



Feasibility Study Report: 2024-2028 Strategic Plan

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Contents

Introduction.....	3
Organization and Plan Overview.....	4
Study Methodology	5
About the Interviewees	6
Fundamental Elements of a Successful Fundraising Campaign	7
Interview Highlights.....	8
Key Findings	10
Characterizing the Yakima County Economy	10
Determining Sufficient Economic Growth	11
Greatest Challenges / Obstacles to Economic Growth	12
Familiarity with YCDA	14
Effectiveness of YCDA.....	15
YCDA’s Accomplishments	18
Benefits from YCDA Efforts.....	19
Assessment and Rating of YCDA’s Proposed Plan	20
Plan Modifications or Additions.....	29
Funding Support	30
Potential Lead Investors	31
Campaign Leadership.....	32
Competing Campaigns	32
Recommendations.....	33
Asking Rights	33
Campaign Goal	33
Campaign Timing & Mode of Engagement	34
Program Refinement	35
Campaign Leadership & Organization.....	36
Investor Cultivation	37
Conclusion	37
Appendix	39
Appendix A – Interview Request Letter.....	39
Appendix C – Questionnaire	40
Appendix D – Investment Table.....	47

Introduction

If YCDA is going to compete successfully for new businesses, new investment, new talent, and successfully manage retention, then it must identify the drivers for future competitiveness and implement specific strategies that have a measurable positive impact. The objective behind YCDA's feasibility study is a long-term action agenda to enhance Yakima County's economy through improving human capital resources, business growth and marketing the region, infrastructure, and quality of place. The proposed 5-year strategic plan (2024-2028) to achieve this was tested

The 56 individuals who participated in the study's 52 total interviews provided candid observations about the proposed, new five-year plan. Their suggestions, insights, and opinions provide specifics for the content of this report.

Organization and Plan Overview

YCDA exists to diversify the local economy by attracting and retaining high-wage jobs for Yakima County. Through public and private partnerships, it is able to connect existing businesses to the resources they need to succeed. This collaborative environment, strategic thinking, and business friendly attitude develops commerce and trade, and has helped in securing the location of manufacturing and commercial enterprises in Yakima County.

To fulfill the vision of economic vitality for Yakima County, stakeholders must continue to support the strategic positioning of the county to compete in a global marketplace. Such important work must be funded to remain relevant and continue the positive trajectory.

YCDA has an opportunity to capitalize on its economic momentum and to achieve even greater results for the county and its citizens. Stakeholders recognize that sustainable economic growth is not accomplished solely by a single line of command, but by the combined efforts of stakeholders, corporate and government partners, and economic development allies.

YCDA unveiled the framework of its new, multi-year plan by developing a *Prospectus* in August 2022. The *Prospectus* included a draft plan of the organization's program of work. The desired outcomes are to build a healthy economic environment by strengthening the capabilities of its workforce, creating new higher paying jobs, enhancing quality of life, and increasing the tax base for expanded services throughout the county.

With full implementation of the new plan, the potential impact for Yakima County businesses and municipalities has far-reaching, positive economic implications. The draft plan represents a \$8 million investment from public and private-sector sources over the next five years.

The draft five-year action plan identifies five strategic initiatives that serve as the framework:

Initiative I:	Workforce Development
Initiative II:	Expand Local Economy
Initiative III:	Grow Small Business
Initiative IV:	Develop Infrastructure for Growth
Initiative V:	Promote Region to Attract New Business
Initiative VI:	Cultivate Yakima County's Unique Business Clusters

Study Methodology

In August 2022, YCDA staff and Board worked closely to develop a *Prospectus* (Appendix B), the discussion document that included YCDA's draft five-year strategic plan and projected costs. The *Prospectus* was finalized and endorsed by the YCDA board in September 2022.

YCDA staff then drafted an *Interview Request Letter* (Appendix A) that explained the study interview process and included a request for involvement. YCDA staff and volunteer leadership next developed a list of prospective interviewees that included more than 130 influential community and business leaders. YCDA mailed the *Prospectus* and *Interview Request Letter* to prospective interviewees and the scheduling of interviews began.

A total of 52 interviews involving 56 individuals were completed by Terry Edmands in October, November and December. Interview scheduling was determined by the availability and interest of those asked to participate. A complete *Roster of Interviewees* is available upon request and represents a broad cross-section of the community and business leaders.

All conversations focused on the information outlined in the draft *Prospectus*. To facilitate the interview process and to best quantify the information obtained, A *Questionnaire* (Appendix C) was utilized. Most interviews lasted between 60 and 90 minutes.

To encourage candid responses, interviewees were assured that their opinions and comments would remain confidential. Interviewees were also assured that the meeting was not a solicitation, but rather an opportunity to gather insights and opinions on the draft plan.

The interviewees shared their thoughts on the feasibility of generating \$8 million (the draft plan's preliminary, new budgeted amount) in five-year funding from public and private sources. Interviewees were asked to review an *Investment Range Table* (Appendix E) illustrating the levels of financial support typically required to raise \$8 million (current commitments plus draft plan's budget) over five years.

While not asking for specific funding support, interviewees were asked about a financial range of support their organization might consider pending acceptable final plans, strong and supportive campaign leadership, and a campaign launch.

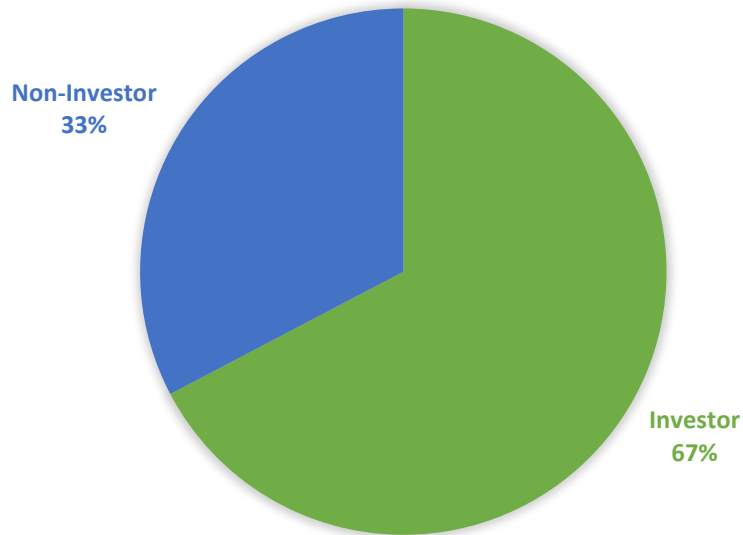
Though direct quotations are in the report, comments are not attributed to any specific person, company, or industry and may in fact be a combination of thoughts / opinions offered (and often echoed verbatim by more than one interviewee). This report lists interviewee responses in the aggregate.

Note that not all interviewees were asked – answered – every question. The findings and recommendations found here are the results of careful analysis by YCDA staff based on experience with prior feasibility studies and campaigns.

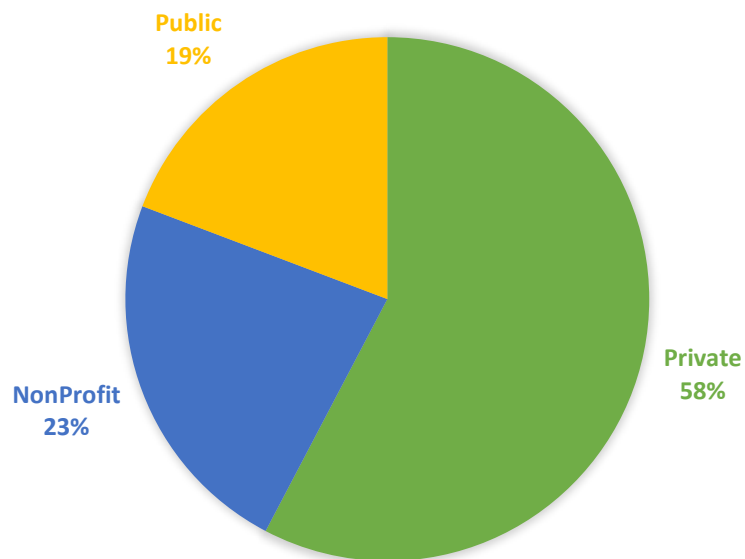
About the Interviewees

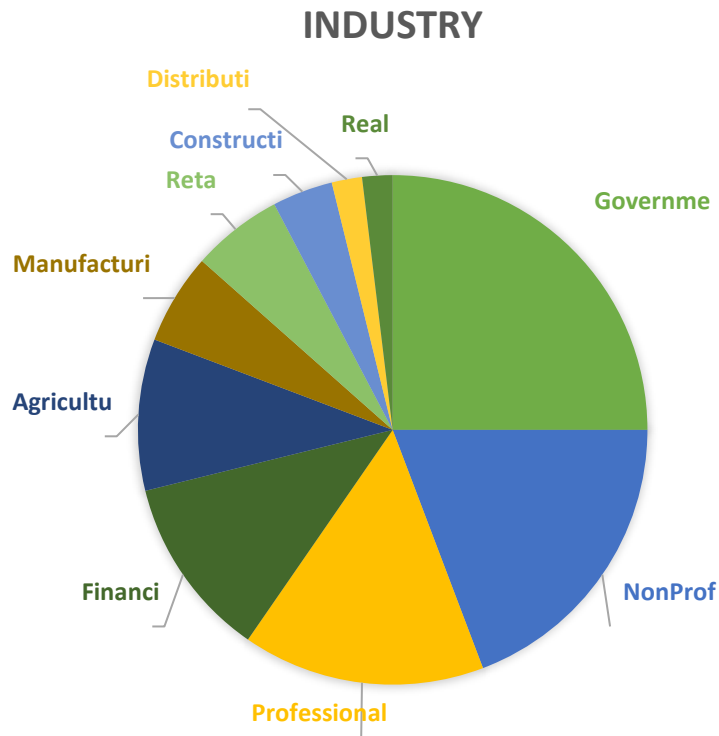
The charts below illustrate the composition of the interview sample in terms of whether an YCDA investor or not, and also public-sector and private-sector industry classification, with percentages calculated based on the interviewees.

