

# WESTERN

## REGIONAL ENTERPRISE NETWORK



**2016-2017 Business Plan**

**Inform. Connect. Accelerate.**

Approved March 1, 2016

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## Message from Board Chair

The Western REN Board of Directors is a cross-section of private sector leaders from Argyle to Digby; we have diverse backgrounds, but each of us has a common purpose of improving the economic climate in Western Nova Scotia.

Our mandate to *'guide and navigate regional economic development'* requires that we fulfil a function that is not being applied elsewhere. We have to do things differently in order to expect different results.

It is our undertaking to be the interactive hub of economic information for the Western Region of Nova Scotia. We engage stakeholders, foster partnerships, and create opportunities for innovative collaboration; all to transform our region's economic challenges into economic opportunities.

We Inform. We Connect. We Accelerate. And we do it now.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Allister Surette".

Allister Surette, Western REN Board Chair  
*President and Vice-Chancellor, Université Sainte-Anne*

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## Message from CEO

Now that we have wrapped up our inaugural period, we are fully operational and looking forward to implementing Year One of our three-year strategy.

Faced, as always, with serious challenges and many opportunities, our role is to make investment in the Western region as easy as possible and to provide businesses with the tools and information they need to succeed and grow.

Our work has us looking very closely at the barriers to success, both perceived and real, and our focus will be on navigating through or working around those barriers.

We find the gaps, the overlaps, the impediments, the opportunities, and we continue to clear that path so that the private sector and our partners in economic and business development can reach greater levels of success from their efforts. In alignment with goals articulated in the *Now or Never* report, and adopted by the Province of Nova Scotia, our work focuses on shifting to a truly collaborative economic development campaign.

We cannot understate the importance of relationships and a shared vision towards a prosperous and stable Nova Scotia.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "A LeBlanc".

Angélique LeBlanc, Western REN CEO

## Who We Are

### Western Nova Scotia's Economic Development Organization

A public-private partnership, the Western Regional Enterprise Network (Western REN) is constantly networking to develop new relationships, and exploring innovative ways to overcome challenges in the regional business climate.

Our **mandate** is to guide and navigate regional economic development while providing support to businesses.

### We Believe

**People are our greatest strength:** The path to success involves working in partnership to ensure a positive, friendly and productive business environment that understands people are the heart and soul of the region.

**Diversity is Crucial to Sustainability:** By focusing on understanding the needs and issues of their business community, the Western REN will be better positioned to support and assist businesses as they grow, develop and continue to add diversity to Western Nova Scotia's demographics and economy.

**Creativity Drives Entrepreneurship & Innovation:** The Western REN will work in partnership with an attitude of collectively accepting the responsibility to succeed and to learn from failures as a region, thus moving forward in maximizing the economic and business development success of the region.

**Western Nova Scotians Embrace the Rural Lifestyle:** The Western REN respects that the people, communities, and businesses of the region have rural roots, therefore, many of the economic development solutions, programs and initiatives offered by the Western REN will be sensitive to the rural nature of their community partners.

**Partnerships are Key to Success:** The main area of focus for the Western REN is bringing together people, groups and organizations to collectively tap into the authenticity and resiliency of the region's businesses in an effort to maximize support for the region's economic development activities.

### WHAT WE DO.

#### WE INFORM

We are the hub for regional economic information, which we share with all partners and the business community.

#### WE CONNECT

We create opportunities for businesses, entrepreneurs, innovators, and policy makers to work together towards overcoming regional economic challenges.

