and growth of local firms is usually the source of most new jobs in a community, about 70-80%.

Existing companies are the foundation of Greater Omaha's economic vitality. The Greater Omaha Economic Development Partnership strives to meet with existing companies annually through Business Expansion and Retention visits as part of our BRE program. **BRE visits serve as an opportunity for the Greater Omaha Economic Development Partnership to interact with companies in the region with the following purpose:**

- Address business needs and concerns
- Assist with expansions that add new jobs
- Help businesses survive economic difficulties

The desired outcomes of a BRE visit are as follows:

- Connect businesses with local resources and assistance
- Identify common trends among businesses to create or modify chamber programming to assist businesses
- Determine policies needed to move the regional economy forward

COMPANIES SURVEYED

Over 270 company visits were conducted as part of our BRE program. Data was collected on 245 of those companies which supports this report.



Breakdown of small and large employers by count:

- 115 Large Employer (50 or more employees)
- 113 Small Business (Less than 50 employees)
- 17 Startup

In the pursuit of understanding the dynamics of the business climate in the region, our team interviewed large, small, and startup businesses. Each segment of business type by organization size offers unique insights and perspectives. Almost half of the companies interviewed were categorized as large businesses with 50 or more full-time employees located in the Greater Omaha area. Large businesses stand as economic powerhouses, influencing the financial health of our community. A large majority of the total workforce in the regional area is employed by large businesses.

Large businesses also have a profound influence on their respective industries, attracting complementary businesses that further enhance the region's economic competitiveness.

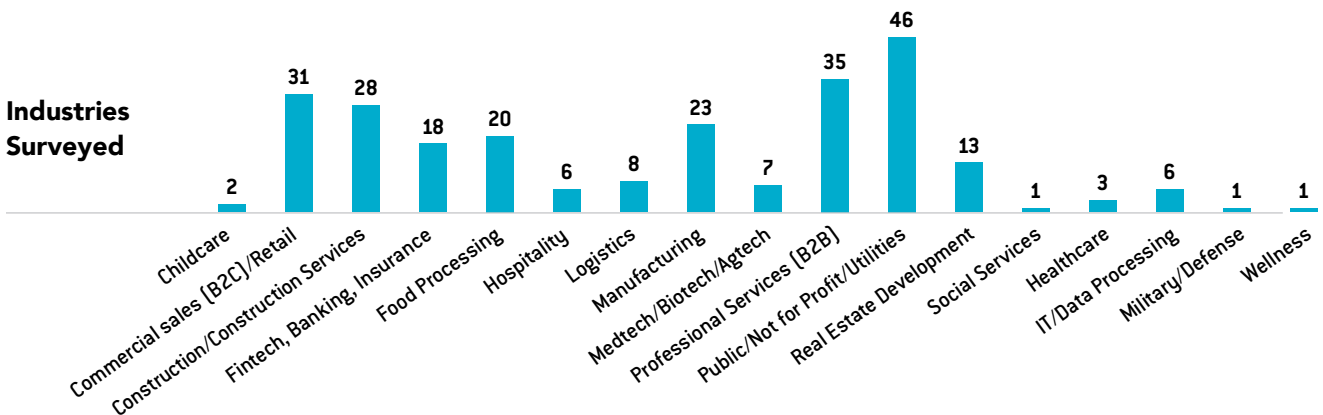
As we continue to innovate and prosper in the region, we turn to startups and small businesses to gain a better understanding of the challenges they face and their transformative impact that their innovations have on local industries. By interviewing business owners, CEOs, C-Suite level employees, and managers from various sectors, we gain a comprehensive view of the economic ecosystem in the region.

- **Total amount of employees represented in this report: 45,562**

The industries included in this report encompass a diverse array of professions, including educators and tech professionals, showcasing a broad representation of essential and skilled professionals contributing to the workforce landscape.

