

**Becker County Resort & Lodging**  
**BUSINESS RETENTION AND EXPANSION STRATEGIES PROGRAM**

**Interview Guide**

Business ID#: \_\_\_\_\_\*

Also record on pages 1 and 4

BUSINESS: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

PERSON INTERVIEWED: \_\_\_\_\_

Job title: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of visit: \_\_\_\_\_

VOLUNTEER VISITORS:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\* **Note to Coordinator:** After placing the ID number on this cover sheet and on pages 1 and 4, remove the cover sheet and file separately to ensure confidentiality of results.

**Becker County Resort & Lodging  
BUSINESS RETENTION AND EXPANSION STRATEGIES PROGRAM**

**Background**

*The resort and lodging industry is an important employer and industry in Becker County. The purpose of this program is to see how we can help them prosper.*

**Sponsorship:** This program is sponsored locally by the Becker County Economic Development Authority and the Detroit Lakes Regional Chamber of Commerce.

The survey is a cooperative effort involving volunteers drawn from the resort and lodging industry, other local businesses, economic development, local government, and educational institutions. The University of Minnesota Business Retention and Expansion Strategies Program and the University of Minnesota Tourism Center, both part of the University of Minnesota Extension Service, provide technical and research assistance for this program, with collaboration from the Minnesota Office of Tourism.

Funding for this program comes from the Becker County Economic Development Authority, the University of Minnesota Tourism Center, the University of Minnesota Regional Sustainable Development Partnership-Central Region, and the West Central Initiative Fund.

**Goals:** The goal of this program is to help our resort and lodging businesses grow. To do this, we will be visiting a sample of resort and lodging related businesses. Through these visits we hope to:

- Demonstrate support for local resort and lodging firms
- Be aware of immediate business concerns
- Increase the competitiveness of local resort and lodging firms
- Establish and implement a strategic plan for economic development
- Build community capacity to sustain growth and development
- Address the \$6,000 per cabin site valuation the Becker County Assessor has implemented

**Guideline 1 - Confidentiality:** Your individual answers to this survey are confidential and will not be released. Your responses will be summarized with those of others to form an overall result in percentages or averages.

**Guideline 2 - The "Skip It Rule":** If there is a question that you feel might be best to skip, we will do that; just let us know. There is no need to explain your reasons.

**Copy of Summary Report:** Copies of the summary report will be provided to all businesses that participate in this survey.

**BUSINESS RETENTION AND EXPANSION SURVEY**

Business ID#:

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Supplied by coordinator*

**PART A: QUESTIONS ON TYPE OF RESORT AND LODGING BUSINESS**

1. In which community is your business located or near?

Community (or township) \_\_\_\_\_

2. Is all the information on the cover sheet complete and correct? (*Circle*)

Yes No → If No, make the necessary corrections.

3a. In what year did the current owners purchase this business?

\_\_\_\_\_ Year

3b. Are you the owner? (*Circle*) Yes No

If no, what is your position? \_\_\_\_\_

4. How was the business acquired?

- (a) Purchased
- (b) Inherited
- (c) We built it

5. How old are you? (*Circle one*)

Self

- a. Younger than 25
- b. 25-34
- c. 35-44
- d. 45-54
- e. 55-64
- f. 65-74
- g. 75 or older

Spouse or other business partner

- a. Younger than 25
- b. 25-34
- c. 35-44
- d. 45-54
- e. 55-64
- f. 65-74
- g. 75 or older

6. What percent of your gross sales comes from the following travel and tourism services?  
(Estimate to closest 5%)

- |                                                       |         |
|-------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| (a) Tourist Attraction (incl. admission fees)         | _____ % |
| (b) Recreation Activity (golf, boat rental, etc.)     | _____ % |
| (c) Professional Services (guide, outfitting, etc.)   | _____ % |
| (d) Lodging                                           | _____ % |
| (e) Camping                                           | _____ % |
| (f) Retail Sales                                      | _____ % |
| (g) Eating & Drinking                                 | _____ % |
| (h) Other ( <i>specify</i> ) _____                    | _____ % |
| (Check the total to see that it adds to 100 percent.) | _____ % |

**Questions 7 and 8 help us understand your type of business. Please read each question to see if it applies to you. If a part of your sales is from "lodging" or "camping" please answer questions 7a, 7b, and 7c. If not, skip to question 8.**

7a. Which of the following best describes your primary lodging operation? (*Circle one*)

- |                               |                              |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| (a) Resort (lodge or cottage) | (e) Condominium              |
| (b) Convention resort         | (f) Campground               |
| (c) Bed and breakfast         | (g) Other ( <i>specify</i> ) |
| (d) Hotel/motel               |                              |

7b. If you have inside lodging, what is the total number of pillows in your lodging operation?  
(i.e., single bed = 1, double/queen/king bed = 2)

\_\_\_\_\_ Pillows

7c. If you have campsites, what is the total number of campsites, including both tents and RVs?

