

2022 Q4 Business Visitation Report

INTRODUCTION

This report has been developed by Community Futures West Yellowhead (CFWY) to provide stakeholders with a portrait of the economic activities in the communities our regional office serves. This report contains information based on data collected from the 2020, 2021 and 2022 Business Visitation project.

PURPOSE

The purpose of these business walks was to visit local businesses and to have a casual conversation about the local economy with business owners. They could communicate their successes, challenges, and opportunities during the economic challenges of COVID-19 and any impacts it was having on their business.

METHODOLOGY

When comparing data between Business Visitation in 2020, Business Visitation in 2021 and Business visitation in 2022, it is important to note that businesses surveyed in 2020 were randomized and not analyzed by business sector: rather, data collected was represented as aggregate data across multiple sectors. Data collected in subsequent Business Visitations (2021 & 2022) were categorized by NAICS sectors as aggregated data.

There are numerous ventures and businesses within CFWY boundaries. The last three business walks (2020, 2021, 2022) focused on small, locally owned storefront businesses with approximately 10 or less employees. Homebased businesses, financial institutions and accommodations were not included in visitation. Businesses visited included sole proprietorships, partnerships, and incorporations. Communities visited included: Jasper, Grande Cache, Hinton, Edson, Niton Junction, Wildwood, Peers and Evansburg.

The March 2022 business visitation surveys were completed by Community Futures West Yellowhead staff, contractors, and volunteers during the fourth quarter of the 2021-22 Fiscal Year. This quarter, business visitation was completed by three (3) staff, one (1) contractor and twenty (20) volunteers. Volunteers in each community consisted of small groups of CFWY staff, municipal Councillors, EDO's, CEO's, Jasper Employment and Education Centre staff, Jasper Chamber of Commerce staff, Hinton Chamber of Commerce volunteer, Edson Chamber of Commerce staff and the MLA. We thank all the volunteers for the time they contributed to this project. All volunteers, staff and contractors were encouraged to practice social distancing, to wear face masks if they chose, and to use sanitizer as well as follow additional and or specific health and safety business measures in place at the time of the business visitation.

Business visited were provided with a Community Futures swag bag. Each bag contained information about Community Futures West Yellowhead's programs and trainings available to entrepreneurs and small business in the West Yellowhead region. Rack cards included in the swag bag provided information on #choosewestyellowhead, EDP (Entrepreneurs with Disabilities), Project Gazelle, SMARTstart, Business



Coaching and Financing and Energy Savings for Business Program through Energy Regulators Alberta (ERA).

Business owners, managers and employees were introduced to Community Futures West Yellowhead's mission to provide grassroots economic development support to small businesses in the region. Business owners, managers and employees were advised that data collected would be used as a resource for assessing trends in the local economy, to assist with future economic development initiatives developed by Community Futures West Yellowhead and regional stakeholders, and data collected would not be used for any other purposes.

A survey tool was used as a baseline for starting conversations and was intended to open dialogue with business owners and/or managers about their current operations, challenges, opportunities, training needs, and future goals related to business operations. It should be noted that not every business visited had a manager or business owner on site. In these circumstances, employees were asked to provide the business owner or manager with a swag bag. Those businesses visited that did not have a manager or owner on site were included as business visited in the aggregate data for number of businesses reached during this project. It should be noted that data specific to these businesses' challenges, opportunities or future training needs were not collated. Hence, it must be noted that the data collected has not been factored to include a non-response rate or partial non-response rate for industries visited during this project. As such, data users are cautioned when comparing data from the Community Futures West Yellowhead Business Visitation data with other Provincial and Federal data, as differences in the methodology, interpretation and data sources make these comparisons uncertain.

VARIABLES

Industry:

- All businesses surveyed were categorized based on the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS)
- Quantitative data was collected to include all businesses by sector for each community within the Yellowhead Region.
- Qualitative data was collected and represents a snapshot of businesses experiences of the current local economy, includes their ideas, experiences, and hopes for future economic development opportunities.

Training needs:

- Businesses surveyed were asked if they identified training needs in:
 - Business Cluster Development, Health & Safety, Emergency Preparedness, Technical & IT, Succession Planning, HR and Labour, Marketing, Financial and Energy Savings

Energy Consumption:

- Businesses were asked if they measure their monthly energy consumption as part of their business operations.
 - Possible answers: Yes/No

Energy Regulators Alberta - Energy Savings for Small Business (ESB Program):

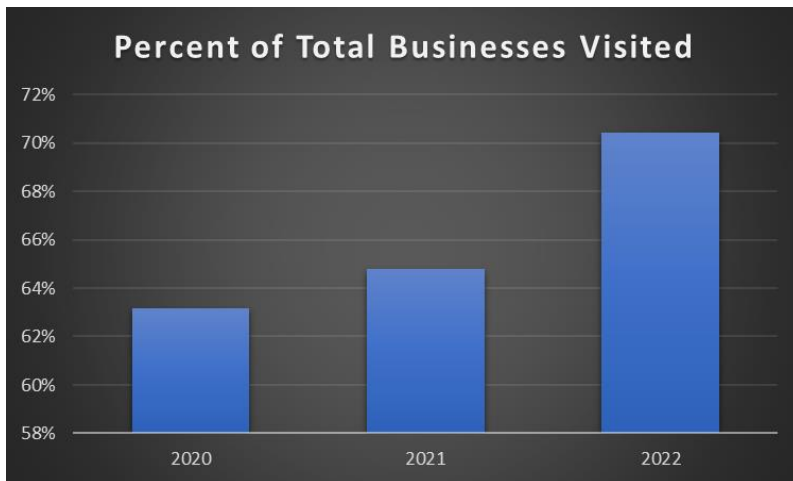


- Businesses were asked if they were aware of the ESB Program.
 - Possible answers: Yes/No
- All businesses were provided with a Rack Card promoting the ESB Program.

