



## **NEWS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

7/25/17

**Contact:**

Sarah Schwartz  
312-667-6015

### **Intersect Illinois reveals results of statewide study to retain, grow business**

*More than 600 business owners participated in inaugural program year*

(Chicago, IL) – **CORE (Creating Opportunities for Retention and Expansion)**, a statewide coalition of economic development professionals designed to retain jobs and investments, and ensure existing businesses in Illinois remain economically viable, released the results from the first year study of over 600 businesses. Intersect Illinois participated during the first year to facilitate these visits to key businesses in the area.

“The Rauner administration saw a true need to begin communicating with the business community to identify tangible ways we can assist their efforts to grow and create opportunities within Illinois,” said Illinois Department of Commerce Director Sean McCarthy. “The inaugural year of the CORE program has been a great success due to our local economic development partners and the hundreds of businesses that offered up their time. The results of this study have provided the state with concrete areas to focus on that can create a more business friendly environment to produce jobs, attract investment and increase the quality of life in Illinois.”

A coalition of more than 150 economic development organizations and communities proactively reached out to area business owners over the year to survey and identify workforce issues, barriers to business growth, forecast future investment and employment, determine market share and competition, and better understand service provider satisfaction levels.

“The information points to an opportunity for us to work together in tackling difficulties and continuing to strive for improvement in the business climate through our collaborative and

valuable partnerships and make Illinois the most attractive place to grow business,” said Ed Sitar, Economic Development Manager for ComEd and a member of CORE’s management committee.

Outreach efforts specifically targeted six key industry sectors whose health is crucial to the Illinois economy: Advanced Manufacturing, Agribusiness and Food Processing, Biotechnology, Energy, Financial Services, and Transportation and Logistics.

“The information is telling, and we now can identify where to specifically focus our efforts,” Intersect Illinois President Andria Winters said. “Our priorities will be our ‘High-Value’ and ‘High-Growth’ companies, the alignment of workforce with apprenticeships, employee training and early education to meet industry needs, as well as improving support for export promotion and expansion plans in international sales, and site selection and asset inventory for developers.”

The CORE initiative is led by a steering committee of representatives from the Illinois Economic Development Association, Intersect Illinois, Great River Economic Development Foundation, Grundy County Economic Development Council, the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, and three major public utilities: Nicor Gas, ComEd, and Ameren Illinois.

“What we found in the first year is that despite the challenges that businesses are facing, there is tremendous opportunity for growth and investment,” said Mike Kearney, Director of Economic Development at Ameren Illinois. “While we have been conducting similar business retention and expansion effort in our territory for years, Ameren is proud to be a part of the bigger strategic effort to help facilitate growth and expansion throughout the state.”

CORE is available to Illinois communities and economic development organizations in need of business retention assistance at no charge. Since launching in 2016, over 150 economic development organizations and partners have conducted 600 visits with area companies in 55 counties. For more information, visit [www.COREIllinois.org](http://www.COREIllinois.org).

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