

Alexandria

BUSINESS RETENTION AND EXPANSION STRATEGIES PROGRAM

Interview Guide

Firm ID: _____
Coordinator: _____
Also record on pages 1 and 5

FIRM:

ADDRESS:

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

PERSON INTERVIEWED: _____

Job title: _____

Date of visit: _____

OTHER KEY OFFICIALS IN THIS ESTABLISHMENT:

Owner _____

Chief Exec. Officer

Plant Manager _____

Personnel Officer _____

VOLUNTEER VISITORS:

Note to Coordinator: After placing the ID number on this cover sheet and on pages 1 and 5, remove the cover sheet and file separately to ensure confidentiality of results.

ALEXANDRIA BUSINESS RETENTION AND EXPANSION STRATEGIES PROGRAM

Background

We believe our existing firms are our best prospects for future growth. The purpose of this program is to see how we can help them grow.

- I. This program is sponsored locally by the following organizations:
 - Alexandria Area Economic Development Commission
 - West Central Initiative
 - University of Minnesota Extension Service, Community Vitality
- II. Technical and research assistance for this program is provided by the University of Minnesota Extension Service.
- III. Business, government, and educational leaders have agreed to help us work with our local firms on this program.
- IV. The survey is a cooperative effort involving volunteers drawn from other businesses, retired individuals, local government, and educational institutions.
- V. The objectives of the program are:
 1. To demonstrate to local business that the community appreciates their contribution to the local economy.
 2. To help existing businesses solve problems.
 3. To assist businesses in using programs aimed at helping them become more competitive.
 4. To establish and implement a strategic plan for economic development.
 5. To build community capacity to sustain growth and development.
- VI. Confidentiality - Your individual answers to this survey are confidential and will not be released. Your response will be summarized with those of others to form an overall result in percentages or averages.
- VII. The "Skip It Rule" - If there is a question that you feel might be best to skip, we will do that; just let us know. There is no need to explain your reasons.
- VIII. Copy of Summary Report - Copies of the summary will be provided to all firms that participate in this survey.

Firm ID: _____
Supplied by Coordinator

ALEXANDRIA BUSINESS RETENTION AND EXPANSION STRATEGIES PROGRAM
Interview Guide

Community _____ Firm ID: _____ Date: _____

1. Have you filled in the cover sheet and is it complete and correct? (circle one)

YES NO → If NO, make the necessary corrections.

2. Did your firm begin its operation in this community? (circle one)

YES NO → If NO, where did you move from?

	<u>Community</u>	<u>State</u>	<u>Year</u>
	_____	_____	_____

→ If YES, what year? _____ YEAR

3. Is this establishment a branch plant, a satellite, or a franchise? (circle one)

YES NO
→ If YES, in which state is the headquarters? _____

4. Do you have multiple locations? (*Circle one*) Yes No

5. If yes, where are they located?

11. What is special or unique about your major products or services?
12. Do you expect the **sales** for your products to increase, stay the same, or decrease over the next three years? (circle one)
- (1) increase
(2) stay the same
(3) decrease
13. Do you expect the **total company profits** for your products to increase, stay the same, or decrease over the next three years? (circle one)
- (1) increase
(2) stay the same
(3) decrease

Suppliers/Customers

What raw materials or other components are used to create or produce your product or service and where do they come from? *(Please specify point of origin by city, state, and supplier)*

14. Raw Materials or Other Components _____ 15. Point of Origin *(Specify city, state, and supplier)* _____

16. How do you ship your products? *(Circle all that apply)* Truck Rail Air Other

17. Do you import products or services from other countries at this location? *(Circle one)*

Yes No *(If No, go to 20)*

If yes, what do you import from other countries, and from what locations? *(Match products to locations)*

18. Products, services: _____ 19. Location(s): *(Specify states and countries)* _____

20. Do you export products or services to other countries from here? *(Circle one)*

Yes No *(If No, go to 23)*

If yes, what products or services do you export, and to what location(s)? *(Match products to locations)*

21. Products, services:

22. Location(s): (*Specify states and countries*)

23. Are there suppliers or customers that would benefit by being located closer to this facility?
(Circle one) Yes No

24. If yes, list the companies and location:

25. What is special or unique about your production process?

26. Do you sub-contract work to other businesses? (circle one) Yes No

27. How many employees work at this location? (We'd like you to break this out between full-time and part-time for the two time periods shown.)

	full-time (as defined by firm)	part-time (20 hours)	part-time (under 20 hours)
currently	_____	_____	_____
three-years ago	_____	_____	_____

28. How many employees work at this location from temp agencies?

full-time	part-time
_____	_____

29. If the number of employees changed from three years ago, please explain the major business factors that led to this increase or decrease.