DISCUSSION

In 2020, CFWY staff identified three hundred seventy-two ($N = 372$) businesses within Jasper, Hinton, Grande Cache, Edson, and Yellowhead County that fit within the small storefront business criteria. A total of two-hundred-sixty-two ($n=262$) businesses, or seventy percent (70%) of businesses fitting the criteria were visited during the fourth quarter of the 2021-22 Fiscal Year. Comparatively, in 2020, sixty-three percent (63%) of the total businesses were surveyed and in 2021, sixty-five percent (65%) of the total businesses identified were surveyed.

Graph 1:



Note: Total possible businesses $N=372$

Note: 2020 total # of Businesses visited $n=235$

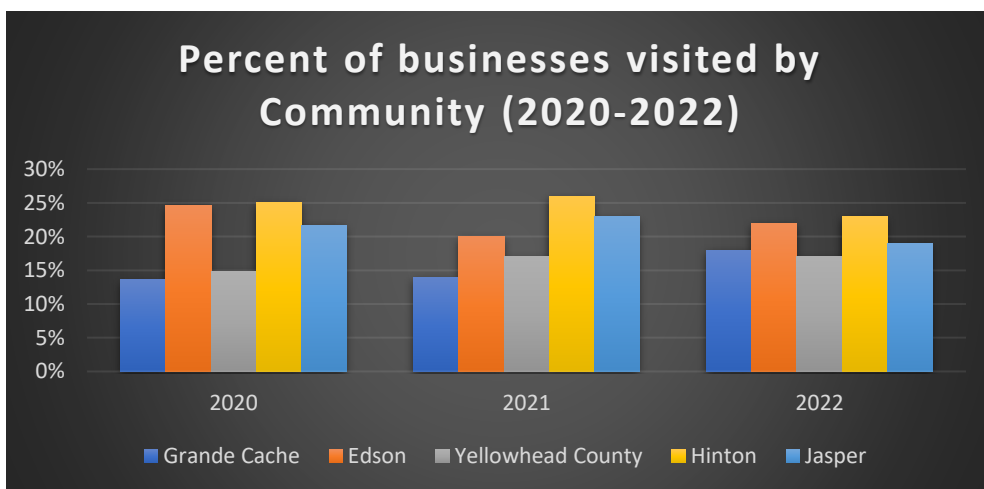
Note: 2021 total # of Businesses visited $n=241$

Note: 2022 total # of Businesses visited $n=262$

SOURCE: 2020, 2021 & 2022 CFWY Business Visitation Data

The distribution of surveys conducted across the Yellowhead Region is represented in Graph 2 below. Interestingly, the 2022 Business survey data reflects a more equitable distribution of businesses visited by community than the previous two years.

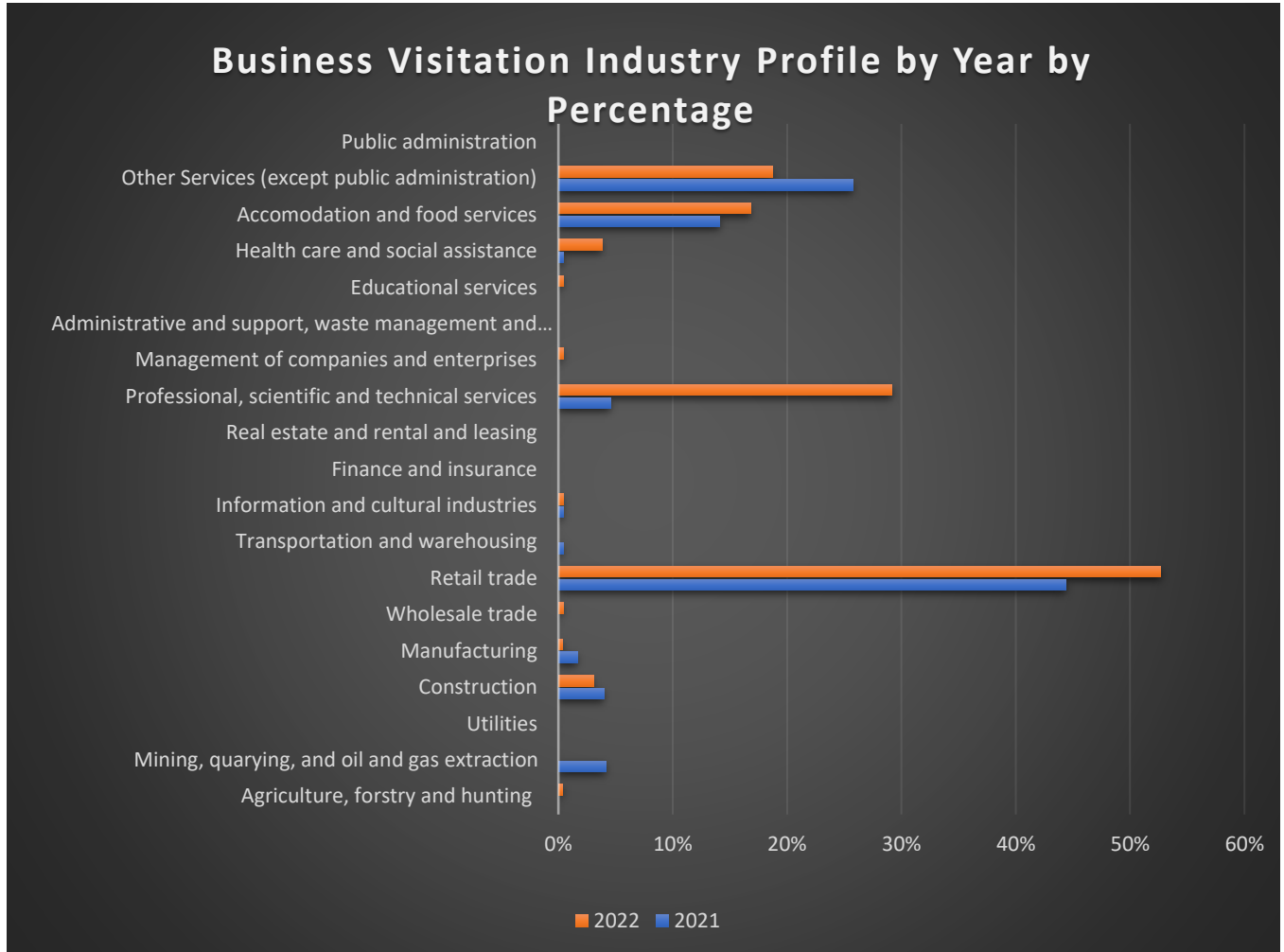
Graph 2:



SOURCE: 2020,2021, 2022 CFWY Business Visitation Data

The total number of businesses visited in 2021 and 2022 were categorized by Industry Sectors and Graph 3 represents the percentage of business visited by sector by year. The 2020 business visitation data was not analyzed by Industry sector, therefore that data is not available.