#### WE ACCELERATE

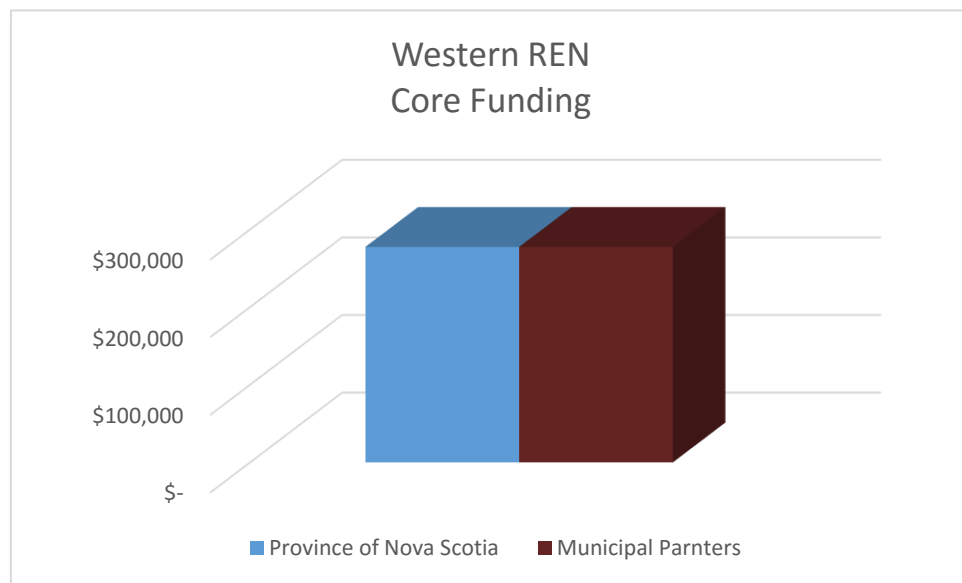
We identify trending patterns of barriers and successes for the business community, and we bring that information to sector groups and the province of Nova Scotia to find resolution.

## Western REN Funding

As with all Regional Enterprise Networks in the province, the Western REN's operating budget is provided through membership municipalities and the Province of Nova Scotia, using formulae determined through formal agreements with both partners.

With the completion and approval of the Strategic Plan, the Western REN is moving from the mostly operational work of the inaugural period, into a period of implementation of strategic initiatives. In doing so, network and partnership strengths will be used to leverage project funding for initiatives of regional significance.

Currently, the operational budget of the Western REN totals just over \$550,000.



The Municipal Partners at the inaugural table of the Western REN are as follows:

- Municipality of the District of Argyle,
- Municipality of the District of Clare,
- Municipality of the District of Digby,
- Municipality of the District of Yarmouth,
- Town of Digby, and
- Town of Yarmouth

Initially, all of the Regional Enterprise Networks were under the jurisdiction of the Department of Economic Rural Development and Tourism, until provincial restructuring moved them to the Department of Municipal Affairs.

