

2023 NAWBO Chicago Advocacy Survey



Survey Background

In late 2023, the Advocacy Committee conducted a survey of our NAWBO Chicago membership—spanning Chicagoland, northwest Indiana and southeast Wisconsin—to understand what business challenges members are facing, with the goal of prioritizing these challenges in our future advocacy efforts.

The survey was completed by 15% of NAWBO Chicago members. Of these respondents:

- + 96% own microbusinesses with fewer than 10 employees
- + 82% have W-2 employees
- + 82% engage 1099 independent contractors annually
- + 78% of respondents' businesses have an annual revenue under \$1M



Critical Themes by Survey Topic

HEALTHCARE

Providing healthcare is a challenge for NAWBO business owners. Many respondents mention that an affordable insurance plan would help them attract and retain high quality employees.

- + Nine of 10 respondents think it is difficult to find affordable health care plans for themselves or their employees.
- + Over half (58%) of respondents choose to offer health insurance through their business.
 - PPOs and HMOs lead the type of insurance offered today among respondents that do offer insurance.
 - Among those offering insurance, 96% offer medical and 72% offer dental. Only 48% are able to offer vision.
 - Of those offering insurance, 59% believe their coverage includes behavioral healthcare access (mental health, addiction, and trauma support) and/or telemedicine.
 - However, 58% do not personally use their own business's health insurance plan, with several citing that their partner/spouse's plan is better and less expensive.
- + Costs in healthcare are increasing. 89% of respondents said their annual premiums for their business health insurance plan increased in the last year and most absorbed the costs and kept the plan they had.
- + Of those members who do not offer health insurance, 53% don't have employees who would qualify, and just over one-third say healthcare is too expensive to offer.

CAREGIVING

The emotional cost of caregiving is a significant weight carried by many NAWBO members from both the personal and employer perspective. Connecting business owners to services and recommendations for support could be invaluable.

- + 40% of respondents say they are personally juggling running a business with caregiving responsibilities—either for children, elders, and/or an adult with disabilities—and face many challenges, including:
 - Stress and anxiety
 - Personally providing caregiving
 - Dealing with emergencies
 - Covering the expenses and additional administrative duties
- + More than half (56%) have employees who are caregivers, which provides additional challenges for their businesses, including:
 - Cost of care vs. income
 - Unpredictable need for time off effects business
 - Mental health and burnout
- + Only 15% of current respondents are able to provide a benefits plan with pre-tax options for caregiving.

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BUSINESS FUNDING

When looking for business funding, more than half of respondents feel accessibility to funding is difficult and rely on private and personal funds. They cite challenges such as high interest rates and complicated and time-consuming processes to apply for grants and loans.

- + One in four (27%) business owners responding have received business funding in the last year. Top reasons for getting funding:
 - Front costs of new business opportunity
 - Increase business stability
 - General business growth
- + Source of funding:
 - Private funding (personal savings, credit cards, family/friend help)
 - SBA/government loan
 - Private bank
 - Business credit card

HIRING

Respondents are in a growth mindset. Finding strong, committed, qualified candidates is a challenge, adapting to changing generational expectations is difficult, and the broader concern around affordability for top talent keeps business owners up at night.

- + More than two-thirds (68%) of respondents planned to expand the number of employees in 2024.
- + When hiring, respondents rely on many different methods to find good talent. Top methods include:
 - References from their own networks (67%) or employees (51%)
 - Job search websites (56%)
 - Social media (51%)
- + Respondents struggle with two key challenges when hiring:
 - Unable to meet salary/compensation expectations (65%)
 - Difficulty finding skilled/qualified candidates (53%)
- + Other challenges include tackling turnover:
 - Poor health insurance plan limits interested candidates
 - Identifying talent that will stay
 - Huge expenses for training and onboarding

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTING

Most respondents are not actively engaged in government contracting.

Those who are face such challenges such as:

- + Heavy administrative and project management time requirements
- + Complicated WBE/WOSB certification processes
 - Securing the proper certifications
 - Local/county/state governmental agencies require different certifications, incurring extra costs and time investments
- + Finding partners under whom to subcontract
- + Slow payers



About NAWBO

Founded in 1975 by women business owners choosing to advocate for themselves and others, the National Association of Women Business Owners (NAWBO) today is the unified voice of America's more than 12 million women-owned businesses, which employ over 10.7 million workers.¹

The NAWBO Chicago Advocacy Committee seeks to support local, state and federal advocacy efforts on behalf of our members and offers opportunities to learn about local issues, policies and candidates that affect our professional lives.

For more information, or to get involved, please contact our committee co-chairs:

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1. "Facts About Small Business: Women Ownership Statistics 2024", the U.S. Small Business Administration Office of Advocacy