



# Heldrich Center/NJSBDC Summer 2021 Outlook/Technical Assistance Needs Survey

## Final Topline Survey Results

September 27, 2021

Survey conducted by the Heldrich Center for Workforce Development, Rutgers University  
Sponsored by the New Jersey Small Business Development Center (NJSBDC) with funds provided by the  
U.S. Cares Act from the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA)

N=1,038 attempts; N=878 completes (includes terminated); N=855 completed at least 20%.

Non-probability, opt-in sample with incentive giveaway; Qualtrics programmed and distributed via email to various business, chamber, and industry organizations and via New Jersey Small Business Development Center email lists. Survey conducted in both English and Spanish (~40 surveys conducted in Spanish).

Field dates: July 1 to August 10, 2021

- ▶ Surveys were ended at Q1 or Q2 if the respondent indicated they did not own or manage a business that has most of its operations (51%) in New Jersey or if they indicated they are not a primary decision maker for operational decisions about the business/organization. Surveys ended at Q12 if currently closed and not likely to reopen in next three to six months.
- ▶ **Findings are based on respondents who completed at least 20% of the survey (855 decision makers; 691 completed 100% of the survey).**
- ▶ Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.
- ▶ Check all that apply question percentages do not total to 100%.
- ▶ Excludes item refusals (skipped questions) unless otherwise noted.

### ASK ALL

1. Do you own a business that is **mainly based** in New Jersey (minimum 51% of your operations)?

N=855

	%
Yes	100%
Total	100%

### ASK IF OWNER (Q1=1)

2. Are you a primary decision maker for operational decisions about the business, including finances and staffing?

N=855

	%
Yes	100%
Total	100%

### ASKALL

3. Approximately how many full- and part-time employees does your business have?

N=870

	%
1	45%
2 to 4	30%
5 to 9	11%
10 to 19	8%
20 to 49	5%
50 or more	2%
Total	100%

4. In which county do **most** of your New Jersey-based operations take place? Select one response.

N=841

	%
Atlantic	4%
Bergen	10%
Burlington	4%
Camden	4%
Cape May	1%
Cumberland	1%
Essex	14%
Gloucester	1%
Hudson	6%
Hunterdon	2%
Mercer	6%
Middlesex	8%
Monmouth	8%
Morris	6%
Ocean	2%
Passaic	7%
Salem	0.4%
Somerset	5%
Sussex	1%
Union	6%
Warren	2%
Total	100%

5. What industry is your business in?

N=855

	%
Arts and entertainment, or recreation	7%
Banking or finance	1%
Construction	6%
Manufacturing	4%
Health care	6%
Retail and wholesale	11%
Grocery or convenience store	1%
Personal services (such as hair salons)	10%
Professional and business services	22%
Real estate	3%
Restaurant/bar/catering	7%
Tourism/lodging/hospitality/leisure	1%
Trade/transportation/utilities	4%
Education or child care	7%
Technology	4%
Warehousing and distribution	2%
Nonprofit organization	2%
Other (specify)	2%
Total	100%

6. Is your business:

("owned" is a minimum 51%)

N=855 (% based on this number)

	%	N
Woman owned?	54%	460
Minority owned?	40%	341
Veteran or disabled veteran owned?	4%	34
None/not applicable	28%	239

7. Are **you registered (certified) with the state** as any of the following? Check all that apply.

N=855 (% based on this number)

	%	N
Small Business Enterprise (SBE)	28%	239
Minority/Woman-owned Business Enterprise (MWBE)	16%	141
Veteran-owned or Disabled Veteran-owned (VOB or DVOB)	1%	10
None/not applicable	60%	517

8. How long has your business been in operation?

N=852

	%
Less than 1 year	15%
1 year to less than 2 years	10%
2 to less than 5 years	20%
5 to less than 10 years	17%
10 years or more	38%
Total	100%

9. What percentage of your New Jersey-based workforce operate in remote-working situations (where employees work remotely for at least two days per week on a regular basis)?

