BREWD Research Report

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Business Retention & Expansion (BRE) and Workforce Development (WD)

BREWD Research Report

Presented by:

Outlook
market research
and consulting

For:

INVEST SOUTHEAST ALBERTA

June 5, 2020

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Background

Invest Southeast Alberta (ISA)

The BREWD (Business Retention & Expansion {BRE} and Workforce Development {WD}) project is being undertaken by the Invest Southeast Alberta (ISA) partnership. ISA is a group of business, economic and business development organizations, training and workforce development agencies and institutions, and government entities who have united to develop a joint economic action plan, share necessary resources, and ensure action is taken to support the region we serve.

BREWD Project & Purpose

ISA's first collaborative initiative encompassed the implementation of this BREWD project resulting in the development of the two key strategies that will support the growth of business moving forward.

1. Business Retention & Expansion (BRE) Strategy
2. Workforce Development (WD) Strategy

The purpose of the BREWD project is to foster a more competitive business environment that provides business and industry the economic support systems they need to grow and succeed.

BREWD Scope & Objectives

This bottom-up collaborative project was implemented in the City of Medicine Hat and within a one-hour commuter-shed encompassing: Redcliff, Bow Island, Cypress County and the County of Forty Mile.

Objectives:

1. Enhance cooperation and consensus among business, government, and economic development organizations.
2. Provide support/information to address immediate individual business issues and opportunities.
3. Encourage, support and facilitate human resource planning and labour market adjustments for the area.
4. Accurately assess needs of local businesses including workforce challenges and develop a corresponding action plan for economic prosperity.

BREWD Process

Business Retention & Expansion (BRE)

Development of the Business Retention and Expansion strategy includes the following:

1. Form BRE Teams:
   - Leadership Team
   - Business Visitation Team
   - Workforce Team
   - Taskforce Team

2. Survey Business Community:
   - Developing the BRE survey based on proven existing models
   - Monitor and direct Red Flag Issues that result from the survey
   - The survey yielded 476 completion, with a goal of 400

3. Prepare Survey Research Report – Compile, analyze, and report findings and overarching themes from primary and secondary research (survey, F2F consultations /visitations).

4. Host Research Review Meeting – Facilitate discussions with the Leadership Team and Workforce Team to assess the Survey Research Report to provide further advisement and identify potential solutions / projects to be incorporated in the report, creating a final report to be presented at the Task Force Retreat.

5. Host Task Force Retreat and Set Priorities - engage and facilitate discussions among the Leadership Team, Task Force Team, Workforce Team and other relevant community experts to discuss the projects, set project priorities for the business community, and identify leaders to move them into action.

6. Prepare Final Summary Report of Priority Actions - outlining the projects ranked in order of priority and project leaders to implement action to be presented at forum.

7. Host Economic Growth Forum - community celebration and official launch of the projects moving into action.

8. Implement Action – Project teams come together to prepare action plans and begin taking action.

9. Evaluate Projects & Monitor Progress – Leaders of both the BRE and WD projects meet monthly to evaluate if progress is occurring and if not, identify next steps.

Workforce Development (WD)

The workforce strategy assessed six key industries encompassing interviews and online surveys with large and small to medium size employers. The strategy draws on research from four instruments:

- 50 In-Person Interviews with Key Employers
- 476 BRE Surveys – Labour Section (specific labour-related questions)
- 10 Surveys with Training and Service Providers
- 341 Worker/Jobseeker Survey

This research formed a Strategic Workforce Plan consisting of:

1. Complete Current Workforce Profile - identify existing pressures employers will face to attract and retain labour.

2. Complete Environmental Scan - identify emerging trends, issues, and business environment including workforce retention and attraction strategies.

3. Determine Future Workforce Demands - determining the future needs of business considering the emerging trends and issues identified in the environmental scan

4. Complete Workforce Gap Analysis - analyzing the data and identifying gaps between workforce supply and demand

5. Develop Strategy – key strategic themes along with suggested projects to support the strategy

6. Prioritize Projects and Identify leads – projects are prioritized for action and those who will lead them forward.

7. Project Evaluation & Outcomes Measured - Leaders of both the BRE and WD projects meet monthly to evaluate if progress is occurring and if not, identify next steps

BREWD Teams

The goal of this broad-based collaborative movement is to ensure inter-connectedness and that a shared economic agenda and vision is achieved across all stakeholder agencies allowing long-term positive economic impacts to be realized now and into the future. The project was carried out by volunteers participating on the following four teams and one committee:

Leadership Team: "Mobilizers"

The BREWD project was led by Sandra Blyth, Invest Medicine Hat/City of Medicine Hat in collaboration with a Project Leadership Team tasked with mobilizing the community and managing the project. The leadership included:

- Melanie Friesen, Alberta Labour and Immigration
- Curtis Gouw, Apple Drugs
- David Howe, Aurora Cannabis
- Jeremy Silver, City Centre Development Agency
- Sean Blewett, Community Futures Entre-Corp
- Jace Anderson, Destination Marketing Organization
- Donovan Bellamy, Dynamic Industrial Solutions
- Julie Sullivan, Hut 8 Mining
- Sandra Blyth, Invest Medicine Hat / City of MH
- Lisa Kowalchuk, Medicine Hat & District Chamber of Commerce
- Mark Keller & Tracy Stroud, Medicine Hat College
- Tracy Noullett, MNP
- Chris Hellman, Mr. Lube / Moxies
- Gillian Digman, Red Hat Cooperative
- Marcus Campbell, Terralta
- Theresa Hardiker, Verge Economic Development

Business Visitation Team: "Advocators"

The Business Visitation Team was tasked with: participating in a half day training session; selecting a minimum of 10 businesses for Face-to-face business visitations of their choice and encouraging business to complete the survey. The Business Visitation Team included:

- Amy Zuk - F&S Safety Buzz
- Ashley Radke - Lacey Homes
- Benita Sauer - MNP LLP
- Brendan Hilllson - McBride's Bakery
- Brooke Hawker - Evoke Inspired Marketing
- Bryan Petersen - Petersen Accounting Services
- Caleb Hagemeister - MNP LLP
- Carole Hillson -McBride's Bakery
- Cathy Acton - Action Land & Environmental Services
- Chris Hellman - Mr. Lube
- Christopher Roberts - Boulevard Hemp Ltd
- Colette Smithers - Jesters Beverage Services
- Darlene Jenkins - Darlene Jenkins
- Dave Shields - Reece Custom
- Derek Schaerer - EnerStar Rentals and Services
- Devin Declercq - DB Technology Group
- Donna Noullett - MNP LLP
- Donovan Bellamy - Dynamic Industrial Solutions
- Drew Jackiw - JMH & Co.
- Dustin Turcotte - Postcard Portables
- Grant MacKay - City of Med Hat
- Janice Humphrey - MNP LLP
- Janice Kirchner - Safety Connections
- Jason Nelson - Being Human Services
- Jason Tweten - Action Land & Environmental Services
- Jeff Sohn - Advance Design & Construction Ltd.
- Jeremiah Benoit - Envision Life
- Jeremy Silver - CCDA
- Jim Mellish - Medicine Hat Nissan
- Jim Taylor - LMT Enterprises
- Joanne Pahl - Medicine Hat Meat Traders
- John Hashem - Box Springs Business Park
- John Rodermond - Rodermond Enterprises Inc.
- Jon Higgins - Pattison Outdoor Advertising
- Julie Friesen - City of Medicine Hat, Councillor
- Kris Kautz - Bert's Vacuums

- Kris Samraj - City of Medicine Hat, Councillor
- Laura Shivak - Terralta
- Laurel Scharfenberg - Temple Consulting
- Lee Waechter - Reece Custom
- Luc Beriault - Positive Life Concepts
- Mel Earl - Speedpro Signs
- Michelle Amos - Methanex
- Mike Harrington - Valhalla Pure
- Pat Guist - CFEC
- Paula Kot - FortisAlberta Inc.
- Phil Turnbull - City of Medicine Hat, Councillor
- Randi Perry - BVA LLP
- Rhonda Humbert - AgeCare Valleyview
- Richard Munro - Memory Lane Computers
- Richard Oster - Cypress County, Deputy Reeve
- Robert Harvey - Canadian Tire
- Rudy Desmeules - St. John Ambulance
- Sarah Franchetto - RBC
- Selena McLean Moore - Economic Development Trade and Tourism
- Sharon Hayward - YMCA
- Shila Sharps - HR SOLUTIONS
- Theresa Hardikker - VERGE
- Tim Fauser - Varsteel
- Tracy Noullett - MNP LLP
- Wayne Pratt - Airwise Structures Inc.
- Wendy Martin-Gutjahr - BGSA Radiology Inc
- Wes Paterson - Medicine Hat College

<u>Research Review Advisory Committee: “Advisors”</u>

The Research Review Advisory Committee provided advisement on current and future business and workforce needs, changes and challenges. They were tasked with participating in research review meetings on January 21st and 22nd, 2020 where they examined the research data (employer interviews and survey data) to identify / prioritize a strategic action plan.

From these meetings a Final Research Report was prepared outlining eight Strategic Themes and over 40 possible solutions to address business needs. Participants included:

- Andrea Aarden - Medicine Hat College
- Jace Anderson - Medicine Hat Tourism
- Jennifer Barclay - Alberta Health Services
- Donovan Bellamy - Dynamic Industrial Solutions
- Garry Bennett - City of Medicine Hat
- Luc Beriault - Positive Life Concepts
- Sean Blewett - Community Futures Entre-Corp
- Sandra Blyth - City of Medicine Hat
- Lora Brenan - Junior Achievement
- Allison Campbell - Medicine Hat College
- Marcus Campbell - Terralta Inc
- Corrie Dale - QinetiQ Target Systems
- John Digman - Medicine Hat Construction Association
- Gillian Digman - Red Hat Cooperative
- Mandy Dion - F Industries Ltd
- Shelly Drefs - Medicine Hat College
- Christie Dyck - Medicine Hat College
- Sarah Franchetto - RBC
- Melanie Friesen - Alberta Labour and Immigration
- Peggy Gizen - Being Human Services
- Kari Godlonton - Medicine Hat College
- Curtis Gouw - Bow Island Apple Drugs
- Theresa Hardiker - VERGE Economic Development
- Chris Hellman - Moxies/Mr Lube
- Shannon Hurlbutt - Medicine Hat College
- Britney Ingram - Medicine Hat Public School Division
- Mark Keller - Medicine Hat College
- Lisa Kowalchuk - Medicine Hat and District Chamber of Commerce
- Shayne Kozachenko - AlbertaWorks
- Kristi Liboiron - Youth Career Development – SEAB
- Jody Magill - Methanex Corporation
- Jennifer Mah - MH LIP
- Ryan McDonald - Aecon
- Sarah McDonald - Alberta Health Services
- Selena McLean-Moore - Alberta Economic Development, Trade and Tourism
- Kelly McNeely - Being Human Services
- Kim Meunier - Alberta Labour and Immigration
- Sandra Milne - APEX
- Kirstyn Myren - YMCA of Medicine Hat
- Wes Paterson - Medicine Hat College

- Ronald Pennington - RonPenn Holdings
- Randi Perry - Grant Thornton LLP
- Emilee Rausch - Aurora Cannabis Inc
- Janice Rigby - Department of National Defence
- Laurel Scharfenberg - Temple Consulting
- Jeremy Silver - City Centre Development Agency
- Jon Sookocheff - Folium Biosciences
- Tracy Stroud - Medicine Hat College
- Victoria Westwood - Medicine Hat Lodge
- Joalee Zanidean - YMCA Employment Centre

Task Force Team: "Strategizers"

The Task Force Team was comprised of the Leadership Team, members of the Workforce Team and other, experts from the community and possibly beyond to provide critical advisement on the overarching issues / opportunities that result from the Research Report. They then assisted in setting project priorities that will lead towards the development of action plans for implementation and ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the projects.

BREWD Business Participation

The participation of business is essential to the success of the BREWD project. Databases were compiled from the business license lists of the City of Medicine Hat, Redcliff, Bow Island, Cypress County, and the County of Forty Mile to total 2,271 businesses. Personal invitations were mailed to all businesses outlining the purpose of the BREWD project, why participation was important, and how to participate.

For the selection of the face-to-face business visitations the volunteers were required to select ten businesses from a shortened database that focused on six key sectors including agriculture, manufacturing, construction, oil and gas, transportation and warehousing, and professional, scientific and technical services. The volunteers also had the option to pick any additional businesses they wanted. Customized packages were developed for each of these businesses and visitations were initiated on September 16th, 2019.

In the end 476 businesses participated in the BREWD Survey. In addition, 50 of these businesses were selected to participate in Key Employer Interviews designed to inform the Workforce Development Strategy (WD). They were selected to:1. Represent the six industry sectors, 2. Represent businesses of various sizes, and 3. To comment on ongoing and expected future workforce challenges in the region. These 50 in-depth interviews provided a wealth of data for the Workforce Development Strategy.

BREWD Jobseeker and Worker Participation

The research for the Workforce Development Strategy was also bolstered by regional workers and jobseekers. 341 people participated in the Jobseeker-Worker Survey. Some were seeking work through Alberta Supports offices or local job fairs, some were students at Medicine Hat College, and others were employees of the businesses that participated in the BREWD survey. These Southeast Albertans provided a deeper perspective of the labour market in the region. Their input balanced with the employer data from the BRE Survey and Key Employer Interviews helped form the Workforce Development Strategy.

BREWD Volunteers and Supporters

Currently, BREWD is supported by over 100 volunteers and supporters who have provided valuable input and time commitment, including but not limited to:

A-E

Action Land & Environmental: Cathy Acton, Jason Tweten
Advance Design & Construction Ltd: Jeff Sohn
AgeCare Valleyview: Rhonda Humbert
Airwise Structures Inc: Wayne Pratt
Alberta Government: Melanie Friesen, Selena McLean-Moore
Alberta Health Services
Alberta Parks: Mike Ratcliff
Apex-Regional Innovation Network – Elizabeth Blair
Aurora Cannabis - David Howe
Auto Star CompuSystems Inc. Brian Dobek
B Digital Ads Inc.:
Being Human Services: Pamela Wagner, Jason Nelson
Bert's Vacuums & Equipment Rentals: Kris Kautz
BGSA Radiology: Tom Strain, Wendy Martin-Gutjahr
Big Marble Farms
Booster Juice: Derek Martin
Borea Construction
Boulevard Hemp Ltd: Christopher Roberts Bow
Island Apple Drugs: Curtis Gouw
Box Springs Business Park: John Hashem
BVA LLP: Randi Perry
Canadian Tire: Rob Harvey
Canalta Centre
CF Industries
City Centre Development Agency: Robin Anton
City of Medicine Hat, Councillors: Julie Friesen, Phil Turnbull, Kris Samraj
Community Futures Entre-Corp: Elizabeth Blair, Sean Blewett, Pat Guist
Community Volunteer: Donna Noullett
Connections Career & Safety Services Ltd.: Janice Kirchner
Contempora Construction Inc.
Cypress County: Richard Oster, Deputy Reeve
DB Technology Group: Devin Declercq
Dynamic Industrial Solutions: Donovan Bellamy
Enerstar Rentals & Services Ltd: Richard Kowalchuk, Derek Schaerer
Environeta Solutions, Wyane Pratt
Envision Life: Jeremiah Benoit
EVOKE Inspired Marketing: Brooke Hawker

F-L

F&S Safety Buzz: Amy Zuk
Folium Biosciences
FortisAlberta Inc: Paula Kot
Goodyear Canada: Doug Schwartz
Gravity Sports: Ben Roscoe
GVN Structures
HR Solutions Canada: Shila Sharps
iFIXPhones: Jeremy Silver
Hut 8 Mining
International Petroleum Corporation
Invest Medicine Hat: Sandra Blyth, Grant MacKay, Dorothy Pribyl
Jesters Beverage Services: Colette Smithers
Jim’s Electric
JMH&Co.: Drew Jackiw
Just Be TC: Darlene Jenkins
Kruse Glass
Lacey Homes Ltd: Ashley Radke
LMT Landscaping Ltd: Jim Taylor
LMT Enterprises

M-P

MasTec Canada Inc.
McBride's Bakery: Brendan Hillson, Carole Hillson
Medicine Hat Chamber of Commerce: Lisa Kowalchuk
Medicine Hat College: Mark Keller, Tracy Stroud
Medicine Hat Construction Association: John Digman
Medicine Hat Meat Traders Ltd: Joanne Pahl
Medicine Hat Lodge
Medicine Hat School District 76
Methanex: Michelle Amos, Jody Magill
Memory Lane Computers: Richard Munro
Midwest Design & Construction
Midwest Surveys
MOI Resources
MNP: Caleb Hagemeister, Janice Humphrey MNP: Tracy Noulett, Benita Sauer
Mr. Lube: Chris Hellman
Nissan: Jim Mellish
Janco Greenhouses
P&C Farms

Padcar Mechanical Ltd.
Pattison Outdoor Advertising: Jon Higgins
Petersen Accounting Services: Bryan Petersen, Holly Tataryn
Pharoah Engineering
PH McNally Associates
Positive Life Concepts: Luc Beriault
Postcard Portables: Dustin Turcotte

Q-T

QinetiQ Target Systems
Quickway Electrical & Security
RBC Royal Bank: Sarah Franchetto
Redcliff Kinesiology: Wes Paterson
Red Hat Co-operative Ltd: Gillian Digman
REECE Custom Process Equipment: Dave Shields, Lee Waechter
Rodermond Enterprises Inc: John Rodermond
Rolling Acres
Sandfly Marketing Inc.: Myrna Stark
Skyview Growers
Safety Connections: Janice Kirchner:
SpeedPro Signs: Mel Earl
TBC General Contracting
Starks Plumbing, Heating and Electrical
St. John Ambulance: Rudy Desmeules
South Country Coop
Sunshine Greenhouses
Temple Consulting: Laurel Scharfenberg
Terralta Inc: Marcus Campbell, Laura Shivak Torxen
Tourism Medicine Hat: Jace Anderson
Trican Well Service
Wedding Star Inc.

U-Z

UPS Store: Dominique Hirsch
Valhalla Pure Outfitters: Mike Harrington
Varsteel: Tim Fauser
VERGE Economic Development: Theresa Hardiker
YMCA: Sharon Hayward

BREWD Sponsors

We would like to acknowledge the valuable support of the following BREWD sponsors:

City Centre Development Agency
Methanex Corporation
Medicine Hat Construction Association
UPS Store
Red Hat Co-operative
MNP LLP

BREWD Research Report Writers

This BREWD Research Report was written by Mark Baxter and Frank Scap of Outlook Market Research & Consulting Ltd. under the direction of Invest Southeast Alberta.

Call to Action

The purpose of the BREWD project is to foster a more competitive business environment that provides business and industry the economic support system they need to grow and succeed.

Economic growth is a byproduct of a healthy environment or eco-system (economic system). Each of us plays an essential role in creating a foundation that will foster growth. To do so we have implemented the BREWD project to allow us to better understand the current state of how our environment is performing and what we must do to improve our performance going forward.

This report outlines what 476 businesses have told us about what is and isn't working and provided suggestions where improvements can be made. This fact-based information is essential to mapping a path forward for our community and it is the responsibility of each of us to ensure we honor their insight through a joint plan of action. Additionally, we must also commit to applying a system that will ensure that ongoing planning and action will continue now and into the future. A system that will not only ensure planning and action occur but overtime will allow for us to benchmark performance and make new distinctions about our environment's strengths and weaknesses. It will allow us to truly become experts in our economy and about our business' needs. We are the sum of our individual parts and together we increase our resources and our ability to effect positive changes more rapidly than ever before.

2020 Call to ACTION

ATTENTION All businesses and service organizations we request your support for the following:

- commit to reading and becoming familiar with the BREWD data and reports;
- use this fact-based information for your individual planning purposes and to guide your decisions for the future;
- lead or support one of the projects prioritized for action by contacting Invest Southeast Alberta; and,
- join us at the 2020 Economic Forum to learn what projects are prioritized for action and who is leading change.

2023 Call to ACTION

ATTENTION All businesses. In 2019, 476 businesses provided insight and direction in the BREWD survey. The majority of these respondents represented construction (17.0%) retail trade (14.6%), professional, scientific and technical services (12.1%) and repair, maintenance and personal services (10.3%). Our goal is to have all industries largely represented in future surveys and we request your support for the following:

- commit to taking the 2023 BREWD survey and increase the response ratio to be even greater; and,
- commit to volunteering on a team to help us get the word out and get others to complete the survey.

ATTENTION all service organizations. Business is important to everyone and they are the reason we are here. As service providers we use surveying to aid us in serving their needs. Often business is asked to complete a survey 2 – 4 times a year by various organizations. In 2023, the BREWD survey tool will be revisited and revised to survey our businesses once again. By working together and devising a survey that can support all of our questions we will save business and ourselves, time and money. We request your support for the following:

- commit to identifying what you want to learn from business and be a part of planning the next survey; and,
- commit to volunteering on a team to help us get the word out and get others to complete the survey.

Covid 19 – BREWD Project Impact

The secondary and primary data for this report was collected and analyzed in 2019. The BRWED survey and employer interviews were conducted in September and October 2019. The 41 “Projects” outlined in the Strategic Themes throughout the report were developed and decided upon in late 2019, and in early 2020 during the Covid 19 outbreak.

The short, medium, and long-term economic and workforce impacts of the pandemic are still unclear, although they are undoubtedly real. The full impact of the Covid 19 situation on the BREWD data set and economic situation in Southeast Alberta will become evident in the months and years to come. But the exhaustive nature of the BREWD data collection process means that much of the information is still reliable and valid, especially when viewed in the context of the longer project arc described in the previous Call to Action section.

Executive Summary

Overview

The BREWD Project was initiated in 2018 under the leadership of the Invest Southeast Alberta partners. The project kicked-off in June with public information sessions that engaged 76 volunteers to sign up on project teams and become advocators of BREWD. Business recognized that BREWD presented not only an opportunity to identify what was and wasn't working in the business environment, but to also direct the resources of local government and service agencies towards addressing the barriers business faced. As a result, BREWD was quickly embraced and became a "business movement" across the region.

In short, the BREWD project involved the implementation and development of a Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) strategy and a Workforce Development (WD) strategy. Both strategies require extensive research and analysis of the region's businesses, employers, workers, and job seekers. To date, this research has encompassed completion of: two comprehensive online business surveys that engaged 476 business respondents (21% response rate) and 341 work / job seekers; 50 in-person interviews with key employers; and 10 surveys with workforce training and service providers.

The research overall has revealed quite optimistic results. There were a number of insightful suggestions from respondents on what wasn't working and how to facilitate business growth in Southeast Alberta. However, one of the biggest takeaways from the survey was that respondents are generally quite happy with the region and its communities as a place to do business. Figure 1 beside illustrates this high level of satisfaction:

Figure 1: Questions 86 to 94: Community Factors in Business Satisfaction

	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
Workforce Factors					
Availability of skilled labour	4.18%	20.60%	22.39%	**35.82%**	**13.43%**
Availability of unskilled labour	2.16%	9.57%	29.94%	**35.19%**	**9.57%**
Wage rates	4.19%	14.37%	26.65%	**44.61%**	**6.89%**
Employee health care cost	3.92%	14.46%	32.53%	**33.43%**	**6.33%**
Union presence	2.83%	1.57%	47.80%	**5.35%**	**4.72%**
Education and Training Factors					
K-12	0.63%	3.77%	18.87%	**40.88%**	**26.42%**
Higher education within a reasonable drive	2.17%	9.94%	21.43%	**43.79%**	**14.91%**
Technical training programs	3.73%	14.29%	25.78%	**35.09%**	**12.11%**
Transportation/Location Factors					
Highway accessibility	0.60%	4.50%	6.31%	**47.15%**	**40.84%**
Air service	1.81%	14.50%	24.77%	**42.30%**	**7.85%**
Proximity to major markets	2.74%	12.46%	29.79%	**41.95%**	**8.21%**
Proximity to raw materials	2.49%	11.21%	41.12%	**20.56%**	**5.61%**
Proximity to service suppliers	2.14%	12.54%	29.97%	**40.37%**	**7.65%**
Railroad service	1.25%	2.80%	44.55%	**19.63%**	**4.98%**
Land, Buildings & Credit Factors					
Availability of land	2.78%	8.64%	26.85%	**39.51%**	**10.49%**
Availability of buildings	2.45%	13.50%	26.38%	**39.57%**	**8.90%**
Cost of buildings	4.28%	23.85%	31.19%	**23.85%**	**5.50%**
Availability of loans	2.45%	10.74%	32.21%	**32.21%**	**7.67%**
Cost of loans	1.85%	18.77%	34.46%	**25.85%**	**4.00%**

When asked in Q97, "What is your overall opinion of your community as a place to conduct business?" 34% said Above Average or Excellent, and only 12% said Below Average or Poor. A deeper dive into business satisfaction factors is seen in Questions 86 to 94 – see Figure 1. The amount of positive versus negative ratings are overwhelming.

When the total number of

Figure 1 (Con't) : Questions 86 to 94: Community Factors in Business Satisfaction					
Utilities Factors					
Energy cost (electric, natural gas)	6.25%	21.43%	22.02%	**41.67%**	**7.74%**
Energy reliability (electric, natural gas)	2.09%	8.06%	21.49%	**46.87%**	**20.30%**
Telecommunications & broadband reliability	4.48%	20.00%	21.79%	**43.28%**	**8.96%**
Telecommunications & broadband cost	**10.15%**	**30.15%**	22.09%	31.04%	4.78%
Broadband speed	8.41%	19.82%	21.92%	**40.24%**	**7.51%**
Local Business Support Factors					
Community attitude towards business	2.38%	13.10%	16.07%	**42.56%**	**24.40%**
Community promotion of itself and business	2.68%	13.69%	20.83%	**44.64%**	**16.96%**
Chamber of commerce	1.50%	4.49%	21.86%	**40.42%**	**26.35%**
Economic development authority	1.20%	11.14%	31.93%	**33.43%**	**10.84%**
Incentives business investment in facilities, worker skills or more workers	4.24%	17.58%	36.36%	**23.33%**	**3.94%**
Quality of Life Factors					
Recreational opportunities	0.89%	7.10%	9.76%	**51.78%**	**29.59%**
Cultural opportunities	1.19%	4.45%	20.47%	**49.85%**	**20.77%**
Social organizations and networks	0.00%	5.93%	15.43%	**55.49%**	**20.77%**
Housing supply	0.60%	7.46%	20.90%	**51.04%**	**15.22%**
Housing costs	2.10%	15.27%	22.75%	**43.71%**	**12.57%**
Health care facilities	2.69%	11.04%	17.01%	**48.06%**	**20.30%**
Availability of child care	2.13%	7.60%	27.66%	**27.05%**	**6.08%**
Government & Regulation Factors					
Fire Department	0.29%	1.47%	6.19%	**52.80%**	**36.28%**
Sewer & Water	0.59%	6.21%	10.95%	**53.25%**	**24.85%**
Street Maintenance	4.45%	12.76%	15.73%	**49.55%**	**16.02%**
Environmental regulations	1.19%	7.12%	26.41%	**40.65%**	**15.13%**
Planning and zoning	3.85%	18.05%	26.04%	**34.32%**	**8.28%**
Code enforcement	2.99%	12.87%	28.74%	**37.43%**	**6.89%**
Local Government Financial Management Factors					
Property Taxes	11.31%	29.76%	22.62%	**28.27%**	**3.57%**
Other local taxes and fees	**7.46%**	**23.28%**	33.73%	28.96%	2.69%
Spending priorities	9.28%	24.25%	36.23%	**22.75%**	**2.69%**
Budget process & financial management	**7.83%**	**19.58%**	37.35%	25.30%	3.01%

Satisfied & Very Satisfied ratings are higher than Dissatisfied & Very Dissatisfied, these figures are presented in green. When Dissatisfied & Very Dissatisfied is higher than the sum of Satisfied & Very Satisfied these figures are displayed in red.

The results clearly indicate 44 out of the 47 Community Factors presented were viewed in an overall positive light by Southeast Alberta Businesses.

On average respondents were just over three times as likely to be Satisfied or Very Satisfied than Dissatisfied or Very Dissatisfied. The significant amount of positive responses allowed more of a focus on new opportunities to support business than a reaction to widespread complaints about the business environment. This is an opportunity for government, policy makers, non-profits, educational institutions, business support organizations and other stakeholders to look at the constructive suggestions throughout the report, build upon perceived strengths and start to form directives that will support the retention and expansion of business in Southeast Alberta.

Though the overall outlook of business is positive, there were many important business issues raised by respondents in the BREWD surveys and interviews. A collation of qualitative responses to Q83 "What is the single biggest barrier to your business's expansion?" were categorized to reflect issues of concern in the business community. The summary of barriers lists economic slowdown as the greatest concern to businesses. However, economic slowdown is a combination of many factors that are often out of the hands of community business stakeholders. Besides economic concerns, labour attraction and training issues were by far the most commonly mentioned business challenges in the BREWD survey and employer interviews.

Twenty-eight percent of respondents in the BREWD survey expect the number of employees in their organization will increase, while only 7% expect a decrease. Approximately 40% of businesses are experiencing hiring challenges, and 24% have issues retaining workers. These are significant proportions of the business base. There were 313 affirmative responses (out of 467) to Q37 - Are you currently experiencing any challenges recruiting/hiring workers in these general categories?

Education and training are a key to workforce development, and again, were often mentioned in the BREWD survey and the employer interviews. Ongoing training is vital to meet the changing needs of businesses, especially due to technological advances. In short, labour attraction, retaining and training is an area where community stakeholders can affect direct and significant change. As such, it was deemed appropriate to dedicate four of the eight Strategic Themes in the BREWD project to Labour.

In closing, the key to improving the business climate is understanding what the business issues are and how they can be addressed by the community. As a result, extensive analysis of the data was completed identifying eight strategic themes as per the following:

Business Retention Expansion Strategic Themes

STRATEGIC THEME 1: Encourage Business Development and Local Shopping by Promoting the Region and Its Businesses.
Companies looking to increase sales, open new markets or attract workers are generally confident about their ability to promote their businesses. But promoting the community, the region, and the business climate as a whole is not their expertise. It is the region's communities and their business support network, such as economic development offices, which can encourage business development and local shopping through promotion of Southeast Alberta as a place to invest, live, work and play.

STRATEGIC THEME 2: Help Facilitate Business Expansion and Diversification by Improving Access to Capital, Land & Buildings, and Incentives.
In the near future, most organizations expect increased sales, the hiring of more staff, and feel the region is a good place to do business. This is affirmed by a large number of businesses expecting to expand and modernize. However, there are fundamental concerns businesses would like addressed that are generally outside businesses' locus of control such as financing, real estate availability, and government incentives. Community stakeholders which support businesses such as lenders and government are the groups that can affect change in these areas.

STRATEGIC THEME 3: Help Facilitate Expected Regional Business Growth by Improving Regulatory Conditions, Infrastructure, and Downtown Development & Maintenance
Government and policy makers can help facilitate expected regional business growth by improving regulatory conditions, infrastructure, and downtown development & maintenance. While businesses are pleased overall with community and government support, there is also a recognition that there are certain issues only policy makers can address.

STRATEGIC THEME 4: Plan for the impacts of ongoing and upcoming technological innovation on regional businesses
Businesses see technological innovation as an opportunity, a necessity, and a challenge. New software, innovate equipment, green technologies, and particularly automation are all of keen interest to businesses. Many businesses need assistance navigating technology options, regulations, costs, and training. Directly tied to this is repeated concern about the quality and cost of internet in the region.

Workforce Development Strategic Themes

STRATEGIC THEME 5: Improve labour force availability and qualifications: INFORM
Develop and communicate workforce information regarding education, training, careers, workplace issues, human resources, and labour market data within the region.

STRATEGIC THEME 6: Improve labour force availability and qualifications: ATTRACT
Identify strategies and tactics to attract new labour including focusing on immigration, mobility and attracting both skilled and unskilled workers from outside the region.

STRATEGIC THEME 7: Improve labour force availability and qualifications: RETAIN
Focus on education, training and developing the skills and knowledge of all current and potential workers within the region

STRATEGIC THEME 8: Improve labour force availability and qualifications: DEVELOP
Encourage community and work attractiveness by developing tactics to engage employees, helping to retain skilled and experienced workers already in the region's workforce.

Business Retention & Expansion (BRE): Research Results, Strategies, and Potential Projects

Characteristics of Businesses Surveyed

Top Sectors for BREWD Participation

The BREWD survey used the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) as the method of identifying the industry each business operates within. NAICS is a widely recognized and used method of business classification by major data collection organization like Statistics Canada and the U.S. Census Bureau

Of the 20 classifications, the following three industries ranked highest in BREWD Survey response rates:

Figure 2: Top Sector Responses Rates in BREWD Survey*	
Construction	17.04%
Retail Trade	14.57%
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	12.11%

*From adjusted data analysis interpreting the 18% of respondents that listed “Other”

This breakdown is similar to the NAICS percentages in the Statistics Canada 2016 Census for Census Division 1 in Alberta (the area that most closely matches the BREWD study area). Removing the Health Care and Education categories (this is a business survey), in the Census data Retail Trade is 1st, Construction is 2nd, and Accommodation and Food Services 3rd. Professional, Scientific and Technical Services is well represented in the BREWD survey, and Construction response numbers were excellent.

MORE PARTICIPATION = MORE IMPACT
Sectors such as Construction which participated in high rates have an opportunity to provide more input to policy makers and stakeholders.

The sector response rates are key to the outcomes of the BREWD Project now and in future Business Expansion & Retention and Workforce Development projects. BREWD is a wide-reaching initiative that has been planned and executed over an almost two-year period. The Strategies and Projects that result from these BREWD initiatives can help guide policy makers, industry associations, educations institutions, and business development stakeholders in their strategic and operational planning. When an industry is under-represented in the research effort, it reduces their ability to impact business support efforts in the community.

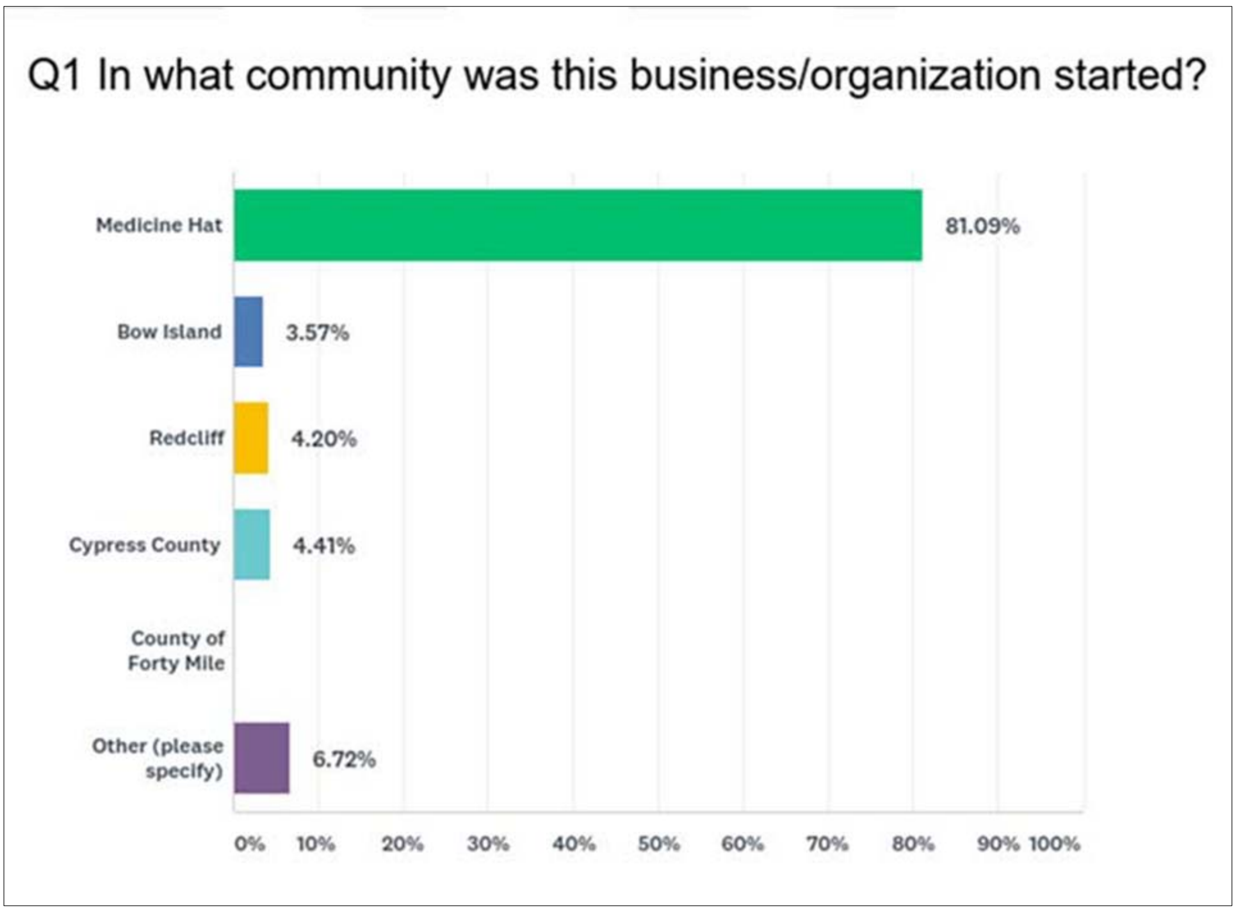
The good news is that BREWD is an ongoing effort. business will have another opportunity to participate in the BREWD research in three years. Make sure that your sector’s voice is heard!

