

# 2020-2021 Business Plan



**Western Regional**  
Enterprise Network

# *INCREASED INVESTMENTS IN WESTERN NS*

All Western REN actions are aimed at increasing investment in Western Nova Scotia.

This plan outlines ways the Western REN creates an investment friendly environment through full engagement of private and public sector partners and by addressing the persistent labour force and infrastructure challenges within the region.

## *REFLECTIONS ON CHANGE*

In my 6 years on this Board, I've seen the Western REN develop into a responsive leader in economic development. Our "Inform, Connect, Accelerate" approach has allowed the Western REN to shift into an effective leadership role during this COVID-19 event.

I am confident that the organization will continue strengthening the regional economy under the incoming leadership.



*Outgoing Board Chair,  
Ron Smith*

Businesses - like everyone - are facing extraordinary and challenging times in a COVID-19 world. The Western REN's main purpose is finding and implementing the innovative solutions needed for a stronger economy in Western NS.

I know collaborations with the Board, Staff, and the many regional partners will continue to create opportunities for business success - even in a COVID-19 world.



*Incoming Board Chair  
Mary Thompson*

# COVID-19 CURVEBALL

*from Chief Executive Officer, Angélique LeBlanc*

While the primary focus during this COVID-19 event is a health and safety one, it has become very clear that health and safety are directly related to economy.



Economic development work workers are on the front lines with businesses, including those which have been deemed essential for people's survival.

Supporting enterprise owners, management, and staff to respond effectively and safely conducting business in a COVID-19 world is the focus of our work.

This Business Plan outlines the actions whereby we continue to implement our strategic goals of increasing investment into the region through public and private sector collaborations, and addressing work force challenges. The actions within this plan demonstrate the same commitment to growing the regional economy with an additional focus on support activities that reduces the risk of viral spread.

Although we are in a time of many unknowns, new opportunities are arising from the crises. Infrastructure needs, such as reliable internet, remain critical for businesses to take full advantage of these opportunities. We continue to build partnerships across the region and across the province in support of our regional economy.

# WESTERN NS REALITIES

## People

An aging population is relevant to already existing workforce challenges as well as to the number of businesses likely to be for sale in the coming years. As the months progress, it will become apparent what impact COVID-19 is having upon our population.

## Geography

A widely dispersed population in largely rural settings, presents a challenge to infrastructure and services, but low population density may have contributed to lower COVID-19 related hospitalization rates in Southwest Nova Scotia.

## Infrastructure

Working from home and increased e-commerce underscores the importance of access to both quality high-speed internet and reliable, good quality energy.

## Industry

Some of the region's key economic drivers have experienced more COVID-19 impact than others. Food processors/harvesters, and other businesses considered essential, were permitted to continue operations while maintaining social distancing and implementing such safety measures as were possible. Many other businesses, some mandated to close, were/are eligible for government support programs. Industries and events requiring large gatherings of people must remain closed or cancel - this will likely have a lasting impact on tourism dependent businesses.

## Exports

Lobster exports have been challenged by disruptions to global air traffic, as well as a sudden reduction in Asian demand in the early days of COVID-19. The markets have opened up again and the price at May 31 was around \$5/pound. The next lobster season opens in October and there remains uncertainty about how another COVID-19 wave will impact this important export.

## Transportation

Nova Scotia's State of Emergency, and resultant border closures and restrictions due to COVID-19 impact transportation of goods and people.

- Yarmouth-Maine ferry - seasonal service and start date has been postponed

- Digby-St.John ferry - adjusted schedule to permit social distancing

- Digby-Annapolis Regional Airport - fewer flights and reduced fuel sales

- Yarmouth International Airport - significant impacts on operations, flights, and maintenance

## Immigration

At June 2020, 78 companies in Western NS are active in the Atlantic Immigration Pilot Program, those 78 companies could be hiring as many as 200 workers. Those 200 workers could bring with them as many as 400 family members.



# GENERAL REALITIES

## Workforce

Some COVID-19 benefits for people out of work are actually a higher income than a person would make while earning minimum wage. During the re-opening stages this is representing a challenge for employers seeking to recall or rebuild their workforce.

Workforce disruption - in the form of remote work and increasing automation - was already underway before the COVID-19 crisis started. Employers and workers will both need to adapt skills and adjust expectations in a COVID-19 work world.

## Canadian Dollar

The value of the Canadian dollar is tied closely with commodity markets. Before COVID-19 hit Canada, the dollar was valued at 76 US cents, and at May 31, 2020 it was 73 US cents.

## Oil Prices

The outbreak of the coronavirus (COVID19) has impacted oil prices by reducing global demand. On June 1, 2020, the price of a barrel of oil was at \$35.44 USD, compared to \$53.50 USD on June 1, 2019. Low oil prices help consumers but hinder Canadian dollar value.

## Tourism

On a global scale, tourism will be one of the hardest hit industries. This industry depends on international travel (including air travel) and gatherings of people. A tourism recovery strategy will rely heavily on domestic and local markets.

## Trade Agreements

As of May 31, 2020, COVID-19 has not impacted existing international trade agreements. However, NS businesses looking to get into or increase exports should contact an NSBI business advisor for clarification on any restrictions or concerns with their export markets.