## Leadership

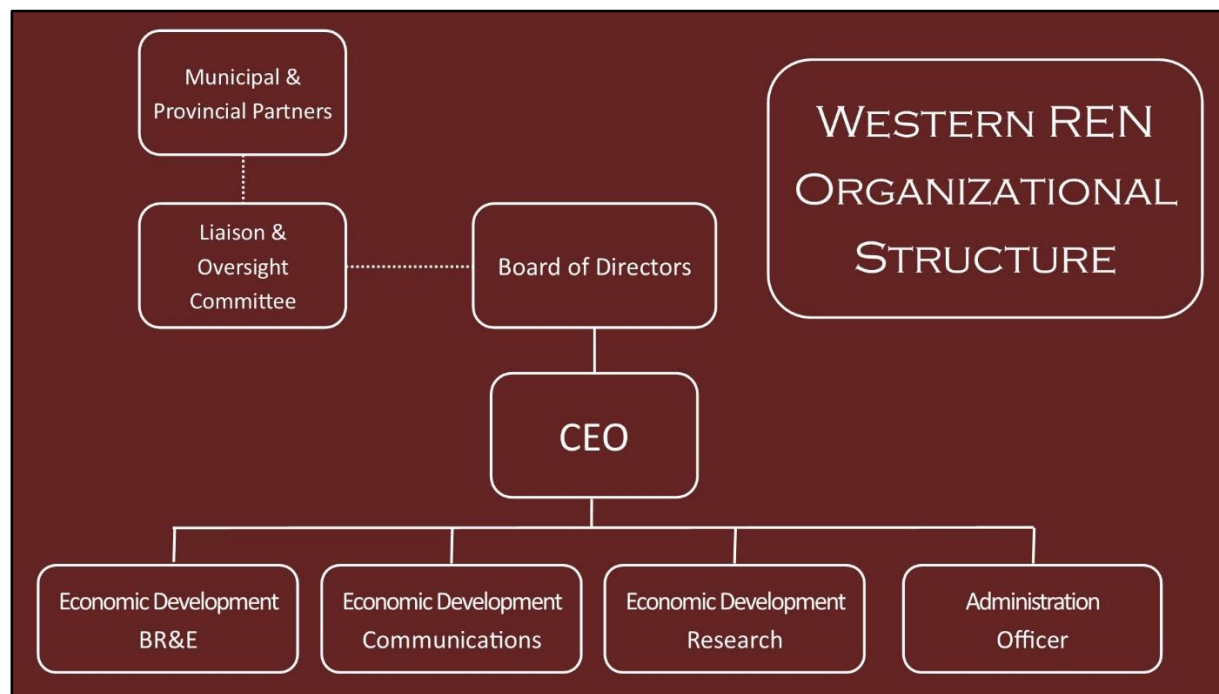
### Organizational Chart

The formation of all RENs goes through the same process. First, government partners agree on the boundaries, basic mandate, and funding formula; then local government create an *Inter-Municipal Agreement* to outline the terms and responsibilities of the governance structure. Each funding partner appoints a representative to the Liaison and Oversight Committee (L&O), which then appoints a Board of Directors selected from applications recruited from the private sector.

The L&O Committee's mandate requires them to meet twice a year at a minimum, to ensure oversight of the Western RENs core activities. In addition, the members of the L&O receive regular reports from the CEO, as directed by the Board. The L&O members are then responsible for ensuring that each funding partner is informed about Western REN work in the region.

The L&O Committee and the Board of Directors both participated in the development, and monitor the implementation of, the Strategic Plan: the primary focus of communications between the two levels.

The Western REN's Board of Directors is intended to operate as a Policy Governance Board, meaning they set clear operating parameters for the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to allow for organizational operations that can respond quickly to changing conditions. The CEO is responsible for all hiring and staff management.



## Board of Directors

The Western REN is lead by a private-sector, volunteer Board of Directors. Our nine-member board includes three standing committees: Executive, Finance, and Audit.

Full biographies and board terms for all board members are available online at [www.westernren.ca](http://www.westernren.ca).



*Allister Surette, Chair*



*Warner Comeau, Vice-Chair*



*Dave Saxton, Finance Chair*



*Craig LeBlanc, Audit Chair*



*Angela Thurber*



*Clark Sigfridson*



*Dr. Michel Comeau*



*David Arenburg*



*Ron Smith*



## Liaison and Oversight Committee

The Board of Directors was recruited and appointed by the Liaison and Oversight Committee (L&O). The eight (8) member L&O is comprised of elected representatives of each of our six (6) municipal partners and two (2) representative from our Provincial partners.

This committee, in addition to finding and appointing the Western REN Board of Directors, is to be the organizational connection back to the member municipal units. The L&O allows a seamless communication connection and ensures our organization is conducting itself with best practices and to the greatest benefit of the whole region.

## Municipal and Provincial membership of the L&O Committee

<a href="#"><u>Municipality of the District of Argyle</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Municipality of the District of Clare</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Municipality of the District of Digby</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Municipality of the District of Yarmouth</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Department of Municipal Affairs</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Nova Scotia Business Inc.</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Town of Digby</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Town of Yarmouth</u></a>

## Staff Team



Angélique LeBlanc  
Chief Executive Officer



Barb Muise  
Administrative Officer



Erika Rolston  
Economic Development Officer  
Communications Lead



Evan Nemeth  
Economic Development Officer  
Research Lead



Victoria Brooks  
Economic Development Officer  
*BusinessNow* Lead



## Western Region's Situational Analysis

Annual average employment in Southern Nova Scotia went unchanged from 2014 to 2015, though full time employment increased by approximately 450 jobs. The unemployment rate during this time improved from 12.05% to 10.85%.<sup>1</sup>

Eleven percent of the province's farming jobs are in the Western Region. The exports from this industry have increased by 228% in the past five years, from \$54,672,000 in 2011 to \$124,765,000 in 2015.<sup>2 3</sup>

Western Region jobs in the Food Manufacturing industry represent 21% of this industry's jobs in the province; exports have increased by 155% from \$660,389,000 in 2011 to \$1,020,563,000 in 2015.<sup>2 3</sup>

Of all the provincial jobs in the Fishing, Hunting and Trapping industries, 36% are in the Western Region, where exports have increased by 202% from \$438,506,000 in 2011 to \$883,595,000 in 2015.<sup>2 3</sup>

Lobster prices climbed from \$4/lb last year, to \$6 at the start of the season, to \$10 in mid-February. Three quarters of the market goes to the US, so the current exchange rate of the Canadian dollar is a factor.<sup>4</sup>

Looking ahead to new business opportunities, several Western Region municipal units are in the process of investing in upgrades to their industrial parks.