30. If you reported any part-time employees in question 27, are they seasonal or year-round? (circle one)

(1) seasonal → If SEASONAL, when is your busy season? (circle up to two seasons)

(a) spring (b) summer (c) fall (d) winter (e) varies

(2) year-round

Firm ID: _____ Supplied by Coordinator

31a. Does your company have problems recruiting employees in the following categories? (circle one per line)

<u>Category</u>	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>UNSURE</u>
(a) general labor	1	2	3
(b) general production labor	1	2	3
(c) precision production/specialty skills	1	2	3
(d) clerical	1	2	3
(e) sales	1	2	3
(f) engineers	1	2	3
(g) professional/management	1	2	3
(h) information technology	1	2	3
(i) temporary/contract employees	1	2	3
(j) student interns	1	2	3
(k) other _____	1	2	3

31b. If you answered YES to any of the categories above, please explain the nature of this problem.

<u>Category</u>	<u>Nature of Problem</u>
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

32. What is the average starting hourly wage paid to employees in each category?

General labor	General production	Precision production	Clerical	Sales	Information Technology	Professional/management
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

33. Does your company provide benefits to its employees? (Circle one) Yes No
 (If No, skip next question)

34. Which of the following benefits are available to your full-time and part-time employees?
 (Please check all that apply)

Category	Full-time	Part-time	Category	Full-time	Part-time
(a) Health insurance	_____	_____	(b) Profit sharing	_____	_____
(c) Life insurance	_____	_____	(d) Tuition reimbursement	_____	_____
(e) Disability insurance	_____	_____	(f) Retirement/401 K contribution	_____	_____
(g) Paid vacation time	_____	_____	(h) Uniforms/uniform allowance	_____	_____
(i) Paid sick leave	_____	_____	(j) Child care/dependent benefits	_____	_____
(k) Bonus	_____	_____	(l) Other (specify)	_____	_____

35. Please indicate where most of your employees live. (Estimate the percentage to the nearest 10 percent.) (Rural mailing address)

(1) Alexandria	_____	percent
(2) Douglas Co.	_____	
(3) Outside Douglas Co.	_____	
where _____		
Check total (should equal 100%)	_____	100%

Business Climate

36. Based on the following factors, please grade this location as a place for your company to do business: *(Circle one for each)*

A) Excellent	B) Good	C) Average	D) Poor	F) Very Poor
a) Availability of Skilled Labor	A B C D F	b) Availability of Unskilled Labor	A B C D F	
c) Worker Stability	A B C D F	d) Worker Productivity	A B C D F	
e) Wage Rates	A B C D F	f) Labor Management Relations	A B C D F	
g) Technical Training Programs	A B C D F	h) Highway Accessibility	A B C D F	
i) Railroad Service	A B C D F	j) Accessibility to Major Airport	A B C D F	
k) Proximity to Major Markets	A B C D F	l) Availability of Credit	A B C D F	
m) Availability and Cost of Land	A B C D F	n) Availability and Cost of Buildings	A B C D F	
o) Proximity to Raw Materials	A B C D F	p) Proximity to Service Suppliers	A B C D F	
q) Environmental Regulations	A B C D F	r) Crime Rate	A B C D F	
s) Unemployment Insurance	A B C D F	t) Worker Compensation Rates	A B C D F	
u) Local Taxes	A B C D F	v) State Taxes	A B C D F	
w) Proximity to Colleges/Universities	A B C D F	x) Housing Cost and Availability	A B C D F	
y) Cultural Opportunities	A B C D F	z) Recreational Opportunities	A B C D F	

37. Please rank in order the three factors you would consider the greatest *strengths* of this community as a location for your business and the three factors you would consider the greatest *weaknesses*. *(Specify by corresponding letters above)*