YCDA INVESTOR STATUS



TYPE OF BUSINESS





Fundamental Elements of a Successful Fundraising Campaign

The fundamental elements listed below are essential to conducting a successful fundraising campaign. Satisfaction of these elements endows an organization and its leaders with “asking rights.” The central purpose of each interview conducted was to uncover the presence or absence of these fundamental elements and, correspondingly, the existence of “asking rights” for YCDA and its proposed plan of work and projected five-year budget.

Compelling Need and Sense of Urgency

The need should be well-recognized and compelling to Yakima County’s business and government community. It must not simply be an organizational need. Most importantly, an urgent reason should exist to fund the program of work NOW.

Effective Plan to Meet the Need

The plan should provide a practical, appropriate solution or response to the need.

Organizational Effectiveness and Fundraising Strength

YCDA’s board should be comprised of respected leaders whose collective reputation is that of an organization that can execute a successful funding campaign and implement the proposed program of work. Board members should be enthusiastic, committed, and

capable of supporting the campaign generously with their financial means, time, and other resources. The organization should have a positive reputation, a track record of success, or other attributes that will instill a sense of confidence in its ability to manage and implement the proposed program.

Constituency Has Adequate Financial Resources

Corporations, foundations, and government organizations in the region that care about the identified needs must have the financial capacity to fund it.

Potential Campaign Leaders Available and Interested / Committed

Leaders of influence and financial means should currently be associated with and committed to the organization and the program. Alternatively, it should be evident the organization could readily recruit leaders of appropriate stature and means to help raise the dollars necessary to fund the programs.

Interview Highlights

YCDA continues to hold “asking rights” with existing and potential investors throughout the county, and these rights can be improved to maximize the success of a capital campaign. By following the recommendations contained in this report, YCDA can increase its asking rights and achieve maximum fundraising success.

YCDA investors recognize the organization’s purpose and are aware of the positive results achieved since its inception. Most investors and potential investors acknowledge the impact of the last 5 years and can point specific programs or activities that directly affected these positive results.

Interviewees realize the overall benefit of the organization’s work, appreciate the staff, and recognize or know members of the board. Potential investors in Yakima County either knew an investor or heard of YCDA.

YCDA staff is known and respected however roles are not clearly understood. Board members are known by most of the business community and are often highly regarded. There exists general awareness and some understanding amongst interviewees of YCDA functions and positive impact on economic growth.

The degree of trust and regard held by interviewees in the organization’s current leadership may be the single-most important factor in reaching the campaign funding goal. Investing in an organization is a vote of confidence in the organization’s leadership.

Yakima County's economy is considered good by most interviewees due to its strong agricultural base. However, many are quick to point out the need to diversify and advance Ag and Food Processing practices. Limited workforce, healthcare, education, "shovel-ready" property and affordable housing are obstacles to future success.

Many respondents feel that state government, and the county and its cities, need to become more business friendly and less risk/change averse. The Ports of Sunnyside and Grandview were mentioned frequently as excellent examples of leveraging resources for economic growth.

Many interviewees voiced commitment to the future of Yakima County however stated frustration with state and local leadership and lack of visible progress. There is a general agreement that workforce skills, dependability, retention and attraction are critical for existing and new business success. The Yakima Valley's curb appeal and self-esteem were often noted as opportunities for improvement.

The increase funding for YCDA's strategic plan will support economic strength in the community. Commitment to community and trust in YCDA leadership will inspire the business community to increase their investments.

The tested goal of \$8 million over five years is deemed unrealistic. The initiatives can be combined in many cases or done in cooperation with other public and private entities to make a more realistic goal.

Based on the priorities outlined from the interviewees, a funding goal of \$4 million to \$4.5 million pledged over a five-year period is recommended. Accordingly, most investors will be asked to increase their investment by 40%. New investors and grant awards remain key components to YCDA's ability to execute the strategic plan.

To secure maximum results, and to reach the campaign goal, a 12-month full-time campaign will be necessary.

Key Findings

The following is a summary and analysis of the responses provided by the 56 individual interviewees, and it includes a sampling of the various viewpoints that exist among business executives, non-profit, and government representatives.

The questionnaire design (as found in Appendix D) encourages specific opinions and feedback from the interviewees. It also uncovers the presence or absence of fundamental elements for conducting a successful funding campaign.

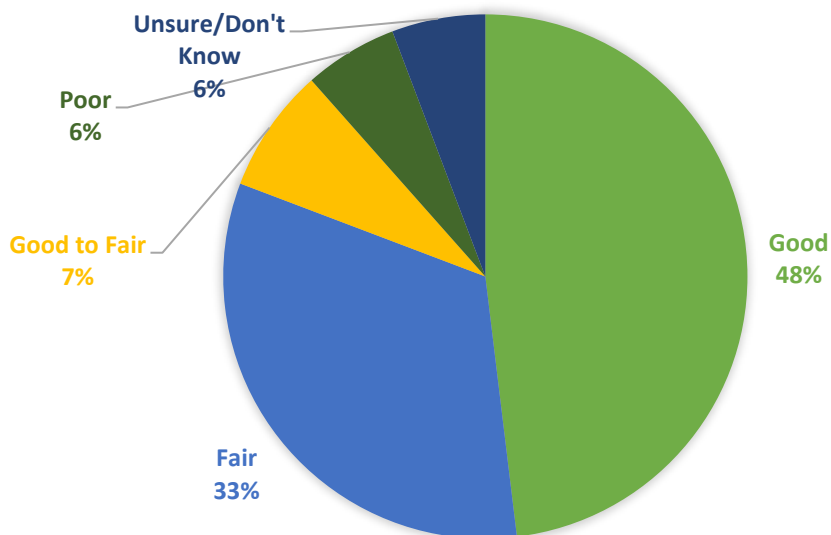
There may seem to be redundancy throughout the findings. Statements and commentary that appear redundant were the result of interviewees raising the same

issue, concerns, and making the same or similar comments in response to more than one question.

To reflect true sentiment, when the interviewees raised issues repeatedly, they were captured in similar but not identical format in response to various questions. Because the same or similar comments were important enough for the interviewee to raise multiple times, capturing the repeated commentary is deemed to be of equal importance to provide the highest degree of accuracy.

Characterizing the Yakima County Economy

Q. How would you characterize Yakima County's economy?



Analysis

Forty-eight percent of respondents regard the Yakima County economy as “good”, with 88% rating it at least “fair” and 0% percent rating it excellent. This opinion is mostly based on how the respondents’ businesses and their customers’ businesses are doing. They often reference the low unemployment rate as “misleading” and report a high number of open positions in the County. Six percent of respondents consider the economy to be “poor” mostly due COVID recovery and the business climate in the State of Washington.

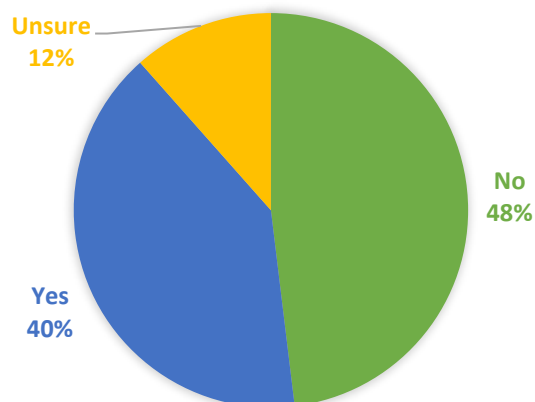
The majority see a lack of economic diversity, skilled workforce, shortage of affordable housing, and an overall shortage of labor at all levels to be the challenge in maintaining success and growth in the future. Most saw existing industry, the public sector, and service sectors as creating the most jobs. Many desire a new strategy to strengthen existing business and bring in new and diverse businesses. They believe that the future is “okay”, but fear without change and new approaches it is not going to get better and could possibly get worse.

In Their Words

- *“We need to keep Agriculture strong and build upon its stable base”*
- *“Can’t find staff”*
- *“We are losing opportunities to Wenatchee and Tri-Cities”*
- *“The State of Washington is not a welcoming environment for business”*
- *“The airport is a pivotal asset at risk”*

Determining Sufficient Economic Growth

Q. Do you feel sufficient economic growth is now occurring to maintain or improve the current economy and quality of life in future years?



Analysis

Forty percent of interviewees believe the economy is adequate. On the other side, 48% responded “no” and expressed caution for the future of the economy. Twelve percent of respondents were “unsure.”

Most agree the agricultural industry producers keep the Yakima Valley consistently stable and not subject to the standard peaks and valleys of other areas. They also recognize that these industries have lower wages and, as a result, it becomes more difficult for some industries to attract the qualified technical workers or higher-paid professionals that are needed to continue the growth.

The following are areas of concern expressed most frequently by interviewees about future growth (not in any specific order):

- Inadequate Workforce Skill Levels
- Lack of “middle class”
- Healthcare shortage
- Lack of “shovel-ready” properties
- Public Education K-12
- Perception of Crime
- Lack of Housing
- Decreased flights into Yakima Air Terminal
- Poor appearance of communities from highway
- Poor perception of communities from residents and non-residents
- Water conservation
- Local and State Leadership

Q. In your opinion, what are the county’s greatest strengths and assets for economic growth?

Analysis

The strengths mentioned by interviewees were consistently the natural environment, cost of living, central location, favorable climate and abundant outdoor recreation.