Université Sainte-Anne has experienced a 15% increase of students, despite declining numbers in most other Nova Scotian universities. Additionally, Sainte-Anne recently secured funding from ACOA to hire a qualified research, development and innovation manager for the purpose of engaging the private sector and industries.<sup>6</sup>

The Western Region has a higher percentage of individuals 25 and above that have postsecondary certificates, diplomas and degrees (53.4%), than the rest of Nova Scotia (40.9%), primarily at the College level. The same trend advantage is apparent at for the percentage of individuals with apprenticeship or trade certificates or diplomas (13.1%), over the whole of Nova Scotia (8.3%).<sup>7</sup>

### WHAT'S HAPPENING RIGHT NOW?

#### *Lobster*<sup>4</sup>

- Catches up (>25-30% over 2014 in opening weeks)
- Prices up – opening at \$6, up \$1.50 from 2014 opening price. Current Price of \$10.
- Exports up – buoyed by low Canadian dollar and lower fuel prices
- First harvest season as a Marine Stewardship Certified industry

#### *Mink*<sup>5</sup>

- Pelts are selling for \$10-30 down from \$100 three years ago.
- Not all Mink Breeders are compliant with new Fur Industry Regulations in the province, which came into effect in early 2016.
- Mink feed processing plants and their feedstock suppliers are also affected, with plants weighing options on how to keep their employees.

## Economic Challenges & Opportunities

### ***Uncertain: Yarmouth Ferry***

At time of print, Bay Ferries has yet to announce its ferry for the Yarmouth to Portland route.

### ***Uncertain: Oil prices***

Slumping oil prices have a negative impact on Nova Scotia's equalization payments and workers who have been dependent on work in Alberta's oil patch. However, lower fuel prices at the pump are helpful to freight businesses and some displaced workers may stay and work in the province.

### ***Uncertain: Canadian dollar***

Increased costs for imported goods present a challenge to retail and manufacturers. However, it represents a boon to exported goods (other than oil). In an effort to combat this downswing, it is believed that the Bank of Canada will introduce negative interest rates, thereby encouraging more lending.

### ***Challenge: Energy Infrastructure***

The Southwestern part of the province has an energy infrastructure network that is not connected to the North American grid. This means that any energy generation in the region can provide only a domestic market. In addition to this challenge, the capacity of the infrastructure is already being maximized, thus creating a barrier to investments in energy generation projects in the region.

### ***Opportunity: Renewable Energy (Tidal, Wind)***

The Bay of Fundy tides and Atlantic winds provide ample renewable energy opportunities, and the technology exists to take full advantage of them. The above-mentioned challenges in the infrastructure systems may therefore represent a valuable, long-term investment opportunity. In the more immediate term, energy efficiency programs on a large scale for both residential and industrial users may help increase capacity for selling energy into the local grid.

### ***Challenge: Commodity Prices***

Large scale operations with natural resources work at economies of scale that cannot be realized until the commodity prices reach a certain point. This results in inconsistency in direct industry activity, employment rates, and secondary/tertiary industries.

### ***Opportunity: Mining***

Avalon Rare Metals Inc. has completed a drilling program at the Tin-Indium mine in East Kemptville. It is now in the process of completing a Preliminary Economic Analysis on the project, which is expected in mid-2016. The site employed 200 individuals in the mid-1980s and early 90s. Avalon anticipates having the mine open and running again in 3-4 years if everything goes as planned.

### ***Opportunity: Offshore Development***

Shell Canada began exploratory drilling in the Shelburne Basin in October, and has recently begun the process of applying to drill a second well. Some suppliers for the operation exist along the South Shore, and a fair amount of the drilling program will aim to employ Nova Scotians.

### **Challenge: Communications Infrastructure**

High speed broadband access is becoming a necessity for many businesses and industries, while also being tied to quality of life for employees. Internet access and reliability in rural South West Nova is the poorest in the province, and has prompted a study by consultants hired by the Nova Scotia Department of Business. The economics of the solutions are being explored, while some argue that short term bandaidd solutions may end up costing more in the long run than dark fibre optic infrastructure.