N=841

	%
0%	55%
1% to 25%	13%
26% to 49%	4%
50% to 74%	6%
75% to 99%	3%
100% (All)	19%
Total	100%

10. What was your business's revenue in 2020?

N=826

	%
Less than \$249,999	74%
\$250,000 to \$499,999	9%
\$500,000 to \$999,999	6%
\$1 million to \$1.9 million	5%
\$2 million to \$2.9 million	1%
\$3 million to \$3.9 million	1%
\$4 million to \$4.9 million	1%
\$5 million to \$9.9 million	2%
\$10 million or more	1%
Total	100%

**DISPLAY TO ALL:** Next, please think about the impact of the pandemic on your business.

11. Which of the following best describes your business?

N=811

	%
Closed at some point due to the pandemic and now open and operating to some extent	46%
Closed at some point due to the pandemic and currently closed	10%
Never closed; we are open and operating to some extent and have been since the beginning of the pandemic	43%
Total	100%

**ASK IF CURRENTLY CLOSED (Q11=2)**

12. Do you think it is likely you will reopen in the next three to six months?

N=84

	%
Yes, will reopen	55%
No, will not reopen – TERMINATE	5%
Unsure	40%
Total	100%

**ASK ALL**

13. How likely is it that your business will continue to be in business in July 2022 (one year from now)?

N=820

	%
Very likely	72%
Somewhat likely	18%
Not too likely	3%
Not at all likely	1%
Don't know	5%
Total	100%

**ASK IF BUSINESS NOT LIKELY TO BE OPEN IN JULY 2022 (Q13=3-5)**

14. Why is it not likely that your business will be open in July 2022?

**OPEN END (~76 responses)**

**ASK ALL**

15. Of the workers that were employed at your business **prior** to the start of the pandemic, what percentage are **currently** employed with your business?

N=779

	%
100% (I have retained all of my employees)	58%
75% to 99% (I have retained most of my employees)	16%
50% to 74% (I have retained at least half of my employees)	7%
0% to 49% (I have retained less than half of my employees)	20%
Total	100%

16. Are the following factors a major challenge for your business, or not?

*Excludes not applicable responses; "major challenge" responses presented in descending order*

Sample Size		Major Challenge	Not a Major Challenge	Total
N=734	Planning for your business's future	66%	34%	100%
N=724	Financial/credit management	65%	35%	100%
N=721	Bringing customers back to your business	57%	43%	100%
N=533	Finding workers for job vacancies	55%	45%	100%
N=551	Retaining critical employees/managing employee turnover	45%	55%	100%
N=675	Keeping up with advances in technology/digital tools/apps	42%	58%	100%
N=549	Managing supply chain or vending issues	42%	58%	100%
N=518	Helping employees manage work and family issues	33%	67%	100%
N=592	Handling legal issues, such as liability	33%	67%	100%
N=601	Complying with federal and state labor mandates	29%	71%	100%
N=555	Managing employee well-being	28%	72%	100%
N=588	Providing a safe working environment	20%	80%	100%
N=228	Managing remote or telecommuting employees (BASED ON Q9)	20%	80%	100%

**DISPLAY TO ALL:** Next, we are interested in the ways that business owners have adapted their operations strategies due to the challenges brought on by the pandemic.

17. What is one thing you've implemented (such as a strategy, a technology, or something else) that has helped your business manage the challenges brought on by the pandemic?

**OPEN END (~600 responses)**

18. Are you using digital tools, apps, or technologies to do any of the following? Check all that apply.

N=755

*"yes" responses presented in descending order*

	% Yes
Interact with customers on a regular basis	71%
Coordinate payment, billing, and/or online sales processing	65%
Sell products or services	56%
Manage timekeeping, appointment scheduling, or other administrative tasks	55%
None/not applicable (single choice only)	12%

**NO Q19**

20. Because of the impact of the pandemic, has your business increased the use of automation technologies to replace some tasks or processes previously done by workers (such as using software to automate customer interaction, email marketing, or human resources tasks)?

N=752

	%
Yes	39%
No	61%
Total	100%

**ASK IF USING DIGITAL TOOLS/APPS OR AUTOMATION (Q18a-d=1) or Q20=1**

21. Have you offered your employees training and/or resources to help them keep up with digital tools, apps, or new technologies that are used in your business?

