

The background of the cover features a diagonal split. The upper right portion shows a light blue sky with two wind turbines. The lower left portion shows a dark blue body of water with a small boat and a forested shoreline in the background.

2019-2020 Business Plan

WESTERN REGIONAL
ENTERPRISE NETWORK

THIS PLAN...

Sets out our strategic goals and actions

Creating a **business and investment friendly environment** is the primary goal of economic development. This is a goal that cannot be reached by one organization or group. These actions will **require partner buy-in and supported implementation**.

This plan is designed to create an investment friendly environment through full engagement of private and public sector partners to address the persistent labour force and infrastructure challenges within the region.

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LEADERSHIP MESSAGES

Notes from the Board Chair and CEO

Message from Board Chair, Ron Smith

This business plan represents a new chapter in the Western REN's work. We have done our homework – bringing together the information, organizations, people, and funders – and now we are **taking serious and effective action**.

Informed decision making and strong partnerships are behind the success of our organization.

The Western REN provides the backbone for efforts to address complexities facing businesses in our region – infrastructure and workforce being at the heart of those challenges.

We recognize the long-term effort needed and we are up for it.

Our professional, dedicated team is serving and effectively engaging people in the region – and it shows.



Message from CEO Angélique LeBlanc

The Western REN has been moving into an even more **action-oriented** stage of our organization. Our successes grow as our partnerships strengthen and the impacts are becoming more evident. From the benefits of the Connector program increasing valuable networks among employers and retaining the region's talent, to supporting employers in the first steps of hiring international talent. The Western REN is helping.

Also, understanding infrastructure challenges has been a priority file since our beginning and we are well positioned to capture investment dollars towards improvements.



WESTERN REGION

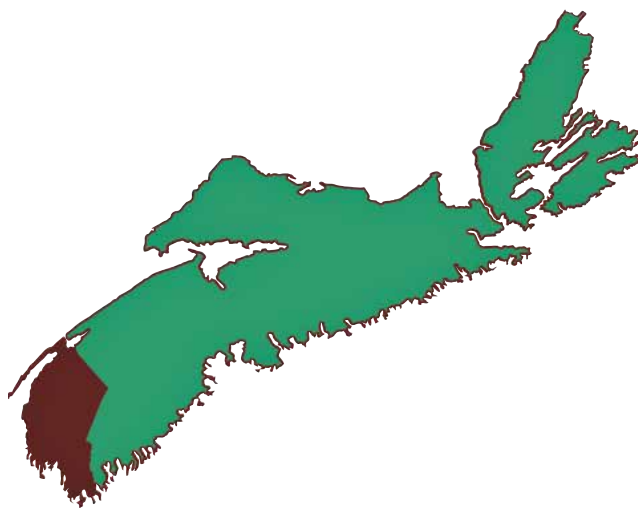
The Region

THE REGION

The Western REN covers an area that includes seven (7) municipal units.

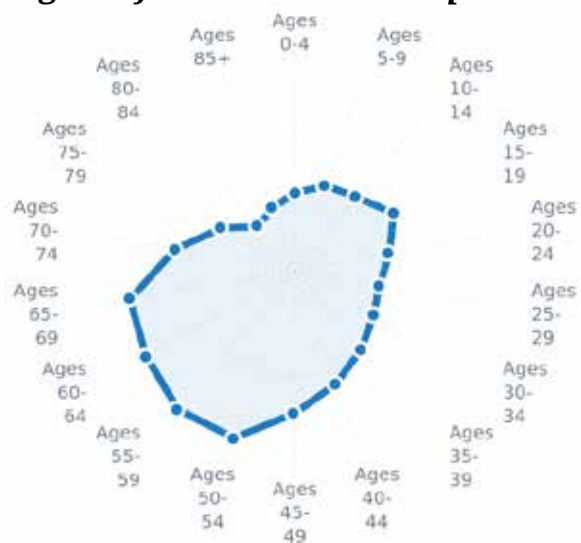
A geographically dispersed population of just under 50,000, this region includes the Municipalities of Argyle, Barrington, Clare, Digby, and Yarmouth, as well as the Towns of Digby and Yarmouth.