### **Challenge: Population**

There is population decline in the Western Region in all demographics other than 65+ (see table below) and raises concerns for the local work force. This decline, while evident in elementary enrollment numbers, is not yet seen in high school enrollment levels where there have been minor increases. Outmigration in the area has resulted in a higher supply of property for sale resulting in lower property prices, which could attract new families to the area.

<b>Population by Age Group</b>									
	Western Region			Neighbouring Counties*			Nova Scotia		
		% Change			% Change			% Change	
	<u>2015</u>	<u>1 Year</u>	<u>5 Year</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>1 Year</u>	<u>5 Year</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>1 Year</u>	<u>5 Year</u>
Total	41,846	-1.1%	-5.9%	35,162	0.4%	-2.8%	943,002	0.0%	0.1%
Under 20	7,904	-2.0%	-13.0%	6,472	4.0%	-6.4%	185,745	-0.6%	-6.9%
20-44	10,392	-2.3%	-16.6%	8,305	5.4%	6.2%	293,631	-0.7%	-2.9%
45-64	13,799	-1.4%	-3.5%	11,701	-1.4%	-17.5%	285,460	-0.6%	-1.7%
65+	9,751	1.4%	13.2%	8,684	-2.2%	-13.4%	178,166	3.1%	19.0%

*\*Neighbouring Counties of Shelburne and Annapolis*

### **Opportunity: Innovation & Entrepreneurship**

With an abundance of natural resources and an aging demographic, innovation and entrepreneurship are important to economic success in the region. Opportunities include value adding existing harvests, developing new products for as-yet-untapped markets, and being a successor for an existing business. There are several economic and business development organizations within the region to help individuals and businesses make opportunities out of challenges, including Community Business Development Corporations (CBDC) and Le Conseil de développement économique de la Nouvelle-Écosse (CDÉNE). Also, Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC) has an overarching entrepreneurship strategy built into much of its programming; both NSCC and the Université Sainte-Anne both have active Enactus clubs.

## Operating Environment

February 2014, the ONE Nova Scotia Commission on Building our New Economy released its *Now or Never* report, and the entire economic development landscape changed. When a provincial commission comprised of economic experts says it's critical to shift old attitudes and work towards a larger common goal – and to do it now – it's time to listen.

*And listen we did.*

While the ONE Nova Scotia's Commission was shaking the foundations of the status quo, the Province of Nova Scotia was rolling out its new model for regional economic development in rural Nova Scotia: Regional Enterprise Networks (REN).

As Inter-Municipal corporations, led by a private sector boards of directors, the RENs are mandated to 'guide and navigate' economic development so the business community can innovate and create opportunities to the benefit of their own economic regions, neighbouring regions, and the whole of the province.

In 2014, the province also requested that the ONE Nova Scotia Coalition develop a 10-year plan to work towards the goals (See Appendix A) of the *Now or Never* report. The resultant *We Choose Now* report highlights seven (7) areas with multiple actions that will – collectively – work towards the larger goals of the *Now or Never* report.

It is one year since the 2015 dismantling of the Department of Economic Rural Development & Tourism (ERDT), when responsibility for the RENs was transferred to the Department of Municipal Affairs (DMA). As the dust settled at the provincial level, it became clear the DMA is a strong supporter of the model and the work of the RENs.

Late in 2015, there was also an important shift at the Federal level, with a change of majority government and its identified priorities; some of which may also change the landscape of Nova Scotia's economic revitalization, including investment spending, foreign direct investment attraction, and immigration goals.

As always, the reality of rural Nova Scotia – indeed of rural Canada – is one of natural resource based communities in transition; lacking the population and economic base to provide the political or business cases for large scale commitments to infrastructure and investment. Our regional economies are heavily influenced by commodity and global markets which leave us vulnerable to forces beyond our control.

Rebuilding Nova Scotia's economy is, and will continue to be, a truly collaborative, action-based effort. In other words:

**We** – the business support sector, private sector, and government sectors –

**Choose** – need to be innovative, willing to take risks, and act –

**Now.**

## Strategic Themes

### ***Strategic Theme #1: Business Retention & Expansion – BusinessNow***

The majority of investment and business development opportunities come from existing businesses already operating within the region. The Western REN must reach out to, and engage with, its business community to understand the needs, issues, and opportunities in their businesses and industries.

