

Thank you to all of the businesses that participated in the retention program. Your feedback is vital to help better understand how to serve your needs and maintain a healthy business environment in Grundy County.

The GEDC would also like to thank all the volunteers who so graciously gave their time to participate in the retention visits as representatives of the County, the education sector, and municipalities.

The GEDC would also like to extend special thanks to ComEd for their ongoing support of the Grundy County retention program.



powering lives

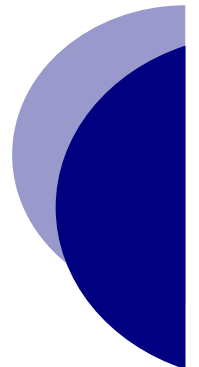


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## Grundy County Retention & Expansion Program

*Promoting a healthy business  
environment in Grundy County*



## Executive Summary

Over the past year Grundy County saw significant investment and activity. The Costco meat processing facility and Hoffman Transportation became fully operational and the TownePlace Suites Marriott opened their doors. Other businesses are investing large amounts of capital in upgrading, modernization or expanding their current facilities including Morris Hospital, LyondellBasell, and Kellogg. Competitive Power Venture's \$1 billion 1,250 MW natural gas plant plans to start construction in Q3 2019. The investment these companies are making demonstrates the strength of the Grundy County economy.

### Highlights from 2018 include:

#### Increasing Sales 75%

- Respondents have experienced improvement in their business portfolio overall, with 75% reporting increasing sales.

#### Workforce

- Grundy County employers continued to rank the local workforce higher or equal to the Midwest and national averages in three of the four core categories by approximately 6 to 12%.

#### Transportation

- Area businesses indicated that they highly value the local infrastructure. They are also satisfied with location, proximity to Chicago, and major highways.

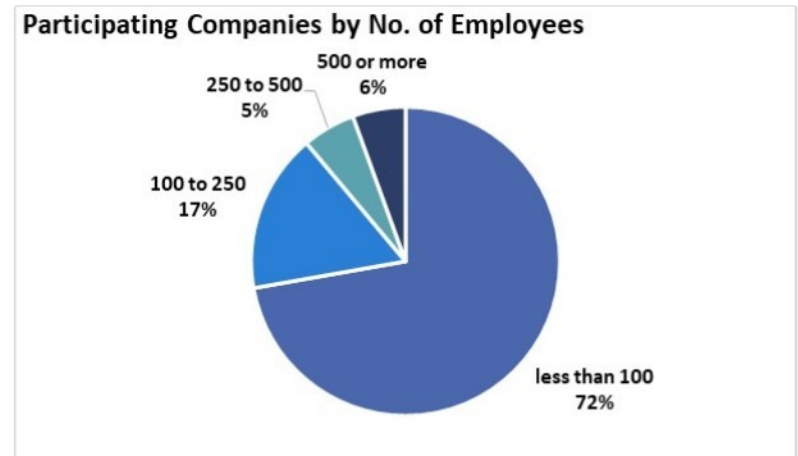
#### Education

- Opportunities to partner with local education, including the Grundy County Summer Internship Program and the Joliet Junior College Operations Engineering and Technician Program, have been valuable for businesses working to attract new workers.

## 2018 Overview

The biennial retention program has offered insight into the business community in Grundy County since 2000. The program helps stakeholders understand the current business climate and how to better plan for the future. For 2018, twenty-one companies with a combined 2,500+ jobs were interviewed, representing a range of industries including:

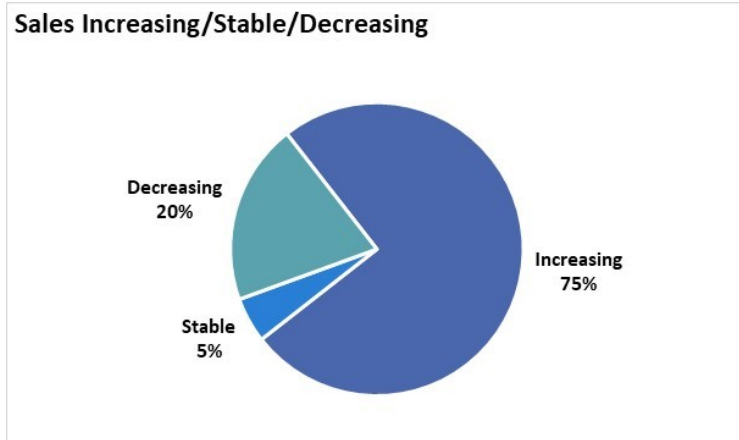
- Construction
- Energy
- Health Care
- Logistics
- Manufacturing
- Retail



