

Performance Results for 2017-18 Community Futures West Yellowhead

Community Futures (CF) is a program that supports community economic development and builds the capacity of communities to realize their full sustainable potential. The purpose of the CF Program is to help communities develop and implement *local solutions to local problems*.

Community Futures Performance Results	Results as of 2017-18
<i>Strong rural community strategic planning and implementation</i>	
1. Total number of community-based projects (new & on-going)	26
2. Total number of local and regionally-based community strategic plans developed and/or updated	5
<i>Rural access to business development services</i>	
3. Total number of business training session participants	321
4. Total number of business advisory services	897
<i>Rural access to capital and leveraged capital</i>	
5. Dollar value of loans	\$478,500
6. Total number of loans	8
7. Number of jobs created/maintained/expanded through lending ¹	29.5
Provide additional information (e.g. Success stories, Links to priorities, leveraging work, communication events, etc...)	
<p>2017/2018 was a challenging year for Community Futures West Yellowhead and the West Yellowhead region. The regional economic experienced a setback with the pipeline dispute between Alberta and British Columbia as most of the area's oil and gas and pipeline industry felt a psychological hold on the economy and its growth. This delay partnered with changes to coal and thermal energy, mountain pine beetle infestation and caribou preservation measures in the region, our traditional industries were stagnant and did not experience much growth in the fiscal year. While the economy was rebounding in the province, the issues in the West Yellowhead appear to take a firm grip on the economy making industry players cautious with expansion and as a result, creating a sense of apprehension with the small business community. As a result, Community Futures West Yellowhead experienced a slower than anticipated year in its activities. Our loan applications were half of what we had experienced in 2016/2017 and we only dispersed 8 loans in the fiscal year. This was half of the loans in 2017/2018 compared to 2016/2017 when we approved and dispersed 16 loans with a total of 22 applications for the entire year. The office also did not meet the Minimum Performance Standard of number of loans and/or projects aligned with WD and Government of Canada priorities. We felt that we were in a reactive mode throughout the year as the pipeline dispute, mountain pine beetle, caribou and coal changes set the tone of the economy and caused us to grab opportunities when they presented themselves in our office. Our goal in 2017/2018 was to focus on the positive in our communities and help the region and our organization through a year of transition. At the start of 2018/2019, Community Futures West Yellowhead is already seeing improvement in our region's economy. The Grande Cache</p>	

¹ Estimated at the time of lending

coal mine is in transition and it is expected to have AER approval to its sale by mid summer 2018; the Grande Cache Institution, after two years of uncertainty in its fate, has received a 25 year renewal to its contract with the federal government; geothermal feasibility studies are underway in Grande Cache and Hinton areas and showing potential in renewable energy diversification; natural gas projects in Edson are resulting in a surge in industry employment in Edson over the summer; and while the pipeline issue is not resolved, Community Futures West Yellowhead is seeing the economy and our small businesses continue with a new attitude of hope as the provincial government is becoming more aggressive in its negotiations with British Columbia. We do anticipate as well with new priorities in inclusiveness and cluster development it will be easier for Community Futures West Yellowhead to be in alignment with government priorities and with the changes in the level of confidence in both industry and small businesses in the West Yellowhead.

Community Futures West Yellowhead is governed by municipal councillors from the five municipalities in which we work. 2017/2018 was a municipal election year so we had a transition in our board as six of our councillors did not return to our board of 10 and we received new and returning councillors to the Board of Directors. As a result, like the economic challenges in our region, our board experienced a year of transition. We embraced this transition with a two-day strategic planning session where the new Board of Directors designed new priorities for the organization for the next four years. The previous board focused on improving our core services as our foundation to the organization and growing our reputation and brand in the West Yellowhead region. The past four years focused on these goals and the organization feels it was accomplished as we are now a well known and reputable organization for business support in the West Yellowhead. New priorities focus now on industry development through Community Futures West Yellowhead in the region and our priorities, along with the Government of Canada priorities of inclusiveness and cluster development, focus on:

- To increase and promote tourism entrepreneurship in the region;
- To increase and promote agricultural and forestry production and processing in the region;
- To increase youth entrepreneurship within our communities; and
- To prepare entrepreneurs for renewable energy initiatives and explore opportunities and partnerships for advancement in new technologies and industries

This work will continue in partnership with our foundational work in the Community Futures program of offering core services in business coaching, business training, business financing and community economic development. Community Futures West Yellowhead is looking forward to the year ahead in the West Yellowhead region. We remain hopeful that the economic challenges that are currently in transition will improve in the year ahead. Despite the challenges to our economy in the West Yellowhead, Community Futures West Yellowhead experienced a successful year in several areas. Our coaching, training, and financing services continue to be the foundation of the organization and as seen in most of our indicators, are strong and healthy services that we provide to the business community of the West Yellowhead. Community Futures West Yellowhead experienced numerous successes in 2017/2018:

Alberta Open Farm Days and the Yellowhead Local Food Initiative: 2017/2018 was the second year of the Yellowhead Local Food Initiative – a partnership between Community Futures West Yellowhead that works to promote ag-tourism and agriculture food producers and processors in the West Yellowhead. This year, we also worked with Alberta Culture and Tourism to support farms participating in Alberta Open Farm Days in August 2017 and worked in partnership with Parkland County to build a valued added agriculture cluster between the two counties. Participants in the cluster were able to access agricultural focused business coaching through Alberta Culture and Tourism as well as participate in marketing and branding with all the involved organizations. The Yellowhead Local Food Initiative offered a bus tour and locally sourced lunch during Alberta Open Farm days that visited the four participating farms and sourced food from the West Yellowhead. 65 participants took part in this event. The Yellowhead Local Food Initiative plans to continue its support with Alberta Open Farm Days and the “Grow Yellowhead” movement through a \$11,000 CARES grant and a possible \$10,000 Alberta Open Farm Days grant in 2018/2019.

Building Health and Safety Capacity in Small Businesses: Community Futures West Yellowhead and Community Futures Yellowhead East partnered to hire a Health and Safety Business Advisor to work in both regions with a project goal to make the language of creating a health and safety management system for small businesses manageable and assist businesses to get started, manage expectations and simplify the process. The goal was accomplished through the design of a “Creating a Health and Safety Management System” workshop that was delivered in 6 communities with 52 participants. Follow up business coaching was offered as part of the project and to date, 22 businesses completed follow up appointments and are working with the Health and Safety Business Advisor on their health and safety management plans. Both offices see the potential of this project to help small businesses gain access to procurement opportunities in the regions and are continuing the project with the BizStream modules and future workshops to help small businesses access expansion opportunities in the region. The project will continue throughout 2018/2019 with a \$20,000 Government of Alberta grant to continue the work in both offices.

Entrepreneurs with Disabilities Advocacy Award and Best Practices Manual: CFWY received the Entrepreneurs with Disabilities Advocacy Award in 2017 at the provincial conference in Edmonton. Our work in this program continued with 15 clients registered in the program, a workshop on “The Importance of Self Care” with CASA that was attended by 40 participants, a social media campaign focusing on the benefits of the Entrepreneurs with Disabilities program by focusing on what you “can” do in entrepreneurship and the creation of a Best Practices Manual for all 27 offices in Alberta to be launched in the 2018/2019 year in partnership with the CFNA. CFWY will continue to work with the Entrepreneurs with Disabilities Program in 2018/2019 and hope to see the program increase its utilization throughout the provincial network as the Best Practices Manual is shared with our colleagues in Alberta.

Women in Municipal Elections Luncheon: CFWY received AUMA funding in 2017 to support female candidates running for municipal office in the West Yellowhead. The event consisted of a luncheon, a viewing of the AUMA video recommended by the funding agreement and a panel of three former female municipal councillors from the West Yellowhead region that started the discussion with facilitated questions and then answered questions from the group for approximately 30 minutes. Female entrepreneurs throughout the region donated their business products for giveaways to workshop participants as well. CFWY matched the \$900 contribution from the AUMA with WD funding for this event that resulted in 27 female candidates running in 2017 – all who attended the AUMA event. CFWY plans to continue this work in 2018/2019 with a proposed women’s conference for business and leaders in the West Yellowhead in November 2018.

Record number of loans paid off in 2017/2018 without refinancing: CFWY had 11 loans repaid in 2017/2018 resulting than a higher than anticipated cash flow for our loan fund in 2018/2019. All 11 businesses are continuing to operate in our region with successful businesses and did not refinance their loans at any point through their repayment schedule with CFWY. CFWY credits our successful aftercare loan program and processes which maintain the relationship with the loan client throughout the life of the loan repayment with our office.

Completion of Hinton and Yellowhead County follow up Business Visitation Studies: As CFWY heads into the last year of a five-year business visitation project with the follow up of our Edson project in 2018/2019, we also celebrate the follow up study in Hinton and Yellowhead County. This project has increased both our reputation and business advisory numbers in the region. Both follow up studies completed in 2017/2018 are available on our website.

Edson Downtown Revitalization: 2017/2018 wrapped up our Edson Downtown Revitalization project with the Town of Edson. In October 2017, both partners hired a consultant to have focus groups with businesses in Edson to discuss ideas and plans for revitalization and beautification in the downtown area and highway 16 corridor. These focus groups engaged approximately 30 people from the small business community that resulted in a final report that created a number of recommendations for the town and businesses to work towards in the upcoming fiscal year to improve the downtown and highway corridor in Edson.