

ABoT Survey Results - Members & Public

The Annapolis Board of Trade Strategic Planning Committee was struck by Council at the June Quarterly General Meeting and mandated to do the following during summer and early fall:

- undertake research.
- devise and carry out two surveys on the future of ABOT, one specifically targeting ABOT members and one specifically targeting members of the public.
- present the survey results and our subsequent committee recommendations to ABoT Council at the September Quarterly General Meeting.

The Strategic Planning Committee consists of the following members:

Victoria Cook-Cranton, AHHBC, representing trades

Tom Ellah, MPL Group, representing large business

Suzan Hebditch, Bailey House B&B, representing accommodations

Susan Lane, CARP, representing non-profits

Jane Nicholson, Mrs. Nicholson Home, representing small business

with Adele MacDonald, AIRO, filling the role of Secretariat/Survey Administrator

The surveys attracted a strong response. We are pleased to report that 70 percent of members participated in the survey and we received 70 responses from the general public. At the September 14th Quarterly General Meeting, Council voted to make these results public.

The information overleaf is a **summary analysis** of the survey results. For privacy purposes, these results **do not include** verbatim responses in the “other” category of several survey questions, or any long-form answers to various questions. The Member Survey Analysis is on pages 2, 3 and 4; the Public Survey Analysis is on pages 5 and 6.

Thank you again for taking the time to respond to the survey.



Jane Nicholson
Chair, Strategic Planning Committee

MEMBERS RESPONSES:

Q1: How many years have you been a member of the Board of Trade?

A1: 70 respondents with a range of less than one year up to 25+ years.

Q2: Why did you join the Annapolis Board of Trade?

A2: 70 respondents with 33% (23) saying they joined specifically to support the community and local area. The next most common reason to join was for networking and making connections to other business people and the community at large.

Q3: What business are you in?

A3: 70 respondents said:

28.57% (20) service/trades

25.71% (18) professional/businessperson - active

22.86% (16) retail

17.14% (12) accommodation

12.86% (9) non-profit/association

8.57% (6) attraction

8.57% (6) professional/ businessperson - retired

2.86% (2) associate/individual member

Q4: Do you use any services provided by the Annapolis Board of Trade, either through ABoT or the Atlantic Chamber of Commerce?

A4: 70 respondents with 95% (67) saying they DO NOT use any of the Atlantic Chamber of Commerce benefits – only 3 businesses use the group insurance plan that is offered. 16% (11) of respondents do not use any of the benefits offered by ABoT. 67% (47) use the free listing on the ABoT website, 59% (41) make sure they provide up-to-date information when they renew their membership, 46% (32) include their information at the Visitor Information Centre, 30% (21) participate in some way in First Friday (either business open or through attendance), 6% (4) share their information with ABoT on Facebook.

Q5: What programs or additional services do you feel ABoT could offer that would have a positive effect on your business?

A5: 70 respondents with the top three answers being 30% (21) for networking, 14% (10) for business awards, and 13% (9) for professional development.

Q6: What do you think should be the number one priority of the Annapolis Board of Trade?

A6: 70 respondents with 26% (18) saying advocacy with government should be the number one priority, 23% (16) saying shared marketing and community events, and 21% (15) saying the Visitor Information Centre. 13 respondents answered “other, please specify” with the majority of those answers relating to a combination of marketing and advocacy. A few of the “other” answers said all of the above should have equal weight.

NOTE: question 6 also needs to be considered in context with questions 15 and 17 which relate to the VIC – those questions show the majority of people wanting their dues to continue to be used on the VIC

even though the majority do not support it as ABoT's first priority or; if the VIC was no longer supported, to be used on some form of tourism promotion.

Q7: Were you aware that ABoT is completely volunteer-run and the organization has no paid administrative staff?

A7: 69 respondents with 93% (64) saying yes, they knew, and 7% (5) saying no they did not know.

Q8: Are you willing to volunteer to keep ABoT operating?