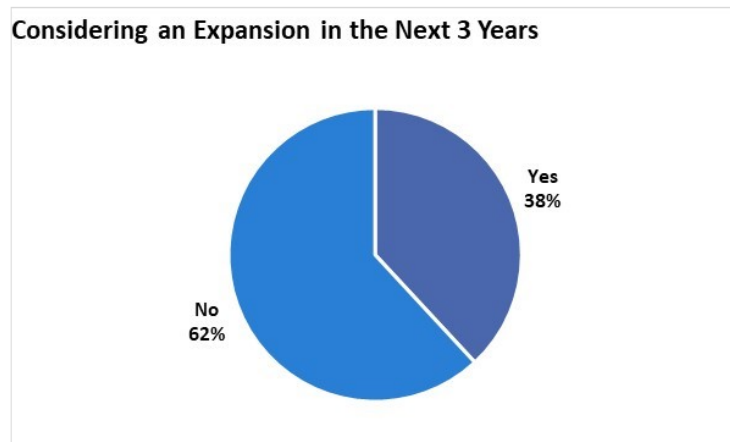
The variety in both size and scope of the participating companies provides well-rounded insights into the current state of the Grundy County economy. In 2018, many companies big and small made capital investments into their businesses either with expansions, modernization, or new facilities.

# The Growth Story

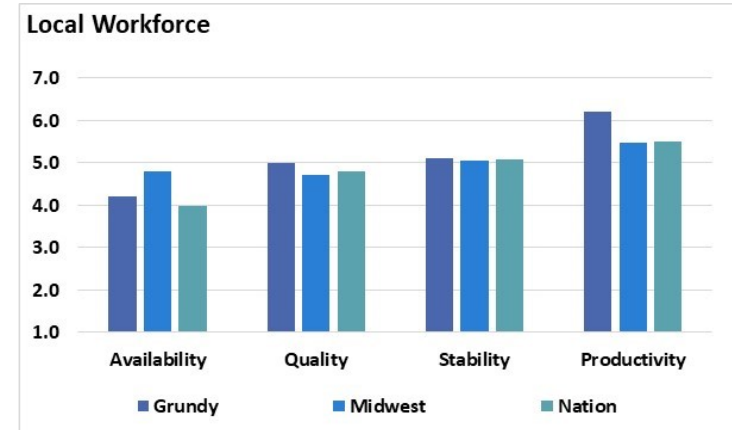
When asked whether their business or sales were increasing, decreasing, or stable, 75% of respondents stated that business was increasing at their Grundy County location. The sales growth includes both increases in market share for existing lines and a variety of new markets both domestically and abroad.



More than a third of firms interviewed indicated that they were considering expansions or renovations in the next three years. This number is higher than two years ago, several companies have made large investments in their facilities in 2018.



# The Workforce



Grundy County businesses continue to rate the local workforce very favorably across the metrics of availability, quality, stability, and productivity. For the first time, Grundy employees ranked lower than regional and national workers for availability. With unemployment numbers at record lows, that was not a surprise. Employee productivity outranked both regional and national workers by 13%. Employers continued to cite the dedication of their employees to both the company and the community as valuable attributes of the local workforce. All rankings are on a scale from 1 to 7, with 7 being the highest.

# Recruiting Challenges

Businesses were also asked whether they have difficulties filling any specific positions. In previous years, companies stated it was challenging to hire highly-skilled professional positions. Two years ago, employers stated that entry-level positions were harder to fill. In 2018, the trend of finding entry-level workers continued to be a challenge. The most common challenge was recruiting entry-level employees, truck drivers, and experienced technicians. The most frequently cited positions were:

- Drivers
- Instrumentation Technicians
- Entry-Level Workers
- Shop Workers

## Local Strengths

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Companies were asked what they perceive to be strengths of doing business in Grundy County. The most common answers included:

### Supportive Community

The support of local communities was the single most cited strength of doing business in Grundy County. Details ranged from fair and reasonable regulation to simply allowing businesses to operate in a business-friendly environment.