In a measured effort, the Western REN and its partners will focus on identifying and supporting those industries, businesses, institutions and individuals who thrive as a result of their innovative and entrepreneurial nature.

### ***Strategic Theme #2: Investment Readiness***

Successfully retaining and attracting investment means being able to provide the appropriate information about business climate and infrastructure required by existing and potential investors.

As the lead regional economic development agency for Western Nova Scotia, the Western REN along with municipal units and economic development partners will become empowered to capture and retain investment opportunities.

### ***Strategic Theme #3: Innovative Partnerships & Communications***

The most important ingredient to achieving economic development success is the ability to harness Nova Scotia's greatest asset – its PEOPLE. In order to truly utilize that asset, the residents of the Western Region need to become engaged in a continuous and energized conversation on what they love about this area, the positive energy and optimism that exists along with the many opportunities available through innovative thinking and a spirit of entrepreneurship.

The sharing and communicating of ideas, information, knowledge and opportunities will be a key success factor for the Western REN and their economic development partners. The Western REN will be the regional hub for communications, networking and partnerships, in support of a strong cohesive economic development regional community that is driven through entrepreneurship and innovation.

## Implementation

The Western REN, as a regional economic development organization in a *post-Ivany* era, operates under the following basic tenets:

- ***There is no silver bullet:*** Our efforts will help shift the economy towards wealth-generation, not necessarily towards previous models of single large employers creating jobs. Entrepreneurship and innovation will be the key to creating the opportunities that lead to stability.
- ***The Rising Tide Floats All Ships:*** We recognize successes within our region are successes for all of Nova Scotia, and vice-versa. We are challenging the 'silo' mentality and fostering relationship building in support of a healthier business climate.
- ***Goal Alignment Builds Momentum:*** We actively seek Collective Impact Initiatives and work toward broader goals; thus harnessing greater capacity and more effective partnerships. We will monitor our activities against the Goals and Game Changers from the Ivany Commission, the collaborative actions in the We Choose Now Playbook, and the priorities of the upcoming Private Sector Growth Strategy; and we will encourage and support our partners to do the same.

### Strategic Theme #1: *BusinessNow*

Our flagship service delivery program, *BusinessNow* is a professional visitation program to support maintenance, growth, and even succession.

All the actions identified within this theme relate directly to our actual on-going visitation program; including turning aggregate data into accessible and useful information.

Western REN Strategic Actions YEAR ONE	Measuring Western REN Progress	Monitoring Regional Impact
Develop a Western REN regional business directory and use to prioritized BRE visits.	Directory completed	Export and business expansion opportunities identified & being captured.
Map out and align “who does what” in economic development services and supports.	Economic Development Navigation Tool Created	Economic & business development programs being used to maximum benefit. Venture capital & new start-ups opportunities being captured.
Expand, coordinate, and promote <i>BusinessNow</i> program in collaboration with partners.	<i>BusinessNow</i> as a core activity with communicated message	Export and business expansion opportunities identified & being captured.
Use referrals and Action Team members to identify those businesses ready to expand or to take their operations to the next level.	Action Team and referrals program in place	Export & domestic markets identified & being captured. Productivity & innovation improving competitiveness.
Create action plans, with partners, to address matters uncovered during visitations.	Action plans created	Exports/domestic markets being maximized, new start-ups developing, venture capital & Foreign Direct Investment available, entrepreneurship & innovation being used in action plans.
Share insights and opportunities for innovation within existing businesses.	Productivity Pilot Project	Productivity & innovation improving competitiveness and allowing businesses to expand and increase export value.

## Strategic Theme #2: Investment Readiness

Working at the speed of business is crucial to make the most of investment opportunities, whether they are from across the road or across the ocean. Our provincial partner, NSBI, is working to attract investment opportunities to Nova Scotia; our task is to provide the best information for their efforts and to set the hook once we get a nibble.

Actions in this section are designed to realistically assess the current state of investment readiness and to work towards an ever increasing state of readiness.