Respondents believe Yakima County has unique strengths and assets for growth that if optimized “within and beyond agriculture”, will ensure economic equality and prosperity in our communities.

In Their Words

- *“Agriculture is and always has been our economic leader.”*
- *“Tourism has great potential in the valley.”*
- *“Our state and local government needs to get onboard and be more pro-business if we are to be successful in encouraging existing and new businesses.”*
- *“We have an abundance of land”*
- *“Of course, the mountains, access to water and our weather goes without saying.”*
- *“Access to a great lifestyle”*
- *“There is still a small-town/ family feel and the lifestyle is great”*
- *“Our natural resources and committed community members are our main assets.”*

Greatest Challenges / Obstacles to Economic Growth

Q. In your opinion, what are the county's greatest challenges / obstacles to economic growth?

Analysis

Nearly all respondents identified the county’s lack of a skilled and dependable workforce as the dominant challenge to economic growth. While they all felt the programs at Perry Technical College and Yakima Valley Community College are addressing some of the skill gaps, there is much more to be done. It seems that growth is being hampered at all levels and for all industries. Access to healthcare was another common concern.

Another consistent response was the perceived increase of gang activity, drug problems, crime, and homelessness in the area. Many felt that more resources were required to improve these systemic issues and that a living wage is necessary for most to be able to advance out of poverty.

The identified challenges are viewed as serious and potential “deal-breakers” for economic growth, specifically talent attraction and retention.

Business and community leaders recognize the importance of the public sector in providing support for moving the County forward. Optimism is greatest for the Ports and smaller cities. Considerable frustration was voiced about the City of Yakima’s ability to initiate and execute positive change.

In Their Words

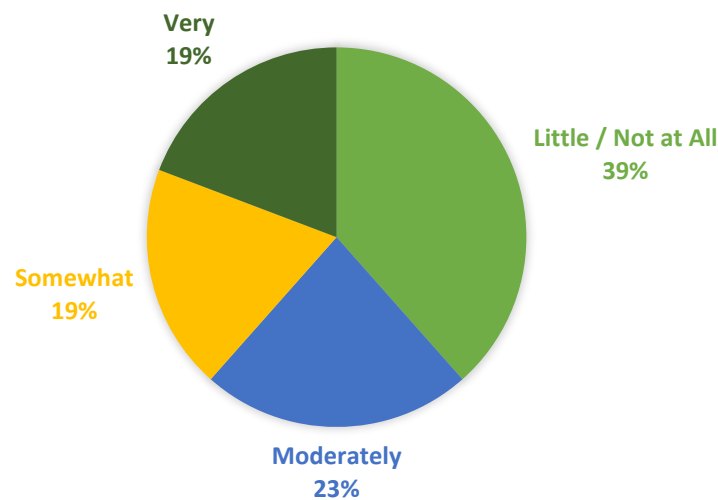
- *“We are suffering in healthcare, education, image and self-esteem”.*
- *“Strengthen the local workforce, businesses and lifestyle FIRST”.*
- *“We have trouble finding professional employees and retaining employees.”*

- *“Creating a pro-business government is key.”*
- *“Yakima needs a WIN”*
- *“Our leaders continue to be change and risk averse.”*
- *“We need housing, infrastructure, roads and bold leadership willing to do things differently”.*

Familiarity with YCDA

Q: How familiar are you with the Yakima County Development Association (YCDA)?

___Yes __No ___Unsure



Analysis

Forty-two % percent of those interviewed indicated they are “Very” or “Moderately” familiar with YCDA. Fifty eight percent stated they were “somewhat” or “little / not at all” familiar with YCDA. This demonstrates the need to increase awareness of economic development activities and YCDA’s role.

The 42% who indicated that they are either “very” familiar or “moderately” familiar, base their familiarity on some form of involvement with the organization. Either by serving on the board, supporting YCDA via the public sector, investing in one of the events, knowing YCDA board members, attending YCDA meetings, receiving newsletter updates or emails on economic development work, or reading announcements in the media.

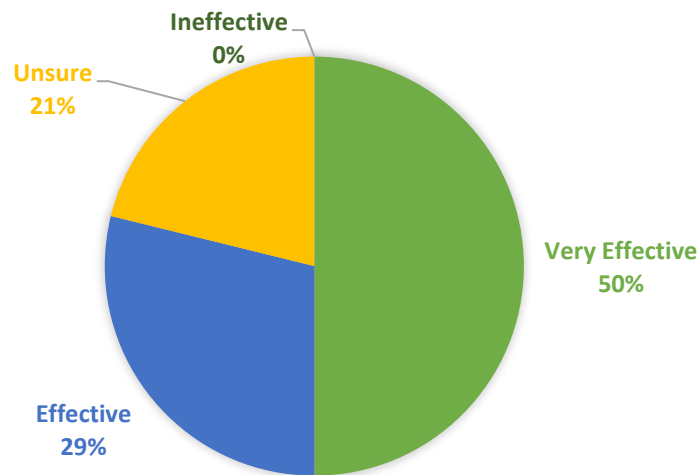
Most interviewees desire a better understanding of YCDA’s role with public leadership, businesses, employees and other nonprofits. Some admit they don’t have time to read the communications received by YCDA. Those indicating “little / not at all” familiar mostly either not current investors and/ or new to the community.

Effectiveness of YCDA

Q. On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 = Not Very Effective, 10 = Very Effective), how would you rate the effectiveness of: YCDA as a whole?

5 – 7 range is considered “effective” and the 8 – 10 range as “very effective.” Below 5 is regarded as “not effective.”

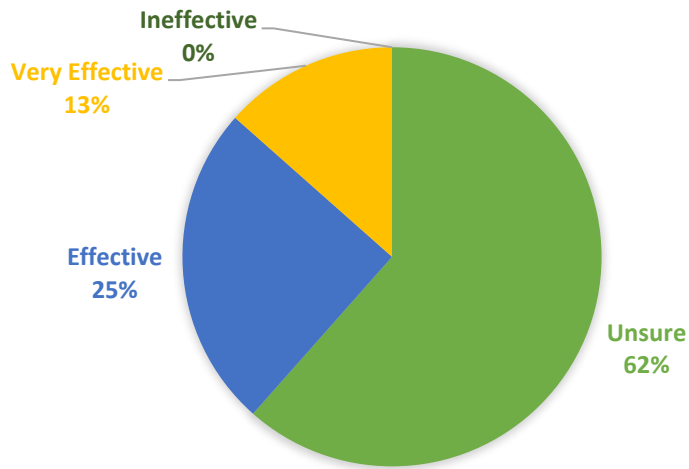
a) YCDA as a Whole?



Analysis:

Seventy-nine percent of respondents rate YCDA as a whole as “effective” or “very effective.” Twenty-one percent say they are not familiar enough with the YCDA to give an opinion and none rate the organization as “ineffective.”

b) YCDA Board of Directors?

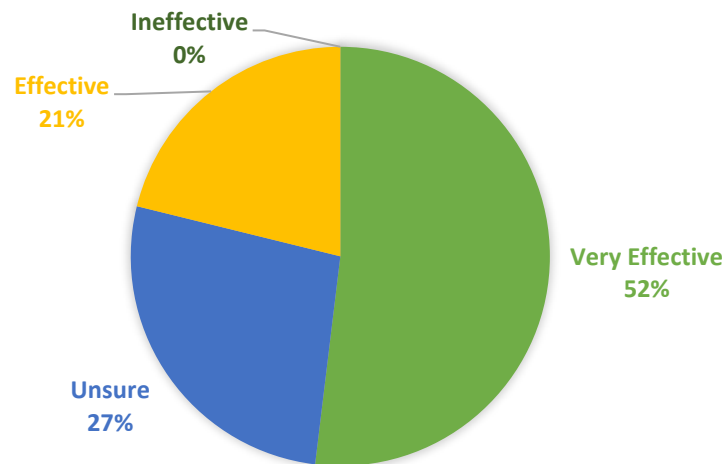


Analysis

Thirty-eight percent rated the performance of the board as “effective” or “very effective.” Respondents added that their response was generally based on their knowledge of one or more board members outside of their role at YCDA.

Sixty-two percent of respondents were unsure, with the majority saying they did not have enough knowledge of the YCDA to comment on board performance. No respondents felt they were ineffective. There is a good amount of respect afforded to the YDCA board. With few exceptions, the board is perceived as an excellent group and having the best interest of Yakima County.

c) YCDA Staff?



Analysis

Seventy-three percent of respondents rate the staff as “effective” to “very effective.” Twenty-one percent have no opinion and no interviewee found them ineffective. Many stated that YCDA’s greatest value is Jonathan’s expertise, staff’s rapport with the community and their ability to influence opportunities with resources. It was acknowledged that while YCDA was doing valuable work (that often wouldn’t be done otherwise), much that needs to be done is beyond YCDA’s power and authority.

In Their Words

- *“YCDA’s COVID response and grant processing was extremely helpful”.*
- *“Would like to see more economic development knowledge throughout staff and board”.*
- *“YCDA cannot remain neutral on key issues”*
- *“Staff is helpful and great connectors”*
- *“Jon is an underutilized ED subject matter expert”*
- *“I rely on the newsletter and emails for most of my YCDA knowledge”.*
- *“Jon knows his stuff and is great to work with”*
- *“The work that Yani does is important and overdue”*
- *“The BOD list is impressive, but I do not know what they do?”*

YCDA's Accomplishments

Q. What specific YCDA accomplishments or programs, if any, stand out in your mind?



Analysis

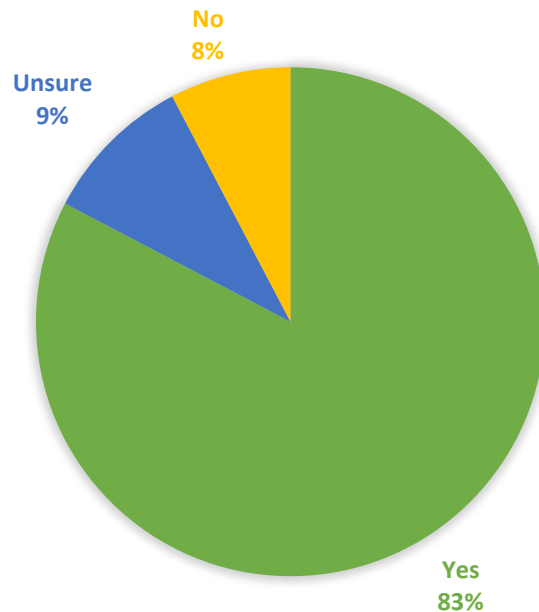
The top accomplishments mentioned were administering SIED applicants/awards, small business support and recruitment.