Graph 3:



SOURCE: 2021 & 2022 CFWY Business Visitation Data

Business Cluster Development

A Business Cluster is a geographic concentration of interconnected businesses, suppliers, and associated institutions in a particular field.¹ Community Futures West Yellowhead is interested in supporting the culture of business cluster developments across our region as part of our strategic plan.

During the past two years, community based local business support networks have been attempted in all communities in the region, though outcomes from the attempts have been challenged to gain momentum.

A total of three percent (3%) of total businesses surveyed in 2022 indicated they were interested in Business Cluster Development. This percentage is considerably lower than the 2021 data which reflects seventeen percent (17%) of all businesses surveyed expressing interest in business cluster development.

Results from the 2022 business visitation reflect that there were zero requests from business owners in Jasper looking for Business Cluster/Networking Support. Currently, Jasper business owners and entrepreneurs are invited to meets regularly at an event hosted at local venues in the community called NETMA (Nobody Ever Tells Me Anything). These events are reportedly well attended by local entrepreneurs and business owners; it appears that these networking events, put on by the Chamber of Commerce in Jasper, are a strong driver for Cluster Development/Networking in the community of Jasper.

Of the businesses visited in Hinton there were zero requests for Business Cluster/Networking Support. Hinton does have two business cluster and networking groups that function independent of Community Futures though we do participate in the networking events when invited. These networking groups are targeted to support local entrepreneurs in the two distinct shopping districts of the community. These networking groups appear to be satisfying the need for business cluster development in Hinton.

Yellowhead County businesses did have two businesses (4%) express interest in business cluster development. Four percent (4%) of businesses indicated it would be good to have the Chamber of Commerce become active again in this region.

Five percent (5%) of businesses visited in Grande Cache request Business Cluster/Networking support. Both were in Retail Trade. There is opportunity to promote business cluster support in Grande Cache and Community Futures West Yellowhead is hopeful that the Regional Business Support Network will see more Grande Cache Businesses participate in this networking opportunity on a quarterly basis. At this time, the Grande Cache Business support network is being facilitated by the MD of Greenview.

This quarter, nine percent (9%) of businesses in Edson request Business Cluster/Networking support. Three businesses were in Retail trade and two were in Other services. Interestingly, most of the Edson businesses expressing interest in cluster development were located along main street. There appears to be an opportunity to develop Business Networking strategies within the municipality of Edson in response to this data, though it should be noted that Edson Business Support Network(virtual) did not have a lot of uptakes during the last two years and was cancelled in the spring of 2021 due to low turn-

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Business_cluster

out. Community Futures West Yellowhead is hopeful that the Regional Business Support Network being held quarterly will have more uptake from business owners in Edson moving forward.

Hinton Chamber of Commerce, in partnership with Community Futures West Yellowhead, are coordinating a Regional Business Support Network on a quarterly basis. The driver for this Regional Business Support Network is that there appears to be an opportunity to expand Business Cluster/Networking supports across the region.

Health and Safety

Training in health and safety for small businesses has been promoted through virtual training and coaching throughout the pandemic at Community Futures West Yellowhead. Two percent (2%) or 5 of 247 businesses visited indicated they would like support in developing and incorporating Health & Safety protocols into their business operations. Two of the five business owners were in Retail trade, one in Health care and social assistance, and two in Accommodation and food services. Community Futures West Yellowhead has reached out directly via email to follow-up with these business owners regarding their indicated interest in Health & Safety. There does not appear to be a large demand for targeted training in this domain (2%), though should there be an increased interest over time, Community Futures West Yellowhead should explore relaunching the Health & Safety webinar training again. For now, it appears our resources would be best spent on one-to-one coaching in this domain. The recommendation is to promote support services in this domain via a targeted marketing plan.

Emergency Preparedness

Emergency preparedness includes all activities, such as plans, procedures, contact lists and exercises undertaken in anticipation of a likely emergency. The goal of these preparedness activities is to ensure organizations (governments) are ready and able to respond quickly and effectively in the event of an emergency.²

In 2021, one-point-seven percent (1.7%) of businesses surveyed indicated they would like support in developing Emergency Preparedness protocols compared with less than one percent (<1%) expressing interest in this domain in 2022. Community Futures West Yellowhead has followed up with interested businesses via email to invite business owners to follow-up with Business Coaches moving forward. There does not appear to be a high demand for this training across the region at this time. The recommendation is to include this Emergency Preparedness training into a strategic marketing campaign to ensure business owners are aware that our coaching services exist to support this outcome.

Technical or IT

With the increasing use of technology there is a growing requirement for businesses to demonstrate competence in using technology for daily operations. One percent (1%) of business surveyed in the region during the 2022 business visitation request IT/Technical Support compared to the 2021 data which reflected two-point-three percent (2.3%) of business owners interested in receiving IT/Technical Support. The demand for this type of coaching/training appears to be low at this time. The business

² <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/health-concerns/emergencies-disasters/emergency-preparedness.html>

owner(s) that indicated they were interested in IT/Technical Support has been referred to the Digital Economy Program.

Succession Planning

Succession planning is a strategy for passing on leadership roles—often the ownership of a company—to family members, an employee or group of employees. Also known as "replacement planning," it ensures that the business continues to run smoothly after a company's most important person moves on to new opportunities, retires, or passes away.³ In 2021, less than one percent (< 1%), expressed interest in succession planning follow-up compared to three percent (3%) of businesses in 2022. Of those businesses that expressed they are interested in succession planning, they indicated they are thinking of retiring and or exiting their business within the next five years. Three businesses were in Edson and were all from Retail trade. Two businesses were in Yellowhead County and were from Retail trade and Accommodation and food services. One business in Jasper indicated they were looking at exiting their business (Retail trade) soon. The promotion of Succession Planning Coaching as a service Community Futures West Yellowhead provides to entrepreneurs and small business owners should be strategically promoted using a targeted marketing campaign as there does appear to be an increased interest in this domain when compared to previous business visitation data.