Location

Business location was determined through a mix of questions. Location can be complex issue: some businesses have no physical location, some have many locations, some have locations in the region but headquarters elsewhere, and some are doing business in the region with no local locations at all. We can best summarize the 'location question' with several pieces of data.

- Below, we can see where the business was started which is a predicable indicator of where the business is still located.
- Figure 4 below takes the location data from five questions in the BRE survey and further refines where the businesses are located. Categorizing the "Other" responses and re-checking all responses led to a realignment where Medicine Hat locations were determined to be 85% of the sample.
- Thirty-one percent of businesses have multiple locations, and these locations range from near Medicine Hat to international. The BRE Survey captured responses from a wide variety of businesses sizes.

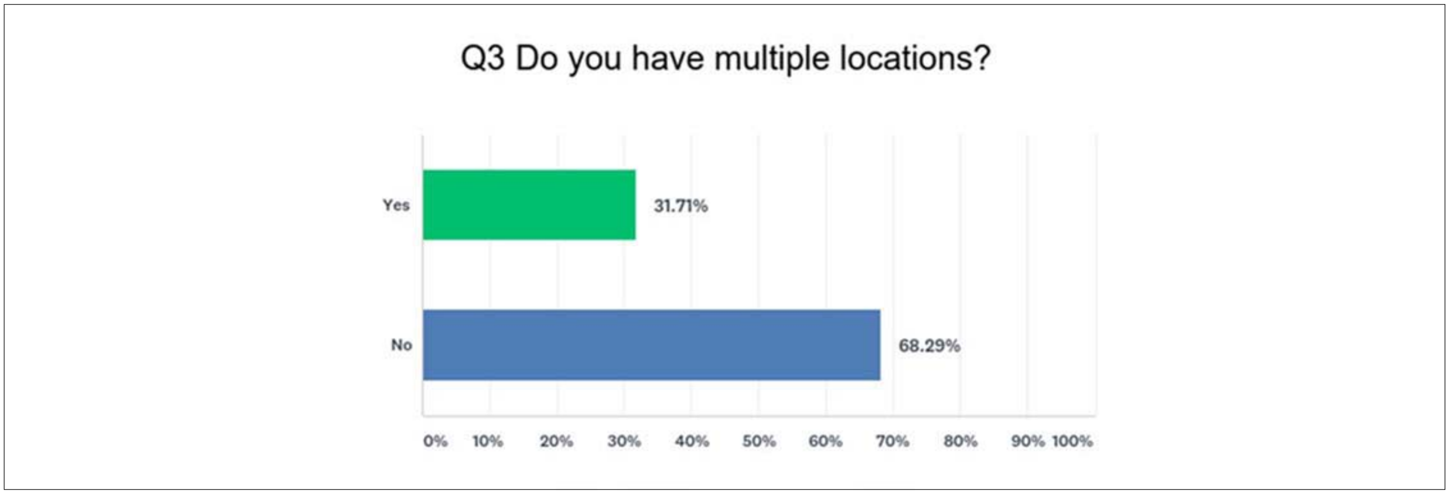
Figure 3:



476/476 Responded

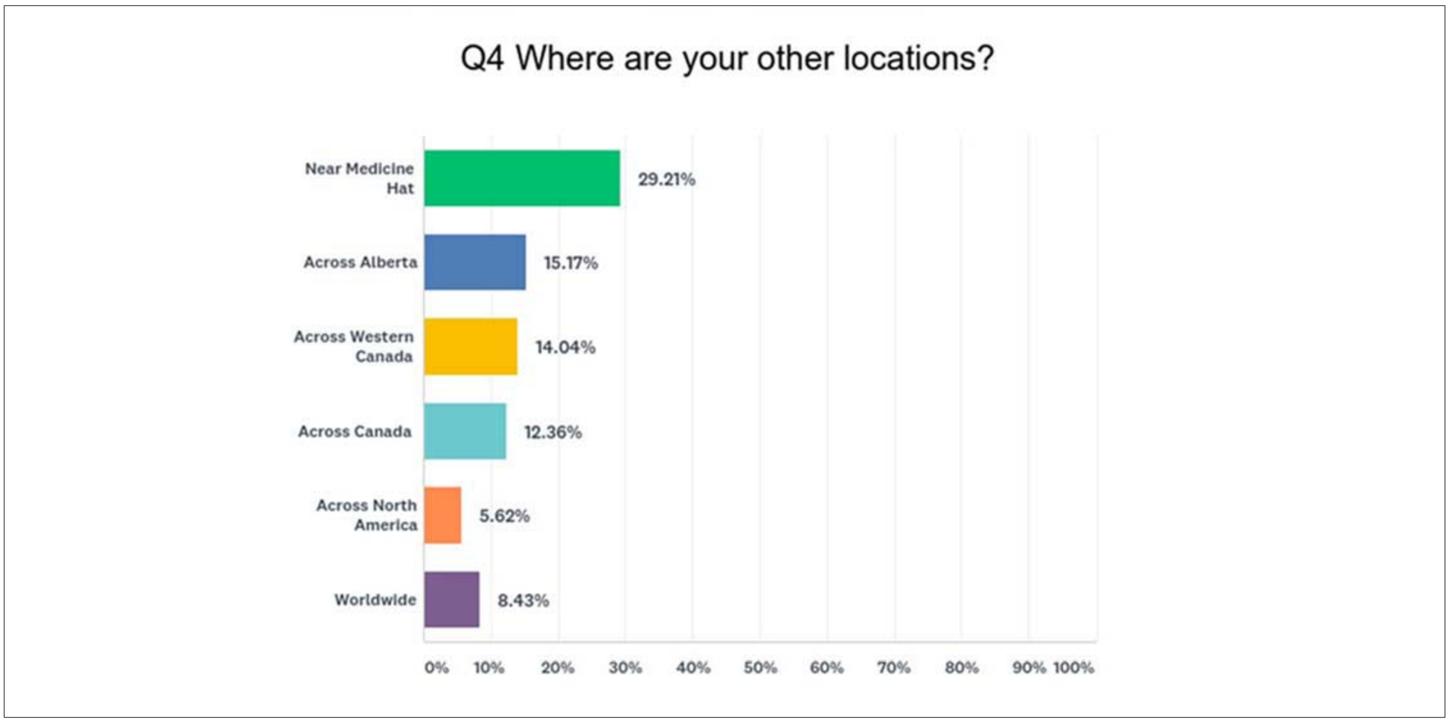
Figure 4: Refined List of Business Locations*				
Medicine Hat	Bow Island	Redcliff	Cypress County	Other
405	19	20	20	11
85.08%	3.99%	4.20%	4.20%	2.31%

Figure 5:



451/476 Responded

Figure 6:

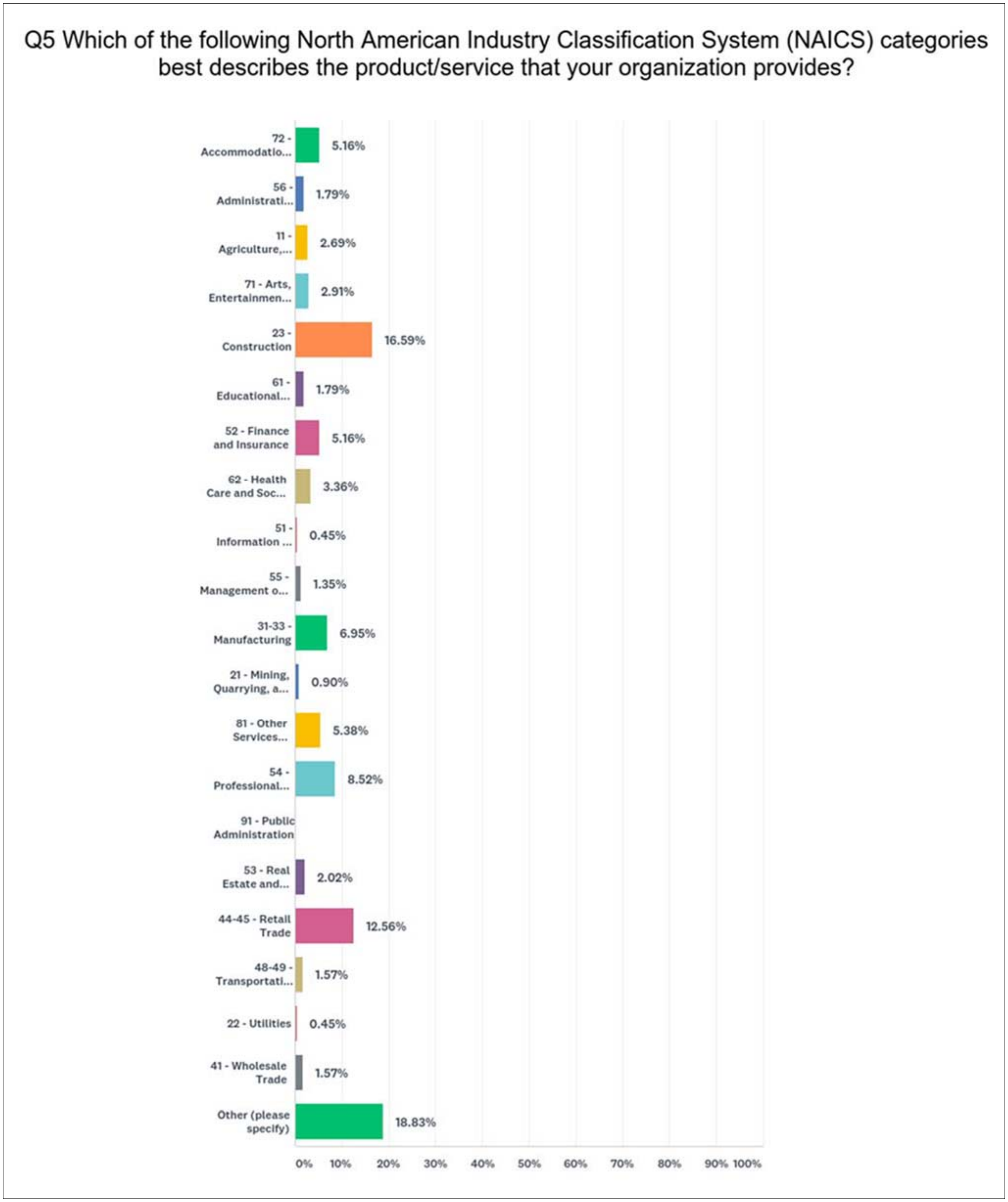


178/476 Responded

Industry

Of 476 respondents, 74 identified as being in the 'Construction' industry, but the 'Other' category required further examination:

Figure 7



NAICS Benefits

The North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) was chosen as the method of identifying the industry each business identifies as belong to because:

- It is a widely recognized and used method of business classification by major data collection organizations like Statistics Canada and the U.S. Census Bureau
- As such, the data will be highly comparable to other communities and regions over time.
- The 20 categories can be refined down to 121 sub-sectors (which was done in the project), and refined even further to: 322 industry groups, 708 industries and 923 Canadian industries

NAICS Challenges

The three challenges with using NAICS codes to classify business is that many of those surveyed either don't recognize their business as fitting into one of the 20 categories; they see themselves as fitting into more than one category; or they just overlook a suitable category. The result is many businesses answer "Other". In this survey it was the most common response at 84, or 19%.

As a result, we assessed the 84 responses to see if they could in fact fit into one of the 20 categories. The result was a reduction in "Other" from 84 respondents down to two. See Figure 8.

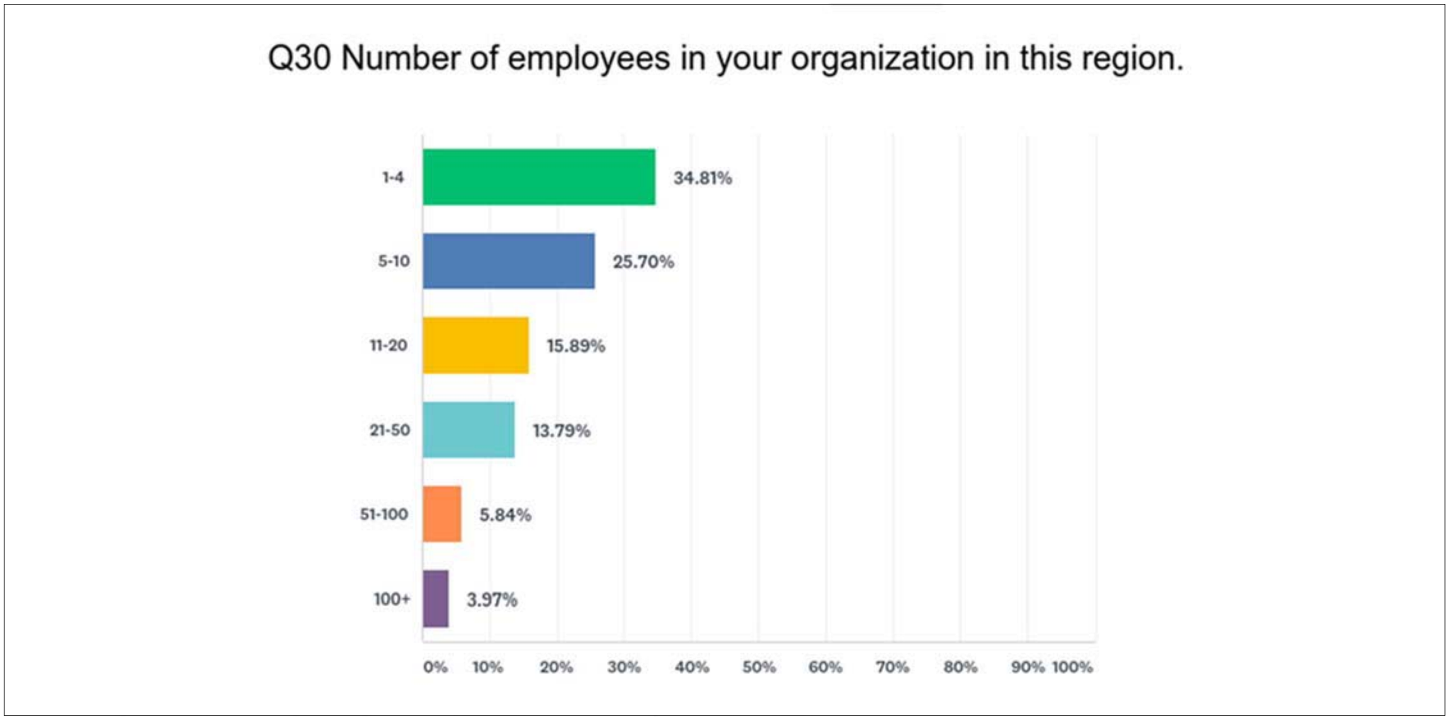
Figure 8: Refined Q5 NAICS Responses*		
	%	**Responses**
23 – Construction	17.04%	76
44-45 - Retail Trade	14.57%	65
54 - Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	12.11%	54
81 - Other Services (Repair & Maintenance services; Personal services, Religious services)	10.31%	46
31-33 - Manufacturing	7.62%	34
72 - Accommodation and Food Services	5.38%	24
52 - Finance and Insurance	5.38%	24
62 - Health Care and Social Assistance	4.26%	19
71 - Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	3.14%	14
11 - Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	2.91%	13
41 - Wholesale Trade	2.47%	11
61 - Educational Services	2.24%	10
53 - Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	2.24%	10
48-49 - Transportation and Warehousing	2.02%	9
56 - Administrative and Support, Waste Management and Remediation Services	1.79%	8
21 - Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	1.79%	8
51 - Information and Cultural Industries	1.57%	7
55 - Management of Companies and Enterprises	1.35%	6
91 - Public Administration	0.67%	3
22 - Utilities	0.67%	3
Other (please specify)	0.45%	2
	Answered	**446**
	Skipped	**30**

***Note:** 'Refined' tables (Figure 8) are for the purpose of interpretation only. i.e. The true number of responses is represented in Figure 7#, not Figure 8. If a respondent provides an "Other" answer, that is the official answer. But looking more closely to interpret the data assists further analysis.

Business Size

The sample shows a traditional distribution of business size with the majority of those surveyed having ten or less employees, but also includes a healthy representation of large businesses with over 50 employees (9.8%).

Figure 9



428/476 Responded

BRE Strategy Areas and Potential Projects

Strategic Theme 1: Encourage Business Development and Local Shopping by Promoting the Region and Its Businesses

Overview of the Strategic Theme

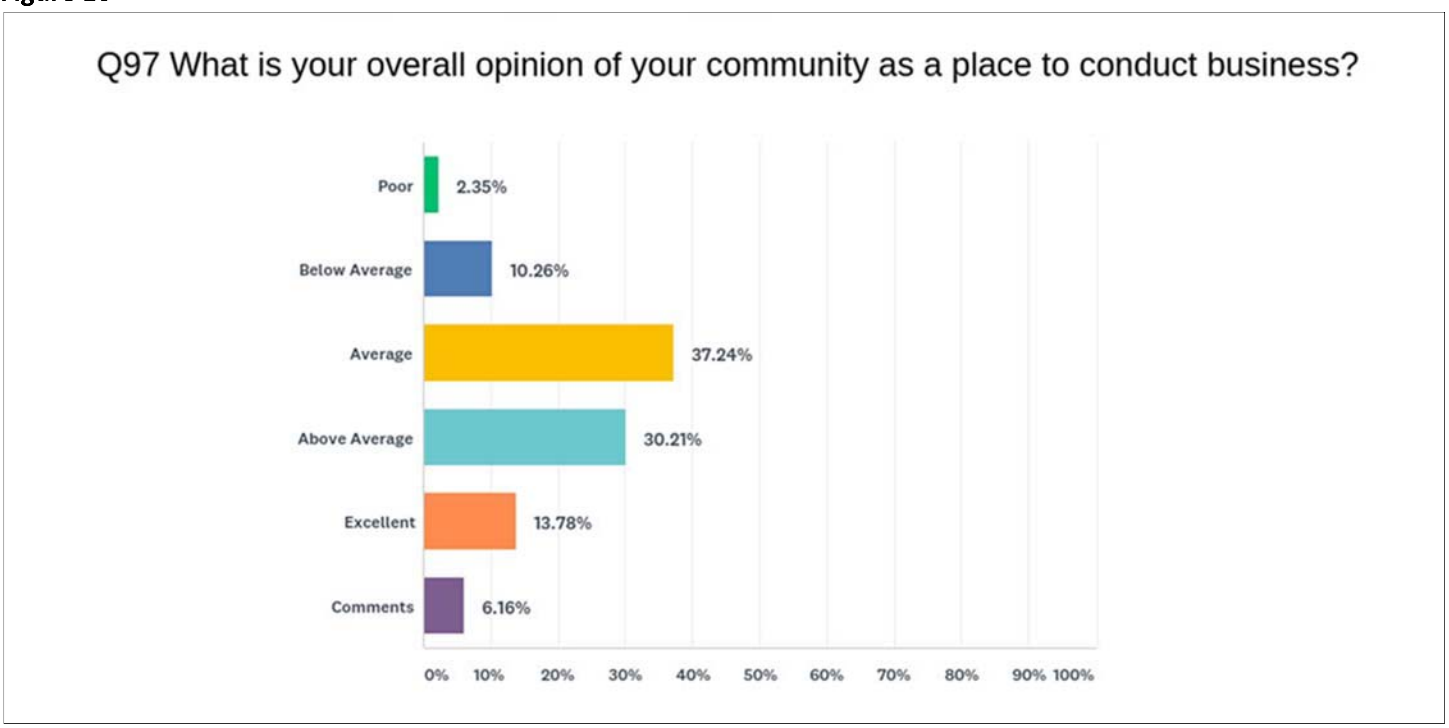
Companies looking to increase sales, open new markets or attract workers are generally confident about their ability to promote their businesses. But promoting the community, the region, and the business climate as a whole is not their expertise. It is the region's communities and their business support networks, such as economic development offices, which can encourage business development and local shopping through promotion of Southeast Alberta as a place to invest in, live, work and play.

Survey Results Related to the Strategic Theme 1

Business Environment

Respondents to the BREWD Survey have an overall positive opinion of their communities as a place to do business. Eighty- one percent felt that the region is an Average, Above Average or Excellent place to conduct business, as opposed to only 13 percent who say it is a Below Average or Poor.

Figure 10



341/476 Responded

This first Strategic Theme of promotion is based not on a widespread dissatisfaction with ongoing efforts by the communities, but on employers feeling Southeast Alberta is a good place for business and this needs to be promoted. Q91 asks "Based on the following local business support factors, please rate your satisfaction with your community as a place for your company to do business:" Under "Community promotion of itself and business", 66% said they were Satisfied or Very Satisfied.

Respondents are happy with local business support: 66% are Very Satisfied or Satisfied with their local Chamber of Commerce, and only 6% Unsatisfied

Figure 11: Q91 Based on the following local business support factors, please rate your satisfaction with your community as a place for your company to do business.

	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
Community attitude towards business	2.38%	13.10%	16.07%	42.56%	24.40%
Community promotion of itself and business	2.68%	13.69%	20.83%	44.64%	16.96%
Chamber of commerce	1.50%	4.49%	21.86%	40.42%	26.35%
Economic development authority	1.20%	11.14%	31.93%	33.43%	10.84%
Incentives for business investment in facilities, worker skills or more workers	4.24%	17.58%	36.36%	23.33%	3.94%

337/476 Responded

At the end of the BREWD Survey there was a question meant to provide extra direction about BRE actions that could be taken. "Q98 - Please help us set some priorities on how the BREWD Leadership Team can help your business or what we should work on to help all of our existing businesses grow and expand. Please provide any additional comments." There were 47 comments that can be encapsulated as follows:

- Encourage new, diverse business development and investments
- Promote the City/region as a place to work and live
- Encourage the community to shop local

On a related note in Q96 "What impact do the following programs, attractions and events have on your business?", 25 percent of respondents said "Information for Tourists" has a Very Positive or Positive Impact, with less than one percent saying it current programs have a Negative or very Negative Impact.

Employer Interview Results Related to the Strategic Theme 1: Encourage Business Development and Local Shopping by Promoting the Region and Its Businesses

While this section of the report highlights results from the BREWD Survey, it is important to note that the idea of community promotion was also a significant sentiment from the Employer Interviews. Strategic Theme 1 is related to Strategic Theme 5: Inform, which is focused on labour in the Workforce Development Strategy. Following are some related responses from the interviews.

- *There is a need to continue promoting the City as a family and young person destination. One of the biggest things we see candidates impressed with is the traffic. We need to promote that.*
- *I guess you sell people on the lifestyle. Our taxes and housing is OK but it is the lifestyle that you need to sell. Get that information out. People see it as the Gas City. That needs to change and let people know everything is here that they need.*

- *…there needs to be more done to promote it as a community of choice, services, taxes, cost of living, housing costs are low, the economy of the region has not suffered nearly as much as other smaller areas. Our community is safe. There is support and services for all types of people. We have almost no homeless problem unlike most cities. The community support and programs are tremendous and there is no worry for anyone. The sense of community.*
- *We need an advertising campaign that puts Medicine Hat on people's map. Get the word out and let people know that this is a good place to be with a far-reaching campaign. Promote the region through an advertising campaign that can make real gains. If they don't know we're here, they're not going to come.*

Potential Projects for Local Consideration

Theme 1 – PROJECT 1: Develop an Experiential Economy

Overview:

The retail landscape is changing everywhere, and Medicine Hat is no exception. Consumers often need to be given a reason to visit brick and mortar store locations instead of shopping on-line. And the less compulsory the items are, the greater the need to compete for the shopper. One solution to this challenge is creating experiences that will pull the shopper into a store. And this experiential economy doesn't stop at the retail sector; it can and should be applied to other businesses that are competing for consumer attention or want to build a new competitive advantage for the future.

> *"Millennials in particular prize engagement and unique moments. Many members of this generation research products and services extensively online, which means they don't require traditional customer service. Instead, when they enter stores, they seek hands-on activities and stimulation."*
> *Why Experiential Retail is a Top Priority for Brick-and-Mortar Stores - spc-retail.com*

Project:

Businesses must be made aware that entering the experiential economy is a competitive tool they can leverage. Training will be essential to promote the 'experiences' that have been made available to businesses in other markets, and how to create new experiences for shoppers. This requires project training partners to:

- Create a cross-sectoral inventory of proven experiential shopping campaigns locally and in other markets.
- Train businesses on customer service regarding experiential concepts including ways to measure how the customer feels about their experiences
- Increase social media assistance training support to enact what will largely be a social media campaign

There will be a strong promotional and communications component of this project as well. Elements will include:

- Internal and external traditional promotion of shopping events in Medicine Hat, for example signage, radio, and television
- Engage young influencers over social media or have them develop social media campaigns. Video testimonials will be important
- Integrate "Shop Local" programs and messaging into the training.

The effort to develop an experiential economy must be fairly organic. If it does not feel authentic to shoppers it may drive away much of the influential target market for experiential shopping: the youth and young adult market.

It also needs to be collaborative. Project partners will range from education & training institutions to business associations to government.

Lastly, we must note that this is a ‘campaign’, not a brand. A marketing campaign creates a call to action for the consumer.

Possible Project Partners / Leads:

Community Futures Entre-Corp, Tourism, Medicine Hat Chamber of Commerce, Accommodation Association, MH Mall, CCDA, Medalta Dunmore Equestrian Society, Ecodale

Theme 1 – PROJECT 2: Buy Local

Overview:

The effort to get consumers to shop locally can be seen in almost every community, especially those in more remote or rural areas. There are many reasons to encourage local shopping, from stimulating the local business economy (when you make a purchase from a local business, that business owner will often make purchases locally) to creating local employment. But Buy Local campaigns need to be about more than obvious community benefits: there has to be a value proposition to entice shoppers away from alternatives such as on-line shopping or buying from major centres.

Project:

The Chamber of Medicine Hat already has shop local incentive program that can be seen at: https://business.medicinehatchamber.com/membertomember . This effort needs to be built upon. It will largely be a communications and promotions effort built around demonstrating the value proposition for shopping locally. Elements may include:

- Research proven Buy Local shopping campaigns locally and in other markets
- Develop a promotional campaign on buy local and illustrate the economic return to how buying local serves all businesses and the community.
- Create a Made in Medicine Hat Guide connecting shoppers and local businesses to products that are developed locally
- Develop a local award program that recognizes local businesses
- Encourage development of local reward programs or one unified reward program for all businesses in the City
- Integrate the Buy Local project with the Develop an Experiential Economy project. The desired outcomes for each project are the same, and there will surely be synergies between the two.
- Develop a Strategic Secret Shopper program for evaluation and improvement in the sector

> *“There are many reasons to shop locally, but we think that you’ll agree that they all lead to one goal – keeping your local business, community and environment healthy, prosperous and vibrant...”*
>
> *www.shop-local.ca*

Seasonality is an important element of Buy Local campaigns. Focusing efforts around high shopping season like Christmas or back to school will provide extra incentives to shoppers.

Business engagement is important as well. Successful Buy Local programs are cross-sectoral. Creating an impetus to shop locally in many areas (e.g. not just retail) will help create a wider effort by all businesses and raise general awareness with the public. Related, encouraging shoppers is important, but businesses must be reminded that they are shoppers too. If businesses make extra effort to buy local, they not only help the community reap the advantages of buying local, but they also lead by example.

Possible Project Partners / Leads:

City of Medicine Hat, Medicine Hat Chamber of Commerce, Tourism Medicine Hat, Deerview Meats, Medicine Hat Brewing Company

Theme 1 – PROJECT 3: Expanding Sport and Recreation Tournaments

Overview:

Sports tournaments and other recreation events are a well-known revenue generator for communities of all sizes, but they have a particularly outsized economic impact on small communities. These activities create spending in the hospitality and retail sectors and those outside dollars circulate in the local economy. However, the competition for these events in small communities has increased dramatically in recent years.

> *"Events and festivals tourism is one of the fastest growing forms of tourism. They are becoming increasingly popular in rural areas as a means to revitalize local economies. Festivals and special events play important roles in destination development, image makers, animators of static attractions, and catalysts for other developments."*
> *Impacts Of Community Events And Festivals On Rural Places*
> *Alberta Rural Development Division*

Several interviewees during the BREWD research process suggested that Medicine Hat engage in an effort to identify a wider set of sports and recreation event options. There are numerous Alberta communities competing for the same sports tournaments. An example of the desired diversification are Savour the Southeast local coffee tours. There is a potential for similar initiatives related to recreational tournaments and gatherings.

Project:

This research project will:

- Seek new and <u>different</u> sport opportunities past just hockey and the 'usual' sports
- Analysis of economic value and viability of different sport/recreation opportunities
- Work in concert with the Medicine Hat Parks and Recreation departments (and other Southeast Alberta municipal governments) to prioritize events that will have economic value
- E.g. "NFL Refs – it isn't always about the tournament or players. Look at different ideas."

Possible Project Partners / Leads:

City of Medicine Hat, Tourism Medicine Hat, Parks and Recreation Department

Theme 1 – PROJECT 4: Medicine Hat Rebrand

Overview:

The BREWD surveys and interviews revealed over and over that many Medicine Hat businesses and residents worry that "The Gas City" slogan is outdated and no longer effective to promote the City and what it has to offer.

Rebranding a City is a major project. Extensive research is usually required from a variety of stakeholders to determine the purpose of the brand, the nature of the brand, and market for the brand, etc.

Good community branding methodology is based on the following four principles:

- Integration of existing community marketing efforts and tools into the branding effort.
- Understanding that the branding process is not just about graphics development. It is based on a solid understanding of marketing principles and research.
- Commitment to scientific method in order to avoid internal perceptual bias from affecting the project results.
- A brand image is useless if people do not use it. In community branding this requires buy-in from the community. If you do not ask the community for input, it is less likely they will support the brand.

"Your community brand is a combination of emotional and intellectual reactions to all the different experiences, marketing communications and behaviors people have encountered on behalf of your community. Branding is the process a community embarks upon to change, refine or improve what people are saying."

www.brandingfcnc.com

Project:

Creating a logo (or a brand refresh) is a relatively simple process compared with the work of building a strategy around effective consultation, research, and implementation planning. Serious research and experience into the community assets that should be promoted to attract investors, residents and visitors is vital to a full branding project. Ideas from the BREWD research review meetings included:

- The change/refresh of Gas City brand of Medicine Hat was a common sentiment because "it's not who we are anymore - lets reflect the future not the past."
- There is also a need to move from the stereotype of a retirement community to a more vibrant and diverse community
- The new brand needs to reflect the desired future state of Medicine Hat and region
- It needs to be inclusive and diverse
- Focusing more on tourism is a possibility, but that direction would have to be confirmed by research
- On suggestion was. "Let's move forward with the sunniest city"

A sample community branding project methodology:

1. Current State Research
   - *Logistics*
     This preliminary step is a planning phase for all sections of the project.
   - *Literature Review*
     A document review of all (but not limited to) documents provided by the community.
   - *Stakeholder Pre-Brand Engagement*
     The goal of stakeholder engagement in the project is three-fold: 1. To review and assess past and current branding, marketing and communications efforts/tools; 2. To capture data to support the creation of a Communications Strategy that can be successfully implemented; and, 3. To build a foundation of regional shared support for the Strategy in the City of Medicine Hat.

2 Brand Platform Development
   - *Data Analysis*
     Collect, review, organize and examine all data from the Literature Review and Stakeholder Consultations in order to develop a regional Value Proposition.
   - *Interim Summary Report*
     Encapsulate all the information from the primary and secondary research to inform the creative team before they start the design process.

3 Creative Development
   - *Tagline Development*

Develop a series of sample taglines to succinctly state the Value Proposition for people and companies to move to or remain in the City.

- *Design*
  Based on the Logistics, Literature Review, Pre-Brand Engagement, and Tagline Development, the graphics team will design several brand options (logo possibly with a tagline).
- *Testing – Stakeholder Post Brand Engagement*
- *Design Deliverables*
  1. *Brand Files: A* complete set of electronic graphics files
  2. *Graphic Standards Manual (Brand Graphics Kit):* This Manual will provide how the logo can be displayed on all marketing materials and any other use, including the type of font, color and size to ensure a consistent look.

4 Communications Strategy Development

- *Communications Strategy*
  Focus heavily on where the brand should 'live' in electronic and print platforms, and address target audiences and venues to promote the region using the brand.

Possible Project Partners / Leads:

City of Medicine Hat, Tourism Medicine Hat, Invest Southeast Alberta

Theme 1 – PROJECT 5: Signage

Overview:

Signage is an important marketing and communications tool for all communities. Good signage informs and promotes. "*Communities often have only one chance to make a good impression on visitors. In a high-speed, automobile-oriented society, information and directional signs are necessary not only for public convenience but also for public safety. Proper signage can inform highway and road users of the community's tourism services, operations and attractions, provide roadway directions to these destinations and increase the frequency and quantity of tourist visits. The overall purpose of implementing a signage program is to elevate the community's marketability as a tourism destination and the products and services that make it unique. Appealing signs that are compatible with the local character and conform to national or international standards will be more inviting for travelers to stop and explore*."

BC Tourism Research Innovation Project (TRIP).

Project:

A signage project may be linked to the aforementioned City branding project. It could be a marketing project and perhaps an infrastructure project at the same time depending on the signage chosen.

- Signage needs to improve and City to be more accommodating to displaying signs
- The project needs to identify key access points to downtown and use signage (e.g. Finley Bridge, YMCA, Esplanade, Kingsway)
- Perhaps the signage can be sponsored locally by businesses and organizations
- Another option is to have solar-powered lit signage – fitting for the City having the most sunshine in Canada

Possible Project Partners / Leads:

City of Medicine Hat, Tourism Medicine Hat, Invest Southeast Alberta, local marketing and signage companies

Theme 1 – PROJECT 6: Investment Attraction Strategy

Overview:

Investment Attraction was mentioned in the BREWD research as a community priority. This is an extensive topic that would include multiple projects. The first logical project is development of an Investment Attraction Strategy.

Note: An Investment Attraction Strategy should be part of a broad-based Economic Development Strategy.

An Investment Attraction Strategy generally identifies specific sectors with high potential to expand or attract new businesses, and lays out a comprehensive plan to attract local or foreign direct investment where that investment will increase the number of high skill and high value jobs.

The Investment Attraction Strategy would build on a number of ongoing projects and initiatives by Invest Medicine Hat, Verge Economic Development, and Invest Southeast Alberta

> *"The purpose of an investment attraction strategy is to develop a strategic plan for attracting business investment, based on a clear set of objectives that can be achieved by implementing carefully thought out tactics. An investment attraction strategy should be developed in consultation with community stakeholders.."*
>
> *Investment Attraction Strateav - Province of British*

Project:

An investment attraction strategy can be developed using a number of methodologies, but they all have common elements. They usually require an Environmental Scan and/or Asset Inventory to assess what the community can build its strategy around. There is almost always stakeholder engagement with those involved in local economic development and the business community. The strategy requires a Market Analysis to understand who the strategy should be trying to attract. A good strategy also includes an Implementation Plan to ensure successful follow-through.

Ideas from the BREWD interviews included:

- The investment attraction strategy can focus on attracting or developing one major opportunity or sector; or take a multi-sectoral approach.
- A focus can be put on opportunities that may be outliers such as renewable energy generation, sport tourism etc.
- The strategy should focus on creating sustainable long-term employment.
- These strategies could include a plan to create a Site Selector/Investor Visitor Experience

An investment attraction strategy project will be applicable for grant funding. The Government of Canada offers the CanExport Community Investments program which provides financial support to communities for their foreign direct investment (FDI) initiatives and activities. The program provides support to Canadian communities seeking to improve their capacity to attract, retain and expand FDI in order to create jobs for Canadians, support innovation and increase exports. Non-repayable contributions range from $3,000 to $500,000, and agreements are made for a one-year period, from January 1 to December 31. The program provides reimbursement of up to 50 percent of eligible expenses. If an applicant accesses other federal government support, the total federal support cannot exceed 50 percent.

https://www.tradecommissioner.gc.ca/funding-financement/canexport/community-communaute/index.aspx?lang=eng

Possible Project Partners / Leads:

Invest Medicine Hat, Verge Economic Development, Invest Southeast Alberta

Strategic Theme 2: Help Facilitate Business Expansion and Diversification by Improving Access to Capital, Land & Buildings, and Incentives

Overview of the Strategic Theme

The research indicates most regional businesses expect increased sales and the hiring of more staff in the near future, and feel the region is a good place to conduct business. This is affirmed by a large number of businesses expecting to expand and modernize. However, there are fundamental concerns businesses would like addressed that are generally outside their locus of control such as financing, real estate availability, and government incentives. Supporting community stakeholders such as lenders and government are groups that can affect change in these areas.