### Infrastructure and Location Assets

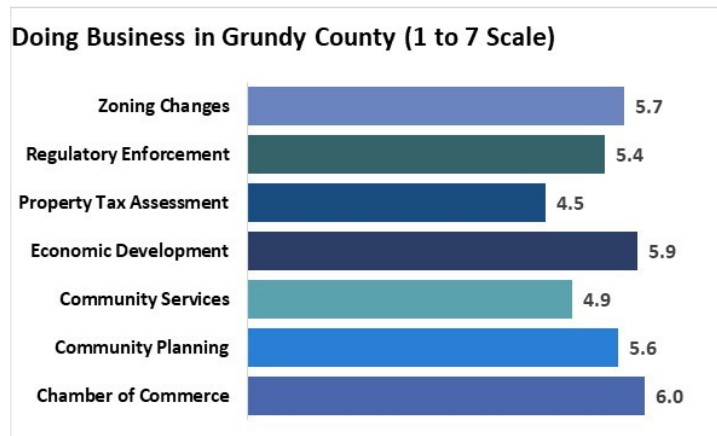
Firms highlighted Grundy County's road, rail, and waterway networks as very strong assets for doing business locally.

### Local Workforce

The local workforce rated well overall, and was cited by many companies as a major advantage to doing business in Grundy County.

### Supportive Agencies/Education Sector

Many firms cited valuable partnerships with local schools including Joliet Junior College and local non-profits like the GEDC and Grundy County Chamber.



## Local Weaknesses

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During the interview process companies were asked whether they perceive any weaknesses in Grundy County as a place to do business. While specifics of the answers varied, the primary challenges identified for doing business in Grundy County were:

### Worker Attraction and Retention

Local companies indicated that they struggled with finding entry-level workers and that the labor pool was not big enough. With unemployment numbers the lowest they have been in over 12 years, finding labor was a concern for employers. In response, many companies stated that they were adding automation wherever possible.

### Retail and Recreational Development

Many companies indicated a need for more retail and commercial development. They also stated that there was a lack of recreational activities and restaurants in Grundy County. Respondents noted that more retail development in the area would assist with employee attraction and retention.

