BUSINESS PLAN 2021-2022

Western Regional Enterprise Network

"EVERY THREAT TO THE STATUS QUO IS AN OPPORTUNITY IN DISGUISE"~Jay Samit

Despite the massive and long-term economic disruption resulting from the global pandemic, Western Nova Scotia is poised for both population growth and economic growth. It will take creativity, innovation, and perseverence - qualities readily available in Western NS.

This plan outlines ways the Western REN continues to work with private and public sector partners and address the ongoing labour force and infrastructure challenges within the region.



CONTINUED CHANGES from Board Chair, Mary Thompson

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, so does its impact on our communities and our businesses, this is unavoidable. Some of the repercussions we've experienced will be with us for some time to come. Now we must choose how to respond.

Working together, across municipal units and across sectors is the raison d'être of the Western REN. Through long-term commitments to collaboration, we are helping the region's businesses to be prepared for an accelerated and innovative recovery.

This is an historic time in our history. Let us make the most of the opportunity that is before us.

Message from our CEO

from Chief Executive Officer, Angélique LeBlanc

This Business Plan represents the final year of our second three-year strategy.

The Western REN, anchored in the region, has become a go-to organization known for having the connections and expertise to build effective networks. COVID-19 notwithstanding, the Western region's business support ecosystem continues to focus and evolve.

The pandemic has changed the business climate. We've seen businesses adapting to new technologies at a much faster pace, especially now that highspeed internet is so much more available throughout the region. Immigration, in particular inter-provincial immigration, is on the rise and the Western REN is here to support employers and newcomers to our region.

The Western REN will continue to partner with public and private sectors as the economic recovery gains momentum. Recognizing the recovery will take longer and look different for individual sectors, we will help find and support innovative solutions for a future-proofed business climate.

Western Nova Scotia offers a quality of place that is already bringing new people and investment opportunities. We look forward to what the next three-year strategy will hold for our future.





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. The rate of population decline has slowed during COVID-19 as more individuals choose to migrate into the region.

Geography

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

Infrastructure

Working from home and increased e-commerce underscores the importance of access to both quality highspeed internet and reliable, good quality energy. The roll-out of fibre internet in the region has been accelerated in response to this need, with the goal of 97% of homes and businesses by end of 2023.

Industry

Key economic drivers have all experienced COVID-19 impacts. Food processors/harvesters, and other businesses considered essential, were not mandated to close. However, some of those sectors have seen their markets negatively impacted by COVID-19. For example, food processors supplying event catering and restaurants are seeing a much reduced market demand. Many other businesses, some mandated to close, continue to be eligible for government support programs. Tourism dependent businesses have been the hardest hit and will likely take the longest to recover. COVID-19 is increasing the rate of closures and businesses for sale.

Exports

Live lobster exports experienced challenges from disruptions to global air traffic, as well as a sudden reduction in Asian demand in the early days of COVID-19. The Canadian export value of live lobster at the end of 2020 was almost 16% less than it was at the end of 2019, while the volume of live lobster exported was only reduced by just over 11%.

Transportation

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

Yarmouth-Maine ferry - cancelled for 2021 operating season

Digby-St.John ferry - adjusted schedule to permit social distancing, subject to change for health protocols Digby-Annapolis Regional Airport - fewer flights and reduced fuel sales

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

Immigration

Between July 2019 and July 2020, the region saw a net increase in both international and interprovincial immigration. COVID-19 travel restrictions slowed the number of endorsments leading to newcomers entering the regional workforce through Atlantic Immigration Pilot Program in 2020.

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 re-opening stages, this has represented 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 have both been adapting skills and adjusting expectations in a COVID-19 work world.

Canadian Dollar

Before COVID-19 hit Canada, the dollar was valued at 76 US cents. At May 31, 2021 the Canadian dollar was 83 US cents, believed to be related to inflation in the USA.

Commodities

On June 1, 2021, the price of a barrel of oil was at \$67.72 USD, compared to \$35.44 USD on June 1, 2020. Low oil prices helped consumers in the early days of COVID-19, but hindered Canadian dollar value.

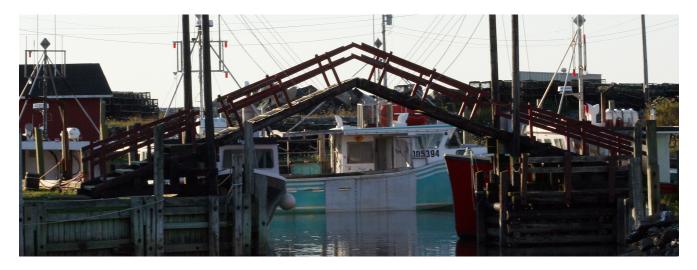
Lumber prices have more than tripled this last year, from \$362.30 USD/1000 board feet in June 2020 to \$1,267.50 USD/1000 board feet in June 2021. Low interest rates have lead to a boom in construction and home renovations.

