

John Day River Territory Rural Tourism Studio

Business Survey Results

May 2011

A. Highlights

- The response rate for the JDRT Business Survey was close to 50%, which means that its results are useful for understanding tourism related business trends.
- These small businesses support 51 full and part time jobs in the region. More than one-third of responding businesses are expecting to add employees in the next six months.
- Over the past six months, a significant number of responding businesses have developed new products or services for the visitor market, as well as initiatives to “green” their businesses.
- There is room for increasing awareness of Travel Oregon’s marketing programs.

B. Introduction and Methodology

A key goal for the Rural Tourism Studio program is to increase sustainable business opportunities, business revenue and jobs in the tourism sector. According to the program logic model, we would not expect to see tangible changes in the bottom line of businesses until at least a year passed after the pilot program delivery. However, we are testing that assumption, and the business survey methodology, by implementing a business survey at the same time as the six month progress assessment.

After testing the business survey for the Wallowa County RTS region in June 2010, with scant responses, we revised the survey instrument to include more multiple choice questions rather than open ended ones. We also asked local intermediaries (in this case, Jessica Metta of the Mid-Columbia Economic Development District) to actively encourage business responses through a targeted email. Finally, we sent the survey slightly earlier in the year to avoid hitting potential respondents during the peak season.

The electronic business survey included 13 questions, primarily multiple choice, in three sections:

- Business Overview (3 questions)
- Numbers (6 questions)
- Recent Innovations (4 questions)

The survey document is included as an appendix to this report.

The JDRT survey was sent in early May, 2011 to a list of 29 sample businesses with tourism related products/services throughout the county. By design, some businesses were selected because they actively participated in the Rural Tourism Studio: others were selected to ensure a representative range of business types, even if they did not participate in RTS at all. Kristin Dahl of Travel Oregon, Jessica Metta of the Mid-Columbia Economic Development District, Penny Woodson of the Condon Chamber of Commerce and Sherry Kaseberg of the Sherman County Historical Society all contributed names to the list. The survey itself was distributed by e-mail under the auspices of Travel Oregon.

Although the sample size for the John Day River Territory was the same size as Wallowa County’s 2010 group (29 businesses), **the response rate for the John Day River Territory was much higher. Fourteen businesses, representing 48% of the sample, completed the survey.** This compares favorably with the 2010 Wallowa County survey *completion* rate of 13.8%. As a result, **we have a useful data set for understanding tourism business trends in the John Day River Territory.**

The following sections provide a brief overview of the JDRT Business survey results. Full survey results are available on the Travel Oregon survey monkey homepage.

C. Profile of Participating Businesses

- Condon Motel
- Wasco House Bed & Breakfast
- Rattray Ranches, LLC
- Country Flowers
- Wild Winds Ranch
- Rufus Hillview Motel
- Twist & Shake Drive In
- Pacific Resource Management LLC
- Historic Hotel Condon
- Oregon Paleo Lands Institute
- Sherman County Historical Museum
- Just-Us Inn
- Two others that did not provide business names

Most of the responding businesses have significant sales and revenue tied to the visitor market. Of the fourteen respondents, ten depend on visitor sales for at least 25% of their revenue. Eight of the fourteen respondents depend on visitor sales for at least 75% of their revenue.

Nearly half (43%) of responding businesses are at least ten years old. The majority of responding businesses provide lodging as at least one of their visitor products/services.

Type of Business, Responding Businesses

Lodging	64%
Restaurant	14%
Tour Company	21%
Retail Store	14%
Guide/Packer	14%
Cultural Attraction	14%
Historic Attraction	14%
Farm Stay	7%
Other Visitor Attraction (please specify)	14%

