



COMMUNITY FUTURES SUNRISE
Regional Business Development Plan Brief



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Executive Summary

The Community Futures (CF) Sunrise Regional Business Development Plan was developed based on a process of engagement and consultation with key organizations, businesses and stakeholders. The process was led by CF Sunrise, funded under the Canada Coal Transition Initiative.

There is a wealth of knowledge, expertise, and commitment to economic growth that exists among the business community and economic development partners throughout the region. The creation of this plan encompassed a strong emphasis on consultation and as such, the plan mirrors the needs, strengths, issues and aspirations that exist within the region. The plan is a document that has clear goals and actions that have been created by the CF Sunrise team based on feedback from the region.

Project opportunities that may be suitable for other regional partners were also identified during the needs assessment process and have been summarized in this document.

The resiliency of our business and municipal sectors was identified as an area of development and opportunity. With both the coal transition and now Covid-19 challenging our economic region; resiliency strategies, planning activities and training will be enhanced areas of focus.

Regional Needs Assessment

The Regional Needs Assessment, from which the Business Development Plan was created, took place from **September to December 2019**. Feedback was obtained from key stakeholders within the region including businesses, urban and rural municipalities, community economic development officers and Chambers of Commerce. Following analysis of the data, key themes emerged in each of the stakeholder groups.

Economic Development Practitioner Roundtable Key Themes

- Lack of economic development knowledge at the community level
- Need for rural diversification due to a reliance on a resource-based economy
- Lack of economic development related planning at the community level
- Need for a regional entity to support economic development efforts

Chamber of Commerce Roundtable Key Themes

- Richness of natural resources in the region (*e.g.*, oil, agriculture, mining)
- Need for rural diversification due to a reliance on a resource-based economy
- Supports are required for businesses due to prolonged economic uncertainty
- Lack of funding for infrastructure development and maintenance
- Need for regional economic development projects and support

Business Survey Key Themes

- Sixty-six percent of respondents expect to be impacted by the coal transition
- Small business owners account for the majority of respondents
- Businesses are generally optimistic
- Forty-six percent of respondents planned to increase their sales in 2020
- Local and regional markets are targeted for business expansion
- Online sale methods (*e.g.*, website, social media) are used by 22% of respondents
- Issues of most importance to respondents include: retaining valued employees, training and skill development, recruiting skilled workers and identifying business opportunities
- Most requested business training includes: marketing, financial literacy and social media

Municipal Survey Key Themes

- Thirty-six percent of respondents expect their business community to be impacted by the coal transition
- Communities require support as it relates to economic development
- Economic priorities of municipalities include: attracting new businesses, attracting new residents and improving the local business climate
- Forty percent of respondents have completed their Official Community Plan (OCP); however, only 12% have created an action plan for implementation purposes
- Lack of capacity (knowledge and staffing) exists to develop and achieve economic development plans and priorities
- Eighty percent of Councils have never received formal economic development training
- Capacity building requests include: economic development principles, economic development planning, business attraction and grant writing
- Only 5 Economic Development Officers are employed in the CF Sunrise region totaling 3.0 full-time positions

Strategic Goals & Objectives

CF Sunrise has the ability to play a lead role in the continued development of entrepreneurship and support of business development in the region. Following data analysis, CF Sunrise was able to identify key priorities for program and service delivery. The objectives and actions of these priorities follow.

Objective 1: To expand the role of CF Sunrise in economic development

Actions:

- Retention of the Regional Economic Development Coordinator
- Build regional capacity as it relates to economic development
- Strengthen relationships with key organizations

Objective 2: To provide continued support to entrepreneurs in southeast Saskatchewan

Actions:

- Provide workshops and training to businesses
- Provide capital for business development and expansion within the region
- Support organizations whose mandate supports economic and business development

Objective 3: To promote the development of entrepreneurship in the region

Actions:

- Provide support to the Estevan Business Incubator
- Promote and support organizations focused on business development and entrepreneurship
- Promote entrepreneurship as a career option

Objective 4: To highlight economic development and entrepreneurship within the region

Actions:

- Promote southeast Saskatchewan as a place to do business
- Highlight development success stories within the region

Objective 5: To promote rural diversification of the CF Sunrise region

Actions:

- Build regional capacity as it relates to rural diversification

Implementation Period

Implementation of the regional business development plan will take the coordinated efforts of organizations and communities throughout the region. The plan outlines a number of programs and services to be delivered in upcoming years. It is proposed that a Regional Economic Development Coordinator be maintained during this time period to execute business development activities, while working with existing entities to achieve economic development outcomes. During the implementation period, regular check-ins with stakeholders will be performed to ensure continued alignment with regional needs.

Other Identified Needs and Potential Project Opportunities

CF Sunrise has identified a number of potential project opportunities that would enhance the coal transition efforts, and may be suitable for other regional partners. The opportunities listed below were taken directly from the stakeholder responses in the Needs Assessment:

- Supports for mental health
- Business mentor/protégé program
- Local procurement of goods (import replacement system/project)
- Business development 'ask an expert' program
- Business or proposal writing program
- Human Resource issues: recruiting, retaining and skill development of employees

Resiliency Focus

The resiliency of our business community and municipal organizations were identified as areas of development and opportunity. With both the coal transition and now Covid-19 challenging our economic region; resiliency strategies, and resulting planning and training activities will be focus areas of the CF Sunrise team.

With these challenges in mind, CF Sunrise will continue to connect with stakeholders and serve clients, incorporating further technology use into our business and municipal supports.

Contact Information

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