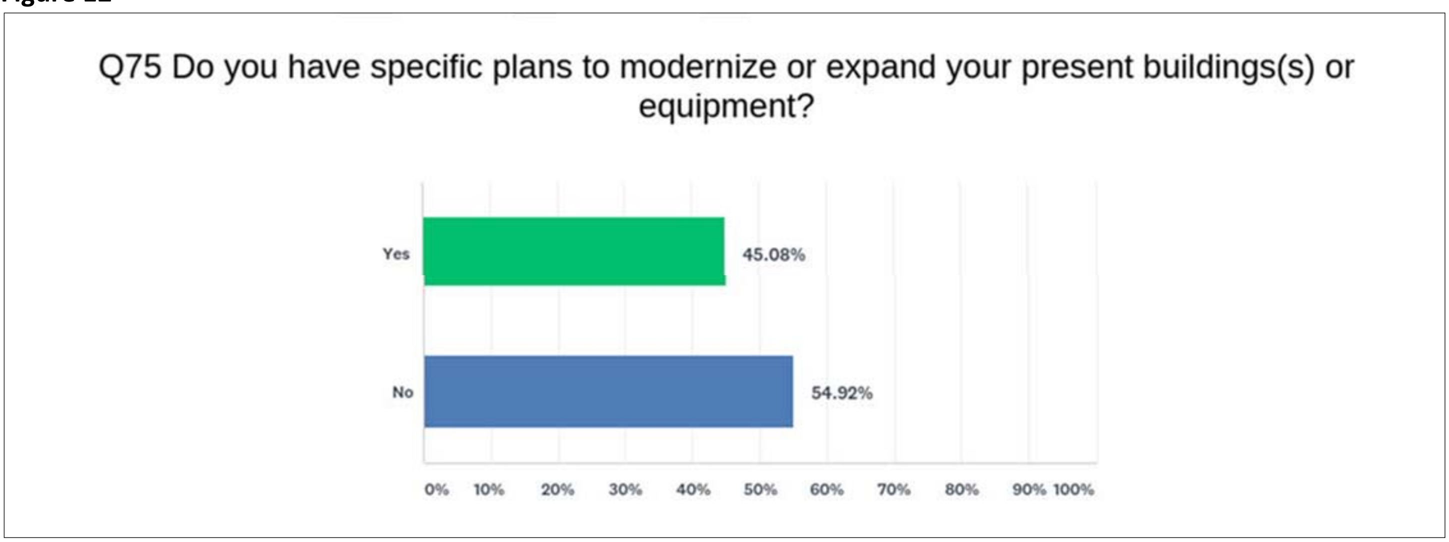
Survey Results Related to Strategic Theme 2

Expansion

The expectation of business expansion and modernization is a notable trend in the BREWD survey. Forty-five percent of businesses have specific plans to modernize or expand their present buildings(s) or equipment. These findings are supported by the optimistic outlook businesses have about the near future:

- Q26: 59% anticipate that in the next 2 years product/service sales will increase and only 7% anticipate a decrease
- Q34: 28% are likely to need more employees over the next year compared to only 7% indicating employee requirements would decrease.

Figure 12



366/476 Responded

Q76 provides some context to these plans. It asks, “If you answered "Yes" (to Q75), what are your modernization or expansion plans?” the most common responses were:

- New equipment – 21 responses

- Expand or new office, warehouse or shop space – 20 responses
- Move to new building/site – 19 responses
- Renovating or modernizing existing building - 14 responses

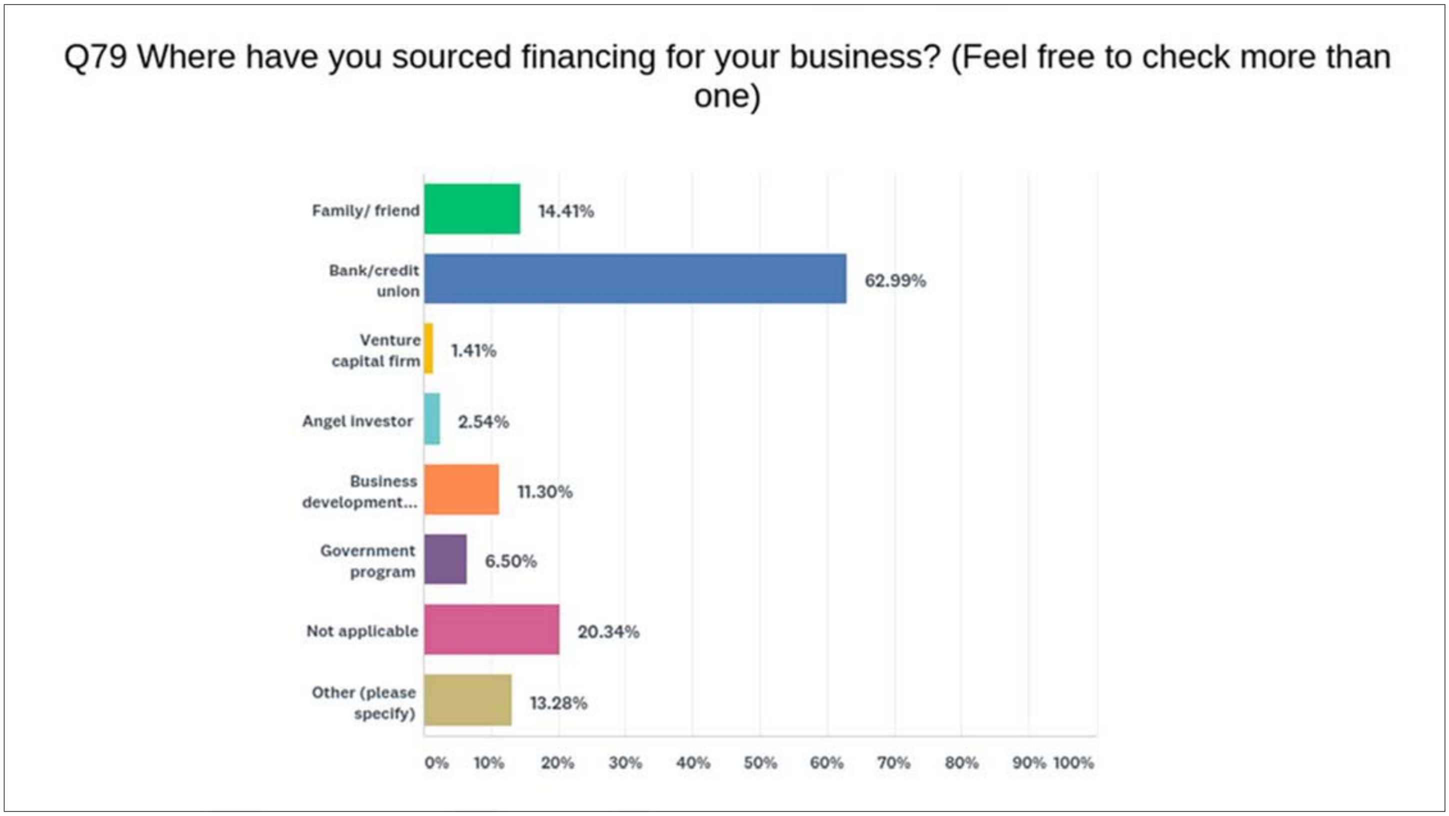
Q90 asks, "In terms of locations, are you currently considering any of the following:"

- Expanding – at this location: 19% or 69 responses
- Expanding – adding another location: 10% or 39 responses

Access to Capital, Land & Buildings, and Incentives

Not surprisingly, banks and credit unions are the primary sources of financing for businesses with 62% of respondents indicating such.

Figure 13



354/476 Responded

The overall satisfaction level with land and finance factors as it relates to business perception is fairly good. However, of the nine community factors measured in the BREWD Survey, Land, Buildings & Credit had one of the lower overall averages. In Figure 14, the cost factors noted in red for Dissatisfied or Very Dissatisfied are higher than the average across all the 47 Community Factors which is 16%. Negative satisfaction rating for Cost of land is 29% and Cost of Buildings is 28%:

Figure 14: Q89 Based on the following LAND, BUILDINGS & CREDIT factors, please rate your satisfaction with your community as a place for your company to do business.					
	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
Availability of land	2.78%	8.64%	26.85%	39.51%	10.49%
Cost of land	4.29%	24.23%	27.30%	25.46%	5.83%
Availability of buildings	2.45%	13.50%	26.38%	39.57%	8.90%
Cost of buildings	4.28%	23.85%	31.19%	23.85%	5.50%
Availability of loans	2.45%	10.74%	32.21%	32.21%	7.67%
Cost of loans	1.85%	18.77%	34.46%	25.85%	4.00%

328/476 Responded

When looking at the qualitative responses from the BREWD survey, we see more mentions of the factors indicated. The issues most often brought up are summarized in the table below. This is a collation of qualitative responses to Q83, categorized to reflect the most salient issues of concern in the business community.

Figure 15: Q83 What is the single biggest barrier to your business's expansion? – (Collation of qualitative responses)	
	Responses
Economy Slowdown	55
Lack of Qualified Labour	42
Access to Capital/Financing	35
Competition	19
Costs (Wages, Equipment, Land)	18
Lack of Land/Buildings	17
Provincial/Federal Barriers	11
Lack of Time	9
Local Government Barriers	7
Oil & Gas Downturn	6
Taxes	5
Age	2

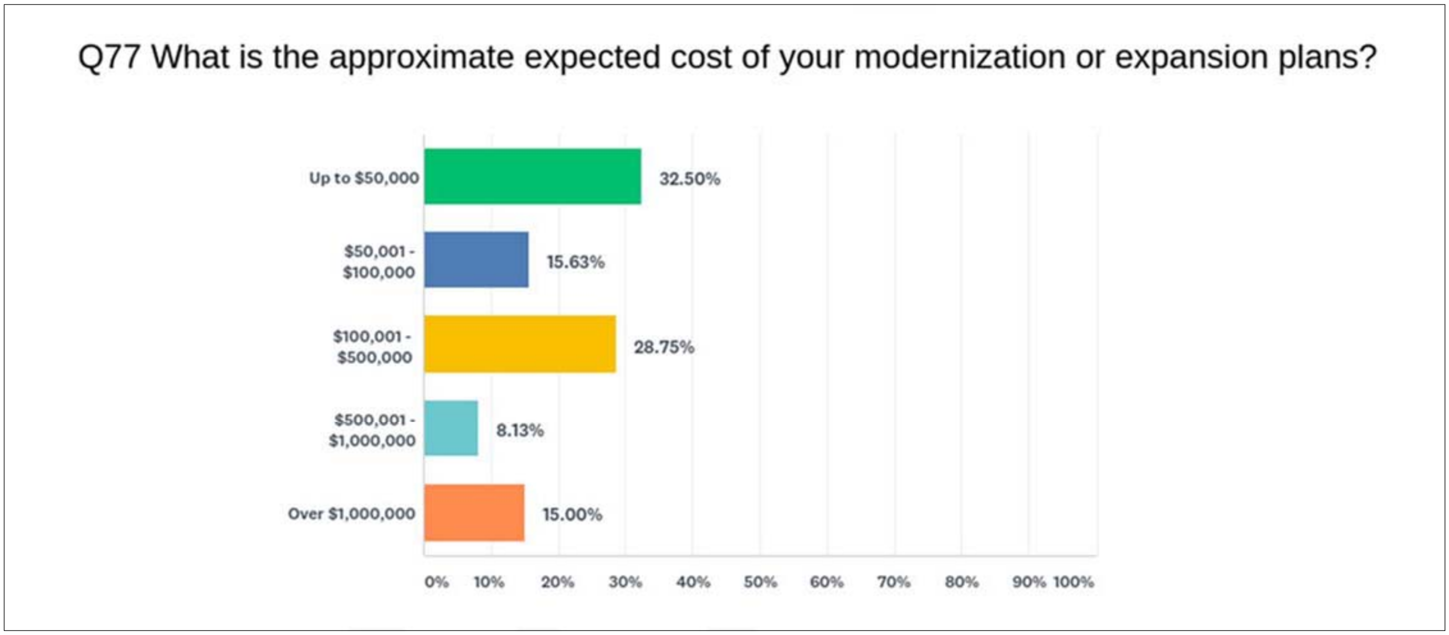
In Q98, "Please help us set some priorities on how the BREWD Leadership Team can help your business or what we should work on to help all of our existing businesses grow and expand. Please provide any additional comments.", fifteen respondents indicated: "Provide incentives and info (land, taxes, grants, financing etc.)".

Synopsis

The BREWD Survey did not reveal that Access to Capital, Land & Buildings, and Incentives are factors that respondents are necessarily highly unsatisfied with in terms of community response. Strategic Theme 2 simply points to these factors as areas that will assist business with the expansion and diversification that they seek.

In the BREWD survey, 108 of 476 respondents say they are "Expanding – at this location or Expanding – adding another location" (Q90). This is a potentially tremendous opportunity for Southeast Alberta. The economic significance of these expansion plans is clear and will greatly impact employment implications. There are twenty-four companies (15%) indicating they plan to spend over $1,000,000 or more on expansion and modernization. See Figure 16:

Figure 16



160/476 Responded

Improving Access to Capital, Land & Buildings, and Incentives is not a weakness in Southeast Alberta. Rather, it is an opportunity to help businesses achieve what they already want to do: expand and modernize.

Potential Projects for Local Consideration

Theme 2 – PROJECT 1: Investment Incentives

Overview:

Key factors in a business deciding to invest in a relocation or expansion generally include land and building availability/cost, labour availability, infrastructure, access to inputs and markets, etc. But the most direct path to businesses investing is often incentives.

Community investment incentive programs can be controversial. Sometimes they are viewed as short term economic development fixes that can be costly to a community that might invest tax dollars in other ways. A community must carefully evaluate the type and cost of these invectives in relation to its economic development objectives. (Having an Economic Development Strategy and an Investment Attraction Strategy can be helpful in guiding this process.)

“An economic development incentive can be strictly defined as ‘cash or near-cash assistance provided on a discretionary basis to attract or retain business operations’. In practice, however, it is a broadly used term denoting an array of benefits designed to promote new business activity or to encourage business or job retention.”

Timothy J. Bartik, Solving the Problems of Economic Development Incentives in Reining, in The Competition For Capital

Project:

The first step in developing an investment incentive program is assessing what is presently available and its effectiveness. Ongoing resources include:

- Downtown Development Investment Program
- City Centre Investment Opportunities Program
- Hat Smart
- Canada Job Grant
- Community Futures Loans (Downtown Development Incentive Program, CCIOP, Loans)
- Business Development Bank of Canada, Entre Corp, and financial institutional lenders
- Medicine Hat Off-site Levy Assist

The next step is an gaining an understanding of incentive programs used by municipalities. General examples and ideas from the BREWD research include:

- Industrial development bond financing
- Municipal income tax credits for qualified capital investment
- Tax increment financing, allocating all or a portion of new taxes
- Job training grants funded to local governments or private enterprises
- Refundable or non-refundable state income tax credits for job creation or retention
- Enterprise or development zones
- Grants or subsidies for new project development
- Utility incentives
- Discounted or free municipal land
- Discounted or free land servicing
- Waiving development fees - e.g. Brazeau County
- Collaborate on regional incentives with all the communities in Southeast Alberta
- Create Incentives for New Business Attraction (the Chamber looking at policies to develop)

Developing and implementing an incentive program would be the next steps in the project. However, conducting the initial research on the type and effectiveness of existing and possible new programs should be the immediate priority. Other considerations may include promoting the availability of incentive programs that are currently available. Eventually a community can also develop a local information HUB that shows how attractive the region can be due to funding and incentive opportunities.

Possible Project Partners / Leads:

City of Medicine Hat (Planning Department), Invest Southeast Alberta, Invest Medicine Hat, Chamber of Commerce

Theme 2 – PROJECT 2: Access to Capital

Overview:

Limited access to capital is a common concern for new or existing businesses who want to expand, relocate, or enter new markets. When asked in the BREWD survey, “What is the single biggest barrier to your business's expansion?” one of the most often mentioned responses was, “Access to capital/financing”. There are a number of ways the public and private sector can respond to the issue of limited capital for business investment.

Project:

The Research Review Meetings had participants suggest a project to create a local equity fund to support new investments, local investment, events, etc. Such a project likely begins with a working group consisting of public and private groups that have access to, or information about, business financing. The core of such a working group can be seen in the suggested Possible Project Partners / Leads list below.

Possible Project Partners / Leads:

Invest Medicine Hat, City of Medicine Hat (Legal), Community Futures Entre-Corp, BDC, RBC (Todd Oreilly), MNP (accounting firms, investment firms), Local Investors

Theme 2 – PROJECT 3: Development Priority Review

"City planners need to lay out achievable goals for each stage of development to translate the benefits of connected infrastructure into measurable returns.

www.govtech.com/smart-cities/5-Strategies-for-Rethinking-Smart-City-ROI-Contributed.html

Overview:

Development or redevelopment of municipal spaces can have massive impacts on local economic development. The research from the BREWD project and the Research Review Meetings led to several suggestions regarding development projects that would benefit the City of Medicine Hat and Southeast Alberta. But there was also a recognition that these are massive initiatives which need to have a starting point.

Project:

A sensible first step to considering municipal redevelopment projects is itemizing what projects are already planned or taking place, and itemizing the community's economic development and BRE priorities that could be positively impacted by redevelopment. A well-diversified public and private sector working group could complete a Municipal Development Priority Review. General examples and ideas from the BREWD research included:

- Move CP rail station which would make room for commercial and residential development and be safer. (Realization that this is a bit 'pie in the sky' right now)
- Look at a "Smart City" model that uses digital communication technologies and big data to improve operational efficiency and the quality of life for residents
- Develop riverfront for commercial and residential uses
- Create more areas or places to develop serviced land (City of Medicine Hat)
- Recreation: have a rink in the downtown and upgrade the ballpark
- Understanding the cost and potential ROI for various development projects

Possible Project Partners / Leads:

- City of Medicine Hat (Planning Department), CP Rail, Invest Southeast Alberta, urban development industry

Theme 2 – PROJECT 4: Industrial Cluster Development

Overview:

Clusters are geographic concentrations of interconnected companies or institutions that manufacture products or deliver services to a particular field or industry. Clusters arise because they increase the productivity with which companies within their sphere can compete. Clusters typically include companies in the same industry or technology area that share infrastructure, suppliers, and distribution networks.

www.inc.com/encyclopedia/clusters.html

Note: An Industrial Cluster Development project would begin with an Industrial Cluster Study that should be part of an Economic Development Strategy and/or the BREWD initiative itself.

Industry clusters are groups of similar and related firms in a defined geographic area that share common markets, technologies, worker skill needs, and which are often linked by buyer-seller relationships.
oregonbusinessplan.org

Project:

Understanding the makeup of industrial clusters in Southeast Alberta is largely a matter of understanding local sectors and supply chains. The BREWD project surveyed and interviewed businesses stratified by sector. For instance, the highest level of participation came from the following sectors: Construction, Retail Trade, and Professional, Scientific and Technical Services. Delving into the supply chains and markets for companies in these and other sectors (likely as defined by NAICS code) would form the basis of an Industrial Cluster Study.

General ideas from the BREWD research and Research Review meetings included:

- Downstream developments - focus attraction efforts there. Let the primary regional industries determine priorities
- Do a sectoral comparative analysis with other communities
- Create an Industrial Asset Map and make the details available to businesses
- Exploring/resolving a regulatory constraint to the clusters' success
- Understanding stronger connections between players within the cluster brought together with the support of the government
- Look specifically at the Aerospace and Defence cluster. Research how to engage in and support targeted supply chain in existing industry at CFB Suffield (a huge market)
- Focus on sectors that specialize in technology innovation and how they can support each other
- Research other less visible regional supply chain opportunities / supporting supply chain and training

Possible research inclusions on an Industrial Cluster Study are too extensive to list. But the BREWD project itself and the planned continuing initiative to consult with regional businesses can serve as a research platform to help conduct a long-term Industrial Cluster Development project. This is in keeping with one of the focuses of the BREWD initiative, *"fact-based information is essential to mapping a path forward for our community and it is the responsibility of each of us to ensure we honor their insight through a joint plan of action."*

Possible Project Partners / Leads:

Invest Southeast Alberta, Verge Economic Development, CFB Suffield, Chamber of Commerce, Companies such as Methanex, Canadian Fertilizer, Big Marble, Sunshine Greenhouse, etc.

Theme 2 – PROJECT 5: Land Investment Opportunity Promotion

Overview:

Providing information about available land and buildings can help facilitate business expansion and diversification. Providing up to date information about available commercial real estate can be a challenge for municipalities and economic developers. The information can change quickly, and it comes from two sources that aren't always linked: available municipal land and available private land and buildings.

Project:

The project may have two components: creating a centralized information resource on available municipal land and available private land and buildings, and, actively promoting available land and buildings to investors and at tradeshows:

- Actively market the availability of land and opportunities (maintain a presence at economic development conferences/investor conferences)
- Develop a central Information HUB with all available properties (This should include all types of commercial lands and services available including the levels of service in different developed areas)
- Representatives from ISA going on trade missions – as a collaboration/partnership of local agencies

A key component to success is engaging real estate organizations and professionals so they have a vested interest in the success of the project. This is important because they are amalgamators of the information, and the front-line sellers.

Possible Project Partners / Leads:
Invest Southeast Alberta, MHREB, City of Medicine Hat Planning and Development

Strategic Theme 3: Help Facilitate Expected Regional Business Growth by Improving Regulatory Conditions, Infrastructure, and Downtown Development and Maintenance

Overview of the Strategic Theme

Government and policy makers can help facilitate expected regional business growth by improving regulatory conditions, infrastructure, and downtown development and maintenance. While businesses are pleased overall with community and government support, there is also a recognition that there are certain issues only policy makers can address.

Survey Results Related to Strategic Theme 3

Expected Business Growth

Much like Strategic Theme 2, Strategic Theme 3 is predicated on expected/desired growth by the business community. For evidence of expected growth see Strategic Theme 2 - Survey Results Related to the Strategic Theme 2 – Expansion (page 30). As illustrated by responses to Q34, 28% of business indicated they are likely to need more employees over the next year compared to only 7% saying employee requirements would decrease.

Figure 17

426/476 Responded

Improving Regulatory Conditions, Broadband Infrastructure, and Downtown Development & Maintenance

Questions 86 to 94 of the BREWD survey dealt with satisfaction with the community as a place to do business. Q93 asked, “Based on the following Government & Regulation factors, please rate your satisfaction with your community as a place for your company to do business.” In “Planning and zoning” 22% were Dissatisfied or Very Dissatisfied, a comparatively higher percentage than the average across the 47 Community Factors which is 16%. “Code enforcement” was actually slightly better than the overall Dissatisfied or Very Dissatisfied average at only 16%. See Table below:

Figure 18: Q93. Based on the following Government & Regulation factors, please rate your satisfaction with your community as a place for your company to do business.

	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
Fire Department	0.29%	1.47%	6.19%	52.80%	36.28%
Sewer & Water	0.59%	6.21%	10.95%	53.25%	24.85%
Street Maintenance	4.45%	12.76%	15.73%	49.55%	16.02%
Environmental regulations	1.19%	7.12%	26.41%	40.65%	15.13%
Planning and zoning	3.85%	18.05%	26.04%	34.32%	8.28%
Code enforcement	2.99%	12.87%	28.74%	37.43%	6.89%

339/476 Responded

As with many other sections of the survey, one can find some nuance in the responses when reviewing the qualitative data. Q95 asks, “Do you have any suggestions for improving the items above that you gave lower ratings to?”. This in reference to questions 86 to 94. The leading response, “Red Tape”, is related closely to Government & Regulation factors:

The highest rated Community Factor in the BREWD Survey were local Fire Departments with 89% indicating they were Satisfied or Very Satisfied

Figure 19: Q95 asks, “Do you have any suggestions for improving the items above that you gave lower ratings to?” - (Collation of qualitative responses)

	Responses
Red Tape (City Cust Service, code enforcement, excess regulation)	20
Infrastructure (mostly roads)	14
Building maintenance (remove/force the fixing of derelict properties)	6
Develop Economic Initiatives (business/resident attraction)	5
Encourage new building development	5
Small business financial support (incentives, grants)	5
Traffic Movement	4
Poor/Expensive Internet	4
Parking	3
More housing	3
Better hospital services	2

To be clear, 339 people responded to Q93. Meaning, 20 respondents in a qualitative follow-up question indicating that red tape is an issue is not synonymous with overall business dissatisfaction. However, this is a notable area for policy makers and administrators to find opportunities to improve service and support in the business community.

Similar to Red Tape issues, Infrastructure was an issue of importance which was indicated. However, with respect to "Street maintenance" 66% of respondents were Satisfied or Very Satisfied. Under Transportation/Location factors in Q88, Highway Accessibility, and Railroad Service are rated extremely high, and Air service was above average.

Infrastructure, especially road and highway access/maintenance are very common concerns in BREWD surveys and economic development studies in general. For the BREWD study, it is notable and an opportunity to support business, but not a highly pressing concern across the entire survey sample.

The one infrastructure area that was notably rated as in need of improvement across the majority of respondents was the cost of regional broadband services. Broadband costs ratings were near the lowest of all factors measured as indicated in the following table which shows more than 40 percent of respondents were dissatisfied.

Figure 20: Q90 Utilities Factors – Broadband

	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
Telecommunications & broadband cost	10.15%	30.15%	22.09%	31.04%	4.78%
Broadband speed	8.41%	19.82%	21.92%	40.24%	7.51%

336/476 Responded

Downtown Development & Maintenance was an area brought up in several qualitative responses as an area which could facilitate expected regional business growth. Many indicated improvements were desired with respect to the following factors:

- Q98 - Facilitate downtown development and maintenance
- Q95 - Encourage new building development
- Q95 - Building maintenance (remove/force the fixing of derelict properties)
- Q83 - Lack of land/buildings

Some of the retail and other businesses in the BREWD Survey made comments that helped better define a suggested strategy related to Downtown Development & Maintenance:

- *We need to fill empty lots, gentrify dilapidated buildings. - Q95*
- *Derelict buildings in the downtown impede growth. - Q95*
- *As a downtown stakeholder, I believe the more people we can have to help advocate for better planned growth and development of our downtown will help our entire community benefit. I also believe that you can measure the success of a city and capture a great sense of its community based on how lively, well maintained and busy (both foot traffic and vehicle traffic) their downtown is. – Q98*
- *Love for the downtown area is to continue to be pushed as a priority for the city to develop and draw in more people. - Q98*

"As a downtown stakeholder, I believe the more people we can have to help advocate for better planned growth and development of our downtown will help our entire community benefit."

There is some quantitative evidence for Downtown Development & Maintenance: as well. Q96 asks "What impact do the following programs, attractions and events have on your business?" 29% said Downtown Atmosphere has a Very Positive or Positive Impact, as opposed to 6% indicating a Negative or Very Negative Impact.

Synopsis

Similar to Strategic Theme 2, Strategic Theme 3 is much more about opportunity to support business than a reaction to complaints in the BREWD Survey and BREWD project as a whole. It is an opportunity for government and policy makers to help facilitate expected regional business growth by improving regulatory conditions, broadband infrastructure, and downtown development & maintenance.

Potential Projects for Local Consideration

Theme 3 – PROJECT 1: Increase Property Tax on Derelict Buildings

Overview:

Derelict buildings, especially in a downtown shopping area, not only potentially bring down adjacent real estate values, but also portray an overall of downtrodden business environment. Businesses that work hard to ensure their properties are welcoming to customers get frustrated with the impression that derelict or unkempt buildings present to the public.

One way a City can help minimize the effect of derelict or unkempt properties is leveeing taxes or fees on owners who don't keep up their properties. One example can be seen in the City of Winnipeg's "Vacant Buildings By-law," which allows the city to impose escalating fees based on the length of time a building remains vacant. The Winnipeg bylaw also allows for escalating fines and other penalties on non-compliant owners of vacant properties.

"Derelict properties can be an obstacle to the positive economic, social, and cultural development of a community. Even a single derelict building can bring down the value of surrounding properties and businesses, pushing development elsewhere and encouraging the type of inefficient sprawl that carries with it significant economic and environmental externalities..."

BC Chamber of Commerce

Project:

This is a likely a two-step project:

1. Research models that have worked in other communities and develop a set of recommendations or report for the City to consider
2. Implementation of measure (taxes, fines, etc.) by the City

Possible Project Partners / Leads:

City of Medicine Hat, City Centre Development Agency, Chamber of Commerce

Theme 3 – PROJECT 2: Educate on Red Tape Reduction

Overview:

The issue of red tape was an often-mentioned topic in the BREWD research and is on the front burner with the Government of Canada, the Province of Alberta and locally through the Medicine Hat and District Chamber of Commerce. The Government of Alberta has a new Ministry of Red Tape Reduction. The Chamber of Commerce recently hosted a roundtable session at Chinook Village, featuring various business and government officials in attendance to discuss red tape reduction. The Chamber already has a red-tape policy.

"The Red Tape Reduction Action Plan, the product of business community input to a year-long commission, not only targets specific irritants to businesses, but the systemic barriers that unnecessarily frustrate and burden Canadian business with additional delays, costs and bureaucracy."
Government of Canada Red Tape Reduction Action Plan

Business representatives often claim red tape is a barrier to business, particularly small business. In Canada, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business has done extensive research into the impact of red tape on small businesses. The first step to reduction is understanding the problem which involves consulting with those most affected: businesses.

Project:

The Research Review meetings revealed a desire to start with a Red Tape Study, working with Industry (construction, developers etc.) to clearly and thoroughly define red tape issues:

- Conduct: Pre and Post Business Development Consultations with Investors
- Take feedback from current businesses on where efficiencies are needed – have an "open for business" attitude
- Look at how to streamline processes at City Hall for small businesses and for those moving here
- Look at refining the procurement process, and educating the business on procurement processes

The end result of the project is an effort to educate policy makers and government on how to effectively reduce red tape.

Possible Project Partners / Leads:

City of Medicine Hat, Chamber of Commerce, Construction Association, Home Builders Association

Theme 3 – PROJECT 3: Residential Housing Plan

Overview:

The BREWD research reflected a consistent concern about housing issues in the City of Medicine Hat. These are wide ranging issues that affect economic development and social wellbeing. But in the context of business development, housing concerns often focus on availability of affordable and well-located housing for the local labour force. Businesses that need workers require them to have appropriate housing. Unfortunately, this is an issue that businesses by and large cannot address on their own.

Medicine Hat has a number of existing informational and organizational resources to draw on in terms of housing such as: Development Investment Readiness Team; City Centre Development Agency; Municipal Development Plan; Intermunicipal Development Plan; Area Structure Plans; etc.

Further research, analysis, planning, and communication may be warranted in the housing sector.

Project:

The Residential Housing Plan project might have two components (or these components can be split into two projects): Residential Development Review and a Quarterly Housing Assessment.

- A Residential Development Review would let the community and builders know where opportunities for development are. This may include infill lands, derelict buildings, and existing empty spaces.
- The Review should utilize the Municipal Development Plan and Intermunicipal Development Plan
- A Quarterly Housing Assessment using data analytics from the City of Medicine Hat, and the Construction Association would provide up to date housing data
- A web tool could be created for the housing industry with dynamic dashboards to inform buyers, sellers and real estate sector overall

"When the local workforce can't find housing they can afford, the entire community suffers….Having a sufficient supply of housing affordable to households all along the income spectrum is also critical to supporting vibrant and sustainable local economies."

National Association of Counties(www.naco.org)

Possible Project Partners / Leads:
City of Medicine Hat Planning Department, Medicine Hat Construction Association, Canadian Home Builders Association of Medicine Hat, Medicine Hat Community Housing Society, Medicine Hat Real Estate Board, Urban Development Industry

Theme 3 – PROJECT 4: Housing Marketing Campaign

Overview:

The outcomes of the Residential Housing Plan as well as existing Southeast Alberta quality of life assets like affordable housing might be coupled into a marketing campaign.

Project:

Develop a website or social media tool as well as communications strategy that shows the value proposition for moving to the region. Highlights might include:

- Demonstrating bang for your buck on the low cost of living in Southeast Alberta
- A virtual tour of local housing options
- A community comparison: the same house in other communities would likely cost more

Possible Project Partners / Leads:

Tourism Medicine Hat – Jace Anderson, Medicine Hat College Students – Visual Communications, Engineering Tech

Strategic Theme 4: Plan for the impacts of ongoing and upcoming technological innovation on regional businesses

Overview of the Strategic Theme

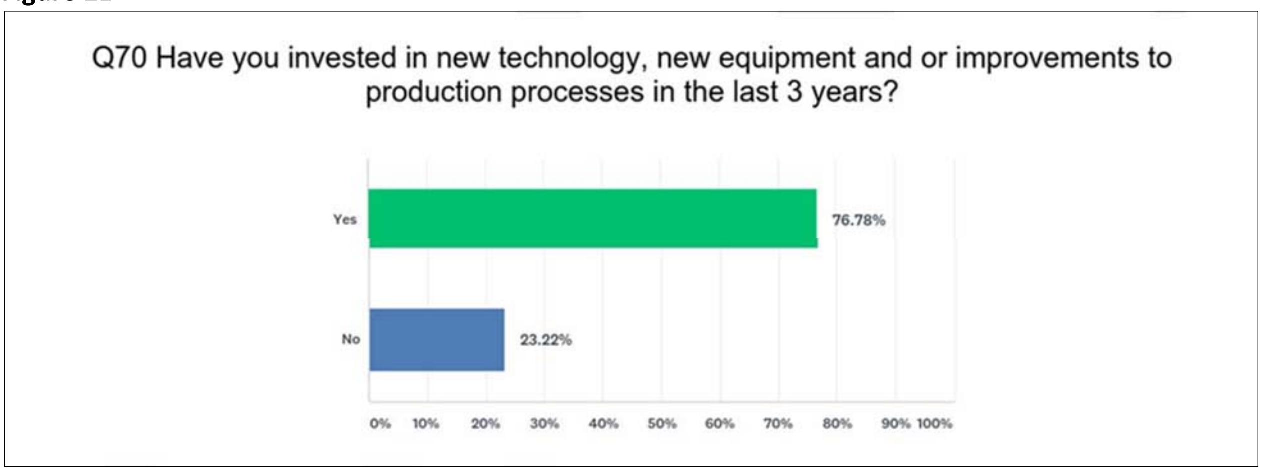
Businesses see technological innovation as an opportunity, a necessity, and a challenge. New software, equipment, green technologies, and automation, in particular, are all of keen interest to businesses. Many businesses need assistance navigating technology options, regulations, costs, and training. There was also repeated concern about the quality and cost of internet in the region.

Survey Results Related to Strategic Theme 4

Technology Investments

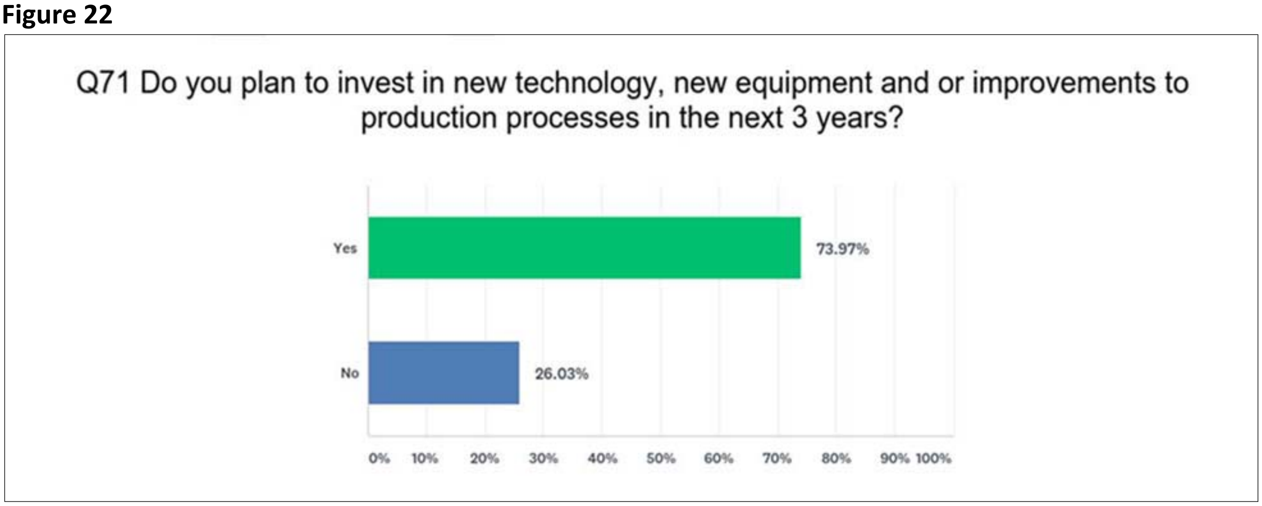
The vast majority of businesses surveyed have invested in new technology, new equipment and/or improvements to production processes in the past 3 years, or plan to in the next 3 years. These findings follow here.

