



**Western Regional
Enterprise Network**

Annual Report

Fiscal Year 2017-2018

www.westernren.ca

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Leader Messages

Liaison and Oversight Committee Chair

Mayor Pam Mood

On behalf of the elected Liaison and Oversight Committee for the Western REN, I invite you to read this report with an eye to how you can help support economic development in Western Nova Scotia.

The municipal partners are working hard to align our efforts for the benefit of the region, and we welcome engagement from the real ‘owners’ – the residents and businesses who make this place their home.

Board Chair

Warner Comeau

The Western Regional Enterprise Network is pleased to present this Annual Report. We want to thank our partners – both public and private sector – for their continued and growing efforts towards improving the business climate in Western Nova Scotia. The innovative and entrepreneurial spirit of our businesses is evident and we look forward to another year of supporting and building on our shared successes. As we begin the final year of our inaugural strategic plan, and begin developing our next three-year plan, the Western REN remains committed to economic development in our region.

Chief Executive Officer

Angélique LeBlanc

This report represents the second year’s work from our three-year strategy. We are on course to accomplish all the goals tasked to us in 2015. We are looking forward to gaining more traction on the momentum we’ve already built and look forward to continued successes with our partners. Economic development truly is a team effort.



What we are

One of the first of its kind, the Western Regional Enterprise Network (Western REN) is an inter municipal corporation established by seven (7) municipal units in Southwest Nova Scotia.

A funding agreement with the Province of Nova Scotia's Department of Municipal Affairs matches the municipal contributions in support of Western REN Core Operations. This is used to leverage project funds through partners in both public and private sectors.

The Western REN's mandate is to **guide and navigate regional economic development** while supporting existing businesses.

Who we are

Liaison and Oversight Committee is a body of funders including an elected official from each of the seven municipal units, and two representatives from the Province of Nova Scotia. Among other responsibilities, this body **appoints the fully private sector Board of Directors**.

- Municipality of the District of Argyle
- Municipality of the District of Barrington
- Municipality of the District of Clare
- Municipality of the District of Digby
- Municipality of the District of Yarmouth
- Town of Digby
- Town of Yarmouth
- Municipal Affairs
- Labour and Advanced Education

Private sector drives activities to reach strategic goals.

Public sector partners on projects and policy discussions.



How we work

Recognizing that there is no silver bullet, and that the rising tide floats all ships, the Western REN accelerates business and investment opportunities by curating and sharing regional economic information and by connecting cross regional and cross sectoral partners to address specific industry and business needs.

Three client-facing programs are available under *BusinessNow*: Business Retention & Expansion, the Connector Program, and the Atlantic Immigration Pilot.

A dedicated staff team of professional, driven people, uses the 3-year strategic plan as a navigational aid. Everything the team undertakes is to further the strategic goals.



2017-2018 Business Plan Results

*Visit www.westernren.ca
for Western REN Business Plans
in our Knowledge Suite*



BusinessNow

Focusing on and serving the existing business community helps build the region with a solid base of committed business owners.

2017-2018 *BusinessNow* activities include:

- **Business Retention & Expansion services** for companies from Barrington to Digby
- **Regional Business Directory** goes live on investinwesternns.com - business owners encouraged to 'claim' listings
- **Continuum of services** and contacts available to businesses and industry sectors
- **Continuous Improvement pilot completed** - a successful pilot with a bottom-line impact
- **Succession matching and mentoring program** concept developed



Businesses Touched

by Business Retention & Expansion Program

73



Investment Readiness

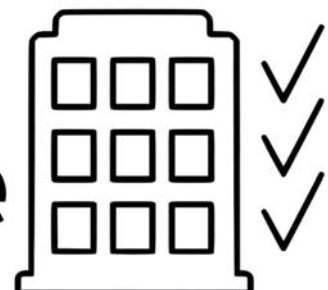
Preparing local government and industry to respond effectively to investment inquiries increases the chance of landing opportunities.