HR & Labour Retention

The unemployment rate for Alberta fell from six-point-five percent (6.5%) in January to five-point-five (5.5%) in February.⁴ 2022 business visitation data reflects that ten percent (10%) of all businesses surveyed in the region are struggling with HR/Labour Retention. Fifty-four percent (54%) of the total number of businesses reporting challenges in this domain were from the Retail trade sector. Twenty three percent (23%) of the total number of businesses reporting challenges in HR/Labour retention were from Accommodation and food services (23%) and twenty-three percent (23%) were from Other services (except public administration) respectively.

Jasper appears to be struggling the most with HR & Labour Retention with twenty-percent (20%) of the total number of businesses visited in Jasper ($n=60$) indicating they were struggling in this domain. Seven percent (7%) of the total number of businesses visited in Hinton ($n=68$) reported they were struggling with HR/Labour Retention. Two percent (2%) of the total number of businesses visited in Yellowhead County ($n=45$) indicated they were struggling with HR/Labour Retention. Eight percent (8%) of the total number of businesses visited in Edson ($n=53$) indicated they were struggling in this domain and six percent (6%) of the total number of businesses visited in Grande Cache ($n=36$) indicated they have been struggling with HR/Labour Retention in the last six months.

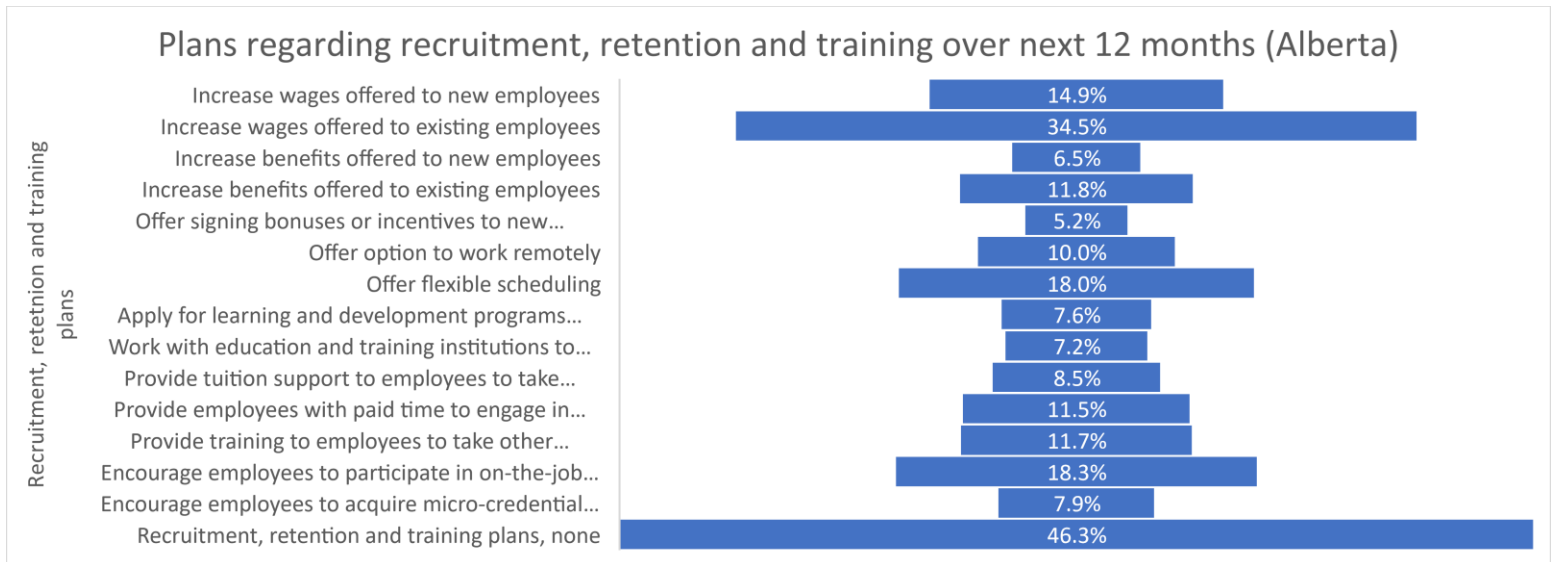
Statistics Canada conducted a study this quarter to survey businesses in Alberta about their plans regarding recruitment, retention, and training goals over the next 12 months. Interestingly, forty-six-point-three percent (46.3%) of businesses have no plans to implement strategy to improve recruitment, retention, or training for their staff. The most common strategies appear to be to offer their existing

³ <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/s/succession-planning.asp>

⁴ <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1410028703>

employees an increase in wage, offering employees flexible scheduling and encouraging employees to participate in on-the-job training.

Graph 4:



SOURCE: Statistics Canada; Table 33-10-0481⁵

There is opportunity to partner with stakeholders in this domain to support regional business owners in the effective and sustainable recruitment, retention and training of their future and current employees. Ongoing strategic support in this domain have been identified and are targeted for the next fiscal year.

Marketing

Fifteen percent (15%) of all businesses surveyed in the region indicated that they were interested in marketing support in 2022. Remarkably, the demand for marketing support is higher in 2022 than it was in 2021 (8.7%). 2022 data reflects that nineteen percent (19%) of businesses surveyed in Grande Cache ($n = 36$) indicated they were interested in developing their marketing strategies. Twenty six percent (26%) of businesses surveyed in Edson ($n=53$) indicated they were interested in follow-up with Community Futures West Yellowhead to develop their marketing strategy. Sixteen percent (16%) of Yellowhead County businesses ($n=45$) surveyed indicated they would like support in this domain. Sixteen (16%) percent of businesses surveyed in Hinton ($n=68$) indicated they would like to work with Community Futures West Yellowhead to develop their marketing strategy. Interestingly, only two percent (2%) of Jasper businesses ($n=60$) surveyed indicated they were interested in marketing support.