Strengths *(Rank from 1 - 3)*

Weaknesses *(Rank from 1 - 3)*

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

38. How would you rate the business climate in Alexandria? *(Circle one)*

A) Excellent B) Good C) Average D) Poor F) Very Poor

39. How would you rate the overall business climate in this State? *(Circle one)*

A) Excellent B) Good C) Average D) Poor F) Very Poor

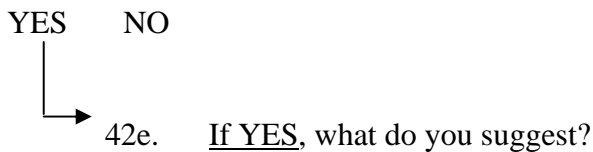
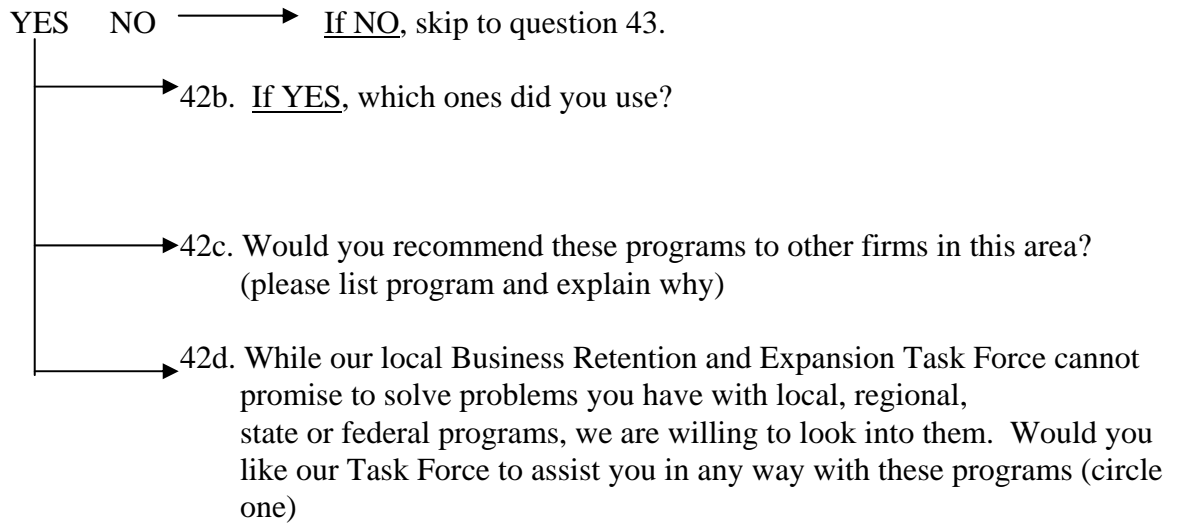
40. Based on the following community services, please grade this location as a place for your company to do business:

A) Excellent	B) Good	C) Average	D) Poor	F) Very Poor
a) Street Maintenance/Drainage	A B C D F	b) Water and Sewer	A B C D F	
c) Police Protection	A B C D F	d) Fire Protection	A B C D F	
e) Emergency Medical Services	A B C D F	f) Health Care Facilities	A B C D F	
g) Electricity Cost and Reliability	A B C D F	h) Natural Gas Cost and Reliability	A B C D F	
i) Telecommunications Services	A B C D F	j) Solid Waste Disposal	A B C D F	
k) Zoning and Permitting	A B C D F	l) Code Enforcement	A B C D F	
m) Available Building Space	A B C D F	n) Available Land	A B C D F	
o) Public Schools	A B C D F	p) Financial Institutions	A B C D F	
q) Child Care	A B C D F	r) Local Higher Education	A B C D F	
s) Local Chamber of Commerce	A B C D F	t) Local Economic Development Corp.	A B C D F	
u) Alexandria Airport	A B C D F			

41. Would you like additional information concerning any of the following subjects?
 (Circle Yes or No for each) Then in the next column, rank the three most important ones.

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Rank 3 most important</u>
(a) Business management	Yes	No	_____
(b) Strategic business planning	Yes	No	_____
(c) Total quality management	Yes	No	_____
(d) Financing programs	Yes	No	_____
(e) Marketing strategies	Yes	No	_____
(f) Labor training/staff development	Yes	No	_____
(g) Taxes	Yes	No	_____
(h) Selling to government	Yes	No	_____
(i) Employee benefits	Yes	No	_____
(j) Recycling for business wastes	Yes	No	_____
(k) e-business	Yes	No	_____
(l) International Trade	Yes	No	_____
(m) Other(specify)_____	Yes	No	_____

42a. During the past three years, have you used any local, regional, state or federal programs to help your business? For example, DEED, SBA, USDA Rural Development, AAEDC, SBDC, West Central Initiative etc. (circle one)



43. What programs or services should the city/county/state offer to help make your company more competitive?
-

Business Changes/Expectations/Plans

44. Has your business expanded at this location within the last three (3) years? (*Circle one*)
 Yes No (*If No, go to 47*)

45. If yes, what was the nature of the expansion? (*Please fill in appropriate responses on blanks*)

Employees (Number)	Land (Acreage)	Building (Square Footage)	Equipment (Investment)	Sales (Percent Increase)	Other (Specify)
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_____	_____	_____	\$ _____	_____	_____
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46. What business factors contributed to the expansion? (*Please circle factors contributing to expansion*)

a. Increased Sales/ Product Demand	b. Facilities Consolidation	c. Lower Production Costs	d. Decreased Competition	e. Employee Productivity	f. Other (<i>Specify</i>) _____
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47. Have you reduced your business operation in the last three (3) years? (*Circle one*)
 Yes No (*If No, go to 50*)