In Their Words

- *"The SIED Program and Jon/Joe's guidance are game changers"*
- *"Encouraging Startups and Entrepreneurs is essential".*
- *"I think they do some things that others already do or should do"*
- *"YCDA often fills in the gaps in business support"*
- *"It is impressive what is done with a small staff"*

Benefits from YCDA Efforts

Q. Do you feel your business / industry benefits from YCDA's efforts? If so, in what specific ways? ___Yes ___No ___Unsure



Analysis

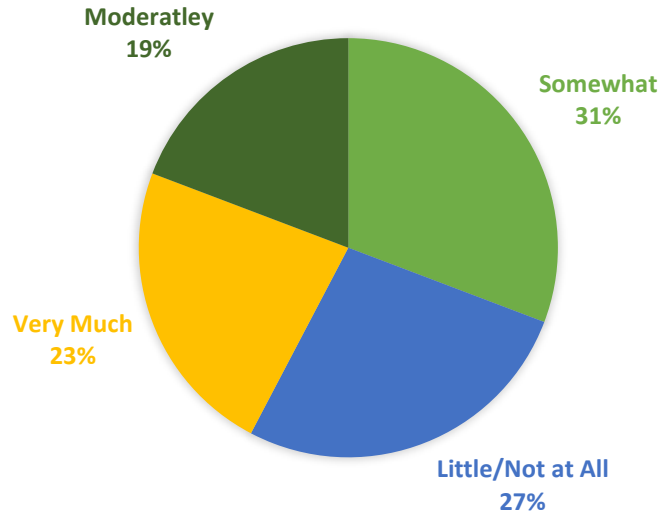
Eighty-six percent of respondents consider the work of YCDA as beneficial to their business or industry. Eight percent of responses were “no”. Nine percent were “unsure” and seemed to be the due to interviewee's unique circumstances where the connection to what they were doing and YCDA's results were not clear.

In Their Words

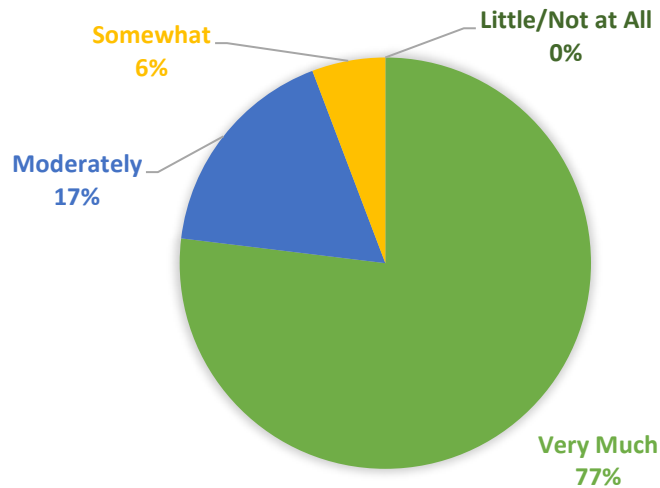
- *“They helped us with training”*
- *“The stronger our economy, the better our lives and future”*
- *“YCDA brings in new customers.”*
- *“They helped us survive COVID”*
- *“New companies means more loans”*
- *“Absolutely, YCDA brings us new customers.”*
- *“The more involved we are the more we get out of it.”*
- *“Most benefits are indirect but invaluable”*

Assessment and Rating of YCDA's Proposed Plan

Q. As described in the draft *Prospectus*, YCDA proposes a five-year (2024-2028) plan for our future with specific strategic investment initiatives. How familiar are you with the plan?



DO YOU SEE VALUE IN THIS 5-YEAR PLAN?



Analysis

Seventy-three percent of respondents indicated at least some familiarity with the plan. For the 27% percent who had read the *Prospectus*, the highlights were briefly reviewed before answering the question.

Interviewees were also asked what goals or benchmarks would be important measures of success for this initiative? Most stated the metrics were good, some asked for clearer measurables/goals.

Rating the Plan

Interviewees were asked to rate each of the plan’s five priority initiatives on a scale from 1 to 10 (1 = not needed / unnecessary; 10 = Absolutely needed / necessary). Upon providing such rating, interviewees then were asked what would be important measures of success for each strategy.

5 – 7 range is “considered necessary” and the 8 – 10 range as “absolutely necessary.” Anything below a “5” is regarded as “not necessary.”

Strategy I: Workforce Development

	1-2	3-4	5-6	7-8	9-10	Unsure	AVERAGE
Workforce Development	4%	0%	4%	19%	67%	6%	8.90

Analysis

Ninety percent of respondents rated this strategy as “necessary” or “absolutely necessary.” Four percent considered it unnecessary, and six percent were unsure.

Workforce improvement was mentioned most frequently as a must-do effort to significantly increase the skilled labor pool. Most felt the current cooperation with Perry Tech and the Yakima Valley Community College is great, but it needs to be expanded significantly to keep up with the current and future demand.

Some stated that YCDA’s role in WFD was too broad and better suited to simply funnel needs to existing resources.

In Their Words

- *“We see a consistently large number of open positions across industries”*
- *“We prefer to promote from within the company or locally”*
- *“Successful Workforce Development is fluid and ever-changing”*
- *“Gone are the days of one size fits all workforce solutions”*
- *“The competition for talent is fierce”*
- *“We cannot compete with higher wages in other areas”*
- *“Many want a job but don’t want to work hard”*
- *“The system rewards folks for not working”*
- *“Executive positions are extremely hard to fill here”*
- *“Internships are underutilized”*
- *“Please explore adding more local training resources”*

Strategy II: Expand Local Economy

	1-2	3-4	5-6	7-8	9-10	Unsure	AVERAGE
Expand Local Economy	0%	2%	10%	21%	57%	10%	8.64

Analysis

Eighty-eight percent of respondents rated this strategy as “necessary” or “absolutely necessary,” and two percent found it unnecessary while ten percent were “unsure.” Most believe now is the time to address our problems and strengthening what is already here.

In Their Words

- *“Effort here must address our Valley’s healthcare, education, equality, crime and poverty”*
- *“Many are still recovering from COVID”*
- *“Communities struggle to expand without a thriving downtown”*
- *“The greatest opportunity for growth here is technology and lifestyle”*
- *“Target businesses in growth stage”*
- *“We need to nurture technical advancement.”*

Strategy III: Grow Small Business

	1-2	3-4	5-6	7-8	9-10	Unsure	AVERAGE
Grow Small Business	0%	2%	8%	25%	61%	4%	8.76

Analysis

Respondents were nearly unanimous with 94% percent rating this strategy as “necessary” or “absolutely” necessary and two percent seeing it as unnecessary. Respondents realize small business is a major contributor to economic growth. Many spoke of small businesses unique role in our economy’s diversity, equality and attractive qualities for residents and visitors. Others were more focused on the practical implementation from the opportunities created for underwriting and partnership.

In Their Words

- *“This initiative is the focus of many other organizations. What is being done to reduce confusion and duplicated efforts?”*
- *“Does Yakima County have any Incubators?”*
- *“A lot of local money is spent at small businesses in other counties”*

Strategy IV: Develop infrastructure for Growth

	1-2	3-4	5-6	7-8	9-10	Unsure	AVERAGE
Develop Infrastructure for Growth	0%	0%	4%	31%	61%	4%	8.98

Analysis

Respondents were nearly unanimous with 96% percent rating this strategy as “necessary” or “absolutely” necessary and four percent stating they were “unsure”. General consensus is that our abundance of land cannot be leveraged without adequate utilities, roads/transportation and connectivity. Those that are familiar with the SIED program applaud its progress. Many support infrastructure improvements not requiring a “bird in hand” and believe “build it and they will come” projects are needed.

There is also considerable desire for improved tools to help identify properties for development; GIS mapping was viewed very positively.

In Their Words

- *"We cannot be competitive without shovel-ready commercial land"*
- *"SIED funds should not be awarded to projects that will proceed without them"*
- *"Yakima County's tax base and tax rate play a key role in our ability to achieve much needed improvements and we will continue in this uphill battle until more tax revenue is generated to fund these improvement"*
- *"SIED's "bird in hand" requirement should be reconsidered"*

Strategy V: Promote Region to Attract New Business

	1-2	3-4	5-6	7-8	9-10	Unsure	AVERAGE
Promote Region to Attract New Business	0%	2%	10%	38%	44%	6%	8.31

Analysis

Ninety-six percent rated this initiative as “necessary” or “absolutely” necessary and six percent

were “unsure”. Despite the emphasized importance of supporting existing business and workforce challenges, the need to attract new businesses is fully supported. How this is done and by who is where opinions vary. Very few stated an understanding of the site selection process and how cities effectively target or compete for businesses. Even fewer are aware of the State’s Department of Commerce’s role, YCDA’s history or current business recruitment activities.