The public school system is supported by the Tri-County Regional Centre for Education and the Conseil scolaire acadien provincial. There are also options among post-secondary institutions for trades and academic pursuits.



The Western Regional Enterprise Network serves a large area in the Southwestern part of Nova Scotia.

Ages of Western NS Population



The province-wide phenomenon of an aging population in this region is compounded by an out-migration of youth seeking opportunities elsewhere.

Source: Townfolio (2017), Statistics Canada 2016 Census

THE ECONOMY

Fishing is both a traditional and a current economic driver in this region; with multiple groundfish and shellfish species exported.

Historically, agriculture and forestry played significant roles in the economy. Presently, emerging industries, such as renewable energy, provide opportunities for growth in these sectors.

Manufacturing, including seafood processing, is one of the largest employers in the region and many of those products are exported.

WESTERN REGION

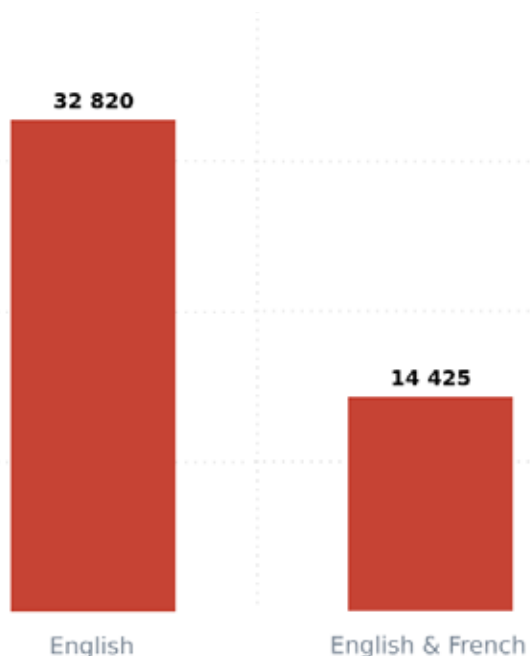
The People

Bilingual Population

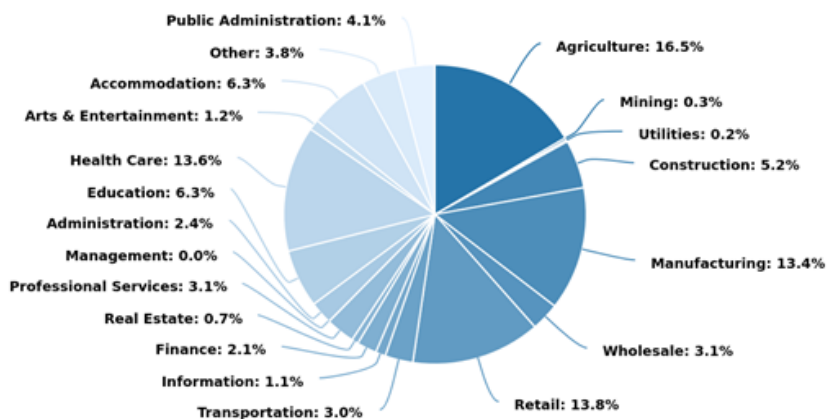
THE PEOPLE

Friendly, skilled, and loyal talent lives in this region, with a high rate (30%) of French/English bilingualism.

Talent among the mature, experienced populations, as well as new talent emerging from the robust post-secondary systems are targeted by recruitment and support programs for both employers and job-seekers.



Labour Force by Industry



*Agriculture, fishing, forestry, and hunting account for 16.5% of the community's workforce.
Source: Townfolio (2017), Statistics Canada 2016 Census*

REGIONAL REALITIES

Infrastructure

Nova Scotia-Maine Ferry

In 2018, the Cat carried 21% more passengers than 2017. Bay Ferries has signed a five-year lease with Bar Harbour, Maine, with renovations required.

Yarmouth's ferry terminal has a committed \$9.7 million for upgrades.

Highways

Highways 101 and 103 are incomplete 100-series highways; neither of them is completely controlled access. Updates to portions of 101 between Digby and Marshalltown have begun. There are plans for completing the gap from Marshalltown to Weymouth.

Internet

Internet in rural South West Nova remains the poorest in the province. Internet companies have received federal funding for work in Cape Sable Island, North Range, and Sandford.