- **BREs are done in all Greater Omaha Chamber partnership counties by the respective staff of their local economic development organizations.** The following counties are represented in this report:

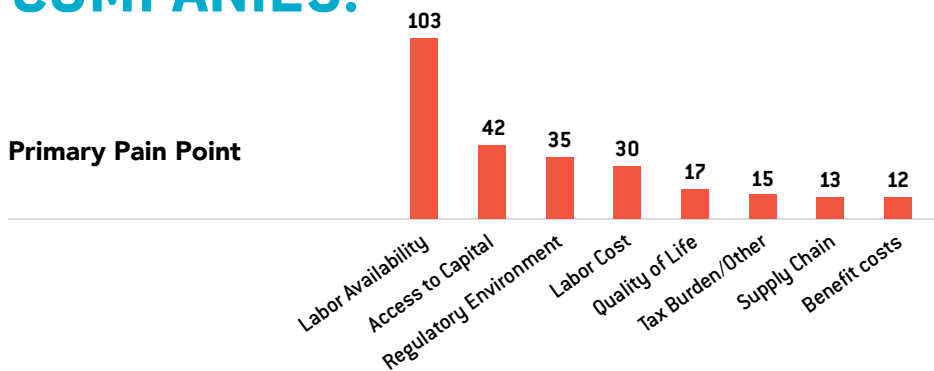
Douglas, Dodge, Cass, Mills, Otoe, Pottawattamie, Sarpy, Washington



The regional economy represents diverse range of industries from MedTech to manufacturing. This survey reflects a broad spectrum of industries that make up the majority of the Greater Omaha economy. The top industry represented is public/not for profit/utilities. The public/not for profit/utility industry encompasses schools, business leagues, industry specific associations, and cultural and recreational entities.



TOP ISSUES FACED BY COMPANIES:



MAJOR PAIN POINT: LABOR AVAILABILITY

The most common pain point among respondents was labor availability. Many organizations described the need to hire individuals with specific skill sets fit for the evolving demands of their industries, yet encountered a notable challenge in sourcing qualified talent within the regional area. The perceived scarcity of skilled labor has emerged as a common pain point, prompting businesses to ideate solutions and turn to external organizations for assistance.

There are several factors that respondents described that contributed to the tight labor availability:

- **Competitive Job Market:** There is high demand for workers but a limited supply of qualified candidates, causing businesses to struggle to find and retain skilled employees.
- **Skills Mismatch:** There is a disconnect between the skills businesses are seeking and the skills available in the local labor pool. This can lead to longer hiring times and increased competition for a limited pool of qualified candidates.
- **Wage Pressures:** Businesses face pressure to increase wages to attract and retain employees. This can impact profit margins, especially for smaller businesses with tighter budgets.
- **Demographic Trends:** Changes in the local population, such as demographic shifts or an aging workforce, have influenced the availability of labor. Some industries have expressed that there is a smaller pool of working-age individuals, which has resulted in them facing challenges in finding workers.

OTHER MAJOR PAIN POINTS:

- **Access to Capital:** Through rising interest rates and perceived limited sources of capital availability, startups and small businesses struggle to innovate and grow their operations within their anticipated timelines.

Through BRE visits, we have connected these small businesses to resources in the community such as:

- **Nebraska Enterprise Fund**
- **Kiva Iowa (microlending platform)**
- **SBDC**

- **Labor Costs:** Similar to limited labor availability, labor costs pose a significant challenge for businesses in the Omaha regional area due to a combination of factors. A competitive job market, characterized by a low unemployment rate, demands that businesses offer competitive salaries and benefits to attract and retain skilled talent. Industries facing high demand for specialized skills further intensify competition for qualified workers, prompting businesses to provide higher wages. Additionally, factors such as skills shortages, rising healthcare costs, and employee turnover impact overall labor expenses. Economic conditions

and global economic factors further influence wage trends, making it imperative for businesses to navigate these difficulties to manage labor costs effectively and sustain competitiveness in the regional market.

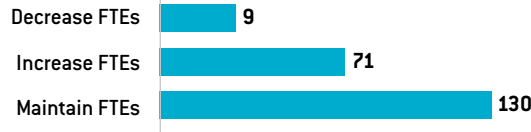
- **Regulatory Environment:** The regulatory environment in the regional area poses challenges for businesses due to its complexity, frequent changes, and industry-specific requirements. Certain industries, such as healthcare, logistics, and finance face additional complexities to comply with local, state, and federal regulations.



WORKFORCE

In the course of conducting interviews with businesses in the Omaha area, a nuanced picture of employment trends emerged, shedding light on the past year and offering insights into the projections for the upcoming year. The responses from various companies provide valuable indicators on employment trends.

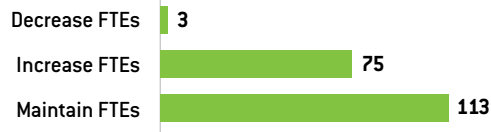
FTE Trends in the Past Year



The majority of respondents expressed stability or growth in their workforce over the past year. A notable proportion, comprising 9 employers, reported a decrease in their full-time equivalent employees (FTEs). Potential causes in this dip in employee count may range from industry-specific challenges to broader economic fluctuations.