A8: 69 respondents with 54% (37) not willing to volunteer to keep ABoT operating. An equal number of respondents (37) were willing to volunteer in some capacity but only 20 respondents included the requested contact information. Only two people were willing to be a member of the executive, nine were willing to sit on council, 16 were willing to sit on committees. Of those 20 who were willing to volunteer and provided contact information, five are already volunteers.

Q9: Were you aware that ABoT membership is roughly divided 50-50 between the Town and the County?

A9: 69 respondents with a close split of awareness – 57% (39) said yes, they were aware and 43% (30) said no, they were not aware of the split.

Q10: If you were once an active volunteer with the Board of Trade who was willing to sit on Council, be part of the executive, or sit on committees but are no longer, what caused you to stop participating?

A10: 69 respondents with 61% (42) saying they had never been a volunteer for ABoT, 20% (14) saying they are currently an active volunteer, and 19% (13) saying they no longer volunteered. The vast majority of the 19% no longer volunteered due to lack of time or that they had already volunteered with ABoT for many years.

Q11: Do you feel your business benefits from being a Board of Trade member?

A11: 69 respondents with 65% (45) saying yes, and 35% (24) saying no.

Q12: Do you believe the Annapolis Board of Trade is an effective voice for the business community?

A12: 68 respondents with 75% (51) saying yes, and 25% (17) saying no.

NOTE: Respondents who said yes were then given Q13 to answer, those who said no were given Q14 to answer. Once those questions were answered both groups of respondents were then given Q15.

Q13 (only answered by Q12 yes respondents): Given the very real challenges addressed in the preamble, how do you see the Board of Trade continuing in the future?

A13: 51 respondents with the common theme among their answers being one of uncertainty about how to proceed but that it cannot go on "as is". There is an understanding that there are neither enough volunteers to keep ABoT functioning nor enough money to keep the VIC functioning. Recommendations include increasing member fees, shifting focus away from the VIC, and getting more support from various levels of government (which shows a lack of knowledge about how things are currently funded with maximum support available from all levels of government).

Q14 (only answered by Q12 no respondents): What, if anything, would you like to see in ABoT's place?

A14: 17 respondents with the common theme among their answers being one of uncertainty about how to proceed but that it cannot go on "as is". Suggestions of replacing the focus on the VIC and tourism

with more marketing of the members themselves. Other suggestions included restructuring to a different model of organization that was more flexible, but again not focused on the VIC.

Q15: Do you wish your membership dues to continue to support the VIC, knowing that without that support, the VIC will close at the end of the 2017 season?

A15: 68 respondents with 79% (54) saying yes, and 21% (14) saying no.

NOTE: Respondents who said yes were then given Q16 to answer before being directed to Q17, those who said no were sent straight to Q17 to answer.

Q16 (only answered by Q15 yes respondents): What would be an ideal location for the Visitor Information Centre?

A16: 54 respondents with 83% (45) saying it should stay in its current location at the Tidal Plant and 17% saying it should be in some other location with the majority of people suggesting Town Hall or some other location in Town.

Q17: If the VIC were no longer supported by ABoT, what would you like to see your membership dues used to finance?

A17: 67 respondents with 31% (21) saying improved online information for tourists, 24% (16) information kiosks for tourists at entrances to Town, 24% (16) said additional programs for businesses with no direct focus on tourism. 21% (14) said “other please describe” and most used that space to reiterate that they either did or did not want the VIC supported. There were also suggestions of where kiosks might be located within Annapolis Royal.

Q18: If the Annapolis Board of Trade ceased to exist, what would you do?

A18: 66 respondents with 32% (21) saying they would join the Annapolis Valley Chamber of Commerce, 32% (21) saying they would form a new merchant’s association specific to Annapolis Royal, 24% (16) said they would not care because it would not affect their business, and the remainders said they would join the Digby board of trade or the Bridgetown chamber.

Q19: Please provide any additional comments or information you wish us to consider.

A19: 41 respondents gave additional feedback. The common themes found among those comments included a desire to see the organization modernize and not be so regimented, or to cease operating because there were not enough volunteers or money to keep it fully functional, and many expressed appreciation for the work by the volunteers along with sadness and sympathy at the possible loss of the organization.