Nova Scotia has announced \$192 million for enhancing access to high speed. Develop Nova Scotia is managing the fund. Western REN has been working with existing companies to ensure shovel ready projects when the \$192 million is accessible.

Digby-Saint John Ferry

The Digby-Saint John ferry route remains an important transportation link.

Although the new Fundy Rose vessel has less space for freight trucks, Bay Ferries has made up for this with additional runs during peak fishing season.

Airports

Digby-Annapolis Regional Airport can accommodate medium, twin-engine planes, is staffed 24/7, and houses an emergency dispatch centre.

Yarmouth International Airport has two runways over 1500 meters long, aircraft services and storage, and fuel services.

Energy

Energy infrastructure of Southwest Nova Scotia is separated from the North American grid, creating a barrier to exporting energy. The domestic grid is being used to its maximum capacity – a challenge for new energy projects in the region.

The Western REN is currently undergoing an Energy Investment Plan to establish a baseline of energy usage and identify opportunities for locally generated green energy, energy storage, and district energy/heating facilities.

REGIONAL REALITIES

International Influences

Canadian Dollar Value

As of February 2019, the Canadian dollar has averaged 75.18 US cents in 2019.

Forecasts suggest a growth of the dollar above 79 US cents in 2020. The combination of falling oil prices, trade tensions, and higher interest rates in the US have all had impacts.

Some experts believe that for non-energy exports from Canada to become more competitive globally, the dollar must first drop even further.



Oil Prices

As of February 2019, oil prices have dropped to \$57 USD per barrel, down from a high of \$65 USD per barrel this time last year.

Lower fuel prices benefit residents, mobile workforce, and freight businesses.

Trade Agreements

The **NAFTA** remains in effect until the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement (**CUSMA**) has been ratified. Roughly 75% of Canada's exports are sent to the United States, as are a great deal of the Western Region's marine catches.

The Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (**CPTPP**) has been agreed to by all 11 participating countries and ratified by 7. Japan and Vietnam are two of Nova Scotia's top 6 seafood importers, reduced tariffs will likely impact those markets positively.

The Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (**CETA**) removed tariffs on 98-99% of tariff lines and

- 8% tariff on live lobster has been lifted
- 20% tariff on processed lobster will be lifted over the next 5 years, increasing the likelihood of identifying new markets for seafood, and other exports.

Commodity Prices

Many natural resources are commodities with prices set on the global market. Harvesting requires economies of scale that can only be realized when the commodity prices reach a certain price point.

This creates inconsistencies for direct industry activity, employment rates, and secondary/tertiary industries.

REGIONAL REALITIES

Natural Resources

Renewable Energy

Ample renewable energy options exist in Southwest Nova Scotia, such as:

- Bay of Fundy tides
- Atlantic winds
- Solar exposure rates on par with Southern Ontario
- Wood energy and biomass

Infrastructure represents a valuable, long-term investment opportunity and the Western REN is working to identify the most immediate opportunities.

In the short term, energy efficiency programs on an industrial scale can help increase local grid capacity.

Onshore Development

In 2018, the NS Department of Energy and Mines estimated onshore natural gas resources worth \$20-60 billion within the province.

In 2014, fracking (the method of recovering natural gas from the ground) was banned in Nova Scotia.

Mining

Tin's value is steady with that of 2018, at \$21,100/tonne as of February 2019

This may increase the viability of the East Kemptville site with its roughly 6 million tonnes of 55% tin ore that has already been mined, but not yet processed.

A Preliminary Economic Assessment of the site was completed in summer 2018. A bulk sample was extracted in January 2019 to begin a pilot-scale ore sorting plant.



Offshore Development

The Sable Offshore Energy Project and Deep Panuke are now being decommissioned. There are no current exploration projects on Nova Scotia's offshore, though multiple exploratory licenses are active.

It is estimated that there is a potential of 120 trillion cubic feet of natural gas and 8 billion barrels of oil offshore.

REGIONAL REALITIES

People

Population & Demographics

Western Region continues to experience population decline, except for ages 65+ (2016 census), raising concerns for the regional workforce.