Fifty-eight percent (58%) of those interested in marketing support were from Retail trade in 2022 while only forty-eight percent (48%) were from this industry in 2021. It appears that the Retail trade industry in the Yellowhead Region does have a consistently large demand for marketing support services. 2022 business visitation data reflects that three percent (3%) of requests for marketing support were from Information and cultural industries and from Professional, scientific and technical services respectively.

⁵ <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/cv.action?pid=3310048101>

There were no requests for marketing support from businesses in these industries in 2021. Interestingly, in 2021 five percent (5%) of businesses interested in marketing support were from the construction industry and 2022 data reflects that no construction businesses were interested in marketing support. 2022 business visitation data reflects that Accommodation and food services make up thirteen percent (13%) of the total businesses interested in marketing support in 2022 while twenty-five percent (25%) of businesses interested in marketing support were from Other services (Except public administration). In 2021, twenty four percent (24%) of businesses looking for marketing support were from Accommodation and food services and Other services (except public administration) respectively.

The Digital Economy Program (DSS) was marketed to all businesses visited during the 2022 business visitation. The program is a free service designed to help small businesses expand their on-line presence and to reach targeted outcome goals to improve their ability to reach their customers, to increase sales, and elevate businesses eCommerce presence. The Digital Economy Program is delivered by Business Link in collaboration with Digital Main Street. It is funded by the Government of Alberta and Prairies Economic Development Canada. This program is open to home-based or commercial small businesses registered in Alberta with less than 50 employees. Marketing covers a vast area of business operations including understanding how you communicate, businesses branding, pricing, understanding competition, market research, and strategic targeting using consumer psychology, and measuring effectiveness of marketing efforts. All interested businesses in the Digital Economy Program were emailed directly with a referral to the program.

Financial Management

Three percent (3%) of all businesses surveyed in the region ($n=262$) indicated they would like follow-up regarding financial coaching available through Community Futures West Yellowhead compared with the five percent (5%) of businesses requesting financial management support in 2021. Fifty-six percent (56%) of the businesses who indicated they would like support in this domain were from Retail trade. Twenty-two percent (22%) of the businesses who indicated they would like financial coaching support were from Accommodation and food services. While twenty-two percent (22%) of the businesses who indicated they would like financial coaching support were from Other services (except public administration).

By community, six percent (6%) of businesses surveyed in Grande Cache ($n=36$) indicated they were looking for financial support. Two percent (2%) of businesses surveyed in Edson ($n=53$) indicated they were looking for support in this domain. Three percent (3%) of businesses surveyed in Yellowhead County ($n=45$) indicated they were looking for financial support. Six percent (6%) of businesses surveyed in Hinton ($n=68$) indicated they were looking for support in this domain and two percent (2%) of businesses surveyed in Jasper ($n=60$) indicated they were looking for financial coaching or training.

Statistics Canada projects that the first quarter of 2022 will see seventy-seven-point-eight percent (77.8%) of businesses or organizations in Alberta have the cash or liquid assets required to operate. In contrast, while two-point-seven percent (2.7%) of businesses are projected to not have liquid assets but reportedly project they will be able to acquire cash or liquid assets required to operate their business. One-point-eight percent (1.8 %) of businesses currently operating reported they do not have the

required cash on hand to operate, nor do they project they will be able to access the cash or liquid assets they need to operate their business in the next three months. Five-point-four percent (5.4%) of businesses surveyed indicated they do not have the cash on hand and were unsure if they will be able to acquire the cash or liquid assets they need to operate their business moving forward. The remaining twelve-point-three percent (12.3%) of businesses surveyed reported unknown as to the status of their operations and their ability to acquire cash or liquid assets to maintain their business.⁶ The fact that twenty-two-point-two (22.2%) of businesses in Alberta do not have cash on hand or assets available to maintain their operations is notable.

Business visitation data from this quarter reflects that three percent (3%) of businesses visited indicated they were interested in financial coaching or financing through CFWY and would be interested ensuring they have the cash or liquid assets required to operate their business. Business visitation analysis reflects that there is a demand for financial coaching for small businesses within the region. Ongoing strategic marketing of financial coaching services is recommended as there appears to be a demand in the region for this kind of support. There may be value in developing a targeted training in this domain moving into the next fiscal year.

Supply Chain Management

During the last two years there have been a number of global events which have negatively impacted the supply chain around the world and in Canada. In 2022 business survey data reflects that twelve percent (12%) of total businesses ($n=262$) surveyed indicated they have struggled with supply chain issues in the past six months. Eleven (11%) of Grande Cache businesses ($n=36$) reported having supply chain issues in the last six months. Nine percent (9%) of Edson businesses ($n=53$) reported being impacted by the challenges in supply chain over the last two quarters. Ten percent (10%) of Yellowhead County businesses ($n=45$) surveyed reported they were impacted by supply chain issues. Nine (9%) of Hinton businesses ($n=68$) surveyed reported experiencing supply chain issues in the last six months. Twenty two percent (22%) of Jasper businesses ($n=60$) reported being impacted by supply chain issues in their business.

Three percent (3%) of total businesses impacted by supply chain issues were in the Construction industry. Seventy seven percent (77%) of the total businesses experiencing supply chain issues were from Retail trade. Three percent (3%) of total businesses experiencing supply chain issues were in Healthcare and social assistance. Sixteen percent (16%) of total businesses impacted by supply chain issues in the last six months were from Other services industries.

Business visitation data reflects that supply chain issues have been impacting regional businesses over the last two years to some degree. Business reported that the cost of getting products to their stores has increased in the last six months and in some cases, goods have been delayed or not arrived at all. Some business owners reported an increase in prices due to challenges in supply and demand which they reportedly are considering or have already passed those additional costs onto the customer.