In Their Words

- *"This is the big driver! If YCDA isn't doing this, then who will?"*
- *"It's all about leads, prospects and loading the pipeline."*
- *"It is very important to be in the game."*
- *"Recruitment tools should be more readily available"*

Strategy VI: Cultivate Yakima County’s Unique Business Clusters

	1-2	3-4	5-6	7-8	9-10	Unsure	AVERAGE
Cultivate Yakima County's Unique Business Clusters	0%	2%	9%	33%	27%	29%	8.05

Analysis

Sixty-nine percent rated this initiative as “necessary” or “absolutely” necessary and two percent felt it was “not necessary”. All respondents requested the meaning of “unique business clusters” and 29% remained unsure of its level of necessity. Most of the respondents that rated this initiative at 5 or higher would like more types of businesses that compliment existing ones and the County’s unique strengths.

In Their Words

- *"If the goal is a more diversified business without compromising existing business, I'm in!"*
- *"Healthy competition is good for all economies"*
- *"It is important to get more eggs in our economic basket"*
- *"Sounds like a new, calculated approach, I like it".*
- *"I still don't know what that means or how it differs from prior initiatives"*
- *"This initiative should be combined with the last one".*

Q. How do you rate YCDA’s five-year projected Outcomes?

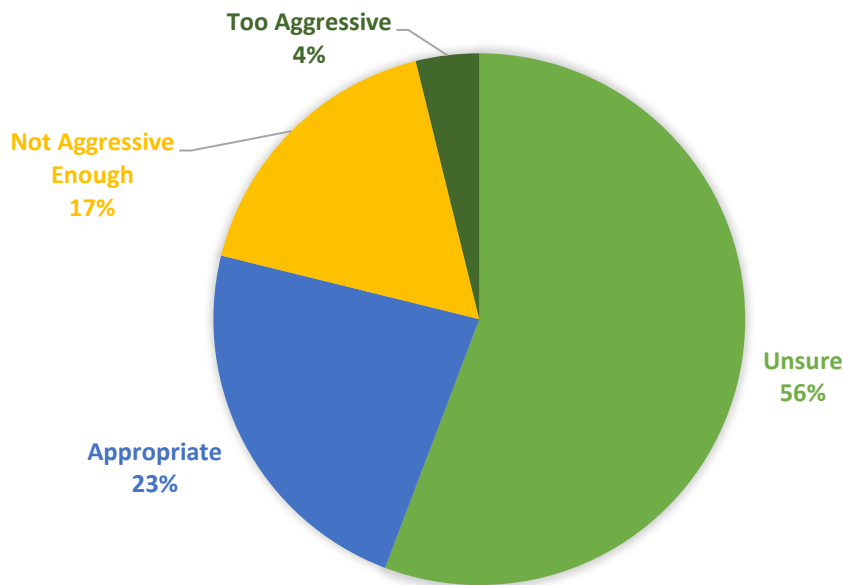
Interviewees were asked to respond to the new plan’s projected outcomes using three choices: Appropriate, Too Aggressive, and Not Aggressive Enough. Responses to each outcome are summarized in the chart on the following pages. Most interviewees wanted

to know how the projected outcomes were determined. It was explained that the top annual achievements from 2019-2022 were used to project the 2024-2028 outcomes.

The consistent occurrence of “Unsure” responses was often followed by a statement that YCDA best knows it’s capacity, not them.

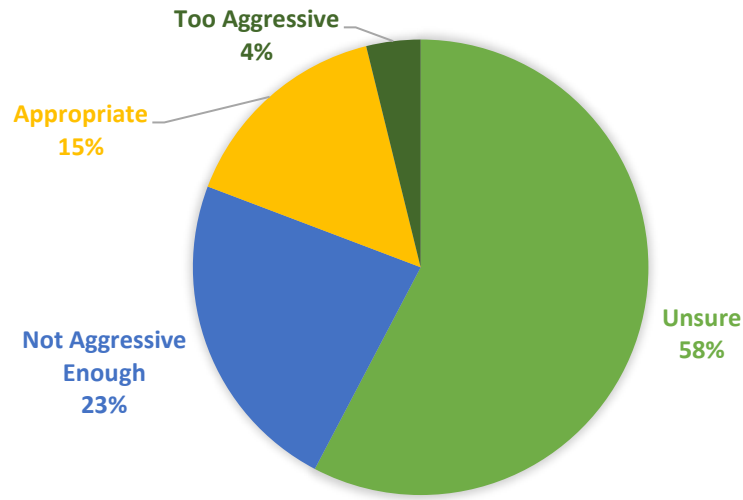
a) **1,200 new jobs paying \$50K+ per year from existing industry**

_____Appropriate _____Too Aggressive _____Not Aggressive Enough



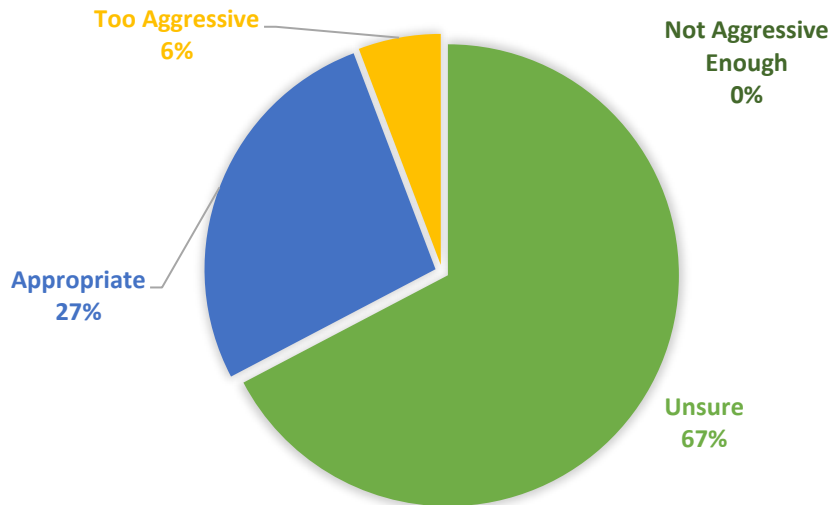
Twenty-three percent rated **1,200 new jobs paying \$50K+ per year from existing industry** as Appropriate. Four percent regard the outcomes as “Too Aggressive” and seventeen percent believe they are “Not aggressive enough”.

b) **250 new jobs paying \$50K+ per year from new industry attraction efforts**
 ___Appropriate ___Too Aggressive ___Not Aggressive Enough



Fifteen percent rated **250 new jobs paying \$50K+ per year from new industry attraction efforts** as Appropriate. Four percent regard the outcomes as “Too Aggressive” and Twenty-three percent believe they are “Not aggressive enough”.

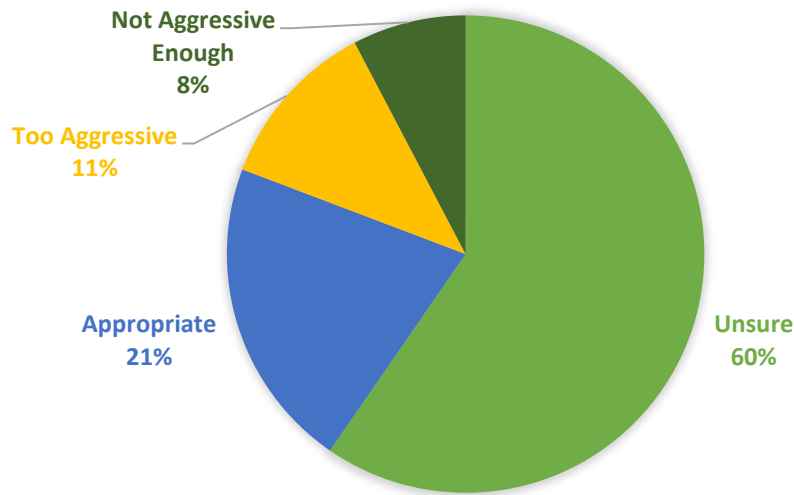
c) **\$320 million of new capital investment (\$200M from existing industry, \$100M from new industry & \$20M from small business.)**
 ___Appropriate ___Too Aggressive ___Not Aggressive Enough



Twenty-seven percent rated **\$320 million of new capital investment** as Appropriate. Six percent regard the outcomes as “Too Aggressive” and none believed they are “Not aggressive enough”.

d) **Provide training to 1,000 workers**

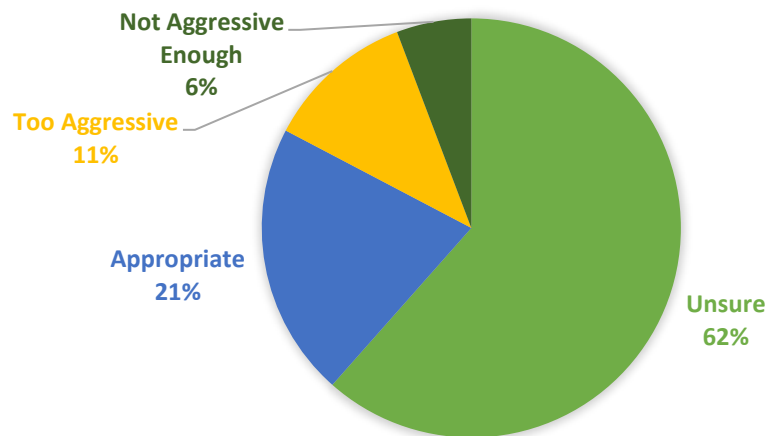
_____ **Appropriate** _____ **Too Aggressive** _____ **Not Aggressive Enough**



Twenty-one percent rated **Provide training to 1,000 workers** as Appropriate. Eleven percent regard the outcomes as “Too Aggressive” and eight percent responded “Not aggressive enough”.