Figure 21



366/476 Responded

Figure 22



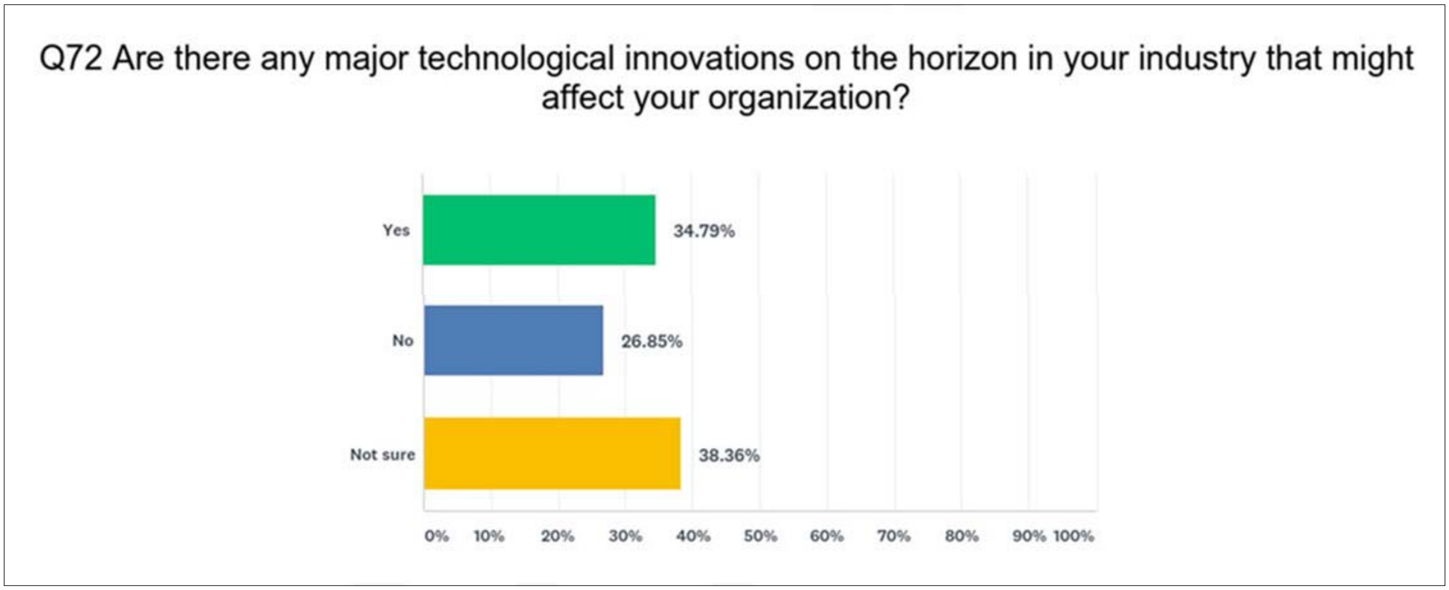
365/476 Responded

Technological Innovations

When asked “Are there any major technological innovations on the horizon in your industry that might affect your organization?” 34% responded “Yes” and 36% said they are “Not sure”. More importantly, only 26% said “No”. Excitement and worry about new technological innovations were a constant theme across all research tools in the BREWD project. This is a traditional theme that researchers see in BRE projects, but it is more prevalent today than ever.

Those who responded "Yes" to Q72, were asked to clarify what these technological innovations are? Many comments focused on software, computer systems, automation, and the training implications.

Figure 23

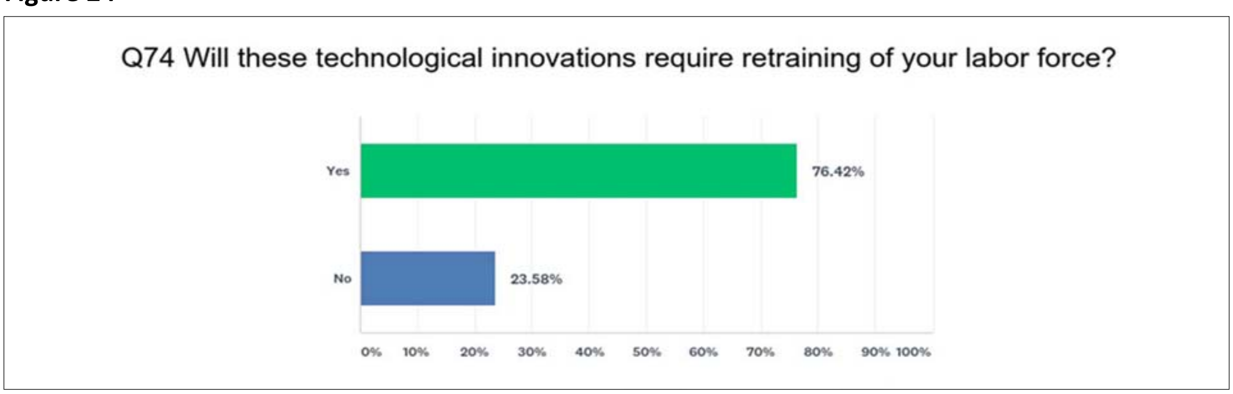


365/476 Responded

Further to this theme, respondents were asked “Will these technological innovations require retraining of your labor force?” 76% of those respondents said “Yes”. A number of respondents in the Labour section of the BREWD survey listed ‘lack of technical skills’ as an impediment to attracting and retaining workers.

This is another opportunity for community stakeholders. If businesses and policy makers can work with training institutions to develop programs addressing these changes, Southeast Alberta can benefit from new companies willing to locate in a region that can count innovation as one of its competitive strengths.

Figure 24



123/476 Responded

Expansion Plans

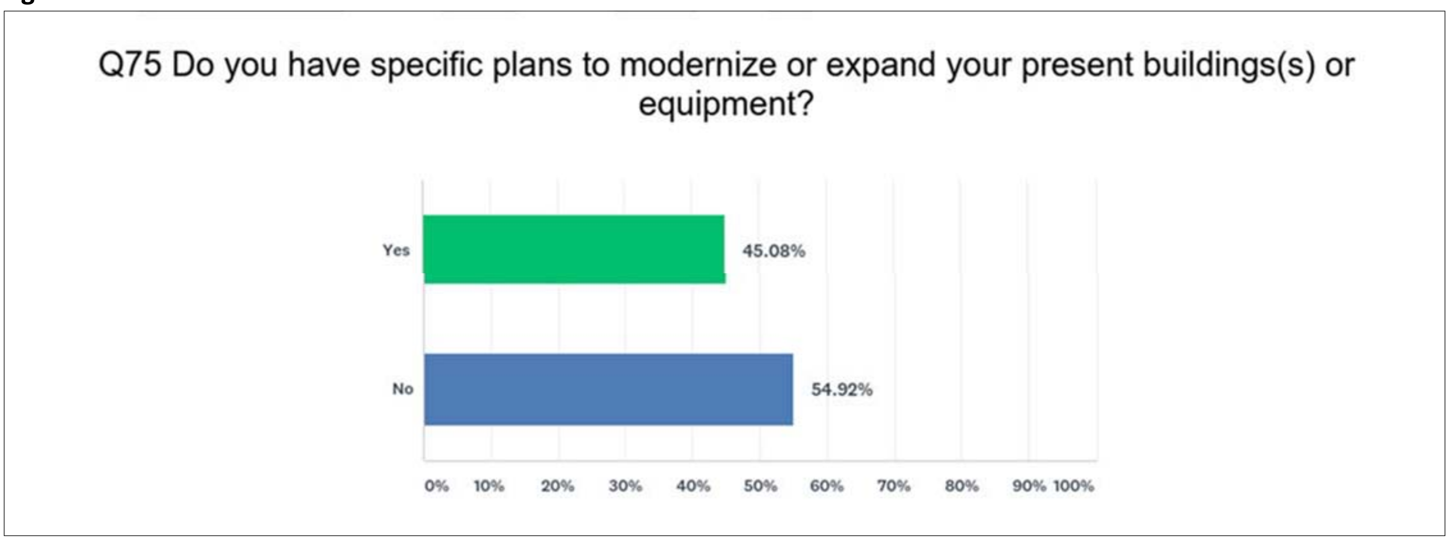
The movement towards investing in new technologies is reinforced by the responses to three questions:

4.2.4.1.1 Q75: Do you have specific plans to modernize or expand your present buildings(s) or equipment?
4.2.4.1.2 Q76: If you answered "Yes", what are your modernization or expansion plans?
4.2.4.1.3 Q77 What is the approximate expected cost of your modernization or expansion plans?

Forty-five percent of respondents have specific plans to modernize or expand, and of that 45%, 23% plan to spend over $500,000. Many of those 45% also indicated that their modernization would involve new equipment, technology, and computer systems. There is also recognition of the impact both in terms of efficiencies but also labour force training and education.

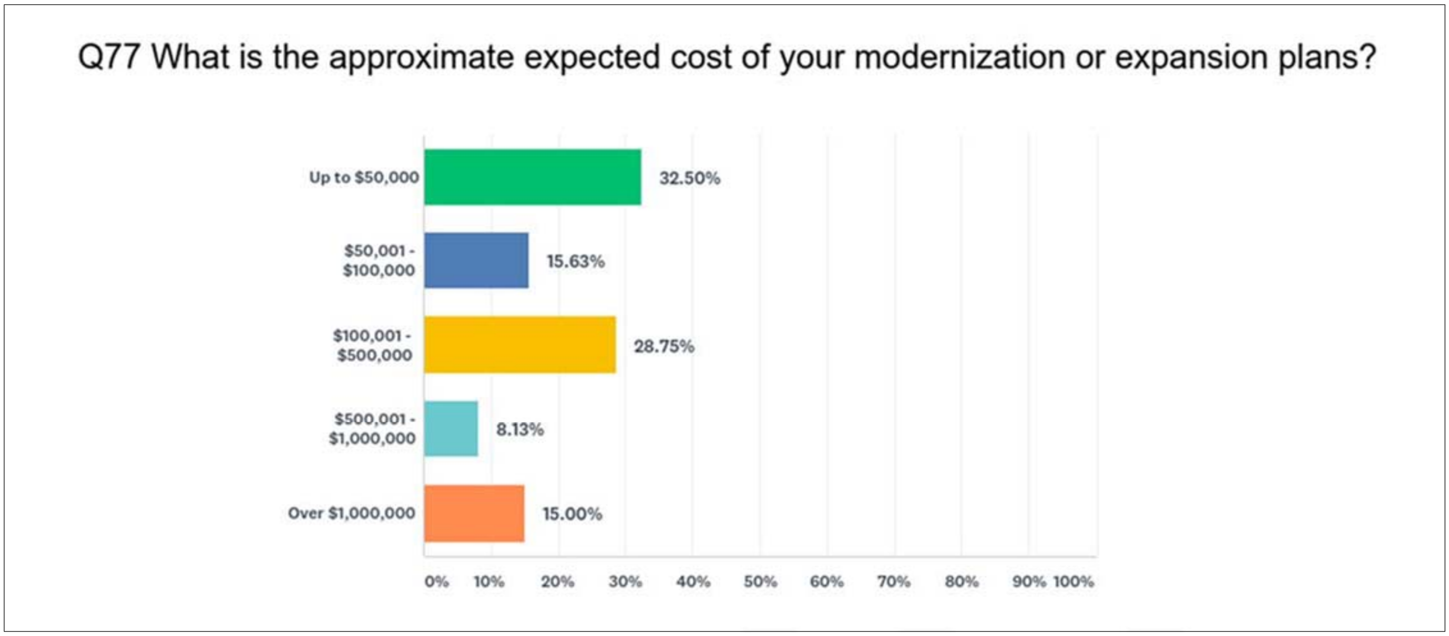
> 45% of respondents in the BRE Survey have specific plans to modernize or expand, and of those 45%, 23% plan to spend over $500,000.

Figure 25



366/476 Responded

Figure 26



160/476 Responded

Potential Projects for Local Consideration

Theme 4 – PROJECT 1: Tech Awareness Campaign

Overview:

Businesses see technological innovation as an opportunity, a necessity, and a challenge. New software, equipment, green technologies, and particularly automation are all of keen interest to businesses. Many businesses need assistance navigating technology options, regulations, costs, and training. Related is a repeated concern about the quality and cost of internet in the region.

A first step in addressing the excitement and anxiety of business about technology is gaining an understanding of the technological landscape in Southeast Alberta. Groups like Alberta Innovates are an existing resource. Then develop a campaign to promote the tech opportunities and resources in the region.

"Technology trend awareness as a skill refers to being mindful of the technology that is recently becoming popular and is readily accepted in the market or industry. It also encompasses one's ability to recognize and understand the usefulness of any such technology for the success of his business.."

www.cleverism.com/skills-and-tools/technology-trend-

Project:

As per the BREWD Research Review Meetings, thoughts on a tech awareness campaign project included:

- Identify what exists and where opportunities there may be (Autostar, DRDC, QinetiQ)
- Talk to companies who know what technologies are available
- Increasing awareness of accessible technology (i.e. apps, funding programs, resources)
- Look at the technical capabilities of workers and training institutes in the region
- Make sure the review is regional in nature

- “A very large portion of the business community do not know what they don’t know / also we don’t know what technologies are being used by those companies that are more in the know / a quarter of companies would like some sort of training with respect to new technologies”
- Develop Survey from those experts: broad business surveys like the BREWD survey – know what is needed and where the gaps are
- Educating businesses on what the emerging technology options are, and coach businesses to embrace new technologies

Possible Project Partners / Leads:

APEX, Medicine Hat College

Theme 4 – PROJECT 2: Tech Training for Regional Companies

Overview:

New research from The Conference Board and Tenet Partners reveals that companies with a strong culture of innovation are viewed more favorably and seen as having greater investment potential, among other favorable outcomes. Companies with the greatest culture of innovation scores also had the highest earnings per share, the biggest dividends, and higher cash flow multiples. Perception of a company’s innovation culture is a double-edged sword: low scores for culture of innovation go hand in hand with further erosion of other scores, like favorability and investment potential. High scores are associated with stronger brands.

The next logical step after the Tech Awareness Campaign Project might be engaging in tech training for regional companies. The training can focus on adding value to important Southeast Alberta industries such as value-added agriculture. energy, and aerospace and defense.

Project:

As per the BREWD Research Review Meetings, thoughts on a tech awareness campaign project included:

- Recording / providing “on-demand” workshops/seminars
- Micro-credential / micro-learning (subscription services for businesses)
    - As needed programs where employers can have employees do virtual learning
    - Businesses choose programs on an as-needed basis
    - Employees can pick and choose what they want, or the employer can choose
- Generational Training/Automation Tech training
- Managing the space between labour and automation
- Employers need to stay on top of technical changes that may be beneficial to their business to develop.
- Working in concert with the younger generation
- Supporting the transition with other types of work/training programs
- Improved responsive training and education related to the new sectors

Possible Project Partners / Leads:

APEX, Medicine Hat College

Theme 4 – PROJECT 3: Smart Cities Technologies Assessment

Overview:

A smart city is a designation given to a city that incorporates information and communication technologies (ICT) to enhance the quality and performance of urban services such as energy, transportation and utilities in order to reduce resource consumption, wastage and overall costs. The overarching aim of a smart city is to enhance the quality of living for its citizens through smart technology.

www.techopedia.com

"The Smart Cities Challenge is a pan-Canadian competition open to all municipalities, local or regional governments, and Indigenous communities (First Nations, Métis and Inuit). The Challenge empowers communities to adopt a smart cities approach to improve the lives of their residents through innovation, data and connected technology."

www.infrastructure.gc.ca/cities-villes/index-eng.html

Project:

As per the BREWD Research Review Meetings, thoughts on a smart city project included:

- Smart City – Research to determine how to get there and how does Medicine Hat shift to becoming a smarter city (a "more" smart City) and attract investment because of it
- Building a Smart City technological asset map

This is a research project where an abundance of secondary research already exists. There are number of applicants to the Smart City Challenge by Infrastructure Canada including Lethbridge. See the applicants here: https://www.infrastructure.gc.ca/sc-vi/map-applications.php

There are key technologies that make a smart city work. Here are the top six:

1. Smart energy
2. Smart transportation
3. Smart data
4. Smart infrastructure
5. Smart mobility
6. Smart IoT devices

https://www.techrepublic.com/article/smart-cities-6-essential-technologies/

Possible Project Partners / Leads:

Invest Southeast Alberta, APEX, Medicine Hat College, City of Medicine Hat (Utilities business development, Information Services)

Theme 4 – PROJECT 4: Medicine Hat Renewable Energy Strategy

As per the BREWD Research Review Meetings, thoughts on a Medicine Hat Renewable Energy Strategy Project included:

- Based on being the sunniest City in Canada, looking at a renewable energy strategy for Medicine Hat makes sense.
- Solar, wind biodiesel, geothermal, etc.
- Independent consultation with businesses and policy makers
- Look to the Southeastern Alberta Energy Diversification Strategy
- Research the significant Provincial and Federal funding sources for such strategies.
- An example of an Energy Diversification Strategy for Vancouver can be seen at: https://vancouver.ca/files/cov/renewable-city-strategy-booklet-2015.pdf

Workforce Development (WD): Research Results, Strategies, and Potential Projects

Current Workforce Profile

The Current Workforce Profile identifies the nature of the regional labour force make-up, challenges workers/jobseekers have in finding new work, and pressures employers face to attract and retain labour.

Labour Related Statistics

The primary purpose of this section is to provide a **labour force overview for Southeast Alberta** based on the Statistics Canada 2016 Census.

Rather than only listing labour related data points for Southeast Alberta, it is useful to **put them into context**. As such, a Regional Comparison has been developed using the following parameters:

- Geographic characteristics are the central factor in creating comparative parameters. Geography of a community is most often directly tied to its value proposition for attracting and retaining a labour force.
- The parameters chosen in such a preliminary benchmarking exercise are somewhat subjective and could only be further refined in consideration of a specific sector labour need.
- Being a 'regional' labour project, it was decided that the closest geographic comparison parameters are Census Divisions. Southeast Alberta is part of Division No. 1, AB
- The key factor was choosing rural areas in Western Canada that have a population center similar in size and economic importance as Medicine Hat.

Figures 27 and 28 provide a snapshot of comparable Census Divisions for the purpose of **context** and are **NOT** used here as a mean of ranking the regions.

Basic Demographics

Figure 27: Basic Demographics						
Census Division:	**Division No. 1, AB**	Division No. 2, AB	Division No. 10, AB	Division No. 19, AB	Division No. 7, SK	Division No. 7, MB
Major Urban Centre in Division:	**Medicine Hat**	Lethbridge	Lloydminster	Grande Prairie	Moose Jaw	Brandon
Population; 2016	**82,627**	169,729	97,449	120,380	47,195	68,746
Population; 2011	**78,694**	156,536	93,039	109,712	46,648	65,084
Population percentage change; 2011 to 2016	**5%**	8%	5%	10%	1%	6%
Total private dwellings	**35,331**	66,991	42,796	49,338	22,895	29,333
Private dwellings occupied by usual residents	**33,230**	62,823	38,242	44,549	19,760	27,632
Population density per square kilometre	**4.0**	9.6	4.8	5.9	2.5	10.9
Land area in square kilometres	**20,559**	17,673	20,466	20,517	18,837	6,309

Labour Force Status

It should be noted that the statistics in Figure 28 are from 2016, a period where unemployment, particularly in Alberta was hitting a recent high point. Communities like Medicine Hat, Lloydminster, and Grande Prairie were particularly hard hit by the downturn in the oil and gas industries.

Figure 28: Labour Force Status – 2016						
Census Division:	**Division No. 1, AB**	Division No. 2, AB	Division No. 10, AB	Division No. 19, AB	Division No. 7, SK	Division No. 7, MB
Major Urban Centre in Division:	**Medicine Hat**	Lethbridge	Lloydminster	Grande Prairie	Moose Jaw	Brandon
Total - Population aged 15 years and over	**64,455**	128,390	75,525	91,270	37,050	52,875
In the labour force	**42,575**	88,460	52,595	69,400	24,790	37,360
Employed	**38,495**	82,675	47,815	62,865	23,375	34,845
Unemployed	**4,080**	5,785	4,785	6,535	1,415	2,515
Not in the labour force	**21,880**	39,930	22,930	21,870	12,260	15,515
Participation rate	**66.1%**	68.9%	69.6%	76.0%	66.9%	70.7%
Employment rate	**59.7%**	64.4%	63.3%	68.9%	63.1%	65.9%
Unemployment rate	**9.6%**	6.5%	9.1%	9.4%	5.7%	6.7%

More recently, unemployment rates have stabilized somewhat but still leave room for improvement. Alberta still enjoys the highest Employment Rate in Canada, but due to high Participation Rates, Unemployment Rates are relativelyhigh.

However, a cautionary note about the data presented here. While the overall trend lines are interesting, the fact that Medicine Hat is included in the "Lethbridge-Medicine Hat economic region" for the purposes of employment statistics, can be misleading. In recent years, unemployment in Lethbridge has been consistently lower than Medicine Hat. And Lethbridge's population is much larger, bringing down the overall unemployment percentage for the economic region.

"According to data from Statistics Canada, Medicine Hat's unemployment rate was listed as 11.3% per cent for August

2019. It's up from 10% in July 2019 (Statistics Canada cautions against month-to-month comparisons for Medicine Hat, due to the smaller sample size)."

https://chatnewstoday.ca, Sept 6, 2019

Statistics Canada is hesitant to provide month-to-month comparisons for Medicine Hat and instead point to the more statistically significant "Lethbridge-Medicine Hat economic region". So, in these month-to-month comparisons, the actual unemployment rate in the Medicine Hat area is often underestimated. This is especially the case in the present economic climate.

Unemployment statistics should also be viewed with a larger lens. The Participation Rate plays a major factor in unemployment. The same Statistics Canada sources listed above also mentioned that in the last year, "The labour force went from 38,500 to 46,100, so not everybody who came in found work".

Figure 29: Recent Alberta Labour Statistics

Alberta

Alberta Labour Force Statistics November, 2019

Seasonally Adjusted

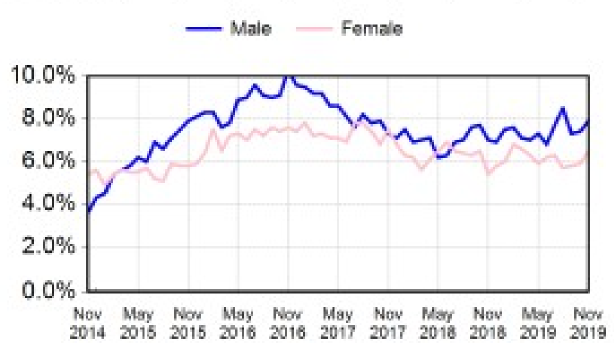
Statistics/Counts		November, 2019	October, 2019	November, 2018
Labour Force	*(000s)*	***2,521.2***	*2,526.5*	*2,513.7*
Employed	*(000s)*	***2,338.7***	*2,356.9*	*2,356.9*
Unemployed	*(000s)*	***182.5***	*169.6*	*156.8*
Unemployment Rate	*(%)*	***7.2%***	*6.7%*	*6.2%*

Unemployment Rate, Alberta Cities
Seasonally Adjusted, 3- Month Moving Average

3-Month Moving Averages	*Edmonton*	*Calgary*
November 2019	***7.7%***	***6.9%***
October 2019	*7.1%*	*7.2%*
November 2018	*6.2%*	*7.8%*

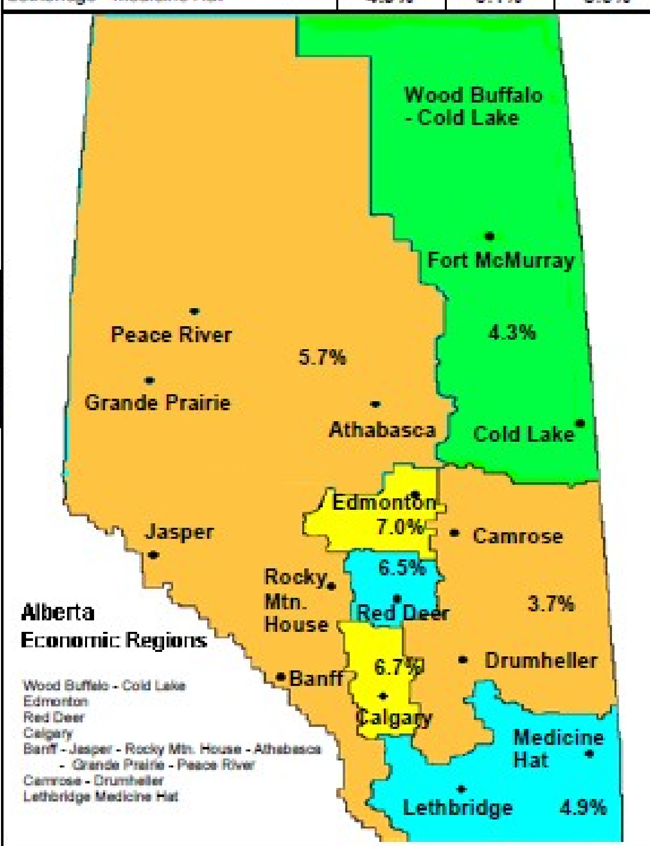
Unemployment Rate by Age & Gender, Alberta
Seasonally Adjusted

Age	All Ages(15+)			Youth(15-24)			Adults(25+)		
Gender	**Both**	Male	Fem.	**Both**	Male	Fem.	**Both**	Male	Fem.
November 2019	**7.2%**	**7.9%**	**6.5%**	**15.2%**	**19.4%**	**10.8%**	**6.0%**	**6.2%**	**5.7%**
October 2019	6.7%	7.4%	5.9%	13.2%	16.5%	9.8%	5.7%	6.1%	5.2%
November 2018	6.2%	7.0%	5.4%	10.2%	12.9%	7.2%	5.7%	6.1%	5.1%



Unemployment Rate, Alberta Regions
Unadjusted, 3- Month Moving Average

	November 2019	October 2019	November 2018
Wood Buffalo - Cold Lake	**4.3%**	5.1%	5.3%
Edmonton	**7.0%**	6.9%	5.6%
Red Deer	**6.5%**	7.3%	5.4%
Banff - Jasper - Rocky Mountain House and Athabasca - Grand Prairie - Peace River	**5.7%**	5.8%	4.6%
Calgary	**6.7%**	7.4%	7.5%
Camrose - Drumheller	**3.7%**	4.3%	6.9%
Lethbridge - Medicine Hat	**4.9%**	6.4%	3.9%



Income

Income in Division 1 AB is comparable to other rural Alberta Divisions, and superior to most other rural divisions across. See Figure 16. But it lags behind major urban centres like Calgary and Edmonton and tends be lower than Northern Alberta Divisions that are heavily involved in oil production.

Figure 30: Income - 2016

Census Division	**Division No. 1, AB**	Division No. 2, AB	Division No. 10, AB	Division No. 19, AB	Division No. 7, SK	Division No. 7, MB
Major Urban Centre	**Medicine Hat**	Lethbridge	Lloydminster	Grande Prairie	Moose Jaw	Brandon
Median total income of households	**$75,141**	$76,397	$82,575	$103,171	$68,729	$69,374
Median after-tax income of households	**$66,184**	$67,486	$71,650	$87,078	$60,666	$59,418
Average total income of households	**$98,438**	$94,884	$103,311	$121,510	$84,661	$83,564
Average after-tax income of households	**$82,031**	$80,307	$85,348	$99,224	$70,940	$68,109

Figure 31: Alberta Cities Median Family Income -2017

Medicine Hat	**$89,710**
Red Deer	$95,630
Lethbridge	$90,570
Edmonton	$93,600
Calgary	$100,320
Grande Prairie	$112,980
Lloydminster	$115,200
	Alberta Regional Dashboard

Education

Major education statistics that affect a regional labour pool are

- No certificate; diploma or degree
- Postsecondary certificate; diploma or degree
- Apprenticeship or trades certificate or diploma

In each of these areas Division 1 AB is highly similar to other comparable regions. In terms of "Major Field of Study", the region is quite similar to others overall. A business or sector would have to mine down to individual Fields to draw applicable comparisons.

Figure 32: Highest Certificate, Diploma or Degree - 2016

Census Division:	**Division No. 1, AB**	Division No. 2, AB	Division No. 10, AB	Division No. 19, AB	Division No. 7, SK	Division No. 7, MB
Major Urban Centre in Division:	**Medicine Hat**	Lethbridge	Lloydminster	Grande Prairie	Moose Jaw	Brandon
Total - Highest certificate; diploma or degree for the population aged 15 years and over	**64,455**	128,390	75,525	91,270	37,050	52,875

No certificate; diploma or degree	**22%**	22%	23%	23%	21%	20%
Secondary (high) school diploma or equivalency certificate	**31%**	31%	29%	31%	32%	32%
Postsecondary certificate; diploma or degree	**47%**	47%	49%	46%	47%	48%
Apprenticeship or trades certificate or diploma	**11%**	10%	13%	12%	12%	9%
Trades certificate or diploma other than Certificate of Apprenticeship or Certificate of Qualification	**3%**	3%	4%	3%	5%	4%
Certificate of Apprenticeship or Certificate of Qualification	**8%**	7%	10%	9%	7%	5%
College; CEGEP or other non-university certificate or diploma	**22%**	20%	21%	20%	19%	20%
University certificate or diploma below bachelor level	**2%**	2%	3%	2%	3%	2%
University certificate; diploma or degree at bachelor level or above	**12%**	16%	12%	12%	13%	17%

Figure 33: Major Field of Study - 2016						
Census Division:	**Division No. 1, AB**	Division No. 2, AB	Division No. 10, AB	Division No. 19, AB	Division No. 7, SK	Division No. 7, MB
Major Urban Centre in Division:	**Medicine Hat**	Lethbridge	Lloydminster	Grande Prairie	Moose Jaw	Brandon
Total - Major field of study - population 15 years and over	**64,455**	128,390	75,520	91,270	37,050	52,875
No postsecondary certificate; diploma or degree	**53.1%**	52.6%	51.3%	53.7%	52.7%	51.7%
Education	**3.7%**	4.1%	4.3%	3.8%	4.4%	5.0%
Humanities	**1.3%**	1.7%	1.3%	1.1%	1.9%	2.0%
Social and behavioural sciences and law	**2.9%**	3.9%	3.0%	3.1%	2.4%	3.6%
Business; management and public administration	**9.4%**	8.6%	8.2%	8.7%	9.4%	8.6%
Physical and life sciences and technologies	**1.0%**	1.5%	1.0%	0.9%	1.0%	1.4%
Mathematics; computer and information sciences	**0.9%**	1.1%	1.1%	0.9%	0.9%	0.9%
Architecture; engineering; and related technologies	**12.5%**	10.4%	14.9%	14.6%	11.5%	9.9%
Agriculture; natural resources and conservation	**1.7%**	2.2%	2.5%	1.9%	1.9%	2.0%
Health and related fields	**8.9%**	9.0%	8.2%	6.9%	8.9%	10.2%
Personal; protective and transportation services	**3.6%**	3.5%	3.2%	3.5%	4.1%	3.7%

Occupations

The NOC comparisons across census divisions are relatively similar. This is expected in geographically similar areas. What was of particular interest to the research team was the correlation level between the BREWD Worker/Jobseeker Survey occupation types, and the 2016 Statistics Canada Census.

North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) codes were used throughout the BREWD project to categorize workers and employers for two reasons:

- This system is a generally accepted statistical standard for categorizing industries and consequently, types of employment
- Using NAICS codes allows the data to be comparable across many statistical sources in almost any area of North America

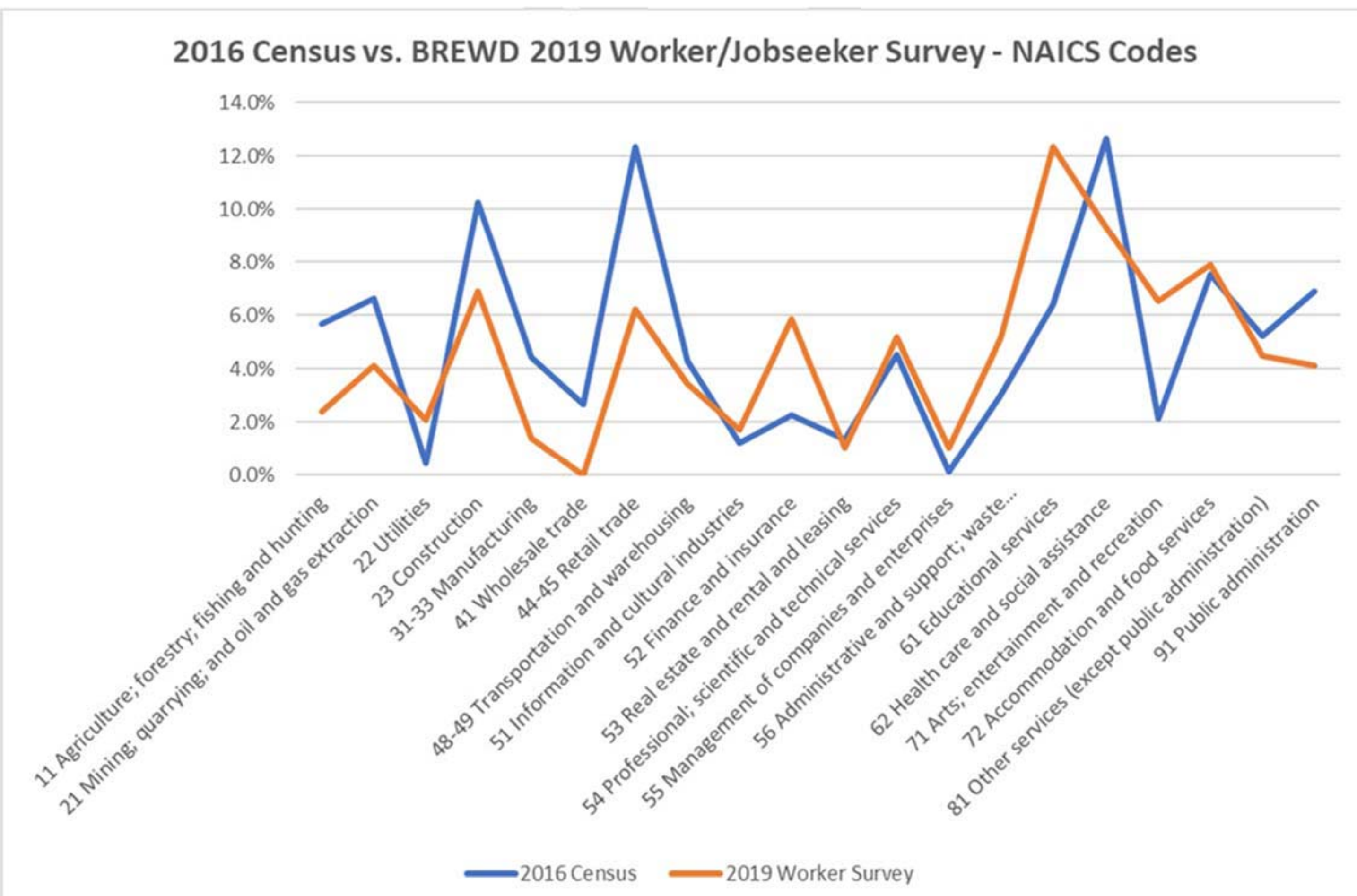
While the BREWD Worker/Jobseeker Survey had an excellent response rate of 341, that pales in comparison to the population count in an actual census of over 40,000. But looking at the correlation level is important to check the validity of the data. 'Figure 35: 2016 Regional Employment by Industry: Census Division 1 AB vs. BREWD 2019 Worker/Jobseeker Survey - NAICS Codes' demonstrates clear trend lines where the two statistical instruments mirror each other. This trend provides an added level of confidence that the responses provided in the BREWD Worker/Jobseeker Survey are representative of the general occupational makeup of the workforce in the region.