While a slight contraction in workforce size was observed among some businesses, it is important to highlight the resilience demonstrated by the majority. Many companies managed to either maintain or increase their FTEs, underscoring a degree of economic robustness and adaptability in the local business landscape.

FTE Trends in the Next Year



Looking ahead to the upcoming year, the outlook for employment in the Omaha area appears promising. A substantial 113 companies shared plans to increase their FTEs, reflecting a positive sentiment towards future growth and expansion. It is estimated that collectively, employers will be hiring for a total of 2,511 jobs. This optimistic stance aligns with broader economic indicators and suggests a collective confidence in the region's economic trajectory.

A significant number of companies, totaling 75, expressed their intention to maintain their current level of employees. This decision could be interpreted as a strategic approach to ensure stability and operational continuity in times of economic uncertainty.

Although the majority of respondents expressed a maintenance and growth phase for their employment in the next year, 3 businesses indicated they would reduce their workforce. The decision to reduce workforce is driven by factors such as market fluctuation or industry-specific challenges.

In general, the industries that identified a need to hire in the next year (and number of companies in that industry):

- Public/not for profit/utilities (9)
- Logistics (2)
- Construction/construction services (12)
- Manufacturing (12)
- Medtech/biotech/agtech (1)
- Food processing (7)
- IT/data processing (2)
- Fintech, banking, insurance (2)
- Professional services (B2B) (15)
- Commercial sales (B2C)/retail (7)
- Real estate development (1)
- Healthcare (1)
- Wellness (1)



POSITIONS NEEDED:

The top 10 most commonly mentioned job roles needed from organizations:

- | | | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Engineers | 4. Sales Representatives | 8. Electricians |
| 2. Production/Warehouse Workers | 5. Nurses | 9. Customer Service/Guest Relations |
| 3. Office Roles | 6. IT Positions | 10. Machine Operators |
| | 7. Maintenance Staff | |

METRO WAGES FOR COMPANY DESIRED POSITIONS:

Occupation Wages, Average Annual in Omaha, NE-IA MSA, 2023Q2

SOC	Occupation	Mean	Entry Level	Experienced	Percentiles				
					10%	25%	50% (Median)	75%	90%
17-0000	Architecture and Engineering Occupations	\$86,000	\$53,600	\$102,300	\$49,500	\$63,100	\$81,700	\$104,600	\$128,000
41-0000	Sales and Related Occupations	\$49,200	\$25,500	\$61,000	\$24,300	\$28,600	\$36,200	\$56,400	\$84,800
43-0000	Office and Administrative Support Occupations	\$44,600	\$31,600	\$51,100	\$29,900	\$35,400	\$41,900	\$50,900	\$62,000
47-0000	Construction and Extraction Occupations	\$55,500	\$37,600	\$64,400	\$36,300	\$41,500	\$51,000	\$64,300	\$82,900
49-0000	Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Occupations	\$56,000	\$36,400	\$65,800	\$33,700	\$42,400	\$53,000	\$66,500	\$81,800
51-0000	Production Occupations	\$45,000	\$31,800	\$51,600	\$30,200	\$35,500	\$42,200	\$50,700	\$61,700
15778	Tech Talent	\$94,800	\$65,400	\$109,400	\$60,800	\$75,200	\$91,600	\$112,000	\$131,700
29-1141	Registered Nurses	\$78,600	\$63,900	\$86,000	\$62,500	\$68,100	\$79,500	\$84,300	\$97,600

Source: JobsEQ®

TOP INDUSTRIES THAT IDENTIFIED THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF NEW JOBS TO BE ADDED TO THEIR ORGANIZATION:

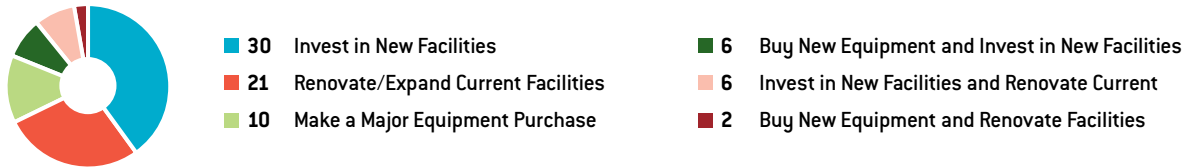
5 companies expressed major job growth happening at their organization within the next year. The number of positions needed and their industries are as follows:

Industry	Company Type	Number of New Hires in the Next Year	Types of Jobs Needed
Food Processing	Large Employer	500	Production, Office/Administrative
Professional Services	Large Employer	300	Customer Service
IT/Data Processing	Large Employer	300	Data Entry and Analysis
Commercial Sales (B2C)/Retail	Large Employer	300	Warehouse, Customer Service
Food Processing	Large Employer	200	Production Floor, Back Office Support

For these five projects alone, the estimated total payroll would be over \$67,000,000 annually. These wages are based on average salaries in the metro area.

BUSINESS GROWTH PROJECTIONS

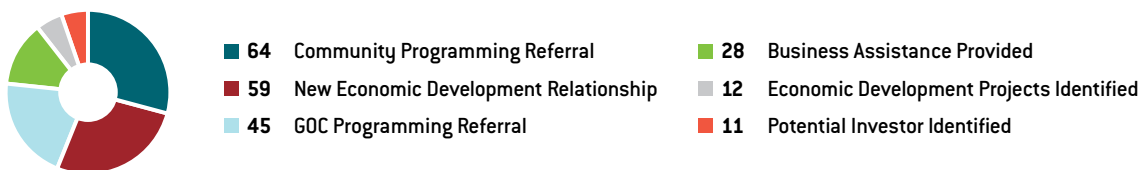
Companies expressed their commitment to growth in the region over the next three years through diverse initiatives, encompassing the renovation and expansion of current facilities, purchasing new equipment, and investing in new facilities.



- Approximately 1/3 of companies indicated planned capital expenditures, which includes renovating current facilities, investing in new facilities, and/or making large equipment purchases in the next three years.
- 30 companies are looking to invest in new facilities. Local investment plays a pivotal role in creating new job opportunities and stimulating economic growth.
- 21 companies are looking to renovate/expand current facilities. Renovating and expanding facilities is vital for adapting to growth, market changes, and ensuring operational efficiency. It not only enhances competitiveness, customer satisfaction, and employee morale, but also contributes to local economic development and long-term sustainability.
- The financial magnitude associated with these growth aspirations from respondents collectively surpasses an impressive \$3.3 billion. This significant financial commitment not only signals confidence in future growth, but also positions these businesses as key contributors to the economic development of the regional area.

OUTCOMES

Through each unique BRE visit conducted in 2023, several outcomes were identified. Each outcome displays the diverse ways in which businesses in the area have engaged in economic development initiatives.



- A BRE visit marked the inaugural interaction between the economic development teams of the Greater Omaha Economic Development Partnership and 59 companies. These new relationships represent an opportunity to foster collaboration and spur growth.
- Partnership with key community stakeholders, including local government and business organizations, is displayed through 64 community programming referrals in the past year.
- 45 businesses were able to get connected to Greater Omaha Chamber programming, including Leadership, CODE, Young Professional, and membership programming/events.
- There were 28 instances in which specific business assistance was provided. The unique cases span from economic development services to regulatory assistance.
- 12 economic development projects were identified. The economic development team at the Greater Omaha Economic Development Partnership is continuing to work with those companies through site selection processes and resource connections to ensure that growth can occur in the region.
- 11 businesses have expressed interest in becoming potential investors, demonstrating their commitment to contributing support and further enhancing the economic landscape in the region.