\_\_\_\_\_ Campsites

8. What is special or unique about your business? (*BR&E visitor--please take detailed notes here. Write on back of page if necessary.*)

## **PART B: QUESTIONS ON LABOR USED**

9. How many family employees work at this establishment?  
(Please break this out for paid and unpaid family members)

\_\_\_\_\_ Number paid family employees  
\_\_\_\_\_ Number unpaid family employees

10. How many other paid employees work at this establishment?  
(Please break it out by the categories shown below)

<u>Year Round</u>		<u>Seasonal - Winter</u>		<u>Seasonal - Summer</u>	
<u>Part-time</u>	<u>Full-time</u>	<u>Part-time</u>	<u>Full-time</u>	<u>Part-time</u>	<u>Full-time</u>
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

11. How many of the jobs are held by students?

\_\_\_\_\_ High school students  
\_\_\_\_\_ College students

**IF YOU HAVE NO EMPLOYEES, YOU CAN SKIP THIS PAGE.**

Business ID#: _____ _____ <i>Supplied by coordinator</i>
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12a. Does your business have problems **recruiting** paid employees in the following categories?  
 (Circle appropriate answer: Yes or No)

Year Round				Seasonal - Winter				Seasonal - Summer			
Part-time		Full-time		Part-time		Full-time		Part-time		Full-time	
Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No

12b. Does your business have problems **retaining** paid employees in the following categories?  
 (Circle appropriate answer: Yes or No)

Year Round				Seasonal - Winter				Seasonal - Summer			
Part-time		Full-time		Part-time		Full-time		Part-time		Full-time	
Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No

13. What are the average wages for each type of employee and what benefits are provided?

Type of Employee	Average Wage/hr	Health Plan*	Retire-ment*	Vacation*	Sick Leave*
Year Round – Part-time	_____	1	2	3	4
Year Round – Full-time	_____	1	2	3	4
Seasonal					
Part-time	_____	1	2	3	4
Full-time	_____	1	2	3	4

\* Circle if available

14. Do your employees require any "special" training?

Yes    No    —>    If Yes, please explain this more fully.

15. Overall, how do you rate your employees with respect to the following? (Circle one per line)

		Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Very Poor
(a)	Attitude toward work	5	4	3	2	1
(b)	Productivity	5	4	3	2	1
(c)	Customer service	5	4	3	2	1
(d)	Knowledge of tourists' needs and desires	5	4	3	2	1
(e)	Knowledge of area tourism opportunities	5	4	3	2	1

**PART C: BUSINESS CONDITIONS AND TRENDS**

For questions 16a. and 16b.: “tourist” = nonseasonal recreational or family visit,  
 “nontourist” = all visitors not included in “tourist” definition

16a. For lodging businesses: What is your total number of units? \_\_\_\_\_

For each season please estimate the following number of units and average occupancy rates

	# Available Units by Season	Average % Occupancy Rate – Tourists	Average % Occupancy Rate – Nontourists
Winter Dec.,Jan.,Feb.			
Spring Mar., Apr., May			
Summer June,Jul., Aug.			
Fall Sep.,Oct., Nov.			

16b. For camping businesses: What is your total number of campsites? \_\_\_\_\_

For each season please estimate the following number of units and average occupancy rates

	# Available Units by Season	Average % Occupancy Rate – Tourists	Average % Occupancy Rate – Nontourists
Winter Dec.,Jan.,Feb.			
Spring Mar., Apr., May			
Summer June,Jul., Aug.			
Fall Sep.,Oct., Nov.			