N=360

*Excludes not applicable responses*

	%
Yes	64%
No	36%
Total	100%



## ASK ALL

22. Since March 2020, have you made any of the following changes to your business's operations to promote social distancing? Check all that apply.

N=740

	% Yes
Reconfigured employee areas, offices, or space	25%
Reconfigured customer areas, storefronts, or space	24%
Alternated workers in the workplace, such as shift/schedule changes	18%
Replaced workers with automation or other new technology	7%
None/not applicable	56%

N=327

*Excludes none/not applicable responses*

	% Yes
Reconfigured employee areas, offices, or space	57%
Reconfigured customer areas, storefronts, or space	55%
Alternated workers in the workplace, such as shift/schedule changes	41%
Replaced workers with automation or other new technology	15%

## ASK IF MADE CHANGES (ANY Q22A-D=1)

23. Now that social distancing restrictions are lifted, will you continue doing these things in the future, or will you go back to how things were before the pandemic?

Sample Size		Will Continue in Future	Will Go Back to How Things were Before	Don't Know	Total
N=182	Reconfigured employee areas, offices, or space	55%	28%	16%	100%
N=175	Reconfigured customer areas, storefronts, or space	52%	32%	16%	100%
N=129	Alternated workers in the workplace, such as shift/schedule changes	47%	36%	16%	100%
N=47	Replaced workers with automation or other new technology	66%	13%	21%	100%

**ASK ALL**

24. Since March 2020, have you added new workforce roles (such as creating new tasks for existing employees or creating new positions) that focus on health and/or hygiene practices in your business?

N=738

	%
Yes	33%
No	67%
Total	100%

25. Since March 2020, have you created new products or services that you will continue to offer in the future?

N=739

	%
Yes	53%
No	47%
Total	100%

26. How important to you is implementing sustainable or socially responsible business practices (that might address equity issues, energy efficiency, or supplier diversity)?

N=714

	%
Very important	59%
Somewhat important	21%
Not too important	4%
Not at all important	5%
Not applicable	10%
Total	100%

N=648

*Excludes not applicable responses*

	%
Very important	66%
Somewhat important	24%
Not too important	5%
Not at all important	5%
Total	100%

27. How important to you is providing high-quality jobs to your workforce?

N=718

	%
Very important	68%
Somewhat important	12%
Not too important	2%
Not at all important	0.1%
Not applicable	17%
Total	100%

N=601

*Excludes not applicable responses*

	%
Very important	83%
Somewhat important	14%
Not too important	3%
Not at all important	0.2%
Total	100%

**DISPLAY TO ALL:** Next, we are interested in what your **plans are for the future** of your business.

**ASK ALL**

28. Thinking about the next 12 months, will your business be affected in any of the following ways?

Will your business...

*Excludes not applicable responses; "yes" responses presented in descending order*

Sample Size		Yes	No	Don't Know	Total
N=590	Hire new employees part time?	47%	20%	33%	100%
N=497	Retrain or upskill current employees for changing roles?	46%	28%	26%	100%
N=573	Hire new employees full time?	40%	26%	34%	100%
N=576	Hire new temporary or contract workers?	40%	26%	35%	100%
N=524	Decrease worker hours?	18%	54%	28%	100%
N=507	Permanently lay off employees?	7%	62%	31%	100%
N=504	Temporarily lay off employees?	7%	61%	32%	100%

28b. In the next 12 months, will your business...

*"yes" responses presented in descending order*

Sample Size		Yes	No	Don't Know	Not Applicable	Total
N=702	Experience increased operational costs?	65%	10%	21%	4%	100%
N=700	Continue to use remote work or increase your use of remote work?	43%	19%	13%	24%	100%
N=695	Suffer supply chain disruptions?	31%	24%	28%	16%	100%
N=693	Temporarily close a location (while open and operating other locations)?	5%	44%	11%	40%	100%
N=690	Permanently close a location (while open and operating other locations)?	4%	44%	11%	40%	100%

*Excludes not applicable responses; "yes" responses presented in descending order*

Sample Size		Yes	No	Don't Know	Total
N=680	Experience increased operational costs?	67%	10%	22%	100%
N=537	Continue to use remote work or increase your use of remote work?	57%	26%	17%	100%
N=591	Suffer supply chain disruptions?	37%	29%	34%	100%
N=420	Temporarily close a location (while open and operating other locations)?	8%	74%	18%	100%
N=418	Permanently close a location (while open and operating other locations)?	7%	74%	19%	100%

29. In the next 12 months, do you think there will be jobs at your business that may **change** because of automation or other new technologies, such as replacing some tasks or processes that your workers are doing right now?