e) **Through welcome receptions, welcome 200 new residents to Yakima County**

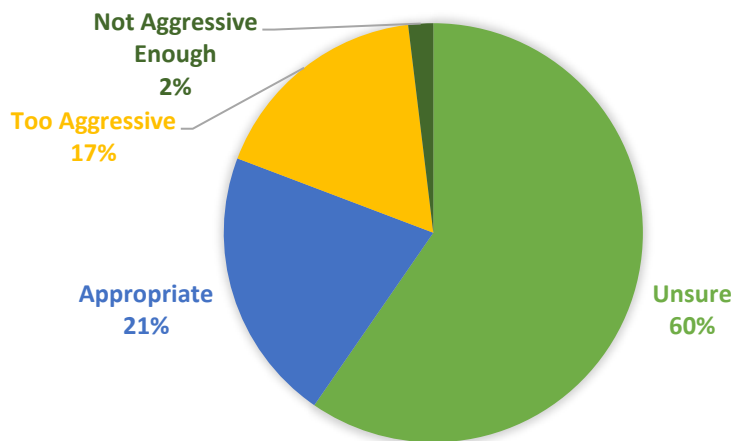
_____ **Appropriate** _____ **Too Aggressive** _____ **Not Aggressive Enough**



Twenty-one percent rated **Welcome 200 new residents to Yakima County** as Appropriate. Eleven percent regard the outcomes as “Too Aggressive” and six percent responded “Not aggressive enough”.

f) **Host 75 industry focused events and roundtables**

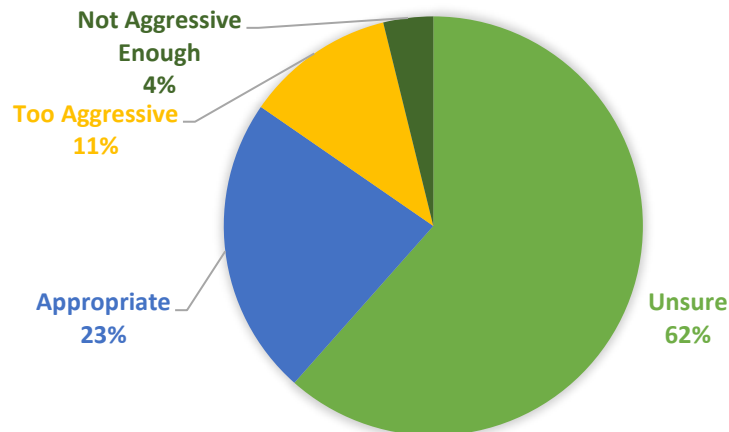
_____Appropriate _____Too Aggressive _____Not Aggressive Enough



Twenty-one percent rated **Host 75 industry focused events and roundtables** as Appropriate. Seventeen percent regard the outcomes as “Too Aggressive” and Two percent responded “Not aggressive enough”.

a) **Through Small Business support efforts, create 500 new jobs**

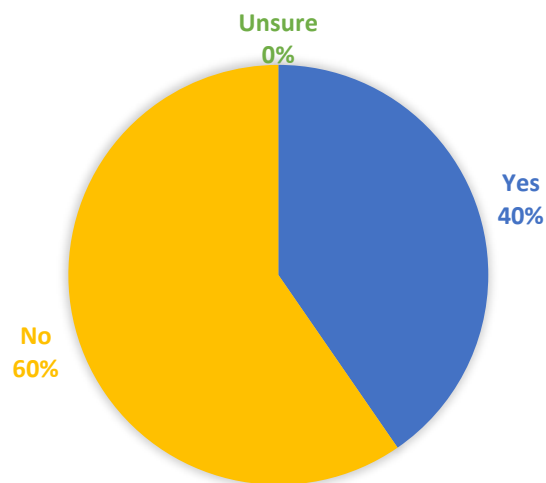
_____Appropriate _____Too Aggressive _____Not Aggressive Enough



Twenty-three percent rated **create 500 new jobs through small business effort** as Appropriate. Eleven percent regard the outcomes as “Too Aggressive” and four percent responded “Not aggressive enough”.

Plan Modifications or Additions

Q. Are there any changes or modifications in the plan you would like to see? Is anything missing?



Analysis

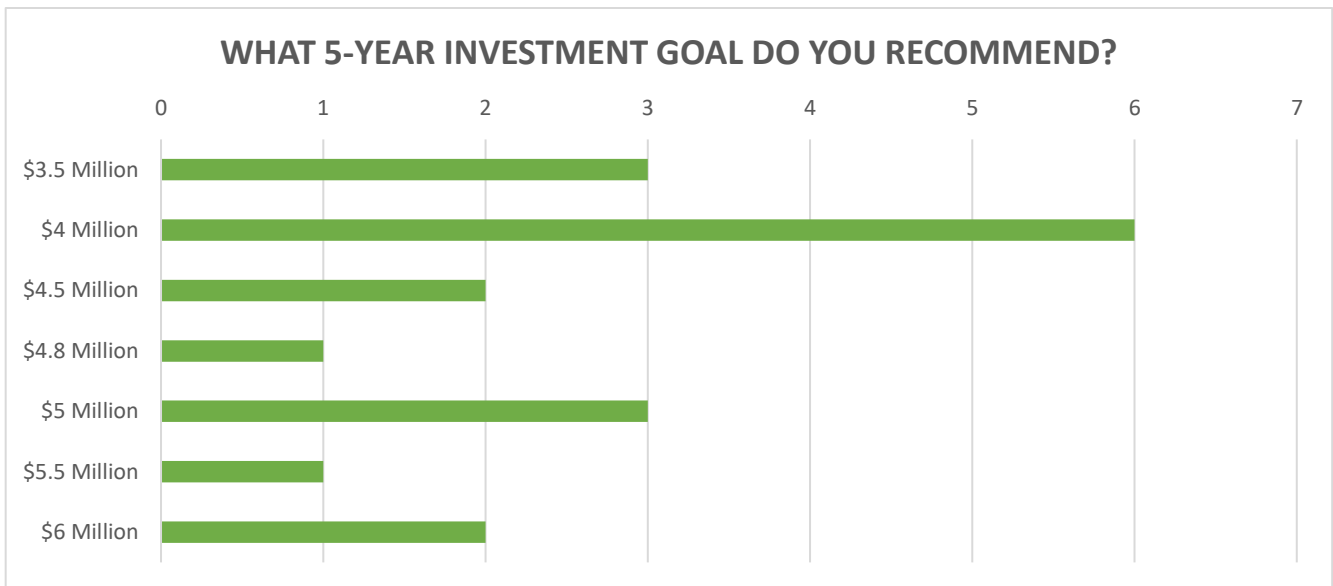
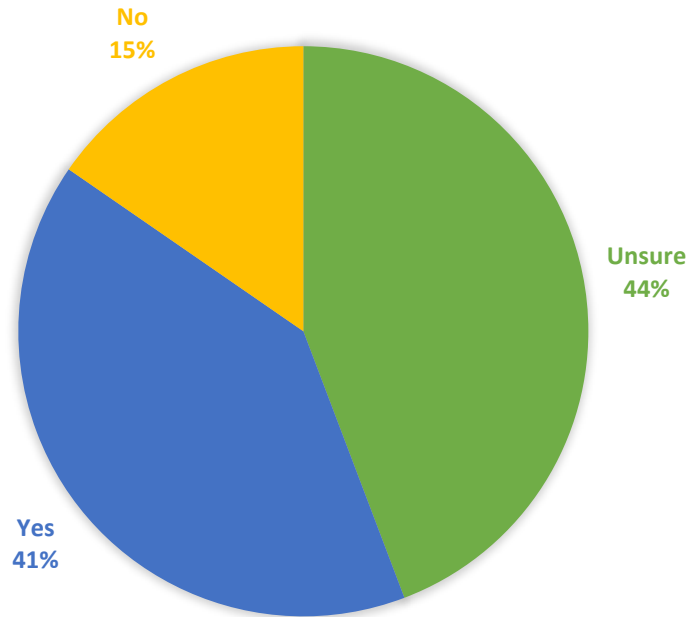
Sixty percent of respondents answered “no” to this question and think the plan is comprehensive, 40% percent made suggestions, and none were unsure. Those who said “yes” to changes offered the following comments below:

In Their Words

- *“Would like to see a focus on two or three key projects for each city/port”.*
- *“Conservation of Natural Resources (especially water) is missing. Without water, Ag is doomed?”*
- *“Include SIED funding goals”*
- *“Economic Development 101 is desperately needed for community leaders”*
- *“Key issues not included: Mill Site, Airport, Crime, Healthcare, Housing, Homelessness, etc.”*
- *“Would like to see board more representative of county demographics and include workforce and relevant public/social services representatives”*
- *“Support outlying communities better.”*
- *“Grant dollars make a difference and are abundant! Expand your role in connecting grant opportunities to targeted candidates”.*
- *“Establish a relationship with the Yakima Training Center and Yakama Nation”.*
- *“Add more structure around resources available to businesses.”*
- *“Establish MOUs with all partnering organizations to eliminate confusion and duplicated efforts:.”*
- *“Narrow your focus.”*
- *“Update your website”*
- *“Awareness of YCDA continues to lack. Offer communications to more business, organizations and people.”*

Funding Support

Q. YCDA's five-year plan requires approximately \$8M over the next five years. Is \$8 M pledged over five years or less realistic and achievable? If no, then what investment goal do you recommend? _____ Yes ___ Unsure ___ No (if so, how much?) \$ _____



Analysis

The discussion with interviewees was prefaced with the explanation that successful funding of this plan would require an 40% average increase in all funding sources. Forty-one percent believe the \$8 million goal is achievable and indicate a 40% increase in their organization's pledge is possible. The 15% of respondents who answered "no," generally reference other campaigns, uncertainty and diminished funds as their concern. The 44% of respondents who were "unsure" felt the goal was justified and would do what they could but would hate to see the campaign fail. A few felt a 40% impact or value increase was not adequately demonstrated.