16c. For all other businesses: In a typical year what months is your business open? (*Circle all months open.*)

Jan	Apr	Jul	Oct
Feb	May	Aug	Nov
Mar	Jun	Sep	Dec

17. What percent of your customers are in each of the following categories?

	<u>Lodging</u>	<u>Camping</u>
(a) Conference/convention business	_____ %	_____ %
(b) Visitors – family vacation	_____ %	_____ %
(c) Seasonal residents	_____ %	_____ %
(d) Other ( <i>specify</i> ) _____	_____ %	_____ %
<i>(Check that the total adds to 100 percent.)</i>	_____ %	_____ %

18. Where are your customers from (*List percent from each geographic area*)

Indiana	_____ %	North Dakota	_____ %
Illinois	_____ %	South Dakota	_____ %
Iowa	_____ %	Wisconsin	_____ %
Michigan	_____ %	Other US	_____ %
Minnesota – metro	_____ %	Canada	_____ %
Minnesota – non-metro	_____ %	International	_____ %
Nebraska	_____ %	(excluding Canada)	
		Local	_____ %

*(Check the total to see that it adds to 100 percent.)*

19. What percentage of your customers are repeat customers?

\_\_\_\_\_ %

20. What new products or services do you think your customers will want from your facility in the next 5-10 years?

21. Over the last two years, have the following business factors increased, stayed the same, or declined? (*Circle*)

	<u>Increased</u>	<u>Stayed the same</u>	<u>Declined</u>
Number of customers	+	same	-
Sales – total revenue	+	same	-
Profits	+	same	-
Employees – full-time	+	same	-
Employees – part-time	+	same	-



22. If any of the business factors increased or decreased, what were the principal reasons for the changes?

23. To what degree do the following factors affect your annual adjustment of prices? (*Circle one*)

	Greatly		Somewhat		None
Property taxes	5	4	3	2	1
Insurance premiums	5	4	3	2	1
Energy costs	5	4	3	2	1
Labor costs	5	4	3	2	1
Mortgage or bank debt	5	4	3	2	1
Other _____	5	4	3	2	1

**PART D: FUTURE BUSINESS PLANS**

24. Over the next two years, do you think the following business factors will increase, stay the same, or decline? (*Circle*)

	<u>Will increase</u>	<u>Will stay the same</u>	<u>Will decline</u>
Number of customers	+	same	-
Sales – total revenue	+	same	-
Profits	+	same	-
Employees – full-time	+	same	-
Employees – part-time	+	same	-

25. If you expect any of these business factors to increase or decrease, what are the principal reasons for the changes?

26a. Are you currently considering renovating or expanding your building or facilities?

Yes                      No

**If you answered Yes to 26a, answer 26b; otherwise skip to 27**

26b. If you answered yes to question 26a, what impact will this have on the number of people you employ? (*Circle one*)

- (a) No change
- (b) Add employees       $\longrightarrow$  How many?      \_\_\_\_\_ Jobs
- (c) Reduce employees       $\longrightarrow$  How many?      \_\_\_\_\_ Jobs

27. If you face constraints to renovation or expansion, what are they? (*Circle all that apply*)  
Please elaborate on any specific problems.

- (a) Inadequate financial return on improvements  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- (b) Inability to get loan  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- (c) Insufficient space available for expansion  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- (d) Environmental/pollution control  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- (e) Planning and zoning guidelines  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- (f) Local government regulations  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- (g) State government regulations  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- (h) Federal government regulations  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- (i) Lack of knowledge in identifying resources and assistance  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(j) Shortage of adequate labor

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(k) Shortage of adequate housing for employees

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(l) Other (*specify*)

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28. Are you currently considering moving, closing or selling your business? (*Circle all that apply*)

(a) Considering moving

(b) Considering closing

(c) Considering selling

**If you answered a, b or c to question 28, answer question 29; otherwise go to 30.**

29. Why are you considering moving, closing, or selling? (*Circle all that are appropriate*)

(1) changing market conditions in travel and tourism industry

(2) obsolete building

(3) redevelop the property

(4) high property value

(5) pass it on to another generation in the family

(6) no land for expansion

(7) transportation problems

(8) crime/vandalism

(9) low work productivity

(10) environmental concerns

(11) rigid code enforcement (including ordinances and building codes)

(12) high property taxes

(13) lease expiration

(14) poor telecommunications

(15) declining population

(16) insufficient labor supply

(17) retiring

(18) another business opportunity

(19) other (*specify*)

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**PART E: INFORMATION NEEDS**

30. Would you like additional information concerning any of the following business or employee-related subjects?

*(Circle yes for each one you want)*

*(If Yes, specifics?)*

Customer Service training	Yes	_____
Financial management	Yes	_____
Computer-related training	Yes	_____
Internet/E-business	Yes	_____
Marketing/advertising planning	Yes	_____
Business plan development	Yes	_____
Business development resources	Yes	_____
Americans with Disabilities Act	Yes	_____
State and/or federal financing programs	Yes	_____
Tourism loan program	Yes	_____
Becker County EDA Revolving Loan Fund	Yes	_____

31. In general, what is your preferred method for obtaining new informational material?

*(Circle those that apply)*

- (a) Workshops
- (b) Tapes/CD-roms
- (c) Fact sheets
- (d) Other publications
- (e) Internet
- (f) Personal consultation
- (g) Other \_\_\_\_\_

32. If you asked for information in question 30, we can send you a list of the agencies that provide this, or we can ask them to send you information on the items that you circled.