Figure 34: National Occupational Classification (NOC) - 2016						
Census Division:	**Division No. 1, AB**	Division No. 2, AB	Division No. 10, AB	Division No. 19, AB	Division No. 7, SK	Division No. 7, MB
Major Urban Centre in Division:	**Medicine Hat**	Lethbridge	Lloydminster	Grande Prairie	Moose Jaw	Brandon
All occupations	**42,030**	87,340	51,885	68,645	24,550	36,755
Management	**10.5%**	11.6%	14.6%	11.6%	16.9%	10.2%
Business; finance and administration	**12.8%**	12.9%	13.7%	13.5%	11.6%	13.2%
Natural and applied sciences and related	**4.3%**	4.1%	3.8%	5.1%	3.7%	3.7%
Health	**8.1%**	7.4%	6.7%	5.5%	7.4%	9.0%
Education; law & social; community and government services	**9.7%**	10.7%	8.5%	8.6%	9.9%	13.8%
Art; culture; recreation and sport	**1.7%**	1.9%	1.7%	1.5%	1.8%	1.3%
Sales and service	**23.6%**	21.9%	18.9%	21.0%	21.9%	23.4%
Trades; transport and equipment and Related	**19.0%**	17.9%	21.5%	22.3%	18.4%	15.1%
Natural resources; agriculture and related Production	**6.5%**	5.6%	6.5%	7.0%	5.8%	3.2%
Manufacturing and utilities	**4.0%**	6.1%	4.1%	3.9%	2.7%	7.1%

Figure 35: 2016 REGIONAL EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY Census Division 1 AB vs. BREWD 2019 Worker/Jobseeker Survey - NAICS Codes		
	2016 Census (Stats can)	**2019 Worker Survey (BREWD)**
11 Agriculture; forestry; fishing and hunting	5.7%	2.41%
21 Mining; quarrying; and oil and gas extraction	6.6%	4.12%
22 Utilities	0.5%	2.06%
23 Construction	10.3%	6.87%
31-33 Manufacturing	4.5%	1.37%

41 Wholesale trade	2.7%	0.00%
44-45 Retail trade	12.3%	6.19%
48-49 Transportation and warehousing	4.3%	3.44%
51 Information and cultural industries	1.2%	1.72%
52 Finance and insurance	2.2%	5.84%
53 Real estate and rental and leasing	1.4%	1.03%
54 Professional; scientific and technical services	4.5%	5.15%
55 Management of companies and enterprises	0.1%	1.03%
56 Administrative and support; waste management & remediation services	3.0%	5.15%
61 Educational services	6.4%	12.37%
62 Health care and social assistance	12.7%	9.28%
71 Arts; entertainment and recreation	2.1%	6.53%
72 Accommodation and food services	7.5%	7.90%
81 Other services (except public administration)	5.2%	4.47%
91 Public administration	6.9%	4.12%

Figure 36: REGIONAL EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY
(2016 Census Division 1 AB vs. BREWD 2019 Worker/Jobseeker Survey - NAICS Codes)



Pressures Facing Workers and Employers

Secondary data sources provide input to identify emerging trends, issues and business environment including workforce retention and attraction strategies. However, this section of the report focuses on the primary data from the Worker/Jobseeker Surveys and the Key Employer Interviews to identify pressures that employers and workers face in the region. The Environmental Scan in the next section will capture secondary data sources forcing on regional trends and workforce retention and attraction strategies.

Worker/Jobseeker Survey - Worker Challenges

When asked "If you are looking to change occupations, what do you feel is the biggest challenge you face?", 262 responses were recorded. This was a long list of qualitative responses that were analyzed and are categorized below. Of these responses, the following concerns were the most prevalent:

1. Age
    - There were a surprising number of respondents who stated that their advanced age and associated level of experience (and remuneration) precluded them from new opportunities. Some described this as "age discrimination", while others said the region is small, creating a lack of opportunity.
2. Lack of education/training
    - A simple "lack of education" was cited in Q19, but it was often mixed with complaints over lack of training in and out of the workplace.
3. Lack of jobs/opportunities in my field
    - This response encapsulates a mix of two basic reactions 'there are not enough jobs in the region', and 'there are a lack of job opportunities in my field'. Sometimes these responses are mixed and hard to separate. But the end result is a feeling that there is not enough job opportunity in the region for the respondents to seek new employment opportunities.
4. Lack of experience
    - A "lack of experience" refers either to the respondent not having enough general experience in her/his desired field to get a job, or the employer of their choice citing lack of experience as a reason they are not employable.
5. Low wages
    - Low wage comments are difficult to quantify. Some just want a higher wage and don't feel it is being offered in their field in the region. Some feel they don't have enough money right now to risk seeking out new employment in a market where wages are not as high as they would like. Some just complain about low wages in general.

Figure 37: WJS Q19 If you are looking to change occupations, what do you feel is the biggest challenge you face?	
Age (overqualified/lack of opportunity in field/discrimination)	17.6%
Lack of education/training	16.7%
Lack of jobs/opportunities in my field	14.8%
Lack of experience	12.5%
Low wages	9.7%
Lack of (and transferability) of skills/qualifications	6.9%
Cost of education/training	5.1%
Transportation/bad location for employment	4.2%
Competition	3.2%
No connections/network	3.2%

Discrimination	2.8%
Technology	1.9%
Flexibility	1.4%

Training and Service Provider Survey - Worker Challenges

The number of employment training and service providers is very small compared to workers or employers. So, while the total number of 10 providers may seem like a small sample, this is actually near 100 percent of the regional training and service providers. More importantly, these people are on the front line in terms of knowledge about the labour situation in Southeast Alberta.

The following results illustrate that job shortages and lack of skills or education are most difficult challenges to jobseekers gaining employment. These sentiments are mirrored in the Worker/Jobseeker Survey.

Figure 38: Q4 Difficulty Clients Are Experiencing in the Labour Market

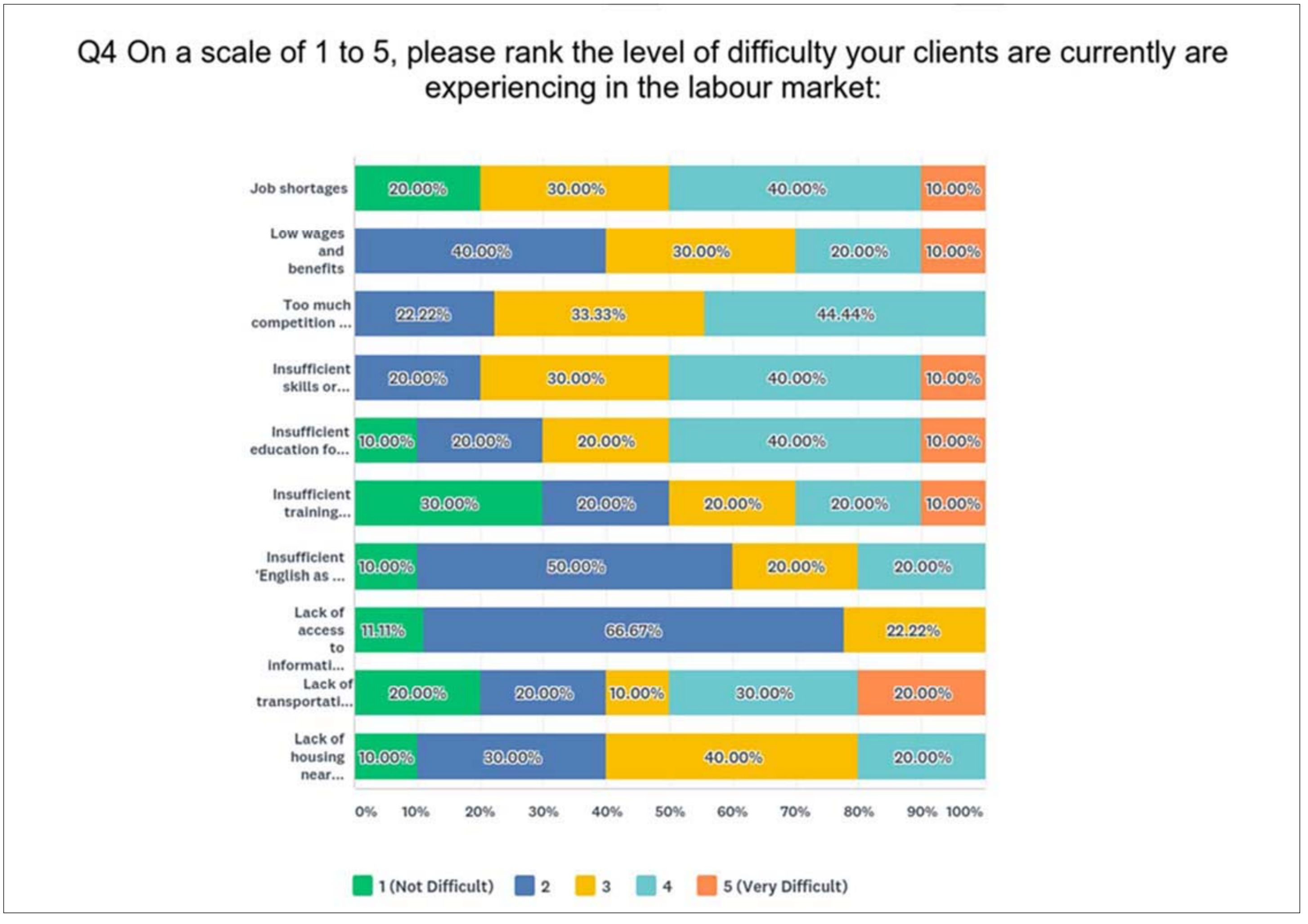


Figure 39: TSPS Q4 - Rank the level of difficulty your clients are currently experiencing in the labour market					
	1 (Not Difficult)	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5 (Very Difficult)**
Job shortages	20%	0%	30%	40%	10%
Low wages and benefits	0%	40%	30%	20%	10%
Too much competition for jobs	0%	22%	33%	44%	0%
Insufficient skills or experience for available jobs	0%	20%	30%	40%	10%
Insufficient education for available jobs	10%	20%	20%	40%	10%
Insufficient training available	30%	20%	20%	20%	10%
Insufficient 'English as a 2nd language' training available	10%	50%	20%	20%	0%
Lack of access to info on how/where to find jobs	11%	67%	22%	0%	0%
Lack of transportation to available jobs	20%	20%	10%	30%	20%
Lack of housing near job locations	10%	30%	40%	20%	0%

Training and service providers were also asked to elaborate on their answers to Q4, and provide their experiences in helping jobseekers find work. Here were some of their comments, paraphrased for confidentiality:

- *It is challenging to find employers willing to take on youth if employers do not have enough work for current employees*
- *The clients we serve are usually very low literacy English levels, making it challenging for clients to get in the labor market.*
- *Labourer that are newcomers have a lot of skills and aptitudes and need to be given the opportunity to show those skills would make it easier for them to enter the workforce. Having skill-based interviews not so focused on vocabulary knowledge and more on work ethic.*
- *Make accreditation more accessible to more people as the cost can be very high and not everyone that is professionally trained has the funds to pay for all the accreditations.*
- *The local labour market has many jobs requiring post-secondary or jobs that are entry-level such as in the service industry, which generally is precarious and has lower compensation. At times, this can be hard for job seekers who are mid-career, don't have education and would like to support themselves and their families.*
- *Childcare can be a barrier to employment. The cost of childcare for before and after school programs can be limiting. This is particularly difficult when many of the available jobs are precarious and/or have low compensation.*
- *Many clients have no driver's license. There are many organizations located outside public transportation routes, which impacts a candidate's ability to apply for jobs.*
- *Employers are less likely to invest in on the job training for those who lack experience as they can easily hire someone who already comes with the skills and experience needed to complete the job duties.*
- *Our primary clientele are vulnerable Albertans, often referred to us by other GOA social programs. They often experience challenges such as low income, low education, low skills (including experience in low skill occupations or low essential skills such as computers), gaps in employment, disabilities/health factors including mental health and addictions (past or current), criminal record, and limited transportation options.*
- *Our clients may struggle to market themselves as suitable candidates for a job, not because they do not have the essential work search tools required, but sometimes do not meet the unsaid expectations that an employer request.*
- *Some clients need accommodations on the job (for example, a client who is an older worker with a back injury and limitations in lifting). They find work and have skills to perform some functions of the job (client gets a job in food service, has experience in customer service and is comfortable using a cash register) but cannot perform the heavy lifting (struggled to lift the heavy food packaging).*

Key Employer Interviews - Employer Challenges (Attracting and Retaining Workers)

The Influence of the Oil and Gas Industry

- The biggest outside factor influencing skilled and non-skilled labour is the fluctuation of the oil and gas industry.
- This is a 'catch 22' for many employers since overall business increases when the Oil and Gas is in an up-cycle which produces more opportunities and need for more staff.
- Competition for staff at all levels is an issue with an industry that is offering considerably more compensation to the labour force. During a down-turn in the Oil and Gas industry, such as the current one, it is much less difficult to fill positions with suitable labour.
- These challenges are at least somewhat prevalent across all industry categories.

The Recent Increase in Minimum Wage

- Companies with low margins have difficulty attracting and retaining workers for minimum wage positions.
- Since the recent hike in the minimum wage took place, employers across all categories are having increased difficulty in retaining workers who were once paid above minimum wage but are unable to increase those employees' wages further because of thin operating margins.
- It was indicated on several occasions that workers once paid above minimum wage are now more likely to seek out jobs they see as 'easier' for the same level of pay.
- Retention of entry level employees was cited as especially hard among employers whose position are more physically intensive as the common thought is that workers would prefer less physically taxing positions for the same wage.

Competition with Neighbouring Metropolitan Centers

- Companies interested in recruiting higher level positions requiring a higher level of expertise or experience (journeymen, etc.) have a difficult time finding those candidates in the local market since they are a limited commodity in a smaller center like the City of Medicine Hat.
- Enticing candidates from other areas has proven to be difficult, in part based on peoples' general preference to reside in larger markets.
- It was cited often times that companies were able to find suitable candidates in other markets and the biggest barrier was convincing them that Medicine Hat and the surrounding region is an attractive work/life location.
- There is concern that the education or level of available education resources available to students is too limited to retain the region's youth.
- Several employers cited that young people have to move to bigger urban centers in order to further their, education and or trade skills and often do not move back to the region once they have left.

When suitable candidates are found, those candidates were often concerned about finding suitable employment for their significant others in a smaller market

Muscle Drain

- Employers whose workforce consists of positions that are more manual labour intensive cited the lack of desire among youth to perform physical labour compared to even ten years ago. Many stated the problem of attracting candidates willing to perform physical labour gets more difficult yearly.

- There is a sense that youth are not educated early on about the potential benefits and job opportunities in fields such as the trades. Graduates are less interested and less knowledgeable about the significant opportunities these types of positions may afford. Along with the desire for less labour intensive positions this has created somewhat of a shortage of employees with certain licenses or certifications in some manual career types such as journeyman carpenters, for instance.

Lack of a Central Resource to Search for Local Candidates

- Most employers indicated they use at least two or more avenues when looking to hire new employees and that often included both social media as well as other online methods including services such as Kijiji and Indeed.
- Employers felt it would be useful to have some sort of employee or job bank where local employees/job seekers could post their resumes or qualifications and local employers could post their positions.
- A resource where employers could identify local candidates on their own and post job opportunities specific to the region to make a connection. Many employers indicated that such a resource would be widely accepted as another means of recruiting a platform they would utilize.

Environmental Scan

The Environmental Scan draws from **secondary research** to identify emerging trends, issues and business environment including workforce retention and attraction strategies. It is meant to balance and compare secondary sources against the significant primary research that has taken place for the BREWD Project.

Trends

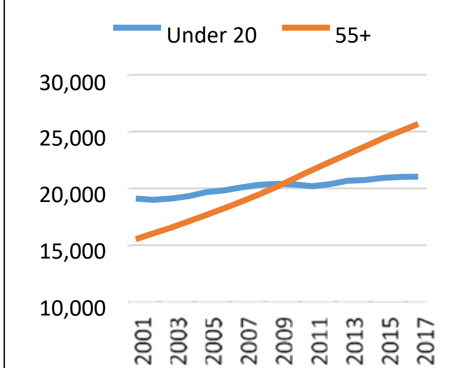
The Region is Aging

The primary research from the Worker/Jobseeker Survey listed ‘age’ as the biggest challenge workers face if they are looking to looking to change occupations. Secondary data supports age as a serious workforce issue as well, namely the aging population.

The 2016 Statistics Canada Census reported that nearly 25% of the Medicine Hat workforce was over the age of 55. This means that 9,500 workers are likely to retire in the next decade or so (as they will be 55 and older).

As a stated in the Immigration Matters; Economic Profile Series: Medicine Hat, Alberta Spring 2019: *“There are growing signs that the demographic situation in Medicine Hat could be a barrier to future economic growth. In 2001, across Division 1 (where the Medicine Hat urban centre makes up 93% of the population), there were 123 young people under the age of 20 for every 100 people over the age of 55. By 2017, that ratio had declined to 82 young people for every 100 over the age of 55 (Figure 2).*

Figure 39: Population by age group and year



Source: Statistics Canada, Table 17-10-0084-01.

This issue not only affects the workforce, but also employers and the entrepreneurs that start and operate many SMEs, especially in rural areas. The same report stated that “*There are 1,800 self-employed people in Medicine Hat and more than 40% of them are over the age of 55.”* Supporting this data is the BRE Survey Question 82 “If you are considering "Downsizing, Selling, Moving or Closing", what are the reasons?” The biggest reason was retirement (42%).

There are a number of strategies to address this issue, as will be explored in section “3.2.6 WD Strategy Areas and Potential Projects”. However, another trend is also part of the strategic theme: Embracing Immigration.

Embracing Immigration

The same 2019 ‘Immigration Matters’ paper noted: “*There is no doubt that the biggest opportunity involves continuing to attract young people and families to Medicine Hat. Since 2013, across Canada, all net growth in the labour market has come from immigrants4. There is a direct correlation between attracting immigrants and workforce growth. The urban centres with the highest immigration rates have, by far, the fastest labour market growth. Medicine Hat has been attracting more immigrants in recent years, but its immigrant attraction rate is still 60% below the provincial average*.”

Immigration also has an impact on an aging/retiring entrepreneurial class in the Southeast Alberta region. Released in March 2016 and entitled **[Immigration, Business Ownership and Employment in Canada]** (Statistics Canada), the study concludes that ‘rates of private business ownership and unincorporated self-employment are higher among immigrants than among the Canadian-born population’.

https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11f0019m/11f0019m2016375-eng.htm

Immigration has other positive effects on the economy. Immigrants who gain employment are like any other citizen: They generate new consumer spending, tax revenue, as well as provide diversity to an economy that can often create new clusters of economic development.

Alberta Advantage Immigration Strategy

The UCP government held consultations this fall to help develop what’s being called the Alberta Advantage Immigration Strategy. The recently released provincial budget included $2.5 million to increase the recognition of foreign qualifications. “Alberta Labour and Immigration is developing a flexible new immigration strategy that will better reflect Alberta’s economic needs by attracting and supporting skilled newcomers to help grow the economy and fill labour and skills shortages,” Alberta Labour and Immigration press secretary Brittany Baltimore said in a statement to Global News. “We will continue to work with industry experts, businesses, municipalities and organizations to ensure new programs and initiatives are balanced and support newcomers, job creators and Albertans.”

https://globalnews.ca/news/6143152/claresholm-labour-shortage-immigration-pilot-project-alberta

The Labour and Immigration Ministry has four Outcomes listed in its Business Plan 2019–23. Number three is directly related to immigration and workforce development:

1. Alberta’s labour legislation and programs supports job creators and a thriving economy
2. Albertans have the skills demanded by Alberta’s labour market now and in the future
3. *Alberta is able to attract immigrants and retain new Albertans, resulting in a skilled, resilient and productive workforce that meets the needs of job creators*
4. Alberta has safe, fair and healthy workplaces
5. Employers and workers have access to timely, fair and independent adjudication and dispute resolution service

More info: https://www.alberta.ca/labour-and-immigration.aspx

Oil and Gas Downturn

The fact that oil and gas prices have plummeted since their highs in 2009 and 2014 is no secret. There are many reasons for this downturn, just a few are:

- The vast expansion of oil and gas production in the U.S. largely due to shale fields and fracking
- Lack of pipelines to bring product to market for refining
- The disparity between Western Canadian Select and West Texas Intermediate prices.

Figure 40

https://www.theglobeandmail.com/business/article-alberta-oil-price-collapse-raises-fears-of-economic-contagion/

The natural gas downturn has been particularly hard on Medicine Hat "The Gas City", and the surrounding region. "*By the end of 2022, 2,000 currently producing wells will be abandoned. A decrease in activity means jobs within the Natural Gas and Petroleum Resources division (NGPR) will be impacted, though it's unknown how many*."
https://chatnewstoday.ca/2019/09/11/city-of-medicine-hat-to-abandon-2000-gas-wells-by-2022/

And the expansion of gas supply and pressure on prices in the U.S. continues to increase: *"The Marcellus and Utica Shales continue to pump out the nation's largest amount of gas, with production above 30,000 million cubic feet per day. Output is expected to rise by another 353 million cubic feet per day in May 2019, according to the EIA's Drilling Productivity Report. The Permian is adding huge volumes of new supply as well, a byproduct of the oil drilling frenzy. The Permian is now the U.S.' second largest shale gas producer, expected to top 14,000 million cubic feet per day next month."* https://oilprice.com/Energy/Gas-Prices/Why-Are-Natural-Gas-Prices-Crashing.html

The trend of lower oil and gas prices isn't expected to turn around dramatically any time soon. This has had and will continue to have serious implications for the Southeast Alberta labour market.

Employer Focus on Retention

Effective Recruitment and Retention strategies are becoming equally important for organizations' success and sustainability. As one VP of a small business association stated, *"Small businesses often struggle to compete on salary and benefits but are usually rated much better on other intrinsic benefits such as flexibility, variety and scope of the work and access to decision-makers. This is the competitive edge they need to promote in hiring."* Effective retention strategies will save you time and money. According to CPHR Alberta, employee turnover is one of the most calculated and measured human resources metrics that exists today. Turnover also happens to be very expensive. According to the Spring 2017 Alberta HR Trends

"The average total cost of processing an employee turnover in the second half of 2016 was $22,600."
- CPHR Alberta

Report conducted by CPHR Alberta, the average total cost of processing an employee turnover in the second half of 2016 was $22,600. When you consider all elements that go into the cost of processing a turnover, including time of the HR team, severance, separation pay, working with recruiters and various regulatory requirements, the cost can add up quickly.

Compensation Isn't Everything

According to the Jobvite 2019 Job Seeker Nation Survey:

- Opportunity Usurps Cash: For the first time, career growth opportunities rank number one (61%) on the list of most important factors to look for a new job, surpassing compensation (57%).
- The Urban/Rural Divide in Job Seeking: 27% of rural workers are much more likely than city dwellers (17%) to believe that finding a job is much harder than last year.
- A Signed Offer Isn't Everything: About a third of job seekers have left a job in the first 90 days; many because of misaligned expectations.

> "For the first time, career growth opportunities rank number one (61%) on the list of most important factors to look for a new job, surpassing compensation (57%)."
> *- Jobvite*

The BREWD Survey as well as the Key Employer Interviews reinforced this trend, affirming that how you treat employees, flexibility and well as their opportunity for advancement are increasingly just as important as compensation level.

Remote Recruitment Technology

Virtual tradeshow events are low-cost and more effective alternatives for smaller businesses when compared to traditional physical (live) events that can be typically geared to the success of deep-pocket, larger businesses that get priority advertising and booth space.

> The U.S. virtual event market is expected to grow from $14 Billion to $18 Billion between 2018 and 2023.
> *- Market Research Media*

Virtual events can be more personal and targeted to niche markets who otherwise may feel overwhelmed in physical event environments. At a minimum, digital elements need to be incorporated into physical events so that current generations of job seekers can continue their job search process in a virtual environment following the close of the physical event.

These remote recruiting tactics are especially important for rural areas like Southeast Alberta that are looking to attract talent from abroad at a reasonable cost.

Employer Branding

"With clear signs that the competition for talent is becoming more challenging, many organizations are duly turning their attention to strengthening their employer brands", as reported by The Harvard Business Review. In addition, "*The rise of social media has made companies a great deal more transparent. People are far more likely to trust a company based on what its employees have to say than on its recruitment advertising. This means that talent attraction relies far more heavily on employee engagement and advocacy.*"

https://hbr.org/2015/05/ceos-need-to-pay-attention-to-employer-branding

The Customer Service - Employee Attraction Link

There is a strong relationship between customer service and the success of Hospitality, Service and Tourism industries. The availability and quality of labour force serving these industries are interconnected such that the customer service experience creates an impression in the minds of the buyer and their likelihood to return to the same destination and provide positive word of mouth. In essence, both the business's ability to deliver on the customer's expectation for product and service delivery, while also providing a positive customer service experience can have lasting consequences on the business and the surrounding community – and in turn on employee attraction success.

Businesses known as "great places to work" will create a natural attraction for new job candidates.

When economic conditions become more demanding, many organizations focus on cost cutting and acquiring new customers, which invariably puts the relationships with their existing customers at risk. In addition, many organizations simply don't understand the significance of customer service. This is the case despite exhaustive literature that has made the connection between service excellence, satisfaction and loyalty (for employees and customers) – and therefore profits. *

Building a strong customer service culture or mindset into the labour force and business owners not only impacts customers but increases employee satisfaction and loyalty, reducing overall turnover and improving productivity.

**Source: "Customer Service for Hospitality and Tourism", Book by Simon and Louise Hudson, Goodfellow Publishers Ltd.*

Business Environment

2019-2020 Alberta Budget

The Government of Alberta's budget was announced midway through this project, and the 2020-21 Budget will have new impacts on the City and the region next year. The 2019-2020 Alberta Budget, which plans to have the province return to a balanced budget by 2023, is reported to have impacts on the employment of public sector workers, post-secondary education costs, and maintain the lowest provincial tax rate in Canada. Preliminary implications for Medicine Hat and the region may be:

- *A potential for increased investment in Medicine Hat will be the return of the Petro-chemical Diversification Program (PDP). That fund could see companies such as Methanex, CF and CanCarb apply to the program which has previously assisted petro-chemical operations in the Industrial Heartland during two phases under the NDP government.*
- *There is no specific spending dedicated to the twinning of Provincial Highway 3 but $597 million has been budgeted for unspecified twinning and widening projects provincially between now and the 2022-23 fiscal year.*
- *Municipal funding will get a reprieve before amounts get rolled back in 2020-21 fiscal year. That year will see Municipal Sustainability Initiative (MSI) funding reduced by $94 million followed by a further $142 million in 2021-22. A new province-wide municipal funding program will be introduced for the 2022-23 fiscal year which will replace MSI, the Municipal Transportation Grant and the City Charters Fiscal Framework Act*.
https://chatnewstoday.ca/2019/10/24/budget-2019-debt-still-grows-but-path-to-balance-mapped-out/

New Southeast Alberta Investments

2017

- Renewable energy company Bluenergy Solarwind, opened its Canadian headquarters in Medicine Hat.
- Aerospace research and development company, Atlantis Research Labs, acquired Medicine Hat-based Form-Tech Machining, with plans to add 200 jobs over five years.
- Capital Power's Whitla Wind Facility, located near Bow Island, was selected in the first round of the Renewable Electricity Program. The 298-megawatt facility will cost $325 million to construct and will employ 200 workers at peak activity levels in 2018.

2018

- Travois Ale Works, one of the smallest breweries in Alberta, opened in the heart of downtown Medicine Hat.
- Cryptocurrency mining company, Hut 8, built a 42-megawatt data centre next door to the City of Medicine Hat's newly commissioned power plant. The Hut 8 data centre has resulted in 40 new technology jobs, not to mention a steady stream of revenue for the City of Medicine Hat's electric utility.
- Aurora Cannabis announced that the world's largest purpose-built cannabis production facility would be located on 71 acres of land in Box Springs Business Park. Upon completion, Medicine Hat's cannabis plant will employ more than 400 people, making it the largest private sector employer in the city. The sheer scale of the development will materially impact Medicine Hat's economy and labour market, increasing annual gross domestic product by $20 million and reducing the unemployment rate by a full percentage point. **Nov 2019 Note**: Aurora Cannabis delays construction on Medicine Hat facility. See https://calgary.ctvnews.ca/aurora-cannabis-halts-construction-on-medicine-hat-facility-1.4687841
- Notable commercial projects that broke ground in 2018 include Stringham LLP's office building on Gershaw Drive, Pilot Flying J's travel centre on the Trans-Canada, Seymour Pacific Developments' apartment complex in Southlands, the Canalta/Co-op commercial development on Strachan Road, and two new hotels located in the south end of the city.

- As the above 2018's ground breakings turn into 2019 and 2020 grand openings, labour market analysts predict 700 newly created full-time positions will become available, driving labour demand even higher.
- Shift Investments establishes presence in Medicine Hat. Shift develops industrial, retail and office real estate in the $500,000 to $10 million dollar range and beyond.

2019

- Folium Biosciences has selected Medicine Hat for its Canadian industrial hemp processing facility in the Box Springs Business Park, near Aurora Cannabis' 1.2 million square foot cannabis production facility. Investment in the Medicine Hat facility will bring approximately 250 new jobs, once it is fully operational. The new hemp processing, extraction and purification facility is expected to be operational in the third quarter of 2020.
- Renewable energy company Bluenergy Solarwind, has installed (with Terralta) and is testing a solar and wind-powered renewable energy micro-grid at Medicine Hat College.
- Cancarb expands its thermal carbon black production facility with a $40 million expansion project that will result in a 20-per-cent increase in output and the creation of nine new full time positions.
- South East Alberta has $3.5B in wind energy projects planned to come online between 2017 and 2019 representing over 1,600 megawatts of power. By using dollar figures provided by CanWEA and proposed projects provided by the Government of Alberta, Southeast Alberta wind farms could produce up to 1,500 construction jobs and over 100 permanent full-time jobs.
- Five new solar energy projects, with potential to create 270 new construction jobs, will be built near Medicine Hat (https://investmedicinehat.ca/report/five-solar-energy-projects/)
- Suncor Energy announced it would proceed with construction of the $300 million Forty Mile Wind Power project in 2020, with an expected completion date of 2021. Once complete, Forty Mile Wind Farm would generate a peak of 200 megawatts.
- A company linked to American investment guru Warren Buffett says it will break ground on a $200-million, 117.6-megawatt wind farm in southeastern Alberta next year. The Rattlesnake Ridge Wind project will be located southwest of Medicine Hat and produce enough energy to supply the equivalent of 79,000 homes, says Calgary-based BHE Canada, a subsidiary of Buffett's Berkshire Hathaway Energy.
- C&B Solar Development ULC is currently constructing a solar production site in Cypress County. The project is located along the Trans-Canada Highway northwest of Suffield. Once complete in the first quarter of 2020, the site will use over 90,000 solar modules to generate a capacity of 23 megawatts on a half-section of land. The project is expected to have a lifespan of approximately thirty years.
- Big Marble Farms will add 10 acres of vegetable greenhouse and a six megawatt (MW) cogeneration power plant to their Medicine Hat greenhouse and packhouse operations. Approximately 35 more employees will be hired due to the expansion.
- The Foremost UAS Range partnered with Canadian companies Peraton, Aerium Analytics and Canadian UAVS to form a $12.4 million Beyond Visual Line of Sight (BVLOS) Research and Development consortium called SkySensus.
- QinetiQ has been awarded a $51m contract to deliver unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) for the Canadian Armed Forces' Unmanned Aircraft Systems Program. The contract will be delivered from QinetiQ's state-of-the-art unmanned vehicle manufacturing and operational facilities in Medicine Hat.
- Construction of Masterpiece Southland Meadows Phase II is under way, adding 104,000 square feet for 81 contemporary living spaces geared towards residents who require independent living and light care services. Once complete, it will be a 255,000 square foot long-term care facility with seven levels of care ranging from independent living to dementia support.
- There are many projects happening or planned in and around Medicine Hat through private organizations or municipal government - that could mean $185 million dollars of investment and create anywhere from 380 to 560 new jobs in the city.

Sample Workforce Retention and Attraction Strategies and Tactics

Looking at the workforce retention and attraction strategies/tactics researched and employed by other communities is a useful exercise to provide perspective to the research effort in the BREWD Project.

Outlined below are four examples of workforce attraction and retention strategies, goals and tactics recommended and/or implemented in communities of comparable size to Medicine Hat. The complete list of tactics under each strategy/approach is outlined within the full reports that can be found in the provided website URLs.

Huron County

Workforce Attraction & Retention Strategy 2018-2020

Primary goal: "Add 500 people to the Huron County workforce by the end of 2018."

This strategy tackles the issue through five different approaches. Each approach is designed to dismantle the barriers and resolve the overall issue of worker shortages:

1. Prepare the community for newcomers, particularly immigrants and refugees, by: discussing the issue and solution; increasing understanding of different cultures; promoting tolerant attitudes; and preparing for an influx of new residents.
2. Attract newcomers by increasing their exposure to Huron County, including awareness about what we have to offer and making personal connections with them.
3. Support employers in their Hiring process through collaboration and dialogue as well as offering toolkits and knowledge to help them become human resource leaders in their industries.
4. Develop measures to ensure the Settlement process for newcomers is as easy as possible, particularly for recent immigrants and refugees.
5. Retain or repatriate as many residents as possible by making newcomers feel welcome, integrating them into the social fabric of the community, and understand where we can improve as a community to retain those with different cultural backgrounds.

https://www.ontarioswestcoast.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Huron-County-Workforce-Attraction-and-Retention-Strategy-2018-2020-V2-1.pdf

Kamloops

Talent Attraction and Retention Strategy – Professional Services Sector

Talent Attraction

- Use Social Media to Attract Employees
- Hire Immigrant Talent
- Create A Positive Candidate Experience
- Utilize Existing Job Boards to Extend Awareness of Job Vacancies
- Consider Underrepresented Groups
- Ask Your Staff to Help Find New Employees
- Offer Corporate Benefits and Incentives That Are Relevant to Your Workforce
- Design and Deliver A Compelling and Authentic Employer Brand That Increases Your Reputation As An Attractive Employer
- Work with Local High Schools to Create Job Opportunities for Promising Students
- Have an Attraction Strategy

Talent Retention

- Start an Employee Recognition Program
- Work with Employees to Maximize Talent Utilization
- Pair & Mentor New Staff with Existing Staff
- Introduce an Internal Career Ladder
- Consider Cultural Sensitivity
- Initiate A Volunteer Leave Policy
- Create Strong Manager-Employee Relationships
- Develop a Talent Succession Plan

http://venturekamloops.com/pdf/labour-attraction/VentureKamloops-ProfessionalServicesSector.pdf

Yukon Territory

Recruitment and Employee Retention Strategies

Recruitment Strategy Goal: Facilitate Yukon employers' ability to recruit suitable employees

Objectives

1. Increase awareness of Yukon as a desirable location to work and live.
2. Increase the return rate of Yukon students who leave for school and return back to Yukon for work.
3. Increase the recruitment of under-represented groups, such as aboriginal people, persons with disabilities, visible minorities, youth, older workers, Social Assistance recipients and women (in trades).
4. Attract people to Yukon for specialized and hard-to-fill positions.
5. Increase the employment of temporary casual workers.
6. Improve Yukon employers' access to information/tools to support their ability to recruit employees.

Employee Retention Strategy Goal: Enhance Yukon employers' ability to retain skilled employees.

Objectives

1. Increase awareness of the importance of employee retention.
2. Improve Yukon employers' access to information/tools to support their ability to retain employees
3. Increase employers' awareness of the barriers to employee retention

http://www.education.gov.yk.ca/pdf/employers/RER-strategies.pdf

Squamish

Tips for Workforce Attraction & Retention

Attraction

Develop your value proposition-- as an employer

- To remain competitive and attract the best employees, it's vital that you can differentiate what makes your company a great place to work. Just as you would optimize the value proposition of your product or service to attract customers, the same principles apply to attracting employees. Figure out your strengths and what sets you apart, as an employer, and communicate that at every possible opportunity to potential staff.
- If you've already got a great value proposition for employees, be sure to clearly communicate what that means in your recruitment campaign. Discuss your strengths, workplace culture, and any unique benefits to set your company apart. (To learn more, read this article by Go2Hr.)

Review your compensation & benefits

- As we saw earlier, compensation is one of the top considerations when candidates are comparing two job opportunities. According to advice from the Society for Human Resource Management, best practice is to review salaries every eighteen months. (Read more, here.)
- To target commuters, consider promoting the numerous financial and social benefits associated with having a job in town.

Move beyond job postings as your sole recruitment tactic

- If you're hiring for a role in the Squamish service industry, you will be facing lots of competition in job postings, and you'll be rewarded for thinking out of the box when it comes to recruitment. Consider implementing additional tactics, such as launching an employee referral program, working with a professional recruiter, partnering with education providers, joining a hiring fair, and/or leveraging the hiring support services available from Work BC Sea to Sky.

Retention

Invest in staff training

- Investing in your employees improves customer service and creates greater job satisfaction, which in turn reduces turnover and improves productivity.
- 85 percent of employees who say they are not likely to leave their job say they have training opportunities (WCC)
- 40 percent of employees who receive poor job training leave within their first year (go2hr.ca)

Create an employee onboarding program

- 69 percent of employees are more likely to be retained for three years if they went through an onboarding program. (Society for Human Resource Management)
- Create an employee onboarding program that speaks to your company's history, mission, and values, and you'll be much more likely to see your employees stay. To get started, read this article.

Focus on recognition

- Recognition has a strong positive correlation with retention. (Forbes)
- 90 percent of employees who receive recognition from their manager indicate higher levels of trust in them. (Forbes)
- Recognition can take many forms, and it doesn't have to cost money every time. Get some inspiration with this toolkit from the Society for Human Resource Management.

https://squamish.ca/business-and-development/economic-development/hire/

Future Workforce Demands

From the key employer interviews several indicators were identified as being significant as they related to future workforce demands in the Southeast Alberta region. Employers across a broad spectrum of industries mentioned the following desired skillsets for both new and current employees:

Willingness to Adapt/Learn

Many employers cited a significant change in the workplace that has and will continue to be brought on by advances in technology resulting in overall changes to the economy. This is prevalent in both skilled positions and in jobs which, in the past, have not been typically impacted by technology shifts.