Statistics Canada reports that this quarter, over half (51.6%) of rural businesses in Alberta reported they anticipated supply chain challenges and expect those difficulties to worsen over the next three months;

⁶ <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=3310048201&pickMembers%5B0%5D=1.10>

forty-three-point-six percent (43.6%) expected them to remain about the same. Less than five percent (4.8%) expected supply chain issues to improve in the short-term. The most common strategy that rural businesses anticipating supply chain difficulties adopted in response was searching for alternative supply sources, with close to two-thirds (63.6%) of rural businesses reporting that they were using this approach. Other common strategies among rural businesses included maintaining higher inventory levels of inputs, products or supplies (50.4%), increasing communications with suppliers or wholesalers (49.8%), and monitoring shortages, delays, or disruptions for critical inputs, products or supplies (49.7%). Meanwhile, seven-point-two percent (7.2%) of rural businesses reported that they were taking no action in response to supply chain difficulties.⁷

In the last quarter, the most common approaches to tackle supply chain issues were to partner with new suppliers (33.7%), substitute inputs, products or supplies with alternate inputs, products or supplies (29.6%), and shift to local suppliers (18.5%). Over one-quarter of businesses surveyed by Stats Canada (27.5%) reported they did not plan to implement any strategies over the next year.⁸

Ongoing targeted marketing is recommended within the framework of Community Futures West Yellowhead financial and business coaching services as a means to support businesses experiencing challenges managing the significant increases in direct costs to their business as a result of supply chain related issues in the economy.

Energy Savings

In 2022 ten percent (10%) of total business surveyed ($n=262$) indicated they were interested in the Energy Savings for Small Business program through the ERA (Energy Regulators Alberta) when compared to twenty-seven-point-five percent (27.5%) in 2021. Eight percent (8%) of total businesses surveyed ($n=262$) in the region report they do take into account their energy consumption on a monthly basis. Nineteen percent (19%) of Grande Cache businesses surveyed ($n=36$) do measure their energy consumption monthly. Six percent (6%) of businesses surveyed in Edson ($n=53$) measure their energy consumption on a regular basis. Ten percent (10%) of businesses surveyed in Yellowhead County ($n=45$) indicated they do measure and monitor their energy consumption monthly. Six percent (6%) of businesses surveyed in Hinton ($n=68$) measure their businesses energy consumption monthly. Three percent (3%) of businesses surveyed in Jasper ($n=60$) indicated they measure their business energy consumption on a regular basis.

It is important to note that during the business walks, many business owners reported they do not pay for utilities directly as they are included in their rent, hence, they do not actively measure their businesses energy consumption regularly. Many businesses orally reported an increase in energy prices in the last six months and therefore their fixed expenses over the last six months have been impacted. Interest in energy and cost savings strategies were discussed with business owners and the ERA Energy Savings for Small Business Program was promoted. All businesses who indicated interest in the program were emailed directly with reference to the program for follow-up.

⁷ <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/21-006-x/21-006-x2022002-eng.htm>

⁸ <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/21-006-x/21-006-x2022002-eng.htm>

Qualitative Data

The following qualitative data has been collated from the Business Survey Tool employed during the business visitation process. Note that the comments below are reflective of individual business owners' experiences in the local economy between October 2021 and March 2022.

Yellowhead County

"We are new owners of this business...prices have increased for product ... it has been difficult to get stock..." – Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting

"We have seen delays in shipments and products like fruits and vegetables...we do have good local support" – Retail trade

"The cost of power has increased; the income from the business is low as there have been a lot of changes in our community... have pivot to doing more photography as a side business...what will happen when the Wildwood school closes?" – Retail trade

"We closed for two months when COVID first hit and a couple of times more recently. We have accessed COVID relief benefits... retiring soon and will be selling the business" – Other services

"We would like to see more start-up businesses come into community and strategies for attracting traffic from the highway. Worried about the school closing and the impact on economic development. During COVID...did not shut down, but pivot to take-out only." – Accommodation and food services

"Food prices have increased...3 months ago a box of product was \$65 and now it is \$107 per box. The price for another product increased from \$37 to \$73 per case. It is hard to pass these extra costs onto the consumer ...but we will have to raise our prices...our power bill has gone up 30% in last six months." – Accommodation and food services

"We had to raise the prices on our menu" – Accommodation and food services

"...parts are going up in price like crazy ...but overall business is good." – Other services

"...we opened last year and business has been great"-Other services

"Business is hit and miss" – Retail trade

"We opened last month and are hoping things improve" – Accommodation and food services

"Business is a bit slow but will probably improve with summer coming" – Retail trade

"...have pivot business to include winter activities..." – Arts, entertainment and recreation

"...we have transient customers... and many people are not supporting local...overall business is good...will need to hire a new staff this year." – Retail trade

"...would like to see the Chamber of Commerce active in Yellowhead County again..." – Retail trade

"...winter has been slow...we have plans to upgrade our signage very soon and we will be hiring for summer" – Other services

"...we are a new business opened just a month...our first month was really really good and we have had great support from the community" – Retail trade

“Chamber of Commerce resurrection is needed [Yellowhead County]...Christmas was good but January and February were slower than expected...would love to see business pick back up...we are hopeful for the coming year” – Other services

“January was very busy, but February was slow. Lots of local support keeps us going.” – Retail trade

Edson

“...have had some supply chain issues ...would like to promote shop local...people in town are buying less...would like the municipality to clear main street and fix the alley issues” – Retail trade

“...we need to support our community from within...we need people to buy local...need things that draw people...we have industry, but people go elsewhere to shop” – Retail trade

“...some businesses do not shovel their sidewalks in winter...liked events downtown that bring more foot traffic to downtown...Art in the Park, Thursday nights open late...would like to network with local businesses.” – Other services

“The economy is challenged... there is not enough foot traffic...shipping costs are high to and from Edmonton...shipping via courier is also expensive to customers...could there be a way to ship via a group discount to rural small businesses?” – Retail trade

“...like to see more promotion of Sidewalk Jamboree and getting businesses working together” – Retail trade

“...we have pondered developing shopping online, but we don’t know if it is worth it...” – Retail trade

“...some building owners on main street don’t care if a building isn’t rented...we need vibrancy to continue to attract people to downtown...get people to shop local...how?” – Retail trade