Western REN Strategic Actions YEAR ONE	Measuring Western REN Progress	Monitoring Regional Impact
Gather, collate, and update the region's centrally held economic and investment data.	Updated and available regional profile & asset inventory	Up to date data is required for all decision making.
Undertake an investment readiness assessment	Investment Readiness Assessment completed	Municipal investment response capacity being improved.
Create an industrial & commercial land inventory, housed online and available for site selectors and investors.	Tool created & data population started	Land and assets inventory available online and being used to capture opportunities for venture capital, start-ups, & Foreign Direct Investment.
Create an investment response protocol with municipal and provincial partners.	Investment Opportunities Action Team established and protocol developed	Foreign Direct Investment, start-up, expansion & venture capital opportunities being captured through efficient use of protocol.
Coordinate and/or administratively support industry sector round tables as required to collectively address industry based needs.	Round tables identifying priorities	Priority needs of rural & regional sectors being addressed, leading to increases in export value, entrepreneurship, & innovative partnerships.
As needed, create and/or support infrastructure working group to define needs, prioritize, and advocate for infrastructure.	Priority infrastructure identified	Coordinated efforts underway to find solutions to infrastructure needs for expansions, start-ups, Foreign Direct Investment, and/or venture capital opportunities.



### Strategic Theme #3: Innovative Partnerships & Communications

Providing a hub for information sharing and partnership development within the business community and development agencies will foster a more collaborative approach to addressing regional issues.

These actions serve to strengthen existing partnerships and allow new ones to develop, all in a positive and optimistic climate of innovation and entrepreneurship.

Western REN Strategic Actions YEAR ONE	Measuring Western REN Progress	Monitoring Regional Impact
Conduct an import substitution study to identify regional supply needs and export opportunities.	Study complete & opportunities identified.	Investment, expansion, & start-ups are capturing opportunities identified.
Request the Province and partners create a Western Nova Scotia Regional Recruitment and Retention Immigration Strategy.	Request made	Partners engaged and beginning to address.
Create and implement a communications plan, including goal alignment messages and good news stories/lessons learned.	Communications plan created and being implemented.	Attitude shift demonstrated by increased willingness to share information and create new & innovative partnerships.
Celebrate successes and lessons learned through an annual Summit and Communications Plan.	Annual Summit Western Wins	
Become the hub for the sharing of information related to the region's business development and economic development service providers.	Information sharing capacity created and accessible.	
Work with partners to organize familiarization tours and site visits to showcase successes.	Familiarization tours and site visits on regular basis	Best practices, including productivity examples & success stories being highlighted to partners.

## Key Partnerships:

Each of the strategic themes in our plan represents multiple opportunities to engage and partner – in fact, networking is the main tool of the Western REN and its key contribution to economic development in the region.

The Western REN's coordination and delivery of the region's *BusinessNow* program is at the heart of its fact-finding and relationship building among the private sector. This professional business visitation program helps connect **existing businesses** with **economic and business development partners** who can help the companies overcome challenges and reach the next level of growth. In addition to directly supporting businesses, the *BusinessNow* program provides insights into the regional business climate that cannot be learned any other way. The Western REN is committed to sharing sector or issue based insights with partners to allow for the most effective planning and decision making.

Formalized **inter-municipal partnership** and working relationships with **Departments of the Nova Scotia government** each demonstrate a shared commitment to improve the economy of Western Nova Scotia. At a government level, this means ensuring existing businesses and **potential investors** have easy access to the accurate and up-to-date information they need for their decision making. Being able to provide this information, and being able to meet an investor's needs is called *Investment Readiness*.

In addition to these formal municipal partnerships, there are also active working relationships between **municipal development staff** and the Western REN. These dynamic networks of economic developers are at both the Western regional level and at the provincial level (Economic Developers Network of Nova Scotia). Coordination of on the ground work and province wide strategies are an important part of ensuring effective economic development.

Another partnership strengthening the Western REN is with **Nova Scotia Business Inc.** NSBI is working to attract investment interests from abroad, to increase the value of provincial exports, and to grow the number of provincial exporters. The Western REN's *BusinessNow* work will identify expansion into export potential, which the network of partners can help the businesses realize. Also, NSBI is casting the net broadly to attract investment from around the world to bring into Nova Scotia – it is the region's job to ensure the Western Region is a good place to land those catches.