The advance of technology in terms of simple things such time-keeping, work schedules and the change innovation has brought to traditional industries was indicated as a trend that will continue to influence most industries. For instance, in the trades, the installation of a fire alarm system used to be predicated on an electrician's basic knowledge of hard wiring. That electrician now has to know how that wiring integrates with the sophisticated software that runs the system. This is a simple example, but the same tenet is true for most industries based on the employer interviews. The need for employees to be constantly upgrading their skillsets is becoming increasingly prevalent in many positions. And employees must be willing to evolve with these changes to flourish in this new job market.

Workers with Technical Expertise to Facilitate New Technologies

Willingness to learn is one thing, but it has to be coupled with capability. The increased prevalence of technologies such as artificial intelligence was identified by several employers as a trend that will continue to significantly influence future labour force requirements.

The need for training and the availability of candidates capable of maintaining and operating these technologies was cited as a future concern by employers in several industries which rely heavily on manual labour. In certain industries such as agriculture and transportation, a shift is foreseen where manual labour will be replaced by new technologies. This will require the hiring of higher salaried individuals with the required skill sets to operate and maintain these new processes.

Continued Education and Continuous Learning

This is directly tied to the willingness of employees to adapt. Several employers indicated there is a need by both employees and employers to invest time and resources into continuing education as the work landscape is changed by innovation and a focus towards more sustainable practices.

Worker skills will need to adapt when new technologies render previous positions less necessary to the overall success of the company. The reliance on continued education will increase dramatically, in the view of the employers, so that workers can perform at expected levels. This can be as simple as the need for in-house training or the need to have employees attend courses at outside institutions to keep abreast of new trends.

The overall feeling among employers is a need to implement continuing education into their workforce strategies and that this practice will become significantly more important than it has been in the past.

Manual Labour Force

There is a concern that the future workforce will be less willing and/or interested in performing any type of manual labour. This is of special concern for industries and businesses where physical labour is a key component of business models that will likely remain unchanged for the foreseeable future.

There is a general sentiment among employers that new candidates are more likely to opt for similar paying positions elsewhere if the alternate position is less labour intensive. Many employers stated that it is hard to find candidates who can see the career opportunities available in more physical types of work environments and feel there may be a real crunch for skilled workers in non-white-collar industries in the near future. The concern for a lack of candidates willing to perform manual labour is especially prevalent in industries such as construction and agriculture.

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Workforce Gap Analysis

A Workforce Gap Analysis analyzes data and identifies gaps between workforce supply and demand. These analyses are best aimed when a combination of quantitative and qualitative data is utilized. Identifying what the exact gaps are per sector is almost impossible to quantify. The closest predictions can be made by assessing individual employers expected needs. However, there are several data sources we can use to develop an overall job gap analysis picture.

Government of Alberta (GOA)

The GOA creates Job market forecasts: employment prospects and the latest job market statistics provide a snapshot of the province's labour force and future outlook. This information can be viewed on the Province's Labour market Information page at : https://www.alberta.ca/job-market-forecasts.aspx#toc-1

Factors such as economic and occupational outlook, demographics and education are used to forecast future demand for occupations and supply of workers in Alberta. There are three basic tools we can use for forecasts in Southeast Alberta:

1. Occupational Demand and Supply Outlook for Alberta
2. Regional Occupational Demand Outlook for the Medicine Hat - Lethbridge Economic Region
3. Occupational Demand and Supply Outlook for Alberta

Occupational Demand and Supply Outlook for Alberta

Over the next ten years, Alberta's labour market is forecasted to grow by approximately 401,000 and a net increase of 352,000 workers is expected to join the labour force. For the coming decade, or by 2025, Alberta could experience a labour shortage of around 49,000 workers. More detailed information about the overall occupational outlook is presented in the following table.

Figure 41: Overall occupational demand and supply outlook for Alberta, 2015 - 2025

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Demand (000s)	2,301	2,312	2,349	2,401	2,452	2,498	2,541	2,581	2,622	2,662	2,702
Labour supply (000s)	2,408	2,426	2,451	2,483	2,521	2,561	2,599	2,639	2,682	2,721	2,760
Annual shortage		-6,378	12,152	19,635	12,014	6,766	4,127	1,202	-2,150	750	416
Cumulative shortage		-6,378	5,774	25,409	37,423	44,189	48,316	49,518	47,368	48,125	48,541

The most recent analysis forecasts a cumulative labour shortage in Alberta of 49,000 workers by the year 2025. The following are a few of the occupations with a forecasted labour shortage of more than 1,000 workers by 2025:

- Managers in construction and transportation (NOC A37)
- Computer and information systems professionals (NOC C07)
- Nurse supervisors and registered nurses (NOC D11)
- Medical technologists and technicians (NOC D21)
- Sales and service supervisors (NOC G01)
- Childcare and home support workers (NOC G81)
- Motor vehicle and transit drivers (NOC H71)

- Contractors, operators and supervisors in agriculture, horticulture and aquaculture (NOC I01)

Regional Occupational Demand Outlook

Current labour market information is essential to career practitioners, employers, teachers and students. This forecast highlights 140 occupations and how they are expected to grow over a five-year period. Growth areas in the region are most prominent in the fields of Health Care and the Service Industry. Trades and transportation sectors show the slowest growth. See Figure 42:

Figure 42: Occupational Demand Outlook at 3 Digit NOC-S*, 2016 - 2020			
Medicine Hat - Lethbridge Economic Region			
Occupation	**Annual average 2016-2020 Employment**	**Annual average 2016-2020 % Change**	**Above/below average growth**
Total Employment	153,520	1.60%	
D11 - Nurse supervisors and registered nurses	3,620	4.00%	Above
D31 - Assisting occupations in support of health services	3,820	3.80%	Above
E02 - Psychologists, social workers, counsellors, clergy and probation officers	2,220	3.70%	Above
E21 - Paralegals, social services and occupations in education and religion	3,500	2.90%	Above
G96 - Food counter attendants, kitchen helpers and related occupations	3,700	2.80%	Above
G41 - Chefs and cooks	2,280	2.70%	Above
B31 - Administrative and regulatory occupations	2,440	2.50%	Above
D23 - Other technical occupations in health care (except dental)	1,720	2.40%	Above
G51 - Occupations in food and beverage service	2,580	2.40%	Above
A22 - Managers in food service and accommodation	1,800	2.30%	Above
G81 - Childcare and home support workers	3,120	2.00%	Above
G93 - Cleaners	4,020	2.00%	Above
H42 - Automotive service technicians	2,120	2.00%	Above
A21 - Managers in retail trade	2,180	1.90%	Above
G01 - Sales and service supervisors	3,220	1.90%	Above
G97 - Other sales and related occupations	2,200	1.90%	Above
J17 - Machine operators workers in food, beverage tobacco processing	2,240	1.90%	Above
G21 - Retail salespersons and sales clerks	3,760	1.60%	Equal
G31 - Cashiers	2,520	1.60%	Equal
E13 - Secondary & elementary school teachers & educational counsellors	4,060	1.50%	Below
H71 - Motor vehicle and transit drivers	5,500	1.50%	Below
B57 - Recording, scheduling and distributing occupations	1,760	1.20%	Below
H32 - Metal forming, shaping and erecting trades	1,760	1.20%	Below
B01 - Auditors, accountants and investment professionals	1,860	1.10%	Below
J31 - Labourers in processing, manufacturing and utilities	1,860	1.10%	Below
I02 - Agriculture and horticulture workers	4,020	1.00%	Below
I13 - Underground miners, oil and gas drillers and related workers	2,160	1.00%	Below
B53 - Finance and insurance clerks	2,260	0.90%	Below
H01 - Contractors and supervisors, trades and related workers	3,100	0.70%	Below
H41 - Machinery and transportation equipment mechanics	2,820	0.70%	Below
I01 - Contractors, supervisors agriculture, horticulture, aquaculture	6,400	0.60%	Below
A37 - Managers in construction and transportation	1,940	0.10%	Below

H12 - Carpenters and cabinetmakers	1,460	0.10%	Below
H21 - Electrical trades and telecommunications occupations	2,080	0.10%	Below

Short-Term Employment Forecast (STEF)

The STEF provides a three-year overview of occupations expected to be in-demand during that period. This forecast examines over 450 occupations and ranks their demand prospects into these categories:

- high demand
- moderately high demand
- medium demand
- low demand

STEF does not show potential labour shortages. It only examines occupations expected to be in demand. STEF helps bridge the gap between what is happening now in Alberta's economy and the government's 10-year, long-term labour forecast, the Occupational Demand and Supply Outlook 2015-2025.

The Forecast identified six occupations that will be in high demand in the next three years:

- Retail and wholesale trade managers
- Property administrators
- Retail sales supervisors
- Food service supervisors
- Sales and account representatives - wholesale trade (non-technical)
- Machine operators, mineral and metal processing

The listing of all 450 occupations is too long for the body of this report. For the full Short-Term Employment Forecast (STEF) please visit: https://www.alberta.ca/job-market-forecasts.aspx#toc-3

BRE Survey – Labour Section

One hundred twenty-one of the 476 BRE respondents said they will be hiring in the next year.

Figure 43

Figure 44: Q35 If you answered "Increase", please estimate the # of employees that will be hired in each of these general categories:													
	1-4		**5-10**		**11-20**		**21-50**		**51-100**		**100+**		**Total**
Managers/Supervisory Staff	92%	48	6%	3	0%	0	2%	1	0%	0	0%	0	52
Professional (requiring university degree)	85%	28	12%	4	0%	0	0%	0	3%	1	0%	0	33
Technical (requiring college diploma)	75%	24	16%	5	3%	1	6%	2	0%	0	0%	0	32
Apprenticeship Trades	75%	30	13%	5	10%	4	3%	1	0%	0	0%	0	40
Clerical/Administrative Staff	94%	45	4%	2	0%	0	0%	0	2%	1	0%	0	48
Service or Production Labour (high school or less)	74%	43	12%	7	9%	5	3%	2	2%	1	0%	0	58
Other	77%	17	14%	3	0%	0	0%	0	5%	1	5%	1	22

121/476 Responded

Q83 asked “What is the single biggest barrier to your business's expansion?” A lack of qualified labour was the second most common answer after economic slowdown concerns. These concerns usually relate to attraction of new workers that are qualified in terms of education, training, and experience.

Key Employer Interviews

In general, companies within similar industries seemed to indicate similar gaps in terms of overall desired skillsets of employees.

There are two basic types of workers that employers have difficulty finding:

1. Entry Level Non-Skilled Labor
2. Workers with the Appropriate Certifications (and/or experience)

Entry Level Non-Skilled Labor

Attracting entry level workers willing to perform manual labour for minimum wage, or just above minimum wage, is a very common challenge among employers. This was most apparent in the agriculture and construction industries where retention of employees required to perform strenuous physical labour was an issue of note. The primary difficulty cited was the new competition for employees created by the recent increase in minimum wage. Workers who had previously been willing to perform more strenuous activities at a pay rate above minimum wage now have more attractive (easier) options for employment at the same pay-scale.

The increase in minimum wage has created a skill gap induced more by Provincial legislation than by market forces. Impacts have been significant for all industries requiring entry level manual labour.

Beyond the significant challenge of competing with employment opportunities which are less physically taxing, employers indicated a general lack of soft skills and 'work ethic' among new employees that is leading to difficulty with retention. An exacerbating factor with this problem was many of these workers' previous employment in positions in the Oil and Gas industry offered have significantly higher wages for entry-level positions. Similar compensation in other industries is often expected as 'the norm' among many candidates.

A significant finding among employers in agriculture was that the increase in the minimum wage along with the decreased desire to perform manual labour among young Canadians has essentially forced them to use other sources of employment almost entirely. Many greenhouses in the region almost exclusively use the Government of Canada's Foreign Workers Program for positions they claim would be almost impossible to fill with Canadian residents. Several in the agriculture industry cited that without the Foreign Workers Program they would likely be **forced to cease operations** due to the lack of a reliable stream of workers from the current Canadian-resident employment pool.

Not surprisingly, companies with higher operating margins who are able to pay slightly more than minimum wage and offer entry level employees other benefits (both monetary and otherwise) were much less concerned about attracting entry level workers and retaining them. Those employers who said they were successful in retaining entry level workers most often cited 'soft' human resource management as the key to attracting and retaining reliable workers. It was very often noted that the key to keeping workers was as simple as having good people management skills by treating their employees as "people and not workers".

Workers with Certifications

This is a broad classification that stretches over businesses across the many industries interviewed. These certifications may include journeymen certificates, Class 1 driver's licenses, college certificates, varying levels of university level degrees and, experience in the field of employment sought.

As one might expect, many employers have difficulty finding employees to fill positions that require specific technical capabilities mainly due to the size of the Medicine Hat market. This is the case across several industries and is inherent to the competition for these workers posed by the larger metropolitan centers located nearby.

The issues often cited among those seeking employees with more specialized skillsets was less about finding candidates and more about convincing them to consider Medicine Hat as a viable place to work/live. Attraction seems to be the challenge that many cite when trying to fill position with very specific expertise, unless they are able to pay a high premium for those candidates.

Organizations looking for new, skilled candidates especially have difficulty attracting younger candidates who may be seeking a different lifestyle in larger urban centers.

Finding highly specialized candidates already located in the Medicine Hat region was the **most common issue among employers, by far**. This is no surprise and is directly tied to market size. Conversely, when these companies have been able to attract these well sought after candidates, they seem to have little trouble retaining them as long as there is a good worker/job/lifestyle fit. The attraction issue, in many cases, seems to be related to the perception of Medicine Hat and the age of the candidate (young families and an older population are easier to attract/retain than young, single adults).

Potential employers often need to convince candidates that the Southeast Alberta region is a place they can see in their future. A place where their employment, their spouses, their family, and their desired lifestyle are all a fit.

Training and Service Provider Survey

Training and Service Providers commented that job seekers are having the most success finding employment in the region in the following occupations:

- Administrative positions
- Automotive service
- Class 1 truck driving (all industries, but specifically oil and gas)
- Construction
- Customer service
- Electrician
- Food services
- General labour
- Heavy equipment
- Hospitality
- Nursing (and all medical fields)
- Retail
- Service industry

Characteristics of Key Employers, Workers/Job Seekers Interviewed and Surveyed

Key Employer Interviewee Characteristics

As part of the Workforce Development portion of the BREWD Project, in-person and telephone interviews were conducted with 50 key employers in Southeast Alberta. The research team took an approach that would allow the collection of data from a broad cross-section of employers/sectors which is generally representative of industry in the region. Six main industries categories/sectors were identified as being prevalent in the area. Below is a breakdown of completed interviews in each of those categories.

Identified Target Industries and Completed Interviews:

I. Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting – 7
II. Mining, oil & gas extraction – 5
III. Construction – 13
IV. Manufacturing – 7
V. Professional, scientific and technical services – 5
VI. Wholesale/retail trade – 4
VII. Other (public administration, education, health care, arts and entertainment, etc.) - 8

Care was taken to ensure that employers of varying sizes and numbers of employees were interviewed from each of the categories. Interviews were conducted with companies that had as few as five and as many as 2,000 employees in the region. Companies of different sizes face different challenges. The varying capacities of employers interviewed allowed the research team to capture information from the a fairly representative regional sample.

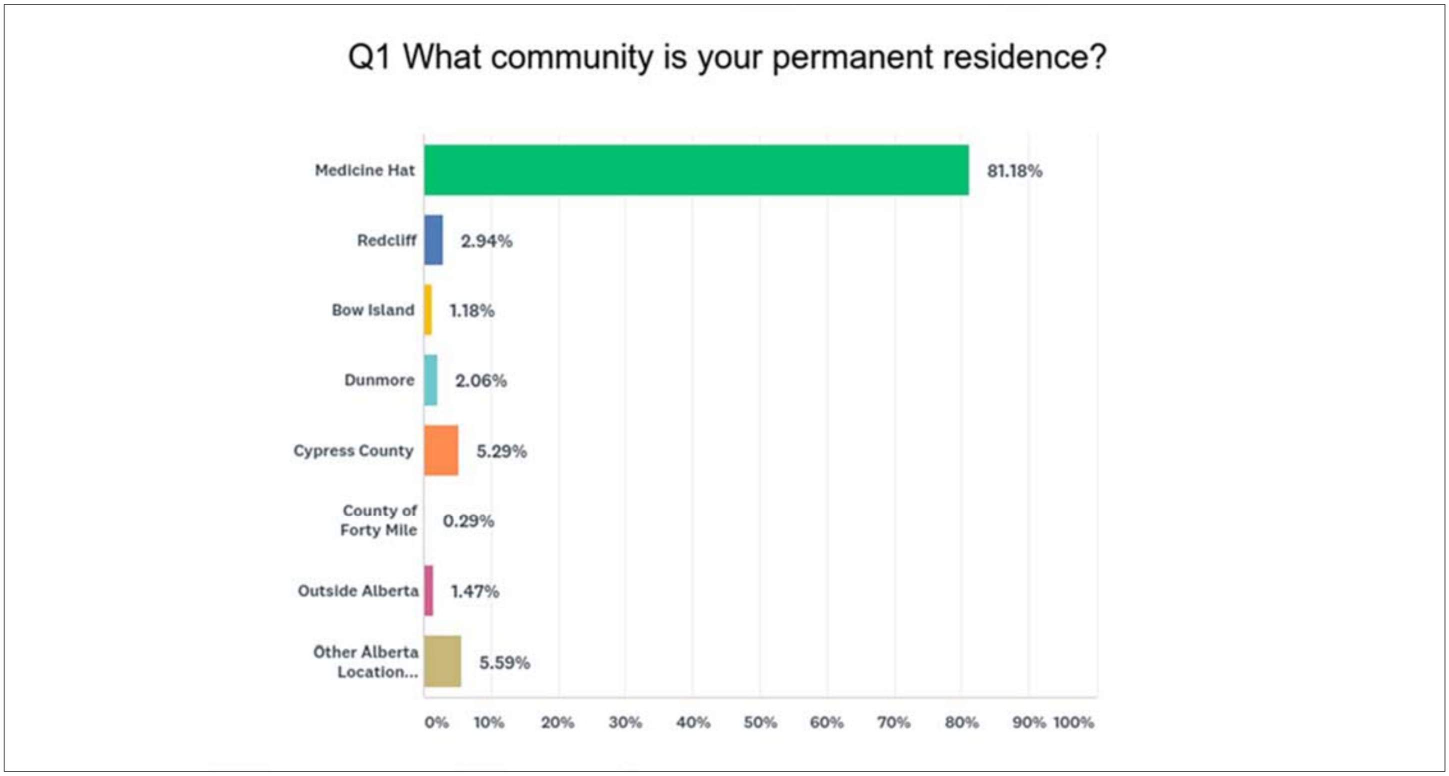
The interview participants representing the employers were typically in high level positions who are either 'in the know' with respect to the current issues with their own labour force, or, are specifically in charge of the human resources functions within their companies. Interview participants included business owners, presidents and vice presidents, CEO's, general managers, and human resource professionals.

Worker/Job Seeker Survey Characteristics

Residence

The vast majority of respondents in the Worker/Job Seeker survey were from Medicine Hat. Of the 6% that listed "Other", most were from Brooks or the Calgary area, or nearby rural locations.

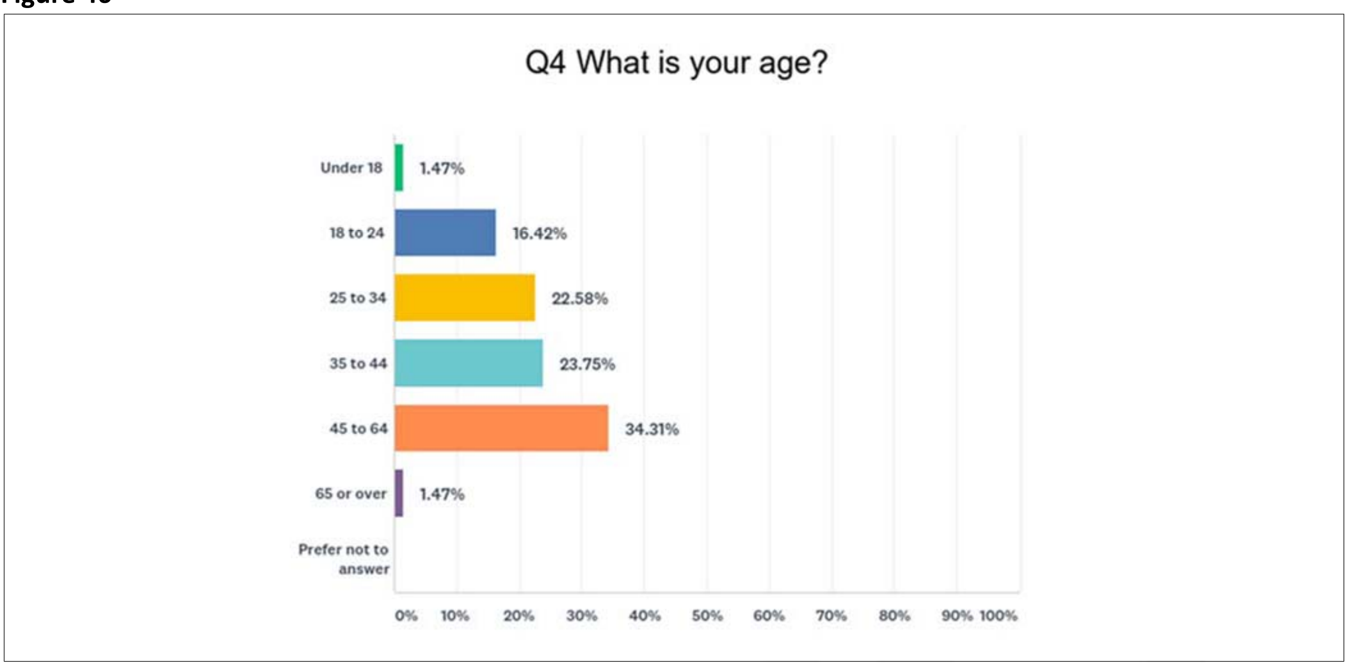
Figure 45



Age

There was a significant sample over the age of 45 – 36%. This may account for frequent survey findings regarding the age-related concerns of those seeking employment or career mobility.

Figure 46

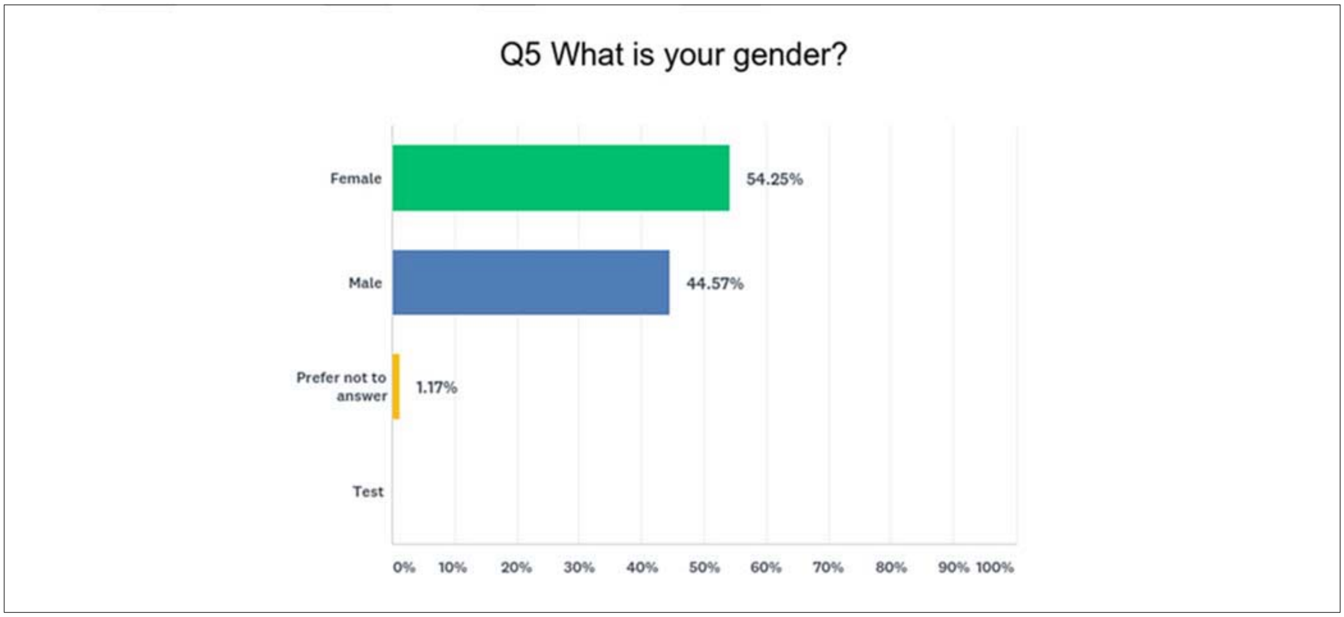


Gender

The largest group of survey respondents was from Medicine Hat at 81%, where according to the 2016 Census, the population comprised of more females - male: 30,840 (49%) and female: 32,415 (51%). Figure 47 shows more females responded to the BRE survey than males.

The “Total - Population aged 15 years and over by Labour force status” in Medicine Hat is male: 24,630 (49%), and female: 25,960 (51%). However, it should be noted that male Labour Participation Rate is 70.4%, whereas the female Participation Rate is 59.6%. This likely accounts for a male Unemployment Rate of 13.2%, but only a female Unemployment Rate of 6.5%

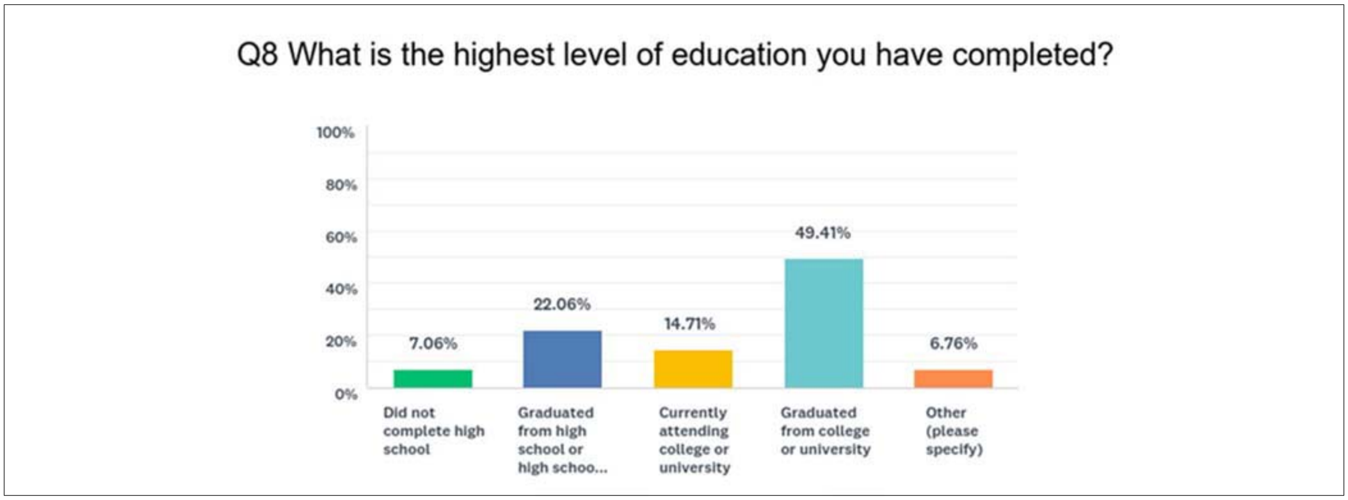
Figure 47



Education Level

As with gender, the survey sample closely mirrors the demographic makeup of the region represented in the 2016 Census as it relates to education level. In Census Division 1 AB, those with a “Postsecondary certificate; diploma or degree” were 47%, in Medicine Hat it was 48%, and in the Worker/Jobseeker Survey (the most similar category), “Graduated from college or university” was 49%.

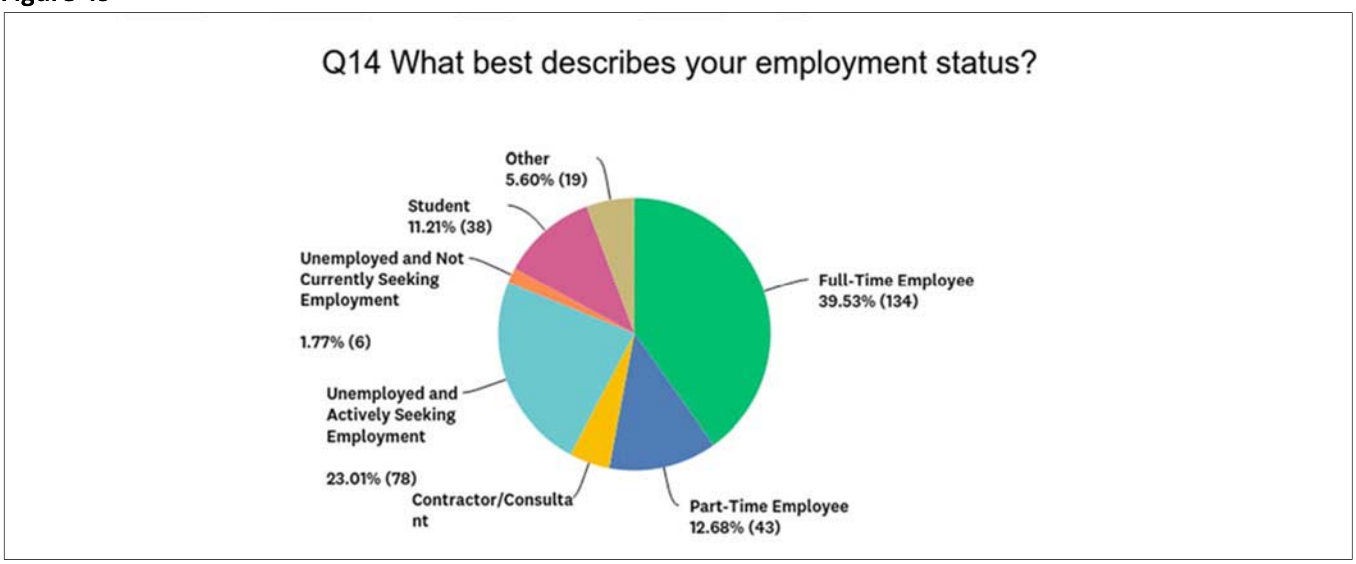
Figure 48



Employment Status

The breakdown in responses in terms of employment status verges dramatically from the actual demographics in the region. However, this is intentional. Whereas the unemployment rate in Census Division 1 AB typically fluctuates between about 7% and 10%, the survey response from unemployed or underemployed are almost 25%. Special effort was made in the survey process to capture the opinions and experiences of '**jobseekers'** in order to better address the obtain information most relevant to the study.

Figure 49



WD Strategy Areas and Potential Projects

One of the overriding goals of the BREWD project is to identify Strategic Themes supported by the project research. In turn, these themes have produced regional projects that can be carried out by local stakeholders to:

1. Enhance cooperation and consensus among business, government and economic development organizations.
2. Provide support/information to address immediate individual business issues and opportunities.
3. Encourage, support and facilitate human resource planning and labour market adjustments for the area.
4. Accurately assess needs of local businesses, including workforce challenges; develop a corresponding action plan for economic prosperity.

One of the major themes identified in almost all Workforce Development and Business Retention & Expansion research is to **improve labour force availability and qualifications through recruitment and training.**

Beyond general economic concerns, labour attraction and training issues were by far the most commonly mentioned business challenges in the BREWD survey. In addition, through the Key Employer Interviews, Worker/Jobseeker Survey, and Training/Service Provider Survey, a wide number of concerns were raised which have been categorized into four Strategic Themes. These themes (or Pillars), as they relate directly to Workforce Development are identified herein as:

- **Inform**
- **Attract**
- **Develop**
- **Retain**

Strategic Theme 5: ***INFORM (labour)***

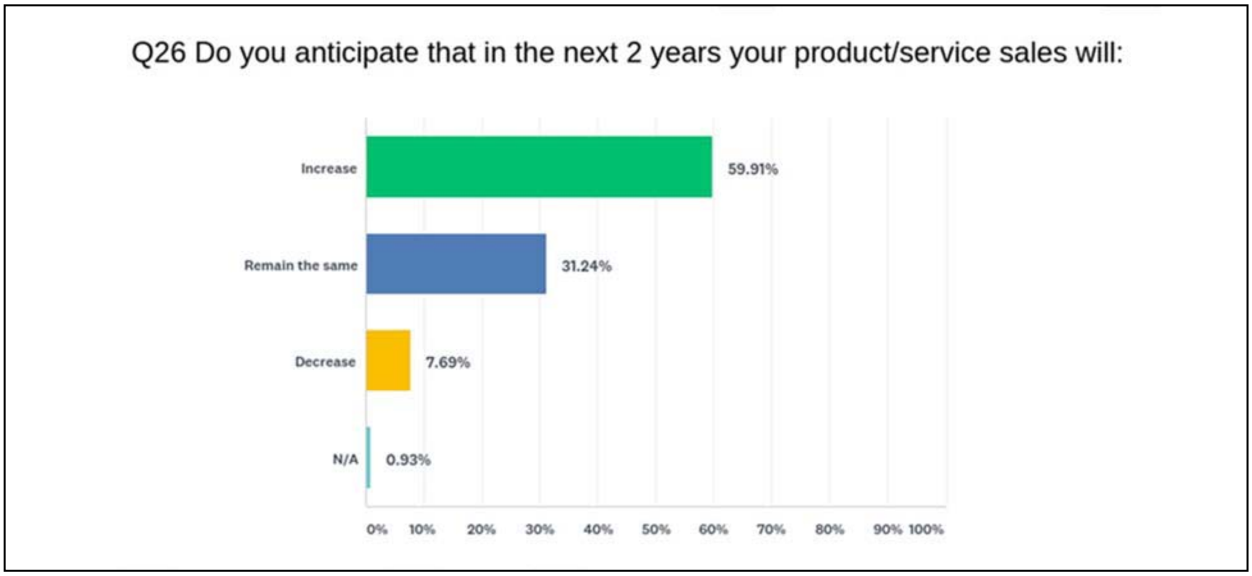
Overview of the Strategic Theme

To develop and communicate workforce information regarding education, training, careers, workplace issues, human resources, and labour market data within the region.

BRE Survey Results Related to Strategic Theme 5: INFORM

A key finding from surveys conducted with businesses is that a majority anticipate their companies will grow over the next two years. Close to 60 percent indicated that the sales of their services or products will increase while less than eight percent foresee a downturn during that time frame. It is anticipated that the foreseeable upturn in activity will likely further increase competition and demand for a sustainable work force.

Figure 50



The expectation of growth combined with worry about the economy leads to a hope that the region will engage in promotion of the community and its businesses. This is related to **Strategic Theme 1**: Encourage business development and local shopping by promoting the region and its businesses. But it also pertains to labour. "Strategic Theme Five: Inform" is largely about employers wanting the City and regional municipalities to promote the area as an excellent place to live and work. Many businesses convey the same sentiment: **'*We can promote our business as a great place to work, but it isn't our expertise to promote the community as a great place to live*.'**

Key Employer Interview Findings Related to Strategic Theme 5: INFORM

(Paraphrased employer responses presented in italics.)

Sharing Experiences

- **Work with Medicine Hat College to identify gaps missing in certain industries.**

  The brain drain is real in Medicine Hat. It would be ideal if we could turn the college into a University to keep our own kids.

  … we took it upon ourselves to look at the local colleges directly because there was no help or any assistance and we made those connections ourselves. And, the end of it we that we now have our own people teaching at the college to get an in and sort of give back. Then we pushed the initiative with the college and got our tentacles in there to groom our own workforce.

  There is not a lot of interaction with the local college. We have to do a lot of training ourselves. It would be nice if there were things such as co-op placements. If the college worked directly with employers to determine what is needed, it would be helpful. More interaction with industry would be helpful. If there was a retail program at the college, industry could work together to develop it.

Technology is changing in the trades and this will create a need for a different type of employee. There will be more need for technical expertise and technical knowledge. We need to ensure those skills are being taught here to the kids here so they stay.

- **Opportunities for employers to discuss what works and what doesn't. Potentially with seminars or functions with speakers.**

  The Chamber, Economic Development and Invest Medicine Hat and the Economic Development Alliance have brought in experts that help the business community at large. Bringing in experts in the area to show the success and get that knowledge across.

  In a general sense, we don't discuss what we do with other employers but a workshop to discuss what other companies do would be helpful as long as it is structured and not just a gripe session.

  I guess communication is really key. We need to be able to talk to others and see what the best hiring practices are for other small companies. Maybe like a seminar or meeting. I don't know.