“...adjusted or pivot our business during COVID to survive...” – Retail trade

“...business is crazy busy...” – Other services

“...would like to see more activities with the Town and downtown businesses...would like to see the parade going down main street again...closing off streets is great as it creates unique foot traffic, builds awareness of local businesses when events are held there” – Retail trade

“...it has been tough these past two years...we are a seasonal business...and right now we are trying to survive...” – Arts, entertainment and recreation

“...we could use help with our online presence...” – Retail trade

“...events downtown and promotion of events on the Town website...they are out of date” – Retail trade

“...more community events; bring them to main street” – Accommodation and food services

“...struggling with oil companies leaving... business has been tough the last couple of years...we are breaking even at best after years of losses.” - -Other services

“...would like to see sidewalk clearing for snow by businesses...” - Retail trade

“...snow removal on main street should be more of a priority...parking was difficult this year: - Retail trade

“...vacancy rates on main street are concerning...would be great if there were more activities on main street...snow removal on main street resulted in huge piles in front of the street...” – Retail trade

“...business is good...some slower orders but overall, it has been fine...” – Retail trade

“...supply chain issues...but overall business is good” – Retail trade

“...business is slow but is hopefully picking up...” – Retail trade

“...business is great!...people are fixing their vehicles instead of buying new. The vehicle shortage has helped as industry is booming in Edson...” – Other services

“...new owner...store transition with sales has ebbed and flowed...COVID has been good for business because people are taking control of their own health.”- Retail trade

“...business is busy but there has also been lots of delays with parts.” – Other services

“We had a stellar winter...now in a bit of a lull...looking forward to summer” – Other services

“Business has gone way down as we went from seven employees to none.” – Professional, scientific and technical services

“...busy but could be better...cost of shipping has gone up.” – Retail trade

“...most local techs do not want to live in Edson...difficult to find qualified employees” – Professional, scientific and technical services

“Business is down...not sure why...not currently advertising...possibly retiring soon” – Retail trade

“...need two more workers...economy is poor so there are more break-ins and as a result business has gone up...we are having trouble finding good candidates to work” – Other services

Jasper

“Covid has not affected us...inventory is more expensive...piping is 4x expensive and hard to get in...fuel costs are affecting us and it is difficult to find truckers with a class 1 license...price of services has gone up.” – Construction

“Commercial business is picking up...we have had inventory issues with stuff not coming in which makes inventory forecasting hard...the landlord has not raised the rent” – Retail trade

“Our on-line sales have picked up...we did not have to shut down over COVID” – Wholesale trade

“Inventory forecasting is tough...summer looks promising...we did operate with reduced capacity and did not have to shut down...we have been able to retain staff” – Arts, entertainment and recreation

“...business is picking up...we only shut down for two weeks during COVID...there is less availability of tires and shipping containers are not getting transported...we had to raise our prices a bit because shipping costs are high” – Other services

“...supply chain issues...employees too...we have none...staffing is our biggest issue...tourism is slow, slower than this time last year...no international travellers nor a lot of domestic traffic either. We had to close the store for a bit...” – Retail trade

- “...supply chain issues and increased prices for stuff...” – Retail trade
- “...paid parking issues...the street is empty...” – Retail trade
- “...would like to see growth of approved accommodation” – Retail trade
- “...paid parking downtown is an issue...would like to see 10–20-minute free parking...” – Retail trade
- “...would like to see foreign worker program, better supply of accommodation and more workers available in the labour pool...” – Accommodation and food services
- “...business has improved. No impact from paid parking. How the Municipality is charging for water is an issue...needs re-examining” – Retail trade
- “...financial recovery has been good...we need kitchen staffing...there is limited accommodations” – Accommodation and food services
- “...business is going well... clientele change...would like to see regional marketing improvement...there are staffing concerns...has accommodation for employees just need skilled staff” – Retail trade
- “...staffing is good, but accommodations are not...we have been steady both evenings and days...we are doing better than pre-pandemic” – Accommodation and food services
- “...order local please!...trends have been unpredictable...lots of foot traffic and local business using services.” – Retail trade
- “...rent relief was helpful...CERB was helpful...hopes it would continue...” – Retail trade
- “...difficult to find staff...shipping costs are high...missing Euro and Ausi customers...feels that artisans are more supported locally than shops...have a low expectation for the future as just trying to get by...” – Retail trade
- “...we are understaffed, and this is affecting economic recovery” – Accommodation and food services
- “...would like to see recruitment outside of Jasper with a focus on career as opposed to seasonal employment...focus on career growth...would like to see supports to promote career satisfaction” – Accommodation and food services
- “...would like to see a municipal business liaison...” – Accommodation and food services
- “...we have random busy days...staffing is painful...inventory has been challenging.” – Retail trade
- “...we feel strong local support and we have happy customers...we are over our pre-covid numbers” – Retail trade
- “...staffing and accommodation are an issue...sales are good...last year was the busiest year ever...feels support from locals and tourists” – Retail trade
- “...we are getting bookings for tours now...we pursued grants and loans to get through including wage subsidy and rent subsidy...” - Arts, entertainment and recreation
- “...things are slower...like a calm before the storm...we like that spring breaks stagger as we have seen an increase in domestic travellers...” – Accommodation and food services

“...we need upgrades in our kitchen...may need a loan...” – Accommodation and food services

“Business has been slow but picking up...staffing is an issue...supply chain issues...we have only been getting 50% of our inventory...prices have raised a lot...” – Retail trade

“Fluctuating business...have supply chain issues on cardboard products... have seen increased inflation and cost of utilities...supply chain is affecting both raw materials and finished products...we have staffing issues and high cost of living expenses...we had to shut down a couple of times” – Accommodation and food services

“...good this winter as people are travelling. November is usually slow, but it was busy because hotels were offering promotions...we changed our products to accommodate domestic traffic...we have seen a price increase in products and some supply issues but not bad” – Retail trade

“...ok...weekends only busy here...we did not do much inventory shopping over the winter...we hope May gets busier” – Retail trade

“No International tourists affects business...have changed products to accommodate domestic travelers...we raised our prices...its hard on everyone...our inventory is low and it takes months in advance to get stalk...” – Retail trade