Which do you prefer? *(Circle one.)*

- (a) Send me the list of agencies/organizations
- (b) Ask agencies to send me information directly

**Note:** *If you circled (b), we will not give the agencies any information except your request for this information.*

33. While we can't guarantee to find it, we would like to know if there are other topics, in addition to those listed in question 30, on which you would like information? If so, what topics?

We want to encourage local businesses and/or communities to use state and federal programs that could be useful to them and to explore how those programs might be improved.

34a. Which of the following programs have you used? (Circle yes in the first column below)

34b. **Of those programs you have used**, would you tell us which ones you would recommend to other businesses in the area? (Circle yes in the second column below)

34c. Or, if you were dissatisfied with the program, let us know that also. (Circle yes in the third column)

	<u>Have used</u> <u>Program</u>	<u>Would</u> <u>Recommend</u>	<u>Was a</u> <u>Problem</u>
(a) Small Business Admin. (SBA) loans	Yes	Yes	Yes
(b) Small Business Development Centers (SBDC)	Yes	Yes	Yes
(c) Minnesota Workforce Center (Job Service)	Yes	Yes	Yes
(d) Small Business Management programs	Yes	Yes	Yes
(e) UM Tourism Center At Your Service	Yes	Yes	Yes
(f) Minnesota Office of Tourism (MOT) Grant Programs	Yes	Yes	Yes
(g) MOT/DEED (DTED) Tourism Loan Programs	Yes	Yes	Yes
(h) MOT/DEED Trends & Travel Research Services	Yes	Yes	Yes
(i) MOT/DEED attractions/accommodations database (Journey)	Yes	Yes	Yes
(j) Becker County EDA Rev. Loan Fund	Yes	Yes	Yes
(k) Other (specify) _____	Yes	Yes	Yes

35. If you had problems with any of these programs, what was it? (Please list program and problems)

36. While our local Business Retention and Expansion Strategies task force cannot promise to solve the issues you just mentioned in question 35, we are willing to look into them. Would you like our task force to assist you in any way with these problems? (Circle one)

Yes      No       $\longrightarrow$       If yes, what do you suggest?

**PART F: PROMOTION AND OPERATING ENVIRONMENT OF BECKER COUNTY'S RESORT AND LODGING INDUSTRY**

37. Over the past 3-5 years, which of the following actions have you taken in response to customer's needs? (*Circle all that apply*)

- (a) Significantly changed products or services
- (b) Added or improved facilities (boats or docks, amenities such as swimming pool)
- (c) Changed business hours or seasonal opening
- (d) Changed primary promotion strategies
- (e) Created website
- (f) Changed or redefined market "niche"
- (g) Other (*specify*) \_\_\_\_\_

38. If you circled one (or more) responses in Question 37, please explain the nature of the changes you made and what those changes were in response to. (*Why did you change?*)

39. Do you have fewer, the same, or more of the following types of customers now than 3-5 years ago? (*Circle one per line*)

	<u>Don't know</u>	<u>Fewer</u>	<u>Same</u>	<u>More</u>	<u>NA</u>
(a) Senior citizens	5	4	3	2	1
(b) Childless couples	5	4	3	2	1
(c) Families with young children	5	4	3	2	1
(d) Same-sex couples	5	4	3	2	1
(e) Singles	5	4	3	2	1
(f) Other ( <i>specify</i> ) _____	5	4	3	2	1

40. Which of the following ways do you track changes in your customer base? (*Circle all that apply*)

- (a) Direct observation (no interaction)
- (b) Response cards
- (c) Focus groups
- (d) Direct mail
- (e) Personal interactions/interviews
- (f) Website-based inquiries
- (f) Don't track customers
- (g) Other (*specify*) \_\_\_\_\_

41. Does your business mostly market to new customers or repeat customers? (*Circle one*)
- (a) New customers
  - (b) Repeat customers
  - (c) Both types
42. Which promotional materials and activities do you use either individually or in cooperation with other businesses? (*Circle all that apply*)
- (a) Radio advertising
  - (b) Print advertising
  - (c) Professionally printed brochures
  - (d) Direct mail
  - (e) Internet website
  - (f) E-mail
  - (g) Special events
  - (h) Sport and travel shows
  - (i) Create free publicity
  - (j) Other (*specify*) \_\_\_\_\_

**Note: The following question only applies to lodging businesses outside Detroit Lakes, which already has a lodging tax.**

43. If you don't currently collect a lodging tax would you support a lodging tax if it were beneficial to promote tourism activities in your community?

