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## **460 Southeast Alaska Business Leaders Weigh in on COVID Impacts and the Economy**

Each year Southeast Conference asks regional business owners and top managers to complete a business climate survey allowing policy leaders, program developers, and project proponents to form projections regarding the economic direction of Southeast Alaska. In 2020 businesses were also asked to provide information regarding how COVID-19 has been impacting their business operations, and 460 Southeast business leaders provided their insights.

The Southeast Alaska Business Climate and COVID-19 Impacts Survey 2020 results include the following findings:

- Just over half of businesses have received COVID-19 support funding, including 47% that received PPP funding.
- Responding employers have already laid off 18.6% their total workforce due to the COVID-19 virus and cancelled hiring thousands of more workers - mostly in the tourism sector. One-quarter of businesses expect to cut more staff in the future.
- Regional business revenue was down 57% on average in 2020 so far, compared to the same period in 2019. By industry, the tourism and arts sectors have experienced the greatest revenue losses, while mining and timber have seen the smallest reductions. Businesses in Skagway and Haines reported the highest revenue losses in the region.
- One-quarter of respondents say that they are at risk closing permanently, while one-third say that are not at risk of closure. The mining and finance industries have the lowest risk of closing due to the pandemic, while child care facilities, social service providers, and food and drink establishments have the greatest risk.
- 89% of respondents call the current economy poor or very poor, and 62% feel that the upcoming year will be worse.

Survey findings will be used to help direct funding and resources to those businesses and communities that need it the most. The survey was developed in a partnership between Southeast Conference, Spruce Root, the City and Borough of Wrangell, the Petersburg Borough, the Sitka Economic Development Association, the Haines Chamber of Commerce, and the Skagway Development Corporation. Rain Coast Data designed and administered the survey and developed the analysis.

Robert Venables, Southeast Conference executive director reacted to the survey results. “There is no sugar-coating the grim state of our economy. We need to rally around our at-risk businesses and do everything possible to stabilize their situation while working toward an economic recovery. There is no quick or easy fix, but Southeast Alaskans are resilient and have continually bounced back from economic disasters. This survey gives voice to the economic woes but also provides understanding of the needs and challenges we must meet.”

Alec Mesdag, Southeast Conference president responded, "In addition to businesses, it is important to note the impacts to social-welfare nonprofits, many of which will simultaneously see increased demand and decreased support. The scramble to keep our heads above water will hopefully not inhibit our ability to absorb what we are experiencing, because we will make it through, and the ability to remember what happened will help us craft a more resilient economy."

The full study can be read on the Southeast Conference website:  
[www.seconference.org/southeast-alaska-business-climate-and-covid-19-impacts-survey-2020](http://www.seconference.org/southeast-alaska-business-climate-and-covid-19-impacts-survey-2020)

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*The mission of **Southeast Conference** is to undertake and support activities that promote strong economies, healthy communities and a quality environment in Southeast Alaska. Southeast Conference began more than 60 years ago with a group of people supporting the establishment of a regional transportation system in Southeast Alaska. As the state and federally designated regional economic development organization for Southeast Alaska, Southeast Conference serves as the collective voice for advancing the region's economy. It has 231 members, including nearly every community in Southeast Alaska.*