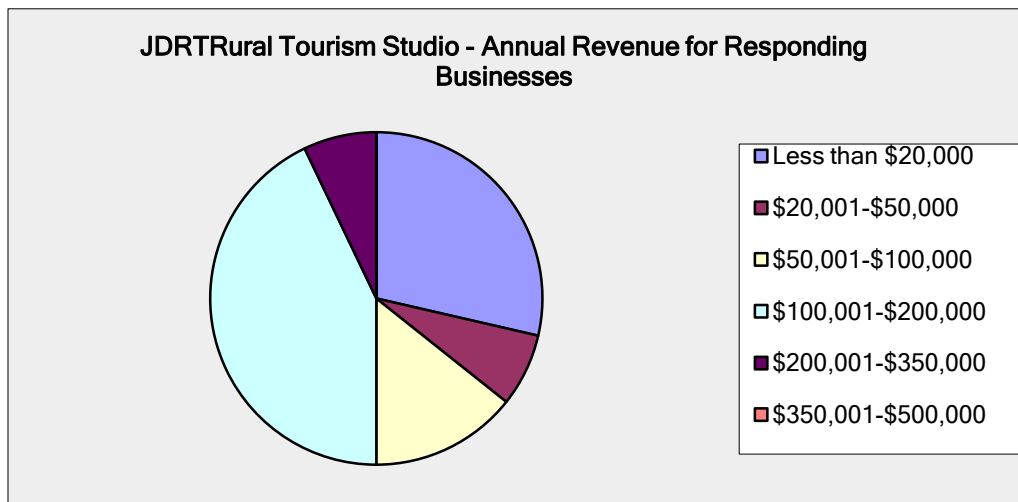
D. Employment and Sales

Responding businesses are small, with an average of 2-3 full-time year round employees. In total, **these businesses support 23 full-time year round jobs, 16 part-time year round jobs, and 12 part-time seasonal jobs.**

In terms of change in employment levels, the majority of businesses (8 of the 14 respondents) have experienced no change in the number of employees over the past six months (since December 2010). The net change in employment across all responding businesses was one additional part time employee.

Respondents indicate some **optimism about their level of employment in the next six months.** While 8 of the 14 businesses continue to expect no change, the other six respondents all expect employment growth with the net addition of 2 full time employees and 4-5 part time employees in total.

In terms of revenue, the majority of businesses are small, with all but one reporting total annual revenues of less than \$200,000. Half of the responding businesses have total annual revenue of less than \$100,000.



Over the past six months, the responding businesses have had mixed experience regarding sales. **Roughly one-third have experienced increased sales, one-third have experienced decreased sales, and one-third have experienced no change as compared with the same six month period last year.**

E. Recent Innovations in Products, Services and Operations

Seven of the fourteen respondents indicated they have developed new products and services for tourists this past six months (since December 2010). The most common new visitor product or service was based on “active outdoor recreation”. Furthermore, **eight of the responding businesses indicated they have also undertaken new initiatives to “green” their businesses.** This addresses key sustainability goals for the RTS program. The most common green initiative was “new or improved recycling programs”.

Have you developed any new products or services targeting the visitor market this past six months? Please check all that apply.		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
New packages with other area attractions	30.8%	4
New visitor experiences based on active outdoor recreation	46.2%	6
New visitor experiences based on history and culture	23.1%	3
New visitor experiences based on events or festivals	30.8%	4
New visitor experiences targeted for children and families	23.1%	3
New visitor experiences based on nature and environment	30.8%	4
New off-season activity	15.4%	2
Not applicable	46.2%	6
<i>answered question</i>		13
<i>skipped question</i>		1

Have you undertaken any new initiatives to "green" your business in the past six months? Please check all that apply.		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
New energy-efficiency improvements	25.0%	3
New water-efficiency improvements	16.7%	2
New or improved reduction of waste	8.3%	1
New or improved recycling program	50.0%	6
New or expanded purchasing environmentally-friendly products or services	8.3%	1
Increased local sourcing of supplies or services	33.3%	4
Travel philanthropy program (collecting donations from visitors for local environmental or social programs)	8.3%	1
Not applicable	33.3%	4
<i>answered question</i>		12
<i>skipped question</i>		2

F. Marketing Activities

Less than half (42.9%) of responding businesses have undertaken new marketing initiatives over the past six months. Slightly more than half (57.6%) of responding businesses are familiar with “Travel Oregon’s marketing programs to promote visitors to your area.” This indicates room for further outreach by Travel Oregon and/or its partners to tourism related businesses in the John Day River Territory.

G. Survey Template

Attached as Appendix