## STRATEGIC ACTIONS

### *Engaging the PRIVATE SECTOR*

Western REN Actions	Outputs	Outcomes
Deliver business and sector development activities	6-8 activities delivered	Increased partnerships across sectors
Continue to deliver BusinessNow services	12 presentations 90 actions taken 100 company interactions	Increased business stability and growth
Engage with Chambers and Boards of Trade on priority issues	Meetings 2 times per year	Increased in shared activities on priority issues
Deliver Succession Program to prepare businesses for transition	25 coupon codes to buyers and sellers	Businesses ready for succession and maximizing value of sale
Continue to deliver Continuous Improvement Program	10-20 participating companies	Increased culture of Continuous Improvement among business leaders
Develop and deliver Virtual Advisor program	14 businesses matched with advisors	Businesses better able to engage in e-commerce

### *Engaging the PUBLIC SECTOR*

Western REN Actions	Outputs	Outcomes
Develop action plan(s) for regional energy infrastructure	Action plan completed	Prioritized investment opportunities with submitted proposals
Continue to prioritize access to reliable, high-speed, rural internet	Identify service gaps, develop partnerships, and provide data for proposals	Increased access to high-speed internet in under-served and unserved communities
Work on strategic issues with economic development partners from public sector	12 meetings per year 25 support activities	Effective communications channels supporting active partnerships
Advance the Western Nova Scotia Regional Value Proposition work	Update strategy for investment opportunities with a COVID-19 response focus	Progress on opportunities in updated value proposition
Circulate, coordinate, and respond to regional investment inquiries	10 collective responses to investment inquiries	Rapid and quality responses generated for inquiries

## STRATEGIC ACTIONS

### Addressing TALENT NEEDS

Western REN Actions	Outputs	Outcomes
Continue delivering the Connector Program	40 Connectors 50 Connectees 4 Networking Events	Increased quality employment for youth, newcomers, and boomerangers
Work towards coordination of immigration services related to workforce and talent gaps	Working agreement among immigration services	Zonal Immigration Partnership developed
Continue to deliver employer driven Atlantic Immigration Pilot	20 Designations 20 Endorsements Submitted 3 Events Hosted	Talent shortage decreased

## CORE BUDGET 2020-2021

### Revenues

	Operating Budget Fiscal Year 2020-2021
Province of Nova Scotia	277,250
Municipal Units	277,500
Other	275,687
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>\$830,437</b>

### Expenses

Wages and benefits	420,251
Training, governance, and risk management	10,800
Travel, meals, and lodging	27,600
Conferences	5,200
Communications and recruitment	21,725
Consulting support/Data management	14,500
Office space and supplies	37,800
Professional and corporate services	14,400
Strategic planning initiatives	278,161
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$830,437</b>

# GOVERNANCE

## LIAISON & OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE



Core Funders  
Approve Strategy  
Appoint Board

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Private Sector Directors  
Limited Terms  
Strategic Direction

## CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER














Hired & Managed by Board  
Runs Organization  
Manages Staff

### Liaison and Oversight Committee - Funders and Board Appointment

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 Phil Mooney		Dept. of Municipal Affairs Marilynn Hay	Dept. Labour & Advanced Education Joe Brown

***The Western REN Liaison and Oversight Committee is always  
seeking talented and motivated people for appointment to the Board of Directors***

### Board of Directors 2020-2021

 Board Chair, Mary Thompson <i>1<sup>st</sup> term expires June 2021</i>	 Board Vice-Chair, Nick d'Eon <i>1<sup>st</sup> term expires June 2021</i>	 Committee Chair, Benjamin Shearer <i>2<sup>nd</sup> term expires June 2023</i>	 Director, Angie Greene <i>1<sup>st</sup> term expires June 2022</i>
 Director, Jamie Symonds <i>2<sup>nd</sup> term expires June 2023</i>	 Director, Brenda Francis <i>1<sup>st</sup> term expires June 2022</i>	 Director, Charles Surette <i>1<sup>st</sup> term expires June 2022</i>	 Director, Karen Enright <i>1<sup>st</sup> term expires June 2022</i>
Vacant	 Director, Julie MacLean <i>1<sup>st</sup> term expires June 2023</i>	 Director, Jocelin d'Entremont <i>1<sup>st</sup> term expires June 2023</i>	 Director, Kenneth Deveau <i>1<sup>st</sup> term expires June 2023</i>



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

#### **Staff - at August 1, 2020**



##### **Angélique LeBlanc - Chief Executive Officer - Since August 2014**

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



##### **Erika Rolston - Board Liaison and Executive Support - Since November 2014**

Erika's comprehensive knowledge of the REN founding articles together with her organizational skills insures a compliant and smoothly running governance structure.



##### **Evan Nemeth - Research Lead - Since August 2015**

Steeped in data and analyses, Evan's ability to understand and translate complex information is crucial to the evidence based decision making of the organization.



##### **Brenda LaGrande - Connector and Succession Program Manager - Since April 2017**

Brenda uses her networks and her natural welcoming personality to help clients build their own networks; connecting talent with employers and entrepreneurs with business sellers.



##### **Keval d'Entremont - Accounting Clerk and Office Manager - Since October 2018**

Keval's calm and competent nature, combined with her organizational and accounting strengths keep the Western REN's wheels turning.



##### **Rob Stephenson - BusinessNow Lead - Since October 2019**

Rob's nearly 30 years in the private sector, including management abroad and export, provide him with a clear understanding of the issues that face business people daily. He connects with business people to help them overcome barriers and grow.



##### **Kathleen d'Entremont-Mooney - Immigration Lead - Since July 2020**

Kathleen's broad experience in many angles of business development includes directly working with employers recruiting from immigrant labour markets. Her role is to help Western regional employers overcome their chronic labour challenges.



##### **Alyson Duffy - Communications Coordinator - Since July 2020**

A recent graduate from Carleton University, Communications and Media Studies, Alyson brings enthusiasm and fresh eyes to the story-telling needed in economic development.

[www.westernren.ca](http://www.westernren.ca)  
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