The Western REN has been charged with providing a hub for information exchange among all partners: private, public, and academic. The region's **Post Secondary Education (PSE)** institutions represent powerful assets for training and skills development, and as hubs of research, innovation, and problem solving. As with all of our other regional assets, the Western REN will engage the PSEs as effective partners towards a new economic prosperity in Western Nova Scotia.

Finally, the Western REN engages, at a project by project level, with **federal government** departments and agencies where strategic goals align. One example is the Western REN lead on a project with Global Affairs Canada, to identify foreign direct investment opportunities by analyzing local industry supply chains. Other potential projects are currently being explored with Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency.

## Budget Overview

### Revenues

Budget April 2016-March 2017

Province of Nova Scotia	277,500
Municipalities	277,500
Total Revenues	\$555,000

### Expenses

Wages and benefits	328,178
Travel, meals and lodging	37,500
Conferences	11,000
Training, governance and risk management	14,100
Consulting support	13,000
Office space, supplies & IT needs	44,000
Professional and Corporate Services	30,750
Communication and recruitment	40,000
Strategic Planning Initiatives	36,472
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$555,000

## Appendix A

### Now or Never Report: Game Changers and Goals

#### Game Changers

##### **ATTITUDE GAME CHANGERS**

1. A new politics
2. Attitude shift: a shared commitment to growing Nova Scotia's one economy

##### **DEMOGRAPHIC GAME CHANGERS**

3. Become a more inclusive and welcoming province

##### **ECONOMIC GROWTH GAME CHANGERS**

4. Place strategic priority on business start-ups and growth- oriented enterprises
5. Renew rural industries
6. A shared commitment to sustainable development and regulatory excellence
7. Rebuild our trade economy
8. Excellence in education and training
9. Promote entrepreneurship

##### **UNDER GOVERNMENT PURVIEW**

10. Integrate economic development services
11. Better management of economic development investment funds
12. Find a committed federal partner

#### Goals

##### **DEMOGRAPHIC GOALS**

1. Inter-provincial Migration: a net gain of 1,000 working age persons per year (reversing a trend that sees an average of 800 people leave annually).
2. International Immigration: triple the average number of new international immigrants annually to 7,000.
3. Retention of International Students: retain 10 per cent of foreign students who complete studies in Nova Scotia annually (double current rate).

##### **ECONOMIC GROWTH GOALS**

4. Business Start-ups: increase the number of new business starts to 4,200 annually (50 per cent more than current).
5. Value of Exports: increase value of international and inter-provincial to \$20 billion (50 per cent more than current).
6. Export Trade: increase the number of Nova Scotia firms participating in export trade by 50% over the current level of 850.
7. Labour Force: raise participation to Canadian rate or higher (bringing more than 25,000 Nova Scotians into permanent attachment to the labour market).
8. First Nations and African Nova Scotians Employment Rates: raise to parity with provincial average.
9. Youth Unemployment: lower rate to national average.

10. Post-Secondary Education and Training: increase population of adults who complete a certificate, diploma, degree, and/or apprenticeship completion from 55 to 65 per cent.
11. Universities R&D: double research funding to \$360M annually.
12. R&D Partnerships: double number of R&D partnerships between industry and post-secondary institutions to 2,000 per year.
13. Venture Capital: increase per capita investment to national average (up at least 60 per cent).
14. Tourism Expansion: revenues from Nova Scotia's leading service sector export will reach \$4 billion (nearly double current).
15. Fisheries and Agriculture Exports: double export value of both on a sustainable basis.
16. Domestic Markets for Agricultural Products: double the value of products produced and consumed in Nova Scotia.

#### **UNDER GOVERNMENT PURVIEW**

17. Lead Long-Term Planning Process: the province, in collaboration with municipalities, will create a plan by the end of 2015 to meet these goals.
  18. Administration: provincial review of municipal government and regional service structures.
  19. Fiscal Health: decrease Nova Scotia's net debt to GDP ratio will drop by nearly 7 points to 30 per cent or less.
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#### **We Choose Now Priorities**

1. The Early Years: Starting Strong
2. Our Future is Young
3. Universities and NSCC as Innovation Hubs
4. Immigration and Welcoming Communities
5. Our ICT Momentum
6. Going Global: Innovation and Competitiveness
7. Nova Scotia's Ocean Advantage

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