  Sharing and brainstorming with comparable businesses and talking to other companies to learn what they are doing and what has worked. Just talking to other companies and learning their experience and seeing the employee's side of problem. Now the term brainstorming is always useful to us. We can talk to other business.

  I think the online aspect with an opportunity for leaders to get together to have a meetup group and share strategies on a personal level where we can share a glass of wine and chat about it.

Promoting the City/Region

- **Promotion of the City at job fairs and in larger market segment. Selling the City and the benefits available such as: short commutes, low cost of living, modern facilities, outdoor recreation, the weather, the sunshine, etc. Just to get the name and benefits of Medicine Hat into the discussion.**

  There is a need to continue promoting the City as a family and young person destination. One of the biggest things we see candidates impressed with is the traffic. We need to promote that.

  I guess you sell people on the lifestyle. Our taxes and housing are OK but it is the lifestyle that you need to sell. Get that information out. People see it as the Gas City. That needs to change and let people know everything is here that they need.

  …there needs to be more done to promote it as a community of choice, services, taxes, cost of living, housing costs are low, the economy of the region has not suffered nearly as much as other smaller areas. Our community is safe. There is support and services for all types of people. We have almost no homeless problem unlike most cities. The community support and programs are tremendous and there is no worry for anyone. The sense of community.

  We need an advertising campaign that puts Medicine Hat on people's map. Get the word out and let people know that this is a good place to be with a far-reaching campaign. Promote the region through an advertising campaign that can make real gains. If they don't know we're here, they're not going to come.

Centralized Information Tools

- **A central information bank for labor laws, safety regulations, changing legislation.**

  We definitely could use information on the employment standards all types of retention and HR assistance. We would utilize anything we can get. Things like occupational health and safety as well as new laws and the like.

  I don't know how many are aware of it but I receive a local labour market email from (the Province of Alberta's labour representative in Medicine Hat) and it is super helpful. If people were more aware of that it would definitely help them. I just don't know how many people are aware of it. Somehow letting companies better know that this is available to them is one thing that would help everyone.

  It would be nice to have a source or a place to keep track of changing labour laws, somewhere that had information regarding worker health and safety laws that change all the time, maybe emails about changing regulations. Employers don't know these things unless you are constantly monitoring them. If one person/entity monitored the changes and let us (the business community know) that would save a lot of time and effort for everybody.

- **A central job bank dedicated to Medicine Hat jobs and Medicine Hat regional companies. A tool and resource for employees not only to learn about the job but the company. Many had suggested something along the lines of a "Medicine Hat Indeed". It was suggested that companies provide their own profile information on the site so potential employees can learn about the company as they search.**

  It would be nice to have a forum that was local. If there was a place to know if somebody is looking for something without having to let people know we are looking. We don't even want our competitors knowing that we are hiring.

  We are more interested in people looking for us rather than us looking for the candidates. We prefer having the information available for us. If the website grouped the types of people who have specific types of skill sets, it would be very helpful. A website idea where candidates could be searched for by specific trades. If a particular refinement could be made that could be potentially easier.

  A Medicine Hat jobs website or something that could lure candidates to go to a centralized place or where, on the back side, the employers submit what they are looking for in terms of their needs and requirements. It doesn't just have to be youth employment but it would let people know where the opportunities are and let the employers get the word out there that they are hiring.

- **Human Resources 101 - small businesses need human resources information and help.**

  Large organizations are lucky to have lots of resources. Small organizations could use help with things they are unfamiliar with. Some of the things they could probably use assistance with are:
    - *job descriptions*
    - *job postings*
    - *recruitment processes*
    - *employee value propositions (what the company can offer the employee)*
    - *onboarding*
    - *succession planning*

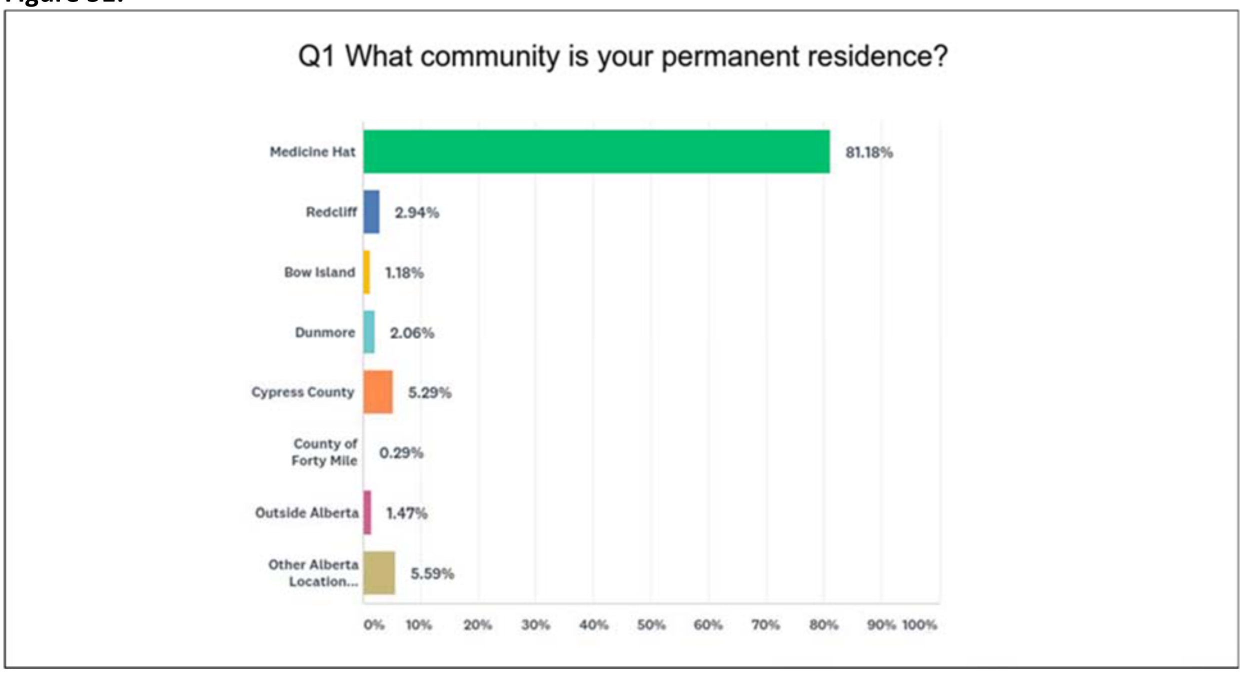
  The resources could be available to help them (SME's) know where to place jobs ads, what rules have changed. Some people don't want the stress of that. Something as simple as employee warning forms, termination procedures, how *to assess someone, the options available to them regarding the promotion, awareness of a payroll company, computer programs to help with payroll and staffing, employee awareness of happenings around town. Sometimes when you work for a small company people feel like they are missing out so maybe options to keep your employees happy.*

A portal with clickable links and a very intuitive search engine for termination letter or, recognition programs that could be implemented, information about human resources legislation and related laws. Links for how to manage job performance amidst addictions or ailments or other issues, regulations and laws about how to conduct internal investigations such as employee theft and political office turmoil and disputes. Tips on mediation and how to manage interaction among your personnel.

Worker/Jobseeker Survey Results Related to Strategic Theme 5: INFORM

A significant portion of respondents to the survey (82%) reside in Medicine Hat. However, it will be important to stay focused on the fact that the region overall will benefit from City promotion. The figure below presents the distribution of the respondents.

Figure 51:



Overall, there seems to be a willingness to learn and develop new skills to further employment opportunities among respondents to the worker/jobseeker survey. Close to 70% of respondents indicated that secondary institution education, skills courses, safety courses, online education and numerous other forms of training and development were means by which they sought to further employment opportunities. In addition, 64% of respondents have either graduated from or are currently attending university or college.

Potential Projects for Local Consideration

Theme 5 – PROJECT 1: Human Resources 101

Overview:

Over 60 percent of the businesses in the BREWD survey have 10 or fewer employees. As in the rest of Canada, small to mid-size enterprise (SME) in Southeast Alberta are vital to employment and make up the vast majority of number of companies. According to Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada, as of December 2017, there were 1.18 million employer businesses in Canada. Of these, 1.15 million (97.9%) were small businesses, 21,926 (1.9%) were medium-sized businesses and 2,939 (0.2%) were large businesses. 30% of employment comes from SMEs.

Small business owners often assume that their size absolves them of the need for a human resources team. The truth is that you will still need to carry out HR tasks no matter your size. In this sense, small businesses stand to gain as much from HR as a mid-sized or large business can.
- Microsoft Growth Centre

These SMEs generally start as single person operations or small partnerships. Human Resources (HR) Management is generally not a concern. The owner(s) of the business take on the majority of HR functions in the company. But as the company grows and adds employees or contractors, HRM grows in importance. A major issue is the vast majority of small businesses have no HMR training, let alone a human department or staff.

Human Resource Management (HRM) is probably one of the more complicated for a small business. What Is HRM? While far from an exhaustive list, these are a few HRM functions:

- Hiring
- Performance management and reviews.
- Employee development, motivation, and training.
- Safety and wellness.
- Benefits
- Communication between employees and/or management.

The challenge for Southeast Alberta businesses, as mentioned many times in the BREWD survey and interviews, is a lack of human resource information and training for SMEs. Developing a multi-pronged Human Resources 101 project for these businesses should be a high priority for Invest Southeast Alberta and all partners/leads with vested interest.

Project:

There are some existing programs, events and resources for SME to further their human resources management proficiencies. Organizations such as Being Human Services, Canadian Professional Human Resources (CPHR), and the Medicine Hat Chamber are invaluable information sources. However, what businesses state they lack is a centralized source of HRM information and training for SMEs. Here are some ideas which stemmed from the Research Review meetings:

- Work with Chamber and SME community to understating the most pressing HMR training and information needs
- Education of all the HMR functions and best practices
- Hiring best practices: places to post jobs in online format, interview protocols, background checks, etc.
- Labour relations information
- Teaching specialized HMR skills like performance reviews and exit interviews
- Extension of CPHR Sessions – allowing non-members access for non-certified members (CPHR)
- Smaller focus of specific information for HR professionals/businesses to choose – applicability to certain sectors

- Advocacy for employment standards: flexibility/information and clarification of specific employment standards
- Better availability of wage rate comparisons data – “ALIS”: (Average Salary data)
- Employer information sessions for government funded employment projects: Online information hub with all available programs for both job seekers and employers that are funded by both provincial or federal gov. E.g. Canada/AB Job Grant, Venture Canada
- Employer information on government HRM resources
- Determine communication strategy to make sure businesses have the HRM information they *need*

It should be noted that this is not a project related to recruitment tools such as job posting or job fairs. Hiring is one of the most critical HRM functions. But this project is about training SMEs in best practices and resources for hiring.

One way to look at such a project is that it needs to be business-topic driven. Or if you will, pain driven to emphasize the importance of well thought out HRM programs. The topics need to reflect the needs of business. Understanding where their “pain” is will be the first step. Showing them how a strong HRM strategy can alleviate some of the pain is the next step.

The scope, duration and location of Human Resources 101 will need to be determined. Such a program and the related information and resources may be delivered in-person, online, or a likely mix. A thorough understanding the HRM needs of small and medium sized enterprises will set the scope of this project.

Possible Project Partners / Leads:

Medicine Hat College, Chamber of Commerce, Entre Corp, CPHR Invest SE Alberta

Theme 5 – PROJECT 2: International/New Canadian Labour Program

Overview:

Newcomers to Canada and international workers are a vital resource for Canadian and Southeast Alberta employers to meet their workforce needs. Therefore, it is important to encourage newcomers to settle in the region and make it is as easy as possible to transition into new careers. Immigration offers long-term potential for growth, sustainability and economic development. Local governments that support inclusion and equity will have the best chance of attracting people who will remain there — people who will fill jobs, start new businesses, consume products and services, and keep the economy going.

> *Since 2015, more people have been leaving the workforce than entering it.*
> Government of Canada

“Canada's economic future is tied directly to our ability to successfully attract, settle, and retain immigrants and refugees. Still, newcomers face significant barriers to success and are falling behind their non-immigrant counterparts. Welcoming communities, able to provide adequate housing, accessible transit, employment, language and cultural supports and services are essential to providing every opportunity for newcomers to succeed.” – Federation of Canadian Municipalities

Project:

This might be viewed more as a campaign which will include specific projects for educating employers about the benefits, nuances, regulations and services available when hiring newcomers. Such a project would facilitate the development of this crucial manpower resource. The initiatives outlined below touch on several aspects related to educating employers. It is anticipated that collaboration of all facets of the concepts outlined below would have to be undertaken as a whole to develop a homogenous and consistent message and theme.

- Educate employers on hiring new Canadians (proposal currently being presented by Being Human Services – pending approval)
    - Highlight cultural differences, expectations, employment myths, communication basics, etc. for employers to encourage the benefits of hiring newcomers

- Global Recruitment Centre Bases - Skilled Worker Pilot Study
    - Skilled recruitment / testing of international applicants
    - Have Settlement Organizations in the community work with successful international applicants, arrival opportunities, online resources, etc.

- Reduce regulatory issues for newcomers
    - Red tape reduction for recognition of skills from other countries
    - Awareness of regulatory issues for employers
    - Support Labour Immigration Partnership
    - How can we simplify understanding regulations for employers?
    - Support transition of seasonal workers

Possible Project Partners / Leads:

Being Human Services, Medicine Hat Immigration Partnership, Chamber of Commerce, Invest Medicine Hat

Theme 5 – PROJECT 3: Business to Business (B2B) Program

Overview:

Ideas tend to flourish in a startup environment, but as companies become more established, it can be more difficult to determine what problems need to be solved next and how to develop those solutions.

One method of better assessing the broader labour situation in the region is a collaborative effort among enterprises that may be facing the same issues. The answers may already be out there.

For the purposes of the BREWD project, '*innovation'* should be viewed as inventive ways to address issues related to business and workforce needs.

Companies make the mistake of thinking that innovation is something they must do alone, but often the ideas generated internally are too narrow in focus to be truly innovative. Innovation isn't just problem solving or building a better mousetrap; it requires a broader perspective. Sharing data is about finding the challenges partners can tackle together—a key step to unlocking innovation.

Harvard Business Review

Project:

Knowledge sharing by enterprises facing the similar issues is likely to foster improvement for the overall business environment. Therefore, it was deemed important to look into developing more formal ways for businesses within the region to work in concert by sharing ideas and collectively addressing (and solving) issues they face. A business to business program could incorporate some of the ideas fleshed out at the Research Review Meetings as outlined below.

- Peer education regarding grant, processes i.e. productivity
- Change of attitude, not so protective of knowledge – business are not necessarily just competitors
- Utilizing existing systems that exist
- Encourage business to engage one another

- Establish industry-specific peer groups – peer knowledge and sharing
- Industry Led Panels
    - More industry led panels – voice to multiple business. More people at the table (different demographics)
    - More collaboration – what do we have, what do we need, GAP analysis and solutions.

Possible Project Partners / Leads:

Industry Associations, GOA, City of Medicine Hat, Chamber of Commerce

Theme 5 – PROJECT 4: Rethinking the Career Fair/Job Expo Experience

A common refrain from employers during interviews was that there is not enough direct connection between local employers and local job seekers in the marketplace. In particular, a common thought was that the younger labour force was a.) unaware of opportunities in the local job market and b.) it is difficult to get this information out to the labour market. Another common feeling amongst employers was that the biggest things lacking from candidates new to the labour force (across all sectors) were soft skills – general life and interpersonal skills.

According to an analysis of the 2018 campus recruiting season by talent acquisition technology firm Oleeo (USA), on-campus events and career fairs ranked behind only employer websites among the top ways students learn about job opportunities.
- Talentculture.com

Job fairs can be a sensible approach to addressing issues that are particularly prevalent in smaller cities like Medicine Hat where there may be a perception that desirable career opportunities are less available than they actually are. In addition, such events can allow industry to directly connect with educators to help ensure the opportunities and the gaps can be communicated on a more direct level.

Typically, job expositions have included employment agencies, educational institutions, product placement, and community stakeholders who share information, network, and promote their brand. As such, the common career fair today is sometimes a letdown for both job seekers and the employers in attendance looking to hire (The Career Foundation). For employers, the prospective applicants are so varied in their skill sets and career trajectories, it would hardly seem worth their time and cost to attend. However, one unique approach is to *group* the career opportunities by sector as a means of focusing on the types of candidates sought with a unified message.

In addition to rethinking the messaging exchanged at career fairs, there is a trend to hold 'less traditional' events which seem to resonate better with a younger demographic and provide a broader reach. This may be an effective way for Southeast Alberta employers to reach out to a broader labour market than those already located or looking to locate in the region. Virtual job fairs allow employers to interview groups of candidates from multiple campuses/or physical locations simultaneously over the internet. This can help employers from limiting themselves to only local candidates by allowing access to a much wider pool of talent.

Project:

The Career Development Fair / Job Exposition project would focus on the specific labour gaps facing Southeast Alberta. Several initiatives were suggested by regional stakeholders at the Research Review Meeting. There seems to be an opportunity to amalgamate some of the issues identified as pressing in the region. Suggestions included:

- 4 days of activities: job fair, decision making, data, transferrable skills awareness, automation awareness
- An effort to really understand what's going on in the labour market
- Examining factors relevant to workers' career choices

- Panel of employers - job seekers can ask questions
- Focus on transferable skills for oil and gas workers, mature workers, youth
- Make part of it an emerging industry career fair
- Technology, automation, transferable skills are important
- Encourage employers to participate in small communities like Bow Island, Suffield (i.e. Wind farms)

Possible Project Partners / Leads:

Medicine Hat College, high schools/junior highs, GOA, City of Medicine Hat, service providers, industry, Chamber of Commerce

Theme 5 – PROJECT 5: Centralized Internet Career Platform

Overview:

During in-depth interviews conducted as part of this study, the concept of a local/regional job website was a common topic of discussion. Interviewees discussed a central job bank dedicated to Medicine Hat area jobs and Medicine Hat area companies. It is felt there is a need for a tool where employees not only learn about the job but the company as well. Many suggested a platform along the line of a "Medicine Hat Indeed". It was suggested that companies have their own profile information on the site so employees can learn about the company as they search.

"…something that could lure candidates to go to a centralized place or, where on the back-side, the employers submit what they are looking at in terms of their own needs…"
- MH business owner

In addition to acting as an online career repository where local businesses can get there information out, such a website may work in conjunction with another web-platform which was frequently discussed during the initial research phase of this study. Many employers cited a need for a resource that they could point a candidate towards which shows them what it is like to move to Medicine Hat and the benefits the region offers.

Project:

The project would be development of a regional career website which could list positions available as well as allow job seekers to search for careers by type, and become aware of what regional companies have to offer. In addition, employers felt it would be beneficial to have the means to search for candidates (whether currently employed or not) for positions they may be looking to fill. The project of developing a job regional internet career platform will be a considerable under-taking. Some of the ideas, concepts and thoughts about the key facets of such a platform were discussed at the Research Review Meetings and are outlined below. These are provided here as a basis for beginning discussions related to this project.

- Information Repository Website (One place to find critical information)
- Staffing Agencies are expensive, could we create a forum for employees looking for people and people looking for work
- Funding to sustain – who will maintain it?
- A portal where sites are linked
- Mapping opportunities to suit users – including a link on main websites to steer people to correct areas of information
- Central area where all the jobs are posted, and job seekers (marginally employed as well)
    - Issue is there are too many outlets and currently not centralized
    - Employers cannot customize job opportunities and responsibility
- Tool Kit for Businesses – 'how to' inform on Social Media

- Incentive programs to entice skilled knowledge workers to MH. Employee recruitment
- Consolidated training calendar: On line calendar that includes all training for businesses
- Algorithm software that matchmaking jobs to potential employees
    - Pool driven specific job bank that would be area only (e.g. Region/municipality) that draws/pulls from potential job seeker
- A Match.com-like Website: to enter your personal information to match you to a person or organization that can help you find out whether MH has all the attractions you may be looking for in a City. (e.g. family of 5, interested in skiing, volleyball and volunteering with local not-for-profits, professional safety advisor and nurse, children aged 5, 8, 13…. Etc.)

Possible Project Partners / Leads:

City of Medicine, industry advisors, GOA, Consultants

Theme 5 – PROJECT 6: Experiential Initiatives for Medicine Hat College <u>AND</u> High School Students

Overview:

Experiential Learning is a collaborative approach to teaching that benefits not only the student/worker but also the community in which the learning takes place. Communities, industry, government and educational institutions can engage with modern life in the classroom and as it is reflected in the workplace. As a community learns together through action and reflection, the way processes are thought of change and development and understanding can then take hold.

> *"Proponents of experiential learning say that it helps to motivate learners because it involves them more deeply and extensively in the learning process: rather than being passive recipients of a "product" that the instructor is delivering, they actively engage with the content, the instructor, their peers, and themselves in an ongoing process of meaningful discovery."*
> University of Waterloo

During the Research Review Meetings, the most common ideas with respect to the Inform theme was the concept of collaborative efforts between industry and education to better ready students for the workplace. All groups at the round table discussions discussed some sort of learning at the workplace for students to get hands-on training in co-op or apprenticeship/internship type programs. These topics were also a common topic of conversation when interviewing regional employers.

Project:

This project is broad reaching and will require the fostering of closer partnerships between educational institutions and industry. The following are some of the possible project inclusions discussed at the Research Review Meetings:

- Bringing Work to Life - CO-OP and Internship Programs
    - Classroom learning
    - Integrated work learning
    - Co-op/Internship/ Apprenticeship
    - Engage Medicine Hat and region to participate in continuation of Co-op programs
    - Develop/Extend Co-op Programming
    - Coordinated Co-op placement

- Development of internship programs for industries with anticipated shortages

- Develop a comprehensive internship program where employers can take on youth for internships related to areas of shortage
- Set up specific skills expectations for participants

- Job Sharing
  - Mentor youth to build capacity and address the age issue
  - Junior achievement programs
  - Make it so that all youth, both at MHC and in high school, have the opportunity to gain hands on experience

- Help Develop Soft Skills (communication, interpersonal, professionalism)

- Career Awareness for Both Students and Workforce
  - Career Fit
  - Workplace mentorship – yearly summits – teaching – support – apprenticeship models
  - Career management assistance for transferable skills

- Inform employers and work more closely with Saamis & other programs – 'fast-track training'

Possible Project Partners / Leads:

Medicine Hat College, Industry, GOA, local high schools

Theme 5 – PROJECT 7: Community-Based Experiential Learning

Overview:

As discussed earlier in this section, experiential learning need not be limited to a collaboration between educators and employers in getting students ready for the workplace. If the community at large also becomes involved in the experiential learning process, everyone in the community has the opportunity to benefit.

Project(s):

Several components of experiential learning were discussed where the community at-large becomes involved to enhance work and life opportunities for locals and those new to the community. The collection of ideas listed below is rather diverse, yet similar in that they are not strictly limited to partnerships with industry and educators. Therefore, they are delineated as potential experiential learning sub-projects which are community-based.

Project

- Virtual Reality Experiences simulating the workplace and the community
  - Providing real world experiences to job seekers and youth
  - Include facilities, parks, schools, communities to really show what Medicine Hat is all about instead of just words on a page

Project

- Welcome Centre – for everyone new to community
  - Network opportunities, personal, work, childcare, community engagement

Project

- Train the Trainer / Job Shadow Program
    - Protect the volunteer / prospective employee from WCB claims

Project

- Simulation Experiences
    - Develop a simulation environment common for regional employers to use to train their employees / develop skills

Possible Project Partners / Leads:

Medicine Hat College, Tourism Medicine Hat, Library, Medicine Hat Immigration Partnership, Industry, City of Medicine Hat, GOA

Strategic Theme 6: *ATTRACT* (*labour*)

Overview of the Strategic Theme

Identify strategies and tactics to attract new labour including focusing on immigration, mobility and attracting workers both skilled and unskilled from outside the region.

BRE Survey Results Related to Strategic Theme 6: ATTRACT

In keeping with the anticipation that the demand for sales and services will increase over the next two years, employees also feel there will a need to increase the number of workers they employ over the next 12 months. Almost 30 percent of respondent indicated they were likely to need more employees over the next year compared to only seven percent feeling their employee requirements would decrease.

Figure 52

As indicated above, a significant portion of employers anticipate the need to expand their workforce. The BRE survey sought information from a broad range of employers and there are anticipated difficulties in attracting candidates across a broad spectrum of skills. The results below do not highlight any one specific skill set or proficiency that is in considerable demand compared to another. For those experiencing challenges in recruiting and hiring, the challenges seem to be across a broad spectrum of workers.

Figure 53: Q37 Are you currently experiencing any challenges RECRUITING/HIRING workers in these general categories?	
No	51.72%
Apprenticeship Trades	14.46%
Service or Production Labour (high school or less)	13.97%
Managers/Supervisory Staff	11.27%
Technical (requiring college diploma)	10.78%
Other (please specify)	10.05%
Professional (requiring university degree)	9.31%
Clerical/Administrative Staff	6.86%

Key Employer Interview Findings Related to Strategic Theme 6: ATTRACT

(Paraphrased employer responses presented in italics.)

Disseminate Information

- **The City needs to get the word out about Medicine Hat on a broader level. There is a pervasive feeling the City is under-recognized.**

  I think it is just working with the private sector to determine what is coming and honestly having a reasonable tax structure to give people an opportunity to move here and to be honest…..KEEP doing what you are doing as a City in term of growing the business community. And the City needs to be marketed differently. This place is an afterthought for most people. It needs to be sold as a place to live.

  If there was a one stop shop on the internet with all of the information that people need, that would be ideal.

  There are pieces that can attract employees and promote the employment opportunities that tie in with the lifestyle that we have here. When we recruit, we need to have something that interests the spouse and what is there for them to do. What jobs are available for them but beyond that, what outside activities are there?

  If the City were to advertise more on what we have to offer then maybe people would not forget about us. You don't hear much about us when you are outside of the City.

- **Many cited the need for a resource they could direct a candidate to that shows them what it is like to move to Medicine Hat an what the City offers new inhabitants specifically.**

  The question is how do you get the info to the candidates of all the benefits of living in Medicine Hat. We need a promotion package we can send or a website we can point people to look at and see that we are a place to come to. It needs to stand alone and address "WHY MEDICINE HAT?".

  A site promoting the City as a great place to live. You have the interview and then we point you to the site. It's like having an interview with Medicine Hat.

  A database of people looking for jobs might be helpful so that people can see who is out there locally. I have no idea who is here locally. When I post on Indeed, I get a million responses but don't want to sift through them. If I had somewhere to go to look and see who is available that would be ideal.

  There is a pretty big misconception about what is available to young people and families. Maybe it's out there and I don't know it. How can we let people know the happenings available to the outside community when we don't even know ourselves? A resource where you go to look at all the things available would help.

- **Social media was most often cited as the way to attract youth. Broader, traditional advertising means are too segmented and not aimed at a youthful market.**

A promotional campaign is integral and the most common promotions right now are through social media. A website is good. But you have to get them to look at the website. You also have to have the support of government and they need to be partners in developing the campaign and allowing business to grow.

You've got to rule out advertising in the traditional sense. Kids don't pay attention to it. So, no matter the company, that's going to be what's next to find people. You have to go into social media and it is definitely the trend of advertising to move away from traditional avenues.

Traditional newsprint and traditional means are not effective anymore. Especially in our industry (information technology). There would have to be targeted social media campaigns. I don't know if anything other than what comes to mind. Social media is just now burgeoning and new means of attracting qualified personnel is the way to go.

Nurture Growth

- **Make new business development and growth more attractive will create more opportunities – if there are jobs, people will come.**

  We can't keep poaching each other, we need to work together to raise the bar and that is mostly going to happen with outside labour attraction. Attracting people from outside of the region.

  We need the high-end jobs and then maybe their kids or spouses might be interested in coming and that would create more jobs for everybody. It would start with construction workers and work its way through the economy.

  The biggest thing is it comes down to politically; the City should have more focus on existing businesses and keeping things local. The biggest thing is keeping industry flowing. There are quite a few people focusing on the area as a good place to be. If we help current industry thrive, it will create more jobs. If we create more jobs, more people will come.

  Bringing back the industry that has left would be key. There was a lot of oil money that left. It was not just the downturn. There need to be more diversity and the focus on bringing more business into the community and once that is done, I think the labour force will follow.

- **Ambassadors program to show prospective employee and employers around town.**

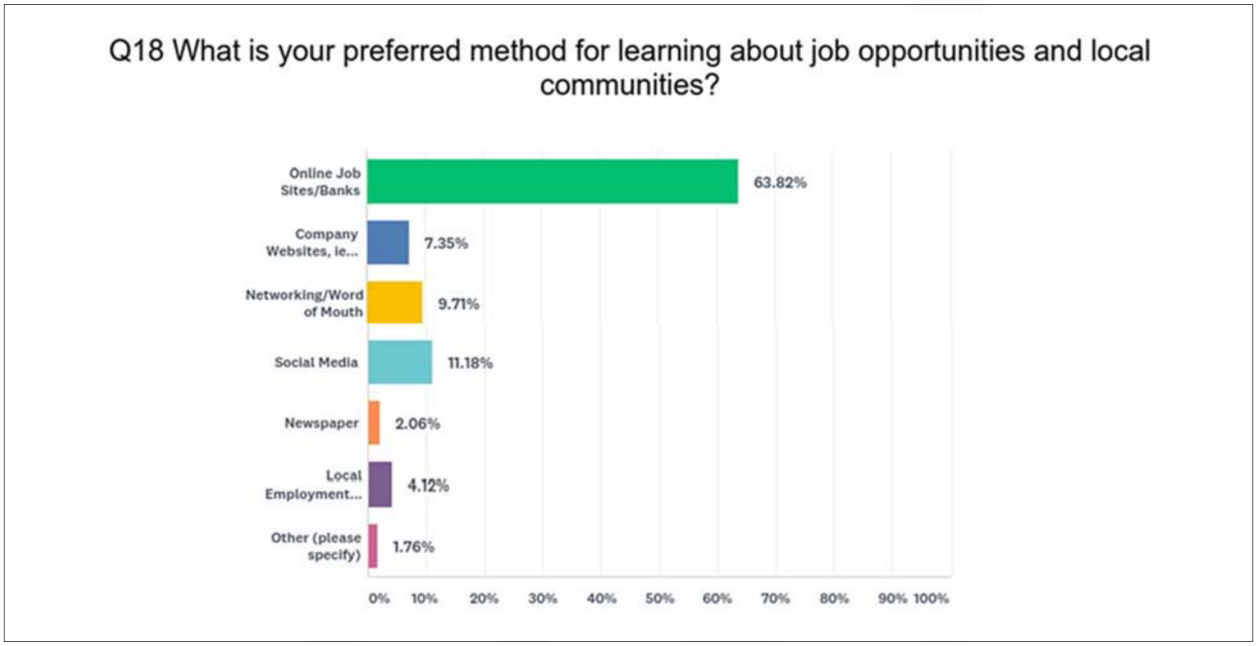
  One issue is attracting highly skilled people to the area. Finding the people with the skills is not the issue. It's attracting them to the area that is the problem. The City used to have a physician attraction program where which would connect the candidates to local schools and recreation to help show them the City. I believe they (I may be mistaken) were shown around the City as well and the spouses were an integral part as well.

  What we have found is when we recruit for higher level positions from elsewhere it can help if we give a tour of the area to show them the Medicine Hat experience in a way that they know what is available before they even get here. Then we sell them on the area and the company. If the City did something like that, I don't know how it would work but that could sell the idea that it is a great place. I don't know how that would work on a larger scale.

Worker/Jobseeker Survey Results Related to Strategic Theme 6: ATTRACT

Not surprisingly, more traditional forms of learning about job opportunities such as newspapers and employment agencies are seldom utilized with 64% of respondents indicating their primary means of searching for opportunities is through online job sites or banks. It should be noted that a significant portion of respondents (11%) indicated that they used social media as their primary means. Furthermore, 82% of respondents use the internet as their primary search method when company websites are included with the two aforementioned means.

Figure 54



Potential Projects for Local Consideration

Theme 6 – PROJECT 1: International Student Attraction Initiative

Overview:

Canada is now the world's third-leading destination for international students, with 642,000 foreign students. Canada has moved into third place globally behind the United States of America and Australia. According to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) data, Canada's international student population grew by 13 per cent in 2019 compared to the previous year, marking yet another year of double-digit growth. Overall, 404,000 international students saw their study permits take effect in 2019.

> Some 60 % of international students have also reported to CBIE that they are interested in becoming permanent residents of Canada after their studies.
> - Canadian Bureau for International Education

According to the Canadian Bureau for International Education, Canada's international student population has grown six-fold over the past 20 years. In the last decade alone, it has tripled.

Canada's growth is being fueled by the rise in the global middle-class population, with more students looking to pursue educational, and in some cases, immigration opportunities overseas. According to UNESCO, there are now over five million international students globally, compared with around two million in the year 2000.

Project:

Like many Canadian colleges and universities, institutions such as Medicine Hat College recruit international students. Growth among the main cohort of *Canadian-born* students entering colleges and universities (individuals between the ages of 18-24) has stagnated over the last decade due to Canada's low birth rate.

Participants at the Research Review Meeting indicated that Medicine Hat College likely already does some international recruitment but that perhaps a student attraction initiative might also fall under the purview of Invest Southeast Alberta working in conjunction with the College. The initiatives considered included:

- Medicine Hat College information distribution
- Market the region's affordable cost of living and quality of life
- Research other successful post-secondary international student attraction programs

Possible Project Partners / Leads:

Medicine Hat College, Invest Southeast Alberta, Training and Support Providers

Theme 6 – PROJECT 2: Spousal Employment Young Family Recruitment Initiative

Overview:

During both the one-on-one interviews and the Research Review Meetings, a common discussion point was the importance of the spouses of potential job candidates. It was mentioned many times that potential employers have difficulty recruiting from outside of the Medicine Hat area but the issue often has more to do with being able to find suitable job opportunities for the spouses of job candidates. Some cited that even when the candidate was perhaps willing move to Medicine Hat, the lack of opportunities for spouses, or at least the lack of knowledge of opportunities, was the deciding factor in candidates not choosing the region as a place for employment.

Similar issues are prevalent with the recruitment of candidates with young families. Both of these issues have considerable overlap.

Project:

This project may have a primary focus on the employment opportunities available for the spouses of regional candidates and it was suggested that a network of larger regional employers may be the group to facilitates this project. However, it was also indicated that other issues such and schooling and quality of life were also informational pieces sought by spouses. The project may include some of the following elements:

- Research on how to attract two people with careers to Southeast Alberta
- How to show candidates and their spouses' opportunities in their fields
- Networking opportunities with human resource professionals to facilitate conversations
- Human resources and realtor mixers
- Assessing the difficulties of attracting two-income families

- If recruiting a family – assisting the partner to find employment.

Following are some of the initiative discussed during the Research Review Meetings that are similar in scope to meeting the needs of spouses. However, these are more closely related to the meeting the needs of young families.

- Differentiate Medicine Hat from other small communities to entice young families to settle here
- Need midlevel, good paying jobs – not just minimum wage.
- Help connect other family members to their interests (ex: schools, leisure opportunities)
- Promote childcare options
- Promote housing options
- Promoting school systems.
- Promote facilities for youth (Riverside Waterslide, Movie Mill, indoor mini-golf, laser tag etc.)

Possible Project Partners / Leads:

.

- City of Medicine Hat, local industries, human resource associations, Tourism Medicine Hat

Theme 6 – PROJECT 3: Welcoming Community Strategy

Overview

Communities across Canada are working hard to welcome newcomers by creating communities that:

- encourage all residents to participate fully in the social, cultural and economic life of the region, without discrimination
- ensure people are open to new ideas and customs and recognize the contributions that newcomers make
- support diversity and respect differences in race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, abilities and beliefs—this means more than simple tolerance - it means embracing and celebrating the whole community

Since 2015, Canada has had more people leaving the workforce than entering it.
https://www150.statcan.gc.ca

Immigration offers long-term potential for growth, sustainability and economic development. Local governments that support inclusion and equity will have the best chance of attracting people who will remain there—people who will fill jobs, start new businesses, consume products and services, and keep their economies going.

Project:

It is anticipated that this project starts with a strategy to build an overreaching plan on how to create a more welcoming community. Such a strategy might turn into a broader reaching initiative, or it may encompass smaller initiatives that foster a welcoming culture.

Concepts considered at the Research Review Meetings included, but were not limited, to the following:

- Pooling advertising/needs to attract workers
- Pool resources to bring together employers that have the same workforce challenges
- Integration of workers and families (People) into the community
- Learn how to economically integrate newcomers into the community
- Welcome Wagon approach: for employers to provide employees

- Information toolkit approach for newcomers to Medicine Hat
- “Support Inclusion” marketing campaign
- Promotion of a community inclusion message
- Community inclusion events – cultural integration/awareness
- Cultural training for employers/employees

Possible Project Partners / Leads:

Medicine Hat Local Immigration Partnership, Tourism Medicine Hat, City of Medicine Hat, Saamis Immigration Services, Entre-Corp

Theme 6 – PROJECT 4: Train the Recruiters Campaign

Overview:

A campaign to train recruiters on how to best promote the region was considered by several groups at the Research Review Meetings. It was felt that some who recruit for positions for either are unaware of what Medicine Hat and the region may have to offer, or do not have the resources to adequately get this information to potential employment candidates. Furthermore, the human resources operations of some companies are not located in the Southeast Alberta region and have less knowledge of the many offerings in the region beyond the job opportunity itself.