In Their Words

- *"I've never been asked to pledge."*
- *"There is a lot of competition for funding."*
- *"Value needs to be better articulated, especially with the significantly larger ask."*
- *"The goal makes sense, but it will be hard."*
- *"Go big, progress depends on it!"*

Potential Lead Investors

Q. Experience shows that the following levels of investments are necessary to reach a campaign goal of \$8M (including current budget, events and dues) committed over five years. What firms or institutions do you believe would consider making top-level investments of \$750,000 or (\$150,000 or more per year) over a five-year period?

Analysis

The overwhelming majority of respondents felt that only Yakima County could and should be the lead investor at that level. No one else was identified at that level.

Campaign Leadership

Q. Whose names come to mind as those who must be out front and visible to get your attention and ensure the campaign is a success?

A key component of any fundraising campaign is volunteer leadership. With that in mind, interviewees were asked to name their ideal campaign leaders.

Only a few respondents could think of a candidate but said they were likely too busy. One person said we should consider the Campaign Chair be a paid position. A few people stated they might consider a future role when they become “empty nesters” or retire. All respondents agreed to assisting as “door openers”.

Competing Campaigns

Q. What other campaigns (*in progress, just completed or pending*) might affect the level of support this program might receive?

Analysis

During the course of the interviews, other campaigns were identified. These were not seen as competing on a beneficiary level, but certainly will utilize some of the same local resources. The consensus is that although the YCDA campaign is regarded as essential, it could be affected by other campaigns.

<u>Campaign</u>	<u>Goal</u>
PNWU	?
Memorial Foundation	?
Cottage in the Meadow	?
Yakima Greenway	\$8M
Meals on Wheels Kitchen	\$2M, 40% raised
La Salle Construction	\$8M-\$10M
Junior Achievement	?
Children’s Village	Wrapping Up
East Yakima Pool	?
Capital Theater	?
SOZO	?
Heritage University	?
Yakima Symphony	?
YMCA	?

Recommendations

The following recommendations are based upon the key findings of the Opportunity Analysis.

Asking Rights

The study results indicate that YCDA established asking rights over many years. There is recognition of significant need and perceptions of YCDA's leadership, staff and board are very positive. The draft strategic plan tested well. The fact that a vast majority of potential investors offered to be door-openers demonstrates a strong allegiance to YCDA and the Yakima County community. There is a general willingness to commit financial support for the organization, with many current investors indicating an openness to increase. A successful funding campaign is very realistic.

Campaign Goal

A funding goal range of \$4 million to \$4.5 million as realistic and attainable.

The most significant factor impacting the final goal and pledge total will be the financial commitments from the top ten investors. Their commitments will set the tone for others to follow. This forecast would signify an increase of \$1.0 million in funding over investment from current levels (over five years).

Strong participation by current investors, the addition of new investors, and enlisting committed volunteer campaign leadership will all impact how much funding can be raised. Assessing a private funding goal is admittedly challenging and never an exact science.

This estimate of funding potential is based on a variety of factors identified during the Opportunity Analysis, both positive and negative.

A more precise or even greater funding goal may develop upon further refinement of YCDA's plan of work and finalization of funding commitments by completion of the "quiet phase" of the campaign. The final funding goal should not be fixed or made public until the campaign "Case Statement" has been developed, the "Refinement" process is complete, the "Evaluations" process is complete, and the lead private investors have made commitments and established the campaign trajectory.

Campaign Timing & Mode of Engagement

A campaign to underwrite the five-year plan should launch immediately to build on the momentum generated by the plan development and feasibility study process.

A 12-month Campaign is recommended to reach or exceed the recommended goal range, assuming the top ten investors are secured.

A comprehensive and detailed campaign timeline containing specific action steps, benchmarks, and milestones to ensure the campaign remains on an aggressive schedule. Below is a big picture overview of the standard phases and functions of a capital campaign. The major action steps include the following:

Quiet / Planning Phase (First 6 Months)

Program Refinement

- Refine program to reflect input from Opportunity Analysis
- Flesh out program / plan details
- Develop scalable budget and contingency plans depending on the final scope of funding
- Re-visit / re-interview key prospective investors interviewed during study process

Development of Campaign Materials

- Produce campaign collaterals and marketing materials
- Create written Case for Investment statement in support of program investment
- Develop economic impact and ROI data
- Design and produce Campaign Brochure

Campaign Marketing and Prospect Cultivation

- Develop and implement aggressive marketing, public relations, prospect communications, and community education efforts

Prospect Evaluations

- Research prospective investors and build prospect database
- Conduct cultivation and inquiry meetings with major prospects
- Recruit and convene Evaluations Committee
- Determine target pledge amounts for all prospective investors

Leadership Recruitment

- Cultivate and enlist high-level business and community leaders
- Match the right leaders to the right roles
- Solicit leaders to provide strong pacesetting pledges

Major Prospect Solicitation

- Secure lead investor participation that reaches or exceeds 50% of overall goal
- Make strategic presentations to prospective top-level investors
- Utilize leadership team assistance based on relationships and influence
- Present customized investment proposals for each prospective investor and demonstrate potential impact and benefits
- Determine final goal to be publicly announced based on early results

Public Phase (Remaining 6 Months)

Kick-Off Event

- Announce and introduce leadership team
- Rollout program to business leaders and media
- Showcase endorsements from well-respected leaders
- Generate excitement and momentum; reveal campaign is 50-60%+ to goal

General Solicitations

- Capitalize on Kick-Off momentum
- Make in-person investment proposals to middle and lower division prospects
- Conduct series of small group briefings to broaden the investor base
- To further broaden the base, also conduct mass solicitation effort (via letter, phone, or internet campaign), if necessary and desired
- Surpass goal and celebrate!

Program Refinement

The five-year plan tested well but should be fine-tuned to reflect the feedback from potential investors during the study. The plan's initiatives need to reflect investor priorities and suggestions. Specific, realistic and measurable goals and outcomes, action items, timelines, and return on investment should be set before implementation of the plan. This allows investors to track and evaluate the success of the program.

Investors have a strong desire for the program to have measurability and accountability.

The initial step in Program Refinement includes the creation of a Program Refinement Task Force consisting of key leaders, and potential investors. Topics include the following:

- Identify and confirm the most important drivers based on the Opportunity Analysis results.
- Create a Case for Support (i.e., Case Statement), which presents the proposed plan as a compelling, fine-tuned initiative. The Case Statement forms the basis for solicitation materials.
- Prepare a Return on Investment (ROI) analysis demonstrating the plan's value and the five-year program's anticipated outcomes; and,
- Create a communication plan to reach major investor prospects, state governmental leaders, business and industry executives, and statewide business interest groups. Compelling visual "sales tools" created early in the campaign support statewide outreach, prospect cultivation, and solicitation.

Campaign Leadership & Organization

Success depends on the identification of strong, committed leadership and their timely cultivation, recruitment and solicitation. Written qualifications and duties for all volunteer leadership positions are defined and an overview of time required for each role is provided.

While YCDA staff is responsible for the campaign's heavy lifting, assistance from supporters and leaders is essential in "opening doors" to presentations and making investment requests.

Investor Cultivation

Several major investors were unavailable for the interview. They will require visits during the early phase of the campaign. These potential investors' enthusiasm, level of support and input regarding the new plan will add momentum.

Interviewees identified as potential major investors should be met with to update and share opportunity analysis results, cultivate their interest, and pave the way for eventual engagement in the funding effort. The cultivation process allows ample time for questions and discussion.

Conclusion

Developing the Campaign Groundwork

A campaign requires a substantial investment of time and resources. With careful preparation, investor cultivation, solid communication, and dedication to addressing the recommendations as outlined, YCDA is ready to proceed to campaign. I

n summary:

1. Launch an intense fundraising campaign with a \$4 million to \$4.5 million preliminary goal range. Pledges are payable over a five-year period.
2. Create a more compelling and specific plan of action with program detail, metrics, and a communication plan via the Program Refinement Task Force. YCDA's board of directors and executive staff should finalize and approve.
3. Conduct a Campaign Commencement (i.e., Leadership Briefing) for YCDA staff and key volunteer leaders to provide a well-defined overview of the campaign process, the timeline, and the roles and responsibilities of staff and volunteer leaders.
4. Produce a customized Return-on-Investment report to answer the investor question, "What's in it for me?" to demonstrate an estimated return of investing in the campaign.
5. Build a prospect database of the top 100 to 150+ prospects for the campaign. Conduct a thorough financial investment evaluation process of the top prospects. Assemble a group of key investors, which have general knowledge of Yakima County and surrounding region businesses regarding their capacity and interest for investing.

6. Identify, cultivate, recruit, and solicit a campaign volunteer leadership team. These leaders should be willing to do the following:

- Make a major / generous and early financial commitment.
- Participate in strategy sessions to guide the campaign and solicitation process.
- Assist in the evaluation of investor prospects.
- Make behind-the-scenes contacts with prospective investors to motivate and pave the way for recruitment or solicitation.
- Serve as a public spokesperson for the campaign through personal visits, public appearances, and the media.
- Help recruit volunteers to serve in key campaign positions.
- Solicit other campaign leaders and major investor donor prospects.
- Attend regular campaign operations meetings throughout the campaign.
- Speak about YCDA and the campaign in various public forums; and,
- Attend the cultivation, kickoff, and celebration events.

The years ahead are filled with great potential and opportunity for Yakima County.