48. If yes, what was the nature of the reduction? (*Please fill in appropriate responses on blanks*)

Employees (Number)	Land (Acreage)	Building (Square Footage)	Equipment (Investment)	Sales (Percent Increase)	Other (<i>Specify</i>)
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_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
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49. What factors contributed to the reduction? (*Please circle factors contributing to reduction*)

a. Increased Sales/ Product Demand	b. Facilities Consolidation	c. Lower Production Costs	d. Decreased Competition	e. Employee Productivity	f. Other (<i>Specify</i>) _____
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50. Are you currently considering? (*circle all that are appropriate*)

- (1) downsizing
- (2) selling
- (3) merging with or acquiring another business
- (4) moving —————> If yes, go to 51
- (5) closing —————> If yes, go to 51
- (6) other changes to business plan
- (7) none of the above —————> If this, skip to question 53.

51. If yes to 50 (4) or (5). Why are you considering moving or closing? (*circle all that are appropriate*)

- (1) changing market conditions
- (2) overcrowded building
- (3) no land for expansion
- (4) transportation problems
- (5) crime/vandalism
- (6) low work productivity
- (7) environmental concerns
- (8) rigid code enforcement (including ordinances and building codes)
- (9) high local taxes
- (10) high state taxes
- (11) lease expiration
- (12) poor telecommunications
- (13) insufficient labor supply
- (14) retiring
- (15) another business opportunity
- (16) other
(specify) _____

52. If moving, where are you considering moving the establishment? (*circle all that apply*)

- (1) in same city as currently located
- (2) another city in this county (specify city) _____
- (3) another county in the state (specify city) _____
- (4) another state (specify city and state) _____
- (5) abroad (specify city and nation) _____
- (6) undecided

53. Do you own or lease this facility? (*Circle one*)

Own Lease

54. If leased, when does lease expire?

55a. Does your company currently own or lease sufficient property to allow for expansion if necessary?

- YES (1)
- MAYBE (2)
- NO (3)

└──┬──┘
 └──┬──┘ → 55b. If MAYBE or NO, what type of land, buildings, and space needs do you foresee?

56a. Do you have any plans to modernize or expand your present buildings(s), equipment or business plan? (circle one)

- YES (1)
- NO (2)

└──┬──┘
 └──┬──┘ → If NO, skip to question 58a.

└──┬──┘
 └──┬──┘ → 56b. If YES, what is planned?

└──┬──┘
 └──┬──┘ → 56c. If YES, when will the work begin? _____ YEAR

57. What impact will the expansion or modernization of your present buildings, equipment, or business plan have on the number of employees? (circle on the left, and if you choose 2 or 3, answer the jobs question)

- (1) no change
- (2) adds employees → About how many jobs will be added? _____ JOBS
- (3) reduces employees → About how many jobs will be lost? _____ JOBS

58a. How has Alexandria changed in the past 10-20 years?

58b. How have these changes affected your business (positively or negatively)?

59. What kinds of changes, if any, would prepare Alexandria for where your business is going in the next 5-10 years?

60. What five things represent the best of Alexandria?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

61. Do the following features have an impact, no impact or negative impact in recruiting employees to Alexandria? (circle one for each letter)

	Positive Impact	No Impact	Negative Impact
(a) natural environment	+	none	-
(b) historic buildings (barns, downtowns, etc.)	+	none	-
(c) farm landscapes	+	none	-
(d) distance from large metro areas	+	none	-
(e) small town atmosphere	+	none	-
(f) community diversity	+	none	-
(g) airport	+	none	-
(h) freeway access	+	none	-
(i) rail access	+	none	-
(j) fishing	+	none	-
(k) wildlife	+	none	-
(l) seasonal tourism	+	none	-
(m) museums/historic sites	+	none	-
(n) activities for kids	+	none	-
(o) festivals or events	+	none	-
(p) other _____	+	none	-

62. Which of the above features (a-p) do you feel should be the focus of a marketing image for Alexandria area? (list the letters for your top three choices)

_____ First choice
 _____ Second choice
 _____ Third choice

63. Do you think promoting the area to visitors is in the best interests of your business? (*circle one*)

YES NO

64. What is your overall opinion of the community as a place to live? (*circle one*)

(5) excellent (4) good (3) fair (2) poor (1) very poor

65. We have covered a lot of issues. Help us set some priorities on how we can help your firm or what we should work on to help all of our existing firms grow and expand. Please give your additional comments.

Again, we appreciate the contributions of your business to our local economy. Thank you for your time and for sharing your opinions.

We cannot promise to solve the concerns you mentioned, but we will promise to try. If we can help you now or in the future, please call:

**Jason Murray
Commission
Pat Kalina
Commission**

**Alexandria Area Economic Development
320-763-4545
Alexandria Area Economic Development
320-763-4545**

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