Tourism

On a global scale, tourism is 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

China has announced new measures, coming into force in 2022, that may impact seafood exports from NS. USA's focus on "Buy American" may further impact this side of the border as Canada is a major construction material supplier. COVID-19 has not directly impacted existing international trade agreements except for its general impact on international businesses via market and supply chain disruptions.



ACTIVITIES IN THIS PLAN WILL BE IMPLEMENTED WITH A COVID-19 SAFETY FOCUS.

STRATEGIC ACTIONS Engaging the PRIVATE SECTOR

Western REN Actions	Outputs	Outcomes	
Deliver business and sector development activities	4-6 activities delivered	Increased partnerships across sectors	
Continue to deliver BusinessNow services	6 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	
Identify funding and deliver Succes- sion Program to prepare businesses for transition	12 companies participating	Businesses ready for succession and maximizing value of sale	
Continue to deliver Continuous Im- provement Program	10-20 participating companies	Increased culture of Continuous Improvement among business leaders	
Continue delivery of Virtual Advisor program	7 businesses matched with advisors	Businesses better positioned for stability and growth	

Engaging the PUBLIC SECTOR

Western REN Actions	Outputs	Outcomes
Implement project for regional energy infrastructure	Projects completed	Less dependency on single-sourced energy
Continue to support access to reliable, high-speed, rural internet	Identify last-mile service gaps, devel- op partnerships, and provide data for proposals	Increased access to high-speed in- ternet 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 Re- gional Value Proposition work	Increase webpage traffic by 80%	Increased ability to attract suitable, long-term invesments
Circulate, coordinate, and respond to regional investment inquiries	10 collective responses to investment inquiries	Rapid and quality responses generat- ed for inquiries

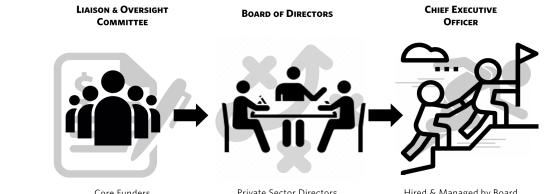
STRATEGIC ACTIONS Addressing TALENT NEEDS

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	
Coordinate immigration services related to workforce and talent gaps via Local Immigration Partnership	Regional people retention and attrac- tion strategy	Increased regional population	
Continue to deliver employer driven Atlantic Immigration Pilot	20 Designations 20 Endorsements Submitted 3 Events Hosted	Talent shortage decreased	

Revenues	Operating Budget Fiscal Year 2020-2021
Province of Nova Scotia	277,250
Municipal Units	278,333
Other	42,000
Total Revenues	\$597,583
Expenses	
Wages and benefits	438,977
Training, governance, and risk management	8,450
Travel, meals, and lodging	14,400
Conferences	5,200
Communications and recruitment	21,725
Consulting support/Data management	13,500
Office space and supplies	33,300
Professional and corporate services	15,100
Strategic planning initiatives	153,282
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$703,934

Board approved surplus spending

GOVERNANCE



Core Funders Approve Strategy Appoint Board Private Sector Directors Limited Terms Strategic Direction Hired & Managed by Board Runs Organization Manages Staff

Liaison and Oversight Committee - Funders and Board Appointment

Municipality of Argyle	Municipality of Barrington	Municipality of Clare	Municipality of Digby	Municipality of Yarmouth
Guy Surette	Eddie Nickerson	Ronnie LeBlanc	Linda Gregory	Patti Durkee, Chair
Town of Digby Ben Cleveland	Town of Yarmouth Derek Lesser		Dept. of Municipal Affairs & Housing Marilynn Hay	Dept. Labour & Advanced Education Joe Brown

Board of Directors 202	0-2021		
Board Chair, Mary Thompson	Board Vice-Chair, Nick d'Eon	Commitee Chair, Benjamin Shearer	Director, Angie Greene
2 ^{me} term expires June 2024	2 nd term expires June 2024	2 nd term expires June 2023	1 st term expires June 2022
Director, Jamie Symonds	Director, Brenda Francis	Director, Charles Surette	Director, Karen Enright
2 nd term expires June 2023	1 st term expires June 2022	1 st term expires June 2022	1 st term expires June 2022
	Director Iulio Mad con	Director localin d'Estremant	Director Konnath Devery
	Director, Julie MacLean	Director, Jocelin d'Entremont	Director, Kenneth Deveau
	1 st term expires June 2023	1 st term expires June 2023	1 st term expires June 2023

The Western REN leverages additional investments into the region through extensive partnerships.

Staff - at June 1, 2021



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' 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 LaGrandeur- *Local Immigration Partnership Coordinator - Since April 2017* Brenda uses her networks and her natural welcoming personality to connect with community groups, employers, and newcomers to the region as an important part of population growth efforts.



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 and export, provide him with a clear understanding of the issues facing private sector 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 aspects 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.



Miranda MacLean - *Connector Program Manager - Since March 2021* Miranda's community outreach and program development skills will help her grow the Connector program while helping clients build their networks, connecting talent with local employers. www.westernren.ca 210 Main Street, Yarmouth, Nova Scotia 902-881-3008