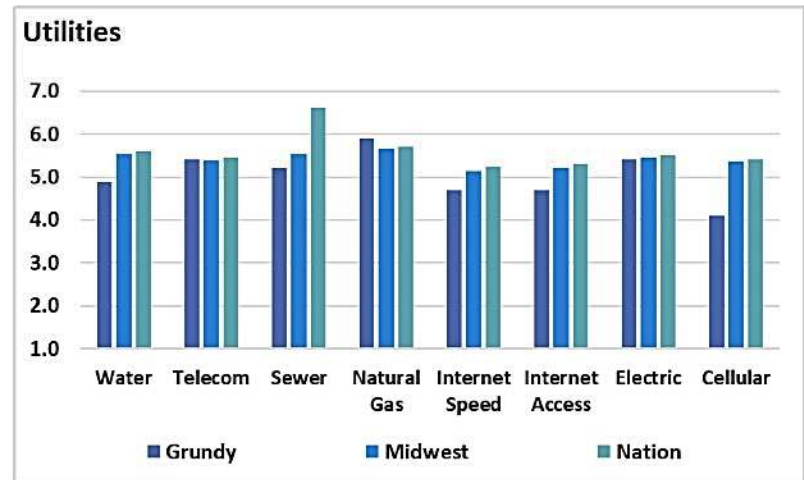
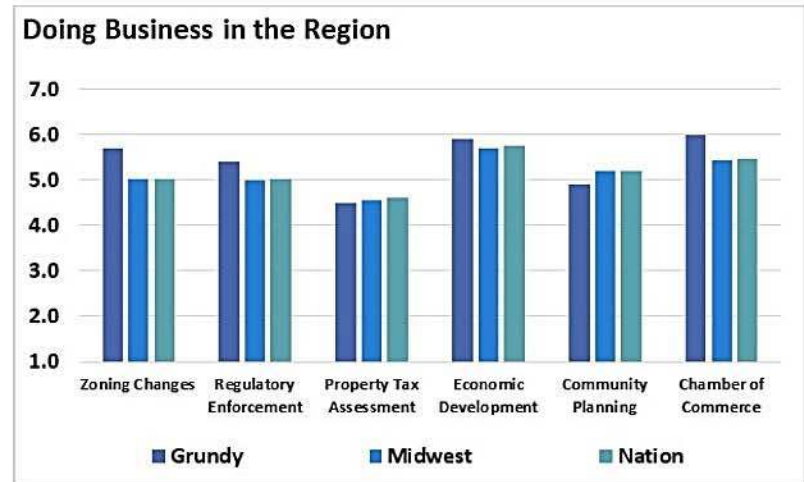
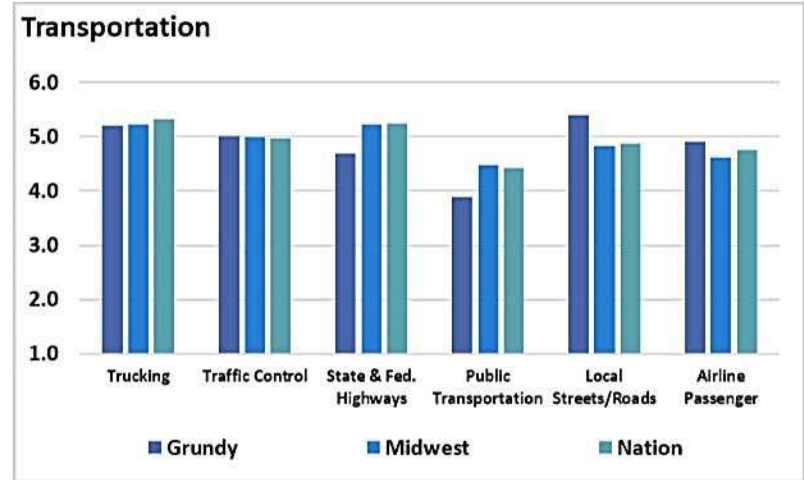
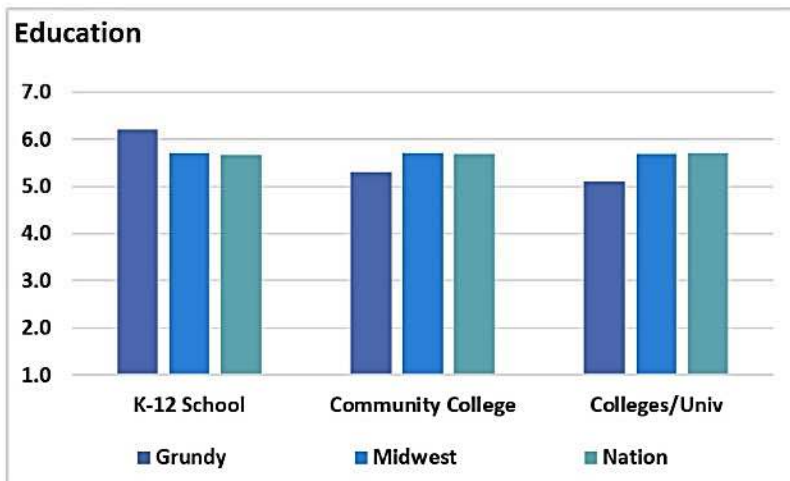
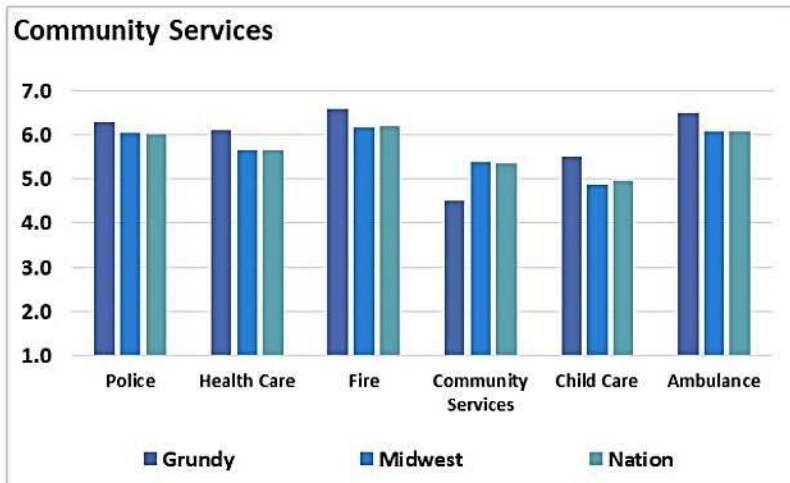
## Legislative Watch

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When asked whether there was any legislation at the local, state, or federal level that may impact their business in the next few years, Grundy companies stated their biggest worries were regarding President Trump's tariffs and taxes in Illinois. The tariffs were a big concern with many since the tariffs can effect the bottom line. With a new governor taking office, businesses are unsure if higher taxes will be implemented. The worry is higher taxes will drive more businesses out of Illinois. The health care field is still concerned with Medicare reimbursements and the new Health Care Violence Prevention Act.

# Regional and National Comparisons

Grundy County businesses rated local services in our county compared to businesses from the Midwest and the nation. This information is made possible through the Blane Canada Synchronist system, which aggregates nationwide retention data. All rankings are on a scale from 1 to 7, with 7 being the highest.



# Rating Grundy County, 2010 - 2018