PUBLIC RESPONSES:

Q1: Are you aware that ABoT is completely volunteer-run and the organization has no paid administrative staff (excluding VIC employees)?

A1: 70 respondents with 77% (54) aware that ABoT is volunteer run and 23% (16) not aware.

Q2: Are you aware that ABoT membership is roughly divided 50-50 between the Town and the County?

A2: 70 respondents with 69% (48) NOT aware of the membership split and 31% (22) aware.

Q3: If you were an active member of the ABoT in the past but are no longer, what caused you to stop participating?

A3: 70 respondents with 80% (56) who had never been members of ABoT and 20% (14) who were former members. The majority of that 14% stopped being members because they did not like the way the organization ran or it was no longer relevant to them.

Q4: Do you believe the Annapolis Board of Trade is an effective voice for the business community?

A4: 64 respondents with 63% (40) saying yes and 38% (24) saying no.

Q5: ABoT, through its membership, runs or supports a number of community events like the Christmas Parade of Lights and First Fridays. Knowing that, are you more or less likely to support a business that you know is a member of ABoT?

A5: 64 respondents with 50% (32) saying more likely to support, 48% (31) saying it wouldn't make a difference and 2% (1) saying they would be less likely to support.

Q6: What do you think should be the number one priority of the Annapolis Board of Trade?

A6: 63 respondents with 37% saying shared marketing and community events should be the number one priority of ABoT, 32% (20) said government advocacy, 14% (9) said the VIC, and 2% (1) said website and social media. 16% (10) said "other please specify" and there were no common themes among those answers – they ranged from don't know, to a request to be more proactively inclusive, and requests to stress how important Sunday and evening shopping hours are.

Q7: Do you think ABoT should continue to support the VIC, knowing that without that support, the VIC will close at the end of the 2017 season?

A7: 62 respondents with 79% (49) saying yes it should continue to support the VIC and 21% (13) saying no it should not.

NOTE: Respondents who said yes were then given Q8 to answer, those who said no were given Q9 to answer.

Q8 (only answered by Q7 yes respondents): What would be an ideal location for the Visitor Information Centre?

A8: 49 respondents with 73% (36) saying it should stay in its current location and 27% (13) saying it should be in some other location. The most common other location was the library space (after it moves) in the Town Hall.

NOTE: Respondents to Q8 were then sent to Q11 to answer.

Q9 (only answered by Q7 no respondents): Why do you feel that ABoT should not continue to support the VIC?

A9: 13 respondents with the most common theme being that it is too costly. Others suggest that it should be the responsibility of the Town and the County.

NOTE: Respondents to Q9 were then sent to Q10 to answer before then being sent to Q11.

Q10 (only answered by Q9 respondents): If the VIC were no longer supported by ABoT, would you like to see the Board of Trade support any of these ideas (check the one item most important to you):

A10: 13 respondents with 31% (4) saying additional programs for businesses, 23% (3) saying information kiosks at all entries to Town, 15% (2) saying improved online information for tourists. 31% (4) said “other please specify” with no common theme among them – answers included move the VIC back to King’s Theatre, forget about tourists and focus on new residents/businesses, there should be more events.

Q11: If the Annapolis Board of Trade ceased to exist, what would you want to have happen?

A11: 60 respondents with 53% (32) saying they would expect the Town of Annapolis Royal to take over the VIC, 23% (14) expect the Town of Annapolis Royal to take over all of the community events currently supported by ABoT, 15% (9) would not care, and 8% (5) said they’d volunteer to keep the community events running and four of them provided email address for follow-up.

Q12: Please provide any additional comments or information you wish us to consider.

A12: 24 respondents gave additional feedback. There was a wide variety of feedback but common themes found among those comments included suggestions that the Town and County provide more funds, that marketing and communications are more important than the VIC, that community events are not the board’s responsibility those should be done by the Town, and in general it was clear that what ABoT does and how it is funded is not clear to the public at large.