



Executives of Iowa's Largest Employers Bullish on 2019 Business Prospects

(DES MOINES) – The Iowa Business Council (IBC) released its quarterly economic outlook survey today, with IBC members reporting high hopes for 2019. This optimism is bolstered by the fact that two thirds of the members anticipate higher sales in the next six months. To support this projected sales growth, 60 percent of respondents expect to add to their workforce, and half project an increase in capital spending.

Despite this bullish economic forecast, nearly 80 percent of executives cite attracting, developing and retaining a quality workforce as their primary business challenge. This sentiment was echoed by small and medium sized businesses at the IBC's Vision to Vitality forums in 2018.

In response to this consistent feedback from both its members and other business leaders, the IBC adopted "Building Iowa's talent pipeline" as a 2019 priority. As part of the IBC's efforts to achieve this priority, its members are committed to the continued implementation of the state's Future Ready Iowa initiative and identified funding the program's Last Dollar Scholarship and Employer Innovation Fund as a legislative priority.

"We continue to hear how the state's workforce shortage constrains growth not only for our members, but for businesses in every corner of our state" said IBC Executive Director Georgia Van Gundy. "It is crucial that we remove barriers keeping Iowans from entering the workforce or up-skilling. Future Ready Iowa provides communities with a roadmap to tackle their regions' challenges, and the Last Dollar Scholarship and Employer Innovation Fund are both important tools that these communities will be able to use to build their talent pipeline."

When considering challenges for their businesses, over one third of IBC members reported the business climate – which includes taxes and regulations – as barriers to growth. This feedback ties to another IBC state legislative priority, as the organization plans to support the continued review of Iowa's tax code in order to increase the competitiveness of Iowa's tax climate.

The Economic Outlook Survey has been completed by the council members on a quarterly basis since 2004. The survey's projected trends have a state-wide impact, especially when considering that IBC companies employ one in six Iowans.

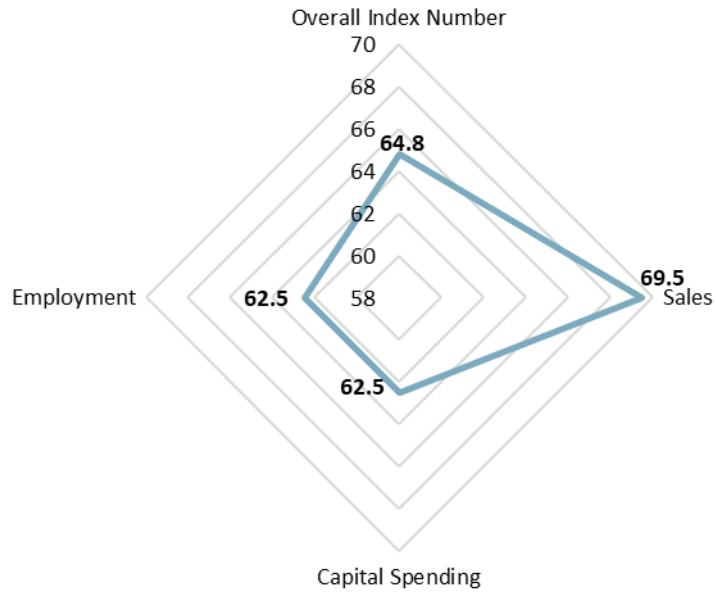
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About the Iowa Business Council

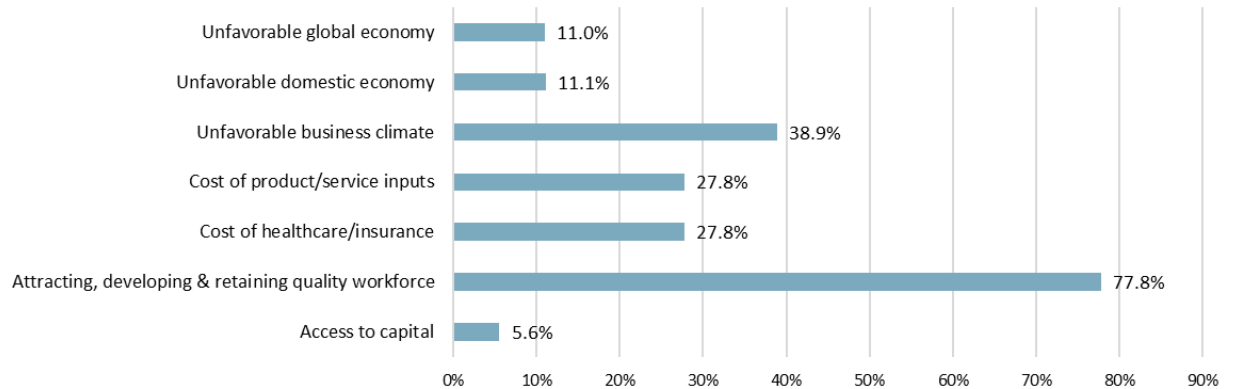
The Iowa Business Council (IBC) is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization whose 23 members are the chief decision makers of major Iowa employers. One in six jobs in Iowa are tied to an IBC company. IBC member companies have invested billions of dollars of capital in Iowa's commercial infrastructure; lead the way in technology innovation, R&D, and grants procured; and are often the driving financial and volunteer forces behind philanthropic efforts all over the state.