2017-2018 Investment Readiness activities include:

- Updated **Labour Market Dashboard** and **Regional Economic Profile** - available online and by request
- **Workforce Roundtable** supports efforts in recruitment, retention, and succession training
- **Land Asset Database** available on investinwesternns.com
- Workshop **Lead Handling Protocol** with NSBI - with regional CAOs and economic development staff
- **Rural internet** support for partnering municipal units

Land Asset Database

goes live





Innovative Partnerships & Communication

Regional communications and networking hub creates new partnering opportunities and builds optimism.

2017-2018 Innovative Partnerships & Communications activities include:

- **Annual Summit** 77 participants received training on staff recruitment and retention
- Identification of **38 investment opportunities** in key regional supply chains
- **Atlantic Immigration Pilot** project supports regional employers to target talent
- **Peer networking and familiarization tours** included in Continuous Improvement project
- **Western Connector** program continues to help regional employers to uncover hidden talents in the region

47

Connectees

59

Connectors

68

meetings with Connectors

Referrals from Connectors

67



Looking ahead

The 2018-2019 Business Plan will wrap up the actions from the first three-year strategy.

- **Succession** matching and mentoring program to attract entrepreneurs to existing businesses with retiring owners
- **Focus BRE** efforts strategically in support of investment opportunities within key supply chains
- **Familiarization tours** within and between sectors
- Implementation of **Investment Opportunities and Strategies**
- Continue supporting employers to find their needed talent - **Connector** program and **Atlantic Immigration Pilot**

Develop the next three-year regional economic strategy to **build on the information, successes and momentum** gained in the first three years.





A Success Story

Continuous Improvement Pilot

364 people trained from **7** firms

Examples of individual firm results

Time saved
is redirected to
new product lines.

Profits increased
from improved process flow

26%



Sales increased

9%

Production increased

44%



Reduced waste by

23%





Western REN examines

Engagement

Region needs 'creative ways to engage people,' participant says

Social Media Followers

+62%



Newsletter Opens

51%



Events and Presentations:

- Immigration Information Sessions (x3)
- Lead Handling Workshop
- Western REN AGM
- Summit - Landing Talent
- Economic Developers Network
- Connector Networking Events (x3)
- Presentations to Council (x21)
- Groundhog Data
- Yarmouth Airport Focus Group
- Chamber of Commerce Presentation

Website Views

7,511



Print Media

9 articles



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Board of Directors

Full Board and Staff Bios available
www.westernren.ca



Chair
Warner Comeau



Vice-Chair
Allister Surette



Finance Chair
David Saxton



Audit Chair
Clark Sigfridson



David Arenburg



Craig LeBlanc



Dr. Michel Comeau



Angela Thurber



Ronald Smith



Misty Morrison



Jamie Symonds



Benjamin Shearer



Staff

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Erika Rolston
Communications



Angélique LeBlanc
CEO



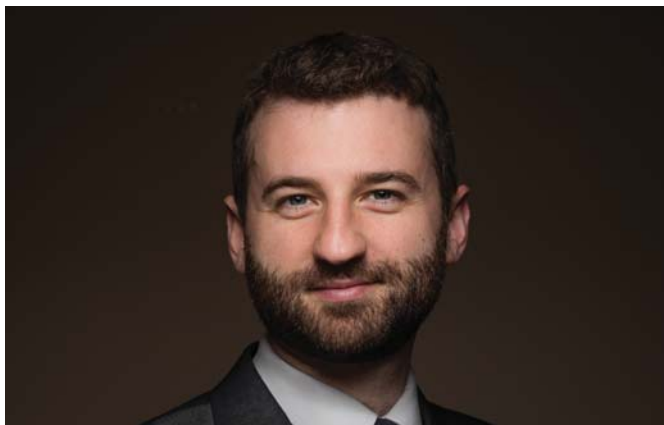
Victoria Brooks
BusinessNow



Brenda LaGrandeur
Connector Program



Gino Thibeault
Immigration Pilot



Evan Nemeth
Research



The Western REN is proud to work with other
RENs in Nova Scotia as

PARTNERS for PROGRESS

Visit www.nsrens.ca for more information



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