Project:

The dissemination of information to specific recruiters or employment agencies would need to be concise and coordinated so as not to overwhelm, yet get the desired information out into the market. Several factors would have to be considered in the development of the campaign. Factors arising out of the Research Review discussions included:

- The need to train recruiters (including those at a distance)
- Consistent messaging and marketing our region/community
- Attract as a whole community, rather than each individual business
- Updated marketing of our community and region through a planned campaign highlighting all industries and quality of life offered here
- Acknowledge the head offices for many companies are not located in Medicine Hat
- Landing page of all recruitment resources. Utilization of and Invest MH website - split Investor & talent attraction
    - Easy Move Toolkit/Lifestyle promotion
        - Promote different amenities and lifestyle available in the communities
        - Housing, culture, education, taxes, utilities, recreation, etc.
        - Include a city wide – Live Work Play video

Possible Project Partners / Leads:

Invest Medicine Hat, Invest Southeast Alberta, Tourism Medicine Hat, Entre-Corp

Theme 6 – PROJECT 5: Social Media Campaign

Overview:

Social media has become a vital tool for sourcing and recruiting the best candidates. Recruiters use social media to conduct background checks among potential hires and confirm their qualifications for a position. Additionally, candidates are increasingly getting information about employment opportunities through social media. This is especially the case with candidates under the age of 30 but is also now much more prevalent among all age groups.

Cost effective and incredibly intuitive as a recruitment tool, social media allows a company's human resources team to engage with a wider audience, target a quality pool of candidates and improve on the effectiveness of their recruitment efforts
www.jobcast.net

Of course, social media itself is also powerful tool for promoting a community as well, with Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn all offering different features and allowing reach to different demographics. Social media posts can help generate a much broader type of recognition through the utilization of advertisements and sponsored posts on these platforms.

Using features available across different platforms, allows the targeting of very specific groups, based on their interests, location, gender, places they have visited, their browsing history, and more. You can also use social networking sites to get creative with competitions or quizzes, in order to generate personal engagement.

Project:

This project would likely involve the creation of a strategy of promoting the City to pre-identified groups whether they be newly graduating students, candidates from a specific industry, a particular age demographic, families, a specific country or region, etc. Such specific targeting is a powerful tool in getting information to a desired audience. The following tactics were considered at the Research Review Meeting:

- Social Media Strategy/Social Media Campaign
- Use community influencers to entice people to come to Medicine Hat
- Pay youth influencers for promotion on social media
- Directed marketing
- Research other successful community talent attraction social media campaigns
- Look at existing attraction tools by social media companies like LinkedIn

Possible Project Partners / Leads:

City of Medicine Hat, Chamber of Commerce, Tourism Medicine Hat

Theme 6 – PROJECT 6: Job Fairs/Active Recruitment in Other Communities

Overview:

There was a sentiment at the Research Review Meetings that the region is underrepresented at trade fairs or shows in larger metropolitan centers. It was suggested that perhaps there is a need for a greater presence at these types of shows or exhibitions to ensure that the City of Medicine Hat and the region is effectively promoted as a place to live and work.

Project:

This project was only loosely discussed at the Research Review Meetings and the scope and breadth of such an initiative can be wide-ranging. The concept would need to be fleshed out to determine what specific aspects of promoting the region in other communities would be both most effective and efficient given limited resources. Some of the ideas discussed which might be expanded upon include:

- Awareness / Recruitment / FAM tours
- Bussing in youth from other cities to meet with local employers and see the community
- Bussing in potential candidates from other cities to meet with local employers and see the community
- Having Esplanade/Canalta Centre ask talent to do a promo message for the region
- Attending job fairs in other cities
- City booth focused on attracting employees

Possible Project Partners / Leads:

City of Medicine Hat, Chamber of Commerce

Theme 6 – PROJECT 7: Bussing - Medicine Hat to Redcliff/Other Communities

Overview:

A long running issue with respect to ensuring employees have sufficient access to employment opportunities in the neighbouring communities of Redcliff and Medicine Hat has been transportation. The lack of a public transportation systems between the two communities is a well-known issue that often limits both employers and employees.

Project:

It is debatable whether this transportation issue belongs in the 'Attract' theme even though the topic was raised during the Attract portion of the Research Review Meetings. The focus in this Strategic Theme is on attracting workers from outside the region. However, if there is a labour pool inside the region that is unable to work due to transportation issues, it becomes a workforce attraction issue impacting commerce between the municipalities.

The project would likely be twofold:

- Identify the scope of the transportation issues in Southeast Alberta communities
- Sourcing public and private solutions to solve the issue

Efforts by Invest Southeast Alberta to address this issue are currently under way.

Possible Project Partners / Leads:

Invest Southeast Alberta, City of Medicine Hat, Town of Redcliff

Strategic Theme 7: ***<u>DEVELOP (labour)</u>***

Overview of the Strategic Theme

Focus on education, training and developing the skills and knowledge of all current and potential workers within the region

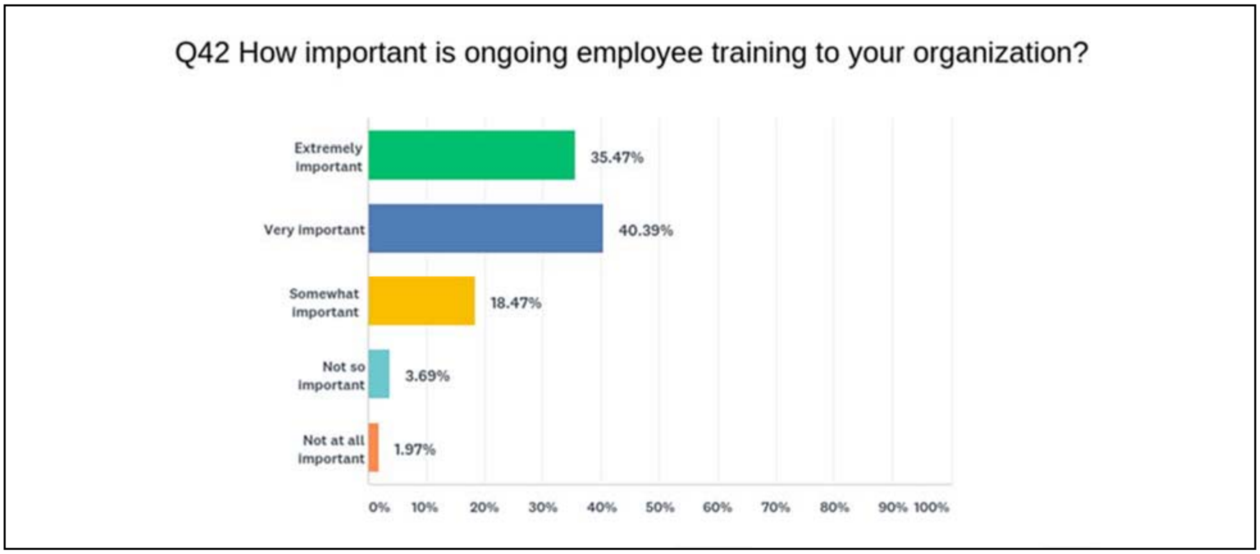
BRE Survey Results Related to Strategic Theme 7: DEVELOP

Employers indicated several reasons that positions were difficult to fill. Some of the most commonly cited reasons were a lack of technical skills, lack of experience and a lack of education. There is a need to better develop the workforce in the eyes of employers. The second most common reason for difficulty filling positions was related to poor motivation and attitude of candidates. This ties in directly to commonly held beliefs stated during the key employer interviews as well.

Figure 55: Q38 What are the top 3 reasons these positions are difficult to fill?	
Lack of technical skills (abilities and knowledge needed to perform specific tasks)	46.94%
Lack of motivation/poor attitudes	45.58%
Lack of work experience	37.76%
Lack of applicants	35.03%
Lack of qualifications (education)	33.33%
Other (please specify)	19.05%
Candidates unwilling to relocate to the area	13.95%
Competition for employees	12.93%
Interested applicants do not have adequate mode of transportation	9.18%
Candidates cannot pass screening (drug, criminal record check, etc.)	6.12%
Language barriers	5.10%
Interested applications cannot access adequate childcare	3.40%
Interested applicants do not have adequate housing to relocate	2.04%

As would be expected based on the difficulties some employers have as it relates to finding candidates with the desired skill set, employers in the region seem to place a good deal of importance on training. As can be seen in the following chart, more than 75% of employers indicated that ongoing training for their employees is either very important or extremely important. Less than five percent of respondents felt ongoing training was not important which indicates a strong desire for the majority of employers to continue developing the workforce.

Figure 56



In keeping with the responses as to the perceived importance of ongoing training, a significant percentage of employers provide or support their workers with continued skill development. Almost 85% of employers currently focus on giving their current workforce opportunities for further development which shows a desire and a vested need to increase workforce skill levels among those surveyed. Fifty-two percent of these businesses said New technology/equipment/technical skills was a type of training they already provide for their employees.

Figure 57

Figure 58: Q45. If your organization provided training in the past 12 months, what type of training did your organization provide?		
New technology/equipment/technical skills	52.13%	171
Professional qualifications (i.e. industry certifications)	42.38%	139
Soft skills (communication, teamwork, literacy, etc.)	38.41%	126
Occupational health and safety	34.15%	112
Supervisory/management training	24.09%	79
Apprenticeship	20.12%	66
Academic upgrading	4.57%	15

Key Employer Interview Findings Related to Strategic Theme 7: DEVELOP

(Paraphrased employer responses presented in italics.)

Teach

- **Develop courses specifically geared towards new technologies. There seems to be a sense that there is a lack of hands-on experiential learning opportunities for students. Even when a candidate's knowledge of technical aspects is sufficient, there is often a lack of real-life experience among new hires.**

  …the Universities are only just starting to teach the skills needed in order to keep up with the advances of AI that will perpetuate. In our last round of hiring, people who had been out of University for a couple years had little experience.

  There should be more forums at high schools and colleges where employers can present themselves. More interaction with younger people and with schools because then they get to meet, see and let these groups know that the trades are a good place to work and show them the benefits.

  Even basic skills like excel and basic business skills are lacking. We need to bring people in and then we need to train them and then we need to bring them along and give hem basic training on how to do the simplest things. Even people who come out of the college – those people come fairly equipped but the specific skill sets (computers) and the soft skills are lacking.

- **Identification of new industries and opportunities is needed in the future. There is a feeling that there is little career direction for students coming out of high school. i.e. Attractive opportunities in the trades and the quality of life one can have in various and differing employment alternatives.**

  Maybe in the college or the schools, maybe there could be more communication between schools and employers. Even approaching junior high and not just high schools where you could tweak interest and let people know that this might be a job that you can do.

  Kids go off to school without knowing what they want to do, go to school for four years and then not have the skills to come out and work.

  .. it really boils down to whether the gatekeeper in the school is interested in the trades or not. If someone is not geared towards the trades, they are not forced into University in the European system. Carpenters can make good money and they (youth) are not driven to do that work because they don't know how much money they can make. The worse it gets, the more money they will make because there will be so few of them.

  If there is training in the area then you could maybe attract the type of people here who can come and learn as they work. If I was going to go to every high school, I would suggest that everyone get a Class 1 license. They will ALWAYS have a job.

- **The lack of basic work ethic was a very common issue among employers offering entry- and just above entry-level positions. Employers are willing to train the right people with the right attitude and work ethic.**

  Right now, we basically look for someone with a heartbeat and then you try to keep them coming to work. I am not sure how we change the work ethic and I don't know if maybe we start looking into foreign workers moving forward or not but we are in trouble when we need to hire people.

  Our rule of thumb right now is you hire five and maybe you keep one.

  The new generation does not have labor skills. Strong work ethic is the biggest thing other than anything else. We have been lucky in that we have found a couple guys but it's tough. I think that's something that needs to be done inside. The work ethic is the thing that needs to be instilled immediately. But as far as training there is not very much that we need. The job is fairly simple. It just seems (construction) like nobody wants to work.

  I think it goes right back to high schools. Career planning and an understanding that there is a need for workforce knowledge and the need to have a basic work ethic.

Limit Intervention

- **Many businesses want help, but some still feel that the four pillars (Inform, Attract, Develop, Retain) are the responsibility of business more than government. Workforce stakeholders have to straddle a line: assist business concerns but don't overreach where there is a perception of too much government intervention.**

  'You know what, the services already exist through not for profit and government agencies and there are other private entities that already do this. The resources are already there and it is not something that needs to be created or done than what already exists in the current environment.'

  I don't want government involved in my business. I don't.

  I think businesses should have their own resources in house. HR should be paid by the companies if they have the money to do it but there are also other for-pay services that do this in Medicine Hat and they could assist the small companies. I don't think government should be doing HR services for businesses. That is not what should be done. A lot of the mom and pop shops don't have a clue what they need and there is a balance for the viability versus what the services offer. Maybe as a help, the services could be identified or a breakdown of health and safety and employment regulations.

Worker/Jobseeker Survey Results Related to Strategic Theme 7: DEVELOP

When asked to rank the quality of the following local amenities/services in the community they lived in, the highest ranked indicators related to employment. Employment opportunities in the region are shown to be the most important factor in job seeker's choice of residence. As can be seen in the following table, the four of the top five and five of the top seven indicators ranked as 'very important' are employment related.

Figure 59: How important are the following factors to you when deciding where to live?					
	Very Important	Important	Neutral	Unimportant	Very Unimportant
Enjoyment of your job	70%	25%	5%	0%	0%
Employment opportunities for you	64%	28%	6%	1%	1%
The wage you are paid	61%	32%	6%	1%	1%
Affordability of housing	59%	33%	6%	1%	1%
Advancement opportunities in your job	53%	33%	11%	2%	1%
Training opportunities in your job	52%	38%	9%	1%	1%
Access to medical services	47%	35%	15%	2%	1%
Employment opportunities for your spouse or partner	45%	27%	16%	3%	9%
Availability of housing	44%	44%	10%	1%	1%
Quality of schools	42%	32%	16%	7%	4%
Community social conditions	38%	48%	12%	1%	1%
Proximity to work	38%	50%	10%	2%	1%
Access to a pharmacy	35%	40%	21%	3%	1%
Urban recreation (e.g. skating, swimming pools, tennis etc.)	24%	44%	24%	6%	2%
Selection of retail services	22%	49%	24%	5%	1%
Backcountry recreation opportunities	16%	33%	35%	11%	5%
Public Transportation	16%	27%	32%	17%	7%
Entertainment (bars, concerts, shows, festivals)	16%	36%	34%	9%	5%
Other (please specify)					

Potential Projects for Local Consideration

Theme 7 – PROJECT 1: Business Training Needs Survey

Overview:

Often when a business looks at increasing productivity, one of the first solutions is to offer additional training for its employees. But who needs to be trained? On what – and to what level? To do what? What is missing? These are all questions that individual businesses might seek to answer internally with a training needs assessment specific to their own businesses.

"If we don't know what is needed how do we develop training projects?"
BREWD Research Review Meeting

Project:

A good training program requires a thoughtful and comprehensive training needs assessment. Since it is not feasible to conduct an assessment of each business in the region, an alternative is to gain a broad sense of the overall needs of enterprise through qualitative research. Such a tool would allow a definitive answer to the general training needs across a wide range of businesses. Before training is developed, a logical step would be to ensure any programs developed reflect the needs of the market.

In place of a training needs assessment, a survey of local business can assess what type of training may lead to higher employee engagement, improved performance and increased productivity. The goal of the research would be to identify general themes surrounding training needs as a whole. Such an initiative could act as a guide to course development for both businesses and educational institutions.

Possible Project Partners / Leads:

Chamber of Commerce, Invest Southeast Alberta

Theme 7 – PROJECT 2: Soft Skills Training Program

Overview:

For most companies, hard skills are at the top of the list when searching for a desirable candidate. Skills directly related to the specifics of a position are clearly at the forefront when hiring to fill a specific need. However, from the research conducted in the BREWD project, it is clear that there is also a distinct need for further development of soft skills in almost all fields. The common response of a need for more soft skills was prevalent regardless of the size the enterprise or the sophistication of the industry.

When a workforce has plentiful technical skills but is lacking in basic soft skills there are certain areas where businesses face challenges. For example, if your employees are well trained in obtaining customers, but not so wonderful at customer retention, you have a soft skills gap. Fortunately, soft skills gaps in a business can be often be mitigated through training programs.

Project:

The types of soft skills chiefly sought by employers include self-motivation, teamwork, creativity, time management, organization, flexibility, conflict resolution, positivity communication, leadership, problem-solving, critical observation, etc.

The specific soft skills projects suggested touch on the above elements. Project elements discussed during Research Review discussions included:

- Coordinated training between industries
- Customer Service Skills Program - creation a customer service training program
- Transferable Skills Program - for mature workers, remote tech training
- Industries sharing resources (money/time) to develop workforce on soft skills
- Soft skills training
    - Leadership
    - Understanding Intergenerational/intercultural difference
    - What has worked in the past won't work in the future
- *Note:* Some employers mention a lack of work ethic in young, but in K-12 schools, many students can't fail (school policies).

Possible Project Partners / Leads:

Medicine Hat College, Industry groups, Private consultants, High schools, Post-Secondary, Medicine Hat Regional Human Resource Association

Theme 7 – PROJECT 3: Technical Skills Development Research Study

Overview:

Several respondents in the BREWD survey and the Research Review Meetings said there is a gap between the technical skills that new graduates possess versus those needed to perform sufficiently in technical positions. It was indicated that the basics are well taught but the specific skills workers require often have to be taught by employers. There is some sense there can be a better way for educational institutions and industry to work in concert to ensure that the skills being taught are those needed in the workplace.

Project:

This could be a relatively short research project focused on the following areas:

- What technical skills are employers looking for? Perhaps a survey.
- Identify the specific technical skills that are lacking in the region. A Regional Skills Inventory.
- Research on skills that will be likely automated and what those impacts are.
- Medicine Hat College can work with industry on aligning skill demands to programming.

Possible Project Partners / Leads:
Medicine Hat College

Theme 7 – PROJECT 4: Continuing Education Campaign

Overview

Employees care about continuing education. Lack of growth opportunities is one of the key reasons for employee turnover. Continued training should be a high priority at all levels of a company. Partnering with colleges and other institutions to offer continuing education classes in areas such as technology skills upgrading can be a key in the ever-changing work environment.

Universities provide continuing education classes on a wide range of topics, from creative writing to 3D modeling. But there's a little-known fact about the schools that offer these programs: They can also build custom training classes for companies, and these courses can be quite affordable.

A full 87% of millennials say professional development or career growth opportunities are very important to them in a job.
Gallup.com

Project:

Medicine Hat College and other education and & training institutions can look to developing an awareness campaign for employers and workers focusing on:

- The importance of continuing education for companies
- The training for opportunities available to workers
- Career growth guidance through continuation education and training
- How businesses or industry sectors can partner with educational institutions to create programming
- Micro-credentials

Another aspect of this project could focus on creating awareness of existing institutions, programs and resources for continuing education and training. Some of the resources list in the Research Review Meetings were:

- Medicine Hat College
    - MHC and collaborations with other institutions
    - MHC Mentorship program – assigning business person with student
    - LMS (Learning Management System) Internal now but now going external
- Cypress College
- Academy of Learning
- Construction Association
- Chamber of Commerce
- Career coaching in high schools
- Being Human Services
- YMCA Employment Transition to Employment Grant
- Connections Career & Safety Services Ltd
- Positive Life Concepts
- Entre Corp
- Training within industry:
    - Hemp/Cannabis
    - Greenhouse industry
    - Renewable Energy
    - Construction
- Buddy Training, Cross-Training, and Mentorship
- Canada /Alberta Job Grant
- Alberta Labour programs and services
- APEX Programming
- Work Integrated Learning – internships and practicums
- Webinars/lunch n learns – micro learning
- Degreed/Online platforms i.e. Ed2Go
- Alberta Apprenticeship
- Private trainers – Positive life/being human/Safety Buzz
- 3 Day Customer Service/Sales Workshop
- SAAMIS Training for existing jobs

Possible Project Partners / Leads:

Medicine Hat College

Theme 7 – PROJECT 5: Credential Recognition Streamlining

Overview:

An issue brought up in the in-depth interviews and the roundtable discussions was that there is desire to reduce the amount of red-tape regarding certifications and credentialing. One particular issue which arose is the challenge of credentialing for potential foreign workers. For this issue the Government of Canada provides funding to governments and organizations through the Foreign Credential Recognition Program (FCRP) to support foreign credential recognition in Canada.

The FCRP does not provide money directly to individuals; it provides funding to provincial and territorial governments and other organizations. These other organizations may include regulatory bodies, national associations and credential assessment agencies. Governments and organizations use the funding for programs that help assess and recognize the international credentials and work experience that individuals have acquired in other countries.

Project:

This first step in the project may be a roundtable between project partners/leads to assess what organization is best suited to lead this effort. It will need to be determined which organization should apply to FCRP to assist businesses in reducing the amount of red-tape regarding certifications and credentialing for potential foreign workers.

- https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/services/funding/foreign-credential-recognition.html

Possible Project Partners / Leads:

Alberta Labour, Alberta Apprenticeship, Medicine Hat College, Chamber of Commerce, City of Medicine Hat

Strategic Theme 8: ***RETAIN (labour)***

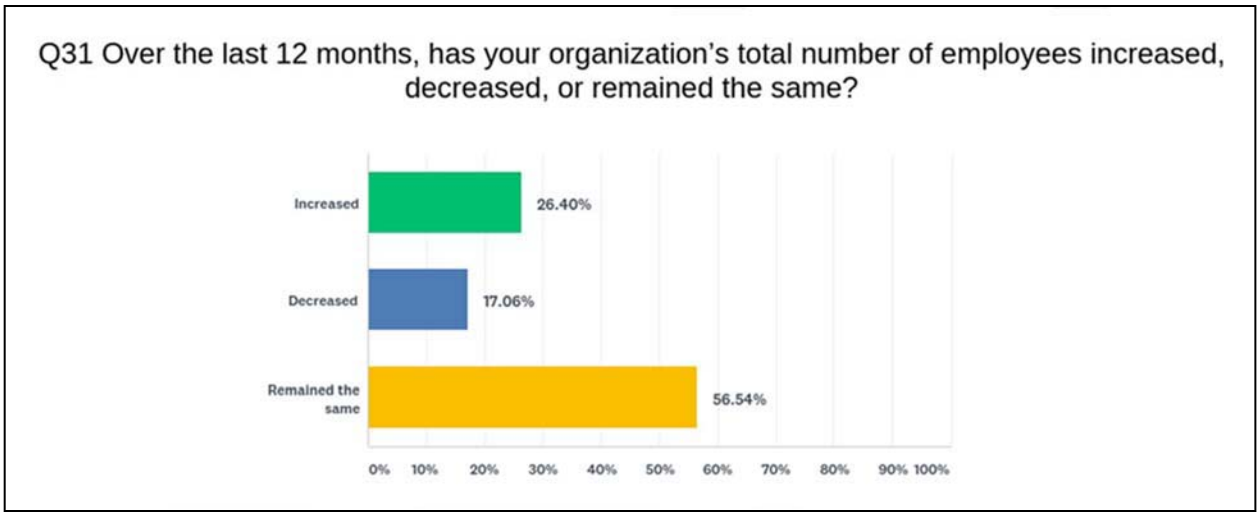
Overview of the Strategic Theme

Encourage community and work attractiveness by developing tactics to engage employees, helping to retain skilled and experienced workers already in the region's workforce

BRE Survey Results Related to Strategic Theme 8: RETAIN

The labour situation for employers is relatively stable. Over 56% of employers say that their labour force has remained the same over the past 12 months and 26% say it has increased. In general, there are far greater concerns about attracting new labour than retaining existing labour.

Figure 60



The area where employees are finding the most difficulty retaining employees seems to be in positions that require less education. Twelve percent indicated that retention among service or production workers with a high school diploma or less was a challenge. Given that these positions typically pay less than occupations requiring a more developed skill set, a focus on retention methods not related to directly to compensation can sometimes be the difference when trying to retain these workers.

Figure 61: Q39 Are you currently experiencing any challenges RETAINING workers in these general categories?	
No	71.61%
Service or Production Labour (high school or less)	11.31%
Apprenticeship Trades	7.29%
Other (please specify)	6.03%
Managers/Supervisory Staff	4.52%
Professional (requiring university degree)	4.02%
Technical (requiring college diploma)	3.77%
Clerical/Administrative Staff	2.51%

Similar responses were given for attributes employers are seeking when having difficulty retaining employees as they have when attracting them. Again, lack motivation was a very common response as to why employees had difficulty retaining workers in certain positions. Beyond this common response, more than 30% who said they have had difficulty with retention indicated a lack of technical skills as a reason. This highlights the importance of training not only to develop the workforce but in retaining workers though the upgrading of skill levels, whether in-house or externally.

Figure 62: Q40 What are the top 3 reasons these positions are difficult to retain?	
Lack of motivation/poor attitudes	45.33%
Other (please specify)	32.89%
Lack of technical skills (abilities and knowledge needed to perform specific tasks)	31.56%
Lack of work experience	29.78%
Lack of applicants	26.22%
Competition for employees	17.78%
Lack of qualifications (education)	17.33%
Candidates unwilling to relocate to the area	10.67%
Interested applicants do not have adequate mode of transportation	5.33%
Interested applications cannot access adequate childcare	4.00%
Candidates cannot pass screening (drug, criminal record check, etc.)	3.11%
Language barriers	2.67%
Interested applicants do not have adequate housing to relocate	1.33%

Key Employer Interview Findings Related to Strategic Theme 8: RETAIN

(Paraphrased employer responses presented in italics.)

People **Not Just Employees**

- A focus on the simple business fundamentals of treating employees well.
- Educate on the importance of maintaining respectful and mutually beneficial relationships between the business and the employer.
- Investment in one's own workforce.
- Real bare bones, basic people management – barbecues, birthdays, etc.
- Once here, easy to retain once they get the sense of the community
- Where margins are available, employers feel that wage-based employee incentives are the best lever for employee retention.

Treating your employees well is the most important and fundamental retention tactic mentioned by a significant number of employers interviewed.

At the end of the day it boils down to recognition of the basic law and regulations that go with human resources but first, beyond that it's really just about treating people well.

A human resource executive at a key employer when asked about what could be offered to local companies to assist with their human resource needs:

I don't even know how to answer that because there is just so much to know that it is almost better for them to hire someone to handle all of the HR parts of it than have to manage all of the rules, regulations etc. I don't know that to would be worth their time. There are so many rules and regulations that they could get in trouble.
It all goes back to being a good manager. … I'm not sure that focusing on engagement is the thing. It is most important to being a good manager who treats employees fairly and in a respectful way. Just the small things and the common courtesies of management 101. That what goes the farthest.

Our biggest challenge in the next five years is retaining employees especially as a smaller company it is difficult to compete with bigger companies. In terms of money and benefits and our margins are tighter so we need to make sure that the employees feel like they are part of the company. It gives you a directly competitive advantage because most companies don't focus on that.

The biggest challenge in terms of workforce comes back to the quality of the individual and there is no exact science to hiring. So much of the challenge would not be quantity but quality. By quality I mean interactive employees and having a workforce that understands how the company can thrive and treat the workers with respect and vice versa.

It goes right down to employee conduct and policies where everybody is at least on the same page. The use of small HR firms could be used. The challenge is they (small businesses) don't know what they are missing until challenges come up. The challenge for the mom and pop shop is the actual education that they need these services. Once a problem arises it is too late. They need the basics so they can focus on the people side.
There is not enough culture fostering and I think especially in the construction industry it's important because it doesn't exist. 100 percent of companies would have a huge competitive advantage if a culture could be built. For example, something as simple as barbecues or home cooked meals and it makes a big difference in the relationships between management of your workers.

SME's that don't have resources often miss on things like benefits programs and that is something that goes unspoken but is probably our best retention tool. We are always growing and people like that and we provide a good wage. But when the work turns down, there is really nothing that can be done other than treating people well. If there is a better paying position they might leave. If you don't treat them well, they will leave regardless of pay.

Worker/Jobseeker Survey Results Related to Strategic Theme 8: RETAIN

Respondents were asked to rank the quality of the local amenities/services in the community they lived in. As outlined previously, the highest ranked indicators were related to employment factors such as job enjoyment, opportunities and wages. Beyond these employment factors, it is important to look what else is important to workers and potential workers to ensure that services and amenities available to them provide a good work/life balance. The following table excludes 'job related factors' in the relative importance making a location most appealing.

Figure 63 (JOB RELATED FACTORS REMOVED) How important are the following factors to you when deciding where to live?					
	Very Important	Important	Neutral	Unimportant	Very Unimportant
Affordability of housing	59%	33%	6%	1%	1%
Access to medical services	47%	35%	15%	2%	1%
Availability of housing	44%	44%	10%	1%	1%
Quality of schools	42%	32%	16%	7%	4%
Community social conditions	38%	48%	12%	1%	1%
Access to a pharmacy	35%	40%	21%	3%	1%
Urban recreation (e.g. skating, swimming pools, tennis etc.)	24%	44%	24%	6%	2%
Selection of retail services	22%	49%	24%	5%	1%
Backcountry recreation opportunities	16%	33%	35%	11%	5%
Public Transportation	16%	27%	32%	17%	7%
Entertainment (bars, concerts, shows, festivals)	16%	36%	34%	9%	5%

Potential Projects for Local Consideration

Theme 8 – PROJECT 1: Keeping Youth in Southeast Alberta

Overview:

Businesses in rural communities face considerable challenges in retaining and attracting youth in Canada. Approximately 28 per cent of the youth population migrated out of rural Canada between 2001 and 2006. Rural communities also experience much lower rates of return migration than urban centres. It is estimated that at the most, only 1 in 4 rural youth who leave their community will return to the same community within 10 years. Overall, there has been a considerable decline in youth population in rural areas. This has led to an unprecedented loss of economic knowledge and potential, which is crucial for rural development.

Youth out-migration is attributed to many factors such as non-availability of jobs in rural areas and the desire to pursue post-secondary education and other experiences etc. The factors encouraging young people to stay in rural areas include the availability of higher education and employment opportunities, social/family pressure to stay and lack of resources to move. A sense of attachment to the local area and whether they feel included or valued by the local community is also important in the decision-making process"

Attracting and Retaining People to Rural Alberta: Rural Development Division 2013

Project:

There are a number of possible facets to youth retention project in the region. ***Three*** types of potential projects are:

- Research: Look at existing plans and resources like https://returntorural.ca . Return to Rural is a Rural development initiative focused on engaging, attracting and retaining youth, serving the communities of the Special Areas and MD of Acadia No.34 region. Other sources:
    - https://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$Department/deptdocs.nsf/all/csi14329/$FILE/Attracting-and-Retaining-people.pdf
    - https://ceric.ca/fr/2017/10/attracting-young-professionals-to-rural-places/
- Promotion: Better awareness of local jobs is vital. But promoting jobs may well be part of Theme 1 (Inform).
- Incentives: Create and incentive program for potential employees to move back. The incentives can be public (tax breaks, housing, etc.) or private (signing bonus, education, etc.) Examples of incentive program from the BREWD Research Review meeting included:
    - Home Depot employees can get some of their post - secondary tuition paid for,
    - JBS foods (Brooks) offers a fully paid family day and scholarship program for employee's kids,

- MHC tuition discounts
- JMH professional accounting mentioned equity programs with employees – stock options, shared ownership, partnership

The decision on which of the project paths to pursue would greatly depend on the Possible Project Partners / Leads,

Possible Project Partners / Leads:

Southeast Alberta service providers, Southeast Alberta businesses

Theme 8 – PROJECT 2: Retention Training Program

Overview:

Of the four labour pillars identified in the BREWD project, Retention was not viewed as high a priority as Attraction was. The research generally revealed that companies that can attract someone to Medicine Hat don't have a serious problem retaining them. The City is seen as a very good place to live and work. But there is also a realization that retention strategies are still important and a number of companies have little experience or knowledge in this area. This is especially the case with smaller companies that grew from a single person or a partnership. The Research Review Meetings revealed a need for these employers to know what is happening right now in the region to retain employees and to train them on retention strategies and tactics.

"Studies have shown that cost related to directly replacing an employee can be as high as 50–60% of the employee's annual salary, but the total cost of turnover can reach as high as 90–200% of the employee's annual salary."

Cascio, W.F. 2006. Managing Human Resources: Productivity, Quality of Work Life, Profits (7th ed)

Project:

Many of the projects suggested in the Research Review Meeting fit into a Retention Training Program. The focus of all these suggestions relates to teaching employers about retention strategies and tactics. First, it is important to note the strategies and tactics that are already in use, according to the attendees of the meetings:

- Welcome Wagon
- Social clubs/onboarding/community aspects of the workplace
- Mentorship programs
- Company benefits/vacation
- Flexible work schedule
- Retention bonuses (seasonal/remote)
- Awareness of career paths
- Flexible work schedule
- Small incentives (Tim Horton cards, good parking spot, employee of the month etc.)
- Office activities (Christmas party, picnics etc.)
- Regular job reviews
- Open Communication - knowing your employees
- Bonus/loyalty Program
- Community donations (worker/employer matching program)
- Staff recognition and team building
- Paid time off above employment standards
- Happy hour
- Mentorship

- Volunteer opportunities
- Interest free loans for training/self-care/technology

The Retention Training Course would review and provide examples of these ongoing activities but also focus on further developing other methods and ideas such as:

- Retraining on how to retain young workers
- Train employers to learn how to recognize strengths, cultivate employee skills, how flexible work environments can be mutually advantageous
- Teach team building, employee appreciation, and how to have fun as a group
- Best practices in promoting incentives
- Creating healthy workplace environments
- Have cultural training for employers and employees
- Being Transparent with Employees – sharing the impact of the economy on the industry and employer- helping the work force be apart
- Retaining employees through building trust, relationships, team, and community – provide models, opportunity and experiences that bring together groups to feel value
- Develop community models to retain and share them. Repeating the successes and modelling positive work culture
- Barter among industries – Family Leisure Pass in exchange for tuition credits
- Triple P Bottom line focused:
    - People
    - Place and
    - Profit
- Being exclusively profit focused is a detriment to the people, business, and community
- Employee Suggestion Box Program: train employers how to set up an effective program to get employee input. Encourage employees to submit ideas for creating efficiencies, improving morale etc. in a non-intimidating manner

One of the outcomes of the project could be a Retention Tips and Tricks Best Practice Toolkit. This would be a set of tools and information that can be provided attendees of the training session(s) and posted online – maybe on the Chamber of Commerce website

Possible Project Partners / Leads:

Medicine Hat College, Chamber of Commerce, Training and Support Providers

Theme 8 – PROJECT 3: Work-Life Balance Study

Overview:

There was a time when the boundaries between work and home were fairly clear. Today, however, mostly due to technology, work is likely to invade personal life — and maintaining work-life balance is no simple task. It is an area, if understood and managed by companies, that can greatly aid in the retention of employees.

"58% of Canadians report "overload" associated with their many roles – work, home and family, friends, physical health, volunteer and community service.

https://cmha.ca/mental-health/finding-help/emotional-wellness

Project:

This would largely be a research project to identify methods by which companies can help their workers find a better work-life balance. Elements might include:

- Developing a family friendly policy study
- Create a work-life balance best practices toolkit. E.g. Work from home guidelines, flex work schedules, productivity awareness
- Researching and being open to innovative ideas
- A productivity study could also be part of the project
- There are a number of resources for this research like the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA), www.mayoclinic.org, worklifebalance.com

Possible Project Partners / Leads:

Companies that are already doing it to mentor; Chamber of Commerce, Community Futures, CHRP

Theme 8 – PROJECT 4: Succession Planning/Career Mapping

Overview:

Long term planning is sometimes a blind spot for companies. The sheer effort it requires for businesses, especially small ones with limited manpower, to succeed day to day is considerable. Planning what happens to the business years down the road is often an afterthought. However, proper planning also feeds into employer retention. The BREWD research revealed that one of the common methods to help retain workers is for them to have an understanding of opportunities for advancement and development.

Project:

The project as suggested has two elements, so perhaps there are two projects here. However, both relate to planning.

The first step is to create programs specific to training businesses on succession planning. A related aspect of this is the development of a strategy for employees to know where they stand in the company, and what opportunities lay ahead. This project could include training sessions or perhaps the development of an information source outlining how businesses can plan for succession. Using this forward-thinking approach will help workers better understand their opportunities and increase retention.

Possible Project Partners / Leads:

Service providers, Chamber of Commerce