IBC member companies include: Alliant Energy; Casey's General Stores, Inc.; Collins Aerospace; Corteva Agriscience; Deere & Company; Fareway; FBL Financial Group, Inc.; HNI Corporation; Hy-Vee, Inc., Iowa Bankers Association; Kent Corporation; Mercy Health Network; Meredith Corporation; MidAmerican Energy Company; Pella Corporation; Principal; Ruan Transportation Management Systems; The Weitz Company; The University of Iowa Health Care; UnityPoint Health; Vermeer Corporation; Wellmark Blue Cross Blue Shield of Iowa; and Wells Enterprises, Inc.

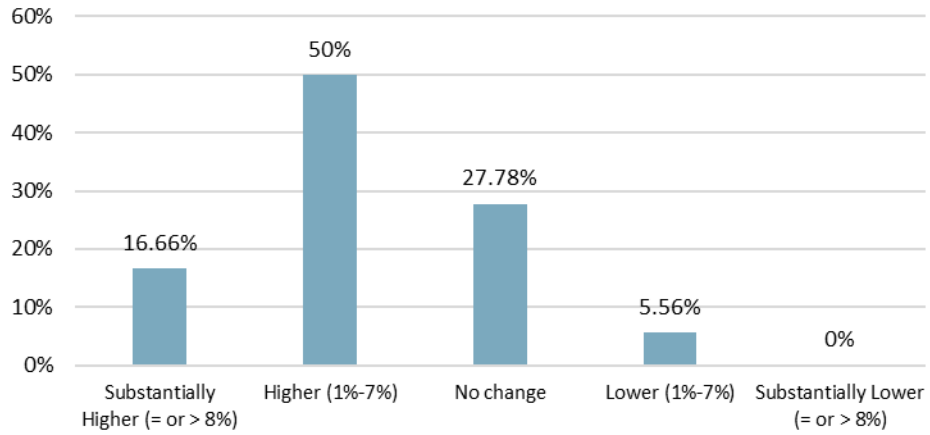
2018 Q4 Economic Outlook Survey Index Numbers



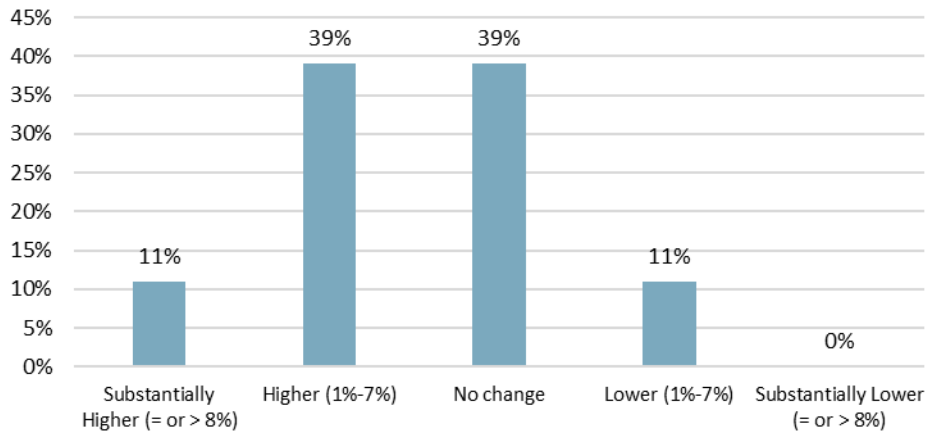
What are your current primary business challenges?



How do you expect your company's sales to change in the next six months?



How do you expect your company's capital spending to change in the next six months?



How do you expect your company's employment to change in the next six months?