Outmigration and the aging population may result in a higher supply of properties and businesses for sale, creating opportunity for entrepreneurial newcomers or people wanting to return to the region.

Local Research & Development

Université Sainte-Anne's Laboratory for Innovation and Science in Industry focuses on research with applications in aquaculture, fisheries, agri-food, and green energies. Many of the region's private sector participants are actively engaged in R&D, innovating new products and responding to market demands.

Canada's Oceans Supercluster will create many opportunities in oceans-based R&D. Regional businesses and academic institutions are well positioned to capture some of these opportunities with the collaborative Sandbox model.

Talent

Various public-sector programs provide tools and incentives to attract and retain a diverse and young workforce, such as:

- Connector Programs
- Graduate to Opportunity
- Atlantic Immigration Pilot Program

Nova Scotia has several incentive programs to support youth recruitment and retention in the workforce.

Innovation & Entrepreneurship

Innovative opportunities in natural resource sectors include value-adding existing harvests and developing new products for as-yet-untapped markets.

Ignite Labs provides an incubation structure, mentoring and partnerships for startup companies to operate in a lean environment. Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC) has entrepreneurship focus built into much of its programming; both NSCC and Université Sainte-Anne have active Enactus Clubs.



STRATEGIC ACTIONS

Engaging the Western Region's PRIVATE SECTOR

Western REN Actions	Outputs	Outcomes
Continue communications via ongoing social media campaign	25% increase in social media uptake	Increased engagement demonstrates relevant messages and information
Continue to deliver and partner on business and sector networking and development events	Host and co-host a minimum of 8 events	Increased partnerships between and among private and public sector
Use BusinessNow to identify opportunities and barriers to investment	12 presentations 90 actions taken 100 company interactions	Improved access to programs and increased client program enrollment
Strategically apply Succession Matching efforts	20 coupon codes to both sellers & buyers 7 Be Your Own Boss codes to buyers	Succession matches made
Implement Continuous Improvement Program	10-20 companies participating	Increased culture of Continuous Improvement among business leaders



STRATEGIC ACTIONS

Engaging the Western Region’s PUBLIC SECTOR

Western REN Actions	Outputs	Outcomes
Create an action plan for regional energy and internet infrastructure	Regional energy action plan developed ISP partner secured	Public and private investments being made
Work on strategic issues with economic developers from municipal units	4 meetings actively seeking partnerships 25 support activities	Increased collaboration among and between municipal partners
Advance the Western Nova Scotian Regional Value Proposition work	12+ stakeholders and partners involved 7 presentations	Value proposition endorsement from municipal and provincial partners
Circulate, coordinate, and respond to regional investment inquiries	10 collective responses to investment inquiries	Strategies in place to improve investment response time and quality

The Western REN continues to leverage additional investments into the region through extensive partnerships on relevant and beneficial work.



STRATEGIC ACTIONS

Addressing TALENT NEEDS

Western REN Actions	Outputs	Outcomes
Continue delivering the Connector Program	40 Connectors 50 Connectees 4 Events	Increased quality employment for youth, newcomers, and boomerangers
Coordinate immigration services related to workforce and talent gaps	Working agreement among immigration services	Talent retention increased
Continue delivery of employer driven Atlantic Immigration Pilot	12 Designations 3 Events 4 Presentations	Talent shortage decreased
Lead provincial, regional, and economic development partners to craft an attraction and retention action plan	Attraction and retention plan in place	Attracting and retaining talent to the region



FUNDING AND PARTNERS

Shared costs and shared work



Western REN core funding has been consistent since 2014.

Using a formula where the seven (7) municipal units' collective contribution is matched by the Province of Nova Scotia makes dollars go further.