N=713

	%
Yes	19%
No	57%
Don't know	25%
Total	100%

### NO Q30

31. How concerned are you about the costs or other impacts of employee turnover on your operations in the future?

N=541

*Excludes not applicable responses*

	%
Very concerned	46%
Somewhat concerned	29%
Not too concerned	18%
Not at all concerned	7%
Total	100%

32. Even as vaccinations increase, how concerned are you about the impact of the pandemic on your business's operations in the future?

N=709

	%
Very concerned	37%
Somewhat concerned	33%
Not too concerned	19%
Not at all concerned	11%
Total	100%

### NO Q33

**DISPLAY TO ALL:** The final set of questions ask you about technical assistance, guidance, or other services your business may need in the future.

34. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

Technical assistance, guidance, or support services would help me stabilize or grow my business.

N=632

*Excludes not applicable responses*

	%
Agree a lot	57%
Agree a little	35%
Disagree a little	5%
Disagree a lot	4%
Total	100%

35. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

If I need technical assistance, guidance, or support services for my business, I know where to find help.

N=662

*Excludes not applicable responses*

	%
Agree a lot	32%
Agree a little	35%
Disagree a little	15%
Disagree a lot	17%
Total	100%

36. In the next 12 months...what do you need in order to grow/continue to grow your business?

*"yes" responses presented in descending order*

Sample Size		Yes	No	Not Applicable	Total
N=692	Growth in online customers or development of online sales or websites	74%	11%	15%	100%
N=694	Access to credit/funding/financial assistance	74%	20%	6%	100%
N=685	A new or improved business plan/strategy	70%	20%	10%	100%
N=686	Growth in walk-in customers	45%	22%	33%	100%
N=682	To fully reopen my business	35%	16%	49%	100%
N=681	To open closed locations	10%	27%	63%	100%

*Excludes not applicable responses; "yes" responses presented in descending order*

Sample Size		Yes	No	Total
N=589	Growth in online customers or development of online sales or websites	87%	13%	100%
N=649	Access to credit/funding/financial assistance	79%	21%	100%
N=617	A new or improved business plan/strategy	78%	22%	100%
N=347	To fully reopen my business	69%	31%	100%
N=458	Growth in walk-in customers	67%	33%	100%
N=252	To open closed locations	27%	73%	100%

37. Below are types of assistance that you may or may not need to help you operate in the next 12 to 24 months.

Of the following types of assistance, based on priority, please choose your top three. Drag and drop into the "Top Three Needs" box. You can also just select one or two types. Assistance with...

N=639

*Excludes refusals/not applicable/not needed (9% of sample)*

	Rank	% Yes (Ranked 1, 2, or 3)
Grants, loans, and credit, such as finding and applying for financial assistance	1	79%
E-commerce, digital marketing, and/or social media	2	72%
Supply chain or vending, such as procurement and consumer behavior	3	37%
Legal issues, such as liability and exit strategies	4	30%
Cyber security protections	5	25%
Remote workforce management	6	11%

38. In the next 12 months...do you plan to apply for financial assistance or look for additional capital from...

Sample Size		Yes	No	Don't Know	Total
N=694	Federal programs?	59%	18%	24%	100%
N=693	State programs?	60%	17%	23%	100%
N=692	County or local programs?	56%	19%	25%	100%

**ASK IF WON'T APPLY FOR ASSISTANCE OR DON'T KNOW (Q38A=2,3 AND Q38B=2,3 AND Q38C=2,3)**

39. Why won't you look for financial assistance? Check all that apply.

N=255

	%
I don't need more debt	45%
The application process is too complicated or I don't have time	15%
I'm not sure it's needed/conditions are improving for my business	40%
I'm not eligible or I don't know if I'm eligible	35%
Other	12%

**ASK ALL**

40. How likely are you to seek out a **one-on-one counseling session, or opportunity to speak with a mentor or consultant**, to assist you with strategizing, developing, or growing your business?