Yes    No

- 44a. In the community or area in which your business is located, how would you rate the following community services? (*Circle one for each service*)

	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>Very Poor</u>
(a) K-12 schools	5	4	3	2	1
(b) Community/vocational colleges	5	4	3	2	1
(c) Child care	5	4	3	2	1
(d) Public restrooms	5	4	3	2	1
(e) Recreational facilities	5	4	3	2	1
(f) Ambulance services	5	4	3	2	1
(g) Health care/hospitals	5	4	3	2	1
(h) Fire protection	5	4	3	2	1
(i) Police protection	5	4	3	2	1
(j) Traffic flow/signage	5	4	3	2	1
(k) Road maintenance	5	4	3	2	1
(l) Zoning/land use planning	5	4	3	2	1
(m) Building code	5	4	3	2	1
(n) Chamber of Commerce	5	4	3	2	1
(o) Other ( <i>Specify</i> ) _____	5	4	3	2	1

44b. For those services that you rated as poor or very poor, what is the problem?

45a. This year, Becker County's Assessor imposed a standard assessment valuation of \$6,000 per cabin on resort properties in the county. Do you think Becker County resorts need to be protected from high lakeshore taxes by a property tax provision similar to the "Green Acres" provision, which protects active farmland from high lakeshore taxes? (*circle*)

Yes      No

45b. Do you have any thoughts about the resorts and lodging property tax assessment situation that you would like to share?



46. Which of the following trends do you think provides potential opportunities or potential threats to your business? (*Circle one on each line*)

	<u>Potential Opportunity</u>	<u>No Impact</u>	<u>Potential Threat</u>
a) Aging of U.S. population	+	none	-
b) School start before Sept. 1st	+	none	-
c) Aging of facilities	+	none	-
d) Shorter & more frequent vacations	+	none	-
e) Two-income families	+	none	-
f) More single-parent families	+	none	-
g) Fluctuating airfares	+	none	-
h) Gaming casinos	+	none	-
i) Increased destination choices competing for \$	+	none	-
j) Quieter snowmobiles	+	none	-
k) Year-round school proposals	+	none	-
l) Declining number of resorts	+	none	-
m) Expanded land use planning	+	none	-
n) Growth in seasonal homes	+	none	-
o) More environmentally-aware visitors	+	none	-
p) Labor shortages	+	none	-
q) Increasing minimum wage	+	none	-
r) Fluctuating gasoline prices	+	none	-
s) Domestic terrorism & public perceptions	+	none	-
t) Nature-based tourism	+	none	-
u) Bag limits	+	none	-
v) Water quality of lakes	+	none	-
w) ATV use	+	none	-
x) More diverse populations	+	none	-
y) Rapid technological advances	+	none	-
z) Insurance premiums	+	none	-
aa) Property taxes	+	none	-
bb) Weather	+	none	-
cc) Other ( <i>specify</i> ) _____	+	none	-

47. In the community which your business is located in or near, is the quality of the following businesses a strength or a weakness? (*Circle one on each line*)

	<u>Strength</u>	<u>Somewhat Strong</u>	<u>Uncertain</u>	<u>Somewhat Weak</u>	<u>Weakness</u>
(a) Cultural amenities (theater, museums, etc.)	5	4	3	2	1
(b) Tourism attractions	5	4	3	2	1
(c) Recreation (golf, boat rental, etc.)	5	4	3	2	1
(d) Lodging places	5	4	3	2	1
(e) Retail stores	5	4	3	2	1
(f) Eating/drinking places	5	4	3	2	1
(g) Casinos	5	4	3	2	1
(h) Services (car rental, laundry, etc.)	5	4	3	2	1
(i) Other	5	4	3	2	1
	<i>(specify)</i> _____				

48. What is your overall opinion of your community as a place to conduct business? (*circle*)

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Very Poor
(5)	(4)	(3)	(2)	(1)

49. Is there anything else that you would like to share with us that the community could help your business with or the community could do to help resort & lodging businesses in general?

Additional comments:

*On behalf of the Becker County Resort and Lodging Business Retention And Expansion Strategies Program thank you for your cooperation.*