“...things have been good but we are having trouble with staffing.” – Accommodation and food services

Hinton

“...I like the business support in Hinton...I’ve worked with Project Gazelle.” – Retail trade

“...sales are good...some delays getting product...” – Retail trade

“Business is slow”- Retail trade

“...we have supply chain issues...global shortage on merchandise and repair supplies” – Retail trade

“Business is going really well. We order from Canadian distributors, so we have not had supply chain issues” – Retail trade

“...slower than normal...trying to grow our business...we are new owners...some transitional challenges...” – Retail trade

“Been in business since November 2021...we have a website, and we like our location...we have been super busy and family pitches in to help” – Retail trade

“We bought this business two years ago and have turned it around in the past two years” – Retail trade

“We have been open for five years and in this location for three years, but we did have to shut down during COVID for eight months” – Other services

“Winter was good...little bit slow now...we advertise on the Chamber website...supply chain has not been too bad for us...” – Retail trade

“...business is very slow...” – Other services

“...slow January and February but hoping to pick up for summer...we need renovations as our equipment is breaking down...” – Retail trade

“...we have had supply chain issues, but business is good” – Retail trade

“Business is crazy good...” – Retail trade

“...business seems okay, but we could use some help managing workers” – Retail trade

“Business is good...we adapted during COVID...having the pipeline has helped...we have had some inventory issues, but we are good for inventory on hand for small jobs” – Retail trade

“Business has been very busy” - Other services

“Business has been good and is picking up” – Accommodation and food services

“Business is good. No complaints...we have been in this location for nine years serving Grande Cache, Jasper, Edson, and Hinton” – Retail trade

“Business is better than last year...we are very hopeful for the next six months” – Retail trade

“...we have been busy...it is slow now...we have had supply chain issues” – Other services

“...hard times...tired...business is still slow...” – Retail trade

“...we saw a decrease of business when CERB finished...no supply chain issues” – Retail trade

“...been in business for seven years...looking for a smaller location...” – Accommodation and food services

“...slow right now...it may be because of people’s mindsets not ready to get back” – Retail trade

“...we saw an increase in business by 50% in the last year...we have been in operation for four years and are expanding rapidly into other communities...” – Retail trade

“...business is improving...supply chain is affecting us...costs are going up slightly...” – Retail trade

“January and February have been slower than normal” – Retail trade

“Business is awesome!” – Arts, entertainment and recreation

“We keep hiring but it is hard to keep workers” – Accommodation and food services

“...been open for a few months...business is declining” – Accommodation and food services

Grande Cache

“Business is good. February slowed down” – Retail trade

“Business is steady” – Accommodation and food services

“...increased tourism...create a tourism attraction strategy for Grande Cache...public transportation in and out of Grande Cache...” – Accommodation and food services

“Energy prices are a concern...support local” – Other services

“Business is good” – Other services

“...would like to see more communication from Economic Development...the BSN is good...more business advertising and shop local...” – Other services

“Cost increases are causing huge issues” – Retail trade

“Business is good...COVID has not slowed us down...Staffing has been an issue with COVID...it has also been hard to get parts” – Other services

“Business is good...busier than expected...we need to move to a bigger space...getting our name out there...” – Retail trade

“Business is good...a little slower but getting ready for Easter...looking for a bigger space...we have transitioned to paper bags and paperless receipts...” – Retail trade

“...supply chain issues...business has been steady but we still want to grow more...the clinic closing is our biggest challenge...and the process isn’t streamlined...time is a factor” – Retail trade

“...did access COVID reliefs...less operational grants...high utilities...staffing issues because of childcare” – Other service

“Business has been slow...too much online shopping...has been an ongoing problem since (we) opened...we did not get relief support because we were not eligible...” – Retail trade

“...mine opened and we got busier...” – Retail trade

“...been busy... no issues except Doctors...need them to come to the community...need attraction from the town and MD” – Retail trade

“Business is not bad...slowing down due to pandemic...it is starting to pick up” – Accommodation and food services

“Business has been consistent...January and February were good...no issues really...new services are gaining traction...had some supply chain issues due to the floods in BC” – Other services

“Business is not bad...January and February were better than usual...we can’t find employees to hire...” – Other service

“Business is really slow...not a lot of local support when there were restrictions...rent is raising at the end of the month...only signing for one year...” – Retail trade

“...been okay...not too busy but doing okay” – Accommodation and food services

“... have issues getting staffing...not a big pool of eligible workers...we have been busy through the pandemic...” – Retail trade

“...very slow...owner is the only employee” – Retail trade

“2020 was excellent...prices have gone up...supply chain issues on certain items” – Retail trade

“...slow all winter...” – Accommodation and food services

“Very slow during the pandemic...now are getting busy...bills are higher, rent is higher.... maybe we will retire soon.” – Accommodation and food services

“Utilities are going up....” – Other services

Summary

The 2022 Business Visitation data reflects a number of obstacles and barriers for rural businesses in the Yellowhead Region. According to Statistics Canada, the most frequently expected short-term obstacles among rural businesses were the rising cost of inputs (56.0%), cost of insurance (42.2%), transportation costs (39.4%), and recruiting skilled employees (38.0%).⁹ Among the rural businesses that expected difficulty acquiring inputs, products or supplies from within Canada in the short term, twelve-point-three percent (12.3%) expected these difficulties to subside within the next six months. Almost three-fifths (58.4%) expected them to continue for six months or longer, while twenty-nine-point-three percent (29.3%) were unsure how long the difficulties would remain.¹⁰

The Business Visitation data from this quarter reflects that cost of inputs and transportation costs are impacting businesses in the region. From the qualitative data, there appears to be mixed thoughts from business owners about the length of time businesses will be experiencing the challenges related to supply chain and increased transportation costs though overall, most businesses are looking forward to the next six months and are hopeful these challenges will not continue to negatively impact their operations as the economy begins to recover. Ongoing marketing of CFWY Coaching Services is recommended.

⁹ <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/21-006-x/21-006-x2022002-eng.htm>

¹⁰ <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/21-006-x/21-006-x2022002-eng.htm>