N=695

	%
Very likely	42%
Somewhat likely	28%
Not too likely	14%
Not at all likely	11%
Depends	5%
Total	100%

41. How likely are you to participate in a **webinar training, group counseling session, or online short course** on a topic that would help you with strategizing, developing, or growing your business?

N=696

	%
Very likely	55%
Somewhat likely	27%
Not too likely	9%
Not at all likely	7%
Depends	3%
Total	100%

42. Have you heard about the technical assistance, business development, or other services offered to New Jersey businesses by the New Jersey Small Business Development Center (NJSBDC)?

N=693

	%
Yes, have heard of NJSBDC	76%
No, have not heard of NJSBDC	19%
Don't know	5%
Total	100%

**ASK IF HEARD OF NJSBDC OR DON'T KNOW (Q42=1,3)**

43. Since the beginning of the pandemic (on or around March 2020), have you participated in a NJSBDC online course, webinar, training, or counseling session?

N=554

	%
Yes	51%
No	49%
Total	100%

**ASK ALL**

44. **Other than rising vaccination rates**, what will help your business stabilize or grow in the next 12 to 24 months (one year to two years from now)?

**OPEN END (~500 responses)**

**DISPLAY TO ALL:** Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this survey. Your responses have been recorded.



## About America's SBDC New Jersey (NJSBDC)

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America's SBDC New Jersey, also known as New Jersey Small Business Development Centers (NJSBDC) network, is one of the nation's first pilot projects and has provided comprehensive services and programs for small businesses in New Jersey over 40 years. SBDC experts help businesses expand their operations, manage their growth, and start new ventures. Expert business consultants help small business owners and entrepreneurs develop business plans, find financing, perform accounting and financial analysis, develop and refine marketing strategies, find and take advantage of procurement and international trade opportunities, learn green sustainability practices, commercialize technology and develop an E-commerce presence. The NJSBDC is a non-profit network, a federal-state-educational partnership, leverages funding from the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), the N.J. Business Action Center, the educational institutions that host the 12 centers, as well as other private sponsorships and additional private/public grants. The NJSBDC Headquarters, located at the Rutgers Business School in Newark, NJ, oversees the network, which is an accredited member of America's SBDC. Approximately 1,000 centers and satellite offices serve small businesses across the country, generating jobs and economic development. To learn more about the NJSBDC, visit [www.njsbdc.com](http://www.njsbdc.com) and follow [@NJSBDC](#) on Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter for new updates, opportunities, and resources.

**#NJSBDC #NJThrives**

## About the Heldrich Center

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The John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development at Rutgers University is devoted to transforming the workforce development system at the local, state, and federal levels. The center, located within the Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy, provides an independent source of analysis for reform and innovation in policymaking and employs cutting-edge research and evaluation methods to identify best practices in workforce development, education, and employment policy. It is also engaged in significant partnerships with the private sector, workforce organizations, and educational institutions to design effective education and training programs. It is deeply committed to assisting job seekers and workers attain the information, education, and skills training they need to move up the economic ladder.

As captured in its slogan, "Solutions at Work," the Heldrich Center is guided by a commitment to translate the strongest research and analysis into practices and programs that companies, community-based organizations, philanthropy, and government officials can use to strengthen their workforce and workforce readiness programs, create jobs, and remain competitive. The center's work strives to build an efficient labor market that matches workers' skills and knowledge with the evolving demands of employers. The center's projects are grounded in a core set of research priorities:

- ▶ Career and Technical Education
- ▶ Data Collection and Analysis
- ▶ Disability Employment
- ▶ Job Seekers in Transition
- ▶ Program Evaluation
- ▶ Trend Analysis

Learn more: [www.heldrich.rutgers.edu](http://www.heldrich.rutgers.edu)