Revenues	Operating Budget Fiscal Year 2019-2020
Province of Nova Scotia	277,500
Municipal Units	277,500
Rental income and Interest	10,900
Total Revenues	\$565,900
Expenses	
Wages and benefits	369,280
Travel, meals, and lodging	26,300
Conferences	7,000
Training, governance, and risk management	11,000
Consulting support	18,800
Office space, supplies and IT needs	38,700
Professional and corporate services	12,700
Communications and recruitment	27,000
Strategic planning initiatives	55,120
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$565,900

Liaison and Oversight Committee - Funding Partners

Municipality of Argyle Lucien LeBlanc	Municipality of Barrington Eddie Nickerson	Municipality of Clare Ronnie LeBlanc	Municipality of Digby Jimmy MacAlpine	Municipality of Yarmouth Patti Durkee
Town of Digby Ben Cleveland	Town of Yarmouth Pam Mood		Dept. of Municipal Affairs Ahmad Shahwan	Dept. Labour & Advanced Education Ross MacDonald

THE HEART OF THE WESTERN REN

Team



Staff

Angélique LeBlanc - Chief Executive Officer - Since August 2014

Possessing natural leadership skills, Angélique brings extensive experience with partnering across sectors to this position. She has a thorough understanding of business and economic development and has a solid team to implement the work.



Vacant -BusinessNow

Actively recruiting



Erika Rolston - Communications & Investment Readiness - Since November 2014

Inter-provincial immigrant from coastal BC, Erika's communication and organizational strengths have supported the collaborative model's implementation in Western NS.



Evan Nemeth - Research Lead - Since August 2015

Steeped in data and analyses, Evan is the hub of the Western REN. His ability to understand and translate complex information is crucial to the evidence based decision making of the organization.



Brenda LaGrande - Connector Program Manager - Since April 2017

Returning to the region after being away, Brenda uses her networks and her natural welcoming personality to help clients build their own networks; connecting the hidden talent with the hidden job market.



Gino Thibeault - Immigration Lead - Since August 2017

Experienced in finance and a former business owner, Gino brings his first hand knowledge of working with foreign labour markets forward in his role promoting the Atlantic Immigration Pilot in Western NS.










Keval Goreham - Accounting Clerk and Office Manager - Since October 2018

The newest member of the team, Keval's calm and competent nature is fast becoming the glue that holds the team together. Her organizational and accounting strengths keep the wheels turning.

Governance and Leadership

Shared governance

Board of Directors - Appointed by the Liaison and Oversight Committee	
	<p>Ron Smith - Board Chair - Final term expires June 2020 An experienced corporate director, Ron's experience in the finance, telecom, and energy sectors contribute to the strategic successes of the Western REN.</p>
	<p>Clark Sigfridson - Board Vice-Chair - Committee Chair (Finance/Audit) - Final term expires June 2019 An entrepreneur and small business owner, Clark's business and finance accumen has assured the organizational financial accountability and transparency.</p>
	<p>David Arenburg - Committee Chair (HR&Governance) - Final term expires June 2020 Recently retired as a franchise owner and operator, David's management and policy skills have supported the recruitment and retention of a high quality organizational team.</p>
	<p>Craig LeBlanc - Final term expires June 2019 Owner and operator of a business since 2005, Craig served as the inaugural Audit Chair and helped establish the sound accounting practices of the Western REN.</p>
	<p>Warner Comeau - Final term expires June 2019 Having served as Board Chair and on the Finance Committee, Warner's understanding of accounting and policy development have ensured the Western REN operates with the highest standards.</p>
	<p>Allister Surette - Final term expires June 2020 The Board's inaugural Chair and co-author of the REN model, Allister's commitment to the long-term economic and social sustainability of Western NS is evident in all he does.</p>
	<p>Benjamin Shearer - First term expires June 2020 A rural practitioner of a general legal practice, Benjamin brings a broad knowledge of business law to the board, along with a clear commitment to community.</p>
	<p>James Symonds - First term expires June 2020 Working as an independent consultant and an IT instructor, Jamie contributes his understanding of technology and software engineering to both strategic and operational aspects of the Western REN.</p>
	<p>Misty Morrison - First term expires June 2020 A Crown Attorney with NS Public Prosecution, Misty's experience with education and race relations supports the organizational efforts to recruit an appropriately diverse Board of Directors.</p>
	<p>Nick d'Eon - First term expires June 2021 Hands on experience in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors, combined with his accute financial skills, Nick ensures continued excellence in both sector engagement and financial operations.</p>
	<p>Mary Thompson - First term expires June 2021 Principal of the three NSCC campuses in the Western REN area, Mary's extensive network of contacts and her clear commitment to the people of the region are a model of leadership skills.</p>



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