

With funding from the Community Foundation of Southern Indiana, the IU Southeast Applied Research and Education Center held community listening sessions and surveyed Clark and Floyd county residents, nonprofit, business, and local government leaders, and the Foundation's fund holders to identify priorities, assets, aspirations, and opportunities for growth and improvement to support thriving communities. Findings will be used to guide the Foundation's grant making to support the community's *Priorities for Progress*.

*Economy* explores the financial well-being and economic potential of the two-county region. By understanding strengths and concerns related to the regional economy, leaders can work to ensure positive and equitable outcomes to support thriving communities.

### Most Frequently Selected Priorities for Economic Development

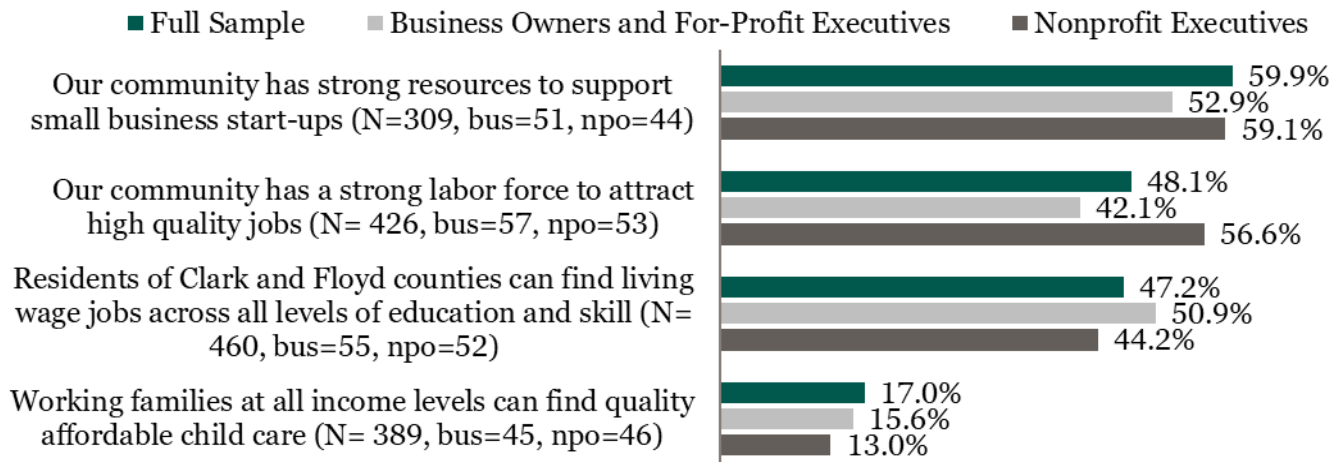


Clark and Floyd counties enjoyed a slow but consistent recovery from the 2008 recession resulting in low unemployment, high labor force engagement, and low poverty rates by 2019. However, the COVID-19 pandemic dramatically changed the work environment, leaving some workers behind. Support for a strong recovery in the wake of the pandemic will require attention to the needs of workers whose jobs will not return.

### Priorities for Progress in Economic Development

- Work to improve wages across sectors, with attention to systemic biases in hiring and pay structures that reinforce and perpetuate the gender wage gap and racial/ethnic groups disparities.
- Continue to support small business development with existing programs and encourage and support opportunities to increase minority and female entrepreneurship.
- Pursue public/private partnerships to pilot models for high quality early care and education with a focus on making it available to people at all income levels, living and working throughout the region.
- Coordinate planning for responsible growth across municipal and county governments, with input from residents, business, and nonprofit sectors.
- Engage in brownfield redevelopment of former industrial sites and build environmental and quality of life protections into all economic development agreements.

## Percent who “agree” or “strongly agree” with statements about economic and labor market opportunities in Clark and Floyd counties



## Most Frequently Selected Priorities for Personal Finance

Residents of Clark and Floyd County have varied priorities related to personal finance. These factors impact the overall economic well-being of the two-county region and are important to understand when looking at economic health. Improving these concerns will not only help individuals but will contribute to a healthier and more prosperous economy.



## Priorities for Progress in Personal Finance

- Pursue public/private partnerships to make more affordable housing available throughout the region (also discussed in Basic Needs section).
- Develop college and career readiness programming in K-12 schools that educates youth on costs of living, the wages needed to support themselves and a family, and the wide range of career pathways available to them.
- Support access to workforce development and training through subsidized programs, scholarships, and grants that reduce or eliminate the need for student loans and make education and training accessible to all.
- Identify creative opportunities to engage single mothers in education and training that meets their child-care needs and supports their ability to focus on improving employability and earnings potential.
- Support efforts to develop women’s skills and confidence in negotiating wages and salaries, increase knowledge of their value in the labor market, and inform them of the wages men earn for the same work.