Appendix A – Interview Request Letter



Board Officers

Chair

Peter Marinace, *KeyBank*

Vice Chair

Jon DeVaney, *WA. State Tree Fruit Assoc.*

Past Chair

Moriet Miketa, *Heritage Real Estate Group*

Treasurer

David Cobia, *Clifton Larson Allen*

Secretary

Debbie Byrd, *Triumph Actuation Systems*

Board of Directors

Amanda McKinney, *Yakima County*

Amy Martinez, *SCWDC*

Andy Marble, *Horizon Distribution*

Austin Beebe, *HUB International*

Ben Annen, *HLA Engineering*

Brad Hansen, *Baker Boyer Bank*

Brittney Hill, *Yakima Chief Hops*

Celina Sanchez, *AGC of WA*

Christine Cote, *Perry Technical Institute*

Cus, Artega, *City of Grandview*

Dan Maycock, *Loftus Labs*

Jay Hester, *Port of Sunnyside*

Jeff Perrault, *Perrault Farms Inc.*

Jeff Cromer, *Washington Beef*

John Cooper, *Yakima Valley Tourism*

John Hodkinson, *City of Union Gap*

Kyle Curtis, *Ramsey Companies*

Linda DiLembo, *Centercal Properties*

Linda Kaminski, *Yakima Valley College*

Lindsey Beddeson, *Tri-Ply Construction*

Maria Rodriguez, *RCDR*

Matt Brown, *City of Yakima*

Mike Battle, *HLA Engineering*

Natasha Trudeau, *Triumph Actuation*

Products

Randy Fenich, *Moss Adams LLP*

Rosylen Oglesby, *City of Yakima*

Scott Carmack, *City of Zillah*

Toni Petty, *Pacific Power*

Vicki Baker, *Yakima Grocery Outlet*

August 31, 2022

«First_Name» «First_Name»
«Organization_Name»
«Organization_Street_Address_Shipping»
«Organization_City_Shipping», «Organization_StateProvince_Shipping»
«Organization_Post_Code_Shipping»

Dear First Name,

The Yakima County Development Association (YCDA) Board of Director's has begun drafting its 2024-2028 economic development strategic plan to propel economic growth in Yakima County.

Before moving forward with this plan, it is critical that we receive your input. We need area businesses and community leaders like you, to share candid and honest opinions for consideration prior to proceeding with the plan.

To help us gain your input, Terry Edmands, YCDA Investor Relations Director will conduct confidential one-on-one interviews in the weeks ahead. She will be seeking your thoughts and opinions on YCDA, its accomplishments, and the DRAFT strategic plan. During this process, we are seeking information - not money. After these interviews conclude, YCDA's leadership team will incorporate the feedback, finalize the plan, and then set appropriate funding goals.

In early September, Terry will contact you to arrange a convenient day and time for the 30-to-45-minute meeting. A synopsis of the proposed plan, its projected budget, and anticipated outcomes is included in the enclosed *Prospectus*. Please take a few moments to review this document prior to your interview.

We value your support and appreciate your participation. If you would like to schedule your interview appointment, you can reach Terry Edmands at 509-575-1140 or by email at terry@ycda.com. If you have any questions please contact Jonathan Smith, Executive Director, at 509-575-1140 or by email at jon@ycda.com.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Peter Marinace'.

Peter Marinace
Board Chair, YCDA

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Jonathan Smith'.

Jonathan Smith
Executive Director, YCDA

address: 10 North 9th Street, Yakima, WA 98901

phone: 509-575-1140

web: chooseyakimavalley.com

Appendix B – Questionnaire

**CONFIDENTIAL QUESTIONNAIRE
FOR INTERNAL USE ONLY**



Yakima County, Washington

Appt. Date: _____ Interviewer: _____

Appt. Time: _____ Interview #: _____

Interviewee Information:

Name: _____ Title: _____

Firm: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

Board (Current or Past)? _____

YCDA Investor? _____ Investment Amount \$ _____ Industry Type: _____

Background Notes / Helpful Information:

(Preface Interview with Confidentiality Statement)

1. How would you characterize the Yakima County economy?

___ Excellent ___ Good ___ Fair ___ Poor ___ Unsure / Don't Know

2. Do you feel sufficient economic growth is now occurring to maintain or to improve the current economy and quality of life in future years? ___ Yes ___ No ___ Unsure

This document displays the goals and components of YCDA's draft strategic plan for the next five years. YCDA leaders identified five priority strategies aimed at realizing the vast economic opportunity awaiting Yakima County.

On a scale from 1 to 10 (10 = absolutely needed / necessary; 1 = not needed / unnecessary), how would you rate the following strategic initiatives?

10. **Strategy I: Expand & Retain Existing Industries**

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Not Sure

What would be important measures of success in your mind for this initiative?

11. **Strategy II: Recruit New Industry**

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Not Sure

What would be important measures of success in your mind for this initiative?

12. **Strategy III: Strengthen Business Environment & Improve Quality of Life**

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Not Sure

What would be important measures of success in your mind for this initiative?

13. **Strategy III (a): What role if any should the YCDA take in supporting the efforts to establish additional Port Districts in Yakima County? Would you support a Port District in your community if it were on the ballot?**

_____ Yes _____ No _____ Unsure

14. **Strategy III (b): Would you support an increased partnership between YCDA and the Greater Yakima Chamber of Commerce?**

_____ Yes _____ No _____ Unsure

15. **Strategy IV: Encourage Small Business Growth**

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Not Sure

What would be important measures of success in your mind for this initiative?

16. **Strategy V: Investor Relations & Communications**

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Not Sure

What would be important measures of success in your mind for this initiative?

17. How do you rate YCDA's five-year projected outcomes?

a) 1,200 new jobs paying \$40K+ per year from existing industry efforts.

_____ Appropriate _____ Too Aggressive _____ Not Aggressive Enough

b) 250 new jobs paying \$40K+ per year from new industry attraction efforts.

_____ Appropriate _____ Too Aggressive _____ Not Aggressive Enough

c) \$268 million of new capital investment (200M from existing industry, \$50M from new industry. & \$18M from small business.)

_____ Appropriate _____ Too Aggressive _____ Not Aggressive Enough

d) Provide training to 1,000 workers.

_____ Appropriate _____ Too Aggressive _____ Not Aggressive Enough

e) Through welcome receptions, welcome 200 new residents to Yakima County.

_____ Appropriate _____ Too Aggressive _____ Not Aggressive Enough

f) Host 75 industry-focused events and roundtables.

_____ Appropriate _____ Too Aggressive _____ Not Aggressive Enough

g) Through small business support efforts, create 500 new jobs.

_____ Appropriate _____ Too Aggressive _____ Not Aggressive Enough

18. Are there any changes or modifications to the plan you would like to see? Is anything missing?

19. YCDA's strategic plan requires approximately \$4.1 million over the next five years. Is \$4.1 million pledged over five years or less realistic and achievable?

Yes No Unsure. If "No," what annual investment goal do you recommend?
\$ _____

(Present Investment Table) Experience shows the levels of investment necessary to reach a campaign goal of \$4.1M over five years. What firms or institutions do you believe would consider top-level investments of \$50,000 or more over a five-year period?

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

20. I am not asking for a financial commitment, just a range of potential support. At what level might you (your organization) consider making a multi-year investment (5 years or less)?

\$ _____ Current Annual Investment Level \$ _____

Follow-Ups (If applicable to interviewee and time permits):

A. Who is responsible for the decision?

B. How quickly could you (your organization) act? Does our campaign timeframe present any foreseeable difficulties?

C. What specific information do you need to finalize a decision? Do you have a preferred method of receiving funding proposals?

D. Would an investment of this type come from your (circle one): Operations Budget / Contributions Budget / Development Budget / Marketing Budget?

E. When is your organization's annual budget set and what time period does it cover? Does your organization fund proposals made after your budget is set?

21. Are there any changes in the program or other circumstances that might influence your firm to consider a larger five-year investment to help this plan achieve success?

22. Leadership – Whose names come to mind as those who must be out front and visible to get your attention and ensure the campaign is a success? Circle most effective Chair.

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

23. A. If asked, would you consider playing a leadership role in such a campaign?

____ Yes ____ No ____ Maybe

B. Would you consider being a door opener?

____ Yes ____ No ____ Maybe

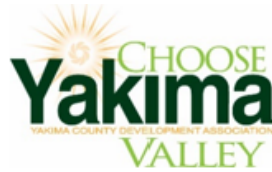
24. What other campaigns (*in progress, just completed or pending*) might affect the level of support this program might receive?

25. Emphasizing again that our discussion is strictly confidential, are there any other factors that you feel might influence the outcome of the campaign?

THANK YOU

End time _____

Appendix C – Investment Table



5-Year Investment Levels Necessary to Guarantee a Campaign Goal of **\$8 Million**

Pledge	Annual Investment at this Level	Number of Pledges at this Level	Total Investment at this Level	<-----Cumulative----->	
				Total Number of Pledges	Total Investment
\$1,000,000	\$200,000	1	\$1,000,000	1	\$1,000,000
\$750,000	\$150,000	1	\$750,000	2	\$1,750,000
\$500,000	\$100,000	2	\$1,000,000	4	\$2,750,000
\$250,000	\$50,000	4	\$1,000,000	8	\$3,750,000
\$200,000	\$40,000	4	\$800,000	12	\$4,550,000
Typical Results: Top 10% of all Investors will invest 60-65% of all Investment					
\$150,000	\$30,000	5	\$750,000	17	\$5,300,000
\$100,000	\$20,000	6	\$600,000	23	\$5,900,000
\$75,000	\$15,000	7	\$525,000	30	\$6,425,000
Typical Results: Top 25% of all Investors will invest 80% of all Investment					
\$50,000	\$10,000	10	\$500,000	40	\$6,925,000
\$25,000	\$5,000	25	\$625,000	65	\$7,550,000
\$10,000	\$2,000	30	\$300,000	95	\$7,850,000
\$5,000	\$1,000	30	\$150,000	125	\$8,000,000