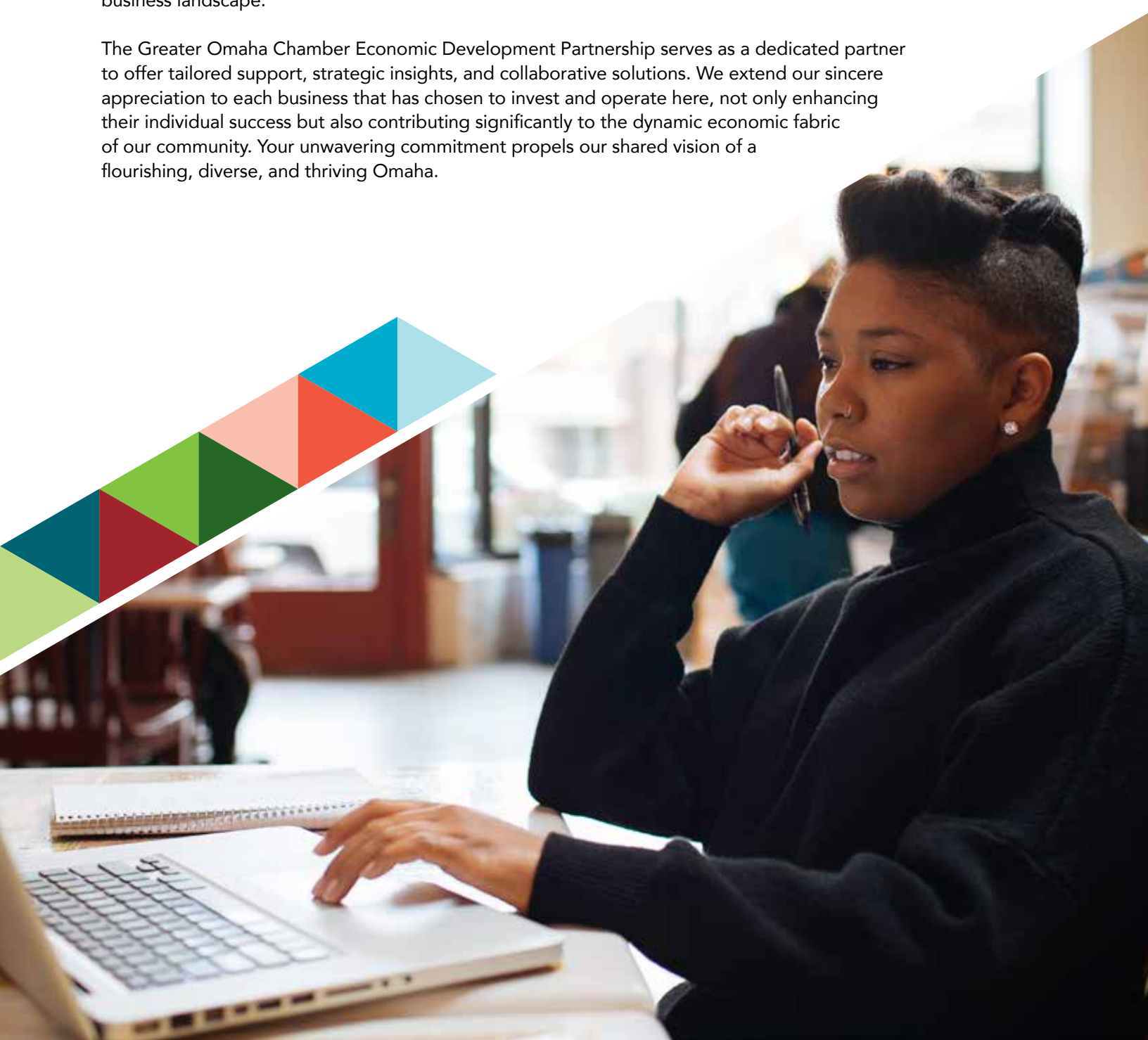
CONCLUSION

As a core initiative of The Greater Omaha Chamber Economic Development Partnership, BRE visits encapsulate a holistic approach to our economic development efforts, recognizing the pivotal role of existing businesses in propelling regional prosperity and job creation.

Although several challenges are presented in this report, the journey of the businesses represented extends beyond challenges, with ambitions of growth in the region shaping the future of continued prosperity for many years to come.

Our steadfast commitment to nurturing the growth and success of businesses in the Omaha region remains at the forefront of our mission. The unique stories and experiences shared through the Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) program visits reflect the resilience, creativity, and collaborative spirit that define our local business landscape.

The Greater Omaha Chamber Economic Development Partnership serves as a dedicated partner to offer tailored support, strategic insights, and collaborative solutions. We extend our sincere appreciation to each business that has chosen to invest and operate here, not only enhancing their individual success but also contributing significantly to the dynamic economic fabric of our community. Your unwavering commitment propels our shared vision of a flourishing, diverse, and thriving Omaha.





PARTICIPATE IN OUR BRE PROGRAM

Your company's input matters! We want you to participate in our 2024 Business Retention & Expansion Program.

Contact Makayla Leiting
Sr. Business Attraction & Expansion Project Manager
(402) 233-7150 | Mleiting@selectgreateromaha.com



Scan to download the full BRE 2023 Annual Report or visit:
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808 Conagra Dr., Ste.400 | Omaha, NE 68102 | (402) 346.5000

OmahaChamber.org